

# M+B

## FLAUNT

### Jesse Stecklow

By Emily Wells  
July 14, 2016

This is Jesse Stecklow's first in-person interview, and he isn't sure what the conversation should look like. Most successful interviews can be written from a casual conversation, but it is soon apparent that Stecklow is far from casual when discussing his body of work; rather, he is specific and purposeful.

At 22, Stecklow has already been given four solo shows at major galleries in New York, Los Angeles, and Stockholm, and was M+B Gallery's single featured artist at The Armory Show in 2015.

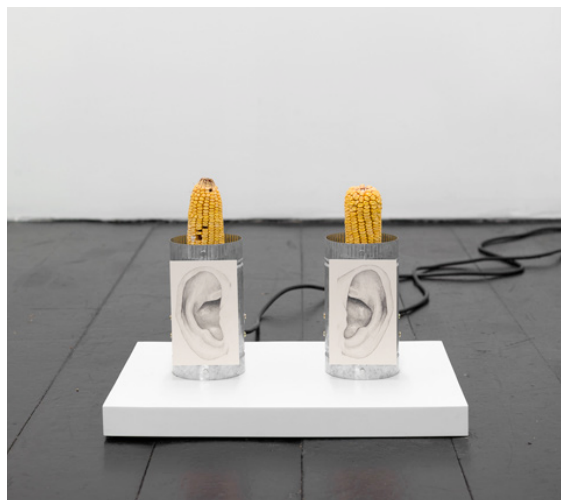
Stecklow is known for his unique integration of data collection with personal elements, which is perhaps best exemplified by a sculpture called "Ear Wigglers" that wiggles ears of corn (he spent a great deal of time gathering air samples that contained corn and corn by-products), inside aluminum containers embellished with drawings of human ears, based off an image he drew of his grandfather's ear in the hospital as a child. This blend of data and narrative feels pertinent and vital.

His processes are largely self-developed, perhaps due to the fact that Stecklow didn't study art in college, majoring instead in Design Media Arts at UCLA—graduating in only three years. It was difficult to focus on school for a great deal of time, he explains, when he was already working in a studio, making the art he wanted to be making. Stecklow now co-runs a graphic design studio, Content is Relative, with a client list of mostly galleries and museums.

Although he insists that he doesn't have too much to say on the topic of adventure — at a daringly young age, he has proven himself to be profoundly adventurous in the landscapes art explores — having collaborating with fiction writers and laboratories that analyze his collected data samples — Stecklow has blended his own artistic mediums, and established himself as a rising young artist.

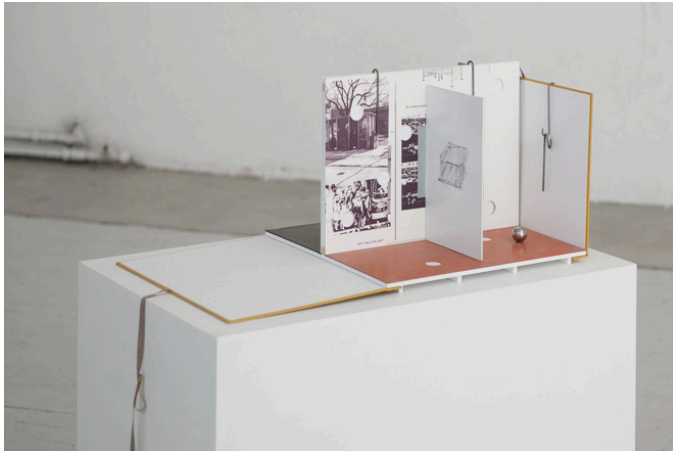
**You work with a great deal of collections of data and samples. How do you translate what is gathered into a piece?**

In the case of these spinning corn ear pieces I've been making, I was piling the output of the sampling project with a more personal narrative. At the time [I was making "Ear Wigglers"] I was thinking a lot about my grandfather. Before he passed away—as a child—I had made a drawing of his ear in the hospital, and then I had begun to redraw his ear based on that childhood drawing. Simultaneously, I was finding elements of corn and by-products of corn production in the airspace— suddenly I had these ear drawings and these ears of corn, and [I remembered that my grandfather] used to be able to do this thing where he would wiggle his ears... so I began making these kinetic sculptures that became ear-wigglers.



EAR WIGGLER (LEFT AND RIGHT)" (2015)  
DRIED CORN, DRAWING, ALUMINUM, DUCT FAN  
PARTS, MODIFIED SHOEBOX LID,  
WOOD, WIRE, TIMER.  
12 X 22 1/2 X 12 INCHES.  
© JESSE STECKLOW, COURTESY M+B GALLERY

# M+B



"BUS SHELTER BOX SET (QUADRANT)" (2016) POWDERCOATED ALUMINUM, CHIPBOARD, PAPER, BOOKBINDERS CLOTH, RUBBER BANDS, SILICONE, RIBBON, BUTTON, WIRE, POWDERCOATED AND PRINTED STEEL, STYRENE, SCREENPRINTED SHOEBOX SEGMENTS, GALVANIZED STEEL ANGLE, BALL BEARINGS, GLUE  
25 1/2 X 15 X 12 INCHES.  
© JESSE STECKLOW, COURTESY M+B GALLERY, LOS ANGELES.



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**You've worked in collaborative processes with other kinds of artists several times—can you tell us a bit about this? What is the benefit of taking something like a memory of your grandfather and pushing it away from yourself?**

I have a project in the new issue of Flash Art which takes the sound components of the Chapter [NY] show and feeds them through a crowdsourcing website to a freelance short story writer there. That issue is about art coming into contact with storytelling and fiction writing. It proved to be interesting—the sound from the show is pretty narrative in quality, so there was a lot of material to go off, but I didn't give [the writer] a lot of other context. The process is about pushing the content away from myself through a second or third party, and then allowing it to come back to me. I'm interested in the distance that's created.

On one level, I think art making is one of the last things to prioritize singular authorship, so I'm interested in artistic practices that embrace a more networked form of collaboration—all other industries do that. There are only so many ways I can view and see the things I'm making on some level, and so having that work come into contact with people who are operating in highly different contexts allows me then to revisit it with new added meaning, and adds a more complex layering of reads for the viewer.

**Who would you like to collaborate with?**

I've been doing projects that think about an exhibition space as a sort of transient space, or a waiting space, this also parallels the fact that here in L.A., I don't use a car, so I make use of the public transportation system here. I'm interested in the pedestrian mindset and the identity that precipitates from that. I would like to do something with someone involved in the L.A. Metro, someone involved in transportation planning, or creating things that affect the pedestrian lifestyle in Los Angeles.

**What do you think being a pedestrian in a driving city has done for your work?**

In taking the bus or the train, you have this sort of inter-period of being able to focus a little more internally. Often times, it's in those kinds of spaces where my attention isn't being totally demanded, that ideas kind of condense and exhibitions sometimes make themselves. I think about those kinds of waiting spaces as spaces with a high potentiality. I think there're a lot of people who still don't know there's a full and rapidly growing transit system in L.A., and also people don't think it's for them because they can afford to own a car—so there's inherent class distinctions as to who takes the Metro and who believes the Metro is for them, and that's kind of unfortunate.