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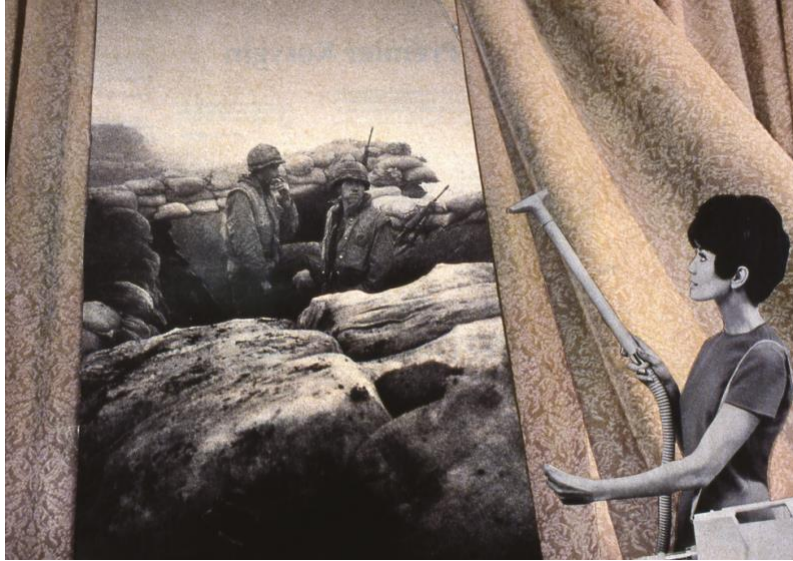
Thesis Draft

Introduction

It's About Time explores women of the future who have broken present day barriers and found themselves in spaces traditionally dominated by men. The work is presented as *TIME* magazines from the future, imagining what these female accomplishments will look like in the media. Despite the work being futuristic in content, they are built on *TIME* magazines of the past. Each collage has been digitally created using cut and altered images from previous *TIME* covers. I hunted through seventy years' worth of *TIME* covers to collect images of past and present accomplished women. These bits and pieces of historical and successful women were used to build the female figures of the future. These imagined females stand at the forefront of my work, breaking visual and societal barriers. They are a collage of many trailblazing women that have come before them. Despite being made from real women, my female figures are not polished or perfect. They are blurry, awkward and ambiguous as their accomplishments have not yet been actualized. They stand and hold space for the women who will make headlines one day. These women also stand as a protest to the stereotypes that are reused and recycled in the media. Their annoyed looks and uncanny faces poke fun at what the media deems as picture perfect. The unimpressed facial expressions of the collaged women and the way men are presented creates a comedic tone within each piece. This reflects my own annoyance with how society views femininity. By presenting these women, not only do I imagine the future but reflect upon on the tired views and stereotypes of the present.

Influences

My works of protest do not stand alone. I have been influenced by the ideas and work of other strong feminist artists. A huge influence and inspiration for my own art has been Martha



Cleaning the Drapes, a photomontage from Martha Rosler's series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (c. 1967–72),

Rosler. *House Beautiful:*

Bringing the War Home and

Body Beautiful, or Beauty

Knows No Pain from 1966–72

inspired me to take on collage,

media and satire. *House*

Beautiful combines painful

images from the Vietnam war

with commercialized images of

American homes (“House Beautiful”). The images used in her work were pulled directly either

