

Mitja Tušek

Avec omega, pomme, haricot, cornichon, rien, bouteille

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Press release



Mitja Tušek
DSC2112001, 2021 (detail)
Acrylic on canvas
120 x 90 cm
MTU026 1

Xippas Geneva

Rue des Sablons 6
1205 Geneva, Switzerland

Tuesday to Friday:
10am to 1pm and 2pm to 6.30pm
Saturday: 12pm to 5pm

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Opening on March 12 from 6pm to 9pm, on the occasion of Nuit des Bains.

Xippas Geneva presents *Avec omega, pomme, haricot, cornichon, rien, bouteille*, Mitja Tušek's first solo exhibition at the gallery in Geneva. The exhibition brings together two recent groups of paintings that extend key questions running through the artist's work since the 1980s: the materiality of painting, the instability of the image, and the fragility of identity.

The first group presents clusters of faces emerging from a dense pictorial field. Each canvas reveals a small society of figures that overlap, conceal and merge with one another. The portraits arise from a surface of smeared, poured or knife-spread paint, where the figure appears only to waver again, caught within a material that seems both to reveal and to engulf it.

Each face is constructed from nine black circles of varying size, often overlapping, which form the elements of the face. This structure echoes Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where both Paradise and Hell are organised into nine spheres. In Dante, these orbs are inhabited by saints and sinners; in Tušek's paintings, each face appears to contain its own mixture of vices and virtues. While each figure possesses its own complexion, all share the same space, that of the canvas, and the same structural logic, that of the circle.

This coexistence can be related to the concept of biocenosis formulated by the biologist Karl Möbius. In his studies of oyster beds in the nineteenth century, Möbius showed that one must consider not an isolated species but the entire community of organisms sharing and interacting within a given environment. The faces painted by Tušek thus form a kind of pictorial ecosystem, a network of individual presences coexisting within the same visual field and structured by their relationships.

These bodiless heads appear as floating presences, fragments of humanity caught in the contemporary flow of images. They may evoke mosaics of avatars or screenshots from virtual meetings, those familiar constellations of faces that populate today's digital interfaces. In this sense, the paintings seem to reflect the multiplication of images and the constant circulation of faces in our visual environment.

The second group of works presented in the exhibition adopts a different organisation. Alongside the clusters of faces appear various objects, including bottles, cigars, coins, a hammer, a cat, fruits and other symbols. Colour disappears in favour of black and white, emphasising the almost caricatural quality of compositions that oscillate between painting and drawing.

Unlike the works in which faces overlap until they dissolve, these compositions function more like visual meshes. The figures no longer cover one another but instead form a network that captures, in its interstices, eggs, tomatoes or other objects whose presence remains enigmatic. Painting here does not seek to stabilise meaning. Rather, it places signs in tension, blurs hierarchies and continually questions the very possibility of representation. Through these two groups of works, Mitja Tušek continues his exploration of a form of painting situated between figuration and abstraction, appearance and disappearance. The canvas becomes a shared space, a field of interactions in which faces, like the images that populate our everyday lives, exist in a precarious balance between singularity and dissolution.

Mitja Tušek (born in 1961 in Maribor, Slovenia) is a Slovenian artist who became a Swiss citizen and has been based in Brussels since the early 1990s. He studied at the *École supérieure d'art visuel* in Geneva in the 1980s and developed a demanding painterly practice that explores the limits between figuration and abstraction. Through processes of layering and erasure, he constructs dense surfaces in which the image emerges, disappears and transforms.

His work has been presented internationally since the early 1990s. He exhibited at Galerie Nelson in Paris in 1991, participated in documenta IX in Kassel in 1992, and presented the exhibition *Quelconque* at the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona in 1993. He later exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1998 and at Kohn Turner Gallery in Los Angeles in 2000. More recently he presented *Wait and See* at La Centrale for Contemporary Art in Brussels in 2025.

His works are held in major public collections including FRAC Poitou-Charentes, FRAC Bretagne, MAMCO Geneva, the Dhondt-Dhaenens Museum in Belgium and the Bonnefantenmuseum in the Netherlands.