



A birdcage (or bird cage) is a cage designed to house birds as pets.

When I was a child, I suffered from seasonal respiratory allergies. Acute asthmatic bronchitis, restricted my capacity to breathe, to engage in strenuous physical activity, to be outside.

I was often isolated, imprisoned within the confines of my air-conditioned bedroom. Through the window glass, I heard my friends' shrieks and laughter, but I was withdrawn from the experience, seemingly too frail to participate.

It was during this time that I began to draw bird cages. Elaborate Escher-esque interiors: room upon room, one unfolding upon another. I used a ruler to delineate and precisely layer a series of stories, then "decorated" each room in diminutive detail.

Antique bird cages are often popular as collector' items or as household decor. Still, they are not suitable for housing live birds, being too small, improper shape, using unsafe materials or construction.

Each of these interiors was multiply bound: a specific home, scaffolded within another hand-drawn exterior metal birdcage-like structure, contained within the pages of a spiral-bound A4 sketchbook. I can see the origin of my interest in considering constricted containers, exploring the edges, and remaking the same space over and

over again. I believed that if I retold the story, I could change the story. I could set myself free.

Although I never drew figures, I did write dialogue for the characters I envisioned living within these architectural spaces.

Was I afraid that, like the caged inhabitants that I too was invisible?

I needed to know my friends would remember me when I was well enough to emerge be in their company again.

The amount of time the bird will spend in the cage each day is also a factor.

When I was ten, I became imprisoned in another gilded cage. It began with another diagnosis: idiopathic scoliosis. A large spinal curve in my left lower back, with a complementary twist behind my right shoulder blade.

I remember the orthopedist scrutinizing the glowing x-ray while my body shivered beneath a pilled cotton gown. He took red grease pencils, protractors, and rulers, precisely marking the silvery image like a geometry theorem. In less than 30 seconds, I became a by-product of these indelible, external markings; I felt myself vanish.

For the next decade, I wore multiple back braces, twenty-three hours each day. Like a corset, each brace imprinted and abraded my skin. My body became a site of intervention, a problem to be solved.

I longed to know myself as more than a collection of symptoms, and yet I knew no other way. Every day, I silenced that desire as I stuffed my torso in the plastic and metal enclosure, cinching the velcro straps tightly across my spine.

In general, the larger and more active the bird, the larger the cage one should use.

Of course, the years passed, and I got better. I got married. I became pregnant.

Before I knew I had a daughter or a son, I knew I was having a child, a child to be named in knowing that they would be a seeker of their knowledge.

And on the day they went to college, I gave them a tiny birdcage of their own. One in which they could open the door and the bird could fly free.

It is illegal in some countries to house a pet bird in a cage that does not permit it to spread its wings.