from the affluent American home magazine, *House*

Beautiful, or *Life* magazine’s coverage of the war

(“House Beautiful”). I was very intrigued by her

usage of media and recycling these images to create

an entirely new message. Not only was she

commenting on the war but also on the media’s role

in it. Rosler’s online artist statement reads, “these

activist photomontages reveal the extent to which a

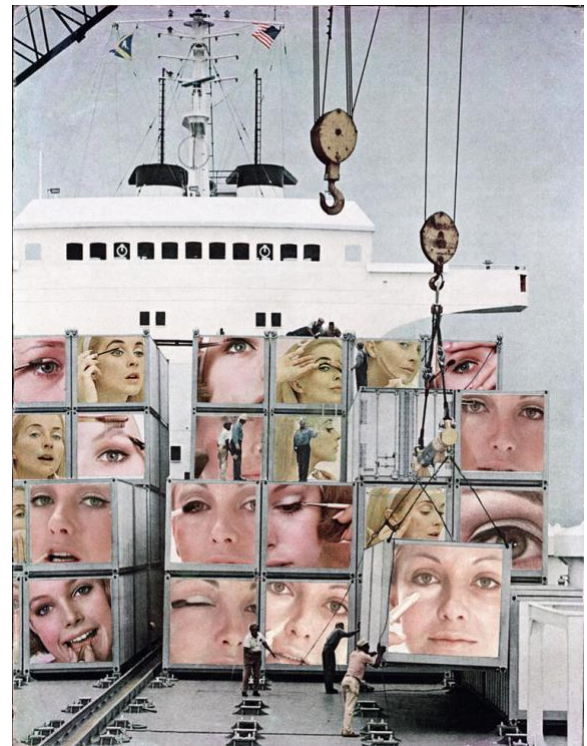
collective experience of war is shaped by media

images” (“House Beautiful”). Rosler’s *Body*

Beautiful also uses found media images, but these

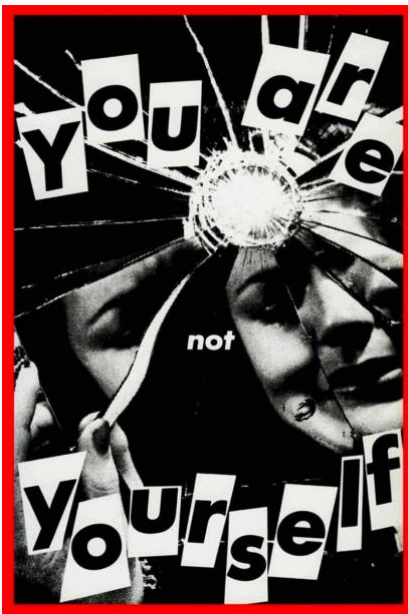
focus more on women and their bodies. In *Body*

Beautiful, the thirty-two photomontages are “...largely concerned with the external pressures,



Cargo Cult, a photomontage from Martha Rosler's series *Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain* (c. 1966–72)

expectations, and fantasies projected upon women” (“Body Beautiful”). Rosler again deliberately uses the media as her medium to express how it is affecting the way we see the people around us. I love how *House Beautiful* juxtaposes picture-perfect femineity with the harsh realities of life and war. Body Beautiful juxtaposes the female body with consumption and expectations. With this deliberate juxtaposition there comes this satirical and almost comical tone in each of these works. These works are dark and spiteful regardless of the beautiful and luxurious images they use. I was inspired by these photomontages to try and achieve a similar edgy satirical style. Rosler is intentional with the images she uses. In the early stages of my work, I struggled with intentionality and being overly direct. Her work provided great examples of collages that utilized combinations of images to share nuanced meaning rather than relying on individual images sharing individual meanings. Instead of being so direct with my feministic



Barbara Kruger's *You are not yourself* (1981-82).

messages, Rosler's work helped me to dig deeper into the tone, depth and delivery of my work and ideas.

Another artist that aided in my exploration of design and text was Barbara Kruger. Where Rosler may be a bit more reserved in her work, Kruger is bold and begins to almost weaponize feminism. As a graphic designer, I was really inspired by Kruger's use of words and fonts. Kruger does not have to utilize a lot of text to have her message heard. She uses somewhat ambiguous phrases with personal pronouns to keep the viewer hooked and thinking, this can be seen in *Untitled (I shop therefore I am)* (1987). Her

ambiguousness and brevity helped me to understand why less is more. By leaving the viewer more room to question and think, it keeps them more engaged. This approach challenged my

artistic progression. In my work process, I started by adding an overload of images and layers

