

Danica Barboza's practice encompasses a multiplicity of forms. The great commonality linking her sculptures, drawings and writing is the artist's emphasis on the processes of deconstruction and discovery. Her narratives grow out from the dissection of bodies and structures, and are leavened with a sharp dose of iconoclasm. They are also strongly informed by evolutionary theories of attachment, based on the research of developmental psychologist John Bowlby—specifically, the notion that any figure associated with feelings of safety and protection is susceptible to being treated as a carer figure and recruited to feed others' need for building affective bonds.

Barboza's own affective tie to David Bowie is a recurring subject in her output, which critically examines the machinery behind the production of desire in popular culture, as well as the phenomenon of celebrity worship. Her callbacks to this one icon gesture towards a permanent state of incompleteness inscribed within these kinds of unidirectional idolatries and the distorted perception of intimacy they trigger.

In Barboza's work, the emotional disruptions that may result from such behaviors are conceptualized and rendered into casts of human body parts, which also reflect what she describes as her "personal love of human anatomy." Her hand-modeled clay busts and limbs are then re-assembled into sculptural amalgams composed of paper, tape and video monitors, as in the work *Interposition 003rd: Pavo-Mortem, Indiame* (2019). The white busts reference Bowie, but they also allude to the artist herself, and to a universe of archetypal figures that recur throughout her work's diverse manifestations. These characters shift personas in each iteration, but Bowie retains a special position, his artistic legacy, later years and apparently sudden death informing the artist's entire oeuvre. The pop star incarnates Barboza's object of desire, with whom she (virtually) joins in what she refers to as a "Mystical Marriage." This "sacred," unconsummated union is documented in the sculpture *Portrait of David and Danica at Home Ca. 2004, III* (2017). Frozen

in the millisecond prior to a kiss, their floating busts reach out to achieve a Rodin-esque narrative of proximal desire. Their heads, however, are detached from their sliced bodies, which are positioned on a row of pedestals and a toilet seat.

Another recurrent figure in Barboza's narratives is the "ad-hoc yet loving" Draco Adolphus B. This 8-foot-tall creature appears in most of the tangible and virtual iterations of the artist's work. When Draco physically manifests, his fractioned (but functional) anatomy melds with school chairs or plastic baskets, but he is also introduced in more volatile forms through the plot of Barboza's *roman à clef, Spondere*. The novel is an ongoing project which began as a response to the science-fiction novel and subsequent film, *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. Like her sculptures, the book admits multiple readings: mutating from gothic novel to folk tale, the novel integrates an assemblage of different genres and styles into an essentially cohesive whole; the protagonists transcend their human condition to serve as metaphors, or they split into multiple voices, creating an encrypted second-order narrative that transcends the written text.

In her novel and in her wider body of work, Barboza seeks to view the icon and its meaning from a posthuman perspective. In other works, Barboza explores the projection of affection towards artificially constructed entities. This is a key theme in Barboza's 2020 exhibition "Advanced Pair Bonding" at Berlin's Schinkel Pavillon. In the middle of the room stands an octagonal basin replicating the shape of the Schinkel's emblematic ceiling lamp. This structure allows the works in the exhibition to float on its dark waters. Bowie's and Barboza's features are once more hand-modeled in the busts stationed around the room, along with some of her sculptural assemblages and a headless RealDoll, still packed in its original wooden crate. All of the busts are modeled in clay, with the exception of a hyperrealistic silicone rendering of Bowie's face. His aged, upside-down visage lies among other everyday elements in the central installation, *A Chapter in Acclimatization / for Saturn, Wearing a Checkered Suit in Your 1964 Magazine* (2020). The devotion manifested in these persistent repetitions is intended to reach a point of completion in this exhibition, as is hinted at by the digital counters submerged in the basin's water. The ultimate pair bonding between the artist and her object of desire feels imminent. It might culminate as an everlasting feeling of incompleteness, and thus stand as a kind of coda for an era in which the talismanic notion of the icon becomes obsolete.

Danica Barboza (American, b.1988, lives and works in New York) draws from her adoration of pop icon David Bowie in a recent exhibition at Berlin's Schinkel Pavillon.

