## Bosco Sodi

**SELECTED PRESS** 

### The Harvard Gazette

### Gold, Clay, and Universal Forms

With 'Origen' at Harvard Art Museums, Bosco Sodi explores the Earth's elements.

JENNIFER AUBIN MARCH 31, 2023



Bosco Sodi's "Untitled," 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin, New York. Artwork: © Studio Bosco Sodi; phot courtesy of the artist and Kasmin, New York.

A new installation of sculptures by Mexican-born artist Bosco Sodi, "Origen," places 14 of his handmade clay spheres at the Harvard Art Museums and marks the first-ever presentation of art on the museums' outdoor Broadway terrace. In a first for a U.S. installation of the artist's work, Sodi has also unveiled three gold-glazed spheres as part of his site-specific arrangement. The works are all on loan from the artist and Kasmin, New York.

"Bosco Sodi: Origen" will remain on display through June 9, 2024. The installation has been organized by Mary Schneider Enriquez, the Houghton Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Harvard Art Museums.

Sodi's practice explores the Earth's elements, marrying age-old traditions of sculpting clay with a contemporary vision of creating simple universal forms that prompt reflection. "Origen," which the artist defines from the Spanish as "source," signifies both the center of a circle or sphere and the beginnings of the planet, including all the attendant geological, historical, and spiritual connotations of the word.

Sodi has long admired the aesthetics of Japanese wabi sabi, which he interprets as operating on principles that favor imperfection and impermanence; his approach celebrates the varied, irregular fissures and faults that enliven his clay forms and their site-specific installations. He creates his spheres by hand in Oaxaca, Mexico, where centuries ago (approximately 500 B.C.–900 A.D.) the Zapotec culture flourished and was celebrated for their sophisticated terracotta sculptures. Building on this history, Sodi works with Oaxacan artisans, using local clay to sculpt each sphere, drying them outside for up to eight months, and then firing them in a makeshift kiln built on a Pacific Ocean beach. The resulting forms reveal the effects of nature's forces — sun, sea air, and fire — as demonstrated by the myriad cracks, chips, and blackened and crusty patches that distinguish each sphere.

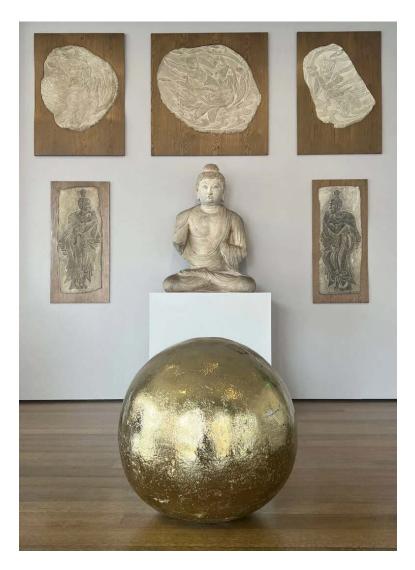


Bosco Sodi's spheres on the outdoor Broadway terrace, marking a first for the space. Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin, New York; photo by Tara Metal/Harvard Art Museums.

"Bosco Sodi's work speaks to the material and to the body, to the earth and to the essential thread connecting human beliefs and existence to the world we inhabit," said Schneider Enriquez. "His terracotta spheres, sculpted by hand and fired in outdoor kilns, convey the age-old, universal symbol as an evocatively rustic, physical presence that invites deep contemplation."

Twelve spheres of varying sizes have been installed on the museums' Broadway terrace, with two additional spheres installed indoors within two consecutive galleries of Asian art (Galleries 1600 and 1610) that have a direct view onto the terrace. Moving from outside to inside the museums, three of the artist's 17-karat-gold-glazed spheres connect to and engage with the meditative atmosphere evoked by the installation of Buddhist figures in Gallery 1610. Sodi, who equates the spherical form with belief systems and the color gold with holiness, puts the spheres in dialogue with the sculptures throughout the gallery.

Said Schneider Enriquez: "I am thrilled to present 'Origen,' both outside the museums and within our galleries of Asian Buddhist and Chinese funerary art, and hope that visitors will find Sodi's installation prompts them to pause and think further about sculpture and beliefs across time and cultures."



One of the 17-karat-gold-glazed spheres in the Harvard Art Museums' Gallery 1610. Photo by Tara Metal/Harvard Art Museums.

### The New York Times

## Can a New Art Space Refresh a Tired Downtown?

Bosco Sodi's new museum in New York's Catskill Mountains will feature artists from around the world and perhaps add some glimmer to a place that time has frayed.

LAURA VAN STRAATEN APRIL 26, 2022



The Mexican-born, Brooklyn-based artist Bosco Sodi, top, is opening a museum called Assembly in Monticello, N.Y., to showcase artists from around the world. Credit Peter Crosby for The New York Times.

MONTICELLO, N.Y. — Like its sister towns nestled nearby in the Catskill Mountains, signs are everywhere that the cultural and economic heydays of this seat of Sullivan County were deep in the past.

Amid the nods to contemporary life in the town center — barbershops, a sports bar, a pizza parlor and other casual eateries — storefronts in buildings from the 1800s sit empty and hotels from the borscht belt boom of the 1950s are still boarded up. Many of the buildings have been declared fire hazards.

But a new museum featuring 21st-century international artists could be a step toward rejuvenation when it opens May 21 on the town's main street, Broadway.

"Museums are incredibly good anchors for main street revitalization," said John Conway, 69, the county's official historian, who compared the town's Broadway to a smile that has lost its attractiveness. "There are gaps



everywhere," he said. "I don't want to be too negative, but it really is a disaster area. It's been bad for decades." But, he added, "the potential is there for it to be great again."



The facade of the warehouse on Main Street, one of many parts of the Assembly building being restored. Peter Crosby for The New York Times.

The new nonprofit art space is the latest project of the prolific Mexican-born, Brooklyn-based artist Bosco Sodi. The new art space is named Assembly. To create it out of what had once been a Buick dealership, Mr. Sodi worked with the Mexican architect Alberto Kalach to carve galleries out of the yellow-brick, hangar-style building.

Assembly's inaugural exhibition is fittingly devoted to cultural, social and economic exchange, a longtime artistic preoccupation also evident in the artist's new solo exhibition, "What Goes Around Comes Around," on view as an official collateral exhibition of the Venice Biennale. (Mr. Sodi also has an ongoing exhibition of 30 sculptures at the Dallas Museum of Art through July 10.)

"I really believe in the exchange of information, ideas and knowledge among human beings," Mr. Sodi said recently, as he gave a tour of the 23,000-square-foot space. "That's what makes societies evolve."

Mr. Sodi chose the name Assembly to emphasize his hope that it will be a gathering place and a forum for Monticello. Assembly will feature rotating yearlong exhibits and offer educational and community programming. He plans to add a restaurant as well. "In order to become a destination, you need a place to eat," he said with a smile.

Mr. Sodi happened upon the place in fall 2020 as he was celebrating his 50th birthday in nearby Forestburgh, N.Y., where he and his wife, the designer Lucia Corredor, both of whom are based in the Red Hook area of Brooklyn, have a country retreat with their three teenagers and a menagerie of dogs, goats and chickens.

Mr. Sodi's preoccupation with "exchange" unites his big projects this spring with his celebrated art center Casa Wabi on the Pacific Coast of the Mexican province Oaxaca. Founded in 2014, named after the Japanese concept of embracing the ephemeral and imperfect and designed by the Pritzker-Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando, Casa Wabi functions as a foundation with on-site art studios, exhibition space and a residency program. Under Casa



Wabi's auspices, Mr. Sodi also operates an exhibition space called Santa María in Mexico City and an art residency program called Casa Nano in Tokyo.



Above: Sculptures by Mr. Sodi at the art center Casa Wabi in Mexico. Credit: Sergio Lopez and Alejandro Jimenez. Below: Mr. Sodi's exhibition in Venice. Credit Andrea Avezzù.

Assembly's inaugural exhibition has been organized by Dakin Hart, senior curator of the Noguchi Museum in Queens, who worked with Daniela Ferretti to curate Mr. Sodi's exhibition in Venice at Palazzo Vendramin Grimani on the Grand Canal. The work on view in Venice is meant to explore the city's unique history as a hub for global cultural and commercial exchanges.

In Monticello, the new museum's first exhibition is about exchange as well, albeit more obliquely: All the artworks are being rescued from the isolation of storage crates and being re-entered into the world, where they can play their



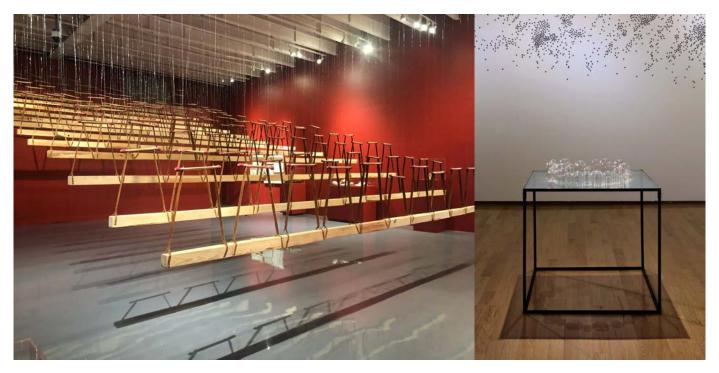
role in the marketplace of ideas. "If someone believes in the power of art as I do, it's very sad to have those powerful objects in a box," Mr. Sodi explained. The exhibition is aptly titled, "Unstored."

The show's organizing concept aims to solve a problem that plagues artists, particularly those who make large-scale works. "A lot of the things come back to you in crates," as Mr. Hart put it, "stacked into every cranny of one's studio."

Mr. Sodi's own work will be on view in the downstairs exhibition space, with some mixed media works in the same vein as those in Venice, and a series made on the commercial burlap sacks that are used to transport Mexican dried chiles.

There will also be sculptures: some of clay; others of ceramic, glazed volcanic rock; and one a miniversion of one of Mr. Sodi's best-known public artworks, "Muro," for which Mr. Sodi created the 6-foot-high, 26-foot- long wall out of Mexican clay in Manhattan's Washington Square Park — and then had the public disassemble it brick by brick — during the first year of the presidency of Donald J. Trump when "Build That Wall!" had become an anti-immigration and anti- Mexican chant at rallies around the nation.

That selection of Mr. Sodi's work will be set against painted rocks by Izumi Kato and large pots by the celebrated ceramist Shiro Tsujimura. Mr. Sodi considers both artists, based mostly in Japan, close friends and major influences on his work.



Left: "Pulso," 2021 by Tania Candiani, who represented Mexico in the Venice Biennale in 2015. Credit Centro Cultural España, México. Right: "Dividirse en el tiempo," 2015, by the Mexican artist Ale de la Puente. Credit Ale de la Puente.

Strewn across the former auto showroom will be two additional distinct shows. The more expansive is a survey of contemporary Mexican sculpture by Mr. Sodi and 16 artists, including Jose Dávila, Gabriela Galván, Ale de la Puente, Tania Candiani, who represented Mexico in the Venice Biennale in 2015; and Mario Navarro, who is Mr. Sodi's studio and project manager for the new museum.



Also on view will be three large-scale works by another of Mr. Sodi's close friends, the Swiss-born, Harlembased Ugo Rondinone.

"Bosco thinks about everything in terms of people." said Mr. Hart. "This first exhibition is a big social map of Bosco's artistic life because it reflects people of importance to him from Mexico, Japan and New York."

Mr. Sodi's plan for all-year programming was good news for the Monticello native Marina Lombardi, who runs Nesin Cultural Arts, a small grass-roots visual and performing arts education program for the region's children and teenagers. "Our population triples to quadruples in the summer, but those of us who live here year-round want to be able to do things in our community," said Mx. Lombardi, who uses gender neutral pronouns.

Mx. Lombardi said the region had become much more ethnically diverse in recent times and expressed delight that Assembly would bring a wide array of artists and artwork from around the globe into the community. But it will be important, they added, that the new museum "is not just serving tourists" and will help economically disadvantaged locals and those unfamiliar with museum-going "feel like they can set foot in such a place."

Mr. Sodi said just as Casa Wabi "emerged as a space that would celebrate art and the surrounding communities," he hoped that Monticello, too, will help shape his new museum. "At the end, art is to better understand ourselves, the earth, other humans. All of the artists here have elements of that in their work," he said.



## The New York Times

### These Are the Art Shows and Events to See This Season

From an enormous roundup of Black American portraits to a two-city retrospective of Jasper Johns, the new art season is buzzing again — and as busy as it ever was.

WILL HEINRICH SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

#### [EXCERPT]

After the pandemic brought museum and gallery shows to a dead stop, last year's racial justice protests lent new urgency to demands that institutions become more transparent, more representative and more diverse. While there's certainly an uptick of shows featuring women and artists of color in this fall preview, there are also many, delayed by Covid-19, that were planned several years ago. For the moment, at least, it feels as if we are picking up just where we left off — with solo blockbusters (like Jasper Johns's, stretching over two cities), art fairs (nearly all in person, again) and ancient treasures (rare ceramics, from Thailand to Mesopotamia). Check museums and fairs for health-related updates: Museums may require proof of vaccination, and fairs may yet migrate back online.

#### September

#### **BOSCO SODI: LA FUERZA DEL DESTINO**

Working between New York and Oaxaca, Mexico, Sodi makes large clay spheres and rectangles whose textures you can almost feel just by looking at them. You can see about 30 in the sculpture garden.



## ELLE

# Space and time, understanding the work of the Mexican artist Bosco Sodi

Bosco's art teaches us to value the accident, to understand it as the beginning of action, as a door to creation.

VALERIA BAQUEIRO JUNE 29, 2021



Works by Mexican artist Bosco Sodi (Courtesy Studio Bosco Sodi)

At one end of the Red Hook neighborhood, Brooklyn, New York, is Studio Bosco Sodi, a place like few others. After a few streets full of brick buildings and industrial buildings, you come to the end of Van Brunt Street; the rest of the way must be covered on foot. To one side, the Statue of Liberty and Manhattan in all its splendor invite us to stop for a few minutes and observe. The view presents one of the most important cities in the world with a unique perspective. It is in this place where many of the works that this great Mexican artist has shared with the world are born.

We had the opportunity to visit the studio and be received by John Rohrer, *studio manager*, who gave us a tour to talk about Bosco's work and listen to some anecdotes, always following the sanitary protocol.





Bosco Sodi, Organic Blue, 2009, mixed media on canvas, 400 x 1200 cm (Courtesy Studio Bosco Sodi)

Upon entering, the environment is transformed: a huge still life that encapsulates all the elements necessary for artistic creation; a carpentry workshop to elaborate the bases of the frames, as well as sawdust (characteristic material of Bosco Sodi's work), vestiges made of pigment from works already completed, a collection of lights to be able to observe every detail of the accident caused by the mix, walls crammed with works with the distinctive crackle and finally, plenty of space.

