

Introduction to Donna Ruff. 2:04 min. Interview: Raymond Elman. Post-Production: Lee Skye. Music: Carmen Cicero. Photo: Eric Swanson. Recorded via Zoom: 8/31/2021, Miami.

Artist

Donna Ruff:

More and Less

By Elman + Skye

ARTIST STATEMENT

For years as a graphic designer I worked on communicating economically. Now I'm interested in pushing that idea of economy to its limits, even to the point of impeding communication — how much information can be removed or transformed, how much must be left behind to retain the narrative?

Since 2011 I've worked with newspapers, cutting patterns from the vanishing print editions, creating a dialogue of positive and negative space, and determining what image and text remained for the viewer to engage with. I'm interested in content, but I'm also interested in aesthetic beauty; my intention to highlight both is always evident. But at the center of my effort is to partially subvert the narrative so that the viewer has a sense that all is not well. There's something going on that needs more attention.

The 2016 election altered my point of view and my work has changed dramatically. In the past I have signified a sense of loss and time passing in abstract terms — fragmentation of shape and pattern. This felt more and more hollow to me as my sense of outrage grew. I wanted to capture the brutality we are inflicting on families who are enduring difficult journeys to escape violence in their countries. My images still come from the news, but are increased in scale so that they can't be ignored or passed by. Destruction in the form of cutting away now suggests a real act of violence. In other works on paper I emphasize the breakdown of our constitution by reproducing American foundational texts, subjecting them to burning and scarring.

We all process our response to important events in individual ways. I don't pretend that my current work changes anything, but in a new climate of news cycles racing by and attacks on the press in general, I am compelled to capture this moment in tangible form, hopefully for us to remember before we move on.

The videos below were recorded via Zoom, are organized by Success Factor, and run between 20 seconds and 6 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 0:52 sec.



Where did you grow up, and what's your earliest memory of art of any discipline?

OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED: 4:39 min.



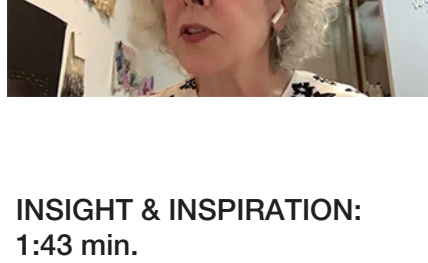
Tell us about your evolution as an artist in Miami.

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 3:53 min.



My longtime friend, the photographer Joel Meyerowitz, once told me that the problem with creating work for advertising is that you wind up executing other people's bad ideas instead of expressing your own true vision.

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 0:23 sec,



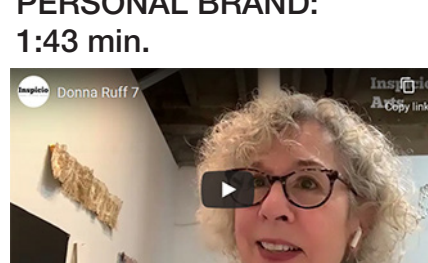
Do you visibly use Scotch Tape in your artwork?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:43 min.



Who are some of your other influencers?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 1:43 min.



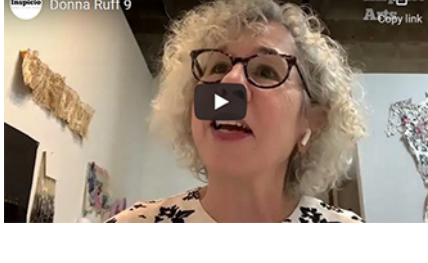
In my work, I soak the collage elements in water and then adhere them to canvas with a polymer medium. You couldn't do that with your work — right?

DEVELOP A VOICE: 1:11 min.



Did your commercial work processes impact your personal work?

CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY: 4:25 min.



How did your techniques for working with cut paper evolve?

CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY: 2:27 min.



When you started burning paper to create negative space, were you using tools from a wood-burning kit like I had as a kid?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 5:58 min.



Talk about the evolution of your work over the past few years from a political and materials perspective.

CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY: 1:14 min.



Another thing we have in common is that I have made pieces that hang from the ceiling and have different images on each side.

COMMUNITY VALUES: 4:01 min.



What brought you back to Miami, and what are your thoughts about the South Florida art community?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 5:38 min.



What's on your drawing board? What have you been working on that hasn't been seen?

BREAKS THE RULES: 0:34 sec.



What's your favorite movie?

UNDERSTANDS ARTISTS' NEEDS: 3:15 min.



What role should a university play in the development of artists?

CRITICAL THINKING: 1:32 min.



You have a full arsenal of traditional artistic skills that you can apply in many ways. What are your thoughts about people who make abstract art, but can't draw?