



# BLOOM

A VIRTUAL EXHIBIT

OCTOBER 23

[WWW.AWAKENINGSART.ORG](http://WWW.AWAKENINGSART.ORG)



chicago  
foundation  
for women



# BLOOM

We are hungry for connection and community. Awakenings welcomes three new artists, Aodan, Sreyash Sarkar, and Marieken Cochius and welcomes back Miguel Barros and Maddie Grotewiel to our gallery in Chicago and virtually on our website. Through paint, fibers, ceramics, and mixed media, each artist connects to themselves and to each other, and plants seeds for community in expressions of tension and release.

They step into the conversation we need to have around sexual violence. They invite the viewer to consider: How do we understand sexuality both on an individual level and as a society in general, especially after trauma? What happens if we do not have an understanding or willingness to talk about sex, including consent and sexual violence? How do we begin to understand?

The impact of trauma on sexuality and sex is specific to each survivor, and, like the artwork here, will look different and can change over time. Bloom's artists applied these large questions in intimate ways and are nurturing new growth. Viewers are invited to join the artists in this conversation and the growing community.

# MADDIE GROTEWIEL

## PINCHED

Remnants of my mother's dress from her childhood, found wooden frame, my great aunt's yarn, clothespin, found pillow stuffing, my great aunt's string, wood glue, acrylic paint, my great aunt's thread, gouache, staples, nails



A narrative, even if it's muted, will always find a way out. We see this in #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, intersectional feminism, and the fight for trans rights today. Silence prevents any motion forward, and deficits in education prolong this silence. I often wonder about how differently my life could be, had I been adequately educated on how to have a healthy, intimate relationship with myself and others. Growing up in a Christian all-girls school bubble, we were taught to remain pure, abstinent girls. Sex-ed class left me uncomfortable to even acknowledge my vagina, horrified by head-on childbirth videos and a peculiar demo involving a banana and a glazed donut. I declared my first sexual experience to be simply a weird night because I kept saying "no," but he was older, so I thought he knew more about sex than I did.

In college, I learned about consent and realized that the interaction had not only been weird, but it was rape. Young minds are so malleable and impressionable, and every single one of my friends had an experience before college that they described as "odd" or "uncomfortable" or "unwanted." We lacked the language to even talk about what it was: sexual assault. Moreover, we didn't have the language to talk about positive sex, sex for pleasure. Only learning about what can go wrong in sex made sex seem so, so negative. Further, the reduction of an individual to their genitalia limits their potential. I've started reading into this, and found that in early philosophy and psychoanalysis, women were othered because of the mere presence of a vagina. In my practice, I routinely use materials with connotations of "beautiful" to address controversial and/or uncomfortable topics.

In *Pinched*, the vagina is made of lace from a dress that was my mother's, and we know lace to be delicate, feminine and associated with weddings. The clothespin thus signifies a societal pinching of the vagina to keep it closed, intact, proper and lady-like. And yet, a trickle of yarn leaks out. A narrative is an active being; if it won't be heard, then it will make a space for itself. We don't frame shameful things, but doing so can threaten the status quo and empower individuals. *Pinched* includes a frame that I broke and repaired over and over again with a substance that alludes to menstrual blood, a life-giving bodily material. In this way, *Pinched* elevates a thing that has been shamed to one worthy of contemplation and appreciation. Post-#MeToo, we are even more aware of the need for meaningful sexual education. While I'm working to fill in my own gaps, I think that the current and coming younger generations deserve better.

## BIO

Maddie Grotewiel was born in Houston in 1997. She is a second-year MFA candidate at Washington University in St. Louis, where she now lives and works. Her practice consists of material studies and experiments with fibers, textiles, wax, latex and household items. These materials culminate in artificial, bodily representations that do not exploit or utilize the actual human body as material. In 2018, Grotewiel received a scholarship to study Batik and oil painting in Italy for five months; she subsequently exhibited her work at Art Studio FUJI in Florence, Italy. In 2019, Grotewiel received her BFA in Studio Art from the University of Texas at Austin. She has exhibited at Des Lee Gallery in St. Louis, Awakenings in Chicago, and the Visual Arts Center in Austin.

