

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



Mother, 2011; oil on canvas; 59 3/4 x 42 3/4 inches; 151.8 x 108.6 cm

Nir Hod: *Mother*
March 28-April 28, 2012
515 W. 27th Street, New York, NY

Opening: Wednesday, March 28th, 2012, 6 - 8pm

Paul Kasmin Gallery is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of 10 new paintings by the artist Nir Hod. Referencing the iconic photograph of Nazi soldiers clearing out the Warsaw Ghetto taken by the Nazi photographer Franz Konrad in 1943, Hod's paintings focus on the anonymous woman rather than the iconic boy.

The "Boy from Warsaw," as he is known, has been the primary focus of this horrific photograph, and has become a symbol of the Holocaust. As Dan Porat of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem writes in his book *The Boy: A Holocaust Story* (H&W/FSG), "*Looking at a photograph, the viewer sees the surface facts and comes to believe he or she has grasped the inner truth of the events depicted, can feel the pain, can see the evil, while in fact knowing nothing of the protagonists, circumstances or context associated with those events.*" By focusing on the woman, Hod named "Mother," Hod asks the viewer to consider her; her inevitable and eventual fate, and what stood before her at that terrible moment in time. Hod has chosen to capture this woman in a sublime and tragic moment, freezing her in time and inviting us to interpret her image.

Throughout his career, Hod has explored the relationships between glamour and loneliness, beauty and death. He first saw the Warsaw Ghetto photograph as a child, when it was widely used to illustrate articles and texts about the Holocaust. Although initially drawn to the young boy, he became increasingly fascinated by the woman in profile as he repeatedly returned to the photograph. Hod's unique depiction of this woman, coming out from the dark, rising like a flame, light falling upon her, references Rembrandt and other Old Master paintings. Finally, she is the woman in her moment, depicted in the forefront of the image. Her arms raised, her body floating, she is portrayed as though she has submitted to the horrific fate that ultimately awaited her. Hod's mastery of color with subtle variations in tone and shade between each painting revitalizes her essence. The paintings act as a metaphor for life and death, bringing her back to life.

Through his delicate duplication between each painting, Hod's multiple images suggest such notable art historical references as Warhol's iconic "Shadow" paintings to the classic film stills, notably from the great

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“Film Noir” genre. In this series, Hod’s palette ranges from the Old Master portraits of Peter Paul Rubens to the photo-realist technique of Gerhard Richter.

Hod’s mastery is, in part, an illusion. Having removed the woman from the photograph, Hod has transferred her to another state where she is depicted as a beautiful modern young lady, alluring, fashionable, floating effortlessly in space. Hod temporarily erases the woman’s connection to the Warsaw Ghetto, the Holocaust, and to World War II. Instead, the woman in these paintings has completely escaped from the horrible reality of the original photograph. Hod has given her memory a new existence, immortalizing her and elevating her to an almost reverential level.

Nir Hod was born in Tel Aviv in 1970 and received his B.F.A. from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem. He lives and works in New York.

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