



/re'klām/
Verb

retrieve or recover (Something previously lost, given, or paid); obtain the return of.

RECLAIM

Oct 2019 ~ Jan 2020

4001 N Ravenswood #204c
Awakenings Gallery

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Reclaim

This summer, we hosted a workshop where attendees transformed undergarments and other personal items of clothing into paper. Witnessing the transition from private objects to bold, artistic expression – set the foundation for our theme of Reclaim.

For the artists in this exhibition, to reclaim is to heal. Many of the pieces now bear little resemblance to their original form. Underwear has become paper has become text. Sappy romance novels have been destroyed until they uncover hidden narratives. Similar processes can be seen in select works from our permanent collection where Starz and Sandra Jeanne Thompson utilize found objects in their respective works. From shredding fabric to erasing text, the destruction of the original form is liberating.

Processes of transformation and reclamation have been a part of Awakenings for a long time. Recent exhibitions and workshops have featured found and sacred objects which have taken on new meaning as they exist in the context of the gallery. At Awakenings, these visual representations of reclamation are paralleled by our efforts to change the vocabulary around sexual violence. Common metaphors around sexual violence assume that “something has been taken away” from survivors. While some resonate with this metaphor, others feel disempowered by the assumption that the violence they have experienced has made them lesser. Reclamation turns the metaphor back on itself, enabling survivors to take back, rather than be taken from.

As always, Awakenings strives to make visible the artistic expression of survivors of sexual assault. Reclaim asks that each of us bear witness to the strength of the artists who enact reclamation through their work, a process which would be incomplete without an observer. We hope this exhibit empowers you to explore what you want to reclaim and to imagine what that process will look like. Whether your process of reclamation is concrete or abstract, we encourage you to leave with the knowledge that what was once yours can be made yours again.

Underpaper

Underpaper is a hand papermaking project started and run by Margaret Sheppard that celebrates creative resilience through the transformation of undergarments into paper art. Reclaiming unmentionables in a symbolic gesture of exposure, the project utilizes hand papermaking as a means to generate solidarity against sexual and domestic violence. Awakenings hosted Underpaper for two half-day workshops in July 2019. Participants brought in meaningful pieces of clothing and went through this process of making paper.

The first step of the process asks participants to sign a pledge of nonviolence that states: "By participating in this process, I am making a vow to myself and my community to use my power to promote peace, and to prevent violence, in thought, speech, and action." Participants begin by using scissors to snip, tear, and cut up their chosen materials into small squares. These fibers are added to the Hollander beater in individual batches. This machine undoes the weave of textiles and breaks down cloth into a pulpy slurry in 10-30 minutes, depending on the amount of material.

Once the fiber is finely processed, it is emptied into buckets and given to its respective participant. They mix their pulp into a vat of cool water by hand and select a mould and deckle (screen and removable frame) for sheet-formation. Participants are guided through the process of dipping their moulds and deckles into the vat and scooping them up out of the slurry. This process is called pulling sheets. Every sheet that is pulled is couched, or pressed, onto a felt. It is common for individuals to make up to 20 sheets of paper in a given workshop, and there is always the option to make more. This paper may be the final product itself or may be used as the basis for further creation. Participants from the July 2019 workshop were given the option to display some of their paper for Awakenings' Reclaim exhibit.

Underpaper aims to ignite constructive dialogues between artists, survivors, care providers, educators, businesses, and local governments in order to facilitate sustained community healing and violence prevention.

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- i. Papermaking Workshop
- ii. Margaret Sheppard, Underpaper
- iii. Awakenings, Chicago [2019]



Preparing the fabric:
participants cut their clothing into small squares.

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Processing the fabric:

participants add their clothing and water into the Hollander beater. The mixture cycles through the blades of the beater many times, and the blades pull apart the fibers, creating a slurry.



Preparing to pull sheets:

Margaret demonstrates the jazz hands approach to thoroughly mix the slurry of fabric in a vat.



Pulling sheets:

Participants use a mould and deckle to scoop and strain the slurry. Using different techniques of scooping and dripping create a variety of effects on the paper's texture and color.



Couching the sheets:

Participants press each sheet into a piece of felt and release the sheet from the mould.

