

# TEMPLON



JIM DINE

HOME & DECOR, novembre 2022



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THOSE IN THE KNOW

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### Jim Dine

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# DESIGN

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW



## **GRACE AND BEAUTY**

On the occasion of his solo exhibition at Galerie Templon in Paris, celebrated American artist Jim Dine opens his atelier to Y-JEAN MUNDLSALLE and shares insights into his six-decade-long career and why he's busier than ever. ▶

photo COURTESY TEMPLON, PARIS - BRUSSELS - NEW YORK

SPOTLIGHT



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is just as important as the finished piece, so he likes to get his hands dirty, working instinctively. Battling with the medium and painting by the accumulation of material, his canvases undergo months of transformation that give them extreme depth – he makes a mark, reacts, corrects and starts again – only stopping “when I get tired of them” or when they must leave for an exhibition. “If they stayed, I might keep working on some of them,” he admits.

We’re standing in the middle of Jim’s disorderly studio in Montrouge in the Parisian suburbs – the largest atelier he’s ever had – littered with screwdrivers, nails, saws, drills, buckets, rags, paintbrushes and Golden acrylic paint bottles, and the floors stained with a patina retaining the memory of the enormous time and effort he spends on each artwork. It feels as if we’re on a construction site, and Jim is the worker accompanied by his tools.

No daylight is visible since, unlike other artists, he prefers the neon lighting and silence of this windowless former taxi garage, hiding away in his cavernous space free of distraction. Poems in handwritten black capital letters adorn the walls, as poetry has emerged as one of his practice’s central disciplines, and you’ll often find him giving readings.

Amidst this clutter and chaos appears the monumental 5.91-metre-long abstract triptych, *Grace and Beauty*, in a riotous, multi-layered arrangement of colours like



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**F**eeling the urgency to create, Jim Dine doesn’t take holidays as there is just too little time, preferring instead to put his hands to work each day to paint, sculpt, draw, make prints or write poems, always with the sole aim of “trying to make art. If it’s my sculpture, I feel I have the obligation to make it, not to allow someone else to realise it.”

For Jim, the creative process

1. Jim Dine at work.

2. *Tomatoes Under The Water*, 1990-1993, oil on canvas painting.

3. *Pinocchio Needs Attention*, a 2006 sculpture, enamel on wood.

4. *Jim's Crowded Table (Friends)*, a 2022 sculpture displayed at the Beauty And Grace exhibition.

5. Jim putting finishing touch to one of his sculptures, *The Blue Flame*, finished this year.

an oversized palette, tinged with charcoal and sand, which has been painted, sanded, repainted, embedded with wood blocks and united with an array of distorted brass pipes exploding from the middle of each panel. Painting and sculpture have become one in this expressionist work overflowing with uncommon energy and emotion.

### The Fusion of Artwork and Tools

Jim's obsession with tools started at 12 when he lived with his maternal grandparents, who owned a hardware store after his mother's death. Never having viewed tools as work instruments but rather as sculptures, he states, "Using tools is what I do. I feel that hand tools are very beautiful,

and sometimes I like to celebrate them."

Jim's current exhibition owes its name to this masterpiece. Held until Nov 5 at Galerie Templon in Paris, he presents over 20 never-before-seen, large-scale relief paintings on wood panels and sculptures created especially for the show over the past two and a half years, which are priced from up to US\$500,000. They are living proof of his flair for opening up new horizons in technical experimentation.

*Big Lady on the Beaver's Stump* in patinated bronze places a headless woman's torso on an imitation tree stump, veins and all, while the vivid blues, yellows, reds, greens and purples of his hand-painted bronze and stainless steel sculptures compete with ▶



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**"BECAUSE [PINOCCHIO] IS A METAPHOR FOR CREATION, I FELT IT WAS A PROFOUND STORY, AND I CONTINUED IT AND THEN GOT VERY INVOLVED WITH IT SCULPTURALLY AND WITH MY PRINTS AND DRAWINGS."**



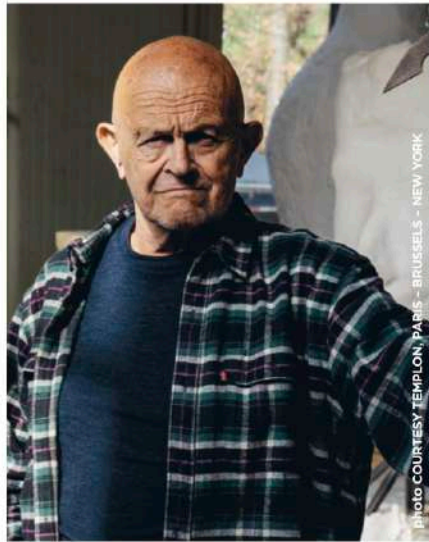
photo LAURENT EDELINE

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**“THERE’S NO MESSAGE IN MY WORK. THE MESSAGE IS I TRY TO MAKE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL OR THAT I’M PROUD OF, THAT’S IT.”**

those of his paintings. Hammers, wrenches, axes and scissors form a giant vase in *Flowers*. Building the positives from plaster and wood, he then passes them on to the artisans to mould and cast in bronze.

When starting a new artwork, Jim is unclear about how it will look at the outset, saying, “I don’t have any artistic philosophy, rules or regime. When you’re as old as I am, you have confidence in your hand and your ideas. Of course, there are failures, but there’s less chance of that in the sense that I know enough how to act upon the works to, hopefully, make them

succeed. If you want to work, you have an idea, and your libido is in your art, then there are no challenges – you just go forward. There’s no message in my work. The message is I try to make something beautiful or that I’m proud of, that’s it.”

