

# AN ALTAR



# TO ALTER

*A Transcendent Experience in Black Feminine Art and Healing*



As an artistic Black femme, one of my greatest challenges is being seen—and seeing myself—in what is considered “art.” As Black femmes, so much of what we create is stolen and co-opted without proper credit, compensation, or visibility. Living in Portland magnifies this statement.

From academia to mainstream media, the Black art I do see revered and consumed is often portrayed through a lens of trauma. It sometimes happens, by default, that the strongest stories we have to tell are an expression of the pain Black people endure through racism and oppression, but what often gets left out of this narrative is the resilience we have to create at all, and the joy that exists within being Black.

I consistently recognize that the art of Black femmes is routinely overlooked.

*An Altar to Alter* was conceived as a complement to Hank Willis Thomas’ commentary on Black Joy. This project was curated with the intention of showing how the magic of representation and visibility through art can change and alter us as individuals. We pour our experiences, life, love, and truths into our work. This is a collection of eleven talented local Black femmes exhibiting how we use art to heal ourselves and the community we exist in.

It is my hope that everyone involved in this project will be truly seen.

xo, Jagger Blaec

*About Us*

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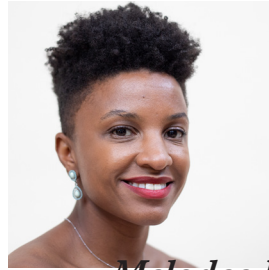
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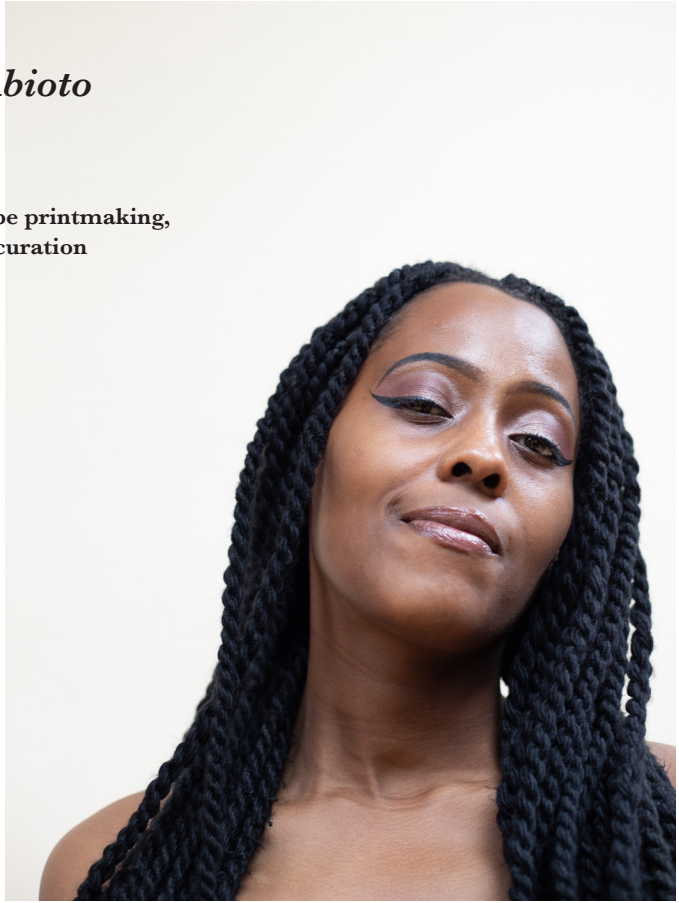
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## *Ni Saara Abioto*

