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(ARTKC365) Switching the Price Tags: Misty Gamble

By [Steve Brisendine](#) March 5, 2010

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"Chanel No. 5" (detail), Ceramic and Wooden Chair

Misty Gamble

Primping and the Currency of Worth

11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art
2004 Baltimore
Kansas City, MO
816.221.2626

Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday
Runs through: April 24.

Artist's site: <http://www.mistygamble.com>

Gallery site: <http://www.sherryleedy.com>

Say what you will about war and religion; one of the thorniest subjects in art (and the rest of life, while we're at it) is that of physical beauty and how a society defines it.

So, up front:

There's nothing wrong with being attracted to a certain "type," whether for reasons of preference or biology. If we all looked for the same physical characteristics ... well, that would be problematic.

But when people get pounded every day with messages that *Looks Matter Most*, and that there's a template into which one must fit to be attractive, the natural laws of attraction become subverted.

There's no question that women get hit hardest and most often with that message. Ads, videos, magazine covers, you name it. Mom and Dad might say "It's what's inside that counts," but the world says otherwise.

Sculptor Misty Gamble isn't the first artist to confront that harsh reality. Human nature being what it is, that vein could be mined for another few centuries without risk of depletion.

But Gamble, whose *Primping and the Currency of Worth* opened last night at Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art in the Crossroads, offers a valuable insight into why things are the way they are.

Focusing on the eccentric and unique qualities of the human figure, my ceramic work is derived from a combination of fantasy and reality, she writes. Gesture, posture and exaggeration of features play an important role in my ability to create dynamic sculptures that capture a moment in time.

The visual moments in this show all come from a previous generation. Gamble's ceramic figures (including *Chanel No. 5*, pictured above in detail) and hand-cast high-heeled pumps are all frozen in the mid-20th century. Hairstyles, color schemes, clothing ... it's all so very **Camelot**.

There's a grotesque streak running through all that glamor, though: unnatural skin tones, distorted expressions, disembodied hands flaunting obscenely large diamonds.

Gamble's time-warp treatment might seem to soften her observational blows. After all, this isn't our time, our place. It might not even be our parents'.

And, in a sense, it does take some of the responsibility away from the current generation. We do, after all, learn what we're shown by our forebears, who in turn learned from theirs, who learned from theirs, all the way back to the roots of the race.




That said, we in the present day don't get a free pass from Gamble. Her visuals might be nostalgic, but the message — and the challenge implicit in that message — will remain fresh so long as we measure worth by the fleeting standard of the exterior.

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