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Uprooted: An Interview with Artist Bianca Abdi-Boragi

Interview with Show + Telephone's Madeline Walker, Edited by Audra Lambert

Madeline Walker. *Can you share with us – what about the theme of the open call caught your attention in relation to your practice as an artist?*

Bianca Abdi-Boragi. Since I've been producing ephemeral works with earth, the title

("Earthly Delights") caught my attention. My practice has been influenced by Land Art and Arte Povera, both. I've been making pieces with high grass, petals, feathers, lost bread in works like *Traveling Plant*, *Epiphany*, *Drift*, *The Heel of the Loaf* to formally engage with ideas of trajectory, subsistence and fulfillment. My art is also inspired a lot from my family's history of migration from Algeria to France to flee the war and personal experiences, conveyed in a form that addresses a collective experience, addressing timeless questions such as war, displacement, freedom, gender roles. Being uprooted from a



country or a culture is a major theme in my work. I want to grasp life's beauty, fragility and nostalgia of ephemera.

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MW. *Conflict and disparity between classes is something you mention in your statement about **The Heel of the Loaf** which feels especially poignant during the pandemic. When you mentioned fragile structures I can't help but think about your experience working with bread and bread crumbs, walking in the space and generally the sensory experience. But also the proportions of the center point to the rest. Can you talk more about what it represents to you?*

BAB. For my solo show last Fall, *The Heel of the Loaf*, I collected discarded bread from shops and bakeries here in Bushwick and Ridgewood. I collect materials outside the studio and then re-imagine and revisit places and residual materials from my surroundings, responding to the moment I find myself in—personal, local, or national. In this piece, the six sided dice had only one “6” side, face down, and five sides of “1”; this large scale sculptural installation was a meditation on fragile structures, sacred subsistence, and capitalism, where the odds of winning are against a majority of people.

Most of my works reflect on class, labor, subsistence, and the consequences of post colonial economic structures. My pieces obey the logic dictated by their concept, material, and process. In the making of a piece, I use all the forms that the material evolves. By the end, there is no waste, because the protocol is endless. I want to turn chaos into a glimpse of the infinite.





An alternate view of "The Heel of the Loaf" by Bianca Abdi-Boragi

The Heel of the Loaf was all about how you felt walking into it, sticking your head inside it and being surprised by it. I'd hoped to make the viewer question their own body and presence in front of the work. It was a multi-sensory experience, a manifestation that connected directly to the viewer's senses. The audience performed simply by walking into the gallery stepping on old loaves covering the floor into crumbs so thin it looked like sand. Through sculptural installation I hope to appeal to the viewer's senses to trigger a thoughtful and meditative dialogue.



"The Heel of the Loaf" Bianca Abdi-Boragi

MW. *Can you tell us more about the genesis of *The Heel of the Loaf*?*

BAB. For this piece, I was focused on the revelation of the fragile economic structures in the US which were crumbling at the start of the pandemic. I wanted visitors to be taken off guard: to be directly impacted by the piece. I want my work to be physical at some level, or a disruption of reality – to disrupt some type of normalcy, conventions, boundaries or challenge the rules, questioning structures or addressing existential questions, to be

thought-provoking, a little bit strange, just on the other side.



“Hybrid Buffet” by Bianca Abdi-Boragi

MW. *What do you have ongoing and/or upcoming that you can share with us?*

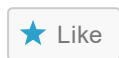
BAB. I’m excited to show a new painting in August 2021 for the group exhibition *Staying Inn* at Heaven Gallery in Chicago. Currently I’m in the midst of making two chairs to complete my new sculpture *Hybrid Buffet*, which was showcased last June at the Flux Factory for *Din Din*, an art food outdoor series of events. *Hybrid Buffet* is a table mosaic made of discarded bread fully coated with matte varnish inspired from the front of Ketchaoua mosque in Algiers, which was destroyed turned into a church under the French then turned into a mosque, addressing labor but also the hybridization of culture, architectonic narratives, mechanism of assimilation, colonization, war but most importantly pacifism, and the act of breaking bread together.

I’m also preparing an experimental film for an upcoming art fair, and working on the pre-production of my second solo show which will be based in sculpture and video art. I am also working on the production of a new piece involving two fabric sculptures and a documentary video about the French flea market. I have a long list of artworks I need to produce, which will keep me busy for many years if not a lifetime. I’m overwhelmed but it’s only good stress so I’m happy!

Finally, I’m also an independent art writer/curator and founder of **Gallery Perchée**, an online art gallery specializing in leading emerging artists. I have a few upcoming curatorial projects for 2021-2022 in NY and Chicago that I’m

very excited about with wonderful artists. *Architecture of Elsewhere* now on view virtually at Gallery Perchée during the Summer of 2021. My other upcoming show *Vector* will open in Sept 2022 at Heaven Gallery Chicago, amidst other NY projects cooking for 2021 and 2022.

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