

:::flowers unfolding:::

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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
University of Washington
2021

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Program Authorized to Offer
Degree: School of Art + Art History +
Design

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::abstract::

Art is a regenerative kind of healing magic. In the studio, my body works with my mind to make paintings, drawings, collages, ceramic objects, hand-written words, and multi-media instillations. Through this work, I examine how my menstruating, gender-fluid white/pink body/mind of Irish decent moves through space, and the interactions I have with plants and other humans. So many lives are steeped with pain or plagued with depression; my work is done in mourning for those lives and in questioning the rigid structures of a racist, ableist, sexist, homo/transphobic, patriarchal society. I tend to these pains with witchy practices such as herbalism, tarot reading, astrology and dreaming. When these cumulative experiences are released in the studio, they take shape in intricate, vibrant images which are meant to captivate viewers, giving them a momentary release from this hurting world.

This work is a rebellion against the guilt-ridden catholic religion I was raised under: cutting paper is a substitute for confessing sins, recycling and reusing materials replaces eating the body and drinking the blood of christ, repetitive mark-making is my own way of praying. Changing materials into art is a way to channel my thoughts about this hurting world, and curing the pains that linger in my body as a result of what I experience. Through this embodied examination, I hope to be a small part of the transformative healing our world so desperately needs. By changing materials in my studio into beautiful forms, I find magic within the mundane.

She sat alone on the floor of the studio, dreaming pictures in shapes of crustaceans, mushrooms, birds and fruits, thinking them symbols of her histories, travels and futures, thinking them outlets for her fears, angers, anxieties, thinking and sinking deep into her body, slipping further away from the hardness of the buildings walls, from the coldness of the air and the pressing seams of her manufactured clothing. There, inside she felt the goo of the earth, damp dark vastness, wide blinking moments of existence, placed neatly onto the circle shapes that surrounded her, described carefully on the rectangle behind her.



:::flowers unfolding:::

Childhood memories: a photograph above my mother's bed, of a whale's tale rising out of the ocean, which I for a long time thought was a bird. *The Wizard of Oz*, played on repeat so often that I memorized the lines and recited them to my grandmother and grandfather. My grandparents: stacks of books, wide-eyed beauty and joy for life interlaced with stern determined hard love. My parents: stacks of books, a sadness that lifted in moments of nostalgia, sports-games-on-silent with guitar playing or folk music on the radio. Subtle whiffs of late night nicotine or weed. Newspapers and black coffee in the morning. Love that was so deep it stung, so clinging that it created claustrophobia. Tales of bygone years. Dreams of change, never changing. Loving god out of habit rather than passion. Not feeling our bodies, existing in our heads. Me, sitting on the floor in a quiet corner, drawing :: beginning with large moving yellow shapes, narrowing down to blues, thin red lines, and black or green if the need was there.

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In *The Search for the Real in the Visual Arts* (published 1948), artist and teacher Hans Hofmann ponders the surrealist artist's belief that art is magic. He determines that art cannot be magic unless the metaphysical act of creation is also magic. 33 years later, in *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*, ecofeminist author and activist Starhawk defines magic as "changing consciousness at will." And in *Parable of The Sower* (published 1993), Octavia Butler shares the journey of Lauren Olamina, who comes to understand: "All that you touch / you Change / All that you Change / Changes you / the only lasting truth / is Change / God is Change." In the studio, the act of drawing, painting, carving, cutting, shaping, and gluing is a way to bridge my daily fears and anxieties with a dreaming, playful mind. This brings me to a settled space, where I feel able to uproot and examine my lived or inherited sensations and experiences. As a queer white menstruating human of Irish decent who lives and makes art in 2021, at a time where our world struggles to dismantle its anger, hatred and self-harm, I imagine art to be a regenerative, healing magic. I listen to folk music that reminds me of my dad, and I read books that recall my mother. News and daydreams and longings for an unattainably perfect future merge with these sounds and words. My medicinal herb garden grows slowly, protected by mugwort and yarrow. Contained inside these parentheses of my life, I make art that wonders how my experiences affect my white/pink body/mind as I move through space to interact with plants and other humans. My hope is that through this creative examination of what exists inside of and around me, I can heal from any pain that has become stuck in my body, and be a part of the greater healing that is so drastically needed on this hurting earth.

My work of exploring the metaphysical, magical act of following creative impulses begins within a room. Inside of this room is a tree that I painted on the wall. It is a memory of the tree that lives outside the studio, existing physically behind the wall that it is painted on. It is the tree I see after I park my car and before I enter the studio, or when I have a smoke break from working. Amber Scoon's *Quantum Art* examines a creative practice that comes from the inherent desire to draw and mimic what one sees. Scoon explains that the world is constantly changing, and that by attempting to copy what we see or experience, we are engaging in an act with uncertain, infinite results. In the at-

tempt to copy what is seen, the artist engages in work that is constantly changing. (Scoon 196-7) The painting of this tree extends down to the tree's roots and the floor of the room, and up towards the ceiling, to the sky and the heavens. Rain pours in from the ceiling, nourishing the fertile ground, and the many seeds of thought or experience which have wandered into the room begin to sprout and grow. My painting of the tree changes with the experiences I bring into the room; in this effect, I engage in the willful change of consciousness that Starhawk defines magic to be. The following are moments which elaborate on these shifting experiences:

