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Thank You for a Lovely Time

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THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY TIME

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of the Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Thank you to my wonderfully supportive family, my patient, honest mentors, and my strange, beautiful friends.

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Abstract

THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY TIME

By Kelley Morrison, MFA

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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Major Director: Susie Ganch
Professor, Department of Craft/Material Studies

Stemming from my own fixation on trying to understand the actions, decisions and thought processes of those around me my work explores the difference between internal and external lives. I construct “brain spaces”; whether my own or someone else’s I strive to understand the decisions they have made and the stories we are a part of. I combine thoughts, feeling and sentiments which I have collected over my life to make objects that act as intermediaries, allowing others to imagine stepping into a mind other than their own. I attempt to bring the landscape of the mind into the physical plane, and to cross the impassable threshold between what is inside and outside of the psyche.

DISTORTED ARCHETYPES

Because there is no better place to start a story, I will start mine in the middle.

There was never any blood. No scars. I never saw any physical evidence, save a lone bucket of vomit. It is amazing how transformative events that we only experience through what others tell us can be. I have acted as a witness for a number of friends as they have fought their way through difficult situations. By listening to their stories I try to provide the only comfort I can: the knowledge that they are not alone, that there is someone who sees what they are experiencing. As a result I encounter their experiences through story and I live them through imagination. Even though I didn't witness these events first hand, that doesn't mean that they aren't real to me. I've imagined them enough times that they are more clear in my memory than the iconic and defining Lifetime-Movie moments like my high school graduation and my first kiss. For me those life experiences are little more than foggy images filed away in my memory with all the other societal rights-of-passage that actually mean very little to me.

Instead I am haunted by events that I was not there to see. I explore these imagined experiences to understand them, I relive them, I remember them, and now these stories that aren't mine have become a part of me. They have come to life as the monster in nightmares and daydreams. Their presence takes on the form of a woman. She used to come to me as a

flash in dreams, only ever showing a part of herself: teeth, or eyes, maybe her neck, but always covered with pearls. She follows me now even in my waking hours with a smile on her face and a string of pearls caught between her teeth like a candy necklace ready to be consumed. I see her everywhere. I project her onto others. She has become the lens through which I see the world and the demon who keeps me awake at night. She is the catalyst for my desperate need to understand the decisions that other people make.

I spend time trying to crawl into the minds of my loved ones and as a result, they have become a permanent part of me. The series that made up my candidacy



Fig. 1 *Distorted Archetypes Series*, 2014

exhibition entitled *Distorted Archetypes* explores four of the relationships that have carved out and inhabited space in my mind. These four headpieces were a way for me to construct and literally get into someone else's head, to see through their eyes, to understand the decisions they have made and the stories we are a part of.

TELL ME A STORY

It was one of my favorite fictional characters, The Doctor from *Doctor Who*, who said, “We are all stories in the end,”¹ and so we are, but more than that, we are stories all along. We are altered, influenced, and built by stories. We are main characters, we play supporting roles, and each story is different based on which character tells it. As a result we are also storytellers.

We exist as narratives in the imaginations of others. When used to our advantage this can be a form of protection by telling stories that are modified or fictitious; we can control the way that others perceive us. Fiction as a tool holds the ability to enlighten, to inspire sentiment, and to deceive. Storytelling can be a way to understand difficult situations and to simplify incomprehensible complexities. In the mind, real people become fanciful characters, stretched and shaped by remembering. “This is not to say that our lives are fictions. Unlike Robinson Crusoe or Emma Bovary we are embedded in a universe with physical and moral dimensions where every thought and action splinters into a million consequences.”² By examining the way that I remember I begin to separate the people in my life from the caricatures they have become in my mind. At the same time the

¹ *Doctor Who*. BBC Worldwide Americas ;, 2010. Film.

² Broks, Paul. *Into the Silent Land: Travels in Neuropsychology*. New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2003. Print. p.41

caricatures become simplified, distilled to their basic archetypes. The archetypes I use are by no means an exclusive list; more could always be added. The four I worked with are the quintessential representations of prominent people in the stories that have influenced me the most. These archetypes function as tools to help me simplify and understand the people around me. Though my goal may be to understand others, the reality is that I am creating and getting to know romanticized versions of the people in my life. By transforming real people into fictitious representations they enter into my daydreams. As I allow my mind to wander through fanciful scenarios I can investigate each character through different perspectives and begin to feel like I understand them. I interpret others' identities in a fluid way which allows me to imagine and to remember the people around me more complexly, but not necessarily more accurately.

