

# AUDACIOUS WOMEN FESTIVAL

## AUDACIART WEEKLY

### On Being A Pretzel

10 July 2020





## AudaciArt – On Being A Pretzel

### AudaciArt

Hallo Everybody

This week's theme, *On Being a Pretzel*, is inspired by a quotation from Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Laureate 1997.

**If you're always trying to please everybody around you, all you end up being is a pretzel, twisted into the shape of a pretzel. If you do that enough, you'll end up not even knowing who you really are. So have the courage to be who you really are, no matter where you are.**

Here is the 14<sup>h</sup> AudaciArt publication: an exciting collection of words and pictures inspired by a quotation by an audacious woman.

It seemed at one point as if it might be a rather thin offering this week, but in the end some fantastic contributions arrived at the last minute, ranging from humour to thought-provoking. As ever, our thanks go to all contributors.

Still, we'll go back to more serious matters over the next couple of weeks. At the end of this week's quote, Jody Williams exhorts us to have the courage to be who we really are. We continue in that vein next time, though of course there is no expectation that work submitted will be either in writing or personal. Women are invited to create and submit any type of work, using any medium or genre, inspired by the theme.

The theme for Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July @ noon is: The Courage to Stand Up

And for the following, 24<sup>h</sup> July: Wait Not a Single Moment



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**Jody Williams**

**Hilery Williams (sadly, no relation!)**

**On Being A Pretzel:** *If you're always trying to please everybody around you, all you end up being is a pretzel, twisted into the shape of a pretzel. If you do that enough, you'll end up not even knowing who you really are. So have the courage to be who you really are, no matter where you are.*



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In more than 100 years of Nobel Peace Prizes, civil-rights and peace activist Jody Williams, is only one of a dozen women have ever to have won the award, in 1997. She was the chief strategist of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, (ICBL) which established the first global treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

The Norwegian Nobel Institute's statement summarises Williams' role as a Peace Activist and, specifically, her role as coordinator with governments, the UN and peace groups in the Campaign against Landmines:

*When Jody Williams was studying international politics in the 1980s, she became involved in aid work in war-torn El Salvador. Landmines were a constant threat to the civilian population, and she was given responsibility for providing artificial limbs for children who had lost arms and legs.*

*From 1991 on, Jody Williams was a driving force in the launching of an international campaign against landmines. By 1997, thanks to her strength and organisational talent, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) had 1,000 organizations from 60 countries on its list of members.*

*The Ottawa Convention, which was signed by 120 states and entered into force in 1999, will always be associated with the names of Jody Williams and the ICBL. It banned the use, production, sale and stock-piling of anti-*



*personnel mines. In addition, it contained provisions concerning mine clearance and the obligation to provide humanitarian assistance.*

Since her protests against the Vietnam War, Williams has been a life-long advocate of freedom, self-determination and human and civil rights. Her aim has been to reclaim the real meaning of peace: human security not the absence of armed conflict and national security.

Williams believes that working for peace is not for the faint hearted: *peace is not a 'utopian vision', but a responsibility that must be worked for each and every day.*

Her achievements come about through her dogged persistence and commitment to sustainability. She believes passionately in environmental justice and human rights.

To this end, she co-founded the Nobel Women's Initiative, endorsed by six of seven living female Peace Laureates. She chairs the effort to support activists, researchers, and others working toward peace, justice, and equality for women and thus all of humanity. Williams also continues to fight for the total global eradication of landmines.

Since 2007, she has been the Sam and Cele Keeper Professor in Peace and Social Justice in the Graduate College of Social Work at the University of Houston. Jody Williams continues to be recognised for her contributions to human rights and global security. She has been awarded 15 honorary degrees and, in 2004, was declared one of the 100 Most Powerful Women in the World for her *tireless crusade against war and the lingering effects that armed conflict has wrought around the world.*

In his speech to the 1997 laureates, the leader of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Francis Sejersted, discussed why anti-personnel mines generated such great international concern, despite the fact, he said, that humans have access to much more dangerous weapons. He compared nuclear arms to landmines: *The former are the weapons of the rich, the latter of the poor.* Both harm innocent civilians and have devastating long-term effects. But nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945. Landmines, however, detonate every day, maiming the poorest, most defenceless people.

