

Chris Sharp on Martin Lukáč

The paintings of Martin Lukac exist somewhere between a rock and a hard place. Normally, such a position would be cause for anxiety in a painter, but Lukac inhabits this willfully liminal space with a relative ease, even a certain grace. What precisely is this space? How to define it? For the past few years, I have been thinking about contemporary western painting in terms of two axes. One is vertical and the other is horizontal. In the vertical axis, painting is perceived as linear and historical in nature, progressing in the logic of a Hegelian dialectic. Essentially romantic, this axis is inhabited by practitioners determined to bring painting to its oft-heralded terminus through a logic of essence and brinkmanship. Some of its key components include Martin Kippenberger, Michael Krebber, Merlin Carpenter, Christopher Wool, Josh Smith, and even Joe Bradley, among others. Meanwhile, the horizontal axis operates according to a logic which is non-linear and extends indefinitely outward in both directions as if along an unbounded horizon. In this scenario, painting is endlessly renewable by virtue of its abandonment of the historical logic of the romantic model and through being more interested in possibilities, in gaining and opening up new ground, than essences and the closure they necessarily entail. It's a kind of brinkmanship in reverse. Some of this mode's more conspicuous practitioners include Amy Sillman, Laura Owens, Walter Swennen, Michael Berryhill, and Allison Katz, among others. Contrary to the current ban on gendering, I would say that the first axis tends to be masculine, while the latter tends to be feminine, regardless of actual gender. Of course, nothing is ever so cut and dry— there is a bit of cross over in both camps, but generally speaking, at least in my estimation, practitioners tend to adhere to one or the other.

Not so in the case of Martin Lukac. At once a believer and a non-believer, a romantic seeker of

endgame essences and wholly committed to new possibilities in painting, Lukac's work somehow manages to synthesize both of the above-described axes, obliging them to coexist with something that amounts to happiness. It is a strange and improbable situation, but one which he, much to my avowed consternation (as I, for the sake of convenience, would basically like to keep these two camps separate), carries out with admirable poise. But just how does he manage to do this? What's his secret? Yet before trying to answer this question, I should at least try and shore up my claim by identifying these two tendencies within his work.

Lukac's painting practice revolves largely around the depiction of motifs. Alighting upon a given form, the simpler, the better, he depicts it, sometimes repeatedly within the same canvas, until he has essentially exhausted it. The motifs can range from modified grids, full of expressive higgledy-piggledy interiors; what looks like a shield or a coat of arms; and more recently (at the time of writing this text), the poorly drawn profile of a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle. A motif, for Lukac, can also be methodical, such as in the case of his white on white paintings, in which a series of gestures, initially applied in dark paint on a canvas, is limned over with white paint, as if to provisionally erase them. This repetition speaks to a central preoccupation within the artist's practice, which has less to do with the act of repetition as a formal trope than how it functions and what it signifies. Given the gestural nature of Lukac's work, it would seem that expression or expressiveness would be important to him, but that expressiveness, whose value typically lies within its singularity, is patently negated by Lukac's will to repeat that gesture, and with it, its singularity. And yet, his repetitions are not purely conceptual, but wield an aesthetic charge, as if to emphasize, to embolden, and underline the fact (and facture) of painting and its essential structure.

The deployment of a motif has a specific function as well. Akin to Josh Smith, the depiction of a given motif, the more banal the better, also expressly and pointedly serves to bracket subject matter. It is not so much the subject of the painting, as it is a kind of circumlocution, or better, a pictorial subterfuge which at once points away and to itself, ultimately acting as a facilitator. However, unlike Josh Smith, Lukac's work is not driven by an endgame, I-can't-go-on-I'll-go-on logic. For all its humor and apparent will to deflate the high seriousness of painting (e.g., the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle) it is totally committed to painting as a craft, practice, and way of negotiating art history. There is an earnestness to Lukac's work, a shameless desire to create good paintings, which is hard to locate in Josh Smith's work, which is somehow always and already repudiated by virtue of the fact that there is no quality control, no hierarchy between "good" and "bad" painting. It is all the same to him. I would argue that it is precisely here that Lukac manages to synthesize the two above mentioned tendencies. Where Smith brackets to terminate, Lukac brackets to renew.

The same could be same for Lukac's commitment to essences, to pairing down. Typically, painting as essence, post-Kippenberger, is not so much about breaking ground, but rather about running it aground. The reductive impetus is generally terminal, which no one knows and does better than Michael Krebber. Homing in on and stoking the death drive of painting, Krebber seeks to push it to a point where the result is always just barely a painting— as if it were on life support, nonchalantly hanging on for its dear life. Lukac on the other hand, when painting monochrome or duo-chrome, is not so much interested in the intrinsic fatality of the medium than in the possibilities that simplicity can afford him. Unlike Krebber and his crew, Lukac's paintings never elicit strong doubts about their ontological status as paintings, but always

revel in their status as such, no matter how paired down they might be. They are always undoubtedly paintings, and are shameless exult in the fact.