Through a computer's speakers, guitar strumming, soft hand-clapping and the warbling singing sound of Townes Van Zandt enters the room :: *i bet you a dollar against this next line. Don't let the sunshine fool ya, don't let the bluebirds tool ya, don't let the women do ya, put your hand in mine.* The words land as sunlight streams onto a yellow corner of the room. *DON'T LET THE SUNSHINE UOY LOOF.* Mercury, the planet of communication is stationed retrograde, so some of the words appear in reverse. Sunshine is particularly deceiving in Seattle, where a momentary burst of sunlight is often followed by hours or days of darkness and rain.



Twice a week I “put my thinking cap on” and tune into *Higher Learning*, a podcast hosted by Rachel Lindsay and Van Lathan, who discuss Black culture, politics, and sports. Early in quarantine, I got sick of reading the news, so I turned to these two personalities to keep me informed. They spoke in my ears while I worked in the studio, cutting paper, shaping clay, moving shapes of color paper across the floor. They spoke one September afternoon of the ways in which, though slavery is legally long over, the mindset that created slavery is still violently alive, reminding listeners that only once the sun of white supremacy sets, will the moon of equality and justice finally rise. The sun, a star of outward shining, embraces masculine energy; the moon carries within it’s shifting rhythms dark feminine vibrations. Inside of the room, I began to dream about the shift from sun to moon, imagining the end of patriarchal rule, and a return to a matriarchal consciousness. No longer letting the sunshine fool me became a metaphor for the efforts I make to actively unlearn the white supremacist ideologies that I, a white benefactor of existing in a racist society, habitually embody.

In line with turning away from patriarchal consciousness, I question the catholic religion I was raised under. This leaves a void where the structure of organized search for understanding existed, which I fill by looking at the world around me, and copying what I see, much in the way Amber Scoon describes. Recently, the longing has expanded, and I began to seek additional methods of meaning, mindful to steer myself towards the direction of the queer and the feminine, keeping in line with my decision to turn away from patriarchal power dynamics. Vicki Noble and Karen Vogel’s circular-shaped *Motherpeace* tarot deck, Chani Nicholas’ astrology for radical-self acceptance, and adrienne maree brown’s compilation of essays and interviews titled *Pleasure Activism* become part of the rituals I seek as spiritual satisfaction. Pulling cards and staying updated on planetary shifts via the Chani Nicholas app provides me with means of moving through the day. In *Pleasure Activism*, adrienne maree brown invites readers to be curious about our minds and our bodies, to not settle for suffering, or fear our desires. She inspires us to seek pleasure and embrace positive change within ourselves. Whereas catholicism teaches that we must repent and make sacrifices to earn a spot in the freedom of heaven, brown teaches that pleasure can be accessed through realizing that we are already

free, sexual beings who have the power within ourselves to re-learn living a pleasurable life (brown 13). The semi-regular ritual of tarot reading provides a lens through which to view my day, with a much more flexible and optimistic scaffolding than catholic prayers and sacrifices. The work of these queer femme visionaries collectively help me to feel my emotions instead of suppressing them by moving out of my head and into my body. A spirit can grow wild, even after it's been tamed by repeated prayers, sacred names and holy waters.



On a cool October morning, I pull the Justice card from my *Motherpeace* tarot deck :: *setting things right*. The card depicts three fates holding the threads of destiny in their hands, spinning the threads, determining what is to come. Speaking to being close to the earth, it asks us to spend time in nature to seek balance. “Nature works in calm quiet ways, giving us what we need rather than what we want sometimes. The Justice card means you can tune into the “rightness” of your situation if you make

the effort to understand it fully.” (Noble 71-5) So three fates came to sit in my painted tree, receiving rain and sun from above, looking down on what occurs in the room, weaving the fate of the situation.

A body which once turned inward and covered itself carefully slowly unfolds, begins to feel the ground it lives on and flow with the air around it. Resmaa Menakem wrote *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* in 2017. Menakem traces America's current mode of self-destruction back to the American Civil War, and then further back to Europe in the Middle Ages, to explain that white supremacy exists as pain or trauma trapped in our entire country's blood and nervous system. "Social and political actions are essential [to ending white supremacy], but they need to be part of a larger strategy of healing, justice, and creating room for growth in traumatized flesh-and-blood bodies." (Menakem ix-xvii) Throughout Menakem's



book, he provides methods of embodiment practices and mindfulness activities which help readers of all colors to access and soothe/heal these pieces of pain which linger deeply in our human systems. Resistance to change causes both physical and bodily harm. I have seen this pain arise in myself and others as a looming cloud of depression, and I have spent much of my life trying to tame this depression. In her hybrid memoir/essay *Depression: a public feeling* (published 2012), Ann Cvetkovich argues that depression is a social condition rather than a medical problem, which comes largely from the colonialist and capitalist shaping of our country (116), edifying Menakem's theory of inherited pain. Cvetkovich discusses various forms of depression, including her own experiences, and consults critical race theory and queer theory to understand and share ex-

