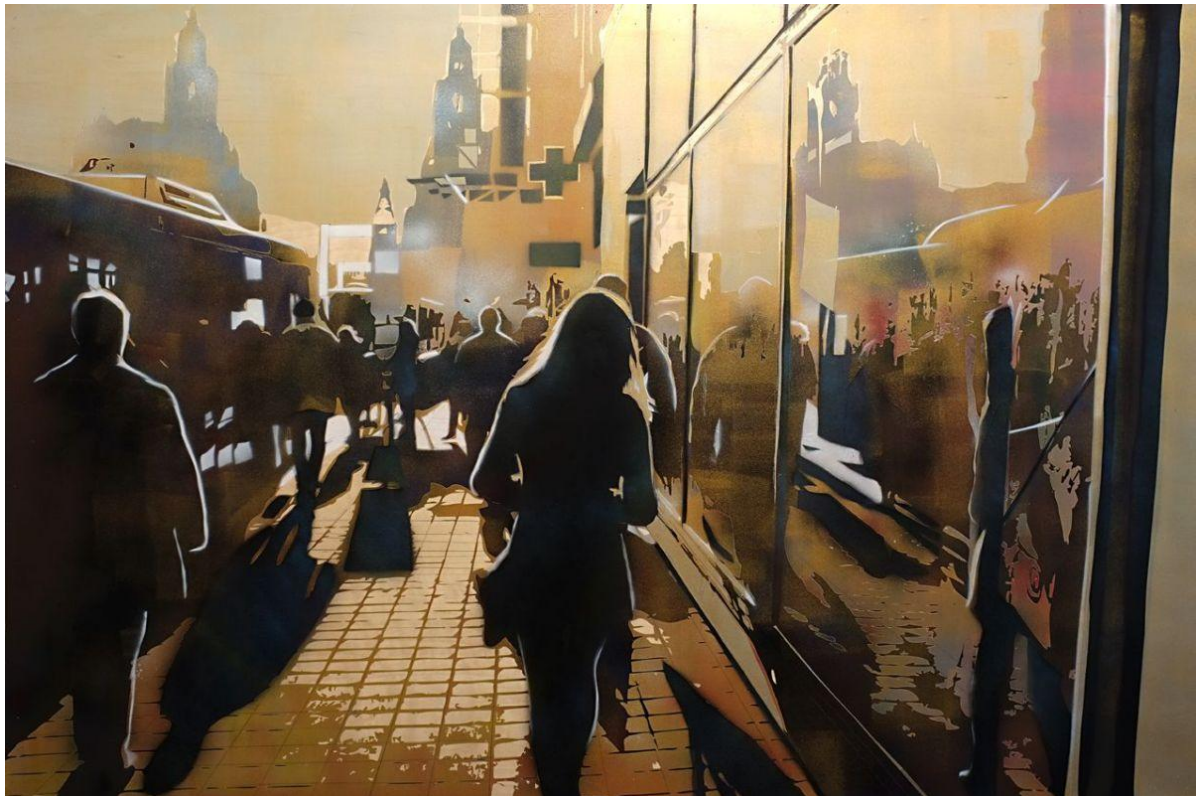


Dynamics of Perception

Thoughts on Zsombor Barakonyi's paintings

text: Ditta Tóth

When it comes to representing reality, art history, through its different periods, has offered an infinite number of examples. Various applied techniques – be it through the accentuation or omission of certain elements of the experiential world – can create illusions of reality in very different ways. On the receiving end, there has been an emerging interest in artwork that also reflects on itself, thereby pointing beyond the usual vantage points and decorative functions. Zsombor Barakonyi's realism is also defined by such considerations: his unique visual language offers viewers new levels of perceiving reality, in which, by overwriting conventional approaches, he builds a dialectic relationship between content and objectuality. His works are postmodern panel paintings depicting visions of metropolitan *flâneur*.



