



more fun inside:

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HERE + SEPTEMBER IS IN THE BAG
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TRAMPOLINING

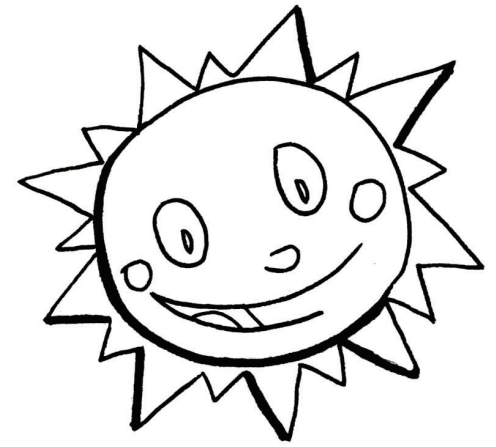
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GET COLOURING!

ADULTS ARE BEING ENCOURAGED TO PICK UP THE CRAYONS. BUT IS THIS PASTIME TRULY THERAPEUTIC OR JUST CHILDISH?

BY JACQUIE MOORE



WAX ON, WAX OFF

COLOURING BOOKS AIMED AT ADULTS ARE POPPING UP EVERYWHERE. SO WHAT HAPPENED TO COLOURING OUTSIDE THE LINES? SHARPEN YOUR CRAYONS THEN READ ON.

BY JACQUIE MOORE

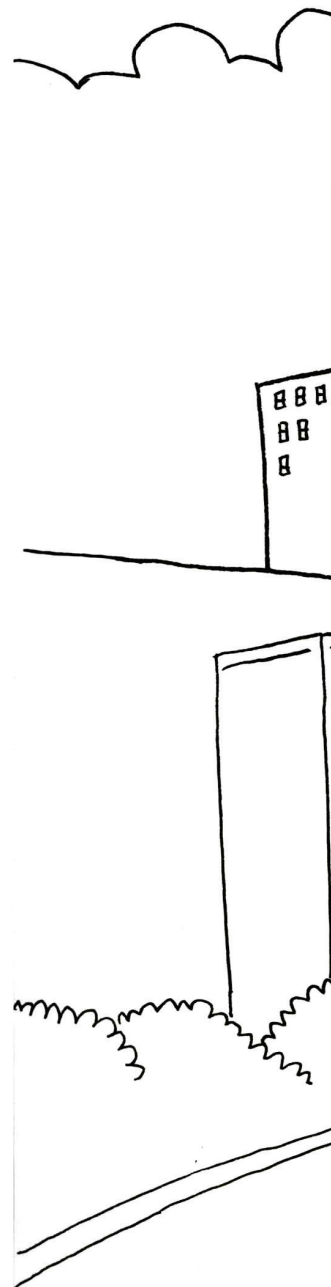
In the spring of 1975, Simpson Sears in Victoria, B.C. announced a kids' colouring contest. Parents had to go into the store to pick up the official colouring page, which featured an illustration of Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends hanging around the Honey Tree. My mom set me up at the kitchen table and I went to work crayoning the animals in their appropriate colours, unfettered by any special motivation to win whatever prize was at stake. I was three. Colouring was my job.

I won. Not only did I get a Dixie cup full of ice cream and a three-foot tall poly-pellet-stuffed Pooh bear (only recently tossed out due to mould infestation) but my photo ran in the *Sidney Review*.

While it did dawn on me a few years later that my winning page had doubtless been pulled randomly from a draw box, the contest had already marked me with an indelible awareness that I was good at colouring inside the lines. Eventually, however, that confidence became twinned with a dark insecurity that I must not be very good at colouring *outside* the lines—evidence in contemporary society, as I'd learned through cultural osmosis, of acute creative infertility and, possibly, soullessness.

Imagine my surprise this summer, then, when I came across a rack labelled "Colouring Books for Adults" in a Nelson bookstore. I'd spent the '90s dutifully reading, if not actively partaking of, Sark's *Living Juicy: Daily Morsels for Your Creative Soul*, and feeling bad about not sticking to Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* "morning pages" routine. But here, where I expected to see blank-paged birch-bark journals for free-hand sketching and random collaging, were structured colouring books of the sort I've vigilantly steered my children away from. More startling, many of them—including *Colour Your Own Van Gogh* and *My Book of Kells Colouring Book*—came equipped with full-colour versions of each famous work so that one could "follow the artists' original schemes." I felt almost dirty perusing them. But also vindicated. I immediately bought one called *Creative Haven Chinese Designs* and spent the next 30 minutes colouring inside the lines before handing the book over to my keen four-year-old.

