

TETRACHROMATIC TRANSMUTATIONS  
"SURREALIST FEMINISM" BY TONYA KNUDSEN

Opening Reception  
Friday December 17th, 2021 4-9pm  
LIVE "Harps in the Age of Enlightenment - the Dital Harp" -  
A performance by Mia Theodoratus

New contemporary surrealism portraits by Tonya Knudsen with  
her first solo exhibition at Dollhaus II.

Tonya Knudsen has been active in the New York literary, fashion  
and art scene since the mid 90s.



Finally committing and focusing on oil portrait painting. She is a contemporary, female surrealist painter. Knudsen is a unique, modern female surrealist and they are rare. She has produced over 30 paintings over the last four years which will be on exhibition. Knudsen's paintings force us to go beyond the female human experience and it's daily mundane existence. She balances a rational vision of life with one that asserts the power of the unconscious and dreams. Knudsen finds the magic and strange beauty in the unexpected of something as strangely familiar, rather than simply mysterious. Her works describe incidents where a familiar thing or event is encountered in an unsettling or bizarre occurrence. We are reminded of the great female surrealist Leonora Carrington with her animal, other-creaturely human hybrids and mysterious people with the presence of spirits. Set in silent magical landscapes and otherworldly atmospheres with an ever presence of the unknown happening about to begin. Knudsen is rather an expert at creating a feeling of dark necromancy and sorcery enchantment about to happen.

Knudsen connects our daily lives to the world of fantasy, dreams, and desire. Most of Knudsen's paintings are very much female. Knudsen explains that each painting starts with a psychological state. What it is to be a woman, a story with some tales that vibrate loudly, screaming to be told. It could be that girl on the dancefloor who finds the light shining on her and everyone notices, wow, she's truly something. It could be a gloomy Victorian girl constrained and intellectual, bursting to break forth. It could be the natural, vindictive Greek goddess casting extreme sentences.

"I see women commuting to work, doing routine domestic things on social media, and am saddened that most women are blind to all these fantastic and imaginative parts of themselves, of womanhood, that are possible."

The works focus on bringing the low-esteemed female disregarded and the unconventional to higher levels. At the core of Knudsen's work is the willingness to challenge imposed values and norms, and a search for freedom for women. These are powerful paintings and to be absorbed slowly as we can proudly say she is a surreal feminist. We see a young Dorothea Tanning in progress with precise figurative renderings of dream-like situations. These depictions of unreal scenes, some of which combine an undercurrent of erotic subjects with enigmatic symbols and desolate space. Like Tanning, Knudsen also submerges herself in her love and her ability in writing, therefore transforming rich Gothic and Romantic words reflected in these painterly, fantastical stories, filled with imagery of the imaginary. Knudsen is meticulous in her attention to details and in building up surfaces with carefully placed brushstrokes.

Knudsen describes her physical process as 'TETRACHROMATIC' where many of her paintings rely on color. "Most people know what color blindness is, in men. But very few people know what a tetrachromat is. It is the opposite, it is a trait commonly found in women who have an extra cone that causes them to view color differently, a wider spectrum, especially in the areas of purple and grey. So there is a theme in this work of how could a tetrachromat show the world color the way they see it?" Knudsen asks us to consider that the very act of her painting women and the use of materials is unique, feminine, and fantastic tale... one all women should take a second and wonder: am I tetrachromat?

Knudsen explains 'TRANSMUTATION' as a modern woman living in a modern world! Every painting in this solo exhibition started with a concept sketch, done in pencil scanned into photoshop, or started in photoshop. The idea being to get down to the colors and see them on a pixel level blasted by light coming through the screen. Interesting things happen to the metal in lead when light passes through it. As humanity moves more into the digital realm - how we look at the world is forever changed, light is coming through the images on our screens. This transmutation of light is another central theme running through this work. How to capture the modernity of digital light with the most classic of art mediums: oil.

With this outstanding collection of paintings by such an otherworldly visionary, we are pleased to have such mistressful oil paintings on exhibition by Tonya Knudsen. Tonya Knudsen lives in Staten Island, New York City, next to Snug Harbor, a park where she finds endless inspiration.