

The following are some poems from my collection:

Sitting outside in the sun I hear a buzzing in my ear
I've always dreaded bugs
The unknown
They were too small to read
I felt it on my thigh and smacked it
It flew away, of course.
I went inside.
The summer after, I was laying in the sun
Somehow always seems to bring me
A ray of joy
Until 1:36pm when the flies come out
Right after it was just too hot to.
I felt a tickle on my leg
I made my defense and marched back into the house, frustrated
As I washed the sweat off my hands that I smacked a minute ago off the back of my knee
I had mistaken for a fly

After "Distant Regard" by Tony Hoagland

If I knew by this time next year I would never see your face again

I would turn to my empty plate and wish there were two

For all the nights this summer I stayed up while people were

in hospital beds hoping to brush skin ever again

I thought of you

And wondered what you were doing in yours

Governments spent and nights just the same hoping for a sign that my feelings weren't vain

And for just one rainy cloud to feel the crisp ease of a cold night to remind me so of how we never
stopped, just kept going

Pulling on the skin around my fingers like affirmations

Blood oozed

Only affirming that if I ever had a choice, I would choose pain

Here you are, your hair shorter and the crisp air not one goosebump in sight, but eyes continuing

A hug; casual. For you or for everyone else? A quick reunion but a quicker heart beating because if I never see your face again I would tell you—

My cheeks redden overheated,

And the air between the words I'm about to say

thicker

than fingers shuffling cards for the first time

So I stop and say just this:

Thank you

for the time spent where you were

never adequately kind

The following is an excerpt from a book chapter published in 2022 titled "Learning to Carve a Space – A Saudi Woman's Journey to Change What's Behind the Boarder". The book included narratives from trailblazers across the globe titled "Women Community Leaders and Their Impact as Global Changemakers."

Ever since taking the step to pursue her education outside the borders of her homeland, Nada's existence has been saturated with the fact that most people think Saudi women are oppressed and voiceless. Simply showing her ID anywhere results in such mild interrogations "do they make you wear that thing on your head all the time back home?" as if it is their business what and when a woman chooses to wear anything. "It's so oppressive, I tell ya," a supermarket cashier said to her once, when she was asked where she was from. "Those women here still wear it. I don't understand why... They're free here!"

This conversation is often the cost she had to pay for telling people in a foreign country where she moved from. It is a frustrating back-and-forth to try to prove to them that there are different versions of practicing Islam globally and that all individuals choose how to present themselves. Women have a say in wearing, or refusing to wear, a headscarf—it is a choice. The person on the other side of the counter, in this particular case someone rather ethnocentric, usually chooses an orientalist view of the issue over hers. Their perception of women from this area of the world is overshadowed by Muslim extremists' interpretation of Islam, generalizing it as all Muslims'. Regardless, Nada Alturki never once changed her origin story for an easier time at checkout or a less serious social interaction. She probably never will.

Nada grew up watching the Disney Channel, going from wishing she was Princess Jasmine to dreaming of the ease of the two lives Hannah Montana had. If she said that watching American narratives on television her whole life did not shape her view of the world, she would tell the biggest lie she would have ever told. It would have been so easy for her to choose a *seemingly* wild and free figure as her role model—one that does not wear the hijab, one that operates on feelings, and one that is not brown. However, she has always and will continue to look up to and aspire to be the Saudi woman who taught her everything. To tell her own story, she cannot help but tell another first.

Because of her, Nada knows what it means to be a woman in a man's world. Because of her, she knows what it means to spill sweat and tears trying to carve a place for yourself. Because of her, she knows what it is to do it all alone.

While some people choose one profession to sustain throughout their lives, her mother chose many. She is a doctor, a college professor, and even worked alongside the King of Saudi Arabia as part of his consultative council. Nada recalls how gorgeous she thought her mother was when she was younger. She was the woman with the widest and warmest smile, but now wrinkles run like rivers under her eyes. Still beautiful, she taught her to never give up on dreams, no matter how out of place they may feel.

She used to tell stories about work when she was a professor and physician at King Saud University in Riyadh. That was her first job. She was one of the youngest female physicians working her position. Regardless, the men still gave her a hard time. Although she was young at the time, Nada still remembers her mother mentioning things such as the men turning on her in meetings or belittling her even though she was one of the hardest working people there. Her stubbornness to change a culture built on misogyny is what got her through all of it.

Those stories slowly became more and more relevant to her daughter as she transitioned from the classroom into the workspace.