She/Her

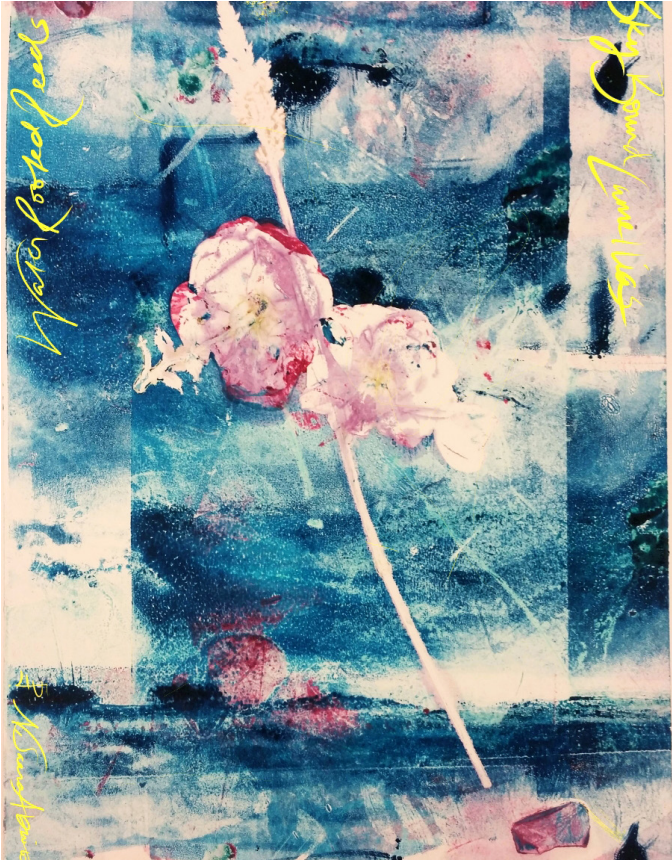
IG: @niabioto

writing, monotype printmaking,  
music - singing, curation



Ni Saara Abioto is a multi-medium ideologist/ healer who is interested in the vision-imaging of the world through fantastical reclamation and creation worthy of a global geode system floating through the ethers. And it's herbal, fauna, human, and self. She believes in the wonder of black—specifically women's— experiences because by God, she is One. Because by God She is One.

Her expression of her artistic gifts manifests healing on multiple levels: Alchemy and love are some of her guiding principles. She believes her artistic gifts lend themselves to each: soul, body and spirit. From creating herbal remedies like cannabis and cannabimimetic tinctures and oils to co-creating with elementary students in contemporary art classes and taking three-month periods to create slime and relating it to the self, every level is relevant for her to realize everyone has a place and voice and body and spirit that is taken seriously while respecting each person's free will to manifest healing.



## *Princess Bouton*

She/Her

IG: @princess.bouton

film, photography, dance performance



Princess is originally from Houston, Texas. She is currently “living the student loan dream” as a filmmaker and equity activist in Portland. Her work is her attempt at externalizing “big emotion, ego, and self-indulgence.”

Her intersectional identity and ability to build her own image makes her feel like the reality of her existence is much louder than the denial of her existence.







***Jarlisa Corbett***

She/They

IG: @jarlisaart

digital illustration, painting

Jarlisa is a Mississippi-born portrait artist and illustrator with a background in communications and theatre. Her creative work is an expression of her multifaceted identities with an emphasis on gender, body, neurodivergence, or loosely, the experience of having neurological variations that are seen as outside the cognitive norm, and more. Thematic elements drawing from nature, science fiction and fantasy illuminate her work, which also encompasses the myriad of beautiful ways other Black womxn and femmes express their own individual identities.

Illustration is the medium in which Jarlisa feels the most seen. Through it, she manifests healing within herself and in turn, hopefully, a sense of healing, resonance and an experience of feeling seen for others.



"I've had some unpleasant experiences and struggled with a number of things from body dysmorphia to mental illness to gender identity. Being able to create art has helped me to find beauty within myself in a way I hope other Black womxn and femmes with similar experiences will also...learning to love myself unconditionally is on-going, but has been the most sustainable form of healing I've experienced," she says.

Jarlisa holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing and Communications with a minor in Performing Arts from the Rochester Institute of Technology. She is currently pursuing a graduate degree in the Business of Art & Design from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Her creative potential knows no boundaries: Jarlisa is open and ready to receive opportunities to expand and deepen her artistic practice.

## *Adriene Cruz*

She/Her

IG: @thedreamerswindow

fabric, mixed media



Lost and found, Abundant offerings of the Spirit.

As a descendant of stolen people Adriene says there has always been an urgent desire to discover her place, roots and purpose.

Whatever the medium, fabric, glass, yarn or paint, along with sacred symbols, patterns and embellishment, vibrant colors

provide are a conduit and offer her a way to escape, to transform and to heal.

