

Rosemary Meza-DesPlas
Artist's Statement

Good Wife/Bad Wife Series 2007-2008

The concept of the *Good Wife/Bad Wife* series evolved soon after I read a book called "A History of the Wife" by Marilyn Yalom. The book examines the wife role from the ancient world to contemporary times. The evolution and transformation of the wife role has created problematic issues which resonate in society then and now. The following excerpt from the book stayed on my mind, "To be a wife may no longer be a badge of honor, but it is far from a badge of woe".

This book led me to contemplate the social role of wife and its impact upon women artists. I started working on this series of works during the summer of 2007. In my studio I made a list and divided women artists (who had been wives) into the black /white categories of good or bad. My initial classification was based on my rudimentary knowledge of these women artists and their respective marriages. The offhand manner in which I assign these women the label of "good" or "bad" mimics the cavalier attitude in which society labels women in narrow-minded black and white terms. As the Raconteurs' song title says there are "many shades of black".

After I selected which artists I would include in my series of *Good Wife/Bad Wife* I spent time researching and learning more about the marriages of each artist. The artists I've included in this series thus far are: Alice Neel, Georgia O'Keeffe, Ana Mendieta, Lee Krasner, Frida Kahlo and Louise Bourgeois. Upon educating myself further about each artist my initial list underwent changes. After reading "Art and the Crisis of Marriage" by Vivien Green Fryd I moved Georgia O'Keeffe from *bad* wife to *good* wife. This book examined the marriages of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz and Edward and Jo Hopper.

In my artworks from the *Good Wife/Bad Wife* series each wife has a patch with her name. The patch is utilized here symbolically. Patches are given for merit in boy scouts and girl scouts. The patch is sewn onto clothing as a positive signifier. I've been captivated by the idea of patches since seeing the boy scout and eagle scout patches of my husband. I also purchased a set of patches from the American Airpower Heritage Museum in Midland, TX which depicted images of aviation nose art from WWII. I've been pondering these patches for awhile and turning over in my head the meaning of them. In my artworks the first name of the artist is depicted on the patch - her identity is reinforced by a patch. The merit is her steadfast individualism despite being a member of a pair....despite being a wife...despite being good or bad.