

Lindenwood University

Digital Commons@Lindenwood University

---

Theses

Theses & Dissertations

---

Spring 3-2015

## Altared Object

Erin Jameson Brown

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/theses>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

---

ALTARED OBJECT

by

Erin Jameson Brown

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Studio Art  
at  
Lindenwood University

© March 2015, Erin Jameson Brown

The author hereby grants Lindenwood University permission to reproduce and to distribute publicly paper and electronic thesis copies of document in whole or in part in any medium now known or hereafter created.

Erin Jameson Brown

Author

Grant Hargate

Committee Chair

Nicole Ottwell

Committee Member

Jacob Stanley

Committee Member

John Troy

Committee Member

ALTARED OBJECT

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Art and Design Department  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts  
at  
Lindenwood University

By

Erin Jameson Brown  
Saint Charles, Missouri

March 2015

## Abstract

The thesis exhibition *Altered Object* seeks to undermine and expose the established religious and patriarchal practices that cause harm to women in contemporary society. In my art, I attempt to expose the latent sexist oppression that exists in society and in the church; how fundamental and foundational it is to our societal norms; and how this oppression is still widely accepted and adhered to, but not necessarily acknowledged today. Through the use of mass-produced objects which I have purchased from thrift stores or found online, seemingly innocuous objects will be repurposed through a process of appropriation and reintroduced in a new context. These objects are reclaimed which were once considered detritus, things that were given away or thrown away, and reintroduced to the viewer in a parallel to the way in which misogyny discards women. The original purpose and appearance of each object is not entirely obscured; each item is presented, however, in a new and almost alien fashion, completely out of place from its original intended function and message.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Methodology, Production and Analysis.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Altared Object: Personhood .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Altared Object: Presence .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Altared Object: Power .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Altared Object: Presentation .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>List of works in MFA exhibition .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>49</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

In full gratitude, I would like to acknowledge the following individuals who encouraged, inspired, supported, assisted, and sacrificed themselves to help me in my artistic pursuits.

Within the committee itself, I would like to thank Professors John Troy, Grant Hargate, Jacob Stanley, and Nicole Ottwell for excellent critique and advice, and for encouraging me to keep making. In my family, I would like to thank my husband Neal Brown, who patiently listens to me, bravely debates with me and lovingly encourages me. For technical assistance and moral support, I thank Joe Weber. For editorial and research support, I thank Dr. James Hutson. Without each of them, this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you.

**List of Figures**

<i>Figure 1: Altared Object: Power</i>	33
<i>Fig 1A: Begging for Mercy</i>	34
<i>Fig 1B: Misguided</i>	35
<i>Fig 1C: Done</i>	36
<i>Figure 2: Altared Object: Personhood</i>	37
<i>Fig 2A: Made for His Pleasure</i>	38
<i>Fig 2B: Coated</i>	39
<i>Fig 2C: Daphne</i>	40
<i>Figure 3: Altared Object: Presence</i>	41
<i>Fig 3A: Such a Pretty Girl</i>	42
<i>Fig 3B: Extinguished</i>	43
<i>Fig 3C: Here</i>	44
<i>Figure 4: Altared Object: Presentation</i>	45
<i>Fig 4A: The Next Score</i>	46
<i>Fig 4B: Preserved</i>	47
<i>Fig 4C: Unbroken</i>	48

## Introduction

Central to modern feminist theory is the idea of objectification. A very basic explanation of objectification as found in the dictionary is seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, *as an object*.<sup>1</sup> There are many ways a person can be objectified. Using one another as instruments is a very normal aspect of everyday life. I use a chef to prepare a meal; I use a taxi driver to drive a taxi. The work in this thesis is not attempting to teach how to decide if someone is being objectified. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate, through sculpture, how one feature of objectification can negatively impact women, individually.

In this thesis, the focus is primarily on the sexual objectification of women, and the negative impact just one of the features can have on them. Each work directly correlates to one of Martha Nussbaum's seven features of objectification:

1. *Instrumentality*: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;
2. *Denial of Autonomy*: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
3. *Inertness*: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;
4. *Fungibility*: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;
5. *Violability*: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;
6. *Ownership*: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);
7. *Denial of Subjectivity*: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Evangelia Papadaki, *Feminist Perspectives on Objectification*. (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 33, no. 1&2

<sup>2</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Objectification*. (*Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24, no. 4 (1985), 249-91.)



Rae Langton's three additional features were not taken into consideration. The three features not considered are:

8. *Reduction to Body*: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;
9. *Reduction to Appearance*: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;
10. *Silencing*: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the clarity of thinking by the many feminist theorists, the outlook for feminist theory and thinking seems cloudy, to say the least. Forty years of factions either for or against a "feminist agenda" seems to have caused a great muddying of the waters. There does not seem to be clarity in regard to what "The Feminists" want. It is simple, actually: most feminists would like women to be treated as humans. Not as property, not as sex objects, not as lesser humans, and not as men... just humans.

Some see the results of feminists as causing more issues, not in waylaying old issues.

Martin Daubney of *The Telegraph* speaks of this in his article, saying:

Chivalry is withering on the vine. When men on buses are too afraid to offer seats... then all of us are losers. Baffled, dazed, confused and becoming increasingly indignant, many men I know are just giving up. If helping ladies (whoops, sexist word alert!) is either not welcomed or, worse, carries the risk of being accused... what's the point even trying?<sup>4</sup>

Is it possible that the backlash, as embodied by Daubney, and many of his ilk, are stoking the flames against feminism in order to not be challenged in their own personal approach to women?

If I took the quote above, and changed just one noun, the sentence becomes absurd... "...baffled,

---

<sup>3</sup> Rae Langton, *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 35)

<sup>4</sup> Martin Daubney, *Chivalry Is Dead and Feminism Is to Blame*. (Telegraph.co.uk. (February 19, 2014), Accessed August 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/10648415/Chivalry-is-dead-and-feminism-is-to-blame.html>.)

dazed, confused and becoming increasingly indignant, many men I know are just giving up. If helping \*someone\*... is either not welcomed or, worse, carries the risk of being accused... what's the point even trying?" A fifteen year old could answer this question; even a seven year old could. But rather, how about a "man's man," Theodore Roosevelt, answer the question for Mr. Daubney: "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."<sup>5</sup> Juvenile at its core, Daubney's question attempts to paint "man" as victimized by systematic emasculation committed when the zealots of the feminist movement, lacking a true opponent, take out their unwarranted anger on unassuming innocents. The subtext unequivocally paints the feminist movement as nothing more than hysterical women shadowboxing with a nonexistent idea.

