Declaration

Name of candidate: Lydia Cook

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project entitled Courtship A Photographic Investigation Of Romantic Engagement is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Design.

CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

• This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
• Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: ..........................................................

Candidate Signature: ..................................................Date: 6/8/2012

Student number: 1097650
COURTSHIP:
A PHOTOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF ROMANTIC ENGAGEMENT.

LYDIA RUTH COOK

‘A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF DESIGN.’

UNITEC INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2011.
Abstract:

The research title of my project is: Courtship: A photographic investigation of romantic engagement.

The research question is concerned with the evolution of romantic courtship with reference to the influence of fairytale conventions. The project aims to produce a photographic series and exegesis, which explore the constructs embodied in traditional fairytales in the context of social and aesthetic behaviours in courtship.

The project started with an investigation of both academic references and contemporary artists. My initial experimentation created works that communicated ideas surrounding themes such as fairytales, romance and gender confusion.

I became interested in finding connections between academic and creative concepts such as the aesthetics of gender identity and the psychology of courtship and fairytales. By engaging in a creative process and exploring references that influenced the works, I was able to question and explore these themes through performing roles of both genders within the creation of characters. This exegesis essentially tracks my creative process, research and the questions and challenges I have faced along the way.
Title of the research project:

Courtship: A photographic investigation of romantic engagement.

Research Question:

How is contemporary romantic courtship evolving with reference to the influence of fairy tale convention?

Aim of the project:

The project will result in a photographic series with an exegesis, which aims to investigate social constructs embodied in the tradition of fairytales in the context of contemporary social and aesthetic behaviours found in courtship.

Objectives:

1) Investigate social behaviour in contemporary romantic courtship.

2) Ascertain the potential influence of fairytale mythology in contemporary courtship.

3) Produce a series of photographs exploring social constructs embodied in the mythology of fairytales in the context of contemporary courtship.

Methodology:

1) Conduct a literature search on social behaviour in everyday romantic courtship.

2) Conduct a literature search of courtship ritual in fairytale mythology.

3) Utilise this research in the development of the photographic series.

4) Incorporate findings from photographic practice in conjunction with the exegesis.

Methods:

1) Literature search and annotated bibliography.

2) Survey of relevant contemporary art in this area.

3) Informed use of location, props, clothing and photographic construction.
Rationale and context for the research:

The research undertaken into traditional fairytales is contextualised with tales stemming from the western tradition of folklore. It is assumed that gender stereotypes are at work within the traditional tales explored. It is through the exploration of these stereotypes that the research unfolds within the realms of questioning this gendered behavior. This is then underpinned by further exploring the generic dynamics at play within courtship.

Questioning these stereotypes is undertaken through referencing contemporary theories on gender such as Mimi Schippers’s idea of “Gender Maneuvering” in her publication entitled Rockin’ Out of the Box: Gender Maneuvering in Alternative Hard Rock which gives important insights into gender roles in romantic courtship. Schippers (2002), defines gender maneuvering as; “If however, we decided to buck the rules and refuse to follow the expectations for femininity and masculinity in a given setting, we could possibly disrupt the relationship between masculinity and femininity. If done collectively, a group of people could possibly set a new course for gender structuration. This is what I call gender maneuvering” (Schippers, 2002, p xii).

This research project intends to use these ideas and other contemporary theories to explore and challenge traditional notions of courtship and roles. The project intends to investigate the changes occurring within courtship behaviour in terms of social dynamics and the power shifts within gender.
Timeline:

October/November 2008

January/February 2009
Develop annotated bibliography.
Complete research proposal.

April/May/June 2009
Submit a formal proposal to the Masters of Design Proposal Committee to officially enter the Master's program on the 18th of May.
Plot structure for exegesis.

July/August 2009
Upload Endnote software and input references.
Feed all texts supervisor.
Produce photographic works at completion level to get feedback in workshop.

September/October 2009
Complete Workshop one (25/11/2009).

November 2009
Complete most of the annotated bibliography.

January/February 2010
Produce photographic works at completion level to get feedback in workshop.

March/April 2010
Complete Workshop two (30/4/2010).
May/June 2010

Work on exegesis.

Work on new images.

July/August 2010

Finalise exegesis introduction.

Finish the first draft of the exegesis.

September 2010

Edit images.

Select images to be framed.

October 2010

Complete annotated bibliography.

Keep refining exegesis.

November 2010


February/March 2011

Produce photographic works at completion level to get feedback in workshop.


Finalise dates and location for exhibition.

April/May/June 2011

Final photography of images

Final edit of images.

Carry out final draft of exegesis.
July/August 2011

Submit exegesis.

Draft Examination Presentation.

September/October 2011

Final edited images to the printers.

Organise exhibition opening.

Finalise Examination Presentation.

November 2011


Examination.

Outcomes:

1) To critically reflect, analyse, observe and review the concepts of how social dynamics in romantic courtship take place in society.

2) To produce a series of photographic works which raise questions about behaviour within romantic courtship in society.

3) To stage a solo exhibition of the work.

4) To produce an exegesis on the work and its relationship to contemporary courtship and traditional fairytales.
Selected Bibliography:


Acknowledgements

A number of people have supported me in the creation of this thesis. I specifically would like to thank my Principal Supervisor Marcus Williams who has been a constant source of inspiration, encouragement and support. Additionally I would like to thank Associate Supervisors Cassandra Barnett and Marie Shannon for their expertise and generous input. I would also like to thank Brian Russell for all his help and give special thanks go to my parents Douglas and Jennifer Turner, my sister Anna Turner and my Husband Gair Cook for their endless loving support. Without their patience and help the project would not have been completed.
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Introduction

This project, Courtship: A photographic investigation of romantic engagement, asks questions about the way contemporary romantic courtship is evolving with reference to fairy tale conventions.

The project results in a photographic series with an exegesis. This work investigates social constructs embodied in the tradition of fairy tales within the context of contemporary social and aesthetic behaviours found in courtship.

Each section of this exegesis follows a theme, which addresses aspects of fairy tales and their parallels with contemporary courtship. Each theme culminates in a series of photographic images that show the creative journey undertaken and facilitates the development of the eight final images.

This research in essence aims to challenge people’s notions around courtship.

“If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.” Albert Einstein as cited in Gadd (2007, p. 1).
Section one: Research and Development
Chapter one: Women wanting to be desired

The project started with the investigation of themes found in fairy tales and in particular the female characters portrayed within these tales.

This initiated a creative process involving the exploration of how to depict characters in a way that challenged conceptions of courtship. In addition to creating images, research into the tales was undertaken. The creative process started with experimentation in developing a cast of female characters.

