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THESIS BOOK



BioVice: A Survival Tool Company

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in Jewelry+Metalsmithing in the Department of Jewelry+Metalsmithing of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

by

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BIOVICE

BioVice: A Survival Tool Company

Chubai Liu

New technology brings us smart machines and advanced tools, expanding our reach to the outside world. It boosts human civilization to a higher level, grows the capital market and enables the crowded market of goods. Until the beginning of 20th century, the mainstream doctrine of the future still believed that a utopian society could be brought by the accelerating rate of technological development. The booming market of the early 20th century in America was like a shot of cardiotonic, stimulating an abundance of promising visions of the future. However, the modernity brought to life by technology does not always secured the promise of a utopic future. Following the Great Depression and World War II, such futuristic visions have changed.

By the 1930s, the turn from a Utopian to a Dystopian paradigm was well underway. Many dystopian classics emerged during this period, such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley published in 1939 and *1984* by George Orwell published in 1949. Alan Clardy concludes a characteristic of these dystopian novels in *World Future Review* that, "The state is led by a privileged elite that dominates



and controls all the institutions of society.”(44). These anti-utopian stories portray a de-individualized and totalitarian society full of terror, which can be read as anti-Stalinist or anti-socialist allegories. On later literary and cinematic works, political elements, such as the oligarchy, have been replaced by multinational companies. The dark side of those multinational companies is my visions of a dystopian future as cruel reality. My works try to reflect current reality through an allegory of what postmodernist culture, which takes place in a dystopian society. Therefore, I create a company whose goal was to emphasize the gap of wealth. Viewers can rethink how wealth relates to the right to live and how consumerism change our value through this allegory

In this dystopian society, the audience would see a distinction between classes, the deteriorating environment, and how multinational companies manipulate and control the politics of our daily lives.

This fictional dystopian society is the background of my work: In the year 2057, Earth's environment has been deeply polluted, humanity has come to rely on external survival tools to live. BioVice as one of the largest bioengineering company in the world, committing themselves to the production of the most advanced survival tools.

There are two production lines in the BioVice Company. One is the economy line which targets the majority, especially the middle class; while the luxury line targets the wealthy and the elite. The designs of both production lines have futuristic appearances,

combining forms from clinical devices and elements of the human body. The imitations of body parts relate to the function of the devices, which refer to the Bionic techniques. The polished surface and mechanical components refer to the quality of mass-produced products. To some extent, the luxury line products offer more advanced functions to ensure a better life quality and longer lifespan. BioVice also provided extra VIP services for their luxury line clients, for instance, free weekly health report and free maintenance. At the same time, the luxury line products have more streamlined design with nonfunctioning features to emphasize the social status by creating an exquisite look.

Through my works, I hope raise questions from the gap between the two lines through different materials, different products durations and extra services behind the luxury lines. By showing the contrast between two production lines and highlighting on the paradox in our life, I question the quality of life in postmodernist society, how consumerism affects our values, and how wealth relates to the right to live.



FILTER JUST LIKE YOUR KIDNEY

Price | \$2498

Model Number | BV1026

Effective Duration | 12 months



WATER PURIFIER

- | Replaceable filter
- | Provides 1,000 gallons of safe drinking water without using chemicals or iodine
- | Removes 98% of bacteria and heavy metal ions
- | Biomimetic materials



Speculative Design

Today, many designers often focus on making technology easy to use, sexy, and consumable. "In *Speculative Everything*, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby propose a kind of design that is used as a tool to create not only things but ideas. For them, design is a means of speculating about how things could be—to imagine possible futures." (MIT Press) In the book "Speculative Everything", the authors Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby made a list to clarify the frame of speculative design. The list is divided into two groups A and B:" group B was not intended to replace A but to simply add another dimension, something to compare it to and facilitate discussion. Ideally, C, D, E, and many others would follow". (6)

