

Artifacts of COVID in Manteca

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My series “Artifacts of COVID in Manteca” examines artifacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the city of Manteca that document the virus’ impact on local businesses, schools, healthcare providers, and the community at large. The artifacts are mostly signs, with the exception of one outdoor dining tent.

I care about this topic because I care for my community, and because I recognize that COVID has taken a devastating toll on Manteca. It is our duty to do good to our friends and neighbors by being responsible with how we conduct ourselves during a national pandemic. Because of a failure to appropriately respond to COVID, the virus has impacted every aspect of daily life. Despite the best efforts of some, more cases continue to be reported, and more lives are put at risk. I believe it is high time for people to confront the consequences of their uncooperative, reckless behavior, and begin making positive changes for the good and health of our community.

This series primary focuses on signage throughout the city, each with varied messages. Signs are a means to grab attention and call to action. As Manteca and the rest of the county return to the “purple” tier in terms of new COVID cases, it becomes apparent that the pleas of these signs are being ignored. By making them the main focal point, the series forces the viewer to look at them and read them; they confront the viewer with the consequences of their actions. The repetition of colors between the signage and their environments shows how they blend into their environments, a visual reminder of how COVID is becoming the new normal. Banners and floor decals that were supposed to be temporary have become worn and grimy with passing time. The gray lighting in many of the photos marks a stark contrast with the optimism of the signs’ messages, resonating with the temptation to despair in the face of COVID. Despite this, glimmers of hope with cheerful color still exist interspersed between grim reminders.