amples of artists who cope with depression through their work. Of compulsive crafting, Cvetkovich observes: “Unlike forms of self-sovereignty that depend on a rational self, crafting is a form of body politics where agency takes a different form than application of the will. It fosters ways of being in the world in which the body moves the mind rather than the other way around, or in which, echoing neurobiological views in another register, body and mind are deeply enmeshed or holistically connected (168).” In merging Menakem’s embodiment exercises with the compulsive making that Cvetkovich sites, physical movement and manipulation of materials become a way for me to break the cyclic patterns of my over-thinking mind. I use paint, paper, clay, markers, wood, pastels, ink pens, tape, graphite, gesso, glue, hand-painted fabric and glitter in my work. By embodying the physical and mental action of focusing in to make repetitive lines and dashes, cutting shapes, mixing, slicing, scraping, scratching, scrubbing oil paint on a canvas surface, stretching my body wide to make washes of color :: pausing to dance or stretch between periods of working :: climbing on a ladder to reach high up, squatting, kneeling or laying down to work low to the ground :: my body settles, creating space for healing to occur. “A calm, settled body,” Menakem writes, “is the foundation for health, for healing, for helping others, and for changing the world (151-2).” Changing materials into art in turn changes me, generating growth like seeds sprouting, and flowers unfolding.



I sealed the room's ceiling shut with a pink, fleshy-like paper ceiling. On a dark winter morning, I entered the room feeling sad, depressed at the state of the world, and wanting to make myself feel better. I sat on the floor with many colors around me, and drew my body moving through the space. I became increasingly interested in my white/ pink body, who makes paintings and small sculpted objects, who menstruates, who gardens. I left feeling lighter, as though a piece of healing had occurred. The small drawings of me performing these movements evolved into three body-sized paintings, and the fates high in the tree help me to weave these shapes :: *if all you told was turned to gold, if all you dreamed was new* imagines a cool February morning, sun shining brightly on my figure, crouching low to make circle shaped drawings, which echo the shape and images of the *Motherpeace* tarot cards I pull. Words fall from the sky, like the blue-toned sounds of Enya's singing, the music my mother loves to listen to.



Concrete world, full of souls depicts me as I emerge from the garden in a haze. It is the day after a car accident which I was lucky to survive, and I am menstruating heavily. Three angels hover around me: my paternal grandfather, and my mother's grandmothers; their energy perhaps the reason for my survival. I have pulled yarrow to help slow my bleeding, and mugwort to assist my dreams, deepening my connection with these angel relatives, who all died years before I was born. I recall my father singing Bob Dylan's *Three Angels*, which relates Dylan's own first steps after recovering from a motorcycle accident.



Is it the bridge between worlds that makes you feel alone? looks at my figure in the garden, gathering the mugwort and yarrow I have grown; the grandmothers observe from a distance. A painting practice creeps beyond the edges of a canvas: its imagery converses with the tangible world, leaning into objects that are sculpted, words written on pages in a quiet book, or particular objects assembled in a particular way. These three paintings nest for this month inside the walls of the Henry Art Gallery. There, they sit low to the ground, offering painted symbols that support the journey of their growth. Little birds rest on the painting's shoulders, tying them to the sky above. A subtly shimmering gold glows above them like warmth from the sun.



In these three works, the gender identity and the plane of existence of the figures is intentionally ambiguous, symbolizing my journey of moving away from the gender binary and the restrictions of linear time. In particular, I relate to the discussion of gender and non-locality in Ali Smith's 2015 novel *How to be both*, which is divided into two intertwined narratives. For half of the book, the painter Francesco del Cossa (1430-1477) narrates in the first person, existing as a spirit who lingers by their painting which hangs in a museum in 2014. They do not remember how they died, but they know that they are in a strange time which does not belong to the year in which they were alive. Reflecting on this, they narrate: "Long gone the life I, the boy and the man I, the sleek good sweet-eyed horse Mattone I, the blushing girl I." (Smith 171) There are many moments where Francesco refers to themselves in the feminine and the masculine, and though they clearly move through the world perceivably gendered as male, they seem to embody and identify with both of these genders. Their spirit tags on to the protagonist on the other side of the novel, a 16 year old girl named George. Francesco's ambiguous floating spirit sees George and refers to her as a boy. It takes Francesco a long time of following George to see that she is a girl. The discussion around gender, and most everything from Francesco's side of the novel/painting are ambiguous, continually shifting in perspective and time. Ali Smith's ability to unite George's seemingly regular life with the shimmering watchful eye of a deceased gender-fluid painter reminds me to open to the potentiality of magic in everyday existence, and to consider that a painting can have more than one side.