The fairy tales of The Brothers Grimm form the basis of my research enabling me to explore the conceptual framework that operates within traditional fairy tales. The Brothers Grimm’s work takes the reader on a journey through dark recesses of the human heart and social morality. The stories often begin with lifelike situations that evolve into the fantastic and magical, as the protagonist is challenged by events and other characters along the way. It is through these storylines that messages surrounding moral consciousness are conveyed to the audience. An example of this is the tale of Little Snow White, more commonly known as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. In this tale The Brothers Grimm create a storyline around Snow White’s evil stepmother engaging in horrid acts to kill her. The Brothers Grimm reveal the consequences of bad behaviour by using the stepmother’s actions as an example, the following extract from the tale describes her punishment:

Just then a pair of red-hot iron shoes were brought in with a pair of tongs and set before her, and these she was forced to put on and to dance in til she fell down dead (Grimm, 1947, p. 25).

In addition, candour can be seen in the way that the characters do not necessarily always gain what they desire in life. This candour is illustrated in the tale of The Little Glass Slipper, more commonly known as Cinderella. In this tale Cinderella’s stepsister so desperately wants to be with the Prince that she cuts her foot to fit the glass slipper and win his approval. However her attempts to win the Prince’s approval fail and he inevitably courts Cinderella. Part of the power of these tales lies in the Brothers Grimm’s ability to intertwine narrative ideas around moral messages, thus connecting fantasy and real life dilemmas.

Jack Zipes’ work helped clarify the direction from which the research approached fairy tales and their relationship to courtship. Zipes’ comments on links between traditional tales and the ideas these tales convey regarding courtship.
Reading Zipes’ extracts in the Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales motivated me to look deeper into tales and to think about the use of traditional tales as a reference for the research undertaken as he raises some significant questions regarding how fairy tales operate and influence people:

*What is it that endows fairy tales with such enchantment? Where do these tales come from? Why do they have such a grip on us? Why do we seem to always need them? We want to know more about ourselves by knowing something more about fairy tales. We want to fathom their mysterious hold on us* (Zipes, 2000, p. XV).

Zipes’ work helped in establishing the parameters involved in the definition of fairy tales and how such a creative and openly interpreted subject matter could be approached in the research. As Zipes suggests, fairy tales do not fit one particular genre, rather, tales boast a varied and case-by-case identity:

*There is no such thing as the fairytale; however, there are hundreds of thousands of fairytales. And these fairytales have been defined in so many different ways that it boggles the mind to think that they can be categorized as a genre* (Zipes, 2000, p. XV).

Zipes’ ideas made it clear to me that traditional and popular fairy tales should form the basis and context for the research. It is through this research that a thread between fairy tales and subliminal messages was unraveled.

Marketing and business acceleration strategist Dave Lakhani helped me understand this concept as he describes subliminal messages as: “‘Subliminal’ can mean ‘invisible’ or ‘covert’ but it can also mean...what it means... stimuli that you are not aware of.” (Lakhani, 2008, p.x). In relation to what is found in fairy tales, subliminal messages are the stimulation of ideas that are delivered on a subconscious level. It is this stimulation on a subconscious level that makes messages found in fairy tales easily digestible to a young audience.

A leading researcher in this field is child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim. Academic Maria Tatar, states the following regarding Bettelheim’s research in this field:

*“In The Uses of Enchantment, Bettelheim argued that fairy tales have a powerful therapeutic value, teaching children that “a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable.” “If one does not shy away,” Bettelheim added with great optimism,” but steadfastly meeting unexpected and often unjust hardship, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious”* (Tatar: 2002: p. xiii-xiv).
It is these sorts of subliminal messages that enable tales to communicate life lessons to children. Maria Tatar also comments on how fairy tales deliver subliminal messages and believes that tales such as Cinderella deliver messages about courtship:

... fairytales can provide readers and listeners with counsel about how to manage anxieties that run particularly deep. How many times do we invoke “Cinderella” when it comes to thinking about courtship, marriage and romance? (Tatar: 2004: p. xlvii).

Subliminal messages found in fairy tales have been utilised as an educational tool by Psychologists to help children understand the challenges they will face both in their childhood and adult life; “Over the past decades child psychologists have mobilised fairytales as powerful therapeutic vehicles for helping children and adults solve their problems by meditating on the dramas staged in them.” (Tatar: 2002, p. xiii-xiv). These ideas are taken on board by children and help mould the way in which they view courtship later in their adult life. Tatar describes this link between tales and ideas around courtship in reference to Beauty and the Beast; “how frequently do we frame marriages as variations on “Beauty and the Beast”? (Tatar: 2004, p. xlvii) It is the impact of subliminal messages delivered within tales that generates the re-telling of these stories throughout time and the reinvention and illustration of these stories through art. Tatar states: “That writers, film makers and artists constantly recycle these stories reveals the degree to which they are perpetually in the back of our collective minds.” The ideas communicated through subliminal messages and their relationship to ideas around courtship led me to research tales that generated these kinds of messages for young girls.

Examples such as Little Glass Slipper and Little Snow White acted as valuable case studies for thinking about the initial stages of courtship communicated within tales. The lead female characters in these stories are depicted as being both in distressing situations and in need of assistance, allowing the male characters to fulfil the role of saviour. This theme occurs in a number of traditional tales and acts as an important trigger for the communication of courtship dynamics as it facilitates the damsel in distress scenario, as the female has to rely on the male for her survival. It also enables the male to have a purpose within the narrative. I looked at incorporating this into the formation of my characters. The character Red (2009) (Figure 1) represents a call of distress. This image illustrates a lone female with a cut foot sitting on her bed and signifies the emotions and feelings gained when thinking about a damsel in distress.

1 Walkerdine (1984: 163) cited in Wohlwend (2009:59) describes the damsel in distress concept as relating to “princess victims and princely rescuers, a classic trope in children’s literature and play that prepare(s) the ground for the insertion of the little girl into romantic heterosexuality”.
The damsel in distress concept is also the precursor for the subject of marriage, another theme dealt with in the Grimm Brothers’ narratives. It is the connection between these preliminary stages of interaction and the end result of marriage that helps entice young girls into the storyline. It gives young girls the opportunity to play out their own fantasies about marriage through the characters. This link between the idea of marriage, fairy tales and the implications for young girls is explored by Zipes. Zipes suggests that fairy tales advocate courtship as the most exciting aspect of life, with marriage being the culmination and therefore end of a young girl’s romantic life.

...in effect, these stories focus upon courtship, which is magnified into the most important and exciting part of a girl’s life, brief though courtship is, because it is the part of her life in which she most counts as a person herself (Zipes, 1986, p. 199).

Zipes also deconstructs these tales in relation to their impact upon adult courtship, and the way fairy tales have embedded certain ideals around being courted, even though these expectations can be very different from reality.

