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FAD magazine

Review: Art confronting atrocities – there are Seeds of Hate and Hope at the Sainsbury Centre, Norwich.

December 2, 2025 | Tabish Khan



A large globe, its continents outlined in red, buzzes as we near it. It bathes the space around it in a red glow, a colour we're evolutionarily hard-wired to associate with danger. Mona Hatoum launched this work in 2009, but it feels more relevant with each day in a world filled with wars and climate disasters. It's the work that greets visitors who enter the Seeds of Hate and Hope exhibition at the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich, part of the 'Can we stop killing each other?' season.

It's not the only artwork that will leave a lasting impact on viewers. Jakkai Siributr has

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created wearable military uniforms, but look inside the camouflage hat, and there's an image of a weeping woman with flames behind her. It's a powerful look at the refugees at the Thai-Myanmar border. Ishichi Miyako's photographs of damaged clothing are of the ghostly remnants of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Alfredo Jaar shows every cover of the magazine Newsweek from the start of the Rwandan genocide until it finally made it on the cover.



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We would expect an exhibition covering genocides, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity to contain many hard-hitting artworks, and there's no lack of them in this show. However, it also includes works that push back against the perpetrators of these atrocities. Gideon Rubin redacts every page of Adolf Hitler's book Mein Kampf, and Indre Serpetyte takes ISIS videos and reduces them to the colours they use, leaving us with a Piet Mondrian-style sculpture of simply blocks of colour.

There are familiar artists in this exhibition, including a film by William Kentridge confronting the legacy of Apartheid in South Africa, and a moving drawing by Denzil Forrester of his friend who died in police custody. However, there are also new artists to me, such as Peter Oloya, who was forced into being a 'child soldier' for the Lord's Resistance Army and now creates sculpture as part of his healing. Zoran Music's figurative drawings are hard to forget once you realise he drew them while in the Dachau concentration camp.



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I usually visit an exhibition, and a couple of artworks stay with me. However, given that every artwork has such a powerful narrative, I'm still processing almost all the works I've seen in this show. It's a testament to the two co-curators, Tafadzwa Makwabarara and Jelena Sofronijevic, for pulling together such an impactful exhibition.



Given the weight of the topic and the quality of the works, this is an exhibition I won't forget anytime soon. The exhibition opens with George Santayana's famous quote, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it".

Seeds of Hate and Hope is a reminder of the past and ongoing atrocities from across the world, the hate that exists, but also the hope for a better future if we can learn from the past.

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Seeds of Hate and Hope – until 17th May
Sainsbury Centre Norwich, Entrance is free.

First image: © Mona Hatoum. All rights reserved, DACS 2025. Image courtesy of White Cube. Photo: Stephen White.
Second image: Copyright: Ishiuchi Miyako. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.
Third image: Courtesy of Gideon Rubin.
Forth image: Courtesy of the Sainsbury Centre Collection. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2025

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Beware!

Gideon Rubin, the man with the faceless portraits

September 25, 2024 | Flora Etienne

Drawing inspiration from old photo albums, famous figures, and paintings by renowned artists, Gideon Rubin creates faceless portraits, leaving the interpretation of the missing features entirely open to the viewer. Memory, identity, and history are central to the Israeli artist's work.

From a childhood in Tel Aviv to the New York attacks

Born in 1973 in Tel Aviv, Gideon Rubin is the grandson of Reuven Rubin , a renowned painter whose career began alongside the history of Israeli art. With Nahum Gutman and Ziona Tagger , he is a founder of the new Eretz-Yisrael style , which is both modern and naive.

Although he grew up in an artistic environment, painting wasn't a calling for Gideon Rubin. It was after completing his military service and experiencing a backpacking trip at the age of 22 that he decided to become an artist. He then studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York, and later at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, from which he graduated in 2002.

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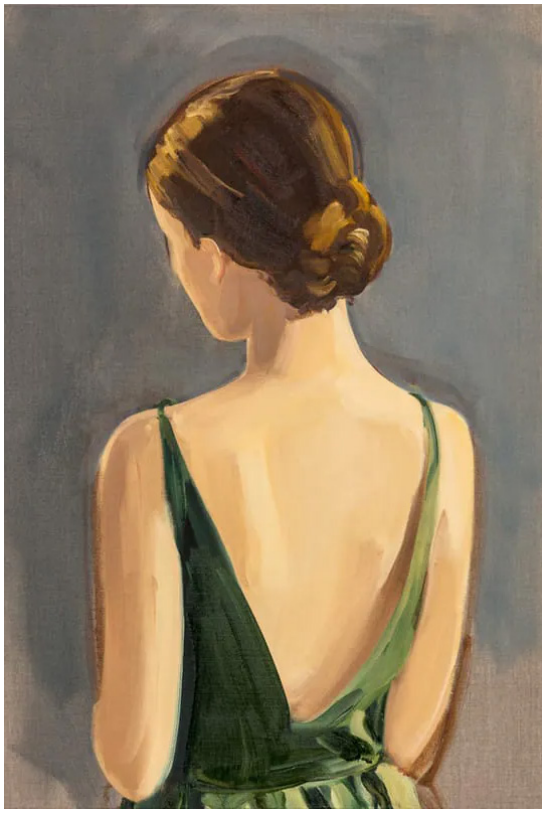


Boy in a Boat , 125 x 150 cm, Oil on linen, 2020

Present in New York on September 11, 2001, he was deeply shaken by the horrific attacks. Caught in an emotional storm, his painting was profoundly affected. He began sketching small still lifes of old dolls he collected. Affected by time, some of these old toys had faded eyes and mouths. Sometimes their hands were missing. When he gradually resumed painting portraits of those around him, it was only natural that he began to create his paintings quickly and, as with his dolls, to sketch only their silhouettes.

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Green Dress , 86.5 x 60 cm, Oil on linen canvas, 2021

Some time later, while leafing through Victorian-era photo albums in an old London bookshop, his artistic identity took shape. These yellowed photographs, symbols of bygone memories, reinforced his desire not to depict faces. This absence was, for him, a way of not imposing limits. Without faces, these portraits are like a blank canvas for the viewer. They are free to associate with them whatever memory they wish or to let their imagination wander.

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Seven Girls in Uniform, 180 x 240 cm, Oil on linen, 2019

The absence of faces assaulting the borders

This absence of a face allows us to transcend temporality, geography, and identification. With Gideon Rubin's paintings, nothing is imposed, only suggested. The interpretation of the observed portrait is left to each individual's discretion, based on a memory or an inspiration.

My wife is Chinese from Hong Kong. When I exhibited my paintings there, her father recognized himself in one of them, even though it was based on a photograph from 1935 in Poland or Hungary. This has happened very often. By removing a few details, however small, the images change, intertwine, and speak to everyone.

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Three girls, 148 x 198 cm, Oil on canvas, 2015

The Israeli artist continues to draw inspiration from old photographs as well as the works of great 20th-century artists such as Richard Prince , Philip Guston , and Willem de Kooning . He most often uses canvas, natural linen, or cardboard as his support. His preferred themes are family, childhood, and memory. Enjoying blending eras, he is equally fond of depicting the ultra-contemporary by painting the silhouettes of media celebrities like Prince Harry, Greta Thunberg, or Bella Hadid , and of venturing to evoke tragic historical events.

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For a 2018 exhibition commissioned by the Freud Museum in London, Gideon Rubin immersed himself in Vienna in 1938, the city Freud had fled to seek refuge in the British capital. With the help of his wife, he managed to unearth contemporary magazines containing numerous propaganda images (particularly idealized images of health promoting the myth of Aryan supremacy) and Nazi symbols. These discoveries inspired a series of paintings on canvas, linen, and paper, in which he erased Nazi references, the swastika, and faces.

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Untitled, 17x22 cm, gouache on paper, 2017

Similarly, he blacked out an original English translation of Mein Kampf in order to neutralize its content. This Black Book would serve as the heart and title of the exhibition. By covering the symbols, he believed it was a way to contradict the Freudian concept of repression by revealing a certain truth. The hateful words were neutralized; they became powerless.

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Black Book p. 578, 25×37.5cm, gouache on paper, 2017

Like his portraits based on old photographs, this Black Book is timeless. Although it dates back more than half a century, this work evokes the persistence of racial hatred, intolerance, and nationalism. A reality all the more relevant as evidenced by the events of recent years, even weeks. Questioning both the horrors of war and the concealment of faces in a world obsessed with appearances, Gideon Rubin's works are disconcertingly pertinent in this masked and violent world.

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Black Book, Gouache on paper.

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artnet

Need a Fast Pass to Serenity This Frieze Week? An Art-Filled Chapel in London Offers an Oasis of Calm

The chapel is an ideal setting to contemplate the artworks's themes of memory, loss, and transformation.

October 7, 2023 | Jo Lawson-Tancred



Installation view of "Living Memory" at All Saints Chapel in London. Photo: Richard Ivey.

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The busiest week of London's art world calendar is almost upon us. As everyone gears up to take on Frieze's big white tents and a buffet of blockbuster museum shows, they may wonder when they'll ever be able to have a break. The insider tip is to visit All Saints Chapel, an oasis of calm just off Oxford Street that boasts magnificent decorative features, including a sweeping crucifixon fresco and stained glass windows by the Victorian artist John Richard Clayton.

This unique 19th-century space is being used to stage the intimate exhibition, "Living Memory," which presents sculptures by Louise Bourgeois and paintings by Israeli artist Gideon Rubin against a soothing soundscape by French musician Nicolas Godin. The show explores how each artist has been informed by memory, and foregrounds their ability to morph materials into strangely familiar, human forms.



Installation view of "Living Memory" at All Saints Chapel in London. Photo: Richard Ivey.

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Adapted for all-women convent, Clayton's crucifixion scene is unusual for only depicting women attendants. These dutiful figures are explicitly echoed in new paintings by Rubin, which were modeled on stills from the German film Mächen in Uniform (1931) by female director Leontine Sagan. Almost life-size, they have a commanding presence, but without faces and dressed in plain white dresses they never overwhelm their ornate surroundings.

"Gideon has always used found photographs from flea markets that are completely anonymous to him, and he'd reimagine their lives," said the show's curator Beth Greenacre. "Its very much about time passing and the loss of detail."

Stealing the show, inevitably, are the three sculptures by Bourgeois, two of which belong to her "Personages" series from the 1940s. These tall abstracted forms are a masterclass in how little detail is needed for a composition to be richly suggestive. Brother & Sister (1949), which takes centre-stage in place of an altar, consists of two curved slabs of woods that merely brush against each other but instantly communicate familial affection.

"She had just left Paris and was an emigré in New York," said Greenacre. "She talked about these as memories of the families and friends she'd left behind. They're totems of characters and they become what we want them to be as well."



Installation view of "Living Memory" at All Saints Chapel in London. Photo: Richard Ivey.

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As in Rubin's work, much can be read into a single gesture, post or tilt of the head. "In that space between abstraction and figuration, what is possible?" said Greenacre. "Its interesting to think of Bourgeois' history of psychoanalysis and how she uses her art as a way of releasing challenging moments from her past."

Leaping forward many decades to Bourgeois' later life, Arch of Hysteria (2000) is a splayed naked body, somehow simultaneously limp and taut, and roughly stitched together with scraps of unnaturally pink fabric. Suspended from the ceiling, the small doll slowly spins on its see-through string. The work is inspired by the idea of the "hysterical" (presumed female) patient confined and studied by the male neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, about whom Bourgeois felt both critical and curious.

Though in some sense, references like these might feel out of place in a chapel, the space's unique capacity for peaceful contemplation feels entirely appropriate for artworks that, much like the religious art that came before them, speak to universal themes of remembrance, loss, spirituality, and transformation.

"Living Memory" is open Monday to Saturday until 6pm at 82-83 Margaret Street in Fitzrovia through October 27. There will be a special late opening on October 12 for Frieze. It is supported by Galerie Karsten Greve.

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artnet® news

Editors' Picks: 14 Events for Your Art Calendar This Week, From a Hand-Drawn Film on Mythological Beasts to a Talk on Artemisia Gentileschi

By Sarah Cascone | November 9, 2021



Gideon Rubin, Untitled (2021). Courtesy of Ryan Lee, New York.

Each week, we search for the most exciting and thought-provoking shows, screenings, and events, both digitally and in-person in the New York area. See our picks from around the world below. (Times are all ET unless otherwise noted.)

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Thursday, November 11–Wednesday, December 22



Gideon Rubin, White Shirt (2021). Courtesy of Ryan Lee, New York.

6. "The Sun Also Rises" at Ryan Lee, New York

In his first solo show with the gallery, London-based painter Gideon Rubin presents his signature faceless figures set in landscapes. Based on found photographs, there is something at once familiar and uncertain in these works, in which, the artist says, "details are lost, but a new identity appears."

Location: Ryan Lee, 515 West 26th Street, New York
Price: Free
Time: Opening reception, 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.; Tuesday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

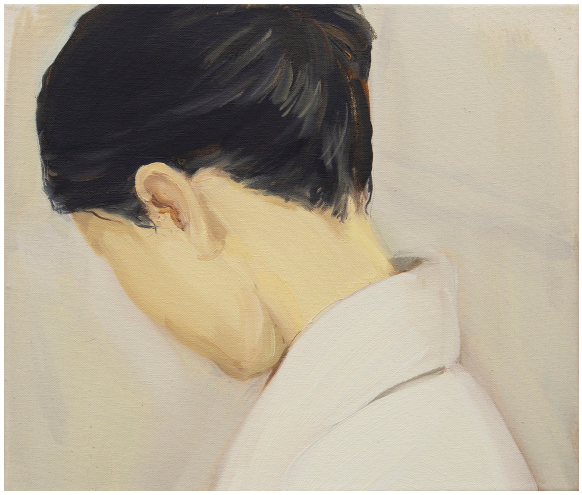
—Sarah Cascone

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THE MONTRÉAL REVIEW
BOOKS • ART • CULTURE

Gideon Rubin: An Interview

October 2021





TMR: Gideon, I know that Leonard Cohen's final work "The Flame" is one of your favorite books. What is the poem in this volume that you liked most?

If I had to choose, I'd pick 'The Mist' - perhaps it's the way Cohen looks at the past - 'a mist', like shadows that creep towards us... the footprints of an old love story, gone forever.

But generally, if I had to pick from any of his poems, I would always go back to 'Last Year's Man'. I find so much of myself in it - in fact, I used it as the title for one of my exhibitions in Paris some years ago.

THE MIST

As the mist leaves no scar
On the dark green hill
So my body leaves no scar
On you, nor ever will

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When wind and hawk encounter
What remains to keep?
So you and I encounter
Then turn then fall to sleep

As many nights endure
Without a moon or star
So will we endure
When one is gone and far

TMR: Do you see Cohen's verses and songs as paintings? And what do you like in Cohen's art?

I think paintings are like poems. We take words that have a certain meaning but when you put them together - it's a new meaning altogether. Painting is like that for me: it is that meeting of shapes, tones and colours - that's where the magic happens.

Cohen is a real master of words - he puts words together in a way that only he can. Anyone else coming up with these sentences and phrases would sound, well, almost silly or daft - but not with Leonard. Miraculously he makes it sound profound, and often religious, even - mystical.



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TMR: Tell me, how did you become an artist? What inspires you to create?

It was years ago on a backpacking trip in South America - it all started there really, right after I finished my military service.

I was with a very observant friend, and he was the first to talk to me about it - I guess the fact that we were trippin' on some local cactus helped… A couple of days later he bought me a little sketchbook and some colour pencils. Funnily enough, it was only when we were waiting to start a trip in a salt desert on the border of Bolivia - after I'd been given some watercolours and brushes - that's when i felt it for the first time in my life: I had the feeling of doing something right - I had found what I was supposed to do... this was the initial spark and it took me quite a few years of painting to make this a reality.

My work was described once as an attempt to stop time. To slow it down. I liked that very much. Painting for me is always associated with a certain internal struggle. When it's working, I'm in this very specific place - of just painting. I think I'm running after that feeling constantly, a bit like an addict, trying to find that place again and again.



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TMR: You love books, but in one interview, you said that you wanted to burn a book ["My Kampf"]. Is that true? And if so, did you burn it?

