

Pandemic Artifacts /  
/ from the Zoomshell

a Turtle Disco Disability Culture Production

Turtle Disco Press, August 2021

Assembled on Odawa Land along the south shore of Crystal Lake in Frankfort, Michigan at The Gill Club. *I vow to dance with you in all the waters.* Edited by Stephanie Heit and Petra Kuppers. Layout and design by Stephanie Heit on microsoft word in palatino font in consult with Petra Kuppers.

*Pandemic Artifacts /*  
*/ from the Zoomshell*

is a Turtle Disco Disability Culture Production. These pieces emerged out of community arts practice and are intended to be experienced and enjoyed in the community, freely and widely. Please share this pdf at leisure, being mindful to keep artist credits intact.

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## Turtle Disco Welcome

Turtle Disco is a somatic writing studio in our repurposed living room in Three Fires Confederacy territory in Ypsilanti, Michigan. We, Petra Kuppers and Stephanie Heit, started Turtle Disco in 2017 as part of our art/life practices, to cultivate disability culture experimentation, creative self-care, communal inquiry, connection, and awareness. We aim to provide a welcoming and supportive environment, grounded in a crip/mad/queer led ethos. Every week, we offer one to three different movement or writing sessions for local folx, as part of a small experiment in art friendship, community building, and ecological sustainability.

In March 2020 the pandemic hit. We stopped our in-person offerings and created the Turtle Disco Zoomshell. Here we experimented with ways to connect with our regular turtles and new and old friends beyond our locality, as so many of us became isolated. The disability community is resilient, inventive, and a great resource for doing things differently. We called on these resources to pivot our offerings. Our first engagement was the Zoomshell Connection Kaffeeklatsch. We sent out an email: "Join us to connect, check-in, and exchange about our creative lives during viral times. Low-key community space with a small group. Meetings are no longer than one hour and are free." These weekly, later monthly, Kaffeeklatsches continue to be a harbor for tender creative exchange, in particular during the first year of the pandemic, when many of us were not seeing other humans in real space. While there was a lack of skin touch and weight sharing, there was a different kind of closeness that felt important and valuable.

The Kaffeeklatsches became a staple in our list of online offerings that grew to include Amoeba Dances, Queer Dreaming, Contemplative Dance & Writing Practice, Crip Magic Reading/Writing Workshops, Starship Somatics, and Turtle Disco Salons. We reached out to be with each other amid this worldwide pandemic, to create a space for the complex range of feelings and experiences within our predominantly disabled and queer community, and to offer vehicles for creative expression and play.

Our intention with *Pandemic Artifacts* // from the Zoomshell is to witness this past COVID stretch through documentation and tracing of our creative practices. We envision this collection as a way to share and enhance our connections within this community and beyond. Turtle Disco is dedicated to access; you will find image descriptions with all the art work. We hope you enjoy your experience of this work. The pieces are divided by the workshops in which they were created. We invite you to check out our current offerings and descriptions of past workshops on our website <https://stephanieheitpoetry.wordpress.com/home/turtle-disco-classes/>

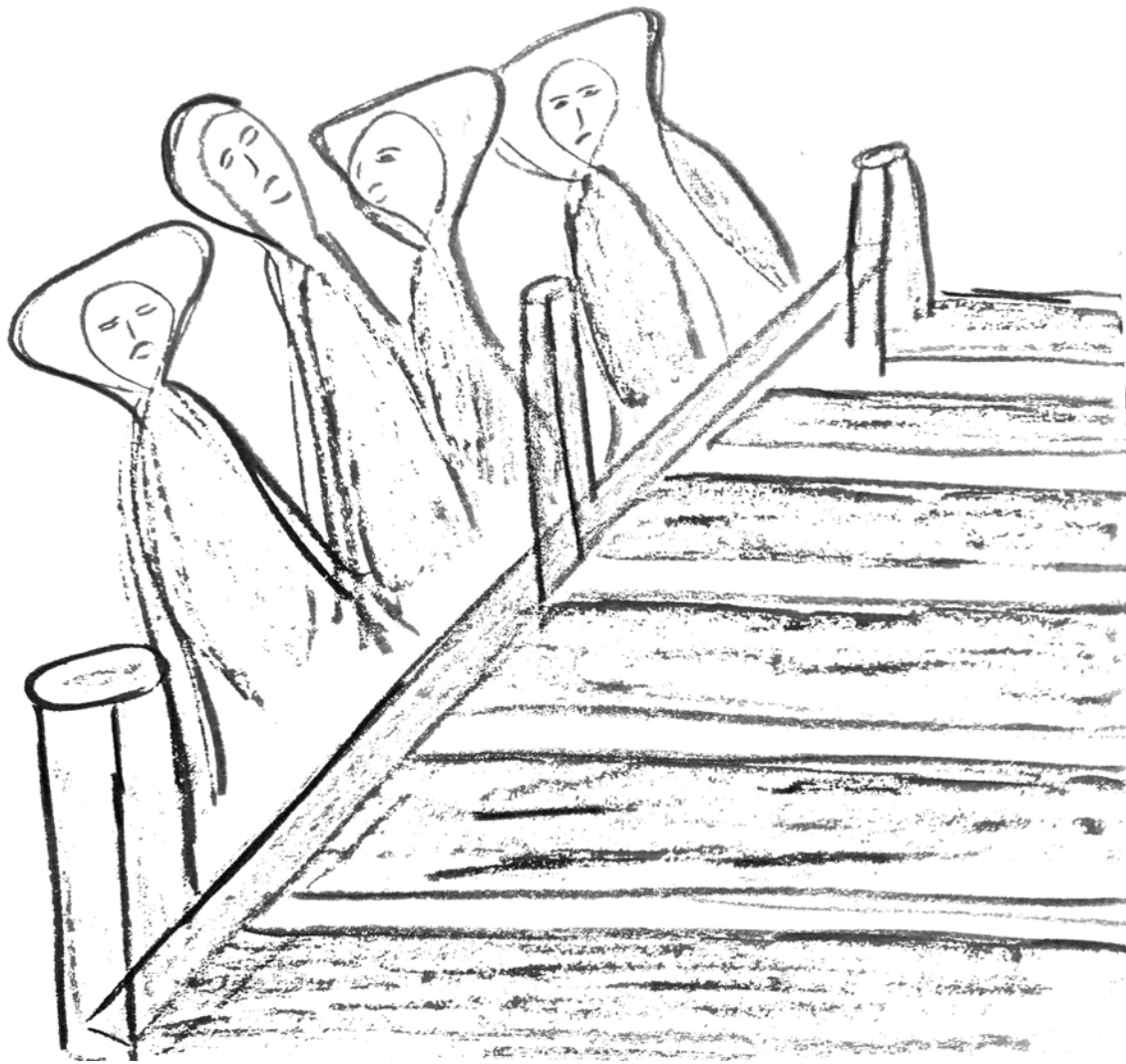
Thank you to everyone who has joined us in person, in the zoomshell, in spirit, and into the future – we are deeply grateful for the Turtle Disco disability culture community.

in love & creativity,

Stephanie Heit & Petra Kuppers



Fear  
Elena SV Flys



Isolation  
Elena SV Flys

**Fear:** This drawing is made with a charcoal pencil. In the center of the image, a short shot of a woman with long hair and a mask, below her a big N95 mask. Right between the strings are two words: you and fear. Three other faces with masks surround the woman, all have a smaller size. At the top two of them, the left one has short hair and glasses, the right one long hair. On the left side of the paper the final face, this is the only face that is looking to the side in profile. All of them have lost looks.

**Isolation:** This drawing was made with acuorable pencils. The colors were brown for the dock and blue for the outfits. In this version everything is in black and white. Port dock. On the left side, 5 silhouettes wrapped in capes with large collars. The outfits resemble those worn by nuns. They all have haunting and empty looks. Mouths open and no sound.

**Elena SV Flys** (she/her) is an Assistant Professor at TAI University Center for the Arts in Madrid. She teaches Arts Administration and her research focuses on accessibility to the arts, audience reception, and social integration. She designs the accessibility for theatre shows utilizing the five senses. She likes to dance, paint and sew with the machine and although she is not very good at it she enjoys it and she loves sharing the experience with others.

## Safety Memory Crystal: A Somatic Meditation by Petra Kupperts

How do I deal with hope and fear in this year of the unknown? I anchor, sense, and then write to ground down. I move to activate my memory, to remind myself of what it feels like, in a particular fleeting moment, to be safe and secure.

I gift this exercise to you, and I hope it can be useful.

Go and feel into your childhood self, reach for a tiny place and sense of security. What image flashes up? Just go with whatever first appears.

Sense into this memory. What did you touch, what did you see, smell, taste? Take a moment to be there, to soak it in. Our childhood memory of safety is often much less conditional than our adult world senses.

