

## M. Jordan Tierney

lives and works in Baltimore MD USA    icarus@jordantierney.com  
Born: Long Island, New York in 1963 / BFA - Visual Communication, MICA- 1986

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019	Function	Baltimore MD	Urban Stream Dreams
2019	Laughing Pint	Baltimore MD	Artifacts
2014	Greenbelt Art Center	Greenbelt MD	Intertidal Souls
2014	Artefactory	Baltimore MD	
2013	Chroma Art Projects	Charlottesville VA	Little Journeys
2013	Laughing Pint	Baltimore MD	Journeys
2012	Charmingtons	Baltimore MD	Redemption
	Zeke's	Baltimore MD	Recent Paintings
2011	School 33 Art Center	Baltimore MD	"Urbanautica"
	Creative Alliance	Baltimore MD	"Collage Stories: A Centennial Exhibition"
2010	High Grounds	Baltimore MD	Recent Collages
2009	Three	Baltimore MD	"Falling in Love in Patterson Park"
2008	Gallery Imperato	Baltimore MD	"Salvage"
2007	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Bricolage"
2006	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Fluke Placards"
2005	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Intercurrences"
2004	Greenbelt Art Center	Greenbelt MD	"SHARD . LAB"
	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Tableaux"
2003	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Stratiforms"
2002	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Fragmentary"
2001	Embassy of Austria	Washington DC	"Presence of Absence"
	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	
2000	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Cosmic Dust Constructions"
	The Passage Gallery	Vienna Austria	
1999	The Ralls Collection	Washington DC	"Ultimate Transmigration Apparatus"
1998	Zaruba Gallery	Rockville MD	
	Touchstone Gallery	Washington DC	"Shadow Maps"
1996	Touchstone Gallery	Washington DC	"Voluptuous Carcass"
	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Schemata"
1995	Dupont Circle	Washington DC	"The Icarus Cycle"
	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Mind Wanders"
1994	Cumberland Theatre	Cumberland MD	"The Icarus Cycle"
	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	
1993	Touchstone Gallery	Washington DC	"Passages"
1992	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Kuai"
1991	Touchstone Gallery	Washington DC	
	Resurgam Gallery	Baltimore MD	"Findings"
1989	Amer. Assoc. Advancement of Science, DC		"Extrapolations"

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019	Y:Art, Baltimore MD	
2018	Max Gallery, Baltimore MD	
2013	School 33 Art Center, Baltimore MD, "Sketchbook", Rene Trevino, Curator	
2013	School 33 Art Center, Baltimore MD, "Biennial", Shannon Egan, Curator	
2011	The Creative Alliance, Baltimore MD, "Collage Stories: A Centennial Exhibition", Kendall Siedlecki, Curator	
2010	National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, "Telling Secrets"	
2007	Paperwork Gallery, Baltimore MD - "Quintessence"	
2006	National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, "Book As Art: Twenty Years of Artists Books from the NMWA"	
2004	National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, "Book as Art XV" - Krystyna Wasserman, Curator	
2003	National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, "Insomnia" - Krystyna Wasserman, Curator	
	Maclean Project for the Arts, Maclean VA, "Plastic Memory" - Deborah McLeod, Curator	
	Courthouse Gallery, Portsmouth VA, "Beyond Words" - Deborah McLeod, Curator	
2002	L.I.P.A. Gallery, Chicago IL - "Memento Mori", Installation of Shadow Wall	
	Signal 66, Washington DC - "Savage/Love"	
2000	Bush Barn Art Center, Salem, OR - "Mortal & Immortal: Art on a Higher Plane"	
	Govinda Gallery, Washington, DC - "Eternity" - J.W. Mahoney, Curator	
	57N Fine Art, Washington DC - "Birth"	
1999	Studio 105 Gallery, Shepherdstown, WV - "Figures"	
	Arts 901, Washington, DC - "An Individual Approach" - Annie Gawlak, Curator	
1998	Baumgartner Gallery, Washington, DC - "Jolt" - J.W. Mahoney, Curator	
	Harmony Hall Regional Center, Fort Washington, MD - "Drawing and Redefining Drawing" - Manon Cleary, Curator	
	Montgomery College, Rockville, MD - "Pure, Passionate, and Private: The Human Form"	
1997	University of Maryland, "Tripping the Transmundane: Mysticism and Contemporary Art" - Nicole DeWald, Curator	
1996	Boyden Gallery, St. Mary's City MD - "Context"	
1995	The Washington Project for the Arts, DC - Visual Arts Grant Recipient Show	
	The Baltimore Life Gallery, Towson, MD - "Above and Below"	
1994	Artscape, Baltimore, MD - "Beauty"	
1993	Artscape, Baltimore, MD - "Psychorealism"	
	The Gallery, Leesburg, VA - "Nine Maryland Artists"	
	Pleiades Gallery, New York, NY - Washington Exchange	
1992	Isospin Two South, Baltimore, MD - "Locals Only" - Paul Moscatt (MICA), juror	
	Lois Hodes Gallery, Baltimore, MD - A Private Screening (folding screens)	

