

AN ANTIDOTE TO PERFECTIONISM

A celebration of urgent creative impulses
and choosing imperfect action
over perfection paralysis.

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AN ANTIDOTE TO PERFECTIONISM

Everyone can make cool shit.

The fucking Victoria & Albert museum has shoeboxes full of zines people made in a week on a busted typewriter and a stolen photocopier to throw at people in their school or their music scene, and half of them would probably be mortified that one of the 100 copies they made of their diary entries cut and pasted over comics about their ex got scanned and uploaded onto the internet archive and is being taught by strangers to stranger strangers. They're raw, cheap, too personal and riddled with errors - and it fucking rules.

Then there's all that perfect shit, the typo-free glossy art and writing that you immediately know is going to be in universities, even down to the fact that the font they used looks more expensive than the same font thrown on your docs.

The messy scraps of people's creativity is cool shit and the pristine masterpieces are cool shit. Everyone can make cool shit.

But you can't make cool shit.

Not now. You can have made cool shit in the past - the stuff you hold yourself to now, which felt flawed in the moment but gets rosier the further you get from it, that you wish you could manage today - and you could make cool shit in the future - some unknown version of you, somehow free from everyday life and the little problems that keep you stuck, who unlocks some secret potential that's felt like it's eluded you in the moment for your whole life, yet somehow you can spot in yourself looking back and are convinced you'll have eventually - but you can't do it today.

Cool shit is made by you yesterday or tomorrow, and other people whenever they do anything.

It's not cool to make cool shit.

Making anything means taking a potentially perfect idea from the idyll of your mind and forcing it to exist in imperfect actuality. It's the opposite of the lie we tell kids when their dog dies. Your creative project was off on the farm, running around with its booker prizes and pulitzers and oscars and being photographed poking out of your favourite celebrity's luggage, then we took it out back and forced it to limp around, smelling damp with its mangy fur and wrong number of teeth.

Then your reward for the one thing worse than killing your darlings - making them live - is that you become incredibly vulnerable, having to admit you care about something enough to take an action.

Loads of actions actually - wrestling with making it extant, figuring out what imperfections you'll have to leave because otherwise it'll end up abandoned and never even get to be uncool shit and what imperfections you'll have to fix else you'd rather tear your eyes out than let anyone see it in this state, finish it even after the fun parts are done and the momentum's left you.

Then it's done and god forbid, you actually have to show someone. And you'll agonise on how to do it but it'll all boil down to staying "Hi, I'm just some person but I made some art about it. I guess I think I'm that fucking special. Please look at it because this matters to me." Fuck. Can you imagine? And then people look at it! Never the right number, either. Either it's so few that it feels like it doesn't matter or it's way too many and it feels like it matters far too much.

It's not cool to make cool shit and you'll have always made it as yourself, never the perfect version you'll be in the future or the charmingly imperfect person you were in the past who felt all the same weird stuff about themselves but you can look back on with kindness you didn't have then. No, now you're just as fucked as

you were then but older, should know better, are more tired, and you haven't had a chance to forgive yourself for whatever you've got going on now yet.

You can only make shit.

So your only option is to not make anything, or make shit anyway.

You're everyone else's someone else, so to all the people you aren't, your shit will be cool shit. You'll either be their friend whose work you love and hype up to everyone who'll listen, or their stranger who's cool shit they either torture themselves comparing their incomplete shit to, or gets them so motivated they want to make their own shit.

Putting everyone else's shit aside, you're your past self's future self and your future self's past self. Your current shit is the shit they were looking at when they were judging their shit.

Your shit will become cool shit.

Right now, you're too close to it. So it feels like it's just shit. But you've done cool shit in the past, and you'll do cool shit in the future. You'll make cool shit again.

The next thing you make will be cool shit one day. Even in the worst case scenario where you end up hating it, you made something. Someone who sees it will love it more than you do and more than you expected they would/could. You practiced taking action and got yourself a step closer to the next cool shit you make by doing this shit. And more than anything, inaction is an action, and there's nothing worse than never doing your ideas. They're not even shit. The only way to 100% guarantee they won't be anything good to come of something you make is to not make it.

So we make shit anyway.

If you've made it this far, I want you to make shit. And I want you to help me make shit.

I've not been writing and I've not been publishing because I needed to write all that to myself. If you needed to read it too, let's give each other some momentum and make cool shit together.

