

Photobooth

Cathedral Arts Project (August-October)

i want my own things how I lived them
-Ntozake Shange

When I consider a modern day photobooth I think of a place that allows us to step outside of ourselves for a moment to be whoever we'd like to be. A selection of props invites us to choose a paper persona and imitate someone else for a moment in time, like a mustached super sleuth or a bombshell ready for a kiss. A character captured and shared in the spirit of fun, joy and laughter. Similar to the photobooth, this mimicking recalls a repetitive occurrence in popular culture. We call it cultural appropriation.

Branded blackness (big lips, cornrows, baby hairs, gold teeth, etc.) has been exploited and marketed in popular culture as brands, trends and even high fashion, as hip-hop culture has migrated into American culture. This cultural shift has proven to be profitable and continues to be touted as innovative, giving little to no credit to its origins. On the flip side, these "trends" are still typically seen as negative and "ghetto" in their authentic spaces.

In this new era of "Black Girl Magic", black women are reclaiming agency as it relates to how our features, styles, and personas are represented in popular culture. The way that we wear our blackness is more than just the caricature-like mimicking often seen in current mainstream culture. We are resurrecting our authentic selves, paying homage to the history of who we are and the distinctive styles and characteristics that define us. Stepping into the photobooth, staring at our own reflection, and removing the stigma of the "hood".

This exhibition explores how black women are reclaiming and renaming our Blackness.

Erin Kendrick