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"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

THE IMAGISTIC AND EMOTIVE PUNCHINESS OF ROBERT JANITZ



Robert Janitz: "1001 Nights [+1]" installation view, Canada, NY

By **EDWARD WAISNIS** June 27, 2025

Robert Janitz makes the type of paintings that stimulate a yearning to look deeply and longer. Working with recognizable image models, he establishes signature abstract icons that offer nuanced reading. Hand-in-hand with this strategy Janitz's close consideration to his medium encourages sensation beyond the plentiful ocular gratification he provides.

Janitz employs with an amalgam of flour *, cold wax, and oil paint. The admixture in it's active (wet) state is semi-transparent, making it virtually invisible during application. This odd effect brings correlation to film emulsion with the characteristic that reveals of the image only revealed after execution . Operating in the blind, so to speak, also finds connection in printmaking, in particular the methods associated with lithography.

What the grit of flour contributes velvety surfaces evoking the organic lushness of moss. Janitz utilizes a wide-range set of tools—from brushes of varying widths to scrapers, squeegees and a notched implement that produces striated lines—to apply his custom medium. Janitz has concocted a range of low-key hues, with intermittent fluorescent flourishes, for the works in the show.

Janitz first gained attention with paintings that depicted muscular interlocking post and lintel structures that recalled architectural-adjacent strategies relied on by Modern, Minimal and Post-Minimalist sculptors (Tony Smith, Ronald Bladen, Carl Andre, and Richard Nonas all come to mind), industrial signage, as well as mind teaser interlocking wire puzzles.

Following stints in Frankfurt, Berlin and Paris, a decade in NYC, Janitz has since migrated to Mexico City. The artist's wanderlust is a strong element, playing out in the accrued cultural reflections that this yen for migration has afforded.

This exhibition focuses on paintings, and one handwoven wall hanging, that offer imagistic and emotive punchiness of an entirely different sort. Nearly all of the works are variations on Janitz's other recurring motif, namely a central mass that stands for either a human head, or the billowing eruptions from a volcano from which the 'smoke and ash' are being emitted. Placed along the bottom edge of the canvas are forms that read as the pseudo-volcano; alternately, the comparison to a likeness transforms them into shoulders.

In ascribing the title of the Persian classic tales of Scheherazade to this body of work, Janitz has embraced the exoticism of antiquity. Or, just maybe, he is simply tallying the number of days he has been in Mexico; a theory hinted to by the pointed addition of *[+1]* to designation.



Robert Janitz, "1001 Nights", 2025, oil, wax, flour on linen, 86 x 56 inches

Relying on an arch as framing device—harking to medieval and renaissance contrivances, as well as Russian icons—*1001 Nights* and *Melancholia*, both 2025, seem to stem from Janitz's earlier exhibition, *Carmina Burrata* (in 2022). Held at the deconsecrated church of San Carlo in Cremona, Italy where Janitz took the opportunity to play off the architecture feature in his careful installation with a viaduct redolent diagonal wall to hang his paintings on.