"Liberation Square" – acrylic on beechwood panel, 100x150x3,5 cm, 2017 © Zsombor Barakonyi

The mechanisms of Barakonyi's special thought structures are already revealed in the process of creating his works; his paintings attest to a mature, thought-tough artistic logic. After

graduating from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts and also earning a Doctor of Liberal Arts degree there, Barakonyi went on to win numerous awards and prizes. It was 10 years ago that he developed his unique style. To his foundations in art history and his professional skill, he adds boldly defined viewpoints that gravitate towards the transcendental, lending his works the capacity to not only reach viewers at the visual level, but also open them to other dimensions of perception. Any attempts at “copying” his signature method is problematic because, although it is traceable, it is not clear how the abstractive levels of reality can be set in motion and how the qualities of essential uniqueness can be brought forth. The depicted scene is always a snapshot, capturing a moment in the urban hubbub and commotion, which reveals itself through a model of perception whose anchoring points have been shifted into a new balance.



“Speedfreak” acrylic on beechwood panel, 75x150x3,5 cm, 2015 © Zsombor Barakonyi



“Unicorn Land” acrylic on beechwood panel, 75x150x3,5 cm, 2015 © Zsombor Barakonyi

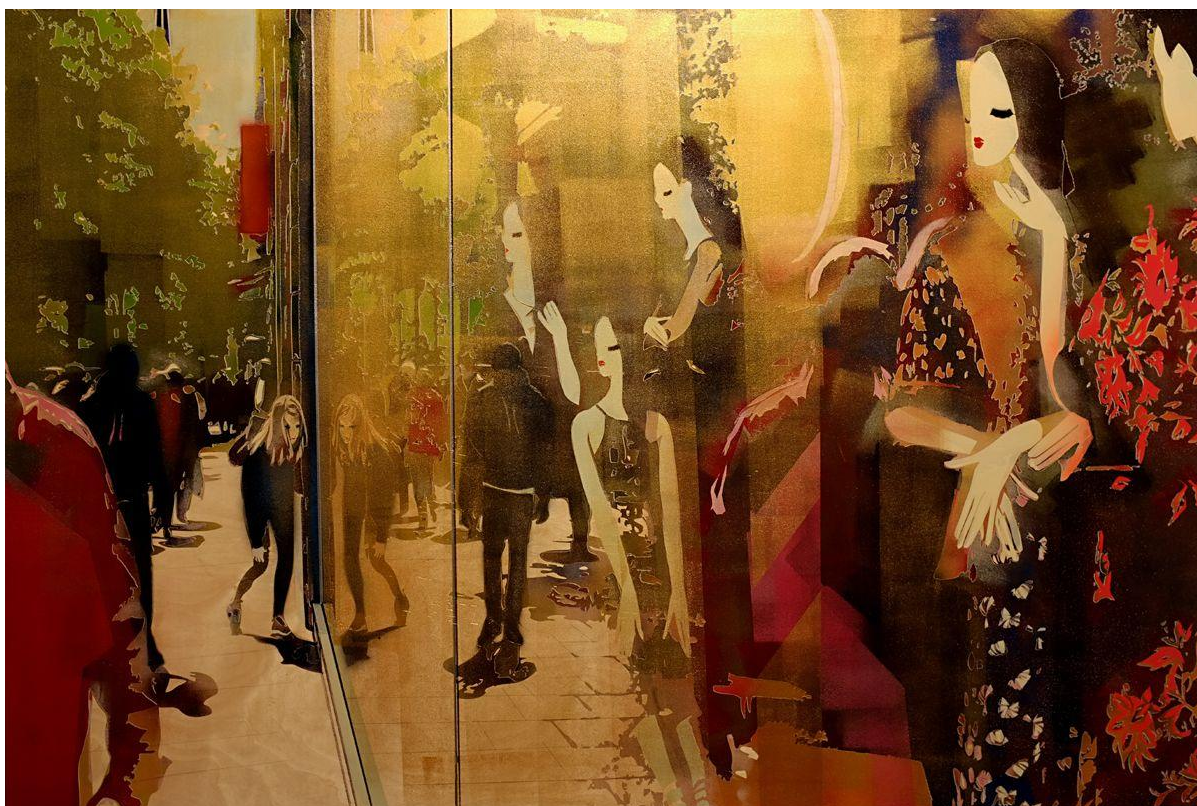


"Under the bridge" acrylic on beechwood panel, 50x75x3,5 cm, 2016 © Zsombor Barakonyi

