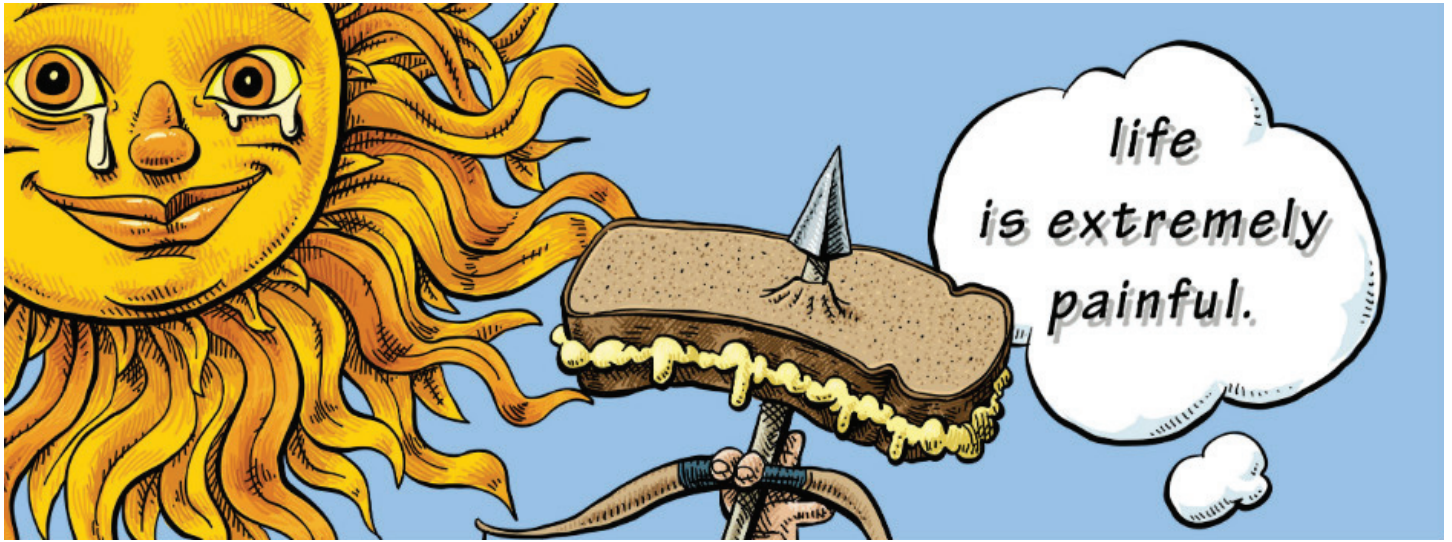


Paddle 8



Texting with Artist Jordan Wolfson

Catching up with the multimedia master about his love of bizarre cartoon characters and knack for creating surreal scenes of heightened tension.

