

Full Bloom

The seeds of this series were planted long before the first face was painted

During the pandemic, I made a series of 3-D houses that reflected our individual and collective experience during lockdown. And in making that work I came to see the iconic house shape as a symbol of self and of personal boundaries.

Then, in the summer of 2022, just as things were beginning to get back to normal, the Supreme Court overturned Roe. And though we could see it coming, it was still hard to wrap my head around the fact that they would renege on almost 50 years of settled law.

I was so angry – on behalf of every woman of child-bearing age, but also for all the women who had gone before, fighting so long and hard to make it possible for women of my generation to be the first to come of age secure in our right to choose.

I'm lucky to have art as a place to process my emotions and the things that affect me. Full Bloom began with these three paintings which I think of as my "Post-Roe Suite". In them I included women of various ages and, on the heels of my pandemic houses, I also inserted house shapes to indicate what I consider a gross violation of personal autonomy through the metaphors of arson, prison and a fence that had been breached.

But while making this work was an outlet for my emotions, it didn't alleviate them, and it wasn't healthy or sustainable to remain in that headspace. And while I was painting and stitching, I often thought of my mother, my grandmother and other smart and independent women in my life, and the way they always faced adversity with grace and resilience. So, I decided to flip the narrative, and rather than continuing to rail against something I couldn't control, this series evolved into an homage to the wisdom, strength and resilience of elder women – a demographic that has contributed so much, but which is often side-lined or ignored.

These aren't meant to be portraits of specific individuals, rather they are portraits of qualities that I admire in women that I know and have known. I encourage you to read the titles hoping that they will call to mind someone who has helped you and been a beacon in your life.

And finally, a quick word about the embroidery. Sewing has been part of my art practice for almost 3 decades. First out of necessity because it was a discipline that allowed me to make art while juggling the demands of a busy, growing family. I began with art quilts that were almost exclusively hand quilted and embroidered, and I grew to love the textural qualities and patterns I could make with hand stitches. As our children grew and my processes expanded, hand-stitching remained a constant in my work. And as I've gotten back into painting again, it's only natural that I would bring stitching along and incorporate it within these works.

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