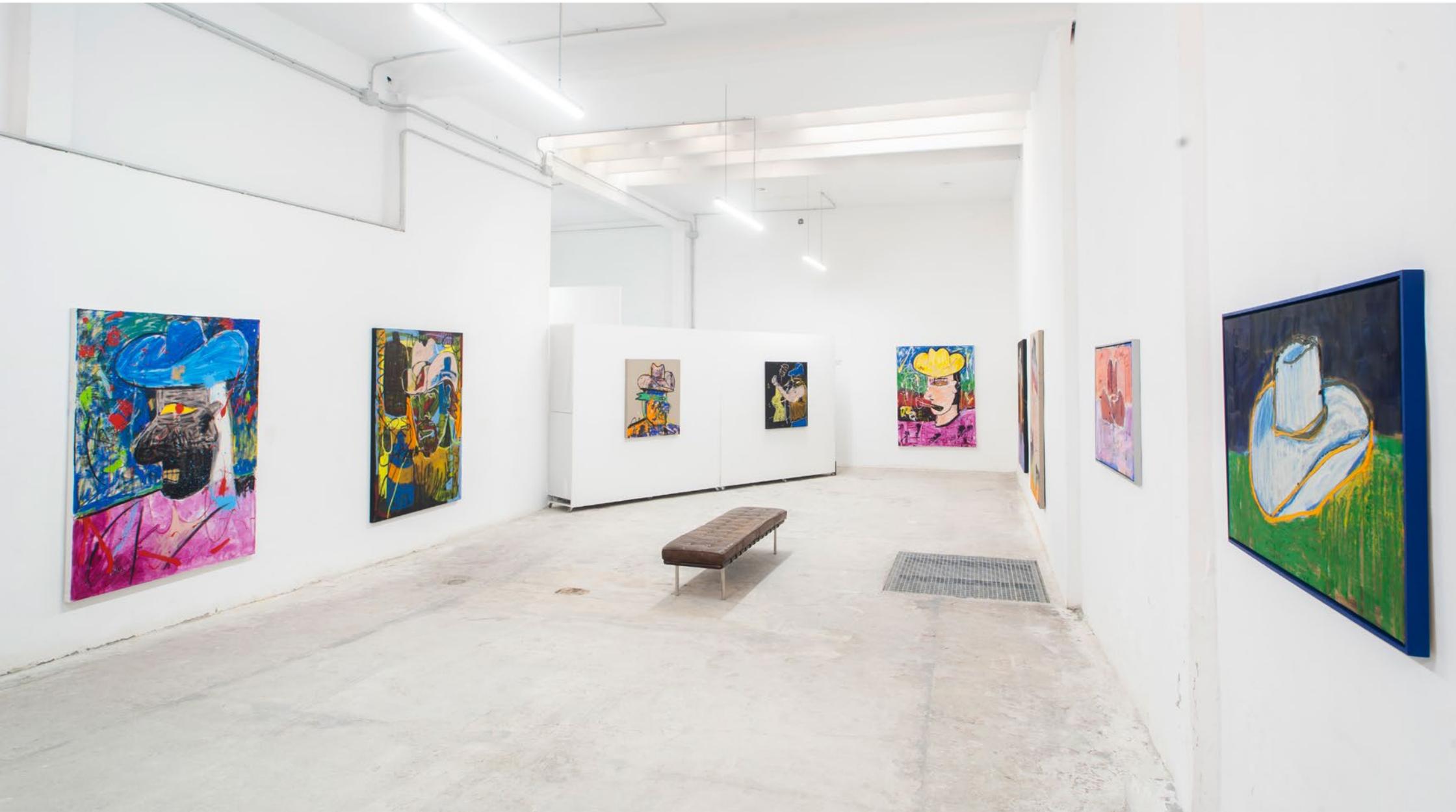
Both of these instances serve as examples of Lukac's rare ability to synthesize two seemingly diametrically opposed tendencies in contemporary painting. How he arrives at this unique position is another discussion altogether. But I wonder if it has to do with that fact that he studied in Prague, where continues to live and work. Removed from the geographical loci— New York, London or/and Berlin— of these debates, he necessarily experiences them at a distance, often through images on line and in reproduction. This is not to say that he is unaware of these debates, but that by the time they reach him, they soften, forfeiting their sharp edges, become more amendable to mingling in a general discussion about painting, which Lukac, as an outsider, or a kind of interloper, is more than happy to listen to, singularly transforming the whole of it at will.

Text: Chris Sharp

MARTIN LUKÁČ

Call me country





Installation view at Tönheim Gallery



Installation view at Tönnheim Gallery

Martin Lukáč

“Call me country”

Tönnheim Gallery, Madrid (Carabanchel)

1th of march – 14th of April 2024

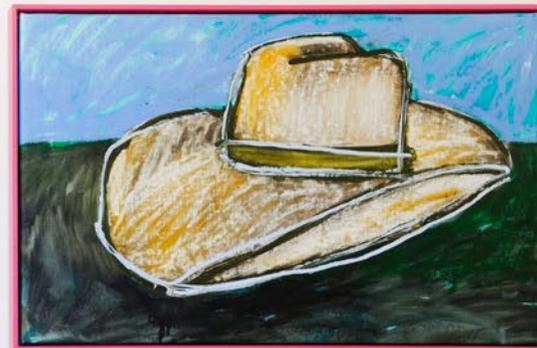
Tönnheim Gallery opens up in Madrid and proudly presents the Prague based Slovakian artist Martin Lukáč and his new exhibition “Call me country” with recently produced paintings. Tönnheim Gallery was earlier called Wadström Tönnheim Gallery and based in Marbella (previously also in Malmö, Sweden). The new gallery location in Madrid is based at Calle Miguel Mayor 1, Carabanchel.

