

My work over the past decade is situated in two strains of thinking about contemporary practice that tend to be seen as oppositional but that I want to put into play. First, there is the effort, characteristic of late modernism, to remove the work from narrative. Color, form and materials are used in such a way as to defy the viewers' desire to make meaning of the work apart from the immediate encounter with the form. My latest work is about this first moment of engagement. The pieces can vary greatly in scale, the colors can be somewhat jarring and there are few immediate clues as to the meaning of the work. It is the corporeal experience that first impresses. Intense fluorescent hues often destabilize the form and make an overall image difficult to grasp. At the same time, there can be indicators, on occasion, that encourage a more analytical approach, and that therefore nudge the work beyond the phenomenological. The titles of works, somewhat obscure, might be apparent to fans of late seventies and early eighties rock bands, music that emerged contemporaneously with the decline of the modernist era.

The occasional use of text and the inclusion of appropriated patterns, images and objects that can only be referential similarly leave traces of intention that encourage further engagement. For example, a work like *The Cambridge (v2)* employs text from the lyrics of a Buzzcocks song, (*I'm in distress. I need a caress, What do I get?*), printed over a common wallpaper pattern used in my then local London pub named *The Cambridge*, home base for the art school next door I was enrolled in during the mid-seventies. Draped over a rail of modernist design, the printed fabric suggests the self-pity, uncertainty and upheaval of the time when art, music and life faced a moment of crisis. While on one level clues like these could be seen as giving the work a narrative framework, the work isn't dependent on this sort of reading. The physicality and visual intensity can simply assert themselves, or, when text is used, can suggest a mood or emotion. This is why my sculpture is clearly indebted to the stripped down aesthetic of late modernism, although it perhaps builds on the subsequent critical discourse about it.

The most recent pieces are more concertedly removed from the realm of narrative but not from the referential. This work addresses issues explored in the writings of, for example, Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, while also invoking aspects of contemporary design, both in the choice of intense Day-Glo colors, and in their form, which plays on the seemingly non-referential quality of abstract corporate logos and signage. In this way, these apparently abstract examples of pure form show the difficulties with efforts to resist interpretation today. At the same time, this newest work is evidence of wistfulness for a less freighted sculptural syntax.

-Paul R. O'Keeffe, 2012.