

Magic in the Mundane: *Gregory Blanche*

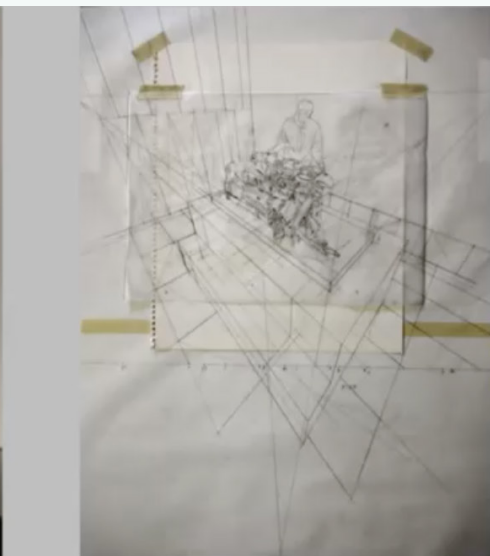
by Zoë Latzer



From a young age, artist Gregory Blanche has always loved visual realism and art that is convincing to the eye through proportion and lighting. Even when he read comics, he gravitated towards ones without superheroes. His love for detailed representation and the time and labor it requires is at the very core of his art practice. Blanche's art is an inquiry— he looks for moments that evoke an emotion, such as melancholy and contemplation. The moment that he feels the magic, whether looking at the oranges on his kitchen table or driving in a car, he feels fueled to create. He usually begins his process by photographing the world around him with only an instant to capture an ephemeral moment and transforms it into drawings, oil paintings, and sculptures. Blanche works to bring objects to life through proportion, lighting, and perspective to illuminate their indescribable qualities.



Deposition Study (sofa and nicodemus gray), Gregory Blanche



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In the 2022 MFA show, he exhibited his graphite drawing *Deposition*, 2021. It depicts a dilapidated sofa that he felt had anthropomorphic qualities rendered elevated on a stepped formal pedestal. With a soft graphite texture, he builds a sharp yet hazy scene. The piece was inspired by a photograph he took of his couch upholstered in a gold and teal damask ripped with undyed cotton base fabric showing through. Blanche found the crumpled white drapes evoked something from another time, it was an object that suggested pity and vulnerability. He saw in this sofa a timeless sadness—in the form and lighting, he saw something very classical. In particular, it reminded him of the Michelangelo sculpture referred to as the *Deposition* or the *Bandini Pietà*, 1547 to 1555. Inspired by his years of living in Florence, Blanche chose to embark on a process of bringing anthropomorphic tendencies to life through the use of graphite.



Gregory Blanche, *Blue Forest Walk*,
2021-22, 48 x 72 inches, oil on canvas



Gregory Blanche, original photograph of *Deposition*, 2021, 1_8 x 13 7_8, pencil on paper

An essential part of realism is working in perspective, which is a practice he loves to explore. Seeing the couch as a proxy for the body, Blanche styled and mocked up the photograph digitally in Photoshop, creating a pedestal for the piece. Drawing this image allowed Blanche to dedicate time to a three-point perspective to sink into a classical technique. Through attention to detail and care, he delicately shades with the edge of his graphite pencil.

With the finished drawing, Blanche elevates the fraying couch by placing it on a pedestal, making it something cherished and unique. As a maker at heart, he is dedicated to the craft and precision of visual realism while making things his own through color and shifts in perspective. His still lifes and landscapes are melancholic yet illuminated by

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Gregory Blanche, a painter born in Berkeley who has lived in Florence for many years, has a BFA from SFAI and is completing an MFA at CCA. His work is based on realistic drawing which he uses currently to explore figure/landscape compositions and urban still lifes in monochrome.