

7 Examples of Fantastic Art Through History

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Throughout centuries, artists have been trying to explain the world around them in terms of **an alternate reality**, creating **fantastic art** drawn from imagination, fantasy, the subconscious, poetry, nature, myth, and religion.

The thematic exhibition soon on view at **David Zwirner** will explore the past and present of **fantastic art**. Titled *Endless Engima: Eight Centuries of Fantastic Art*, this comprehensive thematic exhibition spanning two floors of the gallery's space and encompassing the time of several centuries will include **more than 130 works from the twelfth century to the present day**.

The audience will have a unique opportunity to explore the broad spectrum of **the affinities in intention and imagery** in arts executed across twelve centuries. The exhibition of fantastic art will be organized into **six themes** – Monsters & Demons, Dreams & Temptations, Fragmented Body, Unconscious Gesture, Super Nature, and Sense of Place.

The spectrum of fantastic art will be rich and diverse, ranging from medieval gargoyles, masterworks from the 15th and 16th century by artists such as **Giuseppe Arcimboldo** and **Titian**, 17th-century paintings by **Jan Brueghel the Younger** and **Salvator Rosa**, the 18th-century works by **Francisco de Goya** and **Giovanni Battista Piranesi**, and 19-century works by **William Blake** and **James Ensor** to 20th and 21st-century works by **Jean Arp**, **Louise Bourgeois**, **Giorgio de Chirico**, **Max Ernst**, **René Magritte**, **Kerry James Marshall**, **Pablo Picasso**, **Sigmar Polke**, and much more.

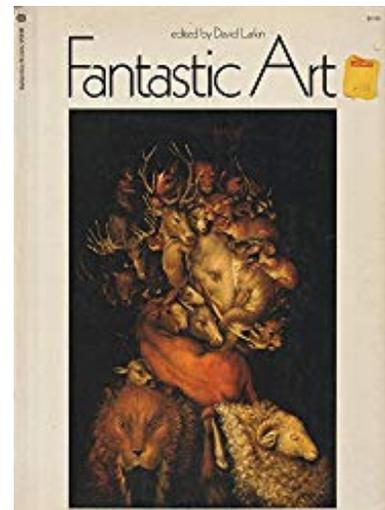
Organized in collaboration with Nicholas Hall, a specialist in the field of Old Masters and nineteenth-century arts, the exhibition will be on view at **David Zwirner's** West 20th Street space in New York **from September 12th until October 27th, 2018**. It will be accompanied by a fully illustrated scholarly catalog, which will include new essays by Dawn Ades, Olivier Berggruen and J. Patrice Marandel and a symposium on Fantastic Art, organized by Nicholas Hall and Yuan Fang on October 27th at The Kitchen.

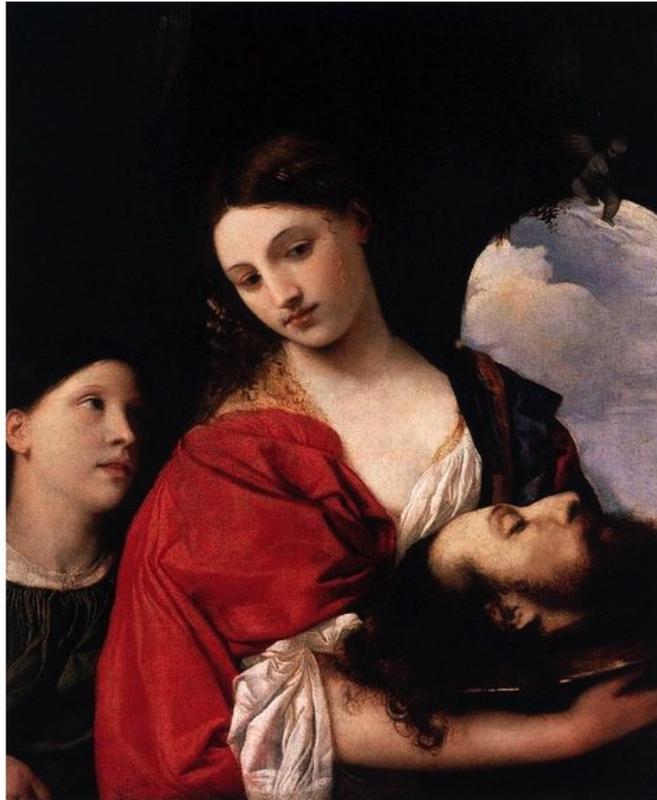
Let's take a look at the list of seven fantastic art pieces that will be on view as part of the exhibition *Endless Engima*.

Editors' Tip: *Fantastic Art* by David Larkin

This book presents a wide spectrum of fantastic and fantasy arts created across a broad period of time, by over thirty high regarded artists, including Dali, Rousseau, Goya, Bosch, and Brueghel. Through their high imagination and fantasy, these artists sought to release a reality beyond the appearance of the subject. This endlessly interesting book of fantastic art is full of pictures which represent windows into both the minds and souls of the artists and the beliefs and values of their cultures.

