

GOWEN CONTEMPORARY

GENEVA Switzerland

MARTA ZGIERSKA (POLAND, 1987)

BLUSH

September 27 - November 17, 2019

Opening reception: Thursday September 26, from 6pm, in the presence of the artist

Vernissage Art en Vieille-Ville, Genève

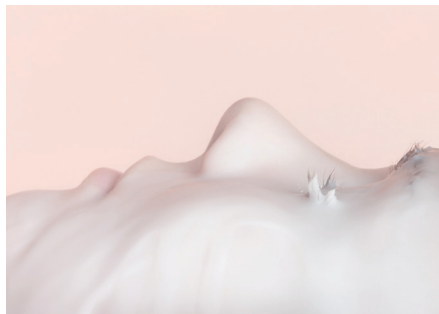


Post series (2013-2016)

isolated in the theatricality of the scenography. Far from the Greek tragic masks or the expressivity of the 19th century, Marta Zgierska's masks arise from the paradoxical ambiguity between power and fragility.

The *Afterbeauty* series (2018) is made from discarded beauty masks. The performance is pushed to the extreme by a repetitive process and a ritual overlapping of multiple layers of beauty product on the skin, repeated to the limits of the physically bearable, until it becomes harmful to the skin. The photographic result is the image of a colourful material shaped in an apparently abstract form. The *Afterbeauty* masks, similar to envelopes of flesh, whose ambiguity is strengthened by the enlarged scale, dispose the viewer towards an aesthetic perception and delight while questioning the notion of feminine beauty.

Through the *Votive Figure* (2019) series, Marta Zgierska refers to the tradition of religious offering made in fulfillment of a vow or to seek healing or protection. In the religious popular culture such representations often take the form of modeled reproductions of injured body parts or organs and



Votive Figure series (2019)

Marta Zgierska began her artistic activity in 2012, after graduating in photography from the National Film School in Lodz and earning a master degree in theatre and journalism from the Marie Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin.

Her best-known series, entitled *Post* (2013-2016), refers to her personal experience following a serious car accident in 2013, which led to several months of psychotherapy and rehabilitation. This body of work was awarded the prestigious Prix HSBC pour la Photographie in 2016 and has since been featured in numerous major international exhibitions. The *Post* series, inhabited with dreams and obsessions in an atmosphere of suspended silence, invents a visual language and an aesthetic that has become the artist's signature.

Marta Zgierska's own body is often the starting point for her creative action as well as the raw material in her artistic practice, through performing steps that allow her to bring together the memory of the traumatic experience, the character of the photographic medium and the confrontation with reality.

Her next works are created from shots taken through long and exhausting performances involving the application of different materials on the face or body. These materials, including plaster, fabric, beauty masks and hot wax, charged with semantic content, generate unconventional self-portraits in the form of masks



Afterbeauty series (2018)

the wax commemorates spiritual help with a particular issue – failing eyesight, fertility, arthritic limbs. This traditional content is subtly displayed by Marta Zgierska in her narrative. By covering her own body in a wax shell, the artist subverts the religious models becoming herself a votive figure and suggesting a sacrifice of her body to a new God: Beauty. This way the artist explores the canons of beauty and undermines the pressure that the contemporary society exerts on the woman's image.

Zgierska intentionally uses a very aesthetic visual language connected with the cosmetics industry and contemporary forms of communication like Instagram, in order to play with the viewer. By the contrast between the beautiful appearance of her works and the heavy, raw, physical process hidden under a pretty coating, she invites us to reflect on the superficiality of the modern human perception.

Marta Zgierska was born in 1987 in Lublin, she lives and works in Warsaw (Poland). **Selected solo exhibitions:** (current) Gowen Contemporary, Geneva, Switzerland (2019 and 2016); Artist of the Year, DongGang Museum of Photography, South Korea (2019); Galerie Intervalle, Paris, France (2019 and 2017); Biala Gallery, Lublin, Poland (2019); Fort Institute of Photography, Warsaw, Poland (2018); Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki, Finland (2017); Filter Space Gallery, Chicago, USA (2017); Reminders Photography Stronghold Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2017); Tampere Art Museum, Backlight Photo Festival, Finland (2017); Encontros da Imagem International Photography Festival, Braga, Portugal (2016); Benaki Museum, Athens Photo Festival, Greece (2016); FotoLeggendo Festival, Rome, Italy (2016); Festival Circulation(s), Paris, France (2016); Malmo Fotobiennial, Sweden (2015). **Selected group exhibitions:** (current) Fotogalerie Wien, Austria (2019); PGS National Gallery of Art in Sopot, Poland (2019); Riga Photography Biennial, Latvia (2018); Museum Dr. Guislain, Gent, Belgium (2017). **Selected awards:** Zgierska was the recipient of numerous grants and awards including Artist of the Year, DongGang Museum of Photography, South Korea (2019); Prix HSBC pour la Photographie (2016). She was also nominated for the prestigious Foam Paul Huf Award (2018).

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