

“BEAUTY OF BODY”

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A few years ago I took my first art class as a college student. I remember being extremely nervous, not knowing what to expect walking in there on my first few days. I always had this idea in my head that I wasn't good enough to be in these classes and that everyone would be so much more skilled than I was. The course was Figure Drawing I with Professor Hurler. He was this sweet, older man, short with gray hair and oddly enough his wife just so happened to be my first grade teacher. I found comfort in that and in the professor's demeanor. He was always so welcoming and so knowledgeable and dedicated to having us learn. Even once I began to feel comfortable, he managed to push me to grow even further.

There was one thing he said to me that has stuck with me ever since—I have always been such a perfectionist and hated the idea of being messy and making mistakes – “Make a mess,” he said. “The work we make emerges from that mess and is just a part of the process.” This class is where I truly learned to love the process and to enjoy each step as it comes. It is where I found my love for figure drawing and the human body.

‘The more I explore drawing the figure, I find it resonates with my personal beliefs of sexualism and objectification. Figure drawing allowed me to take this process that I learned to love so much and turn it into something even more meaningful to me and deliver a greater message.

“Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.”

-Berthold Brecht

I have grown to love this quote so much and it has truly shifted my mindset on art. Art is used to send a message and that is what I try to do. The female body alone is art to me. We should be glorified, yet we are shamed. Growing up, society teaches girls that in order to be respected and safe we must hide ourselves. We are deprived of self expression and self love. Women should not have to change themselves to fit into a mold that men created and that is just simply unobtainable. If you show too much skin you are a slut, if you don't show enough you are a prude. If we as women embrace our bodies and our curves we are cocky, not confident. This applies to weight as well. Weigh more than 130? You're overweight and gross. Weigh under 110? You're anorexic and gross. In the world of women, we are never enough.

I use my artwork to work through these misrepresentations and tropes. My art allows me to capture the female body in all its glory. Capturing this takes vulnerability and bravery, but is worth every ounce. It allows people to soak in the beauty of the female body without judgment.

Women are not objects to be critiqued but masterpieces to be explored. I believe that women are art and should be viewed as such.

The perspective society has on women is greatly explained in the article, *The Effects Of Sexual Objectification On Women's Mental Health*, by Emma Rooney. In the article, she defines sexual objectification as “occur{ing} when a woman’s body, body parts, or sexual functions are isolated from her whole and complex being and treated as objects simply to be looked at, coveted, or touched (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).” In simpler terms, women are seen as objects, or property. Women aren’t viewed as a whole, they are viewed as parts, parts which are then sexualized. People see these parts as objects they can use for personal enjoyment, to look at and/or touch. Rooney follows up by explaining the shift of how women are viewed after being objectified. They describe it by saying, “Once sexually objectified, the worth of a woman’s body or body part is directly equated to its physical appearance or potential sexual function and is treated like it exists solely for others to use or consume (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Szymanski, Moffit, & Carr, 2011).”

Again, this proves my point that women are seen as objects for others use instead of beautiful humans, capable of amazing things. Their worth is put in the hands of society and being taken away from them because of

their appearance. Women were not created solely for the purpose of pleasure, but that is how they are treated. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, “self worth is a sense of one’s own value as a human being.” Dr. Lisa Firestone believes that self-worth should be less about measuring yourself based on external actions and more about valuing your inherent worth as a person. In other words, self-worth is about who you are, not about what you do or what you look like. This type of behavior can be harmful if women internalize these judgements and self-objectify. This can lead to negative consequences such as a greater sense of body-shame and an increase in unwillingness to speak in social interactions.

While our bodies are more than these objectifications made towards us, our bodies can still be used sexually without negative connotations. I am inspired by the artist Vivian Greven and her thoughts on this as well. She too, is a figure artist and she tends to capture emotional intimacy and gestures of love. Rather than being explicitly sexual, she portrays bodies in a more sensual way. She says in an interview for *Art Maze Mag* with Layla Leiman, that her work is “...certainly about intimacy. But not in an explicit sexual sense... it’s more about being close to each other. It’s about trust.” Her form of art delivers a message of trust and vulnerability, as opposed to the negativity some people might surround such with. She says in the same interview, “I appreciate the body and try to overcome its cruel disregard in

contemporary society. The body wants to be our most loyal companion but we want it to look and function like an electronic tool.” Greven uses her art to look past the negativity surrounding the human body, instead glorifying it.

While I do like to work from a live figure, most of my thesis work has been modeled off of photographs I have sourced online. I enjoy working this way because it allows me to study my subject as long as I need and pick a pose I feel most drawn to and that I feel delivers the message that I intend it to. I often lean towards more intricate poses that really capture the beauty of the body. I chose to display pieces of mine where the figures are in intricate positions, one of which is a female body curled up on a pedestal. I chose this position because I thought I could capture the vulnerability of females through this diffident pose. I thought the curve of the spine was a beautiful detail to showcase, with the slight appearance of the side of her breast all while keeping the face out of view. In these pieces I chose to not include the figure’s faces to stress the importance of the body to their meaning. I want the focus of my art to be the beauty these figures hold, from the curve of their backs, the positioning of their legs, to the tenderness of their breasts. I capture this by choosing poses that I feel truly showcase these aspects of the body.

Personally, I feel as though my work relates to a similar meaning of Vivian Greven, but that I tend to capture the process in a manner quite like that of Kjetil Hansen. It wasn't long after my professor told me to 'make a mess' that I came across Hansen and his work which was comparable to that of my own, immediately drawing me to his. While doing some research on him and exploring his work I was led to his biography and instantly felt understood. He writes,

"I've always liked the natural, organic aesthetics that you can get with charcoal. When I first tried it I found it very messy, but I realized the potential it had if I could control the mess. After a while it became more exciting to not try to control everything, and let things go a little. I went to art school once. Life drawing was the only thing that interested me."

I have never related to something I read so much in my life. From the messiness to the style of art we both enjoyed. I tend to work primarily in charcoal making pieces that are fairly large, but intimate. The use of the charcoal to define and accentuate the different curvatures of the female body is what I am most passionate about and enjoy the most when drawing. I love taking a stark white page and seeing it transform into beautiful figures

just through highlights and shadows, as opposed to sharp, distinct lines and strokes.

My work is a constant reminder that our bodies are exactly that... ours. Sexual objectification occurs when a woman's body and sexuality become the defining aspects of the person as a whole. I want my work to move beyond the realm of a drawing and instead be viewed as a message. Our bodies do not define us. Our bodies are art. I hope that these pieces serve this purpose justice.





**Anna, dancing, part 5 version 2**

21.65 x 29.53 x 0.04" Charcoal drawing

2023

by Kjetil Hansen



**Ameeka, waking**

29.53 x 43.31 x 0.04" Charcoal drawing

2023

by Kjetil Hansen



**Becca and the curve**

29.53 x 43.31 x 0.04" Charcoal drawing

2022

by Kjetil Hansen





**The Unknown Woman**

18x24 Pen and Ink

2021

By Jamie Velardi

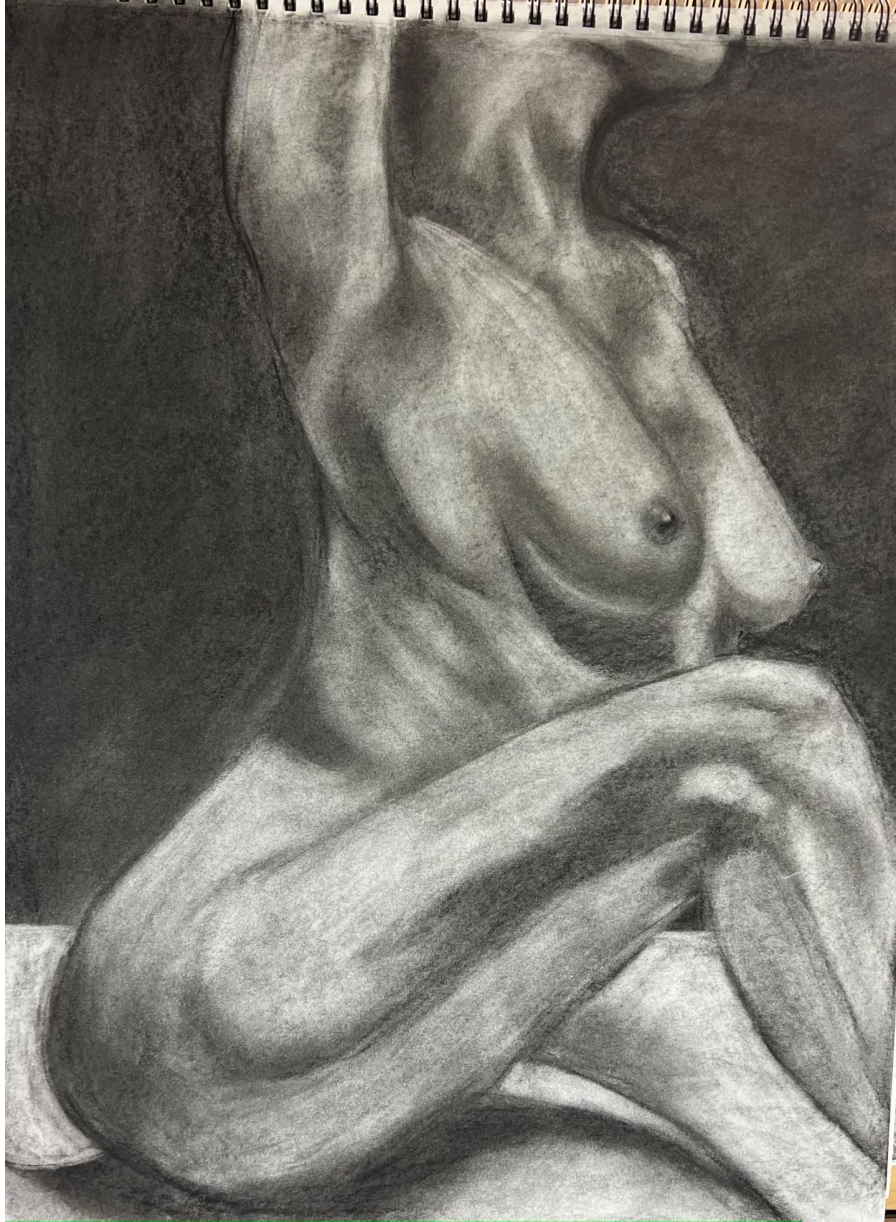


**Comfort**  
18x24 Pen and Ink  
2021  
By Jamie Velardi



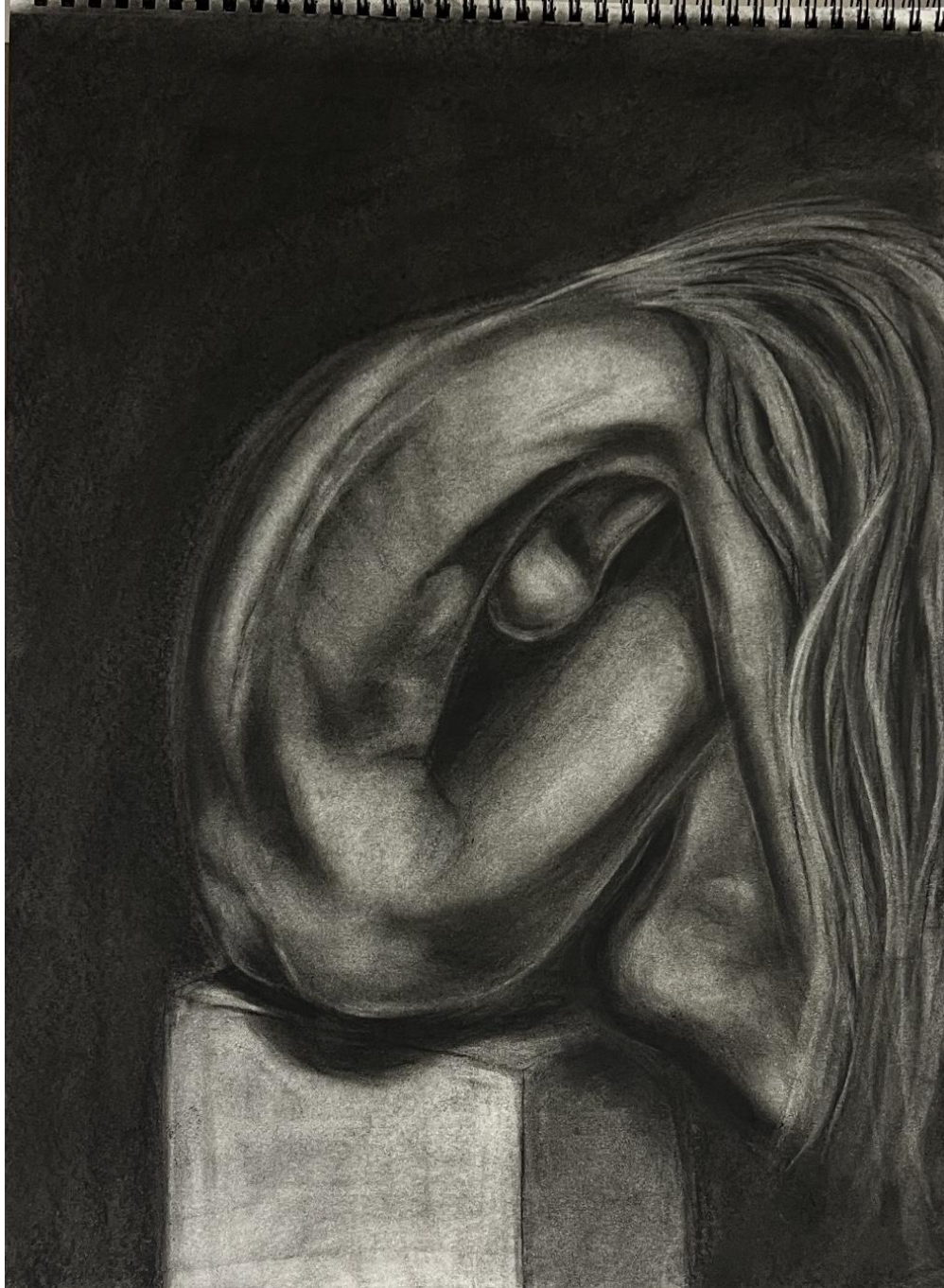


**Curvaceous**  
18x24 Charcoal  
2022  
By Jamie Velardi



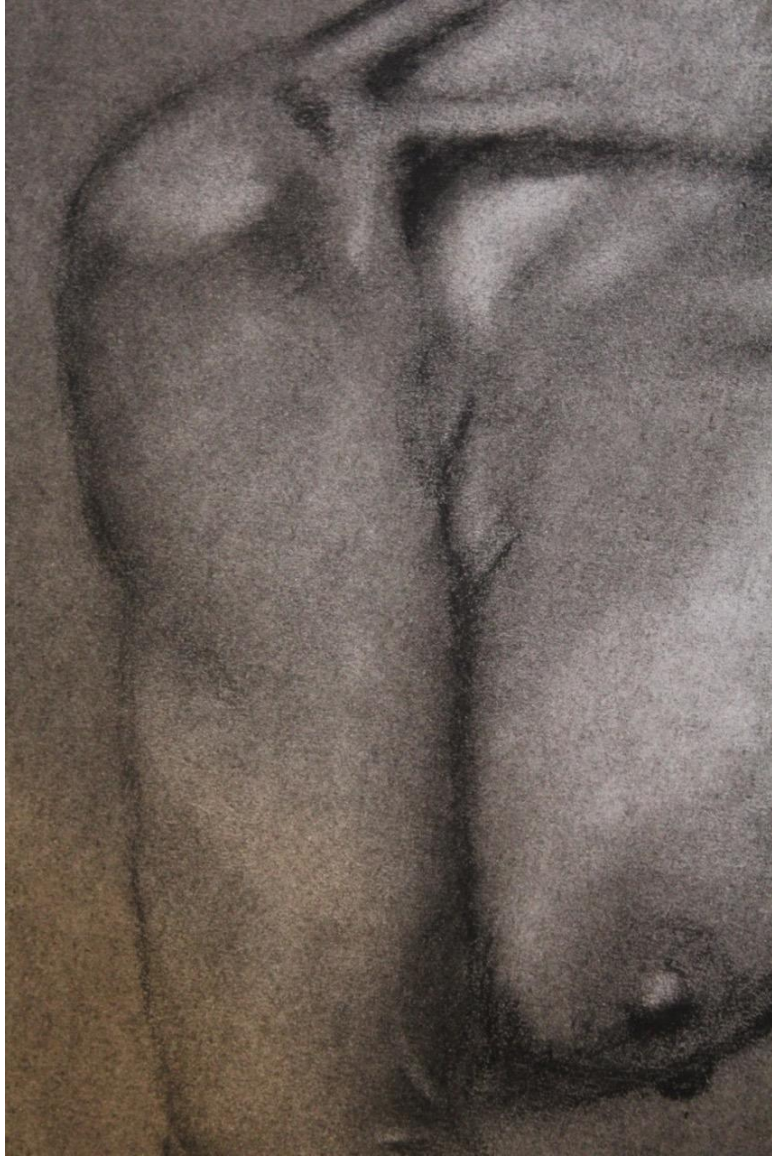
**Woman**  
18x24 Charcoal  
2022  
By Jamie Velardi





**Vulnerability**  
18x24 Charcoal  
2022  
By Jamie Velardi





**Delicate**  
18x24 Charcoal  
2020  
By Jamie Velardi



**Tender Woman**  
18x24 Charcoal  
2021  
By Jamie Velardi

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