

Krista Mitchell

Artist Statement for Final Project “Home by Sundown”

“Home by Sundown” is a series of photographs of liminal spaces in my hometown, arranged chronologically from late afternoon through sunset to nightfall. Growing up in this secluded, small town in the rural countryside, I often felt distant from my peers and trapped within an insular social bubble that limited my perception of myself and others. When I started attending UConn two years ago, my entire worldview was shattered and I felt like I was living in two different realities, even though my home was nearby. Although this was an overwhelming time in my life, I am proud of my resilient ability to adapt when my life was pushed beyond the stagnant, closed-off borders of my hometown. Now that I am a junior at UConn, I often reflect on my upbringing in my town and previous worldview with resentment and embarrassment.

Yet in spite of this bitter taste in my mouth, I still have a nostalgia and fondness for my hometown. Interspersed with recollections of awkwardness and isolation are memories of walking around the downtown with my best friends, watching the annual fireworks show together, and graduating high school with my family by my side. I enjoy this simpler lifestyle during my summers at home, when I continue to spend time around town with my same friends from high school. My sour experiences from my school years are interlaced—and often overshadowed—by a deep nostalgia and appreciation for small town life that was induced by my childhood in this town.

I thus made “Home by Sundown” to celebrate and commemorate my hometown, without forgetting the overwhelming isolation I often felt during my school years—both from my peers and from the rest of the world. Returning to the “bubble” of my youth, I sought to revisit the landmarks of my childhood through the lens of adulthood, seeing things as they truly are. No matter where life takes me, both literally and metaphorically, my hometown will always be the

place that shaped me, the place I am from—and with that comes an unexpected sense of pride in my background. As an artist and writer, I have a deep fascination with small town life, and I want to record this kind of lifestyle before it is overrun by suburbs and superstores. My hometown has already lost several of its historical buildings to commercial outlets, and I noticed in my high school classmates a concerning apathy to learning about our town's history. "Home by Sundown" subsequently features a few locations around town that I feel are integral to the character of the town as well as to my childhood memories. My goal was to capture both concrete documentation of my hometown as well my conception of its atmosphere and figurative identity. I hope that my interpretation of my life in my hometown will resonate with other residents of all ages.

The title "Home by Sundown" references my time spent observing my hometown at sunset, my favorite time of day. While driving through my town, I often envision my future as an artist. During these reflections, I realized that the sun is also setting on the chapter of my life that is set in my hometown, and this inspired me to photograph my town during sunset. Devoid of any people, each photograph is intentionally distant from its subject, simultaneously reflecting the isolation I felt as a child as well as the increasing detachment I feel from my hometown as I enter the world in search of another home, one that will be a better fit. I want to immortalize my hometown before it is too late, but I cannot escape the unsettling, lingering feeling I have always had that I am nothing more than an outsider looking in.