

Robert Raphael Workspace Program 2020

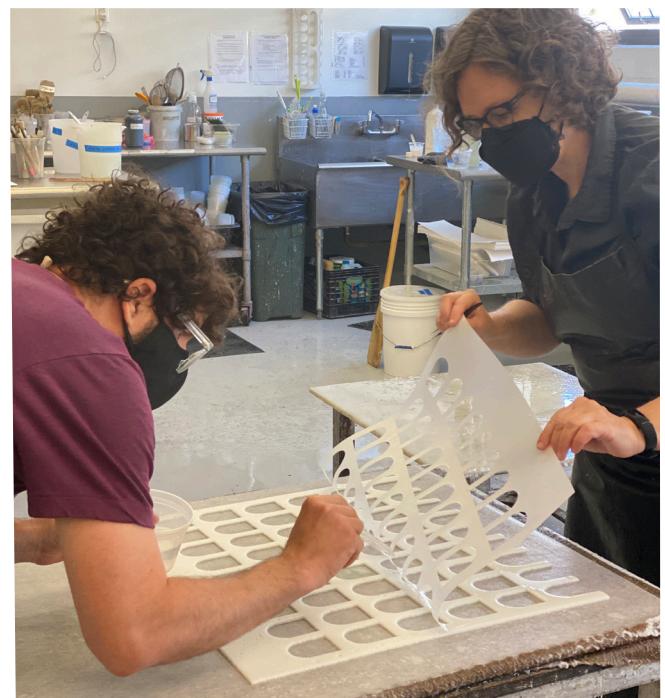
Robert Raphael's work brings together histories of architecture, design, and craft. Primarily working in ceramics, Raphael's practice pushes the boundaries of the medium, carving out arches, grids, and foliage into structures that intentionally curve and buckle. At Dieu Donn , Raphael translated his exploration of the limits of ceramics into an investigation of the medium of paper. Using blowouts—a technique in which pulp is washed away from a stenciled form to create a design—Raphael's pieces are seemingly excavated out of layers of pulp, constructed through removal rather than addition. His stratified and interwoven paper archways create the impression of an extensive cityscape folding into itself, an impressive display that brings ambiguity to monumental symbolic forms.

Decoration is often perceived to be superficial, but I believe its strength lies in its seductive nature. My work draws on the complex history of decorative art, a tradition that intersects with and runs parallel to the history of art. I extract moments from this history including Classicism, architecture, pattern and decoration, and the Weiner Werkst tte. I conflate these disparate histories to create my own language of objects.

Recently, Italian Rationalist architecture has become a focus within my work. Although this period is an incredibly beautiful moment of modernism, it is also deeply tied to Italian Fascism. The current rise of authoritarianism in the United States and abroad has led me to investigate these complex physical remnants of fascism, which are still living a functional life in the present day. Two buildings became the primary subject of my project at Dieu Donn : Palazzo Della Civilt  Romana in Rome and Casa Del Fascio in Como.

Within my work, the process of ceramics is my subject as much as the sculpture itself. I intentionally and masochistically choose to push the physical limits of clay and glaze. Concept, material, and craft are inseparable. I approached my residency at Dieu Donn  through a similar intuitive and phenomenological approach.

Beginning a year later than planned due to the COVID-19 lock down, my residency at Dieu Donn  allowed me to investigate the constructs of Rationalist Architecture, and helped to expand my skills as an artist. With the guidance of Master Collaborator Amy Jacobs, we approached my ideas



Top: Robert Raphael, *Velo*, Abaca, pulp paint, 32 1/4 x 24 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches

Bottom: Robert Raphael working in the studio with Dieu Donn  Studio Collaborator Amy Jacobs, 2020.

through the many processes of handmade paper. Amy and I explored embossing, blow outs, and pulp painting on abaca. The resulting pieces made in paper are a product of research, collaboration, and the many intuitive discoveries reached through material exploration. The works displayed in this show would not have been possible without the assistance and inspiration garnered through the residency and mentorship of Amy.

- Robert Raphael



Above: Robert Raphael working in the Dieu Donn  studio with Studio Collaborator Amy Jacobs, 2020.

About the Artist

Rob Raphael is an artist living and working in Brooklyn, NY. He received his MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI (2004) and BFA, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI (2000). Raphael has held solo and two-person exhibitions at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY; LMAK, New York, NY; Calico, Brooklyn, NY; Greenwich House, New York, NY (with Jessica Stockholder); and Harrison Gallery, Philadelphia, PA. Notable residencies include Dieu Donn  Workspace Residency, Brooklyn, NY; Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, Houston, TX; Civitella Ranieri Ceramics Fellowship, Civitella Ranieri, Umbertide, Italy; Zentrum for Keramik, Berlin, Germany; The Shigaraki Ceramic Sculpture Park, Koka City Shiga Pref., Japan; and Watershed Center for the Ceramic Art, Newcastle, ME. Raphael has a solo exhibition with SITUATIONS, New York in Spring 2022.

About Dieu Donn 

Dieu Donn  is a leading cultural institution dedicated to serving established and emerging artists through the collaborative creation of contemporary art using the process of hand papermaking.

About the Workspace Program

Established in 1990, the Workspace Program offers annual residencies to New York State emerging artists to create new work in handmade paper. The primary goals of this program are to encourage emerging artists to explore the creative possibilities of handmade paper and to develop this art form through a process of collaboration and experimentation. The Workspace Program is presented to the public through an annual exhibition of works produced in this residency program, as well as through print, digital, and online formats. For more information about the Workspace Program, or to learn how to apply, visit www.dieudonne.org.

Support

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