

foreign & domestic

**Jonah Dillon**

September 11 – October 18, 2026

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## Jonah Dillon

September 11 - October 18, 2026

24 Rutgers Street, New York

opening Friday, September 11, 6-8pm

We are delighted to announce Jonah Dillon's first solo exhibition at Foreign & Domestic. The exhibition consists of four sculptures, found objects displayed without adornment or modification, combined in minimal assemblages or arranged in series.

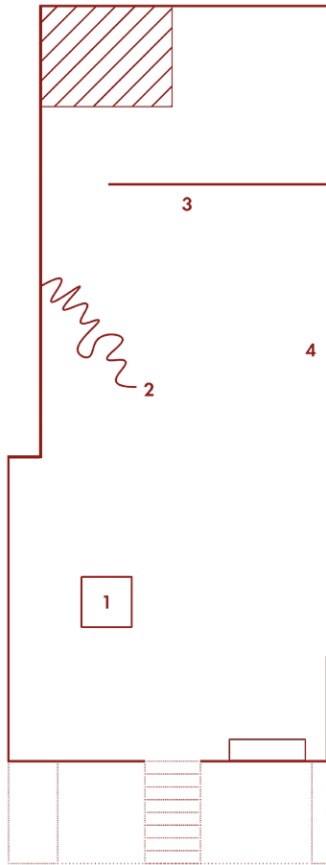
A nineteenth-century cast iron body of Christ, retrieved from a French cemetery, is fused to a large industrial fan, previously installed in a Kansas poultry farm. A mechanic's drop light, paired with a rubber prosthetic arm, lies on the floor as light seeps through an open zipper at the wrist. Twenty-five first aid kits, their white metal cases painted with a red cross in red circle, mass produced in the Soviet Union to an identical standard, yet each uniquely timeworn, are presented in a square grid. A child's doll partly crushed and caked in dirt, salvaged from a utility trench dug in Ulster County, New York, displayed on a white plinth under a plexiglass cube.

Dillon sources objects from online marketplaces and message boards - the first aid kits, for example, are primarily acquired from resellers in Ukraine - alongside more tangible methods and personal connections: an artistic practice of scrolling, scouring and selecting. Each element in Dillon's work is a readymade imbued, through a lifetime of industrial, military, medical or religious use, with a specific aura now given room to breathe in the gallery.

An interview of the artist by Bob Nickas accompanies the exhibition.

Jonah Dillon (b. 1999, Massachussets) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Recent exhibitions include *God alone loves all things and he loves only himself*, Foreign & Domestic (2025; group); *Misery Index* at A.D. NYC (2024; solo); *Hand Foot and Mouth*, A.D. NYC (2023; group).

Dillon graduated from Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 2021 with a BFA in Sculpture.



1. **Jonah Dillon**  
*Untitled*  
2025  
doll, dirt  
4 x 14 x 6 inches

2. **Jonah Dillon**  
*Untitled*  
2023  
rubber prosthetic sleeve, mechanic's light  
4 x 9 x 21 inches

3. **Jonah Dillon**  
*Untitled*  
2026  
industrial fan, cast iron figure  
48 x 48 x 21 inches

4. **Jonah Dillon**  
*Untitled*  
2026  
25 first aid kits  
8 x 8 ½ x 3 inches (each)

*From A Body of Work*

Jonah Dillon and Bob Nickas in conversation

**BN:** At the center of your show is a work with a large, rusted industrial fan, on top of which a small steel crucifix has been mounted—Jesus on the cross. In continuous rotation, the fan's blades blow air into the gallery, accompanied by a low whirring sound. Christ on the cross is an immediately recognizable icon. Your work, visually and sonically, amplifies this iconicity. Some may think of this sculpture as sacrilegious, and yet the fan is clearly breathing life through the body of Christ. How did you come to bring these two objects together? Did you have them at the same time, or did one precede the other into the studio?

**JD:** I acquired the fan first. I've used fans in my work before but never at this scale and I was drawn to its lineage being something with a truly industrial background as opposed to a domestic one. It was allegedly an old fixture at a chicken slaughterhouse in Kansas. I had some semblance that I wanted to merge it with the body of Christ in one form or another, so I spent the next six or so months hunting for a version that felt right. I had previously made a smaller, similar iteration, one that had Christ sit on a wooden crucifix, but I had begun to feel the desire to see a version with both more weight and without the presence of the cross to act like a kind of mediator between his body and the machine behind him—opening up the manner of the relationship between the two felt important.

