

using their off-hand to trace the contours of their face, draw a self-portrait or self-impression without lifting the pen from the page. Participants described feeling very relaxed and peaceful during and after the exercise.

2. WHAT DOES COMING OUT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU, PERSONALLY?

This prompt was a free drawing exercise, and participants were given 15 minutes to use the available supplies to create a piece which expressed their feelings around coming out. Whilst collage materials were available, the group opted for drawing. Responses ranged from the very abstract, to the very representational, with some drawing themselves before and after coming out, some aiming to represent the feeling of coming out, and others drawing how differently they present their gender in different contexts.

The exercise highlighted the differences and commonalities between coming out at different life stages, in different ways, and in different contexts. Participants talked about their pieces and what they were aiming to communicate, and this opened up a fruitful discussion about what gender means to us, how presentation doesn't always match identity, and the limits that being safe in a transphobic society can place on self-expression and actualisation. As a participant

put it, "I've never had space to think about coming out in this way".

3. WHAT CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS DO YOU FACE? WHAT DO YOU NEED TO SUPPORT YOU?

Moving on from exploring personal coming-out narratives, participants were invited to reflect on the challenges and barriers around coming out, and what support might help. Responses reflected the hostility and ignorance that are often levelled at trans and non-binary people from others and society at large, and again, common experiences of not feeling "enough" emerged.

Some people depicted the challenge of overcoming internalised transphobia and cissexism (the assumption that cis identities are more natural or legitimate than trans identities), visualising a sense of being contained or prevented from expressing and embodying yourself. Fears of rejection and, on the other hand, the joy of acceptance and community, also emerged.

The idea of walking a tight-rope between the

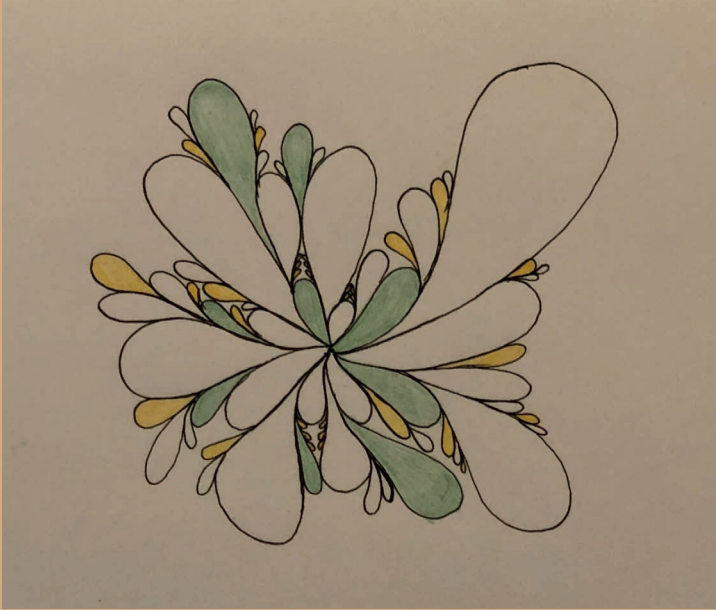
expectations and ignorance of society was clearly captured. A common emergent theme was the need for others to overcome their own repressed truths and for society as a whole to simply understand and empathise with trans experience and the liberatory potential it offers.

4. HOW CAN WE CREATE SAFETY FOR COMING OUT AS TRANS?

In the final segment of the day, the group discussed what we can do to create safety for coming out as trans. Participants described the need for all people to be able to explore and question their own experiences of gender, and what it means to them; the ways in which all people, cisgender or trans, are active participants in how their own gender came to the fore. Having access to trans-friendly spaces which aren't just social but which focus on knowledge production, consciousness raising, and peer support, was also raised, along with safe places to try new ways of expressing gender.

The workshop was drawn to a close by 5pm and participants were asked if they would be happy to share some of the work they produced during the session with The Diversity Trust for anonymous publication.

The "Coming Out as Trans Workbook" was developed as a resource for trans and non-binary people of all ages, and contains questions from the workshop. The resource can be found on The Diversity Trust website.





The Diversity Trust would like to thank the Somerset Equalities Officer Group for their support in this project, and G(end)er Swap for joining us on the day to deliver the workshop.

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