

Devon DeJardin: Spirituality and Uncertainty



October 20, 2021

We look to art to understand who we are in the world that surrounds us; to answer the unanswered; to reveal the unseen. Devon DeJardin's 'Guardians' are a powerful viewing experience that can humble you to your core. It is one thing to view a painting, but rarely do you feel the presence of the painting viewing you. DeJardin has accomplished that, and it is not by accident. His practice, which utilizes old master technique, is pushing painting to new boundaries.

I have had the privilege to visit, paint, and spend time alongside DeJardin in his Los Angeles studio located in an essential part of the Arts District. Positioned a block from prominent power house galleries like Hauser & Wirth, his sprawling, light flooded and music filled space can feel cathedral-esque if you let it. His process requires patience. It is a slow build, a birth, layer after layer, each brushstroke brimming with intention.

*Text by Gordon Winarick
Photos by Jesper D. Lund*

Do not mistake DeJardin as an artist who locks himself away from the world to create. He believes it is important to build a supportive and inspiring community. His studio door seems to be a magnet for creatives from all over the world and echoes that of Warhol's "Factory" . We sat down and discussed early influences, Grandmom's kindness, and the many challenges of the mind.

First off, how are you feeling today? What is on your mind?

I am filled with gratitude. I have air in my lungs and the ability to move. Each day is another page in the book and a beautiful beginning to choose light or darkness. Think about what we are doing right now...How amazing it is to find someone who wants to hear about all the things that go on in your head and what you are working on.

Take me back to when you feel you became interested in art:

I was around age eight and I remember going to the Museum of Fine Art in Boston and seeing a painting called The Martyrdom of St. Hippolytus. The painting has Hippolytus's body spread, tortured and stretched across three panels. It was like it just kept going. It was the first painting that I had ever seen that made me feel a deep sense of horror and fear, as well as wonder and awe. It made me understand that through mark making you can grip the emotion of a viewer while at the same time convey deep stomach turning emotion...it was powerful for me.



Talk to us a little about your early artistic influences, where did your passion for creativity come from?

My earliest source of creative inspiration came from my grandmother, who was a watercolour painter based in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Looking back, I think she was a pivotal figure who taught me about art and encouraged me to create, led by her own artistic passion. Born in England, she migrated to the States and took to painting historical buildings and running art workshops, developing a practice that resonated with the local community. I used to visit my grandmother during the summer holidays and, on one occasion, I stumbled into her basement-studio. She caught me ruffling through her materials but instead of getting angry and frustrated, she decided to teach me about painting. From then on, we would go to the beach to collect sea glass and make cement plates. This was when I first began experimenting with non-traditional materials – sea glass, sand, ripped-up t-shirts, cloth – blending raw materials, to create art, which ultimately helped lead me to the place I am today.

How did you find your voice with painting and creating?

Honestly a big part of my story was, like when I was 16 or 17 I went through very intense counseling and therapy for anxiety & depression. I mean really, really intense – I'm talking 3 hours a day, 3 days a week, for maybe two and a half years. During that time, it just – I mean you feel like the world is gone. Everything is... out. But that darkness is what forced me to spend the time talking it out, working through that rough period and pulling apart those emotions... and I think that, more than anything else, that's what enabled me to put myself into the art and develop a voice that speaks to people.



How has the idea of uncertainty and instability played a creative, generative role in your life?

I've been meditating on the thought of how so often, in our modern world of comfort and convenience, the very uncertainty and discomfort we seek to avoid is the thing we most need in order to move forward. How the journey is the destination, and how only once we recognize that fact can we reach the place we want to.

Speaking on uncertainty, what is one thing you continually wrestle with?

My main fear/uncertainty is the acceleration of days. I have this anxiety that time is passing, that everything is ultimately fleeting and impermanent...However, it pushes me to take advantage of every single moment.

When is/was your current/most recent/next show?

My most recent exhibition was Umgestalter that ran from April 17 – May 9 2021 at DENK Gallery in Los Angeles. The exhibition introduced fifteen new works on canvas, paper, and sculpture. The title of the exhibition referenced a line from Rainer Maria Rilke's poem The Man Watching, in which the poet alludes to the biblical story of Jacob grappling with the angel. In doing so, Rilke suggests that the struggle with that which outmatches us enables humanity to strive against greater and greater things. My next exhibition will be held in New York with Albertz Benda gallery in June 2022. I am very excited to introduce new mediums such as sculpture and wood carvings in this exhibition.

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