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"Isabel," 2004. Cutout, ink on paper, 38 x 70 inches. Photo by Marc Gilman.

AMIE DICKE DUALISM, CONFLICT, + POLARITY

Open a magazine, check out the ads: beautiful women wearing beautiful clothes—Prada, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana—clean and glossy. Billboards, too: rack-cracking monuments to feminine perfection on Sunset Boulevard, on Fifth Avenue, and on streets almost everywhere in between. They are images of powerful women. They are images of sexist objectification—dualism, conflict, polarity. How much art began as a response to such forces?

For a period of six months, in 2001, visiting New York on a tourist's visa, Dutch-born cover artist Amie Dicke was lonely. She looked to the huge billboards around her, using them as touchstones and place-markers in a city she didn't know very well, familiarizing herself with the models' faces and poses. Back in the Netherlands, her room had been covered in similar pictures that she'd torn from magazines and, in New York, inspired by the enormity and amount of advertising plastered all around her, she turned to the familiar pages of women's publications like *Vogue*, with their smaller versions of the fashion ads, for her craft.

She began by tearing out the ads that she liked, and then, with a blade and a black pen, she went to work. Dicke drew lines on the models' bodies—long, droopy lines that created mazes and dark ribbons on the feminine forms. The effect was not unlike the one created when tears spill over mascara-covered eyelashes. Dicke simply expanded the imagery to cover entire bodies. She took her razor blade and removed everything between the black lines, so that a web-like impression of a model was all that remained: empty space filling the areas that jewelry and clothing once occupied.

The cutouts became her most well-known—and well-compensated—work to date. They gave her the freedom to explore different mediums and return, perhaps, to her roots.

Dicke stopped making cutouts when the very magazines she once used as her canvases began featuring her art because, she says, it brought her work full circle. Now, she spends a lot of time creating sculptures, oftentimes relying on found objects. And found objects, she says, are what first drew her to art, when she'd see a leaf, or spot a piece of furniture that she felt was beautiful only to her. Or, when she was able to turn something common into something artful.

From the very beginning, even before her work with magazines in New York, Dicke put herself on display. Her first sculpture was made of marzipan, covered in frosting—art, created with the help of a professional baker. Marzipan, Dicke explains now, has the peculiar quality of taking the shape of whatever it's pressed against. If it's molded against the skin and then peeled away, every wrinkle and detail of the skin is reflected in the sugar. She exploited this for her final art exam at the *Willem de Kooning Academy*, in Rotterdam, using herself as model. The resulting sculpture was titled, "How Sweet Is the Space Between My Legs?"

But, like an addiction, Dicke's fascination with fashion refused to disappear. One of her latest projects involves driving nails into magazine images, a violent act that is a critique of the fashion industry, she says, but also of her own obsession with it.

"It's always a self-portrait," she says of the resulting works. "I am the victim," she begins, by way of explaining her relationship to the fashion industry. "And I am the one who has the knife in the end—a hammer, in this case."

Dualism, conflict, polarity: themes turned on themselves, and on oneself, and into art. [E](#)

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"Black", 2005. Mixed-media sculpture, vintage ceramic, hair, smoking apron. 23 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches. Photo by Hans-Gerard Gaul.



"United (Opact)", 2007. Sculpture-plaster and zip ties. 23 1/2 x 24 x 32 inches. Photo by Hans-Gerard Gaul.