

Ash Galka

*Be good creek walker*

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Galka's drawings bloom from the deep roots of her upbringing in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where native flora and fauna serve as subtle markers and silent characters in her life's story. In her world, passiflora is a distant cousin, honeysuckle a close neighbor, and crows mourning over roadkill feel like losing a dear family friend. Encounters with crows and deer—whether sleeping, eating, or waiting in her backyard—signify a lucky day or good fortune. Each sighting holds specific meaning, often reflecting the current situation. Galka uses these natural symbols in place of herself or other humans, weaving them into her artistic narrative.

Creek walking is a beloved pastime and one of the ways that Galka gained her independence. In her youth, she could go out walking on her own because following the creek to get home was foolproof. When she would leave, her grandmother always made sure to tell her to be good.

Her drawings capture the stark contrast between the region's natural beauty, rich folklore, and the harsh economic blows that have turned her beloved town into a Dollar General ghost town. Each visit reveals a community in flux, with cherished places crumbling yet still striving to endure. Galka finds inspiration in these moments, blending humor with tradition and resilience. She uncovers treasures in creek trash, witnesses heavenly beams spotlight forgotten folding chairs, and sees roadside kudzu transforming into monsters or lovers entwined.

Galka's practice begins with nature-infused memories, intricately woven into her thoughts and brought to life in her sketchbooks. These notebooks are extensions of her mind, capturing fleeting ideas, resonant phrases, and the textures and shapes that she encounters. It's like peering through the morning mist to reveal hidden forms. The journals act as temporary pots, holding her thoughts until they can be transplanted to their permanent home.

*"When I move from my home, I take my garden with me. In the days leading up to leaving, I'll spend uncounted hours gently un-planting and detangling roots, to place in temporary pots."*

Larger drawings are where these ideas take root and flourish, nurtured from sketchbook seeds to a home in fertile soil. This creative space allows her to draw with ritualistic, loving, and methodical precision, crafting something powerful—something she hopes might even impress the moon. Transplanting her sketchbook thoughts into larger works is her way of revisiting and better conveying nostalgia. Each drawing holds a memory, preserved like amber, solidifying the stepping stones of her journey forward.