

CHRIS WOODS: ARTIST STATEMENT

The goal of my work over the last twenty-five years has been to examine the impact of popular culture on the contemporary mind. Western society radiates a malignant, cultural shock wave, combining the Internet, television, movies, video games, music, news, celebrity, opinion, shopping, fast food, and car culture into one irresistible and distorting force. The output of this onslaught consumes and reshapes our collective consciousness as a species. Through my paintings, I hope to decode this compelling and confounding tempest.

My formative work as an artist began by painting my friends, and myself, at large in our shared landscape of shopping malls, convenience stores, and suburban sprawl. I endeavoured to examine, not only our own niche, but also how we fit into the larger context of Western and global culture. My primary obsession was to define our fundamental nature as persons, and consumers, in the late twentieth century.

My early paintings employed a documentary approach in representing my generation and its surroundings. With recent work, however, I have turned to the surreal landscape found in glossy print-ads, fantastic video games, and 30-second TV spots. By depicting my friends surrounded by the tropes of popular culture in my hyper-realistic paintings, I hope to appropriate the same high-gloss finish and dream-like quality that advertising and entertainment uses to arouse our desire and ultimately, gain our submission.

By constructing tableau composed of my friends acting out scenes that mimic the modern vernacular of film, television, and advertising, I am occupying a perspective from the interior of consumer culture that enables me to reveal the truths behind the pixilated facade. By drawing inspiration from both art-history and my local movie-plex I hope to create a 'Chimera' where art disguises itself as the advertising panels that illuminate the mega-mall, the bus-shelter and the highway billboard. My ambition is to undermine and expose the crushing dissonance that consumer culture displays in its rush to sell us dreams we can never realize.

Pop culture has grown to the stage where it has colonized our personal space. It isolates us in the act of 'connecting' us through smart phones and social networking. In doing so, it also robs us of the skills, both social and practical, that we need to build lives of character and substance. Orwell's novel '1984' has come to life in our most eager and willing hands. Now firmly in mid-career, I plan to gain further momentum in my exposure of the belligerent powers of persuasion that endeavor to conquer the sovereign 'Castle-Keep' in the mind of every individual. My coming bodies-of-work will continue to act as challenging counterpoints to the malevolent cultural and corporate forces that surround and seek to consume... us.