

SHAWNA MILLER

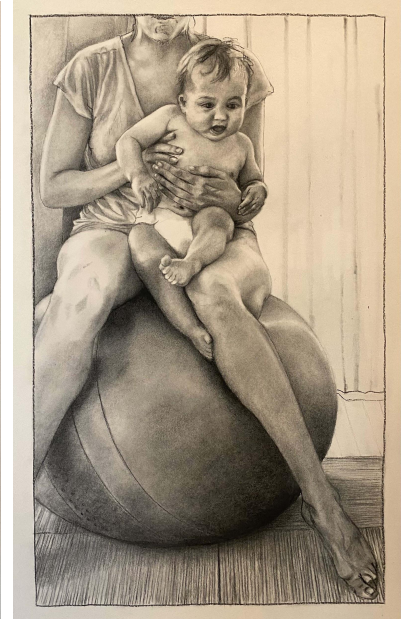
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Oil on panel, 16x20"



Oil on panel, 12x12" each



Charcoal on paper, approximately 12x20" and 20x20"



Work in progress

Self portrait: 32x46", right image 16x20"

Size range and pricing

Oil on panel work starts at 12x12" for \$1,500, 16x20" for \$2,250; large works 30x42" and up start at \$7,500.

Artist Statement

My current body of work addresses the labor of early motherhood. After my first son was born, my work as a new mother felt invisible — I felt invisible — and I needed to be seen in a way that felt real and true to my experience. For many mothers, a gap exists between the palatable, socially acceptable view of mothering and what we actually experience in the flesh, and the mind. I paint to narrow that gap.

Funnily enough, in art making, meanings and readings aren't always what they first seem. In the case of my work, they are one thing *and* another. In the process of creating images that I thought were about me as a mother, I discovered they had just as much to do with me as a child. I lost my own mother suddenly at age 14, and that fissure has loomed large, subconsciously, for almost 30 years. In much of the work, my body has become a proxy for hers in a return to, or a retelling of our history as mother and daughter.

Most of my work is oil on linen or panel. I chose oil paint for its historical connotations of heft, permanence, and value. My paint application is slow, deliberate, and layered. This is purposeful. Time is the unseen element in my work, much as it is in the seasons of grief, or the continuity of raising a child. Time passes unabated and unseen until we suddenly mark it via some new, wider perspective, or we witness it in the face of a child who has grown.

CV or exhibition resume

I am a self-taught painter. I have not exhibited in the Roaring Fork Valley within the last year, and do not have plans to participate in any shows within the next twelve months.

Exhibition Proposal

The body of work I would like to showcase at The Art Base explores the weight of motherhood.

I am working on two related sets. The first set contains smaller paintings — oil on panel, 12 x 12” and 16 x 20” — and one triptych in charcoal on paper. These paintings show tightly cropped images of arms holding children. They represent the physical and emotional weight, and pressure, of maintaining babies. Holding is a physical act that implies closeness and intimacy, but also some necessary forms of resistance. The child in your arms is soft, but also heavy. Holding requires strength and counterforce. The child, while held, feels supported, unless the grip is too tight, and then she’ll squirm. I am fascinated by this dance between two bodies in need of each other.

In this vein, I’m also at work on a very large (4’x 6’) painting in the same style.

The second set of paintings consist of life-size portraits of mothers, and one father. These are domestic moments capturing parents as they exist behind closed doors and beyond the gaze of society. These portraits elevate the everyday. Unkempt hair, yesterday’s makeup -- all of the grit of everyday living. I choose to elevate this state instead of hide it. It represents the countless hours of ordinary living that go into childcare. By showcasing these moments, I hope the artwork encourages viewers to interrogate our culture’s attitudes toward women and gendered labor.

MOTHERLOAD

by Kate Baer

She keeps an office in her sternum, the flat bone in the center of her chest with all its urgent papers, vast appointments, lists of minor things. In her vertebrae she holds more carnal tasks: milk jugs, rotten plants, heavy-bottomed toddlers in all their mortal rage.

She keeps frustration in her hallux: senseless chatter, jealous fangs, the spikes of a dinosaur’s tail. The belly is more complicated — all heartache and ambition. Fires and tidal waves.

In her pelvis she holds her labors, long and slippery. In her clavicle, silent things. (Money and power. Safety and choice. Tiny banquets of shame.)

In her hands she carries their egos, small and flimsy. In her mouth she holds their laughter, gentle currents, a cosmos of everything.