# MIGUEL BARROS

**LIFE HAS SO MANY SIDES AND SHAPES I**

**LIFE HAS SO MANY SIDES AND SHAPES II**

**LIFE HAS SO MANY SIDES AND SHAPES III**

**LIFE HAS SO MANY SIDES AND SHAPES IV**

Mixed Techniques on Canvas carved on wood frames



Four paintings or four sculptures painted on oil canvas, and collage, gold leaves and a lot of mixed tech, 50cm X 40cm (each one)

Everything is wrapped, tortured, imprisoned into a box made by several row frames in wood connected with nails.

Each painting is a double side of itself, and the meaning of those two works are like a metaphor about survivors of any kind of violence, trying to express the dark side of the suffering of the people who was a victim of any abuse.

The experience I've been living in all my life about Mankind makes me all the time to interrogate and ask myself about the rights of the people, the peace in societies, the happiness that of all of us deserve and sometimes in an abrupt way is cut by the action of someone who thinks that they have the right and the power over others using them to their own pleasure, sarcasm, hate, object, or "thing" to be used and dropped away without any kind of empathy, consideration or any love!

When I was a kid I witnessed violence being accepted and tolerated by the system, I also was a victim of an enormous psychologic and physical abuse for some years, too much time for a child in a school. In those days I all time was thinking, in a way to survive to what I was exposed to, thinking all the time that eventually that time will pass and perhaps when I grew up I could help and be part in any way to help someone that suffers cruelty and all the kind of victims of violent circumstances.

I remember quite well, when I was 7 or 8 years old thinking to myself, I'll never do that bad things to anyone, because it makes feel so alone and unhappy, almost without a beam of light, of hope!

Of course all my life is now a reflex about my childhood, and even when I was a little kid, through colours and painting everything was my way to create my own inner world, it was the path I've found to safe myself!

All my work, the colours, the shapes, everything, is about Life, Hope, Happiness, Sharing, Empathy, Caring, and more then anything Love, that is what I've tried to do all the time in my life, to survive through positive actions helping myself helping others, at least I try to all the time!

So, my work is me, my work is the other, my work is for sharing Hope and a moment of a Happy look at my paintings, that's my own goal, nothing is more fulfilling then to see someone smile when is looking a painting I did.

The important thing is the present, and how it build the future and support the past, and I do really hope that through my work people can talk about their worries, fears, nightmares, etc, because that's the answer to sublimate the suffering!

The courage of the victims to continue to live is how they are able to sublimate their horrible experience and take care of that wounds in a perspective exclusive that the only way to survive is to transform that nightmare in something that makes sense, and through it create something useful and positive for themselves and the others, usually this people who are a victim and if they really can overcome through it, they are the best example of humanitarian and solidary people in the world!

## BIO

Miguel Barros was born in Lisbon in the year of 1962 and has triple citizenship: Canadian, Portuguese and Angolan.

In 2014, Miguel moved from Luanda, Angola in Africa, to Calgary, Alberta, where he is currently living. Now he is a Permanent Resident in Calgary! The exposure to a whole new Continent has already trigger a new inspirational process that is clearly distinct from his past experiences, though quite complementary.

In 1975, Miguel's family moved to Brazil for a year. This experience made Miguel decide to invest his education in the Arts.

He holds a degree in Interior Architecture and Design, from IADE (Lisbon, Portugal), 1984. He has designed china for Vista Alegre, after winning the National Design Award in Portugal in 1984.

From 1987 till 1999, Miguel has worked in an institution whose goal was to help drug addicts in their recovering process. Miguel was in charge of the Painting and Drawing Atelier where he combined his artistic and human relation skills to create programs to help the recovery of the participants. During this period, India has drawn Miguel imagination and inspiration. Moved to this motivation, Miguel has made several trips to India, spending their long periods of time on each of his trips. As a consequence, the East has become a recurrent subject in his paintings.

In 2008, Miguel decided to move to Angola, Africa, where he has lived 6 years. This African experience, very close to his family roots, created a new cycle in his professional career, again becoming a significant presence in his paintings.





# AODAN

## HURTING SPRING

Sculpture



As an artist working mainly with porcelain and embroidery, I strive to explore, redefine and externalize femininity and “femaleness”. With highly detailed and intricate techniques, I endeavor to show the complicated tableaux with aggressiveness, gentleness, fragility, softness, toughness, struggles, emotions and pain within femininity and female gender in delicate and cryptic looks. I stay loyal to the creed that art should be an organic combination abundant with personal metaphors and symbols; art is about experience rather than conversation. If there is a story with an open ending, there should be art totally open to interpretations and feelings.

