

刘起民

QUINTUO

刘起民画集

（中国美术学院出版社）







# ARTWORKS by QIMINLIU

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## 自序

### ——渴望中的苦旅

对我来说自序是件不妥的事，本人即不善言，又不善辩，虽然如此，但我更不愿求助，幸好这是一本画集，收入画册里的视觉形象或许是我近年来的审美和创作理念的具体反映。也是居美十多年学习、研究与创作总括；而非仅仅哲人观念性地思考，应该说最了解我艺术创作观念和过程的应该是我自己，也只好自己作序。

我自幼家境贫苦，固执自强，一直与劣势环境较斗，且不屈不挠，从不寄息而委曲求全。又一向独往独来，我行我素，经历了许多困惑中的挣扎，感情与思想上的漂流。旅居美国十余年，总的来说，虽生活宽裕些，精神上却沧桑嵯峨，连续进程中的无家人系列组画一方面是这种生活环境的反映；另一方面是我对美国社会不当现象的揭示与评判。同时表达了我对无家人族群的同情。尤其是1997年到了美国费城美术学院深造以来，目击了许多流浪街头的无家人，也由于我个人感情与生活方面的原因经历许多性情与品格上的陶冶与磨练。生活上的漂泊与坎坷，逐渐加深了我精神浪人的感受，自然地我与这个族群有了更多的接触，长时间的交流换取他们坦诚的相待，也回报了活生生的创作素材，他们是流浪在街头、巷角、公园长凳上、暴露在天空下、被忽视却又挣扎生存的个体。

现在这个创作的过程已经历了七个春秋，而且还会继续下去。2003年的夏天，我驱车历经42天跨美国26个州的横海岸考察之旅。途径丹佛，洛杉矶，圣安东尼奥，伯明翰，费城等大城市，先后与那里的十多个无家人聚集的群体进行了广泛而又深入的生活体验。这次零距离的全面的与无家人群体的接触，不仅是这个画集作品创作的重要动力，也是我整体艺术行为和观念的体现。

连续进程中的无家人系列组画是由多个主题系列组成，其中主要包括“人在街头素描系列”、“无家人肖像系列”、“人在街头油画系列”、“在天空下系列”等。本画册中收集的部分连续进程中的无家人系列组画具体地反映了我在艺术创作上和现实生活中的孤独旅程，另一方面也体现出我直面人生的乐观主义，及人文主义精神。无家人系列以直接的视觉描绘同间接的文学叙述性相结合，系统地反映了当代美国社会流浪街头族群的信仰危机，人情淡漠，及社会福利结构不完善等一些社会问题造成的毒品虐待，酗酒等令人失望的真实。作品通过尊重生命的主调对无家人在逆境中挣扎的生活状态进行了典型描绘。强烈地表述了一个精神浪子以其独特的视角对美国流浪族群生活现状的同情。同时，近年来我一直在研究如何继承传统人物绘画的形式与技巧，如何能更好地反映时代精神特征，如何表现挖掘有积极社会意义的主题。造成流浪汉人生悲剧背后的社会问题及他（她）们的沧桑的体貌特征给予人物绘画形式冲注了生命力。使我在继承人物传统绘画、寻找时代气息和探索人物绘画视觉形式新感觉上找到了交汇点。因此，无家人系列组画不仅体现了我现阶段在艺术创作上的个人风格，更重要的是展示了我在寻找具象现实主义时代精神特征过程中的探索。我一向认为艺术创作的原则应该是反映与挖掘具有积极意义的社会性主题，积极的有责任感的行为和创作方向，会增强作品形式美的内涵。总之，乐观的创作态度与有责任感的审美思维不但会对人类文化和社会生活产生良性的影响，最重要的是通过艺术创作过程艺术家本人的性情也得到了陶冶。学画及创作二十余年，第一本画集终于有幸同艺术爱好者见面。我想通过这个自序的机会感谢对此书做出贡献的撰稿人、摄影师、编辑、赞助、出版、发行的天津人民美术出版社，广州安泰化学公司总经理邹榛夫先生，天津人民美术出版社编辑部张胜先生，荷兰摄影师胡泊门·汗（Hein Hopmans）先生，美国艺术评论家施兆斯·罗博特（Robert Strauss）先生，康涅狄格州东方州立大学阿克画廊经理、评论家、展览策划人卡丽丝·玛丽音（Marion Callis）女士，康涅狄格州东方州立大学作家柏克曼·戴特（Dwight Bachman）先生。我更想借此机会衷心感谢多年在艺术上支持与关心我的亲朋好友。最后，我将此书奉献给养育和支持我的父母亲。