Her work is always a meditation and a prayer for guidance and gratitude for blessings. It allows a channel to open within her to create with assistance from Spirit guides, ancestors and angels.

Creativity has always facilitated her healing and peace to ease life's traumas and a passport to a beautiful blessed life, laughing and sharing as she grows. As a dreamer, she travels the world

in her mind claiming places and people as her home and her own borrowing whatever appeals to her to weave into her art.

Working with her hands creating art, getting lost in the process and finding herself in it unravels and exposes possible answers and new discoveries.

Adriene confirms, "the alchemy is working" when she discovers viewers of her work are also inspired and find a place of beauty and healing in her work.



*Crystal Davis*

She/Her & They/Them

IG: @bloomingfirepdx

FB: @BloomingFireHealing

healing arts, poetry, music



Crystal is a healer and seeker from the American South who uses poetry, music, and energy work to support the LGBTQIA2+ and BIPOC communities in reconnecting with their shared magic and divinity.

Her path has taken her through the education system, legal system, nonprofit industrial complex, and the performance world. Crystal's work explores the delicate navigation of life as

a queer black woman walking between the mundane and magical worlds.

As she explores her artistic self she is continually challenged to assess and reassess the influences of all that is impacting her externally. She is thankful to share what she carries with her through words, song and in small groups aimed at connecting LGBTQIA2+ and BIPOC with their innate ability to heal.

In our days we will live  
like our ghosts will live

Then let us get to work  
not in the service of  
squealing like iron and steel on train tracks  
trundling bodies like product  
from one place to another  
like cheap plastics  
replaceable

not in the service of  
getting ahead by making sure  
that someone else is behind  
struggling to breathe  
not in the service of  
“At least that’s not me”

But in the honor of  
the free, living body  
life unencumbered  
aware and inspired

I want my ghost to live healthy  
I want my ghost to live in sunsets  
I want my ghost to be a reminder  
that there is someone who cares  
I want my Black ghost to help the kid  
alive in the projects  
with their english homework

In our days we will say  
what our ghosts will say

Let pearls of wisdom  
fall from my living mouth  
as they will form on the lips  
Of my ectoplasm  
To ask you:

What is it that you are wanting in this  
clamorous and magnificent existence?

Can you see your divinity  
reflected in the eyes of a newborn?

Can you be a Rose of Jericho  
and welcome the rain?



*Megon Dee-Cave*

She/Her

IG: @chefmegondeecave

@oracleinfusedwellness

culinary/cannabinoid science

As a Black American woman, a chef and an educator, for Megon Dee-Cave, cooking with cannabis is an act of reclaiming ancestral traditions of medicinal cooking. Her artistic gifts manifest in Oracle Infused, her business and line of culinary and wellness products that enable healing for those who seek a balanced wellness routine through nutrition and cannabis and

hemp-derived cannabinoids and terpenoids.

“Cooking is my love language. The kitchen is my sanctuary, my therapy, and my blank canvas. I’ve found self-love, self-dependence, and self-reliance through the perspective of food...In this space, I move with grace and intention passed on to me by the women in my bloodline before me. Empty



pots and pans are my blank canvas. Good ingredients are my medium. Fire is the heartbeat.”

Megon sees a parallel connection between her chosen career path working with medicinal plants and her maternal grandmother’s experience harvesting and processing tobacco on Maryland’s Eastern Shore long ago. Plant medicine is a sacred tradition she imagines her ancestors practiced and

mastered to care for themselves and others in sickness and in pain. Her work today is an extension of that legacy. Through it she is seeking answers about her own identity, a connection to her ancestors pre-colonial language, traditions, spirituality, and food.

If health is power, Megon finds purpose in giving people their power back by reclaiming the human experience through food and cannabis.





## *Father Fannie*

I prefer my name, but they/they+he/him work

IG: @fatherfannie

music, photography, multi media installations

Father Fannie process a lot of personal trauma through artistic expression: Through photos, music, lights, and scents, Father Fannie regrasps memories and transforms them into art.

Father Fannie's work focuses on aspects of QTPOC power, sadness and joy. Father Fannie uses the aforementioned mediums to grasp at moments of pure vulnerability in



Father Fannie's beautifully diverse "magickal" community. Through a variety of mediums Father Fannie accesses, captures and celebrates moments often difficult to articulate verbally.

