



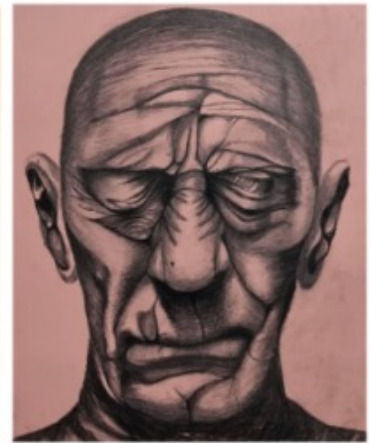
HeifeKollwitz: A Conversation between Victoria Heifetz and Käthe Kollwitz

Victoria Heifetz argues that in the dialog with Käthe Kollwitz, the artist's fear of death, bereavement, and nothingness has been forgotten. Is forgetfulness an erasure? Like Kollwitz's child clutching a mother who struggles with death, Heifetz holds on to herself and her drawings. Still, she says, to rebuild a present and a future, to change – you must let go.

Conversation / Victoria Hefez December 4, 2024

Excerpts from a conversation between Victoria Heifetz and Michal B. Ron, September 25, 2024

Untitled-1.jpg



[1]

From the top right corner, from right to left:

Victoria Heifetz, Dance First, Think Later, 2024, graphite on paper, 300x400 mm

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), Woman with a Dead Child, 1903, line etching, drypoint, sandpaper and soft ground with imprint of ribbed laid paper and Ziegler's transfer paper, 424 x 486 mm

Kn 81 VIII a, Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln, Inv. No. 70300/89021, www.kollwitz.de [2]

Victoria Heifetz, A Man's Head, 2024, graphite on paper, 500x700 mm

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), Death and Woman, 1910, line etching, drypoint, sandpaper, soft ground with imprint of granulated tone paper and Ziegler's transfer paper, and roulette, 448 x 446 mm

Kn 107 IV, Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln, Inv. No. 70300/93008, www.kollwitz.de [2]

Victoria Heifetz, Strange Fruit, 2021, graphite, charcoal and ink on paper, 3 x 1,5 mm

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), Death and Woman, 1910, line etching, drypoint, sandpaper, soft ground with imprint of granulated tone paper and Ziegler's transfer paper, and roulette, 448 x 446 mm

Kn 107 IV, Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln, Inv. No. 70300/93008, www.kollwitz.de [2].

Are we talking about erasure, or forgetting? In my drawings there are a lot of deletions, literal - deletions with an eraser. Over time, I realized that it was nice to see the deletions and also see what



I deleted.

[Untitled-2.jpg](#) [3]



[4]

Victoria Heifetz, Mrs. L., drawing on paper, 2014, detail

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), Death and Woman, 1910, detail

What I do with my body, and what I do with the drawing, is a process that relates to physical change, to the erasure of the past, reconstruction for the present or the future. My drawings take this to a place of transformation, a change of body, that raises questions about it during the drawing process. And a kind of process of love, hate, forgetting, memory, pain, compassion, and that's what's important. And that's also what's beautiful about drawing. Drawing, its ability, if drawing is the thing, you really manage to reach a very wide spectrum of emotions, through drawing. How you press the pencil, how much you press the pencil on the paper, how much the paper resists the pencil, or resists the charcoal, resists the ink, how much you caress the paper.

[Untitled-3.jpg](#) [5]



[6]

Victoria Heifetz, Strange Fruit, 2021

Käthe Kollwitz, Death and Woman, 1910

This is also what connects me to Käthe Kollwitz. The hard work with the drawing. The drawing attacks the paper, the drawing does not apologize, there is a direct connection between the hand that draws and the paper and the pain that was inside her. She deals with bereavement and the separation of a mother from her son, even before it happens to her in real life. In the drawing Death, Woman and Child (1910) in which the mother is gripped by the hands of death, which is a huge shadow that stands behind her and holds her hands, and the child who clings to her body to her breasts and holds her breast, I read this as if he does not want to part from his mother, does not want to part from the breast, and clings as much as he can. What I love about the drawing, which almost makes me cry, is that there is a drawing here that deals with the fear of losing, the great fear that I also have of death, which is very present in my works, the fear of change. In Kollwitz's drawing, this touch of the child on the breast is so moving to me, because I see how I cling to myself, I don't want to let go of the past and on the other hand I so want to let go of the past.