**BN:** The Christ figure on the first, smaller fan not only describes its full circumference, and so is somehow equal to it, but appears almost alabaster white, fleshy, smooth and pure. Strapped to the much larger, more ominous fan, that figure is at its mercy, and muted, dull gray, registers as impure.

**JD:** The cast iron version in the work was the one that felt like it had the presence best suited for the task. The scale and similarly industrialized material composition felt compatible in the way I think I was looking for.

**BN:** I mistakenly referred to a crucifix, but there is none, as you say. Just the body. Of course the body here is itself cruciform—arms raised to the left and right, legs straight down from the torso. The smaller version is one of the first works of yours I ever encountered. The larger fan gives the work its presence, its full force. The body of Christ is so small in relation to the fan's imposing appearance, and Christ, with or without a cross, will always be read as a body in suspension, not only physically, but in terms of the space between death and resurrection.

**JD:** I think the cross has a certain weight, and universality that even supersedes the body upon it. Its removal is about also humanizing the Christ figure—presenting the suffering of a man without the burden of it also being iconographic. The pain is human, regardless of a supposed closeness to divinity. I'm interested in this idea that he represents us better that way, withholding the instrument that puts him in that space with God.

**BN:** I hadn't thought of the fan as replacing the cross, but in taking its place there's also the idea that machines are, and technology has become, our cross to bear. And something else ... You mentioned having been raised agnostic. Agnostics believe that nothing can be known about God's existence, that judgement is withheld. Does this relate to the absent crucifix? We see it even though it's not there. I ask knowing that crosses are something of a recurring motif for you.

**JD:** I think it does. As you've mentioned, the cross is a familiar motif for me. Your point about the kind of liminality agnosticism presents—withholding a commitment to a decisive choice of belief or disbelief—opens other avenues for how to receive the information we're presented by the cross. I never received the conditioning to associate it with rebirth, so it became heavily emblematic of both an inevitable mortality and a frighteningly unknown beyond. I'm sure some people would find this pessimistic, but I've always understood it primarily as a vehicle for death, both functionally and semiotically.

As you mention, In this work the presence of the cross is inherently understood even without it being tangibly there. I'm very interested in this idea that its form can be negated but that we still feel its gravity even when it's not physically present, or that it could possibly be transposed with something else. Perhaps the cross doesn't have to be a cross at all, and that its visual removal expands upon what that space between death and rebirth looks like or is located.

**BN:** You told me in passing that your mother is an art historian, and although we didn't get into her particular area, a painter's name came up, which I've already forgotten, but the Italian Renaissance was my association.

**JD:** That was Artemisia Gentileschi. Her rendition of Judith Slaying Holofernes was probably the first artwork I was consciously aware of. My mother's favorite painting. She wanted me to pay attention to the difference in portrayal from Caravaggio's version; the intensity of the blood splatter, spurting towards her and soaking the sheets, and the

forcefulness of Judith's hands in the act. She resented the way she felt Caravaggio made her look timid, disgusted, and barely holding the sword that was supposedly in the act of severing through flesh and bone.

**BN:** Leo Steinberg's book, *The Sexuality of Christ In Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, is often brought to mind when I come across an image of Christ on the cross, whether painted or sculpted, where the genitals are usually obscured within the folds of a loincloth. Here, the second part of the title is key: *Modern Oblivion*. The suggestion with this particular image/object recurring over hundreds of years, and by way of this phrasing, is that it represents an act of repression. So much in modern life is considered an inconvenient truth, or unpleasant, unspeakable. Can the idea of *Modern Oblivion*, in the sense of human frailty, cruelty, obsolescence and mortality be applied to your sculpture? Saying this, I'm picturing the work you created with the 1938 Chevy truck grille draped with a woman's white nightgown. This gives the grille the appearance of ribs, an inescapable body reference, a machine-like body, stripped to the bone—visible through the diaphanous material. Although this is wall-mounted, we may imagine it found in the shoulder of the road.

**JD:** "Modern Oblivion" feels like terminology that's suitable for the themes in consideration both in this specific work and as a part of my language more universally. I think it can be felt in the context of this sculpture as a singular entity, but also in the embedded histories of both objects it's formed from. The fan lived the majority of life as a piece of machinery tasked with a specific role in the carefully engineered suffering of other living things for our consumption, the manner of which—I'm talking about industrialized farming—also feels like an affront of some kind, something that we've created to satisfy a desire and need beyond moral consideration for things around us. The fan exists because we created it for that purpose. I'm personifying it here in part because I'm thinking about that phrase you used—"the body is machine-like"—and also because I tend to think that as we've crept through centuries of industrialization that the necessity of a human body has become interchangeable with a machine, that they become increasingly analogous with one another.

