



Daniel Giordano: The Italian Worker in the Big Art World

By Samuel Abelow, March 22, 2023

Daniel Giordano knows everybody, and everybody knows Daniel.

Underground Star, Rising

When Daniel smiles for a picture, he smiles perfectly, without blinking, until there's been enough snaps of the lens. He wears a custom-made jumpsuit with his slogan on the back: "There Cannoli Be One". This is a reference to the film Highlander, the fact that Daniel is a native of New York State's Hudson Highland region, as well as his Italian American heritage. He tops off the eccentric look with a cowboy hat. I once mentioned his "Justin Bieber-like good-looks." It hasn't changed. Eternally youthful, beaming with social graces, Daniel Giordano is an art rock star in the making.

This social buzz was evident at JDJ, an art gallery in Tribeca, during the reception for Daniel Giordano's solo exhibit on Wednesday March 8th, 2023. But the room packed with friends does not come effortlessly. Daniel is building a family, through love, generosity and relentless enthusiasm which requires genuine connections, and genuine hard work.

The Italian Worker in the Big Art World

Daniel Giordano's art practice is an intense and sustained mania of "mass-producing f***ing sculpture." On a humid day in late summer, I made the excursion to Giordano's Hudson Valley factory – his atelier.

Daniel fondly refers to this industrial complex as Vicki Island. I toured the workshop and saw the kiddie pool full of nail polish which he uses to marleize towels, which when once hardened, were mounted onto a tire. "The bath towels serve as canvas and I directly pour house paint on the surface of them and then drag my hand and or a stick through it to 'marleize' the colors and patterns", writes Daniel.



Daniel Giordano, *Cannoli (The Grip of Goran)*, 2016, 24K gold leaf, acrylic paint, ceramic, contact lens, cork, dog ticks, epoxy, eyeshadow, faux fur, fibered aluminum coating, hardware, leather, lichen, marine foam, Megan Murphy Martinez's hair, milk paint, Murano glass, peat, pigment, sewing machine needle, sewing machine timing belt, sparklers, steel, Tang drink mix, tennis ball, tennis racket grommet, tennis racket string, thread spool, 20 x 23 x 21 in

Giordano's exhibit *Chamber of Ultimate Solution* at the JDJ Gallery exhibit reminded me of the freaky reality of Daniel's works: his use of an infinite number of strange techniques, as well as endless bizarre material sources.

During my studio visit, Giordano demonstrated his Raku-fired clay technique where I witnessed fragments of fish bones and turkey vulture pellets situated next to buckets of shellac, a box of burnt tennis balls next to railroad spikes laminated with shed snakeskin, and more... It was inspiring to see how this all turned up on the white-walls of the gallery.

Giordano uses a combination of traditional art materials and processes with the unexpected which are both an extension of Daniel's playfulness, as well as his intense desire to push the limits of sculptural arts. "This show at JDJ is just a taste of what's to come," Daniel said to me at the opening, referring to what the art world will see in the massive installation that is currently on view at MASS MoCA, MA. This solo exhibition features larger objects, for example, the legendary deep-fried motocross bikes, which features a scorpion tail shooting out the back.

Chamber of Ultimate Solution at JDJ features a selection of Daniel's smaller scale work. For example, there is an installation of modest, yet elegant Pleasure Pipes. Of course, there were several of the famous Cannoli's – a family favorite. My favorite Cannoli features a copper-colored element which reads more like traditional sculpture than other works present. The armature appears to be a cured leather strap but it is in fact a twisted old horse-shoe. Daniel explained on a phone call a few days after the show:

"I went out to Bird-in-Hand, a town in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and spent a weekend hammering and twisting horseshoes (with my Amish friend Elom), which became armatures for the Cannoli series." He continued, "The Cannoli piece was titled after my chosen grandmother figure who..."

...Talking to Daniel brings one down a rabbit hole of personal stories and associations, bundled networks of personal history — family, location, material.



Daniel Giordano. *Cannoli (Adelaida)*, 2020, Ceramic, coco coir, glitter, hardware, horseshoes, linseed oil wax, perlite, phosphorescent acrylic, pomade, PVC primer, silicone, steel coat hanger, water caltrops, wool, 27 x 3 1/2 x 4 1/2 in

Daniel is a Bit of a Freak

Daniel is a bit of a freak. He's a shooting star. A rising star. A wild rock and roll type artist. A ball of energy. Peter Pan in the flesh. Daniel is a genuine good friend. Generous. As family is with one another. And all of that makes him a "freak" in the art world – a place that is often tough, difficult to make sense of, and eerily competitive. This is part of what makes Daniel Giordano unique.

In 2019, I wrote that my friend Daniel was somebody to watch out for. And then he showed up in the New York Times Arts Section shortly after. He went from a tiny gallery in Bushwick to a prestigious publication so quickly, and I am excited to see don't know what will happen next. I love Daniel and I guess I'll find out soon enough.

See you in Massachusetts in May, buddy.

