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Hyperrealism Meets Surrealism in Mike Dargas' Seductive Portraits



TRANSFORMATION by Mike Dargas. Installation view. Courtesy C24 Gallery and the artist.

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ART
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Standing in front of one of German artist Mike Dargas' paintings, one is overwhelmed by the immensity of the canvas, in some cases reaching two meters in height, and the extraordinary precision of the details. A master in hyper-realism, Dargas paints portraits of

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extremely high resolution in dreamlike setups that are both viscerally real and seductively otherworldly.

Dargas' artistic talent was apparent from a very young age when he would paint and draw in the style of the Old Masters, and at the age of 11 he began attending art school where he also excelled in carpentry and sculpture. In his mid-twenties, after a stint as a tattoo-artist where he perfected his skills in photorealism, inspired by surrealist artists such as Caravaggio, Salvador Dali and H. R. Giger (designer of the creature in the Alien movies), he immersed himself in oil painting.

Hyperrealism, with its emphasis on light conditions, depth of focus and colour nuances, requires a mastery in painting of microscopic precision which Dargas has perfected in a grand scale. Reflecting, as he says, his current state of mind, his oneiric portraits and figures oscillate between the dark and the lyrical, their facial expressions and body inflections intensified by their oversized dimensions.

In his series "Beauty", Dargas has painted Victoria's Secret model Toni Garrn with honey seductively dripping down her face, in a study on femininity, beauty and fragility, but also an allusion to "the various masks we use in our everyday life to hide and protect ourselves" as the artist explains. In other paintings, the subject's face is partly or fully covered by translucent materials such as paper or fabric further exploring the theme of concealment, as well as showcasing his remarkable painting skills that exceed photographic fidelity.

Ironically, yet quite fittingly for the digital age we live in, Dargas' gigantic paintings have gained popularity in considerably smaller dimensions, namely on smartphone and tablet displays through his Instagram account that currently boasts more than a quarter of a million followers. It was also through his social media profile that he was introduced to the international art scene when he was discovered by London's Opera Gallery's Director and Curator Jean-David Malat as he was browsing the app a few years ago.

His latest series, "Transformation", showcased at the C24 Gallery in New York until February 25th, explores the process of change through "people's search for identity and personal conflicts" by attempting to visualize the struggles, hopes and fears of personal transformation. As in his previous work, these paintings, which range from twin portraits of the same subject in two very different incarnations to mirror nudes of a man and a woman in tense poses wrapped in cloth, display Dargas' breathtaking virtuosity in both technique and sensibility.

<https://www.yatzer.com/mike-dargas-transformation>