"In my work, space is fundamental. Perhaps you could say that it is the most important ingredient. I conceive of my work as a series of objects that correspond and belong to a space that they themselves determine." - Bosco Sodi

Space is undoubtedly central to the artist's work. It is this one that is in charge of shaping the crackle, the one that allows us to observe every detail, the one that invites us to move and enjoy the accident, the process of creation; but above all, it is the space in our mind that welcomes new ideas and a greater understanding of art as a process and not just as a result. We could not conceive of a Bosco Sodi without two of its main elements: space and time.



Bosco Sodi, *Untitled*, 2020, mixed media on linen, 200 x 280 cm, Photographer: John Rohrer, (Courtesy Studio Bosco Sodi)



In these times of pandemic and with a year behind that has made us more humble, art allows us to explore within ourselves and realize the fragility and temporality of things. Wabi sabi; accept the temporary and imperfect, that every accident is an opportunity to turn around and create, that the accident is beautiful in itself and connects us both outside and inside.

Whether in an industrial setting, surrounded by concrete like Studio Bosco Sodi in Brooklyn or surrounded by the sea and mountains, with an aesthetic brutalism as the centerpiece within Casa Wabi in Oaxacan lands, the work of the Mexican artist never ceases to amaze us. It reminds us that art is created in moments of action and experimentation and that there are hidden treasures even in the places we least imagine.



Bosco Sodi, Leonor, 2019, mixed media on canvas, 200 x 280 cm, Photographer: John Rohrer, (Courtesy Studio Bosco Sodi)



## Wallpaper\*

### Bosco Sodi's message of post-pandemic hope in New York City

The Mexican artist takes over Manhattan's Washington Square Park on Sunday 23 May, giving away 439 small clay spheres embedded with seeds to spread a message of hope

TF CHAN MAY 22, 2021



Clay spheres created by artist Bosco Sodi for his public art performance *Tabula Rasa*, due to take place in Manhattan's Washington Square Park on Sunday, 23 May 2021.

As the sun rises over Manhattan tomorrow, Mexican artist Bosco Sodi will begin to install 439 small-scale clay spheres at Washington Square Park. Each about the size of a grapefruit, these pieces are the building blocks of his new public artwork and performance, titled *Tabula Rasa*. Over the course of the day, Sodi will invite members of the general public to claim a piece of the installation, until, at dusk, the last piece will be taken away.

The clay spheres won't exactly offer a visual spectacle, but behind their humble appearance is a message of hope. The number 439 refers to the number of days since New York City was first struck by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the installation takes place just as the city roars back to life, with the giveaway element highlighting how solidarity and mutual assistance have been vital to survival and recovery.

The choice of location, too, is significant – Washington Square Park has long been a locus for activism and social justice in the city, having hosted everything from protests against Nazism and the Vietnam War, to demonstrations against the Trump Administration's immigration policies, and to the Black Lives Matter rallies of 2020. It was here that Sodi presented his public installation *Muro* in September 2017, a wall of 1,600 made-in-Mexico clay bricks that



passers-by were invited to dismantle and take home, a symbol of how political and mental hurdles can be overcome by a united community.



The artist in his Red Hook, Brooklyn studio, with some of the clay spheres that will be exhibited and then given away as part of Tabula Rasa, each representing a day of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Then as now, Sodi created his artwork using clay from his Casa Wabi art centre in Puerto Escondido, Mexico. Whereas the clay bricks used in *Muro* (and the monumental sculptures for which Sodi is known) are fired in a traditional kiln to achieve terracotta-hued, cracked and scorched surfaces, the constituent clay spheres of *Tabula Rasa* have been left deliberately unfired. Instead, each contains three types of seed – corn, squash and bean, symbiotic species that have a special place in Central American agriculture. The spheres' new owners are encouraged to plant them in soil, so the seeds will germinate, nourish one another, and continue on into the cycle of life and death.

As the title *Tabula Rasa* (Latin for 'clean slate') suggests, this is a time for New York to start afresh, unencumbered by the scars of the past. Though transitory, Sodi's installation will live on in the backyards and balconies of New Yorkers, celebrating transformation and creative possibility, and offering a poetic reminder that life will always prevail.





# Bosco Sodi brings a hopeful, reflective public art performance to Manhattan

The work invites members of the public to bring home and plant one of 439 small clay spheres, each with seeds inside

DANIEL CASSADY MAY 20, 2021



Tabula Rasa's hand made clay spheres. Courtesy Kasmin Gallery.

Bosco Sodi feels connected to the earth, and to the people who live here. His work reflects that. It is planetary. It has gravity. *Atlantes*, his site-specific work featured over 102,000 clay bricks, hand made by Sodi and a team of local craftsmen, fashioned into 64 massive 7ft cubes that were situated near the Oaxacan coast near Puerto Escondido, Mexico. Sometimes his work feels otherworldly, like *Topographies*, which uses sawdust, pigment, and clay to build



intense, sometimes alien landscape-like works on canvas. But his work is always terrestrial. On 23 May, he is going deeper, underground—figuratively speaking.

With *Tabula Rasa*, a public artwork and performance held in New York City's Washington Square Park, Sodi will bring his love of terra firma to Manhattan and invite people to take some of that passion home with them. Small clay spheres, 439 in total, each with a trio of seeds inside—corn, squash and bean—will be laid out in the park, one sphere for each day the coronavirus pandemic has seized the world. The plants grown from the seeds sustain each other, and members of the public, lovers of art and passers-by are invited to take one sphere home, plant it in the soil, and watch as the work comes literally into fruition.

"This past year has been a time of great reflection: how should the world change? What's our approach to family, to nature, to other humans? What are our values and our approach to life?" Sodi told *The Art Newspaper*. "I thought it would be nice to make an exercise of reflection on the pandemic, but to try to make it something positive. The seeds represent that, and I believe it—in the end life will prevail."

Tabula Rasa has roots in Sodi's last public artwork, *Muro*, also held in Washington Square Park in 2017, which featured an 8m-high wall built out of 1,600 clay bricks. Sodi invited members of the public to take a brick home with them, effectively "tearing the wall down". The project began as a political statement against then president Donald Trump's boarder wall, but while Sodi's motivation was political "some people had a completely different reading," he says, "to them the wall wasn't just political. It was about race, economics, gender." Sodi, who works mostly with abstraction, says he learned a lot that day. "Even if you want to give a significance to your work, it never belongs only to your own reading. And that's beautiful."

The installation, which will begin at dawn and end as the sun sets, when the final sphere has been taken home, is meant to bring together the city's diverse population and "work as beautiful exercise of reflection and new beginnings," Sodi says. "Plus, if everything goes well, people will have two or three wonderful ears of corn to eat."



### Art in America

#### When Process Becomes Form

LILY WEI MARCH 2, 2021



View of Bosco Sodi's exhibition "Perfect Bodies" at Perfect Bodies Auto Collision, 2020. PHOTO CHRISTOPHER STACH; COURTESY KASMIN GALLERY.

The parking lot of Perfect Bodies, a former auto repair shop in Red Hook, hosted an identically titled exhibition by the Mexican-born artist Bosco Sodi. Presented by the nearby Brooklyn nonprofit Pioneer Works and curated by Dakin Hart, senior curator of the Noguchi Museum and Sculpture Garden in Long Island City, it stopped viewers in their tracks. The show was visible anytime through a chain-link fence, but open to the public only on weekends, or by appointment: pandemic rules. But either way, art outdoors was a much-needed boon.

Sodi, a prolific artist with a nearly thirty-year career and an international profile, is best known for two types of work. His jumbo-size monochrome paintings are bulked up with brilliantly colored pigments, their cracked surfaces resembling natural phenomena. His powerful primary structures in a variety of materials are often equally vivid in hue. With a studio in Red Hook, Sodi is a longtime presence in this industrial waterfront neighborhood, where fishing less than perfect bodies out of the surrounding bay was once not uncommon.



The installation's two dozen mottled, irregular clay forms—cuboids and spheroids of various sizes, some weighing upward of 1,000 pounds—were erratically beautiful, depending on the available light. They occupied the space with charismatic assurance, as if they had just touched down from locations unknown, from once and future time zones, like those in a Ted Chiang sci-fi story. These works might seem at home in a wild, overgrown field in a remote region of the world, like remnants of an ancient (or alien) culture stumbled upon by chance. But they were more startling here, where the contrasting industrial site and the handcrafted objects, each a challenge to the other, increased the formal tension. Meanwhile, the fissures in the parking lot pavement reinforced the artist's signature theme, suggesting that despite our ingenuity and best efforts, nature eventually has its way with us.

So why not collaborate? Sodi—deeply engrossed by process, organic materials, and experimentation—is adept at knowing when and how to let go. Antoni Tàpies is a hero of his, as is Joan Miró, and traces of *l'art informel*, Gutai, Zen Buddhist art, Abstract Expressionism, Earth art, and other self-surrendering movements are evident in his work. The sourcing of his pigments and other materials, which come from all over the world, is essential to Sodi's practice. In this instance, the clay was from Oaxaca, where he has a studio in Puerto Escondido, the site of the Tadao Andodesigned international residency he founded in 2014.

The sculptures were fired there in improvised outdoor kilns on the beach and trucked to Brooklyn across the Mexico-United States border, in a kind of symbolic immigration. Their earthy colors, the palette of cave paintings and prehistoric pottery, and their bruised, broken skins—sometimes powdered and gritty, sometimes slicked with patches of glaze—are all contingent, depending on the fortuities of the process. Perfect in their imperfection, these works proclaim Sodi's belief in the non-duplicatable, the incomplete, and, perhaps most affirmatively during the turmoil of the past year, the ongoing.



#### CENTURION

#### Master of Mayhem

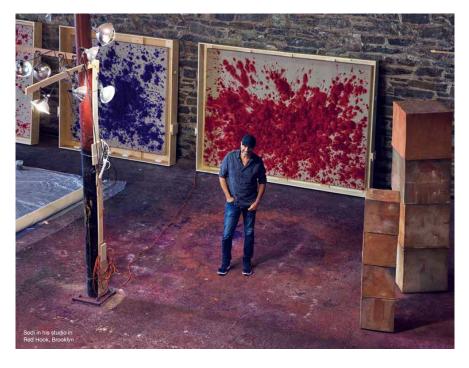
Mexican artist Bosco Sodi's work is both imperfect and unpredictable – and that is precisely its appeal.

**CLAUDIA WHITEUS** WINTER 2020

Art & Design Cover Story

#### Master of Mayhem

Mexican artist Bosco Sodi's work is both imperfect and unpredictable and that is precisely its appeal. By Claudia Whiteus



leafing through a catalogue of an exhibition he'd just visited - that aesthetic of Georges Braque - he learned that the late imperfect and the ephemeral, an approach Cubist artist had used sawdust to texturise that has informed both his work and life in his work. Intrigued, he began incorporating - recent years. An ascendant presence in the sawdust into his paintings, mixing it with pigment and increasingly loving the of vivid, lava-like paintings and sculptures results. One day, he dropped a bucket of the has found its way into prominent public concoction and, it being Friday, left it to dry collections around the globe, from Japan on his studio floor. On Monday, he found it to Australia, and he has held major solo cracked, having somehow come alive on its exhibitions at Blain|Southern in London

signature medium by chance: kind of the philosophy of my work," he says,

He's speaking of wabi-sabi, the Japanese principle that embraces the museum and gallery scene, Sodi's oeuvre

osco Sodi stumbled upon his own. "It was kind of an accident, but that's and New York City's Kasmin Gallery, which currently represents him in the US.

Like the lion's share of his paintings, the 2014 mixed-media on canvas painting gracing this issue's cover remains untitled:
"I want people to really look at the painting - like they're walking through the forest or watching a sunset," he says. "I want everyone to take their own trip through the painting, I want to give a feeling of organicness, of non-human intervention. My paintings really come alive when someone takes a look and makes their own conclusions."

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## It was only after abandoning his studies in chemical engineering and moving to Paris that he considered art as a full-time career





Clockwise from top left: a piece from Sodi's Seven Suns (2020) series, created at Casa Wabi on a burlap sack; the moonscape-like Untitled (2018); Sodi at work in his studio at Casa Wabi, on the Oaxacan coast



career, when a fellow customer at a frame shop offered to buy the watercolour paintings he had created in his little apartment studio. Making a go of it, he and his wife set up shop in a house in Barcelona, which happened to be owned by opera singer José Carreras. Taken with Sodi's work, Carreras introduced him to prominent local gallerists. "After that, things began to develop in an organic way," he says.

Today, Sodi is back in New York after several months at Casa Wabi, on Mexico's Oaxacan coast, where he and his family retreated as the pandemic began. The sunny waterfront complex, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando, plays host to a unique artist-in-residence programme: participants are fully funded

and free to pursue their creative endeavours, but are also asked to interact with the local children and the community at large – many of whom have never had any real contact with the art world.

His approach to making art there was very much a continuation of his trademark improvisational style. "One day while shopping at the local market, I saw these beautiful sacks, made for carrying chilli. They were old and full of stains, but I bought them all, and began working on them with some oil paints I found at Casa Wabi," he says. The result was a collection he's dubbed the Seven Suns, which, like all his works, is a compelling combination of sculpture and painting – and a reminder of how much beauty chance can bring. •

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Two of Sodi's untitled works, from 2012 (top) and 2016, demonstrate the eye-dazzling possibilities of his mixed-media process

Sodi himself approaches his work with a likewise open mind, describing the process as an almost therapeutic experience. "In the studio, I completely disconnect," he explains. "I'm not thinking of anything at all, I completely relax. I begin to work and then after ten minutes I begin to go automatically."

Sodi created our cover painting - part of a collection of outsized canvases up to three by four metres - in preparation for a show in Porto, using a special carbon-black pigment sourced from India. "There are very few times everything goes well when you're painting, but this time, everything was perfect," he says. Having completed the series in record time, he celebrated with a boat trip through the Douro Valley, only to find the paintings covered in mould upon his return. It took ardent research and manpower (for several days, his family helped haul the heavy paintings outside to sit in the sun). In the end, wabi-sabi won out. "The stains left behind by the mould made parts of the black even blacker. It made them completely unique - beautiful."

The fortuitous experiment illustrates another aspect central to Sodi's art. A 21stcentury nomad of sorts, the Mexico Cityborn talent is a prolific traveller, with studios in Brooklyn, Mexico and Barcelona, and has painted all over the world, including Berlin, where he is represented by Eigen + Art. "My work is site-specific," Sodi explains. Using the same methods, the varying temperature and humidity conditions of each place affect the alchemy of his processes, as do the varying shades and consistencies of the local sawdust. "I was in Berlin in the winter; the radiators there dry out the air completely," says Sodi. "The paintings I created there have very powerful cracks because the drying process was so quick."