Moved by the desire to make my own vibrant, magical expression of life which contains multiple sides and identities, the room has changed again. A small diorama sits on the floor of the open white-and-gray gallery: inside of it, paper rain falls and painted sunlight drops onto a small clay slab which depicts the red-dress-wearing figure seen in *if all you told was turned to gold, if all you dreamed was new*, sitting on the ground, building her tarot cards. From the bottom of the picture emerges a yellow tape line. The line moves across the floor, through the gallery, to a door with pink and red painted fabric, urging visitors to follow this yellow tape line, as Dorothy did when leaving munchkin land, looking for her way home with help of the Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz. The line leads

out the door, down the hall, arriving to another door with pink and red painted fabric. A small pink sign says : *come on in and stay a while. you can do whatever you want. vibe on, you beautiful human you! xoxo quinn.*



Open the door :: A dream-like fabric caps the ceiling shut, the figure who emerged on the paintings now stands in front of the tree, painted strips of rain and fabric streams of sun collide on their body. Memories of other places edge their way into the room, towards the old painted tree. Patterns from the fabric ceiling echo onto the wall and the floor, encasing visitors into this space which holds memories of many moments, moving through the thoughts, feelings and vibrations which emanate from the body of the artist who wakes slowly from dreaming, easing their way into the day by way of reading the tarot cards they pull.



Nestled in the room, at the end of the yellow tape line, lays a book:

the tower:
a transformative
awakening

quinn meridrol



The artist wakes slowly in the morning. Although they cannot see out of any windows from where they lay, they can tell that the sky is blue, that the sun is out. Birds are chirping. Rising is hard. Their head is thick with the dreams, which were dark grey, clouded with overlapping figures who reached for glowing yellow feels, who straddled their legs, moving across rooms while standing laying on their sides. All the colors were painted onto the surface so that everything stayed tinged in that gray. They flip and turn and drift there for some time until their body finally gets up, moving slowly through the rooms, taking care of themselves, dressing, rolling out the mat, lighting the incense, breathing in then breathing out, sitting, standing, bending, lifting up, turning right,



opening, shifting, sensing, aligning, warming,
sitting, humming, slowing, laying,
floating. Finding themselves arising. They pull
a tarot card: XVI: THE TOWER.



"Shattering the structure. The Tower represents destruction and cataclysmic change, an earth-shaking stroke of illumination and the end of false consciousness. It is the karmic end to a cycle or evil period which will be a radical change in the consciousness of human/life existence. In Hindu tradition, this period is referred to as the Kali-Yuga. Kali! The goddess of death, destruction & creation. She represents the edge of truth, the fire that burns away falsity and the misdeeds of the past. The tower is the ego death, the end of mental control. It is truth, intuition,



