
Indominable Colour Schemes

Eric Goodchild

Abstract

This ten-page visual, poetic essay captures my disenfranchisement from my own art and poetry, as well as the continuous instability of my life. I start with parental expectations, symbolized by negative space or violent lines and shapes, pondering the cost of these expectations on the joys and freedom of youth. I move into encounters of transphobic and racist bullying at primary school, a time when it was impossible to bear the terms for such experiences. This is followed by representations of abuse, only retroactively understood throughout the subsequent exploration of it, as well as the chronic deprivation of opportunity that these kinds of injuries cause. The exponential costs, particularly the emotional ones, that incur from the practical losses that come with life are then considered, along with the re-traumatization of simply trying to survive them. Finally, there are discordant uses of space, cluttered and overlaid images and words, alongside isolating negative spaces, to represent the constant feeling of failure, including being broken even during instances of stability or minor success.

Keywords

arts-based research, visual essay, poetry, trauma, deviant

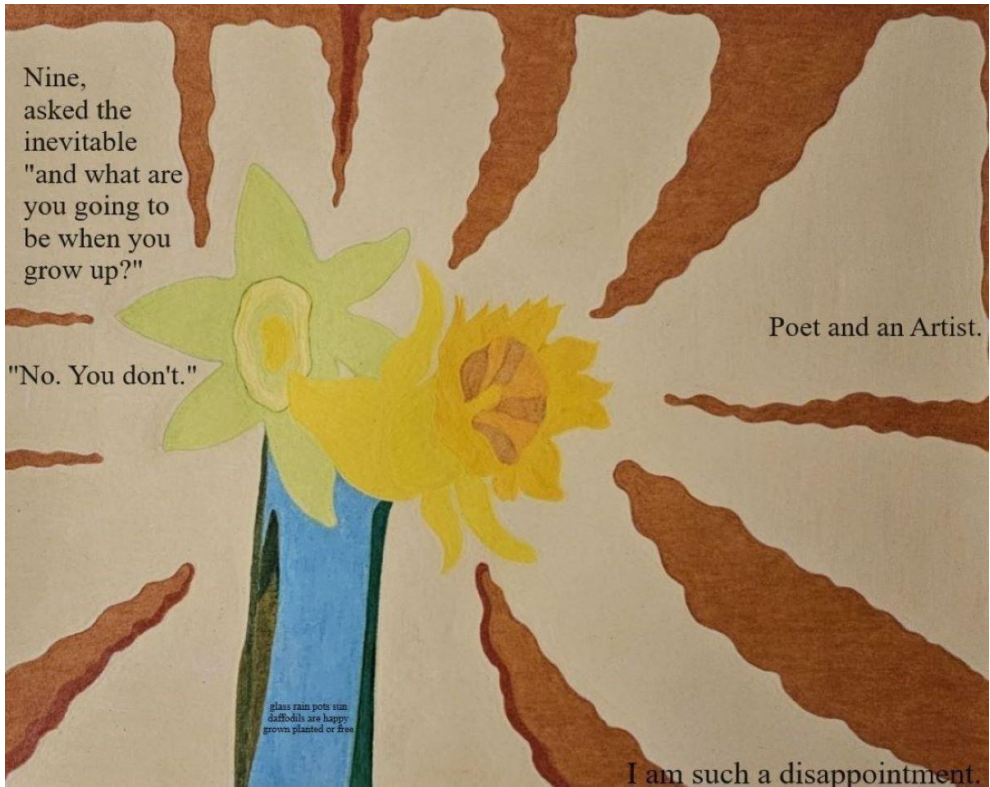


Figure 1. *Wild Daffodil, Cultivated Daffodil Similarly Falling Short*

A wild species of daffodil and a cultivated species of daffodil (symbolic of how I viewed myself when I was in Day School, due to being half Ojibwe and half white) stand together trying to be their own sun, and thus, their own source of light, and, in so doing, turn the reality of their existence upside down, with the sky under them and the earth radiating from above them. But it's all only breaking apart.

