

# Sarah Pucci and Dorothy Iannone at Hannah Hoffman

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Text by Jessica Simmons-Reid



Sarah Pucci, *Saint Holding Infant Jesus* (c. 1980). Beads, sequins, pins, foam, plastic statuette, 6 x 6 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson.

From 1959 to her death in 1996, artist Sarah Pucci constructed over two hundred sculptures as gifts for her daughter, fellow artist Dorothy Iannone. Scaled roughly to the size of two out-stretched palms, perhaps in symbolic reference to the physical gesture of gift-giving, these intimate, intensely elaborate objects—styrofoam forms blanketed with jewels, beads, sequins, pins, and sometimes even pearls—exude earnest tenderness and joyful, unencumbered kitsch. In *Untitled* (c. 1970), for example, a gilded orb meticulously embellished with beads and sequins and topped with a halo of colorful plastic doves regally rests atop a miniature metal goblet like a devotional object prepared as an offering. On a material level, these glittery explosions speak the many languages of vernacular craft, at once recalling ostentatious religious reliquaries; bedazzled children's music boxes; and gaudy, domestic ornaments. On a metaphysical level, however, these aesthetic references become completely arbitrary, as Pucci's sculptures resist conventional object-based critique. Instead, they function as ecstatic manifestations of the unbridled, almost maniacal devotion that a parent harbors for their child.

An exhibition at [Hannah Hoffman](#) includes 15 of these sculptures alongside four collages and a video work by Iannone, the latter of which is an elegiac reminiscence of the life and creative output of her mother (*Sarah Pucci: A Piece About My Mother and Her Work*, 1980). In juxtaposing the work of mother and daughter, the exhibition automatically assumes the role of mediator in a complex family dynamic, with the dialogue between the works remaining inextricably linked to the artists' relationship. Given the nature of Pucci's objects as exclusive gifts for Iannone, that framework makes sense in this context, as it splits open, by just a sliver, the private inner world shared by mother and child, offering a tiny peek into this sacred and complex space.

Pucci's sculptures sit atop a row of plinths that stretch the length of the gallery, with Iannone's collages adorning the main wall directly facing this army of bejeweled objects. While mostly known for her immensely detailed, illustrative, and colorfully erotic paintings exploring human sexuality, Iannone's four collages—completed in 1962, during a period in which Pucci would regularly send her gifts—are quietly abstract and often hieroglyphic. Each contains simple forms of handmade Japanese paper and gold leaf that layer and intermingle to form a series of chirpy, minimalist gestures. In *Hidden Assets*, for example, a column of violet paper with bleeding hints of rose vertically bisects the composition, overlaying a lightning strike of gold leaf that grazes two torn, amoebic-like forms. Aside from flecks of vibrant color and the glint of gold leaf, Pucci and Iannone's bodies of work truly bear no aesthetic relation to one another; each does, however, embody discrete, confident languages that hint at a sophisticated set of material concerns. While Pucci's use of beads and sequins may be more quotidian, the unique complexity of her miniature structures borders on the architectural, speaking to a zealous, prodigious craft honed over the course of three decades—a lifetime of work. As meticulous, time-consuming objects created for one sole recipient, they possess a rapturous emotionality, with each bead and embroidered tinsel mirroring the many labors and adorations of parenthood, the machinations of which often breach the realm of the absurd.

In her video, Iannone honors her mother's labors by eloquently reciting correspondence between the two, which she intersperses with narratives of her own dreams and memories. As she speaks, she affectionately lifts and moves the lavish sculptural gifts in and out of frame, cementing these objects firmly within the context of the familial relationship from which they stem. This bond often veers toward the mystical: for example, when focusing on *Saint Holding Infant Jesus*, created by Pucci (approximately) the same year that Iannone filmed this video, Iannone recounts that both experienced, independently and many years apart, spectral visions of the Virgin Mary. While such sentiments can verge on the trite and saccharin, here, this fervent display of unequivocal love, anchored by a covert language of art, is—dare I say—quite rhapsodic and uplifting.

*Sarah Pucci and Dorothy Iannone* runs from September 10–October 22, 2022 at Hannah Hoffman (2504 W. 7th St., Suite C, Los Angeles, CA 90057).



***Sarah Pucci and Dorothy Iannone***  
**(installation view) (2022). Image**  
**courtesy of the artists and**  
**Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles.**  
**Photo: Paul Salvesson.**



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Dorothy Iannone, *Hidden Assets*  
 (1962). Framed collage, and  
 handmade Japanese paper, and  
 gold leaf on paper. 19 x 15.75  
 inches. Image courtesy of the  
 artist and Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salvesson.



Sarah Pucci, *Untitled* (c. 1970).  
 Beads, sequins, pins, foam,  
 metal cup, 8.5 x 5.5 inches.  
 Image courtesy of the artist and  
 Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles.  
 Photo: Paul Salvesson.



Sarah Pucci, *Twilight* (c. 1970).  
 Beads, sequins, pins, and foam,  
 9.75 x 11.75 x 6.75 inches. Image  
 courtesy of the artist and  
 Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles.  
 Photo: Paul Salvesson.



Dorothy Iannone, Sarah Pucci: *A  
 Piece About My Mother and Her  
 Work* (installation view) (1980).  
 Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles,  
 2022. Image courtesy of the  
 artist and Hannah Hoffman, Los  
 Angeles. Photo: Paul Salvesson.



Jessica Simmons-Reid (MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago; BA, Brown University) is an artist and writer based in Los Angeles and Joshua Tree. She's interested in the interstitial space between the language of abstraction and the abstraction of language, as well as the intermingling of poetry and politics. She has contributed essays and reviews to *Carla* and *Artforum*, among others.

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