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SEEING DOUBLE
The Diptych in Art-Based Research

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RÉSUMÉ
Seeing Double
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Ce texte d'accompagnement pose une réflexion sur mon projet de recherche création en arts visuels portant sur le diptyque en peinture et sur sa relation avec ma pratique artistique. Mon projet de maîtrise est constitué de quatorze peintures qui m'ont permis d'établir des confrontations, des formes de duels ou d'échos entre mes œuvres. J'ai observé mes diptyques et j'ai posé une réflexion sur mon processus de création et sur l'origine de chaque oeuvre. De plus, j'ai réfléchi sur le continuum de cette série et étudié l'impact du diptyque dans ma production artistique. Cette recherche vise à accroître mes connaissances sur ma pratique en arts visuels tout en m'aidant à mieux comprendre ma vie de jeune femme artiste dans la vingtaine.

ABSTRACT
Seeing Double
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This accompanying text describes an art-based research project that consists of my study of the diptych in painting and its relation to my art. I created fourteen paintings and was able to construct confrontations, forms of duels and echoes, and paintings that compliment each other. I examined my diptychs while reflecting on my creative process and the origin of each painting. Also, I reflect on the continuum of my series, as well as the impact of the diptych on my paintings. The goal of this research was to gain understanding on the continuum of my art practice while shedding light on my life as a young woman artist in her twenties.

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“I won't be the last
I won't be the first
Find a way to where the sky meets the earth
It's all right and all wrong
For me it begins at the end of the road”
We come and go...”

- Edward Louis Severson III

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. List of Figures	vii
2. Introduction	1
3. Methodology	6
4. The Birth of Venus	11
Where They All Began: <i>Forbidden Fruit</i>	15
Seeing Double: <i>Forbidden Fruit</i>	16
Where They All Began: <i>Mirror, Mirror on The Wall...</i>	20
Seeing Double: <i>Mirror, Mirror on The Wall...</i>	22
Where They All Began: <i>Gazing, Gasping</i>	26
Seeing Double: <i>Gazing, Gasping</i>	27
Where They All Began: <i>Eye Candy</i>	31
Seeing Double: <i>Eye Candy</i>	32
Where They All Began: <i>Dirty Laundry</i>	36
Seeing Double: <i>Dirty Laundry</i>	37
Where They All Began: <i>Act 6, Take 1&2</i>	41
Seeing Double: <i>Act 6, Take 1&2</i>	42
Where They All Began: <i>What's On?</i>	46
Seeing Double: <i>What's On?</i>	47
The Ladies In Their Glory	48
5. Conclusion	52
6. Long Nights	57
7. References	58

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Journal Entry	9
Figure 2. Journal Entry	10
Figure 3. <i>Forbidden Fruit #1</i>	13
Figure 4. <i>Forbidden Fruit #2</i>	14
Figure 5. <i>Mirror, Mirror On The Wall... #1</i>	18
Figure 6. <i>Mirror, Mirror On The Wall... #2</i>	19
Figure 7. <i>Gazing, Gasping #1</i>	24
Figure 8. <i>Gazing, Gasping #2</i>	25
Figure 9. <i>Eye Candy #1</i>	29
Figure 10. <i>Eye Candy #2</i>	30
Figure 11. Dirty Laundry #1	34
Figure 12. Dirty Laundry #2	35
Figure 13. <i>Act 6, Take #1</i>	39
Figure 14. <i>Act 6, Take #2</i>	40
Figure 15. <i>What's On? #1</i>	44
Figure 16. <i>What's On? #2</i>	45
Figure 17. Exhibition documentation #1	49
Figure 18. Exhibition documentation #2	50
Figure 19. Exhibition documentation #3	50
Figure 20. Exhibition documentation #4	51
Figure 21. Exhibition documentation #5	51

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

For several years, I had been anxiously awaiting my entry at the master of fine arts program. Despite the fact that I had already completed a master's degree in art education (Concordia University, 2006), which had a strong element of creation, I started to doubt my artistic capabilities when the day for my entry was upon me. I started doubting the preliminary proposal of research I had written and submitted to the admission's committee for my entry at the Université Laval. I believed I was not unique or original enough and I was afraid that my artworks would become redundant. I was also afraid that I would not be capable of pushing my artworks further and that my art creation would not move forward. Even though I had some doubts for a short period of time, my intuition still told me I had my rightful place at the master of fine arts program and that I could do great things during my studies.

After a few weeks of courses, I quickly understood that the goal was not to make a drastic change in my art, but to build a continuity between my previous paintings¹ and the ones I intended to create during my studies in the master of fine arts program. Also, it was important for me to find a new avenue to explore so I could continue with my painting practice.

¹ During my master's of art education (Concordia University, 2006), I created a body of paintings that showed fake fashion magazine covers, with myself as the main character. I (re)visioned four themes: the media and consumerism, beauty, the self and vulnerability, that I had found in other women's artwork. I examined the influences of Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Tracey Emin, Karen Kilimnik and Orlan on my work and I was able to see our similarities and how we differ from one another. Because of that, I felt it was not necessary for me to repeat the exercise during my master's degree of fine arts since it is a continuity of my master's degree in art education.

For the past few years now, my work has been inspired by the Pop Art painting style. The Pop Art movement is often characterized by the use of themes drawn from popular culture and how it comments contemporary society and culture. Since the main preoccupation I address in my paintings is the representation of women in current social contexts, and that the diverse forms of medias often influence my artworks, I believe my art is in accordance with the Pop Art movement. The colours I normally use in my artworks are very high contrast. I believe colours have the ability to speak on their own and they enhance the meanings of my paintings. Also, I put a lot of thought into the titles of my paintings since I think they are essential to the content of my paintings. I take a lot of pleasure by creating a link or a relationship between the title and the painting. I think my titles are clever and sometimes, even ironic. I am using this form of artistic expression to question the physical female ideals currently put forth by the media while offering my personal point of view as a young woman in her twenties.

I wanted to wed my skills to my real ideas and to aspire to the making of art that could clearly reveal my values and point of view has woman. (Chicago 1975, p.138)

People often ask me if I consider my work as feminist art. That is a very difficult question to answer. I am aware that my paintings illustrate aspects of a woman's life and current issues facing women. Like most feminist artists, my life as a woman is the central theme behind my artworks.

Women artists may come to re-examine the trend to borrow notions of "beauty" from the world of fashion and advertising, particularly as we come to better understand the harmful impact of such images on younger generations

who excessively, and in imitation of their elders, strive for physical perfection. (Zeglin Brand 2000, p.4)

Although I have some similarities with feminist artists, we do differ. I do not want to fight the misconception regarding the roles of women with my art. I only want to expose issues related to my life that will help me acquire a better understanding of myself as a woman and an artist. My goal is not to change the thoughts of people that surround me. I am not sure if I am prepared to associate myself with the feminist movement just yet since I am not a fan of labels. I would rather paint and let other people define what they see. Maybe my perception will change in the future, as I grow as a woman artist.

Even though I had been painting concerning the representation of women in today's society for a while now, I still felt that, for me, there was a lot more to explore and discover. I believed it was still possible for me to create new concepts and give a new outlook to my artworks. For that reason, I decided to continue to explore the representation of women, but kept part of myself on the lookout for a new challenge.

That is when the idea of creating diptychs came to me as a new avenue to explore. For as long as I can remember, I have painted series. I liked the idea of group and continuity but I never took the time to question myself about the relationship between each painting of a series. Therefore, for this research project, I decided to explore the idea of the diptych and its impact on my paintings. I presumed that I would be able to create tensions between my paintings that could become as important as each painting itself. I thought that the diptychs would give me the possibility of creating confrontations, forms

of duels and paintings that compliment each other, consequently making them more intriguing than single paintings.

This master's degree thesis is divided in two parts. One part consists of an exhibition of my paintings presented at the Galerie Colline of the Université de Moncton in Edmundston, New Brunswick from December 6th 2007 to January 13th 2008. The second part is this written report in which I present my artworks chronologically and embark on a reflective journey. This report is made of two chapters: one relates to the methodology of my research and the other is a critical and analytical reflection on my paintings. The critical and analytical reflection section presents a description of my paintings, as well as review of my use of the diptychs for each series.

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

I perceive *Seeing Double: The Diptych in Art-Based Research* as a report on my reflexive and understanding practice. Graeme Sullivan says that there are many types of reflexive practices. The *self-reflective* practice best describes my practice.

...a *self-reflective* practice describes an inquiry process that is directed by personal interest and creative insight, yet is informed by discipline knowledge and research expertise. (Sullivan 2005, p.100-101)

The main goal of my art-based research was to gain insight on my own art practice. Although I have been painting for a while now, my paintings continue to surprise me. Before this research, I was not aware of the relationship between each painting. With this research, I was hoping that questioning myself on my art would allow me to understand my paintings and myself better, consequently making my research and art practice an *understanding practice*. Sullivan mentions that there are at least four kinds of understanding practices that can be viewed as frameworks to visualize art practices as research. I associated my research with the visual arts as *conceptual knowledge*.

...visual arts knowledge is *conceptual*. This means that knowledge is grounded in the practice of making that uses knowledge that is available through personal cognitive systems and culturally accessible domains. (Sullivan 2005, p.100)

The knowledge I gained from this research came from my own art practice and personal insight, as well as the knowledge from the medias (television, radio, magazines, newspapers, etc.) that surrounds me in everyday life.

During a previous research project (Concordia University, 2006), I discovered more about the themes present in my paintings and felt that the process of exploring the subject had yet to be completed. I still had many ideas left. Until I ran out of ideas, I believed I had no choice but to continue on this route. For these reasons, I decided this research should focus on something a bit different concerning my art production and creative process. That is why I chose to focus on continuum in my artworks. Even though gaining understanding on the format and continuum were my main objectives, the content of my artworks was still a big part of the end result of this study.

To start out this research, I created fourteen acrylic paintings with issues revolving around the image of young contemporary women in society. My theme was very broad, but yet restricted. My two main restrictions were to work with diptychs and to keep the format I had chosen at the beginning. I chose to paint 36" x 36" canvas' simply because I liked the balance the canvas gave me and I had never worked with a squared format before; the canvas itself was intriguing. Another characteristic of this research was the fact that I had never created a body of work of this scale before. I am not ashamed to say that, at the beginning, I was a bit scared of what the outcome would be.