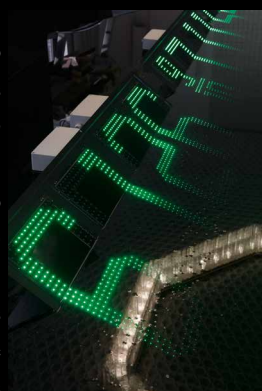


Photo credit: Rafik Greiss

LOURDES

PURE FORWARDNESS

words by Madeleine Holth

Peruvian and Greek-Cypriot creative turbine Andreas Aresti has spent the majority of his time in the realms of fashion as a consultant and stylist with enviable names on his resume like Random Identities, Gypsy Sport, Kanye West and Hood by Air. More recently, Aresti established his own clothing brand, named after his beloved mother, Lourdes.

Having spent several years of his life working with industry vanguards, he has taken a leap of faith into the dimensions of fashion design by accumulating his past experiences and personal upbringing. "After working for people for many years, I thought I finally had something worth making, worth saying," explains Aresti, who dedicated his inaugural collection to a trip his parents took to Niagara Falls before he was born. "I think my mother has had a very big impact on who I am as a person. She's been able to teach me what motherhood means and how love can break conventional roles."

Aresti isn't your archetypal New York designer with a degree from Parsons—in fact, he didn't study fashion at all—but what he lacks in technical skill and curriculum, he makes up for in his curiosity and brutal interest in artistic sensibilities. Instead of widespread mood boards and detailed sketches, Aresti builds his collections by looking at the borders of conversant fabrics matched with personal memories. "I never went to college for this, I never 'studied,'" he explains. "I simply design this way because it's all I know how to do." But what will Lourdes look like ten years down the line, if it does stand the test of time? "I hope the brand lasts for ten years and maybe dies in ten years. I don't know that I need to be a big fashion house. Houses tumble, others get reworked and reformatted to keep up with pace and consumerism. If my brand can stand for something in a decade, something that pushes people forward, whether that be acceptance or representation, I would be very happy."

Aresti has an antagonistic view on the business title of "fashion designer," so his role at Lourdes is fluid and open for interpretation. "I don't like the term 'designer' because it's limiting. We are in the era now where everyone does multiple things. I don't have a word yet that makes me feel good, but when I find it, I'll hold onto it forever."

Aresti grew up in New York, a city that not only raised him emotionally and physically but defined his palette and brand ethos. "I think New York is the backbone of my design process: the movement and the melting pot. I've always wanted my brand to feel like when you

walk through New York and you keep hitting all the 'Walk' signs, it feels like you're invincible, because you're allowed this moment of pure mobility and forwardness. Most of the time, the sidewalk is so crowded that you're rerouting every half-second to avoid bumping into people, but those few moments of bliss is an incredible feeling."

Lourdes' inaugural collection featured familiar themes of functionality, with heaps of denim and clothing quite literally taken out of context, like his wife-beater skirts and tops, here transformed into leggings and full body-suits. "If it was up to me, I would consider this brand POP. Given my past experiences, I've been able to build up a range of sensibilities that stretch far and wide, and ultimately I decided if I made music, I wanted to be next to Michael Jackson, George Michael or Madonna. So when I think of my brand, I don't really consider other brands that I sit next to—it's more the cultural movements that I'm associated with."

Through designing, Aresti hasn't just stitched his vision in cloth—he has also found himself. "I think this is a process I'm going through at the moment: finding myself. We are always changing who we want to be. I might want to be Taz Arnold next week, or I might want to be Pina Bausch. I find a way to incorporate my desires into my designs. We are always working on our voice. I think it starts with your surroundings and your personal experiences. Everything else is nurture."

With stores suffering from COVID-19 backlash and more brands jumping on the upcycling/recycling bandwagon, Aresti thinks now is an opportune moment to explore new approaches. "Given the recent trend of conventional retail dying and second-hand stores and vintage booming, I think there is no better time to connect dots from the past to the future." On his website, Aresti counts down the days until his next collection. "[It] dives into the division I experienced going to a private high school and public high school," he explains. "I'm questioning why we respect authoritative figures in some situations. Questioning if I ever belonged there in the first place."

Having collaborated with Shanye Oliver's Hood By Air and designer Stefano Pilati, designer Andrea Aresti recently debuted Lourdes, his own New York-based brand.



Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin.