

Statement and thoughts about my work

I create work across a fairly broad spectrum of mediums and employ different methods and techniques from drawing and painting to video, sculpture and installation. These various disciplines inform and often bleed into one another. It's my belief that an idea is manifested in whatever form is most appropriate for the specific concept to take shape and be communicated. Ultimately, It's the the idea that dictates the process.

Through my found object sculptural work I explore a variety of concepts but there are at least four or five recurring themes that are fairly consistent. They are, in no particular order or relevance, **perspective and illusion** in both a visual form (abstraction vs. representation) and a conceptual or metaphorical one (what we believe we understand from any given reference point versus what the complex reality may be from different vantages). I contemplate theories of **order from chaos** and visa/versa and human's often futile attempts at classification and taxonomy in a messy world of entropy, disorder and sublimity. My work is also both a celebration **and condemnation of our consumer and disposable popular culture**. I look to achieve this by subverting nostalgia and memory with common, everyday objects, familiar toys and action figurines. The individual pieces serve as a Don Quixote-like action expressing my obvious **disdain for mass consumerism and the associated environmental issues** created by these unsustainable habits. I also **question what we value as a culture and what we consider beautiful and meaningful vs. ugly and worthless**. There is an absurdist quality as I try to create a paradox of prophetic and profane. I try to create a balance in the tension between the spiritual and the irreverent.

My practice inspires me to constantly be observing the wonders of both the natural and man-made material world in all the splendid variety. I am constantly making visual connections in an attempt to be extremely democratic in my approach to materials and subjects by resisting preconceived ideas about what is aesthetically pleasing versus what is generally thought of as ugly and not worthy of my attention. I actively seek out the potential in the mundane, for

example if I am working on a sculpture of a bee I am not just studying the anatomy of a felled insect from one of my hives or a variety of images, diagrams, and videos of all different kinds of bees on the internet I am also looking carefully at everything from the human made or designed material world that bears some similarity to the bee's psychical characteristics. The yellow straws of a discarded broom I find at the dump are ideal for simulating the hairs covering the head, thorax and abdomen, the shape and texture of my wife's broken sunglasses work for the compound eye and the temples for part of the legs, broken records also make fantastic hind legs. The rusted metal mesh that covers the neighbor's fire pit is useful for softening a transition on the smooth part of the thorax. Prescription pill bottles are perfect for the bee's amber-red proboscis and jaw. Unpolished copper wires mimic the vanes that provide structure for the wings, and semi opaque covers of Incandescent lighting works well for the translucent wings. Old film negatives are perfect for the surface of the legs. The whole world literally becomes my pallet in a practice of "reverse biomimicry".

While I am under no illusion that my practice is contributing even in the slightest to raising any kind of awareness to the myriad of challenges we face in our collective struggle to live in a more harmonious way with the ecological systems that sustain us, I do believe I am offering a subtle way to reconsider what is useless vs. useful. I do this not so much in a literal or practical way but more in a metaphorical one. It is in this belief that art making provides a kind of catharsis for anxieties about these mounting environmental issues. It's really an affirmation of endless possibilities and a way to think about the world at large optimistically instead of pessimistically.

My process is more like a long form of meditation on the nature of perspective, illusion and taxonomy. I am quite fascinated by the volume and variety of what our intensely creative and unique species makes and consumes and all of the amazing inventiveness and energy that fuels our narratives and the solutions to our material and spiritual world. The famous imagist poet E.E. Cummings said "*To know the things we surround ourselves with is to know ourselves*". Museums, malls and dumpsters are all wonderful places to witness the magnitude and diversity of all these things and to better understand ourselves.

"The medium is the message" - Marshall McLuhan

I like to think that there exists a quality in my work that is either profound or punk (perhaps both) depending how one interprets it and that is the act of transformation and hopefully transcendence. Simply put, I am selling modified amalgamations constructed from junk, or what I like to refer to as "post consumerist compost" often culled from dumpsters and trash barrels to art collectors, lobbies of luxurious buildings and museums to proudly hang on their walls for appreciation. It is difficult for me to dissect this as either the ultimate Rumpelstiltskin like huckster's swindle, a beautiful poetic justice, or simply an irony that is naturally manifested by the end product finding a temporary resting place. The truth of it is I absolutely adore this turning "shit into sugar" gig that I have woven into my life and work. It may in fact be what I love most about one of the artist's roles in society. This is the artist's proclivity to transform the horrors of the day into an esthetic with music, poetry, and any art that connects and moves us in meaningful ways. Fredrick Nietzsche thought art is not the imitation of nature, but a metaphysical complement that will enable the transcendence of nature itself. *Art is the fundamental metaphysical activity of Man; art is the highest form of human activity. ... Thus, we reach another basic role of art: art as the supreme source of joy.*

The History of objects....

I often like to consider the reaction a designer might have that conceived of an object for a very specific purpose seeing that same object or figure (perhaps manipulated) in one of my pieces being used in a way that he/she never could have imagined possible. It's using random things with a whole backstory of dream, design, production, display, purchase, use, only to be discarded and ultimately found and desired again, swept into one of my piles of potential materials. It sits there, useless to the world until I need it or at least a piece of it for a new purpose. These moments seem almost sacred when the color, shape or identity of an object is perfect to help me construct a convincing illusion or perverse narrative that appears as if the piece was made precisely for that particular function.

Some people believe that certain material things are imbued with, or carry a kind of energy. While I am not a purveyor of such myths I also realize that objects can elicit very strong memories and associations that can transport one to a

particular time in their lives. When people carefully examine my bricolages they are taken on an unguided tour of random objects that may or may not have special meaning to them. I've noticed many people delighted to recognize familiar pieces altered in my work that they have a unique relationship to. It is in this way that I hope to breathe new life into a discarded object thereby giving it a new history but still culled from a familiar place or time. I want to make sculptures that reference both the past and the future, about nature and culture. I wish to make sublime time capsules that are potentially even more interesting two or three hundred years from now. When looking at these peculiar works they might ask... "What did those ancestors of ours make for a while and then not care about? Until somebody cared about some of the things? only to deface them to make something else even more ridiculous?"

Werner Hoffman reminds us in his wonderful book about Goya that "*To every story there belongs another*". I can feel certain hunter/gatherer tendencies take hold when I am out in the world, walking on a beach or across a dirty parking lot littered with refuse when suddenly a random object catches my eye and becomes useful and even meaningful to me. Often I never know when I may need to use that half chewed orange straw for one of my constructions. The work dictates a freeform approach in which the planning and execution are at odds with each other. I can't simply lay out the image and mix the right colors. I am entirely beholden to whatever materials I have on hand to work with. Some sculptures have to sit and wait while I comb the world looking for the right pieces that might help me complete them. It's akin to performing a jazz piece or escaping from Alcatraz with some rope and a food tray. The process is very much planning for the improvisation....mostly I just make it up as I go.

Formally, I enjoy challenging both traditional representational painting and abstract sculptural techniques by directly subverting and/or exaggerating the normal function of both practices thereby creating both abstraction and representation in the same place.

The qualities I want in the work are very paradoxical... I wish them to be beautiful and vile, humorous and depressing, prophetic yet playful, sophisticated and juvenile, totally unique but somehow familiar. Novel and traditional. Timely and timeless. These assemblages may be best described as the lovechild between Chuck Close, Hieronymus Bosch, Robert Rauschenberg, Edward Kienholtz and James Audubon.