2005年3月于美国康涅狄格

## 艺术家小传

刘起民，生于黑龙江省双鸭山市宝山区。1982—1983年就读于双鸭山市职业高中装潢班，1985年毕业于哈尔滨师范大学美术系专科。同年底，迁居安徽省涡阳县，曾短期担任民办美术教师。1987年始开办数期暑期美术学习班。1998年9月独自往西北敦煌考察。1991年毕业于中国戏曲学院舞美系本科，获学士学位。同年12月旅居美国，1997年获宾州州立大学艺术设计学院绘画/素描/版画专业文学硕士，1999年获宾西法尼亚美术学院绘画专业艺术硕士。旅美早期曾着重于版画创作，尤其是石版、铜版及独幅版画的研究。在宾西法尼亚美术学院雕塑系工作期间对石雕、铸铜、电焊等技术也产生浓厚兴趣。1996年后开始重点从事素描、油画，丙烯的绘画形式与材料的探索；同时开始对美国具象人物绘画的历史与现状进行了系统的研究。先后主要师从美国教育家、波普画家史密斯·布鲁斯（Bruce Smith），后现代丙烯、蛋彩绘画巨匠克什邦伯·杰欧斯（Jules Kirschenbaum），美国当代现实主义绘画大师顾德曼·辛迪尼（Sidney Goodman），观念具象新星戴瑟蒂瑞欧·文森特（Vincent Deserdrio），古风主义与印象色彩结合的肖像巨匠善克斯·耐克森（Nelson Shanks），并先后受益于数十位当代卓越的前卫艺术家、理论家、艺评家的讲座。例如：鄂康奇·维涂（Vito Acconci）弗雷克·阿德丽（Audrey Flack），夏伯洛·吉欧（Joel Shapiro），史密斯·凯凯（Kiki Smith），科思伯特·唐纳德（Donald Kuspit），休思·罗伯特（Robert Hughes），普莱金·彼得（Peter Plagens），盖布丽克，苏哲（Suzi Gablik）等等。

综合东西艺术的理论基础与实践，在艺术创作原则与题材上坚持艺术家应该致力于具有积极意义的创作方向。特别近8年来，一直投注于连续进程中的美国无家人系列组画创作。把艺术创作过程和结果做为一体的艺术行为。仅自1997年以来先后参加了50多次个展和联展。曾40多次被美国新闻、报刊杂志、广播电视等媒体的报道。先后荣获多次全美及区域绘画竞赛展的奖励和荣誉。并荣获1999年度费城青年挑战艺术家，1999年度佛尔蒙特福瑞门亚洲艺术家创作基金，2000年度宾州独立基金艺术家和创作基金。1997—1999年以来曾任教于费城宾西法尼亚美术学院雕塑工作室，宾州费城大学艺术学院基础教研室，2000年起至今任美国康涅狄格州东方州立大学教授。



## **Qimin Liu: Paintings and Drawings**

The paintings and drawings in this book represent a metamorphosis. At first observation, one sees embodied in Qimin Liu's work a paradox of visual allure and subject. His painting style is resplendent with the lush color and textures of the European baroque, alternating again with expressive, vigorous calligraphic mark-making, characteristic of traditional Chinese painting. The experimental quality of his drawing style is characterized by the individual marks he makes; they are informed by artistic training gained in both the East and the West. Water is used with charcoal to create surface textures with the softness and depth of flesh; these areas are galvanized by the confident energy of individual marks.

These seductive techniques might seem an incongruous choice for images of homeless men and women, but for Liu, the social statement we might expect in such imagery is secondary, transmuted by his perception. The artist surpasses the admirable accomplishment of a social message presented without shrillness, bombast, or sentimentality, and makes manifest the transformative quality of art. In his subjects' metamorphoses, a problematic figure of the 21st century quotidian is rarefied. An "untouchable" becomes Everyman, and is suddenly, unexpectedly, not only accessible but transcendently beautiful. To affect this transformation, Liu's interest in his subjects had to extend beyond visual fact into spiritual empathy. Initially, the images may call to mind the oversized, minutely observed early portrait images of Chuck Close, or the well known series of portraits of mental patients by the French Romantic painter Théodore Géricault. The American and French artists primarily addressed the facts of their subjects' appearance, however: how reality or disorder informs a face, and the experience of confronting those facts. To find his images, Liu had to gain the trust of people with whom he could only barely communicate (his English-speaking skills were rudimentary, at best, at the project's outset). He found a common level in part by understanding the delicate divide between their lives and his own, and the universality of both. The overwhelming success of his communication with his subjects is evident.

The artist's ultimate interest with these images is not to communicate his own success, but to facilitate ours. "My goal as an artist is that my work will have transcendent spiritual meaning to benefit others and society," he writes. Artist, subject, and viewer are metamorphosed by them: mission accomplished.

Marion M. Callis

March 2005

## **"Qimin Liu"**

Is there any art more difficult to make than that possessed of a social conscience? Such art must always walk a fine line by necessity, especially in these politically correct times where all too often, work deemed important is no different than a once towering statue of Saddam. Indeed, didactic, obvious and heavy-handed stuff is all the rage today, smothered beneath the blanket of Truth. Truth notwithstanding, that doesn't make it Good Art.

Then you've got the work of Qimin Liu. As aesthetically acute as it is socioeconomically accurate (and subtly scathing), Liu's subjects are the disaffected and disenfranchised. Portraits of homeless men, America's own.

Untouchables. Each painting is as much a telling indictment of the shortcomings of the powers that be as they are depictions of personal pain, though here an abiding spirit peeks out. In this, Qimin Liu's art is in keeping with the most responsible work of socially conscious art that ever was, "West London", a sonnet by Matthew Arnold that also deals with society's invisible people.

Qimin Liu demolishes the conventional wisdom that history is forever written by the winners (make that conquerors). There is no such thing as objective art, especially in work enabled by a collective unconscious. Thus, these paintings keep close our solidarity with the disenfranchised among us; at the heart of his portraits is a profound sadness that on a personal level never once fails to meld us all with each man under the sky. Here, Liu is unconcerned with any documentary focus. In this regard, his oeuvre is in keeping with the greatest work of visual art that ever reflected on political issues, "Guernica".

Society's untouchables are given necessary attention in Liu's revealing portraits. An inner dignity shines through each, yet there is pathos here as well. Liu offers nothing judgmental, just a clear vision that is distinct in its myriad methods of offering his subjects their lives. One doesn't think of the homeless as having lives, but Liu assures us that they do indeed, and through how he offers them identity through brushstrokes rendered with sweeping majesty and a palette grounded in naturalism. His illumination of his subjects by turn not just brings us all closer to them but binds a community spirit as being the essence of humanity.

R.B. Strauss

December 2004





### **Qimin Liu: The Real Deal**

My responsibility as an artist extends beyond creating beautiful images or gaining personal fulfillment. My hope is to transcend the purely aesthetic to communicate a deeper spiritual message: one that will be meaningful, thought-provoking, and positive in its effect.

Qimin Liu

When you hear someone say, "There's something wrong with this picture," rest assured. That person is not referring to the compelling paintings and drawings of Qimin Liu, a native of China and assistant professor of visual arts at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic. Liu's representations of the homeless in America -- these men living "Under the Sky," actualize them in a way that our commonplace vision cannot capture. His is an-all-too rare, if not unique, skill that is put at the service of precision. Liu's mastery of detail catches the eye and sears the mind. Cracked lips, parched skin, penetrating glances, bedraggled and dirty mustaches -- all these and more bespeak his artistry. People on the street would call Liu "the real deal!" Connoisseurs deem him incomparable.

What is it that elicits the arresting vibrancy and sensitivity in Liu's vivid, lifelike images, images that appear to breathe as you peer at them? What is it that overpowers? Liu has experienced abject poverty firsthand. He grew up in a broken family in a small village in China's Helongjiang Province. His divorced mother had no income, so as an older child, he had to try hard to make living with his artistic gifts, along with employment to help her and two younger sisters. Often, there was only two meal a day, and on some days, no food at all. Life was an unceasing struggle. Even so, he managed to earn two college degrees before emigrating. Once in the United States, he matriculated at Iowa State University, at Ames. He became an academic standout there and, later, at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Liu was bewildered by the large numbers of homeless people on streets across the country. "How can this be in America, the most powerful country on earth, this land of opportunity!" It seemed that few people cared or were aware of their destitute brothers. which jolted him. "Every person wants to be a part of his or her society, but the destitute are not. They were and are broken men trying to weather the storms of life, men with no roof over their heads year in and year out. Disillusioned, disenfranchised, and discarded members of American society. They are dying, physically, spiritually, and mentally, suffering from the ravages of alcoholism, drug addiction, postwar stress syndrome and mental illness."

Liu worried, then resolutely turned to paintings and drawings of the homeless "to get people to take a closer look at people we would rather not see. I have no political agenda. My responsibility as an artist reaches beyond creating beautiful





images or gaining personal fulfillment. Deep down, I believe we all have certain things in common: the constant search for social responsibility, and the desire to care for others and share with each other. I want to stimulate my audience to think about situations, to generate some change and create, through my images, a reaction to the issues facing today's society. My hope is to transcend the purely aesthetic to communicate a deeper spiritual message, one that will be meaningful, thought-provoking, and positive in its effect."

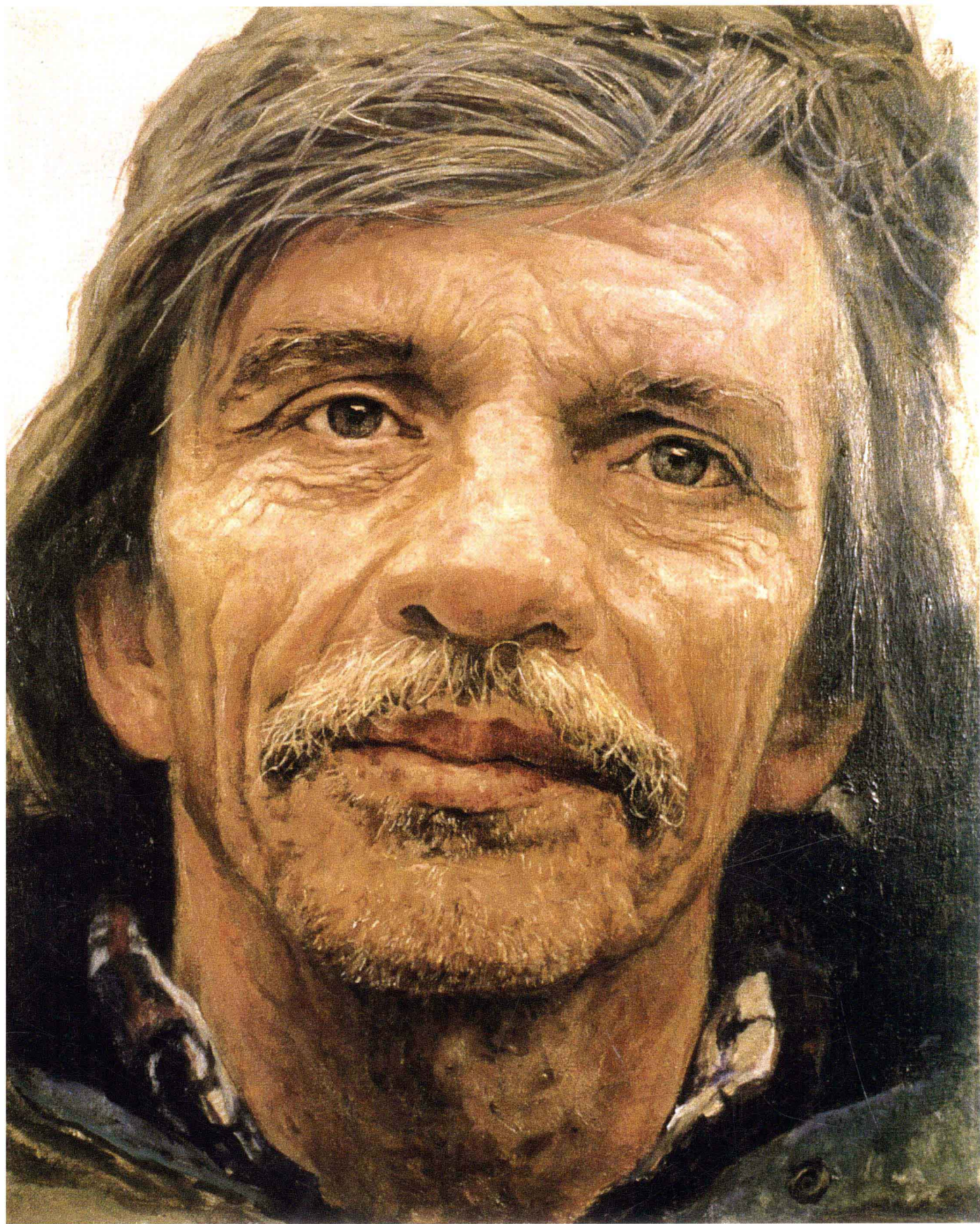
By focusing on the travails of outcasts, Liu believes he is making a choice that they cannot make for themselves. "This is not about art for art's sake. It is much larger than the art form. It is about humanity -- using an art form to express an emotion of caring for less fortunate people, people who are struggling. People need help. They are in despair. That must be the prevailing message. I could not paint them if I did not feel a connection. I feel the men talking to me when I paint. I feel their pain. I try to express their spirit and their hope. And if I cannot give THEM hope, I try to inspire others to do something about this problem of homelessness. It is a worldwide problem. If I persuade people not only to say 'Wow!' but to ask themselves the ultimate spiritual question, How can I help others to a better life? Then my effort will not be in vain."

