

mosaic

issue

001



queer

+

trans-cestal

prints

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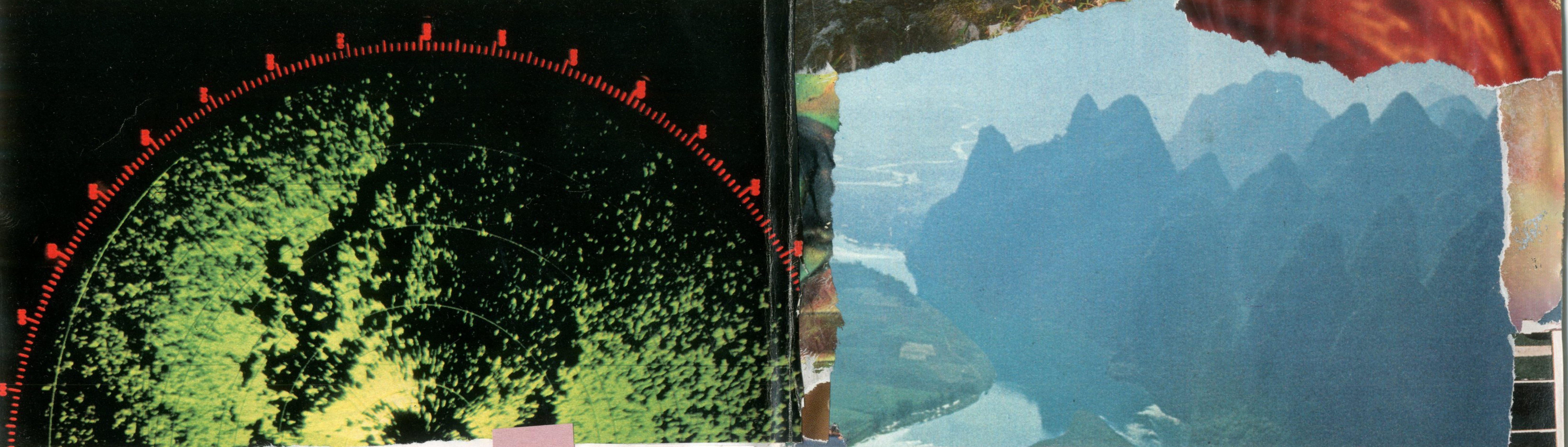
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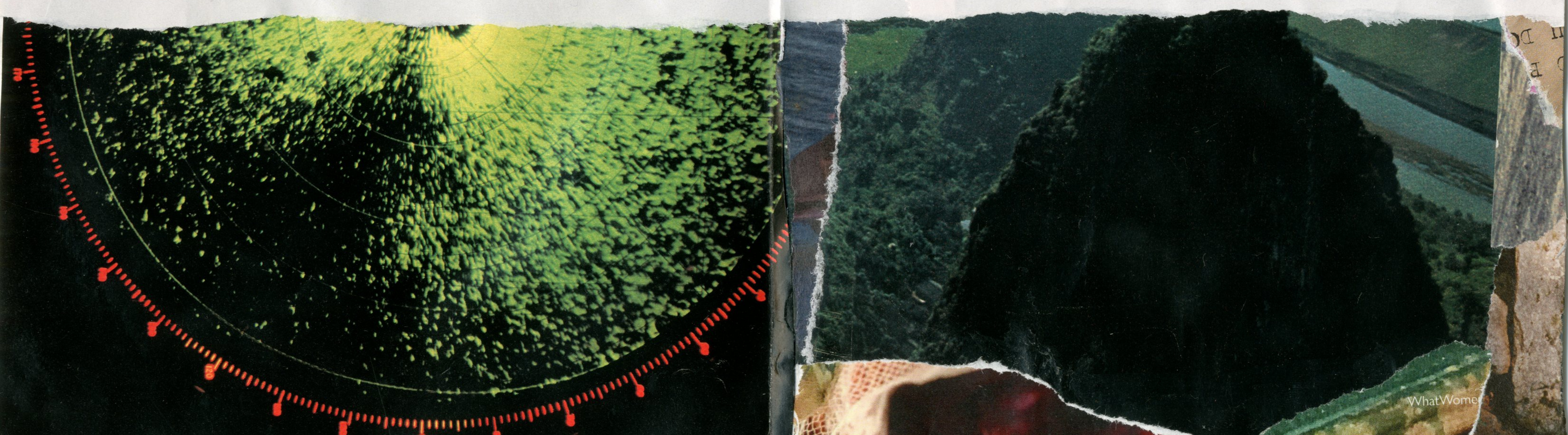
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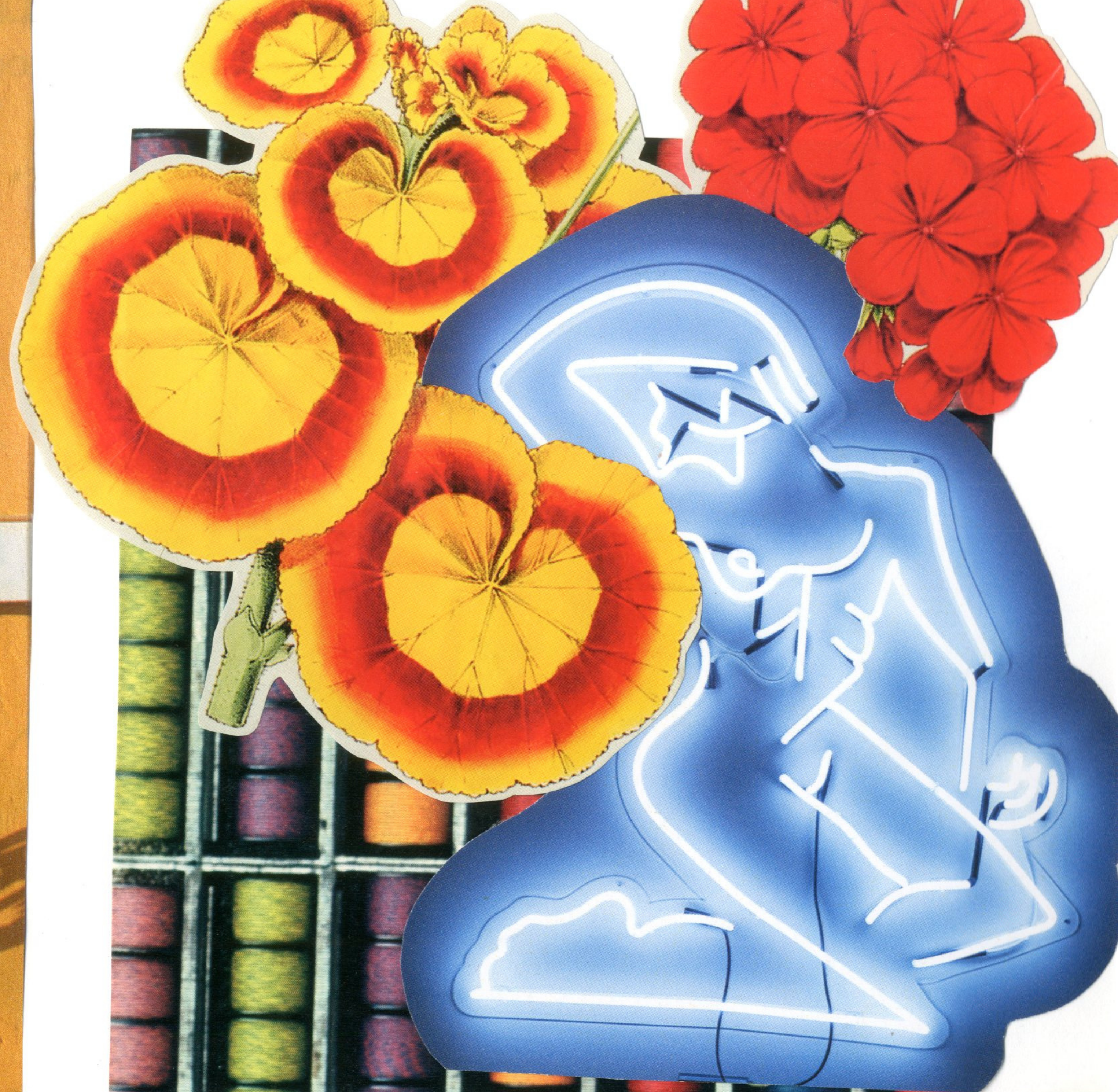
The Queer Ancestors Project is devoted to forging sturdy relationships between LGBTQI+ people and our ancestors.





