

Doodles and words

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Ode to Ridgefield, CT

The governor made my hometown a cultural capital of the state. Because we have an art museum said all the press releases, but everyone local has a different organization they claim is the reason. Like it's all because of the community theater says the people whose neighbors are running the community theater. Or it's all because of this live music venue says the people who have a crush on the woman who manages the place.

The town really embraced the whole art scene designation. Last month I went back to visit and randomly had lunch with two friends. Then to kill time we went to walk up and down the main street. Bam unexpected 'art walk' street fair. All of these 'local artists' showing and making art, congesting the main street. My mom claimed that's been happening, but I don't remember all that ever, and we lived off main street for years. I don't remember all the galleries. We went in them, the three of us friends, and had the weirdest conversations with the other art walkers. One friend goes to me, "That is what makes life worth living. That absolutely surreal random shit." Everyone who we talked to was speaking so funny. I got told I look really artsy. People always say that about me and I attribute it to my glasses.

The town never felt particularly artistic before and I was 'in the arts scene' in school. Like I would write and direct my own plays during elementary school recess. But I stopped that once other



people started putting on their own shows. We did not have a talent pool big enough to be running multiple productions at once. And then the recess monitors banned it anyway, because it was being disruptive. It did not take much to get banned, just meant it was new and intrusive and yet to be policed. So no policy was comprehensive but all policies were defensive. I heard they banned metal water-bottles in recent times. Like how can you justify banning a water bottle? Unless it's really loud when it falls to the floor, and it is then disruptive.

The town never felt particularly artistic but we did have a 'guild of artists.' I took one class there multiple times. In fact people thought I was related to the teacher because I just kept enrolling in

the same class. Like why else do the class again? The class was 'animal art' and I was not even an animal fan per say. I just loved the different projects we got to do. The final project was drawing her dog. It was our only live figure drawing but I was always stressed out on how to position him. Also I think we made him into foam/wood block prints. I must have also done a penguin one.

I perfected my penguin drawing technique when I did a third grade research report on penguins. I feel I took it more seriously that I was supposed to. I made a tri-fold. I wrote jokes into a speech and then my teacher made the class laugh at them. Cruel. She said, "I know no one is paying attention because no one laughed at Rachel's joke." Looking back on the project I



lied. I would stretch the fact for a joke. I just loved penguins. The documentary about penguins came out and I went with my mom and my stuffed animal penguin. I covered his eyes when the penguins died. I got to meet a penguin for my birthday at the aquarium. I did it again for my 16 birthday, and I ended up meeting the same penguin. Except when I first met that penguin (Red-green) they were training them on how to be a meetable penguin with their cohort (Green-red). So I was meeting them not as a trainee but a meetable the second time around. I posted all the photos to facebook and called the album ‘meeting the love of my life’ and all the people thought I meant the animal instructor dude. I had meant the penguin.

The town never felt that arty but I went back to the artist guild to perform a slam poem once in high school freshman year. I think three other friends who were into poetry were also there. At least this tall girl poet and gay guy I knew. I read one about lesbianism and internalized homophobia (even though I felt pretty straight most of the time at that time) and all the adults came up to after like, “You are so brave.” My middle school spanish teacher whose class I used to skip of all the time came up and was like “You are so brave” again and I could tell she was like, This is the reason this girl had been skipping my class. And that wasn’t true: I was skipping because love to lay in the nurses office, and I had figured out I could get away with it.

The town always felt gay. I read this 1980s gay erotica this man wrote set in the town. The story’s conflict is that the house is haunted and he hates our town because it’s oppressive to his gay urban artistic sensibilities. But I only found his work when researching the town at university in a different state. Anyway there have always been gay people in the town because I saw a lot of gay shit go down at least in my time. And I knew my parents knew gay people when they were my ages, so we got at least two generations accounted for. If we are an art town how would we survive without a gay population?

