

Blue Velvet Projects

# Adam Cruces

## Eavesdropping

11.06 – 03.09.2022



## Blue Velvet Projects

### Press release

The oldest evidence of our ancestors' first flirtation with constructing a line between the inside and outside, the wild natural and the domestic, is about 400,000 years old, the same period as a climate-altering lack of rain in the East African Rift Valley. The easily portable version of a shelter, the umbrella (not the tent), arrived much later around 2000 BC, and it was only in the last century that the white cube gallery space was born. In many ways that neutral box, beloved for highlighting non-objective culture, represents the epitome of a dichotomy that began with that first ancient step. A perfect abstraction of an anthropocene separation of human civilization and the wider world.

Adam Cruces's work, for the past decade, has kind of quietly mined and blurred those lines, negotiating the ridiculousness of perceived normal use and the wonder that accompanies man's attempts at illusion. Here he draws attention to the interiority of a gallery space, its sub-level location and the ways in which any cultural product wants to suggest the world outside the space it inhabits. In Cruces's installation, those moments of exclusion become inverted, one is welcomed into a space and then left outside again. It speaks to mankind's desire, once the basics of shelter and food and water have been attained, to always be where one is not.

The paintings here have been inverted too, a subtle switch which suggests a window, although painting has traditionally promised itself to be a window already. An equal illusion. Physically inside looking at an illusory inside, one witnesses the banal and stimulating ways voyeurism works. As with Hitchcock's masterpiece, Rear Window, every portal mirrors the creator and viewer, their desires and fears. Sex, horror, cute and daily- the images pictured transcend the painting while being the painterly. Why else are they boxed in by their opposite? The hardedge, design, neo-geo. The flaming designs, borrowed from those of traditional Swiss alpine architecture, are

related to the flags of Swiss mercenary groups from four centuries ago. Fear tactics to confuse an opponent's men as if a burning hoard approaches.

Cruces's works chart a globalized world in which folk cultures shift between the local and universal. The rain sticks, oscillating through thunder and calm, trace their origins to South America, yet many cultures have claimed them since. Humans have always been mesmerized with the ability to fake the real, from sounds to paintings to the scanning and 3d printing we are only beginning to dip our toes into. The extra and the ordinary.

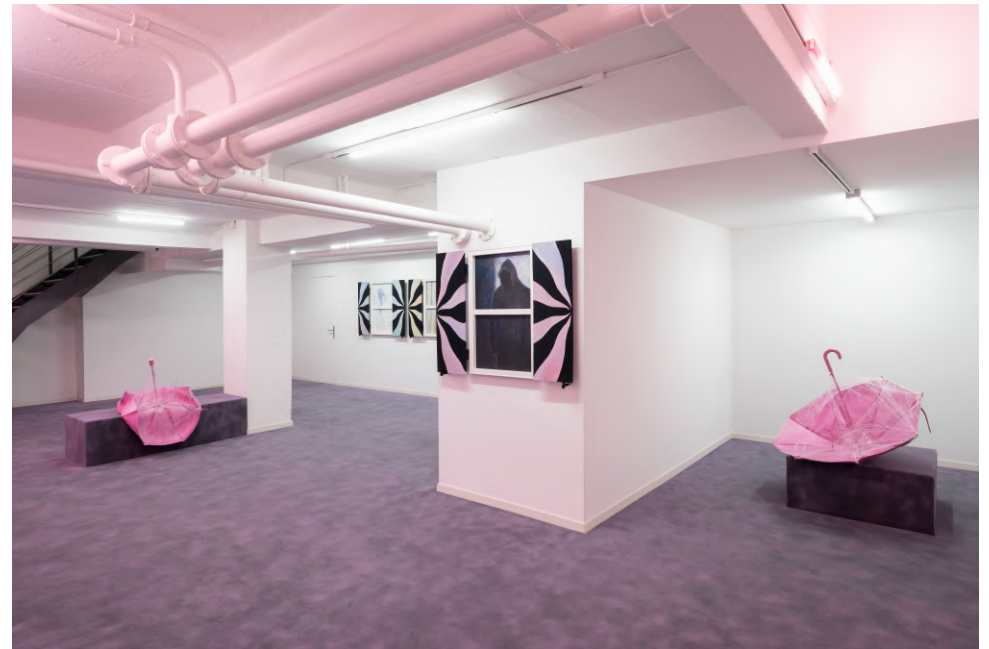
The feeling of transportation inside the space, the moment of main character syndrome each viewer achieves, is a mental movie of aggregation. Film, for the same period as the white cube, and like theater before it, was thought to be the pinnacle of human illusion. CGI and VR are changing that rapidly, but it's the simple fantasies and deceptions, sound and depth, which trigger our lizard brains the best.

