

ARTIST STATEMENT: BENJAMIN ETTEN

WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG MY DAD WORKED FOR THE RAILROAD. HE WAS GONE A LOT, BUT WHENEVER HE WAS HOME WE SPENT TIME BUILDING A MODEL RAILROAD SET IN OUR BASEMENT. WE CALLED IT “APPLETOWN” AND EVENTUALLY IT GREW INTO A VERY DETAILED MINIATURE CITY. WHAT THAT MODEL OFFERED ME WAS A CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE A VERSION OF THE WORLD MY DAD WORKED IN THAT AS A CHILD I HAD NO OTHER WAY OF EXPERIENCING OR COMPREHENDING. THAT IDEA IS STILL WITH ME TODAY.

IN TRUTH A MODEL IS A VERY INCOMPLETE REPRESENTATION OF THE REAL WORLD. IT IS SO SINGULARLY FOCUSED THAT IT IS UNABLE TO CAPTURE ALL OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF LIFE. YET WITHIN THAT FOCUS SOMETHING AMAZING HAPPENS – DISTRACTIONS LIKE EMOTION, CANCER, PREJUDICE AND TAXES ARE REMOVED. CREATION OF A MODEL INHERENTLY FORCES DISSOCIATION FROM ACTUAL REALITY, BUT SIMULTANEOUSLY ALLOWS FOR A MORE INTIMATE EXPERIENCE WITH AN ALTERNATE VERSION OF REALITY.

THIS IDEA OF MODELING REALITY IS THE CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF MY ART. FROM THERE A BUILDING PROCESS OCCURS DURING WHICH I EXTEND THE MODEL THROUGH A VARIETY OF WAYS (IMAGINATION, RESEARCH, PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, ETC.) CREATING A MORE COMPLETE WAY OF DEPICTING LOCATION. INSTEAD OF JUST VISUALLY RECREATING OR DOCUMENTING A LOCATION, MY AIM IS TO SPECIFICALLY ALTER THE WAY THAT LOCATION IS EXPERIENCED THROUGH MY IMAGE.