[Untitled-4.jpg](#) [7]





Käthe Kollwitz, Death and Woman, 1910, detail

Victoria Heifetz, Strange Fruit, 2021, detail

[Untitled-5.jpg](#) [9]



[10]

Victoria Heifetz, Strange Fruit, 2021

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman and Child, 1910

[Untitled-6.jpg](#) [11]



[12]

Victoria Heifetz, Strange Fruit, 2021, detail

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman and Child, 1910, detail

People don't understand this process of gender reassignment surgery, which is actually a deconstruction of the thing itself, and I see the surgical act as a "redrawing" of what exists, which is really what the doctors do. I'd always felt that it was like that in my drawing too, that the things are there, and I bring them out of the paper, and that's why erasure is very relevant because it is also an act of making something present.



[Untitled-7.jpg](#) [13]



[14]

Käthe Kollwitz, Death and Woman, 1910, detail

Victoria Heifetz, Revival, 2018, drawing on paper, 300x150 mm, detail

In Käthe Kollwitz's work, the void is part of the work.¹ The white of the paper is a part of it for her, and for me too. The white is not a white that surrounds the figure, but rather the figure is in nothingness. In the void. Kollwitz is one of the only people, the only women, who made bereavement present. Because what is it to deal with nothingness? How does a mother cope with the death of a son? How do you deal with the aftermath, with this nothingness? Many artists here [in Germany] dealt with the Holocaust in the context of *die präsente Abwesenheit* - the presence of absence. Kollwitz deals with this a lot.

Forgetfulness` here is the struggle against forgetting. The way I read Kollwitz (we won't know, because we didn't talk to her), and this was reinforced when I discovered that she dealt with death before it happened, she didn't fall in love with death. This is something I can understand how people see in me, "Why, why so hard"? Falling in love with the romance of pain. I don't think that's the story. The way I read Kollwitz, and the way I know about myself, and I see the similarity between us, is to deal with the fear of death, and with death, to really fight death, because you are afraid of it. That is, the fear of forgetting, the fear of nothingness, the fear of bereavement. I see it as a mother who doesn't want to experience death. What mother wants to experience death, and of a son at all? And she took drawing as a tool to deal with death. In my context, I draw because I'm afraid of losing what



was and accepting the future.

[Untitled-8.jpg](#) [15]



[16]

Victoria Heifetz, Strange Fruit, 2021, details

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman and Child, 1910, detail

I think the fear of loss is a fear of death, and I want to think, and that's how I read Käthe Kollwitz, who had never wallowed in pain and death. It's no coincidence that in Israel I discovered that there were prints of her work in every kibbutz room, because the State of Israel venerates the sacrifice of children to war. Kollwitz didn't talk about it at all. It's hard to lose a child. And there is a crazy fear of death. She is terrified. And that's what she puts into the drawing. Drawing in her case is a direct tool, it's so real, so that's why she drew it before death happened, it was just uncontrollable. And then, the sad thing is that it did happen.

She was a pacifist. She was against wars. She did not call for the sacrifice of children for the sake of war, on the contrary. After her son died, and even before, she opposed it.

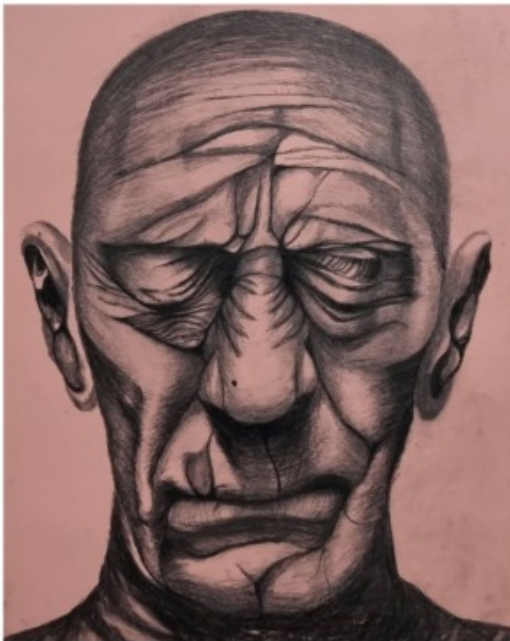
She refused to let death win. She didn't want to forget. Drawing, or art in general, is a way not to



forget. It is a way to make something present. To make ourselves present. And it's interesting how they chose someone who was afraid to make present and turned her works into something that was 'for the sake of national sacrifice'. In both Germany and Israel. How can you embrace bereavement as something legitimate? How can you hallow the sacrifice of your most precious thing for the sake of society, or war, or the existence of a state?