- Gallery 10, Washington, DC - "Refiguring"
- 1991 Arlington Art Center, Arlington, VA - "Painting", Susan Torruella Leval - juror  
Northern VA Community College - Fairfax County Council of the Arts - Elizabeth Turner (Phillips Collection) juror  
Arts 901 Gallery, Washington, DC - "Out of Bounds: Images of Exploration and Discovery" - Sarah Tanguy juror
- 1990 Brody's Gallery, Washington, DC - "Bones"
- 1989 Strathmore Hall Arts Center, MD - "Artery 89" 5th Annual - Julia Boyd, juror  
American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington DC - "Patterns in Nature"  
MFA Gallery, Annapolis, MD - "Works on Paper" - Wilford Scott (National Gallery) juror

#### GRANTS/ AWARDS

- 2004 - WPA/Corcoran ProjectOne.2 printmaking residency at Hand Print Workshop International  
2000 - Artist in Residence, Austrian Federal Chancellery, Vienna, October through December  
1996 - District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities - for a City Arts Project

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- O'Sullivan, Michael- The Washington Post, "The Story Behind the Work", 12/4/2009  
Ober, Cara- URBANCODE magazine, "Evidence of the Invisible", 2007  
McLeod, Deborah- Baltimore Citypaper, "Patterns Recognition", 2006  
Robin Price Publishers- short story by Amy Bloom, images by MJ Tierney letterpress hand bound book, 2005  
McLeod, Deborah- M. Jordan Tierney catalog essay, 2004  
Richard, Paul - The Washington Post, "The Women of Insomnia, Tossing and Turning to Art", March 30, 2003  
Campello, F. Lennox- Cultureflux "Artomatic" 2002  
O'Sullivan, Michael- The Washington Post, "Artomatic for the People", November 8, 2002  
Adams, Lorraine- M. Jordan Tierney catalog essay, 2001  
Lewis, Nicole- The Washington Post, "Arts" - "Eternity at Govinda Gallery", January 27, 2000  
Lewis, Nicole- The Washington Post, "Art Bits", January 13, 2000  
Lewis, Nicole- The Washington Post, "Arts Beat" - "This Old Warehouse", October 21, 1999  
Protzman, Ferdinand- The Washington Post, "Galleries" - "Time, Life, and Found Objects", April 22, 1999  
Gawlak, Annie- catalog for "An Individual Approach" exhibition, 1999  
Protzman, Ferdinand- The Washington Post, "Galleries" - "Jolt at Baumgartner", January 7, 1999  
Protzman, Ferdinand- The Washington Post, "Galleries" - "Bedspring Sculpture Creates Tension" May 21, 1998  
Protzman, Ferdinand- The Washington Post, "Galleries" - "No Dada's Girl", October 5, 1996  
Mahoney, James- catalog for "Voluptuous Carcass" exhibition, 1996  
Schulkind, Rima- Koan, "The Ultimate Alternative Space", Washington DC, October 1995  
Protzman, Ferdinand- The Washington Post, "Galleries" - "Paint the Town Red", July 29, 1995  
The Washington Blade- "The Point", May 26, 1995  
Vento, Mary, Eyewash- "Passages", Washington, DC, May 1993  
Guliano, Mike- Laurel Leader, "Anatomy of Tierney's Surreal Paintings", Laurel, MD, May 13, 1993  
North, Bonnie- Art in Progress, "Dossier", Baltimore, MD, December 1992  
Furr, Susan- Eyewash, "Maureen Jordan Tierney", Washington DC, September 1991

