

In the studio with... Dorothy Iannone

20 JUNE 2022



Dorothy Iannone has been exploring spirituality and sexuality for over six decades. Working across a broad range of mediums including painting, drawing, video and installation, the American artist's riotous, psychedelic visual language draws on Egyptian frescos, Byzantine mosaics and ancient fertility statues, as well as her own personal experiences. 'A description of me and a description of my work wouldn't be that different,' she has said. 'A longing for ecstatic unity. A journey towards unconditional love.' A survey of her work is at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk until 11 September.

Where is your studio?

My studio really consists of two rooms: my atelier, which faces north, is where I make large works, and my 'office', as I call it, which faces south is where I make drawings and works on paper, as well as composing my texts. It's in the middle of the city [Berlin] and from my office windows, I can see trees and buildings, people and shops, and a phenomenal sky. From my atelier, there's nothing much to see, a courtyard and the back of another building.

What do you like most about the space?

That it is so spacious. It contains my whole apartment which consists not only of my atelier and office, but also

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my living/dining room, a library cum guest room and art supplies, a space for a display of my mother's artworks, my bedroom, a meditation room cum library plus storage for my archives and artworks – all in rooms with open doors where from any one room I can see a part of two or three others.

What frustrates you about it?

Absolutely nothing. It's the cat's meow.

Do you follow a particular routine to prepare yourself to work?

When I was young, rain or shine, I painted several hours a day. Now, in my later years, I have to wait till I'm in the mood (or until a deadline comes dangerously close) before making that first mark. But once I have begun it is, more or less, clear sailing.

How messy is your studio?

I'm quite organised. Everything is aesthetically pleasing.



What does it smell like?

Nothing, really. I use acrylic paints and air it daily.

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What's the weirdest object in there?

There's nothing weird to see here. The space is ruled by harmony.

Which artistic tool could you least do without?

The eraser. It's absolutely indispensable.



What is the most well-thumbed book in your studio?

The most well-thumbed book of my life is a paperback edition of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra.

Do you pin up images of other artists' works?

The atelier and the office are filled only with works of mine – completed or in progress – but in other rooms, I have works which artist friends have given me over the years. For instance, in the bedroom there are Dieter Roth works and in the living room there are works by Robert Filliou, among many others from my Fluxus friends.

Do you cook in the studio?

I cook brunch and dinner in the kitchen. In the studio, I drink water while working.

Do you listen to anything while you're working?

In the Sixties and Seventies, I used to listen to Bob Dylan especially, but now I love to work in silence.

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Do you ever sleep in your studio?

From my bedroom, I can see part of my atelier before I fall asleep, and when I wake up in the morning, it's one of the first things I see. I'm really never separated from it.



Who's the most interesting visitor you've had to your studio?

Hard to say since I am blessed with great friends, great curators and great gallerists, but the following encounter comes to mind and perhaps fulfils 'the most interesting visitor' requirement. It was four o'clock in the morning and I was fast asleep. Suddenly I was awakened by the voice of a gentleman standing on the threshold of my bedroom with all the lights of the apartment turned on, waving his hand and saying, 'Hello! Hello!' Instantly I threw back the covers and jumped out of bed. I don't remember being afraid. Perhaps I was unconsciously reassured by the sort of uniform he was wearing which seemed vaguely official. Perhaps he was here to warn me of a gas leak in the neighbourhood? Anyway, if he had been dangerous he wouldn't have turned on all the lights and tried gently to wake me while standing several metres away. He explained that he came from a service to which I subscribe. If I should become debilitated for any reason, say I fall and can't get up, I need only press a button on the necklace chain I wear and someone will come to my assistance. It seems that during my sleep that button had somehow been pressed. I reassured him that I was OK and slowly started walking him to the door which is at the other end of the apartment. Looking around on the way out he commented, 'Nice place you've got here.'

Is anything or anyone banned?

I don't think so. Food smells maybe.