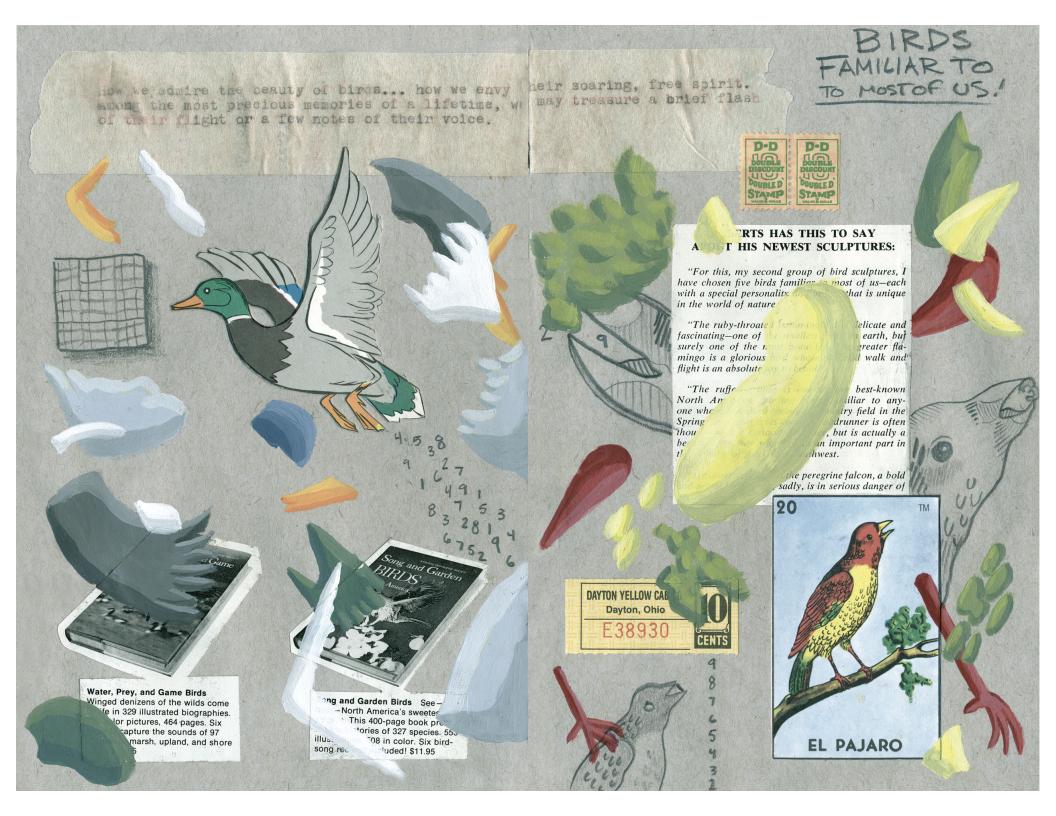
You, The West