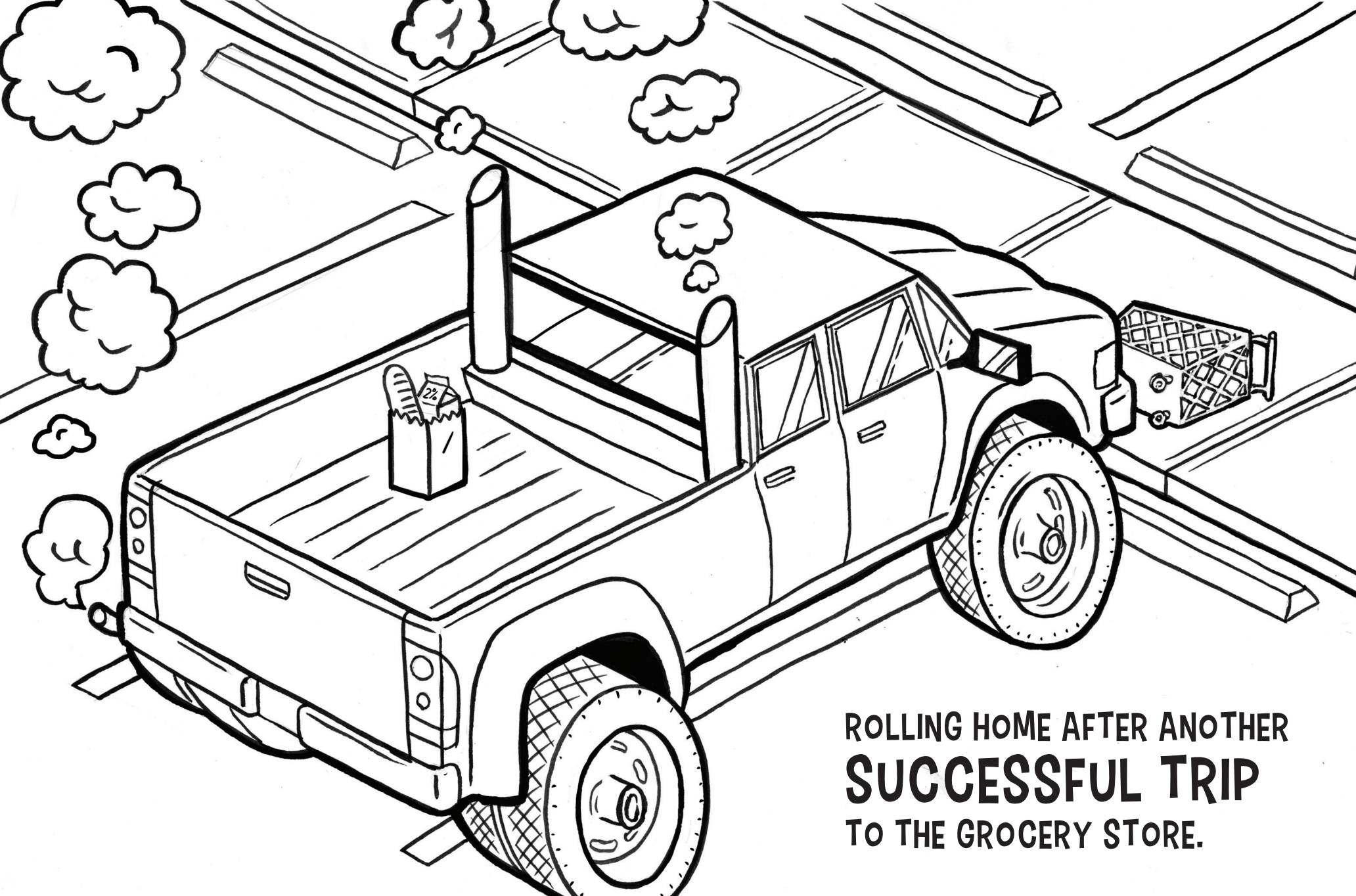
In case you missed it, which is quite likely if you are not consumed by anxiety over how to spend your free time and/or heal your residual childhood wounds, col-



THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY HAS CALGARIANS
FEELING A LITTLE BLUE. IT'S TIME TO APPLY A FEW
OTHER COLOURS TO THE CITY. IT'S TIME TO

COLOUR CALGARY HAPPY!





