

NOME

PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK
KIRSTEN STOLLE

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KIRSTEN STOLLE
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DOLZIGER STR. 31
10247 BERLIN

N O M E P R O J E C T . C O M

KIRSTEN STOLLE: PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK

Kirsten Stolle creates elegant, carefully composed collages that reflect the artist's concern with industrial food production and the influence of biotechnology. Her layered, yet often visually economical works probe issues such as corporate greenwashing, government propaganda and agricultural rhetoric.

In the mid-1990s, Stolle developed an active interest in understanding the potential dangers and controversies of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Although her art practice initially remained separate from her politics, she began to shift her attention, and by extension her work, to understanding the impacts of biotechnology. Beginning in 2008, after experiencing personal health problems from eating GM soy products, Stolle became acutely aware of the potential risks of eating foods that contained genetically engineered ingredients. Since then, her creative investigations have examined the influence of corporate agribusiness and biotech companies on the food supply. The artist asks her viewers to consider the connection between influential corporate interests (read, the financial bottom-line) and public health (read, a serious lack of information) in the choices they make about the food they choose to eat.

Stolle thinks through the relationships between economy and ecology, prompting the viewer to contemplate where their food comes from, how it was grown, and how the choices big businesses make "behind the scenes" impact everyday choices about consumption. Her art - whether collage, text-based work or site-responsive installation - is grounded in a research-based practice investigating corporate propaganda, environmental politics and biotechnology. The late 1940s, 50s and early 60s provide a post-atomic stage set, highlighting the period's prevailing tensions between domestic contentment and the threat of nuclear war. Mining twentieth-century medical books, agricultural magazines, archival photographs, US Department of Agriculture promotional videos, and print

advertisements for source material, her work challenges the dominant public narrative. She is firmly committed to the idea that art can bring new perspectives to contemporary scientific and social issues, engaging her audience through familiar images and ideas that reveal the hidden agendas of corporations.

In her ongoing series Monsanto Intervention, Stolle alters and redacts the magazine advertisements of the chemical company. Monsanto, a multinational agricultural biotech corporation based in the US, bills itself as a "sustainable agricultural company" on its website and in promotional material. Monsanto is the largest producer of genetically engineered (GE) seeds on the planet, accounting for approximately ninety percent of GE seeds planted globally since 2003. From the 1940s to 1960s, Monsanto aggressively marketed toxic chemicals through such advertisements found in print publications. This propaganda promoted the company's chemicals for use in war, agriculture and domestic contexts. Stolle's collages subvert the original text of the advertisements, altering the intended messaging and reframing the visuals to expose the true threat posed by such chemicals.

The titles Stolle uses in these pieces are deliberately provocative: This War is Different. What war? Why this phrase? What is marked out, what am I not seeing? Stolle's redacted text is hauntingly similar to many of the notorious and now public FBI files from the infamous McCarthy era of the 1950s, where thousands of Americans were accused of being communists or communist sympathizers. McCarthyism refers to accusations of subversion or treason without evidence. Perhaps "Monsantoism" will have a similar connotation in the future, referring to introducing genetically modified substances to the food chain without sufficient testing as to their long-term effects. Stolle mimics the government's heavy-handed technique of blacking out words to obscure meaning, and in doing so, creates a kind of poetry, containing historical references and new meaning. War in Paradise refers to the December 7, 1941 bombing of the US Naval base at Pearl Harbor. It also references the over thirty-year lawsuit against the Shell Oil Company and others - the Dole Food Company,

Dole Fresh Fruit Company, Standard Fruit Company, Standard Fruit and Steamship Company, Pineapple Growers Association of Hawaii, AMVAC Chemical Corporation, the Dow Chemical Company, and Occidental Chemical Corporation - concerning the use of the chemical compound DBCP for pest control in growing pineapples on the islands. So much for paradise.

As part of her habitual research, Stolle is a self-proclaimed public radio junkie, listening obsessively to news reports while working in her studio. She first heard the term "pharming" in a story about bioengineering animals for pharmaceutical purposes. In 2009, a *New York Times* newspaper report that was summarized on the radio stated that the US Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had approved the first drug produced in the milk of genetically engineered goats - goats that had been given a human gene. These transgenic goats, specifically engineered to create human proteins within their bodies, live on controlled university and biotech farms. Since 2009, cattle, sheep, chicken, rabbits and pigs have been genetically modified to produce proteins and drugs. The news program raised Stolle's curiosity about the ethics of mixing human and animal genes. She asked herself who was monitoring the well-being of the animals - were the experimental animals and their milk quarantined from the general population? Stolle dug in, discovering through exhaustive research what appeared to her to be "inadequate safety and regulatory oversight and [little] transparency by both the pharmaceutical companies and the FDA," as she told *Made in Mind* magazine in 2014. She continued: "In my mind, the ethical and social concerns, along with the unintended consequences of this experimental science need to be further investigated and brought to people's attention."

