

Mara Battiste **artist's statement**

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Those who *can*, do. Those who *can't*, teach. This unfortunate cliché is reworded, regurgitated, and reinforced in a multitude of ways. It seems to have almost become a belief system, specifically in the art world, and I will admit that at times I have been guilty of buying into it. I had teachers in the past that didn't do much to make me believe otherwise. They did not create their own work, and they did not provide contemporary, relevant resources to stimulate my creative growth. I was surrounded by peers who possessed enviable amounts of ingenuity and talent, but they held little to no regard for institutionalized education. My parents valued creativity, but never at the expense of practicality and financial stability. My family maintained that I could not make a living as an artist, therefore I must teach. My peers thought becoming a teacher would water down my artistic integrity, thus I would not be a true artist. Certain professors told me public education was below my talent, and I would be throwing my opportunities away to teach. I believed that I could do both, and I have done so with great success. I have been intellectually challenged, refined my artistic skills, and produced some of my most significant work as an educator. I have encouraged others to think critically, to create artwork of the highest caliber, and to pursue opportunities that seem out of reach. Those who *can*, *should* teach. Those who *can't*, should do something else.

As a multi-disciplinary artist, I am directly influenced by the lives and objects that inhabit my immediate environment, and indirectly shaped by social politics and culturally enforced gender stereotypes. I aim to explore and deconstruct predetermined roles by presenting visually seductive imagery that lures the viewer in, and then lingers to confront them with their reactions. I appropriate the identities of enduring over-generalizations and humanize them in order to make viewers question why they think the way they think. I have a wide range of aesthetic and conceptual influences that relate to this theme. I draw inspiration from Gustav Klimt's stylized

female allegories and Egon Schiele's confrontational personifications of emotional isolation. I am captivated by the overly exaggerated gender roles of film noir, pulp fiction, pin-up photography of the 1940's and 50's, and David Lynch's postmodern neo-noir interpretations of these classic icons. I am affected by a variety of feminist artists and writers, such as Margaret Atwood, Audrey Flack, Barbara Krueger, Sally Mann, and Cindy Sherman, who provide a more complex view of such two-dimensional characters. Above all, I am interested in the human condition. My intention has always been to create a record of ideas and people that deserve recognition, to present the intangible as tangible, to be critical yet empathetic, and to express visually what I cannot verbalize.

I am pursuing an MFA in Electronic and Time-Based Art because I am ready to move forward into new artistic territories. I have reached what feels like a saturation point in my work, and I am eager to further explore the elements of time and sound. I do not view graduate school as a stepladder out of my current position into another, but rather as a process of discovery and personal growth. I want to experience the satisfaction that comes from collaboration with artists from varying disciplines, and I am seeking a program that values a synthesis of traditional processes and new media. I am confident that Purdue can provide me with the immersion, focus, support, and guidance that I am looking for.