

My Backyard Series/ Report

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Title : My Backyard Series

My backyard series was a picture book about nature in a backyard for children.
Its several pages presented the aesthetic and story on nature.

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Abstract

My Backyard Series was an illustration project inspired by nature life. The idea was to present the aesthetic of the small nature living being and to create a smooth emotion that we received from being among nature. The main focus was the small creatures and plants which usually lived on a forest floor and could often be found in a yard.

The aim was to persuade both children and grown-ups to appreciate the values of nature in different aspects, such as the nature's aesthetic values and their duties/responsibilities to the ecosystem. Hopefully, the visitors would get some constructive emotion from nature.

My purpose was to communicate the heavy information of eco-system in an easy and understandable way through story and pictures. Moreover, I intended to stimulate children and grown-ups to be more interested in nature around us. Hopefully, the readers would get a pleasure moment and fun imagination upon nature issue through my artistic work.

Question frame

- How could I create a 2D format that connected people and nature?
- How to present the project idea?
- How could I communicate information of nature in a simple and enjoyable way?
- How to communicate a story, my perspective and imagination of nature through artistic work?
- What was the value of the project?
- What was the structure, storyline, context of my story?
- What was the other technical addition?

I started my process with the collection of inspiration. I went to nature. I walked in the wood. I read books in the library and I browsed the internet to watch VDO and see pictures of nature life. Then, I sketched any imagination which came up in my mind, trying not to frame the imagination, I let it run free for a while. Later on, I chose a direction with which I would continue.

The results were 8 different sceneries, representing 8 different stories on plants and creatures; for example, one was the story about moss, mushroom, and lichen.



Keyword : Details, nature aesthetic, imagination, explore, simple happiness

Special Thanks

- To mom and dad for your best support.
- Eva Dahlin : Tutor
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- Suthipa Kamyam : Inspiration source and companion
- Thank you to all my friends and teachers for all the best relationship and experience.

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Introduction

My Backyard Series was an illustration project for children. The book represented the aesthetic of small plant world which was usually hidden away from our sight. The aim was to remind the value of nature and emphasize the importance of the existence of those small and delicate creatures.

Background



The starting point of My Backyard Series was when I watched a documentary about a Thai old lady. She decided to leave a city to live alone in her little cottage in the forest. People who watched this documentary might feel sorry for her as they thought it must be hard for people her age to live on her own in the forest and did everything by herself without any basic facilities. However, when I looked into her eyes and listened to her speaking, I felt the happiness in her heart. She found her happiness in the nature. Her life style was so simple. She woke up early in the morning and walked about 7 kilometer deep in the forest to build a small dike at a small stream. The dike was to provide water for her house and for animals in that area. The documentary's host asked her if it was a too tough hobby for her. She answered that it was fine. If she was tired, she took a break and just continued with her work after a rest. There was no rush, no need to force herself, just made it easy and simple.

I was impressed with her story. Suddenly, I thought about what had inspired her to live alone in the forest, with no pipe-water and no electricity. Nature must have given something to her. She looked truly happier than us, who live in a big city surrounding by facilities and convenience.

I was also impressed and inspired by nature. I appreciated its artistic beauty. Every time I was close to nature, I felt calm and peaceful. When I looked at nature closely, I found its stunning delicate details. They were so pure and ideally beautiful. I like their rhythm of life. I would like to become so small that I could be among them. Somehow, this tiny world stimulated my imagination and made me happy in a simple way. There was a friendly communication between me and nature, which led to the understanding of the meaning of life. Nature fulfilled me with smooth emotion, pleasantness, clam and peace of mind.

Besides, when we talked about the happiness in life, I felt there was a lot of “illusion happiness” in my life. I thought if I got these or did that, I would be happy.

Did I have to be rich in order to be happy?

Then, why millionaires were still sad and suffering?

Later, I found this, I called it the illusion happiness, as this kind of happiness did not last long. Sometime, I even felt worse when I achieved something which I thought was my top goal; but after the achievement, I only had a short happiness. I was restless again.

I always had a question in my mind. What was the happiness of life? What we were born to be or do? What was the purpose of life and what was the success of life.

However, I found there were no answers to these questions and I gave up to find the answers. Then, suddenly when I turned around from the focus only to myself; I felt nature had some answers for me. Their life was very simple, they just happened and ended in a cycle. So, why made our life and happiness so complicate? I began to let go some illusion happiness and felt released and free. It was as if I could understand the meaning of life through nature life.

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Another inspiration point was when I found a speech by an American Indian “Chief Seattle”.