ROLLING HOME AFTER ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL TRIP TO THE GROCERY STORE.

ouring books for adults have become a thing. Currently, three of the top 20 bestselling books on Amazon are colouring books for adults, including *Adult Coloring Book: Stress Relieving Patterns*, *Adult Coloring Book: Stress Relieving Animal Designs* and U.K. artist Johanna Basford's *Secret Garden: An Inky Treasure Hunt and Coloring Book*, which has sold upwards of 1.4-million copies (her forthcoming *Lost Ocean: An Inky Adventure and Coloring Book*, due out Oct. 27, ranks among Indigo's list of Most Anticipated Books of 2015). Closer to home, Turner Valley artist and art instructor Crystal Salamon has hundreds of pre-orders from customers awaiting her first adult-g geared colouring book (due out later this month), and the folks at Calgary's Mona Lisa art-supply store reportedly sell a minimum of 50 fine-art colouring books every week.

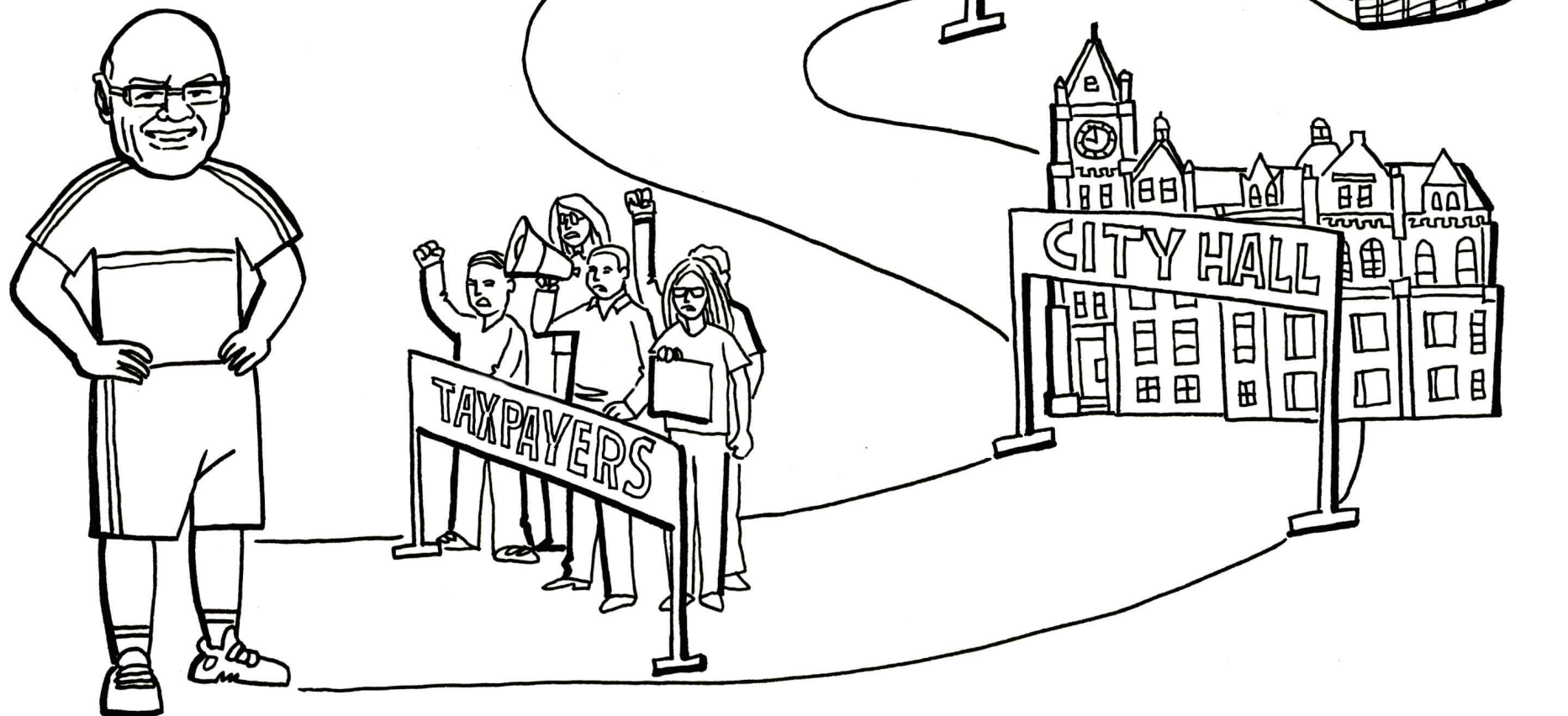
The most obvious unifying feature of these elegant, detailed colouring books is the presence of a certain strain of words on their covers. They are the sorts of words used by yoga teachers during the

sleeping part at the end of class: "mindfulness," "calm," "relaxation," "haven," "inner harmony," "mind healing" and "anti-stress." Their use in colouring-book titles instantly shuts down any idea you may have had that colouring could just be fun. No, this is therapy. A testimony on the back of a colouring book by a Nelson artist praises the book's ability to reach out "to the wounded parts within each of us... It is okay. Everything is okay. Most importantly, you are okay."

