

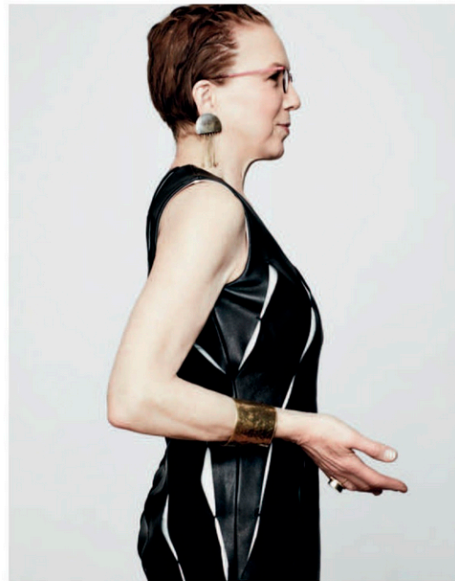
THE ART OF REDEMPTION

ANNE POLLACK BY JOHN BLANKSON

PHOTOGRAPHS: SEAN WALTROUS
 STYLING: GIANNIE COUJI
 HAIR: PASCALE POMA
 USING L'OREAL PROFESSIONNEL
 MAKE UP: PASCALE POMA
 USING LANCÔME
 FASHION ASSISTANT: TEPI ALHANI



LEFT
 ANNE WEARS
 TRENCH COAT
 FROM BROOKLYN FLEA MARKET
 DRESS BY JEFFREY DODD
 JEWELRY ANNE'S OWN



RIGHT
 ANNE WEARS
 DRESS BY JEFFREY DODD
 JEWELRY ANNE'S OWN

Anne Pollack wants to heal through art! An Internet search of "crossingpointarts.org," reveals "PTSD Hurts. Art Heals." It's the slogan for Pollack's nonprofit, Crossing Point Arts. She founded it in 2013 to help survivors of human trafficking overcome their trauma through various art forms. I asked Anne what exactly her organization is about, and she replied, "Crossing Point Arts is a collective of teaching artists who provide trauma-informed workshops through music, drama, poetry, painting – all the arts, for survivors of human trafficking with the help of anti-trafficking agencies in New York City."

Pollack is hoping for expansions throughout Atlanta, Miami, and LA – cities with reported high rates of human trafficking. Survivors come from all walks of life: Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe. The goal is to help them build community and experience creativity that restores their sense of self. Expressive forms of art, whether writing or composing has proven to be a therapeutic experience that connects us to our minds – often helping us unload emotions that stifle our sanity. Crossing Point Arts has created the kind of environment where sex trafficking survivors can express their most unpleasant feelings, whether it's rage, fear, anger, or defeat through a medium that rehabilitates them. Having reached over 4000 people through 100s of workshops throughout Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx, Crossing Point Arts has about 13 (paid) teaching artists on their roster.

Crossing Point Arts is Pollack's brainchild. It's a concept she shaped to fit her vision. Anne's view of the world, her consciousness about its inequalities and intersectionality, led to the birth of her organization. "It was my awareness of slavery and racism in this country, having read about Harriet Tubman at a very young age and the history of slavery (which to me is the biggest crime against humanity) is why I started Crossing Point Arts," she says. Her hope for survivors is that art brings them home to a place of wellness.

The trauma from enslavement never goes away – Anne knows that. It's why she's leading the quest for redemption. The teaching artists at Crossing Point Arts create exciting art workshops that are meant to serve as a form of escapism. If a member needed a therapist, Anne and her team helped with that. A musician herself, Pollack finds her members through personal conversations with other artists and occasional referrals from anti-trafficking agencies. At the core of Crossing Point Arts is ensuring that their work is producing results and helping their members. If a survivor can reclaim their voice, Anne and her team have done their job. For Anne, the future of their endeavors are hopeful, yet ambitious.

Crossing Point Arts needs money and the backing of well-known ambassadors to help fulfill its mission across the country and beyond. It's the only organization in the country of its kind. According to *USA Today*, there were 5,147 reported cases of human trafficking in 2018 – 3,718 were related to sex trafficking. In New York, there are only two clinics for survivors of sex trafficking. Girls of color, particularly Black girls remain the easiest target among this group. Victims of human trafficking are often from poor backgrounds with a history of exploitation, sexual abuse with little to no support from close family or friends. And then there are those whose fate lies in the hands of the unknown. "I think about them every day, hoping they make it to the other side," she expresses. It's a dark world where the lives of innocent women (and men) are changed for the worst.

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Anne was unapologetic in charging the complicity of governments as one of the main reasons for the rising rates in sex trafficking. We're currently in an election cycle, yet no presidential candidate or network has started a discussion about the epidemic or even proposed a policy that specifically targets victims of human trafficking. The solicitation of minors for prostitution, the arrest and death of financier Jeffrey Epstein dominated the 24-hour news cycle. Yet, it was all about him – not the lives of the young women he ruined nor the survivors of child prostitution whose trauma would get triggered at the mention of his name. These perpetrators often have ties with high profile men in government and monarchies.

Anne is hopeful about the possibility of ending sex trafficking – but not until we demand accountability from our leaders and push them to make laws that address the psychological needs of humanity; laws that make child prostitution almost impossible. Pollack believes prevention is possible and urges leaders take a bold and loud stance against such barbaric acts.

Pollack is an artist in her own right. She paints, sings, dances, plays musical instruments, often writes, and even recently sold her first painting. She exudes a protectiveness that guards the songs she writes, the sounds she produces, her sculpting, and the time she spends telling stories through her paintings. "I sometimes forget to eat or drink," she told me. Anne's found solace in self-expression and hopes the survivors she works with experience the same feeling.

She's an excellent cello player and, at one point in her life, was trying to pursue a career as a commercial performer. "I was trying to push a big career and at some point, I just stopped. It was after 9/11 and I started to pay more attention to why I wake up every morning and do what I do," she continues. "It made more sense once I started to realize that my art is for me and not for public consumption. If they liked it, great. If they didn't like it, it didn't matter, because I liked it." Jazz, Caribbean, and indigenous African music are some of Pollack's sources of inspiration. The activist is also an admirer of Judith Jamison as well as James Baldwin's profound style of storytelling.

Anne's story and passions fit right in with our theme: Vanguard. In her own words, "It's knowing that there's an intuition that will take its delivery and give itself form it can acknowledge." In this, she has succeeded. Pollack followed her intuition to take on such profound work that we can all acknowledge. She is certain in her conviction that art can indeed mend broken spirits. Pollack's found the perfect juxtaposition between that and activism to bring redemption to those in need of it. In her desire to use her skills, talents, voice, and the help of her incredible team, Anne has pushed the conversation about sex trafficking further and primed it on our conscience. Through Anne's (and her team's) compassionate work with Crossing Point Arts, the life of a survivor of human trafficking, even if it's just one, has changed. **IG @crossingntarts**