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## Glut and Guzzle

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Glut and Guzzle

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts in Art

By

Ashley Kay Gardner  
University of Utah  
Bachelor of Fine Art in Photography, 2017

July 2020  
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract:

In *Glut and Guzzle* -I explore my relationship with my partner, our sexualities and how to navigate these outside of the LDS faith of my childhood, and their struggles with gender, sexual expression and mental illness. This exploration landed on seductive and repulsive imagery of food and body. I use color, texture and size as a tool similar to visual tools of advertising to seduce my viewer. This is an exploration of how gender norms and the visual language of advertising that infiltrates daily lives and through media and religion can shape identity and gender roles. I utilize advanced 3D technology including large-scale CNC Routers and laser cutters in order to create frames and sculptures. I've explored how using mixed media and sculpture, in conversation with photography, can offer complications and express ideas that engage the audiences' senses beyond a purely visual experience.

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## Acknowledgements

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*Introduction: GLUT AND GUZZLE*

*Glut and Guzzle* is a body of photographic work with custom frames and soft sculpture using advanced 3D technology including large-scale CNC routers and inkjet printed fabrics to display and subvert religious teachings and societal norms. Specifically, the work is an exploration of how gender norms and the visual language of advertising infiltrates daily lives and the harmful effect of media and religion on shaping and reifying identity and gender roles. The work explores how mixed media and sculpture, in conversation with photography, can offer complications to the viewers understanding and engage their senses beyond a purely visual experience.

In this project I focus on my relationship with my partner, our sexualities and how to navigate these outside of the LDS faith of my childhood. The work engages with my partner's struggles with gender, sexual expression and mental illness and notions of the female gaze. These explorations arrived at seductive and grotesque imagery of food and body. The lush, large-scale color photographs, tactile soft-sculpture, and variably textured frames apply the visual tools of advertising to seduce my viewer.

## Section 1: Approach

We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love him, we will stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places as we strive live the young women values which are: faith, divine nature, individual worth, knowledge, choice and accountability, good works, integrity, and virtue. We believe as we come to accept and act upon these values, we will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation. (Young Women's Handbook) <sup>1</sup>

Growing up in the LDS faith, we met as young women from the age of 12-18 in a separate room from the young men. In these classes, we were indoctrinated by our leaders on topics of faith, divine nature, individual worth, knowledge, choice and accountability, good works and integrity. All of which were entangled with teachings of sex, our role in his (God's) divine plan, and how we present ourselves. We learned that as women our divinity stems from our ability to have children, a pressure that we feel so deeply, that a woman unable to bear children is promised a child in the afterlife. How to achieve this goal is through marriage to a 'good' LDS man. In order to accomplish this is modesty in dress and conduct, purity and chastity are the tools by which we procure a husband.

Perhaps the teaching most relevant to this work is the metaphor of the chewing gum. One particular exercise that I experienced several times begins with the leaders passing out bright pink chewing gum. Young women are given sticks of gum, and are invited to unwrap the gum and chew it. After a few minutes, the leaders instruct the young women to take the gum out of their mouth and offer it to the person next to them which results in their rejection and revulsion

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<sup>1</sup>The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. *Young Women's Theme*, 2003, [www.lds.org/?lang=eng](http://www.lds.org/?lang=eng).



at the act. Afterwards, they tell you the gum is your virginity. It is a gift you receive but once and once used, nobody will want it again. The gum should only be given to the man we will marry, unchewed. If we offer ourselves as a used piece of gum, we will be rejected. This exercise is alternatively performed with the young women offering their chewed gum to young men; or with Big Red Chewing Gum wrappers applied to your forehead to signify the slow burn of sin. Through exercises like this, consumption of food is connected to sex and the body for young women as early as the age of 12. All of these ideas are packaged in decorated handouts and wall art that you bedazzle with jewels, signifying your piety. Mass media also reinforces heteronormative roles through advertisements of dolls for little girls, clichés of pink, and perpetuated ideals of female body image as one that is skinny but also sexy. Magazines targeted at teens and young adults with articles titled “12 Steps to Make Him Love You”<sup>2</sup> encourage the ideas that young women are only worth what a man thinks of them. The same magazines also delivered information of how to be better in bed, or different sex moves to please your man. The experiences I desired were fed to me through articles and television shows making it harder for me to “be a good girl”. The language of my indoctrination has been one of mass media and consumption. If my indoctrination is the result of frequent consumption over 26 years of this internalized worth, it is in-turn instrumental in my liberation.

The fervor with which I consumed these flawed lessons of the church has matched the fervor with which I have expressed my newfound deliverance. In the church, we fast for two meals every first Sunday to show our sacrifice and faith and to become closer to God. Ken Stone observes in *Practicing Safer Texts*, “As gluttony leads to fornication, so fasting leads to

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<sup>2</sup> Green, Siski. *Cosmopolitan*, Hearst Magazine, 2017.

abstinence”.<sup>3</sup> Gluttony is sin and sacrifice is pious. I too had once fasted regularly to demonstrate my obedience and faith to my beliefs. After abandoning the fasting, moderation seemed to also be a restriction. I wanted to experience everything outside of the small bubble of my childhood. I was seduced by “sin” and indulgence that quickly became gluttonous. I was fueled by every new experience without restriction; finely crafted cocktails, unhealthy food, experiencing sexual pleasure and exploring representation of the body. The work acknowledges the struggle to find a balance in the tension between seduction and revulsion. The grotesque slathering of cake and berries on the body becomes sexual and indulgent. An act without reproductive purpose, but just for pleasure or pain - similar to the work of Carolee Schneemann who centered female sexual pleasure in performances that use food like *Meat Joy*<sup>4</sup> or the collaborative work with her partner in the film *Fuses*. In each, a balance is struck between the seductive acts of the naked bodies in both the orgiastic performance, or the intimate sexual intercourse with her partner. It is grotesque and repulsive in the confrontational nature of performance art and its use of raw meat and paint, or the collaged and painted negatives of the pornographic footage. This tension and Schneemann’s agency as the artist and maker complicates the fetishization of the female body. In my work, I am questioning the fixation on virginity and the reproductive role of women and traditional heteronormative gender roles as ascribed by the LDS church..

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<sup>3</sup> Stone, Kenneth. *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective (Queering Theology) Food, Sex, and Bible in Queer Perspective Queering Theology Series*, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Schneemann, Carolee. *Carolee Schneemann. Meat Joy. 1964: MoMA*. The Museum of Modern Art, 1964, [www.moma.org/collection/works/126279](http://www.moma.org/collection/works/126279).

Food is used symbolically and as a stand-in for acts of sexual gratification and gluttony.

Consumption has long been used in the LDS church's ritual of taking the body of Christ in the form of bread and the blood of Christ in the form of water as a way to renew covenants with the heavenly father. I consider the communion act as taking the body of another (Christ) as food and how it can evoke a sexual bond. The sacrament food is blessed by ritual prayers<sup>5</sup>. As a child I always looked forward to sacrament - I thought of it as a treat or a snack, especially on the first Sunday of the month. On this day, Mormons are told to fast for two meals and then the end of the day's meetings is usually followed by a communal potluck to break the fast. Food was abundant, and I ate everything, breaking the fast with gluttonous vigor. In a way, gastronomical gluttony is the one place where I could over-indulge without the backlash of being excommunicated from the church. Similarly, within the work food acts as stand in for more lurid acts of pleasure and deviance. Food is also used in the work as stand in for dogma, for the many breakfasts of indoctrination I consumed in daily seminary classes before school, or a supper of weekly activity nights. The food, symbolic of these ideas I consumed, becomes subverted to be a part of my rejection of the same.

