

A R T I S T S T A T E M E N T

I have always been hyper-aware of masculinity, both my own and that of others. 'Manliness' has been a matter of critique within myself and from outside of myself. At one time I used masculinity as a tool for self-preservation - a mask, shield and sword. In 2015 I came out and learned that it was still not time to lay these devices down. Toxic masculinity was ever-present in queer culture as well.

My work is an exploration of masculinity - how masculinity affects self-esteem, self-image, relationships and perceptions. Also the work refers to the societal norms that contribute to enforcing a mask of masculinity. I examine what it means to 'be a man' and what factors affect one's level of masculine power. Themes include relationships, self-expression, insecurities, body image and the gay male experience. My work is not the voice of a victim, as I recognize my privilege, but rather it is a collection of ponderings and comments about the male experience.

My art practice most aligns with the genre of Spirit Art. I glean my inspiration from dreams, meditations and intuitive practices. I 'see' what I am to create like a photograph in my mind's-eye and I need only to reproduce it in the physical world. The significance of each piece is not fully revealed to me until I begin the creation process - inspiration becomes epiphany.

Given the nature of this form of inspiration, my work does not always hold strong to an instantly recognizable artistic voice. Where my artistic concepts and message remain consistent, my subject matter varies. I am therefore always working on different series of art simultaneously. My current collections are entitled *Manly*, *Distortion*, *Suits* and *Stallion*. Within these series you will find the reoccurring subject matter of men's formal wear, classical sculpture, babies and animals. The subject of animals is carried over into my "skull-pture" work where I create using ethically sourced animal skulls.

My work is primarily medium to large-scale oil paintings in black and white with limited use of colour. Gold and silver accents and geometric elements create depth and add a digital quality and design-like aesthetic. The compositions feel minimalistic, clean and orderly. Large areas of the canvas are left blank, creating an ambiguous depth of field that nods to a meditative or dream-like environment - the place that the inspiration was conceived. The singular subject matter evokes a detailed narrative through its peculiar symbolism. As with a poem or a riddle, these images stir a curiosity that prompts viewers to pause and ponder. The message seems attainable even for the non-artist - like a word on the tip of your tongue.

You deal in excellence
Wear it like a custom suit
That fits a little snug
To remind you to take the protein
And leave the dessert
Unforgiving enough
To remind you
That you will never be enough
And that sometimes you can be too much

Hard Rock

- Priyanka Saju