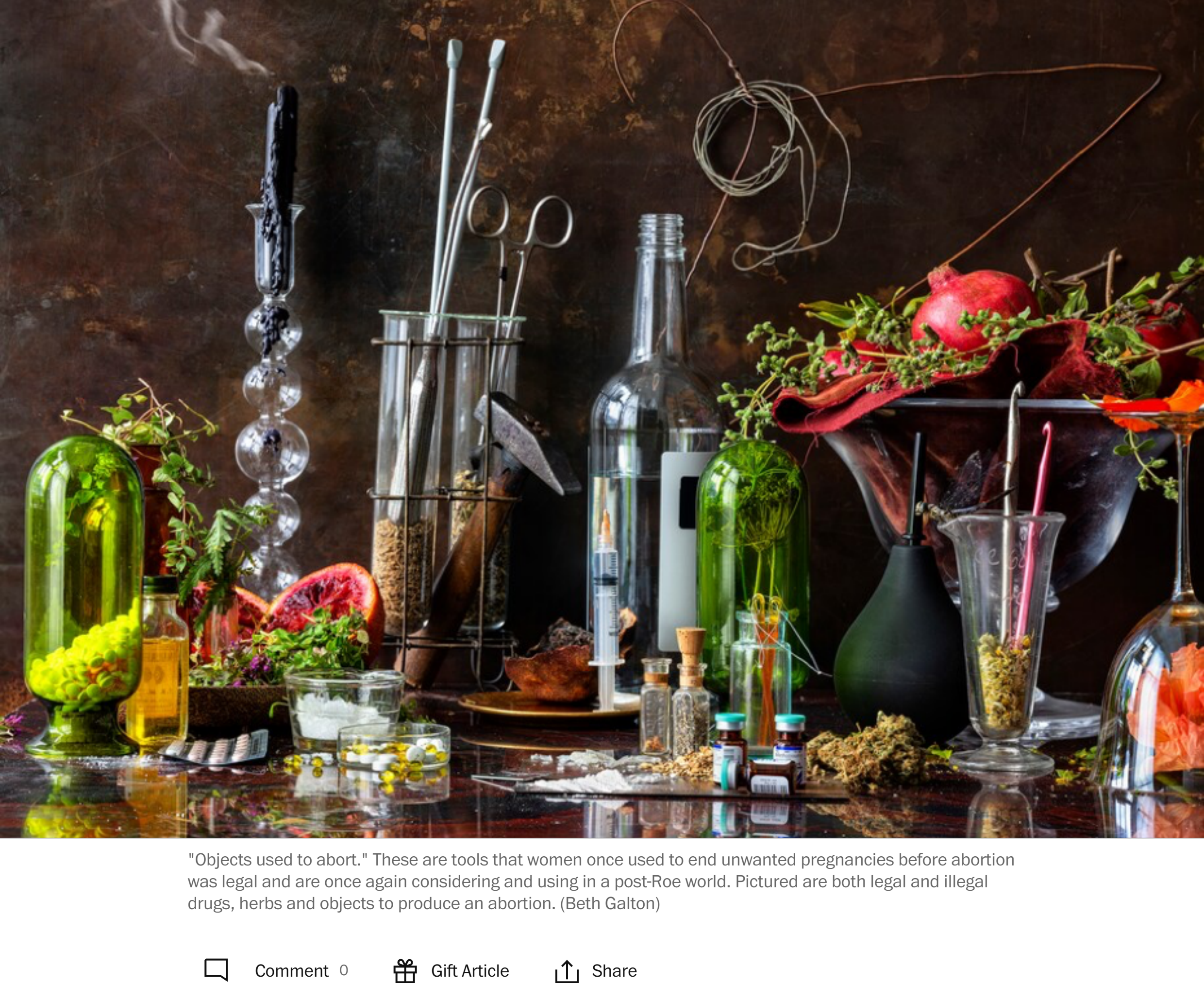


IN SIGHT

The tools and tactics the desperate used to end unwanted pregnancies

Perspective by Beth Galton and Dana Goodyear
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"Objects used to abort." These are tools that women once used to end unwanted pregnancies before abortion was legal and are once again considering and using in a post-Roe world. Pictured are both legal and illegal drugs, herbs and objects to produce an abortion. (Beth Galton)

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In the Dutch still life paintings of the 17th century — with their platters of half-slurped oysters, sweating cheeses, split fruits and wilted blooms — we spectators are witness to an aftermath. Who laid out these weird feasts? Who ate? Who knows?

Aftermath is also the subject of Beth Galton's still lifes. Her photographs, created with the help of prop-stylist Bette Blau, investigate the consequences to reproductive health and freedom after the Supreme Court's decision in June to overturn [Roe v. Wade](#). Since then, information about how to give oneself an [abortion](#) has surged across social-media platforms. This is the sad, secret knowledge passed by rumor and word of mouth in the absence of safe and legal abortion care.



"Back Alley Abortion." These objects traditionally used by medical professionals are also used illegally to perform abortions. Also represented is the abortion pill, shipped to states where abortion is now illegal. (Beth Galton)

On first look, like their Dutch precursors, the images convey abundance: fruits and flowers, herbs and vessels. But Galton's tablescapes are macabre, confronting the viewer with the tools and tactics that the desperate used to end unwanted pregnancies before abortion was an enshrined right, and are once again using in a post-Roe world. There is pennyroyal, dried dong quai, chamomile, ginger and rosehips — herbs that stimulate uterine contractions, but can also cause multi-organ failure and death. There are Schedule One narcotics like cocaine, meth and heroin. No gloss needed there. There are the wire hangers, douches and hammers of our grandmothers. Emblems from the nightmare past, in the spotlight of now.



"Herbs." Herbs used to stimulate uterine contractions but can also cause multi-organ failure and death if not properly used. (Beth Galton)

These dangerous home abortifacients may become the reality across America. Those turning to such methods might be victims of rape or incest, or people whose lives are put at risk by pregnancy. They might be children. They might be carrying nonviable pregnancies, or have some other, entirely personal reason for not wanting to carry a baby to term. They will be scared, likely alone and certainly at risk, not only of sepsis or fatal overdose but, should they succeed, of legal repercussions in the states that would have those who seek abortions tried as murderers.



"Drugs." The use of Schedule One narcotics like cocaine, meth and heroin along with OxyContin are often considered. (Beth Galton)

Among the Dutch still lifes, there is a subgenre known as vanitas paintings, which serve to remind the viewer of her mortality through not-so-subtle emblems such as clock faces, burning candles and human skulls. Galton, making visible the private horror of terminating a pregnancy without the protection of the law, performs the gesture even more literally. Her still lifes force us to contemplate the possibility of the mother's unnecessary death.



"Bodily Harm." Bodily harm caused by wire hangers, knitting needles, douches and hard objects. Emblems from the nightmare past, in the spotlight of now. (Beth Galton)

