Ajay Kurian, *Welcome to World Peace*, 2016, foam,
expanding foam, steel, magic sculpt, motor, hardware, wood,
paint and fabric, 68.5 in. x 65 in. x 43.5 in.

AJAY KURIAN

It's hard to talk about how my work has changed when I've only been making work I can stand behind for just over six years. How has our current moment changed my work? It's made things slower and harder. It's made it harder to get up on certain days. It's created new forms of emotional labor because people now ask how this could have happened, when any retrospection could at least partially answer that question. It's revealed how deeply flawed liberalism has become or always was. Privatization, claiming to stand in for it, simply devoured the idea of progress and left us with even greater inequality. My work has gone through a number of changes, most preceding these notable shifts, but some following. I can now follow certain kernels as stronger nodes than others, but it feels premature to map these out or concretize them before I've met the end of my first decade as an artist. What I feel comfortable in saying is that in looking back, I am less fearful and less concerned with mastery. Before, I was too afraid to risk anything and I wanted to know I had unimpeachable ground to stand on. Now I feel differently, and I realize that "sure footing" was simply a crutch. After I got rid of that crutch, my work got stronger. After I stopped worrying about whether I was right in any kind of *absolute* way, or whether I was responsible to any and all parties, my work finally grew. I wanted my work to be all things for all people, which is perhaps what ontology suggests itself to be. Later I realized that of course I am not all things to all people, so why would my work be? Fear drew me to concern myself with the surety of the concept before I felt it. Necessity goes deeper; it's a concept dialectical at heart. It's both internal and external, driven by the social and modified by the personal. The two are caught in what is beautifully called a "hendiadys"—two words that orbit one another in constant modification. **===**