

Inked



WHY MIKE DARGAS LEFT TATTOOING TO BECOME A FULL-TIME PAINTER

Mike Dargas said goodbye to the tattoo world after 14 years, to channel his creative energy toward large-scale hyperrealism paintings.

DEVON PRESTON · AUG 27, 2019

Many tattoo artists never dream of leaving their careers behind. However, after 14 years working to become a world-renowned realism artist, Mike Dargas said goodbye to the tattoo world. Dargas' decision was not made in vain. Instead, he channeled his energy toward large-scale hyper realism paintings, showing his collections in prestigious galleries around the world. INKED sat with Dargas to find out what led him to make such a drastic career change and what his process is for creating paintings with a sticky-yet-sweet twist.

Prior to becoming a world-renowned painter, you were a tattoo artist. Take us through your experience in the tattoo industry and why you left that career behind.

I was always an artist. Since childhood, I recognized my passion and others recognized my talent. Tattooing was a beautiful medium in which I could express my art, but I left tattooing because I felt I could express myself more with painting.

How did working as a tattooer for 14 years help you to become a successful realism painter?

The experience of creating realistic portrait tattoos helped me with honing my skills. Being creative, practicing and giving 100% everyday helped me to perfect my skills and become successful in realism.

mikedargas
Los Angeles, California

[View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)



29,374 likes

mikedargas

"Unbreakable II " 2019, oil on canvas.
#art #artist #oilpainting #fridakahlo #yellow #glass
#unbreakable #inprogress #maxico #women

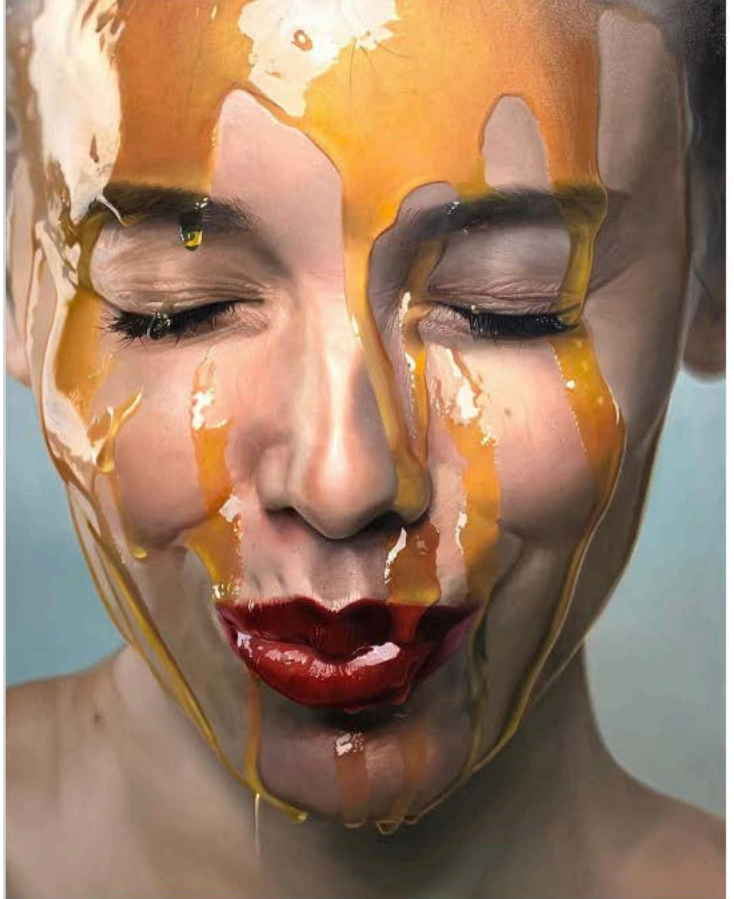
[view all 302 comments](#)

Add a comment...



mikedargas
New York, New York

[View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)



31,548 likes

mikedargas

Mein Sonnenschein , 2019 Oil on canvas 72x48" displayed
@c24gallery .

my muse @christineolivia_ #art #muse #oilpainting
#contemporaryart #honey #love #beauty #healing
[view all 296 comments](#)

Add a comment...



What appeals to you about hyper-realism and what inspired your "Honey" series?

Since I was a kid, I loved the idea and challenge of trying to create something to look as real as possible. I find it so incredible that a human can create something that looks like the real thing or a digital photo. It still blows my mind. When I started using the honey, it was an experiment, and then I recognized how I loved the beauty and expression that came through. I love what the honey does with the expression of the model and the realism that comes through. Every person has a different reaction with the honey, which always creates an interesting expression they can't hide, it's so unique and I love the newness each time. To me, the combination of a woman and the honey has the most beautiful effect and has been healing for me.

What's your process for creating a piece from start to finish?

I work with photographing the model and trying to catch the authentic expression that comes through. I sketch the outlines, mostly on canvas, sometimes on wood panel or other mediums, then I start with the first layer. I usually start with the center, painting the eyes, and adding in details as I go with each layer. I love to experiment with different mediums, mix things up, and am always looking to learn more. I usually work parallel to other works, so each piece takes me a month to two to finish depending on how long I paint each day.

