

EAST HAWAII CULTURAL CENTER

# GRIEF

DOUGLAS DIAZ

12.04.2021-01.28.2022

GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY-FRIDAY,  
10:00 AM-4:00 PM  
SATURDAYS, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

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141 KALĀKAUA ST. DOWNTOWN HILO J | WWW.EHCC.ORG | 808.961.5711

The last two years of my life have been heavily marked by grief. This grief was felt across two different scales: personal and collective. On the personal scale, I lost my beloved, a death that shook me to the core. Her passing has had such a profound effect that everything seems to revolve around that single event. It clearly has delineated a before and after. This grief cast a blanket over everything, not just coloring the everyday mundane activities -- it changed time. The past became a blur, imprecise and further distant. The future is non-existent, and the present slowed down until I could hear my own breath. Each second became so dense that it swallowed the air, making me focus on the now, the space between breaths.

The second scale of grief occurred globally. As I was entering the early stages of grieving for my beloved, the rise of COVID-19 was being felt across the globe. In the ensuing months, collectively we experienced massive loss of lives, loss of our ways of living, and for better or worse, how we viewed the world. Collectively we entered in a state of grieving that both united and separated us at a scale that is hard to fully comprehend even now.

The social distancing measures, the lockdowns, quarantines, and the public panic over restrictions cast a long shadow over this new way of being. Personally it felt that this came at the worst moment, just when I needed to be closer to others. It also came with another heavy price: the loss of freedom; a loss made all the more poignant because grieving is suffocating, and isolating. Grieving is impossible to escape.

In my attempt to not fully drown in grief, I started painting. Yearning for the catharsis that I find in each gesture and stroke, hoping that grieving will serve as an act of healing. I began to wonder, how do we grieve? What is the appropriate amount of time? What purpose does grieving have? How can we make sense of our own personal loss when the world seems to be swept up in a global pandemic (viral, political, social, environmental) that trivializes our individual pain?

Perhaps grieving is eased by understanding how we choose to live, rather than what happens when someone we love dies. In my own grieving process there is an over emphasis on loss, both of the person who passed and what I have lost. What if our response to all the loss we experience could be tempered by a collective wisdom, by revelations and insights gained throughout a lifetime, would it change the way we grieve? Would it ease the pain?

Inspired by the Japanese tradition of writing *jisei* (death poems), I looked at how monks had synthesized all of their accumulated wisdom into a single poem. The compact flashpoint of a few lines brought eloquence to the richness of life while diminishing the impending loss they anticipated. The work I made doesn't provide direct answers, nor are they meant to be deciphered for kernels of knowledge on how to grieve. Perhaps they are better understood as inflection points; insights and emotions that invite contemplation of our experiences, hopefully bringing us together in our collective sense of loss, embracing our own suffering while reaffirming the life we live.

<b>Lament #3</b>	2021	300 x 420 cm / 118 x 165 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$18,000.00
<b>Dew on the grass</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>Only my dreams will wonder</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>Two simple happenings that got entangled</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>I would have mourned my loss of life</b>	2021	230 x 132 cm / 90 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>The last of human desire</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>Dream</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>If you see it as it is, you will never err</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>Both coming and going occur each day</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>There is no death; there is no life...</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>A moon reflected in the water, a flower floating in the sky</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>If I leave no trace behind</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>The truth is never taken from another</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00
<b>Autumn breezes blow</b>	2021	187 x 132 cm / 74 x 52 in	Acrylic and oil pastels on paper	\$5,000.00



*Artist Douglas Diaz in his studio in Bali, Indonesia, 2021.  
Photo courtesy of Larisa Sakhnenko*

### Biography:

Douglas Diaz (b. 1972) is a Brooklyn, New York born artist. His work explores questions of his own humanity, challenging preconceptions and thoughts, embracing fears and the darkness that lies deep within the unconscious in an attempt to gain spiritual equanimity.

His work has been exhibited in solo and group shows since 2015 across Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. In 2017, Douglas had his first solo museum exhibition titled SHUKKE at Art 1 Museum, Indonesia. His work is collected privately and publicly in more than 20 different countries.

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