





AHAVANI MULLEN



***Oneness Tears***, encaustic, watercolor, oil, aluminum, charcoal, on cradled birch panel, 48 x 32 inches, 2016

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***Oneness Tears***, (*detail*), encaustic, watercolor, oil, aluminum, charcoal, on cradled birch panel, 48 x 32 inches, 2016

*Art is the outer vesture of love. Art, like love, is a force of oneness with the Infinite. When we create a piece of art, we are really re-creating or reflecting some beauty of the Infinite.*

*~ Sri Chinmoy*

My works have evolved from silence. The most essential element in art making for me lies in the process itself, in cultivating stillness and reverence while working. It is intuitive and spontaneous, exploring the fruitful periods and the droughts of spiritual experience, the natural cycles of creation, preservation and transformation.

The finished works of art are a relatively permanent record of these moments, a snapshot of the intangible placed inside a physical object. They navigate and define an intermediate space between the outer and the inner, the seen and the unseen. These images wish to serve as a vehicle for a moment of contemplation, a fleeting breath beyond the earthly.

When I remember times throughout my life in which I've had the most profound interactions with works of art, they are experiences ripe with a playful, light quality. With these works, I wish to recreate the fragrance of those moments.





*Cosmos Seeds*, encaustic, oil, on cradled birch panel, 48 x 48 inches, 2016

I am fortunate to have been born into a family of women artists, and I have identified as an artist for as long as I can remember. When I was in my early twenties I had an inner experience that confirmed this knowledge in me, revealing a kind of certainty and confidence with the world of visual art, that we would always know each other intimately.

Like so many artists, long periods of time are spent in the studio just looking at the work in progress, just meditating before the work, allowing myself to really see what exists there.

In my series *Ocean Inside the Drop*, the organic matter I embed in the work such as vines, paper and silk, as well as the use of natural, cellular-like forms, creates visual links between two worlds, visible and invisible. These remind us of our connections to nature as human beings, and our inherent divinity and perfection because of it.

Because encaustic paint is built up layer upon layer, it is particularly well-suited to the atmospheres I wish to evoke. I have found that beeswax has a rich, earthy organic quality as well as an ethereal transparency and luminosity, which allows me to capture a kind of subtle divine light as it is manifested in the physical, material realm.



***Ocean Inside the Drop II***, encaustic, graphite, aluminum, oil, on cradled birch panel, 40 x 30 inches, 2016





*Untitled 53 (Microterrain)*, encaustic, on salvaged wood, 4 x 2.25 x 1.5 inches, 2015

Over the past two to three years I have been working in a variety of media, most heavily in encaustic paint, on wood grounds and reclaimed materials. Some of my work is evolving into more sculptural, 2.5-dimensional pieces as I have discovered salvaged wood, and found new constructions that can be made with these materials. My *Microterrain* series is the beginning of this exploration. In working with these pieces, I found myself responding to uneven surfaces, shapes and crevices, the actual history of each object. These surprising and playful dialogues in topography and scale informed new thinking about working with encaustic as well, engaging with its inherent sculptural qualities.



***Rhythm of Birth and Death***, (diptych), encaustic, oil, graphite, on cradled birch panel, 30 x 80 inches, 2016

I often use words and melodies to guide the movement of the work. In these cases, I draw on devotional Bengali poetry and musical compositions. Some of these are centuries-old lyrical songs by Rabindranath Tagore, and others are more contemporary haunting melodies by Sri Chinmoy. I feel that the themes within specific songs and poems are able to guide my movement through the process, much like mantra is used to concentrate energy. Often they carry me through a sea of uncertainty and unknown territory during the process, like a ship passing through a rough patch of water from shore to shore, from start to finish with the work. It is satisfying to know that the message and fragrance of that particular poem or song is embedded inside the work on a cellular level.



***Fragrance***, oil, cold wax, charcoal, graphite, watercolor, on cradled birch panel, 48 x 48 inches, 2015





***Jubilant***, encaustic, oil, on cradled birch panel, 36 x 36 inches, 2017

I feel so many of us wish to contribute something positive to our world, in various spheres of life. Having studied and engaged in art and spirituality for over twenty years, I feel strongly that my offering lies in creating visual art from this perspective. By allowing my meditation practice to inform my studio practice, and vice versa, I can explore the depths of each in a satisfying way. It leads me to ask, “Where can I bring a quality of elevation to what exists in this vast world of contemporary visual art? What can I contribute to it on a level of expanding consciousness?” The only clues to answers I have ever gotten to these questions direct me back to the intention and process, and lies in that mysterious moment of creation — laying down paint, directing a line, carving a surface.



