

**SEEN** is a space for LGBTQ+ young people in the UK to authentically express themselves. We wanted to provide a place for multimedia art, poetry, prose, video and image to be mutually enjoyed. At the same time, giving grounds for young people to channel their thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives into creative works.

**SEEN** is brought to you by akt and Q42. akt is a national charity supporting LGBTQ+ young people aged 16–25 who are experiencing homelessness, facing familial rejection, or living in a hostile environment. Manchester's Q42 Project at 42nd Street is a safe and social space focusing on nurturing the emotional wellbeing of LGBTQ+ young people, and collaboratively campaigning for their rights.

**Content warning:** This zine contains references to gender and race discrimination that may be triggering for some.

As a multimedia digital zine, we're opening submissions to any art form.

**[akt.org.uk/seen](https://akt.org.uk/seen)**



**lily warnes**



**india daisy**



**misty taylor**

## rainbow road

It's no coincidence  
that the gayest track  
on Mario Kart  
is also the most difficult.  
The rage I experience  
when playing Rainbow Road  
is how it feels to be gay most days.  
Yes, being gay looks like  
a colourful celebration  
to an outsider  
at a Pride parade.  
But in reality,  
it's fucking hard.  
We have to fly through  
intergalactic hoops and  
constellations to discover  
ourselves.  
Steer the tight corners  
of heteronormativity.  
Fall off the edges  
over and over  
in pursuit of  
the finish line  
where we're greeted as  
champions,  
accepted and celebrated.  
Victors, at last.

conor giblin

# lady sinister

A thing at once unadorned, stately, inspiring at first recalling the buried princess, perhaps silly, almost certainly vain and yet - are these not traits becoming

Of the darling diadem, a seat of first ascent?

Princesses are an emblem of girlhood.

A thing I have been robbed,

A grave much trampled.

I will assert my womanhood

I will take my queendom

I will delight as Lady Sinister

Usurp the histories (let the bloodied papers show!)

Bring me my gown too grim for balls yet ostentatious such that secretaries are dazzled.

I wear the colour of the eye's pupil such that none forget:

I am aware.

World, you have started such rumours!

Worry not.

Draped in truth,

I form the very shadows in your minds to assert stability.

Fear not what lies beneath your beds.

It is only I: your Queen, of the black dress.

I wrote this poem shortly before coming out as a trans woman in 2019. In my own head I was growing to accept this side of myself. A major first step for me was realising the simple joy I felt in wishing I could buy the dress this poem inspired.

I saw it in a shop window in the Trafford Centre and kept inventing excuses to cut through the shop to look at it. The puffy sleeves and plunging neckline had a fairytale elegance that I so desperately desired to see in myself, contrasting so powerfully against the cool, black fabric.



I never did come out in time to buy before it disappeared from the display, but by writing the poem, I felt I came to own it in a way. The things I wanted to express by wearing that dress found their voice here.

It was also an experiment in writing an empowering poem. I'm quite fond of contradictions and dissonance, usually. Even here, you can see where the Lady Sinister narrating the poem struggles with being perceived. Is wearing this dress as empowering as she thought it might be? Does she seem vain or childish for trying so hard? The contradictions resolve themselves by acknowledging the difficulties of her past (the girlhood taken from her, never being allowed to be a princess) and how they link to the desires for the future (asserting her womanhood now, even without the formative girlhood). This builds a momentum of empowerment that carries the poem on until she speaks her truth, and thereby wills it into being: "It is only I: your Queen, of the black dress".

The themes of darkness are there out of my own love for the deconstruction of old binaries. The sun is almost always an oppressive eye of an unjust authority in my work, echoing back to reading *The Great Gatsby* and the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg in the second chapter. If God had an eye, it would be the sun, and it would be unbearable to stand in. It's a form of reclamation then, that darkness and sinister feeling became so significant in this poem.

Why do we fear darkness? Because it is uncertain! There could be anything in there, after all. I invite you instead to think of darkness as a place of limitless possibility. You could be anything you want in the darkness without judgement. It is easy to lose your footing, but how else do we form the boundaries of what we are, if not by experimentation and mishaps?

There are no other Gods or authorities apart from yourself.

Why not try being a queen?

**simone haynes**

# it happened by accident

To tell the truth, I had been questioning my sexuality for about four years after I admitted that I imagined this girl in my class at secondary school in a dream I had.

The dream wasn't a sexual one.

I have more female friends than male friends, I am closer to my Mum and my Sister than my Dad, for obvious reasons, and I listen to a lot of 90s music. I began developing feelings for the female band members, even though they were straight.

