

I combine new and traditional media in installations, prints, videos, and public works that attempt to suspend and amplify our relationships to each other, and our environments. My work highlights taken-for-granted categories - such as body, language, vision, or power - and works to remember each as a dynamic encounter. Here we engage with and *feel* the multiple agencies around us. We experience and practice how materials and concepts cooperatively emerge.

For example, in my interactive installation, *stuttering* (2003 / 2009), body and language share the same plane of existence. Viewers-turned-participants use their entire bodies to touch and trigger activation points laid out in a Mondrian-styled grid. Each rectangle in the work's projected image is not filled with primary colors, but animated text and spoken word. The saturation of these 'virtual buttons' creates an inverse relationship: move quickly, and the piece will itself stutter in a barrage of audiovisual verbiage; move carefully, even cautiously - *stutter with your body* - and both meaning and bodies emerge. Viewers must navigate their arms and hands, legs and feet, or neck and head, laboriously back and forth, on and off, each individual button. They perform an intensive and continuous shift between action and passivity to control the piece. How it works is transparent and easy to understand, but the movements it provokes are often alien to those involved. Here participants stage and rehearse the intricacies of embodied speaking and listening.



stuttering, 2003 / 2009
interactive installation, dimensions variable



Nathaniel Stern scanning lilies in South Bend, Indiana, 2009
Compressionism documentation photo by Jesse Egan

Central to my work are the feedback loops between our experience of the world (via embodiment and perception, for example), our movements within it (through performance and performative acts), and our understandings of it (in language and signs). I want to foster greater dialogue around these complex systems and their relationships to matter, affect, and meaning-making.

In my *Compressionism* series of prints (2006 and ongoing), I strap a desktop scanner, laptop and custom-made battery pack to my body, and perform images into existence. I might scan in straight, long lines across tables, tie the scanner around my neck and swing over flowers, do pogo-like gestures over bricks, or just follow the wind over water lilies in a pond. The dynamism between my body, technology, vision, and the landscape is transformed into beautiful and quirky renderings, which are then produced as archival digital prints. I also often take details from these images and iteratively re-make them with traditional processes such as lithography or etching. This series follows the trajectory of Impressionist painting, through Surrealism and beyond Postmodernism, but rather than citing crises of representation, reality, or simulation, I focus on engaging the relations between and around them.

Here I 'per-form' the landscape to challenge notions of a 'pre-formed' world, or sense, or meaning. By practicing the potentials of process and external influence within my work, I seek to challenge the nature of what is 'given.' While my interactive spaces and *Compressionism* series investigate sensual relations through interaction and performance, my other works weave together a wide variety of new technologies, art-making tools, and found materials to produce videos, public interventions, and prints that pose questions about how and what we perform socially. This could be through dialogue, as a community, or within the broader contexts of history and recent news. The 'work' is in unpacking, problematizing, and making strange.

In my ongoing series of generative video works, for instance, I use simple formulas to edit and compress popular movies, revealing secret biases, hidden meanings and impenetrable relationships just below the surface. In *at interval* (2006), I removed all dialogue from Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, leaving only 13 minutes of stutters, gasps, and oral fumbles. Just as in *stuttering*, this work articulates the in-betweens, accents the impossibilities within language.

My *Sentimental Constructions* (2007 and ongoing) are large-scale, site-conditioned interventions made of minimal materials and performed in public spaces. These are architectural structures made of rope, fabric, or mosquito netting, for example, built to scale and performed with a group of collaborators. They are ephemeral arrangements that carve out space and frame their contexts. Each twists the idea of 'public place' by its double activation: first, through the volunteers who stretch the forms outward and around them; and second, through the communal play of the onlookers-turned-participants, who give the piece an/other performative turn. *Sentimental Constructions* have been thus far performed in Croatia, South Africa, Canada, the US, and the UK. The most recent installations have been designed and manifested in workshops along with many international and local participants - a collaborative re-making and re-defining of public space, matter, and their matters.



performance 2 (passage), 2007, 10 x 3 x 15 meters
Sentimental Construction, Joubert Park, Johannesburg

For *Doin' my part to lighten the load* (2008), I convinced well-known arts critic Sean O'Toole, editor of *Art South Africa* magazine, to give up any use of electricity for 24 hours. In the dark hours of the evening, I offered paid South African 'laborers' - car or security guards, house painters, and/or tile-layers that could be solicited on the street - to assist him as needed; they were armed with hand-crank generators and small light bulbs. The title is itself a reference to 'load shedding,' the not uncommon practice of cutting off electric current on certain lines when demand becomes greater than Eskom can handle. Here I attempted to bring to light structures of power in post-Apartheid South Africa: black and white, rich and poor,



Doin' my part to lighten the load, 2008
Sean O'Toole lit by Steven Mabuela and Lungi Konghisa

artist and critic, on and off 'the grid,' among others. O'Toole and I spent weeks debating the pre-set rules for this event, where he asked about everything from his safety to the art work's merit. In the end, the night wound up as a fun and honest discussion of the aforementioned relationships between all those involved, over beer, pizza, and a bit of singing. An installation and online documentation consist of vestiges of the performance: letters, photos, hand-written notes, the generators and bulbs.

