

The New York Times

An Artist Captures 4 Months of Sidewalk Chalk Drawings

The next messages are yours for the making.

By Esther Pearl Watson

STUCK AT HOME IN THE AGE OF ZOOM, MANY OF US HAVE FOUND A CREATIVE WAY TO SHARE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION. ON MY DAILY DOG WALKS, I HAVE NOTICED THE SIDEWALK DRAWINGS AND YARD SIGNAGE CHANGE OVER TIME.

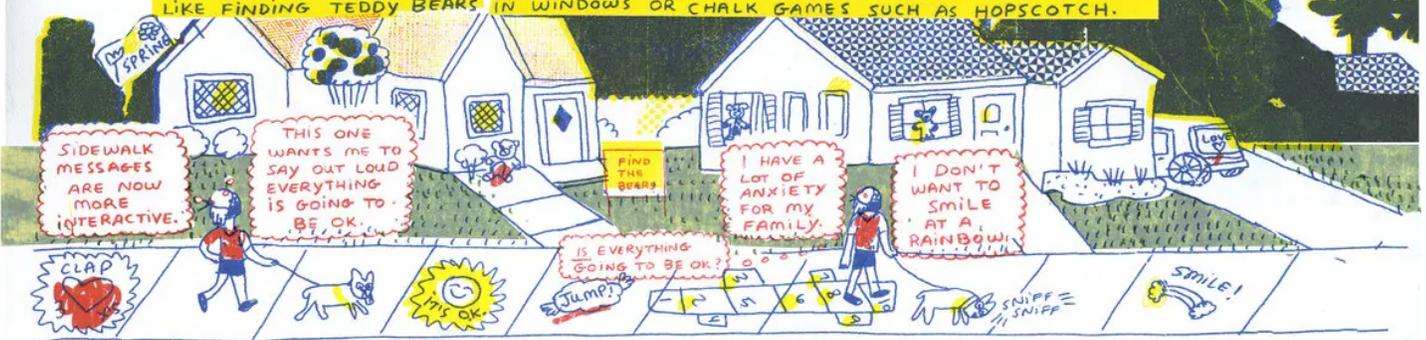
MARCH

AT FIRST THERE WERE PATRIOTIC NODS, RAINBOW CHALK DRAWINGS AND RECOGNITION FOR HEALTHCARE AND ESSENTIAL WORKERS.



APRIL

THE PANDEMIC WAS LASTING MORE THAN A COUPLE OF WEEKS. SIGNAGE STARTED TO SHOW THE BOREDOM WITH ACTIVITIES! LIKE FINDING TEDDY BEARS IN WINDOWS OR CHALK GAMES SUCH AS HOPSCOTCH.



MAY

WHILE WE WAITED FOR A VACCINE, QUARRELED OVER REOPENING AND MASK WEARING BIRTHDAYS, GRADUATIONS AND OTHER KEY MILESTONES WERE CELEBRATED SOCIALLY DISTANT.



JUNE

STRUCTURAL RACISM, HEALTHCARE INEQUALITY, POLICE VIOLENCE ENDED ALL THE EMPTY SENTIMENT, REPLACED BY CALLS TO ACTION, PUBLIC SAFETY REMINDERS AND DESIRE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE.



JULY

I'VE SEEN A LOT OF SIGNS OVER THESE MONTHS IN QUARANTINE BUT SOMETHING WAS MISSING. I NOTICED THERE WERE NO FLAGS AT HALF-STAFF NOR MEMORIALS FOR THE LIVES LOST TO COVID-19. WHAT MESSAGES WOULD BE NEXT?



Esther Pearl Watson is a painter and comics artist, and the author of the graphic novel "Unlovable." She lives in Los Angeles with her French bulldog, Gherkin.

The Diary Project is a weekly visual assignment series produced by Alicia DeSantis, Jennifer Ledbury, Lorne Manly and Josephine Sedgwick.