Real M A G I C





I often feel as though one of the things that the border and migration steals from immigrants and the generations after them is the connection to our ancestors and our histories, even despite intentional attempts to keep connections alive. It's been incredibly healing to think about the ancestors I do not know by name but know – and feel – in my core existed by literally carving out a space for them. I picture these imagined ancestors walking through the plaza in my hometown in Tarimoro, Guanajuato where so many young folks would gather (and from what elders share – fall in love), going to listen to the mariachis playing like my grandma would in her youth, or even something as simple as walking under rows of colorful papel picado during our town's yearly celebration. Papel picado is a decorative tissue paper that typically has images chiseled out often in commemoration of specific holidays like Día de los Muertos or weddings – the papel picado in my print is a celebration of queer love. In the "stencil" of the papel picado I include the words "amor querido," a play on the phrase "amor querido" which translates to "dear love" and is a common (and tender) declaration of love. The soundtrack to my dear imagined ancestors strolling under the rows of papel picado celebrating their queer love is a romantic bolero, like "Amor Mio" (bit.ly/QAPamormio).

paper [son/daughter/doll]

untitled



This print is a paper doll-ification of myself. I hold my queerness and gender as fluid and exploratory, valuing the self-intimacy of trying things on, feeling them out, adjusting to my own alignment, and removing what does not fit. Included are scissors and craft tape, simple tools to construct and reconstruct the paper doll. This paper doll kit is also a queering of the China doll, with intentional ambiguity around markers of racialization and queerness - ex. the queue/rattail, the mandarin collar jacket. Furthermore, it is a nod towards the sociological weight of *paper*, specifically the history of paper sons and paper daughters in Chinese immigration history. In the post-Chinese Exclusion era (1882-1892 prohibition of immigration of Chinese laborers), the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco destroyed many immigration records. Chinese immigrants would forge documentation (names, identities) to immigrate to the U.S. by pretending to be the descendant of someone already there. As is important to queer and trans people, then and now: what documentation of family, self, name, body makes one legible to the state? How do we articulate this relationship to self and family in a way that resists state definitions in favor of making us legible to ourselves?

This print is an homage to Wu Zao (1799-1862), a renowned writer of the Qing Dynasty who wrote poetry with homoerotic overtones. The image inhabits her poetry and its striking expressions of intimacy. She writes, "We play wine games and recite each other's poems. Then you sing 'Remembering South of the River' with its heartbreaking verses. We paint each other's beautiful eyebrows." She also writes of "leaning against bamboo," a popular phrase male poets of the time used to evoke longing.

While this print is a riff off a contemporary queer meme of someone sitting atop another, doing their makeup, the image speaks the language of queer intimacy and ambient desire in art of 19th c. China. I emulate the style of a series of Chinese erotic art I found online that illustrates explicit scenes of gay sex in a style of traditional Chinese art. While I could not verify sources for these pieces, I found them bold and intriguing, and consider that artist a creative predecessor as well.

by jam
@pear_jam

new paths.



there is a point where the ocean waves crash into each other and go their own way. in exploring the ways to make my name, maría, more aligned with my gender identity i have met my ancestors (the 15 marías and marios who came before me) face to face and chosen to flow into a different direction.



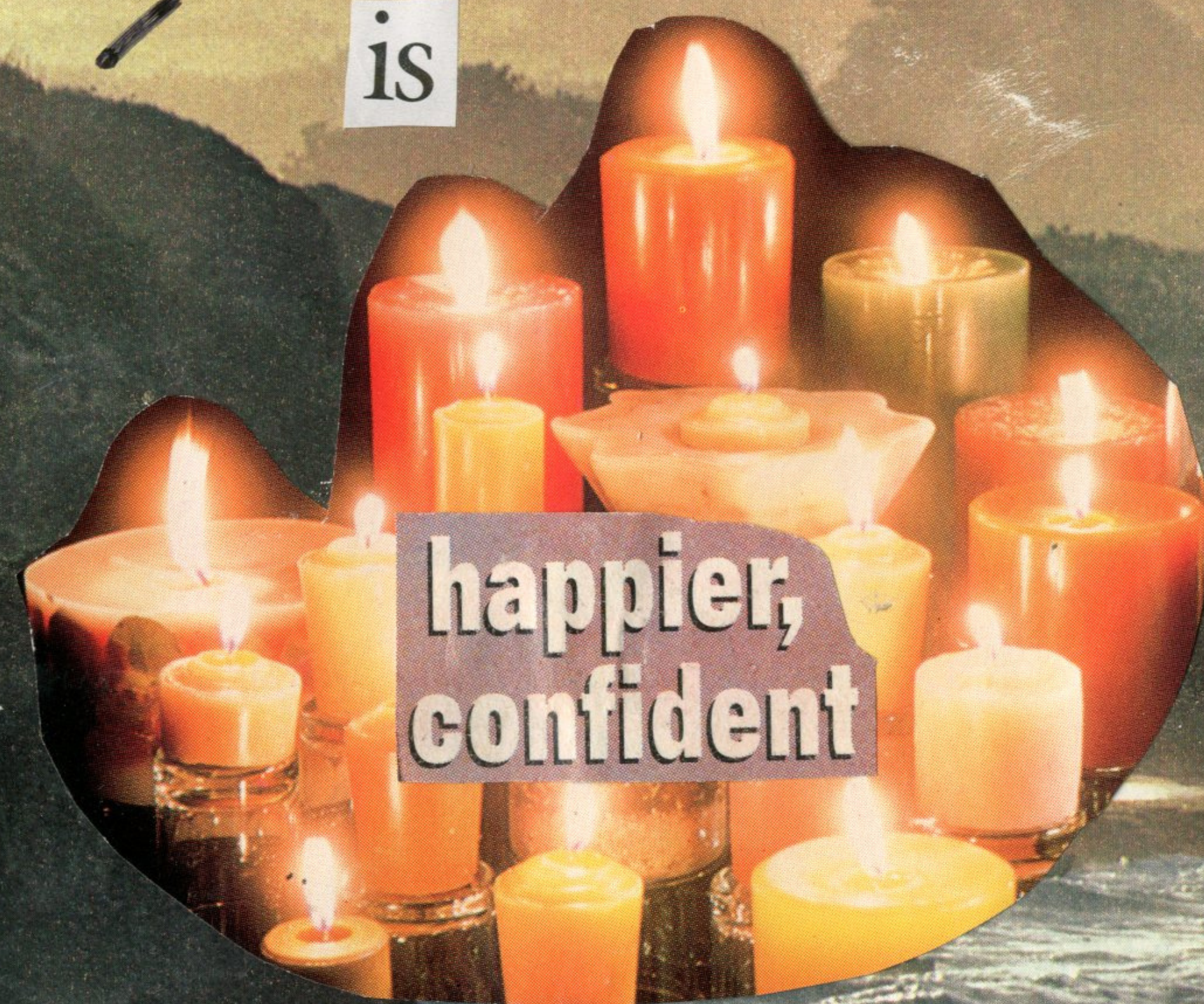
The Melancholy of
Landscapes



m a r

is

happier,
confident



by. Sandy Capacio Campbell
@---silt---



communicated with the ancestors, and were deeply respected community leaders. Many Babaylan are described in historical writings as non cis-women "living and dressing as women," and were said to embody both masculine and feminine energies. Today, we might consider these Babaylan transwomen or non-binary.

In the print, a queer Babaylan ancestor is emerging from a stalk of bamboo. This imagery comes from a Filipino creation story, wherein a crow splits a piece of bamboo and the first man and woman emerge. I wanted to retell this story using a Babaylan to represent my queer Babaylan ancestors' liberatory conception of gender that rejects colonial binaries.

This print is dedicated to my queer Babaylan ancestors, who were sacred community agriculturalists, healers, and spiritual leaders. Historically, the Babaylan led rebellions against Spanish colonizers, acted as spirit mediums and

The Babaylan played an integral role in indigenous, pre-colonial Filipino culture, symbolizing the ways queerness is deeply embodied in our collective identity and spirituality. Although colonialism continues to condemn our inherent queerness to disempower and divide us, queer Babaylan are still alive, practicing, and resisting today.

