



AND OTHER THINGS I LEARNED DURING THE PANDEMIC.

One sunny morning I was driving the dog home from the groomer. Crossing the bridge from East Sacramento back to Sierra Oaks, my mom's name popped up on my caller ID. When I picked up the call she sounded like she had been crying. She told me to pull over. She had to tell me something. She was scared and she hesitated. She told me she was sorry. Then she said, "Your father, he's not your father." This collection of paintings is about why she had to tell me the secret she had kept for 42 years until that sunny June morning in 2020.

This dotting style of painting was taught to me and my daughter by two Indigenous artists during private studio and artists tours in Northern Australia. The technique of dotting is specifically to share stories of heritage and ancestry within the tribes of Native Australians. Dots can represent people, foot steps, ocean, rainfall, ants, rivers, stars and beyond. I've been waiting to use this technique for something special. Given the mind blowing news of my family secret, I finally found the perfect place to use this dotting. It was in the stars.



“Growth”

They made the decision to keep this secret forever.

“No one needs to know” the doctor advised.

And as she grew me from the donation of a stranger,
she and my dad would keep the secret long past their
marriage to each other and to other people.

Sometimes my mom would tell the secret to another during
nights of too much wine. The circle of those keeping the
secret from me would grow a little. And then more branches
would be added. All the years and lies growing into what?

Can love live where the truth is hidden?

WHITNEY LOFRANO 2021 - 60”x48” Oil on Canvas - \$3400





“The Hope in Lisa’s Cancer”

We all went into overdrive when my oldest sister was diagnosed with BRCA and stage four ovarian cancer. Filling out a genetic cancer family tree to determine if my planned hysterectomy needed to include my ovaries. Our father’s side, being our only link as half sisters, was riddled with Cancer. As my other sister and I waited for our BRCA tests to be processed, that’s when my mom called. Her voice terrified to tell me, “I don’t want a stranger from a lab telling you this, you and your sisters don’t share your father. You won’t share that BRCA gene. Your father, he’s not your father.” My 42 year life foundation, my family, was not real but, a lie that was brought to light. Lisa’s cancer was a place to start deep healing for everyone in the dark.





“Go Bears”

So, who is this donor? According to Ancestry, he's very Anglo. According to the doctor who did the procedure, a grad student at Cal who needed \$100 in early 1977. And according to deeper research, he's a pre-Med student.

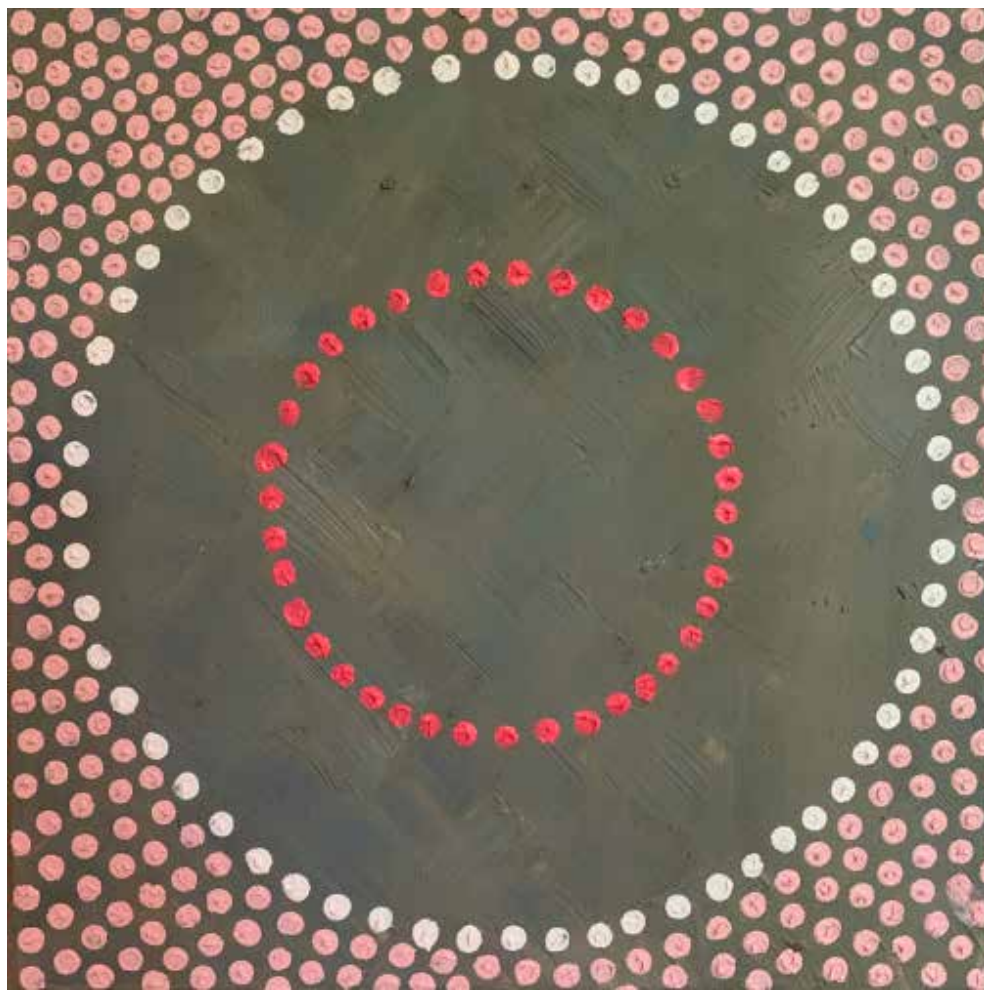
This brings a much deeper meaning to the Cal drinking song my Spiritual Father taught me and to all those Saturdays spent in the bleachers at Memorial Stadium. Could I have walk passed his frat house? Or would he be dressed as Oski? Maybe he was studying in the Library and pittied all the fanfare on game day? For this deeply loyal Duck to say Go Bears, another hit.





