

Allie Wilson
Unmasked, 2022-2023

My academic studies began as a psychology major. While that path has shifted, I am still very much interested in what goes on inside the mind, specifically aspects of personality, self, and neurodivergence. I became suspicious of my own neurodivergence, and those suspicions were eventually confirmed by my doctor in September of 2022. This project reflects a personal journey or exploration, discovering new parts of who I am, and realizing what it means to be both an autistic woman and a person diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in adulthood.

As the mind and the person are made up of many parts, so is my work in that I prefer to use a variety of mediums including digital photography, analog photography, painting, and collage. I prefer to work alone, so I use a tripod and remote to make my photographs. This allows me the ability to create at my own pace and in my own space. Although you will see a mixture of both, I prefer black and white photographs versus color photographs. The medium I choose to use depends on the moment. There isn't always a purposeful connection between a subject or composition and its medium. Sometimes I want to shoot film, and sometimes I want to paint. Sometimes I want to add layers, and sometimes a photograph on its own is sufficient. By leaning into those subconscious preferences I give myself the freedom to experiment and not put myself into a box. Creating a series in this manner allowed me to come to terms with my diagnosis and make sense of my life and the unique way my mind works. People can sometimes view ASD with a narrow lens, but it is a spectrum disorder that affects each person differently. While it's true that many autistic people need structure and boundaries in their lives, I need the freedom to make my own path.

My work also brings up many questions: What makes people who they are? Can we ever truly know a person if we never see inside their mind? Are we more than what we say out loud? Can we know something that is never spoken about and never shared? What makes me, me? Does a diagnosis change who I am or confirm it? What does genuine human connection look or feel like? Am I able to truly connect if I am not authentic? While my work is a reflection of my own answers to these questions, it also holds space for those who may be thinking about these questions for themselves, diagnoses involved or not. I want people to know that it is okay to not know who you are and it's okay to feel like you don't fit in. This particular body of work is an exploration of what it means to feel different or out of place in this world. In addition to personal reflection, my work has an underlying message of hope: we are not alone.