

the body
remembers

ally zlatar



tears

spring
2021



tears

In the passion of the human experience, eating disorders are hard to comprehend. The illness is ridden with ambiguity, confusion, and a constant struggle to make sense of it all. I hate waking up every morning because it means facing the most uncertain thing there is, the body. No word or action speaks louder than a single tear. Tears of grief, sadness, despondency, hopelessness, or despair. My friends and family can attest that I am truly a pessimistic person, but the underlying dread and anxiety beneath the bleak outlook is what haunts me. What often happens is that I start to cry.

Why do I cry?

I cry every day because of my eating disorder. I cry because I starve myself, I cry because I am not skinny enough. I cry because I am in pain.

In my cultural heritage, emotions are normally supposed to be repressed. In my Serbian family, mental health is not talked about. Women are known for being more emotional and our tears have often been invalidated. These works are exploring key historical Serbian paintings of women reimagined and rendered to embrace me, my illness, and my tears.

Tears are an external manifestation of the internalized pain. The tears are not therapeutic, but rather self-destructive. They are a reminder that I am not happy with myself and that the only thing I can do to attempt to remotely feel better is to cry.

Tears have a paradoxical nature as they are physical mirrors of both our internal pain and our external suffering. In these works, crying conveys my struggle with my eating disorder through my cultural heritage and interpretive stories. Tears can serve as an opportunity for communication, intimacy, and enlightenment of one's misery.



a serbian renaissance (1/4)

6" x 4"

acrylic on print
spring 2021



throne, scepter, and tears
6" x 4"
acrylic on print
spring 2021



countess counting calories

6" x 4"

acrylic on print

spring 2021



lion, lamb, and tears
4" x 6"
acrylic on print
spring 2021



bread and pain: an opponent I can not beat
4" x 6"
acrylic on print
spring 2021



painting the
past

winter
2020

painting the past

My past is my present. I fear that I can not escape my reality.

There's an Arabic proverb that states that you should write the bad things that happen to you in the sand so that they can be easily erased from your memory. However, for most, we engrave the horrible things that happen to us in stone. Therefore, our painful memories remain immortalized in our minds. My eating disorder pain is deeply rooted in my psyche. My suffering is not holding me, I am still holding my suffering. I can not let go. I keep questioning why I still cling to the pain. I can not undo my past or the trauma and yet I still cling on.

These works are an exploration into the mind and body of my past through an allegory of a tree. There's something profound and honest about trees in winter. They are experts at letting things go but regrow that same pain over and over.

Why do I hold on to the very things which keep me from hope and love?



painting the past (1/4)

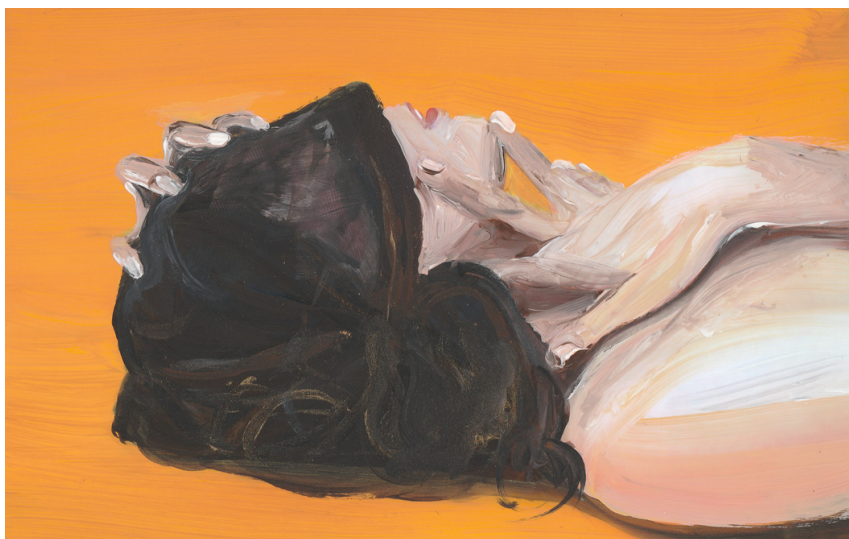
6" x 4"

acrylic on print

winter 2020



painting the past (2/4)
6" x 4"
acrylic on print
winter 2020



painting the past (3/4)
6" x 4"
acrylic on print
winter 2020



painting the past (4/4)

