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BODY IMAGE

By

Emma Sharps

B.A. American University, 2012

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Art History and Art History, Critical and Curatorial Studies

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Department of Fine Arts

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University of Louisville

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"Louisville, Kentucky

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May 2015

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Thesis Approved on

April 14, 2015

By the following Thesis Committee

Thesis Director (Yasmeen Siddiqui)

Second Committee Member (Jongwoo Jeremy Kim)

Third Committee Member (Simona Bertacco)

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Susan Griffin, who puts up with me, especially during this process.

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I would like to thank all my professors both at University of Louisville and American University for helping and guiding me. I would also like to thank John Begley and Peter Morrin who inspired me to work in museums. I would also like to thank my committee members Yasmeen Siddiqui, Jongwoo Jeremy Kim, and Simona Bertacco for all their comments and assistance with this project, as well as the artists (Leslie Lyons and Licia Priest) and collectors (the Photo Archives and Michael Tierney) for allowing me to use their beautiful art.

ABSTRACT

BODY IMAGE

Emma Sharps

April 14, 2015

My thesis and the corresponding exhibition will look at contemporary artists, specifically Jen Davis, Lauren Greenfield, Leslie Lyons and Licia Priest, who examine and oppose the negative effects that art and pop culture have had on perceptions of the female body and, especially, on women's perceptions of their own bodies. Focusing on the last three decades, I will contextualize my exhibition by examining art historical and feminist texts that analyze representations of female bodies. My project will be informed by contemporary psychological and sociological studies of women's attitudes towards their bodies: Joan Brumberg's *The Body Project*, Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* and Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. The exhibition will encompass multiple media works (photography, sculpture, and painted glass), which are mainly created by women artists. My goal is to evaluate the current discussion concerning the spectacle of women and its impact on womanhood and to see the ways in which the recent developments in gender studies can help us renegotiate the terms of body politics.

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INTRODUCTION

“Feminist art history is there to make trouble, to call into question, to ruffle feathers in the patriarchal dovecotes. It should not be mistaken for just another variant of or supplement to mainstream art history.”¹ In this project, I take Linda Nochlin’s statement above as a challenge. This thesis as well as the exhibition that accompanies it aspires to “make trouble, to call into question.” I start with the cultural focus on and depiction of the female body that, as Nochlin shows, has been an important subject of art. Nochlin argues that these depictions are always ideological and historical, always indicative of cultural beliefs about women. Women’s bodies in art works do not give us direct access to the appearances of “real” women, but they do tell us about what a given society thinks a woman is or should be. The relationship between representation and what is represented that Nochlin discusses in terms of female bodies has been, more generally, a major topic in postmodern studies of semiotics. W.J.T. Mitchell, Michael Camille, and Jean Baudrillard draw attention to the fact that words and images are a system of signs and representations which have a vexed and complex relationship to “the real.” The work of Joan Brumberg, Susan Bordo and Naomi Wolf, in turn, show how images of women saturate popular culture. They and other feminist theorists and scholars have demonstrated how destructive these images have been and continue to be for women.

¹ Linda Nochlin, “Introduction” in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, Linda Nochlin, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), xii.

Representations of idealized female bodies distort women's relationship with their own bodies.

One way to challenge these idealized and destructive female body images is to create alternative images, fostering new ways of viewing women and their bodies, creating representations more closely associated with empowerment and displaying a multiplicity of body types. Here is where the role of women artists comes in. By mimicking or exaggerating conventional images of the female body or by offering alternative depictions of women, these artists are ruffling feathers. As Linda Nochlin argues "Ideology manifests itself as much by what is unspoken—unthinkable, unrepresentable—as by what is articulated in a work of art. Insofar as many of the assumptions about women presented themselves as a complex of commonsense views about the world, and were therefore assumed to be self evident, they were relatively invisible to most contemporary viewers as well as to the creators of the paintings."² My claim is that these artists expose ideology by representing what has previously not been represented before.

First I begin with my methodology for this project. It brings together theories and studies from three areas. Feminist Studies provides a language for analyzing and articulating the way artists represent women's relationship to their bodies. The historical writings of Joan Jacobs Brumberg, Susan Bordo's study of the "unbearable weight" of expectations about the female form fostered by popular culture and commodity culture,

² Linda Nochlin, "Women Art, and Power" in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, Linda Nochlin, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 2.

and Naomi Wolf's analysis of "how images of beauty are used against women" have proved instrumental in helping me think through the issues involved.

The second methodological tool that I employ is feminist art history. Here I turn to Linda Nochlin, who almost single-handedly created feminist art history in the 1970's and whose work continues to be influential to the present day. Nochlin's essay "Women, Art and Power" deals with how the ideology of a given time is reflected in the art of the period. Nochlin specifically focuses on how the role of women and their subordination by men can be seen in a series of paintings that she analyzes. The art in my show directly attacks the art conventions that Nochlin discusses in this essay.

In order to ground my discussion of representation I turn to WJT Mitchell, Michael Camille and Jean Baudrillard. All three take the postmodern stance that we live in a world of signs and symbols, whose relationship to "the real" is artificial. Thus we are living in a world that Baudrillard calls a "simulacrum." Understanding the shifting historical and cultural meanings and uses of words and images means, for these theorists, understanding their underlying ideologies.

The next section ties together the methodology and also identifies the female artists in the exhibit—Leslie Lyons, Jen Davis, Lauren Greenfield, and Licia Priest—briefly summarizing their careers and aims. These are artists whose work has been recognized through exhibition record, critical response and collectors. Working with the artists as well as the University of Louisville Photo Archives I was able to identify, select and analyze works that would both support my thesis and inform the process of refining

my argument. I go on to describe these art works and propose ways in which they challenge the current visual discourse about women's bodies.

In order to contextual the work of my project, I survey recent exhibits that deal with the human body ranging from 2009 to 2014 in multiple venues like Amelie A. Wallace Gallery at SUNY College at Old Westbury, Joe McCauley Art Gallery in Heartland, Illinois, and Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton. The various exhibits provided information about recent explorations of the body and its images. I conducted this research to ensure that this project's purview would contribute to this field of study and exhibition making. At the same time both the content and goals of these exhibits deepened my knowledge of representations of the body.

Finally I propose some ways in which my project can further the discussion of contemporary feminist art and artists. I suggest through this exhibit and thesis how this art may help challenge the hegemony of "female bodily beauty.

METHODOLOGY

For my thesis, the research stemmed from a large and varied collection of scholars. This analysis of Body Image had to cross the disciplines of psychology, sociology, history and cultural studies including work by Susan Bordo, and Naomi Wolf. The research provided a foundational layer so that there were multiple ways of approaching the project. In addition, I found that art historians and artists had taken up this topic in different manners than I expected beginning with Linda Nochlin in the 1970's. Because women's understandings of their bodies are so tied up with representations of the female body in art and media, addressing the issues of this project entailed including a group of thinkers who theorized representation like Jean Baudrillard, Michael Camille, and W.J.T. Mitchell.

The Female Body as Project

A significant and influential study of eating disorders and women's (distorted) body images is *The Body Project: An intimate History of American Girls* by the social historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg (1997). In this important gender studies work, Brumberg looks at the ideology of the female body, in particular during the twentieth century. The book presents historical evidence that includes diaries written by American girls between the 1830's and the 1990's.³

³ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, (New York: Random House, 1997), xvii.

These diaries suggest that while today's women may have more freedom and opportunities than before, they are under more pressure and thus at a greater risk.⁴ Brumberg states that "girls today make the body into an all consuming project in ways young women of the past did not."⁵ Women for centuries have constantly been judged based on their appearance (no one more critical of those appearances than themselves). For example, the American poet Lucy Larcom, who tended to the looms in a textile mill of nineteenth-century New England, said she was "morbidly self-critical" in her adolescence.⁶ The nineteenth century, women were concerned about the size of body parts like hands, feet and their waists.⁷ To be too large or too robust was a sign of indelicacy and suggested lower class origins and a rougher way of life. Even Queen Victoria and her mother, the Duchess of Kent, were concerned with their body size.⁸ Victoria had dainty feet but she was often warned by her mother to not drink too much stout or eat too much food. Brumberg says "a future queen, after all, was not supposed to look like a husky milkmaid or mill girl, and her body must never imply that she did demanding physical labor."⁹

Nonetheless, girls in the nineteenth century were not allowed to complain about their looks because it was not good to be considered vain, self-indulgent, and thus immoral. Instead the girls repressed those feelings.¹⁰ They took to their diaries to note a new dress, hair ribbon or other things having to do with their appearance, but their

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xvii.

⁶ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xix.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xx.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xxi.

recorded ideas about self-improvement were not tied to their bodies. The nineteenth-century girls sought to become more diligent about fixing their characters.

However, in the twentieth century, the body is more openly regarded as something to be managed and maintained, through clothing, personal grooming and special attention to exterior surfaces. Brumberg found that, prior to this, girls would mention their appearance every so often in their diaries, but in the twentieth century it became a central theme. Brumberg looks at the diaries of twentieth-century young girls, where the body is a major preoccupation. “I’m so fat and ugly” is a common comment in these diaries.¹¹ Brumberg was a teacher at Cornell University for over two decades, where talk like this was heard in various forms. And while the girls in her class made these comments off hand, they were at the same time highly critical of the Victorian culture where women wore corsets and were restrained according to the students (who wore leggings, jeans, baggy sweaters and dresses).¹² The girls in the classroom considered themselves better and freer than their ancestors, even though the earlier women had braved Cornell a century earlier when they would have been heavily criticized. These clearly intelligent contemporary students still felt the urge to “Police their bodies.”¹³ In today’s culture, Brumberg argues, commercial interest plays a role in young girls’ anger towards their bodies. This strategy results in huge revenues for manufacturers of skin and hair products and even diet foods.¹⁴ And while this situation is great for these companies, it is terrible for younger girls: “it saps the creativity of girls

¹¹ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xxii.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xxiii.