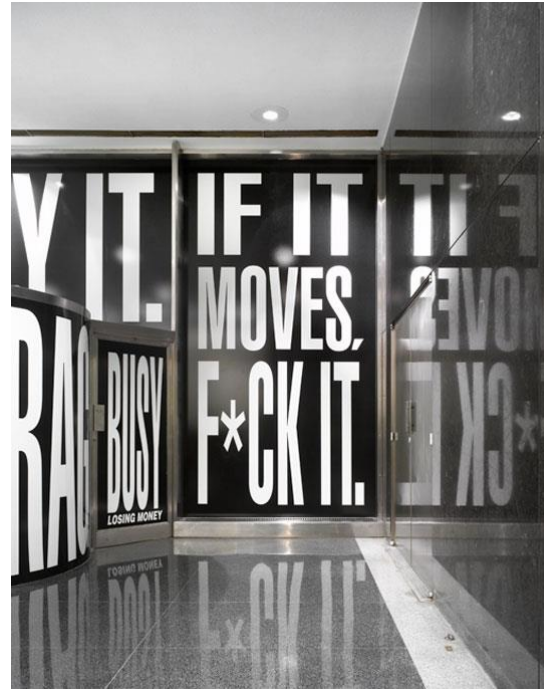


Female Bureau of Investigation, 2023, Digital Print, 30 X 24in

especially in the piece, *Female Bureau of Investigation*. This piece features the imagined first female director of the FBI wearing glasses, suit, and tie. She stares at the Statue of Liberty whose face has been collaged with new eyes and mouth. She stands in just a bra, holding a slew of surveillance cameras. The title covers the female director's mouth. The title itself has been tampered with as "Bureau" has been crossed out by a man below holding a red sharpie. The black background is made up of staring male eyes. In my first draft of the

piece, the background was made up of a collage of photos taken from different *TIME* covers. I used images of men, war, and politics to allude to FBI and surveillance. These images placed behind the digitally-constructed female FBI director and the statue of liberty were distracting and not adding productively to the piece. By taking away this background of images and letting more of the black negative space show, I was able to keep the focus on the main figures. The addition of the eyes were not as visually distracting and added a sense of constant surveillance and judgement without being too direct. By taking away the visual clutter, I learned that "subtracting" could add to the strength of my work. This helped in making my pieces more effective in delivering multiple thought-provoking messages at once.

Kruger's aggressive style with text and imagery was something I also wanted to incorporate into my work. Kruger's site-specific installations like *Between Being Born and Dying* (2009) also gave me inspiration for the materiality of my exhibition. Her immense vinyl prints covering the exhibition space created an immersive environment. Because of their connection with the actual space, they became a lived experience. I was intrigued by the dimensionality of these vinyl prints and how they could be applied to different surfaces to create more of an impact on the viewer.



Barbara Kruger's *Between Being Born and Dying*, installed at the Lever House Art Collection, New York Sep. 19– Nov. 21, 2009.

Two other influences for my work were the Guerilla Girls and Lorna Simpson. The Guerilla Girls like Kruger weaponize feminism by being militant in their messaging and tone. They are aggressive yet comical in their approach. I admired how they mix feistiness and satire. The Guerilla Girls also utilize a lot of graphic design as their works resemble advertisements. I was moved by their unique approach to activism and art. I wanted to incorporate the same



Guerilla Girls' *Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into The Met. Museum?* Poster. 1989

messaging and satire but in a less abrasive way. In contrast to the Guerilla Girls, the collages of Lorna Simpson is a more subtle, nuanced and layered. I found her work while hunting through

TIME magazine. Her artwork was featured on the August 8th 2022 publication for the cover story on Brittney Griner (Gregory). Her collage work engaging with the female figure is beautiful and mysterious. Simpson is incredibly intricate and graceful. Her combining of imagery and female figures is incredibly deliberate and well executed as each curve and cut is seamless. There is a delicate beauty in each of the women she creates. I especially loved her *Observing the Universe* (2021) collages, where she meshed the bodies of black female models from *Ebony* and *Jet* magazine with constellation maps (Uszerowicz).



Lorna Simpson's *Everrything*, 2021 (detail). A part of her *Observing the Universe* collage and pastel on handmade paper, 10 framed collages – Each 25 x 18 x 1 in.

