

JUXTAPOZ

Made in the Dark: A Conversation About Graphite with Amandine Urruty

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Every gallery and artist has had to majorly adjust to the sudden closure of almost all public happenings around the globe. That of course means not only art openings, but physical art viewing. Our friends at [Dorothy Circus Gallery](#), who have spaces in Rome and London, made a quick adjustment for the opening of French graphite painter French artist [Amandine Urruty](#)'s first solo show in England, *Made In The Dark*. This past weekend they hosted a special virtual tour of the gallery show on their IG, giving people a chance to experience the intricate works in a "personal" experience. We caught up with Urruty a few days earlier to talk about the works, the title of the show and why it has to be graphite.



Sasha Bogojev: Where is the title for the exhibition coming from?

Amandine Urruty: There are three ways to explain this title. Actually, I worked on this show during a period of uncertainty, with an exhilarating feeling of freedom tainted with doubt and fear. I also chose this title because of a bad habit : when I'm late, behind schedule, I close the blinds and start living like there's no daylight. Like a prisoner. You quickly lose the track of time, and become way more efficient. even if you shouldn't do this for too long, of course. Then, it's also a subtle reference to a record, also called *Made In the Dark*, by the English band, Hot Chip. It accompanied me during many important periods.

Do you see your work as dark or humorous?

Both! That's my favorite way of doing (and appreciating) art. There's a deep truth in dark humour, a smart way to grasp life's sophistication. I guess that's what I try to depict in my pictures. And above all I love when art, in general, aims at developing a contradictory rhetoric. To me, pictures are like algebra problems that should stay unsolved. To be more understandable, I think the main interest in pictures is that they can (and should) refuse to be explained. I love when things are, at the same time, graceful and lumpish, clean and smelly, brutal and girly, cute and scary.

This idea brought me to accumulate lots of details and contradictory elements in order to create a bit of confusion in pieces that, at first sight, could be only seen as naive, smooth and childish.

Is there a connecting theme between the works in the show?

When the gallery told me that the main theme for their 2020 exhibitions was "Lovers," it appeared to me like crystal clear. I keep drawing about love, in a bittersweet way. Love is endlessly described as the most wonderful feeling, but it can also appear as the worst thing you can ever imagine, once it begins to flirt with hate, envy, jealousy, possession, and disappointment. That's what I wanted to express in my pictures, in a quirky way.

What is the meaning behind the little snouts that your characters are wearing?

The little snouts' story is quite long. When I began working as an artist, years ago, and started to create my first characters, they had no noses, nor feet, nor hands. They were just like minimal rag dolls. When I had to make them evolve, it was obvious for me that they needed costumes (and consequently fake noses). So, I began to deck out my little dolls with muzzles and gloves, masks and wigs, and I tried to think a little more about what could be my work's specificity. Grotesque, carnivalesque of course. Today I continue developing this carnivalesque idea, with all it can imply. What's hidden behind the mask?



How do you feel about the popularity of Snapchat filters in regards to that?

I started working on costumes (and little snouts) since 2007. When Snapchat became a popular application, it really fascinated me. I installed it just to try all the filters. Magical masks ! I wish we could wear them in real life. Everyday.

What is your connection with cabinets of curiosities and do you intentionally compose your work in such a manner?

My way of constructing pictures these last years, with oversaturated compositions, has always been influenced by the wunderkammer paradigm. And recently, by using shelves in my drawings, it became more obvious. I realized a few years ago that it had a main origin. My mother has developed an habit over the years, she keeps collecting things. Eggcups, pre-packed sugar lumps, figurines of hens, duck, horses, frogs, angels, but also teapots. And I may forget some. All these tons of objects, trinkets, and kitsch canvases too, were disseminated in the family house, even in the stairs where we had to be careful not to fall. I guess that's why I live in an empty flat today, with pure white walls.



What attracts you to working exclusively with graphite?

My first drawings were already in black and white, but made with ink. After that I worked a few years with color pencils. Actually I always loved pencils. I love their "primitive" aspect. To me, pencils are fundamental tools. And to be honest, I've never been at ease with painting. I don't know why, maybe I'm not patient enough? Or maybe I'm a bit too clumsy. But I've always preferred pencils for their ease of use. Pencils are also much cleaner than paint, and that's a real advantage considering I've got a bad habit; I've always worked on my bed. With pencils, I can limit the damages.

When I decided not to use color anymore (again), graphite, and charcoal, came as an evidence. It brought me back to my first love, when I was 16 and used to copy French painting of the 19th century (Ingres, David), with black pencils. I wanted to use only one medium, as and try to get better at it. It had to be graphite.

Any plans on using more color in the future after these little rainbows or maybe even different techniques other than graphite?

No, or maybe as little touches of color. But I often change my mind about that. I'll never come back to full color, mais maybe monochromatic pictures. We'll see!