



WOMEN ON THE RISE!

## TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS: Anna Gaskell

### THEMES:

- Narrative strategies/ fairy tales
- Representations of girlhood
- Staged photography / use of filmmaking strategies in contemporary art

### FEATURED WORKS:

*Wonder* (1996), *Override* (1997) and *Hide* (1998)

### RESOURCES:

#### *Links to images*

- [http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist\\_works\\_191\\_0.html](http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_works_191_0.html)
- [http://www.albrightknox.org/acquisitions/acq\\_2002/Gaskell.html](http://www.albrightknox.org/acquisitions/acq_2002/Gaskell.html)
- <http://www.whitecube.com/exhibitions/halfife/>
- [http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist\\_bio\\_191.html](http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_bio_191.html)
- <http://www.whitecube.com/exhibitions/hide/>

#### *Books*

- *Anna Gaskell* by Bonnie Clearwater (1998): Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami
- *Anna Gaskell* by Thom Jones and Nancy Spector (2001): Powerhouse books
- *Writing Your Way: Creating a Personal Journal* by Ellen Jaffe (2001): Sumach Press

### DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- How would you describe the relationship between the girls in the *Wonder* and *Override* series?
- Why do you think they are dressed in that way? Is it a uniform? Could it be characteristic of where they live?
- Do you think the girls are sisters, students, or friends?
- How do you think Anna Gaskell exaggerates the way their bodies look? What happens when she takes a close up image?
- Do the images remind you of a movie you have seen or a story you heard on the news?
- Do Gaskell's photographs change your idea of fairy tales and stories like Alice in Wonderland?

- Are the young ladies in the images behaving the way girls are often expected to? Why/Why not
- Do the images follow a clear story line sequence? Is there a beginning/middle/end? If not, could you make one up by arranging them in a certain way? How would you do that?
- Is the mood of the *Hide* series different from that in *Wonder/Override*? Why/Why not. How does Gaskell use lighting, models, and setting to achieve the mood of *Hide*?

## **MATERIALS FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT: Anna Gaskell**

### ***Flashlights and Scarytales***

- Flashlights of assorted sizes
- Camera (digital or film)

### **PROCEDURE FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT:**

This project is based on images from *Wonder* and *Override* with an emphasis on how Gaskell utilizes extremes of light and dark in her images.

- Instructor will bring an assortment of flash lights of various sizes to class
- Students will form groups of 3-4 (or larger depending on class size)
- Each group will work together to formulate a basic sketch of a story or a series of expressive poses
- Once these have been determined the group will work to stage each scene/pose; They will decide who will work as models, photographers, and lighting/stage hands
- Students will be encouraged to include more than one person in the images as the project is based on depicting psychologically charged relationships
- Photographs will be returned to students and can be installed in the classroom in a narrative or non-sequential format

### **APPLICABLE NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS (GRADES 5 -12):**

- NA—VA.5-8.1 (9-12.1): Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- NA—VA.5-8.3 (9-12.3): Choosing and Evaluating A Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- NA—VA.5-8.6 (9-12.6): Making Connections Between Visual Arts and Other Disciplines [Language Arts]



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## STUDENT HAND OUT: Ana Gaskell

### Ana Gaskell (b. 1969—Iowa)

Anna Gaskell made her international debut in 1996 with a series of photographs titled *Wonder*. Gaskell re-created the story of *Alice in Wonderland* in the series in order to create her own unusual **narrative**. The artist focuses on how the **protagonist** experienced changes to her body such as growing extremely tall and shrinking to the size of an insect.

Young girls who perform mysterious rituals are the **subjects** of the *Override* series (1997). In these images Alice serves as a symbol of how young women try to find their identity, deal with pressures to fit in, and experience growing pains. Gaskell uses visual exaggeration and distortion to create fantasy worlds and leaves her images open to many different interpretations.

Gaskell makes references to other fiction tales in later works. Her *Hide* series of 1998 is inspired by the Brother's Grimm story *The Magic Donkey*. The photographs feature a young heroine who cloaks herself in animal skins to escape from her abusive father. The artist uses these fairy tales as springboards for her ideas. She does not follow the original stories exactly and transforms the narratives in order to make her unique photographs. Gaskell also makes references to film by using techniques such as extreme close-ups to create eerie scenes reminiscent of horror movies.

#### Vocabulary

**Protagonist** – The leading character, heroine, or hero of a drama or other literary work.

**Narrative** – A story or account of events, whether factual or fictional.

**Subject** – A broad term for whatever is the focus of a work of art.

**CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISE:** Ana Gaskell

(Adapted from Ellen Jaffe’s *Writing Your Way: Creating a Personal Journal* 2001)

Create a fairy tale character based on yourself. Pay attention to what your body would be like. You can imagine that you are very tall or extremely small (like Alice in Wonderland), or that parts of your body can grow back, like a lizard’s tail. What is her name? Where does she live? What does she look like? What kind of adventures does your character have?

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