Chief Seattle, Chief of the Suquamish Indians allegedly wrote to the American Government in the 1800's - In this letter he gave the most profound understanding of God in all things.

CHIEF SEATTLE'S LETTER

“The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? The land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of the earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect. All are holy in the memory and experience of my people.

We know the sap which courses through the trees as we know the blood that courses through our veins. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters. The bear, the deer, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the dew in the meadow, the body heat of the pony, and man all belong to the same family.

The shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water, but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you our land, you must remember that it is sacred. Each glossy reflection in the clear waters of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our children. So you must give the rivers the kindness that you would give any brother. If we sell you our land, remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life that it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also received his last sigh. The wind also gives our children the spirit of life. So if we sell our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers.

Will you teach your children what we have taught our children? That the earth is our mother? What befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth.

This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

One thing we know: our God is also your God. The earth is precious to him and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator.

Your destiny is a mystery to us. What will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered? The wild horses tamed? What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills is blotted with talking wires?

Where will the thicket be? Gone! Where will the eagle be? Gone! And what is to say goodbye to the swift pony and then hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival.

When the last red man has vanished with this wilderness, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, will these shores and forests still be here?

Will there be any of the spirit of my people left?

We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So, if we sell you our land, love it as we have loved it. Care for it, as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land for all children, and love it, as God loves us.

As we are part of the land, you too are part of the land. This earth is precious to us. It is also precious to you.

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This letter caught my heart. There was a long relationship between man and nature and once we used to be good friends. However, nowadays, we traveled further away from our beginning, away from our close friend. We continued to ignore the consequences of our actions as we were always busy with some other things that we thought it more important.

I believed human was not more important than anything else in this world. Nature and man were relied on each other. We have come from the same root. We were brothers and sisters.

Therefore, for this degree project, I would like to create some material that could bring back the old nice relation between man and nature. I hoped it would encourage readers to realize the values of nature and receive the simple happiness, like I did. I hoped my work would encourage the readers to appreciate the nature around them and let nature heal and make them peaceful and calm.

The frame of questions

- How could I get started? Where? What structure?
- Why people needed these things? What was the value and meaning?
- How the story should go? Scope?
- Why I much appreciated nature and plants? In what ways? How to communicate this?
- What kind of illustration? feeling? style? story? technique?

Demarcations

- A long story that went deeply into something, as I wanted to combine different stories together.
- Text, I was not sure but it should have some text. However, the story and idea were mainly describing through illustration.
- No structure or order; as I wanted it to have an open end.
- I would only focus on the representation of the aesthetic of plants colonies.

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Implementation

Collection of information and Analysis

My inspiration was the small plant colonies on the forest floor. I started to collect my inspiration materials by visiting a forest near where I lived. I walked there, and absorbed the atmosphere; I explored and took pictures.



I have been interested in small creatures usually found on the forest floor, such as Lichen, Moss, Mushroom and other small plants. These plants were all tiny creatures and seemed to be insignificant. However, to me, I was so inspired by them. They had prominent duties, they were the recyclers of the nature cycle.

In addition, I also collected information from several libraries: the Gothenburg University library, the city library, the botanic library and Umie University library. I read numerous plant books.

I also got a lot of interesting information and pictures from several websites such as flickr, google, Wikipedia, etc.



Addition information

There was interesting knowledge which I found along with this project.

I looked through different articles about different species of plants and they were all new and very interesting knowledge to me. It was as if I found some gems.

Nectar

(Quoted) "Nectar was a sugar-rich liquid produced by plants. It is produced either by flower, in which it attracts pollinating animals, or by extrafloral nectaries, which provide a nutrient source to animal mutualists providing anti-herbivore protection. It is produced in glands called nectaries. Common nectar-consuming pollinators include bees, butterflies and moths, hummingbirds and bats. Nectar is an ecologically important item, the sugar source for honey. It is also useful in agriculture and horticulture because the adult stages of some predatory insects feed on nectar." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nectar_%28plant%29)

Pollinator

(Quoted) "A pollinator is the biotic agent (vector) that moves pollen from the male anthers of a flower to the female stigma of a flower to accomplish fertilization or syngamy of the female gamete in the ovule of the flower by the male gamete from the pollen grain. Though the terms are sometimes confused, a pollinator is different from a pollenizer, which is a plant that is a source of pollen for the pollination process."

