

## Artist Statement for Sabella, the monarq

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The complexity of identity has fascinated me for some time now. What strikes me most is how paradoxical the idea of selfhood is. For instance: we are always ourselves and yet constantly in flux, changing and developing based on a multitude of different factors and environments. In each of us there is the possibility of becoming someone else—or at least demonstrating a multiplicity that makes us unique and gives us life.

My move to the Pacific Northwest led me to re-examine the factors shaping my identity. New geography and culture sparked new ways of looking at both internal and external landscapes. Pressing questions arose: How do I make a home after leaving home behind? How do I integrate the past into potential futures? Channeling these concerns through photography, collage, pattern making, and portraiture, I have developed a multidisciplinary body of work that engages this fundamental yet elusive concept of selfhood.

To explore identity through my photography, I embrace the limitations of analog form while pushing at its boundaries. My polaroids visualize the fragmentary terrain of the remembered as a small flash of a moment, a little out-of-focus. They serve to represent the subjective experience itself: its shadows, its bursts of color, its layers. By carefully manipulating the photographic process, through the use of double exposure, for example, I create layers that simulate our recollections, the way they overlap, blur and distort. With my Texture on Polaroid series, for example, images encountered in daily life—of foliage, of a shelf of books—appear through reflective surfaces that texture and distort. They speak to how true selfhood is multifaceted. It has fractures but also patterns in ways of being. In this way, my artwork articulates a modulating identity in search of new modes of expression.

My portraits explore the multiform self through an array of characters and emotions. I focus on depicting African American women in their many guises—their exuberance, their confidence, sensuality, and vulnerability. These figures are, crucially, *present*. My call is for more, and more varied, images of black women within a field that has historically neglected or dehumanized them. I want to address this injustice by celebrating the women I portray; their beauty and complexity deserves attention. Through each portrait I am able to reorient myself in relation to my potential identities. This can be a daunting process as my sense of “me” is somewhat threatened. However, it can also be liberating, as I choose to reject any singular or fixed version of myself.

Carefulness and consideration are hallmarks of my practice. I am devoted to authentic representations and expressions of the self and equally devoted to creating art that is accessible and financially attainability. As I treasure the adaptable subjects of my work, I also prize art at home in a range of contexts, be it gallery, museum, office, or home space.

Understanding that one's self and place are ever on shifting ground, my work decontextualizes and defamiliarizes the many articulations of identity in order to formulate, and reformulate, the paradoxically unsettled and yet settling self.