

## Daniel Giordano at JDJ Gallery



*Installation view, Daniel Giordano: Chamber of Ultimate Solution at JDJ Gallery. Courtesy of the artist.*

### *Daniel Giordano: Chamber of Ultimate Solution*

#### **JDJ Gallery**

March 8 through April 8, 2023

**By JONATHAN GOODMAN, March 2023**

Daniel Giordano, a young sculptor in his mid-thirties, lives and works in the upstate city of Newburgh, across the river from Beacon and the Dia Foundation space. He grew up there, and his studio is on the third floor of his father's former coat factory. As I write, the artist is on a spree: currently, he has three shows up—a large solo show at MassMoCA, located in North Adams in the northwest corner of Massachusetts; an exhibition at Turley Gallery in Hudson New York; and his show at JDJ on lower Broadway in New York City. The last show, reviewed here, offers, like the others, a bold and challenging reading of sculpture. His art, deliberately demotic, looks to everyday materials, a good number salvaged from the remnants, of textural fabrics and mechanical objects, of the now defunct factory. Elements as ordinary (and exotic) as Tang, the soft drink powder, and Italian cheesecake make their way into his deliberately proletarian, but visually memorable, art.



*Daniel Giordano, Cannoli (The Grip of Goran), 2016-2021, 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. Courtesy of the artist.*

Giordano's work tends toward shapes that are hard to define. Objects exist for themselves; they are mostly abstract, although the artist does work with mask and pipe imagery. This current show presents his idiosyncratic, slightly comic imagination to a New York City public, allowing us to meditate on the even greater divide between a historical modernism and the energies of a larger and larger art public. *Cannoli (The Grip of Goran)* (2016-21) is, like much of Giordano's art, unbounded and open-ended, makes it hard to describe. It is lumpy, with some coloration resulting from the use of gold plating. Threads jut out from all sides of the piece. A wall piece, the sculpture stands out like something unfamiliar, even unattractive in its refusal to take shape. But this refusal is key to Giordano's imagination, which avoids the definition of form in favor of undeclared masses. The cannoli reference establishes Giordano's Italian-American background; he is Italian-American, coming from a culture in which food is highly important. This work stays free of any specific reference, however; it encourages an encounter with the artist's determination to avoid easily understood motives and intentions.

*Fact VII: A Rose is a Rose is a Rose (Giordano)*, made last year, looks a lot like two blankets, one blue and one off-white, scrunched up; in a mass on the wall. Ostensibly a self-portrait, the work includes samples of the artist's hair. The distance from the title to the work is great enough to discourage a detailed reading of its meaning; but Giordano remains close to home, imaginatively and emotionally, suggesting private identifications that we have to know a fair amount about in order to fully understand. Does the piece refer to the artist's early childhood? Or is it mostly an attempt at the improvisational, indistinct shapes he is so good at creating? His esoteric work defies most anything sharply outlined, in favor of an idiom favoring the discarded, in which trash and chance develop his point.



*Daniel Giordano, Fact VII: A Rose is a Rose is a Rose (Giordano), 2022, Acrylic polymer emulsion, bath towels, glitter, hardware, my hair, oil-based paint, pigment, plywood, pomade, rubber, tire, water caltrop, 33 x 30 1/2 x 13 3/4 in. Courtesy of the artist.*

The final work to be discussed, *Pleasure Pipe LXXVI* (2021-22), belongs to an ongoing series of the same name. This example of the sequence has a fish spine where the plume of smoke would be, and what looks like a gray felt bootie where the pipe bowl would be found. But Giordano's materials are so unusual that viewers cannot be sure. As a result, his art becomes notable for its oblique commentaries, most often personal in nature but also indicative of someone seeking meaning beyond the private, where materials are as important as form and the big graphical becomes a window for extended, objective meditation. We are now living in a time in which modernism appears to have become a historical movement, and it would seem that Giordano's work is based on that understanding. Yet the artist himself has declared modernism is not finished, and has suggested that his work is a continuation of it. The kind of work he makes might be aligned with the nonchalant constructions of Robert Rauschenberg. The latter was also well known for his extravagant, workaday materials, and for a cheerful snubbing of high culture. In this show, Giordano continues a tradition that is older, and more venerable, than it seems. **WM**



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