¹⁴ Ibid.

and threatens their mental and physical health”¹⁵ According to Brumberg, by age thirteen, fifty-three percent of American girls are unhappy with their bodies, and by age seventeen seventy-eight percent are still dissatisfied. Not surprisingly there has been an increase in anorexia nervosa and bulimia in the past thirty years.¹⁶ The body has become an obsession, which has led to a recalibration of eating which is unhealthy and can lead to death. Young girls are always asking themselves “Who am I? Who do I want to be?” and more and more the answer has to do with their bodies.¹⁷ Even girls who do not have eating disorders are preoccupied with their bodies. Brumberg asks the question “why is the body still a girl’s nemesis? Shouldn’t today’s sexually liberated girls feel better about themselves than their corseted sisters of a century ago?”¹⁸

Several of the artists chosen for this project take up this problem of young girls’ bodies explicitly. The so-called “freedom” of twentieth and twenty-first centuries girls to be sexual, to dress as they wish, etc, does not equate to real freedom regarding their bodies and body images. Contemporary artists (specifically the ones being exhibited in *Body Image*) demonstrate Brumberg’s point and show the destructiveness of this obsession with “perfecting” the body. What Brumberg describes as the “body project” of twentieth- and twenty –first centuries girls is directly relevant to this thesis’s analysis. Brumberg shows how females policing of their own bodies begins at a very young age. The concept of the “body project” can help us understand both conventional images of young women and those that, potentially, confront and question those images. In doing so, they challenge the idea that self-improvement or self-creation had been, for

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xxiv.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, xxv.

contemporary young females, reduced to a matter of controlling their bodies. To become “better” is to move closer to an idealized body: thin, “attractive,” sexualized, etc.

The artists like Leslie Lyons and Lauren Greenfield show how the early sexualizing of the female body is not liberating, but confining, and another way to objectify and control women. The little girl in “BEFORE” is conforming to the idea of a sexualized woman; her costume and stance are indicative, not of who she is, but rather the conventional standard signs of the sexualized female (i.e. smoking a cigarette, scantily clad, wearing black and fur etc.). Laura Greenfield’s photograph enacts not only the young girl’s policing of her own body by stepping on a scale, but also the complicity of her family, who peer around the corner watching and judging her. The family is imposing their anxiety about the girl’s weight, beauty and image, making her body their own “body project.” Both artists raise the question of whether the body project for the girls portrayed has succeeded or failed. On the one hand, the girls have achieved their goal of appearing “older,” “attractive,” and “slender.” But, on the other hand, the artists demonstrate the costs of appearing this way (loss of innocence, self, individuality, and privacy).

Other artists deal with the “failure” of their own body project. For example Jen Davis depicts a female body that has “failed” to meet standards of beauty. She is not thin, made-up or photo-shopped. Her body is overweight and lacks muscle definition, leading the viewer, attuned to cultural standards and prejudices, to suspect she overeats, is unhealthy, does not exercise and cannot control herself. Her body is wrong, which she illustrates by acting childishly and jumping on the bed dressed in a little girl’s dress. Licia Priest, on the other hand, uses the language of policing in her work in order to foreground

and thus contest it. She writes “standards,” “I wrote,” “I remember,” and “hormone” as well as other phrases, the terms of the body project inscribed both legibly and illegibly on the art work. The idealized standard of female “beauty,” the working to create that beauty, which can cause hormonal imbalance, are all present in her work. If Brumberg shows that creating a self has been reduced to controlling a body, the artists in this show demonstrate that the female self should not be limited to the body and how problematic it is when the culture imposes this limitation.

The book *Unbearable Weight* by Susan Bordo (1993) looks at how today’s society is saturated with images. And, while her references may be dated, her basic premise is still true. Our culture is obsessed with women and their bodies (especially their size).¹⁹ Alexandra Shulman, editor of British *Vogue*, when asked if the fashion industry might be responsible for creating/perpetuating an impossible standard for girls to compare themselves to, said “not many people have actually said to me that they have looked at my magazine and decided to become anorexic.”²⁰ This is dodging the issue: no one decides to be anorexic, just as no one decides to become an alcoholic. In the past, the beauty standard has not been the same all over the world.²¹ In Central Africa, women with curves were considered beautiful. In fact women were sent to fattening farms to become curvier for their wedding.²² Bordo argues that Africa has been a continent overwhelmed by starvation, poverty and disease (AIDS), and that skinniness is linked with those things. However, the globalization of media is changing this situation. In the late twentieth century, a woman who was considered locally beautiful competed in a Miss

¹⁹ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (California: University of California, 2004), xiii.

²⁰ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xiv.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

World contest and did not do well.²³ But another woman, Agbani Darego, from the same region and against the wishes of the community, entered the competition and won. The difference was Agbani was lighter skinned, and hyper- thin.²⁴ This prompted Nigerian teenagers to begin to fast and exercise more to become “lepa” (a word which means thin). This trend is not unusual.²⁵ Bordo uses the example given by Brenda Richardson and Elane Rehr (authors of *101 Ways to Help Your Daughter Love Her Body*) of looking at Russian films before those in the USSR were exposed to United States’ culture and after: the women’s arms are very different, becoming much slimmer.²⁶ The examples continue. The Fiji islands are remote in location. They did not have television till 1995.²⁷ Prior to this, Fiji had no reported cases of eating disorders. A study was done by anthropologist Anne Becker that demonstrated that no matter what their size was, the women in Fiji were all relatively comfortable with their bodies.²⁸ However, in 1998, eleven percent reported vomiting to control their weight and sixty-two percent had begun to diet during the past months. Becker was shocked by this shift; she had believed that Fijian cultural traditions, where eating and voluptuous bodies were celebrated, would “withstand the influence of media images.”²⁹ Clearly, they did not.

To demonstrate the power and hegemony of the idealized female bodies represented in the media, Bordo uses the example of young men who cannot get aroused by women’s breasts because they are not the same as the ones seen on television or in

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xv.

²⁷ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xv.

²⁸ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xv-xvi.

²⁹ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xvi.

movies, despite the fact that the latter are not real.³⁰ The concept of real or fake is not important: fitting the standard is. Bordo describes “the post modern body, increasingly fed on ‘fantasies of rearranging, transforming, and correcting limitless improvement and change, defying the historicity, the mortality, and indeed, the very materiality of the body. In place of that materiality, we now have cultural plastic.’”³¹ With plastic surgery on the rise, the level of perfectionism is also on the rise. Bordo uses the example of a client of Randal Halworth named Ann who requested plastic surgery for fat pockets on her inner thighs. She said “no matter how skinny I get, they get smaller but never go away.”³² Halworth considers her to be a perfect candidate for liposuction. The doctor also notes he doubts that his new client will stop at one surgery. Bordo suggest that Ann got the idea from comparing herself, not to women, but to computer generated torsos.³³ No actual woman has a body like the one she desires for herself. Bordo argues that close to every image of a woman that we see has been modified in some way shape or form. Bordo goes on to talk about how body image can affect different bodies and in different forms through eating habits.³⁴ Binge eating, for example, is a massive problem within the African American community. Even exercise has been reduced to a way to control calorie intake.³⁵ Bordo also discusses how consumer culture has played a role, saying “consumer culture continually excavates and encourages us to let go, indulge in our desires—for sugar, fat, sex, mind-less, entertainment. But at the same time, burgeoning industries centered on diet, exercise, and body enhancement glamorize self-discipline and

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xvii.

³² Ibid.

³³ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xx.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xxi.

code fat as a symbol of laziness and lack of will-power. For girls and women, the tensions of consumer capitalism are layered, additionally, with the contradictions of being female in our time.”³⁶ Bordo argues that the images we see are not just images. They are fantasies of things like acceptance and freedom from hurt or pain that people feel in their own bodies.³⁷ The message is not always the same, but it boils down to seeing what the viewer wants. Even women whose bodies we idealize struggle, in a sense. Beyonce supposedly does five hundred sit ups every night, and Jennifer Lopez does ninety minutes of hard training, four times a week.³⁸ These women may be supporting the idea of a curvier women, but they are still setting an exceedingly high standard.³⁹

The pieces in my show address the beauty standards Bordo discusses. Jen Davis shows her discomfort with her body and her weight by staring blankly into the camera. Her titles as well as her expression hint at this. *Ethereal* depicts her jumping on a bed, in a blurred image: the only time she is weightless or incorporeal is when she is in the air and not weighed down by the “problem” of her body. *Judgment* is a picture of her standing on her scale, which is, in theory, judging her. Leslie Lyons’ “BEFORE” and “AFTER” show the effects of an overly sexualized culture where small children are encouraged to appear older than they are. Lauren Greenfield’s photograph sends a similar message.

In the book *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf says “slim women and heavy ones spoke of the suffering caused by trying to meet the demands of the thin ideal; black,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, xxii.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

brown, and white women—women who looked like fashion models—admitted to knowing, from the time they could first consciously think that the ideal was someone tall, thin, white, and blond, a face without pores, asymmetry, or flaws, someone wholly ‘perfect,’ and someone whom they felt, in one way or another, they were not.”⁴⁰ Like Brumberg, Naomi Wolf argues that, while women have gained a certain amount of freedom, they are still not free. Women are focused on things like physical appearance, bodies, faces, hair and clothing.⁴¹ They feel guilt or shame, but are in denial of this. Wolf claims that there is an important relationship between female liberation and the female body.⁴² While women seem to have broken down barriers like voting or working among men, they are stricter and more critical of their bodies and the images of other women’s bodies. Wolf even goes as far as to say that the progress made earlier in the twentieth century has stalled because of “confusion, division, cynicism, and above all, exhaustion.”⁴³ Wolf also points out that the number of eating disorders have grown vastly, so has cosmetic surgery. Consumers are spending double on pornography than in previous years.⁴⁴ Wolf says “more women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than we have ever had before; but in terms of how we feel about ourselves physically, we may actually be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers.”⁴⁵ It cannot be a coincidence that so many women feel this way. Wolf describes this phenomenon as backlash against feminism. This is the “beauty myth,” which is “the modern version of a social reflex that has been in force since the Industrial Revolution.

⁴⁰ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 1.

⁴¹ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 9.

⁴² Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 10.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

As women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it waned to carry on its work of social control.”⁴⁶ The old feminine ideologies still have control over women.⁴⁷

Wolf argues that beauty is not universal or unchanging nor is it a function of evolution: “its ideals change at apace far more rapid than that of the evolution of species. Charles Darwin was himself convinced by his own explanation that ‘beauty’ resulted from a ‘sexual selection’ that deviated from the rule of natural selection: for women to compete with men through ‘beauty’ is a reversal of the way in which natural selection affects all other mammal.”⁴⁸ The beauty myth, like our own appearances, is constantly changing. Thus, Wolf argues, that the beauty myth is not based on evolution, sex, gender, aesthetics, or God.⁴⁹ It is based on emotional distance, politics, finance, and sexual repression. The beauty myth is not about women at all; it is about men’s institutions and institutional power.⁵⁰ Whichever period one chooses, the concept of beauty is based on women’s behavior that the era believes is desirable: “The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behavior and not appearance.”⁵¹ Even more problematic, women’s identities are tied to their outward appearance, thus making them vulnerable to outside disapproval and approval.

