



kim edgar

*we are sacred when we straddle both sides
(an altar to the threshold)*

On Life in the Threshold

a short essay to accompany the exhibition “we are sacred when we straddle both sides (an altar to the threshold)” an exhibition of works by artist Kim Edgar (they/them) showing at ODD Gallery at the Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture, September 23 - October 30, 2021, Tr’ondek Hwech’in Territory (“Dawson City, Yukon, Canada”)

To be disabled and queer is to constantly exist between two worlds. To be dying while you’re still alive. To be present when so many deny your personhood.

To live queer is to be the stubborn foliage sprouting amongst the concrete, contorting our forms to fill whatever cracks are available. There is a false virtue to survival, to “battling cancer” or “fighting for your life.”

What we see in Kim Edgar’s “we are sacred when we straddle both sides (an altar to the threshold)” is an alternative to the narrative of the “heroically disabled.” In lieu of inspiring quotations or miracle cures, we see a lone figure, rotting on a couch (“The Yellow Wallpaper (2021)”). We see death and decay, blood and guts, figures aflame. Edgar’s world presents a dark moody alternative to the inspiration porn we have become accustomed to online. There will be no Terry Fox running with a smile plastered over all the pain. Edgar instead connects us back to the earth, its landscape, also in a state of climate flux, the large billowing clouds of forest fires repeated in their paintings feel all too recognizable after the hottest July this earth has recorded.

Unlike the pounding beat of capitalism that nags us to “do more” “be better” “heal faster,” Edgar’s world asks us to simply bear witness. “Inspiration Porn, OR They only love us when our dead bodies are profitable, OR A performative lament (2021)” shows a corporate girl-boss indulging in the glow of attention born from the death



and illness of the figure in her arms. It asks: what's left of us once our identities have been consumed for capital?

In “what you had to kill within yourself to survive (2021)” we see the bloody exposure of a figure being lovingly disemboweled. Like Picasso’s infamous Guernica, the large image draws us into a violent scene, a reflection on a world hungry for trans pain. Many of the figures throughout the exhibition appear visibly transgender- with traditional “gender indicators” (how antiquated!) such as genitals or hair appearing almost as an afterthought, as though easily removed or rearranged. Edgar presents a non-binary dream world where the rigid gender binary seems to melt away with the snow, offering an endless mess of bodies, genders and abilities.

“we are sacred when we straddle both sides (an altar to the threshold)” does not shy away from this mess. The mess of everyday existence in a world that is falling apart as you read this. The mess of waking up each day unsure if you will be able to move. The mess of a gender in motion, shifting and changing like the confluence of our two mighty rivers. Drawing on art history, astrological symbolism and inspired by the sub-arctic landscape of their home here in Tr’ondek Hwech’in territory Kim Edgar’s work proudly displays this mess for us to see, feel and experience along side them. For it is our mess too.

2021, Andy Pelletier (they/them), a fellow queer cripple.

Exhibition Statement

There is a sacredness to those who exist on a threshold. People who transcend opposites have knowledge and freedoms that frighten others, whether they transcend the binary of gender, or the binary of life and death, or the binary of spirit and material worlds.

In the past, people who could move freely between opposites were considered healers with wisdom to offer. But for those of us who exist on this threshold – or have crossed a threshold – in this present day, we face marginalization by the wider world.

Living on the threshold of gender, or having crossed that seemingly impenetrable barrier, trans people have a great deal of experience and insight that cis people will never have. But if all we receive as trans people is violence, negation of our personhood, and othering by the cis population, is there impetus (or is it even safe) to connect with a population who hates us? Similarly, disabled people live in the sacred space between life and death, between health and wellness; what crip wisdom should we (can we, safely) share as disabled people? Do able-bodied people deserve our knowledge after they have disposed of us so easily?

The land, too, is in a state of flux. We live in a liminal state between what our climate used to be, and what the future holds as it changes. As a species, what does it mean to live in this state of rapid change? What can we learn from this state in between?

Living on the threshold means leaning into discomfort, learning to investigate pain, kissing the faces of your fears. This existence frightens people because most people are averse to discomfort. But those who exist between binaries understand the sacredness of pain, the mutability of our options, and we know how personal suffering lends us a deeper understanding of the world.

These pieces, which I began making in 2018, have continued to this day as I work through my experiences of liminality.

- Kim Edgar, 2021

Kimberly Edgar is an interdisciplinary artist living on Tr'ondek Hwech'in land in so-called Dawson City, Yukon, Canada. Kim's work reflects on experiences of both the medical system and the ennu that comes with being sick with no end. Their work often compares human bodies with the land-as-body, contemplating the sacred liminality of disability and transness. Kim holds a Broken Pencil Zine Award for best comic for their comic *The Purpose* (2019), and has been nominated for two Doug Wright Awards (2021) for their comic *The Space in Between* (2020). Kim is also the recipient of grants from Cue (2018), Canada Council (2019), On Yukon Time (2020), Culture Quest (2020), and the Yukon Advanced Artist Award (2020). Kim recently started a small press, Hecate Press, by editing and publishing a northern comics anthology called *The Northern Gaze* (2021). With pieces in the Yukon Permanent Art Collection and the Ottawa Direct Purchase Program, Kim is currently working on a debut graphic novel and a solo show at Odd Gallery in the fall of 2021.
www.kimberlyedgar.com