





BODY LANGUAGE

Denis Sarazhin's figurative paintings explore expression and emotion through movement.

BY ROCHELLE BELSITO

Any Other, oil on canvas, 24 x 24"

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The human figure has been the centerpiece of Ukrainian artist Denis Sarazhin's paintings for a number of years, but his exploration into the subject is always changing. His most recent output diverges from the traditional notions of the genre by honing in on the body rather than the face. In his compositions, the figure is in motion and moving off the canvas, so parts of the body are not in the scene. Many times, if the face is included it is obscured or in profile so not to become the focal point.

"This idea of concentrating on the figure more than the face comes from my impressions of contemporary dance and pantomime theater, where body language is the main method to express emotion and feelings," says Sarazhin. "I find a lot of possibilities for painting compositions in depicting a human body—possibilities to express some kind of emotion through a figure's movement makes this theme a great artistic tool."

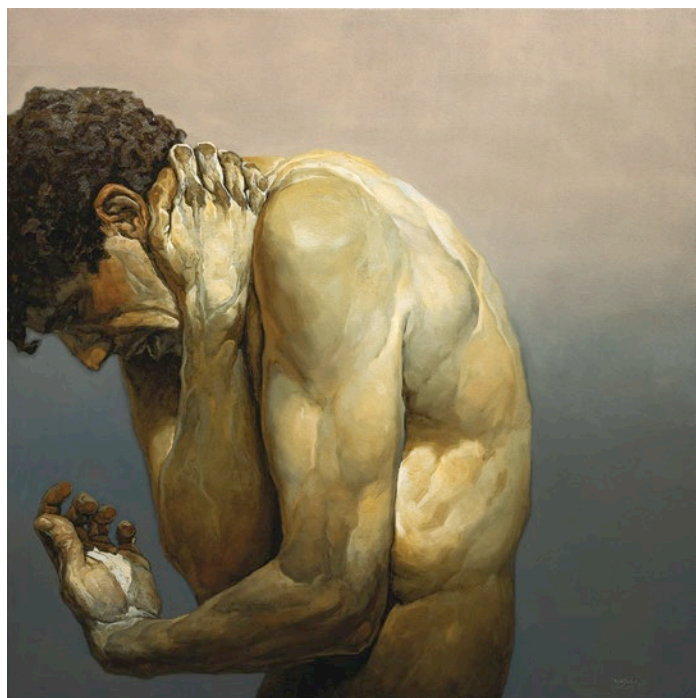
July 11 through 26, Sarazhin's newest works in this theme will be on view in his second major exhibition at Pasadena, California-based Arcadia Contemporary, which exclusively represents the artist in the United

States. Approximately two dozen paintings will be displayed, ranging from large-scale to more intimately sized pieces.

Included will be works such as *Any Other* and *To Find Meaning*, where the figure—a man—is moving across the canvas. In the former work, the top of his head is off the frame and his face is in the shadow. The light falls along one side of his torso and an outstretched arm as he leaps either in or away from the center of the canvas. *To Find Meaning* shows a man cut off mid-torso and gliding his feet along the floor, almost as if he is floating from one side to the other.

Some of his other paintings, such as *Wind No. 2* and *At Once*, depict multiple people in motion together, but all moving as individuals through the space. *At Once* adds another element of houses in the background. Then there are pieces such as *Over Me*, where Sarazhin has created an emotional pose, as the man envelops his arms around himself his facial expression is more prominent than in other paintings.

The visual experience is the heart of Sarazhin's paintings; where instead of offering a complete narrative, he allows the figures to be the guides. "I think visual language can



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Over Me, oil on canvas, 24 x 24"