Wolf believes that today’s beauty myth is linked to the period when technology began to expand at a rapid rate (like photography).⁵² Women became more exposed to images outside of the church. Furthermore Wolf links the growth of the beauty myth with the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 12-13.

⁴⁹ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 14.

⁵² Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 15.

urbanization and breaking down of the family model. In this new model the breadwinner was no longer just the man (typically) who left home for work during the day.⁵³ With this, the middle class expanded, the standards of living and literacy went up, while the size of families went down. Wolf notes that most of what we consider beautiful is from the 1830's, where "the cult of domesticity was first consolidated and the beauty index invented."⁵⁴

The artists in this show are dealing with the consequences of the contemporary beauty myth. Jen Davis shows her discomfort with the beauty myth by staring vacantly at the camera. In the work "Judgment," she directly addresses her feelings about the scale and weight. The numbers on the scale determine whether someone is considered aesthetically appealing. Unfortunately, Jen Davis, as an obese woman, does not fit the beauty myth in western culture (which calls for women to be thin, tall, very similar to a super model). Leslie Lyons' work shows the consequence of young girls attempting to fit this beauty model with her "BEFORE" and "AFTER." The grown woman looks to be the epitome of beauty and sexiness, whereas the little girl is dressed (barely) and standing in a similar pose. This culture expects girls to follow suit and become sexual perhaps before they are ready to be.

The Female Body in Art

Research on the art historical perspective on my topic began with Linda Nochlin's work. Her early essay "Women Art, and Power" investigates the relationships between women, art and power in a series of images from around the eighteenth century to the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

twentieth century.⁵⁵ This scholarship, which examines depictions of the female body from a feminist standpoint, provides a historical perspective on the female body in art. It examines the distinction between how women were artistically displayed versus how women might have appeared in everyday life. The paintings analyzed all depict women in situations where power is involved (usually women lacking it).⁵⁶ Nochlin argues that the workings of ideology are often best seen, not in what is said or thought, but in art. Nochlin maintains that “representations of women in art are founded upon and serve to reproduce indisputable accepted assumptions held by society in general, artists in particular and some artist more than others about men’s power over, superiority to, difference from and necessary control of women.” As a result, Nochlin argues, “assumptions which are manifested in the visual structures as well as the thematic choices of the pictures in question.”⁵⁷ Building on this line of thought, my thesis and corresponding exhibition looks to gather works by women artists who are conscious of the ideological power of the mainstream art Nochlin describes. The artists are well aware of how conventional images of women express an ideology of simultaneous idealization and disempowerment. But with their depictions of women, these women artists seek to confront and challenge this ideology and offer new perspectives and possible alternatives.

In art and life, women are often seen as passive and weak, their sexuality controlled by men.⁵⁸ Women were/are defined by their supposed domestic and nurturing skills. According to Nochlin, women are often seen as objects.⁵⁹ The first work Nochlin examines is Jacques-Louise David’s “The Oath of the Horatii” (1784) where there is a

⁵⁵ Nochlin, “Women Art, and Power,” 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Nochlin, “Women Art, and Power,” 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

pretty clear representation of gender differences.⁶⁰ The women in the painting are extremely passive. Nochlin claims that the women only exist within the work to provide an element of contrast to the strength of the men.⁶¹ In this painting the three brothers, the Horatii, take an oath to Rome on their swords in the presence of their father as well as a group of women and children. It is a depiction of masculine strength and feminine weakness.⁶² There is a clear divide between the two different genders: where the men are standing rigid and tall, the women are hunched over, giving up, according to Nochlin.⁶³ The men seem to also dominate the painting while the women and children are grouped into a corner. During this time women were seen as passive and were expected to be weak and in need of constant protection and supervision.

The next work Nochlin discusses is Sir Joseph Noel Paton's "In Memoriam," which was created "to commemorate the Christian Heroism of the British Ladies in India during the Mutiny of 1857."⁶⁴ The painting, Nochlin says, was altered so that the men entering in the background are the Scottish rescuers and not the Sepoys attacking because the artist felt that the actual facts would create "too painful an impression."⁶⁵ The British women in this work are not seen as fighting their fate but rather have submitted and are kneeling to accept the rape and murder that is around the corner. They are also dressed in beautiful clothing.⁶⁶ Paton has even included a bible from which the women are reading rather than have the women even try to defend themselves.⁶⁷ A reviewer in the *Art Journal* of the time said "The spectator is fascinated by the sublimely calm expression of

⁶⁰ Nochlin, "Women Art, and Power," 3.

⁶¹ Nochlin, "Women Art, and Power," 3-4.

⁶² Nochlin, "Women Art, and Power," 4.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Nochlin, "Women Art, and Power," 5.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Nochlin, "Women Art, and Power," 6.

the principal head—hers is more than Roman virtue; her lips are parted in prayers she holds the Bible in her hand, and that is her strength.”⁶⁸ According to Nochlin, this painting depicts two narratives: one specifically about the women and their children during the “mutiny” of Sepoy in which the victims are frantically praying and preparing for the savages who will attack and rape them. The second narrative is the story about how proper women should act in situations of danger.⁶⁹ According to Nochlin “no lady will ever unsex herself by going so far as to raise a hand in physical violence, even in defense of her children.”⁷⁰ Nochlin points out that this depiction is not necessarily true to how the women reacted during the revolt.⁷¹ Goya’s etching “And They Are Like Wild Beasts” from the “Disasters of War” series, shows women (Nochlin states they are not ladies) behaving differently than “In Memoriam”: the women are peasants, and they are fighting. This is meant to indicate their class, show the desperation to save their children and implies that they are “wild beasts.”⁷² Nochlin argues that art articulates the common ideals in history, in particular women and their roles. For Nochlin, the art discussed above shows how women are meant to act, and, when they do not, the women are seen as “savage” or “animalistic.”⁷³ Nochlin demonstrates how art can perpetuate gender roles.

The art in *Body Image* attempts to break down those gender conventions and ideals. Unlike the works that Nochlin has selected which portray conventional gender roles, the art in *Body Image* is not defined by men or even in terms of men. The women depicted are active in their circumstances and confront their worlds head on. These

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Nochlin, “Women Art, and Power,” 6-7

⁷² Nochlin, “Women Art, and Power,” 7.

⁷³ Ibid.

women have subjectivity in a way that is not conventional in the history of art. Nor does their power make them appear as “beasts” or “savages”; they are upheld for their strength and courage. The women in the exhibit can be seen as feminist symbols: strong, beautiful, and graceful. The two ideas (strength and beauty) are cohesive rather than antagonistic. Leslie Lyons’ work demonstrates her strength as a woman by placing herself in the male role. She is the caretaker and provider, protecting her daughter. Jen Davis’s work shows her discomfort with the role of women and the beauty standard. Instead of allowing herself to be the object, she stares at the viewer, looking uncomfortable and interacting with the viewer.

Theories of Representation

Less directly feminist, but important to my analysis of representation of female bodies “real” and idealized, commercial and personal, will be W.J.T. Mitchell’s book *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* and especially the chapter “Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman.”⁷⁴ The chapter begins with Nelson Goodman’s definition of realism and the problems that come with the modern age. Goodman’s argues that realism “like reality is multiple and evanescent, and no one account of it will do.”⁷⁵ And while Mitchell agrees with this sentiment, he still argues that Goodman’s definition is limiting. Instead, Mitchell says that “the issue of realism is to the prospect a theory of symbols what the problem of ideology is to project of a unified epistemology.”⁷⁶ There are three areas that Goodman ignores, according to Mitchell: values, knowledge and history. Values (aesthetics or ethics) are put to the side or appear

⁷⁴ W. J. T. Mitchell, “Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman,” in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, W.J.T. Mitchell, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 345.

⁷⁵ Mitchell, “Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman,” 346.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

lesser in Goodman's definition.⁷⁷ The exclusion of knowledge is part of Goodman's argument against an epistemological realism. History is left out as well, Goodman instead chooses to focus on the current system of signs and symbols. He does not show interest in the process of change and how symbols and systems are formulated and transformed.⁷⁸ This for Mitchell this leaves out part of the story and weakens his argument. Mitchell's argument is that "we can never get beyond some symbol system or other, and they all, without exception, require formalizable 'routes of reference': that is, systems of notation, conventions of depiction, alphabets, scripts, characters, and other units of significance."⁷⁹ He maintains that pictures are already always connected with symbolism Mitchell says that realism is a representation of something added to a belief system or value system.⁸⁰ He uses the example of a drawing of a unicorn: in one system it could be realistic and denote something real, but in another system it might be a realistic picture but denote nothing. It is easy to assume that realism can be found in resemblances because they are produced by representation.⁸¹ Technological growth in modernity has only multiplied these effects. Mitchell's definition of realism can be applied to both art today and pop culture. This overall theoretical discussion of "realism" can be used to discuss the role of "reality"—and unreality—in artistic and pop cultural depictions of the female body.⁸² This discussion of symbolism is connected to what Brumberg, Bordo and Wolf discuss. The images shown are symbols, operating within a system of symbols. Representations of women as beautiful are situated within and related to their historical and cultural

⁷⁷ Mitchell, "Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman," 346-347

⁷⁸ Mitchell, "Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman," 347.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, "Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman," 348.

⁸⁰ Mitchell, "Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman," 356.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Mitchell, "Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: After Nelson Goodman," 357.

moments. The artists in the exhibit attempt to show the symbolism in our own society and manipulate it in order to open the possibility of subversion. For example, Leslie Lyons attacks this head on with her piece “BEFORE” and “AFTER.” She demonstrates what our society has deemed as sexy with the image of “AFTER” a scantily clad women smoking a cigarette. When “BEFORE” is a young girl in a similar position, however, the image becomes disturbing. By recreating accepted visual symbols for “sexy female” in a double context, Lyons troubles the meaning and power of the image.

