

Artist Statement

Orly Cogan

The tableaux I create are inspired by relationships. They evolve from personal mythologies. I work with vintage, printed fabrics and found embroideries made by women of previous and more modest eras. I act as a collaborator, modernizing their traditional work and altering its original purpose. The fabric becomes the foundation for a fantastical exploration.

Through my own hand stitching I update the content of the vintage embroidery to incorporate the unladylike reality and wit of contemporary women; their struggles and the stereotypes which must now be overcome. These struggles are in all probability very different from those of the earlier generation of women who originally embroidered the textiles to “feminize” their homes. Much of the subject matter touches upon story telling concerning fertility, power plays in relationships, sexuality, self image, isolation, vulnerability and beauty in the mundane.

I am drawn to the space between—dichotomies such as soft and tough, dirty and clean, fantasy and reality, especially as related to gender. My work explores common feminine archetypes and stereotypes, such as Madonna/Whore, Pin-Up Girl, Lolita, and the Femme Fatale. Searching for that odd thing, the Feminist Beauty Queen, I mix subversion with flirtation, humor with power, and intimacy with frivolity.

Ultimately, my quest is to tell a story about the role of women in our ever changing society, all the while honoring the labors of the past. In the process, I aim to provoke certain questions: What role do women want to play in society today? Who do we want to be? What kind of relationships do we want to have? Who are our role models? What are we teaching our children? I hope to ask all of this within the context of constantly shifting boundaries that define our relationships and our identities.