



# ESTHETIC LENS

MAGAZINE

Ally Fouts / August 22, 2021 / Art

## Artist Talks: Ally Fouts & Whitney Bradshaw



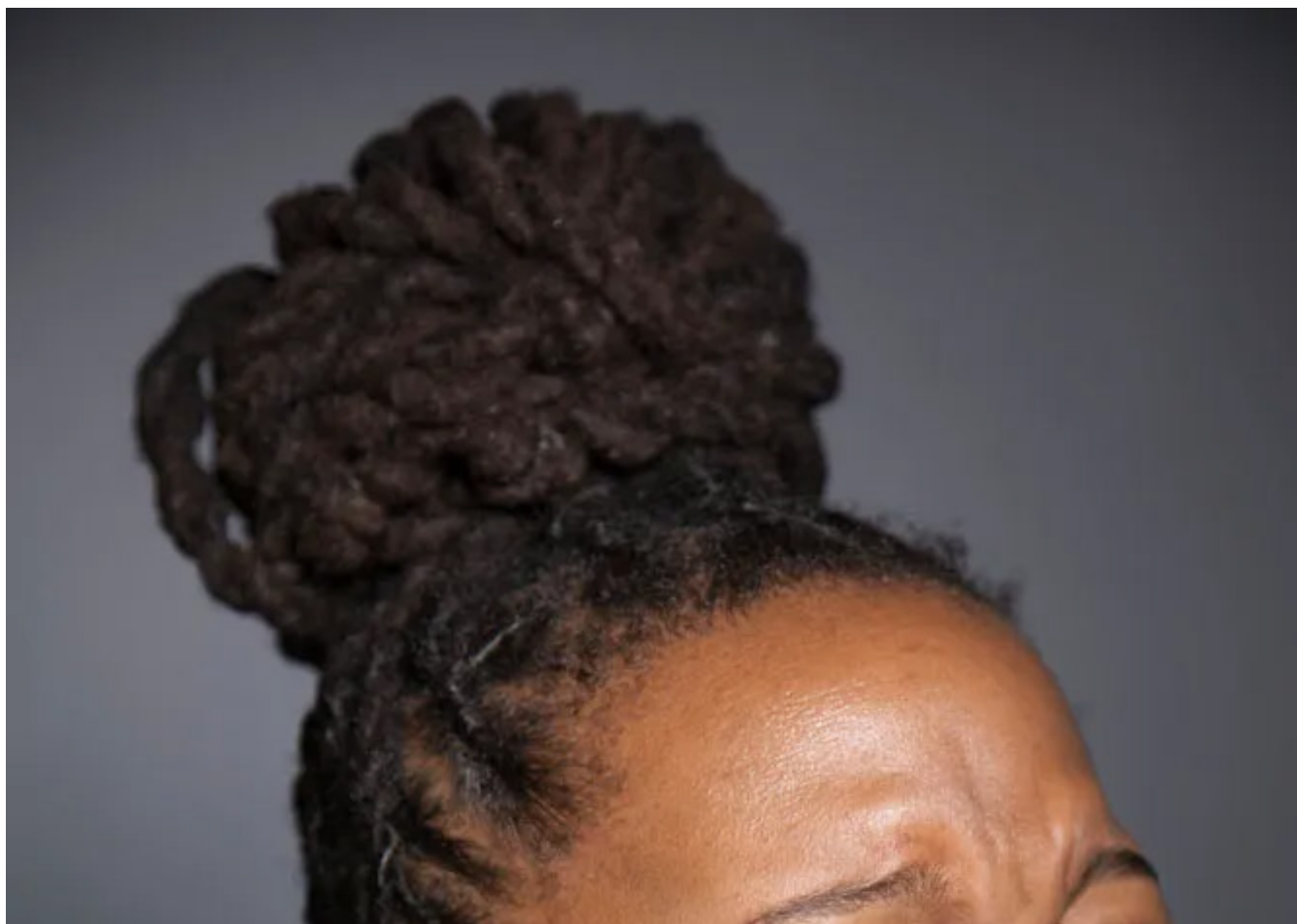
OUTCRY | 2021 | Installation shot McCormick Gallery July 2021 | © Whitney Bradshaw

Esthetic Lens presents another installment of Artist Talks. Artist [Ally Fouts](#) visits [OUTCRY](#), an exhibition featuring the work of [Whitney Bradshaw](#) at [McCormick Gallery](#).



With all the energy I can muster, I try to remember the last time I let out a scream. I can visualize many moments as a child when a scream escaped my lips: being spooked in a haunted house, reacting to pain after hitting a mailbox on my bike, letting out frustration when I couldn't communicate my needs to adults. It is strange imagining that one day, I screamed for the last time. I wouldn't have known how significant the moment was, because it was likely over something relatively inconsequential. But, in many ways, this moment symbolizes a pinnacle in a woman's life: from this moment forward, you are to be silent. Silence in the sense of not advocating for yourself, not sharing your problems, not disagreeing or disrupting, not protecting yourself. I enter [McCormick Gallery](#) to view the exhibition, *OUTCRY*, featuring the work of [Whitney Bradshaw](#). I am surrounded, floor to ceiling, by almost 400 portraits of women screaming. Some expressions twisting with red hot anger, others with escaping light-hearted giggles, many with somber wet tears streaming down their cheeks. Immediately, I am validated for each situation I have been in that warranted a scream. Their emotions latch onto me, and I feel each of them equally. I want to join this chorus of women, screaming each for unique reasons and past experiences, but for one common goal: to be heard. I am meeting with Bradshaw herself to discuss the project. Joining us to offer their unique perspectives and experiences are OUTCRY participants Gerri Fernandez, Kirsten Leenaars, Eglá Kishta, and Darcel Rockett.

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Nancy | 2019 | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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**Ally Fouts:** Formally, each portrait is executed with striking precision, filled with strong shadows and lovely moments of pristine detail. But, each photograph represents a valuable and personal exchange you had with the subject. Looking past your excellent use of aesthetics, this body of work also clearly demonstrates an interest in social justice. Has your background in social work informed your artistic practice?