In the *Animal Pharm* collages, Stolle makes a powerful public commentary on the controversial use of genetic modification in animals by the pharmaceutical industry. Playing on George Orwell's 1945 allegorical and dystopian cult novel *Animal Farm*, these collages again critique the role of corporate and government influence. Through images of everyday domestic objects, blood cells, animals and animal parts, blueprints and scientific instruments, the artist fabricates strange retro-

amalgamations of experiments gone haywire: fascinating but strange. The images are given pseudo-scientific titles - AP1, AP, AP3, AP6 - like experiments in a sinister laboratory.

In light of current political upheaval in the United States and, indeed, around the world, Stolle's artwork remains relevant as members of the US government try to reject overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change. In his December 2016 essay "Donald Trump's War on Science" in *The New Yorker*, Lawrence M. Kraus also turns to Orwell for insight:

In a 1946 essay, George Orwell wrote that 'to see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle.' It's not just that we're easily misled. It's that, by 'impudently twisting the facts,' we can convince ourselves of 'things which we know to be untrue.' A whole society, he wrote, can deceive itself 'for an indefinite time,' and the only check on that mass delusion is that 'sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality.' Science is one source of that solid reality. The Trump Administration seems determined to keep it at bay, and the consequences for society and the environment will be profound.

Like Orwell's writing, Kirsten Stolle's artwork challenges us all to see the evidence in front of us, even when this means clearing aside the propaganda to do so. We must cautiously proceed at our own risk - without fear.

