

# Bockley Gallery

## *Star WallowingBull*

### *Machine Head*

*Machine Head*, 2020  
acrylic on canvas  
60 x 96 inches

*Machine Head* is a reflection of myself and others during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. Between isolation, anxiety, and fear, 2020 had us putting up protective barriers both literally and figuratively. Each object in this large-scale work represents stories both personal and universal.

The General Electric iron press image represents a protective face mask, while the propeller symbolizes our fight to push away the virus and the all-encompassing anxiety we've felt as a global society. The chrome horn is reminiscent of the citywide emergency sirens that warn neighborhoods of impending danger, while the barber pole represents the shut downs that have affected so many small businesses across the country. Images of wine stoppers and playing card patterns refer to the communal isolation we've felt — Whether we self-medicated or found creative ways to pass the time, we were in it together — even if we were physically apart.

The mechanical glass heart represents strength, resilience, and love, with numbered dates that nod to impactful moments in my life. The first date consists of letters and numbers “WEM217” which represent the initials of a waitress I met briefly in 2016 at a Fargo, ND restaurant. In 2017 I connected with her again and learned she had undergone major heart surgery. This moment inspired me to paint a mechanical heart, indicative of her perseverance and the strength that we all hold inside of us. Later that year, I met my current partner Naomi Schliesman and her daughter Zara. I included their initials and date I met them, “NZ1017” in the upper part of the glass heart to represent the continuous support, inspiration, and love we give each other. The numbers on the neck area “9872020” are a nod to very significant times in my life, including the year I started my art career (1998) and the progress of this major work in the 7th month of 2020. The numbers “122998” near the airplane propeller represent the date I moved to Moorhead, MN and began a positive new chapter in my life.

Star WallowingBull, artist statement

The artist would like to thank Richard and Arlette Preston and Tom Arneson for their support of this work.