There is, in fact, a need for equalization. Since the suffragettes withstood torture and humiliation to gain the right to vote years ago, women throughout westernized countries have been coming face-to-face with real opponents who would prefer for women to stay in predefined roles and follow prescribed rules. These roles and rules are endemic to, and intrinsic in, the very structures of our society. This is not always, however, overt or obvious; often, women are objectified very subtly. For example, a woman's personal autonomy can feel challenged when another's gaze becomes visual ownership. It could be that a woman would not like the door held open for her because she does not want another's eyes possessing her body as she walks through the door first. This could result in a woman denouncing the man's 'polite' offer (and could explain to Mr. Daubney why some women object to having the door held for them).

---

<sup>5</sup> Theodore Roosevelt. (<http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/>. March 2012. Accessed March 10, 2015. <http://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Learn-About-TR/TR-Quotes.aspx>.)

In a similar fashion, the artwork displayed in my thesis exhibition, *Altared Object*, is a subtle attack on established religious and patriarchal practices that cause harm to women. In my art, I attempt to expose the latent sexist oppression that exists in society and in the church, how fundamental and foundational it is to our societal norms, and how this oppression is still widely accepted and adhered to, but not necessarily acknowledged. Using objects that I have purchased from thrift stores or found online is an important aspect of the work. I am driven to reclaim things that were once discarded as trash; things that were given away, but are now used in a new and alternate fashion. I am not completely disguising or transforming the function that the object once fulfilled, but am using them to create a new, almost alien way to approach the object.

By using manufactured objects, I am able to demonstrate the ultimate power that a person has over an object. Because I am the owner of all of these items, I take on the role of decider of its fate; when I select an object and change it, I have authorship of that object's identity. For example, in this series a stool is no longer a stool because I have turned it into a pincushion. Through the process of making the sculptures, I have taken away what the object once was and made it something that it was not intended to be; I have changed the object in much the same way as women are changed when they are objectified. In another example, the icon of the Virgin Mother is recognized globally; it stretches through history and even across multiple religions. Tables, candles, bottles, and dirt are also globally recognized objects. By taking these well-known objects and reestablishing their purpose, I define the idea that the person who owns the object has power over the object. The loss of autonomy, then, that women can feel when they are objectified becomes a central subject of my work. Multi-faceted, this objectification is endemic to our culture, and leaves many women facing a choice. Do they accept their roles, or do they rebel?

## Literature Review

Ai Weiwei (1957-) and his lengthy list of sculptures had a direct impact on my own work. His concepts are decentered, his materials vary; however, his work intentionally demonstrates where society and societal rules are subversive to the people they were meant to protect. He is post-structuralist in that he asks the viewer to think about the artwork itself, as well as the systems that were inherent to the making of the piece.<sup>6</sup> Specifically speaking of his magnificent installation in the Tate Modern *Sunflower Seeds* (2010), Weiwei was disappointed in how the piece was presented to the public, specifically because it did not allow for enough decentering and deconstruction. He had wanted the sunflower seeds to be stolen, one by one, by the many different audience members that would come to see his work. As he is himself a dissident, and his work is about the globalization of Chinese handicraft, saw this small act of dissidence (stealing sunflower seeds from the Tate) as a part of the piece itself. He wanted the audience to slowly take away the seeds from the floor, and take them home with them. He wanted the idea that existed in the installation piece to travel home with the viewer, to spread to their countries and cities. He wanted the idea to grow and expand, just like sunflowers.<sup>7</sup>

Like Ai Weiwei, Columbian artist Doris Salcedo (1958-) creates sculptures and installations that are packed with political and social discourse. She uses “everyday items”- chairs, tables, pantyhose, even a crack in the floor- to create dialogues. Her concepts stem from specific events, and her work becomes social commentary.<sup>8</sup> In like fashion, Camille Grey's “Lipstick Bathroom” inside *Womanhouse* (1972) presented a bathroom and its contents

---

<sup>6</sup> Martin Barnaby, *Hanging Man: The Arrest of Ai Weiwei* (New York, New York: Faber and Faber, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Mieke Bal, *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010),

completely painted bright red. Her choice to use color as an index, pointing to sex and sexuality, and not merely for aesthetic purposes gave me constant pause when I developed my own interactions with objects and their colors. Most colors in my work are intentional- they are chosen as indexes to themes that run throughout the work.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of the metaphor of woman-as-object, the objectified woman is a feature in Allen Jones' (1937-) work, where he quite literally turns women into objects. In *Hatstand, Table and Chair* (first exhibited 1970), Jones depicts life-sized, hyper-realistic mannequins of women and contorts their bodies into BDSM-style poses, then turns them into pieces of domestic furniture.<sup>10</sup> Despite the outrage his art caused when it was made in 1969, Jones calls himself a feminist: "As an artist, I have a responsibility to art. As a human being, I have a responsibility to society. I was brought up by a socialist and I think of myself as a feminist and I don't need to defend my political stance."<sup>11</sup> He argues that his work began in reaction to modernism in the 1960's: "The work came out of a preoccupation and a belief that it was possible to make a statement about the figure in the context of the artistic *avant garde* of the 60s."<sup>12</sup> However, his argument seems to break down when he discloses that he believes his subject matter is the human condition and identity. He does a very good job demonstrating that the women are pieces of furniture.

---

<sup>9</sup> Jane M. Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997),

<sup>10</sup> Lambirth, Andrew. *Allen Jones: Works*. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005.)

<sup>11</sup> Mary Eagleton, *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003; Wroe, Nicholas. "Allen Jones: 'I Think of Myself as a Feminist'." [Http://www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com). October 31, 2014. Accessed January 10, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/oct/31/allen-jones-i-think-of-myself-as-a-feminist>.)

<sup>12</sup> Nicholas Wroe, *Allen Jones: 'I Think of Myself as a Feminist'* ([Http://www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com). October 31, 2014. Accessed January 10, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/oct/31/allen-jones-i-think-of-myself-as-a-feminist>.)

However, to better back up his argument that he deals with the human condition, he would need to do a better job communicating that the pieces of furniture are people, or gender non-specific.

In other contexts, artists have more successfully communicated feminist agendas through re-appropriation. One such example is Betye Saar (1926-), who worked in the 1970's to challenge stereotypes by re-appropriating images of power; she took something from one context and reintroduced it into another. Saar worked with arranged found objects that reflected her ancestry and experiences. She used stereotypes and icons from folk culture and advertising to create assemblages and collages. In her work, the found objects became statements of political and social protest.

There are many more examples of the different ways artists have addressed objectification of women, created conversations about society, or have used found objects in their work. The artists I have highlighted have oeuvres that consistently strive to undermine and reveal the systems created and perpetuated through various sanctioned social relationships and contracts. In the *Altared Object* series, I will introduce these relationships in four different fashions including *personhood*, *presence*, *power*, and *presentation*.