Mary Anne Redding

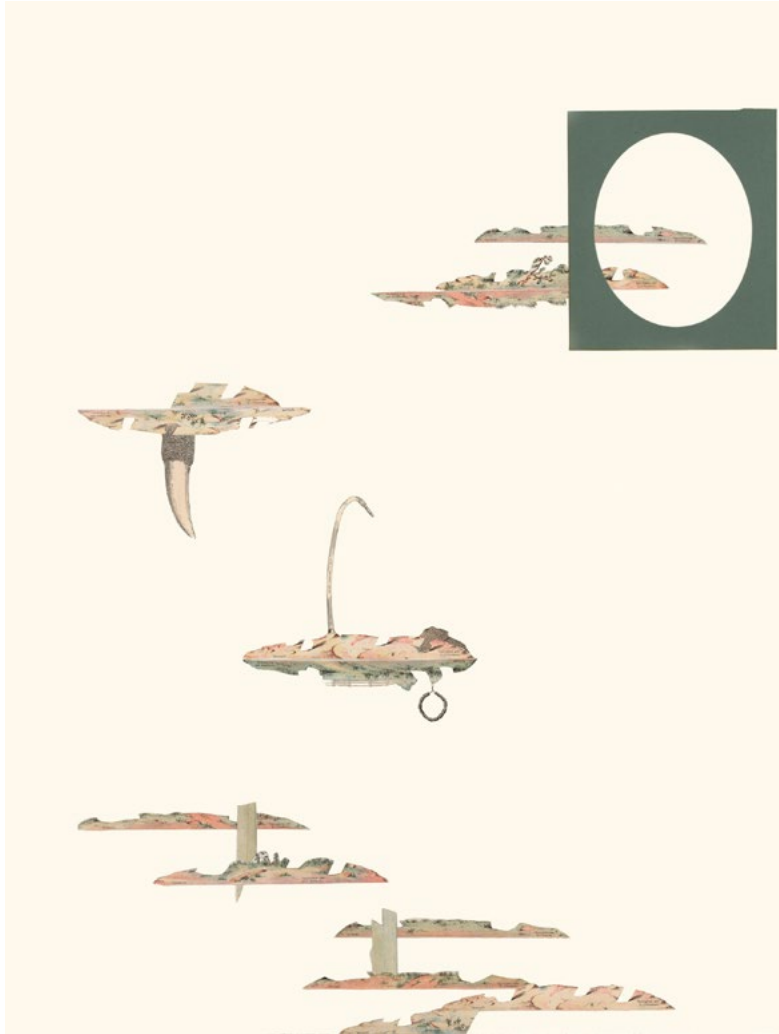
A R T W O R K S

A N I M A L P H A R M



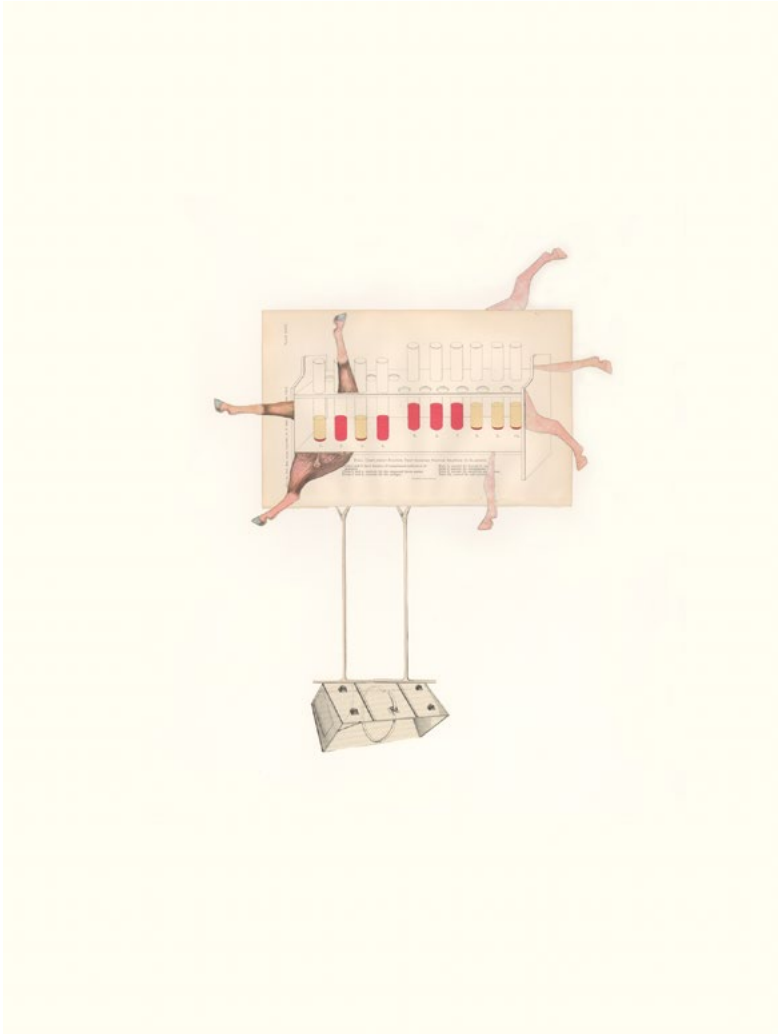
AP 8, 2014

Kirsten Stolle
Collage on paper
76 x 56 cm



AP 6, 2014

Kirsten Stolle
Collage on paper
76 x 56 cm



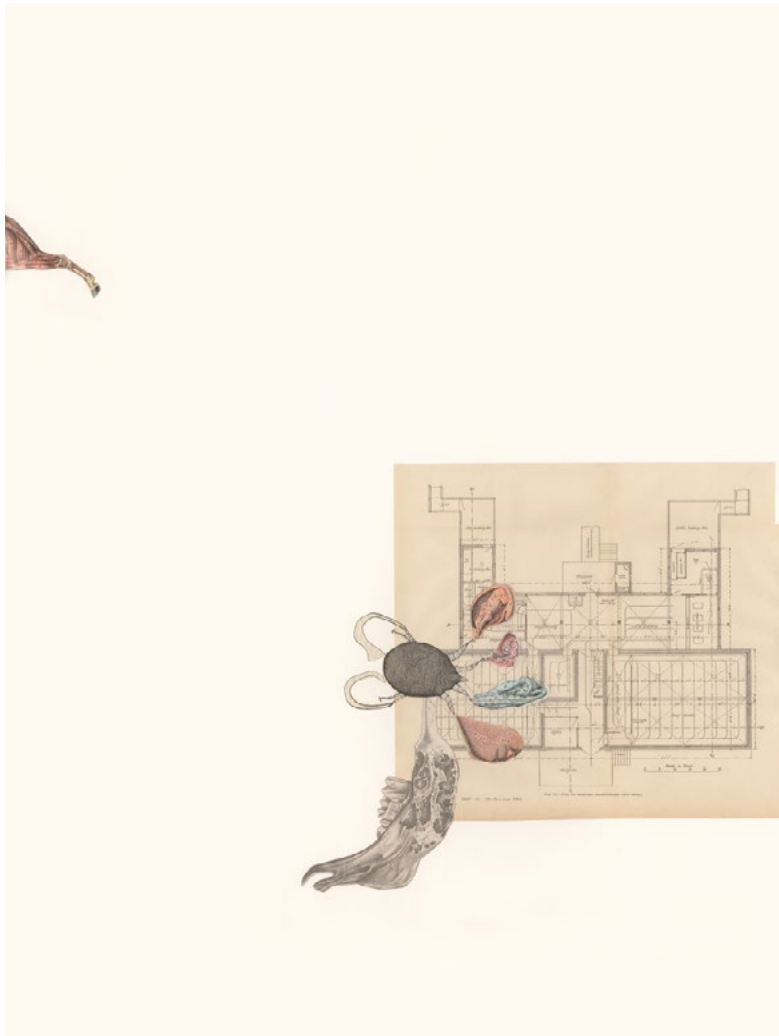
AP 3, 2014

Kirsten Stolle
Collage on paper
76 x 56 cm



AP 9, 2014

Kirsten Stolle
Collage on paper
76 x 56 cm



AP 2, 2014

Kirsten Stolle
Collage on paper
76 x 56 cm



M O N S A N T O
I N T E R V E N T I O N

AP 10, 2014

Kirsten Stolle
Collage on paper
76 x 56 cm



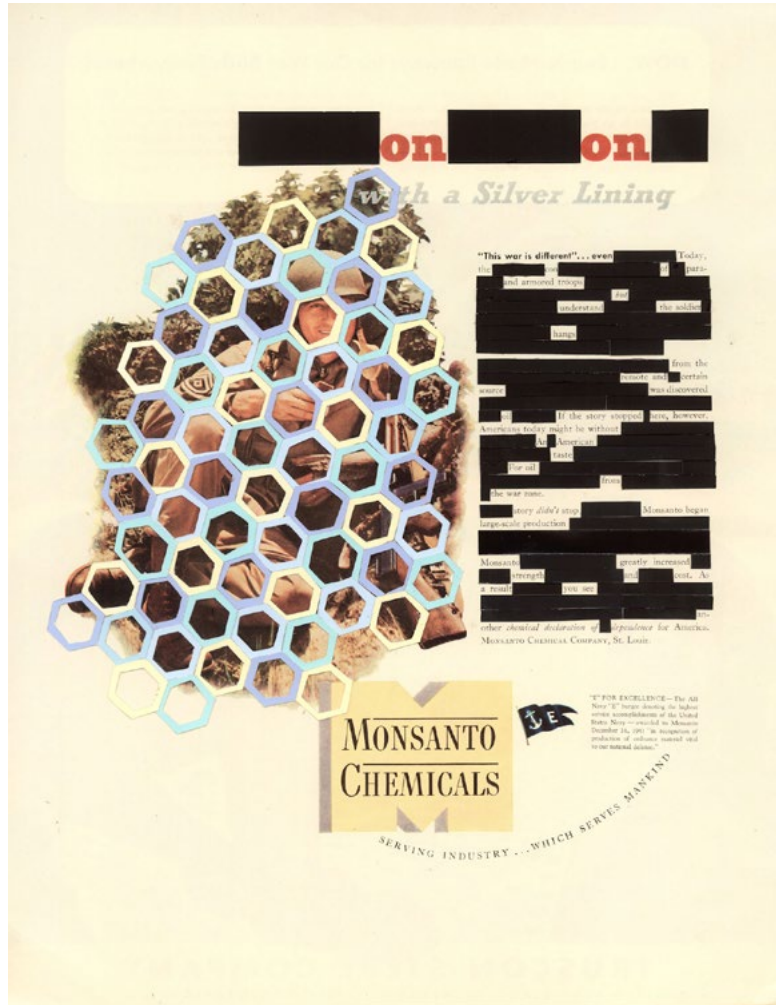
PROTECTING ITS OWN TAIL, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
28 x 21 cm



