

Richard W. James

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Artist Statement

I utilize the traditional doll format of ceramic head, hands, and feet with a cloth body to create large-scale sculptures that employ found objects within the narrative. The mending of clothes and the construction of dwellings are two crafts handed down to me through my parents' and grandparents' way of life. Growing up in a very poor, rural environment, these crafts were required skills for the survival of my family and are integral to my identity. These hard and soft materials/methods have come to represent the traditionally feminine and masculine facets of my upbringing. The clay in my sculptures (a combination of both) has come to symbolize myself within this trifecta.

I use found objects associated with my rural culture to represent the various bits of influence and information that have shaped my outlook. The characters in my work often fail to understand the intended purpose of the objects with which they interact. I find this misuse analogous to how past information can be misinterpreted based on present need, a type of cognitive dissonance from which we all suffer.

The need to question how and why I think the way that I do permeates every aspect of my work. I cannot begin to understand or connect with the world and people around me until I understand the lenses through which I look. Incorporating materials and processes that I associate with the informative years of my life is the most effective way for me to question the cultural lenses given to me in those same years.