### **Methodology, Production and Analysis**

The central form in my series is an iconic statuette of the Virgin Mary. Historically, the statue of the Virgin Mary has been used to inspire pious, domestic devotion for Christians over the world. Miniaturizing the woman who was Mary allows for the worshiper to focus on her perfect holiness, her beauty, grace and kindness. The miniaturization of the image removes her humanity as we can no longer relate to her on a human scale, thus freeing us to contemplate her divine perfection. She is no longer a fourteen-year-old Jewish girl; she is now an iconic figure of perfect

womanhood, a standard to which women should aspire. Susan Stewart elaborates on miniaturization, saying: “What is in fact lost in this idealized miniaturization of the body is sexuality and hence the danger of power. The body becomes an image, and all manifestations of will are transferred to the position of the observer the voyeur. The body exists not in the domain of lived reality but in the domain of commodity relations.”<sup>13</sup>

From the standpoint of semiotics, *Altared Object* takes different aspects of Mary as sign, signifier and icon, and inverts them by reclaiming her role in each as something completely different. A figurine of Mary is an icon because she represents the woman who was Christ’s mother. The figurines are also signs, because they represent the religion behind the story. In this way, she is also an index, especially when iconographic symbols are placed on her person or clothing. Her poses are deliberate indexes, pointing to prayer, obedience, motherhood and piety.

In my work, I invert the symbol of Mary as an icon, and change the perception of the figurine as viewing Mary, Christ’s mother to viewing “all women.” The figurines become symbols and the altars become signifiers. Cognitive dissidence begins to develop in the viewer’s mind, because when viewing the sculpture, two opposing beliefs come into play. As a religious icon, Mary is a perfect example of womanhood, wife and mother. However, this perfect example lives inside a religion and culture that has rules set up to oppress and objectify her. The viewer cannot live in a state of cognitive dissidence and so must choose a side: either Mary is perfectly fine as she is presented (e.g. perfect wife and mother with nothing wrong with how religion and culture treats her) or she is not.

---

<sup>13</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993, 58).

### *Altared Object: Power*

Hierarchies and the battle for power is one of the main themes in *Altared Object: Power* (fig 1). In this triptych, woman submits passively, waiting for those in authority over her to direct her, but her reality consists of endlessly waiting for guidance from a cold machine. Ultimately, she must choose to be free from the burden of waiting on arcane rules. This theme directly correlates to Nussbaum's feature of objectivity called inertness, which is the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also activity.<sup>14</sup>

The grouping begins with *Begging for Mercy* (fig. 1A), a 7' tall sculpture that includes a plywood column, painted white on the outside and black on the inside, sitting on top of four reclaimed table legs. Seven 3" tall porcelain Joseph figurines stand facing one 2" tall porcelain Mary figurine who kneels in the only opening, a Gothic-arched doorway with no doors.

*Misguided* (fig. 1B), is the second sculpture and consists of an elongated stool with a 4" figurine on top. The sculpture is 5' tall and 2' in diameter; the painted porcelain figurine kneels next to a chrome bingo cage filled with 45 small wooden balls stamped with mixed messages. The final sculpture in the series is *Done* (fig. 1C), consists of a 5" figurine on top of a 15" tall by 12" wide wooden-legged stool, with pins and needles surrounding the kneeling porcelain Mary figurine modified with the addition of an ash-and-silicone filled latex balloon on her back.

In viewing woman as subservient to man, doing what she is told and limiting her own decision making, we objectify her. According to Haslanger:

Once we have cast women as submissive and deferential 'by nature', then efforts to change this role appear unmotivated, even pointless. ... These reflections suggest that what appeared to be a 'neutral' or 'objective' ideal, namely, the procedure of drawing on observed regularities to set constraints on practical decision making—is one which will,

---

<sup>14</sup> Nussbaum, Martha C. *Objectification*. (*Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24, no. 4 (1985): 249-91. doi:10.1111/j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x.)



under conditions of gender hierarchy reinforce the social arrangements on which such hierarchy depends.<sup>15</sup>

The grouping begins with *Begging for Mercy* (fig. 1A), which shows Mary kneeling at the feet of seven men. All of the figurines are from a Nativity scene. In fact, there are no more figurines present than in the original Nativity scene these figurines came from. According to the story and seen in many Nativity scenes, there are seven figures traditionally present in addition to Mary—three Wisemen, two shepherds, Joseph, and an angel. The woman's innate ferocity, tenacity and strength are not highlighted in the submissive pose most often assumed by the woman represented in such scenes. Instead, at Christmas time we see a woman, typically kneeling, whose focus is on caring for a baby. In *Begging for Mercy* (fig. 1A) this tableau is modified. Mary has been turned around to face the men, the baby has been removed from the scene, and copies of one male figurine have replaced all of the other figures in the scene. Mary's back is to us, and she kneels facing the crowd of men, all of whom have raised their hand to her, their gazes fixed on her. Mary kneels in front of a group of men who are there, ostensibly, to care for and protect her. There are many men in authority over her in the story told about her life: the father who engaged her to Joseph and paid her dowry, the Father God who impregnated her, the husband who put her on the donkey and took her to Bethlehem, the governor who ordered the census of the entire Roman world, the innkeeper who had no room and so sent her to the barn to give birth; even the Roman soldiers who were known to rape and molest their subjects without consequence. None of these men, the story of which is recorded in Luke 2, are recorded as asking her opinion, her advice, or her consent.

---

<sup>15</sup> Haslanger, Sally, *On Being Objective and Being Objectified, in A Mind of One's Own. Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, (Louise M. Antony and Charlotte Witt (eds.), Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 209–253.)

Mary has been kneeling in the submissive pose for two-thousand years. For generations, women have likewise been held in the submissive position, as exhorted by the Church's ancient canon law. Many years ago, in the early parts of the first millennium, the Christian Church developed a set of rules that were put in place for its people, and included aspects of the law that pertained to women and how they were to be treated. The ideas that formed these beliefs came from theologians who taught that women could not be trusted, and were "lesser men."

'The active power in the seed of the male,' says Aquinas, 'tends to produce something like itself, perfect in masculinity. The female, however, results from 'the debility of the active power,' 'unsuitability of the material,' or a change effected by 'external influences, like the south wind... which is damp, as we are told by Aristotle... Integral to God's plan for creation, says Aquinas, is that Woman be subjected to Man- not in the sense of slavery but as a ruler manages his subjects for their own advantage and benefit.'<sup>16</sup>

The laws put in place left women dependent on their fathers and husbands. Not just for her livelihood, but for deciding what she did and did not have legal rights to do. Generations of men and women lived with a foundation of "man rules over woman." It makes sense that many women, who dutifully wait to be told what to do, find the answers they are given to be confusing, male-centered, or ignorant of the true problem the woman faces.

