

GAGOSIAN

APOLLO  
THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

## In the studio with... Rachel Feinstein

Samuel Reilly



*Markus Jans, Architectural Digest; courtesy Gagosian; © Condé Nast*

Rachel Feinstein developed her feeling for sculpture under the mentorship of Kiki Smith, Ursula von Rydingsvard and Judy Pfaff in New York in the 1990s. Since then the Arizona-born artist has become known for her fantastical, multi-part installations that are inspired by fairy tales as well as rococo or baroque interiors. The works in her current exhibition at Gagosian in London, 'Mirror', look further back in time, to the shift away from the gothic in German art at the turn of the 16th century (until 5 March).

### **Where is your studio?**

On the border of Chinatown and Tribeca in downtown NYC.

### **What do you like most about the space?**

It used to be a store where I would buy art supplies in the 1990s so I have a pleasant memory of the space in its previous incarnation.

### **What frustrates you about it?**

I need more space. I make big sculptures and have lots of big equipment to make them.

### **Do you work alone?**

I like to be alone for a couple of weeks after I have a show to figure out where my head is. When I have an idea of what I'd like to make, I ask my two part-time studio assistants to come in and help me make the sculpture. If I'm working on my mirror paintings then I don't like anyone in the studio with me.



*Holy Blood (2021), Rachel Feinstein. Photo: Prudence Cuming; courtesy Gagosian; © Rachel Feinstein*

### **How messy is your studio?**

It's really messy. My husband finds it disgusting – he says it's like a meth lab or gross man-cave.

### **What does it smell like?**

It smells like the smell a heater makes – the smell of plaster, plywood and the materials I use. It's not bad, but kind of industrial.

### **What's the weirdest object in there?**

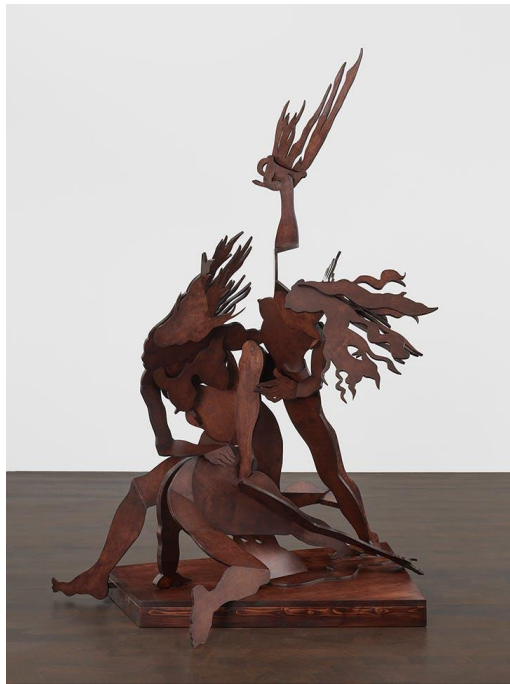
I have these mirrored glass vitrines that my assistants and I built in my studio for my LA show a couple of years ago but which I decided not to use. They are all piled on top of each other, high up on a shelf above my door, and inside them I've put old 3D paper sculptures that I made for various fashion projects: the set for Marc Jacobs' runway in 2012; the paper sets for a fashion story I did for New York Magazine; the paper model for another fashion story for Numero, etc. They look like religious reliquaries.

### **Which artistic tool could you least do without?**

Willow-vine charcoal.

### **What's the most well-thumbed book in your studio?**

Carved Splendor – a beautiful book on limewood German altar sculptures from the 1500s, photographed in natural daylight. Also, Maid, Madonna, Witch – a book of photographs by [Andreas] Feininger of the female form in art.



*Metal Storm (2021), Rachel Feinstein. Photo: Prudence Cuming; courtesy Gagosian; © Rachel Feinstein*

**Do you pin up images of other artists' works? (If so, what are they?)**

An image of Donatello's bas relief from the Bardini in Florence.

**What do you listen to while you're working?**

I'm obsessed with books on tape. I listen back to many classics I read years ago like Orwell's 1984 or Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra but I've also discovered new books that I love, like The Anomaly [by Hervé Le Tellier].

**What do you usually wear while you're working?**

A Dickies all-cotton jumpsuit. I have them in navy, black and olive green.



*Cinderella (2021), Rachel Feinstein. Photo: Prudence Cuming; courtesy Gagosian; © Rachel Feinstein*

**Do you ever sleep in your studio?**

Never. We have done all-nighters but we all leave no matter how tired we are. There's a filthy couch on which I have taken naps when alone but I can't actually sleep there for more than a cat nap.

**Who's the most interesting visitor you've had to your studio?**

It was interesting to have Roger and Mirka Federer right before he played at the US Open. He ended up losing and I somehow feel responsible. Athletes and artists are very similar creatures – they can be very superstitious with good reason. It doesn't make sense that some days you can really draw like an Old Master and other days you can't draw at all.

**'Rachel Feinstein: Mirror' is at Gagosian, London, until 5 March.**