

Artist Statement

Geology provides the visual vocabulary and conceptual impetus for my work. I create objects with complex, layered compositions from diverse natural materials in order to investigate themes of time and place, fragmentation versus wholeness, and the construction of knowledge.

I support the underlying assumption that a person never knows the whole ‘truth’, nor is one able to see all aspects of an inquiry. I acknowledge that one brings prior knowledge and experience to everything one finds/sees/investigates/thinks about, processing small bits of information internally until deciding what one ‘knows’ or ‘believes’ to be true. The field of education calls this constructivism; scientists call it a post-modern theory of science and a rejection of positivism. In my work, I use geology as a metaphor for this process of knowledge construction. Geoscientists obtain a piece of rock, a core, or a bit of chemical or geophysical data and then put these pieces together to reconstruct Earth’s processes and history.

The characteristics of the materials I use also influence my art practice. I cannot separate a study of the Earth from a love of her natural materials—metal, pigments, stone, the flora and the fauna. The physical qualities of these materials and a scientific understanding of ‘why’ they have certain qualities invest meaning into the myriad of materials with which I interact. At any point in the process of creating a work, the malleability of the metal, the color and degree of opacity of the pigments, the texture of the stone, and the forms of the plants and animals can drive my decision-making. For instance, using wood invites me to engage processes of burning, carving, puncturing, and inserting objects. Each method plays a part in rendering a part of the story or metaphor.

By layering materials in compositions which imitate sequences of geological events, my finished sculptures manipulate the viewer's perception of relative time. For example, when making many pieces, I actually move the ‘canvas’ into different positions and apply, distress, drill, and add materials to divide parallel ‘strata.’ The eye of the viewer collides with complex, delineated sequences produced out of the natural order of my object-making.

Sometimes I try to imagine what life would be like if I were not a geologist. I can’t—so I’ve given up on that and finally embraced the rich tapestry of images and materials and processes that I’ve lived with for so long. I strive to translate the concepts and materials into work that transcends scientific illustration and that might provoke an inquiry into my artful intentions to formulate new visual metaphors for how knowledge is found, re-imagined, and reconstructed.