

SHANA HOEHN

HAUNTINGS



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

AUGUST 3 - SEPTEMBER 5, 2019

AUSTIN, TEXAS



Above: *Lady-jet and Giacometti*, 2018, bronze, plastic, 45" x 18" x 18"

Cover Panel: *Lady-jet defies speed and meets Venus (Sisters)*, 2018, plastic, ceramics, 49" x 44" x 10"

HAUNTINGS

A few years ago, TIME Magazine launched an online, curatorial presentation of “The Most Influential Images Of All Time.” Of no surprise, Alfred Eisenstaedt’s 1945 photograph, *V-J Day in Times Square*, was an easy pick for the list. The clarity of the snapshot — a sailor kissing a nurse amidst a celebratory street scene — is, for many, dissonant with the suggested violence undergirding the subjects’ interaction. Much ambiguity around the consensual nature of the scene is a result of the nurse’s back being unnaturally arched, her body bracketed and constrained by the sailor’s arms.

In her most recent body of work, Shana Hoehn has created an iterative visual history built on the bodily contortion of women. The nurse’s arched back becomes, in Hoehn’s interweaving image archive, both a graphical gesture and a cultural symbol — a gesture as symbol that appears to have insidiously permeated some of the most defining aspects of American culture.

The Eisenstaedt photograph is not the specific origin for Hoehn’s recent sculptural work; rather, it is one signpost in Hoehn’s image archive, a collection that tracks the transhistorical contortion gesture amidst visualizations of women. Hoehn has built up this archive over the past two years with curator and writer Ruslana Lichtzier, part of which was recently published as *The Sirens: Volume One: “Women’s Bodies, Madness, Colonial Histories, and Collecting.”* Across these spreads, Hoehn maps this proliferating gesture between ship mastheads, car hood ornaments, movie stills, and scientific research into female “hysteria.” For Hoehn, the car ornaments she saw in Houston were the genesis of *Hauntings*; the arched back of ship mastheads carved as female forms is immediately resonant in hood ornaments like Rolls-Royce’s “The Spirit of Ecstasy” or Cadillac’s “Flying Goddesses.” So warped are the female forms in these hood

ornaments that legibility is dependent on specific positioning.

The Sirens, and Hoehn’s broader image archive, suggests a wide range of contexts for the arched back gesture, and Hoehn has incorporated a range of female archetypes amidst these hood ornaments. For this particular body of work, Hoehn has created a number of sculptures that manipulate source images by means of traditional and digital fabrication methods. To create *Ghost of Spirit of Ecstasy*, Hoehn scanned the Rolls-Royce hood ornament in three dimensions and then digitally distorted the image before printing and then casting the sculpture in aluminum. The original hood ornament is a slender, forward-facing woman splitting the air. Hoehn’s ghost, compressed and then broadened, is a squat spirit who can’t quite seem to get off the ground. The core of *Greater Siren ate a bird in space*, *Plymouth stitched in a caul* was designed on a computer and printed three-dimensionally in plastic. The Plymouth hood ornament is known for its stream of clipper ships, but after Hoehn’s manipulation, it has been enclosed in hand-stitched organza silk dyed with tea. What appears in silhouette is nearly Brancusi’s *Bird in Space*, but there is an underlying sense of conflict as enfolding silk seems to fight against its interior. The form appears again in *400 years of digestion*, *serpent swallows ship*, with a sense of heightened aggression by means of size and orientation. The front end of the hood ornament confronts an iteration of *Breast Bracket*, secured against the wall. The rear protrudes far from the wall, with such angularity that it seems to impale the viewer’s space. There is a sense of violence simmering within many of these works, but *400 years* seems to be an assault.