Also relevant to my thinking regarding representation, bodies, and contemporary culture is Michael Camille’s discussion of Jean Baudrillard’s concept of the simulacrum. Camille begins his essay “Simulacrum,” from *Critical Terms for Art History* edited by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, by looking at the origins of the simulacrum. Plato was the first person to discuss this concept.⁸³ According to Plato, a simulacrum is a “phantasm” or “semblance.” Plato’s philosophic goal was to distinguish “essence from appearance, intelligible from sensible and idea from image.”⁸⁴ The simulacrum is a “perversion of imitation itself—false likeness.”⁸⁵ Plato’s position that the simulacrum is false and dangerous continued throughout history. For example, the Old Testament banned idolatry, arguing that idols are false images.⁸⁶ On the other hand, Baudrillard argues that society in the twentieth century cannot tell the difference between the real and the fake. The fake has become more important than reality.⁸⁷ He says “the real is no

⁸³ Michael Camille, “Simulacrum,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 35.

⁸⁴ Camille, “Simulacrum,” 36.

⁸⁵ Camille, “Simulacrum,” 37.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” in *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994, 1.

longer possible.”⁸⁸ In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, people have replaced reality and meaning with symbols and signs. The constructed media and pop culture that is constantly surrounding us is a system and world of simulacra.⁸⁹ Baudrillard uses the example of Disneyland, which “is a play of illusions.”⁹⁰ In this alternate world, the crowds are drawn to the various fantasies in the park. They are all based on both an ideal in America or a comic strip (another fake world).⁹¹ Furthermore Disneyland’s sole existence is based on people’s needs to escape from the real world

Baudrillard’s notion that we are so saturated with simulacra in contemporary society is borne out in the proliferation of idealized images that delude us from reality.⁹² The artists in *Body Image* use multiple means to combat the hegemony of the idealized female body. In some cases they offer less idealized more “realistic” images; in others, they manipulate images of the female body to disrupt conventional images of women. Because contemporary culture’s images of young girls have become sexualized, Leslie Lyons recreates the type of the sexual girl. At the same time, by juxtaposing the child’s image with that of a grown sexualized women, Lyons draws attention to the constructed or artificial nature of the image as well as its inappropriateness. Licia Priest critiques the hegemonic images of idealized female beauty by creating art that is at once representational and non-representational.

⁸⁸ Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” 11.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” 12.

⁹¹ Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” 14.

⁹² Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” 19.

THE EXHIBIT: *BODY IMAGE*

Choosing the Artist

The specific frameworks that inform my research on artists to include in the exhibition “Body Image” include art history, feminist sociology and psychology. My research process has been informed by the writings of Linda Nochlin, Joan Jacobs Brumberg, Susan Bordo, and Naomi Wolf. Based on their positions and arguments, I developed a methodology and lens that informed the development of criteria for identifying artists and selecting works to be included in a coherent exhibition.

My initial criterion was that the works depict women. Here, my goal was not simply finding art that depicted female bodies. I wanted to work with artists whose work explicitly and implicitly challenged dominant—and destructive—images of women, whose art represented female bodies in empowering ways. A practical consideration was what works the artist or owners were willing to loan and that the work was portable. Gallery dimensions were another significant constraint, limiting the number and size of what could be included. Because the ideas and aims of these artists were crucial, artists I focused on artist I could interview. I made exceptions for two of the artists whom I identified with the help of the Photo Archivist at Ekstrom library. I located information about these artists in relationship to the topic of the female body through published interviews. Another criterion was the inclusion of a diversity of media. I was only.

partially successful in meeting this goal; I was able to include photographs and painted glass. Finally it was important that the works not be repetitious and have distinct points of view, thus allowing the pieces to set up a visual “conversation” within the space. This conversation was enriched as work on the project progressed, because several of the artists shared specific motifs or preoccupations, including young girls, sexuality and costume.

The Artists⁹³

After interviewing several artists⁹⁴ and looking at a range of artworks, I selected works by Leslie Lyons, Jen Davis, Lauren Greenfield, and Licia Priest to include in the show. Leslie Lyons’ pieces address female sexuality as well as the mother daughter relationship, and do so by placing young and older female bodies in iconic and ironic relationships to one another. Jen Davis utilizes the art of self-portraiture, staging images of her own body to express feelings of isolation and discontent with her image and, thus, herself. Lauren Greenfield comments on privacy (or lack thereof) for young girls and how their bodies are constantly monitored by themselves and their families. Lastly, Licia Priest refuses to depict conventional images of the idealized female body, instead turning it inside out.

The first artist I decided to include in the show was Leslie Lyons, a photographer who lives part-time in New York City and Louisville. She began her career as a stills photographer.⁹⁵ She has shot for major record labels like Atlantic Records, Columbia

⁹³ Artist Resumes included in appendix

⁹⁴ Including Mark Dorf, Susanna Crum, Brandon Bass, Brad Stivers, and Edward Taylor.

⁹⁵ Leslie Lyons, “About Us,” Moving the Needle, Accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.movingtheneedlenow.com/about-us/>

Records and so on. Lyons' work has also been published in magazines like *Rolling Stone*, as well as in fashion spreads for international cultural magazines.⁹⁶ Lyons is currently the Creative Director/Director/Photographer for "Moving The Needle," which works with other artists to promote them as well as aid their creativity.⁹⁷ Her show *Female As Thunder* portrays women in situations that might be considered sexual but instead shows the women taking charge of the scenes and forcing the viewer to see them as more than just erotic beings.⁹⁸ The women depicted are taking control of their sexuality, acting as subjects, not objects. The series is comprised of portraits of women and is dedicated to Lyons' friend Jim Carroll, who liked her pictures of women, stating that the women appear sexy but could also kick his ass.⁹⁹

"EVELYN," is a photograph in which Leslie and her daughter are mimicking the iconic photograph of John Lennon and Yoko Ono by Annie Leibowitz. It is 40 inches by 60 inches, black and white pigment print on paper. It is one of an edition of five. It hangs without a frame, tacked on the wall. The photograph shows two female bodies. One is completely naked and the other is clothed in all black. The clothing covers all of this second female's body; only her face is shown. Her long hair is fanned out behind her. The naked image is of an adult woman with shoulder length hair, who is kissing the young girl. The older woman's face is partially obscured by that of the girl. Her arms embrace the girl, but her hands are clenched.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Leslie Lyons, *Female as Thunder*, <http://www.leslielyons.com/#a=0&at=0&mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=2&p=1>, accessed December 27th, 2015.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The Leibowitz photo itself disturbed the gender conventions of portraiture, since Lennon is curled up and naked, while Ono lies straight and is clothed. Lyons is a single mother and often took on the male role of “father” or protector. In this scene she is being both protective (“male”) and loving (“female”) towards her child. The photograph thus provides a further gender-bending twist beyond Leibowitz’s, upending stereotypes of feminine and masculine.¹⁰⁰ Lyons herself has said, “With ‘EVELYN,’ the gender-bending psychology of placing myself in the male role of this famous pose speaks to larger issues of equality, devotion and even sexuality. As mothers in a country with no real cultural rituals for bringing up young women, we must invent our own celebrations to empower our daughters; recognizing the complex visual mosaic in which they see themselves in the media but raising them up to a higher, more deserving place.”¹⁰¹ Lyons affirms the female body as nurturing, but also shows it as inhabiting a place of power. By taking a well-known image of a hetero-sexual couple and re-interpreting it as a mother-daughter relationship, Lyons demonstrates that women can play different roles than what is prescribed. Instead of teaching her daughter to fit an ideal image, the artist is supporting her daughter and allowing her chose her fate. Brumberg discusses the freedom young girls have in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and how that freedom can, in fact, backfire. In Lyons work, she offers a solution to Brumberg’s problem. Lyons also shows that sometimes a relationship with a male is not the most important aspect of a woman’s life (despite what the media and art have articulated). The image is also a copy of another artis’s work, but Lyons has reinterpreted it and restaged it as her own making it a simulacra in a sense.

¹⁰⁰ Leslie Lyons, *Time Traveling with Lyrical Host*, <http://www.leslielyons.com/#a=0&at=0&mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=1&p=5>, accessed January 26th, 2015.

¹⁰¹ Leslie Lyons (artist) email discussion with curator (me), March 2015.

¹⁰² Leslie Lyons, “EVELYN,” black and white pigment on paper, available from: Leslie Lyons Web page, <http://www.leslielyons.com/index.php#mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=10&p=0&a=0&at=0>

Part of my research included looking at Lyons' other series including *Time Traveling with Lyrical Hosts*. After discussing which pieces might be best for the show, Leslie and I agreed to use work from this group. *Time Traveling with Lyrical Hosts* which began with Lyons's grandmother's girdle and the David Bowie song "Who Can I Be Now?" the concept is that of a personal visual journey, with the song lyrics as its basis. The song is about gender identity and feminism. Lyons describes the project: "my grandmother's girdle, my father's football helmet and even my own daughter are in conversation with the past, present and future in a singular moment, allowing me to explore particularly a self that I both imagine and recognize at once."¹⁰³

From the *Time Traveling with Lyrical Hosts* series, I selected two images, that, like "EVELYN," are of Lyons and her daughter (again). They are called "BEFORE" and "AFTER." Both pieces measure 24 inches by 24 inches and are color pigment print on paper. The young girl's photo, "BEFORE," is on the left. She is standing in front of what appears to be a high wooden fence through which narrow strips of light shine. The girl is wearing black bikini underwear; a fur vest hangs in front of her body, extending as far as the navel. Her long hair is disheveled, and she is wearing oversized dark sunglasses. Her right hand is on her hip and her other arm is bent at the elbow, the hand holding a lit cigarette from which smoke swirls. Her face is expressionless. The photograph on the right, "AFTER," shows an adult woman who is also wearing black bikini underwear and the fur vest and appears to be standing in front of the same fence. Her breasts are partially exposed. She wears the same dark sunglasses. Her face is tilted upwards as she exhales smoke. She too has her hand on her hip and the other arm bent, the hand holding a

¹⁰³ Ibid.

cigarette. The woman's hair is also long and disheveled but darker than the girls. She is wearing a large ring on her left hand. The mother and daughter stand in similar positions, dressed the same and posed in an overtly sexual way. It becomes clear that the image is a critique of today's society and how children are forced to act as adults at a young age.¹⁰⁴

The pair of images show how young girls are attempting to fill a role that has been prescribed by pop culture. But the image illuminates the artificiality of that role by comparing the ideal or sexualized woman with a child, who appears to aspiring to the same identity. Traditionally, females in art are posed as beautiful as well as sexual, and in the Lyons photo graph, the young girl is mimicking (and perhaps mocking) that image. The pair of images depict the signs and symbols that are meant to translate to female sexuality (black underwear, smoking cigarette, etc.), but on a young girl this costume feels wrong and dirty.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

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¹⁰⁵ Leslie Lyons, BEFORE, color pigment on paper, available from: Frere Independent, <https://sites.google.com/a/colgate.edu/colgatevr/citing-images/citing-images-chicago>.