From that first moment of separation, of creating an inside distinct from the out, we have vainly and effectively used those spaces to echo what was left behind. It can all be a bit dystopian. Fake windows in the basement, umbrellas no longer able to offer protection, food one can not eat. In a dry future, like drawings of a dodo bird, recordings and simulacrum of rain may be the only memory. This is an interior free of safety, but it also offers up a bigger truth. Beyond sustenance and protection from the elements, it's culture and the arts which offer the radioactive mirror and a narrative way through. Humor and reality colliding into something like hope.

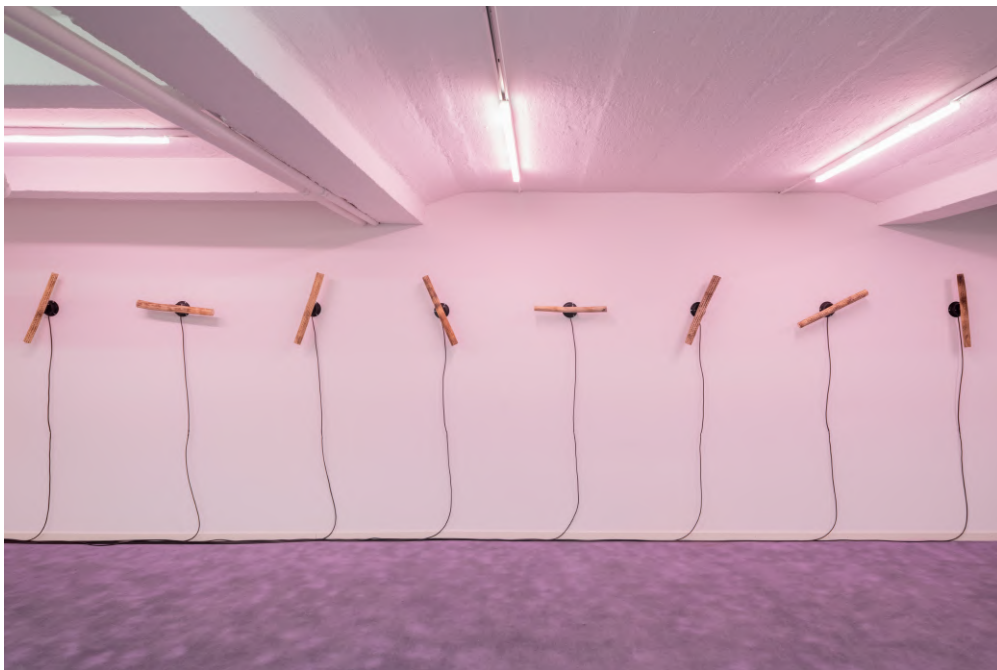
– Mitchell Anderson

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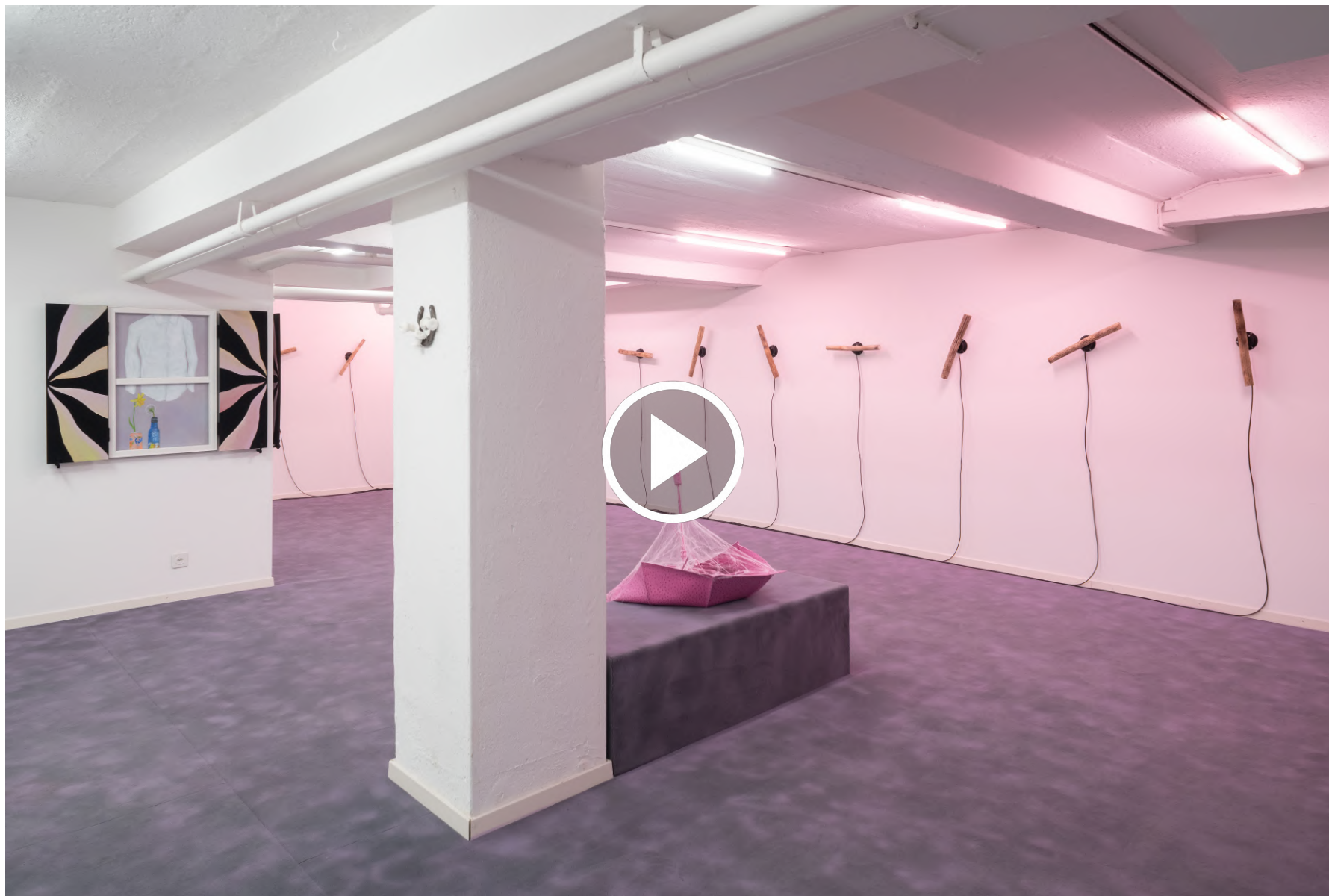
### Exhibition views (selection)



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### Work List



Adam Cruces  
Bather, 2022  
Wood, paint, hardware, canvas  
90 x 120 cm open; 90 x 60 cm closed



Adam Cruces  
Guest, 2022  
Wood, paint, hardware, canvas  
90 x 120 cm open; 90 x 60 cm closed

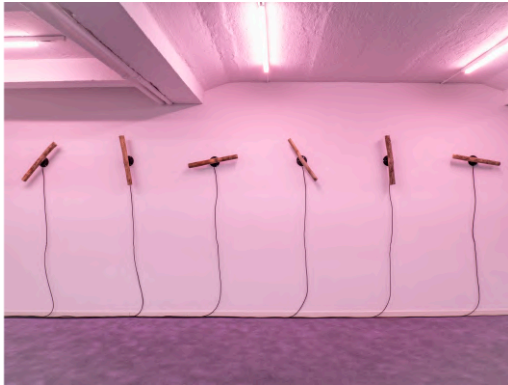


Adam Cruces  
Waiting, 2022  
Wood, paint, hardware, canvas  
90 x 120 cm open; 90 x 60 cm closed



