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# SHAPESHIFTER

by

KATE KOSEK

Under the Direction of Jess Jones, MFA

## ABSTRACT

Where is the line between art and craft? “You can be anything you want to be,” they say, “You can have it all!” *Shapeshifter* is a playful manipulation of form and language pertaining to my perspective as a woman who creates textile sculptures that question the gendered hierarchies within art and craft. Humor and intuition allow me to reclaim power through cute, colorful, and decorative artworks that satirize the dominant narratives surrounding women’s work and leisure. *Shapeshifter* plays with the stereotypes of gender, labor, and aesthetics within art history to imagine a world where objects like pyramids and scrunchies are free to assume their own identity and use value. It is a metaphor for the way I adapt in order to assert myself and survive in a male-dominated, capitalist world.

INDEX WORDS: Art, Craft, Play, Womanhood, Gender, Labor, Aesthetics, Leisure, Formalism, Capitalism, Cute, Kitsch, Humor, Power

SHAPESHIFTER

by

KATE KOSEK

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in the College of the Arts

Georgia State University

2023

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2023

SHAPESHIFTER

by

KATE KOSEK

Committee Chair: Jess Jones

Committee: Dr. Susan Richmond

Jill Frank

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Academic Assistance

College of the Arts

Georgia State University

May 2023

## DEDICATION

This one is for my family.

Mom & Dad, I am who I am because of you two. You taught me how to be curious, hardworking, disciplined and critical. Forever grateful for your unwavering love and support. Thank you for always showing up.

Andge & Eddie, my siblings, my best friends. You taught me how to be funny and let me be a weirdo. I can always count on you to have my back.

Kim & Pat, we may not be related by blood, but I love you two just as much as the bozos you decided to procreate with.

My time at GSU started with the birth of Edward IV and ended with the birth of Helen Moon, my niblings. I cannot wait to watch you both grow into the beautiful humans I know you're destined to be!

This is for my extended family, those living and those who have passed on. All the grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and family friends – you all inspire and help me in one way or another.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this paper to all the women before me and all those who continue to fight for the respect we deserve.

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So grateful for my thesis committee, Jess Jones, Susan Richmond, and Jill Frank. I like to brag about them as being THE BEST committee at GSU. You are three of the smartest people I know, who always made time to help me when I needed it. Thank you for encouraging me to be myself, for trusting my process and for challenging me to become a better artist.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

My experience with craft began in the early 1990s when I spent my childhood making decorative objects out of plastic and other kitschy, colorful materials. Whether it signifies my age or social upbringing, I will always be drawn to wild patterns and anything saturated in neon color or glitter. Crafting decorative objects became an enjoyable, leisurely activity that allowed me to escape the routines enforced by society (education and the workforce) and my family (religion and team sports). I learned textile processes such as crochet and sewing in adolescence and cannot count the number of lopsided scarves I crocheted over the years. A hook and a skein of yarn were all I needed to realize that I enjoy working with my hands. Handicraft skills were passed on to me from my mother and paternal grandmother and were crucial to my artistic development and engagement with sculptural materials.

My grandmother worked in the New York Capital Region textile industry and instilled in me the value of being able to replace missing buttons and repair old clothes as an economical alternative to purchasing new ones. My maternal great-aunts were artists and florists who could make anything out of nothing, and I have vivid memories of visiting their flower shop and arranging bouquets from all the clippings that littered their floor. My mother likes to remind me of the times I used to weave crowns from the branches of willow trees, then place them on the heads of mine and my sister's teammates while I braided their hair before our softball games. I never considered how my family's skills played into the working-class of capitalism or how these playful, tactile abilities could be used in my art practice. Crafting was strictly for decoration or leisure, and I previously considered my artwork to be exclusively engaged with the history of painting.

My undergraduate studio and art history classes never placed an emphasis on craft, so I dismissed a whole field of creatives because their creation of functional objects was less interesting to me than an imaginary world depicted on canvas. I loved the energy and autonomy of Abstract Expressionist painting and hated the simplicity of form explored in Minimalism, so naturally I tried to merge the two ideas together. I was drawn to the geometry of Frank Stella and Sol Lewitt but was bored by their simplistic compositions. Optical artists such as Bridget Riley and Julian Stanczak stimulated my eyes with their complex paintings, so I adapted their ways of using color and pattern to create illusion and sensation.

Eventually, I learned about the Pattern and Decoration movement and felt completely justified in my desire to adorn the canvas with glitter and colorful, repetitive motifs. This under-recognized art movement promoted inclusivity by celebrating decorative surfaces alluding to different cultures, therefore challenging the non-referential ideology of modernism. It was amazing to see a movement comprised mainly of female artists that included men without the hypermasculine energy! The unofficial motto of P&D was “more as more”<sup>1</sup> which was the antithesis of modern art critic Clement Greenberg’s stance on what art should be. He despised decoration and kitsch, which are two words frequently spoken in conversations about my work.

A male painting professor once told me that men usually create rigid, angular compositions while women favor curvilinear shapes. Appalled by this reductive statement, I set out to paint patterns using hard-edged shapes to prove him wrong. This moment made me realize that aesthetics are gendered, and it awoke my defiant nature. As a young artist learning about Greenbergian formalism, I wanted to defy what curator Elissa Auther describes as Greenberg’s

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Katz, “Lessons in Promiscuity: Patterning and the New Decorativeness in Art of the 1970s and 1980s,” in *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972-1985*, ed. Anna Katz (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2019), 21.

pursuit of purity and autonomy in modernist painting, which reinforced the hierarchy between art and craft.<sup>2</sup> I layered clashing, self-referent patterns in complementary colors on top of each other to create vibration and movement on a flat plane, a challenge to the same conventional notions of Western art and exclusivity of taste that the P&D movement defied.<sup>3</sup>

Kitsch is a classist term that describes poor taste and implies a precedence for visual aesthetic over intellectual content. Aesthetics are the viewer's first point of contact with art. Form should be taken seriously by artists because visual interest is how we get people to engage with our work. Ideas surrounding womanhood and gendered value systems inform my formal decisions, but ultimately, I want to create a pleasurable and accessible viewing experience that encourages speculative thinking. Bright colors, geometric shapes, and contrasting textures allow me to create an imaginary world, one that is inspired by reality but abstracted through my cultural perspective and aesthetic taste. In the studio, I physically manipulate material, form, and the orientation of gendered symbols and stereotypes to give power to my crafty, working-class aesthetic and material choices. Kitsch implies a poorly made commercial object, so I use highly refined craft skills to challenge any derogatory associations my work has with this aesthetic descriptor.

The term "shapeshifter" typically alludes to mythical beings that can transform their appearance at will. A shapeshifter is someone that uses adaptation as a protective measure. I think it is an appropriate word to describe my identity, as a woman and as an artist, because of how my accumulated knowledge and skill set allows me to adapt to a myriad of situations where a problem needs to be solved. As women's bodily autonomy is threatened, I use craft labor to

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<sup>2</sup> Elissa Auther, "The Decorative, Abstraction, and the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in the Art Criticism of Clement Greenberg," *Oxford Art Journal* 27, no. 3 (2004): 342.

<sup>3</sup> Katz, "Lessons in Promiscuity," 21.

prove I have societal value beyond the patriarchal positioning of women as homemakers and reproductive machines. I grew up being told I can be anything I want to be, but that utopian view quickly dissipates for many people when they realize the United States government is designed to keep rich white men and others who uphold patriarchal values at the top of that power pyramid.

