

FINDING HOME

A THESIS BY

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FOR

**THE LARGE GLASS
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STUDENT ID 1025691

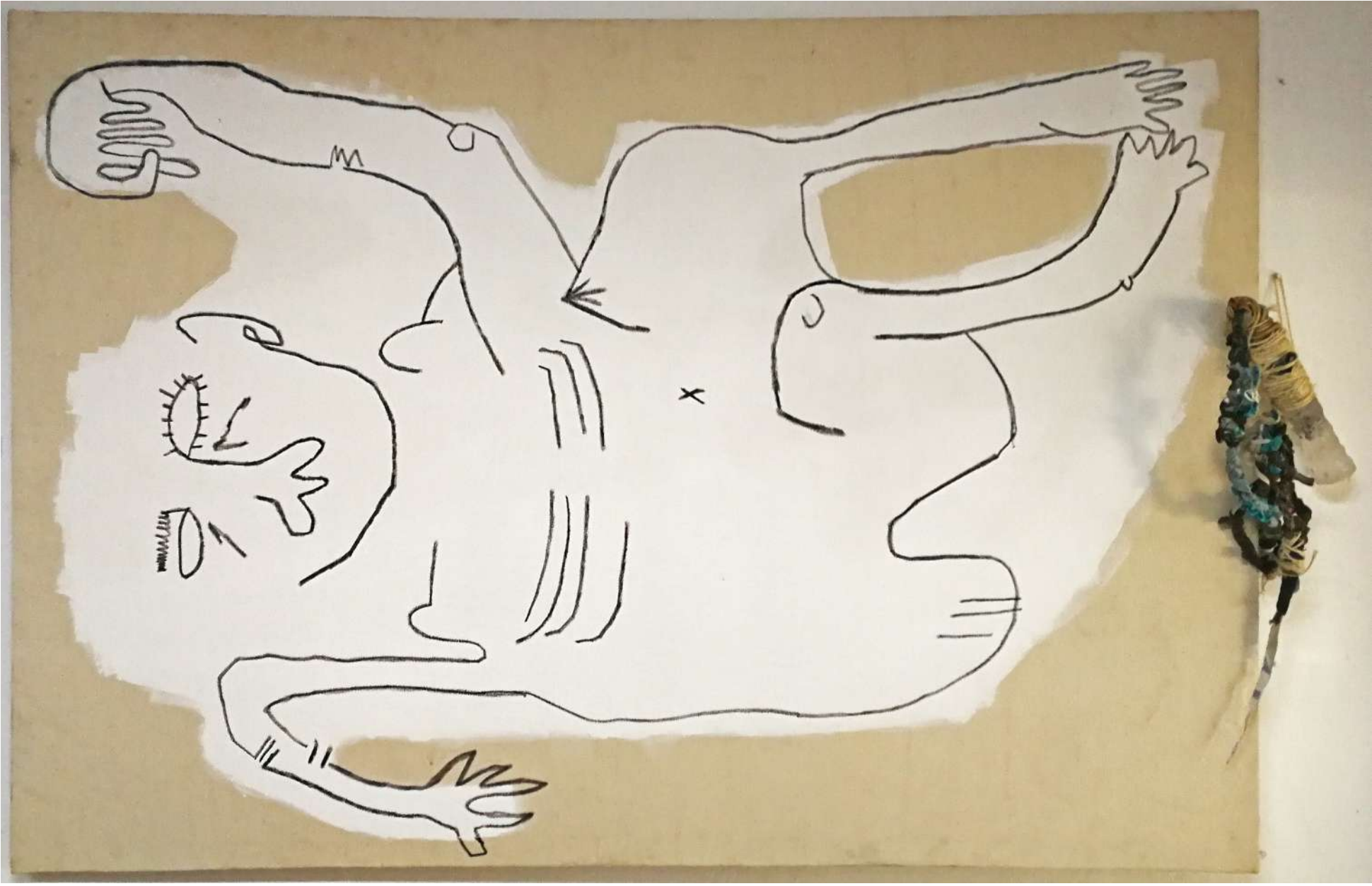
2020

All the text, images and artworks in this publication are made by me if nothing else is mentioned.
The typeface used is *Baskerville*, designed by John Baskerville in England during the years 1750-1756.

Thank you enormously Eloise Sweetman, for supervising me with great support and patience throughout this project.
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I especially want to thank everyone who made me feel that I belong.





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Portraits

2019

128 cm x 192 cm
Casted glass, found
objects and rope.
Acrylic and pastel
on canvas

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INTRODUCTION

There is a king fisher in front of me, a pair of sunbirds are passing a tiny feather back and forth to each other and a Yellow Swallow has just finished building a nest on the branch hanging over the swimming pool and it is now trying to attract a mate to its new built home.¹ A beautiful scenario, and really distracting as I am trying to write.

This is happening while Daniel is busy with his daily routine of cleaning the surface of the pool. Daniel is the caretaker of the garden. He lives in a little shed on a small hill just next to the entrance of this property.

George and Johannes are two brothers who also work here, like their father did for 40 years until he passed away just a few years back. Daniel, George and Johannes are going to completely drain the swimming pool and repaint the bottom and the walls of it in the coming weeks. Absurdly enough neither of them know how to swim.

I have also gotten to know Winnie and Magdelene, the two ladies who clean the interior of the house. They travel for two hours to get to their job and two hours back home again every day.

The guest house is named Sunset View. A fitting name, since we get a great view of the sunset every evening.

Daniel, George, Johannes, Winnie and Magdelene are black. They make a tiny amount of money for the hard work that they do six days every week.

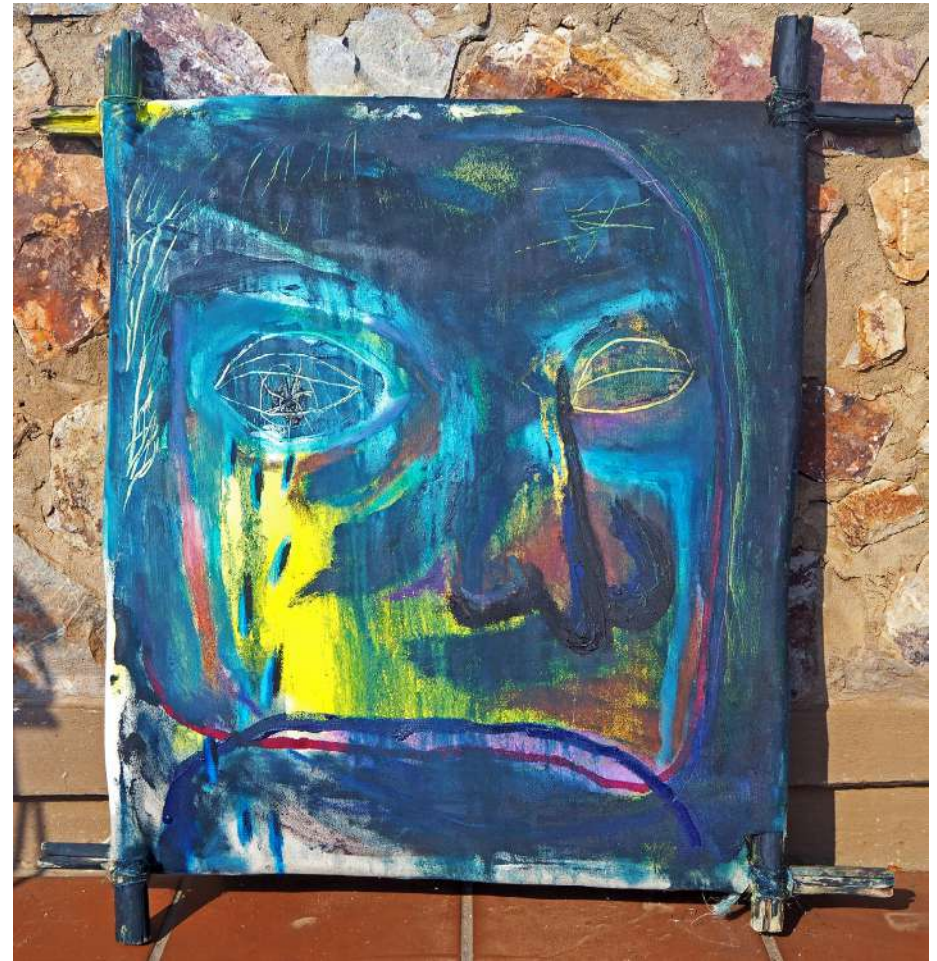
The property owners are white.

I felt a strong connection to Daniel, George, Johannes, Winnie and Magdelene as we got close to each other during my stay at Sunset View in Pretoria, South Africa. They were fascinated to see my way of painting and would sometimes take the opportunity during their short breaks to watch me do my work in the garden. I wanted to show them my gratitude for all the comfort they gave me in the home, so I decided to make five paintings where I could represent each one of them in different ways. I made frames from wood that I collected in the garden where we spent our time together.

On the following pages you can see how the paintings turned out.



Sunset View
70 cm x 70 cm
2019
Oil, acrylic, spray, pastel, rope and wood on canvas



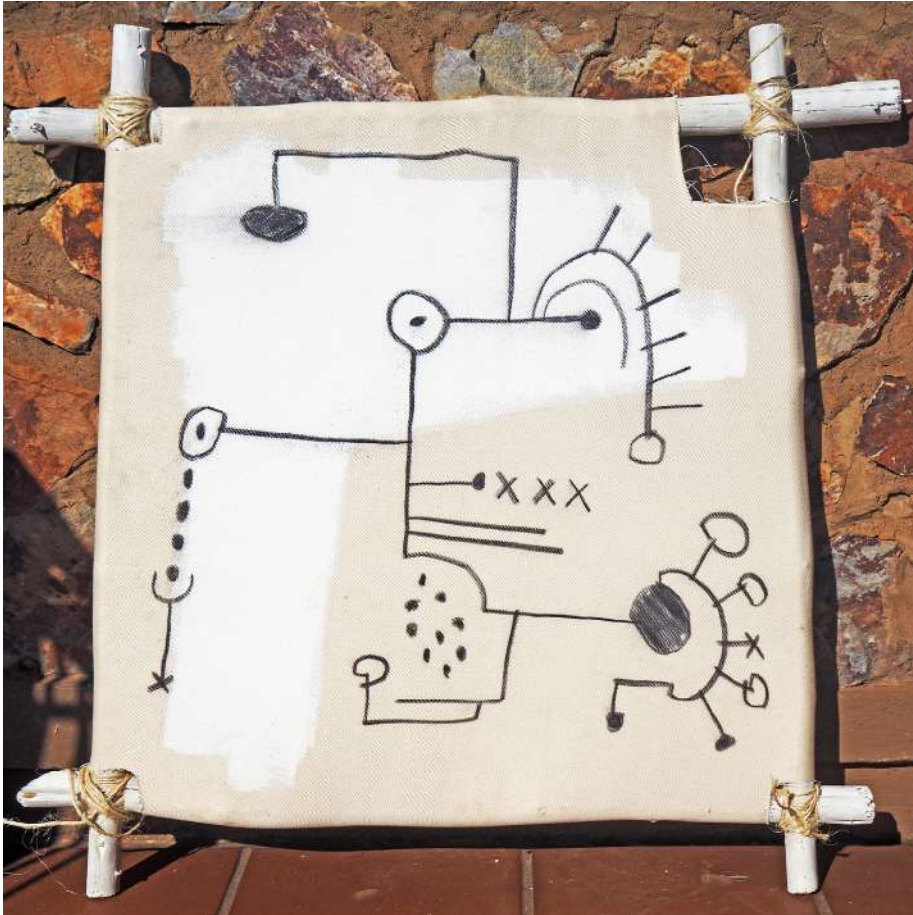
Waiting for Sunrise
70 cm x 70 cm
2019
Oil, acrylic, spray, pastel, ink, rope and wood on canvas



Daniel's Shed
70 cm x 70 cm
2019
Acrylic, oil, pastel, charcoal, graphite, collage, rope and wood on canvas



Magdelene
70 cm x 70 cm
2019
Acrylic, oil, spray, pastel, ink, rope and wood on canvas



I have been fortunate enough to have had homes on several places in the world. Places that have provided me with centerings and belonging.

This thesis is my research on the home. I question what it means to have a home, to feel at home, how to build and care for one's home. I explore these questions through experiences and thoughts that I have built up early in my life as well as more recently, from my studies at Gerrit Rietveld Academie in the Netherlands and my exchange program at Tshwane University of Technology in South Africa.

My research and the content of my work grows from observations of postcolonial structures, the nature around and inside me, historical and political perceptions and flaws and strengths that I notice in our society.

