

I Can Feel Love More Deeply Than Ever Before

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Editing

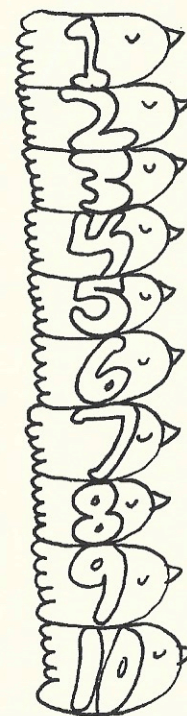
april april

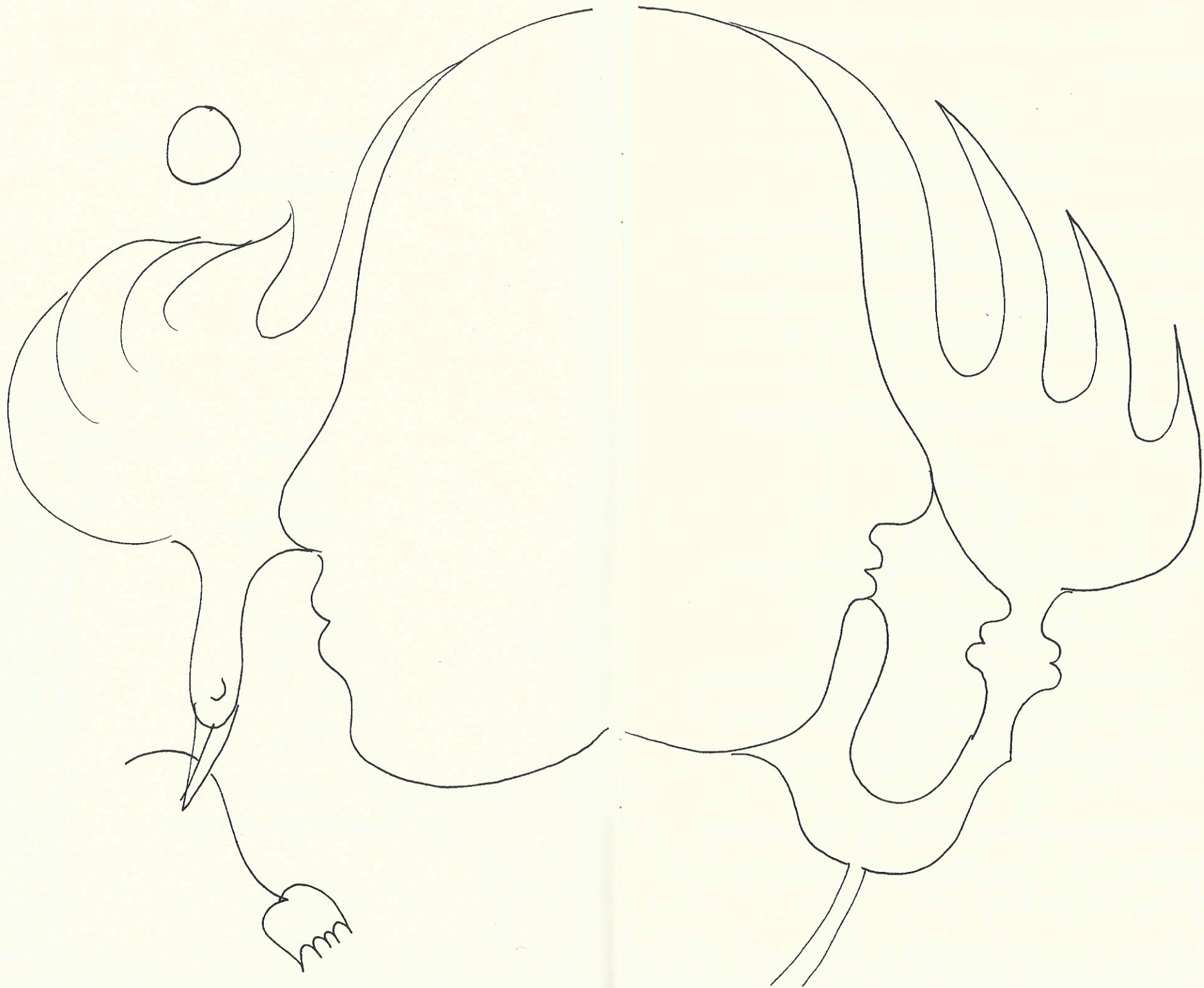
Drew Klopfer



Funding

Greater Columbus Arts Council





*M*y patterns are breaking.

