

Harnish, Tracey. "13 Questions for Roy Dowell." *artweek.LA* (online), 26 May 2012.

Roy Dowell was born in Bronxville, New York in 1951. His family moved often during his childhood and he lived in Pennsylvania, Washington, Northern and Southern California. Following in his Grandmother and Mother's paths he attended the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland for two years and then in 1972 he transferred to the newly founded California Institute of the Arts where he received both his BFA and MFA degrees. At Cal Arts he also met his long time partner, Lari Pittman. Roy's work for the last 30 years has taken the form of constructed paintings, collages and, more recently, sculptures. In all of these forms his work has investigated the hybridization of cultures with multiple influences and references from both within and outside of the traditions of contemporary art. Roy is the founding Chair of the Graduate Fine Arts Program at the Otis College of Art and Design. He has held this position since 1990. He first began his teaching in 1977 at the L.A. Valley College. His work is included in numerous museum and private collections and has been exhibited frequently in exhibitions nationally and internationally. His work has been represented for a number of years by the Margo Leavin Gallery in Los Angeles and is also represented in New York by Lennon/Weinberg Inc. He now lives on the outskirts of Los Angeles, adjacent to the Angeles National Forest and in Central Mexico.

*Did you draw when you were a kid/what age did you start?*

Yes, I drew a lot, pictures of log cabins, lizards and Robin Hood. I do not remember when I started but it was very early in my childhood.

*What has been your biggest sacrifice for art?*

I have made no sacrifices, at least none that I am conscious of. Not making art would be my biggest sacrifice and one I would not be able to endure.

*What artists that aren't dead, influence you?*

Many! I love the work of my friends who are artists and they influence me a great deal. I like the work of TAL-R and the Tobias Brothers. I recently saw an exhibition of the English painter Ryan Mosley that I liked very much. Many sources, cultures and objects influence me. I welcome influences from every part of my life. My work is about those ideas and things that do influence me.

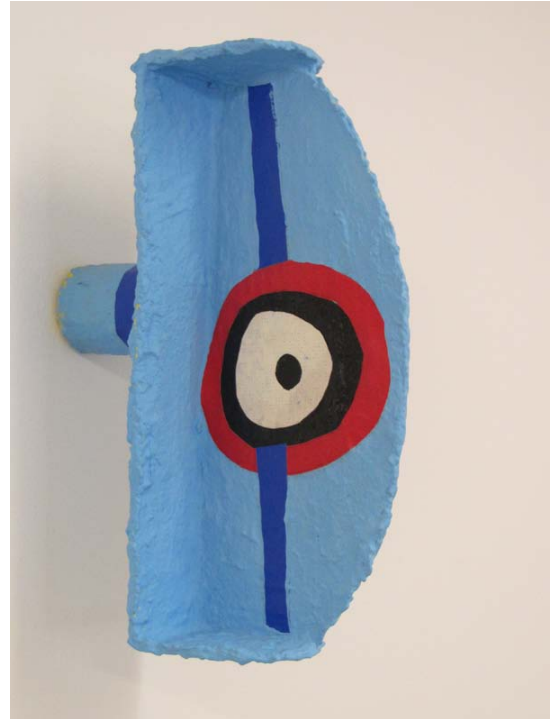
*What artists that aren't dead, really bug you?*

Many...but I will keep them to myself. It is important for artists to have a thorn in their side, competition is a good motivating factor. However it is not very wise to talk about them. The art world is very small place and I see no reason to make any more enemies than I already have.

*What do you listen to while you work?*

I often listen to Western African or Latin American popular music which are my favorites. I sometimes listen to talk radio, I don't always pay attention to what is being discussed I just like to hear the voices.

*What are you working on now?*



Currently I am working on a group of sculptures they are made of paper mache, wood and paint... hybrids of multiple cultures. I am calling them "souvenirs". These pieces will be shown in the "Made in L.A." exhibition at the HAMMER Museum June-September.



*What was the last show you saw?*

The last exhibition that I saw was a very elegant and challenging exhibition of Rodd Zinberg. It was his MFA thesis exhibition at the Bolsky Gallery at the Otis College of Art and Design. Rodd was one of my students. I just saw it a few days ago. I was very happy for him and very proud of him. He has created a very individual and particularized personal language.

*What's the most indispensable item in your studio?*

Outside of the bed in the corner of my studio where I often take a nap in the afternoon, I would say that the object that hangs above my desk, an axe handle with a painted soccer ball attached to it is the most indispensable object in my studio. I bought it in Mexico many years ago and it constantly reminds me of what a perfect object should look like.

*What is it that is spurring ideas for your work these days?*

As has been the case for the last twenty-five years. My work investigates the languages of abstraction with hybrid sources and materials influenced by modernism, popular and world cultures, advertising and decoration. My desire is to engage the viewer by encouraging interpretation and the construction of meaning in my work.

*How do local, national, and world events affect your work?*

In a subliminal, subconscious way, rarely is there any direct reference to any specific event or occurrence in my work.

*What is the most important thing you attempt to do every day?*

I try to do something pertaining to my work every day. I am the Chair of the Graduate Fine Arts Program at the Otis College of Art and Design and my time is often consumed by the requirements of this job. I am not able to be in my studio every day, but I do try to take time to plan what I will do when I get to my studio and to do research or correspondence pertaining to my work during the time that I am not physically there.

*What are you reading right now?*

I am not reading anything at the moment. I just don't have the time. If I try to read at night I fall asleep and my mornings are just too busy. I always set a goal for reading at least a couple of books during the summer.



My favorite reading materials are short stories and biographies. I do read, art and design magazines all the time but I don't really consider that reading. I want to be transformed or transported when I read, magazines don't do that for me.

*What do you like to do when you aren't in the studio?*

I am an avid collector and acquirer. I have many collections that influence my work in various ways. I have a partner of 38 years (the artist, Lari Pittman), an elderly dog (Olive, who is 18 years old), a large cactus collection and a house, all of which I try to spend as much time with as possible.



*Dowell's sculptures will be included in the Made in LA Hammer show that opens June 2. The last image above will be part of the exhibition as a billboard displayed on La Cienega in July. The other collage is currently on exhibit in Dowell's solo show at the Nina Menocal Gallery in Mexico City.*