

Art [Interviews](#)

## In TM Davy's Art, Faeries Have Their Day

The artist's recent exhibition, *Fae*, is like a fantasy film that asks you to stay open to the idea of magic.



Hrag Vartanian February 4, 2024



Artist TM Davy, right, with his husband Liam Davy performing in Company gallery on January 3, 2024 (all photos Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

Walking into Company Gallery in Soho late last year felt like walking into a faerie wonderland. During a casual Wednesday I entered in to find artist [TM Davy](#) with a friend seated on a vibrant array of blankets playing instruments while basking in the color explosion of paintings in his exhibition titled [Fae](#). The paintings featured mysterious caves, gremlin-like creatures, and ethereal light that glows in curious ways.

The hidden world he has brought into the light captivated me as I explored the grotto-like scenes inspired by 1980s and '90s pop culture and close-ups of faerie-like figures that look as influenced by classic Calvin Klein ads as they are by fantasy portraits. I asked the artist to elaborate on his practice, which embraces a type of glorious and vintage faggotry that feels very much about the present moment of healing, mending, fantasy, and new horizons.

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Details of two paintings by TM Davy, left, “heart song” (2023) and, right, “a little splashing” (2023)

***Hyperallergic:*** *How would you describe your exhibition to someone who has never seen your work before?*

**TM Davy:** Entering Company Gallery [you see] a small green faerie popping in from a pink portal. A tiny monster is glad we are here. Vine-covered columns of chromatic faerie caves flank the main room, supporting pine tree gardens above. Across us, a human-sized faerie waves a wand from a singing circle of butterfly-winged friends. A spectrum of wing-eared little ones play, chase, rest, and are encouraged by even smaller faeries to fly. The room is a locus of mystic caves, each of varying color and size, framing a moment. Blue faerie made it home. Red Satyr smokes a joint. There is dancing together, floating in, gazing, posing, picking flowers. The vibration is love. Transmuted consciousness makes eyes in a game of



hue, form, and material expression. A stoned sun drum and a mossy harp rest on the ground. Some days, groups of moving-bodied visitors gather to play music in the room.

**Hyperallergic:** *You spoke about the figures in your paintings as “parts” of you. Can you talk a little bit more about that?*

**TMD:** In working from imagination, so much life comes through. I might see a friend in the gesture of a faerie, a sister in the joy, an old crush passing through faer eyes. Sometimes, a heartbreak, a difficult emotion, or an unresolved memory appears. The process is to follow fae as I feel it. Yellow Satyr, for example, began as an abstract attraction. He got hot but shared a trigger of judgment or distrust that felt unshakeable. Then, somehow, [he became] a likeness of my middle school best friend. I remember us drawing magic together, then drifting apart. We had last connected on a summer home from college, wandering town. Some pals of his found us talking closely. One called me “faggot.” I wasn’t out yet, but I was lost. “So what if I am?” I say, “Why does it bother you?” Then he violently attacked me. Twenty-six years after the friend ghosted [me], and I hid my strangled bruises, Yellow Satyr has me integrating the score. Still, the painting felt sad, so I found my old friend on Instagram. He calls me and apologizes forever, like a fantasy realized for us both. Then, Yellow Satyr changes again, gets gentle with me, and softens into a lover out of time. I tattoo tamed tiny monsters on faer shoulders, protective faeries on faer neck, and a sun smiling above faer eyes.



**Hyperallergic:** *What is a faerie cave for you? That's a term you have used to explain the cavernous spaces in your work. Can you explain?*

**TMD:** The cave is a somatic haven — a home base for faerie teller consciousness. Part of this work was visualizing breath as an inspired witness traveling into an emotional body. Then, follow the insights into a loop with painting. It was a happy discovery that bright hues and linseed oil could reveal faerie caves across the wood grain planters. My family has a tradition of honoring fairies at the knots of great trees.

**Hyperallergic:** *What is the role of gender and sexual identity in this show? You quote from Larry Mitchell's *The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions* (1977), which argues for an anti-assimilationist attitude toward sexual diversity. I'm curious if that represents your perspective.*

**TMD:** Candystore wrote the text and I love shimmer writing. That is a book we both adore. *Hi Ned!* Things get loose, and things get tight in Ramrod. But the fairies know a sustainable ecosystem is diverse. We've got to keep each other alive. The works in *Fae* feel fae-gendered to me, a dreamy non-dual embodiment.



Details of the Gremlin-like figures in, left, "lucid dreamer" (2023) and, right, "tiny monster" (2023)

**Hyperallergic:** *I noticed a strong thread of symbolism in your work, even in the way you use*



*color. Can you explain what role symbolism plays in your work?*

**TMD:** Students of realism know how internal symbols project into the observational depiction of an external world. Electromagnetic spectrums are playing across form and space, and a realist meditation is to witness visual phenomena separable from unconscious structures. Still, we choose where to look. In a symbolism begotten by realism, the witness begins to train that same attention back inward. What image is there to be revealed? What wants to be projected? Weirdly, symbols seem to realize and transcend in feeling seen. The game of light and color becomes as intimate and mysterious as it feels.

***Hyperallergic:*** *The Hollywood movies of the 1970s and 1980s were clearly an influence on your work. I would say Gremlins, Star Wars, and Neverending Story are the first to pop to mind, but I'd love to hear you talk about these influences. Are there others?*

**TMD:** There's something about a monomythic quest. I've listened to Joseph Campbell enough to see how these stories chart my unconscious realm with their magic ones. Jim Henson was a genius of the heart. The breathwork Mr. Miyagi teaches in *Karate Kid II* was beautiful for my childhood self, but I lost the practice to adolescence. Rediscovering conscious breathing saved me again in recent years. A satyr briefly became Ralph Macchio to remember our first teacher. It occurred to me at some point that my recurring dream of grottos was first informed by *Big Bird Goes to China* very early in my life. Superman in the fortress of solitude. *Labyrinth*. *Dark Crystal*. [*My Neighbor*] *Totoro*. Too many to know where influence ends. But I'm grateful to the avatars and magic friends.



One of the painted planters in *Fae* beside “heart song” (2023)

***Hyperallergic:*** *What is it about painting that speaks to you and suggested that it was the ideal medium for this work?*

**TMD:** Painting is my primary love language. I work into the caves like I’m tapping a song in myself. So much of the work is about conjuring light from matter and letting it radiate into a spacious, awake feeling like magic in the room. It’s a way to be in touch.