I kept reflective notes during my creative process in order to have a more insightful outlook on the artworks after they were all completed. Kit Grauer and Anami Nath (1998) mentioned that: "This recording of image making is a record of thinking,

and a step towards a reflection and metacognition” (1998, p.14-15). The visual journal (see figure 1 and figure 2) allowed me to find out exactly what I was thinking during my creative process and how I felt about the series as it grew.



Figure 1. Journal entry by Claudia Fournier (August 2007)



Figure 2. Journal entry by Claudia Fournier (September 2007)

Almost an entire year went by from the time I started production to the time it ended. At the end of production, I was able to step back and take a look at my artworks as a whole and really see what had happened during my year of production. The next chapter holds a reflection on each series, their origin and my use of the diptych, while taking into account my visual journal and my creative process, as well as the final artworks.

THE BIRTH OF VENUS

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

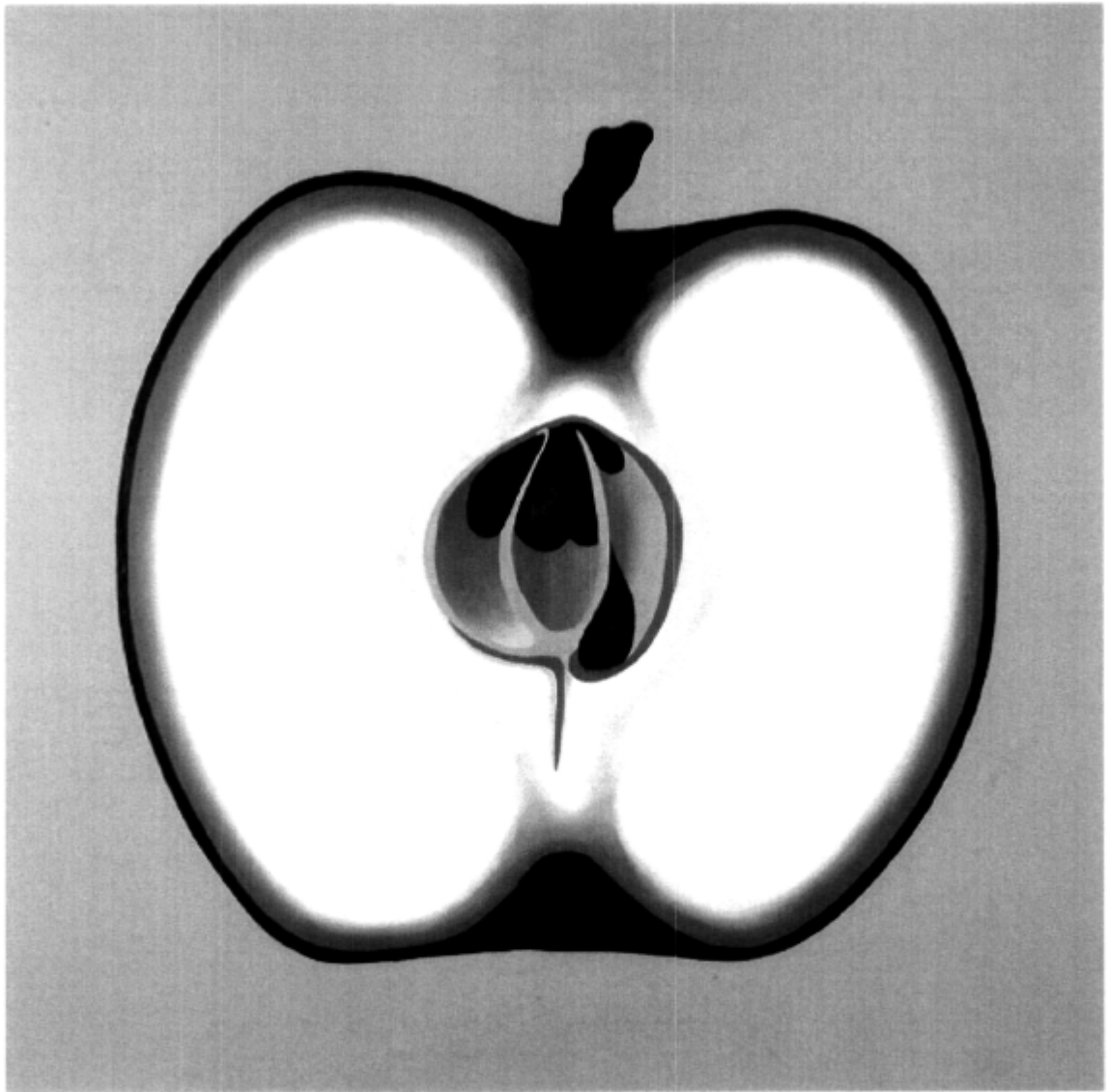


Figure 3. *FORBIDDEN FRUIT #1*
2006
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

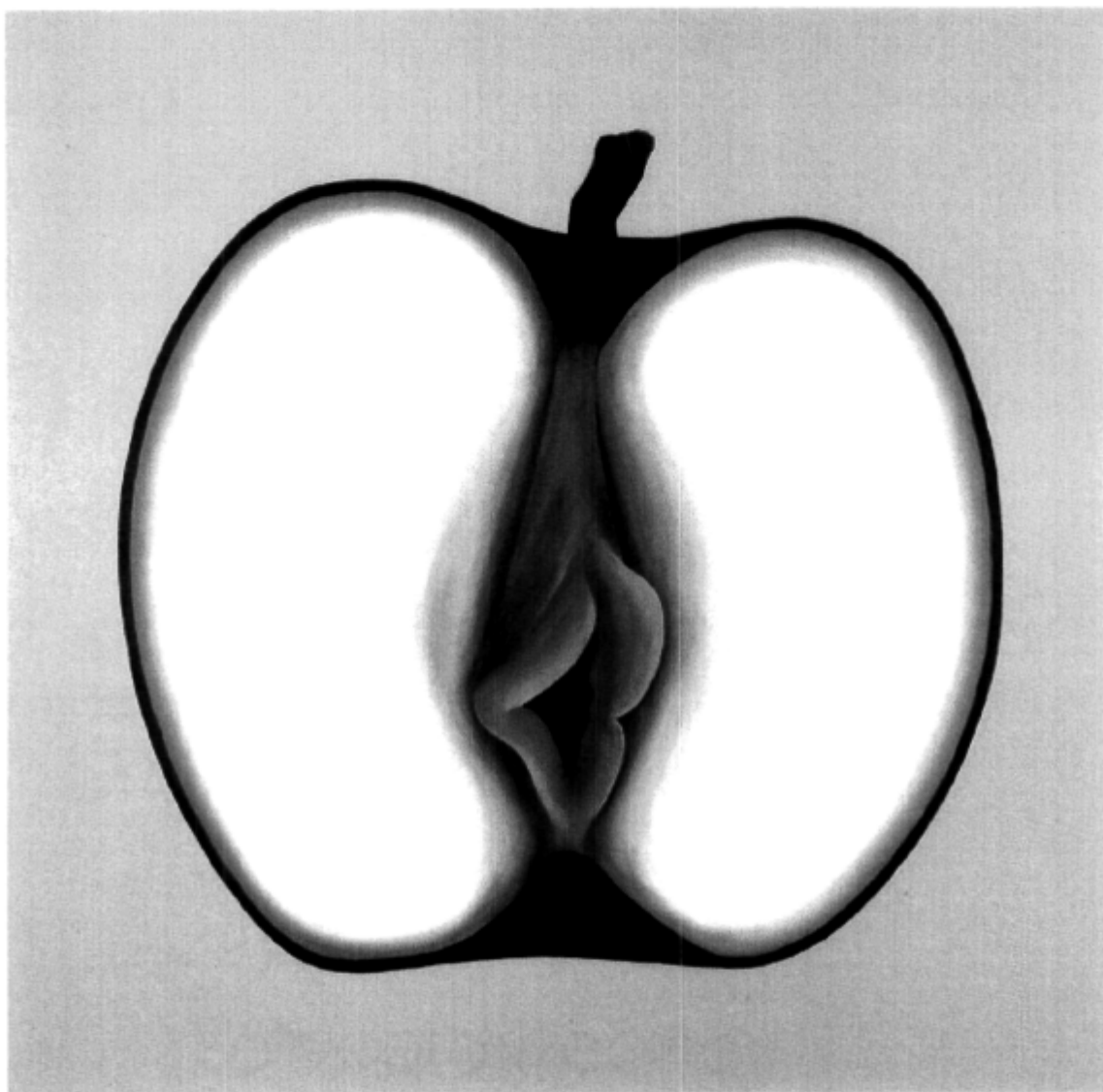


Figure 4. *FORBIDDEN FRUIT #2*
2006
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

The Forbidden Fruit Series

Where They All Began

When I painted my first series, my research was not defined. I was not sure what I would uncover during the research. I knew I wanted to explore the diptych, but I had no idea how or what specific idea to explore. It was while painting that my research project formed itself. I can honestly say that I painted these two paintings in a very spontaneous manner and the end result took me by surprise. My research project started out very quickly, leaving me no time to think. Once in a while, I watch a television show on the ABC network called “Desperate Housewives”. At the beginning of the show you see Venus playing with an apple and it reminded me of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit.

I wanted to play with the idea of women as a fruit. I think women are very sexual beings because they are the proud owners of a vagina. A vagina is just another body part but emphasis is usually made on its sexual and sensual qualities.

Women’s bodies are portrayed as attractive packaging
around an empty box... (Wolf 1997, p.156)

The *Forbidden Fruit* diptych allowed me to expose the fruit, as well as the sexual and sensual qualities attributed to women and their bodies. My goal was not to desexualize the vagina but rather to expose what is usually private, and make it public. Everything is there, nothing is left hidden. When I did the first few brush strokes, I was filled with uncertainty. I used colours that are in between the human flesh and the fruit in order to accentuate the female body, and I am pleased with the end result.

Seeing Double

The “Forbidden Fruit” is the most shocking diptych of the entire body of artworks I created for this research. Both paintings together are very strong and extremely direct. When I showed it to my fellow classmates, some of them thought the content was too obvious and thought I needed to be more reserved. I am aware that together, the paintings speak louder than if they were on their own. However, I think they work well this way because the entire process for them to speak loudly was intentional.

