

Abstract

Corrupt Fairytales: An Exploration of Implied Gender Roles Through Functional and Wearable Art

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This written report supports the creative thesis entitled *Corrupt Fairytales, An Exploration of Implied Gender Roles Through Functional and Wearable Art*. This thesis will investigate implied gender roles through research, and the body of work presented consists of functional and wearable art objects using imagery and elements of nostalgia from the mid-twentieth century. By using materials pertaining to the time period, I am referencing and integrating graphics with text. The art objects created converse about my views on current gender issues and my search for identity in today's society.

Corrupt Fairytales: An Exploration of Implied Gender Roles Through Functional and
Wearable Art

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by

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THROUGH FUNCTIONAL AND WEARABLE ART

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis body of work is my commentary on gender roles in today's society and my search for identity. There are many key elements that allow me to converse about my ideas of implied gender roles and the mythical standard of femininity. One of the major factors is the ability of this work to tell a story by using narrative elements.

By using recognizable imagery, text, and storylines with layered meanings, my work falls into the category of narrative jewelry. I use these narrative elements to create a dialogue between the message I am trying to convey in each piece and the viewer. The images, symbols, colors, and materials used enhance the narrative and set the scene for the story to take place. It is then up to the viewer to interpret the components of the piece and translate them into a cohesive story. It is my intention that the viewers also pull from their own personal experiences while formulating their story, making each person's interpretation of the artwork unique.

The scale of the work also has an impact on the viewer's impression of the story I am trying to tell. In her book, *The Art of Jewelry Design: From Idea to Reality*, Elizabeth Oliver states;

The characteristic small scale of jewelry generally requires the narrative to be told in a miniaturized format. This can heighten the associations with storytelling, the sense of mystery and wonder, as we are subconsciously taken back to childhood, to a time when our world was parallel, but miniature, to that of the giant adults around us. (118-119)

The idea of nostalgia also lends itself to my theme of lost innocence through aging

and the act of searching for one's identity. Salman Akhtar, in his book *Objects of Our Desire: Exploring Our Intimate Connection with the Things Around Us*, writes, "Nostalgic things are deceptive in their emotional appeal. We do not get as fulfilled as we thought we might when presented, in reality, with lost objects from our past. The relief that is provided by nostalgic objects turns out to be momentary. Nostalgia keeps us spellbound but, in the end, leaves us tied to our naïve illusions" (70).

Although each piece I create tells an individual story, the entire body of work uses similar key elements throughout. They include the use of imagery from vintage romance comics, tin from old dollhouses and other sources related to femininity and the home, color created by enamel and or powder coat, and often, moving/interactive components. Every piece also tells a story, relating to my exploration of gender roles, and my search for personal identity.

This nostalgia relates to women of all past generations, but began seriously for me, within my own family. My mother has always been a major influence on my life, shaping me as a human being and beginning to help me to formulate my identity. As her only daughter, she taught me how to behave and react in many different situations. Being a photographer and an art teacher, she also introduced me to the world of artistic expression and helped me to find my passion for making. A great deal of the imagery and found materials used in my pieces are inspired by my mother's influence.

Born in 1953, as part of the Baby Boom generation, my mother grew up in post WWII America. According to Virginia Sapiro, in her book, *Women in American Society*, the mold that postwar women were supposed to fit into, severely degraded the power they

held during the war. “A similar phenomenon was noted immediately following World War II, when the idea that women’s proper role at home was reestablished with new vigor” (61). This role was enforced by all forms of media and socially accepted by society as a whole. Lynn Peril defines this belief system and related media as “pink think”. She elaborates on its influence and longevity;

Pink think is a set of ideas and attitudes about what constitutes proper female behavior; a groupthink that was consciously or not adhered to by advice writers, manufacturers of toys and other consumer products, experts in many walks of life, and the public at large, particularly during the years spanning the mid-twentieth century - but enduring even into the twenty-first century. Pink think assumes there is a standard of behavior to which all women, no matter their age, race, or body type, must aspire. “Femininity” is sometimes used as a code word for this mythical standard, which suggests that women and girls are always gentle, soft, delicate, nurturing beings made of “sugar and spice and everything nice”. (7)

During this time, the main stage for women to express and fulfill their true femininity was in the home. Popular culture after World War II portrayed the image of the young housewife in a very consistent manner. Women living in newly purchased homes often read magazines that imposed conservative cultural ideals with overpowering messages. “Wives were urged to keep the charm in their marriages, to listen with interest to their husbands’ conversation, and to remain physically attractive- all the while raising children and keeping house as if they had a staff or servants” (Kelly 92). Although the designers of these homes claimed that included appliances would ease the workload of caring for a

house and raising children (tasks that most upper middle class women had servants for), they often had the opposite effect. With the appliances, more was expected out of the woman of the house. Clark elaborates, “Instead, housewives spent more time cleaning their houses, cooking elaborate meals, and in general, keeping the home environment under greater control” (234). Along with the appliances, other features of the home were changed to accommodate and enforce the roles of the housewife.