My new exhibition “Call me country” at Tönnheim Gallery is for me a little different because mostly I’m not showing figurative artworks. The last time this happened was in 2016, I had a big figurative show, a “premiere” of my Teenage Mutant ninja turtles at Fait Gallery in Brno, Czech Republic. But since 2022 I’ve started to get back on that road and now focus on this spectrum in my creation, says Martin Lukáč and continues:

When I was 15 I used to visit my uncle. He was often going to watch the rodeo. He liked riding horses and had a honkytonk band. Those feelings and memories has returned to me and since a couple of years back I have been listening to country music. I also wear cowboy boots, hats, belts and I’m really enjoying it. Meanwhile the world is also rethinking this image/ lifestyle. Questioning manhood, manners and the way of men’s life. We can see it most concretely in the fashion world: for example the last fashion show of Louis Vuitton and also the Gucci presentation from a couple of years ago plus in the Barbie movie and more. All of the works presented at this exhibition are referring to concrete things from this mentioned lifestyle I love.

MARTIN LUKÁČ

Rolling Thunder





“Untitled” oil and oil stick and on linen, 2023, 130 × 170 cm



“Untitled” oil and oil stick and on linen, 2023, 130 × 170 cm

Výstavní síň Sokolská 26
Sokolská 26, 702 00 Ostrava 1

Rolling Thunder
Martin Lukáč
7. 9. 2023 – 20. 10. 2023

MARTIN LUKÁČ

The Cuteness Factor



Ludwig Múzeum

THE CUTENESS FACTOR

23. JUNE, 2023 – 12. NOVEMBER

The museum's new temporary exhibition will explore the theme of cuteness, a current phenomenon in contemporary art that is attracting increasing professional interest.

Cuteness first appeared in paintings and prints in Japan during the Edo period (17th–19th centuries). It then became popular in the 1970s with the rise of kawaii (the Japanese word for cute), a cultural phenomenon that permeated all aspects of life, and gradually spread throughout the world. Today, cuteness can also be seen as a global visual trend, with distinctive elements originating from the visual world of pop culture (e.g. manga and anime, cartoons and video games).

Today, we are witnessing the universality and widespread presence of “cuteness”. Alongside social media posts, emojis and gifs, this aesthetic is reflected in a multitude of logos, advertisements and anthropomorphised objects.

What is the source of its enduring popularity? What social processes or crises does its increased presence reflect? How does contemporary art relate to this visual phenomenon, and what potential or danger does it represent? These questions are not only of concern to professionals, but may also be important for the viewer to answer.

The aesthetics of cuteness has also influenced contemporary visual artists due to the large amount of visual, mainly digital, content in constant circulation. The conditions offered by social media, and determined by the necessity of technology (square aesthetics), blur the boundaries between

art and commodity, between self-expression and material gain (e.g. influencers), and thus public and private life often become inextricably intertwined. At the same time, the fact that cuteness in contemporary art draws much of its inspiration from visual means of expression that do not belong to high art but to comics, cartoons and video games, further reinforces the decentralised nature of contemporary culture as a phenomenon.

The exhibition The Cuteness Factor is the first major presentation of the theme in Hungary and in the region. The exhibition features 32 artists from 14 countries, including internationally renowned contemporary artists as well as young artists from Hungary and the region.

Curators: MAJ Ajna, Jan ELANTKOWSKI



“Untitled” oil and oil stick and on linen, 2021, 200 × 170 cm

MARTIN LUKÁČ

As Good As I Once Was





Installation view at Erika Deak Budapest 2022

AS GOOD AS I ONCE WAS

Opening: 10 March, 2022, 3-8 PM

On view: 10 March – 29 April, 2022

Opening hours: Wednesday-Friday, 12-6 PM

Opening by: Dávid Fehér, art historian

Martin Lukáč, Not yet titled, 2021,
oil, oil stick on canvas

We are delighted to announce the first solo exhibition of Martin Lukáč in Hungary, in the Erika Deák Gallery.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Dávid Fehér, art historian, will talk to the artist in English. Due to the epidemic situation, this talk will be held and recorded behind closed doors, the video documentation will be published on our online platforms. The public opening of the exhibition will take place on Thursday, 10 March 2022, between 3-8 PM, in the presence of the artist.

Martin Lukáč, a young painter of Slovakian origin living in Prague, is no stranger to international audiences. His paintings have been shown in solo and group exhibitions throughout Europe and North America (London, Berlin, New York City, Los Angeles), and now in Hungary.

Lukáč's painting is the expression of a liberated, intuitive creative process. His paintings are reminiscent of the abstract, expressive masters, but also have the freedom of graffiti artists and elements of pop culture. For him, painting is a way of being, the process of creation, its essence, the sensual capture of the moment, in his paintings, which are bursting with motifs and colours. His paintings come to life like strange characters from the world of comic books, his amorphous forms, painted in vibrant, vivid colours, springing out of backgrounds full of free-flowing lines, like automatic punctuation marks.

Lukáč often thinks in serieses, using a motif several times, which he then systematically repeats in his canvases in different variations until he exhausts them. Repetition and the reduction of forms not only define Lukáč's art formally, but are also fundamental to his practice. His chosen motifs are not only the subject of his paintings, but also, through their repetition, he transcends them, ultimately acting as a medium for painting.

Martin Lukáč (1989, Piešťany, Slovakia) is living and working in Prague. He graduated from the Technical University of Košice with a BA in Fine Arts in 2013 and received a Master's degree in Painting from the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague in 2016. He was a guest student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in 2014 and at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig in 2015. His works have been shown in solo and group exhibitions throughout Europe and North America and are part of numerous private and public collections. In 2018 he was in Brussels, and in 2019 in Los Angeles for an artist residency program.

In accordance with current epidemiological regulations, it is mandatory to wear a mask covering the mouth and nose at the opening of the exhibition in the gallery space.