WAR IN PARADISE, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
32,38 x 26 cm



THIS WAR IS DIFFERENT, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on paper
32,38 x 26 cm



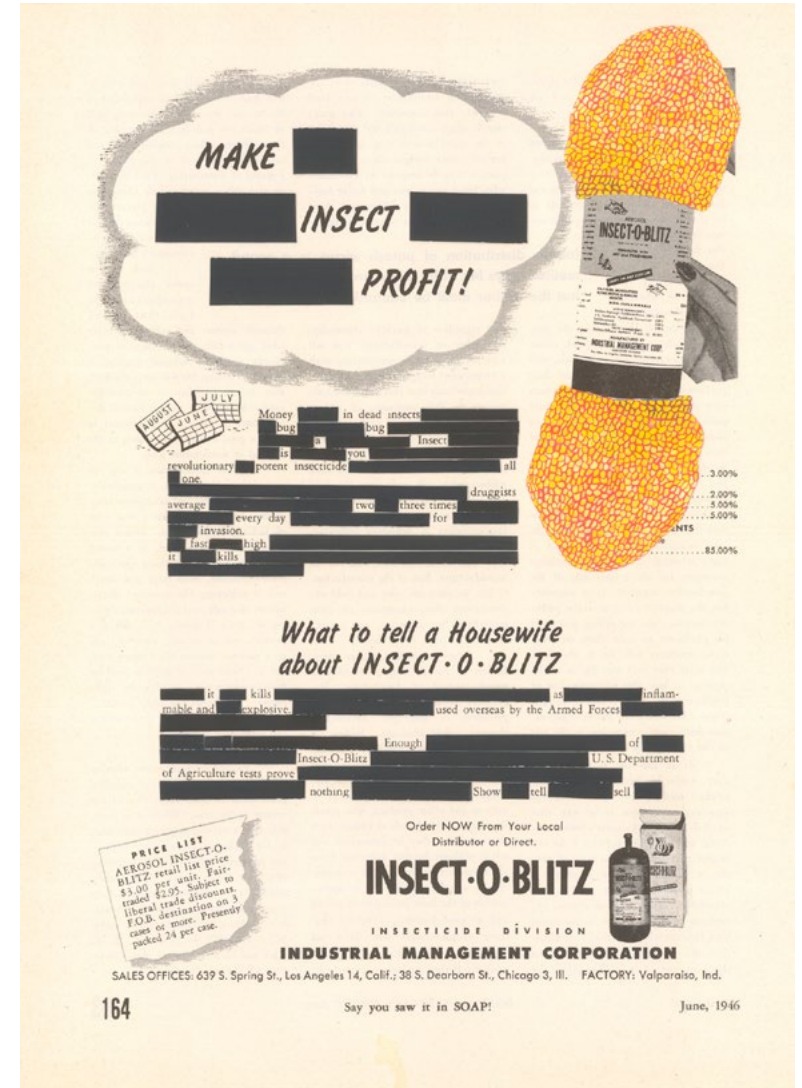
LITTLE MAN, WHAT NOW?, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
32,38 x 25,4 cm



PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
28 x 21 cm



MAKE INSECT PROFIT, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
30,48 x 21,6 cm