Finally, as a Mormon woman I was conditioned to aspire to maintaining a well-kept house and a well-fed husband. The domestic space is a perfect arena to examine these themes in my own work. Feminist artists have long used the aesthetics and form of domesticity to critique traditional roles. The women of Womanhouse, led by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro worked together to completely convert an abandoned Victorian house into a project space for female students. This project came about from lack of space which spurred the collaboration as

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<sup>5</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. *Book of Mormon, Sacrament Prayer D&C 20,11*.

they formed an all female group to critique the intersections of womanhood and domestic spaces. In one of the rooms, titled *Personal Space*<sup>6</sup>, Janice Lester created two spaces, one larger space and a smaller hidden space. The private space was both a freedom and fantasy where only she could go, and it was beautiful. She later realized that the room was the innerspace where women keep things locked within themselves, and it thus became a trap both “beautiful and frightening.” In not being able to express their inner desires, LDS adherents are creating rooms of their own - positioning their own desires as that which makes them sinful. Rejecting this, *Glut and Guzzle* breaks the confines of the domestic space through exaggeration. Lush textiles occupy a human sized soft sculpture in the middle of the room, wallpaper extends 15 feet into the air, far beyond the dimensions of a typical home. Frames hinge off of the wall, and stuffed wooden spoons grow many times their size. Through this excess, the celebratory space of *Glut and Guzzle* allows the viewer the freedom to navigate the two extremes of beauty and seduction and reflect on their own desires - enjoying imagery that celebrates the expression of one's identity, sexuality, and relationship.

## Section II:

This work intersects with the tradition and history of feminist art which has informed my approach to the topics of patriarchy, domestic space and the body. I have drawn inspiration from the Womanhouse group, and artists like Carolee Scheman, Cindy Sherman, Eva Hesse, Martha Rosler, amongst many others.

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<sup>6</sup> The Housing Project. *Personal Space – Womanhouse*, 19 May 2013, [thehousingprojectcollective.wordpress.com/2013/03/16/personal-space/](http://thehousingprojectcollective.wordpress.com/2013/03/16/personal-space/).

The work made in Womanhouse spoke to me in a very personal way as I too seek to reclaim the domestic space that was previously a space of oppression and gendered expectations. The artists use the rooms in the house to express women's sexuality, domestic labor, and inequalities. Many of the women are still making art today and are still in the conversation with other artists like Sara Lucas who uses food, humor and domestic objects to address experience with misogyny. Similarly I am using ideas of home and heteronormative roles, exaggerating them and making them my own.

Martha Rosler's work, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* in 1975, drew my attention from the first time I watched it. In the video, Rosler, in the manner of a television host, raises kitchen utensils in alphabetical order to the camera, operating them violently or banging them together. Rosler has remarked on her own work, "when the woman speaks, she names her own oppression." In this work, I am using the expectations of an LDS woman, expectations of cleanliness in house, appearance and spirit, making sure the family is well fed, and the support she gives her husband in decisions he makes for the household. All these expectations are tied to the home and thus the tool of my oppression. By using symbols of the domestic space I am naming the oppression and subverting it by making it my own through the overexaggerated kitchen utensils, wallpaper design that uses genitals, and food to symbolize rejection of motherhood and others that suggest sexual acts.

Through the use of humor and bright colors, the work also intersects with aspects of Pop Art as it tackles the subjects of Mormonism's views of sex and gender. The bright colors of the work contrast the uniform LDS chapels and the church's value of homogeneity. The work also suggests queerness: the frames pop off the wall, oversized spoons drip and the object of the body

are exaggerated. In the article '*Is Pop Art Queer? Gene Swensen and Andy Warhol*<sup>7</sup>' by Jennifer Sichel, Andy Warhol and Gene Swenson have a conversation about homosexuality and Pop Art. This conversation came about because of the original article's censorship of homosexuality in Pop Art. Sichel makes the observation about queerness in pop art from the conversation:

“The new revelation that Warhol constructed his ‘fantasy’ about everybody being a machine and liking everybody explicitly as a ‘kind of different’ strategy to speak on the record about homosexuality in a fantastical way that could be generative, open, and ambiguous—or, in a word, queer.”

This body of work imagines what an inclusive home looks like for me. In a way, I am queering my own domestic space. This word “queer” as I am using it is “strange and odd.” I use this to mean anything outside the heteronormative traditions of my indoctrination. Andy Warhol's comment about everybody being a machine and liking everybody resonates with my experience. I found the idea very similar to the fundamental teachings of the church, teaching to love thy neighbor unconditionally. The idea of unconditional love feels like Warhol's fantasy where everyone is a machine and everybody likes everybody. Unfortunately, the church does not use this fundamental idea of love. They in fact reprimand members for sinning and excommunicate people who confess to the more egregious sins like premarital sex or being queer.

I take what I want from my upbringing for example, I want monogamy in my partnership, but leave the undesirable behind, like motherhood, and chastity. This is explored in my own work. I cannot ignore the influence that the teaching of the church still has in the work, and I acknowledge that the celebratory

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<sup>7</sup> Sichel, Jennifer. *Do you think Pop Art's queer?*, Oxford Art Journal, 2018

sexual indulgence is not entirely joyful. *Meat Joy* by Scheeman, as discussed earlier, is complete joy with his uninhibited performers losing themselves in erotic indulgence. This is in contrast to my work which is still somewhat rooted in what I was taught about gender roles, sexual indulgence and subjects of taboo. In *Glut and Guzzle*, the suggestion of sexual acts, rejection of motherhood and breaking from heteronormative roles are celebrated, but there is the lingering association of sex being lurid and sinful which manifests itself in the grotesque gluttony found in images like *Better than Sex*. I am unable to divorce myself completely from thinking about these sexual acts as sinful. The celebration in *Glut and Guzzle* is thus tainted. The tactile sexual freedom and choices to reject motherhood are unable to be fully celebrated within this tension between past and present.

### Section III: Exhibition

My work is driven by my personal experience. Many of the pieces in the show respond to conversations, hate-watching old LDS conference videos, and consuming pop culture through Tik Tok, and Netflix shows such as *Food Wars*, where oversexualized cartoon women orgasm after eating perfectly crafted bites of food. Pop culture is a major source of inspiration; the contrast between low culture and high culture, and how the former finds its way into the gallery. References of color and humor intersect with pop art and are something that I use in my work to celebrate the commonplace and everyday.

Rather than treat the canvas as an ‘arena’ for acting out ‘private feelings’, Warhol paints ‘the open sores in American political life’, as Thomas Crow has stated, canvases ‘public, communal feelings’ shared among those who witness atrocities in the

media every day, Warhol supplants remnants of a modernist belief that individual creativity is fuelled by the artist's 'private feelings'—a belief 'sanctified to the point of blasphemy',<sup>8</sup>

Elements like color are a foundational part of the work. I'm drawn to shiny objects and highly colored unicorn cakes which can then form the basis for photographs and installations. I selected the cake in *Better than Sex* (figure, 1, 2) for its bouquet of pink flowers that reminded me of nipples. The mound of the sugary icing called to me as and is a reminder of the sort of sinful indulgence that I desire to eat in one sitting. Warhol goes on to point out that pop art is "liking things". An idea that I embrace and show in the work by choosing food, objects and colors that are appealing to me with bright colors and humorous shapes. I use these things like an advertisement to attract the viewer. Once their attention is grabbed through bright colors and food, the viewer is thrown into a context that subverts the heteronormative sex and gender roles of my childhood.

I fixate on specific food objects such as the egg, symbolic of fertility. The unfertilized nature of commercial eggs represent squandered potential, yet nourishment. I use the egg in two images: *Hard to Swallow*, and *Dreaming*. *Hard to Swallow* (Figure 3,4) is a self portrait framed in a glossy undulating frame, mimicking the viscosity of an oozing egg yolk. The bright egg yolk and red nails are seductive, drawing the audience in, as I had once been drawn in to the belonging and promises of exaltation provided by my LDS community. The egg represents the potential fertility that my body contains, but is placed within the mouth - cutting off my words and choice as it has already been proclaimed that I will replenish the Earth. The tension and seduction create

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<sup>8</sup> Sichel, Jennifer. *Do you think Pop Art's queer?*, Oxford Art Journal, 2018



a beautiful moment of in-betweenness. The photograph freezes the moment right before swallowing, the tension from the rejected yolk running down the hand and crusted on the cheek. Perhaps it is the tension of pleasure without reproduction. With the mouth as a vessel, oral pleasure is merely for satisfaction and not reproduction.

In *Dreaming* (Figure, 5,6) I revisit the lesson of the chewing gum and how I was told that it was a combination of highly developed domestic skills, and my intact purity that would make a LDS man find me desirable enough to marry. The woman's primary responsibility is in the home, supporting her husband and raising good LDS children, with her own desires coming second. This self-portrait expresses the emptiness I felt as a young woman preparing for this role. This image is framed in a way that breaks the traditional framing in the medium of photography: the two dimensional plane comes off of the wall as the woman in the image starts thinking about breaking away from these traditional roles that were indoctrinated in her.

Eggs and, specifically in relation to the work, broken eggs have been a symbol throughout art history. One example of this would be *Broken Eggs*, by Jean Baptiste Greuze in 1756, a painting with themes surrounding the morality of women. The broken eggs in the painting are a common motif to signal the loss of virginity outside of marriage.

While some images draw from my own experience others draw on my relationship with my partner, their lived experience and our life together. In the portrait of my partner entitled *Mending* (figure, 7, 8) they are framed in a circle, the frame is upholstered with images of their skin, then pleated. They are naked and centered while mending a doll made in their own image. The created space is filled with a patterned wallpaper consisting of raw chicken breast and an

intact egg. The round frame signifies an internal space and the pleated upholstered skin, the body.

My partner struggles with their masculine body, sexuality, and bipolar disorder. This image symbolizes their struggle with body image and gender identity. Just as the exhibition challenges the ideas of the domestic, the inclusion of the image in relation to *Dreaming* (figure 5, 6) there are merits and value to partnership and acceptance in these spaces.

While undergoing my own self discovery and acceptance, my partner is also becoming more comfortable expressing their true feelings about gender and identity. In *Tenderize* (figure 9,10 ) the image is presented in the most traditional frame in the exhibition and hangs behind a curtain which a large fabric hand pulls aside letting the image peek through. This image is both tender and violent. The image implies violence through the crushing and smearing of the blackberries. The aftermath of this released trauma is a tender gesture of the hand resting on the chest. The curtain is a nod to both the home and an internalized space. Bi-polar disorder is a mental health issue that is not talked about, highly stigmatized and kept within the walls of the domestic space. I invite the viewer to engage with this image by allowing them to pull the veil back and interact intimately with the piece. I use the fabric hand as a signal to the viewer to touch and interact.

Anchoring the other corner is *Hiding the Ketchup* (figure 11,12) . The shaped frame mimics the contours of a hot dog in its bun, and a squirt shaped cut out reveals the framed photograph. The genitals are tucked between my partner's legs, and their hand holds a hotdog in front of the crotch. The lower part of the frame is partially covered by a fabric bag printed with a gas station hot dog wrapper. Adherence to conventional gendered expectations of dress and behavior are two ways we censor ourselves to fit in and not stand out as different. Hiding the ketchup uses

both a shaped frame and fabric to speak about censoring or hiding sexuality. The genitals are tucked in reference to a female form while the hot dog is clearly suggestive of the male body with the tip censored by the fabric hot dog wrapper. It is important in my work to show that we censor ourselves as a society, just as I performed as a mormon woman to avoid conflict with my family and be accepted by peers.

The cake that I had bought because it reminded me of nipples is presented in *Better than Sex*.

This object expresses sin coupled with manic abandon with self pleasure and indulgence in everything once forbidden. The frame is treated in foam and paint to become grotesque and give the object a sinister feeling. I wanted to express the wide range of gestures in the process of finally exploring who you are without the pressure of considering norms. This indulgence is freeing but similar to having heteronormative expectations placed on you; over indulging and experimenting with toxic substances can cause harm.

At the center of the gallery is a soft sculpture entitled *Eternal Life* (figure.12). Standing at 75 inches tall with a height that references the body. The hole is the absence of a womb, a complete rejection and celebration of my right to choose not to become a mother. The pattern I created is made from collaging of both wallpapers that are seen in the exhibition together to make one pattern. This symbol of both my partner's and my fluidity between the masculine and feminine as a way to describe the acceptance that we have with one another and the beauty in the ability to express ourselves openly without fear of judgement.

In the exhibition (figure, 13) of the work, from the first moment the viewer approaches the space they are confronted with a larger than life installation. They see a woman in an untraditionally shaped frame, broken eggs and giant fabric spoons. The lush wallpaper signals their entrance into

a domestic space. As they venture into the gallery they are able to step back and see the full installation with the wallpaper and the portraits of the woman in the kitchen and a masculine presenting person sewing a doll version of themselves (figure, 14). These images share a wall pointing to the idea that these two individuals are entangled in some way in the narrative. As they interact with the space, their eye is constantly moving up and down with the flow created by the work, and they are implicated through moments of interaction with the curtain and pillows. While my experiences are extreme, they are not unique. The challenges I have faced are not new to women in a broader context. As I continue to find a way forward through my personal relationships and support structure, this work stands as my need to tell my story and experiences of a culture which few are able to separate from. There are other women who have similar experiences of patriarchal systems where they internalize their worth and value based on prescriptions of behavior and appearance. Slut shaming young women still happens everyday, in real life, and in comments on the internet. In addition to finding an audience with other women, these stories must be told to those that harbor, knowingly or not, sexist beliefs. I have metaphorically unlocked the door to my small room and invited everyone into my private space. I will show where I have been, how I have been oppressed and the acceptance and love I have gained through my partnership. These ideas transcend my own experience and others can either relate to similar experiences or acknowledge that there are still problems to be addressed.

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Figure 1, *Better than Sex*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, 13, *Better than Sex*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print





Figure 2, CNC Plywood frame, isolation foam, acrylic medium, spray paint, 2020, Installation View, *Glut and Guzzle*



Figure 3, *Hard to Swallow*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, 2020





Figure 4, *Hard to Swallow*, 4ftx8ft, Archival Inkjet Print, CNC Plywood frame and auto paint, 2020, Installation View, *Glut and Guzzle*



Figure 5, *Dreaming*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, 2019



Figure 6, *Dreaming*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, CNC Plywood frame, 2020, Installation view  
*Glut and Guzzle*





Figure 7, *Mending*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, 2020



Figure 8, *Mending*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, CNC Plywood frame, 2020, Detail View, *Glut and Guzzle*





Figure 9, *Tenderize*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, 2020



Figure 10, *Tenderize*, 40x50, Archival Inkjet Print, CNC Plywood frame, 2020, Installation View, *Glut and Guzzle*





Figure 11, *Hiding the Ketchup*, 50x12, Archival Inkjet Print, 2020





Figure 12, *Hiding the Ketchup*, Exhibition documentation, Sculpture Gallery, July 2020



Figure 12, *Eternal Life*, Exhibition documentation, Sculpture Gallery, July 2020



Figure 13, *Glut and Gluzzle*, Exhibition documentation, Sculpture Gallery, July 2020





Figure 14, *Glut and Gluzzle*, Left to right, *Dreaming*, Fabric Spoons, Wallpaper, *Mending*, Exhibition documentation, Sculpture Gallery, July 2020