The full exhibition can be viewed on the gallery's website and social media pages, and will be open for viewing during opening hours.

If you need any further information, please contact us by e-mail.

MARTIN LUKÁČ

Martin Lukáč at Tyler Wood Gallery New York



Address: 526 W 26th St suite 803, New York, NY 10001, United States



“Untitled” oil and oil stick and c print on linen, 2021, 200 × 170 cm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tyler Wood Gallery | September 17 – October 30

Opening Reception: Friday, September 17 | 6–8pm

NEW YORK – Tyler Wood Gallery is pleased to present new paintings by Prague-based artist Martin Lukáč.

This is the first exhibition in the gallery's new space at 526 West 26th St Suite 803.

Lukáč appropriates images of mass entertainment and art history. Playfully combining them he simultaneously pays tribute to and subverts the images to create his own brand of art as seen in his signature cum logo: ML.

Lukáč, for example, appropriated the images of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Named Leonardo, Raphael, Donatello and Michelangelo, in an art context they are stand-ins for the Renaissance masters. Lukáč often portrayed the profiles of the four turtles in a grid. In other paintings he created expressive abstract forms also within a grid. Linking early masters of figurative art with a 20th century abstraction is a good way to start thinking about Lukáč's work.

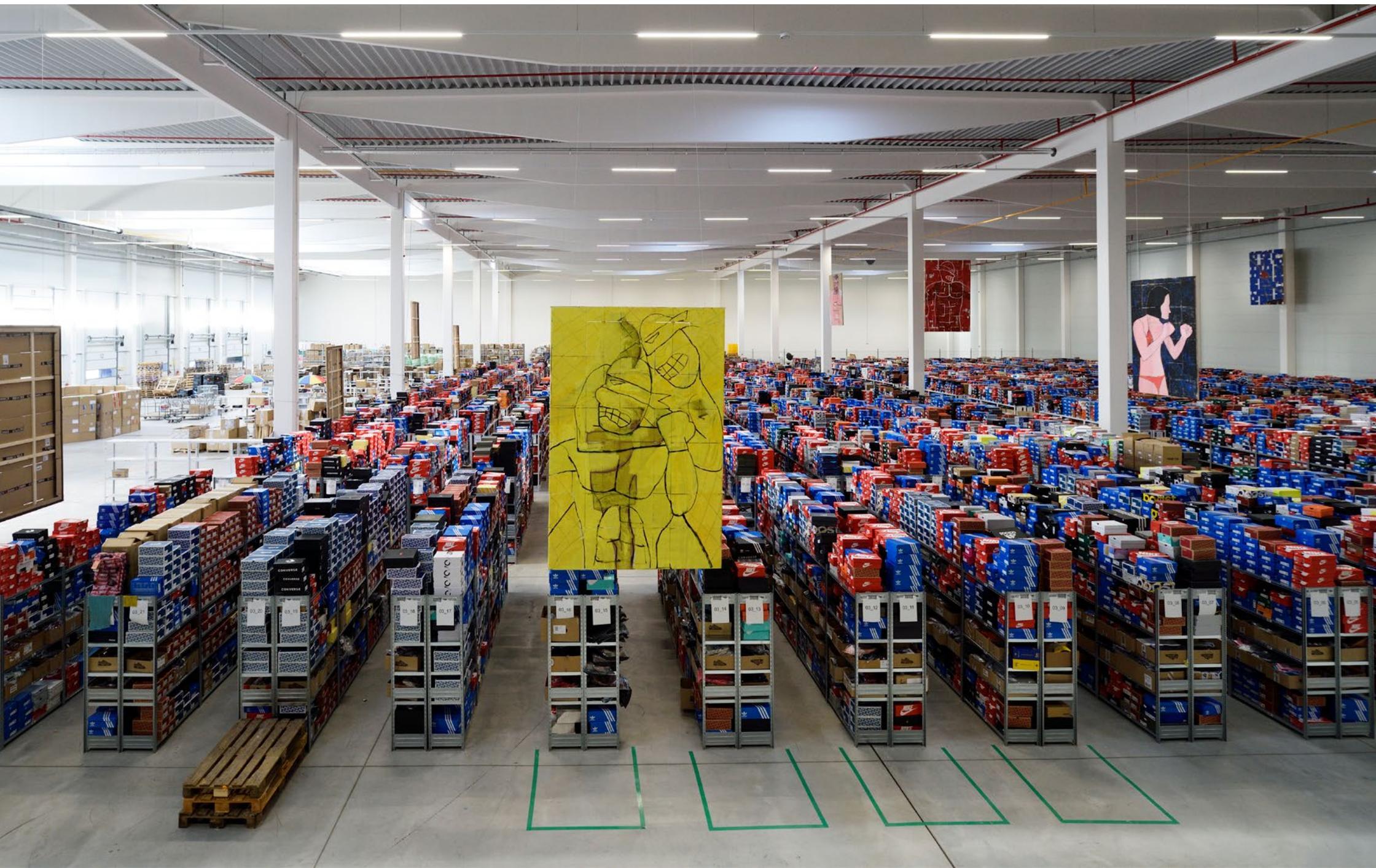
In the current series in the gallery he links the early figuration and abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock with the Neo-expressionism of Jean-Michel Basquiat via printmaking.

Pollock was interested in European artists' interest in the unconscious. Via the psychoanalyst Carl Jung, more specifically Pollock was interested in tapping the unconscious to produce archetypal images. Intrigued by the archetypal images of Native Americans several of his paintings of the 1940's refer to totems. Lukáč recently produced a series of paintings called Totems.

