

ARTIST STATEMENT

My art practice is comprised of two distinct but related bodies of work: one that uses serial photography as an investigative tool and another that is event-based and collaborative.

Moving about the world in everyday scenarios, I use the camera as a tool for research. I discover and document existing situations that are observable as 'distinct'. These 'images' aren't instances of art, but are curiously art-like. One example of such a situation might be an item of 'no-particular-significance' having been the subject of a simple gesture of relocation. Say, a mitten having undergone relocation to an elevated position; moved from the ground to eye-level for easier observation in the case that it could once again be found.

These simple, nearly unconscious, human gestures become part of a larger system of signification, a formalized language visually analogous to art or more pointedly, the production of meaning. In the field the camera, then, becomes a simple tool to collect these images in multitude. As these observable situations proliferate, and my collection of similar images grow, it becomes evident that what might appear as 'singular' is actually part of this larger, more formal system of sign or meaning-production. I am observing a kind of language through this collection, and thus taking a magnifying glass to the fine line between art and the broader world of images/signs.

I am also a co-founder of Hideous Beast, a collaborative effort between Josh Ippel and myself. Since 2004 we have worked organizing structured participatory events, publishing how-to manuals and most recently creating interactive sculptures and installations that examine survival culture. Often our works reflect upon the growing number of projects developing under the rubric of socially engaged art, as with our project called *Field Test*.

Hideous Beast is aligned with a broader social dialogue critical of a growing passivity within traditional modes of entertainment. Engagement in such activities is not generative or participatory, in fact there is often a kind of packaged affair where the audience is expected to "consume" rather than "produce" the experience. Our practice takes up specific methods that work to decentralize the authorship process and distribute the capacity to 'create' to our audience. In many cases we produce situations or platforms where, though related to traditional social events in basic form, the audience is invited to create the elements of the experience. For example, within our *Mini Movie Festival*, participants generate low-tech "films" of their own hand to be viewed by a producing audience.

Hideous Beast has created a project called *Field Test*, designed to take up some of the hard questions of the developing socially engaged field of art. One tactic used by a number of artists similarly interested in generating participatory situations while not coercing an unwilling public is to create manuals or DIY guides with the hopes of unending reproducibility and accessibility. *Field Test* is a conscious enactment or distribution of this work. With a critical eye to the efficacy of such modes or tactics, we have become the guinea pigs for the socially engaged art world.

Most recently, Hideous Beast is working on a series of projects that address the formal and aesthetic qualities of preparation tactics and how they overlap with artistic cultural production. Through a series of installations and events called *Survival School*, we use the gallery as an existential framework for investigating preparedness, a place to draw parallels between two spheres while asking our audience to engage in our present cultural psyche via an art historical lens. These experiments serve as creative attempts to understand how the character of preparation can structure future actions and how aesthetics can provide a flexible engagement with an unpredictable world.