

Drawing as Preservation: Nature, Identity, and the Quiet Act of Paying Attention

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1) Reflect in particular about how your process or your outputs are specifically an act of preservation, documentation or activism:

I see my work as a way of telling stories that might otherwise be overlooked—stories about queer love in the animal kingdom, about trees as caretakers and witnesses, about creatures often misunderstood or feared. In that sense, I see it as both preservation and activism — a reminder that this planet is a home we share with other species who shape our lives, language and imaginations. I'm interested in the ways nature teaches us about transformation and resilience, something I hold on to in the face of climate catastrophe. Through illustration, I document these ideas, drawing from myth, science, and personal narratives. I hope my work challenges dominant narratives—whether it's about love, identity, or our relationship with the non-human world. Sometimes activism is loud, but sometimes it's in the quiet act of paying attention.

2) Reflect upon preservation and documentation in the era of the digital. Do you do scientific illustrations / work related to nature or the environment? What / how are you preserving through the act of drawing?

One major way we document, preserve, and share ideas today happens in the digital realm, which means that digital art is as much an act of preservation as carving images into stone once was. Illustration allows me to capture these themes visually and circulate them widely, reaching people in different places and contexts. Even though my work isn't scientific illustration in the traditional sense, it engages with the idea of observation and knowledge-sharing, blending fact and folklore to make people look at nature—and themselves—differently. What I'd like to think I am preserving is the human instinct for wonder — and specifically, the wonder of feeling connected to every living thing and process, of finding echoes and imprints of our shared DNA. I'm inspired by the ways in which the roots of trees look like our capillaries, the way irises resemble galaxies, the way a sapling, an ocean wave and our inner ear all look like the Fibonacci spiral.

3) Regarding materials and surfaces: where is your work created and why? Do you prefer digital or analog drawing – How does it change what you do (and how you feel about it)?

Digital illustrations are my bread and butter, and since I make those the most often (I illustrate a digital comic every week for my newsletter) my tablet is the most convenient and efficient way to produce those. But drawing analog – i.e. carrying a pencil and notebook and drawing outdoors, making life drawings, or just sketching on the tube for practice is integral to my artistic process. It is, along with journaling, how I make sense of the world. The few paintings I've made so far are all inspired by nature as well – one of a London fox and another of a forest spirit summoning a Peregrine falcon and a Brahminy kite.

4) Any quote or your thoughts about drawing.

I collect quotes about drawing like a magpie and my current favourite is this one by Eric Fischl, who said that he painted so that he could understand what he was feeling. Sometimes I know exactly what I am going to draw but I don't know why I need to make it, and the reason for its existence (or what the drawing is trying to tell me) becomes clearer as I go along. At other times, the drawing begins as a practice sketch or a hasty doodle buried in some journal, and years later it suddenly makes sense and I need to fish it out because I've finally understood what was happening in that moment – this is very satisfying.



Image 1. Under Her Shade: This is a privately commissioned artwork that is very dear to me because I hug a lot of trees. The person who asked me to make this wanted an image that captured their relationship with nature. During a difficult phase in their life, they would spend hours lying under a particular tree near their home, gazing up at its leaves, feeling sheltered and loved. This tree played a huge role in their journey towards healing, and I related to that deeply.