Now feel for that sensation in the here and now, in your own world. Overlay the senses of your childhood with what you are touching now, sitting on now, hearing or seeing.

Lastly, mark it with words. Create a memory crystal of your story, something to remember and bring out when you feel vulnerable or destabilized. May this be a nourishing exercise for you.

Here is my own memory crystal.

I remember...my child's crib at home, surrounded by wide orange and brown arcs. I remember the white spindles of my crib, and the way my hands held them: small, pudgy hands, with bones inside, but soft as twigs, holding on, looking out, toward big arcs, the big arcs reaching, the color changing from stripe to stripe in what I now know is wallpaper. There is a window on the right side, and light falls through, but not on me. The light falls onto the floor. I cannot see the floor. But I think it is fuzzy, maybe green, maybe shag. I remember the spindles and their rhythm, and my hands, and the rounded shapes in front of me. This is my earliest memory, early 1970s, Niederrhein, Germany.

It is 2021. I am lying on my blanket in Turtle Disco, the somatic writing space I co-curate with my wife, poet and dancer Stephanie Heit out of our home. All our sessions are online now, and this community space, our repurposed living room, today just holds my wife and I, and our dogs. As I meditate on safety, there is the boundedness of this blanket, in this square room. In Turtle Disco, we have a bar attached to the wall, to help my disabled self get up from the floor, a handhold to provide balance.

There is my hand on the bar. My fist is so like the fist of that little girl in her white crib. I hold on to the bar tightly, securely, anchored, and look at the world. My arms make windshield wiper arcs, and my mind's eye colors them orange and darker orange and brown. I remake my safety.

The blanket on the floor is soft and fluffy. Now a dog lies on it. The bar is a visual anchor point; there is the release of knowing I am held; I cannot be jostled.

Hopes and fears: as artists, we can activate our fantasies, we can try to feel into sensations, make new connections, animate a world into multi-hued shimmering moments of wonder. In this short meditation, I touched in with a fleeting childhood sense of safety, and I am glad for the privilege of having been able to store that moment in my nervous system and its memory caves.

Touching in and sensing moments of emotional intensity are central to my well-being. I have been disabled all my life, and I am often jarred by pain, and need to find balances that reconnect back to myself. Art practices of sense memory, small movements, and writing allow me to develop the resilience to face what is happening. They allow me to both touch in with and begin to transform the unsettled and threatening emotional resonance of this pandemic.

I hope this short exercise and my illustration of it can be of service to you.

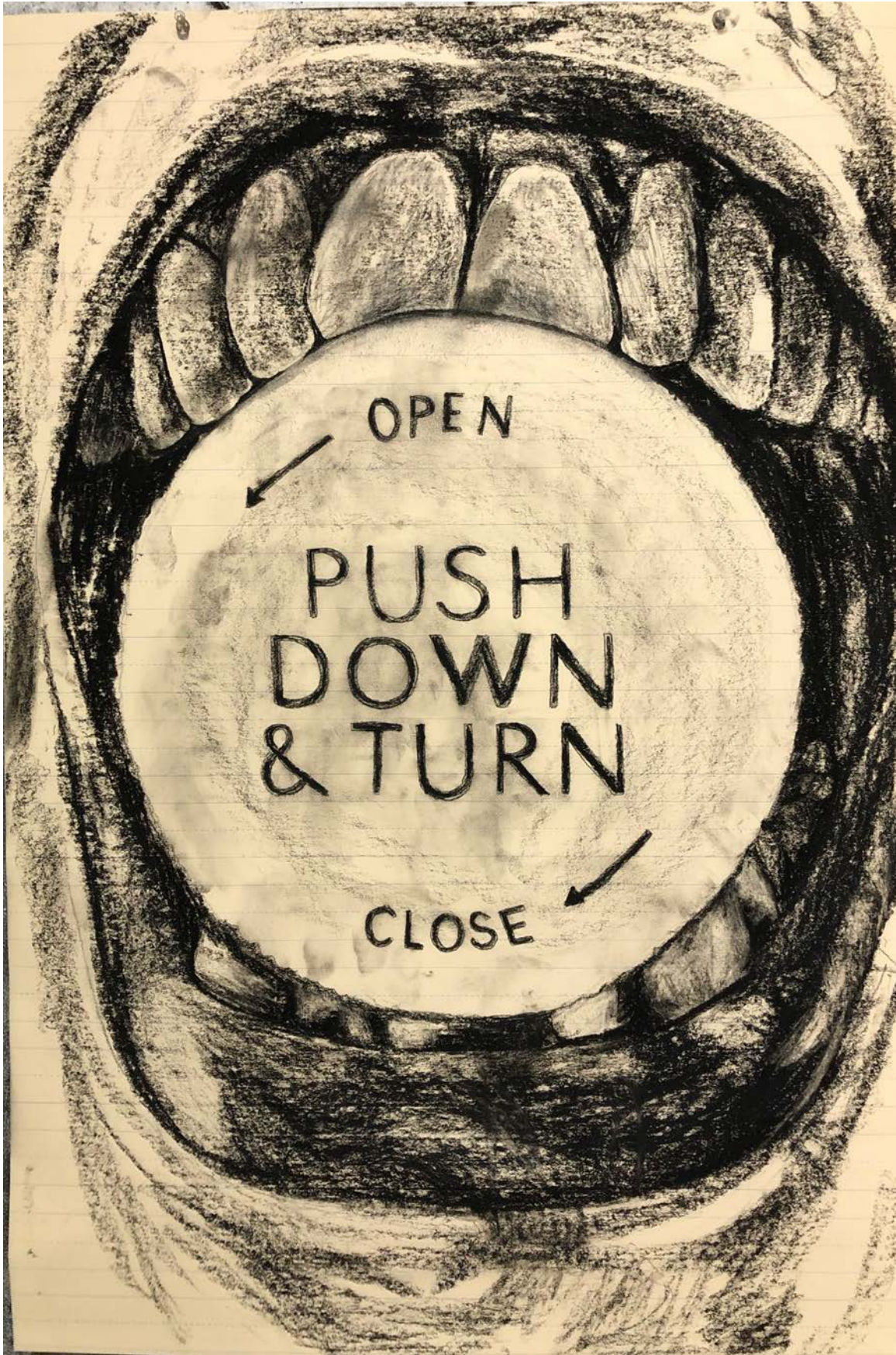
And if you are more of a visual person, here is a short video instructing you in this exercise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSNoKEoHQtk>

[this short missive from Turtle Disco was first a blog-post at the Black Earth Institute, part of a series on *2021 Hopes, Fears, and Possibilities for the Year*, which appeared in March 2021]

**Petra Kupperts** (she/her) is a disability culture activist, a wheelchair dancer, and a community performance artist. Petra grounds herself in disability culture methods, and she uses ecosomatics, performance, poetry, and speculative writing to engage audiences toward more socially just and enjoyable futures. She has been engaged in community dance and disability culture production since the late 80s, and she continues to lead workshops internationally, in these forms as well as in disability-culture adapted social somatics. She is the Artistic Director of The Olimpias, an international disability culture collective, and co-creates Turtle Disco with Stephanie Heit.





What I have learned – Push Down to Open  
Chanika Svetvilas

Image Description for previous page:

In this charcoal drawing on lined paper my mouth fills the entire page stretched out holding a prescription bottle between my crooked teeth. The bottle juts out and only the cap can be seen with its prominent instructions to push down and turn to open with an arrow pointing left to open and right to close. As I consume the pills that help to maintain my mental health, I am also consuming plastic and big pharma and oh yes those side effects. 36" x 24"

## Artist Statement

My interdisciplinary artwork focuses on the diversity of the intersectional lived experience of mental health difference and the impact of the stigma encountered by utilizing an archive of medication guides, prescription bottles, media documentation of current events, historical and psychiatric resource materials that reflect mental health conditions and systemic and historical legacies to find strength in vulnerability.

Created during the pandemic, my large scale drawings, "What I have learned. (Fill in the blank.)" on oversized lined paper, 36" x 24," uses charcoal to acknowledge that its activated form absorbs chemicals after a stomach is pumped from a medication overdose as well as its transformative origins. Scale as metaphor is an ironic contrast between the documented paper trail and the lived experience. The smeared charcoal emphasizes the outlandishness to conform as I resist and reveal the humanity behind the mark and process. Collage and layered imagery jars and confronts the new context. In the series within this series, I explore the term "Consumer," coined by a 1980s group of ex-patient activists who met at an Alternatives conference in the US and agreed on the word 'consumer' to replace 'patient' as drawings of my gaping mouth intersects with objects, texts, and barriers. These visceral drawings embody experiences that question the psychosocial impact of consuming media images, the medical industrial complex, and stereotypes.

