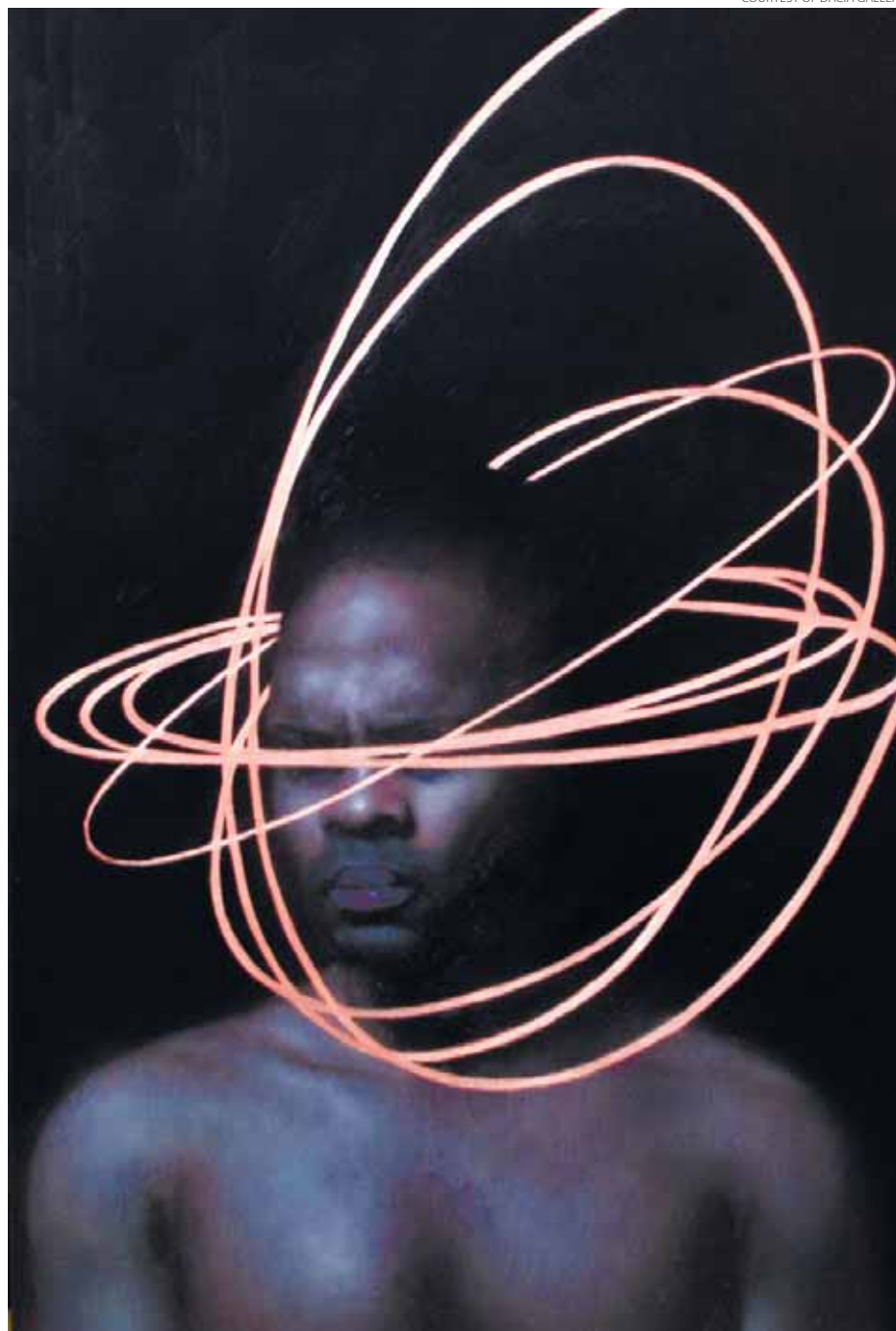


COURTESY OF DACIA GALLERY



"Perspective II" by Victoria Selbach, acrylic on canvas, 51 inches by 35 inches.

COURTESY OF DACIA GALLERY



"Off Balance" by Erin Anderson, oil on copper, 9 inches by 12 inches.

In a landscape dominated by pop, abstract, and conceptual art, Dacia is one of a handful of galleries in the city focusing on contemporary figurative art.

A Gallery Where Artists Are the First Priority

Lee Vasu's unique vision for Dacia Gallery

By Christine Lin
Epoch Times Staff

NEW YORK—They were supposed to celebrate the opening of their group exhibition at Dacia Gallery on Feb. 13, but a snowstorm whited out their plans for the evening. Gathering instead a week later, the exhibiting artists who attended introduced their paintings, each one fresh off the easel.

Their audience—mostly friends and fellow artists—spilled out from a white-walled furnace of a room onto the sidewalk, filling the block with excited chatter. As the speeches began, voices dropped to a hush. What followed was no exercise in customary self-introductions and thank-yous—artists launched straight into sharing their inspirations, musings, unresolved artistic conundrums, and working methods. They were often self-effacing, thinking out loud, backtracking, and drew peals of sympathetic laughter from their listeners.

Dacia Gallery is a sliver of a space on Stanton Street on the Lower East Side, where hundreds of galleries have sprung up over the last few years. In a landscape dominated by pop, abstract, and conceptual art, Dacia is one of a handful of galleries in the city focusing on contemporary figurative art.

The uncommonly collegial atmosphere here is bred from owner and curator Lee Vasu's distinct vision for his gallery.

Watching Artists, Not Markets

At the most basic level, art galleries function to connect artists and collectors. How to negotiate between the interests of the two groups is up to each gallery owner. From Dacia's inception four years ago, Vasu has tipped the balance almost completely toward the artist, and it's working.

