

**ROSIE THE PHOTOSHOPPED: AN EXPLORATION IN THE  
MEDIA'S USE OF WOMEN'S BODIES**

**Honors Thesis**

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For the Degree of Bachelor of Art**

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## Artist's Statement

"Rosie the Photoshopped" is a project meant to bring awareness to people of the media's twisted use of Photoshop on women's bodies. In society today there is an ever-present pressure to have the perfect body. That perfect body is something created by the media and does not actually exist. This is seen especially in ads and magazines. These ads are geared towards women and young girls and carry the messages "You're not good enough" and "If you don't look like this, you're something to be ridiculed." People twist and pinch the bodies of young women to extremes. Breasts are enlarged, waists are pulled in, and arms and legs are thinned and elongated. These unattainable shapes are placed under the public eye with the description of "perfect" when they are not.

My project is meant to open people's eyes. I created four life-size silhouettes of women with these "perfect" bodies and hung them in the library entryway. Each was a different color and height, but all were extremely thin and busty. Between the four bodies were facts about eating disorders and how dieting affects children. I left small buckets of markers next to each piece with a write-up of instructions. The idea was to encourage people to draw each others' outlines over the shapes. Nobody's shape would match up exactly with the silhouette because that body shape does not exist. My original plan was to photoshop the photoshopped body out at the end and have the rainbow of different body types.

This was a public art show where people were encouraged to add their own thoughts. Being something so public comes with risks. The artist has to step back and let people express themselves. I did do this, and the responses were extremely

varied. I had the obvious “Call for a good time” messages and hastily drawn anatomy. The first real type of response I received was positive. People wrote encouraging messages such as “You do you!” and “Don’t let anyone get you down”. They also did as the instructions requested and traced their body outlines in the colors I provided. Others had the opposite reaction and wrote negatively, like “All I want is a twinkie”. I received comments claiming that I was shaming dieting, shaming the media (which I was), and shaming young girls for being thin.

One response in particular made a grand impact. A young woman brought her own paint and supplies to the pieces and covered them in thick, blood-red writing. She changed the message of the pieces completely. Her goal was to make the blue figure into the “black” side of things and the red figure into the “white”. I found her there at midnight after someone called to say she’d been drawing on the figure for over three hours that day. Her words included “#alllivesmatter, #Icantbreathe, #freethenipple, and writings about equality. Her view on my project was on equality of the sexes and equality of race. When she found out the art was mine, she started crying and hugging me, saying I inspired her.

While I do not think she got the point of my thesis, she did have a very powerful response to my work and that is something I wanted. It was not exactly what I had planned, and she did make it impossible for me to Photoshop at the end due to the paint, but it was worth it. Her response caused more people to stop and look at my work because it was so large and messy.

This thesis project was very important to me. There is an extreme amount of pressure to be thin and perfect in today’s society. Anything over a size 12 is

considered plus-sized, while 14 is the national average for women. Girls are starting to diet at younger and younger ages. There has been an increase of reports of eating disorders. The numbers are increasing when they should be decreasing. People, especially young women, are ashamed of their bodies for no reason other than the media's words. This epidemic needs to end, and my hope is that my project brought this to light. The rainbow of shapes in Rosie the Photoshopped is just a fraction of the shapes in the world, and each and every one of them is unique and perfect. The media does not determine who you are. You do.