

# INSTRUMENTS OF WONDER

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This collection of optical instruments allows the audience to imagine their surroundings through a new lens: to hide, to look inward, or to discover. This set of invented tools examine perception and promote exploration. Using eyeglasses as the starting format, I fabricate these objects as a kind of jewelry that have the ability to express identity and the relationship between wearer and viewer. I explore clever mechanisms for wearability to create work that is accessible, playful and truly functional. The precise fitting, movable parts and geometric forms embody an aesthetic that appears at once crisp and concise while also unexpectedly amusing. Found objects are incorporated and referenced in my work to elicit a sense of familiarity and delight while exploring the world through these objects.

## **Sensation**

Sight is one of the basic senses we use to approach the world. As one of a kind detectors, the eyes help us to collect information from the outside to perceive the world in both conscious and unconscious ways. Seeing is one of the innate abilities we have to observe our surroundings. We are so used to seeing the world in one way, through our individual lens. Therefore, I create sight devices for perception to encourage an altered experience with our surroundings.

Seeing is an act that translates the external world into mental images and memories, which influences how we perceive the world. We know that the universe is infinite and we can only notice or witness very small parts of it. But what if I create a tool to block more parts of the already limited view? Through one piece, I use the louver as

a reference to construct a lens. A louver is a window blind or shutter, which has parallel slats that can be oriented to limit the direction of light coming through. It is usually constructed for architectural structures. I explore the idea of using this louver construction as a playful miniature in the piece *Shade*. The fabricated louver lens is mounted onto a bucket to be placed overtop the head, with the opening of the bucket resting on the shoulders. As a result, the wearer is forced to see through at a single angle, to look down, and is not able to perceive information from all directions. This small window is the only opening by which the wearer can connect to the outside world. The wearer's identity also becomes hidden, or reinvented, instilling a sense of imagination and play. In another piece entitled *Dim*, I use multiple layers of metal mesh set in place of the lenses in a pair of round silver spectacles. The overlapping mesh creates a kind of shadow pattern in front of eyes when you are watching something through the lenses. The images that transmit from lens to eye are imprinted in one's mind with this obscuring pattern. However, after a while one gets used to the lenses, the wearer's brain is able to adapt and ignore the pattern and look at the surroundings with no trouble.

### **Eyeglasses format**

Throughout this body of work, I build on the eyeglass format to develop and invent new work, new ways of seeing. Eyeglasses were originally created as strictly practical and functional tools for vision correction, which have existed since at least 1300 (Henshaw 105). Much later, eyeglasses evolved more stylishly into fashion

accessories that affect the appearance of the wearer. People wear eyeglasses to create a look of distinction, the ultimate attitude glasses, that imply their personalities (Pierce 22-23). I view my work as a kind of jewelry which has a close relationship with the body. Conceptually, each piece in this series shows a unique method or perspective with which to observe the world, which operates as a form of self-expression. *Lorgnette* is a forged copper frame without any temples, which was also a kind of fashion frame in the history of eyewear (Pierce 22). The technique used to create this piece is metal forging, which is a traditional metalworking process requiring repeated heat and hammering to slowly move the metal into its final form. During this processes, both the material and the labor are pure. This piece presents the raw appearance of the wrought metal, and reveals the traditional process. The object calls to mind an archaic instrument, long before manufacturing modern industrial machines. The hammer marks serve as evidence left on the surface from forging, and the gesture that the wearer should hold it by two fingers are all indicators of an antiquated or obsolete experience.

## **Function**

In creating a tool or device, the function and believability of the object is a key goal. Each piece contains recognizable elements that inspire the viewer to imagine every object as it functions on the body. I question the role of the lens, the most important part of the glasses. Altering lenses can create varying effects on the process of seeing and exploring, leading me to examine physics and optics. Through the piece *Rear View*, I capture convex mirrors for the lenses which collect images from the rear

field of view. The convex form minifies the image and tries to collect more. When I see through the mirrors, which are hanging in front of you about 6 inches away from the headset, my field of view is not only the in front as usual, but also most of the rear field as well. With this piece worn on the head, I can observe almost everything surrounding me at the same time without turning my head. The functional quality makes the work, *Rear View*, become a body adaptation.