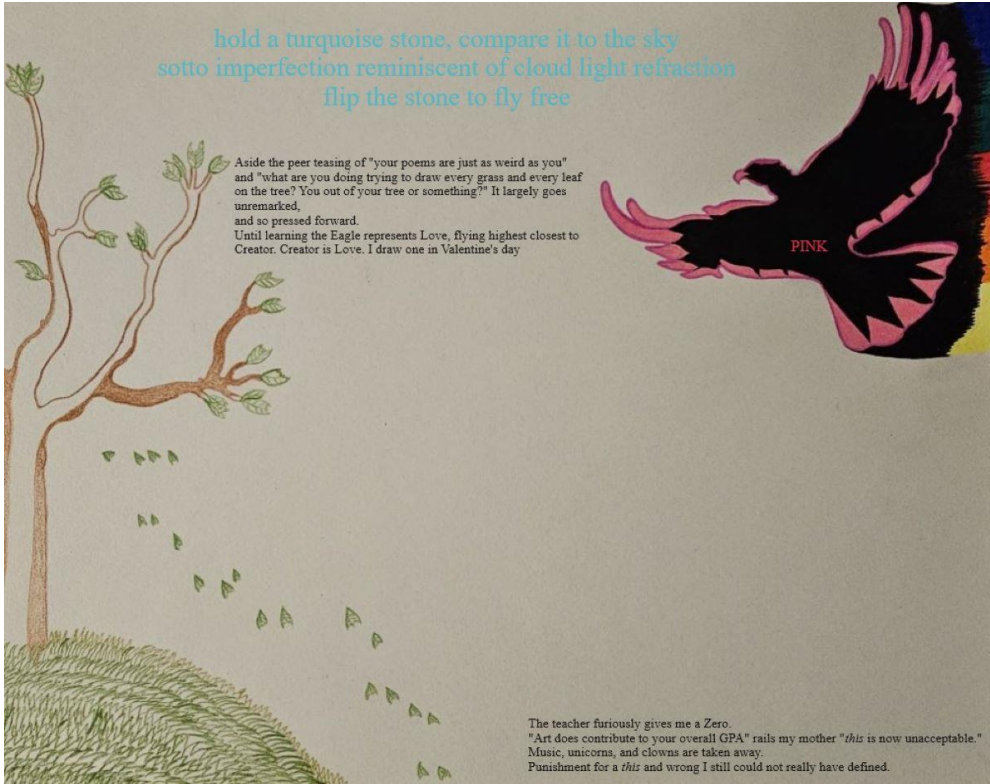


Figure 2. *My Abscission of Pink Feathers.*

On the left of the image, I have recreated the type of tree and field of grass I used to try drawing in art class. Each leaf and blade was individual and distinct. Except here the grass is sharp and ill-grown, more leaves are fallen than retained, and the trunk is internally weak (symbolized by its mid-way absence of colour). The eagle in the upper right, which would be a recreation of the pink eagle that landed me in so much trouble in art class, and trailing a rainbow, if not for its own shadows now. The eagle might have been hoping to land, but it is unlikely that the tree can support it. My bits of art and poetry only made my world more negative. The left to right flow leads to negative space, going off from them; off the narrative.

