

# NICODIM

Daniel Pitín

## The Mechanical Flowers

February 11 - April 1, 2017



The paintings of Daniel Pitín are firmly holding on to the eternal distinction between light and darkness. Light, dispersed from an invisible and ungraspable source focuses on the surface of the canvas, piercing through it and finding its way around and reflecting through numerous forms folded into the composition of the image somewhere between architecture, scenography and a vivid inner space. The play of light and darkness is thus the key element of formation of

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the space, its moods and variability seemingly frozen in the static image on the canvas, yet still breathing with fresh inputs coming from its extraneous environment and ocular abilities of its viewers. The given matter, building blocks of the content stays in the constant flux of transfiguration, with shades of approaching light, through the light, as light itself. Pitín is thus touching field of prefigurations of his work, its main referential points in Czech avant-garde photography of František Drtikol, Jaromir Funke or Josef Sudek, in tradition of cubist painting and even deeper in history, as in baroque paintings through the technique of chiaroscuro, based on strong distinctions between tonal variations, therefore conceiving a dramatic, almost theatrical visual feeling.

*...the response to light is a response to all the possibilities of life itself.*

It may seem as if the language Pitín is utilising lies deep within the abstraction of forms, but don't be confused by the first glimpse of perception since all you see is as far from the concept of abstract painting as possible, with a slightly more careful second look all the included proposes a clear statement of meaning, function and their representation, despite the fact that the depicted shows a strongly outwardly character. However, we can boldly claim that Pitín's language is one of a certain whimsical abstraction without any specifically abstracted forms involved, such language being closer to an expression through sign systems and analogies, through referential hints and clues which allows us to decode given messages from a certain focal point. One of Pitín's long-term allusions is to the work of Alfred Hitchcock whose main instrument was the expression through signs. Let's just take as an example the horrifying idea of *Birds* as an unprecedentedly twisted apparition of the Other in the physical form of the most natural element imaginable, of creatures we are used to connect with singing, with the celebration of life and beauty, living in the sky, just slightly below the angels. Suddenly these innocent creatures turn into a manifestation of all our fears. The explanation in Hitchcock's case could be quite simple, given the period of escalated Cold War, one year after the Cuban Missile Crisis. Pitín's analogies are more complex, as our fears nowadays are. The strategy implemented is the same though. With numerous intertwined conflicts of our era, where shadows are thrown and mirrored on a large scale, it's quite impossible to highlight one specific idea of the Other since we can't possibly know what the Other is. People and situations are emerging out of distant parts of the world, our neighbourhoods, our governments, media, the Internet...just name it. Thus it is important to notice that the idea of a certain fear is no longer as simple as it may seem, fear or better put anxiety is not only bipolar but multipolar at least. Veneers of information and meanings are overlapping and merging, nothing formulates an understandable, easily readable message. In a similar fashion, Pitín's paintings propose an open variety of readings.

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*By day fantastic birds flew through the petrified forests, and jewelled alligators glittered like heraldic salamanders on the banks of the crystalline rivers. By night the illuminated man raced among the trees, his arms like golden cartwheels, his head like a spectral crown...*

A significant shift in terms of Pitín's painting technique is the fact that he has been for the first time using real life models for the depiction of figures on his canvases. This shift from the creation of post-representational image out of an already existing representation by the medium of photography or film shows a necessity to emphasize the humanity, its physical presence, its materiality and dimensions. Not only the figures are painted on the bases of real people, also every scenographic or architectural element has its basis in physical precursors. Such a development of painterly attitude demonstrates a certain fatigue from the digitally induced disconnection of our era of the mass virtual reproduction.

**...an actual proliferation of the sub-atomic identity of all matter. It's as if a sequence of displaced but identical images of the same object were being produced by refraction through a prism, but with the element of time replacing the role of light.**

Another recent project of Daniel Pitín *The Cloud Cartography*, focused on the idea of the impossibility to pierce through the vast fabric of digital channels we are utilising in a quotidian manner. His video, a series of paintings and architectural interventions going *through the glass darkly* shows a proposition of how to navigate the Internet as if walking in the maze of sewers under our streets. This time the focus is much broader. Encompassing a multitude of layers of unresolved riddles of our time. The fear of the Other being transmuted into the expectation of something beautiful to happen.

The Mechanical Flowers are focusing on the friction between nature and materialised inventions of the human mind. Showing an unseen process of dispersion of light through a multiplicity of prisms created on their crystalline surfaces which are covering, infesting and enriching at the same time, physical bodies subjected to forces of their environments throughout the passage of time. Forming projections of spaces with tangible qualities within the enclosed capsules of the medium of the painting. The materiality is questioned and challenged by Pitín's compulsion to reach its other side, not only in terms of the physical dimensions, but also its temporality. The Mechanical Flowers promise an augmented possibility of a touch beyond the borders of visual perception. Painterly qualities are subtler than ever before in Pitín's oeuvre, smoothly allowing the light to come through and open the space to this shifted way of understanding and perception.

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*The crystal trees among them were hung with glass-like trellises of moss. The air was markedly cooler, as if everything was sheathed in ice, but a ceaseless play of light poured through the canopy overhead. The process of crystallisation was more advanced. The fences along the road were so encrusted that they formed a continuous palisade, a white frost at least six inches thick on either side of the palings. The few houses between the trees glistened like wedding cakes, white roofs and chimneys transformed into exotic minarets and baroque domes. On a law of green glass spurs, a child's tricycle gleamed like a Faberge gem, the wheels starred into brilliant jasper crowns.*

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Quotes from J. G. Ballard's The Crystal World

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**Daniel Pitín** (1977, CZ) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in the studio of classical painting and afterwards in the studio of conceptual media. Pitín is creating visually complex paintings with thick imagery and subtle references to canonical art works, architecture and aesthetics of late modernism while using techniques known to history of art from baroque painting to its reconfiguration by the language of avant-garde movements of the early 20th century. The dark scale of his palette, etheric figures and surreal structures, which are simultaneously hiding and revealing its actors is filling his oeuvre with moodiness and a breath of unsaid contents. He describes his paintings as fragments of narratives and dreams through which he explores the "personal and collective memory of known places". Principles formulating his painterly work are also manifested through the media of collage, video and film, found material playing an essential role in this process, encompassing the family archive and as well as internet sources, same as historic film material, specifically with references to the work of Alfred Hitchcock, film noir and Czech new wave films from 60s. His interest shifts in between the humanity and its creation, between structures and their content.