As someone who attended Turtle Disco Zoomshell offerings from the Kaffeeklatsches to the Salons and ecosomatic workshops, I was exposed to writers, poets, filmmakers, dancers among others that provoked me to approach my art practice in new ways — as an embodied being more than just my mind and eyes. I learned to breathe more and be present with the volume and movement of my body and in appreciation of all its idiosyncrasies like my very crooked teeth. Being in community with Turtle Disco meant that I was entrusted to hold the space with others in creative mutual aid that nurtured my spirit as well as my art practice during a time when visiting galleries, museums and artist friends was not possible during the pandemic. I am incredibly thankful that I could join Turtle Disco from Lenni-Lenape land/New Jersey, meet other creatives, share my work, and witness theirs.

**Chanika Svetvilas** (she/her/hers) based on unceded Lenni-Lenape territory also known as Princeton, NJ, is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary artist who utilizes lived experience as a way to interrogate psychiatric forms of care, create safe spaces, disrupt stereotypes and to reflect on contemporary issues as a cultural worker. Svetvilas has exhibited at the Denver International Airport, Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, ABCNoRio, Brooklyn Public Library, Westbeth Gallery, Islip Art Museum, Asian Arts Initiative, and the Wexner Center for the Arts among others. She is co-founder of the biennial Thai Takes film festival, the first Thai film festival in New York State. She earned her MFA at Goddard College in Interdisciplinary Arts.

# Crip Magic

Crip Magic: Reading/Writing Workshop  
with Petra Kuppers & Stephanie Heit

In these generative writing sessions, we will read one or two contemporary poems together, discuss them, and then engage in writing, led by prompts provided by Stephanie and Petra. This is not a sharing or feedback-driven workshop: it's a place to immerse ourselves in craft in connection with social justice discourses, and to get to writing (disability-led, but not exclusive to disability topics or disabled writers).

## Threshold by Megan Kaminski

And in uncertainty—the waiting and  
wanting to open to shore to spill  
I feel it deep in chest and throat  
waves that come with whispers

first time: in a (my) bedroom  
windows open in winter  
called  
away

magic at the edge of fear  
edge of too thin a veil

must I always return from the cusp  
or is there point beyond coming back

mother or mouth :: an island of green in darkness  
my own ark words eclipsed scrambling ::  
exhale whisps

what waits beyond the grappling  
beyond years in recluse  
years of calling (afraid to call)  
with no answer

**Megan Kaminski** (she/they) is a poet and essayist—and the author of three books of poetry, *Gentlewomen* (Noemi, 2020), *Deep City* (Noemi Press, 2015) and *Desiring Map* (Coconut Books, 2012). *Prairie Divination*, her forthcoming illustrated collection of essays + oracle deck with artist L. Ann Wheeler, turns to the plants, animals, and geological features of the prairie ecosystem as guides for living in good relation to each other—and to re-aligning thinking towards kinship, community, and interdependence. An Associate Professor in English and Co-Director of the Global Grasslands CoLABorative at the University of Kansas, she lives in Lawrence, Kansas.



## Intake/Detour by Victoria Lee Khatoon

A. What are the three biggest changes you want to make? List their names and ages.

B. What 3 goals do you want to achieve in the next three months?

single? married? separated? divorced? remarried? widowed? cohabitating?

C. If applicable, please complete the following: If anything was possible, what would you wish for who currently lives in your household?

D. What is most important to your life and why?

Spending increased time alone? Feeling numb? Irritability? Panic attacks? Avoiding people, plans, activities or specific things?

[From Crip Magic Writing first meeting 10/22/2020 with Petra Koppers and Stephanie Heit, intake poem prompt. I searched for a random patient intake form and a coaching or pre-coaching intake form, mashed them up.]

**Victoria Lee Khatoon** (she/her/hers) of Sacramento, California, tribal land of the Nisenan people, gathering place of nearby Meewok, Mewuk, Maidu, and Wintun tribes. Khatoon composes poems, prose, songs, the occasional essay, and/or little book, at sunny morning windows. She's had an essay and short fiction in *Wordgathering*. Recently, her "Haiku-19" was published locally in Team Haag's *Soul of the Narrator XI*. Ableist societal attitudes pressure Khatoon to be more closeted than she'd like. Still reeling from devastating 2016 election, ensuing destruction, pandemic. Saving graces: Olimpias' Turtle Disco Zoomshell events! Likes include: social justice, access, disability culture, what intersects, for starters.

## Dream Space / Threshold Space by Hannah Soyer

Threshold space, layered in blankets and alternating cushions of heat and chill. Last night, a taste I can't quite get out of my mouth—a hallway of miniature houses, conjoined together, purple exteriors with white front doors. At the end of the hallway, a room behind a door—this is shared space, I'm told. There is a bookshelf with multicolored books, a kitchen, and, mysteriously, a cat. The room is empty, but I know instinctively that it was once occupied by a dead friend, and I know, also instinctively, that the sacredness of this space is that I can commune with those passed on.

A handful of years ago, my art teacher from high school passed away—“art teacher from high school” being an inadequate descriptor for the space he took up in so many lives—and still to this day I have not cried over his death. But shortly after he left, I had a dream about him: I was somehow moving up a steep hill, trying to race against something unknown, and suddenly there he was, across the street, raising a hand and calling out “Hannah!” I crouched down in my dream and sobbed, then. I'll never stop thinking about the ways in which an imagined or subconscious self can physically emote grief in different ways. Perhaps the scratch of my knees against concrete is both something I am racing towards and against, only accessible in this space.

Are you on a specific journey? Are you trying  
To talk to someone who has left? What of it?

Lie down and lie down, do you see the way  
This world mirrors ours? Climb on a boat, sail

Westwards through the sea in the sky,  
Gravity abides by new rules here, look—

There she is, on cue, on time, breathe life into her  
Through unfurling petals, sweet raspberry, the tartness

Of crabapple jam licked from fingers. Pivot. The dead artist.  
You can cry here, can hear him calling your name.

Are you looking for a certain ending?  
Are you willing to embrace an uncertain beginning?

In some instances, the breaking of a barrier allows certain, lifesaving substances to get through. Cellular growth in plants begs for breakdown—one cell bursting open to create more, it is a life in death situation. Think of the mermaids and the mermaid poems, *Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill*. Meandering, we find meaning through association—there is no narrative, *no narrative*, to lying heavy on a bed, to numbing out from grief, to boundaries transgressed.

**Hannah Soyer** (she/her) is a queer disabled writer born and living in the Midwest. She is the founder of *This Body is Worthy* <https://www.thisbodyisworthy.com/> a project aimed at celebrating bodies outside of mainstream societal ideals, and *Words of Reclamation*, <https://wordsofreclamation.wordpress.com/> a space for disabled writers. She is the editor of *The Ending Hasn't Happened Yet*, an anthology of poetry from disabled, chronically ill, and/or neurodivergent writers forthcoming from Sable Books, and her work has appeared in places such as *The Rumpus*, *Disability Visibility Project*, and *Entropy*. Hannah also happens to be a cat and chocolate enthusiast.

## When I Am Told by Victoria Lee Khatoun

after "Ode to Lithium" by Shira Erlichman

When I am told I can still work virtually but I have to go onto campus, be around unvaccinated kids, staff to do it, I feel like someone does not understand the meaning of virtually. When I feel like someone does not know the meaning of virtually, I am not virtually upset, I am actually upset. When I am actually upset, I see all the ways someone who does not know me or care about me or love me and certainly does not know anything about my brilliance, might, quick as a ruler to an open hand, make my life a non-life.

When someone makes my life a non-life, I do not know what to say. When I do not know what to say, I am not in the conversation. When I am not in the conversation, I feel like all my time is for nothing. When I feel like all my time is for nothing, I feel like I am in the wrongest place I've ever been. I feel like a fucking fool to have stayed so long, to have worked so hard for so very very little.

When I feel like this, I remember my friends and the people who are like friends. I remember the kids, the parents, the siblings. When I think of the kids, I see the little girl in a zoom square hugging her dog, I see a little brother who also wants to learn push forward; I say, "A is for apple, /a/, /a/, /a/," my mouth open around the imaginary apple; he repeats, "A is for apple, /a/, /a/, /a/" until sister holds him or pushes him away, it depends on the day. Or maybe today is the day she licks his forehead.

When I am in the next class, a boy brings his dog to the square, dog nose zooms massive to lens. When I see giant dog noses, I cannot be pissed. When I cannot be pissed, I can notice. When I can notice, I notice a boy gone quiet, his head turned the direction he wants me to look— towards the yellow bird on his shoulder. The boy's expression, his mouth softly close to the bird, the bird staying in bird-boy-love-closeness. When I see a yellow bird and a boy, I drop my shoulders, I drop my lesson, I stop trying to teach and start trying to learn.