What I loved about Simpson's work is that it engages with the tangled complexity of race, blackness, and the female body in a subtle way (Cole). Teju Cole of the *New York Times* states, "Freedom is Lorna Simpson's starting point and her permanent theme. A humane current animates all her work, a current that neither sidesteps nor confines itself to race (Cole)." Her photomontages allow for the viewer to confront and grapple with these complex issues rather than be directly told what to think. I appreciate how creative she is with her layering. The constellations evoke a feeling of mystery and incomprehensible vastness of uncharted territory. I love her deliberate comparison of black female figures with the beauty of the unknown universe. These works are like visual poetry as the more you look the more nuances you find. While I was interested in the satire and edge of the previously listed artists, I was inspired to incorporate muted beautiful symbolism in my work after viewing Simpson's collages. All of these influences helped me strike a balance between, beauty, anger, and comedy.

Process

Each piece in *It's About Time* takes on the appearance of a traditional *TIME* magazine cover. *TIME* was selected as the media platform from which these collages would be built from



The New Bread Winner, 2023, Digital Print, 30 X 24in

for several key reasons. *TIME*'s somewhat neutral political stance would allow me to find a range of images and illustrations from differing points of view. Second *TIME* has an established history in the media industry. They have been printing since 1923 and have over 100 years' worth of publications. *TIME* has most of these covers available to the public in their online cover vault. I utilized this online image repository to search and find visual material for my collages. I had an entire publication's anthology at my fingertips. This gave me a

rich visual resource to create my digital collages. Lastly *TIME* has an artistry to their cover design. Some issues can be considered art themselves. Each edition is different. Some covers rely heavily on photography, while others rely on illustration, cartoon, text, or a combination. In my hunt for images, I got to observe the different cover design styles and how they changed from decade to decade. While being material for my collages, the previous covers also acted as inspiration for my own designs. Some of the more abstract covers pushed me to try an illustrative and color intensive style for the piece *Put Her In Coach*. I chose to digitally alter the images by utilizing paint brush and polarizing filters in Photoshop. This created color blocked visuals that made the figures and background resemble more of an illustration than photos. Because *TIME*'s

covers differ in style, I was moved to experiment and incorporate differing effects into my own covers.

TIME magazine's flexible and thought-provoking title allows for a direct connection with peering into the future. *TIME* magazine's features are also iconic. *TIME*'s red borders and strong serif font are recognizable and familiar. These established design features symbolize more than just the magazine but also the historic societal constructs that are built around women. The thick red lines reflect the lines that women are told not to cross. The design elements in these pieces act as the foundation for the collage as well as the barriers that the women in my work begin to break out of.



The Military's Secret Weapon, 2023, Digital Print, 30 X 24in

Each collage was created in Photoshop, using cut images from *TIME* covers from over the last 70 years. To begin each collage, I would download, or screen shot a cover of a *TIME* magazine issue that had contained a visual that piqued my interest. This could be an entire cover image or just a small detail within the cover. There are several Photoshop tools that allowed me to extract sections or pieces of images away from the original. I combined these separate pieces to create a completely new

image. A great example of this is in the piece, *The Military's Secret Weapon*. The female soldier on the bottom right is pieced together using a US soldier's uniform from the Iraq/Afghanistan war, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's face and a stiletto. Each of these images were cut from different



One Small Step for WoMan, 2023, Digital Print, 30 X 24in

issues. I added shadows and blended the edges of where the images touched to create a seamless figure. Photoshop is an incredibly powerful software and it allowed me to make continuous edits and revisions to ensure I got the images exactly how I wanted. This digital process, while lacking tactility, did provide for pixel precision with altering and cutting to create a new singular image.

This control allowed me to make deliberate decisions on how to mesh the pieces from differing covers together. Some of my collaged women are

edited smoothly so that the transition between each feature isn't as noticeable. This can be seen in *One Small Step for WoMen*, as the astronaut has a face that seamlessly incorporates differing eyes, nose, mouth and hair. While her face is not perfect, it is not collaged in the same raw style as the woman in *In the End She Decides?*. The features of the Chief Justice have obviously been cut from several issues as her eyes and mouth are seen as separate rectangular images. This differing style of collage was intentional as I wanted the viewer to react to these women in different ways. For the female astronaut, I wanted her face to be more real and relatable so that viewer could see



In the End She Decides?, 2023, Digital Print, 30 X 24in

themselves in this woman. The other female astronaut faces are unaltered further emphasizing this reality and relatability. My blunt style of collage with no smoothing or editing reminds the viewer that this imagined woman is made from past women and their accomplishments. This style allows me to take the media's representation of women and twist it in my own way. By directly displaying and manipulating the images that the media uses I poke fun at their definition of beauty and femineity. Perfectly edited women are no longer the only ones on the cover. I had to deliberately control the cut images would interact with one another to ensure nuanced meaning. Even with this control, glitches and artifacts still occurred just as they would have if I used scissors and glue. Bits from the digital scraps I forgot to erase hide within some of my prints. While digital collage allows for more control it is not perfect, as human error is always present.