Which fine artists, both classic and modern, have inspired your style and techniques?

All of the old masters inspired me in the beginning. The most inspiring artists to me are Salvador Dalí, Caravaggio, Istvan Sandorfi, and HR Giger.

Why do you paint in oil and have you tried creating art with other paints?

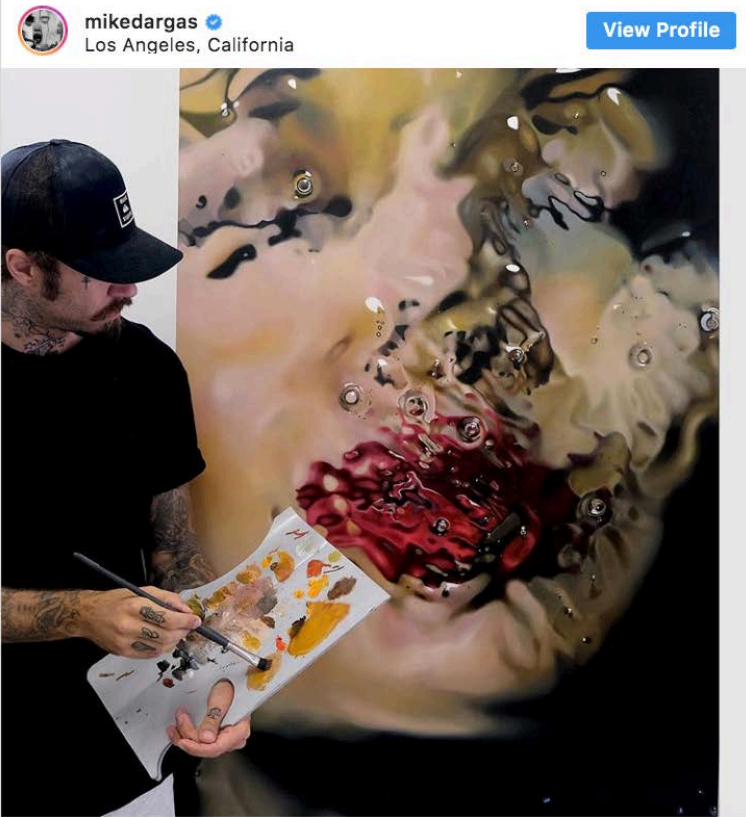
I tried many other mediums, but oil is my favorite. I like working with oils because of the texture, the pigments, and I love the fact that it has a long history of being used by the old masters.

What's your stance on art school and do you believe that today's artists need a traditional education?

I don't believe in needing art school. I'm an auto deduct, so I didn't go to school to study art. I learned on my own by practicing, learning through books, and through the internet. In the end, you just need experience, a lot of practice and time to put in the work.

What city has made the biggest impact on your art?

London has made the biggest impact, that's where people started to get interested in me and my art.



[View More on Instagram](#)



21,598 likes

mikedargas

"Drowning in Love" 2019 40x60"

Last touch up, getting ready for my upcoming exhibition. July 11th with @c24gallery in NYC #oilpainting #art #honey #love #nyc #inprogress

[view all 192 comments](#)

Add a comment...



mikedargas
Los Angeles, California

[View Profile](#)

[View More on Instagram](#)



39,570 likes

mikedargas

This was my first honey self portrait from back in 2014. It's always been an interesting experience to work with honey. To close your eyes and have this liquid covering your head and eyes makes you feel quite vulnerable. It allows for an authentic expression to come through and be surfaced. There is no hiding with this process, it's so refreshing to get to the truth of how someone feels underneath the surface. You never know how one is going to feel or how one will react with honey, and I love that newness about it. Each time a genuine emotion is conveyed and it's always something different. Some may get excited, others may become timid, whatever they feel, I try to capture it and preserve it. Honey makes me happy. #art #oilpainting #oiloncanvas #honey #genuine #expressions #emotions #artist

[view all 409 comments](#)

Add a comment...



Where do you hope to be in one year, five years', and ten years' time?

In one year, I will have a museum solo show. In five years, I will be in all big museums around the globe, and in ten years, I hope to be a living legend. Emphasis on living.

What's up next for Mike Dargas and what can our readers expect to see from you in the second half of 2019?

Up next, I have my next solo show in New York at C24 Gallery. Everything else is still in progress.



[View More on Instagram](#)



50,813 likes
mikedargas

Just finished this beautiful commission piece for @vonmiller @meganxdenise #oilpainting #art #honey #kisses #beauty #bae

[view all 745 comments](#)

Add a comment...



[View More on Instagram](#)



33,298 likes
mikedargas

#art #oilpainting #canvas #dreaming #chocolate
[view all 391 comments](#)

Add a comment...





<https://www.inkedmag.com/original-news/mikedargas-fineartist>