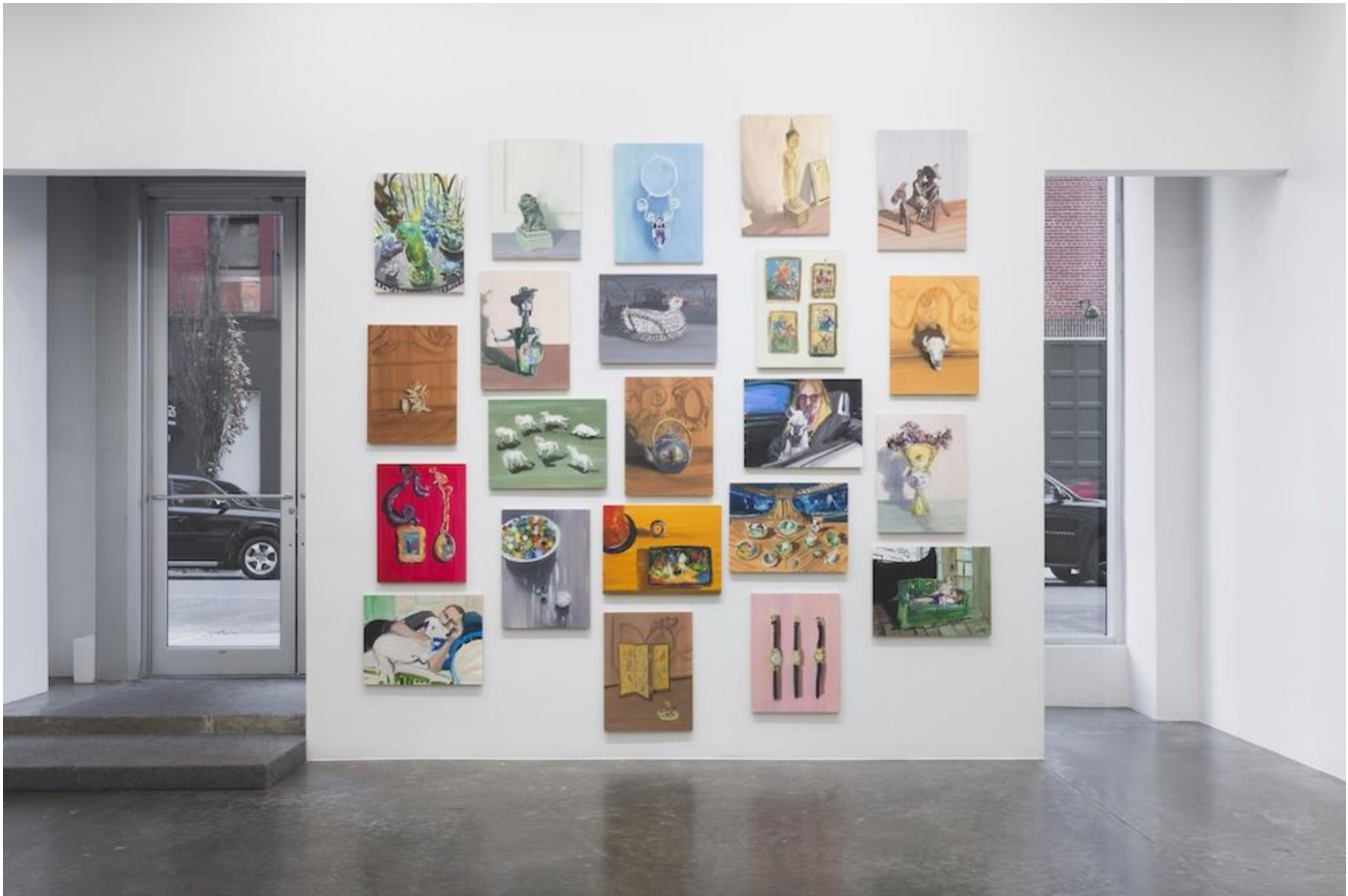




It's been over a year since Covid-19 has been hitting the headlines but it's about this time in 2020 when our lives started getting directly affected by what was coming up. Whether it's technical issues, supply problems, mobility concerns, or even the lack of motivation, the new state of things forced or encourage a shift of focus for a lot of creatives from the standard field of interest to the new horizons. And one of such people is [Deborah Brown](#) whose debut show with [Anna Zorina Gallery](#) is on view until February 13th. *Things As They Are* marks a year in which the Brooklyn-based artist started reconstructing her own experience of reality, celebrating the here and now through a series of quotidian scenes while putting herself as the main protagonist to some extent.

