

EMERGE



ART ON DEMAND 10.2
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CHANTAL
NEW



Working at the nexus of art and social justice, Victoria-based multidisciplinary artist Chantal New takes a broadened approach to drawing that incorporates elements of collage, photography, sculptural installation, and the re-contextualization of found objects.

Art on Demand 10.2 features a selection of works from New's recent series, *be honest. But don't*, which deals with the subjects of femininity and vulnerability. The drawings, photographic collages, and installations in this series capture the inner aspects of the female experience, as well as the nervous thoughts that often characterize adolescence and womanhood. Through delicate sketching and minimalist collages representing socially conditioned

everyday objects, New explores the reduction of women to their material manifestations and the unprecedented scrutiny and commodification that comes with it. Challenging male-centric understandings of femininity, this series addresses the struggles faced by women.

As second-wave feminist¹ writer and public intellectual Germaine Greer points out, "It is commonplace observation that women are forever trying to straighten their hair if it is curly and curl it if it is straight, bind their breasts if they are large and pad them if they are small, darken their hair if it is light and lighten it if it is dark. Not all these measures are dictated by the phantom of fashion. They all reflect dissatisfaction with the body as it is, and an insistent desire that it be

THROUGH DELICATE SKETCHING AND MINIMALIST COLLAGES REPRESENTING SOCIALLY CONDITIONED EVERYDAY OBJECTS, CHANTAL NEW EXPLORES THE REDUCTION OF WOMEN TO THEIR MATERIAL MANIFESTATIONS AND THE UNPRECEDENTED SCRUTINY AND COMMODIFICATION THAT COMES WITH IT.

otherwise, not natural but controlled, fabricated. Many of the devices adopted by women are not cosmetic or ornamental, but disguise of the actual, arising from fear and distaste."² While in some instances these actions can be prompted by the latest trends, often they are expressions of discontent with the body's current state and an unwavering wish for it to be something different—managed and artificial, rather than organic.

Throughout *be honest. But don't*, New uses the phrase "To Be Female, How Taboo" to expose unjust social hierarchies as they pertain to perceptions and lived experiences of being "female." Defined as "a prohibition imposed by social custom or as a protective measure,"³ the concept of "taboo" echoes Greer's explorations of how a male-dominated world affects a female sense of self. Greer has influentially shown how sexist stereotypes undermine female rationality, autonomy, power, and sexuality. New's strong yet emotionally charged art continues Greer's legacy by challenging the persistent injustices of the male-centric social structures that surround us.

New's experimental approach involves the appropriation of handkerchieves, pillowcases, and other everyday objects, as well as the traditional artform of

embroidery, all typically associated with femininity. The resulting works employ both representational and conceptual approaches to show how human vision is "clouded" by entrenched social norms. In *Handkerchieves*, for example, New smudges mascara to write phrases like "Handle with care," usually used to describe something very fragile, or "Stay pure," which aims to objectify a woman.

Drawings and three-dimensional objects come together with photographic collages to explore themes of control and detachment, each serving as a separate part of a wider whole. In her Fuji film photo-collages,



subjects are often partially hidden; New uses the techniques of merging and fragmenting, cropping and hiding as expressive strategies to negotiate what is visible and invisible, seen and unseen. The practice of concealing and revealing emphasizes the ways in which control over what is seen can be an expression of dominant power structures, a gesture of resistance, or both. In New's work the representations of apparel, intimate accessories, and language aimed at objectifying women challenges the viewer to question social hierarchies and the often-invisible harm they cause.

Eisha Menon
Art on Demand 10.2 Curator

NOTES

1. The Second Wave of Feminism emerged in the 1960s, alongside anti-war and civil rights movements. and was aimed at critiquing and dismantling patriarchal attitudes and institutions. Women's objectification, sexuality, and reproductive rights were among the key issues addressed by second-wave feminists. Martha Rampton, "Four Ways of Feminism," *Pacific*, October 25, 2015, <https://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/four-waves-feminism>.
2. Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Paladin, 1971), 261.
3. "Taboo," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed March 8, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/taboo>.

CHANTAL NEW

Chantal New (she/her) is a multidisciplinary artist motivated by the intersections of art and social justice. Her expanded drawing practice takes form across sculptural installation, collage, photography, and the re-contextualizing of found objects. She currently lives and works on the unceded Coast Salish territories of the Lekwungen speaking peoples, known as Victoria, BC. She has a BA in Art and Design from Trinity Western University in the Fraser Valley and an MFA at West Dean College in the UK.

IMAGE CREDITS

Front Cover: Chantal New, *Black Out V* (detail), 2019, collage on paper, 18 x 24 in.

Inside Left: Chantal New, *To Be Female, How Taboo | Bra IV*, 2019, mixed media on mylar, 12 x 12 in.

Inside Right: Chantal New, *Handkerchieves*, 2018, mascara on vintage handkerchieves, 60 in. (length)

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