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New Dawn: Design & Process



New Dawn

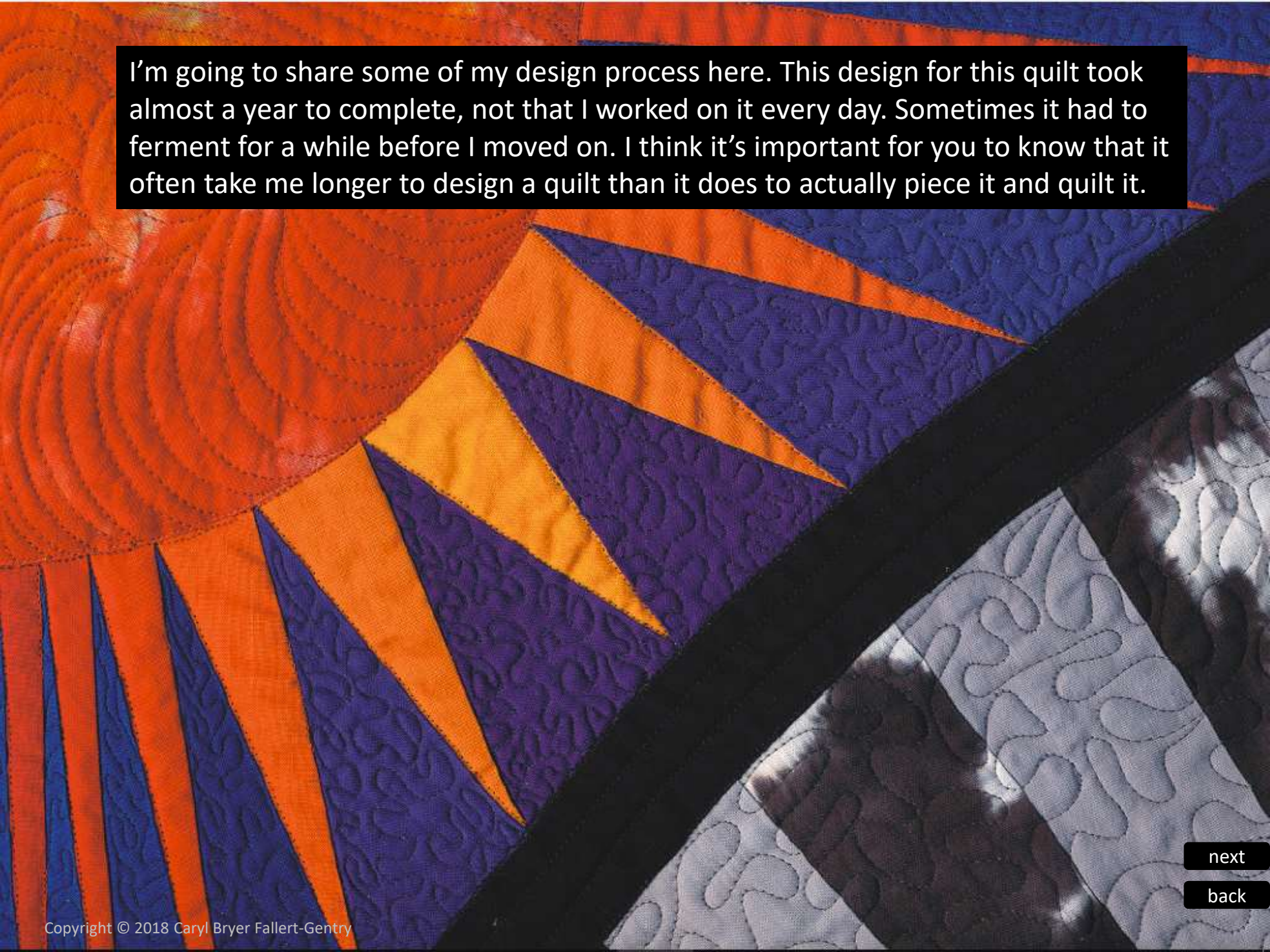
78" x 63"

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This is one of a series of quilts about birds as symbols of freedom and the joy of life. It was made in the year 2000 especially to celebrate the dawning of the new millennium. I chose the mythical Phoenix as a symbol of leaving behind the old and beginning anew. To me the Phoenix is a beautiful symbol of the ability of life and beauty to rise out of decay and destruction. The transition to a new millennium gave us a reason to think about what was good about the old millennium, and what we would like to change. It gave us a chance to focus our visions and make new and positive choices for ourselves and for our world.

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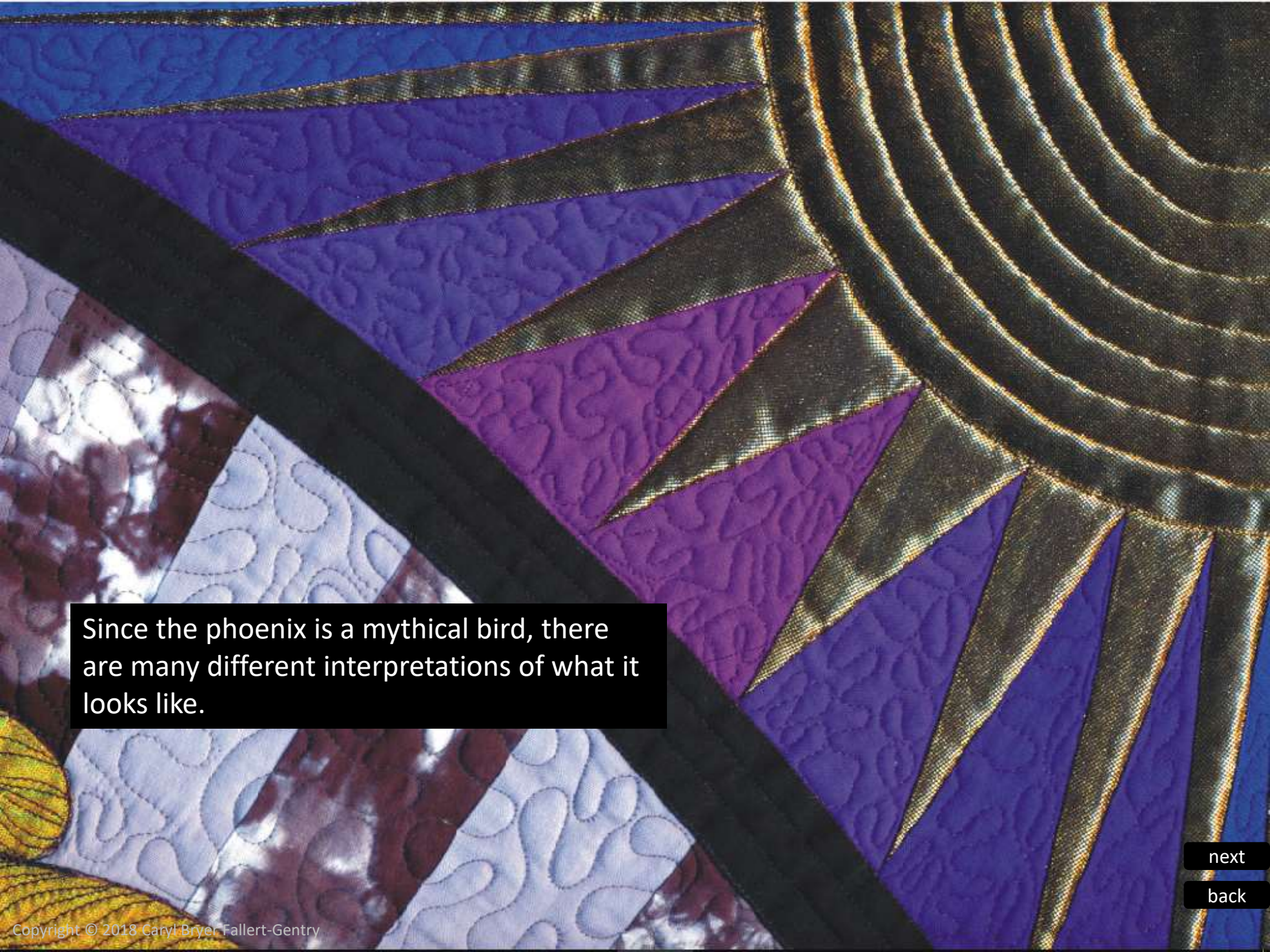
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I'm going to share some of my design process here. This design for this quilt took almost a year to complete, not that I worked on it every day. Sometimes it had to ferment for a while before I moved on. I think it's important for you to know that it often take me longer to design a quilt than it does to actually piece it and quilt it.

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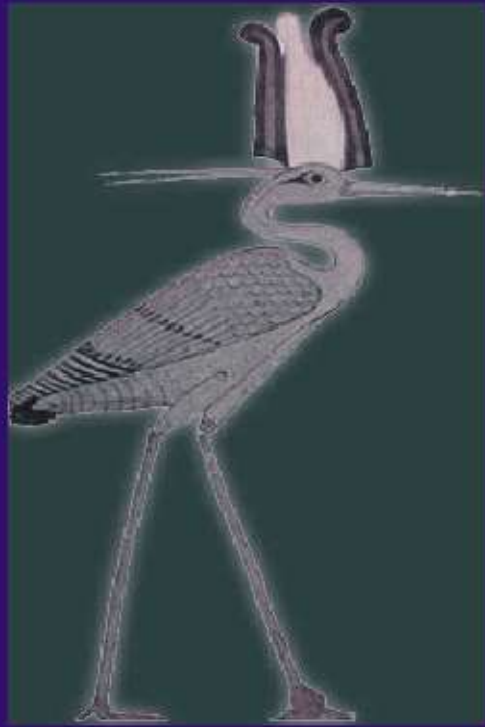
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Since the phoenix is a mythical bird, there are many different interpretations of what it looks like.

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I found many
images from
ancient Egypt,
Assyria, and
Greece ...



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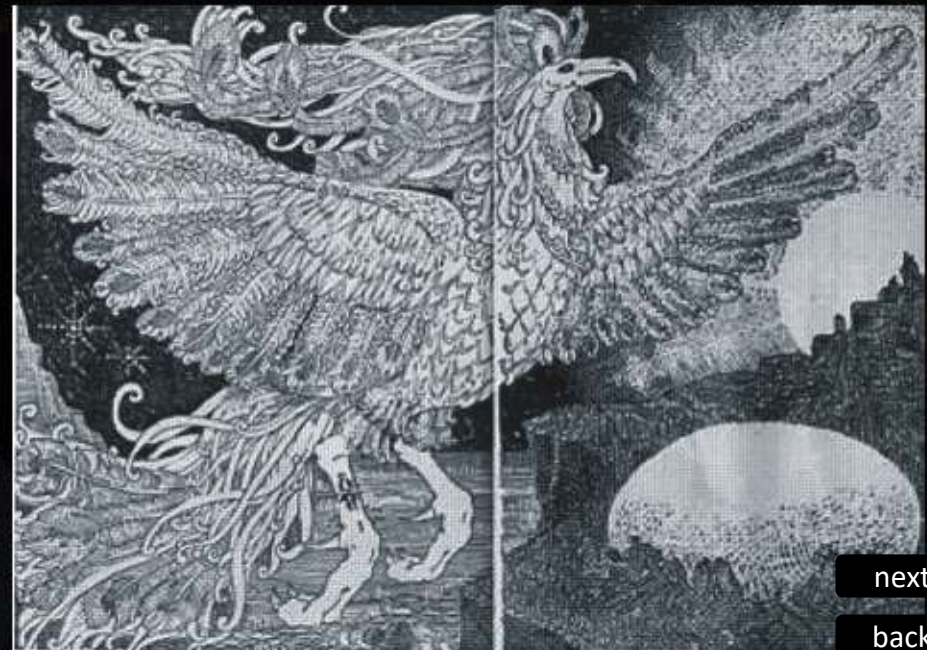
to modern China, where we encountered it everywhere, on the ceramics, on the textiles, and even sometimes on the dinner table.



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Unfortunately, most of the phoenix images I had seen either looked like fancy chickens or terminal peacocks.



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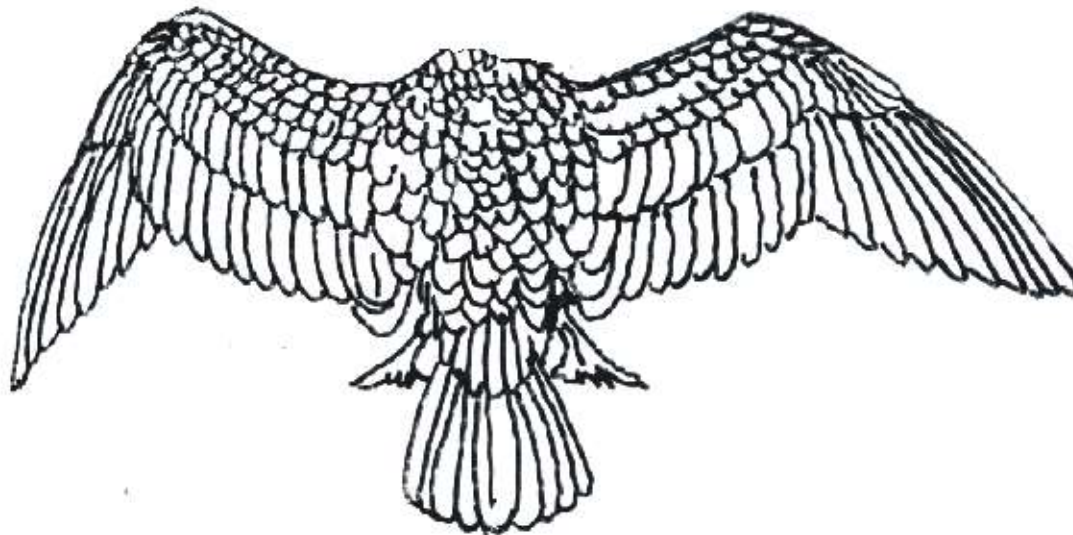
So starting with a picture I had taken of a cormorant,
I set out to make my own interpretation of the phoenix.