The emotions and atmosphere she is adding with her immediate, expressive visual language to everything from the sidewalk shadows to the curious corners of her home, intrigued us to get in touch with Brown and learn more about these images and what led to them.

"Painting Things As They Are: A Conversation with Deborah Brown," Interview Juxtapoz, February 8, 2021.



Sasha Bogojev: Did your way of dealing with or experiencing the "new normal" change through your work?

Deborah Brown: The lockdown has turned out to be a time of great productivity and progress for me. All commitments and distractions fell away. I remember scrolling through the calendar on my iPhone, pressing "delete," "delete," "delete" over and over. Work was the only thing on the horizon. I was seized by a renewed purpose that artists get from time to time when they embark on a new subject matter. Every day I could not wait to get in the studio and explore what lay ahead. Suddenly everything around me became a possible subject for my paintings.

Things that have been in front of me my whole life moved from the periphery onto center stage.

How different is this body of work comparing to your usual motifs/imagery?

When the lockdown went into effect in New York, I had just completed a series of paintings of naked canoeists and bathers for a solo show at Gavlak Gallery in Palm Beach. The work left for Florida. The next week the world changed, and my show in Palm Beach went online. I had also been in the midst of curating a long-planned group show, *Sit Still: Self-Portraits in the Age of*

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Distraction with fellow artist Patty Horing to take place at Anna Zorina Gallery in the summer of 2020 and for which I had committed to do a work.



“*Painting Things As They Are: A Conversation with Deborah Brown,*” Interview Juxtapoz, February 8, 2021.

What was your first reaction to the creative limitations imposed by the lockdown and how are you looking at it now?

Self-portraits were not my subject. Prior to March 2020, I had portrayed the figure in many of my paintings, but in the guise of a “self-figure,” not myself. When everything ground to a halt, it seemed an opportune time to tackle a self-portrait for *Sit Still*. Painting myself was a liberating experience. I chose to portray myself holding Zeus, my recently deceased Jack Russell terrier. It was a sincere expression of my feelings of loss, grief, and uncertainty, a work without guile or affect. In this work, I knew I was on a good path and I did not look back. My work over the last year has focused on the domestic and the personal, on my relationship with my space, my pets, and the objects in my surroundings.

The quotidian scenes you've painted feel much more dreamy and emotionally charged. Is this the way you've experienced them or a way you'd like to experience them?

The pandemic and the isolation it has imposed have made me more introspective and eager to embrace what is important in life, to derive meaning in every way I can. The reality in all its quotidian aspects became very dear to me. I think my paintings reflect a longing to live. The objects, furniture, and decor in my paintings take on anthropomorphic qualities because I see them as an expression of who I am. Some of them like the Bjørn Wiinblad's “face vase” that will be in the show at Volery Gallery in Dubai are objects I've had my entire life. Painting them is a kind of homage, but also a form of psychoanalysis. Rather than a fetishization of my surroundings, I see my activity as an excavation of the meaning of ordinary things through the language of painting.



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Your style is raw and expressive, how important is it for you to create the image in such a manner and why?

I try to work in a fluid, intuitive way without preconceptions about how something should be depicted. I want to avoid illustrating. By suspending intellectual control over the painting process and giving free reign to my hand to respond to my mark-making as I go, I find I can best uncover the essential character of what I am painting, whether it's a figure or an orange. My paintings have a raw, expressionist quality as a result.

What are you looking for in the scenes that you're depicting in your paintings?

In choosing a subject to paint, I am drawn to several things at once—the visual beauty, eccentricity or organization of a scene; the meaning the image has for me; and finally, whether it fits in the lexicon of images that I could envision transforming through my painting process. I am often surprised by what moves me visually and what ends up being a subject for my painting.



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What are some of the scenes that surprise you like that?

Since the pandemic, I have been walking every morning with my dog Trout through the industrial neighborhood of East Williamsburg where my studio is located. I have been in this area for over 15 years but, since the pandemic, I began to notice the macabre, elongated shadows that my dog and I cast on the sidewalks where we walk and the lollipop-like stop signs and bare tree branches stretched like a cartoon across the broad, flat streets. It hit me all of a sudden that this would be a great subject to paint. I have since embarked on a new series that perhaps reflects our tentative step out of the pandemic and out into the world again. Thankfully, it's still there.

All images: Installation Views: Deborah Brown: Things As They Are, 2021