Barakonyi projects one of his photos onto a wooden panel, which had been prepped with multiple layers of adhesive foil. He uses a sharp Japanese steel blade fixed in a pen barrel for cutting out the projected and carefully pre-drawn contours. These outlines break through the foil, also leaving marks on the wooden surface. But Barakonyi's conscious hand is always selective: only certain details are ultimately highlighted. His intentional samurai tactics of engagement employ the gesture of wounding to tear open in the material one of many possibilities, tuning the projected image to the given moment. The thus created gaps and slits acquire their own unique colour by roller-applied acrylic paint, followed by spray paint. (The use of grey is of special significance because it simultaneously invokes the surface priming practice of the renaissance and the virtual work surface of digital image editing programs.) The foil works as a filter or mask which opens the way for the imprints of various layers as well as abstract forms and figurative elements. It renders visible and records a given quality. Montaged islands of a few select colours make up the final painting – coming into contact with one another in some places and remaining separate in others – which condense into a kind of dreamlike vision. Some of Barakonyi's works are entirely without colour gradients; they are composed of spots and strong contrasts that deny plasticity and lend the entire image a two-dimensional feel. In such instances, optical space is produced merely from the lines of perspective offered by buildings and sidewalks. Thus, the imprint captures likeness only in its contours and forms, creating a reinterpretation, rather than a double, of the original photograph. Instead of reconstructing the original scene, it is taken as a basis, a point of departure, which, after some thought, is broken down into dualities and then rearranged into a new image according to new considerations of organization.

