

**Spoke Gallery Flat File Project:
Naoe Suzuki – Hours Days Weeks Months Years Decades Centuries**

Artist Statement

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2020–2021

I started drawing black circles on a bunch of round papers last fall. I wanted to draw perfect circles, so I gathered all sorts of circular shapes to use as templates—lids of pots and pans, tins that came with candles, a Petri dish, and so on. I used these tools to draw many different sizes of circles on the round papers. These circles didn't demand any composition. They preferred randomness and began to multiply. It's been my nightly activity to draw and paint these black circles each day.

I think I know what I'm doing, then I don't know what I'm doing. I think I'm trying to make sense of the world but I don't exactly know how to make sense of it all. Maybe intellectually I can see how the world became as it did, but my emotions are all over the place, messy and confusing. I'm afraid that there will be a delayed response. Years from now, we might realize what the year 2020 has done to the core of our beings and the entire world.

Or maybe not.

But I know where these black circles came from.

In the spring of 2020 when the United States and many other countries around the world were hit by the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, I obsessively checked the maps of the coronavirus infection and death rates in the New York Times every day. At that time, both infection rates and death rates were represented as circles on the map. You could see where the hot spots were by looking at the size of the red circles on the coronavirus infection map. The map for the Covid-19 deaths used black circles. The sizes of these circles were growing each day at an exponential rate, to the point that eventually, the New York Times switched to the color-coded maps for each state, because the size of the circles got so big that they started covering the whole state.

Each day, I was horrified looking at those circles growing larger and spreading throughout the country.

Then, the murder of George Floyd happened, and the Black Lives Matter protests followed. The New York Times was tracking the BLM protests and where the protests were taking place. Again, there was a map. When I first saw the map, I had to do a double take because I was seeing black circles on the map. A strange Deja-vu moment, but immediately followed by hope and joy once I realized what I was looking at.

One night in my studio as I was working on the black circles, I saw the graphite marks shining on the paper against the black. I liked that and started to paint around the graphite marks so that I didn't obscure their shine with ink. I keep adding circles. I'm not sure when it will end or when it is finished. Maybe time will tell.

Or maybe not.