Amelia Merrill
Final Project Summary

Many traits that are found in males of other species are found in human females. This is another example of why humans are strange compared to other species in terms of our sexual selection and practices. I've made a painting to point out some of the more common examples of this, namely fierce competition for mates among females as well as the idea of adornment to attract a mate. (I just want to say first of all that the painting is of me, but not because I'm super egotistical and think I'm an amazing specimen of female attractiveness, but because it's easiest to get good reference of my own face haha).

In many species, almost all species actually, competition for mates is largely enacted by the males. So much so, that males have evolved many traits that females of the same species do not possess for this specific reason. One fairly obvious example of this are the large antlers found on many species such as deer, elk, and moose. Antlers are used for a variety of reasons, but mostly for male competition. While sometimes antlers are used to defend against predators, more often than not they are used to impress females. During certain times of the year, males compete for dominance by using their antlers to fight each other (2). Antlers also signify health to a female because it takes a lot of excess energy to produce them. Female humans also unusually compete for mates almost just as fiercely. While they don't necessarily butt heads together to show dominance it is undeniable that girls also vie against each other, presumably fueled by competition for males, which is a behavior usually reserved for males. One example of this is the fact that women are pretty notorious for being hyper critical of other women, sometimes saying incredibly rude and demeaning things behind each other's backs. This isn't the case all the time obviously, but there is something to be said for aggressive behavior between females. This has been shown in the illustration by the addition of deer horns onto the head.

Another example of role reversal in humans is female adornment, which has been socially constructed mimicking normal evolution of adornment to attract mates. An obvious example of this in the animal kingdom is male bird's colorful plumage. Females of many species of birds are far more plain looking compared to their blinged out male counterparts. Sometimes these developed traits can even be a huge burden, such as a peacock's tail feathers (7). This is mirrored by female humans who sometimes go to great lengths to look "attractive". Females even encumber themselves, much like a peacock, with things like high heels and uncomfortable clothing in order to be attractive. The mystery here is why we choose to do these things. Peacocks unfortunately have no choice about being born with large cumbersome tail feathers, because they have been sexually selected by females to pass these traits on, but human females do these things on purpose. It is especially interesting because humans are one of the few species where this sort of extravagant display is enacted by the females. I've shown this in the painting by the incorporation of peacock tail feathers in the hair.

Bibliography

1. "A Late Winter Treasure Hunt Â«." *RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2012. <http://www.jonijohnsongodsy.com/wordpress/?p=682>.

   Photo reference for antlers used in illustration.

2. "Antler Development in White-tailed Deer: Implications for Management." *G9486*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2012. <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G9486>.

   Research on antlers of whitetailed deer. Talks about how Antlers are used as both a signifier of good health and good genes as well as a means to physically compete for mates.

3. "Bighorn Sheep (Ovis Canadensis)." *Bighorn Sheep Photo*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2012. <http://www.arkive.org/bighorn-sheep/ovis-canadensis/image-G64943.html>.

   Initial horn research, ended up not using this site, but it helped me decide which horns to use in the illustration.

4. "Birds of AÂ featherâ€¦ Â» Full-peacock-feathers-web." *Abbiemcgilvery*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2012. <http://abbiemcgilvery.wordpress.com/my-favorites-iconic-women-of-the-present/birds-of-a-feather/full-peacock-feathers-web-3/>.

   Photo reference for peacock feathers in illustration.

5. "Birds of Paradise - Photo Gallery - National Geographic Magazine." *Birds of Paradise - Photo Gallery - National Geographic Magazine*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2012. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/07/birds-of-paradise/laman-photography>.