“The Light to Guide Me”

So, now, who AM I related to? I went from three half sisters and a full brother to ZERO full siblings and possibly two half brothers. It feels like quicksand or a muddy pit pulling me under. I dive deep into my mom’s side of the family. I ask as many questions as I can, when my Gram is lucid about her family in Alameda. I want to hear all the stories that I have listened to before. I call my cousin Jane who understands the Ancestry website. I visit my Gram as much as I can. I feel like I am holding on to her like a life raft as all the murky waters of this news flood in. She seems to be the only light to guide me as she is dimming.



WHITNEY LOFRANO 2021 - 12"x12" Oil on Canvas - \$450



“Void of Possibility”

Do I want to know who he is? Do I care to see the man who is half of me? It seems to me he could be gone. He might not even be alive but, if I want to know, I might need to search soon.

I have found one half brother. He knew I was his half sister for years before I knew. Ancestry kept getting smarter and our “relationship” kept getting closer. He knew the moment we were linked. This stranger is just as much my brother as the one I was raised my entire life with. Who else is out there in the void of possibility?

WHITNEY LOFRANO 2020 - 24"x24" Oil on Canvas - \$950





“Out of Body”

After she told me my father wasn't my father. I drove home. Hovering somewhere outside my body. I cried and cried. It felt like I had been shocked to my core. My husband attempted to comfort me and look on the bright side. But I just kept thinking, "I don't know who half of me is." It's like everything shifted but, only perception. All of my "family" was still there. But, who AM I?

And then I remembered, there was a man on Ancestry that had reached out years ago privately. He asked if I knew if anyone in my family had donated sperm and I had ignored it... I went back to the message. Due to an update in the system, we were matched as siblings now.

WHITNEY LOFRANO 2020 - 30"x30" Oil on Canvas - \$1150





“Ignorance is Bliss”

With everyone worried about Covid and staying home, I was never more relieved to have isolation. My mind craved silence to slowly process my new reality. I dove into Google to find out more about the doctors who helped my mom get pregnant in Berkeley. Monsters, or people who lived with integrity? Where did they find the donors?

How did others react to similar news?

Seems I was living in bliss much longer than the average child of donation. My new half brother knew as a child.

He didn't seem better for knowing sooner. He just had that strange knowledge longer. The Doner Sibling Registry was filled with palpable desperation of others looking for unknown family. Because I was born to a loving Spiritual father, my searching doesn't feel necessary, only interesting.