**BN:** Interchangeable.

**JD:** The fan is another worker in the factory just like a man is. The Christ is cast in iron, a supposedly sacred and reverential depiction that itself isn't safe or exempt from falling prey to the systems we've created to lurch further along. So many depictions of this image have been carved or painted painstakingly by hand, but this one would have been reproducible by mold and materially capable of withstanding some abuse. It satisfies a purpose, but its existence feels callous nonetheless.

**BN:** The "lurching along" reminds me of a number of works you've made with prosthetics, the one with the leg brace that I saw the first time I was in your studio. Was it for a child? Am I right? Which makes it even more poignant. An already fragile body crippled, more vulnerable. Possibly that's how I've chosen to remember it, to give it a story, or I've overlaid it with my memory of Bob Gober's pile of little girl legs? Lit by an orange glow, stacked in the fireplace.

In this show we'll encounter a disembodied arm, a prosthetic that's meant to be slipped over what remains of a human limb. The object's real creepiness is the open zipper in the prosthetic arm, as if this is the sleeve of a flesh jacket. And the coup de grâce: the arm is illuminated by a sort of glowing probe that's been inserted under the skin, but which is actually a clip-on light with a hook, used for working under the hood of a car. I didn't realize that until you pointed it out to me. Even so, the overall impression is no less sinister, Frankensteinian. You don't display this on a pedestal or a shelf. It's placed directly on the floor. Lopped off or recently discarded ... by who? A one-armed mechanic? Which makes me wonder if you yourself have stories that go along with these works, especially those that are figurative, or disfigurative.

**JD:** That's right. Those leg braces you're referring to would have belonged to a child, presumably afflicted by the polio virus in the 1930's. The prosthetics—thinking about the hand with the zipper running up the forearm in question, and others I've accumulated in the studio over the years—have always held a kind of gothic intimacy to me, both in their visual language and their purely functional historical purpose. These, perhaps above most other objects that find themselves in my employment, come with a specific, and individualized, history of human pain, made to mitigate someone's misfortune in the wake of a brutal accident, illness, and so on.

I don't necessarily assign my own fictionalized narrative to them, either as objects or eventually artworks, but during their acquisition, usually via channels like eBay, I often get a sort of anonymous report of their background. "This prosthetic belonged to my recently deceased neighbor, he wore this for years after he lost his arm in a logging accident." It's an incredibly impersonal way to acquire something that had such an intimate relationship with someone, but that fragmented, secondhand story also becomes inseparable from the object as it finds itself in a work, and then also becomes another silent voice with an account in the history of our existence my practice maybe seeks to propose.

**BN:** "The history of our existence." That's a rather sweeping theme, and it touches on what we were talking about the other day, or mostly what I was going on about—a dismissal of what's become product, contemporary art made to order, supply on demand, as opposed to art as a form of evidence of our being here, observers, witnesses, done for oneself but shared with others. Art approaching human archaeology,

imbued with time, more closely related to antiquity than to the contemporary—an empty category full to the brim. Things unearthed or rescued, like the dried mud-encrusted doll in your show, lifeless, with matted hair, half its face caked, are much more resonant than whatever’s shiny and new. This doll had likely been held by a child, pretending it was her child, to be taken care of, loved, and which no doubt was a source of comfort. Your work with the prosthetic arm echoes the disembodied arms and hands Paul Thek made in the late ‘60s, and this doll recalls for me a later painting of his with the text: Comfort the Afflicted, Afflict the Comfortable.

**JD:** You’re pointing toward a kind of tenderness, both present in the object itself, a small, fragile thing in a suspended state, rescued from its intended burial, and in the contextual history we can attempt to infer or uncover just as it was unearthed from the ground. It’s an object that feels like it could have been cherished and cared for, and yet was subject to a seemingly violent demise—suffocated in the mud beneath the earth. We can’t ask it, and so we fill in the blanks. Perhaps in the child’s mind the doll had fallen ill and passed away, and its burial was meant to lay it to rest. Unbeknownst to its owner, this tiny plastic body would never truly become one with the earth, and the soil couldn’t take back a creation it had not itself sowed.