By Rebecca Bates | October 27, 2015

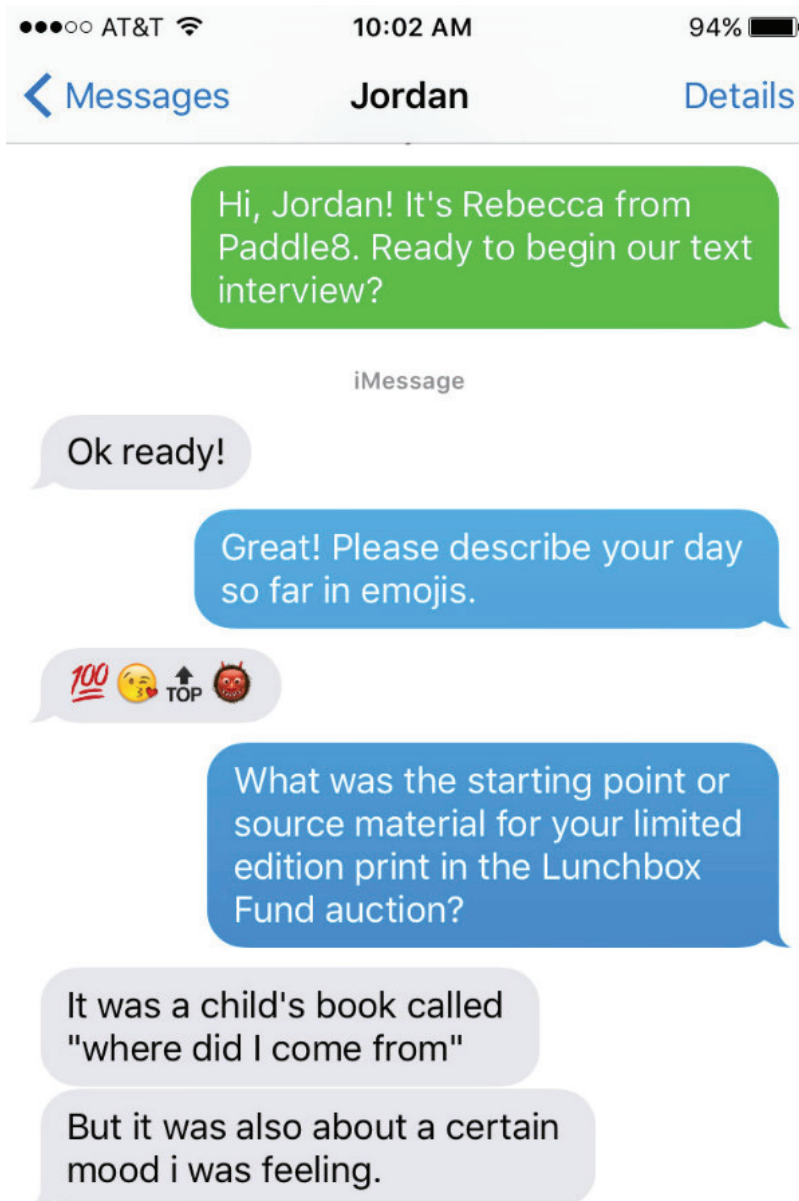


Artist Jordan Wolfson. Photo David X Prutting/BFA.com

Jordan Wolfson's oeuvre is one of intentional, tense contradictions. His 12-minute film *Animation*, made from 2011 shows a caricature of a middle-aged Jewish man casually leafing through pages of *Vogue*. From his mouth comes the sounds of a couple talking about their sex life in awkward whispers, and, later, various recorded recitations of Richard Brautigan's "Love Poem." Through the incongruity of these images and sounds, Wolfson creates an insidiously uncomfortable viewing experience. Likewise, his *Female Figure* (2014) is a comely robotic woman in a short dress, with blonde hair, a monster's face, serrated teeth, and Wolfson's voice. In this way, the artist is the master of subtle, sneaking tension.

The same anxiety creeps into his new limited-edition lithograph print *Untitled*, created for The Lunchbox Fund auction (benefiting the nonprofit's initiatives to fight childhood hunger in South Africa), which looks like a cross between a surreal classroom inspirational poster and a pasted-over subway ad. A round cartoon cherub lies on a cloud, smiling, but crying, his arrow piercing a sandwich, while the sun above him also smiles and cries. In a bubble, the cherub thinks, "Life is extremely painful." Over the print Wolfson has placed three nonsensical bumper stickers. What appears witty on first glance slowly reveals itself to be an onslaught of confusing slogans, imagery, and symbols.

We chatted with Wolfson over text about the impulses behind his bizarre works, what he loves about cartoon characters, and what works hang in his own collection.



What kind of mood?

A kind of depression mixed up w
love

Heartbreak

The print also seems rooted in a
fascination with print
advertising, from subway ads to
bumper stickers. What do you
find most interesting about ads?

I don't really find ads interesting
but I don't dislike them either

I don't think it's related to ads

Maybe it more of a inspirational
poster - I'm not sure - I don't
think critically or analyze when I
work.

The David Zwirner site indicates
the cherub on the print is one of
many characters we'll see in
more of your work. Are your
characters ever inspired by
other cartoon figures in pop
culture?

Yes there will be new work
released over this year and next
that uses these new characters.
Not really inspired by pop
culture per se, more like
violence and distortion. I like
cartoons bc they are not real

I like grotesque cartoons. I like
to see cartoons suffer - maybe
that's too much but it's true

Could you describe your upcoming work in 8 words or less?

What people should know is that I won't be making another small edition like this again anytime soon.

What was the first piece of art you purchased for yourself?

A Wolfgang Tillmans

What would people be surprised to hear you collect?

I'm not sure.

I love art and of course the minute I could afford it I had to have something. It's only natural

What is the first thing you do when you get to the studio in the morning?

I meditate or procrastinate about meditating

I also open up the mail

What was the last gallery or museum show that surprised you?

Trisha Donnelly at Matthew Marks in LA, but it didn't surprise me bc I know she's is one of the greatest artists alive

Great. One last question... Can you please describe what you'll do for the rest of the day in emojis?



Jordan Wolfson's limited-edition print joins works by Jonas Wood, Tara Donovan, Dustin Yellin, and others in an auction to benefit The Lunchbox Fund, a nonprofit that works to end childhood hunger in South Africa. Image above: Detail from Jordan Wolfson's *Untitled*(2015), created to benefit The Lunchbox Fund.