REMEMBERING

Memory is an undeniable force because of its malleability. In *Memories of Things Unseen* Elizabeth F. Loftus discusses how easily memories can be distorted. Not only can they be altered or even implanted through suggestion, the act of remembering slightly alters a memory each time it is relived.³ The harder we try to hold onto a memory, the more it changes and the faster it slips away. “Memory [...] is a shifting, fading, partial thing, a net that doesn’t catch all the fish by any means and sometime catches butterflies that don’t exist.”⁴ There is always a blurry line between the remembered and the imagined.

Using altered remembrances as a tool it is possible bring together multiple times and places and allow them to interact with one another.⁵ I see this same phenomenon when I look at Stephen Gallagher’s work. Using visual references from the Elizabethan era and the history of the decorative arts,



Fig. 2 Stephen Gallagher, *Arcadian Brooch Triple Ruff Blue*, 2008

Source: jamfactory.com.au

³ Loftus, Elizabeth F. "Memories of Things Unseen." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 13.4 (2004): 145-47. Print.

⁴ Solnit, Rebecca. *The Faraway Nearby*. Penguin Group, 2013. Print. p.12

⁵ Amy Tavern. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.amytavern.com>>

⁶ *Visual Arts Australia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://vaaus.co.uk/stephen-gallagher/>>.

Stephen compresses time and space. His brightly colored jewelry manages to look old and new, pulling the past into the present, creating fiction out of history.⁶

Distorted Archetypes does this on a personal level, taking moments from my own history and recreating them in an intentionally exaggerated and embellished form. Through this reinterpretation of my own memories I present them as a fixed point in time; by hitting the pause button I can stop and examine a situation more closely. This acts as a way to preserve one specific moment in the life of a memory while it continues mutating in my mind. The physical objects I create enshrine one fixed point in the story's evolution capturing the breath of transition between before and after.

In the same way Kuntee Sirikrai's *Hidden Moments* series explores the deformation of time through the lens of a single moment. Time itself becomes distorted to find the fractures of a difficult memory in the search to understand. She isolates a moment of change, the time between the before and the after of an event when it can feel as if time itself is being altered.⁷



Fig 3 Kuntee Sirikrai, *Hidden Moments*, 2013
Source: kunteesirikrai.com

⁷ Kuntee Sirikrai. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.kunteesirikrai.com/>>.

PEARLS

One of the ways that my imagined memories manifest in my work is through the use of fake pearls. Through the light of my *Distorted Archetypes* series fake pearls take on a sinister meaning shaded by the dark possibilities of what they stand in for. They are the binding element, adorning every seam, literally holding each headpiece together in the same way that difficult experiences bind us to those who we experience them with.

Pearls reference wealth and power in many cultures throughout history. They were worn and coveted by royalty for their beauty and limited supply. It is said that Cleopatra crushed a pearl into a glass of wine and proceeded to drink it as a show of power and wealth to the Roman Empire.⁸ Pearls are symbols of power, purity, and perfection, and have been imitated with alabaster, blown glass, and paint made with fish scales since the Roman Empire. The poorer classes took advantage of these fake pearls, which allowed them access to a stand-in for a symbol of wealth and power. The wealthy also wore faux pearls, sometimes as a more casual alternative saving their precious gems for important parties, by commissioning fakes of their expensive jewelry to be worn and enjoyed while

⁸ NOVA. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/history-pearls.html>>.

the real gems remained safely locked away, or as a way to exaggerate the appearance of their wealth.⁹



Fig 4 *Queen Elizabeth I*, Unknown Artist, 1588

Source: npg.org.uk

imitation pearl industry.¹¹ It was common during this time to use faux pearls to create grand spectacles of adornment, the likes of which could not be made with the limited amount of real pearls harvested from oysters.¹²

Now faux pearls are made mostly of plastic, or glass in the case of higher quality fakes, that has been covered with pearlescent paint. It is the paradox of faux pearls, a

Portraits from the Elizabethan Era show the time periods abundant use of pearls as adornment. During this time Sumptuary Laws made it illegal for anyone below the status of a Duke or Duchess to wear pearls. Their price and finite availability always controlled who could possess them, but Elizabethan Sumptuary laws added an element of legality to their exclusivity.¹⁰

Queen Elizabeth I herself had such an affinity for pearls that she and her courtiers fueled the

⁹ *Big Bead Little Bead*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014.

<http://www.bigbeadlittlebead.com/guides_and_information/history_of_faux_pearls.php>.

¹⁰ *Elizabethan Sumptuary Statutes*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014. <<http://elizabethan.org/sumptuary/who-wears-what.html>>.

¹¹ *American Museum of Natural History*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014.

<<http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/pearls/what-are-pearls/imitation-pearls>>.

¹² *Two Nerdy History Girls*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2014.