In the second sculpture in *Altared Object: Power* (Fig, this dependence on others for answers is highlighted. *Misguided* (fig. 1B) shows a woman, kneeling in much the same way as Mary was kneeling in *Begging for Mercy* (fig. 1A), or as she does in most other Nativity scenes. In this sculpture, it is her gaze and attention that have been changed. Instead of focusing her attention on the Christ Child, her focus is on a chrome machine that delivers directives to her. The woman has been removed from her intended space, and refocused onto something else. The modification done to her is outside of the figurine; her very existence has been redefined- she is

---

<sup>16</sup> Al Jones. *The Gender Vendors: Sex and Lies from Abraham to Freud*. (Lexington Books.)

no longer presented as a caring mother, as no infant is present. She is instead obsessively focused on an inanimate object, waiting to be told what to do by a machine over which she has no control. Each ball inside the machine has a mixed message imprinted on it. In fact, all the message balls have two or three messages on them, save for the balls that state “Spin Again” or “NO.” One of the balls says both “Stay” and “Get Out.” While another ball says “I am sorry,” “Stop” and “Hurry up.” These messages are delivered to the kneeling woman in a fashion not unlike a lottery. The balls are mixed together before one is randomly selected and sent down the chute to the waiting woman. The machine and the woman sit atop an elongated stool, which is familiar and alien. The stool shows signs of wear, even though the legs are freshly painted; this stool, however, is obviously not for human use- it is too high, and its legs are too weak to support a person. The disproportionate stool, though, does not worry the waiting woman. She sits at the edge of the machine, waiting patiently to be told what to do.

Not so with the woman in *Done* (fig 1C). The third sculpture in the grouping depicts an oversized pincushion- another familiar, but alien piece of furniture. This is a stool that could support human weight, but it has had pins and needles pushed into its cushion, which would make it unsafe and uncomfortable for human use. Kneeling among the pins and needles is a figurine of Mary. Tied to her is a balloon filled with ashes. Her gaze is no longer on the baby Jesus; having been removed from the Nativity crèche, her eyes are now fixed on a large needle. It is disproportionate to her body, what is a needle to us becomes a sword to her; she could wield it to pop the balloon and free herself from the burden that she carries. She runs the risk, however, of getting covered in the mess that is so neatly stored in the balloon. Were she to take the needle and use it to free herself, she would no longer be “lacking in agency or activity.” She would have chosen to rid herself of her burden; she would express free agency. This pose is different from

the other two in the series. While all three women in this grouping are kneeling, this Mary kneels on one knee; her head is bowed in the same way men would kneel before kings when they were knighted. Seeing Mary in this warrior stance calls to mind the woman-warrior embodied by the poet Zaema J. Hussain in *The Sky Is Purple*:

... do not give yourself to them so easily. Wear your strength like armour, fight like a beast. Do not let them tell you that you belong to them. Be fearless. Be a lion. Be like lava. Rip them apart, and burn their bones. And when you are done, tell the world that you belong to no man. That you are a lady, a warrior, a tsunami, and you belong only to yourself.<sup>17</sup>

The notion of a woman standing up for herself in such an aggressive fashion is counter to the traditional view of Mary kneeling submissively and passively at the feet of Joseph. This determination, this choice shows the woman reclaiming power.

### ***Altared Object: Personhood***

In this group of works issues of sexual objectification are investigated in a series of objects. The narrative of the sculptures in *Altared Object: Personhood* (**Figure 1**) follows a woman who is perceived as a toy-shellacked, plastic and overtly sexual. The reality she faces is one where she feels covered in filth because her own body betrays her- she attracts the type of attention she does not want. She then must choose to define herself as something more substantive than a mere sex object, and in doing so she finds protection in isolation, comfort in solitude. This narrative construct speaks to Nussbaum's discussion of how women are denied autonomy: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.<sup>18</sup>

*Personhood* depicts this treatment in each of the individual parts of the triptych. For instance, in

<sup>17</sup> Zaemma J. Hussain, *The Sky Is Purple [Kindle Edition]*. (Amazon.co.uk: Books. April 21, 2014. Accessed December 17, 2014. [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Sky-Purple-Zaema-J-Hussain-ebook/dp/B00JV506HC/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1426034722&sr=1.1&keywords=the%2Bsky%2Bis%2Bpurple.](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Sky-Purple-Zaema-J-Hussain-ebook/dp/B00JV506HC/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1426034722&sr=1.1&keywords=the%2Bsky%2Bis%2Bpurple.))

<sup>18</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Objectification* (*Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24, no. 4 (1985): 249-91.)

*Made for His Pleasure* (fig 2A) the woman's autonomy is taken away from her when she is viewed as nothing more than a sex object; this reality is depicted in *Coated* (fig 2B) where other's perception of her causes her to feel as though she is covered in the thing that causes her degradation. Ultimately, in *Daphne*, (fig 2C) the woman regains her autonomy and self-determination.

In *Made for His Pleasure* (fig 2A), a 4" tall plastic figurine of Mary has been modified with red paint. It stands on a 17" ovoid silver serving platter, which sits on top of a 4"x4" narrow black column of used table legs. The entire sculpture is 5' tall. *Coated* (fig 2B) is a 48" tall and 9" in diameter pillar on top of which stands a 5" figurine of Mary, both are covered in dirt. *Daphne* (fig 2C) is a 5.5" figurine modified with paint and a paper name tag. The figurine stands inside a 28" hut-shaped basket tied to five branches; the entire sculpture is 4' tall and 4.5' in diameter.

The colors used in *Made for His Pleasure* (fig 2A) are simple but specifically chosen for their meaning. Painted a bright and shiny red, the woman is presented to the viewer as something to be consumed; red evokes sex, calling to mind red lipstick, red light, a red dress. It is the color of passion and is very aggressive. The column-like form of the Mary figurine is phallic, save for her hands, which jut outwards from her chest. The silver of the platter specifically references the idiom "served on a silver platter." The platter and Mary are both resting on a tall, thin column made out of reclaimed table legs painted black to highlight the idea of a waiter holding the platter. Exposing the table legs and using them as the foundation of the column is a nod to the Victorian era fetishization of table legs, which were viewed as too erotic to leave uncovered.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Mary Theobald, *Death by Petticoat: American History Myths Debunked* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Pub., 2012) 29.

The need to show explicitness comes from the need to demonstrate the sexuality that defines women in modern society. Woman has historically been categorized as one part of a dichotomy. Either a woman encompasses characteristics that are moral, nurturing, asexual, and pure, or the woman is sexual, unethical, dangerous, and erotic. In this dichotomy, then, the woman sees her own sexuality defined by her relationships to men.<sup>20</sup> The virgin is a woman who has not been had by a man, while a “whore” is a woman who has been had by too many men. The perfect woman is chaste, but still able to provide children for her husband- the perfect woman is, therefore, an unattainable “Virgin Mother.” One standard is held for a woman who is typically defined as pure, and, therefore, nonsexual, and a separate standard is applied, seen as impure and sexual. Viewing the woman as defined by her sexuality and not by her person causes the woman in *Coated* (fig 2B) to live feeling as though she is covered or coated by dirtiness, since sexual feelings or activities would transport her from “good” (virgin) to “bad” (whore). An explanation of this mentality is poetically framed by Le Guin. As she writes:

Civilized Man says: I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is other--outside, below, underneath, subservient. I own, I use, I explore, I exploit, I control. What I do is what matters. What I want is what matter is for. I am that I am, and the rest is women and wilderness, to be used as I see fit.<sup>21</sup>

How all women react to this quote cannot be identified. How a few would react can be. In this triptych, the woman’s reaction results in a willful choice to move away from degradation into isolation and seclusion. She is determined to establish her value for herself, and does not wish to be perceived according to standards set for her.