The seeds of Sodi's globetrotting career were planted early on. Diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia as a child ("the dream team", he quips), his mother put him into Montessoristyle art classes as a form of therapy, where he quickly noticed how it centred and calmed him. Still, it was only after abandoning his studies in chemical engineering and moving to Paris that he considered art as a full-time >





CENTURION-MAGAZINE.COM 67



## Wallpaper\*

# Bosco Sodi on Minimalism, imperfection, and the emotive power of art

As painter and sculptor Bosco Sodi opens major solo shows in Malagá, Manhattan and Brooklyn, we visit his studio to discover a creative process that embraces the accidents of nature. A version of this story will appear in the December 2020 issue of Wallpaper\*, on newsstands 12 November

TF CHAN
DECEMBER 2020







Artist Bosco Sodi, photographed in his Brooklyn studio on 18 September, in front of an untitled white painting now on view at his solo exhibition, 'Vers l'Espagne' at Kasmin Gallery, New York

Bosco Sodi's painting studio is set in a mid-19th-century warehouse in Red Hook, Brooklyn, a long, cavernous space with austere stone walls, exposed ceiling beams, and towering doors that open onto the waterfront. With its impressive proportions, it could comfortably accommodate a small army of technicians and assistants. Indeed, given the scale of Sodi's work (the titular painting for his 2010 show 'Pangaea', at the Bronx Museum, measured 400 x 1,200 cm), one imagines a similarly sizable studio team. Yet Sodi prefers to work by himself, relying on an assistant only for the most physically demanding tasks.

'I prefer to have nobody here. Painting is a very intimate process, so I don't like having my concentration broken,' he says.

Sodi's paintings are driven by materials: pigments, often in striking hues that push the limits of the human eye, personally sourced from around the world (India, Morocco and Japan are a few favourite spots); sawdust, collected from workshops near his studio rather than ordered to custom specifications; glue and water. He personally mixes them in giant buckets, intuiting the measurements as he figures out the ingredients' specific chemical properties. Likewise, he likes to assemble his own canvas stretchers and stretch his own canvases, insisting that touch and feel are essential to 'that exchange of energy between the artist and the object'.





Sodi creates his own paints from dyes that he personally sources from around the world – seen here is an orange dye that he stumbled upon while travelling in India with his father Juan

Lying the canvases flat atop upturned buckets, he throws on fistfuls of paints with his bare hands, splattering layer upon layer over a four to five day period. 'And when I see the first crack, I stop totally and let the painting go by itself. Because if I get into the painting when it's already becoming alive, I will alter the outcome, and it would not have that natural and organic feeling.'

Left out to dry for a few weeks, a painting develops further cracks and fissures that evoke the arid landscapes of Sodi's native Mexico. Finally, Sodi stands it up and properly sees it for the first time. He relishes the fact that the outcome is impossible to predict: 'That's what makes me come every day to the studio – the excitement of not knowing what's going to happen.' Time, as it turns out, is a brilliant co-creator. Vivid as the works-in-progress may be, it's the finished pieces with their weathered surfaces that linger longer in the viewer's memory, able to summon the same awe and wonder as ancient fossils.





Left: The dyes are mixed with sawdust (collected from workshops near his studio), glue and water within giant buckets, taking on a slurry-like consistency. Right: Sodi lies his canvases flat and then throws on fistfuls of the slurry with his bare hands, in deliberate and powerful movements

As Sodi focuses on one colour at a time, his shows of new work tend to be monochromatic. In early September he opened 'Ergo Sum' at the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo in Málaga, Spain, featuring a series of black paintings. For his birthday last year, Sodi had received a small container of pigment from his son of 'the blackest black', a material that absorbs so much light that it obliterates any semblance of texture from the surface it coats. Captivated by the material, the artist proceeded to acquire it in large quantities to create paintings that meditate on nothingness: inscrutable from afar, they only reveal themselves as complex topographies when the viewer draws close.

A more recent show, 'Vers l'Espagne' at Kasmin Gallery, New York has five entirely white works, each measuring 268 x 353 cm. They pay homage to three paintings of the same dimensions by Joan Miró, titled *Peinture sur fond blanc pour la cellule d'un solitaire* (painting on a white background for the cell of a recluse). Miró's originals consisted of blank white canvases each embellished with a solitary trembling line – an ostensibly simple gesture that spoke volumes about minimalism and freedom. The same ideas animate Sodi's artistic practice, and so his admiration for Miró is no coincidence. Since his first encounter in 1992, at the age of 22, he has returned to Barcelona's Fundació Joan Miró many times to see these paintings (for part of the noughties, Sodi lived in the Spanish city and would visit the paintings every month).





Sodi spends four to five days on each painting, stopping as soon as he sees the first cracks. The painting is then left out to dry for another few weeks, so it develops natural cracks and crevices that call to mind the arid landscapes of the artist's native Mexico

Whereas Miró's work was a pure expression of the artist's intention, Sodi's tribute incorporates elements of nature: he thought of his house in upstate New York, with a small lake that is frozen and blanketed with snow in the winter. In the same way, Sodi used to hit the snow with tree branches to create imprints, he now applied a surface treatment to his white paintings. 'So I went upstate and chose branches whose rhythms I liked. And I began to create paintings the same way I always have. But once I was done putting the material on, and while it was still completely fresh, I marked the branches on the paintings,' he recalls. 'I wanted to give this sensation of purity, of simplicity, while keeping a resemblance to the organic.'

The same deference to nature and chance is evident in Sodi's sculptural works within the Kasmin show – six monumental terracotta-hued blocks, made from local clay at his Casa Wabi art centre in Puerto Escondido, Mexico. Formed by hand, dried in the sun and then fired in a traditional kiln with coconuts, wood and jacaranda seeds, their geometric forms are tempered by their cracked and scorched surfaces. Sodi calls the pieces 'pre-industrial minimalist'. 'American Minimalism was based on perfection, here it is the contrary.'





Left: Unpacking a rock sculpture, shipped from Sodi's Mexico City studio and made of solidified magma from the Ceboruco volcano in western Mexico. Right: Earlier artworks in the studio, including paintings on linen (left) and urushi panel (right)

A borough away, back in Red Hook, Sodi is presenting another series of clay sculptures in the most un-gallery-like of settings: a commercial outdoor parking lot. Against a backdrop of concrete and corrugated steel, he is showing large-scale spheres and cubes that were likewise created at Casa Wabi. The title, 'Perfect Bodies', is derived from the auto body shop that used to occupy the site (a sign bearing the name 'Perfect Bodies Auto Collision' remains on view), but also a clever commentary on the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, which embraces imperfection and has been a driving force of Sodi's work for many years.

The installation's curator, Dakin Hart, describes its sculptures as 'the petrified remnants – or organic vanguard – of a Jurassic invasion'. But beyond conjuring a prehistoric past or imagining a dinosaur-dominated future, Sodi hopes that 'Perfect Bodies' will root his viewers in the present, offering a breath of fresh air to those who have only recently returned to seeing art in person.

Despite the pandemic, it has been a prolific few months for Sodi – in addition to his trio of shows, he's also published two books: a monograph with Rizzoli, and a pocket-sized volume of his own reflections on art and life with Mexico City-based Dharma Books and Publishing. Both have offered Sodi an opportunity to take stock of his practice, but it's the latter, presented as a series of short paragraphs, that offers us the clearest picture of his intentions: 'I wish the viewer might capture the ungraspable and that my work awakens his deepest feelings,' he writes. 'My desire is to give viewers a new point of reference that reminds them that life is a profoundly magical experience.'



## The New York Times

#### 4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

SIDDHARTHA MITTER DECEMBER 16, 2020



Installation view of "Bosco Sodi: Perfect Bodies" at Perfect Bodies Auto Collision in Brooklyn. Credit..Bosco Sodi and Kasmin Gallery; Christopher Stach

#### [EXTRACT]

Only the sign survives from Perfect Bodies, a defunct auto body shop near the Red Hook waterfront in Brooklyn, part of an industrial site awaiting redevelopment. This fall, the sculptor Bosco Sodi, whose studio is nearby, borrowed the lot, and also the name, for his installation of more than two dozen rust-colored clay spheres that transform the space from something scruffy and marginal to a source of mysterious, ancient energy.

The orbs, of different sizes, are from the Oaxaca region, where Mr. Sodi, who is Mexican, has built a beachfront artists' retreat; there, he dried them for months in open air before firing them in a traditional brick kiln. Perfectly imperfect, the spheres — and three cuboids made the same way, placed in the lot's corners — are uneven, blistered, sometimes cracked, the natural results of the process that the artist embraces.

Brought by truck to Red Hook — where the installation is presented by Pioneer Works and curated by Dakin Hart, of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation — Mr. Sodi's elemental objects lurk, glower, or bask, depending on the light, the weather, and the visitor's imagination. Free to view this weekend and then by appointment until Jan. 3 — a good outdoor urban destination in pandemic times — they inspire by their indeterminacy, their acceptance and their beauty.



### **ARTnews**

### Artist Bosco Sodi Brings Giant Orbs of Clay to a Brooklyn Parking Lot

ANDY BATTAGLIA
DECEMBER 4, 2020



Bosco Sodi's "Perfect Bodies" at Perfect Bodies Auto Collision. Photo by Christopher Stach

Sitting in an outcast Brooklyn lot that could serve as a site for idle automotive work or an incongruous presidential press conference are 24 clay orbs that weigh as much as 1,000 pounds and take on different properties as the light changes over the course of a day. Each was made by the sculptor and painter Bosco Sodi, who started by shaping balls of wet clay and leaving them out to dry for four months in the shadows and then three months in the sun. After that they went into a kiln, to be fired for 16–24 hours at temperatures rising above 1,2000 degrees. From there, they moved into the back of a container truck and traveled from Oaxaca, Mexico, to Red Hook, the industrial Brooklyn neighborhood where they are living now outside the former home of Perfect Bodies Auto Collision.

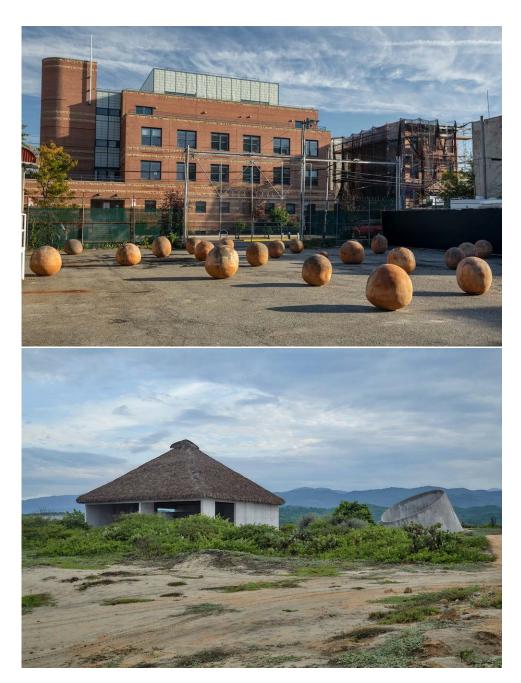
"It's nice to decontextualize them," Sodi said recently during a walk around his work. "I like to see them as objects come to a completely different habitat."

The outdoor exhibition "Perfect Bodies," which opened in October in collaboration with the nearby art space Pioneer Works and runs through December 20, is a few blocks from where Sodi lives when he's not in Oaxaca. Down there, he works in the context of Casa Wabi, an artist retreat he established and built with designs by the storied architect Tadao Ando. The clay comes from a surrounding town known for making ceramic tiles, and it evinces different qualities after being burned with materials wood, coconut skins, and jacaranda seeds—"anything I can find that is



combustible," Sodi said. "I like to use different fuel types to get different textures and different colors. It becomes a kind of painting—painting that is not controlled at all."

Certain of the orbs are marked with a sort of shine; others are gritty and bare, with cracks and disfigurements. "Some of them glaze by themselves. Some don't glaze at all," Sodi said. "I accept all the accidents that happen to the clay. If a part comes out during the burning, it's part of the process."



Above: Bosco Sodi's "Perfect Bodies" at Perfect Bodies Auto Collision. Photo by Christopher Stach. Below: Casa Wabi in Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Sergio-Alejandro Lopez Jimenez.

The earthiness of the enterprise is what interests Sodi most. "Clay has been a very important factor in human evolution," he said of a material that for him evokes the four elements (earth, water, fire, air). "Clay was one of the



first tools that humans used, to carry oil, to carry water. And it's all connected [in ways] you can see in any culture. The beginnings of clay pots in Japan or Korea—they're very similar because they come from human instinct."

Oaxaca is where Sodi spent the first few months of pandemic-related confinement with his family in the spring, with a cultural regimen in place. "I had a family meeting and said, 'We can go to Casa Wabi, but we have to do things. We can't just go there to avoid everything.'" For his teenage children, he drew up lists of movies to watch and books to read. (Among the movies: epics by Akiro Kurasawa, thrillers by Quentin Tarantino, *The Bicycle Thieves, Battleship Potemkin*. And the books: Gabriela Garcia Marquez, Junichiro Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows, Renoir, My Father* by Jean Renoir, *I Confess I Have Lived* by Pablo Neruda.)

They also teamed with others around them to build a much-needed convenience store—"a typical corner store that sells everything," he said of an operation he likened to a more charming 7-Eleven that also sells local crafts and wares like mezcal and hats. "There was no store there and it was necessary for the community. We wanted to do something positive during this terrible nightmare."

The spirit behind the Brooklyn exhibition was in certain ways the same. With Dakin Hart, who curated the installation (and who also works as a senior curator at the Noguchi Museum in Queens), Sodi—while working on a show at Kasmin gallery in Chelsea that opened at the same time and closed in November—identified a location suited for our current times. The outdoor milieu proved to be an issue when a gust of wind managed to roll one of the weighty orbs out of place. "I moved it back and I put some small stones underneath," Sodi said.

But it has its upsides too. "It's nice to do something that people can walk around and and see a bit of culture."



## ELEPHANT

# Bosco Sodi's Paintings Are Reminiscent of Extraterrestrial Topography

Wallace Ludel meets the Mexican artist in his airplane-hanger like Brooklyn studio to discuss Cubism, cracked paint and the beauty of leaving things to chance.

WALLACE LUDEL NOVEMBER 2, 2020



Installation view of Atlantes, 2019. Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Serigio López. Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery

I first saw Bosco Sodi's colossal studio in Red Hook, Brooklyn, some six or seven years ago. It was the summer after I graduated from art school and, like so many others, I was bouncing around New York, freelancing as an art handler and studio assistant. This is when I found myself helping Sodi's assistant to fabricate the massive, custom crates used to transport his paintings. The studio itself feels as spacious as an aeroplane hangar, and it sits on a pier that extends over New York Harbor. As you approach the front door, the Statue of Liberty stands to your right at such close proximity it's as if you could carelessly skip a rock and hit it. After all these years in New York, it remains the best view of the statue that I've ever seen.