He actively helps artists get into other galleries.

"Not many galleries do that—'Why would I give my artists away?'—I don't look at it like that," he said. "I want them to gain full exposure everywhere. It doesn't help me or anyone else if they just have one solo show a year."

Last year he sent the works of 27 artists on a three-month tour across France, Germany, and his native Romania. If a painting sold along the way, the buyer wasn't allowed to have it until the whole tour concluded.

When it comes to collectors, he sometimes finds himself turning people down—not because their offers aren't good, but because their collection might not be the best home for an artist's work.

"I would rather sell it for a

larger percentage off if I can get an artwork into an important collection because it helps the artist in the long run," he said.

The press and auction houses can push a young artist to dizzying heights. But to ensure that an artist's career doesn't fizzle out with the changing fashions requires a slow and steady approach based on patronage and building relationships between artists and collectors.

Vasu said Dacia has attracted a younger group of collectors since he started showing artists in their 20s and 30s.

"All these younger people started to come check it out," he said. "Once they're hooked, people keep coming back. We have a good group of supportive collectors."

See Gallery on B5

COURTESY OF LEE VASU



Lee Vasu at an exhibit at Dacia Gallery, September 2012.

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James Cameron Says 'Avatar 2' Is 'Going Very Well'

By Jack Phillips
Epoch Times Staff

Director James Cameron recently talked about his progress on "Avatar 2," saying production is in the "early stages."

"We're still in the early stages. Right now we're developing the software. I'm writing the scripts. We're designing all the creatures and characters and the settings, and so on. So, I'm not actually directing yet, but I'm doing all the other creative processes that lead up to that. It's going very well. I think it's going to be spectacular," he told Slashfilm.

He added: "You'll see new worlds, new habitats, new cultures. The primary conflict between the human view kind of dominating nature and the Na'vi view of being integrated into nature is the same, but it

manifests itself in very different ways."

Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, and Stephen Lang are starring in the movie to reprise their roles.

Cameron added, "That's the great thing about Avatar, it's such a rich world, I can explore any theme or any idea that I want. Once you've got the characters that an audience loves, it's great to surprise them and make changes and turns that they don't expect."

"And you don't have to spend so much time of the movie setting up all that stuff, because the audience will remember from the previous film. I don't get bored. It's a great world. I love being in the world of Pandora."

The sequel won't be in theaters until December 2016, and "Avatar 3" and "Avatar 4" will come out in 2017 and 2018.



AP PHOTO/20TH CENTURY FOX, FILE

Neytiri (R), voiced by Zoe Saldana and Jake, voiced by Sam Worthington are shown in a scene from, "Avatar."

'LEGO Movie' Sequel Set for May 2017

By Larry Ong
Epoch Times Staff

Still enjoying the top place at the box office, "The LEGO Movie" sequel is scheduled for May 26, 2017, Warner Bros. announced.

Jared Stern and Michelle Morgan will write the sequel, reports The Wrap. Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, who wrote and directed the original, return as producers.

"The LEGO Movie," which

cost \$60 million to produce, passed the \$200 million mark in worldwide box office less than 2 weeks after its release.

The February blockbuster has helped Warner Bros. stand out in the animated film industry, where it faces stiff competition from Disney, Pixar, and Dreamworks.

So far, the sequel is the only big animated film slated for May 2017. "Despicable Me 3" and a new Pixar movie are June releases.



WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT, INC.

Emmet (voiced by Chris Pratt) in the 3D computer animated adventure "The LEGO Movie."

A Gallery Where Artists Are the First Priority

Gallery continued from B1

A Learning Culture

The next big thing on Vasu's agenda is a field trip of epic proportions. He's taking applications from artists of all skill levels for a monthlong residency in Sibiu, Romania.

They will paint and draw figures and landscapes, visit catacombs and monasteries, and study ancient frescoes. Vasu brokered a deal with the Romanian government to let his group of intrepid artists sleep in Dracula's castle.

All participants are expected to break out of their comfort zones, Vasu said.

"How many Prussian, Serbian, Turkish, or Greek artists can the average artist in the United States name? There's a half a continent's worth of work that we don't know," he said. "My idea is to take them out there and show them something different, inspire them in a different way."

A former art educator, Vasu has a teacher's knack at encouraging people to explore and express their ideas.

Personal and artistic growth is always on his mind, and being an artist himself, Vasu understands that creative people thrive on constantly pushing the limits of what's possible. He runs his business the same way—staying involved with the questions each artist is grappling with in his or her artistic expression.

"I don't like to plan shows too far ahead because you never know what artists will be working on in the meantime," he said.

At this moment, if there's one thing on the minds of this group,



COURTESY OF DACIA GALLERY

A selection from "Becoming" by Thomas Wharton, oil on linen.

At this moment, if there's one thing on the minds of these artists, it's a concern about problems with human connections.

it's a concern about human connection, or more specifically, the problems therewith. The

trend among these artists' figurative works is bodies and faces turned away from the viewer, an indirect or obscured gaze, a general sense of emotional distance. They say something about secret pains, isolation, and the modern condition.

Dacia Gallery's current group exhibition, Motus in Figuris, closes on Feb. 28 and features the work of Erin Anderson, Janet Cook, Stephen Early, Thomas Legaspi, Stefano Losi, Osiris Rain, Biata Roytburd, Buket Savci, Carol Scavotto, Victoria Selbach, Patricia Watwood, and Thomas Wharton.

For more information, visit www.daciagallery.com



Stone lithographic advertising poster detail, China, Ca. 1920

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