



WOMEN ON THE RISE!

## TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS: Francesca Woodman

### THEMES:

- Representation of the female body
- Photographic techniques (staging / long exposure)

### FEATURED WORKS:

*House series* (1976), *Space series* (1976), *Self Deceit series* (1977-78), *Angel Series* (1977-78), and others at teacher's discretion.

### RESOURCES:

#### *Links to images*

- [http://www.victoria-miro.com/artists/21\\_biog/](http://www.victoria-miro.com/artists/21_biog/)
- <http://www.berk-edu.com/RESEARCH/francescaWoodman/pages/woodman008.html>

#### *Books*

- *Francesca Woodman* by Chris Townsend (2006): Phaidon Press
- *Francesca Woodman* (1998): Scalo Publishers

### DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- Do you feel that Woodman's images are haunting or romantic?
- How does she represent herself as a woman / girl? Are there any symbols of femininity / girlhood in her work?
- How do mirrors make you feel? Why do you think she chose to title this image *Self-Deceit*? What could that mean? Do you think that mirrors can expose truths about people?
- Do you ever have the urge to hide and/ or reveal yourself emotionally?
- Does it seem that her images were created in the 1970s? Or do they look like they belong in another era? If so, which?

## **MATERIALS FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT: Francesca Woodman**

### ***Self Exposures***

This project is inspired by works in which Woodman uses the long exposure technique in addition to select images such as *Angel Series: Rome* (1977-78). To view this image visit the Victoria Miro website listed above.

- Camera (digital or film)
- Black and white film (if not using digital)
- Tripod
- Props and Costumes (e.g. cloth/paper backdrops; mirrors; vintage wear from thrift shops)

### **PROCEDURE FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT:**

Photography is the creation of an image through the manipulation of light and its movement. In a still camera, film or digital, among other techniques, a long exposure can be achieved by changing the shutter or ISO speed of the camera. A slow shutter speed and dim lighting is used in this lesson to produce images that are faint and ghostly.

The following is a helpful link on long exposure techniques:

<http://www.danheller.com/tech-longexp.html#2>

- Instructors will arrange a staging area in the room using neutral cloth and paper backgrounds
- Instructors will create gauzy wing forms to be hung in the space or worn by students
- Instructor will ask students to wear plain clothing (e.g. t-shirts with no logos, jeans) to class that day. Students will have the option of being photographed in clothes worn to class or will select a vintage-inspired costume supplied by the teacher (students can take turns wearing costumes)
- Instructor will conduct demonstration of long exposure technique
- Students will form groups of 2 or more (depending on class size)
- Students will take turns arranging props, posing, and capturing images with the camera in their group
- Photographs will be developed in black and white or sepia

### **APPLICABLE NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS (GRADES 5 -12):**

- NA—VA.5-8.1 (9-12.1): Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- NA—VA.5-8.3 (9-12.3): Choosing and Evaluating A Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas



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## STUDENT HAND OUT: Francesca Woodman

### Francesca Woodman (b. 1958—Colorado)

Francesca Woodman was born to artist parents. Her mother was a sculptor and father a painter and photographer. She became drawn to photography at an early age. Her staged photographs were created in a studio in Rhode Island or in Italy, where her family visited frequently.

Most of Woodman's work features her body in nature or in relationship to various objects. In many of her photographs the body is blurred, which gives the images a haunting, dream-like effect. She was able to achieve that effect through a photographic technique known as *long exposure*, where the camera shutter is kept open for an extended period to allow the film to absorb a large amount of light. Woodman had a Gothic style and liked working in cemeteries or old, decaying spaces. She kept journals and sometimes incorporated poetry into her works.

The artist died at the age of 23. Although her work did not receive much attention while she was alive, she is now among the celebrated artists of the 1970s era and has been credited with pioneering techniques of staged photography that are now popular among artists.