The pieces of new media that I create are deliberately made from many layers of previously circulated media. As a graphic designer, my paints are the visuals that flash in the news or on magazine stands. My brush strokes begin as I rearrange, cut, edit, and these found images. Technology aided greatly in my process as I could rearrange quickly and undo mistakes. With digitizing the collage process, I could add and subtract from the work seamlessly and at any point. This allowed me to keep coming back to the work and leaving it better than I found it. Look closely and you will see the female figures in each piece are comprised of previous images of women. Yet these new women are constructed to challenge the male gaze. They are constructed by a woman who sees beyond perfection and is more focused on the collective beauty of women. These figures are not complete or natural. They are slightly altered, mixed up and awkward. They reflect how it is still hard to imagine women in these positions. The figures in each cover take on a role of an ambiguous and futuristic woman who has not been actualized.

I wanted to show that I could not fully visualize something if it has not come to reality. Despite these women not being fully conceptualized, they are a collection of the women that have come before them. These figures not only symbolize the future power of the female but even more so reflect what women of the past have built.

All eight 24in x 30in prints were done on adhesive vinyl and were applied directly to the exhibition walls. The larger size allows for the hidden details within each print to be seen. Not only are they magazine covers but because of their size they take on the feeling of advertisements as well. The idea for this material came out of my interest in posters and desire for the works to mimic how media is presented in public spaces. By having these prints adhered right to the wall they resembled posters that are found in cities, plastered to building walls or wrapped around lamp posts. I wanted these prints to feel less like art and more like disturbed forms of media. Images that were alternate versions of what we may view as media. The vinyl also produced a two-dimensional quality, resembling not just a poster but also the screen through which we daily consume media. We are in the digital age of media where it is edited, recycled and mass produced even faster now with technology. My entire process relied on software rather than physical means. Not only was I interested in the digital and two-dimensional quality of the vinyl but also in it being temporary. These prints are not like typical prints that can just be taken down and saved. They are temporary, not meant to last, just like the milestones that they represent. The vinyl material helps to reiterate that the content on them is temporary. In the future, this work will be outdated, and irrelevant, as new achievements are made, and actual magazine covers are published. Just like real pieces of media, this work has a shelf life not only in content but also in material.

Motivation

The overall motivation for this work comes from a personal frustration that I know a lot of young women feel and continue to feel as they navigate the world. I feel as though my gender immediately labels me inferior to my male colleagues. Confidence and strength are celebrated societally for men, yet I feel like these attributes are not encouraged for women. I was tired of femininity being associated with things that are weak, light, and submissive. I don't want to be seen as fragile, incompetent, or incapable of doing something. I still feel like there are limitations on what I can achieve. Having these societal barriers that I am told I cannot cross only makes me want to cross them even more. I bring this attitude of "You can't tell me what to do," in my pieces. My pieces have an edge to them that reflects my own attitudes towards these barriers. Frustration as well as optimism made me want to explore the accomplishments that women have yet to achieve. I began to research the places that women have been excluded from and have not been deemed as good enough for. I found there is still a long list of exclusive spaces and steps to be made to accomplish those "firsts." I am tired that we are still playing catch up. I wanted my work to remind the audience of what women still have yet to achieve. Through my work, I express that our accomplishments are constantly being compared to what men have done. It feels like we've been forced into a race in which we are destined to lose as we're running with 50lbs attached to our backs. When we cross those finish lines it's a sympathetic pat on the back as we know we're coming in fifty to sixty years late. I wanted to imagine those historical days of achievement while still reflecting on why it took us so long.

To control how these future women are displayed I decided to take on the role the media. Like Rosler's work, I wanted to incorporate how the media affects and controls the things we see. These pieces are generated from historical images already published and viewed by millions.

