

Regis University

ePublications at Regis University

Regis University Student Publications
(comprehensive collection)

Regis University Student Publications

Spring 2015

What Makes: Marilyn Monroe and Representations of Femininity in Early Cold War Era America

Katerina J. J. Vuletich
Regis University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Vuletich, Katerina J. J., "What Makes: Marilyn Monroe and Representations of Femininity in Early Cold War Era America" (2015). *Regis University Student Publications (comprehensive collection)*. 654.
<https://epublications.regis.edu/theses/654>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Regis University Student Publications at ePublications at Regis University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Regis University Student Publications (comprehensive collection) by an authorized administrator of ePublications at Regis University. For more information, please contact epublications@regis.edu.

Regis University
Regis College
Honors Theses

Disclaimer

Use of the materials available in the Regis University Thesis Collection ("Collection") is limited and restricted to those users who agree to comply with the following terms of use. Regis University reserves the right to deny access to the Collection to any person who violates these terms of use or who seeks to or does alter, avoid or supersede the functional conditions, restrictions and limitations of the Collection.

The site may be used only for lawful purposes. The user is solely responsible for knowing and adhering to any and all applicable laws, rules, and regulations relating or pertaining to use of the Collection.

All content in this Collection is owned by and subject to the exclusive control of Regis University and the authors of the materials. It is available only for research purposes and may not be used in violation of copyright laws or for unlawful purposes. The materials may not be downloaded in whole or in part without permission of the copyright holder or as otherwise authorized in the "fair use" standards of the U.S. copyright laws and regulations.

**WHAT MAKES: MARILYN MONROE AND REPRESENTATIONS OF
FEMININITY IN EARLY COLD WAR ERA AMERICA**

**A thesis submitted to
Regis College
The Honors Program
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Graduation with Honors**

by

Katerina J. Vuletich

May 2015

Thesis written by

Katerina J. Vuletich

Approved by

Professor Barbara Coleman, Thesis Advisor

Professor Anthony Ortega, Thesis Advisor

Professor Robin Koenigsberg, Thesis Reader

Accepted by

Professor Thomas Howe, Regis University Honors Program Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	iv
Preface and Acknowledgements	v
Chapter I: The Blonde Bombshell	1
I.1 Marilyn Monroe: Rebranding Blondeness and Femininity	3
I.2 Exposing the Desires of Early Cold War Era America	8
I.3 Consider Again Marilyn Monroe	12
Chapter II: WHAT makes: Artist Statement and Portfolio.....	14
Notes	24
Bibliography	27

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1. Katerina Vuletich, <i>Bombshell</i> or <i>my god</i> ...	1
Fig. 2. Katerina Vuletich, <i>MM Productions</i>	6

Preface

Personally, I was never particularly drawn to images of Marilyn Monroe. I see her on everything – posters, t-shirts, even advertisements – so often any luster her beautiful face used to have has faded to a dull kitsch. Monroe is everywhere.

At face value, she appears to be nothing more than a mass produced idea – her lips, her eyes, her hair, and her body are all parts of a well-constructed façade that encapsulated a cleverly manipulated persona. Though, her appearance is what has been reproduced, this persona is what truly defined Monroe for her 1950s audience. In the end, she is one of the twentieth century's more inexhaustible icons. Extending even into our present era, the image Monroe represented continues many years following her untimely death in August, 1962. Her image is so persistent it compels a person to consider the fiber that made Monroe enormously prolific. She was even accompanied by dozens of Jayne Mansfields, Mamie Van Dorens, and various other famous blonde bombshells from the 1950s – counterparts to which her own face, body, and public character are nearly indistinguishable. Why was the image Monroe portrayed so popular it was recreated over and over and over? What really made Monroe?

Many seem to readily assume she was famous because she was beautiful. But, this is an answer that, at best, only considers physical characteristics and, at worst, blatantly ignores the 1950s culture that almost certainly helped to shape Monroe. Yes, at least in the beginning of her career, Monroe shaped herself – she created the ideas she represented. However, her fame was more thoroughly rooted in the audience that consumed her striking image. When we, as consumers, devour those posters, t-shirts, and

advertisements representing her prominent visage, we are not buying Monroe, we are buying an illusion – an illusion Norman Mailer refers to as a “drifting sense in the form of Marilyn Monroe”.ⁱ And, for some reason, this illusion has always appealed to us. But, this then urges certain questions: What is this illusion and why does it continue to attract us even in our modern age?

Over the years, certain pouty, open lips, sultry eyes, and blonde unmoving hair have come to be synonymous with the two words ‘Marilyn Monroe’. When her name is uttered, there is a certain connotative value – both physically and characteristically – that are ultimately an abstraction of the woman herself. Even the words that define her – pouty, open, sultry – become an abstraction of the features to which they owe their namesake. Eventually the person herself evaporates and leaves behind the residual of an idea – a myth about femininity and our imagined past. Alas, what we consume seems to speak to what we desire and, in this case, how we define femininity. And when we peel back the layers of meaning, and get to the core of the matter, we begin to understand how our perception of the world that surrounds us influences our desires and thus, inevitably, what we consume.

In this, the idea comes to fruition and seems to insist itself – the myth that Monroe and other blonde bombshells created was never a myth that indicated the wants and desires of the women themselves. Instead, the myth that these 1950s female sex icons

ⁱ Mailer, Norman. *Marilyn: A Biography*. United States: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973, 193, quoted in Benzel, Kathryn N. “The Body as Art: Still Photographs of Marilyn Monroe”, *The Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 2, (2004): 18.

established was a myth that reveals the wants and desires of the culture to which they owe their undying fame.

Acknowledgements

To my advisors, Professors Barbara Coleman and Anthony Ortega, and my reader, Professor Robin Koenigsberg – I owe you far more than a simple “thanks”. You have inspired my thinking and gently guided me these past four years with unending patience. Truly, my full gratitude cannot be adequately expressed in little a mere paragraph of text. Your kind words, ceaseless compassion, and truly beautiful intellects have impacted the way I look at this world. I feel incredibly humbled and privileged to have had the opportunity to call myself your student.

To the entire honors community – including those who have graduated before me and those who will graduate after me – you have been a powerful force in my college career. From our first year, filled with uncertainty and questions, to our graduating year, filled with possibly more uncertainty and undoubtedly more questions, I have grown spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally. Our in class and out of class discussions have been invaluable experiences. And, to Martin Garnar, Connie Gates, Professor Tom Howe, and Professor Tom Bowie – who have served as intellectual parents and emotional support to this community of smart, kind, and hardworking students – you four delightful individuals are not thanked nor paid nearly enough.

And, lastly, of course I would like to thank my brothers, Joe and Seth, and to my parents, Joe and Lynne, who have supported me throughout my life and engaged me in dialogue that expanded my thinking and broadened my questioning. Not every person is as fortunate as I am to have a family like mine. Mom, dad, Joe, and Seth – I love you and I hope you realize what a blessing you have been in my life.

I. The Blonde Bombshell



Fig. 1. Katerina Vuletich, *Bombshell or my god...*, 2014. Mixed media, 24in x 18in. based on Milton H. Greene's *Ballerina Sitting*, October, 1954. Colorized photograph.

A young woman, with her shoulders delicately arched inward, is situated as the central focal point in Milton H. Greene's 1954 photograph (fig. 1).ⁱⁱ The soft radiance of her clear white skin coupled with her loosely wrapped, equally blemish-free, white dress contrasts against the velvet black space that frames her slightly curved body. The intensity of this black space is only countered by the richness of her seductively dark eyes. While her dress is unzipped, her carefully placed arms seem to temporarily fasten the clothes to her body. Her short hair swoops into loose pale blonde plumes creating a crisp, blonde halo around her seemingly expressionless face. Despite the gentle yet fixed curves of her body, her face is level and steady – breaking through the invisible barrier of the picture plane. Though the photograph is a color photograph, the only variation in color seems to come with the soft hues of pink that blush her smooth skin and the kiss of true red circling her lightly parted lips. The only visible blemishes present on the woman are three moles creating a sort of Orion's belt staring a little above the left corner of her lips, going to her left collar bone, and ending at the top of her right breast.

A tension seems to sit between the young woman and her audience. Lingering is the thought that at any moment she might lift her arms or move from her stationary position and the dress may fall leaving her more exposed than she already appears to be. Less evident traits of vulnerability are set against tangible traits of literal nakedness. Nearly blemish-free luminous white skin, blonde hair, and large seemingly defenseless doe eyes are juxtaposed by sultry red lips and the persistent chance that the dress may fall

ⁱⁱ The Milton H. Greene photograph I am referring to in the next few paragraphs is the same photograph on which my mixed media collage *Bombshell* is based. For a link to the original colorized photograph, please visit the following link: http://www.immortalmarilyn.com/images/2003_week19.jpg

to the floor. Ultimately, the coupling of sensuality and vulnerability build towards a theme of defenseless, tender, and exposed sexuality. Yes, she seems sensual; but, without a doubt, unprotected as well. Set against an unending blackness, she stands in a nondescript setting that ultimately aids in stripping her of her physical form and letting her linger in the unique definition of femininity she represents. This subtly erotic woman, of course, is Marilyn Monroe.

I.1. Marilyn Monroe: Rebranding Blondenness and Femininity

It seems to go without saying that she has a signature sensuality that labels her as the one and only Monroe. Her “breathy, pouty, wide-eyed” aura carries an economy of signs that she is not only feminine and fully woman; but, moreover, that she embodies a particular sort of femininity.¹ Altogether, this economy of signs amounts to the cadence with which Monroe presents herself. It establishes a unique eroticism signature to her sexually vulnerable character and, inevitably, becomes seemingly synonymous with her physical traits. “Juic[y]”, “Love Goddess”, “blonde all over” Monroe redefined the distinguishing characteristics of femaleness and, ultimately, made her image and images of comparable likeness – blonde haired, white skinned, wide-eyed – the ideal woman of 1950s early Cold War era America.² The first 1953 issue of Playboy magazine – featuring a nude photo taken by Tom Kelley of a young Monroe from 1949 – halfheartedly attempts to understand and identify the roots of Monroe’s almost inexplicably substantial stardom.³ “What makes Marilyn?”⁴ This question, when unpacked, urges speculation about Monroe and the platoon of Monroe’s iconic blonde counterparts that emerged during the early Cold War era. Though shallowly, this question

begins to expose a deeper dialogue about the 1950s populace and, moreover, the public's relationship to all the "slightly sensational" or, in Monroe's case, phenomenally sensational blonde bombshells that rose to fame during that particular period in the American twentieth century.⁵ What really made these women so inexhaustibly iconic?

All things considered, Monroe and her contemporaries "really [weren't] *that* spectacular".⁶ Playboy's 1953 article, *What Makes Marilyn?* reads, "... the young lady [Monroe] is very well stacked ... [But] we've known girls [sic] who beat those dimensions all to hell".⁷ Though, admittedly, rather tactlessly, this article is shaking to fruition the idea that Monroe's hair, eyes, lips, and body were not unknown traits of eroticism or femininity during the 1950s. In fact, many of her physical features were all manifestations of femaleness extending even to quick-witted Mae West or Jean Harlow.ⁱⁱⁱ But, as Grant McCracken states in his book, *Big Hair*, "Under the influence of West and Harlow, blondness became a declaration of wantonness [and] Monroe's self-invention called for something different. ... Monroe was afraid blondness would look 'artificial' and vampish, and this was not what Monroe wanted for 'Marilyn'".⁸ In the end, what Monroe, Mansfield, Van Doren, and countless other blonde bombshells did was effectively change the brand of eroticism and femininity their physical features symbolized. Their image reached beyond mere traits of beauty and eventually even renamed the formerly "vampish" character their attributes once represented.⁹ Monroe's fame was never just a product of her blonde hair, red lips, white skin, or curvy figure; her

ⁱⁱⁱ For a photograph of Jean Harlow, please visit the following link:

<http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/person/81306/80337/Jean-Harlow/archives.html>

fame was ultimately oriented in the kind of femaleness that came to accompany these physically distinguishing features. “More than either face or body, it is what little Norma Jean [Monroe] learned to do with both”.¹⁰

It seems eventually femininity as defined by Monroe transcended her physical limitations and conversed with the ideas she represented. As her physical form evaporated, this tailored femaleness became a myth about Monroe and, moreover, a myth about femininity and eroticism. Her proposed sexuality became signature to her body. She became a brand of female sexuality. From Katherine Benzel’s *The Body as Art*, Norman Mailer writes, “she is not sensual but sensuous ... she is not so much a woman as a mood, a cloud of drifting sense in the form of Marilyn Monroe ... [She is] luminous”.¹¹ In this abstraction of physical self, Monroe created a product that was open to the option of her 1950s audience. In forming a myth about femininity – in abstracting her body – Monroe was essentially stripping herself of any authority over her body, her name, and her image and becoming “a person you could see right into and possess completely”.¹² In recounting when she was young, Monroe stated it was “as if [she] were two people. One of them was Norma Jean from the orphanage who belonged to nobody. The other was someone whose name [she] didn’t know. But [she] knew where she belonged. She belonged to the ocean and the sky and the whole world.”.¹³ Eventually, that once nameless person became “Marilyn Monroe” and “Marilyn Monroe” did, in fact, belong to “the whole world”.¹⁴ Monroe was open to public option and, more importantly, sensuously vulnerable.

to various other blonde bombshells, such as Jayne Mansfield (fig. 2).^{iv} When being compared to Monroe, Mansfield retorted, “I don’t wiggle. I walk. I am a good actress – an original. I don’t know why people like to compare me to Marilyn ...”.¹⁷ Yet, at least publicly, Mansfield sported similar physical features Monroe had utilized in the creation of “Marilyn”. All things considered, Mansfield was also blonde haired, white skinned, wide-eyed, and young. And, inevitably, she too was sensuously vulnerable.

When speaking about her above average I.Q., Mansfield stated, “At the University of Texas it was discovered I had an I.Q. of 163. Everyone laughed when I mentioned it. I cooled it. In Hollywood, I realized it would ruin my feminine, sexy ‘image’. Who wants a brainy blonde?”.¹⁸ The image of femininity Mansfield represented could not escape Monroe’s created character that was, altogether, “breathy, pouty, wide-eyed, prone to grammatical error, constantly surprised by the world and unsophisticated in everything she [did]”.¹⁹ This particular brand of bloneness, as epitomized by Monroe, was unavoidable to anyone that donned Monroe’s defining physical traits. And, to anyone that donned Monroe’s defining physical traits, there was also the connotative significance that complemented her “breathy, pouty, wide-eyed ... unsophisticated” mannerisms.²⁰ While Monroe’s characteristics – or Monroe’s brand of bloneness – were, “no doubt, markers of stupidity in some people. They were also markers of submission” in her.²¹ Unlike West and Harlow, the blonde bombshells of the 1950s were innocent and simple not smutty or clever.²² As a result, bloneness was aligned with open sexuality and

^{iv} For a photograph of Jayne Mansfield, please visit the following link: <http://hilobrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/JayneMansfieldBeach.jpg> This *Playboy* photograph is the same photograph on which my mixed media collage *MM Productions* is based.

eventually – per the assistance of the early Cold War era blonde bombshells – sexual subservience. But, this alone still does not reveal the origins of the widespread public draw to this particular brand of bloneness. Assuming Mansfield’s rhetorical question has merit – “Who wants a brainy blonde?” might be better phrased – why didn’t anyone want “a brainy blonde”?²³ In other words, why did the 1950’s populace desire and, for a while, prefer Monroe’s seemingly simple minded, vulnerable, sexually submissive form of femininity?

1.2. Exposing the Desires of Early Cold War Era America

To understand this, it is necessary to understand the public’s origins of desire; and, for early Cold War era America, desire was heavily oriented around the social and political anxieties – the “alleged dangers” – mid-century mass consumerist society posed against the individual.²⁴ Several such anxieties were rooted in sex, women, and the atomic bomb.²⁵ In *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Elaine Tyler May writes, “popular culture during the Cold War [sic] connected the unleashing of the atom and the unleashing of sex”.²⁶ Ultimately, May states, much of the public’s “anxiet[ies] focused on women, whose economic and sexual behavior seemed to have changed dramatically” in post-World War II America.²⁷ From the book, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*, James Gilbert states, masculinity ““lost its rugged clarity of outline”” amidst the perceived aggression and power of contemporary “women, the fluid uncertainties of modern society, [and] the cost in esteem of adjusting to centralization and modern bureaucratic control of the workplace”.²⁸ In turn, this “ambiguity of the contemporary male role” caused an ensuing male panic.²⁹

Again, in the words of Gilbert, “[w]hether men actually suffered an identity crisis – or crises – during the 1950s” was arbitrated by the fact that “many observers” believed men were “being afflicted by an increasingly feminized world”.³⁰ Subsequently, women’s express femininity and sexuality specifically was deemed “destructive and disruptive,” according to May, and stood as an “alleged dangers” to social and political peace – a peace that was founded on the so called “traditional” values of the emerging mass society.³¹ As a result, social “experts” and “professionals” anchored national security in the adhering to “‘old’ traditional” values and strong “family values”.³² “[S]exual restraint outside marriage and traditional gender roles in marriage” were considered, among other things, “mature, responsible, ‘normal’, and patriotic”.³³ Those who conformed to these imagined “traditional” values were “‘normal’”, while those who did not – such as homosexual and sexually liberated men and women – were “weak”, “perverted, immoral, unpatriotic, and pathological”.³⁴

Ultimately, while the threat of unleashed sexuality was not gender exclusive, the looming danger of women’s express femininity and sexuality was further exacerbated by “[e]xperts repeatedly explain[ing] that it was up to young women to ‘draw the line’ and exercise sexual restraint”.³⁵ In turn, women were responsible not only for their own sexual conduct; but, men’s sexual conduct as well.³⁶ In the words of May, female “temptresses” “were potentially destructive creatures” that assaulted social and political safety through their “seduction” of men.³⁷ But, like the atomic bomb, “temptresses” could “be tamed and domesticated for the benefit of society”.³⁸ In a 1949 *Reader’s Digest*, Ramona Barth writes, “‘If you would make women less aggressive, give us an aggressive

man whose real masculinity allows women to bask in their true femininity””; after all, ““every shrew needs and wants to be tamed””.³⁹ In this, Barth proposes “real masculinity” and “true femininity” are contingent on strict gender roles in which men aggressively asserts themselves as dominant and women claim their rightful place as subservient.⁴⁰ And so, in early Cold War era America, the blonde bombshell emerged as a representation of contained sexuality. They were “tamed,” May writes “into harmless, *chicks, kittens*, and the most famous sexual pet of them all, the Playboy bunny”.⁴¹ Mansfield’s “Who wants a brainy blonde?” wasn’t without warrant after all.⁴² Ultimately, a simple minded, vulnerable, sexually submissive female was no threat to society or challenge to male authority and could be easily “harnessed ... ‘within the home’”⁴³ or sexually used by a man to reassert his “true masculinity and individualism”⁴⁴. Marilyn Monroe – “a very Stradivarius of sex” – appeared alongside fellow blonde bombshells as a tamed threat to national security and, moreover, masculinity.⁴⁵ Their “cultivate good looks, personality, and cheerful subservience” contributed to their popularity and transformed their representation of femininity into an easily consumable product for largely male consumption.⁴⁶

But, as James states, “beneath the surface of very loud complaints about men and masculinity, and laments about decline, the real issue was mass society itself and the widespread hesitations about what it meant to be a man in a consumer world where women had already staked a claim”.⁴⁷ With this, the idea comes to full fruition that “complaints about men and masculinity, and laments about [masculine] decline” were actually a misinterpretation of “the real issue” – “mass society itself”.⁴⁸ As a result, “the

real issue” was largely ignored and the supposed threat of an “increasingly feminized world” took its place.⁴⁹ Eventually, this imagined assault against men and masculinity transformed into a perceived aggression; and, consequently, it was neutralized with a real aggression against women and femininity. Marilyn Monroe’s “breathy, pouty, wide-eyed ... unsophisticated” mannerisms were a manifestation of this aggression.⁵⁰

Inarguably Monroe’s proposed image of femininity and female sexuality was iconic and pervasive. To quote Jack Lemmon in *Some Like it Hot*, Monroe was “a whole different sex!”⁵¹ She “was like a rolling thunder”.⁵² Indeed, as Norman Mailer says, Monroe was “a deliverance – a very Stradivarius of sex”.⁵³ But, it seems Monroe was not so much a “deliverance” or a “Stradivarius” for her own individual femininity or for the femininity of the 1950s female public; she was a “deliverance” for the mid-century middle-class heterosexual male who felt ostracized by society and, more importantly, belittled by women.⁵⁴ What Mailer calls “gorgeous, forgiving, humorous, compliant and tender”, Gloria Steinem calls “eager for approval”.⁵⁵ Monroe and her accompanying blonde bombshells’ brand of femaleness was made for and by “male movie goers and male photographers and male directors”.⁵⁶ They were icons that “harnessed” femininity to a simple, vulnerable, submissive character.⁵⁷ Their widespread public consumption normalized specified gender identities, rejected others, and reinforced clearly defined gender roles. They were a “popular culture form”⁵⁸ that countered the perceived aggressions committed against men with a real aggression against women and, arguably, a real aggression against many men who did not conform to the newly tailored definition of a “strong man”⁵⁹. And, while this brand of femininity seemed to be “a [creation] of

Monroe's own making", "Marilyn" was desired and consequently made popular by the 1950s public.⁶⁰ In this way, Monroe's unique image of femininity was a direct representation of the hegemonic culture that coincided with this particular era in American history. At long last, Monroe's simple, vulnerable, submissive form of femaleness was never intended or allowed to liberate her "distinct identity".⁶¹ Rather, it seems, it was always intended to liberate the "distinct identity" of a "mass [society's] ... widespread hesitations" and hence no truly "distinct identity" at all.⁶²

1.3 Consider Again Marilyn Monroe

So, consider again Marilyn Monroe – beautiful, breathy, sweet Marilyn Monroe – and all the tangible and intangible implications her name and image carry. She is, without a doubt, one of the most influential icons to have been alive during the twentieth century. Because of this, her personal life is coated in ideological conjectures and assumed characteristics. Her true identity – whatever that might be – is fortified by a white skinned, blonde haired, curvy shell of armor. Certainly, she appears obscured by layer upon layer of mass consumption and widespread publicity. Even when she was alive, the way in which she held herself in front of the camera was mannered – as though there was some imagined pinnacle of femininity she was trying to impersonate. In the end, this mannered, female imitating character is all we have to remember Monroe. And, it seems, her true identity is lost among the litany of magazines, books, and objects that physically bear this mannered, female imitating character. It goes without saying this representation, or this myth, Monroe and her blonde contemporaries embody is separate and distinct from their personal life experiences.

In commenting on Monroe's death in 1962, Marlon Brando stated that nobody could understand "how [sic] a girl with success, fame, youth, money, and beauty [sic] could kill herself. Nobody could understand it because those are the things that everybody wants, and they [couldn't] believe that life wasn't important to Marilyn Monroe, or that her life was elsewhere".⁶³ Ultimately, the truthfulness and clarity of Monroe's identity is still largely ignored or fundamentally ambiguous. Thus, we are left with the lingering notion that when we consume Monroe's image, we are doing so with some consequence to this truthfulness and clarity. In the last chapters of Monroe's semi-complete autobiography she states, "My publicity [sic] is something on the outside. It has nothing to do with what [I] actually [am]".⁶⁴ Eventually, when we, as consumers, participate in the mass production of Monroe's image we are inserting ourselves into her life and participating in this creation of 'Marilyn Monroe'. What it is we are saying about Monroe's identity and, moreover, about our role in her identity is nevertheless subject to the unique perspective of the individual observer.

II. WHAT makes: Artist Statement and Portfolio

Certain pouty, open lips, sultry eyes, and blonde unmoving hair have come to be synonymous with the two words ‘Marilyn Monroe’. When her name is uttered, there is a specific connotative value – both physically and characteristically – that is ultimately an abstraction of the woman herself. Even the words that define her – pouty, open, sultry – become an abstraction of the features to which they owe their namesake. Eventually the person herself evaporates and leaves behind the residual of an idea – a myth about femininity and our imagined past.

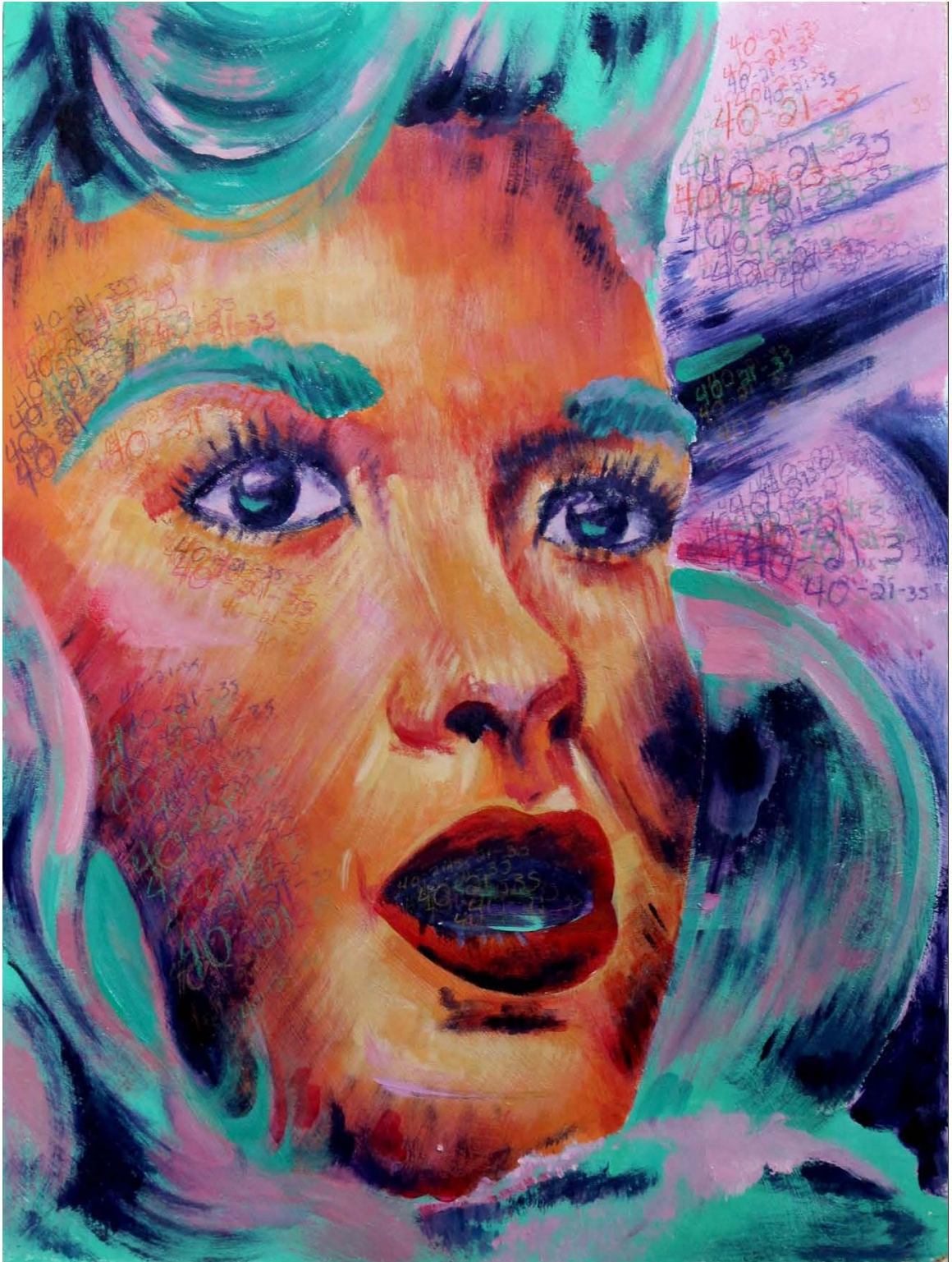
In my ambiguously titled debut portfolio, *WHAT makes*, Monroe and various other blonde bombshells of the 1950s adopt a new context that communicates with the women themselves and, more so, with the culture that signifies, replicates, and consumes their unique image of femininity. Through manipulated color, line and layers of mixed-media materials, I am touching upon an implicit argument about Monroe, her blonde counterparts, and ideas surrounding blondness, eroticism, and femininity. This body of work creates new connections between these women and their voyeurs by mimicking and redefining what many early Pop Artists, such as James Rosenquist, revealed through a juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated text and mass produced images. In this carefully constructed layered chaos I distort, abstract, and exaggerate features for visual appeal and, moreover, to create a dynamic conversation between objects. Ultimately, this portfolio outlines the tacit points of a discussion that might already exist and eventually formulates ideas about blondness, eroticism, and femininity that seem self-actualizing.



Katerina Vuletich, *Bombshell or my god...*, 2014. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.



Katerina Vuletich, *What Makes*, 2014. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.



Katerina Vuletich, 40-21-35, 2014. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.



Katerina Vuletich, *Herself*, 2015. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.



Katerina Vuletich, *MM Productions*, 2014. Mixed media, 24in x 16in.



Katerina Vuletich, *Blondeness or Oh, honey, you're dripping*, 2015. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.



Katerina Vuletich, *Sextomb Tryptic: Sex*, 2015. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.



Katerina Vuletich, *Sexbomb Tryptic: Bomb*, 2015. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.



Katerina Vuletich, *Sextomb Tryptic: Barred Marilyn*, 2015. Mixed media, 24in x 18in.

Notes

¹ Grant David McCracken, *Big Hair: A Journey into the Transformation of Self*, (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1996), 83.

² Hugh Hefner, "What Makes Marilyn?", *Playboy*, (December 1, 1953), 17-18.

³ Guus Luijters, Jayne Mansfield, and Gerard Timmer, *Sexbomb: The Life and Death of Jayne Mansfield*, (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1988), 102.

⁴ Hefner, "What Makes Marilyn?", 17-18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁸ McCracken, *Big Hair*, 82.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Hefner, "What Makes Marilyn?", 18.

¹¹ Norman Mailer, *Marilyn: A Biography*, (United States: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973), 193, quoted in Kathryn N. Benzel, "The Body as Art: Still Photographs of Marilyn Monroe", *The Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 2, (2004), 18.

¹² McCracken, *Big Hair*, 84.

¹³ Marilyn Monroe, Ben Hecht, and Joshua Greene. *My Story*, (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ McCracken, *Big Hair*, 85.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Luijters, Mansfield, and Timmer, *Sexbomb*, 100.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁹ McCracken, *Big Hair*, 83.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 82.

²³ Luijters, Mansfield, and Timmer, *Sexbomb*, 84.

²⁴ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 102.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 92.

²⁷ Ibid., 93.

²⁸ James Gilbert, “A Feeling of Crisis: The 1950s,” in *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 62, 63.

²⁹ Ibid., 62.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 110, 102.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 99, 96.

³⁴ Ibid., 96, 98.

³⁵ Ibid., 101.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 96, 110.

³⁸ Ibid., 110.

³⁹ Gilbert, “A Feeling of Crisis”, 70.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 112.

⁴² Luijters, Mansfield, and Timmer, *Sexbomb*, 84.

⁴³ May, *Homeward Bound*, 112.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, “A Feeling of Crisis”, 70.

⁴⁵ *American Masters Marilyn Monroe: Still Life*, Performed by Marilyn Monroe, Leonora Goldberg, Norman Mailer, Gloria Steinem, et. al., (United States: Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 2006) Film, 0:54.

⁴⁶ May, *Homeward Bound*, 102.

⁴⁷ Gilbert, “A Feeling of Crisis”, 80.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 63, 80.

⁵⁰ McCracken, *Big Hair*, 83.

⁵¹ Jack Lemmon, *Some Like it Hot*, directed by Billy Wilder (1959; United States: MGM Home Entertainment, 2001), Film, quoted in *American Masters Marilyn Monroe: Still Life*, Performed by Marilyn Monroe, Leonora Goldberg, Norman Mailer, Gloria Steinem, et. al., (United States: Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 2006) Film, 0:44.

⁵² *American Masters*, Performed by Goldberg, 12:27.

⁵³ *American Masters*, Performed by Mailer, 0:54.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *American Masters*, Performed by Steinem, 0:54-2:48.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7:24.

⁵⁷ May, *Homeward Bound*, 113.

⁵⁸ Mary Beth Haralovich, "Sitcoms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Homemaker," in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*. eds. Spigel and Mann, (Minneapolis: University of Press of Minnesota Press, 1992) E-mail, 138.

⁵⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 96.

⁶⁰ McCracken, *Big Hair*, 81.

⁶¹ Gilbert, "A Feeling of Crisis", 63.

⁶² Ibid., 63, 80.

⁶³ Marilyn Monroe, Stanley F. Buchthal, and Bernard Comment, *Fragments: Poems, Intimate Notes, Letters*, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010), vii.

⁶⁴ Monroe, Hecht, and Greene. *My Story*, 180.

Bibliography

- American Masters Marilyn Monroe: Still Life*. Performed by Marilyn Monroe, Amy Greene-Andrews, Norman Mailer. USA: Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 2006. Film.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983.
- Gilbert, James "A Feeling of Crisis: The 1950s," in *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Haralovich, Mary Beth. "Sitcoms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Homemaker," in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*. eds. Spigel and Mann. Minneapolis: University of Press of Minnesota Press, 1992. E-mail.
- Hefner, Hugh. "What Makes Marilyn?" *Playboy*, December 1, 1953, 17-18.
- Lemmon, Jack. *Some Like it Hot*, directed by Billy Wilder. 1959. United States: MGM Home Entertainment, 2001. Film, quoted in *American Masters Marilyn Monroe: Still Life*, Performed by Monroe, Marilyn, Leonora Goldberg, Norman Mailer, Gloria Steinem, et. al. United States: Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 2006. Film.
- Luijters, Guus, Mansfield, Jayne, and Gerard Timmer. *Sexbomb: The Life and Death of Jayne Mansfield*. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1988.
- Mailer, Norman. *Marilyn: A Biography*. United States: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973, 193, quoted in Benzel, Kathryn N. "The Body as Art: Still Photographs of Marilyn Monroe", *The Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 2, (2004): 18.
- May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.
- McCracken, Grant David. *Big Hair: A Journey into the Transformation of Self*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1996.
- Monroe, Marilyn, Ben Hecht, and Joshua Greene. *My Story*. New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000.
- Monroe, Marilyn, Stanley F. Buchthal, and Bernard Comment. *Fragments: Poems, Intimate Notes, Letters*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010.