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Subjectivity, Eternity
and Nature – Mira
Dancy on Her New
Exhibition at Dio
Horia Gallery, Athens



Featured image: Mira Dancy: See Thru Palm, Installation
View; Courtesy of the artist and Dio Horia

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When it morphed into a gallery back in 2018, **Dio Horia in Athens** put one all-abiding rule in place. It was to provide its Acropolis-shaded platform to the most relevant artists of the day, preferably with aesthetic ties and concerns to Greece or its culture. As the audience has had the chance to witness for themselves, the Kent-born (LA-based) artist **Mira Dancy** checks all of the above boxes.

To start with, Dancy's ongoing solo exhibition at [Dio Horia Gallery](#) is an exercise in a convergence of the highest order. Contrary to the less heedful spirits, the artist doesn't just slap her art onto the glass-walled indoors and expect the world to align with it. Instead, mindful of the gallery's distinct location and mien, she takes notice of its splendid architecture and lays out the figures of her distinctive paintings, ink drawings, and vinyl window to complement the idiosyncratic surroundings of the location itself.

Such convergence permeates the show's entire narrative. Titled *See-Thru Palm* and running through September 16th, it combines the most frequent elements from Dancy's visual vernacular and gestural grace to capture fleeting concepts like **eternity, subjective relation to nature, or even subjectivity itself**. The palm, be it front or hand, is at the center of the artist's pictorial canopy. Through its rich symbolism, Dancy explores the tensions between the real and the reflected, the seen and the perceived, as well as the immediate experience of art's more common elements like color or line.

We asked [Mira Dancy](#) to discuss her approach to art making, explain the vibrancy of her visual paradoxes, and give us a little extra on the show at hand. In the interview, we learned how the title came about and what, if anything, is expected of the viewer.

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Mira Dancy: *See Thru Palm*, Installation View; Courtesy of the artist and Dio Horia

Drawing Inspiration From Time and Place

Widewalls: Your exhibition at Dio Horia is titled See-Thru Palm. Can you tell us more about the concept of the show and the inspiration behind the title?

Mira Dancy: I conceive of my shows by first considering the architecture of the space. The concept for this show stemmed from my meditations on the architectural conditions of Dio Horia's space in Athens— thinking of a glass-walled street corner in the direct shadow of the Acropolis, with remnants of ancient life quite literally cutting through the floor of the gallery and visible under glass. I began to visualize a figure diving between these layers of time, navigating a loop between different strata, a form changed by each layer it cuts through – a figure with the kind of flexibility we imagine ghosts to have – to travel through time, through walls, and to shapeshift. I wanted the work in the show to respond to the various architectural attributes of the space – the glass-facing exterior, the luminous white interior, and the unexpected long staircase down to the lower basement space. All of these unique conditions seemed to merit different approaches of form... almost like the space has three distinct registers; public. intimate. and hidden layers.

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looking at a thing results in it completely changing before our eyes.



Mira Dancy: *See Thru Palm*, Installation View; Courtesy of the artist and Dio Horia

Constant Change of Form

Widewalls: You are presenting a variety of different mediums in your newest show, including paintings, large-scale ink drawings, and sculpture. Which came first, and how did

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Widewalls: *You are presenting a variety of different mediums in your newest show, including paintings, large-scale ink drawings, and sculpture. Which came first, and how did your practice expand to other mediums?*

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MD: My work flows from ink drawings, beginning with simple calligraphic black lines where I begin to see images and figures emerge. These lines are rooted in the body, and usually I am imagining the white of the paper as a medium and the body or pose that appears as a kind of message. A crystal ball. The body both is and isn't me. She is a teacher. A line of ink might begin with the idea of a leg, but morph into a cloud, or vice versa, as I like to keep my idea of what the image is open to change for as long as possible. There's a certain time-frame to working with paper and ink, and I like the clock-like nature of working this way. There's only so many marks until you reach saturation, but I push against this and layer black ink and acrylic white so that there is a constant positive/negative back and forth until the very end. When an image begins to resonate with me I follow it deeper, repeat it, until it begins to gather language or symbolic traction I can hold onto. My ideas to incorporate vinyl, plexiglass, and sand

When an image begins to resonate with me I follow it deeper, repeat it, until it begins to gather language or symbolic traction I can hold onto. My ideas to incorporate vinyl, plexiglass, and sand gestures alongside my paintings all emerged in a similar way... through rough sketches and side-notes in my journal. The idea that thoughts persistently change forms, manifest, and then re-manifest fuels my process.