[2/25/21]

it began right here by Sarah Dean

inspired by danez smith

it began right here  
we began right here  
in the entrance  
of the english country dance

where pheromones first mingled  
and you became weak in the knees  
part of me may have known then  
that we would become us

[December 3, 2020]

**Sarah Dean** (she/her) lives on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabeg – (including Odawa, Ojibwe and Boodewadomi) and Wyandot peoples, which is also known as Ann Arbor, MI. As an environmental auditor, she seeks to engage in creative practices to add balance to her life. She enjoys movement (English and Scottish country dance, contemplative dance practice, Interplay, Authentic Movement), poetry, and collage.



## Metate by Naomi Ortiz

Grate my wound on rock  
Heft leverage in this quiet morning  
Pound scrape pound scrape  
D r a g

Commit to stone on stone  
Deconstruct between eons of time  
What seems unbreakable  
Pulverize the hard shell to reach meat

Nab one second of rest before lift  
Ground down again at the beginning  
As sun swings across sky  
Ache torso hip sway  
Forward back forward back

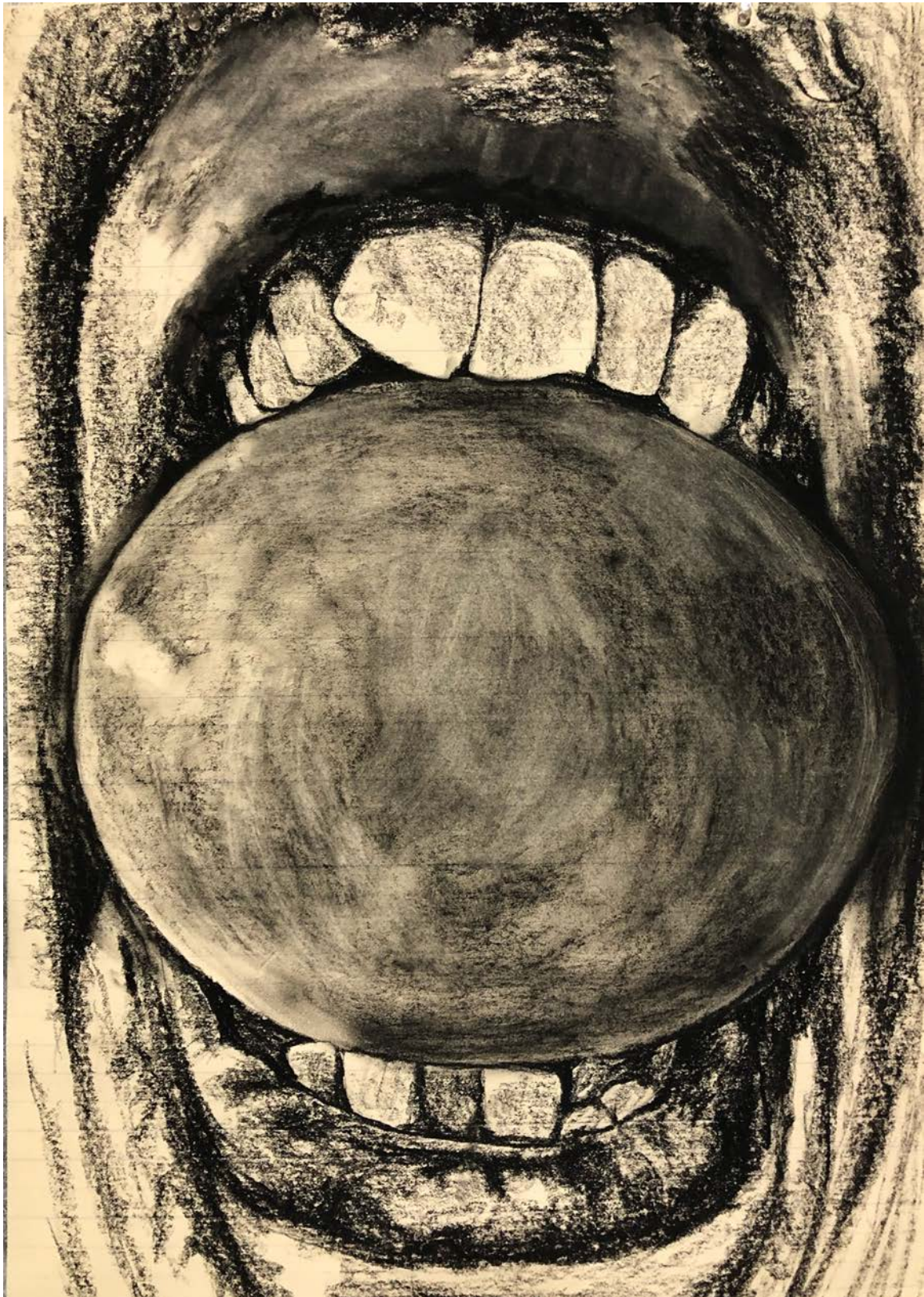
Wounds take time  
Attention  
So much attention  
Once offered on stone  
D r a g crush d r a g crush  
To yield something I can swallow

Metate

**Naomi Ortiz** (they / she) is a Poet, Writer, Facilitator, and Visual Artist whose intersectional work focuses on self-care for activists, disability justice, eco-justice, and relationship with place. They are the author of *Sustaining Spirit: Self-Care for Social Justice* (Reclamation Press), a book for diverse communities on dealing with the risks of burnout. Ortiz is Border Narrative Grant Awardee for her multidisciplinary project, *Complicating Conversations*. Numerous publications and anthologies have featured Ortiz's writing and poetry, and her artwork has been presented through a variety of formats. Ortiz is a proud disabled mestiza (Latina/ Indigenous/ White), living in the Arizona U.S./Mexico borderlands. Website: [www.NaomiOrtiz.com](http://www.NaomiOrtiz.com)

## Threshold by Megan Kaminski

Are you the wind that brings in the storm?  
    cold clashing with too-heavy air  
    a bite that brings clarity with isolation  
Are the trees singing to us—or do we only imagine them so?  
    leafing into deep red bloom and then release  
Are the signs on the highway meant for me—or for someone  
    passing through?  
Have I overstayed my welcome, collapsing one place into  
    another, a shiny overlay I imagine into home?  
How will I know if my roots have actually taken, if I nourish the  
    earth with my breath and tidings?  
Have I carried my own weight?  
Did I pack out everything I brought?  
What awaits at each crossing—the first and the ones after?  
May I carry on, carry you and she and all of us with me?



What I have learned – In the Balance  
Chanika Svetvilas

In this charcoal drawing I hold an egg horizontally between my teeth a tricky balance as my jaw stretches out to bare my crooked teeth. Why an egg? Sometimes negotiating how I am among “normatives” is like finding that balance, but feeling the strain. Charcoal on lined paper, 36” x 24”

# Amoeba Dances

## Amoeba Dances with Petra Kuppers

In this workshop, we will listen to and move with sounds we are making with our own breath, in our own home, while being comfortable on a mat on the floor (or in a similar comfortable position for yourself and your particular bodymind). The practice is informed by Pauline Oliveros' deep listening work, by Continuum Movement, and by Olimpias disability culture practices. We will use our breath to channel sounds through our body, paying attention to the images, sensations and movements that come up as we engage our home space, and the objects inside it. We will then move from experience into creative writing.

Petra's practice is born out of experiences of physical pain, and it is designed to be accessible to people who live with (different kinds of) pain. Our breath tunnels link us to new and old worlds, to moments that allow us to experience ourselves in difference, in hope, in joy, toward aliveness. We encounter ourselves and our micro-worlds, responsive to minute shifts, desires, and sensual states.

## The Hollow Place by Jose Miguel Esteban

Desire to enter the cavity within,  
drop into the world of the body.  
A hollow space.  
    A hallowed place.

Linger.  
The wind whistles,  
escapes the clenching of teeth.  
Collapse the tunnel  
and hold the breath.

Wind  
hold me up.  
Wind  
    push me forward.  
    follow me.  
    stay with me.

Echoes reverberate in stillness.  
Echoes of a breath  
tickle the skin.  
    blow through the flesh.  
    reverberate within the bones.

An ache trickles down the spine.  
Shoulder mourns  
the arm, longing to float  
succumbs to gravity.  
Drop into the cascading pain.  
Fill in the void,  
Fall,  
into the cavity.

I carve a space in the weight,  
shape the emptiness within.  
Sculpt the body.  
Stop my body  
from releasing...

Throat drops into stomach,  
waiting within the space.

...exhale into this place.