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¹⁰⁶ Leslie Lyons, “AFTER,” color pigment on paper, available from: Insider Louisville, <http://insiderlouisville.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Leslie-Lyons.jpg?4b84e9>.

Jen Davis is a Brooklyn-based photographer born in Akron, Ohio in 1978.¹⁰⁷ Davis got her B.A. from Columbia College in Chicago in 2002 and received her MFA from Yale University in 2008. She is represented by Lee Marks Fine Art.¹⁰⁸ For the past eleven years she has worked on a series of self-portraits that deal with large issues like beauty, identity, and body image. Several of these images involve a close up of her own body, a body that does not fit the current narrow definition of female beauty.¹⁰⁹ Overall, her photographs show an artist displaying and exploring images of the female and the possible effects that variations in these women's bodies have had on her own and others' lives. I was able to access Davis's work through the Photo Archives at University of Louisville.

The art works I am showing were created in the early 2000's. During this time she participated in a few shows around body image, portraits, the self, and male nudes.¹¹⁰ Davis spent a number of her early years as an obese woman; recently she has had lap band surgery. She claims that her early self-portraits are trying to comprehend her own insecurities about her size and appearance.¹¹¹ In many of her works she is looking directly at the camera either "questioning her surroundings or confronting the viewer."¹¹² She even said "I'm a bit uneasy in my skin right now."¹¹³ Before she began on these self-portraits, she had been constructing images to convey a sense of isolation and loneliness.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Jen Davis, "Artist Information," <http://www.jendavisphoto.com/index.php?/info/bio/>, accessed January 26th, 2015.

¹¹⁰ Diana Spechler, "Coming Into Focus: 3 Photos That Will Change How You Think About Your Body," <http://www.oprah.com/health/Jen-Davis-Self-Portraits-Weight-Loss-and-Photography>, accessed February 7th, 2015.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

She says “It was like I was taking self-portraits, except I wasn’t in them.”¹¹⁴ So when she was twenty-two she decided to turn the camera on herself and learn about herself.¹¹⁵ She created a series of four images: “Judgment” (a chromogenic color print, measuring 14 inches by 17 inches) depicts a woman in a bathroom, identifiable by the toilet, radiator, yellow shower curtain and bathtub in the background. She stands on a green scale set on a shiny grey tile floor (the walls appear to be grey as well). The scene is reflected in the tiles. We only see the body from the knees down. The image shows how a woman struggles to fit an ideal. She is being “judged” for not weighing a certain amount. In fact not even her whole body is shown in the image. It has been edited out, perhaps because it was not aesthetically pleasing. In some ways the scale stands for the judgment the female feels when stepping on it (both by others and oneself). It also is a points to an ideal female image that women strive to achieve but can never do so.

The next image, “Ethereal,” is also in color (its measurements are 22 inches by 28 inches; it is a chromogenic color print). Here a woman (presumably the artist again) is depicted jumping and twirling on a pale yellow bed. She is wearing what appears to be a blue sundress of light cotton. Her legs and body are rounded, almost childishly chubby, but she has a tattoo on her ankle. The image cuts off just above the waist so we do not see her face. The woman is reduced to only her body, which is in full display. She can only be judged or assessed based on that. Her body does not fit the aesthetic standards. The title and her jumping on the bed, suggest that the only way for her to be weightless or carefree is by jumping, which is temporary. Her weight will bring her down eventually. The title suggests something not real, a sign of something other-worldly. Instead we are

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

presented with a body heavy with weight but still able to have a moment of pure joy and lightness.

The third photo, “Fantasy No. 11” measuring 22 inches by 28 inches and it is a chromogenic color print. The image shows the same woman lying on a bed on her left side, wearing a light blue nightgown that resembles the dress in “Ethereal.” We see her only from the waist up. She stares directly out at the viewer. The sheets (as in “Ethereal”) are pale yellow and the comforter is light olive green. She has a green and white print pillowcase. She appears to be embraced from behind as we see a male arm lying across the front of her body, which her own arm, in turn, encircles. Her companion lies face down, his face is concealed. In terms of Brumberg, Bordo, and Wolf women are supposed to mold themselves into an ideal image so that they can be attractive to men. In this circumstance, Jen Davis is embraced by a man, despite not fitting the beauty ideal, but she is still uncomfortable. Her blank gaze suggests that. Nochlin argues that the ideology presented in art is that part of women’s roles is to be submissive to men. The ideological message of both media and culture is that a woman is not complete until she finds a man. In the photograph the woman is embraced by a man, but she stares at the viewer in discomfort and is not submissive. The male presence is barely felt at all (he is almost out of sight, except for his arm). In terms of post-modernist theory, the signs are all there for the woman to be happy and complete but she is not. She does not fit, both with the male counterpart and in her own body.

The last in this series is “Untitled No.1” the same woman (Davis) is seated on a bed wearing the same light blue night gown, paired with white knee socks with a black pattern. The bedding is light blue with white pillow covers. The background is a green

wall. The woman stares at the viewer with the same expressionless stare as in “Fantasy, No. 11.” Her blonde hair is disheveled. Next to the bed is a small table with an orchid plant in a white vase. In art and media women are often depicted in bed as an idealized form. They are sexual and/or angelic. In this work, Jen Davis contradicts this stereotype by showing herself in single bed, her hair unkept, unwashed; her body is big. She shows her discomfort with the viewer gazing at her by staring back. Her expression almost say, “What and why are you looking at me?”

These works, which were hung side-by-side in *Body Image*, amount to a series of challenges: the woman returns the gaze, in doing so, forces the viewer to confront her or his discomfort. Davis’s images do not perpetuate what Naomi Wolf calls “the beauty myth.” Davis refuses to take on the project of self—that is to say body—improvement that Brumberg finds as the goal of so many contemporary women. Nonetheless, she shows her discomfort and loneliness with this choice.

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¹¹⁶ Jen Davis, "Judgment," Chromogenic Color, available from: Clampart, <http://clampart.com/2013/07/judgement/judgment/>.

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¹¹⁷ Jen Davis, "Ethereal," Chromogenic Color, available from: The Dream Being, <https://thedreambeing.wordpress.com/tag/jen-davis/>.

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¹¹⁸ Jen Davis, "Fantasy No. 1," Chromogenic Color, available from: Flak Photo, <http://flakphoto.com/photo/jen-davis-fantasy-no.-1>.

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¹¹⁹ Jen Davis, "Untitled No. 11," Chromogenic Color, available From: Flak Photo, <http://flakphoto.com/photo/jen-davis-untitled-no.-11>.

The work of artist Lauren Greenfield is a pivotal aspect of this curatorial project because of her place in the fields of sociology and feminist discourse. Her work has had a significant influence on my understanding of the social constructs that conceive and contrive the female body and assign its value. Her work has appeared at the International Center of Photography and Getty Museum among others. The work included in *Body Image* was loaned by the University of Louisville. Photo Archives.

Greenfield is the creator of the documentary “Thin” and the more famous “Queen of Versailles.”¹²⁰ Greenfield graduated from Harvard University in 1987 with a B.A. in Visual and Environmental Studies. Her thesis project on the French aristocracy, called “Survivors of the French Revolution,” led to her internship and eventually a grant from National Geographic.¹²¹ She used the money to fund her debut “Fast Forward: Growing up in the Shadow of Hollywood.” The study looked at children at school, home, and so on in Los Angeles, where image and celebrity and material goods are key.¹²² Her next body of work, “Girl Culture,” explores girls and their lives in their current world.¹²³ Greenfield attempts to show how girls today put themselves on display constantly and how feminine ideology has changed. The image in my exhibit is from this study.¹²⁴ Theorist Joan Jacob Brumberg wrote the introduction to Greenfield’s book.

The image chosen for this exhibit is from the “Girl Culture” series. Title unknown, the photo depicts a young girl in a bathroom standing on a scale. She is dressed in all black (a long-sleeved lacy dress and tights with high heeled shoes) wearing a white

¹²⁰ Lauren Greenfield, “Artist Biography,” <http://www.laurengreenfield.com/index.php?p=RMCD4CNH>, accessed February 10th, 2015.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

pearl necklace. She is looking down, trying to read the numbers on the scale. Her long brown hair is pulled back in a high ponytail. Behind her, on the side of the tub, sits a younger girl (possibly her sister or friend) in a black flowered dress staring at her. In the doorway stand two older people (possibly her parents), one male and one female, also staring at the young girl. The male is dressed in a flowered robe and the women a black one. This image shows the negative effects of unrealistic, idealized female body images and the shared anxiety women feel about their bodies.¹²⁵ This disturbing family portrait shows not only the young girl, but also her parents and siblings, as engaged in monitoring and controlling her image. The implication is that this is a shared “body project,” to use Brumberg’s term. The girl is trying to fit an ideal (both in terms of her weight and her appearance) displayed in magazines. In art and media, girls are constantly being looked at. In this image, the artist shows how prying the constant attention can be. All the signs are there for an adult woman: black dress, high heels, and pearls, but worn by is a young girl. The picture shows the loss of innocence through symbolism.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

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¹²⁶ Lauren Greenfield, *Untitled*, Cibachrome. Available from: [Laurengreenfield.com](http://www.laurengreenfield.com), <http://www.laurengreenfield.com/index.php?p=UNW5OHGQ>.