---

<sup>20</sup> Suzette Henke, *Feminist Perspectives on James Joyce*. (The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies 6, no. 1, Literature, Language and Politics in Ireland (June 01, 1980), 14-22.)

<sup>21</sup> Le Guin Ursula, *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (New York: Grove Press, 1989) 30.

Elucidating this theme of self-isolation and fleeing an undesirable socially stigmatized label, the next in the grouping speaks to the process. *Daphne* (fig 2C), for instance, self-identifies- although her clothes look like she is “Mary,” her very modern nametag reads “Daphne.” She denounces the title of “Mary,” and claims a name that comes from Greek mythology. In the myth, Apollo pursues Daphne relentlessly. Daphne continually rebuffed Apollo. When he still would not leave her alone she went to her father for help. The way he helped his daughter was to turn her into a laurel tree, removing her humanity and objectifying her totally. As if her autonomy was not completely gone, Apollo walked by the Daphne-tree, and decided it was the most beautiful tree he had ever seen, so he picked the tree and wore it as an ornament, using her as an object of adornment.<sup>22</sup> The use of the name Daphne in the work furthers the alteration of the semiotic sign, signified and icon. Mary is used culturally as an icon of perfect womanhood as defined by a Christian religion. This is inverted and reclaimed to become a signifier of a pagan story. The index of paganism is found in the use of materials in her altar. The branches used to hold up the rattan hut are roughly hewn of their bark, and are lashed together with rattan string, holding up a basket shaped like a hut. All of these materials and forms call to mind witches and paganism. Though most modern day women do not find themselves choosing to live in isolated huts in order to find the freedom to self identify, women do find themselves rebelling against specific instances inside society. As best summed up by punk-rock singer, educator and feminist Alice Bag, “If Jesus himself, or Mohammed, or Buddha

---

<sup>22</sup> Ovid, *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971).

spoke to me personally and said that women are inferior to men, I would still reject that as false dogma because I know with every ounce of my being that this is not true.”<sup>23</sup>

**b. *Altared Object: Presence***

Denial of autonomy is an underlying theme in *Altared Object: Presence* (fig. 3). However, this triptych’s primary theme discusses the woman’s “Fungibility- as if interchangeable.” The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable a) with other objects of the same type and/or b) with objects of other types.<sup>24</sup> Here the woman is seen as beautiful only if she fits society’s expectation of beauty (wearing either makeup or a burka). The reality is that small pieces of her personality and beauty can be lost or hidden in that process, and her choice is to eschew the shroud and allow herself to emerge from under the prescribed enhancements, exposing her true self, can be a precarious position.

The sculptures in starts with *Such a Pretty Girl*, (fig 3A) a 7” figurine inside a 17” glass jar, which sits on a 36” tall wooden table and in front of a 15” framed ovoid mirror. The figurine has been modified with cloth and covered in Vaseline; the entire sculpture is 4’ tall and 1’ wide and 1’ deep. *Extinguished* (fig 3B) is a 6” tall figurine of Mary made out of wax, surrounded by 38 used vigil candles. The entire sculpture is 4’ x 1’x1’. *Here* (fig 3C) is a 6” figurine of Mary carved out of wood sitting on top of a rounded tabletop covered in cloth and wax; the sculpture is 44” tall and 17” in diameter.

Why women would want to conform to society’s standards of beauty, instead of defining beauty for themselves, is an important question. The Poxy Boggards are a small time band,

---

<sup>23</sup> Alice Bag, *Violence Girl: East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage: A Chicana Punk Story* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2011) 26.

<sup>24</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Objectification* (Philosophy & Public Affairs 24, no. 4 (1985): 249-91.)



playing at renaissance fairs and the like in California. Their song “Hey Nonny Nonny,” demonstrates the interchangeability of women. As the lyrics demonstrate:

A pretty girl men fight for  
They've even started wars.  
How pretty does she have to be  
When she's down upon all fours?  
I find the ones who aren't so pretty  
Are diamonds in the rough.  
Cause pretty girls may look good  
But the ugly know their stuff.<sup>25</sup>

This song is not well known. It is not a chart topper, the band has never toured outside of California. However, their simple lyrics demonstrate truth that is heard in other pop culture platforms. Women are interchangeable, and are to be used for sex. “She” does not matter, so long as “he” is able to use her well. If “woman as sex object” is constantly reinforced, then it is understandable that women begin to judge themselves as worthy based on whether or not men are attracted to them.

The woman in *Such a Pretty Girl* (fig 3A) is completely shrouded; only her eyes and some of her forehead peek through a swirling burka of cloth and Vaseline. She sits inside a bottle, looking at herself in a mirror. By regarding herself in the mirror, she demonstrates her own participation in her objectification. In being infatuated with their bodily beings, women learn to see and treat themselves as objects to be gazed at and decorated; they learn to see themselves as though from the outside. “Narcissism... consists in the setting up of the ego as a double ‘stranger’.”<sup>26</sup> The adolescent girl “becomes an object and she sees herself as an object; she discovers this new aspect of her being with surprise: it seems to her that she has been

---

<sup>25</sup> “Hey Nonny Nonny”. Performed by *Poxy Boggards Band*. Youtube.com. May 24, 2011. Accessed November 3, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opxNRp8NiZk>.

<sup>26</sup> Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990). 431

doubled; instead of coinciding exactly with herself, she now begins to exist outside.”<sup>27</sup> However, this ‘stranger’ who inhabits women's consciousness, Bartky writes, is hardly a stranger; it is, rather, the woman's own self.<sup>28</sup>

The self-objectification of woman is not an unknown phenomenon in patriarchal societies. Some feminist theorists propose that women feel constantly watched by men, and so, therefore, feel the need to fit into the social construct of being “beautiful” or sexually pleasing. As Papadaki writes, “In the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality woman must make herself ‘object and prey’ for the man. ... Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other.”<sup>29</sup> This leads women to objectify their own persons. Bartky argues that the woman “[takes] toward her own person the attitude of the man. She will then take erotic satisfaction in her physical self, reveling in her body as a beautiful object to be gazed at and decorated.”<sup>30</sup>

Not everyone agrees that this is a negative thing. Rosalind Gill quotes English author Fay Weldon who argues that women are not actively seeking to objectify themselves, but are freely choosing to use beauty to make themselves feel good: “There is a return to femininity, but it seems to me that most girls don’t give two hoots about men. It is about being healthy for themselves and not for men.”<sup>31</sup> This thinking that previous generations of women presented themselves solely to please men suggests generations of hetero-normativity, as well as generations of complete powerlessness. It is ridiculous to suggest this about our past, there have

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 316.