<<http://twonerdyhistorygirls.blogspot.com/2011/05/roman-pearls-faux-jewels-for-18th-c.html>>.

manufactured symbol of purity and perfection that I find so captivating. They are honestly false and falsely honest; perfectly, consistently spherical in a way that nature could never make them, they carry a false version of the symbolism of their rare and greatly desired counterpart.

Pearls are coveted irritations, worn proudly by the wealthy while faux pearls are a proud imitation. They are made to mimic the beauty of layers built through agitation. In my work they become badges of survival, resistance, and dark possibility. I use faux pearls because they are deceptive, designed to look like something they are not. In the same way my *Distorted Archetypes* series is a tool of deception. I use these head pieces to lie to myself, to convince myself that I understand situations that I cannot possibly understand. It is easy to see a faux pearls' pearlescent coating flaking off, revealing the slightly translucent plastic beads underneath, just as when I examine my archetypes more closely I can see them as stand-ins, as faux versions of the people they represent. These characters and the stories they enact exists in the confines of my imagination, they may be based on event that really happened, but the only way that I experience them is through fabricated memories.

HEADSPACE

The head is the most public and the most private space we have. It is literally the face we show the world while at the same time it holds our most intimate thoughts and feelings. It's where we keep our stories; it is the center of our narrative selves. To get inside someone's head, to truly understand them, is a herculean feat, but that has never stopped me from trying to achieve it.

With the *Distorted Archetypes* series I explore the transformation of my relationships with others to memory and of memory to internal mythology. This transition is one that takes place in the internal spaces of my mind, accessible to me alone. But just as pearls peek out through seams and spill around the edges into the external space of this work, I began to notice changes in my relationships that seemed to be fueled by the distortions occurring to my internal narratives. As a result I wonder how much I should trust my memory, when it is at best one version of the truth. When seen in this light stories quickly become complex with each player making decisions based not only on events which have occurred, but their own shifting recollections of these events. In this way our stories are just as internal as they are external.

“Where does a story begin? The fiction is that they do, and end, rather than that the stuff of a story is just a cup of water scooped from the sea and poured back into it”.¹³ There are stories that I can tell only by starting in the middle, because all there is to some stories is the middle. To say that our stories begin with “once upon a time” and end with “happily ever after” is a notion best left to princesses and fairytales. We live complexly in ever changing stories that started before we are born and continue after we die. We do not exist in a vacuum, so our stories are inseparable from all the others.

Shifts in perspective can put into place arbitrary boundaries through the center of shared experiences. “We are all the heroes of our own stories, and one of the arts of perspective is to see yourself small on the stage of another’s story, to see the vast expanse of the world that is not about you, and to see your power, to make your life, to make others, or break them, to tell stories rather than be told by them.”¹⁴ Through the *Distorted Archetype* series I try to see a larger story, one where heroes and villains are one in the same depending on whose perspective the story is seen through, a story based on relativity and not absolutes. No one is all good, or all evil- instead, we are a combination defined by the decisions we make.

The headpieces are infused with the personalities of the characters they represent having been distilled down to their basic archetype and then reimagined as complex beings. They are *Jester*, *Twins*, *Magician*, and *Sage*. We all have a little bit of them in us and if given the chance to imagine slipping into their mind their character is accentuated. By giving viewers the chance to fill the helmets with their own versions of these

¹³ Solnit, Rebecca. *The Faraway Nearby*. Penguin Group, 2013. Print. p.27

archetypes I prompt them to examine the interactions they have with their own facsimiles of these characters.

“We glimpse a stranger on the street, and the exchange lasts barely a moment. But then we go home and think on it and think on it and try to understand what the glance meant and inspect it from this angle and from that one, spinning futures and fantasies around it. The experience that lasted an instant plays out for a lifetime inside us. It becomes, in fact, the story of our lives.”¹⁵ I am interested in the way that we as humans interact with each other, how we interpret and store that information as memory and story, how those stories stay with us, and how they influence who we become.



Fig 5 *Distorted Archetypes: Sage*, 2014

people they stand in for. The *Sage* is made of a series of chased flowers each brightly colored, popping out from their dark patinated, copper background as they wrap around the head. These flowers form a

My characters, if I can even claim them as mine, are intricate, but they will never be as complicated as the



Fig 6 *Distorted Archetypes: Sage*, 2014

¹⁴ Solnit, Rebecca. *The Faraway Nearby*. Penguin Group, 2013. Print. p.29

¹⁵ Iyer, Pico. *The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere*. Simon & Schuster. Print. p.21-22

conversation between me and the Sage to be read through Victorian flower language. It consists of questions and wise words that sound like fortune cookie phrases; the kind of knowledge that comes from experience, that you can't understand until you understand it. Faux pearls bubble around the edges of the flowers, filling in gaps and securing the spiraling conversation into place. They are a purity that the *Sage* has manufactured for herself. Their beauty is a scar constructed around irritation; they are a growth and a sign of growth. Her spirit is both dark and light; she is lovely and she has earned it.