Before I go on, most people would say that this is a phase that I am going through. As I am writing this, I am 17 on the verge of being 18 (ie. in my adolescence), which leads me to the day in my life which will go down as the most memorable day of my existence: November 26th, 2020.

My best friend (who is a boy - just thought you'd like to know) and I were sitting in my college cafe. The day before I admitted that I had been questioning for 3 years, and then the day after (i.e the day we are talking about), the following exchange was well... um....exchanged.

*Note: **A** is me, **BF** is my best friend*

**A:**There's something i need to tell you

**BF:**Ok

**A:**You know I said I was questioning yesterday...

**BF:**Yep

**A:** Well I....I like girls. More than boys.

**BF:** So, you're a lesbian?

**A:** Yes.

So technically, I came out of the closet to my best friend and eleven other people, but as of now, I haven't told my parents or siblings (and to be honest i am a total chicken and I am also scared of being bullied or being shunned).

I know my Mum and sister will be supportive but it's my Dad who I am worried about. I'm worried because he might be a homophobe due to him being born in 1959, and it took another eight years (1967) for same sex relationships (not marriage, aas that took even longer, 2014, to be legalised. People say that when you have told people, it should feel like a weight has been lifted off your shoulders, which for me, it did.

# anonymous

## how to dance with hoverflies

Hurry to the garden.

Find fennel and creeping thistle.

Follow that rust-warm hum to a deceit of hoverflies.

Look past first impressions pretending to be something else might mean survival.

You will know this, soon.

Enjoy the summer.

Wear the dress with tassels, spin.

Move how you like.

Move where you feel taken.

Remember this – the joy, your mother at an open window – laughter lifting to the wind, gentle and bright-bodied.

**jack cooper**



I very much subscribe to the concept of found family; though my blood relatives are an important part of my life, it is - and always has been - my friends and queer community that have offered the most support, solidarity and kinship. I was raised by my parents, but it has been surrounded by my friends that I have grown into the proud trans man I am today. To me, home is less a place of physical residence and more a sense of companionship, respect and kindness.

Eli, 21 years old, he/him



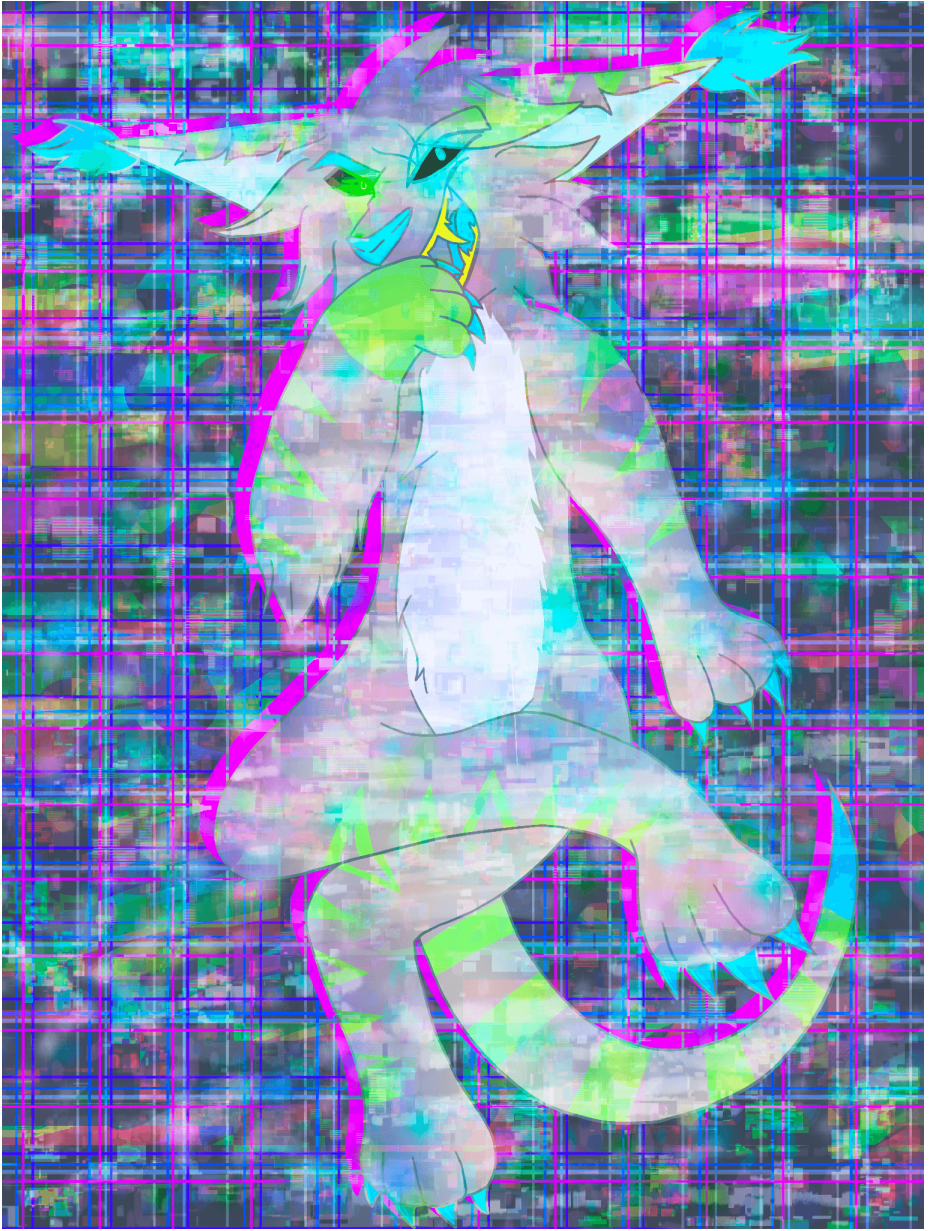


I'm not sure how to quantify home in a brief paragraph, but I like being warm. Whether it's with my copious amount of cushions and blankets or just the people around me, home means safety. Home and family are linked in my mind because even though I like my own space, having people you can rely on and trust with anything means that your home can be wherever your family is – blood or otherwise. Found family I believe is an important aspect of our (LGBTQIA+) culture and we should celebrate it.

Lily, 20 years old, she/her



eli jonathan



**tyler wilkie**

At age 14, I thought I was pastel, pink, blue, and white.  
My skin was different to the skin of others,  
and I felt something wasn't quite right.  
At age 15, the colours remained in deeper hues,  
joined by purple and black.  
I could still go forwards or back, I said,  
but I wasn't sure what that meant for me.  
At age 18, I was still black and white,  
and purple stuck around, too.  
Sunshine-yellow made her debut.  
This is what I wanted at 14.  
At age 20, I look at the colours everyday,  
hung on the wall of my sanctuary.  
I am comfortable in the skin that is different to others.  
Grounded in my identity.

**elliott beck**

# my coming out story

I grew up around a lot of toxic masculinity.

When I first started feeling attracted to men at the age of 12, I was very confused and scared. I thought that there was something wrong with me because growing up, the ideas that were around made me feel like being queer was wrong.

All the other boys in my year would talk about their girlfriends and the porn they were watching, which were only of women, and I felt like I had some sort of dirty secret knowing that I was attracted to men, as well as women.

Back then, the only thing I knew my sexuality to be, was bisexuality. I've stuck to that term mostly because it's easier for my family to understand, but I would say that pansexual is more accurate, as there are many genders and I'm attracted to all of them.

The first person I ever came out to was my oldest friend, but this was completely by accident. They had gone onto my device and saw the gay porn I had been looking at. I came back into the room to their very shocked expression, so I just came out and said "I'm bisexual". And that was the first time I had ever said it out loud. It was a relief but also scary, because someone else knew my secret. However, he was accepting and sweet and turns out, he completely forgot about it.

I ended up coming out to him again, years later. I went through high school and sixth form staying closeted until just after sixth form. When sixth form ended, I came out to a few friends. One of my friend groups were great about it and I felt loved and accepted, but someone else I told and trusted outed me to a whole group of friends, and the reaction wasn't ideal. A lot of these people were some of my oldest friends and some were cool about it, but I was also met with ridicule and slurs. Some of the responses to me coming out said that I was "actually gay and should stop lying". This hurt me because again, I felt like I couldn't be myself around these people.



Around this time, I came out to people at college and they were all cool about it. This helped me embrace my identity a lot more. Shortly after this was when I first came out to my family.

I've struggled with my mental health for a long time. This particular day was a bad one. We were eating dinner and my Sister made a gay joke, which she did often, because being gay was a punchline to her. I had had enough of everything and I was done hiding who I am. I stopped eating and with tears in my eyes, I said: "Actually, on that, I'm bisexual". There wasn't really a response and I've never really talked about it with my Dad since, I think he thinks because I'm in a long term relationship with a woman that it was just a phase. I think that's what a lot of people think of bi or pan people, but that's a load of rubbish because you can be queer and be in a relationship with the opposite sex.

