
Faculty Mentor: Joe Johnson, Art

HOME/BODY

Kylee Isom

HOME/BODY is a collection of black and white self-portraits made with a large-format 4x5 film camera. This work navigates the tangled notions of body and femininity, in relation to the domestic sphere. Engaging with the history of photography as a means of representation accessible to women, this project acknowledges the function of the self-portrait throughout art history as a means of reclaiming agency and rewriting the narrative of womanhood. Utilizing textiles, objects of fashion, and iconographic symbols of femininity as a vessel for dialogue within the confines of the home space, this body of work looks critically at historical and present-day perceptions of gender roles, idealized beauty, and womanhood. Incorporating recognizable emblems of femininity, like floral patterns, allows an access point into a more complex dialogue where investigation is imperative. Leaning into the history of shapewear as a means of smoothing, sculpting, and perfecting the body – one that has kept up with the societal standards of beauty as they have evolved over time – these images work against the material to establish a tension and a heightened focus on the body. This project, also, uses fabric and textiles to alter the function of the body in space. The performative act of abstracting, distorting, or stripping away the body by subverting the function of these materials works to undermine oppressive systems of misrepresentation. There are instances where this act narrows the focus to particular pieces of the subject to confront the tendency to sexualize pieces of the female body that exists nearly subconsciously. The photographs often include built environments and conditions that challenge the perceptions of the image as truthful and begin to suggest the constructed nature of photographs. This is a body of work which questions the way in which womanhood is tethered to domesticity and the way in which this tether serves as an obstacle to the fabrication of identity.

HOME/BODY interrogates the dynamic relationship between beauty, body, and femininity and how this relationship has been sculpted and preserved throughout history.