This work acts a memorial for my memories. Trapping the people in my life in the state which I remember them and at a time when we were part of a shared experience. Each object is a frozen moment preserving a complicated and wonderful relationship. They can be seen as my attempt to reconcile the different versions of people that I encounter: knowing them both in real time, and in memory or imagination.

WALLFLOWER

When I was in elementary school I made friendship bracelets: colorful embroidery floss knotted into patterned strips. I must have made hundreds of them. Sitting in the off-white box that is my parents' living room, I would tie the same series of knots for hours, till my fingers became raw from the thread sliding between them. I never wore them and I never gave them away, they were only ever friendship bracelets in name. I made them to make them. What happened to them after that never mattered, not even enough to hand them off as a gift. Not that my crippling shyness would have made it easy to present my friends with these small tokens of affection, but the thought of giving them away never even crossed my mind. To me their value was in their making and nowhere else. The material was abundant and a lot of the colors were ugly. In fact the more interesting and complex the patterns got the more colors had to be used, and the uglier the end result was. I made them so that my hands didn't have to be still, when they were finished, when they had fulfilled their purpose I forgot about them. As soon as the final knot was tied each bracelet was doomed to exist only as a marker of time spent. They are probably still sitting in a bag at my parents' house collecting dust. "It's only by taking myself away from clutter and distraction that I can begin to hear something out of earshot and recall that listening is

much more invigorating than giving voice to all the thoughts and prejudices that anyway keep me company twenty-four hours a day.”¹⁶

I have always been good at finding excuses to spend a lot of time in my head. If my hands were busy I would be left to myself, to quietly work. To be quiet and to have busy hand became my go to tactic to retreat from the outside world into the world in my head, the one truly private place. Looking back I understand the compulsion to make as a way to distance myself from everything around me and to feed my shy and self-conscious desire to be invisible. Now as an adult I question the reason for that impulse and the ramifications of this defensive tactic. Did I become an artist and maker because it was my childhood refuge from the world or did I simply follow a pattern that I was genetically predisposed to follow? My skilled hands and my ability to make are one of the most prominent ways through which I define myself. How much of who I am did I construct from the desires of a shy child and how much is coded in my DNA?

To make is my compulsion. I was raised with the understanding that what is broken can be fixed, machines require maintenance, and that my hands were a tool capable of accomplishing these tasks. As my father was fixing cars and building shelves, my mother was patching worn out jeans, my brother was building computers and I was sewing doll clothes and prom dresses for my friends. I grew up in a house of hands that were never still. I rely on a depression-era mantra passed to me by my grandmother: “Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without”. When something falls into disrepair my instinct is not to discard, but to alter, to mend, and to hold on.

¹⁶ Iyer, Pico. *The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere*. Simon & Schuster. Print. p.62

ELSEWHERE

For me, the draw of being a metalsmith is that it crosses boundaries of time and tradition, function and decoration. I really love the idea of time travel. I am always wishing that I was somewhere other than where I am. Whether I am trying to hold on to the past, or trying to propel myself into the future, I am always trying to be elsewhere. In *Wanderlust* Elisabeth Eaves says, “Photographers, like writers, want to pin things down. Not entirely happy with the flow of time, we try to capture and explain, to seize moments and then hold them up to the light for examination, savoring what’s passed.”¹⁷ I may not strive for travel in the same way as Elizabeth, who wants to physically be other places, but I do aim for mental travel. I love daydreaming, visiting old memories and possible futures. I love the idea of art and object making as a way to pause and dissect one moment caught from one point of view. By using techniques from the past I get to travel through time. I form vessels by angle raising, a process which became obsolete in the late 1700s with the increased availability to lathes and rolling mills.¹⁸ I prefer my jewelers saw to a laser cutter, CNC router or any other form of modern technology that may get the job done faster. I get to use

¹⁷ Eaves, Elisabeth. *Wanderlust: A Love Affair with Five Continents*. Berkeley, Calif.: Seal, 2011. Print. p.66

¹⁸ Ward, Barbara McLean. *Silver in American Life: Selections from the Mabel Brady Garvan and Other Collections at Yale University*. Boston, Mass.: D.R. Godine, 1979. Print. p.23

processes from the past to make objects that are designed to function in the present. While I have it, I embrace the luxury of having the time to dedicate to making an object by hand.



