Bare: the Modern Female Nude Uncovered

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BARE: THE MODERN FEMALE NUDE *UNCOVERED*

by

Tasha Determan

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
University Honors Program

Department of Fine Arts
The University of South Dakota
December 2021
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ABSTRACT

Bare: the Modern Female Nude Uncovered

Tasha Determan

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My honors thesis critiques representations of the female nude and advocates for diverse expression of the female body. The research encompasses two series of artwork and a written component examining and reflecting upon the artwork. The first series is Venus of Fruit, which assesses past depictions and associations of the female nude specifically objectification and sexualization in western art. The sculptures are four cast bronze nude figures within an apple, a banana, and a pineapple. The figures are Venuses trapped within nature, beauty, fertility, and sexualization. The second series is Venus Anew, which examines the naked and the nude within sexualization and combines the art nude with the sexual nude. It is a life-size installation of nine, hanging, red iron oxide drawings of nude and naked poses. Through the transition of poses within the drawings, I encourage the viewer to question their own perception of sensuality and nudity. Within both series I am artist and model, which I believe provides full autonomy and representation. This article examines my artistic expression of female nudity through my two series, Venus of Fruit and Venus Anew, and I argue that the series criticize the history of the female nude while advocating for new interpretations.

Keywords: nude, naked, art, sexuality, expression, Venus
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To challenge myself, I decided to create two series of artwork about the female nude. The first series is *Venus of Fruit*, which assesses past depictions and associations of the female nude specifically objectification and sexualization. The second series is *Venus Anew*, which challenges the sexual nature of nude, female poses. Within both series I am artist and model, which I believe provides full autonomy and representation. Throughout my artist education, I was bombarded by the depiction of the female nude and therefore decided to make art about it. From the start of my research, I was surprised by the interpretation of the female nude as sexual. Even in the contemporary world of today with advertising and porn, to dress as nude is to be naked and sexual, especially as a woman. The article “Genius and Gender,” Jane Silcock explains, “For centuries, perfection in the depiction of the nude form was perceived as one of the pinnacles, perhaps the pinnacle, of an academic art education, and the life-class was central to achieving this goal.”¹ Even today in art education at universities, the life drawing class is a requirement, and the nude is elevated. In a 2013 article about the impact of life drawing on teenage female art students, Clare Stanhope brought up two anxieties and fears of students, which were looking at nudity combined with body image, and the sexual association of nudity.² Twenty-first-century media, advertising, and human experiences sexualize the female nude while pushing a body image. It is time to overcome the history of the art nude while kickstarting a conversation about the artistic representation of the female body. This article examines my artistic expression of female nudity through my two series, *Venus of Fruit* and *Venus Anew*, and I argue that the series criticize the history of the female nude while advocating for new interpretations.
Venus of Fruit

The first series within the project is *Venus of Fruit*, which encompasses three sculptures: *Venus of Banana*, *Venus of Apple II*, and *Venus of Pineapple* (Fig. 1-12). The sculptures are cast bronze, life-size fruit sculptures of a pineapple, a banana, and an apple with a nude Venus figure carved into the fruit. Furthermore, the scale of the nudes is intimate, drawing the viewer to examine the figures. The nudes are polished to a yellow mirror finish, which softens, elevates, and accentuates female nudity while the surrounding fruit appears dark and moldy. The contrast of the treatment of the cast bronze from shiny to moldy denotes the overall theme of objectified Venuses. Each *Venus of Fruit* sculpture directly references a historical painting of Venus created by a male artist. *Venus of Pineapple* is sourced from *The Birth of Venus* by William-Adolphe Bouguereau; *Venus of Banana* originates from *The Birth of Venus* by Alexandre Cabanel; and *Venus of Apple* comes from *Venus Anadyomene* or *Venus Rising from the Sea* by Titian (Fig. 13, 14, 15).

