

Amber Steinbach: Artist Statement 2023

My artwork is always expanding and ever-changing, but my love for portraiture stays the same. I have a lot of pieces that incorporate portraiture. I enjoy the intimacy of portraiture, so I find myself using myself and friends as references which makes the process that much more intimate. I love how the bone structure of a human face is configured and how each person's face is completely different depending on their own facial modifications and/or features they were born with. One of the best ways to express an emotion in a piece is by painting someone with that emotion whether that's through facial expression, position of the body, or the paint application itself. The human body is something that ties into my love of faces and it also has to do with the making of my feminist pieces. How I would describe my feminist work is artwork that I have related to my own experiences as a woman while still allowing other women to connect to the work and make it so their voices/experiences feel heard and understood. Often, when I make a piece with a feminist undertone it's of a female body part or even a portrait. The human body is so alluring and captivating with all the different planes and directions it goes: You can easily tell a story from just the way a body is positioned within a painting. For instance, if I want the viewer to be confronted with the body I'll show just a portion of the body and not the whole figure, like in my piece "Honey."

In regards to materials, I let the materials guide my way into portraiture and any subjects I choose to tackle. Mixed media is incorporated within almost all of my pieces and is a process that I will keep incorporating into my artistic practice. I work with an array of media: oil, watercolor, markers, colored pencil, ink, acrylic, pastel, charcoal, graphite, fabric, and found objects. Seeing the way material reacts with one another makes for a fun and endearing way to add to pieces. It allows me to thicken up and paint and add more to it without adding anymore paint. Sometimes what a painting needs isn't always paint. By using various materials on top of one another, it leaves some of the outcomes of the piece to chance. Since I don't always know how the material will react with another, the end result is often unpredictable. I invite such moments of chance into my work.

My artistic practice not only includes mixed media but also found objects. I'll put different found objects into pieces and build up the painting with paint and 3-dimensional materials. In the end, I'm left with a piece that can tend to look more like a sculpture than a painting. I always find myself trying to put objects in my piece like Fabric, glass, sand, glitter, stickers, wax, clay. Sometimes my work is the complete opposite of my sculptural work. I also love to make works that are flat yet rich with dimension via unique color shifts and subtle uses of texture. In my piece about shaving, "Slut and Brute," I spent much of my time piling wax on wax onto a small rectangular canvas. The wax was meant to represent shaving cream. I then added paint, glitter, and gemstones onto the "cream." In the end, it's something that many want to touch but are also revolted at the grotesque bodily feel it gives off.

Thematically, a development with work has been my interest in making abstract bodily work. I've been interested in the idea of making abstract work of the human body and now I've been doing that. My senior project called "Body and Abstraction" helped me explore the idea of making works around the body that are rearranged in a way that are no longer one recognizable body part, but still feel bodily in another way. I've achieved this by playing around with cutting up and rearranging drawings of the human body and also with color and textures as well. This idea is something that I wish to explore further with time and something I'd love to expand upon with my practice.