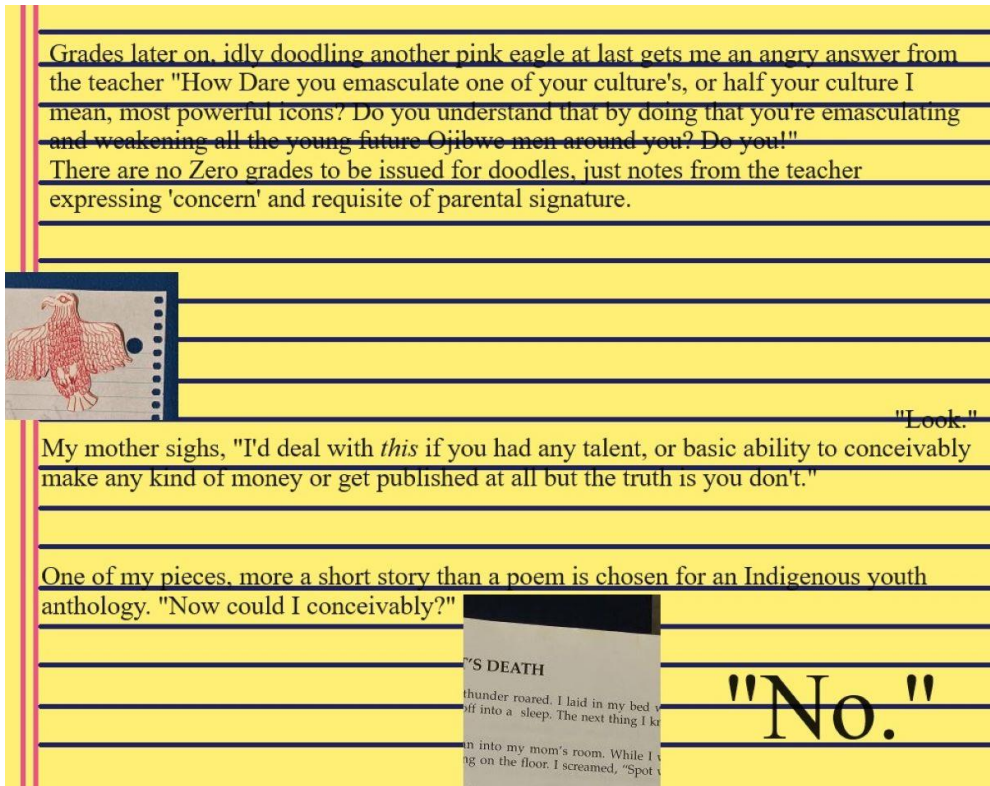


Figure 3. Diminished Self-Perception by way of 'My Future,' scholastically.

Against a colour scheme and line arrangement, reminiscent of the paper my Day School required assignments to be completed on, are descriptions of my experiences and feelings as a young artist and writer. Photos of my pink eagle doodle, and my short story are inserted, but they are tangentially located. Cropped as small as possible before the images and print become altogether indiscernible, yet their presence and placement still disharmonizes everything on the page.

