

ISOLATION INTERVIEWS
JEAN-PHILIPPE DORDOLO





ISSUE 3

Continuing the Isolation Interviews: a new series of weekly artist profiles highlighting current concerns, accompanied by a selection of available works.

We know that these are precarious and uncertain times for everyone and with so many people staying at home, self-isolating or social distancing, we want to be able to continue sharing some of our favourite art and artists with you. The Isolation Interviews are a weekly series of conversations with artists that will explore how these new circumstances are affecting their practices and productivity. We'll hear how they are finding solutions - and even opportunities - and what their plans and hopes are for the future.

Brooke Benington is committed to supporting and creating opportunities for artists. We believe that this is needed now more than ever. Most artists are self-employed, often supplementing their income by working as technicians, fabricators, assistants, teachers and a whole host of other jobs. Now, many have very suddenly lost a vital source of income. With this in mind, we are accompanying each Isolation Interview with a curated selection of work by that artist, available for purchase.

Thank you for your continued support. Stay safe and look after one another.

Lily & George
Directors, Brooke Benington

What is your usual studio routine and how, if at all, has it been affected or restricted by recent isolation and social distancing measures?

I usually go to the studio when I don't have work commitments. It's good if I can get in for three full days a week.

Of course the restrictions around social distancing have had a huge impact on my routine. As a freelance technician, work has dried up entirely. I have no income coming in at the moment, but I have plenty of time to make art. I'm lucky my studio space is close to where I live and it is self-contained.

As a result I've been going there most days. The rest of the time I have been drawing at home. I like to do everything

myself and I do not use fabricators. I had stocked up on a few essentials before the outbreak, but omitted to purchase the silicon rubber I need for a new body of work. I can't imagine my materials will last for three months. I anticipate I'll have to pace myself first, and scavenge towards the end.

While I can't financially afford much at the moment, time has been an abundant resource. The pace of things has slowed down, I feel I do not have the same pressure to wrap up my various works in progress. It's a privilege to be in a position where I can witness a body of work grow. I will attempt to enjoy this moment (despite everything that's going on) and try things out.

Your work often blurs the boundaries between sculpture and painting. Could you tell us a little bit about your practice, and in particular your process?

I don't think I've ever wanted to be a sculptor or a painter. I like borrowing from both. I'm fascinated by the wealth of material gestures present in sculpture. I think building something that's free standing (thus inherently confrontational) is unforgiving. It's a difficult thing to do well.

I find painting mesmerising. I'm trying to understand its use of composition and colour, and how to apply its dynamic back into sculpture, through materials and scale, amongst other things.

Painting is usually understood as paint applied onto a support, whether it is wood or stretched canvas etc. Stone, bronze or even plaster sculptures can be made of single block of material which has been carved or cast. My cast paintings attempt to merge both ideas into one single object - they are both support and image.



I have used a similar process to cast big heads, and watercolour drawings. I like the idea of colour being the material, rather than sitting on the surface. I like textures. I find applying a treatment or finish onto a surface sometimes conceals its inherent properties.

Could you talk a bit about the narrative within your practice as well as the use of humour and (self) portraiture?

The narrative qualities emerge naturally in the process of making the work. I'm not trying to force any meaning, if I do it backfires and I am rarely happy with the result.

Nevertheless I have to acknowledge the recurrence of certain topics in the work. I think the relationship between labour and leisure are omnipresent. They are reflected in my attitude toward making work. Books like 'Tender is the Night' by F. Scott Fitzgerald and 'Super Cannes' by J. G. Ballard left a strong impression on me.

The process is similar to making a Tarte Tatin. For this French desert, you need apples, a pastry for the base, and a binding agent. The apples are cut into segments and placed in the bottom of the baking tray. The shortcrust pastry is laid on top, covering all the layers of fruit. Then it goes in the oven. When it comes out, the content of the baking tray is flipped upside down so that the fruit is served face up, with the crust at the bottom.

To best explain the process, run through the recipe again substituting the apples for a mix of polymer compound and pigments. The baking tray is replaced by a silicon mould shaped as the back of a stretched canvas. The shortcrust pastry is a fibreglass matting used to reinforce the structure of the panel.

When I flip the cast painting out of its mould, the resin layers at the bottom of the mould act as the forefront of the cast image. The result is a matt, flat picture, embedded in an object which bears all the physical attributes of a bare stretched canvas.



Humour is an extension of my interest and critique of hierarchies which is noticeable in either the subject matter, or the material/method I use to execute the work. Humour can be achieved by creating distance with things with which we have an affinity. There are several mechanisms one can resort to: satire, caricature, absurdity, etc. Pieter Bruegel the Elder did it brilliantly in the 16th century. As did Magritte in the 20th century. Humour has always played an important role in art, but I feel it is sometimes frowned upon because it can be mistaken as too lowbrow for a fine art audience.

I think my interest in portraiture started when I saw *The Ricotta Eaters* from Vincenzo Campi in the Beaux-Arts Museum in Lyon. In this painting, peasants gleefully eat ricotta straight out of a bowl. Their smiles shed evidence on poor oral hygiene. Crumbs are falling off everywhere. This certainly isn't a subject deemed as noble for a painting at the time. I ended up looking at dutch genre paintings in the 17th century, and in particular the tronies sub-genre, which focalises on characters with exaggerated facial expressions.



I relate to this because I've never had the talent to draw realistically. I remember taking a life drawing course at art school, and my tutor told me I was butchering the model. Maybe it is time I embrace my instinctive tendencies towards the crude and caricatural. I don't find any beauty in the representation of the beautiful, if that makes sense?

