

Tenderhooks

by Angela Lyon

Noticing the ever-increasing extremes to control the organic nature of the human body and mind, my work is expressly concerned with the *construction* of the ideal in contemporary society. Unable to ignore the prevalence of the romanticised female in the mass media, I examine the impact that this presentation has on the sociological attitudes of the 21st century. I am interested in how society interprets and feeds these perfectly controlled visions that shamelessly parade as truth.

By analysing the *ideal* images that fight for my attention, from nineteenth century Dante Rossetti's paintings of ideal women to television's *Extreme Makeover*, I examine the shifting boundaries between the subject and the object, the self and the other and scope the limits between perception, projection and *perfection*.

With the real and the unreal in question, characters evolve from the self-defeating desire to become 'ideal'. Within the anxious world of perfectionism, beneath its sugar-coated veneer, an uncanny opposite resides, revealing a place where fact and fiction become inseparable. Unable to function together in ordered harmony, the real and the ideal are in conflict before the lens. Refusing to represent romanticised visions, characters recoil, indistinct, fidgety and uncomfortable. They become just fleeting moments, uncontrolled by the edges of the picture plane. Their primary concern, not that of their presentation but that of the inescapable, anxious world they consequently inhabit. In this place the real, the unreal and the ideal remain unsure where the self ends and the other begins.