I grew up in a culture that females are always told “rather be a jade broken than a tile intact”, which means we should rather be dead than raped. Our "reputation, virginity, wholeness and pureness" even matter more than our existence. A girl should not be growing up like this.

This piece is about how the pain and harms caused by sexual violence are carried in an "invisible" but inseparable way by female victims. However, I choose a material to show that we are not fated to be silent and "obedient" victims. Porcelain has its own sharp edges when broken. If you hurt us, we fight back.

## BIO

Aodan (born. Hohhot, China) is a visual artist who is more willing to call herself an 'escapist' and 'art sharman'. She graduated from Oberlin College with a bachelor degree in visual arts and School of Art Institute of Chicago with a master degree in fashion, body and garment. Her works have been exhibited in multiple shows in the USA and included in magazines from Turkey, United Kingdom and Spain.

Aodan's body of work delves into the complicated tableaux with aggressiveness, gentleness, fragility, softness, toughness, struggles, emotions and pain within femininity and female gender in delicate and cryptic looks. She digs into the neglected, unorthodox, forgotten and hidden parts in "Yin" out of love, desire and fear.

# SREYASH SARKAR

## ROOTS

Oil and Soft Pastels on Fabriano Cold Press



‘Roots’ is a meditation on the intersectionality of inevitable forms of sexual violence, stress and a dialogue with the outer world about what remains. Sexual violence is about domination—across race, nation, class, gender, and other dimensions of inequality and also is an inevitable product of power differentials, and thereby a site of the reproduction of these multiple inequalities. What I wanted to depict in this piece of work, was that although survivor narratives are being endowed with a certain degree of rectitude and benevolence in today’s times (hopefully), the very idea that the onus of starting the conversation about abuse, in whatever form it might be, lies with the survivor and this remains ‘rooted’ in the preposterous belief that – it happened ‘to you’. ‘You’ must tell us what happened, now. This immediacy not only channels an ignoble ignorance about the survivor’s mental health but also that sometimes revisiting a story is not essential; not all stories can be told to the public. What remains because of this action is of course, shame. Shame, at not being able to share one’s story. Shame, on top of having to deal with a scar that is never completely healed and becomes a part of the person’s veritable reality. So invariably, any dialogue after this loses the value of empathy. I want to tell people, that it is okay not to tell your story. Be who you want to be and fly. Just know this: as long as civilization exists- violence, sexual or in any other form will exist. We simply cannot stop talking about it, resisting it in our inimitable way and the power indices that it so surreptitiously engulfs.

## BIO

Sreyash Sarkar, is a poet, a qualified painter, a practising Hindustani Classical musician and an aspiring researcher in Microelectronics and Nanotechnology. Educated in Kolkata, Bangalore, and Paris, he has been a student correspondent at The Statesman, Kolkata from his school, South Point. In 2012, in an international poetry competition organized in the memoir of Yeats, his poem was shortlisted among 40 other poets from all over the world. Having been nominated and won a plethora of literary and art prizes, his interview was published in the “The Arty Legume”, where he was asked to speak on cubism, existentialism in art and intrusion in a painting. He has been extensively featured in “Five Poetry Magazine”, “Muses”, “El Portal”, “Tagore for us”, “The Country Cake-Stall”, “The Orange Orchard” etc. His interviews on his subjective views of art have appeared in Little Chambers Press, JuxtapozLive, Artesthetica Magazine, The Gooseberry Bushes, Swanspace magazine, among others. He is the youngest ‘polymath’ to be featured in Education-World Magazine for his outstanding achievements. His musical compositions have been part of cinematic scores and have been orchestrated widely. In 2016, the famed pianist Valentina Igoshina offered to work with him after having listened to his ‘Sea-shore of Time’ and he has also been closely working with famed world musician, Jean Philippe Rykiel. He is currently, working with several musicians to bring out his album, ‘Mois’ which features 12 compositions based on each month. Besides, being a freelance writer and an associate editor for several magazines, he is the editor-in-chief of Kalomer Kalomishak, a bilingual magazine, which he founded in 2013. He currently divides his time between Kolkata and Paris, where he is currently pursuing his doctoral studies. He can be reached at [sreysarkar.weebly.com](http://sreysarkar.weebly.com).

