What does it mean to be white and female living in the United States? In what ways have these identifiers been used as weapons of violence and oppression, and how can we begin to shift the narrative we have been given and take control of our position of power? Durham-based artist Meg Stein explores the ways that white femininity feeds systems of supremacy. Through community engagement, performance, and sculpture she asks her viewers to begin the difficult process of dissecting what whiteness and white femininity actually mean. Stein uses humor, found materials, and biomorphic forms to create an approachable environment. Yet close engagement reveals the discomfort and distortion hiding beneath the surface of seemingly familiar and playful forms. The danger of white femininity lies in its fragile façade, negating the power that white women yield in order to impose violence on persons of color. By unpacking these ideas and re-presenting this narrative Stein casts the mythology of white femininity in a new light, where purity and innocence are revealed as a menacing force.

The process of dismantling an identity so strongly rooted in our cultural imagination is an aggressive undertaking. However, part of Stein's brilliance is her recognition that this process holds the potential for healing and growth. This happens in a number of ways including public workshops, opportunities to share stories and the shared physical labor of creating elements that are used in the finished sculptural forms. For example, in Dirty White Matter, Stein invited participants to create the work in collaboration with her while listening to and talking about the experiences of black women. This performative aspect of the work emphasizes the very nature of the problem Stein seeks to address. This is not about a singular struggle, or an individual artist's sense of self, but about a collective identity that must be redefined together.