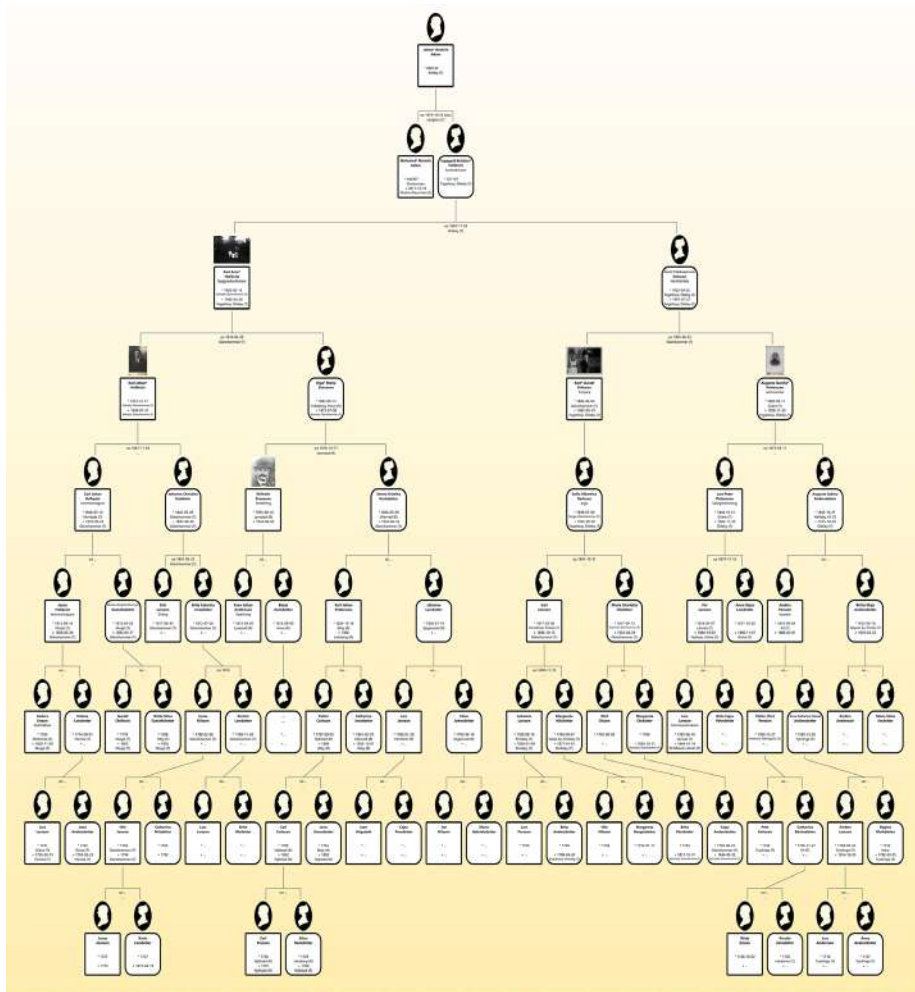
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The Garden

70 cm x 70 cm

2019

Acrylic, charcoal, rope and wood on canvas



Family tree with the information from Kristina Hellkvist's genealogy research.⁴

SUEDI

“You were born in Sweden. I was as well. You were born as Swedish, I was born as something else. In Suedi (which means Swedish in Arabic, among other languages) I describe how a seed is sown in my head early in life. The seed is the feeling of not being accepted for who you are. As the seed germinates over the course of the song, the mantra of ‘you are not Swedish’ turns into a desire to belong to something else that you can be accepted as and feel belonging to.”
 - Erik Lundin²

My father was born in Sudan, in the city Omdurman. He moved to Sweden in the early 1970's, where he and my mother met each other. I was born there, in Sweden, so I guess I could be considered Swedish just as well as my mother or anyone else that is born in Sweden. A lot of people have asked me where I *really* come from though. I guess they assume that I am from another part of the world since my looks are not, in a traditional view, typical for a Nordic person. My skin is brown, the color in my eyes is really dark and my hair is naturally very curly.

I wonder if those who ask me where I *really* come from are very conservative, ignorant or confused. Or if they might have a point.

I had to learn early in my life that I will stand out in most occasions when I am in my home country, partly because of the color of my skin. But I grew up in Sweden, Swedish is my mother tongue and all ancestors from my mothers side of the family are Nordic, according to a genealogy test that she took,³ and her own research shows that her roots are Swedish all the way back to the year 1716.⁴

On the other hand when my sister took a test with the online genealogy platform *MyHeritage*, just as our mother did, it showed a vast range of different countries;

Scandinavian - 27,5%
Finnish - 1,1%
Irish, Scottish and Welsh - 17,0%
Greek and South Italian - 7,2%
Balkan - 4,6%
Somali - 16,8%
Kenyan - 9,9%
West African - 6,3%
North African - 1,1%
Middle Eastern - 5,3%
Central Asian - 3,2%

Having the above information in mind, and since my sister and I share the same ancestors, it turns out to be a more complex question to ask me where I *really* come from.

“What are we really seeking, though, when we ask where someone comes from? And what are we really seeing when we hear an answer? Here’s one possibility; Basically, countries represent power.”
- Taiye Selasi⁵

What Taiye Selasi means is that for someone to hear that I have roots in Sudan, they might automatically assume that I have less power, while for example Sweden represents more power.

If a person wants to know who I really am, though, rather than to assume things based on my parents nationality, a more accurate question would be to ask me where I am a local. Ask me where I have my home. Then I could tell so much more about who I am.



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Self portrait

200 cm x 160 cm

2018

Acrylic, oil, spray, pastel and collage on canvas

This portrait is a study of my microscopic world, the lives on and in my body, my inner self. The movements are reinterpretations of the microbes paths in my skin and the collage is the results of a microphotographic study on my body.

CELESTIAL BODY

Probably everyone you have ever met, no matter how they communicate with each other, what color and shape their teeth, fingers, roots, claws, hair, wings, tails, petals are, what kind of food they eat, how fat, skinny or in between they are, they all have in common that they share the same planet as their home. All the billions and trillions of fishes, plants, insects, clouds and people all belong to this one small lump of stuff in space. We all get nutrition from it, we drink from its sweat, urinate on its skin and fall asleep with its breath.

As the Earth wanders around the Sun over and over again, things are changing on, around and inside of it. Everything that is alive grows, dies and eventually fade back into the ecosystem, the clouds keep dancing with the wind until they drop down as rain and the core of the planet keeps pumping heat, like a heart, inside.

As we wander the surface of the planet and make use of its resources for our whole lifetime others are also wandering the surface of our own bodies, much in the same way as we are doing it on Earth, just on a different scale. Our bodies are celestial as well as the planets are. On, around and inside are living beings that can live because of us. Every strain of hair, just as every tree, can be lived on. It can be crafted. We can be whatever they decide us to be. Every time you take a shower they think it is a massive rain-storm. Every time you dance they call it an earthquake. Every time you come close to someone something completely new is about to happen. Celestial bodies meeting each other. That's how magic is made.

Or something disastrous. Celestial bodies colliding. That's what killed the dinosaurs.

(SPEAKING OF DINOSAURS)

Dinosaurs have evolved into the birds we have around us today.⁶ It happened on the same planet that we are living on, while sipping on the same water that we are drinking.

If you have ever seen the movie Jurassic Park you might think that all the dinosaurs were gray and brown and that their language would be pretty much just nasty shouts.⁷ But since the pigments are not preserved for so many millions of years I would like to think that they were also pink, yellow and turquoise so they could hide easily in their surrounding environment, maybe behind a massive flower. And since we have no idea of knowing how they would communicate and it is known that the birds of today have evolved from dinosaurs I think that they also sang beautiful songs.



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The Evolution of Birds 1
131 cm x 131 cm
2019

Acrylic, oil, pastel, spray, markers and ink on canvas

CELESTIAL BODY 2

Do you know that your body glows like baby Jesus ⁸
and that there are 5000 suns just like us
But only we have tamed each other ⁹
Do you know that baby Jesus glows like the Moon
and at one point the universe could stop to expand
The only thing still shining will be the moonlight
A rainbow made out of moon dust and sunshine
It is enough for me to go home under it

“Something in us recognises the Cosmos as home. We are made of stellar ash. Our origin and evolution have been tied to distant cosmic events. The exploration of the Cosmos is a voyage of self-discovery.”
- Carl Sagan ¹⁰

Cosmos is relative, everything that is tiny is also extremely huge and everything big is practically invisible.

Did you know that the stars are moving further away from each other all the time, as the universe is expanding? Eventually the ones living on earth will not be able to see the same constellations in the sky as we see them tonight. Future generations might only gaze upon the Moon. Imagine having the Moon as the only thing to look at on the night sky. Imagine when the children of Earth have moved on to a life on Mars. Then they will have two moons surrounding their home, and they will be 86 846 733 kilometers further away from the Sun.^{11 12}

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Celestial Bodies
98 cm x 120 cm
2018

Oil, acrylic, spray and pastel on canvas

Celestial Bodies depicts parts of the human body, the full Moon spotted on the night sky as well as a dying star, a supernova. The Moon is glowing since the Sun is shining on it, the cold skin on the hand and foot reflects the moon light and one finger is pointing towards the dying star. Nearly all of the elements in our bodies are the same as the ones that make up the stars and have gone through supernovas. We are made of star dust.



YELLOW SWALLOW

It turns out that the bird above the swimming pool has been named many times before my friend Fidel told me that their name is Yellow Swallow, including the names Jesa, Lihlokohloko, Lethelopje, Kwera Nguya, Thaga, Ndzheyana, Ihobo-Hobo, Ihlokohloko, African Masked Weaver, Black-fronted Weaver, Capricorn Weaver Bird, Greater Masked Weaver, Half-masked Weaver, Lichtenstein's Weaver Bird, Mariqua Weaver Bird, Masked Weaver, Namaqua Masked Weaver, Shelley's Weaver Bird, Yellow Masked Weaver and Zambesi Masked Weaver. Someone once decided to name them Southern Masked Weaver,¹³ which has become the most common name to the western society. I am pretty sure that Fidel made up the name Yellow Swallow at the moment when I was asking him if he knew what the bird was called. I like the idea of being able to decide for ourselves rather than just agreeing to what someone else decided without us a very long time ago, so I stick with Fidel's spontaneous naming.

I have noticed that the Yellow Swallow works hard for one whole day to weave a nest out of grass, with the only tools being their beak and feet, and when they have completed the structure they spend about three or four days dancing around on the branch that the nest is hanging from, flapping their wings in rather hectic but small and incredibly fast motions while they are singing songs with, to my ears, the most irregular patterns with sounds that I wouldn't even recognize as coming from a bird if I hadn't known.

I got curious on how the birds learn the special weaving technique. Is it from observing other birds doing the same thing, do they communicate it verbally amongst each other or is it by instinct that they just know how to weave sophisticated structures?

I have seen this same bird almost every day for several weeks now. Always on the same branch. A strange behavior that I found while observing them is that they often build a new nest. At first I thought that someone was tearing down the nest so that they had to build a new one, but after a while I noticed that they destroy the nest on their own just a few days after it has been constructed. As soon as the old nest is removed from the branch, they start over to construct a new one. The structure changes a little bit every time, making it more reachable and more stable than before. The bird is experimenting with grass as a material and approaches the making of a new nest in quite a playful way, much like how Ben Okri describes creativity in his book *A Way of Being Free*,¹⁴ linking creativity not only to people but also to the birds.

The Yellow Swallow is perfecting a skill and the ones to judge are their potential partners. If the bird that builds the nest doesn't get the response they crave from the others that they want to attract it means that the nest wasn't good enough, and they have to start over again.¹⁵

I want to compare this behavior with how a person learns how to build a brick house.

We can absolutely learn to create from one another already early in our lives, by exchange in playing and observing. Many of us, including myself, grew up playing with LEGO bricks. We can use them to construct a close to endless variety of structures, either representing something or to make something more abstract. We can build little plastic cars, animals, blobs and miniature houses. With a bit of messing around with the materials it might not be so strange for us to combine multiple bricks to construct a wall. If we build and connect a few of these walls we will eventually have a room. So later on in life we can look at a pile of bricks and already make the assumption that they could be constructed into a room. Make a roof for it and we have a house. It might be a very basic house, but nonetheless a house.

So let's say you try to build this house of yours. It doesn't really become the house of your dreams, though. It is not very fashionable, extremely unsafe to stay in and you made the entrance a bit too small so that you have to squeeze yourself through it to get



WALLS

When looking through glass, like a window for example, one is not experiencing with all the senses what is on the other side of it but is actually looking *at* the window and can get an understanding of what is on the other side because of the transparency of the glass. It gives a more or less distorted view, so the only way to really embrace what is on the other side one must bodily go there.

I once faced a glass wall that was so tall it reached all the way to the sky. It was built because the ones on one side of it didn't want to share the same heaven as the ones on the other side. They also didn't want to share the same water, ground, air or even the same language as the others. The two sides couldn't agree on anything, so they even named the two areas differently, The Outside and The Inside.^{16 17}

By now the wall is so old that people have even forgotten that it is made of glass. It is hard to see because of the thick layer of dust that is gathered on its surface.

Even though the wall have been there for a very long time a lot of people still want to make sure that no one from The Inside can cross over to The Outside. If one lives in The Inside they should not get out. If one lives outside it is their own choice to go in, but they can't expect to get back out that easily.

The only ones not affected by the wall are the birds who have the freedom to fly over it, if they have strong enough wings.

The Outside was really clean and tidy. Everyone had the space to move as freely as they wanted. They could go anywhere, but for some reason everyone seemed to be stuck and didn't care much to explore their surroundings. And most of the people living

in The Outside had a lot of money. I could tell since they all had luxurious handbags, shiny shoes and it was really expensive to buy anything there. The grass was green and it would smell good of the flowers blooming all year round. They had the freedom to do anything they wanted to and could buy anything they possibly needed. Nobody had to go hungry, but no one was singing and only a few were smiling.

The buildings were really gray in The Outside, and for some reason they didn't want to put any color on their surroundings. No one wanted to hug one another, even though they believed to know love. No one would speak to their neighbors, even though they shared the same language. A lot of people had lost their children but nobody seemed to be looking for where they were hiding.

There were a few places where they could look through the glass wall, so some people knew that the people in The Inside was having it so much worse than themselves, but only very few had ever been in there to experience how it really was.

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Walls

H 25 cm x Ø 60 cm

2018-2019

Blown glass



I was very curious to visit The Inside. So my friends and I went there. It was really easy to get in. The door was wide open and nobody was there to stop us. The wall was thick. I am guessing probably about 15 meters.

It was very crowded and extremely loud in The Inside. The most disturbing sounds I have ever heard. And it was smelly. Stinky, in fact. And for good reasons. There was trash and feces all over the ground that nobody took care of. The only way to reach the main road without stepping in mud was to balance one's way through the mess on plastic bags and a few stones scattered here and there. The air was thick of fog from all the cars. Not a single flower was blooming, since just a few rays from the Sun could reach the ground.

The Inside was massive. As big as a whole country. But there was only one single horse in that whole area. The horse was so skinny that I am sure that even I was heavier, and so weak that it could hardly stand up on its own.

Those living in The Inside didn't want to be in the position they were placed in, but they didn't have much of a choice to go anywhere else. They were stuck behind the wall since the door was only open one way for them.

My friends and I were fortunate enough to meet Majdi, a person who was living in The Inside. I remember that he told me that my fathers name, Mohamed, and my own name, Ibrahim, were really common in The Inside. It gave me a strong feeling of belonging. Majdi invited us to come live in his house. He was cooking for us, shared his bed with us and day by day we learned a little bit more of each others languages. He told us that his lifelong dream was to become a professional singer.

The people in The Inside were so different from the ones in The Outside. In The Inside they were dancing and told jokes to each other. They were laughing and hugging one another. They would greet me on the streets even though we clearly couldn't communicate in the same spoken language. If one person would lose their child, everyone would instantly go and look for them.

For one whole month every year they would starve

themselves just to know the feeling of being hungry, to feel more compassion towards the less wealthy.

At certain times during the day all the noise would suddenly stop, but just for a moment, until one person would take tone and started to sing really loud. Everyone else in The Inside would follow that person, and they all sang beautiful songs together. Songs that their ancestors had been singing before them and passed on through generations. It was so loud, so clean and so magical. It felt like they were practicing for something really big to happen.¹⁸

In one of those moments I came to think of a song that I know of.¹⁹ It is a song about singing loud and strong, that I wanted to share with Majdi and for him to teach to the others in The Inside.

