



Marcin Cienski

9 Dec 2016 — 22 Jan 2017 at the Envoy enterprises in New York, United States



Marcin Cienski, I am Not Going to Please You, Exhibition view. Courtesy of envoy enterprises

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Known in the international art world for his darkly romantic, humorous and provocative paintings, Marcin Cienski introduces the viewer to his personal demons and fears in his solo exhibition I am Not Going to Please You.

Currently, society as a whole is dealing with demons. An acute awareness of traditional cultural values clashing with contemporary values is leading to a number of conflicts. The political climate of the 30's is being revisited with the vulgarity of a reality show posing as entertainment. Manners of conduct, long considered the norm for decency and a civilized society, are being thrown out of the window by those meant to set an example.

Traditional culture is collapsing and politicians, for their personal gain, play on humankind's inherent fear of the unknown, by encouraging divisiveness, hatred and resentment towards people who think and act differently. Cienski states: "Fear often is our main motivation and life coach. It can push us to oppress individuals and destroy nations. Stigma of being different can turn a person into a demon in the eyes of an oppressor. Demons are also real, spiritual entities that can hunt us. Posses us. These days demons left their infernal home and now run in packs being more active, hungrier, and madder than



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ever.”

At a distance, the artist’s paintings look almost photographic in detail. Close-up, they illustrate a bold and dynamic brushwork resulting in a more ‘painterly’ look. Take a few steps away from the paintings and something happens. Through a great sense of depth and intrigue, Cienski introduces us to a universe marked by alienation, absurdity and irony. His strange cast of figures, engaged in mysterious actions, can be interpreted in many ways. Coal Mask (2016), for example, can be seen as an ironic, critical examination of the decline of the coal industry, leaving a dumbstruck worker with nothing but dirt on his face. Or it can be seen as a metaphor for the masks men take on in front of others. The narrative of Late Guest (2016) is riddled with double-takes. It is an alarming work, which appears to hint at a fiery apocalypse. A man, covered with a mask and a hood, seems to be posing for his portrait right upon entering the dark room of a house. One can but derive that the late guest is not exactly an invited much less a wanted guest. The icy silence and Gothic aspect of the painting is interlaced with today’s reality, even though the scene could be dating back a hundred years ago. Innocently called Take it off (2016), a man in a sinister and extremely deliberate stance, his face covered by a horse head, raises his right arm as if pointing to some imminent doom. Lance (2016), a bearded man in a skull mask, is portrayed using the "be aware that you are about to die ' motif from the Baroque period. By darkening the shadows and transfixing Lance in a blinding shaft of light, the work is reminiscent of Caravaggio's tenebrism.

And then there are the frightening paintings of actual demons. Regardless of the actual subjects, Cienski’s paintings are exquisitely made in the old master tradition. They are beautiful with a cruel edge. They exude absolute mystery. Through the enigmatic rituals in which fiction and reality mingle, the bizarre alienation and ominous tension, the viewer becomes a lonely wanderer in the artist’s landscapes of desolation, but also a receptacle of all the suffering and misery of the world.

Marcin Cienski (Poland, 1976) is a painter living and working in Pennsylvania. He graduated from the Fine Arts Academy in Krakow, Poland. The artist has exhibited in institutions such as the Kunstverein Tiergarten in Berlin, Germany; Museum Abtei in Liesborn, Germany and Kunsthalle Rostock in Rostock Germany as well as in commercial galleries in Norway, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

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Opening hours

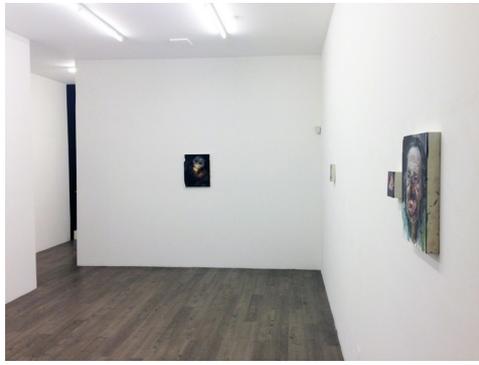
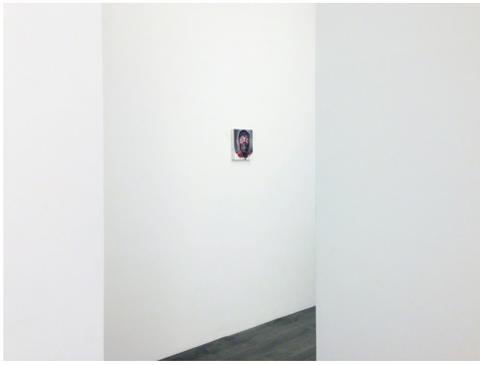
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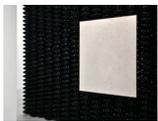
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Captions

1. Marcin Cienski, I am Not Going to Please You, Exhibition view. Courtesy of envoy enterprises
2. Marcin Cienski, I am Not Going to Please You, Exhibition view. Courtesy of envoy enterprises
3. Marcin Cienski, I am Not Going to Please You, Exhibition view. Courtesy of envoy enterprises

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