

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

This statement will introduce my creative research practice conducted as an Assistant Professor at Wayne State University; the resulting accomplishments, publications, and awards; and my anticipated trajectory as I move forward. My position at Wayne State has been integral to the development and success of my visual art practice. As an academic in a research university, experimentation and innovation have been supported and encouraged in both the general atmosphere of the institution and directly through research funding. This has allowed me to make work that is experimental, without the accommodations for market viability that independent artists must consider. My teaching practice also has informed my creative research. I have been able to bring my specific research interests to the classroom, which has demanded a deeper understanding of my subjects and a greater clarity of articulation in order to make the information accessible to my students. Seeking diverse topics for my students beyond my current research has also enriched my practice by introducing new sources, methods, and techniques that I have applied to my creative work.

The success of my creative practice is evidenced through the inclusion of my work in prominent exhibitions and through awards of residencies and grants. In the studio arts, the primary mode of publication is through public exhibitions at galleries, installation spaces, and museums. These exhibitions are curated or juried from national and international pools of artists. I have also been awarded both internal and external grants for my creative research projects. Peer reviewed residencies are an additional form of external funding. They provide fully funded research support with no-cost access to facilities, lodging, and food. Many residencies also provide valuable technical support, stipends, and professional networking opportunities with curators and critics.

In this statement, I provide a general overview of my practice, outcomes of my work, and I outline a selection of specific projects I have undertaken at Wayne State. Though presented as discreet bodies of work, all of these projects are interrelated and often produced concurrently, exploring a fluid spectrum of ideas, materials, and methods.

## BACKGROUND

I am a craft artist with formative training in the field of jewelry and metalsmithing. Over the years, my practice has transitioned from jewelry as the format of my work to adornment as the subject of my work. This has freed me to approach jewelry through a variety of methods ranging from traditionally fabricated metal objects to textiles, beading, ceramics, installation, 3D printing, and computer controlled objects.

My practice engages in the production of works that are hybrids of grotesque or undesirable aspects of the body and objects we commonly associate with beauty, power, status, health or wealth. Through my work, I investigate how the pursuit of human beauty has left its mark on the body. Bodily ideals in society are often implemented through the use of objects and materials placed on the body. The act of covering and adding to the body transforms it from a natural state towards an icon of perfection. My work explores jewelry/adornment as agents of this transformation.

The materials of jewelry, including gold and pearls, have been reoccurring materials in my work. I have begun to explore their conceptual possibilities by investigating their cultural associations. I use the semiotics of gold and gems to call upon the common associations of decoration, domestic handicraft, and women, and to investigate the commodification and display of the desire for love, sex, and bodies through status objects.

Through my work, I have discovered the political power of crafts. In recent history, craft has been theorized as a medium that existed outside of the white, male, Euro centrality of the contemporary art world. Crafts have been conceptualized as being in the realm of the domestic, social, female, and/or indigenous.<sup>1</sup> Though this outside position may be seen as marginalization, it also holds opportunity for deviance and protest. As my work deals largely with the

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<sup>1</sup> Lechner, Jenna. "One of Portland's Most Important Art Spaces Is Closing. Now What?" the Portland Mercury. Mar. 16, 2016. Web

female body, it calls upon the historical association with craft and the feminine. I will continue to work within the craft traditions capitalizing on their association with the body, the senses, the feminine, the erotic, decadence, ritual, wealth, and power in ways that challenge the status quo.

My work has undergone two significant evolutions: the mediated activation of discreet objects through performance, video, and photographs, and the introduction of performative non-objects. As my work began to utilize performative actions, it became necessary to develop photography and video as components that are equally as important as the objects I created. My performances developed into actions where the object became ephemeral, dissipating after the performance and existing only in an image. Nicholas Bell, Curator at the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum wrote in the catalog for the exhibition *40 Under 40: Craft Futures* that "Jewelry crossed a conceptual Rubicon the moment Lauren Kalman gilded her tongue. The piece from her series *Hard Wear*, exists only in documentation..." Though my practice is diverse in format, it has remained firmly rooted in the craft discipline as it deconstructs and reconstructs decorative and functional objects as a core method.