The lyrics go like this;

*Sjung starkare och sjung högre
Sjung bort mörkret
Du kan sjunga allting
Så länge solen inte
Går upp fyrkantig
Så länge du finns på jorden
Sjung högre
Sjung när hjärtat lider
Och sjung även om det brister
Sjung när tårarna rinner
Sjung när du inte räcker till
Sjung när månen täcker skyn
Så länge du finns på jorden
Sjung högre
Sjung på djupt vatten
Gör din sång till en båt som flyter
Du kan sjunga allting
Så länge solen inte
Går upp fyrkantig
Så länge du finns på jorden
Sjung högre*

But since the song is in a language that Majdi doesn't understand, I asked my friends Mohamed and Zein to help me translate it for him;

على وىوقاً نغ
مالظلا نع أدىعب نغ
عبرم لكشرب قرشت ال سمشلا نأ املاط
امودءانغل لكانكمإب هنإف
شيعت كنأ املاط لواع توصب نغ
يناعي و كبلق ملأتى امदन عىتح نغ
كعومدمهنت امदन ع نغ
كتامل كيهتنت عىتح نغ
ءامسل رمقلا يطغى عىتح نغ
. ةايحلا هذه يف دوجوم تنأ املاط
على توصب نغ
و هايمل قاعأب نغ
هايمل على وفطي براق كئىانغ لعجا
عبرم لكشرب قرشت ال سمشلا نأ املاط
امودءانغل لكانكمإب هنإف
على توصب نغ



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Untitled

85 cm x 120 cm

2019

Oil, markers and collage on canvas

My interpretation of the songs that were sung in The Inside. An abstraction of the sounds. I made a painting of what I heard, since I couldn't understand the language of the words. The building that is pictured in the painting is the one where the person who started the song would be located.

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Ramadan

100 cm x 135 cm

2019

Acrylic, spray, markers, pastel, collage on canvas

I found out that the people in The Inside started the fasting month a few weeks after I left them. I wanted to know what it was like, so I tried it out for myself. The experience taught me a lot about compassion. It changed the connection I have to my names and the way I treat them. I now feel a stronger value to what I consume. I don't eat as fast and as much as I used to. I also value water differently. When it rains it doesn't just rain.



Brahm
mohamed mohamed mohamed
mohamed
mohamed
mohamed
mohamed
mohamed
mohamed

My visit to The Outside and The Inside made me understand a lot about walls and what they can do. They can be tall, short, wide, narrow, colorful or gray. Even languages can be used as walls, or barriers, for understanding. Something as simple as a piece of paper can become a wall. One thing that all walls have in common is that they divide and separate, so we don't have to see, hear, smell or feel what's on the other side. They separate the inside from the outside, the garden from the street, or a person from the other. Usually a new space is created behind the walls. Sometimes a space within a space within space.

THE HOME BUTTON

The world is a small place. So small in fact that it can fit in a pocket or in the palm of a hand. Not the whole physical world obviously, but a kind of representation of it.

If you have a smartphone you probably have access to most of your friends and family through it. You also have close to instant access to literature, music, movies and other entertainment. You don't have to go to a clothing store or supermarket as long as you have an internet connection and an address to ship the clothes and groceries to. And why would kids go out to play in the playgrounds anymore, when all the fun they want is already at their fingertips? Who needs to go birdwatching when someone else already posted a better view of all kinds of birds?²⁰ Why meet each other face to face when it is so easy to face each other on FaceTime? Why would we ever long for our homes when we can be home with the click of a button? Did we give up on our freedom of experiencing the world or did the experience just change?

I can't be the only one who feels a little bit dumber when surrounded by smart objects.

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5G

210 cm x 261 cm

2018-2019

Acrylic, oil, spray and pastel on canvas

The new 5G internet being developed and already installed in big cities all over the world led me to work on this big painting. It depicts the radiation that is spread all over our environment, affecting the birds and their fragile little hearts, the playgrounds getting empty and our smartphones acting as a hotspot to redirect the radiation straight to our brains.



WALLS 2

I went to study in Pretoria for five months. Or Tshwane, as it is also known. When I arrived there I experienced for the first time in my life that people will not consider me to be a black person. Instead they see me as colored or mixed. It was a strange feeling to be told that I'm not black when my whole life I've been just that, although it seems to be a more accurate assumption to say that I am mixed.^{p 21, 22} Some people would even consider me to be white. Sure, I was raised by a white mother, attended primary school, high school, college and am now studying in an academy with a majority of white students, in countries where the majority of the population is white, but I have never been seen as such by my surroundings since the colour of my skin is not white. Everywhere I go I have always been a black person. People have shouted to me with different racial slurs and when I now finally could see myself among the norm I got to know that they think I am white. Though, when I asked a friend if they consider me to be white they just grabbed my shoulder, looked me in the eyes and with a really sensitive voice replied "Come on brother, don't say that...", as if they felt real pity for me just for asking.

There were walls everywhere in Pretoria. Not to divide the city into two parts but to divide everyone from everyone else.

Every house would have a tall wall around it. On top of the walls there would be razor wire. On top of the razor wire were electric wire. On top of that would be security cameras and next to those I would usually see a big sign with the text

"ARMED RESPONSE".

Try to imagine yourself walking on a street and all you see are walls. Like a huge maze.



Just like in *The Inside* and *The Outside*, it was only the birds that weren't affected by the walls.

And in most properties they had at least one dog. Many people that I spoke to told me that they were afraid of dogs. I asked why and got the answer "Because that is what they used to scare us with during Apartheid".

Most dogs in Pretoria are not really treated as pets normally are, in the way that I am used to. Or I assume that depends what to define as a pet. Most chickens, cows and other farm animals would probably dream of having the life of a guard dog.

Chickens, for example, are normally hatched by machines at an industrial farm. 50 percent of them are killed as soon as they are identified as roosters since they make no, or little, profit for the farmers. The ones that survive this first step of their lives move on to getting their beaks burnt so that they will hurt themselves if they pick on their many, many neighbors that are soon to come. They are placed behind walls, chicken wire, where they get fed and grow for three months. It is rare for them to ever catch even a glimpse of sunlight before they get slaughtered.²¹

I have been thinking about what it means for a bird to have wings that they never really get to use. And being born with beautiful songs in their throats that never really are heard.

I have always had a sort of longing for flying and some people train their voices a whole lifetime to get it as close as possible to perfection, and still we take away that freedom from the ones that naturally have the ability to fly and knows how to sing in the right frequencies. Strange.

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Pretoria

192 cm x 128 cm

2019

Oil, spray and pastel on canvas

"There were walls everywhere in Pretoria. Not to divide the city into two parts but to divide everyone from everyone else."

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The Evolution of Birds 2

131 cm x 131 cm

2019

Acrylic, oil, pastel and ink on canvas

People want to have the freedom to be able to eat at Kentucky Fried Chicken whenever they feel like it. But to reach that freedom they have to make sure not to let the chicken disappear by keeping them in ridiculously large numbers at all times. Imagine if they would have thought about that long ago, when the dodo was still alive. Then maybe they wouldn't go extinct.

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The Evolution of Birds 3

131 cm x 131 cm

2019

Acrylic, oil, charcoal and graphite on canvas

I have lately seen jackdaws with a lot of white feathers. Jackdaws are usually only black and grey, so I found it very odd to see them in a different color. I know that jackdaws eat from trashcans and food scraps that people leave behind and my friend told me about a couple of these birds that he saw eating out of a KFC bucket.

I drew the conclusion that the jackdaws have become victims of a capitalist society that we, the people, have constructed. This is depicted in *The Evolution of Birds 3*, where the native species are evolving into the consumers of capitalism.



FINDING HOME

Homes doesn't necessarily come with comfort. One can also be put in a home because it is more convenient for one part, like how the ones in *The Outside* won't let the ones in *The Inside* live free,^{p 36} or how some people force chickens to live inside of small cages.^{p 60}

Even without being engaged it can still be a struggle to get the home right and to get the confirmation one needs to move forward in life. Just look at how the Yellow Swallow has to rebuild their nest over and over again, to also make somebody else find it attractive enough.^{p 30} The act of the Yellow Swallow became such a literal observation of how creativity is the foundation of the home. I am pretty sure that not everyone will relate to this statement, but I couldn't agree more that I feel at home when I create. Whether it is to create something to share or not, it is through the moments of creating that I get to be in charge and decide how to move on. I get to confront my own inverted sides. It can sometimes be pleasurable, but just as well a struggle. That goes for writing as well as painting, sculpting, glass blowing, cooking, playing, dancing, and so on. In those moments it doesn't really matter where my physical home is. I can create a home by just creating, so to say.

I have noticed that most homes are inclusive for some, while excluding others. Similar to a work of art. Not everyone will feel included when they look at the paintings *Sunset View* and *Magdelene* for example.^{p 12, 15} And not everyone is meant to be directly included. Those are two paintings where I depict persons that I want to tell a story about.

However, those who can find a relation, feel something and be part of the dialogue that I have started through the paint-

ings are more than welcome. To be excluded from the image and still start to critically think as a spectator might be even more important than it is to be directly included in the work. I indirectly include the ones who I feel need to get faced with their own privileges and perceptions and to start criticising the advantage they have over the less privileged, by excluding them from the image itself.

When it comes to the artworks themselves though, where do they belong? I take *Portraits* as an example.^{p 4-7} The work consists of two pieces; one is a painting depicting a person beaten to the ground by the lashes from a whip. I leave it up to you to decide who is portrayed in the painting. The second piece is a sculpture, resembling a whip, where the handle has imprints of my right hand. It is moulded after me and, as far as I know, only my hand can get a good grip. It really becomes an extension of my body. The strap is made from old shirts, wires, plastic bags and other materials that were dumped next to the streets. It is a heavy piece and emotionally really strong for me.

The work was made during my stay in South Africa as a representation of how I have travelled across the world, from the Netherlands to South Africa, just like the colonisers did hundreds of years ago. Making the piece has been a very confronting process and I wouldn't want to leave it in South Africa. It would almost be like a reenactment of how Europeans claimed the area with violence a long time ago. On the other hand that reenactment might be exactly what I am doing by taking the whip home with me and only leaving behind the beaten up person in the painting.

Living in South Africa made me very aware of my privileges as a European, but it also made the bond I have to my African roots way stronger. The experience has been confronting towards myself, my home, my choices and my universe, which manifests itself in my art and my reflections on it.

To feel at home should be to feel belonging. As an outsider in my home country, Sweden, I always had the desire to belong somewhere.^{p 19, 20} I have realised that I am different. But then of course everyone is different, since everyone is an individual with

one's own qualities, personalities and characteristics. I am constantly learning to embrace my differences, to do what I feel is right and to move through time in a way that feels natural.

The world is a big place with a lot of people in it. So it is not strange to sometimes feel small and insignificant. Especially when looking out in space and realising that the Earth is just a tiny little dot in this never ending space.^{p 26-29} But somehow we get to live, here and now, as the celestial bodies we are.

Think of your self as a star. If one star is taken out of its constellation in space, the balance of everything gets a bit distorted.

You get to belong right here, right now.

I think that everyone can find their way of belonging. Part of that belonging for me comes when I create. I sometimes don't realise it in the moment of creating, but when I look back at my works it is clear that my creativity has naturally become a part of how I proceed and process my life. That is when I get to digest what I have gone through. It helps me remember where I have stood before so that I can move on, develop and evolve. It helps me realise where I stand now. It helps me confront my self, confirm my self and comfort my self. It has become a way for me to feel that I belong in the world.

A way to feel at home in the world.

To feel at home in my self.

