

# ARTPULSE

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Miaz Brothers, *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas, 78" x 149." Courtesy of Fabien Castanier Gallery, Culver City, CA.

## MIAZ BROTHERS AND THE MASTERS

Fabien Castanier Gallery – Culver City, CA

By Megan Abrahams

The express intent of portraiture is to document the features of an individual, creating a visual likeness that freezes a moment, defying the passage of time. The most insightful portraits transcend the mere physical traits, capturing some essence of character and personality between the brushstrokes.

The Miaz Brothers offer a new take on portraiture, with the deliberate intention of conveying no likeness at all. These un-portraits, which the artists refer to as their *Antimatter Series*, portray only a vague suggestion of the human face and figure. In a visually oxymoronic *tour de force*, the paintings are, in effect, the antithesis of portraiture. Composed to conceal, more than reveal, they are subtle glimmers, which leave virtually all clues to identity veiled in a haze.

Rendered in layers of aerosol paint, some of the paintings apparently reference actual classic paintings—a Rembrandt self-portrait may be one—thus the allusion to the masters. Others in this series may be extrapolated from generic notions of classic works. All are based on classic or Renaissance period pieces. They are muted, out of focus, seemingly transitory—as if the past is fading away—perhaps to suggest, in time, the images will disappear completely. If portraits were originally intended to record the existence of the subject for perpetuity, the Miaz Brothers don't concur.

In the hazy aura within these works, it's possible to discern a few vague clues. In *Young Man 4*, there is a dim suggestion of youth. Among the hints is a slight area of pink where the lips might be, a suggestion of brown hair, maybe a hat. In the blue background, some paint drips, incongruous. More clues are evident in *Old Man*

4. A brownish area at the base of the face denotes a beard. A soft, white semi-circle above the apparent shoulders indicates a ruff.

Most of the paintings represent males, but there are clearly females in the series, as evidenced by the vague allusion to a white shawl and brown blurred shapes, perhaps two elongated buns as in an antiquated hairstyle in, *Young Woman 1*. For its part, *Untitled*, the largest painting in the exhibit, is a reclining female nude—conveyed by the nuance of rosy-white flesh tones and warm red-brown shades in a vague curved shape. The figure is described with lush subtlety. A modulated green background suggests an outdoor setting. A series of elongated drips in the right foreground adds immediacy, bringing the composition into the present moment.

With the advent of photography, portraiture lost some of its importance. Cubist portraits famously scrambled the face. Still ingenious, such witty simulacra did not represent a true likeness. The subtle and evasive paintings of the Miaz Brothers leave it to the viewer to recognize the haunting features coming out of the dark background haze. In deliberately refuting the conventions, they convey the fleeting nature of human existence. ■

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