





# FOR DRIVING RAGES



**BRAD OVERTON'S  
NEW EXHIBITION,  
EROS AND THANATOS,  
DELVES INTO THE  
IMPULSES OF THE  
HUMAN PSYCHE.**

BY  
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**I**n 1920, Sigmund Freud wrote his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where he discusses the dynamics between the life drive and the death drive. The life drive, which he called Eros after the Greek god of love, is identified through positive emotions such as love and creativity. Negative emotions and risky behaviors are revealed through the death drive, or Thanatos, a post-Freudian term. Freud argued the duality of the two, in that they help define one another but are distinct and opposing.

Artist Brad Overton focuses on this concept in his new exhibition *Eros and Thanatos* at Blue Rain Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The show will feature new calavera portraits and his annual painting of the Koshare. In contrast to Freud, Overton "suggests that maybe [Eros and Thanatos] are just two sides of the same coin," explains the gallery. "Maybe they are different manifestations of the same energy turned up or down in frequency—and perhaps that energy flowing from a single source does so for good or ill in our lives depending on our ability to nurture or suppress what it fuels."

In his research, Overton found that the two were more related than disparate. "Take for instance someone who rides a motorcycle. 'It's a death wish,' is a common thing to say," he explains. "I think though it's someone who knows what they're doing. What we are really after in this life is living our life...It always comes back to





3

the actual desires for a fuller experience of life and love. Even if someone is being negative, it's because they want something positive. If we think about it and empathize with others, we can see even the people with risky behavior or personal expression that might be shocking or different are truly looking for something that we all want."

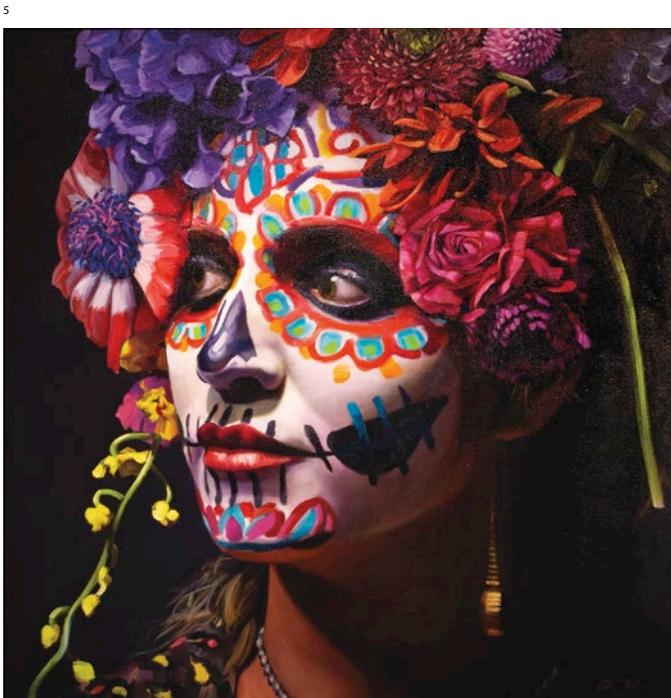
The calavera embodies Overton's interpretation of the concept because of its dichotomous nature. Calavera, meaning skull in Spanish, is a common

symbol for the Mexican holiday Dia de Los Muertos, the Day of the Day, where ancestors who have passed on are celebrated. People participating in the holiday will often use the skull as a mask or it is shaped from sugar or chocolate. Overton uses the calavera solely as a mask in his paintings. The portraits depict women with bright skull makeup that he paints on their faces before painting the work itself. From what he has experienced, these masks have allowed the models to become more vulnerable.

**2**  
Brad Overton in his studio.

**3**  
*Saudade*, oil, 48 x 48"





**4**  
*Rendición*, oil on linen  
on panel, 20 x 16"

**5**  
*Moyetzicate*, oil on  
canvas, 60 x 60"

**6**  
*Cordelia*, oil on canvas,  
52 x 52"

"It's like they're in a Venetian mask, where they have taken on this other personal and have permission to be really relaxed," Overton explains. "Oftentimes, when taking photos it's the opposite. Somebody might be anxious in life and when they have their picture taken they become more anxious. What I've noticed—what I see it as—is an empowering experience from the models who wear the makeup. It's an ironic thing. You cover up the face except for the eyes and the expression becomes less guarded. It's fascinating to me that you get more out of it."

During his model sessions, Overton focuses on the mood, props and costumes, but the most important element to his work—regardless if he is painting a portrait or still life—is the light. "In the calavera series there is a more consistent emphasis on dramatic light and dark, *chiaroscuro*," he says. "Light and dark, distinct from each other are bound to each other. You can't have one without the other. The same can be said of Eros and Thanatos. Without one, the full meaning of the other can't be realized. That's the non-duality."

In his painting *Valiente*, Overton takes on his interpretation of Eros and Thanatos by showing his metaphor of the motorcycle—the idea of what can be destructive can bring joy. Depicted is a woman with her face painted in the calavera style riding a motorcycle through the desert at twilight. "That's my idea of freedom," Overton says. "And the calavera is the symbol of that. Ultimate freedom from fear. Defiance of death through living fully." ●

## EROS AND THANATOS

**When:** June 28–July 13, 2019

**Where:** Blue Rain Gallery,  
544 S. Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501

**Information:** (505) 954-9902,  
[www.blueraingallery.com](http://www.blueraingallery.com)