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Dollhouse

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Dolls have been used to reinforce gender roles way before Barbie became a household name. In 1879, Henrik Isben published A Doll’s House, a play in which a Norwegian housewife has a groundbreaking epiphany about how marriage has reduced her life to child’s play. There has been controversy about the critique of the domesticated housewife as a concern for women’s rights. Many women enjoy their role as homemakers, wives, and mothers. However this series, Doll House, was made as a very personal response to how growing up in poverty and a small, isolated community can really distort gender identity by equivalating marriage and success. Where woman lack opportunities in education and the workplace, obsession with superficial qualities ensue in pursuit of the financially independent gentleman caller. (I ain’t saying she a gold digger, but…) Mix financial desperation with social pressures, superficial media, and our culture’s obsession with porn culture and misogyny can easily distort the female identity to a life of plastic.

The images are broken up into two different lighting scenarios, day lit and black light. I had only anticipated using the day lit aesthetic, however I was really curious to see how the neon paint would translate under a black light and I was pleasantly surprised to see how disturbing some the skin textures became. Motifs in this series include obsessions with superficiality, sexuality, and procreation as a means of solidifying one’s self-worth and how these obsessions are passed down the maternal line. Important symbols include the chain, which represents domestication or imprisonment, the skull, which represents the death of independence, and the gilded angel, which represents purity or innocence, whether real or perceived. Gold is used to represent glorification and materialism. For example in the piece, Doll House, gold pets, trophies, and coins all lose worth after the death of individuality and self-worth. So far the response I have gotten to these images has been quite strong. People are disturbed by them in the same ways many women feel disturbed by the phony expectations of their culture.

http://samanthasrichardson.com/dolls/