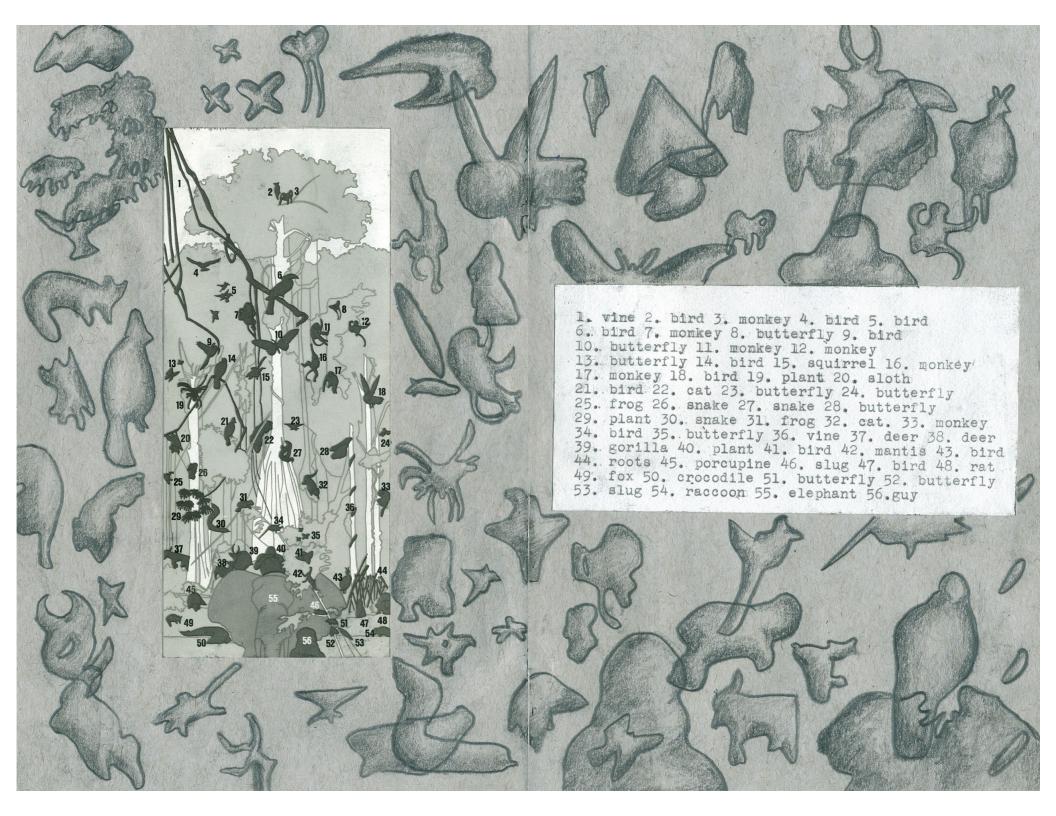
(an armchair vacation)