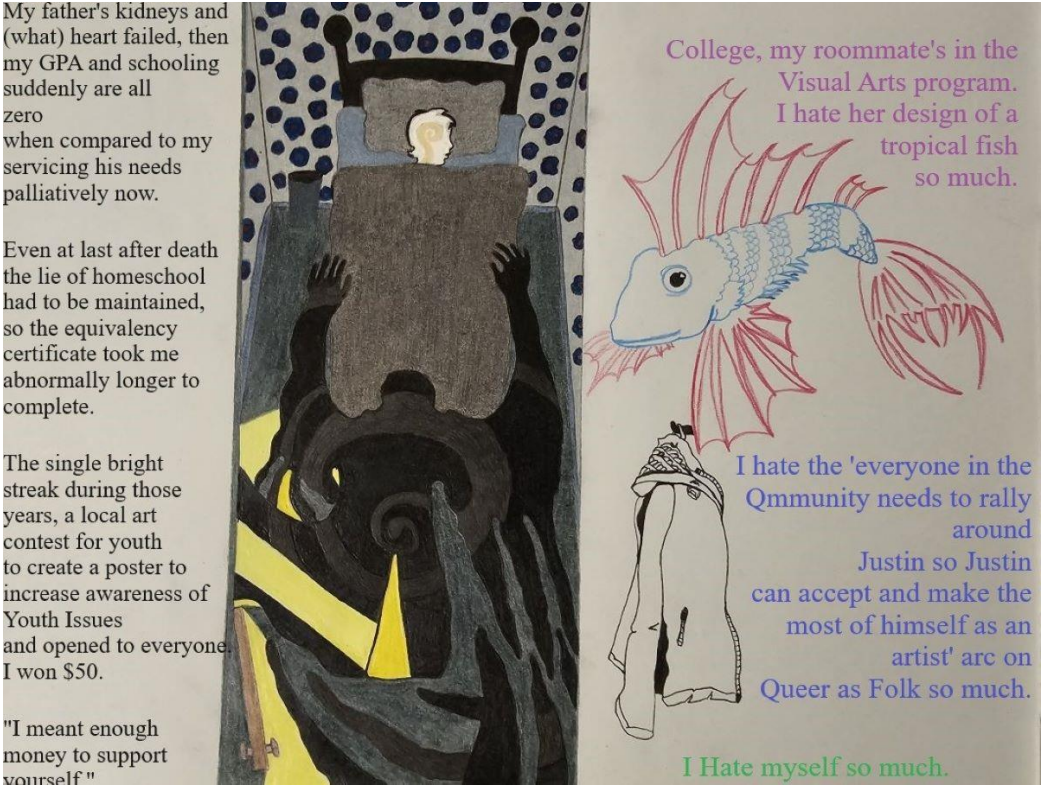


Figure 4. Nightmares Swimming.

In the center of the image is a recreation of the drawing I submitted for a poster contest on youth issues. The youth issue I wanted to increase awareness around was sexual abuse. A child is depicted in bed. Towards them, is a slightly darker question mark already spiralling internally within them, to symbolize the complete confusion of what is even being done to them, and why. The spiral, in darker shades of greys and blacks, originates from the adult abuser who reaches for the child, distorting all light from the hallway with their presence. To the right, is a tropical fish drawing reminiscent of the one drawn by my college roommate for her visual arts program. The fish holds a black and white ink drawing of a jacket, akin to the drawing Justin made of Brian's jacket in a sudden burst of artistic inspiration (re: Queer as Folk).