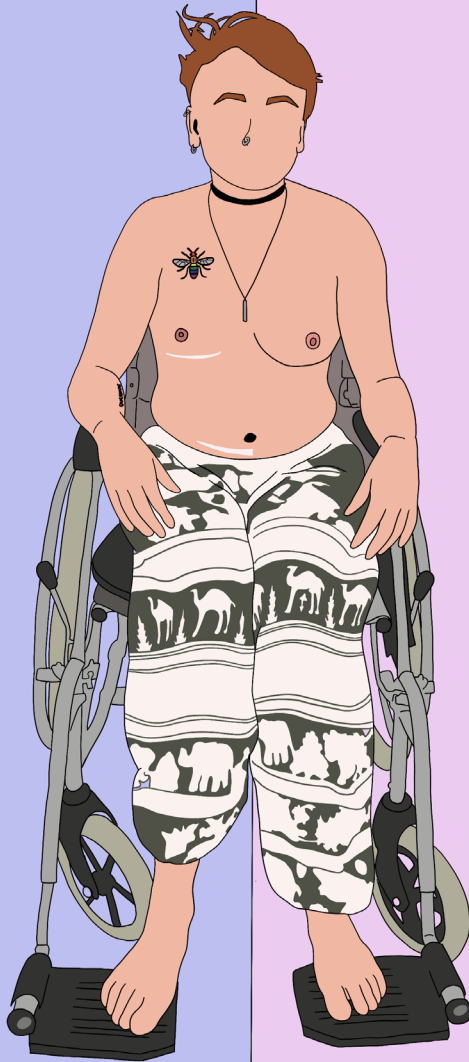
Something I'm very grateful for is my little sister, who has always understood and been so accepting about it. It's taken a long, long time but I'm at a place where I'm out to most people (apart from my homophobic Grandad) and I'm happy in my queer identity.

I went through a lot of years of thinking I was broken or that there was something wrong with me. I wish I could go back and talk to "teenage me" and tell him that he isn't broken and that there's nothing wrong with him, that he is amazing and wonderful. And one day, he will embrace his queerness and be proud, and that things will get better for him.

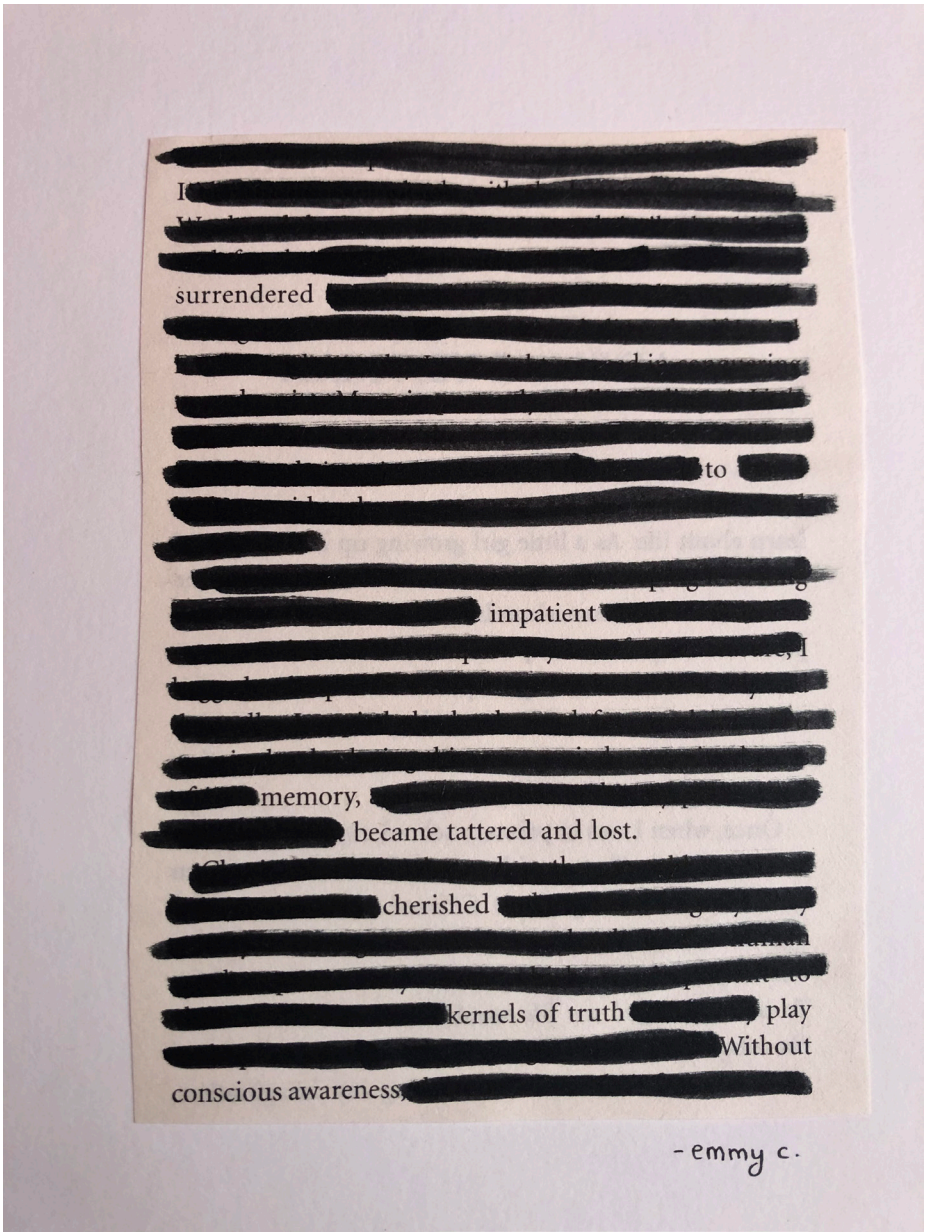
Lastly, I just want to say to any queer young people: you are not broken or wrong. You are you, and you are amazing. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

