

#artinthetimeofcorona

interview with Herman Mhire

✘ This is one in a series of interviews with our customers to see how they are adapting to the COVID-19 world.

Herman Mhire lives in Lafayette, LA and has been a customer for over 25 years.

Mhire was named Distinguished Professor in the College of the Arts at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He also served as Director/Chief Curator of the University Art Museum, where he envisioned and established the Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum. Additionally, he is the founding president of Festival International de Louisiane. Trained as a painter and printmaker, his work has been widely exhibited and critically acclaimed. Through his many roles as a curator, artist, and professor he continues to serve as an ambassador of the Arts for Louisiana locally and internationally.

This is his **#artinthetimeofcorona** story.

✘ Herman Mhire “Loop de Loop” 2020 archival pigment print, 29” x 22”

How was Lafayette, LA affected by the COVID-19 virus? How have you been affected personally?

Since the COVID-19 virus was first diagnosed, there have been 8,168 cases and 106 deaths in Lafayette Parish, LA. The widespread closure of schools and places of business, coupled with stay-at-home directives, transformed a normally active city into a ghost town. Friends and family remained in contact via social media, email and cellphone, shared lists of

favorite films available on Netflix, and posted photos of their latest culinary creations on Facebook.

How have you been affected personally?

Lafayette was blessed with unusually cool and dryer than normal weather this spring, which encouraged residents of all ages to walk, jog and cycle in my neighborhood every morning and evening. Seeing neighbors outdoors, albeit at a safe distance, provided much needed live contact while remaining isolated in my home the rest of the day. Mandatory masking and social distancing have reduced significantly the infection and mortality rates.

Do you have a daily routine that keeps you grounded these days?

In addition to working in my studio, I have pets and a sizable garden to care for which require attention every day. Limiting activities away from my residence has allowed me to pay greater attention to my studio work and my immediate environment.

Are you reading, cooking, streaming, or doing any activity that is helping you cope?

The rapid spread of COVID-19 coincided with the arrival of Spring. Because I'm an avid gardener, the anticipation of creating a new garden this year was both exciting and therapeutic. In the midst of a global pandemic and an economic downturn, gardening provided a way to engage in a productive activity, plunging my hands into the soil and soaking up rays of sunshine.

With museums and galleries closed are you seeing a shift to the internet for viewing/selling art? How is this affecting

you?

I've read that online viewing and selling of works of art has increased. Because I'm not currently an active participant in the commerce of art, I have not been affected by this trend.

Do you see any positive changes for artists in a post pandemic world?

It's too early to know what the long-term impact of COVID-19 will be on artists. The current health, economic and social justice crises will no doubt provide subject matter for artists to draw upon for years to come.