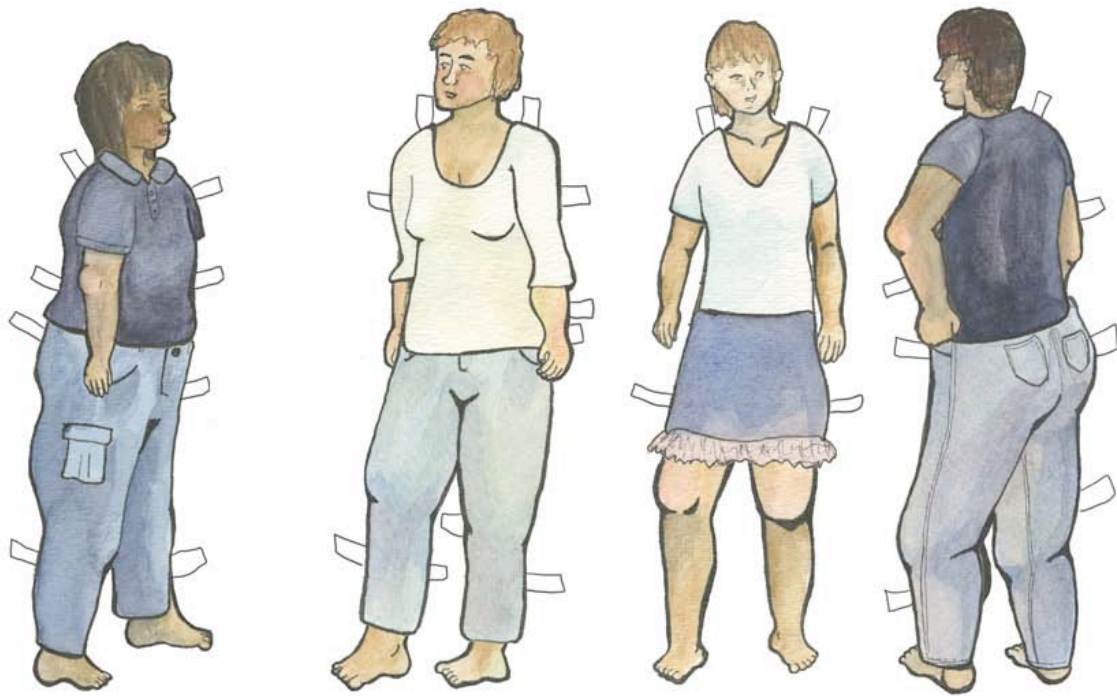


Engendering Play



Tara Hutton
SMP I In-Progress Exhibition
Fall 2010

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Introduction

Why do we give our children dolls? They are toys that ultimately reflect the gendered roles of society. Boys are given action figures while girls receive American Girl or Barbie dolls. And the two operate differently—dolls are played with, dressed up, and treated like children. (The same cannot be said for action figures) We don't expect dolls with genitalia, or dolls that perform outside of culturally inscribed gender roles. Because they are for children, dolls cannot be radical. For this gallery show, I have returned to the imagery of my childhood as an adult, and recreated dolls that are more accurate to life, the kind of dolls that I would play with now. These dolls reflect the multiplicity of narratives and reality of my own life.

This first semester has been an evolution of ideas about materiality, and interactivity for me. When I came into the school year, I was interested in ideas about feminine identity, and I wanted to figure out how to create fabric pieces, even fabric books, that were reflective on my identity (as a woman, as a woman artist—expected to create crafty art objects). I was inspired by Miriam Schapiro, Judy Chicago, Faith Ringgold—female artists interested in fabric and the feminine. I struggled to create works whose meaning was a function of its materiality, in the fabric itself. I was trying to rush through creating fabric books, but without the content and stories within the book, they were unengaging objects that did not provide any critique of the stereotypes I was restating. For the midterm critique, I turned my eyes towards the idea of dolls—first through fabric dolls as a way of breaking out of the stagnant fabric books, then with paper dolls, which I painted and reprinted as mass-producible objects.

The midterm critique brought with it the issue of presentation and audience interaction with my work. When I created a book, the viewer would pick it up and read it. The only action required by the viewer is to hold the object and read the images. But I had to figure out how I could create a space where the audience would feel comfortable engaging in play with these dolls, which are typically seen in the privacy of one's home. If the viewer felt she was on display, she wouldn't be able to critically play with the dolls—something I observed when I took the dolls into the campus center and let the student body play with them. At first I thought videos of other playing out stories with the dolls were a way to encourage the viewers to see what was happening on the screen, and then replicate it. But the videos rendered the doll objects obsolete. They returned to the book state—which disseminated information very effectively, but did not make the viewer an active participant in the artwork. Instead the viewer passively received the narratives I had created, instead of making their own in their mind.

The paper dolls, and their narratives that I have created, become similar to a disjointed book—I've taken the images and stories out of the pages of a book and placed them in a space for the viewer. To find everything, the viewer has to go through and pull the dolls out—they are stowed away such as toys are when we are not playing with them. That physical engagement initiates play. Even if the viewer is not acting out narratives with the dolls in the gallery, the idea of play and physical interaction remains there. The note cards are there to provide a multiplicity of narratives; they are not the limit of the stories. I hope to plant the ideas of gendered play within the viewer, and to take the traditional narratives of gender and sexuality and stretch, distort, and subvert them. In the narratives, hopefully the viewer will find something that is relatable, and hopefully the viewer will also find a new narrative—something that will alter his or her thoughts and perceptions about contemporary sexuality.

Summer Work



Under the Sea, 2010, embroidery floss on fabric



Mermaid, 2010, Acrylic, embroidery floss, and beads on canvas

Over the summer, I created several pieces that did not have any content within them, besides the fabric of the pieces. I was working with ideas about materiality, and choosing seemingly random imagery to combine with my fabric and book (unpictured) mediums. In retrospect, I can see that even though the only content I included in the pieces was the materiality, I was very interested in simple, childlike imagery. I have always been interested in an illustrative style that speaks simply and clearly, yet I can use in a multitude of ways.

I did spend a lot of the summer reflecting on art, reading about artists on my own as well as in our summer text *In the Making*, and writing about art. Here are several excerpts from my summer writings with relevant passages in bold:

...Rirkrit Tiravanija subverts the traditional ideas about art, and the notion that the museum is a place where viewers passively examine art objects. In *Untitled (Free)*, the gallery is a dining room, and the “artwork” is the interactions between the people eating in the gallery. The gallery is a transformed space, and the relation between the viewer and the artwork compresses until the audience is creating the art, and the audience is essential for the art to happen; Tiravanija is just the coordinator of the artwork. I enjoy how Tiravanija has transformed the role of the artist and audience, similar to how Allan Kaprow gave the audience a participatory role in his *Happenings*. Weintraub describes Tiravanija’s work as “unpretentious”, which makes the work more accessible to the audience; instead of feeling intimidated and isolated by a high-art formalist work, the audience can engage with the artwork, both literally and intellectually.

I was initially surprised to see Thomas Kinkade included at the very beginning of this book; his artwork has become so ubiquitous, I would have thought he would be looked down upon for creating a certain consumer brand, kitschy paintings and images that are replicated and hung in every American’s bathrooms. However, Weintraub uses Kinkade’s work in the book to point out how an artist can create art that has mass appeal. Kinkade’s paintings are not thematically controversial. Instead, Kinkade creates artwork that is visually pleasing, peaceful, and atmospheric. People decorate with Kinkade’s work, because the artwork has a universal quality, and is commercially available.

Kinkade and Tiravanija’s work interests me the most, because they use their artwork to alter age-old ideas about the role of artwork and of the gallery. Kinkade’s work may not be full of metaphors and deeper meaning for critics to unearth, but his artwork is accessible to many viewers, who don’t necessarily go to art galleries or consider themselves fans of fine art. It is mass culture—I see it sold in the penny saver. Kinkade is more popular than any of the other artists from *In The Making* and he reaches more people, one could say he reaches almost all people, by creating artwork that thematically accessible. Tiravanija is physically accessible. The gallery is no longer a formal space reserved for critics and people who understand Art, but somewhere people can sit down for a good, home cooked meal. **Making the gallery a less elite institution is very important to me, and I hope to bring in a different audience to the gallery, or bring my artwork out of a gallery to a different audience.**

...My identity affects the form and material of my artwork. I am female, and therefore I must know how to sew, or make decorative objects. My artwork is relegated to the home, or the craft show. I create artwork that fits the feminine code in medium, but I may create a political artwork with content, such as a book about endangered big cats, or sewn paintings about identity. I create objects with thread, fabric, watercolor, or books, not to perpetuate ideas about womanhood and art, but in order to examine how craft objects are viable art forms that can be placed in both the gallery or on the street. Like Goldin, **I am disclosing my identity to the viewer by creating feminine artwork**, or including the people I know in my artwork.

...The “normal man” attitude Maggi holds towards his objects is plainspoken but effective. Maggi does not want to be didactic, or larger than life. Artwork that is made of everyday objects or is scaled smaller than most gallery objects takes on a multiplicity of sizes—even if the artwork is small, able to sit in the artist’s hand, it references much larger artworks. The artwork can oscillate between large-scale references and small, plainspoken reality. I connect with Simpson and Yanagi’s restraint and control—my artwork is often small, not large or grandiose objects. **The objects are small so that I can connect to their objecthood**, be it an embroidery or a zine, and **I want the viewer to also connect to, touch and hold, and flip through the objects I make. Humor is also essential in my artwork**. Often I want to tell a story that is slightly ridiculous or exaggerated, or create artwork that falls into the realm of kitsch. By creating artwork that I have fun making, I hope that the enjoyment translates into the audience’s attitude towards the artwork...

