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JOSÉ LÓPEZ VERGARA

Hidden Beauty

In describing the work of José López Vergara, Arcadia Contemporary gallery observes, “Although his realist technique requires a strict methodology and rational thinking, his compositions rely on subconscious impulses and demand an abstract expression.”

At some level the artist’s subconscious and our own exist in the same realm, but their surface manifestations can differ widely.

In his painting *Silene*, the maiden, who is often an overlooked subject in depictions of the story of St. George and the dragon, is in the center of the composition, seemingly oblivious to what is happening to her. St. George, behind her, is adapted from a painting by Bernat Martorell, a 15th century Spanish artist.

Silene is the name of a plant called campion, the most common color of which is that of the maiden’s gown and the gown of the maiden in the background of Martorell’s painting.

“I titled the painting *Silene*,” Vergara explains,

“because that’s the name of the city where everything happens in the story. Simple and straight forward. I didn’t know that *Silene* was also the name of a pink flower, but I love when these things happen unexpectedly.

“I don’t know what these coincidences mean. I don’t know what it is, but it happens in some of my compositions, and it gives them a mystery and a deep meaning that intrigues me.”

He continues, “In my painting there are many things that can give you an idea of what’s happening. But I never want to make it clear. I like each person to see the work to come up with their own story of what’s happening. For me the maiden could also be the dragon, that’s why she’s touching the dragon’s mouth. And that’s also why she is being pierced by the spear of St. George, but that’s only my interpretation.

“I like to create images that can be interpreted in many ways. Normally, I just worry about the image, the composition and visual value. And I leave the meaning

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Silene, oil on canvas,
29½ x 21½”

2
Sentinel, oil on canvas,
22 x 14”

3
The Beast, oil on canvas,
28 x 37”

4
Vergara at work in
his studio.



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to the viewer. I always [choose] the title when the painting is finished.

"I hope that my viewers add their own story to each painting. I want them to feel connected somehow to the pictures. And in case of artists, the best thing I can wish for is that they leave the show feeling inspired to create their own work."

In an artist statement written when he was a student, he wrote about discovering the "hidden beauty that surrounds us." Reflecting on that today he adds, "To find the hidden beauty that surrounds us means that everything in nature, bad or ugly, can be transformed into a beautiful image through the eyes of a true artist. My focus now is to search for an idealized representation of the world—using raw scenes and moments in nature as inspiration and transform them into beautiful pictures."

His beautiful, thought-provoking works will be shown at Arcadia Conemporary in New York, May 25 through June 11. ●

Arcadia Contemporary

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