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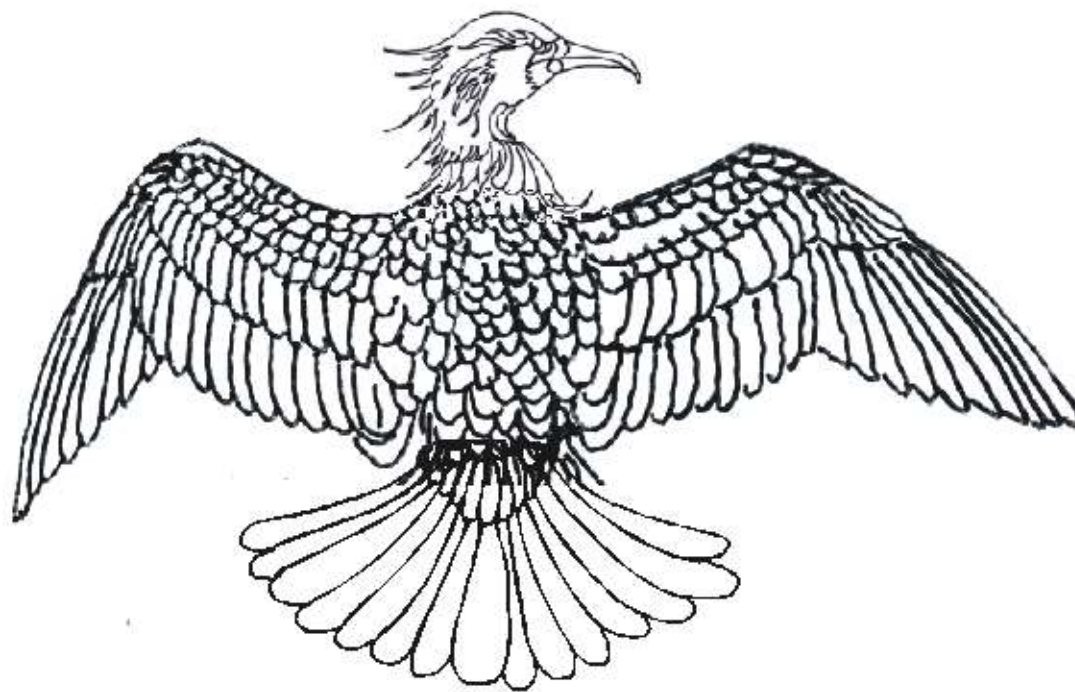
I started with just the body, wings,
and tail since I planned to have a
more majestic head.



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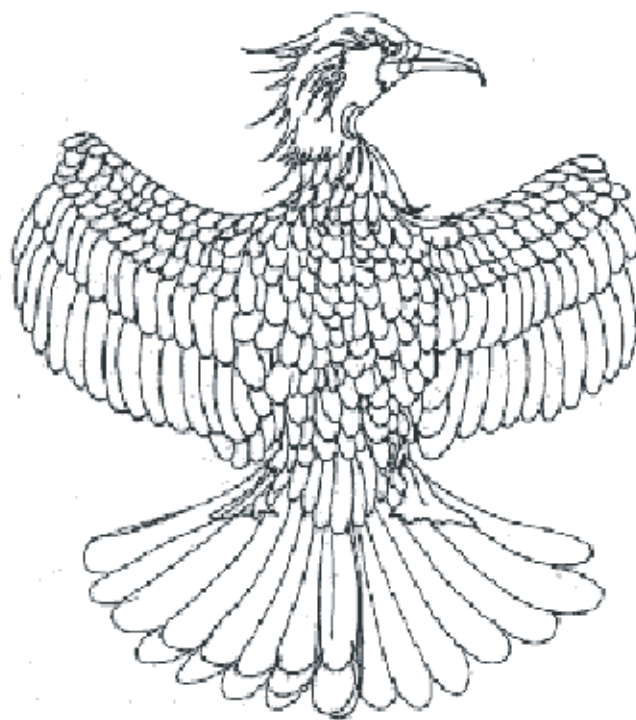
I added a head that looked more like an eagle and a spreading tail.



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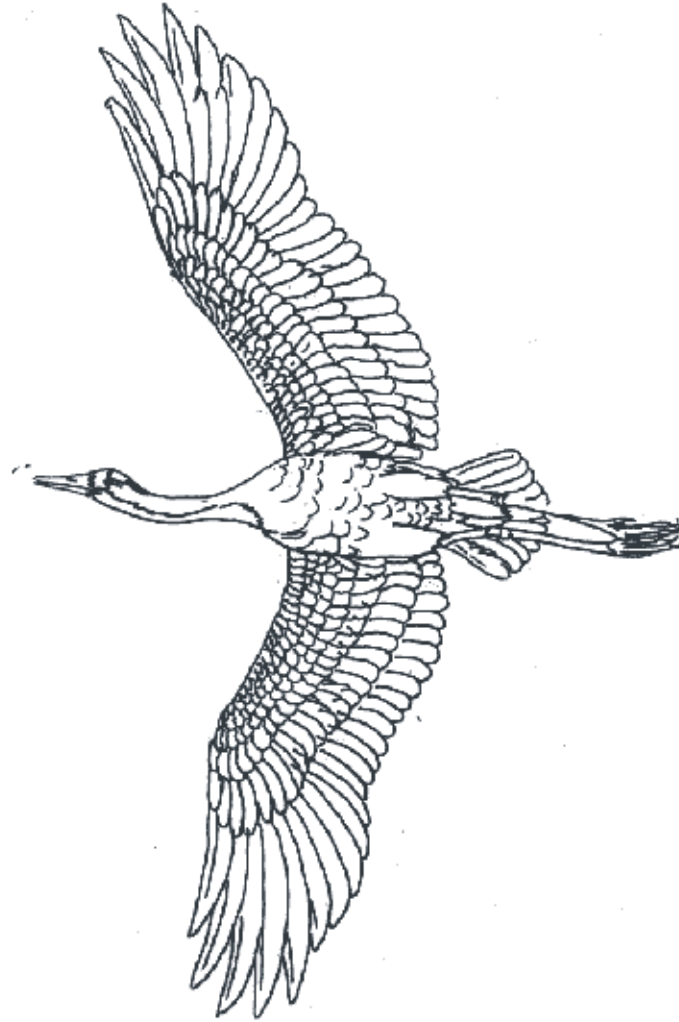
I thought the wings should be raised...



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so I borrowed the
wind tips from a
different bird...



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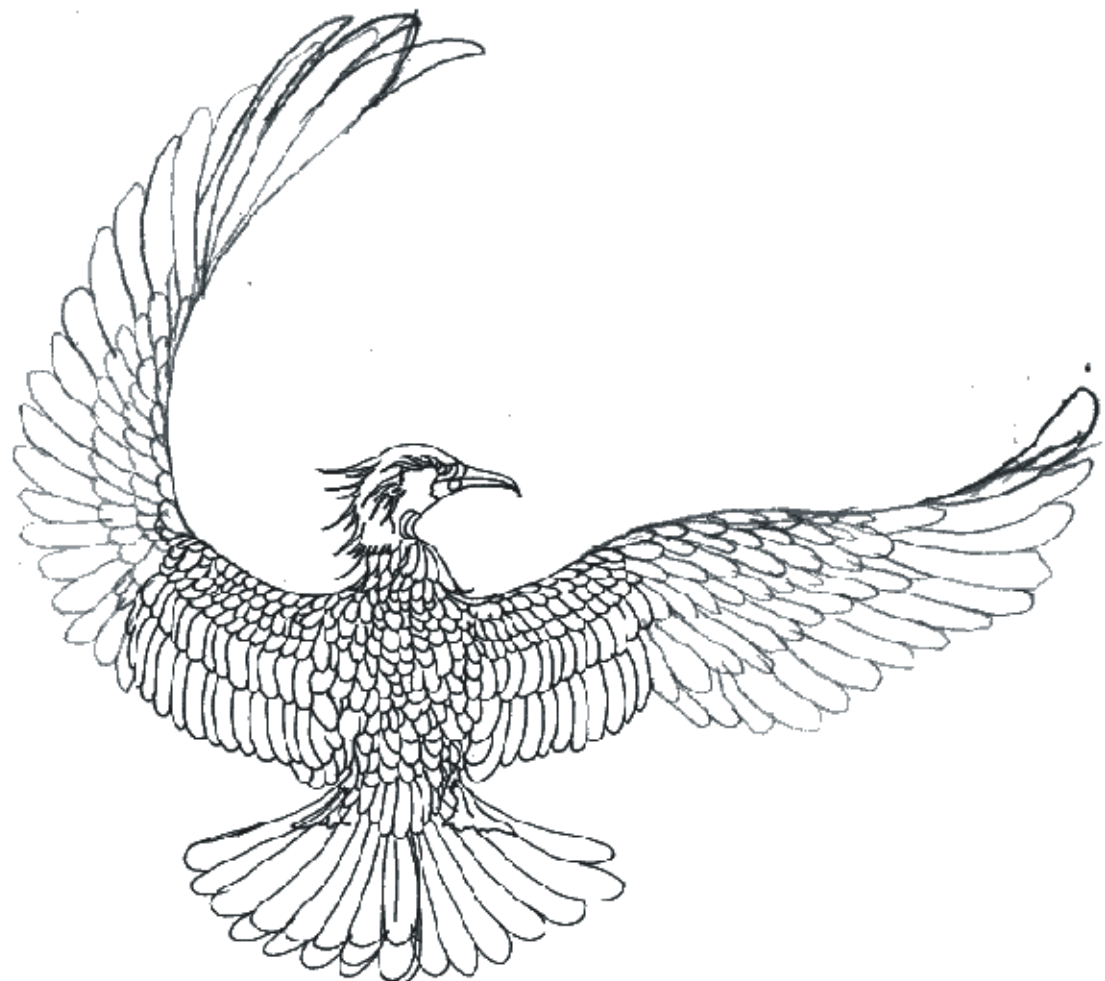
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And stuck them on the
cormorant.

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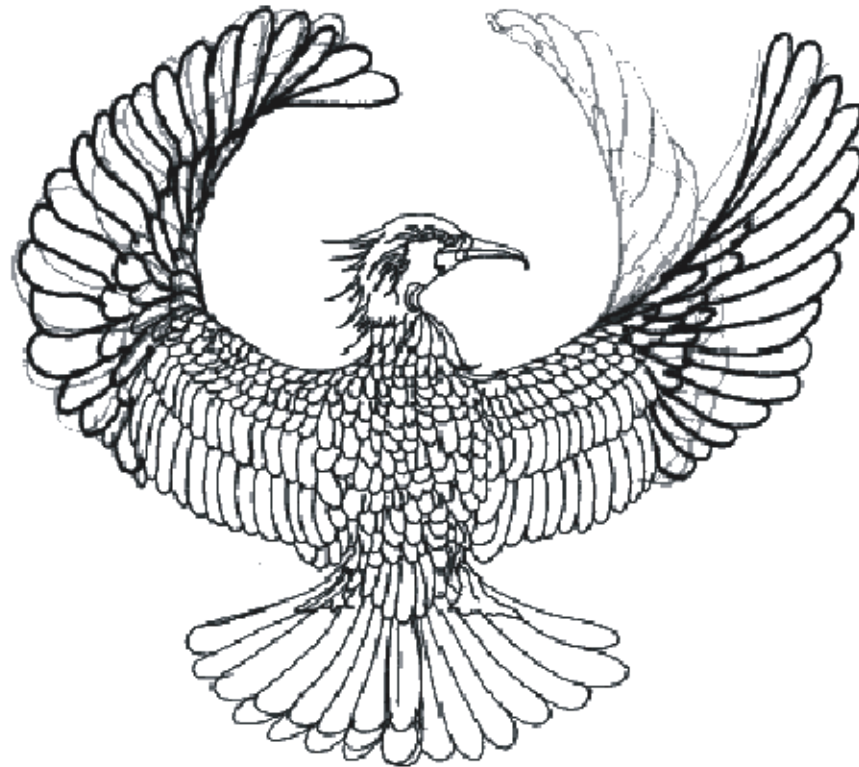
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I tried several different poses...

