Alexis Etzkorn

Through dialogue across the mediums of painting and sculpture, I explore art making as the cultivation of an intimate relationship between artist and subject.

The still life paintings develop this relationship through my careful noticing and appreciation of seemingly mundane objects. The shirt strewn across the table. The rotting pumpkin sitting on the street’s edge, awaiting its impending disposal. The chair I walk past everyday, most often unoccupied. These objects are usually just objects; however, through the act of observation and the laborious process of painting, I develop affection for their fine details.

Within each simple object, an infinite number of compositions vie for my attention. Strange shapes of vibrant color burst at their seams and breathtaking forms reveal themselves. My role as a painter is to devote myself to these subjects, to study them so closely that these small, luminous details, ordinarily unnoticed, become bold, vibrant, and alive.

My role as sculptor takes on this task in an immediate, direct way. While my paintings create an intimacy with the subjects through their translation into an image, Straw Pyramid fosters this relationship through direct, immediate contact with the subject—the neon, plastic drinking straw. The sculpture has been a constant exploration of how the humble straw can be transformed in a way that brings out its essential qualities.

A painterly expression highlights the bold, neon colors; wire wrapping accentuates the ridges and bends; and the construction of a systematic pyramidal structure demonstrates a potential for perfect geometry. These modes of expression and construction evoke the warmth of a human presence, a physical connection between structure and artist, that stands in contrast to cold, geometric, Minimalist forms crafted by machines. This warmth also extends an invitation to the viewer: the whimsical straws exude a fun and friendly vibration that attract the eye from afar and encourage the viewer to get to know them, to examine the same details and qualities of the straw I explored through my process of art making.

This body of work serves to disrupt the viewer’s perception of the mundane, so that they might reconsider and appreciate its details—the beauty and ornament of their own living room chairs, the garbage they are leaving at their curbside, or perhaps even the vibrantly colored, smooth, plastic straw swirling around in their smoothie.