



devon dejardin

photography: david katzinger
fashion: valeria semushina

It can be said that our evolution and progress come as a result of the challenges we endure in life. We see it in nature all the time: consider the extreme heat, pressure and time it takes to transform an abundant element like carbon into a diamond. Afterward, we're left with one of the hardest and most precious minerals known to man. LA-based artist, painter and all-around spiritual creative Devon DeJardin is open about the challenges he's faced and how they've informed not only his work, but the reason why he works. He deems these strenuous periods "Guardians," the focus of his art for some time now since selling out his first show in 2018. With his first New York solo exhibition on the way, we chat with DeJardin about how that came to be, how he's coping with his growing fame, success and much more.

A lot has happened for you as you've quickly risen to higher recognition and success in the art world. How has that experience and increase in attention been for you?

These past few years have been overwhelming, but I find myself resting in gratitude on this journey. I am really trying to stay dialed into the present moment. I read this excerpt from Seneca this past year that said "true happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future, not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is sufficient, for he that so wants nothing. The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not."



Currently, the subject of your artwork has been on “Guardians” — the forces and experiences that guide us through life. How has your relationship with Guardians been since focusing on them in your art? Has it evolved?

At the start, the idea of a “Guardian” was an entity and force that was meant to protect and guide the viewer... an angel, in a sense. As I have spent time developing the physical process and narrative behind these Guardian figures, it has revealed to me that our real life ‘guardians’ come in forms we don’t recognise: challenges that force us to learn new skills, losses that teach us emotional resilience, crises that show us our inner strength... turmoil. In a way, art itself has always been a Guardian for me, and the paintings are the reflection of that.

Aside from being featured in a show alongside some big names (KAWS, Daniel Arsham, and Timothy Curtis), your first New York solo exhibition is in the works. Tell us how that came about and what we might expect?

I met Thorsten Albertz through a mutual friend and collector of my work. We had a few studio visits and dinners. After developing a friendship with Albertz he proposed the idea of showing a few works in a group show at their new Los Angeles design space and additionally in Miami at Untitled Art Fair. We both saw eye to eye on the idea of collaboration and of the “gallery to artist” relationship. It was only natural that we continued the conversation of a future solo show.

The New York solo exhibition will be an introduction into many new mediums including bronze sculpture and hand carved wood work. I will be showing an evolution of my previous work as well as introducing new concepts. I plan to also include elements of my personal studio in Los Angeles, California so the audience can have a deeper look into my practice.

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You've mentioned having a rather strict work routine, creating regularly from morning until late afternoon. If so, how do you recharge yourself?

Lately, I have been spending a lot of my “recharge” time learning Wim Hof methods of hot/cold therapy and breath work. I've found it beneficial for both my mental and physical state of mind. Additionally, I find that solitude is a key for recharging. I need time alone to think and plan. During [these] periods of time alone after a concentrated time of creative intellectual activity, the intuitive mind seems to just take over and produce these sudden clear insights which give me much joy and delight.

Among the many other factors (sounds, temperature, smells, etc.) that play a part in your work environment and studio ambience — are you particular about your work set-up?

Yes and no. The main thing for me is space. I need room to be able to step back and view a painting from all different types of distances and angles. I am fortunate that the two individuals who run DENK Gallery have allowed me to utilise their space over the past year and half to develop larger scale works and deepen my practice.

As far as organisation of supplies and how paintings are worked on... it is somewhat chaotic. I am usually bouncing between multiple pieces while also sketching and developing future works.

Do you see what you're going to create before you pick up your materials? What does it look like in your mind's eye?

I do my best to have a clear plan of where I want my work to finish. However, leaving some room for improvisation I feel is important. Much of my work starts with a loose sketch then a detailed study in oil paint. When working with sculpture, I sketch in 3D programs to have a more sound idea of how a piece can look from all angles. At the end of the day, once a large-scale painting or sculpture begins, all prior framework may be completely thrown out the door if I feel myself letting go and letting the painting create itself.

How do you know when a work of yours is finished? Is it often that pieces go left unfinished?

This is a tough question to answer. I always find myself wanting to add "one more touch up" again and again. There just comes a point where the painting kind of nudges you and says "hey, it's going to be alright... I'm ok... I am good... I am finished." It is a battle, and ultimately you find yourself in a place where you simply have to let go.

You've described how painting and creating your art helps you to find your place in the world, as you've overcome personal struggles with depression and anxiety through it. What is your relationship to these works that come from such a personal place? Are you sentimental about them?

I am very sentimental about these works. It is EXTREMELY hard to let them go at times. However, I pray that these works that come from such an intimate space brings life and understanding to those who experience them. Art should heal, challenge and transform us.

From the pandemic to climate change, there's the constant discussion surrounding the different crises society's faced with. How much do the crises in the news and the outside world inform you and your art?

The work I strive to make as a painter, creative, however you want to label it, is work that conveys and instills feelings. Work that symbolises everything about our moment in time, our state of the world, and one's knowledge of the craft. To me, good art, and strong creations from any individual, is a pure expression of emotion, of a moment in time. I think it is important that a finished artwork has three things: 1) a conversation with the past, 2) touches on the present, 3) points towards the future / suggests what's to come. Everything around me impacts my train of thought, which ultimately reflects in the work being created.

Though you're not in school anymore, have you continued your study of spiritual traditions and of spirituality itself?

Absolutely. I am and will forever be questioning, searching and researching to deepen my understanding of spirituality and my relationship with God. I find it fascinating.

What are your next goals for your work and your life?

To be present in all things and thankful for all things. Everything else will develop as it is intended.



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