After marriage she ceases to be wooed, her consent is no longer sought, she derives her status from her husband and her personal identity is effectively snuffed out. When fairytales show courtship as exciting and conclude with marriage and the vague statement that ‘they lived happily ever after’, children may develop a deep-seated desire always to be courted since marriage is literally the end of the story (Zipes, 1986, p.199-200).
Zipes goes as far as to say that tales such as those composed by *The Brothers Grimm* act as “training manuals” (Zipes, 1986, p.200) for girls, regarding the way they should act in courtship. The idea of these tales acting as training manuals for young girls is evidenced in the way in which female characters such as *Little Snow White* and *Cinderella* conduct themselves when interacting with males:

> The editing of female speech in fairytales by male authors/transcribers shows in a very real way how tales have been used as a means of training women how to behave in a socially (i.e. patriarchally) acceptable fashion (Slatter, 2006, p.162).

The influence that these tales hold in regard to their ‘training’ of young girls in courtship raises a number of ideas. In particular, ‘training’ suggests that expecting to live happily ever after and ‘be saved’ by a male character is possible in a real life situation as described by Slatter in these tales:

> The voice of the mother was used to enforce ideas of sanctioned behavior – girls are quiet, pretty, submissive and there to be rescued (Slatter, 2006, p.163).

These ideas around courtship are cultivated in the minds of the impressionable young, many years before they are relevant.

My works endeavor to challenge the concepts and key themes of fairy tales that form the basis of psychological engagement with young girls, or as Zipes has suggested, the tale’s ability to act as a training manual for girls. These concepts are both challenged and manipulated in order to create a new set of narratives. Such narratives include the ideas of breaking down the façade of living happily ever after. I decided to explore the idea of portraying characters in affluent surroundings yet displaying wounds, imperfections, or loneliness, which question the portrayal of the character living happily ever after within my images.

The idea of the female character experiencing distress and harm is evident in almost all of the Grimm’s tales. This not only relates to the idea of creating a damsel in distress but in particular employs physical harm and adversity in order to develop the character’s narrative. Examples of this can be seen in the tale of *Little Snow White* who is poisoned and the tale of *Briar Rose*, more commonly known as *Sleeping Beauty*, who pricks her finger. For me this aspect of the Grimm’s tales opened up important ideas regarding courtship as a process, which involves hurt or injured characters; creating a link to the pain caused by rejection in courtship. Here I was trying to link these two ideas and transpose the idea of rejection into physical form.

The idea of the female character experiencing distress and harm is evident in almost all of the Grimm’s tales.
A significant artist in terms of the portrayal of physical harm is the painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), whose work has guided me when employing this concept. Kahlo utilises this concept in a stylised manner as can be seen in works such as *The Broken Column* (Figure 2) which illustrates nails penetrating skin and detailed open wounds revealing flesh, blood and bone.

![Image of Frida Kahlo](image)

**Figure 2.** Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column* (1944)

The presence of harm evokes empathy and facilitates interaction with and reflection upon Kahlo’s own experiences, as explained by Taylor:

> Rendered in vivid colors and realistic detail, Kahlo’s jewel-like paintings are filled with complex symbolism, often relating to specific incidents in her life. The Broken Column (1944) (Figure 2) expresses her struggles with illness throughout her life (Taylor, 2008).

I identified a link between Kahlo’s work and the explorations of physical harm to reflect significant incidents in a character’s life within the Brothers Grimm work. Physical harm can be seen in my works through the adoption of cuts, blood, pricked fingers and crutches. These imply harm and subtly suggest a possible metaphor for emotional wounds that the characters may also have sustained.
An important reference regarding the courtship mechanisms revealed within the Brothers Grimm’s tales is the idea explored by American writer and psychotherapist Colette Dowling in her work the *Cinderella Complex: Woman’s Hidden Fear of Independence*. This work reference the way in which women interact within the roles they assume:

*Women today are caught in the crossfire between old and radically new social ideas, but the truth is, we cannot fall back on the old ‘role’ any more. It’s not functional; it’s not a true option. We may think it is; we may want it to be; but it isn’t. The prince has vanished. The cave man has grown smaller and weaker. In fact, in terms of what is required for survival in the modern world, he is really no stronger, or smarter, or more courageous than we are. He is, however, more experienced* (Dowling, 1982, p. 23-24).

Dowling’s work suggests a connection between traditional and contemporary ideas surrounding how women should function in courtship. Some of the images I have created display characters engaging in mundane, domestic tasks such as preparing a meal, while other characters pose provocatively in seductive settings. These parallels are implied in order to provoke dialogue between traditional and contemporary women’s roles. However, Dowling (1982) does not relate these ideas to cultural expectations, such as the embodiment of codes of behaviour that exist and function within the reality of social interaction, instead pointing to the archaic nature of fairy tales specifically referring to the damsel in distress syndrome. My works aim to explore the relationship between traditional and contemporary roles for women through the portrayal of characters. The portrayal of a mundane and traditionally female task can be seen in the image entitled *Pricked* (2010) (Figure 3).

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2 Dowling expresses this notion of an ‘old role’ for women as a traditional view point expressed by women in society during the early twentieth century. Helene Deutsch’s publication *The Psychology of Women: 1944* explains that women were likely to be happiest from her observations when they were subordinate to males. “They are the loveliest and most unaggressive of helpmates and they want to remain in that role; they do not insist on their own rights- quite to the contrary.”
This character initially suggests roles depicted within traditional tales, with the character preparing a meal for a possible partner. On closer analysis these notions are challenged as the image reveals takeaway containers and the character’s implied ineptitude at household tasks, through the accidental cutting of her finger. Sea Maiden (Figure 4) also comments on the portrayal of female roles.
This character has carefully prepared sushi and is flirting in the spa pool. This comments on a more contemporary portrayal of a woman as she actively attempts to seduce. *Beastly Beauty* (2009) (Figure 5) displays confidence and determination through body language; facial expressions and eye contact endeavour to engage and seduce the viewer.

![Figure 5. Lydia Cook, Beastly Beauty (2009)](image)

Questioning ideas raised by the Brother’s Grimms’ work and the use of traditional and modern roles by women in courtship led me to the theories of Jacques Lacan (1901 –1981 French psychoanalyst, psychiatrist and literary theorist). Lacan explores ideas around the impossibility of realising a particular object of desire to satisfy a need. To explain this idea, he coined the term “asymptotic course”.

Professor Paul Fry (Professor of English, Yale University) describes this concept:

“Lacan speaks of the impossibility of realizing an object of desire, because the metonymic structure of desire follows what he calls "an asymptotic course, "asymptotic" meaning the line which curves toward the line it wants to meet but never reaches it. There’s a kind of an underlying punning sense in that word of the metonymic course of desire not revealing the symptom. It's asymptotic in that sense as well” (Fry, 2009).

This theory is cultivated through the idea of an underlying sense of need in wanting the asymptotic course to take place, and the idea of satisfying this ‘need’ comes into play when someone desires an object or person. Lacan explains that this course is revealed when symptoms of the need are endured and begin to surface through the instances that take place to create the asymptotic course. In terms of courtship, Lacan’s theory is evident when someone feels something for someone else (the symptom)
and believes these feelings are necessary to gain this person. It is in this realisation that an individual takes action to court their potential partner, taking action prompts an asymptotic course to take place.

