

**JoAnne Artman Gallery, Presents:**  
**“BEGIN AGAIN” FEATURING BROOKE SHADEN**

June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019

Artist’s Reception: Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from 6pm-8pm

Please RSVP: 949.510.5481 by June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019

**JoAnne Artman Gallery**

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**BEGIN AGAIN: Series Text**

**“Begin Again” | Reflections on identity**

*Begin Again started as an exploration of the self. What would the world look like if only I existed? Would I create more life in my own vision? From those questions the series morphed into an exploration of the hidden self. How do we identify our true selves among a pack? How do we stand out when we aren’t sure who we are yet? And most importantly, where do the differences between us truly lie?*

*Through this series you will explore four major topics: the hidden self, the reflected self, the identified self, and the contained/released self.*

*The Hidden Self: a meditation on praise, devotion, and the places we put our identity when we don’t look inward. Do the institutions and people who easily give us identities hold us back from finding uniqueness within ourselves?*

*The Reflected Self: the world shows us who we are before we are able to discern that for ourselves. A look at the mirrors that cast an identity onto us and the shattering of those perceptions as we don’t match who we think we should be.*

*The Identified Self: moving past reflections to try on the masks we find. We explore many identities, often assuming the surface role of who we want to be without digging deep enough to pull up the reality of our most authentic being.*

*The Concealed/Revealed Self: the boxes we fit into and how to break out of them. These final images are a look at the ways we try to fit ourselves into pigeonholes of identity. We suffer there, stagnating and pretending, or we break free.*

*As Walt Whitman said, “Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. I am large; I contain multitudes.” If we are to embody ourselves in those diverse and unique forms, we must be willing to take away all concealments – the veils, the masks, the reflections, and become who we are meant to be.*

**“Hidden: Devotion” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*As I began to explore identity, I started asking myself where people put their trust if not in the self. What do we devote ourselves to? Who? What institutions, beliefs, and philosophies? Why is it so comforting to place our sense of identity in others?*

*As I explored that topic I realized that devotion is an integral part of our identities. Who and what we devote ourselves to, in time, mind, and body reveal something about us that makes up our core identity, even if that devotion is to ourselves alone.*

*Who stands at the center of that circle for you? Who wears the red veil? Why? And how is your identity wrapped up in that person/place/thing?*

**“Hidden: Concealed” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*This image became a cornerstone of this series as it represents the sea of our possible selves and how to stand out from it. Identity is a difficult thing to discern, especially when the options are infinite and it feels impossible to stand out from the crowd.*

*In this image I stand with 80+ clones of myself. We are all veiled, all blended together. The red veil, instead of symbolizing the person or thing we devote ourselves to, this time stands for the true self among a sea of false identities.*

*Who is that person for you, if you are honest? Who is the one among all the other possibilities that stands out from the crowd? Are you ever desperate to reveal yourself as unique rather than blend in?*

**“Hidden: Praise” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*Praise can be seen as a continuation of Devotion. Who or what do you hold above all else? Who do you praise? Is your identity wrapped up in that thing?*

*Is it healthy to raise that person or thing up above all else? What if you saw yourself manifested in that levitating person? Do you deserve that praise? Do you desire to be praised? Do you believe in raising ourselves up?*

*It is so difficult to identify yourself as the one who stands out in a crowd. Should we elevate that identity?*

**“Identity: Unseeing” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*She crumples into a ball at the base of a tree; a seed ready for planting. Hanging from the tree are masks, they seem to taunt her from their position above her, spinning to look at all directions, watching.*

*How do we choose our identity? Is it a conscious process or are we born with it?*

*Through this series and examining identity, it is easy to believe that we can choose one identity for another; that we can swap masks as we please. I seek to naturally shift faces, to naturally become a new person throughout my journey for each new phase. Those identities grow within; I am the seed, my masks sprouting as from my gut, internal, awakening.*

**“Identity: Identification” | self-portrait, 2019 | 16x16”, 1 of 3**

*The masks we have to choose from are infinite; the ways in which we hide ourselves extensive. How does it feel to look through different eyes?*

*Sometimes it isn't easy to recognize when we are wearing a mask at all. We get use to the ill fit and the heaviness of it. We think that is the frame of view we are meant to have. We fit ourselves into masks that look more normal, more acceptable, that speak less and blend more.*

*Creating this image was a big undertaking, as all of the images with replicated materials were. To create a scene where the enormity of our identity surrounds us was important to the visual narrative of this series.*

**“Identity: Inquiry” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*In The Great Gatsby, the eyes of God overlook the characters in the form of an eyeglasses billboard. This visual has provided me an inspiring reference point for how I see symbolism and how I pursue it in my own work. Here I play on the eye of God with this huge mask, our protagonist climbing up to see through it.*

*What is our field of view and vision? Through what lens do we see the world? Is it our own, or are we wearing gray-colored glasses? Who taints our vision, and who enhances it? Through what cultural lens do we see, and what does that mean for our identity?*

*The mask of God; the eye of the World. Whatever lens you look through, always ask yourself if it is your own, or if it ever can be truly yours.*

**“Reflection: Revolution” | self-portrait, 2019 | 16x16”, 1 of 3**

*Reflection is a major part of how we cultivate an identity. First, in the people we surround ourselves with. Do the people around you look like a copy of yourself, or is it diversified? Second, in the way we think we are versus the way we actually are. Do we deceive ourselves for fear of the truth? Or do you see exactly who you are? And if so, do you like that person, or not?*

*The revolving mirror shards each display a slightly different and distorted view of the character and the world around her. Which one is the real identity? Which angle reflects the true self? Or do we need to expand our sense of self to include all variations?*

**“Reflection: Sown” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*What happens when our vision of ourselves is shattered? In refusing to see ourselves clearly, we scatter ourselves broken and lame; our perception distorted. What if each piece of mirror contained a different fragment?*

*Here the mirror pieces reflect the sky. Is it possible to see ourselves reflected in the world around us?*

*The agony in our character's pose is both passive, letting go, and pleading, looking upward. Collapsed. Broken. Searching. Discovering.*

**“Reflection: Departed” | self-portrait, 2019 | 16x16”, 1 of 3**

*It was important to me to include a frame in this narrative, a symbol for our frame of reference, the way we frame ourselves, and the ways in which how something is presented is not necessary an accurate depiction of the thing itself. Here she climbs through the frame only to disappear through the other side. The glass shattered, her self broken free of her cage.*

**“Contain” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*We put ourselves into boxes; the world wants to categorize us appropriately. It is safe and familiar. It feels good to fill a box, to become adept at a certain thing and to let that thing define you. What happens when we fit ourselves to those boxes? We become incapable of forming new shapes. We consent to the comfort of an unchanging self and we sacrifice the newness of change.*

*Even when we try new things, we too often limit ourselves to labels and titles. Instead of pursuing passion, we pursue perfection in the name of competency. This image shows that self-entrapment, and also begins to ask what happens when we break out of those boxes that confine us.*

**“Release” | self-portrait, 2019 | 36x36”, 1 of 2**

*The final image in the Begin Again series, we celebrate the freedom of release. Release from: expectation, identity norms, prescribed ways of viewing the world, and of viewing the self.*

*Metamorphosis was always at the center of this series. To chase the self, to conquer that version of the self, and to begin again. This is the cycle of identity that I seek to portray in this series, and to celebrate in this final image.*