

COVID CAUTIOUS



QUEERS ZINE

EDITED BY STEEL TRANSPLANTS

COVID CAUTIOUS QUEERS ZINE

Creating this zine in 2024, year five of the COVID-19 pandemic feels more important than ever, in a time when pandemic denial, lack of safety and isolation are so prevalent for disabled and immunocompromised community members.

This zine captures queer and disabled solidarity through art, language and virtual connections. This zine is a reminder that we are not as alone as we feel most of the time, there is queer community that continues to keep each other safe and show solidarity across intersections.

A general content/trigger warning for discussions of mental health struggles, death, rage, grief and many other difficult emotions that come with being COVID cautious in a time of denial. This zine might bring up similar feelings for you, may you channel those into art or community support.

This zine also contains kink and nudity.

FEBRUARY 2024

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Eve - They/Them - Queer dyke - Instagram @artbydykes

Elliott Dobda - He/They - Gender-nonconforming trans boy - Mixed Media Artist

Website: eliotteagardener.wixsite.com/eliottsteagarden

Instagram: @eliottsteagarden

Email: eliotteagardener@gmail.com

Jake Wasserman - this one/that one, he/him, any/all - Queer, Bi, Disabled

Website: [flickr.com/wasserperson](https://www.flickr.com/photos/wasserperson/)

Roan Boucher - He/Him - Queer, Trans, Disabled, Jewish parent

Instagram: @pollinator_press_art

Sophie Pouyanne - They/Them - Queer, Agender, Disabled

Instagram @anomalous.goo

Cara Morgan - They/Them - Disabled, Neurodivergent, Queer, Nonbinary

Instagram @caramorganpoet

Eskedar - She/They - Queer, Black, Genderqueer

Instagram @real_esk

Hannah Hill/Hanecdote - She/They - Queer, Disabled, Mixed Race

Instagram @hanecdote

Robbie - They/Them - Non-binary hobbyist-artist and writer

Marty - They/Them - white settler on Turtle Island - fucking force of nature - silly billy - junkyard kid - Instagram @harty.marty

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Jaquelee Chit Yu Chau - She/her - BIPOC Queer

Instagram: @jaqueleec

Website: <https://jaqueleechau.wixsite.com/home-en>

Email: jaqueleechau@gmail.com

Jessica Kenney - They/She - Non-binary, Disabled

Instagram @artjessapproaches

Email j.kenney2d@gmail.com

Claudia Mallea - She/Her

Queer, disabled , chronically ill, Jewish Latina

Instagram @cloud_i_a

X: @mylarsleeve

Sabrina Leigh - She/They - Queer

Instagram @odd.little.things

Access Butch - They/Them - White queer disabled

Instagram: @access_butch

Email: hemlock.stanier@gmail.com

Madi Lou - They/Them

Genderqueer, transgender, disabled, white

Email: queerkindness@gmail.com

**gp - any pronouns - genderqueer, disabled, chronically ill Korean
jack-of-many-trades, word weaver and story-receiver and -sharer**

Instagram @garlicgrass

Email: grapar3@gmail.com

Sophie - She/They - Queer

Email: dearestlamb@proton.me

Mickey Przepiora - They/He - Queer, Trans, disabled

Instagram @generalstrikeus_roc

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

stevie linn springs - He/Him - disabled transsexual leatherdyke fag

Instagram @himbosexuality

Khale McHurst - They/Them - non-binary lesbian

Instagram / X: @khalemchurst

Jax Davis - They/Them - TransFat QueerCrip

Personal Instagram: @Slaapkameractivist

Poetry blog: singularitypoetry.blogspot.com

Poetry Instagram: @Singularitypoetry

alyssa giannini - They/Them - queer and trans

Website: www.craftordiy.art

Hania Mariën - She/Her - Queer

Instagram @wombatwisdoms

Website: www.haniamarien.com

Email: wombatwisdoms@gmail.com

rose - She/They - Queer and Disabled

Email: Abbysheppard82@gmail.com

Nadia Buiter - She/They - Queer, bi, disabled, chronically ill

Instagram / X: @nadiabuiter

Rae White - They/Them - Non-binary, trans and queer

Email: rae.white1985@gmail.com

Website: raewhite.net

Instagram/Threads @rae.elliott.white

X: @wings_humming

Facebook: @raewhiteofficial

Bluesky: @raewhite.bsky.social

Ty Muto - He/They - White, Queer, Disabled

Instagram @carbsinablanket

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Toby MacNutt - They/Them - Queer, Trans, Non-binary

Website: tobymacnutt.com

Instagram: @tobymacnutt

Rebecca VanderKooi - She/They - Lesbian, Chronically Ill

Instagram @rotspotrebecca

Cat Xia - They/Them - Pansexual Chinese, Canadian, American

Website: Hellxia.com

Cade Braynen - They/Them

Black, trans-masculine, disabled/chronically ill, bisexual

polyamorous, AuDHD, BPD

Email: braynec3@gmail.com

Instagram: @halleys_comet7561

Facebook: Cade Braynen

Emmeline Kaiser - They/Them - Queer, trans, mixed gaysian

Instagram: @emkaisart

Alec Stoddard - He/They - Queer, trans, disabled

Instagram: @alecwiththechains

Website: www.alecstoddard.com

Photography credit to Rowan Littell (they/them) of Haphazard

Imagination

@haphazardimagination on Instagram

Artie Carden - They/Them - Nonbinary, queer, ace-spec

Instagram: @ArtieCarden / @Artie.is.Arty

Website: artiecarden.com

Gabriel Loyd - They/Them - Nonbinary, disabled, queer, latine

Instagram @queer.witch

Amber - She/Her - Queer, bisexual, chronically ill settler

Instagram: @queenofinfinitespace / @femmingway_art

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Cherubim Kuma - They/He - Queer, trans, disabled

Instagram @cherubimscloud

TOR WAR - HE/HIM - TRANS, GAY, AND HALF VIETNAMESE

Instagram: @torwar_

Website: torwar.carrd.co

Email: 0torwar@gmail.com

char m. - any pronouns - Queer, trans, poet

Instagram: @teal_torch

Website: nomoreuntil.wordpress.com

Email: tealtorch@proton.me

Oliver - He/Him - Gay disabled trans man

Carrd: <https://oliverniko.carrd.co/>

Instagram / X: @Oliver_Niko

Tumblr / BlueSky: @oliverniko

Email: mikleollie1998@gmail.com

Birch Rosen - They/Them

queer, trans, white, autistic, chronically ill

Website: birchrosen.com

Instagram: @birchwrites

Email: birchrosen@gmail.com

yankel akiba - They/Them - trans and nonbinary, queer,

chronically ill, white, diasporist ashkenazi yid

Instagram: @doykayt_dreaming

ShellMinded - They/Them - queer agender aromantic asexual

Instagram / Tumblr: @shellminded

Ceildh (kale) Birkhahn - They/them -queer / enby aroace with

chronic health issues

Website: suitcasedragon.com

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

punkgarf - he/him - queer transsexual etc!!!

Instagram / X: @punkgarf

Ralf - They/Them

Faggy transsexual crip & multimedia collage artist

Instagram: @ratfaggy

Email: ratfaggy@gmail.com

Megan Fletcher - She/Her - Queer/aro-ace, disabled, neurodivergent

Instagram: @megan_fletcher_art

E. Caroline Walters - They/Them - Queer

Instagram: @ecarolinewalters

brie - They/Them - non-binary lesbian with long COVID

Instagram: @soft_orb

Instagram for Mask Bloc Éire: @maskbloceire

Derrick Dixon - He/They - Queer Interdisciplinary artist

Instagram @derrickrdixon

Krystal - They/Them - queer, trans, disabled, neurodivergent

Email: snailspiral@proton.me

maira - they/them - queer, trans, nonbinary, neurodivergent, fat

Instagram: @lngrmstplr

Websites: longarmstapler.neocities.org

linktr.ee/lngrmstplr

CUPOYO - they/she - nonbinary Black lesbian

Website: cupoyo.carrrd.co

**Kit Blamire - they/them - queer, non binary, white,
disabled, chronically sick**

Instagram: @kit_blamire

Website: kateblamire.co.uk

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Liz Fitzgerald - They/Them - white, queer, non-binary,

chronically ill / disabled, neurodivergent

Email: lizfitzgerald@ucdavis.edu

Ahleigh - They/Them - Queer // Trans // Disabled

Instagram: @St.Edje_Creatives

**Danielle Gauld - She/Her - disabled, living with chronic pain
and illness, queer**

Instagram: @wildbluegrace

Tiana Marie - They/Them - queer, nonbinary, Latinx

Website: tiana-marie.com

Instagram: @littletianamarie

Email: scarsandmoss@gmail.com

Chandrapups - They/Them [Plural]

**We are disabled pangenderfluid, trans, and intersex Viet, Khmer
and Chinese plural artists. We are multimedia artists who work in
prose, poetry, illustrations, food, and more.**

Instagram: @chandrapups_art

X: @chandrapups

Tumblr: chandrapups-art.tumblr.com

**SJ Malinske - They/She - autistic agender dyke, chronically
ill/disabled**

Instagram: @eternalflame_bb

**Nai - They/Them - Queer/trans (biromantic ace and non-binary),
disabled (high-risk in several ways and recovering from long
COVID; has Crohn's and is neurodivergent), immigrant (US to**

Canada), white settler

Email: kjhfui@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Grace Rountree - She/They - queer white disabled anti-zionist jew

Instagram: @printingworldstocome

**Mylo Pepper - They/Them - Queer, trans, fat, autistic,
chronically ill, disabled**

Instagram: @yerpersofficial

Email: yerpersofficial@gmail.com

**Alejandra Diemecke - She/Her - Queer, bi, pan,
chronically ill chicanx**

Instagram: @_lallorona_music

Willow Vaughan - She/Her - queer, trans, neurodivergent

Website: willowv.itch.io

Lucio - He/Him - trans, neurodivergent, Black

Email: EmperorLuzco@lucia.city

Zoë Newmarco - They/She - queer, nonbinary, chronically ill

Instagram: @reclamation.rags

**SnackGnatRat - He/It/They - trans man, biromantic gray-aroace,
disabled, neurodivergent, multiracial, anarchist**

Tumblr / X : @ratoybox

Tiktok: @snackgnatratoybox

**Amanda Farman - They/She - white queer and genderqueer
anti-zionist Jewish person**

Instagram: @mask_produced

Logan Fenner - He/They - Autistic bisexual dyke trans man

Instagram: @ninegoldfinches

Alice Lanning - They/Them - Disabled nonbinary lesbian

Instagram: @bitterfemme

Website: alicelanning.crevado.com

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Nat - She/Her - Queer

Adrian Peace-Williams - She/They - Queer

**Valkyrie Cain - They/Them - A medium & complex
support needs Disabled burlesque/drag performer
and poet, who's non-binary and sex work
experienced.**

Instagram: @Mx.Syd / @ValkyrieCainBurlesque

**Kay Kassirer - They/Them - white queer trans Jewish
disabled neurodivergent dyke**

**Oli Oldfield - They/He - Queer, Trans &
Neurodivergent**

Instagram: @olioldsart

**Stevie Dod - They/Them - chronically ill and disabled
nonbinary**

butch lesbian

Email: sdod@gm.slc.edu



**Mask up bitch, October 2023. Lino print
by Eve (they/them)**

Which of Us Is Afraid?

The nurse sees my KN95 and offers me this:

*There was a study that said you're 5 times
more likely to get COVID if you wear a mask
because you're breathing in your own air.*

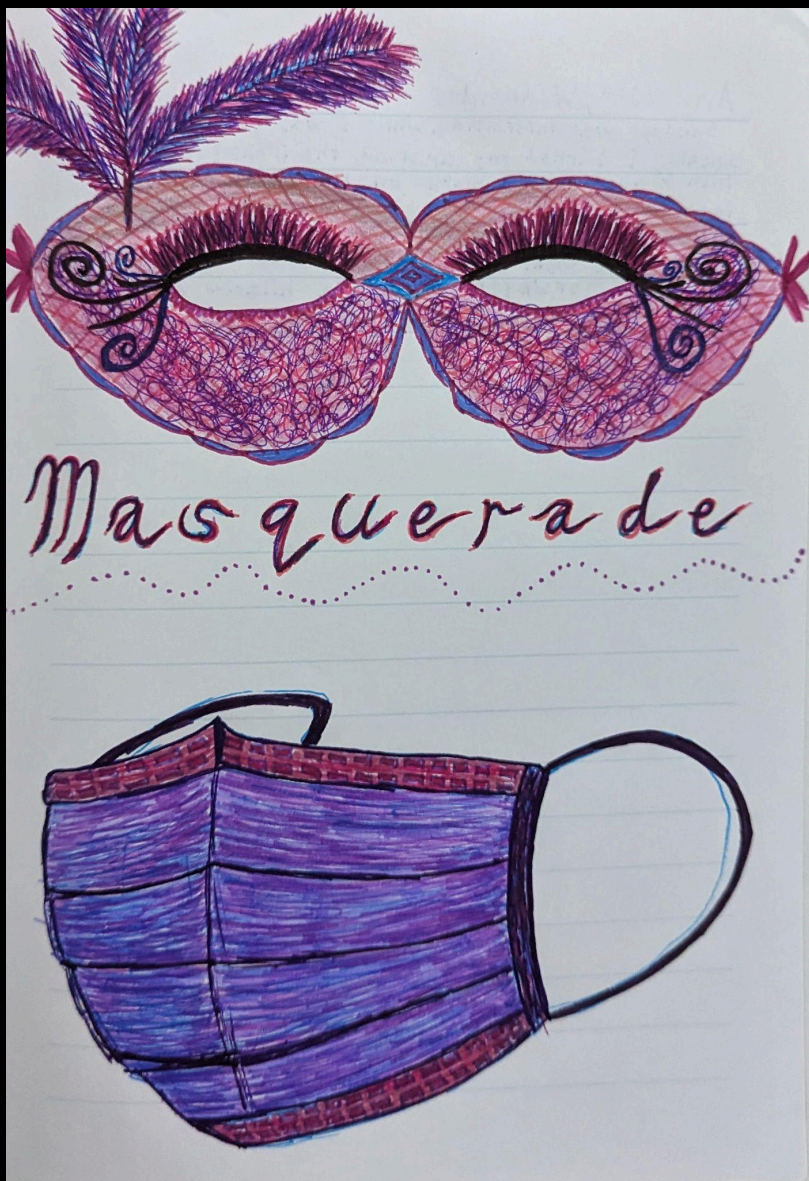
There is a lot I want to say back. That's not how COVID works. That's not how masks work. If that were true, COVID researchers wouldn't wear respirators and special equipment. Are you fucking kidding me? Can I please have another nurse? I am so tired of people thinking I'm crazy when I'm right. I'm so tired of people thinking my "anxiety" is "unfounded" and "irrational." I'm sick of the bad news. And being the only one around who hears it. And people saying shit like this. You are a medical professional and you are doing jack shit to protect me. And by the way? You suck at placing a line. You know what? One of us is wearing a mask in an ongoing airborne pandemic, and one of us is sticking their fingers in their ears and yelling *I CAN'T HEAR YOU!* Which of us is afraid, huh? Speak up please, I can't hear you.

But I don't say anything at all.

I lie back on the table.

Because she is the one putting a needle in my arm and I am the one who needs it.

Which of Us Is Afraid? Written Prose by Cara Morgan (they/them)



**Masquerade, September 2020, felt tip pens
By Elliot Dobda (he/they)
This artwork was inspired by The Phantom of
the Opera.**



**Self Portrait by Jake Wasserman
(this one/that one, he/him, any/all)**



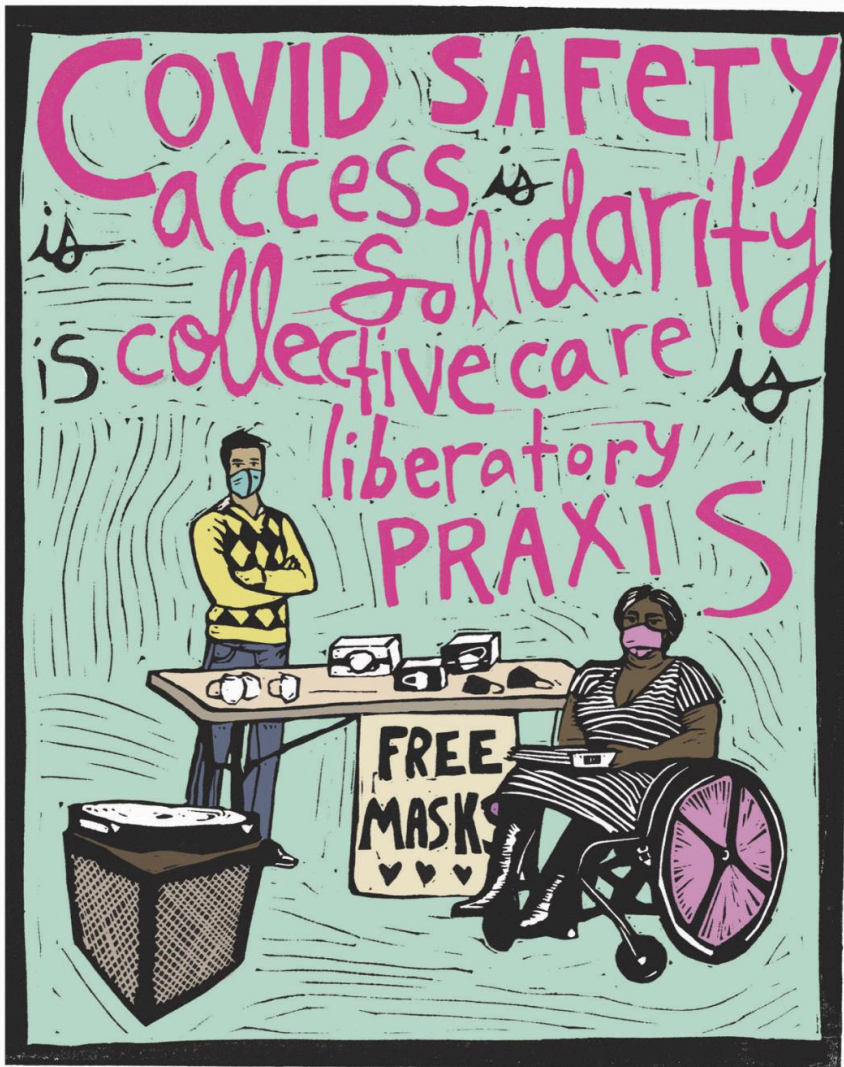
**Disabled People Deserve to Live, April 2023,
Lino Print
By Roan Boucher (he/him)**

Made in April 2023, after then-CDC Director Rochelle Walensky cited the “encouraging” data that the majority of Covid deaths are in those with 4 or more pre-existing medical conditions.

This statement and its phrasing lay bare what disabled people have seen clearly - that our lives are disposable to those who are guiding public health policy, that the deaths of disabled people are considered an acceptable loss. Rather than protecting the most vulnerable, our leaders have asked us to carry the burden of survival alone, so everyone else can act as though things are “normal“.

Disabled people (and fat people, pregnant people, elders, and others particularly vulnerable to COVID) are not expendable. People of color and poor people are not expendable. Our public health response is based on eugenicist logics, insisting that we normalize millions of preventable deaths.

A humane and coherent public health strategy would take a fraction of the money and energy our government spends on militarism, incarceration, and policing. The lack of action on Covid is an extension of this violence, an unacceptable - if predictable - response from a society that values white supremacy and profit for the wealthy over the survival and care of its people.



COVID Safety is Access, Lino Print
By Roan Boucher (he/him)

**Spaces without COVID precautions are *not
accessible spaces***

**It's no surprise that the state has abandoned
us, but we don't have to abandon each other**



**COVID safety is access
is solidarity
is collective care
is liberatory praxis**



**Nishmat Kol Chai, Lino Print
By Roan Boucher (he/him)**

I have worn a mask around everyone not in my household/pod, indoors and outdoors, without exception for 3 1/2 years. I am constantly thinking about breath and air; the air moving in and out of our lungs, the exchange of particles between all living things via our breath, breath and air as a source of life, sometimes as a source of harm, something that constantly, physically connects us all.

These lines from Jewish liturgy are always echoing in my mind - nishmat kol chai, the breath of every living being. Kol haneshamah, everything with breath. These are prayers of gratitude: with our breath we praise god.

The spaces I have found for collective prayer in the pandemic have taken care to keep our breath from causing harm - I am so grateful for davening outdoors, masked, or on zoom. When we pray without these measures in place - when we meet, organize, protest, strategize, share meals, sing, cruise, dance, gather in any way - I won't be there, and I'll be thinking about all the other disabled, sick, and/or simply mindful folks who also won't or can't.

Our connectedness is everything. EVERYTHING. Whether we acknowledge it or not, whether we feel it or not. We affect each other. Our breath affects each other. We are breathing the same air and everything in it, the earth and rain and ashes and wildfire smoke and virus and cells and gasses, in and out of our lungs, many times a minute, connecting us. It hurts how connected we are, and it's beautiful, and it can kill us, and we would die without it.

