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## Miami Art Exchange

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### How Deep Can We Go?

Onajide Shabaka – 31 Mar., 2009

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by Onajide Shabaka



Photo: Onajide Shabaka - Miami Art Exchange, 2009

"Deepen / Deeper" an exhibition of paintings by Miami based Asser Saint Val at Carol Jazzar Contemporart Art offers us a series of paintings that explore the relationship between eclectic symbolism and figurative abstraction through our relationship to science. The ctatlogue essay states:

"Asser Saint Val's oeuvre is fuelled by dedicated research into the chemical and sociological properties of Melanin, a biological compound found in the plant, animal, and protista kingdoms that among other things, colors human skin, hair and eyes.

Having conducted encyclopedic studies of what he refers to as 'the phenomenon of Melanin' and its manifestation in the world, the artist explores the way in which science has previously been used to justify false perceptions concerning people of color. His findings, which draw from research into humans of all races, take the form of paintings often titled after scientists who have worked closely within his area of interest."

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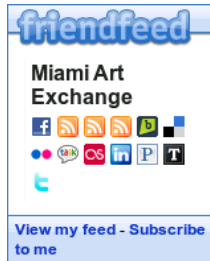
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Asser Saint-Val was a recipient of the South Florida cultural Consortium Fellowship in 2006. The value fellowships such as these have to artists is allowing them to be more financially able to create larger work, which in turn, allowed Saint-Val to push his work further and to take more risks. He has really relished the opportunity to tap into more things and open more conversations which, again, feeds into his work.

The exhibitions in the aftermath of the initial investigation into the science of melanin resulted in this exhibition with its larger, more powerful works. Viewers at the opening were saying the sexuality stronger was more evident in these images and, that Saint-Val seemed to have a very intuitive feeling for women. Saint-Val states, "At the show a man was talking about how well I represent women. I was raised in the presence of many women and feel very comfortable with women but, the work is not specifically about women." More to the point, he mentions tapping in to various chemical processes and the scientific aspects that form the basis for his work.

As we continue to watch Saint-Val's work further develop our hope is to see its further development and refinement. The larger scale has definitely brought a new sense of viewing the work that is more striking yet, retains its intimacy.

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