Inside Artist Dustin Yellin’s Brooklyn Factory of Delights

The 40-year-old artist, predicted to be bigger than big, has been courting fame with a purpose: to create a “cultural Utopia” that’s part gallery, part think tank, part school, part science lab, and part Factory-esque party zone.

BY AMY FINE COLLINS | PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN BECKER | SEPTEMBER 2015

On a frigid night last February, the California-and-Colorado-reared Brooklyn artist Dustin Yellin fidgeted in Row K of Lincoln Center’s David H. Koch Theater, next to his mother, Jackie. The Yellins were such newcomers to Manhattan’s mainstream cultural elite that neither had ever been to a ballet. Before the all-Balanchine program commenced, principal dancer Adrian Danchig-Waring stepped in front of the monumental gold curtain and made an announcement. As part of New York City Ballet’s ongoing Art Series, 15 monolithic, mixed-media sculptures by Dustin Yellin had been installed on the Promenade level, and after that evening’s performance, the audience was invited to view the exhibition and drink free beer. Danchig-Waring added that he had declined Yellin’s offer to join the company onstage for a dance or two. Yellin, a compact, bearded redhead, now 40, whispered, “In the old days, I would have jumped onto the stage, naked!”
Later, on the Promenade, hundreds of balletomanes peered into Yellin’s limpid slabs of layered, low-iron glass, mesmerized. They crouched, bent, and took photos in their attempts to decipher the tiny cutout paper images pasted inside, which, viewed from a slight distance, coalesced into 3-D human bodies, seemingly floating within transparent blocks. In the chest cavity of an ethereal being, they could detect anything from a miniature black-and-white Roman head to an orange Gulf Oil sign, snipped from books and magazines, to gauzy drifts of acrylic paint. Dwarfed by his six-foot-eight effigies, Yellin—a hyperkinetic blur in black jeans, Nikes, spectacles, and mismatched socks—eagerly signed programs, answered questions, and handed out copies of *Intercourse*, the magazine he publishes at Pioneer Works, the nonprofit inter-disciplinary cultural center that he founded in Red Hook, Brooklyn, in 2012. “Regular people genuinely adore Dustin’s sculptures,” the critic and Museum of Modern Art poet laureate Kenneth Goldsmith observes. “Now we know what public art can look like. Dustin’s going to be bigger than the art world. He could become a major pop figure.”

Within days, the 15 Lincoln Center Psychogeographies sculptures were not only sold out, at around $150,000 each (one to Lincoln Center itself), but also featured on the front page of *The New York Times*. Simultaneously, a Sotheby’s lobby exhibition of Yellin’s apocalyptic, Hieronymus Bosch-inspired, 24,000-pound *Triptych*—a super-terrarium containing a blood-spewing fountain, a cyclopean female serpent, and foaming geodesic domes—led to its acquisition for $1.7 million. “The asking price!” Yellin marvels. “My art is food for Pioneer Works. Everything I do is about that larger mission—my Rizzoli book, my TED talk, the Psychogeographies,” a phalanx of which traveled afterward to the Kennedy Center. More went up on Sunset Boulevard in the late summer.

Longtime Yellin proponent Stacey Bendet, the C.E.O. and creative director of the clothing company Alice + Olivia, notes, “I learned a while ago that it’s good to invest in artists who want as badly as Dustin does to be famous. Now, all of the sudden, he’s everywhere. You might say he’s entered the Establishment.”

**“WHO IS THIS KID?”**

As a congenital outsider, Yellin would make an unlikely member of any ruling caste. “He was the weirdest kid, a willful loner,” says his mother, Jackie Yellin, a Hawaii-based entrepreneur whose real-estate company leases properties to nursing homes. His father, Ben, who, with his current wife, operates a chain of Los Angeles martial-arts schools, adds, “Dustin was always digging through garbage, bringing home rocks and other oddities, arranging strange junk in his room. He couldn’t have given a damn about school. But he always knew how to make money. When he was a little kid, he went down to Venice Beach with a boom box to break-dance. He attracted over a hundred people.” (Yellin can be seen some 30 years later break-dancing in Jay Z’s 2013 “Picasso Baby” video.)