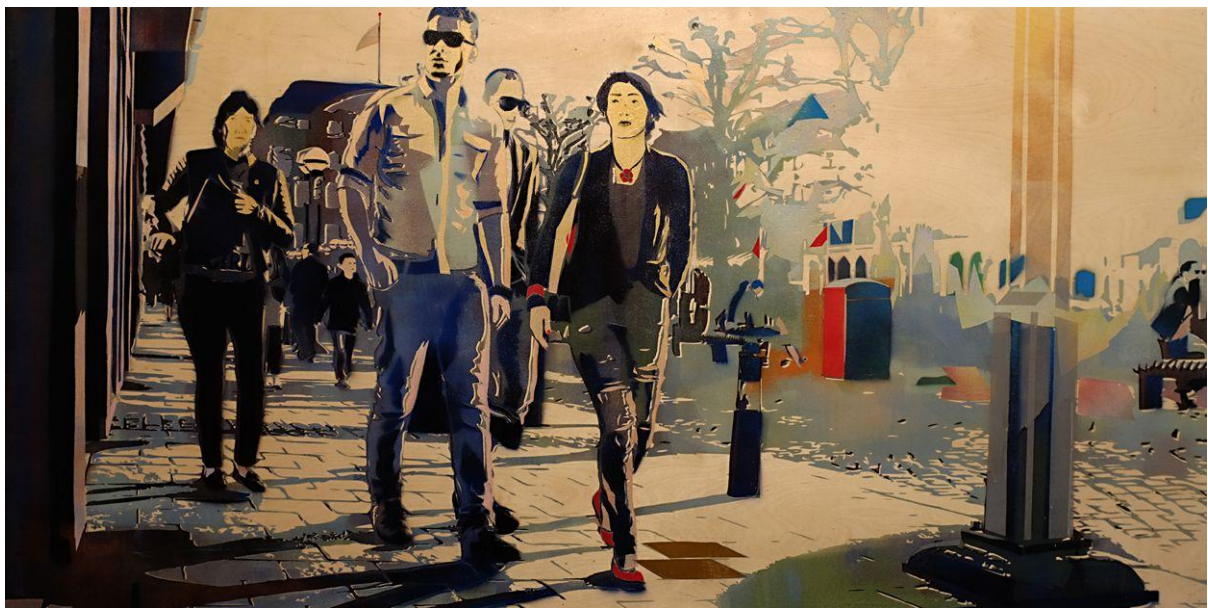


"Blue Ikarus" akril bükkfatáblán, 50x75x3,5 cm, 2016 © Zsombor Barakonyi

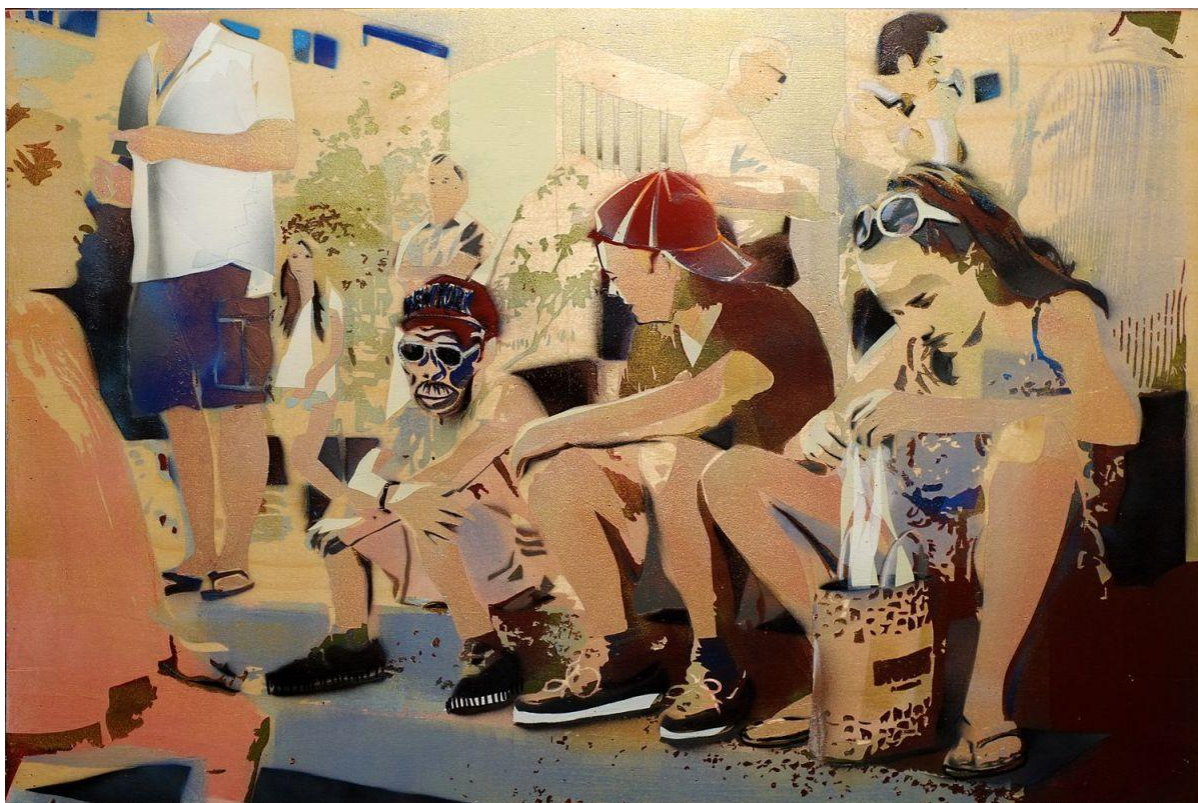


"Narcissa V.02" acrylc on beechwood panel, 100x150x3,5 cm, 2016 © Zsombor Barakonyi

Touching and keeping distance can be observed on other levels as well. The processes of preparation are characterized by the gesture of touch. The wooden panel that is worked by the carpenter is subject to a number of tactile effects. With the smoothing of the foil onto the surface, the aggressive act of incision, and the scraping up of stencil edges, the artist enters into direct contact with the material. The spraying of paint, however, takes place at a distance. Between paint-edges which touch in some places but not in others, the untreated wood surface remains visible, sometimes in rather large patches. These cracks and lines of fracture crisscross the entire panel, emphasizing the material nature of the creation process. In other words, the painted surfaces represent the visual image, which is fragmented by the unpainted zones where the work calls to us more as an object. Such a speculative confrontation between content and object forces viewers into a constant shifting of perspectives, thereby rendering the perceptual scheme even more complete.