A	B
Affirmative	Critical
Problem solving	Problem finding
Provides answers	Asks questions
Design for production	Design for debate
Design as solution	Design as medium
In the service of industry	In the service of society
Fictional functions	Functional fictions

For how the world is	For how the world could be
Change the world to suit us	Change us to suit the world
Science fiction	Social fiction
Futures	Parallel worlds
The "real" real	The "unreal" real
Narratives of production	Narratives of consumption
Applications	Implications
Fun	Humor
Innovative	Provocation
Concept design	Conceptual design
Consumer	Citizen
Makes us buy	Makes us think
Ergonomics	Rhetoric
User-friendliness	Ethics
Process	Authorship

A/B, Dunne & Raby

The BioVice project includes many aspects of speculative design. First, BioVice's background is set in the future, this future is a "parallel world" to reflect the current life. Additionally, both production lines in the story are endowed with "fictional functions" in Group A, all those "fictional functions" and many other details composed to a "functional fiction" in Group B. Lastly, branding is an essential part of this project. It plays dual roles in the narrative: in the story, it is a tool to promoting products and seducing have consumers into their consumption purchase ('make us buy' from Group A); in the reality, it authenticates the story to have audience believe the allegory and project into the "real world" ('make us think' from Group B), and ask questions of postmodernist lifestyle, especially that of the ethics of consumerism and emerging technologies. In its full scope, the project includes product design, jewelry design, and branding. One can identify multiple pairings of words from Dunne and Raby's list to describe BioVice.





Price | \$2498

Model Number | BV8823

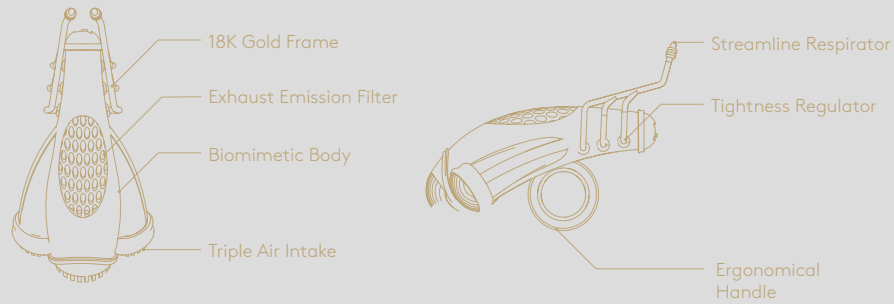
Effective Duration | 12 months

AS PURE AS YOUR NOSE

AIR PURIFIER

- | Replaceable tube and mask
- | Provides at least 95% filtration efficiency against solid and liquid aerosols
- | Biomimetic materials





EVEN PURER THAN YOUR OWN NOSE

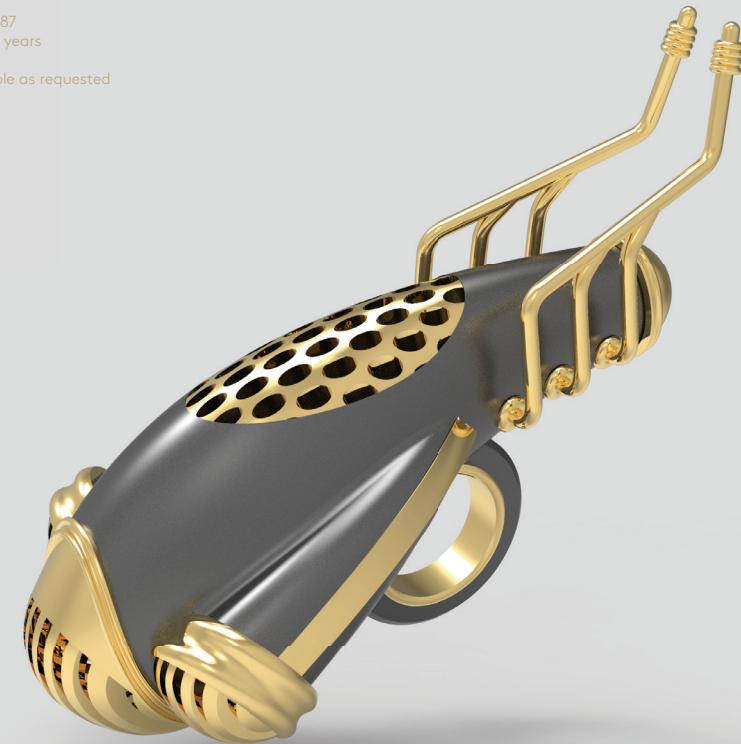
Price | \$110,098
 Model Number | LX9087
 Effective Duration | 12 years