Make something. Anything. Start right now. If you're reading this, you can almost definitely get started right now even though you'll probably tell yourself you can't. It doesn't have to be perfect, because it can't be perfect. It just has to be. It can be anything from a single poem or sketch to writing up a concept of something you always wanted to do but never did to an entire zine that you think is shit but could end up in the V&A thanks to one cool curator who took a shine to it.

Make something now. You have to finish it this week.

By the end of the week, send it to me. I'll publish it in a big collection of cool shit.*

(*Only one rule - don't be an asshole. I'm not going to publish bigoted shit. I'm not putting racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, etc shit.)

I'll publish it by the week after, because I'm not allowed to be a perfectionist about this either. It'll be published online so everyone can see their shit and each other's shit real easy, and I'll make a printable PDF zine version of it too, so everyone who wants a physical scrappy zine copy of it to hold in their hands and make its way into a museum can do that, without me having to deal with the printing costs and pricing and shipping that'll get in the way of immediately doing cool shit and make it less accessible anyway.

Start it now, finish it this week, send it to antidotetoperfectionism@gmail.com

Thanks for reading, I love you, I love this, I love how things are so exciting and so possible once I get out of the way of my own shit.

Now go make cool shit.

- Casey Garfield

—

The above was written in one sitting on a Sunday night and shared online the next morning, unedited, before the energy behind it had a chance to subside.

What follows is everything that was sent in response over the following week, presented in the order it was received.

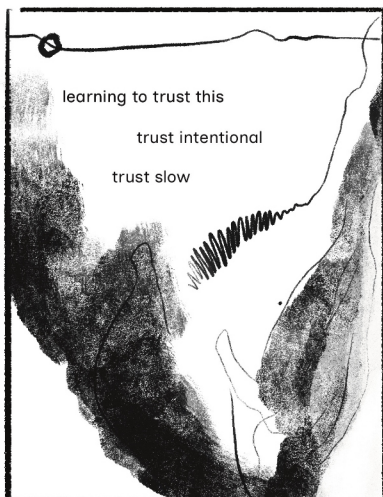
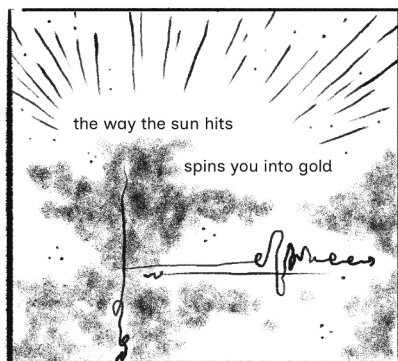
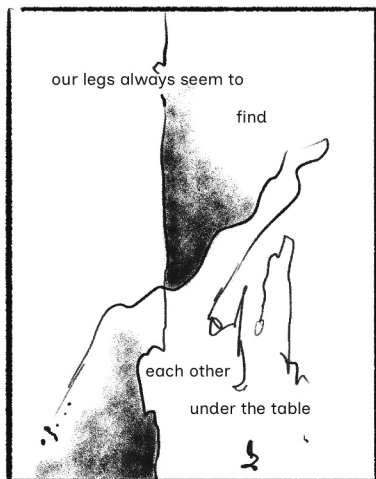
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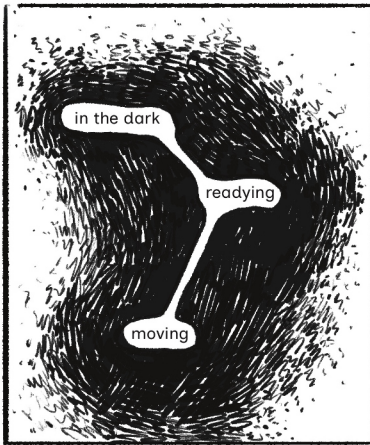
The entire issue can be found online, for free, at www.placeholderpress.co.uk/antiperfectionism - but it's cool to hold art in your hands, especially since this was inspired by riot grrl zines of the 90s (in particular, Glorianne: A Girl's Guide To Getting Involved, which was also made in a single week and is all the better for the urgent energy and scrappy outcomes of it) so we made physical copies too.

Huge thanks to Lucy K Shaw and everyone who took part in her workshop series The Chapbook Factory, where we held a conversation about perfection paralysis and the importance of taking action and making cool shit, which was the catalyst for this entire project.

Massive love to everyone who got involved, and to you for reading this. Enjoy everyone's cool shit, then make your own. It's too late to be in this zine, but never too late to make your own. Tell me about it when you do, yeah? www.caseygarfield.co.uk/contact

[GLACIALLY, BUT NOT FROZEN;
THE WAY IT MELTS, SLOW AT
FIRST AND THEN ALL AT ONCE





- honor ash

YEAR BEGINNING NOW

Alright! Time to overthink this.
Feeling first then
Thought invents
The sin to justify.