Initial Intentions: My Original Plan for Creating Art, September 6th

I am female. See me craft. I want to reexamine and challenge traditional ideas about high art objects, while exploring my own identity as a woman, a female artist. The type of art women create is often expected to be different from male artists. Female work is smaller, craft-related, and decorative.

I want to create work that is at the center of an intersection of my identity and my desire to examine my identity in a political and artistic light. The medium, and the narratives created in the pieces, are all a result of my identity. I submit to the expectation that as a woman, I create pieces that are embroidered, textile objects. But, by creating these pieces, and placing them in a gallery setting, I am attempting to subvert the traditional ideas associated with not only with what mediums constitute high art, but explore the ways in which craft can be seen as viable pieces in the gallery. Many female artists before me have created pieces that are crafted and sewn, such as Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party or China Adam’s Official Stitch and Hide Procedure.

This summer, I continued examining my relationship to the artworks that are a hybrid of paintings and embroidered and beaded pieces. Making pieces that hang on the wall, however, is not exactly where I want to go with my artwork. I am trying to create pieces that are not objects to be observed from afar, but experienced directly. It is best to feel a sewn piece—the smooth fabric, the texture of the stitches, contribute a tactile experience to the visual. That is why I enjoy creating books—to see the piece the viewer must hold and interact with it.

Because I am so interested in my gender and the craft of my medium, the work does have a specific audience that may be excluded from the pieces. I originally thought my artwork was similar to Thomas Kinkade’s, accessible for anyone who enjoyed pretty images. However, by creating with women in mind, my pieces are more interesting to women and those interested in gendered work. Some men won’t necessarily understand or enjoy that.

The largest issue I have at hand right now is to understand how my content fits in with the medium of the piece. Is the medium the content, or should the narratives in these pieces develop separately from my ideas about myself as a female artist? I see my work as semi-autobiographical, even when I am not explicitly the subject in the book, I pull pieces of myself into the narratives, and through that I hope to create a coherent sense of the content of my pieces.

Initial Interview: September 20th

Ally & Allison: What inspires you? What are some of the sources, both within art and outside of art that you turn to?

Tara: A lot of what inspires me is my own experiences and memories. I am inspired by things I read, feminist scholars and like, the Guerilla Girls. I also appropriate a lot of ideas and patterns and symbols, something semiotic that the viewer can 'read'. I'm definitely referencing all those awesome feminist artists from the seventies that worked with fabric—Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago and a bunch more. Also related to my experiences, I'm inspired by childhood experiences, my own and then the cultural ideal of childhood experience—how we learn as children about ourselves, who we are and what we can be—especially the language that inspires that, in children's toys and books, the stories that are used as didactic tools at the same time that they're supposed to entertain children.

Ally & Allison: How important is self-expression to your art making? In what way does 'self' enter your artwork?

Tara: I would say that I would not have any artwork without my identity. I rely heavily on my identity as a woman in my artwork. I take my own identity and point of view, and spit it out onto paper or fabric, to challenge whatever issue I have with the world. Using my sense of self as source material is important, as well as because everything about the artwork is reflective onto me, and creating a space in the world for me. But at the same time it's not always so political. Sometimes I just want to create what I want to see in the world, be it in how I am drawing and painting and sewing, or just in the types of people I am depicting. But I definitely see my sense of self at the forefront of my artwork.

Ally & Allison: How does your choice of medium(s) affect your work and contribute to its meaning?

Tara: Books, fabric and dolls or toys are interesting mediums. With regard to fabric, I'm definitely trying to tap into traditional stereotypes and ideas, that fabric equals feminine and how that plays out in our minds. It's also very tactile. Fabric is all about touching—you're supposed to hold a fabric object, or wear it. And books or toys are about holding too. So the viewer is connected to the objecthood of the artwork—it's not just an image. I am extremely interested in the interaction of audience with the objects I create, be it that they are reading the piece, or handling it, and how does that affect the viewer? How can the viewer alter the artwork, or change the meaning, through interaction with it? And the narrative aspect of books and artwork is very important to me, there's usually a story to be told.

Ally & Allison: Is your work ultimately more about your process or about the final product? Why do you feel that way?

Tara: I am very interested in the process. Sewing and making books, making paper, drawing and scanning and editing then re-printing, it all is very time consuming and very process based. And there's a meditation in the process of creating. I am tapping into the processes that many other women have used, cutting and sewing and creating decorative objects, sometimes just because it's a time-killer, a hobby. Of course, my objects are very goal-oriented since I intend to display them as artwork, but there's the calming process of making them. And I think that affects the final product. You end up with something that you can't just whip by—you have to stay and flip through the pages, or you have to move it, draw on it, and interact with it. That may just be because of the type of objects I am creating, but I like to think that the time I put into the process translates into the time the viewer needs to spend with the final product.

Ally & Allison: Does the context in which your artwork is displayed affect your artistic choices? How might you address this in the upcoming fall exhibition?

Tara: It is kind of something I am ambivalent about. I mean, placing my artwork in a gallery means I get to elevate these objects, books, toys, and embroidery, when usually you see them in a home. And I want to create a space in the gallery that references the place you traditionally interact with these objects; otherwise, how am I going to elicit the viewer interaction I want? But I would rather find somewhere else to have them, where people see them but aren't seeking them out. Like the campus center, or on a website where everyone can access it. I'm thinking about taking my art to the campus center one day and just handing out pieces and soliciting interactions from people who won't be in the gallery usually.

Ally & Allison: Do you have a mission? What do you consider to be your purpose for creating art?

Tara: I guess... I want to create something with a little bit of my perspective in it. I want to make my identity more legitimate and explicit, and through that I'm opening it up to many other people, creating a space where strange and subversive things can happen. Sometimes my work is political (you know, the personal being political haha), but I don't want it to necessarily have to go up and duke it out with some critic like Clement Greenberg! I want to take these mediums, and do what many others have done, try to legitimize it. Feminine craft can be art. Toys can be art. Children's imagery is just as fine as it is commercial.

Ally & Allison: How do you measure the success of your artwork?

Tara: If it was read by someone who normally wouldn't look at it. If someone got something from it that was different than their usual perspective. I want the viewer to interact with the art, even if she isn't directly touching it, to be reading the narratives and reading the imagery. I hope that some of the viewers connect with the art. I know not everyone will, not everyone is me, but if some people connect and other people get something new, and if most people are amused, that would be successful. I'm hoping that people will enjoy the product as much as I enjoy the process of making art.

Ally & Allison: What about making art intimidates you?

Tara: Oh, everything! Trying to create a piece that other people will understand and connect to. Creating something that is relevant when I have had so many artists before me working in similar media, and with similar ideas. I think sharing your artwork with the world is one of the toughest and scariest things ever, because you have to hear other people's opinions of it, and you have to worry that it might fail. The scariest thing, to me, is if the work didn't elicit a viewer response. Even anger or hatred would be okay, if it was because my work was offensive or someone didn't agree with the message. Because then I would know I was communicating.

Ally & Allison: If you could have your portrait done by anyone who would it be and why?

Tara: I have to admit, I'd like to see what Andy Goldsworthy would do with me. Because he's not a portrait artist, and his material use is so ephemeral, or nature based. His material is essential to his works—it affects the meaning, and the forms, the shape of the artwork. His medium is meaning, and that is so absolutely lovely within his works.

First Progress Critique, September 22



The pieces I presented for the critique were a step in experimenting with how I want material to affect meaning—the embroidered books dealing with femininity (or femininity and masculinity together), or hyper-masculine books made of sheet metal and sawdust. However, the books were very simplistic—a starting point for my thoughts on gender but not the “twisting of the knife” that I want to make them eventually. The books are funny or ironic, but not quite subversive. Sometimes it is hard to tell whether or not I am trying to critique stereotypes or just regurgitating them. I think, as Lisa said, I need to go further, even too far, in my next pieces so I know how far to go, how political or sexual my pieces need to be in order to address the issues of gender and sexuality I want to address. Not only will pushing the book help me develop that subversive content, but it will push me as an artist to develop meaningful ways to address the issues of gender that I am interested in. Another point brought up in the critique was how do I want to address gender with my medium? If fabric=feminine, I need to either rigidly adhere to that or create a world within the books where fabric can be feminine, masculine, or neither. I should also pay attention to the child-like semiotics I want to use—artists like Jeff Koons take pop cultural and child-like imagery and turn it into something decidedly more adult.

Intention Statement: September 22

I am interested in creating books because they are not only a collection of visual images, but they are objects the viewer is forced to interact with, to read and page through. There is physicality to artists’ books—the pages can be like a book of paper, or they can be fabric, or thick handmade paper. The book can be seen as visual images, read materials, or even sculptural objects. Just as female-crafted objects are personal and tactile, the craft-inspired books I create are personal; they are held and kept within the private sphere of the viewer, as intimate object. Each type of page says something slightly different through texture and tangibility.

As much as the material is content, I also want to work with symbols that reference children’s books and iconography. The simplicity of such imagery is altered when looking at topics of a more adult nature, or dealing with political implications of gender within society, art, and the gallery. The material is still pretty important to me, because I want to take my own ‘feminine skills’ and talents I was given as a girl, as a child, and take them into an art gallery which does not necessarily usually support artwork that look like fabric children’s books.

Just making pieces that repeat the idea of craft as feminine art as masculine only gets the viewer to think about gender in art if s/he is critically looking at the pieces. I need to have a twist of a

knife, something to make the pieces political, referencing the semiotics of childhood and children's books, but ironically funny as well. The work will be subversive in how it interacts with the gallery and the way in which it operates as pieces that address gender disparities and stereotypes, but tries to transcend them and create transformative bodies within the work.

