



Cumwizard69420. *Woman screams at Trump's inauguration, 2021*.
Oil on canvas. 16 x 20 in. / 40.6 x 50.8 cm.

Diane Arbus: Untitled Cumwizard69420: The Americans

January 12 - March 11, 2023

Cheim & Read
547 West 25 Street
New York NY 10001

Cheim & Read is pleased to present two new exhibitions, *Diane Arbus: Untitled* and *Cumwizard69420: The Americans*, at the gallery's Chelsea location, 547 West 25th Street, New York. The shows will open on January 12, 2023, and run through March 11. *The Americans* is Cumwizard's first solo exhibition in New York.

Writing about the Diane Arbus retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2005, Peter Schjeldahl stated, "No other photographer has been more controversial," and no other body of Arbus's work has been more controversial than *Untitled*, a series of images depicting the residents of a home for the developmentally disabled in New Jersey. In fact, the photographs were never exhibited in her lifetime, but published posthumously as a book edited and designed by Doon Arbus, the artist's daughter, and Yolanda Cuomo in 1995.

Taken between 1969 and 1971, the year of Arbus's death at the age of 48, the photographs of *Untitled* offer a distinct contrast with the tightly framed imagery of her 1960s work. Instead of confronting the immediate gaze of her subjects, Arbus takes a step back, opening the lens up to their surroundings, the park-like grounds of the home where they lived. In a number of images, the women and men are costumed and masked for a Halloween party, further distancing them from the viewer, in theatrical scenes that are at once alienating, beguiling, and dreamlike.

Reviewing *Untitled* on the occasion of its publication in 1995, Hilton Als declared that these photographs "can't be confined by critical categorization, because they are purely ecstatic; they are the pictures Arbus had been waiting all her life to take."

Cumwizard69420 describes himself on his personal website as a "former economics and math student" who took his first and only art class, Intro to Drawing and Painting, before dropping out of college in 2019. After a stint as a food delivery driver, he started painting again in 2020 and has since created a remarkable body of boldly colored, fearlessly explicit paintings and watercolors.

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Drawing from the media multiverse of TV shows, movies, and the internet, Cumwizard casts a penetrating eye on the inflated egos and self-delusions raging through our celebrity-obsessed culture. And yet these images, which are often unnerving and frequently grotesque, are also generously human, laced with affection and humor. As Als wrote about Arbus's *Untitled* photographs, they "don't feel exploitative in the least, because they are filled with love and discipline."

The name of the exhibition, *The Americans*, mirrors the title of the influential photography book by Robert Frank, one of Arbus's predecessors in the candid depiction of life in the United States. The difference is that Frank, like Arbus, shined a light on ordinary citizens, while Cumwizard's subjects are busy shining a light on themselves, creating a new kind of social landscape. Rather than appropriating such self-owns at face value, the artist transforms their imagery into the language of paint, layering them with personal themes and references to art history, the movies, and, as he told an interviewer on the website *Insufficient Fare*, "things that make me laugh."