

Ashley Gonzalez: Just looking at your resume, I'm inferring from the titles of some of your solo exhibitions that this isn't your first to focus on environmental and economic (resources) concerns. When did these subjects first come of interest to you and how has the work you've done evolved to reflect that interest?

Kirsten Stolle: *My early mixed-media pieces centered on creating abstractions based on natural and human forms. Although I was politically active and interested in health concerns on a personal level, my art practice remained separate. The shift to making work based on my sociopolitical concerns really took shape in 2008. After having some of my own health issues with soy products, I became acutely aware of the potential health risks of eating foods that contained genetically engineered ingredients. This event set me on the path to a research-based practice, one that is underpinned by topics that have political framework and hit upon contemporary social issues.*

AG: What do you think are the strengths of using preexisting materials, such as the Monsanto ads or in the de-identified series, the photos of the various women?

KS: *Like many collage artists, I consider myself a geek when it comes to trolling eBay, Etsy and on-line book dealers for vintage materials. With older works on paper such as lithographs, etchings and magazine advertisements, there is a specificity to the printing process that speaks to a unique time in our history. This imagery, created through traditional means (as opposed to digital), is integral to the development of each piece and can provide a strong narrative element.*

AG: For *Proceed at your own risk*, is there significance to the shape and color of the blue line cutting across the bridge? How about its placement between the mother and baby ducks?

KS: *Yes, I wanted to allude to fence-like structure, one that visually blocks the viewer from entering the image and obscures part of the advertisement.*

AG: For the *de-identified* series, I noticed that all of the photographs were dated between 1860 and 1861. Is there a significance there?

KS: *To support my imagined narrative, it was essential for me to find portraits of Victorian women. I was lucky enough to come across mid-19th century etchings on eBay. The women, posed in stiff and uncomfortable-looking positions, provide a sense of voyeuristic inquiry. The etchings showcase both their perceived beauty and possible unhappiness at being documented. I was drawn to this tension and thought it would be a perfect platform to create a project based on concealing faces from 21st century surveillance technology.*

AG: As I was looking at these, I flip flopped between thinking that the face had become the focal point of the piece or that perhaps the masks and hair pieces meant to force me to think about other aspects of the picture and take my focus away from the face. What did you anticipate viewers would do?

KS: *Both. Ironically by covering up each woman's face I am forcing the viewer to look more closely at what is being covered up and why. It was important for me to use colors and shapes that were a bit uncomfortable and odd to instill a sense of unease and questioning.*