You have been experimenting with new materials and processes such as casting with pewter and making mono-prints. What has prompted these explorations and how important is it for you to continue to expand your practice?

I've made a small head in pewter last October. I was interested in seeing

what my work would look like in another material. Metals offer a different sensibility to resin or plaster. I think about the notions of weight and density when looking at a metal sculpture. Pewter has a low melting point. It is the cheapest and easiest alloy to try things out. I'm not so keen on bronze. It has too many connotations within art, and it looks too heavy on the eye. Ideally I'd like to try working though a few ideas with cast aluminium.

I started with mono-prints at the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown. I thought I should use the time to try something I haven't done before. Mono-prints take drawing in a different place for me, with added grit, and a quickness of execution. Working from the back of the page also strikes a chord in relation to the way I work with the cast paintings.

I think it's important to keep evolving. There is a lot to learn from observing and testing. Being curious and trying new materials and techniques is important for me. I get frustrated at times because I can't seem to move along fast enough. But I'd like to hope it will all make sense when I look back in 20 years!



The restrictions implemented to combat coronavirus have disrupted the art world, forcing people to innovate and experiment. As an artist in the early years of your career, can you see opportunity in this disruption and what changes would you like to see as a result of it?

It's too early to observe or feel the whole range of consequences the lockdown will impose on the art world. Although I do have a hunch about where things are heading and it's not pretty...

In the meantime I will keep working as much as I can. If my employment dries up and I can't afford my studio anymore, I take solace in the fact I can still enjoy drawing from my kitchen table (for a time at least!). There's always a way to remain active. But it takes a lot of stamina. And a hard skin.

I hope people will react to the aftermath of the lockdown by wanting to explore more. After being confined to the four walls of our rooms, a bit of aimless wandering will be welcome. Shutting down computers should come as a relief! Going to art galleries is free, so people should feel encouraged to visit again and connect with art in the flesh!



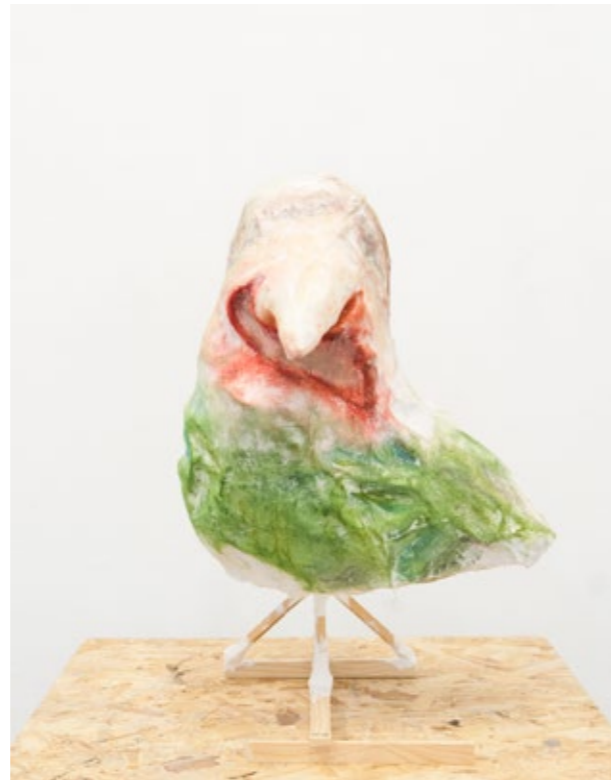
JEAN-PHILIPPE DORDOLO

Jean-Philippe Dordolo (b. in Orange, FR) lives and work in London. He graduated from BA(Hons) Byam Shaw School of Art /Central St Martins in 2011 and MFA Slade School of Art in 2019. Recent exhibitions include solo presentations *Bindlestiff* at Exhibit Gallery, London (2019) and *Fliegen one Flügel* at Saatchi Gallery (2018), curated by Kris Day. Other exhibitions include *The Horse* at Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney (2018), *Gone Fishing* at Centrum, Berlin (2016), *Flatland* at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, Edinburgh (2015), *Come Closer* at Art First, London (2014) and *Universal Fragments* at Large Glass, London (2013). Awards include the Jealous Graduate Prize (2020), the Felix Slade Scholarship (2018), the Pankerd Jones Memorial Prize (2018) and the Euan Uglow Scholarship (2017). Dordolo was an art editor for the quarterly arts magazine *Ambit* from 2013 to 2018.

www.jeanphilippedordolo.com



Als abswesend posieren, 2019
Composite, fibreglass, pigments cast of the back of a stretched canvas
102 x 328 x 5 cm



Ein singender Vogel (Eine Pause, dann ein langer Kuss), 2018
Wood, modroc, pastel
56.7 x 39 x 47 cm



Verschwindender Akt, 2018
Composite, fibreglass, pigments cast of the back of a stretched canvas
102 x 76 x 5 cm



Sag 'Hallo' zu Fremden, 2019
Cast composite, fibreglass, pigments, polystyrene, plaster, acrylic, pewter, pastel, rivets, wood
167 x 71 x 87 cm



Porträt einer gerahmten Zeichnung, 2018
Composite, fibreglass, pigments cast of a framed watercolour paper sheet
40.5 x 31.5 x 6.5 cm



Sonnenuntergänge, 2020
Graphite and watercolour pencils on fine grain heavyweight 200g/m2 acid free paper
42 x 59.4 cm

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