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by Leila Antakly

In the Studio with Coady Brown

Leila Antakly | November 19, 2021

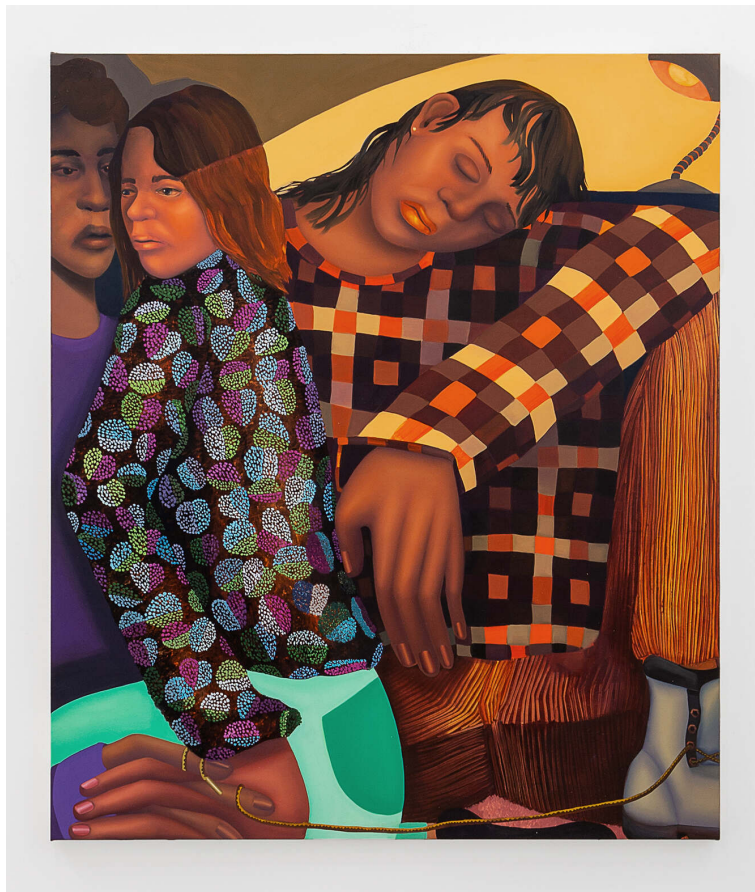


I am a painter, and currently live in Philadelphia. I moved here in the beginning of the pandemic after hopping around the country for the last few years....from the east coast to LA to Vermont to Massachusetts.....I had a span of moving from one art residency to another, which was great but I was starting to crave some stability and consistency. At a certain point that stability can feed you more than constant change and new experiences, or maybe that is just being an artist in your thirties versus your twenties. I opened two solo shows this past September, one at Taymour Grahne in London and the other at Shulamit Nazarian in Los Angeles. This summer was really exhausting, and I am now lucky enough to be able to focus more on larger projects further down the line, allowing me to take more time with things in the studio, and absorb more of the world around me to draw into my work.

Coady, we know you've been really busy so thank you for joining us today, please share with us some of your greatest inspirations or influences?

The people in my life are by far my greatest inspiration. I went to the Yale Norfolk School of Art during the summer of my senior year of college, and there I met the people that would change my life forever. I found my best friends, who are incredible, inspiring, mind-blowing artists in ways that are so different from how I see and experience the world. They brought me out of my shell and showed me beauty through their vision. It took me a while to finally arrive to my work as it stands today (at the time, and for a few years following, I was making very material based, experimental work) but I was just so in love with people, their bodies, how they express themselves, that it was only natural that I would make work about it. This group of friends were the ultimate muse. And while the work has developed beyond being solely about my personal relationships, it was through them that I found my voice and established my visual vocabulary.

Art history is also a huge influence, but that's a less exciting answer. El Greco, Otto Dix, Lisa Yuskavage, Mernet Larson, Modigliani, to name a few.



Coady Brown, *Risk*, 2021, oil on canvas, 54 x 46 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Tell us a bit about your creative process?