My work has begun to extend beyond a solo art practice to incorporate collaborations with designers and engineers, curatorial projects, art festival organizing, and community programming. All of these have developed out of my research interests and experiences in my studio practice. My curatorial projects reflect my work as well, focusing on performance, masking, and utopic architecture and design.

#### **RECENT EXHIBITIONS / AWARDS / RECOGNITION / PUBLICATION WHILE AT WAYNE STATE**

I was recently awarded First Place in the SNAG Emerging/Mid-Career Scholarship competition through the Society of North American Goldsmiths, was selected as a finalist in the AJF Artist Award through Art Jewelry Forum, and was recently nominated for a United States Artists Fellowship. In fall 2015, I was invited to Beijing as a VIP Artist for the Beijing International Contemporary Metal & Jewelry Art Exhibition 2015 at the World Art Museum, where I contributed an essay for the catalog. I was also selected for the Inaugural International Interdisciplinary Artist in Residency, Australian National University, traveling to Canberra Australia to begin research for new work.

During my time at Wayne State, my work has been featured in several very prominent museum exhibitions including *Multiple Exposures* at the Museum of Art and Design in New York, *40 Under 40: Craft Futures* at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, *Body Embellishment* at the Mint Museum, and the *Beijing International Contemporary Metal & Jewelry Art Exhibition 2015* at the World Art Museum. My work has been published in 8 books and written about in publications including the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Washingtonian*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *American Craft Magazine*, and *Metalsmith Magazine*, among others.

I also co-curated the exhibition *I'm Your Man* with Millee Tibbs, which was awarded a New York exhibition and grant through the ISE Emerging Curators Program from the ISE Cultural Foundation in New York.

#### **CREATIVE PROJECTS CONDUCTED AT WAYNE STATE**

##### **Spectacular (2011-2012)**

###### Concepts / Process

*Spectacular* is a visual art project that consists of 11 wearable objects, 8 videos, and a live performance. It combines traditional craft and garment construction techniques with a critical investigation into the depiction of illness, stigmas of illness, and sexualizing of the abnormal, in both contemporary and nineteenth century visual culture. The process involved producing elaborate wearable objects using construction methods borrowed from lingerie design.

#### Exhibitions / Awards / Recognition / Publication

This work was exhibited in one invited solo exhibition at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. It was also selected for a juried solo exhibition at Redux Contemporary Arts Center in Charleston, SC, where a live performance was also debuted. It was juried into a two person show in ARC Gallery in Chicago, IL, a museum exhibition *Extreme Fibers: Textile Icons and the New Edge*, Muskegon Museum of Art, and was invited to be part of the *Socha a Objekt* sculpture festival in Bratislava Slovakia. This work was funded through a Dean's Creative Research Grant from the College of Fine Performing and Communications Arts at Wayne State, and a residency at the Santa Fe Art Institute.

#### **Virus Simulation (2012-2015)**

##### Concepts / Process

*Virus Simulation* is a collaborative work between Lauren Kalman and engineer Kipp Bradford, Research Scientist, MIT Media Lab. It is an interactive artwork that makes visible the hidden world of a biological virus spread by social contact. The work is comprised of wearable interactive electronic jewelry that mimics the spread of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). The design for these brooches is derived from a computer image of the HPV virus. This work creates an opportunity to simulate the spread of a contagious disease in a real population, explore the limitations of simulations and their social implications, while avoiding the obvious ethical problem of infecting a live population with a live virus. It expands my approach of visualizing illness on the skin to visualizing unseen aspects of illness.

Mr. Bradford and I collaboratively generated the idea and wrote text about the work. I was responsible for the aesthetic design of the brooches, photographic documentation, illustrative graphics, video production, installation displays, exhibition submissions, and grant writing. Mr. Bradford was responsible for the design and fabrication of the hardware and software, and the production of the flowchart.

