

## Brave New Normal World: Aleksandar Todorović @ Dio Horia, Athens

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Dio Horia gallery is currently presenting Athens' solo debut by the Serbian artist Aleksandar Todorović, following the artist's residency and a solo show in Mykonos in 2017. *Brave New Normal World* explores contemporary political, social, health, and economic concerns through an uncommon filter of Byzantine art and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Thinking about religious iconography, in particular, Byzantine art and Eastern Orthodox Christianity tradition, as a visual language used to talk about the contemporary political and societal issues from the humanist perspectives, creates a confusing, contradictory paradox. And it's likely just that baffling aspect, the clash of the sacred and the secular, mixed with the undeniable parallels between the political or economical structures and religious hierarchies that make Todorović's work so captivating, intriguing, and fundamentally on point. Staying away from the naturalistic way of representation and stepping towards surrealism or even abstraction, these ancient works were originally aimed to represent the Heavenly, unearthly, something beyond our mortal existence. And looking at the imbalance of influence between common people and mega-corporations, witnessing political leaders being perceived as messiahs or martyrs, or following the cults of misinformation sprouting from the black hole of information that is the Internet, prompted the Serbian artist to repurpose this proven methodology to comment on the absurd idolatry taking place in real-time.

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Created with strict rules in mind, both in terms of aesthetic or technical approaches as well as ways of constructing the narrative, their initial form and appearance evoke a sense of unequivocal and larger-than-life importance. So by placing present-day events and people within such a frame, Todorović is capable of both ridiculing the existing relationships and values in effect, as well as intelligibly laying out the structures that carry and perpetuate them. Originally revolving around the Internet and the ways it conditions and navigates our existence, especially our personal relationships and interactions, the body of work got elevated by the global pandemic and the unforeseen ways that the global network influenced it. As the historically unseen scenarios started unfolding on the screens in front of our eyes, the portrayal of our digital landscape got more convoluted and informed creating a surrealist retelling of the pandemic with an accent on the role that digital technology played in it. With the frequent appearance of everyday gadgets, both existing and imaginary technological achievements, and adorned with cleverly chosen and placed emojis or witty wordplays, the Belgrade-based constructed a cultural and historic glitch of sorts, creating unprecedented real-time commentary of the most surreal scenes from our present-day reality show - life in 21st century. "Think of it as a Decameron, but via Zoom," Todorović cleverly summarised this clash of past traditions and relentless technological and societal change portrayed through the centuries-old lens originally developed by the chroniclers of the spiritual truths. —Sasha Bogojev