

Naudline Pierre

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Naudline Pierre, *Descent*, 2016. Photo: Courtesy of the Artist/Artwork © 2016 Naudline Pierre Photography ©2017 Paul Takeuchi

“I used to have a hard time going to the Met or sitting in an art-history class. I was approaching it not only as a woman but as a black woman. I felt like, *Where are we? Where do we fit?* There have been times where I’m like, *I cannot go into a 19th-century wing and look at paintings of women as props.* But now I feel like I’ve found a way to co-opt classical language, to subvert it in a way that can give me a feeling of agency.

The main figures in my paintings are female, and the other figures are often genderless. I don't usually paint male figures — I feel like I have enough male energy in my life — but I add male genitalia sometimes. When I'm painting the female form, I'm taking time getting into the shape of it, I'm enjoying it. But when I'm painting a man, it's more like I made a genderless figure, and now I'm going to slap a penis on it. The penis feels comical.

I've known of men who make careers off painting women lying naked on lush sheets — not great careers, but careers — and I've heard them say their work is about empowering women. I wish they'd just call it what it is so we could move past this shroud of fake whatever-it-is. You like color, light, flesh, the female form. Just say "I like boobs." And a lot of artists, their time is up. Bye. Leave space for the rest of us making work that's interesting and moving the needle. When I see that Jeff Koons work with Cicciolina, it's a big yawn for me. I'm over it.

<https://www.thecut.com/2018/04/can-a-male-artist-still-paint-a-female-nude.html>