All three figures have their arms removed with their heads and faces integrated into the fruit. The arms have been removed to emphasize the nudity of the figures while communicating the model’s lack in autonomy and representation. I believe that arms and faces are the two most expressive features of a full nude, and to remove both conveys sexual objectification. To be armless takes away the model’s ability to communicate, and reinstates the model as a vulnerable, frozen object. Additionally, the *Venus de Milo* with her missing arms is a major inspiration behind *Venus of Fruit* (Fig. 16). Previous scholars describe *Venus de Milo* as a timeless ideal of female beauty. Originally, in the statue, Venus is positioned with her left arm on a pillar and her right arm holding an apple, but the missing pieces were lost during shipment. Additionally,
“rumor has it that a noted curator made the fragments’ disappear, because they contradicted his reading of the work’s iconography.” In such a way, Venus is objectified into becoming armless. The incorporation and modification of arms and heads in Venus of Fruit denote the overall dichotomy of the male artist and objectified, anonymous, female model.

Venus of Fruit is meant to evoke the history of the canonized, western, traditional female nude in art. Historically, women were excluded from drawing and studying the nude model from the 16th-19th centuries but were painted as nude subjects since the Renaissance. Therefore, the power dynamic in western art was biased towards the male artist’s perspective of directing the female model. Many of these female nude depictions were titled with Venus and the models remained anonymous. “Sassy, silly or coy, the typical Venus is always irresistible human. She smiles, folding her arms or pulling her garments to cover her nakedness with calculated inefficiency.” As well, some Venus paintings do not depict the goddess, but instead a nude. For example, Venus of Urbino and Venus of Willendorf were titled with Venus because of the association of nudity and fertility (Fig. 17 & 18). At the start of the Renaissance the female nude reemerged and, “by the early nineteenth century, Americans had accepted that the female form ‘entirely without drapery’…was termed a Venus.” Thus, the female nude is often interpreted as sexual or erotic.

Now given the art historical context of female artists and the Venus, artwork depicting the female nude may be sexually exploitative. As explained in an article in The Journal of Sex Research, “Men acting as spectators of women’s nudity have been construed as objectifying because they reinforce the traditional power dynamic that positions men above women.” Therefore, within the Venus of Fruit series, the Venuses are trapped within sexualization and objectification; they are stuck within the confines of the male gaze. There are several actions that
fall in the realm of objectification such as being seen and treated as a physical object with no regard to mental status, being nameless, and being treated as a sexual plaything. Within the three historical paintings, each were created by a male artist directing an anonymous female model, which is objectifying. The integration of the nude into the fruit serves to represent the objectification of the male artist to the female model, and therefore, trapping the female nude into such a representation as the Venus.

Moreover, each Venus of Fruit has its own character and spirit. Of the three sculptures, Venus of Banana represents the common, historical theme of the reclining nude in nature. As explained by Caroline Winterer in an article, “Recumbence alone—even clothed—identified a woman as a Venus.” The reclining nude became popular with Giorgione’s 1510 Sleeping Venus, which “established the classic formula for the reclining female nude” and Giorgione discovered “the use of twisting postures to eroticize the female body” (Fig. 19). The painting Birth of Venus by Alexandre Cabanel is a rendition of the reclining nude with an exaggerated erotic twist of the waist. The painting features a very white, nude Venus reclining on a bed of waves; Venus has just been birthed as a virginal, complacent, youthful, nude female. Similarly, Venus of Banana is also on a bed of nature—a banana, which is beautifully opened to reveal an intimate female nude. The banana peel is folded back into itself in smooth, organic lines like a flower. In replicating the pose, the entirety of the figure is included except for the head and arms, which disappear into the banana peel. The intimate quality of this work emphasizes the ability to consume the female nude like food. Venus of Banana is meant to signify and criticize the common representation of the female nude as predominantly reclining. To take a bite out of Venus of Banana would bring no thoughts of agency or identity of the Venus, she is simply a sexual female nude ready to be enjoyed.
Venus of Apple II signifies the burden of the female nude within sexualization. When viewing Venus of Apple II, the nude is carved into the core of the apple, as though she is eaten and left as garbage. Within the core are the seeds of the apple, which are symbolic of fertility. Some depictions of Venus are linked to fertility, such as the statuette Venus of Willendorf. With her emphasized breasts, abdomen, and vulva, she is interpreted as a fertility figure, but the true utility of the statuette is unknown. Along with the Venus of Willendorf, Venus of Apple II is also inspired by Titian’s Venus Rising from the Sea. In Titian’s painting, Venus is wading through thigh-high water, clutching her long hair with both hands, and looking over her left shoulder. In the artwork Venus of Apple II, Titian’s Venus is transformed from a comfortable, curious female nude to a naked, hunched over female. In the bronze sculpture, the upper half of the apple core expands into the top of the apple, which serves as the nude figure’s head and neck. Compositionally, the weight is at least three times greater than the body. Unfortunately, the female nude must bear the weight of common stereotypes, objectification, and the lack of diverse expression. As with the other Venus of Fruit artworks, the arms were removed in Venus of Apple II to communicate the model’s lack of autonomy in a male artist’s painting—the model cannot defend or input on their own representation. Of the three Venus sculptures, Venus of Apple II is the least romanticized and most blatant.

