

In Loving Memory**Mackenzie Catton¹**

Senior BFA Studio Art, Painting Concentration, Art History Minor

I am reborn a woman, time and time again, morning by morning, in my birthing vessels that shelter ephemeral scraps of remembrance, lingering on the edge of futile reconstruction and forgottenness.

Through a habit of hoarding and fetishizing over objects that remind me of the past, I try to pin down transient memories remembered and partially forgotten that construct the personal presence of my womanhood and femininity. I use self-portraiture, still lives assembled from familiar kitsch objects, and domestic spaces to view my work through the lens of my grandparents' house.

I explore my own construction of femininity in relation to a new discovery of sexuality that seems to contradict an appearance of innocence. An overwhelming pink glow surfaces from my childhood bedroom and a bedroom from my grandmother's house deemed "The Pink Room." My work addresses this oppressive pink and muted pastels from the 1950s as a means to show sentimentality towards the particular representation of femininity from my grandmother's time, while making sense of a new expression of sexuality. Objects that remind of my grandmother become bodily female signifiers, as well as vessels or wombs for nurturing my ideas of womanhood. Kitsch objects that harbor nostalgia become actors on a domestic stage for the considerations of femininity and sexuality. These entities find themselves at odds in our culture, but my work questions their dichotomy.

My work is influenced by Laurie Simmons' photography work, which captures a brand of femininity typical of the 1950s. Her work shows an ambiguous relationship with the roles and representation of women from that time period. I find affinity with the way she speaks of objects as taking on personalities of their own in a time of materiality. Materiality grounds us in a fleeting world of change. Simmons' use of dolls and dollhouse furniture from the 1950s is "less about the act of playing and more about the re-creation of a sense of visual memory or history" (Laurie Simmons). These objects to which I find myself attracted become a means of recreation. Thus, I deeply connect with the inexplicable sadness of Simmons' work that registers on a personal level.

Speaking through a language of contrived marks, I find myself lovingly pouring over objects of my past that remind of my grandparents' house. Through over-articulation, I obsess over my paintings to the point of a dead-

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ened quality. Symmetry structures many of my works, making them static through use of verticals and horizontals to emphasize my frustration with the dynamic nature of change. Looking to ground myself through my memories, my work distorts the realities of my past into new amalgamations that seem familiar, but will never replicate the past. Yet, out of the deadness of preciousness and sentimentality, I seek to preserve and breathe new life into what will never be the same.

And so I am reborn a woman, time and time again. Yet, have I changed?

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<http://www.mnartists.org/mackenziecatton>



Toilette II, 2016, oil on panel, found objects, 23" x 24"



Toilette, 2016, vanity mirror, carved soap, lavender scent, 78" x 30"



Purse, 2016, oil on panel, 9" x 12"



The Pink Room, 2016, oil on canvas, 33" x 28"