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# Daniel Hesidence

## Daniel Hesidence

Born in Akron, Ohio, 1975. Lives and works in Queens.

The passage of time is one of Daniel Hesidence's central but not immediately understood subjects. His paintings recall Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the story of a handsome man who sold his soul for immortality: Gray's painted portrait would age while he remained beautiful, forever young. Hesidence's portraits reveal traces of beauty's passing, flesh that has scarred and withered, features that may be all but unrecognizable. At its most defamiliarized and abstract, the human face in his work is an ethereal landscape, composed of wisps and swirls of color that might easily vanish into thin air. These are portraits that in a sense will never age: they are already in a suspended state of decay. Their subjects will never cheat the inevitable advance of age and death, and neither will the artist, a mere mortal, steadily moving toward his own conclusion as he paints from one to the next, from the next to the last. Of course, the same is true for the viewer.

At first glance, these paintings may appear repulsive, otherworldly representations of beings who are all but alien to us, of scenes we cannot imagine except during the most troubled sleep. But they are of this world—the portraits are of us. They are based on Hesidence's perception of himself and his examination of those around him in his everyday life. *The Chambers Street Paintings* (2002–4), made in the artist's studio on Chambers Street in Lower Manhattan, can be seen as psychologically charged reflections, as libidinal adoration. For all of their seeming grotesquerie, these works are lovingly painted, acknowledging a strange beauty and depth of mystery behind each subject. One thinly veiled woman beckons with the most beguiling of smiles, an instrument of seduction, utterly unknowable, and quite possibly deadly. The color and light in these paintings is at times gossamer, delicate, and highly refined; at others they take on an acidic, nearly toxic glow. Hesidence circles around parallel conceptions: of beauty and horror, life and death, pain and pleasure, degeneration and transcendence. These works continually remind us that one is never intimately experienced and truly understood without the other. Engaged by the larger questions—*Who are we? What are we? Where do we go from here?*—Hesidence's art is ultimately an art of consciousness, each painting a "mental picture," a step along the way.

Bob Nickas

## Selected Exhibitions:

- 2005 Zach Feuer Gallery, Los Angeles (solo).
- 2004 Feature Inc., New York (solo).
- 2003 *Flesh and Blood*, Michael Steinberg Gallery, New York.
- 2002 *The Funeral Home*, Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles, California.

Top right: *Untitled (Chambers Street Paintings)*, painting, 2003

Top left: *Untitled (Chambers Street Paintings)*, painting, 2002–03

Bottom: installation view



