

## STERLING CRISPIN INTERVIEW BY TRAVIS EGEDY

**Twenty-three-year-old Sterling Crispin** is one of Denver's most unique and exciting up and coming artists. Primarily working in video and digitally manipulated photography, his work explores many ideas on society's current entanglement with technology and where we are headed as both biological and artificial organisms in the future. A graduate of Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design fine arts department, and a current artist in residence at Redline Studios, Crispin is part of a loose-knit group of radical young artists who are interested in pushing the Denver art community forward into a new era. These young artists are part of a new avant-garde for the recession generation, working with found materials, holding art shows in converted warehouses and critiquing the status of art in both Denver and the world. I was able to sit down with Sterling to eat some burritos, pet a cat and discuss the inevitable fusion of man and machine.

### **Travis Egedy :What are you interested in?**

Sterling Crispin: I'm really interested in the future and virtual reality. Supercomputers smarter than everyone on the planet combined; science fiction stuff that's becoming a reality. I just read an article I saw on Slashdot about a robot that has a living rat brain inside of it controlling where it moves. I keep having these dreams I'm living underground or traveling to the center of the earth in search of something.

**Your use of symmetry is a recurring theme, if not a central basis to every one of your pieces, is this just an aesthetic preference or is there something of significance in symmetrical balance to you?**

Well I think when you see a highly symmetrical object in nature it can be very profound. It's an underlying force and system of order in our universe that's usually invisible, but it becomes visible to you suddenly and that's an amazing thing. I guess I want people to become more aware of that and recognize that everything is significant and interconnected.

**A lot of your work is informed by cutting edge scientific theory. What role does science play in your work? How do you think science and art inform each other? Does science need art?**

Science is a window into the future for me and I guess the present as well. I think that people don't realize what technology already exists in very real working situations. Bacteria engineered to glow in the presence of explosives, robotic exoskeletons and robots with living rat brains! It's crazy! I'm really waiting for the technological singularity, when a machine becomes intelligent enough to redesign itself and become smarter, then redesign itself over and over becoming basically a synthetic god.

But yeah I think that science and art inform each other a lot. I think there's



something really creative in discovery and the scientific process. Most artists don't need to have any evidence or really stand behind what they are saying, and I think that's the big difference. In science if you say something, you need some proof or it is just a theory, just soft science. I think most artists just put something out there and say, "Isn't this interesting?" without really needing to believe in it or prove it. So I feel like artists have more freedom, but maybe it's harder to 'prove' things in art, if that's what you're trying to do.

I think I'm inspired and informed by developments in technology and science but I don't think I'm really making art about science. I'm really interested in a lot of the key elements of Buddhism, that everything is interconnected and nothing has an independent identity or reality. Most of my work stands on that concept as sort of a foundation and I mix in other things I'm interested in. Western society is so based on the idea that everything is independent and that yourself and your ego are important things. If we all realized that we were not so important and different from the world around us we couldn't justify the things we do to the planet, each other and the living things here. I think if I could say one thing to everyone on the planet that's what I would say.