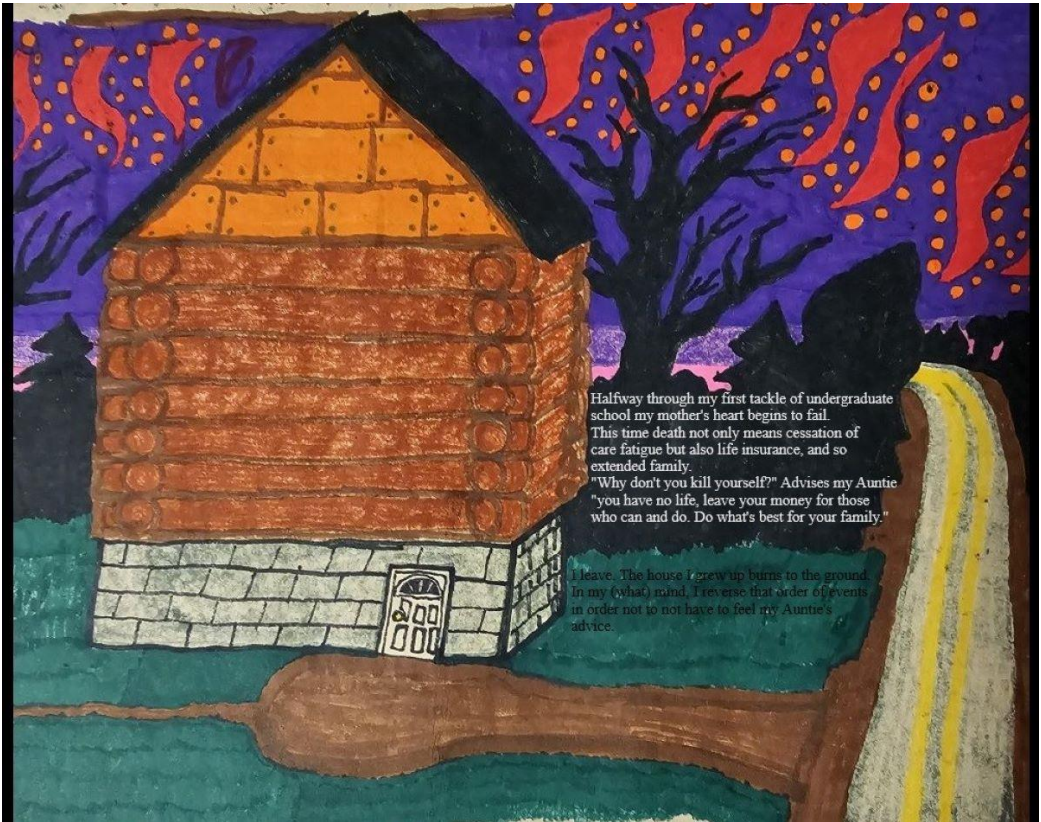


Figure 5. *Darkness Unrelatable.*

Six years. Where they went I have no idea. Art is all I can think of to keep myself from obeying Auntie's wishes. Except art is an ability like all others, if you don't use it, you lose it, and it was almost depressing enough to manifest the impulse to kill myself, when I saw how terrible the artwork I now created was. In this image, the landscape is completely off, the lines are wonky, and the ink runs together. The absence of windows or front door on the house and the flames in the sky were intentional. These were to symbolize the internal darkness and prison-like quality of the house I grew up in, and because I couldn't deal with the fire. This sketch was created shortly after I left my Reserve, with scented markers (my first art tools).

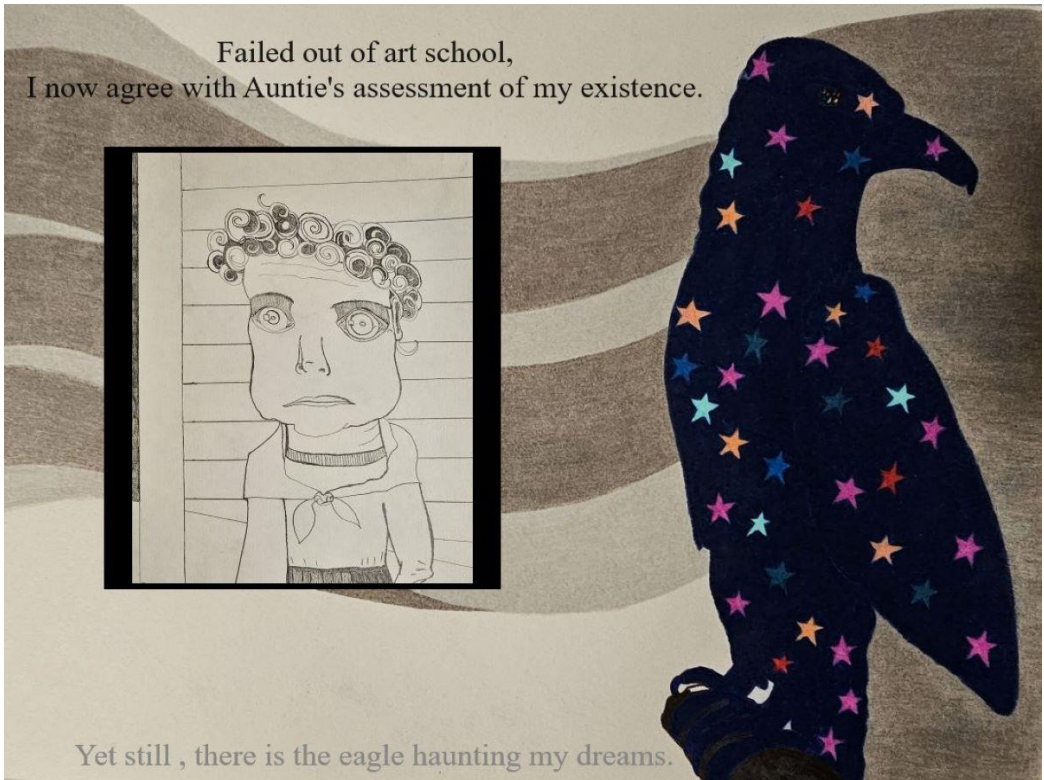


Figure 6. *Twilight Vision.*

Left is an insert of one page of a storyboard assignment I made while unable to hack it at an art and film college program. The image is backgrounded and seperated off. During this time and place in my life I lived nearby a lake trail, which I walked every evening. On one of these walks, an eagle landed on top of a tree right before me. Such instances are considered scared revealings to Indigenous people. Here I have tried to depict the spiritual dimension of the eagle, as well as being powerful enough to just smoke and drift my cross-eyed drawing away.