Nada started her first internship in early 2019 at a communications firm. At the beginning, it was a great experience, but, as her days there accumulated, so did the workload. She started noticing that there was a bias in recognizing the female interns' work within the company culture. She began comparing the mounds of work she herself had to do during a single workday to her male peer's struggle to find anything to do around the office some days. Still, he was given recognition in meetings for work he never did. No one corrected the assumption, and slowly it began to dawn on her.

Even in a white workspace, as a male person of color, he was still seen as more important than she was. She had never fully digested the weight of her gender until that moment. Thus, she called her mother: "Mama what do I do? This is really getting to me, I'm not good enough, I can't seem to prove myself here!" Her mother took a deep breath and simply told her daughter to stop, then. "*Habibti*, my love, stop *trying* to prove yourself. The minute you do is the minute you

stop competing. You are here to do good work and to better this earth, that is all you're here to do." And then she asked, "are you proud of the work that you're doing?" "Yes," Nada said. "Then that's all you need."

The following is a documentation project I completed during my time as Writer in Residence at Misk Art Institute's second Masaha residency program. In four parts, I attempted to document the very building the residency took place:

Part 1: The Dream

What is a dream? It's something that always seemed so far away. Your muse; your motivation to go on. To dare to do it was a freedom we could not afford — until now. As Saudi opens its doors to new possibilities as of late, it got me thinking of what my role is during this change. As a woman with a journalism background, my natural response is to document through my words: the streets crowded in green on September 23rd, my mother's hand on a steering wheel, the sparkle in the eye of a young artist at her first showcase. My position is one that is unprecedented. As the first writer in residence at Misk Art Institute's second Masaha residency cohort, obligation weighs heavy on me. How do you decide what is important enough to document? How do you answer the questions you don't yet have?

They always tell you to remember where you come from, so I took that as a starting point. Looking around at Masaha, the space I've called "home" for the past 3 months, I see a fountain of history. The tire tracks on the concrete floors tell me this was once a parking garage to visitors of the upstairs gallery space, *Prince Faisal Bin Fahad Arts Hall*, that now is a home to paintings by several artists from around the world by virtue of Sacha Craddock's *Here, Now* exhibition. The space opened to the public in late 2019 as part of Misk Art Institute to accommodate the change and embrace of the contemporary art scene that is now booming in Saudi. The concepts of biennales, art residency programs, and museum exhibitions are relatively new to the country. Saudi Arabian art is merely a seed in the process of sprouting. But who planted it? The contemporary art movement did not come out of thin air. We must remember who came before us. "Know thy history" said to us Hamza Serafi-, co-founder of Athr Gallery in Jeddah during a visit to Masaha.

The Modernist art movement in Saudi Arabia began in the 1960s by the likes of Abdulhalim Radwi, Safia Binzagr, and Mohammad Al-Saleem. All exceptional artists in my opinion, it is almost unfathomable that such art was created 60 years ago. As a millennial, I see the past of this country as a compartmentalized cocoon. Conservative schools of thought were so prominent during my childhood; it's difficult to think that there was a time before that when freedom and creativity were embraced so openly. Looking deeper into the subject, however, has been a struggle I'm sure many people have endured. "The biggest hardship you'll find during your research is data," said Myrna Ayad, my mentor. After trips to libraries, museums, and hours online, I found that her words proved regrettably true. I felt a sadness in my heart that years and years of resistance, steps towards history, and marvelous strides in the timeline of our heroes are reduced to a dozen names and two handfuls of articles and books. Anything I needed to find about that era, I had to physically hunt down. This completely contrasted and contradicted the emphasis on a technologically savvy future. In an age where we can't enter a drugstore or coffee shop without having to flash our

phones in admission, our ancestors are harder to access than ever. Why were there no efforts to digitize this information? An entire art movement does not come down to only a few dozen artists; where are the forgotten ones? Was it too much to ask for to make them eternal, or at the very least their efforts? As cliché as it sounds, I decided to be the change.

My main goal here is to start small. What is this building? Where was Masaha planted? What is my role here? How can I write down this experience, the people who made it happen, so that they live on for centuries to come? Speaking in a larger sense, this space has housed 10 artists from all over the world who have made it their mission to explore the meaning of home and belonging for months. For some, these are triggering issues to tackle, and that alone makes this place important. What happens here marks this space important. Coming back from studying abroad with the fear that I will no longer belong to a place I used to call home, Masaha took me in with open arms. This building, under a different name, did the same for others years and years ago. It became my motivation, my dream, to ensure that no one else is forgotten. Nor this building.

