Adelia Wise

Artist Statement

By using charcoal on a large scale, I hope to invoke the raw vitality it possesses, its mobility and ephemerality, in juxtaposition with flesh and the human form. Paper celebrates our physicality with a vulnerable skin-like texture, and represents limited resources, simplicity, and fragility. The importance of scale is to surpass life-size and envelope the viewer, forcing intimacy on them. In doing so I attempt to confront my audience with the deeper issues within these forms – the conversations that we really need to be having – about humanity, nature, and adaptability.

Everyone’s experiences through life are unique to them, though they may be shared by humanity throughout time and across culture – like becoming a parent. Despite this adventure being sought upon by human beings since the beginning of our time on Earth, many of the tribulations and trials a new mother goes through are kept private, providing the perfect breeding grounds for anxiety and fear. The seemingly natural things a body should do are not always so simple, and although medical science swoops in with miraculous cures and solutions they can often be preemptive and capitalistic in their intent, pressuring new parents in their most vulnerable times and further disrupting nature’s process. Many of my current works, like “Injection Site,” are dealing with these dualities of nature and science, bodies and their (dis)functions, relationships between the physical and mental self, between an individual and the person they choose to have children with, and between a mother and her children. They are personal and explicit; my goal is to undress the issues surrounding fertility and motherhood, such as “Clusterf\*eding,” where I attempt to render the delicate tangle of my breastfeeding journey. Though the topic has been politicized like everything else to do with a woman’s body, this piece is reflecting on the mental and physical strain placed on a woman to provide for her babies while swimming in hormones and sleeplessness.

On themes of anxiety and relationships, the threesome of large charcoal figure drawings entitled “Call,” “Me,” and “Daddy,” depict a man’s hands on a woman’s body. Unlike many of the other works I have made similar to these, where the individual is manipulating their own body, contorting and pressing into it, this triptych invokes a different kind of discomfort from the viewer. The most obvious conversation is about male dominance and feminism, but more specifically I want to discuss sexuality, consent, and the metaphorical struggle between two people in a relationship. Each are an illustration of anxiety manifesting itself as physical aggression.

For future endeavors, I intend to further explore my changing role as a mother, as well as the dualities of medicine and culture vs. nature, and better defining the idea of what is “natural.” While I am primarily utilizing my own personal experiences, I am interested in being a voice for underrepresented identities navigating similar trials, such as trans people taking hormones and cis women struggling to conceive. I want to unpack the way culture has deemed some medical intervention as socially acceptable but others not. While confronting these difficult realities, it is important to maintain the dignity of the individual and avoid exposing too much of an already raw area. My goal is to empower and inform the viewer through a compassionate but unfiltered lens.