

VOGUE

How Rising Art Star Drake Carr Gets “The Feel of Fashion”

by Lynn Yaeger



TAKE A BOW

Drake Carr in New York. Photographed by Ethan James Green, *Vogue*, October 2023.

“I love fashion, and I love drawing clothing,” says artist Drake Carr. In early 2023, members of Carr’s extended family—everyone from stylist Dara Allen to downtown artist Rose Mori to club luminary “Connie Girl” Fleming to the models Karlie Kloss and Pat Cleveland—showed up in all their rarefied glory to have their portraits drawn by Carr during his residency at New York Life Gallery.

Carr’s drawings, paintings, and installations, at once unblinking and delicate, have an uncanny ability to distill the essence of his subjects. In an age of AI, where we are increasingly victims of bland manufactured content, the defiantly handmade quality of Carr’s work is subtly rebellious. As his friend Green puts it: “He manages to capture people in a way a lot of photographers can’t.”

Carr, who is 30, lanky, and all-American handsome, arrived in New York City in 2015. (Green says their friendship was inevitable: “We are both gay boys from churchy homes in Michigan.”) He worked at restaurants to keep afloat, at one point buying himself an airbrush machine for \$200 just to explore its possibilities. His first gallery was the walls of Happyfun Hideaway, a “queer tiki disco dive bar” in Bushwick, Brooklyn, where he still works one day a week—which is maybe surprising for a guy whose work graced the Summer 2023 cover of *Art in America*. But maybe not.



AUTHOR, AUTHOR!

Carr's portrait of writer Lynn Yaeger.



COLOR STORIES

Carr's *Rose*, 2023.

In his soft voice, Carr confesses that there is so much he wants to do—fashion, of course, but also a continuation of his series depicting the louche characters he has encountered since he arrived in New York. His work, first widely seen through his Instagram posts, has since been in one-person shows at The Hole gallery on the Bowery and in Los Angeles. In October, at *Vogue's* Forces of Fashion, he will set up shop, sketching a handful of the conference's illustrious attendees.

While Carr's first fashion drawings were informed by his childhood infatuation with superheroes, his grown-up works have their roots in the now vanished world of fashion illustration—he particularly reveres the late Antonio Lopez, but "instead of starting with the garment and doing a little gesture of the face, I do the face and a silhouette of the garment," he explains. "Just getting the feel of the fashion."

For his residency at Green's Chinatown atelier, some of his subjects brought bags of their own clothes—Carr describes one ensemble as "pink boxer shorts, patent leather boots, and an expensive scarf." The project resulted in a monograph, *Walk-Ins*, with Carr's boyfriend, a graphic designer, making the beautiful book. (They live near Prospect Park in Brooklyn and met while Carr was having his mom's old business card—the business was Nails by Wendy—tattooed on his arm.) Carr's fashion work, though, has stretched far beyond pastel undershorts: For Christopher John Rogers's fall 2019 show—the designer is another member of his Brooklyn posse—Carr painted bodices and created a print of faces that turned up on a shirt. "He has a real appreciation of glamour, which is not always so popular right now," Rogers says, adding that his friend is "kind of soft-spoken, but when you get to know him, the ebullience of his personality comes through."

Quietly ebullient as he may be, Carr is a bit awestruck by his recent rise. "There are moments when I feel like a country mouse in the city," he confesses. But like so many intensely creative people who leave behind far-flung addresses and head for the nearest metropolis, he has found a home in the wilds of Brooklyn. "I don't ever feel like I shouldn't be here."



STRIKE A POSE
Julian and Kenta, 2023.