By Asa Mease

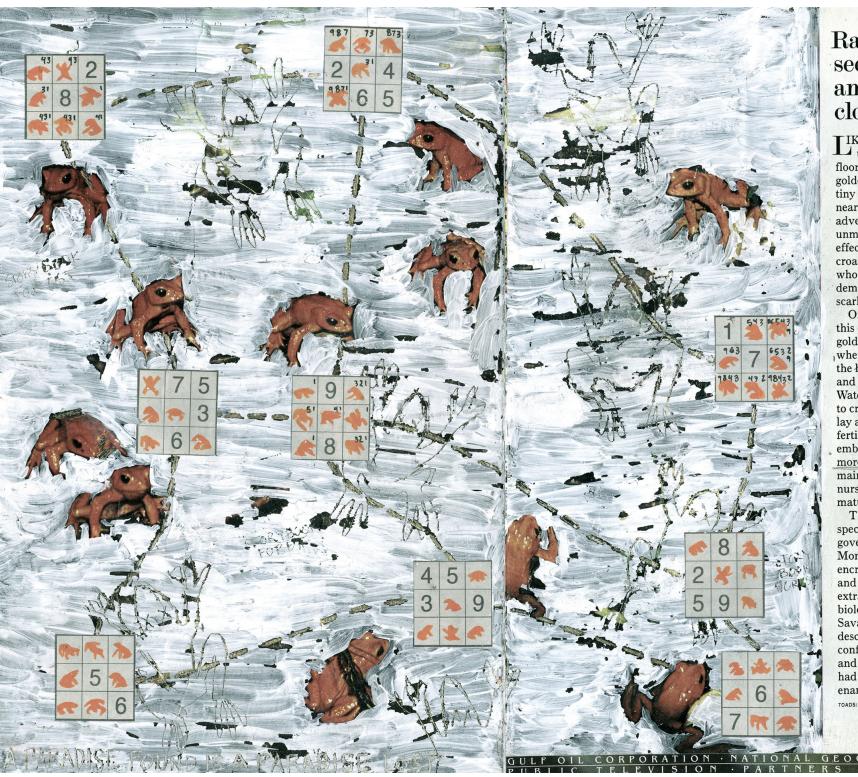












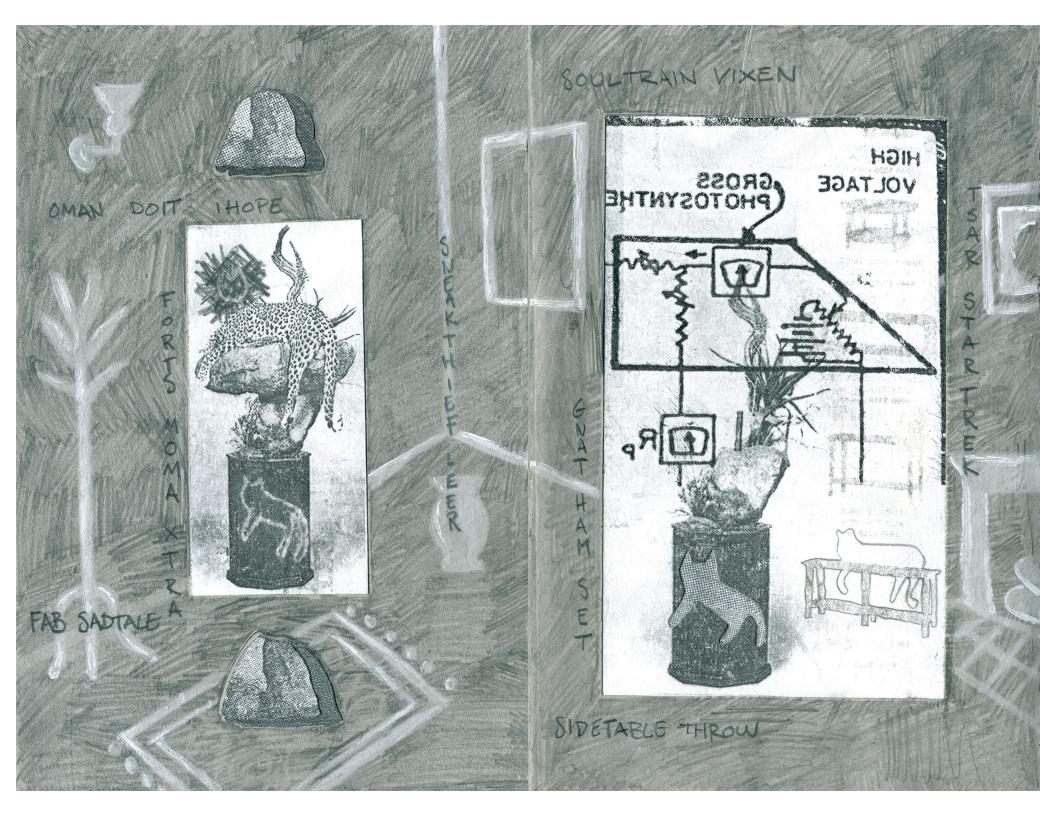
Rare toads seek mates amid the clouds

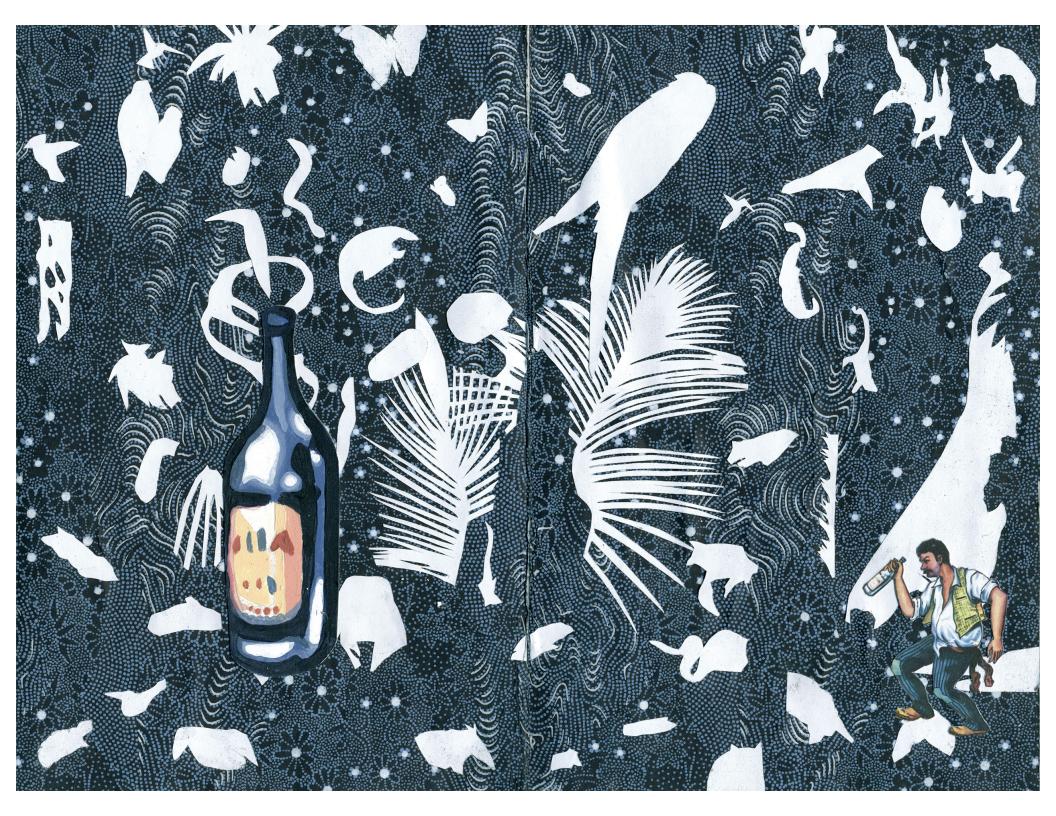
LIKE NEON SIGNALS
that flash from the dark
floor of Monteverde, male
golden toads await mates at a
tiny pool. Since the species is
nearly voiceless, it pays to
advertise: The males'
unmistakable color seems as
effective as romantic
croaking in luring females,
who are attired in more
demure green to black with
scarlet spots.

Only in a small niche of this cloud forest does the golden toad exist. Here, when the clouds lie thick upon the heights, usually in April and May, mating takes place. Water trickles down the trees to create pools where females lay about 200 eggs. After fertilization by males, the embryos depend on a few more weeks of wet weather to maintain their aquatic nursery and allow them to mature.

The discovery of this new species in 1964 helped win government protection for Monteverde, threatened by encroaching development and land speculation. The extraordinary toads amazed biologists, including Jay M. Savage, who wrote in first describing them: "I must confess...my... disbelief and suspicion that someone had dipped the examples in enamel paint."

