

“A Consumer’s Digest”

Emily Newman

Artist Statement

My materials and content come from mass consumerism and how I view its effects on culture. Long journeys seated as a passenger engage my view from behind salt crusted windshields, consuming images from the side roads and cross country interstates. I make note of favorite snack foods and backyard treasures. These hum drum experiences, marked by a photo or a collected object, become memories of a daily life lived as a mother and an artist.

From toddler snacks to battery blister packs, I find value in the non-momentous aspects of life. I contrast this value, usually personal or considered simply waste, with formats that allude to objects of monetary value-retail sales displays and things contained in product packaging. In some instances, I take the individuality of personal memories and place them in familiar displays, presenting the privately cherished as a publicly consumed good- worthy of being valued outside of my internal context. In other works, I alter the mass produced good- the name brand cereal box, the plastic containers surrounding the cheapest, generic (insert any object here)- giving value to this refuse by displaying an individual, hand-crafted object or highlighting the most untouched, natural based image within the pictorial field of an overly processed product.

I alternate between the role of manufacturer and craftsman to question the hierarchy that may or may not exist between the artisanal- hand made, personal, unique and the mass produced- mechanized, generic, ubiquitous. Switching between roles of maker and playing with format and materials allows me to better understand how and why we consume. Is it to cultivate our identities, to use our purchasing power to align our beliefs and ideologies to one another, to collectively experience life through the ownership of things? In a capitalistic, consumer driven society, how does what we purchase show what we truly value?

Bio

Emily Newman is an artist and educator living in Des Moines, Iowa. She is an Assistant Professor of Art at Drake University. Emily holds a BFA in sculpture from Syracuse University and a MFA in studio art from the University of Nebraska Lincoln. Originally from Colorado, she has called the Midwest home for almost 15 years. Emily utilizes a variety of subject matter, materials, and processes to make sculptures, drawings, and photographs exploring life in the 21st century as a woman, mom, wife, and artist.