Initially I did want to burn it. This copy of Mein Kampf was bought - completely unintentionally - by my dear partner, who's also an artist, Silia Ka Tung. I thought she was buying me some pre-WW2 1930's German magazines, but when I opened the parcel that morning I discovered, to my horror, that she had bought an English translation of 'Mein Kampf', which was published in Britain in the 1930's. I didn't burn it in the end - instead I covered it in paint, black gouache. Every word and every letter was carefully and methodically erased with a brush and every image was altered. It became the central piece of my 2018 exhibition titled "Black Book' at the Freud museum in London.

TMR: You have a series of paintings that symbolically depict key moments of twentieth-century Chinese history. From where comes this interest in China?

Silia, my partner in life and in art, is Chinese. Born in China she moved to Hong Kong when she was a young girl. We have three girls of our own at home, who are shared between her Chinese and my Jewish/Israeli culture. These specific works were made during a residency in Shenzhen, China in 2016.

By that time I was already using old magazines in my work and Silia mentioned that I should check out 'Huabao' - pictorial Chinese magazines that were published until the beginning of the cultural revolution. I bought dozens of them and they became an endless source of material, which I painted over systematically during the residency.

TMR: There is something mystical behind the blank faces of your models. Do you invite us to fill the empty space alone, with our own imagination and meaning, or rather tell us that the human face is an eternal mystery?

Our response to art - whether a painting, a play or a musical piece - and whether we find it to be successful or effective, depends on how much we can project our own ideas, thoughts and memories onto it, and to what extent are these activated. My work is a lot about that, this distance between the work and the viewer.

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TMR: Are your models real people? It seems to me that they are: they are surrounded by an environment that we know, they do "normal" things, etc... The word "person" comes from the Latin word persona (in Greek prosopon), which means a mask worn by an actor on stage. It seems that you strip the personality (the mask) of your models and leave these faceless people in the bare context of body, colour, and environment. Is that right?

Usually the figures are not a reference to a specific person. Taken from a large collection of anonymous images (I used to collect vintage photo albums, and now I get most of them online) the original photograph is simply a departure point for my portraits. Through a process - the application and erasure of paint - details are lost but a new identity comes to life. This new identity is both general and specific, but it has to come to life on canvas - a real person but not anyone in particular. Often I think of them as actors on a very minimal set, perhaps the light is soft, revealing only certain details - it's suggestive and open to much more...

TMR: Would you agree that Facebook and all other social network websites, instead of making us known, they rather hide us behind a wall of "cacophony" of

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images, messages, and colors? For me, art is about truth, and the truth is often a blank space that waits to be discovered, a vail that waits to be lifted? Do you think so? What is art for you?

I remember Silia telling me I should open an IG account - otherwise, she said, it's like everyone else having a business card when you don't. My resistance broke and I opened myself an account. I think perhaps I feared I would get addicted - which of course, with my addictive personality, is exactly what happened...

I think that 'good' art, whatever that means, always needs time - maybe coming back to it again and then again. What is art for me? It's a way to communicate, but also painting is really who I am. I'm not sure who I am without painting.



TMR: And one final question: tell me about your "normal" day as an artist.

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I'm not a very early person but that seems to be changing a bit with the years. I help get the girls ready and take them to school, then usually get to the studio around mid-morning. I try to run twice a week, usually in a park nearby, and I do some Tai Chi on the studio floor.

I'll be in the studio til early evening - often it's productive and sometimes less. A writer I admire once described writing as going in the morning to open your shop. Some days people come in and some days there's no one but the shop is always open. At times a sudden burst of creative energy comes rushing out just as I'm getting ready to get home in time for dinner with the girls - so I'm often late... But I almost always make it for a bedtime story with the little one… if there's some deadline I will happily go back to the studio after dinner, if not Netflix or some reading. I'm a man of habits and if I can have a painting made during that 'typical' day in the studio - that's really the best I can hope for.

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anniversary

The Belonging of Memories — Q+A with Painter Gideon Rubin

By Eve Laliberté | January 27, 2021



Gideon Rubin, Six Girls in Uniform, 180 x 2440 cm, oil on linen, 2020

Scientifically intriguing yet poetic in its elusiveness, memory has been an unbounded theme among inspiring artists and thinkers in the past decades. In **Matter and Memory (1896)**, an essay on the relation of body and spirit, philosopher **Henri Bergson** wrote on the relationship between mental images and souvenirs, sensations, and imagination, notably stating that there is no consciousness without memory.

Bergson's reflections in this remarkable topical book allow us to introduce **London-based Israeli artist Gideon Rubin**'s paintings as a shortcut to the universality of consciousness. Appropriating fragments of other people's lives and giving them new perspectives and narratives in his work, Rubin creates what could be clues to comprehend the framework of human remembrance.

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We asked the artist some questions to learn more about his relation to art and the past's belonging. [Eve Laliberté: EL, Gideon Rubin: GR]

EL: What brought you to painting? Was becoming an artist a dream, a plan, or a coincidence?

GR: It was pure chance and destiny. Or maybe the other way around. I first started painting during a backpacking trip in my early 20's in South America, on a salt desert between Chile and Bolivia, to be exact. I was born in a house surrounded by my grandfather's paintings, but only when I left Israel and began travelling did I start painting myself, and the need to paint appeared. Everyone around me was surprised. No one saw this coming, myself included.



Gideon Rubin, Untitled (Reflection), 25.5 x 20.5 cm, Oil on linen, 2016



Gideon Rubin, Interior, 51 x 56 cm, Oil on linen, 2013

EL: There is a strong feeling of enigma emanating from your body of work. You paint most of your pieces by drawing from old photographs belonging to other people. Why are you interested in souvenirs?

GR: I am always drawn to objects. The older the stuff is, the better. One of my most pleasurable activities is wandering off at flea markets and antique shops. My parents' house looks more like a 'British museum' jumble sale, as my mother is an obsessive collector who has difficulties throwing anything out. It's not only their intrinsic beauty that draws me in but also the way they hold times' passing. That's what I have a hard time resisting to. It's their stories that

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pull me in again and again. As if by working with these objects, touching them, painting them - some hidden angels or unearthed truths which weirdly enough seem relevant to me now, can reveal themselves.



Gideon Rubin, Making Out, 30.5 x 36 cm, Oil on linen, 2019



Gideon Rubin, Untitled, 38 x 27.5 cm, Gouache on paper, 2016

EL: Interacting with fragments of strangers' lives, you take part in redefining the narratives. Are the memories you paint yours or someone else's?

GR: I used to think they're not mine, but now I'm less sure, so maybe both. Of course, the point of departure is someone else's memories and life. Then, I'm drawn to a specific image because it touches something within me, even if buried deep in my subconscious. Only then something quite interesting happens. The image becomes everyone's memory. I am very interested in how it crosses over, how by altering a few details, we, as viewers, can relate in a more direct way to someone else's story.

EL: Where do you typically find the photographs you draw inspiration from?

GR: Antique markets, flea markets, antique shops, used bookshops, and eBay, of course.

EL: Is there an aim to bring history forward in your paintings? Or perhaps to underline the universality of human experience? Why?

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GR: A friend, who's an art critic, writer, and curator who has written about my work a few times in the past, once said that I try to stop time in my work. As if I look at history, freeze it, and drag it to the present. I like this. I think it's a fundamental quality in art, which makes it relevant to our lives — our here and now. I think this relates to how I experienced Velasquez and the Old Masters for the first time. There is this painting in the Met, in New York,' The Moore'. It's not only an admiration for how the image was made or its beauty, but also how much it touches and penetrates our present life that is so mind-blowing.



Gideon Rubin, White Shirt, 45.5 x 51 cm, Oil on linen, 2018

EL: It's as if the figures are waiting for us to tell them something, to give them an identity. Why are you interested in the "incomplete"?

GR: I have a vast catalogue at home - which my parents had to drag from NY - 'Unfinished' from an exhibition of unfinished works by all the Masters, which was held at the Met Breuer in New York I think, last year.

Oh, how I wish I could have seen this exhibition. Picasso once said,' To finish a piece of work is to kill it' - I'm a firm believer in that. It is so much easier to feed the viewer with every detail and nuance, so much more challenging to leave things a bit more open.

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Gideon Rubin, Untitled (Two in a Boat), 77 x 102 cm, Oil on linen, 2019

EL: Could you share any book, movie, documentary, or location that you particularly like or have inspired you recently?

GR: Next to my bed, I have 'The Flame' by Leonard Cohen. What's weird is that as you read his poems, often, you can hear his voice reading the lines in your head. I've also re-read a little book of poetry recently by Wisława Szymborska translated to Hebrew, which I always enjoy. And third and last is an artist's book by Francis Alys - which I recently had to buy, again, as I lost my original copy. One of my favourite art books of all time, 'The Prophet and the Fly': beautiful, poetic, and political, all wrapped up in one exceptional book.



Gideon Rubin, Girl in the Water, 122 x 102 cm, Oil on canvas, 2011



Gideon Rubin, Pink, 46 x 41 cm, Oil on canvas, 2019



Gideon Rubin, Untitled, 11.5 X 9.5 cm, Gouache on cardboard, 2016

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All images courtesy of Gideon Rubin

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Gideon Rubin, peintre de l'effacement

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La galerie Karsten Greve présentait la nouvelle série de Gideon Rubin inspirée d'images prises sur internet d'artistes du XXème siècle qui ont marqué sa pratique picturale. Portraitiste singulier dont l'œuvre se caractérise par l'absence de visage, Rubin autorise le regardeur à se projeter dans ses toiles en confisquant l'identité de ses personnages. Troublant.

36 COMMENTAIRES | 15 RECOMMANDÉS | A + A -



Gideon Rubin Night Out 2020 Huile sur toile de lin / Oil on linen 55 x 60 cm / 21 2/3 x 23 2/3 in © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Richard Ivey

C'est, en fait, deux séries de toiles que le peintre Gideon Rubin (né en 1973 à Tel Aviv, vit et travaille à Londres) donnait à voir à la galerie Karsten Greve à Paris. L'une, inspirée du cinéma de la République de Weimar, dans l'Allemagne des années 1920, accompagne l'autre, nouvelle série qui l'a occupé ces deux dernières années et qui donne à voir, de Philip Guston à Richard Diebenkorn, les artistes qui l'ont influencé. Ils sont peintres, appartiennent au XXème siècle et sont représentés dans leur jeunesse. Rubin en fait le portrait d'après des images trouvées sur internet, tout en prenant soin, dans la démarche artistique qui le caractérise, de les laisser dans l'anonymat en gommant invariablement toute individualité, effaçant chaque visage. Les peintures de Gideon Rubin oscillent entre figuration et abstraction, entre effacement et reconstruction. « *J'aimerais penser que les personnages de mes tableaux rappellent certaines personnes ou évoquent des souvenirs au spectateur plutôt que de représenter des identités spécifiques. Mes œuvres sont minimales, il n'y a souvent pas grand-chose. Je veux que le spectateur les regarde et se concentre sur le processus de peinture et sur l'œuvre elle-même, en se concentrant sur certains détails que je fournis, comme la posture d'une figure ou un arbre à l'arrière-plan de la peinture. C'est une façon plus abstraite de regarder une scène ; il est impossible de s'identifier directement aux personnages de mes peintures, je veux proposer d'autres façons de voir les figures, où le spectateur est également impliqué dans l'achèvement d'un récit ou d'une scène[1]* » explique-t-il.



Vue de l'exposition personnelle de Gideon Rubin "A stranger's hand", galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 16 octobre 2020 - 16 janvier 2021 © Gideon Rubin; photo : Guillaume Lasserre

Né en 1973 à Tel Aviv, Gideon Rubin est le petit fils du peintre israélien d'origine roumaine Reuven Rubin[2] (1893 - 1974) installé dès 1923 en Palestine alors sous mandat britannique. La carrière du grand-père débute en même temps que l'histoire de l'art israélienne, à un moment, les années vingt, de rébellion contre les conventions du passé. Il est l'un des fondateurs, avec Nahum Gutman et Ziona Tagger notamment, du nouveau style Eretz-Yisrael, à la fois moderne et naïf , qui caractérise l'invention d'un art israélien, influencé par les mouvements picturaux européens qui se succèdent alors. Reuven Rubin sera le premier ambassadeur d'Israël en Roumanie et léguera sa maison d'inspiration Bauhaus ainsi que les peintures qu'elle contient à la ville de Tel Aviv. Depuis 1983, elle abrite le musée Rubin. Gideon Rubin grandit donc dans un environnement baigné par l'art et la culture. Il fait ses études à la School of Visual Art de New York, puis à la Slade School of Fine art de Londres d'où il est diplômé en 2002. Il fait

de l'enfance, la famille, la mémoire, ses thèmes de prédilection, réalisant des portraits sans visages. S'inspirant d'anciens albums de famille, de peintures de maitres anciens mais aussi de clichés de célébrités pris par des paparazzi, il efface en effet complètement les visages de ses personnages. A travers cette antienne, l'artiste propose une autre façon, alternative, de voir les figures. « *J'aime imaginer un dialogue entre l'œuvre et celui qui la regarde* » confie-t-il.



Gideon Rubin The Office 2020 Huile sur toile / Oil on canvas 41 x 51 x 1,8 cm / 16 x 20 x 3/4 in © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Richard Ivey

« Parfois créer c'est déconstruire et déconstruire c'est créer »



Gideon Rubin Blue 2020 Huile sur toile / Oil on canvas 60 x 55 cm / 23 2/3 x 21 2/3 in © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Richard Ivey

Peintre obsessionnel, Gideon Rubin est aussi un collectionneur compulsif de photographies anciennes vernaculaires renfermant les souvenirs des autres, des anonymes. Il se sert de ces images comme modèle à déconstruire dans son processus de création. *« Lorsque je considère ces images, je recherche une narration, une scène ouverte à l'interprétation : plus l'image est ordinaire et banale, mieux c'est »* confie-t-il. Il découpe la toile en plusieurs parties avant de faire disparaître de celle-ci des éléments présents sur l'image comme l'arrière plan et surtout les traits de visage des protagonistes. Il se plait à inventer des formes à partir des seules tonalités, en modifiant simplement une couleur de façon graduelle. Finalement, ce qui reste, ce qui raconte l'histoire du tableau autant que l'identité des personnages, c'est sa construction : les coups de pinceaux, l'invention d'une forme, les tons, l'effacement du temps ou du lieu. Si les peintures de Gideon Rubin troublent autant, c'est précisément parce qu'on sait rarement ce qui s'y passe. Une scène anodine peut ainsi devenir anxiogène tant la frontière entre la joie et le danger s'estompe avec les traits du visage, avec son atemporalité, conduisant souvent à un sentiment de solitude, d'introspection. Ces effacements autorisent une distance entre l'artiste et son œuvre, qui peut ainsi multiplier les histoires et les interprétations possibles. *« Parfois créer c'est déconstruire et déconstruire c'est créer[3] »* affirme-t-il.

Gideon Rubin ne se limite pas à la toile. Il exécute rapidement à la gouache de tous petits formats sur carton – trouvé là où il est, souvent usuel, jetable – qui lui procure une immédiateté impossible avec la peinture à l'huile. Ces gouaches sont sans nul doute les portraits les plus identifiables de l'artiste qui semble prendre plaisir, de la starlette au président, à créer son propre carnet *people*. Il travaille aussi à même les pages de vieux magazines, datant des années 1950-60. A l'ère 2.0, il fait disparaître l'image et le texte manuellement pour ne garder que le personnage dont il finit par effacer le visage jusqu'à qu'il soit impossible de le reconnaitre. Ces dessins rapides deviennent parfois des études pour ses tableaux.