Every person must let forgetting to happen in order to continue living. Because it's part of life. And we're constantly fighting it. We don't want the body to wear out, we don't want to forget what we were, but to preserve it. The entire field of cosmetics is designed only to perpetuate what we were, so that the world will not forget it. But there is no choice, this is a battle whose outcome is known in advance. Death will come, the end will come, and old age will come. And it comes, the change happens, whether we want it or not. That's what happened to me with the gender change. You can continue to ignore it, but it's there. It happens, whether you like it or not.

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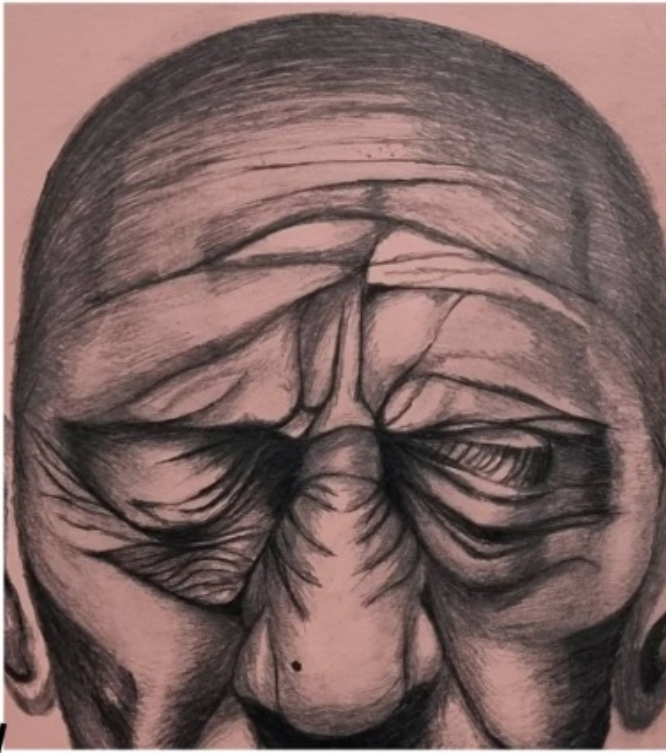


[18]

Victoria Heifetz, Head of a Man, 2024

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman with a Dead Child, 1903

[Untitled-10.jpg](#) [19]



