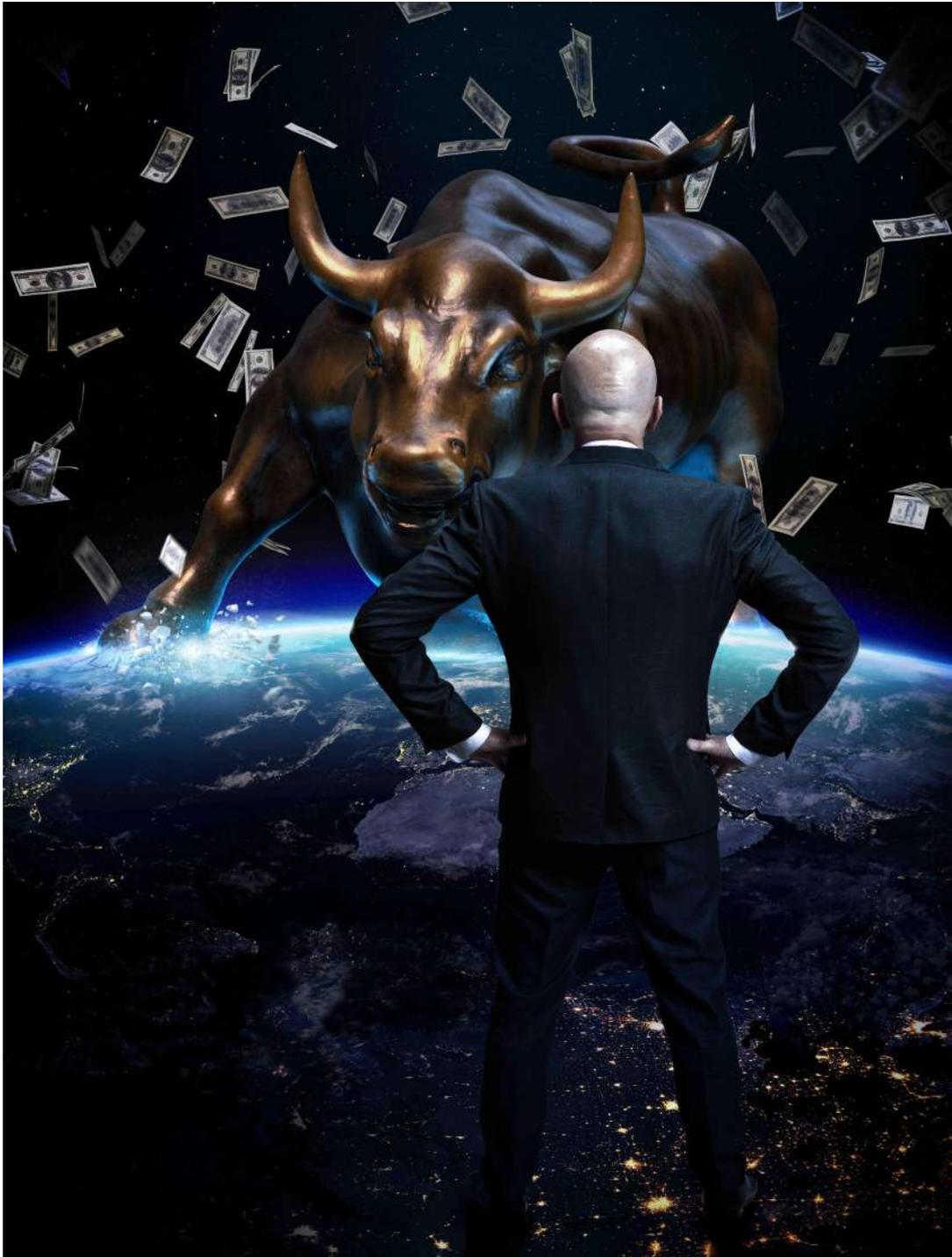


Carû Sanders PR

+44 (0) 207 292 8335 caru@carusanderspr.com



Philipp Humm: Faust

Coming soon to The Saatchi Gallery in October: Why today's Faust is a tech giant according to business-leader-turned-artist



MMT

Faust has influenced the likes of Christopher Marlowe, Rembrandt, Delacroix, Thomas Mann, The Rolling Stones, Queen, and Rosemary's Baby. This October, Philipp Humm will present his version, based on Goethe's *Faust*, the timeless story of the man who sells his soul to the devil at Saatchi Gallery at the Start Art Fair.

As a former CEO in 'high-tech', at Vodafone and T-Mobile and as a vice president at Amazon, Humm's insight into the make-up and moral dysfunction of some of the world's powerful elite informed his artistic expression of a modern Faust. If anyone is equipped to make that call, it's him.

