

# EXCELLENCE

*magazine*

Rémi Dargegen



## VEE SPEERS *surreal, erudite and always provocative*

Paris-based photographer Vee Speers probes, shocks and subverts with her work, penetrating perfection and transporting us into a realm of contrasts, contradictions and conflicts; a changing and kaleidoscopic reality of the grotesque surrounded by lyricism and beauty.

La fotografa parigina Vee Speers sonda, sconvolge e sovverte con il suo lavoro, penetrando la perfezione e trasportandoci in un regno di contrasti, contraddizioni e conflitti: una realtà mutevole e caleidoscopica del grottesco circondata da lirismo e bellezza.

Text by Valeria Rastrelli

"Bordello" #102

Australian-born Vee Speers is an artist with a personal style of portraiture difficult to forget and to not immediately recognize. Based in Paris, the artist works in her studio, where she stages visions of dressed and transformed models, the details meticulous in their perfection. In her photographic technique she uses black&white shots, a preference inherited from her father, initially using Polaroids to develop the compositions to then add desaturated colors in Photoshop. In the charcoal tones of black and white, often faded, almost antiquated, the artist has evolved towards a new style, where timeless symbols forge powerful and evocative stories in eternal metamorphosis. Speers, although a photographer, goes beyond the work itself. She's a storyteller who, within the walls of a studio, manages to create entire universes from scratch where emotion must emerge as a primary aspect of the work and its meaning, including aesthetic.

*Nata in Australia, Vee Speers è un'artista con uno stile personale di ritrattistica difficile da dimenticare e da non riconoscere immediatamente. Di base a Parigi, lavora nel suo studio dove mette in scena le sue visioni su modelli e modelle, vestiti e trasformati, i dettagli meticolosi nella loro perfezione. Nella sua tecnica fotografica utilizza scatti in bianco e nero, preferenza ereditata dal padre, inizialmente utilizzando Polaroid per sviluppare le composizioni, per poi aggiungere colori desaturati in Photoshop. Nei toni carbone del bianco e nero, spesso sbiaditi, quasi antiquati, l'artista si è evoluta verso un nuovo stile, dove simboli senza tempo forgiato storie potenti ed evocative in eterna metamorfosi. Speers, pur essendo una fotografa, va oltre il lavoro stesso. È una narratrice che, tra le mura di uno studio, riesce a creare dal nulla interi universi dove l'emozione deve emergere come aspetto primario dell'opera e del suo significato, anche estetico.*



The portraits that emerge from her creativity give the impression of being timeless, yet crystallized in it. Halfway between reality and fantasy, they manage to simultaneously convey an idea of passage and permanence. The 9 series created so far tell a narrative in which the artist gradually builds her particular mythology, made up of bodies, mutations, assemblages, staged by exploring the world of childhood and the transition to other phases of life and femininity, two of her favorite themes.

*I ritratti che risultano dalla sua creatività danno l'impressione di essere senza tempo, eppure cristallizzati in esso. A metà tra realtà e fantasia, riescono a trasmettere contemporaneamente un'idea di passaggio e permanenza. Le 9 serie finora realizzate raccontano una narrazione in cui l'artista costruisce via via la sua particolare mitologia, fatta di corpi, mutazioni e assemblaggi messa in scena esplorando il mondo dell'infanzia e il passaggio ad altre fasi della vita e della femminilità, due dei suoi temi preferiti.*



Since the beginning of the 2000s the female body, its evolution, rebirth and relationship with nature has been a central theme of her work, becoming famous with the monograph *Bordello*, an exploration of darkness and provocation, where the artist casts aside all inhibitions and restrictions of her background in the Anglican Church and immerses herself in the masked and taboo world of Paris' brothels. Paying homage to Man Ray and Brassai, she depicts prostitution with a charm, dark noir tease, lightness and mystery, describing with respect these women obsessed with beauty. She tries, and succeeds, to be playful and discreet, but exposing the real. But above all, she's happy to give poetry and mysterious allure even where it's not so usual.

*Dall'inizio degli anni 2000 il corpo femminile, la sua evoluzione, la rinascita e il rapporto con la natura, diventa un tema centrale del suo lavoro, e la rende famosa con la monografia *Bordello*, un'esplorazione tra oscurità e provocazione, dove l'artista mette da parte ogni inibizione e restrizione propria del suo background (la Chiesa Anglicana) per immergersi nel mondo mascherato e tabù dei bordelli di Parigi. Rendendo omaggio a Man Ray e Brassai, racconta la prostituzione con fascino, noir cupo, leggerezza e mistero, descrivendo con rispetto queste donne ossessionate dalla bellezza. Cerca, e ci riesce, di essere giocosa e discreta, tuttavia mostrando la realtà. Ma soprattutto è felice di donare poesia e un'allure misteriosa anche in un contesto dove non sono consuete.*

"Untitled #34" - "Bulletproof" series



Photo from the "Birthday Party" series

*Birthday Party* (2007) eternalizes the last days of childhood with timeless portraits of 8-year-old boys and girls that are at once hauntingly beautiful and provocative. Some represent professions, others symbolize the life to come, others are representations of character traits, attitudes, habits, ways of being and doing. Dreams, contradictions, hopes and resignation, apparent normality or exaggerated artificiality. In the world of art everything is possible and here the surreal takes on such a concrete character that it scares and amazes at the same time with images from which you cannot take your eyes off due to their sublimity.

