

STATEMENT: *toward a science of the particular, or, how I am systematically unsystematic in my laboratory.*

I am interested in what is real and how our minds do and don't let us perceive and experience what is real. There seem to be two basic kinds of human knowledge: an immediate knowledge based on *experience*, including intuition and feeling (knowledge of the particular thing); and science, which is based on knowledge of the type of thing and its relationship to other types arrived at through experiments (knowledge of universal principles or *information*). It seems like the two kinds of knowledge can get in the way of each other, so that the ingrained habits of our minds which help us in classification and prediction may yet hinder creative breakthroughs in understanding. My goal is to play at a synthesis of these two modes, using the medium of art, whose function has been described as the "transformation of information into experience."¹

Photography offers me a clarity, and an implication of "reality," that I find useful in my investigations. Furthermore, the medium of computer graphics—using techniques of layering, masking, and grafting—offers me an interesting mixture of control and accident. A manipulated photograph can still surprise.

In my photo-based work I have been exploring **scale** and **transformation** using scans and photographs of everyday objects, which I manipulate using computer software. (See the Series: Celestial Bodies; Alchemy Scrolls; Mimesis. The words in red above are hyper-linked to the posts on my blog where I discuss these concepts in depth vis-à-vis my work.) These concepts also play a central role in scientific thought, and I try to tap in to this through the experiential mode of art.

I have also been calling attention to, and flouting, our system of mental categories such as animal, plant, and manufactured, and more generally playing with the difference between the natural and the human-wrought. I sometimes just put visually rhyming images next to each other to see what happens. People always find some kind of meaning. (See the Series: Pseudomorphs; Jewels; Mimesis; Alchemy Scrolls).

Such flouting of categories is a species of nonsense, another core mode I have been deploying in my work. Nonsense is a release of control, an acceptance of accident, an opening to communication, a subversion of systems. Nonsense is useful because it calls attention to the viewer's automatic drive to make sense of things. People always try to find some kind of meaning, and I find this mechanism fascinating. Nonsense startles them and I've seen some smiling viewers become aware of their own grasping minds. There is an opening between the artist, her idea, the work, and the viewer, an opening where meaning and communication can happen, where knowledge as information *and* experience can live. In a way I have discovered what I mean by watching this happen in my public studio, which is one reason why I call this place a laboratory: Black Lab. I experiment here.

As an undergraduate I studied the philosophy of language and I started my artistic practice with words. But words seemed too limited by convention and cultural contingency (what isn't?) so I went looking for a way to stretch and augment language. I mastered typography, letterpress printing, relief printmaking, and bookbinding and started producing texts and books that depend on their physical presence for their meaning and I called this practice "Physical Language." My idea was that an enhanced language would be better at communicating what would otherwise be impossible to say. Verbal nonsense was often a center of gravity for me because I love to feel, and elicit the feeling of, a bending-toward-meaning-but-not-quite-getting-there. Using nonsense is like deploying a system that calls into question the systematic.

In a new series, Epic Alley, I have circled back to my verbal experiments and have combined digital photo collage with text using the comic book trope and riffing on the idea of the heroic. I am curious to see where this superhero's journey will lead me.

1. Dr. Arnold Weinstein in the Introduction to his 84 Lectures on the Classics of American Literature.

