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SMP II

Spring 2015

Artist Statement

I am an artist that easily succumbs to finding images from popular culture or vernacular items to be fascinating and often brilliant works. Others may argue that images or items associated with popular taste are superficial works, that function as a facade to an industry based on nonsense and commercial gain. My art contradicts this thought and aims to elevate the conventional and the popular. While I realize that popular culture does not contribute to advancing the greater goals of humanity, as an artist I find it alluring. I embrace the stylistic choices of mainstream culture and mimic or lightly ridicule the absurdity of what is popular. I work with the thought in mind that the French salon produced highly refined, academic works, whose successes or failures were fated by the public's taste and preference. My imagery is arranged and framed

to most closely parody motifs from textiles, surface patterns, advertisements, and popular snapshot imagery. I paint using natural imagery, but most visuals have not been drawn or painted from life. Therefore, like popular culture and the objects I use as the framework for my art, my paintings are contrived stand-ins or reflections of the natural world. I pair rough, used materials with large, vibrant organic imagery in order to enhance or elevate items that are seen as ordinary.

Unlike the luxurious or pristine nature associated with popular collectives, my works are illustrated using repurposed or altered materials. My material use is crucial to the construction and concept of my art. I intentionally choose to remodel found materials because I feel that the reshaping and decorative enhancement of the piece is the primary foundation for my work. I find that by carefully treating, staining, and painting unrefined materials, I am able to create a work that both references popular design and academic illusion. I strategically stain or manipulate the surface qualities of the item I am working with in

order to maintain and accentuate preexisting characteristics of the materials. As in the fashion term couture often suggests and glorifies the handmade element to an article of clothing, I see unique idiosyncrasies and imperfections in my work as marks of my hand that add to the beauty and rarity in my works. I illustrate my works on found goods that often hold a strong tie to the material world because the pairing allows me to draw an ironic divide between material and flat organic imagery.

I begin each work with the discovery of a found piece. Contrary to the extremely critical nature of popular industry, my selection process is not as discriminating. My selection process is dictated by chance and my environment at the time. When looking for items to work with I first look at the items form. I look to find materials with a clear pre-existing purpose or connotation and a commercial nature. For example, I often work with shipping pallets because they act as the base and carrier for consumer goods. I do not look for items in pristine condition or that hold unaided visual beauty because the found material component of my

work serves to support the idea that the available or commodified may transformed into fine works with visual and conceptual significance.

I choose to embellish rather than hide natural defects or blemishes in order to reinforce the charm or individuality that may be found in what is seen as commonplace or ordinary. Most skilled artist and sculptures are taught to avoid working with or through knots and other natural variations in wooden materials, but I include and embody them. I chose accentuate these flaws because unlike popular culture, my works are unique and individual. Despite the fact that I reference ideas and imagery rooted in physical perfection, my work is not meant to be standardized or ideal. I also look to find works with unusual surface texture or pattern because I feel that these aspects help add additional abstract elements and form.

My painting additionally highlights the material, by not only serving to help socially elevate the shopworn object, but also assists me to further the decorative nature of the piece. Although my work

physically shows accumbent, unpalatable paintings that draw reference from popular industry, which is considered to be vapid or one dimensional, my art plays on the idea of the conventional being beautiful. I paint abstracted floral and animal imagery in compositions that make allusion to popular textiles, advertisement, and photographs. I see Georgia O'keeffe as a strong influence in terms of my imagery and subject matter. As O'keeffe did I paint large scale abstracted organic imagery at unconventional views or vantage points. I use large, sweeping brush strokes like O'keeffe, but my images leave a tighter more controlled impression on the viewer. I use multiple, blurred layers of paint to create large scale forms with subtle detail. I use layers of paint in order to portray the concept of superficial depth. I abstract and reconstruct landscapes from onsite observation, memory, or images. I paint flat imagery that presents itself with intent and high character, but is ultimately vacant with life and based off of a unauthentic reality.

Although each form appears to be a strong individual, everything has

become a “type” or methodically built image on a simple platform. Each form is clustered, but remains uniquely placed and isolated in ambiguous spatial planes. I paint each visual element in a pilled style that acts as one unit functioning in skewed harmony.