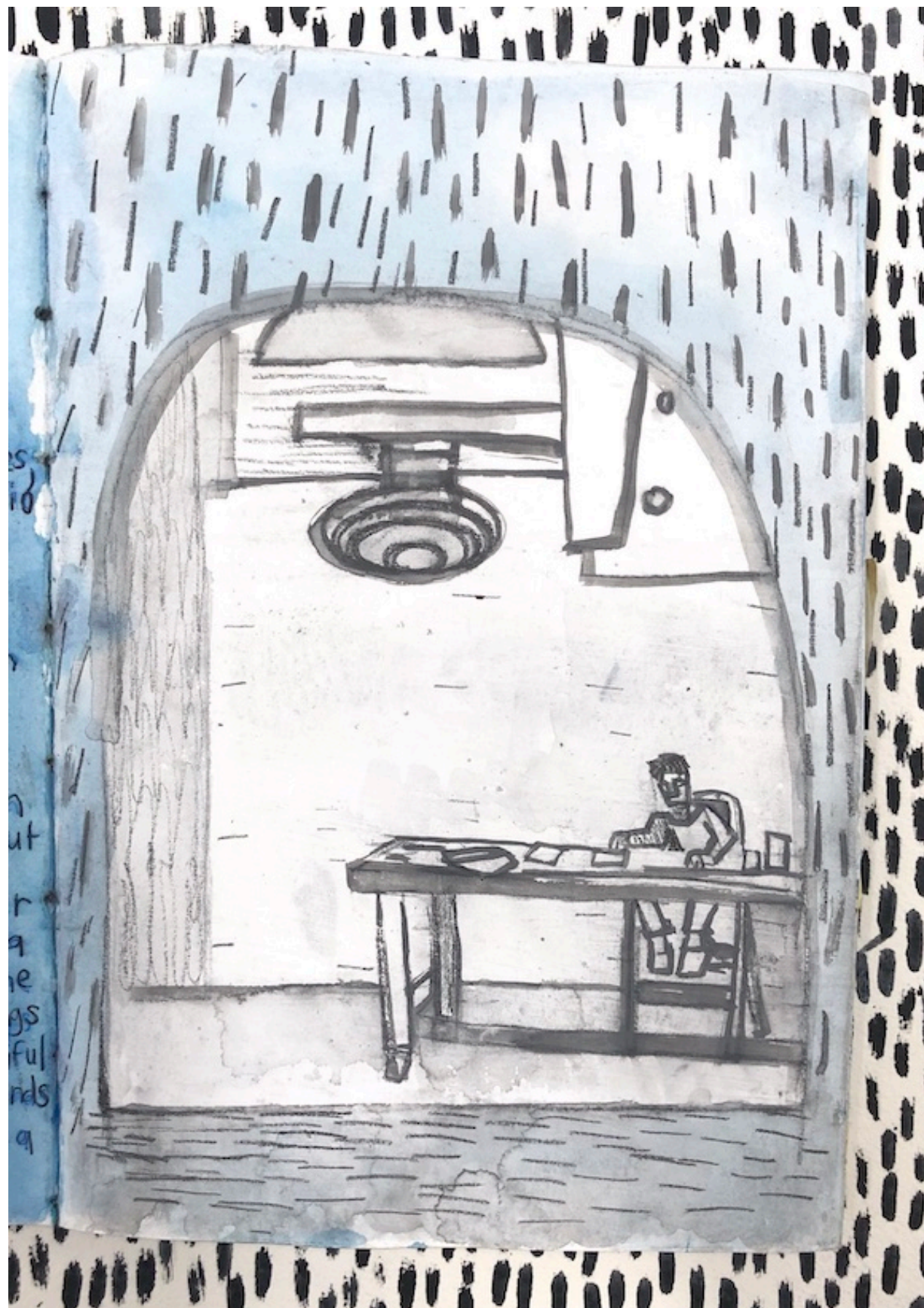


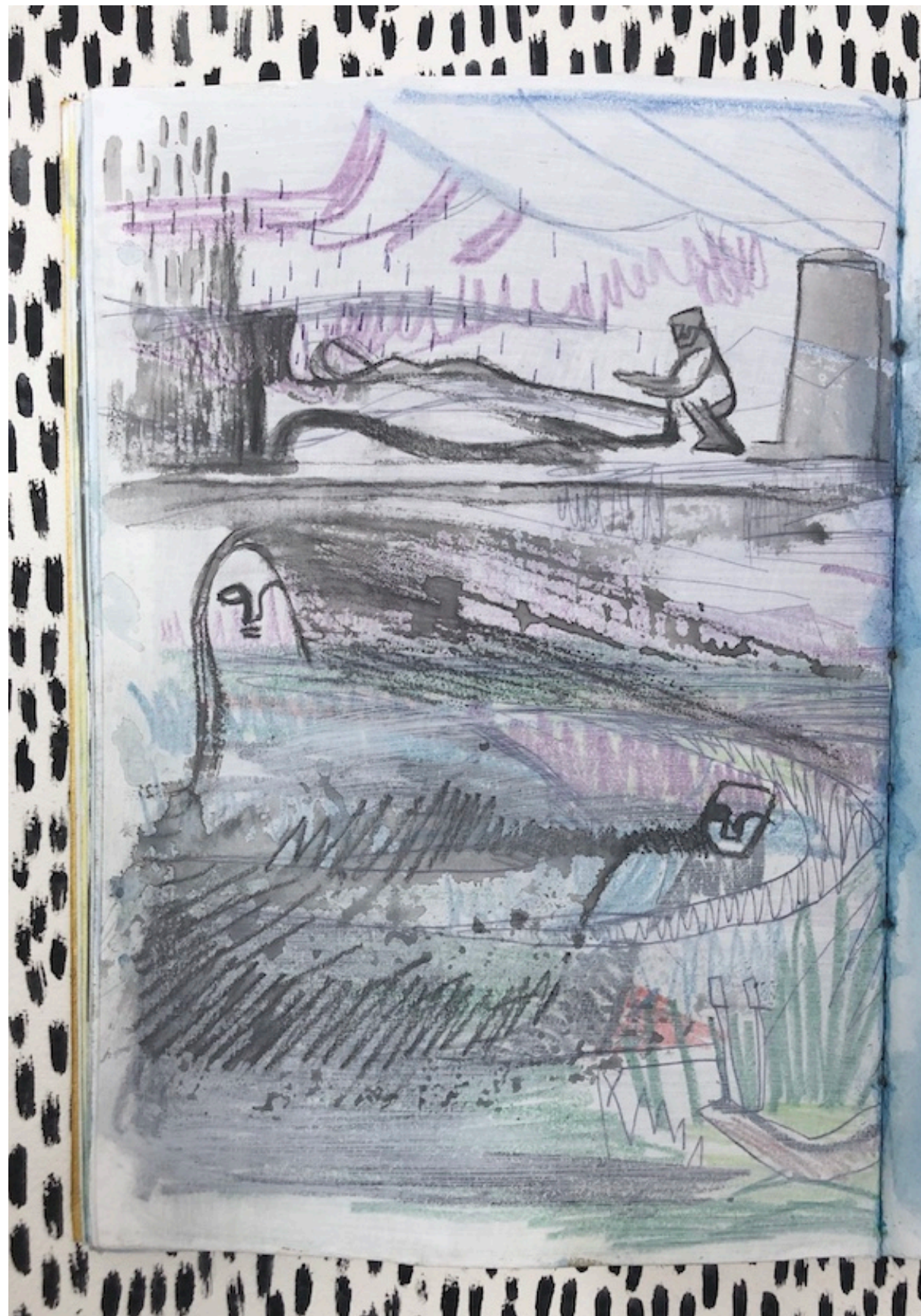
life force. Standing atop the tower, they catch a bolt of lightning with their bare hands. Their eyes are open and they radiate energy of fire from their head, the force of creative energy. Behind them is the dark sky and the ocean, feminine powers of intelligence & wisdom. On the ground are members of their community whose illuminated minds are burning old concepts, who are ready to wash away the ashes and enter the new age - the age of Aquarius, ruled by Uranus. Old structures and ways of thought are shattering: The end of white supremacy! The end of patriarchal evils! The end of power over, and the start of finding power from within, of true human autonomy, of valuing and loving and listening to the people who have been pushed to the margins and repressed. The true end of slavery and discrimination, real freedom for black folks, for asian folks, for women, for indigenous peoples, for the erased, for trans folks, queer individuals, gender non-conformers, for two-spirit peoples, for witches, for every

