

OKAMURA



Tim Okamura (born 1968 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada) is a contemporary Canadian painter known for his depiction of African-American and minority subjects in urban settings, and his combination of graffiti and realism. His work has been featured in several major motion pictures and in London's National Portrait Gallery. He was also one of several artists to be shortlisted in 2006 for a proposed portrait of Queen Elizabeth.

Urban life and hip-hop has influenced not only Okamura's subject matter in his paintings, but some of its musical concepts –sampling, combining new beats and classic grooves

This also affected his approach to image-making: sampling excerpts from art history and world mythology, blending classical techniques of oil painting with the spontaneity of spray painted graffiti, combining the academic “realism” of his portrait and figure painting with modern graphics and contemporary urban environments.

“I continue to be inspired simultaneously by the disparate visual language of Rembrandt's dark portraits, the intense contemplation of Antonio Lopez Garcia, and “wild-style” graffiti writers”.

"...a painter who does portraits with tumultuous graffiti backgrounds....a hip-hop painter". Nicholls,Liz

"Tim Okamura, Artist to the Stars", *The Edmonton Journal*

Influenced by



Rembrandt



Antonio Lopez Garcia

(Maria 1974)

Tim Okamura's work investigates identity, environment and contemporary iconography, through a unique approach that combines an academic approach to figure painting with collage, spray paint and mixed media.

Okamura's paintings express an interest in the individual captured on canvas, as well as the idea of transmitting "Courage" or stoicism through the studied expression of a subject's face or a particular posture, or finding the subtle glimmer in someone's eye that communicates the elusive concept spirit or soulfulness is of utmost importance to him.

Additionally, the layers of visual elements in these paintings are often created as a result of observation of the visual encounters on the streets of New York. The build-up of street signage, posters, random felt marker tags,



stencilled street art, and more refined graffiti pieces that together form a complex cultural melting pot that Okamura often emulates on canvas through textural oil paint, rough-hewn collage, and spray cans.

Artistically speaking, Tim Okamura may just be the Caravaggio of our time. Selecting many of the subjects for his realistic portraits from people he meets on New York city streets — much like the famed Baroque artist filled his canvases with ordinary people he knew in Rome — Okamura depicts a range of humanity within a context of dramatic light and shadow.

Urban Portraits and Brooklyn Mythology is a series of 24 atmospheric oil paintings that Okamura has completed over the past several years. The exhibition highlights his ongoing fascination with the human face and showcases his skills as a talented portrait artist. Thoroughly contemporary in his approach, he places his subjects in graffiti-covered alleyways and depicts their likenesses using rough brush strokes

In *Urban Portraits and Brooklyn Mythologies* a portrait of actor Bryan Greenberg who played the role of the artist continues the connection to *Prime*. Shown in a tank top with stylized graffiti letters spelling out "Berg" on the wall behind him, Greenberg holds a paint brush in his right hand and stares defiantly out from the canvas.

Despite this brush with celebrity, most of the paintings in this collection have little to do with fame and everything to do with a telling a story using the human form. In the painting *Blue, Green & Gold* we meet a black man stationed in front of a concrete wall marked with the tags of New York's graffiti writers. Viewing this portrait we understand that, for the people who inhabit his world, life is not filled with Hollywood actors and red carpet affairs. A similar narrative is present in *Totem Wall* where a man of Aboriginal descent, seemingly caught between tradition and urban life, stands in front of a wall painted with graffiti and native Indian symbol



Tim Okamura: *Portrait of Actor Bryan Greenberg*, n/d, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches

Tim Okamura and TheKidbelo (David Brunning) - collaborations



The Peace Queen (Genetaska)



The Wait/The Gift (Kanenhagenat)



The End of Sun's Grief



Mikapi (Fights Alone Bravelly)