6" x 4"

acrylic on print

winter 2020



i didn't
choose this

summer
2020

i didn't choose this

This series explores various points in my life where my eating disorder was triggered and became an addiction, vastly impacting me and hindering my recovery and further perpetuating me being unwell.

I did not choose to have an eating disorder, but at times I thought I did. I am constantly conflicted by the juxtaposing beliefs of the unfairness of being burdened by my disease because of my genetic and mental predisposition to it, and the other view that I can control it, summon it and make it disappear whenever I want. Nonetheless, that was the eating disorder trying to make it seem less intrusive and destructive. This sets up a series of self-fulfilling prophecies to reignite my eating disorder cycle of shame and punishing myself.

"it was always her" explores how I felt that I was not enough to keep my boyfriend at the time. I sought control from my eating disorder to help compensate for my lack of control in the relationship.

Eating disorders can have an indirect less obvious control over other things. "it was always blind" explores how I used my eating disorder to fill my boredom and my thoughts, and occupy my time. I needed something to create an identity and fill up all of the emotional space. I spent all my time, money, and thoughts on the disorder.

Seeking perfection and having control of my food was helping me cope with the lack of control I had at various points in my life.

Words at times cannot explain how much food has an influence on me. Every day, every hour is consumed by thoughts of food, where to buy it, how to eat it, how it tastes, how to avoid it, and most of all how fat is it going to make me.

It is apparent to me, that not everyone can understand how deeply this consumes my existence.

"feast" is a piece that examines the reality of the disease. Watching food videos, looking at food magazines, walking by cafes, and reading restaurant menus to almost imagine the hope, the longing, and the deprivation of the foods you enjoy. My head was filled with the dreams of indulging in cake, but the restriction made me miserable. The sadness and the void are present. The work depicts the control, and the self-hatred behind denying myself the foods I truly wanted.

"euphoria" (1/2), (2/2) comprises two paintings that illuminate a binge, the breaking point and giving in to the cravings. Although eating food is pleasurable to most, it is almost magical for those with eating disorders. It can allow you to dissociate and temporarily suspend you from reality. Food can help you forget about your problems and escape the confines of reality.

"eat it all" gives the audience a glimpse into the insatiable lust and carnage for food. I can not control myself around food, especially cake. As soon as I get a taste, it is a blood lust. I become a complete savage and devour everything in my sight. I would do it all the time if I could. I so desperately long to lose control and feel full. A binge fills the void in me that I cannot neglect.

"holy kingdom" depicts me standing in front of my fridge. It is a simple premise of course, but the fridge to me is more than a kitchen appliance. The fridge is my Xanadu, my Elysian Fields, Garden of Eden, it is a place of bliss. After a bad break-up or a long day of being yelled at by my boss at work, the fridge is my promised land. The fridge opens its doors and holds me inside. It cradles me and whispers that things are going to be okay because I am now in the land of milk and honey.

- and I ate all the milk and honey-

When the world around you is crumbling and you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, there it is. It is in the back of the refrigerator.



it was always her
4" x 6"
acrylic on print
summer 2020



feast
4" x 6"
acrylic on print
summer 2020



euphoria (1/2),(2/2)
6" x 4"
acrylic on print
summer 2020



eat it all
acrylic on print
4" x 6"
summer 2020



holy kingdom
6" x 4"
acrylic on print
summer 2020

the repetition kills y
the repetition kills y
the repetition kills yo
the repetition kills yo
the repetition kills you
the repetition kills you
the repetition kills you
he repetition kills you
e repetition kills you
repetition kills you
repetition kills you
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the repetition kills you
the repetition kills yo
the repetition kills y
the repetition kills