Part 2: The Building

It felt like the stars were aligned when I found out that the Saudi National Museum was holding two exhibits under the title “Shawahed,” one showcasing Modern Saudi art and the other contemporary. This was exactly my initial project idea. Entering as a group into the Modern art showroom, I spent close to an hour inquiring about the origins of each piece with Shaima Shamsi by my side, one of the art residents in my cohort. It was particularly moving to see paintings I had only admired online—in particular Mohammad Al Saleem’s painting titled “Allah”—and surrealism taking effect on Saudi art that long ago. Knowing there were close to 2,000 found pieces by the Ministry of Culture during that time period, I was left wondering why they made these selections in particular. Most importantly, I asked myself: where were all the women in this room? Surely there weren’t only a handful of Saudi women creating art in the later half of the 1900s. Why weren’t they in showrooms and gallery spaces that showcased historic moments of our art movements and heritage? Did anyone fight to offer them a spot? One man surely did, years ago, in the very space I’m writing in today.

Prince Faisal bin Fahad Fine Arts Hall, originally called *معهد العاصمة النموذجي للفنون التشكيلية*, had a name change after the death of the Prince in honor of his inauguration of the building in 1401H and his sincere fight for the arts throughout his life. Ibrahim bin Nasser AlFassam took on the role as the first keeper of the gallery in 1985 and held that position for four years. According to his precursor, Mohammad AlMunif, he had received the gallery brand new and was undergoing its best years aesthetically. There were no events taking place during that time. It was originally not a fine arts hall: the building was a gift to the General Manager of the Model Institute of the Capital, Othman AlSaleh, and it was under the Ministry of Finance, used for budget and monetary purposes. After Alsaleh’s retirement, Saleh Albakr took his place and decided to use the space recreationally for activities and showcases. AlFassam, during that period, went back to teaching, and the space was yet again left to dust, until the General Sport Authority took hold of it and used it for education purposes, and that’s when Mohammed Almunif took on the role of general manager of the space. “Starting my role as general manager was a difficult period,” said Almunif. “Whenever I pass by it or come by here, the ghosts of the good and the bad of the past come to haunt me. The good memories and the bad.”

He would have shied away from the task if he had not come there with a goal. “I wanted it to be a real hall, a fine arts hall.” He compared the Prince Faisal hall to a man with a disability trying to enter a race; It had the ability to get there, but there was so much work to be done. He had traveled to Egypt, Syria, Morocco and Tunisia covering art exhibits and show openings. His goal was to create a space that mirrored at least 50% of what had been done in those showrooms. The hall was his to do what he pleased. Almunif began to make thorough efforts and connections in order to better build and maintain the hall; he had asked me not to publish some of the stories he told. At times, he felt like he was “sitting in the hall and I was burning inside. It’s like having guests over and not having anything to serve them other than simple things. I didn’t know what to do. What could I do?” he said of that time. They needed lighting for the hall that required expertise handling; they needed AC units that they couldn’t afford; security was unreliable. There was once a fence somewhere outside the building, he told me, that they sometimes displayed information on that was made of aluminum and copper. One day, he came in and found it gone. Some of the cleaning crew after hours had pulled it apart and stole it in order to sell it. Not a single bar of the fence was left. After that, he began to ask exhibition organizers to take care of any needs that they might need, from security, to lighting. He was only the hall manager, at the end of the day.

In 1428H, the Saudi Art Association was established and Almunif was nominated as Vice President while also performing as the manager of the hall. He suggested to the head of the Ministry of Culture and Media at the time to rent the upstairs floor of the hall and hold that and their association’s headquarters. The minister accepted and the hall flourished. It held offices, workshops, exhibits; artists filled the space with buzzing conversations and paint strokes. Mind you, this was during the Enlightenment (Sahwa) period in Saudi, so of course, the obvious issue arose: How can you let women into the hall in the company of men? During this time, Almunif stepped down. He said it wasn’t necessarily because of these complaints but he said this: “I’m an artist, and I don’t like people obligating me with things. Since I’m doing my work right and following a straight path, why would you come in and disturb my plans? I haven’t taken a crooked path or gained any personal benefits. I’m doing my work successfully and proudly. I was offering progression,” he said. “Did you personally support women in the arts participating in the hall?” I asked him. “I was the one telling them to come,” he answered.

