Sotto Voce

Ash Sark
BFA Presentation 2021
Drawing and Painting

Committee:
Sarah Kabot,
Tony Ingrisano,
Amber Kempthorn,
Tommy Mira y Lopez

https://ashsark.wixsite.com/artwork
My exhibition titled *Sotto Voce* concentrates on internality, contemplation, and the interplay between unrest and calm. Some drawings are presented on the wall, while others are presented in a series of three books that guide a viewer through mindfulness meditations. The image-based work depicts the body, focusing on small, cropped sections of a figure. Other works refer to the body through text that prompts the viewer to engage with their own body. The small drawings bring a viewer close to the object to look at them or read them, encouraging a physical closeness with the work. The other drawings are larger than life-size with proximate depictions of a body being examined, displaying a moment of closeness and vulnerability that we don’t normally see from others.

All works are rendered in watercolor on non-absorbent watercolor paper creating a hazy, dreamy feel that lends itself to the psychological topics I am capturing. On the figures, deep purples and blues make parts of the body look bruised or as if blood is rushing to the surface of the skin—something is happening within the body that refers to a struggle. There is disquiet within the quiet. The combination of water-based media on a non-absorbent ground demonstrates disconnection; the watercolor doesn’t soak into the slick surface of the paper, it pools and reticulates. These effects reflect the dissociative or anxious feelings embodied in the figurative works and cause distortion in the text. In the books, the combination of this distortion, the curation of the pages, and the prompted meditations slow a viewer down and ask them to be present.
These works reclaim both time and the body. My figurative drawings depict and embody anxiety manifesting in a body and the meditations are tools used to counteract that anxiety. Contemplating one’s body is typically reserved for moments when one is alone and in a familiar setting. By bringing these activities into a public gallery setting and encouraging gallery patrons to participate, I encourage an audience to be aware of their body. The space I create with Sotto Voce emphasizes the value in introspection, emotional vulnerability, and close personal moments with oneself or with an artwork. My drawings and my books ask for close and slow looking while they whisper understanding to a viewer.
Sotto voce: “intentionally said in a quiet voice”
Throughout this exercise pay close attention to how your body feels. Be as aware of physical sensations as possible.

Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 5, release for 6.

Start with your toes. Clench them for 5 seconds, slowly release, feeling the tension leave your body.

Calves next. Flex for 5 seconds as hard as you can. Release.

Squeeze your thighs, glutes, and hips. Release.
Meditation 1 (part 2)

Suck in your belly, continue to breathe.

Chest. Breathe in deep for 5, hold for 5.

exhale for 5

Visualize tension leaving your body with your breath.

Tense up your neck and shoulders.

Hold 5 seconds.

Release.

Clench your jaw

and release.
Meditation 1 (Part 3)

Scrunch up your face. Close your eyes. Relax.

Lastly, your hands. All of the tension left in your body, visualise it in your fingers.

Slowly release your fingers, visualising your anxiety exiting through your fingertips.
While taking part in this exercise, try to notice things around you that you may not notice normally.

What are 5 things that you see in your immediate surroundings?

What color are they? How far away are they from you? What is the size of the object compared to your body?

What are 4 things you can touch? Pick them up. How heavy is the object? What is the texture like?

What are 3 sounds in your environment? How loud or quiet are they? How distant? Is there any white noise?

What are 2 things you can smell? How strong are they? Are they good or bad smells?

Lastly, what is 1 thing you can taste? Is it a strong taste? Is it sour? Sweet? Savory?
Answer the following questions out loud. Listen closely to your voice.

What is your name?

How old are you?

Where do you live?

What will you do next?

Where are you now?

What have you done today so far?

What are you doing now?
Meditations, hardcover books, 7” x 7”, 2021

Installation View
Untitled (Tugging)
watercolor on Yupo
20" x 26"
2020
Untitled (Stretching)
watercolor on Yupo
20" × 26"
2020
Compression
watercolor on Yupo
26" x 40"
2020
Close-ups
Untitled 1-3
watercolor on Yupo
Size variable
2021
Untitled 4-5, watercolor on Yupo, 9” x 9” each, 2021
Thank you!