"I've found that it is often difficult to access or express joy; so I have invested a lot of my creative energy and focus into highlighting those often fleeting moments of happiness. As an artist that has faced

many momentous traumas and universal gifts, I want to save every moment that speaks to me, they explain. "The way I choose to juxtapose our strength and toughness with our vulnerability is a recurring theme in my work. It is so important to me for my work to encompass and place emphasis on queer/fluid identity and how sometimes just existing is self-care."



***Leila Haile***

They/Them

IG: @enbyonce

**tattooing, dance, organizing**

A Portland resident for 13 years, Leila's collective disciplines as a dancer, tattooist, performer and activist culminate in a body of work rooted in furthering collective liberation of marginalized peoples through empowerment, organization and mobilization.



Tattooing specifically allows them to create an environment for folks to connect with and reclaim their bodies while also facilitating their own healing.

***Kanda Mbenza-Ngoma***

She/Her

IG: @kmbenzangoma

music and modeling



Kanda is a Portland-based first-generation Congolese singer, songwriter, model and multi-disciplinary artist.

Healing and the fat, black, queer femme and her many facets are the focal point of Kanda's art. She believes by showcasing and sharing the process, many people can be inspired to start their own journey of healing, a process integral to the survival of change and revolution the way she sees it.

"Black femme voices matter. Black femme lives matter. We are needed. We are vital. And we are to know it for ourselves," she says. "The black femme is gifted with so much magic and has been persecuted and demonized for it. I want to explore the world beyond circumstances. By exploring, I believe that the frequency of change and healing becomes palpable and material. Although healing

can be ugly, difficult, sobering and at times lonely, it is most of all beautiful. All parts of the process are valid and all parts of the process open new doors to healing and possibility.”

Kanda grew up in Boise, Idaho. She is a graduate of Portland State University with a degree in Vocal Jazz. She has performed with prestigious musicians and bands locally and she has been the face of multiple fashion lines

including Tomboyx, Ace & Jig and Joyn. Kanda is an advocate for racial equity, mental health, queer narratives and and body positivity. In her spare time she can be found playing the guitar, listening to music or audiobooks, spending time with loved ones or working on spiritual healing. She is currently working on her second EP that due in November 2019.



Photo by Michelle Lepe



*Kris Rene*  
They/Them  
IG: @obsidianbrat

music

Kris Rene is a self-taught musician holding space for soundful means of moving through the hard and good parts of living. Through ambient folk sounds, Kris invites the listener to feel alongside them and sing along if they wish. When they are not playing solo jams for tender hearts, they play hard and fast music in bands such as Novelas, and Tantrum.



Playing music allows them to name and release emotions they feel in the moment. "It's like cleansing the heart in the deepest of places. Places I didn't see before. It's like a balm that soothes."



## *Tazha The Diviner*

She

IG: @TazhaTheDiviner

painting, music, design



To say the least, Tazha Williams is a polymath. A graphic designer, musician and artist, her work explores identity, healing and transformation.

“Creative expression is healing the self. Healing the self emanates and heals others,” she says.

Tazha’s creative process stems from her vibrant, lived experience as a queer woman of African descent. Her work is an ode to the lost narratives of her creative and resilient ancestors.

Tazha’s work has been featured in the San Diego Union Tribune, and on The Today Show and San Diego’s KUSI News.

In 2017, Tazha was won the Oregon MRG Foudnation's Lilla Jewel Award, an honor that elevates the work of women artists in around the state who advance a social message through their work with an emphasis on women of color and queer women.

Tazha currently resides in Portland, OR where she studies Graphic Design at the Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA).



Portland in Color seeks to disrupt the homogeneity of representation in Portland arts and media by highlighting the voices and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. By showcasing the work, voices, and experiences of BIPOC, we reject the narrative that Portland's whiteness is a valid excuse for the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are a resource exploring how we can expand our networks and challenge the false notions that our city lacks diversity. Find us at [www.portlandincolor.com](http://www.portlandincolor.com) and [@portlandincolor](https://twitter.com/portlandincolor).

THANK YOU!