*customization available as requested

AIR PURIFIER

- | Free maintenance
- | Free one year VIP service
- | Free weekly health tracking report
- | Biomimetic materials with nano material coating
- | Provides at least 99.5% filtration efficiency against solids and liquid aerosols
- | According to clinical test, reduces lung disease effectively in 2 weeks
- | Customized size

BIJVICE



Survive in the Future

In *Prospects for Survival*, Noam Chomsky warns that, "Global warming, anyone with eyes open should be aware that the dangers are severe and imminent. There should be no need to sample the grim reports on threats to the environment that appear regularly in science journals, sometimes making it to major media. How are we reacting? In a recent report from the U.S. business press (Bloomberg, March 2): 'The boom looks like it's back. The number of oil and gas rigs drilling in the US has almost doubled.... If that rate of expansion continues, the shale boom will break new production records by summer. The US now produces nine million barrels a day' (2). According to Chomsky's report, environmental problems and disasters will be the major ordeal in the future, how to survive in this future is a noticeable question. Many cinematic works demonstrate the devastating effects of natural calamities and invoke discussions on how to survive in the future full of unpredictable dangers. So many facts reinforce the questioning of utopian society and prepare for the potential dangers in the dystopian society. BioVice distinguishes

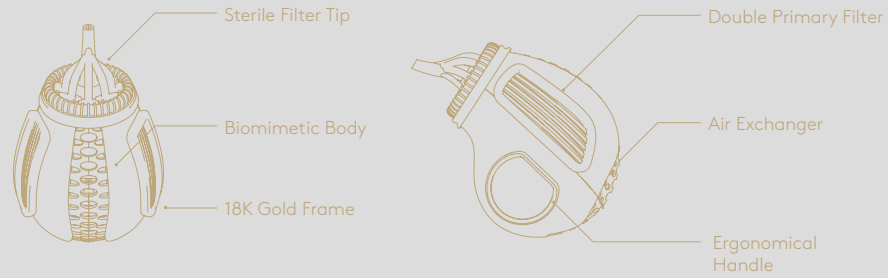
the two production lines by enhancing the essential functions, the products from the two production lines have different functions that may directly affect the consumers' lifespan. Ostensibly, it aims to provide solutions to the survival problems, but it may bring more troubles: the garish look of luxury products distinguish the class of wealth, but above all, it's looking is a symbol of better life quality, and longer lifespan. The distinction between basic line and luxury line products is an inducement that may causes more violent and wrongful acts.



