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## Pretty Young Host

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Bard

Pretty Young Host

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Arts  
of Bard College

By  
Maria Olsson Skalin

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2018

“Pretty Young Host” is largely inspired by my upbringing in a society that impresses a sense of normalcy, bordering on necessity for women to have children in order to live happily. This societal pressure has led to my fascination with the Western world’s consumption and production of women as “fertile bodies”, including pro-natalist advertising and media that specifically targets women. I was both interested in and horrified by television commercials of life-like baby dolls for young girls, teaching them from a young age to learn how to raise and care for a child, as well as some advertising in recent years that encourages couples in countries like Denmark to have more children as a way of maintaining the country's economy and livelihood. As we today live in a political climate where chaos is constantly swarming around us and affecting our every move, my personal stance against our world’s growing population has reached a point where it is unimaginable for me to even consider raising a family in such a destructive era. The metaphorical clock that is placed on women across the world to produce offspring, and the inherent pressure to make fertility last, is what has driven some of the violence that is visibly present in a few of my pieces. I also felt a need to evoke a kind of protest through the use of slogans dedicated to sending a message that it is okay to either choose or not to choose a traditional family lifestyle, and a video with audio narration that is a summation of my raw emotion towards the subject of fertility.

Having begun my project by solely making linoleum prints, my transition into working with fabric and embroidery has opened new ways for me bridge a gap between a medium I have experience with and am passionate about, and media that I have never worked with before. My

reason for making prints was not only to follow a path of passion and familiarity, but also to convey a sense of duplication and repetition of my self-portrait as a metaphor for the chaotic overpopulation that I fear the world is headed towards. Fabric and the act of sewing were not art forms that I had any experience with prior to starting this project, but I felt that it was important to bring a unique and handmade quality to my work while simultaneously using textiles, which have for centuries had connotations of female domesticity. Using a palette of light pinks and yellow that are reminiscent of both femininity and nurseries, my work illustrates how I have aspired to move in a direction where my girlhood meets an urgent need to express my inner rage and discomfort at being in possession of a body that, to the capitalist world, is seen as both a product and a producer of future generations that are equally preyed upon in turn. "Pretty Young Host" is thus an exploration into my portrayal of my own body and identity, serving in its entirety as a self-portrait with insight into my personal views regarding what it means to be in possession of a "fertile body", and the way that I have conveyed my confusion, discomfort, and overall emotional reactions to navigating the world as a woman.