Types of pollinators

Bee, the most recognized pollinators are the various species of bees, which are plainly adapted to pollination. Bees typically are fuzzy and carry an electrostatic charge. Both features help pollen grains adhere to their bodies, but they also have specialized pollen-carrying structures; in most bees, this takes the form of a structure known as the scopa, which is on the hind legs of most bees, and/or the lower abdomen (e.g., of megachilid bees), made up of thick, plumose setae. Honey bees, bumblebees, and their relatives do not have a scopa, but the hind leg is modified into a structure called the corbicula (also known as the "pollen basket"). Most bees gather nectar, a concentrated energy source, and pollen, which is high protein food, to nurture their young, and inadvertently transfer some among the flowers as they are working. Euglossine bees pollinate orchids, but these are male bees collecting floral scents rather than females gathering nectar or pollen. Female orchid bees act as pollinators, but of flowers other than orchids. Eusocial bees such as honey bees need an abundant and steady source of pollen to multiply." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pollinator>)

Honey bees

Honey bees, honey bees travel from flower to flower, collecting nectar (later converted to honey), and pollen grains. The bee collects the pollen by rubbing against the anthers. The pollen collects on the hind legs, in a structure referred to as a "pollen basket". As the bee flies from flower to flower, some of the pollen grains are transferred onto the stigma of other flowers. Nectar provides the energy for bee nutrition; pollen provides the protein. When bees are rearing large quantities of brood (beekeepers say hives are "building"), bees deliberately gather pollen to meet the nutritional needs of the brood. A honey bee that is deliberately gathering pollen is up to ten times more efficient as a pollinator than one that is primarily gathering nectar and only unintentionally transferring pollen.

Good pollination management seeks to have bees in a "building" state during the bloom period of the crop, thus requiring them to gather pollen, and making them more efficient pollinators. Thus the management techniques of a beekeeper providing pollination services are different from, and to some extent in tension with, those of a beekeeper who is trying to produce honey. Millions of hives of honey bees are contracted out as pollinators by beekeepers, and honey bees are by far the most important commercial pollinating agents, but many other kinds of pollinators, from bluebottle flies, to bumblebees, orchard mason bees, and leaf cutter bees are cultured and sold for managed pollination.

Other species of bees differ in various details of their behavior and pollen-gathering

habits, and it should be remembered that honey bees are not native to the Western Hemisphere; all pollination of native plants in the Americas has been historically performed by various native bees.”

Honey

(Quoted) “Honey is produced by bees as a food source. In cold weather or when fresh food sources are scarce, bees use their stored honey as their source of energy. In the hive, there are three types of bee, a single female queen bee, a seasonally variable number of male drone bees to fertilize new queens, and some 20,000 to 40,000 female worker bees. The worker bees raise larvae and collect the nectar that will become honey in the hive.

Leaving the hive, they collect sugar-rich flower nectar and return. In the hive, the bees use their “honey stomachs” to ingest and regurgitate the nectar a number of times until it is partially digested. The bees work together as a group with the regurgitation and digestion until the product reaches a desired quality. It is then stored in honeycomb cells. After the final regurgitation, the honeycomb is left unsealed. However, the nectar is still high in both water content and natural yeasts, which, unchecked, would cause the sugars in the nectar to ferment. The process continues as bees inside the hive fan their wings, creating a strong draft across the honeycomb, which enhances evaporation of much of the water from the nectar. This reduction in water content raises the sugar concentration and prevents fermentation. Ripe honey, as removed from the hive by a beekeeper, has a long shelf life, and will not ferment if properly sealed.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honey>)

The life cycle of fungi

(Quoted) “Mycology”, the study of fungi, is a division of Microbiology where scientists study the interaction of mushrooms, the environment and human uses. Most mushrooms reproduce asexually by releasing thousands of spores through their gills into the open air for dispersion into the environment. Every spore is capable of germinating to create a new hypha. Hyphae are masses of intertwined filaments of cells which are the morphological unit of the fungus. When a thick mass of hyphae forms it is called mycelium or mycelia. Mushroom mycelium is usually white in color with a rough, cottony texture. Root like growth is called rhizomorphic.

When spores germinate they consume the water and nutrients from their environment and begin to reproduce. The medium that mushroom mycelium grows on is usually called substrate. Before the mushroom can start to form fruit bodies the mycelium colonizes the substrate fully and when the environmental conditions are right the mushroom emerges to produce more spores.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycelium>)

Mushroom, Mushroom poisoning

(Quoted) “... refers to harmful effects from ingestion of toxic substances present in a mushroom. These symptoms can vary from slight gastrointestinal discomfort to death. The toxins present are secondary metabolites produced in specific biochemical pathways in the fungal cells. Mushroom poisoning is usually the result of ingestion of wild mushrooms after miss identification of a toxic mushroom as an edible species. The most common reason for this miss identification is close resemblance in terms of colour and general morphology of the toxic mushrooms species with edible species. Even very experienced wild mushroom gatherers are upon rare occasion poisoned by eating toxic species, despite being well aware of the risks, through carelessness.