Suddenly, colouring inside the lines—a tidy kid's hobby lately discouraged in favour of time spent in the bespattered Jackson Pollack room at 4Cats art studio—is even better than OK. It's been co-opted by grown-ups as the ultimate coping mechanism for dealing with our anxious, disconnected, emotionally stunted selves. It's cheaper than counselling and less awkward than Pilates (and vice versa).

Carl Jung was one of the first psychologists to push colouring as a mental-health technique in the early 20th century. Jung had his

HELP KEN KING NEGOTIATE THE OBSTACLES STANDING BETWEEN HIM AND CALGARYNEXT.



patients create and colour personal images in the style of ancient Buddhist and Hindu mandalas in an attempt to clarify emotional disorders and work toward self-healing. Likewise, veteran Calgary art therapist Straja King uses mandalas as a way to, among other things, help “remind people to be creative, as is their birthright.” While the heart of King’s work is all raw, unstructured self-expression (“I’m always encouraging people to colour outside the lines,” she admits), she does think of adult colouring books as a “gateway” art project. “For people who don’t generally lean into the expressive arts, a colouring book provides a structure, it invites us in and allows us to get our feet on the ground. There’s a healthy regression there—it’s all about play, and that can really help mitigate anxiety.” King’s perfect colouring book would come with some blank pages at the back for the user to experiment with on their own. (Many of the books I saw do, indeed, contain blank pages.)

For some, colouring is more than grounding—it’s a ticket to improved social standing. While Instagrammed photos of completed colouring pages haven’t yet hit Look-what-I-had-for-brunch levels, they’re getting there. “A page of colouring can offer proof of ability, which is important in terms of social status,” says Alex Bierman, a professor of psychology at the University of Calgary. His research focuses on stress in the context of aging. “As people age, there is often a loss of social status,” he says. “And once you retire, you no longer feel efficacious. Displaying some tangible evidence to family and friends—an attractive art project—can be an important display of self-worth.” Certainly, for adults who have no retirement hobby waiting in the wings, colouring has a more immediate payoff than taking up quilting (*Grandma’s Quilts Coloring Books for Grown-Ups* will scratch both itches at once).

But let’s recall the old days, when colouring was not something you

did to feel better about yourself or even to win a Pooh bear, but rather pure rainy-day fun. Enter the timely and refreshing resurrection of Doodle Art.