"Deliberately and Peacefully" acrylic on beechwood panel, 75x150x3,5 cm, 2016 © Zsombor Barakonyi

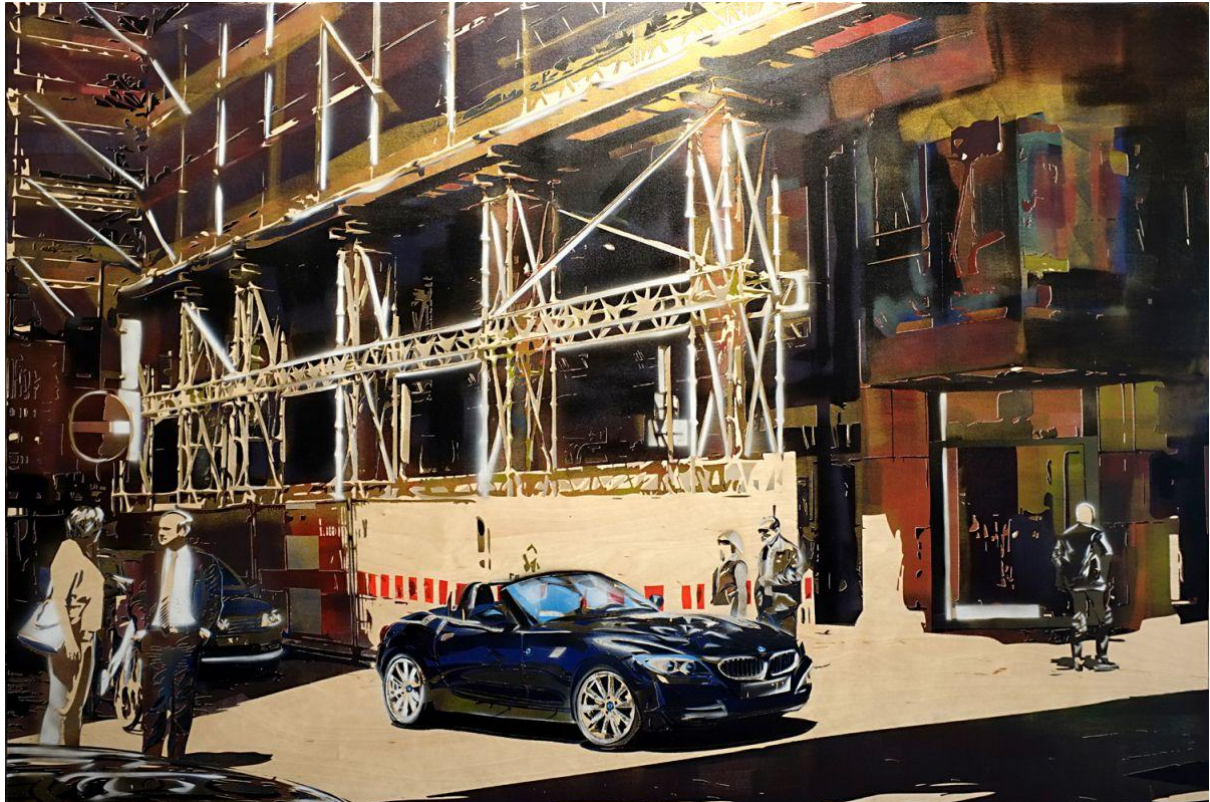


"I beg to differ" acrylic on beechwood panel, 50x75x3,5 cm, 2016 © Zsombor Barakonyi



"Liberation Square 1984, Remix Version" acrylic on beechwood panel, 50x75x3,5 cm, 2017 © Zsombor Barakonyi