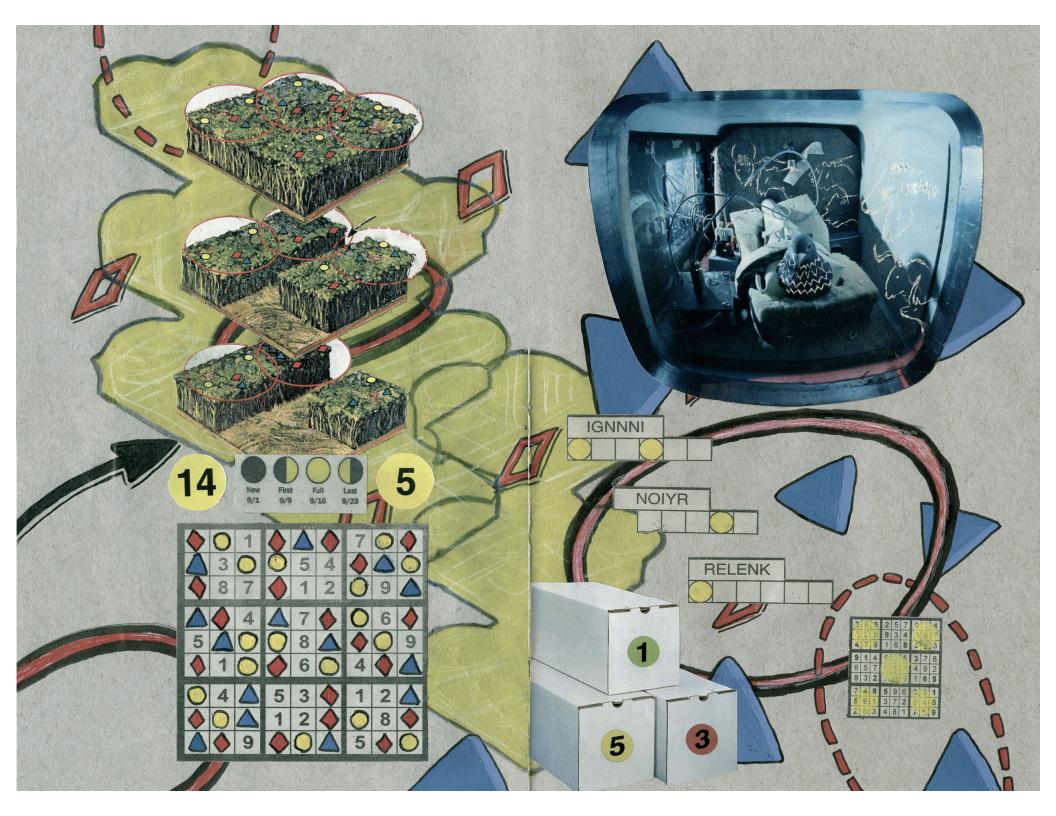
Gulf

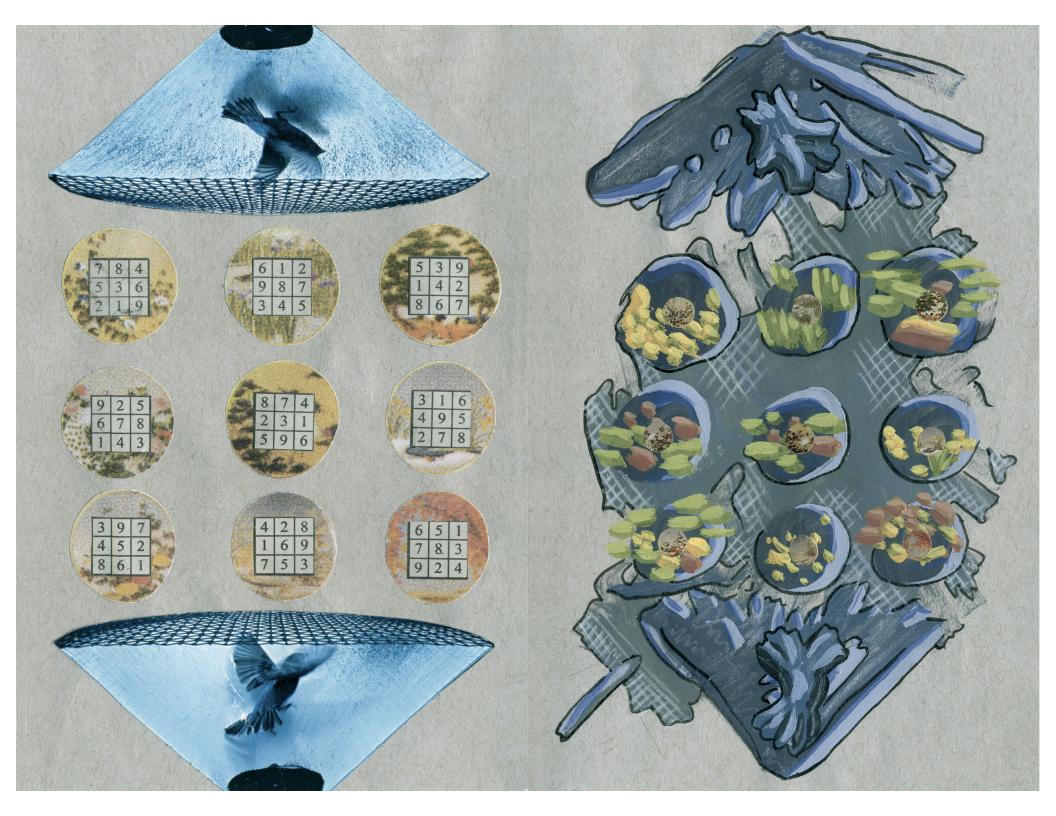