Featured image: Contemporary follower of Hieronymus Bosch – The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1515. Private collection. Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner.





Titian - Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist

The greatest painter of 16th-century Venice, **Tiziano Vecellio** known as **Titian** experimented with many different styles of painting, embodying the development of art during his epoch. Recognized by his contemporaries as “The Sun Amidst Small Stars”, he profoundly influences not only painters of the Italian Renaissance, but also future generations of Western art.

Created around 1515, the painting *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist* reinterprets **the legend of Salome** and her mother’s hatred of John for his preaching against her. It has been suggested that the head of John the Baptist might be **a self-portrait** and that Titian was alluding to his private life with the model, which is believed is the same used in the work *Dresden Venus*.

Featured image: Tiziano Vecelli, known as Titian – Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist, 1560-1570. Private Collection. Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner.



Lisa Yuskavage - Rorschach Blot

An American artist, **Lisa Yuskavage** is widely associated with a re-emergence of the figurative in contemporary painting. She is best known for **seemingly ignoble subjects** depicted with classic, historical techniques. Her exquisitely painted canvases are often visually paradoxical.

Created in 1995, the work *Rorschach Blot* features **the strange and haunting figure** placed against the bright yellow background which speaks of sunshine and sweetness. The position of the figure creates a sinister echo of the world of the child and the circus within this highly sexualized context, blurring the lines **between human and inanimate**.

Featured image: Lisa Yuskavage, *Rorschach Blot*, 1995 © Lisa Yuskavage. Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner.



Raymond Pettibon - No Title (And Such Complicated...)

An American illustrator and cartoonist, **Raymond Pettibon** is known for his comic-like drawings which convey intelligently disturbing, ironic messages. Using ink and paper, he creates works which are always **rebellious against the system**. Many of his works are featured on a range of **album covers**.

In the early 1990s, Pettibon created a spectacular series of **Gothic cathedrals**. The work *No Title (And such complicated...)* from 2014 evokes this series, with its experimentation with color and line and text so small as to be barely visible.

Featured image: Raymond Pettibon – No Title (And such complicated...), 2014 © Raymond Pettibon. Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner



Marcel Dzama - Hope Until Death

A contemporary artist from Canada, **Marcel Dzama** is best known for his fantastical pen-and-ink figure drawings. Often rendered in a **muted color scheme** of earthy greens, reds and browns, Dzama's works feature slender women, cowboys, talking trees, and animals, among other characters.

Created in 1987, the work *Hope Until Death* is a surrealistic tableau featuring a centrally placed three-eyed female head and a range of characters from popular culture.

Featured image: Marcel Dzama, Hope until death, 2018 © Marcel Dzama. Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner



Contemporary follower of Hieronymus Bosch - The Garden of Earthly Delights

One of the most notable apocalyptic painters of the world and one of art's first visionary geniuses, **Hieronymus Bosch** is celebrated for his **detailed and symbolic narratives** in biblical-themes fantasy landscapes populated by fantastical, and often macabre creatures.

Bosch's fantastical scenes remained enormously popular throughout Europe in the sixteenth century. One of his contemporary followers rendered his celebrated painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Intricate in its symbols, it depicts **themes addressing history and faith**.

Featured image: Contemporary follower of Hieronymus Bosch – The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1515. Private collection. Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner.



Giuseppe Arcimboldo - A Reversible Anthropomorphic Portrait of a Man Composed of Fruit

An Italian Renaissance painter, **Giuseppe Arcimboldo** is known for his intricate paintings, which combined **inanimate or found objects** into kaleidoscopic “composite heads”. His portraits of human heads made up of vegetables, fruit and tree roots, were greatly admired by his contemporaries and remain a source of fascination today.

The work *A Reversible Anthropomorphic Portrait of a Man Composed of Fruit* is one of his most famous works. It is still debated among art critics if these works were whimsical and full of riddles or the fantasy product of a deranged mind.

Featured image: Giuseppe Arcimboldo – A Reversible Anthropomorphic Portrait of a Man Composed of Fruit, c. 1590.
Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner



Piero di Cosimo - The Finding of Vulcan on the Island of Lemnos

A Florentine painter of the Italian Renaissance, **Piero di Cosimo** is most famous for the mythological and allegorical subjects he painted in the late Quattrocento. He combined the straightforward realism of his figures with an often whimsical treatment of his subjects, creating the distinctive mood in his works.

The work *The Finding of Vulcan on the Island of Lemnos* depicts a story of **Vulcan**, the god of fire and the blacksmith in Roman mythology. When he was thrown down from Olympus by his father Jupiter, he landed on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean where he was looked after by the inhabitants. In the work, he is shown being helped to his feet by nymphs.

Featured image: Piero di Cosimo – The Finding of Vulcan on the Island of Lemnos, c. 1490. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund, 1932.1. Courtesy Nicholas Hall and David Zwirner

Follow These Artists

- Raymond Pettibon

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- Marcel Dzama

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