

## Beautiful Decay Book 5: Psychonauts

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In my childhood, I never got the chance to believe in fantastical things. I was never convinced that Santa Claus or the tooth fairy existed. Ghosts, specters, and imaginary worlds belonged to other children, who wildly fantasized about faraway lands and amazing characters that could fulfill every desire, while I only trusted in things I could see. As an adult, this seems to me like an awful place for a child to be. The childhood embrace of magic and mystery leaves nothing unwanted—every dream and horror is vividly present in the mind.

While the physical world is a fine place, the world of dreams provides an uncanny connection between the past, present, and future unmatched by day-to-day life on Earth. So when encountering an artist who fully embraces this other world, my mind instantly starts exploring the connection between fantasy, myth, and visualization—a place ripe with both imagination and interpretation. And the work of Christopher Davison does just this. A magical combination of media and image-making, Davison's drawings and paintings delicately balance dream and reality, emotion and narrative. While many artists these days need to rationalize their material choices, his process accentuates the spatial and visual interpretations of his imagery. His work intuitively moves between media with ease—drawing from the language of painting, drawing, and printmaking to mold these three worlds into something uniquely its own.

Davison's multiplicity of media successfully binds the worlds that the imagery creates, perfectly merging the visual depiction of dream space and reality. Each image is rooted in a familiar environment, yet the dimension remains complex and unrecognizable. The dark palette and varied

texture explore the way we experience reality through memory, while the sparse, raking color draws the eye to an unreal and emotive space. Each hyperreal color explores a distinct mood, allowing the image to delve into an unknown psychological experience. So as the space and color lead us into the world of Freud, the imagery allows us to explore these relationships through our own experience rather than through analysis. Davison's work references a time and place that is both unreal and universal—an investigation into our own minds through representation, color, and marks.

In his work, the breakdown between representation and the unreal leads this journey. While each image emotes a particular mood and space, it is the intimated narrative quality of the work as a whole that provides the most satisfying discoveries. While rarely employing an overt storyline, Davison's work takes the viewer into a space of mental exploration through an extended dream sequence, referencing both life and another world of hope, desire, and horror. Each work draws one into a journey through the caverns of memory and time, psychological and physical space; sending the viewer on a path that seemingly has no beginning or end, no north or south, no right or wrong. Rather Davison provides us with a disjointed story rich with information from our collective inner psyche, permitting us to explore ourselves through his imagined world. Instantly, his images return us to the desires, hopes, dreams, and dangers that were presented to us as children, with full permission to search, experience and embrace all of the worlds he has to offer.

I recently had the chance to talk with Davison about his mythical places, his approaches to storytelling, and the world between image and imagination.