You are afraid
Almost all the time.

Imagine for a moment,
Your punishment
Has some kind of end goal, a destination,
Any metaphor to make it make sense when
So much love
Cascades your way.

Imagine yourself innocent.
Note to self:
Listen to why she loves you.
Start here, and here, and here

- Taeside

MISSED DELIVERY

We played a messy game
of pass-the-parcel
for years. I was always
returned to sender
before anything could
really get started,
a gift
too difficult
to open,
or so I was told.

Now, I unwrap the layers
of the present
to offer what I find
to myself.
Learning, as I go,
how to belong
in the world
in the moments
when the music
stops.

- Sara Collie

THE MANY LIES OF MR CAPITALISM (PART 1)

The Many Lies of Mr Capitalism (part 1)

February
2025

"We are born alone and we die alone"

Really? REALLY?! There's not a band of women
Waiting to birth you, your mother included?
What kind of anti-fact nonsense is this?

You are born into community

Communality

a den of care and love

How dare you deny that truth

The loneliness you speak of is yours alone

You drove the connectivity out of your life

With greed and destruction

Don't pretend yours is a universal truth

Indigenously we die in company too

On a bed of memory and peace, if we are lucky
Or on an adventure of life-making with our
village

The fact of this matter is that by nature,

We are togetherness our whole life

One people, one tribe, one love (thanks Bob M)

- Alexia Pepper de Caires

THIS HOUSE, THIS BODY

There is a sunlit spot on the window seat,
where light pours in thick as honey,
where warmth collects like a held breath.
I sit there.
I do not move.

Outside, the world is running.
I hear it in the rhythm of trainers on pavement,
in the chatter of dogs off-leash,
in the hiss of bus brakes and the clatter of wheels,
in the shuffle of a child skipping over cracked slabs.
It is all moving.

Inside, my body is a locked door.
A house with faulty wiring, a leaking roof.
The bones ache, the muscles stiffen,
fatigue spreads thick and slow,
a fog crawling in under the front door.

And then the thought—
because there is always the thought—
if I am already this tired, this brittle,
if my limbs already resist the weight of the day,
how will I carry a child?
How will I hold them when they cry?
How will I chase after them, scoop them up, spin them
laughing?
How will I be what they need
when I am not always what I need?

The sun moves, shifts its shape,
abandons the carpet to shadow.
The warmth leaves,
and I am still here,
sitting.
Waiting.

Wondering how much of this life
will be spent watching,
and how much of it
I will get to live.

- Nia Cain

VINEGAR POND



'Vinegar Pond' is a video collage by Kirsty O'Rourke.

These stills are taken from the full video, which can be viewed in the online version of this magazine at placeholderpress.co.uk/antiperfectionism



Over the ambient sound of the wind and birdsong in Mousehold Heath - punctuated by the sounds of water lapping, plopping, and ice breaking - footage of Vinegar Pond is played and overlaid in a collage of short clips.



- Kirsty O'Rourke

I JUST DON'T KNOW

And I dunno, man, I guess when I was sat in that steam room on the verge of a panic attack, thinking of all the stuff I had to do, and how I accidentally slept in, and how this swim-'n'- steam was supposed to be a relaxing start to the morning, and how I'll start this new job soon and have to get up for work in the morning, and how much life-time I'm gonna lose working to live, and how the heat I'd intended to clear my pores feels kinda stifling, and how this gym makes me so sad and I'm gonna miss it awfully, I guess at that point I was annoyed when you walked in and sat down next to me.

