

Pinocchio: a real BOY

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Artist's Statement

While working on an installation involving tricksters, gender shifting, and relative realities, I rediscovered Pinocchio, one of my childhood heroes. Like many kids in the US, I grew up exposed to the Disney version, not the original. I couldn't remember what happened that made Pinocchio's donkey ears go away, so I searched the Internet for the story. What I came away with was a much better story than I remembered from childhood, and one that inspired this new series of work.

Culling images from Carlo Collodi's original stories published in 1883, ***Pinocchio: a real BOY***, explores the bad boy puppet that wants to become real. Unlike the better known Disney interpretation, Collodi's marionette is not cute, cuddly or remotely nice. Rather, Collodi's Pinocchio is a naughty imp with no impulse control. In our time he would be considered a hardcore delinquent and consigned to a juvenile lockup. Only through a series of harsh, even impossible adventures, is he improbably transformed into a "real boy".

In the spirit of the original story, I construct an edgy, dystopian visual identity for Pinocchio, an unsanitized view of a classic character. Pinocchio becomes a demented construction that (in turn) gets his feet burnt off; locked up in jail for being stupid; and gleefully kills the Talking Cricket. All of the images are literally taken from the original stories; no embellishment required. Rediscovering children's literature with Pinocchio makes for an unsettling experience. These older stories bear little resemblance to the whitewashed, politically correct fiction now fed to children. Pinocchio represents a past where children had to prepare for a very harsh world, one where many children died long before adulthood.

The first set of works in glass translates the drawings to ruby-red, etched flashed glass for presentation, and operates within the boundaries of the existing text of the Pinocchio stories laid out by Collodi. Acting only in an interpretive mode, these works pull the most decisive and dramatic moments out of the written words.

The second set of works in glass start with the idea of Pinocchio becoming a real boy. Pinocchio becomes an avatar used to explore gender and identity politics. These works add text, changing the interpretation and meaning of the visual images. Executed in clear plate glass, these works circle back on what it means to be real, and question whether it is a good idea.