

David H. Clemons

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Artist statement:

My Studio work has always been an extension of the experiences I have internalized and I dissect my experiences and tease out greater awareness of the impact levied by each experience. My practice has become deeply introspective as probing my understanding of loneliness, friendships, creativity, southern culture, fatherhood, and finding a new sense of place and redefined identity have been my source material. This personal exploration has been difficult at times as I do not always feel I have the adequate tools or emotional distance to gain insights into some of these uncomfortable mental places.

The nagging question at the root of the work is: What happens as you confront and reconcile the mental image of yourself with the reality of who you must be, based on the demands of your life? This was the question I pondered sitting on a rocky shore line watching a boat struggle against the waves to reach open sea. The infinite possibility in the vast expanse of the ocean posed a physical and metaphorical escape; this is an escape with brilliant potential but fraught with danger. The seeds for this body of work initially grew in the form of a short story inspired by this observation. The story chronicles a character fleeing from captivity only to meet an uncanny stowaway on his boat. I found myself being more enticed by the objects I began sketching than the written words. The objects have nautical references and heavily feature crude boats and warning buoys foreshadowing impending destruction.

As I executed the work in this new direction I utilized a process-based approach, a methodology driven by trying to convey emotional tension and introspection through material manipulation and alluring objects. Ultimately the objects stand-alone from the narrative and are intended to evoke a visceral response in the viewer tapping into subconscious fears, anxieties, sympathies, and curiosities. The works are intended to be stand-ins for a human need to probe the darkness of the unknown within one's self.

Clemons Bio:

David was born in El Paso, Texas and spent much of his life in Austin, Texas. Initially he began his undergraduate career attending Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, pursuing a combined degree program for Biology Art and Pre-Med. He attended the program for two years before returning to Austin to complete his BFA at the University of Texas in Austin, with a primary emphasis in painting. He earned his MFA in Metalsmithing in 2007 from San Diego State University. David taught in the art department at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock, Arkansas for the 10 years. During 8 of those years he developed and headed the Metalsmithing and Jewelry Department. He presently lives and creates work in Penland, North Carolina. His work embraces the craft of Metalsmithing and it's collected history of techniques and objects. The resulting works rendered in metal, mixed media, and hand made artist books are vehicles to communicate ideas surrounding identity and forays into material and process-based work. He has work included in the collections of the Arkansas Art Center, National Ornamental Metal Museum, and the Yale Contemporary Craft Collection.