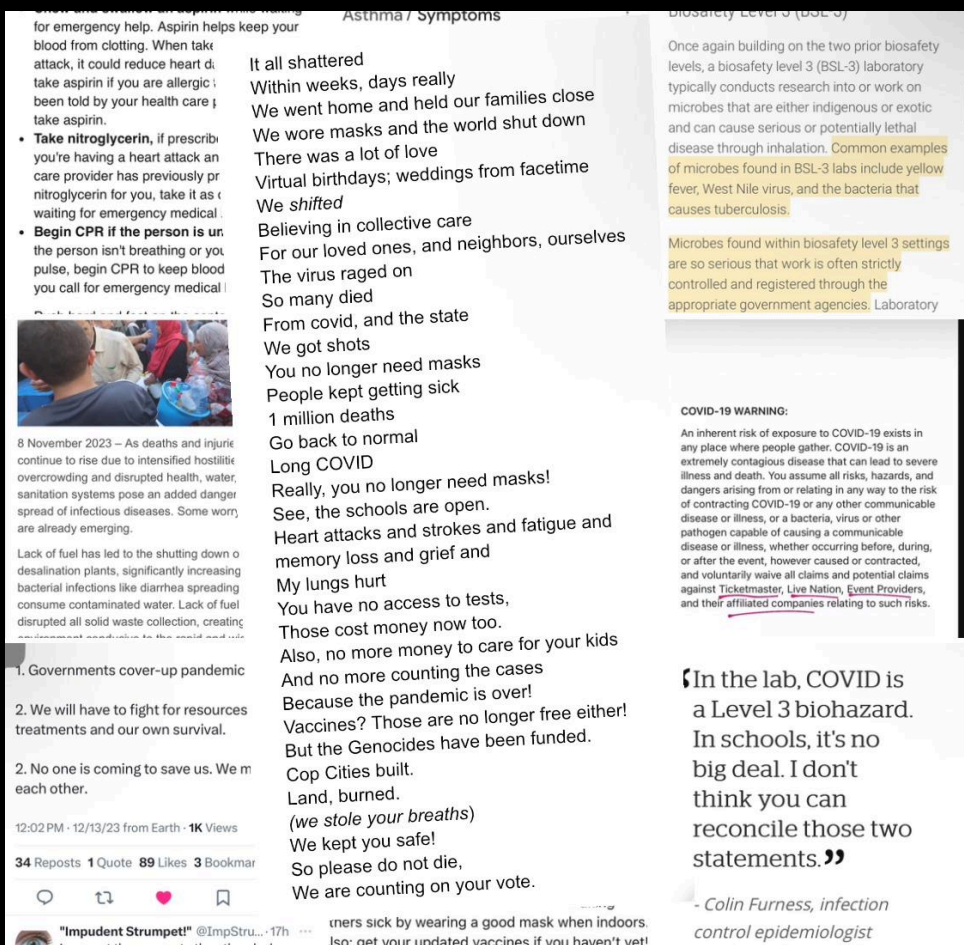
May we wake from the collective trance of individualism. Connectedness is power. May we keep each other safe, may we work together, may we make a new world that we can all live in.



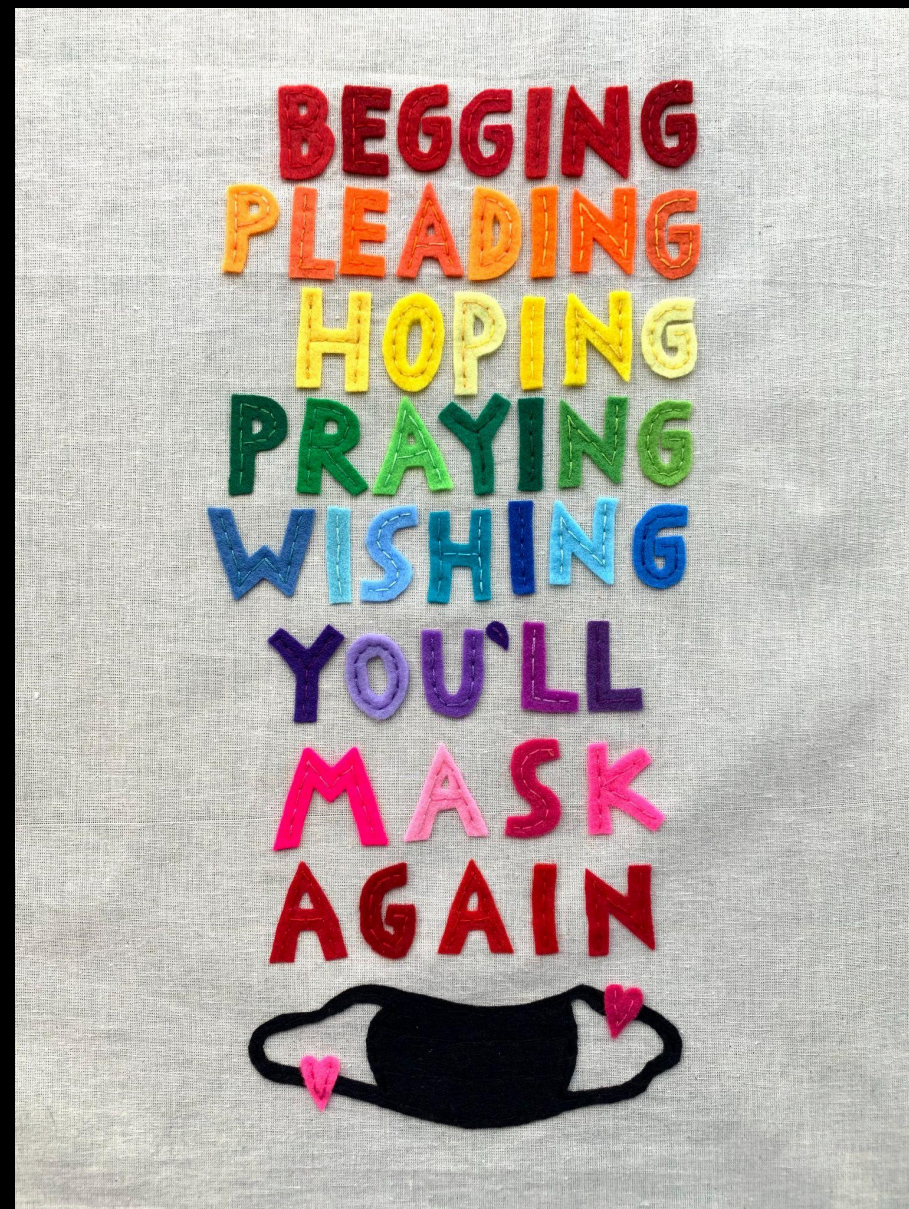
This mask is made to go over an N95 mask, putting focus on it and adding beauty.



**Maille Mask, December 2023, Stainless steel and glow in the dark rubber
by Sophie Pouyanne (they/them)**



**Biden 2024, 12/15/23, Poem
by Eskedar (she/they)**



**Wishing and Hoping, 2023, Colourful felt,
embroidery thread on natural calico
by Hannah Hill/Hanecdote (she/they)**

This is the New Normal

Robbie 2023 (they/them)

In a time of uncertainty, we all donned our masks for safety... a common practice outside of the US, and for good reason- it keeps people safe! I never understood why we as Americans didn't adopt these precautions or implement them in our own ways until 2020... As a Texan who also lived in Florida for a few years, I suspected mask mandates wouldn't go over well, but I desperately wanted to be wrong. Years later, while the mandates have been lifted in the South US, I still wear my mask and am careful about where I go and who I see... why?

I'm an asthmatic who has gotten COVID twice from people who weren't careful around me.

There are too many people where I live that don't wear masks, who rejected ever wearing masks, that simply don't care or don't believe in the possibility that they could be putting others at risk.

I wear my mask whenever I am around people (with very few exceptions) and I wish others would too.

Maybe I wouldn't have gotten COVID twice and have to live with aching lungs if others had been more careful around me.

"This is the New Normal 2023"

**A written collection of thoughts on wearing a mask
by Robbie (they/them), December 2023.**



"You Should Care Too"

**A digital art piece using hand-written thoughts and
pictures of Robbie (they/them) wearing a mask,
December 2023**



**"15 Months: Air Mail", 2023, screenprint
by Jaquelee Chit Yu Chau (she/her)**

In "15 Months: Air Mail", an image of a X-ray view of masks mailed inside a standard envelop expresses personal frustration and questions the attitude towards COVID-19 and accessibility in the US. The print stems from my experience of getting KN95 masks mailed by my family as it is cheaper to have masks of quality mailed internationally than to purchase bulk here in the US.



**"For the beloved and the guide", 2022, Lithograph
by Jaquelee Chit Yu Chau (she/her)**

"For the beloved and the guide" shows a traditional memorial meal prepared for those who passed, as well as for their spirit guide. This corresponds to the grief over the inability to attend such ritual under COVID restrictions.

My work investigates pathways, material culture and history of everyday objects. They exist under established systems that govern the economic, political, cultural, and personal. The unfolding of their ontological histories addresses the contemporary which is often convoluted.



if home was safe...
Photography and Digital art
by Marty (they/them)

Just Do It! (Poetry, Dec 2022)

Please wear a mask,
it's just my life
at risk.

Have some care,
your "freedom" is stepping on
my health.

Should I need to suffer
because in person is better?

Why should I die
so you can stay
in your comfort zone?

Put on a mask
We've asked nicely
I am tired.

Let me have one shred of dignity
Just one scrap of fabric
could address this on the nose.

Just Do It! Dec 2022, Poetry
by Jessica Kenney (they/she)

Last Kiss

When I think of Odette now it's of that kiss after the movie, the last time I saw her. Of her ripping her mask off and stepping toward me. But more than the kiss the moment before it, her face shiny in the light of passing cars, her eyes bright and hot on mine.

it wasn't either of our first, but it was her last kiss.

she had mentioned being a little short of breath but I figured she was just nervous for a job interview the next day. And she always drank too much coffee. I didn't think of it until I got that text from Odette's number the next afternoon.

"Hello Sam, this is Odette's mother. She passed away this morning from cardiac arrest related to Covid. I know she really cared for you and would want you to know. her funeral is Monday. I'll update with the time and location."

My first thought when I read the text was that it was a joke, like when you ask a friend to break up with someone for you. I did that once in college and still feel guilty about it. Though I didn't ask Gary Gold to text Rachel Hunt "Sorry, I've really enjoyed getting to know you but I've realized I'm gay."

I couldn't believe it. Just a day prior I had been watching Odette's masked face flicker in the movie lights hoping we'd laugh at the same joke, her under mine on the arm rest.

We had only dated for three months but I know I loved her. I hadn't told her but I'd written it in my diary often enough. And kept up a list of moments in which I knew I loved her. A conspiratorial joke I made that she had laughed hard at, that walk in Lincoln Center, slow dancing in her kitchen.

I never made it to the funeral; I was only on my second day of isolation. Thankfully, I didn't get very sick from what Odette had given me, and I recovered fully. I remember almost not wanting to recover. I could have worked from home but I took a week of sick days instead. I lay in bed and listened to the playlist she had made me. I didn't eat soup or take fever reducers or antivirals, not wanting to get rid of the last thing Odette ever gave me.

Last Kiss is about the anxiety thought that any kiss could be you or your partner's last ever kiss, and the pervasive health anxiety that living through a pandemic creates and warrants. It is also my attempt at processing the texts my mom sent my partner and friends while I was in surgery after my brain aneurysm rupture. I know if I had died my friends would have been informed by her by text. Many people must have received such texts in the last four years.

I am a disabled, queer, Jewish Latina feminist. I am engaged in feminist labor organizing as a member of the NY Caring Majority. This story is rooted in my commitment to Disability Justice.

**Last Kiss, Short story, 402 words
by Claudia Mallea (she/her)**



**Opulence, June 2020, Copic Markers on tan paper
by Sabrina Leigh (she/they)**

This piece was drawn during the wild times of the toilet paper hoarding that was going on during the lockdown. This was my visual manifestation to the question “what the fuck is everyone doing with all that toilet paper?”

December 27, 2023 at 7:53 AM

It happened last night,

The call that family was testing positive.
No ride from the airport after exposure,
Still being forced to get home somehow.

Bitterly, I am selfishly aware it will make
what was two weeks apart
Into over a month.
No New Years kiss,
Not even a hug welcoming us home.

I cried myself to sleep
Ridden with anxiety
For what this will do to our relationship;
Our COVID practices
Never seem like enough.

**Bubble Positive, Dec. 27th 2023, written prose
by Madi Lou (they/them)**

Angry Crip Rants 1: A letter to my housemates who don't give a shit about Covid

**the legacy of snarky disabled people is rich and generative*

This is what, like the 7th time?

I've groveled and begged in the groupchat

I've been nice and gentle

When I explain how to stop killing us.

I offered you my own masks and tests

I even added heart emojis to the pleas.

You ignored those messages

So I'll try again

In a different tone:

Dear housemates:

Spit those social justice words out of your mouth

And right into mine

Fuck yeah

Spit them all over my face

And tell me that you care

I see you like my messages

And heart my insta story

{A screenshot of a twitter post

that describes how you are killing us}

Like it.

**Angry Crip Rants 1, Poetry
By Access Butch (they/them)**

Go ahead!

I will never trust you.

We work overtime

To avoid the trails of destruction

you leave hanging in the air

throughout our shared home

The money we spend,

the time we spend,

the anxiety we spend

Because of you

Fuck you.

We derail our lives.

We run ourselves dry

While you greet us with a smile,

lying through your teeth

about your intersectional activism

We are not friends.

But I guess I'll force a smile while you kill me

And my loved ones.

Thanks!

♥️😬 [heart emoji, mask face emoji]

**This poem is inspired by Alice Wong's work on the sheer
power of crip anger and snark.**

To: the Moon

i have come to love you as i love your reflection in the water

the way you refract across the choppy waves reminds me of your playfulness, your pain
the shadowing of your dark across still waters reminds me of your weight, your presence

and I share you a kiss in the way repelling magnets do

will i ever press my cheek to your rough, cold one?
will i ever lay cradled in your craters?

someone once told me that stars are actually pictures of the past--
they lie so far away from us that their rays, crossing space and time, reach us too
late.

what of you?

as you climb into my scooped hands and drain through the cracks night makes in my fingers,
i condense these questions into the air
only for them to be recycled into my nose and mouth, an echo chamber of my damp ache

perhaps i may never experience you except as past-becoming,
to love you from a distance, the context in which we build

i weave worlds from our weeping and catch baskets of your glow, and I wonder

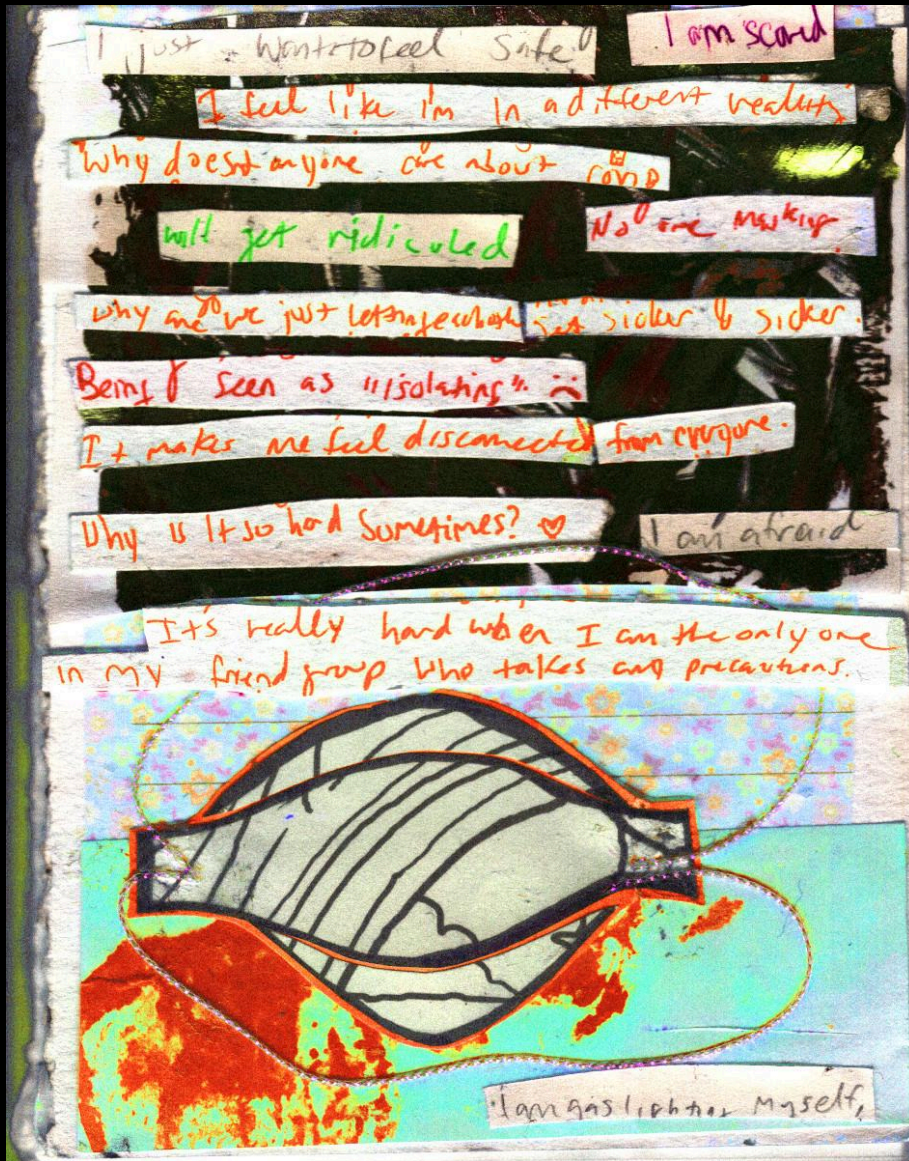
for those of us whose rays reach each other,
do we explode?
supernova and collapse in on ourselves?
do we create other stars from fragments of light that chip off from us?
do we expand so much that something wonderful happens,
something magnificent?
do we become something better than a star?
I wonder.
I wonder.

To: The Moon, October-January, Poem by gp (any pronouns)

This poem was inspired by thinking about the long-distance relationships and the lunar new year. In Korean folklore (as with several other cultures), it is said that a rabbit lives on the moon, making rice cakes, celebrating the new year.

I've been reflecting a lot on the people that I care so deeply about that I will perhaps never be able to be with again due to the increasing layers of pandemic and other kinds of violence that separate us, the people who I will never be able to hold; to smell; to hear their laughter directly in my space, in order to prioritize care for each other. A seeming paradox--that physical distance is an act of care--but a reality many of us live. Those of us who are chronically ill, disabled, Sick, those of us growing up as QTBIPOC online, those of us who are borne of diaspora have already had practice loving someones, somethings, someplaces through reflections, through scraps of past-becoming. In turning back to that folktale and my poem: what if the rabbit were no longer able to live on the moon? What if the rabbit could only love the moon (and the moon love the rabbit) separated by space-time, wearing masks or in reflections on screens (water)? Is their love any less intimate, any less real?

I've also been reflecting a lot on the strength and power of long-distance relationships particularly forged in genuine solidarity. As we continue to fight and build sustained resistance against colonial genocide, seeking the fall of empires everywhere, do we believe these relationships are powerful even if not physically proximal? I do, and I am choosing to weave together realities alongside people who I may never hold, smell, hear in the same space-time, desperately fighting for what those who live in the violences of displacement and occupation and exploitation know so well. And so this poem is also for these intimately bound relationships as well, knowing that the convenience of physical proximity is not what drives these connections but rather the intentional, practiced desire to care, to remember, to have been, be, and become together.



**Journal Excerpts, Fall 2023, pen on paper and paper collage, beet dyed paper, expressed grief and anxiety surrounding COVID.
by Sophie (she/they)**

mouthbreathers

june 2023

when i see your unmasked face
on that one app on my phone
it feels deeply personal
like you don't care if i live or die

but, you're not thinking about me
living
or dying
you're thinking about you
living your own life
just like we all are, right?

in this country where individualism reigns supreme
and government policies force us Back To Normal
but
normal doesn't work for me
when you don't wear a mask

how is it that everyone
can no longer bear to wear a mask
after 2+ years of daily practice?

a silly little mask!
and quite literally the only thing
separating me from an even earlier death sentence
than i'm already destined for

but i'm glad you got to breathe all over everyone at the [redacted]

**mouthbreathers, june 2023, poem
by stevie linn springs (he/him)**



wear a fucking mask, december 2023, acrylic paint
on canvas
by stevie linn springs (he/him)

your whiteness is showing

october 2023

“your whiteness is showing”
you said to me in the fall of 2020
as i cried about not being able to kiss you
when the first person in your bubble got COVID

you scolded me for having *weak* COVID boundaries
even though i lived alone and isolated
and you did not
even though i was disabled and chronically ill
and you were not

3 years later,
i’m still disabled and chronically ill
but you are not
i still refrain from going to bars & restaurants
but you do not
i still wear a mask in public
but you do not

did your values change?
or is that just your whiteness showing?

your whiteness is showing, october 2023, poem

by stevie linn springs (he/him)

As more and more people have the veil lifted from in-front of their eyes, and they see the bias in mainstream media, I feel like I need to scream from the rooftops that they are lying about COVID-19, too!

The disabled community has not stopped working to protect themselves and others from COVID-19 while the rest of the world goes back to business as usual. And even while hitting the streets in support of Palestine, Congo, Sudan, black lives and trans lives, etc., the disabled community is still fighting a biological warfare battle - wearing a mask in crowds of unmasked people.

I have seen many references to death tolls these past few years - different genocides, different causes of death, different countries - but it is always due to the same reason: white supremacy and capitalism.