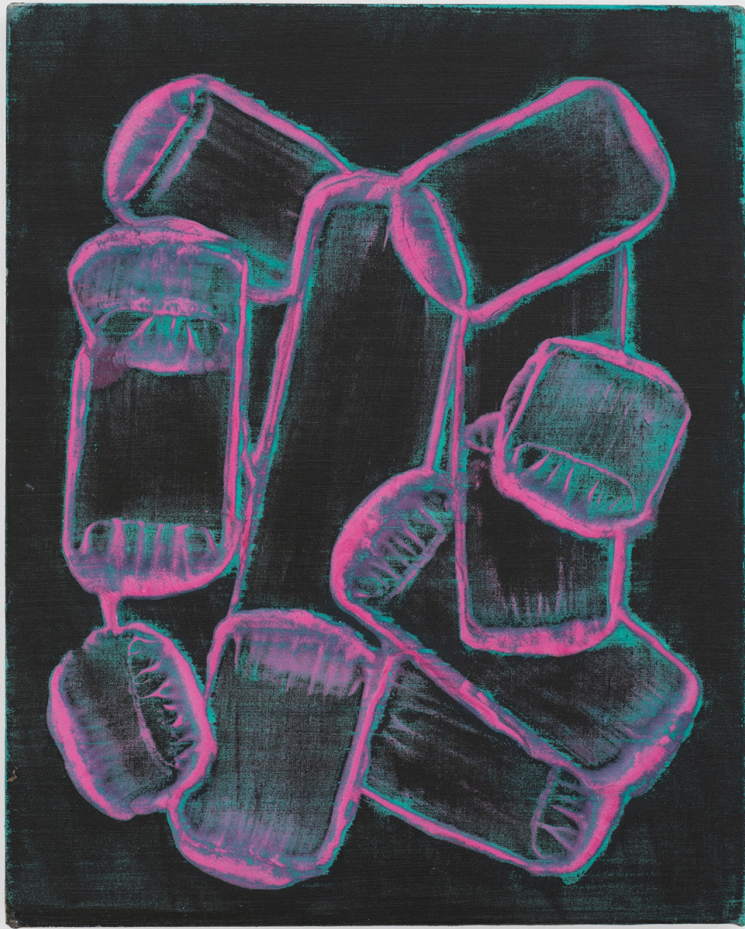
Robert Janitz, "Delicate Matter", 2025, oil, wax, flour on linen, 53.125 x 39.375 inches

Delicate Matters, 2025 is instilled with a sense of whimsy. The central 'figure' may well be portrait of a seventeenth century magistrate (or a barrister in current day Britain, for that matter) whose powdered coiffure has run havoc, becoming an obliterating, but enlivening, shambles.



Robert Janitz, "The Absolute Mind", 2025, handwoven tapestry, 48.75 x 35.5 inches

The sole non-painted work, *The Absolute Mind*, 2025, is a gorgeous handwoven tapestry that is instilled with a panoply from Janitz's elements, including chromatic shifts in both the fierce central 'brain' and the border surround. While the nap and pile mimics the fuzziness of the paintings.



Robert Janitz, "Studio Rats", 2025, oil, wax, flour on linen, 25 x 20 inches

Studio Rats, 2025 is another matter entirely. This diminutive canvas, executed with the same set of tools and materials, carries a theme entirely out of whack with the the proceedings. Against an inky black background shock pink and teal cluster of cells orbit, distinctive from microscopy, but these are not glass slide organisms. Rather, as the title clues, this is a cache of mobile phones gathered at a drop point outside of the solace of the reserved workspace; nodding to the slang term used to describe art students.



Robert Janitz, "The Appearance", 2025, oil, wax, flour on linen, 25.625 x 19.625 inches

Another work that steps away from the prescribed format, *The Appearance*, 2025 has a darkened field of regimented horizontal stripes on which the rosy garland of striated centrifugal swipes unfurl. Given the title, this aspirant to conjuring speaks more to the practitioners probings rather than to a mandala of mysticism.



Robert Janitz, "Afternoon by the Window", 2025, oil, wax, flour on linen, 55.125 x 43.25 inches



Robert Janitz, "Mayan Riveiera", 2025, oil, wax, flour on linen, 33.5 x 25.625 inches

Two paintings focus on shrouding that rings of Rene Magritte's enraptured couple (their heads swaddled in fabric) in *The Lovers* of 1929. *Afternoon by the Window* and *Mayan Riveiera*, both 2025, alternate between enrapturing gauzy sheer drapery to a bad hair day combover that verges on threatening, respectively.



Robert Janitz, "Masquerade in the Park", 2024, oil, wax, flour on linen, 25.625 x 19.625 inches

Then there is the jazzy take of *Masquerade in the Park* of 2024. This earlier iteration contains a 'head' full of a jumble of jostling components analogous to a searching mind.

Janitz has ventured into sculpture, from concrete benches that carried the swagger of Scott Burton's sculpture-cum-furniture pieces, to sheet aluminum pieces that are close cousins to Franz West, and volcanic stone pieces that fall under the rubric of Aztec archetypes. Additionally, he has trafficked in video and he has even contributed fabric design to a furniture retailer.

This multi-fronted artist is chiefly a painter, and, ultimately, it is his work in this discipline that has afforded him significant attention as well as direction that bodes well for the future of his practice. **WM**

* Janitz previously experimented with baking powder and has also been using ground glass of late.

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