

This piece examines the discredited intelligence of innocence and the flaws in how childhood dissolves in the hands of knowledge. Why, as we are supposed to be growing wiser and learning more, do we inhibit our minds with rules and boundaries? Why are we allowed to do and say certain things as a child but not as a teenager or adult - what does innocence excuse? Is knowledge always power? Or does it blind us to the freedom of exploration? These are examples of questions I examined in an attempt to critique the distrust held in ideas generated from kids. Why do thoughts increase in value when they originate from adults when some of the world's most revolutionary ideas have come from those who never stopped dreaming like children?

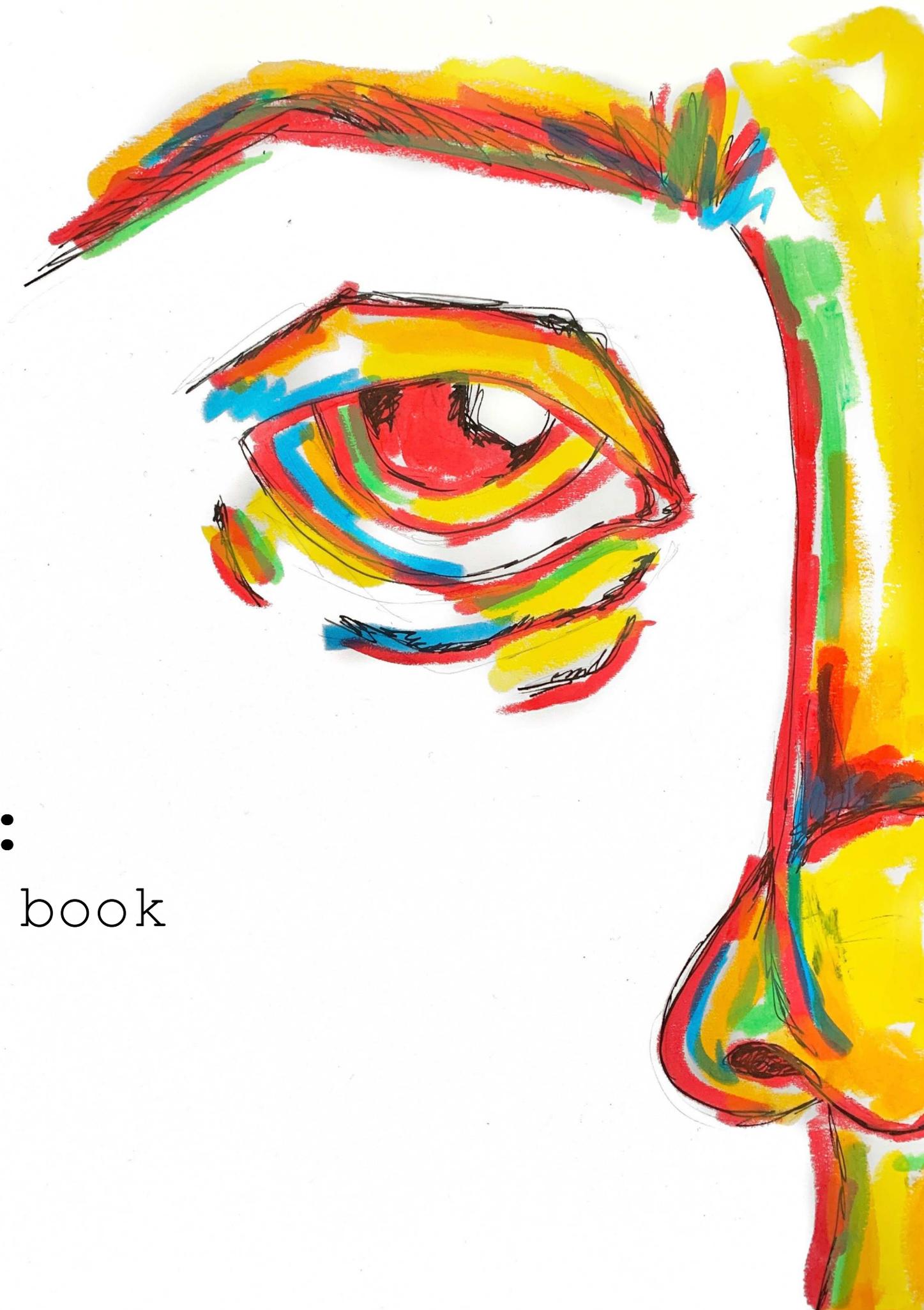
To create my piece, I used a combination of technically driven pencil drawing and loose-handed sketches made from paint sticks for children. These materials are a direct parallel to my critique of the ways in which we are taught to create as we grow up. The pencil drawings are representative of how I have been taught to produce technically proficient art. On the other hand, the paint sticks symbolize my creation of art as a direct reflection of my thoughts, free from preconceived notions of what is considered “good.” The combination of these materials aims to make the viewer question which aspects of the piece are really more successful - what is “supposed” to be created, or what *is* created. In addition, the image depicts a compilation of sections from the human face to serve as a disfigured reflection: a grown-up figure in pencil, longing for its child-self in paint sticks.

After examining the piece, I want the viewer to be left questioning how they have been blindly conditioned to think and operate in certain ways. I want them to put themselves in the piece - be reminded of their childhood, perhaps smiling at something they long to do again. Children are labeled as possessing the widest imaginations, however, I believe imagination doesn't disappear, it's blocked by societal norms, rules, and expectations. I want the viewer to believe they can once again unleash their mind to the vast realm of possibility. We may not be able to regain innocence and discard knowledge, but we can inspire ourselves to dream once more.

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The Powerful Mind of Innocence

New York, New York



# **INNOCENCE :**

a children's book  
for adults



# INNOCENCE

- a. **freedom from** legal guilt of a particular crime or offense
- b. freedom from **guilt** or sin through being unacquainted with **evil**
- c. lack of **knowledge**
- d. lack of worldly **experience** or sophistication

## GUILT:

why, as we are supposed to be growing wiser and learning more, do we inhibit our minds with rules and boundaries?

**responsibility.**

what does innocence excuse?

the feeling that we **owe** something to the world and those around us.

is knowledge always power? or does it blind us to the freedom of not knowing? knowledge of ourselves can be blinding.

our **obligations** tie our feet to the ground.

## EVIL:

why, as we are supposed to be growing wiser and learning more, do we inhibit our minds with rules and boundaries?

**fear.**

what does innocence excuse?

the need to be **brave.**

is knowledge always power? or does it blind us to the freedom of not knowing? knowledge can prevent us from action, we know what we could **lose.** we know how badly it could end.

## KNOWLEDGE :

why, as we are supposed to be growing wiser and learning more, do we inhibit our minds with rules and boundaries?

we can't **escape**.

what does innocence excuse?

having to know the **answer**. having to **solve** the problem.

is knowledge always power? or does it blind us to the freedom of not knowing?

freedom from knowledge opens the door to **curiosity**.

## EXPERIENCE :

why, as we are supposed to be growing wiser and learning more, do we inhibit our minds with rules and boundaries?

**failure.**

what does innocence excuse?

