

In Pierre Gonnord's Old-Fashioned Portraits, a Glimpse of Life on the Edge of the World

Bridget Gleeson March 5, 2015



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“The dream goes over time / Floating like a sailboat,” wrote the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca. This contrast between vulnerability and resilience was the inspiration for Pierre Gonnord's latest collection of stark and striking portraits, which go on view today at Hasted Kraeutler in New York.

These images feel new and old at the same time. That's because the French-born photographer's works are highly stylized, evoking the portraiture of the Old Masters. Gonnord captures his subjects the same way almost every time: from the waist up, looking straight into the camera, naturally lit, and set against a dark drop cloth that the artist carries with him. But it's not only the style that makes the portraits of “The Dream Goes Over Time” feel timeless. It's the artist's choice of subjects. In the tradition of legendary portraitists before him—like Caravaggio, who painted Roman fruit vendors, street urchins, and prostitutes—Gonnord delves into the underbelly of the modern world to find them.

The artist travels to little-known communities and lesser-developed corners of the world to find his subjects—laborers, gypsies, artists, people who live on the fringe—forgotten, or never known to begin with. These are “people from the ghettos,” as Gonnord says, “the outskirts of the city, that flee from a globalized world from which they feel rejected.” For many of these faces, the artist's image represents the one and only photograph in existence. In the age of Instagram, camera sticks, and selfies, the reminder that there's another less-connected world out there—recent studies estimate that only 40% of the world's population has ever used the internet—is a powerful one.

“The Dream Goes Over Time” is on view at Hasted Kraeutler, New York, Mar 5–Apr. 25, 2015.