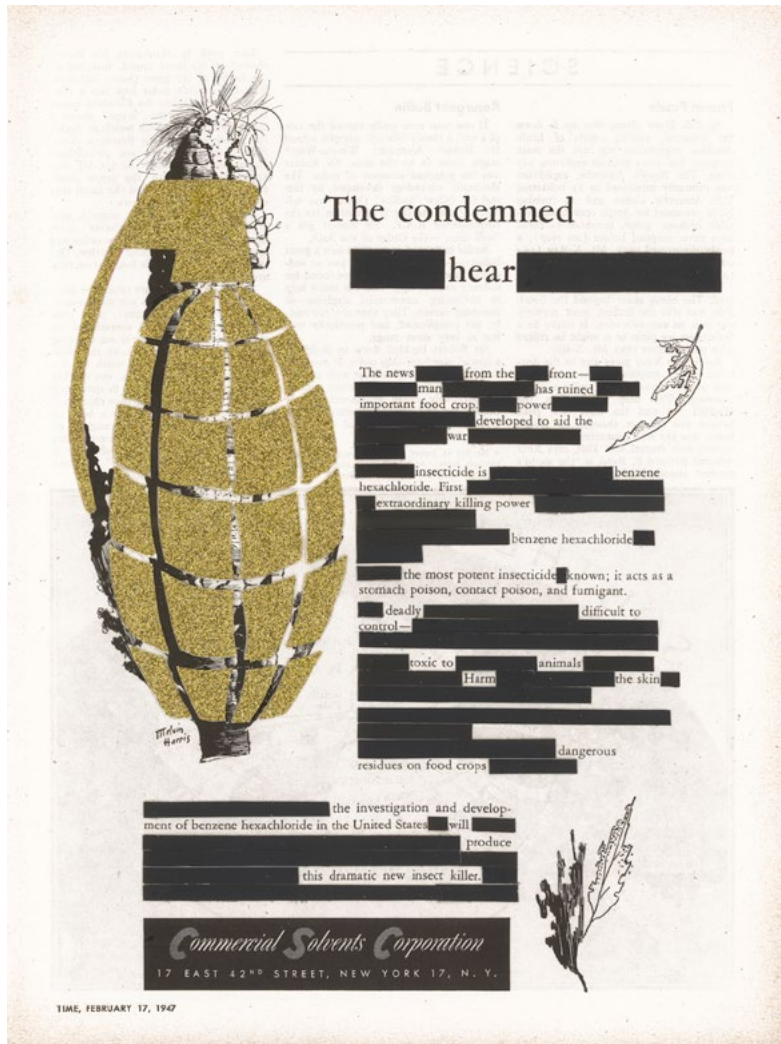
IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
30,48 x 25,4 cm



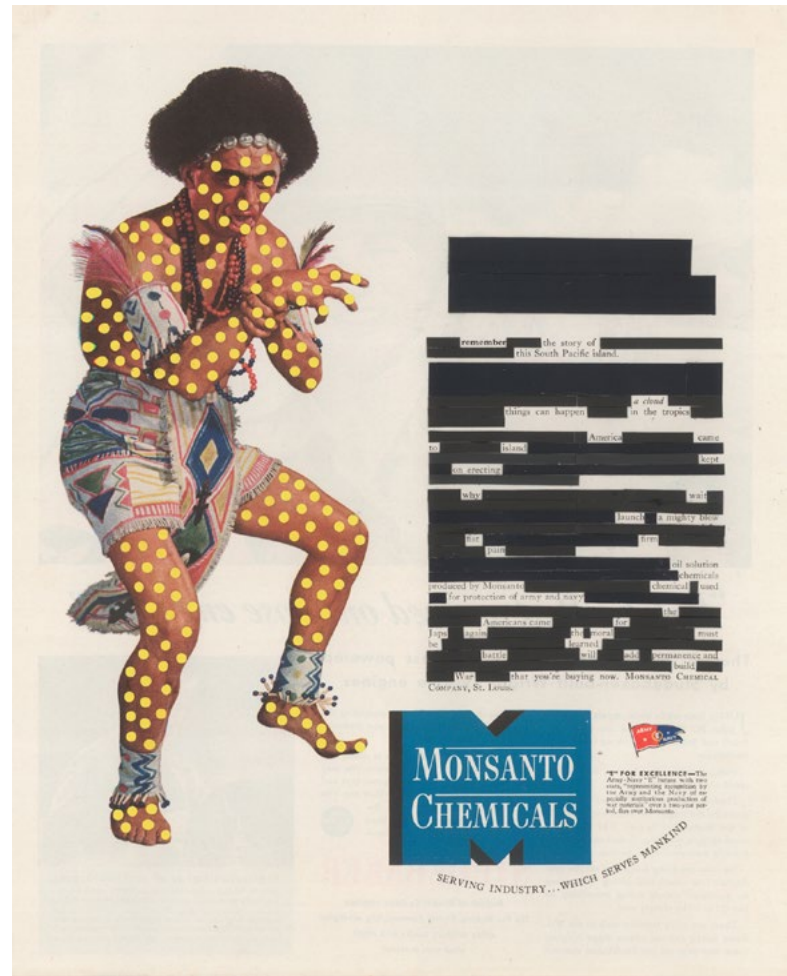
V DAY, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
28 x 19,5 cm



THE CONDEMNED HEAR, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
28 x 21 cm

