Suzanne Scott Constantine

Interdisciplinary Artist and Writer

Mixed Media – Performance – Installation

Email: suzannescottc@me.com
Phone: (703) 909-3250
Website: https://edgewiseart.com
Instagram: @suzannescottc

Suzanne Scott Constantine makes art as a practice of radical hope. Her mixed media, installation, and performance works explore the threads binding us to each other and to all living things; threads that persist even when frayed and thin.

Before moving to the Outer Banks in 2018, Suzanne was Professor of Integrated Studies and Director of Women and Gender Studies at George Mason University. She holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Art from Goddard College, and an MA in English Literature from James Madison University.

Image page 1, top: "The Classical Nude Rescues Her Sister," 2026, mixed media on cradle board, 30" x 24"

Image page 2, top: "Pulling Back the Curtain," 2026, mixed media on canvas, 40"x30"

Image page 2, bottom: "They Are Listening," 2026, mixed media on canvas, 30"x40"

Image page 3, top: "In and Out," 2026, mixed media on canvas, 40"x30"

Image page 3, bottom: "Grief for the Wounded World," 2026, mixed media on cradle board, 24"x30"



A Close Reading of the World

Suzanne Scott Constantine

All you need to know is that the future is wide open,
and you are about to create it by what you do.
-Pema Chodron

What does an art exhibition filled with images of women's bodies have to do with the challenges we face in a complicated, frustrating, and dangerous world?

Everything.

As an artist and a woman, I've been fascinated with the miraculous ways female bodies shape-shift over time to adapt to environmental, physical, and psychological factors. Despite the historical scrutinizing, idealizing, and demonizing of the female body, women have developed wonderful ways to negotiate, moderate, arbitrate, and conciliate.

Old women can tell stories of facing down social and cultural expectations, contriving ways to do and be what they wanted. Few managed to have it all, but most would say that they kept their most precious possession: themselves.

In planning my work for *Embodied*, I could see that social media and 24/7 influencer culture could subject all young people, not just women, to geometrically expanded bodily strictures and expectations. In a moment of trad-wives and looks-maxxing, it's not nostalgic to consider how old women lived their embodiment; it's a survival skill.

Often, answers to difficult questions come in stories and visions. That's why my figures are expressive, surrealist-inspired bodies: they draw from life, but offer expanded possibilities through the exaggerations, substitutions, and mysteries of the dream.



An inspiration for my work is the poet Adrienne Rich, a "feminist influencer" long before that was a thing. Rich tapped into the reservoir of collective struggles about the female body. "The body has been made so problematic for women that it has often seemed easier to shrug it off," she wrote in *Of Woman Born* (1976). Rich saw the female body as a site of intense struggle, but she also recognized it as a site of potential power.

I had this struggle in mind when I made "Pulling Back the Curtain." I was celebrating the moment at which a woman refuses to "shrug it off," and fully inhabits her body, regardless of the tropes (like that of the classical nude) through which others may try to dismiss or minimize her experience of herself as powerful in her embodiment



For a woman who fully inhabits her body, new possibilities for knowledge, power, and resistance emerge. In "They Are Listening," a woman peers out warily from her "big mouth," alert to the dangers when someone speaks truthfully to an audience whose response is unpredictable. Yet she persists, hoping to actualize the slogan "speak truth for justice without fear of consequences." As the poet Joy Harjo wrote, "I have work to do, for the rest of my life, to reconcile terrible stories I did not learn or did not hear, to take in unimaginable cruelty and atrocity for which I must take some responsibility; also, to take in beauty I didn't see."

Difficult? Risky? Yes. But being brave is a willingness to live in the mystery, the questions, the paradoxes. To live in the body fully inhabited. A woman's embodiment is her source of strength and her connection to the living world.



Self-acceptance is rarely a one-time event, but a recurring choice that must be made and borne over and over again. In "In and Out," I envision this reiterative process through the experience of Queer people. We step out of the closet, often with great apprehension, and then find ourselves having to repeat the ritual every time we are in a new situation. The closet we carry within is not just internalized homophobia. It's also the pain of making one's way in a world where majoritarian eyes may be blind to the differences in their midst. The result is often suspicion, misunderstanding, isolation, and lost opportunities for learning and community-building.

Our complex and troubled world demands of us that we find a way past reiterative misunderstanding. Like all of the earth – tree roots, rivers and their tributaries, animals emerging after a long winter, and birds returning to their ancestral nesting places – we reach out for what brings us life. "What the plants are breathing out, all us animals are breathing in," wrote the environmentalist Joanna Macy. "And what we animals are breathing out, all the plants are breathing in. The exquisite reciprocity remains astonishing to me even today—a magic pulse of interspecies generosity quietly unfurling itself in the depths of the present moment, hidden at the heart of all our experience."



If we too could appreciate the planet as a living body, we might be more successful at imagining a richer future. In "Grief for the Wounded World," I imagine this wounded earth, distorted by human carelessness, soothed by loving hands.

To love the world in all its wounded being, we also must learn to live in reciprocity with our full and flawed selves. If we learn to do a close reading of the world, we see that even on the worst day, the world is exquisite. If we learn to do a close reading of ourselves, we are exquisite too.

Reciprocity also means embracing our infinite connections to each other. The web of interconnectedness was what motivated me to make the image on the front panel of this brochure, "The Classical Nude Rescues Her Sister." Freeing herself from the limiting vision of what a woman's embodiment permits is just not enough. She is not free until her sister is free. Our kinship must embrace the exquisite world. Our responsibility is to the future, not just to today.