In *Forbidden Fruit #1*, the one with the core of the apple (also know as “the normal apple”), I was not sure what to do in the center. I opted for the core of the apple to create the illusion between the two paintings. At first glance, it is almost as if the rear end of the woman is on display but when you look at it closely you see otherwise; it is simply the core of an apple. To me, the curves of the apple suggest the female form in both paintings.

In this series, the diptych allowed me to create an illusion as if the spectator is seeing double². It was my first time experimenting with the diptych and I remain very pleased with the outcome. It was not as difficult as I expected, since their concepts came to me quite easily. By creating those two artworks in a very spontaneous manner, I do not understand all the decisions made during my creative process. Doing this series made me realize that I do not like to over-think my paintings, nor force meanings out of them. I suppose my interpretation of the *Forbidden Fruit* will become clearer in due course.

² The title of my research project emerged from my art practice.

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL...



Figure 5. *MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL #1*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"



Figure 6. *MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL #2*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

The Mirror, Mirror on The Wall... Series

Where They All Began

The concept of *Mirror, Mirror on The Wall...* was something that had been on my mind for a while. When I first started painting on the subject of the representation of women in society in 2003, I used to portray women as victims. Having outgrown my young twenties, my views have change and I no longer see women as victims of the proliferation of mass media imagery and of societal expectations. With my mid-twenties upon me, I think I have a more realistic view of my surroundings. I assume that, as a woman, I chose to subject myself to these standards and for that reason my point of view on the subject has shifted over the past year. I wanted to create paintings that reflected my new points of view.

This series is a realistic representation of my life and my relationship with my own body. The first painting shows that I am very critical about my body. I often look at myself in the mirror and criticize everything I hate about my physical appearance. I am ashamed to say that I am my own worst critic concerning my body as well as my inner self. The second painting represents my feelings towards the male gaze. I often imagine that my boyfriend looks at me with a critical eye. I do not exactly know what my boyfriend thinks when he looks at me and I prefer not knowing. I think some questions should remains unanswered and in a weird way, I enjoy the agony I go through every time my boyfriend looks at me. I presume this is my way of dealing with my own

insecurities. I know I should not feel insecure about my image, but I believe most people, women and men, do. We all have our insecurities and deal with them on a daily basis.

We look into the mirror not merely to see how we look, but how we expect others to see us, and, unless amazingly self-confident, we attempt to modulate our appearances in order that others shall see us as we hope to be seen. (Zeglin Brand, 2000, p.72)

Seeing Double

With *Mirror, Mirror on The Wall...* I was able to play with the French saying “les deux côtés de la médaille”. My goal was to illustrate two sides of the same story and I strongly believe I succeeded. These paintings *echo* each other and I think they can shed light on the life of women and their relationship with their own body. Despite the fact that I understood beforehand that I am my own worst critic regarding my physical appearance, painting this series makes everything clearer and more real.

Creating *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall...* made me look inside myself and forced me to deal with my personal issues, as well as my internal demons about my body. It is difficult to describe how an art practice like mine helps me understand my life better and helps me live. I find my own unclear issues and attempt to resolve them through art. This diptych is a great model of that. For a few years now, I have been trying to better understand my life as a woman and every painting is a baby step towards a new awareness of my own self.

The two paintings create *illusion*. At first, you think they are identical but looking closely, you discover the male figure in the mirror. Also, I think this series creates *doubt* and makes you question yourself why there would be a male figure present when a woman looks at herself in the mirror. Like in the *Forbidden Fruit* series, I was able to illustrate my private thoughts and turn them into public knowledge. In doing so, I intentionally put myself in the center of a vulnerable situation.

GAZING, GASPING

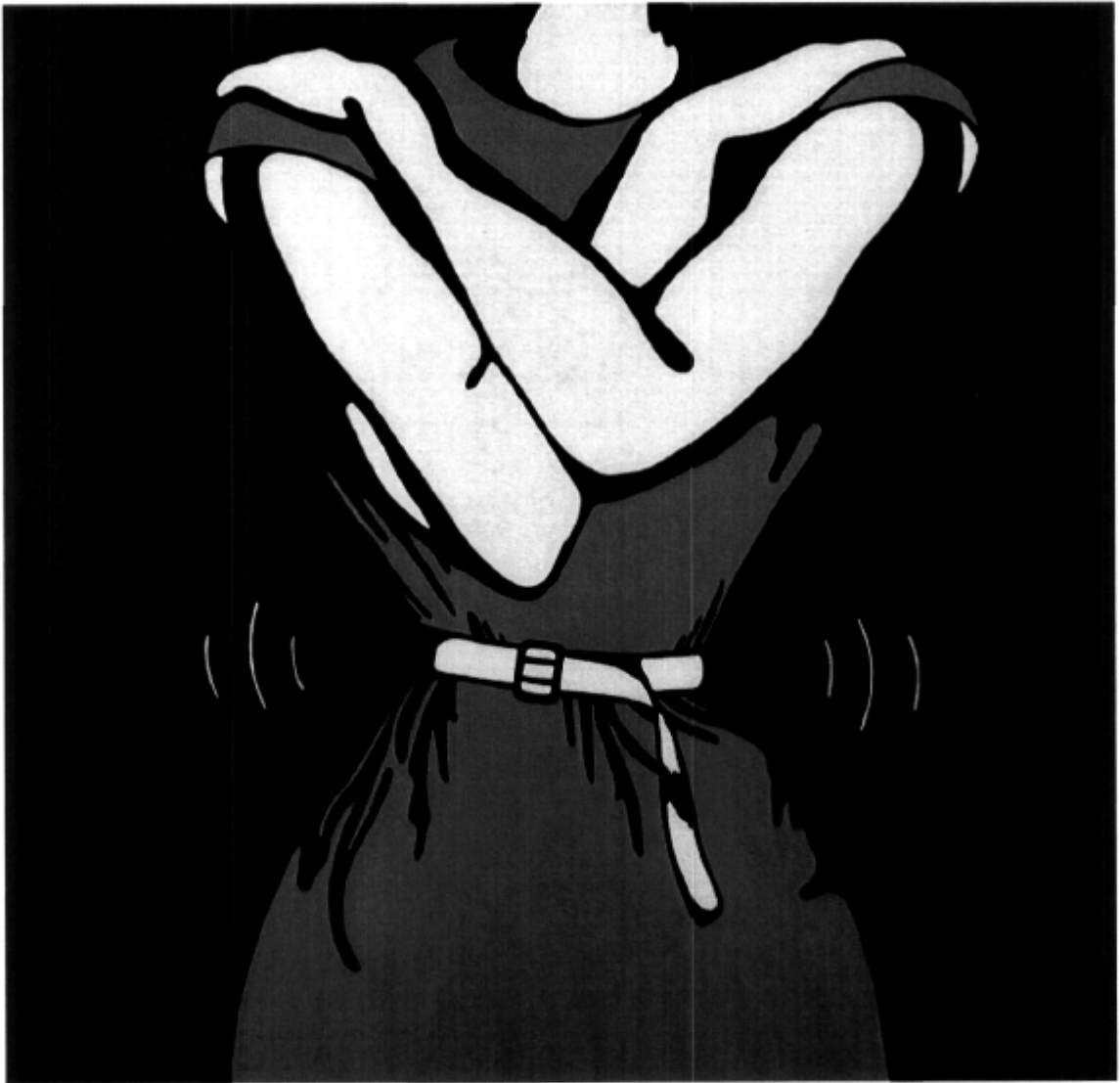


Figure 7. *GAZING, GASPING #1*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"



Figure 8. *GAZING, GASPING #2*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

The *Gazing, Gasping* Series

Where They All Began

At that point in the research, I was not satisfied with how my project was coming along. That was about the same time my advisor suggested that I should reflect on the paintings I had done until then, and write down their significance as I saw it. Afterwards, I found out that reflecting on my artworks in the middle of my art production made me become self-conscious about every decision I make while thinking of my concepts. Because of that, I decided to stop thinking and simply paint for my own pleasure, and see where my art would take me. *Gazing, Gasping* remains my mystery. At the time I painted them, I was in a bit of an “artist block”. I was lost in my thoughts and very preoccupied with my life, and that is what I wanted to demonstrate with these two paintings. I think it worked because that is what I see when looking at my diptych.

Unlike the other series, I did not paint objects as metaphors to represent my life as a woman. The images are metaphors for some of the feelings and emotions I felt during this research. There were days when I felt as if I had a cord (or in this case, a belt) tightening my waist, making me feel like I was not thin enough and that I should do everything I could to reach the physical perfection advertised by the media. At other times, I felt like I was in the center of a tornado. All I could see were spinning objects and words without being able to grab anything. The medias continuously bombard me with information and on a regular basis, I have to sort out this data that surrounds me and make my way through life.

Seeing Double

Gazing, Gasping is very different from the other series. The paintings have been completed for some time now and I still have difficulties determining their relationship; it remains unclear to me. I presume that someone else could pinpoint their exact relationship better than I can since I have been immersed in them for a while now and it is difficult for me to have an accurate view of what is really represented on the canvas. Like the other diptychs, it takes me a certain amount of time to understand each series and the relationship between each painting. My reflection on *Gazing, Gasping* has yet to be completed.

For now, I think this diptych creates *illusion* and allows *doubt* to settle in the spectator's mind. At first glance, the paintings look the same. But after pausing for a second or two, you start to see the slightly different elements in each one. I do not think one painting adds to the other even if they *echo* each other. They both represent my feelings as an artist regarding life. Even though I am uncertain about the relationship between the two paintings, I strongly believe they *compliment* each other. There is less contrast between them than the other series but they both reflect the melancholy I was going through during that time period in my research. It was difficult for me not knowing what to paint. At a certain point, I even doubted my artist capabilities. However, I soon realized that I just needed to pause and recharge my batteries before continuing with my research project.