Mary's First and Last Chance

This print honors Mary's First and Last Chance, a lesbian bar located at 2278 Telegraph Ave in Oakland that was the subject of a 1959 California Supreme Court case. Opened in 1948 by Mary Azar, a Syrian American butch lesbian, Mary's First and Last Chance had its liquor license revoked in 1956 after two policewomen who had been frequenting the bar undercover for nearly a year reported the "unnatural advances" they had experienced as bar patrons. Despite the condescension of the Deputy Attorney General's report, we can pick out a few names: Shirleen, who had called undercover policewoman Marge Gwinn a "cute little butch" before kissing her, and Buddy the waitress, who had brought three friends along to the bar and "had grown quite fond of Marge too."

Here, I imagine the glow of neon lights and the scenes of lesbian intimacy that must have filled these rooms seventy years ago. Despite the gaze of the policewomen, disguised in lesbian drag and desperately repressing their own desires, Mary serves up drinks behind the bar while Shirleen and Buddy kiss in the corner. On the left, I depict myself walking by the building on Telegraph in the present, in an era where only a handful of lesbian bars remain open in the United States.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST PLACES





In 'Shade the King', Rindon Johnson writes, "you can fuck women and still love them, right? I think this all the time when I have my 7 inches of silicone inside of someone's pussy. I care for you so I choke you. I care for you so I objectify you. You look like my new headphones. You look like my new adidas. You look tired in the hot way. Thank you for letting me pretend to come inside you. Trans-men are the worst. Actually I am the worst. Am I trans or just a dyke who is too lazy to get top surgery?"

I quote Rindon and feel every word vibrating in my bones. The way I loop through my thoughts, backtrack on my own feelings, avoid the gender politics, can't help but try to label while simultaneously doing everything to avoid it. Am I hideous, is it beautiful? Am I disgusting in the clean way? I choke on my words with the way my tongue ties in knots.



Karishma Johnson
@pukey.green

By ERNEST LENN

A girl who admitted being a patron of Tommy's Place at 17 lowered her head at a State hearing yesterday and used a term which fell from her lips like an obscene word.

In a barely audible whisper she said that Tommy's Place had been recommended to her as a "gay" bar, meaning, she explained, a bar frequented by homo sexuals.

Her story, and that of another 18 year old girl now in high school, came as the hearing

This print is about imagined ancestors, inspired by the lives of several teenagers who were caught up in the 1954 raid on Tommy's Place, a lesbian/Trans bar in San Francisco's North Beach. Newspaper accounts make it clear that police offered the young women a choice: testify against the bartenders at Tommy's Place or face prosecution themselves. My novel, *Thrill Spot* (currently in search of a publisher), is a fictional account of the raid. In my imagining of events, two of the girls testify; another refuses and lands in juvenile detention as a result. While researching the novel, I was able to locate one of the teenage girls, now in her eighties: she continues to carry guilt, over sixty years later, for the testimony she provided that sent two people to jail. Many Queer people of the time came to understand their desires by seeing them reflected (though often in distorted ways) in pulp fiction. *Women's Barracks*, by Tereska Torr s, was one of the earliest published lesbian pulp novels. In my story I imagine that one of the braver girls – the one who refuses to testify – slips the novel into the stack of schoolbooks of another girl as a way of making connection and communicating their shared identity.



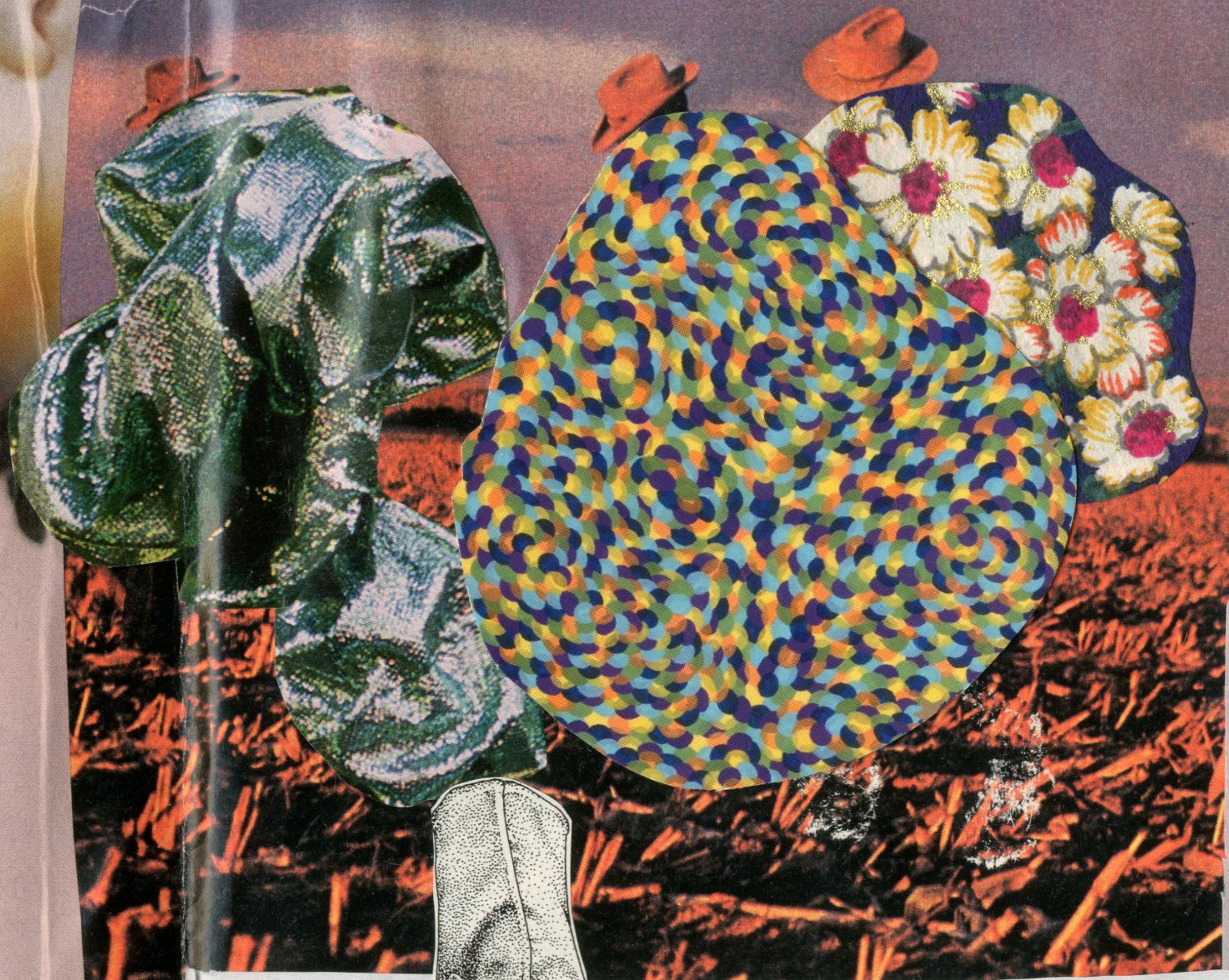
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Yesterday's
Frank Guli