That was a key moment. Because of people like him, the arts were on their way to be accessible to women in the country. He made great efforts, some he also asked me not to mention, in order to ensure women’s places in the art world. He opened up the doors, wider than most would, for the women of this country. “We were risk-takers during a period that wasn’t prepared for development. Our dreams were bigger,” he told me. Because of his determination, the Prince Faisal Hall became what it is today.

Part 3: The Future

So where does that leave us? Ten years ago, stepping into our cities’ gates, you would have been exposed to a different country entirely. “The early artistic endeavors have the importance: they supported, cheered on, and moved art forward during the difficult beginnings,” said Mohammad Alresayes. The arts were a luxury we could not afford; Noah’s arc could only carry a few. As Saudi Arabia is opening up its doors for intellectual conversation and the ever embrace of artistic pursuits, what is the future of the Saudi art

scene? We are labeling a false beginning only after the scene was established and the vision was solidified.

The actual beginnings are difficult to trace down — the facts and logistics. Sitting down with Mr. Mohammed Alresayes, one of the pioneering artists in Saudi Arabia, was an enlightening event. I was pleased to find out that he had once worked alongside my grandfather, Abdulrahman Alansary, a prominent archeologist and author. One of his books was in the very library we sat beside that contained books donated by Alresayes from his private collection. During my talk with Alresayes, he told me about the building near the Fine Arts hall, which is now AlRiyadh Schools. It used to be a building he himself went to, Alanjal Institute belonging to the owning family. After they decided to abandon those programs, it was destroyed. “They should have left the building up and found another space for AlRiyadh Schools. This is heritage that is now gone. Twenty-five years of producing teachers and art students, the one half that the second generation of artists graduated from, is just gone. We can’t change history but we can carry it with us.”

Alresayes presented his PhD dissertation on museums and institutions, so I asked him what he thought of Saudi institutions. Some of the residents had been to the National museum and came back not all that impressed; pieces missing and architecture undone. Alresayes himself compared an incident that he had during a show he participated in in 2002 at the same museum. There was a Japanese delegation attending the show and one of them asked Alresayes: “where’s the art museum?” He told me it was an embarrassing question. He was expecting so much more than the exhibit offered. Even today, there are some efforts to highlight the modern and contemporary art in the region, such as the anticipated Dariyah Gate museum, but to this day, we still do not have an established Contemporary Art Museum.

In regards to the future of the art scene in the country, we are now enduring a “beautiful art revolution and outset of galleries, new halls, and discovering collections we never knew existed. If we continue in this rhythm, we can expect a bright future. Especially if the government concerns itself in establishing more institutions and museums.”

Personally, I believe that the art scene in Saudi is a young writer who has yet to find her voice. There is so much to learn and yet we are running before learning to walk. I’ve been so inspired by the efforts made here; artists from all ages emerging with their broad strokes and honest voices. I am truly lucky to come back from living abroad for 4 years to the warm welcome of Misk Art Institute, and it’s because of institutions like this that education is accessible to Saudi communities. During this intensive program, we’ve had the privilege of attending 6 masterclasses led by curators and artists from around the globe, given Majlis sessions in the heart of Masaha in an effort to engage the public with our work, and took trips around Riyadh to authentically experience the artistic soul that moves the city along. I’d never seen it like this before. She shines. It is through the efforts of private galleries, public institutions, and museums that we preserve our heritage—our ancestor’s dreams—and carry on their missions and their names.

One of the amazing experiences I’ve had was the privilege of attending a silk-screen workshop with the artist and designer Lulwah AlHomoud. Sitting down with her, she weighed in on this. “I think we were starting backwards. The art started and then the base for it was built,” she said to me. “Without

institutions and things that support the arts — books, publishing, and museums— there is no art. They're working on that right now [...] I believe that the support from the country is important for the arts, but to have the government taking artists and pushing them to study abroad and showcasing them—you don't want the artist to be spoon fed. They have to work as hard as we did." I see what she's saying. We shouldn't be creating artists, but rather supporting them.