The town had two rappers. First was S who did a parody rap album. Something about Nuts was his stage-name. It was very homoerotic and graphic. I always claim he’s bisexual but only know him to date women. One time he tried to feel me up and it was one of the few times being a girl among the guys scared the shit out of me. All I could think was his mom is in the next room, feeling weird, and having to navigating through piles on laundry on the floor, the piles like lava, or maybe it was just a nightmare I had one time. A different time when I was still his friend he did a freestyle diss against another friend who became a brother but not brotherly. It rhymed well so it always stuck with me, but it was rude to my brother’s birth mother. He also was amazing to



me because one time we wanted to go to the movies but didn’t have a way to check the times. It was before you could browse the internet on the phone. Like when you would accidentally press down and then say no no no and try to press end as soon as possible not to rack up the bill. We wanted to go to the movies but didn’t know the times so he said, “I am going to call this kid who I know has no life and he will look up the times and read them back to us.” And he called the kid and the kid indeed was at home and happily looked movie times up for his friend. How could you ever want to lose a friendship like that, when you saw on the inside of someone else’s outside?

The second rapper was famous in high school and I got in a debate with my high school “flame” about whether or not the MC was “culturally appropriative.” “What does he really have to sing about in this town?” That kid was always poetic. My friend “spotted” him on a walk down main street and she told him a lie, that she a talent scout and him a model. She took photos of him for the “high school photography club.” When she told me I was just jealous that she took the photos of him. The MC spoke poetically two instances aside from his art. Once he said to my high school flame “Ya know bang in the beamer piece” about how he was going to hang out with some new student. Another time my flame was showing me how nonsensical he talked with his poetic best friends, that my flame could respond to “wyd” with “pizza slice piece” and the poet knew exactly what the flame was doing. Slice piece bang.

Another music group in the non-art town was the punk trio who were ‘cool’ to my friends. The trio were anchors in a larger association of people who partied together. One of them dated my best friend. Another member famously dated this girl and they famously added another girl to form a poly triad, and then the triad famously disintegrated into the only lesbian couple in the town. The third member of the punk group was always single. He was a rock legend locally. It was a rite of passage to have a crush on him. The one who had it worst was the tall girl poet. She cheated on him by making out with some other guy and then came to his house and recited a poem she wrote for him about her grief. The rock star had not known he was dating the tall girl poet. Thats okay because one time I cried after he made out with the tall poet and I don’t even like men.

Women In My Family

Women in my family wear red lipstick and are ready.

Family women rise, dance, trick security to set.

Forgiving women in my family: never take anything they say.

Women in my family are refusing to return what was taken.

In truth, women in my family murdered. Or it is as real as all whisper after.

Women drive fast, heads bounce.

We all get women shape.

I was woman: the boy, rose to the sky, high.

us outside, night mosquitos darted from

me to bite him. He told me. He told me:

he couldn't sleep. He woke up.

I was soothed knowing nature.

Women in my family have a nature of their own.

their daughters and their men, trailing, consequence of sun lighting body.



asked: 3, 4, 10, 60, 77, 119, 33, 120, 5

answered:

3 FAVORITE COLOR
Pink :)

4 FAVORITE MOVIE
10 Things I Hate About You

10 DREAM JOB
Vet-erinarian, weather-host, star-catcher

60 WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?
Winning the talent show with my friends. It was so fun when we rehearsed and took it so seriously for a few days. I felt famous.

77 WHAT'S THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?
The meanest thing I ever did is when I spit in Ellen Klive's eye and called her a, "Knave," all because she beat me in four square. I pummeled the mesh red ball into the ground as if it were her head. But the next day I came down with the flu, so everyone thought, "Oh that explains her yesterday, she's usually so sweet." Every bone in my body is like a horse-shoe crab's (soft). The four-square kill-shot bruised my forearms. All during the flu I hazily watched TV, ate Saltines, and iced my wrists. My mom had no sympathy for the arm boo-boo and the subsequent victim complex I had: I would leave toys and clothes all around the house, blaming my wrist, saying it hurt to twist and bend and pick up my trash. Pedantically my mom stopped bowing behind to clear my remains, so I saw litter pile up — then nothing was hidden to me about what I caused.

119 YOUR HOUSE, CONTAINING EVERYTHING YOU OWN, CATCHES FIRE. AFTER SAVING YOUR LOVED ONES AND PETS, YOU HAVE TIME TO FINAL DASH SAVE ANY ONE ITEM. WHAT WOULD IT BE? WHY?

Q & A

No one runs back in for one item. Or has the time to care about one item. There's flames. There's smoke. All the firemen are across the street with everything you had. You don't save your loved ones or pets, you need other people to. How can you tell everyone now running in where you would never go again that 'He likes to hide there when he's scared. Please look under the couch for my dog.' The bird probably already dead because his heart beat so fast that he had a heart attack, what you'd always feared, because you'd listened to his pulse before and knew what it sounded like, like something already sped up, something already on its end. First I wondered if things really burned like on cartoons, with one end lighting and making its way toward the other side, the physical of time left to intervene. But next I remembered that was only how bomb fuses singed.

