

The *Art of Influence: Breaking Criminal Traditions* is a fine art exhibition of nonthreatening art objects that expose the audience to a variety of current human rights atrocities. The pieces presented in the exhibition only allude to the issues at hand: it is the viewer's mind that makes the leap from beautiful art object to a darker reality. Criminal traditions are ongoing, centuries-old rituals that kill or maim millions each year – yet aren't considered crimes. They include honor killing, acid attacks, bride burning, forced childhood marriage, female genital mutilation, and other violence that is not illegal because the perpetrators are relatives who are doing "what's best" for the girl or "defending" their family's honor.

These patterns of injustice are ancient and the violence still grows today. Not only are criminal traditions increasing in their cultures of origin

but they have rapidly spread to immigrant communities worldwide – including here in the United States. And females aren't the only victims. Many men don't want to honor kill family members; and many grooms don't want to marry a child bride, yet social and economic pressures force them to do so. And with a long history of cultural prejudice, gay men are still victimized. Bottom line: everyone suffers.

The mission of the exhibition is to translate the experience of fine art into social action and strategies for community engagement – encouraging the viewer to consider alternative perspectives and begin a dialogue in an attempt to promote social change.

Curator Charles Gniech launched *The Art of Influence: Breaking Criminal Traditions* in 2013. He has participated in multiple panel discussions relating to the exhibition and has lectured on his curatorial process. Gniech holds an MFA with an emphasis in painting and a BFA with an emphasis in illustration, both from Northern Illinois University. While teaching, curating and consulting, Gniech continues to paint and exhibits at the national level. His paintings have been included in numerous gallery and museum exhibitions, and his work is included in many public and private collections. Gniech is an associate professor of graphic design at Joliet Junior College and has been teaching at various colleges and universities for more than 25 years. While teaching at The Illinois Institute of Art–Chicago, Gniech served as curator of the Institute's galleries and acted as the Collections Curator for the Corporate Fine Art Collection. Site-specific versions of *The Art of Influence* have been presented nationally.

THE ART OF INFLUENCE

Breaking Criminal Tradition



Joyce Polance, *Pull*, 2015, oil on canvas, 24" x 24"

January 15 – February 28, 2019

Reception

Thursday, February 7, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Gallery talk 5:30 p.m.

Closed January 20

Exhibit Hours

Sunday: 1-4 p.m.

Tuesday & Thursday: 2-7 p.m.

Wednesday & Friday: 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

THE GALLERY
AT PENN COLLEGE

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