JASMINE LIANG

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TIME TRAVELING
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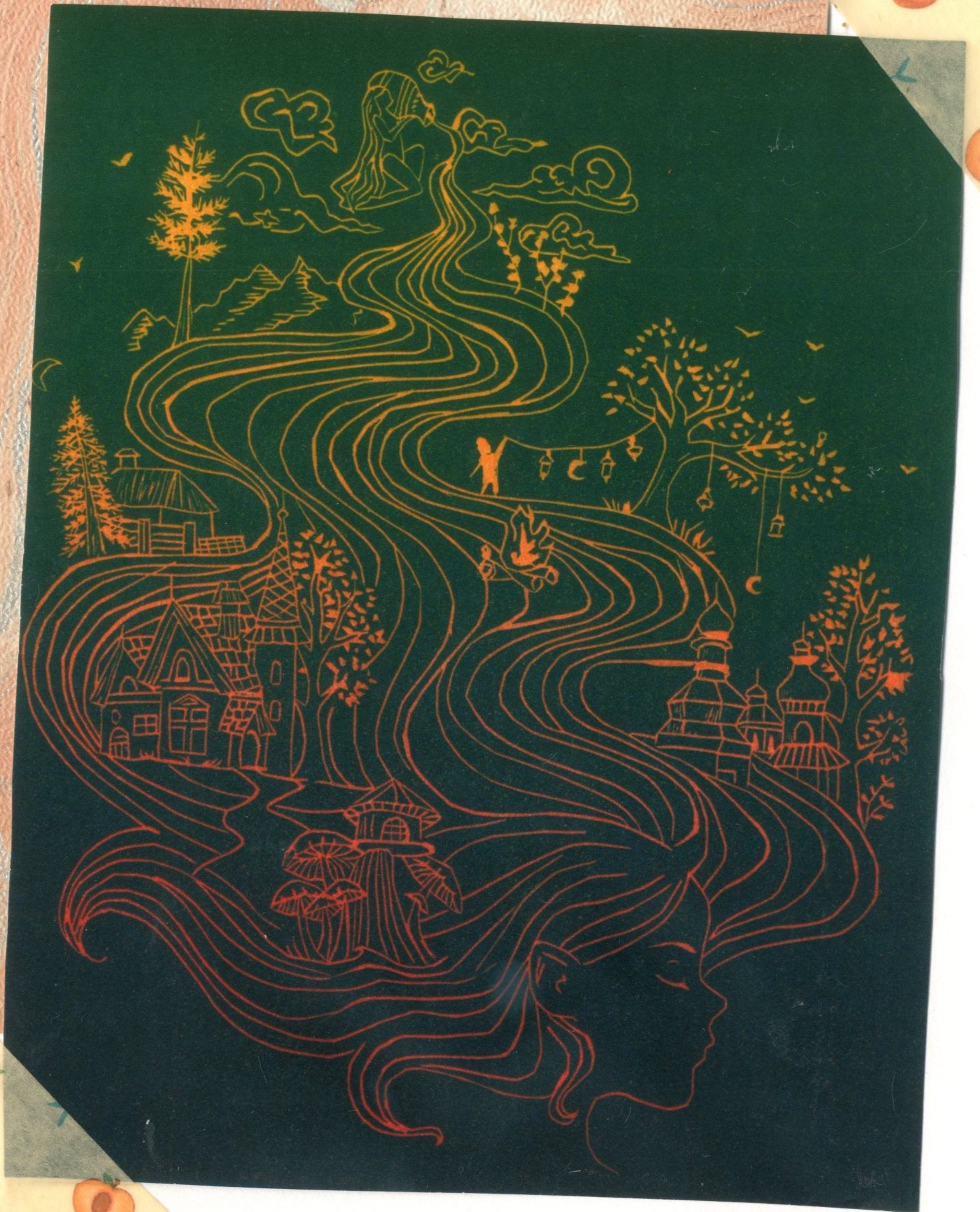
The nearlings and artificial furs
are ex as glamorous as they are fun.

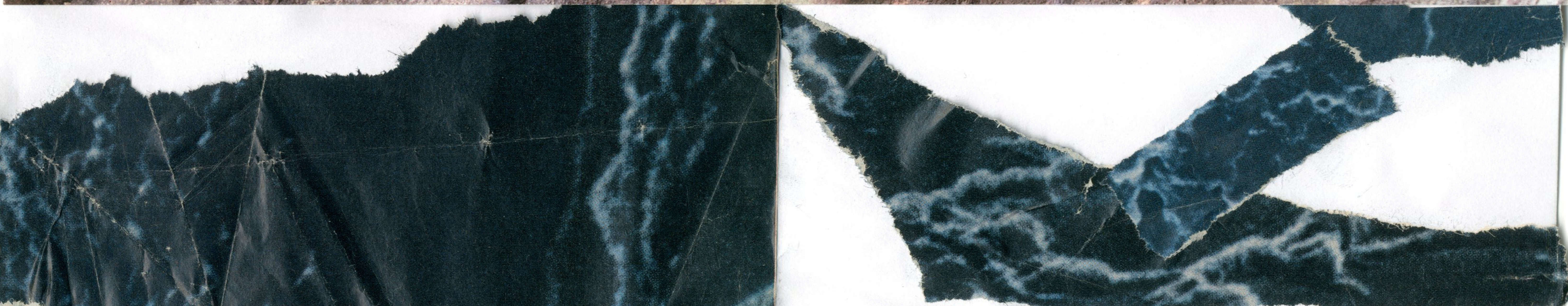
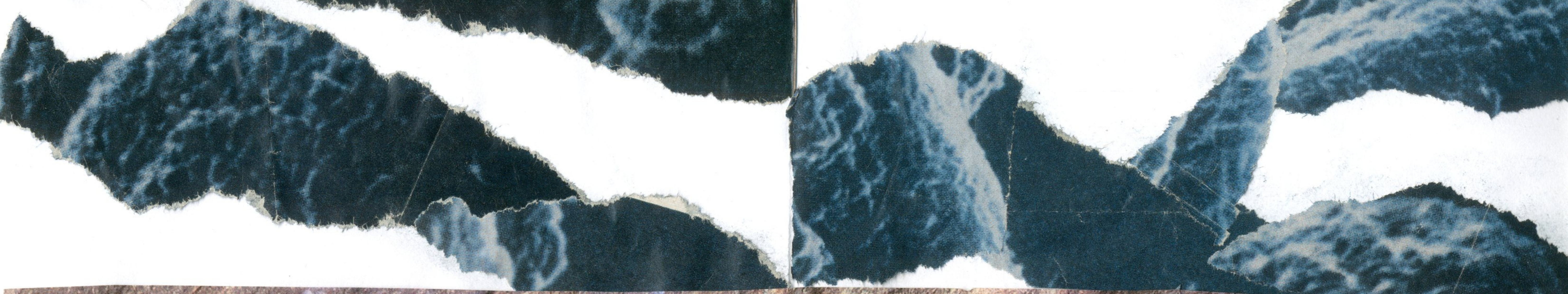
Hair Musings from the Closet

My hair knew I was a lesbian before I did. It strangled the fingers of men who tried to touch it, turning into a scratchy, bristling menace. My hair has always had my back.

When I came out, everyone expected me to cut and dye it because that seemed like a rite of passage for all new dykelings. Being a queer woman of color with long hair in a culture where the dominant image of lesbianism is narrow and white-centric sometimes means being invisible.

Hence, this print is a celebration of queer BIPOC femininity in one of its many forms. I am queer not despite my long hair but because of it. My hair is a lineage, a chronology-- each strand ties me to an ancestor. It is a flowing river that connects every motherland that my predecessors once inhabited, a record of everything they once held dear. It carries the wisdom of old forests & desert sandstorms & marble-domed mosques & unraveling fields of rye. It takes up space, reminds me of the full force of my existence, the potency of my presence.





Recalling

"A beautiful body becomes one because the person within respects themselves. This is the key to staying alive. Be respectful to yourself and others. Practice safe sex." *— David Lauryl, 1995*

"The highest creation is the creation of oneself and total consciousness within. To be whole with in oneness, that is the peak. Self-realisation." *— Laozi*

Displays of affection between Chinese friends of the same sex are common, but young unmarried men and women are seldom seen even holding hands.



JULY 25 / AUG. 1, 2012

You are capable competent, creative, careful. Prove it.
Lucky # 2, 36, 20, 35, 8, 50
Learn Chinese: Ten Pieces, Shi-pian 十片

Give what you have; to someone it may be better than you dare to think.

"AIDS is not on my mind too much, but I think about it." Do you practice safe sex?
"Yes, I take precautions if it's necessary." *— David Lauryl, 1995*

Repose

This print is based on a 1905 photo taken in San Francisco's Chinatown. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, authorities saw Chinatown's opium dens as hotbeds of vice and sexual deviance. The perverse sexuality associated with opium-smoking Chinese men and the small, crowded underground rooms of opium dens came to stand in for broader anxieties about social intimacy across race and class lines.

