

HESSE FLATOW

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Chronogram

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On the Cover: Kirsten Dierup | December 2019

By Lisa Di Venuta

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Kirsten Dierup

Kirsten Dierup's vivid, multidimensional paintings evoke the feeling of a visceral dream, full of uncanny details you can't place in memory and yet are somehow familiar. Dierup achieves this phantasmagorical effect by mining her subconscious, with the help of periodic insomnia. If she can't fall asleep, she lays in the dark and focuses on summoning images, a practice that often results in a jolt of artistic inspiration. "I'm hyper-focused," says Dierup. "Once I get the image in my head, I can work for hours and hours."

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Deirup brainstorms during bouts of insomnia and takes naps with the intention of culling imagery from her daydreams. She's working on an intriguing portrait of a bright blue tarp draped over an unknown figure. Her vision is inspired by the Tower of Babel, incorporating the twisted silhouette into the fold of the tarp.



Deirup's work is influenced by a host of inventive artists and academics: David Lynch, Carl Jung, and the American landscape painters of the Hudson River School movement. Before painting, Deirup researches imagery and learns as much as possible about her subject, delving through art books and online articles. Her commitment to research stems from her time at Cooper Union. "It's a unique environment because it's free, but the discourse is challenging," she says.

Deirup credits the East Village institution with helping push past her creative limits. She recreates the art school's collaborative environment by regularly meeting with fellow artists for mutual critiques, and constantly experimenting with new ideas, methods, and media.

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Deirup is an emerging artist, albeit one with years of experience and success in the industry. In 2008, shortly after her first child was born, the stock market crashed. Both economic and personal changes motivated Deirup to re-evaluate how she worked as an

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artist. She began teaching art at NYU, selling her work to galleries, and, in 2013, moved from Brooklyn to the Hudson Valley. In 2018, she teamed up with fellow artist and mom Paola Oxo to open Mother Gallery in Beacon, a retort to the male-dominated art world that seems to have little place for women who nurture both a career and a family.



Now, Deirup has returned to painting with newfound vigor. She maximizes every second of her day to fulfill artistic and personal obligations. "I'm painting like my life depends on it," she says. In the next year, she aims to complete a unified body of work. Working primarily in gouache, she paints narratives, framing thoughts and conjuring images in each piece. Deirup navigates art as though she's adjusting a camera, bringing faces into focus along with the periphery. She paints archetypes of people; obscuring their identity while maintaining resonance with the collective social consciousness.

As a painter, she maintains a strict separation between work and self, which allows her to envision ideas outside the scope of what she's personally experienced. "I make a concerted effort to keep my identity out of my work," said Deirup. "It's not about me."