The studio floor is a rough, multi-hued terrain reminiscent of a sci-fi film. It rises and falls with the same vibrantly coloured, earthy texture found in Sodi's paintings; a result of the artist creating the works as they lie horizontally on the ground (think of the famous floor of Pollock's East Hampton studio but, instead of dripped paint, it's scattered



mounds of Sodi's ineffable colours and textures). Two Porsches sit parked in the back of the workspace, one—a red 1967 Porsche 912—has a sign in the rear window, advertising it for \$55,000. "I'm selling that one," says Sodi. "It's too difficult to maintain."



Bosco Sodi, Untitled, 2019. Mixed media on canvas. Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery

The surfaces of his paintings are made primarily from a mixture of sawdust, glue, raw pigments and latex; an alchemical combination that together forms a vibrant, rough plain that recalls extraterrestrial topography as much as it invokes the dry landscape of the artist's native Mexico. As the mixture dries, deep cracks form in it, something Sodi has learned to embrace over the years.

In 2002, he visited an exhibition of works by Georges Braque, the French painter who, along with Picasso, shaped cubism in the early twentieth century. He bought a show catalogue as a gift for his mother. "I got it because my mother loves cubism," he tells me, "I was reading it on the train back and I read that Braque, when he wanted to give texture to a painting, would use sawdust mixed in his oil paints. Before that I was using marble dust and sand and other typical things that artists use. So I began experimenting with sawdust. At the beginning I was very shy, just using a little bit, and then one time I was at my studio and I put too much in the mixture. When I was leaving the studio with my kids (they used to come by and we would go to the beach; these were the good old times in Barcelona) I dropped the bucket. They were eager to leave so we left the mixture on the floor. That was Friday, and when I came in on Monday, it was this huge chunk of material with cracks. It was beautiful." Today, Sodi maintains studios in New York, Barcelona and Mexico. He sources his sawdust from local shops, while his raw pigments stem from countries all over the world, such as Morocco, India, Mexico and Japan.

"You know how Anish Kapoor bought the rights to a pure black?" he asks me as we discuss the pigments. "Well, I got a better one." He pulls off the protective tarp that has been hanging over one of his paintings and shows me a massive canvas with a black so deep that it hardly reflects light, vacuuming it up like a hole rather than being



articulated by it. "In pure pigment, these absorb 99.5 per cent of light," he says. "When you mix it with latex, like I do, it absorbs maybe 88 per cent." At the time of speaking, the black paintings are packed up and will soon be heading to Spain by boat for an exhibition at CAC Málaga.



Above: Installation view of *Bosco Sodi, We are the Garden, the Garden Is Us.* February 3–April 1, 2020. Botanical Garden of Oaxaca. Photo by Sergio López. Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery. Below: Portrait by Don Stahl.

In 2014 Sodi founded the Casa Wabi Foundation in Oaxaca, a non-profit artist residency programme named after the Japanese term wabi-sabi: meaning an outlook that embraces chance and imperfection. "I have always tried to be very open to accidents, non-control and chance. I try to embrace that in my practice," he says of the name, adding, "to paint or make sculpture, it's therapy. It would be very boring to come in and do everything the same. It would be better to go to an office every day from 9 to 5. I try to implement the mindset and to be open to the accidents." In addition to hosting large exhibitions and providing the visiting artists with housing and studio space, Casa Wabi



requires that its residents carry out projects with the local communities. "The artists don't host painting workshops or little things like that," he tells me. "They have to propose something with substance and something that will really make a change. Maybe not an immediate, perceptive change, but something for the future."

For his current show at Kasmin, Sodi is exhibiting a body of new white paintings. These works were executed recently, and came out of a fascination with a Joan Miró painting that he saw in Barcelona. (Sodi and his family spent ten years living in Barcelona, moving there initially so his wife could pursue a master's degree in economics). The Miró paintings, Peinture sur Fond Blanc Pour la Cellule d'un Solitaire (Painting on White Background for the Cell of a Recluse), which are housed in the Joan Miró Foundation in Barcelona, are a series of white canvases with a single black line running through each. The Spanish artist painted them as a septuagenarian in the late 1960s. "When Miró was able to reach this amazing simplicity, he was beyond everything," says Sodi, who would visit the Miró museum every month or so during his years in Barcelona. "I love those paintings. You have to be old to make those kinds of paintings, when you don't care about anything, you know?"



Installation view of Atlantes, 2019. Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Serigio López. Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery

For this body of work, the Miró influence met another longstanding inspiration: nature. Sodi and a friend drove around his Catskills property (where he spends his weekends) looking for trees with well-articulated, fractal-like limbs. First Sodi tried whipping the branches against the snow on his property to see its effect, then he brought them back to his Brooklyn studio. There, he applied his mixture involving sawdust and pigment (white pigment, this time) but rather than allowing the material to dry and crack naturally, as it is inclined to do, he whipped it with the branches when it was still wet. When I tell him I can't help but think of the Abstract Expressionists standing over their canvases, Sodi nods, telling me, "It's physical, and there's an exchange of energy between the painting and the artist." In addition to the long ruptures the branches make in the material, bits of twigs get stuck in it by chance, which remain embedded as it dries and become part of the work.

"I've always had a connection with nature. When I was young I was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, etcetera; I found ways of calming myself which included painting and being in nature. Relating to people can be difficult for me," he explains, after I prod as to where this desire to re-present and work with organic forms comes from. "When I was young I used to go to my grandparents' house in the forest every weekend. A few



years ago we bought a house upstate. It is a dream to go there; we have goats and chickens and a small lake. When I'm in New York, we go every weekend."



Installation view of Bosco Sodi, We Are the Garden, the Garden Is Us. February 3–April 1, 2020. Botanical Garden of Oaxaca. Photo by Sergio López. Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery

At the time of our meeting, Sodi has just returned from a long trip to Egypt with his family. The idea came after the artist encountered a Richard Serra interview, in which he noted the influence from ancient tombs. Sodi shows me a blue and white painting that is in progress; the work is lying horizontally on four buckets as it dries. This painting was inspired by the ceilings of Egyptian tombs, which are painted to resemble the sky so that the dead may find their way upwards towards the afterlife.

I ask him, with a practice that feels so earthly and distinctly rooted, and yet with a lifestyle that appears so sweepingly nomadic, when is he the happiest? "After the last few weeks of travelling, I need to come back to paint. To reconnect and relax, otherwise I have too many things in my mind," he says. "For happy moments? I love to be with family, I love to be in the Catskills, but I also love to be in Casa Wabi, and to be with my friends." He nods, adding, "There are a lot of happy moments."

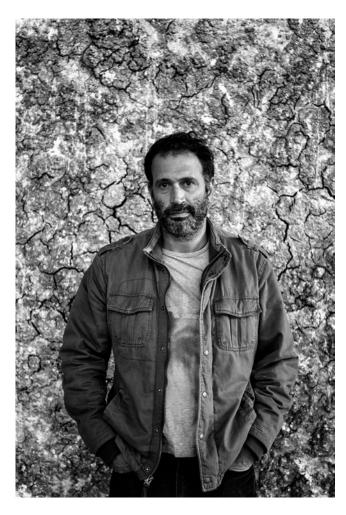




### A Beautiful Mess

The chaotic artistry of Mexican talent Bosco Sodi is on full display at two NYC shows

TOM BURSON OCTOBER 2020



Imperfect, impermanent and incomplete: these are the guiding principles of the Japanese aesthetic *wabi-sabi*, and they guide the unique creations of Mexican artist Bosco Sodi, whose latest installations have taken up shop at two New York City galleries.

More than twenty hulking balls and cubes built from ruddy Oaxacan clay decorate the gallery floors of Brooklyn's Pioneer Works. The creation, Sodi's latest installation Perfect Bodies (until 20 December), is a curious synthetises between minimalism and the contemporary "Land art" movement that highlights the artistic purity and rawness of dirt from the artist's home studio Casa Wabi in Oaxaca. In the words of the artist himself, it speaks to "silence, contemplation and the passing of time – small things in life and our relationship with earth".



Perfect Bodies, Photo by Sergio Alejandro Lopez Jimenez

While Perfect Bodies celebrates the natural surroundings of Sodi's Mexican home, at Kasmin Gallery, the installation Vers l'Espagne (until 12 November) examines Sodi's influences – Eduardo Chillida, Manolo Millares, Joan Miró, among others – from his time in Spain. Consisting of five large-scale paintings along with some freestanding clay sculptures, the exhibition demonstrates the powerful simplicity of elemental materials conceived through Sodi's open-minded, almost therapeutic approach. In one series Peinture sur fond blanc pour la cellule d'un solitaire, the artist specifically recalls the experience of seeing Miró's works in Barcelona, which he describes as "a feeling of warmth, calmness and repose". And it's a feeling he hopes to evoke within his own paintings.



Vers l'Espagne, Photo by Diego Flores

"I want people to really look at the painting – like they're walking through the forest of watching a sunset," says Sodi about his own work in an interview with Centurion Magazine, which showcases one of the artist's paintings on the cover of its upcoming edition. "I want everyone to take their own trip through the painting, I want to give a feeling of organicness, of non-human intervention. My paintings really come alive when someone takes a look and makes their own conclusions."

Our full cover story on Bosco Sodi appears in the Winter 2020 issue of Centurion Magazine under the headline "Master of Mayhem."



Photo by Sergio Alejandro Lopez Jimenez



Photo by Diego Flores

# Galerie

## Bosco Sodi Embraces the Japanese Philosophy of Wabi-Sabi in Quarantine

The artist has been busy creating new works at his Tadao Ando-designed art foundation on the coast of Mexico

LUCY REES MAY 29, 2020



Bosco Sodi's palapa-style studio at Casa Wabi features concrete walls topped by a traditional thatched roof, a design conceived by Pritzker Prizewinning architect Tadao Ando.

Located in the sun-drenched Mexican town of Puerto Escondido overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Casa Wabi is a creative haven for artists and the local community that feels a million miles away from the rest of the world. It's little wonder, then, that the artist Bosco Sodi—who founded the art foundation in 2014—felt it would be the perfect place to hunker down with his wife and three children when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and quarantine orders were put into effect. "When they announced that schools were going to be closed, we decided to come straight here," says Sodi, who also maintains studios in New York (his primary residence) and Barcelona.

Named after the Japanese aesthetic philosophy of wabi-sabi, in which imperfections are celebrated, the sprawling seaside compound was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando and provides residences for visiting artists, exhibition spaces, a ceramics studio, and programs for local schools. "One of the perspectives I wanted to share with my kids was that this is a very serious moment, but we have to make the best of it. We came to



Casa Wabi to be in nature, to create some interesting projects together, and to work on the foundation," he tells Galerie after being there for two months now. "Seeing the positive side of this was really important."





Bosco Sodi's recent stacked-clay forms made during quarantine.

For his part, Sodi has been busy working on a new series of ceramics and experimenting with different types of clay work, which due to their enormous size are going to take around six months to dry. Misshapen rectangular forms using raw earth are loosely stacked upon one another in columns, and monumental spherical forms resemble globes or planets.

The artist has also been working on a new series using burlap bags he found in a market that were once used to carry dry chilies. Replacing the uniform surface of a traditional canvas, he paints the rough texture of the sacks with vibrant circles in red, yellow, and orange. Deeply inspired by Arte Povera, the avant-garde Italian art movement founded in the 1960s that makes use of humble, everyday materials, Sodi says: "Here at Casa Wabi, the sunsets are so beautiful, so I have been painting a sun on the cloth. I am very happy with them." The director of Sodi's gallery in Brazil, Luciana Brito, has already asked to showcase them in an upcoming exhibition for the space in São Paolo.





Sodi at Casa Wabi.



New works created by Sodi in quarantine.



"The works relate to the perfection and state of how we were living, and now we are rebuilding and things are changing shape," he says. Indeed, Sodi's practice can be characterized by an exploration of the power of material, guided by a deep spiritual connection to the art. Describing his creative process as "controlled chaos," Sodi is showcasing his extensive oeuvre in a new book by Rizzoli (the first comprehensive publication of his work) that comes out in July.



A planter for a bonsai tree made during quarantine.

Under normal circumstances, Sodi maintains a busy schedule, traveling around the world for his many exhibition openings at the nine galleries that represent him, including Kasmin in New York, where he was due to have an exhibition in April. (The show, titled "Ver l'Espagne" is now slated for October.) "The reality is that time moves much slower here," he says, "and I have more time to work on all these things." Days are spent going for swims in the ocean, reading, listening to music, and making improvements on the grounds—including overseeing the construction of a pavilion designed by Solano Benítez, the Paraguayan architect who won the Golden Lion for best participant at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016.

Sodi has also been going through his writing from the past 20 years, all of which is preserved at the estate. "I have been writing about art for a long time, and I have been arranging all of my texts to publish a simple book about my art and art in general." Working with an important editor from Mexico, he plans for the book to be called In Quarantine. "It's one of those projects that I have always wanted to do but never had the time."





A view of Casa Wabi.

As the world at large has been forced to slow down during this period, Sodi hopes we will see long-term changes for the better. "I hope that art will be less about the market, but we will focus again on the soul of the works," he says. "So many of my artist friends said they had no time for reflection and for putting roots in a place. I want to show my children that the most important thing in life is the connection with other human beings, with the earth, and with nature, and the importance of friendship and family. We must look at the beauty of life—even when you are in quarantine in your house and you look at a beautiful painting or sculpture and you think, Life is still beautiful, no?"



A view of the ceramics workshop at Casa Wabi.



# Wallpaper\*

## Ahead of his Hong Kong show, Bosco Sodi meditates on painting as therapy

On view from 13 February, the Mexican artist's solo exhibition at Axel Vervoordt is the culmination of a two-week residency in the city

CATHERINE SHAW FEBRUARY 6, 2020



Artist Bosco Sodi at work during his residency in Hong Kong. Photography: Ngai Lung Tai of Random Art Workshop. Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

Mexican artist Bosco Sodi's signature lava-like material paintings – an otherworldly combination of intense monochrome pigment, sawdust, pulp, natural fibres and glue – have been given an intriguing twist following his two-week artist residency at Axel Vervoordt's Hong Kong gallery. The uncharacteristically large body of work, part of a solo exhibition opening on 13 February, encapsulates the artist's familiar use of lush colours and organic earthiness.

But when Sodi started working in the airy, light-filled, industrial loft in Wong Chuk Hang, he found the locally sourced sawdust absorbs pigments completely differently, transforming the results. 'When I paint in Berlin the sawdust is very dark; in Mexico the one I get is very white,' he says.