You see, disabled people do not fit into the perfect white-supremacy-mold, and neither do queer and trans people. This is why the MAGA campaign chooses to target disabled and queer folk. But truly, it's all a distraction from the real issue of white supremacy.

When we fail to also defend our black and brown communities, across the world and in our homes, *we fail to fight for everyone.*

When you do not wear a mask, *you fail to fight for everyone.*

When you only hire drag queens for events, and not drag kings, *you fail to fight for everyone.*

When you don't post about, or speak about, or show up for Palestine, *you fail to fight for everyone.*

When you think, "it's too complicated, I will wait to hear someone else tell me what to think", *you aren't fighting for anything.*

When you think, "Well I'm scared to lose my job, lose my friends, lose my followers on Instagram", *you aren't fighting for anything.*

And when you fail to fight for everyone, you fail to fight for yourself - you fail to fight for anything worth fighting for.

It's imperative that we struggle for everyone's liberation simultaneously. It's a lot to hold, and many people feel hopelessness and relenting to the powers that be, but we must keep going. Our ancestors before us fought hard for us, and we must keep fighting for them and for the future generations.

Climate change is at our door - now is not the time for hopelessness. Take that grief, that pain, that anger, and put it towards community action. Wear a mask, listen to black and brown people and the disabled community, and work for liberation. We can do this.

**Fight for Anything, 1/4/2024, Written Prose
by Mickey Przepiora (they/he)**

Maybe I'VE BEEN TO my last CONCERT

by Khale McHurst 2024

Live music has always been like a religious experience to me.

The feeling of the bass deep in my chest.



Experiencing in a new way songs I had listened to hundreds of times.



The energy of the crowd -



- feeling connected to so many people at once.

The sheer spectacle of it.



When the pandemic began, we lost so much.



I live in Melbourne, Australia, which had some of the longest and strictest lockdowns in the world.

Even though some people thought the measures were too severe, there is no doubt that they saved countless lives.



As vaccines arrived and the world started to open up again, people quickly let go of their caution. They were so desperate to feel normal again.

Even when mask mandates stopped, I kept wearing mine any time I left the house.





**'Maybe I've Been To My Last Concert' - comic, 2024
by Khale McHurst (they/them)**

You have told me in many ways
That all of me means nothing.
You ignored in many ways
My voice that was aching.

You turned your back to me
And returned right back to normal.
Me just trying to survive
You happily called delusional.

You build your self esteem
Out of corpses and dust.
Being better than us
Is all that you want.

And I am still trying to scream
Into a void of make belief.

And I am still trying to make you see.
You might be dying alongside me.

You would be happier if I died.
One last breath and eyes open wide.
Saying otherwise would be a lie.

You would be happier with me gone.
So your life could just trot along.
Living your lie wouldn't feel so wrong.

You would be happier if I stopped.
Being healthy is all you got.
So you happily let it rot

Just to proof a point.

Did you proof your point?

You think I asked for this silence?
I can not remember when I forgot how to scream.
You think I deserved all your violence?
These marks are showing on my skin.

I see you are made out of faces.
A single tear lining them out.
I thought I knew how you laced them.
But now it has left me in doubt.

Stop stitching my mouth into your image.
Start asking me why I don't smile.
Stop asking me not to pull at the stitches.
While you still remain in denial.

I am having my conversations
In the protection of my heart.
Cause I lost all my lamentations
And it is pulling me apart.

You want to take my words
And my ability to talk.
Cause I wear my heart on my sleeve
And you want my heart.

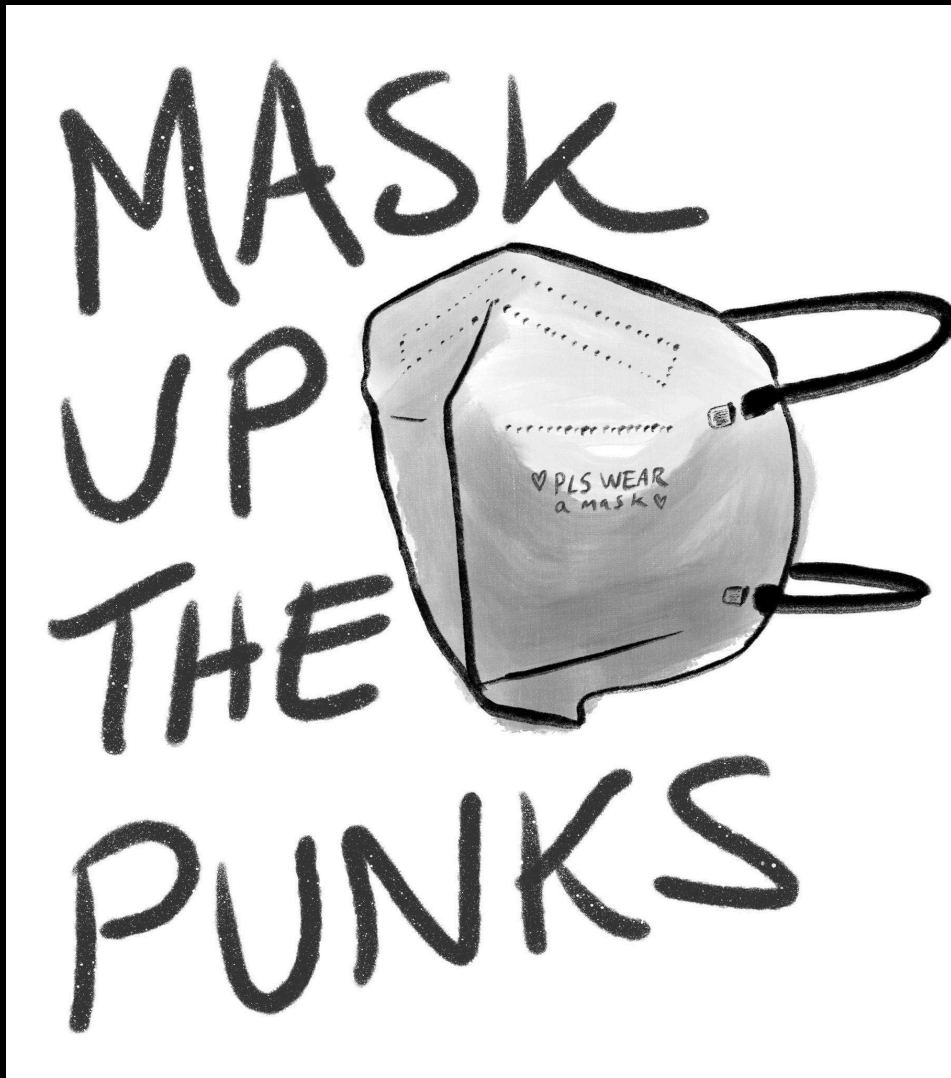
You want my heart and my brain,
Yes you want my promise,
That I will never remind you,
I will just give you silence.

But I think I am done being silenced,
I think I am ready to start screaming.
I will take all our conversations
And wear them out on my skin.

I will wear them as a mask,
To protect from your spit.
Whatever good you think you do,
I promise you're not doing it.

**Hindsight is 2020, December 2023, Poem
by Jax Davis (They/Them)**

**Almost 4 Years Now, December 2023, Poem
By Jax Davis (They/Them)**



**mask up the punks, 1/6/24, digital drawing
by alyssa giannini (they/them)**

There is a silence
Between you and I.
It lives between the breaths,
And exists beneath your lies.
Right under when you told me
You cared for this heart of mine.
Then you turned around and
I found my access denied.

How do you think you spell
The word friend, my dear?
With working legs and and
Apostrophe near?
With an erasure of anything
You deemed to queer?
How do you claim that you
Loved me, my dear?

How can you say that you
Definitely cared?
While a lack of inclusion
Lay a wall to me bare?
How do we meet in the middle
If I can not get there?
Are you ashamed of me
Cause people might stare?

There's an end to the sentence
Between you and I.
It has been there long before
We said goodbye.
You cannot build a family
Upon a foundation of lies.
Let us keep the silence
Between you and I.

**Access Denied, December 2023, Poem
by Jax Davis (they/them)**



WOMBAT WISDOMS
CARE FOR EACH OTHER



**Wombat Wisdoms Care For Each Other, January 6th
2024, digital using Procreate
by Hania Mariën (she/her)**

On Waves

I grew up in the ocean
A fish turned man burdened with speech
Let me tell you what i know

How hard the tide recedes is
How big the next wave will be
The undertow is push/pull to
Sacrifice you to the uncaring
Mouth of the sea

You may survive
Your loved ones may not

You don't know the ocean like i do
All i see for miles is wet sand
Where water used to be
Run and hide now/stay inside now
The ocean has room for a sea of bodies

I grew up in the ocean
A fish turned man burdened with speech
Let me tell you what i know

A.R. Sheppard

On Waves, Poem by rose (she/they)

**I wrote this on the early days of lockdown I still feel
like people aren't taking COVID as seriously as they
should, my beloved partner has covid at time of
submission and i am so very scared.**

Erasure

There must be a film over this world,
That cloaks me in grey

Grey enough, so that I blend
With rain clouds and skyscrapers

Grey enough, so that I become
Part of the background scenery

Grey enough, so that I melt
Away in trodden snow

There must be a film over this world
That hides me away

Away enough, so that they
Never lose comforts of consumerism

Away enough, so that they
Don't have to look at wilted wood

Away enough, so that they
Can fill places where I once stood

Sometimes I see another,
Cloaked in grey, hidden away

We lock our eyes and promise,
A fight to be seen, somehow, somewhere, someday...

**Erasure, November 4th, 2023, poem
by Nadia Buiter (she/they)**

This poem is about the erasure experienced by risk groups during this pandemic. It felt like we (risk group members) were suddenly invisible to the rest of the world, and in many ways we literally are, since many of us are still isolated at home. Simultaneously, many risk group members have to risk their lives constantly because they are forced to by an inaccessible and ableist society, but that constant risk taking goes unacknowledged or is even actively downplayed. These feelings of erasure were in a way not new to me, because I've already been excluded from specifically queer spaces based on being bisexual and disabled. So this poem is a nod to my fellow queer disabled people who are still COVID conscious. I see you and you're not alone.



**Abandoned, 2024, digital photo collage
by Rae White (they/them)**

I care about you
Meet me at the glory hole
You hot fucking crip

Holding each other's gaze
A brief moment of refuge
A fellow masked queer

You wear caring well
Right over your nose and
mouth
Thank you dear comrade

**Harm Reduction, Haiku Poems
by Ty Muto (he/they)**

"I will touch your face again"
Toby MacNutt

I will touch your face again.
My palm cradling the revealed topology of your cheek,
our foreheads pressed together, worry lines dovetailing
fogged-up glasses gone,
breath warm and safe.
I've lost muscle but we can hold each other up
on the floor, on the couch, in a tea house,
a bookstore, a theatre, your kitchen,
until the sea of our tears holds us both
floating, sinking, swimming
in what we have lost and what we have still, somehow, found.

**"I will touch your face again", 2022, poem
by Toby MacNutt (they/them)**



**COVID Response, 1/14/2024, digital comic
by Cat Xia (they/them)**



**Discarded Ghost V1, January 13, 2024, digital tablet
(Procreate)
by Cale Braynen (they/them)**



**Friends?, January 15, 2024, digital tablet (Procreate)
by Cale Braynen (they/them)**

Disaster Capitalism and COVID

By Rebecca VanderKooi

Disaster capitalism¹ is, "The exploitation of natural or man-made disasters (such as catastrophic weather events, war, epidemics, etc.) in service of capitalist interests; the practice of using unstable social, political, and economic situations to impose or benefit from deregulation, the privatization of public assets, etc." This isn't a new concept; it can be seen everywhere², from the privatization of prisons³, profiting off of devastating earthquakes⁴, and even privatizing war and turning it into a lucrative business³. One of the latest examples of predatory disaster capitalism has been the ongoing COVID pandemic.

In the transcripts of a 2022 call⁵ with Angela Hwang, Pfizer's Group President of Biopharmaceuticals, the drive for profit at all costs wasn't hidden as Hwang talked about "generating demand" for their medication, PAXLOVID. It is undoubtedly a great thing that there are medications that help when people have COVID. However, as Hwang said⁶, "We also see the social removal of the mask mandate, the social distancing requirements have been removed...We know with all that infections are going to increase, and that's the role PAXLOVID can play."

One may think that this response is because COVID is milder, but that is not the case. It is classified as a Biosafety Level 3 pathogen⁷. The CDC⁸ defines a level 3 pathogen as "the microbes there can be either indigenous or exotic, and they can cause serious or potentially lethal disease through respiratory transmission." The fact is that COVID is still killing people, and of those who do survive infection, many people are experiencing Long COVID, which has been called a mass disabling event⁹. At least 18 million Americans¹⁰ have said they have or have had Long COVID, and repeat infections compound the risk of developing the condition¹¹.

Yet another example of corporations focusing on profits amidst mass illness and death is Delta Airlines. Amidst the spread of the Omicron variant the CEO of Delta requested¹² that the CDC change the 10-day quarantine to five days. The Delta CEO as well as the airline's medical advisor and chief health officer wrote in a letter, "With the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, the 10-day isolation for those who are fully vaccinated may significantly impact our workforce and operations." This change was made¹³ despite some flight attendants having concerns¹³ about the change and even though many people are still contagious after the five days. The 5-day quarantine is now standard practice, potentially endangering countless lives.

These are just two instances of many; throughout the entire pandemic, it has been clear that profit matters more than human lives to corporations as well as the government. From the jump, mask-wearing was politicized. Many people refused to wear a mask simply because then President Trump mocked it¹⁴ and often wouldn't wear one himself. Furthermore, amid a shortage of PPE and other lifesaving medical equipment, the shortage was exacerbated by Trump waging a trade war¹⁵, once again showing the politicization of the pandemic rather than focusing on human lives.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it was largely Republicans who were more against masking and Democrats who were for it¹⁶—although there are always exceptions. However, now most Democrats in

political roles have joined their Republican colleagues in no longer wearing masks. Not seeing leaders taking precautions likely plays a role in causing the public not to take precautions, either. Despite the pandemic raging on and December 2023 bringing the second largest COVID surge¹⁷, President Biden didn't mention COVID in his administration's 2023 major accomplishments¹⁸. Additionally, in January of 2024, President Biden tweeted¹⁹, "When I came to office, the pandemic was raging, the economy was reeling. But because of the American people, we've achieved record job creation, historic economic growth, and among the lowest inflation rates of any major economy." Given that December to January was one of the largest COVID waves to date, it looks ironic that he mentioned that the pandemic was raging when he took office because it was also raging at the time of the tweet.

In the spring of 2023, the World Health Organization chief declared an end to COVID as a global health emergency²⁰. Since then, many people have stopped taking any COVID precautions and consider the pandemic a thing of the past. However, according to wastewater data, between December of 2023 and January of 2024, the second biggest wave of the pandemic¹⁷ took place, notably after the pandemic was considered over. Furthermore, there was largely silence from the government; no mask mandates were instated, and many hospitals didn't even require healthcare providers to wear masks despite the surge of COVID cases.

In September 2021, well into the COVID vaccine era, when asked when the pandemic would be under control, Dr. Anthony Fauci said²¹, "In a country of our size, you can't be hanging around and having 100,000 infections a day. You've got to get well below 10,000 before you start feeling comfortable." In the height of the January 2024 surge, approximately 2 million people were getting infected each day²².

It all seems rather short-sighted to continue the plan that is letting people get infected over and over again. COVID has been known to be a mass disabling event; even mild infections are causing severe long-term damage. The former White House coronavirus response coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx explained that COVID is very different from the flu and that it has impacted all parts of the human body, including mitochondria, clots, neurological symptoms, and more.

Dr. Birx said²³, "The reason the comparison to HIV is important is because HIV was also asymptomatic; you couldn't see the virus through symptoms because people were infected for 7, 8, 9 years before they developed symptoms. But HIV quietly destroyed our immune system, and we learned a lot about immunology from HIV, and it's changed completely our cancer therapy. We're learning now about mitochondria and viral impact and brain fog and the changes in our neurons and the cells that nourish our neurons that really allow us to think and move. And we are learning that because of what Long COVID has done. There's two sides of this coin every time, **there is a lot of destruction that mild and moderate COVID can do that is unseen just like HIV** was destroying our immune system. What came out of that was brilliant science that changed how we treated HIV. If you're diagnosed today, you can live a very normal lifespan; people not only survive but thrive. We need to get to the place where we've done the research so that people with Long COVID can not only survive but thrive."

In the meantime, there is no proven cure for Long COVID, and with repeat infections and a distinct lack of public health, the workforce will likely continue to see an increase in disabled workers or people who are unable to work due to their disability. You'd think that for a society driven so heavily by profit, there

would be more focus placed on mitigations, even just to keep workers healthy and able to make a profit. Especially given that more than 2 million people²⁴ have become disabled since 2020. However, instead, the Census Bureau has plans²⁵ to change its questions in a way that would cut the amount of people considered "disabled" by nearly half. This could mean huge cuts to state and federal disability programs. The ongoing pandemic has disabled millions, and the solution hasn't been support, public health, or mitigations. Instead, it is to make it harder for disabled people to survive.

It's a bleak picture, but it's also reality—a reality both sides of the political aisle would rather sweep under the rug and ignore. It's easy to put your head in the proverbial sand, to be unaware, or pretend to be anyway. It's also easy to let the injustice of it all swallow you whole. However, neither is the solution—the best and, dare I say, only action here is to call out the injustice when we see it and work, even in small ways, to make the world a better and safer place for everyone.

Disaster Capitalism and COVID, 1/14/2024, research writing by Rebecca VanderKooi (she/they)

Article Sources

- 1-https://www.oed.com/dictionary/disaster-capitalism_n?tl=true
- 2-<https://www.versobooks.com/products/127-disaster-capitalism>
- 3-<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/06/naomi-klein-how-power-profits-from-disaster>
- 4-<https://thepublicarchive.com/?p=5110>
- 5-https://s28.q4cdn.com/781576035/files/doc_financials/2022/q1/PFE-USQ_Transcript_2022-05-03_v2.pdf
- 6- https://twitter.com/NateB_Panic/status/1742980516759101473
- 7-<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html>
- 8-<https://www.cdc.gov/training/quicklearns/biosafety/#:~:text=BSL%2D3,the%20inhalation%20route%20of%20exposure>
- 9-<https://www.unmc.edu/healthsecurity/transmission/2023/07/25/long-covid-persists-as-a-mass-disabling-event/>
- 10-<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/survey-18-million-americans-say-they-have-long-covid>
- 11-<https://www.unmc.edu/healthsecurity/transmission/2023/12/27/every-covid-infection-increases-your-risk-of-long-covid-studywarns/#:~:text=Their%20data%20demonstrates%20that%20on,than%20two%2C%20the%20researchers%20explain>
- 12-<https://news.delta.com/sites/default/files/2021-12/delta-letter-to-cdc-december-21-2021.pdf>
- 13-<https://www.npr.org/2021/12/29/1068731487/delta-ceo-asks-cdc-to-cut-quarantine>
- 14-<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-downplaying-virus-mocked-wearing-masks-months/story?id=73392694>
- 15-<https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/trump-s-trade-war-exacerbated-shortage-medical-equipment-n1170466>
- 16-<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/15/73-democrats-are-wearing-masks-fight-coronavirus-only-59-republicans-are/>
- 17-<https://fortune.com/well/2024/01/05/us-reachest-second-highest-covid-pink-pirola-jn1-omicron-pi-rho/>
- 18-<https://twitter.com/POTUS/status/1741206275055034388>
- 19-<https://twitter.com/POTUS/status/1742947750071705863>
- 20- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367>
- 21-<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/sep/09/anthony-fauci-comments-covid-19-cases-high-control>
- 22-<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-01-04/covid-2024-flu-virus-vaccine>
- 23-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYYt4thaaow>
- 24- <https://twitter.com/MorePerfectUS>
- 25-<https://www.science.org/content/article/how-many-americans-are-disabled-proposed-census-changes-would-greatly-decreasecount>



let's protect each other!!!, 1/16/2023, digital art
(procreate)
by Emmeline Kaiser (they/them)



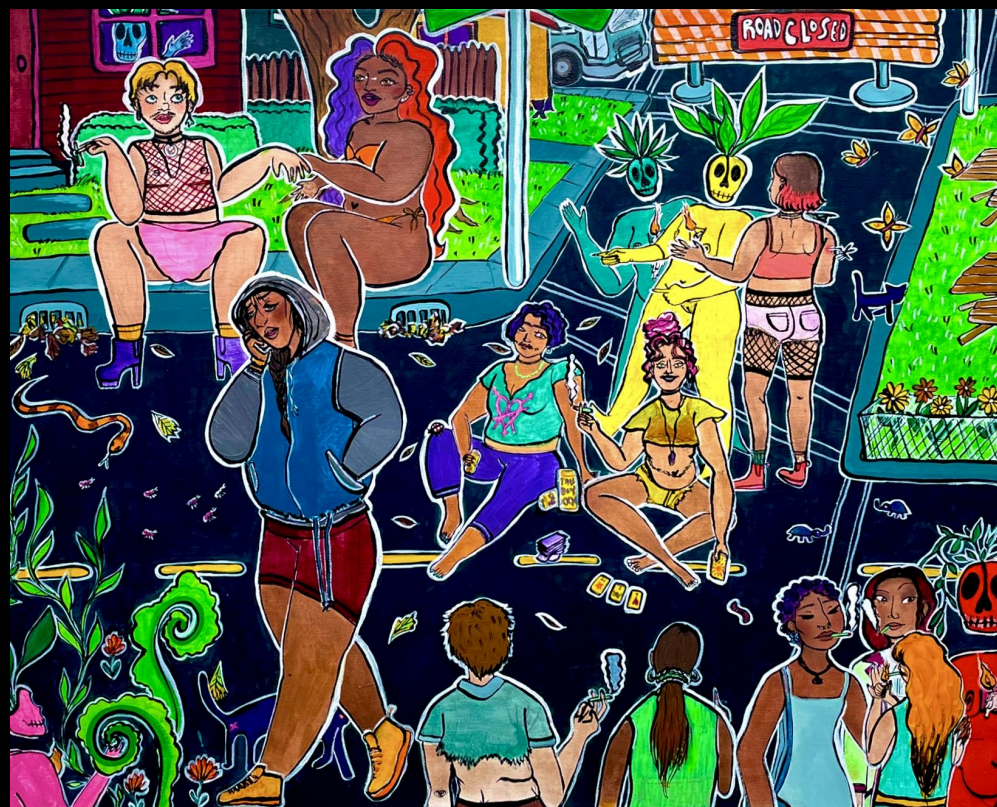
Éclosion, 2023, performance/photography
by Alec Stoddard (he/they)