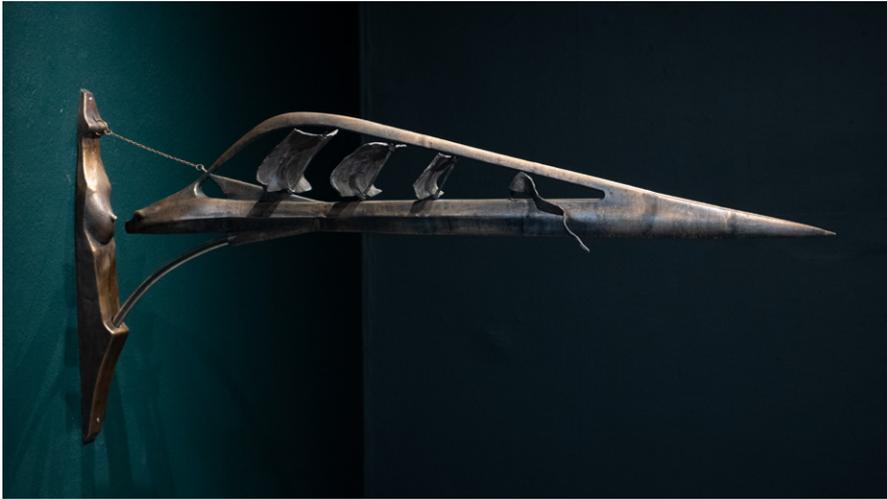
The car hood ornaments are but one source of visual inspiration for Hoehn’s *Hauntings* series and, in fact, are only one iteration of

distorted female archetypes. Other works combine reference to historical femmes, such as the siren or the ancient *Venus of Willendorf*. The sirens were often figured in ship mastheads but also are framed as seductresses. *Obscene Songs (Siren and Baubo)* is an integration of a siren and the Greek goddess Baubo, the sexually liberated Goddess of Mirth. The mythological siren’s song, which tempts men off course at sea, is here a banshee scream. The mermaid’s tail divides from behind into two legs exposing a woman’s genitalia. For *Lady-jet defies speed and meets venus (Sisters)*, Hoehn morphs two Lady-jet figures in such a way that their form mimics the *Venus of Willendorf*.

Hoehn’s practice is a strong consideration of the historically distorted female form as a symptom of ongoing socio-economic-political oppression. She contorts and manipulates contorted and manipulated female forms — reanimating these figures in such a way that they assume an agency for haunting. But Hoehn’s historical concerns extend even further and, by building on this



Obscene Songs (siren and Baubo), 2019, wood, putty, paint, 25" x 23" x 25"



400 years of digestions, serpent swallows ship, 2019, bronze, steel, 24" x 44" x 8"

aesthetic of contortion, Hoehn synthesizes defining aspects in the history of visualizing America — some of the national myths, and some of those myths' underbellies. The myths of the siren, the floozy, and the earth mother percolate. Clear is the consideration of car culture, which is a recent iteration of consumerism in the American national image. There are other references to industrial production and trade. The aesthetics of jet planes resonate with the car hood ornaments in work like *Lady-jet* and *Giacometti*, in which a female form-war plane is in a nosedive — the femme present in the military-industrial complex. The Plymouth hood ornament was designed around the clipper ship, a 19th century merchant ship design known for its speed. The materials in this body of work — bronze, steel, aluminum, wood, concrete — are key components in industrial production. Hoehn's work suggests that these industries feed national consumerism, but below the surface are the impulses inherent in manifest destiny ideologies in the project of the West.

To understand Hoehn's work as having, at its core, colonial concerns, one must recognize the coinciding principles present in the Pontiac hood ornament of a Native

American chieftain, the outline of successive clipper ships in the Plymouth hood ornament, and an abstracted American flag. Hoehn's work manipulates source imagery, but put together, Hoehn is mapping a history of colonialism and its bodily effects in an American context. The ideology of manifest destiny rationalized the annihilation of indigenous groups. Filtered many times over and redeployed, the image of a Native

American chieftain is meant to imbue, in the context of a Pontiac car hood ornament, some sort of American essence. Clipper ships, recurring in the Plymouth hood ornament, were originally designed to be small, fast vessels suited for trade along the coastlines of the United States and the Caribbean Islands. After the abolition of slavery, slave ships were redesigned to be more maneuverable so as to evade capture by naval warships — a favorite form was the Baltimore Clipper. These symbols reverberate in histories of expansionism dependent on bodily and cultural annihilation, upon which the infrastructure of the West depends.