*Untitled,* 2019, by Bosco Sodi, mixed media on canvas. Photography: Ngai Lung Tai of Random Art Workshop. Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

This is also the first time the artist has worked with turquoise, although it has long had an emotional connection for him. Sodi explains, 'The colour reminds me of my childhood and [the Mexico edge of] the Caribbean Sea, the Agua Azul waterfalls, and cenotes. It is also my mother's favourite colour.'

Sodi mixes his own paints and stretches linen specially sourced from South Korea to create the canvases, before starting to work quickly on several of varying sizes at the same time, applying the dense, wet, organic mixture in rough layers by hand, adding handfuls and smearing and pushing the material until the first major fissure appears as it dries and contracts. 'It is a very organic and instinctive process,' he notes.

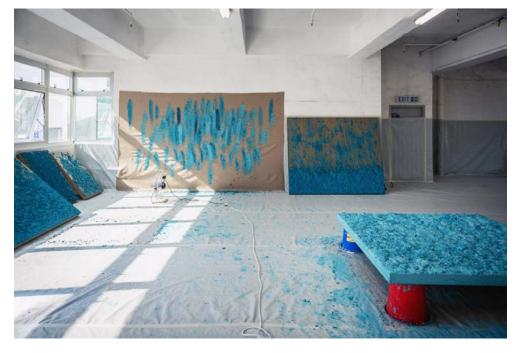
The artist finds the process of making his art meditative. When, as a young boy, he was diagnosed with dyslexia and hyperactivity, his mother took him to an art class. 'Painting became an escape for me. This is my therapy in a way and I still prefer to work quietly without any disturbance.' The show has 17 paintings ranging from 26.5 x 17.5cm to 180 x 220cm, but each monochromatic surface is different in its own interesting ways with a distinct materiality, from the small exuberant pieces like molten volcanic lava bubbling on the surface to the larger works' sheer, raw, visceral landscapes. Some are dramatically slashed as if the material had split.

It is the curious combination of control and spontaneity that excites Sodi the most. 'I focus much more on the process than on the outcome,' he says. 'The shape and scale of the canvas, the painting as an object that transmits meaning — everything else becomes secondary to the experience of colour. What matters is the power of what you see.' The untitled works are presented alongside five clay sculptures shaped and smoothed by hand into precise cubes and circles before being fired at Sodi's Casa Wabi studio in Mexico in a traditional brick kiln, giving the clay a terracotta hue.





Both: *Untitled*, 2019, by Bosco Sodi, mixed media on canvas. Photography: Ngai Lung Tai of Random Art Workshop. Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery.



Sodi's works in progress at Axel Vervoordt Hong Kong. Photography: Ngai Lung Tai of Random Art Workshop. Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery.



# Galerie

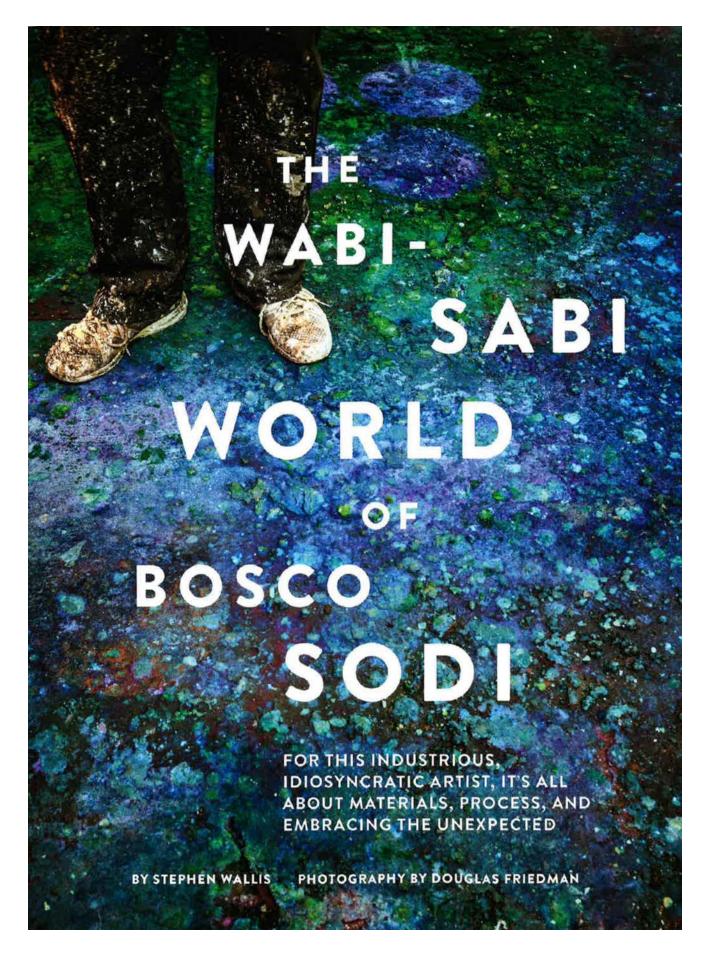
### The Wabi-Sabi World of Bosco Sodi

For this industrious, idiosyncratic artist, it's all about materials, process, and embracing the unexpected  $\frac{1}{2}$ 

STEPHEN WALLIS PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN MARCH 5, 2019











hen Hurricane Sandy
barreled through New
York City in 2012, few
neighborhoods were hit as
hard as Red Hook, on the
Brooklyn waterfront. After
the storm surge receded, the
pier at the end of Van Brunt
Street was stained scarlet, like

the remnants of a brutal crime scene perhaps. And, indeed, the devastation that confronted the artists, nonprofits, and businesses occupying the pier's 1860s brick-and-stone warehouses was horrible. Bosco Sodi, whose washed-away cache of pigments was responsible for the red residue, lost 18 of the process-intensive paintings he is best known for—their cracked and densely encrusted surfaces calling to mind lava fields or desert landscapes, often in vivid monochrome hues. A year's worth of his work was gone.

"We were completely destroyed, so we had to renew totally," recounts the Mexican-born Sodi, who made New York his base a decade ago and lives in Red Hook with his wife, Lucia Corredor, owner of the vintage-furniture store Decada in Mexico City, and their three children, Bosco, Mariana, and Alvaro. He says it took around four months to clean up and renovate the sprawling space, which features 25-foot-high stone walls topped by a trussed timber ceiling: "During that time, I wasn't able to paint at all. Looking back, while it was obviously a disaster, it made me reflect and go more slowly, and that was ultimately a good thing."



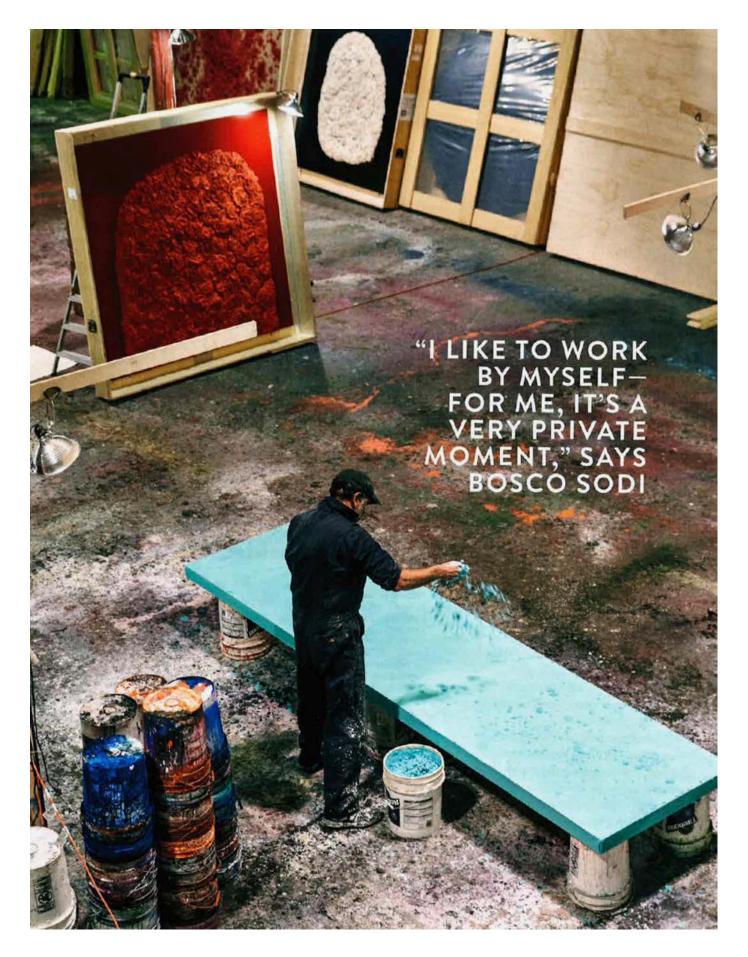
From left: Sodi makes his paintings by thickly layering a pigment-andsawdust mixture onto the canvas with his hands. Standing side by side are two very different works; they can take up to several weeks to dry, cracking and transforming in unforeseeable ways. Opposite: Sodi lays his canvases flat atop large buckets, making it easy for him to move around them as he applies the plament mixture.

After a brief pause and reset, Sodi has maintained a remarkably busy, border-hopping art practice that stands out even in today's globalized world. Represented by nine galleries, he maintains studios in three countries, each focused on specific aspects of his creative output. His New York and Barcelona spaces are devoted to painting. In Mexico City (his hometown), he transforms volcanic rocks into sculptural objects by coating them in eye-catching glazes—including a 17K-gold mixture—and firing them at extreme temperatures. And Puerto Escondido, on Mexico's Oaxacan coast, is where he works with

clay, hand-molding cubes and bricks to create the minimalist stacks he calls "Caryatids" and "Atlantes" in reference to the female and male figures that decorate support columns in classical architecture.

But Puerto Escondido is more than just another home and workspace. There, Sodi has collaborated with several celebrated architects, including Tadao Ando, Kengo Kuma, and Álvaro Siza, to design an expansive oceanfront compound that also functions as a nonprofit arts center. Named Casa Wabi—after the Japanese aesthetic philosophy wabi-sabi, which prizes imperfection, rusticity, and simplicity—the complex features residences for visiting artists, exhibition spaces, a ceramics-teaching

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workshop, gardens for native flora, a mobile library, and programs for nearby schools. The subject of a new book, Casa Wabi, published by Rizzoli, the five-year-old center continues to evolve. "We've already hosted more than 240 artists, and we have worked with more than 16,000 kids in the community," says Sodi. "But I wanted the foundation to be very wabi-sabi—very changeable and flexible—and we're working on making our social programs even stronger."

Sodi entrusts the day-to-day running of Casa Wabi to his sister Carla Sodi Ambrosi, as he spends the majority of his time in New York. Days in his Red Hook studio tend to start early, and not infrequently he is alone, stretching his canvases and blending the mixture of pigment, sawdust, glue, and water that he uses to make his paintings. "I like to work by myself—for me, it's a very private moment," says Sodi, before adding, "Sometimes I'll let one of my kids help me."

To start, he lays his canvases—typically several feet or more across—atop plastic buckets so that the work surface is about a foot and a half off the floor. Working quickly with only his hands, he mounds and smears and flings the mixture onto the canvas with an almost performative physicality. (Years' worth of chromatic splatters encrust the studio floor, creating what is arguably the ultimate wabi-sabi painting.) While the works are left to dry—for three to five weeks—alchemy takes over, as their surfaces harden and crack in unpredictable ways that are influenced by factors such as temperature, humidity, and the pH of the water used.

"The work is about Bosco's relationship to the materials," says the artist's studio manager, John Rohrer, who occupies an office at the front of the warehouse, where there's a bar and vintage seating selected by Corredor for hosting visitors. "Everything he makes is an experimentation. He embraces all outcomes."

Sodi's latest paintings have taken a reflective—and muted—turn, brought on by a combination of factors, including the death of a beloved grandmother, which got him





From top: Sodi's palapa-style studio at Casa Wabi features concrete walls topped by a traditional thatched roof, a design conceived by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando. Inside the space, one of the artist's column-like "Caryatids" stands among an array of his works hand-molded from local clay and fired in traditional outdoor kilns.

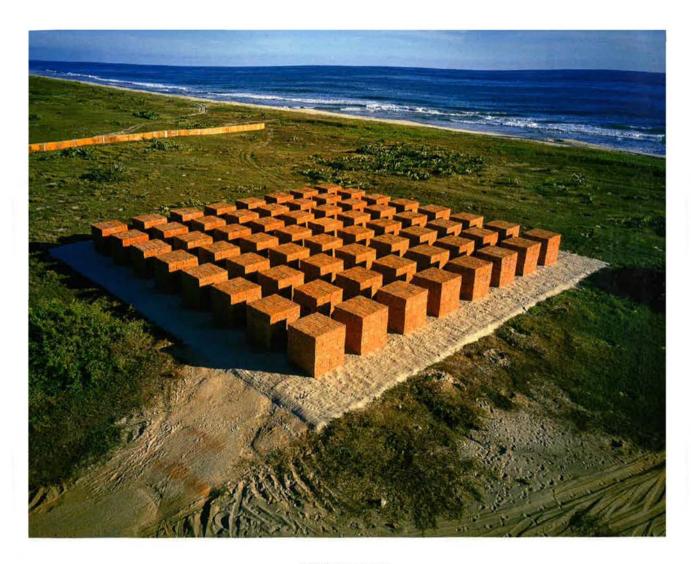
thinking more about his own life, getting older, and his family. He decided to create a series of paintings that combine areas of black and white as a way of addressing universal dualities: light and darkness, life and death, good and evil. The series, called "Genesis," debuted in the fall at his Berlin gallery, Galerie Eigen + Art. Additional works are on view at a pair of exhibitions, at Blain|Southern in London and Galería Hilario Galguera in Mexico City, through late

March and early April, respectively.

"This is the first time I've mixed two colors. I like the elegance of black and white," says Sodi, adding with a laugh, "In the end, the hope is that the white, the good, will prevail."

White will also be prominent in his next paintings project—to be exhibited at Kasmin Gallery in New York in 2020—conceived as an homage to Spain, where he began his career. One specific inspiration is a triptych of white Joan Miró paintings, Pintura Sobre Fondo Blanco





para la Celda de un Solitario (I,II,III), cach with a single line gently wavering across its surface. Sodi plans to render that simple gesture as "a scratch, as if it was a very free line," he says.

Meanwhile, this spring will mark the official unveiling of Sodi's monumental Atlantes pavilion at Casa Wabi. More than two years in the making, the land-art-scaled installation features 64 equally spaced, seven-foot-tall cubic structures,

each composed of 1,600 clay bricks. "They look like they are holding up the sky," the artist says of his Atlas-inspired cubes, noting that "they will change over time, as they get mold, turn green, and wildlife inhabits them."

And Sodi has continued making clay bricks for new iterations of his *Muro*, which began as a public art installation for New York's Washington Square Park in 2017 and has become the best-known work of his career. Standing more than 6 feet high and 26 feet across, the original wall was made of 1,600 bricks, which members of the public were invited to take away, slowly dismantling the structure.