Recently, while aiding my grandmother in cleaning her attic, my mother came upon a box of old romance comic books she had read as a child. She promptly mailed me the comics and I received them at school. This gift has been the basis for the appropriation, manipulation, and use of romance comic imagery in my work. While exploring comic imagery, I found that I was able to convey my cynicism and sarcasm about gender roles in subtle ways, in an effort to avoid offending or shocking the viewer. With comic book imagery, I am able to include social and political commentary and make it more accessible. I found that comic artists often use their art to portray social commentary similar to what I want to achieve with my work. Joe Casey and Matt Fraction explain this in their article, “From Gutter Business to Art Form”, “Comic book initial perception as mainly kids’ entertainment means that they are perfect vehicles for subversive ideas. No one expects a comic book to deliver real, potent satire, or incisive social critique, which means it can be that much more effective when it happens.” (31) Keeping this in mind when designing and creating, I am able to layer meanings with images, symbols, and text. Using images from my mother’s childhood, I am able to reference the time period when women were relegated to the home and gender roles were strictly enforced by societal standards. By adding my own commentary and creating my

own narratives, I am able to express my views on my own identity and how it relates to the gender roles that are still in place in today's society.

My work can be analyzed for deeper meaning on many levels by the viewer, or simply looked at as beautifully crafted art objects. Casey talked about how college professors are now analyzing comic books, "If anything, it proves the true interactiveness of comic books, where anyone can read anything into the work, if they so choose. Most good work allows for that." (40) The fact that most of the comics that I use in my work were written and illustrated by men also puts an interesting twist on the work. The stories and imagery I refer to are generated from a man's perspective during a time when women had little to no power in society and were expected to follow their societal roles. In most cases, the female character is portrayed as helpless, indecisive, and totally dependent on her relationship with a male. She is also stereotyped to be overly emotional and only concerned with finding a relationship that will lead to marriage, home ownership, children, and the ideal of the "American Dream". Even though we have been through several waves of feminism, many of these stereotypes of women still hold true.

I am attempting to start a conversation about why this stereotype is still part of our culture. I am constantly reading stories about why the feminist movement is considered to be over and why many women's attitudes are so passive when it comes to these issues. I think Jessica Valenti describes the American view on feminism quite well, "The history of feminism in the United States is generally thought of in an extremely limited way: Women got the vote, then some woman burned their bras. Then it died 'cause women were equal. Done and done" (47).

TECHNIQUE

Color and imagery are both very important to my work. The colors of the images as well as the surrounding decorative elements allow the viewer to better understand my reference to the Post WWII era of graphics and ideals. Certain colors are also stereotypically associated with different genders, allowing me to express a feeling of domesticity without needing to literally represent it with graphics. Three different techniques make it possible for me to include color in a variety of ways on the pieces that I create. The three processes which are an important part of my research are enameling, powder coating, and the inclusion of tin.

The materials I choose to use when creating an object or piece of jewelry, directly reference the time period that I am critiquing. I use enamels in these pieces because I can reproduce colors that are similar to those used in the romance comics that my mother read as a child. Enameling is essentially a process of applying color to metal by fusing glass to its surface. Different ways of applying the glass enamel have been used since ancient times. The technique that I use is called *champlevé*. Linda Darty defines this specific way of enameling in her book, *The Art of Enameling: Techniques, Projects, Inspiration*, stating that “the term *champlevé* comes from the two French words “champ,” a field, and “levé,” raised. In this technique raised fields, or areas of metal, are incorporated into the finished design and the enamel is inlaid into the recessed compartments” (114). To create the recessed areas, a resist (usually nail polish) is applied to the metal in the areas that I want raised and place the whole piece in an acid bath of ferric chloride. By doing this, the exposed metal is etched away and the resulting piece is comprised of raised lines and recessed compartments. Using colors reminiscent of romance comics, I fill the recessed

areas with the powdered glass and place it in a kiln set at 1500°F until it is fully fused. After letting the piece cool, the enamel is ground flush with the metal, making a smooth even surface. I repeat filling any recesses and grinding until the surface is completely uniform and smooth. Lastly, a glass etching cream is applied to matte the surface. Utilizing the technique of enameling, I am able to create images with blocks of color and bold black lines, similar to comic book imagery.