This process of recycling media and content is very similar to the process of Artificial Intelligence (AI). I took on a similar role of AI as I was sucking up the cultural content and context in *TIME* to generate something new. I also utilized digital technology to generate each piece. Yet these new images, like AI generated images, are not exact or perfect. Because these women and accomplishments are not yet a reality, past images cannot fully actualize them. As my work evolved, I recognized that while my process related to tactics of AI, I am interjecting my own bias, thoughts, and emotions into this uncanny work. As discussed above my own attitudes are interwoven and expressed in these pieces through the small details. I don't believe AI could create this work because it does not have the same motivations and visual literacy as I do. These works are not only imagining a new future, but also embodying my own commentary on the past, present and future.

By utilizing images of the past, I set out to foresee what these accomplishments could really feel like in the future. I wanted to create a new representation of women in the media that I hadn't seen before, a view that not only reflected beauty but reflected strength, poise, and frustration. Instead of overly celebratory, I focused on how these moments will feel. In several of the pieces there is an overlying feeling of annoyance and satire, especially in *One Small Step for WoMan*. Two astronauts are depicted with this satirical approach; one is positioned as riding on a rocket, and the one standing on the moon is rolling her eyes. They are poised mocking this accomplishment because it feels at this point more of a formality than anything. Men were on the moon decades ago, and now society has deemed women smart enough or strong enough to go. The third astronaut stares at the viewer confronting them on the fact that women have never been to the Moon yet we already view that as an old scientific accomplishment. This piece has layers

of intensity and comedy all wrapped into one work. The detail within the eyes and positioning of each astronaut reflects an unsatisfied mood about this future accomplishment.



The New Bread Winner, 2023, Digital Print, 30 X 24in

Another piece that relies heavily on satire and attitude is *The New Bread Winner*. This piece depicts a collaged businesswoman whose features are pieced together from other women in previous *TIME* magazines. She is in a standard male business suit standing on the red *TIME* border. There is an old man who has been collaged to appear kneeling in a bathrobe in a submissive position holding a plate of food. A baby in a stroller sits behind the two figures. Dollar bill vines grow in the background with the top male CEOs, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg,

pecking out from behind the vines. The business CEO woman is frowning, unamused as the male dominated world around her is suddenly flipped by her being in a position of power. Her facial expression as well as the work's title reflects my own feelings towards the "women belong in the kitchen" stereotype. This piece was my way of combatting and making fun of the thought that women can't lead or achieve in the ways men can.

These two pieces both depict woman entering a new space, literally like the Moon or figuratively like a CEO position. This tone was created by manipulating the women's facial expressions in unimpressed looks as well as the small details like the Moon's expression or the older male servant. These two works encompass what this body of work is about as they imagine

women in new spaces while also commenting on how these achievements are long overdue. In *America's New Emotional President* and *Female Bureau of Investigation* I also reflect on the male gaze and stereotypes that fall on women in power. Without being too direct, I wanted to make fun of how women are seen in the media, and are sometimes seen as either as too bossy and emotional or overly sexualized. In *America's New Emotional President*, I placed (or positioned) shouting male political figures as if trying to calm down the stoic and reserved female president. This contrast between men being the emotional leaders and the calm women flips the stereotype on its head, mocking with humor rather than validating. It was important to not only reflect the professional barriers that these future women are overcoming but also the social ones as well. These stereotypes and figurative barriers are hidden within the detailed imagery and



America's New Emotional President, 2023, Digital Print, 30 X 24in

text, inviting the viewer for close inspection of each piece. By incorporating layers of deliberate ambiguous details, I was able to achieve several different layers of meaning. Each magazine cover image evokes optimism on the surface, yet beneath overwhelming annoyance about a gender gap in achievement that never closed.

Conclusion

It's About Time is a body of work that allowed me to imagine what I cannot see. By depicting these envisioned achievements for women, they become less imagined and more real. I

wanted to express my personal anger towards the stereotypes and limitations women face in a nuanced way both seriously and comically. It is my hope that my female audience may resonate with the figures staring back at them. That they may see themselves or their own feelings in these works. While temporary, these prints attempt to express how it feels to be a woman in today's time while imagining and providing visual evidence of what is to come.

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