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People tell stories across multiple mediums and I have always enjoyed storytelling accomplished by means other than writing. Many Russian tales were told orally and through illustrations as many peasants were illiterate, and folklore differed from village to village because these tales were not permanently written down. The illustration of stories by means of the visual arts is fascinating because the viewer must interpret the story from forms they see, not by words they read. The artist plays with ambiguity, and meaning is incorporated in subtle ways. I have attempted the same in my thesis project.

My thesis consists of individual sculptures, each telling their own narrative. The main theme of my artwork is relationships, and all of the main actors in my narrative sculptures are busts of women and girls. Each sculpture illustrates various types of friendships among girls and women, with some of these bonds strong enough to be equated with sisterhood. However, many bonds are not without conflict.

Two figures comprise each work, with the figures either in opposition to one another or the two figures causing opposition in their environment. Significantly, opposition in my work creates conflict and thus a story. “Binary opposites” are found within many European tales and especially Russian folklore such as the oppositions of “pure” and “tainted,” and of “familiar” and “unfamiliar.” Similarly, in my work, most of the figures play opposites of one another, and the concept of opposing forces is borrowed from folklore. The conflict is noticeable in the details, placement and contrast of the materials of each bust.

The materials used in the sculptures include wood, metal, clay, fabric, thread, and flowers. Not all sculptures, however, use identical material. All of the busts are composed of clay, but each sculpture has its own unique and delicate additional material. The additional materials differ from the clay because the additional materials are fragile while the clay is solid and heavy. The juxtaposition of the clay and delicate materials also plays a role in emphasizing the conflict of each artwork.

The overarching theme of bonds ties all of the works together and each sculpture possesses some material similar and common to others.