

GRACE ATHENA FLOTT

ARTIST STATEMENT - New Icons

New Icons is a project I began with the intention of finding my own visual history as a person with a non-normative body. Upon realizing that my image did not exist outside of medical textbooks, horror movies or sensational news media, I created this project to celebrate what it actually means to look different. *New Icons* uplifts the variable faces and bodies of my burn injury community. With painted realist portraits, interviews, direct body printmaking and expressive paintings inspired by scar patterns, I took an auto-ethnographic approach and focused my documentation on our lived experiences.

As a white cis-woman with a burn injury that can pass as “normal,” I traverse reductive binaries present within narratives of health, gender and beauty — false dichotomies like healthy/ill, victim/survivor, whole/broken and beautiful/ugly. By creating this collection and sharing the participant interviews I hope to show that physical difference is a dynamic identity that reveals our culture’s body hierarchy. We can begin to explore and revel in this dynamism only when we see ourselves as human and images have a great humanizing power.

The realism of each portrait with the addition of the interviews fortifies our existence — my existence — in defiance of a society that commonly greets our physical appearances with pity, staring, or outright harassment. While I employ motifs of late European Medieval to Renaissance iconography, a longterm exchange with each portrait participant is paramount to my process in order to build agency and consent over time. With awareness of the idealizing power of the normative gaze, I paint each person with meticulous life-size detail as a way of honoring their story as it is embedded in their skin. I also invite each participant to contribute to the painting by creating prints directly from their own scars, patterns which I then screen print at scale into the portraiture.

I explore my own scar patterns in the small expressive neon paintings. I am drawn to the gestural movements carved into my surface with pure color and think of the forms as a terrain or map. In the vein of feminist disability philosophy, this work is premised on the idea that notions of ourselves are formed with and against other bodies. The portraiture together with the abstracted patterns begins to weave the stories of each individual into a larger picture of body liberation.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Grace Athena Flott (b. 1990) is an award winning multi-disciplinary visual artist fascinated by the myth of normalcy and social constructions of health, beauty, and gender. Her practice is rooted in figurative painting and incorporates printmaking, installation, and public art. She is a recipient of the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture Hope Corps Grant and was awarded First Place in Artistic Excellence by *Southwest Art Magazine*. Flott’s work is exhibited in solo and juried group exhibitions internationally including with Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, Winslow, WA; Figure|Ground Gallery, Seattle; Museum of Modern European Art (MEAM), Barcelona; and Salmagundi Club, New York City. Her works have been published in *Fine Art Connoisseur*, *Realism Today* and are collected internationally. She is a graduate of the University of Washington and the Juliette Aristides Classical Atelier. Flott lives and works in Seattle, WA.



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