*Light Pools*, encaustic, watercolor, silk, graphite, oil, on cradled birch panel, 55 x 60 inches, 2015



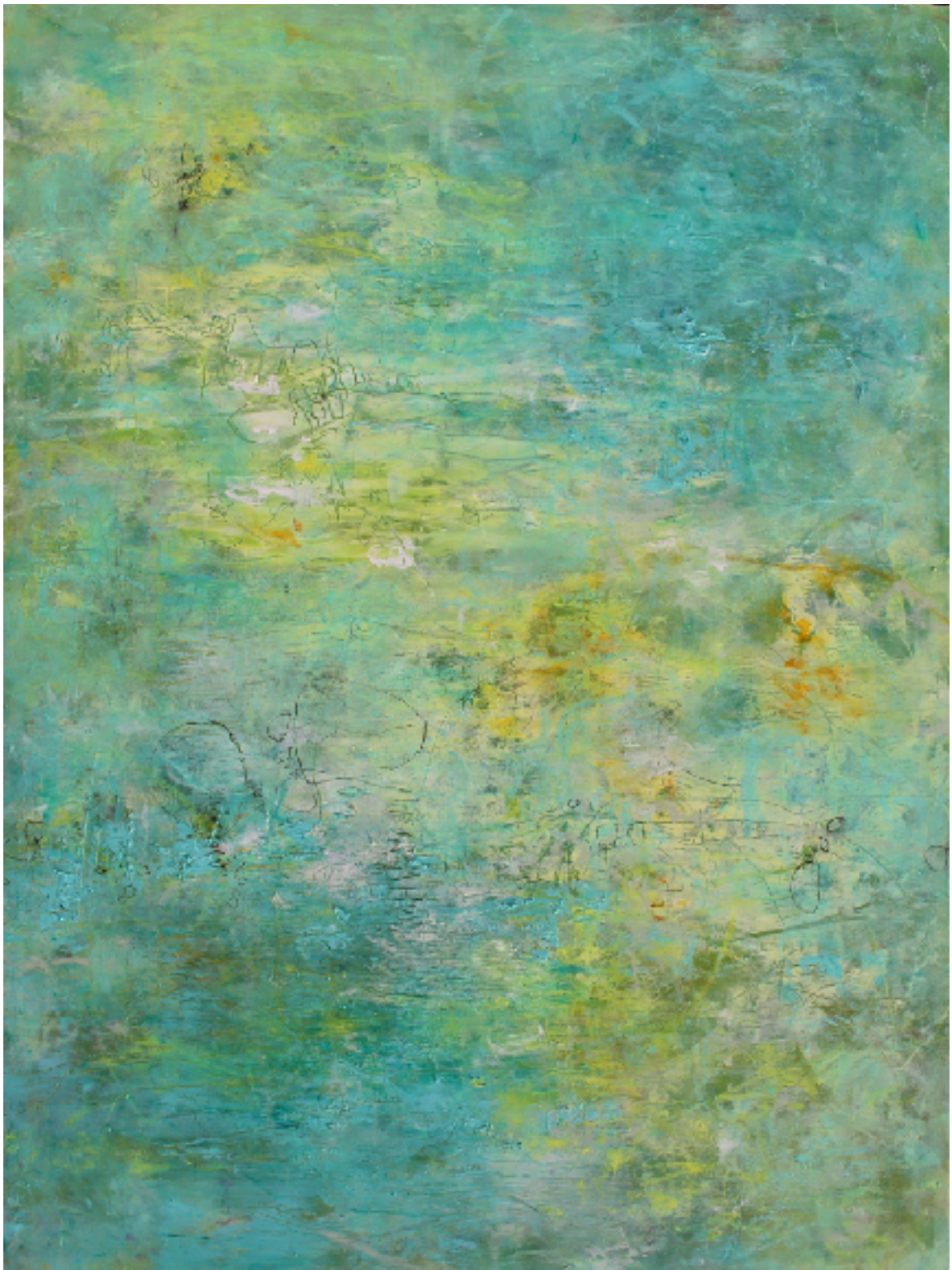
***Immensity***, (detail), oil, cold wax, charcoal, graphite, watercolor, on cradled birch panel, 48 x 48 inches, 2016





***Boundless***, encaustic, watercolor, graphite, oil, on cradled birch panel, 48 x 36 inches, 2015





***Adoration Gifts***, oil, graphite, cold wax on cradled birch panel, 40 x 30 inches, 2016



***Unfolding***, oil, cold wax, graphite, watercolor, on cradled birch panel, 48 x 36 inches, 2017





## BIO



Ahavani Mullen is a visual artist who works in a variety of media, constructing paintings, images and 2.5-dimensional work that have evolved from silence. Rooted in a contemplative journey that spans over two decades, her work navigates a space between the seen and the unseen, and serves as a record of the intangible. Ahavani is honored by having received awards from James Rondeau, Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as grants from 3Arts, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Illinois Arts Council. Her most recent solo exhibitions in Illinois include those at Olivet Nazarene University, South Suburban College and Morpho Gallery. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and museums nationally and internationally, and is held in numerous private and corporate collections. She is represented by Circa Gallery in Minneapolis and Chicago Art Source Gallery. She balances her full time studio practice with teaching. Born in Minneapolis, MN, she received a B.A. from Macalester College in St. Paul, MN in 1996. Ahavani is currently based in Chicago.

[www.ahavani.com](http://www.ahavani.com)

[ahavani@gmail.com](mailto:ahavani@gmail.com)

[www.instagram.com/ahavanimullen/](https://www.instagram.com/ahavanimullen/)

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