**UR MASK GOES OVER YOUR NOSE
WEAR A MASK U DICK
NO MASK ON UR FACE U BIG DISGRACE
Upcycled collages by Artie Carden (they/them)**



**The Hermit, June 2023, acrylic on canvas
by Gabriel Loyd (they/them)**



**Block Party, August 2021, acrylic and oils on
canvas
by Gabriel Loyd (they/them)**

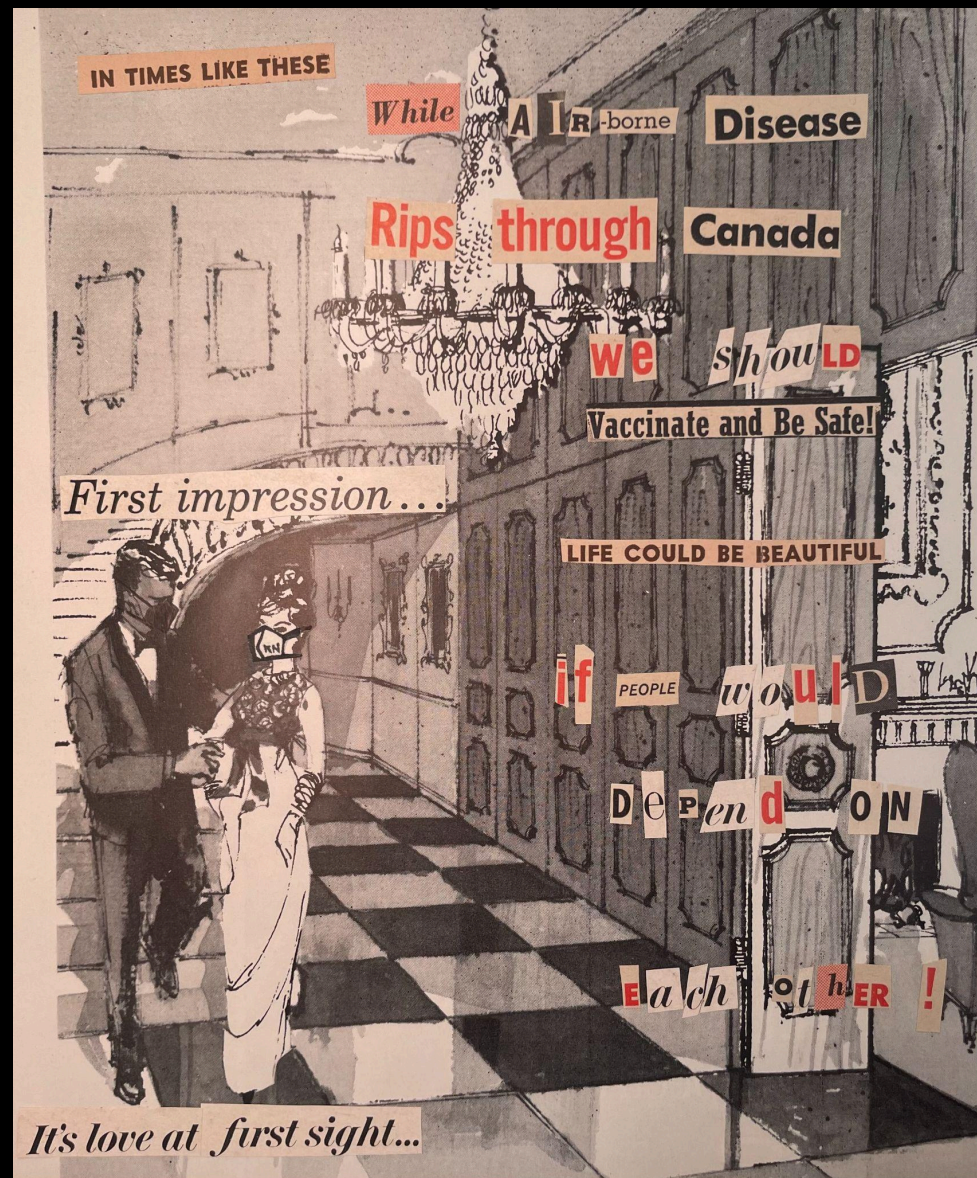


**Wear Thy Mask, May 2023, digital artwork
by Gabriel Loyd (they/them)**

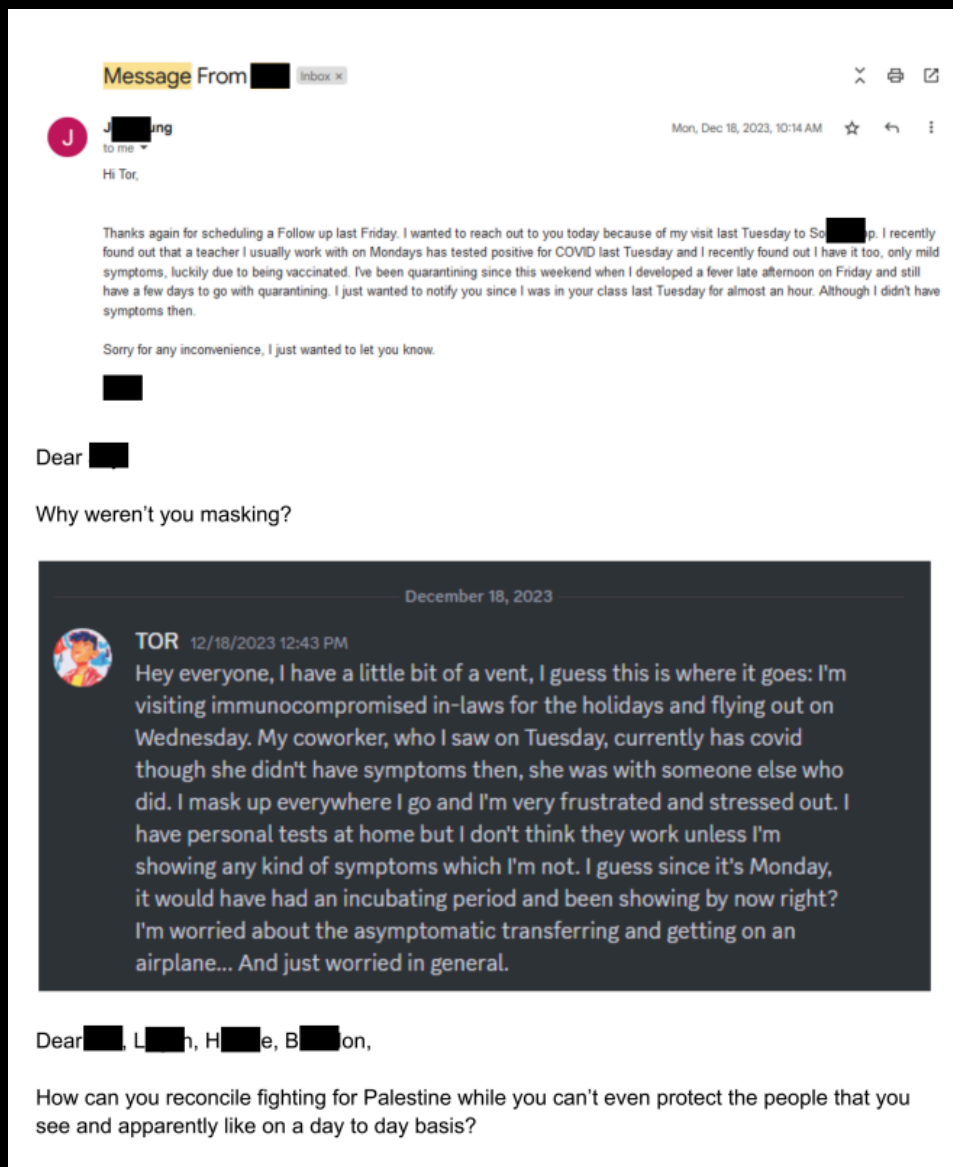
My artwork explores the spaces between solidarity and solitude. In 2019, I painted a figure with a broken skull for a head, and plants growing from the skull, to represent the juxtaposition of feeling dead inside while still knowing that I have a whole life ahead of me that I need to live and grow through. In 2020, I kept painting these figures and named them “Quarantine Babes,” as they are meant to represent the feelings we go through in our covid cautious isolation. I painted Block Party the summer after Covid vaccines became available, when our community was grappling with vax-only propaganda and watching previously masked people unmask en masse. Block Party is meant to capture the anxiety lurking under that celebration. Wear Thy Mask and The Hermit came later, the former as my own attempt at propaganda and the latter as an expression of the same themes carried by that tarot card (more growth, isolation, cocooning if you will).



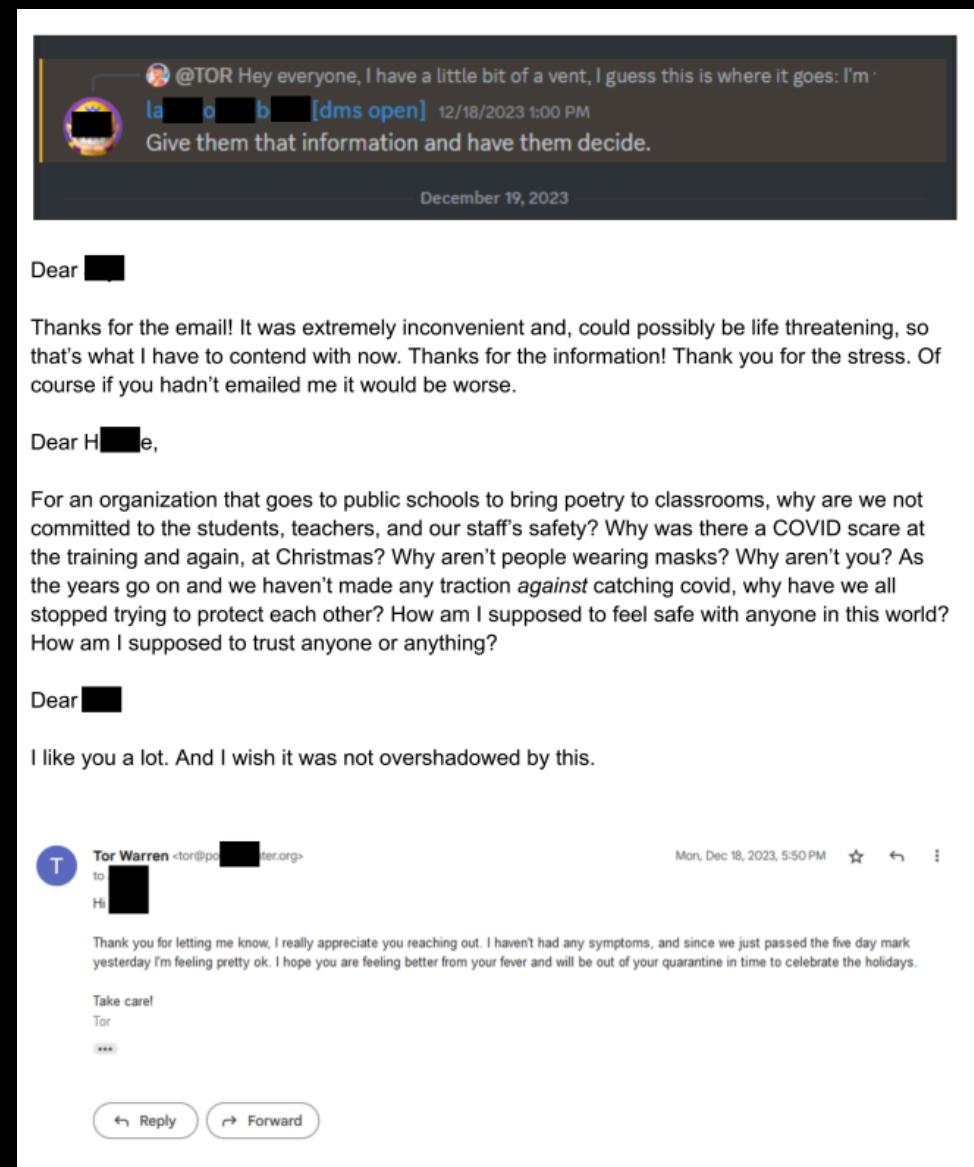
"Conscious Queens," Jan 2024, watercolor, colored pencil, and ink on paper
by Amber (she/her)



Untitled, 2024, Collage
by Cherubim Kuma (they/he)



Collection of Correspondences from December 18 2023 , Dec 2023-Jan 2024, Digital Collage (Email and discord screenshots, Poetry Pieces in Google Doc, Censor Bars in Gimp)



by TOR WAR (HE/HIM)

I THOUGHT YOU'D STILL BE WEARING A MASK RIGHT NOW
I THOUGHT YOU CARED ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORS
I THOUGHT YOU WERE SCARED OF GETTING THIS VIRUS
I THOUGHT "WE KEEP US SAFE" MEANT FROM COVID TOO
I THOUGHT "WE KEEP US SAFE" MEANT DISABLED PEOPLE TOO
I THOUGHT YOU CARED ABOUT YOUR ELDERS
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T TRUST THE GOVERNMENT
I THOUGHT WE WERE IN THIS TOGETHER
I THOUGHT WE COULD TRUST EACH OTHER
I THOUGHT WE COULD EXPERIENCE COMMUNAL CARE
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO BE IN COMMUNITY WITH ME
I THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD HOW TRANSMISSION WORKS
I THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD INTERDEPENDENCE
I THOUGHT I COULD TRUST YOU
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW WHAT THE STAKES WERE
I THOUGHT THE PANDEMIC WAS A PORTAL
I THOUGHT THE PANDEMIC COULD BE OVER BY NOW
I THOUGHT I'D NEVER FEEL THIS LONELY
I THOUGHT I KNEW ALL THE WAYS IN WHICH WE COULD BETRAY EACH OTHER
I THOUGHT YOU HAD "RADICAL POLITICS"
I THOUGHT WE WOULD BE TOGETHER AT THE END(S) OF THE WORLD
I THOUGHT WE COULD SHARE SPACE
I THOUGHT YOU WERE COOL
I THOUGHT YOU WERE MORE THOUGHTFUL THAN THIS
I THOUGHT WE COULD STAY IN EACH OTHERS' PODS
I THOUGHT YOU CARED ABOUT MY SICK FRIENDS
I THOUGHT I KNEW WHAT PARTS OF THIS WOULD BE HARDEST
I THOUGHT WE COULD GRIEVE TOGETHER
I THOUGHT WE HAD SHARED VALUES
I THOUGHT YOU COULD HOLD COMPLEXITY
I THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T GIVE UP
I THOUGHT WE COULD FIGURE THIS OUT TOGETHER
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO BUILD DIFFERENT WORLDS
I THOUGHT SO MANY PEOPLE WOULDN'T HAVE TO DIE
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T WANT "BACK TO NORMAL"
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED EVERYONE TO LIVE
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW HOW MUCH WE NEED EACH OTHER
I THOUGHT I WOULDN'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN THIS TO YOU

**I THOUGHT YOU'D STILL BE WEARING A MASK
RIGHT NOW, 2/4/2023, grief rage poem
by char m. (any pronouns)**



**Safety First (18th January 2024), digital art
by Oliver (he/him)**

Covid Stole My Slut Era

content warning: kink

I never got to have a proper slut era. I had a short slut period in 2018, during which I had several hookups, including a one-night stand, and went to a trans night at the bathhouse and a couple orgies. But that was before and at the very beginning of my medical transition, so I wasn't slutting in the optimal body for me. I had tits and a higher voice, which tended to pull me out of the moment, and I didn't have all this nice body hair or a fat dick yet.

My sluttiness took a long hiatus a few months later, when I met the woman who would become my wife. Our relationship was always polyamorous, but we settled down for a while. By the time we started wanting to date anyone new, the pandemic was going strong. We made a few connections in 2021, once we were fully vaccinated and before the delta variant took over, but they didn't last.

I didn't return to wholehearted sluttiness until mid-2022, shortly after I had phalloplasty. In August 2022, two months post-op, I went to an event called Trans Beach Day, where I happened to see someone flagging red (see: handkerchief code). I cruised him. We chatted a little about our sexual interests and my recent surgery, and he gave me his instagram to connect later.

Amazingly, we took similar covid precautions *and* hit it off. To make another long story short, we fell in love, and through my relationship with him, I learned that my submissive and masochistic (and dominant and sadistic) streaks go a lot deeper than I had previously realized. I'm now proud to be Daddy's collared service sub.

I want a slut era now that I have the body I wanted and know more about what I enjoy. I want to explore BDSM with different kinds of players. And I still want to be vanilla-slutty. I want to suck more trans dick! I want to stick my new phallo dick in all sorts of holes!

The pandemic makes it hard to have sex with new people. Going virtual is an option, theoretically, but virtual sex lacks the sensual, visceral feeling of embodiment that I most want from sex. So here's a list of ways I've tried to have covid-safe(-enough) sex during the pandemic and how those have worked out.

1. Fuck a stranger from an app. First choice would be someone who's good about covid. People like that are somewhat scarce, so prospects are more limited than ever before, and connections can still fall through for all the reasons they ever did. This has worked out for me exactly once.

Could I ask someone to step up their covid game for a while so we could fuck? Maybe, but I haven't been able to bring myself to go through with it. Besides how draining I find it to navigate covid-safety conversations, it's hard to know how long of a lower-exposure period for the other person would be enough to keep me safe. And anyway, could I trust them to do as they said they would?

What if we masked *while* fucking? That would probably be the most reliable, realistic way to make sex with new people covid-safe, but just thinking about the negotiations exhausts me, and I can't help but be sad thinking about how many of my favorite sex things would be off-limits without the use of mouths.

2. Fucking someone I already know. I know a fair share of the local queer trans covid-conscious kinky population, and it's easier to trust people I know. But again, there are the usual issues: some people don't want to fuck *because* we know each other. Sometimes I'm not sure if friends are liking my dating app profile because they're interested or just to say hi. And sometimes people I thought were doing all the right things post unmasked pictures indoors at restaurants.
3. Play parties. There's a local play party that checks vaccine cards and requires masks except if you're eating, drinking, or playing. I've been a few times. I'm immensely grateful to the organizers. I haven't played with anyone new there, but it's fun to watch and be watched, and meaningful to have a safe-enough way to be part of the local scene.
4. Meeting some guy randomly at the beach, as previously mentioned. 10/10, but probably not reproducible.

I called this "Covid Stole My Slut Era" because that's punchy, but it's not really the disease that stole my slut era, it's the pandemic. I've been privileged, cautious, and lucky enough to never have had covid. But the *pandemic* is impossible to avoid. Really, the pandemic stole my slut era. And the pandemic was preventable. The government stole my slut era. Capitalism stole my slut era. "Back to normal" stole my slut era.

And individuals' selfishness and ableism are stealing my slut era. Some people are exposed to covid due to circumstances beyond their control, but sometimes people just choose their own pleasure over vulnerable people's survival.

Earlier in the pandemic, I hoped that more-sensitive rapid tests might someday give me my slut era back. I would have preferred to fuck people who were as covid-cautious as I was, but I would've settled for knowing a partner wasn't infectious. The pandemic had made my world so much smaller already, and I didn't want to make it any smaller than it had to be.

I won't settle anymore. Masking in public spaces is the minimum. If your general lifestyle jeopardizes my existence, you're not safe for me, regardless of whether you're currently infectious. I will keep my world as small as I need to.