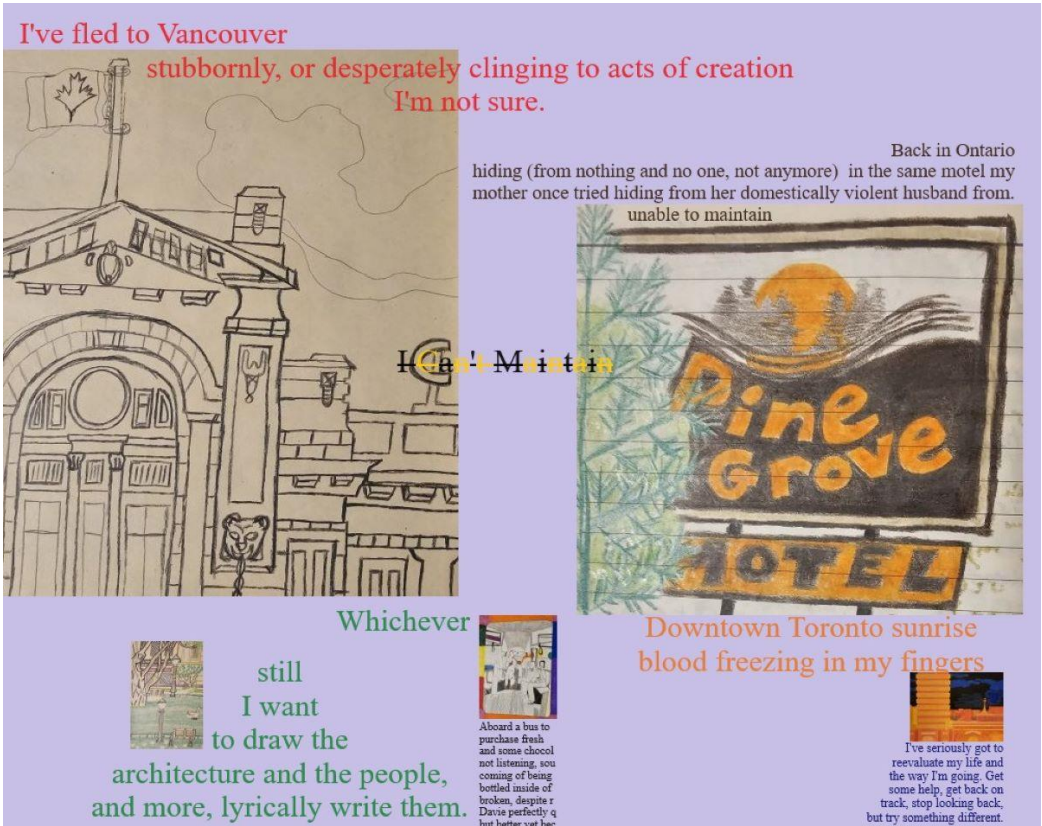


Figure 7. Pacific Central Black and White, Pacific Central Colour, Bear Drinking on a Bus While Everyone Looks Away, Drawing of the Bad Motel's sign Upper Right Corner in My Journal, Toronto at Sunrise.

This image contains five pieces, resized and inserted to compose and portray my crazed flight, from art school to Vancouver, Vancouver to Sault Ste. Marie—which was too close for comfort—to the motel that my mother and I tried to hide out in decades earlier (the words 'I Can't Maintain' crossed out and alternating in yellow and black meant to be evocative of police tape here), and Sault Ste-Marie to Toronto. The three works, collectively of Pacific Central's lawn; a literal bear in place of an Indigenous man who said his name was "Bear" and went on drinking on a city bus one day; a collective aversion and an orange downtown Toronto one morning, create the illusion of supporting blocks, but are uneven and likely soon to topple.

Undergraduate then I'll
apply to Law School!

that'll posthumously prove
I was worthy of my
mother's love



"Perhaps you could still *do* your art too. Universities have wonderful, creative opportunities," suggests my mental well ness counselor.

So, I do.

I enter pieces in the SCI-ART show, write poetry to Sulphur, the uni lit anthology, convince my Environmental Sciences prof to accept a Deviant Art page of Environmental Issues for the course term project, and my Youth Studies prof to accept a visual timeline of youth experiences for his course's term project.



