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Tony Larson: 2017 MFA Thesis Exhibition

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Claremont Graduate University
04.16.17

Artist's Statement

My project is about exploring a dialogue between new and traditional representations of communication, symbology and identity. I zoom in on familiar, banal or commonly overlooked elements found in ubiquitous digital and analog streams of visual information, take those fragments apart and mash them together into new structures. The search for the nucleus of each painting starts with a personal interest in a wide variety of subjects, from politics to art history. Once a theme has been determined I will mine it for visual cues as a key into the process of beginning a new work. My goal is to create an experience that is shared, commutable or connective. I make an effort to avoid tricking the viewer into believing they have to break a code or succumb to a command that I am making. I want to invite a discussion that is reliant on a shared, if ambiguous, history between us.

While my color choices are largely instinctive, I suspect that I am influenced by my lifelong Southern California surroundings, from tract home developments to bleached out roadside billboards and strip malls. Additionally, my palette reflects an attempt to dial-down the highly chromatic, back-lit graphic language that constitutes much of my digital source material. I consciously employ traditional materials to enhance the tension between the handmade and the virtual. Materials like Flashe, acrylic and oil paint on canvas highlight this compelling disparity.

Finally, I am interested in altering the modes of communication to which I am subjugated. I am open to participating fully in the world around me, especially in the arms of technology. With every new media channel directed at changing consumer behavior and every new gadget at its dedicated servitude, there are new cracks and chasms to inhabit. These spaces are where new propositions are made. I discover and expand these empty spaces by sticking to a regimented set of processes and self imposed limitations to the way I approach painting. My work proposes that the space of art is uniquely capable of supporting the contradictory yet connective nature of communication and behavior and is an optimal forum for contemplation and discovering meaning. New possibilities are discovered.