If you're still masking, regardless of whether we'd ever fuck, thank you. If you have masked pics on the apps or mention the precautions you're taking, thank you, and that's hot. And if you *really* like what you've read, try me. :)

Covid Stole My Slut Era, 1/22/2024, written prose by Birch Rosen (they/them)

**An essay about how the pandemic is making it hard to
have safe casual sex and the ways I've tried to navigate
it**



**untitled, 1.13.2024, gelly rolls on paper
by yankel akiba (they/them)**

i sit again in a cloth folding chair on my porch.
the crickets sing to me, and i sing with them.
cardinals and finches swoop past, chirping.
my lavender plant is still in bloom,
and my basil plants are flowering.

i'm letting them.

i see my neighbors going to and from
their cars. sometimes i wave.

this is how small my world has become.

will the world ever be closer to safe for me again?
when i go in it, there is breath all around me,
and no way to tell which breath carries virus.
people are breathing it, smiling into it, laughing, gasping.
i wonder how many will become ill,
how much it will spread and how many will become
like me
or worse
chronic fatigue and autonomic dysfunction
the world becoming so small and limiting.

i can't understand why they don't protect themselves.
i can't understand why they won't protect their loved ones.

their eyes fix on me.
i am cast away.

the bees don't care if i'm masking.
they don't talk behind my back about my "anxiety."
the oak tree, towering over me, whispers
as the wind winds its way through the leaves,
but it whispers kindness and connection
rather than pathologization or condescension.

the air is moist. it holds me.
i relax into its embrace.
the spider who winds its web on the marigolds every evening
must be resting for the day.
time ticks on, somehow. days pass.
i keep the company of trees and wonder
how to accept this new small world.
8.16.2023

**untitled, 8.16.2023, poetry
by yankel akiba (they/them)**

who is singing mi chamocha
and dancing around the flailing bodies of the drowning disabled?
who celebrates and sings,
looking obliviously forward,
away from all those who could not stand, could not
breathe, could not walk, could
not dance? all those who were left behind
to die?
who refuses to turn back,
as the distance grows and grows, and who,
as we grow out of sight, will forget we were ever there,
struggling to live?
who declares righteousness and justice
at the very same time as they
neglect and ignore the pleas of those they harm?

you seek forgiveness, but you don't know forgiveness.
forgiveness is not a token you can buy with prayer, nor a consolation from confession.
forgiveness is the fragile smile that only blossoms from repair.
and repair, it is an intricate process that transforms harm and restores connection.
these transforming and restoring first require acknowledgement, and
acknowledgement demands you to quiet and to turn, to listen and witness.
and how can you listen and witness when you are so busy acting free,
distracting yourselves from the shame and blame and grief of your complicity in harm?

teshuva, tefillah, tzedaka.

we are not even at the sea yet. we remain in mitzrayim.
your want for freedom birthed an illusion of liberation
when we are all still in the muck, together.

please, pause. please, look. please, listen. please, witness.
you refuse to know, but we are in this together.
reciprocity is not a transaction, but a declaration
of our interconnectedness.

who will you be without us?

please, pause. please, look. please, listen. please, witness.
you choose: one day, we can sing mi chamocha together, or,
one day, as you descendants travel in your dancing footsteps,
you will be similarly trampled, left behind, forgotten.

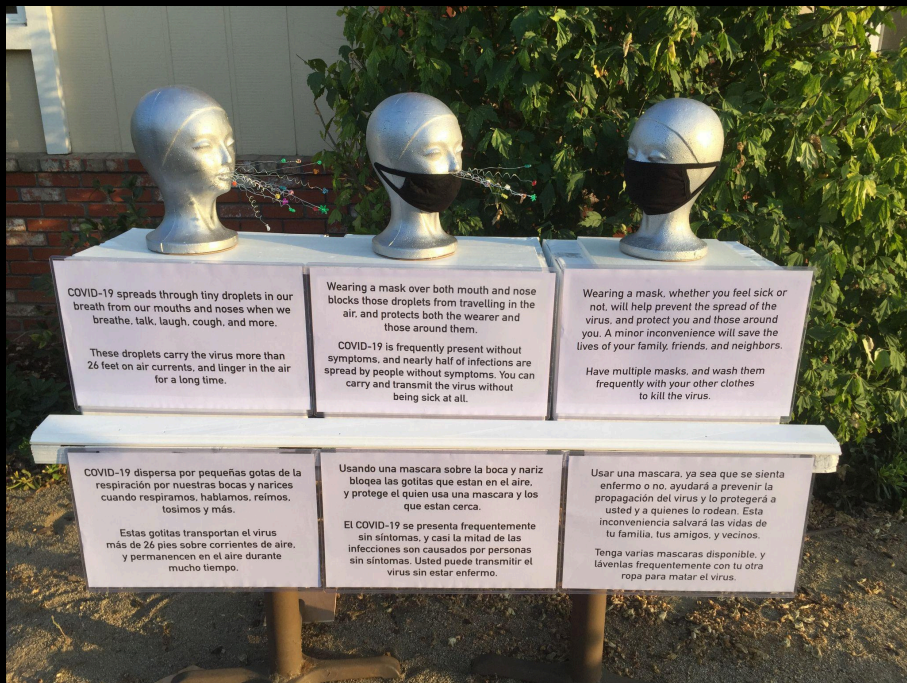
who are we without us?

please, pause. please, look. please, listen. please, witness.
nobody's free until everybody's free.
let's build a world where we can dance, in our own ways,
all of us, together.

10.4.22

**untitled, 10.4.2022, poetry
by yankel akiba (they/them)**





This is my Covid-19 informational art installation and mask station.

I am a Covid-19 survivor. When I got sick in March 2020, before masking restrictions were put into place, it felt like an elephant was sitting on my chest. Even as a person with a chronic illness, I was denied testing due to the shortage of tests. I was bedridden for 5 weeks. Almost 4 years later, I am still not recovered, and have been diagnosed with Long Covid.

In March 2020, I did everything right. I wore a mask, I social-distanced, I stopped going anywhere except work. I still got sick. I still mask with an N-95 mask every time I leave the house. I am one of the few people I know who still does.

Every time people dismiss mask wearing, an essential act to protect vulnerable people, my chest tightens again.

I live in an area that had a high number of cases reported, and a low amount of people masking. I wanted to help my community understand why masks are necessary in fighting the virus in an elegant, simple way that didn't evoke fear, but evoked cooperation. I decided to use my background in design, art, and education to make an informative and educational way to visually inform people why they needed to fully mask in the first place.

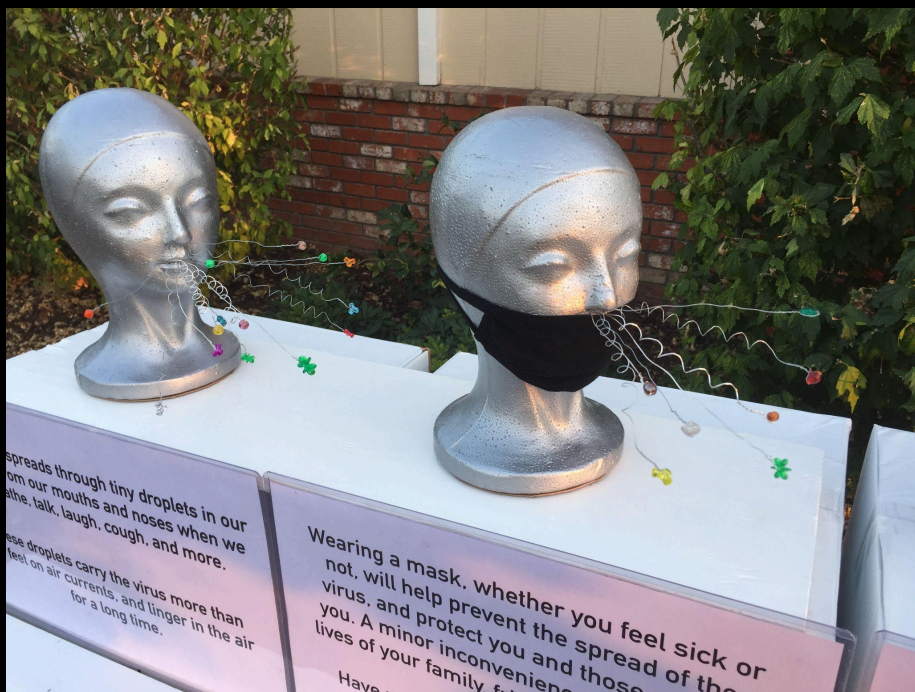
As I recovered from my acute Covid, I worked steadily on this project off and on. I didn't have much energy, but when I did, I worked to make this installation happen. I did my research on the science from multiple sources, and got help to translate it into Spanish so that more people in my area could access it.

I partnered with a seamstress to make masks available as part of this project, so that people in my neighborhood could take a mask for themselves, or someone they knew that needed one. After posting a photo of my installation on a Facebook group, I got additional donations of masks from all over the US.

By the end of my installation, I gave away 243 masks.

I hope that my effort helped at least one person in my community, and helped stop the spread of the virus, so that at least one person did not have to go through what I did.

by ShellMinded (they/them)



the high-Pitched voice of the Radio interviewer
SAYS—"now that the Pandemic is over—"

my mother and i turn to each other SIMULTANEOUSLY
With matching LOOKS. She SWITCHES the
CAR off and the tinny-CRACKLE
voice dies away.

it is mid-february,
2021.

in mid-february,
2021, a few things
are true.

We are still following
cdc guidelines.

my sister is having
Screaming fits
and i am having
anxiety attacks,

both borne of
uncertain stress.

our dog is still alive.

our other dog is still in a shelter.

and only two-fifths of our family have been vaccinated.

in mid-february, 2021, a few things are untrue.

my assurances to myself.

my assurances to myself.

my brother's repeated claims
of being fine.

the life
expectancy
of our
fish.

the radio interviewer's assertion
that the pandemic is over.

as i move further from the
panic of 2020 and anxiety
of 2021, i am asking myself
questions i do not know
how to answer.

how do i trust again?

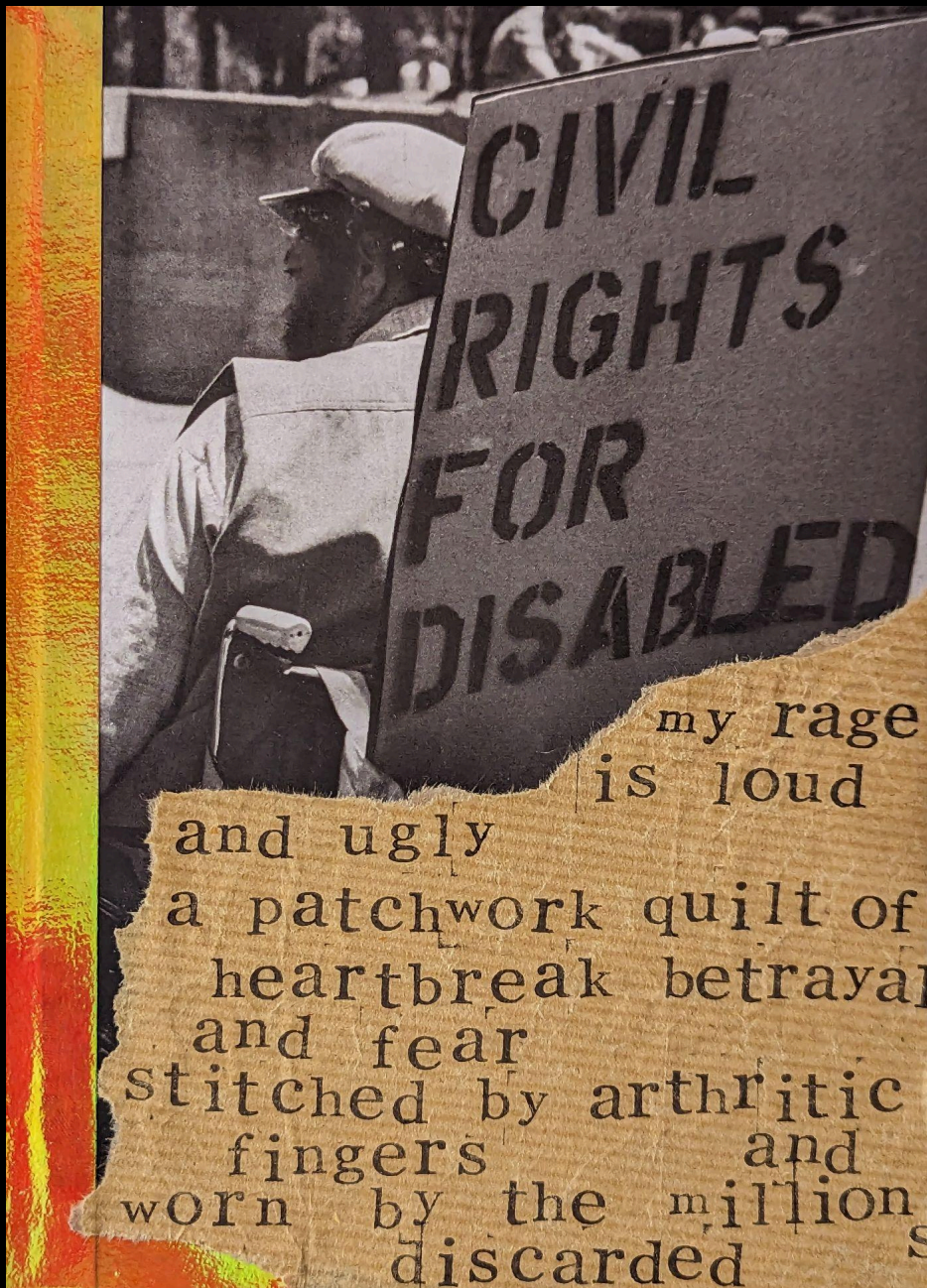
the pandemic created many liars
in the name of convenience.

how does it feel, i am asking myself,
to know that people do not care about you?



**Community Care, 1/26/24, digital art
by punkgarf (he/him)**

**do you know how to tell the beginning from the end, 2023,
digitally illustrated poetry
by Ceilidh (kale) Birkhahn (they/them)**



This piece was made in honor of Judy Heumann shortly after her passing, and was inspired by the dropping of mask mandates in healthcare settings in Oregon and across the US in Spring of 2023, the ending of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, the countless lives that have been and will be impacted and lost because of the severe negligence of our local and federal governments and the capitalistic push to “return to normal”, and the Disabled grief and rage which has fueled our movements since the beginning & will bring about the change we desperately need.

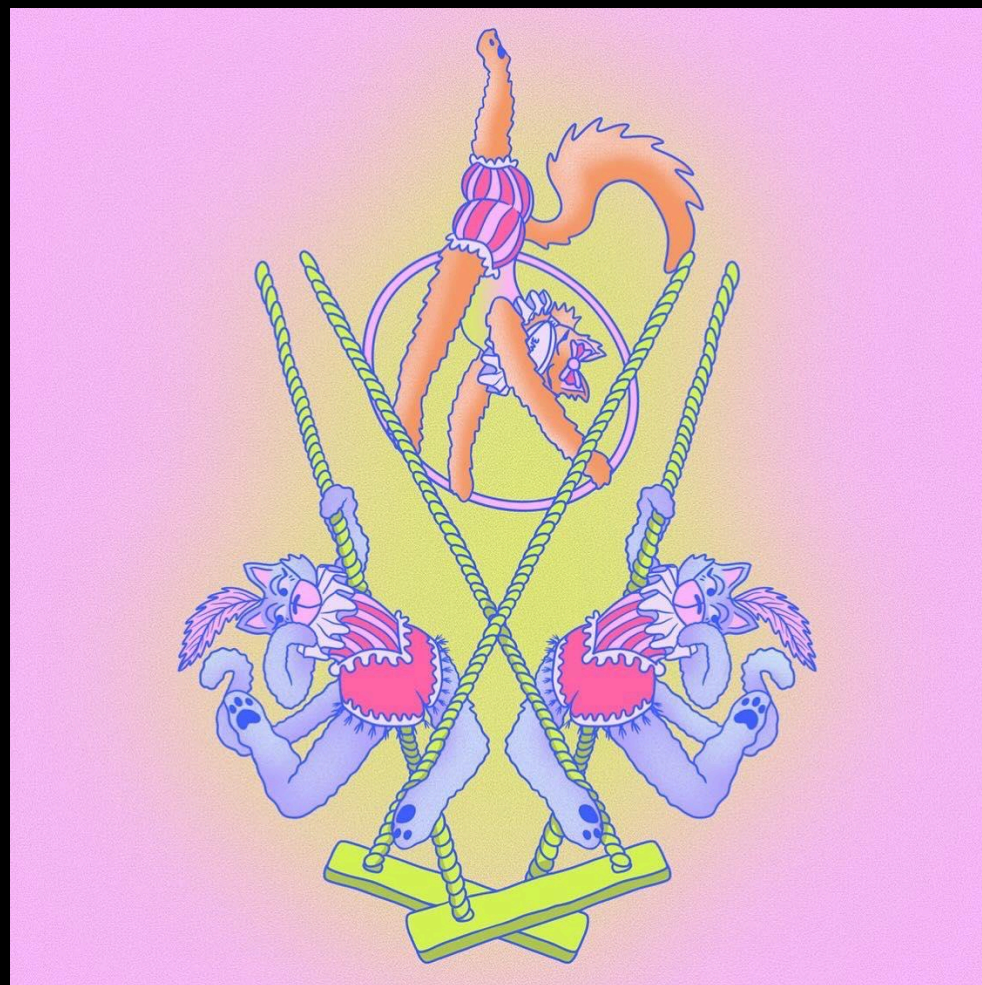
**Untitled, March 2023, multimedia collage
by Ralf (they/them)**



**Sick of Being Strong, Jan 2024 - lino print,
handwritten text, and digital editing
by Megan Fletcher (she/her)**



**Diary Entry, May 13th, 2023, Collage+ink
by E. Caroline Walters (they/them)**



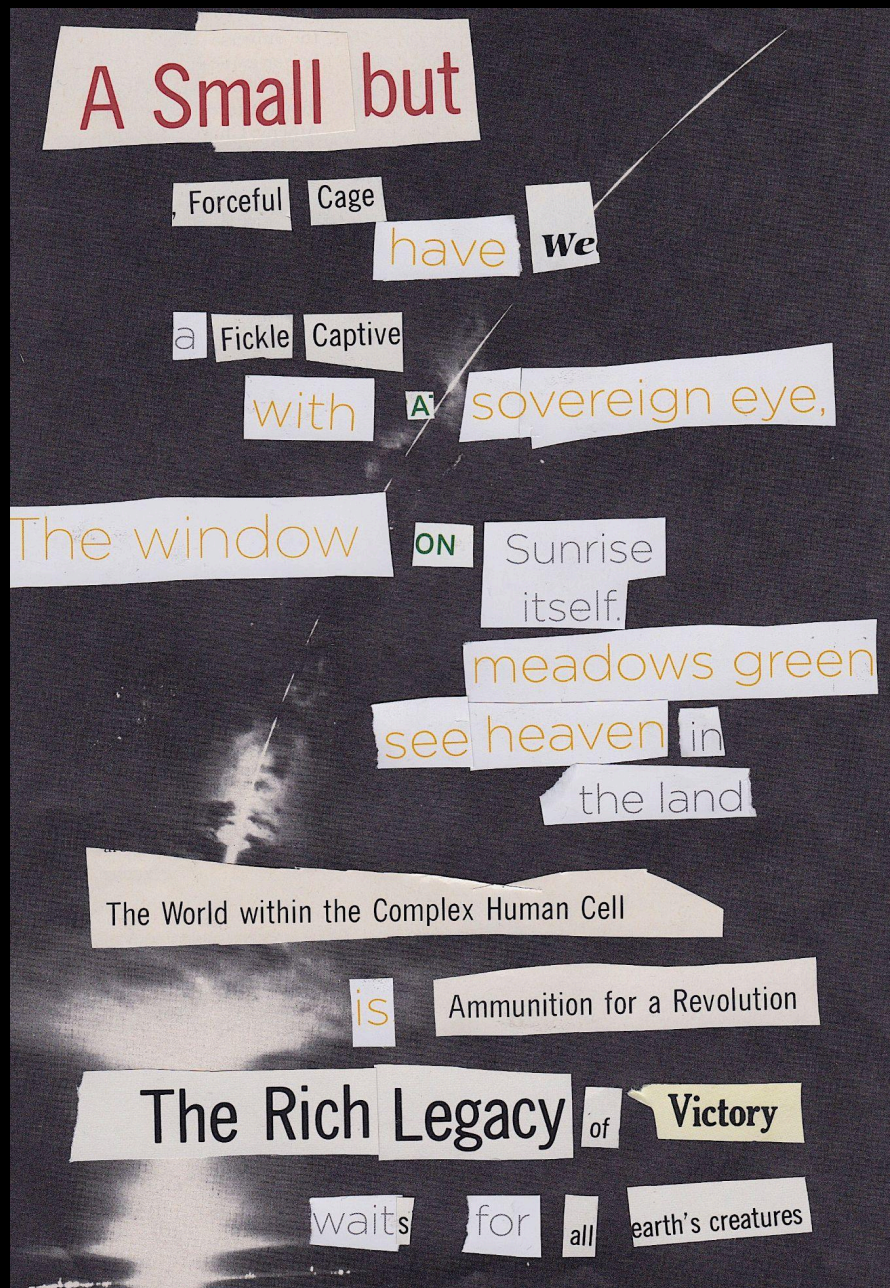
**Masked Aerial Cats, January 2024, digital
illustration
by brie (they/them)**