My family recognizes the value of my skills but usually do not understand what I am making or why I am making it.<sup>4</sup> Non-artists often consider artists to only be successful when their work sells for a lot of money, which places an expectation on creatives within capitalism and can limit creative potential. Artmaking is an inexplicable drive to bring an idea, or an image, formed in your mind into reality. The creation process is a type of problem solving based on a logical system that may only make sense to the individual artist. In my practice, I use craft labor to play with the semiotics of form and language to propose alternate ways of viewing gendered binaries and stereotypes within oppressive systems. Beauty is an illusion; when you strip my work of its color and ornamentation, you are left with silly abstract forms that mask the physical and emotional labor of a working-class American woman. *Shapeshifter* is a metaphor for the way I adapt in order to survive and reclaim power in a male-dominated, capitalist world.

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<sup>4</sup> That's understandable. I usually don't know why either, at least until much later.

## 2 WHERE IS THE LINE BETWEEN ART & CRAFT?

Depending on your perspective, you may associate craft with specific skills, materials, or objects. Craft is generally considered in relation to handmade objects that are created out of wood, metal, glass, ceramic, or textile. As the world modernizes and relies heavily on technology to create the products we use, we lose our desire to learn skills that enable us to produce these objects with our own two hands. In forgetting these skills, we relinquish control over our own means of production. Hand-made goods are pushed aside in favor of convenient, inexpensive, mass-produced commodities. “Crafting,” once a necessary activity that fulfilled all our needs, is relegated to the status of hobby or pastime—an activity for people who possess the luxury of leisure time.

The original leisure class of the Western world was established before the Industrial Revolution and consisted of upper-class women. In his book, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America*, cultural and economic historian Steven M. Gelber discusses how the difference between duty and leisure was hard to distinguish in the lives of those women. Leisure class women did not work outside of the home, and their affluent status enabled them to hire servants to take care of the family’s cooking and cleaning. With all this free time needing to be occupied, they developed practical skills and industrious habits. Idleness was classified as a sin, so handicrafts such as embroidery, drawing, and wax-work (using wax to make models of fruit and flowers) ensured the productivity of women within the home.<sup>5</sup> Gelber writes, “handicrafts hide their affirmation of capitalist values in the disguise of leisure.”<sup>6</sup> The resulting products of

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<sup>5</sup> Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 159.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

leisure craft are representative of commercially-made objects, but their value is diminished due to separation from the market and the gendered hierarchies within capitalism.

Different types of craft labor, craft materials, and craft objects are traditionally gendered according to the masculine/feminine binary and these binary assignments translate into an unspoken (yet implied) value system. Textiles are stereotyped as “women’s work” because of labor associations within a domestic space. “Textile work associated with embroidery and tapestry often connotes gender submission and class privilege,”<sup>7</sup> writes artist and scholar Mireille Perron. Plain needlework, such as mending, was praised as practical sewing that kept the household neat and orderly. Fancy needlework produced decorative items and was often criticized as being a product of idleness.<sup>8</sup> Soft, lightweight textiles were classified as being feminine while hard, heavy wood and metal were predominately used by men.<sup>9</sup> Processes like crocheting and beadwork is feminine, but glassblowing and leatherworking is masculine. In each of these examples, greater prestige (and monetary value) is attached to the masculine form of craft. Less prestige is attached to crafts that can be performed inside the home with basic materials and tools like knitting needles and yarn. In some cases, as with glassblowing and metalworking, fire presents an element of danger and the need for upper-body strength may explain some of the gendered stereotyping. Fortunately, these ideas are largely outdated due to efforts within the craft community to make the field more diverse and equitable by expanding opportunities to people other than white cisgender men. Women can and do perform labor traditionally designated as men’s work, just as men can and do take on roles that are traditionally

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<sup>7</sup> Mireille Perron, “Common Threads: Local Strategies for ‘Inappropriated Artists,’” in *Material Matters: The Art and Culture of Contemporary Textiles*, ed. Ingrid Bachmann and Ruth Scheuing (Canada: YYZ Books, 1998), 123.

<sup>8</sup> Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America*, 161.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 180.

feminine. Men can sew and women can weld—with enough time and practice, we are all capable of producing highly skilled crafted objects regardless of our sex or gender.

Despite the number and variety of artists using craft processes, there seems to be a lack of attention to how craft histories and lineages relate to and affect the resulting work. Using craft techniques is a highly intentional part of my practice. In reclaiming craft as a vital form of expression, I create artwork that employs craft's deep cultural associations to speak about gender roles and women's bodily autonomy. I am interested in exploiting and subverting those old craft-gender stereotypes and their assigned levels of prestige to critique the art world, capitalism, and other patriarchal systems.

I am not the first artist to use craft techniques in this way. Craft has a long history of being used in subversive, non-hierarchical ways within the world of “high art.” In 1895 art dealer Siegfried Bing explains how one goes about gaining and transcending craft expertise. In his essay, *Artistic America*, Bing describes how American artists are not tethered to centuries of traditions in the same way Europeans are, which invites the imagination to play. He claims that American artists allow themselves to pull from a range of materials, ignoring any type of hierarchy, and manipulate these materials in every possible way the process allows. After they become proficient in the material and process, Bing asserts, they allow themselves to forget these traditional ways in order to create something new that's guided by their intuition and expertise of skill and material.<sup>10</sup> Bing's theory is an apt description of the way I and other contemporary artists adopt and use craft materials and processes.

One contemporary artist using craft in a subversive way to discuss issues pertaining to gender is Rose Nestler. I came across her artwork a few years before I started working three-

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<sup>10</sup> Siegfried Bing, “Artistic America,” in *The Craft Reader*, ed. Glenn Adamson (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 101.

dimensionally and was immediately seduced by her high-level of craftsmanship and use of lush fabrics to create sculptures that playfully represent the body. Nestler's sculpture, *Tool Bag* (Figure 2.1) is a great example of how gendered symbols of labor and class are confused within the form of a bag. Experiencing this work for the first time, the viewer can immediately recognize a bag of construction tools sitting on top of a wooden stool whose seat is shaped to reference a house's pitched roof. The tools in the bag, such as a hammer and wrench, are rendered useless because they are made of leather. Depending on your knowledge of fashion and popular culture, you may not immediately recognize that the bag is modeled after the iconic Birkin (Figure 2.2). The Birkin, designed by Hermes in collaboration with actress Jane Birkin, was originally a chic leather baby bag for carrying diapers and bottles<sup>11</sup> but is now a class symbol of success and extravagance. Nestler explains her interest in the Birkin, "Knowing that their initial purpose was tied to the labor of taking care of a baby and now looking at them as these commodity objects with inflated prices and speculative value felt not dissimilar to the art market."<sup>12</sup> *Tool Bag* subverts class, labor, and gender through craft by making us question the value of an object and its intended use based on its context.

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<sup>11</sup> "The Birkin," Hermes, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.hermes.com/us/en/story/106191-birkin/>.

<sup>12</sup> David Eardley, "Big Question: Rose Nestler," *Art 21*, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://art21.org/read/big-question-rose-nestler/>.