**Jose Miguel (Miggy) Esteban** (he/him) is a Filipino-Canadian dance/movement artist and educator based in Tkaronto/Toronto, the traditional lands and territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Huron-Wendat. Miggy is a PhD student in the Department of Social Justice Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. His research engages with disability studies, dance/performance studies, and embodied practices of research-creation to encounter the interpretations of gesture as sites for inspiring a return to our bodies, to our (un)belonging within space, and to our movement in relation with one another.



## Untitled by Tracy Veck

Feeling textures of my body, floating with the sun dappling, letting my limbs loose, breathing in the words of another's voice... moving through layers of peat, sediments of mountains, snow capped and slowly melting. In the water I am becoming lavender scented molecules. I feel swerves bumping and scattering. Forms colliding and criss-crossing slowly, so slowly and deliciously disassembling, a taste of dew.

**Tracy Veck** (she/they) is a disabled queer sharer of ideas and movement meditation practices based in Scotland.

## Untitled by Denise Leto

Small belly ghosts.  
Quivering reed our oboe lung.  
Or a wing, countless wings.  
Vulva air though cloth ellipse.  
Vibration makes erasure few.  
What garment the sound of myth?  
Her hair is a whirling green-blue.  
Fearlessly fathom the inlet lace.  
Sibilant roll on her bottom body.  
Glances the pastel prismatic slow.  
Lamp of sand is a filament fin.  
Color of odd angles in ancient purr.  
Her absent tears seek puckering mud.  
Knees bent in the hollow door.  
Lush fray follows sun or land.  
Sticks sway with ample thread.  
How she loves soft vowels  
in the pattern breeze.

**Denise Leto** (she/her) is a queer multidisciplinary poet, writer and dance dramaturge. Her current project, *home (Body)* is a dance, video, poetry installation and performance. Her poetry/prose collaboration centered around the Villanelle appeared with *InDance*. She co-created the *San Francisco Baylands Eco-Poetry Project*. Work has appeared in numerous publications recently in *Rogue Agent*, *Mollyhouse*, *Hello/Goodbye Apocalypse* and the *Italian American Review*. Poems are forthcoming in *Orion*, *Baest* and *Quarterly West*. She is the author of the poetry book for the dance/performance exploring embodied/vocal difference, *Your Body is Not a Shark*. She does cross-genre, disability culture work with *Olimpias Art Collective*.

## about the legs? the arms? by Stephanie Heit

I lick my lips that aren't where they were. Saliva pools between my toes. My knees move instead of my hands. Tunnels enact themselves. Jut under the surface. A network signals and gapes – wind clears passages. What was once a combination lock, open. Things leak: spinal fluid, mucus. Debris jumbles up in corners – chat comments, silt, plastic bags, velvet blankets. Cells plump up. Respiration quickens. Heart pump muscle, a calm thing or anxious possibility. When ready, try out gravity. Stand/fall at the same time. Hinge in shadow. Carve and let spaces carve. Organs sing tunes to each other. Aspirant lub dub harmonies: liver squirt, kidney squish, celebrate in pulse. I get high on the vibrations. It's a thin membrane. A most fortunate assembly of vulnerable parts. Saran Wrap protected.

**Stephanie Heit** (she/her) is a queer poet, dancer, and teacher of somatic writing and contemplative movement practices. She is a Zoeglossia Fellow, bipolar, and a member of the Olimpias, an international disability performance collective. Her poetry collection, *The Color She Gave Gravity* (The Operating System) explores the seams of language, movement, and mental health difference. Her art and life practices are embedded in her love of movement, water, language, the body, disability culture, different ways of being, and collaboration. She lives on Three Fires Confederacy territory in Ypsilanti, Michigan where she creates Turtle Disco, a somatic writing space, with Petra Koppers.

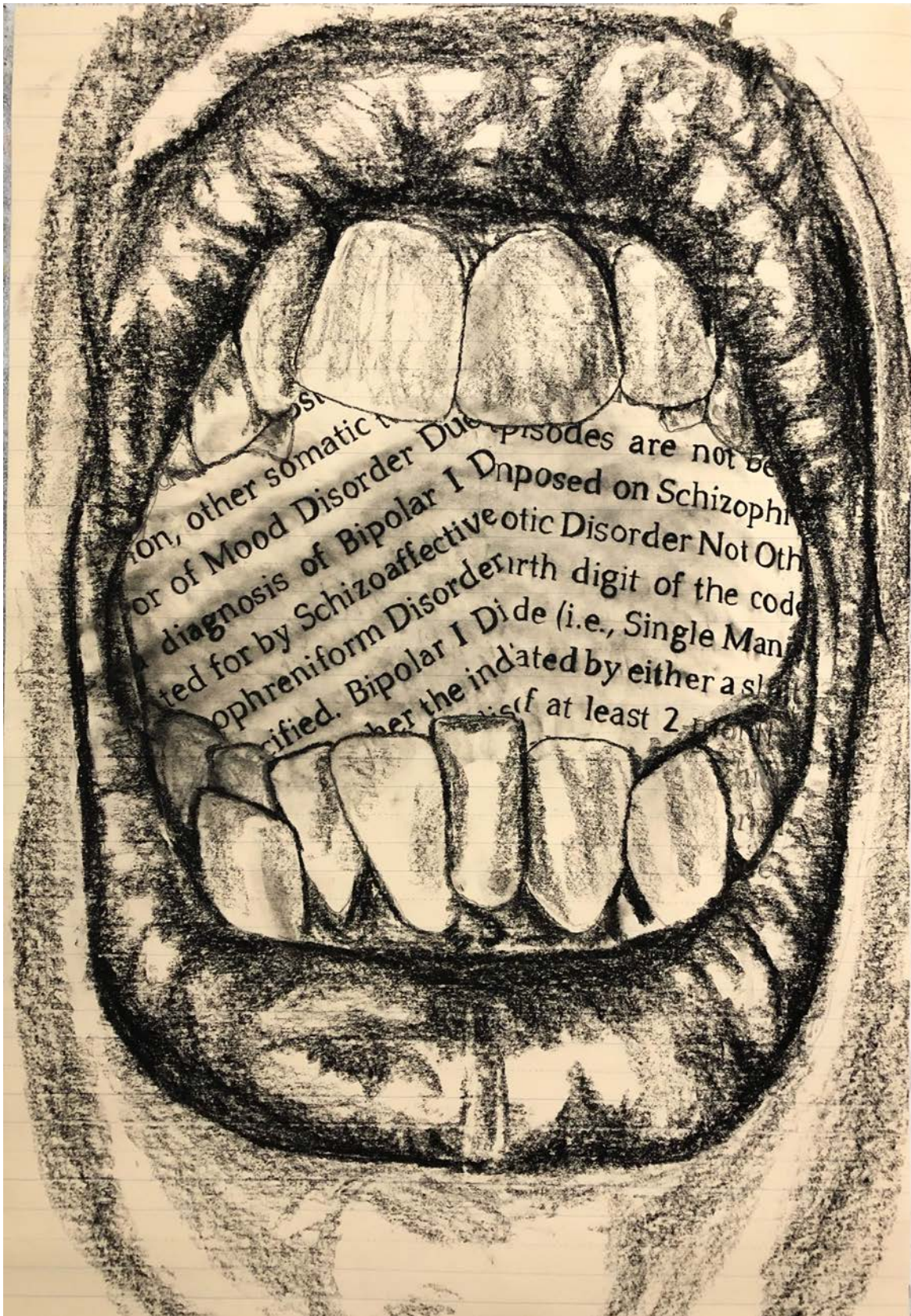


## Untitled by Marc Arthur

ancient thistle tastes on the tongue  
lymph of mastodon  
hollow artery  
we imagine a practice of survival  
what knowledge does a bone impart?  
how does it shape improvisation?

licking language into meaning  
hairs stand up on back of neck  
another way to wake up again

**Marc Arthur** (he/him/his) is a theatre and performance artist based in Ypsilanti, Michigan. His work incorporates methods from dance, painting, and socially engaged art. He is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in Arts-based Social Justice Research and Practice at the University of Michigan where he is studying community-based theatre approaches for decreasing stigma and oppression.



What I have learned – Bipolar Disorder  
Chanika Svetvilas

Text inside the mouth is a page about the diagnosis of bipolar disorder torn from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, known as the DSM. Mouth covering the entire page is gaped open baring crooked teeth. Text is in place of where you might see a tongue blocking the throat smothering my breath. Charcoal on lined paper, 36" x 24".