Supported by Shahad, Sarah, and Deemah, our cohort was taught by Lulwah in a state-of-the-art facility at the Masaha space, the first of its kind in the region, how to professionally print a design on any canvas using the silk screen method. Through the experience of learning this method, I fell in love; it inspired me to screen print the cover and back you are now holding. Originally a designer, Alhomoud also fell in love with screen printing. I managed to sit down with her and she told me how her journey began. She had always been drawing, using that skill in her designs, and she'd been curating exhibitions since she was in university in 1999 all around the history of Arabic calligraphy. Later on in her career, she was curating an exhibition about Saudi Art and she was asked to show her work. However, she had no works produced other than the ones in her sketchbook. That was the start for her. She found that the art of silk screen printing best suited the soul of her designs. "The approach of my art has a lot of research. My work isn't born in a moment. It needs lots of planning and thinking. It's not about me, or my feelings, or the events. The art I produce is beyond space and time, which is the way Islamic art has always been done."

As she was speaking, I wondered: what was it like to be an artist as a woman during 2008? "Because I started in London, I didn't find it difficult, and knowing that the first Saudi women exhibition was in the 60s with Safia Binzagr and Mounirah Mosly. They were pioneers in that area, it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman. Having said that, the approach I took in my art is very rare for a woman." If you look at the art of calligraphy, it is mostly dominated by men. But she was drawn to it and I suppose passion will always be stronger than the obligation to abide by social constructs. It's truly an inspiring thing for her to take that lead, especially in 2008. That was a period where things were extremely controversial and conservative, and only now are things socially becoming more lenient. She agreed with my statement: "The reason I did my research in printmaking is because I felt that we were completely isolated from our culture. The things I learned while doing my research were things I was never exposed to during my life. Even the development of Arabic writing—that wasn't open to us. We had calligraphy classes, but nothing about the history and how it evolved."

That reminds me of the interview I had with another one of the art residents, Zainab Abohussain. She is a multidisciplinary artist specializing in miniature painting and Islamic art. She mentioned that Islamic art is just a given name; it actually refers to all Eastern art. "Yes, it's problematic," said Lulwah. "Islamic art in general is a universal language, like Islam itself. We didn't know anything about Islamic art. Islamic art embraced all these different cultures in it. Maybe during our conservative period, we were afraid of exposure to all these cultures. To learn about Islamic art, you have to learn about Persian culture, Turkish, Spanish, and so many different things."

Lulwah has lived through a very unique time where she emerged as an artist in 2008, the heart of the conservative school of thought and well into a contemporary one. This was not just within the country but also internationally: she was living in London during the tragic 9/11 incident. "There was a very aggressive agenda against Saudi Arabia after 9/11. At that time, I was saying that through art and culture

is how we should respond. People don't know us but art is a way for them to know about our culture. It's national branding," she said. Beautiful. This is the language the country is finally shifting to after all these years. "They understood the language of how to communicate with the rest of the world. We didn't know how to do that before."

Through these endeavours at Misk, I've also learned much about the ins and out of the institutions and where the arts stand socioeconomically. The art market ecosystem here is still in a stage where they're building themselves up, but it seems to me that we have all the key building blocks for an art scene: the artists, the passion, backing institutions, nonprofits, biennales, art shows, galleries, etc. All but the press and discourse. Sure, there are many platforms covering artistic pursuits in the region, but what are they really *saying*? How are they directing the view and direction of the arts? Are they reflecting what the country really needs; what the culture accepts? Most importantly, is it prompting a public discourse on the themes they are exploring? Some might argue that the country is too young for criticism at this point, but I wonder how true that is. It's always seemed to me that if a child isn't doing well at school, they are presented with guidance and suggested ways to improve: why should this young industry be any different?

Many people, I've found, mistake criticism for one's disapproval of something when in reality, it's the examination of that thing. Art and art criticism are meant to have a dialectical relationship and are meant to provide insight not only to the audience on the general perception of their art, but also to the audience, giving them a deeper educated understanding of the art at hand. "We don't have art critics [here in Saudi]," Almunif said to me. "We write impressions, not criticism." There was once criticism, he said. If you follow the proper standards, criticism could stop an artist from working or boost their career. He mentioned that there used to be standards for art back in the day in the sense that you're able to evaluate a piece of work on the essence of those artistic movements. When you really look into an art piece, you can see smaller details; a missing stroke, a broken lightbulb— those are the details critics look for and then ask: why? A piece of work is evaluated on the standards of artistic styles or movements such as surrealism, expressionism, cubism, etc. Now, a piece of work can embody multiple movements. "We no longer have those metrics and measurements because art has surpassed them," said Almunif. An important note he mentioned is that a critic must be following an artist's work for a while. There needs to be consistency, because otherwise they cannot be a true evaluation of their work. You cannot critique an artist from their first show, and any critique must be personal. Do not generalize, he insisted.