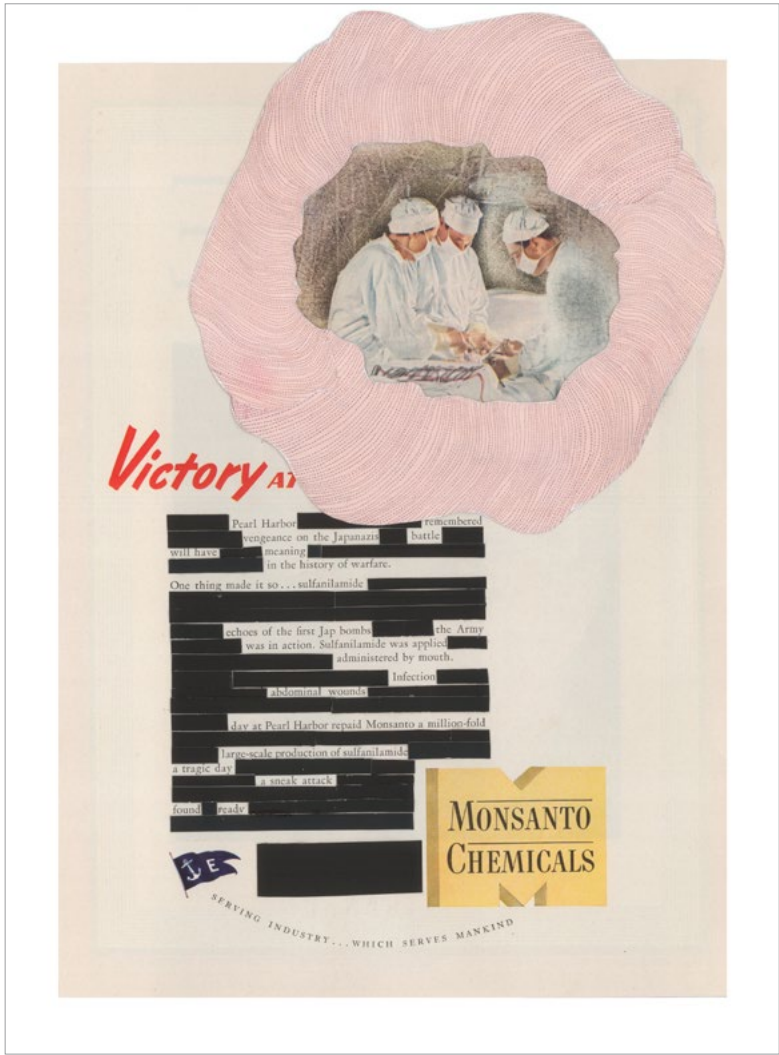


CHIEF TALUGI/REMEMBER THE STORY, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
33 x 25,4 cm



ROSIE, 2013
 Kirsten Stolle,
 Collage on magazine advertisement
 32,38 x 26 cm



VICTORY, 2013
 Kirsten Stolle,
 Collage on magazine advertisement
 30,48 x 20,32 cm



NEST OF NAZIS, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on paper
32,38 x 26 cm



