

Ellen Mueller

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ARTIST STATEMENT

I am an interdisciplinary artist exploring the shared, everyday challenge of resisting change and maintaining control. Within my work I strive to create experiences that engage the cultural conscience of the audience, while addressing social and political issues through image, performance and installation.

I focus on a chaotic world of non-stop technological revolution, impending global climate change, and hyperactive news media. I use humor and absurdist situations as a method for dealing with these challenging topics in an indirect way, often resulting in works that have an element of escapism.

Control takes on many forms in my work, often materializing as both mundane and nonsensical elements, such as attempting to control time, developing narratives, and organizing systems of archiving. These social behaviors often stem from a resistance to change, and a fear of the unknown. My goal is to bring awareness of these two qualities to the forefront of the participant's mind, while actively engaging the individual's personal experiences.

I try to balance this overwhelming subject matter with a dry humor. Humor acts a point of access for those outside of the contemporary art world, which is often my target audience.

In an effort to further connect with this specific audience, my work, while very detailed in some respects, reflects an economy, efficiency, and sparseness overall. By limiting the amount of information in each drawing or performance, I leave the works open for the participant's imagination to fill with personally relevant material. This aspect of audience interaction is important to the work, because it integrates my ideas with those of the participants in uniquely meaningful ways, which speaks to my ongoing effort to connect with and give back to the audience.

My experiences in theater, model fabrication, graphic design, and drawing continue to influence my work. As I began working in the traditional fine arts, those interests grew simultaneously and fed one another as they developed. When creating works, I attempt to avoid categorization and my multi-faceted foundation feeds that impulse to resist predefined genres.

Common elements I utilize within my work are language, attire, social networking, and graphic design specific to my chosen delivery. The process also involves searching for visual cues online in an attempt to examine what a broad cross-section of the English-speaking world visually associates my search terms. I find that this process of collecting, archiving, and listing helps me to broaden my understanding of my research subjects, and provides endless image and conceptual combinations or connections.

In all my works, I start by identifying a concept I'd like to communicate, then selecting the most appropriate medium for that topic. Often this process begins by creating a flawed structure, system, or persona, then inviting people to interact with it. Many of the systems I invent are attempts at explaining the unexplainable, or examining something that appears rife with contradictions. I strive to leave no space for the unknown or uncertain, but end up highlighting both in the process.

Often, the work includes some form of adapted personae, or character, following in the footsteps of The Yes Men, Sacha Baron Cohen, and Tamy Ben-Tor. This tactic allows for a comfort zone, or sacred space, between the participants and myself. The audience does not have to be immediately concerned that they are critiquing me as a person, but instead they can comfortably judge and evaluate the character guilt-free. It eliminates the uneasiness that can sometimes surface when viewing highly personal work. I make this effort to create a comfortable space for the audience who is always at the forefront of my mind as I create.