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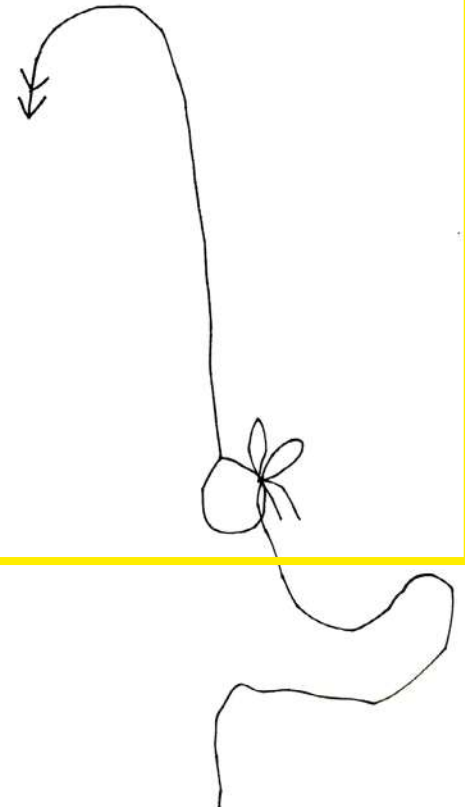
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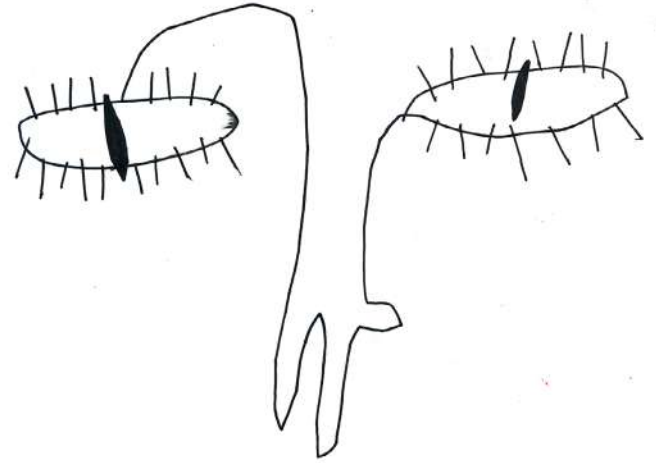
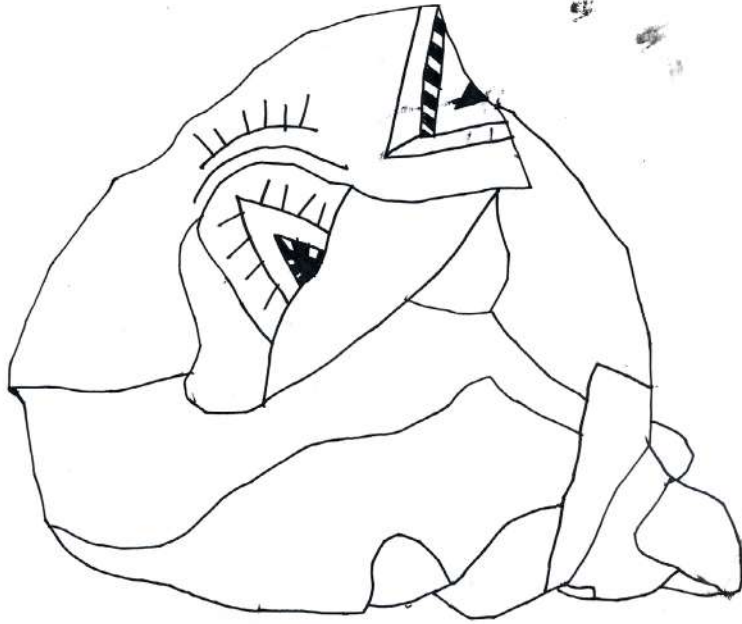
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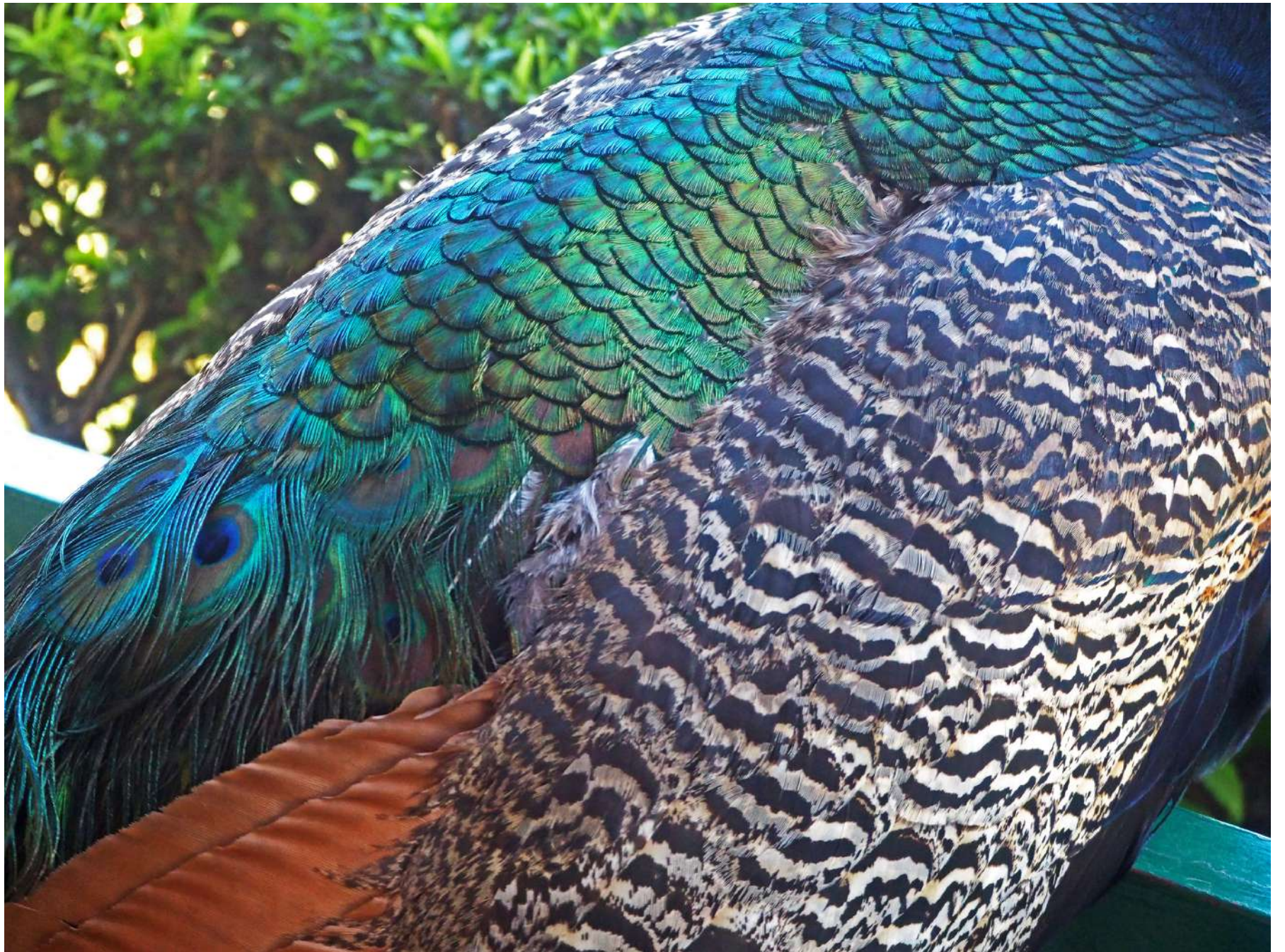


The following pages contain notes, drawings, photos, etc. from the process of making *Finding Home*.

Thank you.











GERRIT RIETVELD ACADEMY

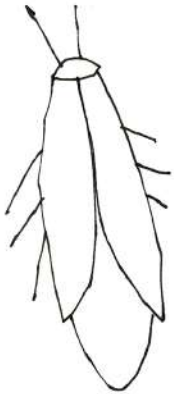




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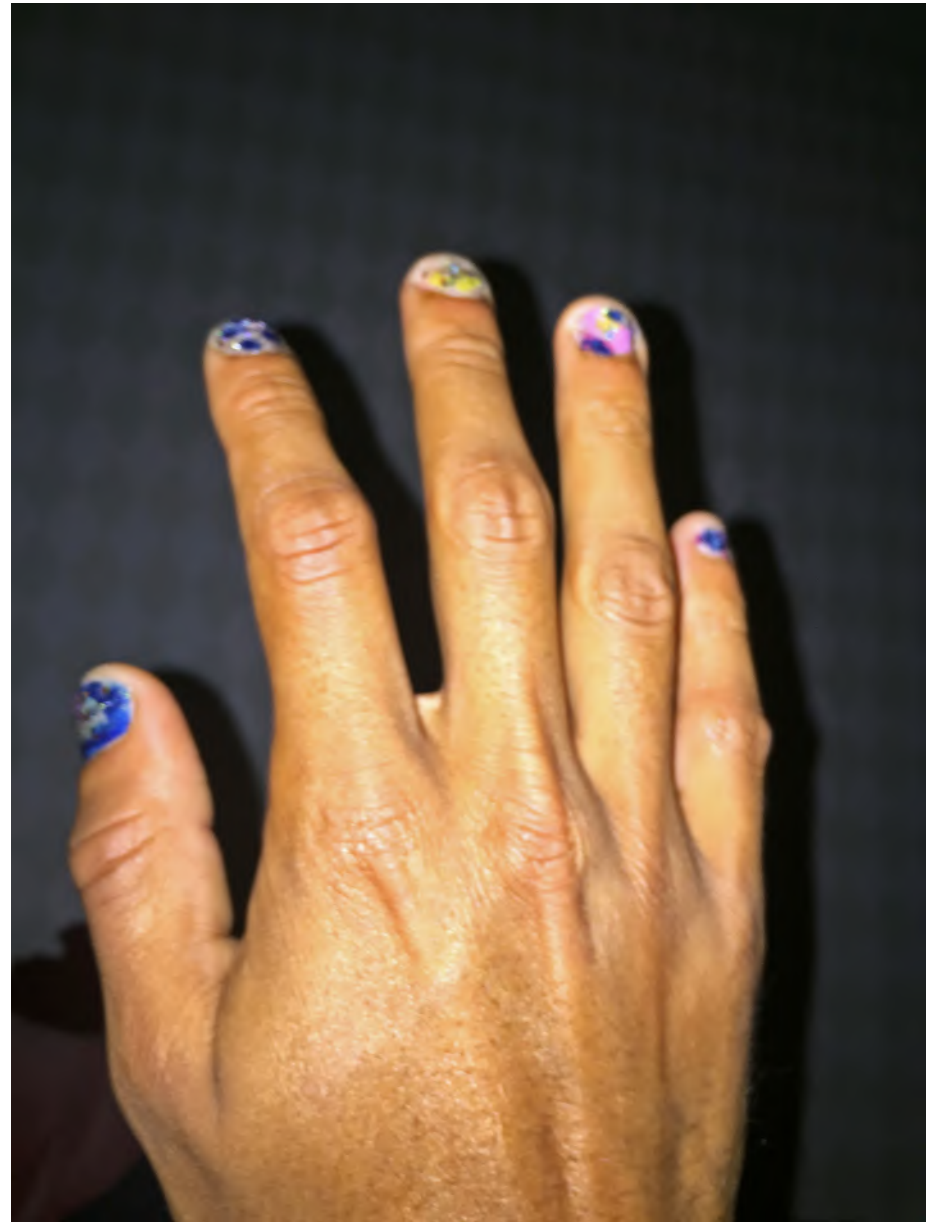
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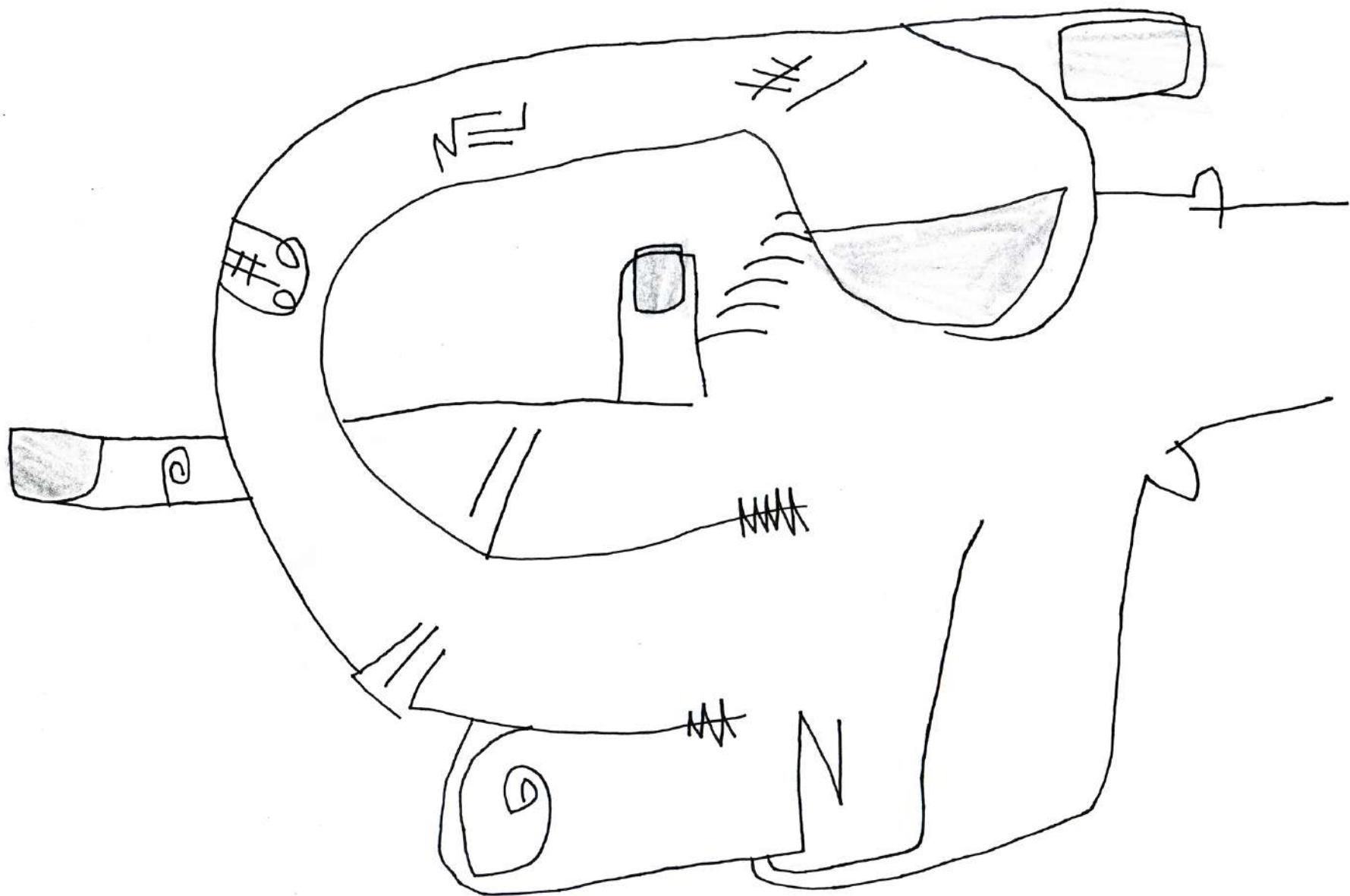
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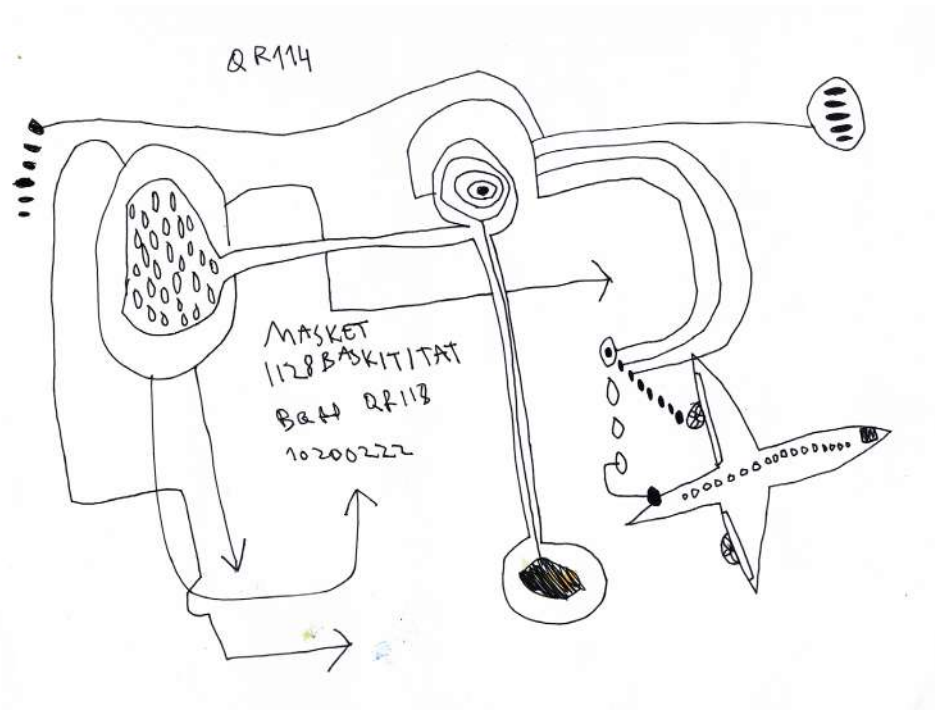


