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Resting cake face

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RESTING CAKE FACE

by

Ashley Dawn Heber

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts
degree in Art in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2015

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Sue Hettmansperger

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Ashley Dawn Heber

has been approved by the Examining Committee for
the thesis requirement for the Master of Art degree
in Art at the May 2015 graduation.

Thesis Committee:

Sue Hettmansperger, Thesis Supervisor

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

My most recent series of paintings places specific focus on the societal struggles young women face with an emphasis on the need to constantly be viewed as attractive. I am interested in cultural taboos of women's sexuality, and body image anxiety. Layered imagery of anonymous groups of young women paired with grotesque representations of food mimic the internet bombardment so inescapable for young women today. Painted stereotypes of beauty further show the imbalance of male / female gender roles and holographic glitter as well as day glow color push the drama further. In spending time with my drawings and paintings the viewer will, ideally, begin to question the cultural expectations for women, and contemplate possibilities for change.

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My work focuses on theories of desire, material value, consumption, and appropriation. A kaleidoscopic web is formed through painted patterns, representing the complex world of advertising and the state of wanting-where desire becomes addiction. I achieve this imagery through the use of bright, flat colors derived from the vibrant Los Angeles cultural motifs I grew up with as well as from art historical influences of Bay Area painting. My contemporary sources include David Salle's gestural mix of realism with abstraction as well as Jeff Koons layered pop culture imagery.

My most recent series of paintings places specific focus on the societal struggles young women face with an emphasis on the need to constantly be viewed as attractive. I am interested in cultural taboos of women's sexuality, and body image anxiety. Depictions of glossy hair and inexpensive flashy jewelry portray what society expects of young women. Painted stereotypes of beauty further show the imbalance of male / female gender roles, and holographic glitter as well as day glow color push the drama further.

Layered imagery of anonymous groups of young women paired with grotesque representations of food mimic the Internet bombardment so inescapable for young women today. The viewer is drawn in for a slower consideration of the whole by juxtaposing subject matter to replicate web media strategies. The repetitive subject matter/ and large-scale works mirror the techniques of commercial advertisements.

Amplifying these color and compositional moves, I also quote doodles that evolve from spontaneous drawing into larger abstract mark making. For young girls, doodling is a part of their inner dialogue. These attenuated drawings divulge aspects of adolescent

experience. Pairing enjoyable and automatic mark making with my paintings through the use of drawing gives the viewer a more playful and compelling picture. Having the dynamic of more rigid representational imagery paired with free flowing abstraction brings the work full circle.

In spending time with my drawings and paintings the viewer will, ideally, begin to question the cultural expectations for women, and contemplate possibilities for change. Similarly, the spontaneous and free-formed line of the drawing will have more of a playful interaction with the realist elements of the work. Ultimately, I ask the viewer to look critically at the cultural relevance of these objects and decide where the value lies.