

NOELIA TOWERS

Broken String of Pearls

November 15 - December 21, 2024

11 Rue Pastourelle

75003 Paris

Stems Gallery is very proud to announce the opening of *"Broken String of Pearls"*, an exhibition featuring the profound and contemplative paintings of Barcelona-born, Chicago-based artist Noelia Towers.

At the heart of Towers' work lies a deeply personal narrative that intertwines themes of heritage, loss, and the emotional weight of memory. Inspired by her grandmother's engagement ring—a cherished family heirloom gifted to her by her mother—Towers explores the rich histories embedded in objects passed down through generations. Each painting serves as a testament to the lives of those who came before us, transforming ordinary artefacts into powerful symbols of our collective past.

Towers' paintings evoke an intricate landscape of emotions, reflecting on the fragility of legacy and the relentless passage of time. Within these works, there is a palpable tension that mirrors a sense of despair surrounding the unknown, informed by past events and Towers' own anxieties. This aspect is crucial, as it directly relates to how she feels within her personal life and encapsulates the exact sentiment she aimed to evoke. The artist's examination of jewelry—often seen as mere symbols of wealth and status—becomes a gateway to deeper reflections on womanhood, mortality, and the connections that bind us across time. Towers' approach of sourcing and re-contextualizing images invites viewers to engage with both familiar and mysterious narratives, allowing for open-ended interpretations.

At the beginning of this year, I was gifted my grandmother's engagement ring by my mother. I am not one to wear much jewelry because I have (unintentionally) lost or misplaced most of it throughout my life. When I was 18, my mother handed me all the gold rings and necklaces I had been gifted throughout my childhood, from my baptism to my first communion. Shortly after, I found myself in a dire financial situation where I had to sell the lot of it so I could be able to afford rent for that month. I was given around 300 Euros in exchange for the gold. I wasn't mad about it since I had no sentimental attachment to it after all and I had never cared for these types of material goods. This time however, with my grandmother's engagement ring, something felt different.

I now hold something that once belonged to the woman that came before me, the woman that raised my mother and later in life, me. A family heirloom now in my possession. As my mom opened an old, feeble box full of small keepsakes of not much significant monetary worth yet so personal and full of emotional value, I couldn't help but think of the rich histories embedded in these objects passed down through generations, their legacy, each one of them a witness to their lives. These artifacts, once cherished for their beauty, now emerge as evocative symbols of a collective past. Rings that have sealed promises, pearl earrings and necklaces that have adorned forebears.

Within this display of elegance, an undertone of melancholy and foreboding pervades, intertwining these precious objects with a sense of impending tragedy, reflecting a deep-seated anxiety about the fragility of legacy and the relentless passage of time.



Delving into a landscape of emotions where the fear of an uncertain future convolutes with a deep sense of loss and grief informed by past events, the tragedies of our predecessors connect to our own lived experiences. Each piece embodies the overwhelming sensation of waiting for disaster and misfortune to strike, capturing moments of tension that reside within us as we navigate the uncertainty of what lies ahead and puts to question what events took place before the moments being portrayed. An exploration of the intricate dance between anticipation and uncertainty, beauty and dread, a testament to the passage of time, a reflection on womanhood and its rites of passage, merging themes of personal despair, tension, and the poignant weight of the unknown. From the carelessness and imprudence of our youth, through the ecstasy and recklessness of young adulthood, to facing the end of life and its cycles, coming to terms with our own mortality, while the use of jewels, most often associated with wealth, class and status, play a significant role in contextualizing the works.

When our bodies cease to exist, these material objects don't seem to lose their worth, they live on without us. The artworks are intentionally ambiguous, inviting viewers to engage with the narratives and create their own stories. Their familiarity is balanced by an aura of mystery, leaving room for endless interpretations and possibilities. The images are not just reflections of individual experiences but they resonate with universal themes, reflecting on the timeless connections that bind us to those who came before us and those who will follow. By using sourced images to create these pieces, they are taken out of their initial context and by addition or subtraction of elements, the former referenced image is no longer the same, and the works take on a complete new form and meaning.

-- Noelia Towers