WHITNEY LOFRANO 2020 - 30"x24" Oil on Canvas - \$1200



“Stepping Stones to Gratitude”

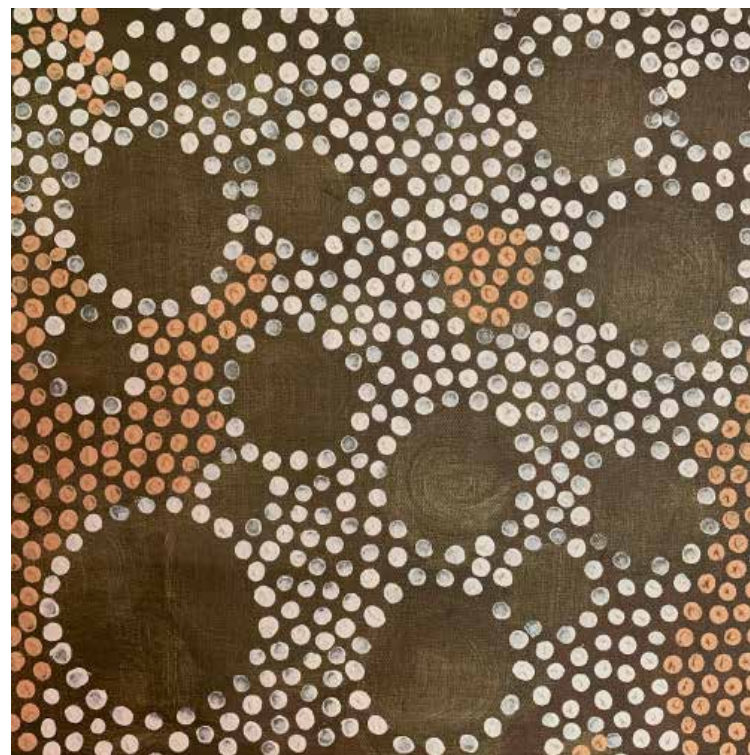
Being sober for years and doing the work of healing before this news hit me was the biggest blessing of my life.

The way that the information came in, emotions rode high and then I was able to get to gratitude very quickly.

If I had been drinking, I would have processed this all from a place of fear. Questioning motivations would have been my death. I know myself well enough now, I would have drank harder and pushed the nuggets of truth available to me deeper away with self pity and self righteous anger.

Instead, my shock wore off quickly. I recognized the choices my parents made, especially my Spiritual father, were made from love and a hope to have me in their lives.

We can't live in self pity and gratitude at the same time.



WHITNEY LOFRANO 2021 - 12"x12" Oil on Canvas - \$450



“Same Soil, Three Results”

There are siblings who grow from the same soil.
Given the same amount of sunlight and love, and
then they use that energy to grow in different ways.
As a parent, how do I find that sweet spot to love
them equally but also give the individual care?
Letting go of the result might just be the trick
to watching them bloom.

But, what if this was in reverse? Thinking about the two
half siblings I have floating out in the world with half of
our father's DNA. How much does this apply?
Are we all just bound to be different?





“Shattering Expectations”

They didn't know what I was capable of. They forgot about me. I forgot about me. One day I rose up with shaking legs and blurry eyes and said, "This is the day."

Building my dreams. Day by day I worked. I didn't ignore my inner voice anymore. And, in turn, they didn't ignore me anymore. I look at all that I have done and I know what I am capable of. That is all that matters.



