

Thomas Haley's Artist Statement

I use my work to explore the ways I relate to society as a disabled person. Through my work, I communicate my point of view and foster sympathy and empathy toward it. My disability is physical, and the main tension between the nondisabled world and me is mobility, usually relating to transportation. My work revolves around this tension.

My most current work is my series *Intrinsic*, in which I consider how the natural landscape inherently hinders mobility. This series is related to my previous series *Wanderlust*, but with different processes and materials. These series complement my previous series *Pathfinder*, in which I consider how humans have created cityscapes that do not accommodate the mobility needs of everyone.

All of my work is planned on a computer and translated to a painting or sculpture. For *Intrinsic*, I program a CNC router to carve a topographical sculpture of a fictional place. Then I use an airbrush to paint natural landscape on the topography. I program and cut the roads and buildings into poured epoxy layers with a CNC router and then cast pigmented epoxy. I cut off the excess epoxy and level the sculpture with a CNC router between layers. I program the white roads and buildings based on the topographic sculpture.

My work contains elements which represent mobility conflicts in various environments. Each painting or sculpture has a blue route that is placed based on my own decision making process when faced with such conflicts. This process is complex and involves deciding on the risks and rewards of various alternatives, such as length and slope. A viewer must look at several pieces to better understand my decision making process and my point of view.

I progress between projects in a logical manner: each project shares common elements with previous projects, such as use of materials, visual style, and ideas. In some of my older work, I examined how infrastructure affects its users.

This led into my work about disability, since infrastructure is a critical part in restricting mobility. I use maps since they are a direct way to understand how I am often forced to change my path due to environmental factors.

A substantial part of my studio work consists of experimentation and trial-and-error. For example, in my series *Wanderlust* I considered many approaches to marking the acrylic surface before deciding on the method that was most aesthetically sensible. Research into new methods was also a major aspect of my *Intrinsic* series. Exploration of CNC machining allowed me to use a CNC router to build topographic sculptures and cut patterns into epoxy. Investigation of epoxy casting methods allowed me to create void-free castings within the sculptures. These processes are new to my practice and separate *Intrinsic* from *Wanderlust*. My research into processes and materials is a vital part of my practice and is a significant drive to produce new work.

My disability enriches my research. There are many processes and materials that I am unable to use, or cannot use in the conventional way because of my physical limitations. This forces me to think about the process and work with others so that I can use it. I often have to figure out several ways to accomplish the artistic goals of my work using different processes or materials, and then choose the best one. This process can lead me to develop novel ways to produce work.

My artwork discussing disability will grow. I will discuss disability in many different ways with my artwork. This work will expand to consider ways I relate to society beyond mobility issues, and ways to improve the mobility of people like me and fully integrate us into society.