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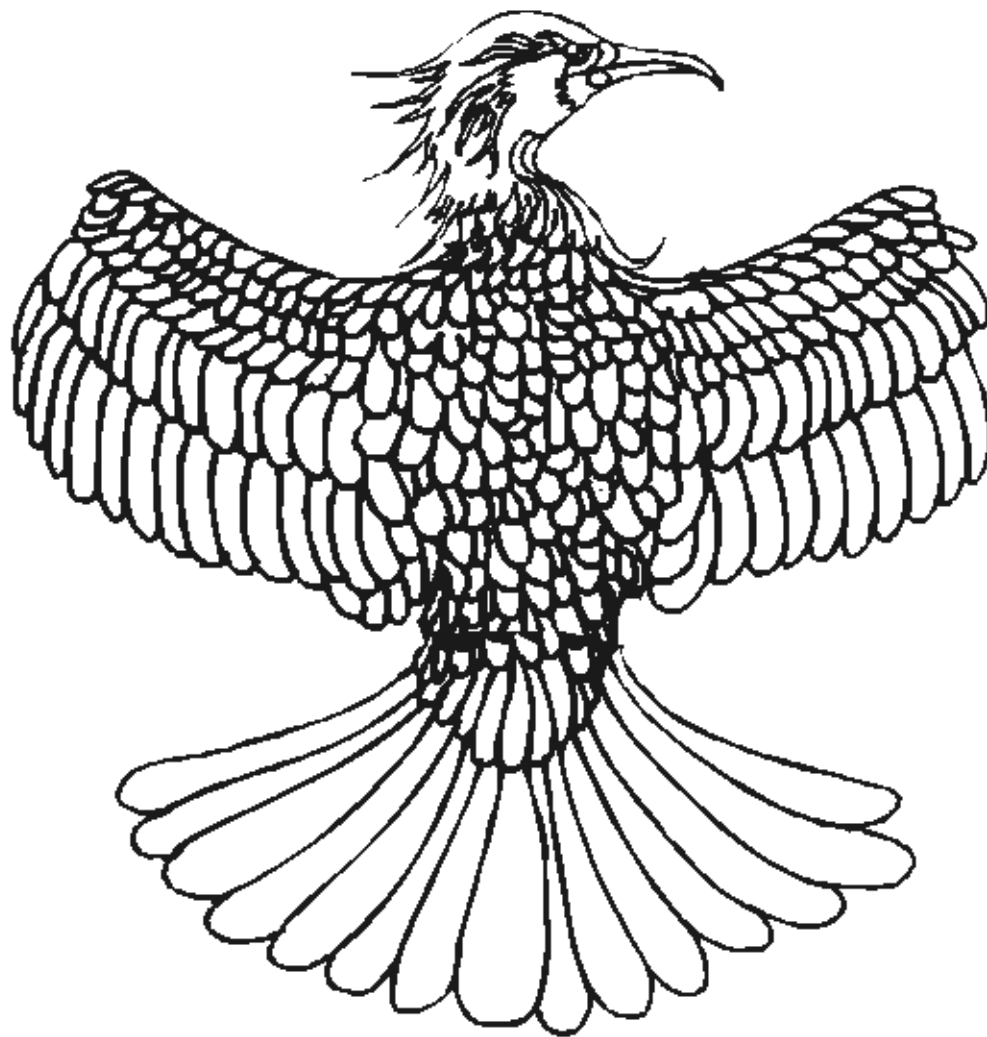


and got pretty close with this one
but it wasn't exactly what I had in
mind...

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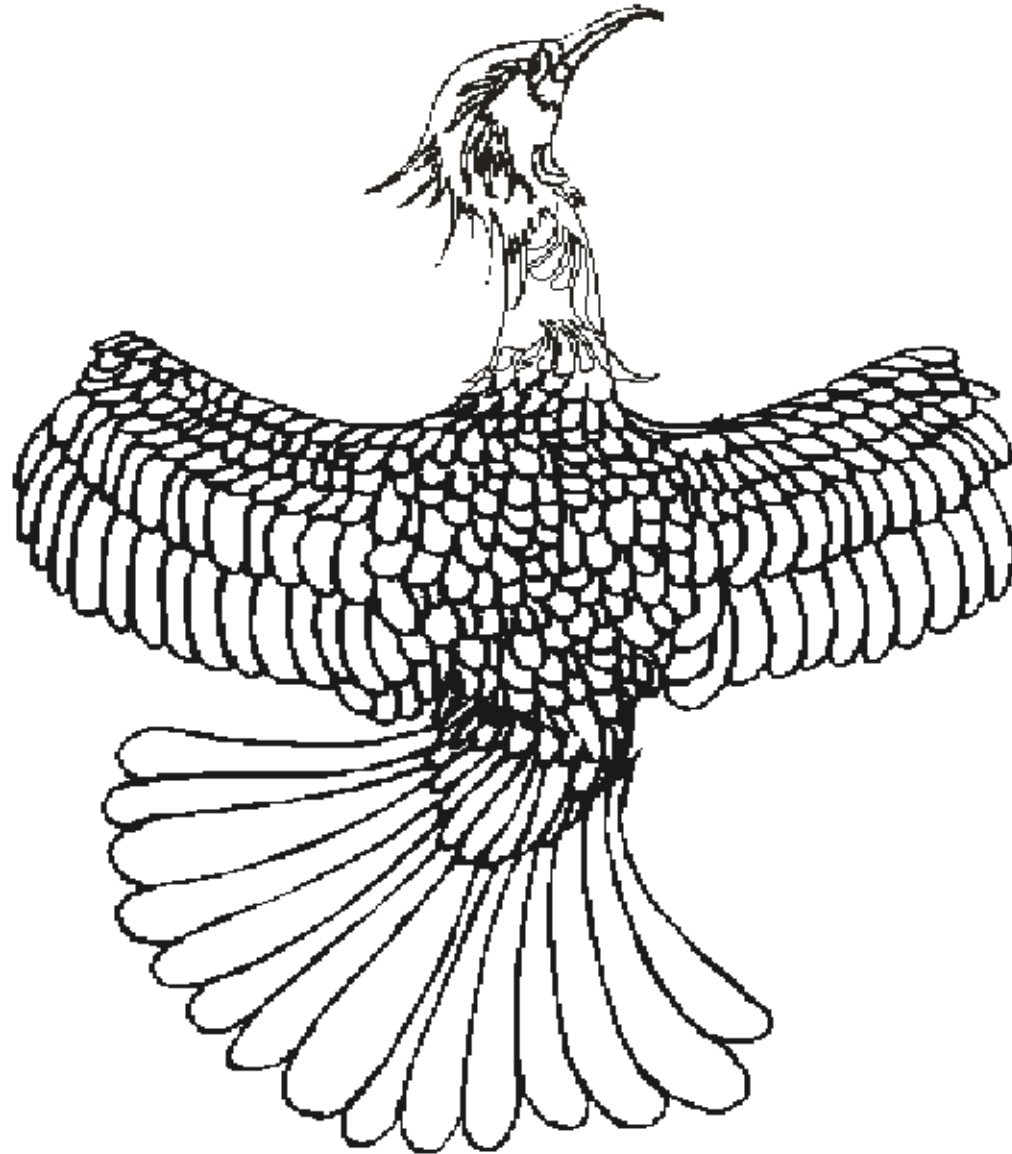
So I stripped off the wings again ...



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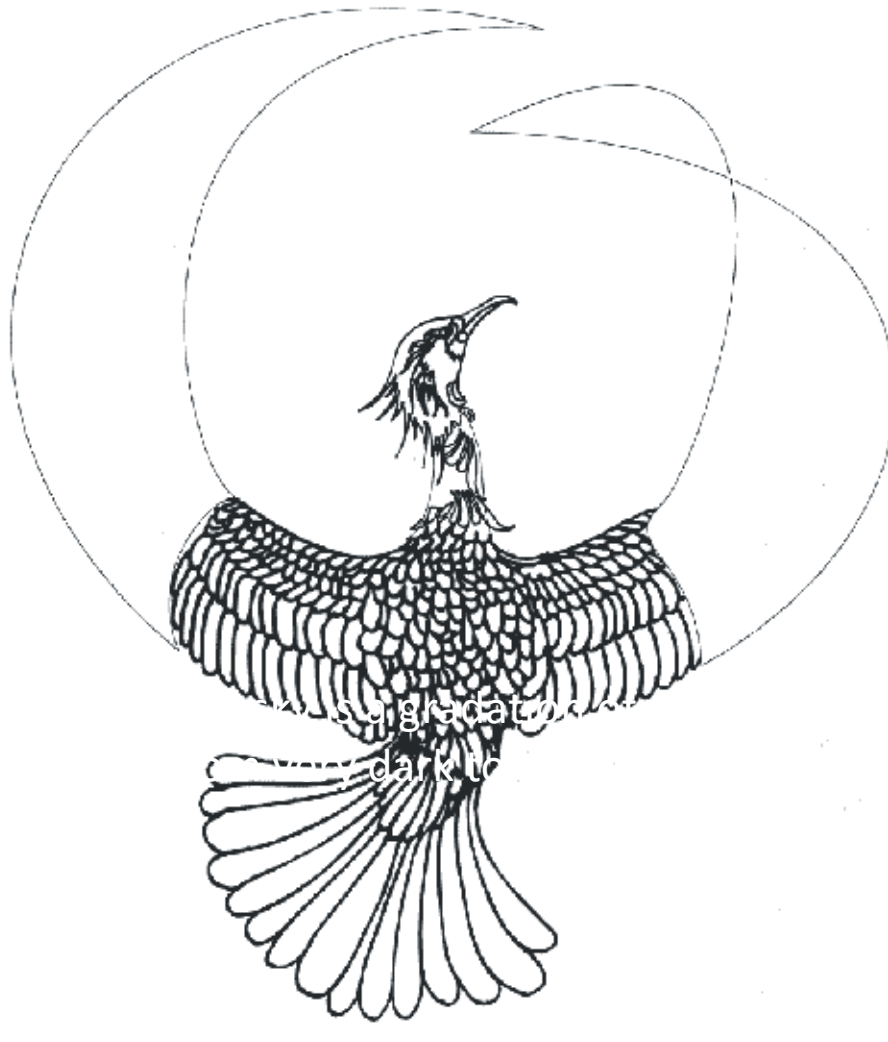
Elongated the neck, angled the tail to the left...



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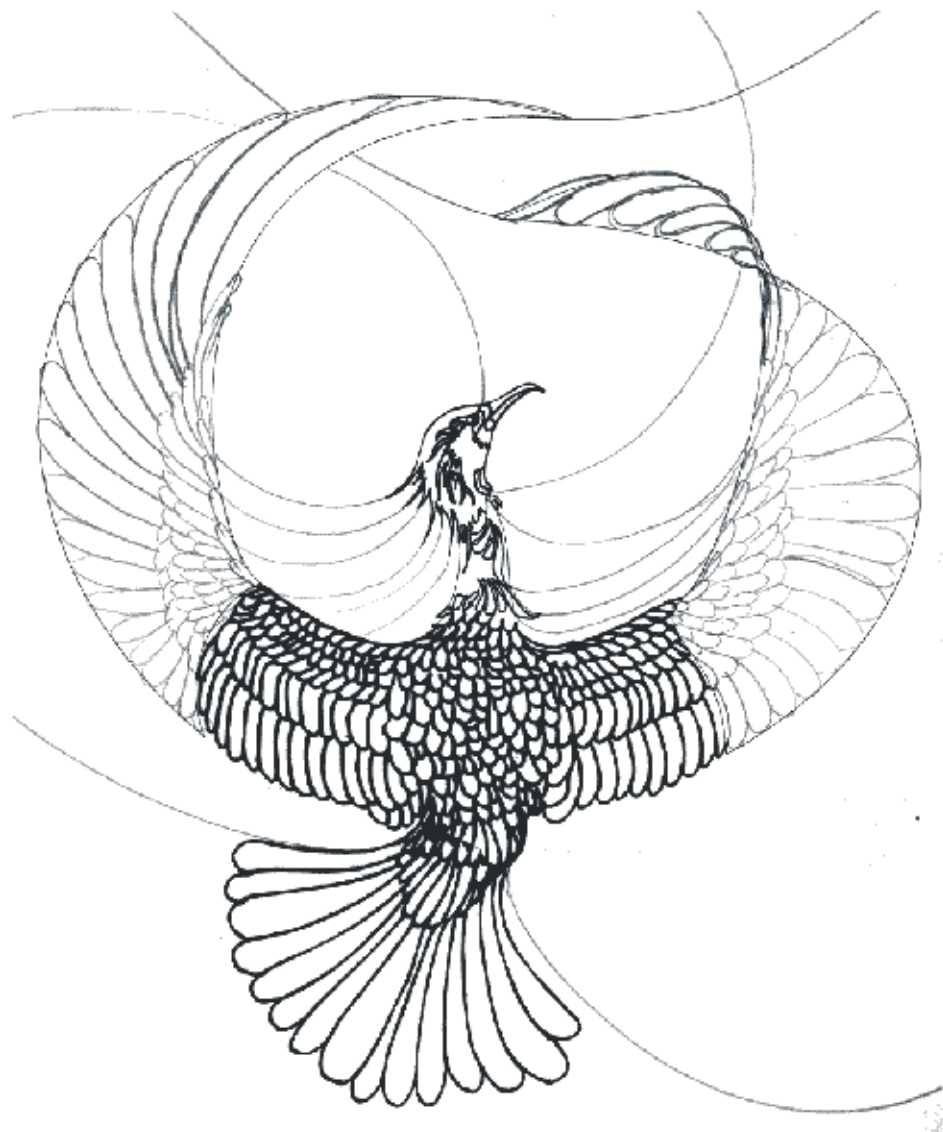
and drew the shapes I wanted the wings to be.