#### Exhibitions / Awards / Recognition / Publication

This project was funded through a Puffing Foundation West grant, a Research Enhancement Program in the Arts and Humanities grant from Wayne State, and a residency at Can Serrat in El Bruc, Spain. It was invited to exhibitions including *Artists in Conversation: The Body* at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; *Shift: Contemporary Makers That Define, Expand and Contradict The Field of Art Jewelry* at Grunwald Gallery, Indiana University; and *After Wearing: Gestures, Actions and Jewellery* at Pratt Institute, New York, NY. It was included in a review of *After Wearing* on Art Jewelry Forum, the premiere digital publication for international studio jewelry. It was juried into several exhibitions including *Touch: Interactive Craft* at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, TN and *CoOperation Garnish*, which was exhibited at Velvet DaVinci Gallery, San Francisco, CA, the Baltimore Jewelry Center, and Brooklyn Metal Works.

#### **But if the Crime is Beautiful... (2013-2015)**

##### Concepts/Process

*But if the Crime is Beautiful...* is a multi-media project comprised of 64 photographs, 10 wearable objects, and 11 sculptures, with series' subtitled *Composition with Ornament and Object*, *Hoods*, *Altared*, and *Monstrance*. These series' utilized fabricated objects and found furniture combined with the body to produce sculptural compositions.

The titles of the project are inspired by the architect Adolf Loos' 1910 lecture *Ornament and Crime*, where he proposes that ornament is regressive and primitive, and that in (his) contemporary society only degenerates and criminals are decorated (this includes women). The "crime" in my work points not only to the decorated but also to female sexuality. Loos' writings on architecture and functional art helped to define the principals of the Modern Architecture and Design movements. The influence of this movement permeates the contemporary built environment

and therefore impacts our psychological and bodily relationship to space and objects. The furniture in *But if the Crime is Beautiful...* represents this Modernist lineage. The figures and fabricated objects, positioned on or around the furniture, point to a variety of historical, political, and social contexts relating to religious iconography, sex, gender, power, pleasure, and torture. The female figures reference the ideal female body in art and advertising with the intent of questioning constructions of beauty, the objectification of the body, the power dynamics established by the photographic gaze, and our ability to empathize with the pain or pleasure of another.

#### Exhibitions / Awards / Recognition / Publication

*But if the Crime is Beautiful...* has been displayed as 3 solo shows with 3 forthcoming, all invited or juried. Each instance displayed a different selection of objects and images from this large body of work. One of these solo exhibitions was an invited museum exhibition at the Cranbrook Museum of Art. The Cranbrook show was reviewed in *Metalsmith Magazine* and *Art Jewelry Forum*, and was named one of the top metro Detroit exhibitions in Fall 2014. Selections from this body of work were included in 11 other invited or juried exhibitions including *Body Embellishment* at the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC, a nationally prominent craft museum.

This work has been funded through a Research Enhancement Program in the Arts and Humanities grant from Wayne State and through fully funded residencies at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (with 1200 applicants in the current year and an acceptance rate of 36-42 residents per year), Brush Creek Foundation for the Arts, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (2013 and 2014), and Oberpfälzer Künstlerhaus in Schwandorf, Germany.

#### **Devices for Filling a Void (2013-Present)**

##### Concepts / Process

*Devices for Filling a Void* is a work in progress that currently consists of 5 completed objects and 8 completed photographs, with 7-10 additional objects in progress that will be followed by 14-20 additional images. The objects range in size from hand held to human scale and are made out of gold-plated electroformed copper, slip cast clay, and hand-built clay. The objects have a form similar to reconstructive surgical devices, used to hold the flesh in place as it heals. In this case, rather than coaxing the face into an ideal position, they distort the face through expanding the nostrils and holding the mouth open. The objects literally fill the voids of the facial orifices, but the title also points to the psychological filling of emotional or erotic voids.

