

Aimee Howard  
Artist Statement  
Heart Series: *Clichés*

Works from this series consist of containers in the form of human anatomical hearts, which open to reveal visual narratives of clichés associated with the heart. The inspiration for these pieces comes from my fascination with the physical framework of the human anatomy. In particular I have been drawn to the heart because of the long standing symbolism surrounding it. In western culture, we learn that the heart is an organ circulating blood through the body. However, we are also aware of the notion that a heart has ‘control’ over a person’s emotions. These pieces are a means of visually exploring the idea that our heart defines who we are. I wanted to illustrate the belief that when we describe a person’s essence we do it by listing ‘characteristics’ of his or her heart; a heart of gold, a soft heart, a cold heart, an empty heart, and so on. In fact, we use these descriptions so often they have become clichés. The universal nature of clichés is important to each piece, with reference to the fact that although individuals will handle a ‘broken heart’ differently, the point is that we have all had the experience.

When thinking about the creation and display of these hearts, the idea of adding medical connotations seemed very appropriate. In this culture, we view doctors with high esteem, believing them capable of fixing problems, be it physical or psychological. By allowing subtle medical associations to emerge the hearts become visual diagrams; a medical explanation of what an empty or wrecked heart looks like. These pieces are, in effect, an x-ray; something to look at and determine exactly what the problem is, and how to fix it. Many of the hearts are designed to allow the viewer to decide if the piece has a positive or negative outlook. For example, the *Broken Heart* contains a gear that has cracked, however the tools and spare parts necessary to ‘fix’ the problem are also presented. It is my hope that these pieces illustrate positive and negative elements of the human condition, confirming that we are not alone in our struggles or our success.