Vue de l'exposition personnelle de Gideon Rubin "A stranger's hand", oeuvres sur carton, galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 16 octobre 2020 - 16 janvier 2021 © Gideon Rubin; photo : Guillaume Lasserre

La main d'un inconnu

Intitulée *« A stranger's hand »*, l'exposition présentée à la galerie Karsten Greve de Paris rassemble une trentaine de toiles parmi lesquelles *« Six girls in uniform »* accueille le visiteur de façon inquiétante. Le portrait de groupe, ainsi que deux autres toiles de même sujet, s'inspire du film allemand « Mädchen in Uniform[4] » réalisé en 1931 par Leontine Sagan et Carl Froelich. Têtes baissées en signe de subordination, les jeunes filles du tableau reprennent les poses de celles qui, dans le film, subissent les méthodes d'éducation d'une institution vouée à la discipline prussienne. L'histoire, qui se passe avant la Première guerre mondiale, n'est pas sans rappeler l'atmosphère menaçante du « ruban blanc » (2009), film de Michael Haneke au sous-titre non moins inquiétant : « Une histoire allemande pour les enfants », même si le traitement des deux films diffère. On peut rattacher à cet ensemble le portrait fantomatique et mystérieux d'une infirmière dont l'absence de visage n'est pas exsangue d'une certaine suavité.



Gideon Rubin Six Girls in Uniform 2019 Huile sur toile de lin / Oil on linen 180 x 240 cm / 70 ⅞ x 94 ½ in © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Richard Ivey



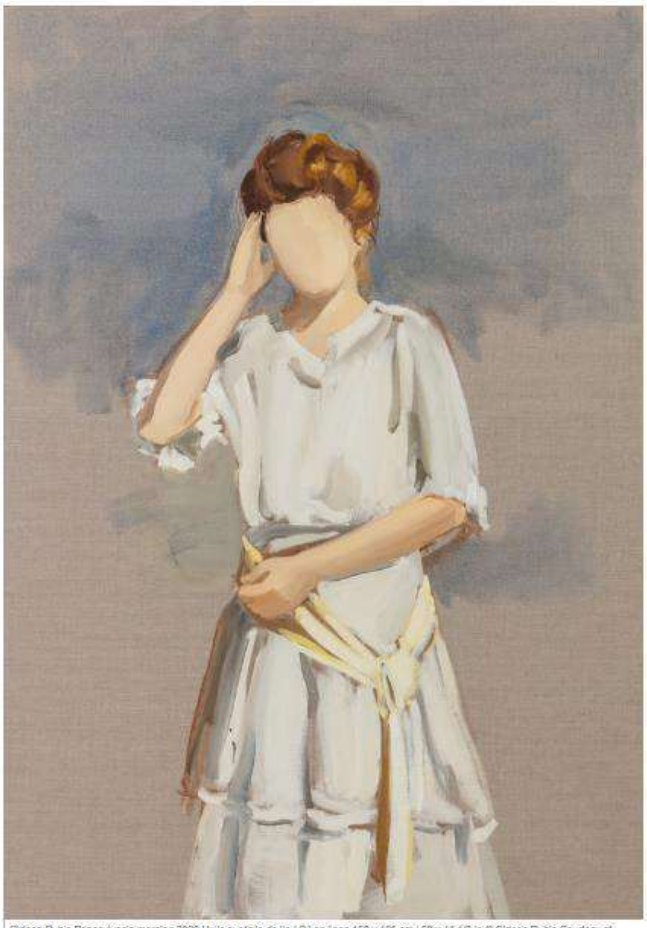
Gideon Rubin At Coombe Priory 2019 Huile sur toile de lin / Oil on linen 150 x 105 cm/ 59 x 41 1/3 in © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Richard Ivey

L'autre série, composée de dix toiles dont deux diptyques, rend hommage aux artistes du XXème siècle qui ont durablement influencé son travail. Elle trouve son origine dans la photographie de la femme et de la fille du peintre Balthus. « *Pendant des années, j'ai eu sur le sol de mon atelier une photo de la femme et de la fille de Balthus prise par le photographe italien Pierpaolo Ferrari* » confie Rubin, indiquant la possibilité « *que ce soit l'inusable motif de la mère et l'enfant ou le récit de naissance et de mort qui rendait cette image si fascinante* » à ses yeux. Il choisit cette image pour le diptyque « *In the Grand Chalet* » qui devient le premier tableau de la série. Parmi les artistes représentés, Philip Guston est reconnaissable à sa façon de tenir sa cigarette. Hormis Balthus, tous sont américains, du new yorkais d'adoption Willem de Kooning au californien du nord Richard Diebenkorn. Ce qui frappe lorsqu'on regarde attentivement chacune des toiles, c'est l'attention particulière portée aux mains. Instrument privilégié de l'action, tant physique qu'intellectuelle, la main incarne l'activité, le travail ; c'est aussi un moyen de communication, un outil de création. Protectrice ou dominatrice, elle rend compte surtout ici de l'individualité des peintres à qui Rubin rend hommage. Si la démarche de Rubin confronte le spectateur à un inconnu, elle lui permet aussi de développer une intimité avec sa représentation et ainsi de recomposer peu à peu une histoire personnelle.



Gideon Rubin In the Grand Chalet 2019 Huile sur toile de lin / Oil on linen Diptyque / Diptych : 150 x 105 cm / 59 x 41 1/3 in © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Richard Ivey

Fasciné par le temps qui passe au point de le suspendre, Gideon Rubin ressuscite des vies oubliées dont il efface les détails, ce qui a pour effet de provoquer chez le regardeur un sentiment de déjà vu, l'impression de retrouver une image perdue. En pratiquant l'effacement systématique des visages, précisément de ce qui fait une personne, mais aussi de tout ce qui peut se rapporter à un lieu géographique, à une temporalité, l'artiste rend possible l'identification du regardeur. Sa projection dans le tableau devient presque naturelle. C'est ce paradoxe que Rubin a érigé au cœur de sa démarche artistique. Il n'y a plus de limites à l'interprétation. Le souvenir d'un inconnu devient alors le nôtre. C'est dans sa subjectivité que le travail figuratif de Gideon Rubin se teinte d'abstraction. Sans doute est-ce à cet endroit que nait cette indicible sentiment de mystère.



Gideon Rubin Pennsylvania morning 2020 Huile sur toile de lin / Oil on linen 150 x 105 cm / 59 x 41 1/3 in © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Richard Ivey

[1] Sauf mention contraire, les citations de l'artiste sont extraites du dossier de presse de l'exposition « *A stranger's hand* » à la galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, du 16 octobre 2020 au 16 janvier 2021.

[2] Sa biographie détaillée est disponible sur le site du Rubin Museum. http://rubinmuseum.org.il/en/company/reuven/bio/ Consulté le 17 décembre 2020. Voir également, Jeannie Rosenfeld, « Demand for Reuven Rubin Is Rising. So Are the Prices », *Haaretz*, 13 avril 2008, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/1.4969418 Consulté le 17 décembre 2020.

[3] Expression employée par l'artiste dans le film de la collection « Boîte noire » (Canal plus, 2020) qui lui est consacré et qui lui donne son titre. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSiz54NP3Q Consulté le 2 janvier 2021.

[4] « Mädchen in Uniform » est aussi le plus célèbre film crypto-lesbien de l'Allemagne de Weimar. Voir Veronika Meyer, « Lesbian Classics in Germany? A Film Historical Analysis of Mädchen in Uniform (1931 and 1958) », *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, vol. 16, 2012, Issue 3 Global Lesbian Cinema, pp. 340-353.



Gideon Rubin Untitled (Two in a Boat) 77 x 102 cm Oil on linen 2019 © Gideon Rubin Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz Photo : Guillaume Lasserre

« *A stranger's hand* » exposition monographique de Gideon Rubin - Jusqu'au 16 janvier 2021 - Du mardi au samedi de 10h à 19h.



FROM TOP Gideon in his north London studio, next to a pair of large-scale landscapes in oil on canvas. His portraits of people with featureless faces in gouache on cardboard

Gideon Rubin

Continuing her series, Emily Tobin meets the Israeli artist whose faceless portraits speak volumes of a missing family history

PHOTOGRAPHS JOSHUA MONAGHAN



Gideon Rubin's north London studio is populated by faceless men and women; eyes, noses and mouths have vanished. Perhaps they were painted over. Perhaps they were never there. And yet, Gideon's talent is such that a kink in a lock of hair or a cocked head can somehow be heavy with emotion; the flesh-coloured facets of a face seem to harbour a multitude of unspoken words and untold stories. Some may find these works eerie; I find them beautiful, though they are steeped in melancholy.

Gideon is the grandson of Israeli painter Reuven Rubin. But despite his artistic lineage, he studiously avoided art through school and it was not until he travelled to South America, following a stint in the Israeli army, that he picked up a paintbrush. 'I was doing it for the first time in my life and something felt right,' he says. He studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York and later at the Slade, and has lived in London ever since. 'I wanted to be a painter, ▷



not an artist,' says Gideon of that time. He was preoccupied by figuration, often turning the focus in on himself to produce self-portraits. But he had, by his own admission, painted himself 'into a corner'.

Gideon was in New York when the twin towers of the World Trade Center collapsed in 2001. He watched the tragedy unfold from a friend's rooftop. 'It was like a screen had come down. I couldn't paint how I'd painted before,' he says. 'I needed to unload this great psychological residue.' And so he began to paint abandoned toys – old dolls with missing limbs and eyes, and toy cars that, he explains, 'showed a life lived'. Slowly he shifted back to portraiture, using historical photographs as his starting point. 'I'm Israeli-Jewish from Europe and my family was destroyed in the war. We have no memories, no objects, no photographs left,' he says. 'These photographs became a vehicle for memories. I was reclaiming and recreating a past that was missing.'

Despite these featureless faces, his studio is filled with recognisable people. The maid from Manet's 1863 painting *Olympia* proffers a bunch of flowers; a red-headed prince adjusts his tie; figurative artist Alice Neel touches her hair. Gideon's works are marked by absence and yet they are entirely knowable. *gideonrubin.com* ▷

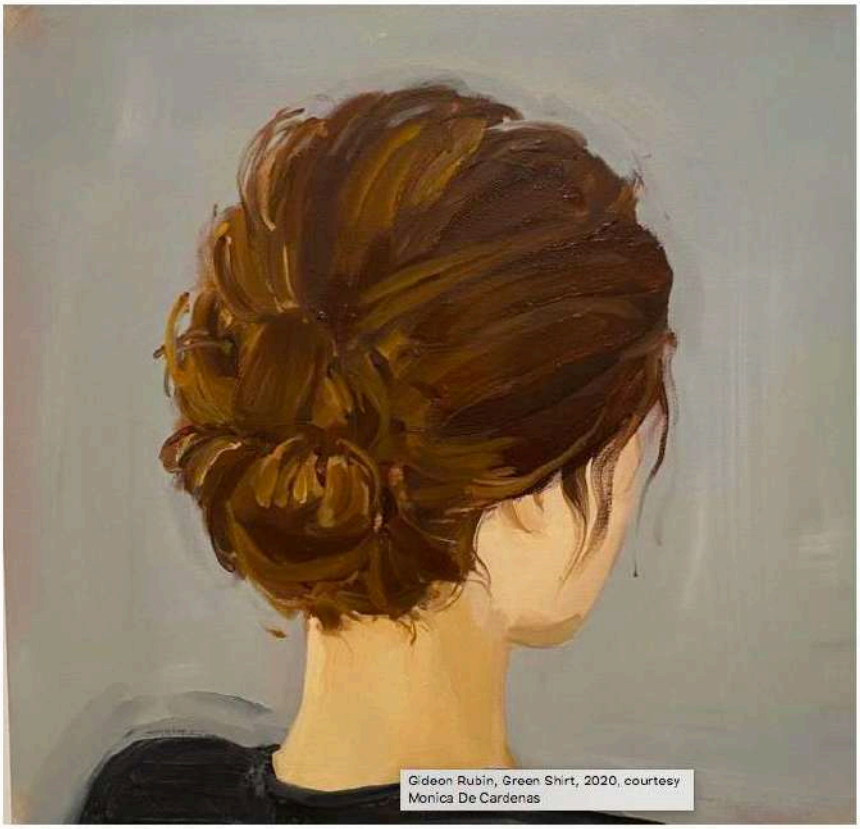
ANTICLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT A poster advertising one of Gideon's exhibitions in Shenzhen, China. *Black Bra*, oil on canvas, 2019. *Untitled*, oil on linen, 2020. Gideon relaxing in his studio. *Untitled*, oil on linen, 2019. Detail from *Black Pen*, oil on linen, 2019

Artribune
DAL 2011 ARTE ECCETERA ECCETERA

Il volto svela, l'artista cela. I ritratti impossibili di Gideon Rubin a Milano

By **Rubina Romanelli** - 2 settembre 2020

LA GALLERIA MONICA DE CARDENAS PRESENTA NELLA SUA SEDE MILANESE LA PRIMA MOSTRA PERSONALE IN ITALIA DI GIDEON RUBIN, ARTISTA ISRAELIANO DI BASE A LONDRA.

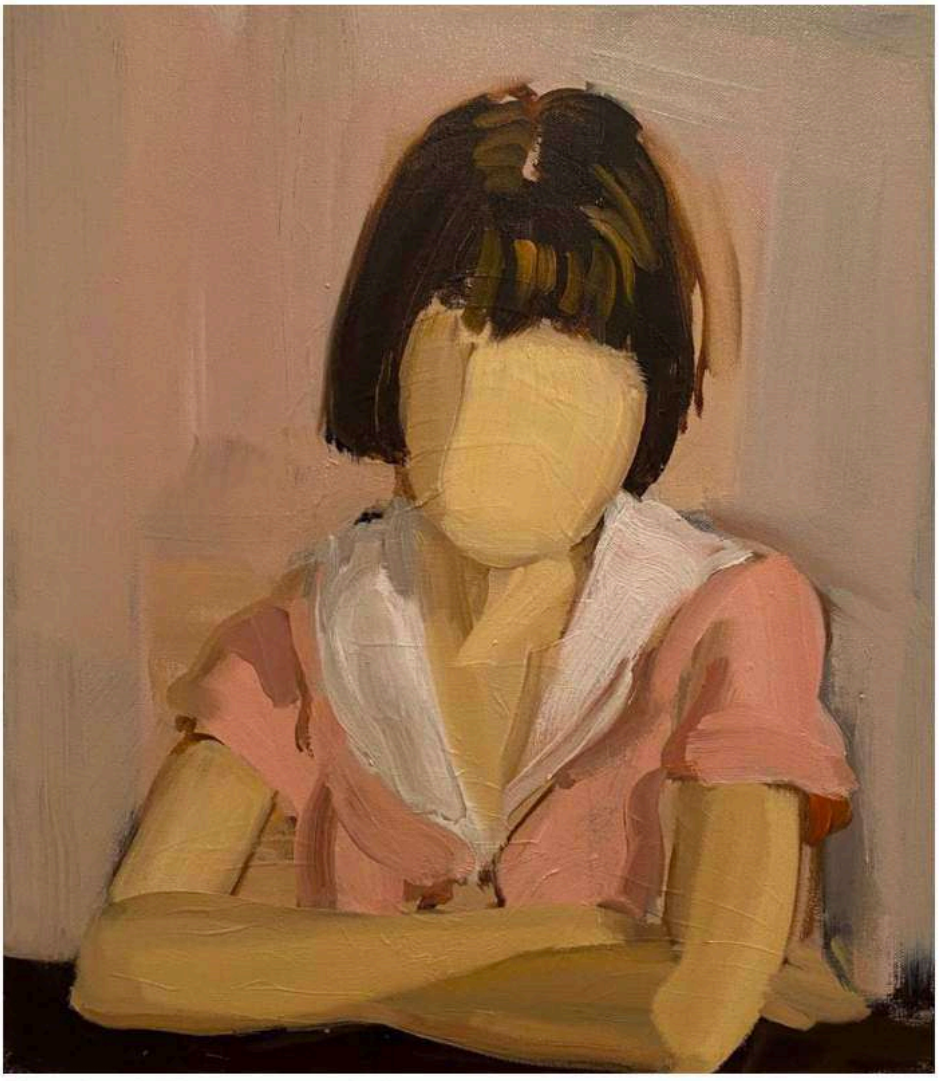


Gideon Rubin, Green Shirt, 2020, courtesy Monica De Cardenas

Nella mostra da Monica De Cardenas sono presentate opere recenti di vario formato. Gideon Rubin, classe 1973, è un pittore che si distingue per l'esecuzione di ritratti in cui i volti vengono cancellati e privati di qualsiasi tratto somatico. Il processo creativo di Rubin parte solitamente dalla raccolta di materiale proveniente da pubblicità, vecchie riviste o fotografie e, in generale, da immagini che l'artista colleziona meticolosamente e instancabilmente. Rubin archivia le immagini per poi trasporle e tradurle in pittura. Talvolta, invece, se ne appropria e vi dipinge direttamente sopra, partendo dalla cancellazione del volto attraverso la pittura, in contrasto con l'immagine fotografica del supporto originale sottostante.
Colpisce tuttavia come i volti, nonostante siano ricoperti dalla **pittura a olio** e di conseguenza teoricamente da questa neutralizzati, continuino a risultare enormemente espressivi. L'attenzione dell'osservatore, inaspettatamente, non trovando un primo riscontro sul volto, si rivolge dunque agli altri elementi del quadro: le pose, lo sfondo, i tratti del pennello, i colori. Poiché a mancare è proprio l'elemento chiave del volto, ogni altro dettaglio assume un'importanza fondamentale, e questa mancanza ci porta a indagare il quadro, a chiederci chi rappresenti, cosa stia succedendo, e a volerne cogliere l'aspetto più intimo ed emotivo, sicuramente meno esplicito di una espressione. Il volto svela, l'artista cela.

