

2015

## She Pricked Her Finger

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### Recommended Citation

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SHE PRICKED HER FINGER

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The Department of Art

by

Veronica Kay Hallock

B.F.A., Herron School of Art and Design, 2012

May 2015

In memory of  
Bill and Ruth Armand

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my Baton Rouge family, those whom have gotten me through the thick and thin when family was so far away. Thank you to my amazing committee whom have given me countless advice and patience. To Leslie Koptcho and Kimberly Arp who have helped me to become the artist I am today, and for putting up with and encouraging all my absurdity. To Eric Euler for all our travels, we've been through everything together. To all my girlfriends especially Leah Hamel, Kelsey Livingston, and Masy Hebert. When I was blowing my nose in banana leaves, they brought me tissues, when I wanted to dance all night they were my partners. And most importantly to my family, those still with me and those who are only with me in memory. They have shown me countless support my entire life, and are still a dominant force of positivity and encouragement. These three years have been some of the most challenging; and with this overwhelming amount of support, I have risen to the challenges and grown into a better artist and person.

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## ABSTRACT

*She Pricked Her Finger* transports the viewer into a landscape of the bucolic and the macabre. Large scale sculptures and drawings create a panorama-environment which explores ideas of familial and geographical identity through themes of mortality and loss. Her work utilizes a self-generated folktale as a vehicle for expressing her experiences with new landscapes and many family deaths. Ultimately Veronica's work reconciles the transition of home; the journey we take from our childhood home to the new homes we build.

## IN THE MESS OF IT

I pricked my finger in the mess of it. But the little bead of blood was lost in the ocean of embalming fluids and viscera. Little lacey flowers grew from the mingle of death and stunted life. Warm-white, like the lace of an aged wedding dress, and in them a little sprig of blood red. I picked one and idly played with it. I can't help but remember the story of Persephone. She too was on her way to meet Death in the underworld. But her journey had been easy, one of love, or perhaps lust, maybe just possession. I pulled a little section off...He loves me....I pulled another...He loves me not.

It had been strange when he came to me. As a young girl, I remember seeing him in sidelong ways. If I squinted too closely he disappeared. He was like the colors you see when you close your eyes, or the green halo after staring at a lightbulb for too long. But he was always there, not by the casket or by the mourners, but in the family room in the back, staring at the platters of food.

He had been there when my cousin Melanie died of Leukemia, she was in the third grade. It had been a fun funeral, all my favorite cousins had been there.

He had been there when my Great Aunt Margie's head had met a hammer and she was pushed down a flight of stairs. He seemed as surprised as I did about the open casket.

And He was there when my Great Grandmother passed away just shy of her 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday. We had all been disappointed.

And every time I caught him by the spread, staring at the finger sandwiches and seven layer dip.

## SNAP

The spring in the trap let fly.      Empty.

I fell to the ground, digging little holes in the earth with my toes. How easy it is for some to get to the underworld. The Vikings did it by fire, we bury ours in soil. I read somewhere once that the Vietnamese let vultures peck at them till they are nothing. Valkyries seemed more pleasant than that, but then again, I think that is only in battle that they take your soul. I dug my fingers deeper into the soil and pushed with my hands to meet the worms.

I used to worship the land. The rolling pastures as they rose up to the wooded river bluffs and salt licks. Sycamores lining the banks. Their white bare torsos climbing to meet their lover's touch in the sky had been my personal totems. Now, I understood the harvest was only bountiful because we give ourselves to the land. We plough her and work her, we move machines over her supple form, and we say we rape her, but it is my family that feeds her lust. Their bones are the soil we till. It is their flesh that I am nourished by, and that I grow strong and upright in. Her quilted landscape is the swaddling cloth of corpses. And I love her.

## SNAP

The smell of smoke was pungent, or perhaps it wasn't. Perhaps I only knew I should be smelling smoke because I knew I should. The fire while frightening only seemed hot because I knew that fire should be. But If I stepped back from the horror of it, of the burning barn, it was just a scene from a puzzle. The landscape climbing one hill directly over the other, like a crumpled quilt kicked to the foot of the bed on

a summer's night. But all the movement seemed to be in the periphery. And when I turned my gaze to catch it, it had vanished. All the while the fire roared and the smoke made me cough, because I knew it should.