<sup>28</sup> Evangelia Papadaki, *Feminist Perspectives on Objectification* (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 33, no. 1&2 (Summer 2014), 210-28. )

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990). 254

<sup>31</sup> Rosalind Gill, *Gender and the Media* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007). 72

been instances where women have had autonomy and have had relationships that were of their choosing, and were not hetero-normative. However, it is equally ridiculous to suggest that a complete shift is currently in progress, Gill notes.

It presents women as completely free agents, and cannot account for why, if we are just pleasing ourselves, the resulting valued 'look' is so similar -- hairless body, slim waist, firm buttocks, etc. Moreover it simply avoids all the interesting and difficult questions about how socially constructed ideals of beauty are internalised and made our own.<sup>32</sup>

This engendered idea of woman viewing herself as beautiful only if she fits society's standards shifts her from objectified to objectifier. She is offered what is deemed as power by becoming "an object of desire." Gill continues:

It endows women with the status of active subjecthood so that they can then 'choose' to become sex objects because this suits their 'liberated' interests. In this way, sexual objectification can be presented not as something done to women by some men, but as the freely chosen wish of active, confident, assertive female subjects.<sup>33</sup>

Karl Marx's theory of alienation explains the objectification that results from women's preoccupation with their appearance. One feature of his theory of alienation is in the fragmentation of the human person, the "splintering of human nature into a number of misbegotten parts."<sup>34</sup> A fragmentation of women in patriarchal societies occurs, according to Bartky "by being too closely identified with [their body]... [their] entire being is identified with the body, a thing which... has been regarded as less inherently human than the mind or personality."<sup>35</sup> When all focus is on the body, and her mind or personality is not considered an integral part to her person, she is fragmented. "Bartky believes that through this fragmentation a

---

<sup>32</sup> Rosalind Gill, *From Sexual Objectification to Sexual Subjectification: The Resexualisation of Women's Bodies in the Media* (May 23, 2009), 132

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Papadaki, *Feminist Perspectives on Objectification* 210-28.

<sup>35</sup> Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*

woman is objectified, since her body is separated from her person and is thought as representing the woman.”<sup>36</sup> Iris Marion Young adds that women's preoccupation with their appearance suppresses the body potential of women: as quoted by Bartky, “Developing a sense of our bodies as beautiful objects to be gazed at and decorated requires suppressing a sense of our bodies as strong, active subjects...”<sup>37</sup>

This fragmentation is at the core of *Extinguished* (fig 3B). The figurine of Mary sits with multiple candles on top of a lantern, which locks away the largest candle. This demonstrates that the potential of the woman is still present, even though much of her is fragmented and extinguished. Alternately, *Here* (fig 3C), the third and final piece of this triptych, demonstrates the woman’s emergence from the shroud. By choosing to emerge, the woman attempts to restructure her world. She refuses to continue to be a part of “the existing situation of gender inequality.”<sup>38</sup>

Or s Nancy Bauer states, “There is a great temptation for women to allow themselves to become objectified and self-objectified. In order to achieve full personhood, it is necessary not only that men stop objectifying women, but also that “women care about abjuring the temptation to objectify themselves”<sup>39</sup>

### ***Altared Object: Presentation***

In *Altared Object: Presentation* (fig. 4) the woman is an award, something won and soon forgotten. Her sexuality becomes her identity, and ultimately her choice must be to stand, despite

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Iris Young, *Is There a Woman's World?—Some Reflections on the Struggle for Our Bodies* (Proceedings of The Second Sex—Thirty Years Later: A Commemorative Conference on Feminist Theory. New York: The New York Institute for the Humanities, 1979), 326

<sup>38</sup> Papadaki, Evangelina. *Feminist Perspectives on Objectification*. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 33, no. 1&2 (Summer 2014): 210-28. doi:10.1111/1467-9973.00225.) 49

<sup>39</sup> Bauer, Nancy, 2015, *How to Do Things with Pornography*, (Harvard University Press.)

what she has lived through. In this triptych, Nussman's feature of objectivity that is most highlighted is the concept of "denial of subjectivity: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account."<sup>40</sup> The three sculptures start with *The Next Score*, (fig 4A) a 24" wide and 6" deep wooden shelf, which holds seven trophies constructed with marble, wood or painted plastic. The tallest trophy is a 7" Mary figurine modified with gold paint. The second sculpture, *Preserved*, (fig 4B) is a 36" by 16" ovoid, plastic framed mirror covered with hog gut and with a 6" Mary figurine offset on the mirror. The final sculpture, *Unbroken* (fig 4C) is a 42" tall and 24" deep dollhouse modified with fire. The 7" tall Mary figurine has been modified with white paint and ashes from the burned house.

*The Next Score* (fig 4A) depicts a woman as a passive participant in some sort of event, however, she is both the target and the prize. Standing taller than all the other figurines, her eyes are fixed over the other trophies on something outside of the tableau. She stares past inanimate objects, a soccer ball and a loving cup, seemingly unaware of the men, and the potential violence, surrounding her. To her left and to her right are other trophies, turned so that the eyes of the figurines are fixated on her. By simply turning the trophies, they become menacing- a baseball player with a bat seems poised ready to hit her. Two men seem to be locked in a struggle over who will reach her first. Upon closer examination, we see that they are simply struggling over possession of a soccer ball at their feet. A hockey player holds his stick, willfully daring the woman to some contest. A final trophy topper is just a diver, but he becomes an aggressor when his intent seems to be to leap onto her. These figurines are posed in such a way that evokes violence because of the potential violence that can occur when a woman's sexuality

---

<sup>40</sup> Nussbaum, Martha C. *Objectification*. (*Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24, no. 4 (1985): 249-91. doi:10.1111/j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x.)

becomes “something any man who wants to can buy and hold in his hands... She becomes something to be used by him, specifically, an object of his sexual use.”<sup>41</sup> MacKinnon notes that possession sometimes leads to violence and abuse. If women are just things, not people, then there can be nothing wrong with abusing them: “The object status of women, then, is the cause of men seeing nothing problematic with violent behavior towards women.”<sup>42</sup>

Not all objectification leads directly to violence, however. Kant’s Categorical Imperative prohibits “treating a person merely as a means, and not at the same time as an end.”<sup>43</sup> According to Leslie Green, there is actually nothing “wrong” with treating a person as a means, or as an instrument. She writes: “. . . we must treat others as instruments, for we need their skills, their company, and their bodies—in fact, there is little that we social creatures can do on our own, and so little that is fulfilling.”<sup>44</sup> According to Green, when people are old, severely disabled, or chronically unemployed, what they fear the most is that they no longer are of use to others. As Green puts it, “they miss not only their diminished agency, but also their diminished objectivity. . . . They become . . . subjectified.”<sup>45</sup> So it is important to view the objectification of women in many lights. In *The Next Score*, the objectification is overt, men seeing one woman as a trophy to be won.

