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Beauty vs Medicine

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BEAUTY VS MEDICINE

by

Jiayi Xiao

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

Kee-Ho Yuen
Thesis Mentor

Fall 2017

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

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BEAUTY V. MEDICINE
Jiayi Xiao
Fall 2017
School of Art and Art History

Nowadays, more and more women pay attention to their body shape, I am one of them. As I was growing up, I gained a lot of weight and height. Even though it was not a big deal in other people's eyes, in my family, that was a serious thing. My family doesn't like people who can't control their body. My parents think that if you have better body shape you will have the better future. So, I was pushed to lose weight and given diet pills. The diet pills were very efficient. I lost a lot of weight. I was excited at first, but I soon found my body condition got bad and strange. I was always dizzy, my hands were always shaking, and my heart beat was always high. I quit taking the pills and started exercising and felt better inside and out. For my research project, I focused on representing the opposition of outside appearance with internal dysfunction through creating metal objects.

Initially, I had an idea of what I wanted to show, but I didn't have a specific image for my project. I settled on making a pill blister pack. At first I thought to do it by hand, but it's hard to make. I decided to design my blister pack using the adobe illustrator after measuring the real pill blister pack size and drawing it on the computer. After the blister pack was designed and ready to print, I printed the design on to the paper, and glued the pill shapes onto very thick plastic board. I used the handsaw to cut the pill spot on the plastic to make the pill hole. The cutting process was not easy, it took me long time to cut out the holes. After the cutting, I decided to cast the pills in cooper. So, I annealed the bronze for the blister pack to make the pill relief and indentations soft and easy to change form. I put the annealed bronze on the top of the plastic blister pack, and put both of them between two big square rubber sheets in the middle of the hydraulic press machine to create the shape of the pill blister pack. This process was repeated 4-5 times to achieve the best depth of the pill plate. I also cut little rubber forms in the pill shape and size and put them on the square rubber to make the rut deeper. After the blister pack was finished and the rut was deep enough, I create a twisted ring band for the plate, and I soldered them together. Originally, I wanted to cast the pill with no damage, but when I cast the pills, they dissolved in the casting solution. However, I thought it was very interesting to use the squished pills to indicate the unhealthy body. I decided to use the real pill with the casted squished pill together for contrast. I sprayed the blister pack in a rose gold color, and then I positioned my pills. I used clay to cover the edges and poured resin on the top to create a shell. But clay was not a good tool to cover the edges, because after the resin dried, the clay stuck into the resin and was hard to clean up. So, I repeated the experiment again, and I made the new plate and two separate ring bands in a silver color. The second time I used tape to cover the edges, this time it worked a lot better and I really like it. The quality was totally different.

I really enjoyed my project. Prior to beginning my research project, I didn't imagine how many things would happen to my piece. As I was doing it, more and more ideas and thoughts were emerging. Even though some parts are not as well as I expected, I have a better idea on how to proceed to make the project better. My second project represented my initial idea best and I have ideas that I wish to explore to make it even better.