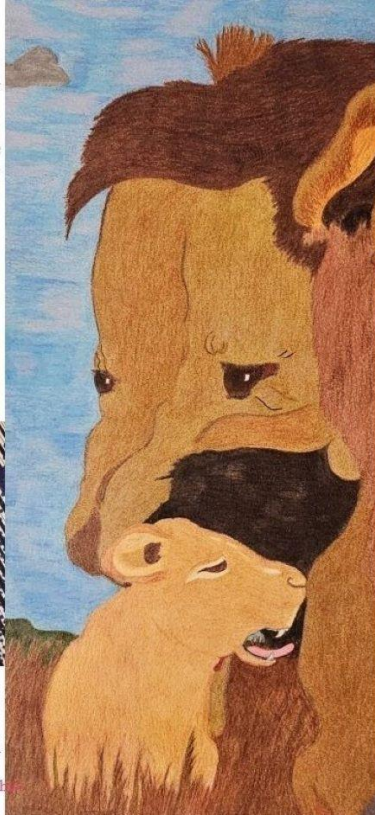
I even write 250 words on the Intersectionality of that pink Eagle. Convincing myself, it was really the pink of the Transgender Symbol.



There are publications that accept the unprofessional.

I can do this.

I can do this.



I can't...

I can't law school

Worse, Dal's email shunts the one poem I've managed to produce all year

Where Shelter the Spirited During Tumul
For this last day of now incalculable num
I've decided errands could be deferred jus
paced hurriedly back, forth, and across in
and decided I didn't that much miss small
... etc

acceptance and consent
to publish to **Junk Mail**

How did I manage to bring myself to a place where
the best work of me is 'Junk'?
Is all I can wonder, while crashing and burning.

Figure 8. *Couldn't Sort It if I Tried.*

Top far left, the Sulphur Anthology VII issue that my poetry appeared in. Top left, one of the twenty pieces depicting environment issues from my Environmental Sciences term project (here nuclear pollution caused ecosystem collapse). Mid-page left, a pen and ink drawing, conceptualizing the subconscious, that I did over summer break between grades six and seven. Later, I used this same drawing as part of my timeline project for my Youth Studies course. Bottom left, I inserted my pink eagle doodle as well for my timeline project. Though, the eagle here is on a black background and dispirited. Central, my 2019 Sci-Art show entry, depicting the phenomena of infanticide among lions in the natural world.

There's really no good time for everything to go tits up, but during a global pandemic's gotta be one winner out of all the possible bad times.

One of my poetry submissions was accepted.

Conditionally,

*In social measures crafted not by us, pumped long as
 we desire to not to narrow practice
 sustainable, mostly educational, prefer copying of past to
 their wisdom, among these, however, life's awkward
 that we can't be sure to respect each member that
 the world's history, on the list
 to measure half a breath's enough to see your life
 but breathe, and half a breath's enough for making
 be remembered. Each nation's full history. My bed
 with the Captain's just past in setting.*

The poem also has to be read over their new 'Spring Showcase!' on Zoom. Unable to afford both bus fare and a double double excuse to be there (forget rent and wifi) I backpack the laptop I've managed to keep to Tim's in order to be informed "our wife's down", once they've poured the coffee.



and

Hard as I try I can't get the eagle to go right.



A back cover's also needed. "Do you have any more I might choose from?" casually asks the editor.



When she selects one from the three I've managed to draw in the "an additional week" she's given me I know I should be grateful, perhaps relieved, hell perhaps even proud. Instead the most I feel is hope she doesn't notice my forearms twitching or my scarred nailbeds.

Figure 9. Skeleton in Pinks and Blues, Eagle in Trans Symbol Colours, One Drunken Night, Potential in Process of Drowning, Walking Away, Two Spirit and Interracial Young Adult.

Top left, the poem for the Summer Showcase I missed has a line of 'pink and blue bones of society', this skeleton drawing is a literal representation of that, a backdrop for an excerpt. Lower left, my first attempt at a full sized piece of my pink eagle, in the colours and shapes of the trans symbol. They were too vivid and clashing. It has been resized and inserted here, attacking the alcohol bottle of the other piece, foreshadowing the later second figure of the completed piece. Central, POV of an alcoholic looking down at their shaking hand, atop empty dropped bottles resting upon the angry orange carpet below, skin symbolic of how alcohol can make your own body hostile towards you. This piece was accepted as the Vol 24 Iss 3 Fall 2022 of the magazine Opens Minds Quarterly. Right, the resized pieces, from which the back cover (same issue) was selected, here circled in red.

