

JAMIE FITZPATRICK



TEMPLE MAGAZINE

The theme of this issue is *La Farce*. The farce is a comic play from the middle ages that presents ridiculous situations and characters where deception, ambiguities, tricks and mystifications reign. It also mean a pleasant trick that we play at someone, and minced food (meat or other) used for stuffing. So it seemed obvious to us to invite you to participate in this issue. Indeed, your sculptures and performances are funny and mocking, they activate and include the viewer, and they are a mixture of different materials. Could you tell us more about what guides you in making those forms, and what is the origin of the subjects you criticize?



JAMIE FITZPATRICK

I'm drawn to the idea that the things

in my practice are trying to undermine a kind of stable authority.

I suppose the works I'm most well known for are the figurative sculptures built out of collapsed and broken forms. A lot of that work started from when I first moved back down to London to study. I started cycling around everywhere, and because I was above ground, I started paying more attention to the sculptures that were on plinths along the streets and the kind of people that had been placed on top of them. I had no idea who they were. I didn't know them as names or titles or for what they had done to get up there.

So instead they represented this kind of symbol of authority that I understood and could read. And I started to realize that the history of it wasn't important. They are just a network of historic iconographic authority that was being continuously repeated over time. And it's all kind of saying and constantly reinforcing this idea that we're up here, you're down there, there's this kind of physical manifestation of hierarchy that's built into the thing. So initially the work came out of trying to undermine that.

Another thing that gives them the kind of power is their permanence. They're built out of materials that are immovable. They last longer than our lifetimes. Materially, there was this stability I was really trying to get at rather than achieve a representative exact form. Whether that's through using materials that are purposefully quite fragile or impermanent, like waxes and clays, or by having them move through animatronics. Something suddenly kind of flickers, an eye blinks or the mouth begins to move. In that moment the sculpture loses all that immutability, that arrogant permanence and becomes silly like a puppet. By just having these small gestures, or by animating the works with moving image and performance, the sculptures are kind of used in something that involves time. That kind of outlines the practice in general, this kind of sense of trying to undermine these assumed authorities or assumed cultural legacies that we just expected to accept.



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You have a repertoire of forms, with symbols that are dominant. Like busts, horses. What feeds this repertoire? I saw some photos from your studio and there were posters of some super kitsch rosewater films hanging on the wall. Do you collect different types of images? How do you shape your characters?

JAMIE FITZPATRICK

Yes, I try to cover the walls of the studio with images, things I'm working on at the time, things for new ideas of just favourite things that have stood the rest of time. Those images you saw were from the front covers of some of the Romance novels my wife likes to collect. I'm interested in the way they lean in to these very exaggerated gender stereotypes and gendered desire.

I suppose its part of this movement away from the colonial statuary I've been working a lot with and towards a more general idea of masculinity and projected masculinity and my relationship to these privileges that I've seen in my practice over the last couple of years. But I suppose in general, these kind of repeated images, the Louis XIV hair and like you say, the horses or big boots and hats and stuff. A lot of it is because the actual sculptures themselves, public statues I mean, use these kind of very quick, easily legible motifs so that the message of authority is immediate and understandable. And I suppose when I'm using them, I'm just being more explicit. I'm just saying, this is what we're doing. And also I would like to think there is a thought process and there's a critical thought behind the works, but also I don't want the works to be so impenetrable, I want them to be able to be read. So if I put a big wig on something, people know directly what direction I'm critically pointing without me having to explain it, where the setup is there immediately, a bit like a joke. It's the setup and the punchline. For me, it just opens up who is able to engage with the work. I mean, a lot of art is made for people who speak a language that you learn

art school. And I think that's important and there is a place for it. But it is also intentionally exclusionary in its nature, it is created solely for an audience that are initiated into its hermetic language. One of the successes of the types of work I'm trying to challenge is its willingness to be understood, on a visual and critical level, by its audience. It's populist. I suppose I'm trying to tap in to that, to leave a little bit of that in. Like a smear on the glass of the mirror I'm holding up. I like that about my work, that there is a criticality but also it's not a prerequisite to experiencing it. And I think as well I'm looking to make sculpture more often now that it's placed outside rather than in a gallery. It's not an inviting space. If you're not used to going to galleries, they're not particularly comfortable place to be.

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It can be unpleasant indeed.

JAMIE FITZPATRICK

The building has an architectural austerity that is just not inviting. You go to Gagosian for example and they've got bouncers on the door.

It's mad. It's like they're purposefully there to make you feel unwelcome. Like you're already thought of as untrustworthy or a threat to that 'sort' of space. Most galleries will have someone at the desk that has to be passed to get to see the work, like a literal gate-keeper. Unless you are familiar with going to galleries, it is simply off-putting for most people and reinforces the idea that the art viewing experience prohibitive. I think there's something really interesting about trying to kind of find ways of showing work. One of the galleries I work with, Vitrine, they have these spaces in Basel and London in which there is no gallery to physically enter. They're purposely trying to find other ways of exhibiting, which I find quite interesting in general.