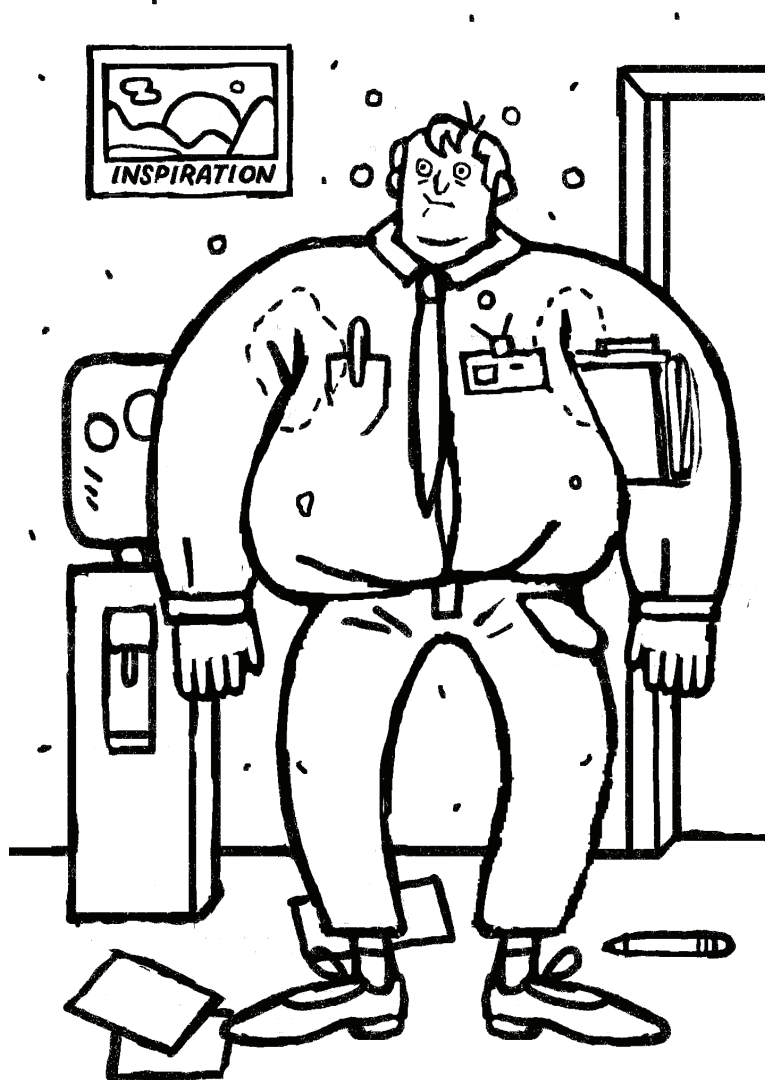
Marketed to young boomers who remember the original poster-sized colouring pages sold in white tubes with their own special felt pens, The Original Doodle Art, which lay dormant for a couple of decades, is enjoying a second go-round. The company was started in 1972 in Vancouver by the Anderson family, who banked on the idea that people would enjoy sitting around alone or in small groups for days on end, filling in super-detailed, psychedelic drawings of butterflies, jungle scenes and vases of flowers. They were right: the first Doodle Art poster—an illustration called “Ecology” by the artist Len Masse—went on to sell one-million copies. “By 1974, one in nine homes in Canada had a Doodle Art kit,” says

Andrew Perkins, who, with a partner, bought the company from the Andersons in 2011. While Perkins doesn’t expect the company to hit that level of sales again, he and his partners have done a lot to attract fans, new and old.

Some of the new Doodle Art posters have an edginess that wasn’t there 40 years ago: “Zombie March,” for instance, is not welcome at Chapters due to its graphic content. The style of others, such as “Lady of Feathers” and “Enchanted Forest,” is reminiscent of contemporary tattoo art. As for the folks motivated by nostalgia, Doodle Art has reissued several of the original prints—although they were forced to rethink the iconic white-tube packaging. “That was familiar and appealing to people who knew it from the first time around,” says Perkins. “But new customers had no idea what it was.”

One of the inevitable byproducts of the adult colouring-book

**MONDAY TO FRIDAY HE RULES THE WATER COOLER.
ON WEEKENDS HE IS HOME ONLY ON THE RANGE.**



market is the host of parodies that have begun to appear. Some consumers were gleefully waiting for it: in the comments section of one of a zillion online articles about the calming benefits of colouring, a reader wrote, “This isn’t a thing until I’ve seen it on *Portlandia*.” It’s a thing: the hilarious *Portlandia Activity Book* (published last year by McSweeney’s) includes a “Non-Normative Coloring Book” in which one is encouraged to colour (unicorns) outside the lines. Other offbeat offerings include *Coloring for Grown-Ups: The Adult Activity Book*, which includes a colour-able maze for a guy without health insurance, who needs help navigating “the perils of daily life without suffering bodily harm,” before dying a slow and painful death from natural causes. *Unicorn Jerks* features 18 drawing of unicorns obnoxiously texting and farting in elevators.

My favourite new colouring book is one that may even—if I press

hard enough with my Crayolas—mitigate the damaging psychic fallout from my Sears win (subsequent worries about not being creative, etc.). Can colouring-induced trauma be overcome by colouring? The answer to this conundrum may well lie in *Outside the Lines: An Artists’ Coloring Book For Giant Imaginations*, a contribution to the recent fad that, as its title suggests, endeavours to escape the confines of the traditional colouring book. It’s a compendium of drawings by dozens of well-known contemporary (and quirky) fine artists, cartoonists and musicians. Appealingly, it doesn’t have the words “anti-stress” or “Colour Me Happy” on the cover. Most importantly, the drawings are so weird that, even if I choose to colour, say, Lacy Micallef’s “Hot Dog Surf Party” inside the lines, I can still feel somewhat creative. In fact, I think I’ll make the water pink and the hot dogs blue. Take that, Walt Disney! I feel better already. **S**

BACK TO SCHOOL
IS THE **HAPPIEST**
TIME OF
THE YEAR.

