

Marcin Janusz

90% Juice, 10% Sugar

Exhibition opening:

March 23rd, 2018 (Friday), 6 p.m.

On until April 15th, 2018

(Tue – Sun, 12 a.m. – 7 p.m.)

Curator: Agnieszka Cieślak

Free entrance

In his paintings, drawings and photographs Marcin Janusz focuses on portraying the individualism of individuals, although – paradoxically – he avoids showing the human face: figures stand turned around, wearing masks, or their faces are filled in solely by a mixture of coloured splotches. The hidden identity is contrasted with a demonstration of a proud male physicality, captured on the border of boyish charm and the burgeoning strength of a mature man. The intimate portraits do not merely characterize the heroes in their physical dimension, but also say a great deal about their psyche. “I externalize their doubts, fears and desires, balancing on the boundary of maturity and childhood,” writes the artist. Although the *90% Juice, 10% Sugar* exhibition mainly displays his later, abstract works, they constitute a continuation of the figurative explorations of the artist.

A key word in Janusz’s oeuvre is metamorphosis, understood as a physical transformation, as well as – and perhaps primarily – changes occurring in the human psyche. Transformation also occurs in the painting style of the artist: from figurative to abstract and on to

ever newer experiments with the form and matter of the painting. Despite all its variety Janusz’s creative work is internally consistent, and certain motifs and strategies, such as using pastel colours and organic forms or combining various techniques (oil paint, watercolours, spray paint) have accompanied him since the very beginning.

The *90% Juice, 10% Sugar* exhibition presents works from 2016–2018 which constitute a cross-section of the artist’s work as a student, with a predominance of newer painterly experiments created with this year’s diploma work in mind (Janusz is a fifth year student at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts). The sole figurative painting in the exhibition, *L6* from the series *Icing* (2016), presents a figure with a masked face lying in a fairly provocative pose and looking directly at us. The figure and the background have been blurred with a yellow spray line that is associated with street graffiti (later Janusz achieves a similar effect with oil paints). The painting originated on the basis of a photographic self-portrait of the artist, much like most of his non abstract works. Presenting a frivolous, liberated individual refers us to a fascinating process of maturation. Maturation, in this case of an artistic nature, is also visible in the works presented in the exhibition that come from subsequent painterly cycles.

Since 2016 Janusz has been interested in formal experimentation, casting aside literal figurativeness in favour of abstraction. Although it is not immediately perceptible, these paintings are only superficially abstract.

Biomorphic shapes in pastel, sugary colours essentially constitute imagined physiological and metabolic processes that take place in the human body. These are internal portraits in the literal sense of the word, phenomena visible only under a microscope become revealed in them on a macro scale. The pastel colours can be associated with a style typical for sportswear which alludes to the theme of vitality in the context of caring about one's health.

In creating the series *Vitalic* (2016–2017), Janusz combined reflection on the idea of vitality, understood as life energy related to the physical fitness of the human body, with the conviction that the right dose of poison can function as medicine. The artist labelled substances acting in such a manner as “pharmacons,” perceiving in them the possibility of “cleansing” the body and positively influencing the human psyche, among other things through changing one's awareness or broadening cognitive perspectives. The vivid colour scheme of the paintings, at moments giving the sensation of seemingly emanating light, creates a “toxic” atmosphere which intrigues and attracts and simultaneously disturbs one. The intense colours, often highly contrasting with one another, are intended to stimulate the viewer, as do psychoactive substances.

Janusz continues to explore the problem of the relationship between vitality and the medicinal properties of poison in the series *90% Juice*, *10% Sugar* (from 2017), adding to his repertoire artistic experiments with resin. The substance “eats into” oil paint, illustrating the concept of “pharmacons” at the level of painterly material: as a result, on the surface of the painting little blisters are formed that are reminiscent of human secretions, such as saliva, bile or sweat, which often accompany detoxification. The first work in a larger format carried by means of this technique is *juice 0.5* (2018); the organic character of the painting was augmented further by using a skin-colour background. In the described cycle Marcin Janusz uses a darker colour scheme than in his earlier works (*juice 0.2*, 2017), although they do not lack in canvases that have vivacious, dynamic colours (*juice 0.1*, 2018). The culmination of the artist's technological experiments is the newest painting from the cycle with the significant title *I'm oozing juices*: multicoloured, organic forms reminiscent of biological samples viewed under a microscope are combined with coarse textures

obtained with the aid of resin. In these works the artist attains a certain aesthetisation of ugliness by showing the body fluids which usually repulse us in such a manner that we cannot take our eyes off of them.

In the painting *Vitalic 0.3* (the *Vitalic* series, 2016), Marcin Janusz covered a broken crystal glass with oil paint, and he used a similar device in the object *10% Sugar* (2017), with its form corresponding to the organic shapes occurring in the artist's painting. The “crystal sugar” used in both of these works corresponds to various substances and dietary supplements that have a vital influence on the psychophysical condition of a human being and a seminal one on the vitality of his or her body. In the glass roller that serves as the base for the object in *10% Sugar* multicoloured pigments were submerged: colourful streaks appear to fall out of crystal forms, and captured in motion they constitute three-dimensional representations of colours used by the artist on the flat surface of the canvas.

The most recent creation is an abstract sketch printed on textile. This work gives the exhibition the character of an installation; it also fulfils the function of ordering the exhibition space and promises that Marcin Janusz will surprise us with more than one painterly experiment.

Marcin Janusz (b. 1991), in 2013 completed the BA programme at the Faculty of Health Sciences of the Jagiellonian University's Medical College, specializing in emergency medical services. He is currently a student of the fifth year at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts. He has participated in numerous collective exhibitions both in Poland and abroad, among other in the finalist exhibition of the Hestia Artistic Journey competition (Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2017). *90% Juice*, *10% Sugar* is his third individual exhibition: earlier he exhibited his work at the *Surface Icing* exhibition (Księgarnia I Wystawa gallery, 2016).