

KHALIF TAHIR THOMPSON

WHO KNOWS WHERE THE TIME GOES

30 September - 10 November 2023
Zidoun-Bossuyt Luxembourg

Through my practice, I chronicle the lived and imagined experiences of and between human beings. I believe painting can be a tool in considering the emotional, psychological complexity of an individual's story and identity. Creating imagery that connects one to the realm of another, I alter perception and invoke empathy towards my subjects, depicting their reality across a visceral lens. Focusing on portraiture and figuration, my subjects include family, friends, and cultural figures placed in constructed settings. I render my subjects in oil paint, incorporating mixed media, collage, and handmade paper to build the abstracted environments in which they exist.

The works submitted are a selection of paintings examining a range of subjects, with regards to cultural figures, romantic, familial relationships, and individual identity. This work essentially examines my interest in seeing and understanding the likeness and lived experience of people. Through the different subjects' primary gaze, the work connects the viewer to them, establishing a relationship that garners insight and introspection. The atmosphere of each piece hosts distinct environments that fluctuate from tangible to ethereal, framing the viewers' perception towards their pain, joy questioning, resolve, and role in the world in which they live.

I create the work on primed or raw canvas, both stretched and unstretched. Using a graphite pencil, I then draft out the composition and figure. I render portraits, figures using oil paint and brushes, layering over time. While constructing the setting of each work I used gel medium to adhere the different cut-out shapes and textures to the surface, further informing the structure and body using a wide range of materials such as rust, denim, silk, wool, leather, beads, newsprint and magazines. I further add pigmented handmade paper to the compositions, using abaca, cotton, hemp, and denim fiber.

The ongoing language of painting presents a long history of the classical tradition, different movements, and techniques. In particular, as it pertains to black portraiture and conceptualism, it is to this day, lacking in the recording of black lived experience. Early 20th century innovators documenting black life through art such as Charles White, Elizabeth Catlett, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, and Faith Ringgold were influential in telling diverse stories. In contemporary art we see the tradition carried on with artists such as Henry Taylor, Kerry James Marshall, and Tschabalala Self. By prominently depicting black individual stories, my work further expands conversations surrounding black art portraiture, figuration, and theory.

BIOGRAPHY

Best recognized for his powerful portraiture and figuration work, Khalif Tahir Thompson incorporates painting, drawing, collage, printmaking, and paper-making into his practice, while exploring notions of self through the scopes of race, sexuality, and spirituality. He recently obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Purchase College and completed a fellowship at the EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop in NYC, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Jerome Emerging Artist residency at The Anderson Center. He was selected as a member of Kehinde Wiley's Black Rock Senegal residency in 2022.

Currently enrolled at Yale University School of Art, he is pursuing his MFA in Painting/ Printmaking. Khalif Tahir Thompson is exclusively represented by Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery and will present his first solo exhibition in Europe at Zidoun-Bossuyt Luxembourg in September 2023. His work is part of The Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, the MFAH The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo. After participating at The Royal Drawing School at Dumfries House, Scotland, in July 2023, Khalif Tahir Thompson joined the AAF/Seebacher Prize for Fine Arts, Austria, in August 2023.