### **Movement and mechanism**

I explore clever mechanisms for wearability to create work that is accessible, playful and truly functional. The precise fitting, movable parts and geometric forms embody an aesthetic that appears at once crisp and concise while also unexpectedly amusing. Most of my works are fabricated by hand, utilizing many measuring tools: caliper, divider, protractor, machinist square, etc. With the help of these tools, I slowly move forward from each step to make sure the shape, the size and the mechanism are working when I put all the parts together. While I take on new challenges in every piece, the process is “pleasure-oriented, particularly in that the overcoming of self-imposed difficulties or the perceiving of something in a new way results in a pleasurable feeling” (Dissanayake 214). All these little moveable joints are containing time, value, wearability, function and pleasure through the making process. And for the wearer or viewer, the moving parts provide more opportunities to engage with the work. I believe that the movable parts offer curiosity and desire to people even before they get a chance to touch them. For example, in the *Eye Switch*, I utilize the rotating mechanism

with polarized films to create an object that implies movement with its physical appearance and also surprises the viewer with its ability to actually dim the lighting. Each lens contains two layers of the film; the top layer is able to spin which creates the optically disorienting feeling of shifting between light and dark within seconds.

### **Found objects**

By using found objects, I also explore a way to expand the meaning and understanding of materials used in my work. I search for common found objects that most people are familiar with which can create more synesthesia with the viewers. Re-purposing these everyday objects in unexpected ways also brings a humorous quality to the work. The bucket that I incorporate into the work *Shade* is made for wearing on the head. This act creates a private or secret enclosed area for the wearer, and by putting it over the head, it is reminiscent of the whimsical sense of childhood play.

The body of work from *Instruments of Wonder* explores the enduring curiosity of human observation through artful tools placed between our eyes and the world.

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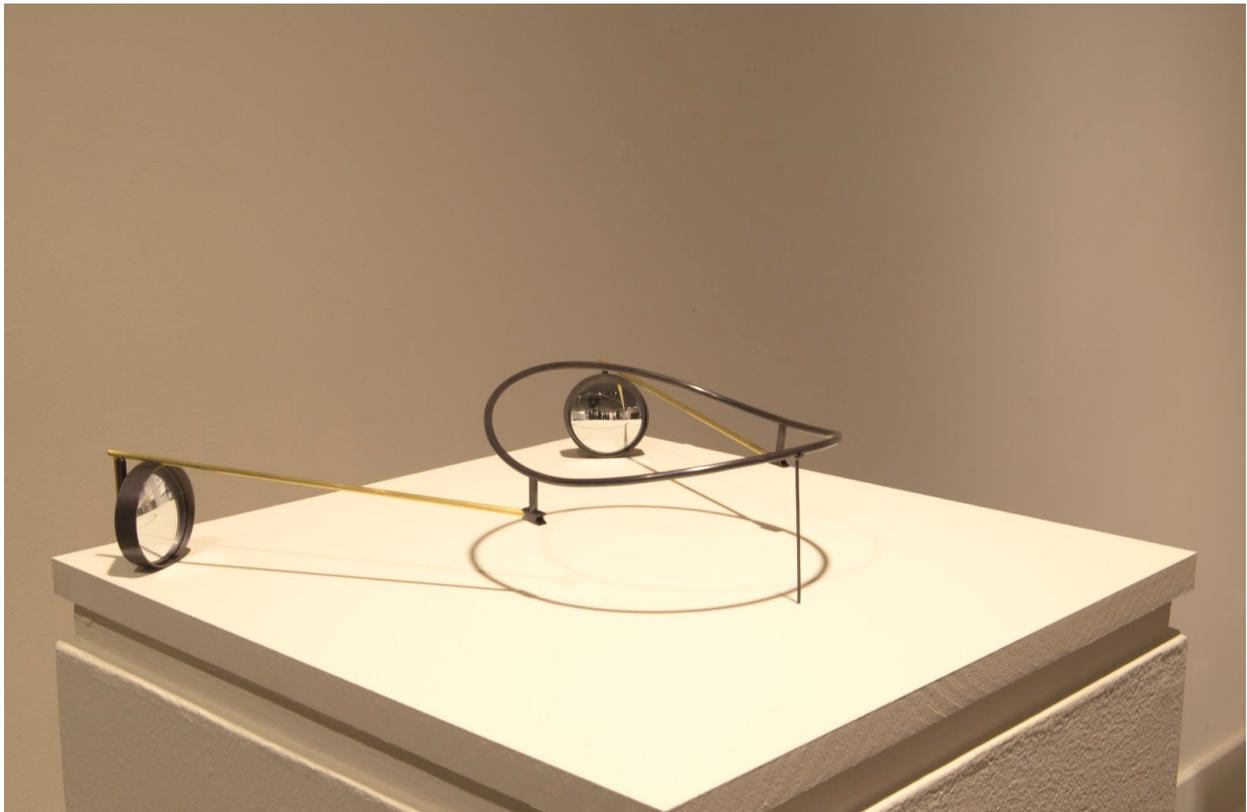
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*Rear View*  
Copper, brass, mirror  
2019



