

Clifford W. Tresner
Artist Statement

I grew up in a rural farming community with a tradition of hard work and little need of formal education beyond 8th grade. As the first in my family to graduate high school and attend college. I am, in many ways, ill-equipped to lead the life of a college art professor. Assuming the aura of sage refinement often associated with those in academia has always seemed elusive and exploring my role as an educator and artist is still a work in progress. I often gauge others' reaction to a variety of situations and to the creative process. I do this primarily out of a sense of discovery; learning on the fly and questioning boundaries - seeing how things work, and often, fail to work.

In the simplest terms my work is about questioning. I tend to question everything and doubt the answer. I learned quickly from my father and in public education to temper my questions and accept answers for what they are.

In the studio, I have freedom to question and doubt. While individual works may deal with specific subject matter, the underlying structure is questioning the nature of relationships. What happens if I do this or that to a material, or place one object adjacent another? I am constantly working out the elements of a composition, balancing what I know of furniture design and other functional crafts with fine art practices. When I have provided enough answers via the "art object" I question if I was asking the right things in the first place. Then comes a period of destruction, dismantling, or taking apart. Through this process, I come to terms with my inquisitive nature. I revel in it, and during a cycle of creation and destruction, arrive at an answer I can live with. When making a successful piece, walking the line between its content and form, I realize how interconnected my practice is with all aspects of my life.

My influences are as varied as the way I piece my work together. I take great pleasure discovering other artists' work, analyzing how they are perceived, and taking what I need from them. All things relative, I borrow my historical perspective, sense of craft, conceptual flexibility, playfulness, and connection to materials from the likes of Marcel Duchamp, Anthony Gormley, David Nash, Cy Twombly, and Leonardo da Vinci. This is by no means a definitive statement, but it is an effective introduction to my work and myself.