I DIPINTI DI GIDEON RUBIN

Nonostante l'omissione di qualsiasi particolare del viso, la psicologia dei personaggi trasuda dalle figure. Gli ovali vuoti diventano specchio o proiezione. In un procedimento similare ai famosi quadri specchianti di **Michelangelo Pistoletto**, dove specchiandoci entriamo nell'opera, con Rubin indugiamo e indaghiamo partendo dai volti, ma stavolta sono il vuoto e l'assenza che ci risucchiano dentro al quadro, trasportandoci in atmosfere senza tempo. Il rapporto spazio-tempo risulta così azzerato e l'empatia con l'opera è prima spiazzante, poi totale. Il quadro appare essenziale. Le figure che prendono vita nello spazio pittorico, ben lontane dai grandi ritratti storici, sono colte in momenti casuali della quotidianità, talvolta intimi. I paesaggi sono ambigui, ridotti al minimo, quasi astratti. Nonostante la fisionomia del **volto** sia omessa, o, meglio, cancellata, nelle tele c'è un aspetto fortemente evocativo. L'atmosfera è densa, pesante, le poche pennellate sono anch'esse colme di materiale pittorico. La cancellatura del volto su vecchie immagini, inoltre, certo non può non far pensare alle leggi razziali emanate in Italia nel 1938, con le quali gli umani venivano considerati al pari degli animali (in molti luoghi si vietava l'ingresso ai cani e agli ebrei), annullandone l'identità e la dignità. I volti nelle opere di Rubin vengono così anch'essi annullati: ammutiti e mutilati dei loro tratti somatici, non possono più esprimersi attraverso le espressioni facciali o l'uso della parola.



Gideon Rubin, Pink, 2019, courtesy Monica De Cardenas

STORIA, MEMORIA E PRESENTE NELLA PITTURA DI RUBIN

Da Monica De Cardenas, oltre alle svariate figure umane, che si potrebbero chiamare "i ritratti impossibili", alcune tele presentano solamente frammenti del corpo o di ambienti, dettagli ingranditi, *zoomed and cropped* dalla fonte originale. In qualche modo l'artista si allontana dal volto, come un elemento non più necessario, tanta ed equiparabile può essere la forza di un altro dettaglio una volta che ha catturato la nostra attenzione. Le dimensioni più contenute di queste opere aumentano l'intimità dei momenti colti. In alcune di esse non può non colpire la registrazione da parte dell'artista di un elemento attuale come la **mascherina** dipinta sul volto, ormai simbolo di un'altra guerra da combattere.
Abbiamo detto che le fonti delle opere di Rubin sono spesso immagini trovate, fotografie che appartengono a un passato personale ma anonimo, personaggi prelevati da riviste o giornali. I soggetti dei suoi quadri sono i più variegati: talvolta icone popolari britanniche, come la famiglia reale inglese, oppure persone a lui vicine come i componenti della sua stessa famiglia. L'artista crea così un archivio di immagini per i suoi quadri, una sorta di atto di riappropriazione di storie e memorie personali, passando anche da quelle negate dall'Olocausto fino a personaggi ormai scomparsi o che ha conosciuto solamente attraverso le pagine di libri e riviste. All'interno dello spazio pittorico, tutti vivono sullo stesso piano, il piano dell'esistenza, dello stare al mondo, della condizione umana, non una condizione sociale, ma una condizione di solitudine. Nasce così una costellazione infinita di persone che ruotano attorno a lui.

DALL'OLOCAUSTO A OGGI

Le sue opere, così come i personaggi che le abitano, esistono in una dimensione atemporale, non un tempo storico, ma quello interiore della memoria e dell'inconscio. Esse, inoltre, portano alla luce anche una parte mancante nella storia personale dell'artista il cui nonno, rinomato pittore, fu uno di dodici fratelli ma solo uno dei tre che sopravvissero all'**Olocausto**. Nonostante l'artista non abbia potuto incontrare di persona parte della sua famiglia e quindi non ne conservi ricordi, essi esistono e sono presenze ingombranti, che in questa costellazione silenziosa emanano un'eco assordante.
Essendo tematiche come la memoria così rilevanti nel suo lavoro, non è casuale che nel 2018 Gideon Rubin abbia realizzato una nella casa-museo di Freud a Londra (a cura di James Putnam), col quale condivide le origini ebraiche. Freud aveva dovuto lasciare Vienna nel 1938 per rifugiarsi a Londra, nel quartiere di Hampstead. L'anno successivo *Mein Kampf* veniva pubblicato in inglese e diffuso in Inghilterra. Il paradosso è che, mentre da un lato Freud godeva di una libertà ritrovata, dall'altro si insinuava la minaccia nazista. Rubin si riappropria di questo oggetto mefistofelico e vi cancella parti di testo e immagini, creando delle pagine monocrome e astratte; li potremmo definire "atti creativi esorcizzanti".
La domanda finale è dunque questa: perché coprire il volto? Nel processo di cancellazione (*erasing*) e dunque sottrazione, da un lato si perde ma, dall'altro, in direzione opposta, si guadagna, riportando alla superficie del presente la memoria di un individuo o di un momento, dandogli vita eterna, come solo la pittura sa fare.

– *Rubina Romanelli*

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Editoriale Giorgio Mondadori

A MILANO

Gideon Rubin

Il volto è uno spazio vuoto

I personaggi privi di lineamenti dipinti dall'artista israeliano coinvolgono lo spettatore, trascinandolo in un viaggio tra memoria e oblio

DI STEFANO CASTELLI

La caratteristica che accomuna i dipinti di **Gideon Rubin** (Tel Aviv, 1973) è l'occultamento del volto. Talvolta viene raffigurata la nuca, oppure il viso è "omesso" da un'inquadratura parziale, che taglia parte del corpo. Nella maggioranza dei casi la figura si offre invece frontalmente allo sguardo di chi osserva il dipinto, ma è completamente priva di lineamenti. L'ovale del viso si apre così all'interpretazione, creando non un'assenza tragica di espressione, ma piuttosto uno spazio "drammatico" che collega emotivamente soggetto e spettatore.



Gideon Rubin, *Untitled (Two in a boat)*, 2019, olio su lino, cm 77x102, in mostra fino al 10 ottobre da Monica De Cardenas a Milano.



TRA MOVIMENTO E STASI, SPUNTI DI SENSUALITA' ACCENNATA



ASTRAZIONE NELLA FIGURA. Nipote del pittore **Reuven Rubin** (1893-1974), l'artista ha compiuto i suoi studi a Londra, dove vive tuttora. I volti ipotetici da lui dipinti sono il risultato di un processo che l'ha portato da un realismo accurato alla ricerca dell'astrazione dentro la figura. Più che di un'evoluzione graduale si è trattato però di un cambio repentino: lo stile attuale è nato dopo lo shock degli **attentati dell'11 settembre 2001**, dei quali Rubin è stato testimone diretto, trovandosi nell'Ottava strada al momento del disastro. Nacque allora anche un diverso modo di lavorare, più frenetico e veloce. Il risultato è una notevole freschezza espressiva, testimoniata dalla personale che la galleria **Monica De Cardenas** dedica all'artista nella sua sede di Milano, con ventisette dipinti su tela o lino realizzati tra il 2018 e il 2020 e una selezione di piccoli lavori su cartone. I diversi formati, la serrata alternanza di ritratti e scene più ampie, oltre naturalmente alla mancanza dei lineamenti, "accerchiano" il visitatore. Paradossalmente, proprio la semplificazione e la mancata caratterizzazione rendono i lavori più coinvolgenti: come se le **figure umane ipotetiche** interrogassero direttamente chi le guarda, invitandolo a completare ciò che manca con la propria fantasia o i propri ricordi.

COME IN UNO SPECCHIO. La prima sala getta le basi del discorso riunendo un suggestivo panorama acquatico, con due figure infantili su una barca che danno l'impressione allo stesso tempo di movimento e stasi, due "ritratti parziali", nei quali del corpo si vede solo un frammento, e due eleganti figure femminili ritratte di spalle (i capelli sono il primo esempio della forza espressiva dell'artista). Nelle sale successive, il senso di empatia con i soggetti aumenta: ad esempio nei confronti dell'infermiera un po' spettrale di *Nurse* (2020) o del ragazzo abbandonato in una barca in mezzo a una distesa d'acqua (*Boy in boat*, 2020). E il rispecchiamento tocca il culmine con i lavori realizzati durante la pandemia, nei quali i soggetti ritratti indossano la mascherina così come è obbligato a fa-

continua a pag. 102 ⟶



Altri tre lavori di Gideon Rubin in mostra a Milano. 1 *Black bra*, 2019, olio su tela, cm 35,5x30,5. 2 *White stripes*, 2018, olio su lino, cm 51x45,5. 3 *Untitled*, 2019, olio su lino, cm 101x90.

Le gallerie in Italia e all'estero, i prezzi e la prossima mostra

Oltre a **Monica De Cardenas** (Milano, Zuoz e Lugano, www.monicadecardenas.com), le altre gallerie che trattano Gideon Rubin sono **Karsten Greve** (Colonia, Parigi e Sankt Moritz, www.galerie-karsten-greve.com), **Hosfelt** (San Francisco, www.hosfeltgallery.com), **Alon Segev** (Tel Aviv, www.alonsegev.com) e **FoxJensen & FoxJensenMcCrory** (Sidney e Auckland, www.jensengallery.com). I prezzi dei dipinti su tela o su lino variano da **10mila euro** per un piccolo formato a **45mila euro** per un formato medio-grande. I piccoli lavori su cartone costano invece **3.500 euro** (a tutti i prezzi va aggiunta l'IVA). Dopo l'appuntamento milanese, la prossima mostra di Rubin è in programma dal 16 ottobre al 7 novembre alla galleria Karsten Greve di Parigi.



4 Gideon Rubin, *The couple*, 2020, olio su lino, cm 35,5x20,5. 5 *Red trousers*, 2019, olio su tela, cm 122x102. La mostra milanese presenta 27 dipinti realizzati tra il 2018 e il 2020, oltre a piccole opere su cartone.

→ segue da pag. 100

re il visitatore della mostra. È una **pittura di contrasti**, quella di Rubin. Ad atmosfere "nordiche" si mescolano tocchi caldi e sensuali, a una **solennità quasi da arte antica** si affiancano tocchi di libertà espressiva decisamente attuali, la ricercatezza del dipinto trova un contrasto in tratti di non finito (spesso emerge la tela grezza in alcune zone del dipinto). Lo spazio aperto dalla "vaghezza" dei soggetti, poi, viene colmato da particolari fortemente connotati, come la cravatta in *Trench coat* (2020) o il manto del cavallo in *Boy and horse* (2019).

VISIONI TRATTE DA UN IMMAGINARIO COLLETTIVO ALIMENTATO DALLE RIVISTE



FONTI D'ISPIRAZIONE. La sensualità, presente in tutti i lavori, si manifesta esplicitamente in una sala della mostra caratterizzata da una dimensione intima, con figure colte nell'atto di spogliarsi raffigurate con eleganza in dipinti dal formato ridotto. Hanno invece toni cromatici più caldi i tre piccoli dipinti del ciclo dedicato al **Palazzo Monti di Brescia**, sede di un programma di residenze artistiche cui Rubin ha partecipato nel 2018. C'è anche l'altro filone, che utilizza **supporti "poveri"**: lavori di piccolo formato su pezzi di cartone da imballaggio. Vi si riconoscono, sempre privati dei lineamenti, personaggi come **Amy Winehouse** o capolavori della storia dell'arte come *Las meninas* di **Velázquez**. Si svelano così le fonti utilizzate dall'artista, anche nei dipinti su tela: immagini di vario tipo trovate sulle riviste, ovvero un campionario che pesca nell'immaginario collettivo per **mettere in comunicazione memoria e oblio**, storie personali e storia collettiva. ■

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GIDEON RUBIN. Milano, galleria Monica De Cardenas (via Francesco Viganò 4, tel. 02-29010068, www.monicadecardenas.com). Fino al 10 ottobre.



EN EFFAÇANT LES TRAITS DE SES PERSONNAGES, IL SAISIT L'ESSENTIEL ET FASCINE LA PLANÈTE ARTY. DEPUIS QUINZE ANS, CE PEINTRE ISRAÉLIEN POURSUIT UN TRAVAIL HABITÉ, ENTREMÊLÉ D'HISTOIRE ET D'ÉMOTION. PORTRAIT SENSIBLE À L'OCCASION DE SON EXPOSITION À PARIS.

GIDEON RUBIN
Figure de l'art

CONFINEMENT OBLIGE, au printemps dernier, c'est par vidéoconférence que se raconte Gideon Rubin, depuis son atelier du nord de Londres. Chaleureux, volubile, il offre un café virtuel, se lève pour montrer une toile, se rassoit, glisse une anecdote, se lève à nouveau. Petit-fils de Reuven Rubin, peintre reconnu, fils de la curatrice du Rubin Museum à Tel Aviv, où il est né en 1973, Gedeon a grandi entouré d'art. « Jamais, pourtant, je n'avais pensé que je serais artiste, explique-t-il. Dans l'atelier resté intact de mon grand-père (mort quand il avait un an, NDLR) au sein de sa maison-musée, la seule chose qui m'attirait était sa palette couverte de peinture sèche, la sensation que j'avais en passant la main dessus. »
À 22 ans, son service militaire achevé, il part quelques mois sac à dos avec un ami, en Amérique latine. Un voyage initiatique au cours duquel il décide de devenir artiste. Il s'envolera ensuite pour New York étudier à la School of Visual Arts.

En 2000, nouveau départ pour Londres et la Slade School of Fine Art. « Je voulais vivre en Europe à cause des grands maîtres de la peinture espagnole, Vélasquez, Goya… » Entre deux années d'études, en 2001, Gideon Rubin séjourne de nouveau à New York, quand « le 11 septembre, le monde s'écroule, littéralement ». Il rentre par le premier avion et révolutionne sa façon de peindre – « j'étais dans une telle tempête émotionnelle ». Il se met à esquisser à toute vitesse des petites natures mortes de vieilles poupées qu'il chine en collectionneur avide, dans des teintes sourdes, naturelles, qui rappellent Giorgio Morandi, une autre de ses influences.
« J'ai découvert que j'étais davantage un peintre immédiat, rapide. Je peignais ces vieux jouets et, parfois, le temps en avait effacé les yeux, la bouche, il leur manquait les mains. Mais comme je suis d'abord un portraitiste, petit à petit, je suis revenu vers les gens, mes amis, ma fiancée… Et je les ai peints comme les poupées, plus vite, sans mettre les yeux, en esquissant juste la silhouette, en les glissant dans une ombre. » Vers 2005, dans une librairie de livres anciens, à Londres, il tombe sur des albums-photos de l'époque victorienne. « Des clichés jaunis qui s'effaçaient comme de lointains souvenirs. À partir de là, je n'ai plus cessé de peindre des photographies. L'absence de visage est devenue une porte, une ouverture, une manière de ne pas imposer de limites. »

PAR **ANNE-CLAIRE MEFFRE**



L'artiste (dans son atelier devant l'une de ses compositions) confisque l'identité des personnages de ses toiles (*The Artist's Wife and Daughter*, 2019, ci-contre) et crée un dialogue entre l'œuvre et le spectateur, qui peut y retranscrire sa propre histoire.

