

RAINER ANDREESSEN

Headspace

June 20 – July 5, 2020

MM Fine Art

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"Headspace is a series of portraits that began many years ago in my thoughts. I wanted to capture a group of subjects that convey compassion and empathy for the human condition, and do that in its simplest form, without distraction. Each of the subjects I chose to paint, have influenced me in a profound way, by somehow changing the trajectory of life, for the better. I am forever grateful to them, with all my heart." ~ R.A.

Born in 1963, Rainer Andreesen was raised on a remote island on the north west coast of Canada. Drawing since age 5, his obsession with art and the love of old master paintings from Rembrandt to John Singer Sargent led him to further his education in the arts. Like the masters who influenced him Andreesen, now a New Yorker, has long been driven by the desire to not merely draw a likeness of a person but to convey the essence of their spirit. A series of recent life altering events led Andreesen to contemplate the human condition in all its complexity. In this collection of works, which the artist describes as a meditation on the human condition, he specifically explores and pays homage to pivotal relationships and inspirational friendships.

Each sitter included in *Headspace* has significantly influenced and touched Andreesen's life journey in some way. Relationships range from the intimate, such as the portrait of his husband Victor, who he portrays on the precipice of a life-threatening illness, to the inspirational, like his portrait of John Singer Sargent, a significant influence whose impact can be detected in Andreesen's use of values and brushwork. Evident is the important role that music plays in his work, with portraits included of the iconic David Bowie and Irish singer songwriter Mick Flannery whose work became the soundtrack for this series. Close

friends and colleagues are immortalized as well. Rounding out the series are two self-portraits. Often considered an occasion for introspection, these vanity free autobiographical statements are a fitting inclusion for a visual memoir-meditation.

This is strict portraiture. A master of his craft, Andreesen presents his subjects without fanfare, there is no narrative, no background, no clues, no distraction. The portraits are powerful, unsentimental character studies, for the most part tightly cropped, with the sitter meeting us with a direct gaze. There is a sense of drama at play here, the darkened empty backgrounds provide an enigmatic atmosphere. The absence of distraction forces the viewer to focus purely on human character. Andreesen allows the viewer to create their own story and their own dialogue with the subject. There are actually two relationships presented for consideration in this series of portraits, that between the artist and his subject and that between us (the viewer) and the subject. We are disarmed by the opportunity to engage with another so uncompromisingly. How do we interpret the honest and profound rendering of someone's soul?

The catalyst for this collection of paintings was the realization that one never truly knows what private struggles others around us are experiencing at any given time and the sense of empathy that was motivated by that realization. Perhaps at this turbulent time in our shared experience, the message is more relevant than ever. These compelling and frank portraits are an apt reminder to take the time to consider the depths of the anonymous faces among us.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a printed catalog.

Please stay posted for any special events relating to this exhibition, gallery is awaiting detailed Long Island summer guidelines.

For more information or hi res images:

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3. Victor



4. Debra



5. 3 Chords

Selected images from top:

1. Rainer Andreesen, *Wayne*, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches
2. Rainer Andreesen in his Sag Harbor studio, May 2020
3. Rainer Andreesen, *Debra*, oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches
4. Rainer Andreesen, *Victor*, oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches
5. Rainer Andreesen, *3 Chords*, oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches