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Art 325

### WichMaker - Artist/Written Statement

My work critiques the systemic and patriarchal expectations placed on women, particularly around caregiving roles and domesticity, while highlighting the societal acceptance of mistreatment against cis and trans women. Through wearable art and performance, I examine how women are pressured into complacency and obedience under oppressive circumstances, with my piece activating these themes in real time to create an unsettling experience for the viewership.

Within the outfit, an apron with lace alludes to the prominent fetishization of femme-presenting people by implementing the typical French Maid's attire. Through the material of sandwich bags and sandwiches, I can further allude to the connotations of the well-known phrase used against women: "Go make me a sandwich." The apron heavily perpetuates connotations of femininity and traditional expectations. Alongside the apron draped in sandwich bags, a tray with a pile of roast beef and sandwiches is held to insinuate the reference to "roast beef," equating to the derogatory language used to demean the female genitalia. Towards the bottom of the outfit, my mother's wedding shoes represented purity idealized by Western society, in which women are being "given away" to their partners "for better or for worse." The wedding shoes were the tie to connect the performance through the lens of domestic mistreatment.

Concealing emotions is a standard procedure for women, even though the stereotypes of womanhood state otherwise. The mask serves as a blockage into the woman's actualized reality. The viewers will never know her profound truth because a wall of emotion has been built over her. Expressions hold universal meaning, with downwards-tilting eyes being known to stimulate a connection to sadness and smiles to happiness. The expression on the mask was one of a person who was beaten down repeatedly, time and time again. Her exhaustion is prevalent. The mask never was lifted throughout the performance, for a woman never must break her role, at least that is what I have been told.

Performance functions as the activator of still sculptures and works. It was vital to add this element to highlight the nature of oppression. The performance was held in the Cubenhiem. The almost suffocating nature of the area adds to the similarities of the asphyxiating power dynamic seen throughout the World's perception of positions for women versus men. The performance consisted of both a woman and a man, who was the symbolic representation of misogyny. A megaphone was used for the duration of the performance with the projection of the male voice. The loudness of the words within the cube elevated the intensity while the man simultaneously ripped sandwiches from the apron, ripping the imagery and throwing them to the floor. Weaponizing one's femininity was portrayed through the man chucking clumps of roast beef against all body parts of the woman, which was unexpected and spur of the moment. The

element of surprise finds itself within domestic mistreatment, such as the unforeseeable shortcomings of emotional regulation. Taking away the known from the performance integrated a level of uncomfortability yet familiarity with my male counterpart, which tends to mirror the withdrawal of behavior after familial and domestic mistreatment. The dropping of the tray ended as the conclusion to the woman's exhaustion from having to mask herself and tolerate inhumane conditions.

The contemporary uprising in trad-wife culture and incel rhetoric never fails to perpetuate an everlasting ripple through the fabric of gendered expectations. *WichMaker*, as a result, situates viewers in an immersive and personal experience that is heavily overlooked due to the previously discussed phenomena. Many elements employed throughout the performance and wearable piece were inspired by the work *The Sexual Politics of Meat* by Carol Adams (1990). I was inferring the comparison of women to meat and how the process of objectification cultivates an environment that normalizes the oppression of womanhood. *Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face)* by Barbara Kruger (1981) presents bold text onto black and white imagery that motivated my artwork. The phrase "perceived as" in white text on the abdomen of the apron alludes to the same gendered gaze argued through Kruger's work. BDSM degradation of painting on barbaric phrases that are meant to dwindle a woman's identity portrays that the woman is not claiming her perception of being "Meat," but rather that these connotations have been forced onto her.

This work compels viewers to confront the ingrained power dynamics and objectification of women, urging reflection on gendered oppression in society.

Link to documentation: <https://www.artbykriss.com/art325>