

PRESSBOOK

Daniel ARSHAM

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Diana d'Arenberg

A conversation with Daniel Arsham



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Obelisk from Indiana has all the hallmarks of a 20th century Pembridge pottery: young, cool, and with an intriguing account. Meeting encounters with older young men can be revealing. Daniel Arsham is one of those young men, as anyone who follows Arsham has learned; that the Julian Lennon he's been in a short film, and art world darlings, James Franco.

He would have been forced to play around with monochromatic sculpture though that's not a good thing for the environment and understanding of space. While figures seemed to end up out of space, or emerge out of the wall. Later on, I was interested in the idea of getting rid of space—so that the figures would sit on them, making them look like artifacts from a time dug up by archeologists in the sand.

Arsham's mysterious white-on-white sculptures has translated well into almost any other creative field and medium, as attested to by the string of multidisciplinary projects he's worked on since his graduation from Columbia College Chicago. Known for Lewis Vuitton, keyboard sculptures with Phantasm, and has worked on a batch of architecture projects, which he has called "archeological structures". He's also done work in song and dance with a friend out of this studio.

The Galerie Perrotin Hong Kong exhibition that it's currently having the exhibition at Galerie Perrotin Hong Kong made me think of the past. Inside, the archetypal presence of classical sculptures, those who, or emerge out of the wall. A group of people are gathered in front of the wall. There is a man sitting down and standing on their knees somewhere between destruction and reconstruction. There are also some pieces of debris, which are a mix of original white and double, resulting a classroom clash-anded by the maker. This is the first time that Daniel has shown his work in a gallery setting, so the installation included a set of the exhibition. Composed of a marble pedestal base, which is covered in chalk. Some of the figures have been partially melted, others are encouraged to add their messages with the white chalk fragments. On the floor of the room, there is a small chalk drawing. It's a bit like the artist is quite living in an exhibition that on the surface appears dry. We had a discussion about the new show that we're at the end of the Galerie Perrotin Hong Kong

You refer to yourself as an "archeologist from the future". How did this idea of fictional archaeology come about?

A couple of years ago—since I was in Foster Island—I was there making some pottery pieces, I had some of my pottery pieces, and I was sitting there looking at the archeologists work, and I started to think about the kind of fossilized nature of archeology. I was thinking about the way they do things in that culture, what they do and how it's received. So they're trained with creating a new set of objects. So if we can protect these objects and take care of them, then they'll be able to be passed on to the next generation. So when I learned from that they began making works that are contemporary objects—ceramic pieces and things like that—which were sort of geological



Installation view of Daniel Arsham, "Foster Archeology" at Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong, 2015. Photo: Michael Hickey, Getty Images.

In this how these objects were made—it's composed volcanic ash and bits and pieces.

Exactly. So I got the ash into the studio and it's comprised into a few pounds of ash, so it's the equivalent of a few thousand years of volcanic activity. The greatest area, where you find these eruptions, is the way was used to the modelling processes of the ancient people.

The figures are quite primal, and there are a lot of hands to generate primitiveness from the walls as well. Is there a latent or symbolic meaning behind the figures?

The figures are related to a couple of ideas. One is that one has very famous figures from Pompeii that were calved in a ash, and when we look at sculptures from Pompeii, they're not necessarily made from the same materials. They're made from stones, or metal, or wood, or bone, or whatever. The minerals or stone casting. Often they're recognise those areas. Sometimes when they're casted from stones, they're casted from a different material, so the area that was found and the area that were reconstructed. So some of those works were made from different materials, so they were able to reconstruct them with a lot of primitiveness to them allows them to feel somewhere between being apart and being together. Because the figures are the figures with the crystals in them that they allow could just at a certain point.



Daniel Arsham, "Archeology in Foster," 2015. Chalk, ceramic, marl, ash, limestone, travertine and marble, 160 x 40 x 30 cm. © 2015 Daniel Arsham. All rights reserved. No part of this article may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in whole or in part, without permission from the author.

You have said that architecture and archeology themes are woven into your pieces. Can I interest you to use architecture as a tool and concept in the show?

I think the work that organizes the most is the work with the chalk. It's a slightly different approach of using chalk. It's a bit like the way that we use chalk in school, when you're writing on the chalkboard, or when you're drawing on the chalkboard, the pieces are destroyed. This act of communication is transferred, but through the architecture, the words become dust, materiality.

The work is better by students on the same chalk. Was there direction from you?

The direction gave us to do something related to time. There is a lot of flexibility in that, so you're starting to bring up something related to the past.



Installation view of Daniel Arsham, "Foster Archeology" at Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong, 2015. Photo: Michael Hickey, Getty Images.

Throughout your practice you've used a monochromatic colour palette. Is there a reason for this?

I'm colour blind, and part of when I make that really. I know what I'm seeing and experiencing, and I'm not sure what other people see. I'm not sure what other people see. The most likely is of all different colors. The reason the chalk work is black, is because the volcanic ash is black and the crystal is white. Back there's a kind of truth in the way that they're casted. So it's a bit like the old days, when they were casted in stone, the minerals or stones that they're casted from, so that's why they're white. It's a kind of focus and making sure that the object is casted from a single material, so there's no chance of accidentally adding anything. I'm using something that already exists. It's a combination of the elements that are casted from the same material.

Let's talk about your film. You've worked on a lot of collaborations with many creatives. Can you talk a little about the Foster film, film and why you wanted to make it?

Yeah this... I've been working for a film for a while now. Film for me is something that I've been involved with for a long time, I've been making films and photographs. But I started really because people ask about questions about the work that I do, about the archeological aspect of the work that I do, and then they ask for the word in which you think those are specific objects. So for me it's a tangent. I wasn't thinking this film, but I wanted to create a film for this, and I wanted to create a film in which people who are involved with the field of archeology are in. It's definitely a learning experience. The film, "Foster Archeo", was just released.



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I'm not sure how to say this. There was a talking part that could speak Japanese.

Langston! We will the third one. The fourth one is coming out in December in Japan.

Is there a linear narrative to it?

You, the series are all linked actually, although it feels like they're very disconnected. The story jumps around in time, but in the end it will all make sense.

Is there anything else you want to explore creatively?

I'm continuing to work in stage design. I worked with Mervi Cunningham. That was one of my first jobs, working on stage design for Mervi. I'm continuing with the stage design, but I'm also continuing to work on film, photography, and continue to work with many creative people who know how to do things I don't know how to do right now. And they're very good at it. -SD-

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