Lukáč drew with charcoal his own archetypal image which he made into a lithograph then digitally scanned to print onto the linen of the four paintings in the exhibition.

Basquiat painted archetypal images of man. He often did so successfully using black, red and yellow. Lukáč appropriates these colors for his current series. His archetypal image is also skeletal like Basquiat's figures.

Martin Lukáč (born 1989, Piešťany, Slovakia) is a painter currently living and working in Prague. Selected exhibitions include: Kunsthalle Košice, (Slovakia, 2021), Shattered Speech, Grove Collective (London, UK, 2021), NOSZTRÓMO, ASHES/ASHES (New York, NY, 2019) I Ain't Though, Kunstraum Orloff (Leipzig, DE, 2019) Interpreter's Booth, Chimera-Project Gallery (Budapest, HU, 2018). Lukáč was also the recipient of the La Brea Studio Residency (Los Angeles, CA, 2019).





“Ground and pound” acrylic on cardboard 2019 300 × 200 cm 2019



“Training” acrylic on cardboard 2019 300 × 200 cm 2019



“Main Slovak and Czech card” acrylic and charcoal on cardboard 2019 300 × 200 cm 2019



“Main Card” acrylic and charcoal on cardboard 2019 300 × 200 cm 2019

“Mann in Flammen” acrylic on cardboard 2019 300 × 200 cm 2019

**Martin Lukáč at Footshop Warehouse
June 6, 2019**

Artist: Martin Lukáč

Exhibition title: Mann in Flammen

**Venue: Footshop Warehouse,
Prague, The Czech Republic**

Date: May 23 – June 23, 2019

**Photography: all images copyright
and courtesy of the artist**

MARTIN LUKÁČ

I'd rather be with you





“I’d rather be with you” at Duve Berlin, 2019



“I’d rather be with you” at Duve Berlin, 2019



“I’d rather be with you” at Duve Berlin, 2019

MARTIN LUKAC

“I’d rather be with you”

Duve Berlin

February 8 – April 5, 2019

Text by Peter Megyeši

The exhibited paintings of Martin Lukáč (1989) represent two styles of his work in two large series. In the first, he develops his serial painting technique based around the variation of shape and color of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Comics heroes, well known among the cultural milieu of Lukáč’s generation which grew up during the complex years of Slovakia’s post-socialist transformation. In the 1990s, Lukáč and his peers became inundated by visual representations of these cultural heroes which became a cultural article, being used in a wide spectrum of products, often imbued with many manufacture inaccuracies, discolorations, or other visual idiosyncrasies which differed from the prototypes. The sheer number of these products gave the illusion of opulence and plenty which promised economic equality with the developed west, the birthplace of the teenage mutants. Today, they are the object of nostalgic memory, a collectively shared imagination, and they draw associations with the memories of one generation’s childhood.

Where the first part, consisting of the anthropomorphic turtles, works through pop-cultural painting, and systematically reacts to the production of mass media, the second part of the exhibited paintings consists of works which rather find inspiration in the avant-garde and elite painting culture represented by a formal language which draws on the hundred-year history of abstract painting. Lukáč balances between form and formlessness, and his canvases toe the threshold between the amorphous and the moment when a form emerges and takes shape. He is

interested in manifesting those shapes which culture perceives as artificial, as part of a wide repository of signs and attributes of abstract painting. In his painting compositions he places emphasis on the most basic units, referring to the unconscious in the image sphere of the abstract tradition. As usual, there is a motif whose potential is varied and explored until it is exhausted. These motifs are layered and schemed within a matrix which surfaces as a well-known, almost emblematic motif for modernism. These new image compositions combine various visual languages of the past, and reconfigure them for new contexts.





“Aww Yeah!” at Nevven Gallery in Gothenburg, 2019



Martin Lukac × Laformela 120 × 105 cm, various materials on cotton, 2019



Martin Lukac × Laformela 120 × 105 cm, various materials on cotton, 2019



“Aww Yeah!” at Nevven Gallery in Gothenburg, 2019

Artist: Martin Lukáč
 Exhibition title: Aww Yeah!
 Venue: Nevven Gallery, Göteborg, Sweden
 Date: February 14 – March 10, 2019

Nevven is proud to present Aww Yeah!
 a solo exhibition of new paintings by
 Slovak artist Martin Lukáč.

Neither fully figurative nor completely abstract, the paintings by Martin Lukáč are unruly and elegant. Repetition is fundamental in his practice. The Slovak artist's series are built upon the iteration of straightforward powerful graphic elements and abstract ideas. Sometimes the result is purely abstract and expressionist series. More often, figurative features, like fictional characters and appropriations from popular culture, are brutally superimposed to the elaborate backgrounds – in an act which is both of defiance and exaltation of the abstract quality of the works.

A pirate face is repeated in most of the paintings featured in Aww Yeah!. Quickly traced with oil-stick over the otherwise abstract and gestural canvases, the nature of this character is enigmatic, defiant and ironic at the same time. What this pirate symbolises is deliberately left open to interpretation and misinterpretation, as it is of no concern to a rebel what people might think of him. The nihilism and the disruptive power of this character emerge in the fast paced, obsessive repetition in which it is portrayed and sometimes erased. Its ubiquitous presence and self-assertion stand as a provocation and a dare to the viewer.

This series, which is presented for the first time in this exhibition, is combined with new takes on older works and with the introduction of formal elements unprecedented in Lukáč's paintings. The long-lasting series of Ninja Turtles' portraits is

reinterpreted with textile interventions, which are appearing for the first time in his practice – hinting to the artist's interest and current collaborations within the fashion world. The works in this show, emboldened by colourful, heavy frames are exhibited in an experimental and maximalist installation overturning and overpowering the gallery space.