*Dim*  
Silver  
2019



*Eye Switch*  
Silver, polarized filter, stainless steel  
2019



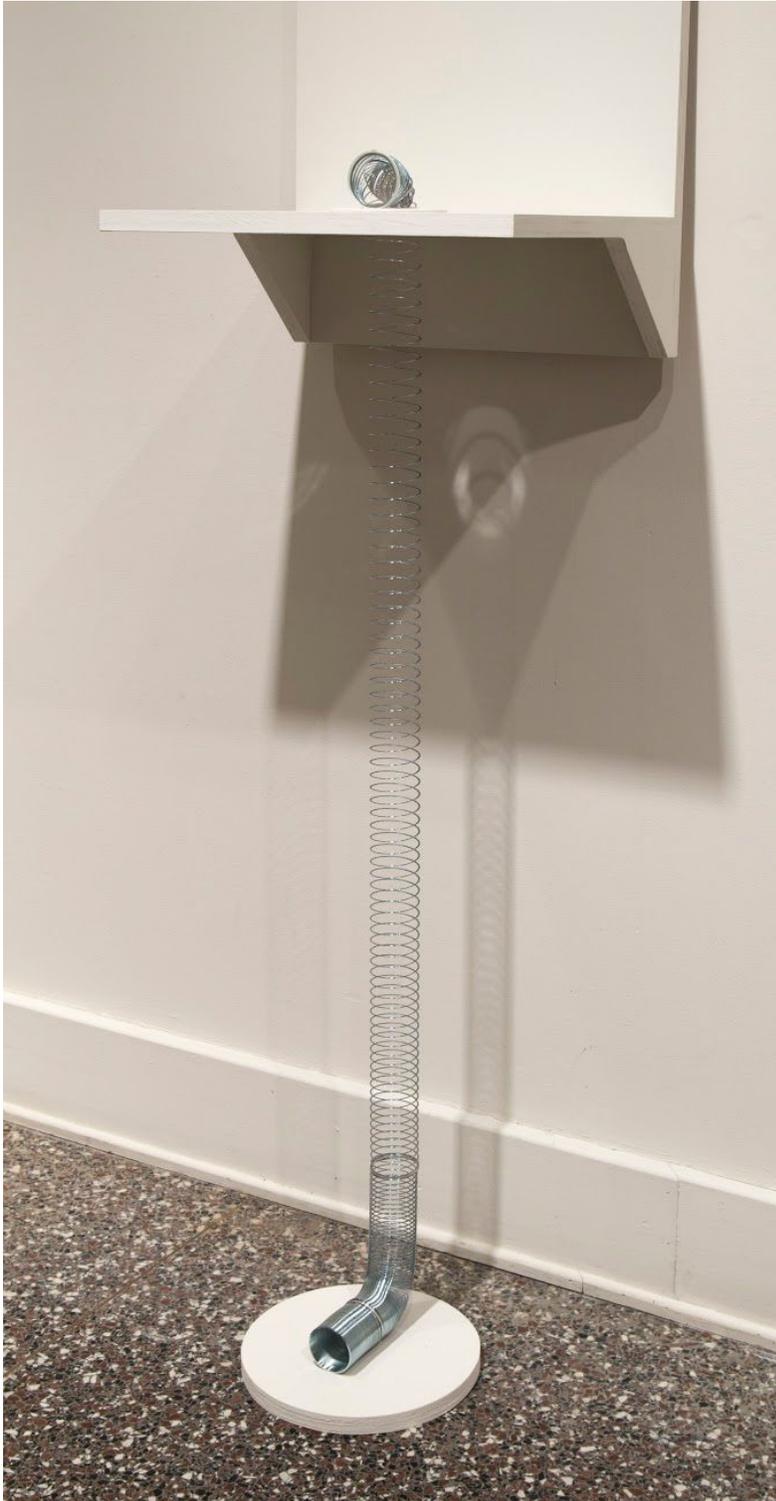
*Lorgnette*  
Copper  
2019



*Offbeat Tool*  
Bronze, brass  
2019



*Hearken Back*  
Silver, metal slinky, acrylic mirror, glass  
2019



*Hearken Back*  
Silver, metal slinky, acrylic mirror, glass  
2019



*Shade*  
Silver, plastic bucket  
2019



Display in Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art