

Victims and Victors – Marcus Jansen

Gestural painter Marcus Jansen reflects on the complexities of being.

December 27th, 2021



Informed by his military background, Marcus Jansen's paintings employ the symbolic frame of historic military dress or familiar war images as canvases within canvases. The interior story in some cases describe the effect of war physically and mentally on what we might see as distant archetypes, the soldier, the leader, the hero. Parts of these figures in his paintings are incomplete or completed in ways that describe a variety of composite life experiences, graffiti, maps, classic military portraits, and something unknowable. A common thread to Jansen's work is the obscured faces of the characters perhaps a statement on the artist's experiences of a being a 'soldier' returning home to a society that either expects a seamless transformation into a 'worker' or within a safe category of 'victim or victor'. A process that in many cases glosses individual experience in suppressed or conformist terms. Jansen's melange of painting styles create complex narrative worlds, where recognisable things disintegrate into washes of colours, gestural brushwork or subtle mysteries of shadow and light. As viewers we are asked to question the familiar in what we see, familiarity without understanding in art and life coming across as shorthand for detachment or dismissal. The success of his paintings is in drawing us into the dialogue of what familiar symbols tell us with their silence, and what they bury.

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Marcus Jansen, Soldier with PTSD, 2021