

Jessica Halonen: Artist Statement

My work uses imagery associated with dysfunctional biological systems to address issues of balance and control in both a personal and a formal sense. It is influenced by the design qualities found in medical science, such as pharmaceutical supplies, images of diseased cells and textbook diagrams. While referencing physiological dysfunction, I transform the patterns, sequences and colors of these sources in order to give the image more benign and ludic connotations.

My current body of work, Rx Garden, modifies the traditional use of botanical illustration and trompe l'oeil to explore the imagery and issues associated with the expanding use of genetically modified plants in the pharmaceutical industry. I am currently producing a series of drawings that introduces contemporary approaches to pharmaceutical production by deconstructing and embellishing biological systems, resulting in images that loosely resemble traditional botanical illustration. My recent sculptures include simulations of natural elements in various stages of life, one example being a log pile that plays host to an inorganic and synthetically colored lichen growth. While I am interested in the political and environmental controversies associated with genetically modified materials, my work is more focused on the unique juxtaposition of the inorganic and organic materials associated with this relatively new development.

My materials and methods are varied and often untraditional, working with media as divergent as live trees to cast chocolate. I view this exploration as an important part of my work, analogous to the work conducted in a laboratory. By challenging myself to make use of wide-ranging and often hybridized media for each new series of works, I am able to reconsider my interests from multiple perspectives. In all of my explorations I hope to chart a personal equilibrium between normality and abnormality, real and contrived, in visual terms.