Six years following *The Birthday Party*, Vee Speers rephotographs the same children in the transformation phase towards adolescence. In *Bulletproof* (2013), there is still that childish, innocent and playful note in the characters, but it's wearing thin. Bodies are formed, they grew, faces are shaped. However, the dystopian element remains, the imagery dries up, now more brutal and concrete. We are already moving into the era where a survival instinct must emerge. Lords of the Flies, Peter Pan, gladiators, warriors and survivors nevertheless form an invincible and very powerful army, like the images they create. Everyone rules their world and interprets their costume with pride. In their own way and in their own customs, they're invincible. Everyone holds the reins, dictates the rules. In the imaginary kingdoms that the artist creates, their characters will always remain, whatever happens, armed and victorious.



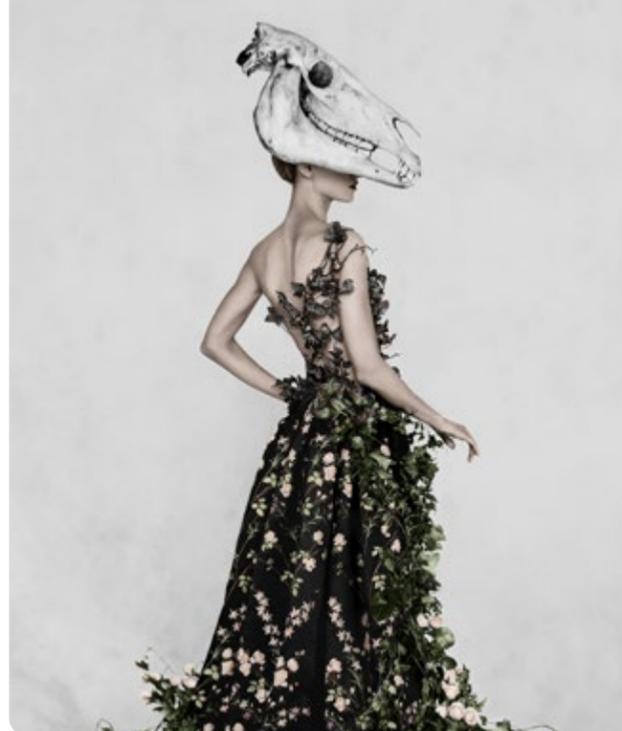
"Untitled #20" - "Bulletproof" series

*Birthday Party* (2007) immortalizes the last days of childhood with portraits without time of boys and girls of 8 years old who are contemporaneously beautiful in a disturbing and provocative way. Some represent professions, others symbolize the life to come, others are representations of character traits, attitudes, habits, ways of being and doing. Dreams, contradictions, hopes and resignation, apparent normality or exaggerated artificiality. In the world of art everything is possible and here the surreal takes on such a concrete character that it scares and amazes at the same time with images from which you cannot take your eyes off due to their sublimity.

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"Untitled #16" - "Dystopia" series



"Fashioned From Nature #1"

The **Phoenix** series (2020) depicts women taking inspiration from the legend of the Phoenix: from the flames and ashes emerges the encouraging force of the liberation of women rediscovered and renewed, at the beginning of something. With elegance and finally gained independence, they rise to new beings, with dignity. They have suffered in the past and fought for respect. But now they are queens themselves and queens of the world. Phoenix is the artist's homage to the Anonymous Woman, who inevitably had to remain like this for a long time. Like female artists who often don't have the same opportunities of males.

La serie **Phoenix** (2020) rappresenta le donne ispirandosi alla leggenda della Fenice: dalle fiamme e dalle ceneri emerge la forza incoraggiante della liberazione di una donna riscoperta e rinnovata, all'inizio di qualcosa. Con eleganza e un'indipendenza finalmente conquistata, emerge a essere nuovo, con dignità. Donne che hanno sofferto in passato e hanno lottato per il rispetto e ora sono regine di sé stesse e regine del mondo. Phoenix è l'omaggio dell'artista alla Donna Anonima, che inevitabilmente è rimasta tale per molto tempo. Proprio come le artiste donne, che spesso non hanno le stesse opportunità degli uomini.

"Untitled #1" - "Dystopia" series



"Pleats" - "Phoenix" series



"Globe" - "Transcendence" series

The last, **Transcendence** (2024), reflects on our relationship with the planet and explores the concept of overcoming the limitations and distractions of our material existence to reach limitless possibilities. It is inspired by the Renaissance and its sculptures where beauty, harmony and balance put us in relationship with the greatness and infinity of Mother Nature. The softness of the figures, the light, the floral element, the sinuous movements and the cloud formations part of the work become an emotional and abstract expression of unlimited inspiration, optimism and spiritual awakening.

The artist is represented by the Echo Fine Arts Gallery, a gallery based in the French Riviera. The gallery is also media partner of Excellence Magazine and of the digital platform [beyond.luxury](https://beyond.luxury).

L'ultima serie **Transcendence** (2024) riflette sulla nostra relazione con il pianeta ed esplora il concetto del superamento dei limiti e delle distrazioni della nostra esistenza materiale per raggiungere possibilità illimitate. Si ispira al Rinascimento e alle sue sculture dove bellezza, armonia ed equilibrio ci pongono in relazione con la grandezza e l'infinità di Madre Natura. La morbidezza delle figure, la luce, l'elemento floreale, i movimenti sinuosi e le formazioni nuvolose parte dell'opera diventano un'espressione emotiva e astratta di ispirazione illimitata, ottimismo e risveglio spirituale.

L'artista è rappresentato dalla Echo Fine Arts Gallery, una galleria con sede in Costa Azzurra. La galleria è anche media partner di Excellence Magazine e della piattaforma digitale [beyond.luxury](https://beyond.luxury).