#### **A Born Artist**

For Jim, born in 1935 in Cincinnati, Ohio, art has been his whole life and is all he has ever wanted to do. “I was a gifted child who was always going to be an artist, and nobody else in the family ever was, so it was unusual,” he shares. “I was born an artist, and that’s all I can do, and that’s all I’ve ever done.”

After graduating in fine art from Ohio University, he began his career in 1958 in New York as a pioneer of “happenings” – performances that attracted attention in their ambition to invent another kind of art – collaborating with Claes Oldenburg, before exhibiting his assemblages and first paintings in the 1960s alongside Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Ed Ruscha and Robert Rauschenberg. But while this new generation of pop artists spoke of the external world, he looked introspectively, calling himself a “romantic expressionist”. He recalls, “The art scene at the time was small, before commerce, not corrupted, with wonderful artists. It was very exciting, and I met people you could look up to and who gave you encouragement.”

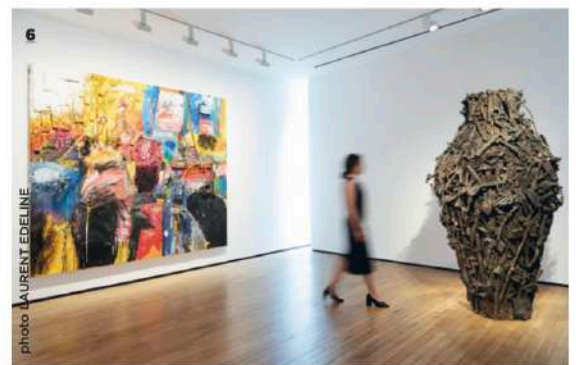
There’s no denying the autobiographical nature of Jim’s work seen through numerous recurring motifs, including his own bald head with conspicuous ears, hearts, bathrobes, tools, the Venus de Milo and Pinocchio, in which he searches for himself and his identity – an inexhaustible

**6.** *The Castle Farm* mixed media painting, 2022, displayed at Jim Dine: *Beauty And Grace* exhibition.

**7.** *Jim’s Head My Puzzled Mind*, a bronze sculpture completed in 2018.

**8.** *Prophet In The Storm*, 2020, oil, acrylic and wood on panel.

**9.** *Beauty And Grace*, one of Jim’s latest mixed-media artworks completed this year.



source of inspiration. These emblematic themes can all be considered self-portraits and are a way to speak about his life and his past. For example, *Castle Farms* depicts his mother's rhythm when nightclub dancing, while *Hub Pieters' Teeth* depicts the teeth of the renowned hematologist who collected his work. "They come from my head, my imagination, what I think I can work with, what's relevant at the time that I'm doing it," he notes. "They're all part of me. The leitmotif that goes through my work is the autobiography. I'm always interested when I have an insight into my unconscious."

As a child, Jim watched Walt Disney's *Pinocchio* and developed a fascination with the characters from Carlo Collodi's novel, sometimes identifying with the puppet and sometimes with the woodcarver Geppetto. Sculpting logs directly with a hand-held chainsaw, he explored the artist's ultimate fantasy: creating offspring through art. A talking wooden stick that becomes a boy, Pinocchio symbolises the perpetual struggle to make art. It is a story of alchemy, like converting lead into gold, and Jim loves that moment when the artwork emerges. "My mother took me to see the film, and it stayed with me," he recalls. "Because it is a metaphor for creation, I felt it was a profound story, and I continued it and then got very involved with it sculpturally and with my prints and drawings."

### Busier Than Ever

Living and working nomadically, Jim has spent

over 60 years crisscrossing the globe, splitting his time between various foundries, studios and print workshops, from Walla Walla in Washington state, Oregon and New York (that he has since given up) to Göttingen in Germany, Vienna in Austria and St Gallen in Switzerland, while being an intermittent Parisian for the last two decades, having initially headed there to work with Aldo Crommelynck, Picasso's famous engraver.

Selecting the master craftsmen with whom he works closely for their technical expertise, he encourages them to push his experimentations

further. "I enjoy changing studios. Each one makes the work a little differently, depending on the light, where it is, what nature is like there, whether the people are sympathetic," he comments. "It's a luxury of being able to travel and go where I want to go. If I could, I'd have more studios."

This November, Jim also opens *A History of Gardening* at Cristea Roberts Gallery in London, which will run until January. Next spring will see *Storm of Memory*, an exhibition of new sculpture, works on paper, prints and books at Kunsthauus Gottingen. He will

have his first solo show in May at Galerie Templon's New York space. For as long as his body will allow, he plans to continue producing actively, to do what he was born to do.

"I feel more passion for creating today than when I first started because now it's the only thing I care about. I get my energy genetically from luck – I'm lucky I can work right now. I get my energy also because I love to work; I'm challenged by these projects, making a better sculpture, and going further with it. At some point, I'm not going to have it, so I'm trying to take advantage of it." ■



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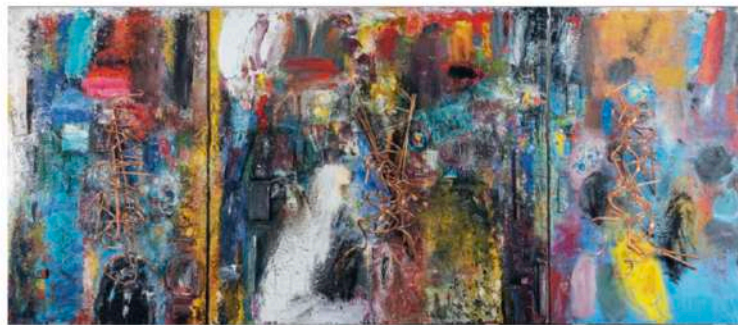


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