Spot. Grab. Snip. Strip.

Growing.

Spot. Grab. Snip. Strip.

Mutating.

Spot. Grab. Snip. Strip.

I slip the flowers one by one into a vase.

My patterns are transforming.

To maintain focus while meditating, I count my breaths as they go in and out.

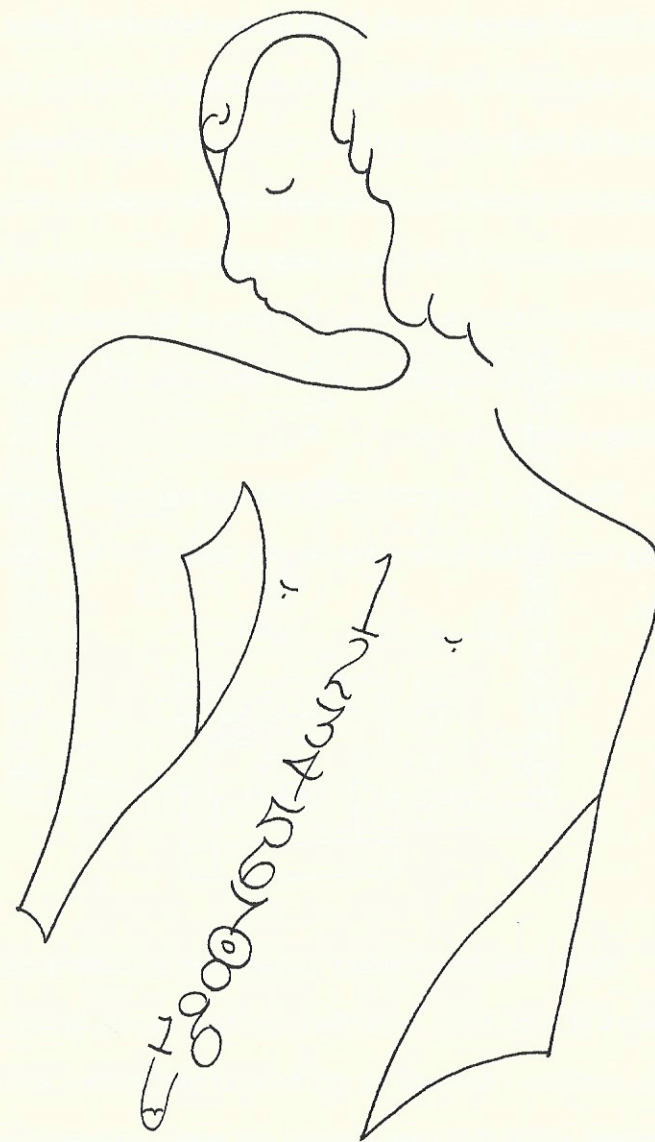
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, repeat...

The result is the creation of a pattern that isn't seen with the eyes but rather felt with the body. As air enters the lungs, the body expands along a wave of replenishment. As the lungs release, the body relaxes. Sustained, mindful attention to breathing can reveal a sensation that I describe to myself as *love for the Earth*. I don't feel it every time or even that often. Instead, my attention is easily lured to graze upon passing thoughts...

1, 2, 3, distraction, 4, 5, 6, distraction, 7, 8, 9, distraction, 10, repeat...

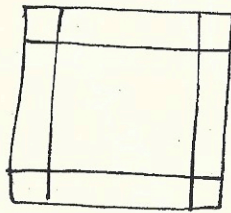
These distractions are my daily worries. *Who am I? I'm not sure. Am I doing enough? I don't know how to measure that. Am I a good person? I should spend some time outside today.*

These worries are allowed to be there. The pattern isn't ruined, just changing.

