In Bad Taste is a depiction of my own sexual awakening – a journey that began in my conservative childhood home of Holland, Michigan, and continues to evolve as a young adult in Kalamazoo. The title of the exhibition is a tongue-in-cheek response to its sexual content. It is not meant to be shocking or indecent, rather I am presenting a predominantly humorous perspective of the most vulnerable parts of my life such as rape, BDSM, masturbation, addiction, and of course, sexual pleasure. In an ideal world, this material could be addressed without embarrassment or shame.

I use many everyday objects to personalize this multi-media, performative, and at times, interactive exhibit; however, I have taken on a male identity to recount my sexual encounters. This choice does not reflect a desire to be gendered male, nor does it show antagonism toward men, instead it is a feminist statement on our society’s sexual double standard. For women of my generation, sexual conduct is still inextricably equated with their character. A women who has too much or too adventurous sex, or too many sexual partners is still thought of as a ‘slut’ or ‘skank,’ while the social status of men who act in a similar fashion is not adversely affected. I find myself, at times, unconsciously accepting this double standard, perhaps because of my conservative upbringing that preached abstinence before marriage (between a man and a woman, of course.) I am challenging this double standard much like the women of the 19th and early 20th century, who changed their identity and wrote under a male pseudonym. In this exhibition the penis is my penname. Voicing my sexuality through a male persona felt unsettling at times, but also rather liberating. The male surrogate allowed me to ignore traditional moral assumptions about female sexuality, and to push the idea of “bad taste” beyond what I felt comfortable doing as a woman.

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