Powder coating is another way of applying color to metal that directly correlates to the time period and the setting of the pieces that I am creating. Powder coat has been used in industry for decades on such things as stoves, kitchen appliances, and automobiles. Powder coating is achieved by applying a pigmented powdered epoxy resin or plastic to an object using an electrostatic charge. Since both the powder and the object have an electrostatic charge, the powder coats the back of the piece as well as the front in a relatively even layer. After the object is coated it is placed in an oven to set and then cure. The final product is vivid in color and more durable than enamel in that it cannot crack if dropped.

Tin is incorporated into every piece as a lightweight alternative to enamel and a way to include color and enhance the narrative. Bobby Hannson tells a brief history of tin in his book *The Fine Art of the Tin Can: Techniques and Inspirations*;

The old British term “tinned can,” derived from the term “tinned canister,” is more accurate than our common term “tin can.” Tin cans are made of tinned steel- steel plated with tin. The steel provides strength and economy, and the tin resists rust and corrosion. The process of tinning iron was invented in Bohemia at the

beginning of the sixteenth century. The earliest tin cans were made from thinned iron so thick and strong that soldiers often resorted to bayonets and hammers to open them. The can opener wasn't invented for another 50 years, by which time cans were made of slimmer stuff. (12)

In each piece, the tin is chosen for its graphic qualities and nostalgic feel. A majority of the tin used in this body of work is acquired from vintage tin dollhouses, lunchboxes and cookie tins. The sources are associated with traditionally feminine activities; playing with dolls, cooking, and baking. Integrating these specific pieces of tin helps me to reinforce the ideals of traditional gender roles and domesticity.

EXHIBITION



Trophy (Plate 1)

This necklace was made to tell an entire story. The story is left open to interpretation by the viewer, but it shows several moments in time allowing for the viewer to follow a complete story line.

I have taken advantage of the format of the story by including each snippet of the narrative as links on a chain. In this way, when the necklace is open, it can be laid in a flat straight line and read more like a comic strip. On the other hand, it can also be closed and read in a cyclical format; referencing the fact that the story continues and is repeated over and over again.

The technical aspects of the piece aid in making this piece wearable, but also strengthen my concept. Connecting each individual link, I have constructed a mechanism called a universal joint. These specific mechanisms allow for movement in almost any direction. Since the links are large and bulky, the universal joints make it possible for the necklace to lay comfortably against the body when worn. Along with the universal joints, the links are also hinged, allowing for the wearer or viewer to be able to flip up the individual links to reveal the text included on the back. The wearer has the option of sharing the text on the back with the people around them or just letting them view the images on the front. The movement and interaction relate to my ideas about childhood and nostalgia, bringing the viewer back to their own memories of childhood and toys with moving parts. The feeling of comfort is counteracted by a sad love story being told in cheery and bright colored imagery. The narrative is a love story gone wrong. The first link pictures a woman wearing a green scarf seeing a man in the distance. The back reads, "Her heart fluttered at the sight of him". The tin behind the woman matches her scarf and has imagery of ferns to represent the "urban jungle". The next piece is a close up of the man that was pictured in the last scene. He is smiling and is saying "Hello." The caption on the back of this piece reads, "Their eyes met and she knew it was love." The story becomes related to the relationship myth of "love at first sight." The next link shows a scene of the

two enjoying drinks and conversation. It reads, "They had so much in common." Next, the romance progresses and the two are pictured in a sweet embrace. Being self-explanatory, the back only reads, ". . ." The romance then takes a turn for the worse in the next scene. Our heroine, in shock, sees her love hand in hand with another woman. The caption on the back reads, "Was he seeing someone else?" Her reaction to this discovery was not good, as can be seen in the imagery of the next link. The main character slaps the man across the face. The caption reads, "He deserved every ounce of her fury." The final link pictures the woman, very distraught over the relationship, crying. In a sterling silver quote bubble she is sighing. The back reads, "Her heart was broken into a million pieces." Depending on how the necklace is displayed, this could be the end of the narrative, or the story could repeat itself indefinitely.

