

Ilona Szwarc: *Mother Mould*
September 27th - November 11th 2023

In *Mother Mould*, Los Angeles-based photographer Ilona Szwarc invents a fetishistic poetics around the process of sculpting a woman's torso. Szwarc documents herself creating a mould of a model's body, coating breasts in bright green silicone. She then abstracts the raw materials of the casting process in a series of photographs that reframe the object as pure color and form.

Mother Mould builds on Szwarc's long-standing fascination with acts of transformation, props and prosthetics, and the production of identity, an inquiry rooted in Szwarc's immigrant background. The model – largely in absentia – is a stand-in for Szwarc, a lookalike with whom Szwarc can play Pygmalion, plying the boundary between the real and the fake.

The abstracted fields of *Mother Mould* mimic Szwarc's abstraction of self: Is Szwarc a photographer, voyeur, sculptor, or object? Photos such as "I know a perspective from which all that exists appears awesome and mysterious" suggest that the way to achieve perspective is to somehow view the world as both object and subject. To allow for this process, Szwarc has created the "mother mould", a tool that allows for multiple casts to be made, remaking the self over and over again.

As an immigrant to the United States whose identity was reformed around another language and home, Szwarc is familiar with what it means to observe oneself; to see oneself clearly through gaps produced by an unfamiliar familiarity. Szwarc is cognizant of the power dynamics inherent in the process of witnessing oneself. Like the plaster torso cast in *Mother Mould*, Szwarc's photographic work is a kind of third body, an object shed in the irreconcilable moments of womanhood and an immigrant experience. Szwarc's photographic work is concerned with rendering her experience visible in a way impossible in language. In *Mother Mould*, there's something melancholic about that process. The perfect sculpture she creates is only a smiling fragment in a potentially infinite series of fragments.