Though lurid shots such as this one were used to sensationalize the dangers of Chinatown for white middle-class observers, I immediately saw in the relaxed body language, the lounging cat, and the expression on his face a kindred spirit in all his languid glory. Without glorifying the reality of addiction, or the imperial machinations that made opium such a commonplace Chinese pastime, I wanted to re-render this image – and the "perverse social relations" that it embodied – with a loving hand. I seek to recontextualize this unnamed man's repose as an ancestor to queer practices of care, community, and intimacy, many of which are still criminalized today.



Star girl



HEALS

CW



the month before i turned seventeen, a judge ruled that my trauma was my fault. looking back, i'm not surprised because the legal system is bullshit, but at the time my anger was so massive i felt like i was going to die. most of all, i felt so betrayed by my own spirituality that i took down my altar, hid my tarot deck and photos of ancestors, and severed my connection with St. Rita de Cascia, the patroness saint of abuse victims who i had been praying to for weeks. it took almost a year until i was able to reconnect with my ancestors and reclaim my relationship with spirituality, this time with no saints on pedestals but instead through lesbianism & embracing the messiness of healing.



For this print, I wanted to honor an artist whose work and words I have often turn to and who has expanded what I believe [and now know] is possible for me in this lifetime as a migrant, as queer/cuir, as an artist. Gabriel Garcia Roman is a multidisciplinary artist born in Mexico, raised in Chicago, and based in New York who explores the politics of identity through his work. His work profoundly inspires me, including his Queer Icons series that has introduced to me so many other queer activists and inspired me to envision him as a Saint in his own right. It's not uncommon for folks online that engage with his content to lovingly call him Tio and he really exemplifies to me the magic of the queer kinship that is forged across space and time.

The portrait incorporates elements of a traditional stained glass portrait of a saint decorating the walls of a church. I am moved by the ways that Gabriel sees art all around him, as demonstrated by the impromptu selfies he takes in front of circular structures that crown him in a halo. The halo I created to circle around him is inspired by the movement of ocean waves. The pattern of his shirt is inspired by the star pattern traditionally incorporated in portraits of la Virgen de Guadalupe.



"Lush"

The title of this print and much of its inspiration comes from the song "Lush Life" by Billy Strayhorn. Lyrically speaking, on the surface I find it to be quite a moody break-up song actually. However, taken with a look at Strayhorn's life as a gay jazz musician and composer in the 40's, 50's, and 60's, it's also a powerful record of queer love. Strayhorn, the composer for many of the works that Duke Ellington became famous for, preserved his agency in an environment that could have been hostile by choosing to live in Ellington's shadow instead of becoming a bandleader himself, allowing him to be open about his sexuality. Perhaps a lush life speaks to the images of low, warm lights and audiences dressed to the nines in the clubs of the Harlem and Paris jazz worlds Strayhorn scored with his music. Perhaps a lush life is the one he was able to create for himself, where he was openly gay in a time in place he otherwise may not have been able to be.

This is lushness for me!



Tommy's Bar Called Perverts' Haven



1—There has been an alarming increase of perverts here since the end of World War II. It is not just a local problem, but a national one. According to Murphy, "some very prominent people here

Tommy Vasu was a community builder who claimed public space for lesbian and trans people in 1950s San Francisco. In 1954 Tommy's bar was raided by police and became the focus of several trials and lurid headlines. Newspapers called Tommy's Place a "Perverts' Haven" and "happy hunting ground for a group of adult debauchees who recruited school girls into their academy of dope addiction and sex perversion." Bar patrons called the raid a set-up. My novel, *Thrill Spot* (currently in search of a publisher), is a fictional account of the raid on Tommy's Place. Tommy was known for wearing suits, driving a gold Cadillac, and using men's restrooms. While working on the novel, I kept nearby descriptions from two people who knew Tommy. According to lesbian Reba Hudson, "she was a real piece of work." According to straight newspaper columnist Herb Caen: "The short-haired, long-tempered girl named Tommy who runs the best parking lot on B'way in North Beach — [is] a gentleman among ladies." I think of Tommy as someone who did everything they could to create space for us to find love, lust, community, companionship, safety, a cold beer, and ourselves.

Do Not Touch

This print is a tribute to and celebration of my dear friend Manu Kaur— a queer Dalit non-binary femme badass and community organizer working toward their dream of “an anti-racist, anti-casteist equal society that gives safety and life to oppressed communities”. I admire their willingness and drive to educate others about all of the tangible and intangible ways in which casteism manifests in queer diasporic spaces. I am endlessly inspired by their bravery and care in constantly advocating for marginalized people and fighting against caste discrimination. In this image, they are wearing a print from Do Not Touch— an art collective by a Dalit artist named Jessie Sohpaal— in a reclamation of the concept of untouchability.



I had the privilege of personally meeting Manu at Kousa— a celebration of queer SWANA joy in Oakland. It was the first queer SWANA event that I had ever been to— I came there alone and didn't know anyone.

To Manu: thank you for the outstretched hand. Lately, I've been thinking about radical microinclusions (the opposite of micro-aggressions). These are small yet impactful acts that extend acceptance & welcoming to those who often feel excluded. Thank you for being the first person to talk to me when I was alone.