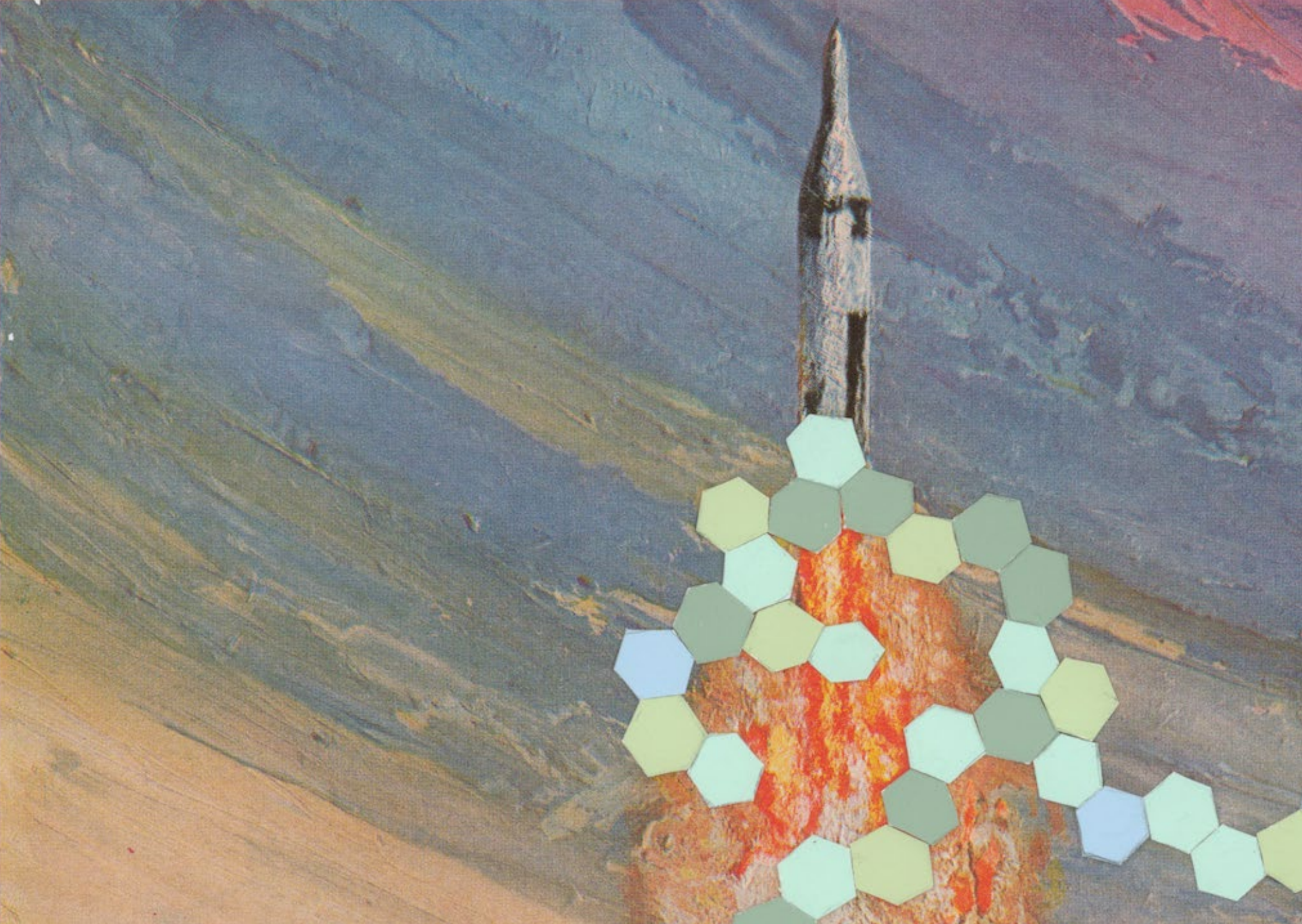
END OF SOIL, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
Collage on magazine advertisement
28 x 21 cm



BY THE TON, 2013

Kirsten Stolle,
 Collage on magazine advertisement
 25,4 x 35,60 cm





KIRSTEN STOLLE

Kirsten Stolle is a visual artist working in collage, drawing, and site-responsive installations. Her research-based practice is grounded in the investigation of corporate propaganda, environmental politics and biotechnology. She appropriates practices of redaction, manipulation and distortion to confront industry misinformation. Her work examines the global influence of agrichemical and pharmaceutical corporations on our food supply and considers the connection between corporate interests and public health.

Her ongoing multi-disciplinary project *Genetically Commodified* targets the industrialization of food production, the commodification of nature and the manipulation of genes for profit. Using vintage medical books, 20th century agricultural catalogs, USDA promotional videos, and mid-century chemical company magazine advertisements, she creates hybridized works that critique the prevailing narrative. Stolle invites reconsideration of what once represented the American dream, the blind faith in progress through science and technology, and the role of business in making a profit. Her most recent area of research focuses on the impact of facial recognition technology and the historical legacy of military weapons in context with our current state of aerial drones and surveillance systems.

Stolle received a BA in Visual Arts from Framingham State University and completed studies at Richmond College (London) and Massachusetts College of Art (Boston, MA). Her work is included in the permanent collections of the San Jose Museum of Art (CA), Crocker Art Museum (CA), and Minneapolis Institute of Art (MN). Select US solo exhibitions include the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, NC, The Turchin Center for the Visual Art, NC and Dolby Chadwick Gallery, CA. Her drawings have been published in *Poetry Magazine*, *Made in Mind Magazine*, *Vehicle Magazine*, *DIALOGIST*, *SLICE*, *Spolia Literary Magazine*, *Manifest International Drawing Annual*, and *New American Paintings*.

www.kirstenstolle.com

A project by **Kirsten Stolle**

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