

# Wonderland.

## DYLAN SOLOMON KRAUS

We talk to the artist about his new otherworldly exhibition, *ExHypnosis*, and the journey that led him to its presentation.

April 28, 2023



Waking up the world, Dylan Solomon Kraus explores the idea of hypnosis — and its counterpart — through his third solo exhibition with Peres Project. His first exhibit in Berlin, coinciding with Berlin Gallery Week, *ExHypnosis* serves as a wake up call to society. The antithesis to the concept of hypnosis — putting its subjects in a trance and leading them to unthinking automatism disconnected with the world around them — ex-hypnosis is the reawakening of agency. It is the shock to a system used to walking aimlessly through life.

Kraus explores this idea in a collection of paintings until the title *ExHypnosis*. Growing up hiking and camping, Dylan has always felt a connection to the earth, stars, and spirit of the natural environment. Providing a grounding space of clarity for him, he pulls celestial and earthly references into his work. Each piece takes on a life of its own and sends an impactful message to its audience, forming a deep connection with the eyes that lay on it. Otherworldly yet rooted in the human condition, the work creates an environment to think critically and have meaningful conversations regarding our own world. Looking at mythical symbols in real spaces bridges the gap between what is true and what is fiction.

We talk to Dylan about early influences, his new exhibition, birds, butterflies, and time.

Watch Dylan discuss *ExHypnosis*...

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Dylan Solomon Kraus – *ExHypnosis* – Berlin, 2023 from Peres Projects on Vimeo.

And now for the interview...

## Who and what influences you in life and creation?

My influences are all over the board from people like Goethe to Young Thug. I weave in and out of world history and contemporary culture. I feel really connected to the Romantic movement of the 19th/20th century. The Romantics were watching the industrial revolution and its consequences unfolding just like I am watching the digital/tech revolution unfold. I would prefer a babbling brook to a talking computer any day.



## How did you first find your love for art?

I remember once being a child on the train looking at the graffiti wizzing by thinking “who did this?!”, “why?!”, “What does it all mean!?”. All I could see was a blur but I could sense something behind all those colors and shapes and was super inspired by it while having no idea what it was. That excitement and mystery kindled an early love of what I would call art now.

## Why is art the form of expression you choose to expand on your ideas?

“Art” is one of the last fields available to non-linear thinkers. I had a hard time going through conventional schooling, much of what was taught didn’t make sense to me. When I discovered contemporary art (at the Dia: Beacon around age 20) I realized there was language in all of the art that I could understand. That language being more multi-dimensional and thus able to convey the complexities of life with more accuracy. I like being able to rebel against conventional thought patterns with creative imaginative thinking and art is a good incubator for that.

## How has your background and experiences impacted the way you create?

I think small things in my upbringing have contributed a lot to who I am today as a person and as an artist. I’m very grateful to have gone camping and hiking while growing up; sleeping under the stars far from civilization is a feeling I want to convey in my paintings. I worked some in agriculture growing up and that has had a big influence on me in my artistic vision. When you work with the land you pay keen attention to the seasons,

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weather, and conditions around you. Watching plants grow from seed to harvest is a beautiful thing. I take all these experiences with me wherever I go. Both agriculture and stargazing are things all people on earth used to do, now we are very separated from those activities more and more which will result in people not knowing who they are or where they come from (earth and sky).

## **What has been the pinnacle moment of your career to date?**

For me the pinnacle of my career is always changing and moving, something to pursue. Perhaps my proudest and most meaningful accomplishment, which has brought me to where I am today, was when I received a full tuition scholarship to Cooper Union, it was like being accepted in Hogwarts for me.

## **How are you feeling about your third solo exhibition?**

I always feel very grateful for the opportunity to show my work, especially in this show which coincides with Berlin Gallery Week. I have been living here in Berlin so the chance to show on my new home field feels very special. It will deepen my connection with the people here which is important for me.



## **Talk us through the name *ExHypnosis* as a concept and why it felt like the right name for the collection?**

I think the world is under a spell, or hypnotism at the moment. *ExHypnosis* means to wake up, break hypnosis. My show documents my own experience of trying to wake up and the confusion that weaves in and out of clarity during the process of gaining wakefulness. I want to offer new perspectives on life, just like a near death experience can do to one. After being close to a death, one has the opportunity to see life in a renewed way.

## **How does this exhibition compare to your previous ones?**

This show for me has more clarity in it. I feel like my own understanding is getting clearer and that shows in the work. I try to create a zodiac in my shows, lots of different works that come together to form a whole. Some motifs represent the outer world and some represent the inner world. I want to weave together a larger experience than just the individual paintings, and shows are the opportunity for that.

## **How does this selection fit in with your art on a grander scale?**

It's part of my evolution, I'm returning to a few motifs I showed very early on in my career that I have wanted to

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return to. For instance “The Neophyte” is a painting from my first show at Entrance Gallery in NYC, the motif is from a dream I had in which I was drowning and was rescued by a horse beneath me, carrying me to shore. I contemplate these motifs and they become clearer to me, which is why I return to them, to convey them with more inner clarity and understanding.



## **This is your first exhibition in Berlin, what is it about the city that drew you towards there?**

I came to Berlin because it is a very artist friendly city which I appreciate. Studio space is much more accessible here than NYC where I came from. Artistically, I feel like a plant in a greenhouse where I have plenty of water and sun, thus allowing me to get a good head start on my growth. Also just being in a new place is very helpful for an artist, I see things anew and have to relearn many things I used to do on auto-pilot which is good for my brain, the challenges are very fruitful.

## **What does the use of the bird, butterfly and moon represent?**

They represent many things to many people, all full of wisdom. For me the bird is a beautiful creature I see everyday singing in the trees looking down at everything from above, barely incarnated on earth with hollow bones to stay light and in flight. I love how in Ancient Greek the word for butterfly is ‘PSYCHE’ the same as the soul. The moon of course is a wonderful way to tell time with its waxing and waning. The meaning is accessible in a literal way and then also an inner interpretive way and that balance is important to me, doorways in and out of the work, part of me and part of you.

## **Time is a key feature of much of the work, what are you trying to convey with that imagery?**

Time is an incredible doorway to a much deeper conversation that touches upon the nature of reality. Talking about the connection between time/space/light or noticing how the clock is a single point surrounded by a circle of twelve just like the earth as it spins within the zodiac around it; or how the moon as it waxes and wanes tells us about our movement around the sun-time is just fascinating on every level. When I paint the clock I like to imagine I am interacting with a symbol, like tearing the clock or bending it forwards and backwards is a way of talking about something very complex very simply and literally using symbols and actions upon them.

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**As a whole, is there a message you are portraying through this collection of art works?**

As the title suggests, definitely one of “ex-hypnosis”. The work is a byproduct of all my observations, thoughts and feelings over the last year, and that’s all love. I hope people feel that love when taking it in.

**What do you want viewers to gain from the exhibition?**

I hope people gain inspiration and creativity, because they are contagious.

**What’s next for you?**

I feel led by my work, it’s beyond my control; the work seems to create itself as long as I show up to the studio which is what I plan to do. I will keep sailing towards the city in the clouds.