Liu has already won the hearts of the art community and thousands of Liu "watchers" who appreciate his work. This first book -- one of many to come -- is a treasure, a landmark by the artist. It is a must-read volume and a major breakthrough in communications: hard-hitting, uninhibited, candid. A bare-knuckles story of the homeless. From beginning to end, one is made aware of Liu's empathy. His oeuvre is provocative and significant in that it reflects our hopes and fears, as well as hard facts. It is also a positive force for change. Truly magnificent, it is among the elite collections of painting and drawings to bring to the fore the story of homelessness in America. His will be the standard by which others are judged.

If you are a person of discernment, you will cherish this book. Liu's style demonstrates his passion: uplifting, optimistic, unforgettable. It will inspire and reward for years to come. It will give you pause as you ponder the differences in circumstances across this great land. . To be buffeted by wintry winds is true, miserable hardship. To try to sleep at night in a dark alley is not soothing to the body or soul. If you absorb the message herein, you will be stirred to be a gift to a deserving other. And that's what Qimin wants for you, that you care about others. That's why Qimin Liu, my friend, is, for me, the real deal.

Dwight Bachman  
November 2004





在天空下系列之一 （私人收藏） Under the sky #1 20 × 16inches Private Collection





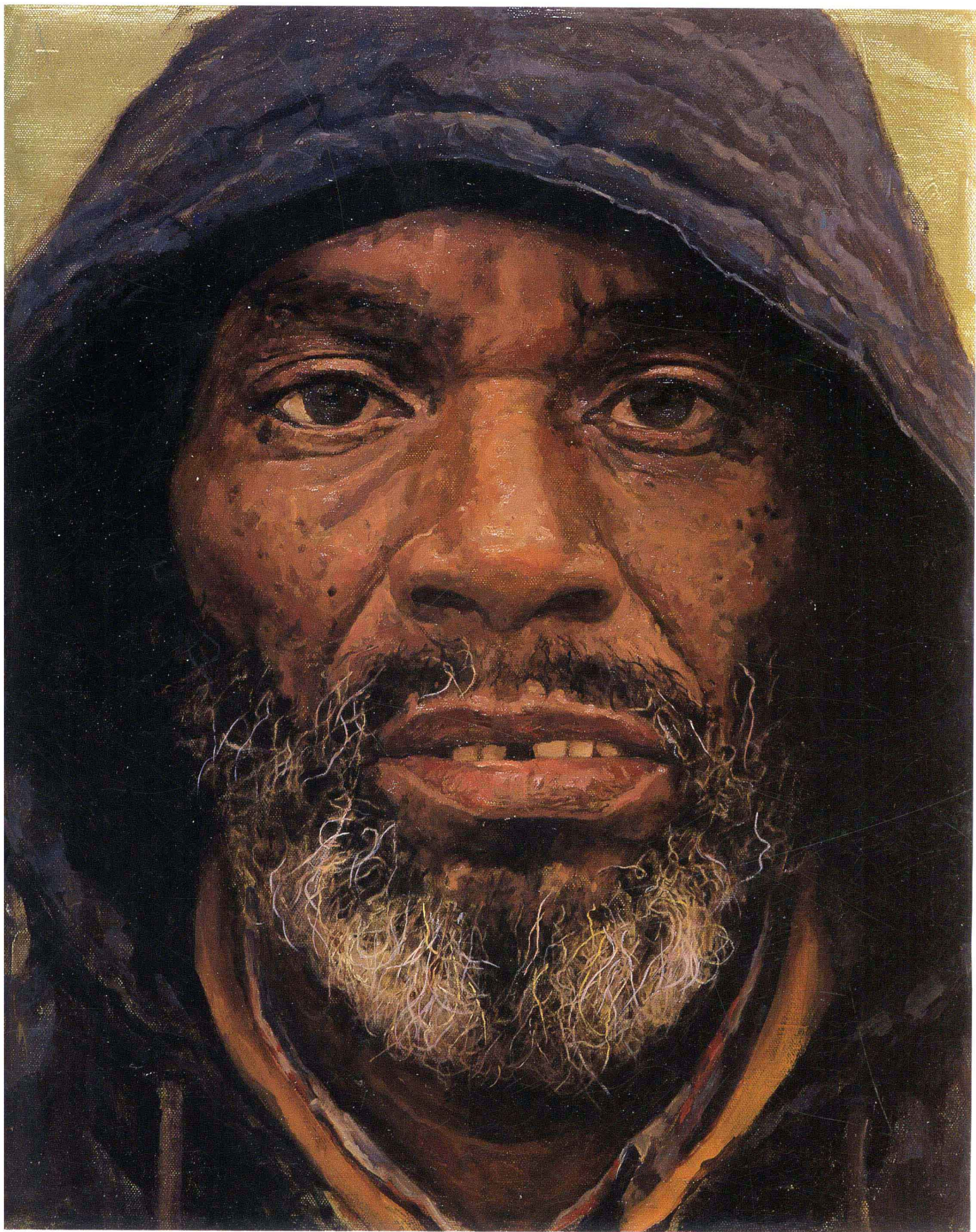
在天空下系列之二 Under the Sky #2 20 x 16inches





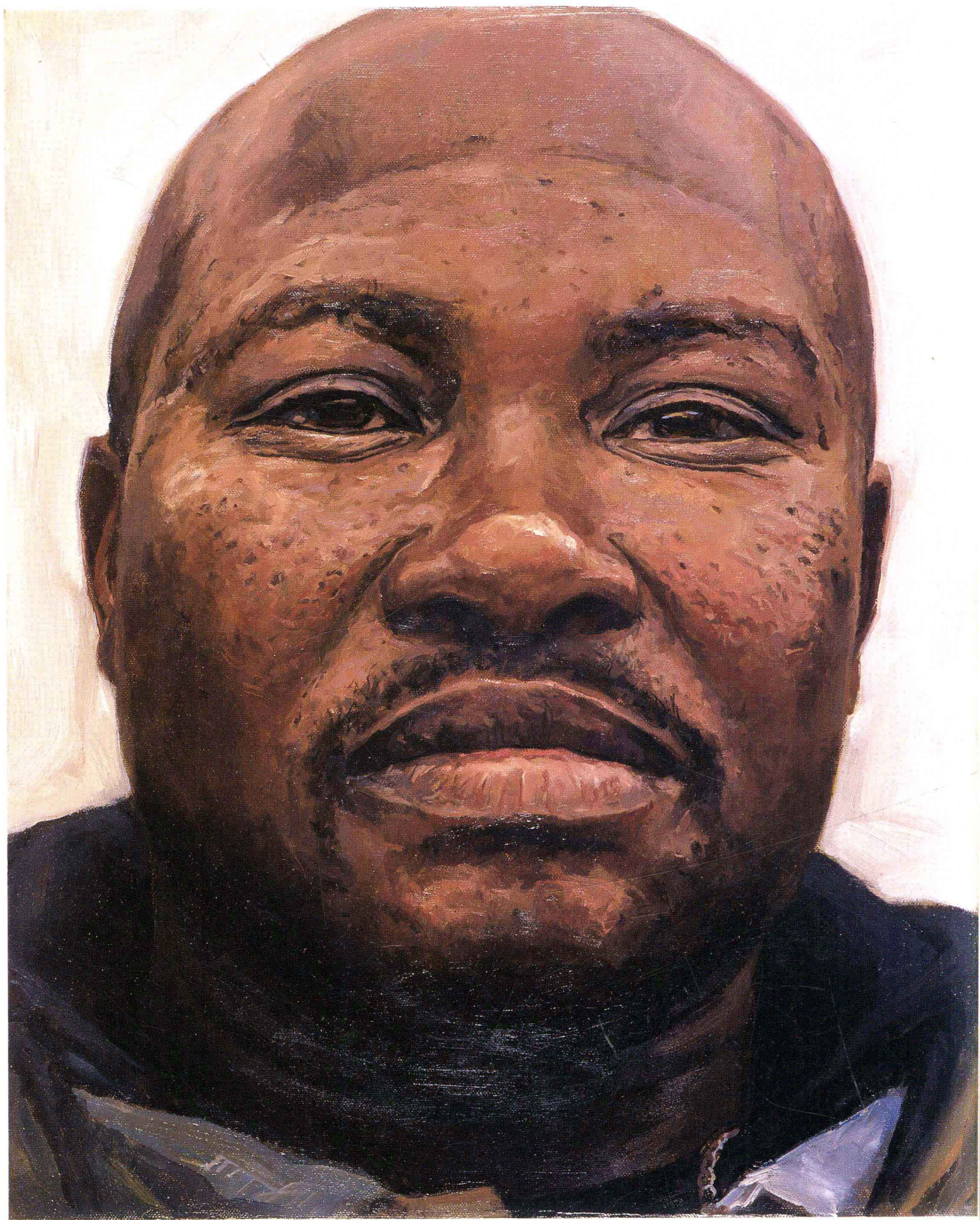
在天空下系列之三 Under the Sky #3 20 × 16inches





在天空下系列之四 Under the Sky #4 20 x 16inches





在天空下系列之五 Under the Sky #5 20 × 16inches





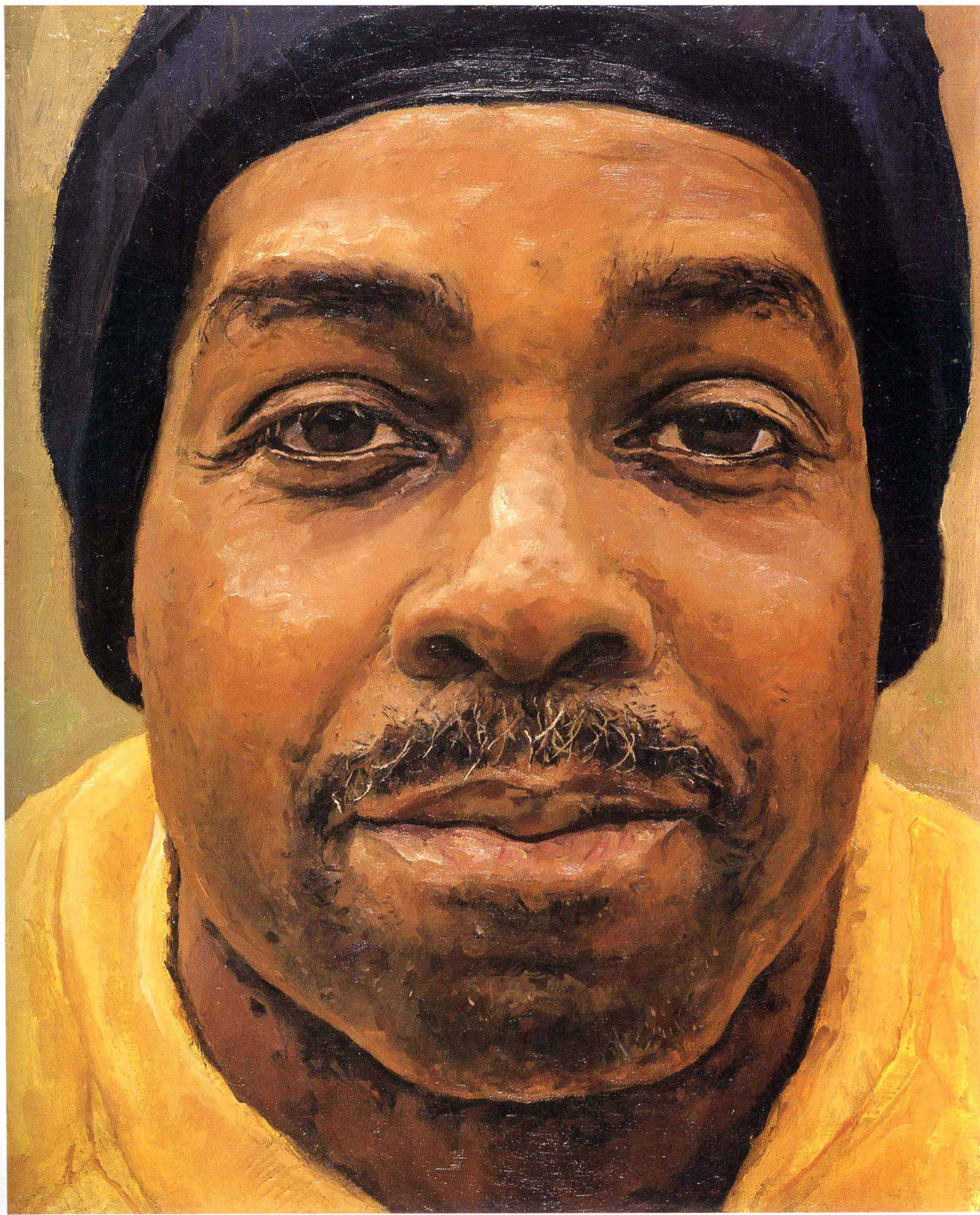
在天空下系列之六 (私人收藏) Under the Sky #6 20 x 16inches Private Collection





