



Keeper of the Faith, an encaustic artwork by Kim Henigman Bruce. (photo by LANA MICHELIN/Advocate staff).

This Might Hurt: Roles of girls and women explored in Red Deer art exhibit

Kim Henigman Bruce's exhibit, How I Got Here, at Harris-Warke gallery

It almost hurts to look at Kim Henigman Bruce's latest art project — yet it's equally hard to look away.

The delicate shrunken wax head sculptures in her How I Got Here exhibit at the Harris-Warke Gallery, upstairs at Sunworks on Ross Street have hundreds of steel pins pushed through their soft craniums.

If this raises voodoo imagery in some people's minds, it won't be for the first time. Bruce recalled with a chuckle, "I once had a gallery owner tell me my works were too disturbing to display."

The Calgary artist uses her startling sculptures to make artistic statements about the expected roles of girls and women in society — and their right to break these expectations.

But she concedes, "I have a bit of a dark side..."

"I don't know what attracted me to pins and needles. They are cold and hard — but the key is they hurt, right?"

This Might Hurt is actually the name of one of her works — a bespectacled head that's blackened by sunken pins. It sits on a waxen book base with the coy title, *The Husband's Secret*.

The Calgary artist was exposed to all kinds of sewing implements — and expected "women's roles" — in high school. "I'm old enough to have had to take Home Ec in Grades 10 to 12. The boys all took shop class and the girls had to

learn to cook and sew.”

As she entered early adulthood, the homemaker role never applied. She had to make a living as an entrepreneur after graduating from an Interior Design program and realizing she couldn't get a job.

Bruce ran her own commercial design company with 12 employees for more than 15 years — creating retail interiors and exteriors in Red Deer and throughout southern Alberta.

At age 42, she decided to sell her company and focus on her artwork, which she'd been honing through years of evening classes at the University of Calgary and Alberta College of Art and Design, and the Series summer program at Red Deer College.

While Bruce started out as a painter, she now finds sculpture, whether in clay, wax, silicone or with found objects, more fulfilling.

Her *How I Got Here* exhibit says something about her early years — including *Three Hail Marys*, which reference her lapsed Catholicism.

Keeper of the Faith shows a head attached by strings to hanging vials, each holding a printed statement. “She’s about having faith in whatever I need to have faith in...”

Bruce, who's exhibited throughout North America and is represented by a Seattle, WA gallery, wants viewers to draw their own meanings from her art.

The exhibit continues to June 30.

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Pinpoint, an encaustic artwork by Kim Henigman Bruce. (By LANA MICHELIN/Advocate staff).