

The Other Body

My testimony to the students of the New York Studio School.

My passion for the body is natural and instinctual, as it is for everyone. It goes back as far as I can remember, to looking under the door of my parents' bedroom, and extends to the present, for example when I enjoy seeing the open display of topless bodies on French beaches. I think that growing up in the Mediterranean basin, the cradle of nudity, explains why I feel so at ease with nudity.

The body, and the nude or naked body in particular, is what attracts me. It can even be present in an abstract painting, as it is in the torrid *Boogie Woogie* of Mondrian, which vibrates with sensations and emotions. This painting is certainly sexier than a frigid Bouguereau that fetishizes pre-adolescent girls. Great art must produce an erotic frisson.

For this reason I am very pleased to show my photography here, at the New York Studio School, where students are still taught with actual live models. I think that this generous display of bodies full of life is still a very relevant, meaningful practice in an era when we are overwhelmed with mediatic images of beheaded or exploded bodies.

In my photography the model is both a partner and a muse. The model and I need to become very close and get to know each other for a while; we need to do several sessions and become friends. This is because each model has his or her particular beauty and strength, and this takes time to reveal. As Courbet put it, "I've never seen an angel or a goddess. That's why I don't paint any." We are never close enough to the model, and this relationship is a human adventure that links us for years.

Each era produces different representations of the nude. Living in today's New York, which by its nature is a multicultural city, I want my art to reflect this experience of the bodies of five continents. I want my art to allow the presence of this difference. Whatever medium you choose and become comfortable with, whether it is painting, sculpture, photography, or film, I recommend that you stay close to the body, to the emotion and sensation. This is the source of my inspiration and the anchor of my art.

Ariane Lopez-Huici,

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Translated by Philip Barnard