

Artist Statment: Khaled Hafez

As a practicing studio artist, my practice spans the mediums of Painting, video/film, photography, installation and interdisciplinary art approaches. My core research focus is the exploration of the complex nature of identity; for my painting practice, the identity I scrutinize is a one that is a composite of African, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Arab, Islamic, with ancient Egyptian and Judeo-Christian traces. In my current video, photography and other mixed media works, I am interested in movement, an element that was indispensable in ancient Egyptian painting, where all painted elements were in motion, as opposed to Egyptian sculpture that always caught the protagonists in a “pose”, nearly always static. I use a lot of symbols and codes from all ancient cultures, and from the universal heritage of the world.

In a contemporary culture dominated by a century of film and animation, the similarity between the ancient and the current contemporary forms of the kinetic is intriguing to me, and a focal aspect of my research. In my painting, I use imagery of body perfection and treat them to reflect metamorphosis and the movement from one state to another; for the male figures I appropriate images of body builders, and for the female figures I use images extracted from advertising and from cheesy commercial tabloids. The images are enlarged in archival color and black and white photocopies and silk-screen prints. The choice of the image reflects always the perfection of body proportions, a criteria used in all Mediterranean mythology, and a trait that does not represent a significant proportion of ANY majority of any population living today. This approach provides for my desire to mingle fiction with reality. I link imagery of the ancient iconography with deja-vu contemporary advertising elements; the icons/images are manipulated to insinuate metamorphosis. I believe that we are at a point in history where there is cultural recycling: visual, conceptual, beliefs among other aspects. Throughout the diversity of the mediums I use, I explore this cultural recycling.

Khaled Hafez

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