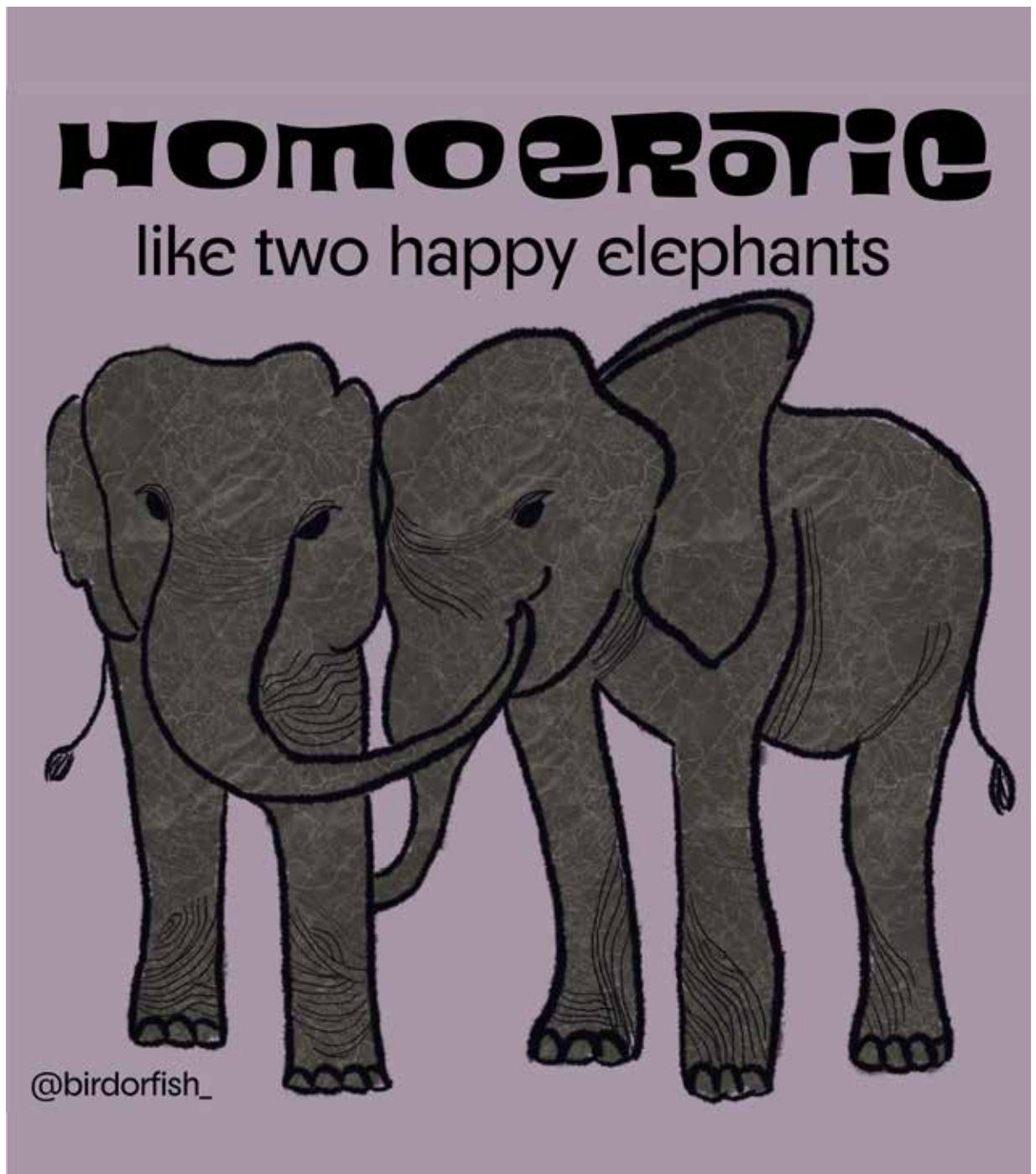
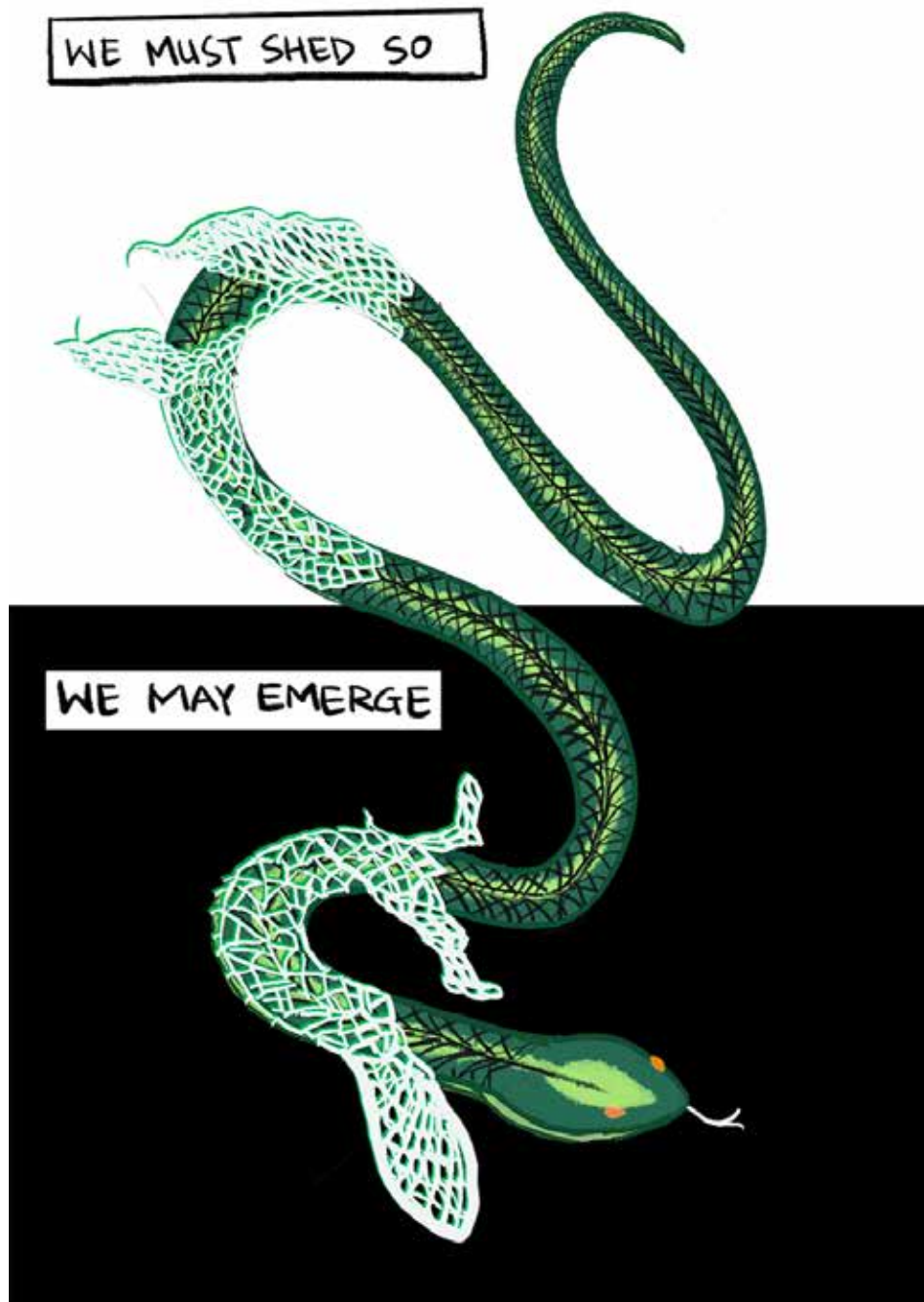


