

TIM CLIFFORD ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My recent work investigates the intersection between aesthetics and violence and more broadly how objects and images absorb meaning and become embedded with history. The work asserts, in the words of the poet George Oppen, that: "There are things we live among/ and 'to see them/ Is to know ourselves.'"

The subject of violence was first addressed directly in my series Target Panic, 100 drawings of competition shooting targets that straddled the world between gun culture and pure abstraction (cf. the constructivist tradition). I had just completed this work in 2012, when the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School. This was the school I attended as a child and the event and the news coverage around it deeply informed my series of works based on carnival shooting galleries, collectively known as the Threat Assessment series.

My most recent works, including the prints I worked on at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking are rooted in a study of the mourning rituals and cemetery architecture of rural America. The series of drawings, A Good Death, refers to the Christian tradition of *ars moriendi*, or "the art of dying" and draws on early 19th century tombstone imagery, primarily that of the weeping willow.

These new works were inspired in part by Drew Gilpin Faust's study *The Republic of Suffering*, which documented how the civil war and the violence on American soil changed forever American's view of death, mourning and the afterlife. For me, the current political situation around the world—the refugee crisis, gun violence in America, Black Lives Matter—all point to rarity of a good life and the importance of trying to achieve "a good death," at the end of long life among loved ones.