**ryan mcgee**

@mx.syd



**sydney king**



I  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
surrendered [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] to [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] impatient [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] memory, [redacted]  
[redacted] became tattered and lost.  
[redacted]  
[redacted] cherished [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] kernels of truth [redacted] play  
[redacted] Without  
conscious awareness, [redacted]

-emmy c.

emmy clarke

FRAGMENTS, COMPLETE.

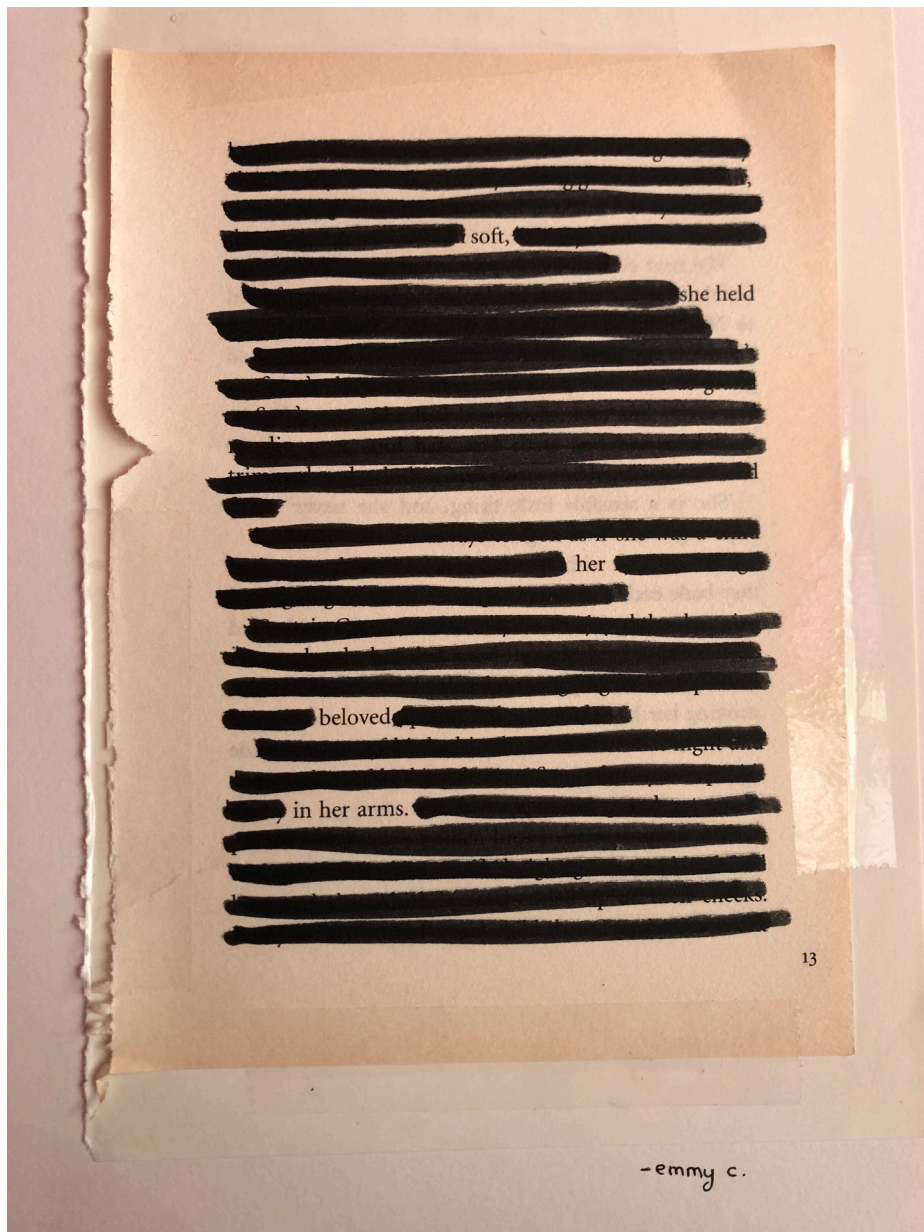
Having worshipped her steadily,  
I will stay beside her in the lily-fields  
quite cheerfully,  
quite quiet.