FILTER BETTER THAN YOUR OWN KIDNEY

Price | \$110,098
 Model Number | LX9045
 Effective Duration | 12 years

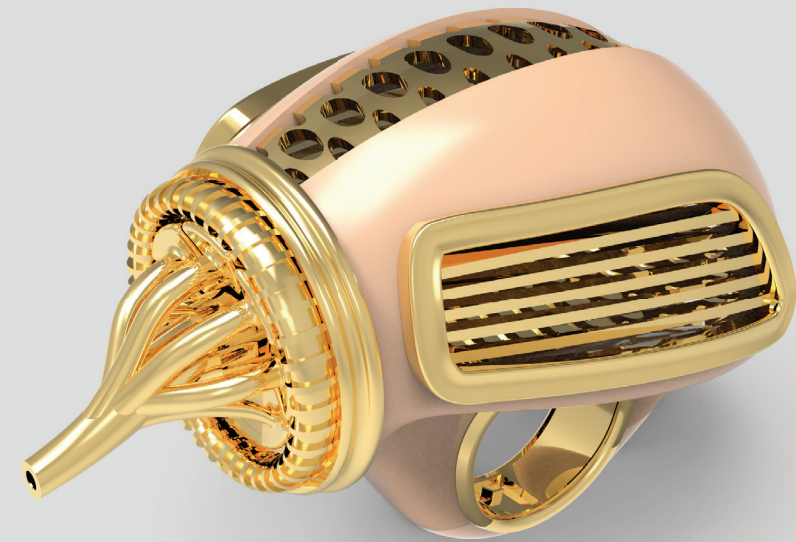
*customization available as requested



WATER PURIFIER

- | Free maintenance
- | Free one year VIP service
- | Free weekly health tracking report
- | Biomimetic materials with nano material coating
- | According to clinical tests, reduces gastrointestinal disease effectively in 1 week
- | Provides 20,000 gallons of safe drinking water without using chemicals or iodine
- | Removes 99.9% of bacteria and heavy metal ions
- | Customized size

BIJVICE



Consumerism, Veblen Goods

Veblen goods are a type of luxury goods conceived by Thorstein Veblen, a Norwegian-American economist and sociologist who first introduces the term "conspicuous consumption" in 1899 in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. "A Veblen good is a luxury item whose price does not follow the usual laws of supply and demand. Usually, the higher the price of a particular good the less people will want it. For luxury goods, such as very expensive wines, watches or cars, however, the item becomes more desirable as it grows more expensive and less desirable should it drop in price." (lexicon.ft.com) I use the theory established by Veblen to set the price range and user groups for two product lines. BioVice Luxury line designs are Veblen Goods. Even though the functions of Luxury line products are more powerful, the outer appearance is designed to display wealth rather than merely supporting their inner functions. BioVice provides luxury goods users priority by offering extra services. Extra services are one of the most important marketing strategy to distinguish luxury line from basic line. For instance, luxury line clients



Barbara Kruger, "I shop therefore I am", 1990

have free product maintenance and health report. Customization is the key word behind those VIP services. Luxury line clients not only pay for the product itself but also the customized services and intimacy relationship with BioVice. Being a luxury line product user means owning the tangible product and abstract VIP identity. VIP is a concept to promote, it is a status symbol and summation of a user's identity in consumerism world. According to Jean Baudrillard's concept of "Symbolic exchange", products have use value and exchange value, in today's society products also have symbolic value. Through the action of purchase, consumers not only purchase the functions of products, consumer's social status, value and taste are shown, products can be seen as symbols of user identity.

Fashion & Medical Device

Medical devices occupy a special category of consumption goods, requiring approval from systems and organizations. In the United States, for instance, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for regulating the clinical market including medical devices. The process is strict and extremely complicated since people will directly apply clinical products on the body in urgent situations. The more components a medical product has, the more risk it will take to get approval from FDA. Based on this regulatory system, most medical devices limit the design to essential and functional elements to avoid unnecessary parts not getting approval from FDA. Essential functions and ergonomics are the qualities people most expect from clinical products. However, BioVice is, not only a medical devices company but also a company related to fashion industry. Its production lines are both equipped with fashion elements, especially so in the luxury line. In the "Definition of Fashion", Valerie Steele introduces that, "Most commonly, fashion is defined as the prevailing style of dress or behavior at any given time" (1). Fashion is more than



HEAR AND CONTROL YOUR HEART



BIJVICE

HEARTBEAT CONTROLLER

- | Replaceable tube
- | Efficiently control your heartbeat in five seconds
- | Biomimetic materials

