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Sara Gallagher utilizes graphite drawings to provoke dialogue around the inner landscape of the human experience. In a society that has never fully embraced the importance of mental health, Sara is actively working to break the taboos that surround it. Creating a collaborative experience, she engages with her models personally allowing a vulnerable, authentic discussion to set the direction of each piece.

Sara Gallagher

Explain your process. It all starts with a vulnerable, honest dialogue. I have an open call for people to participate in my body of work, inviting them to share about an emotional or mental state of being they are currently working through. Often prompting them with “how do you engage with (or, what is limiting your engagement with) intimacy within your own life? Intimacy with yourself, with others, with your culture or society?” This begins a deep and personal conversation, unique to them yet often related to others.

From there, I build the visual concept through the use of thumbnail sketches and photoshoots. Piecing these images together in Photoshop I create my photo reference, and finally begin to draw. Lines, layers, and then details. The piece is truly finished when it is released into the world sparking new vulnerable dialogues to begin again. An act of intimacy within itself - to find emotional connection within a piece of art.

What current trends are you following and why? Hyperrealism and the effect it has on modern day surrealism. The incredible attention to detail that contemporary realists are focusing on is beginning to take surrealism, and magical realism for that matter, to whole new depths. Art has the ability to portray that which isn't physical; Dali conveyed the subconscious, Turner encapsulated emotions, etc... The hyperreal movement is creating a new opportunity to visually manifest that which otherwise isn't seen. We live in a world with crispness at our fingertips - details are no longer lost in reproduction of everyday print, photo, or video. Contemporary artists are following suit and personifying concepts in just as crisp of way. It is both demystifying and mystifying at the exact same time.

What role does your artwork have in society? Everyone needs to be heard, to be seen. That being said, there are often

many parts of ourselves that we feel we need to keep hidden from others, even those closest to us. My artwork serves as a tool to give voice to the emotions that many of us feel, but rarely talk about. The relatability in these intimate, private places connects us in new ways and breaks away some of the taboo surrounding the importance of emotional and mental health in our society. When a piece of mine helps someone to find empathy and compassion for themselves or another, that's when I've succeeded.



Ripple, 2021
Graphite on paper
14 × 14 in