Karley Klopfenstein Studio Visit, September 27th

I would say that, in her studio visit with me, Karley Klopfenstein echoed many of the sentiments that everyone expressed in the progress critique, and really gave me some tough questions to ponder about the content of my artwork. She, like myself, was not very impressed with the books I had created for the progress critique—they were very cheesy and too simplistic. Karley was more interested in the masculine book, but still felt it was lacking something in imagery since it was in a book format (which I guess comes back to the question of whether artists books are art objects or explicitly narrative storytelling vehicles). Like Lisa, she was interested in the use of children's books and putting something inappropriate in the symbols and conventions of a child's primer or manners book, but definitely something more than I had done.

Karley's greatest concern was with my medium, which surprised me because we were both working with similar ideas of craft and the feminine and child-like (**See Appendix A, September 20th**). Karley mentioned that many of the feminist artists of the 1970s have created fabric works that undermine or question the gendering of fabric, and that I might not have much success at creating a message that is different than what these women did, with the exception that the book format is something new.

Karley did enjoy the handmade paper and thought that it could be something that you wouldn't expect, something sculptural—like a sawdust bra. She warned me away from doing overdone imagery like guns or camo within my work, unless I made it more surprising—like a floral print sewn gun. She actually enjoyed my summer work the most, and thought the mermaid painting had a lot of potential. (My issue with that is of course, that the underwater scenes don't have much content in them besides the medium they are made of and type of imagery they are) Karley also was attached to the idea of a diary, and suggested that I do a diary of small embroideries every day, as stream-of-consciousness pieces.

I delayed in posting this because I needed an extra day to consider what Karley said to me—she gave me a lot of tough criticism, and some of the feedback was very different from what everyone else was telling me, especially discouraging me from creating feminist fabric works, as if the medium was tired out. I don't think I will try the embroidered diary or going to mermaid images, because I don't feel the content in those types of images, but I think I am not going to only do books—I would like to create some paper works and sewn objects that are more sculptural than book-like.

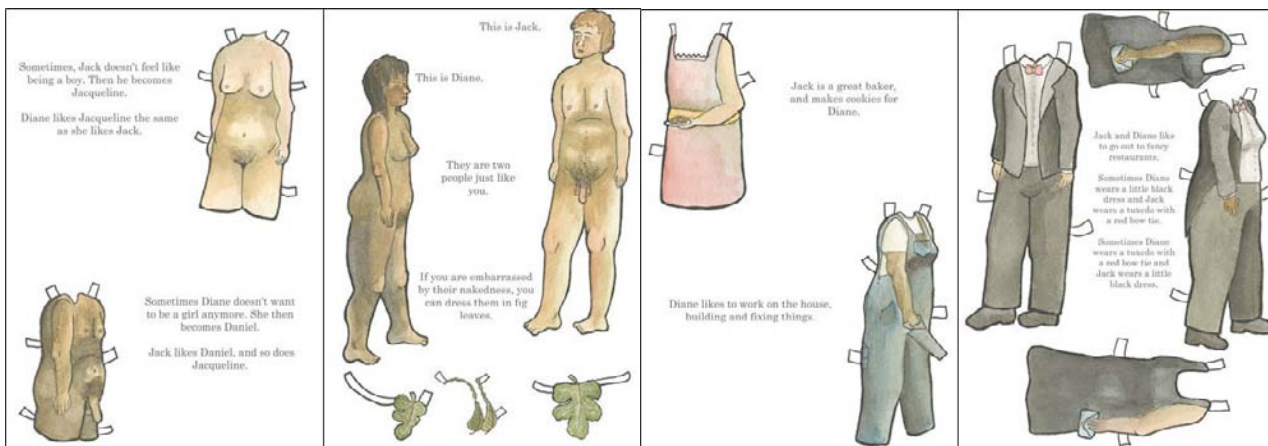
Editorial Comment 11/23: Though I originally thought that Karley and I had the same ideas and I would get a lot out of her time as the artist in residence, I can see now that we are using our ideas about the craft/fabric medium differently, which is why I ended up moving away from fabric as a medium, which she as well as other faculty members suggested. Klopfenstein used her fabric medium in a very public way; to compare the fabric to a tank is a bold move, she was taking the feminine of the interior “woman's sphere” and placing it into the military sphere. I was more interested in the role of fabric and craft as private crafts, and how that signifies femininity, and my own female identity, and then how that ends up working within the gallery. Because I could not figure out the appropriate way to explore this, I moved on to a different material in which I could explore my identity as a woman, a woman who was a child and still works with children, and a lesbian.

Journal Entry, October 3rd

Dolls are didactic tools—we give them to children to show them appropriate actions, how to look, how to dress. They are often used for girls (though “dolls” for boys, aka action figures, also proliferate). Barbie dolls, and their new counterpart Bratz dolls, reflect fashion, popular culture. American Girl dolls, a favorite of mine, were supposed to teach young girls history. My sister even had a realistic baby doll, weighted like a real baby (to prepare her for childrearing, I suppose?). I have been interested in dolls—I did a series of paintings of Barbie and Bratz dolls parodying Botticelli’s Birth Of Venus, and my sophomore year I made a hand sewn doll, which I based a series of drawings on. (The idea of doll identity and my own has never been far from my mind.)

Editorial Comment: I would say that this is where I really came to terms with what I was doing with medium, and instead of randomly choosing a medium (fabric) and awkwardly attempting to figure out my relation to the medium, the ideas transform medium—I can make paper dolls (as I am doing now) in watercolor, or create sewn dolls, or even two-dimensional images of dolls.

Midterm Critique: October 18th



Page layouts from the Paper Doll book handed out at midterm, digital prints of watercolor illustrations. 2010
These pamphlets were handed out at the critique and subsequent open studios, as well as at tabling on November 6th

In the midterm critique, I was actually validated by something that I was very nervous about--the explicitness of my pieces, and whether or not something that dealt with gender and sexuality in a fun, funny, childlike manner would be relevant or effective as an artwork. The faculty and students wanted me to clarify the language (both written and visual) that I was using in the pieces, but otherwise seemed to be fine with the use of children's imagery as a language. The faculty did give me some hard-hitting questions about why I was not pushing the work more, and issues with the narrative. Since I had originally started with more radical ideas and pared them down, I see this as more permission to go wild with the works. I am really glad they honed in on the narrative issue, since I can see that it is something that I am interested in, but hasn't been that strong in previous works, both in this class and in others. The faculty gave me a bunch of ideas for how to create this narrative, from textual to animated to audio, and I'm really excited to explore and create some of these narratives.



In the critique we discussed the location of the dolls, and how to get the viewer into the appropriate mentality to play with the dolls. Carrie Patterson mentioned how dolls and these issues seems to be something that would be better enacted in the home, not in a gallery, and asked me how I would create a space in which the viewer would feel comfortable and in that **child-like state** where she or he can feel comfortably play and experiment with the dolls bodies.

Joe talked about the language of the story in the paper dolls being preliminary; it still needed to find it's "**child's language**", and maybe not be so overtly didactic. Carrie mentioned recording and playing the audio of an interaction between audience and the dolls. Billy mentioned creating a flash or stop motion animation of the dolls that creates several narratives, in addition to the many narratives the viewer can create with the dolls. I could also record the viewer's reactions and interactions with the dolls and exhibit along with my narratives. Billy also referenced a flash project I created (<http://students.smcm.edu/tnhutton/314/project3.html>) which was surprising and interjected my authorship on the narrative; Billy also stressed the **power of surprise in narratives**, especially when I am creating narratives about stereotypes and subverting dominant narratives. Connected with the idea of recording the narratives that the audience has with the dolls (and the question of where do I create these interactions) is the idea of creating a **public space** where these dolls become much more aggressive in some ways, than in the gallery, where something like this is more expected. Colby suggested uncanny life-size paper dolls that we can dress, which will make some people uncomfortable (such as with the large genitalia), some people laugh, and some people will think it is cool. That connected with my initial proposal of putting artwork in non-gallery spaces, and displaying/examining the difference between gallery and public (such as the recording of viewer interaction.)



Obviously the **body** is something I am invested in, something I want to examine as the idea of the body that is passive to the viewer's action (Marina Abramovic, etc), as well as the idea of a body that can change meaning and visuality, based on what the viewer does to it, and where the viewer comes from; **the doll body as reflective of our own identity and self-expression**. As mentioned before, Joe stated the bodies I was using were a little **too tame; they don't transform enough**. If I use the ideas of both the fabric and paper dolls (and perhaps return to some of the ideas of my original drafts of the paper dolls), that will be a more successful doll than the original drafts.

Brittany mentioned how the dolls are **provocative because they are mass producible**, they can be distributed to anyone. But Joe mentioned how in some ways, for inside the gallery, these dolls are too gentle and toned down. He talked about the "biological integrity" of these dolls--they still function on a biological binary, and are still pretty coherent. In some ways, the fabric doll is more radical because it's a blank canvas for the viewer to do essentially anything to (though I only encourage drawing on the face). He saw something with Velcro; detachable body parts that you could put anywhere is what I'm considering!

Artists/references to look up more:

- Cindy Sherman's paper doll animation--Doll Clothes, 1975
- ask Carrie about the puppet theatre
- Ask Joe about the "biological integrity" comment, coherence/incoherence
- Allison Y mentioned the Ben Folds "You Don't Know Me" video

Intention Statement, October 18th

Dolls are feminine, didactic, and related to children, both rearing children and the imaginative world that children create. Among other roles, paper dolls teach children gender roles, how to dress certain bodies, and how those bodies act. The paper dolls, however, allow children to create their own stories--stories that very well may contradict the narrative given to the dolls through clothing that fits onto their paper bodies. Because paper dolls fit into the same realm as dolls and feminine toys, it also reflects on me as a female artist that I am choosing to create and show female dolls--but for an audience of men, women and the rest of us, of all ages.