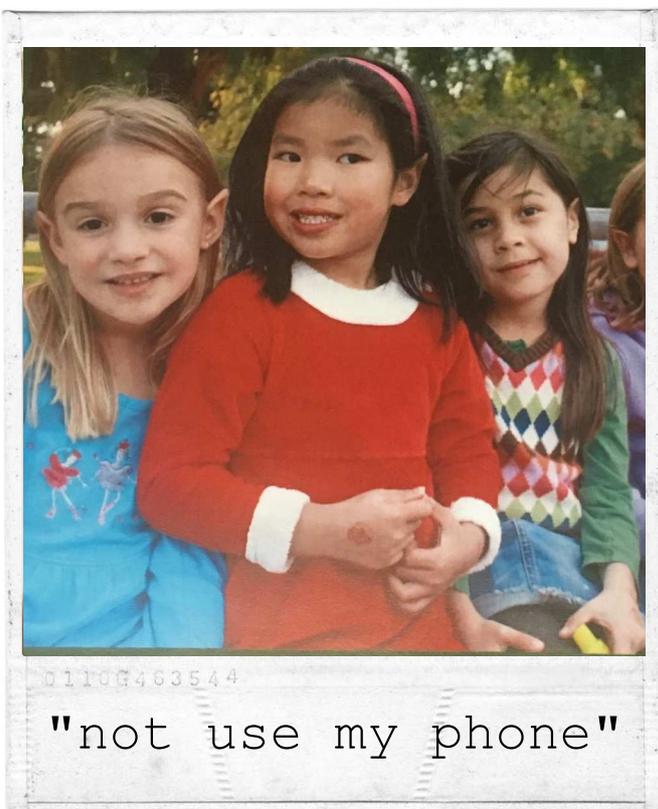
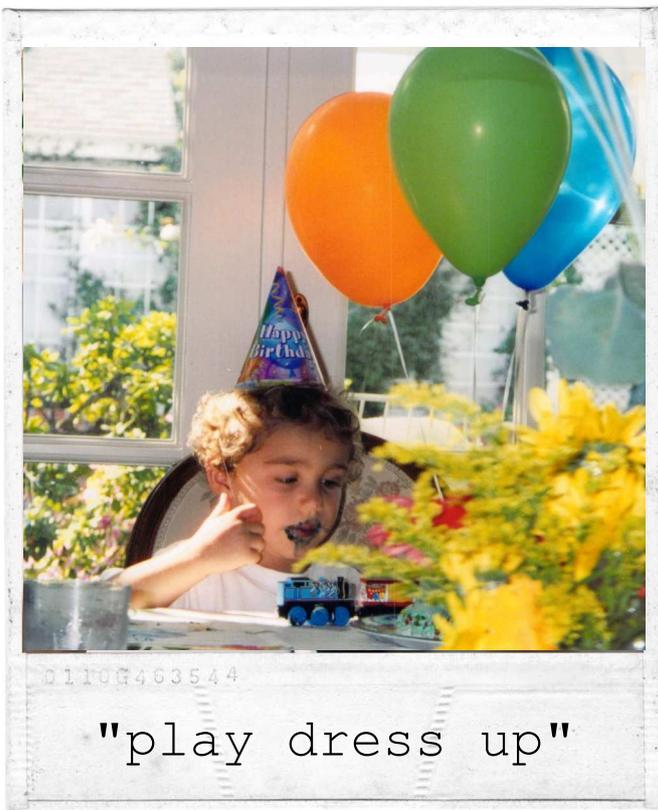
knowing the falsified definition of **success**. being **contained** within that boundary.

is knowledge always power? or does it blind us to the freedom of not knowing?

when we know failure, we have been

**discouraged**. when we know failure, we have also **learned** something.

what did you do as a child that



you don't do anymore?



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"dance naked"



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"ride my scooter"



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"think without worry"



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"have confidence in myself"

why did



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"it got too hard"



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"i have grown to  
respect myself"



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"i lost curiosity"



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"it didn't have  
purpose"

you stop?



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"wasn't fun anymore"



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"it was out of my  
hands"



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"the way to celebrate  
changed"



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"i don't know"

but don't we still do all these things?  
is playing on the beach not the same as a  
sandbox?

we still play dress up to go out with  
friends.

