

The Institute for Peace

POEM

BY: KRISTEN SHELLEY JONES

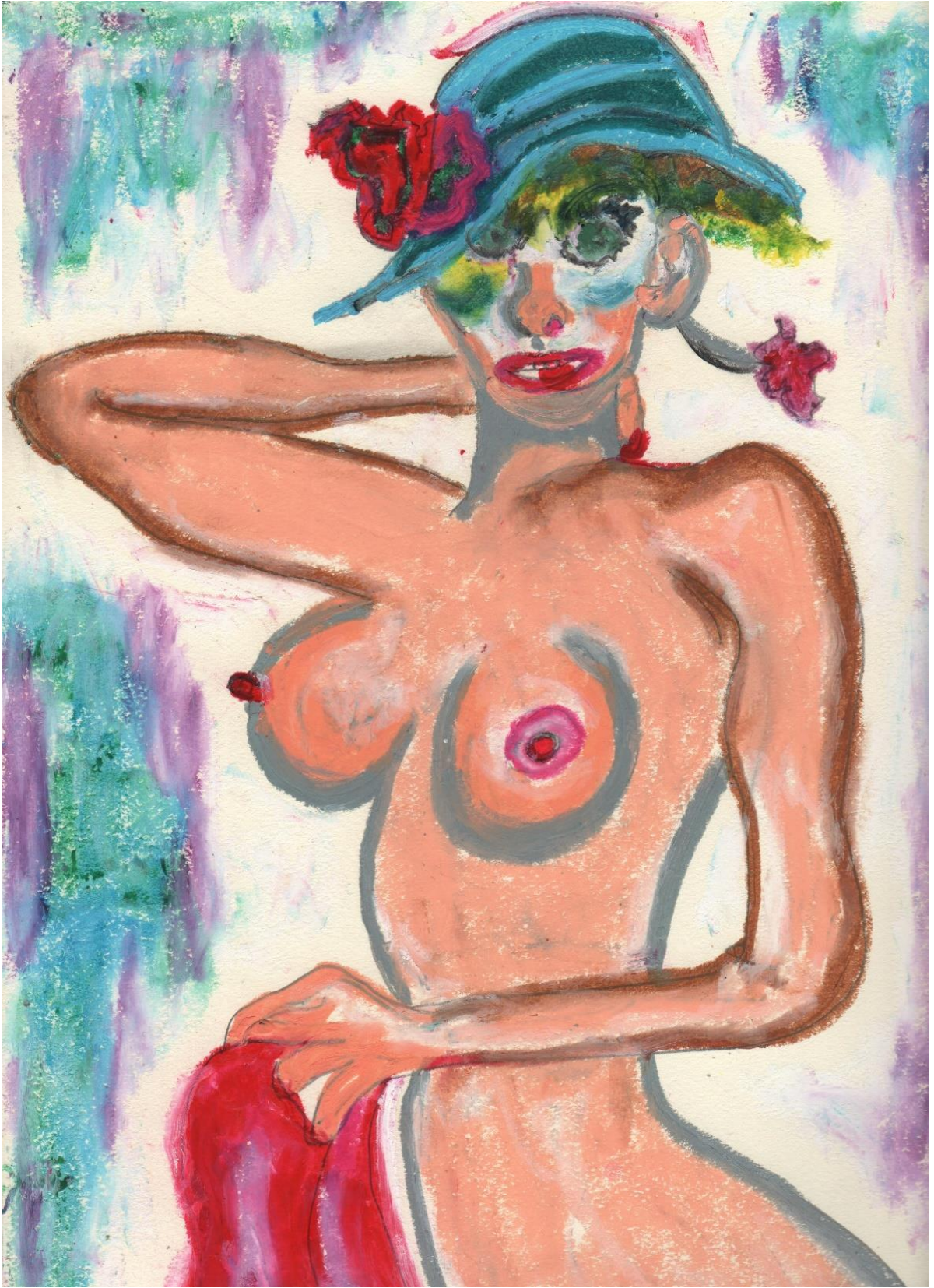
ARTWORK

BY: DAVE O

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The Institute for Peace

Oh, there can be plans, of this I have no doubt
We have genius in our bones, this family of ours
Most generous plans, that would indeed be inclusive
Showing explicitly how each of us is a unique part

Of a greater whole, which is the magic of this family
Of ours and this planet we have named earth
(Though how could it be named, and why?)
And this greater whole, our cosmos, is of course

Greater to a degree that is forever elusive
Really beyond the grasp of our minds and
Senses, even as we continue to populate it
With our delirium and most imaginative

Ignorance: how many angels really can dance
Upon the head of a pin? Any number we would
Have, of course! And from whence, we should
Now ask, do these newly laid plans of ours

Originate? It would be natural to think that
These plans must come from our very best
For we have been lost and hurting a long
And lonely time now; and our road ahead

Carrying along "failed" baggage. . .



