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**Serge Strosberg's 'Les Demoiselles de New York'**



When you imagine the work of a classically trained painter, portraits of transvestites in bedazzled bikini tops and garter belts don't usually come to mind. But somehow, in a marriage of high art and cultural taboos, Serge Strosberg's latest work, "Les Demoiselles de New York," seamlessly unites these two unexpected components.

Born in Belgium and educated at Paris's finest art academies, Strosberg has built an impressive career around his expressionistic realist paintings. However, after moving to New York in 2007 and absorbing our fine city's never-ending eccentricities, the artist was moved to push his work over the edge.

"I wanted to do something more experimental, something crazier, wilder."

He did just that. Intrigued by their bizarre beauty and eclectic sense of individuality, Strosberg named New York's most infamous transvestites as his new muses. With the help of his soon-to-be models, Malik So Chic, Kenny Kenny, Jordan Fox and Chloe Bijoux, the painter immersed himself in the Chelsea club scene and embarked on a mission to understand his subjects.

"They're creative people who transform into these characters at night. To me, it's very fascinating," said Strosberg of his muses.

This fascination was realized in "Les Demoiselles de New York," a moody egg-tempera painting that radiates with the evening personas of Chelsea's dancing divas. Inspired by Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger," the groundbreaking piece was presented alongside other related works during a recent one-night vernissage at Strosberg's Soho Studio.

Curated by Stacy Engman, the show and its premier work functions on many levels.

"The use of a centuries-old medium-egg tempera-elevates the Chelsea Clubs (and their stars) to an iconic level," said Engman.

In regards to how the work portrays the transgendered community, Engman believes, "it demystifies what's happening in the Chelsea nightlife scene. It celebrates the New York vernacular, New York's love of characters. It's very relevant...and depicts each character as an icon."

But the work wasn't just a validation of transvestites' role in New York's cultural history. Strosberg's work pushes beyond his muses' risqué lingerie, feathered boas and platinum wigs to express something more personal, more profound.

"The show is about identity," said the artist. And through his subjects' softly painted eyes and lively faces, Strosberg captures not only their identity, but their humanity.

"Throughout this project, I have met some extraordinary individuals from a marginalized part of society. Beyond the eccentricity of those New York icons who live the night at its fullest in Chelsea's clubs, I have found that they are more human, more open minded, and feel more genuine emotion than most 'normal' human beings."

"Les Demoiselles de New York" is a celebration. It celebrates some of New York's most outrageously flamboyant characters, but more importantly, it praises the courage of these utterly unique human beings to bare all of their fabulous selves.

*Photo: Seana Cavanagh*

This entry was written by Katharine Zarrella, posted on May 14, 2009 at 8:46 am, filed under Art and tagged Serge Strosberg. Bookmark the permalink. Follow any comments here with the RSS feed for this post. Post a comment or leave a trackback: Trackback URL.

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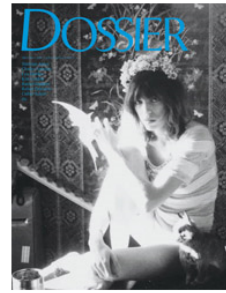


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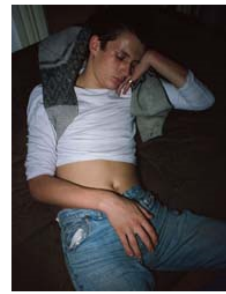
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