# Contemplative Dance & Writing Practice

Contemplative Dance & Writing Practice with Stephanie Heit

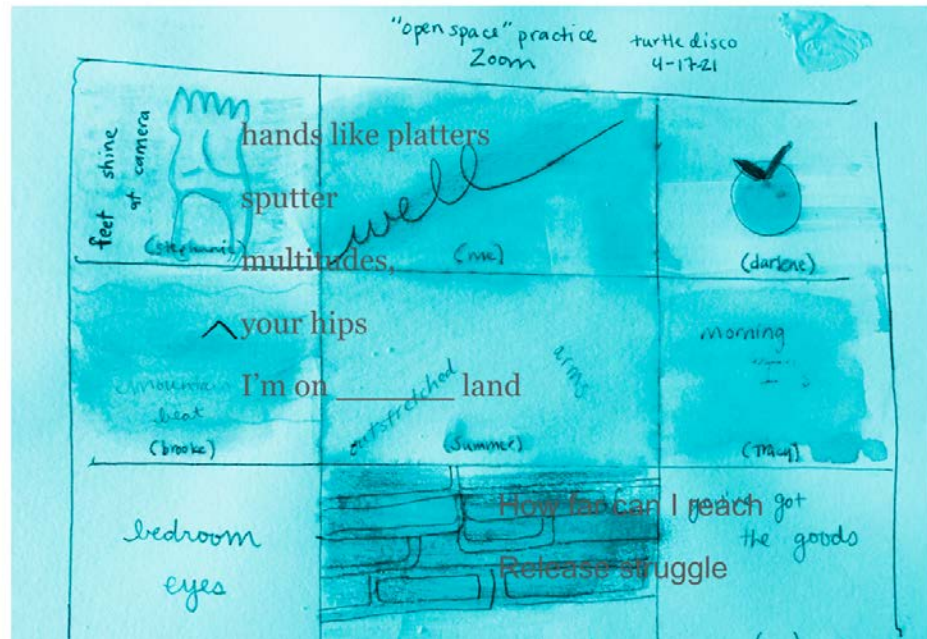
In this practice, we will create a laboratory of delight: move in improvisational play engaging with our inner and outer spaces, awaken the senses through freewrites, witness the breath in meditation, tend to self and other taking influence from and connecting through our community of zoom squares. Join us to cultivate creative self-care, communal and individual inquiries, and an embodied, moving writing experience. This can be a rich training ground for touching into and being with the unknown, a useful skill for these uncertain times.

Contemplative Dance & Writing Practice is based on and adapted from Contemplative Dance Practice created and developed at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado by Barbara Dilley, who I had the pleasure to study with for many years. I honor this lineage and appreciate her invitation to adjust this “dancer’s meditation hall” to make it a living, changing thing to meet the moment.

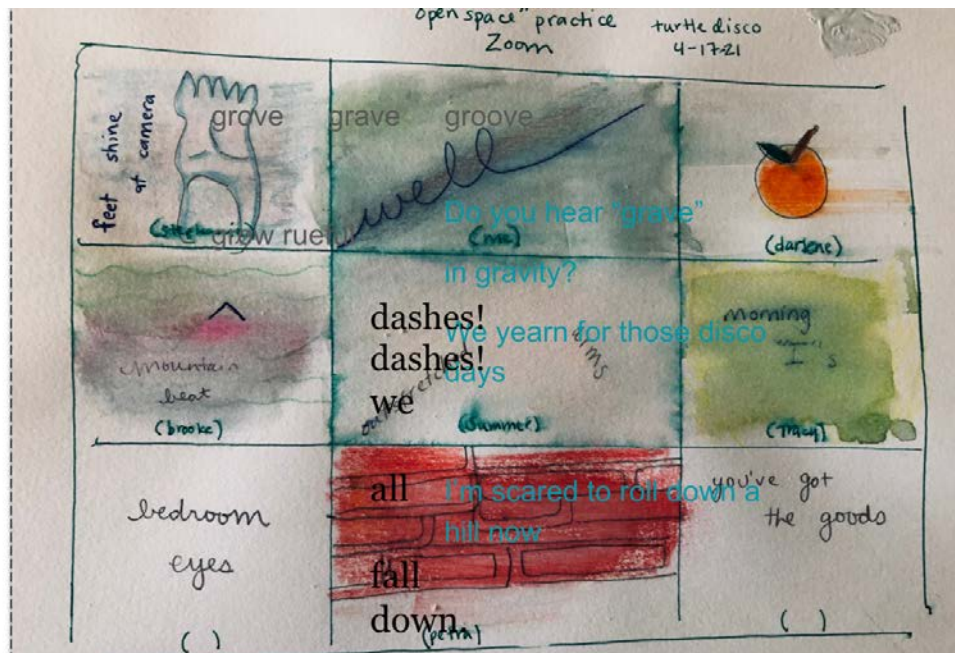
No experience necessary. Please make a zoom space nest equipped with whatever you need for sitting or horizontal meditation (chair, cushion, mat). Bring writing/art materials you desire (journal, pen, colored pencils, etc.). Dress in comfy layers to support movement and stillness.



arrival

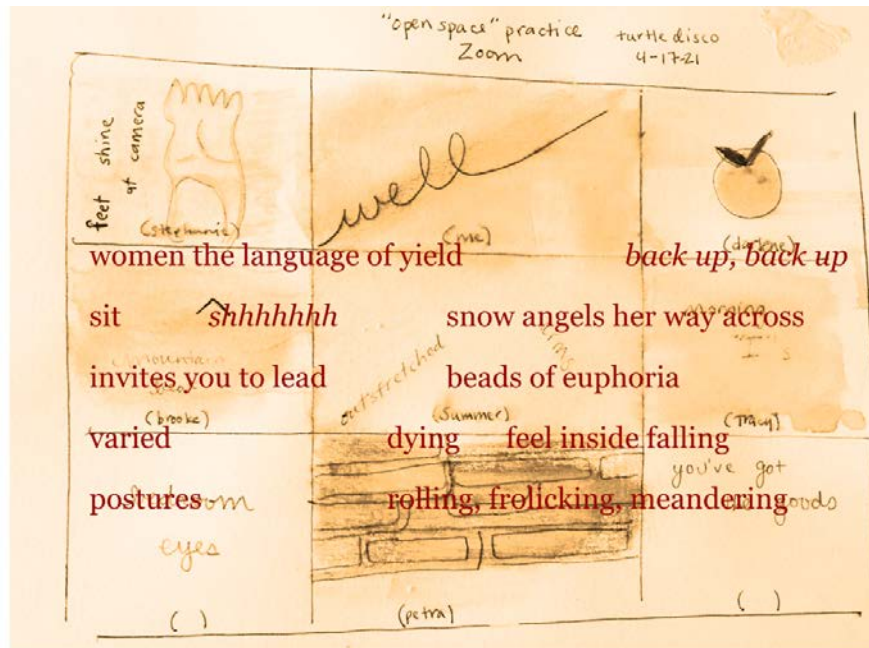


open space writing



Samar Abulhassan

## meditation



Samar Abulhassan

Image Description for two images on previous page and image on this page:  
 Each image has a base of a hand drawn grid of nine zoom squares, three rows of three with the text open space writing 4/17/21 at the top. The squares have names: stephanie, me, darlene, brooke, summer, tracy, ( ), petra, ( ). There is handwritten text and drawings on each square: "feet shine at camera" with a picture of one foot, "well" in cursive diagonally across, drawing of an orange, "mountain beat" with triangle and wavy peaks, "outstretched arms," "morning I's," "bedroom eyes," drawing of bricks, "you've got the goods."

The first image, "arrival," is in a turquoise wash and has typed text across: hands like platters spatter multitudes, your hips I'm on \_\_\_\_\_ land How far can I reach Release struggle

The second image, "open space writing," has a grayish wash with color added, red for the bricks, orange for the fruit, pink hues for mountains. The typed text is: grove grave groove grow rue, Do you hear "grave" in gravity? We yearn for those disco days, I'm scared to roll down a hill now, dashes! dashes! we all fall down

The third image, "meditation," has a light orange wash. The typed text is: women the language of yield back up back up sit shhhhhh snow angels her way across invites you to lead beads of euphoria varied dying feel inside falling postures rolling, frolicking meandering

**Samar Abulhassan** (she/her) holds an MFA from Colorado State University. Born to Lebanese immigrants and raised with multiple languages, she is a 2006 Hedgebrook alum and the author of several chapbooks. Samar is a full time teaching artist, and in her 13th year of guiding young poets through Seattle Arts & Lectures' Writers in the Schools. Nocturnal by nature, she often gets her best ideas at night, and is inspired by the ocean, music and dance. In 2016, Samar received a CityArtist grant to aid in completing a novel-in-poems reflecting on memory, longing, and the Arabic alphabet.

## An Ecstasy of Charge by Jose Miguel Esteban

Static from socks against carpet,  
friction of body against fabric.  
Shocks,  
    jolts,  
        emanate from rubbing  
my self upon the surface around me.

Attune to my surroundings,  
    air hovers around me,  
        particles rub against me,  
            an ecstasy of charge.  
The ecstasy of my discharging pulse  
reverberates beyond me.