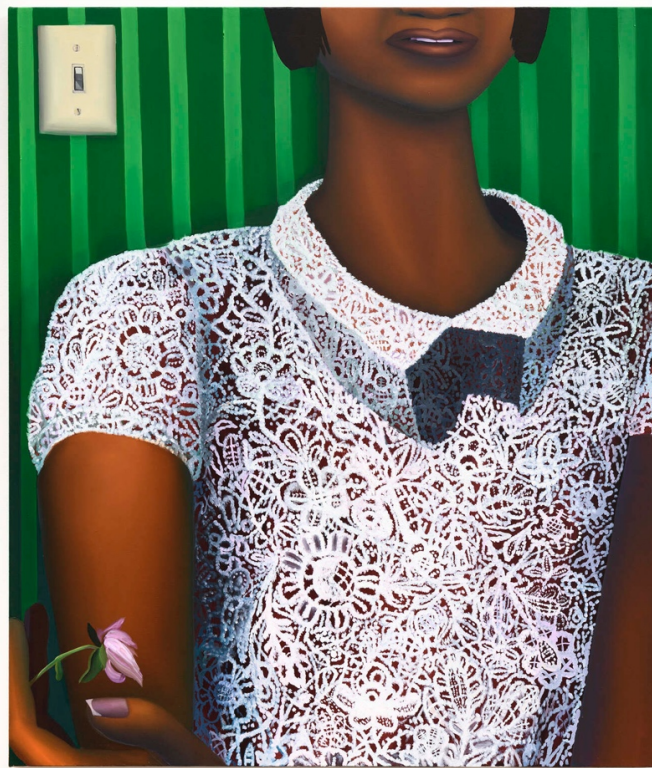
I always start with drawing. From there, things either begin really abstractly, or really concretely. An example being, a painting sometimes will start because there is a certain pattern I want to experiment with, or a pose, and then the painting will build around that. Other times, I will make a painting that is based on a color relationship. Like a painting that is primarily blue and yellow or pink and green. Combinations that might not initially be pleasing but become a puzzle I need to deconstruct. I make a pencil drawing where the composition is 90% resolved, and then that translates to an underpainting. I always want to leave room for growth and change while I am working, because it always turns out that some of the best things about the work happen in spontaneous moments. I learn the most when I am open to the process of making. It is the most rewarding part about being an artist.

How has the pandemic affected your creativity and how do you see the world changing?

Strangely, and blessedly, the pandemic hasn't changed much about my creativity and the day to day. I live in my head a lot, and the images I make I build internally. The inspiration for my work comes from my imagination, memories, references from movies and books, as well as music and clothing and textiles, old photos I have taken, fashion magazines, music videos and historical works of art. It's an amalgamation of multiple sources which generate spontaneously and constantly. I did really miss being out in the world and watching strangers. I love observing people while they are out and in their element, seeing how people interact with one another; strangers, love interests, friends. The world is changing....slowly. In my 31 years, some things have gotten a lot better, some stayed the same, some worse. A lot of things feel like a limboed grid lock, where sometimes only slow movements can make just the lightest impact. But it's something.

Who do you consider to be an icon of our time?

This is a really interesting question and one that I had to think a lot about. To me, an icon is someone who defines things on their own terms, and is a trailblazer for new ways of thinking in how we understand ourselves and the world around us. And while he recently passed, for me he is still an icon of our time: Prince. He showed us new ways to be sexy, cool, confident, impassioned. Let alone the impact that his music had. He broke all the rules, and gave no fucks. He was such an artist, and followed his instincts and created the world that he wanted to see, top to bottom (not an ass-less pants joke, but it could be).



Coady Brown, *Midnight Bloom*, 2020, oil on canvas, 42 x 36 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

What does wellbeing mean to you, and what do you practice?

As I've gotten older, I understand more that for me wellbeing means balance. And yes that of course means a balance of sleep and exercise, eating well etc., but it also means living outside of your routine and comfort zone, trying to get outside of your own way and into a more open mindset. This means trying new things, like roller-skating, or pole dancing, or whatever. I feel like our bodies are so much smarter than our minds, and if we do things that allow us to be in tune with our bodies and get outside of our own head, we walk away with a richer experience of the world, and probably some more interesting ideas.

Anything else you would like to share?

Just that, if you haven't already, listen to the album *What's Your Pleasure* by Jessie Ware, the deluxe version. That album pulls together so many themes in my life and work, and is such a stunning tapestry of what it means to enjoy and explore having a body in this world. Also, the album is undeniably a love letter to Prince. So there you go, full circle.

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