Fig 7 *Curious Vessel Series*, 2014 (Process Image)

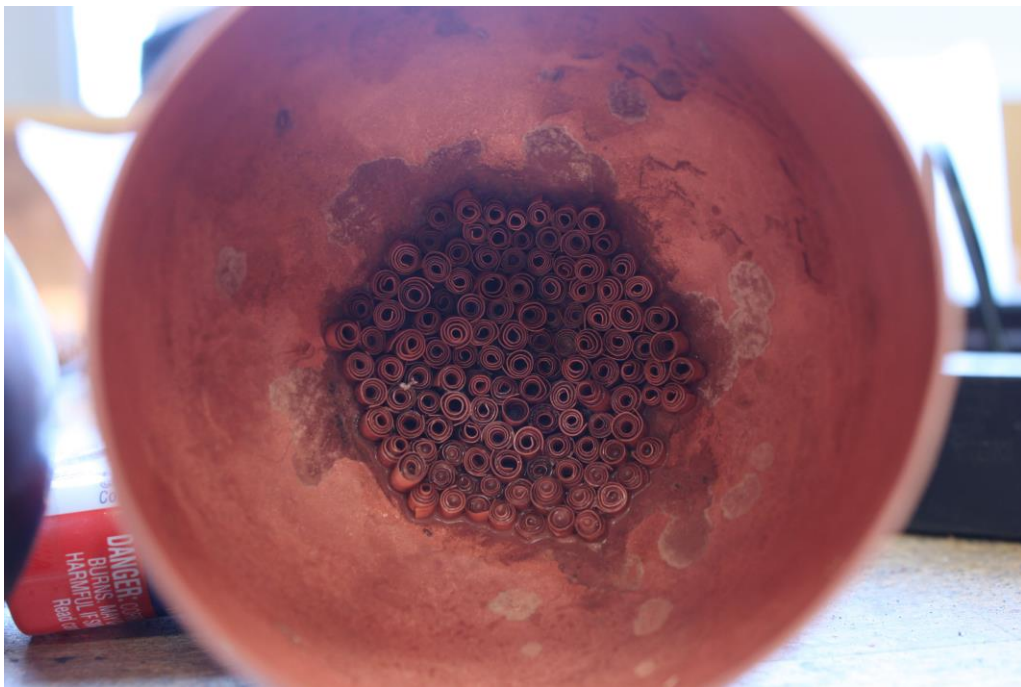


Fig 8 *Curious Vessel Series*, 2014 (Process Image)

Time is precious. In a time when almost everything can be instant I wonder what it means to take your time just because you can. I wonder what it means to choose the long way. I wonder what that time spent making contributes to an object in a world that is instant. In *Thickening the Edge*, Lisa Galnick notes, “Most recently, a further transformation has taken place with the advent of digital technology that allows immediate access to image through the internet, and, additionally, the emergence of a new class of objects produced with computer assisted design technologies that allow for quick and subtle variations in product design. Hand-crafted functional objects can no longer be experienced on their own terms, and any interaction with a crafted vessel must be seen in light of the mass-produced norm from which it deviates.”¹⁹ I wonder all of this and more knowing that the techniques I choose and the histories I align myself with are no longer common knowledge. For example, floriography was a form of communication used in the Victorian era in which flowers were given to communicate particular sentiments. In a time with strict and conservative rules of etiquette this flower language grew into a complex code through which thoughts and feelings could be quietly and secretly passed between friends and lovers. As floriography evolved books filled with the meanings of flowers were published. Differences between meanings in the various floriography dictionaries made it easy for miscommunications to happen, adding an extra variable to this already coded form of communication. This being the case, floriography is more about getting across a feeling than it is about exact wording or specific phrases. Flowers were used in instances where

¹⁹ Galnick, Lisa. "Thickening the Edge: Holloware in an Age of Pluralism." *Lisa Galnick : Published Writings by Galnick : Thickening the Edge: Holloware in an Age of Pluralism*. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

words were inadequate. Now the meanings of flowers are no longer common knowledge and because of this I am drawn to floriography as a tool which I can use to embed into my work important conversations and feelings without betraying those with who I have shared them. Each flower I use represents a turning point in my life that has shaped who I have become.

SELF

My work deals with the construction of identity or self. “[The Brain] constructs a model of the organism of which it is a part and, beyond this, a representation of that organism’s place in relation to other, similar, organisms: people. As part of this process it assembles a ‘self’, which can be thought of as the device we humans employ as a means of negotiating the social environment.”²⁰ There are parts of who we are that are inherent, but we also gather little bits and pieces, from mannerism to mentalities, from the people around us. I see people less as individuals and more as overlapping webs of influences that are forever in flux. We are forever influenced by the people around us, holding onto the pieces of them that we like for ourselves and leaving the rest to them. At times it feels like there are stark lines separating everybody from everybody else, other times it feels like there are no dividing lines and I can feel others bleeding into my identity. I find myself in others. Through repetitive processes of growth through accumulation I make work the same way that I make myself.