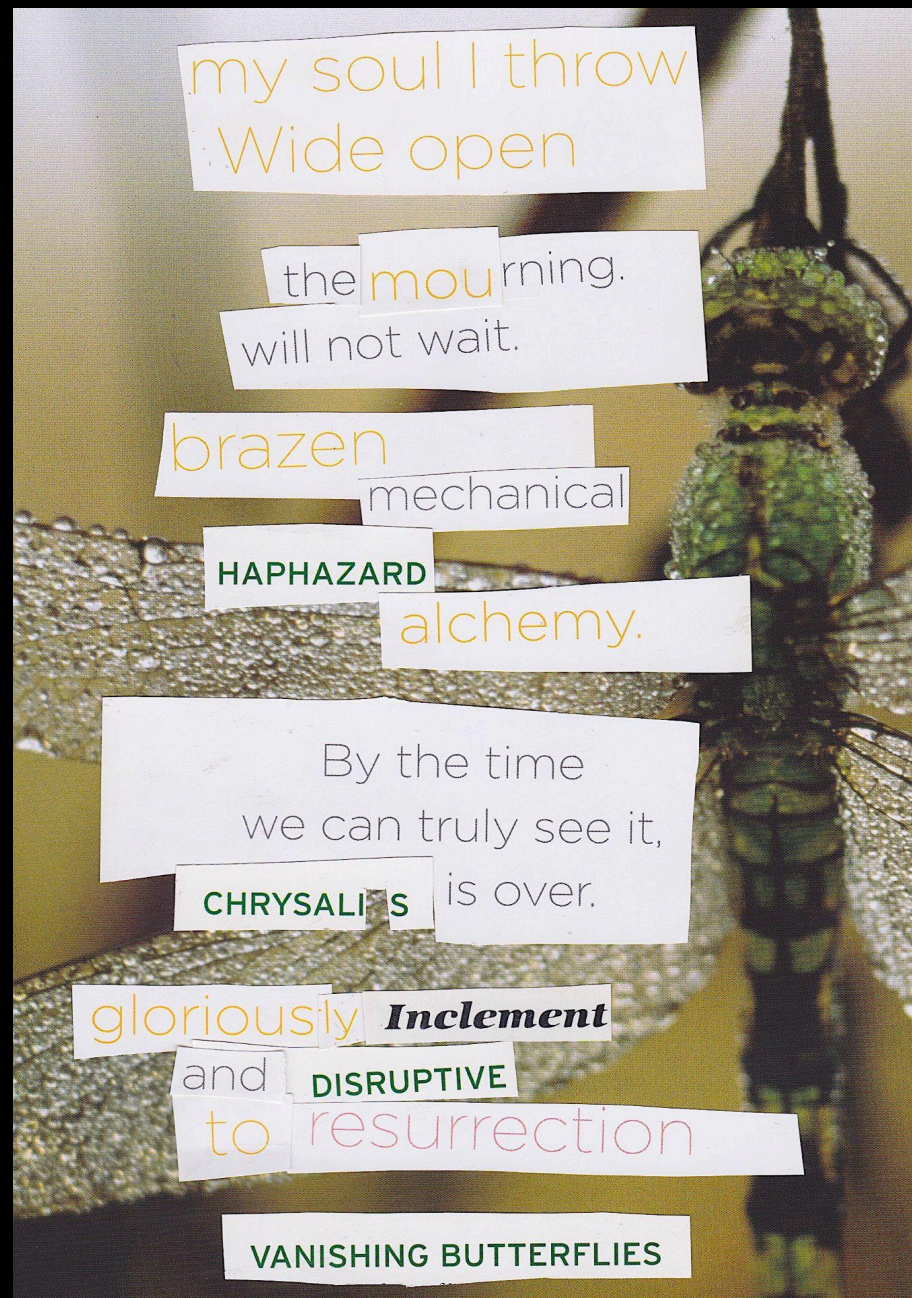
**Masked Aerial Cats, January 2024, digital
illustration
by brie (they/them)**



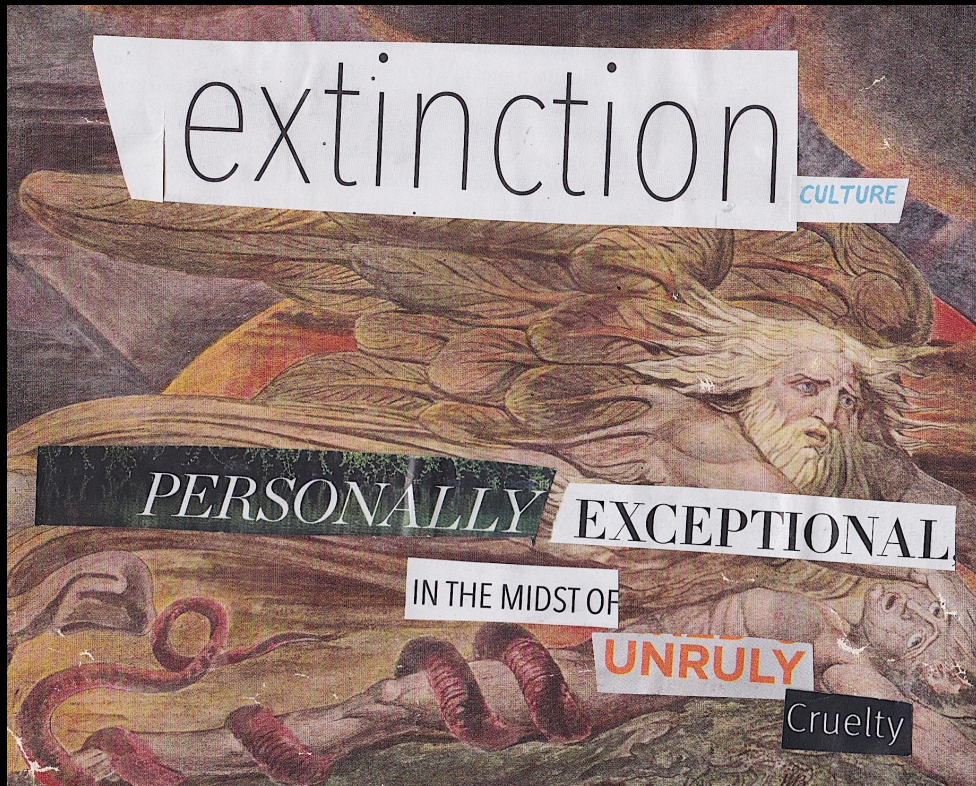
**Masked Aerial Cats, January 2024, digital
illustration
by brie (they/them)**



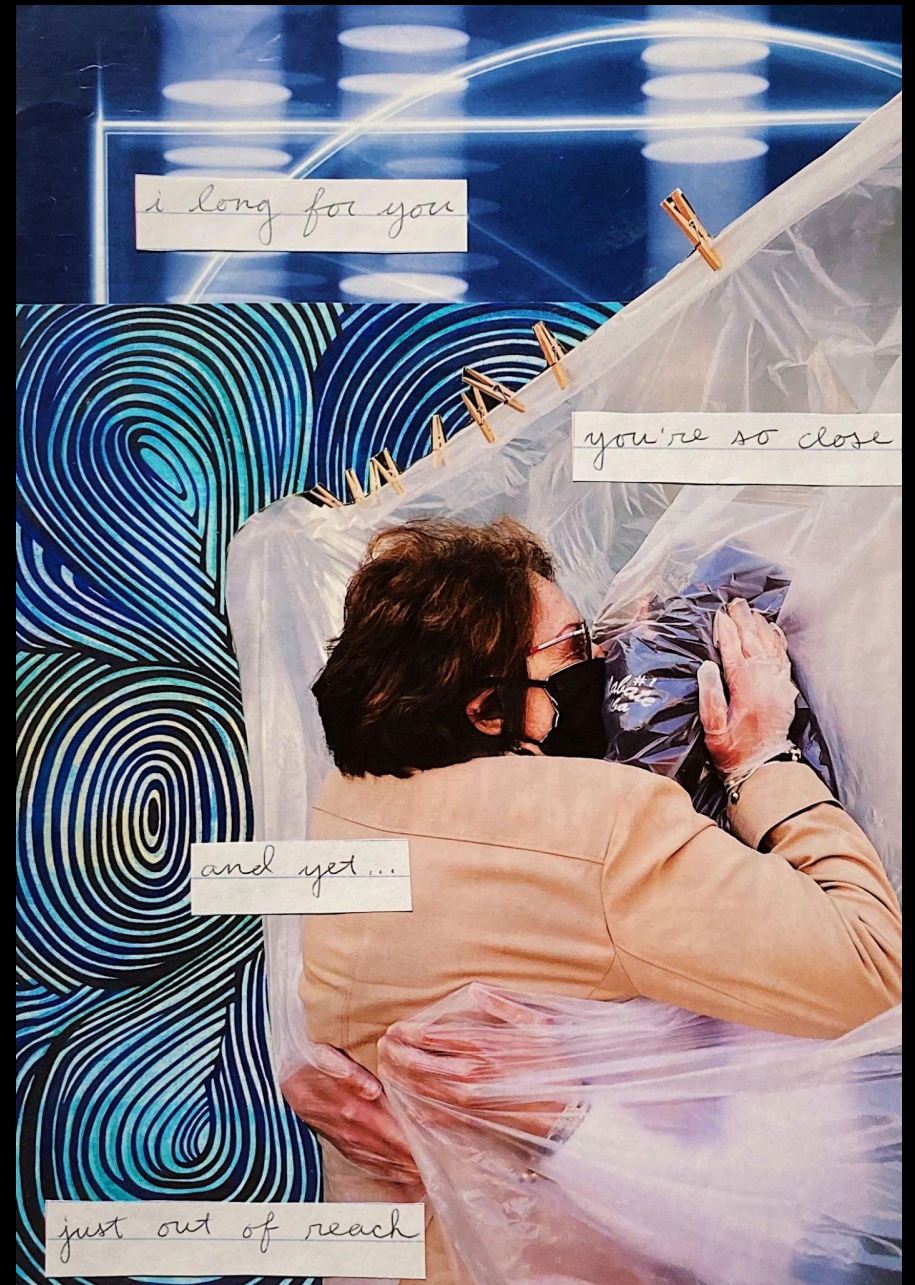
**Green Meadows, 2024, Poetry and Collage
by Derrick Dixon (He/They)**



**Chrysalis, 2024, Poetry and Collage
by Derrick Dixon (He/They)**



**Extinction Culture, 2024, Poetry and Collage
by Derrick Dixon (He/They)**



**i long for you, January 2024, collage
by Krystal (They/Them)**

every time i mask

i'm thinking about you

and the future

that i want to

create

for us



**thinking of the future, 1/19/24, Scan+text
by maira (they/them)**



**True Besties Masks Up!!, 2024, digital art
by CUPOYO (they/she)**

swathes

my biggest emotion is called miscellaneous
it lies somewhere between gut wrenching and boredom
sometimes a restless terror
sometimes not like anything at all
just a wideness
a wideness that is too much for the current moment
sometimes it swims up my throat after forcing its way through all my capillaries
stares around with big hurt eyes
sometimes miscellaneous can only be sorted through poetry
endless naming ceremonies

since entering a territory called pandemic
waves are hollowed out with new meaning
miscellaneous roars
a grief that rips through me and tears my hatred to shreds
a huge pile grows
i am left sorting through it
choosing between self respect and friendship
quiet sobs, on my knees, asking what are we doing?
what are we doing here

i could cry about how life isn't just
obvious

solidarity

friendship

and other flowers and simple equations
instead it is swathes
swathes and swathes and swathes
and swathes
just endless swathes
a roaming kind of misery
and other miscellaneous pains and actions

true, there may be occasional breaths of something fresh
flashes of freddy mercury
and other victorious arms raised to the sky
an aliveness that gets me daydreaming
about how an 80s light jean and tank top is just enough to make me want to die and
to start actually living
but on ordinary days, these days, it is just swathes

i want to be part of something but i also want to be invisible
by that i mean
i don't want to be sick anymore
or i want us all to be
once and for all
let's be done with it
i want us all to know this powerlessness and rage

**swathes, December 2022, poem
by Kit Blamire (they/them)**



**Fashionable Resistance, December 2023, original
DTF transfer to sweatshirt
by Liz Fitzgerald (they/them)**



**Masked Magick, 2/7/21, DSLR Photography
by Ahleigh (They/Them)**



This is the product of a collaborative process involving the model (G Loyd - @queer.witch), the wing maker (Eva Spencer - @cheetah_fae), Mount Tabor park, and me - the photographer. We aimed to capture Loyd's essence and highlight it with the magic of a PNW forest. Loyd chose their clothing, makeup, and location - lit candles in the trees, read tarot cards, spun soul into laughter. Eva crafted the wings with her and Loyd's musings. The sun and the clouds and the trees brought the ambiance. I simply capture the moments as I am able.

Making Hope

By the time you read this, it will be four years since so many of us became “the vulnerable” in the face of a virus that would change everything and nothing at all. Now, here in the aftertimes, when denial, dismissal, and unnecessary death and disablement have become the background of everything everywhere and the foreground of our now-even-more-limited lives, hope is hard to cleave to. It is hard to make, the furnaces of so many of our hearts grown cold.

And yet.

And yet, even amidst this catastrophe layered over the bedrock of so many other catastrophes, there is also this:

- Every mask a love letter. A sign held up that says, “I’m not pretending. I care about our future, about the lives of people others have decided are disposable, about myself, about you. We matter. Always.”
- The strength of character it takes to fight against the flow of this great forgetting, this widespread willingness to sacrifice others and the future for convenience and comfort, a parody of “normalcy” whatever that means. The cost is so high, to make your body a public altar of refusal, a visible symbol of care and caution, of commitment to leaving no one behind and of not abandoning ourselves or each other. And still we do it.
- The solidarity. A conversation at the check out: “Thank you for being masked. As someone high risk it means a lot to me.” Them responding, “Oh yeah for sure. I’m also immunocompromised so...” (a look around at the maskless people watching us). The simple eye contact and nod that says “I see you. I wish things were different but here we are. Good luck. Be safe.” The rare all-masked space where your body can breathe easier - the joy of belonging, finally, for this moment at least. Smiles you can’t see but can feel with your whole body. Precious missives from this parallel otherworld we inhabit: “You’re not alone. You made me feel less alone. Thank you for speaking out. I just needed to tell someone who would understand. I knew you’d understand.”
- The new economy of information exchange. So many of us stepping wholeheartedly into the role of citizen scientist, reading the studies, walking each other through the new evidence about transmission, impact, prevention, recovery. Filling the wide chasm left by the devastating if unsurprising failure of public health. Many of us sick and struggling but together a network of education and expertise spanning the globe, fierce knowledge-tenders unstoppable in the face of stigma and gaslighting. And the professional researchers who still toil endlessly despite dwindling resources and ever-present backlash – who work to find preventatives, treatments, understanding, who arm us with the tools we use to fight back.
- The exhaustion yes, but also the victories of self-advocacy and advocacy for others, when they happen. The courage it takes to say, “I need you to put on a mask” or to call ahead and name ourselves high-risk or “cautious”. The moments when it is met with compassion rather than derision – the rare class or event that steps up and requires masks, the practitioner who seats you next to the air filter, the doctor’s office that says come in first thing in the morning or you can wait outside and we’ll call when we’re ready for you.
- New friendships forged in the fires of this new/old world. The recognition of kindredness in the face of shared experiences of relentless violence. The old friendships that survived the strain of these years - so many didn’t and this is a deep and endless grief tempered only by those that became stronger. The family member or friend who asks “how can I see you in a way that is safe enough?” or makes ways to involve you virtually in their lives, or who makes it easy to ask for precautions and simply cooperates, as if it’s no big deal. But it is. It really really is, to those of us grown so used to judgment or resistance.
- The slow down, the divestment from the endless cycles of consumption and distraction. The turning away from the grasping and grind, towards the things that truly matter. The isolation yes, but also the clarity - like waking up after a fever dream into something more akin to truth. The veil pulled back, just a little bit more.
- The connections made between struggles. Ableism, racism, capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, the neverending war on the poor. The people trying to survive eugenics speaking out against genocide from the streets, from their beds. Free Palestine. Permanent ceasefire now. End the occupation.
- The genius pointed in the direction of care and connection. The creativity it takes not only to survive but to make a life here, amidst the brutality of these times. The online games and gatherings, the time spent outdoors in cleaner air, the visits that have become so precious – nothing taken for granted. The meals left on someone’s doorstep or sent through delivery, the mutual aid of many kinds, the checking in on one another, the strategizing before medical appointments, the underground acts of community. The elderly neighbour driven to vaccine appointments, his gratitude beaming through and around his n95.

This. This is hope. This is how we make it, together.

**Making Hope, Written Prose
by Danielle Gauld (she/her)**

Listen here: <http://bit.ly/3qEbDTr>

SICK, SEXY & ALIVE

listen here: <http://bit.ly/3qEbDTr>

Doc office hold music stuck in my head
Dietary restrictions like not eating bread
Lifting the mandates got us seein' red
Eugenics don't care if my people drop dead

Your ignorance based in the news you've been fed
We're all connected despite what they said
6 feet ain't shit cos your cough is widespread
Catch it once, catch it twice, or 3 times go ahead
You'll be like us, sick and tired in bed
We will bear witness to tears that you shed

CHORUS

We got that hold music
But that won't hold us back
Fear follows like a grim reaper
But I got my ill clan, validating crip fam
We got that bold spirit
Even in a flare attack
Got KN95 fashion
Sick, sexy, and alive, hanging for our dear lives

Draining my energy I gotta ask
Why's it so hard to just have my back?
Government tells you it's just like the flu:
"You'll kick it's ass like youre doing kung fu"
Then please tell me why, my friends who don't mask
Is it putting the young and abled to task
Tired for months in a cognitive slog
Making it hard in this capitalist fog

Blood clots and heart failure
Sick as a dog
That's just a few of symptoms that they've logged
Crowded and indoors, it happens to you
PCR test is now positive too

Shut down in your house inside of your head
Longing to undo the steps that you tread
Origins unknown
Took you to the ground
Paranoia that surrounds
Another symptom down, man!

Shut down in your house inside of your head
Longing to undo the steps that you tread
Origins unknown, took you to the ground
Paranoia that surrounds, lets take the system
down, man!

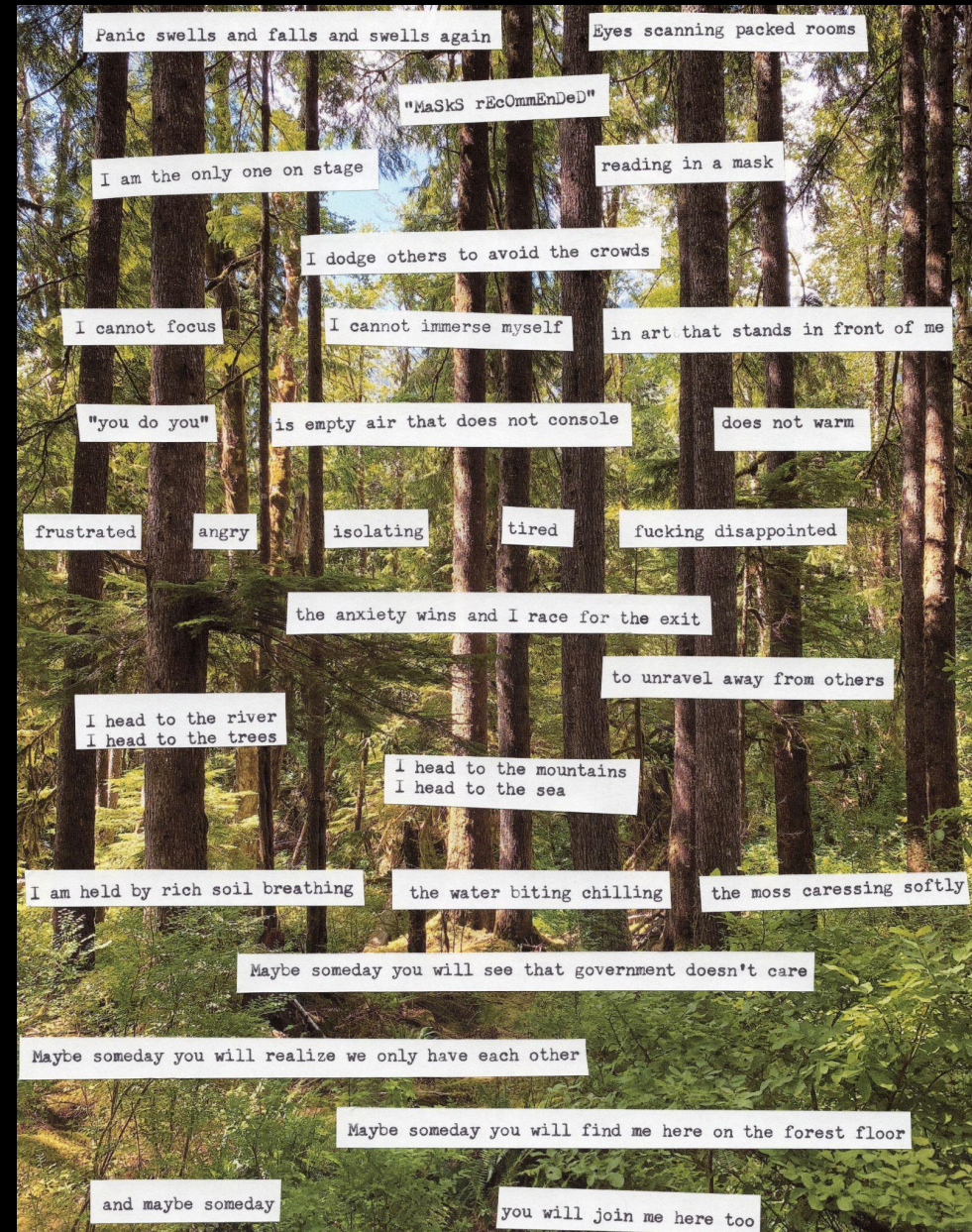
CHORUS 2

Now you got that hold music
Crank that elevator track
Anxiety, we breathe with it
You can join our ill clan, validating crip fam