The inclusion of artist Licia Priest played a pivotal role in this exhibition, because of her media and radical approach to beauty through the biological sciences. Priest is an artist based in Louisville, who is interested not in the outward appearance of the physical body, but the beauty of its inner workings.¹²⁷ Priest attempts to go beyond surface and outwards appearances. Priest is interested in how outside elements can affect individuals on a molecular level. These effects, however, are not clear to the naked eye; they are normally only visible with a microscope. She typically paints and adds foil to glass.¹²⁸ Her work often uses multi-layered and mirroring glass. Priest tries to capture moments of body movement through the use of multiple painted stills.¹²⁹

The work included in *Body Image* titled, “Set in Motion,” is made up of two freestanding elements comprised of layered glass, it is 47 inches by 89 inches. It depicts two or three figures either falling down or jumping up. Their gender is not known and none of their heads/skulls are visible. The first figure is leaping forward and is painted bright pink with gold shading and black outlines. The next figure is hunched over and is brownish color with gold shading and black outlines. Another brown and gold figure is leaping in the air while one (who is brown, gold and orange) is curled up on the ground. All around the figures written words are written in white. The same word or phrase is written over and over. These include words like “standard,” “motion” and the names of the different hormones, which are affected when one grapples with an eating disorder.. In both instances the depicted bodies are affected by hormonal imbalances stemming from eating disorders. The artist strategically integrates text, which surrounds both figures as if

¹²⁷ Licia Priest, “Artist Biography,” http://www.paintunderglass.com/paintunderglass.com/About_the_Artist.html, accessed December 8th, 2015.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

they are being drowned by it. The multiplicity of images and words as images prevents us from seeing a coherent simplified, iconic female body. We cannot resolve the artwork into a recognizable female figure: “mother” or “sexual woman” or “girl.” By removing gender, sexuality and even race Licia Priest allows for us to look at the body as simply a body, not somebody. There is no clear role for these figures. But her work demonstrates the effect of struggling to fit a beauty ideal both in art and pop culture (figuring the results of an eating disorder) on a molecular level. A picture of the inside of women’s bodies is not viewed as beautiful. But Licia Priest makes them so. The words, written over and over, are signs but also become a visual element in how they surround the figures.

Exhibit Design

The space assigned to me for this exhibit was the Dario Covi gallery. It is a smallish rectangular room with one entrance. The lighting was easily adjustable. There were also two overhead windows which on a sunny day provided additional light. I decided that the first wall on the right would be a logical starting place for a viewer. So the initial text panel and title of the show were placed there. Greenfield's work hung on the same wall. I chose this as the first image in part because it was the only singular piece by an artist. Given the text on the wall, I did not want to crowd the space with multiple images. In addition, the photograph conveys its message the most directly out of all the images in the show, thus allowing it to stand on its own. The family group in the photograph also illustrates clearly that women's problems with their bodies are not simply of their own creation.

The next wall was the largest one, so it seemed only logical to place the largest work there: "EVELYN" by Leslie Lyons. And since I wanted each wall to be dedicated to one artist, so that the viewer could get a clear sense of their view points, I placed Lyons' paired images of "BEFORE" and "AFTER" on the same wall to the left of "EVELYN." I also wanted to juxtapose images of the multiple mother and daughter relationships next to one another. These depictions of mother-daughter continued the topic introduced in Greenfield's image of family. An additional reason for placing the smaller pieces closer to the left side is that the next piece displayed in the back center of the room was the large free-standing piece by Priest. So the large "EVELYN" would not have to compete for the space or visually distract the viewer.

I was able to consult with Priest in the placing of her artwork. She wanted people to be able to walk around the piece and also have it seen in as much light as possible. We placed the art directly below the windows, sufficiently far from the back wall to allow viewers access to all sides. At the same time, keeping the Priest artwork back from the center of the room kept this large piece from dominating the visual field.

Finally Davis' works were placed on the left wall. These were roughly the same in size. The smaller piece, "Judgment," was placed by the door because if people chose to start on that wall they would begin with an image that was equally as striking and direct as the Greenfield photograph (in fact "Judgement" was chosen for advertising for the exhibit). Davis' section of the exhibit contrasted with the others because it depicted four different images of one women's body (with the exception of the man's arm in "Fantasy No.1") and her relationship with it, as opposed to the other images which showed bodies in relationship to others.

This arrangement allowed me to include the work of four different artists within a relatively small space. One advantage of the space was that the close proximity of the artworks to one another put them in visual "conversation." Even while looking carefully at one image, viewers' peripheral vision necessarily took in the promise of other art and other points of view.

PREVIOUS EXHIBITS

Within the past few years there have been a wide variety of shows centered around the body. There are exhibits on the human body that focus solely on how the body functions. These are not necessarily about body image, but instead are about the workings of the body. One example was a show at University of New South Wales Galleries in Australia: “Bringing together art and medical science, the exhibition takes viewers on enthralling visual journeys inside the human body, discovering aspects of blood flow, organ and cellular behavior.”¹³⁰ It was the first of three exhibitions in UNSW Galleries *Signs of Life* exhibition season. The show ran from the 6th of September to the 8th of November 2014.¹³¹ This is one example of how art is dealing with the human body. Instead of looking at in terms of feminist theory, they are addressing the body from a scientific stand point. In order to get a better understanding of the issue, it is important to see the issue from all sides. The work here is similar to Licia Priest’s work: both show the beauty of the human body at a molecular level. Her work for *Body Image*, though, is centered on anorexia and not just the body and its inner workings. More directly related to my project are exhibits that focus, not only on the human body, but also on the negative effects of the idealized female form both in art and popular culture.¹³² For example, *Body Conscious* was presented at the Amelie A. Wallace Gallery at SUNY

¹³⁰ “Body Image,” UNSW Galleries accessed January 12, 2015, <https://www.artdesign.unsw.edu.au/unsw-galleries/body-image>, accessed January 10th, 2015.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

College at Old Westbury from February 3rd, 2014 to April 10th, 2014. It was curated by Emily L. Newman, who is the Assistant Professor of Art History at Texas A& M University. It included a public reception and a lecture by the curator on the theme of the exhibit. It also included several film screenings like Lauren Greenfield's *Thin* (2006), Ariane Lopex-Huici and Marilia Destot's *The Body Close Up* (2008), L.A. Raeven's *Beyond the Image* (2010) and Beth B.'s *Exposed* (2013). It was a group exhibition of nine artists that explored how female bodies are imaged in contemporary art. The show represented "these artists' attempts to articulate the Western obsession with the size of women's body."¹³³ *Body Conscious*, similar to my own exhibit, hoped to shift how media and our society perceive and criticize the female form.¹³⁴ Although the aims of this exhibit and my project are closely related, *Body Conscious* focused on the electronic media, which my show does not because the exhibit *Body Image* comes from a more historical stand point. However the use of pop culture in this show was helpful.

Another relevant exhibit that dealt with body image (in April 2014) was *A Different Mirror* in Brixton, England.¹³⁵ This exhibit was only three days long but included film, visual art, dance and poetry. The description of the show is "it provides a platform for Women of Color artists to explore the conflicts about how we see ourselves versus how we are seen."¹³⁶ The exhibit also looked at the relationship between female bodies and female identities. It included educational activities that, combined with the exhibit, were meant to question how societal systems or structures have shaped our own

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ "A Different Mirror," kickstarter, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1199281917/a-different-mirror-an-exhibition-on-body-image>, accessed January 12th, 2015.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

relationship with our bodies and how that relationship has become tied to our identities.¹³⁷ Here, too, there was a social outreach aspect to the exhibit, expanding its reach beyond narrow art historical boundaries. This small show utilized mixed media to send its message (something which I attempted to do in my own exhibit). It also made the argument for our bodies being connected to our identities (similar to Brumberg and Bordo).

Any Body: Art and Essays about Body Image at Joe McCauley Art Gallery ran from October 27th to December 12th 2014. The exhibit included mixed media collages, essays, and photograms created by students at Heartland, Illinois Wesleyan and Bloomington High School.¹³⁸ The displays are from HCC's first art therapy session held in early October 2014. During this session, participants were allowed to explore their complicated views of their bodies.¹³⁹ The art therapy work was led by clinical social worker Michele Carroll, who instructed students to create whatever came to mind. Carroll stated "I wanted them to focus more on the experience than actual piece."¹⁴⁰ Carroll defines "body image" as how we think other people see us and argues that these images are influenced by media, family and culture. The exhibit was meant to be a conversation and encouraged its attendees to interact with the art and the essays.¹⁴¹ Viewers could leave a comment on the gallery wall, attend an artists' reception, or participate in a talking circle.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "Any Body," Heartland Community College, <https://www.heartland.edu/news.jsp?newsID=2167>, accessed January 13th, 2015.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Carroll points out that, recently, attention has been given to the way social media depict—and distort—women’s body images¹⁴³ When idealized images are widespread and insistent, the pressure to conform to those images greatly increases. “An unhealthy body image leads to body dysmorphic disorder, which is essentially a really skewed vision of what our body looks like...it can lead to all kinds of other things including eating or exercise disorders.”¹⁴⁴ Carroll concludes that body image affects all ages: forty percent of third grade girls are on a diet.¹⁴⁵ The art created was by people suffering with eating disorders. Initially, the exhibit for my thesis was also going to include art made by those suffering from eating disorders. However, there was no way to get that art and I did not want to include art that was created as part of a single-minded project. I wanted work by practicing artists whose aims were multiple, layered, and not diagnostic. This show was great for one purpose but it did not have the layers required.

The artist Lauren Greenfield’s exhibit, *Girl Culture*, including her previously mentioned film “Thin,” takes up the issue of young girls’ body images. The exhibit, at the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, in March of 2009¹⁴⁶ aimed to provoke a dialogue on the subject matter: both the importance of body images (in particular women’s) and eating disorders as a serious mental illness. Greenfield says “The body is so important to girls. It is the canvas they use to show the world who they are. That is the overarching theme” in her book linked with the photographic series *Girl Culture*.¹⁴⁷ The exhibit features fifty-eight prints from Greenfield’s collection of images. The show

¹⁴³ Anne-Gerard Flynn, “Photographer Lauren Greenfield to speak on body image exhibits,” http://www.masslive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2009/03/documentary_photographer_laure.html, accessed January 15th, 2015.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

corresponded with a public lecture by Lauren Greenfield in March of that year. Greenfield's intent was to raise questions about "our values, our insecurities, what we spend time doing."¹⁴⁸ Greenfield defines her topic as "the process of treating eating disorders and how tough they are to fight. It is not about popular culture but a look into the heart of darkness—mental illness."¹⁴⁹ In fact, one in seven women under the age of twenty-five has had an eating disorder. Greenfield argues that photography often doesn't tell the whole story and leaves out a lot of complexity and narrative. Furthermore, eating disorders, rather than being seen as serious mental illness, are glamorized by the media and Hollywood.¹⁵⁰ Greenfield's inspiration for the show stems from growing up in Los Angeles. This can be seen in her first show *Fast Forward: Growing up the Shadow of Hollywood*.¹⁵¹ I was able to include Greenfield's work in my exhibit. So a show that is centered around her work was an important part of the research. Much of what Greenfield discusses in this show shaped how her work was viewed in my own exhibition.