Aww Yeah! is a kaleidoscopic burst. A rich semiotic field that strongly reflects the creative urge behind this new body of work, in which the artist is introducing both technical and thematic new elements. Aww Yeah! is an immersive experience, in which Martin Lukáč wants to overwhelm the viewer with the unruly nature of the installation and its reckless and provocative protagonists.

MARTIN LUKÁČ

Collectors Choice





“Collectors Choice” at Eduardo Secci Contemporary (Florence, IT) 2018



Untitled, 145 × 180 cm, acrylic on cotton, 2018



Untitled, 145 × 180 cm, acrylic on cotton, 2018



“Collectors Choice” at Eduardo Secci Contemporary (Florence, IT) 2018

MARTIN LUKAC, RICARDO PASSAPORTE,
 LUCA POZZI, KRISTIAN TOUBORG
 CURATED BY CLAUS BUSCH RISVIG
 5 LUGLIO – 11 AGOSTO / 2018

Eduardo Secci Contemporary is pleased to present the exhibition "Collector's Choice," curated by Art Collector Claus Busch Risvig, consisting of the works by Luca Pozzi, Martin Lukac, Ricardo Passaporte and Kristian Touborg. The collective exhibit will feature the works by these four international artists and will be inaugurated at the gallery's headquarters, in Piazza Goldoni 2, Florence, on July 5th, 2018, at 6 pm.

This show, the last one scheduled for the gallery's summer season, will be the first of a series where international art collectors will be invited to showcase a selection of artists from their private collection who are most meaningful to them. This way, the collector takes over the role of the curator, and becomes an active participant in the exhibition. The gallery is looking to explore new paths, and wishes to make the general public aware of the new roles that are emerging in the arts world, always more oriented towards the promotion of young and very young authors. And it's precisely to support the work of new artists that collectors, who are in close contact with them through the art market and, even more, thanks to the new Internet and social media platforms, become precious points of reference not just for galleries but also, and mostly, for artists. Since the 80s, there have been a thriving number of virtuous collectors who pay close attention to novelties, are receptive to new artistic languages and are capable of polarizing the attention on the artists they collect. Recalling a few prestigious examples, we mention Charles Saatchi, who had a prominent role in the formation of the Young British Artists, or, more recently, key figures of contemporary patronage and collecting, such as Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo or the duo Bertelli & Prada.

All four artists showcased in the exhibit, grapple with a direct confrontation with the idea of the image in the contemporary, each through their personal and recognizable language, and search it by making it emerge from an everyday context, isolating it, manipulating it, analyzing it, reducing it to a matrix, and, finally, even evaluating its possibility of surviving in a world overloaded and overexcited by constant and relentless visual stimuli. The artists, all born in the 80s, are direct witnesses of the deep and incontrovertible social changes caused so much by the most recent scientific, technological and digital discoveries, as by the overwhelming subjugation to a capitalist and commercial aesthetic that has contributed to alter the perception humans have today of the image. The image is recurring in the works by the artists as a mark, as their signature: it is repeated, denied or sublimated. The exhibition is presented as a conscious choice, capable of offering a glimpse into the languages of these four artists, set in an unprecedented juxtaposition as to suggest some reflections on their use of the image (in its figurative meanings, and not) in the contemporary era.

Space-time has always been a main theme of interest for Luca Pozzi (1983, Italy). Past, present and future are indistinguishable. One, single dimension, fluid and all-inclusive, emerges from the direct confrontation with his hybrid installations, conceived by their author as painting devices suspended in space and time. His "Detectors," taking advantage of the ping-pong metaphor, represent the bundle of particles captured right before a hypothetical collision inside the LHC detector.

The works by Martin Lukac (1989, Slovakia) feed off of recurrent motifs that he freely draws from crests, political images or pop- culture icons from the 90s. Once he identifies a motif that captures his attention, he extrapolates it from its context, repeats it multiple times, even within the borders

of the same canvas, until it's completely exhausted, and in most cases ends up with actual abstractions that reveal the true nature of his artistic research.

Immediate, direct and mundane, are just some of the most efficient adjectives to define the paintings and the installations by Ricardo Passaporte (1987, Portugal). He is a careful interpret of the communicative power inherent in logos of large multinationals. The font and colors of these brands undergo a process, in which they are revisited, broken down or duplicated. After appropriating himself of such icons, and transmitting their social and cultural value, not without a subtle background irony, Passaporte ends by giving form to a seductive, contemporary symbolism.

Technical reproduction and reconstruction are the predominant languages adopted in his artworks by Kristian Touborg (1987, Denmark). He attempts to overcome the concept of the white canvas, constructing assemblies of Dadaist perception, as a result of the tactile and optical experiences that the artist gathers in his daily life, and repurposes them in the form of manual or digital reproductions. His works feed on the collection of images, which become representations of simultaneous experiences.

MARTIN LUKÁČ

Two hands and a magnifying glass





“Two hands and a Magnifying glass” installation view at Fait Gallery Brno 2016



“Two hands and a Magnifying glass” installation view at Fait Gallery Brno 2016
160 × 200 cm oil on canvas each piece
(Donatello, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raffaello)

With *Two Hands and a Magnifying Glass*, Martin Lukáč is searching for something and so am I. We are searching for completely different things. Within his work, I am hunting for a deeper meaning that goes beyond his skilled aesthetic decision-making. He is searching for a way to escape this.