Above: This spring in Mexico, Sodi is unveiling his Atlantes pavilion at Casa Wabi, a monumental project that took more than two years to complete. Each of the 64 seven-foot cubic structures is composed of 1,600 individual clay bricks.

It was a rare foray into politics for Sodi, who notes that the piece was not just about debates over immigration and border security but "a lot of walls that have to be broken down—economic, gender." He has since reprised Muro in Brexit-edgy London, in Antwerp, and most recently in Tampa, Florida, in January. "Even though I'm not a political artist, at times like this I think artists have an obligation if they see an opportunity to make a political statement," he says. "It's now or never."

Stepping outside Sodi's studio onto the pier, you find yourself staring directly at the Statue of Liberty, rising majestically in New York Harbor. The power of that symbol of freedom—which once greeted waves of immigrants entering America through Ellis Island—isn't lost on Sodi. "It is," he says, "an important reminder."

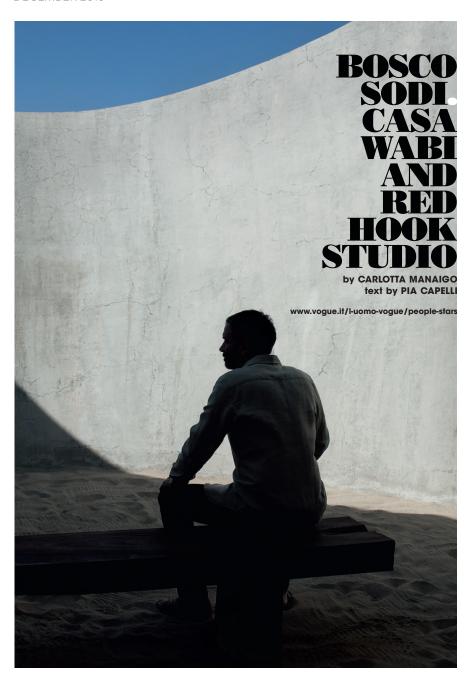
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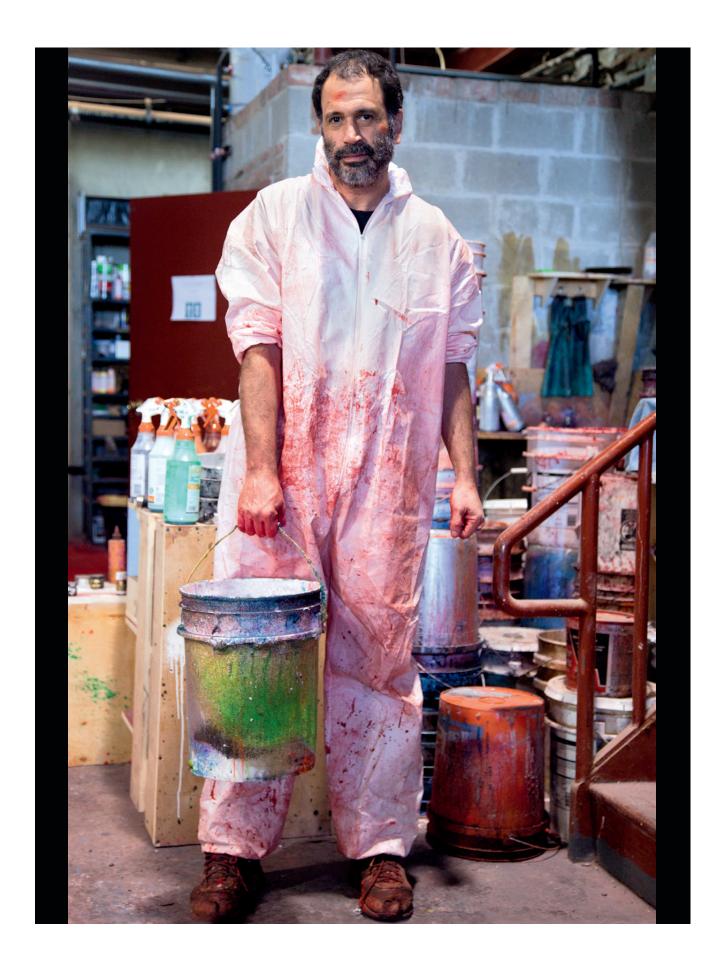
### Bosco Sodi, Casa Wabi, and Red Hook Studio

TEXT: PIA CAPELLI. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARLOTTA MANAIGO DECEMBER 2016



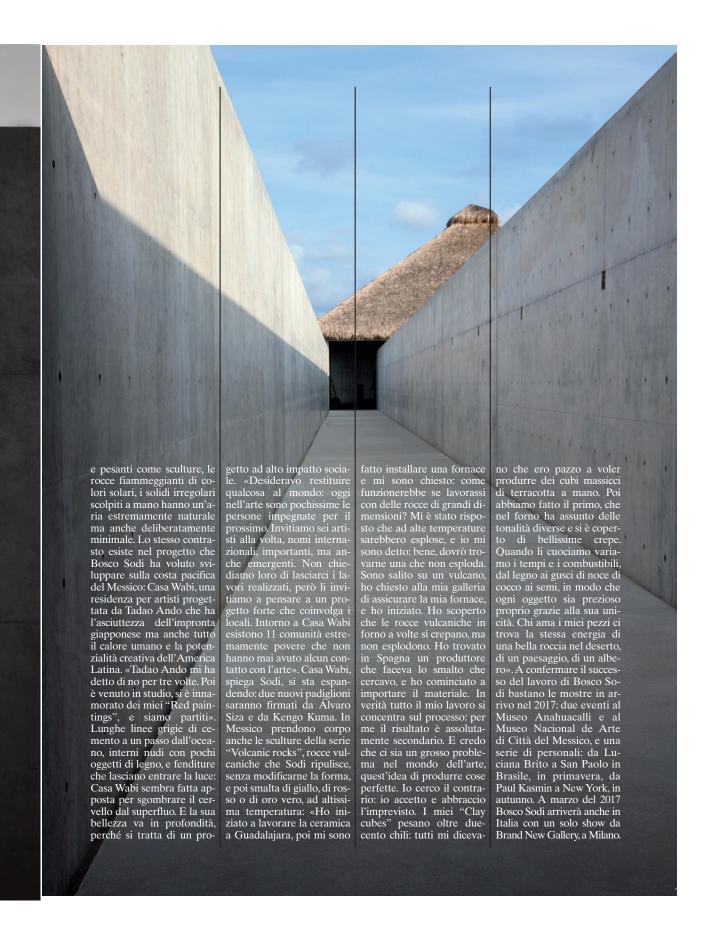


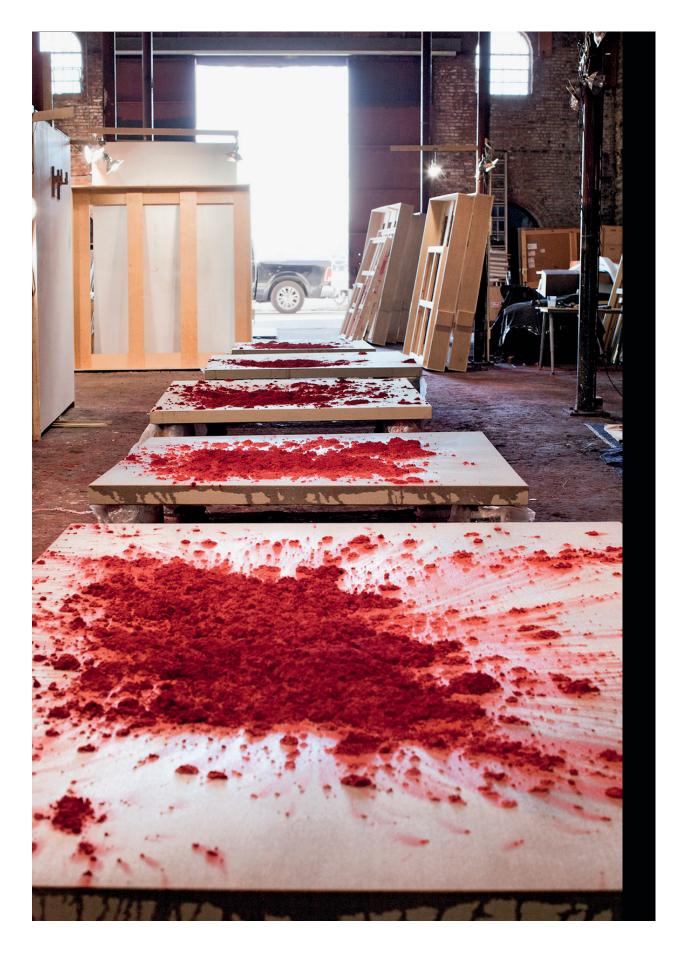


















# **ArtReview**

#### Bosco Sodi

The Mexican artist brings something of a chemistry experiment to works that evoke the continental and the planetary

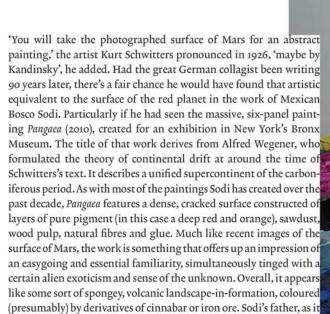
MARK RAPPOLT SEPTEMBER 2016



#### Bosco Sodi

The Mexican artist brings something of a chemistry experiment to works that evoke the continental and the planetary

by Mark Rappolt



Schwitters was writing about Martian imagery (in a text titled 'Kunst und Zeiten') in the context of his developing an argument that art is something innately around us, a creation of nature and chance, waiting only to be uncovered and framed by the artist: 'The task of the artist is to recognise and limit, to limit and recognise,' the German continued rather remorselessly. Like a developer of Las Vegas casinos, an artist should focus on their 'vision'; like a movie director, they needed to train themselves to know precisely where and when to make a cut. (ox, perhaps Schwitters himself would have chosen examples that did less to imply that art was part of the entertainment industry; but hey - he lived then and we live now.) The German was also writing in the buildup to a dispute with Wassily Kandinsky about whether it was a theoretical or natural approach to form that should be the basis of art. Form, Schwitters argued in i-Zeichnungen (1926) is 'the frozen instantaneous picture of a process'. And in an age in which most art is held up tight within the grip of

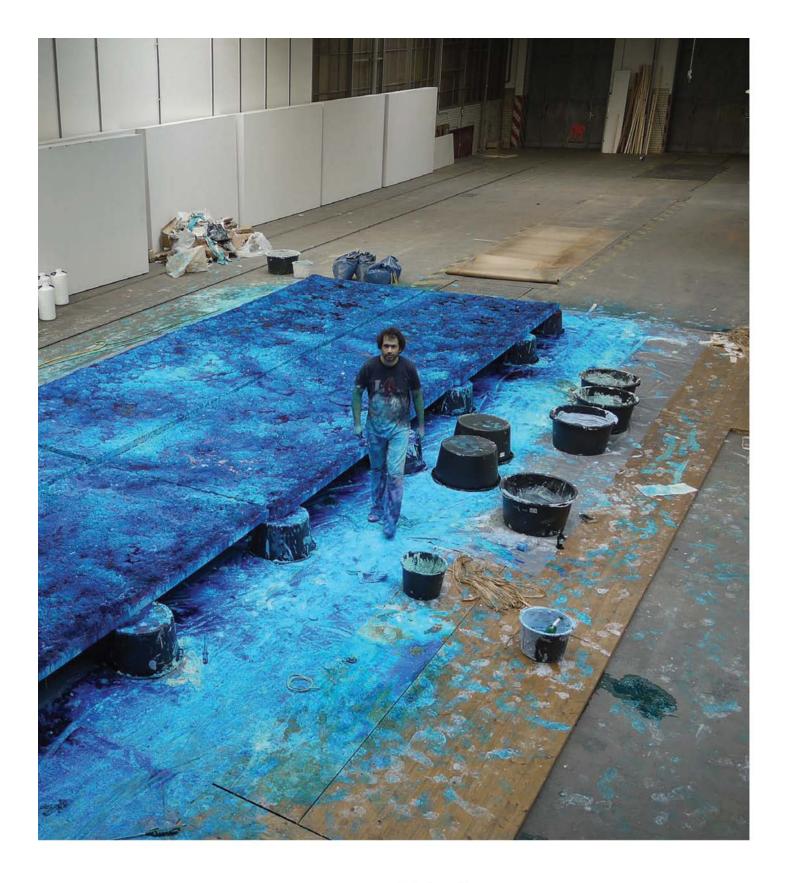
happens, is a chemical engineer.

theoretical supports, one of the pleasures of Sodi's work derives from the fact that, when it comes to form, his thinking lies firmly within the Schwitters camp.

Indeed, by anyone's standards, Sodi is disarmingly casual when it comes to describing his own painterly process. "It's not about control," he often says; rather it's about celebrating 'chance' and 'randomness'. "It's much more about the process than the outcome," he told critic Jennifer Parker earlier this year. In keeping with the concept of Pangaea, Sodi operates a multicontinental practice. He has created work in studios in Brooklyn, Mexico, Berlin and Madrid. More recently he has been spending time in Japan. Work created in each location (these days primarily Brooklyn and Mexico) is completely different as a result of specific local atmospheric conditions, in a way that combines the particular (or site-specificity) and the universal without subjecting those qualities to the debates about colonialism, postcolonialism or national or identity politics in which most art today tends to dress itself. In that sense, Sodi's works are truly an effect of nature, rather than culture.

Of course, what Sodi doesn't make clear in a statement like the one above is that the process that allows the operations of chance to occur in his work is the result of a certain amount of discipline. Various concentrations of water within the layers of Sodi's painting can affect the degrees of cracking, even if the precise detail of that cracking is by its nature unpredictable; decisions with regard to pigment (both in terms of quantity and quality) are also conscious decisions. The artist provides a chemical framework, the reactions that happen take care of themselves. In that regard, each work has something of the nature of a chemical experiment. Perhaps, even, given the way his works appear, it would be truer to describe them as geochemical experiments 'I wanted the viewer to feel like they'd entered a cave," the artist told writer Lowenna Waters when describing the sensation he was aiming at when installing a spring show of iridescent paintings and gilded sculptures at London's Blain/Southern gallery. In addition to the paintings, Sodi had installed a series of variously sized rocks gathered, by hand (owing to the size, weight and awkward shape of some of the stones, in practice they were hauled by around 20 hands)

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September 2016





above Yūgen, 2016 (installation view). Photo: Peter Mallet.
Courtesy the artist and Blain/Southern, London & Berlin
preceding pages The artist at work in his studio,
Red Hook, New York. Courtesy Bosco Sodi Studio

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from the Ceboruco volcano in Mexico. The rocks were then fired for three days (causing a number to explode) and the survivors covered in 18-carat gold. He'd painted the gallery walls a deep, mineral purple to synthesise that cavelike effect. Yet the purple also had an imperial feel, and combined with the gold, it created the kind of heavy atmosphere of an environment that might be the equivalent of entering, say, Nero's rock garden. If the Roman emperor had been a student of Zen philosophy and *karesansui*.