*Figure 2.1 Rose Nestler. Tool Bag. 2020. Leather, fabric, thread, polyfil, wire, zipper, solid cherry stool. 66" x 46" x 29".*



*Figure 2.2 The original Birkin bag, designed in collaboration between Hermès and Jane Birkin in 1984.*

Throughout my graduate program, I examined artists like Rose Nestler to deconstruct their strategies in employing craft techniques. I also learned new skill sets, such as welding and glassblowing, in order to broaden the vocabulary with which I can express my ideas. Artist, writer, and curator Melissa Potter wrote an essay in *Bomb Magazine* connecting craft and material engagement with the tenets of feminism. I like the idea that there is a collaborative interchange happening between myself and the material I choose to work with. Potter wrote, “Material process for many craft artists was not directed toward mastering techniques as much as it was a means of ‘thinking-through-making,’ a process-oriented approach that revealed the

potential of a given medium.”<sup>13</sup> I may not be an expert in every craft discipline, but I am constantly learning how to develop my construction skills in order to highlight the importance of female inclusion in male dominated spaces.

My wall sculpture, *Here come the water works* (Figure 2.3), is an example of how I use craft and material exploration to subvert derogatory language aimed at women. I have heard this phrase many times in my life to describe women using their tears as a manipulation tactic. Remember how the United States has yet to have a female president because people are worried that women are overly emotional? According to a November 2022 article in *Forbes*, labeling a woman “emotional” makes her point of view less credible than a man with the same label, and around 1-in-8 people have doubts that women are suitable for politics.<sup>14</sup> These assumptions and stereotypes are harmful and absurd, so I wanted to create a piece to satirize this concept.

This work has it all in terms of material and process; welded metal, wood joinery, sewn textiles, sculpted hot glass, commercially produced plastic and a fiber flocked plaster cast taken from one of my pieces of crochet. The combination of craft presented here is important because it relates to women being fed the narrative that they can “have it all” when it comes to a family, career and leisure. Men can certainly have it all, but why have I never heard this phrase uttered to a man? Perhaps it was initially meant to empower women, because men have always been able to receive whatever they want due to patriarchal power. I can’t help but consider how this phrase is hypocritical when used in the context of female politicians because if women can’t be emotional and the president of the United States, how can they have it all?

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<sup>13</sup> Melissa Potter, “Material Engagements: Craft and Feminist Futures,” *Bomb Magazine*, June 28, 2019, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/material-engagements-craft-and-feminist-futures/>.

<sup>14</sup> Kim Elsesser, “Labeling Women As ‘Emotional’ Undermines Their Credibility, New Study Shows,” *Forbes*, November 1, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimelsesser/2022/11/01/labeling-women-as-emotional-impacts-the-legitimacy-of-their-arguments-according-to-new-study/?sh=14fae085b903>.



*Figure 2.3 Kate Kosek. Here come the water works. 2022. Plaster cast of vacuum formed wood panel that was wrapped in crocheted cotton yarn, flocked rayon fibers, steel, wood dowels, PVC stop valve, glass, polyester fabric, polyfil, cotton yarn, cotton fabric, Dritz quilting pins, screw caps, acrylic paint. 12" x 14" x 6"*

I would not be where I am today without Ruth Asawa and Eva Hesse. Their engagement with material and form were revolutionary during their lifetimes, and they continue to inspire future generations of artists. Asawa's biomorphic hanging columns (Figure 2.4) were made from crocheted metal wire, a material and process combination that was not previously seen in the art world. Hesse was a fearless material pioneer in the sculptural field. Latex and fiberglass were

industrial materials new to sculpture, and Hesse manipulated them into forms she considered to be “nonart, nonconnotive, nonanthropomorphic, nongeometric, non, nothing, everything, but another kind, vision, sort, from a total other reference point.”<sup>15</sup> Hesse often used rope and other fibrous material to create her post-minimalist artworks. *Expanded Expansion* (Figure 2.5), beautifully integrates hard and soft materials into a repetitive form that plays on the geometric ideals of her minimalist contemporaries while embracing process and materiality.

Artist Donald Judd wrote in 1964, “Half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture.”<sup>16</sup> Decades later, curator Jenelle Porter revisited Judd’s essay, *Specific Objects*, to place fiber art within his description for a new direction in modern art. Porter asks, “Why not consider fiber as painting *and* sculpture, drawing *and* sculpture, installation *and* painting, and most problematically, art *and* craft? This ‘both/and’ condition positions fiber more firmly proximate to the explorations that have propelled art since the 1960s.”<sup>17</sup> Porter’s statement perfectly describes my attitude toward artmaking and is the reason why I consider textiles to be my most dominant craft medium; fiber is versatile.

When I make paintings, they take inspiration from woven structures and the surface design seen on fabric. My welded metal structures follow a similar logic as my paintings except they can bear weight in three-dimensional space. Fiber art is considered to occupy both two-dimensional and three-dimensional space, and the material property can create hard and soft textures and structures. The fiber artists of the 1960s (Sheila Hicks, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Claire Zeisler, etc.) were extremely influential to my development as a textile artist. They were

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<sup>15</sup> Grace Glueck, “Bringing the Soul Into Minimalism: Eva Hesse,” *The New York Times*, May 12, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/12/arts/design/12hess.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” Judd Foundation, accessed April 10, 2023, [https://juddfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Specific\\_Objects\\_1964.pdf](https://juddfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Specific_Objects_1964.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Jenelle Porter, “The Materialists,” in *Fiber: Sculpture 1960-Present*, ed. Jenelle Porter (Munich: Prestel, 2014), 11-12.

innovators when it came to manipulating fibers to create massive, free standing and hanging textile sculptures that rejected the traditionally celebrated properties of tapestry weaving. For these reasons, I believe textiles are the shapeshifter of all craft mediums. Textiles “have it all” in terms of how they can be manipulated into functional and non-functional objects, and many artists use textile processes to create new art forms with non-fibrous material.



*Figure 2.4 Ruth Asawa Untitled (S.270, Hanging Six-Lobed, Complex Interlocking Continuous Form within a Form with Two Interior Spheres) 1955, refabricated 1957–1958. Image source: The Whitney Museum of Art*



*Figure 2.5 Eva Hesse, Expanded Expansion, 1969, Fiberglass, polyester resin, latex, and cheesecloth. Photo Credit: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Gift, Family of Eva Hesse, 1975.*

### 3 RECLAIMING POWER

Autonomy over my body is a privilege I do not take for granted. I value the ability to be in control of my lifestyle choices. Bodily autonomy and reproductive rights are not universal and are in constant danger of being revoked. State control over women's reproductive choices, societal expectations of the female body, and the reclamation of power are entry points into understanding my work. I acknowledge that womanhood is more complex than being a white, American, cisgender female, so I want to emphasize that my research and artwork is considered from my perspective and is not meant to be exclusionary.

Issues surrounding bodily autonomy and reproductive rights are ongoing and especially relevant as the Supreme Court recently overturned *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling. This decision puts other major cases at risk of being overturned, such as the legalization of gay marriage and the criminalization of consensual homosexual conduct.<sup>18</sup> Allowing the government to have control over our bodily autonomy is a dangerous game that often exposes the hypocrisy of how outdated language and perspectives (for example, *The Constitution of the United States of America*) can be manipulated in favor of those who hold the most power. In a conversation with *Vanity Fair's* editor-in-chief Radhika Jones, famed American feminist, political activist, and journalist Gloria Steinem stated, "if you don't have power over your own body, you are not living in a democracy."<sup>19</sup> By overturning this specific court case, women and queer people are at risk of losing the same power of choice that

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<sup>18</sup> Nina Totenberg and Sarah McCammon, "Supreme Court Overturns *Roe v. Wade*, Ending Right to Abortion Upheld Decades," *All Things Considered*, June 24, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/24/1102305878/supreme-court-abortion-roe-v-wade-decision-overturn>.