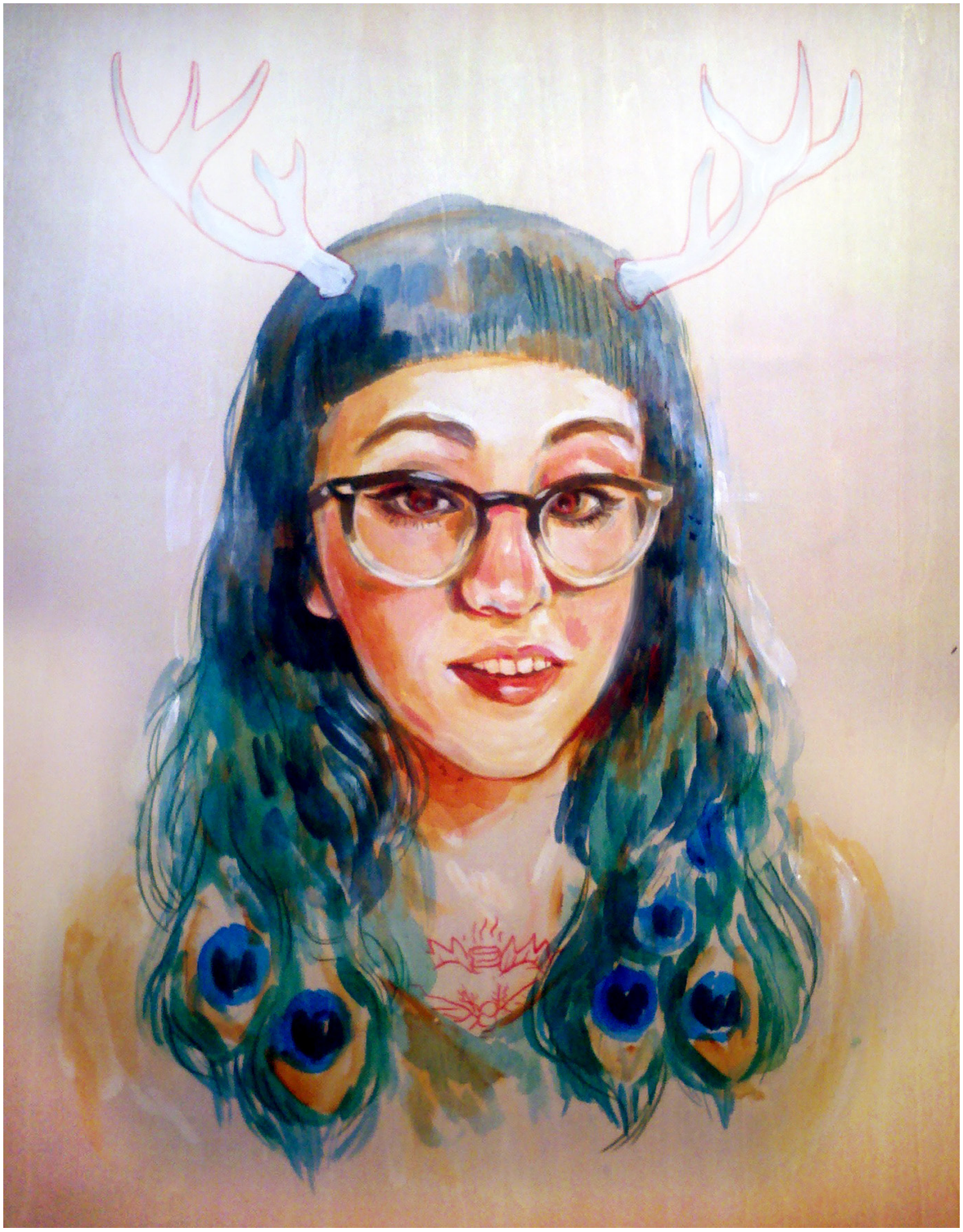
   Research on colorful feathers in birds, specifically birds of paradise, which I ended up also not using, but still valuable visual information in the photos here.

6. "Birds of Paradise: Ritual of Seduction - Australian Geographic." *Birds of Paradise: Ritual of Seduction - Australian Geographic*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2012. <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/birds-of-paradise-seduction-rituals.htm>.

   Research on colorful bird plumage which talks about how the traits are used to attract plain looking females of the same species. This is important to my project because it is very common in birds that only males have colorful feathers.

7. "How Peacocks Got Their Colorful Tails." *LiveScience.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2012. <http://www.livescience.com/5066-peacocks-colorful-tails.html>.

Peacock tail feather information. This website talks about how despite the feathers being a huge burden to the male they still evolved due to female choice.



Sexual competition in females

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