HEARTBEAT CONTROLLER

Price | \$2698

Model Number | BV4035

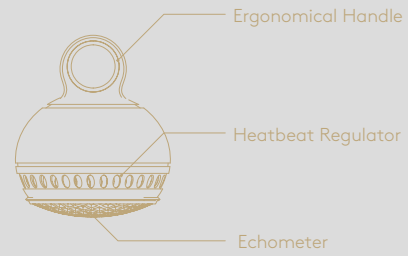
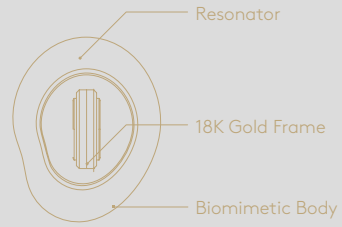
Effective Duration | 2 years



MASTER YOUR HEARTBEAT

Price | \$210,998
Model Number | LX8955
Effective Duration | 12 years

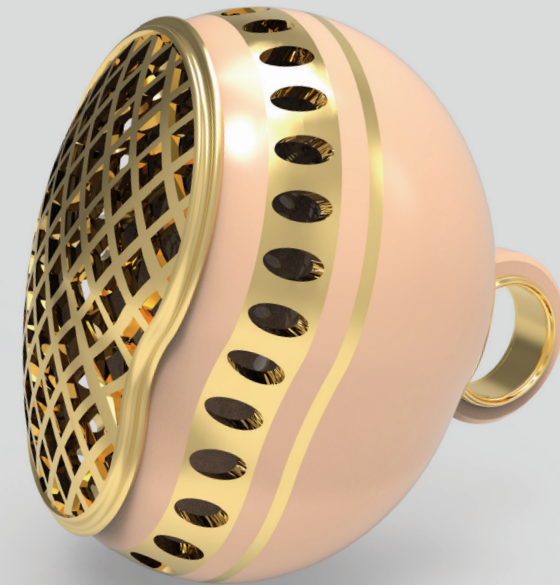
*customization available as requested



HEARTBEAT CONTROLLER

- | Free maintenance
- | Free one year VIP service
- | Free weekly health tracking report
- | Biomimetic materials with 18K gold coating
- | Efficiently controls your heartbeat in 1 second

BIJVICE



styles of clothing and accessories but a manner of doing something. It reflects various aspects of a person. Through one's fashion style, his/her social status and value would be represented. It is undeniable that fashion has always been interpreted as the ornament which lacks some necessities. In the case of BioVice, there is a paradox inside the design since BioVice's products: they are the combination of necessity and the non-essential.

Objectified Female Body in Marketing

Women's bodies are consistently used in the promotion of commodities and advertisements. Regardless of whether the product is being targeted on low or high class, the products and their advertisements which referring to the sexual objectification of women are often more likely to achieve a higher profit.

Alfred P Sloan, the head of General Motors, during his 33 years career life, he made the GM became the biggest car manufacturer in the world. "Before GM, Henry Ford dominated the market with one uniform car, the Model T, and the slogan is 'A customer can have a car painted any color he wants as long as it's black' ". (The Man Who Made Us Spend) Sloan realizes that they can increase sales by producing multiple styles of cars. GM calls this with a sophisticated name, "Organize creation of dissatisfaction". To create more dissatisfaction, GM applies more curvy shape in their design. During that time, in GM's advertisements, no matter two





Chevrolet Bel Air by GM

dimensional posters or TV commercials, their cars always comes with a well-dressed female. The other marketing strategy is adding more colors in their car to give clients more choices, even though they may have the same configuration inside. You can see the female dressed in considered color which perfectly matches the car beside her. GM's promoting strategy is still in use today, you can see female body as a promoting symbol show in many automobile advertisements.

In order to have my viewer realize how commercials manipulate our consumption habit, I apply the same strategies in promoting BioVice designs, the strategies include creating more dissatisfactions, imitating female body shapes and adding color options.

The shapes of many BioVice products also reference the shape of human body, the curves especially refer to that of the female contours. As an example, the BioVice injector is designed to reference the body of a female, the shape also suggests its function of being a hormone injector. It aims to keep women younger looking by injecting synthetic hormone – the outside appearance and the inner function are pointing out the objectification of women bodies in our society.

