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Bruce Sargeant And His Circle: Figure And Form



Synopsis

Painter Mark Beard is a master of fiction. Working in the 1920s style of his imaginary gay great-uncle Bruce Sargeant, Beard creates images of athletes in various stages of dress and undress. This archly homoerotic, exquisitely rendered body of work is rounded out with paintings by Bruce's circle of friends and associates: his Classicist teacher, Modernist lesbian best friend, and Abstract Expressionist art-school rival. Critical essays, remembrances from New York society members, and other ephemera from this lively quartet of fictional characters create an enticing journey into history, literature, and art.

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Customer Reviews

"The imaginary Bruce Sargeant is actually one of the many alter egos of artist Mark Beard, who envisioned Bruce as his gay great-uncle. A homoerotic masterpiece with a twist, the book features the work of Bruce and his close circle." -- Queer Filter.com

Bruce Sargeant's work is featured in Abercrombie & Fitch's flagship stores thanks to the efforts of Mark Beard, a painter who resides in New York City. Thomas Sokolowski is the director of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

This is the second copy of this book I've purchased since it was published. I only wish that an updated edition will follow. The extraordinary artist that Mark Beard is deserves it!

Exceptional volume for a very difficult to find collection on an overlooked artist

The physical book was even more impressive than I anticipated.

Bruce Sargeant's work is amazing. I'm so glad I was able to explore more of his work in this book. I had heard of him and been exposed to some of his work from artist friends of mine but I'm so glad I got this book. Really amazing.

Mark Beard has developed a strong following of admirers, collectors, and museum placements and all of this success has been through his very astutely devised concept of channeling his talent through the fictional artists under whose name he creates. Perhaps at one point Beard wished to keep his secret of the identity of Bruce Sargeant, an artist from his genealogy whose dates are 1898 - 1938, but the beautifully executed paintings Beard attributes to his ancestor bloomed from his studio into public recognition and now are among the collections of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Atheneum; the Whitney, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Princeton, Harvard, and Yale Universities; Graphische Sammlung, Munich and others. The paintings are of young healthy athletes in all manner of sport and "Sargeant's" technique has a raw, at times semi-finished brushwork look that makes them feel very spontaneous and very incidentally sensuous. The paintings are creating a 'posed' look, not unlike the very popular 1920-1940 images of men as created for magazine ads: these men are bathed in light that accentuates their muscular forms and their highly masculine presentation. The technique of this extremely interesting and well-conceived and designed art book is one that would invite the reader into Mark Beard's imaginary world. A thorough history of Bruce Sargeant is given in photographs, magazine articles and even letters to his friend regarding his passion for his lover Yip. By the time the viewer reaches the plates of Sargeant's paintings the imaginary world Beard has created is wholly credible. And as if Beard's channeling through the imaginary Sargeant weren't enough, he also creates Bruce Sargeant's 'Circle of Friends' - his teacher, the flamboyant Hippolyte Alexandre Michallon (many will appreciate the names selected for this imaginary character!) who taught Sargeant in the tradition of the *École des Beaux-Arts* and whose paintings are also included here (proving that Beard can paint far more tightly than his Sargeant paintings); his friend Edith Thayer Cromwell whose minor paintings cling to the Modernist school; Brechtholdt Steeruwitz who painted in the German Expressionist manner, separating himself from the Beaux Art style he learned with Sargeant; and finally a contemporary Peter Coulter who was influenced by all of this circle and brought about

paintings that are far more political and angry and infused with an African American imagery. In one portion of the book there are pictures of each of these artists, and it is here that the 'truth' of the varying identities of these five artists is apparent: Mark Beard assumes the costumed identity of Sargeant, Michallon, Cromwell, Steeruwitz and Coulter - unveiling his various identities much the way an analyst would uncover the dissociative identities of a confused patient. Some readers may question the impetus for this fascinating collection of works by one excellent contemporary artist as a ploy for marketing attention. But there is no denying the beauty of these paintings or the skill and craftsmanship of the painter. Mark Beard has found a way to explore the influences on figurative painting - figure and form - and the journey he is taking simply adds more excitement and depth to his work. This book is remarkable on many levels and for those who have yet to discover the artistry of Mark Beard, this is a magnificent way to appreciate his talent. Grady Harp, July 10

The artist is amazingly creative with his various personas. He weaves the different lives together in an almost Gothic pattern. I especially like the Bruce Sargeant athletes.

One of those cases where I wish I had ordered the book instead of the Kindle edition. It is a glorious look at Sargeant and his circle's magnificent use of color to display the human form.

This is a beautifully done book. Glad to have it to my male nudes collection. If you're a Paul Cadmus fan I'm sure you would love Sargeant's work as well. Beautiful color plates and crisp prints.

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