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1. *Your artistic research has always focused on the relationship between painting, space and time, through the layering and recombination of objects, places and memories.*

   I paint pictures that are perfectly constructed impossibilities. Although many of my sources actually exist – in this case, the carved and painted wooden sculptures of the early European Renaissance – my image is first and foremost a surface, highlighting painting's unique ability to simultaneously uphold and destroy illusions.

2. *The layers of color become as fundamental to the rendering of the painting as they are necessary for the depth that the work takes on. Can you explain what lies behind the glazing of the faces in* Face of a Woman, Head of a Child?

- The painting technique I have developed over time moves between materialization and dematerialization. On a multiply grounded canvas, I apply up to four layers of oil paint. Each layer covers the entire surface, like a veil. My handling of color, texture, form, and space is self-evident, equal to the visual games and enigmas that pervade Rococo and Mannerist painting, yet firmly rooted, formally and conceptually, within the vernacular information of my own time.
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- Each painting comprises layers of sheer and luminous oil paint, that I apply with a small brush, regardless of the scale of the painting. The tonalities of the original early Renaissance sculptures upon which these works are based vary widely according to the cultures to which they belong: the layers of color are built up accordingly – for example the turquoise undercoat corresponding to northern palette, while orange undercoat denotes the warmer complexions of southern subjects.





3. *The figures are completely removed from their religious context into a purely abstract dimension with no connotations. Once decontextualized, what is the relationship between the subjects?*

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- I have secularized these sacred figures from the early Renaissance by eliding all identifying details, titles, and iconography to focus solely on their facial features. Zooming in on my subjects first with my camera and then the computer, I crop and enlarge their faces, paying close attention to the material qualities of the original sculptures, including the marks inflicted by the passage of time. I try to capture the play of light on the surface, highlighting the three-dimensional forms and the stylistic decisions of the original sculptor and *Fassmaler* (artisanal painter). I am the third artist in the relationship, so to speak! I take care to emphasize the idiosyncratic features of each woman and child, heightening their surreal sense of artificiality through their imperfections and anatomical eccentricities. In eliding the religious iconography, I present the sculptures as highly subjective three-dimensional objects, imbued with animate vitality through painterly contour and color—a woman's tender, protective gaze or the blush of a baby's cheek, like a ripe apple.
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- I structure the paired portraits of woman and child so that their gazes are separated rather than engaged with each other, destabilizing the visible emotional bond between them as they appear in the original sculpture. While the similarity of their features attests to their genetic relationship, the viewer might well speculate whether in fact one single model served for both adult and infant.

4. *Within the new series there is also a pair of woman and child that can be traced - in terms of features and expressions - to contemporary times. Why is this?*

- Among the historical pairings, there is one young mother and child from my own family circle who are emblematic of today's more diverse Germany. By juxtaposing portraits from my own context and community with those of archetypal history, I propose portraiture, representation, and family bonds as elements of a persistent dialogue in life and art. In this single diptych, my approach is very different. Both woman and child look candidly out of the canvas as if to engage the viewer directly.

5. *What did you want to emphasize with this gesture?*

- The figures I paint oscillate back and forth between reality and depiction; the likenesses of the sculptures become more real and lifelike than the sculptures themselve, while conversely, the contemporary woman and child look more like religious icons.

6. *With Face of a Woman, Head of a Child there was a clear departure from natural subjects, how come this change of direction?* If you look closely at my work natural subjects have never been my purview!

7. *How did you feel about returning to Rome twenty-five years after your residency at the German Academy in Villa Massimo?* It was at Villa Massimo twenty-five years ago that I began painting still lifes. At that time, the backgrounds were flat and monochrome. So I decided to revisit the still lifes for the current exhibition in Rome. What has changed is the backgrounds, which are generic landscapes and skies. The woman-and-child diptychs draw contrapuntal energy from the aesthetic and religious context of Baroque Rome, framed by the spectacular modern geometry of Gagosian's gallery.