PHOTOS GIDEON RUBIN/COURTESY OF GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE KÖLN PARIS ST. MORITZ/RICHARD IVEY

MINIMALISME ET SUGGESTION

Les personnages de Gideon Rubin sont à la fois mystérieusement incarnés et évanescents. « Un curateur a dit que mon travail arrêtait le temps. Je pense que cela vient du fait qu'on est obsédés par nos différences, alors qu'on est surtout faits de similarités. Ma femme est chinoise de Hongkong. Quand j'y ai exposé mes peintures, son père s'est reconnu dans l'une d'elles alors qu'elle était tirée d'une photo de 1935 en Pologne ou en Hongrie. C'est arrivé très souvent. En enlevant quelques détails, aussi infimes soient-ils, les images changent, s'entrecroisent et parlent à tous. » Dans les quelques paysages qu'il peint aussi, il cherche la normalité, la familiarité d'une vue quotidienne qui, un jour, se révèle autrement : des palmiers, des montagnes enneigées, un bout de nature. « Ils deviennent abstraits pour moi, comme si quelqu'un venait juste d'y passer… » Gideon Rubin aime le minimalisme et la suggestion. Il puise dans les magazines des références très actuelles. Dans une petite série qu'il appelle *De Goya à Paris Hilton*, il peint, toujours sans leurs traits, les grands maîtres espagnols qui l'ont tant inspiré, comme les célébrités de notre époque, Kate Moss ou Billie Eilish.
En 2018, une exposition-clé au Freud Museum à Londres dévoile une autre facette de son travail. Connu pour sa passion pour l'histoire et les images du passé (qui l'avait amené à peindre sur d'anciennes publications), il est invité par le musée à se pencher sur le Vienne de 1938, qu'avait fui Freud pour se réfugier à Londres. Sa femme lui déniche des magazines de l'époque, saturés d'images de propagande et de symboles nazis, et une première édition de la traduction anglaise de *Mein Kampf*. Il surmonte son effroi et peint sur les ouvrages, effaçant textes, visages, svastikas… Ce *Black Book* sera le cœur et le titre de l'exposition, et le moyen pour lui de contredire le concept freudien du refoulement : « En recouvrant les symboles, je cherchais à révéler une certaine vérité. »
Toujours en action, Gideon Rubin expose partout, à un rythme effréné. Il arrive à Paris cet automne, à la Galerie Karsten Greve *, avec deux séries : l'une inspirée du cinéma de la République de Weimar dans les années 1920, et l'autre, de portraits sans visage de personnalités qui l'ont influencé – Alice Neel, Willem de Kooning… Un parallèle entre cette histoire qui l'obsède et son histoire d'artiste. ✦

* *« Gideon Rubin », du 16 octobre au 7 novembre, à la Galerie Karsten Greve, à Paris. galerie-karsten-greve.com et gideonrubin.com*


PAMBIANCO
MAGAZINE
NUMERI, FATTI E PROTAGONISTI DELLA MODA E DEL LUSSO
In cerca di VISIONI sul futuro, la moda si muove tra la voglia di indipendenza dalle FASHION WEEK e timori di nuovi competitor digitali. Intanto, la Borsa si interroga: si ripeterà l'effetto Covid? Per ora, a Londra, trema il TAX FREE
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COVER BY GIDEON RUBIN













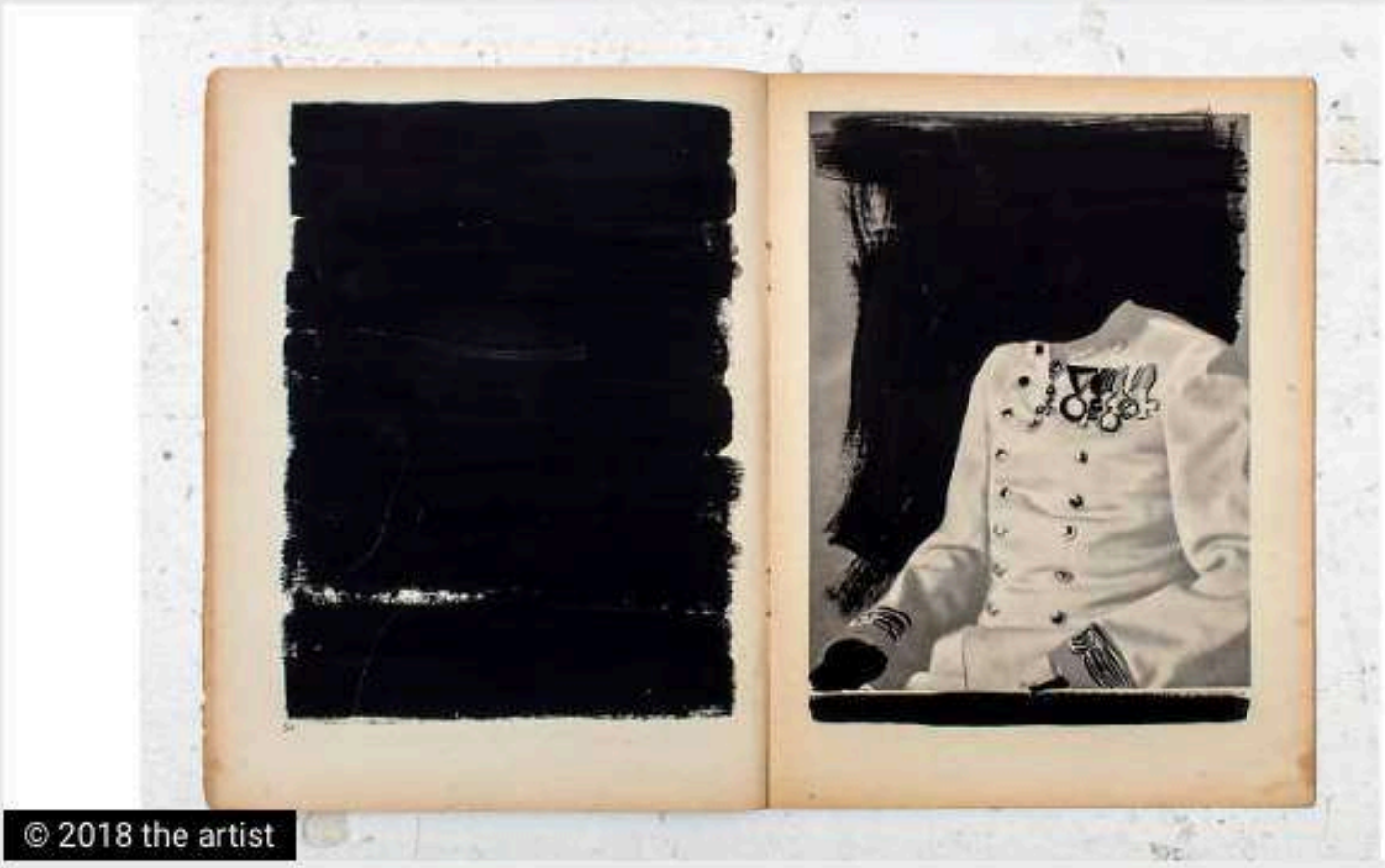
L'umanità senza volto di GIDEON RUBIN

Uomini e donne senza volto, colti in momenti di impalpabile intimità. A ritrarli è Gideon Rubin, autore di opere melanconiche, che parlano di un passato anonimo eppure familiare, di memorie prelevate da giornali e vecchie fotografie per essere assunte come frammenti di una storia più ampia. Una coppia che cammina abbracciata, una ragazza che si sveste, i fiori che lentamente appassiscono fanno parte di una dimensione quasi atemporale di quiete, amplificata dalle tenui colorazioni utilizzate. Toni sabbiosi, blu grigiastri e bianchi lattiginosi sono distesi sulla tela con pennellate fluide e seduttive, che suggeriscono il desiderio di riportare in vita un ricordo tramite la pittura e dargli durata nel tempo. I volti, privati dei tratti somatici, assumono una involontaria risonanza nell'attuale pandemia. Le mascherine chirurgiche che noi tutti adesso indossiamo celano i nostri più significativi tratti identitari, rendendoci astratti ed enigmatici, ma al tempo stesso reali e vitali, al pari delle sagome fantasmatiche che abitano le figurazioni dell'artista israeliano. Nato a Tel Aviv nel 1973, Rubin ha studiato alla School of Visual Arts di New York e poi alla Slade School of Fine Arts di Londra, dove ha completato gli studi nel 2002 e attualmente vive. Già noto a livello internazionale grazie a numerose esposizioni tenutesi in tutto il mondo, è ora alla sua prima mostra personale in Italia, dal 3 giugno al 10 ottobre 2020 ospitata nella sede milanese della Galleria Monica De Cardenas.

Courtesy of Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Milano / Zuoz

Gideon Rubin: Black Book

Art, Contemporary art Freud Museum , Frognal Until Sunday April 15 2018



© 2018 the artist

TIME OUT SAYS

★★★★☆

DETAILS

DATES AND TIMES

USERS SAY

Gideon Rubin's family fled the Nazis 80 years ago, just like Sigmund Freud, in whose Hampstead home the artist has secreted a series of new artworks. Most of this show is based on pre-war German magazine images, from which the taint of Nazism has been erased. Swastikas have been removed from the vests of exercising girls, parades have been doctored out of streets, colourful flags have replaced red ones we'd rather forget, but never can, or should. These images are put on the walls of Freud's house, in the glass-fronted cabinets of its permanent exhibitions, and among Freud's possessions in his study. In their vintage gilt frames, Rubin's works look like they've always belonged there.

This exhibition is small, but it packs a punch. By hiding doctored artefacts in historical surroundings, what look like rooms from the past actually contain an alternative narrative where Nazis didn't parade and didn't murder millions. You have to dig out and separate the fiction from the reality, just as Freud would ask people to do with their own psyches.

But the real urgency comes with the 'Black Book' of the exhibition title itself: a first edition 1939 English version of 'Mein Kampf'. Every page has been redacted, erasing Hitler's words. It is an inversion of history in which the oppressors cease to exist in the way the oppressed actually did.

BY: JONATHAN MCALOON

26 Mar 2018

5 QUESTIONS

Gideon Rubin on Painting Over the Past

"I could not have imagined working with this explosive material." For Black Book Gideon Rubin looks at truth, memory and the media, placing edited pages from German 1930s newspapers in Sigmund Freud's former London home. Words by Rosalind Duguid



You currently have a show on at the Freud Museum in London. Can you tell me a little about it?

It all started following a visit to the museum almost two years ago. I visit Freud's former home once or twice a year: I'm a groupie, I love this place, it's local and I like to think that every visit I take something with me. This time in particular I thought about Freud's narrow escape from Vienna in 1938, the way he was eventually allowed to leave with some family members, his belongings, cherished collections, books and even the famous couch. I thought of the parallels with my own family's history and parallels with today's refugee crisis.

"Memories are not erased, they are covered by another layer which makes them seem to disappear, but they don't, they are still very much there"

I have been working with 1950s and 1960s magazines and newspapers for the last couple of years. It began on an Outset residency in Tel Aviv where I worked with Israeli 1950s gossip magazines. Then I worked with 1960s pre-Cultural Revolution magazines on a residency in China a couple of months later. As I left the Freud Museum I found myself wondering about the magazines and newspapers which predated the war, the ones Freud and other refugees like him must have seen as they were fleeing their homes. What did these papers look like? Eventually I managed to put my hands on a few and immediately started painting over them, instinctively drawn to and also repulsed by the source material. Only when I was cutting out or painting over the swastikas and images of the Nazi army marching in the streets did it start to make sense. It made me feel better. In an era of fake news, it felt as if I was editing the news of the past. Editing history.

So I guess in Black Book I finally managed to combine a few of my obsessions: history, collective memories and those pre-sixties magazines, where all was more simply laid out; ideologies, right and wrong, work, family, even World War Two.



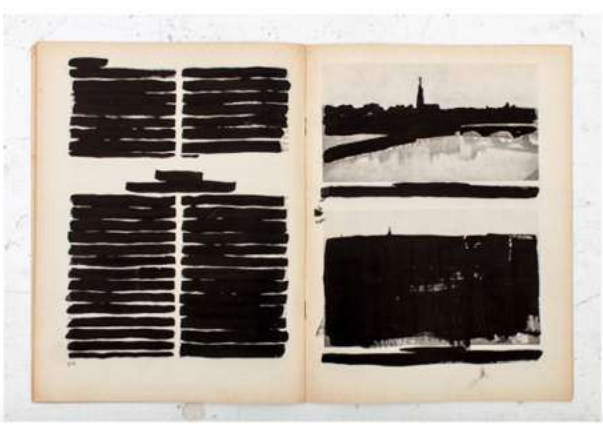
What was the process of sourcing and picking this imagery like?

Initially I asked the gallery I work with in Germany, Galerie Karsten Greve, if they could help me find these magazines. I had no idea where to even start looking for these publications, and I was unaware that they could not be bought or sold in Germany. My wife, Silia, jumped in and two weeks later I received a package with quite a few publications which she had found on eBay. Handling it felt very strange and eerie at first, but I got used to it.

"I'm not sure how I feel about nostalgia, but I've been obsessed with the notion of time since I can remember"

How do you feel the exhibition's location in Sigmund Freud's last home will influence the way the work is read?

I wanted to place my work amidst Freud's personal objects and memorabilia unobtrusively. I wish for the viewer to hardly notice the little changes I made by inserting my works around the house. Also, my aim is not to focus solely on the Holocaust, attempting perhaps to bring one's attention closer to our time, to the present. There is also the notion of erasing or painting over the source material, much like our memories, in keeping with Freud's legacy. Memories are not erased, they are covered by another layer which makes them seem to disappear, but they don't, they are still very much there. One of the interesting facts I learned about Freud's collections when I was preparing the show was that the quality or rarity of the antiques was not crucial for him. Significant was the fact that they were actually unearthed. In some way I was trying to play with this process, turn it on its head a bit. There is also the challenging juxtaposition between the horrific nature of the work and its display in the intimate surroundings of the house.



You largely paint faceless figures, further evoking partial or fragmented memories. Where did this fascination with nostalgia and memory begin?

I'm not sure how I feel about nostalgia, but I've been obsessed with the notion of time since I can remember. Even in high school, the only class I found mildly interesting, challenging and thought-provoking was history class. One of my favourite past-times is roaming endlessly through antique markets and thrift shops. My parents' house where I grew up is not that different from Freud's home, filled to the ceiling with books, art and antiques. At the same time I can't bare looking at my own past, my own family's photo albums. I actually can't stand it.



Many of your previous painted works have been deliberately ambiguous. How did making Black Book, where you're dealing quite directly with a very specific kind of propaganda, differ?

I could not have imagined working with this explosive material. I have never before produced overtly specific political work. It always felt like going around the issues rather than facing them directly. Making the Black Book series felt like diving into the heart of some of those issues I have been and still am preoccupied with in my personal life, my family history and my work. It was touching where it hurt the most. I don't think I would have been able to deal with this had the project not developed organically, as it did: from the way my wife accidentally bought Mein Kampf's English translation assuming it was more of the same German magazines; and then I just had to react to what I found in front of me.





At the opening someone mentioned that the work felt like sticking your tongue out, a childish reaction. In a way I agree, how can one face this darkest chapter in human history? One of the books that changed the way I thought of evil and of the Holocaust was Alone in Berlin by Hans Fallada. It also reminds me of an article by one of my favourite Israeli journalists in Haaretz (a liberal paper, the equivalent of the Guardian) where, speaking of the current political situation in Israel, he writes that we should not expect, think or dream of winning. All we can strive for is protest itself, making our voice heard. That's as noble as we can get.