#### EXPERIENCE

- 1998-present- self-employed- sculptor, furniture making, building renovation, custom framing, crating, exhibit fabrication, art installation  
(Smithsonian Institution, Baltimore Museum of Art, numerous other public and private art collections)  
1991-2006- founder, 57N Fine Art, warehouse gallery and performance space in Washington DC  
1995-1998- HMB Art Handlers  
1986-1990 (National Geographic, New Republic, AARP, etc)  
1989-1995- board member, exhibit installation, marketing, programming, Touchstone Gallery  
1983-1995- laurel Art Center, manager, custom framer

Galleries

# Time, Life and Found Objects

M.J. Tierney's Stylish  
Assemblages at Ralls

By FERDINAND PROTZMAN  
Special to The Washington Post

**T**ime is one of man's most marvelous and comforting inventions. Born of some innate need to mark our species's existence on the walls of an unfathomable universe, chronology has evolved from basic measurements such as night and day into a precious commodity marked to the millisecond.

But as Maureen Jordan Tierney's powerful, captivating exhibition of sculptural assemblages and mixed-media collages at the Ralls Collection demonstrates, time is as fleeting as its creators. Within the confines of a system developed by transient beings to measure the infinite, we search for meaning, understanding and enlightenment. Then, just when the whole megillah may be starting to make sense, our time runs out.

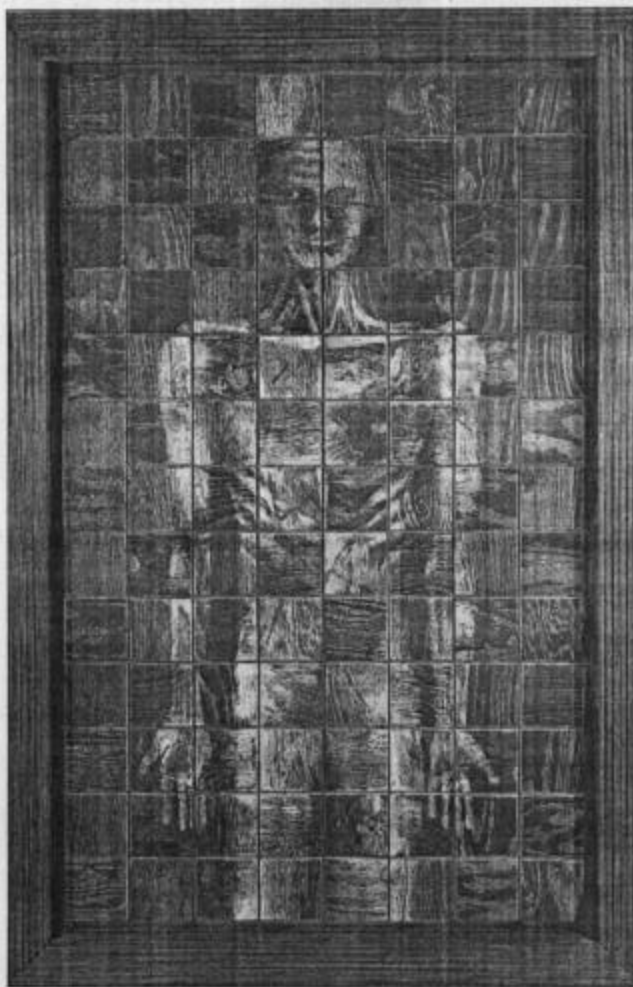
Turning such weighty, potentially depressing notions into art is no mean feat. But Tierney pulls it off in fine style, thanks to her intelligence, wit and talent for transforming found objects into art. Aesthetically, intellectually and emotionally, this is her most mature and fully realized work to date.

As the exhibit's title, "Ultimate Transmigration Apparatus," suggests, Tierney confronts the ephemeral nature of time and existence by embracing the notion of life as a mysterious physical and spiritual transition. The search for meaning is a recurrent theme in her work.

The assemblages are made from a wide array of objects that Tierney finds on the streets or buys in flea markets. Bedsprings, old pianos and organs, typewriters and radios appear to be among her favorite materials.

She transforms this odd melange into highly appealing works—it's almost impossible to keep one's hands off the keyboards—that feature intricate systems for ordering information or imagery.