EYE CANDY

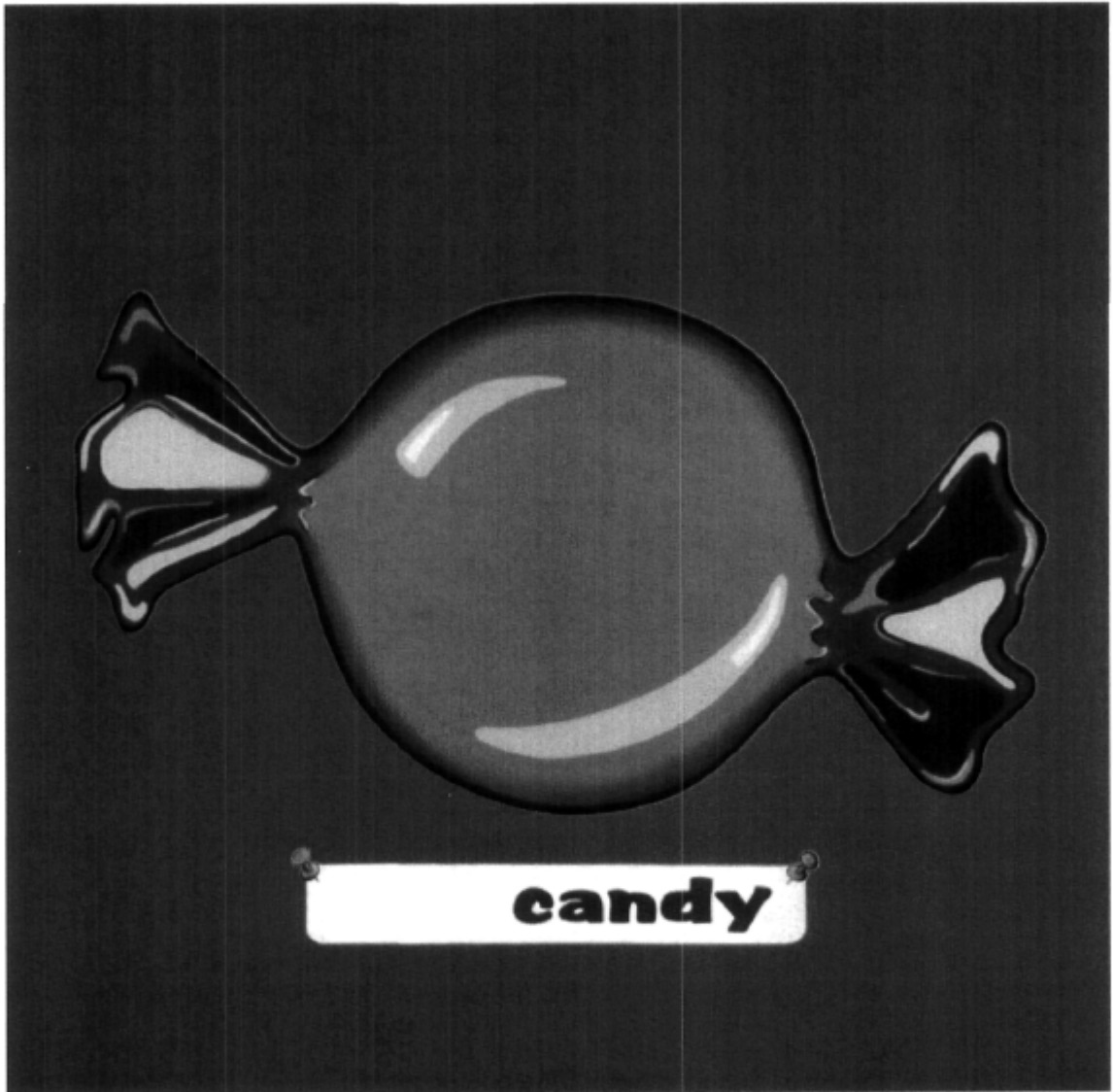


Figure 9. *EYE CANDY #1*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

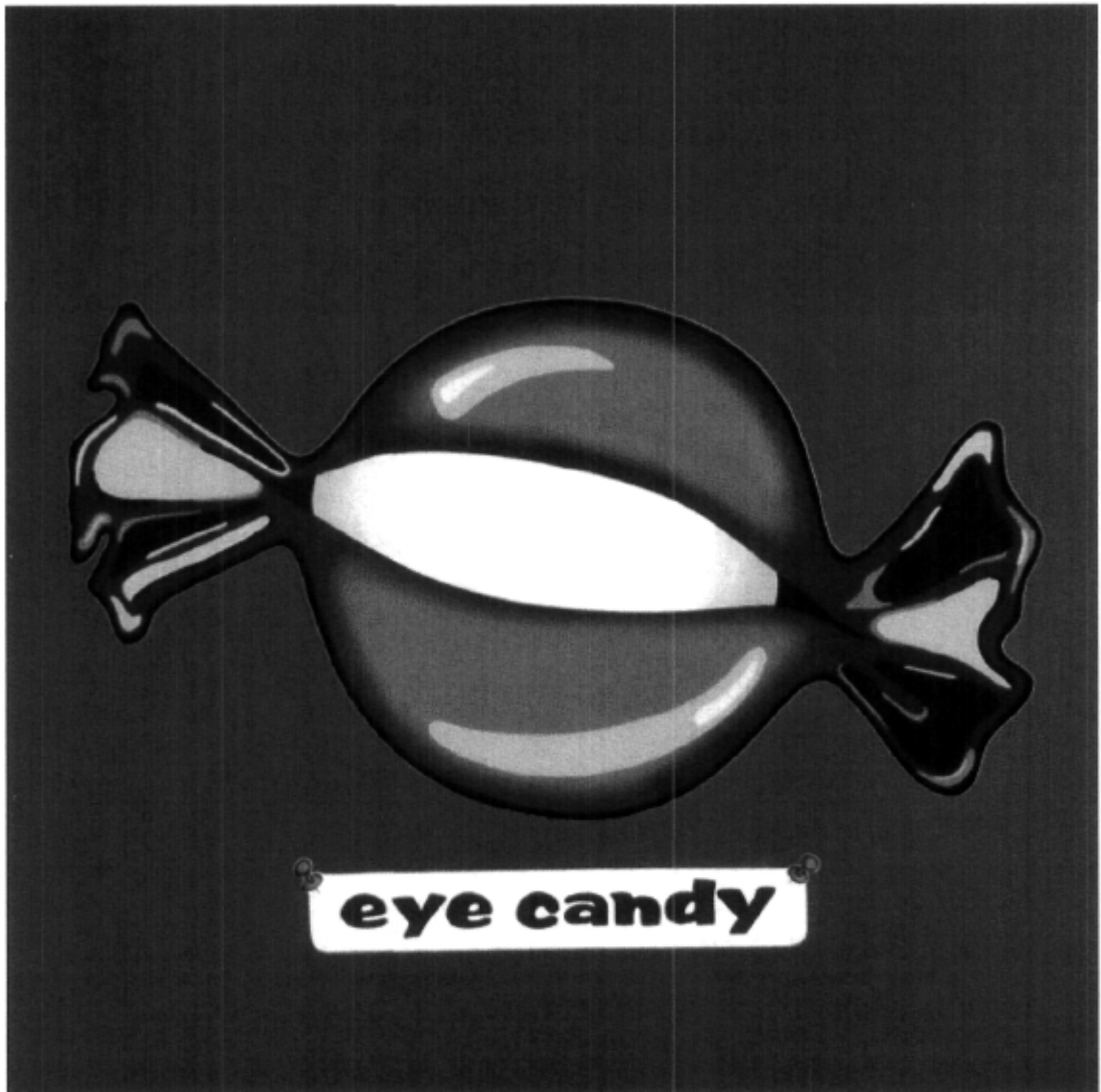


Figure 10. *EYE CANDY #2*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

The *Eye Candy* Series

Where They All Began

Ever heard a woman being referred to as an “eye candy”? It means that she is as sweet and pleasurable to the eye as the candy is for the taste buds. The expression “eye candy” was something that had been simmering in my mind for some time now. Even if I think it is very clever, it does not mean that I approve when someone says it!

Unlike the diptychs *Forbidden Fruit* and *Mirror, Mirror, on The Wall...*, my concept changed throughout the creation for *Eye Candy*. I started with the candy that is fully wrapped. That one was clear right from the start. I wanted to use very bright eye-catching colours typically found in a candy store. For the second half of this diptych, I wanted to unwrap the candy as a metaphor of the current phenomenon of women wearing less and less clothes in order to appear sexier. I think showing a small portion of the candy is very effective. As a young woman, I am often faced with the dilemma of women being portrayed as objects. I think the “eye candy” saying is intertwined with that dilemma. Women are often dehumanized and objectified as sex objects, or objects in general. In *Eye Candy*, I was able to transform women’s bodies as everyday objects.

Seeing Double

I was very excited that I was able to include text in the *Eye Candy* series and that the diptych offered me the possibility of playing with the words as well as the image. Before this research, it was almost a habit for me to use words directly on the canvas to include additional information to my artworks and I was missing it. In *Eye Candy*, it was the perfect opportunity for me to use text. I used a very bubbly type of font and wrote “candy” on the canvas with the wrapped candy. I made sure to leave space for another word, as if I forgot to include one. For *Eye Candy #2*, the unwrapped candy, I chose to write the entire title of my painting, *Eye Candy*. Since not everyone is familiar with the saying “Eye Candy”, I think it was necessary for me to include the two words in order to give enough clues to the spectators, while assisting them in their interpretation of the painting.

Unlike the other series, I do not think each *Eye Candy* painting would work on their own, specifically *Eye Candy #1*. Alone, I do not think it says much, as if something is missing. I wanted to create paintings that can work on their own and as pairs. I can visualize *Eye Candy #2* exhibited or hung somewhere solo, but maybe the interpretation level of difficulties would be higher; spectators might not have enough clues to build their own interpretations. Like many other series created for this research, the two paintings create a *tension* and I think the relationship between them speaks louder than any painting on its own.

