

FLORIAN PUMHÖSL

Florian Pumhösl's work is constituted by a constellation of historical references encoded within a visual language that appears purely formal. The apparent abstraction of his paintings, films, and installations is anchored by specific archival sources: 17th-century kimono designs, avant-garde typography, WWI military uniform patterns, for instance, cartography, Latin American textiles, or early dance notations. Through the selection, reduction, rearrangement, and reproduction of his source materials—unsystematic and subjective modes of transcription—the artist arrives at a vocabulary that is at once abstract and semiotically motivated.

Pumhösl's compositions establish points of contact with realms traditionally consigned to the margins of modern art. Through attention to the social, political, and geographic genealogy of given forms, his works reveal that the modernist fantasy of complete self-referentiality was always already haunted by irreducible specificity and cultural instability. "I am calling into question to what extent it is possible to act within a space defined by the artist himself – a space that emerges from the hierarchy between my own authorship and its research sources, between historical references or concrete borrowings and what I can depict," Pumhösl states. "My medium is the physical and historical space that I create using painting, architecture, film or photography."

For his 2014 exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery, Pumhösl created formally reduced compositions based on the Georgian Mkhedruli alphabet and a 19th-century rabbinical map ("Eretz Israel," from *Boundaries of the Land* by Rabbi Joshua Feiwel ben Israel, Grodno, 1813). The austere motifs, carefully stamped on ceramic plaster panels in oil paint using cliché, a 19th-century technique, are delicately situated between the proto-mechanical and the handmade. Through the reproduction and displacement of his dual sources, Pumhösl reflects on the hierarchy of the graphic, semantic, and phonetic denotations of text and underscores the arbitrary nature of the sign. In emptying these systems of their use value, he opens them up to other associations. This is emblematic of his process at large, which examines the imbrication and reciprocal permeation of formalism and historicity—of abstraction and specificity.

Saltern is Pumhösl's 2019 series of painted metal reliefs, which refers to a coastal horizontal structure consisting of ramparts, canals, and plains. As Pumhösl notes, the saltern is a "man-made landscape between sea and inhabited territory with modules characterized by flow and stagnation." Following a morphological line of thought that adapts the spatial, temporal, and pictorial aspects of the saltworks, Pumhösl identifies the saltern as "an abstract image par excellence, because it is able to dissolve everything that appears manifest in it into relations." The malleable ridges of Pumhösl's reliefs allude to the saltworks' embankments, creating boundaries and thresholds within the field of each work. Utilizing bookbinding techniques, the sheet metal is folded with a bonefolder and aluminum cliché. Occasional segments of the folds are cut and pressed against the mount, pointing to the openings of the basin within the imaginary saltern and resisting the common notion of a painting as a closed structure.

Florian Pumhösl (b. 1971, Vienna) lives and works in Vienna. Solo and two-person exhibitions of his work have been staged at Galerie UM, Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design (Prague, 2023); Schindler House, MAK Center for Art and Architecture, with Vincent Fecteau (West Hollywood, 2021); Kunsthau Bregenz (2012); Art Institute of Chicago, with Liz Deschenes (2012); Mumok (Vienna, 2011); Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen (Düsseldorf, 2010); Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (Luxembourg, 2009); Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam, 2008); Neue Kunsthalle St. Gallen (2005); Centre d'édition contemporaine (Geneva, 2004); Kölnerischer Kunstverein (Cologne, 2003); Secession (Vienna, 2000); and Salzburger Kunstverein (1998), among others. His work was featured in Documenta 12 (Kassel, 2007), São Paulo Biennial (2006), and the 50th Venice Biennale (2003). Recently, Pumhösl's work appeared in group exhibitions at the V-A-C Foundation (Venice), Pinault Collection (Venice), Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Haus Der Kunst (Munich), City Gallery Prague, Museum Abteiberg (Mönchengladbach), Generali Foundation (Vienna), MACBA (Barcelona), Raven Row (London), Künstlerhaus Vienna, and Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw).

He has had solo exhibitions at Miguel Abreu Gallery, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin and Cologne, Lisson Gallery, London, Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna, Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv and Paris, and Parra & Romero, Madrid. His work is in the permanent collections of Tate Modern (London), MAK – Museum of Applied Arts (Vienna), Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), MUMOK (Vienna), Generali Foundation (Vienna), Kunsthau Bregenz, Pinault Collection, V-A-C Foundation (Moscow), BSI Collection (Lugano), and Museo

Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid), among others. Several monographs are dedicated to Pumhösl's work: Florian Pumhösl: Works in Exhibitions 1993-2012 (Kunsthhaus Bregenz, 2012), Florian Pumhösl: 678 (Buchhandlung Walther König, 2012), and Florian Pumhösl (Lisson Gallery/Galerie Buchholz, 2008).

A two-person exhibition with Vincent Fecteau, I hear the ancient music of words and words, yes, that's it., was held at the MAK Center Schindler House, West Hollywood, in 2021–22, accompanied by a publication of the same title. An iteration of the exhibition traveled to Galerie Buchholz, Berlin in late 2022, opening in tandem with his solo exhibition, Florian Pumhösl, also at Galerie Buchholz. Lithosphere, the artist's fourth one-person exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery was held in spring 2024. Recital at Dvir Gallery, Paris, took place in winter 2023–24, and Tabique was on view at Parra & Romero, Madrid, through February 14, 2026.

Since 2018, Pumhösl has served as Chair of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich.