

WOMEN I'VE BEEN

Exhibition Guide

820 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA

March 9, 2025 - July 21, 2025

Made possible by an artist intensive with **Sibyls Shrine**, guest curated by **Jessica Gaynelle Moss** and presented by **The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust**.

Collaborators: Alexis Rosa Caldero, Ania Fedisz, Jason Forck, Josh Ice, Maria J. Hackett, Ruby Powell, Selah Ezra Konur, Senaan Marcel Konur, Sema Marie Konur, and Vivastine Seward.

Note: Scents of sage, palo santo, vetiver, and rose appear gently throughout the space. There are mentions of harm to women in the film—take care.

Digital version: <https://melikeonearth.com/women-ive-been>

THE FOUNDATION

I was becoming someone new—and honestly, it felt like dying.

A year ago, I started building *Women I've Been* while swimming in the deep end of postpartum grief and revelation. Somewhere between birthing a child and losing the map back to myself, I realized this wasn't just another creative project. This was my eulogy to the version of me who didn't know what it cost to mother—myself, my son, this art.

I learned that becoming is violent. It strips, burns, devours. But it also reveals. What's left is the spiral—our map, our proof that we've been here before and made it. That's the spine of this exhibition. Everything else? Artifacts from my lineage—Blackfoot to Nigeria, Albania to Istanbul—women who held the line so I could be here to tell it.

The vessels anchoring the space are pulled from a bloodline of craftsmanship—Phoenicians, Egyptians, Tiffany's American decadence—all meeting here. I molded them in the shape of my great-granny Ruby's 115-year-old heirloom vase, dipped them in evil eye blue because protection is non-negotiable. Each one holds the sacred waters of the divine feminine, oxidized to shimmer like every woman who survived her own burn.

This exhibition is a ceremonial funeral for my youth. A rite of passage into mothering. And yeah, some parts of me died to get here. But what grew is wilder—faith like teeth, devotion like muscle.

Performance was my first language. Now, I let the relics, the films, the vessels perform for me—past, present, future lined up like a prayer you're scared to say out loud. I built this golden-ratio stage so it vibrates—dares you to see yourself reflected back. Transformed.

INTENTION | WHY I MADE THIS

I don't make art to be clever. I make it to save us.

If no one's said it yet—mothering is intelligence. Mothering is the art. This exhibition is a love letter to that wisdom, inherited and earned. A map for anyone out here shedding skins, looking for proof that they survived.

We don't need another gallery space that centers “art for art's sake.” This is art in service. In ritual. In reverence. This is me taking Rhodessa Jones' charge to heart: “**Make art that saves lives.**” Because that's what this is—for survivors, for mothers, for anyone who's had to rebuild from rubble.

Creating this nearly broke me. Dead serious. But the edge teaches you who you are. And there's no art worth making that doesn't cost you.

This residency, this space, this community—saved my life. If you walk away with anything, let it be this: somewhere out there, someone is making art just for you. Let this be your proof.

I built a portal. A sanctuary. A home. A goodbye. A heaven.

When I walk through, I throw coins into the Bosphorus and pray my mother's dreams flow through me. You'll find gold, coins, flame, roses, and sunlight dancing here. Witness it. Take what you need.

Motherhood gave me new eyes. Not softer—sharper. This work is where I bury my younger selves and birth the version of me who chooses not to perform survival, but design a life. One where creativity is devotion. Where beauty is resistance. Where the divine feminine is the blueprint.

I speak their names. The Osage Nation. The Shawnee people. The original stewards of this land. This work stands on that ground—in reverence, not erasure.

THE WORKS | IN THE SPACE

1. Reflection | Nexus (2025)

Five billboards. Five women I've been. Tito Way.

Dance raised me. Burlesque liberated me. Motherhood almost killed me—but didn't. These portraits hold it all: the child, the maiden, the mother, the crone, the ethereal me. Each billboard, a question mark daring you to ask: *Who are you becoming?*

2. Alignment Prism 1 & 2 (2021)

Hexagons. Plexiglass. Built during the plague when my Brooklyn apartment became my studio. These are magnetic reminders—align yourself with those who see your light. Knowledge is liberation. No one can steal what you know.

3. A Divine Procession (2025)

Seventeen glass vessels. Gold. Water. Light.

Designed like a stage, built like a prayer. Inspired by Fibonacci and ancestral glasswork. Every vessel holds intention. Every droplet, a hymn. Protection isn't metaphorical here—it's material. I'm building a portal to ancestors, to heaven, to whatever saves us next.

4. Çok Kalp | So Much Love (2025)

Neon sigils—heart and womb codes.

Rave lights for the wild child I was, the feral girl who danced until sunrise in clubs built over sacred ground. Prayer + desire + alignment + action. This is the portal. Forget one, lose the game.

5. Motherhood Unfurling (2025) | Film Series

- *She is an Island*: Pregnant. Alone. Grateful. Ibiza.
- *Jenersayon*: A poem, a scream, a movement. The labor of mothering.
- *Flora y Fauna*: A song with my brother Selah. A love letter to nature's perfect order.

Download the song: <https://melikekonur.bandcamp.com/track/flora-y-fauna>

Show me what I cannot see.

All thanks and glory to the most high creator.

www.melikeonearth.com