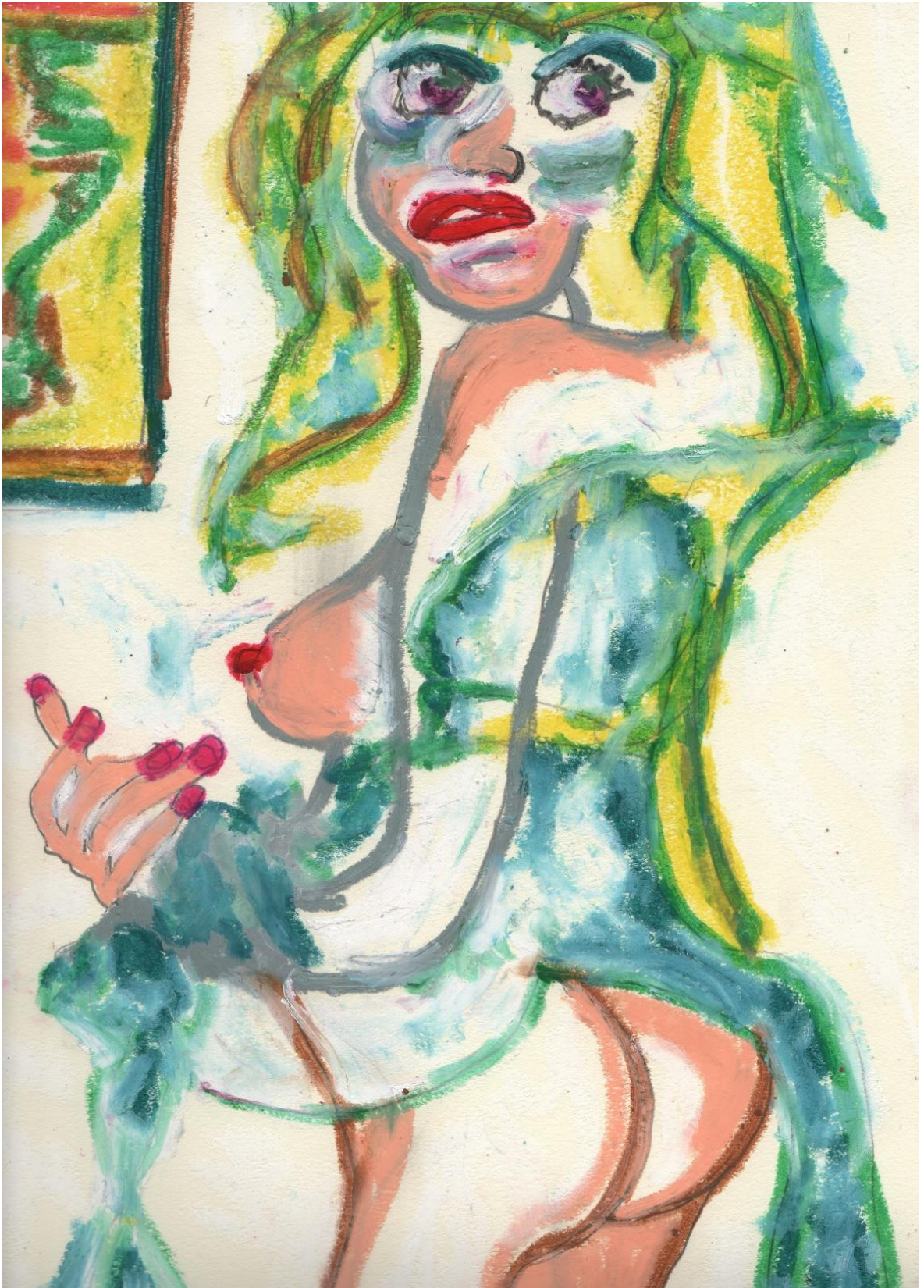
Has become fraught with hazards of
Indecision and misdirection, our general
Ignorance undermining our confidence
It seems now that we cannot find our

Way. So, standing within this vacuum
Of our own apparent delusions, how
Is it that we could enumerate, select
And then convince these "best" of

Us to help the rest, to lead us back
Upon a rightful road, a road that we
Can travel together, in freedom and
A greater wisdom shared by all?

First, of course, we need to establish
Our Institute for Peace and Healing
This can easily be done by simply
Extracting a thirty percent (or so!)

Peace and Healing tax from every
Extant defense/war budget now
Present in the current world order
Standing in the face of our rather



Hyper (if not maniacal) aversion
To cooperation by way of taxation
It could be argued this would be
Impossible. But it could also be

Argued that these current allocations
Also exist due to some form of taxation
So, it might simply be a matter of
Changing the allocation of a thirty

Percent portion from death to life
And this clearly is a decision that family
Members can make! We can as a
Family define and then build a Peace

And Healing Institute, using existing
Moneys and resources, and then
Populating it with the best of us: why
Would we shield ourselves from hope?

So, getting back to this last part, we
Must select of course from across the
Entire palette, showing us the fullest
Expression of our heritage and diversity

There is more evil than good within each of us, perhaps. . .



Of experience, because in order to achieve
Some harmony within a family, there cannot
Be any member left alone without a voice
But we must at every moment remember

That we will be traveling in a newly
Re-engineered direction, with a new
Ethics and a new pathos. We could carry
Along some of this now seen to be

“Failed” baggage if we wish, but our
Children may not, and theirs will certainly
Not, because by then we will have had
Our first generation of peace and healing

Set upon the world, and going back would
Not be anything thought reasonable to
Do. And we would have already begun
Re-allocating the remaining seventy

Percent of all extant war/defense budgets
From death to life; and in short, we will
Have begun anew, with a newly revised
Family of man and woman kind plan



Bien sur, a family can have its troubles
Some even believe there is more evil
Within each of us than good. Perhaps
But is that a reason to kill or even to

Hate? As forgiveness within a family
Would seem to be even more of a
Natural thing. We can forgive, after all
We have done so, and that is most easy

To see; so, forgiving one another is as
Easily done as the sun shines hot and
The rains fall wet, and it could become
The best working part of our newly

Re-engineered system, as evil is
Nothing but a weakness and our
Goodness and fortitude could be
Strengthened against its workings

Until we could gain control of this
Function amongst our family members
Does not our family history instruct
Us as to how it has blossomed and

The anguish of evil's hallowed victories. . .



