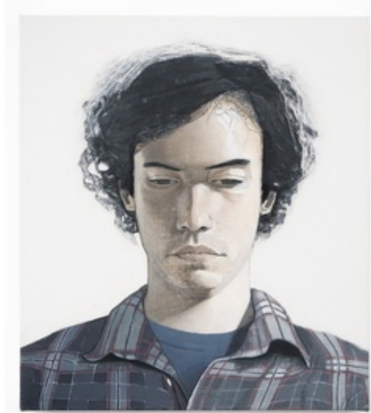


ARTFORUM



Caleb Considine, *Patrick*, 2013, oil on canvas, 18 x 16"

Caleb Considine
ESSEX STREET, New York

One of the more intoxicating works in Caleb Considine's New York debut is a three-quarter portrait of a young man, titled *Patrick*, 2013. His skin is terribly pale, and light gleams over one side of his face, causing his cheek to resemble the smooth surface of marble. The other side is cast in shadow and appears almost pixilated. Silky dark locks pile over his head, but at his forehead they turn into spidery black lines, causing his alabaster skin to seem fractured, like the shell of a cracked egg. Cross-hatching is visible at his hairline, where Considine decided to stop painting, exposing part of the canvas and disturbing his own illusionism. A subtle wash of white glows around the top of his head, turning the edges of his black hair a gray-white: It seems he has aged prematurely, but here the aging process proceeds backward, starting from the outside and descending in. His eyes are cast down toward the ground and his pupils are lackluster—the look, perhaps, of someone who has stared too long at a computer screen. If nonchalance and cynicism attend here, they are qualities birthed entirely by the artist's allegiance to realism—as if Considine is studying depiction as way to study a generational sensibility.

That said, Considine's fidelity to realism seems motivated by an interest not in illusionism but in reproduction. Among the other five works in this exhibition, for instance, there is a painting of a painting and a painting of a drawing. He has also painted objects within his studio (a hair dryer, insulation wrapped around a heating pipe). Throughout, the emphasis seems less on subject than on technique: This process recalls the way students in a beginning art course paint arbitrary objects—a vase, a bowl of fruit—as a pedagogical tool. His images are rigorously studied, made of precise brushstrokes that are built up and scraped away or soaked off the canvas. Though all of Considine's paintings here include technical disruptions similar to those within *Patrick*, their verisimilitude is staggering. Rendered in a palette of cold blues and harsh whites, it's notable that each lacks vibrancy: The paintings seem sucked dry of energy, as if his objects had faded in the process of reproduction. One might call this art Photorealism—but a realism that gestures toward not the photograph but the photocopy.

— Allese Thomson