Very important to me is the audience interaction with the work I create. Does the audience follow a narrative that is normative? Will a tomboy create an outfit for the female-bodied person that is boyish? Will the gay man create a romance between two men? Will people do crazy outfits because it is funny and strange, or because they see themselves in those oddly dressed people? I

want to examine and record the narratives the viewer creates, as well as create some of my own (in both normative and non-normative) and display those.

Studio Visit with Billy Friebele, October 27th

Technical Things:

We have Adobe CS3, which is something that I am hoping to use along with final cut/imovie for the videos. Billy offered to lend me a CS3 book he has in addition to the books I am getting from USMAI. Billy said I could look at the cameras in the media center; he also has two handycams and some HD flipcams, which are also more innocuous and less scary to viewers in the campus center.

Public interactions/Gallery Situation:

Billy brought up that my largest issue is how to instill trust in my viewers. Often, people in a gallery feel like they are in a spotlight, which is something I'm trying to avoid, since they will not be as open or do as many unexpected things with the dolls. Billy mentioned that one of the things he really enjoyed was how the dolls, in how I drew them, were both comfortable and uncomfortable—the way I was painting and the childlike visual language was comfortable even as the dolls were shockingly naked and uncomfortably transgressive.

We were both unsure how to handle the situation of making people comfortable in the gallery; Billy enjoyed the idea of setting up a table one day with the dolls, and inviting the viewers to dress them up, and then using that as source for videos and animations that would be shown in the gallery along with the dolls themselves. One question he had for me was what the viewers would get out of the gallery; I originally said that I just wanted the viewer in the gallery to play with the dolls, and hopefully inspired by the dolls, experiment with doing things outside their comfort zone. Billy mentioned that playing might not be enough for him, he wouldn't necessarily be inspired to do anything wild just for the sake of playing. When I mentioned putting out some disposable cameras with which the viewers could photograph their dolls in the set ups, he thought that was a better solution, and I could get some potentially really fun and interesting results. We agreed that the gallery show in December would be a good chance to see just how people will interact with the artwork in the gallery, since it often is tough to get people to interact with art, especially in a gallery. We also talked about a future web presence, such as setting up a website where I can collect these videos and possibly for next semester, flash games or flash animations where I can have the viewer submit their ideas through the computer (instead of putting them on the spot in a public physical space).

Relational aesthetics/credit other people:

Billy mentioned that I should probably network or talk to FUSE or JCB about anything that the WGSX dept can offer me in terms of an interested audience (if say, a public day with the dolls fails, at least I can talk to WGSX majors who are specifically interested in these things). He also brought up relational aesthetics—creating an artwork through the interaction of viewer and art or viewer and artist. That was something I'm definitely tapping into, and I also mentioned that while I was getting feedback for the campus center setup, with the gallery set up I was fine just sending my art and ideas into the world, and letting the viewer keep how she felt about the interactions with the dolls, instead of insisting on finding out what she did/how she felt about it. Using peoples ideas as a source from the day in the campus center, however, brings up the issue of how to credit other people if I am creating a situation where I elaborate on the ideas that others come up with—a collective authorship. Something I am going to think about is how to credit people, or if I need to, as I am collecting data from them.

Narratives:

The biggest weakness to Billy was that my book was simply one narrative. I restricted him and the other viewers to one possibility that the dolls could become with the text. The multiplicity of ideas that I am trying to work out is the strong point of the work; I'm trying to elicit narratives from the viewer that I would not think of in my limited experience, and having multiple narratives (instead of one concrete story) will help that. **It's kind of like I'm writing a computer program—my input is the dolls I create, and the people I try to access, and I let them interact, then I display and organize the results.**

Artist references:

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Relational aesthetics- book by Nicolas Bourriaud

Paul Mccarthy—if I ever wanted to turn human's bodies into the paper dolls for the videos

Tabling with Paper dolls in Campus Center, November 5th



I went to the campus center and put my paper dolls on a table, to see what people would think about the dolls, how they would react, what stories they would create, as a way to generate ideas for my own narratives. The table went better than expected. But there were still some disappointing aspects. College kids in public are only going to be goofy, juvenile (aided by the nudity of the dolls). I need to strike a balance between humor and seriousness so the interactions don't be come juvenile...



The first girl that showed up put one of the male dolls in a tux that wasn't created for him; I mentioned that it wouldn't fit him properly and she said it made her think of her brother in his father's prom tux, that doesn't fit quite correctly. One person created a story about someone returning from a formal party to join a bedroom party. "We just returned from our party!" "Wanna join ours?". Two other girls made popular clothing and mocked it; hipsters and the popular habit of wearing leggings without a skirt or pants.



I am happy for the genuine interaction with the first girl. The shared experiences and memories were great. Now I just wonder: do I want to create narratives that are charged sexually and with gender issues? How humorous can they be? I don't want it to be read as juvenilia even as I am trying to use a child-like language and interject humor in the work.

Interview, part two with Ally and Allison, November 5th

Ally: What is the target audience you are looking at addressing, is it college age? Adult? Teenage? And how do you think that affects the way you should show/display your work?

Tara: I don't know if there's a specific target audience that I'm trying to connect to here. I mean, I am trying to get people to hearken back to their childhood and leave a more adult mindset for one that is more childlike and experimental, so I don't think children or younger teenagers would necessarily get as much out of it? But I definitely want it to connect to all ages, both college students and adults. I don't think there is an age limit to play and creating stories. The tough part about people who aren't children is trying to convince them that it's ok to touch art, and move it around! I think that handing out things is important, because it allows the viewer to take it home and alter it as she or he sees fit. I hope that giving examples will help convince people it's okay to touch and alter the artwork, and that is why I am experimenting with video narratives, examples that include other people interacting with the artwork, just like the viewer could be interacting!

Allison: What is the relationship a viewer should have with your artwork?

Tara: I definitely don't want the viewer to just stand back and observe the artwork. That becomes too passive, and the viewer is just replicating how she watches television or looks at the

computer. I think that meaning and inspiration can be applied to the pieces I have in the artwork, like they are the ingredients that I create for the viewer to create an image, or a story, whatever she or he would like to do!

I don't necessarily want to prescribe meaning to the work, because I want the viewers to interact with it, become part of it, and derive their own meaning from the artwork. What it means to me can only be a few things; it can only be my intention, if I'm talking about gender. If the viewer interacts with it, there is no limit to meanings and relationships between viewer and work. It might not be about gender or sex at all; maybe it's about how hard it is to find clothes that fit, haha.

Allison: What is the importance of narrative to your work, if at all?

Tara: My narrative isn't extremely essential to the work. I do have my own stories and narratives that I see within the paper dolls I created, but it's very limiting to make the dolls only about my experience. The reason I want to create public venues for play with the dolls, and have them open for play in the gallery, is because I am interested in the narratives and characters that the viewer might create or bring to the artwork. And while I'm hoping to get some other narratives from people to help me create videos, it's not necessary that I see and hear all of the narratives and ideas people create with the work. The fact that they are out in the world, and played with, is enough for me, and why I enjoy disseminating the work so everyone can "own" the dolls, and play with them on their own.

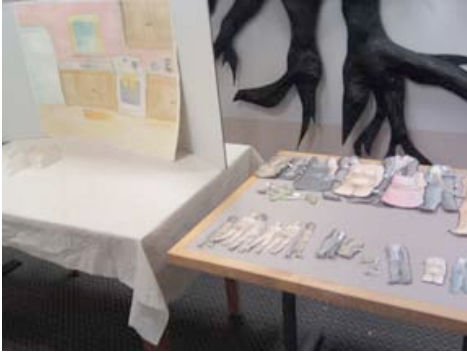
Ally: In what ways are you trying to confront the notion of gender within your work, and in what ways are you trying to change that notion for the viewer? In other words, are you trying to change the viewer's idea of gender or just confront them with what they already think?

Tara: The images and medium I am working in are inherently gendered; whenever someone deals with images related to children, they're more feminine. And of course dolls are toys for little girls, and these didactic toys that girls use. As a female artist, that's part of my background. I played with paper dolls! So in some ways it's expected of me to use images like this. For me of course, I'm trying to subvert some of the gendered ideas about my work, such as creating these dolls that are ridiculously realistic, in a way that most people wouldn't want their kids to see. And the dolls don't necessarily conform to ideas about gender, they at least have the ability to transform from stereotypical ideas about gender and sexuality. But even though I have that as the "ingredients" in the artwork, and that's what the artwork does for me, I don't necessarily see a need for the viewer's interaction with the dolls to be solely about gender. But I think it's inevitable that it will be flavored with ideas about gender, and the viewer might interact with the dolls in a manner that is stereotypical, or the space might be a liminal space where the viewer can do nontraditional things with the dolls.

Allison: Your work uses the rhetoric of children's books, what is it that you want to tease out from this source?

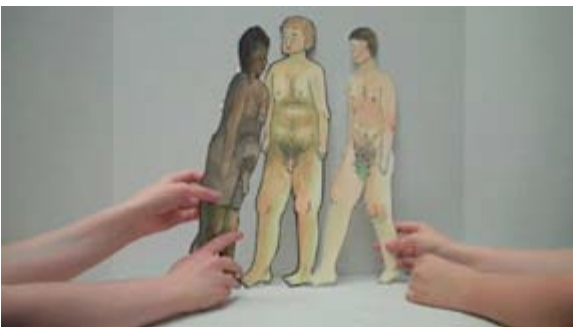
Tara: This is a great question! The rhetoric and imagery of children's books and toys is very didactic, because we're often trying to teach children shapes, colors, even morals or social norms through their early toys. This rhetoric is also seen as very transparent, because children are perceived as not able to understand complex, "adult" issues. So you wouldn't expect to see symbolism or difficult ideas in children's imagery, and you would expect the imagery to be true-to-life, if you were teaching children about the world. So when I use this imagery and rhetoric in something that is not necessarily true-to-life, am I creating an alternate world? Or maybe I'm just adding complexity to the existing mores. It's also very subversive because it has the look of something for children, but the content is not necessarily.