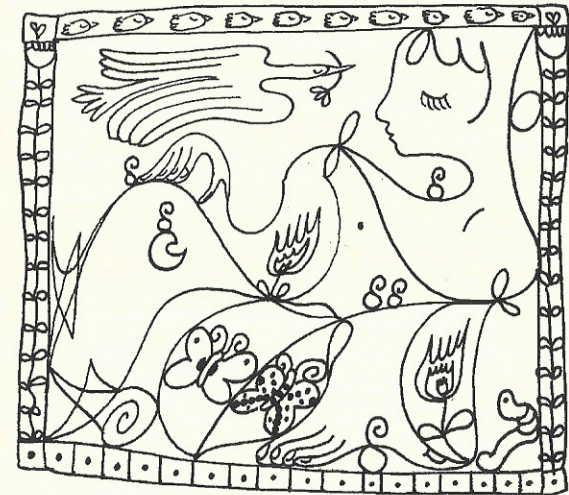


I am cultivating a new body of work. I start with drawings on paper and then move to silk that I dye by hand. I don't rent a traditional studio, instead opting to work in the garden behind my home. Greenery and blue sky cradle my vision as I draw. Cicadas, crickets, birds, and critters of all kinds chatter and sing while each mark is made. Humidity glistens on my brown skin. In rhythm with the weather, I rest on days of rain and summon forth dyes of deep saturation on days of sun. Silk is prismatic and alive in the wind. Looking at the artwork I have made during this time, in this place, I notice something new about the patterns appearing within them.

For years, I have consistently begun my works on silk by drawing long, steady lines along the taut margins of my material's surface.



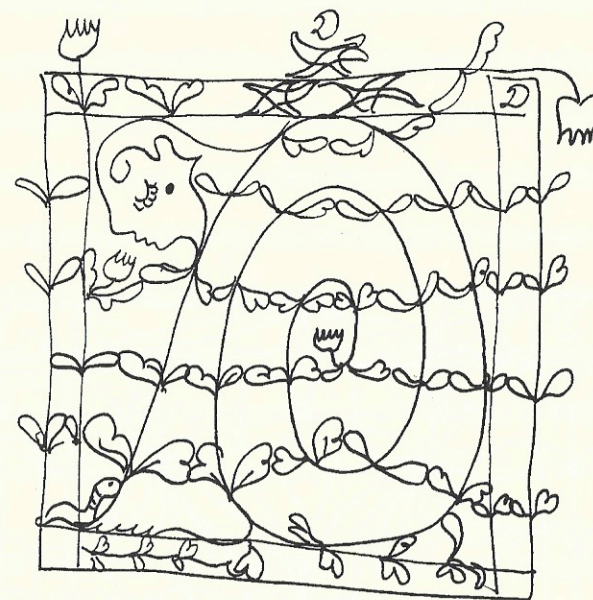
These lines form borders that are then inoculated with patterns composed of stars, birds, butterflies, cherries, moons, bones, snails, beetles, numbers 1 through 10, my beloved earthworms, and more. Sometimes, words that form diaristic and poetic statements make their way into the border. Patterning is meditative, and I view the resulting motifs as visual scores for breathing.



Recently, I've been drawing flowers and vines—rhythmic lines that grow in sets of mirrored leaves.

1, 2, 3...

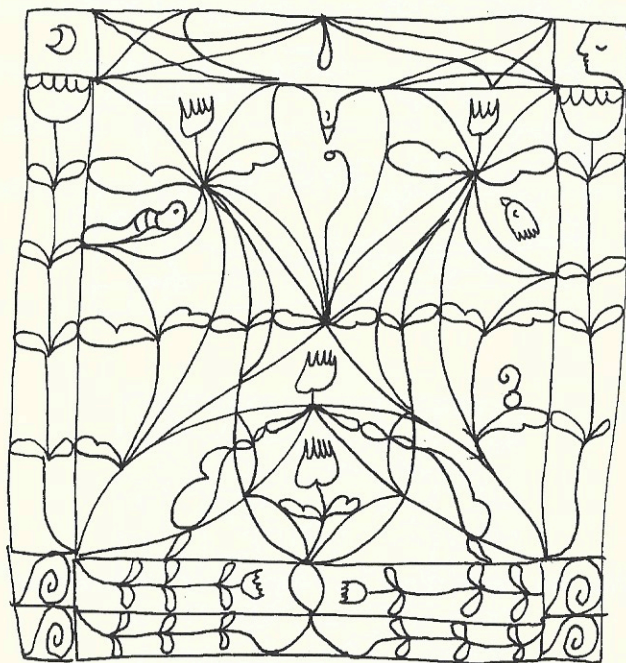
In the past, I would have kept these floral patterns restrained to their borders. I notice them now creeping out from their quadrants and into the drawings' central compositions. In turn, the images in the center are emerging outward, stretching into the borders. The separation between interior and exterior is softening—the two are beginning to overlap.



Has this convergence been happening for some time?

I see traces of this change here and there in older work. But in this moment, I see with clarity how this growth parallels my own. The drawings are transforming because I am.

My patterns are breaking.