The Blain/Southern exhibition, titled Yūgen (a somewhat untranslatable Japanese expression evoking the deep emotional response to aesthetic creation), pointed also to one of the more intriguing developments in Sodi's recent work: a self-conscious awareness of the (high) commodity value of the objects he creates, and of the market that exploits that value. As much as they are expressions of (relatively) chance natural processes, in the very human environments in which they are displayed, his rocks and his paintings are objects of desire. And certainly in the overheated art-market that preceded the adjustments of this year, that desire has been intense. But if there is a sense of humour in the artist's exposure of this dichotomy (Sodi will talk about his pleasure in sharing beers and fried chicken with the labourers who haul his rocks, even while sharing a formal gallery dinner in a fancy urban restaurant with a bunch of urban collectors; and while on the one hand he is gilding natural forms, on the other he is exploiting natural materials to produce unnatural forms in the shape of simple sculptures composed of 50cm-high cubes of fired Mexican clay), there is a serious side to it too.

In 2014, the artist invested some of the proceeds from his artistic endeavours in the establishment of the Casa Wabi Foundation (its

name derived from another Japanese concept, wabi-sabi, centred on humility, which sees in the appreciation of beauty an acceptance of the impermanent and incomplete), located near the town of Puerto Escondido in Oaxaca, Mexico. Housed in a complex designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, the foundation's programme includes an artist residency programme, outreach projects with the local community (which until now has had a relatively limited contact with art, particularly in its contemporary manifestations) and an investment in sustainable living (much like Sodi's artworks, and perhaps the clay cubes in particular, this is best described as the promotion of a symbiotic relationship between nature, its resources and social and cultural living). In keeping with his pan-continental influences, the artist is currently developing a new residency programme located in Tokyo.

After all the previous talk about natural form, it will seem contradictory (if not ridiculous) to locate Sodi's work within any kind of theory. And yet in terms of his activities, both as an artist and as some-one attempting to add his voice, and point of view, to the way in which art is institutionalised in its relations to society and culture, it would be true to say that Sodi's output is the result of exercising a strong philosophy of practice. And without any Heideggerian overtones, that philosophy pertains to art as a being rather than merely a presence in the world. ar

Bosco Sodi: Cubes is on view at Eigen + Art, Berlin, through 27 August. His exhibition Malpaís can be seen at 143 N. Robertson Blvd, Los Angeles (presented by Paul Kasmin Gallery, Brandon Davis Projects and Jose Mestre) from 25 August to 8 October



Clay cubes in the artist's studio, Casa Wabi, Oaxaca, 2015. Courtesy Bosco Sodi Studio

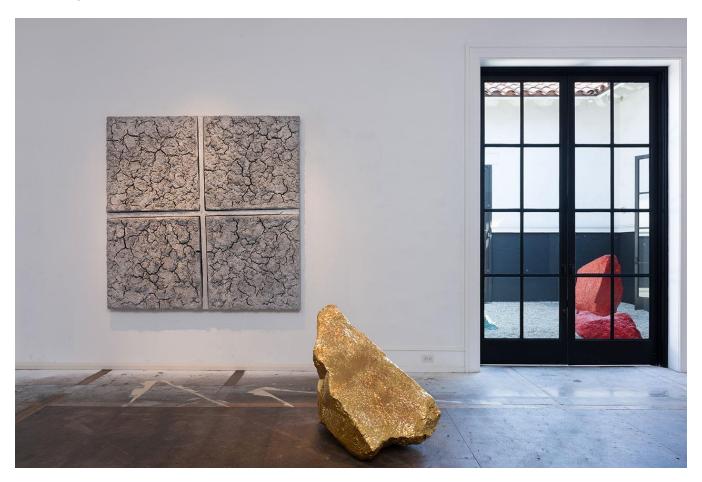
KASMIN

# Wallpaper\*

#### Mix-master

Bosco Sodi stages his first solo show in LA to dramatic effect

MICHAEL SLENSKE AUGUST 30, 2016



'Malpaid' is Bosco Sodi's first show in Los Angeles. The exhibition, curated by Matthew Schum, is being staged in a lofty, rough-hewn West Hollywood space. All works in the show are untitled.

Eight years ago, working in his studio in Barcelona, Bosco Sodi accidentally dropped a bucket of his sawdust, pigment and binder mixture on the floor. 'I didn't have time to clean it because I had to leave for vacation,' he recalls. 'When I came back it was all cracked, but I liked it.'





Left: The stars of the show are a series of round, trapezoidal and square iterations (pictured) of Sodi's iconic pigment paintings, many of which are finished in his radioactive hues of blue, red, pink and yellow. Right: The installation features paintings, volcanic rock sculptures fired with red glaze and real gold, and stack bricks made of local mud and sand.

That accident became the artist's Pollock moment. He's spent the ensuing years exploring a material obsession with craggy, volcanic paintings – some made with 30 kgs of saturated pigments sourced on travels to India, China and Morocco – that reference everything from Donald Judd's minimalism, Jay DeFeo's abstractions and land art pioneers like Robert Smithson.

I think the most important part of my work is the process,' says Sodi. 'The outcome is secondary for me.'

Judging from Sodi's omnipresence on the international gallery and museum scene, those outcomes have been resoundingly successful. 'Malpais' – his first solo show in Los Angeles, curated by Matthew Schum and co-produced by his New York gallerist Paul Kasmin, Brandon Davis Projects and Jose Mestre – touched down last week in a lofty, rough-hewn West Hollywood space that formerly housed a Ralph Lauren boutique.



The works are set in nooks, courtyard and galleries of the storefront. Pictured right: *Untitled*, 2013 (centre) stands among a group of ceramic glaze volcanic rock sculptures from 2012-2015. Nearly all of them are sourced from the artist's personal collection, and mark the last time he worked wth color

"Malpais" is this desert place where there's nothing, but that was Matthew's idea. I like to be very respectful of the curator,' says Sodi of the installation. Paintings and volcanic rock sculptures fired with red glaze and real gold are mixed with stack bricks made from local mud and sand sourced by brick-makers near Casa Wabi, Sodi's Tadao



Ando-designed studio in Puerto Escondido, Mexico. These have been set inside the nooks, courtyard and galleries of the storefront.

T've never seen all of these works together because I've had them in storage in New York,' Sodi admits. 'It was much more of an experiment for me. I'm surprised how there are so many correlations.'

As an example, he points to a 2010 silver pigment painting divided into quadrants set in dialogue with a stack of the Casa Wabi cubes. They are fired at different temperatures with different materials and take on the patina of Corten steel when dry. Some are also fired in gold, like the volcanic rocks, which he sources from Guadalajara and uses just as they were found.



"I've never seen all of these works together because I've has them in a storage unit in New York," Sodi admits. "It was much more of an experiment for me. I'm surprised how there are so many correlations."

The stars of the show, however, are round, trapezoidal and square iterations of Sodi's iconic pigment paintings, many of which are finished in his radioactive hues of blue, red, pink and yellow. Nearly all of them were sourced from his personal collection and mark the last time he worked with colour. A massive black and white DeFeo-esque landscape nearly swallows a gold mud cube stack standing before it. The other standouts are lustrous silver works that sparkle with a glittery green glaze – the result of a white Japanese pigment combining with a potentially toxic aluminium pigment.

'I look for a lot of randomness in my work,' says Sodi. 'This only works with silver pigment, but when it does it's amazing.'



# **ARTFORUM**

#### Bosco Sodi

ALLISON YOUNG JUNE 2016



The Japanese art of *kintsugi*—the treatment of cracked or broken pottery with gold laquer—stems from a philosophical embrace of imperfection. Seams of precious metal trace the jagged fault lines of an object; gold can elevate, but does not mask, these traces of the vessel's history. Bosco Sodi's art is forged in a similar spirit of deference for raw materials and natural processes. If you look closely enough at one of his ceramic-glazed volcanic rock sculptures (all works cited *Untitled*, 2016), a subtle line of gold-on-gold pigment might catch the light, revealing its meandering path across the work's textured surface.

True to the philosophy of *wabi sabi*, which has long informed Sodi's practice, each of the thirty-two rock sculptures features in his latest exhibition is uniquely shapes and draws focus to the interplay of opposites: the roughness of igneous rock with the smoothness of ceramic glaze. Of varying sizes, these are arranged seemlingly haphazardly throughout the gallery, requiring the viewer to walk carefully, even contemplatively, around the space. Such is Sodi's vision: This show, titled for the concept of *Yugen*–defined in faint handwritten script on the entrance wall as the "profound and mysterious beauty of the universe that cannot be described by words"–is laid out like a Japanese garden and invites a reflective mode of viewing.

Sodi has extended his ongoing series of sawdust-and-pigment "paintings," previously executed in hue such as magenta, charcoal, and ochre. His latest output is strangely suited to spring in England, its palette reminiscent of ash and moss. These appear like grand topographies of cracked earth, and, as with the volcanic rock sculptures, they betray a sense of time and process—melting and cooling, drying and congealing—and of the beauty in roughness.



### The Creators Project

#### Bosco Sodi's Illusion of Earth

Studio Visit

MARINA GARCIA-VASQUEZ JUNE 15, 2016



All photos by Charlie Rubin for The Creators Project.

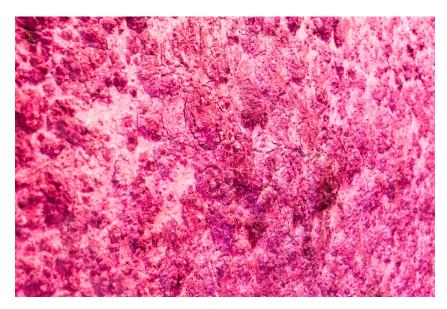
The caked, magenta-hued cluster is Bosco Sodi's sculptural association with the spiritual. As an artist, Sodi has always been interested in the relationship between humans and terra firma. His dried earth artworks are reminiscent of parched deserts, forgotten lava, and scorched dirt, yet they contain a colorful magic to them that alludes to opportunities for spiritual transcendence, like the oasis in the desert or the cave-covered cenote; a magic that happens only by spending time surveying the works and letting your thoughts go on an adventure.

When I visit Sodi in his Red Hook, Brooklyn studio, I am informed that he is fitting me in quickly before he departs for Europe to set up two shows, Yūgen, at the Blain|Southern Gallery in London, and Cubes at Galerie Eigen + Art in Berlin.

Last year, on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Latin American art department at Sotheby's, the auction house promoted a celebratory sale from a selection of leading contemporary artists from Mexico. Sodi's Untitled magenta work was amongst the works of Gabriel Orozco and Francis Alÿs, and was displayed in the exhibit and available for auction. There were whispers and Instagram posts heralding Sodi as "the best Mexican artist, no



question." That feverish exaltation stayed with me and further piqued my interest in the artist's process, as well as the announcement that Sodi's studio was nearby, just across the East River.



His directions tell me that I will have arrived when the Statue of Liberty is on my right, across the water. The studio is on my left in a historic brick building. The vista is impressive and imparts a feeling of success: art made this happen.

I am greeted at the door by the studio manager who quickly leads me into Sodi's workspace, a large industrial garage with marked stations of activity. The artist is in the center of the space hovering over a framed mound of white plaster held up by four buckets. He is spraying the canvas with water and peering over the materials as they dry.



Sodi's process as an artist is much more akin to that of a scientist. He prefers to use layers of pigment, water, glue, and natural fibers like sawdust and coconut, than traditional paints. He says, "I am more focused on the process than the outcome. I love to research and test, much more like a laboratory. My work deals with the temporality of life, the connection to nature, and passing of time. The works are not controlled by me. There are similarities between my paintings to what happens in nature," he tells me.



As we tour the space, I ask him about the piece he was working on when I walked in. "I began to put layers and layers," he explains. "When I see a crack. I try not to intervene with a painting. I work normally in horizontal."

Around the workspace, I see large canvases, square pillars, and sand mounds that have been transformed to metal sculptures. He shares with me his plan for the London show: 35 small gold rocks surrounded by five large, silver paintings. The gold rocks that anchor the show are actual lava rocks the artist pulled from a volcano in Mexico. He cleaned them and glazed them in reds, yellows, oranges, and lastly, in a layer of gold at 2,080 degrees. He says, "We are going to paint the walls in black purple, to make it like a cave to explore the profound and mysterious sense of beauty for the universe." The show's title, *Yūgen*, is a Japanese word that refers to a profound awareness of the universe, one that evokes feelings that are inexplicably deep, too mysterious for words. The mystery is to be felt by the viewer, or better yet, the art explorer.



We move on to the pieces that will be sent to Berlin, clay cube sculptures to be paired with white paintings. The Cubes works are 700 pound columns, made from clay that Sodi makes in his Oaxaca, Mexico studio. He lets them dry for 35 days and then puts them in the sun for an additional 45 days to pick up natural textures. Sodi likes that they come out inconsistent and looking ancient from the process. He says, "You are going to have a much more earthy feeling rather than a galactic one. I like to have monochromatic paintings to invite the viewer into the paintings." Much like Rothko, who used large panels in monochromatic colors, Sodi likes to have a series of consistent color fields so that you can actually find the inconsistencies in them, the fibers, the presence of earth in the piece.

This white one I am looking at has an iridescence to it that can only be found when you are face-to face with the piece. I ask about the greenish sparkles, and Sodi motions me to follow him to his pigment closet. The artist travels the world from India to Morocco in search of new gradients. He asks, "You see how the reaction of the pigment on white becomes green? I am looking for the accidents, looking for the surprises the accidents bring me. This was an accident but I dropped a little bit on the silver painting and it turned green."





As a visitor, I too become emotional about those specks of green sparkle. I begin to think of the white visage as a portal to unexplored lands, of soft and moist moss, of bioluminescent bays, of a leaf, and how it become its exact shade of emerald. Here in this studio, the celebration of color is an opportunity to revere nature—or at least our personal archives of it. That's what it's like to stand beside a Sodi.

He tells me, "I like that the viewer makes color associations. I am not making art with the color in mind." Instead, his works depend on where they're made. His pigments change colors from location to location, no doubt due to the water. He has studios in Oaxaca, Mexico, Barcelona, and Berlin.



Our tour gets cut after 35 minutes because Sodi has to prepare to both pack the works and travel to London the very next day. In parting, I tell him that his pieces must take a lot of patience—does he ever have studio assistants? He responds, "I don't believe in the production of my work. The real action, I always like to do it myself. Sometimes I work with assistants on layers of the large-scale paintings. I use so many different materials. I mix sawdust with the pigments and fibers. I just work with what I have. I believe in the exchange of energy between the materials and the artist."



