

Jessica Wohl

*Matriarchs*

Artist Statement

---

Matriarchs, a series of new collages, investigates women and their relationship to the home through presenting empowered, feminine creatures ruling over their domestic domains. Comprised of body parts and domestic furnishings, such as fingers, afghans, stuffed animals and butcher knives, the anonymous "women" are presented as strong, powerful, alluring and threatening guardians that, instead of being undermined or discounted by their associations with the home, actually gain their power from it. The hand-cut imagery is culled exclusively from magazine publications that portray idealized women, such as Women's Day, Good Housekeeping, Martha Stewart Living, Vogue, Playboy and Hustler, from the 1960's through today.

Particularly drawn to the home and its residents, I exploit the uncanny while subverting domestic representations of perfection and happiness. I use obsession, personification and gothic overtones to convey the idea that looks can be deceiving, and I interpret the family, the posed portrait and the suburban tract home as stages where this unsettling dynamic plays out. Conceptual strategies such as repeating, simulating, concealing and mutating induce a sense of discomfort in the work. By employing tight boundaries, clean edges and sickly smiles, secret interiors are protected from the outside world.