

Sanguine Bedtime Stories

The Sanguine♥ Bedtime Stories are book-sized, mixed-media, interactive encasement diptychs, serving as a contemplation on blood and its associations with mortality, disease, healing, sexuality, female energy and magic by putting my own red fluid under the loupe. These encasement diptychs refer to the medieval portable altarpieces, which were used for private devotion and could be carried easily from place to place in personal baggage. These contemporary diptychs enter into a dialogue with the Middle Ages, whose extremes in epidemics and wars as well as in scientific and artistic achievements are comparable to those in our century.

Why is this project invested with blood and why is it imperative that it is my own? Answers to these questions lie in my childhood, which I recall being infused with an enormous amount of blood and its inherent strong smell. Most of the blood that I saw and smelled was my father's. He was an alcohol and drug abuser. Late at night when his drunkenness and belligerence reached its highpoint he would usually fall and injure himself. One night he fell down with a beer bottle in his hands. His hands were cut so badly that for a long time the wounds would not stop bleeding.

This experience is at the heart of the Sanguine Bedtime Stories. Although this incident was traumatic and fearful, it was also filled with compassion, magic and healing because in my child's mind something wonderful happened at the moment when my father's blood started flowing: he stopped screaming at me, he stopped harassing me and like a miracle it suddenly became very peaceful and quiet as he washed his bloody hands under running cold water.

A few sympathetic and art-loving souls in the medical profession volunteered to draw my blood for this ongoing project. It is easy to get blood from my visibly thick veins. As I watch the syringe go into the veins, I feel the warm blood flowing from my body into the ten or fifteen anti-coagulant filled vials, and I welcome that feeling of peace and quiet again.

During the installation, another long forgotten memory comes to mind and takes shape. As I saturate the wall with red paint I am reminded of my father shooting Morphine into veins which had been pierced too often so that the injection needle would bounce off and make his blood splatter all over the walls. While stenciling the biohazard symbol in a pattern all over the red painted wall the horror of this experience has lost its potency and merely exists as a mark on the wall.

Hinged on the wall and placed on a black shelf, each three-dimensional 'blood story' is encased in wood and closes with a brass catch in the front. The viewer is invited to open my personal diary and by doing so emphasizes the blurred line between the private and the public. The golden color of the brass hardware which supports and adorns the wall-hanging objects conveys a sense of preciousness and mystery. But the red-painted and blood-stained outsides are imprinted with the biohazard symbol, adding the notion of danger to the pieces. Upon opening the leaves of the book, fragments of the human body drawn with my own blood on latex and sewn onto stretched maroon/red-colored and bloodstained bandanas are revealed. The use of fabric and color refers to the handkerchief code for blood fetish, vampirism and menstruation, which is utilized by some S/M and gay groups to tell the potential partner of their particular sexual preference.

The intuitive and obsessive process of stitching, embroidering, pinning, and binding the individual bloodstained canvases, as well as the use of iodine and gauze, draw attention not only to the vulnerability but also to the regenerative abilities of our bodies and minds. The header of each 'page' spells the word 'blood' in a different language, converting the series into a microcosm of universal communication and compatibility where the only requirement for membership is your own blood.

Catya Plate
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♥**sanguine** /'sangwin/ a. [(O)Fr. *sanguin(e)* f. L. *sanguineus*] **1** Blood-red. **2** Of or pertaining to blood; consisting of or containing blood. **3** *Hist.* Having the constitution characterized by the predominance of blood over the other three bodily humors, believed to be indicated by a ruddy face and a brave and hopeful amorous disposition. **4** Having the temperament attributed to people of this constitution; confident, optimistic. **New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.**