To prevent mushroom poisoning, mushroom gatherers need to be very familiar with the mushrooms they intend to collect as well as with any similar-looking toxic species. In addition, edibility of mushrooms may depend on methods of preparation for cooking. Collectors also need to be well aware that edibility or toxicity of some species varies with geographic location.

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Some example of Toxic Mushrooms

False Morels (*Gyromitra esculenta*)

(Quoted)“Looks are deceiving. False Morels is beautiful but deadly. This mushroom species seems delicious. Yes it is but it is potentially fatal if eaten raw. It is a popular delicacy in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and the upper Great Lakes region of North America. This mushroom’s toxin is the gyromitrin and affects the liver, central nervous system and the kidneys. Symptoms of poisoning involve vomiting and diarrhea several hours after consumption, followed by dizziness, lethargy and headache. Severe cases may lead to delirium, coma and death after 5-7 days.

Destroying Angel (*Amanita ocreata*)

This mushroom contains the highly toxic amatoxins and phallotoxins and has been responsible for a number of mushroom poisonings in western North America. Death Angel, Destroying Angel or more precisely Western North American Destroying Angel is found mostly in the Pacific Northwest and California growing near oak trees. Just half a cap of this mushroom can be enough to kill a human. There is some evidence it may be the most toxic of all the North American phalloideae, as a higher proportion of people consuming it had organ damage and 40% perished. Dogs, too, have been known to consume this fungus in California with fatal results. No definitive antidote for amatoxin poisoning is available, but some specific treatments such as intravenous penicillin have been shown to improve survivability.

Death Cap (*Amanita phalloides*)

This species has been involved in the majority of human deaths from mushroom poisoning. It is a poisonous fungus widely distributed across Europe that resemble several edible species which is the most common cause of accidental human poisoning. The principal toxic constituent is a-amninin, which damages the liver and kidneys, often fatally. No antidote is known.

It associates with various deciduous and coniferous trees. The quintessential toadstool, it is a large white-gilled, white-spotted, usually deep red mushroom, one of the most recognizable and widely encountered in popular culture.

Fly agaric fruiting bodies emerge from the soil looking like a white egg, covered in the white warty material of the universal veil. Dissecting the mushroom at this stage will reveal a characteristic yellowish layer of skin under the veil which assists in identification. As the fungus grows, the red color appears through the broken veil and the warts become less prominent; they do not change in size but are reduced relative to the expanding skin area. Fully grown, the bright red cap is usually around 8–20 cm (3–8 in) in diameter, although larger specimens have been found. The red color may fade after rain and in older mushrooms. After emerging from the ground, the cap is covered with numerous small white to yellow pyramid-shaped warts. These are remnants of the universal veil, a membrane that encloses the entire mushroom when it is still very young. The free gills are white, as is the spore print.

Fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*)

commonly known as the fly agaric is a poisonous and fungus, one of many in the genus *Amanita*. It associates with various deciduous and coniferous trees. The quintessential toadstool, it is a large white-gilled, white-spotted, usually deep red mushroom, one of the most recognizable and widely encountered in popular culture.

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These all inspiration from different source enhanced my imagination and ideas. Then I started to sketch and tried to create my story. My sketch was the combination between my personal imagination and the reality of nature life.