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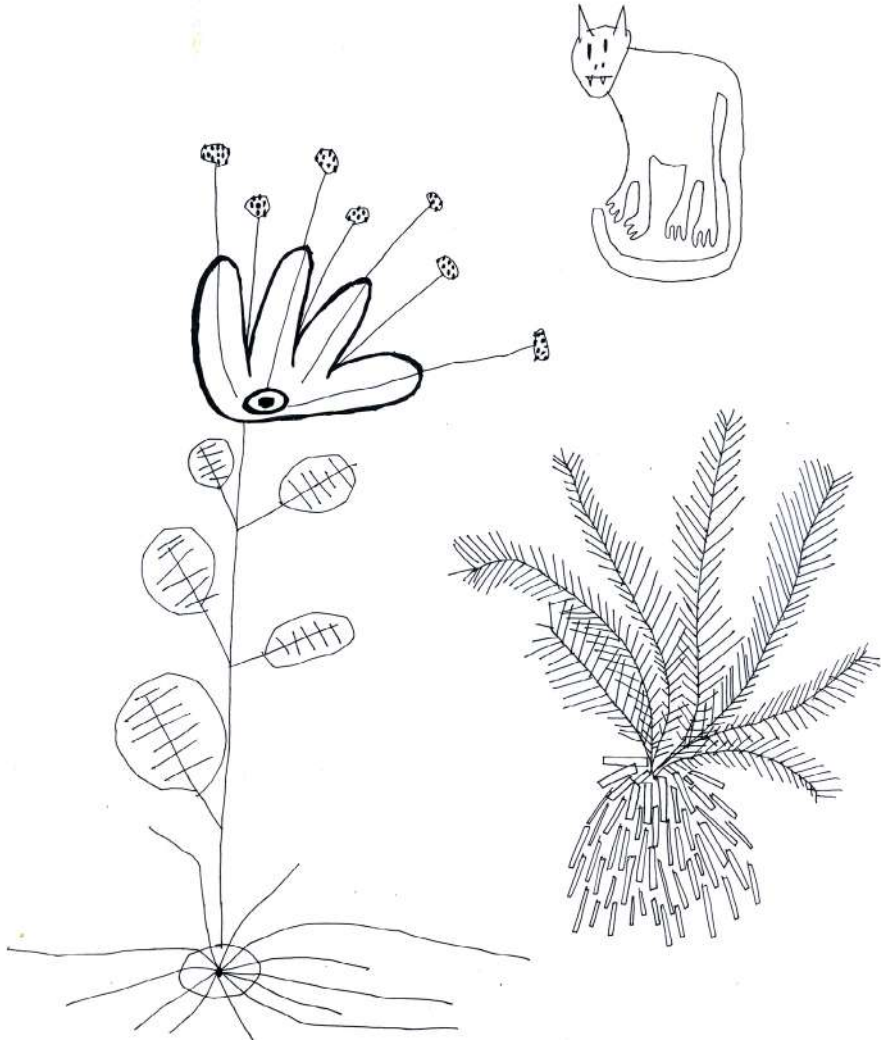




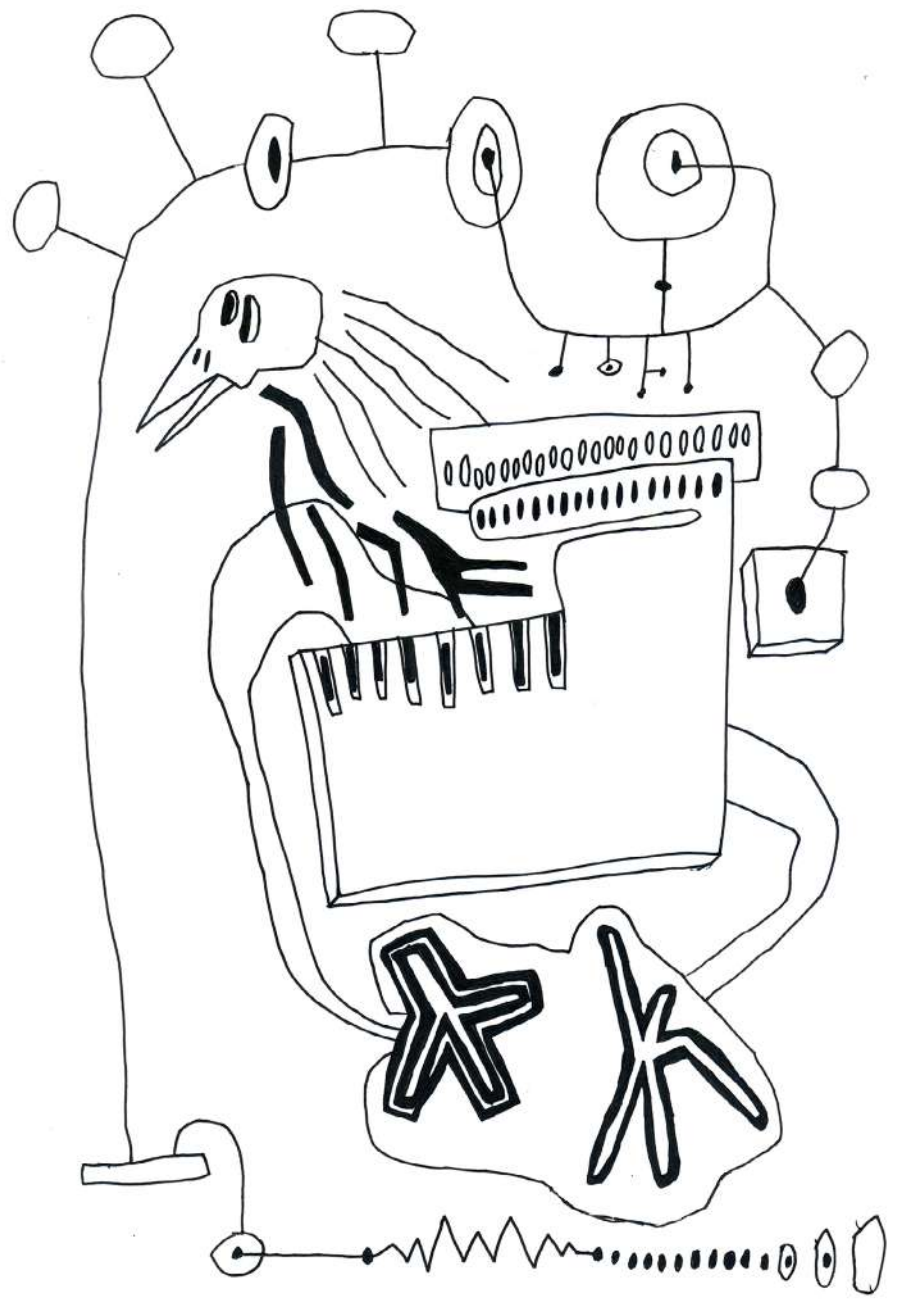
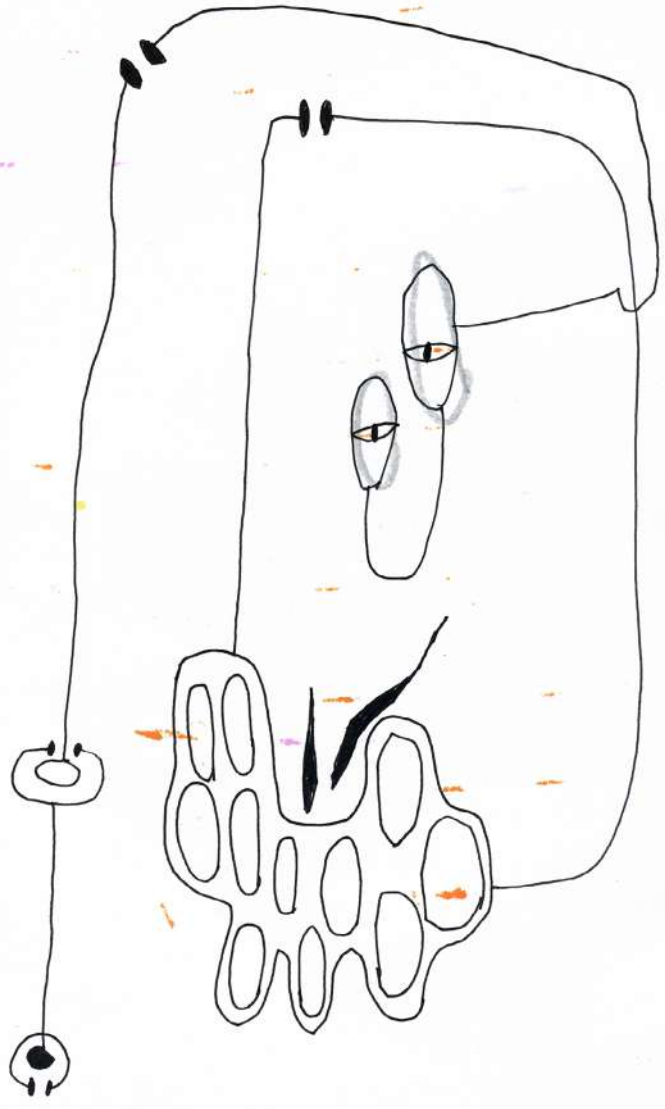




Creatures of Liesles garden.



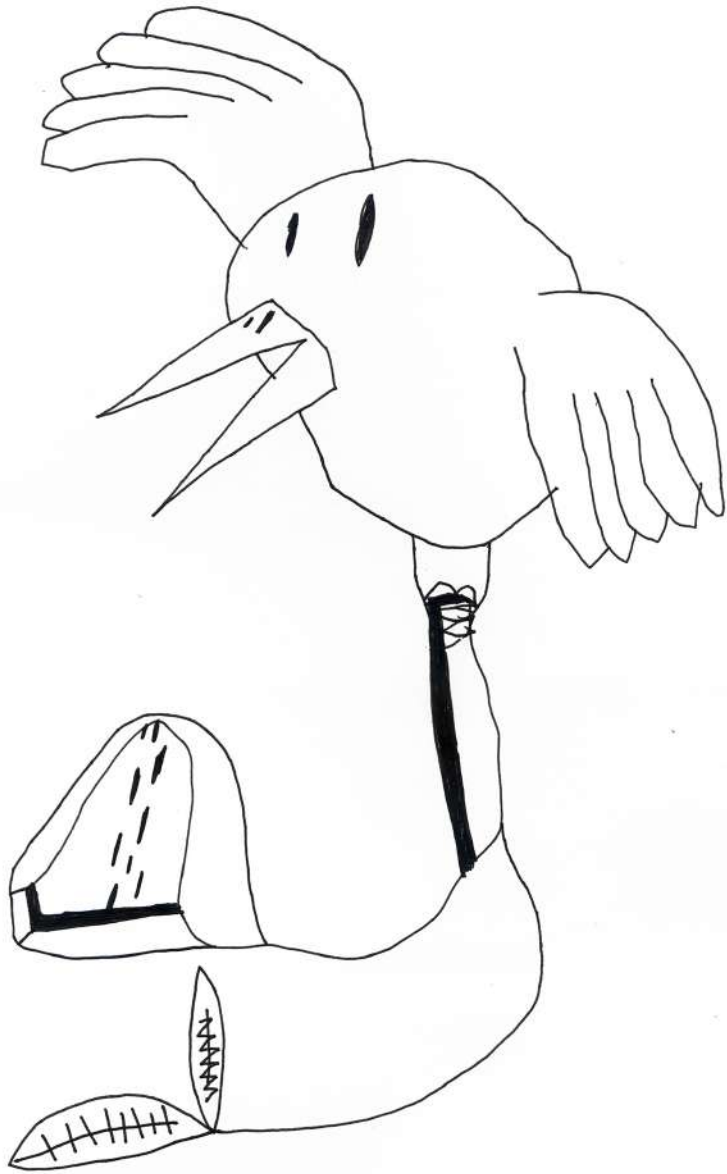
(not) sleeping with a stuffed nose.

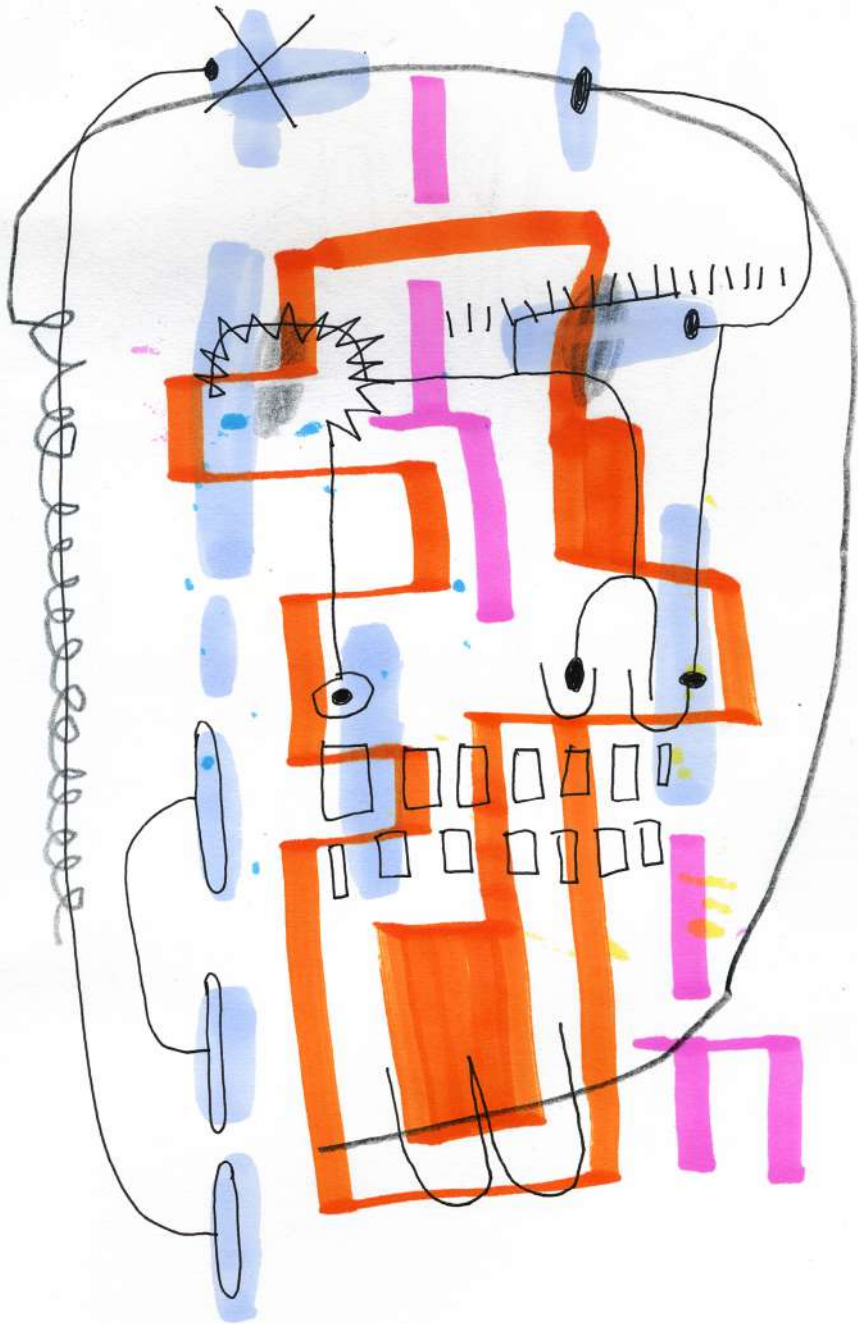












Drawing by S.G.