##### Exhibitions / Awards / Recognition / Publication

*Devices for Filling a Void* were invited for an exhibition as part of the *Personal Space Project* in Canberra Australia, a combination digital and physical exhibition. This hybrid exhibition venue was chronicled in *Shows and Tales --On Jewelry Exhibition-Making* published in 2015. Selections from this body of work have been included in juried exhibitions at the World Art Museum in Beijing, China; the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology in Beijing, China; and with Platina Gallery at Schmuck 2015 jewelry week in Munich, Germany and Editbar in Boston, MA. Four objects from this series were included in the flagship exhibition of *Schmuck 2016*, one of the most prominent annual jewelry events in the world hosted in Munich, Germany. 720 jewelry artists from 35 countries applied for the exhibition with 66 artists from 21 countries selected for the exhibition.

This work was funded through a Dean's Creative Research Grant from the College of Fine Performing and Communications Arts at Wayne State and through funded residencies at Haystack Mountain School, the Corporation of Yaddo, the Jentel Foundation, and the Vermont Studio Center. Using this work, I was selected as a semi-finalist for the national Zanesville Prize for Contemporary Ceramics, a semi-finalist in the Taiwan International Metal Craft Competition, and awarded First Place in the ENJOIA'T Contemporary Jewelry Award in Barcelona, Spain.

## **The Museum of Broken Desires (2015-Present)**

### Concepts / Process

*The Museum of Broken Desires* is a new multi-media project that explores performance and objects as projections of desire. It will be comprised of ceramic objects, video, and installation. It looks at traditional modes of conveying and codifying displays of power on individual and monumental scales: hoods/masks, mortuary objects, museums, parades, architecture, and public spectacles; and then seeks to subvert institutionalized power through performance.

### Awards / Recognition / Publication

*The Museum of Broken Desires* has been funded through a Wayne State University Research Grant and the Detroit-based Ponyride's Established Artist Award grant. It has also been funded through my residency at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. Though this body of work is still in progress, selections from it have already been included in exhibitions at Butter Projects in Royal Oak, MI and the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts.

## **TRAJECTORY AND FUTURE CREATIVE RESEARCH**

I intend to continue to pursue and expand my practice within the contemporary craft discipline through production of challenging work, building large scale-projects, utilizing digital fabrication, and developing new curatorial and collaborative projects. In the coming years, my work will expand in scale and incorporate more diverse materials and approaches, while continuing to innovate within the field of jewelry. I have begun developing large scale projects using craft media and digital fabrication to produce more expansive objects that I could not produce by hand.

I am currently working on two large-scale projects that represent this trajectory in my practice. Both have substantial budgets and will debut in 2016. The first is an installation at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh, PA, and is an extension of *But if the Crime is Beautiful...* The Mattress Factory is funding the production of 3000 brass kudzu leaves using an industrial cutting process that I will then press into a three-dimensional mold. I will use the leaves to line a room filled with Modernist furniture. The second project emerged from an invitation by the Museum of Arts and Design in New York to produce new work and create an installation that incorporates a curated selection of objects from its permanent collection. I plan to further involve the use of digital fabrication in my work, including the ability to accurately 3D scan and print a representation of my body. This is leading to new work using these 3D body scans that will commence in 2017.

In the longer term, I am working on two curatorial projects related to my studio interests titled *Masked* and *Building Utopia* that will debut at Holding House and Popps Packing in Detroit, MI in 2017. This is part of my effort to expand the curatorial component of my practice to include more national and international projects.

Based on the success of my previous projects, I foresee my work being displayed in increasingly important national and international venues and museums, highlighted in prominent publications, and winning more prestigious grants and residencies. All of these will expand the reach of my work to new audiences and contribute to the visibility of Wayne State University.

Through my future practice, I will continue to be a leader in my field and bring my experience back to Wayne State through my research, teaching, and service roles.