These systems offer the viewer many options but no definitive outcomes. "Galaxy Chooser" is a large assemblage made from an old radio set topped by a wooden cabinet that has been divided into a pegboard and gridlike boxes that Tierney has filled with drink coasters, which can be hung on the pegs. On each coaster she has painted an imaginary constellation. Viewers are free to create their own cosmos by hanging different combinations of celestial bodies on the board. Like most of the assemblages in the show, "Galaxy Chooser" gently pulls the viewer's eyes toward the heavens. Tierney's ability to incorporate something as banal as



"Topological Presence," in Tierney's "Ultimate Transmigration Apparatus" exhibit at Ralls.

ent cosmological exploration has made her assemblages the most interesting currently produced in Washington. Discarded objects naturally evoke their past, yet they exist in the present and imply the future. In previous exhibitions, however, her eye for the possibilities presented by found objects has also produced the occasional piece that seemed frivolous or contrived.

That is not the case here, due in large part to her incorporation of some form of grid pattern in every work. Whether it is the wires of a discarded bedspring in "Aftermath" or the checkerboard of plywood squares on which Tierney has painted a haunting figure in "Topological Presence," the grid gives her assemblages a new thematic and stylistic rigor.

That feeling is even stronger in the collages, which look like mosaics made from inch-square pieces of paper. This sectioning off calls to mind the way we divide time and space for a variety of purposes. But the compartmentalization is also an invitation

to individually investigate each square, and then to try and see how they all fit together.

On a purely visual level, the collages are charming, like miniature patchwork quilts hanging on the wall. But these are not just cute bits of paper. They convey some sobering ideas.

"Just Outside Ground Zero, Not Having Saved the Textbooks" combines collage and painting on a wood panel. The tiny images show bits and pieces of 19th-century industrial machinery that look quaint in light of current technology. Why worry about springs when gigabytes rule the day?

But Tierney has stamped snatches of text into the wood that surrounds the pictures of pistons and flywheels. When you read clues like "spring steel has a carbon content of..." and realize you have no idea, the title hits home.

Maureen Jordan Tierney, at the Ralls Collection, 1516 31st St. NW, Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., 202-342-1754, through May 15.



## THE ARTS

# Patterns Recognition

M. Jordan Tierney Reconfigures Objects And Ideas In Her Mixed-Media Works

by Deborah McLeod

**Bricolage: Amalgamated Disintegration** | At Resurgam Gallery through May 27



BRIC-A-BRAC: Detail Of M. Jordan Tierney's "Ever Thus."

**NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH CRITIC** John Ruskin called it the Age of Ueber, describing the Victorians' self-aware skepticism about faith and the future. Maybe his descriptive reliance on color and mood helps us to see M. Jordan Tierney's new show at Resurgam Gallery, *Bricolage: Amalgamated Disintegration*, as somewhat laced to the era. It could also be the sumptuous visual decadence of Tierney's tactile surfaces, the coy, lush, vaulting ornamentation of turn-of-the-century style gathering into its folds. It might also include the literary period's love/hate fascination with science, society, politics, fashion, imperialism, individualism, commerce, and death.

Then, too, there is some hard, defiant evidence of Dadaism, another influence that saturates Tierney's collaged constructions. Those little messages divined and clipped from the newspaper that, once isolated, can be read like settled tea leaves. Freed of the confines and expectations of their original context they incline toward entirely different prophetic typologies. And in another Dadaist tradition, cutouts from magazines, watching eyes, massed floating heads, and gesturing figures indicate the human condition in a media-supremacy culture.

Through the introduction of photomontage and the desecration of conventional icons, Dadaism was originally a hostile takeover of any remaining vestiges of the Victorian standard. So it is interesting to consider in Tierney's imagery those two polarities as bedfellows. At least in America, time heals all adversarial wounds.

Tierney constructs her tableaux with several visual devices that are particularly her own. For years she has used the translucent, skin-colored tissue of dress patterns. Easily vulnerable to careless handling, these sheer diagrams whisper their dressmaker instructions with small printed words placed at crucial points along their margins. Pulled from small paper packets they can manipulate their compact, monastic flatness into a shape that will enfold and re-create a human form. These diagrams address skepticism by explaining the mundane--through their advice to cut and fold and dart--and through the metaphysical, promising something in a third dimension that might only be comprehended in one plane, walking each consecutive trusting seamstress through the construction process step by step. Tierney cuts, stretches, crumples, and pastes a pattern's arm or bodice or collar, complete with its instructions, along the ridge of a cemetery hill or flowing from a furrowed crevice, or as the striations of tree bark.