and all human beings who exist on this earth, a shattering awakening of reconnecting and reuniting with each other, with the ground we walk on and the planets that surround us. A transformative awakening! This is the message of the goddess: the feminine force of healing. Let old forms shatter, let truth shine through and destroy what is false. We cut away the parts of the past that no longer serve us so that we can enter a future which is pleasurable for all humans everywhere. This awakening is challenging, and it is tempting to cling to old forms & ideas. But looking away from the truth might get one lost in the destruction, or become part of the structure which is being shattered. This awakening is painful but necessary. From this, a fearless courage is born. The shrill shriek of Cailleach is heard by all and changes all. **

* adapted from Vicki Noble's Motherpeace tarot deck and book.

She sips her coffee as she sits and digests the information. Then she dresses, eats, cleans and leaves, arriving at the studio as the sky clouds over, turning the day into grey. Rain spits on the domed roof, while she sits in the white room at the high table to lay down the story of how she turned through that day. The tower had left her with an impression of looming fall black, dark blue, highlights of light blue or gold, and energy in the form of red. The name Cailleach rings in her system. She wants to know more about this Irish sister to Kali, the blue faced hermit who walks the earth in the winter months. She thinks back to the time of a few years ago in April, when she sat in the circle in the dark room, hearing the songs and words around her, brought on by beautiful twisting vine plants. Amidst the soothing sounds anger had bubbled inside her, erupting into a blue face with white hair whose tongue was sticking out.







The man who tended to Bernie's body and her spirit and her room had twin tattoos on his forearms: 47//74: The numbers 4 and 7 interlacing and reversing there to make a space to wish on. We had heard that the grandmothers were in the basement, the light one and the dark one both. Waiting, calmly, holding space. I felt the dark one with me, the one I shake a hammer with. She reminded me that her birthday was July 4TH, in the feminine moon or season of cancer, a day of explosions. She who is perceived that the reverse of that day was approaching and that April 7TH is the day that Bernie would pass away, her spirit dissolving into many pieces, her body landing on the mountain with the sunflowers, to sit and be still, looking out at the land and its plants and its people.







One year later, I met the woman who made the cards that I draw from. We were in a room, many women in a circle: singing, talking, sipping tea. The space was very yellow glowing, the women mostly white. We talked about the cards, about our signs, the moon. Sweet smells wafted, tensions tingled, some things snapped, late afternoon light pierced through the windows. In the evening, a strange sort of healing ceremony occurred.



YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL



YOU ARE KIND AND



YOU ARE LOVEABLE

YOU ARE POWERFUL

The following year, in a different place farther north, the circle they entered was denser, the colors darker, and the tea much thicker. The woods were closer, the grass easier to access. The sky showed night, the moon was new. They sat, wrapped in their blanket, feeling angry and alone, helpless in a way they could not understand. That was when the Cailleach came.







