

Althuis Hofland Fine Arts

Earned Never Given

Lukas Luzius Leichtle

11 December - 8 January, 2022

As our largest organ which both plays an important immunity role as well as holding together everything we recognize and define as human form, skin presents itself as the focal point of Lukas Luzius Leichtle's painterly practice. His interest in portraying subjects in exaggerated, sometimes theatrical poses and often concealing their faces in some manner, is informed by the idea of presenting the ambivalence and sensitivity of that exterior, as well as poetically referring to its relationship with our psyche. This is done through an intricate, slow, and focused technique that continuously shifts between paint application and scraping, meticulously constructing a well-rounded image full of unobtrusive marks and traces. Reminiscent of the tender tissue enclosing our muscles, bones, and organs, yet dehumanized through the consistent choice of abiotic hues, the work steps into the abstract spheres while being contained within highly realistic outlines.

And such an interest in the abstraction of realism navigated Leichtle's focus towards the phenomenon of a cauliflower ear, an irreversible condition that follows a physical trauma, common with wrestlers, boxers, and martial artists. "I am interested in the deformation of this sensitive part of the body as a result of performed violence and masculinity. The link between internal processes having an effect and shaping the outer presence of an individual is particularly of interest to my practice as a painter," the artist explains, suggesting the connection between our intrinsic fragility and socially imposed or expected resilience. Linking these images to the idea of compression and performance, the works from *Earned Never Given* series celebrate these deformations as coded signs of toughness within a society in which values and concepts of success and identity are changing rapidly. "Recontextualizing the slogan and taking it from a hyper-masculine sport context into my painting practice, where the fragility of skin becomes evident through an exaggeration of texture potentially opens the opportunity for reflection," Leichtle explains about the connection of the title borrowed from an Instagram account showcasing cauliflower ears from which he selected most of the imagery. And although starting from the interest in the physical disfigurement and swelling as an indirect consequence of internal mechanisms, these explorations arguably culminate in the examples containing headgear. The addition of a manmade element creates a striking contrast of materiality, guiding and fixating the overall composition as well as emphasizing the said intent of abstracting the reality. At the same time, the desired shielding role of a headguard elevates the deformation aspect beyond the ear itself, transforming and enhancing the compression through its precautionary and protective function.

- Sasha Bogojev

Lukas Luzius Leichtle (b. 1995) is a German artist currently studying at Weißensee Kunsthochschule in Berlin. His recent exhibitions include Westbund Art Fair with Linseed projects, Shanghai, 2021 (solo) 'Spirit Resonance' at Samuele Visentin, London, 2021 (solo), 'Flesh' at New Child gallery, Brussels, 2021 (group)