



About NUDES

By: [Mitch Gillette Member Posts](#)

An Artist Statement

This body of work is actually from 2000 – 2005 and, despite their sunny appearance, they arose from a dark place. In 1996 or so I was beset with a sudden worsening of what had been a manageable mental illness, into a much more serious one (which continues). I was broken by self-doubt and disgusted by everything I had so far produced. I believed I did not know how to paint, so I stopped. For a year I worked on some interesting design projects, but I was miserable. Finally, in what I considered a blind, last-ditch effort, I picked up brushes again. I worked on one painting for two years, which ultimately failed.



Sunbather (2002-2003) Oil on Canvas

I tried again. I decided I would attempt to teach myself how to paint all over. The nude is the foundation of art training and I felt comfortable with it. The figure has always been the subject of my work. I've often depicted nudity, but until then always at the service of a narrative — and never as a study in itself. I challenged myself to paint the figure in a much more realistic style than I was used to, trying to sharpen whatever tools I might possess. Under the circumstances live models were out of the question, and anyway, I wanted to avoid the straight-forward “reclining nude” sort of pictures — the nude for nude sake, so to speak. Instead I found subjects in a practice I'd used in my graphic work, the appropriation of vintage cheesecake, beefcake, and nudist photography. There I could find nudes posing, their anatomy clear, their sexuality present but non-pornographic, naughty but not without a kind of innocence. (As far as I'm aware the sunlit settings were accidental, dictated more by the source images than any conscious effort to cheer myself).



Sunbather (Drawing) (2000)
Pencil on Paper



Sunbather (Color Study) (2001)
Oil on Masonite

Naturally, these paintings are about much more than how-to-paint exercises. I'm not one to plumb the depths of meaning in my work, I tend to let meaning happen by itself. But I can discuss purpose.

A tension was intended to comment on unhealthy modern mores. The austere purity and beauty we celebrate with the classical nude in art are at odds with the modern American attitude of nakedness which is most often shameful, dirty, or fodder for masturbation. I strove for a friction between the refinement of classical nudes suggested in the poses of the figures and the academic application of paint, including color glazes—and the sexual nature of the figures, their once illicit, salacious nature dimmed by today's

standards, but still undeniably felt.

...accidently, leaving the canvases slightly damaged and future planned work abandoned. The paintings leaned against the wall of my studio for fifteen years, face out, constant companions, very dusty, never meant to be shown, seen only by friends. I let them out now.

—M.G.

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