Venus of Pineapple embodies a combination of the previous two sculptures within objectification, consumption, and representation. It portrays the classical Greek depiction of contrapposto on the female nude, which is an asymmetrical pose where one leg holds most of the weight. I specifically used a contrapposto pose in the Venus of Fruit series because the pose is relaxed, confident, and active. As well, the most popular image of Venus is the painting The Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli, in which Venus is standing contrapposto while shielding her
nudity (Fig. 20). Moreover, the historical painting *The Birth of Venus* by William-Adolphe Bouguereau illustrates a scene of Venus being transported on her shell while surrounded with putti, nymphs, and centaurs. Venus is standing with extreme contrapposto as she raises her hands over her head to display her nudity and play with her hair. Venus is once again depicted with bare mons pubis and as a thin, young, long-haired nude. Moreover, Bouguereau’s Venus is transformed from a comfortable, nude goddess to a nonconsenting, anonymous female nude in *Venus of Pineapple*.

Additionally, *Venus of Pineapple* is a life-size bronze sculpture of a pineapple with a female nude carved into the core, as though the delicious fruit was just eaten, and the leftovers are ready to be thrown. The pineapple leaves appear as a large mask resting on the figure’s shoulders that burst outwards into the sky. In contrast to the *Venus of Apple*, it is much more dynamic than if a boulder were sitting on the nude’s head. *Venus of Pineapple* embodies the exoticization and sexualization of Eastern and African cultures. The mask on the pineapple nude brings connotations of African Masks, which were historically, culturally appropriated by western artists. For example, Pablo Picasso painted *Les demoiselles d’Avignon* in 1907, which features five nude female prostitutes of which one is wearing an African mask. (Fig. 21)12 Specifically, *Venus of Pineapple* condemns the cultural appropriation of Eastern and African societies. In the symbolism of the artwork, the association of the Other is derived through the exotic nature of pineapple. Beginning in the 19th century, a popular demand amongst western audiences for oriental genre scenes, particularly of the harem, arose. Painted by western male artists, the women are portrayed as passive and voiceless concubines or odalisques waiting within a decorated Oriental interior to entertain a male.13 Even though reclining poses were more common there are several paintings at the time that feature a contrapposto odalisque, such as
Jean-Léon Gérôme’s *Slave Market* and Henri Adrien Tanoux’s *Beauté du harem* and *La favorite du sultan* (Fig. 22-24). Through the many inspirations of *Venus of Pineapple*, the dynamic masked nude stands against sexual objectification and eroticization of the Other.

Furthermore, fruit is utilized in *Venus of Fruit* as a symbol to signify the tropes of the female nude in art because of its connotations around fertility, beauty, and most importantly objectivity. The artworks were cast and carved using real fruit to represent the physical process of objectifying the Venus. The rest of the fruit is covered with a dark green and brown patina symbolizing molding fruit. For the practical process, both an apple and pineapple were selected because they each contain cores and parts that are often thrown away after being consumed. As though the nude too would be thrown away with the seeds and core after the fruit flesh was eaten. With the third artwork, instead of carving into the banana peel, I decided to carve into the flesh and use the peel as framing. Depending on how much banana is eaten, the entire nude may be devoured. I specifically wanted to include a banana because it is phallic. In 1972, Linda Nochlin created “Buy My Bananas,” which is a photograph of a male model holding a tray of bananas at thigh height near his groin (Fig. 25). He is nude except for his stockings and shoes. As well, this photograph is juxtaposed next to “Buy My Apples,” which is a photograph of a nude woman holding a tray of apples to her bosom while wearing stockings and shoes. In *Venus of Banana*, the nude represents the model, and the phallic banana represents the male artist and therefore the power dynamic between them. The female model is directed and represented by the male artist; while at the same time, historically, the female model is excluded from participating as an artist.