**Whitney Bradshaw:** *The fact that I did social work for such a long time before working toward my MFA really informs my practice. When I was in graduate school, I spent one year experimenting, and the second and third year, I focused on a project titled [Scars](#). The project was inspired by a friend of mine who was in a fire when we were in our 20s and nearly died. I was visiting her in the burn ward at the hospital and thinking a lot about how beautiful her scars were. To me, they were signs of resilience and power. For a long time, I was thinking of photographing her, but I didn't want to approach her with the question. I was nervous and I was worried that it wasn't going to be a positive experience for her. I didn't want her to feel like I was exploiting her in any way. I waited years before asking, but I finally did, and she*

**I** agreed to do it. I made hundreds of pictures of her, and eventually we got to a place with it that worked photographically and was really transformative for her. She began to feel more confident about her scars and stopped covering them up. Through the photographs, her scars became beautiful, otherworldly abstractions that were photographed so closely that you could see hair and pores, so you knew they were skin and that they were surfaces that were damaged, but that they also looked like landscapes or moonscapes. I ended up showing that work in several group shows, and at the openings, people would come up to me and ask if I'd be interested in connecting with friends or family members of theirs who had experienced trauma that was visible on their skin. For example, at one opening a woman came up and told me that, "I have a brother who was in a motorcycle accident. I'm sure he would love to have you photograph his scars." In addition, many visitors to the show left me notes expressing their appreciation for the work and some asking to have their scars photographed. These people had also experienced some trauma that caused them to look "different." I followed up with all of the people who provided me with contact information. From there the project spun out organically. I ended up working with nine people very intimately over the course of 2 years until I felt I'd completed the project.

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≡ OUTCRY | 2021 | Installation shot McCormick Gallery July 2021 | © Whitney Bradshaw

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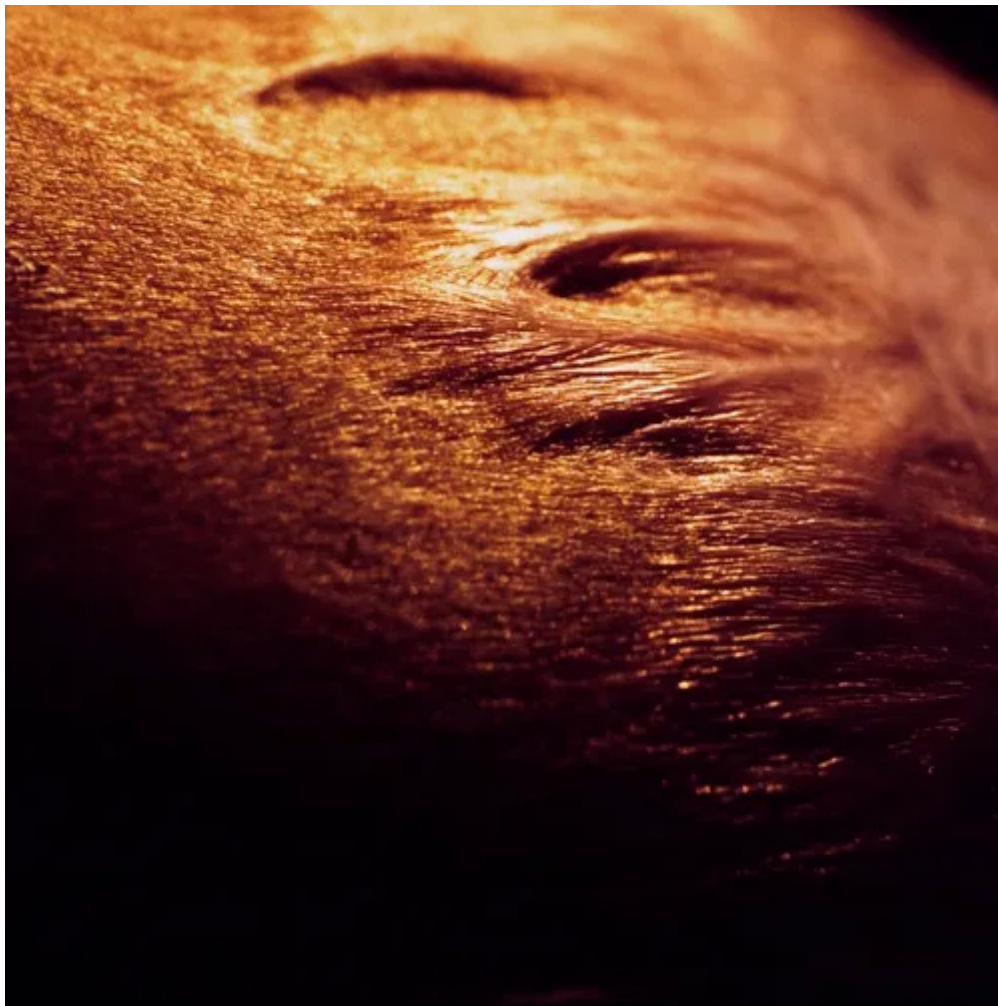


Untitled from the Scar Series | 2002 | 15" x 15" | Cibachrome Print | © Whitney Bradshaw

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*The scar project was the first time that I had made a body of work that had the potential to be empowering and cathartic for the subjects. It also required intimate collaboration between myself and my subjects. The project was a nice wedding of my social work background and my interest in making art. I feel that's when I truly found my unique voice as an artist. My practice is really connected with my desire to empower communities, encourage viewers to address challenging issues, and work toward social justice.*

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Untitled from the Scar Series | 2002 | 15" x 15" | Cibachrome Print | © Whitney Bradshaw

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**AF:** When I look at these images of women screaming, I see a multitude of expressions. Anger, frustration, sadness, relief, and laughter light up this room. The collaboration between you and the subject is integral to these profound resulting images. If you didn't have this background in social work as a foundation, the resulting project would have looked significantly different. Now that we know where your interest in meshing social justice with your artistic practice stems from, can you walk us through the genesis of *OUTCRY* specifically?

**WB:** *As a photographer, I'm always collaborating with my subjects. I love working with people. Because of this, most of my photography deals with portraiture, often combined with community building and empowerment. For a long time I contemplated developing a project for women who have experienced silencing, harassment, and/or sexual assault. When I was doing social service work, I worked with rape victims in emergency rooms. I was on call for 14 Chicago hospitals. Anytime someone was raped, I would meet them in the emergency room and be their support person. To do this work, those of us who volunteered were required to*

**Complete** an intensive training program. Because it was such a personal experience and many of us were survivors we developed close friendships with the people who were in training with us. Since then, I've wanted to engage with a project that would empower women and also create a safe space for them to be able to talk about difficult things while feeling heard and being witnessed. For years I was unable to come up with a project idea that I thought would be empowering, therapeutic, and fun, not just painful.