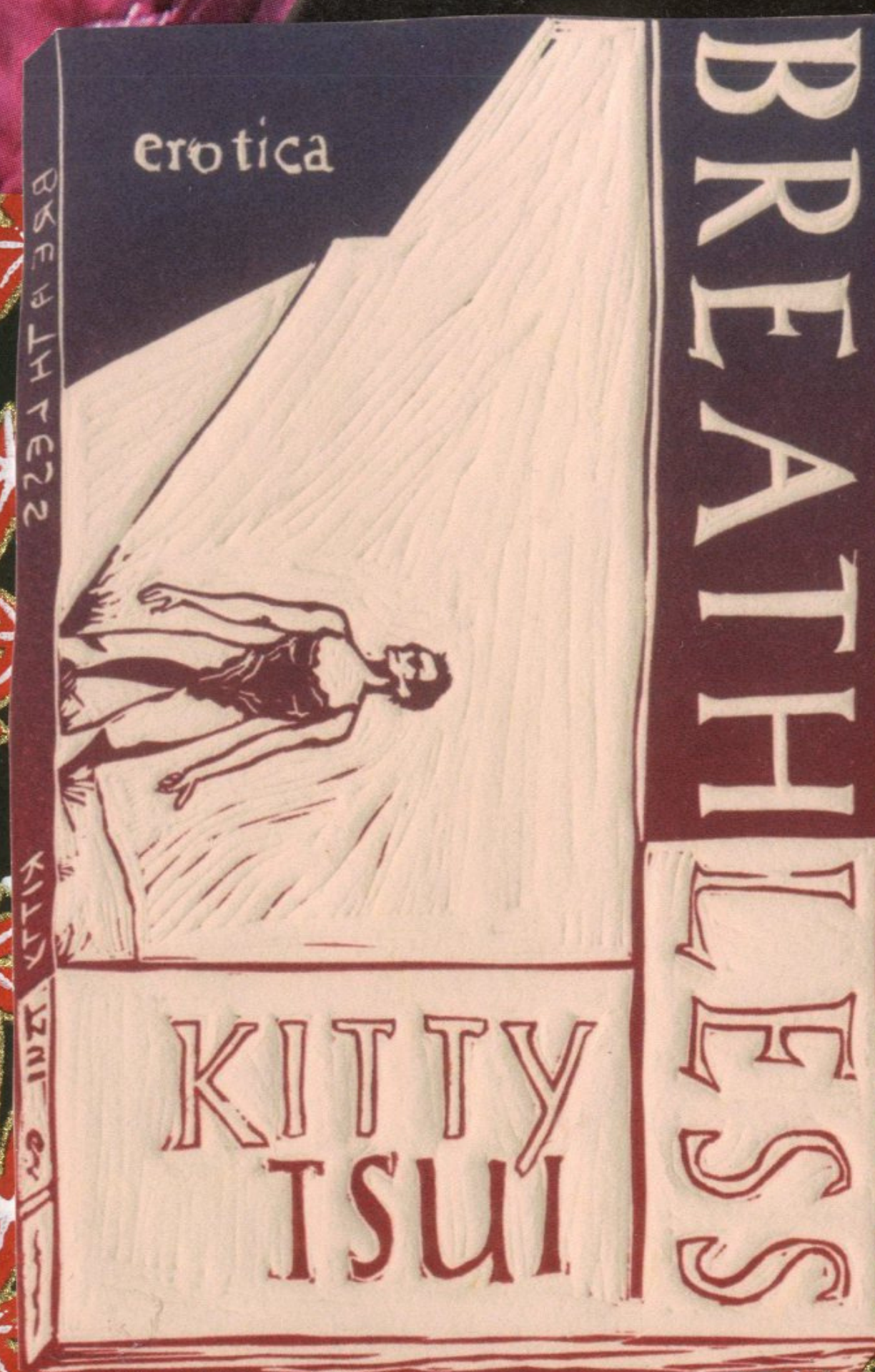
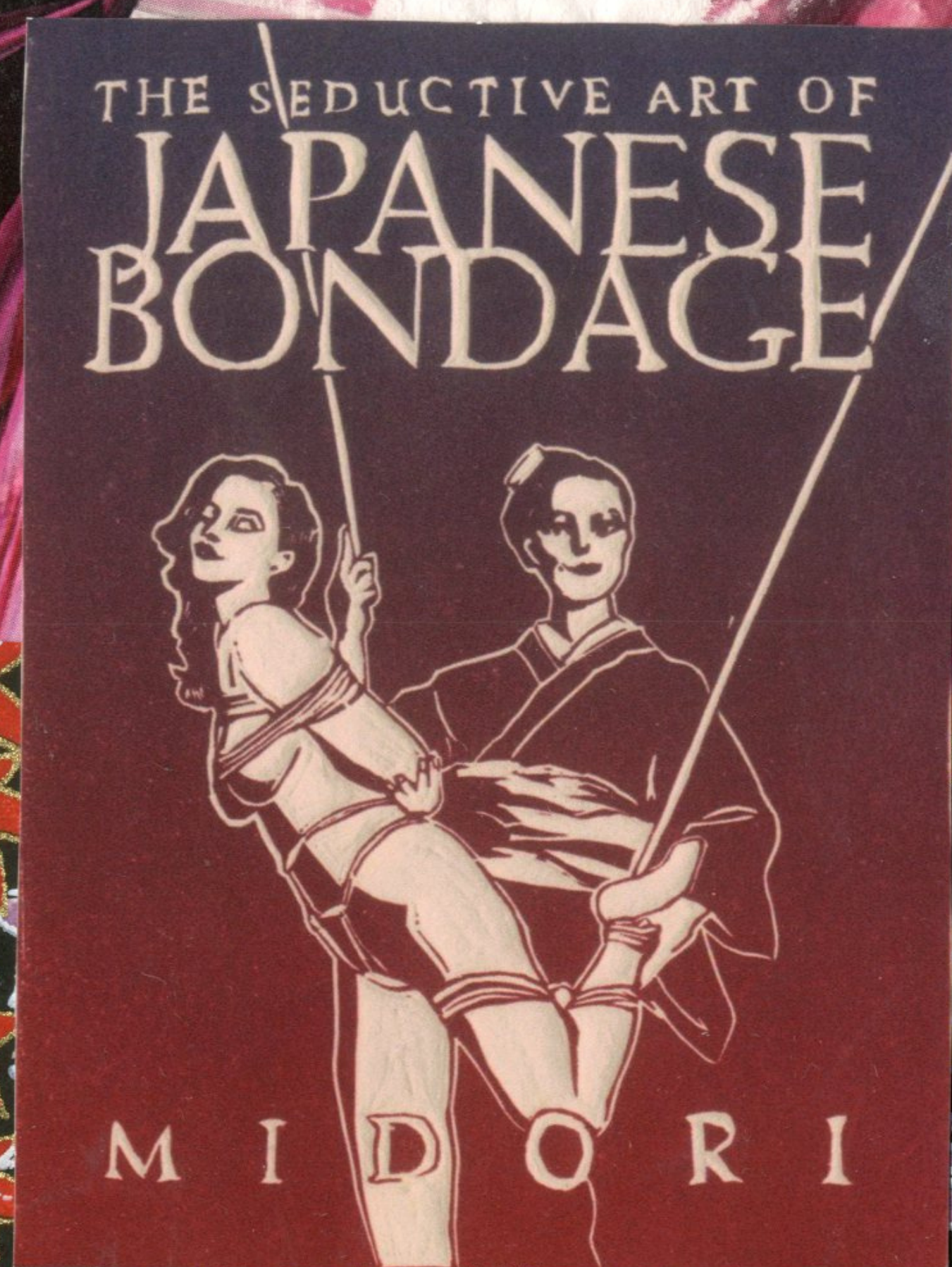
To all powerful queer BIPOC femme icons: keep doing what you're doing. Somewhere out there is a younger person like you, quietly rooting for you.

by. Sandy Capacio Campbell
@ --- silt ---

In this print, I honor the revolutionary queer Babaylan ancestors who were our healers and spirit mediums of indigenous Filipino society. Many of these Babaylan were queer and played significant roles in resisting Spanish colonialism and religious/cultural imperialism through practicing criminalized indigenous spirituality and by organizing revolts. The Spanish feared the power held by these influential members of society, knowing that as long as the Babaylan existed, the Filipino people would never fully be assimilated colonial subjects. The Babaylan were so feared that many were thrown to crocodiles to ensure their demise in an act of targeted genocide. — not knowing that in Filipino spirituality, to be consumed



by a crocodile, a sacred spirit, is to be transformed into a God. Because the colonizers posed such a threat to the survival of our spirituality and healing practices, the Babaylan were forced to go underground. This print honors Tapara, a queer Babaylan who incited uprisings in Iloilo. Their body was fed to crocodiles, but their spirits of resistance run in the blood of our people.



The Queer Kinkster Reader (Kitty and Midori), 2022

JASMINE LIANG



R e t u r n i n g



COMET IKEYA-SEKI was photographed just before dawn over San Francisco Bay area with a special, wide-angle camera.

Juan Gabriel, also known as Juanga or el "Divo de Juárez," is an artist that is deeply embedded in the DNA of Mexican culture. Take, for example, "Amor Eterno," the song he composed to honor his mom, and which is now often sung in funerals and in remembrance of those who have passed — serving as an anthem for those in mourning (bit.ly/QAPamoreterno). This print is inspired by that tension that Juan Gabriel lived in as a successful artist in a machista society and particularly in his genre of regional Mexican music. In one of his earliest album covers, he's depicted as seeing himself reflected in a mirror in traditional Mexican charro attire despite not wearing those clothes on the outside looking in. I argue that, similarly, his music and presence creates a mirror in which queer Latinx and genderqueer individuals can see ourselves within Mexican culture.

Despite never openly identifying as "queer" or going through a public process of coming out, when asked whether he was gay, Juanga would often say "*lo que se ve no se pregunta*/what you see, you shouldn't ask." Not only does Juanga challenge our notion of coming out, his success challenges the need to fit the cultural norms of what it means to be a successful performer in a culture where machismo and homophobia are societal norms. By existing as unapologetically as he did, and even further, by being as loved as he was, he created a space for other queer Latinx folks to exist and be loved and simply be.

اتن (Attan) is a traditional dance originating from the tribal Pashtun regions of Afghanistan. As most traditions that existed before the introduction of western imperialism, it is (at least, in my humble gay opinion) fundamentally queer. Oftentimes, it feels as though tradition and queerness are placed on opposite ends of a diasporic spectrum. An yet, I feel the most queer when I am dancing in traditional clothes to the sound of rolling drumbeats. I feel the most myself.

For decades, my people have been dancing under drones. They know better than anyone that joy comes not from the absence of war, but despite the abundance of it. When I danced Attan for the first time, barefoot in a Berkeley ballroom, I remember feeling my footsteps guided by generations of women who have danced these same steps before me. The space between memory and flesh is filled with the jingling of head jewelry. A tempest of whirling silhouettes, swelling upwards in a crescendo of leaps.

