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Artist Statement

The variety of materials and processes used to create art has always fascinated me. Whether it be the bright colors produced by markers, the variation in a watercolor wash, the luminosity achieved through layering of oil paint, or the textures created through developing my own ceramic glazes, I have loved experimenting with the various mediums traditional to art. Occasionally, however, I found myself getting so caught up in my various media and material explorations, that I failed to produce a solid piece of art—conceptually or compositionally.

I solve this problem by making my concepts and design about the materials themselves. Creating three-dimensional illustrations from recycled materials allows me to highlight the things that I love: experimenting with unconventional materials and processes, producing effects through the use of design and lighting, and telling stories with a quirky wit. I am interested in exploring the visual representation of joy in everyday life. I like the idea of creating something aesthetic out of something meant for trash, adding uses to things most people consider useless.

Working with recycled materials has considerably changed the way I approach making art by causing me to pay increasing attention to the world around me. I keep my eyes open for bits and pieces—strawberry containers with the right size bumps, acorns, discarded ribbon—that I can use in my illustrations. Often, each individual composition changes according to the items I find, and the things I find along the way inspire ideas for new illustrations. My community has become involved in this process: many people save things they would normally throw away, in case I might want to use them. I have been given parts of a dismantled piano, boxes full of unidentifiable plumbing parts, and bags of dryer lint (including one with lots of cat hair). The materials I use come with laden meaning, both from their original purpose and from the place I find them. I then add to the life span of these materials by repurposing and augmenting their meaning through the illustration itself.

The repurposing of materials not only serves to create interesting visual context and added meaning in my art, but also fits in with my beliefs as a Christian. I can take things that other people view as trash, and would normally discard, and turn them into something new and beautiful. I like that I can visually represent the redemptive nature of Christianity without having to resort to the traditional imagery often associated with Christian illustration.

Allowing my materials to show through enables quiet wit to emerge in my illustrations. The juxtaposition of a milk carton milking a cow, a toilet paper roll on the toilet, or rock star made of dryer lint hopefully causes the viewer to pause a little bit and smile. My desire is to bring the slightly odd to the everyday illustration, causing us to notice and celebrate the curious in our everyday lives.