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Margaret | 2018 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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OUTCRY | 2021 | Installation shot McCormick Gallery July 2021 | © Whitney Bradshaw

*When Trump was elected, I was irate and frankly a bit terrified about a racist, xenophobic, sexual predator being elected to the highest office in the land. This made me want to scream and got me thinking a lot about beginning an empowerment project that would also constitute a political act of resistance. The fact that the revolutionary #MeToo movement was really having an impact; holding men accountable finally, further encouraged me. Making this work felt really urgent. I wanted to engage with a project that was fervently against this president and all he stood for that would empower women and continue to propel the #MeToo movement forward. It was important to me that the project be intersectional and include a diverse range of perspectives/experiences and representations of all women. Some pop culture things that inspired this idea include the movie Network. It's about this news reporter who can't take it anymore, and starts screaming out the window, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore!" His words inspired others to do the same. It becomes a movement of sorts. Additionally, I am a huge fan of Grace Jones and the cover art on her album Slave to the Rhythm is this stunningly powerful image of her screaming. I was thinking about that, and I*

Started to research more pictures of women screaming and considered ways in which we could reclaim our voice and take up space. I also really wanted the project to be for the female gaze, not the male gaze.

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Clara | 2019 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw



*Yoko Ono, who I am tremendously inspired by, was walking in New York City the day Trump was elected, and was shocked by how quiet it was. She thought people would be absolutely enraged and yelling in the streets. So she screamed, over twitter, for about 20 seconds in response to Trump being elected. The fact that she felt the same need to scream as me encouraged me to continue to research scream therapy. After I had already started the project, I saw Laurie Anderson perform at the Art Institute, and she engaged the audience in a group scream for a full 60 seconds. I admire Laurie greatly and when it happened my phone blew up with women who had engaged in OUTCRY and were at the show. They were like YES!*

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Outcry Scream Session at Bradshaw's House March 2018 | Courtesy of Whitney Bradshaw

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*The night of the Women's March in 2018, I began the project by inviting three of my neighbors over. My partner was getting his haircut that day. The stylist was complaining that she couldn't go to the Women's March because she had to cut hair, and he was like, "my partner is*

Inviting some women over to scream for a feminist art project, maybe it would feel good for you to do it.” She was like “Hell Yes!”. My partner texted me and asked if she could join and I said “Absolutely!” She invited a friend and came over. The very first night brought women together who didn’t know each other. We tried it out. I talked about the long history of silencing of women and girls, and the fact that our culture works to keep white males safe at all costs. Not valuing women or children, BIPOC or LGBTQ identified people. Not listening to or believing survivors. That first night, everyone let out a lot of anger and frustration with the political climate, but also told personal stories about their own experience with sexual harassment, sexual assault, and/or microaggressions wielded at the BIPOC and/or LGBTQ participants on the daily. After the session, everyone felt empowered, lighter, and a stronger sense of community. These first 5 women told their friends and I told women I knew and the project grew at a rapid pace. In less than a year, I had held scream sessions with and photographed 200 women and kept a waiting list. Still do. The project has grown to 385 participants now, since I held a session last week at McCormick Gallery.

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Outcry Scream Session at Bradshaw’s House March 2018 | Courtesy of Whitney Bradshaw



*I was very excited that the first session included women who didn't know one another and ranged in age, race, ethnicity, and ability. This set the tone for the project moving forward. From then on I have invited groups of women who don't know one another, purposefully, to bridge divides and allow for an intersectional feminist space that encourages understanding and empathy. For me, a truly diverse community is ideal and when living in such a segregated city like Chicago that can be difficult to come by. I believe and know that more diversity, of all kinds, strengthens us all. Here again, Trump's divisiveness further inspired my drive to make these sessions bring people of all backgrounds together. I should also mention that these sessions are open to anyone who identifies as a woman. There are several people who identify as transgendered and non-binary in the project. In fact, women should be spelled womxn.*

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Outcry Scream Session at DePaul Art Museum September 2018 | Courtesy of Whitney Bradshaw

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**AF:** This project started with five or six people during that first session, and then through word of mouth, grew tremendously. This is reminiscent of the #MeToo movement, which needed a couple of voices to come forward at first, and has continued to grow exponentially ever since. After that first night, did you see this project growing as much as it has? Additionally, is there an end number?

**WB:** *I had no idea how rapidly this project would grow or how many women would want to engage with it. At first, it was all word of mouth and so many women wanted to participate with it that I was holding one scream session a week and keeping a waiting list. I don't have an ideal number that I will stop at. It's important to me to continue to engage with communities and empower women. I had a show at the DePaul Art Museum in 2018. That was the first time I showed the work. It opened in September with 100 portraits. By December, 200 women had engaged with the project through scream sessions that I held at the museum and at my home. The portraits were floor to ceiling for the last two weeks of the exhibition. Now there are nearly 400 Outcry portraits! I have stopped holding sessions in my home on a regular basis, partially because of the pandemic, of course, but also because I have another project I'm working on as well and a full-time job plus a family. I have decided to continue the project but am now only holding Outcry Scream sessions when I have an exhibition of the work so that I can engage with the communities wherever the show goes.*

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OUTCRY | 2021 | Installation shot McCormick Gallery July 2021 | © Whitney Bradshaw

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**AF:** The powerful sense of community that is developed during the scream sessions is crucial to the project. You empower women by giving them space to talk, listen, and scream with one another. Not only do the participants experience this sense of community, but viewers do as well. Walking into the gallery and seeing nearly 400 expressive portraits surrounding me, I immediately felt adopted into this powerful group of women. The restrictions brought upon by the pandemic have dramatically altered our ability to connect with others and develop new communities. Can you explain how *OUTCRY* was both affected and evolved during the pandemic?