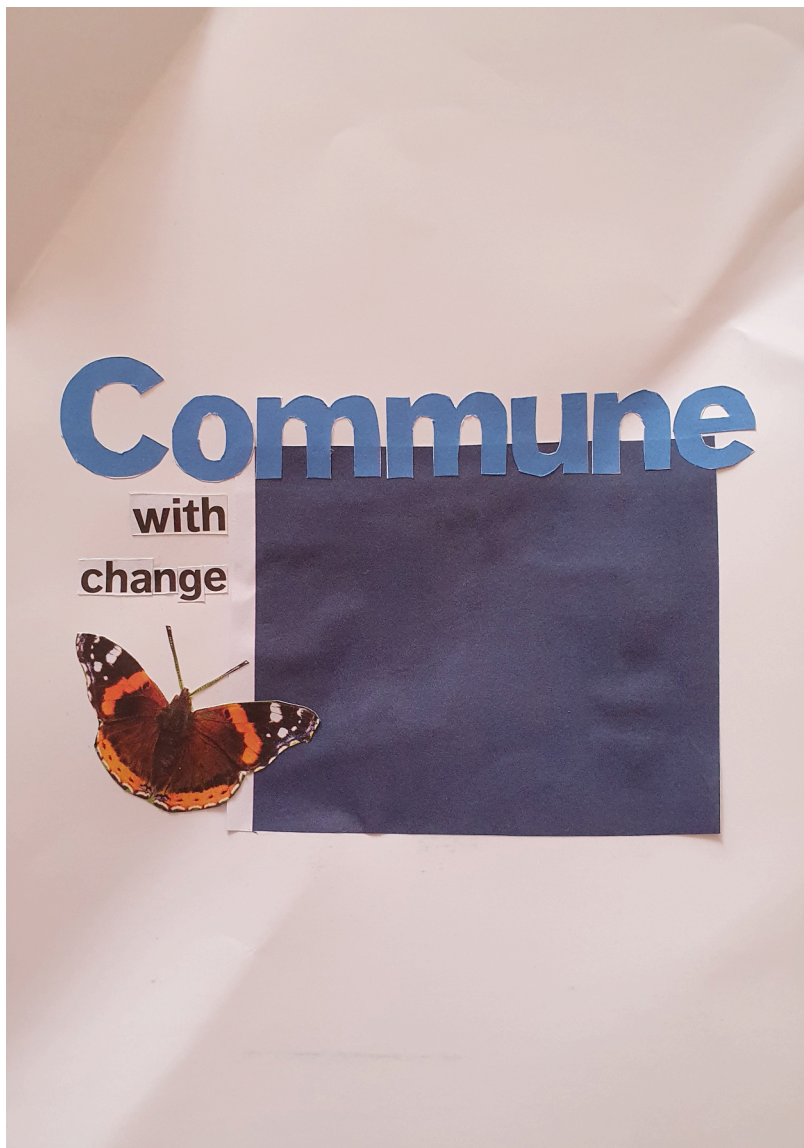
And I dunno, man, I guess I had some unfair preconceptions when I heard your thick Norfolk accent and saw your aging, tattooed skin, hair scraped into a ponytail as you moaned about the sauna being broken, and I guess I instinctively pulled up my knees and crossed my arms over my chest, because you are a man, man, and I'm aesthetically a woman and we're both near naked here, and I guess I wasn't gassed to find I couldn't have my panic attack in peace.

But, I dunno, man. Then you started talking about your wife and your trip to Wales to see the grandkid, and how much you love that campervan 'cause you can park for free right near the beach, and all the places you used to travel to on your motorbike, across the channel with your lady wrapped around you, and the villages in Italy with their perfect cheese-cube houses, and the Thailand sands that taught you how to party until 7am, and the bars in Cambodia where you found friends from home you didn't even realise you'd missed, and how the people in India were the most beautiful you'd ever met, and how I was still so young and had to travel while I could, and then you stood to walk across the pool because it was better for your joints and it lets you get your steps in, and I dunno man, I guess it's 'cause I was on edge already, but I just wanted to sob at how you could be so kind and inspiring when it's not even mid-

morning yet, and I guess it's just that, without knowing it, you put into perspective how much time there is for everything and I dunno, man, I just think you're better than you'll ever know, I guess.

- Cathleen Davies

COMMUNE WITH CHANGE



- Bryony Mason

BEAUTY OF ORIGINALITY

how frustrating that such beauty ceases to exist in a modern world where everything is designed by someone with no sense of style or creativity, cathedrals don't look like cathedrals, churches don't look like churches, uniforms don't look like uniforms, business casual doesn't exist anymore and we're continuously resorting to bringing back old styles on our own as a way to have some sense of originality. not even that, just something different from all the greys and blacks and whites and hoodies and joggers. where's the effort? where's the small details, the smart little references, the subtle hints at things we, as a society, care about. or don't we care anymore?



- Anya Gant

ROSSIAN'S ANGEL

There's a fluffy little ocean
Pooled in my lap
A tidal flurry pouched in her slumber
Eyes creased in lullaby
Pink velvet button stirring the air we share
I plumb down the tip of my breath
To nestle it there
And find out what all the fuss is about
Before I feel myself float off
In dream.

