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Concession to the Obsession

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Concession to the Obsession

My work is both a commentary on the pervasive societal ills of disposability and detachment in contemporary culture and an active participant in the same environment it criticizes. By exaggerating the colors of plastic bottles in a painting, I hope to show our obsession with the material as well as its overlooked value. Plastic packaging is often made from petroleum that is sourced from the Middle East, and waged for in war. It is often used once and then discarded. I make small attempts to fight these wasteful practices by working bottles into utilitarian lights, reincorporating plastic molding from store-bought items into collages, and incorporating LED lighting.

I demonstrate my simultaneous revulsion and fascination with disposable goods. I photograph myself with such chemically toxic substances as cosmetics, sodas and cleaning products, speaking to their harmful nature while also reveling in their shimmering color. Their clever design is no accident and I find myself giving into the marketing seduction. The same goes for such other harmful behaviors as obsessive use of cell phones and social media, and rabid consumption of reality television and gossip magazines. In my work I want to show we are the consumers and the consumed.

I embrace excess with piles of wires, trash, screaming colors and all sorts of environmentally unfriendly materials such as foil, resin and neon spray paint. It feels a bit over the top at times, screaming for attention like an ad in a swarm of commercialism. We have become hoarders and foragers, sifting through endless stuff: accumulated waste, material goods, and information. This proliferation of technology has enabled greater access to our global community, but leaves us feeling helpless without it. I try to assault the viewer with extraneous material, in the same way media has assaulted me.

My ambition to make a political statement has evolved into a paradox. I criticize aspects of contemporary society while simultaneously celebrating them. My work asks the question: Is there a way out of these cultural addictions?

- Julie Orr