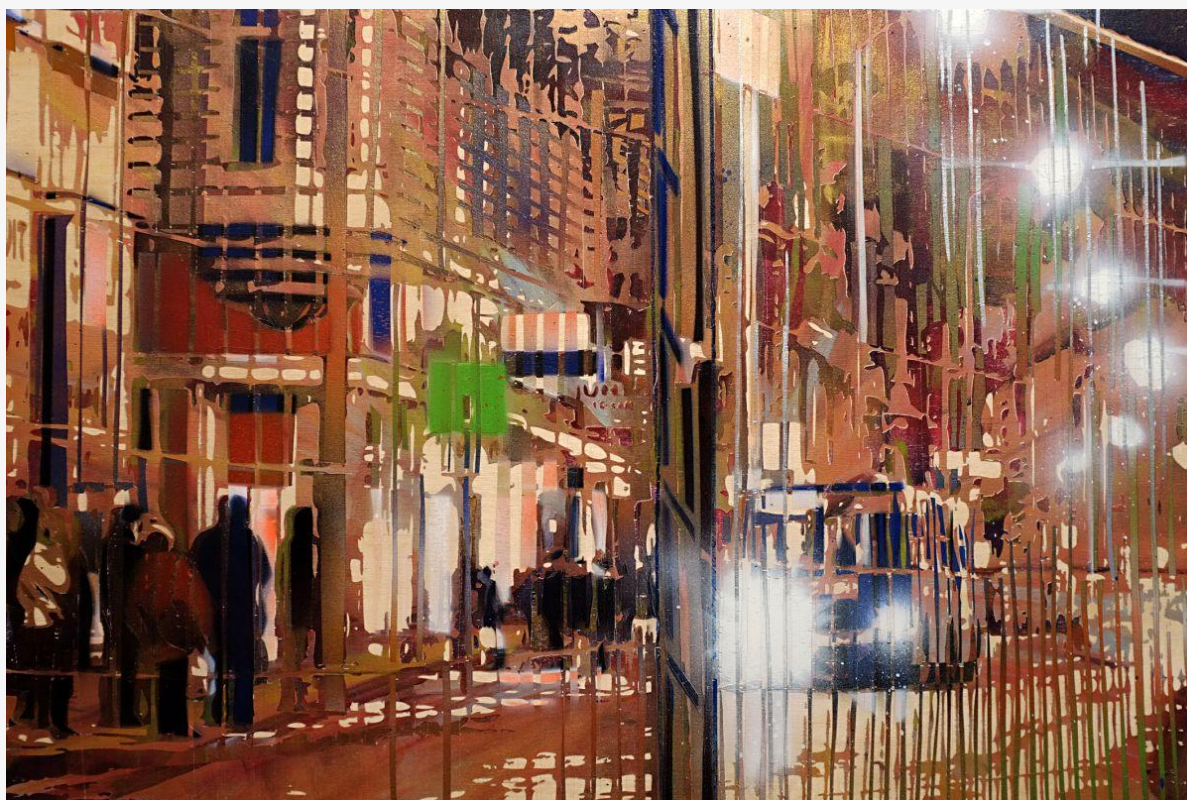
While Barakonyi also targets these components, it is not by subordinating them to the traditional visual language, but by using them to create new relationships between visual elements. With the help of monochrome bands and abstract forms, he erases and blurs the boundaries of individual objects. The foliage of trees blends with parts of architecture, shadows cast by vehicles or various reflections. The paintings are filled with a vibrant play-on-forms created by the shadows that gather in the irregularities of building facades and the folds of clothing. Light is placed in the focus of these artworks, as it dissolves the contours of buildings and appropriates bits of bodies and objects – as it informs optical situations. Barakonyi has a keen sense for overwriting certain details in the photographs, altering the dominance of its portrayed figures, thereby subverting the hierarchy between different segments of composition. In a space divided into slices and blocks of colour, some objects disappear while others are accentuated by strongly contrasted juxtapositions. The photographed people of the street lose their facial features, their clothing is often indistinguishable, thereby becoming mere silhouettes – secondary parts of the visual plane. The artist uses these tools to direct the viewer's gaze: at times focusing it on certain spaces, at other times diffusing it over the entire image surface. Zsombor Barakonyi, with a curious, experimenting attitude, reinterprets some of his earlier artworks every couple of years, erasing or accentuating different details. By making his selections of important and inconsequential components, he increases the intensity of his preferred version of reality. While the same perspectival dynamics operate in these variations, their effects are always different. Their creation hinges on rediscovering the world of perception – on transforming into a visual experience the layers of a world that has been divided into dualities but is nevertheless seen as a whole.



"Kind of Blue V.02" acrylic on beechwood panel, 100x150x3,5 cm, 2017 © Zsombor Barakonyi



"Decent Amuck Runner V.02" acrylic on beechwood panel, 50x75x3,5 cm, 2017 © Zsombor Barakonyi



"East Flow, Remix Version" acrylic on beechwood panel, 50x75x3,5 cm, 2017 © Zsombor Barakonyi

Zsombor Barakonyi's body of work, which has matured into its present form during a prolific 10-year period, has been showcased in major European cities and comprises a part of numerous collections both in Hungary and abroad. His upcoming jubilee exhibition will be held in Yekaterinburg, Saint Petersburg and Moscow.