In the second part of the triptych, the woman is seen as an object that exists behind her own virginity. The form of *Preserved* (fig 4B) is a yannic-shaped mirror with the figurine of Mary floating behind a screen of a semi-transparent skin-like material. The mirror provides

---

<sup>41</sup> MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.)

<sup>42</sup> Evangelia Papadaki. *Feminist Perspectives on Objectification*. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 33, no. 1&2 (Summer 2014): 210-28. doi:10.1111/1467-9973.00225.)

<sup>43</sup> Immanuel Kant and Mary J. Gregor. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998.)

<sup>44</sup> Green, Leslie, 2000, *Pornographies*, (Journal of Political Philosophy, 8(1): 27–52.)

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

luminance, as well as the opportunity for the viewer to see an obscured reflection of himself or herself surrounding the woman. This shadowy reflection is coupled with flashes of color in the spaces where the skin has been, seemingly violently, torn. The ensemble speaks directly to the reality of a woman's value being established not by her beauty, and certainly not by her experiences. Instead, the woman's value rests, at least in part, in the preservation of her hymen for her future husband. The irony that the figurine is of the Virgin Mary is not lost in the piece, however, the question of whether the biblical Mary was a virgin before, during or after the birth of Christ is not the subject of this work. Certainly, finding the value of a woman in her virginity seems an ancient approach to modern relationships. It seems that valuation resting in purity is just an old, antiquated thought process. However, just a few months ago, a meme floated across the Internet. It was a simple picture of an engagement ring with the words "No Hymen, No Diamond." While it originated as a 4Chan joke, it quickly swept across twitter, Facebook and Reddit, with people voicing their agreements or disagreements in various ways.<sup>46</sup>

Choosing to live a chaste life is a fine choice. However, demanding that a woman be a virgin in order for her to "be worth" a diamond ring implies at least three things that negatively affect women. The first is the implication that her value rests in her purity until marriage, but makes no mention of the purity required for the future husband. Second, this indicates that her purity is a commodity, which is worth the equivalent of a diamond ring. Third, this thinking rests in an assumption that her goal should be to get married to a man. The women who are supposed to conform to this idea of womanhood are most definitely denied subjectivity. Their own feelings and experiences are discarded and, worse, their biological, completely natural, urges are used to shame women into conforming to standards set by others. *Preserved* asks the viewer to define

---

<sup>46</sup> Forum. "No Hymen No Diamond." Reddit.com. January 21, 2015. Accessed February 2, 2015. <http://redd.it/2xlud7>.

what it is that is being preserved with this type of thinking. Is the woman being preserved? Is the skin in front of her? Or is the thing that is preserved the arcane rules designed to restrict women's expression of her feelings and desires? Brokenness is an important aspect of this sculpture. The "skin" stretched across the mirror is ripped in multiple places. Also, the mirror in *Preserved* was purchased "as is" at a thrift store. Somewhere along its fifty-year history, a small piece of the mirror frame broke. As we live in a throwaway society, more than likely the frame and mirror were donated after the owner noticed the breakage. Metaphorically speaking, this adds to the value of the piece- a simple discussion of how useless an object is considered if it is broken.

The idea of brokenness carries over to the third piece of the triptych. *Unbroken* (fig 4C) is a burned and broken dollhouse, with a cracked and glued figurine standing welcomingly on a balcony. There is tension between the broken ruins of a burned-down dollhouse and the title of the piece. The used matches stored inside of the broken figurine are ostensibly the ones that started the fire. The insides of her are painted black with the ashes of the house. She presents herself to the world from the balcony, welcoming them to a house she seems proud of. What then is broken? What is unbroken? Did she light the fire in order to "fix" the house, or did she destroy the house? These questions that the viewer must answer for himself or herself are framed by the preceding two pieces of the triptych. While we do not know this exact woman's story, based on the preceding parts of the narrative, it is apparent that what this woman experienced is very important. Merely by presenting herself to the world in such an important and whole way, she demonstrates that her experiences and feeling are important for the viewer to consider. She takes back her subjectivity with relish and mystery.



In the series of triptychs that we have just discussed, the materials were modified in order to highlight the choices (or lack thereof) relating to women and their roles in society.

Additionally, the realities of women's lives were investigated, along with how specific, willful choices must be made by women in order to create realities desired. The works attempt to reveal the hegemonic systems of power and repression in modern society, and how they function.

### **Conclusion**

The exhibition was laid out to walk the viewer in a counter-clockwise fashion around two sets of walls, leading to a conclusion of the four sets of triptychs. Each grouping was laid out in roughly a C-shape. As the layout unfolded with viewers, I had expected that they would come to a conclusion at the end of each individual grouping with a new truth on their own. My hope is that the viewer would begin to question the role and the choice that each woman had to make in each grouping and address this choice to themselves and to society.

My work was original and innovative in how I used found objects for a new purpose to question their own role in social power dynamics. Other artists have used similar found objects for a new message. My attempt is moving the discipline forward by addressing these issues in a new way. The new way of how I formally and conceptually reiterate the issues at hand, address power structures and move beyond feminism to systems in a whole including economic, racial and stratifications of society is questioned and criticized in order to move society forward in this discourse. This work reflects society and allows for an evaluation of our own directions, assumptions and prejudices, and moves us forward pluralistically.

**List of works in MFA exhibition**



Figure 1: *Altared Object: Power*

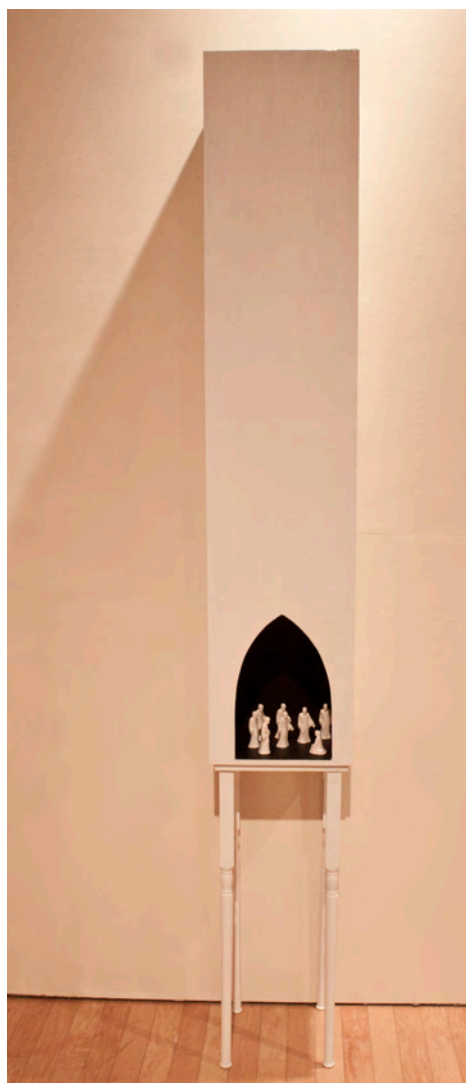


Fig 1A: *Begging for Mercy*  
2014  
1' x 1' x 8'  
Secondhand nativity scene figurines, wood, paint