A warmth, a heat  
engulfs me.  
The heat, more vigorous  
diffuses beyond me.

Pleasure agitates pain,  
    ecstatic pain,  
        toxic pleasure.  
Release the explosion,  
    pent-up charge.  
Luxuriate in the confetti,  
    a rainfall surrounds me.

Glitter everywhere.  
Stuck to me. Stuck on me.  
Rub it off  
a shimmering rainbow glued onto me.

Stickiness.  
    Stuck-ness.  
Rub to remove.  
Massage the glitter  
    incorporated into me,  
    incorporating through me.  
Something within me from without me,  
    a dream.  
        my desire.  
            we play.

reserve a quilt of spiders by Roxanna Bennett

storing energies like chipmunks  
in a dream hut dark with licorice & garlic  
what do I need & is there enough  
rest is/ in love mirror hands dancing

from Madrid to Michigan many limbed  
orange many fingered what do the trees need  
from us head rocks voluptuous  
soft rocking waves warm wood far away

open space music in small not-squares  
quilt of spiders purple arthritis gloves  
spell sign love access is meet in kindness  
with a magic wand

listen as contribution resurgence verges  
puppy ukulele & a stone on petra's head  
stephanie swirling with dad & autumn leaves  
sad but

mirror hands  
dream hut  
soft rocking supportive  
bodymind re re re re position

[turtle disco zoomshells Contemplative Dance & Writing November 14, 2020]

The disabled poem-making entity known as **Roxanna Bennett** resides on the traditional territory of the Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of Scugog, Hiawatha & Alderville First Nations & the Métis Nation and is grateful to the many generations of Indigenous people who have cared for this land from beginningless time. They are the author of *The Untranslatable I*, (Gordon Hill Press, 2021) *Unmeaningable*, (Gordon Hill Press, 2019), *unseen garden* (chapbook, knife | fork | book, 2018), and *The Uncertainty Principle* (Tightrope Books, 2014).

## Untitled by Tracy Veck

I'm a little fearful of the invitation, I have history with mimicry  
Yet there are moments  
Little joys of feeling connected  
Virtually between us  
I witness someone holding their body  
And I hold mine  
Reassuring ourselves  
We close our eyes  
Turning inwards with the solidarity of sharing  
Breathing out a little lighter



## If a Creek Ran Through You by Hannah Soyer

I haven't gone back to Saylorville Lake since the time I met her there. But I'm feeling like I don't need to write about her anymore. We are asked to focus on our saliva, and my thought is that my mouth is dry. I've been writing a lot about water lately, and a lot about drought. Is it too stereotypical to write about the land as a Midwesterner?

Let us not forget the skin is an organ. There are cool winds and there are hot winds. And in the meadow the coneflowers have burnt up, turned black and brown. Were they denied the water they needed?

Imagine a creek through your body. The creek is you. But you still have that container, that skin membrane.

What are the banks of the river? If the leaves keep falling from the trees in our backyard, eventually the sun will be able to come through.

What are the thoughts the river brings with it? What are the memories? Where does the river end and become a lake? An ocean? What makes the river a river, if the water is always changing? Is it the form of a river that makes it a river? The land? Perhaps everything that is not water? We name something a lake, and then we name it something else, and it is not quite like the act of naming that the fox talks about in *The Little Prince*. It is not, actually, an act of love, although it is perhaps an attempt at taming. What people too often forget is that water can kill you—life giver, life taker. The edges where water meets land, is it an edge? A barrier? A boundary? How do we bend?

I think of Terra Park, another manmade water container, but so much different than Saylorville Lake. I have been taking walks (almost weekly) around the pond at Terra Park throughout my time home in Iowa during the pandemic. It is a place to meet a friend, masked and feet apart. In June, shortly after the breakup, I meet a friend there for an evening walk and my throat fills with the sight of all the wildflowers blooming. Earlier that week, I am leaving my grandparents house at sunset and feel like crying at the sight of the way the light streaks across the sky, leaving stripes on the Iowa clouds. I text a friend, telling them the thought of her enjoying this sight with a different girl is killing me, a sharp knife in my stomach. "It's not hers, Hannah," my friend responds. "Don't let her have it. Enjoy the sunset without letting her ruin it."

The pond at Terra Park is cool and calm, and the wind makes little waves form on the surface of the water, but they are measured and slow. When I go to Terra Park in the evening, the sun laps the water—golden and blue, it is such a beautiful mixture, a coming together of disparate elements.

Even though Terra Park is manmade, it is the natural power it embodies that makes it so wonderful to be a part of. I am reminded of Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, realizing how it is this reciprocal, caring relationship between humans and the earth that allows not just humans to thrive and live, but also the earth. I don't know if this is the same with humans—reciprocity in human-to-human relationships.

And of course, what would I need to be able to live within water? Gills? Lungs that function differently? Muscles that allow me to move in tandem with the currents? A tail? A fin? Is this really all that different from what I need to live out of water?



### Three of Wands Beth Currans

Inspired by a papercut image on a tarot card by Ruth West, this pen and ink drawing was done during a Contemplative Movement session led by Stephanie Heit on April 24, 2021. The image emphasizes the importance of retreat and contemplation by focusing on a heavy woman cozying up with a book.

**Beth Currans** (she/her) teaches at Eastern Michigan University (Three Fires Anishinaabe Territory (Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatami) aka Ypsilanti, Michigan) where she also administers the Women's and Gender Studies, Critical Disability Studies, and College in Prison programs. Her research explores how cultural outsiders, especially women and queer people, claim and transform public spaces. Her creative and somatic practices include gardening, cooking, drawing, ceramics, swimming and hiking in natural spaces, and yoga.

## Eco Femme(inism) by Raven Kame'enui-Becker

A bed of grass tops supple soil,  
blades loop into earthen hooks  
from woven roots.  
Firm, even pressure on the nervous ecosystem,  
our neural networks rejoice!

*Mud-making delight! Mud-making at night, mud making 'til light.*

Feel the slippery residue of worm flesh on rock,  
to the tune of a ladybug shell  
crunching against concrete fragments.  
A conversation between loves,  
the sound of two layers  
becoming one.  
Each waved strand finds a space to fit,  
each tight curl coiled into its nest  
Labored breaths harmonize  
with the thrum of deep, low, fast heartbeats  
soaking our soil,  
mucus saturating the darkness between us.

*Mud-making delight! Mud-making at night, mud making 'til light.*

Flowers, weeds, seeds emerge from under the covers,  
Water to wine, lips to dirt to mud—  
bathed in the glory of terrestrial magic.  
*Pop! Pop! Pop!* Seedlings come alive in small explosions.  
Terrene digits curl and unfurl,  
fuzzy bubbles growing, yearning, bursting beneath our tongues  
pressure and rel(ief)ease.  
Feel the mud between your toes—  
Does the lovemaking reach your bones?  
Are its leftovers caught in your throat?

*Mud-making delight! Mud-making at night, mud making 'til light.*

Again, scoop the soil with soggy fingers—  
my love is never quite enough.  
Always left with more to pot,  
more holes to fill.  
Never quite enough goes from heart to fist,  
from fist to mouth,  
from mouth to the spaces between us.

*Mud-making delight! Mud-making at night, mud making 'til light.*

Stomach acid favors flavor—  
savor notes of dirt, sod, and grass  
water-soluble desire  
swirls with disintegrating remains.

**Raven Kame'enui-Becker** (they / them / theirs) is a Kanaka Maoli from Honolulu, Hawai'i. Their creative practices include painting with water-based oils and acrylics, and drawing with pen and colored pencil. They also write poetry and creative nonfiction essays.