**WB:** *Like any other scream session, there has been a broad range of reasons why women choose to engage with Outcry but during the pandemic, many of the women who participated in the scream sessions came to let out anger, pain, fear, and sadness surrounding the horrific murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and the countless other Black men, women, and children who have been killed at the hands of the police. We screamed in support of mothers and fathers who have lost their children to systemic racism and live with an underlying fear of themselves or their own children or family members becoming victims. We screamed Black Lives Matter and talked about the revolutionary time we are living in, the work we are doing to dismantle systemic racism, and the hope we have for real, lasting change. We screamed in celebration of the brilliance, strength, resilience, wisdom, faith, and joy prevalent in BIPOC communities. There were therapists and health workers present who shared some of the incredible work they are doing to care for and support BIPOC and their communities. All of the pandemic scream sessions have been extraordinarily moving and powerful. Many people who participate in Outcry come to it as activists. My own activism inspired me to conceive of Outcry as a collective act of resistance.*

*I had two OUTCRY exhibitions during the pandemic. The first was at [Wave Pool Contemporary Art Fulfillment Center](#) in Cincinnati, Ohio and the second was at the [Lubeznik Center for the Arts](#) in Michigan City, Indiana. I planned to run two scream sessions at each so that I could engage the local communities. Leading up to them, I did a lot of research about how to safely conduct them. It turns out that we needed to be about 27 feet away from one another, outside, with masks on. Screaming, like singing, can project the virus far and wide so you have to be very socially distant. I accepted the fact that these images would look different from the rest. It is what the moment called for. What resulted were some incredible  $\frac{3}{4}$  length portraits that include a lot more body language than the non-pandemic portraits which are more like headshots. When looking at the pandemic portraits, you get a sense of how much energy and movement is happening in the body while women are screaming. For the first pandemic scream session which I ran in Cincinnati, I purchased clear masks so that everyone's mouths would be visible and we would be able to hear each other better when we talked. Later, when I held the sessions at the Lubeznik Center for the Arts I encouraged women to choose whether to*

Wear their own mask or one of the clear ones. Some participants wore masks with a unique message on them that added another layer to the project.

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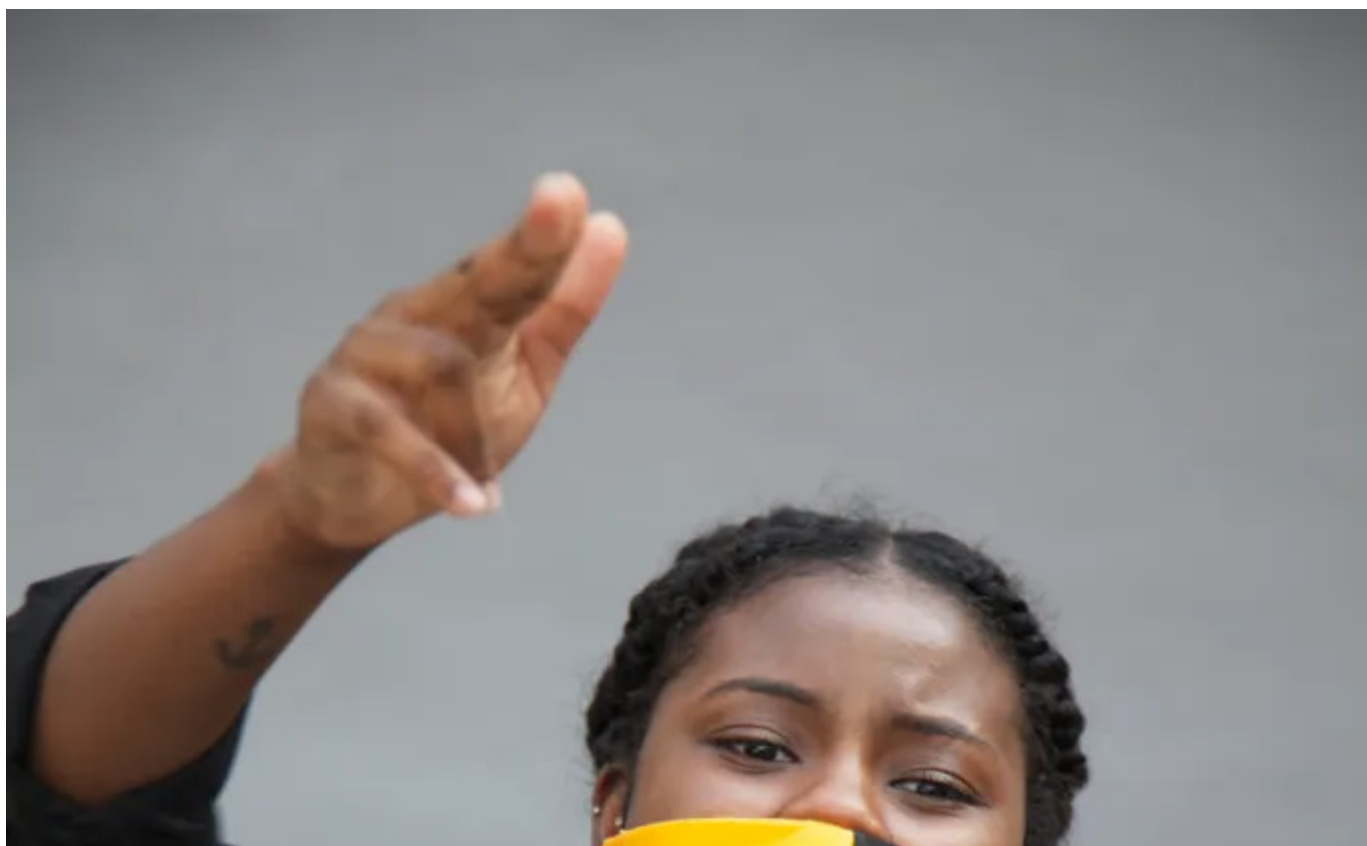


Faye | 2020 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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*I find it so interesting that there were many women responding to the world at the same time, by screaming, and researching the power of women's rage and how our rage has historically sparked many important movements toward equality and social justice. [Rage Becomes Her](#) by Soraya Chemaly and [Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger](#) by Rebecca Traister both came out the same year I began OUTCRY. It's fascinating! Clearly this is a sign of the times! During the pandemic, in Iceland, the government started a program where people could call in and let out a scream to provide a much-needed release and encourage or promote self-care and good mental health. You see this happening historically all the time, where similar things are being researched, written about, developed, or created happen by a number of different people in far-flung places without any connection or knowledge of the others' work. It's just what the moment calls for. The zeitgeist of the era!*

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Elisha | 2020 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

