



Altered Scale in Pink
13.5 x 13.5 inches
Mixed Media
Price available upon request



Altered Scale in Green
13 x 11 inches
Mixed Media
Price available upon request

K. S. O'Brien

Bio

Kathleen Shannon O'Brien was born in Baltimore, MD. In the early 1960's, she attended Grace and St. Peter's School and enjoyed the depth of the artistic and literary curriculum. O'Brien attended art classes at the Baltimore Museum of Art in the summer. While at the Park School, under the mentorship and guidance of Charles Leslie "Les" Harris, renowned maximalist, magic realist and visionary artist, O'Brien pursued her love of the visual arts. O'Brien was accepted into the Maryland Institute College of Art and gravitated toward mixed media and poetry. She was fortunate to have studied extensively with Joe Cardarelli, Baltimore's own "Godfather of Poetry," and ensconced herself in the writings of Alice Notley and Diane di Prima. O'Brien also studied under visiting artist Joyce Scott and learned about the power of storytelling and addressing controversial subjects through works of art. Influenced by the enigmatic work of Joseph Cornell, Miriam Shapiro, Judy Chicago and Joyce Scott, O'Brien visited the Smithsonian Museum American Art Joseph Cornell Study Center in Washington, DC, met the Director and gave her an original assemblage for her personal collection. O'Brien moved to Seattle and became one of the artists at Pike Place Market, working two other jobs to make ends meet. There, O'Brien formed Full Circle Arts. O'Brien has exhibited work at the Maryland Institute Alumni Show several times, as well as in several galleries and exhibits in Baltimore and Fayetteville, AR. Continuing her education, O'Brien was awarded a Master of Education Degree from the University of Arkansas. O'Brien lives in Fayetteville and continues to work in mixed media from her art studio at home, where she primarily makes pieces for private collections.

Artist Statement

My work draws from a deep well of experiences as a woman growing up with poverty, neglect, abuse, eating disorders and trauma. As a deeply spiritual person, I believe the act of creating is a sacred and transcendent experience in which I tap into the psyche and beyond. I choose mixed media and found objects with discernment and care, using the ancient art of dowsing in the selection process. My current series explores the intricacies and complexities of women and weight, body image, size and how those things undermine our sense of worth and value. My work begins with a unique canvas: an actual bathroom scale. The scale has been transformed and is never intended to be stepped on. They are designed to be placed on a gallery sculpture pedestal so that the viewer can gaze down at the piece.

My work often has a symmetrical layout with hints of an altar style design, taking the eye from the utilitarian to the divine. Drawing from my early experiences of sanctuary in Grace and St. Peter's Ladies Chapel and Cathedral in Baltimore, MD, my work has an inherent structure amid the seemingly unrelated items such as brass bullet casings, floral beadwork, Barbie doll stilettos, wings and crescent moons. Each piece always has one or two tiny mirrors, in which the viewer can see themselves if they look closely. Some viewers see themselves without even glancing in the mirrors.

The pieces are evocative and call upon the viewer to question how women have come to be controlled by and fearful of the act of stepping on a scale.