

Art often functions as a powerful lens, examining and scrutinizing the culture from which it is created. Art can magnify difficult situations and bring challenges into crisp focus. It can call for attention, ask questions, clamor for change, or provide an escape from reality. Artists are inspired by the culture in which they live and each make individual contributions based on their personal experiences and unique points of view.

As I have become increasingly conscious of my connection to culture, I recognize that I am driven by the non-stop, bigger, better, faster culture of excess in which I find myself daily. My work confronts stress, busyness and endless demands—specifically the demands facing women. I witness women all around me struggling to fill several challenging roles simultaneously. Women are expected to be beautiful objects, caring mothers, supportive wives, diligent homemakers, and productive workers. I wonder, is striving to fulfill all of these expectations realistic? Who is making these demands? Can women choose one role over another without sacrificing an essential part of themselves? My work is fueled by observation of endless to-do lists, overflowing inboxes, seventy hour work weeks, miracle diets, cosmetic surgery, and the looming feeling that there is not enough time. I investigate the physical and mental manifestations of our frenzied pace such as anxiety attacks, negative self-images, and crumbling relationships.

*Embodiment* gives concrete form to these concerns. I use steel armatures, fabric, felt, and found objects to create figurative characters with which others can empathize. The pieces often feel worn out, weighted down, and overstuffed. Some speak specifically of struggle and frustration while others are vulnerable and uncomfortably exposed. I reveal personalities through puckers, stains, and other imperfections along with careful use of scale and gesture. Each piece I create relies on nagging familiarity and subtle humor to call attention to and interrogate the demanding culture in which we live.

Betsy Timmer, April 2008