This is my satirical view on the traditional love story where the woman meets the man and everything ends happily ever after.



Revelation (Plate 2)

Teatime in the United States is associated with upper-class women as well as with children; specifically girls. A feeling of innocence is inferred by the nostalgic overtones of playing tea with dolls and stuffed animals. This is contrasted by the graphic image of a terrified woman holding a teacup.

The viewer can determine the cause of the shocked look on the woman's face if the inscription along the rim is read, "As she sipped her tea, she finally realized what Louise had been trying to tell her." With such an open-ended phrase, the viewer is able to infer an ending to the narrative pulling their own from past experiences and situations encountered.

I chose to combine the concept of realization with the object of a tea infuser for several reasons. First, I associate teatime with the stereotyped version of women trying to impress each other, chat about housewife dilemmas, and the spread of gossip. Second, I have my own associations with drinking tea as well. In the morning, I drink tea to help me gather my thoughts and focus on what I have to do throughout the day. I also have a tea

break during the day as a time for me to reflect on what has happened during the morning and work through the problems I may face.



As she gazed off into nothingness, she successfully avoided the task at hand. (Plate 3)

For me, the epitome of feminine ideals from the Post WWII era can be summed up in two key items; the apron and the pearl necklace. With frills, lace, and rickrack, the apron was worn while completing many household chores that women were expected to carryout while maintaining a pristine living environment. It was worn while caring for the children and the best, most fashionable aprons were worn while serving dinner and

entertaining guests. I feel it was and still is the perfect accessory for any woman adhering to traditional gender roles and trying to prove her femininity.

A good string of pearls seemed to be a necessity to reinforce the dainty charm of any lady looking to impress others. Throughout history, pearls have been worn in western culture as a status symbol and to show that a woman was married. The trend to uphold traditional gender roles allowed the pearl necklace to find its home around the neck of the radiant housewife.

In my opinion, this piece combines both the ideals of the pearl necklace and the apron to create an eloquently redundant ensemble perfect for any feminine lady.

The apron is constructed using brightly colored fabric reminiscent of fabrics printed during the fifties. The fabric from the apron is then integrated into the chain of the necklace, being set into small round links, referring to round pearls. At the back of the necklace is a vintage button, again to reference the fabric in the apron. The pendant of the necklace depicts an elegantly dressed woman wearing a strand of pearls and wielding a meat cleaver. She looks off into the distance with a smirk on her face. The phrase on the back of the pendant states, "As she gazed off into nothingness, she successfully avoided the task at hand." The viewer is then left to determine what task this content housewife is neglecting to complete.



The idea of a white picket fence terrified her. (Plate 4)

My next necklace was constructed following the same theme of eloquent redundancy using domestic imagery paired with an apron and pearls.

This apron employed the use of all vintage fabrics purchased from an antique mall as well as some antique glass buttons. The fabric and buttons were incorporated into the necklace using the same method as the previous piece. However, instead of just using

round links to represent pearls, this necklace has strings of actual pearls for a more literal connection to the popular attire for housewives. The champlevé-enameled pendant depicts a very distressed woman, screaming with tears flowing down her face. The matte enamel is accompanied by some cheery pastel colored tin, used to contrast the intensity of the imagery. The inscription on the reverse of the pendant reads, “The idea of a white picket fence terrified her”. The inscription has a direct correlation to the mythical “American Dream”, in which every woman is happily married with the average 2.5 children and a house with blue shutters and a white picket fence.



Tin Brooch Series (Plate 5, Plate 6, Plate 7)

The images from these three brooches were appropriated from a lunch box that was created in the 1950s called Campus Queen. On the front was a girl in a ball gown and crown with her date and a few other couples and in pink scrolling letters the caption “Campus Queen.” On the sides were images of girls in different social settings including talking on the phone, reading, listening to records, having ice cream sundaes, and

shopping. On the back was a board game, in which the goal was to become none other than the Campus Queen.

Keeping in mind the information read in various self-help books and magazine articles, I collaged the tin images of the girls from the lunch box into different settings, each portraying a different situation.

