



Installation view of *Blue Is the Decayed Pink*, Piotr Janas  
Image: Philip Reed, Courtesy of Thomas Erben Gallery, New York

## Piotr Janas' 'Blue Is the Decayed Pink' revisits the human body through surrealism

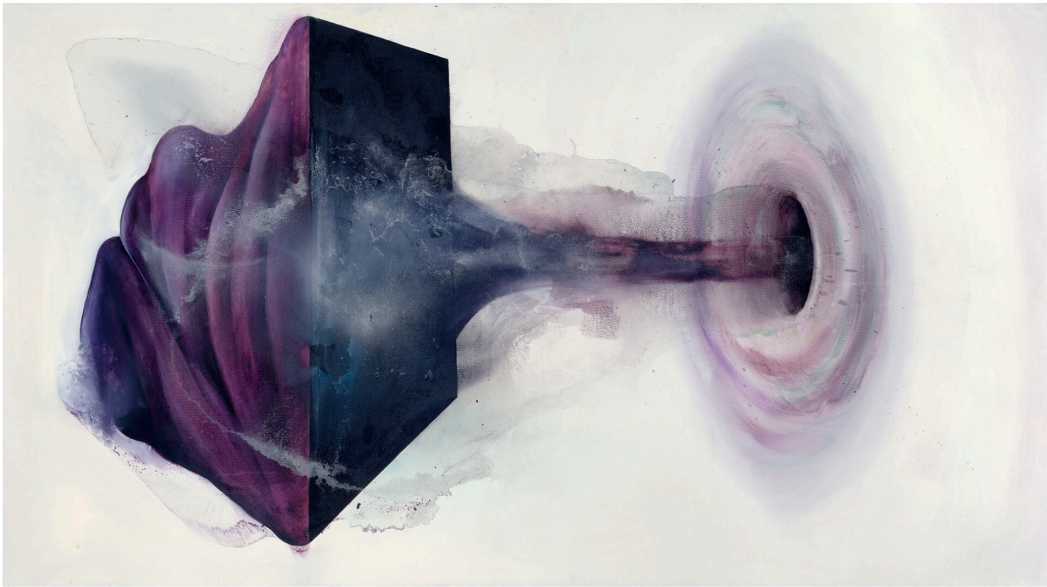
The Polish painter's exhibition *Blue Is the Decayed Pink* at Thomas Erben Gallery features paintings and video work created to accentuate the visceral quality of human body.

by Dilpreet Bhullar | Published on : Jun 02, 2022

The Polish painter Piotr Janas' first exhibition *Blue Is the Decayed Pink* at **Thomas Erben Gallery, New York**, encompasses paintings created between 2008 and 2020. Janas' paintings lie at the intersection of bio morphism and modernist abstraction language, which carry a hint of late-surrealist aesthetic – an extension of the Polish avant-garde of the '60s and '70s. The vast expanse of **surrealism** gives wide wings to creative imagination where the artist has the liberty to do anything and everything. Having tutelage under Prof. Jerzy Tchorzewski, the paintings offer a tactile reflection on the conditions of post-industrial life that took a toll on the human body and mind alike. Brimming with profound visceral quality, the canvas translates to be a physiognomy in the hands of Janas – it bleeds, bends and withers. The paintings if exude decadence also epitomise the will to resist the complete annihilation of the human self.

In an interview with STIR, Janas talks about the duality shared between body and canvas, "For me, the canvas is not necessarily a rectangle one can simply cover in paint. It is like a piece of the human body that can be explored in many different ways (stretch, puncture, and kiss). The rectangular shape of the canvas is not a window to a different universe but just an object." Furthermore, the title of the **exhibition** raises the curiosity of the audience to know more about its coming into being. Sharing a response to such interests, Janas elucidates, "My works are strictly connected to the human body. At some point, I realised that almost all the colours I use throughout my work, with the exception of white and black, are shades of pink, which relate in an apparent manner to the human body. Other colours, such as different shades of green and blue, help me conceptualise the state of the body and manifest its evanescence. The background in my works is usually white; black is used to shape non-physical objects."

The press release revisits the short story *In the Penal Colony* by the 19<sup>th</sup> century author Franz Kafka to draw a parallel between the futility of law and body. To briefly mention, on the imaginary prison island of the short story, a fancy execution device after functioning for a considerable duration of time carves the text of the law into the skin of the accused. The intense pain endured by the body is equivalent to the moment of quasi-religious epiphany, only to come to realise that the law is nothing more than the power of fate. Like every piece of the object, the machine succumbs to the cycle of decay. It continues to function, yet it falls short to inculcate the mystical experience among the victims.



Untitled, 2019, Oil and lacquer on canvas

*Image: Courtesy of Piotr Janas, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw, and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York*

The existential crisis kernel of the works of Kafka was a response to the absurdity of modern life where the political state and institutions cloaked by absolutism failed to be the upholder of morality. With the exhibition, Janas cajoles the viewers to leave their zones of comfort. "Not everything needs to be cool. Not everything needs to bring joy and pleasure. Not everything has to be a professional product," mentions the artist. The abstract nature of law propounded by Kafka saw its manifestation in Jonas's paintings where the body is nothing more than a sum of flesh and blood. As the ideals of law collapse in the story of Kafka, the figures of Janas too slip into the field of contradiction. On the verge of being aversive and attractive, the figures in Janas' paintings disclose the predicament of a modernist life.