33 PICK ONE: SATURDAY OR SUNDAY?
Saturday

120 OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN YOUR FAMILY, WHOSE DEATH WOULD YOU FIND MOST DISTURBING? WHY?
Whichever of my ancestors killed using their hands. They already touched death so much before they died. Would they have felt odd, dissolving into a border they once appreciated as rigid?

5 FAVORITE DRINK
Grapefruit juice



collaborate relax
I am I will be
worried I too
scary
things. Communicating
what will I be held to
What will I realize if I
misunderstood?
I am asked
about the things
I don't want?
them too? people
Collaboration
sounds good
trust fully
collaborate. relax fully
I want good
when I relax I
have
put trust in
people seeing I am
more
change

seeing I am

Love

brave

gain

already in my life, while unfavorable

well live open

seen honest about

enjoyment

come expense? Can I

need to do, what

I know

myself something

working toward? What

common goal

connected or an island?

Declassified 2

an island

laundry

.....

in my mind I

say to her.

.....

my bedroom. It sounds tiring

to go to the place. I need to make

her feel

choice. I figure out what I like

about her. I like

to escape deep into

another part

connected

to me.

Declassified 3

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Desire



I want to sprinkle
cinnamon sugar on
your knees'
back and tongue
my way down
the slopes of
your calves.



Homophobia

How gay are you?
Well, one time the girl-I-never
dated-but-was-not-
a-friend-to told
me I reminded her
of Valerie Solanas. Another
told me I seemed committed
to this-lesbian-thing.

I've had a crush on, like,
everyone ever. Or at least
thought about it and
it sounded nice. I miss being

around other dykes. It is so shocking
returned to the straight world. Small
doubt. Fear fear fear, always
fear. I want to be a fear eater. Flame

eater, right down the throat. Severed
head limp like a worm. Hold my finger
but only the tip, and let me feel
your fingers ring round my fist. Pass
back and forth or trade around the circle.

I wore an orange bra and underwear, too,
to prove I wasn't a whore. I wanted more

to peel. To pretend I was
nervous. I was fear
but for nothing planned. I expected

less words. Forgot I'd signed
up for conversation and a witness. All
the small things around.

I had not planned on being seen
and could not retreat. She commented,
I got nervous. She said it looked like blood.
I realized I never wanted to explain. Stop
seeing, just get over
here, kiss me!





Intrusive

In high school I dreamed taking my eye and cutting it open. I would practice virtual dissections posted 'pre-lab.' My best friend watched Kill Bill and she remembered me when fighter snatches woman's eye.



Sharing A Meal

Asking my best friend if he wanted to go to therapy with me, after learning I couldn't come back to play tomorrow, since I had therapy. Okay:

do you want to come? We don't really do anything at the office. I spend a long time picking out a snack. Then I drink hot coco I microwaved in a styrofoam cup. I experimented with differences in: length microwaved, ratio of Swiss Miss to water.

I always wanted to perfect a recipe, even the ones perfectly given. I experimented with the chocolate chip cookie recipe and my mom did not care for them. She didn't get why I did not follow a script that delivered excellence. I made Kraft Mac n cheese

but wanted to be fancy, so I never added milk, butter. It was sour cream or soy sauce. I brought my soy sauce Mac n cheese to the church teen sing out where they fed me one meal (relief for my mother) and I got to listen to a story and sing songs with other awkward people I never saw in school.



We sat far apart on plushy couches. Youth Leader N really hyped us up, saying he had an insane story to tell us, one you would never expect to hear in the Bible, about a man so fat, when a sword pierced him, he did not care, he kept on living.

A song Youth Leader N strummed on acoustic guitar was about a big, big house. It was my father's house. We described what we did in this big, big home. There was a big, big table, with lots and lots of food. And a big, big yard, where we could play football! Touch down! It was my father's house.



Family Steps

I am the girl
who slammed the door
and ran down
and up
the stairs.

It happened: a little girl
can pound her
soles against wood.

I felt hovered
and was floating
above too. Above me?

Angels? At the park
I asked for a sign and
some girl shouted ‘oh my GOD.’

Seeing
all that scares me: bodies
overlapped unexpectedly. Her head

and second her
head blurred in
from the back. Layering

when it should
mesh, be shared.