This series also begins the inclusion of thought bubbles in my work. Thought balloons or bubbles are unique to comic imagery. Steve Englehart, in his article “The Lone Hero, An American Ideal”, explains the importance of thought balloons in comics;

But thought balloons have distinct benefits: they allow some human insight into characters who may not verbalize much, and they allow future storylines to be planted. . . without thought balloons, stories become flatter, more linear. And my point is, thought balloons are a tool available to comics writers that are not available to film writers. (119)

The text on the back of the brooches further enhances the narrative of the imagery on the front. The characters on each brooch break the boundaries of the frame, giving them more depth despite the flatness of the layered tin.

The first brooch (Plate 5) is an image of a girl reading a book. I altered and collaged the image so it looks as if she is pushing the book away to daydream. In the daydream is a man and woman. The text on the back reads, “Putting trivial matters aside, she focused on the future she was raised for.” This brooch was made as a response to a quote found in *Joyce Jackson’s Guide to Dating* and is elaborated on by Peril;

Joyce suggested that a girl who had gone through high school and college and still hadn't found "the one" might try graduate school, "especially one where the men students outnumbered the women." A college education so gained never went to waste, she reassured readers, as housewives were "called on occasionally to give book reports in the P.T.A." (91)

I find it interesting that some girls, even today consider going to school and furthering their education because they think they will be able to find a suitable husband in college. The media from the fifties made this idea widespread.

The second of the series (Plate 6) plays with the myth that women should marry rich men; even if they are not in love. The caption on this brooch reads, "It was then she realized that everything she had been looking for had been right in front of her all along." The caption alludes to the collaged image on the front of a couple in which the man is smiling and the woman is holding a bouquet of flowers and wearing a prong-set diamond on her finger, suggesting she is engaged. To contrast the romantic imagery, the girl is thinking about large stacks of money. The viewer is lead to believe that instead of thinking about love and being happy about her engagement to the man pictured, she is only thinking about his money. The imagery added with the caption supports this idea and makes it seem as if she has known this man for some time, but it took her a while to figure out that all she really had been searching for was his money.

My friends and their experiences with online dating, inspired the third and final of this brooch series. Feeling alone and in need of significant others in their lives, a few of my friends began to seek out male companionship via internet dating sites. They would

always be very excited to receive messages from potential suitors, read their dating profiles, and set up dates with their “perfect matches”. It seemed that every time they arrived home from a date, they were disappointed and sometimes even appalled. The third and final piece of the series (Plate 7) focuses on the feelings of hope combined with the anxiety they would have when finding a man they thought would fit them. The quote, “He sounded like the man of her dreams, but how could she be sure?” combined with the imagery of the girl talking on the phone with a phantom dream man composed of a black outline as opposed to the vibrant colors of the girl.



Pair of Convertible Tin Necklaces with Aprons (Plate 8, Plate 9)

Continuing to use the tin imagery from the “Campus Queen” lunch box, the next two pieces elaborate on the use of the thought bubble. Keeping with the idea of dreams and fantasies, I designed two convertible necklaces with corresponding aprons. I call the necklaces convertible, because they are just that. They can be worn as necklaces only, or the chains can be removed and they can be worn as brooches.

Tying the ephemeral thoughts of the imagery to the real world and the wearer are miniature, common domestic objects: telephones and irons. Each piece of the necklace was cast individually from molds taken off dollhouse components out of a two-part plastic. The tiny white objects again reference the classic pearl necklace, but this time with more nostalgic overtones.

Instead of incorporating existing fabric into the necklaces, in these pieces, imagery and pattern from the necklace were incorporated into the aprons. After scanning the tin used in the necklaces into the computer, the files were uploaded onto a website and had the fabric printed and shipped to me. The aprons were then constructed using the fabric with the same exact design as the tin utilized in the necklaces.

The first convertible necklace (Plate 8) pictures a woman in a room with a candelabra behind her. It is titled, “Her fantasies were flooded with ideas of grandeur”, which is also inscribed on the back of the piece on a sterling silver plate. The title alludes to the tin imagery in the woman’s thoughts: a lavishly dressed couple. The apron is made of fabric picturing the candelabra and wallpaper from the scene on the necklace.

The second necklace (Plate 9) deals more with the idea of how a “feminine” lady would expect to be thought of by a male. The image is of a man, possibly outside of a front door due to the lamp near him, thinking of a scantily clad woman. The image of the woman was acquired from a vintage foundation tin (makeup). Titled, “Her radiance would soon infiltrate his daydreams”, the piece is directly influence by Arlene Dahl’s book, *Always Ask a Man*. Peril includes an excerpt in her book, “Keep your femininity in focus and you can overcome all handicaps. Let yourself be frankly and fabulously female

and you'll have men fighting for your smiles. Remember the secret ingredient of fascination- *femininity*" (21).