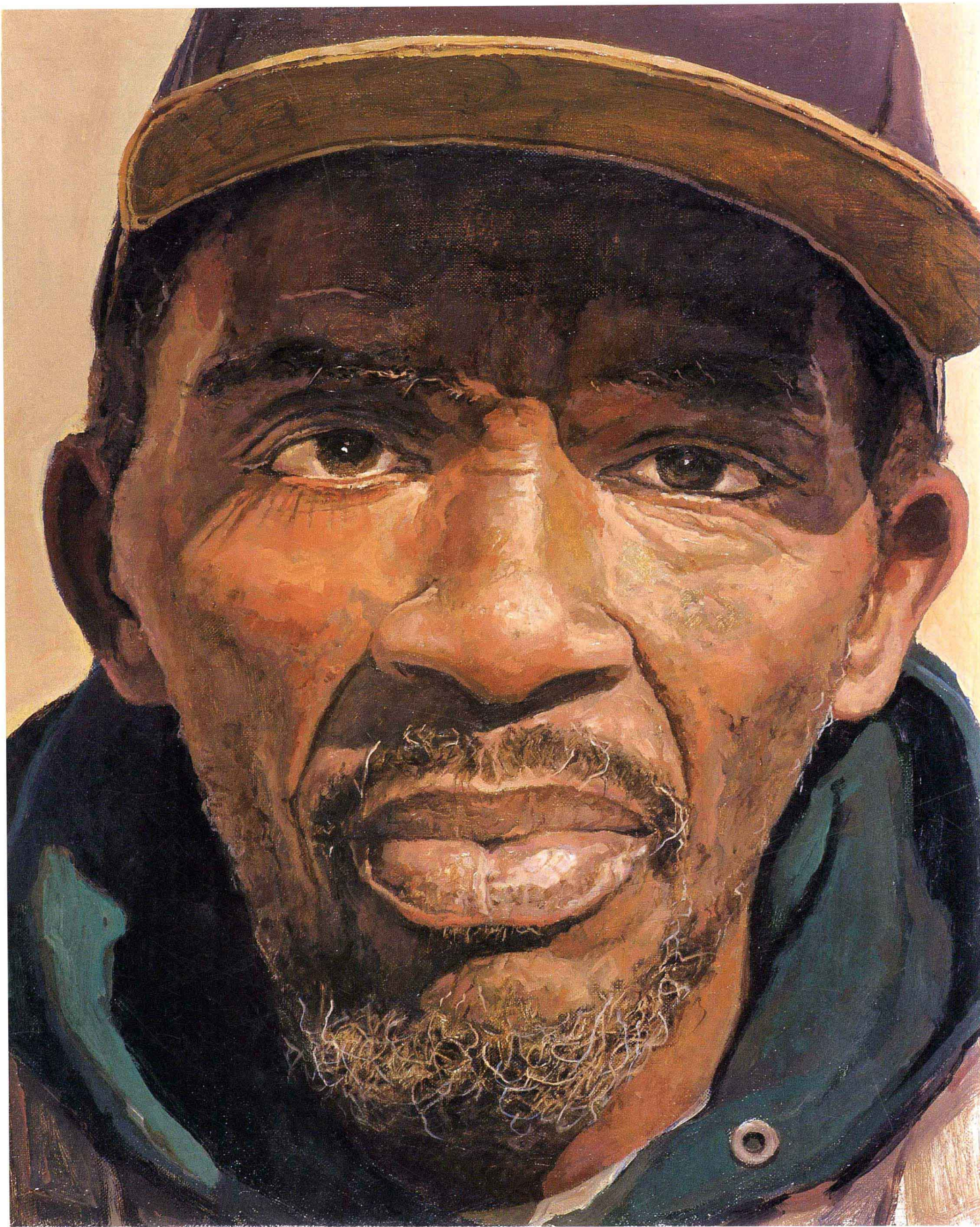
在天空下系列之七 Under the Sky #7 20 × 16inches





在天空下系列之八 Under the Sky #8 20 × 16inches





在天空下系列之九 Under the Sky #9 20 × 16inches





在天空下系列之十 Under the Sky #10 20 x 16inches

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