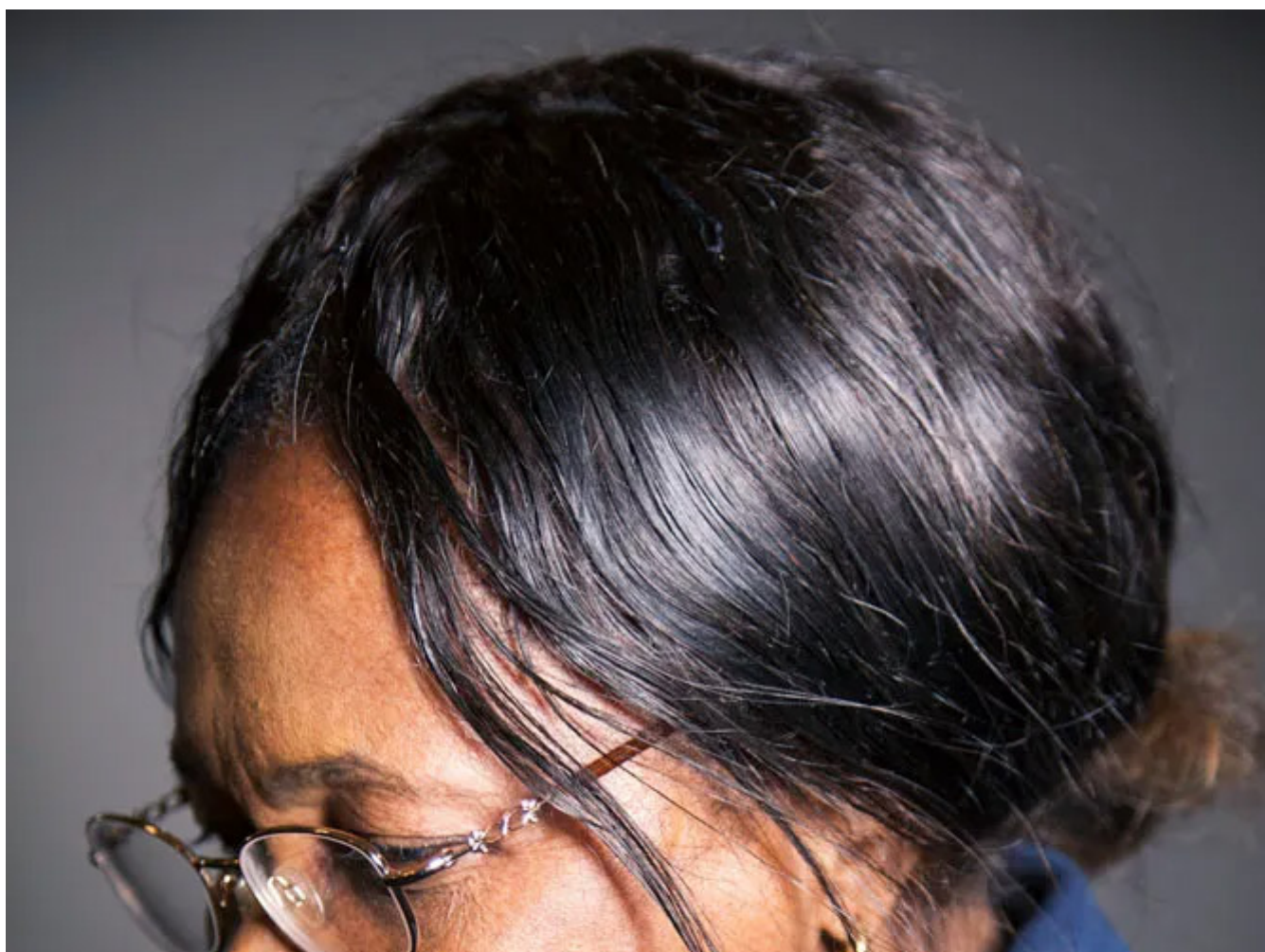
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**AF:** The sheer volume of photographs is a testament to your dedication to the project. Not only does each image require time, attention, and care, but each scream session also requires an even higher level of these. I imagine it would be easy to lose ambition after a while, or feel overwhelmed by the emotional toll of the process. Your tenacity is apparent, which makes me expect that there have been incredibly profound outcomes to these sessions that keep your energy sustained. Can you share any memorable moments or specific experiences from the project that inspired you to keep pushing it further?

**WB:** *So many. I can tell you from one of the pandemic scream sessions. There were a number of older women in the group. One of the women I could tell was really nervous, many are. Understandably so, as it's very difficult to scream with a group of women you don't know, and*

the top of that to be vulnerable enough to allow yourself to be captured on film. Especially if you're raised as a woman in our culture where you are conditioned to be quiet, smiling and pretty all the time. After I exemplify some screams, we all engage in 3 practice screams together, and then each participant volunteers to stand in front of the camera and scream three times, not in a row, but we go through everyone in the group and then come back around three times so each participant can really practice owning their voice. Everyone has the choice to scream alone or with the support of the whole group. This woman went around for the first and second time, and she was like, no, I'm not ready, still not ready. The third time around, she still hadn't done it. She was like, "I don't know, I really want to do this, I really want to do it. But I don't know." So I said, there is no pressure to do it at all if you don't want to, but if you really want to try it maybe you can start by turning your back to the camera and see how it feels. She got up, turned her back to us, slowly let out a scream and then slowly started turning around toward me and the camera and continued to scream louder and louder. I made a portrait of the side of her as she was turning. Afterwards, she was super excited that she did it and thanked us all profusely for supporting her. She emailed me afterward and told me she felt really empowered and much more confident afterward. She explained how important it was to her and how she felt she's needed to do that for such a long time, and now she feels like she can own her voice and speak up.

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Veronique | 2018 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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*In 2019, I was invited to exhibit OUTCRY at the [Show Gallery](#) in St Paul, Minnesota. The mission of the gallery is to create accessibility in the arts, and to promote and unite artists of all abilities. I was elated to engage women with different abilities in the project and have an exhibition at the Show Gallery after running scream sessions there so that every woman who took part could see themselves included in the exhibition. I am always interested in making sure that all women are represented in this work and feel strongly that everyone should see themselves in art, in galleries, in museums, in advertising; actually everywhere! One of the participants had been in the foster care system and like many children who were forced into this broken system, she was traumatized. This remarkable woman had been largely non-verbal but when told about the project and the opportunity to come scream, she wanted to take part. She came to the session, and she screamed several times with the support of the rest of the group. About a month later, her counselor emailed me to let me know that she had gotten up in front of 40 people and told her story. Later, when the portraits were exhibited at the gallery, she came to the opening and saw her portrait installed alongside hundreds of others. It was clearly impactful and allowed us all the opportunity to celebrate her voice and those of many*

uhers together! She and I talked extensively that night. I will never forget it or her. She is truly extraordinary! There are many more stories where those came from. Each woman comes to the project for their own reasons and has a unique experience with it. Some participants shared that the timing of their session was just right as they were dealing with something related to sexual or gender violence, came to the session, and felt empowered enough to confront someone that they needed to or to tell a friend or family member what happened to them.