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles were named after Italian Renaissance masters – Donatello, Leonardo, Raphael and Michaelangelo. If anything this represents an example of the re-territorialization of art into the realm of pop-culture, which is not an uncommon occurrence. Portraying these fictional crime-fighting characters on canvas plucks them out again from their designated position, and a constant back and forth shifting takes place. Their forms have been ground down to shabby silhouettes bearing sniggering grimaces and their numbers surge, they multiply and transform into ghoulish or uncanny versions of one another. These are not portraits, but likenesses, looking into cracked mirrors. Repetition and excess are ever-present throughout Lukáč's work, which suggests a long pursuit, an exhaustive endeavor. For this exhibition the focused effort has been magnified, however, one cannot say that there is any sign the artist has found what he is looking for – there is no hint of satisfaction or closure. Instead, there is a feeling that the repetition may continue unceasingly, whether through creating twenty paintings or a thousand.

This notion of excess also leaks from Lukáč's work as he regularly traverses the barriers between art, design, and fashion. Taking symbols from pop-culture, his gestural abstract paintings can be found placed within installations that resemble stage sets of Nike sneaker commercials. These deliberations are neither critiques of nor odes to consumerism – but lie somewhere in between. The question is whether or not the viewer can tell the difference

between the very references he uses, and the original sources themselves. Perhaps it does not matter. I believe that Lukáč and his work are one in the same – that he takes on a kind of Deleuzian “controlled hysteria”, where the artist becomes the work, which in turn reflects the intensity of sensations and impulses present within him. Perhaps the works do not mirror one another after all, but the artist himself – the reflection of which is a bit arrogant, distorted, and unfinished – as all humans are.

Martin Lukáč (b. 1989 in Piešťany, Slovakia) is a painter currently living and working in Prague. Lukáč's work often nods to or directly references the recently-past aesthetic forms he encountered during his life growing up in post-occupied Bratislava. Subjects or motifs from 90s pop-culture (music, sports, television) are often present, and declare themselves through a certain gestural repetition on the canvas. Lukáč graduated from the Painting Studio of Jiří Černický and Marek Meduna in 2016. His most recent solo exhibitions include *No Love all Hate* at 35M2 Gallery, Prague, and *“Bon Appétit”* (duo show with David Krňanský) Ivan Gallery, Bucharest, Romania. He exhibited his work in group exhibitions in The National Gallery in Prague – Trade Fair Palace (2016), Leto, Warsaw (2016), I: project space, Beijing (2016), and Galerie AMU (2015), among others. He will exhibit his work in Nevan Contempo (under the name BHG) in December 2016.

Text: Christina Gigliotti

MARTIN LUKÁČ

No Love all hate at Gallery 35M²



Installation view, "Untitled", oil on canvas, 145 × 110 cm



Installation view, "Untitled", oil and oil stick on canvas, 145 × 110 cm



Installation view, "Untitled", oil and oil stick on canvas, 145 × 110 cm

Let's get serious now. I'm listening to 90's hip-hop and browsing Tumblr looking at new drawings by Martin Lukáč. The non-stop perusing of internet blogs with its overwhelming tide of information is just as typical for Martin's work as its reduction of style. This contrast seems to me to be of great significance. You need to first absorb as many of the outside world's influences as possible to then be able to reduce them to their essence. Running a hip-hop playlist in the background while i "consume" Martin's drawings seems also important to me because of a story he once told me.

When he was growing up in the seeming shadow of Bratislava's largest housing estate Petržalka his attention was captured by a graffiti of a basketball player on a wall. He was not pictured as a winner or a loser. It was just a picture of him with his back hunched, maybe tired after a match. Maybe there was a strange mixture of happiness and sadness inside his head and he wasn't able to see the difference between them clearly enough so he hid himself from the world in his hands.

This basketball player theme can also be read as a throwback to the 90's, the african-american culture taking form in basketball and hip-hop, that influenced Martin. But can Martin's artwork even really be read?

We are entering an exhibition space. The black and yellow coloring greets us with its boldness. We meet it half-way, the paintings are silent but at the same time they are projecting some kind of strange energy. We hesitate. Should we move right, left or just stay still? We move closer and examine the coat of red paint dissolving itself into green. We are framing with our eyes the essence of painting – brushstroke and color in their clarity and fullness. We step back and a red eye presents itself. It pulls us in, to an oil-scented landscape.

Of course we can talk about Martin's paintings. Of course they can help us verbalize references to the history of art. Find the time periods with which they are flirting. We can wax lyrical about their randomness or just as easily argue about their strict construction. We can see emerging figural motives that are being abstracted. We can also observe certain markings, their repetition and variation. For example the authors initials often in large scale, not ment as a signature but as a part of the overall composition. Floating through space, sometimes even becoming a one singular component and that's not even mentioning the ever-present and repeating symbol of a line-grid. Even the reduced color palette invites different interpretations. Black and yellow are far from each other. Just like love and hate. But despite that they share, in these painted surfaces, some kind of mutual aggression, that forms an assault on our sight. But at the same time we feel a harmony that is brought on by the taming of the aggression using the right-angled order of the frames. The installation of the paintings on plywood is supposed to bring us closer to the authors experience. It is created everyday by him drawing on a wooden table in his studio. Recreating this visual situation is crucial because it is what the author wants to relocate to the context and space of a gallery. The spacial context is just as important as a singular painting in the authors and also our perception. The exhibit becomes not a sum of its parts but a sum of reflections (like the spacial one). The landscape of reflections that is created this way is much more immersive. It can pull us in and break our detachment. Yes we can read it but should we?

