Mary Temple
Artist Statement
Currency, 2007-present

On September 24, 2007 the president of Iran spoke at Columbia University amid protests and much controversy. I found the event, coverage and images of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad compelling and made some drawings of him from various Web–based news sources. Drawing his face connected me to him—I wanted to know more about his past as well as Iran's history. I've continued to draw the face of a world leader every day since then. My goal is to isolate that person and try to understand their behavior, to be attentive and present as a citizen of the world. Before beginning the portrait, I assign it a position on the tabloid-size paper according to my sense of optimism or pessimism regarding their behavior--the higher it is on the page, the greater my hope for world harmony. Thus, I'm delineating an ever growing, biased global event time-line. To underscore the diaristic nature of the undertaking, I hang the drawings in a calendar format, in monthly grids. After I complete the drawing I scan it, returning it to its digital beginnings and send it back into the Web, to a museum staff member, who then prints it and hangs on the gallery wall, so that it mirrors my journalism-meets-journal studio installation and practice.

The title, of the piece, *Currency*, most obviously references my desire and attempt to keep informed of and bear witness to, world events. We speak of an idea having *currency* meaning that it is widely accepted and circulated. The title *Currency* also refers to the scale of the portraits themselves, which might evoke a bank note or dollar bill portrait, an image of power and money entwined.