All images: Untitled, 2017. Courtesy the artist

Black Book

Until 15 April at the Freud Museum, London

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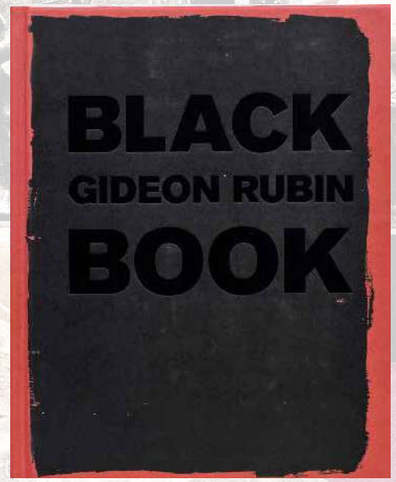
PORTFOLIO

BLACK BOOK DE GIDEON RUBIN

Gideon Rubin est un artiste israélien installé à Londres. Au printemps dernier, il a créé pour le Musée Freud de Londres un projet spécial, *Black Book*.

Avec cette exposition à l'intérieur du domicile et cabinet londonien de Sigmund Freud, Rubin s'intéresse à la fin des années trente, lorsque Freud quittait Vienne pour Londres, à travers des magazines allemands d'avant-guerre et une copie d'une traduction en anglais de M*ein Kampf* dont il a systématiquement recouvert les mots pour en effacer la force infâme.

Plus d'informations
- sur Gideon Rubin : gideonrubin.com
- sur le Musée Freud de Londres : www.freud.org.uk



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ENTRETIEN AVEC GIDEON RUBIN

Propos recueillis et traduits par ASD

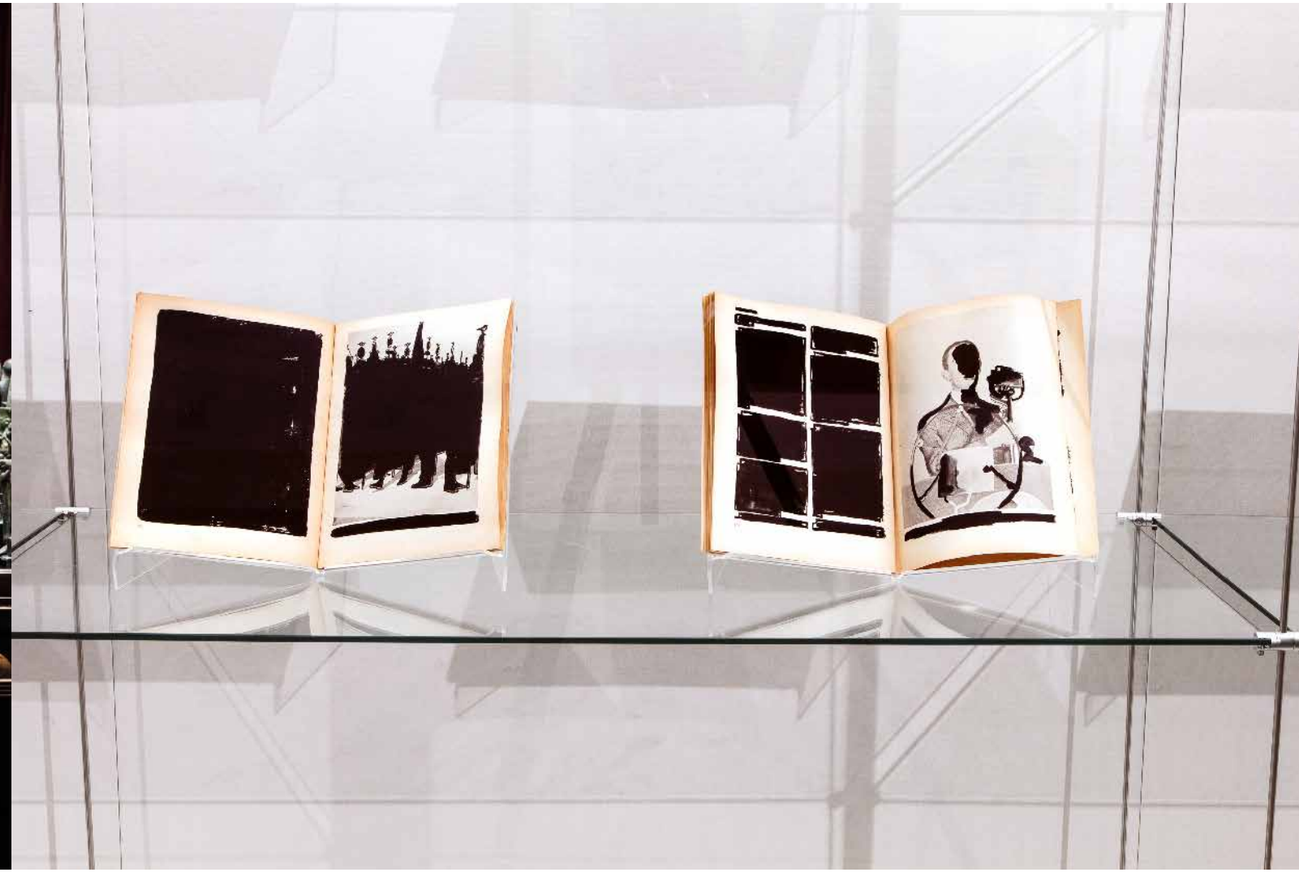
LE PROJET BLACK BOOK A ÉTÉ CRÉÉ SPÉCIALEMENT POUR LE MUSÉE FREUD DE LONDRES, DE QUOI S'AGIT-IL ?

Je vis à Londres non loin du Musée Freud que je visite souvent parce que cette maison m'est très particulière, unique à bien des égards – à chaque visite, je crois, je quitte ce lieu avec quelque chose. Il y a environ deux ans, en quittant le musée à l'issue d'une de ces visites, je pensais à l'époque où Freud a quitté Vienne pour Londres, très tardivement. Je me demandais comment il avait finalement été autorisé à partir en emportant avec lui quelques membres de sa famille et tant de ses affaires et de ses objets de collection. Je me demandais aussi ce que pouvaient être les magazines et les journaux affichés dans les kiosques viennois alors qu'il se précipitait hors de la ville qu'il aimait tant. À quoi ressemblaient-ils ? Les journaux datant d'après le début de la guerre, c'est révélateur, ne m'intriguaient pas. Lorsque j'y repense, je me demande souvent pourquoi je me suis retrouvé là-dedans. Était-ce lié à mon obsession récente pour les magazines et journaux anciens qui avait débuté cinq ans auparavant lors d'une résidence à Tel Aviv ? Ou peut-être était-ce le flux ininterrompu de migrants qui se noient sur les côtes européennes ? Quoi qu'il en soit, c'est ce qui m'a fait avancer. Quelque temps plus tard, avec l'aide de ma femme, j'ai acheté sur eBay quelques magazines allemands de la fin des années trente. Bien qu'ils fussent très inconfortables à manipuler et à peindre, le résultat était intéressant. Quoique similaires, dans le processus, à ce que j'avais fait avec des magazines israéliens ou chinois, ceux-ci étaient manifestement plus sombres en termes de ton et de sujets. Ce n'est qu'après avoir entrepris ce travail que j'ai pensé qu'il pourrait intéresser le musée Freud – et je suis heureux que ça ait été le cas. Le titre, *Black book* ("Livre noir") n'est venu que plus tard lorsque j'ai commencé à noircir les pages de la première édition feuilletonnée de *Mein Kampf* en anglais, qui constitue à mon sens, le cœur noir de cette exposition.

POUR LE PROJET BLACK BOOK, VOUS AVEZ TRAVAILLÉ SUR DES COPIES DE "MEIN KAMPF", CE QUI PEUT SEMBLER PROVOCATEUR. POUVEZ-VOUS NOUS EXPLIQUER COMMENT VOUS EN ÊTES ARRIVÉ LÀ ?

Ce que je sais, c'est qu'en aucun cas je n'aurais fait ça intentionnellement. Tout s'est passé par coïncidence. J'étais déjà bien avancé dans ce projet et je voulais voir la maison de Freud à Vienne. Sur le chemin du retour, j'ai dit à ma femme, l'artiste Silia Ka Tung, que j'allais être à court de magazines allemands d'avant-guerre et qu'il m'en fallait de nouveaux. Elle a pensé racheter le même type de magazines. Je vous laisse imaginer l'horreur qui m'a saisi lorsque, j'ai ouvert le paquet soigneusement fermé un matin alors que nous préparions nos filles pour l'école. Ma première réaction a été de vouloir balancer ces horreurs à la poubelle mais je me suis dit qu'elles étaient trop sales pour ça. Je ne pouvais pas les tolérer sous mon toit. Alors je les ai pris et je les ai posés dans le placard à outils de mon studio en essayant de ne plus y penser. Lorsque





je suis rentré chez moi ce soir-là, ma femme m'a parlé d'une discussion qu'elle avait eue avec un de nos amis conservateurs. Lorsqu'elle m'a rapporté son idée que peut-être je devrais en faire de l'art, j'ai pensé que c'était la plus mauvaise idée que j'aie jamais entendue. Je détestais tellement ces papiers qu'au bout de deux jours, avec une infinie réticence, j'ai rouvert le paquet, j'en ai pris un et j'ai peint la couverture en noir. J'étais à la fois attiré et repoussé par ça. Ce fut le début, j'ai mis six mois à finir.

FREUD S'INTÉRESSAIT À L'INCONSCIENT, VOUS SEMBLE-T-IL QUE MASQUER DES SYMBOLES OU DES FIGURES NAZIS ET LES MOTS DE HITLER FAIT PARTIE D'UN TRAVAIL INCONSCIENT DE VOTRE PART ?

En me promenant parmi mes œuvres dans le musée Freud, il m'est apparu que mon travail s'apparentait à des souvenirs, comme si les choses ne pouvaient pas juste disparaître. Peindre par-dessus un drapeau nazi, une image de Hitler ou de l'armée nazie paradant dans les rues ne les fait pas partir. Ni la réalité ni nos souvenirs de cela. Mais ça l'enfouit, ça libère un espace nécessaire à de nouvelles expériences. Cela devient le fondement de quelque chose qui est à la fois très nouveau et très ancré dans son passé. Un peu comme des fondations que l'on bâtirait par-dessus des ruines anciennes. À l'image de Freud lui-même qui s'intéressait aux objets antiques, peut-être pas tant pour leur valeur artistique que parce qu'elles avaient été enterrées longtemps pour ne resurgir qu'avec le temps.

VOTRE TRAVAIL EN GÉNÉRAL TEND À MASQUER DES CHOSES QUI, POURTANT, NE DISPARAISSENT PAS. D'UNE CERTAINE FAÇON, ELLES SONT MÊME RENDUES PLUS PRÉSENTES PAR LE VOILE DE LA PEINTURE. QUEL SENS CELA FAIT-IL POUR VOUS ?

Pour moi, effacer ou masquer certaines parties d'une image est un acte positif. C'est comme s'il y a une ligne tracée sur un papier blanc et que vous l'effacez ou la masquez, elle reste très visible – elle devient un passage, une porte. Comme une empreinte, un souvenir, tout en étant aussi quelque chose de nouveau, soustrait à son état originel. Cet état me semble bien plus mystérieux, il offre d'infinies possibilités, permet à celui qui le regarde d'y apporter sa propre histoire.

À TRAVERS VOTRE TRAVAIL, EN FAIT, VOUS N'EFFACEZ PAS LES CHOSES, VOUS LEUR AJOUTEZ PLUTÔT DE LA MATIÈRE. AVEC CE PROJET, AJOUTEZ-VOUS DE LA MATIÈRE À LA PHILOSOPHIE DE FREUD ET À L'HISTOIRE ?

Si je parviens à ajouter ma propre petite expérience, ce projet *Black Book* à la riche histoire du Musée Freud, alors j'ai réalisé plus que je ne l'aurais jamais rêvé. Avant l'exposition, une des choses que j'appréhendais le plus, qui m'inquiétait le plus, était la réaction possible de survivants de la Shoah à ce projet *Black Book*. Un ami très cher, un artiste israélien, a amené son père, survivant de la Shoah, voir l'exposition. Il a été touché, ému aux larmes. Ça, je ne l'oublierai jamais.

ATELIER DE PENSÉE(S) JUIVE(S) תנועה
TENOU'A

AU (RE)COMMENCEMENT
UN NUMÉRO CONÇU PAR TENOU'A ET L'AJC

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N° 180 - ÉTÉ 2020

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#PEINDRE

RALENTIR, RÉFLÉCHIR, RETROUVER

GIDEON RUBIN
ARTISTE



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POUR LE PEINTRE ISRAÉLIEN GIDEON RUBIN, QUI PARTAGE SA VIE ENTRE LONDRES, TEL AVIV ET HONG KONG, CE CONFINEMENT MARQUE UNE PAUSE, UNE DÉCÉLÉRATION DONT LES RÉSULTATS EN STUDIO LE SURPRENNENT.

Une chose est sûre : en tant qu'artiste, on s'adapte très bien à être confiné. D'une certaine façon, ceci est notre état naturel, notre *modus operandi*. J'imagine que c'est différent pour chaque artiste mais, pour moi, la peinture apparaît souvent comme un projet solitaire. Quand tout ceci a débuté, je venais de rentrer à Londres de New York et Jérusalem où j'exposais. En fait, l'expo de la Jerusalem Artist House n'a été ouverte qu'une petite semaine avant de devoir fermer. Voyager et traverser des aéroports à moitié déserts fut une bien étrange expérience.

Le mois dernier, je devais inaugurer une expo avec un autre artiste au Musée Rubin de Tel Aviv, juste entre le *Séder* de *Pessah* chez mes parents et la *bat mitsva* de notre fille aînée. Mais bien sûr, tout ça et tant d'autres projets ont été reportés. Avec nos engagements professionnels tout autour du monde et nos vies éparpillées entre trois villes (ma femme vient de Hong Kong, je suis israélien et nous vivons à Londres), nous voici devenus les illustrations d'un monde de globe-trotters qui s'est retrouvé soudainement cloué au sol, à l'arrêt complet.

Souvent, ma femme rit de moi en disant que je peins comme si j'étais poursuivi (elle ajoute habituellement « par une meute de chiens sauvages »). Et là, pour la première fois en quinze ans, je ne cours pas après une *deadline*. Comme pour tant d'autres, le premier effet du confinement fut de m'arrêter net dans mes projets. Cela m'a forcé à m'arrêter, pour penser. Et cela m'a permis de passer plus de temps avec nos trois magnifiques filles, et de lire, et de faire plus d'exercice. Qui plus est, mes filles ont davantage de temps pour poser pour moi (enfin, uniquement si je les laisse regarder un écran…).

Pour parler spécifiquement de mon travail, tout ceci m'a fait ralentir et réfléchir… Par chance, mon studio ne se situe qu'à quelques minutes à pieds de notre domicile – je peux m'y rendre quand je veux, et peindre ; c'est ce qui me permet de rester sain d'esprit en temps normal déjà, en ce moment bien plus encore. Il me semble toujours qu'à l'intérieur du studio, nous disposons d'un autre filtre, d'un calque glissé entre nous et la réalité. Une sorte de compromis dans lequel certains aspects du monde extérieur suintent à travers le travail artistique. La première chose que j'ai remarquée, c'étaient les masques sur les visages. J'ai vu si souvent des gens porter des masques dans les rues de Hong Kong mais maintenant que cela a atteint notre réalité, j'imagine qu'il n'y a rien de surprenant à ce qu'ils se soient fait une place sur mes toiles.

Avoir le temps d'écouter et de m'arrêter dans mon studio m'a permis de porter un nouveau regard sur des travaux que j'avais laissés de côté. Je pense par exemple à une peinture issue d'une série de tableaux antiques que j'ai accumulés au cours de mes voyages. Je les ramène au studio et me plais à les triturer en ajoutant ou en effaçant des éléments du tableau d'origine. Celle-ci est une peinture anonyme que j'ai depuis des années – un magnifique paysage classique –, et cela fait des années que je ne sais pas trop ce que je pourrais bien en faire. Cela m'a pris pas loin de deux jours de travail, au cœur de cette crise, en isolement… j'ai simplement ajouté un minuscule petit personnage. Peut-être est-ce moi, moi rêvant d'être dehors à nouveau.