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Idea and sketch work

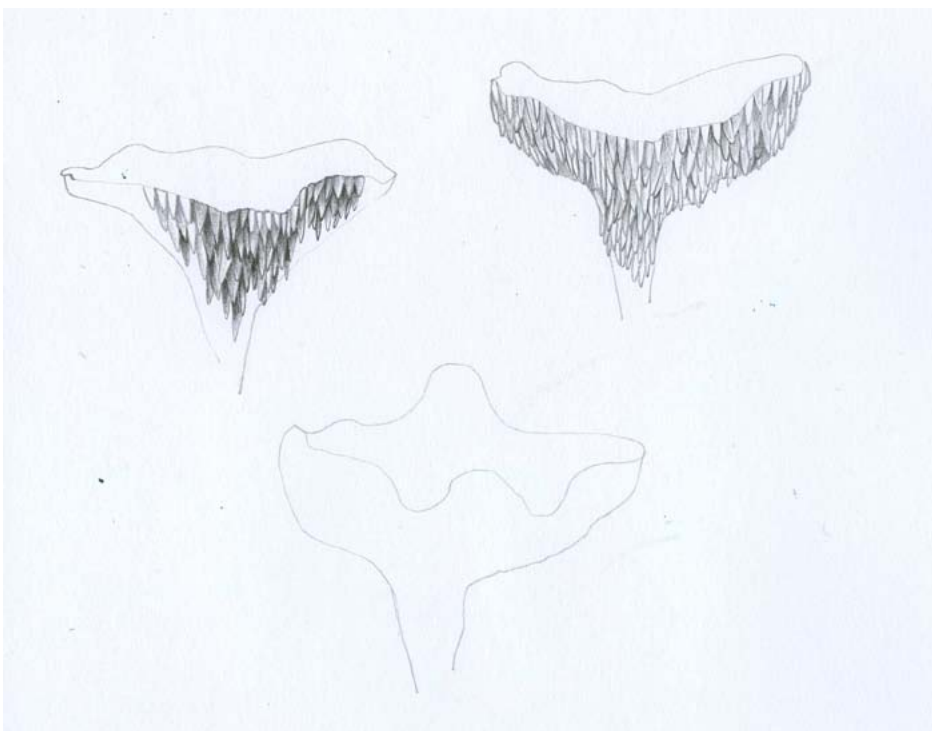
In the beginning, I'm not clear which direction or what kind of story I will create but there was one strong idea about to represent the aesthetic of plant world that I kept with me all the time. Moreover, I added my own fun imagination upon nature, aimed to create the feeling of enjoyable and appreciate nature.

I choose to work with plants that quite well-known so it could easily caught people attention as they could recognize them. I used my own picture and imagination to create my illustration. I transform my imagination and idea into a sketch. At the same time, I tried to discover the style and the way to communicate my idea which easy to be understands and contend strong feeling of nature.