Photo by Shaggy





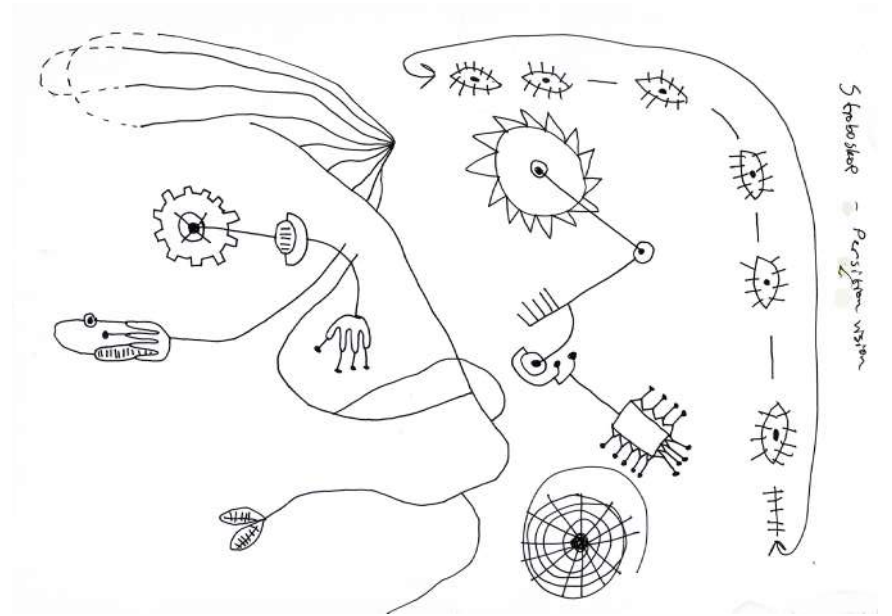
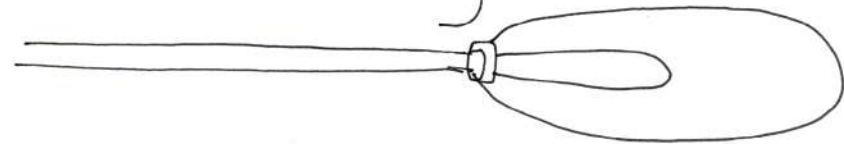
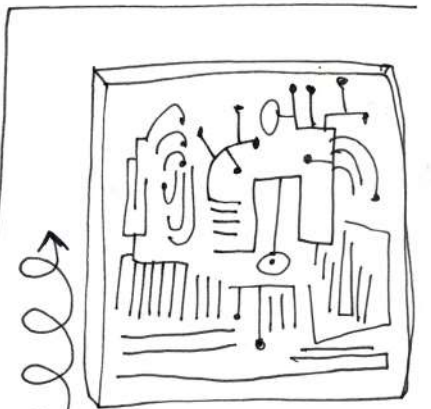
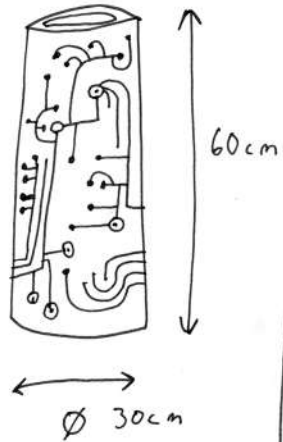


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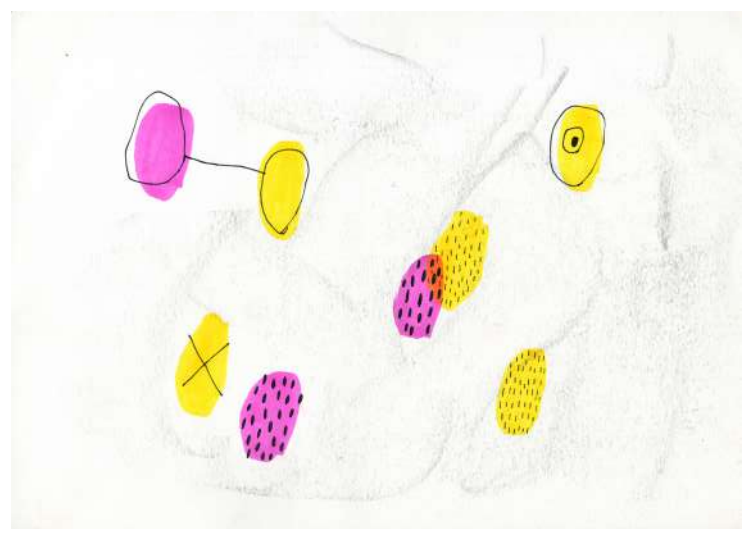
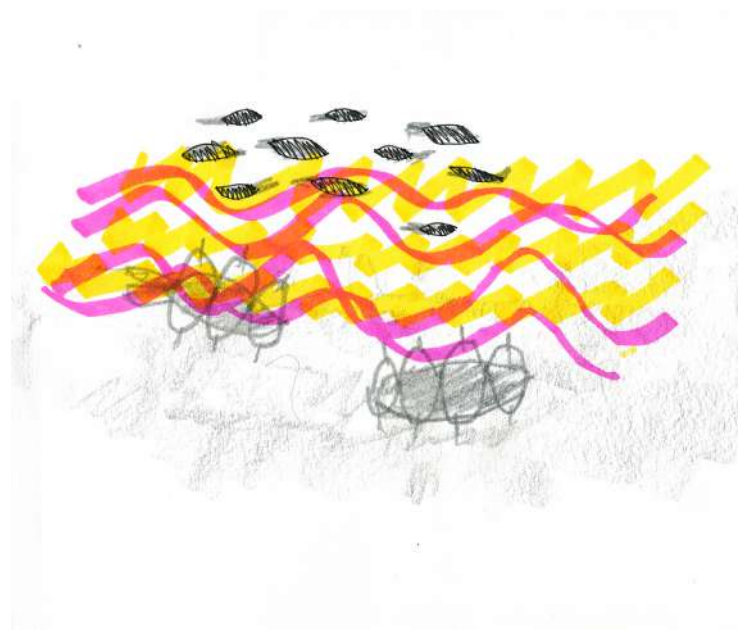
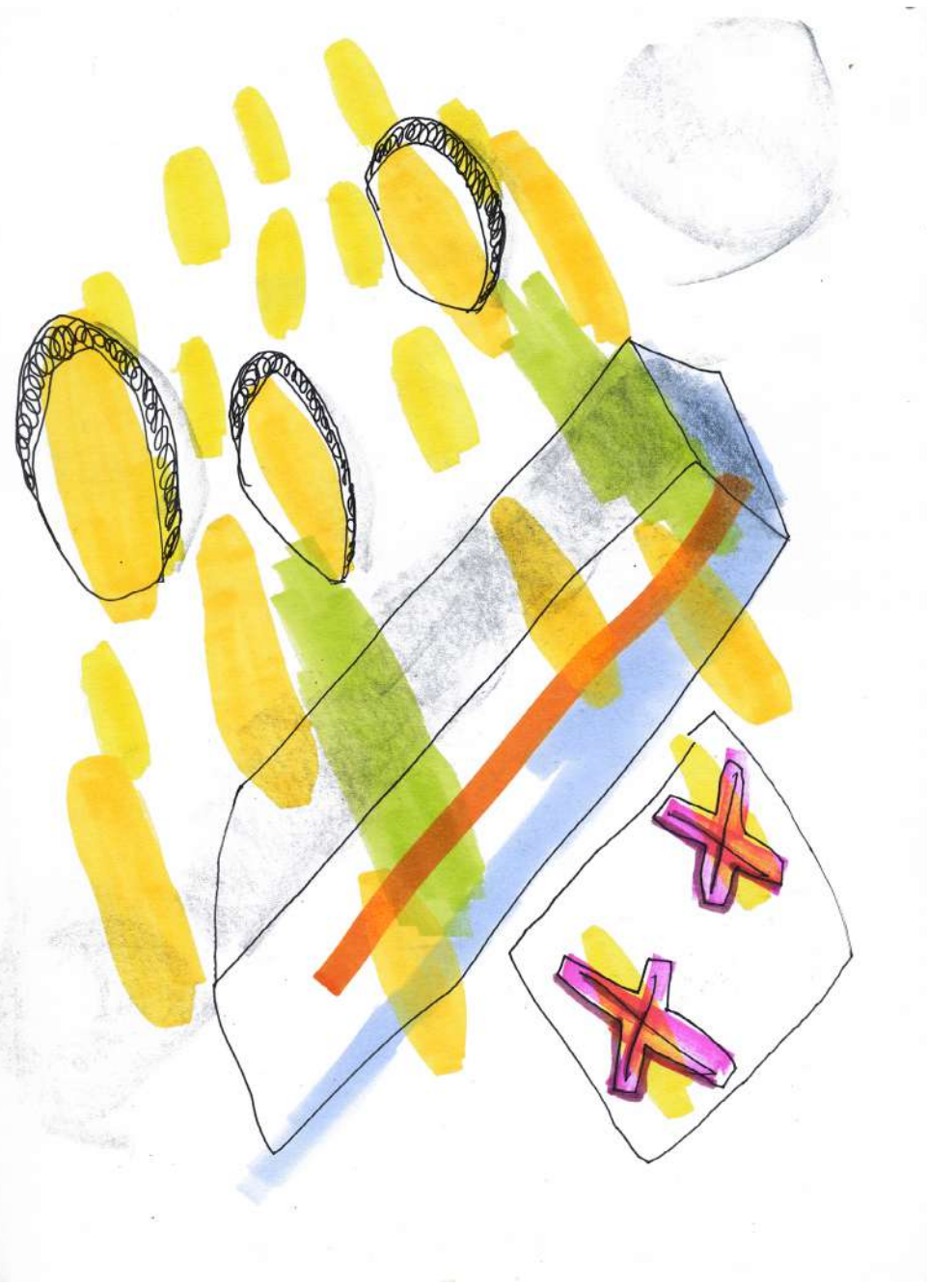
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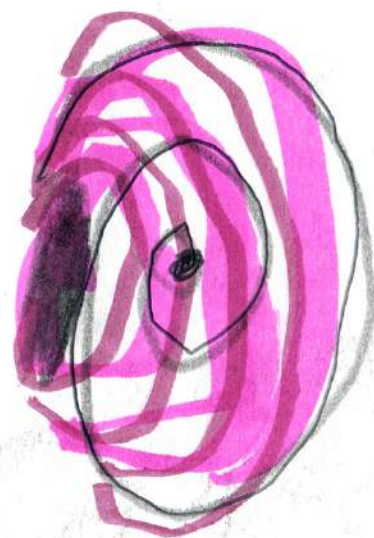
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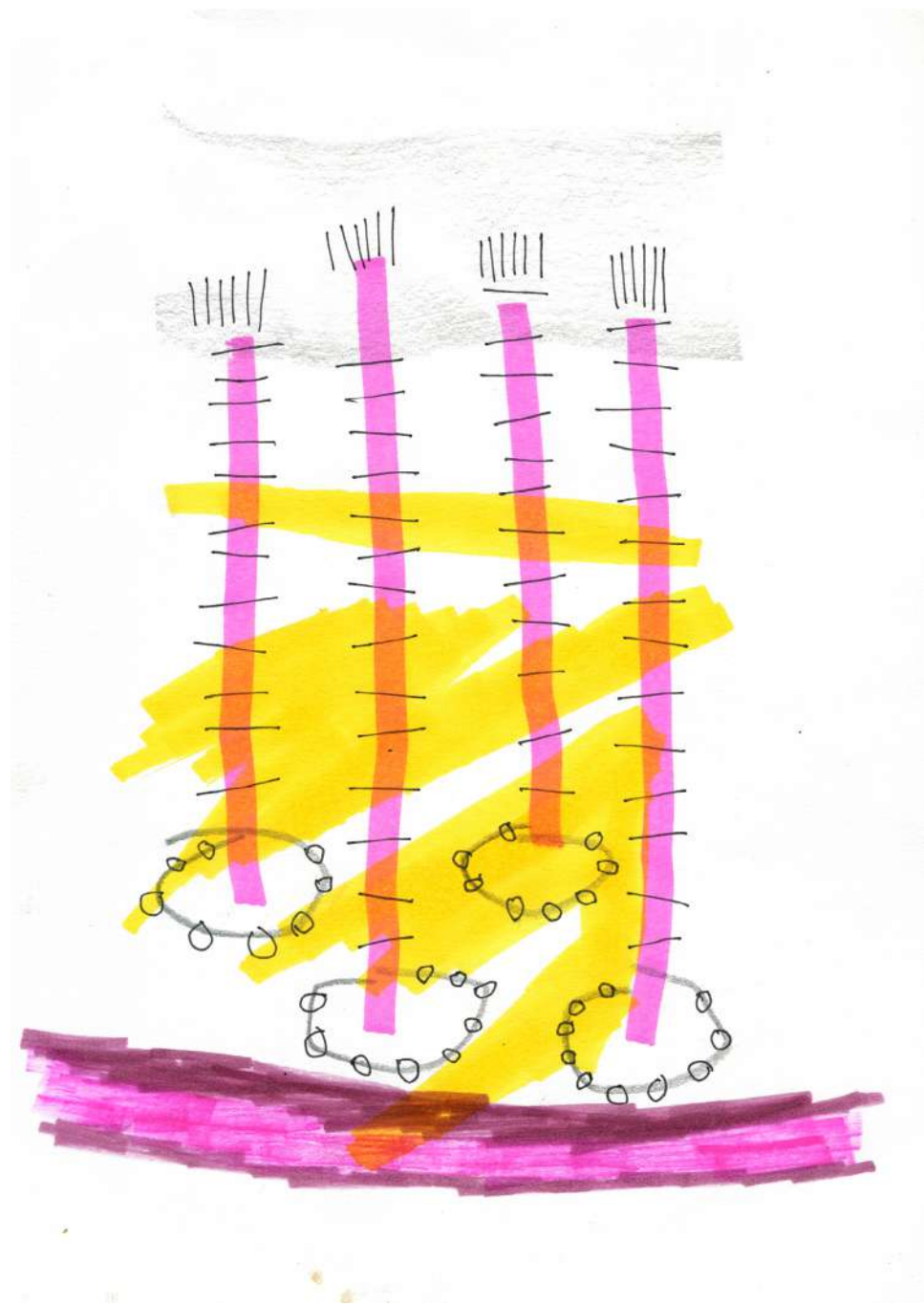
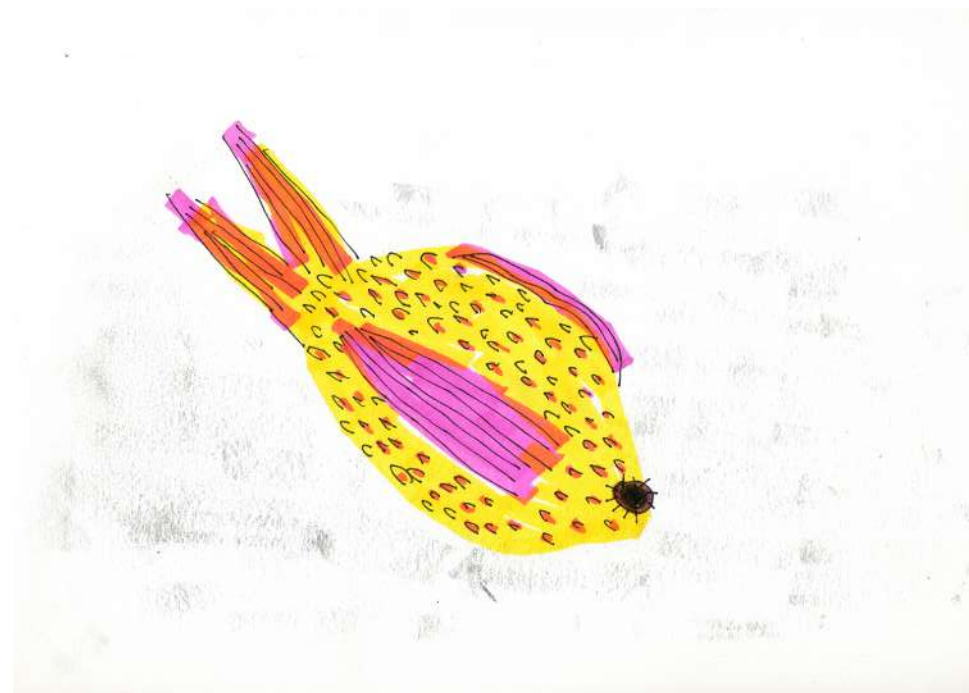
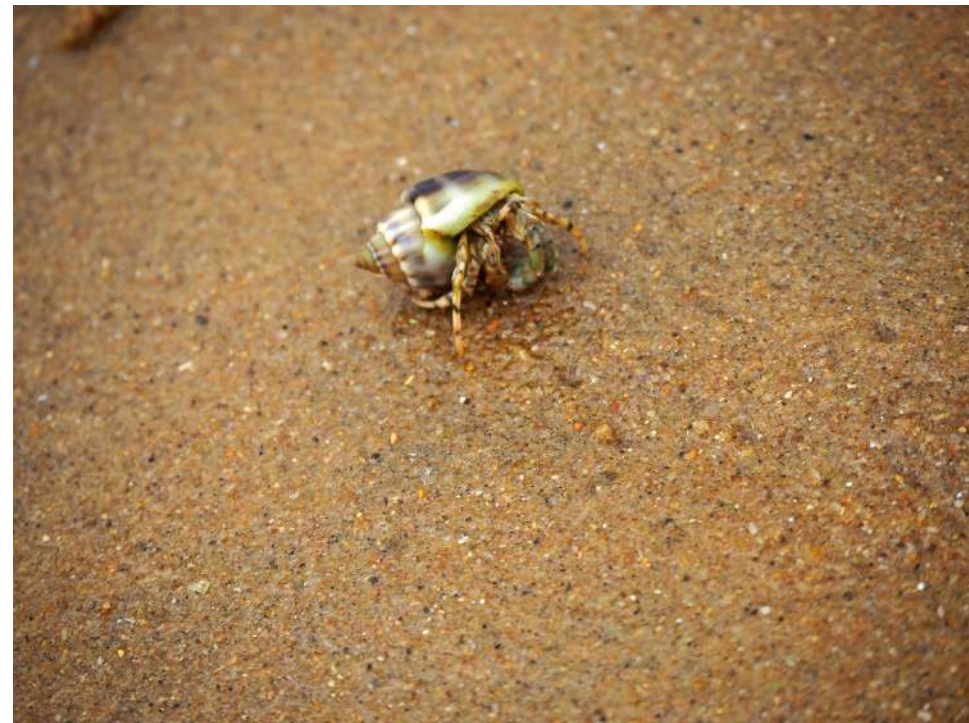


