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The Paper Dolls Project Statement

The *Paper Dolls* Project is a collaborative 4-artist residency at the Providence Athenaeum in the Winter of 2013, culminating in an exhibit of work at the AS220 Project Space/Reading Room and an Athenaeum salon discussion in April. Jiyoung Chung, Jacqueline Frole, Holly Gaboriault, and Francoise McAree are the participating artists. Kate Wodehouse, the Providence Athenaeum Collections Librarian, collaborated closely with the artists in their research and was integral to the project.

A Cindy Sherman video, entitled “Doll Clothes”, an animation of a human paper doll, was the catalyst of the idea for this project. A seminal piece for Sherman, it established the conceptual groundwork for a lot of her later work—transforming an innocuous childhood pastime into something both provocative and conceptual.

Like Sherman’s video, the theme of *Paper Dolls* is not intended as a direct or literal interpretation but rather provides the construct for development of this project.

Paper--“*Paper* has (arguably) emerged as of the essential medium of the century”, (Art News, Art Review, Nov. 13, p. 123) and all the participating artists work primarily with “paper” as their main medium.

Dolls--All the artists are women and 3 work with depictions and representations of women.

Additionally, the subject of *Paper Dolls* has an immediate ability to tap into a universal nostalgic appeal--almost every girl on the planet has played with paper dolls--while accessing some individual and personal response-- no matter what age a woman is, she has a paper doll memory.

Within the framework of *Paper Dolls*, the artists were asked to come up with 3 individual topics. The list is as follows: Doll culture in 1978, beauty, textiles, army brigade movements and uniforms, dance steps (with shoe prints and lines), marionettes, wallpaper samples, parasols, cabinets of curiosities, historical female figures (written), silhouettes and optical illusions. Working closely with Kate at the Athenaeum over the course of 3 months, the artists referenced the wide variety of books pulled on these various tangential subjects to develop their individual projects.

This project is intentionally collaborative and opportunities for exchange, overlap and discussion have been deliberate to encourage an ongoing dialogue about individual discoveries and progress of each artist’s work. For the Salon, the artists will discuss navigating through the process, highlighting specific books, images, and sources that proved pivotal, along with discoveries and decisions they made during the various phases. The choice of working at the Athenaeum was important for the project. Many artists use the Athenaeum as resource for inspiration and information. The trajectory of research there is rarely linear and projects like this set out to illuminate it’s often oblique and rather circuitous, complicated, layered, surprising and magical nature-- from beginning inspiration to finished work. AS220’s Reading Room at the Project Space is the ideal venue for exhibiting the resulting work—its size and format lends itself really well to this kind of project. Ultimately, the exhibit and dialogue allow for a forum to augment the experience of such work.