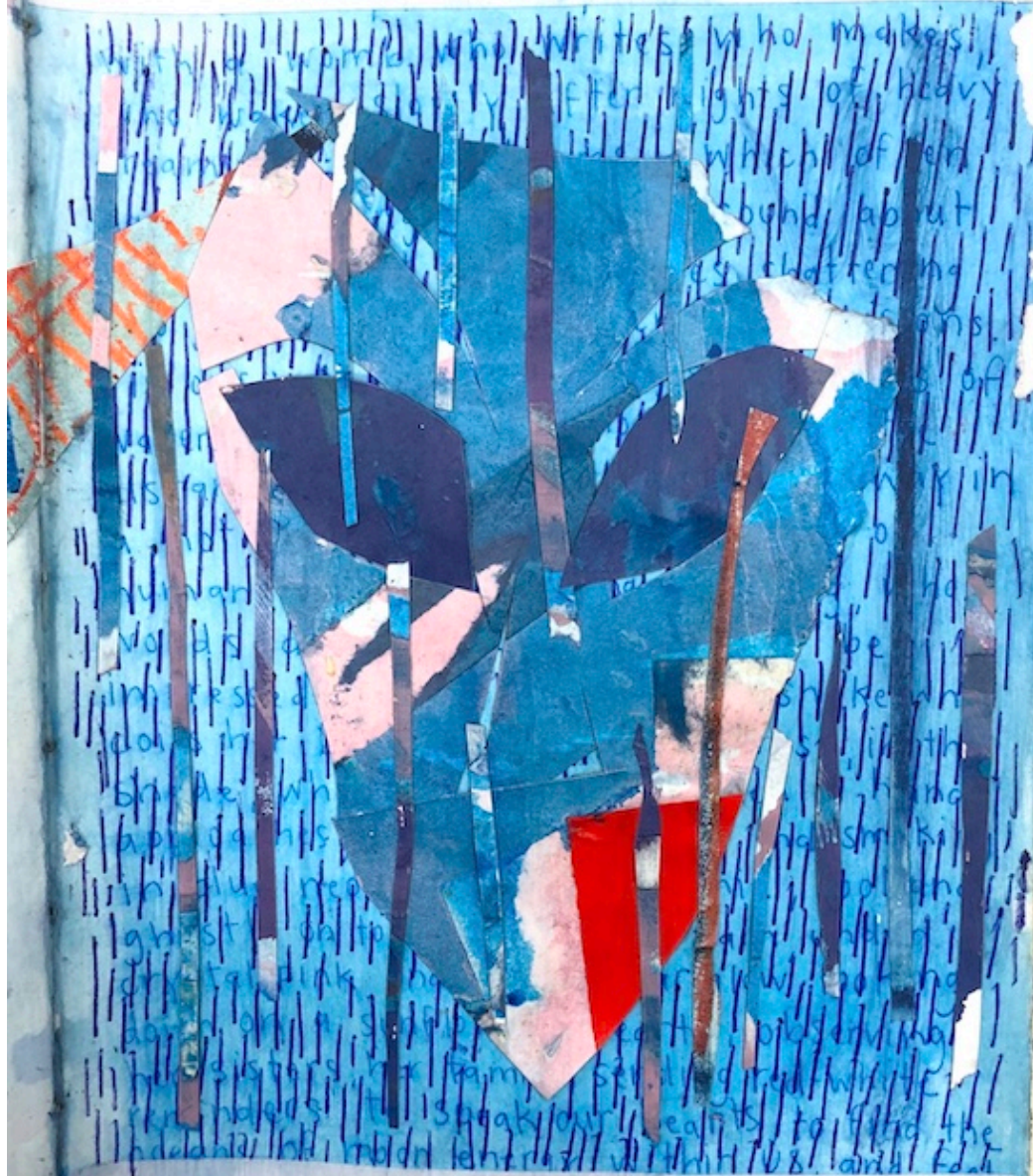


I LOVE YOU



I AM SORRY

AND I THANK YOU



PLEASE FORGIVE ME



he feels cold, low and slow, dreamy, spacey, sad, alone in the studio room. Cool blue. They shiver into the feeling of blue, into that time four years ago, sitting in the dark, music and sweet words and smells surrounding, but within, the Irish anger swelling, churning like water made of fire, erupting in their frontal vision in the form of a face, shades of blue, tongue sticking out, hair white and wild, eyes slanted down under a furrowed brow, showing red teeth and the anger pulsating like thunder and lightning striking in her.



Now, as they sit still and listen to the rain falling on the dome above, with the Tower cards rattling in their tarot deck, the one made by woman who is standing in a yellow glowing circle, and with the wishing energy of APRIL 7TH charging in their system, they come to understand that Cailleach came that day with a message, a reminder to turn and look within, where their creative energy pulses, where the inner fire burns away the weeds of the past and make room for new life to grow. The anger they felt comes from their roots. Cailleach asks them to reach into their Irish heritage, to connect with their grandmothers, to intuitively follow where those connections lead.



Intuition and connection

Take them to here, now, this moment on a bright Monday - Monday - afternoon, they recall a moment on a cloudy Wednesday morning, when they sat for a while to write and remember a Thursday when winter was closing out to give Cailleach a her yearly rest. Feeling them cold and raw from having peeled off many layers of lived experience and returning them to the earth, they sit alone in the white room at the high table and remember a dream: Their mother's grandmothers sit as young children playing together on either side of a small stream which runs through Ireland. In the sky, a ghostly spirit angel gives them life force. Cool blue water runs between them. Inside them are the seeds that will become Bernie, her mother, Tess, Mary, Maggie, Chelsea, Rylee, Mason,