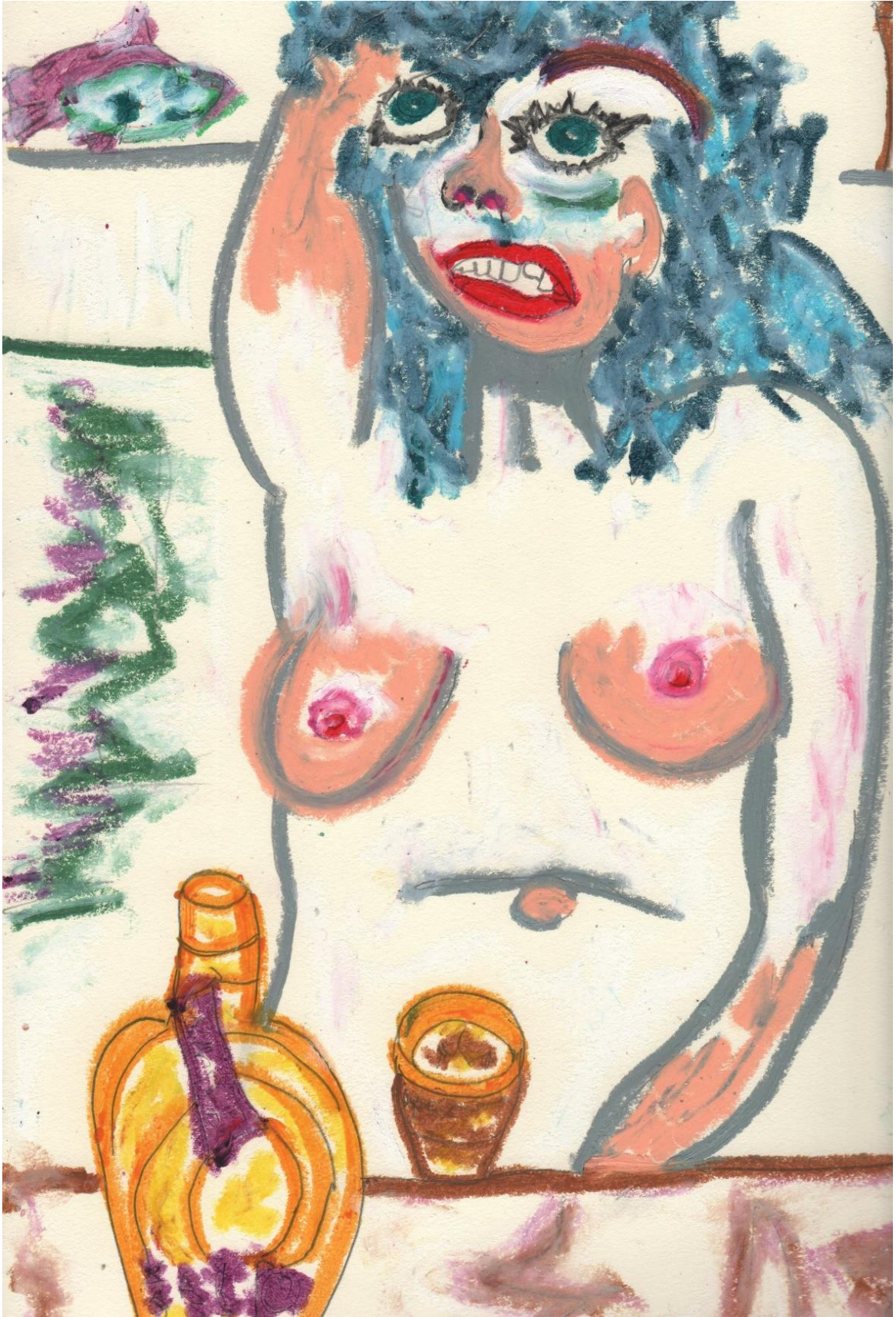
Flourished? Thereby providing a pathway
To its recension. As easily as the winds
Blow in every direction, we could work
To dissipate its impetus, and perhaps

Even to forget the anguish of its
Hallowed victories: much like a family
Learns to honor itself, and to respect
Its weaknesses, as well as its powers

For the one can enervate any victory
Quite as well as the other can succeed
We can serve to deny honor to these
Failures by striving to procure the hope

That we can love each other; to forgive
Of course, a first step, a beginning
To begin, and then only to steer ourselves
Towards each other's needs which must

Be our work for some time to come
In order to repair this machine of ours
This dream we used to have about
Ourselves, and the reasons we had



To be the way we have been during
These long days and nights of this
Failure to communicate. Does this
New way that we seek tell us that

We are equal in every way, and
Therefore, the same? No, of course
Not—that would be foolish and
Inane! We are each a flower and

And a fool, a hero and a dupe; but
None of us are the same, never and
Not alike in given detail, except that
We are a family and thereby inter-

Changeable in that respect with
Regard to that individual identity
Of membership within this family
Upon this earth, traveling (somehow

To somewhere) within this cosmos
Then and now we are the same in
This contingent game of life we all
Are playing. It is not the sameness

Seeking to begin the beginning of steering ourselves towards. . .