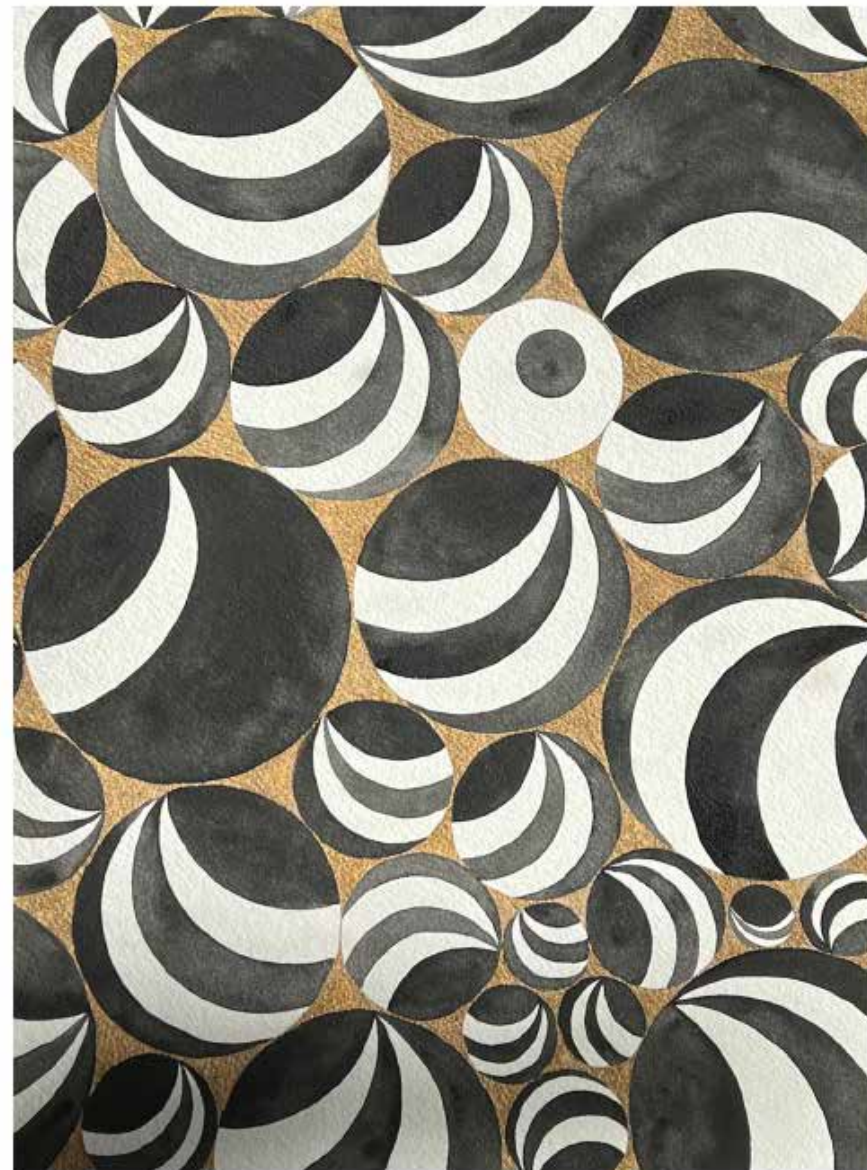


“Trust the White Lines”

Driving in the mountains one day the icy fog was so dense that I couldn't see three feet in front of my car. Heart racing, I slowed my breathing and got back to basics. Where is that white line? Can I see it? Can I follow it?

Do I trust Caltrans painted it properly?

Just in life, when the journey gets hazy and we are not sure we should keep going, I need to recenter myself, breathe and trust the white lines.





"Thinly Veiled Chaos"

Being near the American River is a feast of light, shadow and color. We walk and bike on the pathway and give our fellow urban adventurers friendly salutations as we pass. Are most of these people feeling anxiety and the hardships of living in a modern society? It can't be just me. Somehow the untouched ecosystems sit waiting for us. Far enough from the homes and traffic lights. Just waiting to take the stress out of daily living. Water reflecting light. Trees filtering the hot sun. Thinly veiled chaos lies between modern life and the river we walk near.





“Playing Footsie”

Don't touch me with those hands or lips.
This invisible bug sets the rules like the teacher
in sex ed hoping we wouldn't. Let's be kids again
and feel toes against toes. Before we knew where
all the hidden freckles were. Tickling and squirming
and squealing. Happy slow days.
Feelings unfelt for years.





“Everything is on the Line”

If we have learned anything from September 11th,
Americans come together when everything is on the line.
Destruction and fire make rich soil for growth.
Red and blue seeds might even mix together to
create purple flowers of hope.





“Counting Pills”

After my husband had an epic hospital stay, he was sent home with meds. So many that the discharging doctor told me that I needed to be in charge of them all. Fair enough.

There was counting, recounting, chopping and sorting. Distributing and restocking. Script filling and transporting. It was a full-time job and I was bad at it. After two months things started to slip. I buckled under the pressure and turned into Nurse Ratchet. I quit. Count your own damn pills.

WHITNEY LOFRANO 2019 - 36"x24" Acrylic on Linen - \$950





“Circulation Prayer”

Living in a jester’s court with the doctors and other characters telling us that my husband’s vein system would not work the same ever again. So, I painted the madness I felt as a vein system. Each circle I painted, saying a prayer for movement. Months at the painting, not feeling any change.

The “experts” had a succession of five different breakthroughs to get us to the one doctor that had insight into this madness. When the lights are out on a dark night and you pray for the one you love, it is that love that will shine in the darkness. So when you turn the lights out on this painting “LOVE” glows in the dark (See Glow in the Dark Paint “LOVE” after photo.)