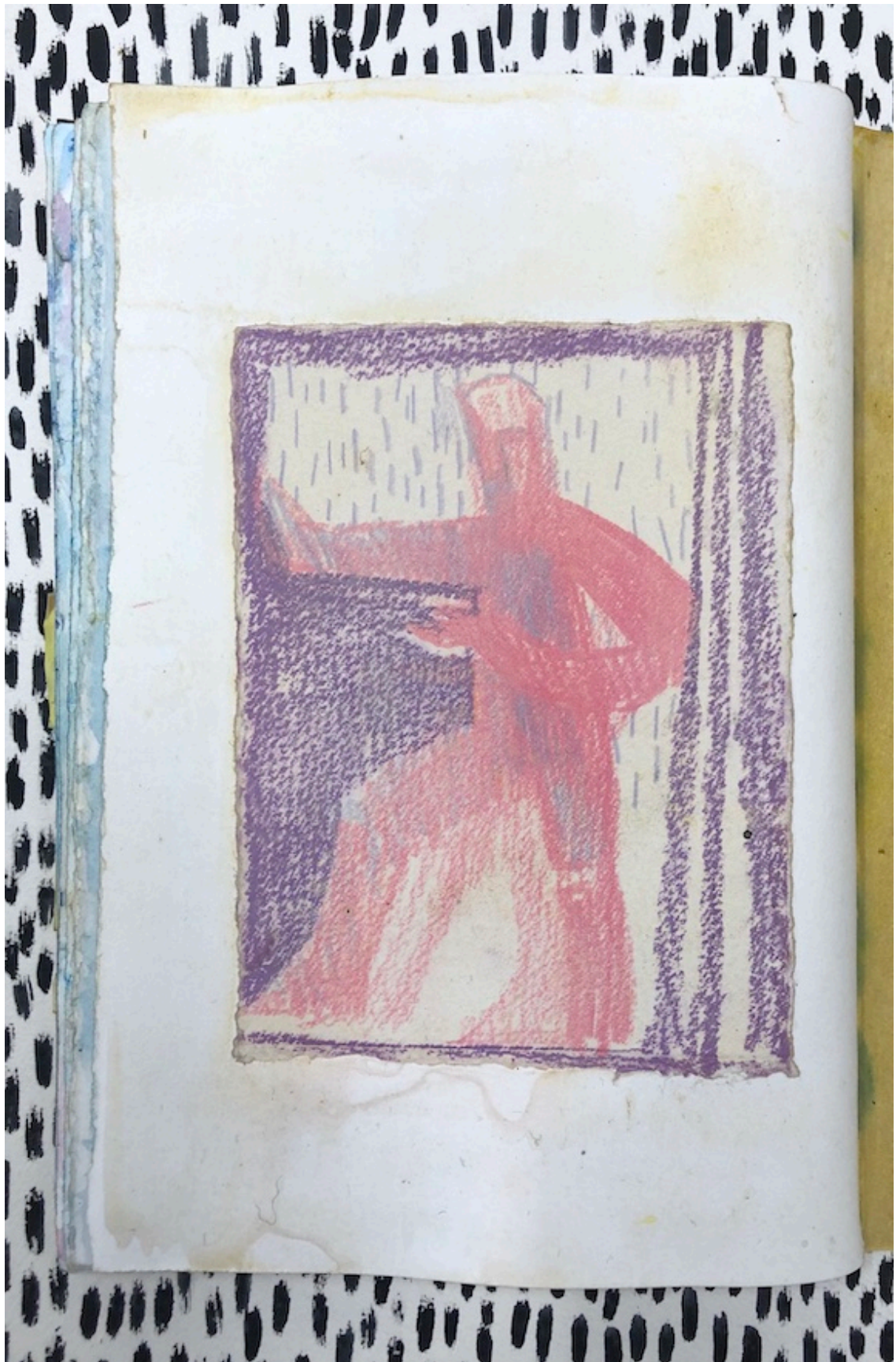
Axel, Liam, Jimmy, Frank, and this
white/pink body with a womb who
bleeds, writes, makes, wakes slowly after
nights of heavy dreaming:: The dreams,
which often have a strange shrieking
sound about them, and shift on their
sides, shattering into glass shards that
pierce the visions:: The visions, of
walking alongside paths of water with
strips of mountains in the distance; of
poison plants who sway in a hot summer
wind; of circles of humans, sitting,
singing, planning, whose words dissolve
before they can be impressed on the
mind; of a snake who coils her black body
in the grass, in the shade, who lunges
forward when a hand approaches; of Tess
sitting and smoking in blue-neon darkness;
Bernie, cool and ghostly on top of the
mountain, under crystal pink and purple
star glow, looking down on a sunflowered
earth, observing her sister, the family,
sending red-white reminders to speak our
hearts, to find the oceans of moon energy
within us, and feel its magic cyclic
turning, waiting like Celine Dion, destroying,
changing, transforming.



O

On July 4th, I remembered my great-grandmother, and I moved some wild mugwort moon magic into the garden. Between the hot summer breezes, the plant whispered it's healing reminders: Shed your layers of pain, fear, anger, anxiety, hatred, evils; shed your racist skin, your ableist auras, peel away power dynamics, strip your supremacist structures, grind away your gendered lenses, and shake your body, move your mind, compost old hindering blockages, sway your way, lightly and cool, into the aquarian age, where new love will grow from the dark rich soil, where humans and plants breathe freely, winding and intertwining their gifts - fueled by earth womb moon magic, giving freely, freely living, humming, loving, belonging...







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