- Leia Newland

THE FABLE

Here is the fable.

Two men meet from different worlds and they both have a different word for The Thing.

They cannot agree on a word for it, they both think their word is the best.

And they argued and argued about the best word until one man killed the other.

And then he had no one to argue with about the best word for the feeling of loss

- G Healy

HALF POEMS

I wish it was spring all the time

But if it was spring all the time

I wouldn't feel the overwhelming relief that the first
sunny day in slog of grey clouds brings

Would it be possible to appreciate an eternal spring

I think I'd try

You hear the first drop of rain before you feel them and
for a moment it feels like a dream
Suspended in space moments before a downpour

We are strange and beautiful creatures

The thing about eating healthy is that I keep having to
buy fruit
The kitchen has become overrun with
Clementines/ tangerines / satsumas
And I'm not sure what the difference is other than they
are great this time of year
And Maya laughs because I can't help saying it every 3
pm when it's
Clementine / tangerine / satsuma time
Which should grow tiresome but instead they smile and
beat me to the punchline
Clementine/ tangerine / satsuma season will be over
soon
And I refuse to eat a sad dry bitter fruit
They're just better this time of year

Every nature poem reads the same

If you sit still long enough you'll become part of the
landscape, a home for spiders webs and a perch for tired
damsel flies

It's a warm bright October afternoon & I think we're all
the same

The same ducks drying their wings in the sun, robins
eating the last of the blackberries,

I remember the whimsy of being five

The same as I remember the whimsy of being 17 and

I think that's why I get on with everyone

I'm doing an escape room

I'm walking to work on a cool September morning
listening to paramore & feeling the the back to school
anxieties of my 14 year old self

How did I End up here

- Freya Elise

'ON DOUBT AND DOCUMENTARIES

Ganymede is *(as far as we know)*
The 8th largest object orbiting the sun
and it orbits the *(as far as we know)*
Largest object orbiting the sun and
some of us think it likely has *(as far as we can tell)*
Three magnetic fields acting on it
which cause *(some of us have claimed)*
The strange banding of aurorae observed
around the middle of each hemisphere

*when the attachments around my spine hum into my
hips I ask again what's wrong with me that my
percussive joints can crack their little
radiations into orbit and hang heavy now around
my jaw*

I remember being young and watching Blue Planet (1)
In the big sweeping flatpack chair
with my feet on the beanbag
And the humpback whale is trying to get herself
between the pod of Orca and her calf
Pushing it to the surface until it gets too tired
And Attenborough sadly pronounces her failure
as the scene transforms into a whalefall
so we can learn from this how nothing is ever wasted

*I want to say I'm drowning but succumbing feels
more like breathing than breaking the surface
ever did and I wonder if I sink too readily to
rot and marine snow too keen to nourish and
dissolve under too many mouths to feed alive*

Ice floats because the water molecules stick together in
hexagons
Load spread evenly across itself and rigid full of spaces
*(or so it always looked in clicking mismatching
spiked plastic atoms and soft hollow bonds)*
And iron falling into the oceans on the early earth
reacted
With the oxygen in the water to make rust

And the chemical reaction of iron rusting in the water
Let the oxygen out (*We're pretty sure*)

*And I react to you like iron and water and
pressure and rock like dried out peaty fields and
tilled scarring soil desperate for the flow to be
dammed and dug and diverted in some instinctive
service*

There have been groups of scientists observing Orca in
Antarctica
And one at one time was concerned
For the matriarch of a pod that is sometimes observed
Moving together to make waves to wash their prey
From jagged havens now washed smooth
Dissolving floating sanctuaries
Exhausting
He hadn't seen her yet you see and missed her
Worried that food had become too scarce for her
cunning

*I tell myself if I ever move I might invite my
favourite pigeons to make the journey with me so
they can find me again if they like and never
have to worry about food*

We're still not sure why or how bees
make such perfect hexagonal honeycomb
If they measure with their bodies
or if that's just what happens to slightly warm wax
circles
When you surround them on six sides with each other
But either way bees arrange isodiametric cylinders
evenly in a pattern
And I wonder if the bees and water are quite sure
the shapes they make Are the right shapes
for what they're after

*epistemology is my jam I said and there's too
many knowings and knowledges and god can you
give it a rest all the agonizing and obsessing
and agonizing as if there was a wrong shape*

to condense into

The twin auroric shackling of Ganymede *(Some of us suppose)*

Is caused by it's triplicate magnetic field

One just like our own a core of spinning molten heat

One hidden salty ocean underneath it's crust

(some of us hope it is alive somehow or will be when we get our hands on it)