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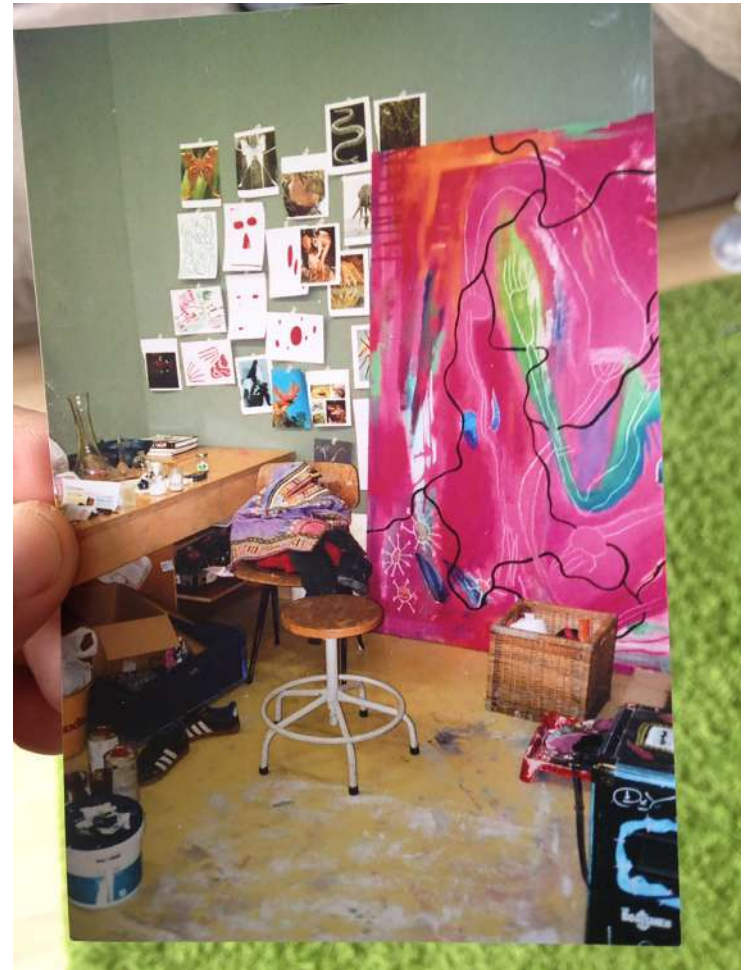


Photo by Laura

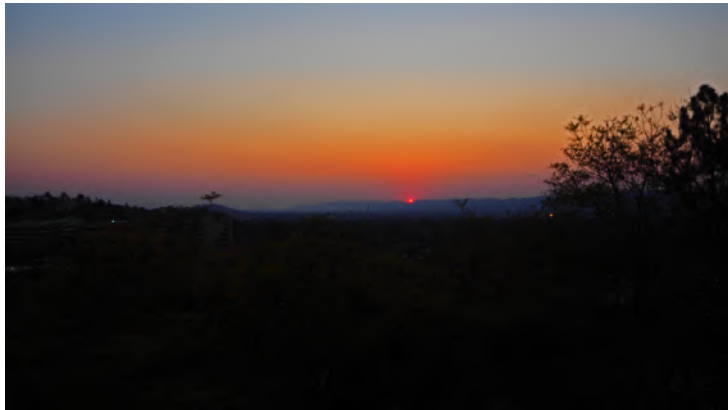
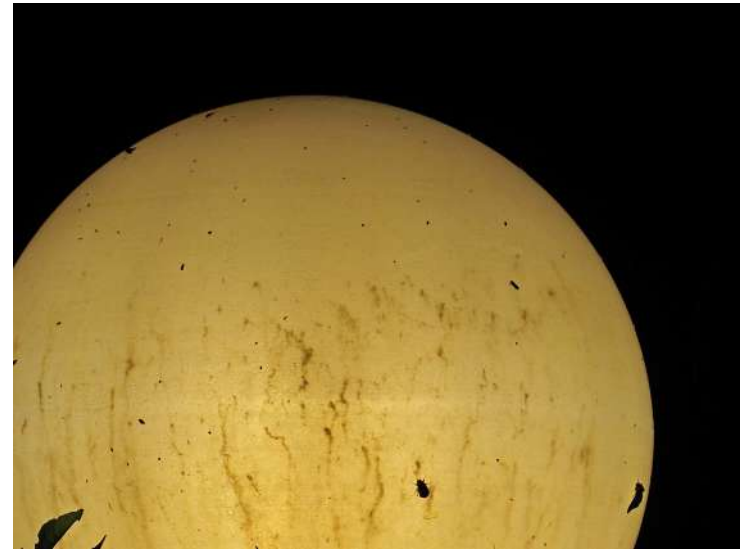


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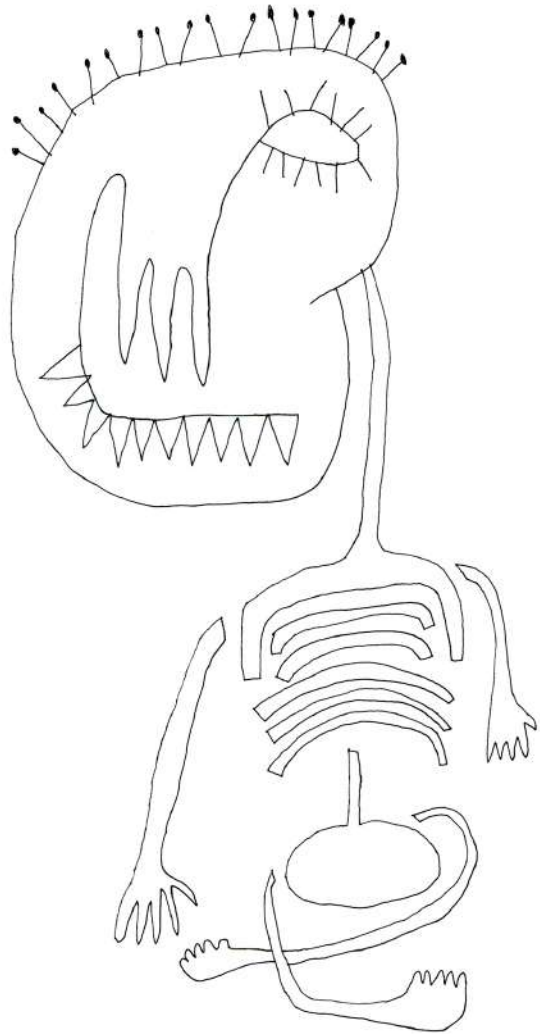
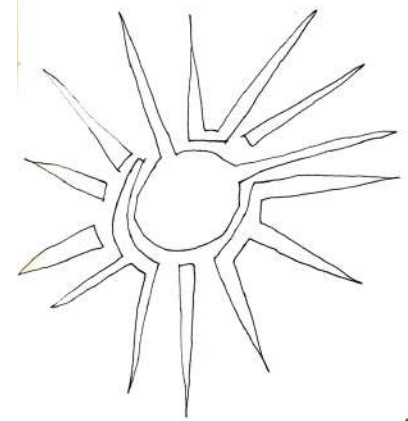
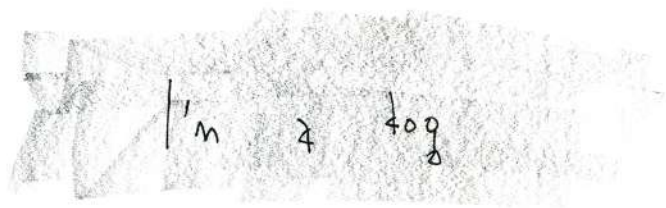
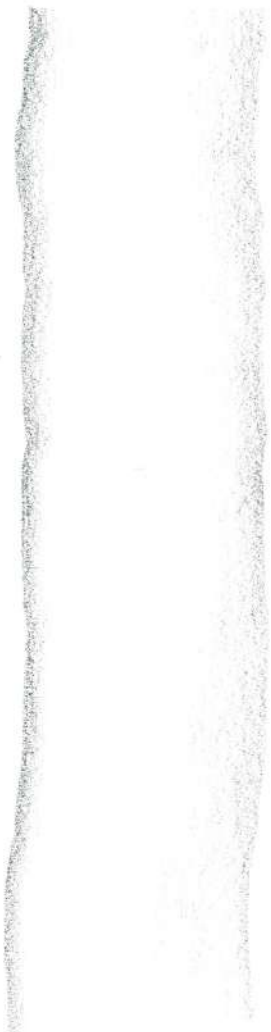
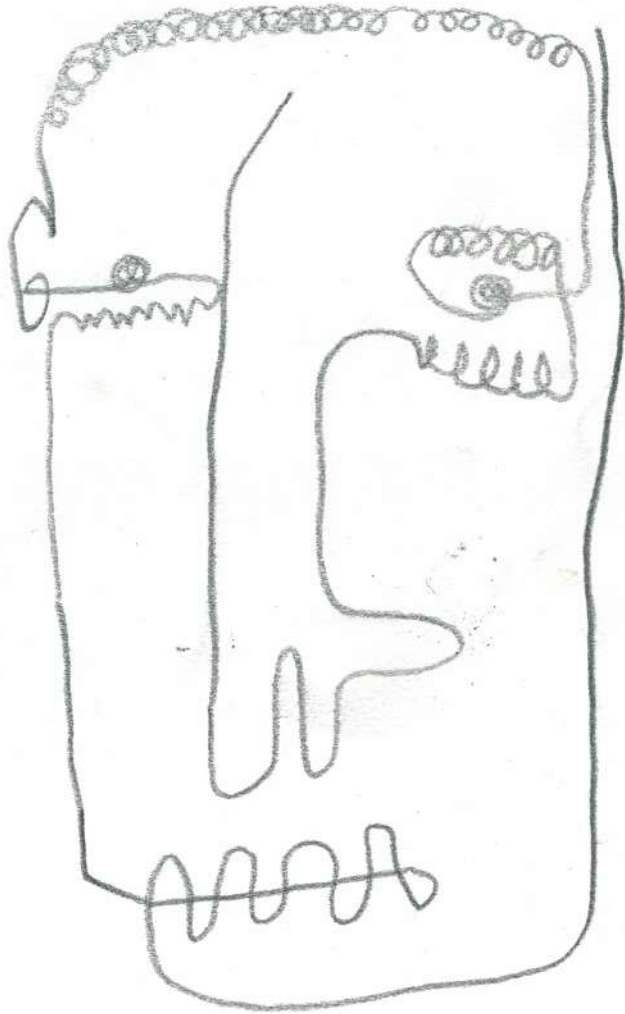