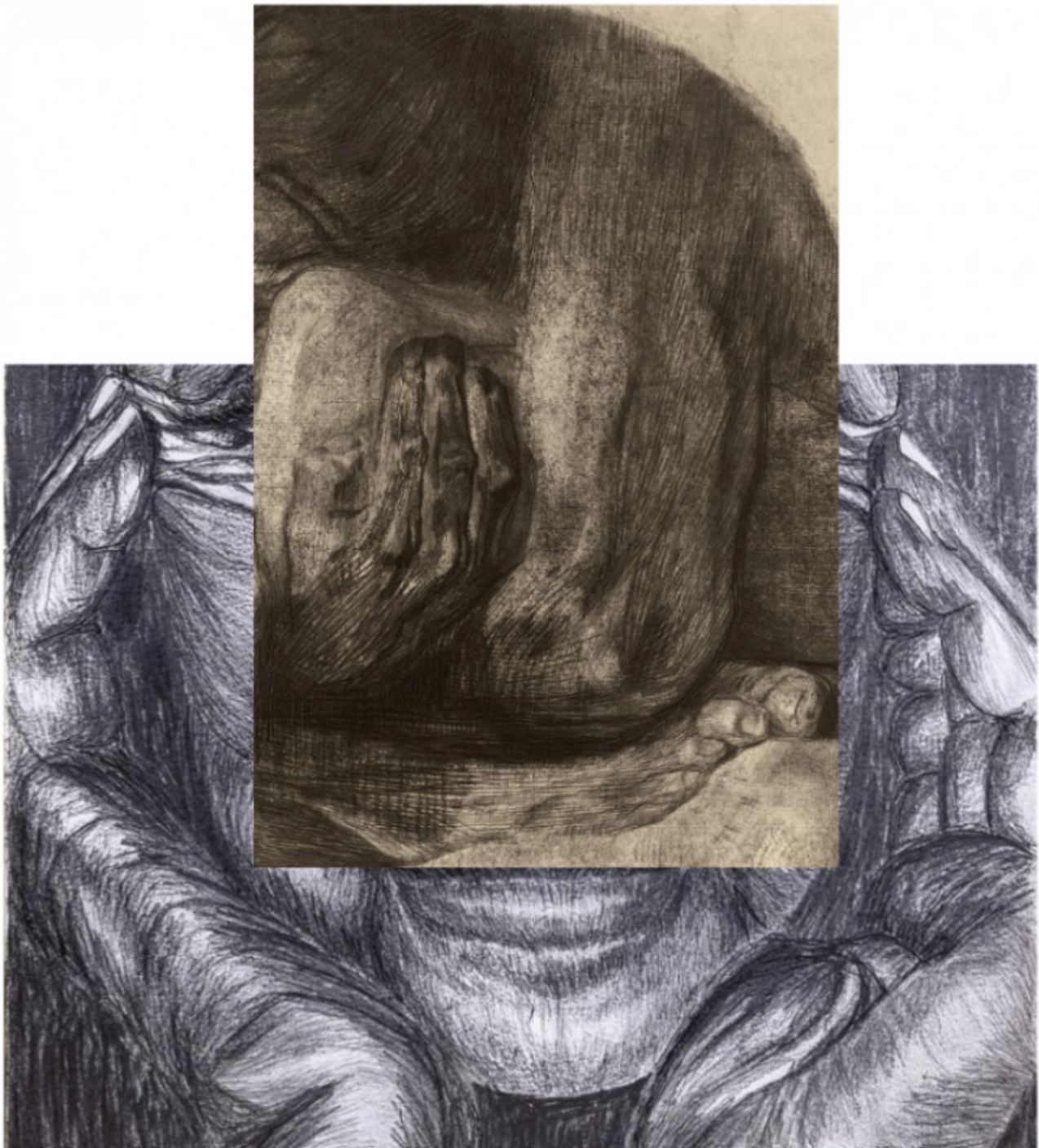
[20]

Victoria Heifetz, Head of a Man, 2024, detail

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman with a Dead Child, 1903, detail

The gender discourse undermines conventions, and demands of people: forget what you know.

[Untitled-11.jpg](#) [21]



[22]

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman with a Dead Child, 1903, detail

Victoria Heifetz, First Dance, Than Think, 2024, detail

I say to the world, let go. Release what has been. Let me change. Conversely, I am terrified of it. I also have some romanticism and nostalgia for the past. As much as Kollwitz had fought death, there must be some romanticism of death, and pain, which I, too, have.



[Untitled-12.jpg](#) [23]



[24]

Victoria Heifetz, Strange Fruit, 2021, detail

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman and Child, 1910, detail

[Untitled-13.jpg](#) [25]



[26]