That threshold between sensitivity and cruelty feels like it plays an important part in my work. Even that word—tenderness—could refer either to treating something with care or drawing pain of some kind. That title you’re referring to also feels resonant in how we perceive this object. It represents us, after all, in its visage. It’s obviously disquieting, but for those who feel close to suffering, or perhaps just grappling with our mortality—the afflicted—it may offer a kind of companionship, or just the feeling of being seen in some way.

**BN:** Yesterday, when I showed an image of the doll to a writer friend of mine, her first reaction, and she was very taken by the piece, something seemingly beyond resuscitation, was to ask if you’ve read Mike Kelley’s essay, “Playing With Dead Things,” which accompanied his exhibition *The Uncanny*, in 1993. The essay begins with a number of quotes, and the one from Freud, I believe, applies to what you do: “It may be true that the uncanny is nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it.”

**JD:** I tend to believe that. It’s certainly a major theme in my work, a reaction to a kind of insidiously perverse illusion or facade of normalcy surrounding so many aspects of our lives and our culture. It feels as if we’re most unsettled by the things we have ordinary, acutely nameable language for, but that become subconscious representations of things that elicit fear or contain an underlying darkness. It’s those that have a tangible relationship to our bodies especially—whether it’s a child’s discarded toy or a prosthetic meant to attempt to resurrect a sense of completion after a life-changing accident—

or just something that looks like a part of our own form we recognize and feel internally.

I used the word “liminality” earlier in reference to something else, but it’s a concept I think of often, a kind of threshold which I’ve always taken as the boundary between what’s comfortably understood and what’s murkier, vaguely grounded in recognition but distorted in some way.

**BN:** Which returns us to ...

**JD:** Freud’s quote. Objects spliced, placed or drawn together with seemingly unidentifiable purpose, subverting or repressing their nameability as they’re merged. The uncanny semblance that we know these things but can no longer identify them as they are now.

I work with older objects that I sense have repressed histories, whose contextual past has a particularly strong hold on their present state, and I think that inherent sense of age, decrepitness, the presence of visible decay, reflects our own fears of obsolescence and the feeling of being discarded, just as we ourselves have attempted to discard or replace these things once they’ve served their intended purposes. I can recall my own experiences cautiously exploring abandoned and forsaken industrial buildings, hospitals and homes in New England when I was growing up. It took until I was an adult to come to understand where their uncanniness really came from, that they were a derelict reflection of something I knew well but stripped of their vitality, and perhaps were a glimpse into their future.

**BN:** For writers of imaginative fiction, the question used to be: “Does the future have a future?” Today the question has been rephrased. “Will the future include us?” But I can’t imagine a machine or program contemplating its own fragility and eventual disappearance. Appliances break down all the time, often less than a week after the warranty has expired. But do they register their own mortality? Their own expiration date ... or only contractually? Let alone express thoughts like: “Who knew the apocalypse would be so boring?”

A program, unless it absorbs and mimics a particularly human impulse, is not going to begin collecting vintage first-aid kits, without knowing why, at least at first, and even then. Which brings us to the last work in your show, the wall-mounted grid of twenty-five first-aid kits. With them, prominently, is your recurring motif, the cross, in this case graphically bright red on a white metal box. Only a few are shiny white. Most are rusted, appearing battle-worn. A few look as unearthed as the dirt-encrusted doll, dug out from a collapsed trench. I know this is anecdotal, not intended to correspond with current events, but you told me that these are Russian manufactured, and did they originally come from Ukraine? Although I know you acquired them from various sources over time.

**JD:** I purchased most of them through online antiques dealers who primarily seemed to be located in Ukraine, although as you're mentioning, I was able to discern quickly that they were originally of Soviet manufacture. They were the first things I'd ever consciously made an attempt to import from overseas. Up until the point when I first started collecting them, which I believe was back in the fall of 2024, I had been actively filtering my attempts toward collecting things that were either located domestically or were U.S. manufacture. I think I was seeking things that felt representative of this idea of "abject Americana" that I kept repeating to myself in my studio as I was trying to specify the language around what I was hoping to achieve across the work I've been doing in a broad sense. There was something about the medical cross symbol, though, that felt particularly transcendent.

I had started buying American ones, some with text, all with different designs, but this one kept reoccurring and I felt my desire shift to see a grid of things that had started out the same and lived different lives instead of being totally disparate from the jump. I assume you're aware of the work, but I was thinking heavily about Luis Camnitzer's bloody bandage piece *Leftovers* from 1970 when I started the process of obtaining the kits, unsure of the amount I needed but with the urge to accumulate as many as I could. I settled on twenty five, but would be curious to expand even further in the future.

