VINCIBLE
THE SUPERHERO, REIMAGINED

▶ If Superman sat for a portrait in the 15th century, what would the result look like?

That's the question Sacha Goldberger's "Super Flemish" project answers. The Parisian photographer created a series of Flemish painting-inspired portraits that feature modern-day superheroes, such as Princess Leia and the Hulk, wearing Renaissance-style costumes and the pensive facial expressions common to the era's portraiture.

INSPIRATION: The Flemish paintings that adorn the walls of Goldberger's grandmother's home, where he lives and cares for her.

LOGISTICS: The project took two years and 110 people, including 12 makeup artists and five costume designers. The first year was dedicated to designing the concept and the costumes; the second included eight months of casting.

CASTING: Goldberger wanted models who looked almost identical to the actors who portrayed the characters in movies.

EQUIPMENT: Goldberger used a Phase One P65 camera. Lighting the image was a complicated process. "The Flemish painting is special," Goldberger says. "You have to have a lot of shadow, but we didn't want it to be too dark."

POSING: Putting modern-day superheroes in 15th-century settings meant the subjects needed to project a thoughtful and subdued attitude. "When we started to shoot the Hulk, he was screaming and showing his muscles, and that was not what I was looking for," Goldberger says. "I wanted a soft look and the contrast between the muscles and Romanticism."

RESULT: The portraits evoke the moody style of the Flemish masters, encouraging viewers to see superhero subjects in a new light. "Superheroes are invincible, and then you look at these images and they look so human, so vulnerable," Goldberger says. "Superman is a man of steel, but in my picture he is a man of flesh." •