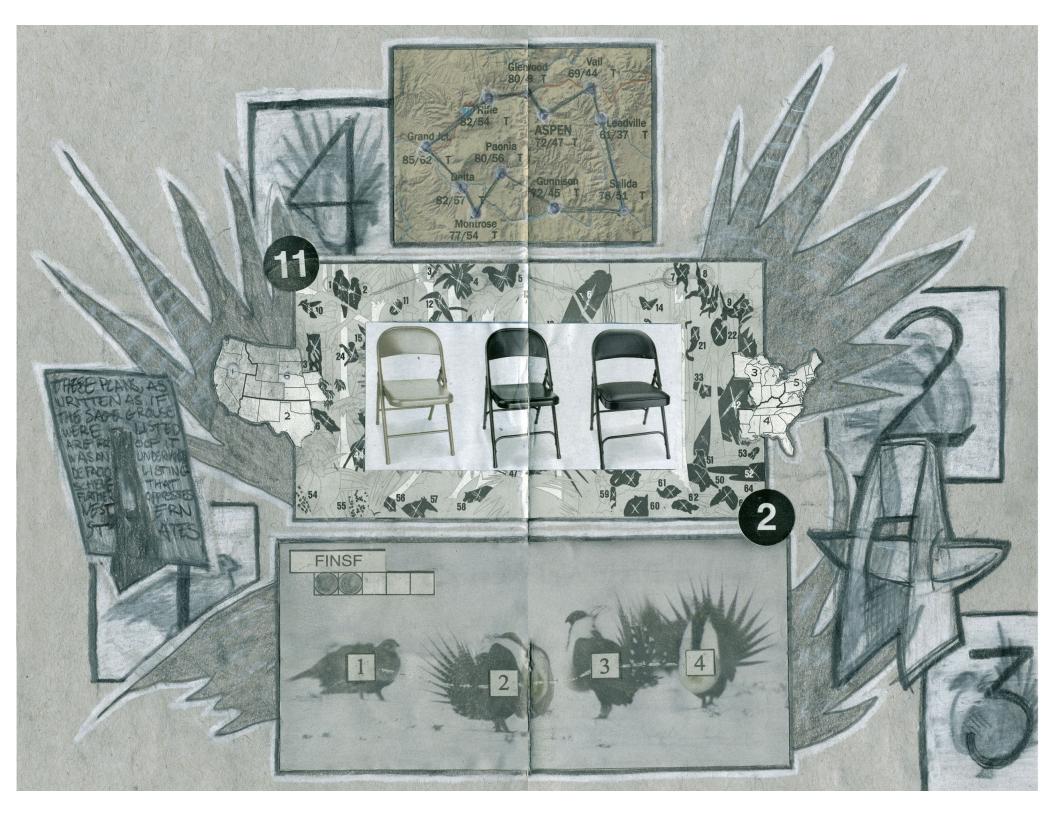


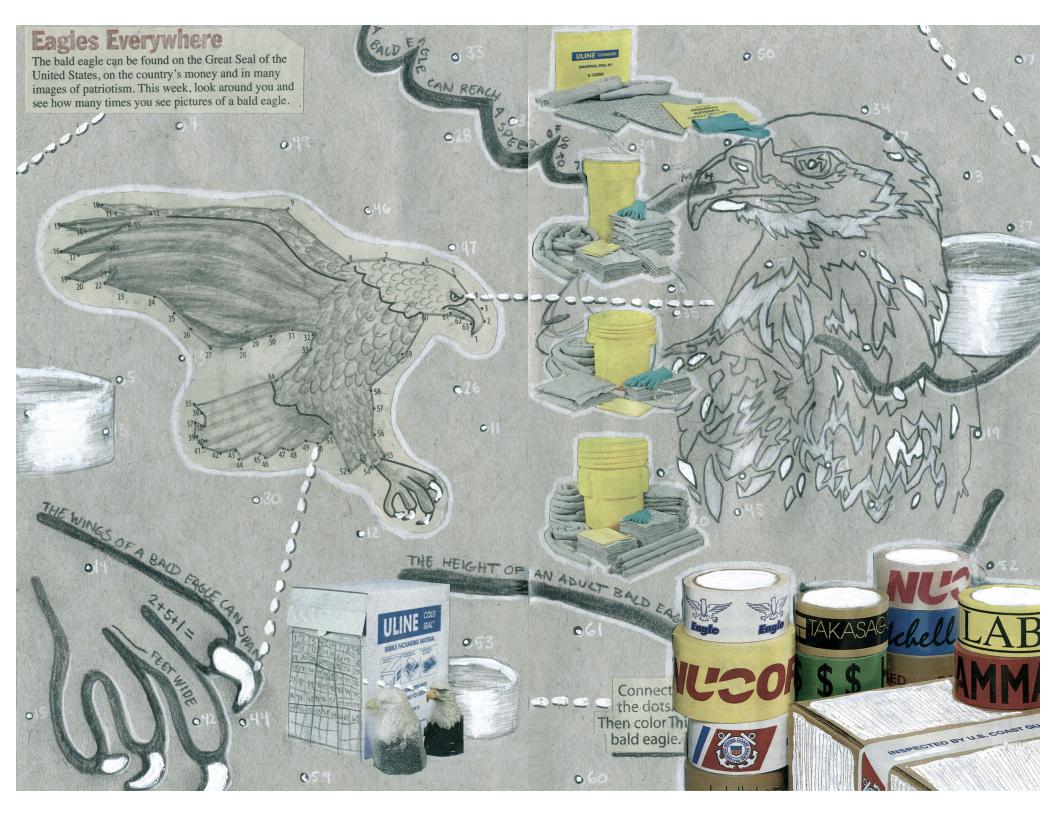


