

IN THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

Danny Rolph

Prosperity Life spoke to the world-renowned London born and bred artist Danny Rolph. We had a glimpse of his London-based Studio and spoke about his artistic inspirations and career paths.

What is art to you?

Danny: Art at its most rudimentary level is communication and encounter. I like Anais Nin's quote "We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are."

How would you describe your art?

Paintings that are spatially indulgent and delicious! Uncompromising, relating to Art History and open to those who believe in the power of visual discovery.

Has it changed it over the years?

The studio practise has evolved in many ways over the years (I graduated from the Royal College of Art in Painting in 1993). I follow my hunches and let the work drag me towards what I haven't encountered before.

I noticed on your Instagram beautiful figurative works on paper. Do you exhibit/show your figurative sketches?

Thank you, I'm always drawing. Ninety per cent of what I do is work on paper. It mainly exists in its own right but sometimes transfers to the canvas or Triplewall polycarbonate sheets that I paint on. In the last eight years or so I have cut up a few of my travelling sketchbooks and arrange into window-like framed artworks, this transfers the private sketchbook into a public situation.

An artist's career is quite a complex matrix of personal creativity, maintaining healthy relationships with galleries and museums and of course collectors. How does one survive and prosper as a contemporary artist?

I agree. Artists careers ebb and flow in unpredictable ways. Relationships are incredibly important in that we are in the business of communication and we need time to locate our particular vision. Opportunities and money help us to carry on psychologically and practically in our studios. Alongside my studio time and exhibition schedule, I've been teaching undergrads and postgrads for over two decades in many universities. I speak to students about artistic survival a lot and have developed an acronym for them to remember: VIRUS (vision, integrity, resilience, understanding and stubbornness).

Please tell us about your Rothko Memorial Trust exhibition/residency in Latvia in 2020?

The Mark Rothko Memorial Trust Award is planned for June-July 2020. it's a great honour to receive this as I am an admirer of Rothko and his paintings. It will mean that I spend a month painting in a studio provided at the Mark Rothko Art Centre in Daugavpils, Latvia as an Artist in Residence. This will be the first residency I've undertaken since I was a Rome Scholar at The British School at Rome in 1998. I am looking forward to working in and exploring the country as well. Meeting local artists will be



"KARUNA"

important to me and to hear how they survive. It will coincide with Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (RIBOCA 3) which is held in high esteem, so I'm excited!

What inspires you to create?

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I recognised at fifteen years old that I wanted to paint and draw as much as I could after encountering a painting by Velasquez at the National Gallery in London called "Christ in the house of Martha and Mary" from 1618. At that age, I had no plan and continue to think like this as it maintains artistic freedom. Creating is like breathing to me. I'm on a lifelong search to discover who I am and recognise that as I change my work will evolve and mirror my concerns and desires. The galleries I work with in New York (532gallery Thomas Jaeckel), Houston (Barbara Davis Gallery) and Brussels (Aeroplastics) are fully supportive in my approach. I'm continually inspired by art, politics, history, poetry, travel, philosophy, music and of course life!

Who are the contemporary artists whose work you admire?

Chris Ofili, Laura Owens, Brice Marden, Charlene Von Heyl, Albert Oehlen, Dana Schutz and Wade Guyton to name a few.

Who was your biggest influence in your journey as an artist?

My first big influence on me becoming an artist was my art teacher at Central Foundation Boys School called Iain Rutherford, He spoke to me constantly about the responsibility of becoming an artist.

What art do you have on your walls at home and what would you like to own next?

I have lots of work by other artists on my walls, some famous and some not. It's good for the children to see other people's visions.

"It's good for the children to see other people's visions."

The Royal Academy of Arts, Tate in London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York have your works in their collection. Do you have ambitions for other museums to acquire your work?

I only teach at the Royal Academy Schools, they don't have a work, the others do though! I respect all Art museums as their purpose is to preserve culture for successive generations. Of course, It would be great to have work in museums further afield as I'm an internationalist. Private collectors are as important though, I make no distinctions.

I enjoyed your descriptions of the two large canvasses in your studio. Could you please provide some commentary on Karuna and Fu (below). Does it matter to you whether collectors or anyone who connects with your work, understand/appreciate the history of that particular piece?

The two recently finished 6 x 7 ft (183x213cm) acrylic canvasses we spoke about are called "Karuna" (zen for compassion) and "Fu" (Haka for good fortune). It's great if a viewer/collector tunes into the work of course, but the title for me is always a suggestion or acknowledgement of the way the work communicates itself back to me in its finished state. However, some titles are from lists such as British prime ministers, endangered languages, places or Dukedoms! I paint and draw every day as a way to keep the eye and mind sharp, similar to a footballer doing keep ups, perhaps.



"FU"