

TURNER CARROLL

Shawn Smith

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My work investigates the slippery intersection between the digital world and reality. Specifically, I am interested in how we experience nature through technology. When we see images of nature on TV or on a computer screen, we feel that we are seeing nature but we are really only seeing patterns of pixilated light.

For the past few years, I have been creating a series of "Re-things." These whimsical sculptures represent pixilated animals and objects of nature. I find images of my subjects online and then create three-dimensional sculptural representations of these two-dimensional images. I build my "Re-things" pixel by pixel to understand how each pixel plays a crucial role in the identity of an object. Through the process of pixilation, color is distilled, some bits of information are lost, and the form is abstracted. Making the intangible tangible, I view my building process as an experiment in alchemy, using man-made composite and recycled materials to represent natural forms.

In my building process, I start with a full sheet of material like plywood or MDF and cut it into 1/2" strips of varying lengths--typically 1/2" to 2' long. I then hand dye each strip of wood individually with dyes mixed from ink and acrylic paint. I mix each color by hand to create a huge palette of colors in order to give the sculpture more depth and visual interest before assembling the object.

My conceptual and material practice explores identity, color, labor, technology, and science. As an object maker, I am interested in relating these concepts back to the symbiotic connection between the hand and the "thing." This relationship is a basic principle in the development of the modern human--biologically, technologically, culturally, and scientifically. I am fascinated by the importance of the "thing" in our history and how this relationship is changing with technology, as we become more removed from first hand experience by observing the world through a screen.

Shawn's works have been exhibited internationally in museums, most recently he was included in the most exciting artists under 40, at the National Museum of Art. He has also been featured in *Wired Magazine*.