I know you darling!  
she said.  
Just look and see!

I sat down  
drank in every word  
comfortably wrapped up in  
the bend and sway of her voice

- emmy c.

**emmy clarke**



emmy clarke



## i am who i am

People preach and promote equality,  
Yet their actions are all monotony.  
It's ironic that society is replete with  
variety.

From the streets and corporations,  
All that's seen is exclusion.  
Too fat, too fem, too Asian, too gay,  
These were words I heard every day,  
I'm done with what you have to say.  
For unity and love still I pray.

By law is not okay to discriminate,  
Whether it's religion, age, gender or race,  
But if I tell you I'm gay, you might punch  
me in the face,  
This is who I am.

I'm sure it's not just a phase.

Everyday we fight for our lives, in a hope  
that one day we unite,

The world might be falling, but I'll never  
lose sight of what's right.

Rebuilding the system, trying to make it  
better,

Only to be told that our lives won't matter.

I'm no longer scared of who I am,  
I am who I am.

Ian is my name, I will be respected, and  
my life is valid,

Because Stonewall happened for my  
chance to be valued.

Queerbashers and racists please take a  
seat,

Don't fight against my every heart beat,  
I deserve an opinion which sparks a  
discussion,

My identity is unique, I reject your  
presumptions.

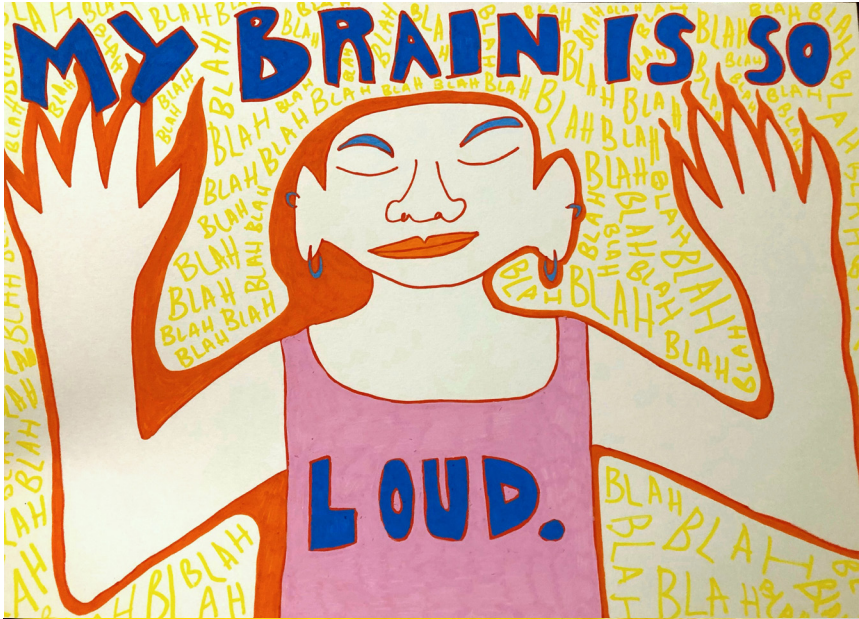
## ian wong





**ria davies**





flatb0y/seren thomas



**flatb0y/seren thomas**



**flatb0y/seren thomas**

# SEEN

akt +  42