Love, a good descent.
Intrusive always,

“What if I tumble over?”
Desire, a hand offering

help off the pew.
At church arranging cookie platters.
I want to play host.

I want to invite
you in, large home, all
food and laughter,

all castle on a cloud.
Always my parents

home, where everyone congregates.
My parents,
my age, hoisting family:

two held.
Now I

forever
their child, forever

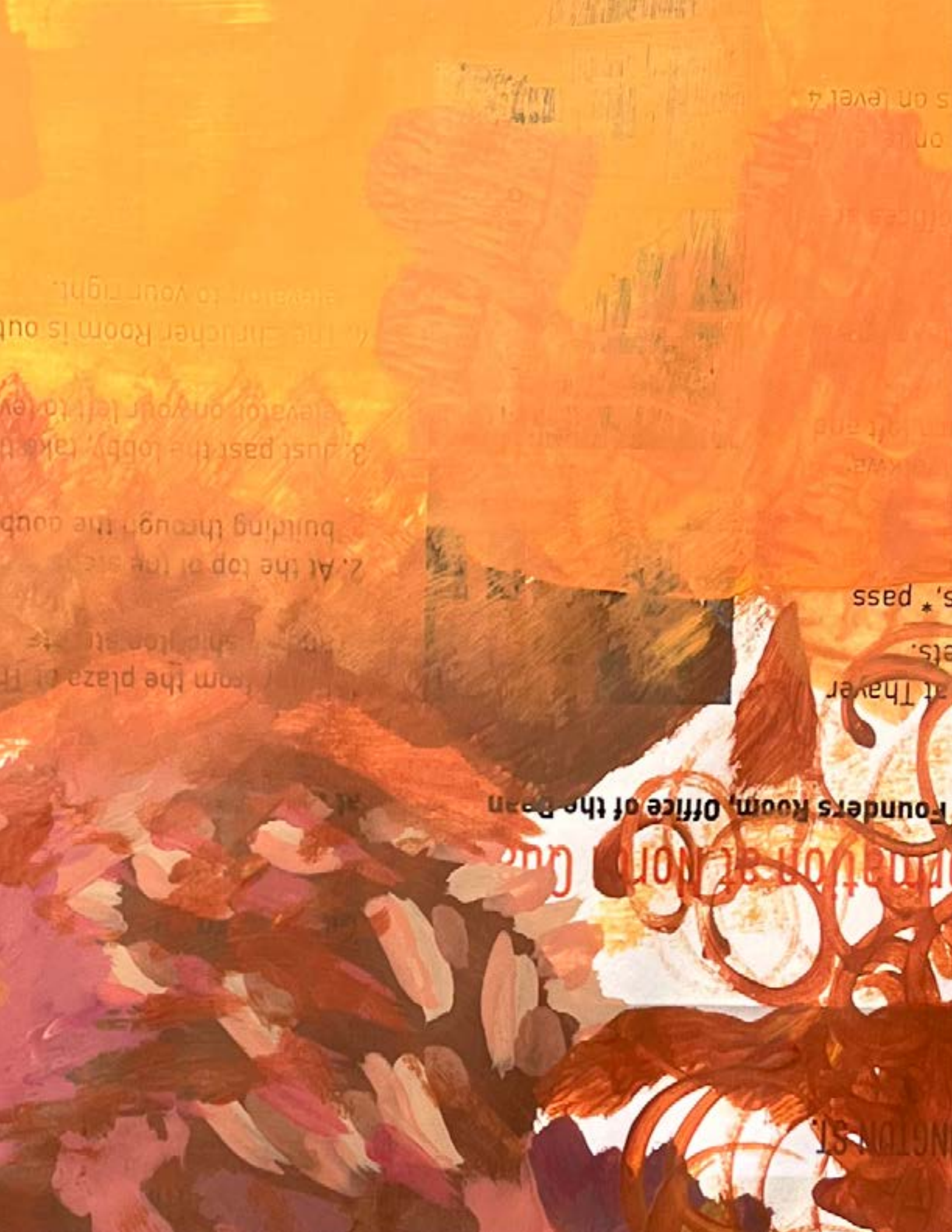
indebted. Everyone says:

I look so much like my dad,
if you see me next to him,

or so much my mom
if you see
me next to her.

I am: so much
both, learning
new and past.





Information at Noni Quay
Founders Room, Office of the Dean