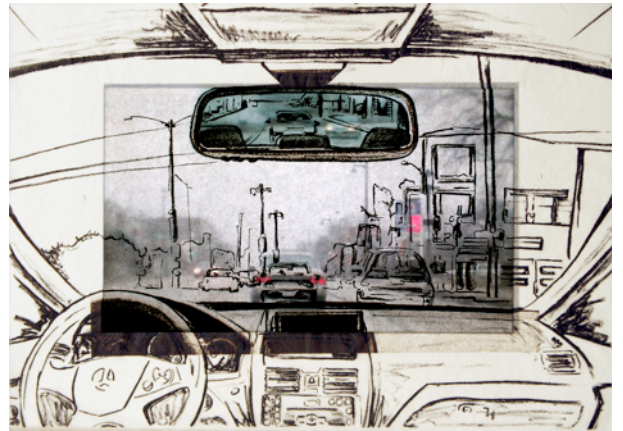
Given Time (2010) is a mixed reality installation that simultaneously activates and performs two permanently logged-in Second Life avatars, each forever and only seen by and through the other. They hover in mid-air, almost completely still, gazing into one another's interface. Viewers encounter this networked partnership as a diptych of large-scale and facing video projections in a real world gallery, both exhibiting a live view of one avatar, as perceived by the other. To create a visceral aesthetic, these custom-designed and life-sized "bodies" are hand-drawn in subtly animated charcoal, graphite and pastel. The audience is invited to physically walk between them; they're able to hear and see them breathing, witness their hair

blowing in the wind, pick up faint sounds such as rushing water or birds crying out from the surrounding simulated environment. Here, an intimate exchange between dual, virtual bodies is transformed into a public meditation on human relationships, bodily mortality, and time's inevitable flow.

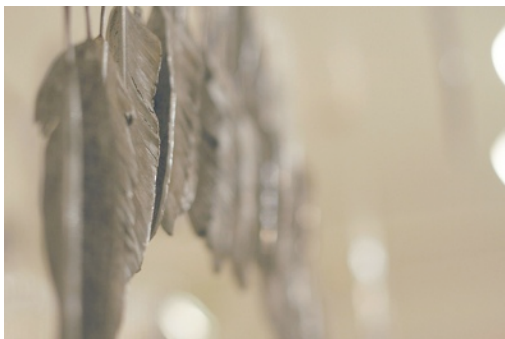
As described in the last several works, my practice has become increasingly engaged in the exploration of relationships. These could be personal or professional, online or offline, for example, and between artists and the academy, epistemology and technology, bodies and space, or history and public dialog, to name a few of my interests. This trajectory also means I am progressively more involved with interdisciplinary and collaborative projects.

Wikipedia Art, with Scott Kildall (2009), for example, questions structures of power and knowledge in the Age of the Internet. Here we wrote about, and then initiated, an art work composed on Wikipedia, and thus art that anyone can edit. Through a social and creative feedback loop of publish-cite-transform that I call 'performative citations,' the piece began as an intervention, turned into an object, and was killed and resurrected on the Wikipedia site several times over. Wikipedians, artists, critics, bloggers, geeks and journalists debated fact, theory, and opinion via hundreds of sites and publications worldwide, each community continuously transforming what the work was and did and meant simply through their writing and talking about it.

In *Distill Life*, with Jessica Meuninck-Ganger (2009 and ongoing), we approach both old and new media as conceptual-material formations. We permanently mount translucent prints and drawings directly on top of video screens, creating moving images on paper. We incorporate technologies and aesthetics from traditional printmaking - including woodblock, silk screen, etching, lithography, photogravure, etc - with the technologies and aesthetics of contemporary digital, video, and networked art, to explore images as multidimensional. Our juxtaposition of anachronistic and disparate methods, materials and content - print and video, paper and electronics, real and virtual - enables novel approaches to understanding each.



Kinnickinnic, 2009
lithograph, LCD with video
10 x 14 x 2 inches, 2009



Falling Still (detail), 2010, 8 x 15 x 4 feet
steel, concrete, fishing line

And *Falling Still*, with Yevgeniya Kaganovich (2010), utilizes 200 cement-cast feathers as individual pixels to create a larger image across 6 planes. Each of these sculptures has been hand-poured into molds of actual feathers, exhibiting finely detailed quills on one side, and flat concrete surfaces on the other. They hang from the ceiling via discrete fishing lines, swinging, twisting, and turning as viewers move around the 8 x 15 x 4 foot installation area. From all perspectives but one, the work floats between 1-dimensional lines, 2-dimensional planes and 3-dimensional pixels. View it exactly perpendicular to its planes, and all the work's elements cohere into a bit-mapped image of a body, leaping through the air. While *Falling Still* is itself suspended between movement and stasis, it also moves and arrests us. The installation directs us in and around incongruous objects, through an improbable image, and across multiple dimensions.

Academic inquiry and writing are essential parts of my practice as an artist as well. In addition to an undergraduate degree in design and terminal studio art degree, I hold a humanities-based PhD, and continue to write articles, books, chapters, reviews and artist perspectives for

various mainstream and academic publications, as well as the spaces between. My writing, like my art, combines traditional art historical trajectories with contemporary understandings of relationality, participation, and media, in order to bring new insight to art and art criticism.

Through performance, provocation and play, my work seeks to infold our unfolding relationships with the world, and with one another. I invite viewers to explore, to embody, and to re-imagine.