**BN:** Camnitzer, of course. I wouldn't have thought of this piece, the large grid of stacked boxes that appear wrapped with bloodied bandages, although as soon as you mention it, yes, the parallel is clear, not only formally but in terms of state-sponsored terror, violent social control. Camnitzer is from Uruguay, and as elsewhere in Latin America the period in which he made the work was a time of political repression in that part of the world. His title, stamped on every wooden box, suggests they may contain body parts, bones, skulls—what's left of humans after they've been disposed of. In your work there's only the red cross, blood red, which may in fact speak volumes, and the repetition of the kits, as with Camnitzer's boxes, suggests they represent multitudes. But you aren't responding, as he was, to a specific crisis within the society ... or are you, as if there's the sounding of a general alarm, arising from a sense of free-floating dread?

I should add that in conflict zones a red cross indicates the neutrality of those who are present to offer medical assistance or humanitarian aid. While it means "Do Not Shoot," we know this hasn't always been respected, possibly intentionally, and with tragic consequence.

**JD:** The ubiquity of that symbol, a signifier for emergency medical attention, feels important. I wasn't consciously attempting to correlate them, but I was thinking about our healthcare system, the feeling of being left to rot in a bureaucratic trap that has covertly claimed so many, and the underlying current of fear surrounding what feels like

increasingly shrinking access to survival under the avaricious weight of our corporate oligarchy. I was also thinking of our culture of mass shootings, so many in number and often reported by mainstream media without faces or names, the sense that it's too inconvenient or inefficient to humanize every member of a mass mortality. Even beyond our imperialist exploits, it includes civilians in our own country. Lives are reduced to statistics, unwitting individuals forever grouped together under the banner of being lost to us during the same senseless event. I think this channel we wade through, holding the reality of these things with us everyday, becomes part of that overarching, free-floating dread you're speaking of.

**BN:** Your show may only have four works, but the space between one and another amplifies them exponentially. In art, as it's not true otherwise, one plus one equals three. The grid of first-aid kits and the mud-encrusted doll. Help arrived too late. The doll and the disembodied arm. The bond between a parent and a child severed. The disembodied arm and Christ hovering over the giant fan, which is either a life force or a manmade disaster, and which may be claimed as "an act of God." In the face of tragedy, some will question or lose their faith.

These works, I believe, were conceived and began to evolve ahead of your show, before it was offered. Did they align for you over time, one by one, before they eventually coalesced in their potential to heighten one another, each evocative in its own right, while amplified in unison.

**JD:** There's an element of a sort world building in my practice that feels pertinent here. I'm often seeking to make things that feel disparate in their individual semiotic traits and associations, but relying on their inherent, established language to build a kind of layered resonance with one another. As I'm saying this I'm thinking about the relationship between the severed arm on the floor, and the wall of med kits, and your examples as well. Each one different, but projecting an atmosphere that draws them together in the same universe of being.

I really appreciate the kind of specificity in the through lines you're pointing to, because it's a major part of my process, attempting to provide enough information to draw uncomfortable inferences about the relationships each work may have with one another but without the closure of a concrete narrative. These works were made, or collected, over a period of three years. The hand, which has lived in my studio for some time, was first, and then the beginnings of the kits trickled in, the doll acquired by chance before the kits' completion, and the fan in unison with their finalization. In my mind the two were competing for scale—the fan and hand, the first and last works, felt as if they had an important connection in how they conduct, and inject a shot of artificial life—the low industrial hum of the spinning blades, and the burn of the light deep within the zippered latex skin. A sense of breath tethered to a cord.

catalogue of works



Jonah Dillon  
*Untitled*  
2025  
doll, dirt  
4 x 14 x 6 inches  
(10.2 x 35.6 x 15.2 cm)  
JD0005











Jonah Dillon

*Untitled*

2023

rubber prosthetic sleeve, mechanic's light

4 x 9 x 21 inches

(10.2 x 10.2 x 53.3 cm)

JD0006





Jonah Dillon

*Untitled*

2026

industrial fan, cast iron figure

48 x 48 x 21 inches

(121.9 x 121.9 x 53.3 cm)

JD0003











Jonah Dillon  
*Untitled*  
2026  
25 first aid kits  
8 x 8 ½ x 3 in (each)  
(20.3 x 21.6 x 7.6 cm)  
JD0004









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photography by Stan Narten

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