

# M+B

## photograph

### STUTTER SHUTTER: WHITNEY HUBBS AT CASEMORE KIRKEBY

By Glen Helfand

Satin sheets can look sexier in pictures than they feel in real life – made, as they often are, with polyester. This capacity for illusion makes them terrific photographic props – the shiny textile appears in a few of Whitney Hubbs’s recent photographs, conveying an alluring wit and abject sensuality. Using bargain-bin materials, she riffs on aspects of classic still life, portrait, and self-portrait compositions. There’s an alone-in-the-studio playfulness to Hubbs’s photographs. They recall Cindy Sherman’s sly, surrealistic pictures, though Hubbs admits to a discomfort in front of the camera. And so there’s *Pretend Self Portrait #3*, 2018, in which shimmering fabric is draped over a substrate, with rips offering peeks of the opaque white wall behind it. The satin-covered surrogate provides evidence of the artist’s playful practice of transforming prosaic materials.



The conversation Hubbs instigates, in the 13 works on view at Casemore Kirkeby through March 3, focuses on deceptive surfaces, skins of various sorts. In *Other Picture #3 (Swaddled Organs)*, 2018, there’s a golden sheen to fabric that has been pinched and tied into a pattern of tuck-and-roll nipples. It’s an image that makes you imagine running your hands over the undulating and puckered surface. The tactile focus is amplified by black carpeting installed for the show, a sound-muffling softness underfoot. *Other Picture #3* is hung next to an image of a nude body under wet fabric, and Hubbs’s corporal focus grows all the more palpable. It’s titled *Invisible Woman*, 2018, though the figure’s gender isn’t apparent.

In other works, elements of actual flesh peek through. While Hubbs is known for her images of women, one of the show’s standouts is *Invisible Man*, 2018. A male figure is swathed in a garment resembling a strapless disco body suit made from blue duct tape, and posed against a plastic tarp that obliterates, Venus de Milo-like, his head, arms, and a leg. Carefully deployed cutouts reveal a nipple, chest hair, and the scoop of a flesh-colored camisole. Elsewhere, Hubbs moves studio backgrounds to the foreground with pictures of distressed matte black Cinefoil and “seamless” backdrops that have been loosely created with taped construction paper – colorful, uneven surfaces and textures that subvert expected camera tricks. The edges are rough and endearingly goofy – so confident in their ungainly glamour they seem to flirt with the viewer. I found myself smiling right back at them.