## CRACK

I heard a noise, or perhaps I only thought I heard a noise, but I turned my head, because I knew I should. Steps rose in front of me, and there was my great-great uncle, or cousin, or someone from that great, step, once-adopted, twice-removed part of the family. He was my son, and there he was climbing those squeaky, dilapidated stairs. I called out to him. Perhaps no sound came from my lips; perhaps he didn't hear me. But he did not turn, he did not falter in his steps, he kept climbing upwards, towards that light, towards some figure silhouetted in the green-absence of light.

## CLAP

I snapped my neck to the backfire of the rotting farm doors. Then again, maybe there was no noise after all. I felt dizzy with it, the swimming of colors in my eyes. From the smoke and crackle of the burning barn burst forth a casket, creeping from the farmhouse rot.

## SNAP

My eyes shot open, to lie there, my heart in my ears. I pushed a blanket of earth from me. I staggered and tripped my way to the trap. Empty, but for a little wool and flesh. I picked at the flesh from the steel teeth. I pulled at the sinew between thumbs and forefingers and with my tongue in my mouth. I teased the wool from the contraption and pushed it to my breast, stowing it there by my heart.

I thought to become the beast. When I was in grade school, a teacher or perhaps a television show had told me that some of the Native Americans had eaten the brains of their enemies, if they had been particularly strong or wise. I thought of warriors carrying snake skins and frog hides, so that they would be slippery and hard to catch. I too would become my prize; I would take from him and barter for my soul. To have a part of him, I could have all of him. There was a word for this. I remember studying it. What was it called, it was. It was like voodoo. By having a bit of something you controlled the whole. Sympathetic Magic that was it. I would do the same. I had part of the beast and it was in me.

## SNAP

I bolted.        Empty.

Sweet rot filled the air. This trap had been closer than the others to the graves. I shivered, and walked to the corpses. I must have been wrong in exhuming the bodies. They had shifted in their sleep. The glue keeping their eyes and mouths shut must have had some chemical reaction with the flagrant gasses escaping the body. Their eyes were wild and their mouths in open screams. I knew of course that bodies chattered and danced in their tombs, but I had not been prepared. It was a silly thought, but I remembered hearing that this was how the myth of vampires came about, from the body's natural decay and shift. But I wasn't certain that they hadn't pried loose the glue to tell me something. Their blood-clotted eyes seemed so- worried.



I wept as I do every time I visit their graves.

I brought apples on my first visit, it felt wrong to come empty-handed. My mother never visited the grave except to lay the next body down. I thought they must miss her. It was winter coming. They would want some fruit before only nuts and out-of-season oranges would be shipped in from the South. My Grandfather had said that his mother had never eaten a ripe apple. In the winter she would stow it all away in a barrel. As one would start to rot she would eat it first, and in this way she continued all winter, eating the worst fruit before it went bad. So I brought them apples from the tree in the backyard. They weren't good for eating really, not from the orchard, but after all I did not really expect them to eat the apples. One of my sister's friends had told me that the Buddhist just put paper versions of things in the grave. That some people were even putting paper iPads and mp3 players in the coffin. So I thought that an apple from our land would be better than one good to be eaten.

My cousin said the apples did not freeze, nor decay, nor were they eaten by animals. They petrified. My mother said it was a sign of sainthood. After all we had guessed they were saints, but now we knew.

Their death's seemed to mark the beginning of my courtship. Every time I was brought home it was for a funeral. Every holiday was marked by a new tombstone. I was tired. Not in the way that you think a handle of tequila, a good fuck, and a two-day hangover will cure you. But tired in the pit of it. I remember my Grandfather saying to me. "People at church. They keep comin' up to me and saying goodbye. Sayin' goodbye in the way that they think they best say it to me now, or it'll be at my casket when they see me again. And they wouldn't to have spoken the words to a warm body. But I keep going to their funerals. I keep telling them to put their foot in the door for me, but they don't seem to."