Three-quarter progress critique, November 10th



For the critique, I presented the additions I had made to the dolls I had, as well as the backgrounds I have been working on, and some video “sketches” of what kinds of narratives I could create to include in the installation in the gallery. The focus of the critique was on the video narratives; since that is the part where I am least sure of what needs to happen. I talked about how important it is for me to create these narratives, many of which will be about gender and sexuality (as it cannot be ignored in how I create the dolls), but my narratives are not the totality of the piece. I want something that the viewers can be inspired or motivated by to create his or her own narratives.

Everyone in the critique enjoyed the use of hands in the videos—the amount of movement the dolls need to have might not be a lot, since the dolls themselves are stationary. This means the audio and the dialogue is more integral—and as a whole, everyone thought the ad-lib dialogue was too jokey, and not as easy to understand. I think the discomfort of the people being recorded also comes across in the more ad-libbed pieces. People were more drawn to the idea of multiple ways of telling archetypal stories, such as sleeping beauty. Lisa referenced Bruce Nauman’s videos and the repetition—that repetition forces the audience to wait for a change, or not expect a change when it occurs, which would be an interesting way of asserting my authorship on the videos. It was asked why I didn’t just do a video installation, but for me, the most valuable part of the artwork is that the interactivity can be literal, and the work can be taken out of the gallery (in the case of books of paper dolls) and interacted with by the viewer, however she would like. We then realized that it isn’t essential for the viewers to play in the gallery (though as always it is nice), but the important part is to have that possibility, to have the dolls there as a visual reminder that one can go up and act out a narrative on the screen, or edit it in any way that the viewer sees fit. The idea of “never looking at paper dolls again” was mentioned and I agree that would be something I’d love for the viewers to take out of the gallery.



Everyone mentioned that they were surprised that I was holding back from getting more explicit in my work, which is something I am timid about still. I will have to try creating one or two videos explicitly about sexuality, and see what that result is, to try and find the space between too far and not far enough.

Also mentioned were several technical aspects, like getting a microphone for audio recording so it would be better quality, and transitions between videos. Placing multiple video screens in the gallery was something I was planning to do that was affirmed, with the narratives on loop, and having different readings of the same narrative in the same space helps bring that idea more to the

front of the show. Creating story-specific backgrounds and costuming also is important to create readable narratives.

Intention Statement, November 10th

Dolls are feminine, didactic, and related to children, both rearing children and the imaginative world that children create. Among other roles, paper dolls teach children gender roles, how to dress certain bodies, and how those bodies act. I created the paper dolls that I wish I could have been raised with—dolls that are not idealized, and are not censored, sexless bodies, dolls that do not conform to specific gender-specific standards. By creating dolls that don't fit into those standards, it is that much easier to find stories of experience that do not follow the culturally assigned "normal" account. Since they do follow the language of something that would be given to children, the dolls seem to hold a level of truthfulness, or at the least, a level of reflection of actual life. I hope to help expand the ideas about what "normal life" is, for myself, and everyone.

The part that is essential to me is the creation of a space where the viewer can create his or her own narrative. My perspective is only one of many; I know it is limited, and I know that no matter how many stories I create, I can only go so far in expanding the viewer's thoughts about gender roles and contemporary culture. What has the possibility of being truly subversive and expansive is the ability to take these dolls, and assign whatever narrative the viewer wants to the dolls. The type of dolls I have made, and the narrative elements, read as stories about gender and sexuality. The gendered politics inspire the piece but also important to me is the role of the work in generating narratives and ideas within the viewer—having not only videos where the dolls act out stories, but having actual dolls to play with and take from the gallery is just as important. My artistic act is not only planting the seed of ideas and stories in the viewer's minds, but also giving them actual physical objects that allow the viewer's experiences and imagination to enter the work and join my narratives. Even though the dolls are meant to be played with, in the gallery they are more awkward, as publicly displayed objects. Even when the dolls are not played with, their existence in the gallery indicates to the viewer that not only does the artist create stories and play with the dolls, but the viewers themselves are free to play and experiment with the dolls also. This is also why to me, something like a small paper doll booklet that can be disseminated is valuable in spreading narrative possibilities, and allowing anyone who has these objects I created the ability to engage with the artwork, outside of any influence that I or the gallery has.

Studio Visit with Sue Johnson: November 14th

Sue Johnson skyped with me on November 14, after I had mailed her a copy of the doll book I presented at the midterm critique. I told her about what I had done up through the $\frac{3}{4}$ progress critique, and showed her the new dolls and backgrounds I created. The first thing Sue commented on was the creepy, odd bodies I was painting. She commented that they seemed like they were "trying to crawl out of their skin". She mentioned that that probably caused discomfort and unease in viewers, and that it wouldn't work well in a situation where people are only reading the dolls quickly—like the campus center. The kind of unease that it brings up in the viewer does not exactly relate to children's literature, even though it does use that language.

Sue mentioned adding more details and specificity to the backgrounds, and making them less pastel-like, more dynamic with lights and darks. She suggested Beatrix Potter for an example of dynamic painting, who is still working with children's illustrations. She was also concerned about the set-up in the gallery—she really disliked the table, and suggested getting the dolls upright, such as in plastic sleeves on the wall (transforming the dolls into both dolls and art objects) or

stored in a playroom-like setup where the viewer can take the dolls out and put them back away. Something that the inclusion of the backgrounds does is really make the whole setup theatrical.

Sue then asked me the hard-hitting question of what my sources artists are. I'm struggling with that because I seem to have two categories of source artists; artists who talk about female identity, dolls and the like, and artists who are dealing with sex and sexuality in art, who have a bit of humor in their works. Sue said that the latter group of artists would be where I would find my best sources. She told me that even when I'm different from an artist, I can explore what I want my artwork to be in the differences that I have from, say, Jeff Koons. She mentioned Cindy Sherman as a touchstone for discussing bodies and narratives around bodies, and suggested I look at artists that source her.

Sue also thought that I could try expanding the imagery I am using to something that is all-ages, and cross-cultural, such as masks. Masks create a liminal space, but are characters that are more accessible to adults. I am not sure how I feel about the idea, but I do agree when she told me that the dolls themselves wear "full body masks".

For a little we talked about what I am trying to do with the art, since I am still terrible at articulating what my intention is. She mentioned looking at artists that deal with the language of protest, because **ultimately I am trying to change something in the viewer**. We agreed that more than play I am working towards change and disseminating information (be it through videos or books). Sue also told me to stop describing what I want the audience to do, because I can't get inside their heads. I told her that **I wanted to give people raw ingredients that they could take out of the gallery and do with as they please**, which she thought was the clearest thing I've said yet. The book I sent her of course, was more of a **recipe**, so I am hoping to work on making future objects and videos less of recipes and more ingredients for the audience.

Appendix A: Art Event Write-ups:

Karley Klopfenstein Artist Lecture, September 20th

With regard to my own artwork, Karley Klopfenstein is a godsend. Someone else working in the same media (if we define 'crafts' in general as a medium) as me, with many of the same ideas about content through the medium. Hearing Klopfenstein's graduate school story was reassuring. I think that especially because I am a senior it resonated with me to hear her say that even though grad school did not work for her, she was able to find her own way into an artistic practice, through volunteering, working, and eventually finding the kind of medium and subject matter that interested her.

To me, it seems like Klopfenstein first found the medium she was interested in with her lovely red ribbon pieces—a fabric, and transient pieces that could be recycled or thrown away; impermanent works. With Red Tide, and The Gift, Klopfenstein already was working at being political, critiquing but gently, because of the media she was using. Even though The Gift was her first work in the series with the red satin ribbon, by wrapping the fort in a ribbon, I can see how it was a precursor to her works where she is taking military imagery and wrapping it in a soft, feminine cover. After she found the sorts of materials and medium she enjoyed working in, I think she began working on the sorts of political, visual puns she is currently working within. The real bite of the work is in the contradictions, I feel. There is a feminine/masculine dynamic in the work, which trails out into a bunch of other contradictions—fuzzy and explosive, foreign and domestic. But of course, Klopfenstein is placing both of these contradictions in one artwork—a bomb can be both dangerous and fuzzy when you decorate it with a Persian rug.

I am extremely impressed by the extent to which Karley Klopfenstein researches before she begins to create an artwork. Both the researching of the patterns of the rugs (and choosing rug patterns that are site specific—such as rugs patterns from Afghanistan for the tank she is creating) and the design of the guns, bombs, and vehicles that she is emulating are very in depth and detailed. That is a great research ethic I hope I can try to emulate in my own research of the visual language of children’s books. Most of what Klopfenstein said about her use of media I connected to and are things I am thinking of. There were a few things I had not considered, such as the idea that crafted objects were often useful objects—my own experience today is that many of these objects have fallen out of the realm of useful into the ‘decorative’, and are derided for that. I am looking forward to talking with her in person, so I can ask her more about her work, so I can figure out how to push my own works, and include in them the same humor and relevance that hers have.

