

Natalie Niblack

Artist Statement

My current painting, drawing, and graphic work reflect a pervading sense of accelerated change in our culture- change in the climate, environment, politics, and war.

It addresses the experience of living in the Anthropocene, where everything around us is impacted by human activity, and is a product of our collective consent and participation. I am attempting to codify a viewpoint of a world that is based on monetary value and utility and the inevitability of complicity and participation in it. The convenience and unavoidability of driving, using plastics in almost every product, consuming foods from every ocean and continent, has recreated our landscape into one of mindless consumption and an excess of waste. While driving my diesel car over the tracks of a major railway for oil and coal near my home, I simultaneously know about the fossil fuel industry and it's attendant callous disregard for the environment, when broken pipelines and devastated watersheds are an acceptable risk, simply collateral damage. It is this disconnect between our collective actions and their consequences that fuels this body of work. It asks viewers to recognize their participation in the climate emergency, and that the choices we have collectively made is inevitably and irrevocably altering the world around us.

In my ceramic work, I am deliberately lampooning people in power. When dealing with the three ring circus of politics, I find clay is my favorite media. Traditionally seen as less refined than painting, it is more acceptable to be satirical and use exaggeration.

Because there is a long tradition from gargoyles to Messerschmidt to Arneson, there is a lot more room for distortion and caricature, which to me is the appropriate approach to the subject matter. Although the subjects are temporary, and (with luck) soon forgotten, the grab for power eternally reproduces itself. They are distressingly familiar archetypes straight out of a Machiavellian daydream or a dystopian tarot: the Narcissist, the Sycophant, the Holy man, or the heartless Judge. I feel I have met them before in the great graphic works of Daumier, Goya, or Hogarth. I draw inspiration from these artists because they do one of the things that art does best: holds up a mirror and laughs.