

Darling/Debris

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I find it amusing that I drink the same beer now that my grandparents did when they were my age. It's comforting. I see it as an intergenerational nostalgia, a ritual. Elsewhere in the world rites of passage and coming-of-age rituals are definitive markers that delineate the realms of youth and adulthood. In America, this transition is much more nebulous. It is a long, stretching collection of milestones without a final goal post. Most of these touchstones are knit closely together with consumption of goods. The Purchase of Playtex Tampons or Magnum Condoms. Brand relationships litter our past within our memories; they stabilize our future through our routines. In this way commercial branding and individual identity intersect. Brand loyalty becomes an integrated prosthesis in our concept of self. I can't count the number of times I've overheard someone desperately trying to bum a cigarette only to watch as they turn one down because they're strictly a Parliament / American Spirit / Marlboro smoker.

It's not about the flavor of the tobacco and certainly not about the taste of the cheap beer my granddad and I are still drinking. "Buying decisions are made on promises that transcend products and promises are rooted in human emotion." (Travis) The promise these products make in exchange for our brand loyalty is that we might share their legacy. The promise that every time you eat a Hershey's bar, you think of your mom, who would hide them in the back of the freezer and savor them by herself after dinner. You can't smell Newport menthol without thinking of your highschool girlfriend who would sneak them in between classes. Sharing proximity to these monolithic brands allows us to momentarily fool ourselves into believing we will have the same longevity, the same constancy, or that at the very least we will leave evidence to be remembered by.

My work focuses on the ritual buying habits I observe in youth culture and the workaday routines that accompany them. I use traditional printmaking and papermaking practices to create complex vignettes of these consumer relationships. There is inherent humor and tension in creating images of frivolous garbage using processes steeped in structure and academic tradition. It is a love of failure, an appreciation for vulgarity, and an "ability to be serious about the frivolous and frivolous about the serious." (Sontag) Rather than vilifying or celebrating consumer culture and brands, I reproduce these branded objects with a self-reflexive sentimentality. The Fine Art Institution looks down on the industrial application of these self-same processes. Approaching them from a classically trained standpoint I use the imagery to subvert the medium and the medium to mock the imagery. The work attacks and embraces itself in an uroboros of

high art/low class conflict. My work is an experiment in portraiture of the American working class, and in my own ability to retain sentimentality while distilling individuals and memories down to the pastiche of products of which they are made.

I enjoy examining the relationship between private and public and imbuing secret personal rituals into my works. I often decide which packaging I'm going to reference based on stories I source from friends or from my personal life. In the diptych "Darlin'" I have printed the words "Darlin' do you know that I love you?" in Budweiser font onto handmade paper embossed with beer cans. With its deep red script and delicate paper, the piece resembles a love note. It is the kind of earnest confession the tavern hero permits himself after a few beers. The work for me however is not amorous. This phrase is borrowed from my childhood. My grandfather and I were not close but he would sit in a lawn chair and drink while I played in the garden. Intermittently he would call me over and ask this. I would respond in the affirmative and he would reply "Good, now go fetch grandpa another beer." It always seemed this tenderness reflected his feelings about beer more than those about me. This ritual is one of my few memories of him. In this piece I explore the way Budweiser has become a prosthesis for my grandfather and the romantic notion of affection only revealed once imbibed.

At 13 years old I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, Chronic Depression, ADHD and general anxiety disorder, a winning combination that made me particularly prone to forgetfulness and the formation of bizarre neurotic habits. Forgetting something or the idea that something of value would be lost to memory or discarded was a particularly painful concept to me. It was during this time in my life that I became obsessed with collecting and documenting detritus and with forming routines as a coping mechanism to abate the symptoms of my illnesses. I religiously journaled and archived. I packed myself the same exact items in the same exact quantity daily for school lunch and every day. I would alternate taking the same two routes home from school. On my walks home I would collect bits and bobs from the ground, and once inside I would catalog what I had found that day in a yellow legal pad. Teenagehood is a universally unpleasant time of uncertainty in the self and for me this was no different. All that I really knew about myself was that I was sick in a way that would never fully remit, and that I liked to make things. Having habits and qualities that I could be recognized for, even strange ones like eating Smuckers Uncrustables every day of my life and stuffing my pockets with garbage, felt like a salve for the identity in

