

Jova Lynne: Split at Matéria Core City

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Installation view

On October 28, 2023, one of Detroit's newest galleries, Matéria Core City celebrated the opening of *Split*, a solo exhibition by Detroit-based artist and curator Jova Lynne. Photographic and sculptural elements are spread throughout the gallery in a minimalist tone, with pops of yellow, copper, gold and silver enriched by the whites of the walls. The simplicity allows for a serenity that supports the conceptual focus of the show, healing.



Waves, 2023. Installation

This collection of works balances storytelling and philosophy in a poetic dance that is introduced in *On Splitting*, a text by the artist herself. In this piece of writing, Lynne meditates on the timelessness that is realized through the biological process of mitosis. We learn about the birth of this contemplation as it took place in the waiting room of the Kings County Courthouse in Brooklyn, NY. The pattern on the floor prompted a moment of dreamlike pondering that allowed her to consider the templates of life. She zoomed out to acknowledge the amoebic forms that are repeated infinitely all around us before zooming back in, to the courthouse where she waited to become the executor of her mother's estate. Relative thoughts briefly entered, like the humanity of the belly button and the eternal cells of Henrietta Lacks. Like her text, the show at Matéria breathes out and then in again, bringing this concept of universality down to the intimacy of her own family bloodline.

Installation view





Calabash, 2023. Edition of 3, Archival digital print



Eve, 2023. Edition of 3, Archival digital print

The materiality present in the show comes second to the symbolism relayed by it. The physical objects orbit the concept of the heirloom — tarnished, fragmented, cherished. Many of them are mirrored and made immortal by the photographs on the wall. Their center placement implies an archival-like regard as if to point to the reality of the objects as representations of points in time and place that come together to form the ancestral web of the artist. Were they her mother's? The process of grief is helped along by things that bring about healing through memory. An attunement to the conceptual weight of these specific elements create a sanctuary-like setting that is then further informed by the intentional use of the color. Yellow in many cultures symbolizes joy and optimism, gold symbolizes wisdom and power. Lynne utilizes the healing properties of metals as well. Copper is known globally as an agent of relief for joint pain, low immunity, anemia and cardiovascular disease. Silver, an antimicrobial aid for flu prevention and wound care.



Objective, 2023. Edition of 3, Archival digital print



Heavy is the Crown - Henrietta Lacks, 2023. Edition of 3, Archival digital print

The employment of ambiguity throughout the show allows for visitors to form relationships with the work without being told how to do so. The subject, whose face is not revealed, could be anyone. The objects with poetic titles could mean anything. This is calling again on the *undefined* as the only *real* truth. Lynne's mother, Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson, was an active leader in the faith of Unitarian Universalism, a spiritual community of people from different age groups, backgrounds and belief systems who come together to worship in an attempt to challenge the prejudices and welcome the creative possibilities that come with diversity. Her mother's twin, Dr. Janice Marie Johnson also works with the organization, carrying on both her and her sister's legacy of boundless spirituality into the future. She is the woman in the pictures, a living representation of the daughter cells that initially gave them both life.



Within, 2023. Wood, wax



Nucleus, 2023. Wood, wax, aluminum

While the pieces on display are composed with a grace that allows for an appreciation of them as individual works of art, it remains evident that their primary role as objects and photographs are to illustrate the artist's persistent concentration on the cell and its biological performance as a carrier of culture from one living body to the next. This culture persists, transforms, adapts following the person's life experiences, which produce, in a physical way, the collection of objects that remain after they are gone. While Jova Lynne investigates the role that heirlooms and storytelling plays in developing identity, and the role that identity plays in processing grief, she is actively participating in the ongoing relevance of art as an agent for catharsis.

Jova Lynne: Split is on view through January 6, 2024
Matéria Core City – 4725 16th Street, Detroit, MI 48208
<https://www.materia-art.com/>

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