

Impact Statement

Mackenzie Sothers, Grade 12.

Brains over Beauty, 2016.

Mixed media on paper, 16 x 16 Inches.

Washburn Rural High School, Topeka, KS

Unsung Hero: Hedy Lamarr

Hedy Lamarr is best known as an Austrian model and actress from the 1940s. Some of her most well-known films are Ecstasy, Samson and Delilah, and Algiers. While filming one of her movies, she was voted the most beautiful woman on screen. Although most people assumed that Hedy only had her looks and good acting skills; she was also extremely intelligent. During World War II, Hedy Lamarr worked undercover with the government to invent a circuit that would allow the soldiers to communicate with each other through radios; without the messages being received and translated by the Japanese. One aspect of Hedy that assisted her in hiding her work with the government was her beauty. In the forties, women (especially beautiful women) were not seen as individuals who could be intelligent. They were only seen as pretty faces whose jobs were to be seen and not heard, and make sure dinner was ready when their husbands got home. Instead of following social norms, Hedy defied the status quo, and used her gift to make a difference in the world. Her intelligence and beauty both assisted her in creating a radio circuit that saved the lives of thousands of soldiers; and will continue to assist in communications even in today's military.

In my piece, I wanted to highlight several parts of Hedy's story. First, I wanted to show the invention that deemed her an unsung hero. When she first invented it, she was not recognized because she was a woman, I wanted her invention to be a big focus of the piece. One big part of her story was that her looks helped her hide her part in creating the invention. In the piece, I decided to hide her beauty behind her invention. I highlighted the basic symbols of beauty: red lips and light eyes; and then put the circuit in a contrasting color over her face. I also partially hid her face, in order to have her intelligence outshine her beauty.

Hedy's story inspired me, because she did not let society's views and roles for women influence her decision to make a difference. Her invention helped not only the soldiers in WWII; but also helped future soldiers communicate in better and safer ways. Looking at graduating soon and going to college; I connected with Hedy's story because I do not want to submit to society's views on what women should be, or what they should do for a living. I am very thankful to live in the time period where women are more free to decide what they want to make of themselves. Back then it would have been very difficult to stand up for your rights as a woman. Hedy Lamarr is just one of many women who made the stand to step out of the roles they had been placed in. I only hope as I finish my education and start on my career path; that I can be as strong and independent as Lamarr and all the other unrecognized women before me.