



ART · PAINTING

Portraits Without A Face: Gideon Rubin's Intimate Paintings Capture Subjects In Personal Moments

SCROLL



Israeli contemporary artist Gideon Rubin is known for his paintings of anonymous subjects caught in moments of intimacy. Yet ironically, rather than painting from life, Rubin has a tendency to borrow his subjects from photographs in vintage albums that he has collected from all around the world.

Rubin applies paint thickly with broad strokes, working with a muted palette that gives more weight to tone than color. The figures in his artworks have been altered in ways that make them appear realistic: people lie in bed, bathe in water, undress, or sit in contemplation; yet notably, none of the figures have faces. The ghost-like nature of these paintings complements other works including empty rowboats and landscapes, presenting the audience with a situation of total anonymity. This elicits a yearning to understand—who are these people? What have they been through, and how do they feel? Lacking identity and personality means Rubin's figures have secrets, a factor he is intrigued by. "I loved the anonymity of the subjects," he says of the photographs he has painted from. "On the one hand, these people had nothing to do with me—unlike my earlier paintings, which were of myself, my family, and my friends; on the other hand, it was as if each of these people were holding a key to a story, a history that I was trying to tap into."