In order to understand how these two aspects interact, the metaphor of quilting between the two lines within the asymptotic course can be utilised. The cotton that binds the quilt creates connections between the two elements. This process takes place when you can’t ever “get” what you want but you can always have what you need if you try. In order to simplify this idea Professor Fry relates it to lyrics in The Rolling Stones’ famous song You Can’t Always Get What You Want. If Lacan were the Rolling Stones, he would have slightly rewritten the famous refrain by saying,

“"You can't ever 'git' what you want,” right: "but sometimes if you try"--and you got to try. Even for what you need, you got to-- [laughter] right? [laughter] You can't just sit there--"Sometimes if you try you 'git' what you need." I'm sure that Mick Jagger had many sticky fingers in the pages of Lacan in order to be able to make that important distinction, but I think it's one that perhaps you might want to salt away the next time you feel confused about the distinction between desire and need” (Fry, 2009).

Here we are trying to distinguish between the ideas of desire and need. I am interested in intertwining such thought processes into my works in a visual sense; relating the idea of not being able to get what you want, a term explored by Lacan in Fry’s analogy, and the process of trying to find someone in the courtship process. This correlates with characters in my works being portrayed in isolation. The characters portray a longing to be desired by virtue of their isolation and apparent loneliness. Characters are represented in this context to generate empathy and association of the viewer with such loneliness.

As discussed, Zipes’ work reveals a number of important links between traditional fairy tales and the effect that these have upon how children and adults perceive courtship. The characters created in this set of images relate to a number of experimental ideas. Further images including Little Snow White (2009) (Figure 6), Frog (2009) (Figure 7), Rapunzel (2010) (Figure 8), Red Rose (2010) (Figure 9) and The Little Glass Slipper (2010) (Figure 10) were generated as part of the exploration and development of images during this stage of the project. The next chapter looks at ideas around gender roles and the implications this has upon courtship, representation and fairy tale conventions.
Figure 6. Lydia Cook, Little Snow White (2009)

Figure 7. Lydia Cook, Frog (2009)
Figure 8. Lydia Cook, *Rapunzel* (2010)

Figure 9. Lydia Cook, *Rose-Red* (2010)
Figure 10. Lydia Cook, *The Little Glass Slipper* (2010)
Chapter two: Understanding gender identity and persona

In order to further explore notions of courtship within traditional tales I explore what fairy tale characters and women in contemporary society might have in common when looking for in an ideal courting partner. Exploring this concept raises the question of what different genders project, in order to be desired. The photographic works in this project look at how male and female characters are depicted in traditional tales, and in turn how aesthetic and symbolic elements can be both reflected and manipulated. In order to project gender, these aesthetic and symbolic elements are adapted through tools such as: costuming, props, set design and body language. It is at this stage of the project that I considered the possibility of exploiting assumptions made by the viewer regarding gender, through experimenting with dressing as a male.

When making aesthetic decisions about male and female characters in the series, I utilise a mixture of ideas inspired by traditional tales and my own interpretation of each character. Through this process that I was able to question the modes by which women distinguish gender. Achieving a male aesthetic, which I was happy with, was a challenging task and experimenting with props such as breastplates and masks helped in achieving the approach to masculinity that I sought. These elements also functioned to signify princes in traditional tales. The use of clothing that relates to the image of monarchy projected in traditional tales also helps the works to convey ideas about wealth and status. The image Chest Plate (2010) (Figure 11) reflects the exploration of such ideas. In particular I was exploring the aesthetic of knighthood and the authority that this holds to exhibit desirable characteristics in courtship.

Figure 11. Lydia Cook, Chest Plate (2010)
Body language is used to help construct personalities for each character and to engage the viewer. This method links the visual aspect of the male persona to ideas of desire engaged with in courtship. Body language is an important element involved in the initiation and development of courtship and this link has been described by academics such as Grammer et al:

In interactions between strangers we can assume that courtship occurs in all situations where a suitable mate of the other sex is spotted and interest in the partner is communicated. If interpersonal coordination signals mutual rapport, involvement, and togetherness, then interpersonal coordination should be the hallmark of courtship. (Grammer et al, 1998, p. 8)

As described by Grammer et al there is a clear link between the reflection of body language and the initiation of courtship. Research in this field suggests that there is evidence of synchronization in body language between people engaging in courtship through the mirroring of body language, as explored by Bernieri and Rosenthal (1991,p.3) in Grammer et al (1998, p.3): “This 'synchronic hypothesis' states that people do not interact randomly or independently, but coordinate and synchronize their behaviours with each other. The use of body language in creating personae was helpful in developing possible emotions for the characters through body language and expressions to allow a non-verbal dialogue with the viewer. This can be seen in the character Red Lace with lace tightened over the character’s mouth; he subverts the verbal to the non-verbal in his interactive approach to courtship. This non-verbal communication is an important indicator of attraction in courtship, as described by Byers and Heinlein (1989) “nonverbal behavior played a significant role in the initiation of sexual behavior as well as the response by the partner to the initiation”.

Figure 12. Lydia Cook, Red Lace (2010)
Body language has also been used as a tool in creating the characters’ gender identities. The use of feminine and masculine ranges of body language helped in the expression of gender with some characters. I found that the use of a range of body languages helped blur lines between femininity and masculinity in order to lead the viewer to question the gender of characters.

The majority of traditional tales operate on the premise that characters have clearly defined genders. Ambiguity in gender portrayal enables my characters to suggest their own, alternative, narratives, and disrupts conventional gender roles encountered within traditional fairy tales. This can be seen in the image *Red Lace* that is based on The Brothers Grimm’s version of Little Red Riding Hood. Instead of a female character going off the path to pick flowers for her grandmother, it is a male character. This could possibly be her grandson, thus suggesting an alternative narrative to that of the traditional tale and asking questions about how the story would change if the young, vulnerable character in the story were male. This questions the boundaries of what is acceptable as a ‘fantasy character’ and challenges more rigid conventions of difference between the sexes. The subliminal message around gender projection in traditional tales is brought under scrutiny.

Manipulating gender creates another link between the viewer and the image. The works endeavor to capture attention and create drama in order to disturb the viewer’s perception, creating images that need to be considered closely. The ability to open up such questions through portraying gender further develops the dynamics that can take place between the subject and viewer.