Another exhibit based on body image is Katy Daixon Wimer's photographs which bare women's insecurities. Daixon Wimer, through photography, wants to alter how women view and think about their bodies.¹⁵² The exhibit, called *The Body Project*, was shown in Whitewater Arts Alliance Cultural Arts Center.¹⁵³ It featured images of women (both nude and partially nude) posing with words or phrases written on them in marker. The words are written on the parts of their bodies that made them feel insecure.¹⁵⁴ The

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Andrea Anderson, "Whitewater photo exhibit bares women's insecurities," http://www.gazettextra.com/20141119/whitewater_photo_exhibit_bares_womens_insecurities, accessed January 16th, 2015.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

participants were told to write something that they would do or tell themselves to do when they are trying to erase negative thoughts about their appearances. The goal of *The Body Project* was “to promote self-love in a world where women are bombarded with images that make them question their bodies and what they should look like.”¹⁵⁵ The biggest problem, according to Daixon-Wimer, is that girls are bombarded with images promoting standards that are impossible to reach (even the models in the magazines do not even look the way they appear: they have a pound and a half of make up on, and use lighting and photo shop, all to create the illusion that they have perfect bodies). Daixon-Wimer’s main point is that everyone is different; no two bodies are alike.¹⁵⁶ Some women are small; some are large; some are in-between. Daixon-Wimer got the idea for the show from a discussion she and her friends were having about body images.¹⁵⁷ This brought up her own struggles with her looks around her twenties. This small project grew from family and friends to a closed group on Facebook of two hundred and eighty people.¹⁵⁸ The photographer notes that she has seen a difference in women she has photographed. For example, a women in her mid-50s participated in the project and afterwards has learned to embrace her body.¹⁵⁹ She even requested to do a nude photo shoot with Daixon-Wimer. Another woman who had struggled with bulimia on her own finally reached out to a doctor.¹⁶⁰ Daixon-Wimer hopes to extend the project to men and has talked about moving the exhibit to another gallery.¹⁶¹ Once again this exhibit has one clear voice which is interesting, but with my own exhibit I wish to incorporate multiple

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

voices. My expectations for this show are modest but these previous exhibits are both informative and inspiring.

CONCLUSION: CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

Through displaying the work of contemporary artists who create unconventional and challenging images of women, my project aims to start a dialogue about how women's bodies are typically portrayed in the media and art, as well as the damaging effects of idealized body images. My exhibit will include works of art that go against the cultural dogma about how women should look. Grouping these artists together offers viewers multiple ways of seeing how the artists have interpreted the theme and in their own way fought against idealized and rigid stereotypes for female appearance. Women have been pigeon-holed into specific roles, as well as body-images. Pop culture has reinforced rigid ideals of feminine beauty and behavior, and women struggle with the consequences of not fitting into these molds. One of the results of these idealized images is the tendency for many women to develop eating disorders. While such disorders have multiple causes, cultural and artistic images of women's bodies are a significant factor in the disease. By displaying and analyzing images of women who themselves take up the topic of the historical (mis)representation of the female body, my exhibit will bring awareness to the problem. The artists in this show are questioning or confronting the topic and offer alternative possibilities. They provide alternative images of women and their bodies. These un-idealized images of the female body offer multiple perspectives because multiple artists are used, thus creating a visual conversation. There is not simpl

one point of view. The artists are of different ages and have different relationships with family and bodies. “EVELYN” itself creates a cultural conversation (referencing a famous image with its own response). The artists in this exhibit have (in their own way) joined in the conversation about *Body Image*. Jen Davis both with her interaction with the audience and as well as her titles, which are in conversation with the images and which engage the viewer in puzzling out the relationship between image and word. Similarly, Licia Priest includes words in her piece, which the viewer must struggle to make out, relate to the images of women’s bodies, and view as images or symbols themselves. Lauren Greenfield’s work is from a series, which both demonstrates and discusses her message using multiple images. Introducing these artists, whose works are held locally to an audience, will allow the viewers to engage with, interpret, and, I hope, be inspired to learn more about these women artists. The point of this exhibition is to create a dialogue that will increase knowledge about the topic and about artists who are offer alternatives.

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APENDICES

Labels For Exhibit

Body Image takes a stand against the negative effects pop culture and art have had on women and their bodies. Today, more than ever, women's bodies are heavily criticized, and, despite a loosening of gender roles, women are expected to look and act a certain way. The artists chosen for this exhibit intervene in the current discussion about women and their bodies in art and pop culture. The works comprising *Body Image* have been selected for their power as pictures and their explorations of concepts that provide viewers a chance to see the ways in which recent developments in gender studies can help us renegotiate the terms of body politics.

Leslie Lyons is a photographer based in New York City and Louisville. Her work often addresses women and their sexuality as seen recently in her series *Female as Thunder* (2014) that was on view in Louisville . Many times, the women are shown as taking charge of their sexuality, and the images force the viewer to see these females as more than sexual beings or objects. The piece "EVELYN" mimics the famous photograph by Annie Leibowitz of John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Lyons describes the work: "With EVELYN, the gender-bending psychology of placing myself in the male role of this famous pose speaks to larger issues of equality, devotion and even sexuality. As mothers in a country with no real cultural rituals for bringing up young women, we must invent our own celebrations to empower our daughters; recognizing the complex

visual mosaic in which they see themselves in the media but raising them up to a higher, more deserving place."

Lyons affirms the female body as nurturing, but also shows it as inhabiting a place of power. The other two photographs are from her series *Time Traveling with Lyrical Host*, which tells the visual story of the song lyrics of David Bowie's "Who Can I Be Now?" The two images, called "BEFORE" and "AFTER" are of Lyons and her daughter. The two are posed the exact same position and dressed the same way. The pair wears a fur vest, black underwear, sunglasses and both females are shown blowing cigarette smoke towards the camera. On both females the clothing (or lack thereof) and pose appear sexual, but seeing the young girl this way makes for uncomfortable viewing. It is clear that the photographs are critical of how girls are forced to be sexual at an increasingly younger age. Lyons shows how woman's bodies are not their own and the effects of that lack of ownership. At the same time, she attempts to reclaim the female body for her own art. These photographs were graciously lent from the Michael Tierney collection

Jen Davis is a Brooklyn-based photographer who focuses mainly on self-portraiture, which, while individualized, addresses broader issues of beauty, identity and body image. During the time that these photographs were taken, Davis was an obese woman who did not fit contemporary standards of beauty. Jen Davis has said of her art that she is often working to understand her insecurities because of this "failure" to be "beautiful." Her works convey the loneliness and isolation many women feel about themselves and their bodies because they do not fit society's stereotypical roles. The

photos are graciously lent by Fine Prints Collection, Photographic Archives, University of Louisville.

Lauren Greenfield is an American photographer and filmmaker. This image is taken from her series “Girl Culture,” which looks at young girls and their lives in today’s world. The series illustrates how girls’ bodies are constantly on display. Even while the girl is in the privacy of her bathroom, her family is still peering in on her. Greenfield describes her photographs as interrogating “the popular culture that we share and the way the culture leaves its imprint on individuals in their most public and private moments.” This photograph is graciously lent by Fine Prints Collection, Photographic Archives, University of Louisville.

Licia Priest focuses, not on outward beauty, but rather on the inner workings of body (the muscles, bones, etc.). The artist is questioning contemporary aesthetics and arguing for deconstructing the body to propose different criteria for beauty. The pieces in this show demonstrate her interest in how certain conditions (like anorexia nervosa) affect individuals both internally and externally. Her research includes looking at cause and effect of the experiences in life beneath the skin. According to Licia Priest: “As I read about and view images of the various systems, I am in awe of how we are wonderfully made.” The work on display, *Set in Motion*, is made up of two freestanding elements comprised of layered glass that depicts two figures (one hunched over and the other leaping). In both instances the depicted bodies are affected by hormonal imbalances stemming from eating disorders. The artists strategically integrates text; words surround both figures as if they are being drowned by language.

Artist CV

Leslie Lyons Selective Bio & C.V.

Lyons' early fine art photography work was selected for the cover of Chronicle Books' *Nerve*, *The New Nude* along with four inside pages of the collection which included work by Nan Goldin, David Levinthal, Taryn Simon and other fine photographers, as well as in *The Strip Flips* series (*Anna*, *George*, *Susan*, *Lyle*) published by Power House Books. Lyons' work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions alongside such celebrated artists as Kehinde Wiley, Mickalene Thomas, Andrea Stanislaw and Mel Chin, among others. Her clients as an independent photographer and director include Atlantic Records, Bumberhshoot Festival, Columbia Records, Maker's Mark, *New York Times*, *Vibe* Magazine among others. Lyons lives and works in Louisville and New York City.

Recent Exhibitions/Projects

2015

"Female Icons & Identity, Group Exhibition," Green Building Gallery, Louisville, KY

2014

BANK 286-tile installation from the "Unswept Floors" series, RARE Gallery, SCOPE Miami

"FEMALE AS THUNDER," Swanson Contemporary, Louisville, KY

Workshop installation & production of Social Poetry Work, THESE ART FORMS MUST BE DEVELOPED, Second Sunday intervention event, Pioneer Works Center for Art & Innovation, Brooklyn, NY

BANK 64-tile installation from “Unswept Floors” series, KY Museum of Art & Craft,
Louisville, KY

“A \$100,000 Bill on the Floor,” interview, One Way Street, Richard Prout’s blog

“They Didn’t Care Much for Money So They Left it in the Ground,” Social Poetry
workshop, Humana Festival of New American Plays

Lauren Greenfield

Filmography

The Queen of Versailles (2012.) Director

Beauty CULTure (2011). Director

Kids + Money (2008). Director

THIN (2006). Director

Books—Monographs by Lauren Greenfield

THIN. Chronicle Books, 2006

Girl Culture. Chronicle Books, 2002

Fast Forward : Growing Up in the Shadow of Hollywood. Chronicle 2004

Magazine articles in *Eyes*, *AARP*, *ADbusters*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Focus*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*,
Gentleman’s Quarterly, *Glamour*, *Jewish Women*, *Le Monde*, *Life*, *Mother Jones*,
National Geographic, *New York Magazine*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Oprah*, *Parade*,
People, *Photo Media*, *Stern*, *Time*, *Vanity Fair*, *Village Voice*, among others.