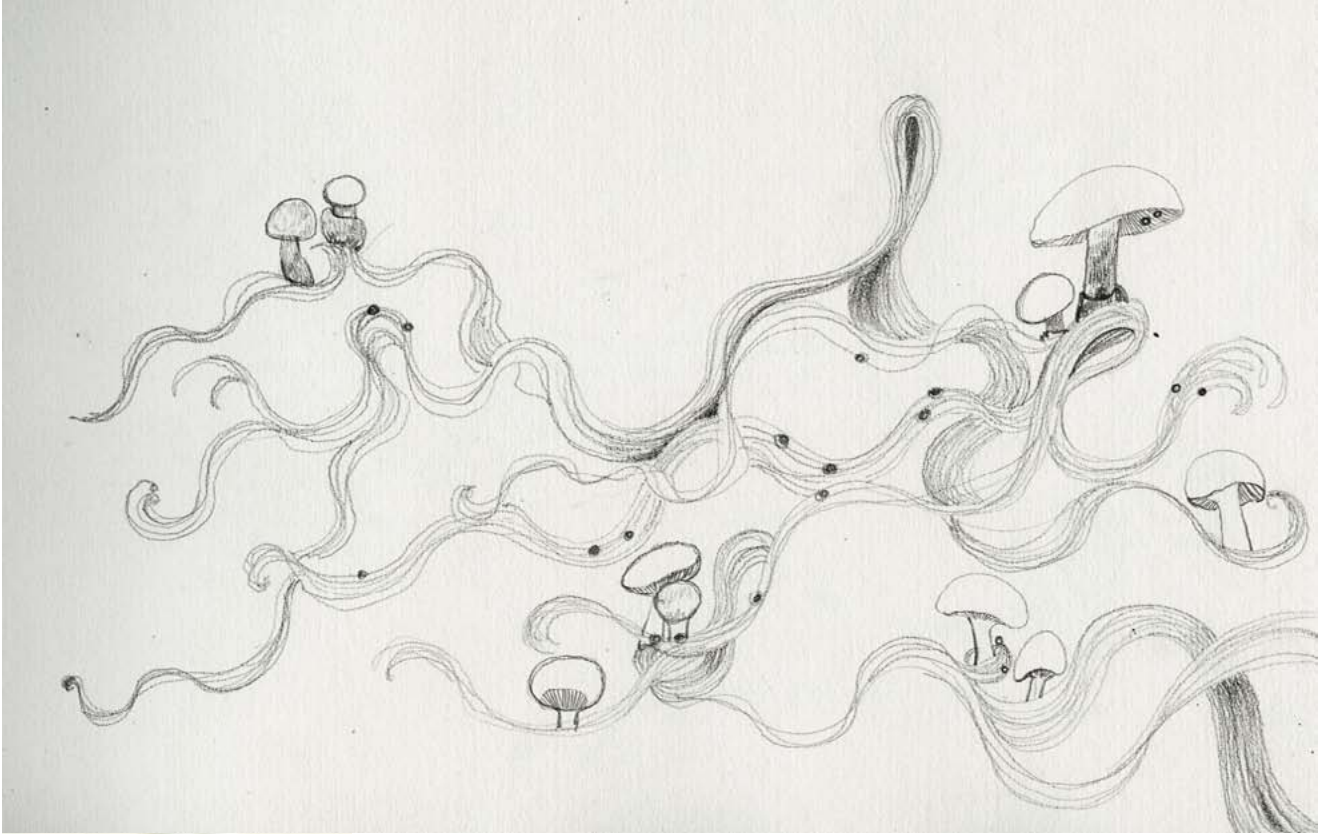
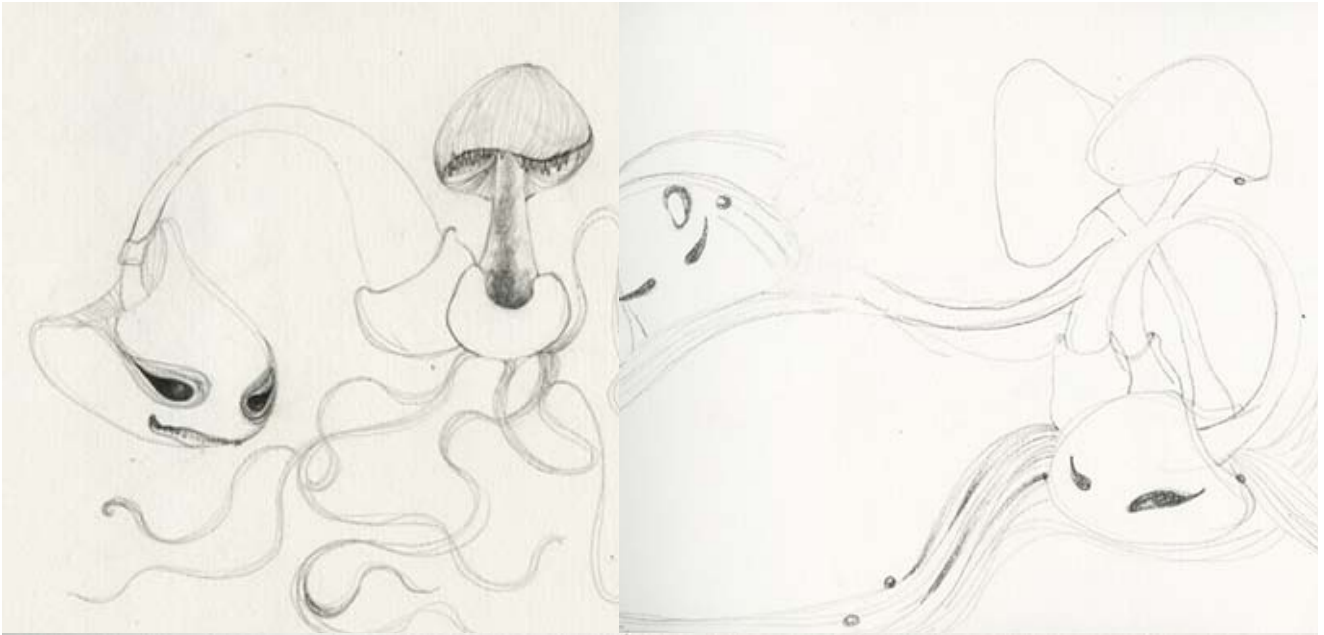