Yellin recalls, “When I was 11, I smoked pot. My mother said, ‘If you don’t drink or do drugs again until you’re 18, I’ll buy you a car.’” At 14, he began “hustling Swatch watches,” hiring homeless people to buy up one-per-customer limited-edition timepieces for resale, a scheme that in two years netted him enough money to buy an Audi. When Yellin turned 18 (he and his divorced mother had meanwhile left Los Angeles for Aspen, Colorado), he told her, “I kept my promise. Now you owe me a car.” But since he already had one, Jackie gave her son $35,000 instead. “I spent every cent of it on drugs, sex, and rock ’n’ roll,” Yellin says. He hitchhiked through New Zealand, Australia, and Thailand, “read Freud, learned about Warhol, wrote bad poetry, and dropped acid in Bondi Beach while watching Woodstock.”

When he returned to Aspen, Yellin found that a girl he knew had taken up with an older man, a physicist. Spellbound, Yellin told the physicist that he wanted to study with him. “He introduced me to poetry, religion, science. I had no culture—I had dropped out of Aspen High School,” Yellin says. And he also subjected the wayward teen to experiments of a dubious nature. “He blindfolded me, put me on a saltwater bed in a dark room, and injected me with liquid ketamine”—the anesthetizing drug also known as K. “He told me I would think I had died. I felt like I had exploded through the universe—like I had been reduced to a single cell.”

Finally, Jackie intervened. “I told him never to go near my son again,” she recalls. “But somehow some of the eccentric things Dustin did rebuilt him psychologically.” Yellin concurs: “I had seen my whole future. I knew I wanted to make a real social change. I decided I was going to become the most famous artist in the world, because with art you can attract movie stars, industrialists, people with the power, and through them solve the world’s problems.”

“I may have found him a little bit annoying back then,” Liv Tyler says, “like ‘Is this guy for real?’”
Having found his calling, yet “knowing nothing and nobody,” Yellin moved to New York in 1995. With help in the form of a monthly rent check sent by his mother—“directly to the landlord so he wouldn’t use it on drugs,” she says—Yellin leased an old stable in the then desolate perimeters of Chelsea.

Yellin says, “I got lucky, right off the boat. At Spy and at Bowery Bar, I met all the 80s artists, the Lemonheads, Karen Elson.” He befriended both Shalom Harlow (“I had never seen a model before”) and Angela Lindvall, whom he eventually dated. Yellin’s succession of dazzling liaisons has puzzled many of his friends. (A later girlfriend was Michelle Williams.) “Even I don’t understand why these beauties are attracted to him,” says Jackie.

Before long the Stable became a 1990s meeting place for the young, the glamorous, the gifted, and the dissolute. On any given day or night, Julian Schnabel’s daughters, Lola and Stella; model and future shoe designer Tabitha Simmons; and Marlon Richards, the son of Keith, might be mingling with art critic and Warhol protégé Rene Ricard, British model Erin O’Connor, and various entertainment-industry up-and-comers, including Harmony Korine and Claire Danes. The Lemonheads’ Evan Dando brought Liv Tyler, and Zac Posen was welcomed into the fold, along with model-singer-actress Bijou Phillips. “There was a whole collective of creative people,” Posen says. “It was Factory-esque.” Tyler recalls, “There were beautiful young people spread all over, just lounging, hanging out. I remember at that time thinking, Who is this kid?! Where did he get this apartment?! What does he do?! I may have even found him a little bit annoying back then, like ‘Is this guy for real?’”

Yellin also attracted uptown types, including Andrew Kern, then a Brown student and now an evolutionary geneticist and Pioneer Works board member. “Dustin had an incredible magnetism,” Kern remembers. “He stepped into the social scene through his crazy antics. His place was a clubhouse, almost more for work than parties. I’d be working on a science project, Dustin on his art. There was even a rehearsal studio going on in the back. We took it very seriously—an amalgamation of different disciplines working together.”

Landscape designer Taylor Drayton Nelson, a member of Kern’s Brown clique, says, “He always had the magic keys to clubs and restaurants. The velvet rope disappeared for Dustin.” Yellin elaborates, “I met Giuseppe Cipriani when he was starting downtown Cipriani. He said, ‘Anything this kid makes I’ll put up on my walls.’ When the restaurant opened, I’d take out a big group to Cipriani and Giuseppe would feed us all for free.”

