

Donna Bassin

## *Precious Scars*

As a lens-based artist and trauma psychologist, I employ beauty and the experiences of the human body to call us into an encounter and then witness the challenging emotions of these dark and turbulent times.

In this series, photographs of peaceful, spiritual life taken in the traditional city of Kyoto, Japan, are materially marked with injuries of damage from violence repaired yet left scarred and transformed. As a nation, Japan, with a history of violence like the United States, has confronted its past and committed itself since WW II to constitutionally repair and restore peace.

The Japanese aesthetic practice of kintsugi - the repair of broken pottery with gold lacquer - provides a visual metaphor for transcending violence while usefully acknowledging and not hiding histories of damage. Metaphorically, kintsugi honors the acceptance of injury as part of the object's life and gives material form to the history of experience.

Each photograph of this series is unique and produced in a 4-step process. My association with Kodachrome slides and their use to record memories of experiences in other places inspired the square composition and white borders. I print the original digital photographs on 16" x 16" Moab Moenkopi Washi Unryu rice paper.

I tear the print to damage and wound the image. Torn fragments from other photographs in the series back the tears, further mended with quick and crude sewing with colored embroidery thread. The repair doesn't restore the original image to what it was, but visually and viscerally accentuates the damage.

Lastly, the prints are dipped in an archival beeswax encaustic medium. The encaustic wax results in a translucent skin-like texture, holding the image together and enhancing the areas of tear and repair, resulting in "precious scars."