Traduit de l'anglais par ASD

Au mois d'octobre, la galerie Karsten Greve de Paris consacre une exposition aux œuvres de **Gideon Rubin**. Plus d'informations sur *https://galerie-karsten-greve.com/*



Courtesy Gideon Rubin

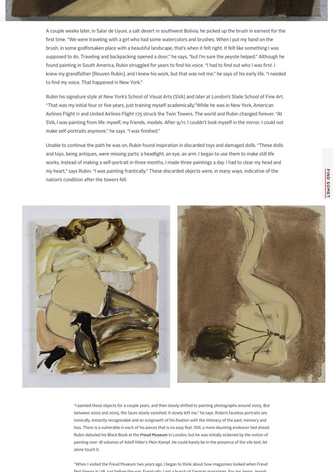
ART & ARCHITECTURE

Artist Gideon Rubin: Inspirations from Vulnerability, Intimacy and Atrocity

Written by Dylan Armon / October 12, 2018

Gideon Rubin began creating his nostalgic, dreamlike art late in life. "It never occurred to me that I could do it—or want to do it," he explains, despite being son to a curator and grandson to a painter. "In Israel [his hometown], there was no inclination that I could ever become an artist," says the now London-based artist. "I started painting late. Art was in my DNA, but I rejected it."

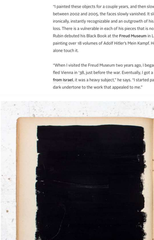
And then everything changed when he was 22. While on release **from military service**, Rubin backpacked across South America with friends. It was there, surrounded by lush landscapes and new people, that he discovered his passion for painting—but not before ingesting a psychoactive that gave him the key he needed to **unlock his artistic potential**. "I took a sort of peyote in Ecuador," says Rubin, "which showed me that there's more than the eye can see, that somehow you have to trust your senses. Like the experience you have as a child, when you can focus on something so minute as an ant walking or your hair in a stream of water; I found the experience poetic and reminiscent of childhood memories."

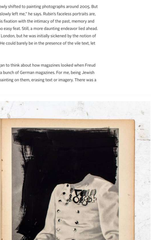


A couple weeks later, in Salar de Uyuni, a salt desert in southwest Bolivia, he picked up the brush in earnest for the first time. "We were traveling with a girl who had some watercolors and brushes. When I put them to the brush, in some godforsaken place with a beautiful landscape, that's when it felt right. It felt like something I was supposed to do. Traveling and backpacking opened a door," he says, "but I'm sure the peyote helped." Although he found painting in South America, Rubin struggled for years to find his voice. "I had to find out who I was first. I knew my grandfather [Reuven Rubin] and I knew his work, but that was not me," he says of his early life. "I needed to find my voice. That happened in New York."

Rubin his signature style at New York's School of Visual Arts (SVA) and later at London's Slade School of Fine Art. "That was my initial four or five years, just training myself academically." While he was in New York, American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 struck the Twin Towers. The world and Rubin changed forever. "At SVA, I was painting from life: myself, my friends, models. After 9/11, I couldn't look myself in the mirror. I could not make self-portraits anymore," he says. "I was finished."

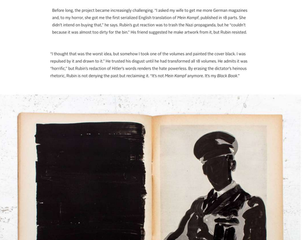
Unable to continue the path he was on, Rubin found inspiration in discarded toys and damaged dolls. "These dolls and toys, being antiques, were missing parts: a headlight, an eye, an arm. I began to use them to make still life works. Instead of making a self-portrait in three months, I made three paintings a day. I had to clear my head and my heart," says Rubin. "I was painting frantically." These discarded objects were, in many ways, indicative of the nation's condition after the towers fell.





"I painted these objects for a couple years, and then slowly shifted to painting photographs around 2005. But between 2002 and 2005, the faces slowly vanished. It slowly left me," he says. Rubin's faceless portraits are, ironically, instantly recognizable and an outgrowth of his fixation with the intimacy of the past, memory and loss. There is a vulnerable in each of his pieces that is no easy feat. Still, a more daunting endeavor lied ahead. Rubin debuted his Black Book at the **Freud Museum** in London, but he was initially sickened by the notion of painting over 40 volumes of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. He could barely be in the presence of the vile text, let alone touch it.

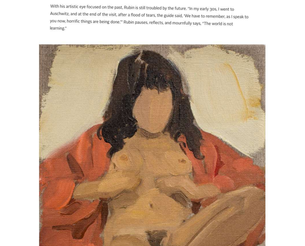
"When I visited the Freud Museum two years ago, I began to think about how magicians looked when Freud fled Vienna in '38, just before the war. Eventually, I got a bunch of German magazines. For me, being Jewish from Israel, it was a heavy subject," he says. "I started painting on them, erasing text or imagery. There was a dark undertone to the work that appealed to me."



Black Book

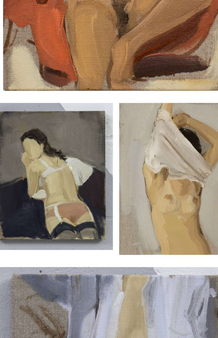
Before long, the project became increasingly challenging. "I asked my wife to get me more German magazines and, to my horror, she got me the first serialized English translation of *Mein Kampf*, published in 48 parts. She didn't intend on buying this," he says. Rubin's gut reaction was to trash the Nazi propaganda, but he "couldn't because it was almost too dirty for the bin." His friend suggested he make artwork from it, but Rubin resisted.

"I thought that was the worst idea, but somehow I took one of the volumes and painted the cover black. I was repulsed by it and drawn to it." He trusted his disgust until he had transformed all 48 volumes. He admits it was "horrific," but Rubin's redaction of Hitler's words renders the hate powerless. By erasing the dictator's heinous rhetoric, Rubin is not denying the past but reclaiming it. "It's not *Mein Kampf* anymore. It's my Black Book."



Even after completing the project, Rubin worried about how Holocaust survivors would react. "I was apprehensive about what actual survivors would think of the exhibit. If they found it abusive or hurtful in anyway, there was nothing I could do to make it better," he says. An attendee at the Black Book exhibition quickly assuaged his fears. "This lovely artist, a good friend, brought her dad who is a Holocaust survivor, and he was in tears," he says. "He was touched by it and especially moved by how I integrated the work, this heavy source material within the very personal space of Sigmund Freud, blending the personal memory with the collective one. They asked what I felt was different in this project from work I've done before, and I said, 'It's as if I was practicing for 15 years until I got to the Black Book.'"

With his artistic eye focused on the past, Rubin is still troubled by the future. "In my early 30s, I went to Auschwitz, and at the end of the visit, after a flood of tears, the guide said, 'We have to remember, as I speak to you now, horrific things are being done.'" Rubin pauses, reflects, and mournfully says, "The world is not learning."















© Gideon Rubin - http://gideonrubin.com/

8 AVRIL

Une évidence

Au départ il y eut le *Séder* de *Pessah*. En bonne et due forme, nous nous préparions à célébrer tout en symbole le retour à la liberté. L'affaire avait été tranchée de prier sur *Zoom* en famille, cela tiendrait le temps que ça tiendrait. Des mauvaises connexions, de l'impatience et du manque d'ingrédients, nous ferions notre affaire.

Dans le fragile équilibre de ce soir, si différent des autres soirs – et pouvait-il en être autrement ? Où serions-nous l'année prochaine, le mois prochain, le jour d'après ? Dans le fragile équilibre de cette soirée… une image surgit, silencieuse. Je ne la lâchai pas.
J'ai photographié mon écran.

Cela ressemblait à une image d'archive en construction. De celles que les tout jeunes enfants montreraient à leurs petits-enfants au cours des décennies à venir. Chemises blanches, *kippa* noire, boucles longues et plateaux, qui, de génération en génération, passaient sur les têtes mal cadrées pour imposer à *Zoom* notre tradition.

Quelle trace resterait-il de nos vies assignées à résidence, de nos voix fatiguées, du lien réinventé ?

Il nous faudrait des témoignages d'enfants et d'adolescents. Il nous faudrait des témoignages d'enfants et d'adolescents que l'on pensait dangereux du seul fait de leur âge.

Plus d'école. Et la Terre s'était presque arrêtée de tourner.

Ce fut alors une évidence. Je la posai sur le papier.
J'avais besoin d'entendre leurs vérités, leur avenir, leurs héros, leur humeur, leur présent, la photographie qu'ils en feraient. L'*a posteriori* ne pourrait recréer les conditions d'une parole confinée.

Je ne savais pas où j'allais, convaincue que les moyens du bord et la contrainte d'être filmé par écrans interposés, laisseraient la trace, authentique et fidèle, de ce qui nous arrivait. Je ne savais pas où j'allais, convaincue que les interviews devaient se dérouler loin de l'oreille des parents. Créer de la liberté au creux de l'exiguïté.
Note pour plus tard : au cœur du dispositif, il me faudrait pourtant intégrer l'intrusion invisible et hors champ des adultes familiers : *« Je suis venue vérifier que l'enregistrement est enclenché. Est-elle bien cadrée ? »* Ou celle intarissable du *« membre de l'unité de protection universelle contre les mesures d'invasion ».* De Buzz L'Éclair, je garderai la voix intergalactique.

Pop Kulturkampf, at Hosfelt Gallery

Rubin's exhibit at Hosfelt Gallery, "The Kaiser's Daughter," modifies a 1939 English serialization of *Mein Kampf*, while a companion show, "Anoka Faruqee: structural color," looks more deeply into questions of form.

Jonathan Curiel / Thu Apr 19th, 2018 9:15am / Art Culture



Gideon Rubin was in his London kitchen, getting his three girls ready for their day, when he opened a package from Amazon. Rubin had asked his wife to purchase pre-World War II Nazi publications for an art project he was doing on Sigmund Freud's 1938 escape to England from German-controlled Austria, and she'd found "something quite good." The package was wrapped in aging, brown paper and tied together by an old, thin rope.

"It was a very eerie experience," Rubin tells *SF Weekly*. "It felt like it hasn't been 'opened' for many years. ... And as I opened the package, I got chills running down my spine."

That's because Rubin encountered pages of Hitler's writing in English, not German. His wife had bought him all 18 serializations of a 1939 English translation of ***Mein Kampf*** — the autobiography and political manifesto that propelled Hitler's rise and subsequently the Holocaust that killed more than 15 million people, including six million Jews. To escape Hitler's shadow, Rubin's own grandparents fled Europe in 1939, and he was raised in Israel before traveling the world and moving to London. For days after that Monday morning, Rubin hid away his new copies of *Mein Kampf*. He was too flustered even to look at its words and illustrations.

"I wanted to throw it or burn it," he says. "I needed to get rid of it."

But then Rubin did something he'd done with previous art projects: He began modifying *Mein Kampf* and abstracting it. On multiple pages, he blackened or excised the faces of Germans and Nazi sympathizers who were supposed to represent the perfect race, and he crossed out text that was supposed to rationalize the Germans' supposed superiority — and the supposed inferiority of "impure" people.

"The edition came with your weekend magazine," Rubin says of his serialized edition, "and had a lot of images — which the original wouldn't have had — because it had to explain the text to the English reader."

Rubin's new exhibit at **Hosfelt Gallery**, **"The Kaiser's Daughter"** — which extends the art exhibit that Rubin had this year at London's Freud Museum — features paintings based on his *Mein Kampf* printings and other Nazi-era magazines. People are depicted bicycling, horseback riding, and getting ready for a night out. But their eyes, eyebrows, noses, and mouths are missing, essentially painted over with masks. Like the *Mein Kampf* serialization, Rubin's artwork at Hosfelt is foreboding — menacing, even. But the foreboding is packaged in scenes of idealized happenings, so standing before a piece like *Tuxedo* is to be caught in a spiral of artistic tension. How do you reconcile the beauty with the dissonance?

That sort of paradox is a theme in many great artworks, of course, including **Elmer Bischoff**'s 1969 painting of a seemingly wealthy couple, ***Yellow Lampshade***, which coincidentally also incorporates a painted-over face. Instead of de-humanizing the painting's subjects, the face masks turn the subjects into more universal stand-ins. Almost like mannequins. Without a face to focus on, art-goers are prompted to look elsewhere in Rubin's paintings. Usually with portraits, says Rubin, viewers go first to the face — to meet the subjects' eyes, and then circle around the artwork from there. ***Tuxedo*** and other works in "The Kaiser's Daughter" upend that instinct.

"I'm interested in other things — in mannerisms and other signifiers that make us who we are," Rubin says by phone. "My paintings are minimal and there's not much in them — so it [emphasizes] every little nuance, every little tilt of the head. I want to focus on the other stuff."

Hosfelt Gallery's concurrent exhibit, **"Anoka Faruqee: structural color,"** also challenges the way we perceive and see art. Faruqee's multitude of pieces are large, shimmering, album-like squares — with grooves and textures that make them appear to be revolving in real time. But they aren't revolving. It's their colliding layers, inlays, and overlays of paint — and the way those layers play with people's eyes and light — that give Faruqee's artwork its complex allure.

Faruqee, who made the pieces with her partner **David Driscoll**, used a hardware-store tool called a trowel to dig into the paint and create the grooves and imperfections that make a work like *2017P-18* come to life.

Faruqee, who is director of graduate studies in painting and printmaking at the Yale School of Art, draws upon myriad sources and influences, including Islamic geometry and Persian and Mughal miniature paintings. In a March 2017 essay for her book *The Visible Spectrum*, Faruqee writes that "the space between perception and idea is a spectrum" rather than an absolute and that form and content are often closer in proximity than people think. "Anoka Faruqee: structural color" was a chance for Faruqee and Driscoll to put that theory into practice.

"Any kind of sense of a shimmer that you get is an optical shimmer," Faruqee says by phone from New Haven, Conn. "It's not reflective or iridescent paint. It's the effect of the colors interacting with one another, and how your eye puts that together as light. Transitions of color feel like light. And if you're at an angle, spatially the lines will converge and get closer together."

Driscoll came up with the idea of working with a trowel around 2012. Faruqee says the instrument is almost like a comb: "The trowel was a technique that David innovated. He has a background in construction management, so he had one of those trowels, and we'd talked about, 'Is there a way to create interference patterns through paint.' "

Seeing "Anoka Faruqee: structural color" and "Gideon Rubin: The Kaiser's Daughter" at the same time is to quickly cross the bridge between abstraction and figuration — and to realize how easily it is to make that passage. Faruqee and Driscoll's grooved works are mounted on canvases that, on their sides, show off the splatters and run-offs that emanate from the artwork's gestations. We see both the finished work and what some people would call the unfinished sides — but Faruqee and Driscoll kept in those sides for a reason.

"It provides an interesting counterpoint to what's happening on the surface," Faruqee says. "And it also provides a clue to the process. These things are so mysterious as paintings, you almost don't know what you're coming across."

To art-goers who want complete portraiture, Rubin's paintings can also feel "unfinished." Not only are they missing complete faces, many of the paintings incorporate basic forms and colors. They could be settings from anywhere — not just Germany.

The everyday scenes in "The Kaiser's Daughter" undermine the idea that Nazi Germany was only driven by military-wearing officers. Nazi sympathizers existed all around the world, including England. In 1939, as Freud was in London succumbing to cancer, he would have been able to read the *Mein Kampf* serialization that Rubin now owns. Like his other art projects, "The Kaiser's Daughter" is about historical memory. But it also takes an indirect dig at Israel's current conservative government and its policies, and at the current White House.

"It is a time," Rubin says, "of political intolerance and fear of the 'other.' "

Yes, it is. Rubin found a way to delve into the subject of evil and its ability to exist in succeeding generations. Faruqee's exhibit is an eye-catching respite from that very idea.

