

Daniel Maw

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Artist Statement

I create as a way to process and heighten my experience. I was born the middle of five children in a dirty, industrial river town on the banks of the Mississippi. Fine art seemed a distant enterprise, but books, movies, music, newspaper comics, animated cartoons, and video games were available. I aim to make art more of a natural and necessary slice of life.

I have a curiosity for the nuances, vagaries, and absurdities of existence. My work is about the search – for connection, love, success, and meaning. Although I have been fortunate enough to travel abroad, my work is about this more mundane meandering. My first meaningful encounters with challenging concepts throughout my life – “eternity” in sermons at church, “irony” when so many were without drinking water after a memorable flood in my hometown, “memory” while storytelling with family, “permanence” after loss, “place” after living in four states in three years – those moments that give pause are infinite inspiration.

I am pragmatic. I make use of materials and methods that are available and familiar to most people. My work takes the form of popular media. Therefore I integrate print, design, video / animation, and spaces / circumstances into my work. Storytelling and autobiography are central themes, so using personally relevant color, form, style, and design carries conceptual weight. I scavenge cute and sexy styles and designs that are potent with appeal. This provides an “in” like the “hook” of a hip hop song. It is familiar, memorable, and guard dropping. Once the audience is paying attention, I take them places both light and dark. I play with expectations and wade between attractive and repulsive to illicit a conflicted response. My work might look old or new – create nostalgia or fake it. I investigate the notion of ideal.

I borrow the grandeur of the cinema but also the diminutive demeanor of a picture book. I create images and illustrated stories that narrate my perspective and connect to experience at large. I create looped animated GIFs that harken to the cyclical nature of life yet also reflect on a singular moment. I create spaces / circumstances that are metaphors for human experience. I awe with projections and large scale works that are constructed with crude methods and cultural detritus so as to be inspiring and tenuous simultaneously – not unlike one’s crafted exterior or online persona. You might walk into one of my exhibitions and at once admire how a cardboard form could cast an image on a wall, only to see the projector inside the form through a gap where the tape has come undone – and the print on the cardboard reveals it once contained fish sticks. I explore how I think and what I desire by evoking the mystery and grit of existence. Like the Wizard of Oz, a snake oil salesman, or ringleader, I reveal and conceal.