

Reflection on "Mind Unzipped" by Beth Halem

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I started in the middle of the page, with a zipper.

This was being used as a symbol in a series I was working on for my AP art class. It was a series about uncovering feelings and thoughts that otherwise would stay locked inside.

My pieces were meant to act as answers to a question: "What would happen if we could be unzipped?" This series was the most important thing on my mind, and was so intertwined with my emotional struggles at the time.



I drew a post-it note next, because *everything* I had to do was written on post-it notes all over my school planner. Staying organized felt so overwhelming that even meeting a friend after school was something to put on a post-it note so I didn't forget.

In high school, I was not a "group person" and did not have many friends. I always sought out that romantic relationship that I felt would fulfill me. The longing for this kind of relationship came to me in images: holding hands, exchanging kisses, being held, and the notion of a possible broken heart are depicted at the top right of the map.

Directly above the post-it, I drew a tearful green eye, symbolic of a "flirty friendship" I had in high school, but it went nowhere. He nicknamed me "green eyes," thus the tearful green eye.

After exploring those thoughts through drawing, I returned back to the central post-it note. I began to experience anxiety about college, sparked by the need to find a meaningful relationship. I began drawing moving boxes, my acceptance letter, a Buffalo college sweatshirt (the first school I got accepted to), and the Discman I was using -- music always helped my thought process along (depicted on the bottom right of the map).

Accompanying that is a drawing of my golden retriever, who was becoming sick. I was terrified that he would pass away while I was away at college. I had to express that fear on paper.

To the left, I depicted an inner emotional struggle I was experiencing at the time with my father. We were trying to build a new foundation for our relationship, just as I was going to leave for college. We had recently gone out together to play pool, one of the best father-daughter-bonding

memories I had at the time. I wanted to express these bittersweet emotions of feeling so happy that we were developing a special relationship, but I was feeling sad that I was leaving for school, afraid that we wouldn't be able to built on it. I drew a phone, symbolizing better communication with my dad, and the comforting thought that we could still talk on the phone.

On the pool table, I drew a scorpion, my zodiac sign, signifying my identity. A big part of who I am is my relationships with my family members. I felt as though a “new beginning” with my dad marked a new page in who I was becoming as a person.

The images above the pool table depict stages of my childhood. After looking back on what I drew in this section, I asked myself why I drew myself so sad, as I did not believe I was sad as a child. Perhaps the way I was feeling at the time was sadness about saying goodbye to my childhood; I am still not sure.

The image of the crying angel in that section of the map is from a reoccurring dream I was having at the time. I sought to explore the significance of this “fallen angel” by writing poetry and seeing if meaning would be revealed. I continued to pursue my investigation as an art major in college, where this fallen angel became a continuous motif in my artwork. The significance evolved over time, and her presence remains in my work.

The mind map has zippers opening throughout, showing that the release of one emotion leads to the release of other emotions, working as a “domino effect.” Sometimes the release of emotions could feel like you've opened a “can of worms,” but at the same time, it could be very therapeutic.

Lyrics were written in the background, however I cannot recall which they were.