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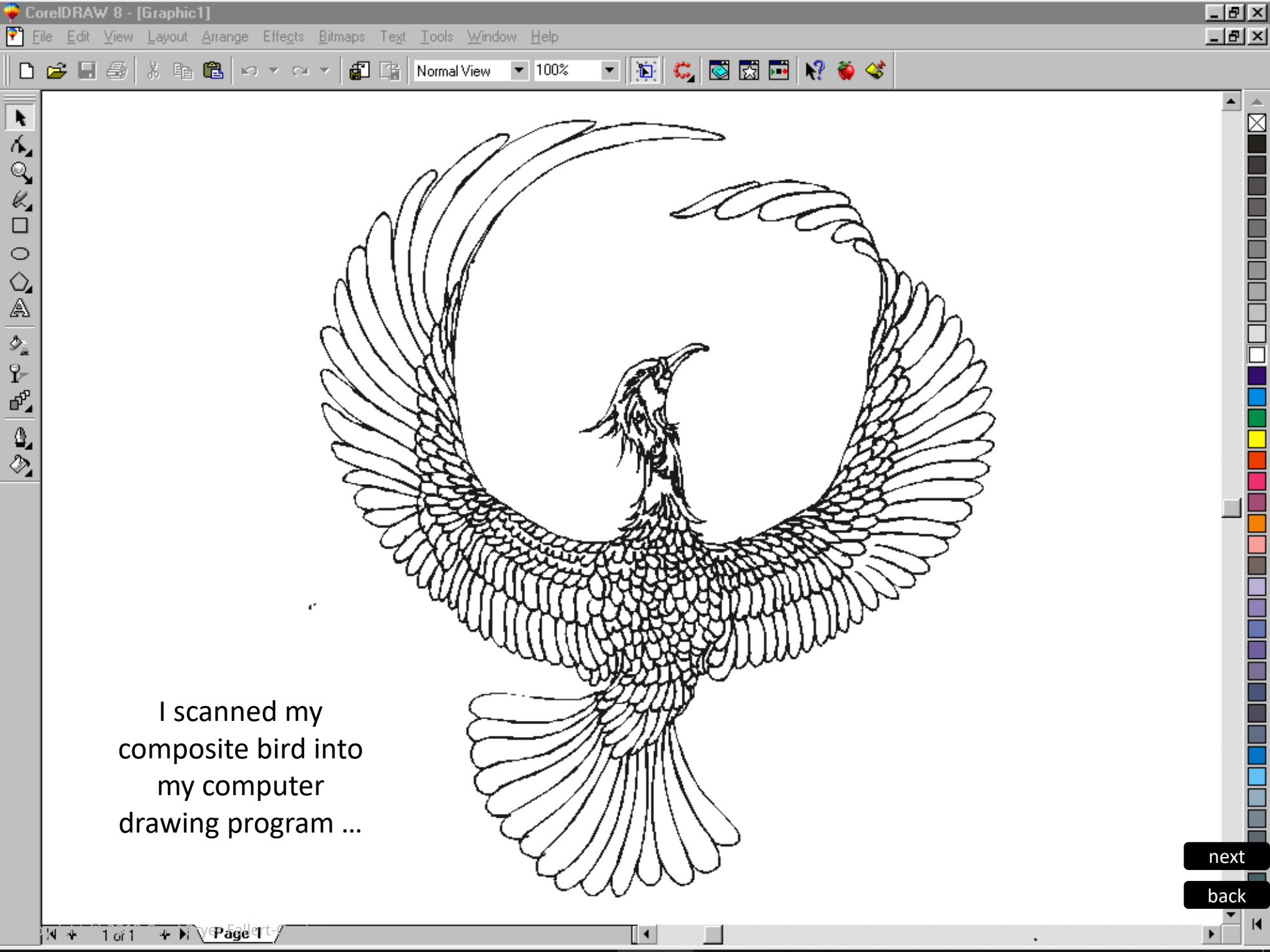
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By this time, I had a lot of practice drawing feathers, so I just free-handed feathers into the shapes with pencil.



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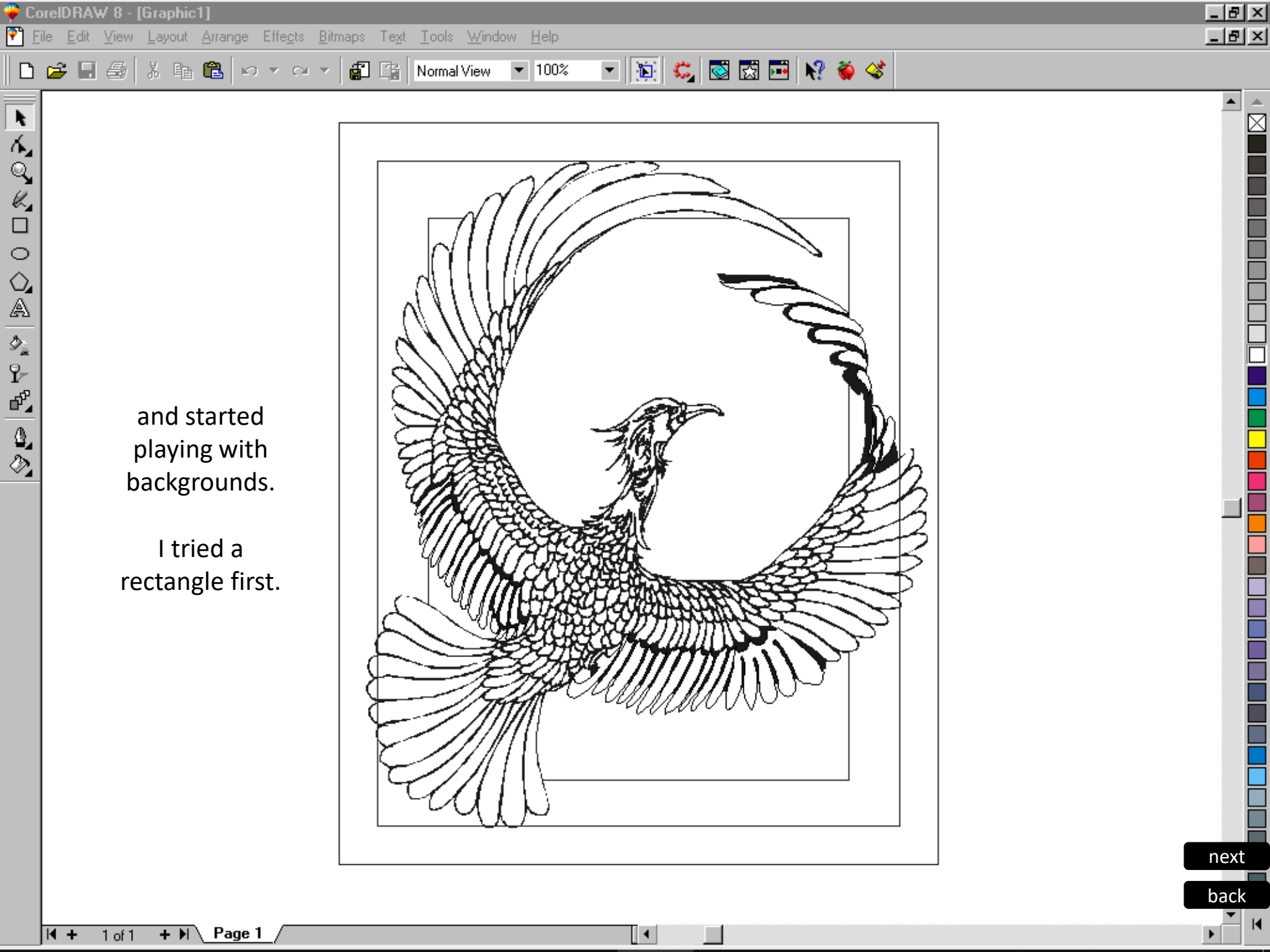
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I scanned my
composite bird into
my computer
drawing program ...

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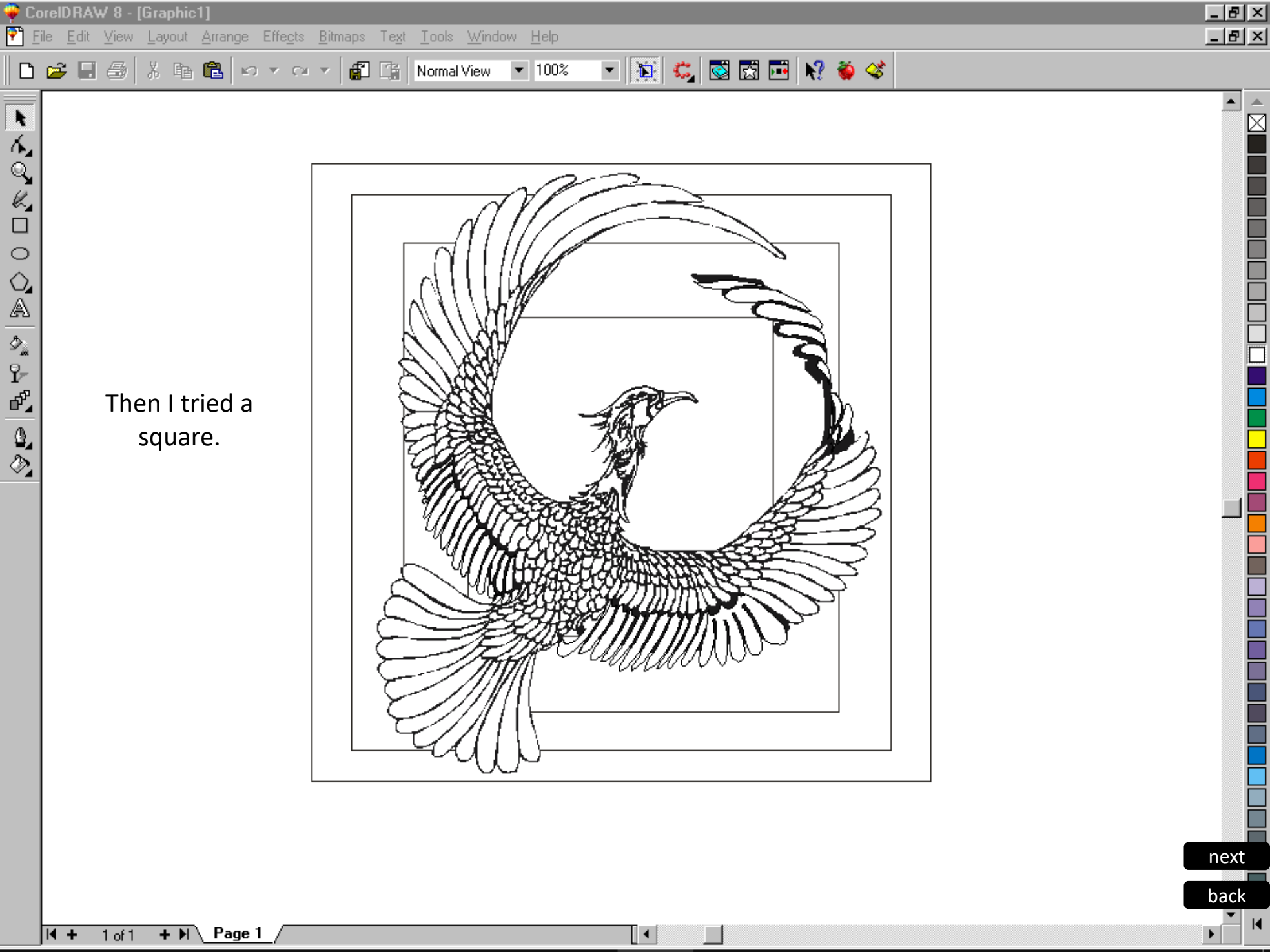


and started
playing with
backgrounds.

I tried a
rectangle first.

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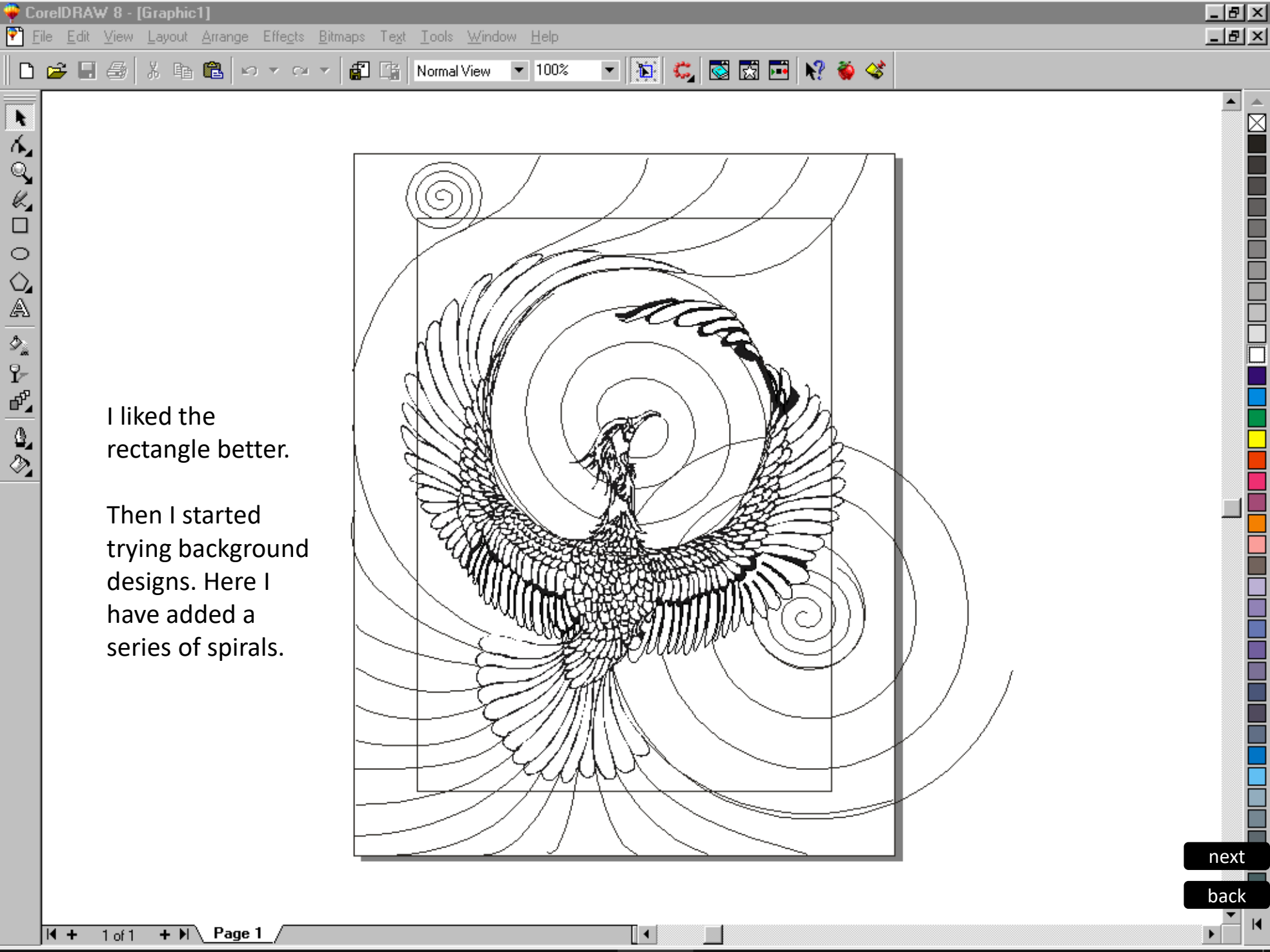
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Then I tried a
square.