When she does this the pattern's small instructions seem to emanate from the earth: "cut along lines," "gather here," "arm." The instructions assume altogether different meanings.

Another of Tierney's stratagems is to import regulated systems into the collage of irrational dream imagery. Sometimes they are game boards that suggest rules of engagement and strategy, other times they are counting

or listing devices like the small encrypted key tags that show up here and there in her work. These key tags are most overtly present in "Nine," a highly systematized piece repeating the artist's own existential fingerprints. Why not 10, though? Besides the fact that it would blow the geometry of the work, possessing only nine fingers is full of both sinister and noble literary precedence. The most wonderful story of heroic amputation stems from a Chinese belief that the index finger of the favored hand is the body part connected to appetite.

Appetite is, in fact, a repeated theme in Tierney's work. Both "Home on the Range" and "Rapacious" have a great deal to do with insatiable American appetites. Spillages of manna as handbags and diamonds and totems of tires address appetite as a motif in these two works. The front window installation, "Short Term Planning," plunges in that direction, too, with mounds of shattered china plates trashed beneath a hovering wrecking ball.

A number of works in the show are set up as triptychs. Like dress patterns that are flat but propose awaiting dimension, diptychs and triptychs offer the same corporeal anticipation. They look like they could fold and become altarpieces or books, which was both forms' original liturgical function. The diptych "Bludgeonism" has a male and female side to its dichotomy. A blackened, turned chair leg attached to the left panel represents furnished formalism. It could just as effectively function as a merciless scepter or a menacing weapon. Across the page is an image less certainly perceivable. Is it an opened garment, a cleft area of bleeding flesh, or an enclosure that previously preserved a belief? It's an elegant and unnerving piece.

*Bricolage* is a French term for constructing something from whatever materials happen to be at hand. Tierney retains that serendipity as a guiding principle, and allows calculated happenstance to thrive as the principal wisdom of her work. There is an auspicious, extrapolative character to all of it. When diviners forecast, they gather objects together on a surface and draw conclusions from the interchange. Random and specific are generally considered opposite, but not necessarily during divination, when they begin to speak, resolve, and answer each other and ultimately the umber questions of the supplicant.

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# Jordan Tierney

## Evidence of the Invisible

By Cara Ober  
Photos by Laudree Diamond

Q: Like your artwork, your studio is intricate, stuffed with detail, and rich in layered information.

A: In a sense, your studio is a work of art. Can you explain this relationship between your studio and your artwork? How has this relationship evolved over time? What is essential for you in a studio?

A: I feel like the world is my studio. I try to pay attention all the time. Then, as I come from the street into the heart of the studio, there is an editing process going on where once I track the center, everything should be highly concentrated and potent inspiration and tools for what I find important. The things I drag back to my lair help me work. I surround myself with inspiring music, writing, and detritus from the world's continuous, disinterested, scheming and grinding. A studio is like the inside of an artist's head. As an obsessive collector, making art is an excuse for keeping the stuff I accumulate—like branding collection in the city. The thing I find most recent about life, just as the tide washes up information from the sea. What do people throw out of their car windows? Where? How long does it stay there? A home full of abandoned broken chairs on eviction day, elegant old machine parts, broken glass—all of it is a tactile memory adjuvant. Over time, I learned which objects are parts of my language. Removed from their original context, I can deploy them with their alternative meanings even as they glow with their original connotations.

Q: How long have you been an exhibiting artist? Where and when were your favorite exhibits? Why have those exhibitions and places been significant for you?

A: About 20 years. By far, the best experience I had showing my work was in 1995. I had made a series of twelve paintings on hollow-core doors, 84" x 36" called the Lurax cycle. It needed to be exhibited in the round since it was about the never-ending

cycle of birth and death. The only place that I could think of was DuPont Circle itself. I attached the paintings to the park benches facing the fountain for an entire day on both a Friday and a Saturday in June. Thousands of people walked through them on their way to office, shops and the Metro. That circle is an eddy in the river of Connecticut Avenue. People scurry, perform, pose, people-watch, and meet there. It is art about life right in daily life. The art changed their pace and perception those days. They would stop and be very open about major life issues with total strangers. Art opened a dialogue in an egalitarian public space in a way that it can't in the removed space of a gallery setting. My next public art will be to wear a shirt saying, "I have no time for your short attention span."