Within ourselves that we adore
In fact, it is more our given and
Various natures to be changeable
And diverse, and in these colors

And reflections there is delight
But it must be the fight we wage
For equal access to our freedoms
Of life itself: clean air to breathe

And water to drink, enough food
To eat, and babies who thrive
Could these basic freedoms of life
Perhaps, become the blueprint for

Our re-engineering, helping us to
Define this re-designed and
Directed pathway of ours, upon
Which we find ourselves these

Days, a bit bewildered and indecisive
But hope re-gained is still our first
Goal and destination, we could not
Make it far into this new future



Without its foundation, because to
Build upon anything else could not last
Nor would it take to the soils of our
Endeavors. These labors must be

Prodigious, for one cannot change
Darkness to light without them; but
We must find our reasons within the
Joy of family: a recognition and

Validation that we are working together!
And how, acting only in our names, are
We, as a six-billion-member family (or so!)
Supposed to go about this business of

Re-invention, re-visioning our existence
Here on this planet earth? Is there some
Miraculous algorithm that we could
Populate with our own data and thereby

Operate with credible expectation that
We are now doing the right thing?
Healing our family, accepting the
Responsibility that comes naturally

To repair this machine: this dream we used to have about ourselves. . .



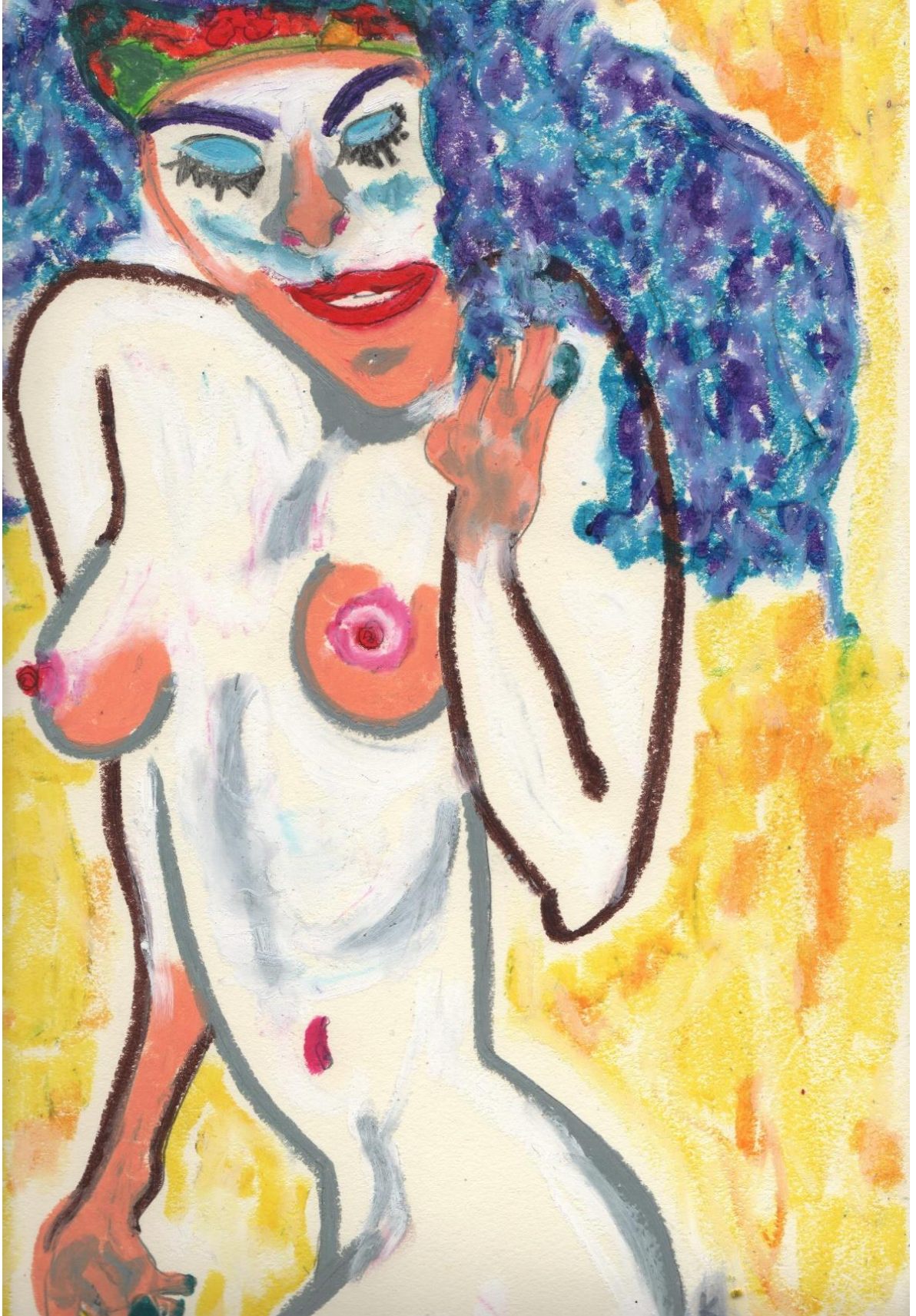
With a large family, steering ourselves
Towards goodness, nurturing and loving
Finding a pathway for our planet and
Ourselves that will procure and extend

This progression of ours through the cosmos?
Perhaps. But I would not like to delegate my
Own responsibility to some purported
Miracle of mathematical precision in the

