

I'm going to tell you a story.

A story about pain, yes,
but actually,
no,
I don't think it is.
Because art is never inspired by pain.

Motivated, maybe.

But if this is a story about inspiration,
yes, that feels right,
then it is also a story
about stories.

The ones grafted into stones,
molded out of clay,
hidden—with fingers dipped in berry-red dyes—on mountaintops.

Stories.

Why am I telling you this?
Well,
our art is made of these stories.

And this is mine.

Two years ago I decided I was going to recover
from a multi-year struggle with mental-illness.
It was during this time that I discovered
the destruction of
the invisible,
is made easier through creation of
the visible.

For me, art began as a way to cope when I couldn't see a way out of pain,
when I was consumed by all the things that I believed made me irrevocably broken.

I used to take my anger,
my sadness and fear,
out on my body.
I punished it for nothing.
For keeping me alive.

For nothing.

I am still trying to fix all the damage

I did.

All the pain

I caused.

I am ashamed at how I treated my body for so long

but everyday,

despite my hatred,

it kept moving me forward.

My heart kept beating.

My skin kept healing.

Even when I didn't deserve it.

I used to loathe self-portraits,

but now,

everytime I photograph my body

myself

draw it

make it central

make it seen

I'm saying "i'm sorry"

"i am so so

so

sorry."

I am making a promise that I will take care of it, and proving to

myself

that it deserves a place amongst all the other

respected and beautiful

things.

I used to write a lot, too.

Sometimes I wrote lengthy poems

(would have never guessed...),

other times I scribbled gracelessly on scraps of paper;

none were masterpieces,

but,

even now,

Even now,
many of my pieces are accompanied by
Lines.
Of.
Text.
Or.
Words.
Floating
here
and
there.

For me, art began as a way to cope when
I felt like no one could see me,
nothing could save me,
but now,
I know that it has the possibility to be
so much more.

I want my work to validate the unseen:

the wounds sustained from invisible battles,
the unimaginable joy in tiny victories,
the mundane bravery of
living.

I want my work to comfort those who need it the most:

who would give anything to be seen,
to know that there are others who survived,
that it is possible to be “broken”

and still *enough.*

I believe that art has an unrivaled power
to connect with the most vulnerable parts of us,
to call forth the unnoticed begging to be understood,

to convince us once and for all that
we are not alone.

Art taught me that

I
am not alone.

And so,

to you,
to everyone who sees the paper-and-pen parts of me that I put into the world,
who stops to listen to my story:

You
Are
Not

Alone.