Licia Priest

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Fine Artist, Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad: The Art of Mark Priest
Administrator (National Underground Railroad Site), Researcher, Grant writer,
Storyboard creator, Exhibition layout planner, Narrator for video trailers, Website
Designer, Videographer, Editor / Video Producer, Exhibition Brochures, Invitation cards,
and DVD cover Designer.

Selected Group Exhibitions

- Wearable Art, Fashion Show, KMAC, Kentucky, 2013
- [BFA Thesis Exhibition](#), University of Louisville, Kentucky, 2012
- Dynamic Doors, Lexington Art League, Lexington, Kentucky, 2003
- Allen R. Hite Gallery, University of Louisville, Kentucky, 2001
- "The Art of Two", First Street Gallery, Sanford Florida, 1993
- "Off the Walls", Huntington Museum of Art, Huntington, West Virginia, 1988

- 10th Annual Black Artist Exhibition, J.B. Speed Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, 1986

Solo Exhibitions

- McCauley Theatre, Louisville, Kentucky, 1989
- Ekstrom Library, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987

Education

BFA Painting. University of Louisville. 2012

- Studied sculpture, fiber and painting
- Created sculptural paintings, designed clothing, and paintings on glass
- Study of anatomy, Art History, Communications,

Summer Studies Abroad program in West Africa: Parson School of Design. 1988

- Studied strip loom weaving with male weavers in villages of Korhogo, and Bouake, Cote D'Ivoire

- Studied paste resist and indigo dying textile techniques by Hausa male fabric dyers in Bamako, Mopti, Mali.

- Studied African-Art History, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali.

Public Collections

University of Louisville, Louisville KY

Brown Foreman Company, Louisville KY

PNC Bank, Louisville, KY

Images, Louisville, KY

Private Collections

Mr. and Mrs. Barnett

Mrs. Brown

Mr. and Mrs. Whitmore

Jen Davis

b. 1978, Akron Ohio

Lives and works in New York City

jendavisphoto.com

Solo Exhibitions

2013 Jen Davis - Self Portraits, Le Laboratoire de la Création, Paris, France (October)

Body Time, Braenderigaarden Centre of Contemporary Art, Viborg, Denmark
(September)

2009 Jen Davis: New Photographs, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art,
Indianapolis, IN

2005 Self-Image, Photo Passage at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, Canada

Jen Davis: Recent Photographs, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX

2004 Jen Davis: Body Image, Schneider Gallery, Chicago, IL

Selected Group Exhibitions

2013 Male Nudes - Female Desires, Tanja Wagner Gallery, Berlin, Germany

2012 The Youth Code curated by Natalie Herschdorfer, Daegu Photo Biennial,
Daegu, Korea

untitled no. 2, Randall Scott Projects, Washington, DC

Fokus Frau (Focusing on Women), Gallery of Design in the University of Applied Science and Art, Dortmund, Germany

Gazed Upon, Ampersand Gallery, Portland, OR

Looking & Looking: Amy Elkins and Jen Davis, Light Work Gallery, Syracuse, NY

Under Cover, Decker Gallery at Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MA

2011 Mine, Stacion - Center for Contemporary Art, Prishtina, Kosova

About Face, Gallery 339, Philadelphia, PA

Beauty, Humor and Social Justice: Gifts from Joan Morgenstern, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

The Fleeting Glimpse: Reflections in Modern and Contemporary Photography from the Virginia

Museum of Fine Arts, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA

reGeneration 2: Tomorrow's Photographers Today (traveling exhibition): Aperture Gallery,

New York, NY; Preus Museum, Horten, Norway; Ludwig Museum, Budapest

2010 The Fleeting Glimpse: Selections in Modern and Contemporary Photography

from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins University, Roanoke, VA

She: in her teens and twenties, University Art Gallery of San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

14th Annual Quinzaine Photographique Nantaise, Le Temple du Goût, Nantes, France

Domestic, Espai Cultural Caja Madrid, Barcelona, Spain

reGeneration 2: Tomorrow's Photographers Today (traveling exhibition): Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne;

Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town; Pingyao International Photography Festival, China;

Galleria Carla Sozzani, Milan; Centre Gallery, Miami Dade College, Miami

The Naked Truth, Hous Projects, New York, NY

Global Photography: Looking at | looking for, Galleria Contemporaneo, Venice, Italy

PQ: 100, The Center for Photography at Woodstock, Woodstock, NY

Going from Nowhere: Accumulated Images, Philadelphia Photo Arts Center,
Philadelphia, PA

Versus, Hous Projects, New York, NY

2009 Global Photography: Looking at | looking for, SIFEST 2009 - Photo Festival of
Savignano, Italy

Hall of Mirrors, Northlight Gallery, Tempe, AZ

Women, Galerie Priska Pasquer, Cologne, Germany

Yesterday & Tomorrow: Issues in Contemporary Photography, Ruschman Art
Gallery, Indianapolis, IN

NYMPHOTO Presents, Sasha Wolf Gallery, New York, NY

2008 Photographic Figures, Museum of Fine Art, Boston, MA

Made In Chicago: Photographs from the LaSalle Bank Collection, Chicago Cultural
Center, Chicago, IL

Unmasked & Anonymous, Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI

Yale MFA Photography 2008, (Traveling Show) Yale University Green Hall Gallery,
New Haven, CT

Danziger Projects, New York, NY, Gallery 339, Philadelphia, PA

2007 The Female Gaze, Weber State University, Ogden, UT

A New American Portrait, Jen Bekman Gallery, New York, NY

Relative Closeness, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL

On the Wall-Aperture Magazine '05-'06, Aperture Gallery, New York, NY

2006 Passionate Attitudes, Center for Photography at Woodstock, Woodstock, NY

Domestic Diaries, Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, IL

Those Who Do, Teach, Marwen Foundation, Chicago, IL

New Trends In Chicago Photography, Version Fest, Chicago, IL

2005 The Chicago Project, Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, IL

2004 Who Makes Self-Portraits in 2004?, Heaven Gallery, Chicago, IL

Identifying Marks: Contemporary Portraits, Houston Center for Photography,
Houston, TX

17th Evanston + Vicinity Biennial, Evanston Arts Center, Evanston, IL

Self-Exposed, Daiter Contemporary, Chicago, IL

Soliloquies, John R. Grady Gallery of Photographic Art, Elgin, IL

Joyce Grant Photography Exhibition, Texas Woman's University Fine Arts Gallery,
Denton, TX

2003 Self-Centered, Creative Artist Network, Philadelphia, PA

As Seen, Moser Gallery at University of Saint Francis, Joliet, IL

Selected Publications

2012 "Exposed" Marie Claire: The Body Issue, November 2012

"Contact Sheet: The Light Work Annual 2012" Light Work Foundation

"Coming into Focus" by Diana Spechler, O Magazine, September 2012

"On Fashion and Shame" Vestoj, Issue 3

"Contact Sheet: Looking & Looking" Light Work Foundation

"Gazed Upon" Published by Ampersand, Portland, OR

"The Fat Trap" New York Times Sunday Magazine

2011 "Le Portfolio Auto Portraits XXL" Le Monde Magazine, No 98, July 2011

"The Conflict Issue" Gup Magazine 028

"Self-Portraits" Blow Magazine, issue three

"Zelfportret" LINDA Magazine, Issue 80, April 2011

2010 "Plus-Size Wars" New York Times Sunday Magazine

"reGeneration2: Tomorrow's Photographers Today" Thames & Hudson

2009 "The way we live now" New York Times Sunday Magazine

2008 "Yale Graduate Photography 2008" Yale University Press

2007 "Women Seeing Women" Photography Quarterly, no. 94

2006 "Portfolio of Nine Photographs" Zoom International, November/December
Issue

"The Modern Self" PDN, August 2006
 "Jen Davis: Body Image" Aperture, Issue 182, Spring 2006
 2005 "Sex TV" Jen Davis, Episode 8-5
 "Liberation" Hors-Serie 2005 Photographie, Images d'inactualite
 "Contact Magazine" Feature Exhibitions
 2004 "Body Image And Catharsis Co-Exist In This Exhibit" Chicago Tribune
 "Self-Exposed" Catalog, Karen Irvine
 "Camera Austria" Forum Section, Issue 85, March 2004
 2003 "My Bobby/Your Body" 6x6 Series, Columbia College Publishing
 Lectures & Visiting Artist
 2013 Dok 13 International Photography Festival, Fredrikstad, Norway
 The Photographers Lecture Series at International Center for Photography, New York, NY
 CUNY College of Staten Island, Staten Island, NY
 2012 Maine College of Art, Portland, MA
 Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
 Parsons, New York, NY
 2011 Bidwell Artist-in-Residence at the University of Akron and Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH
 Picturing the Self: Jen Davis and Pierre Cassou-Nogues In Conversation, Aperture Foundation, NYC
 2010 San Diego State University, San Diego, CA
 The Fleeting Glimpse key note speaker, Roanoke, VA
 Cooper Union, New York, NY
 2009 University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK
 East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
 2008 Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
 School of Visual Arts, New York, NY

New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, New York, NY
2006 University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL
2004 Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX
2003 University of Saint Francis, Joliet, IL
Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, OH
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH
Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL
The Sir Elton John Photography Collection, Atlanta, GA
LaSalle National Bank Photography Collection, Chicago, IL
Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
Photographic Archives, University of Louisville, KY
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX
Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA

CURRICULUM VITA

NAME: Emma Sharps

ADDRESS: University of Louisville
2301 South Third Street
Louisville, KY, 40292

DOB: Louisville, KY-July 30, 1989

Education:

B.A. History
American University
2008-2012

M.A. Art (Creative) and Art History Critical and Curatorial Studies
University of Louisville
2013-2015

Publication:

"Lockhart Glossary" in *The Untold Tale of Bob Lockhart: A Retrospective* (contributor)