“The self is a patchwork of the felt and unfelt, of presences and absences, of navigable channels around the walled off numbness.”²¹ I explore identity the only way that I can, through the only identity that I have constructed: my own. By focusing on a single

²⁰ Broks, Paul. *Into the Silent Land: Travels in Neuropsychology*. New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2003. Print. p.51

facet of personality I aim to better understand the implications and realities of being a wallflower. To be a wallflower, with all the stereotypes of introversion the word implies, has become a pillar of my identity. To be quiet and to be introverted are seen as undesirable personality traits, aspects to be changed. I often feel pressure to be an altered version of myself because others think that I will be happier, more productive, or better if I change what comes to me naturally. The term wallflower is a 16th century word, which refers to a woman who has no one to dance with at a party and as a result stands along the wall. The word has evolved to mean “a shy person, especially a girl or woman, who is frightened to involve herself in social activities and does not attract much interest or attention”.²² A wallflower is seen as timid and afraid. From where I stand, as a person who identifies as being a wallflower I see the advantages of being quiet. I find comfort in seeing and not being seen, it allows me to move more freely. Attention from others only leads to an overbearing sense of self-consciousness. In my Thesis Exhibition, *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, I recreate the experience of being a wallflower. To observe and to be observed are constants in the existence of a wallflower.

From the outside the viewer is able to look in, to observe the inside from limited vantage points. When one enters, the viewer becomes surrounded by a pattern that shifts and changes in subtle ways that may not make sense. These slight disruptions compound,

²¹ Solnit, Rebecca. *The Faraway Nearby*. Penguin Group, 2013. Print. p.116

²² "Wallflower." *Wallflower - Definition in the British English Dictionary & Thesaurus - Cambridge Dictionaries Online (US)*. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.
<<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/british/wallflower>>.



Fig 9 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, 2015



Fig 10 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, 2015

and while they were implemented as a way to fix and to make sense of the pattern, the end result is that they have made any over laying pattern hard to find.

In this exploration of internal and external spaces I allow the viewer to experience standing on the outside trying to look in and also standing on the inside feeling observed. The exterior of the space has been designed to show only hints of what lies inside and when one enters the small internal space they are surrounded by pattern and color in a way that is disquieting and overwhelming. I am interested in where power and comfort lie. I know that personally I feel much more comfortable in the protected internal space with the ability and choice to look out. Because of the all-encompassing nature of the wallpaper the viewer may not want to or be interested in looking outward. Who would, after all, want to



Fig 11 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, 2015 (detail)



Fig 12 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, 2015 (detail)

peer out of place of wonder, fantasy and possibility into reality, when inside the space it is easy to feel as if Wonderland may be through one of the doors in front of you? The possibility of what could lay beyond any of these doors is endless, making this space one of imagination and wonder. The small space can also be confining, positioning its occupants as caged, to be viewed from the outside like an animal at the zoo. There is power and vulnerability in both the internal and external vantage points. Outside it is easy and tempting to peer in, to explore the internal space from the slits between the doors. The inside is an enticing place of color and wonder, but can you enjoy it knowing that you are being watched from the outside, that there is someone peering in at you?

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Thank You for a Lovely Time has acted as a way for me to understand my own patterns. When it comes to process I can be a bit obsessive. My approach has not changed since the days of making friendship bracelets but my materials have. It is difficult for me to think singularly, instead I think in strands of beads, thousands of hand-made jump rings, and series of vessels.



Fig 13 *Curious Vessel Series*, 2014



Fig 14 *Distorted Archetypes: Twins*, 2014



Fig 15 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, 2015 (Process Image)



Fig 16 Dance Recital, 1998

Fueled by my deep-seated desire to figure out if practice really does make perfect I design work that allows me to repeat the same task hundreds if not thousands of times. What I have found through this approach to making is that by combining and layering a single gesture there is room for each mark to be imperfect because when seen as a whole the imperfections fade away. It is through repetitive process that I find a sense of clarity. There is a magic that only happens in movement: a state of mind that can only be reached through being present in your body. I was a dancer from age six to nineteen and even though it has been years since I've stood at a ballet barre the movements and mentalities I learned there will always be familiar to me. My hand remembers the steady comfort of the barres' stainless steel support as readily as the feel of the hammer I hold today. The physical and mental awareness that happens through metalsmithing is strikingly similar to that of dancing, where movement is derived from the desire to refine my abilities until precision is second nature. With each hammer blow, as with each plié, habits are formed and abilities are honed.