<sup>19</sup> Gloria Steinem and Radhika Jones, "Gloria Steinem and Radhika Jones in Conversation," *Vanity Fair*, November 4, 2022, video, 10:32, <https://www.vanityfair.com/video/watch/vf-in-conversation-gloria-steinem-radhika-jones>.

is afforded to heteronormative relationships and the patriarchy, highlighting the ways in which democracy is failing specific United States citizens.

Personal experience has led me to make work that addresses female bodily autonomy and patriarchal control within the healthcare system. Cancerous cells were found and removed from my cervix five years ago. The male oncologist I visited every three months post-surgery suggested a hysterectomy as the best but most aggressive course of action. He advised against this treatment because I was young. Was I married or in a relationship, he inquired; did I already have or did I at some point want to have children? I replied no to all, yet at the end of my appointment, this arrogant doctor advised me to “hurry up and get married, have a couple kids, then we can take care of this thing.” “Take care of” meant remove and “this thing” meant my uterus. I was dumbstruck. The female physician’s assistant and I looked at each other in a shared “what the fuck” moment. Why did he think it was appropriate to ask such personal questions and hand out life advice to someone he had just met for the first time? It did not matter what my responses to his questions were, this male doctor was convinced that marriage and reproduction were in my future.

My story highlights the expectations patriarchal society places on women. The belief that all women must want to have children is antiquated, yet the belief persists—even when a woman clearly states her position on the matter. I am beyond happy for anyone who chooses to start a family, but the critical word here is “choice.” Being forced into doing something because it is what society expects is dangerous, especially when the expectation involves bringing new life into this world. I would have been fine with having my uterus removed if it meant the cancer could not return. In the end, I had a less invasive procedure that removed a cone shaped portion of my cervix but left my fertility intact.

After my nephew was born in May 2020, I noticed how frequently people ask brand-new parents, “When are you having another one?” Not only does the invasiveness of this question surprise me, but the immediacy with which it is asked shocked me too. She was barely out of labor and already people were asking my sister-in-law when she planned to go through childbirth again! This question may be well-intentioned, but I find it totally inappropriate and sneakily political. Women producing babies sustains capitalism by constantly replenishing the labor pool.

*He needs a sister* (Figure 3.1) is a piece I made to represent this idea of children coming out of the womb, one right after another. Like so many cars on Henry Ford’s assembly line, the female body is expected to be a baby-making machine. In this work, I am comparing childbearing to Karl Marx’s critique of capitalism with the female body as the raw material and instrument of labor needed for the reproduction of human life.<sup>20</sup> The title of this wall-mounted textile sculpture references the exact phrase I overheard someone say to my sister-in-law. Sitting in a uterus-shaped pocket are golden eggs that represent unborn children who will hatch and become future human resources. The red and blue of the apron symbolize the female and male reproductive organs needed to create a child, and I see the apron itself as being a gender-neutral uniform that references work. I’ve strategically used crochet and decorative embroidery to set this piece from a woman’s perspective and to link craft with reproductive labor.

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<sup>20</sup> Karl Marx, “Wage Labour and Capital,” in *The Marx Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978), 204-207.



*Figure 3.1 Kate Kosek. He needs a sister. 2021. Cotton and acrylic yarn, tinsel cord, paracord, mx dyed cotton fabric, foil lined cotton fabric, polyfil, steel. 37" x 37" x 7".*

While I refer to most of my work as textile sculptures, I see these wall-mounted pieces as straddling the line between tapestry and painting. One of my favorite artists making art about the female body and fertility, who also complicates the gender binary and the classification of their work, is British artist Sarah Lucas. Lucas works with various mediums to convey her ideas. Her audience participatory piece entitled, *One Thousand Eggs: For Women* (Figure 3.2) could be classified as a painting and/or a performance. This work has been exhibited internationally in venues such as Contemporary Fine Arts in Berlin, the New Museum in New York, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and the Red Brick Museum in Beijing. Institutions provide Lucas with

a large white wall as a canvas for 1,000 raw chicken eggs to be thrown at its surface by a mostly female audience. The artist's wry humor shines through with her stipulation that men are allowed to join if they are dressed in drag or as a phallus.<sup>21</sup> This work is important on many levels, but there are two ideas most relevant to my artistic practice.



Figure 3.2 Sarah Lucas. *One Thousand Eggs: For Women*. 2018. *New Museum, New York*.

The first idea is tied to my visual encounter with the work and how aesthetics are often gendered based on formal qualities. In her book, *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction*, author and Professor of Philosophy Carolyn Korsmeyer writes, “Generally speaking, the world of male values is abstract and associated with the ‘mind,’ that of the female, concrete and particular and associated with the ‘body.’”<sup>22</sup> I see this statement as being connected to the way Clement Greenberg championed Jackson Pollock and other Abstract Expressionists’ pursuit for purity and

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan McAloon, “Sarah Lucas got Women to Throw 1000 Eggs at the Wall,” *Elephant*, November 18, 2018, <https://elephant.art/sarah-lucas-1000-eggs-for-women/>.

<sup>22</sup> Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004), 14.

autonomy in painting. Art historian Lisa Saltzman referred to Greenberg's paradigm as humanism devoid of the human.<sup>23</sup> These artists produced paintings based on physical and emotional expression and the work that resulted were images from their mind as opposed to referential forms. As with most of art history, the movement is associated mostly with male painters.

*One Thousand Eggs: For Women* starts as a collective performance but results in a painting. Lucas states, "It's absolutely not about making a mess, it's about being really neat and making the most beautiful egg painting."<sup>24</sup> Knowing Lucas' propensity for humor in her art, I view this piece as a jab at the history of modern painting. The way the eggs splatter and drip down the wall recall Pollock's method of action painting. He positioned his canvas on the floor and hovered over the surface while he worked, whereas Lucas' painting is interacted with from a longer distance. While this artwork can represent female anger and the collective power to create and destroy, it can also function as an avenue for catharsis. Lucas commented to Lorissa Rinehart, a cultural critic and historian, after the performance at the Hammer Museum, "you can let a lot out. It is a liberating thing and I don't think women are letting it out."<sup>25</sup> I think this work successfully connects the formal representation of autonomy in art, specifically the emotional expression in abstract painting, with the threat to female bodily autonomy. Lucas blurs the line between masculine and feminine values that Korsmeyer describes by using the egg as a symbol for the body and the action as an expression of the mind's rage.

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<sup>23</sup> Lisa Saltzman, "Reconsidering the Stain: On Gender, Identity, and New York School Painting," in *Reading Abstract Expressionism: Context and Critique*, ed. Ellen G. Landau (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 561.

<sup>24</sup> Julian Simmons, "FunQroc - ONE THOUSAND EGGS - Sarah Lucas at CFA Berlin," Vimeo, May 14, 2017, Video, 5:16, <https://vimeo.com/217413960>.

