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LIVING ART

Alexa Meade

Alexa Meade has innovated a trompe-l’oeil painting technique that can perceptually compress three-dimensional space into a two-dimensional plane. Her work is a fusion of installation, painting, performance, photography, and video art.

Rather than painting a representational picture on a flat canvas, Meade paints her representational image directly on top of her three-dimensional subjects. The subject and its representation become one and the same. Essentially, her art imitates life on top of life.

Meade’s approach to portraiture questions our understanding of the body and identity. She coats her models with a mask of paint, obscuring the body while intimately exposing it, creating an unflinchingly raw account of the person. The painted second skin perceptually dissolves the body into a 2-D caricature. The subjects become art objects as they are transformed into re-interpretations of themselves. In turn, the models’ identities become altered by their new skin, embodying the artist’s dictated definition of their image to the viewer.

The project plays on the tensions between ephemera and permanence. The physical painting exists only for mere hours and is obliterated when the model sheds its metaphorical skin. What endures is an artifact of the performance, a 2-D photograph extracted from the 3-D scene. □





Alexa Meade, *Exposure 3 (Portrait of a Self-Portrait)*, 2009. C-print, Edition of 7. Performance with paint on live model, 16 x 20 inches.