Hope that it could rescue me—from myself!
For, have we not allowed these precision
Miracles of our own creation to manage
Our family resources and value? This hyper-

Energized model of capital flux? When money
Becomes a sponsoring god for a family, then
All things money-like become by a perverse
Association god-like; but now we know how

These manifestations of self-serving
Superstitions driven by greed and delusional
Hoarding can and do serve to undermine
The integrity of our family, antagonize and



Intimidate family members and always
To weaken and abuse our very sense of
Family pride and the power we possess
So, as a family, we must know by now

Not to choose again this misdirection
A transition is on the horizon and these
Are difficult times: change, most especially
Change within a family, such a multitudinous

Marvelously complex and diverse a family
As our own, will always be a challenge
Often fraught with inertial passions and
Residual ignorance (as we all must admit

That wisdom is but an evolutionary feature
Of our existence here); and this shedding of
Our historical skin could be as harsh as a
Snake does shed its own skin, seeking the

Light of a new dawn. Will we have to
Change our family leaders? Well, do we
Not all of us replace ourselves by death
And life? So, yes, of course, but this

This shedding of our historical skin. . .



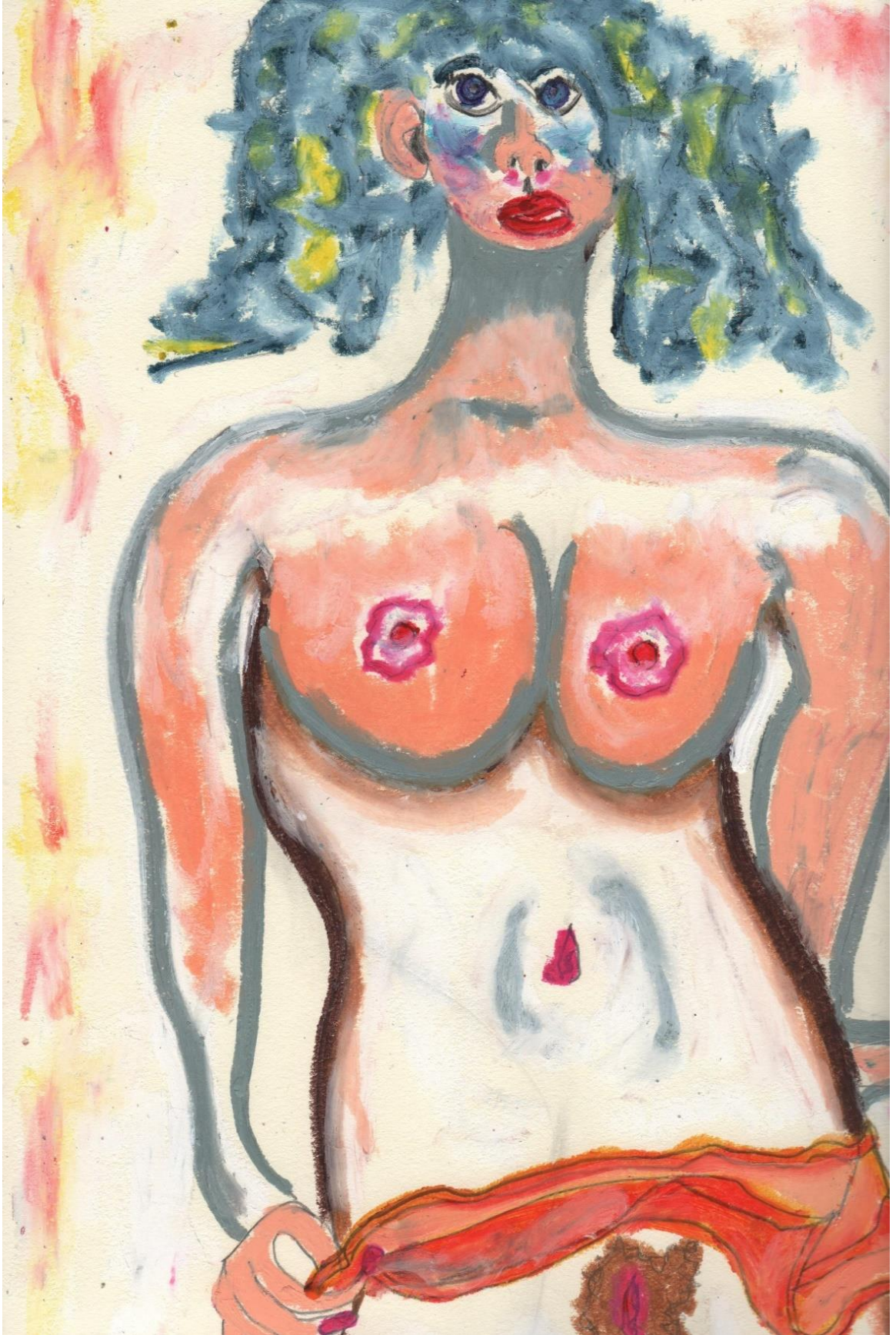
Would only be a false stopping point
In a journey destined to find a new
Beginning and then to set out upon it
So, first, and most imperatively, we must

Find our way here, to the beginning. Now
We have urgency in our house: though
There is no ending for time itself—at
Least not within our understanding

Of it—but perhaps, there is an ending
To our own. Our family's history has
Been established, but can it be
Extended? Within this contingency

Of urgent appraisal, we must measure
The possible future for our family with
Very careful circumspection, as this
Is not a field for second chances

