

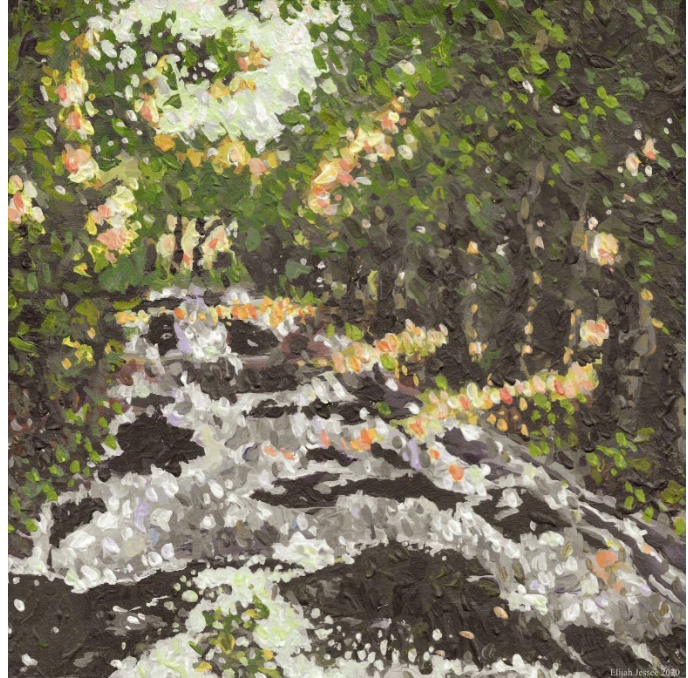
Outside the Lines WINNER

By Zoe Hall

Foreword by Emily K.

In “Outside the Lines,” author Zoe Hall considers her connection to art and perfectionism. She describes the stress of her childhood coloring and compares this to her dad’s loose and carefree painting style. She explores what watching her father paint taught her about art — and about life. “Outside the Lines” is notable for its use of language, which is both playful and intricate. The scent of crayons and splatter of paint are captured vividly, as are the author’s thoughts as she takes

in these different artistic worlds. Indeed, the reflectiveness of this piece is another of its strengths. Hall carefully captures her changing attitude towards creating art, leaving readers with a unique and thoughtful takeaway. We see how Hall grows as a person through the piece, how she is shaped by her father and his art as she comes to view the creative process as a freeing — rather than stressful — endeavor. With its descriptive language, its subtlety, and its thoughtfulness, “Outside the Lines” wowed us.



Sun Rays on a Rainy Day by Elijah Jessee

Snap. Another crayon broken. Lying on my stomach, my body tenses as I firmly draw in my animal coloring book. I always press too hard, careful to thoroughly color inside every line. My mother constantly explains to me that my muscles will suffer if I remain this tense. Regardless, I continue to stay there on our carpeted floor, stiff as a brick. I push aside the fragmented pieces and reach for a new color, inhaling a whiff of the waxy smell as I do so. I return to my drawing, determined to finish completely and accurately. My father is an artist, and as the daughter of an artist, I ought to properly color my kittens.

In the evening, I tiptoe around the corner leading from the kitchen and into the study, peeking my head into “the studio.” I silently hoist myself into the towering chair by the entrance. It creaks as I clamber up the rickety beams and situate myself towards my father. Surely he notices my presence, but he continues to focus on his painting. I leave behind my world of perfectionism and

broken crayons and enter the paint splattered and rock music filled world of my Dad's. His canvas stretches across the entire wall. The floor, littered with paint drips, appears to be art itself.

I found no method or pattern in his work as he squiggled line after line. His acrylic filled solo cups lined his desk as he switched from color to color. Occasionally I piped up, inquiring about or commenting on his brushstrokes.

"Why did you cover up all the red? That looks like a Z!" Oftentimes he explained his artwork without me prompting him.

"See how I trace these lines? I do it with a smaller brush each time. I just keep going back over them again and again."

I came to realize that he did indeed have a method, but unlike me, he remained relaxed and at peace. His placid approach allowed the paint to flow freely from his brush. He created the lines. He painted outside the lines. And when he didn't like them, he covered up the lines.

I later returned to the coloring book and set out to create my own lines. I selected my favorite Crayola colors; I always held them with great caution, lest I break them too. Among the few were "Inchworm" and "Blue Jeans," two colors unfit for the kitten I had flipped to. I continued despite that, outlining the cat with my vibrant colors. I filled the entire page, willing myself to relax as I did so. Relief washed over me, and the creativity began.

Genuine art does not come from trying to be perfect, but from being at peace. My father consistently demonstrated this truth. A decade later I sit up tall in my own chair, immersed in soft piano music and surrounded by sunlight streaming through open windows. I lay out my pans of watercolors and variety of brushes. Delicately painting my own scenes, I combine both loose colors and intricate details. A peaceful mindset penetrates the room, and all pressure to be perfect escapes. I create outside of the lines.