<sup>25</sup> Lorissa Rinehart, "Why Splattering Eggs on a Museum's Walls with Other Women Was So Satisfying," *Hyperallergic*, May 28, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/502398/why-splattering-eggs-on-a-museums-walls-with-other-women-was-so-satisfying/>.

The second idea in *One Thousand Eggs: For Women* that resonates with me is how Lucas metaphorically puts female fertility back into women's hands as opposed to being controlled by a male-dominated government. Lucas also reclaims power by forcing men to alter their appearance in order to participate in this egg throwing event. "By designating the event 'for women,' moreover, she puts the fate of the egg—typically understood as the female reproductive cell—into the hands of women, perhaps alluding to political debates concerning women's rights over their own bodies,"<sup>26</sup> writes New Museum curator Margot Norton. Issues surrounding the threat to female autonomy are what lead me to begin working with the egg symbol in my art.

Similar to Sarah Lucas' use of modern painting to speak about issues of female fertility, my work *Penelope Brancusi* (Figure 3.3) references modern sculpture to talk about autonomy of the mind and body. I cannot fully explain my obsession with Constantin Brancusi's famous sculpture, *Endless Column* (Figure 3.4), but similar formal qualities, like repetitive stacking, pyramids, and the chevron silhouette, have recurred in my work for the past 15 years. Whenever I have a creative block, I return to "the column" as a starting point. My first semester of graduate school in 2020 was spent weaving on a loom, trying to create three-dimensional woven structures. After I learned how to weld in early 2021, it became obvious that I needed to create an homage to Brancusi made of handwoven cloth and metal.

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<sup>26</sup> Margot Norton, "The raw and the cooked," in *Sarah Lucas: au naturel*, ed. Massimiliano Gioni and Margot Norton (London: Phaidon, 2018), 102.



*Figure 3.3 Kate Kosek. Penelope Brancusi. 2021. Cotton & acrylic yarn, paracord, plastic canvas, steel, spray paint, screw caps, 3D printed PLA. 97" x 13" x 11".*

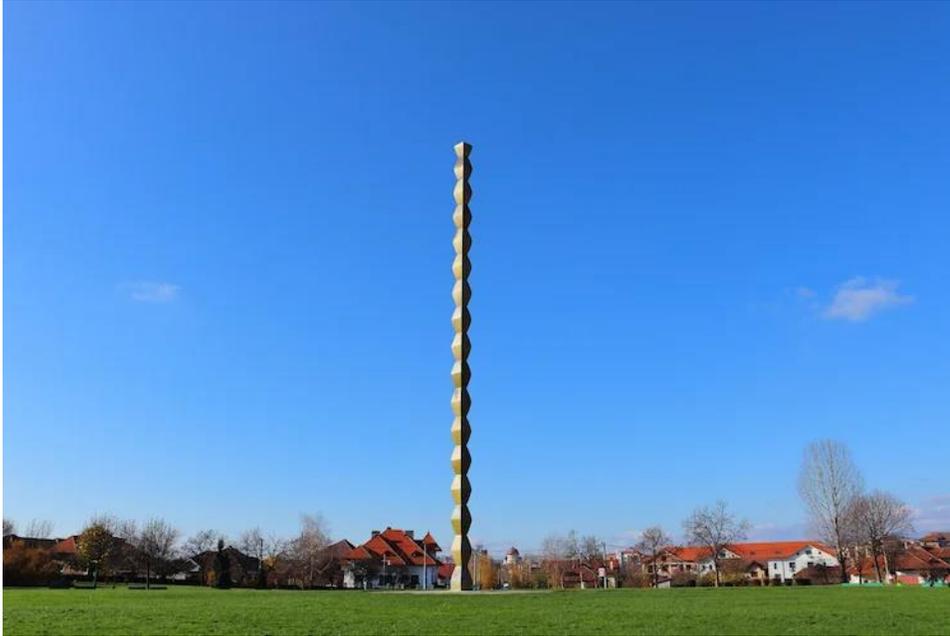


Figure 3.4 Constantin Brancusi. *Endless Column*. 1938 (Pictured here after 1996 restoration).

I never read Homer's *Odyssey* but became inspired by his character Penelope after I read *Material Matters: The Art and Culture of Contemporary Textiles*. Like many of the authors in this compilation, I see Penelope as a symbol of patriarchal resistance. "Their weaving enabled them to assert their own wills against a dominating power structure, for which they were either punished, maligned, misrepresented or, even worse, forgotten in historical records," writes artist Ruth Scheuing in an essay that focuses on the stories of three female weavers in Greek mythology: Penelope, Arachne, and Philomela.<sup>27</sup> According to art historian Sarat Maharaj's retelling of the story, Odysseus did not return immediately after the Trojan War which led people to believe that Penelope would be in search of a new husband. Many suitors pursued her while she faithfully sat at her loom, weaving a shroud, awaiting his return. "She had promised to

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<sup>27</sup> Ruth Scheuing, "The Unravelling of History: Penelope and Other Stories," in *Material Matters: The Art and Culture of Contemporary Textiles*, ed. Ingrid Bachmann and Ruth Scheuing (Canada: YYZ Books, 1998), 201.

make up her mind about whom to marry when she had finished weaving her husband's shroud. But she had only pretended to be doing this. All day she would weave at the loom. By night she would sneak out to undo her day's work. She had devised a delay tactic, a way of stalling for time,"<sup>28</sup> writes Maharaj. Further on Maharaj used the phrase, "Penelope's unending shroud, Draupadi's endless sari,"<sup>29</sup> and my mind immediately connected those words to *Endless Column*. This piece of writing inspired me to weave a column that mimicked Brancusi's sculpture to speak about women's autonomy.

I initially intended to call the work *Eggless Column* as a play on words but did not want to mock the reality that some women cannot produce eggs or conceive children on their own. My experience as a female has been an endless stream of questions and comments about marriage and reproduction. The bottom of my wall sculpture is unwoven to symbolize a Penelope-like resistance. I put off these types of relationships because I want to figure out my own identity and career without being shaped or controlled by another. Will I remain as "the lonely spinster," sitting at a loom weaving my life away? Only time will tell, and when it does, it will be my choice.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Sarat Maharaj, "Arachne's Genre: Towards Inter-Cultural Studies in Textiles," in *Material Matters: The Art and Culture of Contemporary Textiles*, ed. Ingrid Bachmann and Ruth Scheuing (Canada: YYZ Books, 1998), 167.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Sorry not sorry for my little Carrie Bradshaw moment here.

#### 4 PLAY TIME

Childlike wonder and imagination come to mind when I hear the word play. While we mostly associate play with positive leisurely activity, it can simultaneously cause and help escape oppression.<sup>31</sup> Play is fundamental to my studio practice because a lot of my work comes to fruition through an intuitive response to material and form in combination with my sense of humor. I initiate conversations surrounding womanhood and bodily autonomy by playing with the visual semiotics of materials and forms to challenge how certain signs of gender are perceived. My work uses a cute, colorful, and decorative aesthetic together with humor to subvert the expectations of craft, gender, and power.

