

Luke Ball

Artist Statement

My work depicts the struggle between men and the cultural customs and social expectations we are subject to through an exploration of concepts related to American culture, symbolism, masculinity, and my personal experience with social customs. I create images of isolated and desolate environments which are home to structures that hint at the presence of their creators, but never reveal them. Elements from my everyday life populate my work. The objects these landscapes are adorned with, such as muscle cars, rudimentary wooden scaffolding, construction materials, and domestic objects, are expressions of my personal visual vocabulary. These reference my life and the world in which I live. These symbols are taken from and represent the duties and responsibilities that society dictates I perform as a male. My work not only asks what it means to be a man, but it also pokes fun at and subverts what the answers to that question may be.

My work usually takes the form of prints or drawn collages. Printmaking is an important means of production to me for a number of reasons. The roots of printmaking are deeply embedded in satire. Social commentators and satirists have realized the potential in printmaking for mass reproduction and distribution. The idea of mass circulation is appealing to me also. My work is about culture, and I intend to effect culture through mass circulation.

I am interested in connecting the material process to the content of the imagery. Among print processes I am drawn to etching as a means of connecting a real metal object, the etched copper plate, to the objects in the imagery. The etched line allows for precision and delicacy, but also relates to the act of corrosion. The drawn collages allow me to literally construct the image from a set of objects; much like the structures I depict would have to be built in the real world.

These images explore the decay of social ritual; in particular, how the classic social expectations associated with men are eroding. Rituals in rust also acknowledges that rust and decay are a ritual in their own right, and it is important to recognize that change is natural and inevitable. By depicting structures and using objects laden with personal meaning and symbolism, and placing them into desolate landscapes and spaces, this work challenges the conceptions and expectations of masculinity in America.