In order to further understand how gender portrayal can be manipulated in imagery, I explored the works of artist Cindy Sherman as Sherman is influential in her ability to manipulate gender. The use of self-portraiture helps the work to comment on gender and creates a fascinating connection between the photographer and the subject. This can generate an alternate reflection of the photographer in a different role. After analysing Sherman’s approach to gender portrayal, I adapted some of her methods; I utilise self-portraiture in both male and female characters. This facilitates an enigmatic effect as the audience may see the characters as masculine, yet on closer analysis become unsure about their true gender. This dynamic between viewer and subject is seen in Sherman’s work as Laura Mulvey suggests in her analysis:

> The viewer is subject to a series of double takes, estrangements and recognitions. The camera looks; it ‘captures’ the female character in a parody of different voyeurisms. It intrudes into moments in which she is unguarded, sometimes undressed, absorbed into her own world in the privacy of her own environment. (Mulvey, 2006, p. 288)
Mulvey articulates this relationship between the subject and spectator as developing through an encounter with the photographs, which holds viewer engagement in mind. By using this technique in my own images, I strive to create a juncture for experimentation between the subject and observer. This outward communication conveyed by my characters in order to instigate a relationship with the viewer can be seen in the image Beastly Beauty (2010) (Figure 5 p, 23), which portrays a women opening the French doors to her lounge. The body language of this character suggests an invitation to the viewer to join her in her environment.

Figure 13. Cindy Sherman, Untitled #196, (1989)

Analysing Sherman’s strategies and developing appropriate methodology in my own practice has enabled me to create a dialogue between the projection and perception of gender. This challenges clearly defined gender and creates ambiguity. The images therefore generate an evolving gender identity, rather than one fixed identity. Psychoanalyst Harry Gershman’s work describes this concept of an evolving gender identity as Gershman (1967, p.1000) describes gender as being a social dynamic; “Sex is biological and gender is social”. Additionally Gershman develops a case for the existence of gender operating within an evolving process of identity:

A gender role is not established at birth, but results cumulatively from experiences encountered and transacted through explicit instructions, elucidations, and spontaneous unplanned learning.

(Gershman 1967, p.1001)
Therefore Gershman makes a case that gender identity is linked with the individual's environment and is constantly evolving due to environmental changes and experiences. This idea of unplanned learning, and its impact upon gender identity creation, links into the idea of subliminal messages. As fairy tales can form a part of this spontaneous learning, the subliminal messages they communicate can become a part of children's gender development. Devine-Wright and Clayton (2010 p.270) describe gender evolution and suggest that these two elements are interconnected; "Place and environmental identities are constantly evolving, as both people and environments change".

This concept of gender identity interacts with the courtship experience for individuals. The ideas of the expression of gender being influenced by environment lead me to think about a somewhat chameleon-like quality at play within courtship interaction. This led to thoughts about expressing a fluidity of gender within my characters, thereby mirroring the changes that take place in courtship interaction.

In order to understand how gender portrayal works, through research I came to the idea of gender manoeuvring. This concept, coined by sociologist Mimi Schippers, identifies digressions from standard expectations regarding gender including intentional gender manipulation. Shippers explicates this concept as

…a specific kind of interaction. When one or more people manipulate their own gender performance or manipulate the meaning of their own or others' gender performances in order to establish, disrupt, or change the relationship between and among masculinities and femininities, they are gender manoeuvring (Schippers, 2002, p. xii).

The influence of the notion of gender manoeuvring is evidenced in the work through subtle aesthetic devices such as body language, costuming and setting. Although I am a female performing a male gender, the imagery still deviously indicates elements of femininity. The majority of the male characters are dressed in a masculine fashion, with hints of femininity. The development of this concept can be seen in the image of the Biker (2010) (Figure 14). This character represents both male and female characteristics. The jacket, jeans and boots are all female clothing yet not conventionally feminine. The only distinct element in effect that links to masculinity is the use of makeup to create stubble on the face, and masculine body language.
This idea of creating personae is concomitant to the way in which individuals interact within the courtship process in reality. It is through the creation of differing personae that people are able to adapt to the social constructions of our society. As explained by Raphael Demos (1955) in his examination of the work undertaken by world-renowned psychotherapist Carl Jung, the adaption of the persona is the beginning of a process of ‘civilizing the self’. Demos states that personae is a result of the expectations and demands placed on people by society. The word persona is the Latin word for mask and this meaning reveals its role and use within the realm of courtship. Such masks or personae can take many forms as described by Jung in Demos; “if the individual is a married woman, she puts on the appropriate persona”. (Raphael, 1955, p.77)

Additionally Jung’s exploration of the persona has revealed that this results in the development of the conscious and unconscious persona. Raphael explains Jung’s exploration through the following example:

“A man must appear mature even though he be childish, he must appear good (to himself as well) and thus repress his evil impulses. In this fashion is the personal unconscious developed; it consists of the “shadow” which is the unconscious counterpart of the conscious persona”. (Raphael, 1955, p.78)

Both the conscious and unconscious persona have important implications in how courtship works. Presenting a mask of ideals or traits that projects certain messages to people within courtship is an example of this. It is through the use of personae that people are able to project certain beliefs, morals and emotions in order to mirror what they believe a prospective partner is looking for. I have utilised the
idea of persona into the creation of the characters within my works as I allow the characters to project certain masks towards the viewer and therefore possibly open up dialogue around what people project in courtship and what they are looking for through this projection.

The creation of personae for different characters is illustrated in *Red* (2009) (Figure 1, p. 18). This character communicates a sense of surprise, tension, and detachment. She, in many senses, represents a disconnection from reality, from what has happened or what could happen. In essence she represents confusion about what she wants from courtship, or possibly life for that matter. The printed trees in the background further represent the continuum of paths she may follow and the confusion and isolation of engagement.
Chapter three: Confusing fantasy and reality in character and in space

In order to develop my approach to creating images and to question the practice I have been undertaking, I experimented with fantasy both in the characterisation and in the perception of space surrounding the settings of the works. This allowed me to step back and re-assess the development of visual works.

Experimentation with fantasy elements began with the merging of human and animal identities in order to create beast-like characters, and also in the juxtaposition of different spaces or worlds.

The idea of the anti-fairy tale involves deconstruction of and experimentation with elements found within the traditional fairy tale as described by Calvin:

*Rarely an outward opposition to the traditional form itself, the anti-tale takes aspects of the fairy tale genre and re-imagines, subverts, inverts, deconstructs or satirizes elements of them to present an alternate narrative interpretation, outcome or morality* (Calvin, 2010).

This idea was adapted as a mechanism for extending my photographs in terms of a fairy tale. A significant reference is the artist Neil Gaiman, author of the book *MirrorMask*, which was adapted into a film.

![Figure 15. Neil Gaiman, MirrorMask (2005), (Screen shot)](image)

Gaiman employs the anti-fairy tale concept in order to create plots that operate outside the norms of traditional fairy tales. *MirrorMask* (Figure 15) is created around a narrative that utilises two alternative realities: a real world and a fantasy world. I began to experiment with these ideas, with particular reference to space, by using methods such as creating a ‘frame within a frame’. The idea of the frame within a frame can be seen in *Warped*, (Figure 16) depicting a masked character gazing upon the scene.
of Snow White lounging by a pool. The space that operates between the masked character and Snow White acts as the space between two worlds of perception.