October 5th: Heather Harvey Artist Lecture

Heather Harvey is indubitably one of the most articulate speakers I have ever seen, and is especially good at putting into words the more intangible ideas about artmaking and the issues she is interested in, a skill I hope to work on cultivating. Harvey is interested in opaque, ephemeral things—she references poetry, philosophy, and biology as often as she discusses artists and artistic issues. In her installation pieces, she wants to create layered means, like a poem with shifting symbolism, idiosyncrasies to suggest things about human nature. Her works have a concrete, compelling visuality, but she works with meanings beyond the aesthetics. Harvey is interested in works that are multidisciplinary, multifaceted. Like poetry, she creates art that morphs into different subjects from where she started. She compares the scale of human experience versus the quantum scale. We can understand science (and art) at our size, but when it becomes immensely larger, it just breaks down in our brains—it is a mystery. And mystery is something that Harvey is interested in examining through her artwork—the blind spots in our knowledge. Because she is an artist, Harvey can draw on other disciplines to examine the everyday mystery, but does not need to follow the rules of the other disciplines, an idea that Linda Weintraub talks about in *In the Making*. One of Harvey’s sources is Albert Einstein—he examined both love and science, and understood the limits of science. Harvey, too, understands the limits of art.

Harvey’s abstract installations, especially her most recent one, create a sense of personalities and people, anthropomorphized figures in the wall that we, the viewers try to understand and interact with (some are aggressive, some are playfully nice). I love the phrase she uses to describe her pieces, “wall interventions”, the subtle and quiet transformations on the architecture, that create an uncertain intangible space—is the space really altered? It all becomes very poetic, and in many ways I feel Harvey is as much a poet with plaster as an artist.

Harvey’s lecture was very well-written, and I was impressed by her varied list of sources that she made into a coherent body of work, which is something I am working to incorporate within my own work. I thought it was interesting that she felt freed from art history, and did not feel the burden of the history of painting. Even though I am doing things very differently from painters, I still feel a burden from art history that plays on me as creating artwork about my identity, which is not white male heteronormative artist-hero. I am curious as to what her previous interactions with the history of painting have been, and if she has always felt so freed from art history.

October 25th: Gallery Opening, *Tenterhooks*- Karley Klopfenstein and Anja Marais

Tenterhooks, Karley Klopfenstein and Anja Marais' collaborative exhibition, deals with an intersection of material and political issues. Both artists include a sense of 'self' in the work, whether it is the material as representative of the self, and a feminine identity (Karley), or the personal identity as a politicized entity (Anja).

Karley's work we have seen before in her artist lecture earlier this semester. She justified her showing of the tank as a work in progress as with the empty spaces, it shows the process the piece has, how it comes together. I am not sure if this is a completely valid justification, but it was impressive to see the tank pieced together as an object. The physicality of the tank was much more powerful than her preliminary sketch, even though the sketch showed the finished rug patterns. In all of Karley's works, there is a scientific exactness that she displays in how she researches her projects, and creates models that are to scale and as exact a replica that she can make. This is of course at odds with the soft, feminine and craft medium she is working in. This makes Karley's tank and other works more effective in the way in which they display dichotomies but then subvert them by placing both ends (science/art, military/domestic, masculine/feminine) in one artwork.

Anja's work is more tied into personal meaning and her own experience as a political entity. Anja is a white woman born into South Africa; she feels like a nomad, and does not fit in completely with African or Anglo culture. Her artwork deals with abstracted, fabric bodies and the idea of being without a home. The artwork she creates is much more symbolic than Klopfenstein's, and perhaps because I had not been introduced to it before, but I found it to be much more difficult to extract all the layers of meaning, and for that reason more interesting. The way that Anja created narratives of the body is also very important to me; her bodies are textured and pieced together, in some ways referencing nature (such as flowing water), yet also grotesque and uncanny. Her narrative of the body is that of colonialism, of her personal experience, that is some ways universal but very personal.

One thing I enjoyed about the exhibition was how well the two artist's works fit together in the gallery. They both are dealing with ideas of the materiality of their medium, and how it affects meaning. The patterning in Anja's sculptures even seems to reference back to Karley's unfinished tank, making the inclusion of an unfinished work less startling in the gallery setting.

October 28th: Mirta Kupferminc- *The Skin of Memory: Space of Repression and Expression*

In Mirta Kupferminc's lecture "The Skin of Memory: Space of Repression and Expression", Kupferminc dealt with her identity and that of her parents, who survived Auschwitz and immigrated to Argentina. Like Anja Marais, Kupferminc has a dichotomy of identity—is she Argentine, where she was born, or Jewish, Hungarian like her parents? Her parents' experience lives on through her artwork, and it follows through imagery and ideas of personal identity expanding into a worldwide history.

What interested me the most was her connection between tattooing and embroidery, something I have thought of as well. Kupferminc discussed how for her, embroidery was tied to her mother who would embroider Hungarian floral imagery into many textiles. Also related to her mother's identity is the stark number tattooed onto her forearm. I am always interested in the dichotomy of feminine/masculine, and it is played out here through the embroidery/tattoo dichotomy, where ornamental tattoos are extremely masculine but still so similar to poking a needle through fabric. The video of the needle and thread that Kupferminc showed was extremely powerful and emotionally triggering. It is violent, yet it is just needle and thread.

The body of work that Kupferminc talked about was very complex and had multiple multimedia parts to it. She had the art object (chair), the photographs, video projection, and the tattoo artist who selectively handed out temporary tattoos in the gallery. The works meaning becomes more complex, but I think that the multiple media helps with the multiplicity of meaning and experiences Kupferminc is trying to express. She is examining the difference between ornamental and imposed tattoos, the idea of how all tattoos play into identity. Specific to the Holocaust, she is tracing a history from her mother and other survivors to a replication of the singling out of ‘other’ people based on an arbitrary marker, red clothing. I feel like in the gallery, all of this must have been very powerful, even overwhelming. The art is part monument, part exploration and simulation of the past. Even though it is referencing the terrible events of the past, I think that it cannot ever replicate the actual experience; but the emotional response and monumentality is essential to the body of work.

November 11th: Dr. Andrea Giunta- *The Politics of Representation: Art and Human Rights in Latin America*

Dr. Andrea Giunta talked about the relationship between art and human rights in Argentina, specifically in relation to “los desaparecidos”. In the 1970s, Argentine government began taking people without any notice, and those that disappeared were simply that: the disappeared. The memory of those who disappeared during that time has been enacted through art and mass media outlets such as newspapers. Giunta discussed how the art related to “los desaparecidos” served to continue to publicize a political act that the government denied, and becomes a confluence of personal memory and political action.

Dr Giunta began by talking about newspaper memorials to the disappeared, where the newspapers take the photos out of the realm of art into politics. The photos, placed in a public medium such as a newspaper, keep the memory of a person alive in society, while at the same time, for family members, it is like a public family album, a public memorial of a loved one. The photos in newspaper memorials, protests, and artwork serve to keep a person who has been disappeared alive, through publicizing the image and memory of his or her face.

One gallery installation, *Identidad*, took the newspaper images of couples that were disappeared while expecting a child, and reproduced them at life size, placing mirrors in between the photos. Someone visiting the gallery could see their features in a couple, and find their identity, as three people did. The memorial photos, which were originally in a family album, then reproduced in mass media, are now transformed into art objects, where the relation between viewer and art is one of inquiry. Daniel Ontiveros also transformed the newspaper images by drawing the images, and adding the names and other nuances of a personality into images that were originally frozen photos.

Giunta concluded that the art related to “los desaparecidos” reacts to political actions, those of the past and both serves political and social purposes in working with issues of human rights and memory, as it opens the viewers eyes to political history. My artwork is not political, but I would say that it is reaction to social culture, and though I doubt I have to do much to open viewer’s eyes to the sexist and heterosexist norms of society, I am hoping to enact some sort of change through the dissemination of information. Even the use of zines and videos reflects mass media, similar to the newspaper memorials of the disappeared.

Appendix B: Artists of Interest:

Marco Maggi

I was introduced to Maggi over the summer through the book In the Making. I was interested in the way in which he is “gently subversive”. Maggi’s pieces are made of household materials, such as aluminum foil, apples, or printer paper. “I am a little man working with normal things” (In the Making 270), Maggi said of his artwork. By simplifying his material, process, and imagery, Maggi creates an environment of simple, understated artwork. His pieces also are subversive in that they are antithetical to most high-tech, elaborately electronic artworks. While Maggi is referencing textiles, maps, and ancient symbols with his artwork, he is not specifically creating meaning for the viewer to read and decode. Instead, his works operate as “open texts to open readers”, a language without any prescribed meaning attached. Maggi calls them “seeds of text”, where the viewer must let the meaning sprout in his or her mind. This interaction with the audience forces the audience to think and dwell on the artwork longer, even though the pieces may be small and made of mundane materials. This new interaction between viewer and artwork demands more of the viewer, but also give the viewer more interpretative reign, and more to gain from examining the artwork. I am very interested in the way in which Maggi takes time to create his pieces; their value isn’t in the material (which is everyday objects) but in the process of creating the pieces, the amount of time spent on the small images.



Silver Line, 2009 - pencil on aluminum - 20 x 16 inches
<http://hosfeltgallery.com/index.php?p=artists&a=Marco%20Maggi>



Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, Dollhouse, 1972. wood and mixed media. ArtStor.

Miriam Schapiro

Initially, I was drawn to Schapiro because she pioneered works of art in the 1970s that were created with fabric, and related to the feminine, which she named *femme*. Schapiro definitely questioned the line between high art and crafts that existed at that time, which is something I also seek to do. As I began to look into works about dolls, I returned to Schapiro’s 1974 *Womanhouse* piece with Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse*. Schapiro and Brody created a dollhouse with found objects. The dollhouse is subversive in how it portrays the woman who lives within, as well as creating a sense of danger (such as the bear that peeks through the nursery window), letting us question what a dollhouse exactly does for women and how they self-identify. Because she is working with dolls, it was useful for me to see what has been done before, but I found that Schapiro and I could not connect in terms of content or even humor (many feminist artists of the 1970s were much more serious in their artmaking).

