

## EXTENDED BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

**Harry Dodge** is an American visual artist and writer whose interdisciplinary practice is characterized by its explorations of relation, materiality and ecstatic contamination. He is primarily known for his work in sculpture, video and writing, but started as a performer and in social practice. His work, which is both abstract and representational often incorporates amalgamations of materials (including found objects and language) and frequently, but not always, uses humor and/or satire to examine more serious subject matter. Dodge is the author of a non-fiction book, *My Meteorite, Or, Without The Random There Can Be No New Thing* (Penguin Press, March 2020) described as “an expansive, radiant and genre-defying investigation into the habits of matter, what constitutes a bond, and how we are shaped by numberless forces we cannot know.” Dodge lives and works in Los Angeles.

### Interests

In an interview with Carrie Kellerby, Dodge states that just after finishing his feature film, *By Hook or By Crook*, he “lost interest in narrativity/emotionality [...] I suddenly wanted to explore structure, almost exclusively, and sought to have form or flow be the effervescent stew from which experimental vapors arise. I got into theory, science, philosophy, and history, and started experimenting with more poetic forms.” On this he has also said, “My video work is structured around the power of language rather than images. Which, as you may know, is considered a video sin. It’s like I ride a figurative horse into abstraction—I mean my interests are quite structural in a weird way. I often think of things in terms of shapes, forms and flows, so it’s odd that I so often employ character, and emotion as you call it, or even comedy, but for me, those things, if I complicate them just enough, they start to break down as signifiers hopefully. They atomize a little.” Also: “I still use character, I guess, to deliver inquisitions on structure.”

Dodge’s first solo exhibition in New York was *Frowntown*, at Wallspace in 2012. At this show Dodge presented sculpture, drawings and video that amplified and departed from the experiments of his previous work. Of *Frowntown*, Megan Heuer wrote, “his sculptures direct their polymorphous semiotics through painterly assemblages of household items with erotic, sinister, and organic overtones...” Kelly Taxter, who curated the next solo exhibition, *Meaty Beaty Big and Bouncy* at Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (CT, 2013), writes that Dodge’s work “investigates the contours of that which defies categorization—what may not be visible or valued, but is present nevertheless, often hovering at the threshold of what can be seen. A threshold, like an edge, is both within and without, a rim over which contents spill, a fissure out of which the interior seeps, a boundary (of nature, the body, the mind) whose limits are pushed, tested, and potentially transgressed.” Harry’s work from this period was not only strategically humorous but also—strategically—mildly disturbing. (About video *Fred Can Never Be Called*

*Bald* (2012), Johanna Burton wrote, “These scenes of stupidity and mayhem come to feel incredibly precarious and unexpectedly moving.”). Work from this period dealt with, loosely-stated, notions of the unnamable, leakage, categorical incontinence, and transgression as world building. Dodge had long had the sense that the realm of the digital—constituted, as it is, by binary code—lacked a kind of material profusion, infinity, sensuality, in short, *corporeality*; fundamental to his interest in analog reality was a kind of neo-Luddism, technophobia, even misanthropy.

In preparing for the exhibition *The Cybernetic Fold*, at WallSpace (NY, 2015), Dodge toyed with the idea that his veneration for “materiality” contained the seed of a paradox. Wasn’t “the virtual” just another, weirder kind of material? Was flatness, or the screen, some kind of body he hadn’t yet considered? Why would he insist that metallic minerals, or human ingenuity and curiosity for that matter, exist apart from the cosmological givens? Andrew Kachel wrote of *The Cybernetic Fold*: “this is a sharp-witted study of materiality and relationality at a moment dominated less by objects than their porous digital counterparts.” Dodge began to imagine a quantifiability so high-resolution that it *effectively* became analog; he started to wonder if there could be a digital-object, or even some sort of programmable robot that might be able to, theoretically, produce affect, or something in the range of affect, something which, radiant, might also then leap, invisibly, from person to person or even thing to person, e.g., love.

During 2016, Dodge looked into the fast-moving, ethically charged field of robotics and machine intelligence and began to interweave this research with questions of vital matter, and intersubjectivity, or what French poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant called “consenting not to be a single being.” Informed by Glissant’s writing, as well as other established and emergent writings on social theory and science studies, Dodge explores—via sculpture, drawings, and video—a reframing of relationality as *practices of love*, a kind of *being-with* that does not exclude the nonhuman.