![Image of Lydia Cook's Warped (2010)](image16.jpg)

Figure 16. Lydia Cook, Warped (2010)

Similar methods have been explored in the works of a number of painters. Salvador Dali’s work portraying a figure at a window utilises this method. According to Radford, Dali uses a “pictorial device of a figure in conjunction with a ‘framed’ landscape seen through a window – a picture within a picture – which is typical of Italian Novecento art”. (Radford, 1998, p. 61)

![Image of Salvador Dali's Figure at a Window (1925)](image17.jpg)

Figure 17. Salvador Dali, Figure at a Window (1925)
Furthermore, artist Abelardo Morell deals with the exploration of worlds of fantasy within his photographic works. Morell is a useful reference as his portrayal of fantasy worlds experiment with childhood elements. Morell employs alternative realities within his works, creating frames within frames and multiple points of view. Morell's ability to implement such characteristics within his works is described by writer Wendy Watriss;

*He began to try to see the world through his child's eyes. He turned his camera inward, to the domestic objects surrounding him. With long shutter speeds and low angles, the objects were transformed into elements of mystery. He turned the rooms of his house into a camera obscura, and photographed what happened. He used classic optics, but the results were magical. Overhead, above the familiar furnishings, another world came into play with strange lights and objects from outside the window. A small space became a world within a world, multiple worlds, and Morell's photograph was the testament.* Wendy Watriss, Carver et al (2002, p. 253),

![Image](image.jpg)

Figure 18. Abelardo Morell, *The Loveliest Garden You Ever Saw* (1998)

Morell's work regarding the representation of multiple worlds is similar to the effects explored within *MirrorMask* (Figure 15, p. 35). This concept of representing multiple worlds that interrelate creates an interesting dynamic regarding the way in which characters interact both within and across spaces. This dynamic is created through different physical viewpoints portrayed within the imagery between the character and space. The use of the 'frame within frame' concept creates a feeling of interaction between characters and refers to the way the viewer perceives the work. In *Mimicking* (Figure 19) this process is happening through three perspectives, the viewer's, the first character with top hat and the second character in the frame. Therefore the use of the frame within frame device sets up a number of viewpoints, which in turn creates a number of unfolding worlds.
In addition, experimentation took place by looking at the human and animal elements found within traditional tales. An interesting reference in exploring this idea is the painter George Condo, who portrays characters that possess animal, human and fantasy elements in a balanced manner, for example *The Internal Rage of Rodrigo* (Figure 20). This intrigued me and led to experiments within my own work. Condo’s ability to combine fantasy and reality creates a particular style and he constantly pushes the boundaries of these elements: “possible and the bearable in his art. His mixture of surrealism, Pop Art and Bugs Bunny implies an eccentric sadness with gallows humour.” (Penndorf 2005, p. 7).

Figure 20. George Condo, *The Internal Rage of Rodrigo* (2008)
Condo’s use of ‘beast-like’ characters prompted me to investigate peculiar elements such as the use of masking in Bunny, Mask (Figure 21) and Black Hat (Figure 22) This ability to integrate human and animal like features to create characters that combine both elements within their persona has helped guide my own practice in creating such characters.

Figure 21. Lydia Cook, Bunny Mask (2010)

Figure 22. Lydia Cook, Black Hat (2010)
The works by artists such as Dali, Morell and Condo have inspired me to experiment with and negotiate my way through a variety of ideas and concepts in order to stimulate new approaches in my practice. I feel that, although this experimentation helped new avenues to develop regarding the ideas and work, the images produced from this process do not communicate a clear enough link between courtship and fairy tales. The images produced at this stage of the project are in my opinion, overly driven by fantasy. Additionally, although the idea of masking can possibly create gender confusion, on closer analysis it became clear that this approach detracts from the creation of realistic characters who could exist. However, utilising a frame within frame approach helped with the development of characters and approach to setting up the photographs.
Section two: Processing findings.
To further explore the creation of male characters and ideas around performing gender. I decided to investigate how mundane everyday tasks or intentions would sit within my imagery and the links that these characters could have to fairy tale conventions and courtship. The characters in Bathing (Figure 23), Shaving Wound (Figure 24) and Game (Figure 25) represent this experimentation with male characters carrying out mundane tasks. Activities such as shaving and bathing are all part of the preparation for courtship. Although these images were interesting, I do not think that they engage the research question sufficiently.

Figure 23. Lydia Cook, Bathing (2010)
Figure 24. Lydia Cook, *Shaving Wound* (2010)

Figure 25. Lydia Cook, *Game* (2010)
In order to build on these initial experimentations, I created the character Charming (Figure 26). This character marks the incorporation of ideas explored in Bathing (Figure 23), Shaving Wound (Figure 24), and Game (Figure 25) as the image represents a male engaging in the everyday task of talking on his cell phone and waiting. It depicts a quiet moment, perhaps before possible courtship interaction, suggesting loneliness and isolation within courtship. Ideas gathered from fairy tales such as Rupunzel, alluded to in the high-rise apartment and the castle-like shadow seen through the window, reinforce the isolation of this character from the world. Although loneliness and isolation are subtly implied within the image, Charming (Figure 26) overtly addresses courtship through the use of symbols. He represents romance and promise as he waits with red roses and gazes out of his window for the arrival of a date, providing a snapshot of the vulnerability of males in courtship. His crutches suggest pain and hurt and he can be seen to represent certain “damsel in distress” attributes. The interesting dynamic that this character creates is the representation of a situation in which a male is waiting for a female to come to him. This is the reverse of a traditional situation in which males take the initiative by driving to collect the female. This construct, is explained by Reiss et al in Seal and Ehrhardt (2003, p. 296): “Traditional heterosexual script theory portrays men as the indicators and women as the boundary-setters of courtship”.

Figure 26. Lydia Cook, Charming (2010)

Thinking about failed courtship interaction led me to create Step Brothers (Figure 28). In this image I was thinking about the trials and tribulations of courtship and developing conversations about how people deal with these trials. I thought about questions such as; when heartache strikes, do people eat their hearts out, in a figurative sense?
Christina Bacchilega comments on courtship through referencing the tale Bluebeard’s Egg by Margaret Atwood and the comments regarding courtship of the character Sally:

“Trouble with your heart? Get it removed, she thinks,

... then you’ll have no more problems” (Bacchilega, 1955, p.114).

The figurative idea of eating one's heart disconnects us from the notion of attachment that we all are taught to identify with in relation to our heart.

Artist Frida Kahlo portrays ideas about the heart and self-projection as illustrated in the painting The Two Frida’s (Figure 27), here Kahlo depicts herself as a set of twins with interconnected hearts. In this image Kahlo comments on the connection that she has with her heart and the comfort and security she feels from the simple idea of her heart beating and circulating blood through her veins. Hayden Herrera (1991, p. 135-136) comments on the ideas embodied in Kahlo's work; “Frida’s world is self-enclosed. Rejected by Diego, she holds her hand, binds herself to herself with a strong red vein. She is her only companion.”

