

What does it mean to be an athlete? It's more of a state of mind than a specific type of activity. On one hand, to be an athlete is about the violence inherent in always being observed, judged, and evaluated. But it's also about the joy that comes with overcoming an obstacle. It involves living a life where danger and pain might possibly become exuberance and celebration—or might not. It begins and ends with risk.

For Diamond Stingily, to be an athlete can involve sports, sure, but it also relates to her experience with making art. There are the many types of ambitions, fears, and expectations—some her own, and others imposed on her. There are the encouraging milestones and the personal triumphs, but the goalposts are also always shifting. It is relentless.

While Stingily's work speaks to broader socio-cultural themes like class, race, and gender, it is always rooted in her own life. She grew up playing volleyball and softball. Both of her brothers are former professional football players. The family trophies were kept on a bookshelf in the living room. She used to bury her dolls in the backyard. She has been a poet and artist for most of her life. She is doing the best she can.

Diamond Stingily (b. 1990, Chicago) lives and works in New York.

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