Fig 1B: *Misguided*  
2015  
1' x 1' x 3'  
Stool seat and wood, secondhand nativity figurine, found object modified with ink



Fig 1C: *Misguided*  
2015  
1' x 1' x 2'  
Found stool, pins and needles, secondhand nativity figurine, latex, ash



Figure 2: *Altared Object: Personhood*

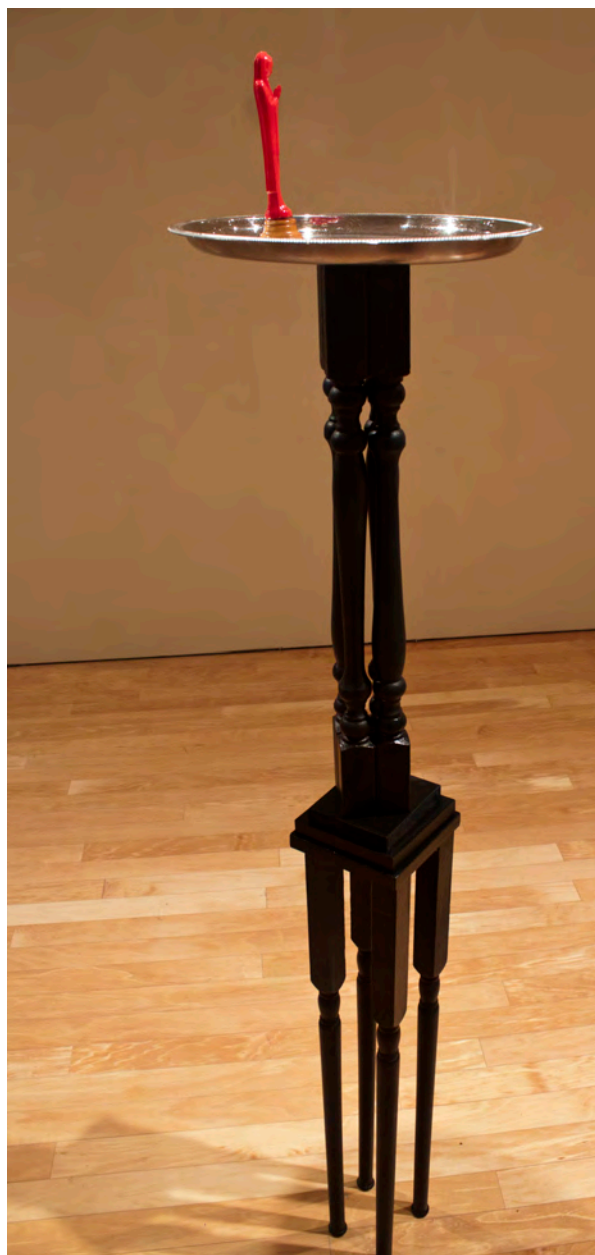


Fig 2A: *Made for His Pleasure*  
2014  
1' x 2' x 4'  
Table legs, found platter, secondhand figurine modified with paint



Fig 2B: *Coated*  
2015  
1' x 1' x 4'  
Secondhand figurine modified with dirt





Fig 2C: *Daphne*  
2014  
3.5' x 3' x 2'  
Secondhand figurine modified with paint and paper, rattan, branches



Figure 3: *Altared Object: Presence*



Fig 3A: *Such a Pretty Girl*  
2015  
1' x 1' x 2.5'  
Secondhand figurine, petroleum jelly, jar, mirror



*Fig 3B: Extinguished*  
2015  
1' x 1' x 3'  
Used vigil candles, secondhand figurine, found lantern, found candlestick holder



Fig 3C: *Here*  
2015  
2' x 2' x 3'  
Secondhand figurine, wax, tablecloth, table



Figure 4: *Altared Object: Presentation*



Fig 4A: *The Next Score*  
2015  
36" x 6" x 17"  
Secondhand figurine,  
trophies, shelf





Fig 4B: *Preserved*  
2015  
1.5' x 2'  
Secondhand figurine, found mirror, hog gut





Fig 4C: *Unbroken*  
2015  
2.5' x 2' x 3'  
Secondhand figurine, found dollhouse modified with fire, ash

## Bibliography

- Bag, Alice. *Violence Girl: East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage: A Chicana Punk Story*. Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2011.
- Bal, Mieke. *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Bartky, Sandra Lee. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Daubney, Martin. "Chivalry Is Dead and Feminism Is to Blame." *Telegraph.co.uk*. February 19, 2014. Accessed August 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/10648415/Chivalry-is-dead-and-feminism-is-to-blame.html>.
- Eagleton, Mary. *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- Gill, Rosalind. *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007.
- Gill, Rosalind. "Rosalind Gill, "From Sexual Objectification to Sexual Subjectification: The Resexualisation of Women's Bodies in the Media"" *RSS*. May 23, 2009. Accessed March 10, 2015. <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2009/gill230509.html>.
- Henke, Suzette A. "Feminist Perspectives on James Joyce." *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 6, no. 1, Literature, Language and Politics in Ireland (June 01, 1980): 14-22. Accessed March 10, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/25512488?ref=no-x-route:067d34190616b016ab9cc50dc45a3607>.

Jones, Al. *The Gender Vendors: Sex and Lies from Abraham to Freud*. Lexington Books.

Kant, Immanuel, and Mary J. Gregor. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Lambirth, Andrew. *Allen Jones: Works*. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005.

Langton, Rae. *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*. New York: Grove Press, 1989.

MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Martin, Barnaby. *Hanging Man: The Arrest of Ai Weiwei*. New York, New York: Faber and Faber, 2013.

Nussbaum, Martha C. "Objectification." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24, no. 4 (1985): 249-91. doi:10.1111/j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x.

Ovid, and Rolfe Humphries. *Ovid: Metamorphoses*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.

Papadaki, Evangelia (Lina). "Feminist Perspectives on Objectification." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 33, no. 1&2 (Summer 2014): 210-28. doi:10.1111/1467-9973.00225.

Selz, Peter, and Susan Landauer. *Art of Engagement: Visual Politics in California and beyond*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993.

Theobald, Mary Miley. *Death by Petticoat: American History Myths Debunked*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Pub., 2012.

Ussher, Jane M. *Fantasies of Femininity: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Wroe, Nicholas. "Allen Jones: 'I Think of Myself as a Feminist'." [Http://www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com). October 31, 2014. Accessed January 10, 2015.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/oct/31/allen-jones-i-think-of-myself-as-a-feminist>.