

# FORT GANSEVOORT

## The Creators Project

### Embroidered Hip-Hop Lyric Lingerie Spins Hard Truths

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An installation comprised of vintage lingerie, hand-embroidered with lyrics from celebrated rappers, tackles the position of subordination women have long held in hip-hop culture. In an ingenious fashion, artist Zoe Buckman's exhibition, *Every Curve*, juxtaposes the genre's often crude attitudes towards women with utterly feminine articles of dress, resulting in thought-provoking objects.

In LA's Papillion Art's main salon, soft daylight enters and casts a warm glow on the hanging undergarments. Silk slips, cone bras, girdles, garter belts and a host of other unmentionables are delicately suspended from the ceiling in this immersive installation, further complemented by sheer colored stockings modeled on various mannequin legs throughout the space.

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Buckman sourced the lingerie from vintage boutiques, eBay, and Etsy, intentionally selecting items from the early 1900s to the 60s—to illustrate the evolution of women’s bodies throughout the decades.

Buckman, a native East Londoner investigates feminist terrain and women’s issues through photography, sculpture, embroidery and installation. Every Curve marks her second solo exhibit, but her first show with Papillion. In her 2015 debut show, Present Life, Buckman displayed her own plastinated placenta, exploring themes of mortality, beauty, and femininity in the process.

“The garments have had their own lives before I've worked on them, and by embroidering the lyrics onto them in a long and often painstaking practice. I'm also drawing on a history of female and feminist expression,” Buckman tells The Creators Project. The personal significance of this three-year project is monumental, Buckman explains: “I'm an incredibly nostalgic person, so this mode or expression is also a nod to who I was in the 90s / early '00s. The fact that I used to wear vintage slips over jeans and would sew words into my pencil cases at school.”

During the 90s, the artist’s formative years were shaped by listening to Biggie Smalls and Tupac, yet her unresolved feelings connected to the sexist overtones lingered on. Ultimately, motherhood became the motivating trigger for her to address the complicated messages. Instead of humming classic lullabies to her newborn daughter, Buckman would find herself reciting verses from Biggie’s 1994 album Ready to Die. Buckman tells The Creators Project, “When you're cooing into your baby's ear lyrics like 'Bitches I like them brainless, guns I like them stainless steel,' it's hard not to find issue with the messaging and want to use your artwork to explore this dialogue.”

Every Curve doesn't shy away from hip-hop's sexually explicit themes. Biggie’s lascivious line from "The What"—“Welcome to my center, honeys feel it deep in their placenta”—is visually realized on a hand-embroidered panty. Yet, there is a poetically conflicting relationship between the undergarments and the hard-edged words sewn into them. The text is softened by the dainty embroidery, as if the words somehow seem less painful set against pretty garments. These contradictions run parallel in the music as well, where in the case of Tupac, his emotionality towards women routinely wavered. He glorifies the pleasures of adultery and promiscuity in "I Get Around," yet empathizes with the plight of black women in "Keep Ya Head Up." Buckman masterfully excels in bringing these concepts to light while simultaneously probing the viewer to seek deeper and more honest responses.

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The exhibition also continues Buckman's interests in chastity belts. A neon sculpture in the form of a chastity belt hangs, an antiquated symbol long associated with the torment of women. An installation of several hanging chastity belts fashioned from smooth metal and powder, coated into an array of luscious pastel tones, draws inspiration from 50s diners and kitchen interiors. But on closer inspection, what seems to be eye candy becomes something slightly ominous: the belts have jagged vaginal openings, and no longer seem playful, but rather dangerous.

Says Buckman, "They hang from the ceiling on fine thread and look almost like a baby's mobile. They even look kind of charming at first, and I like that play between what we find appealing and what we find problematic."

Every Curve will be on view through April 30 at Papillon Art in Los Angeles. Buckman is also participating in the group exhibit March Madness, curated by Hank Willis Thomas, currently on view through May 1, 2016, at Fort Gansevoort in New York.