DIRTY LAUNDRY

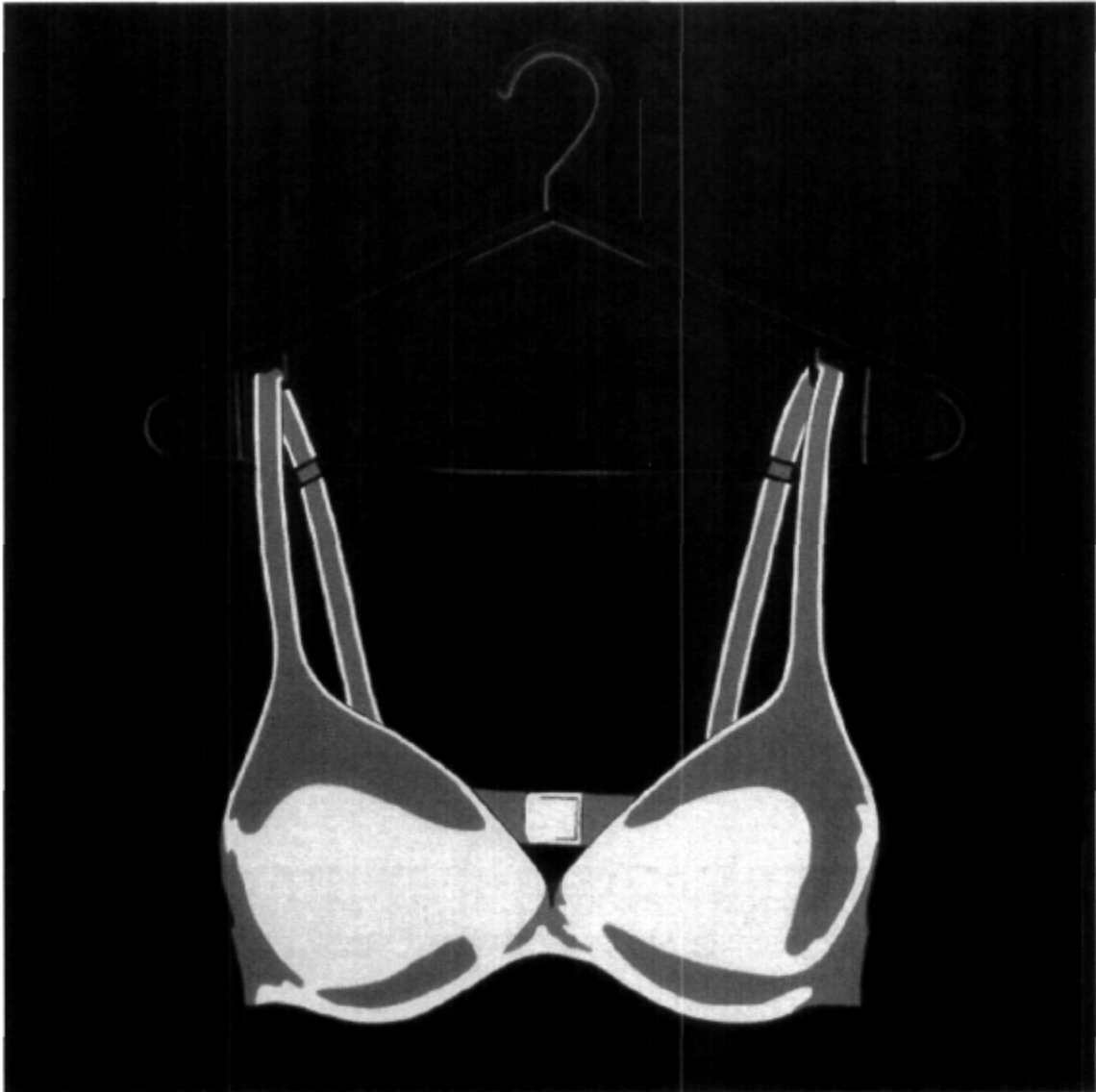


Figure 11. *DIRTY LAUNDRY #1*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

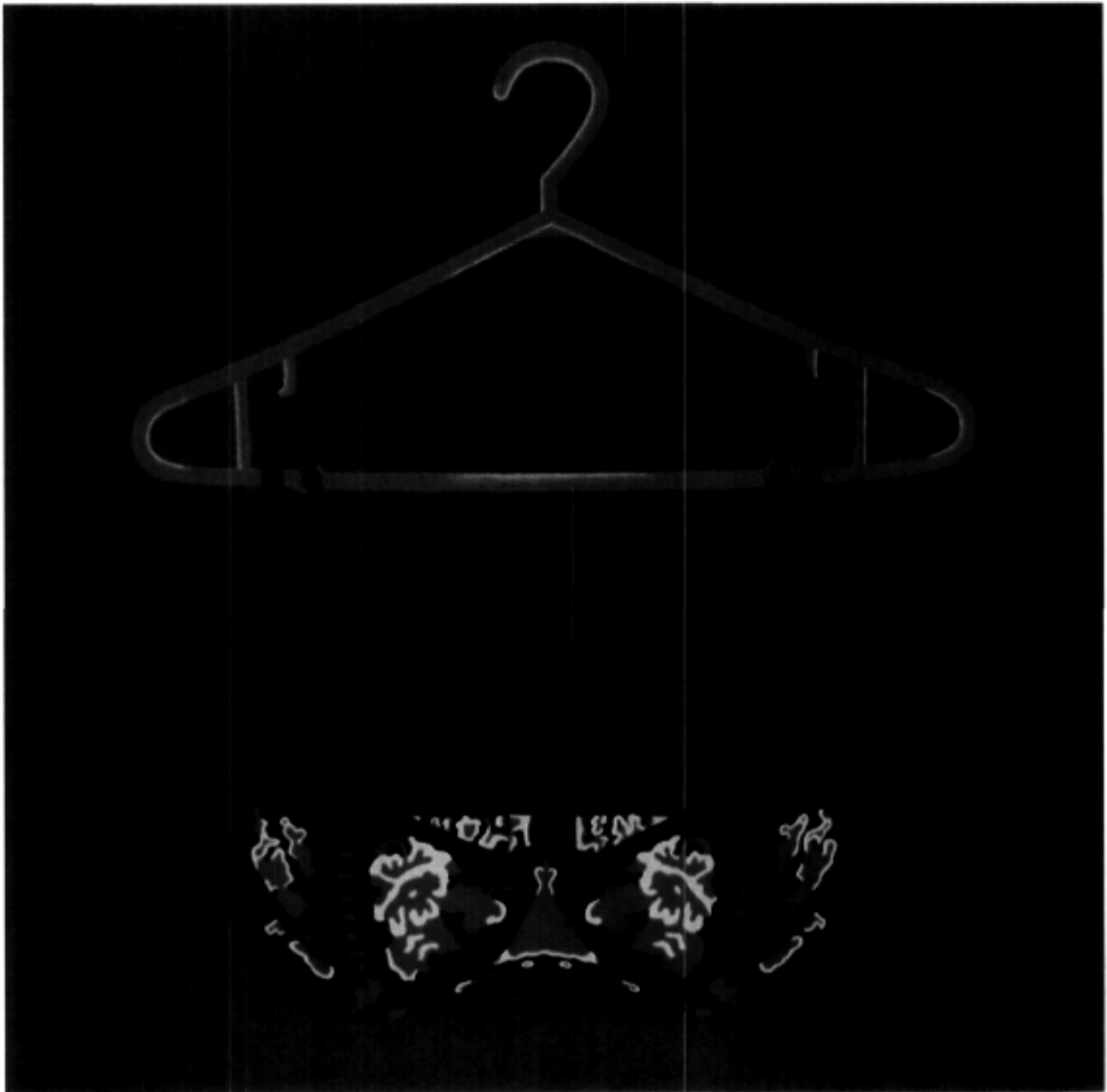


Figure 12. *DIRTY LAUNDRY #2*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

The *Dirty Laundry* Series

Where They All Began

Dirty Laundry is one of the diptychs I really enjoyed creating from start to finish. Everything about the series was clear before my paintbrush even touched the canvas. I knew exactly what I wanted the diptych to say and how to achieve that. Over the past year, I wanted to play with the idea of sex appeal but my ideas were not defined. I had to wait many months before I knew exactly what I wanted to do. Waiting patiently was the key to ensure a successful outcome for these artworks.

On a daily basis, I am subjected to lingerie advertisements (television, billboards and magazines). I contemplate those toned women in the ads and the delicate undergarments they are wearing, while dreaming of what I could look and feel like in it. I think that if I were to use lingerie to its fullest potential, I could make my body more attractive and intriguing than it currently is. By emphasizing your most attractive assets (as shown in the lingerie advertisements), you are assured to get positive feedback from your male target without exception. (In my mind, I picture men drooling when encountering a woman in lingerie!) For these reasons, I think lingerie advertisements make us dream of what could happen if we take on our roles as consumers. “Men are more visual than us and what I mean is that they respond more effectively and quickly to visual stimuli while we are more emotional in our approach to life.”³

³[Http://www.mynippon.com/fashion/lingerie-seduction.htm](http://www.mynippon.com/fashion/lingerie-seduction.htm) (site visited on 09/29/07).

Seeing Double

With these two paintings, the diptych worked perfectly. I created two paintings that *compliment* and *confront* each other at the same time. I wanted to create contrast between the two options women have with the brassieres: comfort and sexy. The comfort bra painting shows a wider shoulder strap and monotonous colours. The yellowish grey tones I used are very dull, just like the bra itself. The second painting shows the sexy bra composed of a thin shoulder strap, black lace with bright pink accents. The black flower lace implies mystery and seductiveness. Even if lingerie is normally something private, I believe it has an effect on one's personality. I think the diptych helped illustrate my feelings toward lingerie, specifically brassieres, and how they can affect a woman's life.

One might wonder why I did not put the brassiere on a woman's body. In this case, I felt it was not necessary to use the body to talk about issues surrounding it. During this research, I noticed that once in a while, I enjoy leaving the body out of the painting since it allows me to explore the various possibilities offered by my art. When I take a step back and keep a hold on my impulses and habits of using the body, and make well-thought-out decisions, I found that the outcome is better. *Dirty Laundry* is definitely one of my favorite diptychs in this body of paintings, both visually and conceptually. I think each painting is sufficient on its own but when they are together they speak even louder about the sensual and sexual qualities attributed to women.

