

Steve Briscoe Statement 2020

In the past 40 years, I have primarily been interested in three-dimensional work with forays in other media. I am process oriented, setting up visual problems to solve, technical or material challenges to overcome, or theses that are argued, but not proven. I sometimes think of my pieces as a series of ambiguous portraits, anthropomorphized into characters in an open-ended drama. Or perhaps they are connectable pieces of a single work to be reunited someday. These are my mental quirks and viewers have their own. I leave it to them to solve or not as they wish.

My early influences were the Funk heroes and a selection of craftsmen: H.C. Westermann, Sam Hernandez, Clayton Bailey and the Slant Step gang. Their works were spiked with wit, irreverence and cryptic self-logic. Later, the sculptors of mysterious things like Martin Puryear, Robert Therrien, Peter Shelton provided elegance and ambiguity.

I am a restless artist without a single narrative. I try to make do with what is at hand, generally, and try to keep the waste footprint to a minimum. My salvaged wood works which I have presented here are a response to and utilization of a material with a former function. I shop flea markets, garage sales and thrift stores for items that can serve my purposes. Response to a used thing is no different than inspiration by muse. I see what it can do, how it can be combined, altered or interpreted into my vocabulary.

Behind the recent tiling works and accretion stacks is the fracturing that we feel, precariously balancing our interests against those of others. We feel so alone in our bodies and minds that we often forget that we are interdependent, connected part of a matrix of shared experience and environment. Sometimes our world is orderly and well-oiled, other times messy, improvised, cobbled together with makeshift abandon. Often it is both at the same time, like driving on a crowded freeway – high stakes at high speed, competitive and cooperative, lawful and transgressive, male and female. I mean these works to be both precarious and stable, masses clad with fragmentary clutter, much as waves of information threaten to overwhelm us.

The alphanumeric works are reflective of our password-protected world and reference paintings I did almost 20 years ago after 9/11. Those works voiced a discomfort with the government intrusion into our private virtual spaces. Now it seems that corporate intrusion is the greater threat as our information is bought and sold with our tacit consent. In this time, we are merely a collection of data points that describe our psychographic portraits.

I am 60 now and living with Parkinson's Disease and a pandemic. I am facing challenging years ahead, and making art is a time-consuming process. I, like everyone, will have to find a way to move forward in a standing-still moment. Our world may change forever but the need for art as the expression of the human spirit and reflection of the social, economic and political order will continue.