

# NYP NEWYORKPRESS

6-12 OCTOBER 2004

**DANIEL HESIDENCE: FARM PAINTINGS**  
THROUGH SAT., OCT. 9



**WHAT DO CRITICS** have against Daniel Hesidence? Last November, his eerie, ethereal paintings were shown alongside much-lauded goths Sue De Beer and Banks Violette in the group show "Flesh and Blood" at Micheal Steinberg Fine Art. The following January, the same month *ArtForum* devoted more than 2000 words to De Beer, another show featuring De Beer and Violette received a huge, mostly favorable write-up in the *Voice* by Jerry Saltz. A couple months later, she and Violette were selected for the Whitney Biennial. Why was "Flesh and Blood" so widely ignored?

It's not just because he's a painter that critics shy away from Hesidence. After all, look at John Currin and how fashionable it's become lately to champion what not even a decade ago these same blowhards proclaimed a dead medium. Maybe they're spiteful—or skeptical—about how prolific Hesidence is: At just 28, he's amassed a body of work most artists couldn't create in a lifetime. His previous series, "The Whole," consists of well over 100 paintings. But this isn't Jeff Koons-assembly-line stuff. Just as the title can be interpreted several ways, each volume of "The Whole"—all 15 of them—is vastly different. The sizes range from eight by 10 inches to three feet square; the colors, from pastel to sepia to fluorescent; the brushwork, from varnished to topographical to tumescent; the imagery, from mutilated women to rainbows.

Maybe the critics are only respecting the artist's wishes. "'The Whole' should not be discussed," a preface to the website ([thewholearchive.com](http://thewholearchive.com)) reads. "The intention, the direction, or any element of the work must avoid a verbal format."

Or maybe, just maybe, the reason critics won't discuss him is because they simply don't know how. Unlike Currin's Upper East Side socialites or Violette's heavy-metal imagery or De Beer's horror-movie homages, Hesidence's bizarre, often brutal abstractions don't smirk and nudge the viewer in the ribs and say, "Get it?"

Life-size or larger, his latest "FARM" paintings—while just as masterful in their brushwork and use of color—are even more alien than "The Whole." A fiendish extra-terrestrial. Floating amoebas and womb-like apparitions. Not to say there's nothing to identify with here. It's not the paintings themselves, however, but the apparent struggle that went into their creation. Take one of the show's smaller series "Chambers Street Paintings (2004)," depicting a gaping brunette, as if she'd just gotten a facial. If there was ever a cock within the frame, the appendage has since been painted over, the woman's come-smear face gashed and bloodied while a halo-like egg encircles her head. Why would Hesidence remove the phallus? Perhaps he was disgusted with himself, the same way we sometimes feel when we wake up the next morning with a stranger in our bed. And the egg? Could that be some attempt to alleviate that awkwardness—like fixing breakfast?

Of course, this sounds absurd. And there you have the real reason why any reputable critic won't touch it.

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