

# Style and Substance

The artist Ben Weiner offers a tour of his psychedelic studio.  
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Ben Weiner's Queens studio is filled with both paint cans and prescription pill bottles—a testament to the artist's unique practice of transforming household substances (both legal and illegal) into fragile crystal sculptures and psychedelic prints. Using commonplace stimulants like Five Hour Energy (Berry flavor) and MDMA, Weiner probes our curious trust in drugs by turning them into something unrecognizable, messy, and yet distinctively chemical. His process is loosely derived from chemigrams and is as much creative experimentation as it is chemistry, but it's the unpredictability of his results that make them all the more intriguing.

*"I am really interested in the substances we put into and onto our bodies. In the store, they are always packaged as these plutonic products, which makes people a little bit more comforted, but in reality these are chemicals and our body is full of chemistry and things react in unpredictable ways. With my chemigrams, I am exploring the sort of organic aspects of these drugs."*



*"A lot of my larger works are photorealistic paintings of body products, so I'm sort of going about it the opposite way by doing something process based by using a representational drawing to capture a photographic impression of the chemical!"*



“These will sit here for three hours. By the end of the process, these will look really hazy. I especially like the smaller studies because they look like they could be acids tabs. Because they feel more like physical objects”

*“I work with a lot of premixed colors so I store my paint in the fridge to keep it moist. It’s a trick I learned working at Jeff Koons’s studio.”*



*“The crystal sculptures are an extension of my drawing process. So instead of soaking a drawing in Five Hour Energy, I soaked a workman’s glove and I just let the water evaporate.”*

*“It seems like there are so many commercial products now that are laced with drugs basically and there’s almost this arbitrary distinction between legal and illegal drugs. So in this series, there is definitely a psychedelic component—but I’m also using a lot of legal drugs.”*

*“I save the leftover crystals from each process to use as seed crystals for the next one.”*

*“All of this is fifth grade chemistry, I am not going for anything scientific, anytime you paint or make a sculptural mold there is the same amount of chemistry—I am just using materials that are from everyday life,” says the artist pouring one of his crystal molds.*