Prior to the conception of the series, I created *Venus of Apple*, which was less refined and cast in copper for implications of Aphrodite. Both the original *Venus of Apple* and *Venus of
Apple II have inspiration from the story of “The Judgment of Paris” in which Aphrodite wins the beauty contest and receives a golden apple as her prize.\textsuperscript{14} As well, apples play a crucial role within the understanding of nakedness in the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. The Fall occurs when Adam and Eve eat an apple from the Tree of Knowledge after being forbidden by God. Soon after both Adam and Eve become aware of their nakedness, which is indicative of their guilt, moral shame, and sexuality. Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve’s nudity represented the purity of their thought.\textsuperscript{15} Within Christian history and Greek myth, apples play a unique role in beauty and nudity, which is exemplified in Venus of Apple II.

In contrast to apples, pineapples do not possess the rich myth and history; however, the farming of pineapples as an exotic fruit is inspirational to Venus of Pineapple. Ruth Levitt explains the history and cultivation of pineapples in her article “‘A Noble Present of Fruit’: A Transatlantic History of Pineapple Cultivation” in the journal Garden History in 2014. She explains that around 2000 BC, pineapples were first being cultivated by the Tupi-Guarani Indians near the borders of Brazil and Argentina.\textsuperscript{16} The pineapple was traded by tribes and grew into the Caribbean islands. By the sixteenth century, pineapples were in South America, the Azores, East and West Africa, India, China, and Southeast Asia by Portuguese explorers. Pineapples continued to be cultivated and spread to tropical regions throughout the world in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and became a popular export. Pineapples were often brought back to European elites in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as an exotic trophy.\textsuperscript{17} Additionally, pineapples were cultivated for white occupants on sugar and coffee plantations in Jamaica, which relied on slaves shipped from Africa in the seventeenth century. At first, whole pineapple plants and candied pineapple were exported to America and Europe before the invention of faster steamships. As explained in the article, “the philosopher John Locke (1632-
1704) discussed the unseen and untasted pineapple as the symbol of an exotic object which could not be known until it had been seen and tasted.”¹⁸ I believe this quote exemplifies the exotic nature of the pineapple within *Venus of Pineapple*. As though, the female nude and pineapple fruit represent an exotic object that cannot be understood until tasted and seen. Through the symbology of a pineapple, *Venus of Pineapple* represents the objectification, exoticization, and sexualization of Eastern and African cultures.

Moreover, I am both model and artist within the nude figures of *Venus of Fruit*. I believe this is significant in the representation of historical objectification in the series. Women were historically excluded from drawing and studying the nude figure, but instead were included as models for male artists. Through this perspective, the female nude or muse is historically objectifying, because it reinstates the traditional power dynamic of men above women and in some cases treats the female muse as a physical object or sexual plaything. As stated in an article, “A power imbalance between artist, model or muse seems inevitable, perhaps dependent upon their relationship and questions of gender or sexuality of the participants.”¹⁹ Therefore, in *Venus of Fruit*, I am both artist and muse which promotes body autonomy, agency, and the inclusion of the female perspective. Instead of stylizing the female nude or even representing “all” women, I used my own uncensored female body. In *Venus of Fruit*, each nude is based off a Venus painting created by a male artist. I utilized my own posed, personal nude instead of the referenced paintings to create the nudes in fruit. In conclusion, *Venus of Fruit* criticizes the historical objectification of the female nude through the transformation of fruit and historical paintings.
Venus Anew

The second series within the project is Venus Anew, which is an installation of nine drawings that feature full-scale nude self-portraits (Fig. 26-29). The drawings are hung vertically with six drawings facing backwards or forwards into two rows. The other three drawings are set perpendicularly between the three rows with the seventh drawing an outlier. The nudes are hung elevated above the viewer in a manner that surrounds them, so that the viewer compares their interpretations of the female, art nude to the contemporary nude and their clothed body in the installation. Venus Anew is created using parchment paper. Parchment paper is silicone-coated paper commonly used in cooking, which gives the drawings a translucent quality. I specifically used parchment paper because it is cheap and experimental. As well, my drawings are drawn with red iron oxide powder, rust, which gives the drawings a reddish-brown hue. I was inspired at the time by sanguine, or red chalk and crayon, which has long been used in drawings by many old masters. Each drawing in Venus Anew features a vertical slit in the paper, which splits the nude in half. The slit represents the line between the naked versus the nude. It asks the viewer if the nude is vulnerably naked, powerfully nude, or both.

