

HOLLIS MCGOWAN

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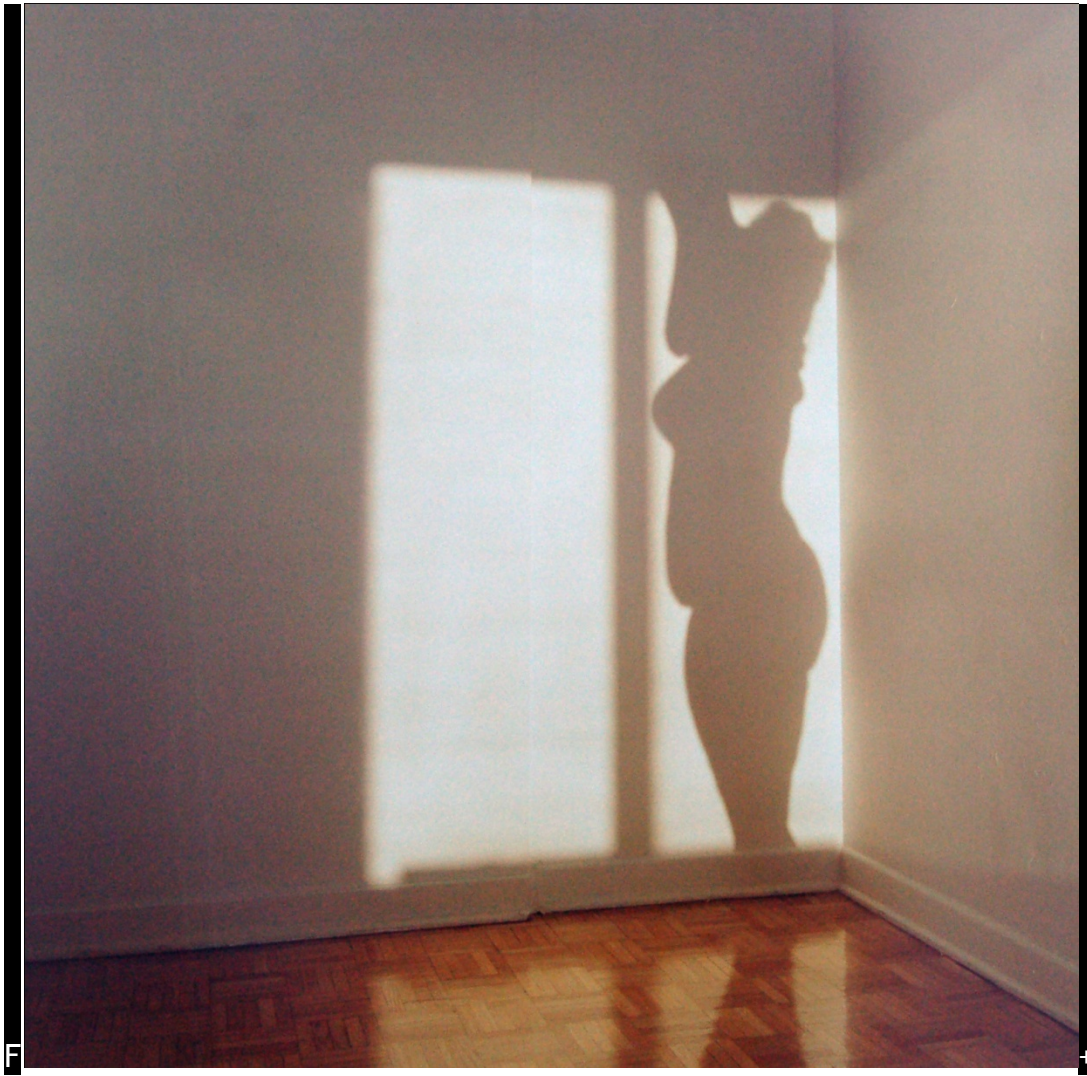


Untitled. 2011.

Hollis McGowan,

Photograph, 30 x 40 cm

From the series *Everything I Hate About Myself*



Hollis McGowan, *Untitled*. 2011.

Photograph, 30 x 40 cm

From the series *Everything I Hate About Myself*

Hollis McGowan, twenty-one years old and originally from Ottawa, is a fourth year photography major at Concordia University. McGowan's work is focused on women's issues. She prefers working with film and printing in the darkroom, as opposed to using digital images. The project that McGowan is currently working on is titled *Everything I Hate About Myself*. It is a self portraiture series that explores the extreme insecurities McGowan has with her body. She started this project two years ago, but discontinued it for a while. McGowan says that she will continue working on the project for many years, as her self-doubt will be a continuous struggle. She expects to try to bring herself out of the home and into the public space. Currently, however, her works are images of herself inside her home. This project is very personal and difficult, but it also serves as a form of healing. McGowan struggles with depression and an eating disorder. Photographing herself serves as a means of coping with her anxieties and fears. In her own words, "showing these photographs to others and making my body, the thing I am most insecure about, into art, helps me accept it more."

Everything I Hate About Myself shows enormous strength and courage. These images are intentionally harsh, and as McGowan suggests "speak of innocence and truth."¹ McGowan chose to make the images in colour to show her presence in the project. The colours also emphasize her negative emotions, rather than softening and romanticizing them as black and white prints. To add to the impact upon the viewer, McGowan printed the images large because it makes them more confrontational, and this is not a topic that should go unnoticed. The first image is a close-up of McGowan's face. She is confronting the viewer with her direct and unwavering gaze. At the same time, she is confronting herself, her worries and hesitation, as if she is looking at herself in a mirror. The image is absolutely pure as there is nothing to hide behind—neither make-up nor clothes. This image is a strong beginning to the series, because it expresses the insecurity that McGowan speaks about, but also reveals inner courage to confront it. Another image reveals McGowan's whole body, in the process of undressing herself, but only as a silhouette. This image, like the others in the

series, serves as a piece of puzzle, both for McGowan and the viewer. McGowan wrestles with her anxieties by portraying herself in the process of taking off her clothes. She only captures the outline of her body which exaggerates the curves of her form. It is difficult to separate these two images from the rest because they work together as a self portrait, but these particular images are excellent examples of McGowan's project.

¹ From a personal conversation with the artist.