"Gideon Rubin: The Kaiser's Daughter" and **"Anoka Faruqee: structural color,"** *through April 28, at Hosfelt Gallery, 260 Utah St. Free; 415-495-5454 or hosfeltgallery.com*

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THE LONDON MAGAZINE
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Review | Black Book by Gideon Rubin at The Freud Museum

by Alexander Douglas Bryan | March 22, 2018



Youth, Black Book, Gideon Rubin

The Freud Museum, in Freud's old house, is a five-minute walk from Finchley Road tube station, away from the main road on a residential street. Other than the small sign and the two blue plaques which bear the names Sigmund and Anna Freud, the house blends into those on either side. Freud's house, in which he probed the human memory and subconscious, is a fitting location for its current exhibition, Black Book by Gideon Rubin.

Black Book is a work of erasure. Rubin erases the faces, figures, backgrounds, flags, and the text of works to create anonymous characters onto which we place ourselves, our locations, and the faces of those we know. This erasure, particularly of facial

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features, metaphorically plays with the concept of identity and self. This interrogation would be enough to understand the Freud Museum as an appropriate location for the exhibit. However, when you understand the context of the work, it gains in significance immeasurably. The erased works are Nazi propaganda, the text, Mein Kampf.

This contextual knowledge makes Gideon's work a statement on the current refugee crises; Freud himself a refugee in London. It turns the faceless figures from a comment on the individual into a comment on nationalism, on mass hysteria, on demagoguery, and on social forgetfulness. It is a comment on a historical moment which affected the families of both Freud and Gideon, but also is highly charged contemporary statement. It is harder to think of a more suitable mix of subject and setting.

Gideon's works are not confined to a single room but instead are placed throughout the Freud Museum. They are sometimes obvious, like the old newspapers stuck to the wall on the landing or the canvas paintings in the dining room. They are sometimes subtle, like the small images in vintage frames which sit on shelves amongst other photos or sit on Freud's desk amongst his old papers. The choice to display these works in locations both obvious and obscure adds to the insidious feel of the exhibit. Gideon works in layers. He makes you look and look again.

The idyllic images only enhance the exhibit's insidious feel. Originally these pictures masked abhorrent content. Designed to beguile and allure they aimed to dilute Nazi message. Gideon, by removing aspects of the images, subverts this. Erasing part of them heightens our sensitivity to the context; painting over the pictures makes us more aware of their message. He plays with our collective knowledge and our collective memory. We know the doctrine these images promoted without being told. We can see how these images helped the spread of Nazism and in the faceless figures, we can see ourselves.



Tuxedo, Black Book, Gideon Rubin

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Gideon's use of the handsomely dressed couple shows the disarming nature of these pictures at their peak. The image of the couple, which recurs throughout the exhibit, grows from a small print into a full wall canvas and differs from the other images because they are more than beguiling or alluring, they are aspirational. You can't just see yourself in their faceless figures, you actively want to. This is the nature of the work. Devoid of context they are a successful couple. He is dressed in a full tuxedo and she in a matching flapper-esque body suit. They seem wealthy and, despite being featureless, you imagine them attractive and happy. They draw the viewer in despite the context. They are the ideal. They represent the ubiquitous 'happy couple' to which we all aspire. The growth of this painting, from a small print to a full canvas, seems to mimic the growth of this idea as promoted by Nazism. As you move through the Freud Museum and through Gideon's works, this image/idea grows and blossoms and culminates into a full canvas of the couple directly opposite the blacked-out text of Mein Kampf. Opposite Mein Kampf the fallacy of both images is highlighted. Vilifying others does not make you better than them. The happy couple, like Mein Kampf, are a harmful illusion. This becomes starkly contemporary in Freud's house, a man who dealt with forgetting and the repression of memories.



p 426, Black Book, Gideon Rubin

On the opposite wall in a room length glass cabinet is Mein Kampf. Eighteen open editions of blacked out pictures and text. Gideon's deletions are not uniform. Some pages are completely defaced, others have lines across the page regardless of the columns of print, others are divided in two where the columns of print separate down the page, others are individual words with the spaces left intact. The pages opposite the blacked out text are landscapes with buildings removed, portraits with blacked out heads above a chest full of medals, and blacked out marches with silhouetted people with their arms held in roman solute. It is particularly easy, when arranged opposite

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the marching scenes, to see organised columns of people in the blacked out text, to see rallies, to see the crowds at Nuremburg. The scenes are not shocking. We are all familiar with the icons of Nazism. What is shocking about Gideon's work is that its base text is in English. Gideon worked from a serialised English translation of Mein Kampf distributed in 1939. It is widely known and taught that Britain had a fascist movement lead by Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists. However, it is less known that an English version of Mein Kampf was available here in 1939, that those seeking refuge from Nazism in Europe were still being dogged by its propaganda while in England. These are less thought of, less remembered.

The Freud Museum is worth visiting, regardless of this exhibit, as a testament to the man who helped shape our modern definition of memory and self. Gideon's work is worth seeing as an independent work of art for its technique and beauty. But the thematic combination of setting and subject elevates the Gideon exhibit at the Freud Museum to a higher level, a deeper introspection on history and memory and national identity and immigration. The exhibit delves into history to confront highly contemporary issues, fittingly Freudian. Standing outside of the Freud Museum it is hard to think that such a strong and probing debate about nationalism, mass hysteria, memory, immigration, war, and tragedy, is happening behind the walls of a quintessentially suburban home. Everything about this exhibit is a statement.

Black Book by Gideon Rubin at The Freud Museum runs from the 7 February 2018 until 15 April 2018.

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artnet® news

Artist Gideon Rubin Redacted Nazi Texts, Then Installed Them in Sigmund Freud's Home

by Taylor Dafoe | March 15, 2018



Gideon Rubin, BLACK BOOK (2018). Courtesy of the Freud Museum.

Can art engage with historical propaganda without becoming propaganda itself?

Artist Gideon Rubin explores this question in his exhibition, "BLACK BOOK," on view now at the Freud Museum in London, located in the house the pioneering psychoanalyst occupied after fleeing from Nazi-annexed Austria.

For the exhibition, Rubin collected rare Nazi paraphernalia and altered it beyond recognition. His works are not just on walls and in vitrines but planted throughout the home—on bookshelves and tables and in Freud's study, next to his infamous couch—as if they belonged to the doctor himself.

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Rubin, an Israeli-born artist currently living in London, is best known for his paintings of faceless figures, often based off of old found photographs the artist collects. The works in "BLACK BOOK" are similar in that they engage directly with vintage material, however, the element of anonymity is gone. Rather than

decontextualized depictions of unidentified figures culled from family photo albums and other unremarkable materials, the works in "BLACK BOOK" are all about context and origin. The gesture of altering historic documents—removing faces or redacting information—is less about the whitewashing of time, and more about rewriting history. Evoking Freud, the works play on the psychologist's theories about repression and our tendency to block out certain memories from our psyche. The seeds of the exhibition first began a couple of



Installation view of "BLACK BOOK" at the Freud Museum (2018). Courtesy of the Freud Museum.

years ago when Rubin, an Israeli Jew whose maternal grandparents also had to escape the Nazis in the late 1930's, decided to turn from anonymous photos to material connected to his own sense history and identity. He turned to eBay, looking for authentic Nazi paraphernalia. Or, more accurately, his wife Silia Ka Tung, did. A fellow artist and more computer literate than Rubin, Tung scoured the auction site for artifacts.

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A week later, a package of old magazines from Nazi East Germany arrived at his house, replete with pictures of Hitler and swastikas. "It freaked me out," Rubin says. "The first couple of days I was washing my hands every time I touched them because I was so repulsed by the subject matter."



Installation view of "BLACK BOOK" at the Freud Museum (2018). Courtesy of the Freud Museum.

He began working with the magazines in the way that he usually works with vintage source material, using the imagery as the basis for paintings. He was interested in the work but also confused. "I didn't know why I was doing them," he recalls. "I didn't understand how I could be so drawn to them and repulsed by them the same time. But when I started covering the Nazi emblems and the pictures of Hitler, it made me feel better. I thought that was a good enough reason to continue on."

And so he did. He expanded his research, asked his wife to purchase more artifacts, and made a trip to visit Freud's original home in Vienna from which he was forced to flee. But soon after, Rubin ran into his biggest challenge yet.

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Gideon Rubin, BLACK BOOK (2018). Courtesy of the Freud Museum.

"One day I got this package in the mail," Rubin recalls. He went downstairs to get it, and his wife told him that she had found something "great." "I opened the packaged, and a chill ran down my spine."

It was a serialized first edition of the English translation of Mein Kampf, Adolf Hitler's autobiography, published in the UK in 1939 (just one month after Freud's death).

"'This is way too dirty for my paintings,' I told my wife. 'I can't even have this in my house. I need to burn it,'" he said, already thinking about the possibility of being under government surveillance for owning such a thing. But his wife encouraged him to keep it and to use it in his work. "I thought that it was the most fucked up idea I had ever heard. 'I'm never going to do that,' I told her."

But sure enough, a week or so later, Rubin pulled out the book. He began working directly on the pages, redacting text, and altering faces. The resulting work—with each and every word, symbol, and person blacked out—makes up the current show's titular piece, BLACK BOOK. It's installed in a case in the museum among the work he did with propagandist magazines and a series of paintings on canvas, linen, and paper.

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Installation view of "BLACK BOOK" at the Freud Museum (2018). Courtesy of the Freud Museum.

After BLACK BOOK was done, the initial questions that Rubin had to confront still plagued him. The Nazi materials, while representing something terrible, were nonetheless historic documents that should never be forgotten. How could he reconcile the fact that he'd altered them, even if the experience was personally rewarding?

"When I finished the last page, I looked at it and realized that it wasn't Mein Kampf anymore," Rubin says. It was my BLACK BOOK. I discovered that blacking out is not a subtractive gesture; it's an additive one. You never actually erase anything; you add something that covers it up. It's similar to memory, and how the brain works. Memories never go away, they just move or morph or become covered by another one."

"You can't negate the life of things that have come before, you can only create something new."

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Installation view of "BLACK BOOK" at the Freud Museum (2018).
Courtesy of the Freud Museum.

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by Melody Boh
2015

ART REPUBLIK EXAMINES THE FACELESS PORTRAITS OF GIDEON RUBIN.
BY MELODY BOH

Insert Face Here

There is something familiar yet haunting about Gideon Rubin's works; after all, they are faceless. But they were not always that way. The Israeli-born artist was a realist painter – he has always painted portraits, and still does, but took inspiration from life and observation, sometimes taking months to complete a work. However, in 2001, the tragic events of September 11 saw Rubin witnessing the horror unfold before his eyes from his friend's rooftop, changing the way he worked and turning his back on his realist style.

Born in Tel Aviv, Israel in 1973, Rubin first graduated with a Bachelor's degree from School of Visual Art, New York before going on to complete his Master's degree with Slade School of Fine Art, University College in 2002 in London, where he continues to reside. The artist has since showcased his works in numerous solo and group exhibitions all over the world, and with works in private collections in London, Hong Kong, New York, Paris and beyond. In 2013, he undertook the Outset Israel Bialik Residency in Tel Aviv. In 2014, he was awarded the Shifting Foundation Grant and spent time at the Da Wang Culture Highland artist residency near Shenzhen, China.

Today, Rubin possesses a simpler, quasi-minimalist painting style. Drawing inspiration from old photographs, photos of celebrities or paintings by old masters, he paints faceless portraits and, on occasion, obscured landscapes. He strips his subjects bare, transforming them into unidentifiable figures. Through his abstract paintings, Rubin encourages viewers to focus on intentionally included details, and urges them to form their own narratives and consequently, be part of the process. The artist explains, "I'd like to think the figures in my paintings remind the viewer of certain people or evoke memories rather than portray specific identities… focusing on certain details that I provide, such as the posture of a figure or a tree in the paintings background. It's a more abstract way of looking at a scene; it is impossible to directly identify with the characters in my paintings, I want to offer alternative ways of viewing the figures, where the viewer is also involved in completing a narrative or scene."

A huge focus in Rubin's works is the way medium is employed. Adopting the canvas or raw linen as a preferred medium, the artist often leaves entire areas untouched in his paintings, allowing the white space to become an integral part of his works. He paints a canvas repeatedly, again and again, the surface of the paintings suggests previous layers of paints and scenes, culminating to a final scene that is entrenched in multiple layers of paint and history.

Drawn to earthy tones, Rubin works primarily with a palette that involves more tones than colours. He applies broad and bold brush strokes in subtle shades such as sandy tones, grey blues and off whites, suggesting in the simplest yet most expressive terms a life passed, a secret unearthed or a memory resurfaced, and his desire to bring these forgotten moments or people back to life again. Rubin mixes his colours with an abundance of zinc white, damar varnish and linseed oil to achieve de-saturated colours, perhaps a reflection of the faded quality of old photographs that he uses as source materials.





This page, from top to bottom: *Untitled (Class Photo I)* (detailed view), 2015; *White Glove*, 2015, Gideon Rubin.

Facing page: *Braids* (detailed view), 2015, Gideon Rubin.

In 2016, Rubin will kick off the new year with 'Questions of Forgiveness', a solo exhibition at Galerie Karsten Greve in Paris, France from 9 January to 5 March. Borrowing imagery from old photographs and abstracting them to faceless forms, Rubin employs his characteristic abstract style to his works, once again evoking a sense of both intimacy and disconcertment.

"The paintings are intimate and unapologetically nostalgic but the work is not sentimental," says Rubin. "Viewing these paintings might be a voyeuristic experience, but instead there's a sense of familiarity. It's like the memory of something that's at the point of fading completely, or remembering a history that you were told about but never actually experienced first-hand…. The insignificant moments represented are the stuff of collective memory – the minutiae that make up the meaningful part of our lives.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

Studio Visit | Gideon Rubin

by Kristopher Houser
August 14, 2009



Gideon Rubin in his studio. Photo by Michal Rubin

On a dreadful rainy day in London, I recently trekked up to Kilburn, an area marked by graffiti and dotted with street vendors selling discounted fruit and the odd plastic toy, to visit the studio of the painter Gideon Rubin.Â

I rang the bell to what looked like a government mega-complex, and the gates opened to reveal a dark parking area. I had to jump a few massive puddles to reach the artist's sprawling ground-floor work space.Â

Despite the gloomy environs outside, Rubin was all smiles. His studio was equally inviting â€" Martin Margiela-style white painted walls and floors, the occasional scattered rag doll and a jumble of photos taped to the walls.

The visual soup led me to ask the artist about his inspiration. "My references and models have changed over time; I used to work with still and live objects," said the

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36-year-old Rubin, in his slightly accented English that betrays his Israeli roots. “But for my upcoming shows I have been using vintage photo albums.”Â Â

Rubin sources these albums from all over the world and on eBay and then creates sweet looking portraits that evoke children’s book illustrations, though Rubin’s individuals have no faces. “I paint from objects that have life and layers â€” things that tell a story,” he said, adding that he finds it difficult to paint new objects straight from the package or — harder still — family portraits.Â Â

Perhaps with good reason. Rubin is the grandson of the noted Romanian-born Israeli painter Reuven Rubin and the son of a diplomat and curator. He’s reluctant to divulge too many details about his lineage but did note that a recent exhibition, “Family Traces,” which opened at the Israel Museum in July, was the first time Rubin’s art has been showed alongside his grandfather’s.

Next month he has a solo show, “Mexican Summer,” at the Hosfelt Gallery in San Francisco (Sept. 8 through Oct. 17), which features works he created from photos of a European family living in a Mexican village around 1920.
“I was drawn to the family in a photo album, because they felt out of place,” he said. “I liked the relationship between the family and the locals. I was inspired by what they were wearing, what they were doing and how the two cultures interacted with each other. But mainly, I was inspired to paint the two kids, a brother and sister.”Â

Rubin then walked me through his “1929” show for the Rokeby Gallery in London (Oct. 8 to Nov. 12). Nearly 40 of the expected 60 to 70 paintings were in a working installation for my preview. The most obvious point of departure in “1929” is his newfound depiction of scenarios with more family groupings. (His previous works often have a singular child, faceless, in a non-identifiable situation.) Although stylistically consistent with Rubin’s previous work, the “1929” series has a more colorful and unquestionably happy feeling to it.

Why the change in mood, I wondered? What’s changed in his life? “I now have a 1-year-old daughter,” he said smiling. At this rate, Rubin may yet turn his hand to painting family portraits.