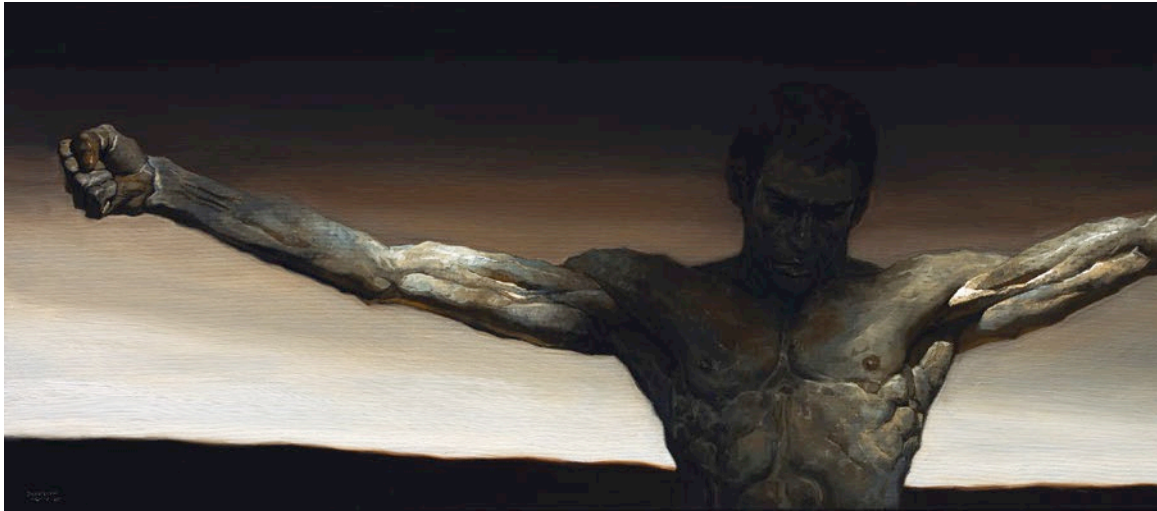
2
To Find Meaning, oil on canvas, 32 x 32"

2





3



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At Once, oil on canvas, 24 x 24"

4

Wind No. 2, oil on canvas, 36 x 36"

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Breathe In, oil on canvas, 24 x 47"

6

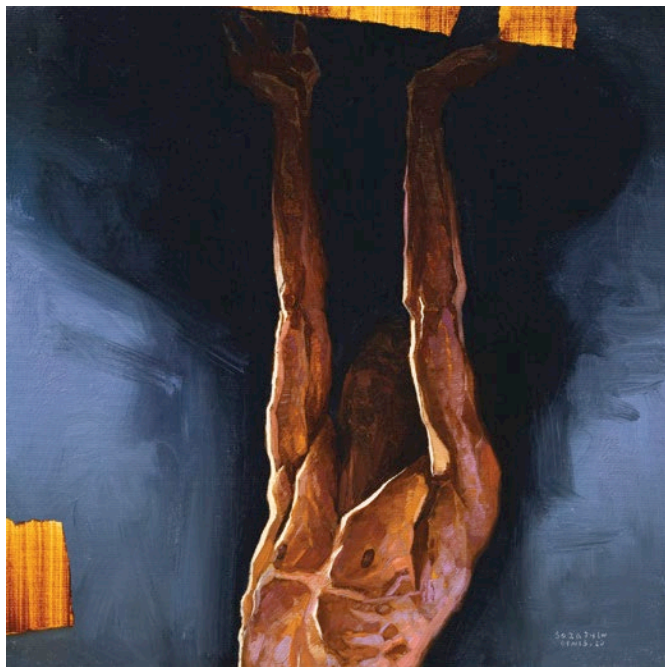
Take a Look, oil on canvas, 12 x 12"



4



5



6

tell even more than you can express using only words,” Sarazhin explains. “There is something about it you can feel, but couldn’t explain using language. That’s why I have interest in body language; it is very powerful nonverbal language. Using it in visual context, you can say a lot of things without words.”

Sarazhin is still making discoveries in his artwork and finding fresh ways to present the human form. “For this show I have changed a little bit of the color intensity of my paintings, and have found more interest in low chroma and more delicate nuances than there were in my previous works,” says Sarazhin. “I decided to change my paintings’ color intensity after some period of very high chroma works. Of course, it is not a separate decision; it goes together in changing with the theme of the composition, drawing and the whole process of creating paintings.”

The artist has also welcomed change in his process, which allows him to focus on making a harmonious final composition. “My working process depends on the different ideas and possibilities. If I have an idea that could be done from a live model, [the process is] one way. If the composition has very hard or impossible

poses for the model, of course I use photo reference or make it up from imagination,” he shares. This is a departure from what he learned in art school where working from life was considered the best method. Photographic references were often looked down upon, but having expanded as an artist, Sarazhin has embraced a multitude of strategies in his art.

“We are now at a tipping point of new discoveries in art. Art is changing, new technologies are coming and [are] very powerful tools for creative processes,” Sarazhin says. “I think metaphorically: Who is sitting now and thinking about if this artist works from photo references or a life model, and condemns this? They might be losing the main idea and opportunities of art, which is to create and not only depict subjects like in life. And this is the main power of art for me—to create.” ●

DENIS SARAZHIN

When: July 11-26, 2020

Where: Arcadia Contemporary,
39 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, CA 91105

Information: (626) 486-2018,

www.arcadiacontemporary.com