

## Without a Sound

In the series riddled with grotesque imagery *Without a Sound*, I explore the power of metaphor to communicate the horror of experiencing Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome (CVS). The metaphor that I used to guide my artistic choices is "Pulling Back the Curtain." My aim with this series was not to paint scenes of a CVS episode but to instead reveal the turmoil in my young mind as I experienced them. Some aspects of CVS that I explore in this series are the process of Empacho (painful massage on the back), fear of the unknown, and having one's mouth wired shut after surgery.

Suffering from CVS has left me with more than just bitter memories, it has left me with a debilitating phobia of vomit (emetophobia). This phobia takes control of my life and I live in constant fear of being sick myself or having people around me being sick. One of the ways that I decided to delve into the origins of my fear is by pulling back the curtain and first learning more about the disorder itself as well as learning effective ways of communicating how it felt and feels to others. Communicating how I feel is of utmost importance because my parents' inability to communicate with doctors about my condition due to language barriers left me unable to get the help that I needed. That inability to communicate caused me to have long-lasting effects on my life such as having to deal with debilitating emetophobia. The emetophobia that was a result of CVS goes beyond simply being disgusted at the thought of vomit but instead having that fear control my life by being traumatized for months by as little as seeing or hearing a short clip of someone vomiting.

With help of both my research and my vivid memories of CVS, I aimed to create compositions comprised of well-known fears and injuries to the skin that can help those who have not heard of or experienced CVS get a glimpse of the disorder. I hope to encourage people to learn how to effectively communicate their ailments to healthcare providers and their loved ones to get the help they need.

Does anyone notice

Oil on Gesso Board

16"x20"

Empacho (the Spanish word for indigestion), is a name that is also used for a full body massage that was taught to my mother in Mexico. Empacho began with me laying on my back and my mother using her fingertips to press my stomach. I would turn around and lay on my stomach, and my mother would proceed to use her palm and push out from the middle of my back. Then she would continue a similar motion down my legs. The final part of empacho was her pinching the skin around my cervical spine and without letting go, going all the way down my spine to around the coccyx area. That was done twice in a row. After the massage, I was instructed to drink 15ml of virgin olive oil and two cups of mint tea. Since the empacho wasn't always done in the early hours of the morning, I was not allowed to consume anything that was boiled beans, dry frosted flakes, and water for the rest of the day. As a child, this entire process was horrific and painful but that was the only way I found relief from my CVS symptoms.

Why have you forsaken me

Oil on Gesso Board

16"x20"

Cyclical Vomiting Syndrome is a disorder that causes repeated episodes of nausea or vomiting. These episodes can last up to a few hours, days, or in some cases a full week. I never received medical help for my symptoms and still have not to this day.

I never thought they'd get me here

Oil on Gesso Board

16"x20"

As a naïve child, I believed that clenching my jaw hard enough would cause a CVS episode to stop.