With this show, the idea of incorporating a vinyl image on the exterior glass walls was one of my first instincts. The diving position of this figure emerged as I was envisioning a body in a kind of fluid state, orchestrating a dialogue at this convergence of storefront, sidewalk, and archaeological space. She also takes on a bit of the Hanged-Man pose from the Tarot, which I liked. I imagine that she resurfaces in the interior of the show, as both the swimming figures in "Revolving Blues" and in a wholly transformed state in the hanging plexiglass piece "Fist of Heart". I also

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imagine the poem on the street-facing wall behind her as a kind of shadow or trace – as if the moment she hits the water her splash transforms to text.

I am not suggesting or expecting that every viewer will necessarily intuit these moves the same way that I do– but it is important to my process that I inscribe and imagine architecture as an animating force.

Widewalls: Layering techniques are crucial for your recognizable style. Can you tell us more about the process?

MD: The layers in my paintings have indeed become more dense and structurally challenging over the last few years, and it is hard for me not to read into this in a psychological way. I think this layering emerged as I responded to a desire to paint both visible and invisible aspects of my daily thinking. My perspective on motherhood, and my

thoughts about how bodies can act in this world does feel more complicated than it did, say, ten years ago. I am inspired by both the mirror and the window qualities of the medium, and still strive to have the surfaces of my paintings operate in these two directions at once, imagining a breathable surface that both receives and emits images.

While my drawings usually flesh out ideas for particular kinds of figures (i.e. Dealer/ Dreamer/ Ghost) or compositions that will become paintings, the canvases tend to begin with sweeps and structures of color intuitively channeled from the drawings. I often create digital sketches for paintings as well, trying out different ideas for color schemes and combining parts of different drawings together before I begin, but these plans are usually made obsolete 1 or 2 days into the process. Each painting evolves incrementally over the course of a few months, many hours spent staring into the painting, experiencing it from the

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inside, adopting its point-of-view, and conjuring its storyline.

My relationship to layering in the paintings follows an idea that any singular image inevitably doubles, invites a multitude of interruptions and alternatives. I think the layering of sound, text, and sculpture accompanying the paintings belies my sense of how color can bleed into voice, how shape becomes a word... transmutations that speak to our experience of the world and how we can begin to make or find meaning. Each form echoes in the next.

***Widewalls:** You are known for your gentle, abstracted approach to the female figure. How did that come to be?*

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***Widewalls:** You are known for your gentle, abstracted approach to the female figure. How did that come to be?*

MD: My figures are drawn from both the inside and outside at once— they imagine shared mother/daughter bodies— sometimes loving, sometimes harsh. I don't necessarily think of them as gentle, categorically, but empathic to background, tender to shape, and maybe flowing between psychic worlds, yes. In the 20-some years that I have been painting I have taken some detours away from the figure, but there is something principally within me that paints to see this woman come forward, to grapple with how much or how little she needs to be described to be seen. Is she knowable? Is she familiar? From my perspective, each painting is a kind of communion or confrontation.

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The Contrasts and Influences

Widewalls: Seeing as you have presented both monochromatic and wildly vibrant artworks, can you tell us what influences your color palette of choice?

I like contrasting the black and white works on paper against the brightly saturated canvases. I think of it as a filmic shift, a flash, or a new

exposure, as suddenly an image jolts forward, differently. This difference is experienced in a bodily way in the gallery – looking one way the room is filled with glowing reds and pinks, but as you turn toward the side wall, the color is drawn out – reduced to blues, blacks, and glass surfaces. This same principle is experienced through looking at the pendulum "Fist of Heart"-- in one position it is a strong pink and red suspended teardrop, but as it slowly rotates, or you move through the room, it dissipates to a sliver of blue. Color shifts sometimes reference a break in a timeline...sometimes the black and white works on paper have a historical weight to them, and they are like witnesses to the scenes splintered into the paintings. The prismatic, heavy-hued paintings are made by a continuous churning of colors, reflecting on a kind of cast of imbued instead of emanating colors... colors recorded by the mind, tinged with memory.

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Widewalls: What is next for you?

MD: In a lot of ways, I am just beginning to process these effects that my new life in LA is bringing forward in my work, and I am excited to get back into the studio for a period of experimentation and meditation. I think there is a very strong sense of "a wheel about to turn" in the air right now, and I cherish my time in the studio where I can tap into this collective premonition. *See-Thru Palm* revived some of my poetic and architectural inclinations—my desire to include text, audio, and sculptural elements alongside paintings has recurred in various forms over time— and I want to discover more ways to keep this channel open. The paintings are always invitations to some next place for me, and I think this work is pointing me toward a more liquid, reflective surface. Right at the very last moments before this show opened I started to work on a few video ideas— ultimately there wasn't time to fully develop them— but I do think

they are the seeds for what comes next— allowing more glimpses of real-time elements into the work, creating more space for gestures of language and dance to come more readily to the surface. I have been collating a group of personal photographs and videos from my daily life, and I'm not sure yet if they will become direct inspiration for my next group of paintings, or a kind of "living document" in book or video form.



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