crisis. This fetishization of accumulated objects and their power to reinforce identity and memory is hard for me to shake. I am still in possession of every birthday card and fortune cookie wrapper I've opened since I was fourteen. As an adult, the act of collecting garbage has been validated with the act of chronicling it in my work. My love of souvenirs that are both personal and ubiquitous led me to reading about the iconic St. Valentine's Day candy box. I discovered that the original purpose for the box was two-fold. The heart shaped boxes emblazoned with roses and cherubs were intended to be kept after the chocolate was eaten and used as a container for other romantic keepsakes like love letters or locks of hair. This revealed a connection to my own collection of keepsakes. The bottle caps I saved after sharing a soda with my first love were stored alongside cool bits of metal found by the train tracks and plastic bugs I had plucked from the dirt. For me there was no distinction in the sentimental nature of these items. This was the inspiration for my sculpture "Keepsake Sampler" in which I use paper pulp to create a candy box and fill it with found objects from my collection. The sculpture is accompanied by a "candy map" that offers a brief description of the nature of the object. While the map descriptions might endear the viewer to the object, they do not serve to clarify which pieces are genuine mementos and which are trash. This piece serves to explore a darling/debris dynamic and poses the question of what differentiates our flotsam from our favorites.

This tenuous relationship is also represented in my piece "Say it with Flowers," which was one of the first trash reproductions I made that was not my own discovery. A friend and I were making our way through a parking lot on the way back from an art supply run. On this rare occasion I was not looking down at my feet and was instead distractedly babbling about how the shopping center contained the only sit-down Domino's restaurant I had ever seen. I opened my mouth to say "I'm going to make art about that" but was interrupted by my friend alerting me to what lay at my feet. A mercilessly flattened bouquet of flowers sat crushed, tire treads and shoe prints impressed on the thin waxy paper. "Wonder what the story is there," I said and I grabbed it and chucked it in the back of my car. I thought about the unfortunate soul who purchased the bouquet and how they likely cherished and daintily transported it hoping to find their feelings requited or perhaps for reconciliation. It was simultaneously heartbreaking and hilarious to imagine the recipient dashing them to the floor, stamping on them and perhaps running them over with a car for good measure. How thin the diametric divide is between treasure and trash.

It's no mystery how I became a process-based artist. I thrive under routine and am comforted by

repeated motions and actions. The mediums I use require me to repeat the same steps over and over. The order is specific. There's room for me to deviate or personalize, but ultimately when my mind is frazzled I am guided back home through the paths that the processes carve out for me. I am comforted by the knowledge of what comes next. Staring at paper pulp moving through the beater I cannot help but be reminded of a cow chewing its cud. I think about the things that we as a collective repeatedly do and the thoughts that we ruminate on. Repeated ad nauseum these processes begin to feel like friends and co-collaborators. Do we know someone more expert on the subject repetition than the silkscreen? Who has a better memory than paper, or displays our wrestle with the ephemeral more than watercolor monotype? The driving messages of my work and interests are inseparable from the mediums I employ.

My work day doesn't begin without a tour of the shop, weaving in and out of rooms, checking out who's in and what they are working on. In a way, my peers and colleagues are a kind of collection. They are a toolbox, a think tank, a veritable wellspring of knowledge, inspiration, stories, and totems. Assessing the rotating cast of the studio allows me to see what I have at my disposal. The face of a friend with a knack for pulling a flawless silkscreen flat or the perfect eye for color mixing can set the tone for the day. Observing the evidence of their workflow spurs new ideas and reminds me of the driving themes behind my work . If there's a peanut M&M wrapper and instant noodles in the trash can, it likely means Isabel and Isaiah were up burning the midnight oil. The number of packages of sour gummy worms and cans of Red Bull in the trash informs me of how stressed out Sam is on a given day. These detrital effigies renew my faith in the ways our stories can be told by what's left behind. When I am struggling to cope with change or uncertainty or when I am shaken about the strength of my concepts or skills, I am emboldened by the familiarity and fidelity of my collective. This echoes the same reassurance that companies provide us when, despite a product's new look, it still delivers the same great taste.