Jennifer Linton

Linton is a Canadian contemporary female artist who takes the personal (her own identity as a woman and a mother) and politicizes it. Her MFA work, *The Disobedient Dollhouse*, is literally related to my own issues with dolls—Linton is revisiting her childhood, and much like Schapiro's dollhouse, finds it dark and dangerous for herself as a woman. I am more interested in her book, *My Alphabet of Anxieties & Desires*. In the book, she takes the form of a traditional children's didactic item (an alphabet book) and subverts it, examines it as an adult. The pieces have a different narrative than one you would give to a child—they are the words an adult (one full of anxieties) would think about when using the alphabet. The images themselves still have quite a bit of sarcasm and humor in them, which is where I would like to take my work towards.



L is for Lust — Alphabet Series. 2008. Colored pencil on illustration board. 9" x 12"
From Artist's website: <http://www.jenniferlinton.ca/>



Violet - Ice (Kama Sutra). 1991. Glass 13 x 28 x 17
From Artist's Website: <http://www.jeffkoons.com/site/index.html>

they are pieces of artwork. I'm not completely sure if I agree with Koons, but I enjoy that he has pushed it too far too, and it gives me a lot to think about with the fine line between porn/art, and how to straddle (or eliminate) it. I can define myself and my art in how I am different from Koons—he often seems to be discussing himself as an artistic figure, as a white heterosexual male, who is accorded all of the privilege of the normative modes of sexuality. Pornography is made for men like Koons. I am trying to create an interaction and narrative quite different from Koons—I want a subversive narrative of sexuality, I want to expand ideas of sexuality and love beyond what Koons depicts in *Made in Heaven*.

Jeff Koons

Koons is famous for creating sculptures based off of and inspired by pop culture, such as his balloon animal sculptures. He creates artwork that also has a childlike language, as he is reflecting and making valuable the kitsch of our pop culture. His *Made in Heaven* show is of particular interest to me because he used the language of popular culture and pornography, contemporary (hetero)sexuality, but places it into the gallery and says that

Faith Ringgold

Ringgold's quilts signify many things; her work references race foremost, and her own history as a black woman denied artistic capacity to create work that can be considered fine artwork and shown in museums. The dolls and quilts Ringgold made were inventive for the time because as art objects, they took on the idea of "women's work" and objects meant for consumption and the home, not the gallery. Obviously these objects are no longer an oddity in the gallery, but the innovation in artmaking, taking something nontraditional and using it to express her concerns about societal mores, is something I want to emulate. I enjoy Ringgold's children's book, Tar Beach, with the matter-of-fact, child like language that I want to emulate in my own narratives (as I am not a writer and have to be careful in my language choices). Ringgold is dealing with race, and her gender comes secondary, but I feel like the style in which she is claiming children's language and imagery and using them to talk about adult issues is valuable and can be emulated in my own works.

Appendix C: Action plans

September 6th, Initial Action Plan:

Weekend of 9/3-9/5: Gather materials; fabric scraps, extra embroidery floss, book paper, embroidery hoops, etc. Draft plans for an early book; collect stories/illustrations for a zine about Penny
Monday 9/6: Put together and photocopy Penny zine, Go through books that came in from USMAI and send back irrelevant books, make a mock-up of a fabric collage/ embroidery book
Tuesday 9/7: morning: work on narratives/characters for books, class, work in scene shop, evening: initial sketches for characters/narratives
Wednesday 9/8: class, mock ups of a book from the zine as well as beginning mockups of another book
Thursday 9/9: class, evening: email/meet with faculty to discuss source artists and go to library to research source artists in books and contemporary artists in magazines
Friday 9/10: Over the weekend, I want to create three books in full, as well as explore other objects that can be created with fabric, thread, collage, etc (today, cutting fabric and paper for books, gathering materials), as well as work in the library with sources
Saturday 9/11: illustrate books
Sunday 9/12: finish putting together books
Monday 9/13: figure out which works are most successful so far, and mock-up others if more are needed, class (share in-progress critique works with Lisa)
Tuesday 9/14: class, work in scene shop, and work in library on bibliography
Wednesday 9/15: class, work on second drafts of crit pieces
Thursday 9/16: second or third drafts of crit pieces, class, Cirque de Soeil in the evening
Friday 9/17: Begin final versions of progress critique pieces (third or fourth versions)
Saturday 9/18: HFStival
Sunday 9/19: work on final draft of progress critique works
Monday 9/20: finish final versions of prog, crit works, Karley Klopfenstein lecture, class
In the following four weeks, I hope to keep on creating on average three pieces a week, while working out the issues of craft and female identity, and how the medium and content interact. I'm hoping to create books as well as two-dimensional pieces, and perhaps work on digital pieces.

September 22nd, post first progress critique:

Weekend of Sept 24-26: reflect on crit and plan new works, collect sources and read more about other artists
Monday 9/27: Studio visit with Karley; initial sketches for (doll?) book, gathering fabric and materials
Tues 9/28: read more (Miriam Shapiro), work on book (sewing together)
Weds 9/29: sew together doll, work on book aspect
Thursday 9/30: begin binding book

Friday Oct 1: have book completed; start next sketches for 1-2? Books, femmage inspired book?
Weekend of Oct 2-3: cut fabric/plan books/ read about Judy Chicago
Monday Oct 4: piece together books
Tuesday Oct 5: piece together books
Weds Oct 6: Present 3 artists; annotated bib due—binding books
Thursday Oct 7: bind/finish books—work in digital lab scanning fabric
Friday Oct 8: have 2-3? Books completed, spend some time in digital lab manipulating
Weekend of Oct 9-10: reading days; home working @ Joanns

October 18th, post-midterm critique:

Weekend: revise paper dolls, storyboard narratives and create backgrounds for dolls and animations; follow up emails to sue, billy, joe, and carrie (as well as emailing erica re: using the laminating machine?)
Monday: gallery opening; work on revised (moveable?) paper dolls and clothes
Tues: research; revise paper dolls (I see clothes becoming an issue)
Weds: work on background and dolls
Thurs: reading; test printing and laminating
Fri: preliminary dolls + bgs drawn and painted
Weekend: Work in digital lab, scanning images and creating animations/narratives (either through video or flash)
Monday: more drawing/painting based on digital results
Tues: reading, work out the possibility of public space for dolls?
Weds:drawing and painting
Thurs : reading, digital printing/laminating?
Fri: mac lab
Weekend: digital printing (work on scale)

November 10th, post three-quarter critique:

Weekend 12-14: choose 3 stories to videorecord and write/storyboard the different ways of altering the story, and make genre-specific clothing for the existing dolls, as well as have one or two story-specific backgrounds inked and start painting them.
Monday: paint backgrounds and clothing
Tuesday: print dolls clothing
Wednesday: video recording (first main story)
Thursday: revising storyboards based on recording; video recording; editing video
Weekend 19-21: video recording and editing; work on other clothing/dolls as necessary
Monday: video recording, scanning dolls
Tuesday: editing to make a larger paper doll book-editing video
Wednesday: Thanksgiving Break
Thursday: Thanksgiving Break
Friday: Thanksgiving Break
Saturday: Thanksgiving Break
Sunday: editing, printing possible books of dolls for show, printing any other necessary dolls and clothing for the gallery

Appendix D: Annotated Bibliography

Ammann, Jean-Christophe. Jeff Koons. Ed. Angelika Muthesius and Burkhard Riemschneider. Cologne: Taschen, 1992. Print.

Koons is infamous for his pop art sculptures, the humorous and ironic kitsch of his pieces. I got this book to look into the way he uses irony and humor to take something that is culturally devalued and turn them into giant, monumental art objects. What kept drawing me in, however (and probably unsurprisingly), was the Made in Heaven exhibit and the sexually explicit artworks of Koons and Ilona Staller. This show caused a lot of controversy, since Koons himself said he was depicting himself and Staller as a Modern-day Adam and Eve. I am also curious about how Koons defines the artwork in this

exhibit as non-pornographic, because "There was love there" (156), and the artwork becomes a post-modern piece about sex with love. I'm not completely sure if I agree with Koons, but I enjoy that he has pushed it too far too, and it gives me a lot to think about with the fine line between porn/art, and how to straddle (or eliminate) it.

Author, Elissa. *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010. Print.

String, Felt, Thread is a great generalist book that discusses the divide of art/craft in the art world, and how craft has been placed below Art, and feminized, to take it out of the gallery. As well as a historical text, the book gives me several contemporary artists (from the 1970s until now) to look at how they use embroidery and fabric in pieces, and how these pieces operate in a gallery--something I am concerned with.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods. Dijon: Leses Du Réel, 2002. Print.

I have always been interested in the interaction between viewers and art objects; relational aesthetics makes those interactions the artwork itself. The idea that the artwork that the artist produces is "relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic objects" is not that radical, in my mind. Unlike Rirkrit Tiravanija, I am not trying to facilitate these moments of sociability. It is more that I am using the gallery space as a liminal space, and one where I can place these "objects creating sociability" (as named by Bourriaud). Bourriaud describes the new idea of relational aesthetics not as "the end of art" but as a new form of art, which is constantly changing as an "inter-human game". My artworks are not images to be viewed and translated, but hopefully objects that create some idea of play and interaction, even if it is primarily in the viewer's mind and does not happen as much in the gallery

Cameron, Dan. *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1998. Print.