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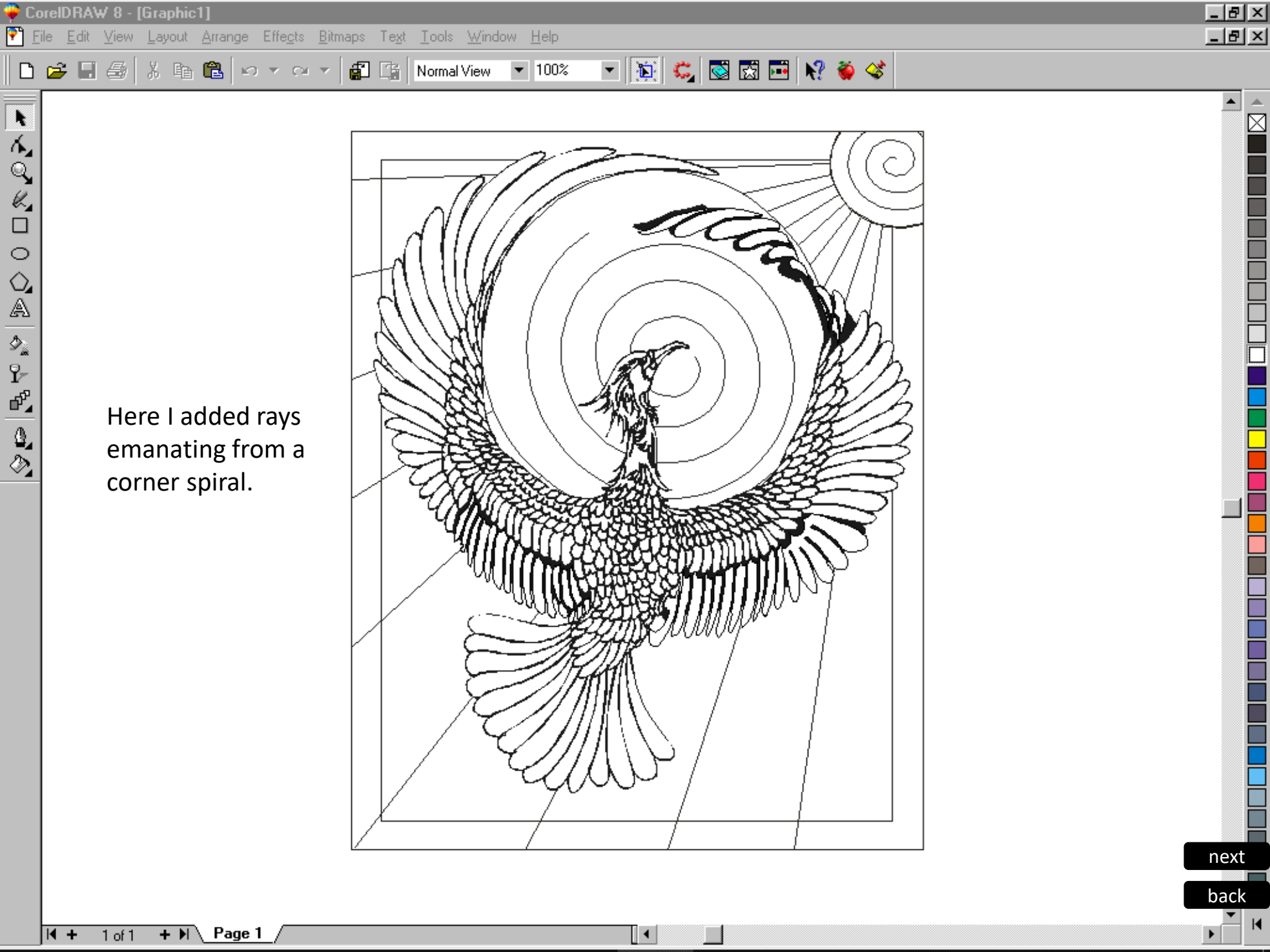
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I liked the rectangle better.

Then I started trying background designs. Here I have added a series of spirals.

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Here I added rays emanating from a corner spiral.

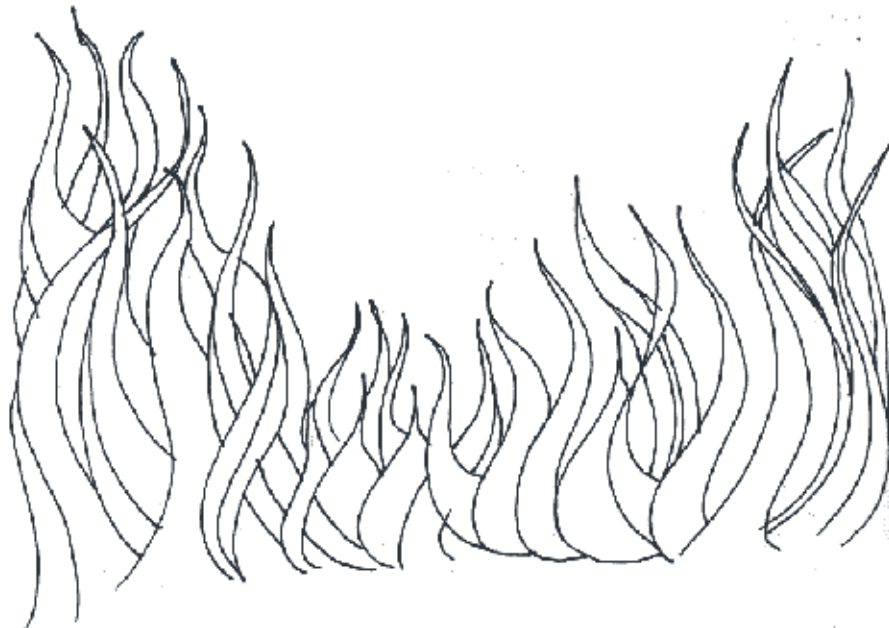
Naturally I needed some flames. One of my neighbors was burning weeds in his fence-row, so I photographed the flames to use as a reference.



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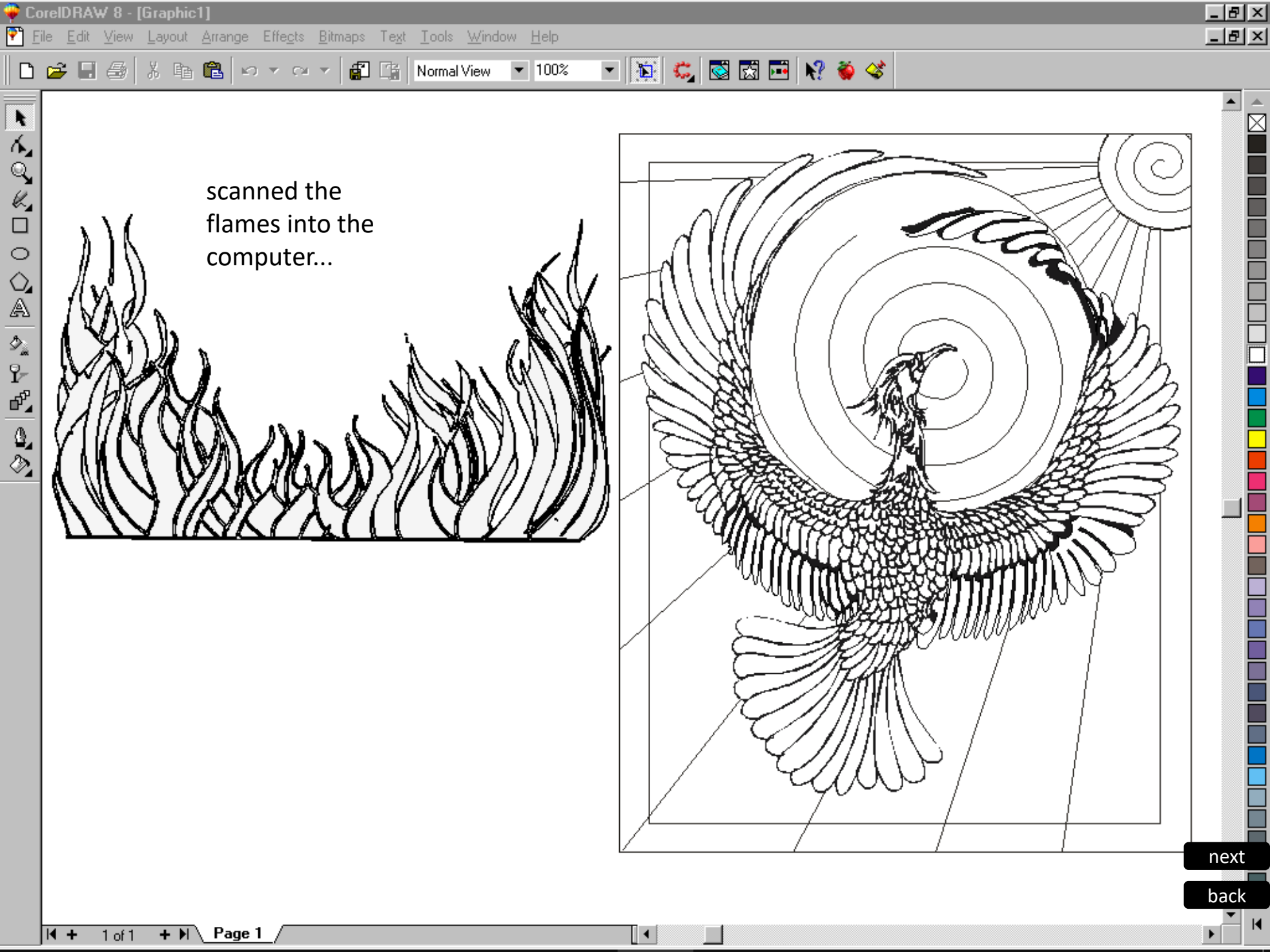
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I made a drawing
of flames...

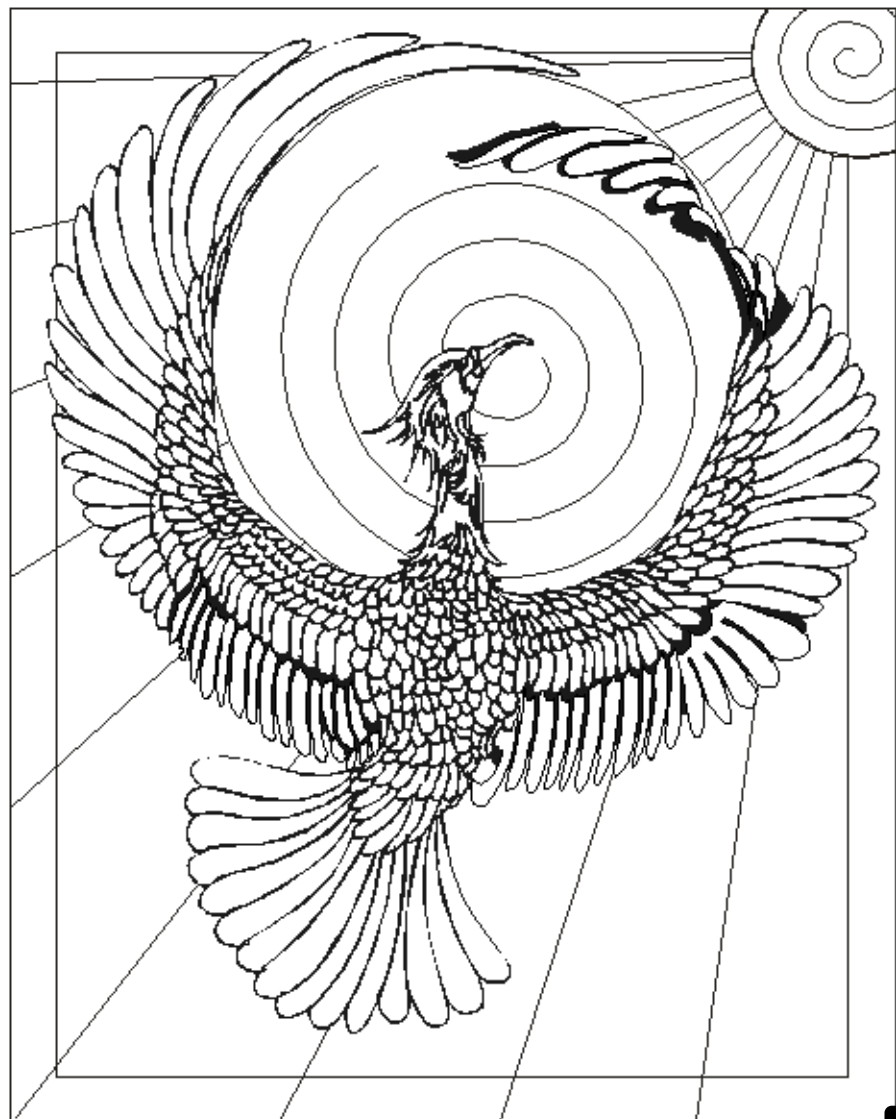
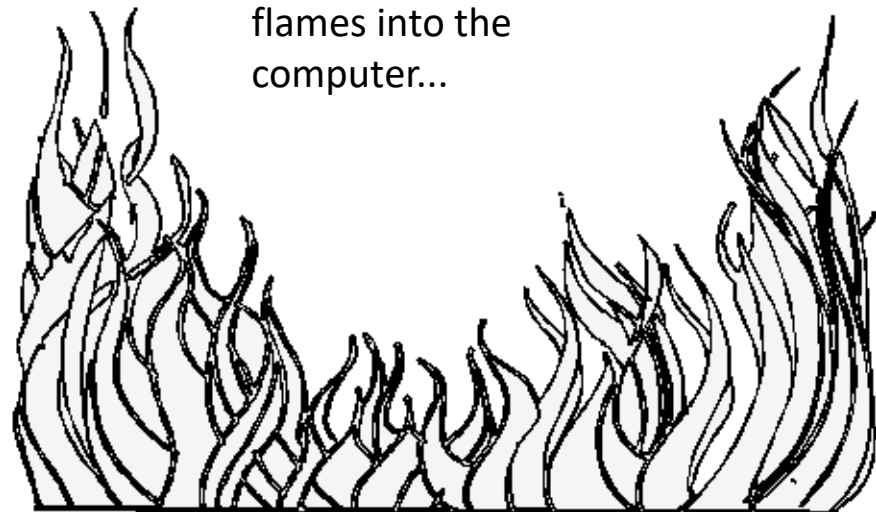


