

④ Philip Mueller,
Mother Agave,
oil on canvas,
100 × 80 cm, 2017,
Carbon 12

⑤ Philip Mueller,
Jonny Versace,
oil on canvas,
104 × 84 cm, 2017,
Carbon 12



Mueller puts more emotional intensity into his portrayal of Jonny Versace, the fashion magnate murdered in 1997, again using the skull and adding death in the shadows. On his head is a smattering of pink paint — a surreal element which in its looseness of application references Khojasteh's technique. The Iranian artist applies paint incredibly thickly. His contorted, at times freakish forms comment on the dangers of absolute power and control inspired by dictators and political heavyweights, particularly from his native Iran. Subjects are not clearly identified. Titles are instead suggestive of a particular state of mind: *The Cry of the Grey Spirit*, *Waiting for the Sun*, *The Fixed Gaze*. Features are blurred and distorted, the artist astutely bringing inner demons to the surface.

Good Face and Incurable Flaws

CARBON 12

September 13 to October 31

Throughout history, artists have wrestled with the challenging task of representing a sitter: not just reproducing their physical attributes but giving an impression of their mood and personality, capturing their very essence. Here we see two very different approaches to portraiture.

Carbon 12 has forged a unique position combining a focus on European (primarily Austrian) and Iranian contemporary art. This exhibition illustrates how fascinating a dual perspective that approach can offer, bringing together recent works by two artists of the same age (not yet 30): Philip Mueller from Vienna and Amir Khojasteh from Tehran.

We are familiar with Mueller's bucolic, fantastical scenes. Here, we have zoomed in and slowed down: his portraits cool and monumental, their surroundings ripe with symbolism. Some reference power play from Greek mythology — Mother Agave was a licentious character in Euripides' play *The Bacchae*. Mueller gives her a face devoid of expression, her dress covered in skulls with a pair of horns on her headband. Behind her sit domestic pots holding agaves, which are perennial until they flower, at which point the plant dies.

⑥ Amir Khojasteh,
Waiting for the sun,
oil on canvas,
40 × 30 cm, 2017,
Carbon 12