Moreover, Venus Anew as a series and installation examines naked versus nude through the differentiation of sexuality. Specifically, the female body when nude is automatically interpreted as sexual. Even among the poses in Venus Anew, the nudes are automatically erotic. Historically, the sexual nude was excluded from the art nude. However, in contemporary art, the two are thoroughly combined. In my series Venus Anew, I combine the art nude with sexuality to reexamine the contemporary interpretation of the female nude. Historically, there is a separation between the naked and the nude in order to elevate the art nude as a genre. Today, naked and
nude are divided by definition, but exist together in art and media. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, nude is devoid of a natural or conventional covering, and naked is not covered by clothing\textsuperscript{21}. However, the fourth definition of naked is unarmed and defenseless.\textsuperscript{22} I believe that nude and naked are analogous with a difference. To be naked implies vulnerability, weakness, and defenselessness. To be nude implies strength, power, and confidence.

Furthermore, I examine naked versus nude through the sexual interpretation of poses because sexuality can be both vulnerable and powerful. In my \textit{Venus Anew} series, I aim to destroy the historical elevation of the art nude and reestablish the dialogue around naked versus nude. The nudes in the nine drawings are posed in a variety of forms both unsexual and sexual in order to examine naked versus nude in both contexts. I emphasize the variety of poses and interpretations of the female nude to obscure the line between the naked and the nude. Through the transition of poses, I encourage the viewer to question their own perceptions of sexuality, nudity, media, art, and life.

Historically there is a separation between the art nude and the pornographic nude, where the nude is elevated over the naked. The historical discourses created by Kenneth Clark, John Berger, and Lynda Nead about the naked versus the nude are inspirational to \textit{Venus Anew}. In 1956, Kenneth Clark stated in \textit{The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form}:

To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment most of us feel in that condition. The word ‘nude,’ on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed.\textsuperscript{23}
Within Clark’s definition, his goal is to deny the sexuality of the nude and separate the art nude from the public nude. In 1972, John Berger explained in *Ways of Seeing*, “To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object…to become a nude.”24 Berger viewed nakedness as a process and not a state of being. In 2012, Flaminio Gualdoni wrote in *The History of the Nude*, “the nude as an artistic genre of representation was invented for the purpose of distinguishing between the naked and the nude, thus using the beauty of art to exorcise what could not be eliminated from the beauty of the physical body, that is, the seductive rapture of the gaze, bodily desire.”25 According to Gualdoni’s explanation, the genre of Venus or nude paintings utilizes bodily desire to entrance the viewer, but elevates it to a level of social acceptability. Furthermore, Clark and Berger promoted the elitist distinction between the art nude and pornographic nude. In 1990, Lynda Nead explained in *The Female Nude: Pornography, Art, and Sexuality*, “Only by continuing to examine the complexity with which such categorizations as pornography and art map out broad cultural notions of the licit and the illicit and societal notions of male and female sexuality will we come to a more subtle understanding of the implications of images of the female nude.”26 Within her article, Nead does not differentiate between the naked and the nude and instead directs her readers to further investigate their definitions. Within *Venus Anew*, the series help the viewer to do exactly that, which is to breakdown, explore and consider their personal definitions around female nudity.

One of the key components within the *Venus Anew* series is the life-size installation. The drawings are interspersed in the space to allow viewers to walk in-between and to weave themselves through the hanging panels. The viewers are surrounded by multiple portraits at once in order to compare several nudes along with their own clothed body. Each drawing is six feet
and eight inches tall; the nudes are full-scale at about five feet and eight inches. Since the nudes are full-scale, they become more real and tangible to the viewer compared to smaller works like *Venus of Fruit*. As well, the nudes are rendered realistically from digital photographs. The drawings suspend about a foot or two above the ground; therefore, the nudes sway at an elevated height like moving statues. The movement of the artwork, which is influenced by the viewer’s motion, communicates that the nude installation is breathing, and that the viewer can contribute to the perception of the female nude. When experiencing the installation, the viewer will meander around thinking about nude representation through the poses of myself—a white, uncensored, ordinary female.