The word “cute” is often used when describing children. Their small, pudgy bodies and adorable reactions to new experiences causes adults to gush over their cuteness. Cultural historian Sianne Ngai states, “Cuteness is not just an aestheticization but an eroticization of powerlessness, evoking tenderness for ‘small things’ but also sometimes, a desire to belittle or diminish them further.”<sup>32</sup> I throw around the word “cute” haphazardly, mostly to describe my approval of something, but also as a way to brush things off without sounding mean. Before learning about Ngai’s cute theory, I never considered how this specific aesthetic descriptor could insinuate a sense of authority or control. Evolution makes babies cute as a survival tactic; they cannot take care of themselves after birth, so their small and soft bodily form is what causes an adult to sympathize and take care of them. We see the adult as the one in control when it is really the baby forcing the adult to take care of them. Cute theory has inspired me to consider how I

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<sup>31</sup> Brian Sutton-Smith, “Play Theory and Cruel Play of the Nineteenth Century,” in *The World of Play*, ed. Frank E. Manning (New York: Leisure Press, 1983), 104-110.

<sup>32</sup> Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 3.

can use cute aesthetics and playful language to subvert power by creating my own symbols for bodily autonomy.

Spontaneous play in the studio often helps me generate ideas. In the summer of 2021, I began to sew random scraps of fabric together with no intent for the resulting form. As this piece of patchwork grew, I decided to turn it into a tube. After thinking about the word “tube” and how the shape could relate to control of the female body, the phrase “having your tubes tied” came to mind. This idea was subconsciously informed by the 2020 whistleblower complaint in Georgia that uncovered forced sterilizations of U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement detainees.<sup>33</sup> I bent the patchwork tube in half to symbolize a uterus, then constructed a metal armature for the tube to squeeze into and be held in place. Fluorescent green paint on the metal is the hue that represents toxic masculinity in my mind.

I continued to work with eggs as a symbol for fertility with the placement of a 3D printed egg above the sewn and stuffed uterine-shaped textile form. This combination of shapes doubles as a flower, another fertility symbol. The title, *You've really got a hold on me* (Figure 4.1), is a direct reference to a song title from Smokey Robinson & The Miracles. When I made this work, I shamelessly binge-watched *Private Practice*, a television drama about a women's health center, and noticed how babies were referred to as “a miracle.” Referring to babies as miracles is funny to me because childbirth is not a surprising event, it is a natural process. In this instance, the title of my work and the symbols within are meant to poke fun at masculine control of the female body, as well as the control these “cute” babies have over our language.

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<sup>33</sup> Gabriela Salas, “A Brief History of Sterilization Abuse in the U.S. and its Connection to ICE Mass Hysterectomies in Georgia,” National Women's Health Network, October 2, 2020, <https://nwhn.org/a-brief-history-of-sterilization-abuse-in-the-u-s-and-its-connection-to-ice-mass-hysterectomies-in-georgia/>.



*Figure 4.1 Kate Kosek. You've really got a hold on me. 2021. Steel, spray paint, paracord, cotton yarn, tinsel cord, hand dyed cotton fabric, velvet, upholstery piping, 3D printed PLA that has been smashed with a hammer. 24" x 20.5" x 10".*

Natalie Baxter is a contemporary artist I admire who uses cute and playful aesthetics to subvert craft, gender, and power. Her series, *Warm Gun*, consists of nearly 200 poly-filled fabric forms uniquely sewn to mimic different types of firearms. According to Baxter, this series “examines the United States’ issues of gun violence and masculinity through a collection of

colorfully quilted, droopy, caricatures of assault weapons, bringing ‘macho’ objects into a traditionally feminine sphere and questioning their potency.”<sup>34</sup> One piece in the series, *Barb* (Figure 4.2) makes me laugh every time I look at it. The flaccidity of the barrel with the dangling fringe calls to mind the limp penises Glenn Adamson writes about in his essay, *Soft Power*, and how the US government has more desire to control infamous artwork (“pornography”), like Michelangelo’s *David*, being shown to their children<sup>35</sup> instead of controlling the gun violence that plagues our country.

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<sup>34</sup> Natalie Baxter, “Warm Gun,” accessed April 10, 2023, <https://www.nataliebaxter.com/warmgun>.

<sup>35</sup> Juliana Kim, “A principal is fired, invited to Italy after students are shown Michelangelo’s ‘David,’” *All Things Considered*, March 27, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/27/1166079167/tallahassee-classical-michelangelo-david-principal-fired>.



*Figure 4.2 Natalie Baxter. Barb. 2018. Fabric, polyfil, and fringe. 9" x 25".*

Adamson claimed the fiber art movement of the 1960s likely failed to enter the mainstream because the material property and gravity of fiber suggested a similar flaccidity to limp dicks, which made people uncomfortable.<sup>36</sup> “The soft penis conjured by these artists disrupts conventional, male-dominated narratives of artistic creativity; and it is perhaps no surprise that, unlike parallel developments in sculpture at this time (postminimalism,

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<sup>36</sup> Glenn Adamson, “Soft Power,” in *Fiber: Sculpture 1960-Present*, ed. Jenelle Porter (Munich: Prestel, 2014), 143.

conceptualism), fiber art has gotten short historical shrift,”<sup>37</sup> writes Adamson. I find it funny how most people perceive stuffed fiber forms as a reference to certain body parts, especially phalluses. That is what my brain immediately thought when I saw Baxter’s *Barb*, “limp dick.”<sup>38</sup> Dick jokes are (usually) funny. Erectile dysfunction is not necessarily funny because it often makes a man feel emasculated. I do not want men to feel emasculated by my work, I want them to question their discomfort. By leaning into the material’s bodily associations, fiber sculpture is the perfect medium to abstract the body and talk about issues of control and power in a cute and playful way.

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<sup>37</sup> Adamson, “Soft Power,” 144.

<sup>38</sup> Said my brain.

## 5 SHAPESHIFTER

My thesis exhibition *Shapeshifter* (Figure 5.1), played with the idea of “having it all” through an installation of animated, well-crafted textile sculptures that subvert the passive and derogatory notions surrounding women’s work and leisure. This exhibition consisted of ten artworks that combined textile, metal, wood, and glass as a way for me to have it all; a woman’s dream! My excessive use of color, material, and process blurs the perpetual hierarchies and stereotypes within art, craft, and capitalism. The dream of having it all is both liberating and oppressive, so my maximal approach to formalist artmaking teeters between being too much or not enough.



*Figure 5.1 Kate Kosek. Shapeshifter. March 20-24, 2023. Thesis exhibition in the Welch Gallery at Georgia State University.*

As a single, shapeshifting woman, it is important for me to make work that I can move around on my own. Not too big, not too small, but just the right size for this little Goldilocks!

The scale of my work was decided based on that necessity; although having someone help me move these pieces into the gallery made the installation a lot easier on myself.

The smallest works in the exhibition were *Tired Quilt 1* and *Tired Quilt 2* (Figure 5.2). When I moved to Atlanta in 2020, I noticed how quilts are engrained in the cultural fabric of the American South. Quilting represents a history of necessity and poverty, but for some people, quilting is the epitome of a leisure time activity due to how long it takes to make one. In 1971, the Whitney Museum of Art opened a pivotal exhibition, *Abstract Design in American Quilts*, that justified this craft as a vital form of artistic expression, but lo and behold the makers remained anonymous.<sup>39</sup> Writer, critic, and curator Lucy Lippard once stated, “The quilt has become the prime visual metaphor for women’s lives, women’s culture.”<sup>40</sup> Maybe I am tired of seeing quilts being used as a symbol for women’s labor since there are plenty of men and non-binary people making quilts today. Or maybe I am physically tired from the amount of labor that is required to make a large, utilitarian object that gets thrown around the house and disrespected. One thing is for sure, my cute little quilts are tired of hanging on the wall like an art object.