Dodge has written that he reads a lot, “mainly theory, non-fiction, and philosophy” and enjoys thinking which he experiences as “full body pleasure not totally distinct from the feeling of hot sand or a poke in the eye.” Studio practice, Dodge contends, is an experiment in “allowing the body to think.” He has referred to artworks as “non-language knowings.”

Dodge’s short video (6 minutes, 2019), *Late Heavy Bombardment* which premiered in a show called *User* at Callicoon Fine Arts, uses comic, rough-hewn animation to examine certain polemical, exhausted binaries (political polarization, urge to purification) that saturate contemporary American culture.

Dodge’s non-fiction book, *My Meteorite, Or, Without The Random There Can Be No New Thing* will be published by Penguin Press, March 2020. The book is described as, “an expansive, radiant and genre-defying investigation into the habits of matter, what constitutes a bond, and how we are shaped by numberless forces we cannot know. As artist Harry Dodge initiates a research project about machine intelligence, he abruptly finds himself contending with the decline and death of his father from dementia, the

renovation of a bewildering but powerful connection to his birth-mother, and the vicissitudes of artistic practice—its strange solitude and sociality.”

Art critical press, intermittently, suggests that Harry’s artistic and philosophical interests circulate around gender. Such a focus, while understandable given the culture’s preoccupations, unfortunately bypasses the plethora of Dodge’s principal interests. Dodge identifies as a person about whom nothing factual about gender can be said.

#### Early Life:

Dodge (b. San Francisco, 1966) was adopted and raised by George and Phyllis Bard. The family lived in Fremont, California; Bay Village, Ohio, and then the suburbs of Chicago, including Palatine and Vernon Hills. He attended Libertyville High School from which he graduated early. He attended University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana for a year before relocating to San Francisco in 1985. Dodge briefly attended SF State, SF City College and a furniture and cabinetmaking program at Oakland City College. He received an MFA from Milton Avery School of the Arts at Bard College in 2003.

#### Early Career

##### 1992-2001

Dodge co-founded and ran a community-oriented art space-salon called, *The Bearded Lady*, located in the Mission District of San Francisco. Hosting variety shows here soon gave way into full, evening-length performance spectacles directed by Dodge (and featuring Dodge as monologist) including: *Muddy Little River* and *From Where I’m Sitting (I can only reach your ass.)*. Both these shows were performed in 1997. Dodge counts this time as fundamental; took inspiration from Kathy Acker—who was a frequent customer and who conducted some classes at the café—and other SF artists, dancers, thinkers, and performers active and emerging at that time (ex: Mission School painters, Alicia McCarthy, Chris Johansen, Miguel Gutierrez, neighboring Kiki Gallery’s director Rick Jacobsen, visual artists Keith Mayerson, Catherine Opie, Nayland Blake, Vincent Fecteau), Dance/theater group CORE, and Nao Bustamante. Dodge began practicing drawing, painting and sculpture during this time. At the end of this period, Dodge co-wrote, co-directed and edited a feature film, *By Hook or By Crook*, that premiered at Sundance in 2001.

##### 2002-2008

Unenthusiastic about the strictures and personalities involved with narrative feature-filmmaking Dodge decided to attend Milton Avery School of the Arts at Bard College and seek an MFA. Here he studied with and was inspired by Peggy Ahwesh, Amy Sillman and Nayland Blake, among others. At Bard, Dodge started making short videos, sculpture and roughly-hewn drawings of objects including bottles of glue and cavemen, that continue to mark his current artwork. In 2001 Dodge moved to Los Angeles and, in 2003, began making

short videos with Stanya Kahn. Their collaborative video *Can't Swallow It, Can't Spit It Out* was part of the 2008 Whitney Biennial, and is in the collection at Museum of Modern Art in NY. The pair's work was, at that time, represented by Elizabeth Dee Gallery.

### Teaching

Dodge has taught in the Art, English, and Critical Studies departments at Bard College, UCLA, UCSD, and CalArts. In 2013 he was hired as Regular Faculty at California Institute of the Arts, in Valencia CA.

### Recognition

In 2018, Dodge was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship, and an Art Matters Grant in 2012. His solo work is held in collections at institutions such as Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and the Tufts University Art Museum.

Dodge is married to author Maggie Nelson. They have one child together, a son born in 2012. Dodge also has a child with Stanya Kahn, a son born in 2004.