

# MELISSA COOKE BENSON

## PIECES OF ME



SEPT. 15 - DEC. 16

GORECKI GALLERY, BENEDICTA ARTS CENTER, CSB

**Virtual Artist Talk/Q&A:** October 15, 5 p.m.

Melissa Cooke Benson creates large scale powdered graphite drawings. Her work investigates the relationship between photography, performance and drawing in portraiture. Cooke Benson's drawings are made by dusting thin layers of graphite onto paper with a dry brush. The softness of the graphite provides a smooth surface that can be augmented by erasing in details and textures. No pencils are used in the work, allowing the surface to glow without the shine of heavy pencil marks. Illusion dissolves into brush work and the honesty of the material.

## CONNECT

TOPICS AND THEMES THIS EXHIBITION ENGAGES WITH:

- Drawing
- Communication
- Sociology/Anthopology
- Crital Social Thought
- Gender Studies
- History

## ARTIST WEBSITE

[Melissa Cooke Benson](#)

## QUESTIONS

In the midst of the pandemic, quarantine, and political climate Melissa felt motivated to take the show in a different direction that better represented her own experience and related to current events. Throughout her work she highlights the loss of touch, shifts in interpersonal communication, and the realities of her life and experience of her family in this moment.

- How are you able to see this reflected in the work?
- In what ways has the pandemic altered the way you think about your own work?
- How has the pandemic impacted your experience engaging with art?
- What shifts have you seen in communication styles?
- Have you seen it impact the lives of your loved ones? If so, how?

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- At first glance, what medium did you think Cooke's work was?
- Have you ever seen this medium before?
- What characteristics are unique to you?
- What mediums do you use in your own life that represent your self-expression?

In the [2017 Twin Cities PBS special \*Minnesota Original\*](#), Melissa shares that, "In doing self-portraiture I always hoped that by doing something very personal, I'd uncover something more universal that could potentially be a porthole into other people's experiences... something they could connect with".

- Do you relate to Melissa's work? If so, how?
- What questions does it raise for you?

As life has changed for Melissa, so has the lens in which she sees the world and how it informs her artwork.

- What are the foundational lenses and core values that frame your approach to the world?
- What experiences have changed your perspective? What variables impact these views the most?