



[Equality, Accessibility, Availability | Doug Jones | Caeteris Paribus | ASC Gallery | London](#)

[Doug Jones](#)'s new series of work revolve around issues of equality, accessibility and availability. Through the media of video, installation, needlepoint embroidery and quilt-making, Jones' show *Caeteris Paribus* (everything else being equal) weaves together experiences of personal failure of involvement in public events, irreverent comments on British heritage production and observations on ubiquitous patterns of restriction inscribed in the social arena by legislative mechanisms and police jurisdiction.

To accompany the exhibition, a catalogue has been produced which includes an interview between the artist and the writer Anna Castelli. ASC Gallery have kindly allowed us to reproduce this conversation below.

Doug Jones in conversation with Anna Castelli, London, 2011.

One of the last times I saw Doug, he showed me on Google Earth a dead-end street next to Morrison's car park in Peckham. Quite random, I thought. I know the area quite well since I pass it every day on my way to work. It is one of those non-places. Those spaces that feel like no-man's land, where there is no past and no present. Where you would not imagine anything has ever happened. Doug informed me that evening that he recently discovered his family began there. In a house that was bombed and destroyed by the German Luftwaffe in a night raid during the Second World War. Every day I pass the car park now, the landscape is not the same. It has become a place that has a past, a history, a heritage.

Anna Castelli: Starting from the title that you have selected for this exhibition, *Caeteris paribus*, (Other things being equal) tell me more about the body of works you are showing on this occasion.

Doug Jones: In *Caeteris paribus* I am presenting a series of works which revolve around ideas of equality, accessibility and availability. There is a new development on a series of needlepoint tapestries on which I have been working since 2007. Other works presented will be videos and installations/sculptures that I produced during the last few months. The video *Royal Wedding* records my experience of trying to attend Kate and William's marriage. A second video focuses on public water fountains in

Venice. The installation pieces could be seen as soft interventions on the architecture of the gallery building and on the urban landscape. Using quilted hi-visibility material I have made a soft portable version of a Gothic cathedral's arches.

AC: The use of the Latin language is a recurrent trait in your work, Why Latin?

DJ: I studied Latin at school when I was young. The choice of naming my works in Latin is a reference to the power of language. In fact, as soon as something is named or labeled with a Latin word, we treat it as something that becomes valuable, serious and worthy. I find that amusing.

AC: So what is the story behind the tapestry pieces?

DJ: The needlepoints are found objects on which I intervene. I have a passion for this sort of tapestry because for me they are classic symbols of quintessential Britishness. They are symbols of British tradition and identity. The subjects I choose, such as old picturesque villages, little cottages and beautiful countryside sceneries bring feelings of comfort and nostalgia. My intervention then becomes a way of questioning and raising issues about home ownership and exclusion in this country. It is an observation about the distribution of council houses within the population, or places like the notorious 'Dover Immigration Removal Centre'.

AC: *Dinner for Twenty* appears to make a nostalgic reference to the British street parties held at the time of national celebrations such as the end of World War 2, the Queens silver Jubilee, Royal weddings and coronations.

DJ: Something similar still took place on a minor scale for the most recent royal wedding, largely governed by Health and Safety, even the old ladies making sandwiches required a CRB check... In my piece all types of events are celebrated through a vast dinner service made up of commemorative table-ware, from Coal miners' strikes to pancake races, from banking through to Wesleys methodist movement. Being invited to this dinner party requires the guests to join up to the collective, the diners are literally tied together by their apron strings.

AC: Tell me more about the 'Royal Wedding' and your experience that day.

DJ: I was genuinely excited the day of the Royal Wedding. It is possibly the largest public event I will ever experience in my life and I really didn't want to miss it. I even had an argument with my partner because she didn't have much desire to go and cheer at the Royal couple. The video documents that day and the impossibility for me to actually take part in the celebration of the wedding. The wedding was in fact very difficult to access. Every single street leading to Whitehall and the Mall had been closed with turnpikes, barrages and tall metal fences from the early morning. A huge cohort of police officers at every gate turned crowds of people away, suggesting an entry would be possible from the next gate, where the same thing would occur. I found myself wandering in the streets of London for hours, without ever being able to take part in the public event which the entire country had been invited to attend. A moment that was supposed to be available for everyone, and was also paid by everyone with tax money, has once again ended up being just for the few.

AC: There is a fundamental critique of society in every one of your works. Is this just a critique of the British government and people or maybe a more extended comment about human beings and (the) Western society?

DJ: suppose when you start thinking about issues and problems that you wish (or have the will) to address you always start from home, from the things that are more familiar to you. Although I am not sure I would use the word critique to define what my work does. I prefer to say that I make observations.

AC: And how about the irony that lies behind such interventions?

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DJ: Again, I don't think there is irony. I don't like the word irony and I don't really know what it means. I think that my work is slightly rude and maybe a little revengeful. It is my bad mannered answer to the conventions I grew up with and that are part of my cultural heritage.

AC: Can we say that your work is maybe...irreverent?

DJ: Yes, I like that. I like irreverent. I like being irreverent, playing with imagery that used to impress me and transfix me as a child. This is why I enjoy tying up old ladies...

AC: And how about *Datur omnibus* then. This is the only work that is not strictly connected with British culture. How does that fit in?

DJ: I recently spent a week in Venice, mostly wandering around looking at the architecture in the boiling heat. Thirst made me notice just how many public water fountains were there. The quest for cold running water started to guide my steps through the city. Bottled water in Venice is very expensive and therefore unaffordable in the quantities you need to keep hydrated. Also in June, the Italian people have been voting for a referendum against the water privatization. Filming people using the public fountain then becomes a way to address the importance of peoples rights. The availability of water that makes you equal. But also Venice for me symbolizes the Grand Tour.

AC: Grand tour?

DJ: Yes, the Grand Tour. The traditional travel of Europe undertaken by the British upper-class's of means. Now with low budget airlines such as Ryanair or Easyjet this has become available for the masses. Also I love to observe tourists and to see how the British behave outside the UK.

AC: So in all your works there seems to be a contradictory relationship with your cultural heritage that translates into your irreverent intervention on appropriated materials. This seems a very intimate aspect of your practice that can be quite complicated to understand.

DJ: There is something really subtle here. I can maybe explain it by going back to the Royal Wedding. My wish that day and my intention during the editing of the video was never to mock the Royal Family. I honestly wanted to be in the streets and cheer with the crowd. I was incredibly excited and genuinely looking forward to taking part. The impossibility to do so and the circumstances of the event created my work. With everything that I use, all my symbols and all my materials, my intent is never just to poke fun or be rude. I choose these elements because they are truly important to me, part of who I am. I use them to make a commentary on what surrounds me.

Doug Jones: *Caeteris Paribus* is on show at ASC Gallery, London until 21 October.

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Image:

Royal Wedding

Photography by Assunta Ruocco

Courtesy of Ceri Hand Gallery.

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