

The Boston Globe

Crystalle Lacouture centers loss and care at Praise Shadows Art Gallery

The artist's show 'Evenings's Evening' offers sacred geometry that feels like a salve

By Cate McQuaid Globe Correspondent, Updated October 31, 2023, 12:28 p.m.



From the Israel-Hamas war to the mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine, and beyond, it has been a terrible month of violence and grief. "Evening's Evening," Crystalle Lacouture's exhibition at Praise Shadows Art Gallery, is a balm. "The gentlest of shows," I scribbled in my notebook as I walked through.

Loss and care are at the heart of Lacouture's art. Her mother, Marlene Adelman, received a terminal cancer diagnosis in the early days of the pandemic and had to limit in-person contact. That's when the artist began a daily devotional practice of drawing in gouache and colored pencil on [paper targets](#) from shooting ranges. These small, sunny-colored, mostly symmetrical abstractions read like [sacred geometry](#) — full of shapes and patterns that may recur in nature and religious symbolism. On each one, Lacouture inscribes "MAMA," a murmuring mantra of love.

Adelman died at 67 in 2022; Lacouture's drawing practice continues.



Crystalle Lacouture, "Blue Mask," oil on canvas, from "Evening's Evening" at Praise Shadows Art Gallery. PRAISE SHADOWS ART GALLERY



Crystalle Lacouture, "Half Mast (21 for Uvalde)," 21 MAMA drawings in one large frame. DAN WATKINS PHOTOGRAPHY/PRAISE SHADOWS ART GALLERY

An artist might be attracted to the mandala-like targets for formal reasons. But in the United States, guns are a loaded subject. “Half Mast (21 for Uvalde),” a three-by-seven grid of “MAMA” drawings, celebrates the lives of the 19 children and two adults killed in the [school shooting](#) in Uvalde, Texas in May 2022.

It looks like a patchwork quilt, each square a unique mind-bending geometric pattern. Yet the paper targets are unmistakable. The sheets read “SCORE KEEPER” and have places to note a bullet’s weight and a rifle’s caliber. Lacouture’s installation is like a baby blanket draped over an evil eye.

She unfurls sacred abstractions on a larger scale in paintings such as “Blue Mask.” Patterns of fans, stripes, and dotted lines draw the eye inward toward the center. The artist’s hand shines; here paintings are not perfect geometries, but a human’s gestures toward something larger than herself. Lacouture charts a day’s arc in a gorgeous series of ambitious woodblock prints in daringly subtle tones. Each print (“First Light,” “Highest Sun”) could be an object of meditation.



Crystalle Lacouture, "First Light," woodblock print with type and linocut. PRAISE SHADOWS ART GALLERY

For Lacouture, who has [three children](#), art-making, familial love, and spiritual practice seem intertwined. The artist's two beaded-and-belled works, "Epistle" and "House Jewelry," can be handled and jingled. They are domestic blessings: "Epistle," which hangs in arcs from the ceiling, has a message in binary code hidden in its outer strands: *Bless this house; inside and out.*

CRYSTALLE LACOUTURE: EVENING'S EVENING

At Praise Shadows Art Gallery, 313A Harvard St., Brookline, through Nov. 26. 617-487-5427

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