

Ruptured: girls at eleven

“...go home and make work out of what you have in your studio. You already have what you need.”
- Kim Abeles, Art & Activism Panel, 2011

With this in mind, Madison's 1998 photo essay of girls as they are leaving a LAUSD elementary school for middle school became the basis for a new work. The pictures are portraits of “girls at eleven” as they are leaving the safety of elementary school, where they are children, for the campuses of middle schools where their budding sexuality will define them.

Each silver gelatin (darkroom) picture printed by the artist in 1998 is now “destroyed” by the puncture of holes through which the linen thread is hand stitched. The addition of the white linen thread to the “girls at eleven” photographs brings attention to this period of transition between girl to woman. The white linen thread has a virginal quality that echoes the materiality of the menstrual products the girls will soon be using.

By rupturing the sanctity and integrity of the photo, by repeatedly piercing and repairing it, by introducing the thread, the artist has shifted the narrative to include what is not physically represented here: the rupture these girls' lives are about to undergo, and the materials and process they will now use to piece together their futures and their pasts. The thread represents the literal line between the girls' lives pre-and post-pubescence, the societal obstructions (still) placed on them. and the reality of discovering their own way as knowledge pushes childhood icons off their pedestals.

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