

TOUCHSTONEGALLERY

TIMOTHY JOHNSON

IT'S GREEK TO ME THE ARTIST AS STORYTELLER

Preview: February 27 and 28, 11-6 pm

Opening Reception: Friday, March 1, 6-8:30 pm

Artisan cocktails and select non-alcoholic teas provided by DC-based [Capital Kombucha](#); Janelle Gill on keyboard

Third Thursday: March 21, 6-8:30 pm



Metamorphosing the mundane with the fantastic, Timothy Johnson reinterprets the legends of ancient Greek mythology with his new portrait series entitled, *It's Greek to Me*; exhibiting at Touchstone Gallery from March 1 to March 31, 2013.

Using friends, colleagues and himself as models, Johnson propels the archetypal Western portrait into the Olympian stratosphere, all with splashes of irony and scatological humor. Borrowing the conceits of staid 20th Century portraiture, he skews ancient Greek mythology with wry 21st Century humor. He sees the ancient myths as elaborate intergenerational folklore; cautionary tales from the pre-Christian world, and he interprets them on canvas as *single figure narratives*: the story is depicted in toto; some literal, others symbolic; but all exciting visual feats.

No two paintings depict the myths in the same way. Daphne, depicted literally, is pursued by a loosely draped Apollo at sunny high noon through a pastoral Mediterranean setting several centuries before the birth of Christ. Yet Narcissus languishes in a modern-day kitchen in an anonymous downmarket urban flat; a chrome-finished toaster figuring importantly to the fable. Cloistered in a cramped shower stall, Danae shows his disdain for a particularly undesirable gift from Zeus; an ill-fitting, papery shower cap little protection from the vile divine passion. Icarus, falling to Earth, sheds his feathers and Ray-bans, but holds on to his Levis. *The Rape of Europa* becomes a dusty Texas rodeo; our heroine a busty, confident, all-American cowgirl.

In perhaps the most thought-provoking portrait, Cronus, dressed for a summer picnic in baby blue wife-beater and cheerful madras shorts, sups on a plastic baby doll, conjuring up the obscene, the violent, the heartbreaking, but at the same time, the truly hilarious. His facial expression, lewd, doltish, and without a clue, is utterly priceless.

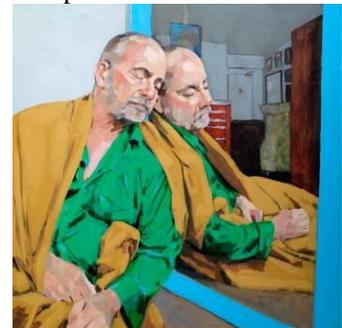


With this new series, Johnson shows all his artistic strengths; chiefly his mastery at form and flesh;. Look at Prometheus and his modest pose and strangely sexy farmer tan; Hades, sun-starved flesh translucent with pale blues and grays; and Icarus; torso tense, head thrusting and arms akimbo; musculature so true yet impasto-ed and rich against a bold, blue sky. His flesh strokes are at once painterly, yet controlled, and always striking to the eye, heart and soul.

A master of color apart from flesh tones, Johnson's hues are vibrant and pleasing, never garish or vulgar. His colors have purpose and are never gratuitous. The colors in Hypnos pop with intense golds, greens and blues; but the eye never strays from the beautiful impressionistic flesh strokes of Sleep and his reflected half-brother Death.

Johnson's series is a resplendent retelling of those familiar myths of old, but with a contemporary perspective; and all captured in dazzling color and composition. He delights the viewer with both subtle symbolism and ribald humor. Rarely does an artist of Johnson's caliber reveal an equal talent for storytelling, yet he does just that with his new series.

As an added bonus for visitors, Johnson will be painting the series' final piece in person at Touchstone Gallery on Saturdays and Sundays throughout March. Don't miss this unique opportunity to see first hand the artist at work. Please call ahead to confirm his hours.



Images: Icarus...Flight Cancelled; Narcissus...Another Morning Coffee Distraction; Hypnos...Sleep and his half-brother, Death all acrylic on canvas by Timothy Johnson

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