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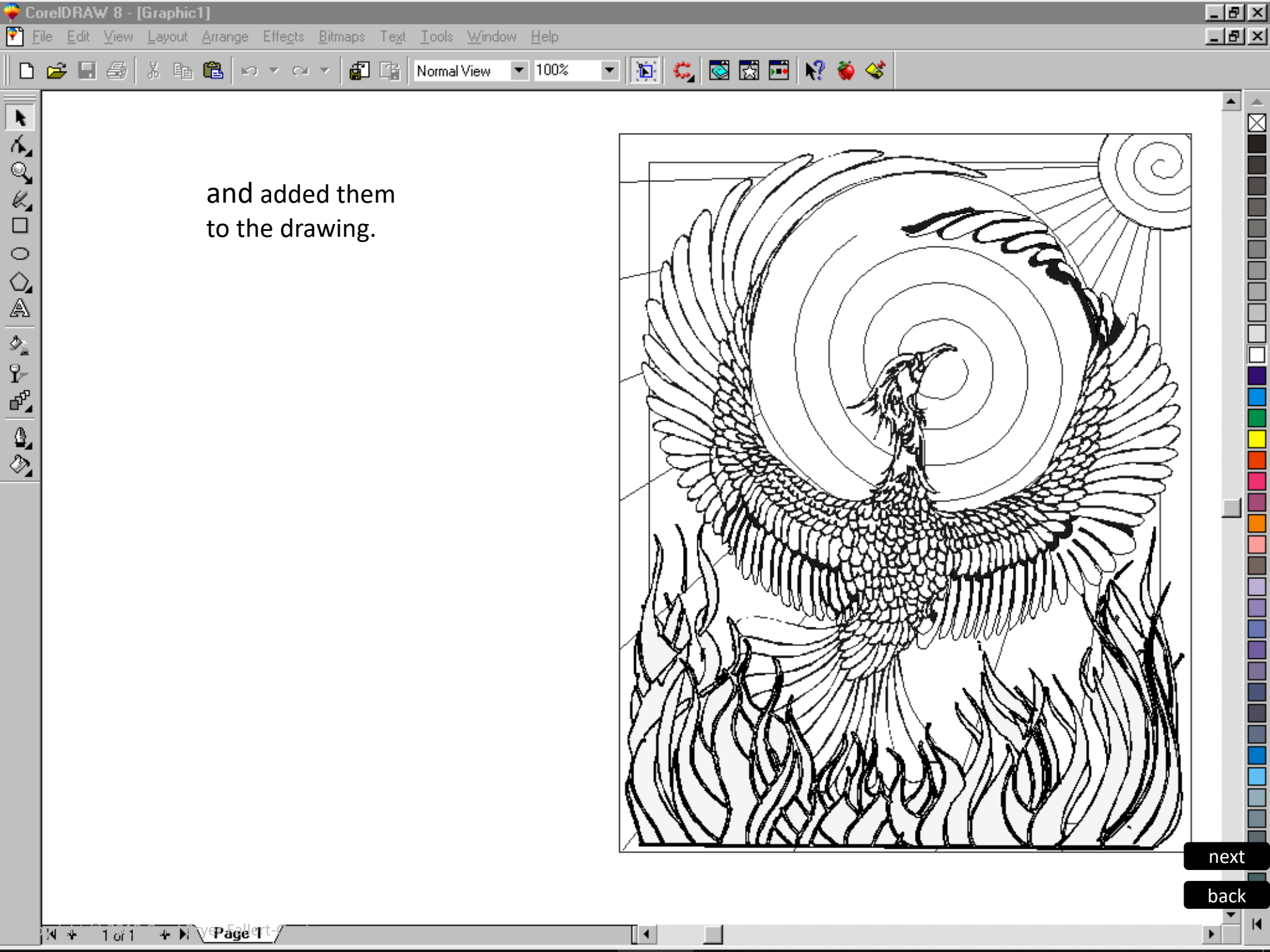


scanned the
flames into the
computer...



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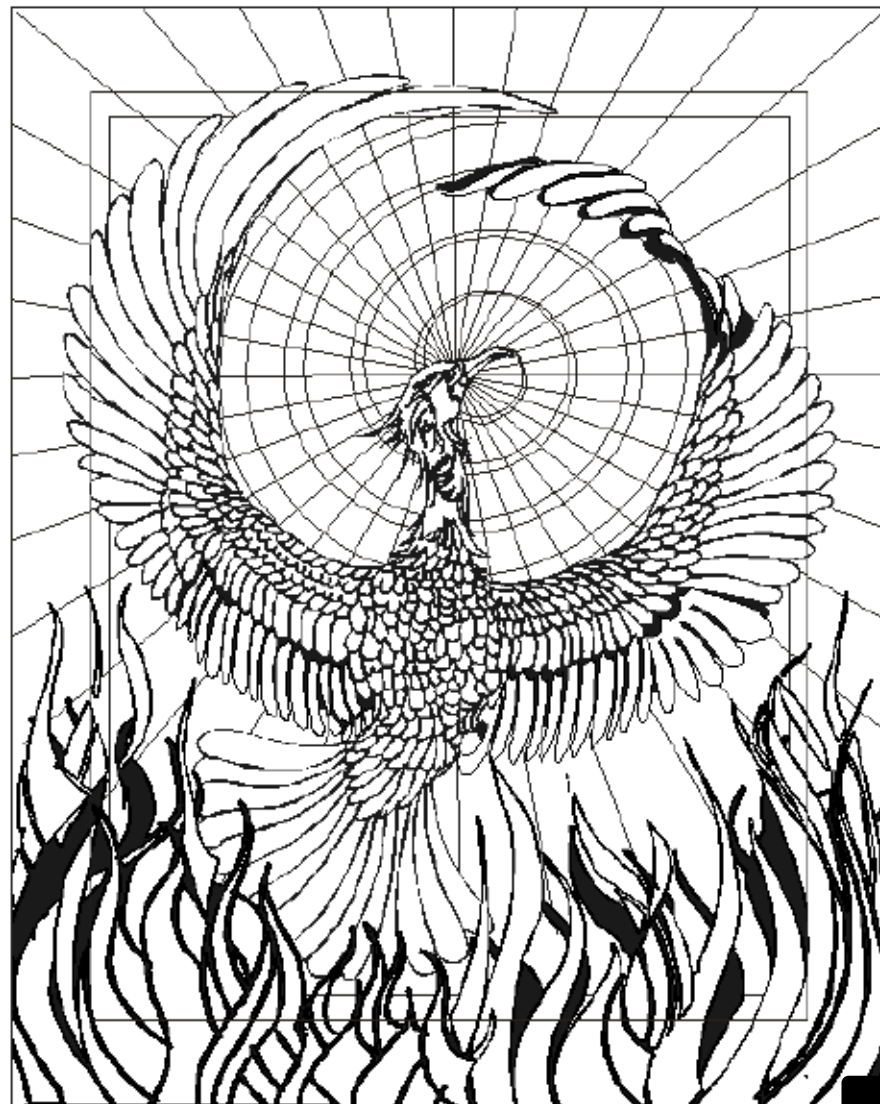
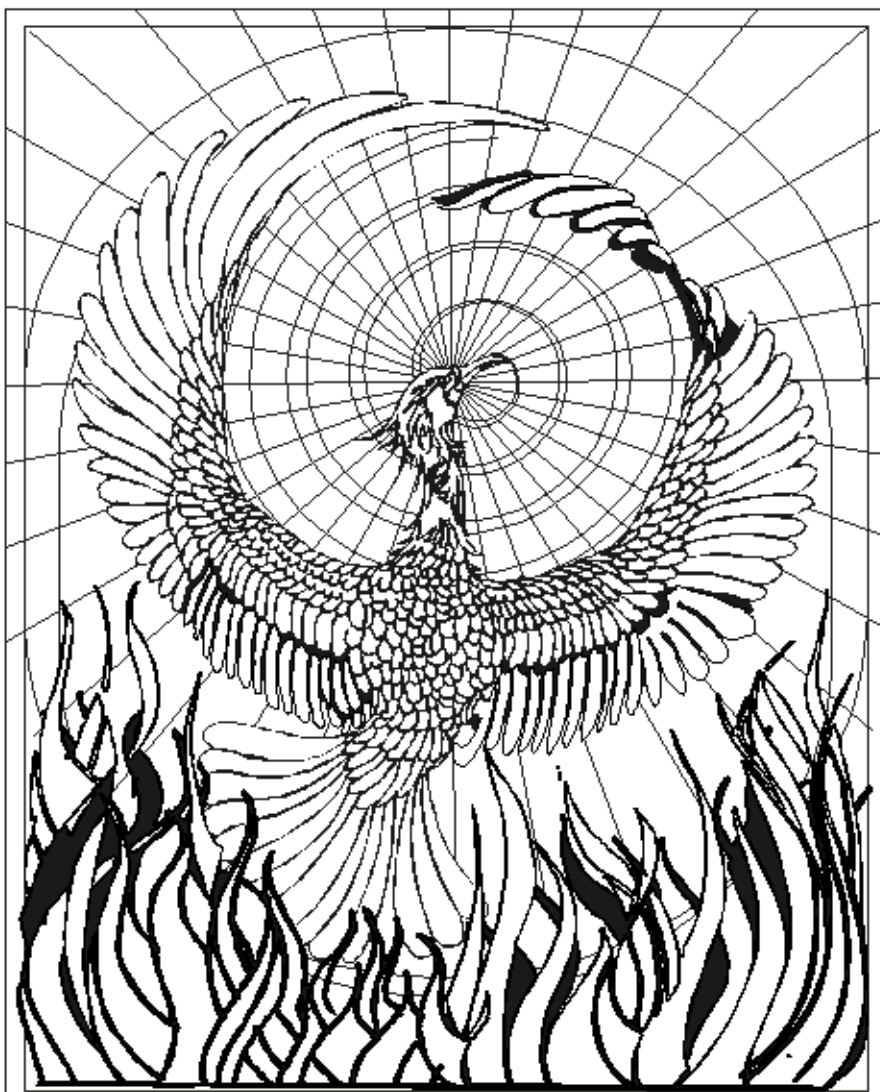


and added them
to the drawing.

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I tried various border arrangements, including one that looked like a portal.





It was time to play with pencil again, so I printed multiple copies of the computer drawing I liked the best...

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And tried adding some paper-pieced elements.