To us my hands, to make, is a large part of who I am and as a result, I am everywhere in this work. From the hand drawn flowers in the wallpaper to the processes used to alter it, I have embedded my likeness and my hand into every aspect of the piece. When one enters into the small enclosure they are surrounded by flowers colored with a pallet pulled from the various hair colors I have had and chosen for their meanings in

Victorian Flower
Language. The
flowers I chose adorn
the walls the same
way I adorn myself
and their meanings
from some of the
prominent memories
and mantras that
cyclically flow
through my mind. To
open a door into my



Fig 17 Wallpaper Pattern, 2015

thoughts would be to enter into a systematic loop of thoughts which influence the decisions I make and the way that I interact with others. When decoded, the floral wallpaper reads: thinking of an absent friend, I'll remember, I'll never tell, thank you for a lovely time. These are thoughts that repeat again and again in my mind that viewers would never know unless I told them. They are sentiments that have been given to me by others; memories of words exchanged that have stuck with me and continue to guide me. On a daily basis my mind is full of past conversations and what has come from them, of hypothetical future conversations and what could prompt them, about how I react to all of these things, about how all of it defines me, and about the distance between the person who reacted in the past and the way that I would react in the future. My mind is a self-reflexive cycle of what-ifs.

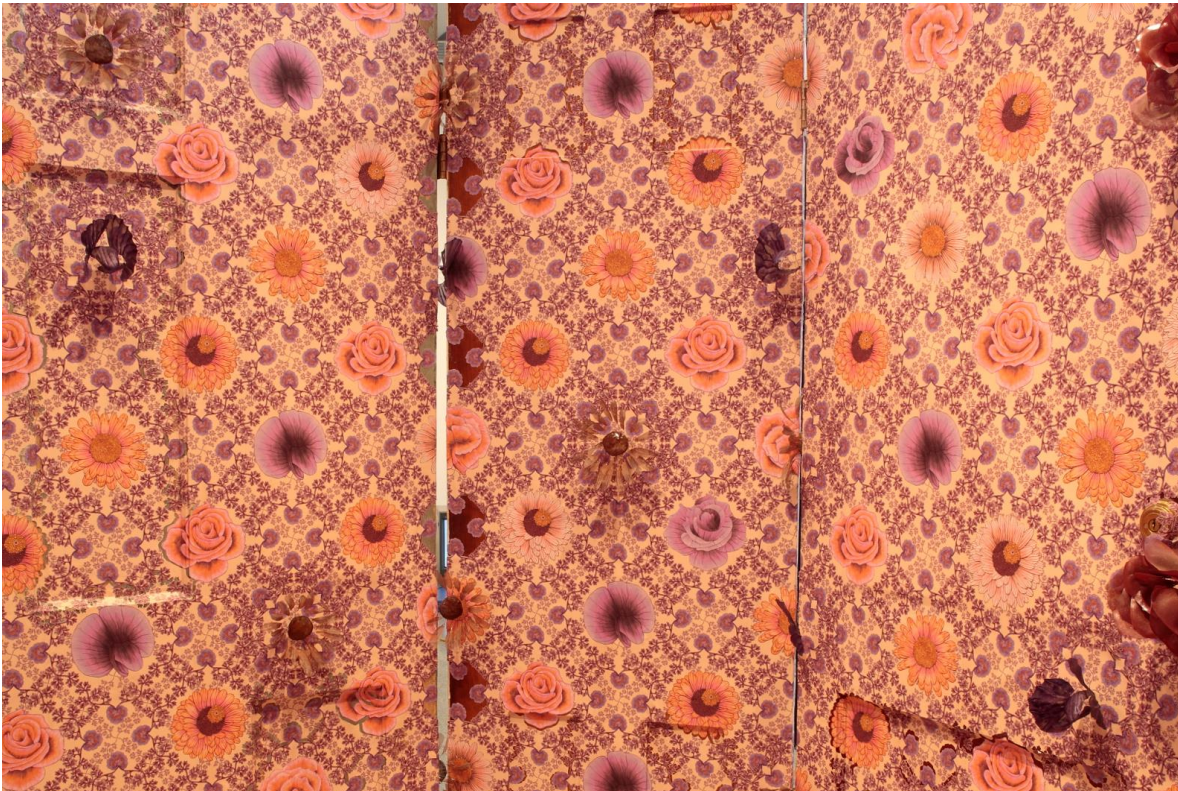


Fig 18 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, 2015 (detail)

What if you didn't remember? What if I did tell? What if we had been more present? This cycle of self-conscious thoughts acts as a censor that is only quieted when my hands are busy, which gives me ample drive to hide behind the time consuming processes I cling to. Furthered by this cycle is my need to understand and to control, so I wonder



Fig 19 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, 2015 (detail)

what the fuel is: the need for my hands to be working, making, and mending inspired by familial environment or the introverted anxiety that seems to be written into my genetics. Is one a cause and the other an effect or are they just a combination of elements that result in the perfect storm that is my need to be invisible? Through this exhibition I invite you to step into my mind, to surround yourself with the thought processes that are my constant companions. See how it feels, examine my patterns with their constantly shifting, always the sameness. I hope you find it unsettling, I know that I do.