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Finishing the paper:

Sheets of paper accumulate in stacks throughout the workshop, with protective sheets between each paper, and are left to dry overnight. Once dry, the paper is the participant's to do with as they wish!

Catherine

I believe deeply in the intuitive healing power of art, whether it's the process of making the piece or the messages I learn and communicate from what I made. There was something both fascinating and empowering to see my underwear turn into an unrecognizable and beautiful form. The wet, wet messiness of the process washed away the old meaning and truly allowed me to see what the sludge, that was once a pair of panties, needed to be.

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Anger

My anger is contained now
not froze or protected, but contained
Witness it. Touch it. Feel the ups and downs captured in the ridges.
Don't worry about getting it dirty or breaking it. That already
happened.
Watch it fade and deteriorate.
Watch me heal

She reclaimed Herself

She saw who she was through the aftermath of destruction
she allowed herself
to fly
to be still
to feel the pain
to remember
to heal
The light from above shone down on her
Illuminating the strength within
She reclaimed Herself

Untitled

Alex Brightbill

Hilos (Threads)

My inspiration for the Underpaper paper making Workshop:

I thought about my relationship to other women in my family. My grandmother who I was very close with and passed away a few years ago, my cousin Faby who was like my sister and passed away of lupus when she was teenager and my mother, who is a courageous woman but a complicated relationship we've had as mother and daughter. And me, an artist, the immigrant woman a wife, a sister, a daughter a person that has come along way in my relationship with these women.

Rather than a traumatic event with these women in my life, this process is a celebration, a reclaim and healing for me.

The garments I used in my papermaking was a crochet napkin my grandma made, my cousin's Quinceañera handkerchief with her initials, a scarf my mother gifted me and a blouse I wore for my immigration interview. After the papermaking process I then created these four paintings.

The second phase of these pieces was a very special moment for me too, every brush stroke color choices and technique was completely unplanned not thought out. I wanted to just listen to my intuition my feelings ...each layer, process and textures was a special moment, a ritual.

Cara Dailey

Making art can be a very profound and healing act. Growing up in a very conservative community in a family of outsiders to that community, I am keenly aware of the interplay of politics and power and communication. Restrictive environments lead to a complex sense of taboo regarding expression which is further compounded around topics which are seen as taboo in mainstream society.

Natural objects and images are my visual language. The overlooked and misunderstood are my subjects. Printmaking is my primary medium, but I work in any media that allows me to express the value of those subjects or play on beliefs and attitudes about them.

The Underpaper project is inspiring and provocative. The materials themselves become the message, and the symbols of pain, shame, and the taboo can be processed (literally) into something new and beautiful. Margaret Sheppard creates an environment where individuals freely create personal work within the rhythm and collaboration of a group project.

Ramona Pozek

Uncle Sam Wants to Know

What were you wearing? is a question often asked of victims of sexual assault that presumes that the victim's clothing somehow makes them complicit in their assault. As a member of the Armed Forces at the time of my assault, I happened to be wearing my government issued uniform. Much of the handmade paper in this piece was created using fabric from that uniform. The renderings have been sliced into plates to emulate a Fashion Plate toy that I played with as an innocent child. The paper components have been ripped to shreds much like my testimony after I reported and torn into fragments like most of my memories.

Laura Boillot

Seeds of Doubt

This reflects on the nature of how our stories and experiences are impacted by how they are received in families, communities, society, etc.

Seeds of doubt being planted that can prevent from processing pain or loss in a healthy way. The culture of not being believed and creating ruptures in how we see and care for ourselves.

Nature's Rhythms

The idea of nature and trees has always been a representation of the cyclical nature of breaking and healing for me. The tree, deformed and dark, but strong and protected, reflects the ways that we build walls and grow in ways that are efforts to heal, but really keep us distant from accepting our stories and seeking community around them, isolating or pretending to be strong.

Cleansing

As part of the process of upheaval, water offers an image of washing away what no longer serves us. To make room for new ways of being.

Reaping and Sowing

It was helpful to reflect and embrace the paper itself as the art. A wearing of threads of an item of clothing from a different part of my life, making room to be integrated with other fabrics to make something new. The cycle of renewal, a community of those finding healing are sown into our own process, making a more layered and beautiful piece of paper.

