

Galleries By Edith Newhall

Gomez's photographs of males have European style

German Gomez's exhibition at Bridgette Mayer Gallery offers further proof of this gallery's increasingly international focus.

Gomez's life-size color photographs of nude and partially clothed men, one series of which re-creates Michelangelo's "The Damned" from his *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel and many of which are composites of several male figures or faces torn from their original photographs and reassembled, are clearly the work of an artist steeped in European painting.

Gomez, who lives in Madrid and received both his B.F.A. and his M.F.A. from the Complutense University there, must also have more than a passing knowledge of the *affichistes*, those European artists who became known in the 1950s and 1960s for their paintings and collages fashioned from fragments of posters they removed from walls.

Gomez's photographs are as layered in meaning as they are layered physically. "Fichados-Tatuados," the first of several series represented in this show, are full-length frontal portraits of solitary young men displaying tattoos on various parts of their bodies, accompanied by framed photographs of what appear to be police records showing two lateral views of each subject.

These are not real convicts, as one might assume, nor are the tattoos authentic. The men are friends of Gomez's, the "tattoos" are paintings by Gomez, and Gomez has referred to the series as "an invented historical self-portrait, a biography in images using the

skin of fifty characters, who have accepted to be the 'support' to narrate my life."

In the photos that make up "Compuestos," Gomez has assembled a single face from portions of two or three of his photographs of male faces, and in "De Padres y de Hijos," he ex-



From German Gomez's "De Padres y de Hijos," a photographic exploration of the theme of fathers and sons, at Bridgette Mayer Gallery.

plores the theme of fathers and sons by superimposing several images of younger and older male faces atop each other.

Gomez's "The Damned," which comprises several framed photographs and takes up the entire back wall of the gallery, is a remarkable effort — each panel depicts two or three men in a complicated pose reminiscent of those in the mural — but the expressions on the faces of his figures are surprisingly peaceful, even reflective. The "damned" are his friends, again, just ordinary sinners.

My favorite works are the theatrical ones that display stitching, crumples, and other surface tensions that align them most obviously with painting and collage.

Bridgette Mayer Gallery, 709 Walnut St., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. 215-413-8893 or www.bridgettemayergallery.com. Through Saturday.

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