Vanity Set (Plate 10, Plate 11, Plate 12)

Metal items classically associated with beauty and femininity are most often used to adorn the body. What about the tools used to aid in this process of adornment? I turned to the place in the house that is solely used by women; the vanity. A fascinating and mesmerizing area of any household, the vanity can be seen as important for any “true woman.” It is a private place for a woman to “put her face on” and its sole purpose is for the beautification of a woman. There are many tools for the arduous process of full beautification. A classic vanity set includes three items, but a more complex set can include more than fifteen. For this body of work, I decided to stick with the basics; a hand mirror, a hairbrush, and a comb. The gaudy gold is applied to each piece using the process of powder coating and is meant to add to the theatrics of the scene and the idea of applying makeup in general.

The mirror (Plate 10), a must on any vanity table, is adorned with the image of a man with his arm around a woman who has a questioning look. The looking glass is acquired from an antique mirror purchased from a flea market, while the handle and pattern behind the couple are crafted from an old fruitcake tin. The inscription tells the story, “Thank goodness that she had practiced for hours in front of a mirror in case a situation like this should arise.” I made this mirror based on a personal experience when I was in an awkward situation with a male and should have handled it better. If only I had read more etiquette books before this situation had taken place!

The next in the set is the hairbrush (Plate 11). Having read several old books like *Vogue’s Book of Etiquette*, *Self Knowledge and Guide to Sex Instruction*, and *Joyce Jackson’s Guide to Dating*, and viewing 1950s home magazines dealing with feminine

beauty and how it would help the reader get further in life, I decided the concept of the brush should be based on these ideals. The brush is constructed using vintage bristles from an existing brush and the handle and pattern behind the image is fabricated from the same fruitcake tin. The same theatrical gold powder coat is also used. The woman in the image looks innocent and slightly alarmed. The title suggests the reason for this reaction, “To reach her goals, ‘dainty’ would need to be quickly incorporated into her vocabulary.”

Returning to proper etiquette in relationships, the comb (Plate 12) again pictures a couple. Instead of being intimately close, the two are on opposite ends of the comb. The quote, etched on a silver plate on the reverse side as the image reads, “He had piqued her interest and she was doing her best to hide that fact.” The text is inspired by the advice given by Helen Louise Crouse, urging girls not to act too interested and scare the boy away. Also included is the fruitcake tin and gaudy gold powder coat. The actual comb is acquired and then manipulated.



Travel Vanity (Plate 13, Plate 14)

With ideas of eternal beautification and beauty standards for women still fresh in mind from creating the vanity set, I decided to continue with this concept, but to take it one step further. Beauty on the go is highly recommended in all beauty manuals because a true, feminine lady is always prepared with touch-up accessories and needs to make sure she is looking her best. The travel vanity set for this body of work includes a pocket mirror (Plate 13) and a folding comb (Plate 14). Staying consistent with the standard vanity set, the travel vanity pieces employ the use of the same fruitcake tin and ostentatious gold powder coat.

The travel mirror is compact enough to slip easily into a pocket or handbag. The image is of a woman with bright blue earrings looking over her shoulder, satisfied. The quote informs the viewer of her expression, “At last there was something that could hold her attention.” For me, the mirror deals with the idea of being content with myself despite the pressures of society, but the viewer could also read the open-ended text in a variety of other ways.

The flip comb was inspired by my passion and fascination for knife making. My hair is very curly and I cannot comb it, so I find humor in constructing a comb, which is useless for me, adding to my sarcastic dialogue about beauty objects in general. In this piece, I repurposed an existing aluminum comb, powder coated it red, and incased it in the fruitcake tin. The woman is pictured in profile with her eyes closed, as if in thought. The plate on the reverse declares, “She constantly had to remind herself that LOVE was also a four letter word.” Similar to the pocket mirror, this piece is about being content with myself.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have shared both the technical and conceptual aspects of my thesis exhibition. I have discussed my interest in and research of traditional gender roles in American society and their relation to making art objects and jewelry. The materials and techniques I use allow me to express my cynical narratives about these social implications to the viewer. In the end, this body of work is about being content with myself and knowing that I have the ability to succeed in anything without conforming to the constraints of traditional gender roles.

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