I draw reference and inspiration for my stylized organic imagery from a wide range of medias or cultural outlets. I my paintings are most often composed to mimic floral and non figural patterns seen on textiles. I like to reference pattern and repetition in reference to consumer culture as famed artist Andy Warhol did. My work, *Pineapples*, is a large piece illustrated on a palette featuring multiple skewed images of a pineapple uses repetition of an organic shape to allude the mass production of commodities. My three feet by four feet piece features a bright blue color block framed by a two inch gold border set in of blank wooden surface. I use the gold border as Warhol did in order to draw associations between material, economic wealth, and popular culture. The blue color block containing the works subject matter is

constantly interrupted by the repetitious gaps within the palette format. The blue color block holds five pineapples that are partially incomplete (to varying degrees) because they are placed in a skewed arrangement around the border of the image. The fruit of the pineapples is illustrated in unrealistic tones of purple, pink, gold, brown. Two of the pineapples are crowned with large sprays of leaves in lime green and pink while three other pineapples are contrasted with somewhat realistic looking leaves of green tones. Like Warhol, I use striking and bold color in reference to the bright, eye catching imagery of the mass media.

A key compositional aspect to my work is framing or guided boundaries. I leave visual gaps within the frames in hopes that the viewer will engage with the work in order to fill in spaces and missing elements. I also paint multiple borders on my work in order to actively direct and interact with the viewer's eye. I often illustrate packaged space with defined and enclosed freedom by outlining specific frames or areas of my work in order to help contain imagery and direct the viewers

eye. In my works, as well as in society the viewer has personal, yet guided ability to fill the negative space. Therefore as popular style and taste works, the viewer is in a controlled space with liberty and decision making ability, but the setting is ultimately dictated and one sided. A work of mine that exhibits this practice of strategic framing is *Two Pink Kitties Almost Touching*. This work is illustrated on two separate drawer fronts that are hung one on top of the other with spacing in between (as they would rest on a chest of drawers). I initially framed the outer bevelled edges of each drawer with a light pink paint in order to enhance the surface qualities of the wood piece. The pink outer borders provide bold color contrast which help draw a clear divide between material and imagery. I then placed the focal points of my piece within the wooden frame. Within the wooden borders on each drawer is a simple linear image of an unrealistically colored hairless cat. The top drawer holds an image of a cat dramatically looming in the top left corner of the image with an outstretched paw illustrated in varying tones of pinks, purples,

and magentas. The image of the cat is strategically cut and placed with a gap in the image on the left where one may assume is a fourth of the image. The lower drawer depicts a larger cat emerging from the bottom right corner with an outstretched paw reaching toward the corresponding drawer and cat. Each cat is depicted in the same color palette and remains suspended in an airy blue background. The image of the lower cat is also divided and highlights a small gap where one may see the surface of the drawer, but is divided a fourth of the way in from the right of the image. I use a rough fourth to reference the monetary or commercial nature of material and culture. The strategic breaks within the image provide an opposing pattern which actively leads the viewer from one subject to the next. The horizontal divide in the middle of the drawers is also the ultimate space that each cat is reaching towards. I find that the blank space visually allows me to reach my intended aesthetic, while conceptually pointing to blank content surrounded by facades of material. I like to see my use of borders, gaps, and frames,

as a nod to the Dutch art movement, De Stijl, which literally translates to the style. These works employed patterns and frames which were used to guide the viewers eye. The lines and borders I use vary in size and symmetry as De Stijl artist's did in order to promote visual movement and flow. I also employ frames and borders because I often paint with vivid, fluorescent color and find the visual resting places allow me to tread the fine line between "a bit much" and "too much". Although I am making allusions to the garish nature of popular culture I still aim to retain a tasteful visual.

I am aware that the core reasoning behind my affinity to such cultural iconography, is because every aspect has been created and groomed to be marketed for 'the populace' to instantly enjoy. Rather than fight my personal inclinations and what many proficient experts have polled as seasonal I often incorporate current tastes of the time. Cultural reference is a large element to my visual construction and I find that by using current and past cultural items and strategies patterns I am

connect to with the viewer. Beyond my imagery and material use I reference popular culture through my use of titles. I pair my works that contain direct and indirect reference to commodified culture with titles that are meant to be humorous dialogues with my work. For example, my work titled, Kim, features large, showy imagery that some may consider gaudy or distasteful. This reference is meant to spark the viewer to draw comparison to the absurd, uninspiring nature of the popular icon, Kim Kardashian. I find that my titles help me reiterate my intention to draw a tie between the concept of superficial material and culture and dazzling imagery.

My art is decorative and leisure oriented with the intent to critique and at the same time embrace the popular. I aim to highlight material qualities and use items as a basis for my comment on material society. I find that the pairing of visual and content helps me create works that are both aesthetically and conceptually significant. My work aims to give my answer to the question of if a work is commodified or popular may be be

considered substantial? The popular American film, *Funny Games* phrased the relationship between the material and the anti-material universe as if “... you're inside of a black hole. The gravitational force is so great that nothing...absolutely nothing can escape. which means absolutely no communication.” I find this to be incorrect, I do not find that the material nature of the work dulls the point to no communication. I find that although the material world is full of constant contradiction, I find that it is a highly communicative field that aesthetically enlivens society.