Now you got that tired spirit
But you know we got your back
Got KF94's flashin'
Sick, sexy and alive, hanging for our dear lives

We got that bold spirit
Even when we're being attacked
Got KN95 fashion
Sick, sexy and alive, hanging for our dear lives

**Sick, Sexy & Alive, Original Song
by Liz Fitzgerald (They/Them)**



**Join Me, January 2024, mixed media
by Tiana Marie (They/them)**



Liberation for All, January 14th 2024, Clip Studio Paint
by Chandrapups (They/Them) [Plural]



Call For Freedom, January 5th 2024, CLIP Studio Paint
by Chandrapups (They/Them) [Plural]

**On becoming chronically ill, November 2023, poem
by SJ Malinske (They/She)**



“let me know when you get better”
i’m still falling from that place

back first, arched
arms up, still reaching

the callousness of abandonment
disguised as a nicety

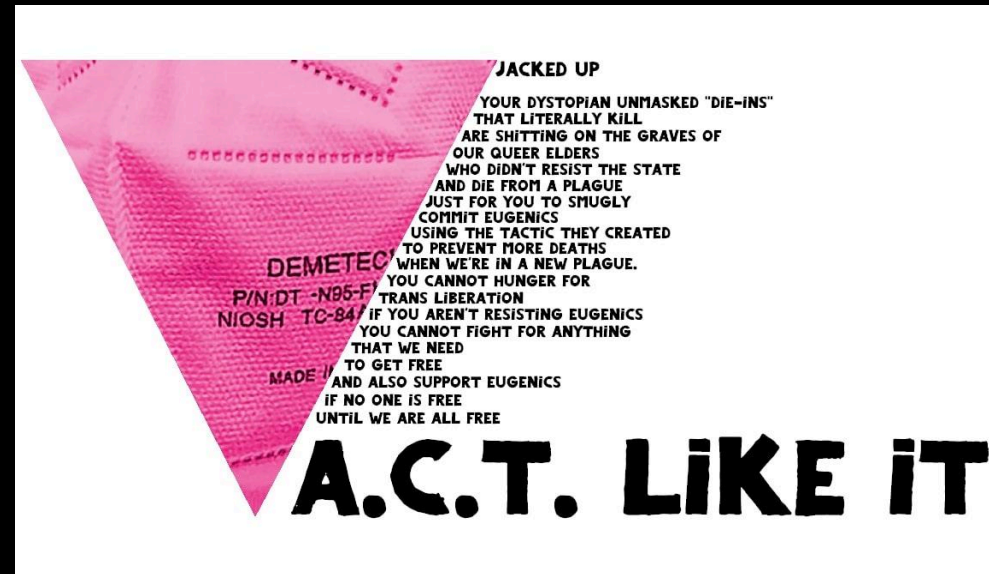


ever further from the busy
ever further from the herd

i’ll hit the ground eventually
maybe i’ll call you then

**I wrote this as I was processing my grief about the ways
my friendships and relationships radically shifted when
I became chronically ill during this ongoing and largely
ignored mass disabling event**

**Jacked Up, 2024/01/31, digital art/poetry
by Nai (They/Them)**



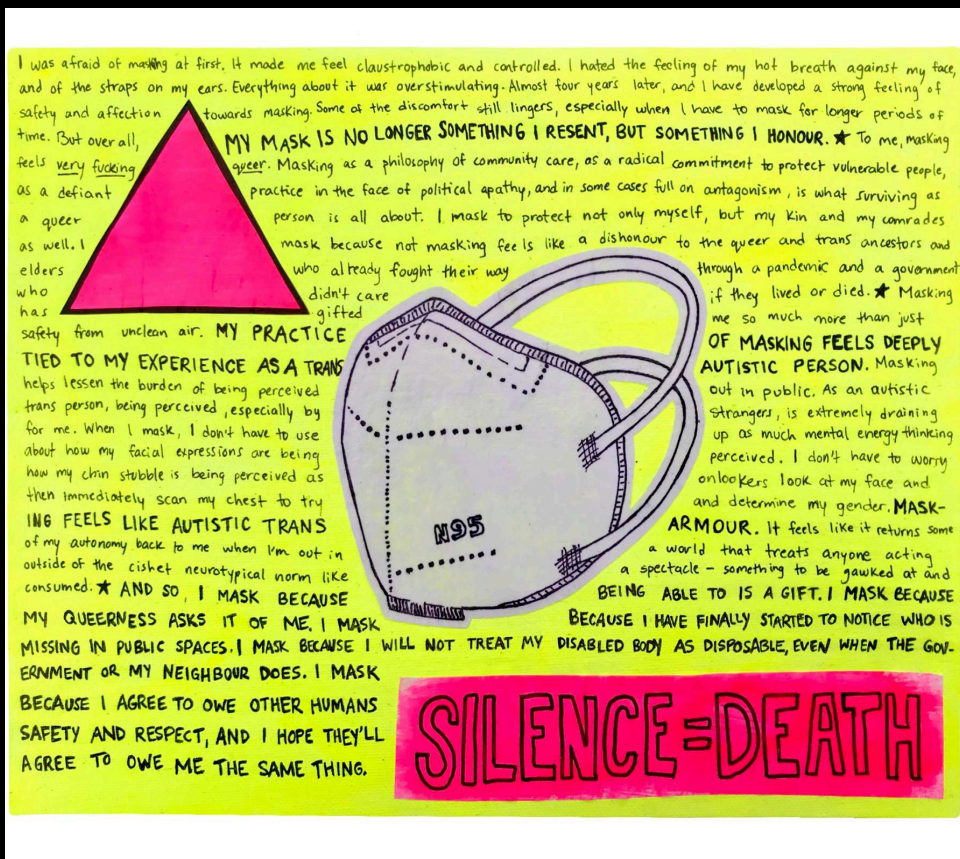
**I wrote/made this because I was angry about the trend
of "die-ins" featuring all (or mostly) unmasked people,
although I was especially thinking of one that happened
in the UK a while ago where people were protesting
something related to trans issues, few were masked,
and it was very crowded with very little space for each
person. I wanted to evoke the *true* spirit of ACT
UP—which still exists and holds masked protests—hence
the pink N95 mask triangle. I think if we were to really
make noise the way they did, we might be able to
achieve the kinds of things they did, but with COVID-19
and LC. Instead, we have...this.**



Solidarity Keeps Us Safe, 2023, linocut, quilt, digital collage
by Grace Rountree (She/They)



Another World Is Possible, 2024, linocut
by Grace Rountree (She/They)



**Masking feels like autistic trans armour, Jan 2024,
Paint, marker, and pasted paper on canvas.
by Mylo Pepper (They/Them)**



**All life is sacred, 1/31/24, digital art
by Alejandra Diemecke (She/Her)**

Ethics Survey

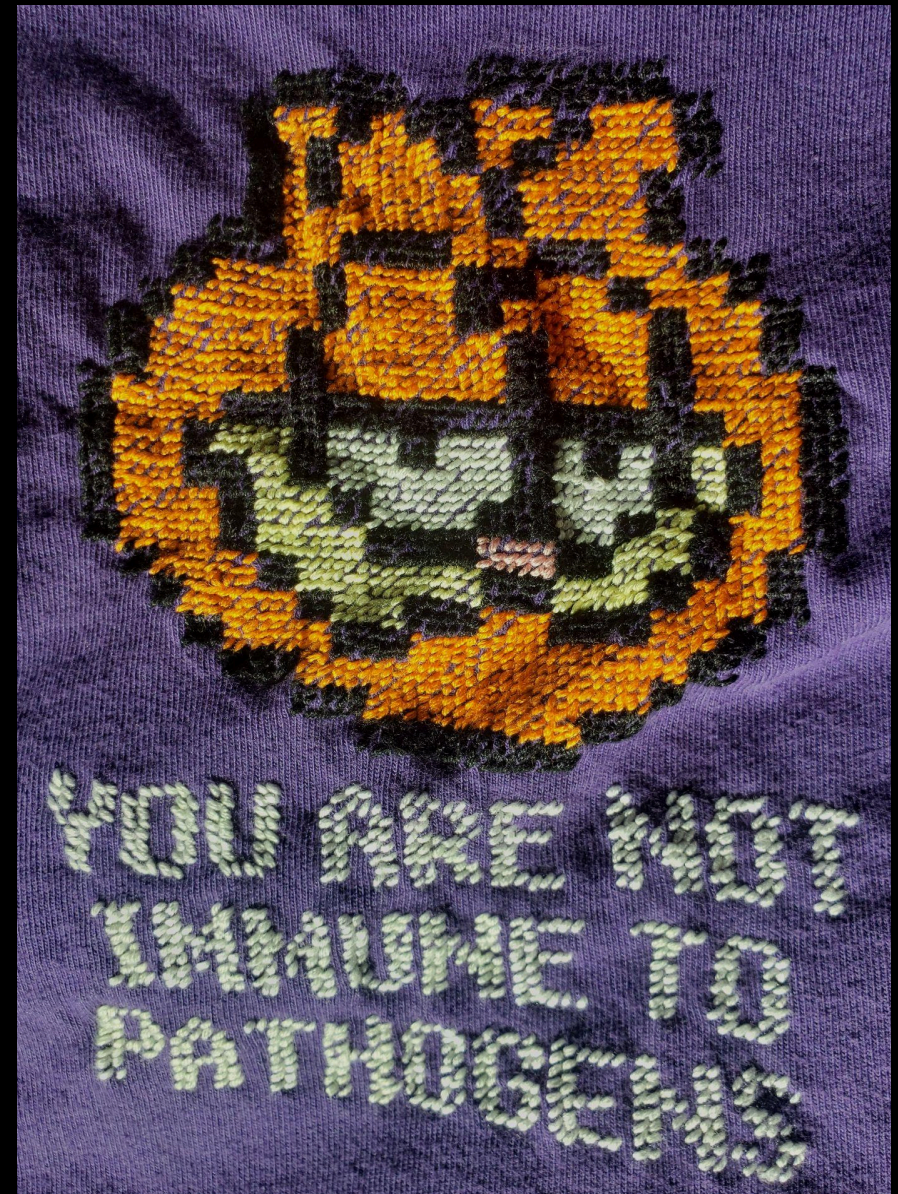
These are questions about hypothetical conflicts between your ethical values and disruptions to your daily living.

All questions are optional, please only answer questions you are comfortable answering.

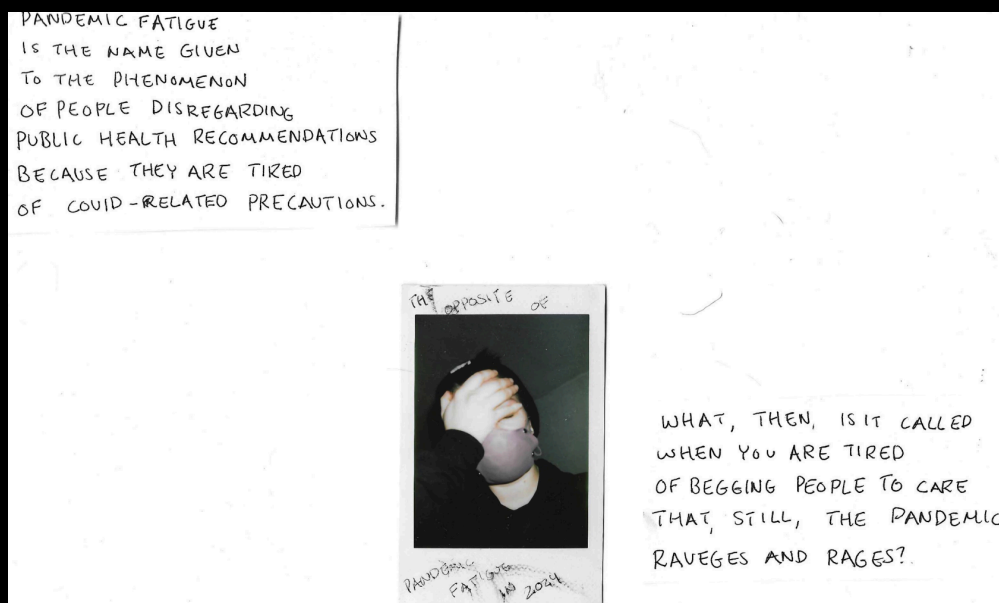
1. "In order to protect the life of someone I love, I would sacrifice..."

- ☐ my time and energy
- ☐ my resources
- ☐ my autonomy
- ☐ my plans or goals for the future
- ☐ being perceived as impartial/fair
- ☐ being part of a community
- ☐ relationships with my friends and family
- ☐ eating indoors at restaurants
- ☐ having my face out at the grocery store
- ☐ none of the above

**Ethics Quiz, 1/31/2024, poem
by Willow Vaughan (She/Her)**



**You are not immune to pathogens, January 30, 2024
cross stitch
by Lucio (He/Him)**

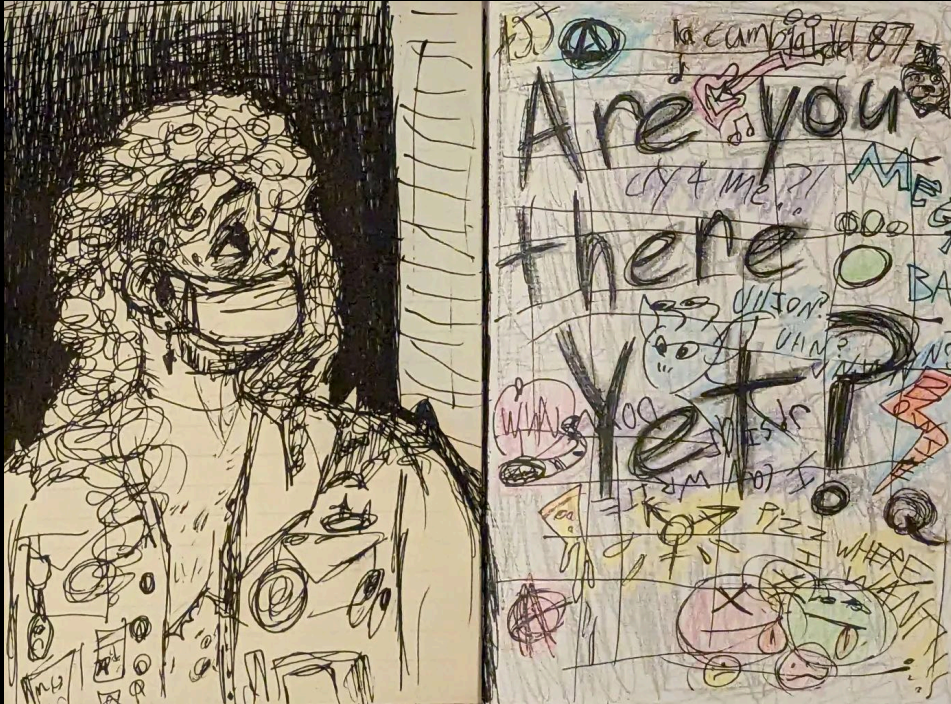


**The Opposite of Pandemic Fatigue, photo and handwritten collage
by Zoë Newmarco (They/She)**



**Queers protecting queers, paper collage
by Zoë Newmarco (They/She)**

All of the words on the outside border of this piece are things people have said to me in response to seeing my mask, or me declining to take off my mask. The words in the middle are words my (still COVIDing) friends and I have shared with each other to remind each other that we keep each other as safe as we can.



**Small Breather At An Empty Stop; 2023, gel pen &
crayon on notebook paper
by SnackGnatRat (He/It/They)**

**This piece does not encourage wearing a mask wrong,
see artist statement for more details!**

the world — only grows
yet I'm surrounded by everyone and
they crowd and I feel
yet you — only further

**Despite it all,
I remained
COVID-free.**

Sicker,
their bare faces.
Compromised air,
elude me.

**Refusal, 12/29/23, poem
by SnackGnatRat (He/It/They)**

**Despite it all,
I won't let myself go
Mask-free.**



**Masking is Flagging, January 2024, digital art
by Amanda Farman (They/She)**



**Mask Stache, 1.25.2024, ink on paper
by Logan Fenner (He/They)**

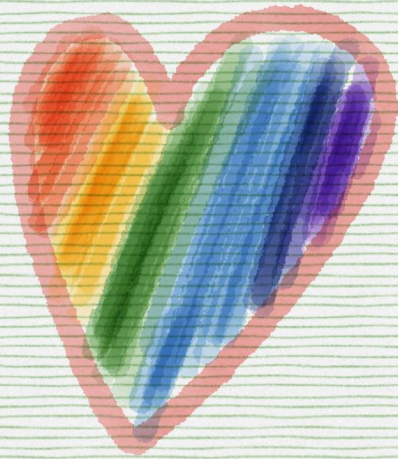


The Love Letter, 2024, linocut print on Kn95



by Alice Lanning (They/Them)

I feel supported



when my community masks

NAT

I <3 Queer Community Care, 1/22/24, Digital
by Nat (She/Her)

Reforming, a Little

I come here, I offer, I ask, I listen, feel. I go to the ocean, that is what I do.

Stormy clouds and I cry until I am empty for now, the quiet after the rain has passed, calm, curious, raw. The sun opens from the sky, gold, silver, pink, purple, yellow, orange, blue, warm curling around my cracked skin.

I have been crushed, shaped into something different, forming again and again, the rain molding me again, the sun brings me forth into this new/old being, this body making from pieces, like rock flowing on lava, heating and cooling.

The loneliness is the crushing, haunting and swirling. Rainbows get made in that space my brain and eyes tell me, light/fire water mixing, colliding with each other, hitting the beach, and splitting the illusion of loneliness in my heart, cracking a smile to match my skin.

My face, that is bare at this beach with no humans. You are all with me, I hold close to my heart cocoon, listing the names of people who believe me, who I believe in.

These heavy clouds rolling and boiling, deep blue, purple, black, alive and calling, meeting me in my crushedness, relating, mirroring, daring, teasing, laughing, thundering, I am alive. Thank you, sky.

**Reforming, a Little, 2023, Poem
by Adrian Peace-Williams (She/They)**

Entering The Retail Space

You smile and stare at me, your mouth hesitant and brief, eyes confused and wondering, you smile and you know it means we are apart from each other. You don't see my smile, and I know it means we are connected.

Smile, show your teeth like fangs dripping in violence, abandonment, death.

Maybe you have dimples, a lipstick on, I can witness these things, feel you choosing with each breath your life over mine, my mothers, my friends. Is your smile worth more than your life?

It's a jeer now, a smear on your beautiful being. You are a gift, why won't you open yourself? We know why.

Your eyes glance, quickly, and turn away. I am a problem, a discomfort, I ask questions with my presence that parts of you are coercing yourself not to answer.

I move past, the air flowing around us, shifting to make space.

Until next time, I dread the need to return, me in my sun kissed dirt hugged clothes.

I bring the soil in; does it remind you of where you came from?

All your smiles, turn, lift up to me, shrink away, I am the only one here. Their smiling teeth grating on me, raking my body. We do not need to be here.

**Entering the Retail Space, 2023, Poem
by Adrian Peace-Williams (She/They)**

Headlights

We can't be expected to use headlights when we drive forever
They're inconvenient and make my eyes hurt
I've been driving for years without them, and I haven't killed anything
Well, I don't know that for sure
I hit a few things in the night, but nobody told me they died
And it doesn't matter that much anyway
They're animals
The chances of me killing an actual human are much lower!
They probably had pre-existing conditions too - I saw one of them limping across the road
I can't be held responsible for that - surely?
And it's not like headlights protect me from danger either
You can't expect me to go out of my way just to make sure someone else doesn't get themselves hit
I'm always responsible when I cross the road
I look both ways
A car would never hit me... would it?

This poem isn't about headlights.
Wear a mask.

@Mx.Syd @ValkyrieCainBurlesque

**Headlights, Poem
by Valkyrie Cain (They/Them)**

Unmasking and Respirator Wearing

I am so sad, I am so sad I am so sad I am so sad I am so sad I am so sad I am so sad, why would anyone want to make anyone feel alone? I feel so alone. What is happening to me?

I hate being inside, I am alone inside. None of my friends are there, I can't feel my body connected. There are no indications to place me in my relations. I am disconnected. My insides churning from outward to in, looking for recognition, anywhere, in anything, I can't find it.

Did I say the right thing? Did I reassure you? Show them what they want so you don't get questioned, laughed at, given the look of "you don't belong". And now I don't know if I can do it, don't want to, afraid of both, afraid of people. Been taught/showed to not be me for 29 years, my tools hurt me, I need new ones, my mask is melting, dripping and slipping, do people see in?

I am already so apart, and now you make me feel more. I hurt I hurt I hurt. Do the little laugh, do the "oh yeah", do the thing do the thing do the thing. I can't it hurts, its pulling feelings teeth, digging out, you want another? I just gave you so much! NO NO NO NO NO! FUCK NO! I owe you nothing.

"Adrian is quite"

"Adrian is special in that way"

"We all learn differently"

"Adrian is so nice, so kind"

"Adrian is very easy going, except for when she's not"

"hahaha you got it wrong!"

Pretend pretend pretend pretend, blab bla bla, I can't find the words in my head and sometimes they are there but they won't come out. Blocked by all the screams that never got let free.

Spelling counting, pain, failures, struggles, Adrian's special things.

