



Arrival

Tracey-Mae Chambers:

about eve

© 2014

A publication for Tracey-Mae Chambers: about eve published by:

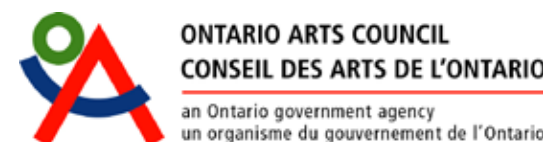


1450 Henry Street - Whitby, Ontario L1N 0A8
whitbystationgallery.com

September 13 - November 23, 2014

Graphic Design: Chris Willdig • **Printing:** Rapid Reproduction • **Photography:** Jacob Lickers
Curator: Olexander Wlasenko

Organized with the support of the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario and Baagwating Community Association.



Tracey-Mae Chambers:

about eve



Subdued

September 13 – November 23, 2014

About Tracey-Mae Chambers

I am a work in progress both as a female native artist and as a person I continue to hone and develop my skills. My work has evolved over the last few years from non-representational abstraction to encaustic and sculpture. This is largely due to a Career and Access Grant, which involved mentorships under Christi Belcourt, Linda Lundström and Ann Shier. After working with such a powerful force as Christi Belcourt, I have gravitated to creating works that address social change in women's roles, as well as body image issues.

I put my education at the Royal Conservatory (Toronto) to good use as I pursue teaching positions at art facilities across Canada and in my studio. I feel a great joy in sharing my passion for art creation. I have recently become one of the few instructors for Encaustikos which manufactures encaustic mediums and supplies that has enriched my practice due to an ongoing education in the art form.

www.traceymae.com



Tracey-Mae Chambers: *about eve*

Upon entering Tracey-Mae Chambers's exhibition, the viewer is immersed into wonderment and the exhilaration of artistic process. Her solo show elicits a range of questions: What are these vessels of evacuated human forms made of? Who are these individuals? What are their stories? How do these free-standing sculptures relate to the surrounding painted pieces on the walls?

about eve consists of three thematically and materially linked components. The exhibition centers around thirty-three sculptural forms and a full form dress made from paper that conceals toy dolls. Lining the walls of this solo show are twenty panels of various shapes and sizes. This rich material output demonstrates a sustained body of work created over the course of four months.

The artist's latest series is a focused, multilayered project stimulated by a full range of discourses and collaborations. A range of women's voices inform the series ranging from participants, mentors and teachers. Chambers's work leading up to *about eve* was stimulated by conversations she had with fellow Métis artist, Christi Belcourt and fashion designer Linda Lundström. The artist worked with encaustic educator, Ann Shier to further burnish her wax painting technique.

The above-mentioned women informed the conceptual and technical development of the series. Chambers engaged some dozen women living in women's shelters to act as participants who "donated their 'shape' to the exhibition."¹ The volunteers ranged in age and a variety of life paths. One woman suffered from anorexia. Another is a mastectomy survivor. One by one, the artist became acquainted with each woman and her life story. The creative act was one of collaboration and meaningful exchange.



eve exposed

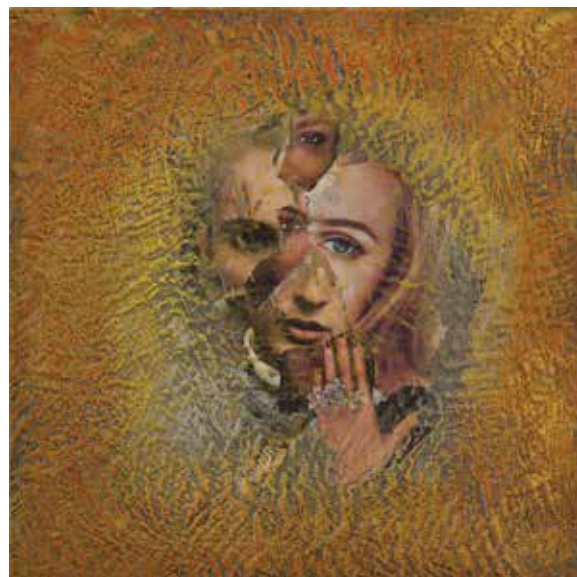
Chambers embellished some of her subject's forms with markers of individual character such as jewelry, curlicue wires and other distinguishing accoutrements such as a circuit board. It's interesting to note here that one of the women participants gave the artist her mother's ashes to infuse in the coloured wax.

Chambers's sculptural forms make reference to European garments worn by women between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The exuberant full-scale paper dress is based on a Victorian era hooped shirtdress. This formal costume functions as an enclosed apparatus providing a controlled environment for the dolls gathered at its base. *Engineered for Inadequacy* vexes the historical role of women as both protector and incubator.

The acephalic, half-figure wax forms invoke the sleeveless, low-cut bodices that were historically stiffened by reeds or whale bone. In her working process, the artist wrapped her female models with tape. The taped form was carefully removed then applied with papier-mâché. Once hardened the form surfaces were painted with coloured wax. The artist almost intuitively chose her medium. Encaustic naturally interfaces as a perfect material for human depiction. As the melted wax cools, it intersects the threshold of body temperature. For a fleeting moment, the medium is the same warmth as the woman who gave her form.

This body of work engages multiple levels of senses. A rich, yet subtle aroma emanates from the beeswax medium. Olfactory sensation has strong associations with memory and historical continuum. Natural wax has a venerable tradition dating to the Coptic period. Extant Fayum mummy portraits give vivid representation of likenesses created several millennia before our day. It's no surprise that for Chambers the act of preservation is best conveyed through the encaustic medium.

Encaustic is a favored technique both for its painterly and sculptural effects. The coloured wax can be applied to any surface. The wax can be further manipulated with special brushes,



Sum of my Parts



Engineered for Inadequacy

heat lamps, heat guns, candles—any source of heat. This versatile medium is ideal for invoking associations with the past. The artist further intersperses historical images of women in her compositions. Pictorial collage elements disrupt the figure/ground surface tension of both her panels and sculptures. The idealized photographic portraits simultaneously submerge, rest or move on an oozing waxy plane. The physiognomies of the portrayed photos remain anonymous, just as the artist's contemporary body portraits. Some of the body forms are titled with a woman's given name and a surname initial. The others, those who wished to remain anonymous, are simply titled *eve*. Here, a few associations surface. According to Abrahamic creation myth, Eve was the first woman. In this light, Chambers's anonymous female forms are contemporary bookends—or present-day parentheses in the vast continuum of matriarchal lineage. Titling her sculptures with a lower case "e", the artist invokes a daily cycle of evening. A transitional moment when light wanes and, like the temperature of Chambers's chosen medium, the flow of hot wax cools and finds stasis.

¹ *about eve* Artist Statement, Tracey-Mae Chambers, April 2014.



Roxanne



eve (front view)



eve (back view)



Julia M.



Darlene P.



Trudy O.



Cathy G.