

Local

Sarah Gersbach: Moore student collects strangers' underwear in online art

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Sarah Gersbach wants you to mail her underwear. And then tell her what she looks like wearing them.

No, she's neither fetishist nor vendor of illicit services. She's a 29-year-old graduate student at the Moore College of Art and Design working on a performance art thesis about the search for the authentic self.

"The images I'm creating challenges the idea of the self portrait because even though I'm portraying myself as an individual, my underwear is chosen by someone else," she said. "It's part of my larger work about the ability – or non-ability – for people to self-define their personality."

Gersbach began accepting submissions – new with tags, to a p.o. box – three months ago, soliciting them through a [Facebook page](#) titled "Choose my Underwear" and daily posting pictures of herself wearing the gratis garments, and nothing else.

"Originally, I thought of going to local places and asking strangers to buy me underwear, but I thought it would be awkward and put people off," she said. "Facebook works well because I'm able to have a lot more control over how I set it up."

And it is exactly this indirect form of communication, in which judgments are based on 140-character proclamations and Photoshopped pictures, whose impact on identity Gersbach aims to explore.

"More so than ever before, people are able to live out their own constructions of themselves. They're able to put out this image and it's able to be tweaked and made up any way that you really want to," she said. "It's pulling us away, I think, from being able to really get down to our own self definition because what we're really focusing on more and more is just the image."

Her motives fully exposed

She isn't worried about half-naked pictures of herself floating around on the internet. "It really has to do with how I am taking my image and making it a reflection of another person's perspective. A body is a body. There are myriad images of women in this day in compromising positions on the internet out there already."

She isn't selling sex. "The way I see it is very non-sexual, almost like a science project, and that's the way I want to keep it. It's very sterile. I'm not elaborating on any kind of fantasy except for displaying underwear on myself."

People seem to really like panties. "There's so many different variations of what you wear under your clothes ... negligees, stockings, that kind of thing. There's long underwear. Nobody has sent me a bra, which is also underwear. What I'm getting a lot of is just panties, which is interesting to me."

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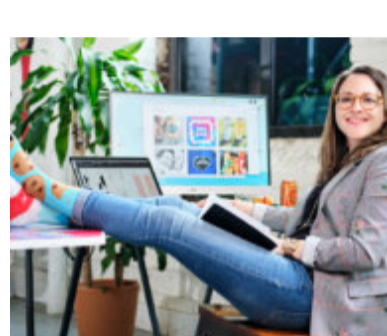
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