From my desk upstairs, I look past the vase of flowers to take in a recent silk drawing suspended on the wall. It offers a world of viridian greens, walnut browns, blacks, dollops of sapphire blue; these colors bleed and bloom across the shiny surface. Within the central image, six human faces appear in profile, resting with their eyes closed. One face bends down to kiss what could be a tomato. Another, sandwiched prominently in the center, glows with the syrupy sweetness of poppy red. Flower stems extend vertically before discovering pathways that allow them to permeate inward. Written in blocky-bubbly letters across the top of the image, text reads:

I CAN FEEL LOVE MORE DEEPLY THAN EVER BEFORE

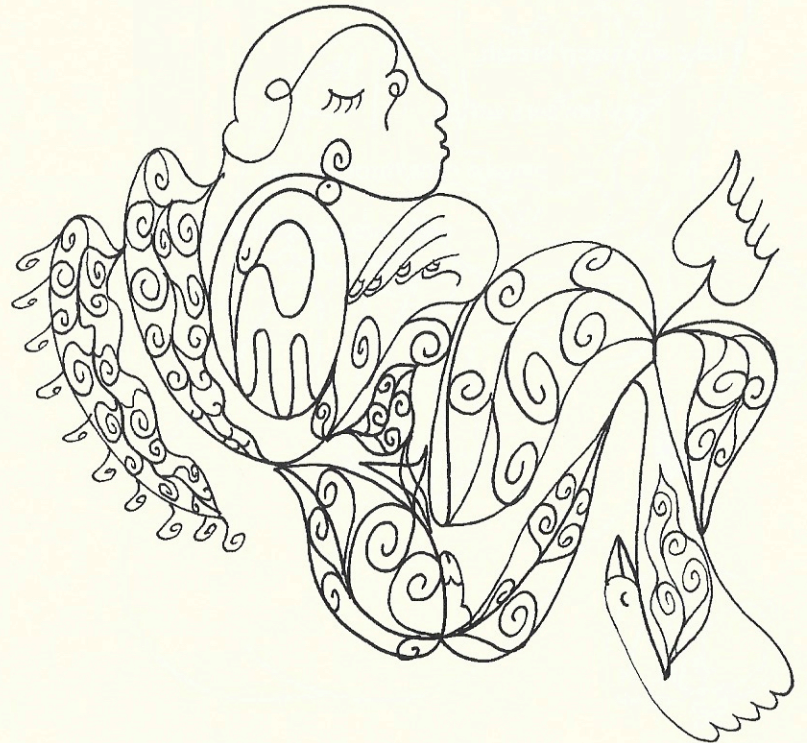
This statement is honest and bursting from my core. I am learning to accept myself. After all, I made this piece soon after my first dose of estrogen. Since my teens, there has been a firm separation between how I present myself in the world—my personal borders—and how I feel on the inside. But, in this moment, the two are negotiating how they can be together. I feel myself intertwining and pruning and figuring something out. I am seeking a harmony wherein I can begin to be indistinguishable from myself, no longer using one version to hide or contain another. Patterns along my personal margins are merging inward, and that which is contained is branching outward. All is transitioning and growing and changing. Not rigid or perfect, but loose, messy, and overflowing in abundance.

On days that I feel down, I make a point of going outside in the evening to sit in the garden on a pale-yellow rocker. The plants have grown tremendously this summer, and this refuge has become my favorite place to meet with the garden in secret. I count my breathing and observe the life and color all around. Spires of rose-pink hollyhocks have shot up taller than me and bustle with the buzz of pollinators. Deep red dahlias spin with radial symmetry as the lightning bugs bob and burn into streaks of luciferase green. A majestic walnut tree fills the sky in a plume of one million rustling leaves. Kitty purrs softly in my lap. I feel *love for the Earth* within the pattern of my breath. Imperfectly, doubts begin to surface within my counting...

The garden is so good, but what about me?

I feel wrong.

When I am present in the garden, it embraces me. At times, our edges coalesce and we become each other. Like when I am breathing in the rich aroma of sweet-smelling Tulsi, or tasting the pop and tart of golden raspberries, or rinsing my paintbrushes in buckets of warm rainwater, or getting burned by the sizzling sun, or cutting bouquets of flowers to inspire me while I write. The garden and I weave together just like the vines and leaves that tessellate across my silks.



My partner, Drew, comes outside at dusk and joins me on the rocker. He tells me unprompted that he views the garden as an extension of me. I hold this sentiment close to my chest.

Could it be true?...

...that the small ecosystem I nurtured into existence—something so incontestably good—is, in some way, an extension of my spirit? I feel out a thought with conviction: if the garden is good, then I must be, too.

I take in a deep breath,
my borders soften,
pattern runs through me,
and I am grateful to be trans.