"I see that it's really important to have art critics in the country, but ones who have actually studied the origins of criticism academically. Before that even, they also have to be convinced by the importance of it and know that it has dangers. He has to know the essence of criticism. It's a mirror for artists and it also guides them from afar," told me Alresayes. He also agrees with his colleague, Almunif, that as a country, we still don't have specialized art critics. Again, another person states that we write our impressions, claiming they are educated critiques. He studied art criticism in university and is a witness to the fact that no one uses those standards; people don't see their value, he states. He explains that historical and critical writers, in actuality, establish history and its movements. If we had 200 amazing artists in the country, how would we know where they're headed? Who gathers and concludes their vision? Who analyzes their work? However, Alresayes concludes that even opinion writers are better than nothing.

He goes on to say that it's great to have artists who understand the global visions. We should be heading along with that movement; if he understands it well and the philosophy, results, essence, and cause of it and absorbs that direction, he can then apply it in a way that incorporates our culture. We shouldn't imitate — we need to act with intention. In Western cultures, an artist is appreciated when his works reflect the care and respect he has for his culture, religion, and surroundings. An artist must be impacted, but also make an impact. We have so much heritage and cultural legacies in our own country. Why not search within it?

“Art criticism is so important. It corrects the picture. There are things that are wrong here in Saudi art,” said Alhumoud. She said that there are so many important details that no one is writing about. “This is why artists can do whatever they want, because there is no criticism.”

“Regrettably, entities now, Misk and the Ministry included, are focusing on contemporary art, while art doesn't end at Modern and contemporary art. Art is endless. It's not deduced to particular things. Art deals with human sentiment. Whatever is not relative to a community or their knowledge is not art to them. We appreciate it, but aren't convinced by it,” Almunif said.

This is very similar to my first impressions of the exhibit taking place now at the hall, *Here, Now*, curated by British Sacha Craddock. Not the art particularly, but the exhibit as a whole. How are we presenting our community? What discourses are we triggering? As an outside viewer, merely a personal opinion: during a time where Saudi Arabia is opening up its doors to tourists, art, and endless possibilities, the show drags the efforts that attempt to widen its horizons for cultural conversations. The exhibit goes out of its way, regardless of its intention, to argue that Saudis can't have a cohesive conversation with modernity. In a way, *Here, Now* is the most appropriate title for this exhibition, not moving the audience forward or backwards—not moving them in any direction at all. Why are the Saudi pieces presented dark and gloomy while the international pieces are present hope and delicacy. Are we doing justice to our own cultural efforts? These are definitely things to think about if we plan to grow.

As a country, we may be moving too fast. Europe, a continent that is home to some of the biggest art hubs on the planet, did not get there overnight. My fear is that we are moving so fast that we are losing our cultural identity. After all, we are nothing without it. Are we making art for the world around us or ourselves? Are we bringing it to smaller Saudi communities? Are we highlighting efforts that are outside of just the major cities? “If we are presenting for the Saudi community, we must rethink or reconstruct our path. If we are creating for the sake of other communities, then we are alienating our own.” That may be the most profound statement Almunif said to me during our talk. We will only figure out what our culture needs by experimentation. Again, we must start at home. In that way, I suppose, we must appreciate the efforts of *Here, Now*. At the very least, it brought us closer to knowing what we *don't* resonate with. At the end of the day Misk is doing the most essential job right now: education. As Luluah said, “art without education doesn't mean anything.”

I had to ask her: So many women during the beginning of the art movement were so scared to come out and showcase their art, or even weren't allowed to because of so many reasons; what would you say to them if they were here with us? “When people tell me I'm a pioneer, I say ‘no, I'm not. The pioneers are the women who did art and believed in art in the 60s and 70s. They really did something, and without support.’” And they will not be forgotten.

Part 4: The Promise

You spoke to me in my sleep
years ago, you dared to dream
held your brush, eternity between your fingers.
there is work to be done.

I felt your pain between the words
written by the victors of circumstance
there was no space for you on their arc

*Hold on to the night, for
the moon is not above, but within me.*
I mutter: I am sorry.
She was not ready for you

The beauty you held is covered in ashes
of those next in line, their sons now able to sing
because you had once screamed
upon deaf ears

I imagine that my grandfather had tread your land
held your sorrows in his hands and
entrusted me to tell the world
with just a glance

It is not just a name, but a past.
Your last words to me:
Make us eternal