



ADRIAN GOTTLIEB

# Monolithic Dignity

A new exhibition now open at American Legacy Fine Arts in Pasadena, California, presents new paintings by Los Angeles artist Adrian Gottlieb, whose works—many titled after important figures in Greek mythology—give silent and contemplative spaces to female figures whose calm expressions and humble demeanors evoke a peaceful serenity.

“The new work borrows some psychological themes, sometimes from classic stories. Some of these were previous ideas I revisited that I didn’t know how to approach at the time,” Gottlieb says. “The new painting *Medea* shows the moment the woman contemplates the decision to murder her children after Jason left her for Glauce. The new paintings capture something ‘between’ the punchlines. Take Michelangelo’s version of David versus Bernini’s depiction. One captures a moment of static glory, the other shows the action, hurling the stone

that would kill Goliath. The subject of my paintings is about the state between action and un-action. Whether that thing is heroic, terrible or entirely mundane is an ambiguity I like.”

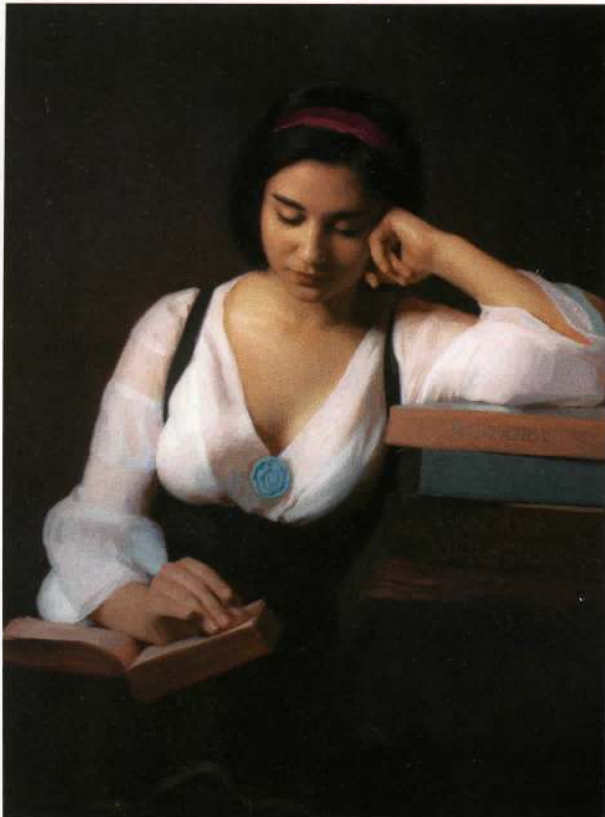
In *Azure*, the artist paints a female figure with a light-blue ribbon spiraled into her hair. She gazes off the canvas quietly, as if in a reflective moment of vulnerability. “I want my figures to have a monolithic dignity, but with purpose. I’m unhappy with figures that don’t express the suggestion of movement or figures that have no implied psychological expression,” he says. “Reflection before the act, as with *Medea* or *Lucretia*, are interesting moments possessing tension and duality.”

Gottlieb achieves his paintings with a combination of photographs and life drawings. “I take lots of pictures, which helps me to see a far greater variety of

possible poses and compositions. Of the ones I like, I do pencil drawings from life to see if the motion and rhythms could translate into a painting’s needs. Then I make color studies to see how well all of this translates to paint,” he says. “I might also create fully rendered charcoal drawings at scale to catch any last problems the previous steps missed. If an idea can get this far, it probably becomes a painting, but there’s no guarantee that it will either. I have plenty of studies that I revisit and am still unclear on how to give them the ‘angle’ that will bring them to full coherence. Sometimes it takes a while for anything to come forward.”

He continues, “The intuitive part of the creative process is still a mystery to me.” ●

American Legacy Fine Arts 949 Linda Vista Avenue • Pasadena, CA 91103 • (626) 577-7733 • [www.americanlegacyfinearts.com](http://www.americanlegacyfinearts.com)



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*“Gottlieb’s personal fascination with interpreting ephemeral, yet deep, thoughts as a form of poetic idealism in painting prompts a distinct art language that merges the worlds of realism and impressionism. By applying the classical skill of the Old Masters, his contemporary subjects are given an enigmatic and timeless appeal.”*

– Elaine Adams, director, American Legacy Fine Arts



1  
*Becoming*, oil on linen,  
33 x 21"

2  
*Medea*, oil on linen,  
28 x 24"

3  
*Pasithea*, oil on panel,  
24 x 36"

4  
*Azure*, oil on linen panel,  
21 x 16"

4