Even with his hyperactive social life, Yellin was always obsessively making art—at that point mostly paintings, collages, and, Nelson says, “psycho-repetitious drawings of multi-cellular entities.” Posen adds, “He was probably too prolific—he could have used editing. But he was open to discussion.” With the avuncular aid of Tony Durazzo, an interior designer Yellin had met in 1995, his efforts grew incrementally more accomplished. On Durazzo’s first visit to the Stable, Rene Ricard cautioned Yellin’s latest acolyte, “Be careful. Dustin could be a religion.”

Durazzo says, “I knew I was hitching my wagon to the right person. Whatever Dustin wanted, he got.” Eventually Durazzo quit his job to work full-time with Yellin and to help pitch in financially. At first the pair made paintings, “then we got into collages, and then, to preserve collages, we started brushing resin over the artwork,” Durazzo says. After three years, Durazzo ran through all his savings. At a certain point they “were living on $20 a day,” Durazzo recounts. But before the situation became too dire, Yellin had an artistic breakthrough. Late one afternoon, as he was cutting up a dictionary and gluing it to canvas, a bee flew into the picture and got stuck. To seal the collage, Yellin poured resin over it, submerging the insect. The dead bee, preserved gloriously intact for eternity, as if in amber, redirected Yellin’s visual language from that turn-of-the-21st-century moment forward.
Yellin and Durazzo figured out that they could permanently embed objects—dead frogs, spaghetti—in a transparent block by placing them in a wooden box and pouring resin over them. After the resin dried, hardened, and was polished with sandpaper, the objects would appear to be miraculously suspended inside a see-through matrix. Yellin then pushed the process one step further by forgoing the implanting of actual things. Instead, exchanging the wooden containers for Pyrex baking dishes, he delicately drew with India ink or Wite-Out on successive poured and dried layers of resin. The resulting transparent box created the tomographic optical illusion that a fantastical, three-dimensional life-form had been trapped within it. Yellin had invented a new way of making “drawings in space,” he says, suggesting “dendrites, molecular structures, imaginary species.” Durazzo states, “All of a sudden people wanted to buy them. Artists like Donald Baechler asked Dustin to do trades.”

Yet all had not been well in Yellin’s bohemian paradise. In 1999, following a period when the denizens of Yellin’s downtown salon had been reading “a lot of Fitzgerald,” as one friend recalls, and Yellin had maybe ingested too many substances, the artist embarked upon a quixotic mission to rescue Zelda, who he was convinced was incarcerated, Rapunzel-like, in Central Park’s Belvedere Castle. After repeatedly beseeching security guards, Yellin was arrested for trespassing and was locked up in the psych ward of Roosevelt hospital. “They even took my shoelaces,” he says. Jackie, who flew in to get him released, says, “Dustin didn’t want to leave the hospital. He still thought he was in a book.” Yellin, it turned out, had taped the delusional episode on his camcorder, and the video lives on as a piece of performance art, called The Crack-Up. “It is a total psychotic break captured on film,” Kern says.
Then, early in 2000, the 24-year-old Yellin received his first real publicity—not for his art but for another hospital visit, this time for a stab wound to his calf accidentally inflicted by Bijou Phillips. Just a few months later, another Stable-related incident took a far graver turn. One habitué died of an overdose. “It was a huge tragedy. It broke up the whole scene,” a former Stable regular says. Kern observes, “Dustin has had to come out of that shadow. He left New York for a while and he grew up a lot.”

“Everyone grows up and gets married,” Yellin says today. “So did I, too.” He had his first solo gallery show, at the Lower East Side’s James Fuentes Project Space, and took as his bride “a Canadian girl named Danielle Pittman.” Just before their 2003 wedding, at his mother’s compound on Kauai, Yellin and Nelson went swimming on an isolated beach, a known shark breeding ground, and, Nelson remembers, almost drowned getting back to shore. Finally, winded, quaking, and bleeding, the pair scrambled over perilous rocks back to the house, with 15 minutes to spare before the ceremony. The bride wore Zac Posen; Yellin had bartered a sculpture, a resin cube in which the artist had inserted a dead mouse, for the dress. “The marriage lasted eight months,” Yellin says. “She wanted to have children. I didn’t. I left her and got back on my feet.”