Can we negotiate and compromise with
Extinction? We cannot equivocate with
Our family's only fortune, life itself! This
Thing we call globalism, this false goblin



Of place (location, location, location—bah!)
This is our family's heritage, and yes, this
Is our house, and we all are now at home
Is it not ridiculous to consider one room or

Another of this our magnificent house as
Superior? Or inferior? Or some collection
Or segment of our brothers and sisters to be
Less or more, simply because of reasons

We have conjured ourselves, one to another
To another, to another, an endless dithering
Fantasy of nationalization and exploitation?
Our house is burning down, our lands and

Our passions have been set afire! And this
Must be our first challenge of intra-familial
Discussion and resolution. Fareed Zakaria
Tells us "We must re-engineer our way of

Living!" We have studied and learned and
Thereby propagated war (oh, so much war!)
Amongst ourselves—our own family members
Really!? How did it come to be that we act

Our family's history has been established but can it be extended?



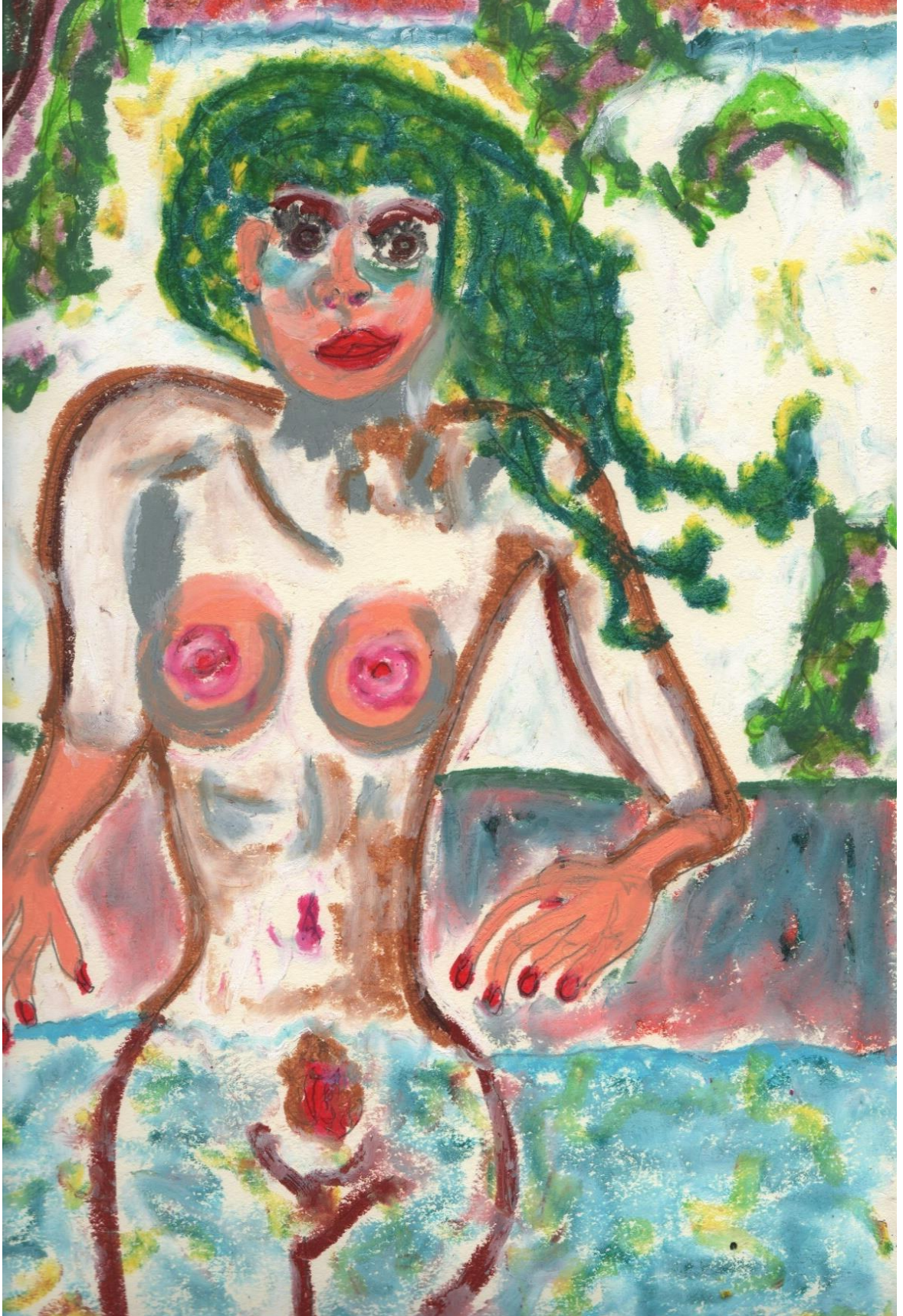
This way, with hostility and duplicity, against
Our own brothers and sisters? I cannot
Answer that, nor could anyone, I suspect
But can we stop it, now that we know each

Other better, and can see the hurt and the
Damage we have meted out, all according
To this intricate system of horror and shame?
Perhaps, I cannot think why not, unless

We have run out of time, but do not yet
Know it. We have a World Bank, as if
Money were our most valuable asset
Requiring such careful management

And concern: whispering with glee about
How these stacks of gold measure our
Goodness and worth, but its only merit
Lying beneath a smothering blanket of

Greed and deceit. But, really, would it
Not be best to measure our highest
Value by knowing and understanding
One's own family's needs, and working



Toward their fulfillment? A family
Living on a spinning planet, moving
Within and throughout a cosmos
A journey which is as mysterious

As the roots of our own ignorance
At its heart, vulnerable and
Contingent, proud but withering
Under a shroud of fear and

Trepidation. So, given that this is
True absolutely, how do we find
The heroes we need to begin
This task? Where are we to discover

These re-engineers? Well, let us
Talk about our initiative for peace
We are not “protecting” against
But instead, integrating peace

Into every aspect, every nuance
Into every aspiration that radiates
From this newly re-engineered
Model of ours! Evil? It is nothing

Can we negotiate and compromise with extinction?



