

## **“Eduardo Gil: portraits that feel like landscapes”**

**Marjan Groothuis**

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...Eduardo Gil's exhibition titled 'Paisajes' although he doesn't present landscapes in the traditional sense, on the contrary. Maybe, 'Portraits' would have been more apt but his images, although focusing on faces, are a lot more than that. Over thirty large colour photographs, measuring approximately 120 x 100 centimetres, adorn the walls showing the faces of people with their eyes closed.

It is a strange point of departure because this view is usually reserved for more private circumstances, watching your children or partner sleep, maybe when making love or when someone has died. Another possibility is catching someone unaware, a person who has fallen asleep on a bus or train, which can cause uneasiness: there is a sense of helplessness, as if seeing something that one is not supposed to see. Also, those who posed for Gil might be in for a bit of a shock as nobody knows what he or she looks like with eyes closed.

Furthermore, the pictures were taken without frills, no make-up, no adornments, and are therefore rather remorseless. Every wrinkle, pimple, hair and pore is visible, there is nothing to distract from these imperfections. Also the fact that all were portrayed in the same way, frontally and with bare shoulders, enhances the eeriness. At every moment it seems that these people could open their eyes and stare back at you, but right now communication is being denied. On the other hand, it is pretty clear that those portrayed are not blind, their expressions and mimics would be totally different, and not sleeping or dead either: their faces would be more serene and the cheeks are far too rosy for the latter option.

The big question is, of course, why would Gil portray people in this position? This project, he says, refers to a picture I made a couple of years ago of a friend of mine, also a photographer who has died since. In it, he adds, she can be seen with closed eyes and somehow the image really appealed to me. Only last year, Gil explains, I decided to take up this theme and so far I have taken one hundred pictures of people with their eyes closed, mostly friends, artists, pupils or strangers, it is a work in progress. To me, he says, these faces are like landscapes, hence the title of the exhibition, because there is so much to see, the traces the years have left behind and are going to leave behind. In short, he adds, these images, tell about experiences, the unstoppable passing of time and that by closing the eyes many eerie things happen, just as a vacant stare can be unsettling. Maybe, after all, eyes are indeed the mirrors of the soul.