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<sup>39</sup> Hilton Kramer, “Art: Quilts Find a Place at the Whitney,” *The New York Times*, July 3, 1971, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/03/archives/art-quilts-find-a-place-at-the-whitney.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Janis Jefferies, “Autobiographical Patterns,” in *Material Matters: The Art and Culture of Contemporary Textiles* (Canada: YYZ Books, 1998), 109.



*Figure 5.2 Kate Kosek. Tired Quilt 1. 2023. Fabric, thread, polyfil. 12" x 23" x 14" (FLOOR). Tired Quilt 2. 2023. Fabric, thread, fosshape. 14" x 14" x 5" (WALL).*

These tiny, animated quilts along with *Screwnchie* (Figure 5.3) and *Valance in Balance* (Figure 5.4) are examples of how I apply Ngai's cute theory to my work. These pieces are small in scale and use fabric to soften the hard edges. They all sat in corners, a nod to the control of naughty children, except for *Tired Quilt 2* who appeared to slide down the wall. Scrunchies are utilitarian and decorative objects for the hair in the same way that valances are for a window and quilts are for a bed. I stripped these objects from their intended functions and gave them their own agency.



Figure 5.3 Kate Kosek. *Screwnchie*. 2022. Steel, fabric, thread. 19" x 19" x 19".



Figure 5.4 Kate Kosek. Valance in Balance. 2023. Steel, fabric, yarn, thread. 44" x 23" x 21".

*She gets around* (Figure 5.5) is another sculpture that plays with agency. The rollerblade wheels suggest movement, but the angle of the legs prohibit the wheels' function, so it just rocks back and forth. There is a potential for action, but the structure was built to prevent forward motion. The title of the work is a phrase that is both celebratory and derogatory. It signifies a worldly, independent woman but is mainly used to refer to women who sleep around. I wanted to present a challenge to the viewer with this phrase because the words we use can empower or hurt someone.



Figure 5.5 Kate Kosek. *She gets around*. 2023. Powder coated steel, fabric, thread, polyfil, upholstery cord, plexiglas, wheels, bolts. 61" x 50" x 30".

Language is an important tool for me to connect my ideas and forms. Titles offer insight into the references I make within the work. *Fake it till you make it* (Figure 5.6) is a piece about imposter syndrome. It is a phrase used to reclaim power. By pretending to be someone else you admire, you gain the ability and confidence to become that person. The pointed fiber ellipses were made to mimic the metal structure. A scrunchie came along and decided to rest on the fiber form instead of the metal prong that was designed to bear the scrunchie's weight. Is the metal supporting the fiber or is the fiber now supporting the metal? Who is the shapeshifter in this scenario?

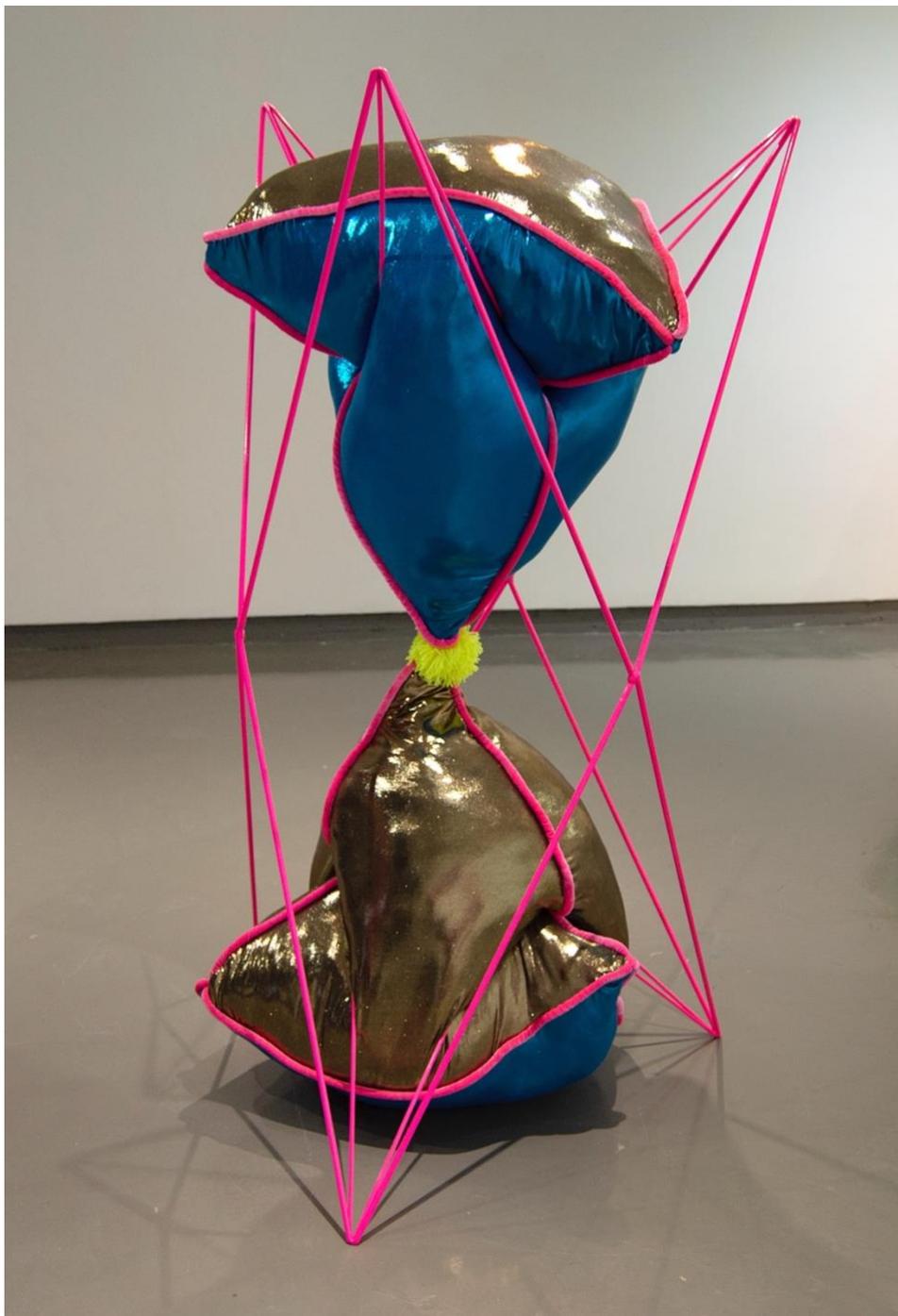


*Figure 5.6 Kate Kosek. Fake it till you make it. 2023. Powder coated steel, fabric, thread, polyfil. 44" x 33" x 15".*

This body of work started out as a literal struggle but resulted in a synergistic relationship between materials. *Buckle Up* (Figure 5.7) and *Soft Power* (Figure 5.8) were created by forcing overstuffed fiber pyramids into rigid metal structures. The separate components within each piece are beautiful on their own, but the forced interaction between the metal and fiber brings these sculptures to life. *Soft Power* is a nod to Glenn Adamson's essay with the same name. The forced pyramids turn into a set of uteri, mirrored over the horizontal axis to create an hourglass figure. This time we are confronted with limp uteri instead of limp dicks. Are the pyramidal uteri being suppressed by the metal or are they bursting through with their own empowerment?