In the early 2000s, Yellin had an epiphany when Durazzo, a Carroll Gardens native, took him and some friends on a road trip to Brooklyn. “We stopped at Defonte’s, in Red Hook, to get sandwiches, and sat by the water eating,” Durazzo says. Yellin looked around the neighborhood, which Life once reported to be a crossroads of crack consumption, and declared that this was where he was going to live. Kern, who had joined the expedition that day, remembers, “Dustin had a little money—his art was progressing. He took a chunk of that money” and, circa 2004, bought a 2,500-square-foot former garage on Van Brunt Street. “This was the most disgusting garage you’ve ever seen. I told him he was nuts,” Kern continues. “Well, of course he turned it into a really nice place. He has this vision. He sees things in spaces, people, and the world that others just miss.”

Next, in 2007, Yellin bought with his photographer girlfriend, Charlotte Kidd, a 15,000-square-foot warehouse on Imlay Street, in Red Hook. An offbeat, mixed-use complex, the Kidd Yellin space became part studio, part house, part gallery, and part hangar for Yellin’s 1952 Airstream.

Though Kidd Yellin was founded partly as an alternative to the Chelsea art scene, Yellin held a few one-man shows at Manhattan’s Robert Miller Gallery. The first, in 2005, sold out; the second, in 2007, was a critical failure. “There is a superhuman aspect to the actual making of these pieces,” Roberta Smith wrote in The New York Times, “but extreme skill is no guarantee of profundity.... His work is highbrow kitsch.” Subsequently, Vito Schnabel, Richard Heller, and other dealers showed his work, but Yellin has now more or less forsaken galleries. “If any of your parents want to buy anything,” he informed a group of Chapin schoolgirls touring his studio one afternoon, “tell them to come directly to Papa.”

ART UTOPIA

Yellin and Kidd broke up, and their space went to her. But he already had his eye on a bigger prize, a 25,000-square-foot, three-story, pigeon-infested Civil War-era ironworks building with 40-foot ceilings, around the corner at 159 Pioneer Street. “I can remember so clearly the day he told me about Pioneer Works for the first time,” Liv Tyler recalls. “He was jumping on a giant pogo stick, and he pointed down the street to a huge abandoned factory and said, ‘Liver’—what he has always called me—you see that building? I’m going to buy it one day and turn it into an art center.” And then he went on to describe what it would be like. And now here we are five years later and he did it. It is real and it is beautiful and impressive.”
In 2011, with a loan guaranteed by his mother, sales from his art, and funds advanced from collectors, Yellin purchased the derelict brick behemoth and its adjoining garbage-strewn lot for $3.7 million. "It was a shithole," he says. "We had no windows, no floors, no stairs, no utilities." And when the comprehensive renovations were nearly complete, Hurricane Sandy hit and he had to re-start reconstruction, from the bottom up. Yellin likens the entire undertaking to *Fitzcarraldo*, the Werner Herzog film about a madman who hauled a steamship over a mountain to build an opera house in the Peruvian jungle.

Yellin established Pioneer Works as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and assembled boards of directors and advisers, among them entrepreneurs such as Andres Santo Domingo, who was won over by his friend’s “persistent innocence,” and artists such as Mickalene Thomas, who got involved, she says, because “I’ve not met anyone who thinks that big.” So as not to “confuse my mission,” Yellin set up his studio in a 15,000-square-foot converted food warehouse two doors away and rented an apartment close by.

And what exactly is the mission of Yellin’s perpetually mutating “cultural Utopia”? According to its Web site, the Pioneer Works Center for Art and Innovation “is dedicated to the creation, synthesis and discussion of art, science and education.” Chanel global C.E.O. and Yellin collector Maureen Chiquet explains, “Dustin is breaking the model of siloed education. I’m on the board of Yale—we’re looking at ways to combine art and science and get past brick walls. Dustin is doing all this instinctively, and brilliantly, from scratch.” Chiquet is not the only representative of a blue-chip corporation paying attention to how Yellin is cross-pollinating disciplines—so is General Electric. Beth Comstock, president and C.E.O. of G.E. Business Innovations, says, “I watch incubators in Silicon Valley and all around the world. Pioneer Works is leading the way. It’s a great community to keep plugged into. You never know where innovation is going to happen.”
Bob Colacello, a Pioneer Works advisory-board member and a *Vanity Fair* special correspondent, says, “I’m asked if Pioneer Works is anything like Andy Warhol’s Factory. It’s not. Dustin is more generous. He has exhibitions and workspace for other artists. He has a radio station, a recording studio, scientists, a photo lab, a 3-D printer, an education program.” More than 2,000 students of all ages so far have enrolled in short- and long-form courses, covering everything from lock picking to the works of Adam Smith. “He has these fabulous Second Sundays,” Colacello continues, “where you can see open studios and live performances. One time there was an all-female mariachi band, with gorgeous Mexican girls.”