Rather than employing a multitude of models within *Venus Anew*, I utilized my own nude, once again. Furthermore, I drew my own, personal nude to directly communicate with the viewer, to make myself vulnerable, and to present the most authentic nude. Furthermore, in the drawings, I am nude with my hair in a ponytail, and my pubic hair unshaved. In order to present a genuine nude, I embraced my features instead of hiding them. In the drawings, the nudes’ faces are blurred to bring focus to the pose of the body. Moreover, there are a few drawings that make eye contact with the viewer, which directly involves and connects them to the nude. Eye contact is broken but implied in the blurred faces. Additionally, the drawings are digitally realistic, which makes the life-sized nudes more real and alive.

Through personal interpretation, certain poses even when replicated will carry a different tone. As explained in an article, “While it is true that downward gaze can represent a form of submission, it can also represent an element of seduction or dominance. As such, the meanings of these gestures…may be more readily contested than scholars have thus recognized.”

For example, *Venus Anew no. 3* is looking downward at her own buttocks representing an element of
seduction (Fig. 30). The poses in *Venus Anew* offer a variety of interpretations: scientific, stiff, naked, nude, sexual, confident, passive, and vulnerable.

The most significant and utilized pose of *Venus Anew* is the Venus *pudica* in which the nude is covering themselves with their hands, drawing the eye in a sexual manner. A popular artwork featuring the Venus *pudica* is Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus*. The Venus *pudica* originated from a statue created by Praxiteles called *Aphrodite of Knidos* (Fig. 31). In the original *Aphrodite of Knidos*, the female nude is elegantly standing in contrapposto with her right arm bent, covering her pudenda. More variations of the *Aphrodite of Knidos* were inspired, and the gesture changed to the left arm covering the pudenda and the right arm covering the breasts. In *Venus Anew no. 5*, the depicted pose includes the Knidian gesture of the Venus *pudica* (Fig. 32). The nude is standing contrapposto with one hand covering the genitals and the other hand covering the breasts and nipples. As written in *The Evolution of Allure* by George L. Hersey, “the implication is that the goddess…has noticed that someone—the viewer, the artist—has caught sight of her…and she is doing her best to cover herself.” Because the figure is covering her nudity, she is also drawing the eye to such areas, which intrigues the viewer to imagine what is underneath. To cover the breast and genital areas is to be aware that those areas are sexually interpreted and therefore vulnerable. Furthermore, to cover one’s own nudity would imply that they may be nude for “pure,” or unsexual reasons, like taking a bath or being born from a scallop shell. The Venus *pudica* implies themes of purity and susceptibility. In contrast to the pure aesthetic of the Venus *pudica*, a major interpretation of *Venus Anew no. 5* is the vague implication that she is masturbating.

Additionally, there are multiple variations of the Venus *pudica* within *Venus Anew*. The variations created in the series are most commonly covering her breasts instead of her genitals,
drawing the eye to those areas. Poses that differentiate away from sexual nature are considered purer, and the arrangement of her arms is crucial in the sexual interpretation of the nude. The “purest” pose is *Venus Anew no. 1*, which features a nude standing straight and facing forward; her arms are crossed over her breasts with her hands on either collarbone and her face turned upwards (Fig. 33). In comparison to the original Venus *pudica*, the nude is not covering her genitals and is avoiding eye contact, which detaches her from the viewer and sexual interpretation. *Venus Anew no. 1* is the purest pose based on the stiff engagement to the viewer with the face turned, eyes closed, and arms crossed.