Adam Cruces  
Flowers and Fruits, 2022  
Wood, paint, hardware, canvas  
90 x 120 cm open; 90 x 60 cm closed

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Adam Cruces  
Fountain, 2022  
Dried cactus, rotating motor  
50 x 11 x 10 cm. jeder



Adam Cruces  
Souvenir, 2022  
Faux ostrich skin, umbrella parts, cobwebs  
110 x 110 Ø 80 cm



Adam Cruces  
Lucky to the Core(s), 2022  
Nylon 12 SLS 3D prints, horseshoe  
15 x 15 x 8 cm



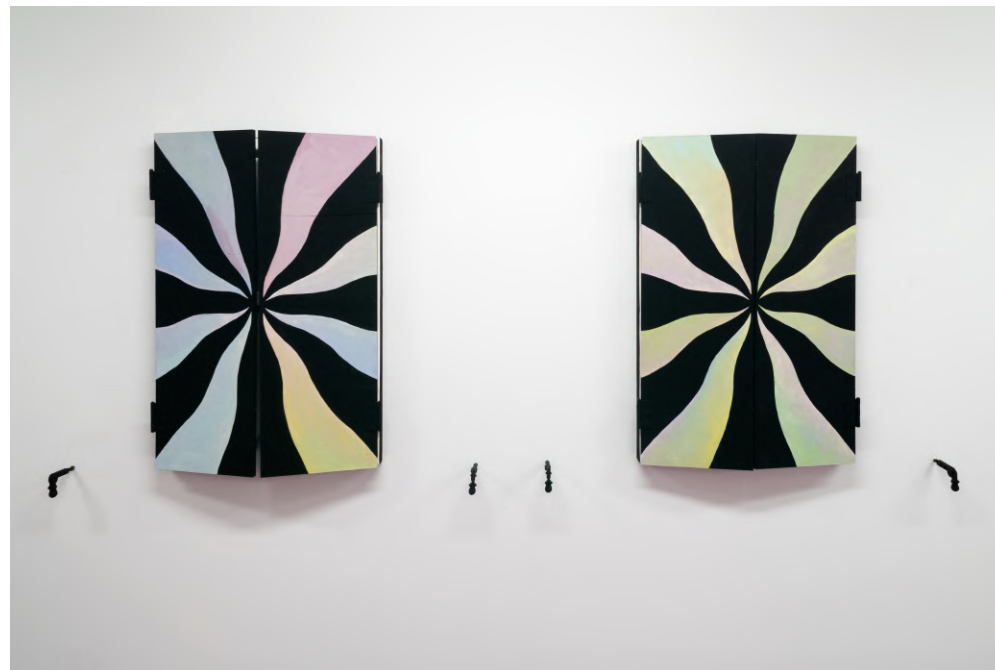
Adam Cruces  
Remnant, 2022  
Faux ostrich skin, umbrella parts, cobwebs  
100 x 90 Ø 55 cm

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## Biography

Adam Cruces is an artist who was born in 1985 in Houston, TX. He graduated with his BFA in Interdisciplinary Art from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2008, and his MFA in Art and Media from Zürcher Hochschule der Künste in 2013. His work is interested in how we interact with the landscape, while incorporating a wide variety of material approaches - painting, sculpture, and video. These elements often culminate in installations that collapse notions of obligation and leisure, nature and domestication, the familiar and the foreign. Cruces currently lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland.

## Selected solo/partner exhibitions

- 2021 When the dust settles, Rindermarkt 23, Zürich, CH
- 2020 A curse in disguise, Disneyland Paris, Melbourne, AU
- 2019 Hair of the Dog, Gelateria Sogni di Ghiaccio, Bologna, IT
- 2018 Deleted Scene(s), with Louisa Gagliardi, Galerie Joseph Tang, Paris, FR  
Rustic Murmur, Giorgio Galotti, Turin, IT
- 2017 Tastes like headaches, kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, LV
- 2016 Pastel, Galerie Joseph Tang, Paris, FR  
What A Silencer Sounds Like, with Sinae Yoo, Kunsthaus Langenthal, Langenthal, CH
- 2015 Diet Sonata, Smart Objects, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
Fixing to, Galerie Joseph Tang, Paris, FR
- 2014 Un Coucher de Soleil, Exo Exo, Paris, FR  
29, Plymouth Rock, Zürich, CH
- 2013 Nothing To See Here, with Enrico Boccioletti, Swiss Institute, Milan, IT