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Judy | 2020 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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*I've had women participate who explain that they don't speak up in front of people, or don't feel confident talking in male dominated spaces, and want to practice being able to do this. When you get to do it with the support of all these other women, it helps you remember when you need to speak up that you have all these people behind you. The #MeToo movement started to make a difference because so many people were speaking up and out. I feel we have to continue this to keep moving forward and make sure we are the ones who are supported, cared for, and believed. Turning the tables so that the predators pay and hopefully over time our society as a whole works to ensure we no longer have a rape culture, instead I envision schools that teach consent, healthy relationships, and sex positive health courses from a young age so that we can improve our society and ensure everyone's lives are valued, not just those who hold the most power. A revolution in education needs to take place both in schools and in homes. I hope OUTCRY will continue to travel far and wide so that more women can take part and feel empowered, witnessed, and heard while everyone in the community can spend time learning about the project and see people like themselves or their families and friends in it. Ultimately I hope people see this as a collective act of resistance and that this project contributes to the many changes we need to make to improve our world and ensure everyone is valued and cared for!*

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OUTCRY | 2021 | Installation shot McCormick Gallery July 2021 | © Whitney Bradshaw

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As Bradshaw and I wrap up our discussion of *OUTCRY*, four past participants of the project slowly trickle in. Meeting the participants in real life after seeing their portraits on the gallery walls is a jarring and exciting experience. I suddenly feel overwhelmed with gratitude that I get to learn more about each of their experiences. Sitting in a circle together in the middle of the gallery, surrounded by the indomitable support of nearly 400 women, we begin a session of sharing.

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Kerri | 2018 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

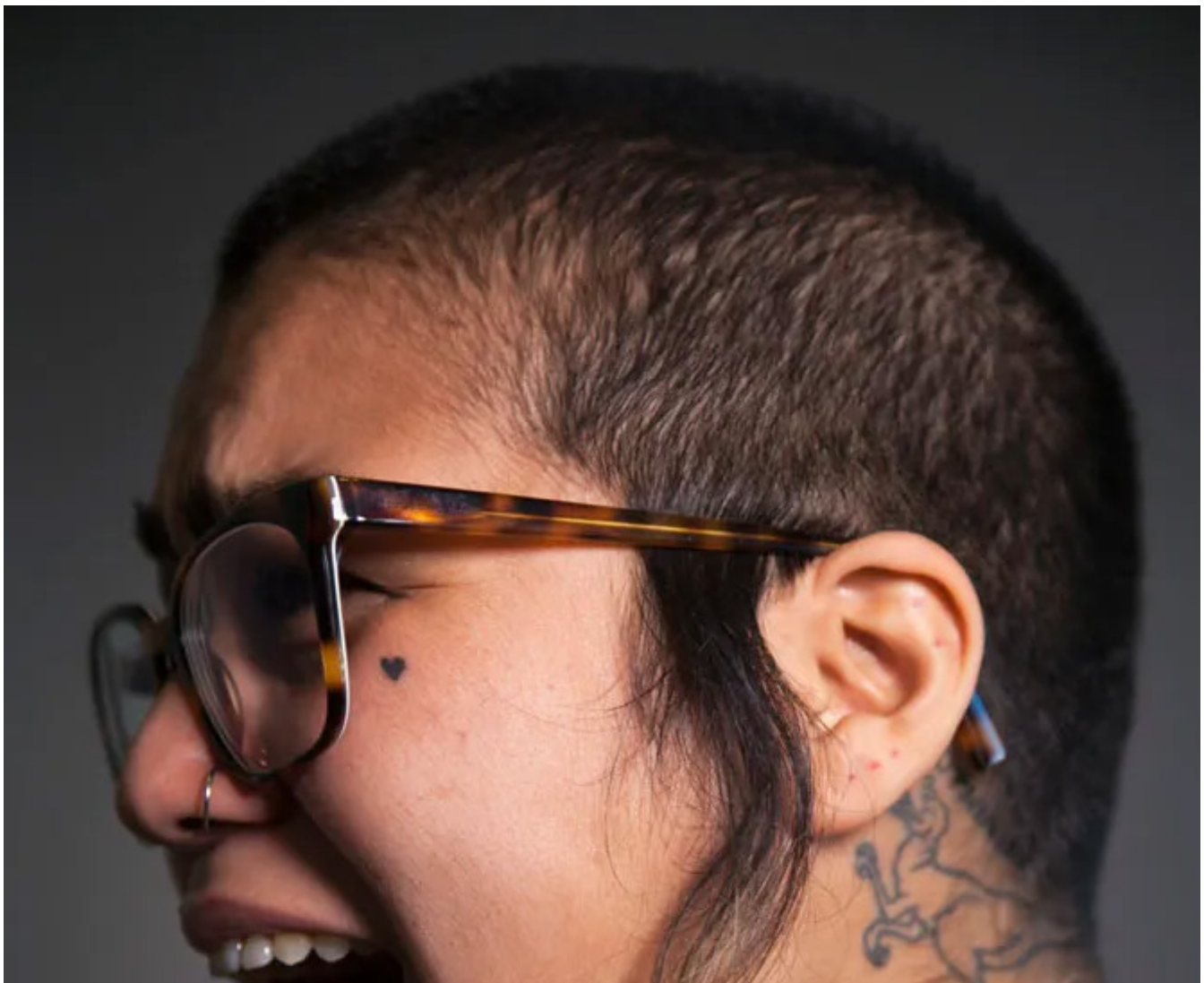
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**AF:** Let's start first with you, Gerri. We would love to hear about your experience as a participant in *OUTCRY*. What were your expectations from the scream session?



