

IN TIME OF PLAGUE

ON MAKING A DOCUMENTARY
ABOUT BARBARA HOPE
STEINBERG

Of 2020 I'll distinctly remember the last time I walked through an art gallery before everything changed. It was on the 26th of January, just four days before WHO declared Coronavirus a global health emergency.

I walked along walls brimming with artistry but I don't think I was looking- really looking. My mind was elsewhere and little did I know that centuries of flaking paint, varnished clays and decorative textiles would be locked away for many months shortly after.

Exhibitions stopped. Galleries closed. Artists gave up their rented spaces and collaborations ceased to continue in-person. And whilst many art forms continued in solitude- as art often does, the reality of living in a new world was, at times, just too much to handle for many creatives and the art of some suffered at the hands of the year's events. For other artists, their work continued. But in most cases, the end product couldn't reach far beyond their studios. Events which would ordinarily inhabit a physical space moved online and the way that art is traditionally consumed changed overnight.

The struggling artist has, of course, become a tenet in itself, but the struggle of the working artist today is a battle made harder beyond anyone's control. Moving into a digital space doesn't come without its own troubles. From working out the best way to reach your audience, to understanding the subtleties of this new dynamic and navigating social media- things that often feel somewhat counter creative. A form of marketing and business than many an artist would rather circumvent.

With a new series of artwork comprised of 20 oil paintings ready to be exhibited at some point COVID permitting, Barbara Hope Steinberg stands ready. But is this new digital space ready to accommodate?

I first connected with Steinberg over email before inevitably, Zoom in a fashion largely associated with 2020. After emails, meetings, proposals and time spent studying her previous collections of large,

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bold and dynamic works; collaborating on a series of short films and a documentary was on the table.

Albert Maysles' *Iris*, Randall Wright's *Maggi Hambling: Making Love With The Paint* and Frédéric Tcheng's *Dior and I*, are all artistic documentaries which stick in the mind. Making a documentary, or any film connected to a person can become a filmmaker's greatest accolade. Having the ability to form a bond with another person, to intrude on their most vulnerable moments, remaining impartial, creative and within the confines of reality can create a turbulent, often beautiful outcome all at the same time. But what about making one at a distance? Well, that's going to be a little different.

In the meantime, Steinberg hopes to showcase the series of short films via social media including images linked to the birth of her collection- a marriage of landscape, nature and something intangible in the air.