MOVING FORWARD

I know that I will never be able to read someone else's mind, or to fully understand their actions and decisions. That will probably never stop me from trying. So much of who I am I have gotten from the people I am surrounded by and because of this I feel that the only way to understand myself is to understand those who influence me. As I begin the transition out of graduate school I leave knowing that who I am will change when I get where I'm going next. I look forward to getting to know myself again. I leave this version of myself behind, but I will miss her, and those who brought her to life. As I close this chapter in my life the only thing left to say is thank you for a lovely time.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

- 2015 MFA Candidate Craft/Material Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, VA
2013 BFA Metals, University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, WI

Scholarships/Awards

- 2014 Penland Work Study Scholarship, Partial Tuition Waiver
2014 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Spring 2014, Virginia Commonwealth University, Full Tuition Waiver and \$5000 Stipend
2013 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Fall 2013, Virginia Commonwealth University, Full Tuition Waiver and \$5000 Stipend
2012 UWW-Undergraduate Research Program, Research Grant
UWW-Undergraduate Research Program, Summer Undergraduate Research, Community Based Research Grant
2011 UWW-Undergraduate Research Program, Research Grant, Arts and Humanities Oral Presentation Award Winner
2010 UWW-Undergraduate Research Program, Research Grant

Exhibitions

- 2015 *Thank You for a Lovely Time*, MFA Thesis Exhibition, The Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Momentum, SNAG Annual Student Exhibition, Boston Park Plaza, Boston, MA
2014 *Remarks on Seeing*, FAB Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, VA
Where Words are not Enough: MFA Candidacy Exhibition, Art Space, Richmond, VA
Refined VIII: Maker's Choice, SFA Art Galleries, Nacogdoches, TX
2013 *FAKTURA 2013*, Lewandowski Student Gallery, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC
Alchemy 2: A Global Vision For Enamel, Carnegie Visual and Performing Arts Center, Covington, KY
2012 *UW-W Art Faculty Exhibit and Invited Students*, Studio 84, Whitewater, WI
Annual Student Juried Show, Crossman Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI, Honorable Mention
Fusion, SNAG Student Juried Exhibition, Trailblazer's Ballroom, The Westin Kierland Resort and Spa, Scottsdale, AZ

- 2011 *Not Your Everyday Stitching*, Fiskum Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
Annual Student Juried Show, Crossman Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
Preserve the eARTh, Fiskum Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
- 2010 *The Adornment Show*, Invitational Exhibition, Winnebago Studios, Madison, WI
No Boundaries, SNAG Annual Student Juried Exhibition, Glassell Junior School Building, Museum of Fine Arts, Huston, TX
Best of the Best, Group invitational, Fiskum Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
Annual Student Juried Show, Crossman Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI, Honorable Mention
Fiber: Fun, Funky, and Functional, Harry and Laura Nohr Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Platteville
Food for Thought, Thomas Mann Gallery I/O, New Orleans, LA

Related Work Experience

- 2014 Adjunct Instructor, Intermediate Forming and Fabrication , Department of Craft/Material Studies School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (Fall 2014)
 Adjunct Instructor, Beginning Jewelry and Metalsmithing, Department of Craft/Material Studies School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (Summer 2014)
- 2013 Metals Studio Camp Councilor, UW-Whitewater Grandchildren's University
- 2012 Metals Studio Camp Councilor, UW-Whitewater Grandchildren's University
- 2010-2013 Lab Tech, Metals Studio, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, provide studio maintenance and student assistance during Lab sessions

Attended Presentations and Workshops

- 2012 Filigree Workshop, Stacey Lee Webber, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
 Panel Discussion with Jamie Bennett, Anya Kivarkis, Amelia Toelke, Jonathan Wahl, and Yevgeniya Kaganovich, Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, Milwaukee, WI
 Enameling Workshop, Jessica Calderwood, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
 Found Object Workshop, Mary Frissbee Johnson, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
- 2011 Rapid Prototyping Workshop, Phil Renato, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
- 2010 Pewter Workshop, Fred Fenster, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
 Kiff Slemons, Visiting Artist, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
 Bruce Metcalf, Artist Lecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI
 Lauren Kalman, Artist Lecture, The Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, WI
 Granulation Workshop, Ana Lopez, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI

Organizations

2013-Present American Craft Council
2013-Present Ethical Metalsmiths
2013-Present Ethical Metalsmiths Student Committee, Founding Member
2009-Present Society of North American Goldsmiths
2009 – 2013 Alloy, Student Metalsmithing Organization, UW-Whitewater, WI
2012-2013 President of Alloy, Student Metalsmithing Organization, UW-Whitewater, WI