

Vous rappelez-vous du jour ou du moment ou vous avez voulu devenir un artiste ? Et quel a été l'impératif qui vous a poussé à l'être ?

Do you remember the day or moment you decided to become an artist? What drove this decision?

As a child I used to observe people in public places and record situations with drawings, cartoons and caricatures. Much later, as a young man living in Rome, I began to physically change the flow of everyday life through temporary placement of sculptural objects in public spaces and photographing interactions that ensued. These Roman projects ultimately developed into collaborative performance work with sculptural objects that I engage with currently. So there is a certain continuity in my creative practice from childhood to now. It wasn't a particular experience or moment that prompted my decision to make art but rather an evolving interest in subverting the commonplace and shifting the perception of experiences and ideas.



Vous êtes le pur produit de l'héritage de la culture américaine, en particulier des notions qu'avancait déjà Barnett Newman avec la Kabbale, naviguant entre sociologie et religion. Le ressentez-vous ainsi ? Voulez-vous exprimer les confrontations de la société moderne ?

You are of Jewish American heritage, and share Barnett Newman's interest in Jewish mysticism

or Kabbalah. How do you feel about this influence which lies somewhere between sociology and religion? What meaning does it have for contemporary society?

Though born and raised in the United States, I also consider myself the product of European culture. I studied in Rome as an undergraduate and returned to Italy with a Fulbright grant in 1990. During this time I met art theorist and collector Enrico Pedrini who deepened my understanding of Fluxus, Arte Povera, Possibilism and other advanced expressions of European art making.



I am interested in the spiritual dimension of art and my book "Jewish Metaphysics As Generative Principle in American Art" explores the influence of Jewish thought on post-war American abstraction. In it, I discuss the work of Barnett Newman among others, and his fascination with Jewish mysticism or Kabbalah. Jewish metaphysics have influenced the development of my work and continues to have relevance for contemporary society.

There is a Jewish creation story, which interests me particularly. According to the Lurianic Kabbalah (and I paraphrase John Perreault's elegant description), energy or light or meaning poured from the Unknowable-Unnameable-Unlimitable down the Kabbalah tree from vessel to vessel. Perreault likens the effect to a wedding-glass pyramid. At this wedding, however, the lower vessels weren't strong enough to contain light and shattered, sending sparks into the void.

Because of the flawed creation, Divine light remains intermingled with dark vessel shards and trapped in the commonplace. Through a process known as "tikkun olam" ("repairing the world" in Hebrew), Jews seek to liberate light, so it may return to its source. This correction is accomplished through prayer and social engagement. I believe that art making also has the potential to release this energy.



La spiritualité semble tenir une grande place dans votre œuvre. Vous semblez montrer une spiritualité provocante qui semble toujours dépasser les stéréotypes acquis de la métaphysique.

Spirituality seems to have an important place your work. But your interpretation of Jewish metaphysics seems provocative at times and not bound to organized religion.

Spirituality, as expressed in contemporary art, interests me far more than organized religion.

While influenced by Judaism, my approach to art making also finds inspiration in Buddhism. My ongoing conceptual work "Meditation/Mediation," for example, involves working with artist collaborators who fill my twelve vessel sculptures with temporary meaning through performance interventions. The physical form of these vessel sculptures is influenced by the shapes of summer tea bowls used in the Japanese tea ceremony. But they also refer to the tradition of begging bowls in the Buddhist tradition. Monks still go out into the world with nothing but a bowl and live from the sustenance given them by people they encounter on the path.

I lived very near the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan during the 911 attacks and this trauma temporarily impeded my ability to make art. Deeply shaken, I found myself unable to create new forms in the studio. I'd been awarded a residency at the Napoule Art Foundation near Cannes, and carried pre-existing vessel sculptures with me in a rucksack. It was on the Côte d'Azur that I began exploring what Achille Bonito Oliva later referred to as "the concave spaces of art." I sought to fill these vessels by siting them in environments, encountered on walks, and documenting them with photography. In Rome one year later, at the Baruchello Foundation, I began performance collaborations that define "Meditation/Mediation." Enrico Pedrini remarked, "Within these projects, collective spiritual and emotional exchanges take form and resonate."