ACT 6, TAKE #1 & #2

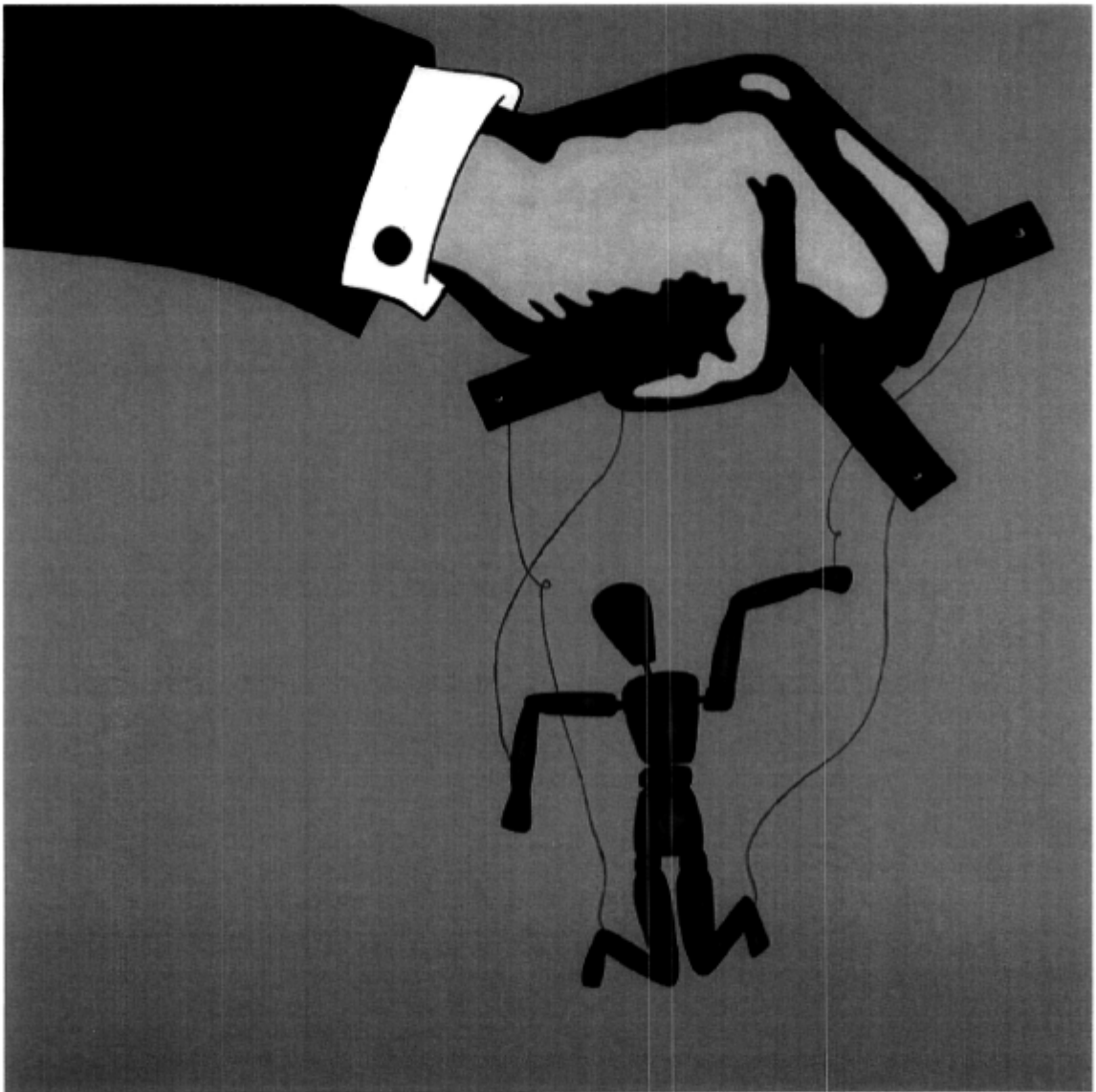


Figure 13. *ACT 6, TAKE #1*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

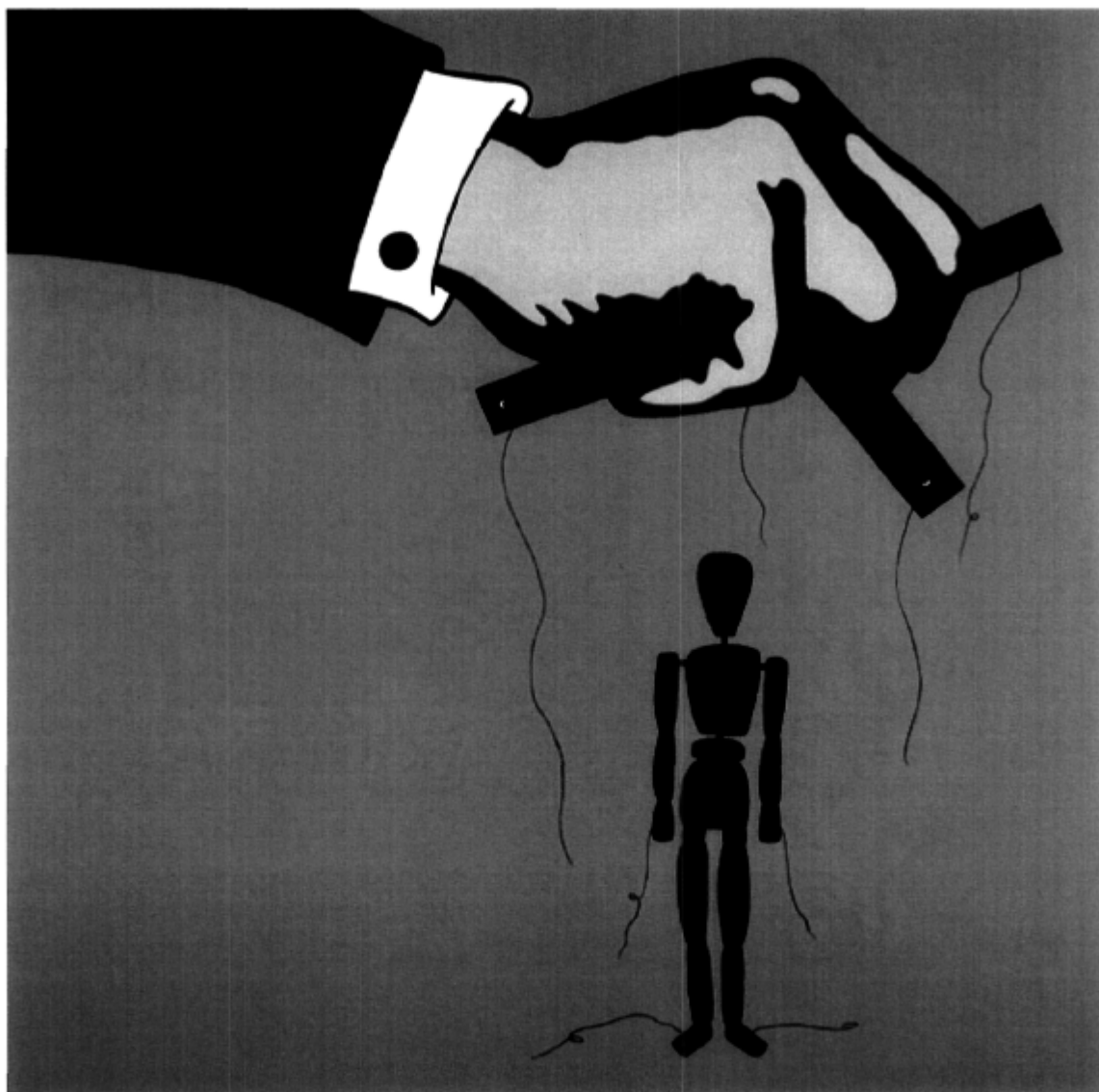


Figure 14. *ACT 6, TAKE #2*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

The Act 6, Take #1 & #2 Series

Where They All Began

The creative process of this diptych went by quickly. I thought out this concept while I was finishing up *Dirty Laundry*. As soon as I had finished *Dirty Laundry*, I started painting Act 6, Take 1 & 2. I did not have time to reflect in between the two diptychs and I really enjoyed proceeding that way because it did not leave me time to clarify my intentions behind the paintings before I actually painted them. I was able to really enjoy the act of painting and worry about what it all meant afterwards.

Now that time has passed since the completion of *Act 6, Take 1 & 2*, I know a little more about the series and am able to reflect on how it makes me feel. Over the past few years, I created many paintings that tackle the concept of people being manipulated by society. Magazines, billboards and television advertisements have the power to control our thoughts and sometime even our beliefs, by insinuating what is expected from us. We are constantly being told how to act and how to live our lives. *Act 6, Take 1&2* are sort of a continuation of the magazine paintings I created during my masters of art education (Concordia University, 2006). This series illustrates how I feel towards the medias and how they influence my life. Sometimes, I feel as if I am not capable of making any decisions by myself. It is as if, as a young woman, someone or something else controls my life. I think *Act 6, Take 2* represents where I am now, stronger than ever before, given that I have come to better understand my life as a young woman.

Seeing Double

The end result of my paintings rarely corresponds to the image I have in my head before creating them. Sometimes, my concept grows while I paint and at other times, my ideas are clear right from the start but the aesthetic qualities (shapes, colours, etc.) of my paintings change throughout the creation. For this diptych, what I had envisioned ended up being the final product. I am very satisfied with the end result and with what the diptych enabled me to do.

Using the diptych was very exciting in this series. The diptych allowed me to create a *confrontation* between my reality and my ideals. It permitted me to face my fear of not being self-assured or strong enough to be in this very dictating world. Each painting makes me want to become stronger and less vulnerable to my own self and to the societal expectations. I was able to detach myself from personal questions regarding my life while creating two paintings that *echo* each other as well as *compliment* each other. The two paintings are very *playful* even if their meaning is not necessarily joyful. They could both stand on their own but their meanings are intertwined and together they form a very strong diptych.

I am very lucky to have the opportunity, through art, to discover myself and to resolve the unclear aspects of my life. Though I have used softer colours than in some of my other series (*Eye Candy*, *Dirty Laundry*, etc.), the *tension* between the two paintings is very present. When looking at this diptych, I cannot help myself from going back and forth. The tension between the two paintings creates a mystery that remains unresolved.

WHAT'S ON?

