
*Malinconia*, by Venezuelan artist Javier Rodriguez, deals with one of the most prominent mental health issues of recent times: depression. *Malinconia* is the Italian word for melancholy. Depression and melancholia can be viewed as one and the same thing.

The piece is a collage based on the Jan van Eyck painting *Portrait of a Man with a Turban*, a famous work of the Northern Renaissance. From the mouth down the picture is untouched retaining the classic Renaissance pose and stoic expression. But from the nose up the picture is a distortion: a confused jumble of images. This image of the Renaissance and all it entails – discovery, progress and a greater understanding of the universe – is juxtaposed with images of confusion and doubt, perfectly encapsulating the milieu that so often leads to melancholy: that greater knowledge leads not to greater understanding and certainty, but instead to more questions and uncertainty.

The most powerful part of the piece is the man’s eyes. Slightly off-centre, they are where the face first becomes distorted. His eyes are the windows to his melancholia, their downward slant conveying his angst.

Peering from within the folds of the turban are four eyes, indicating a strong influence of the surrealist movement, who themselves were influenced by psychoanalysis.

Rodriguez’s works are intricate compositions made from antique books. This mixture of old materials and modern technique perfectly encapsulates his sensibility of classic ideas in a contemporary context. Please visit [http://www.javierrodriguez.co.uk](http://www.javierrodriguez.co.uk) to see his work.