## **SNAP**

I turned too quickly to see if I had won my prize, and the ground opened below me. At last the underworld had claimed me. At the bottom of the chasm, a small bed of those curious flowers. I found myself quite contrasted to the purity of their warm-white blossoms save for their sprig of red. I was sticky with blood, flesh and dirt under nails. I plucked a blossom, this was not my own trap I had fallen into

**LOVES ME**

**LOVES ME NOT**

**LOVES ME**

**LOVES ME NOT**

Not Flesh, But Flesh

Rubbed raw

'Til naked bone presses under foot

**LOVES ME**

Not down and feather,

But memory and soil, our marriage bed

Your eyes kissed with coins

Not tatted lace, but maggots become your breast

Cut by your own hand, undone by my desire

## **LOVES ME NOT**

Not three but one,  
In Cairo their waters mingle  
Pressed by their heavy bodies,  
The land yields to them

Not three but one,  
In dirt our bodies mingle  
The soil parts  
For our dead weight

Not

## **LOVES ME**

## **LOVES ME NOT**

But **LOVES YOU**,

You **LOVE ME NOT**

## **SNAP**

I cried out.        A trap full of warm flesh.

I could feel it like a toothache into the pit of my stomach. My breast ached, feeling like a hunter whose kill has fallen on his neighbor's land. I was trapped. I thought to climb the steep sides, but fell and pulled at fast roots. Clods of dirt fell on the beautiful flowers. I collapsed to the bottom of the pit; my toes digging into roots and flowers.

I dug. I dug downwards. Like a man caught in an avalanche, perhaps down was the way up. I pried loose the earth and tore out heavy stones. Fragrance swept over me; I was on the surface climbing from the cavern.

Warm Flesh and blood, pooled at my thighs. I tore at him pushing into him. He would not give way to my will. So I opened my mouth to him, biting and tearing savagely at his flesh. But his hide was tough, and I spit him out. I looked to my surroundings and found a sharp rock. Beating at his fur and marring his flesh, I sliced and gashed at him till he was exposed to me. I pulled at his flesh, his entrails came spilling to me rushing over my thighs, and filling me up. Sharp bone pressed against my chest and I pried at his heart. But it was enclosed, guarded, caged in bone. I cut at the soft tissue connecting the two sides.

I pulled. - Nothing.

I pulled. - Nothing.

I pulled. - The rib cage sprang open, slicing my cheek. I buried myself inside him. I knew I was wrong when my hands found his heart. I knew I was wrong when I ripped the aorta severing his heart. My stomach filled with bile. I lay back full of lust, and shame. My legs tingled from his absence. I lay basking in his scent and fluids.

My Great-Grandmother had massaged a chicken heart in saline solution. The heart beating for hours after it was torn from its host.

LubDubLubDubLubDubLubDubLubDub

The blood began to cool. Like cum, sticky and cool once expelled from the body.

The heart in my hand still beat. At first keeping the same allegro tempo as my own.

LubDubLubDub LubDub LubDub

Allegro and Gigue.

LubDub

LubDub

Andante Cantabile.

Lub

Dub

Lub

Dub

Largo Appassionato.

THUNK

I squeezed the heart.

THUNK

I squeezed again.

THUNK

There was the sound of rushing water on the shore and the hollow sound of a boat making dock. I picked up the beast's heart, he was no more than a pile of fur and entrails. I handed the heart over to the ferryman. "Where to?" He asked me as he took the heart from my hands.

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## APPENDIX



*Veil.* Work by Veronica Hallock. 2015. Photograph by Greta Gerstner.



*Nets.* Work by Veronica Hallock. 2015. Photograph by Greta Gerstner.





*She Pricked Her Finger.* Image 1, Work by Veronica Hallock. 2015. Photograph by Greta Gerstner.



*She Pricked Her Finger.* Image 2, Work by Veronica Hallock. 2015. Photograph by Greta Gerstner.





*She Pricked Her Finger.* Image 3, Work by Veronica Hallock. 2015. Photograph by Greta Gerstner.



*Traps.* Work by Veronica Hallock. 2015. Photograph by Greta Gerstner.

## VITA

Veronica Hallock received her Bachelors of Fine Arts at Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis Indiana. She has notable publications in *500 Handmade* books by Lark Crafts as well as in The Firehouse Gallery's *20/20 Vision, Fifth Edition: The Art of Contemporary University Printmaking*. She has exhibited in many galleries and participated in the Prospect 3 Elevator Project. Veronica expects to graduate from Louisiana State University with a Master of Fine Arts in May 2015. Upon completion she plans to crack the world open like a Louisiana gulf Oyster and slurp it down in one gulp.