Image 2. Homo Elephants: This image is part of a series of illustrations I made called Nature is Queer, as a way to respond to the (mistaken) idea that still prevails in many parts of the world that the only “natural” way to love is the path of Cis-Het-Monogamy. The series included birds, mammals and reptiles and introduced me to some incredible queer icons of the animal kingdom. This particular illustration was inspired by the real life story of two lesbian elephants from Thailand, Tilly and Mae Kham Puan, who love going on long walks, bathing in the river and loving each other away from bull elephants. I also learned that Tilly was a bit of a monogamist but Mae Kham was polyamorous.



Images 3. and 4.: These illustrations are part of a graphic story from [my newsletter](#) about alchemy, transformation and growth. All of our metaphors for these processes are borrowed from nature — the seed of an idea, turning over a new leaf, hatching a plan and so on. The way we use language tells us so much about the way we see the world and our interconnectedness with nature. People tend to either love reptiles and insects or fear them, I fall in the former category.



Snakes are the most glamorous of the lot, and I've been obsessed with them since I was a child (Ka from Jungle Book, that slithering, seductive siren call of trusssst in me). In particular, the process of moulting/regeneration is one that is incredibly fascinating and inspiring. It's helped me think through the notion of fixed identities and selves, the ways in which we label ourselves and each other and try to fit whole human lives into little squares. We must shed these labels and identities as often as we can, like the snake, to examine what lies underneath and emerge as we truly want to be seen.



Image 5. This is an image of the Curupira, a folk legend believed to be the protector of Brazil's forests. The Curupira disorients hunters, poachers and woodcutters with their ability to hide in trees, produce whistles and bird calls, and make tracks that look like feet moving backwards. I learned about the Curupira, and about Brazil's connection to nature through capoeira, folk stories and songs taught by my teacher [Mestre Poncianinho](#). I made this image inspired by a song we performed together at our winter festival.