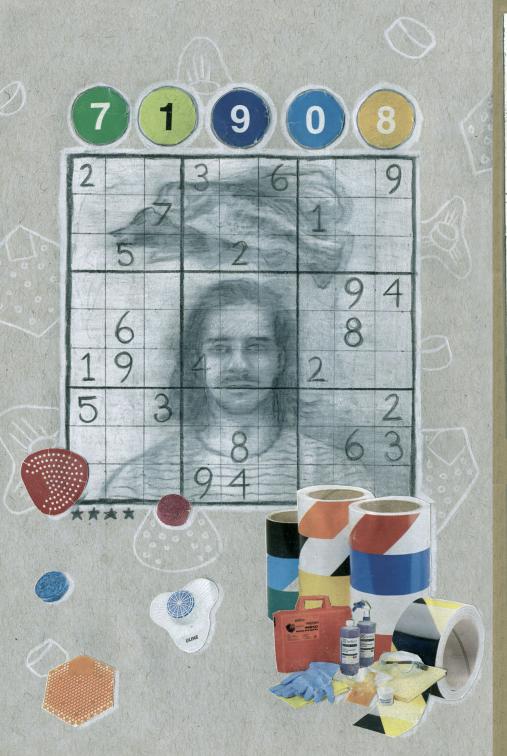














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