The mythology of Faust is so powerful that when Christopher Marlowe's Elizabethan play *Doctor Faustus* was performed in an early production, legend has it that actual devils appeared on stage "to the great amazement of the actors and spectators." The story has inspired countless writers, artists, dramatists, composers and musicians ever since. Humm felt that it was time to

free Faust from his medieval shackles and make him a person of our world.

Humm was leading a dual life as a tech revolutionary chief as the CEO of Vodafone. He painted in his spare time under a pseudonym, quietly sketching colleagues in meetings until 2015, when he was 'outed' on the front page of the Wall Street Journal. He made the leap from the boardroom to the studio and moved through the gears >



Pact



Bartholomeus Skin

of ourselves, living in the pleasures of the moment according to his own desires? Much like the world we live in today, with our credit cards and fast food, we opt for immediate gratification, even in the knowledge that it brings long-term pain.

For Humm, every historical era and culture has its own Faust figure and he has woven in several versions into his tapestry on modern life. Humm's primary Faust is a tech giant modelled on Steve Jobs, dressed in Jobs' "work uniform" of New Balance sneakers, jeans and black turtleneck sweater. Like Faust, Jobs reached the pinnacle of the industry and technology - but the words on his deathbed were filled with regret. No detail is accidental in Humm's visual narrative and language. Mephisto is dressed in blue suited attire of a hedge fund manager, Napoleon on horseback while the symbolic bull of Wall Street bucks with a warning on monetary policy.

In November 2019 Humm added to his Faustian oeuvre with *The Last Faust*, a theatrical feature-length art film which he wrote, cast, costumed and directed starring Steven Berkoff. In the film, Faust's company is called Winestone inc (the English translation of the German name "Weinstein"). "Faust in the first part of the story acts more like a Weinstein than a Steve Jobs", explains Humm. "He uses his position of power to seduce a 14-year-old girl and then ditches her."

Set in 2059, Dr Goodfellow (Steven Berkoff), the company's CEO has fled to his mother's house with a robot assistant, Paris (Edwin De La Renta) and recounts the story of his >

> allowing his true ambitions to show through, sketching, painting, sculpting, taking photographs and even venturing into filmmaking.

Humm has used Goethe's narrative as the compass for his own retelling. Inspired by masters and illustrative storytellers, Paula Rego and Salvador Dali, what began with a few sketches in 2017 has expanded into a "pop expressionist" odyssey.

Paintings in oil and watercolour, fine art photography, sculpture, a novella and even a feature film, which he wrote, cast, costumed and directed himself complete his ever-expanding body of work.

Big, immersive and rattling with an intellectual energy, each painting, each photograph and artwork is referenced with a specific context that communicates emotions and ideas with a deeper social meaning. Humm's compositions have clues and motifs that help decode the different scenes from corporate life, celebrity culture, while popular culture plays out through the works Humm's Faust is an extreme version



Minoan Bull Leaping



Anguished

> predecessor Faust, played by Martin Hancock. Goodfellow is Faust's successor, named after Ian Goodfellow who was heading Google Brain and is now at Apple heading machine learning. With Google and Apple linked together in the film as they are in reality, as tech giants reigning with unfettered control, the film touches on timeless and contemporary issues. Humm's observations power the narrative on corruption, love, power, fame, artificial intelligence through to contemporary references such as Harvey Weinstein, monetary policy and Silicon Valley.

"Having worked in high tech, I am an insider and understand the moral shortcomings of its leaders", explains Humm by way of explanation. As for who is the ultimate archetype, Steven Berkoff explained in an interview in The Guardian that he believed Trump to be the perfect example of Faust. Humm begs to differ. Retirement from the >



Influencers



Talking To Spirits

> corporate world has given him the opportunity to reflect on the social responsibilities of its leaders. He says, “Faust is a genius that has gone too far. Unlike Trump who is a gifted populist, low on morals and not a genius. Weinstein is a close match in the first part of Faust: an incredibly successful producer and pervert. But I was thinking more of people like Steve Jobs, Zuckerberg, Larry Page, Bill Gates and Larry Ellison. So for example Zuckerberg is a genius who believes he can create his own censorship - a state across states.”

In transposing the story to the 21st Century, in the context of modern technology, Humm has created a cautionary tale. “We have not changed in 500 years”, he acknowledges. “Except that science and technology is far more advanced and dangerous. If you create a self-learning computer system more intelligent than yourself, it might attempt to save the planet by eliminating humans altogether.”

For images or an interview with Philip please contact Caru Sanders caru@carusanderspr.com / 07834 351297

Press Information

START Art Fair 2021

Where

Saatchi Gallery,
Duke of York's HQ,
King's Rd, Chelsea
London SW3 4RY

Private view

October 2021

Duration

Wednesday 13th
– Sunday 17th
October 2021

Website

startartfair.com/
philippumm.art

Nearest tube

Sloane Square