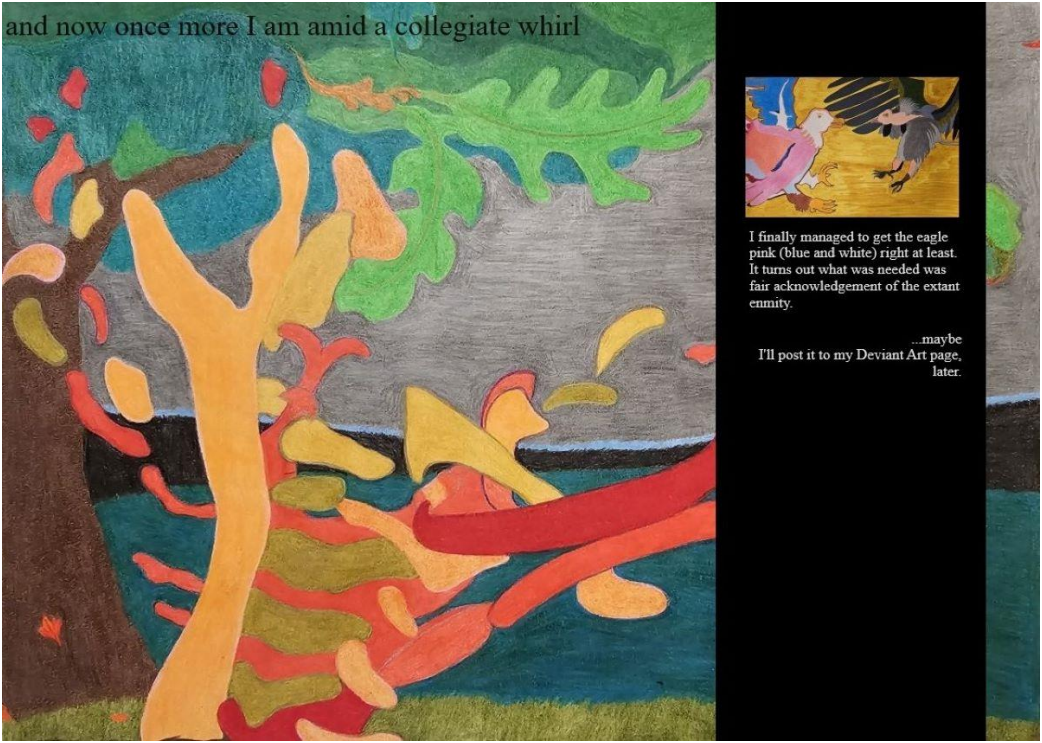


Figure 10. *Far Up Simultaneously Close Away, Two Spirit Aerial.*

This image is an attempt to capture the form and feel of fall leaves caught up in the small whirlwinds of the season. In the narrative of this visual essay it represents my reentry to postsecondary school, and how tumultuous that feels. Left is an inserted, resized completed piece of an eagle, with a full backdrop that is now grounded to the bottom, in the pinks, blues, white, and shapes of the trans symbol, facing down a vulture (here, the symbolic of death).

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my grandmother Bella Mandawigan, I lost you too soon. My mother Patricia Goodchild, I do believe she at times genuinely tried. Further, I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have given me encouragement and support at some of the harder moments in my life, Wendy Twance, Sabine Gorecki, Terry Ingram. Miigwech.

Author Biography

Eric Goodchild (They/Them) is an Interracial Ojibwe White, Two Spirit person. They were born and raised in Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nations reserve. They completed their BA at Laurentian University in April 2020, and are now working towards their Masters at York University, where they (occasionally find time to) vlog on YouTube (as Culturally Lost) about trying to keep true to their Ojibwe identity., while feeling so disenfranchised from it. Their latest work of poetry can be read in *Wingless Dreamer*, can be viewed at: <https://www.deviantart.com/Ocean20/art/Two-Spirit-Aerial-1015926388>.