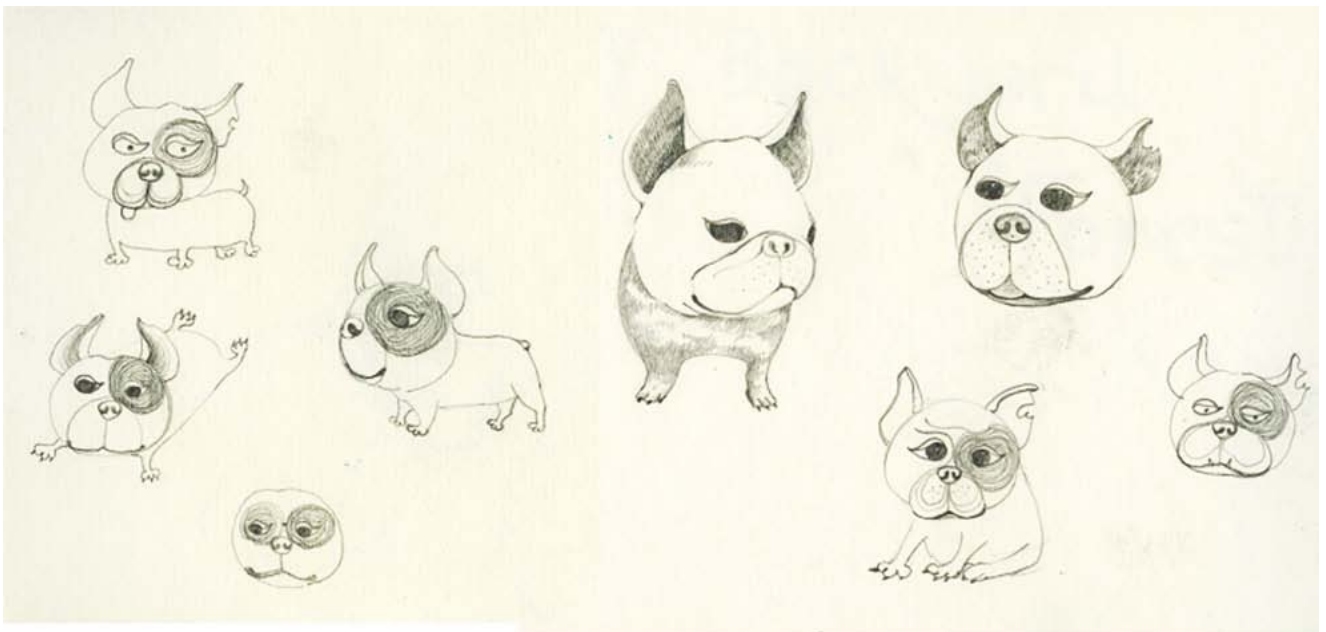
First, I created two characters, a little girl and her pet dog. They will toured us around the plant colonies and introduced their friends, other creatures to us. I wanted to add information text in the bubble space. Then, later I decided to leave it as I would like to focus more on a nature shape and form. I would like to put my attention to pictures and let my pictures told the story.



This sketch was in a realistic style aimed to show the real shape and form of a plant.

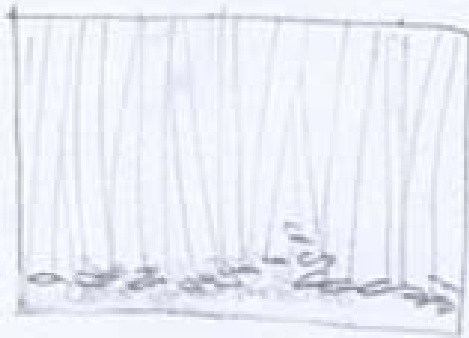
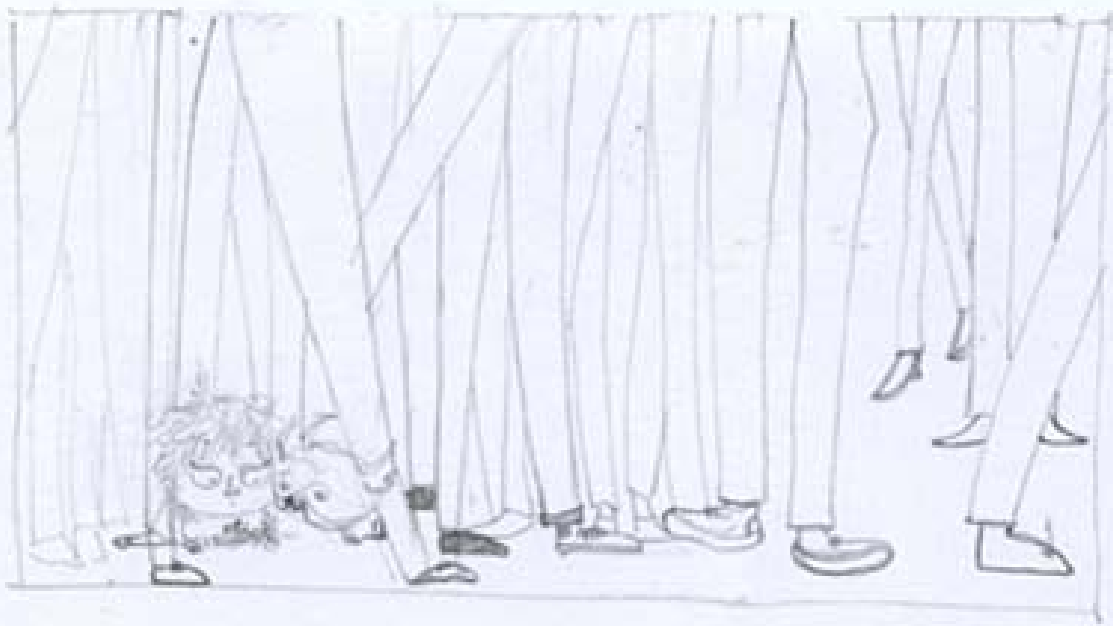


Then, I developed the sketch in the way to focus more on the plant shape and form and the plant's character. This sketch came from when I read about the life cycle of fungus and then I combined them with the character of poison mushroom.



