ALMINE RECH

Through Our Eyes
Resonance and Illusion in Contemporary Portraits

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The third year into the pandemic, we have spent an inconceivable amount of time with ourselves, yet we are craving human interactions like never before. As are these artists, who continue to investigate the concept of individuals and collectives, and the ambiguous relationship between, through portraiture. Human figures in their paintings are merely abstract representations of an individual or a group. They are encapsulated as the carrier of memories, emotions, experiences, and quarantine monologues. Unlike most portraits that depict a "sitter"—a real person—and aim to achieve a certain level of "likeness" in presentation, these modern works forego the sitter in order to allow for a greater magnitude of commonality and ambiguity. In place of us, these fictitious "sitters" seek answers to questions like identity, gender, chaos, uncertainty, desire, acculturation, and more. They play with our perceptions and illusions and make us constantly question the veracity of the subjects.

From George Condo's *blue paintings* to Rashid Johnson's *Bruise Painting*, a reflection of the bruised psychological state in the time of the pandemic, they choose to present emotions that are highly personal but also collective. The works of Austin Lee, Andre Butzer, Mr., and Javier Calleja then offer a way of healing and resilience by immersing us in contagious happiness. The artists fuse kaleidoscopic physical appearances, experiences, memories, and characteristics into one persona and prompt us to seek analogies and resonance. The participatory experience and the sense of resonance have become an important part of contemporary portraits. They lead us into a dialogue with ourselves and the current condition.

Curated by Louis Blanc-Francard and Viahsta Yuan