With money from grants, donations, and fund-raisers, Yellin expects in a few years to generate a total operating budget of around $5 million per annum. Pioneer Works no longer relies heavily on income from sales of its founder’s art; Yellin, who lives relatively modestly, channels much of that revenue back into his studio’s overhead, rapidly escalating due to the increasing demand for his output.

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Among the dozens of artists who have benefited from a Pioneer Works residency are the art duo Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly, who spent several months in 2014 developing their lauded performance piece *Timelining* in a second-floor studio and a third-floor rehearsal space. “Dustin doesn’t have all the gatekeepers and snobbiness you usually find in the art world,” Kelly says. Gerard adds, “He hands you your space and gives you whatever you want. Because Dustin’s an autodidact, Pioneer Works is almost like an alternative school for him. In a way, everyone is there to teach Dustin. His generosity as an artist is something we’ve never encountered. Usually artists are competitive.” Yellin’s friend the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tom Reiss agrees: “Dustin loves everyone else’s creative egos. He’s learned the magic formula, which is that if you’re competing with other creative people you’re just depleting your energy and destroying yourself.”

As far as the sciences go, board member Matthew Putman, a former Columbia physics professor and the founder and C.E.O. of Nanotronics, a microscope and artificial-intelligence company, has donated to Pioneer Works one of his company’s $250,000 microscopes. In 2014, Putman oversaw resident artist Bruno Levy’s creation, via the microscope’s technology, of startling digital images of vitamin-C crystals. Putman, in fact, became so enamored of Pioneer Works that he situated a Nanotronics research lab across the street, where a Pioneer Works bookshop has also opened. “A place like Pioneer Works had been my dream forever,” Putman says. “The difference between Dustin and me is that I didn’t realize it could actually happen.”

Meanwhile, Barnard astrophysicist Janna Levin is writing her latest book in a third-floor office, while also coordinating a “Scientific Controversies” series, in which she pairs thinkers who dispute such topics as the possible existence of more than one universe. At the end of the inaugural “Many Worlds” debate, panelists each went home with a tintype portrait taken by resident artist Robyn Hasty. “We have a brain trust here—a Beuysian social sculpture!” Yellin says.

Reiss elaborates: “Dustin’s got this incredible carnival going on, a massive social structure that exactly parallels the art he’s doing. He’s trying to contain everybody—and everything—in his boxes.”
On the Second Sunday in March, more than 400 people filtered into Pioneer Works in spite of the arctic temperature. (The numbers would spike to nearly 4,000 by June.) “Build it,” Yellin says, “and they will fucking come!” Local hipsters and their children mixed with kids from the local housing projects, foreign tourists, street-cred-seeking Manhattanites, and Yellin’s ubiquitous mutt, Townes. On the second floor, the studio of Korean artist Hyon Gyon bulged with prismatic, textile-encrusted wall hangings, while that of the Brazilian Henrique Oliveira teemed with labyrinthine graphite drawings. “Eventually, a Pioneer Works school of art will come out of here, as in the Hudson River School,” Pioneer Works advisory-board member Justin Stanwix, an eBay executive, predicts. In a dimly lit office on the third floor, Levin, Putman, and futurist Michael Vassar argued, beers in hand, about whether Ptolemy was any more mistaken than their own contemporaries about the classification of planets. “This discussion would never take place in an academic setting,” Levin says. A few smokers wandered outside to the half-acre garden, which in due time would blossom with flowering pear trees, mullein, and sunflowers. (The organic vegetables also cultivated there will supply the produce for an upcoming Pioneer Works restaurant.) Indoors, a live band played on the ground floor, where stragglers could still be found dancing near midnight.