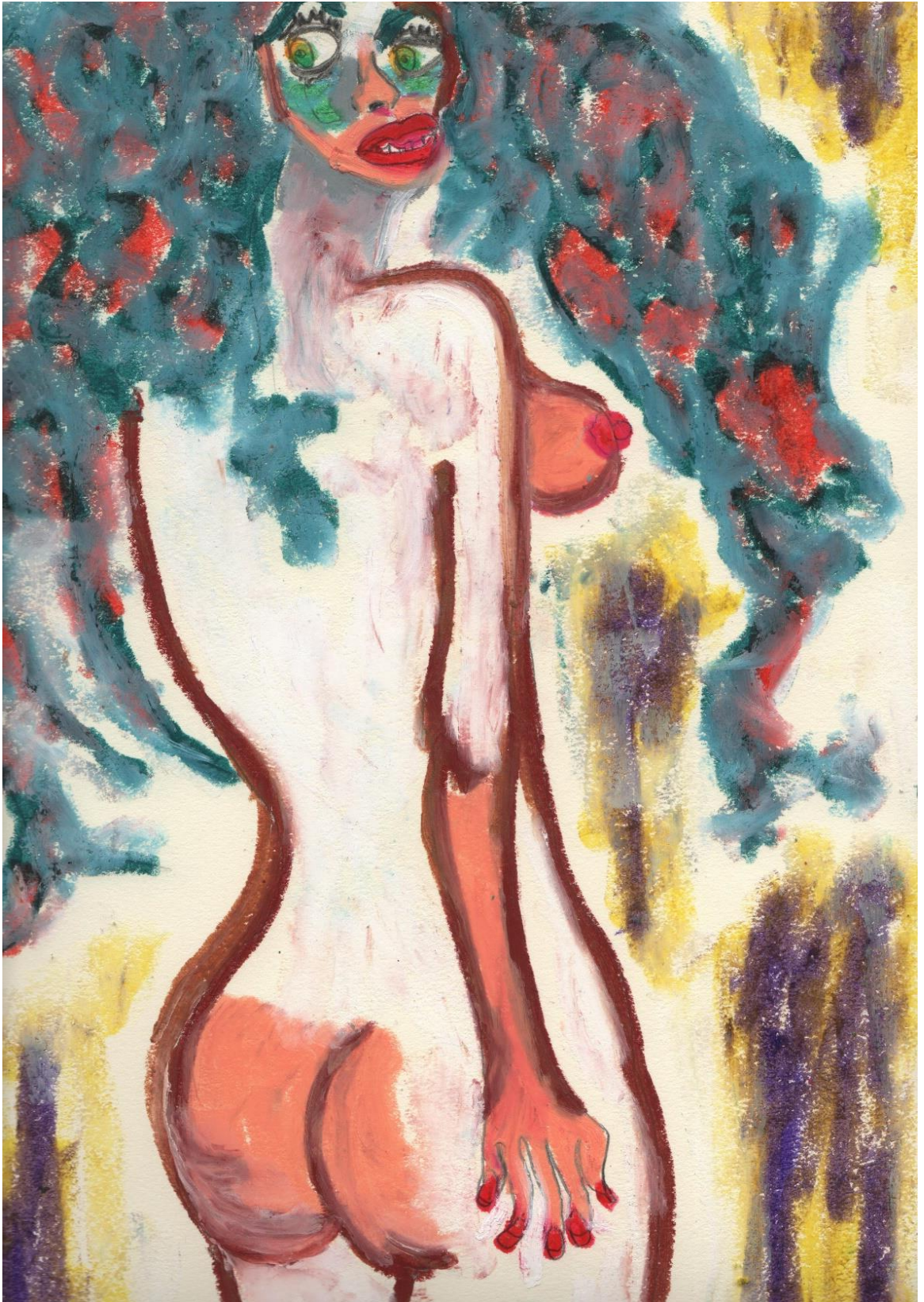
But a mirage of fear and want
It has no power of its own to stop
This transition, especially now that
We know each other better

Not well, of course, not yet, but
There is no going back. We have
Vast electronic verification of
Each other's existence—these

Brothers and sisters of this family
Of man and woman kind, who
Certainly live and love, are born
And pass away: all accomplished

In a wonderfully complex and
Variegated simultaneity of actions
In a panoply of performance on
Nearly every possible habitable

Surface harbored by this planet
We are a wonderful, marvelous
Collection of people, and we all
(Each of us in our own way)



Come to this interactive
Realization of family along
A pathway of personal evolution
Life itself touches us, as we too

Ourselves touch back. So, now
That we know about one another
Is it not exciting? This happy
Happenstance of sharing this

Treasury of coexistence and
Potential: all given and received
Packaged and produced, each
Among all, by family members!