## Selected group exhibitions

- 2021 Werkschau, Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich, CH
- 2020 Werk- und Auslandsatelier- Stipendien, Halmhaus, Zürich, CH
- 2019 Observer of the Techniques, WallRiss, Fribourg, CH
- 2018 First I Have to Put My Face On, Foothold, Polignano a Mare, IT
- 2017 Built like a memory, Tag Team, Bergen, NO  
Harmoniemusik und Vogelschiessen, Shanaynay, Paris, FR
- 2016 The Conference, Kunsthall Aarhus, Aarhus, DK  
Dear Betty: Run Fast, Bite Hard!, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo, IT
- 2015 Fit For Purpose, Kunsthaus Glarus, Glarus, CH
- 2014 Nie Jetzt, Helmhaus, Zürich, CH  
Megarave, Kunsthaus Langenthal, Langenthal, CH
- 2013 It Is All In The Detail, Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel, CH
- 2012 Synthetic Vertigo: 002 Eye Rubs, Elaine MGK, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, CH

## Awards / Residencies

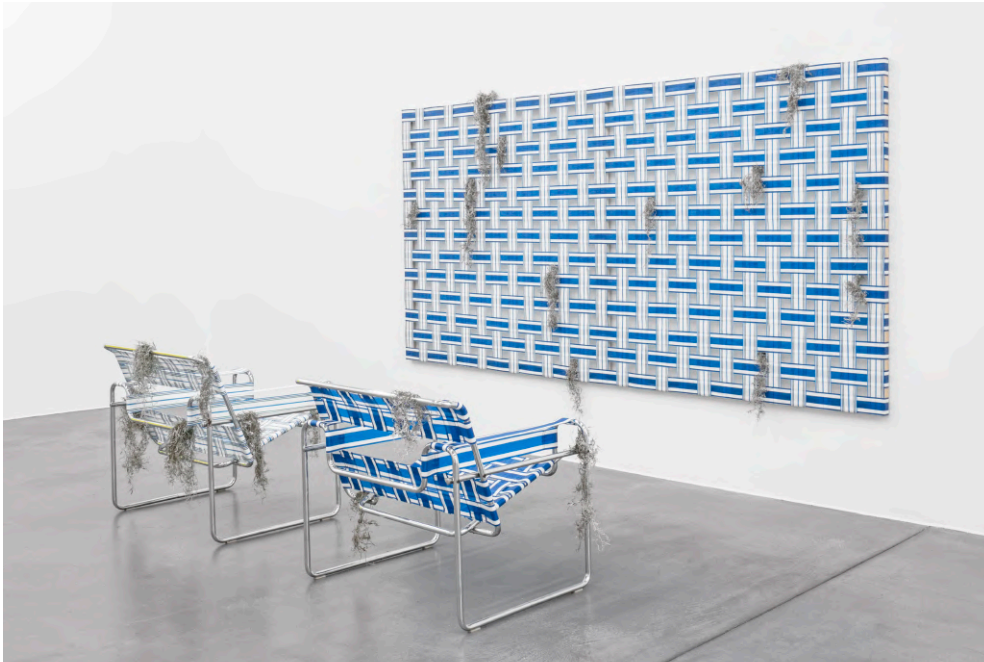
- 2022 Nordisk Kunstnarsenter Dale Residency, Dale, NO (Forthcoming)  
Sigg Art Foundation Residency, Bandol, FR
- 2021 Nave Proyecto Residency, Guayllabamba, EC
- 2018 Cripta747 Studio Residency, Turin, IT
- 2017 Aldea Residency, Bergen, NO
- 2016 La Brea Studio Residency, with Louisa Gagliardi, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
Artist Residency, Rupert, Vilnius, LT
- 2015 Projektbeitrag: What A Silencer Sounds Like at Kunsthaus Langenthal, Kanton Zürich
- 2013 Werkbeitrag Bildende Kunst, Kanton Zürich  
Werkbeitrag und Auslandsatelier (Paris), Stadt Zürich

