

John Cessna- Artist/Research Statement
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My creative portfolio revolves around a variety of influences, but a select number of themes. Regardless of medium, my work utilizes skeletal narratives where nothing is directly spelled out. This allows for each viewer to create his or her own interpretation of every piece. I pursue this form of production because it allows me to leave clues, directing the audience, even somewhat manipulating them, while creating a new ending from each experience.

In terms of subject matter, I am heavily influenced by the subverted. I enjoy finding detailed ways to twist a subject so spectators second-guess the larger picture. As an artist influenced by the suburban image in entertainment, as well as growing up in this environment, I frequently set my work in the suburban sphere. In terms of narrative, this subverted-influence comes from the distorted historical lens of Federico Fellini (*I Vitelloni*, *Amarcord*) and the suburban-escapism of early Steven Spielberg (*E.T.*, *Amazing Stories*). Even John Hughes' work exploring the suburban identity has shaped my experimentation within this setting. Furthermore, a large part of this theme of subversion has been molded by the surrealist vice-centered ideas (sex, drugs/alcohol, death, sin) juxtaposed with the iconic, marketed images of suburban perfection. The clash of these ideas and images creates narratives centered around cynicism, irony, and intrigue.

All of my work is constructed. Each piece, whether moving or still, contains an element of staging, which is done either physically or digitally to guide the intended message. The modern digital process allows for unprecedented mobility and experimentation on location, while still producing professional quality. This malleable workflow aids in the continuing evolvement of artistic process. In addition, these constructed scenes refute the documentary genre even further by never showing the climax or full scope of the action, instead visually representing the moment-before or the moment-after. Artistic influences working in a similar fashion are Gregory Crewdson, Stan Douglas, and the Sanchez Brothers, Carlos and Jason.

Turning to distribution, my work tends to exist in the digital realm. Examining the catalyst to viral-ability in the visual works is a consistent pursuit when creating. I believe

that a balance between lightness (comedy) and the darkness, or social critique, achieves an image ripe with both the austere formal qualities of my tableau photography and the unexpected turn of events that generates a sincere belly laugh. I have found that combining these qualities allows the mass digital viewer to both indulge in the bitterness of topical comedy and feel enlightened by intellectual commentary, thus inviting the contemporary act of being altruistic through digital "sharing".

-John Cessna, 11/2014