## **BLOUINARTINFO**

## Where in the World is Bosco Sodi?

JENNIFER PARKER APRIL 1, 2015



Bosco Sodi in his Brooklyn Studio, standing before one of his untitled paintings created this year.

Bosco Sodi is having a moment.

The Mexican-born artist is about to haul 10 tons of glazed volcanic rock sculptures and large-scale impasto paintings to London for his very first solo show at Blain|Southern Gallery later this month. Meanwhile, a new, high profile collector's gallery in the Bahamas is busy preparing to showcase Sodi's work in its debut opening this summer. To keep up with demand, Sodi jets from his studios in Barcelona, Mexico, and Red Hook, Brooklyn, sourcing raw materials for his site-specific works, which currently command between \$50,000 and \$200,000 per piece.

For a closer look, ARTINFO met Sodi inside his massive warehouse-style studio on Red Hook's waterfront. Plastic hazmat suits, goggles, and industrial gloves hanging on tinder hooks line concrete walls, which overlook a scattered landscape of clay sculptures, cracked paintings, and exploded volcanic rock. This is Sodi's grand chemical experiment — the physical results of his commune with the natural world.

Peering out from underneath a dusty Yankees baseball cap, Sodi walked over to a 3,000-pound statue made of Mexican clay cubes, which he'd shaped by hand and fired in a wood kiln. His hand smoothed over one long, spiny



crack in the burnt orange clay. "My work is not about control. It's about finding beauty in the accidents of life. The randomness in the process is what makes it unique," he said, before moving on to the next example.



"Clay Cubes," (2015) by Bosco Sodi at Casa Wabi.

Crouching down to floor-level, we inspected the surface of a freshly cracked, 10 by 10 foot painting. Like most of his large-scale works, this one is made up of layers of pigment, water, glue, and wood fibers — which Sodi mixes and manipulates until drying creates the first crack. He then abandons the piece, allowing it to take its own shape. "You see, it's much more about the process than the outcome," he said, hovering his hands over the peaks and valleys of the silvery, caked canvas, which could sooner pass for the surface of the moon than a warehouse painting in Brooklyn.

At 46, the husband and father of three is an unassuming, soft-spoken presence — with a calm ambition that bubbles just beneath the surface. That Sodi's father, Juan Sodi, is a chemical engineer comes as no surprise. His influence is apparent in every piece of his son's shining, crackling, and nearly-living artwork — which also reflects the artist's far-flung search for the world's most interesting natural elements.

"I'm trying out new materials for burning," said Sodi, approaching a hot pink painting set against 15 feet of wall space. "In this one, I used coconut skins and Jacaranda seeds for a different texture." In Mexico, blooming Jacaranda trees are considered a welcome sign of spring — which I interpreted as the essence of this painting. Sodi nodded silently, encouraging subjectivity without guiding it. Nearly all of his works are untitled, because he prefers to



remove preconceptions from the equation. "I don't want to give any hint to the viewer. Interpretations should be very free," he said, stepping back to give me space to ponder the paintings.

The works Sodi has created for the Blain/Southern show, opening April 20, are similarly impressive. At first, rocks slathered in gold and orange glaze don't seem that notable — until you learn what they are. Sodi's sculptures are sourced from the Ceboruco volcano in Mexico, encased in ceramic glaze and cooked at 1,260 degrees Celsius for three days. "The concept is to find a rock when it's alive with orange and yellow lava. That means it's in an alive state," the artist said. "If the rocks have even a little crack, they explode." Of the total 120 volcanic rocks Sodi has acquired, only 14 have remained intact during the glazing process.

Sodi's most important work to date, however, can be seen at Casa Wabi, the artists' refuge he owns in Oaxaca, Mexico. There, on a 90-acre plot of land, Bosco built a Zen-like respite from the fast-paced contemporary art world with the help of his father and the Japanese architect Tadao Ando. Today, Casa Wabi's facilities include six dorms, a working studio, and a 90-acre botanical garden where Sodi's massive Mexican clay sculptures stand eroding in the elements of Mexico's Pacific coast. Here, artists from around the world come to pursue passion projects, host exhibitions, and learn the "wabi" way of life.

"Wabi Sabi" is a Japanese concept, referring to an aesthetic or philosophy that finds beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and accident. Titled or not, it describes Sodi's work perfectly.



## Bosco Sodi Behind the Scenes

KAT HERRIMAN NOVEMBER 5, 2014



Bosco Sodi in his seaside Red Hook studio. Photographer: Dustin Aksland.

Tucked away on an unassuming pier in Red Hook, Brooklyn, Mexican artist Bosco Sodi's studio looks more like an aircraft hangar than a place for art making. The square footage isn't an unnecessary luxury, considering the amount of space required to create the mammoth alien landscapes that the artist is best known for. Sodi's latest project, for example, is a 60-foot-long piece commissioned by Dustin Yellin's art incubator Pioneer Works, entitled The Last Day. Take a behind-the-scenes tour of its creation here.





Left: "I was a little bit tired of doing colors, so I wanted to make something that gives another completely different feeling." Right: "I have a good friendship with Dustin [Yellin], so when they approached to do something for Pioineer Works, I decided to create a big piece for their main wall. It's a unique space in New York, it's a bit to boring to do the same show in the same Chelsea space all the time." Photographer: Dustin Aksland.



Left: "Silver is a series I've been doing lately. I like the coldness of the color." Right: "I found this iridescent pigment in Japan. It's very expensive but I haven't been able to find it here. I like the effect it adds." Photographer: Dustin Aksland.





Left: "Sometimes collectors ask about buying my shoes. One of my old gallerists from Berlin, he was always asked about my shoes because they were even more covered than these." Right: "For me, painting is a pleasure. And any pleasure should be accompanied by music. I listen to everything from Coltrane and jazz to Dave Matthews and Beethoven." Photographer: Dustin Aksland.



Left: "I keep everything ready in T frames, because after Sandy I didn't have time to take everything out. So now, if a big storm comes I can put everything in a truck in four hours." Right: "At my studio in Mexico, the sun is very strong. We have this big patio where we can put the paintings to dry. There, the cracks are very fast and chaotic. Here, near the ocean, the humidity creates these deeper, more rhythmic ridges." Photographer: Dustin Aksland.



"I prefer to make big things rather than small things. I like to feel like a small part of a big universe. It's the perspective that we must not forget. It makes you humble and it's beautiful, no?" Photographer: Dustin Aksland.

# **ArtReview**

## Bosco Sodi

The wabi-sabi painter and cultural entrepreneur

CHRISTIAN VIVERS-FAUNÉ PHOTOGRAPHY BY YASUYUKI TAKAGI SUMMER 2014

### Bosco Sodi

### The wabi-sabi painter and cultural entrepreneur

by Christian Viveros-Fauné Portrait and studio photography by Yasuyuki Takagi



 ${\it Untitled}, 2013, mixed \ media \ on \ canvas, 186 \ cm \ diameter, 16 \ cm \ depth.$  @ the artist. Courtesy Pace, New York, London, Beijing & Menlo Park

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Today, save for the odd airmiles pilgrimage, we typically look to documentation of massive 1970s Earth art to communicate the ground-shaking power of the great outdoors. But in certain exceptional cases, the experience of hard-encrusted dirt, compacted rock and age-old geological matter can also be had under a roof and within four walls – as long as it's in the right gallery or studio.

This, in a nutshell, was my takeaway from several encounters with the paintings and sculptures of the Mexican-born, New York-based artist Bosco Sodi. In fact, on my last visit to his studio, a persistent thought took hold. Not since visits to one of Walter De Maria's Earth Rooms or to certain dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History — the two-storey representation of the Bahamas's Andros barrier reef, for instance — have manmade constructions impressed themselves on your humble correspondent with such brute force.

An artist whose wildly coloured, five-centimetre-thick, extralarge abstractions and boulder-size sculptures speak a direct and elemental language, Sodi has, despite his work's ruggedness, become a darling of the highly urbane, distinctly nonoutdoorsy global

art scene. A Pace gallery artist who also exhibits with Mexico City's Galeria Hilario Galguera, he has spent the last years engaged with various museum exhibitions—among them a 2013 show of paintings at Valencia's IVAM—while being simultaneously occupied in at least two countries with several complex aid and construction projects.

Most prominent among the latter have been volunteer relief work for artists devastated by Hurricane Sandy (Sodi organised an opera-fundraiser that also included the auction of artworks made by Mickalene Thomas, Ron Gorchov, Douglas Gordon and Teresita Fernandez), and the ongoing construction of a beachfront artist residency near the village of Puerto Escondido. An

Atlantic Center for the Arts-type enterprise located on the shores of Mexico's own permanent sunshine state – the pre-Columbian and culinary mecca that is Oaxaca – Sodi's Casa Wabi casts the painter-sculptor firmly in the mould of the twenty-first-century mogul. An outstanding artist, Sodi is nothing if not also a cultural entrepreneur.

The building of Casa Wabi is a perfect example of Sodi's all-terrain ingeniousness, particularly as it translates his brawny artistic practice from elaborate studio production to even more complex 'real life'. Named after the Japanese ideal of wabi-sabi – an aesthetic philosophy that finds special beauty in the imperfections of rusticity – Sodi's residency complex was designed by none other than Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando. Not exactly the sort of archi-

tectural proposal that the celebrated Ando customarily accepts (it cost a fraction of his usual jobs), the 27-hectare site, featuring the architect's 5,500sqm project, saw the light of

day only after years of intense outreach, lobbying and cold-calling from Sodi himself.

'I spent three-and-a-half months in Japan and fell in love with Tadao's work,' Sodi told one interviewer, 'and I found that his work and mine had a great deal in common. They are both very wabi-sabi – simple and without pretension. My dream is for the residency to be a place where artists can rest and recharge their batteries, not work all the time. If someone wants to bring their family, or two lovers at a time, they are welcome to, and have my full blessing.'

Sited directly on the Pacific Ocean, Ando's design for the complex incorporated one of the region's most typical construction elements: the *palapa*, or Mexican thatched roof hut. Starting from this basic building block, Sodi commissioned the Japanese architect to create a studio and living quarters for him and his family, in addition to six residences to be occupied year-round by invited guests – mainly artists, curators and critics. Also included with the finished group of structures are an Ando-designed sculpture garden and a 400sqm gallery, built to display the work of leading artists during three exhi-

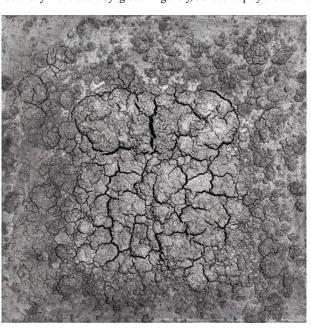
bitions a year.

"I want Casa Wabi to function as a contemporary version of Marfa," Sodi told me, invoking the Valhalla of countrified Minimalism. "I want it to be a place that offers an organic relationship to nature and the environment, while also establishing connections between the residency and nearby communities." In fact, Sodi and Casa Wabi's director, Patricia Martín (the ex-director of the Jumex Collection), stand fully committed to making arts education for local children and their families an integral part of Casa Wabi's remit. Funding presently exists for various kinds of public programmes and is expanding. Not surprisingly, Sodi's vision continues to grow - it

now includes a film festival, a food festival and, why not, possibly an

Of course, none of this would be possible without Sodi's critical and financial success. A purveyor of an up-to-date combination of all-over abstraction (think Rothko's use of colour and Pollock's physicality), art brut (Dubuffet's pumice-stone surfaces) and landscape painting (the Grand Canyon as painted by Jay DeFeo), Sodi's rapid ascent from New York newcomer to celebrated Gotham artist took place just four years ago. His breakthrough came with a 2010 Bronx Museum exhibition, in which he installed a six-panel, lava-coloured, 4-by-12m painting as the centrepiece of his first museum solo. An accumulation of red and orange crust made from raw pigment,

sawdust, water and glue, Sodi's painting – appropriately titled *Pangea* for the single landmass that geologists say dominated the earth 250 million years ago – instantly impressed



Untitled, 2013, mixed media on canvas, 186×186 cm. Photo: Kevin Kunstadt. Courtesy Galeria Hilario Galguera, Mexico City

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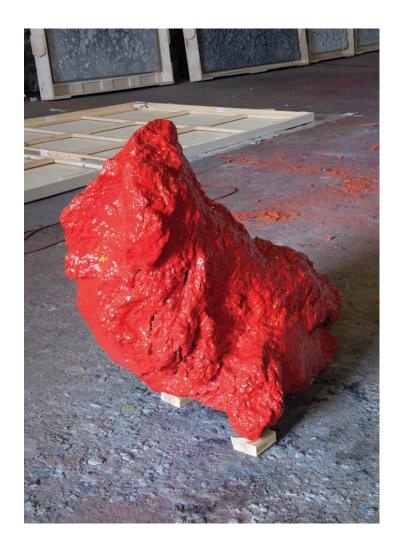
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above Untitled, 2012, ceramic glaze over volcanic rock, 100×125×85 cm.
Photographed in Bosco Sodi's studio, New York, April 2014

preceding pages Pangea, 2010, mixed media on canvas, 400×1200 cm.
Photo: Kevin Kunstadt. Courtesy Galeria Hilario Galguera, Mexico City

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visitors while simultaneously mobilising hungry collectors and dealers all over town.

Fast-forward four years, and one finds the forty-four-year-old artist immersed in making similarly vigorous work inside a football-field-size studio in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. Spry and athletic, Sodi willingly demonstrates how several of his finished surfaces – they resemble nothing so much as the cracked earth of the mineral-rich Atacama Desert – are made using a combination of deliberate and chance elements. In every case, his paintings are the result of sciencelike experiments with organic and inorganic materials that, once mounted onto a single canvas, can weigh as much as 450kg. This is when the artist's planned pileups enter their important accidental phase – a period of 'settling' (the metaphor is intentionally geological) in which Sodi's materials give way to unpredictable breaks and fissures produced as much by the artist's purposeful combinations as by the elements themselves.

One XXI-size, silver-coloured number Sodi points to inside the studio took two-and-a-half months to set during New York's wet winter; another, an intense, modestly-scaled, vermillion painting still protected by its travel crate, dried at Casa Wabi in just 20 arid days. "I like that variation, chance," Sodi confesses about the effects forces like heat and humidity have on his surfaces. "I don't like total control. When it gets predictable, it gets boring. I don't like boring."

As I look around at the differently hued and sized canvases in the studio – cobalt, fuchsia, halite and coal – I'm reminded that nature is rarely controllable or boring (unless it involves camping with artworld types). Sodi's accidents give visuality and shape to that power like few other artworks seen anytime, anywhere. ar

Fractais, a solo exhibition of work by Bosco Sodi, is on show at Galeria Fernando Santos, Porto, to 18 June



Bosco Sodi in his studio, New York, April 2014

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