One field is not it's own

By its close orbit around the largest object *(that we know)*

Orbiting our sun

*ease neglects coming easily in the asides and
outpacings and the essayists paranoid picking at
the peeling edges of paper thin skin scalded and
pulling back from itself in the charring steam
and I think I'm afraid to react and reaction is
change*

- Eddie Lambe

JOY IS NOT MADE TO BE
A CRUMB (AFTER MARY OLIVER)



- Sallyanne Rock

THE SUN SHONE IN FEBRUARY, AND MAYBE THINGS WILL BE 'OKAY

The most beautiful sight you'll ever behold
Is roughly 2pm on a summer afternoon
Some 10 or so years ago
Surrounded by your friends
And you won't even realise it
Until it's far too late

Parked in a docile green bathed in gold
A river trickles and bubbles coolly
In the shadows of a ruined church.
Collapsed and abandoned bikes stacked together
Form a monument to the carefree.
An idol to idleness.
A previously tossed frisbee adorned as its crown
Geometric and resplendent in its curves

Tinny dubstep rattles from the mono speaker
Of a LG Optimus
A smart phone with a touchscreen that doesn't cost
hundreds
And proudly boasts a rear camera with megapixels in
the double digits

The future is now.

- Oli Russell

BÍOS

honor ash is a songwriter and poet from Norwich. She believes that every poem is a love poem.

Taeside is a Norwich-based poet and ex-teacher. She has an unhealthy affinity for pringles. Fun fact: she is gay.

Sara Collie (she/her) is a Norwich-based poet with a PhD in French Literature and a lifelong fascination with the way that words and stories shape and define us. You can find her wherever the wildflowers are currently blooming or discover her published work online at saracollie.wordpress.com/writing

Alexia Pepper de Caires is a writer, collager and noticer in the Middle, aka Birmingham. She runs Back To Books Brum @backtobooksbrum as a radical, queer & feminist community bookspace when spoons allow. Art @neon_pony__

Nia Cain (They/He) is a Norwich based creative spirit, drawn to adventure and the outdoors with their dog Obi. Through art, writing, and music, they are learning to navigate the complexities of disability while finding joy in the world around them.

‘Vinegar Pond’ is a video collage by **Kirsty O'Rourke**. See more of their work at horsegirl1995.mmm.page

Cathleen Davies is a writer, researcher, and teacher from East Yorkshire, England. Her work has appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies. She writes literary fiction for LGBTQ+ audiences. Their three solo collections ‘Cheeky, Bloody Articles’; ‘And Marvel’; and ‘Fluid’ have been published by 4horseman publications.

Bryony Mason is a Fine Art student at Norwich University of the Arts mainly focusing on collage and found text works. Creating short poems from the

existing media she finds in newspapers, books, and leaflets found for free or bought second hand, Bryony aims to use the familiar and often disregarded to create something meaningful and compelling. Find her on Instagram at @artist.bryony

Anya Gant is a Norwich University of the Arts Fine Art student using a variety of mediums in their work, such as paint and ink. They also enjoy digital art, photography and text work as shown here. Find them on Instagram at @anyaarts._

Leia Newland (she/they) is a Scotland based poet working to support carers in their local community. For 20 years they thought the lyric 'twisted firestarter' was 'terrific firestarter' in The Prodigy's classic banger 'Firestarter'.

g healy makes stuff

Freya Elise is a queer paper cut illustrator inspired by folk art, nature and magic. Instagram: @freyaelise

Eddie Lambe is an occasional poet and sometimes househusband, who posts poems at @baathos and non-poems (including the favourite pigeons mentioned) at @eddiesheep2010

Sallyanne Rock is a queer, neurodivergent poet from the Black Country. She is also an access support worker for artists, and solo parent of two teenagers. Recently she's been exploring ways to blend poetry with visual art, including drawing and textiles. Instagram @sallrockpoet.

Oli Russell used to say they were a "guy that does poetry" over a poet, who "writes bad poetry about good friends". After some earnest feedback around negative self talk, Oli Russell now identifies as a Norwich based poet, who writes decent work on a range of topics.

Thanks for reading,
go make more cool shit.

FEATURING

Casey Garfield

honor ash

Taeside

Sara Collie

Alexia Pepper de Caires

Nia Cain

Kirsty O'Rourke

Cathleen Davies

Bryony Mason

Anya Gant

Leia Newland

G Healy

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