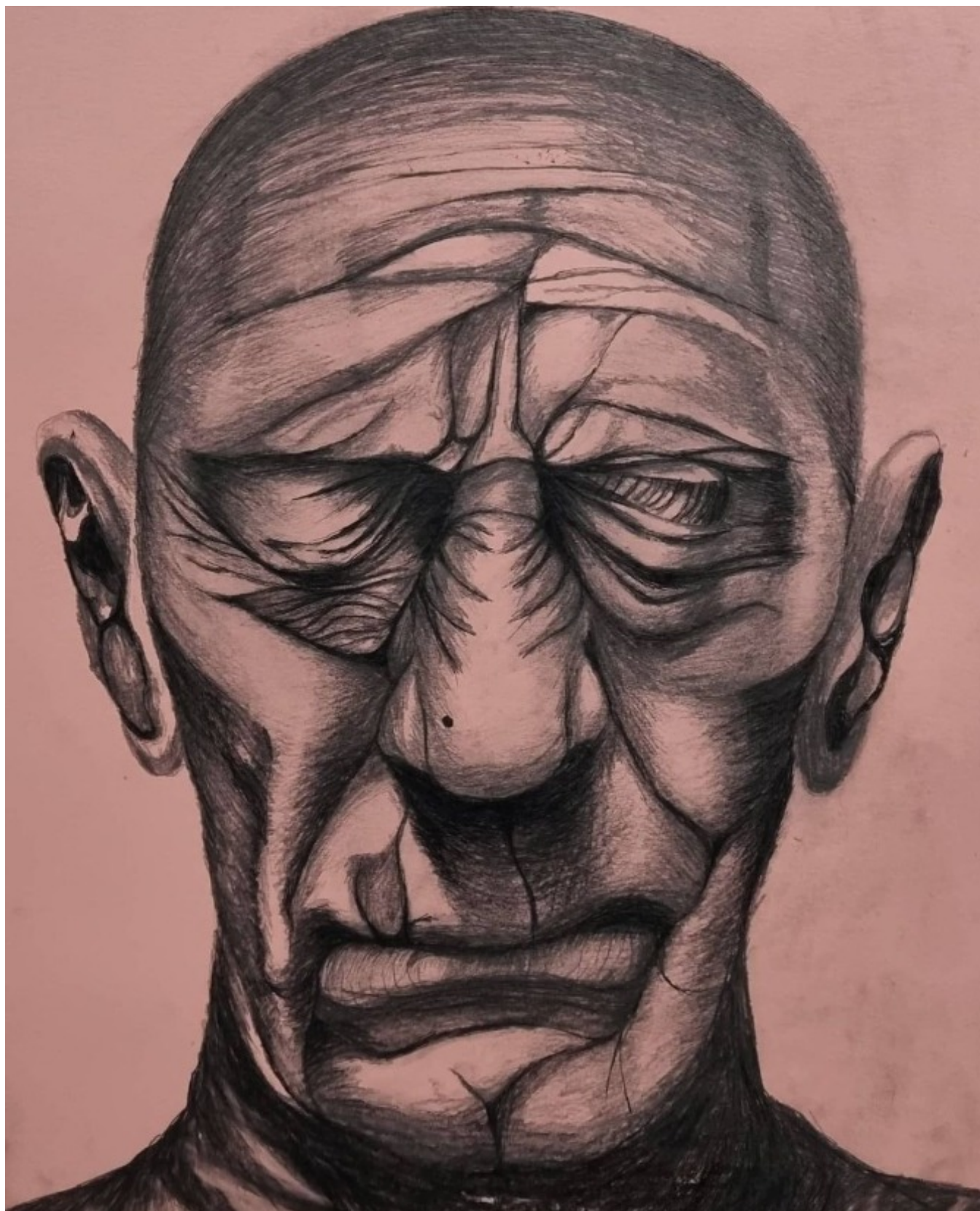
Victoria Heifetz, Dance First, Think Later, 2024

Käthe Kollwitz, Death, Woman with a Dead Child, 1903

Käthe Kollwitz faces Death that has destroyed, killed, erased, and obliterated the life she had created. I am creating something new, and, in every creation, there is an act of killing the past. On the bright side, there is this optimistic gaze that looks at life.

This is the reason I do what I do and haven't given up. I could have given up, killed Victoria, and not let her be. Or let her be behind closed doors. But I am creating her, I am letting her be, in front of the world, in front of myself. There is a presence here of someone who wants life. I am so afraid of death, so preoccupied with it, trying to control it. It is so contradictory to art, because you have to let go... Will I be able to close my eyes? Let go? The moment the mother holds the child is the moment I grip myself. I can't grasp this moment, that when I die, everything will be controlled by biology, God...

