

2 Pretty 2 Cry

Kendyl Cartagena
Visual Femme Fairy Tales

No matter your level of empathy, you never know exactly what someone else is feeling. Our emotions are unique, specific to our past, personality, and biology. Everyone wears a mask, and we often believe we're left to battle our inner demons alone. That's because society tells us to keep our problems to ourselves. Someone somewhere always has it worse. Women, in particular, have had a long history of mistreatment and misunderstanding when it comes to addressing the struggles that come along with being female.

Being viewed as the weaker sex, our opinions don't have the same weight as a man's. Our perspectives are more likely to be put down, patronized, undermined, or regarded as fiction. Women speaking out against injustices are seen as attention seekers or angry feminists. Society tells women the only emotion acceptable to show in public is happiness/contentment. This idea is reinforced every time a man uses some deviation of the phrase "smile, you're too pretty to be sad"; basically a nice way of saying that our level of attractiveness and approachability is more immediately important than anything we feel in that moment. Even Hillary Clinton was criticized during her campaign for not smiling while giving her speeches. Females have their own extensive list of unique stressors based on biology alone that we are taught about minimally. This plays a huge part in the misunderstanding. To most people without uteri, a woman's menstrual cycle is a mystery. Young boys are taught about their own anatomy and how to have safe sex for pleasure. In school, they're given free condoms and sent on their merry way. That lack of education carries into adulthood, creating full grown men disgusted by menstrual blood, feminine products, even child birth.

Much like a song with lighthearted melody paired with disconsolate lyrics, through this series I plan to stylistically portray the essence of what society views women to be: pink, visually appealing, soft and vulnerable, etc., while simultaneously depicting the female-specific struggles we face. I want to represent the beautiful mask we wear to keep up our appearances of serenity. I hope to encourage viewers to take a second look and interpret their own meaning behind the details that they may have missed upon first glance. In these paintings, I allude to topics such as relationships, pregnancy, rape, depression, vulnerability, and sexism, all while looking like a scene from a fairy tale. I hope to create something viewers can relate to, either through my perspective, or through interpretations of their own.