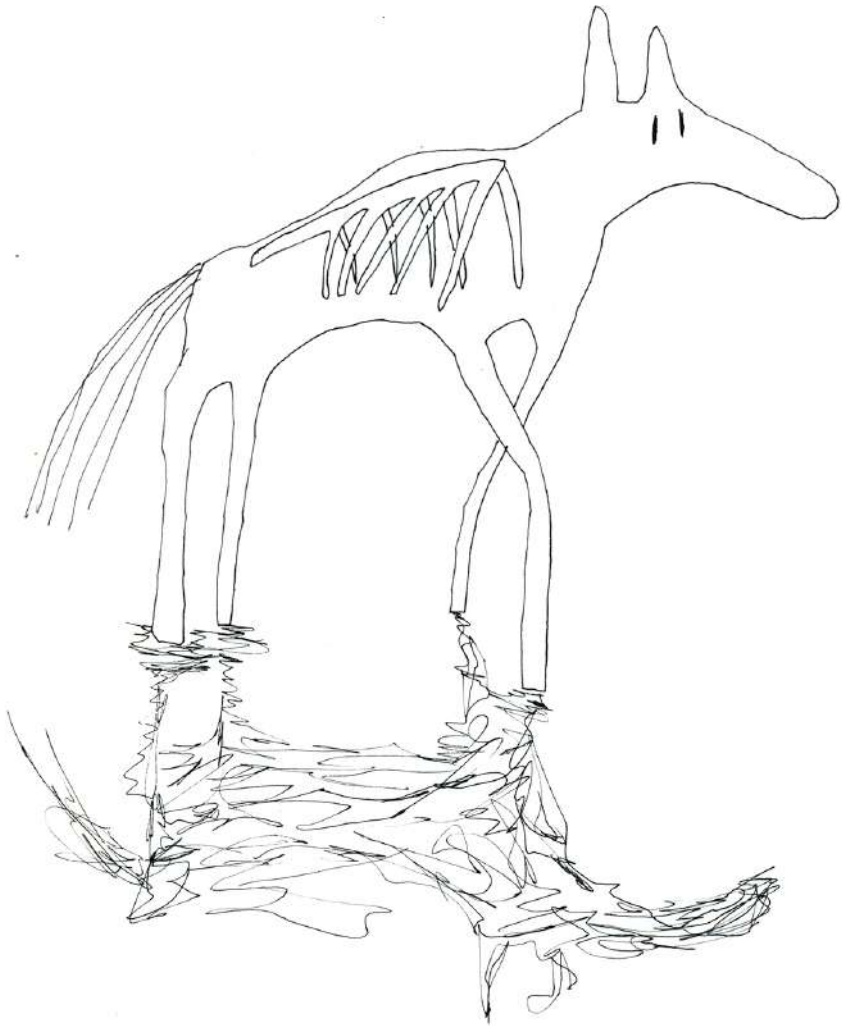
Photo by Kristina











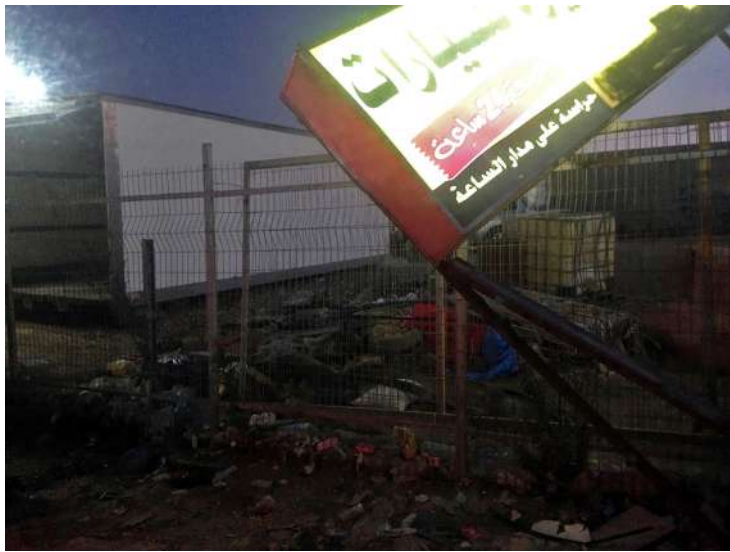
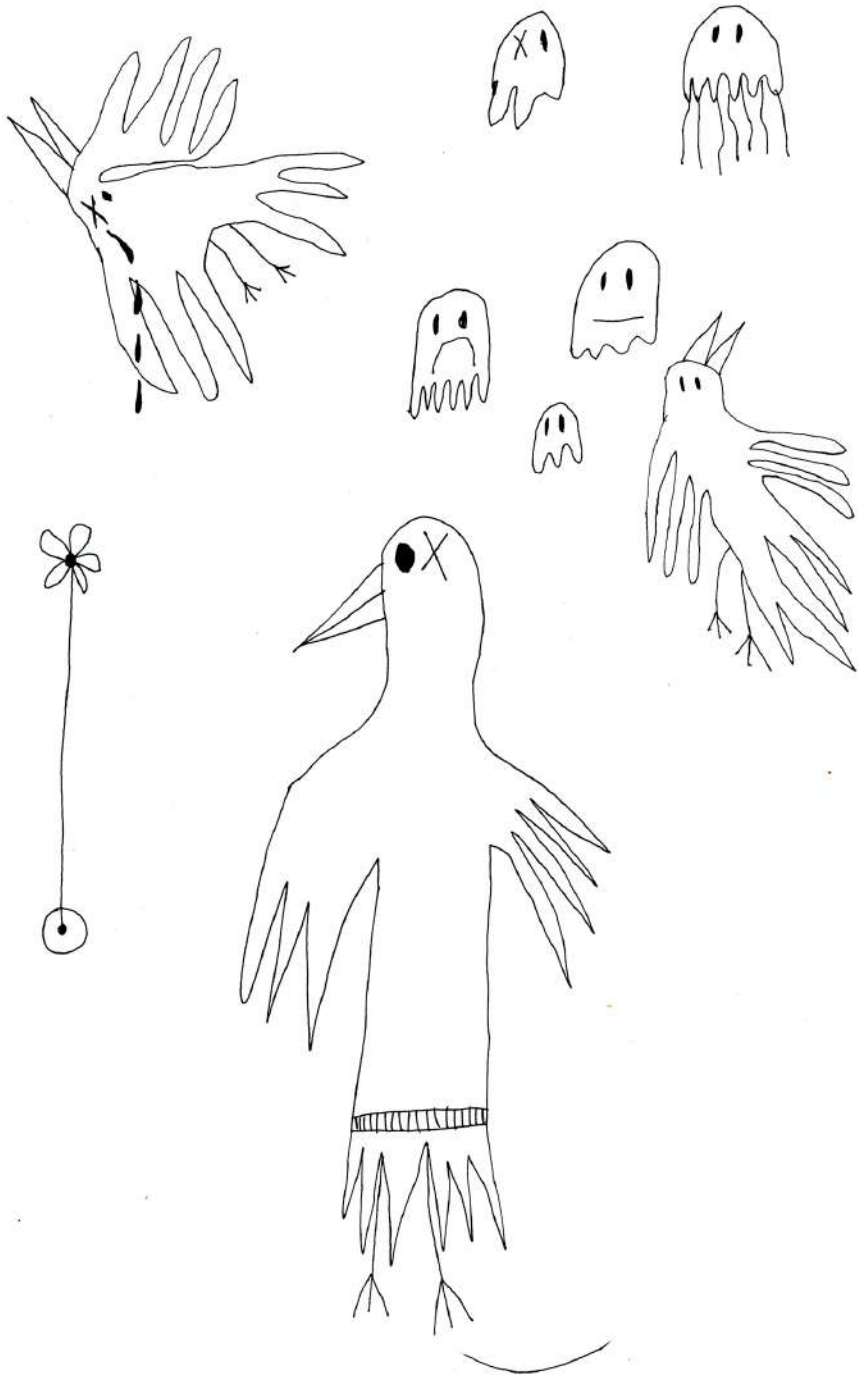


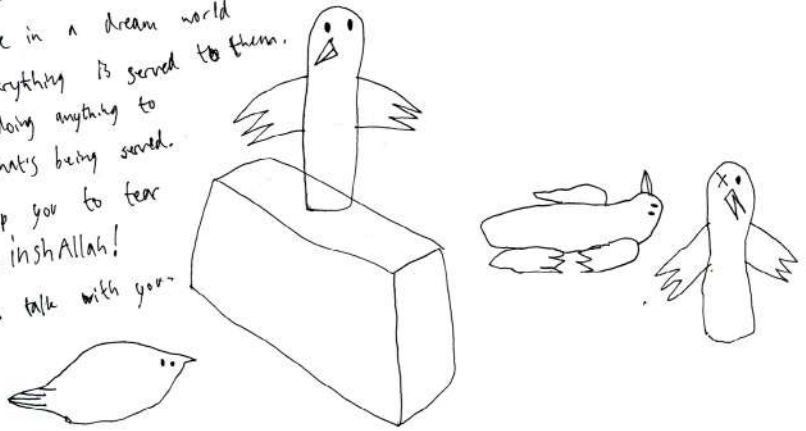
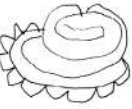
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Photo by Linda



I dream of walls falling,
 breaking, exploding, falling,
 but as soon as one is gone, a new is built,
 it feels like what we do is building one after the
 other. I wonder what would be if they were
 made of glass? so we could look straight through them...
 I feel that is the problem, that so many never get
 to see what's on the other side.
 they live in a dream world
 where everything is served to them.
 without doing anything to
 deserve what's being served.
 I will help you to tear
 it down, inshAllah!
 & learn to talk with you -
 -marhaba!











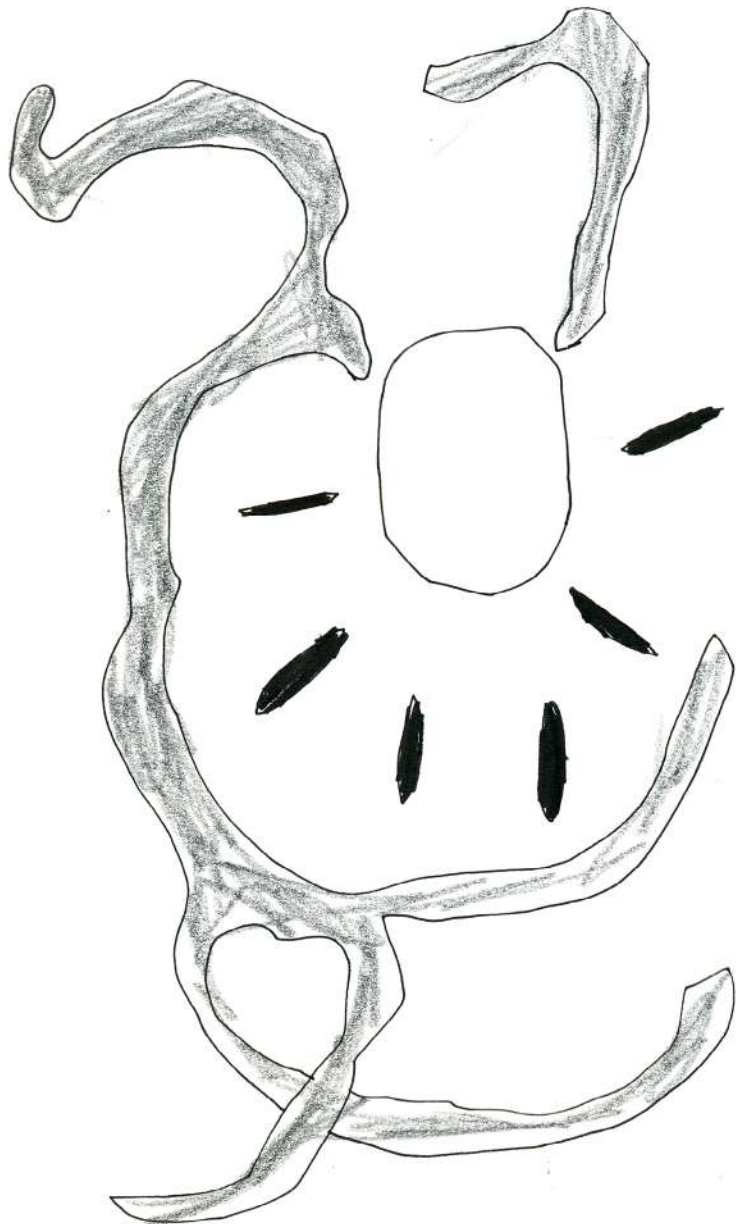


Photo by Enrico