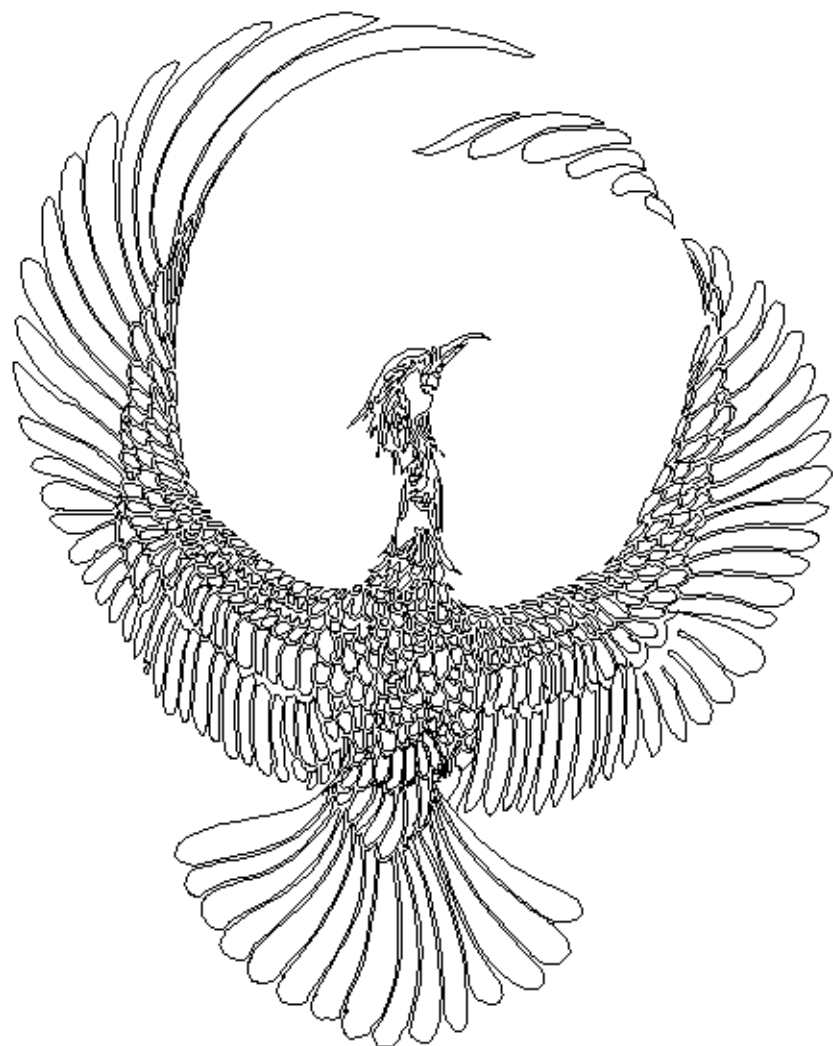
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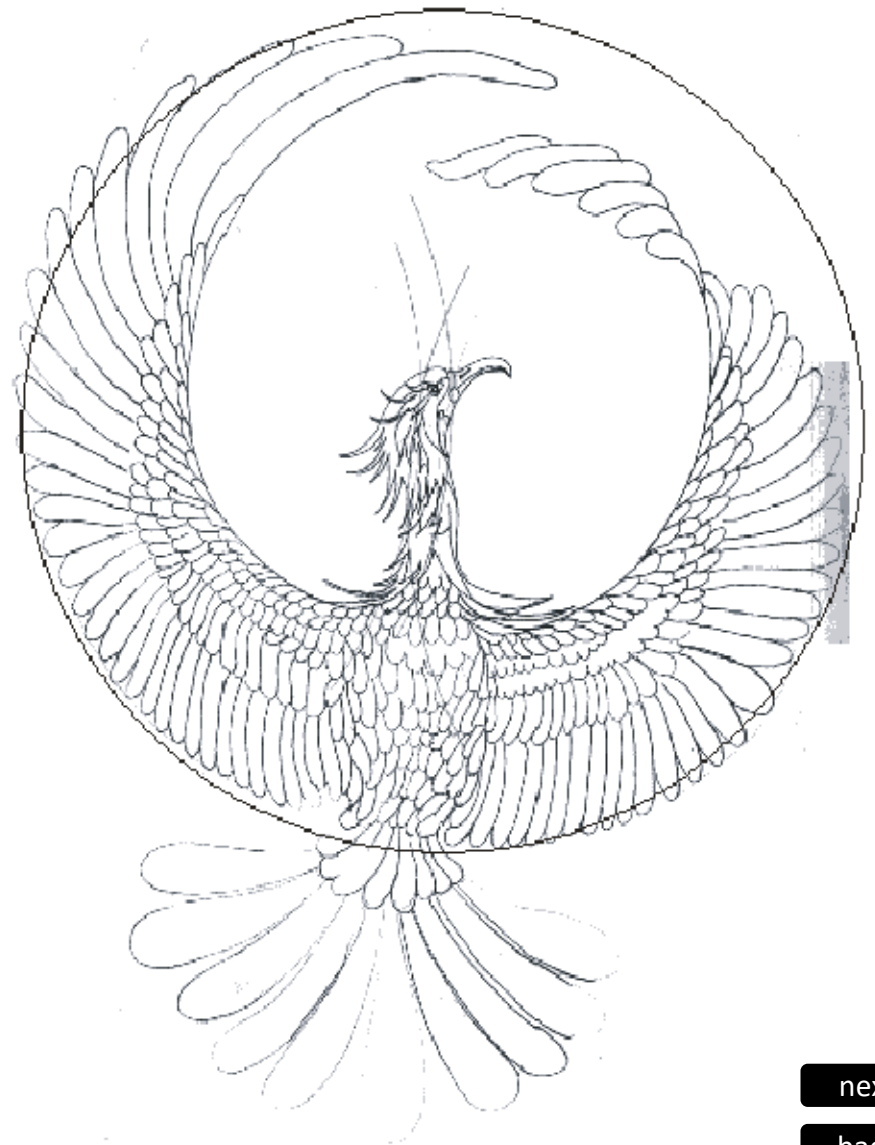
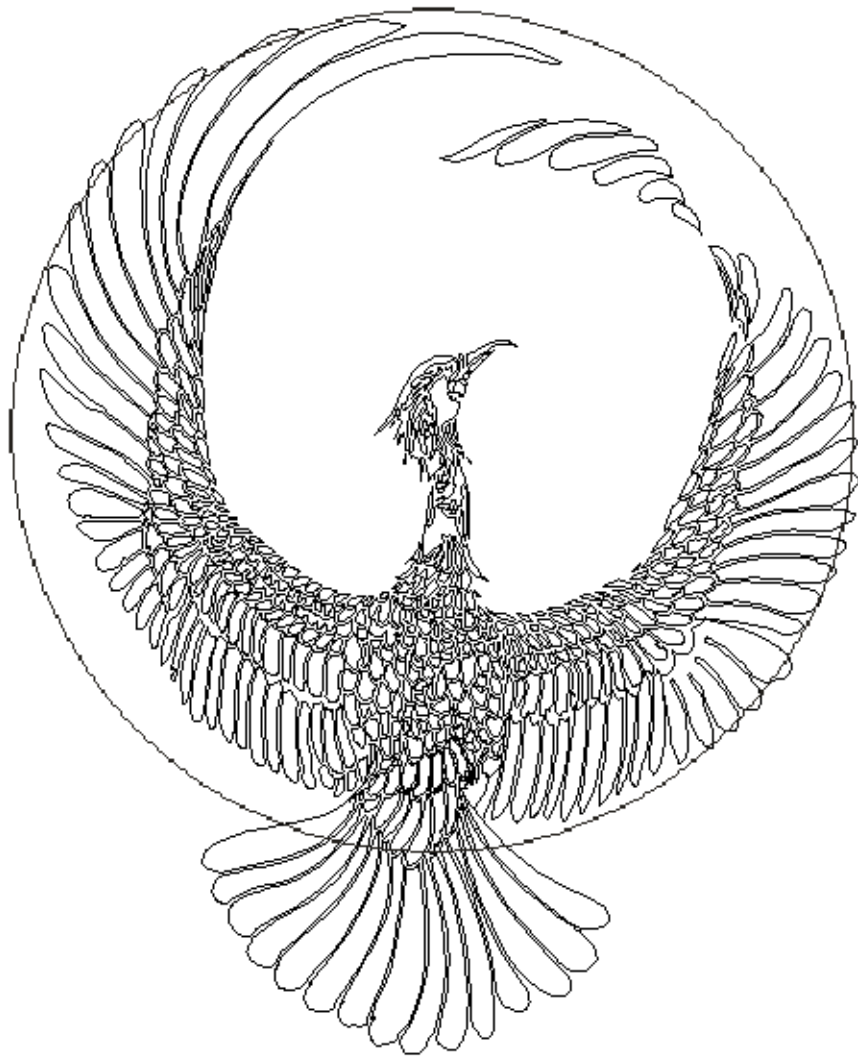


I still wasn't
completely
satisfied with the
shape of the
bird...

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So I drew a perfect circle around the wings and let the feathers extend to the edge of the circle. I also straightened the tail a bit.



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After trying every variation I could think of, this became my most complete sketch on paper.

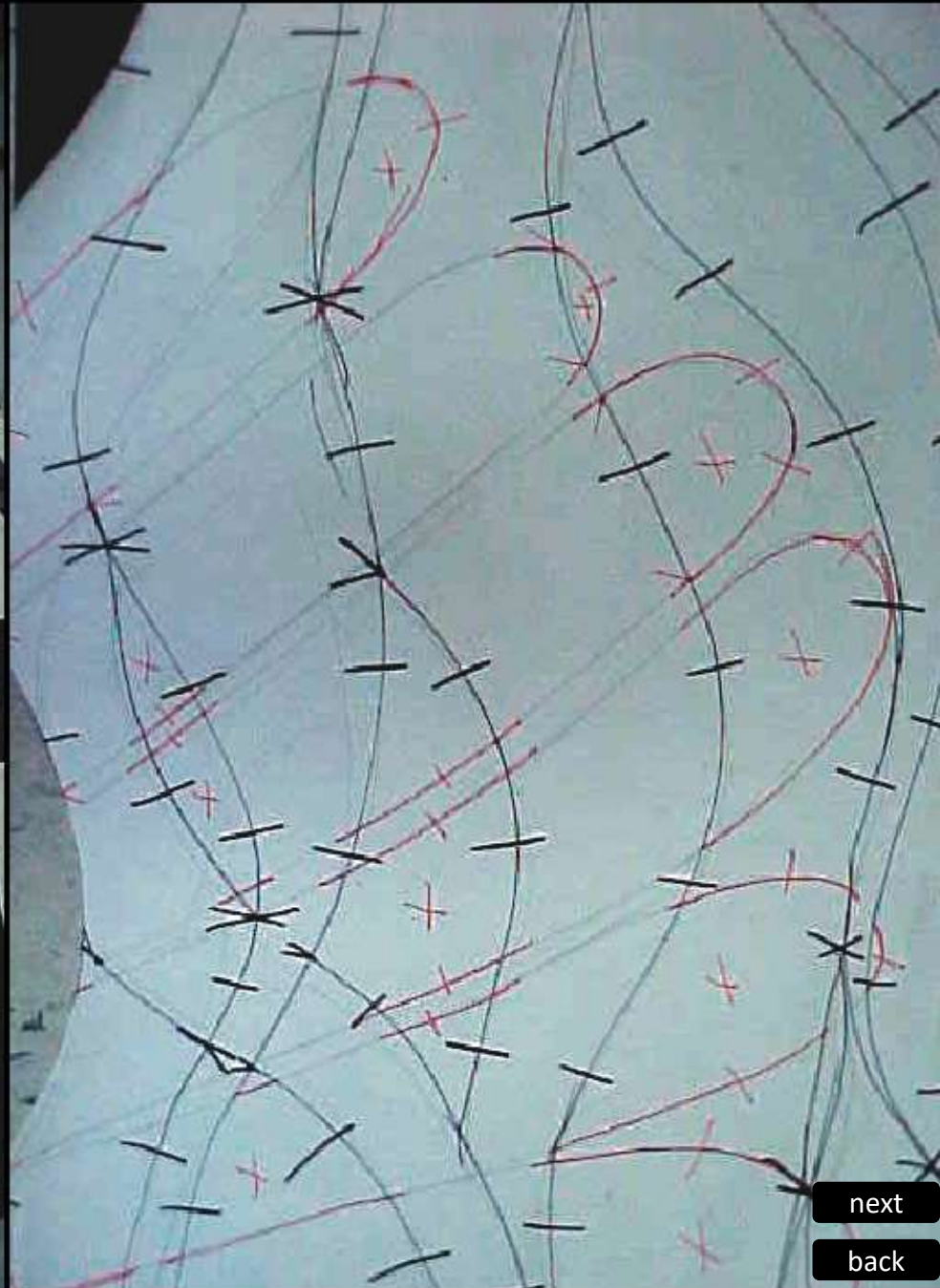
This was printed on acetate and projected onto a piece of paper that was about 65" wide by 80" high.



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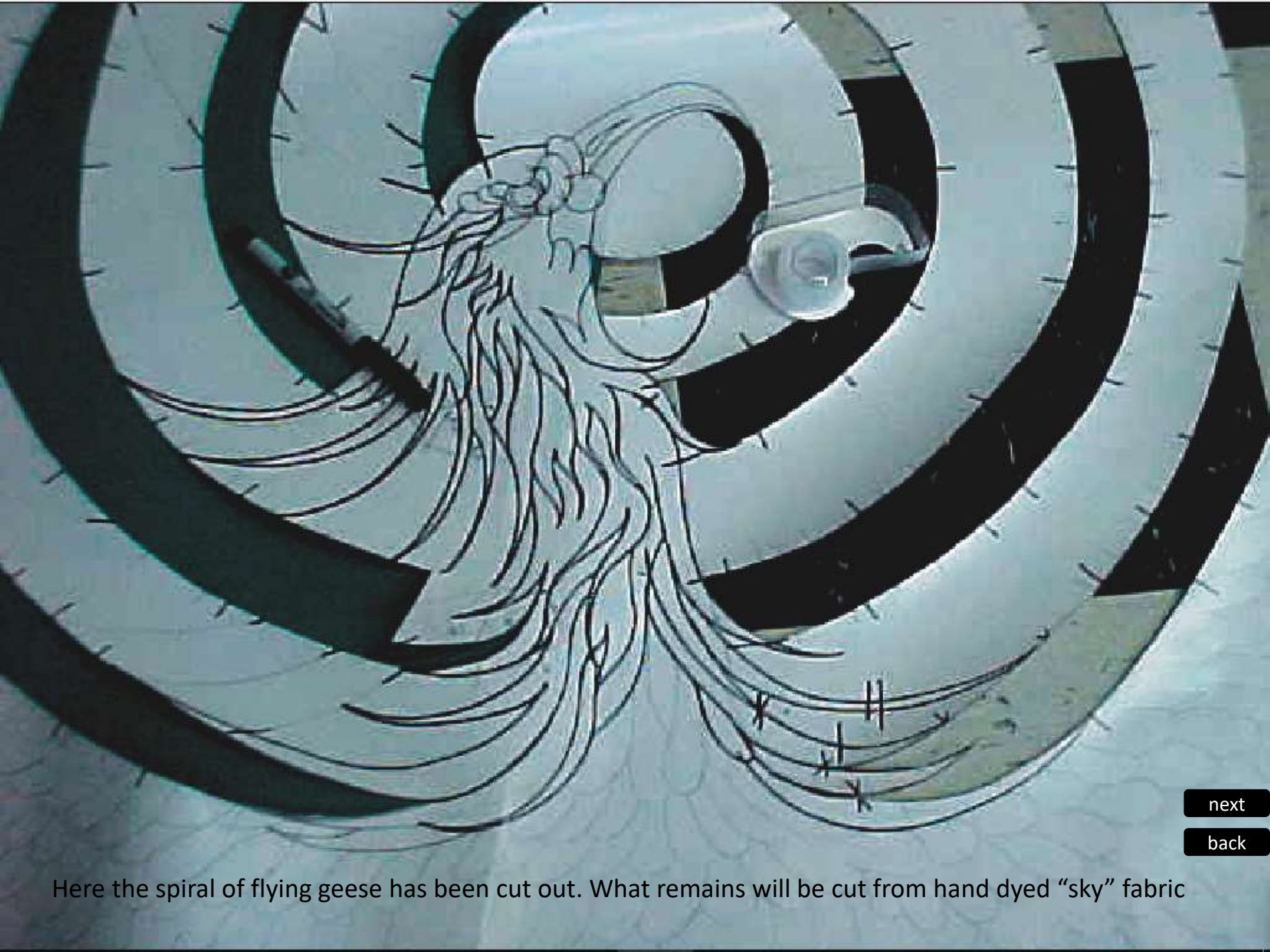
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The big drawing became the pattern for cutting my fabric. You can see that I used lots of registration marks to help align the pieces after they have been cut, and I even changed the color of the pencil to differentiate between flame templates and tail templates.

