



DAVID LIGARE

DRAPERY PAINTINGS

1972 - 2023



Serifos, 1979, 8.5 x 11 in, Watercolor and Gouache; *Untitled*, 1978, 8.5 x 11 in, Watercolor and Gouache



I FIRST BEGAN PAINTING white drapery piled on a table on the deck of my house in Big Sur. I called them the "Delphi Series," after the ancient Greek City. I loved the purity of these forms in the sunlight with the sea behind. After working with this idea for several years, I wanted to do something else with the drapery. I had seen photos by Los Angeles artist John Baldessari where he had thrown three red balls in the air trying to randomly make an equilateral triangle. Baldessari was a conceptual artist but that work was about more than randomness, or absurdity, it was about the underlying idea of geometry. This was a key realization for me.

In 1976 I began having a friend throw a sheet into the air as I photographed it. From the photographs I began a series of paintings named after Greek Islands and subtitled "Thrown Draperies." The paintings were meant to appear as casual as snapshots, but were, in fact, carefully composed onto a structure of geometric lines relating proportionally to the rectangle of the canvas. I had noted that one of the fundamental principles of Classicism was the balance of opposites. In Greek theory, the balance of opposites is between the ordered, or Apollonian, and the chaotic, or Dionysian, and many other dualities that form what Nietzsche called, "the primal unity."

Kourtina III, 2023, 20 x 24 in, Oil on Canvas



Andikithera II, 1987, 78 x 60 in, Oil on Canvas



Another inspiration for all these paintings was Hellenistic Greek sculpture where the heads and arms had been knocked off and all that was left was a torso with flowing drapery. In my paintings, I wanted for the drapery to become an island or a world unto itself with each fold, shadow, reflection and translucency described by the super-rational intensity of the sun.

I have continued to make the thrown drapery paintings periodically over the years because they are such a pleasure to realize and to paint. I did an exhibition of them in London in 2010 called "REDUX," but my first solo exhibition of the thrown drapery paintings was at Andrew Crispo Gallery in New York in 1978. In the catalogue for that exhibition, the poet and critic, Peter Clothier wrote, "If the work reaches for a new "Classicism", then, it does not fail to account for the contemporary mind's conditioning by twentieth century concepts and technology. The archetype is recontextualized without losing any of its ancient values. The paintings represent a more heroic beauty."

~ David Ligare

Kourtina II, 2023, 20 x 24 in, Oil on Canvas



Still Life with Paper, 2022, 20 x 24 in, Oil on Canvas; (cover) *Kourtina I*, 2023, 30 x 40 in, Oil on Canvas

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