At the same time, hormone injector and heartbeat controller are produced to create more desires. Functions of BioVice Air Purifier and Water Purifier are made for the sake of our own survival, since human cannot live without clean air and clean water. However, hormone injector and heartbeat



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HORMONE INJECTOR

- | Biomimetic materials
- | Inject hormones without pain



INJECT YOUR
ESSENTIAL

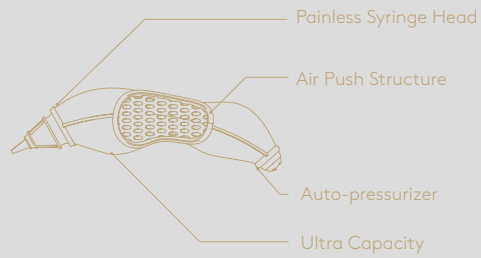
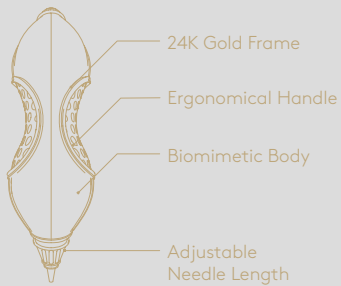


OBJECTIFIED FEMALE
BODY IN MARKETING

Price | \$2268

Model Number | BV4432

Effective Duration | 3 months



INFUSE YOUR LIFE

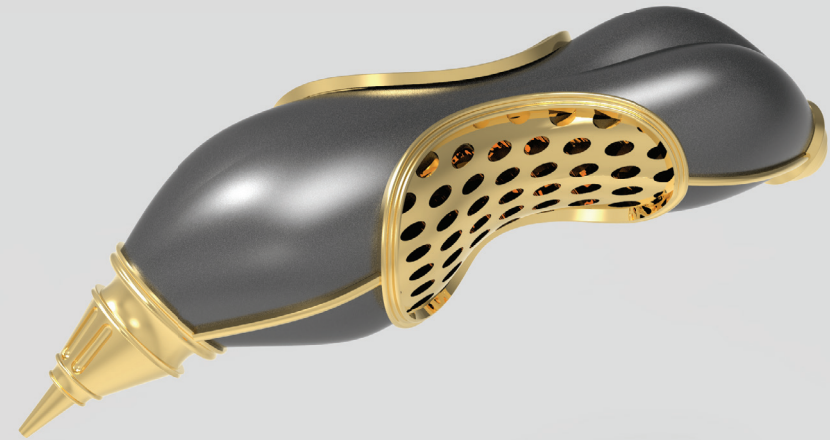
Price | \$15,680
Model Number | LX7840
Effective Duration | 8 years

*customization available as requested

HORMONE INJECTOR

- | Inject hormones without pain
- | Adapt to multiple medical solutions
- | Free maintenance
- | Free one year VIP service
- | Free weekly health tracking report
- | Biomimetic materials with 18K gold coating

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BIJ
VICE

OBJECTIFIED FEMALE
BODY IN MARKETING

controller are not necessities. They are outcomes of "Organize creation of dissatisfaction". Their functions are very similar to supplements; however, do we really need those supplements, will they really be good for our body?

Conclusion

In BioVice project, I want to discuss how we live in this consumer-oriented world, BioVice is a epitome of this world. Through BioVice, I hope viewers raise questions from the gap between the two lines. By showing the contrast between two production lines and zooming-in on the paradox in our life, I would like to reveal our lifestyle in this postmodernist society, how consumerism affects our values, and how wealth relates to the right to live. BioVice's products have many commons with commodities we have in reality, I choose to expose our sinister side to observe our society. I believe the future is a point of reference for my audience to examine society from a proper distance. These speculative designs are a lens which reflect our current life. I hope viewers rethink those issues in consumerism and rapid developing technologies. Those issues might be subtle to realize but have deep influence in our lives.



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