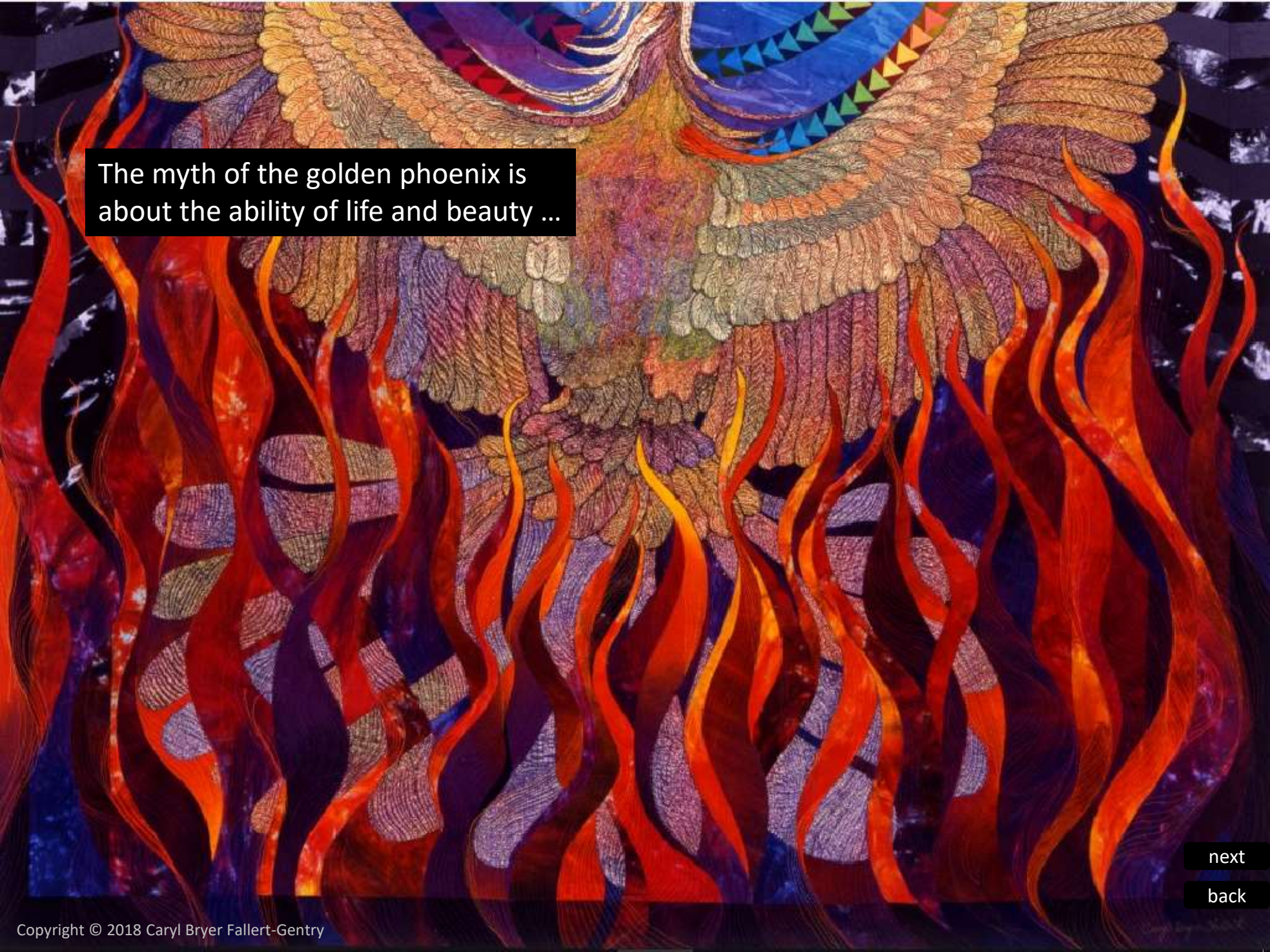


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Here the spiral of flying geese has been cut out. What remains will be cut from hand dyed "sky" fabric



The myth of the golden phoenix is about the ability of life and beauty ...

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to rise out of death and destruction



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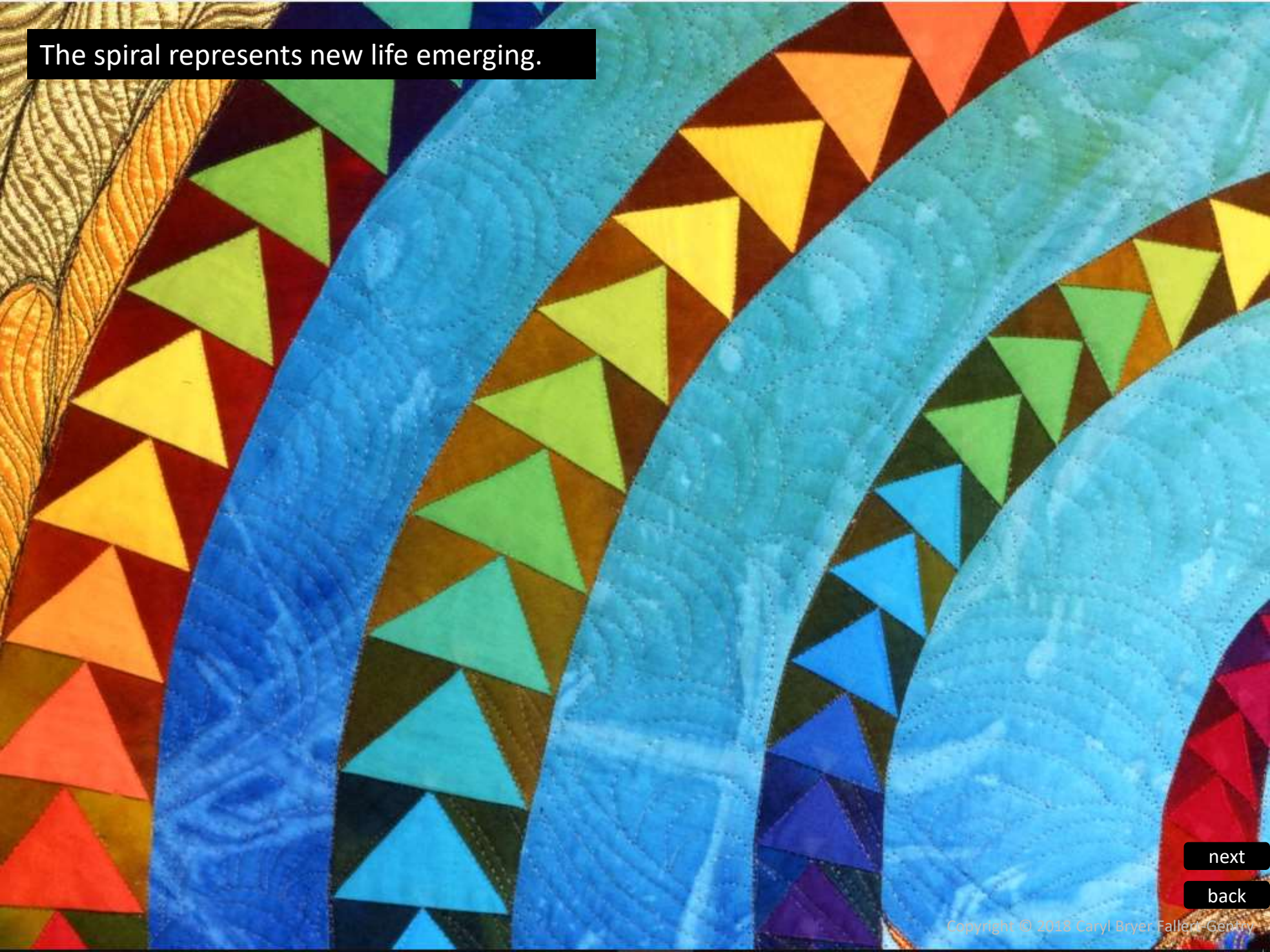
The eye of the phoenix is made from laser foil so the color changes as you see it from different angles.



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The spiral represents new life emerging.



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The rainbow colors represent light and the energy of life.



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The wings are made from combination of commercial metallic fabrics...



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and hand painted cotton, covered with iridescent gold organza.



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The flying geese start smaller than a penny and get larger as they spiral out.



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New Dawn

78" x 63"

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As the phoenix rises from the flames, it is about to fly through a portal toward clear skies and unlimited possibilities beyond. In the corners of the portal are two suns ...

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a fire colored sun...

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and a golden sun ...

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Representing energy that can be either nurturing or destructive. It's our choice.



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New Dawn

78" x 63"

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Techniques: All of the fabrics in this quilt, except metallics, were hand dyed and painted by Caryl. It was machine pieced, machine appliqued, and machine quilted.

This quilt is currently traveling in Layered & Stitched: 50 Years of Innovative Art, a SAQA invitational, October 31, 2019 through December 2022. It has been purchased by a private collector in Texas.

Publications:

- Quilts Japan: 2001: January, p. 31
- Quilters Newsletter Magazine, 2001, April, p. 35
- Fairfield Processing Ad. Fall 2002, numerous sewing and quilting periodicals
- Windhover: A Journal of Christian Literature, Baylor University Press, 2007, Cover & page 181
- The Quintessential Quilt: Commemorative Catalogue of the 2006 International Quilt Festival, Houston, TX., p.24
- Quilting Arts Magazine, June/July 2019, Issue 99, p. 25

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Exhibitions:

- Millenium Quilt Contest, Quilt Festival, November 2-5, 2000, Houston, TX spexhibits@quilts.com (and traveling)
- Burlington Arts Center, Burlington, Ontario, Canada, Caryl Bryer Fallert: A Sense of Wonder, Solo Exhibition, Feb.-Mar. 2001
- Thirty Distinguished Quiltmakers in the World, Tokyo, Japan, January 2002
- Quilting the Quilt, Duluth, MN, 2002 (best domestic machine quilting)
- Little White School Museum, Solo Exhibition, Oswego, IL 2003
- Museum of the American Quilters Society: 20th Anniversary AQS Best of Show Exhibit 2004, Paducah KY
- "Evolving Styles - 20 Years of Color & Design" Solo Exhibition: LaConner Quilt Museum, LaConner WA, March 16 - May 15, 2005
- Quilting by the Lake: Faculty Exhibition, 2005, Morrisville, NY
- Jinny Beyer Quilting Seminar 2006: Faculty Exhibition, Hilton Head Island, NC
- National Quilting Association Show, 2006, Columbus, OH (invitational)
- Silver Star Salute: Retrospective Solo Exhibition 2006 International Quilt Market/Festival, Houston TX
- Full-Spectrum: Natural Fibers, Quilts & Textile Arts, Binghamton University Art Museum, Binghamton NY, Sept 10-December 18, 2009
- Wisconsin Museum of Quilts and Fiber Arts, (retrospective exhibition of my work) Cedarburg, WI, January 14-April 12, 2015
- Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry: A Retrospective, New England Quilt Museum, Lowell, MA, August 20 - October 31, 2015
- Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry: 40 Years of Color, Light, & Motion, University Museum, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS, January 26 - April 16, 2016
- Fantasies in Fiber & Beads: (two person show) Northwind Arts Center, Port Townsend, WA, May 5-29, 2016
- Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry: 40 Years of Color, Light, & Motion,
 - Mitchell Museum, Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, Mt. Vernon, IL, July 31-October 9, 2016
 - Nixon Centre for Performing & Visual Arts, Newnan, GA January 9 - February 17, 2017
 - Texas Quilt Museum, La Grange, TX • March 30 - June 25, 2017
- Layered & Stitched: 50 Years of Innovative Art, SAQA invitational, International Quilt Festival, 2019, Houston, TX, October 31-November 3, 2019 and traveling through December 2022



Thanks for taking this creative journey with me.

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