

Lukas Quietzsch
The Appeal of Individualism
May 1 – June 26, 2026

From one individual to another: “To ourselves and others we might also be many.”
For Lukas Quietzsch

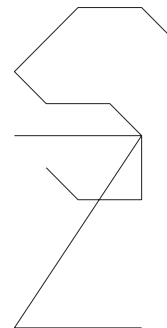
You enter a room full of people. At first, you perceive them as one dense mass. As if all were cut from the same cloth. A person steps forth from the crowd and greets you: “Oh hi”—“How’s it going?” Someone singular now stands before you. You speak. Your conversation goes into detail, gains dimensions. Then the connection dissolves. The other person blends back into the stuff this evening is made of, and draws you in with them. For anybody arriving after you, you will now also be just part of the background in a crowded room.

You wake up in the morning. Stretch your limbs. Observe your surroundings. All is in place. Outside reality restored. Time to check in on the inner life. Still one gooey porridge. Consult memory. What was I so scared of yesterday? What was I looking forward to? Yes, that’s what it was, oh fuck, that too. From the mélange of mixed emotions, specific feelings pop out, acquire contours, and either let you jump up and grab the phone: new messages during the night? Or leisurely sink back into the cushions, thinking: Last night was awesome. With that in mind, I’ll start the day.

The two sensations—entering a crowded room at night and waking up to one’s dispositions each morning—should have little in common. In his new paintings, Lukas Quietzsch shows you that, to the contrary, they may be quite alike. The works evoke both processes at once: how figures emerge from a mass and feelings arise from a mess. From the paintings, figures and feelings come forth and address you: “You, in front of the canvas, from one individual to another, for now, I’ll be me, you’ll be you.” Yet after greeting you, the figures and feelings once more recede into the background, taking you along. Follow them and disappear into the picture. In the moment of address, you are an individual. In the act of submersion in painting, you are but a speck of color on the coat of the cosmos. Liberatingly so, actually.

Quietzsch continues modulating the relation between figure and background so that it stays decidedly indefinite. What is painted, gets washed and in part rubbed out. Figures are surrounded by the outlines of the stains left when spills of water dry up. What by rights should seem bone dry, looks like wet bubbles of primordial soup. They encapsulate the figures but could also birth them. Quietzsch doesn’t use brushes to paint the figures. He takes Teddy Bears. Like rubber stamps, he wets them in color, presses them on the painting, and partially rubs out the imprint again. Bears on canvas. Disarmingly appealing.

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Before the bears come to represent this or that, they first of all speak candidly. Their imprint says “squeeze me!” I can’t withstand their appeal. Neither do I want to. Like I wouldn’t withdraw from a person, or cat, who emerges from the backdrop of an everyday scene, to happily say hello or demandingly meow. Neither could I remove myself from the feelings, or sensation of a sore throat, that already linger on the threshold of consciousness when I come to, and assert their influence: “Under my sign your day shall start. Today like this. Tomorrow otherwise. Let me infect you with my mood.” Until the hold loosens again.

Quietzsch refrains from judging. Instead he registers the traces of each appeal and assertion, day in day out, from picture to picture, bear to bear, as the paintings take shape over the duration of several months. Together with excess pigments, surplus content gets wiped off the canvas. Rudimentary atmospheres persist, however, in the guise of distinct color temperatures. Blues add cooling. Reds turn up the heat. These are not the colors of a single night or temperatures produced by stage lights. They are lights that slowly modulate. As they would when seasons of feeling change. As they do, in the transition from moments when our selves gain contours, to moments when they diffuse again, and we could also be just fine with being washed out multitudes, to each other and ourselves.

Jan Verwoert