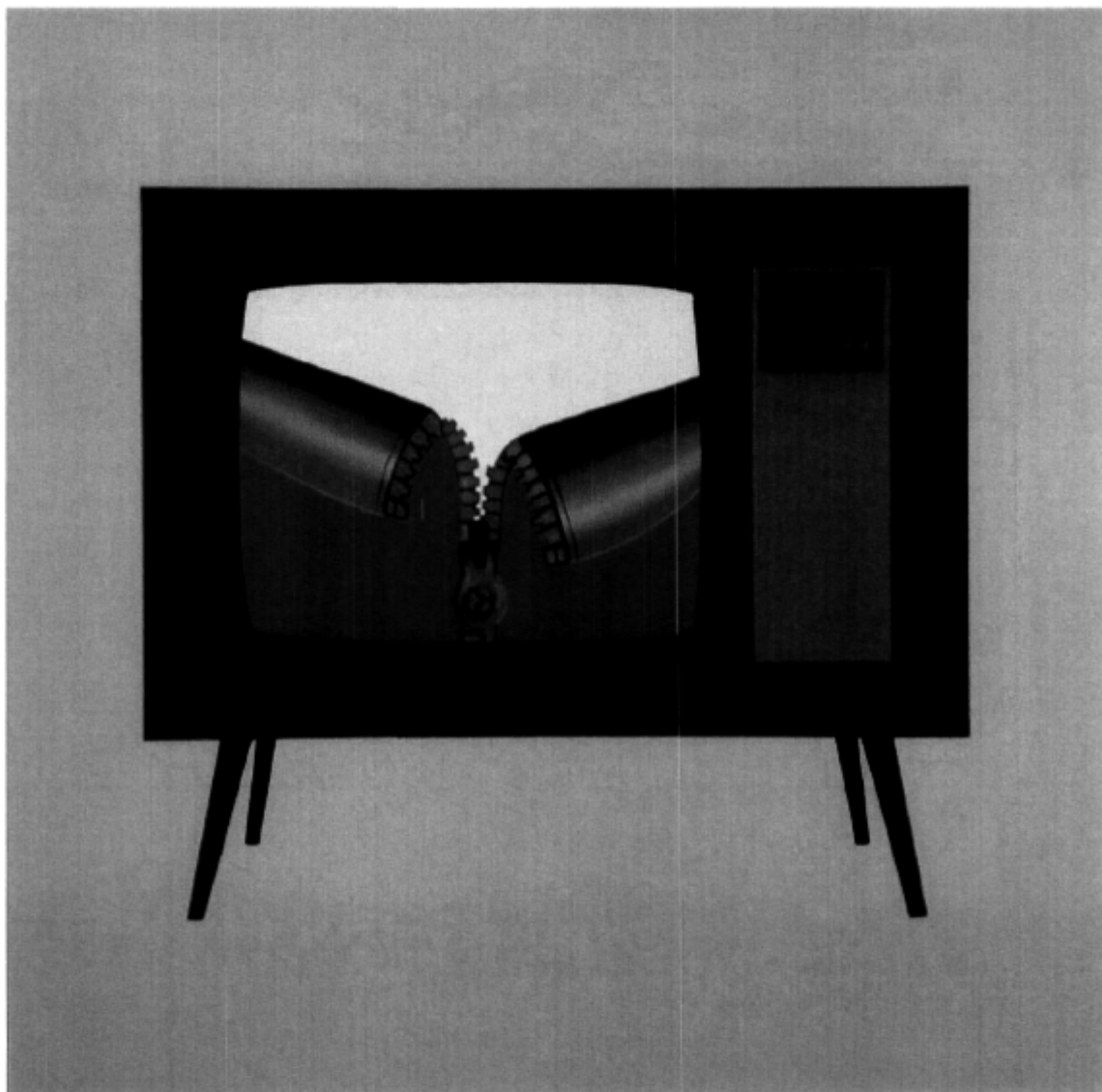


Figure 15. *WHAT'S ON? #1*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

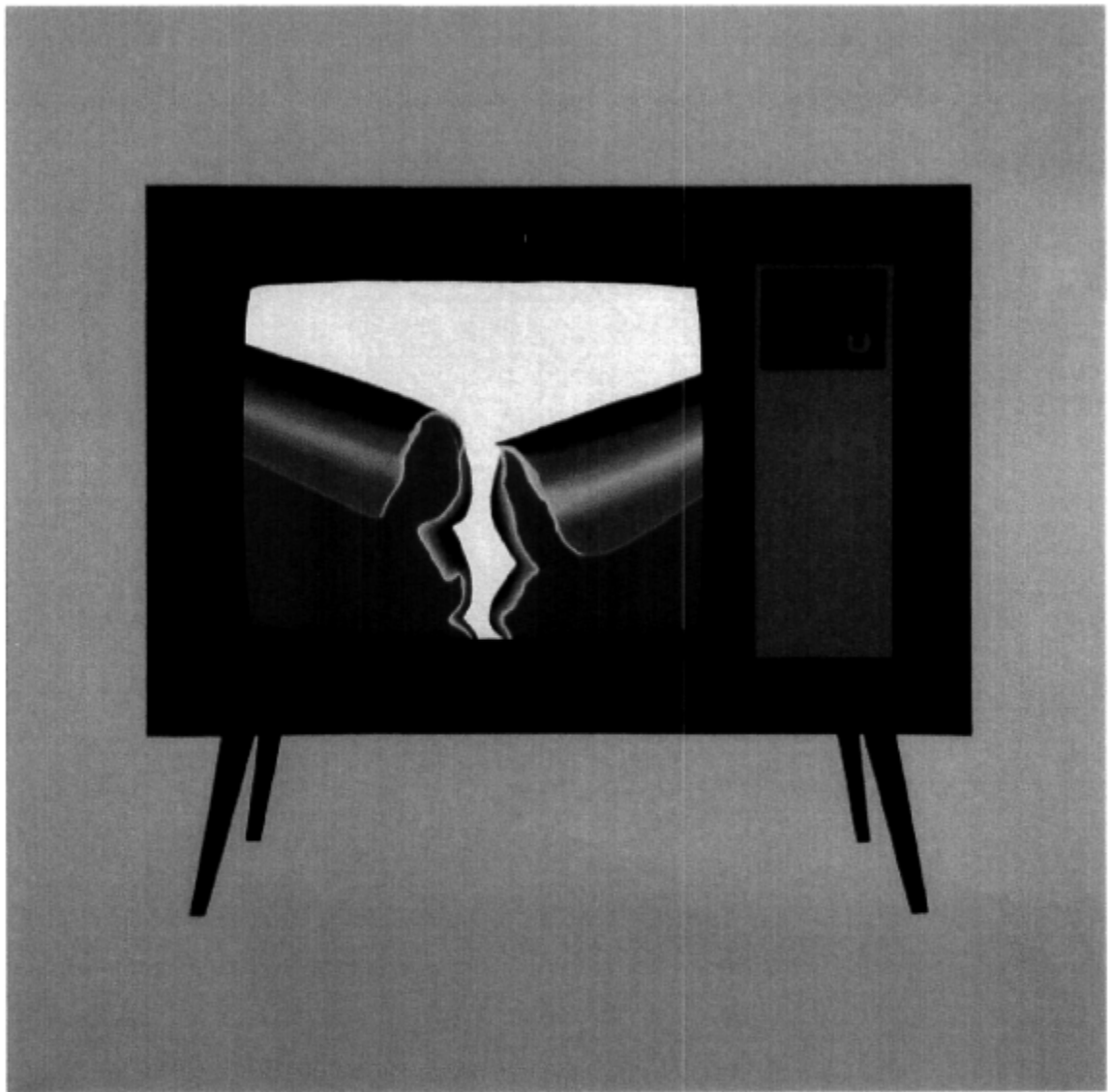


Figure 16. *WHAT'S ON? #2*
2007
Acrylic on canvas
36"X36"

The *What's On?* Series

Where They All Began

For a while now, I wanted to create two paintings that revolve around an actual phenomenon that surrounds me: numerous women seem to be undressing themselves to become more appealing males. I find it ridiculous how women's clothing seems to be getting smaller and smaller from one day to the next. I think today's society teaches us, women, the preconceived concept that the more body you reveal, the prettier you are and the more desired you will be by the opposite sex. By looking at television advertisements and magazines, I suppose I can see where and how society persuades us that the less clothes you wear, the more attractive you become.

To me, the *What's On?* series represents that exact phenomenon. I used the zipper to represent that some women willingly undress themselves to please others. A little skin here and there does not seem to bother them and they assume the responsibilities that come their way by doing so. On the other hand, I painted torn paper on the second painting to illustrate the pressure I subject myself to, to reveal more skin. Sometimes, during a moment of weakness, I succumb to the pressure and partially undress my body to fulfill what is expected of me, in hopes of being "normal" like other women.

Seeing Double

During the past few years, television as well as the other forms of mass media, have been encouraging women to undress themselves in order to fit in, to please others or simply to feel sexy and wanted. *What's On?* is very similar to *Mirror, Mirror On The Wall...* The two paintings form a *comparison* of two of the various reasons why women agree to wear more revealing clothing. It allows people to see that women are not always victims in today's society and that sometimes, they make their own decisions.

I really like the two paintings of the *What's On?* series, both conceptually and aesthetically. The idea of the zipper versus the torn paper had been in my head for some months now and I was finally able to create a painting that reflected that. Once again, this painting is a metaphor that illustrates issues revolving around women and their bodies. I used the image of a television to represent media advertisements. Also, I used the zipper and torn paper as a metaphor to represent women undressing themselves to increase their sex appeal. Metaphors have been constantly surprising me during this research. I let my art guide me, and unconsciously, metaphors surfaced from my paintings.

It is bizarre to say that I am glad this diptych is the last one created for my research project. I think it successfully sums up everything I was trying to say in all of my other paintings. As a young woman, I am constantly facing decisions. These decisions leave their trails on my life and have a permanent impact on who I am now, and who I will become.

THE LADIES IN THEIR GLORY

The Ladies in Their Glory

As I have mentioned in the introduction section of this text, I had the opportunity to present the artworks of *Seeing Double* at the Galerie Colline of the Université de Moncton in Edmundston, New Brunswick from December 6th 2007 to January 13th 2008. It was very rewarding and empowering to see them in an art gallery setting. I was finally able to have a full view of the tensions, metaphors and echoes I created with my paintings. My artworks were finally displayed the way I intended them to be, which allowed them to speak individually and as a whole.