## Education

- 2013 MFA, Kunst und Medien, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, Zürich, CH
- 2008 BFA, Interdisciplinary Arts, Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO, USA

## Blue Velvet Projects

### Past Exhibitions (selection)



*Partners in Crime, 2021*  
Installation view at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich, CH



*When the dust settles, 2021*  
Installation view at Rindermarkt 23, Zürich, CH

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### Past Exhibitions (selection)



*No drop in a storm feels responsible*, 2016  
Installation view at Kunsthhaus Langenthal, Langenthal, CH



*29*, 2014  
Installation view at Plymouth Rock, Zürich, CH

## Selected Press – DE FORMAL, 2020

Artist Interview

January 31, 2020



Adam Cruces' work is interested in how we interact with the landscape. His practice incorporates a wide variety of material approaches, including painting, sculpture, and video. These elements often culminate in installations that collapse notions of obligation and leisure, nature and domestication, the familiar and the foreign.

**Hello Adam, we are so glad to have you on De:Formal. Can you start with telling us a bit about your background and your art practice?**

I was born in a suburb of Houston, TX in 1985. I completed my first serious artwork at 8 years old. I was trained to paint traditionally from observation, focusing mainly on still lifes and landscapes. I moved to Kansas City in 2005 for my bachelor studies, where I originally went for Painting, but ended up transferring to the Interdisciplinary Arts department. There I began to experiment with video, sound, and installation. After completing my BFA in 2008, I moved to NYC where I worked as an artist assistant while continuing to develop my own practice on the side, mostly video. In 2010, I moved to Zürich, for my master studies. During that 3 year period, I used 1 year to run a project space out of my studio ([www.theheadquarters.org](http://www.theheadquarters.org)). That period allowed me to re-evaluate the direction I want to take, and my work became more installation oriented than it was previously. Upon completing my MFA, I was a founding member of the project space Taylor Macklin ([www.taylormacklin.com](http://www.taylormacklin.com)), and received a year residency in Paris, where I would ultimately get inspired to include painting in my practice once again. Now my work is a bit all over the place in terms of approaches and subjects, which is good. I feel free to take risks.



**Your site specific projects are composed of incredibly sleek objects that are also playful and spontaneous. Can you walk us through your planning and making process when creating a new project?**

First off, whenever feasible, I make new work for each exhibition, whether solo or group. Sometimes from one project to the next there will be a clear connection, like the dog and the silhouette in 'Ouroboros' with the silhouettes and dog from the 'Hair of the Dog' exhibition in Bologna. Other times there's apparently no connection, like the melted candle paintings from 'Icarus' and the serpentine works from 'Built like a memory'. Whether the link comes through heavily on the surface or subtly under the radar, my goal is consistent freshness.

As far as process goes, it all depends. I frequently begin with an idea I've been brainstorming. But oftentimes things get kicked off with a material I'd like to explore or revisit. Contextual and practical details are a crucial aspect of how the work comes to form. I always consider the space (location, physical display area), time (deadline, duration of show), budget, etc. All of these factors are weighing in as I calculate how I want to engage the viewer.

Then I typically start researching the necessary tools or materials. I'll meditate on how I see things materializing and start writing text (for myself) about my intentions for the theme, individual works, and so forth. Put together some sketches and tests. Since I work from home, I'll complete as much as I possibly can of the piece(s) before I send things to the space, and finally go there to put things together. It's not unusual to have a lot of the production happening on-site. So I try to give myself as much possibilities and flexibility for executing the final product. Lots of trial and error, with room for happy accidents. It's kind of like putting together a puzzle every time. However, not all of the pieces are necessary, and there isn't only one solution.

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**You received your Bachelors in Fine Arts from Kansas City Art Institute in 2008 and moved to Switzerland for the MFA program at Zürcher Hochschule der Künste in 2010. What are the differences in art education between the USA and Switzerland in your own experience? Does the education system shape the art industry differently in the two countries?**

There was a huge difference! I had always expected the BFA to be more laid back and the MFA to be more intense. Although it was quite the opposite.