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In your sculptures there is something very intense about the way they are molded.

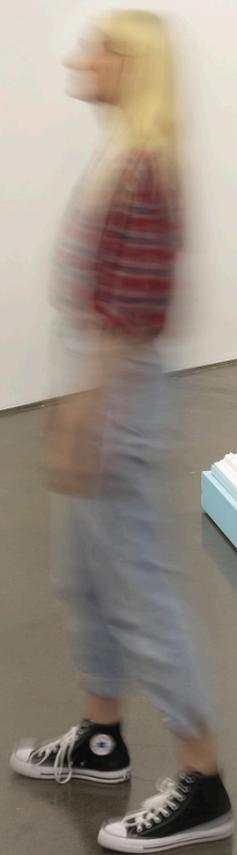
I find this same intensity when I am in front of a sculpture by Paul McCarthy, there is a super raw side. How do you make these sculptures, how long can you spend on one?

JAMIE FITZPATRICK

Ultimately, most of the sculptures I make end up as is a figure which, understandably, I think makes it easy to assume that the work is about figurative sculpture. And in some ways it is. But for me, it's more about the kind of act of making. The form isn't just a figure but becomes a kind of record of the marking and the kind of performative destruction. I'm using the sculpture as a surface on which to perform an act of violence or an aggression or frustration through the material. For example, you have all these parts in a work where you see where my fingers have been dug in and gauged or ripped at the detail. That's what gives it energy and urgency. That's the thing I'm trying to achieve. And that goes across all the works, whether its sculpture or drawing or film. It's not really about the figure. It's about the subtraction of the figure, the removal of that figure from the image. Obviously,

Paul McCarthy is a big influence on the work. And there was something I heard in a youtube video about him that I saw, where, i'm guessing it was one of his assistants, said: Our job is not to make a sculpture. The job is to capture this one moment of chaos and keep that moment forever. And that always stuck with me. It was a very succinct description of what I had instinctively been trying to achieve myself. It's like there's this whirlwind of making and acting out that happens in the studio. And at some point it's like we say, stop and that's it. And then we have to kind of keep that and find a way of making that bit safer and more stable and presentable. And for me, I find that part quite a laborious process, like something like casting or something can take months or weeks as opposed to the making which happens over hours or days. So the actual sculptures often take very little time. And then the kind of process of keeping that still so that it can be

displayed. That's where a lot of the time and effort goes really. And also, the thing I'm still trying to do is that sometimes when you cast something or you find another way of reproducing it in a slightly more permanent way, it loses that initial immediacy sometimes. And it's quite disheartening, after labouring over it for ages, you get it out and you're like, it's not holding up that kind of vigour that it once had.



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You make 3D models, since the lockdown if I'm not talking nonsense. What is the destination of these 3D, do you use them as preparatory drawings for future sculptures or exhibitions?



JAMIE FITZPATRICK

It started off the first lockdown. I think like lots of people I was feeling a bit empty creatively and was chatting to a friend and they said, Have you tried this? There's a free software on the internet and I had all the time in the world to try and figure it out. Then I started playing about with it and found a way of working that was really similar to the way that I sculpt in clay. I was surprised how quick it was. I'm definitely not using the programme and the way it was intended to be used, but I found a way in which it works for me.

I don't see them as works, they're much more like preparatory sketches.

What is really good is that they enable me to be able to try things out on any scale. I have no interest in printing them off because I'd lose all of that kind of getting your hands dirty I was speaking about. It's too clinical for my way of working. Everything is a decision. I never kind sit and draw out exactly what the work will look like before I start making. I'll have an idea in my head, but I also want to leave a lot to chance. I want things to fall off. I want things to break, or buckle under the weight of overloading. All of this stumbling upon exciting forms for final works isn't possible in such a prescribed method.

But about a month ago, I was invited by a foundry to collaborate with them using their scanning facilities.

I was a bit dubious at first because I can be a little bit of a romantic traditionalist when it comes to the bodily engagement with making. Even the fact that I had been using 3D models, I was a bit like I felt a bit dirty about it, like I was distancing myself from the whole sculptural process. And then these guys just said, We'd like to try it. Let's just see what happens. I'd seen those things where people scan themselves and it was like, really blocky and crude, so I was expecting something a bit like that. But this thing was amazing, it retained so much of the detail and energy of the original physical object. You could even see my fingerprints in it, and that was even without it on the finest setting. And what I really found exciting about the process was the potential to play

about with scale on the final object.
That gestures can be on clay and scaled up
well past the actual relationship
to my body. It's like a big giant hand
has been working on them.
So in that way, I'm excited in pursuing
this technology and seeing how it can
work with my particular way of working
with sculpture.



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Warrior ©Jamie Fitzpatrick
Grimm Tales ©Paolo Massimo Testa
In the garden of piggy male ©Jamie Fitzpatrick
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