What does queer joy in diaspora look like? Clouds of colorful fabric suspended momentarily in midair. An ancient love ballad sung to the beat of drums and rubab. Embroidered coins glinting under overhead lights, bare feet hypnotized by the drumbeat. Bodies curling around the music. It also looks like dissonance. Like twirling and jumping while your homeland collapses. Like feeling incapable of holding these different worlds within yourself all at once, but still choosing to honor each one.



for me, certainly during pandemic times lies in the knowledge that my Queer ancestors have faced similar situations in the past, and that grief, death, life, and health are all nonbinary. and when thinking about the future, Prior Walter's final line in "Angels in America" comes to mind

THE
GREAT
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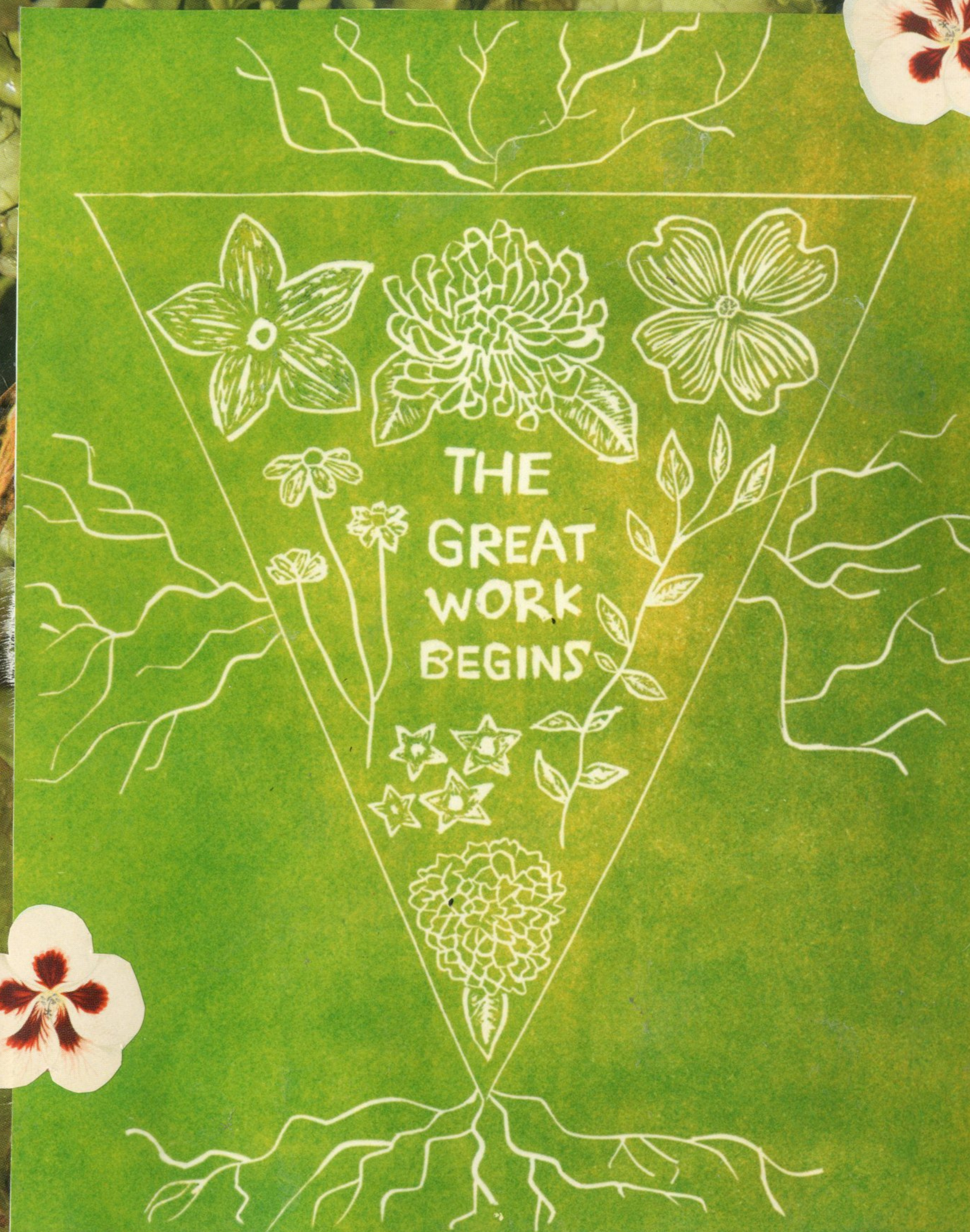
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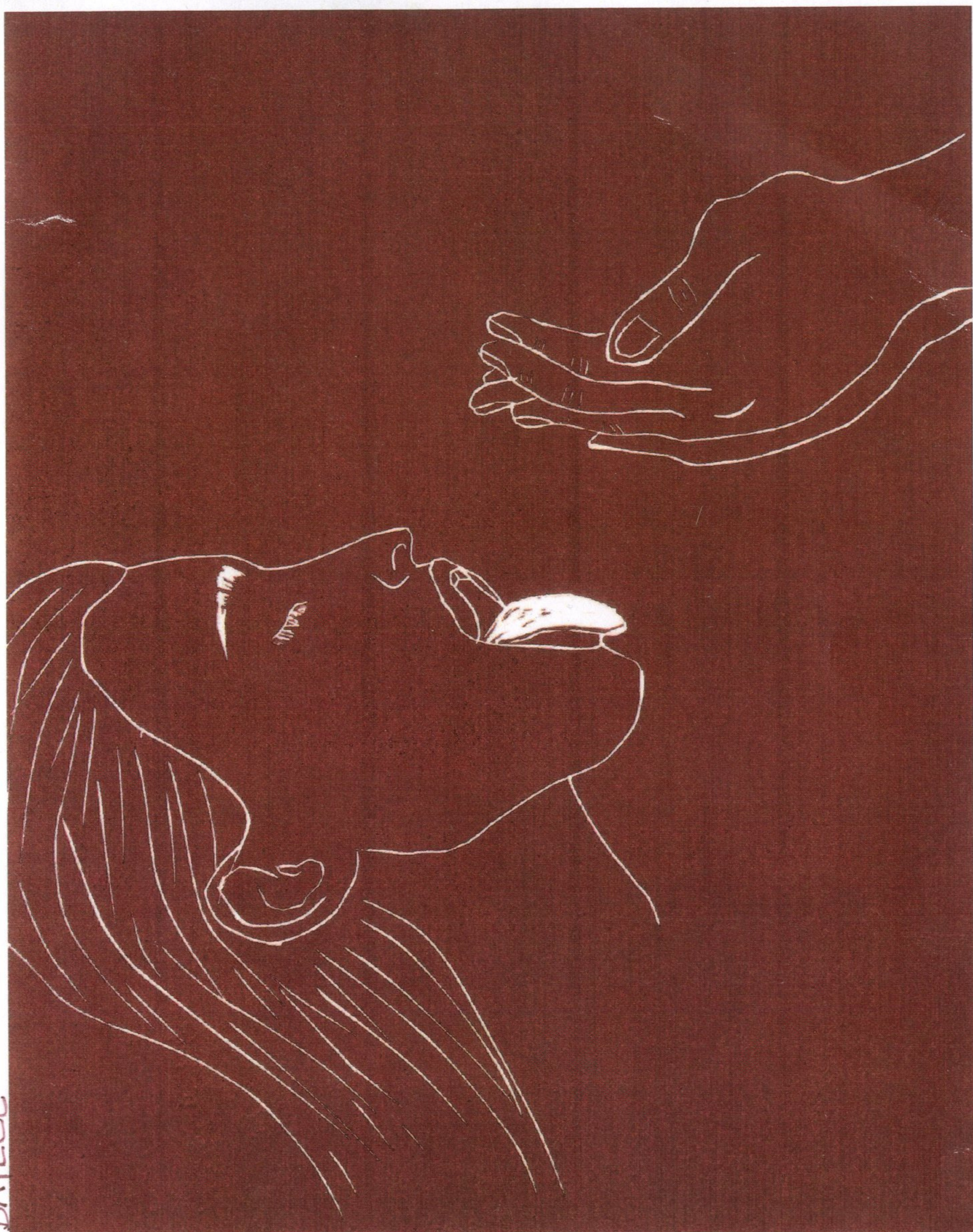
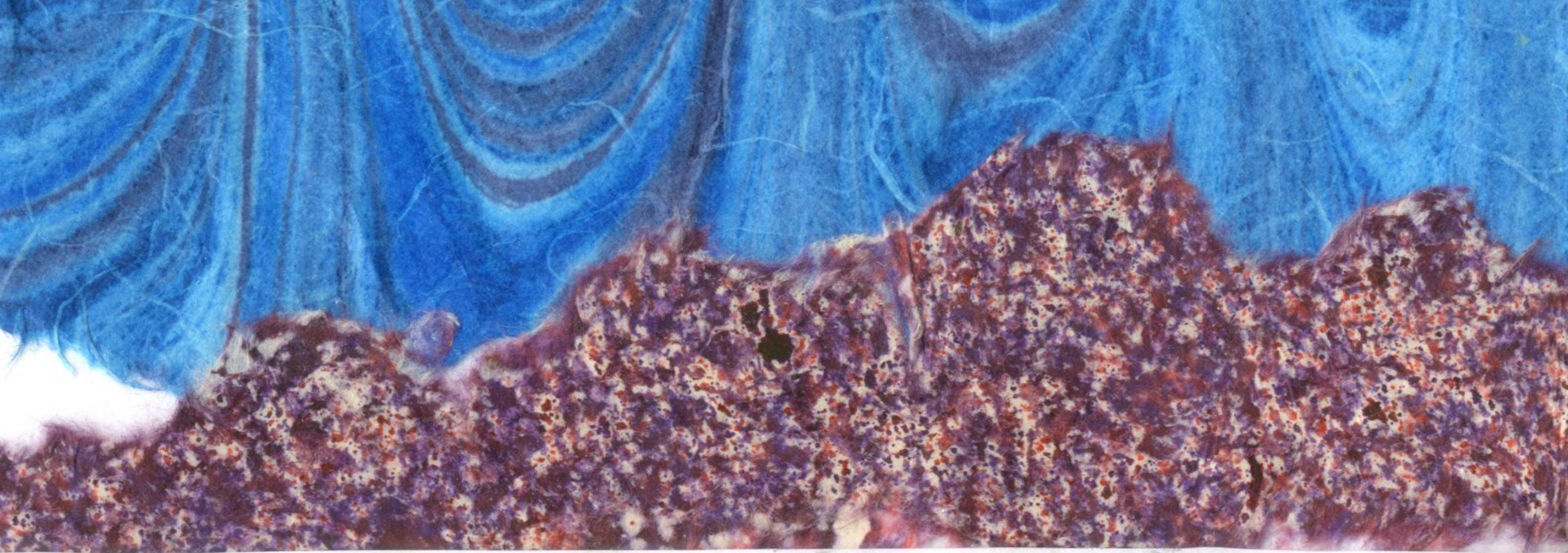
neighbors.

