

## (for today)

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NEHA CHOKSI

Quotidian beads threaded with desire, instinct, art:

me sleepily

cradling my lover

the whale Tahlequah

cradling her dead calf

the painted canvas

cradling the stone

My tenderness swells beside such grief.

Her grief stands akimbo with this artifice.

Turn over that artifice next to my tenderness.

I fit each pierced gemstone faithfully, a talisman for my invocation.

*Uncoil today's heartstring from the buried universe.*

Me sleepily cradling my lover as the clock slipped us into 2021, sunken in her sex, glad that this new year starts with her loving fucks. This dawn we are that body, strong under many suns, weathered by many fateful winds, destined one day to wane, and thus, today rejoicing in being vulnerable, tender, supple, wondrously labile.

The whale Tahlequah, cradling her dead calf, dragging it around for 17 days in 2018, gave birth again this fall. You remember the story made headlines the world over? Her grief moved us. These orcas are endangered. One of us tracked this orca J35 to study her pod. We *imagine* we share in her tragedy and new motherly pride.

The painted fabric, cradling the stone and coated with pigment crushed from another stone, signals the magic born of their encounter. After millions of years forming stones, add a flash of human energy to manifest the still life immanent in all.

Even stone bodies are tender, violable, entropic, vulnerable. And yet, don't count your gemstones *when* there are mountains cleaved by rivers and tiger tracks. Neither bury the gemstones *where* there remain open skies studded with birds and stars. Just cradle my homology between the dead calf, my lover and the stone. To make nature feel natural, you and I have the tool of art: that suspended stone draws in the energy of the given and the manufactured world. The traditional future awaits the elemental.

– Neha Choksi, Los Angeles, January 1, 2021



**Neha Choksi.** *Ahimsa (Compassion)*. Canvas, paint made from mined mineral pigment, rock. 40" x 16.5" x 4". 2020. Image courtesy of the artist.