Julia Matson

Cycles

My healing is cyclical like the moon in its waxing and waning,
My healing is cyclical like the sea and its tides,
Deep, dark, and mysterious,
dangerous
and full of life

Shared Transformation

Plunging my hands into the pulp evoked a visceral realization that I was touching the fibers of transformation and healing of the other workshop participants.

My paper is made up of our individual suffering and challenges, our growth and empowerment, and our ability to come together and transform and reclaim the fibers of our stories.

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Ginevra Francesconi & Kate Graham

Katherine Graham and Ginevra Francesconi are Chicago based students, artists and wild women. On handmade paper made in the Awakenings gallery, they transposed text messages sent between one another during times of joy, sadness, transformation and reclamation overlaid with an excerpt from "The House" by Warsan Shire.

This piece was inspired by shared lived experiences, the healing power of female friendship and the resilience they see every day in the women around them.

Daniel L.

Heartstrings Redacted

This altered book deals with feelings related to losing one's agency and the difficulty of dealing with memories of sexual abuse. It references how childhood sexual trauma has affected my mental health and sense of self-coherence. Memories from that experience are confusing and incomplete. I know the who and what (mostly) of what happened, but not the when, where, how many or (most importantly for me) why of what took place. Art offers a place where those un-answers can have an outlet. This book subverts my inner drive to be a detective and "get to the bottom of it." Instead, with a black permanent marker in hand, I tell my truth (to the best of my ability) and speak to what I've carried in my heart through all these years. These are "Heartstrings: Redacted."

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Daniel L. is an art therapist, artist, and filmmaker. He lives in Chicago with his lovely humans and his dog.

Niki Zahava

Swirling into Myself: A Self Portrait

My art comes out of a deep need to express myself in ways I cannot satiate through acting and for me, can only be expressed through shape, color and texture. As a survivor of childhood sexual assault, the pieces that I create are a way for me to repurpose those events that live deep within my brain.

"Swirling within myself...a Self-Portrait" began as a digital oil pastel painting and the swirling motion within the drawing is a way to describe the dizzying feeling of anxiety and PTSD. Using a broken clock that I had recently purchased, I repurposed the clock into a frame for the painting. I extended the painting and affixed it onto the face of the clock, added the broken hands and broken glass, and this broken dime store clock is now transformed into a sculpture that better explains, visually, how triggers and memories consume me.

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Niki Zahava has toured nationally for over 10 years as an actor and has performed regionally in Chicago, California and the Pacific Northwest. While in Portland, OR, she had the opportunity to originate the role of Natasha in the World Premier of Tracy Letts' adaptation of *THREE SISTERS* at Artists Repertory Theatre. Other roles include: Little Stone in Sarah Ruhl's *EURYPIDICE*, Lindy Love in Ayckbourn's *HOUSE AND GARDEN*, and Midas' Daughter, Psyche, Pomona and narrator in Mary Zimmerman's *METAMORPHOSES* (Artists Rep) Ginny in *ELIOT...A SOLDIER'S FUGUE*, Mercy in *CLEAN*, and Maria in *EL GRITO DEL BRONX* (Miracle Theatre) among others.

As a visual artist she enjoys working with oil and soft pastels on various textures of paper and "Reclaim" will be her 1st opportunity to display one of her pieces. She holds a B.A. in Speech and Drama and a Minor in Media Communications from Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Classical Theatre Performance from The National Shakespeare Conservatory, NYC and TEFL Certification from the Boston Academy of English, Boston, and is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

Madeleine Grotewiel

Shack Shirt

Hands can bring our private, visceral parts into the space outside of our bodies. Through creating bodily, three-dimensional works, I hope to permeate both the verbal and tangible boundaries that influence our perception of human beings. Because we can be touched in both positive and negative ways, tactile material specificity is an essential component of my practice. The metamorphosis of fibers and rejected domestic items into sculpture examines functionality in relation to both objects and human beings. In this way, Shack Shirt directly addresses the controversy over who and what we dispose of, such as victims or bikini top pads. A "shack shirt" is a fraternity t-shirt that a male college student sends a female home with following a night spent together. This specific shirt came into my possession following my rape a couple of years ago. The bikini pads create a shell that, when merged with the shirt, reference post-assault shame. I hope that this raw sculpture promotes the process of reclaiming one's voice and body for others, as it did for me.