Figure 27. Frida Kahlo, The Two Fridas (1939)

In my work, Step Brothers (Figure 28) they are eating a heart. Although not physically connected as in Kahlo's work, the brothers are united through this act. In this way, the sorrow at their rejection is reflected and shared.
This act of eating a heart can also be seen as an impulsive act representing anger at disappointment and failure in courtship. Despite the interesting ideas at play, in the end Step Brothers did not make the final cut. Having two characters in the space of the image did not work as well as I envisaged. I was not able to depict the loneliness that was portrayed in the earlier images, which utilised only one character. The interaction between viewer and character is diffused as two characters create a busier image, blocking the viewer's ability to concentrate upon one central character. People who are involved in the courtship process essentially operate alone; when someone seeks out a potential partner it is their individual thoughts and approach to courtship that define the way in which they operate.

In order to integrate another key theme of courtship and gender, I created the image entitled Ironing (Figure 29). This image was developed to integrate ideas around gender maneuvering and the implications this might have upon courtship and tales. I wanted to comment on role reversals by representing a male character undertaking the supposedly female task of ironing. I explore the concept of shape shifting with features of the character such as the tail, suggesting animal qualities. This idea is related to the animal and human attributes explored by George Condo. As has been discussed in Bathing (Figure 23) Shaving Wound (Figure 24) and Game (Figure 25) I wanted to depict a male character preparing for courtship. However, I do not believe the image demonstrates a link to both tales and courtship ideas.
To further refine ideas around the portrayal of males preparing for courtship, I created the image *Gold* (Figure 30). The character is engaging in the routine task of shaving, a basic task that males engage in almost universally. The golden colour of his skin creates a link to the tale of King Midas and his golden touch. King Midas is the personification of wealth and the male dominated ruling class. Midas is the ideal of an alpha male, through his ability to obtain an infinite amount of material wealth. I find such notions interesting and relevant to the courtship process for males. Their perceived wealth is linked to success in their quest for a partner, adding to society’s pressure on men to be financially successful.
Writer Jeffrey Nevid discusses the importance of wealth and spending for men. Nevid’s research illustrates the impact that wealth can have upon courtship:

“Female advertisers who described themselves as attractive more often requested financial security from prospective mates, while men who advertised their wealth sought more attractive women than males who did not advertise wealth”. Clearly, wealth has been found as a factor in courtship for some individuals. Wealth adds to appeal in courtship and in some cases, can offset a lack of other attributes: “When a disparity exists, equity may be maintained by some exchange of one partner’s attractiveness for some compensating qualities in the other, such as wealth, prestige or intelligence” (Bar-Tal and Saxe, 1976, as cited Nevid, 1984, p. 410).

An interesting artist who explores the role of wealth is photographer Karen Knorr. In her Gentlemen series (1981 – 1983) (Figure 31), Knorr explores ideas surrounding English Gentlemen’s clubs. Chris Wallace (2010, accessed: 6.10.10) describes Knorr’s works:

“A series of 26 images investigate the values that ally these classes to conservative values where primogeniture is still an issue”.

It is Knorr’s ability to comment on social status and wealth through symbolism that creates a valuable reference for my works.

Figure 31. Karen Knorr, Gentlemen series (1981-1983)

(The caption under the photograph reads: It is a mark of good breeding to be able to meet all unprecedented situations calmly, without excitement or uncontrolled anger.)
Gold is an important milestone in the project and the research question as a whole as it facilitated the exploration regarding the role and implications of wealth in courtship.

The image *Eyes of Obol* (2010) (Figure 32) additionally comments on the role of wealth in courtship. This flamboyant character visually illustrates such ideas through both his elegant attire and his lavish modern apartment. He represents an upper-class gentleman ready to explore the world of courtship.

In order to find further links to fairy tales and their concepts, I explored Greek Mythology, in particular the myth of Charon. As described by Sullivan (1950, p. 11) through the works of Virgil, Charon is the ferryman of the underworld as he transports the dead into the realms of Hades, or Hell:

"No-one can read the Sixth Book of the Aeneid and easily forget the grim boat-man Charon. For Virgil's portrait of him is vivid and memorable. There he stands in his boat, a mass of hoary beard upon his chin, his eyes staring orbs of flame, his rough garment hanging by a knot off one shoulder. He pushes his boat from the shore with a pole, then tends the sails".

In Greek mythology this passage from the world of the living to the world of the dead is undertaken through the act of placing an obol or gold coin either upon one’s eye or under one’s tongue: "put an obol in the dead man’s mouth as passage-money for the boatman" (Sullivan, 1950, p. 17). Charon accepts this payment for the journey across the river Styx into Hell. The character in *Eyes of Obol* (2010) (Figure 32) has a gold coin over one eye. The idea of being able to transcend the barrier between the living and the dead through wealth opened up dialogue about how wealth can impact on the transition from being single into a relationship, in the courtship process, and how wealth impacts upon the way in which people act in courtship. As has been discussed regarding the image *Gold* (2010) (Figure 30), according to researchers such as Nevid (1984), wealth offers advantages for individuals participating in courtship.

This image, although useful and visually interesting in its own right, has not been included in the final series. However, a number of signifiers in the image gave me ideas for future works. As *Eyes of Obol* (2010) (Figure 32) depicts a strong, outgoing character, body language to convey such traits was developed through this experiment. This helped me to later develop characters that represented self-belief and strength of personality such as *Wolf Prince* (2010) (Figure 35). *Eyes of Obol* (2010) (Figure 32), however does not make a strong enough link between courtship and tales. Although the idea of relating the character to the tale of Charon was interesting, it remained at odds with rest of the project.
To develop the romantic theme further, I created a male character *Serenading* (2010) (Figure 33) to comment on the idea of playing an instrument and how this links to the idea of seduction. This character portrays a more vulnerable side of male courtship, as the character is revealing a passion to a potential partner and, therefore, exposing a part of himself; taking a risk by giving an insight into his life.

Although this character has enabled me to reflect upon other ideas of courtship and romance, I believe that the image *Serenading* (2010) (Figure 33) is not strong enough and, therefore, it has not been included in the final body of work.
After the development of the images *Eyes of Obol* (2010) (Figure 32) and *Serenading* (2010) (Figure 33), I set out to create an image that effectively illustrates links between courtship and tales, leading to the creation of *Wolf Prince* (2010) (Figure 35), a character that represents human and animal qualities. This character was built on the analysis of ideas at work within traditional tales such as Beauty and the Beast. In creating this character I was representing the combination of humanistic beauty and untamed animalism by using visual ideas such as the wolf-like hair. A character with these two qualities enabled me to create a narrative based on a dangerous yet enticing character preparing a meal for a potential partner. Historically, wolf-like characters evoke ideas of desire and lust as described by Warner:

“In one sense the beast has returned to define Beauty in the early medieval feminine character of seductive concupiscence; only now, the stigma has been lifted. The Beast as a beast has become the object of desire” (Warner, 1996, p. 307-308).

