



Vojtěch Kovařík  
*The Labours of Hercules*  
19/04 - 27/05 2023

Mendes Wood DM is proud to present *The Labours of Hercules*, Vojtěch Kovařík's first solo exhibition in the gallery's Brussels space. Following his previous shows with the gallery in New York, São Paulo and Villa Era, Italy, Kovařík will be taking over the entirety of the gallery's two floors to delve into his passion for Greek mythology and tell the story of the Twelve Labours of Hercules.

As the story goes, Hercules was born from an affair that Zeus, father of the gods, had with a mortal woman named Alcmene. Zeus' wife, the goddess Hera, nursed the child unaware that he was her husband's illegitimate son, and her divine milk gave Hercules his supernatural strength. From the moment Hera realised who the child was, she repeatedly tried to kill him, but when all her attempts proved unsuccessful, she induced a madness in him that caused him to kill his wife and children. To atone for this, Hercules consulted the Oracle of Delphi and the god Apollo, and was finally instructed to spend ten years serving Eurystheus, the king of Mycenae at the time. During this time of servitude, Hercules was sent to perform twelve difficult tasks, or labours, which have since been immortalised throughout the course of art history, from classical art, sculpture and mosaics all the way to Tintoretto and Rubens.

Through a combination of immersive large and small-scale paintings, Kovařík isolates moments from the myth that resonate with his sensibilities and puts them to canvas. Rather than creating a chronologically framed cycle of works that charts the entire story from start to finish, the artist hones in on critical or iconic moments within the narrative, but also offers more intimate and psychologically charged looks at the states of mind of some of the characters in the story.

Using his signature mix of acrylic, oil and sand on canvas, Kovařík breathes new life into this ancient and cautionary tale of heroism and redemption, with the sculptural bodies of his heroes, always constrained by his canvases, frozen in time but alive with a colour palette that stands in stark contrast to the sober, white sculptures of Hercules that line the sculpture halls of antiquities museums around the world.

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**Vojtěch Kovařík** (b. 1993, Valašské Meziříčí, Czech Republic) lives and works in Brno, Czech Republic.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Dusk of the Gods*, Mendes Wood DM, New York (2022); *Destinies of Stone Faces*, Galerie Derouillon, Paris (2022); *In the Thickets of Unexplored Places*, Mendes Wood DM São Paulo (2021); *Vojtech Kovarik*, Mendes Wood DM at Villa Era, Vigliano Biellese (2020); *Hidden Garden*, Galerie Derouillon, Paris, France (2020). Recent group exhibitions include *Ars22: Living Encounters*, Kiasma (2022) and *Baltic Triennial 14: The Endless Frontier*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius (2021).

The artist's work is present in museums and public collections worldwide, including National Gallery of Victoria (Australia); ICA Miami (USA); Blenheim Foundation (United Kingdom); Zuzeum Museum (Latvia); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (Italy); The Ekard Collection (Netherlands); Lafayette Collection (France); Jumex Collection (Mexico); K11 Art Foundation (China); and KADIST Foundation (France). He is winner of the 12<sup>th</sup> Prize of Art Critique for Young Painting, Galerie Kritiku, Prague, Czech Republic.

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