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Artist **Madeleine Grotewiel** was born in Houston, TX to two scientists, whose professions consistently fueled her interest in what people inherit genetically, physically, and environmentally. Her upbringing in the south, namely Texas and Virginia, further sparked a curiosity in social norms, specifically those that oppress women. No longer sweeping things under the rug, she and her work push back against the status quo, aiming to normalize the discussion of topics deemed "taboo." Thus, her soft sculptures raise the volume on the socially uncomfortable subjects of menstruation, rape, and interpersonal power dynamics.

She received her BFA from the University of Texas at Austin earlier this year in 2019. In 2018, Madeleine received a Merit Scholarship to study textiles and oil painting in Florence, Italy for five months. Her work has been shown at the Visual Arts Center in Austin, TX, Art Studio FUJI in Florence, Italy and Blink Beauty Too in Austin, TX.

Madeleine is currently a first-year MFA candidate at Washington University in St. Louis, working primarily in fibers and conducting research on the fluidity of the human body, inherited trauma, and the global issue of human trafficking.

Jennifer Rose Hasso

20 months too long

An orchid: an exotic plant that grows in inhospitable and challenging conditions. The orchid adapts to its environment and becomes one with the ecosystem until it cannot live without the flower, and the flower cannot live without it. I am an orchid. I have existed in the margins, made a home in the cracks where the light barely seeps in, and blazed trails in no woman's land where not much had previously existed. When my body, my sexuality, my intelligence, and my integrity were assaulted I stood my ground, but even small trickles of water wear away at a mountain over time. Exhausted, I reserved energy for key battles, choosing shreds of sanity and oversized garments to hide and protect my fragile form from the hostile climate. 20 months of wearing someone else's clothing.

When someone tells you (and others) that you are less than them, they assail you with their words. When they comment harshly about your body or clothing, they batter you with their criticisms. When they denigrate your sexuality and slut shame you, they assault you with their judgment. And when your allies turn a deaf ear to those attacks, they demean you with their silence. Constant abuse can force us to edit ourselves, become self-critical, and shroud our radiance once fear is branded onto our person. Those 20 months became my tomb. No more. I am choosing to once again dress in bold, bright clothing and reclaim my luminosity. I am remembering to be gentle with my flesh, after a lifetime of abusing, modifying, then growing to love it. I am rejecting the voices of the jealous, the insecure, the narcissists, the hypocrites, and the haters and repossessing my confidence and my selfhood.

Sunlight broke through. New season, new bloom. I emerge from you my lonely tomb. Shed the layers, resuscitate yourself, and find a new ecosystem to thrive in. I offer my clothing, like discarded armor to the canvas; removed piece by piece from my vibrant skin

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and given to the static orchids that stand guard over a mausoleum of toxic behaviors and broken promises. A quilt or kaleidoscope of textiles merge like memories blurring with time, only revealing their intimate details, careworn yet elegant, with closer inspection. For 20 months I needed their physical and emotional protection, like the layer of fine silk under leather shielding the hearts of warriors. The salvaging of my closet is the reclaiming of my body, my breath, my being.

Jennifer Rose Hasso is an educator, historian, artist, writer, anthropologist, and scholar of the arts and social sciences. She is an advocate for human rights, peace studies, and social justice and rolls those themes into her artwork and curricula. She has been fortunate to make a career out of her diverse interests and to collaborate with scholars and creatives from an array of fields. She loves to travel, experience the unique ways in which others express themselves and to engage in dialogue about people's lives and cultures different from her own. She views the arts as a universal language that has the power to heal, unite, foster tolerance, promote equity and strengthen communities, both locally and globally.

PERMANENT COLLECTION

Linda Ness

Moonlit Cartwheels
Tightrope Romance
Bible Reading
Vacation with Dad
Father Knows Best
Dead Limbs
Rageaholic
The Beat Goes On
Unfinished Nightmare

Sandra Jean Thompson

Angel of Mourning

Starz

All That Can Be Boxed Away

Artists statements are located next to each artwork respectively

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Individual Artist Project Grant

