

Domenic Esposito: Vox Clamantis

January 7-30, 2022

Piano Craft Gallery, Boston

Throwing a wrench at the monkey is how artist Domenic Esposito copes with unforgivable loss and injustice. Using metal and paint, he symbolizes his stalwart commitment to exposing accountable parties, both in examining individual authority, and raising a fist to corporate malfeasance. He begins with a type of visual shorthand and employs repetition with great calculation to remind us that the societal dilemmas that he presents are not going away, but merely multiplying under our watch. In a manner that is at once emotionally detached and iconographic, he creates a composite of things and situations to document a world of addiction and human fragility, as he witnesses the struggles of his own brother who is an addict. His emotional acuity subliminally connects the commonplace objects that once upon a time, had a naive functionality in everyday life to memories that continue to trigger pain, anger, loss, fear, calamity and isolation. They are presented in stasis so that he can gently initiate the viewer into his frame of mind. In this respect, the exhibition is an opus of emotional meanderings that are deeply personal. Thus, Esposito shares his own fragility with the viewer and exposes how far he can go in his shared observations, sentiments and his ultimate demand for a reckoning.

Diana Lada L'Henaff,
Curator

With his sculpture *FDA Spoon*, 2019 the wrench is indignantly thrown at the pharmaceutical industry and indirectly at the government agency that activated its legitimacy. Clearly and with deliberate allegation, Esposito presents his suit and demands moral rectitude for human loss caused by the premeditated actions of "Big Pharma." The burnt spoon, as symbol of the reverberating damage echoing in modern society today, is in equal parts a representation of the destabilization of his own family; it recalls a time when the misplacement of a simple spoon from the kitchen drawer began to perplex, alarm and eventually destroy trust. When the 800lb sculpture was laid at the feet of Purdue Pharmaceuticals in Stamford, CT, *FDA Spoon*, became a visual interpretation of many heart wrenching journeys, and at the same time a clarion call for a silently suffering population that demanded acknowledgement and restitution for the lives and families they had lost. As a social activist, Esposito's rage is a righteous one. Stamford was a Goliath moment. In reality, it is simply the primordial response of a big brother battling the giant that continues to torment and corrupt his family.

Throughout his search for explanation, Esposito connects the morphology of the interior and exterior environments that inform the addictions that harm us. With *Corrupted I, II, III*, 2020, he asks that we look deeply within ourselves because the disease of addiction does not just live in the outside world in the form of colorful pills, gambling paraphernalia, and social media badges but, it is encrypted in the interior spaces of the left and right lobes of the brain. Overlaying recognizable imagery, he alludes to the susceptible and destructive compulsions of technology, gambling and drugs designed to validate cravings and magnify human fragility for profit. The choice of bronze is deliberate, as the agony of addiction is measured in both the weight of the metal and the indestructible nature of its chemistry.



Corrupted I (detail), 2020
Bronze and spalted maple
18" x 8" x 8"



FDA Spoon, 2019
Aluminum with burnt metal patina
48" x 120.5" x 48"

However, this time, he throws the wrench back at us so that we may openly evaluate "the monkey on our back" and question where our own individual psychopathologies lie.

Esposito is no longer misled by the deceit of loved ones who swear their truth under the pressure of their addiction. With *Unconditional*, 2020, he understands that it is all part of the addict's digressions. The combination of full length bronze and acrylic on canvas narrates a journey fraught with pressure denying one world in favor of another. The repetitive figures on the canvas march in an orderly profusion of greyscale haze, and convey the density of the struggle. The breakthrough to bronze remains, in itself, a metaphor for the prodigal. As always, Esposito encapsulates his thinking with a fast release coating of unconditional compassion because he and his family have travelled this road, repeatedly hoping for the return to normal. Without judgment, he lauds the clarity necessary to make it out when the addiction is so strongly coded in the body. He frames these marching souls in an effort to show reverence for their strength. But ultimately, it is hope that he renders. After all, he surrenders to the truth in the deceit, but he chooses to keep faith that this is just the first step out of the fog.

In *Assailable*, 2021, the canvas reflects an eerie color palette from which a bronze, hooded figure emerges. Much like the spoons that he casts to succinctly represent a carnage instituted by pharmaceutical interests, the hooded figure features prominently in this series of mixed media works to bring us face to face with our own human infractions. Through



the use of bronze, the figure is made significant. Through the use of color, the intimacy between the viewer and the message is transmitted. Esposito records in combined metal and canvas the feelings of mental fatigue, sequestration, absence of touch, and emotional detachment. He does not assign stigma to the bent form. Instead, the hooded figure expresses the emotional incumbency of the vulnerable and ostracized in the curve of the shoulders. The use of the hoodie as metaphor to convey societal separation is juxtaposed against the safe, bland nature of a once

Unconditional, 2020
Oil on canvas, cast bronze
40" x 30" x 12"

utilitarian piece of clothing found in every wardrobe, much like the ubiquity of the spoon in every kitchen drawer. Here, the hoodie defies all that is seemingly harmless and very simply articulates an absence of engagement. The hooded downcast line of sight, the rounded torso, the hands firmly planted in the central pocket, assume a position of frailty, infirmity and withdrawal. Always alone and never really acknowledged, the hooded figure is another representation of abject collective slight. Esposito provides a way that safely allows the viewer to consider what it means to be this figure; it is the lost, the disconnected, the shunned. You cannot see the face because this is not what is important nor the thing that should draw your attention. In fact, this is the person



Assailable, 2020
Oil on canvas, cast bronze
40" x 30" x 12"

mental health, addiction and homelessness, and remain to this day, a harsh backdrop for these chronic issues facing our nation. In *Mass*, 2021 the background depicts figures living in a tented underworld while cars and pedestrians blindly whirl by, insinuating society's rebuff and indifference.

you pass on a street corner and do not care to know. For Esposito this is no longer an option because this form is known. He seeks our genuine consideration and understanding, because this is personal.

In full circle, the origins of the exhibition are placed into context with a series of paintings that narrate events observed by Esposito throughout years spent searching for his brother. Known avenues in Boston, like Massachusetts Ave and Melnea Cass Boulevard, have been

home to persons afflicted with

mental health, addiction and homelessness, and remain to this day, a harsh backdrop for these chronic issues facing our nation. In *Mass*, 2021 the background depicts figures living in a tented underworld while cars and pedestrians blindly whirl by, insinuating society's rebuff and indifference.



Mass, 2021
Oil on canvas
48" x 72"

Except for the occasional city sweep, in real time, the area returns to tents and bewildered souls more often than Boston can keep up with. Kitty corner to Cass, 2021, a lone ambulance centered on the canvas, forewarns the potential for human catastrophe while the minuscule line the back wall in various stages of disjointed subsistence. These scenes are very carefully decided by Esposito. He observes this world with a measured statement of fact. He shares what he can stomach. He shares a circumspect post card without delving too deeply or passionately into what he has and continues to experience for so many years. In the foreground of both canvasses, the isolated hooded figure who has become the protagonist in this drama, turns away from "the others" implying a change of course. He is not lost in the background of an unforgiving declaration of foregone loss. This sullen figure walks the earth as an object of faith that subconsciously represents who he hopes to save and bring back to the fold someday. The representation of the faceless figure is the brother, sister, parent or child of countless families who endure and remain hopeful. This time, Esposito throws the wrench at our feet and demands that we pick it up, because this time the cry for compassion is within our reach.



Cass, 2021
Oil on canvas
48" x 72"