

Impact Statement

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Hedy Lamarr: people's brains are more interesting than their looks, 2024.

Graphite on paper, 22.5 x 16 inches.

Holton High School, Mayetta, KS

Unsung Hero: Hedy Lamarr

I found Hedy Lamarr when researching women in STEM. Hedy was underrepresented and ignored even though she was part of a major technological achievement. When Hedy was just 17 years old, she starred in her first film. She then took off after gaining worldwide fame for her scandalous role in the film *Ecstasy* (1933). The world thought she was nothing more than a "Hollywood Bombshell." Being Born in the early 1900s, Women were discouraged from continuing their education and not allowed to work in the field of STEM. However, Hedy was gifted in math, science, and engineering. She was an innovator, wanting to be seen for something else besides her beauty. She worked behind the scenes and patented "The Secret Communication System" also known as frequency hopping. Her idea made a way for radio guidance transmitters and torpedo receivers to jump simultaneously from frequency to frequency in order to prevent messages from being intercepted by opposing sides during World War II. She introduced the technology that would be used as a starting point for Wi-Fi, GPS, and Bluetooth communication systems. Hedy simply wanted to tell the world that Intelligence is Beautiful, and I wanted to help her share this message.

Upon researching Hedy Lamarr, I found her personality traits to be remarkable. Hedy was an innovator, and a gifted woman. Not only did she possess the talent of acting and entertaining, but she also has the ability to design and execute her own invention, which helped change the world technologically as we know it. Hedy was resilient, she didn't give up, or give in to the society standards that told her to just be beautiful and silent. She pushed through her adversity and proved that women belong in STEM and deserve a higher position in society. She was a leader who paved the way for women to get more recognition and served as a role model to all the young females who wanted to be more than "just another pretty face." Hedy Lamarr summed up her point by stating: "People's brains are more interesting than their looks."

Through my artwork I wanted to show Hedy Lamarr's journey in the eye of the public as she progressed from a "scandalous bombshell," to a respected inventor. I wanted to show snapshots of her life through the eyes of others but highlight Hedy's resilience as she continued working on this amazing project outside the public eye. I chose to show some popular news articles whose authors were puzzled by her invention, wondering how someone so glamorous could be part of a major technological advancement. I also wanted to show many different portraits rather than just one because Hedy seemed to live many different lives. She had Hollywood convinced she was just a pretty girl who

could act and show some skin, while she was really a beautiful woman with the brains to prove it.

Through this project I learned that people are not what they may seem, and everyone deserves to be listened to. Intelligence is beautiful. Someone somewhere has an amazing idea that could change the world no matter race, age, religion or gender. I was given an opportunity to share Hedy's story with my community. My art was displayed in a gallery in town for an event on a weekend. There were lots of people, and they got to come in to learn more about Hedy's story. There was a QR code under the picture so that anyone could scan it and read my impact statement. It is on display for the whole month, so anyone can stop in and see it. For people who are not able to attend in person, there is a YouTube video online with my art and my impact statement. This way people everywhere will get to discover what I discovered: people's brains are more interesting than their looks.