History is defined by the relationship between literal and visual culture. The clash between them is the clash of continual logic and magical looping. Vilém Flusser said that the time of the image is the time of the eternal return of itself. It appears that Martin achieves this with his obsessive freeing of painterly gestures. It is important to realize this while walking through the exhibition space. You can read the past, the present and the future here but the paintings represent a kind of timelessness that we can immerse ourselves in. So let us avert our eyes from this context. Throw it away and see the black and yellow jungle before us.

Curated by František Fekete

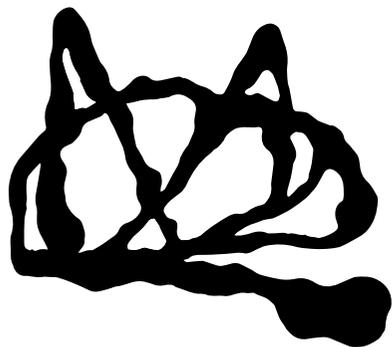
MARTIN LUKÁČ

1989

Piešťany, Slovakia

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SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

“Call me country”, Tönnheim Gallery, Madrid, 2024

“Rolling Thunder”, Výstavní síň
Sokolská 26, Ostrava, 2023

“Battlefield”, Galerie NOD, Prague, 2023

As Good As I Once Was, Erika Deak
Gallery, Budapest, 2022

When The Love Factors High, Dot
Contemporary, Bratislava, 2022

Martin Lukáč at Tyler Wood Gallery New York, 2021

“No Escape” at Collectors Agenda, Vienna, 2021

“Nevermind” at The Cabin (Los Angeles) CA 2019

Mann in Flammen at Footshop
Warehouse Prague, 2019

I'd rather be with you at Duve Berlin, 2019

Aww Yeah! at Nevven Gallery Gothenburg, 2019

If on a winter's night a traveller at
The Court in Pescara, 2018

MacGyver at Photoport Gallery
(Bratislava, Slovakia), 2017

Two Hands and a Magnifying Glass at
Fait Gallery (Brno, CZ), 2016

No Love all Hate, 35M² Gallery, (Prague,
Czech Republic), 2016

SELECTED DUO SHOWS

Interpreter's Booth, an exhibition in two chapters
by, Anu Vahtra and Martin Lukáč at Chimera-
Project Gallery Budapest (HU), 2018

Roel van Der Linden & Martin Lukáč, New York
Denim 85' De Vishal, Haarlem (NL), 2017

Interpreter's Booth with Anu Vahtra at
Lucie Drdova Gallery (CZ), 2017

Bon Appétit With David Krňanský at Ivan
Gallery Bucharest (RO), 2016

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

“The Cuteness Factor”, Ludwig
Múzeum, Budapest, 2023

The Glass Bead Game at MAMOTH. 2021–2022

“GOOGOL” at Artemis Gallery, Lisbon, 2021

Shattered Speech at Grove Collective, London, 2021

“NOSZTRÓMO” AT ASHES/ASHES
(NEW YORK CITY) NY 2019

I ain't Though at Kunstraum Ortloff in Leipzig, 2019

Les Copains D'abord! at Singular Art
Gallery in Nijmegen NL, 2019

AMARETTO at Villa Vertua Masolo. Milan Italy, 2019

“Collectors Choice” at Eduardo Secci
Contemporary (Florence, IT), 2018

“Connected by the Hand” at Henie Onstand
Kunstsenter (Oslo, NO), 2018

*As If A Field Could Become Some Dream' No
Place gallery (Columbus Ohio USA)*

Den Moderne Kunstalon at Vestijyllands
Kunstpavillon (DK), 2018

“20 cm from the ground” at L21 (Palma,
Spain, ES), 2017–2018

Paper Cuts, curated by Kristian
Day, Tripp Gallery, London, UK

“We are the ones volume 1.” At Carlsberg Byens
Galleri& Kunstsalon (Copenhagen,DK), 2017

Selected Works Bech Risvig Collection at Huset for
Kunst & Design, Holstebro, Denmark, 2017

“Decisions,Decisions” California institute
of the arts, (CA), 2017

“Jeff Koons Recommends: After Shit Falls” at
Kers Gallery (Amsterdam NL), 2017

Dog.Piss.Protection.Attachments., I: Project
space, Beijing, (China), 2016

BLACK HOLE GENERATION SHOWS (BHG)

Kings are Back at The Dot project (London ENG), 2017

Pure Hate at Nevan Contempo (Prague CZ), 2016

Nuance of freshness at Gallery Leto (Warsaw PL), 2016

STUDIES

2009–2013, B.A, Faculty of fine arts,
Technical University Košice
Contemporary painting studio,
head of department,
doc. akad.mal. Adam Szentpétery,
Mgr.art. Ján Vasilko

2013–2016, M.A, Academy of Arts Architectue and Design
Prague, painting, MgA. Jiří Černický, MgA. Marek Meduna.

2014, intership at Academy Of Fine Arts in Prague
Doc. Vladimír Skrepl, Jiří Kovanda.

2015, intership at Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig/
Hochschule fuer Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig Prof. Astrid
Klein, Dr. Ralf Hartmann

RESIDENCIES

La Brea Studio Residency (Los Angeles) 2019
Penthouse art residency (Harlan Levey projects x NH Hotel
Bloom) (Brussels, BE), 2018
BANSKÁ ST A NICA, Slovakia, 2017

AWARDS & GRANTS

9th Prize of art critique for young painting, 2016
Galerie Kritiku, Prague, Czech Republic