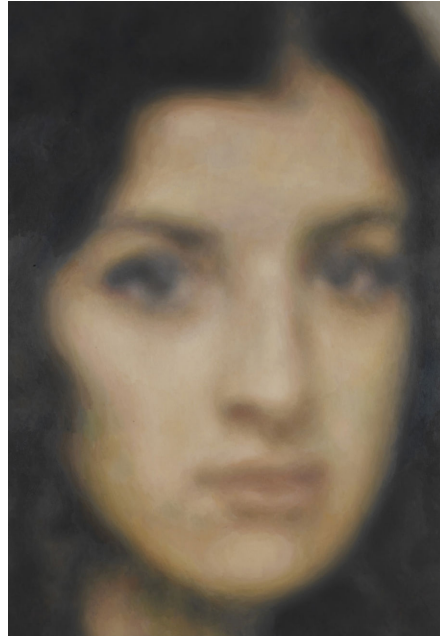


## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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### **Y.Z. Kami's Ethereal Portraits Capture The Beauty Of Meditation**



*Untitled, 2010*

Examining most portraits we learn certain things about the subject: the placement of their parts, the spots where wrinkles have emerged, the stories that made their mark on said stranger's flesh. Yet when standing face to face with one of Y.Z. Kami's massive paintings, the viewer gains a very different kind of understanding.

Kami's subjects appear in a tranquil, otherworldly state, eyes closed to the outside world, focused on the world beyond. Their appearances are blurred by an ethereal haze, as if the meditative trance of the subject was somehow transferred onto the viewer's vantage point. The sfumato renderings conjure the feeling of fluidity, as both subject and viewer float above their bodies into the realm of the painted image.

"You could say that these representations are painfully realistic — but that would be to diminish their impact," Michael Glover wrote in *The Independent*. "Though seemingly good likenesses, they also seem like ghostly representatives of whatever it is about the nature of being human that they are trying to tell us." Kami's paintings do give the impression that they themselves are impressions, imprints of the human spirit rather than manifestations of its earthly form.

Kami, who was born in Iran, folds spirituality into all of his imagery without ascribing to a particular text or faith. Rather, an infinite energy flows through each image, without feeling bound to a particular time or place. Some of Kami's paintings depict hands clasped in prayer,

allowing the viewer to know the subject without even showing his or her face. The dreamy artworks suggest the truth of human understanding is not written in the body, but felt in the glow surrounding it. Through experiencing Kami's works, both subject and viewer momentarily escape the human form and meet in a realm that looks back on them both.

*Y.Z. Kami's "Paintings" runs until February 22 at Gagosian Gallery. All images © Y.Z. Kami. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery. Photography by Robert McKeever*