Ringgold's quilts signify many things; her work references race foremost, and her own history as a black woman denied artistic capacity to create work that can be considered fine artwork and shown in museums. What I want to most examine, though, is the characteristics of several of her quilts from the French Collection, including "Dancing At The Louvre" and "Tar Beach". Those quilts focus on a narrative (both include text around the borders; the text and images from Tar Beach was turned into a children's book) that is enjoyable and ironic. She deals with heavy issues, but has no issue "dancing, instead of maintaining a respectful silence, at the great Western temples of culture" (Tucker ix). The dolls and quilts Ringgold made were inventive for the time because as art objects, they took on the idea of "women's work" and objects meant for consumption and the home, not the gallery. Obviously these objects are no longer an oddity in the gallery, but the innovation in artmaking, taking something nontraditional and using it to express her concerns about societal mores, is something I want to emulate. In the work *Picasso's Studio*, Ringgold directly interacts and critiques one of the masters of art history, Picasso, who has done a lot to limit the visibility and depiction of African women (as well as African American women). So far I haven't directly referenced art historical cannon, though that is something that I always have issue with, and have considered in many ways referencing.

Chansky, Ricia A. "A Stitch in Time: Third-Wave Feminist Reclamation of Needled Imagery." *Journal of Popular Culture* 43.4 (2010): 681-700. Print. Chansky examines how third-wave feminists have returned back to women's traditional art, such as knitting and

sewing, and are radically altering the types of images that their grandmothers placed within this fabric imagery. Second wave feminists in the 60s and 70s reclaimed fabric imagery (see Miriam Schapiro) but kept the imagery more tame, within the realms of expected fabric imagery. Chansky mentions how fabric imagery calls to mind ideas about the home and family traditions. The artists who discuss political and social issues with these materials are surprising; one doesn't expect to see a cross stitch with obscenities on it (Subversive Cross Stitch) or pornographic latch hook rug kits (Made with Sweet Love). My initial fabric works are more similar to the second-wave feminist imagery. But with the issues I am discussing, I should take advice from these fabric artists, and face head-on issues of the explicit, the pornographic, the sexual.

Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999. Print.

I would say that Schapiro is one of my ideological mothers, really. She pioneered a type of painting with fabric collage, which she named 'femmage'. Initially her femmages were much more abstract like the abstract paintings and computer drawings she was creating before 1972. Schapiro wanted to connect with women who create beauty but are not considered artists because of their medium and its limit within the home. Schapiro definitely questioned the line between high art and crafts that existed at that time, and is one of the reasons we can see fabric used in art all of the time now! Also of significance to me is her 1974 Womanhouse piece with Sherry Brody, *Dollhouse*. Schapiro and Brody created a dollhouse with found objects that reflects the shifting roles feminine identity. The dollhouse is subversive in how it portrays the woman who lives within, as well as creating a sense of danger (such as the bear that peeks through the nursery window), letting us question what a dollhouse exactly does for women and how they self-identify.

Guerilla Girls. Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers: the Guerrilla Girls' Illustrated Guide to Female Stereotypes. New York, NY: Penguin, 2003. Print.

Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers is the Guerilla Girl's examination (and repudiation) of female stereotypes. The stereotypes that get associated with women reflect a single dimension of femininity, and through the singular representations of women, as either frigid or sluts, soccer moms to businesswomen, welfare mothers or gold diggers, women lose some of their cultural power and autonomy. The Guerilla Girls critically examine these stereotypes, and hope by unveiling them, and through their "stereotype eradication kit", to promote a discourse about the two-dimensional representation of women in society, culture and popular media. Of particular interest to me is one of the funniest things the book does, which is the ethnic doll collection, which displays dolls that are racially stereotyped, and includes a biography that describes their characteristics, but then includes something to prove that these stereotypes are not all that can describe these races and religions. For example, with Theresa, the Good Catholic Girl, there is a warning that "due to a manufacturing flaw related to real-life Catholics in the U.S., 97 percent of Theresa dolls will use contraceptives sometime in their lives and 87 percent will make up their own minds about having an abortion. Some dolls may even join rebellious Catholic groups like Dignity or turn into Lesbians! Sorry, no returns or refunds." The information allows the reader to see these dolls (and their stereotypes) as more multi-faceted, and the mere existence of some of the ridiculous stereotypes (such as Rosa, Hot Tamale, Pearl, China Doll, or Scheherazade, the Harem Girl), allows the viewer to question why, exactly these stereotypes exist, since they are such a flat idea of race, religion, and gender.

Kuhn, Deanna, Sharon C. Nash, and Laura Brucken. "Sex Role Concepts of Two- and Three-Year-Olds." *Child Development* 49.2 (1978): 445-51. Jstor. Web. 07 Oct. 2010. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1128709>>.

I was looking for more information on developmental psychology, and information on how girls use dolls. I was surprised to find that paper dolls were even used as tools in this study! The study took a sample of children two and three years old, gave them two paper dolls, one female and one male, and asked the children to assign items to either the female or male doll. They children were given traits, activities, and future roles. The children, even at two years old, almost always assigned the sex-stereotyped traits to the gender it is associated with--girls like to cook, clean house, help mother, talk a lot. Boys like to play with cars, build things, say "I can hit you", never cry, are mean, etc. It really fascinates me that this study was done with paper dolls, and though I am not observing and recording the interactions with the dolls, I was inspired by this kind of scientific experimentation to give the viewers a variety of options in order to categorize the dolls however they feel fit.

Schapiro, Miriam, and Melissa Meyers. "Waste Not, Want Not: Femmae." *Heresies* 1.4 (1977): 66-69. Print.

In this article, Schapiro examines the use and value of women's work, especially that with needles which has been disparaged by historians, including scrapbooking and early photocollage by women, which Schapiro argues predates male photocollage. Schapiro also sees the scraps that women gather and collage together as nourishing objects which can create images that are just as colorful, symbolic, and evocative as painted or drawn imagery. I initially used this source as a critical jumping point for my own use of fabric and femmage within my work. It was too much of a superficial connection, however. The value of women's imagery, disparaged by art historians, resonates with my own thoughts about the value of children's imagery. Children's books and toys are connected with the feminine and the home, and also are not given as much credit for layered, deep meanings, sociopolitical intent, or evoking adult emotion. I hope to reclaim those children's images and by placing them in the gallery, give them some of these layers of meaning.

Tucker, Marcia. *Bad Girls*. New York, NY: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994. Print.

Bad Girls is the title of an exhibition organized by Marcia Tucker in 1994 (with a sister exhibition organized by Marcia Tanner), that brought together artists that were creating pieces about gender, but being 'bad', being humorous, being sexual, going too far. This book is the catalogue that includes essays by the curators and artists in the exhibitions. This was really helpful to give me some more contemporary feminist artists, especially since feminism has changed since the seventies (any work I make in fabric, while relying on Schapiro and Ringgold's fabric works, is vastly different from the visual rhetoric of theirs). The essays included discussed the idea of "bad" as actually good, sexual, funny, and critical of traditional ideas about gender. Something highlighted in the essays in this book was the essentialness of humor in critique about gender. When feminists seem to be humorless, some artists tried to bring laughter into the critique. I enjoy the humor-filled images, the sexuality that is placed in the open in some images and how that can be filled with humor and subversive, which is something I want to work on making sure is in my artwork.

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. New York: Crown, 1991. Print.

Tar Beach is the children's book based on a storybook quilt of the same name created by Ringgold. Ringgold tells the semi-autobiographic story of poverty and race, highlighting

the struggles her father is having joining the union. Ringgold adds a level of fantasy, as the protagonist flies through the night sky while lying on the roof of her parent's apartment. Ringgold claims the buildings as her own, in a way fantastically reclaiming power denied to herself and her father that is denied due to their race. The part I enjoy most about Ringgold's book is the matter-of-fact, child like language that I want to emulate in my own narratives (as I am not a writer and have to be careful in my language choices). Ringgold is dealing with race, and her gender comes secondary, but I feel like the style in which she is claiming children's language and imagery and using them to talk about adult issues is valuable and can be emulated in my own works.

Sullivan, Nikki. "Queering Popular Culture." *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York UP, 2003. 189-206. Print.

Sullivan points out that every time we view an image (be it a painting, sculpture, advertisement, film) we "read" them, translate them through our own experience and then recreate the image. Sullivan then describes different methods of queering popular culture, such as inherent queer readings, images informed by camp, the gaze, and images engaging within heterosexist institutions. Theorist Alexander Doty claims that even heterosexuals have queer moments and readings of all images, causing similar reactions as Freud's uncanny. Sullivan discusses the Barbie Liberation Organization (BLO), which switched the voice boxes of talking Barbie dolls and talking GI Joes. I feel like my work is very much following similar ideas to the BLO and works that engage in the normative institutions. (and not because they are dolls!) I have taken the imagery and ideas of normalized children's playthings, and attempted to place my own ideas about identity into them, creating a counter-institution that operates under the transparency of children's toys, but with an alternate reading. I hope to explore more artists referenced in this article and continue to work with this idea Erica Rand and Judith Butler are discussing

Weintraub, Linda. *In the Making: Creative Options for Contemporary Art*. New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art, 2003. Print.

Appendix E: Future Reading List

Rice, Shelley, and Lynn Gumpert. *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, and Cindy Sherman*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999. Print.

Sherman, Cindy, and Gunilla Knape. *Cindy Sherman*. Göteborg, Sweden: Hasselblad Center, 2000. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Nodelman, Perry. *Words about Pictures: the Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. Athens: University of Georgia, 1988. Print.

Rand, Erica. *Barbie's Queer Accessories*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. Print.

Ferguson, Russell. *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. New York, NY: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990. Print.

Weintraub, Linda, Arthur Coleman Danto, and Thomas McEvilley. *Art on the Edge and Over: Searching for Art's Meaning in Contemporary Society, 1970s-1990s*. Litchfield, CT: Art Insights, 1996. Print.

González-Torres, Félix, and Julie Ault. *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*. Göttingen: SteidlDangin, 2006. Print.

Spector, Nancy, and Félix González-Torres. *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1995. Print.