[Untitled-14.jpg](#) [27]



[28]



[Kn 81 VIII a.jpg](#) [29]



[30]

[5Heifetz_Revivel_DrawingOnPaper_2018_300x150.jpg](#) [31]



[32]

[Kn_108_XIII_sig.jpg](#) [33]



[34]

[StrangeFruit5.jpg](#) [35]



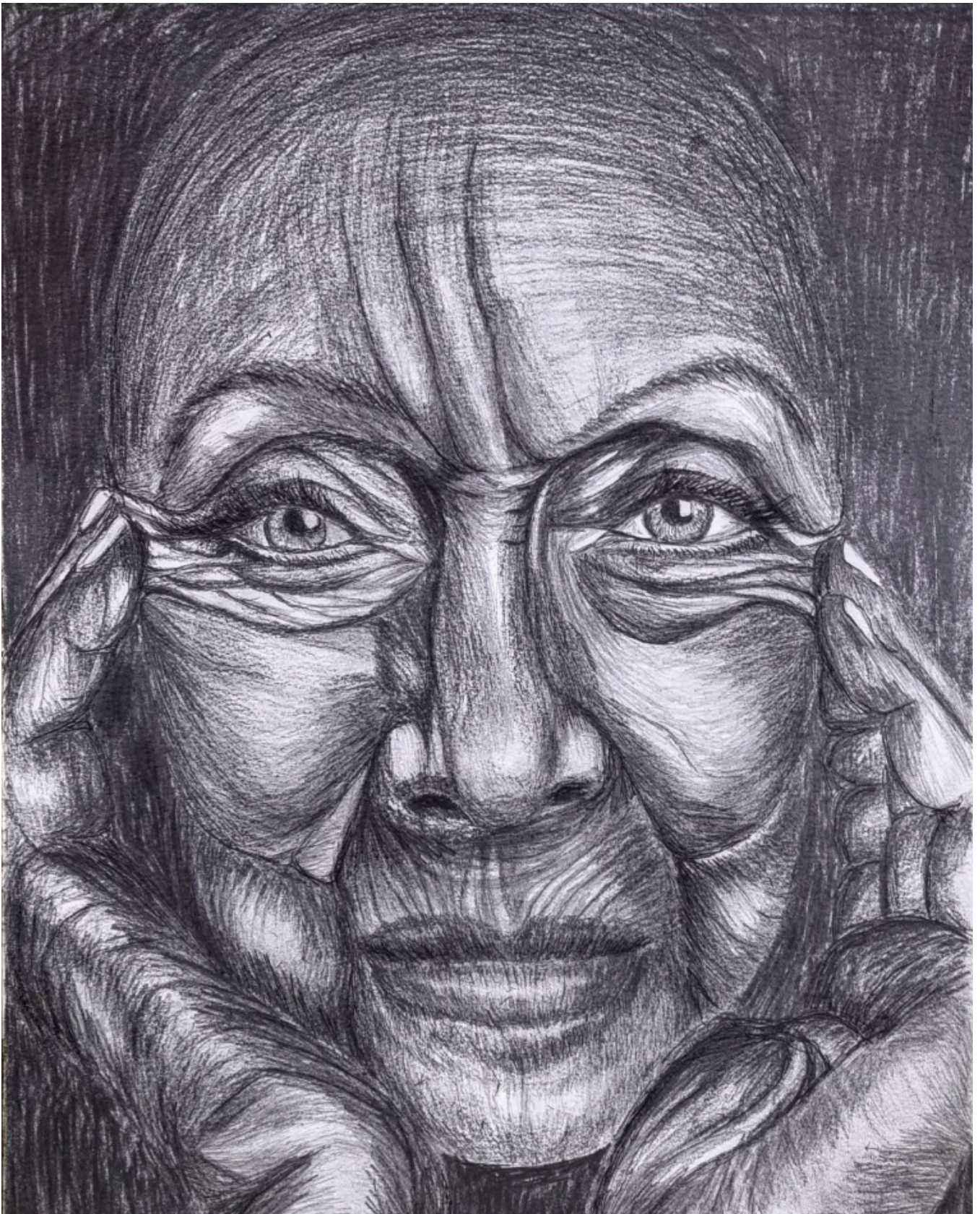


[Kn 107 IV.jpg](#) **[37]**



[38]

[Dance first. Think Later., graphite on paper, 30 x 40, 2024.jpg](#) **[39]**



[40]

- [1.](#) In Berlin, Käthe Kollwitz's artwork, *Mother with her Dead Son* (*Mutter mit totem Sohn*), is displayed in the Neue Wache (New Guardhouse). Formerly, it was a royal guard building, and now it is a monument to the victims of war and violence in general. Inside is an enlarged



version of Kollwitz's sculpture of a mother holding her dead son. What's significant is that they have left the entire Neue Wache building empty; this emptiness is part of the artwork and the memorial.

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Links

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