

CULTURE PLACE

ARTIST CHAT: JONATHAN SELIGER



Name: Jonathan Seliger

Location: New York, NY

Works available from: McClain Gallery

For those who don't know your work, can you describe your artistic approach and creative process?

I create 3-dimensional recognizable objects in varying scales from the handheld, table-top or pedestal, wall or floor-mounted to monumental outdoor pieces. The materials are painted canvas and painted metals such as bronze and aluminum.

Have you been able to find inspiration and think creatively during this time? If so, where and how?

I am trying to but it's hard not to be pre-occupied and distracted.

What are you working on right now? How has the pandemic affected your work?

For the painted metal works I collaborate with fabricators. During the pandemic this has not been possible, not to mention budgetary constraints which have been restrictive. I am working on smaller painted canvas pieces. I just finished a painted canvas Louboutin shopping bag that hangs on a patinated bronze hook. I am also thinking about somehow incorporating nature into my primarily culture-based works.

Walk us through your daily routine when working.

Too often now work is in fits and starts, not predictable, relaxed or routine. Painted canvas works start with a piece of raw cotton duck stapled to the wall and successive layers of gesso and modeling paste are applied with a brush and palette knife. Layers are sanded and prepped for base layers of paint. At this point I will usually draw the cartography of the form and remove the canvas from the wall to cut and fold before painting begins. The canvas is put back on the wall to paint; once more or less where I want it, then I will remove it and start constructing the 3-D form. When finished I spray the pieces generally with a synthetic varnish.

What's on your reading list?

Vampires In The Lemon Grove by Karen Russell.

What's on your watch list?

Just finished Babylon Berlin and The Last Dance. Weight of Gold seems fascinating.

What's on your listen list?

The Last Archive and 1619 podcasts. Mozart Requiem and LCD Soundsystem.

What was the last thing that made you laugh out loud?

On a recent TED Radio Hour Manoosh Zomorodi was discussing something about, in geological time, eating rocks. She prefaced it by saying "This must be the dumbest question ever!"

What role can artists play during a time like this?

Just keep on doing our work and keep on keepin' on.

Who and/or what are your artistic influences?

Jasper Johns' early work has been a formative influence. I often am reminded that one can't choose one's nature and therefore, influence. I always wish I was more influenced by Rauschenberg. He's so generous and generative.

What are you trying to communicate with your art?

That we are here. And then we are not.



JONATHAN SELIGER

Disappearing Fabric, 2006

copper, steel, oil, acrylic and modeling paste on canvas

45 x 89 x 10 inches

MCCLAIN GALLERY

\$30,000

Where do you go when you are looking for inspiration or new ideas?

I like it when inspiration finds me. It's hard to force it.

What have you changed your mind about recently?

After hearing an episode of The Daily podcast called "Why They're Protesting," it wasn't a question of changing my mind so much as opening it. I had to admit to myself, painfully, "you've spent your entire life living in the dark."

Are there any movies, music, podcasts, publications, or works of art that have made a big impact on you recently? If so, why?

Carmen Herrera's painted metal fabrications: so beautiful, so jealous.

What is the best thing you have cooked recently?

Gazpacho with perfect summer produce. Can I call blending raw ingredients "cooking"?

What piece of your artwork would you like to be remembered for?

Probably a Kennedy matchbook.

What do you miss the most from pre-pandemic days?

Being out and about in NYC. Visiting MoMA and commercial galleries. Exploring new restaurants and favorite old spots.

Please share a link to something we should all see or know about:

<https://youtu.be/mKXtVQnqhB4>

Which artist of the past would you most like to meet? And why?

Giotto. It's where it all begins.

Have you ever had a moment when you questioned your career entirely?

Yes. Who hasn't?

Why do you love what you do?

For the moments when I get lost and forget about everything else but where I am and what I am focusing on in that very moment. It's so hard to be in the present.

What has been the highlight of your career so far?

Seeing a large body of my work installed in Varese, Italy in the Panza Collection. The installation was so pristine, thoughtful, sensitive and respectful. Such an honor.



JONATHAN SELIGER

Caprice, 2011

Automotive enamel on bronze, chrome plated bronze, glass

48 x 54 x 12 inches

MCCLAIN GALLERY

\$40,000