But how do we proceed, given
Our history of, well, intra-familial
Atrocities that were, until now
Understood only dimly through

A fog of ignorance and superstition
Driven by our now more vestigial
Powers of greed and fear? We
Must certainly study this new

Our house is burning down. . .



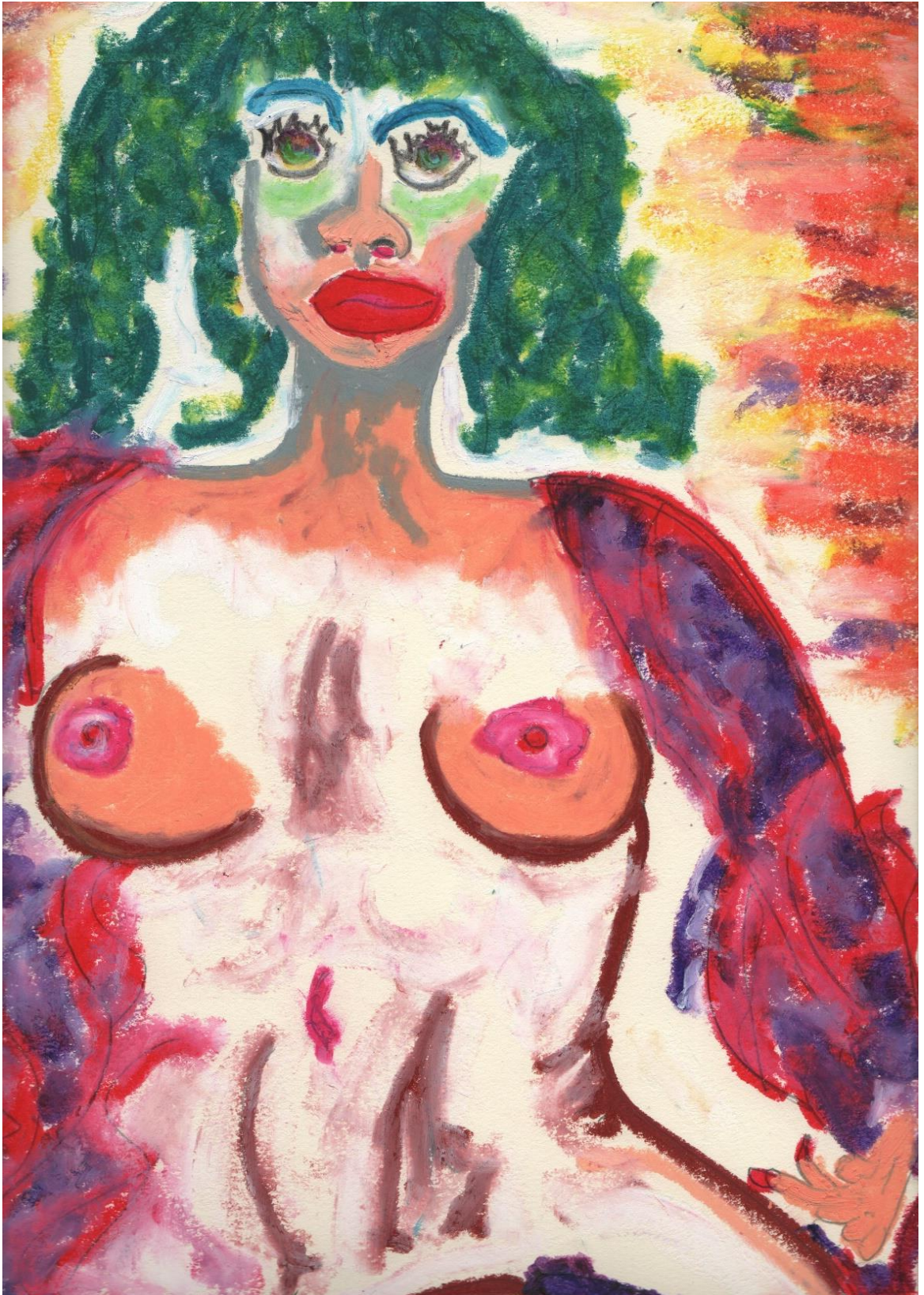
Dawn we are beginning, now
Ready to shed our shredded
Chrysalis of myth and magical
Superstition that has served

As our cloak and shield
Hiding ourselves from each
Other, while our family values
And relationships have

Languished. It would seem
Our next step must be to open
Wide our eyes, our hearts, our
Minds and our arms, as any

Family would do, in order to
Re-vitalize energy, re-navigate
Direction, and to re-emphasize
Commitments one to each other

I suggest we begin as we have
Always done in times of crisis
And peril (again, as any family
Would in order to re-establish



And re-validate its familial
Coda). We should identify our
Most able and wise leaders
And teachers from across the

Breadth of our group, this
Glorious mélange of individuals
But these individuals must be
Already awoken from the dreams

Of anti-civilization (but easily done
I believe, as now there are many who
Have been); determine a meeting
Place (well-enabled and well-

Provisioned); invite those folks
Identified to come together
And then it would seem a most
Reasonable thing to create an

Institute for the study and
Propagation of peace and life
Peace for ourselves, of course
But peace with our planet

But these individuals must be already awoken. . .



Most critically, as it is the
Source of life itself (there
Is none other!). And life?
We are a group as diverse

And unique as the grains
Of sand upon a beach, each
Autonomous and distinct in
Its very own way: a splendid

And singular romance; and yet
If held alone and seen only by
The light of this estimation
Then, a beach it would

Never make!

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