The disturbing nature of this work is that Hoehn's signifiers, although filtered many times over, are images circulating in our present visual culture. Hoehn is mapping gestures that recur in these core myths of the American project; in her operations, she troubles these figures even further. In these confrontations of empire and its effects, Hoehn raises femmes with vengeful purpose.

Martha Scott Burton is a visual culture scholar and writer



Ghost of Spirit of Ecstasy, 2018, aluminum, 3" x 8.5" x 6"

Shana Hoehn

EDUCATION

- 2016 MFA, Sculpture and Extended Media, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Richmond, VA
- 2013 BFA, Painting, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), Baltimore, MD

STUDY ABROAD

- 2011 University College of London: Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK

SOLO & TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *Hauntings, Women & Their Work*, Austin, TX
- 2018 *Fun House*, Valet Gallery, Richmond, VA
- 2017 *Bypass Manifesto: A Score*, Vox Populi, Philadelphia, PA
It would go, Klowden Mann, Culver City, CA
The Boneyard, Blank Check, Houston, TX
Ji Won Choi and Shana Hoehn, screening, 67 Ludlow, New York City, NY
- 2013 *Illusion of Intimacy*, Pinkard Gallery, Baltimore, MD

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 *Triumph Manual Project*, Triumph School, Chicago, IL
CORE Exhibition, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX
Feminum, Texas Sculpture Symposium, Landmark Arts, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX
Dangerous Professors, Flatlands, Houston, TX
I think we meet here, Visual Arts Center, University of Texas, Austin, TX
- 2017 *Closed Quarters*, Vachon Gallery, Seattle University, Seattle, WA
Before the Foot was Purple, VCU MFA Show, David & Schweitzer Contemporary, New York, NY
CORE Fellows, screening, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, TX
CORE Exhibition, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX
4th Annual Louisiana Biennial, Louisiana Tech School of Design, Ruston, LA
- 2016 *Scenario II*, ACRE Projects, Chicago, IL
Love, Devotion, and Surrender, 22 London, Asheville, NC
VCU Thesis Exhibition, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA
Divisions, video screening, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, New York, NY
BYOBS, Sediment Gallery, Richmond, VA

- 2015 *Innies and Outies*, FAB Gallery, Richmond, VA
- 2015 *Gloryas*, VCU Candidacy Exhibition, Richmond, VA
- 2014 *Quadruple Feature*, FAB Gallery, Richmond, VA
Fulbright Comexus, Material Art Fair, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2013 *MICA Commencement Exhibition*, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD

RESIDENCIES & FELLOWSHIPS

- 2018 CORE Fellowship, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, TX
- 2016 SOMA Summer, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2015 ACRE Residency, Artists' Cooperative Residency & Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
- 2013 MICA Skowhegan Fellowship, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Madison, ME
- 2014 Fulbright Research Grant, Installation Art, Oaxaca City and Mexico City, Mexico

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2018 Idea Fund Grant, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
Eliza Randall Prize, Glassell School, Museum of Fine Arts Houston
- 2017 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant
Eliza Randall Prize, Glassell School, Museum of Fine Arts Houston
Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant
- 2016 VCU SOMA Fellowship
VCU Graduate Teaching Assistantship
- 2015 VCU Graduate Student Assistantship
- 2013 Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture MICA Graduate Award
MICA Winifred Gordon Study Abroad Scholarship
- 2011 São Tomé and Príncipe MICA Study Abroad Full Fellowship
- 2010 MICA Achievement Award
- 2009-'13 MICA Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation Scholarship
MICA Trustee Scholarship
MICA Mathias J. Devito Scholarship
MICA Thalheimer Endowed Scholarship
MICA NEA John Renna Art Scholarship
NFAA YoungArts Scholarship



Hauntings, 2019, gallery view, bronze, steel, aluminum, ceramics, plastic, wood

Women & Their Work

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Women & Their Work is a visual and performing arts organization located in Austin that serves as a catalyst for new ideas in contemporary art. For over 40 years, Women & Their Work has brought groundbreaking art created by women to Austin with exhibitions, performances and education workshops. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented over 1,900 artists in 323 visual art exhibitions, 154 music, dance and theater events, 16 film festivals, 30 literary readings and spoken word performances, and 696 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *ArtForum*, and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a

grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 750 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



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