honor the history of Queer community care.

i am a firm believer that much of public health history is rooted in Queerness. this print is a tribute to the living and the grieving, the dead and the dying community members, the ancestors who are remembered and those we may have forgotten, and everyone in between. may the rot from the illness transform into soil that grows flowers on your graves. you are my chosen family, in sickness and in health, because Queerness includes both.



there is an opportunity for radical change, it's up to us to take it.



BAYLEE

THIRST

after Natalie Diaz

Natalie Diaz (1978-) is a Mojave poet and former basketball player. Her 2021 Pulitzer-winning collection Postcolonial Love Poem weaves together themes of sapphic love, her ancestral land that is the Mojave desert, her brothers, and Indigenous rights. I felt that these excerpts from “*exhibits from The American Water Museum*” perfectly encapsulated the entire collection. This print depicts a Native woman opening her mouth to catch whatever is held in the unidentified hands above. What is in those hands is open to viewer interpretation- is it the dirt that Diaz mentions? Is it water to finally quench the woman’s thirst? Is it the emptiness of false hope? Or is it something else entirely?

Reading Postcolonial Love Poem for the first time was life-changing. Diaz helped me understand that what resonated with me in Paula Gunn Allen’s work was not a fluke, but a sign that I belonged in this Native lesbian poet family that views the Native woman’s body as a metaphor for ancestral landscapes. Postcolonial Love Poem is an intimate portrayal of sapphic love that makes me emotional every time I read it.

satisfied.



Beef noodles and liang mian, 2022

Like most Taiwanese folks, my family comes from a military background because of the draft. My Yeh Yeh and Tai Gong had military careers in the KMT and my dad served in the 80s.

The stories my dad would tell me about his own experiences in the army shaped my childhood and my understandings of masculinity and belonging.

I wondered how militarism has shaped masculinity in Taiwan and how that relates to Chinese American masculinity as it is racialized in the U.S., and how it relates to my gender fluidity, whether people perceive it or not.

I imagine my future self time traveling back to Taiwan, where I'm in the military. I wanted to focus on a moment of leisure and comfort so I'm eating my favorite hot and cold Taiwanese staples, beef noodles and liang mian.

JASMINE LIANG

the artists

Katie Gilmartin's checkered past includes stints as a buoyant union organizer, bona fide sex researcher, and deeply engaged college professor, before becoming a deliriously happy printmaking teacher. In 2010 Katie (she/they) founded the Queer Ancestors Project, devoted to forging sturdy relationships between young Queer and Trans artists and their ancestors. Katie's illustrated noir mystery exploring the lives of Queer and Trans ancestors, *Blackmail, My Love*, won Lambda and Indiefab Awards. Katiegilmartin.com @Katie-Gilmartin

Baylee (they/any) is a Northern Cheyenne and Lebanese American lesbian who is obsessed with uncovering and/or reimagining the histories of oppressed peoples. In QAP, they are savoring the opportunity to find their Native lesbian poet family members.

Jess (any pronouns) is a lesbian Chinese American illustrator and historian based in North Oakland. Her work is inspired by sweet and joyful moments of everyday life and the richness of queer ways of moving through the world.

Sandy (she/they) is a queer Pinay ethnic studies educator and artist living in Oakland, CA. They love cooking, biking, and learning about indigenous history and abolition. You can find them on Instagram @__silt__.

María-Elisa "Mar" Valle (they/any) is an immigrant mexican lesboy whose coming out coincided with the revival of the artistic practice during lockdown. Since then, Mar has spent their time creating varied visual works on Lamchin-Ohlone land. In their free time, she enjoys hanging out with loved ones, collecting rocks and shells, reading, and dreaming about a queer utopia.

karishma johnson (any!) 23. lesbian. printmaker. focused on making art about the things they love most: fish, tomatoes, and being queer. @pukey.green

Ayoade (she/they) is an aspiring curator and artist in her sprouting stage.

Clara (they/them) is an unapologetically queer and undocumented education justice advocate and budding artist. Through their art, they explore [and try to make sense of] themes of migration and growing up queer in Latinx, immigrant household, as well as giving the people they love and admire their roses! They are inspired by the queerness of nature, the sun and the moon, and family-style meals. They grew up in the San Fernando Valley and currently reside in San Francisco with their cat Jamba Juice. IG: undocudesvelada

jam (they) is a toisanese artist based in ramaytush ohlone land. they enjoy experimenting with different mediums of art including linocut, collage, skin (hand poke tattooing), and hair (cut and color). their art explores queer love and the body as a conduit of ancestral wisdoms. jam is a member of the current queer ancestors project cohort ('22-'23) and can be found on Instagram @pear_jam.

Jasmine Liang (they/any) is a multidisciplinary artist, student organizer, and resident of Visitacion Valley. Through printmaking and digital and alternative photographic processes, Jasmine documents and self-archives their personal and ancestral histories connecting to their hometown of San Francisco. As a co-founding member of the Art Student Union at San Francisco State University, Jasmine is committed to connecting community to youth arts organizations and local artists.

Arina Sarwari-Stadnyk is an Afghan-Ukrainian diaspora artist and writer who is currently based in occupied Ohlone Lisjan land. Arina studied literature and creative writing at UC Berkeley and is currently applying to graduate programs in creative nonfiction. She is also involved in the Queer Ancestors Project, where she makes block prints and summons her queer ancestors as well as Pedaling Point, where she participates in collaborative storytelling that centers refugee experiences. In her free time, Arina enjoys skateboarding, dancing Attan, organizing sapphic poetry circles, cooking feasts with her housemates, worshipping cats, and generally wreaking havoc.

a zine made by

@queerancestorsproject

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