The second Venus *pudica* variation is *Venus Anew no. 6*, which is also nicknamed *Plastic Roses* (Fig. 34). This work of art is inspired by *Marilyn Monroe, Pink Roses, From the Last Sitting* which are a set of photographs taken by Bert Stern of Marilyn Monroe (Fig. 35). In the selected photo, Monroe is nude holding two, fabric, pink roses in either hand. One pink rose is held to a breast with her hand, and the second rose is held to her neck while her arm covers her breast. Monroe is sexually gazing at the camera with heavy lidded eyes. The image cuts off at her hips, where she is only wearing white underwear. The photograph is black and white except for the pink roses. Furthermore, in *Venus Anew no. 6*, Marilyn Monroe’s sexual pose is reproduced into a full, life-sized nude. In the drawing, the pink roses are replaced with white plastic bags. The plastic bags represent the industrial and everyday use of plastic in contemporary culture. In contrast to *Pink Roses*, *Venus Anew no. 6* is less sexually charged because the face is blurred, and the pose is held stiffly. Even though the face is blurred, *Venus Anew no. 6* makes eye contact with the viewer, but the full connection is lost. In both nudes, their nudity is covered but they remain very sexual images like the Venus *pudica*. Additionally, the use of plastic bags or pink roses emphasizes the hidden breasts. Compared to other *Venus Anew*
nudes, *Venus Anew no. 6* is the only nude wearing underwear instead of the common dark patch of pubes. *Venus Anew no. 6* depicts a sexual pose of a historical sex figure but remains one of the most covered nudes.

The third variation of Venus *pudica* is *Venus Anew no. 8* (Fig. 36). In this drawing, the nude is covering both of her breasts and nipples with her hands. She is standing three-quarters from her back. In the image her buttocks is clearly rendered, but her nipples are covered emphasizing them. Her head is turned back making eye contact with the viewer. Is *Venus Anew no. 8* innately sexual? Does covering oneself absolve one of sexuality?

One of the most sexual poses of the series is *Venus Anew no. 3*. This drawing and pose is inspired by the statue *Venus Callipyge*, which means “Venus of the beautiful buttocks” since she lifts her dress to reveal her lovely buttocks (Fig. 37). The statue depicts a young woman looking over her right shoulder down at her buttocks. At the same time, she is lifting her dress from the back over her left shoulder while also lifting the front and showing her hairless mons pubis. As well, one nipple is peeking out of the neckline of the dress. In *Venus Anew no. 3*, the same pose is reproduced with the nude gazing at her revealed buttocks while a breast and nipple falls out of the neckline. Of the *Venus Anew* drawings, *Venus Anew no. 3* is the only nude that removes clothes to entice the viewer’s eye. Moreover, *Venus Anew no. 3* represents the allure of uncovering the clothed, female nude, and the sexual function of clothes or lingerie. Furthermore, the pose is also very sexual because the nude is looking at her own buttocks and pointedly drawing the viewer’s eye to it.

The rest of the nudes in *Venus Anew* are more pure and less sexual but invite the viewer to question their intent and interpretation. I include these drawings to help the viewer develop a distinction between the naked and the nude through sexualization of the body. *Venus Anew no. 4*
depicts a confident artistic expression of the female nude (Fig. 38). The nude is posed standing contrapposto with her arms folded over her head with her torso stretched. Her vague face is looking directly at the viewer. In such a pose, the female nude is directly challenging the viewer with her nudity. Rather than hiding her nudity, she flaunts and accentuates it with her assertive pose. In *Venus Anew no. 7*, the same pose is replicated, but displayed from the back view of the model. Rather than the female nude flaunting her nudity, it is hidden, creating mystique from the back perspective (Fig. 39). In *Venus Anew no. 2*, the female nude is standing straight with her back to the viewer and her arms pulled in front of her (Fig. 40). In contrast to *Venus Anew no. 7*, the female nude in *Venus Anew no. 2* is no longer confident; her arms are lowered, potentially covering her mons pubis and the assertive contrapposto is lost. Instead, the female nude appears much more vulnerable shielded away from the viewer’s eyes. The final drawing of the series is *Venus Anew no. 9* (Fig. 41). It is the most frank and honest of the nudes. In the drawing, the nude is facing the viewer straight on with her arms hanging loosely at her sides. Her nudity is glaringly obvious with her nipples and pubic hair on display. The lack of intent or interplay of her arms communicates the unsexual nature of the portrait. While challenging the viewer’s ideas of female nudity, *Venus Anew* aims to open the viewers’ eyes to more representation and acceptance of the female nude in media.

