

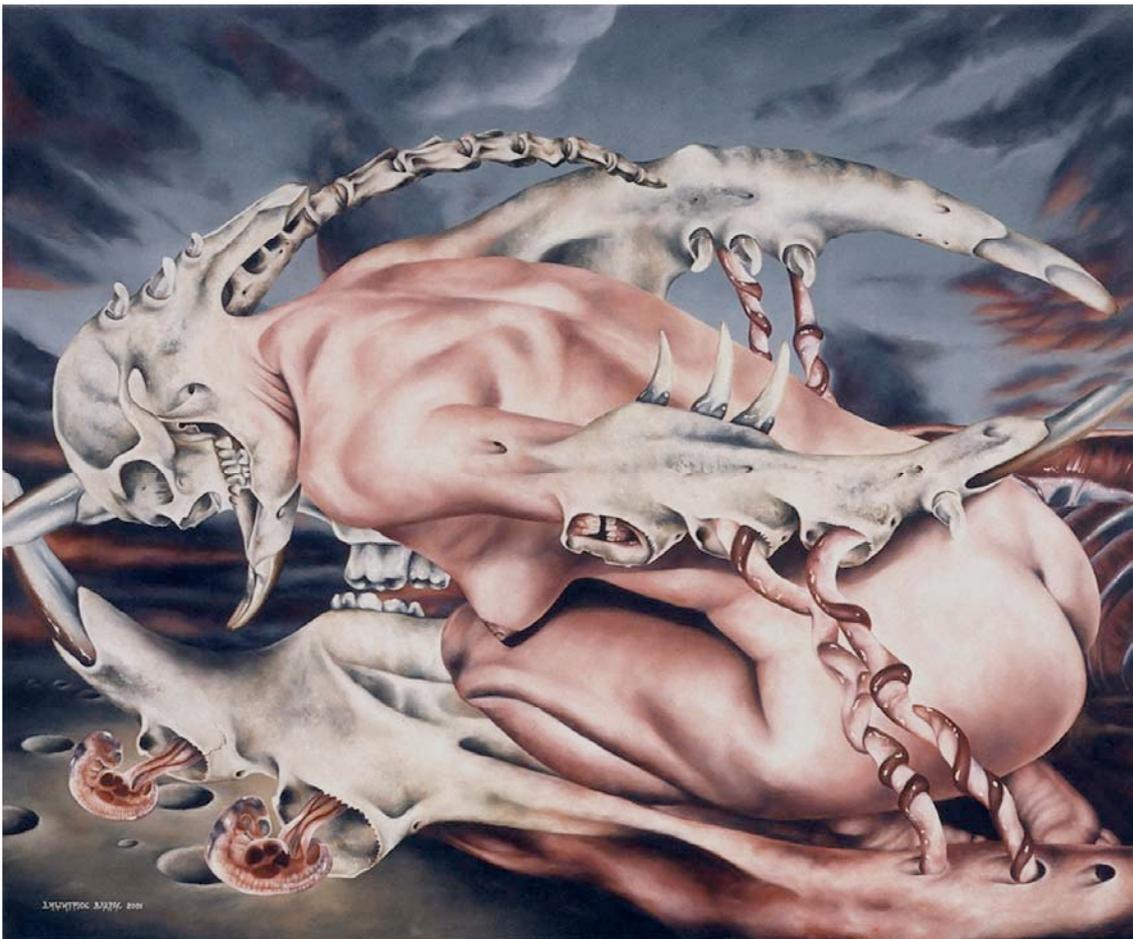
## DEMETRIOS VAKRAS

[www.vakras.com](http://www.vakras.com)

Demetrios Vakras was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1962. He has been painting with oil paints since 1977 and has never wavered from his elucidation of the bizarre, fantastic and surreal. He is self-taught and his earliest influence was the work of the surrealists (Dali, Magritte, Bellmer).

His art rejects the notion that art is expression at the expense of technique, for every one of us has something to express and that would make us all artists. He maintains that unless you have an understanding of what has been expressed in the past and the skill with which to express it, that you are likely to repeat it, worse still repeat it badly. This is a rejection of the pretensions of artistic aspirants whose lack of any real talent is celebrated as the quintessential ingredient that defines them as 'artists'. There is no effort required in painting badly and it is just as easy to redefine what had hitherto not been defined as art as actually being art - after all that was Marcel Duchamp's achievement. *But*, that was novel and could only ever have been done once! It has to be remembered that Duchamp's declaration that the mass-produced urinal he exhibited as a "found art object" (*Fountain*) was in 1917; and, that it was in 1938, at the *International Exhibition of Surrealism* (Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris), that Salvador Dali exhibited his installation-as-art-piece: *Rainy Taxi*. Ever since, the art-world has demonstrated the mnemonic abilities of Alzheimer's sufferers - looking at every installation and found object as if it were totally new, never before seen, *avant garde*! "Avant garde" has thus become nothing more than the recycling of yesterday's ideas.

That there is persistence in repeating what Duchamp did over 80 years ago and Dali over 60 years ago demonstrates the historical vacuum of modern art theory and practice. Andy Warhol and pop-art were already anachronisms well before they ever came to be.



*reconstitution (with spare body parts) II : life bearer*, 2001, 101.5cm x 122cm ( 40" x 48" ), oil on canvas

Vakras' current imagery of dismembered human forms recombined with animal skulls, jaw and pelvic bones, and machinery stem from his earlier works, his so called *Apocalypse Series* which true to the definition of the word is about revealing what had hitherto been concealed.

In these earlier paintings the individual is imprisoned by, and part of, machinery purpose-created to ease existence, machinery which for the term of an individual's existence requires constant maintenance against its dissolution by natural entropy. In his current works the philosophical line has been largely abandoned. Although the pictorial elements remain the same they generally serve no purpose other than the fantastic. Forms metamorphose into unlikely recombinations. He sees the fantastic as an ongoing theme in art. What could be more fantastic than creating the illusion of bison on cave walls? Art of the imagination is a vein alive and well in art, which includes within its historical repertoire Heironymous Bosch, Grunewald, Blake, Fuseli, the symbolists, the surrealists, the artists of the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism, etc. Fantastic art antecedes surrealism. Surrealism is the inheritance of fantastic art to come.



*Reaper iii*, 1997, oil on canvas, 76cm x 55.5cm (33" x 20")



*Multifarious Maulings*, 1996, oil on canvas 137cm x 183cm (54" x 72")