In an interview, ('People', 27 October 1997) Jody Williams said, *Together we are a superpower. It's a new definition of superpower. It is not one, it's everybody.*

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Further information:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/jody\\_williams\\_a\\_realistic\\_vision\\_for\\_world\\_peace](https://www.ted.com/talks/jody_williams_a_realistic_vision_for_world_peace)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jody\\_Williams#:~:text=Jody%20Williams%20%28born%20October%201950%29%20is%20an%20promote%20new%20understandings%20of%20security%20in%20today%27s%20world.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jody_Williams#:~:text=Jody%20Williams%20%28born%20October%201950%29%20is%20an%20promote%20new%20understandings%20of%20security%20in%20today%27s%20world.)

<https://peaceprizelaureates.nobelpeacecenter.org/en/laureate/1997-jody-williams>



## On Being: A. Pretzel

*On Being is a podcast presented by Krista Tippett, who interviews guests from the fields of spirituality, science, the arts, community activism and more, in order to explore “the animating questions at the centre of human life” (Wikipedia). Previous interviewees include Rebecca Solnit, Carlo Rovelli, Richard Rohr and Desmond Tutu. In this as yet unbroadcast episode, Krista discusses the significance of snacking in human culture with A. Pretzel.*

**KT:** My guest today is A. Pretzel, who will be well-known to listeners from the worlds of buffet catering, airline appetisers and televised sport. Welcome Mr. Pretzel.

**AP:** Thank you, Krista. I was happy to get your invitation, especially as this is the first time I've had the opportunity of participating in a podcast. As you know, the Pretzel name was one of the first to be established in snack provision, and therefore there's always a risk of falling out of fashion in the face of competition from newcomers in the field. But freshness is one of our core values, so this new way of packaging what I believe we have to offer is very welcome.

**KT:** And how do you see your relationship with these newcomers, who do seem to have attracted many fans among consumers of snack products?

**AP:** Innovation is, of course, a driving force in human progress. But, you know, sometimes choice for the sake of it can just leave people bewildered and incapacitated. Who wants to spend 10 minutes gazing at all the shelves in a supermarket aisle, trying to decide between Cheesy Wotsits, Sour Cream and Chive Snack a Jacks, Pickled Onion Monster Munch or one of dozens of brands and flavours of crisps? That's when the traditional snack, such as the pretzel, can provide a familiar and reliable solution.

**KT:** Are you concerned that even the Pretzel brand hasn't been immune to this kind of confusing diversification?

**AP:** Yes. It's impossible not to be aware that there has been a schism among our community. Traditionalists have been challenged by a progressive wing that has sought to make pretzels more “relevant” in the modern market. Hence you will now see such hybrids as chocolate covered pretzels and jalapeno pretzels. Personally, I cannot see the necessity for these.

**KT:** Well, that brings me on to the controversial topic of cultural appropriation. What are your thoughts on that?

**AP:** As you may know, the word pretzel is German in origin and the food has a long, religious history tied to the Catholic church because it could be eaten during the season of Lent since it contains no meat, dairy or eggs. Whilst one wouldn't want to see its consumption limited to Christians observing a period of abstinence, I nevertheless believe a certain restraint should be maintained in relation to the humble pretzel. For example, I question the appropriateness of over-excited football



Fans watching matches from their sofas, wolfing down bags of pretzels whilst consuming excessive quantities of beer.

**KT:** I'm afraid we're running out of time now. But do you have you any final message for our listeners, Mr. Pretzel?

**AP:** Yes. I'd say be cautious about the allure of novelty. Stick to tried and tested ideas that have proved their worth over time, remember to do all things in moderation, and you won't go far wrong in making satisfactory choices in your life.

**KT:** Thank you, A. Pretzel.

**AP:** Thank *you*, Krista.

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**Sock Pretzel**  
**Sally Freedman**



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## Pretzel

Margaret Ferguson Burns



I felt that the main recognising feature of a pretzel is its unique shape, before even its taste or how it feels, smells etc.

Fossils share this uniqueness, in that even although we cannot taste, hear, feel...the creature or substance which came before, we can see their particular shape - and be tempted to pick them up to explore their other characteristics - and maybe appreciate the wonderful place that earth was and is, even after many, sometimes millions, of years trapped in chalk, sandstone, coal, marcasite...



Here are some photos of fossils I found this week on a rocky, sandy, pebbly beach walk under the chalk cliffs of Cap Blanc Nez west of Calais - while the tide was way out - when it's high tide it crashes against some parts of the cliffs where they crumble and fall to reveal the fossils within.



They include a clam shell, ammonite, marcasite, maybe parts of plants or crystals with their beautiful tactile patterns - and a little flint birdie.



What will we leave behind? Will it be a devastated earth - or one where future generations will know that we have nurtured our shared environment with love and kindness to help it heal?"





## Uncoiling

Hilery Williams

Lockdown came as quite a relief to Maureen.

Initially the thoughts simmering in her head caused her restless days and nights. Had she washed her hands after buying the fish on Thursdays? Was her dry throat a sign of illness, or just because she snored (as had been explained to her in humiliating detail all those years ago)? She really should lose some of that weight accumulated since Mother's fall. (Was eating a third biscuit at coffee time really such a wicked thing?) How long should she leave the delivery of hearing aid batteries before opening them?

It was the arrival of the batteries that turned up the heat. She startled awake up at 2 in the morning with the realisation that she didn't have to wear them any more (that would save a bob or two). Two nights later, after her nocturnal trip to the bathroom, she started making detours to the larder before returning to bed. It was a week before the urge to brush her teeth evaporated, even when the snack had been home-made biscuits. A further week passed: the tin of goodies was deposited handily beside the bed.

Soon Maureen ceased to bake altogether, having discovered that online shopping opened up a wealth of opportunities to indulge herself in hitherto unknown delicacies such as Individual Lemon Cheesecakes, Chocolate Fudge Pretzel Clusters and White Cheddar Popcorn. The pleasure of stewing over others' trolleys and the profligacy and poor nourishment noted therein was more than compensated for by the genial exchanges she had with the nice lad (tattoos notwithstanding) which broke the monotony of the week.

For Mother's Day she ordered a big box of Thornton's Chocolates, knowing she would be grilled for offering inferior goods - the Praline Superieure from Lidl which Maureen favoured. It had been six weeks since she had last seen Mum. Oh, she called every Wednesday and Sunday afternoon. The stilted, shouted conversations were beginning to grate on Maureen. And probably on Mum too, though it was hard to tell. There was nothing to report anyway, once the deficiencies of the cuisine, (Curry! On a Sunday!), staff and fellow residents had been pronounced upon.

One Sunday, Maureen watched *Chocolat* with that gorgeous Johnny Depp - in the afternoon! - pretending she was at the cinema (trying buttered popcorn this time). She completely forgot to call the Home. No mention was made the following Wednesday.

Every day Maureen looked at the huge box of pralines. It reminded her of how she loved her mother. And how she loved chocolate. She wondered how the box would fare if she posted it. Perhaps it would become crushed making the sweets inside inedible. Perhaps there would be an unseasonal heatwave which melted the contents. Maybe a postie would be tempted by the goodies within. The cost of postage amounted to almost more than the treat itself.



One Wednesday afternoon Maureen was emboldened. She opened the box and devoured 15 chocolates while she caught up with *The Antiques Roadshow*.