In summary, *Venus Anew* examines the naked and the nude within sexualization and combines the art nude with the sexual nude. The series creates a life-size installation about female nudity for the viewer to interpret. *Venus of Fruit* criticizes the objectification of the female nude within western art. One of the prime symbols in both series is the use of arms. In *Venus of Fruit*, the nudes’ arms were removed to represent the lack of a female model’s autonomy and agency in the gaze of western historical art. Whereas in *Venus Anew*, the nudes’
arms communicate the intent and interplay of the model. Overall, the series in exhibition together criticize representations of the female nude and advocate for diverse expression of the female body.

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9 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 108.
18 Ibid., 109.

22 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 15.
Bibliography


Figure 1 & 2
Tasha Determan
*Venus of Banana*, 2020-2021
Cast Bronze
Figure 3 & 4
Tasha Determan
*Venus of Banana*, 2020-2021
Cast Bronze
Figure 5 & 6
Tasha Determan
Venus of Apple II, 2020-2021
Cast Bronze
Figure 7 & 8  
Tasha Determan  
Venus of Apple II, 2020-2021  
Cast Bronze
Figure 9 & 10
Tasha Determan
Venus of Pineapple, 2020-2021
Cast Bronze
Figure 11 & 12
Tasha Determan
Venus of Pineapple, 2020-2021
Cast Bronze
Figure 13
William-Adolphe Bouguereau
*The Birth of Venus, 1879*
Oil on canvas
Musée d’Orsay, Paris
Figure 14
Alexandre Cabanel
*The Birth of Venus*, 1863
Oil on canvas
Musée d’Orsay, Paris
Figure 15
Titian
*Venus Anadyomene*, c. 1520
Oil on canvas
Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh
Figure 16
Alexandros of Antioch
*Venus de Milo*, 150-125 BC
Parian marble
Louvre, Paris
Figure 17
Titian
*Venus of Urbino*, 1534
Oil on Canvas
Uffizi Gallery, Florence
Figure 18
Josef Szombathy, archeologist
_Venus of Willendorf_, c. 24,000-22,000 B.C.E.
Limestone, Red ochre
National History Museum, Vienna
Figure 19
Giorgione; Titian
*Sleeping Venus*, c. 1510
Oil on canvas
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Figure 20
Sandro Botticelli
*The Birth of Venus*, c. 1484-1486
Tempera on canvas
Uffizi Gallery, Florence
Figure 21
Pablo Picasso
*Les demoiselles d’Avignon*, 1907
Oil on canvas
The Museum of Modern Art, New York City
Figure 22
Jean-Léon Gérôme
*Slave Market*, 1866
Oil on canvas
The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown
Figure 23
Henri Adrien Tanoux
*Beauté du harem*, 1912
Oil on canvas
Figure 24
Henri Adrien Tanoux
*La favorite du sultan*
Oil on canvas
Figure 25
Linda Nochlin
*Buy My Bananas*, 1972
Photograph and found photograph from late 19th century French magazine
Figure 26 & 27
Tasha Determan
*Venus Anew* Installation, 2020-2021
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Tasha Determan

_Venus Anew_ Installation, 2020-2021

Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 30
Tasha Determan
*Venus Anew no. 3*, 2020-2021
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 31
Restorer: Ippolito Buzzi
_Aphrodite of Knidos, Cnidian Aphrodite, Roman marble copy of Praxiteles, 4__th__ century BC_
Marble
Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Alte
Figure 32
Tasha Determan
_Venus Anew no. 5, 2020-2021_
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 33
Tasha Determan
*Venus Anew no. 1*, 2020-2021
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 34
Tasha Determan
Venus Anew no. 6, 2020-2021
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 35
Bert Stern; Marilyn Monroe
*Pink Roses*, from the “Last Sitting,” 1962
Photograph
Figure 36
Tasha Determan
*Venus Anew no. 8*, 2020-2021
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 37
*Venus Callipyge or Aphrodite Kallipygos*, 1st or 2nd century BC
White marble
National Archeological Museum, Naples
Figure 38
Tasha Determan
Venus Anew no. 4, 2020-2021
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 39
Tasha Determan
*Venus Anew no. 7*, 2020-2021
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 40
Tasha Determan
*Venus Anew no. 2, 2020-2021*
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)
Figure 41
Tasha Determan
*Venus Anew no. 9, 2020-2021*
Poplar wood, parchment paper, red iron oxide (rust)