

Painkiller

2021

Acrylic and oil on canvas

100 cm x 120 cm

Featuring the figure from Epp's *Quarantine* painting, here the artist presents a cropped, close up. Morphing between a pop villainess and a decontaminated superhero, the figure holds an ice cube between pale, sugary lips. She's wrapped in a yellow latex suit, which echoes the form and colour of the Beatles' iconic Yellow Submarine. A vehicle, which is submerged deep below the surface of the water - hermetically sealed and contained - she too, is trapped beneath a tight layer of spandex. The bullet-shaped head of the yellow submarine mimics the nuanced shape of Epp's character's heads. A glass shield protects the middle part of her face, which is framed by two rubber-gloved hands. The blue fingers are gracefully posed, as if the figure knows she's about to be photographed. The shield, gloves and latex all function as protective barriers from the outside world, conveying the idea of the loss of physical touch during recent times. A skin-to-skin tactility, that has been replaced with kissing through face masks or a mere wave from a distance. Epp reverberates the sensory experience of licking a cold ice cube in an attempt to recover the sensation of lost touch and grapple with feelings of loneliness and numbness. A symbol of frigidity, an ice cube expresses the absence of warmth and stirs up abstract images of an unknown, alien territory, which is not so dissimilar to the current atmosphere conjured up by the global pandemic. Objects of escapism float in the earholes of the figure's suit. Pills, music, luxury shopping. All are forms of consumption used to distract oneself from their unpleasant realities. They are painkillers. Confined to the walls of our home and unable to experience the touch of our loved ones, today, we use and abuse these inanimate objects with an even greater urgency, as a way of retreating from the real world.