Q: Your latest project is collaboration with an international selection of artists you chose specifically for this project. What is this project and how did it come about? Who is involved and what is the goal? What have you learned or gained from doing it?

A: "The Periodic Table(s)" is a collaboration, hand-built, book-like object in an edition of 100. It is a series of 112 pages of experience, mystery, joy, self-reflect in the result of over 20 years of being involved in all manner of creating, exhibiting and marketing art. It is a solution to the loneliness of the studio, being jealous of jazz musicians and wanting to go late to learn to play piano at the level I make art. It is an outlet for my need to nurture the untapped passion and ideas in people I respect and care about. These are journalists and photographers of national papers, musicians, printers and radio producers. I maintain a curiosity in the small relationship with most of them and wanted to share this with others. It is all based on giving. I provide the opportunity and production—they provide the creation of their choice. They receive six copies and give five away. Several sponsors receive three copies and give two

..artforum 7



away. Each issue will have activities for the recipient to complete and mail back. These responses will be seeds for the next issue. There is no compromising due to advertisers or politics. There is no interaction with the hype machine since it is all spread by invitation and gift.

I will be out in a month, so I don't yet know the full effect. It was far more complicated and time-consuming than I realized. The geographic separation (such as the one from Berlin to Chicago) was sometimes a hurdle. Each person's definition of collaboration is as individual as their fingerprints. I hope for it to become a biennial process.

Q: Your work blends the boundaries of painting, sculpture and installation. What materials and techniques are most meaningful for you in your artistic practice? How do you bridge the gap between media?

A: I try to build a three-dimensional surface where light and imagery can play, similar to the way when facades collect graffiti, historical connotations and time erosion or how people are screens for our projections, memories, fantasies

and their own hardships. My surfaces are built from pieces of architectural salvage and furniture parts or things I carve: a found object like a piano leg might be playing the role of itself, or of a symbol, or just of an abstract design element. There are weathered plywood fields that are also walls, eyes that are the viewer and the viewed, containers that both protect and inspire. The surreal(s) technique of juxtaposing two unrelated things elicits previously unnoticed connections. I also like to go from the large scale, physically overpowering, to tiny detail—everything from a chainlink to a 400 tooth has a place. I prefer for the viewer not to be aware of my "hand" so marks should seem like they just happened.

Q: Who are the artists who have been most influential or inspirational for you?

A: As a former European writer, experimental jazz musician, artist who romanced us here some evidence but few if any answers, they are a balance of complex yet spare, chaos and control, strength and vulnerability. I never want to feel like I know a work. Also, they are people who

make fear(s) into the unknown as opposed to commodities.

Q: What is the importance of the narrative, especially an invented one, in your work? What stories are currently playing out in the work you are doing? Are they autobiographical or any level?

A: I never think about narrative, maybe because I try to depict past, present and future all at the same time. In fact, I usually don't verbalize what I'm doing until I title it about three quarters of the way through. I find that labels limit things, but at some point I do need to stay on track of what the piece seems to be about or it could go on forever. They are only autobiographical in that they are issues that are important to me, and in the world as seen through my lens. We are all shaped by our surroundings, and it is important to be an active participant to not process rather than a victim. I attempt to create universal things so they remain so of our common humanity.

There is one long-term scenario I am working on about language. It involves an imaginary woman collecting words from street trash after the apocalypse. She is saving the words from

signs, packaging and junk mail. In dechasing their meaning, she hopes to rebuild language and thereby civilization. Of course, the words available from those types of communication are ridiculous and I think in some way our world has been reduced to "fren booms," "now and improved," and "fritta-shiny." She is also searching for some meaning in the state of the world. Hum, that sounds somewhat autobiographical.

Q: You are very selective about your choice in color. Most of your work consists of black, white, and a few neutral colors. What is the significance of color for you? How do you make your color choices?

A: I have always enjoyed the black and white leveling of the newspaper—the least boring next to the \$2000 Tiffany trinket presented with the same black and white as shop window display paper. For 20 years I lived in economically challenged parts of Washington, DC. This meant opportunity and choice for me—public buildings, the people, and public policy skeletons in the desert bleached of life. So there is a lot of color in my work, and words with flowers in these places. That is my palette. :JUC