"You're spaced out" "you're too perfect" "you would never be angry, you're an angel" Go through the maze, play the game, watch their faces, did I do it? Stuck stuck stuck, I missed something, how did I get here, I can't decide, none of it's right, I'm starting to panic, no, no no no I can't do this in public, I'll look weak, they will come for me, eyes looking and their brows in the worried/scowl position, leave me alone. Too many questions, give me time, too loud, I can't spell this, everything is blurring, things float and I can't hold on or make the connection, I look and I take in, say out loud, but it all disappears, blank head, no, I have to have something to show, I have to understand.

Masking for so long now it's a part of me, and now respirator wearing is a part of me, I am switching masks, but still apart somehow. I just want safety, I just want care, I just want to be with you everywhere.

**Unmasking and Respirator Wearing, 2023, Poem
by Adrian Peace-Williams (She/They)**

suck and swallow

previously published in arc magazine issue 102

my friend brings me a dozen popsicles
drops them off outside my apartment
I say thank you through a closed door

the covid test comes back negative
I get one day to celebrate before finding out
I have strep throat instead
a different workplace hazard

sucking on the popsicles soothes my sore throat
but my swollen esophagus still hurts when I swallow

I wish I didn't need to suck or swallow
I wish work was safer

I dream of a world where I'm protected
where people want to wear masks and condoms
and I don't need to worry about who's nearby

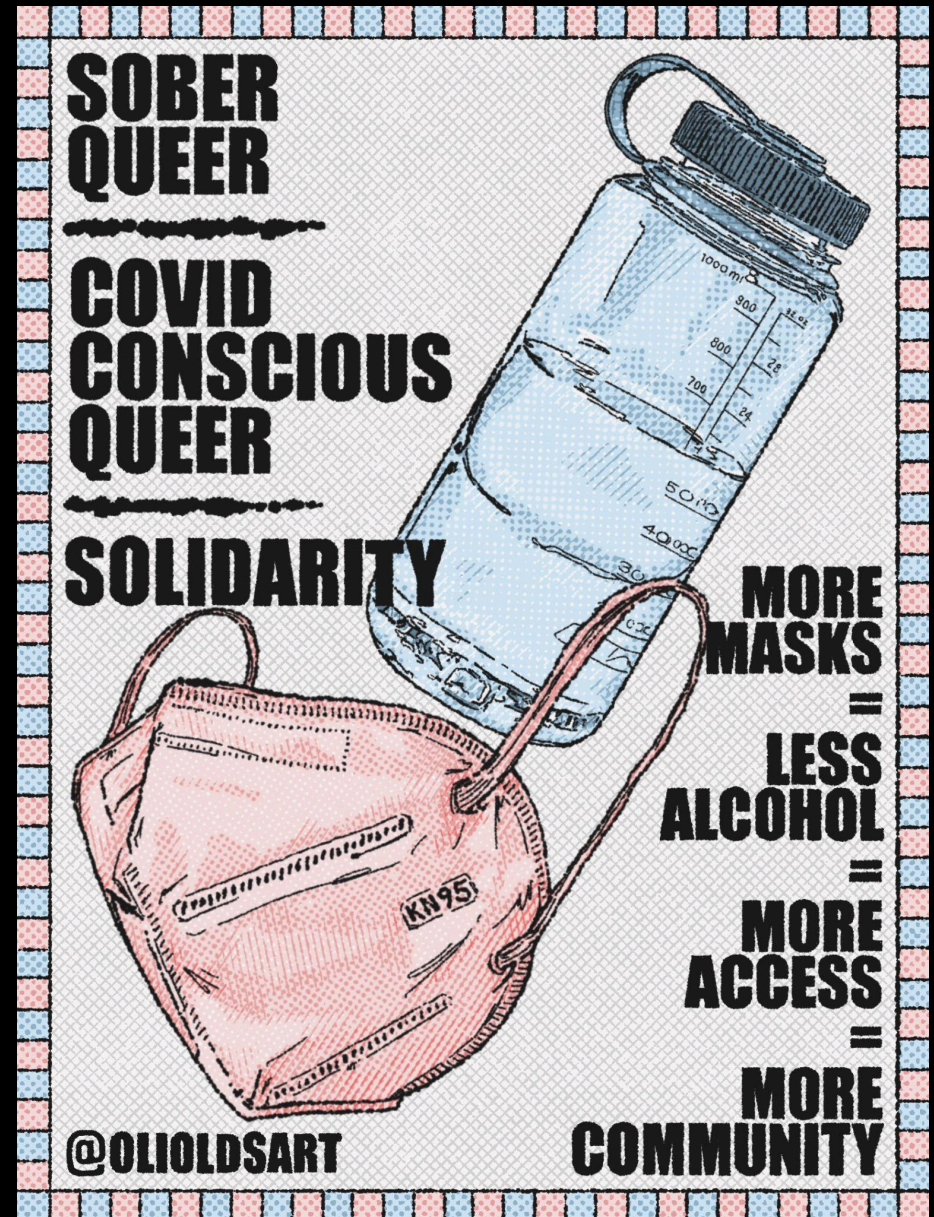
my driving instructor says I'm really good
at being aware of my surroundings
I tell her this is how I survive

keep an eye on my drink
double check the condom is still in place
move before the maskless stranger behind me
starts breathing down my neck

I leave the cafe
I leave the hotel
I leave the community

suddenly I am alone
saying fuck you through a closed door
that isn't safe to open just yet

**Suck and Swallow, Poem
by Kay Kassirer (They/Them)**



**Sober / Covid Conscious Solidarity, January 2024,
Digital Illustration (Procreate)
by Oli Oldfield (They/He)**



**Pax, 2023, oil and acrylic on canvas
by Stevie Dod (They/Them)**

COVID Cautious Weekly Checklist

- ☐ Talk about COVID with chosen family
- ☐ Share COVID art online
- ☐ Leave my apartment masked one time only
- ☐ Endure at least 7 waves of COVID grief (1+ every day)
- ☐ Rapid test at least once
- ☐ Make plans to see one friend in person
- ☐ Cancel plans
- ☐ Facetime my loved ones
- ☐ Wake up with a sore throat and worry I have COVID
- ☐ Share resources with community groups
- ☐ Debate going to that unmasked event
- ☐ Stay home from the unmasked event
- ☐ Offer masks, tests and my HEPA filter to anyone who will listen
- ☐ Use CPC mouthwash
- ☐ Worry I have COVID
- ☐ Worry I have COVID
- ☐ Worry I have COVID
- ☐ Wash my reusable respirator
- ☐ Spend at least one hour a day imagining COVID cautious futures
- ☐ Read articles about long COVID
- ☐ Watch infection and death numbers continue to rise
- ☐ See an event that is masks required and wish it was happening in my community
- ☐ Ask about mask requirements when there is no mention of them
- ☐ Think about the relationships I've lost due to lack of COVID care
- ☐ Mute or unfollow people who keep sharing unmasked crowd photos
- ☐ Spend at least one hour a day wishing things were different

**COVID Cautious Weekly Checklist, February 2024,
List Poem
by Steel Transplants (They/Them)**

COMPILATION OF ARTISTS SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES



**T4T Masks, January 2024, Digital Art
by Steel Transplants**

@artbydykes	@queenofinfinitespace
@eliottsteagarden	@femmingway_art
@pollinator_press_art	@cherubimscloud
@anomalous.goo	@torwar_
@caramorganpoet	@teal_torch
@real_esk	@Oliver_Niko
@hanecdote	@birchwrites
@harty.marty	@doykayt_dreaming
@jaqueleec	@ShellMinded
@artjessapproaches	@punkgarf
@cloud_i_a	@ratfaggy
@odd.little.things	@megan_fletcher_art
@garlicgrass	@ecarolinewalters
@generalstrikeus_roc	@soft_orb
@himbosexuality	@derrickrdixon
@khalemchurst	@lngrmstplr
@Slaapkameractivist	@kit_blamire
@Singularitypoetry	@St.Edge_Creatives
@wombatwisdoms	@cheetah_fae
@nadiabuitar	@wildbluegrace
@rae.elliott.white	@littletianamarie
@carbsinablanket	@chandrapups_art
@tobymacnutt	@printingworldstocome
@rotpotrebecca	@yerpersofficial
@halleys_comet7561	@_lallorona_music
@emkaisart	@reclamation.rags
@alecwiththechains	@mask_produced
@haphazardimagination	@ninegoldfinches
@ArtieCarden	@bitterfemme
@Artie.is.Arty	@Mx.Syd
@queer.witch	@ValkyrieCainBurlesque
	@kaykassirer
	@olioldsart

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Eve:

I make art for queers. Being Covid cautious is inherently queer.
We keep us safe.

Jake Wasserman:

I try to catch moments & processes. Light caught on film,
biodegradation caught in bottles, people caught in impromptu
architecture

Hannah Hill/Hanecdote:

Bold, illustrative and emotional textile art.

Robbie:

With any creative endeavor I seek to share my thoughts- for both
my art and writing, I focus for as long as I can, and when I find I
can't push myself any further, I either work on it again when I can
concentrate or I consider the piece completed. Usually it's the
latter.

Getting COVID twice has changed my perspective of the virus- I
wanted to evoke that same frustration in my pieces, and I hope
that my work can raise awareness on how important these issues
still are, now that a lot of restrictions in our daily lives have been
lifted.

Marty:

phone or point-and-shoot photography (portraits and self portraits)

Jessica Kenney:

is a non binary, disabled, neurodivergent artist, musician, and poet
who resides in Fredericton New Brunswick. They explore chaotic and
creative ways of thinking with playful combinations of mediums.
Jessica's work deals with themes of disability and difference.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Access Butch:

I am a disabled drag artist who dabbles in fiber arts, collage,
painting, and writing.

Madi Lou:

This piece was written after my partner's family tested positive for
COVID, one day after Christmas. The writing was meant to be
cathartic, a way to release the fear and anxiety I was facing alone
and far away from home.

Mickey Przepiora:

I am a writer of poetry, essays, fiction and everything else. An
activist, musician, and educator.

stevie linn springs:

i mostly make art as a way to process grief and trauma - collage
is my most common medium - but poetry has become my
primary way of processing anger. all 3 of these pieces were
made while deeply enraged about the way people in our
queer/trans community have abandoned the most disabled
among us.

Khale McHurst:

is an autobiographical comic artist writing about queerness,
gendered violence, mental illness and relationships. This comic
speaks to Khale's relationship with live music, and how it has
perhaps changed forever thanks to the pandemic and their disability.

Jax Davis:

I'm a nonbinary, fat, bisexual/queer disabled person who is high risk
for covid and still living in lockdown. I write poetry and I paint but
being disabled my ability to paint is very depending on my good days.
Poetry is an art I can do lying down.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Hania Mariën:

Wombats are strong, rotund, marsupials that look kind of like large ground crawling koalas. Alone, they are cute. But in groups, they form something magnificent: wisdoms! This piece celebrates the wisdom of the covid-conscious queer community through these wonderful creatures.

Rae White:

This work features photos I took of masks abandoned and discarded on the ground in my suburb. It evokes the never-ending abandonment I feel at Covid restrictions being lifted and at our government's ignorance and inaction.

Toby MacNutt:

This piece appeared in my 2023 zine "What Cannot Be Held", a collection of poems for the big feelings of the pandemic and queer/trans disabled existence - rage, grief, love, fear, loneliness, care. It is slightly edited from the original in this submission.

Cat Xia:

I'm an artist in Sacramento, CA who likes to create sad, angry, and cute art. My illustrative narratives trend towards my experiences with climate change, racism, sexism, religion, spirituality, and class warfare. The mediums I work in are mostly digital and traditional painting and drawing.

Cade Braynen:

Recently I've been working more on digital art, but still like to return to traditional paper and pencil when I have the spoons. I enjoy drawing about plenty of things: disability struggles, environmentalism, space/astronomy, LGBT+, and I have a planetary comic in the works! I also like to draw nature landscapes.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Alec Stoddard:

I'm (he/they) a genderqueer trans performance artist exploring themes of identity construction, body sovereignty, and kinesthetic strategies of queer survivance through the spectacular body. Since 2020, I've investigated the relationship of performer to object, using my body in various stages of modification and its changes in response to outside forces, both tangible and intangible, organic and systemic.

Artie Carden:

I upcycle materials to make mainly political artwork at affordable price points for marginalised communities. I use old, unwanted film photographs mainly from the 80s to early 2000s taken by members of my family (or donated from friends) and turn them into little pieces of artwork that speaks to marginalised people.

Oliver:

This digital painting is of two of my kinky OCs, featuring JoJo, a non-binary disabled sub (any pronouns), and Francis, their trans male Dom (he/him). I wanted to create a sensual piece featuring covid precautions being taken before they engage in a scene, and showing how it's as intimate and important as any other measure that must be taken when practicing safe BDSM.

I enjoy using an oil painting like approach in a digital medium, and have lately focused on exploring themes close to my heart--this piece encapsulates my love for portraying kink, disability and queerness. I hope that shows with every brush stroke!

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Ceilidh (kale):

Creates work at the intersection of fantasy and technology, with focus on overlap between the human and the nonhuman. They enjoy theatre, visual art, composing, whispering sweet nothings at the sky, photography, writing, and have “had a piano hobby” for over thirteen years.

Aside from the arts, they also enjoy making bird noises, sweet star fruit, and pretending to be a dragon. Ceilidh can usually be found with a pen in their hand, pocket, hair—or at least somewhere in their general vicinity.

Ralf:

RATFAGGY's work consists of a mashup of analog & digital mixed media collage and diary-like prose, exploring the intersections of disability and queerness, and the trauma, passion, anger, and heartbreak they experience as a chronically ill transsexual in the current political climate of rampant transphobia and widespread COVID denial.

Megan Fletcher:

My practice generally revolves around the concept of embodiment and the specific relationship between embodiment and disability. Often using printmaking, my work foregrounds the physical process of creating to convey personal narratives. With this piece here, I wanted to explore how isolating and exhausting it can be to be a clinically vulnerable person during a pandemic while it seems the majority of people have 'moved on', which is compounded by existing as someone who doesn't conform to conventional ideas of relationships that would often act as somebody's main support system.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

E. Caroline Walters:

I make zines and illustrations about textiles, my queer and fat experiences, loneliness, and joy.

brie:

i illustrated these cats for a poster for an event for Mask Bloc Éire. In my general practice i aim to create dreamy art and accessible yet fun graphic design

Liz Fitzgerald:

I designed a DTF transfer to put on a hoodie that would be a fun, fashionable, loud & brazen accessory to draw attention to both the importance and undeniably fashion forward amazingness of wearing high quality masks to protect ourselves and others.

A song about my experience, frustration, defiance, and at times joyful collective camaraderie while trying to navigate a world where so many of the people I know, love, and come into contact with do not understand the critical importance of protecting ourselves and others from the harms of COVID and long COVID. It alternates from singing to my fellow COVID cautious and chronically ill folks and to being in conversation with my non-cautious friends who I see taking risks, getting sick, and maybe starting to regret their inaction to protect self and others from harm.

Danielle Gauld:

The experience of living through COVID as a high risk disabled person, particularly as someone with ME/CFS, has been so absolutely devastating in so many ways that writing has taken on more urgency in my life and become a completely necessary practice for survival. I also play around in photography, blockprinting, and various kinds of witch-crafting.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Tiana Marie:

My zine process includes photos I've taken (I credit the photographer if I have not). I print out the photos and cut and paste wording from my typewriter to weave both imagery and writing together.

Chandrapups:

I primarily draw erotic and non-erotic furry art that centers and celebrates QTBIPOC joy and spiritual, non-human centered expressions. We primarily work with ink, pencils, paper, markers, and digital programs. We celebrate kinks that that subvert oppressive narratives and we help our clients' dream fantasies' come true in the form of animations, illustrations and comics. Our art is a way to connect, give, receive, and grow love between our communities.

Nai:

My general art practice is kind of all over the place, and it's been a while since I've done anything artistic. I mainly write poems and songs, make collages, and do graphic design and photography, but am hoping to branch out more and also do more mixed media art. My work has been mostly personal for a while, but I aim to make more political art. I use a lot of wordplay (as you can see here) and enjoy making connections between different topics. My collages also often involve playful, but dark humour and can be chaotic. My photography is generally more wistful; sometimes abstract.

Grace Rountree:

This piece is about solidarity as a sacred practice and is a call for leaving no one behind, inspired by the rich intersections between disability justice and anti-zionist Jewish practices. This piece centers disabled, high risk, immunocompromised, and chronically ill folks and the care and wisdom we have woven to navigate ongoing pandemic times. The state (including prisons, police, borders, zionism) will never keep us safe; we build safety by protecting each other.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Mylo Pepper:

This piece is a journal entry on canvas. I wanted to reflect on how my identity as an autistic trans person has impacted my experience of masking. I chose neon colours because they bring me so much stimmy joy, and I chose to paint and draw the images separately and paste them onto the canvas to add texture and depth.

Alejandra Diemecke:

I am a multi genre artist, this piece is a digital piece I created with procreate. I process this cruel and beautiful world through art.

SnackGnatRat:

The title totally doesn't have anything to do with me worried that the audience will think I'm showing someone wearing a mask wrong around other people..... Anyway, this piece shows my future self next to a wall full of graffiti. My future self has longer (and punkier!) hair and top surgery. The jacket looks how my punk jacket did at the time, and in this future I'm still wearing a mask. Whenever I'm outdoors in an empty spot, I pull down my mask for a breather until I'm near people again, which is what is happening in the picture.

The graffiti itself is of a bunch of interests of mine as well as random doodles. Besides the trans symbol part of the wall, it isn't overtly queer.

However, it includes references to media that appeals to people of the 2SLGBTQ+ community - like Animorphs and FNAF - and artists who were part of the community itself - David Bowie and (Freddie Mercury of) Queen.

The giant "Are you there Yet?" text reflects my sense of longing. It's something that my current self is asking my future self - are you there yet?

Have you had top surgery? Did you finish your jacket? Are you still masking? Have we finally reached the end of the pandemic?

I like to try out experimental art whenever I can, but I particularly lean towards making my poems experimental. Each stanza of the poem can be read in a different order, with a different meaning or voice / tone / mood. However, there's one big connection, and that's the feeling of isolation and otherness when surrounded by maskless people, especially as someone who is already othered. At the same time, I refuse to stop wearing my mask.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Amanda Farman:

I had the idea for this last summer at Non-Binary People's Day in Philly, when the masked movement class Queerobics featured bandanas as merch at their table! Masking truly is flagging.

Logan Fenner:

I make and distribute paper zines. This one is more like a comic, but is a fairly accurate representation of the kind of work I make regularly. Text-based zines with visual supplementation, often personal stories or tiny guides to niche things. There is often a collage, photographic, or art element. I really enjoy making them and am grateful to my readers who enjoy them.

Valkyrie Cain:

In addition to being a burlesque and drag performer, I write poetry about topics I feel deeply about. I have a severe learning disorder, so I am not very good at putting spoken words together, and I don't care for structure and hidden meaning, so my poetry, much like my dancing, is a raw manifestation of my emotion. This poem points out the ridiculousness of anti-maskers' logic by comparing it to another act that people engage with on a daily basis in the name of community care.

Please note: This poem is about people who refuse to mask, not those who cannot for medical reasons - your disabilities are valid.

Kay Kassirer:

I write autobiographical poetry focusing on themes of gender & sexuality, disability, grief, and sex work

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Oli Oldfield:

This digital illustration was born out of my thoughts and feelings around the thoughtfulness, selflessness, solidarity and covid consciousness I've found in sober queer spaces as a trans person in early sobriety. It is a love letter to the accessible spaces that are cultivated for these at risk communities out of care and necessity. It is a direct call to the queers in my life and local community to consider how dedicating time and energy to including disabled and sober queer folks in queer events and programming is necessary in building safe, strong, loving, caring and whole community spaces. The colour palette used is a direct nod to my trans siblings.

My art practice has existed in many different ways over time, depending on personal contexts; I am currently focusing my energy in digital illustration inspired by / dedicated to political & social causes that are important to my communities & I.

Stevie Dod:

Paxlovid is the antiviral treatment for COVID-19. Its blue and yellow foil packaging struck me as ironic in its cheerfulness and fragility. I received Paxlovid for my second COVID infection, in 2022, which I contracted while being as cautious as I knew how to be at the time. My first infection in 2020 furthered my chronic illnesses and disabled me with Long COVID.

I painted this at a community art class while living in Utica, New York. The other students in this class would walk by my easel, be excited by my work, then become awkward and distant as I described the subject. Even the drug that saves lives from COVID is controversial and too uncomfortable to discuss.

THANK YOU

**TO ALL THE COVID CAUTIOUS QUEERS
WHO SHARED THEIR BEAUTIFUL WORK FOR THIS ZINE**

**TO ALL THE COVID CAUTIOUS QUEERS WHO CONNECTED WITH ME AND
EACH OTHER THROUGH THIS ZINE**

**TO ALL THE COVID CAUTIOUS QUEERS WHO TOOK THE TIME TO READ AND
SHARE THIS ZINE**

**TO ALL THE COVID CAUTIOUS QUEERS WHO CONTINUE TO WEAR A MASK
EVERY DAY (IF MEDICALLY POSSIBLE)**

**TO ALL THE COVID CAUTIOUS QUEERS WHO CONTINUE TO EXIST AND
RESIST**

**TO ALL THE COVID CAUTIOUS QUEERS: WE ARE KEEPING EACH OTHER
ALIVE**

**IN UNWAVERING SOLIDARITY,
STEEL TRANSPLANTS**

2024