Maureen felt terrible. Did she love chocolate more than her mum? She phoned to confess. Once she thought she had made herself understood, she found to her relief that Mum wasn't cross. The Carer told her that her Mother had ordered an Easter Egg for her two months ago and, realising, she wouldn't see her daughter again for some time, had eaten it all, in one sitting, on Easter Monday.

Maureen's mum never spoke of this: she did not appear to feel one bit guilty about it.

At that point, without a thought or a word, Maureen let go. She let go of fear; she discarded judgements. She ignored the voices of contradictory opinions that flooded her head. She set free the committee of indecision within her. She gave up on the 'right' way of doing things altogether. She ceased to worry, stopped hesitating. She didn't look to a cookbook or Mother or the church for advice. She just let go.

She stopped gauging the niceties of how to be good; she didn't consult anyone to discuss whether she should. She censored the words *should* and *ought* and *must* and *have to*.

Maureen decided to stop living her life through Mother's family recipes, those smells and tastes of long dead antecedents. She taught herself to imagine a different way of sustaining herself.

Maureen released herself from all the memories and anxieties, planning and calculating, menus and methodologies that constricted her.

Maureen straightened her shoulders, stretched upwards and outwards, looked ahead with joy.

She became uncoiled.

*Copyright © 2020 Hilery Williams*



## Portrait Of A Pretzel

Sally Wainwright

When I started this piece I thought of the pretzel as nothing more than a salty snack (*how wrong could I be?!*) and set out to write about Clara Peeters, a 17<sup>th</sup> century Flemish still-life artist. And I will. But while researching it, I was side-tracked by the many beliefs and stories attached to the humble pretzel, leading to a rather circuitous route to our painter, visiting various bakeries, a Celtic goddess, a circus performer and an Algonquin-Mohawk Catholic Saint on the way.

There are many theories as to the origin of the pretzel. According to one, a French monk in 610 CE used left over pieces of bread dough and folded them in a way reminiscent of arms crossed over the chest in prayer (an alternative version has him making the three holes to represent the holy trinity) and then gave them to children as a reward for learning their prayers. The Italians similarly claim that it was an Italian monk who invented them as a reward for children, 'pretiola' meaning 'small rewards' in Italian. Some Germans say they were invented by German bakers being held hostage by visiting dignitaries, though the Bavarians insist they were invented by mistake when a local baker accidentally dipped a sweet pretzel mix into the sodium hydroxide solution being used to clean and disinfect the bakery countertops instead of the intended sugar-water. It is this solution that gives the pretzel its distinctive dark, shiny crust. Although dangerous in its original form, when baked the sodium hydroxide reacts with carbon dioxide in the air, and is converted into baking soda. (Though if you're ever moved to bake some pretzels, it might be easier to use a baking soda solution instead.)

Some believe the pretzel's shape can be traced back to Roman times. But food historian William Woys Weaver claims that pretzels long predate the Christian era and in fact symbolize a human sacrifice to the Gaulish goddess Sirona, worshipped for her healing powers. Weaver says the three holes in the pretzel represent nooses used for hanging three people at once, three being a more powerful sacrifice than a mere single person.

Although she was often depicted as the companion of the Roman god Apollo, Sirona's cult can be traced to well before the advent of the Romans, and was spread through a large area of north western Europe. There are several temples dedicated to her, including an elaborate shrine in Hochscheid (Germany) and others in Augst (Switzerland) and Budapest (Hungary). All have a well or thermal spring in its centre. Statues of Sirona usually show her with a snake (which is still today the symbol of medics) wrapped around her right arm, leading the snake's head to a bowl of eggs held in her other hand.

In 1973 a devout Catholic and ex-circus performer by the name of Marlene Macauley decided that America needed a potent new religious symbol to rally behind and counter the growing secularism of American society. What could be more fitting than the pretzel, with what she believed to be its Christian origins? She founded 'Pretzels for God' (*before you ask, I haven't made it up!*) to restore the pretzel to its rightful



place in Christian history. The PFG movement offered family friendly events and pretzel ceremonies to encourage fellow Arizonians to find their way back to god. PFG turned to a 17<sup>th</sup> century native American woman, Kateri Tekakwitha to provide additional spiritual guidance, declaring her the pretzel patron, despite the fact that pretzels hadn't reached the shores of America during her lifetime.

Takakwitha's mother, an Algonquin, had been captured by the Mohawks and subsequently married a Mohawk chief. Takakwitha was born in 1656 and at the age of 4 contracted small pox, which left her with permanent scarring which she tried to hide by covering her face with a blanket. The small pox outbreak killed her young brother and both her parents, leaving the youngster to be brought up by her uncle. As a young woman she resisted all attempts by her adoptive parents to get married. Instead, aged 19, she converted to Catholicism and took a vow of chastity. (*Draw your own conclusions!*) However, she had to flee to a Native Christian community near Montreal to escape from rumours of sorcery spread by her neighbours. She was a diligent worker, particularly skilled in traditional women's arts, and became known as 'The Lily of the Mohawks'. But she was always sickly and died in 1680 aged only 24.

Her connection to PFG may have helped her canonisation in 2012 as St Kateri Tekakwitha. She is the patroness of ecology and the environment, people in exile and Native Americans.

The association – rightly or not – of pretzels with Christianity has led to them making quite an appearance in religious art, including several paintings of the Last Supper. Pretzels had also become popular as Lenten food since they adhered to the strict Lenten fasting requirements of the Middle Ages. Pieter Bruegle the Elder's *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* depicts a popular community event which represented the transition from one culinary tradition to another. In it, pretzels appear on the float of Lady Lent alongside other traditional Lenten fare.

Bruegle's name has also been mooted as one of several artists who may have taught the early 17<sup>th</sup> century artist Clara Peeters, whose paintings include *Still Life with Cheeses, Almonds and Pretzels*. This painting includes some of her trademarks such as the silver knife engraved along its edge with her name. The handle also has two naked women on its main face. 'Bride's knives' such as this were typically produced by silversmiths in Antwerp around 1595 – 1600 and may have been one she actually owned.

Peeters was one of the first still-life artists. Her earliest known painting *Still Life*, which happened also to include a P-shaped pretzel, was dated 1607, at which time little more than a dozen such paintings had been produced in the Netherlands. She often incorporated sometimes multiple reflections of herself in the polished surfaces of objects such as plates, pitchers and vases. (In this painting her head can just be seen on the edge of the jug.) Although the technique was not itself new, Peeters was one of the first artists to include such self-portraiture in still-lives.

She became only the second artist ever to include dead game birds in her paintings – both freshly killed and plucked and ready for cooking. Her innovative style spread



and other artists who adopted her style are considered members of her small though prominent artistic school, called by some 'the circle of Peeters'.



By Clara Peeters - www.mauritshuis.nl :Info : Pic, Public Domain,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20034536>

Despite Peeters' significant influence, many basic facts about her – even the dates of her birth, marriage and death – are unknown. There is a record of her being baptized in 1594, but this suggests her earliest signed works were completed when she was only 12 or 13 leading some art historians to suggest she must have actually been born earlier. This was not uncommon for female artists who, no matter how skilled, generally lacked the power, wealth or influence to ensure their life and works were recorded and collected. This imbalance continues today, with women artists significantly underrepresented in museums around the world, and their work fetching less than that by men.

But to go there now would be a road too far from the question of pretzels, so I'll leave you to chew on this. 🥨

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Further Information:

- <https://earthandstarryheaven.com/2015/03/08/sirona-healer-goddess/>
- [https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=154](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=154)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kateri\\_Tekakwitha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kateri_Tekakwitha)
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- <https://artandtheology.org/2016/02/29/praying-with-pretzels/>
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Clara-Peeters>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clara\\_Peeters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clara_Peeters)