

## 2023 Catalog essay for Salesman's Samples / Statement for Transmission Gallery / General info

Artists photograph their work all the time. It is how most art is disseminated to the larger world. More people will interact with a photograph of an artwork than with the original. What are they missing? When an object is represented by its photograph, a lot is left to the imagination, other views must be filled in by the viewer, assumptions have to be made. What are we really seeing in a photograph?

In 1988, I began experimenting with a product called "Liquid Light," a photographic emulsion with the consistency of white glue. It is painted on a surface, then exposed and developed with standard black and white photo chemistry. I was trying to combine two art practices and found that making life-sized prints of found objects, and later sculptural assemblages, raised interesting questions about originality, representation and the ideal.

By presenting both a sculpted object and its photographic likeness in proximity, I was trying to ask the question, "Does the photograph equal the sculpture?" I started with unaltered objects but discovered that a found object has more baggage. The viewer brings their own history to it. In contrast, a sculpture is as new to the viewer as the canvas likeness and so the equation is, if not equal, at least more balanced. The photographic image, printed in this rougher, painterly way is also a constructed sculpture of sorts; its stretcher bar gives it a dimensionality and the brushy quality of the emulsion even references painting. My deliberate transformation of the documentary photograph by printing it in this way makes an equation of the comparison of the monument, the document and the sum of the parts.

The equation of these works is the sum of the inputs divided by the incongruity of the results. What is lost in the retelling? What is gained? Is one more original than the other? It is this equation that makes the eyes dart back and forth looking for likeness or disparity; failure in one, success in the other. It is not always a clear victory for either.

The temperamental emulsion and the use of toners produced a brushy, interpreted image. Coupled with the fact that these were printed on a fabric on stretcher bars as a reference to painting, three media in the conversation.

As I refurbished these for this show, I repainted and cleaned some of the objects, while the photographs seemed not to have aged at all.

The title of Salesman's Sample is a reference to my grandfather's work as a sales representative for a knife distributor in the Central Valley of California. His sample cases inspired some other works in suitcases as well as the title of this series.

At some point the sculpture and photography started to part company. Processing the canvases was cumbersome and smelly. I got a Bemis Foundation residency in 1992 which turned my attention back to sculpture. While I continued to do both photography and sculpture, I let them be separate activities with their own challenges and rewards.