

*"Our generation arrived after the utopia had been accomplished, after the cooling off of the nuclear explosion. Radioactive fallout has descended, and we have rediscovered ourselves in a post-utopian world. It is our task to describe the state of mankind, of the world and of our own psyche in this post-utopian world."*

*--Ilya Kabakov*

As an artist who grew up in a rural area of the American south, I am inclined in my work to explore issues of labor, class, the aesthetics of rural experience, and American domesticity. Visualizing typical domestic situations allows me to discuss the ways in which we insist on surrounding ourselves with objects of both comfort and terror. I utilize the historical decorative arts and realistic figuration in art history as a vehicle for these explorations in drawing and painting.

I am interested in making images as a way to display cultural values, class, and religious beliefs. I employ visual humor to highlight the discrepancy between the illusion of what we want to be and what we actually are. Strategies of appropriation are at the core of my practice, and historic archival research is a large part of my process. I am particularly drawn to representing situations that take to task American consumerism, nationalist military defense, and political identity. I sometimes use my own image and body as a way to personalize (and internalize) these struggles.

I aim to slow down a capitalist sense of time by making art 'products' with a shelf life: wall paintings (which are painted over after the exhibition), expendable consumer items (paper plates, butcher paper, cheap fabric, vinyl), and performative exhibitions of mundane tasks (a haircut, a nap). I hope to elevate and prolong the ephemeral (albeit briefly) so that we may recognize the absurd impulses in our own behavior.

A body of work I have investigated recently relates to the 'Lost Colony' and Elizabethan colonialism. I am inspired by the watercolors of John White from the 1580's, which feature native Algonquins and Secotans (located then in present-day North Carolina) performing rituals, planting crops, preparing food, and displaying their clothing, and also the formal portraits of Queen Elizabeth I and the explorers and voyagers (Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, etc.) who formed her colonial advisorship. I have been creating an exploratory series of paintings and drawings on paper and panel that lift, excise, and appropriate the found figures and clothing forms from the historical documents. The result is the beginning of the *Sumptuary Series*, which visually collages the abstracted elements, creating charged absurdities that hopefully reflect the legacy of historical inequity in a contemporary visual language. My goal as the artist is to add to the language of contemporary art through the revival of archaic forms.

The basic tenet of this project is to resolve an understanding of the historical situations at work, and to interrogate the narratives and images, searching for a clearer display of the colonial power dynamics. Even within the Elizabethan portraits, by painters such as Hilliard and Gheeraerts, what we see on display is an attentiveness to crafting a public persona, political agenda, and the attendant clues to specific aspects of propaganda in image-making. As Bruce Nauman once said, "art is a means of acquiring an investigative attitude." In the *Sumptuary Series*, I have already begun to explore the relationship between decorative costume, class, and social power.