The use of this character allowed the work to explore the representation of desire and lust. An important reference for the creation of this character has been Angela Carter and her film *The Company Of Wolves* (1984) (Figure 34). The film is a peculiar tale that crosses boundaries between fantasy and reality. It depicts men who turn into wolves and illustrates the lust and desire that these half-bred creatures have for humans through the relationship of a traveling man/wolf and a young girl, and the animalism of lust itself. The film is based upon ideas explored in the traditional tale of *Little Red Cap* by the Grimm Brothers or the later version of *Little Red Riding Hood* created by Disney. The film has subliminal messages stitched through its story line in regard to trusting strangers and men in particular. The charming man/wolf character that pursues the young girl represents the stranger in this story. Like the tale of *Little Red Cap*, the film delivers coded messages about a correlation between the savagery of a wolf and the behaviour of men. Perrault best describes this as he distinguishes the identity of the wolf:

“Now, there are real wolves, with hair pelts and enormous teeth; but also wolves who seem perfectly charming, sweet-natured and obliging, who pursue young girls in the street and pay them the most flattering attentions. Unfortunately, these smooth-tongued, smooth pelted wolves are the most dangerous wolves of all”. (Warner, 1996 p.182-183)

Here Perrault reveals the subliminal messages conveyed in these stories, and that the smooth pelted, sweet-natured wolf is used as a personification for men. Such stories convey the message to a young audience not to trust either strangers or the advances of men, as they may be dangerous.

The *Wolf Prince* (2010) (Figure 35) suggests links between courtship and tales. This character, along with ideas from inspiring works such as *The Company of Wolves* (1984) (Figure 34) and *Little Red Cap*, creates its own narrative and associates masculinity with animalistic characteristics of hunting in the courtship process. Intent and desire are embodied in the character. I believe that the strength of this
image is its ability to correlate courtship and ideas found in traditional tales and to lead to the creation of a new narrative. This helps facilitate dialogue about the work, as *The Wolf Prince* is an example of a twist on an antagonist convention found in the development of traditional fairy tale narratives. The *Wolf Prince* has caught his meal and is proceeding to prepare it. Although these allusions are evident, it is important to remember that the image enables the development of conversations around what kind of a narrative is being created and why the character is preparing a meal. This could lead to a number of possibilities. He could be preparing a meal for a potential partner, with the hint of the two dinner plates (in the background); the animalistic act of hunting and dissection of prey is alluded to within a sterile, suburban environment. The lavishly fitted out kitchen with marble counter tops, the china and exotic samurai swords, all of these elements symbolize wealth and a taste for embellishment.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 34. Angela Carter, *The Company of Wolves* (1984) (Screen shot)
Persephone Seeds (2010) (Figure 36), Blue Beach (2011) (Figure 37) and Axe (2011) (Figure 38) were created as an exploration of a variety of ideas related to the above themes. However these images did not achieve the purpose of my works and are therefore not included in the final selection of images.
Figure 37. Lydia Cook, *Blue Beach* (2011)

Figure 38. Lydia Cook, *Axe* (2011)
Chapter five: Findings

This investigation into social constructs around courtship in conjunction with traditional fairy tales has revealed some interesting links as to how these themes operate. Research suggests that the subliminal messages found in traditional tales mould the way in which children perceive different ideas about courtship. These messages are absorbed into the psyche of the young and culminate in the way in which we live our lives.

The photographic works I have made aim to raise questions about the rather personal and secretive realm of dating in society and what men and women are looking for. This investigation into courtship is based on the framework of fairy tales evolving out of western culture and additionally explores certain stereotypes devolving from these. Using gender as a basis for experimentation, the works question gendered behaviour in order to seek out the generic dynamics at play within courtship. The photographs (and the characters in them) in the final body of work were chosen for their ability to convey and comment on my findings about the relationship between courtship and fairy tale conventions.

When thinking about what the body of work has meant to me both creatively and academically, I have realised that traditional tales radically impact upon our ideas of courtship. Subliminal messages construct conventions for consumption by children around how courtship should operate. Immersing myself in this project has led me to question the rationality of the belief in these subliminal messages, and whether or not these ideas, are positive influences for such fundamental interactions as courtship.

Through performing gender roles myself, for the camera, in conjunction with research, my ideas about gender and how we play out aspects of these roles were considered and developed. This seriously challenged the way in which I thought about how gender can be perceived and portrayed. Looking into the complex area of performing genders compelled me to stop and think about how I was approaching this as a photographer. I began to question how I could convey gender, whilst not digressing from the ideas around courtship that are intertwined into the project. This lead me to blur gender roles in order to challenge the traditional gender conventions found within fairy tales. This approach led to the notion of the anti-fairy tale. This can be seen in the creation of male characters, as ideas generated for them were not as confined by descriptions found in traditional tales, as is the case with the female characters. This allowed creative use of the elusive nature of these characters in their original context.
The work undertaken in this thesis has been to prompt further research into traditional fairy tales and courtship. I have realised that there are many other research avenues that could be undertaken. Questions that spring to mind include how traditional tales impact upon the other aspects within people’s lives, other than courtship. How courtship can change the perception of the traditional tales one is exposed to in childhood and how the realisation of the psychological implications result in actual outcomes for individuals.

_each fairy tale is a magic mirror which reflects some aspects of our inner world, and of the steps required by our evolution from immaturity to maturity. For those who immerse themselves in what the fairy tale has to communicate, it becomes a deep, quiet pool which at first seems to reflect only our own image; but behind it we soon discover the inner turmoil of our soul-its depth, and ways to gain peace within ourselves and with the world, which is the reward of our struggles._

Final works

Red (2009)
Archival digital print 24x24inch Framed
Exhibited at North Art Gallery November 2011
Sea Maid (2010)

Archival digital print 24x24 inch Framed

Exhibited at North Art Gallery November 2011
Radishes (2011)
Archival digital print 24x24inch Framed
Exhibited at North Art Gallery November 2011
Pricked (2010)
Archival digital print 24x24inch Framed
Exhibited at North Art Gallery November 2011
Wolf Prince (2010)
Archival digital print 24x24inch Framed
Exhibited at North Art Gallery November 2011
Charming (2010)
Archival digital print 24x24 inch Framed
Exhibited at North Art Gallery November 2011
Gold (2010)
Archival digital print 24x24 inch Framed
Exhibited at North Art Gallery November 2011
Blue Beard (2011)
Archival digital print 24x24inch Framed
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Algar, J., & Geronimi, C. (1949). *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* [DVD].


Arentz, E. (2000). *Cartoon noir* [DVD].


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Geronimi, C., & Jackson, W. (1953). *Peter Pan* [DVD].


Geronimi, C., Jackson, W., & Luske, H. (1951). *Alice in Wonderland* [DVD].


King, M. P. (2008). Sex and the City. On Sex and the City the movie [DVD].


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