Only some of the activity seeped into Yellin’s studio. There, philanthropist Joanna Fisher was staking her claim on a rose-tinted Psychogeography for her Hamptons house, while her husband, Brian, a developer, listened to Yellin’s plea for a Pioneer Works elevator. Some Yellin sculptures were wrapped in brown paper, ready for removal; one bore the inscription “Lauren Santo Domingo.” From the sidelines, Yellin’s girlfriend, the French filmmaker-artist Zoé Le Ber, noted, “Dustin never stops working.” By 2009, Yellin had renounced resin as his main medium—“It was highly toxic and going to kill me,” he says—and switched to glass. The giant microscope-slide-like sheets of glass used in the Psychogeographies and The Triptych are still, nonetheless, held together with a resin, which—as it has the same refractive properties as the glass—preserves the sculptures’ essential transparency.

TOMORROW, THE WORLD

When Yellin changed media, Tony Durazzo returned to his original profession, and new assistants now help plot the topographic-map-style contours necessary to build up the illusion of 3-D humans, landscapes, and beasts. The studio, in fact, resembles a morgue or massive operating room, with unfinished Psychogeographies (a few now sprouting animal heads) lying prone on worktables, awaiting the careful insertion of paper collage elements from the section of the atelier called the “cutting room.” Tiny images, clipped from books and magazines, are sorted into bins of varying sizes labeled “Black and White,” “Gemology,” “Animals,” “Symmetry,” “Icebergs.” These bits of cultural detritus are attached to the glass plates with a simple Staples glue stick by Yellin and members of his fluctuating team of about 20 studio deputies. “We’re trapping consciousness,” Yellin says. “These are maps of our species.”
Yellin, his dog, Townes, and various assistants and Pioneer Works staffers gather in the facility’s garden. Photograph by Jonathan Becker.
The still, quiet center of Yellin’s world is located not in his studio but in his spartan apartment nearby, which he currently uses “only to sleep,” he says. The walls are lined with paintings by Rene Ricard and Benjamin Degen, drawings by Marcel Dzama and Ernesto Caivano. In an antique glass-fronted bookcase Yellin safeguards his first editions of Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Nabokov, Isherwood, and Henry Miller. Another shelf holds photo albums, visual diaries of his life, including full documentation via Polaroid of the young, beautiful, and soon-to-be-famous visitors to the Stable. And arrayed fastidiously on surfaces, or secreted inside a vintage dentist’s cabinet, is a salmagundi of natural and artificial curiosities, some of which Yellin has treasured since childhood: a glittery geode, a moldavite chunk that glows like kryptonite, a geisha’s spiky sex toy, a ghoulish 18th-century ivory crucifix, a Mesopotamian cylinder seal, a shrunken head (“probably a fake”).

Several weeks later—after his autobiographical TED talk in Vancouver, where he fraternized at the Fairmont Pacific Rim hotel until one A.M. with Google’s Larry Page and the city’s mayor—Yellin is back in town, shilling for Pioneer Works. He has donated a diminutive sculpture to the Oceana gala at the Four Seasons restaurant; just before it is auctioned off for $31,000, he finds his way to Michael Bloomberg’s table. A supplicant on bended knee, Yellin manages to extract from one of New York’s richest citizens both his personal e-mail address and a promise to visit Pioneer Works. “Dustin,”

“I’m a manic optimist!” Yellin exclaims at Sant Ambroeus SoHo, where, by the time his pasta cacio e pepe is set before him, he has brokered a deal with the manager for a “lifetime of free food” in exchange for a collaged glass backgammon board. Later, back at Pioneer Works, he and his cousin and co-director, Gabriel Florenz, strategize about goals for their second “Village Fête” fund-raiser, hosted by Brooklynite power couple Maggie Gyllenhaal and Peter Sarsgaard, among others, which in a week’s time would net them more than $800,000.

On the sunny afternoon of the party, a bevy of early birds—Alexa Chung, Lauren Santo Domingo, Sienna Miller, Poppy Delevingne—sets the tone of the evening by celebrating Delevingne’s 29th birthday outside with Oreos and Bombay Sapphire gin. Santo Domingo’s husband, Andres, reflects, “People sometimes demonize artists for being too ambitious.” But Yellin, he believes, disarms detractors by “wanting the arts to be a tool for success for everyone.”

As the speeches, auctions, pig roasts, and tarot readings roll out according to plan, Yellin surveys his improbably idealistic, fully functioning wonderland. “I’ve done exactly what I set out to do 20 years ago,” he says. “I look at the world and know I can change it. I will make more Pioneer Works—in Kauai, L.A., Paris, Lagos, San Francisco, London. We’re just getting started.”
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Yellin at his Red Hook studio.
Photo: Photograph by Jonathan Becker.