*Figure 5.7* Kate Kosek. *Buckle Up*. 2023. Powder coated steel, wood, fabric, thread, cotton batting, polyfil, upholstery cord, yarn. 76" x 50" x 27".



*Figure 5.8 Kate Kosek. Soft Power. 2023. Powder coated steel, fabric, thread, upholstery cord, yarn. 63" x 35" x 35".*

I frequently reference art history and other cultural icons in my work. The most obvious in this exhibition, *Pietà* (Figure 5.9), is an appropriation of Michelangelo's famous marble

sculpture of the Virgin Mary and dead body of Jesus Christ (Figure 5.10). Initially, this piece was supposed to have a stuffed fiber pyramid force its way through the metal armature. Instead, I draped the unstuffed pyramid on the metal and loved the result of this quick, gestural moment. It made me laugh because I immediately saw the shape of Mary holding a dying Jesus in her arms. Motherhood is a struggle and a facet of the shapeshifting identity many women desire on their way toward having it all.



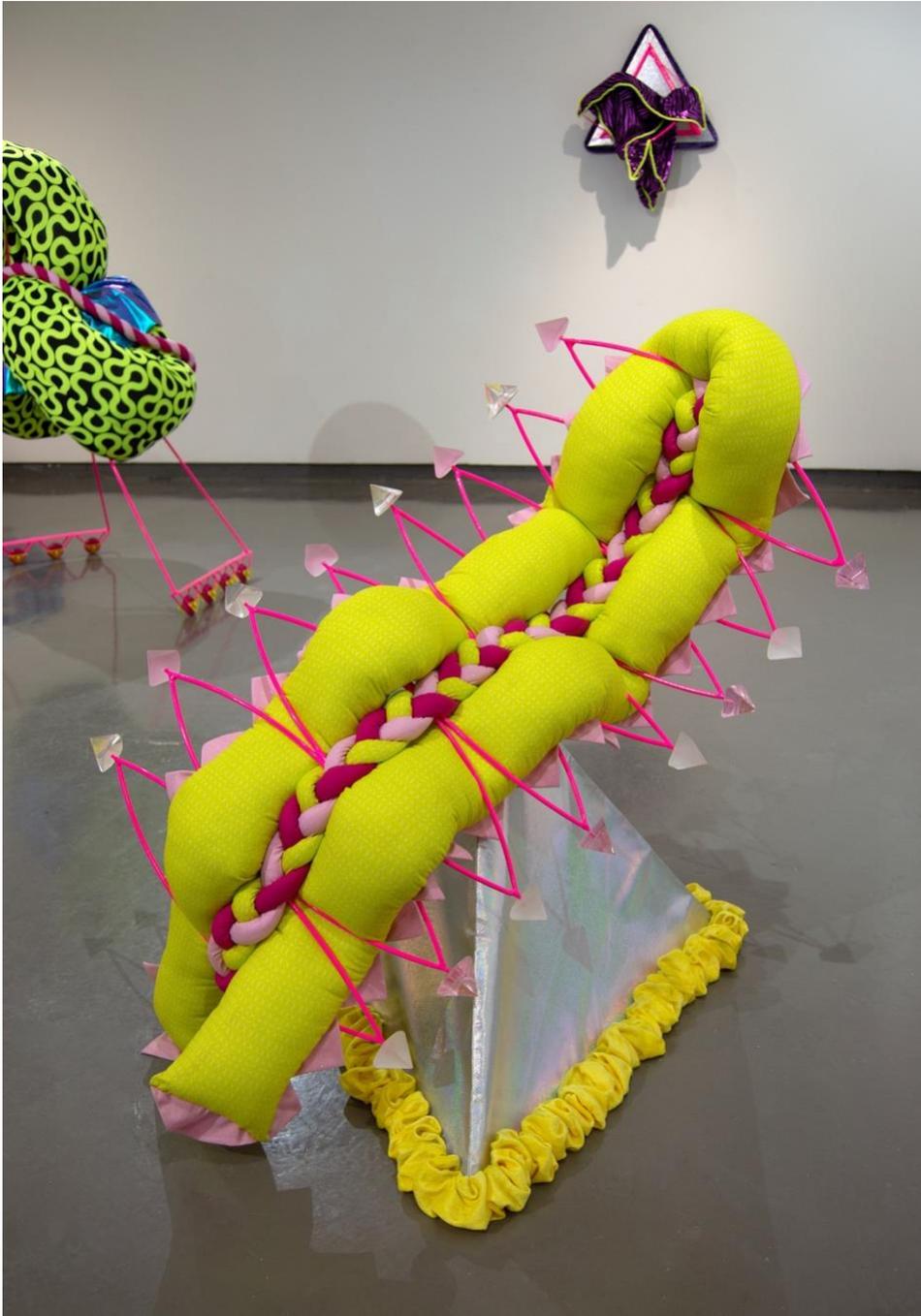
*Figure 5.9 Kate Kosek. Pietà. 2023. Powder coated steel, wood, fabric, thread, yarn, upholstery vinyl, upholstery cord, screw caps. 35" x 26" x 15".*



*Figure 5.10 Michelangelo Buonarroti. Pietà. 1498-99. Marble. 68.5" x 76.8." Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City.*

Speaking of struggle, *Sweet & Sour Seat* (Figure 5.11) was the hardest piece to resolve. I wanted to create a lounge chair that balanced on a pyramid and was devoid of function. I forced myself to incorporate glass in this sculpture because *Shapeshifter* would not “have it all” without it. The problem was that I had to attach the glass as the final step, which made it hard for me to visualize what fiber intervention would work best. The title of this sculpture comes from the movie *Vanilla Sky*, and perfectly encapsulates my entire thesis experience, “One day you’ll know

what love truly is, it's the sour and the sweet. And I know sour, which allows me to appreciate the sweet."<sup>41</sup>



*Figure 5.11 Kate Kosek. Sweet & Sour Seat. 2023. Powder coated steel, cast glass, fabric, thread, upholstery cord, upholstery vinyl. 40" x 45" x 40".*

<sup>41</sup> *Vanilla Sky*, directed by Cameron Crowe (2001; Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures), Amazon Prime Streaming.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

I faked being an academic and finally made it through this paper! I would like to provide you with a bullet point list of my conclusions, because that is how my shapeshifting brain actually works:

- Like capitalism, I have a love/hate relationship with academia.
- My research may not be obvious in the resulting work, but these ideas certainly influence how I make decisions.
- The feelings of comfort we associate with textiles, along with cuteness and humor, provide entry points into my work about serious issues regarding bodily autonomy and the cultural enforcement of strict gender roles.
- I don't want to perpetuate stereotypes; I want to move between and beyond them as an act of defiance.
- I am excited to continue working on *Shapeshifter* and am already brainstorming ways to break the larger body of work into smaller, focused series.
- I am unsure of where I exist as a person because I travel between many places, so I could see my work trying to exist in different forms and locations too. Should my work exist in a gallery or museum? Inside the home? On my front lawn? Ah the shapeshifting lifestyle!
- A female police officer told me how my exhibition made her want to tap into her creativity and start taking pottery classes again. That was a pretty cool, humanizing moment that affirmed my desire to find ways for opposing forces/materials to coexist.
- At the end of the day, I make art by following my instincts more than anything.

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