# MARIEKEN COCHIUS

## CURRENTS AND SHADOWS

#7 & #8

Oil on wood panel



My recent series of paintings Currents and Shadows is about processing memories, patterns in nature, and capturing the movement of light, wind, and water. The paintings in Currents and Shadows feature thick layers of oil on wood panel. My process is meditative and intuitive, and involves working in multiple layers. I apply the paint with my fingers, molding it. The paintings are almost entirely abstract with subtle references to water, trees and sky. On a formal level, the shapes create a kind of energy, a push and pull between light and dark, and the composition causes your eye to move around without resting. Although the paintings reference landscapes, there is a sense of turbulence that represents the movement of natural elements such as wind and water. The turmoil is also a reference to human emotion – an expression of my fear, anger, and frustration about our society’s inability to save and protect the environment.

## BIO

Marieken Cochius is a Dutch-born artist whose work is meditative and intuitive and often explores growth forms, movement of light and wind, root systems, and animal architecture. Her work encompasses drawing, painting and sculpture.

She is a 2020 recipient of a Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA), Emergency Grants COVID-19 Fund grant, and the Marjorie Curit award winner for Contemporary and Non Traditional art.

She has participated in residencies including the Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT. Cochius in recent group exhibitions at the Alexey von Schlippe Gallery at UConn Avery Point, CT; the Attleboro Museum, MA; Foundry Art Centre, St Charles, MO; Woodstock Artist Association and Museum, Woodstock, NY; Roxbury Arts Center, NY; The Ely Center, New Haven, CT; Ann Street Gallery, Newburgh, NY; Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn, NY and more. Her work was featured in the publications Willard and Maple Magazine (cover), Sun Spot Journal (cover), and in Superstition Review, High Shelf Press, Tule Review 2020, Cold Mountain Review, Mud Season Review, Art for a New Earth, Esthetic Apostle, FLAR, DeLuge Journal, Alluvian Environmental Journal, and Raw Art Review. She is a survivor of sexual violence.

# SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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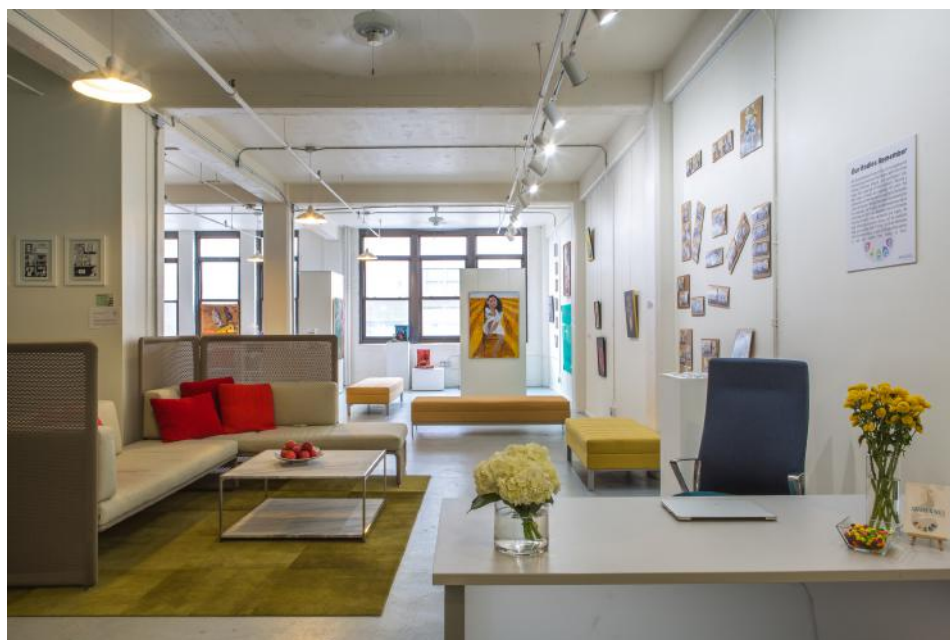
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**JUDITH'S CIRCLE**

Join our core squad of Awakenings' supporters and join Judith's Circle. By committing to making a monthly donation of any amount, you are directly impacting a survivor's healing process. Your contribution directly supports our artists and Awakenings' ability to provide trauma-aware, professional arts experiences like this for our survivor artists.

Join the Circle at [awakeningsart.org/judiths-circle](https://awakeningsart.org/judiths-circle).



# UPCOMING PROGRAMS:

**Gallery of Sounds** | *November 23rd*

**Bloom Virtual Celebration** | *November 18th*

**Awakened Voices Issue 11: Legacy** | *December 4th*

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