"play date" is just a word for "hangout".  
instead of disney channel we watch  
netflix.

why does age have to change meaning?

why do we place so much importance on the  
origin of the idea?

why does the value of a thought increase  
when it comes from an adult?

aren't they the ones who fear to ask the  
real questions?

fail to even imagine them?

people say that children have the widest imaginations, however, they don't stop to question why. **imagination can't disappear**. we can't lose the ability to think, however we can prohibit ourselves from thinking in certain ways. we cloud our minds with barriers and block ourselves from accessing our rawest thoughts. we have, at times unwillingly, been trained to discard certain ideas that are too far fetched. as we grow, the ideas we once thought of as exciting and expansive become "silly" or just a dream we keep in the back of our minds. what could be achieved if all adults were able to unleash their imaginations? this is not to say all adults are shielded in this way. some of the world's greatest inventions and discoveries have come from adults who never allowed themselves to discard their "unrealistic" thoughts. imagine a world where the roles are reversed. where we all long to think like children. where knowledge isn't power, innocence is.

## an example: experimental art

my dad, who has no experience in art, decides he wants to make a painting. technique, composition, and style are foreign to him. he squirts out too much paint from the tube and begins working.

my dad is the child of the art world. he has not been trained or taught to operate and create in a certain way. what he produces is a direct reflection of his mind, uninhibited by societal norms, boundaries, or rules in the creative field. he is unafraid to create freely. he does not possess the fear of being an outsider because he doesn't know what an outsider looks like.

suppose i told you this  
is what he created:



**what would your reaction be?**

surprised? impressed?

**what would you have to say about it?**

"its good for a first try."

"better than I could do in the beginning."

"i didn't think someone with so little experience could make that."

"he has potential."

"it kinda looks like a kid made it."

what if i told you i created the painting. i have taken art classes for years and just spent a semester at art school.

**now what would you have to say?**

"it conveys a lot of emotion"

"this is beautiful"

"i like the different perspectives"

"the shading is amazing"

"i love the contrast"

**why does the answer change?**

**"if you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. if you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales." - Albert Einstein**

**a.** true intellectual growth defies how kids are trained to be "smart." the best thing for a child's mind is to let it continue to imagine. to wonder. to believe in the things adults deem fairy tales - unicorns, mermaids, happiness.

**b.** how we measure intelligence is flawed. we focus so much on the product and so little on the way we got there. for example, a student may get an A on a paper because they are a good writer. another student may have an idea that pushes the boundaries of what is expected, but lacks the means to translate it, or rather, the means to express it in the traditional way that is asked of students. why is it that so often the first student is labeled as "more intelligent?" what is missed when we discard those who lie outside the box of traditional intelligence? what could be gained if we decided to listen?

**"we worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today" - Stacia Tauscher**

**a.** we focus on what we want children to grow up to be. we condition them to become something great. we forget that they are already there. we forget to preserve the minds they have now. you cant be trained to think like a child. you cant repair the broken mind of an adult. you can't erase what you know. you can only cherish what you don't.

**"children see magic because they look for it" - Christopher Moore**

**a.** children know how to dream. they dream without confinement because they still believe their dreams could become realities.

**b.** magic has been labeled an illusion. we don't allow ourselves to believe even when we have no reason not to. adults normally possess the same initial awe as children upon seeing magic; however they look for the "trick." children don't look for an excuse to cut their imaginations short. this enables them to build their thoughts upon the expansive realm of possibility.

**"the knowledge that makes us cherish  
innocence makes innocence  
unattainable." - Irving Howe**

**a.** what's the point of writing all of  
this if innocence cant be regained?  
maybe it's so we stop making the same  
mistakes. the children of today still  
have hope. all we can do is not crush  
it.

# INNOCENCE: BY ME

our dictionary definitions often leave out the real meaning behind words. words are just vehicles that allow us to attempt and convey our thoughts. the connotations, personal relations and inner thoughts that surround each word create it's true meaning. however, these are not universal truths. despite language being shared by millions, it holds a different meaning for each person who speaks it. i believe there is no one definition of innocence. childhood is an individual experience. for some, innocence may not even have anything to do with childhood. experience constructs meaning. no two people have the same experiences. no two people can hold the same meanings in language.

**innocence is individual, but a gift to all.**