**Terri Fernandez:** *I did the scream session at DePaul when Whitney had a show there. I actually thought I was signing up for a photography workshop, as I am a photographer as well. I do not like being photographed in the slightest. I thought, this is awesome, I'm gonna learn from this female photographer. Then I got there and learned what it actually was. I was not thrilled about it. I thought I would probably leave then. I didn't want to be photographed. Whitney was like, why don't you stay and just see how you feel? I stayed. We went around and everyone shared different experiences. There was this overwhelming sense of community over tragic things that people shared. That's ultimately what led me to be photographed. I felt I was in such a safe space, and then also able to connect with so many other women. I was really scared and nervous. When I talked about my experience, I mentioned I had my photo taken. My friends were shocked. The whole reason I was able to do it was because of that sense of safety and connection with all the other women I met. I cried afterwards. Everyone was so open and honest, and it was a really beautiful thing to be a part of. I'm happy that I did it because it gave me a sense of control over my emotions. I don't have trouble talking in public settings, but I do get into situations where I shut down if I'm emotionally being pushed. I do feel this helped me be more likely to say something rather than shut down. It was very cathartic.*

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Gerri | 2018 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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**AF:** It can be tremendously difficult for photographers to step in front of the lens. Branching out of your comfort zone is an act of bravery, and it seems the safe environment helped make this brave process manageable. As someone who doesn't usually enjoy photos of themselves, how do you feel when you look at your portrait now?

**Gerri Fernandez:** *Embarrassed, if I am being honest. I really don't like photos of myself. Objectively, it's awesome and I'm really proud to be a part of it. It's my own insecurities that make me feel embarrassed. It's also been crazy to see how much the project has grown. It's very inspiring as a woman photographer to see someone who's doing something that's making a difference and centering women. Besides my insecurities, I am very happy with and proud of my image. It's been a big joy to see all the different portraits come out.*

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OUTCRY | 2021 | Installation shot McCormick Gallery July 2021 | © Whitney Bradshaw

**AF:** Moving to you, Kirsten, I am curious to hear about your experience participating in *OUTCRY*. More specifically, can you share what element of the project encouraged you to participate in the first place?

**Kirsten Leenaars:** *I'd seen some of the images and I knew what the project was about, and I really loved the impetus of the project. I was very nervous to participate because I don't like raising my voice. But, I believed in the project and wanted to do this and challenge myself. From the moment of entering the space and having the other women present, also seeing the range of women that were in my session was really incredible. I thought it was really inspiring to see different ages and people present. I could tell I was not the only one feeling nervous, which helped. The workshop part where we all would breathe in together was really powerful and helped me relax into it and open up. Whitney sharing her story helped foster that space where everybody felt like they could open up to a group of strangers. I loved that Whitney offered an option to scream by yourself or invite the other women to scream with you. I*

I definitely thought I needed the other women to join me, as I felt too nervous to scream by myself. It was powerful hearing people share why they were screaming. It made us reflect on the different experiences that we have where we felt shut down or that we couldn't use our voice, out of fear of retaliation or simply not being able to produce that sound.

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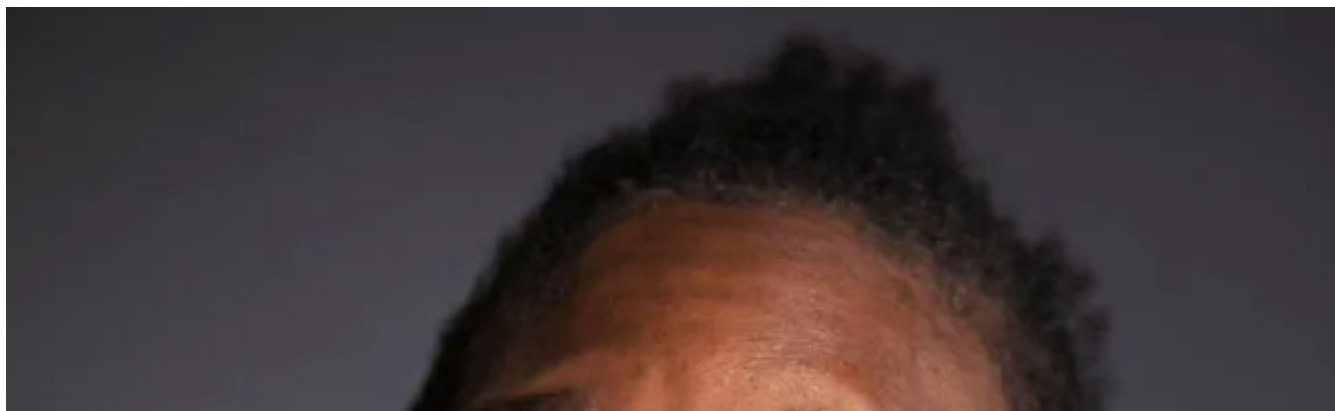
Mimi | 2018 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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*Some stories were really brutal at times, the women were so vulnerable. It made me consider my motivation to be there. In some ways, I felt that I didn't have that one story that could capture the reason. But I realized for me, it was a culmination of all the times where I felt that I couldn't express myself, most often in male dominance. It felt really empowering and I was inspired by all the other stories that were shared. There was validity to everyone's story and everybody's experience, no matter how big or small.*

*Whitney was amazing at making everyone feel comfortable for that moment in the spotlight. It didn't feel like, "oh, everybody is watching me," but rather "oh, everybody is here to support me." Afterwards, I felt the raw and very emotional experiences from the different women that were shared, but there was also this joy and empowerment of screaming together. I felt transformed. I already knew going into it that it was going to be a powerful experience, but the extent and the physicality of the experience surprised me. Whitney told us if we didn't like our image, we could tell her. She protected our agency through the end. Seeing everybody up here is incredible. It's also amazing to see it grow. You can go on with this project for many years. I think that the concept is extremely powerful and relevant at any given time. There are a lot of layers to the project, and being part of the scream session, you really step in all these layers, and you realize how deep it truly is.*

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Princess | 2019 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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**AF:** It sounds like the supportive environment created by Bradshaw and the rest of the participants kept you grounded and made you feel secure during what otherwise would

have been a nerve racking experience. How do you feel when you look at your portrait now?

**Kirsten Leenaars:** *I have to get used to it. It feels weird if I look at it by myself, but I feel very happy to be part of the collection of women that are portrayed here. I've grown very fond of this screaming image. They are all really beautiful portraits, too. That's easier to see when you look at somebody else's portrait than your own.*

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Natalie | 2018 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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**AF:** Eglá, I want to know about how the scream session went from your perspective. It is interesting to hear how different participants were made aware of the project. How did you hear about *OUTCRY*?