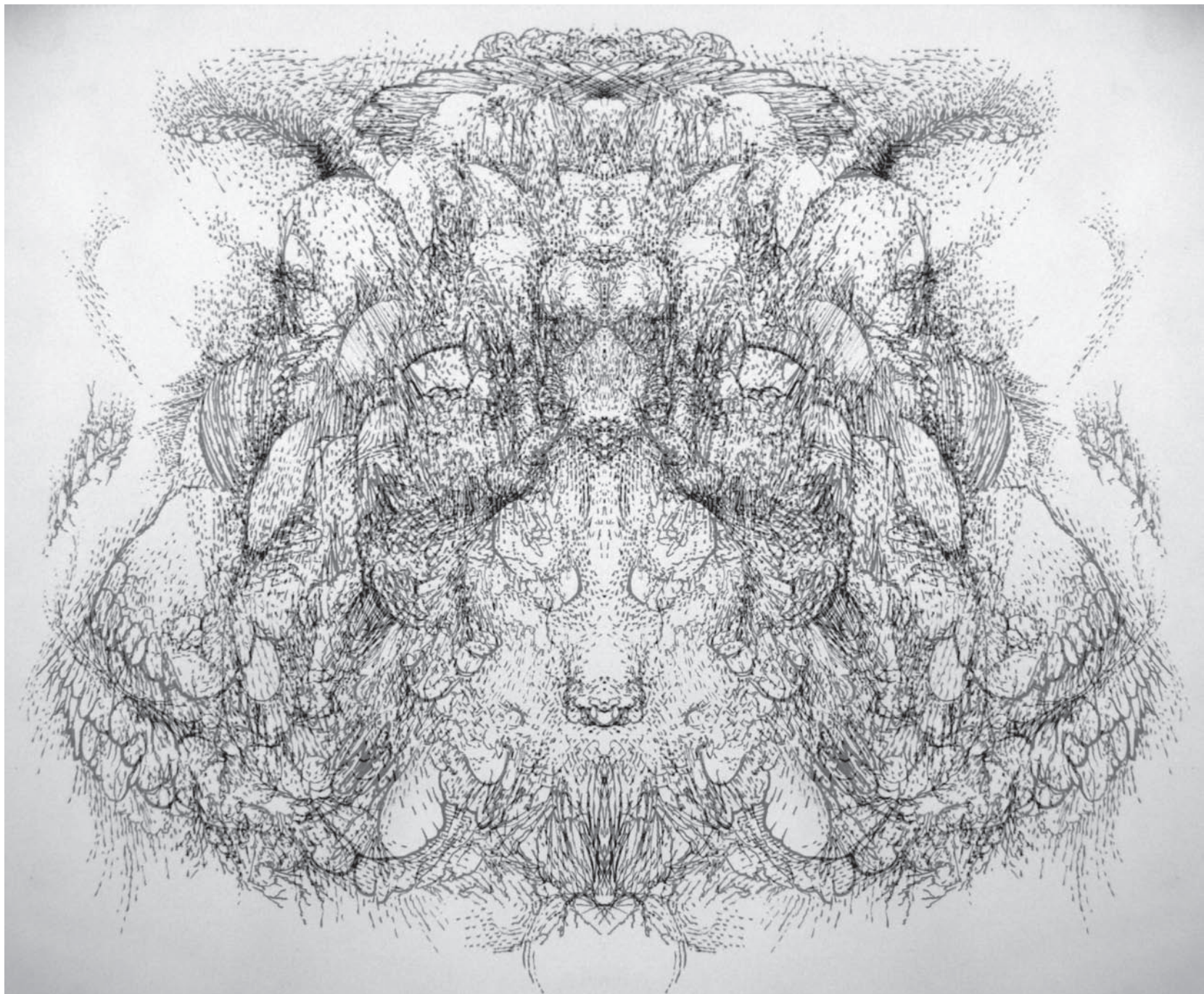
All things are equal. You are not different than the things around you; everything is mutually dependent on one another and deserves compassion.

**I find it really interesting that the more humanity progresses with external technologies, the farther we remove ourselves from nature and the self, as if you're going in the opposite direction from the true "organic" reality. Technology and spirituality just seem to clash and don't work together. Or is the "future" of spirituality inevitably going to have to work with or alongside technology?**

I see where you're coming from and I feel that but I think we are quickly becoming one organism. The Internet and the cell phone networks were a big first step toward that, but also biomedical advancements, artificial organs, synthetic body parts. I think in our lifetime there will be large numbers of people who are more synthetic than organic, and computerized brains. I feel like all of this is accelerating us toward a weird collective consciousness, and the whole emergent thing of it all is moving faster than our understanding of it.

**It's like the evolution of our consciousness is being informed by our technologies. Or vice versa. It's interesting, because that idea could be imposed on your use of symmetry, two sides that are the same, informing one another in an infinite loop.**

Yeah, spirituality and technology are definitely connected and growing together. Things naturally seek higher forms and complex structures. Like I said before, I feel like our development of technology has really taken its own form and is moving faster as a whole organism than our understanding of it. Of course



I'm really interested in the idea of a synthetic brain and connecting human brains via technology. Sort of developing a hive consciousness aided by computers and networking.

it still takes people to develop those innovations but I suppose I feel like they are inevitabilities at this point. I'm really interested in the idea of a synthetic brain and connecting human brains via technology. Sort of developing a hive consciousness aided by computers and networking. I can't wait.

Pure virtual reality would also put a lot of those sorts of ideas into place. Mass groups of people all thinking and feeling as one organism. I think some people consider that a frightening thing but I think it's really beautiful and I suppose in my mind we are all one mass organism, but technology will eventually bring that to a physical or post-physical reality.

**Wow, yeah everything is so exciting now. We are at a really unique place in the course of human history, I mean even just that term "post-physical" sounds so radical! But this is our world and reality today. It will be really interesting to see where this all ends up in a few years. High five!**

Yeah I can't wait, all we can really do now is make informed speculations as to where we are going. I really hope I see the birth of a synthetic consciousness or the first 'true virtual reality.' I feel like it's an inevitability; I just hope I get to see it happen. The future is exciting but so is the present moment! That's the other cool thing to me about all of this, it seems so far away but really it's unfolding in front of us every day.

< [www.sterlingcrispin.com](http://www.sterlingcrispin.com) >