

Art New England September/October 2023

Ellen Shattuck Pierce

Taking Place

HallSpace

950 Dorchester Ave, Dorchester, MA

September 16-October 21, 2023

Reception: September 16, 2-5PM

Artist talk is October 7, 3PM

Gallery Hours: Friday, Saturday 12-6

Monday-Thursday by appointment

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Artist: Ellen Shattuck Pierce; esp195@mail.harvard.edu; 617-999-7128;

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Ellen Shattuck Pierce is a journalistic narrator in art. Her keen observations of her feelings and responses during the Covid Pandemic and her experience as a public school teacher, mother, and artist inform the eighteen prints which comprise the *Covid Chronicles* which premier in the HallSpace exhibit. The works are a result of Shattuck Pierce's 2022 Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Fellowship.

The tethering to the world wider than the personal is present throughout the series. In *4/13/20*, a solitary woman staring out of her window is attached to a rope which wanders outside forming a heart that lassos universal symbols depicting populations and activities most threatened by covid.

Replete with allegory, in *Wash, Rinse, Repeat*, an isolated child walks a proverbial "highway," surrounded by scenes of people lined up for vaccines, for food, for Black Lives Matter protests. It is a stark presentation of what people could no longer pretend "not to see."

Shattuck Pierce's densely packed linotypes in relentless black and white emphasize the reduced quality of life visited upon all during the pandemic. In *Reopening*, which refers to the summer of hope in 2020, there is a sense of light permeating the usually dark palette. *Winter Peril*, which chronologically follows it, shows the return to isolation. Its figures appear mummified, wrapped once again by their constraints.

Circling Around shows off Shattuck Pierce's masterful skills in creating motion through mark making. The endless spirals are almost dizzying as she references the vortex of emotion we felt as a nation on January 6, 2021, the day of the insurrection, with the capitol encircled for weeks afterwards. Accompanying personal circles of solitary activities continued to mark every person's day, measured by the rotation of a clock's hands.

In an article she wrote, *Bearing Witness*, Pierce notes "All this is happening, all at the same time, and all of it is true." The pandemic created a magnifying glass illuminating this ever-present reality. The series, *Covid Chronicles* remains as a testament to a key moment in human history and a reminder of some of the lessons that we "perhaps" have learned.