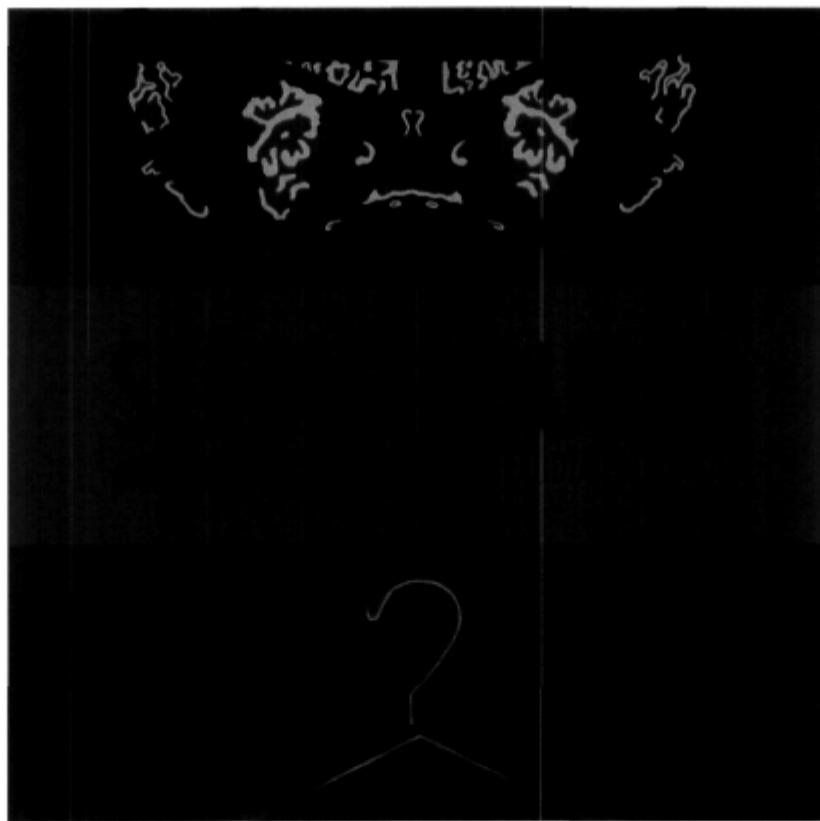


Figure 17. Exhibition documentation. Invitation no.1. Created by Marianne Chevalier (2007)

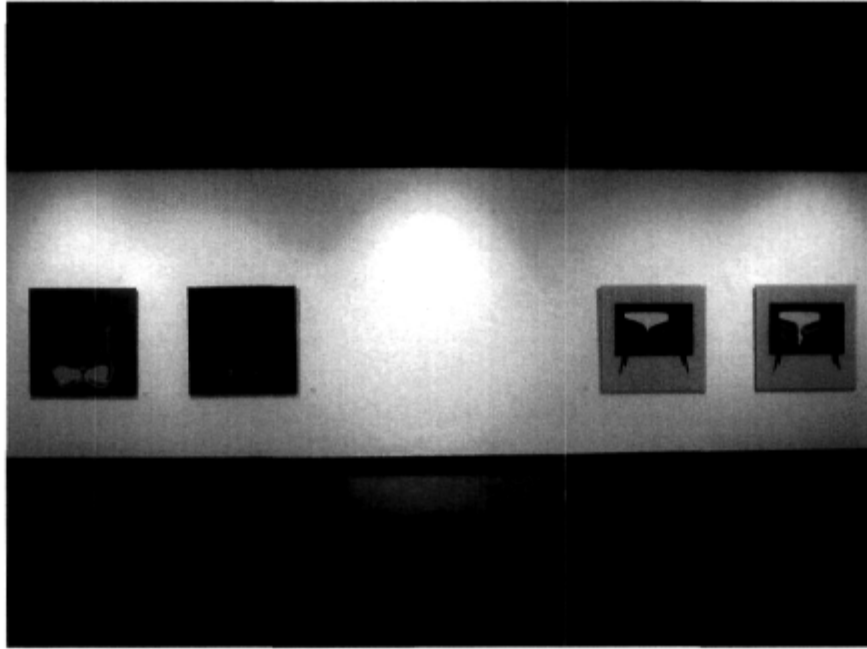


Figure 18. Exhibition documentation. Photograph no.1 at La Galerie Colline. Photograph by Claudia Fournier (2007)



Figure 19. Exhibition documentation. Photograph no.2 at La Galerie Colline. Photograph by Claudia Fournier (2007)



Figure 20. Exhibition documentation. Photograph no.3 at La Galerie Colline. Photograph by Claudia Fournier (2007)

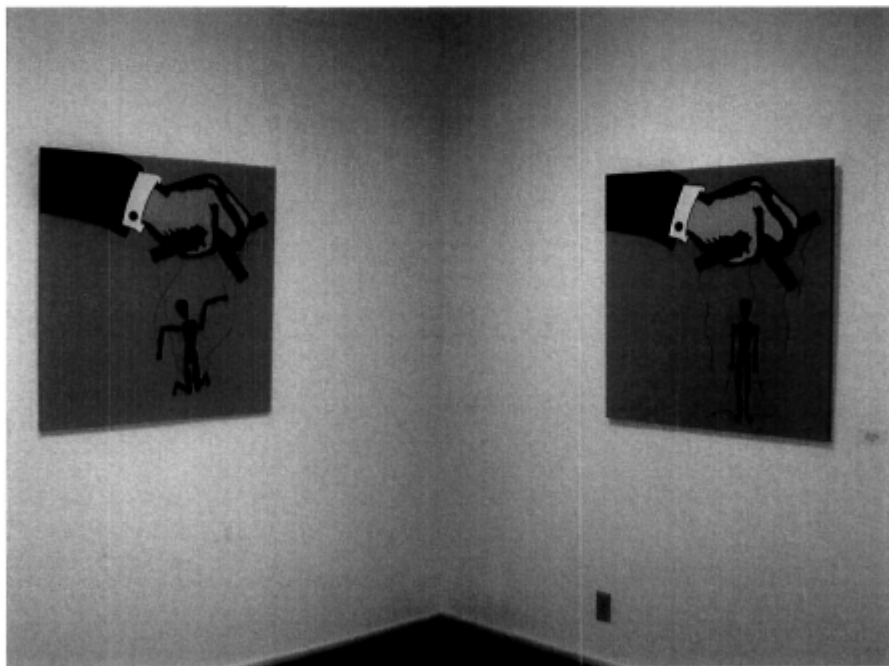


Figure 21. Exhibition documentation. Photograph no.4 at La Galerie Colline. Photograph by Claudia Fournier (2007)

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this research, I expected my project to be enriching and fulfilling but I never expected to find this much knowledge about my art. This research really surprised me. I discovered the presence of three incredible elements in my art: the act of revealing, tensions and metaphors.

During this research, I often found myself to be dealing with issues or thoughts that are normally private and transformed them into public issues or thoughts. I found it to be very interesting. The act of exposing and revealing was very stimulating, as well as lightening. Because of the societal expectation of what I should look or be like, I often carry a lot of weight on my shoulders. By exposing private aspects of my life, I was able to relieve myself of that invisible weight and excess baggage, and it helped me come to peace with who I am.

A few of the people who have seen my artworks have asked me which painting of a series I prefer. At first I was not sure what to answer. Now that I had a chance to think about it, I know that I do not prefer one painting from the others. What I like best is the relationship/tension between the two paintings. The *Forbidden Fruit* and the *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall* series both created *illusion* and *doubt*, as if you are seeing double. *Gazing, Gasping, Eye Candy* and *What's On?* created a *comparison* between two issues, or emotions. Each painting adds to the other and strengthens what I was trying to convey by creating them. I see *Dirty Laundry* and *Act 6, Take 1 & 2* as complimentary diptychs

since they seem to have created a *confrontation* between each other. It is almost as if one painting can communicate with the other. It does not matter whether the paintings created illusion, doubt or confrontations. The tensions created make my artworks more powerful than if each painting was on its own; they create a mysterious force between the paintings. When I chose to create diptychs, I expected to create series of two paintings that worked together as if they were one artwork. What I never expected is the power the paintings would have in pairs. *Forbidden Fruit*, *Dirty Laundry* and *Act 6, Take 1 & 2* are perfect examples of that type of tension formed by the two artworks of a series. These tensions were unexpected, but more than welcomed, since they complete each series.

The most surprising element I discovered in my art was my usage of metaphors. Sometimes, I showed the female body as it is, and at other times, I used metaphors to discuss issues regarding the female body. In a few of the paintings, like *Eye Candy* and *What's On?*, I used objects as symbolic means to represent the female form. Metaphors were not part of the plan I had set out for myself at the beginning of this research. They just happened while I was creating my body of work. My art guided me and metaphors turned out to be one of my most interesting discoveries. Metaphors allowed me to detach myself from the personal questions or issues that I address in my paintings and made my them more accessible.

The representation of women has been the central idea behind my paintings for a very long time and I am proud to say that I am finally ready to move on. The research gave me the answers I needed and allowed me to find peace with my inner demons

regarding my appearance. I have known for a little while that I wanted a change in my work but I did not know in which direction I should go. Now that I had time to reflect more on my work, I know that my life as a woman is still a topic I want to discuss in my paintings. My research project has come to an end, and now, I would like to approach the subject of womanhood, by reflecting on my own experiences and influences. I think it is a theme that is broad enough for me to explore and it is not too different from what I have been doing. I have a lot of ideas to explore. I think I will start by painting different stages of a woman's life. I am hoping that working with a theme that is a little familiar to me will prevent me from getting lost along the way. Moreover, womanhood is a topic close to my heart since I have been emerged in it since birth. I am very excited about this new topic and cannot wait to continue with my paintings.

I learned a lot during the past year and this research had many positive impacts on my life. I learned that I am more than just a painter. I am also a young woman who is very concerned about my surroundings. Painting for me is very soothing and it is a way of transferring my anger, frustrations, preoccupations and thoughts on canvas. Every painting illustrates part of my life. They are about what I feel on good or bad days and sometimes they represent what I was thinking about during a split second. Every now and then, I paint from intuition and this research made me realized that I do not like to over-think each painting before or after it is done. I want the viewers to experience my work on their own and to take a plunge in my universe.

This research allowed me to realize that the art of painting is very important to me. Something inexplicable happens when I mix colours and when I make decisions on the canvas; it is very difficult to describe. To me, the final product is not as important as what I feel and experience during my creative process. My artworks are sort of a personal journal in which I express myself. My art is part of who I am and I truly hope it will always remain like this.

“Have no fear
For when I'm alone
I'll be better off than I was before
I've got this light
I'll be around to grow
Who I was before
I cannot recall...”

- Edward Louis Severson III

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REFERENCES

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