**Egla Kishta:** *My friend, Adia, was part of the project and she connected me to Whitney. I arrived first and was nervous, but Whitney has a great ability to make you feel very comfortable, safe, and supported.*

*I've only recently accepted what an anxious person I am. I realize I had this specific undercurrent of anxiety running on one of those nightmare scenarios, where you're in danger but can't scream. Something was telling me that if I was put in that situation, I wouldn't be able to produce a sound to save myself; I wouldn't be ready. The sad thing is that there have been plenty of moments in my life that warranted a scream I wasn't able to produce. The anxiety was there because I had already shown myself I couldn't do it. I decided to scream by myself because I really wanted to hear what I sounded like on my own. And I surprised myself! I thought it was going to be one long note, but my scream came out crackling and raggedy. I expected an arrow flying cleanly through the air, but it was more like claws ripping through everything.*

*It's hard to describe what I felt when I first looked at my picture. I was surprised to see how wide my neck gets when I scream! I look powerful. Looking at the portraits posted in the gallery—it's a quiet room, but it feels like you can hear the women. You hear screaming, crying, singing, howling. We're a chorus, supporting each other through space and time. If someone was trying to harm me now, I can use my voice; I can defend myself with what I learned through OUTCRY. I wish I could bring every woman I know through this memorable experience.*

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Megan | 2019 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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**AF:** Darcel, I am wondering how you became involved with *OUTCRY*. Starting from being first made aware of the project, until this moment here when you see your portrait on the wall, what did your experience look like?

**Darcel Rockett:** *As a journalist, distancing yourself from the stories that you report on is part of staying objective. When I first got an email about the scream session from the PR person at the DePaul Art Museum, where OUTCRY was first exhibited, the idea piqued my curiosity. I reported on the session, not as a participant, but as a reporter. At the time, Whitney requested a female photographer because she wanted to ensure that women felt safe and comfortable in the Outcry space. I observed and talked with participants who were partaking in the process. There were a lot of women students, some not, but they were all willing to share*

heir story. Every woman had a story, some shared, some let their scream tell the story for them. All had a voice that they released to be heard. A few women cried after being given the opportunity to tap into that inner voice that they never get the chance to release.

Whitney shared future scream session dates with me for the article, so more women can join in. When the story was published, it resonated with readers. Soon after, I would see other outlets feature OUTCRY segments and articles.

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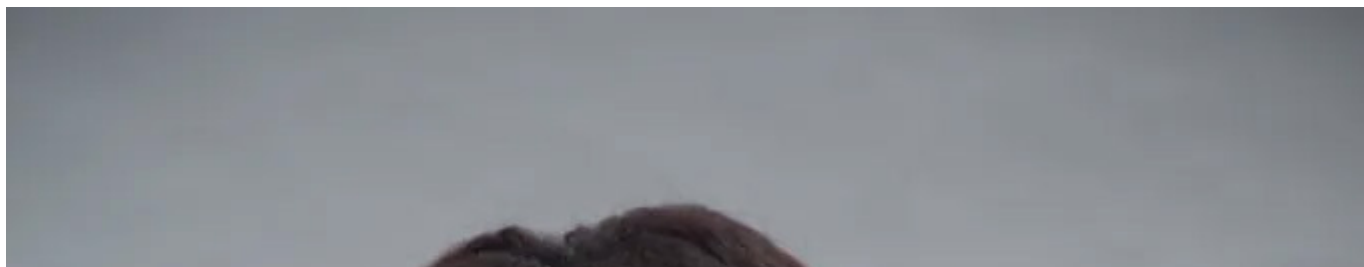
Rebecca | 2020 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw

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*The thing about Whitney is, when you get into her sphere, you can't just say one and done. She encouraged me to come to a scream session. It was one of those things I put on my to-do list along with so many other deadlines. I figured, let me see if I can bring my mom, I think both of us need to scream. I am the only daughter out of five boys, so there's a lot of testosterone in our house, my dad included. My mom and I hold the estrogen power.*

*I was excited to put my unbiased reporter self aside and participate and let my voice be heard. It was a chance to get emotionally naked in front of your sisterhood and your community. The sessions are traveling, but I feel it is anchored in some way. You're part of this community, not an object of the moment for an art project. You become part of this traveling sisterhood. Some of these faces make you laugh, some of them make you cry, some of these make you proud because people found their voice. Whitney makes you feel comfortable to come in touch with yourself. That's another thing too, I'm always on deadlines, so usually I don't stop to check in with myself. I am always on the hamster wheel, but this experience let me exist in that moment and be present. That's why I brought my mom. I keep trying to bring more women but she's gonna have to get more walls. When I look at the portrait now, let's put it this way: it's still my Instagram picture. I feel really proud of it. I feel strong. Whitney provided that space that was therapeutic.*

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Crystal | 2020 | 22" x 17" | Archival Inkjet Print | From the Outcry series | © Whitney Bradshaw



With that, the six of us break into bubbling conversations about plans for the week, discussions of projects we've been working on, laughter about interactions with strangers in the city. We talk about how Bradshaw keeps up communication with all OUTCRY participants via an email group where they continue to support one another by sharing what they are up to. Additionally, Bradshaw informs participants anytime an OUTCRY show is opening so they know when, where, and whose portraits are in it. The mention of a traveling sisterhood perfectly describes the environment OUTCRY fosters. Looking around the room between Bradshaw, the participants, and the portraits, I am amazed to see the positive outcome that results from letting women use their voice. More importantly, I am filled with immense hope of what the future of being a woman can look like.

*OUTCRY* is on view at McCormick Gallery until September 4, 2021. McCormick Gallery is located at 835 W. Washington Blvd. Check out Bradshaw's [Instagram](#) for gallery hours.

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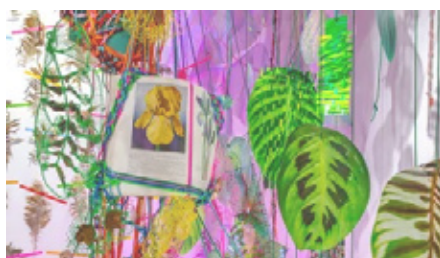
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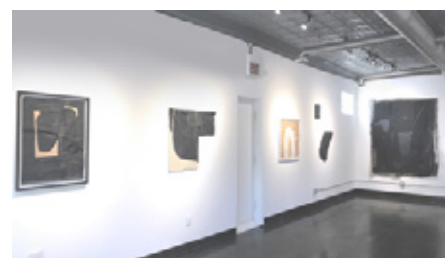
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