Interdisciplinary Arts at Kansas City was rigorous. This was a special program that admitted only 3 to 4 students each year, and each had access to the other departments' facilities (painting, sculpture, ceramics, video, etc.). Weekly theory readings and discussions, research presentations, critical reports on exhibitions around town, meetings with teachers and outside visitors, keeping a log of studio hours (where it was meant to have a minimum of 20 hours/week, excluding class time and other studio electives), those were turned in each month. There were 3 critiques every semester (first to talk about what you want to do, second was a progress report, and third was final feedback on the semester). A final 1 hour lecture on our own practice for each senior. All of that was just for 1 class, which didn't account for the workload of Art History, Philosophy, Creative Writing, and other studio courses. It was challenging, but great! The emphasis on discipline across the board had a powerful impact on my organization with time management, preparation, and work ethic. Although I'm pretty burnt out on the theory side since then.

My MFA was far more independent, all the responsibility was on the individual. There were a couple weeks of class/ workshops per semester. Each person had to set up the mandatory minimum of 2 meetings with faculty or visitors each semester. And then there were only 2 critiques during my 3 years, and one final presentation of work and defense of a discursive text. Aside from having to be able to read and understand German, it was a fairly casual structure. It also allowed me to take a step back from my work for a year to do Headquarters for a year, which I mentioned earlier. It felt like a studio residency with only a handful of requirements.

Since both contexts were small in relation to the coastal cities in the States or the larger Euro cities (Paris, Berlin, London, Milan), the ways in which the schools shaped the art scenes is a little tough to say. Kansas City had a communal vibe, a bit hippy/ punk, very DIY. The art scene at the time seemed isolated from NYC and LA, or even Chicago. So opportunities to live off one's work was limited to say the least. Work in the art field was scarce, because there were so few artists you could assist or galleries you could handle work for to make money locally. So I suppose people would work at cafes, restaurants, the school, or maybe one of the two museums after graduating. Or you make work that's collector friendly, and there's no certainty in that if you want to stay in Kansas City, because the market is so tiny.

Zurich is another story. Despite its size, it has a disproportionate influence on the art world. In Switzerland there's a lot more opportunity, with a more general attention to culture than in the States. One's able to apply for support and residencies at the city, canton (state), and national levels. There's also an insane amount of great institutions (historical to contemporary), young and established galleries, as well as project spaces. All condensed into a country that takes only a couple hours to cross. It doesn't hurt that Switzerland is basically in the center of Europe. It's easy to get to the other big European cities with little hassle. It feels very connected, while also being withdrawn.

I should also point out that the prevalence of the internet and social media in 2019 is a game changer. It wasn't like it is now during my Kansas City period. These days artists can use those tools to get in touch with peers, be up to date with what's going on elsewhere, and put their stuff online. The web platforms have a lot of significance in terms exposure and geographical flexibility.



**The collaborations between you and artist Louisa Gagliardi are sometimes extra playful. Can you tell us a bit about Gagliardi, how did your first collaboration come about, and your experience working with them?**

Louisa is my partner, so we share everything from a romantic basis to a professional basis. We also live together and both work from home. This means we have a constant dialog, including things we're developing in our practices. Since we're practically always together as a couple, that's what we decided to designate as the name for our collaborative practice - Couple ([www.couple.work](http://www.couple.work))

'Private Views' was the first true collaboration, working on the same pieces, as one author with one vision. 'Private Views' was a series of 4 paintings on the excessively large tags of women's thongs, for a group show at Hole of The Fox, Antwerp in 2016. The paintings were different landscapes corresponding to the colors of the panties and were hung on 3D prints of the Nefertiti bust. Thus connecting the dots between nature, the female form, and the commodity.

We treat the collaboration as a chance to have fun, and do things we might not normally do within our individual outputs. Naturally, there's plenty of back and forth, with some disagreements, but the experience is always a welcomed challenge. Louisa tends to be hands on, while I tend to be cerebral. I feel like the Couple work is a little more loose, in a good way, than what we'd do on our own.



