

Christine Whittaker – Sculpture Statement Crude Independence

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Crude Independence:

These works were developed during 2002 – 2005. I started Crude Independence while doing the Athena fellowship with Mark DiSuvero and a fellowship New York University (though the works were not directly associated with that degree).

In 2002, I was in charge of daily videoconferences for Bank of America, New York. Those daily conference detailed business in the fields of pharmaceutical, consumer goods, entertainment and energy. The energy business is headquartered in Houston and on particular day they showed a world demographic of world energy usage. America came at a staggering rate of 85% of usage of the world's energy resources of which we obtain 2/3 of those resources outside of the United States. That automatically puts us at risk of our "independence". I was shocked (note these figures are not paralleled by American Petroleum Institute Policy Analysis and Strategic Planning Department reports).

I started Crude Independence during the invasion of Iran. Having a family history associated with both military research and development, as well as oil and gas I saw what was happening in Iran and Iraq from a perspective of what I would call "Crude Independence". I found that America now is involved in actions that are keenly in conflict with our "Declaration of Independence"; furthermore the gamble that America is taking (in order to obtain energy) is at the risk to our "independence". "Conflicting Energy State" was the first built of this sculpture series and is direct commentary on this notion.

The issue of energy is composed of a complex matrix of American energy corporations, world politics, American automobile corporations, America's nostalgic love affair with the automobile (that was ideologically developed in the 1960's) and advances in geological exploration (technology and tool age). According to American Petroleum Institute Policy Analysis And Strategic Planning Department, for many decades the idea that we are running out of oil reserves is a farce, in fact we will not peak on global exploration resources until 2050. Today in order to gain access to world reserves the industry has tapped to the level of the earth's crust. In the 1980's the drilling average was approximately a mile. Advances in geological technology and tool age have made it possible to go to these greater depths. Additionally, America has been obtaining resources overseas rather than extinguishing our own reserves, as it is cheaper and doesn't jeopardize our own supply this action has made our political position in the world very complicated.

If the American Petroleum Institute Policy Analysis and Strategic Planning Department reports, are correct then why is crude approaching \$80 a barrel and gas \$4 a gallon? Why are we pouring billions of dollars into Iran and Iraq? Furthermore what is the cumulated cost of this process? Logically, if the American Petroleum Institute Policy Analysis and Strategic Planning Department reports, are correct the energy corporations are at the heart of the current energy crisis. As of today, November 9, 2005 in lew of these events the congress is investigating America's energy corporations. Mobile and Shell responded in kind saying "there corporation's are massive and that their budgets are justified as doing business at the competitive costs, furthermore these costs are comparative to that of running any major corporation in America today." As an American I would question that answer, I don't know of any other corporations in America that has recently tripled there expenditures without providing accountability.

I think the nature of the problem lies in current ideologies concerning exploration at the expense of other nations and political blocks in the development of alternative energy resources and energy efficiency regulations (namely progressive changes in auto manufacturing) and nostalgic collective psyche of America's love affair with the automobile, In effect if you look at the cost of all of the current path financially and politically verse investment in energy efficiency and the development of alternative energy resources the later may not seem more practical.

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Continuing to travel the energy exploration path that America is on at the rate of our current consumption level combined with the amount of energy America imports places America at a dangerous level of “dependency”. The more we “depend” other nations, this included the costs of restructuring other nations we are continuing the process of becoming more “dependent” the less “independent”, reiterating this stance of “Crude Independence”.

America has thrived in every other aspect of development but lags in energy. Energy is crucial to our nation maintaining its position in the world development is key to keeping that position. Investment into our nation in this way insures our “independence”, which is the foundation of this great nation.

“Ubiquitous internal energy” was the last piece I built in the body of the “Crude Independence” works it reflects the viewpoint concerning America’s position regarding energy. America has great assets and talent in engineering, science, technology and ingenuity at this point the problem of energy haven’t tapped these resources. All of the sculpture suggest this great potential as the light emanating from behind lead, through and or around the steel barrels here and there suggest “potential energy”. I think the challenge to maintaining our independence requires taking that risk and investing in America.

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