## Untitled by Sarah Dean

i look down  
see my size 9 feet  
too large  
for my korean heritage  
~

i will always be me  
even when i wish  
i were someone else  
these almond shaped eyes  
these piano fingers  
this irregularly beating heart  
~

finding middle ground  
fulcrum, balancing point  
both poles in view  
~

this act of balancing  
in tree pose  
engages muscles  
compels stillness  
with micromovements  
requires focus  
as branches sway  
revealing the shallow roots  
of my practice  
and yet  
shifting my arms  
activating my torso  
i align myself again

[January 23, 2021]

## rhythms of the temple of fortitude by Roxanna Bennett

seasonal artificial  
imposed rhythms:  
9-5 isms nonsensical elections

slow in turn with nature slower  
even slower  
even slo o o o w w e rrrr than this

how slowly can I form this word  
& with  
what care

in/side out/side my space  
closeted within my own interrupted  
welcome disruption welcome

pressure to fill  
space with noise pressure perceived  
of gravity

sped up rushed through shunted aside  
elbowed out of the way to  
"make room make room"

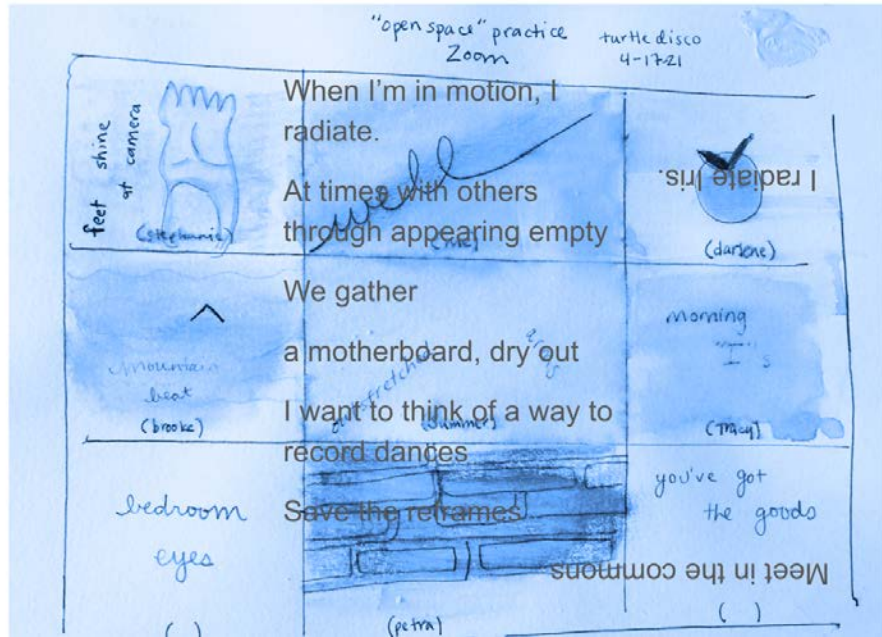
heave all uns  
of heartbeat tempo breath  
the temple of fortitude

this closet of blankets & pillows  
downbeat Michigan's autumn waves  
in warm not-squares

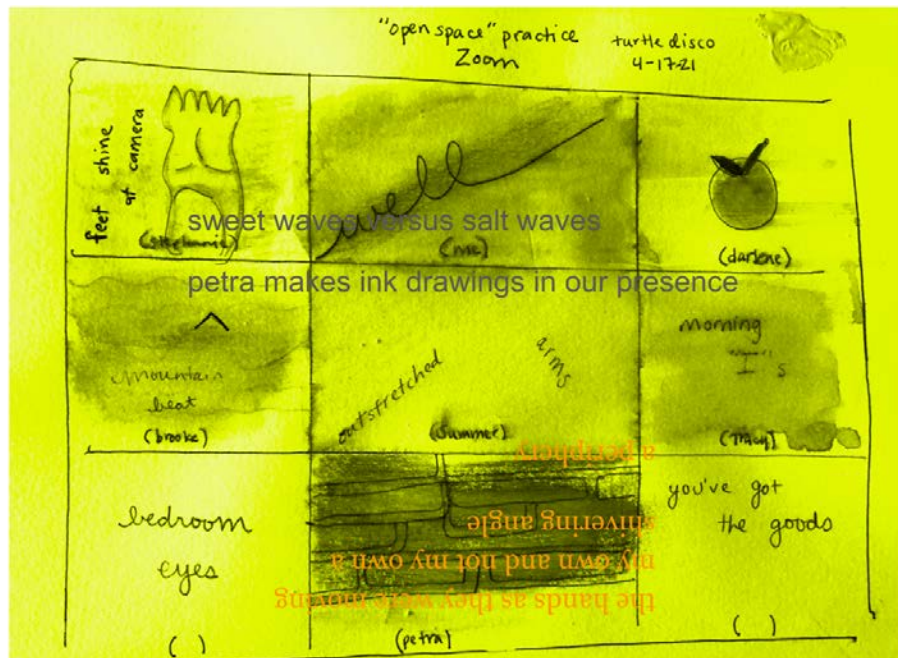
turtles distant  
disco  
unheaval

[turtle disco zoomshells Contemplative Dance & Writing  
November 28, 2020]

writing practice



closing notes

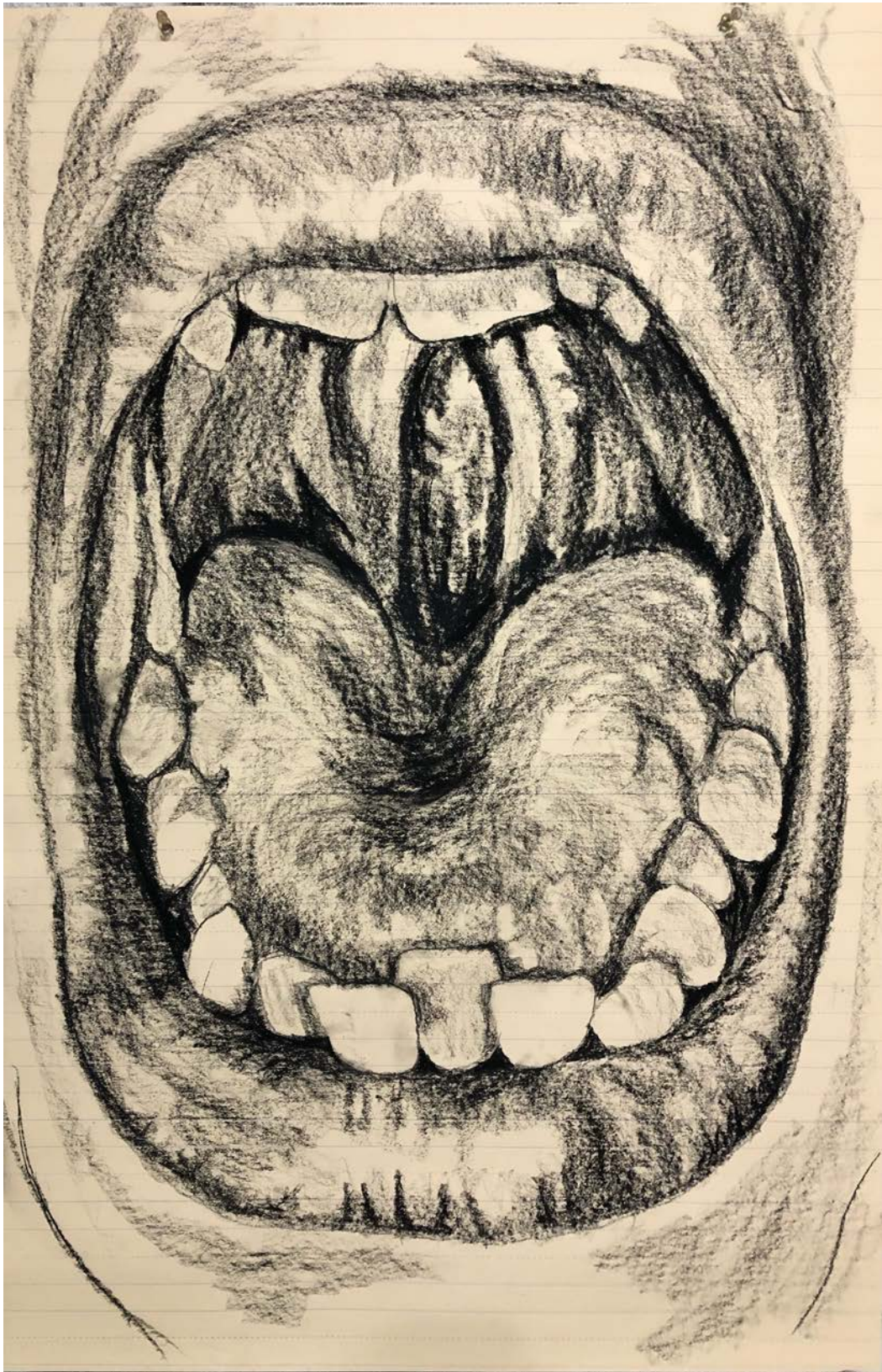


Samar Abulhassan

The image, "writing practice," is in a sky blue wash. The typed text is: When I'm in motion, I radiate. At times with others appearing empty We gather a motherboard, dry out I want to think of a way to record dances Save the reframes (and upside down text) Meet in the commons I radiate Iris

The image, "closing notes," is in a lime green wash. The typed text is: sweet waves versus salt waves petra makes ink drawings in our presence (and upside down text in orange) the hands as they were moving my own and not my own a shivering angle a periphery





What I have learned – Silent Scream  
Chanika Svetvilas

I felt like I pulled the gag out of my mouth...and I screamed. charcoal on lined paper, 36" x 24" ID: charcoal drawing of a gaping gagging mouth consumes the entire page revealing crooked teeth and the hollow back of the mouth while the tongue presses down. Is it a silent scream?