

Spoonbill Studio is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by Guy Richards Smit, which will be on view from October 23 through December 4, 2018.



Guy Richards Smit reminds us that we're all going to die, but don't be so serious about it.

During a visit to the Bone Church in Kutna Hora, Czech Republic, Smit was deeply impressed by the overwhelming number of skulls that he knew were once living beings, but were completely unrelatable or recognizable as individuals. In the soon to be released artist's monograph *A Mountain of Skulls (Trela)* Smit recalls focusing on a particular skull, thinking, "What if that guy was the town baker?". He began assigning roles and personalities to each skull, imagining a village and contemplating the unique persons who made up its population. This concept remained with him, and came to life in a series of watercolors that has continued for several years, with the artist generally creating one skull a day.

Often set on some grass or the bare ground, these close-up portraits of

skulls are paired with comic titles or pithy phrases written in large bold letters. The quips humorously convey a defining trace of who the skulls once were in life when they were fleshy and a brain sat in their cranium. They grant a caricatured but also summed-up personality to the dead. As the series progressed, Smit realized he was indeed bringing his "necro-village" into being, populating it with arch memento moris, all cast in the comedic realm, and each distinguished by their moniker. There is a "Wallflower", "Fuckboy", the townspeople with "A Terrible Sense of Urgency."

The style of the skulls resources the Renaissance memento mori period, but in a loose, exuberant, unpolished mode. Added is a contemporary patois of fundamental insouciance in the face of mortality. Smit's watercolors are a rehabilitative response to the nameless, if highly aestheticized, skulls he found in the Bone Church. It disturbed him that they had been used without an epitaph; that they were mere macabre material. Did the dead give permission to hijack their armature of life? Probably not. Smit works to undo this violation by reanimating the skulls, both visually and by giving each one a nick-name or phrase to remember them by.

None of us will escape death, at least not yet. Instead of anxiety and resignation, Smit mischievously reminds us that we can approach the situation with amusement, even laughter.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

[Guy Richards Smit](#) has been known for his paintings, video installations and performances exploring the themes of narcissism, desire, power and failure. Using pop cultural forms such as Stand Up comedy, Pop Music, Comic Books, New York Times' front pages and television Sitcoms he's conveyed a sharply observant cultural and political message with philosophical observations and humor.

Born and raised in New York City, Guy Richards Smit's work has been seen at Hallwalls, Buffalo NY (2018), SPRING/BREAK Art Show, NY (2016, 2017), Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles CA (2016) The Pompidou Center, Paris (2015) and in biennials in Havana, Valencia and at ARCOMadrid in 2008 and Dublin Contemporary in 2011. Solo exhibitions include The Grossmalerman Show at Pierogi Gallery (2014), Schroeder Romero & Shredder, New York,

USA 2011; Fred [London] Ltd., London, UK 2009; Nausea 2, Premier Series, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2004; QED, Los Angeles, CA in 2006. He has received awards including the Penny McCall Foundation Award in 2004 and the Foundation for Contemporary Art in 2016

He has recorded two albums and toured internationally with his band Maxi Geil!&PlayColt.

In 2016 he completed the 5 episode multi camera sitcom *The Grossmalerman Show* which was shot on a stage set in front of a live studio audience and he continues to perform stand up comedy around New York City.