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Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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## Unspinning and a Constant Whirring

Laura Marina Salgarolo  
*Bard College*

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Laura Salgarolo  
Artist Statement  
May 2016

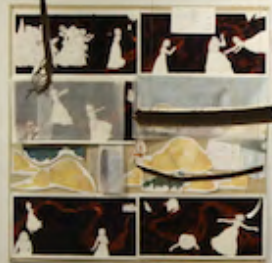
My senior thesis project is a living workspace and reading environment, housing a library of books and ephemera. This collection includes a series of books I made by hand, the foremost of which is a picture book I have written and illustrated. The books are “guarded” by several small librarian characters I invented and sculpted, and are shelved alongside classified and labeled ephemera and found objects. My aim has been to construct an environment for this library with a lamp-lit reading space and a work desk covered in process work and sketches. The exhibit will represent the merging and hybridization of the main elements, with the natural found objects and the constructed books and stories sharing the same space.

The picture book, entitled *Still Skin*, is a metafictional retelling of Rumpelstiltskin. The story recounts the miller’s daughter becoming aware of the reader’s gaze, escaping into the gutter of the book, re-emerging and interacting with the text and scenery of her original story. The miller’s daughter is exploited and manipulated, like so many fellow female fairytale characters, by everyone around her: her family, the king, and Rumpelstiltskin. What comes into play when we acknowledge that the author is a manipulator of characters and worlds, and what is my role as a new author in attempting to give this character a voice? My retelling derives from the simple, yet powerful inspiration of fairytales, and an interest in the historical context from which stories emerge, in their transformations across time and culture, and in the agency and responsibility of the author, the reader, and the character.

The books of this project are all in some way an attempt to discover the reason behind the resilience of the format of stories and books by creating new ones through alterations and subversions. For example the book, *Child’s Play*, explores the idea of characters leaving their stories in a purely physical way, with paper cutouts of children walking across strings through the pages, only to return to their book armed with a match. Other books deal with these questions in a less narrative fashion. *Second Sight* is a book of embossed images, created on the basis of sketches I executed by only touching and never looking at the objects I was supposed to draw. The embossings are interspersed with blind contour drawings of the people who searched for and gave me objects to draw. This book explores what it means to collect, to perceive, to record and translate content, and then to read it. By questioning the familiar format, I question myself and my assumptions, as well as where my ideas come from and how I selectively collect and store them.

In the beginning the collection of objects now part of my project was just that, a collection. I then began to think of them through different lenses: the potentially sinister desire to preserve or control transient things, to pin life piece by piece into small boxes, to arrange what exists, seemingly in disarray, in my own personal way, and whether or not that should be done. However, the link between my library of books and my library of objects emerged as I settled upon the organizing principle of the objects. Each item is labeled as an element of a fairytale, either a tangible symbol or an idea or theme. This reflects the cycle of creation, recycling familiar found symbols to convert or subvert and create anew.

The reading space exists to digest the found and the created. The workspace is perhaps too obvious an indication that this cycle, this process, doesn't stop. Questioning does not cease. Nothing is ever more than an attempt.

















Still Skin









PC3













Ch...

...kiss from a witch...  
...the citizen of...  
...part of an ungr...  
...matter. But...  
...on cases so...  
...be individual...  
...scientific fir...  
...that the...  
...of the...  
...affected



city ruins

Scouts caught









Send light  
Luzgavala, Iowa April 2016 1413

Enlarged images based on drawings  
received by only looking and never  
touching exhibits. Field center

CARD CATALOG

Production:  
Lush green morning  
in a small stream



Production: uses  
a sort of yeast  
to kind mixture







