
Home is a complex idea imbued with a variety of meanings and associations. This exhibition explores home as a mutable emotional and conceptual phenomenon inextricably linked to physical spaces, which are subject to a cycle of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. Highly personalized, these spaces continually evolve as their inhabitants age or move, eventually replaced by new inhabitants or none at all. Homes are markers and souvenirs of personal narratives and inner lives. Whether actual or staged, physical or conceptual, idyllic or ruined, they are products of the imaginations of both those who construct and inhabit them and others who gaze upon them from the outside.

The theme of abandonment is addressed again in South Street, one of Justin Kimball's photographs of a ghostly home whose resident has died. The unoccupied bed—arguably the most intimate object in a home, a place where people are born, copulate, conceive, give birth, die—is a raw allusion to the death of the former occupant. The bedroom's demise necessarily coincides with that of the deceased, whose presence defined and vitalized the space, and whose ethos lingers in the matching color of the walls and the flowers on the curtains. Whether the spirit of the deceased or the promise of change and new life, the breeze that blows in through the broken window offers consolation. Viewers are left to reconstruct the story of the deteriorating interior.

The images of homes on display, be they representations of existent, real, and/or functional house-like infrastructures, scenes of former homes in shambles, or dreamlike dwelling spaces, invoke the imagination. They come to life and take on meaning only once engaged on a conceptual and affective, personal level. The home is the product of the heart and mind. Nowhere is the fragility of the material home more visible than in the visual imagery of the abandoned, empty, or ruined home. Yet it is in these images of absence that the home's resilience in the (re)imagination is most apparent.

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Justin Kimball, South Street, from the series Pieces of String, 2013, color photograph. Gift of Richard S. and Jeanne Press, 2013.44.2.