“Oh you smoke spirits?”  
Silkscreen, Watercolor and Pulp Painting



"Modelo Time"  
Silkscreen, watercolor and Pulp painting



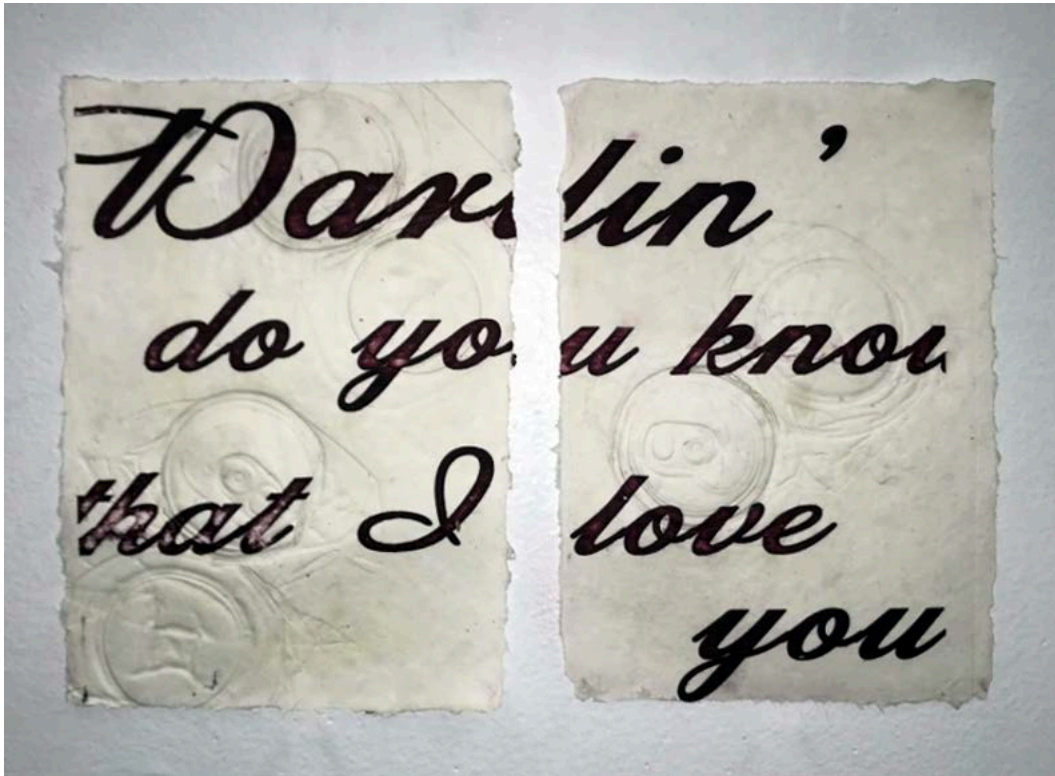
"Pibber"  
Silkscreen, Watercolor and Pulp Painting





“Say it with Flowers”  
Silkscreen and Watercolor on Hand beaten paper





"Darlin"  
Plexi intaglio on handmade paper  
Each sheet 5.5x 8



"Slush Honey Sparklers"  
Reduction Linocut  
22x30

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An essay considering and outlining the meanings and connotations of the subculture of Camp.

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Digital Collection of images of Tom Sach's work concerning current consumption culture as a replacement for "real culture."

Oldenburg, Claes. "I Am For An Art." 1961

An ode to the possibility of using anything in your surroundings, especially imagery and concepts from "low culture" as a starting point for artmaking.