The developing of other character.







Then, I tried to make more sketches in different sceneries.

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The result

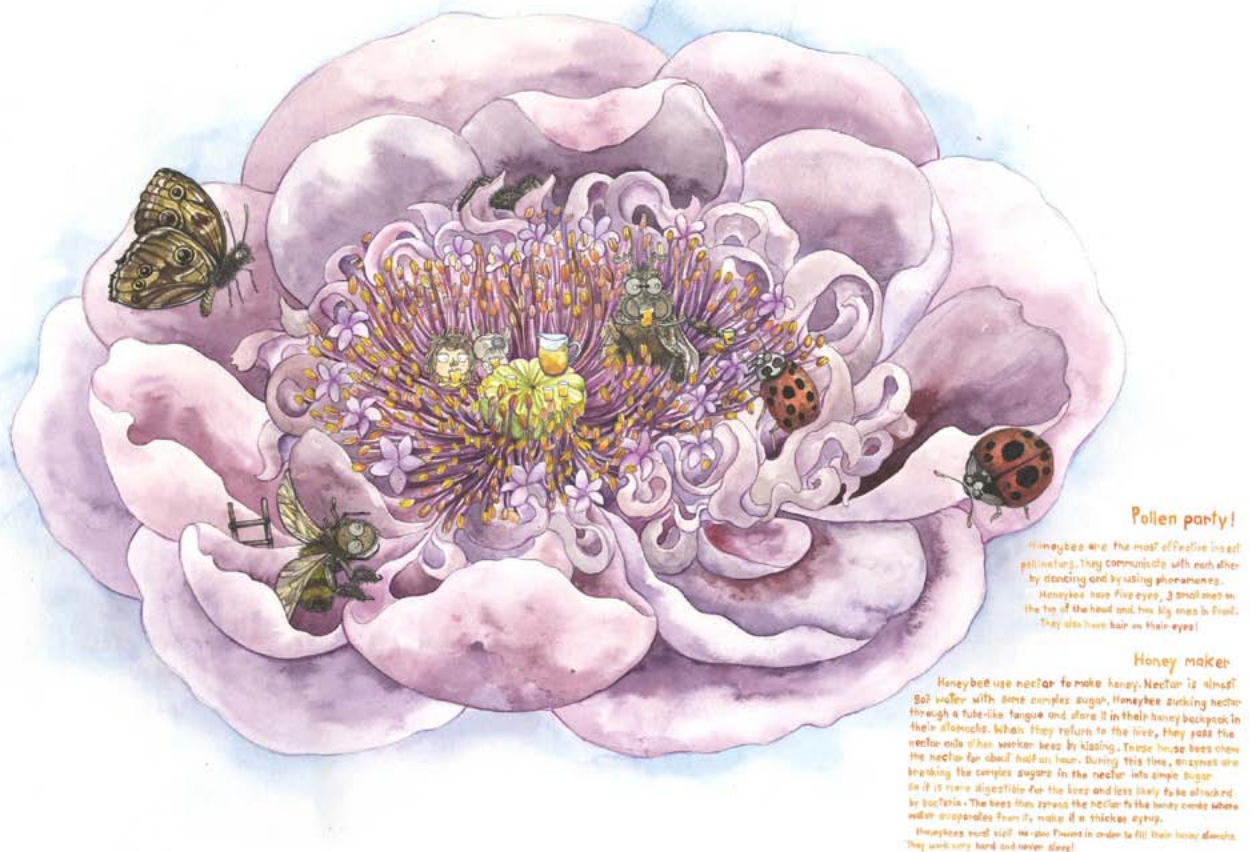
My Backyard Series consisted of 8 pages and each page represented a story of a nature life, its details, and the inseparable reliance between plants and animals. The storyline would proceed by two characters. They would travel around the plant colonies and introduced their little friends.

Final state, I worked with pencil drawing combine with water color. The original piece was A2 size 70*50 cm.

There were information texts at the edge of each page. The text provided interesting fact relating to the picture. They were the fact about nature and ecology system which might be too heavy for children. However, parents could well explain this fact and knowledge to their children. They could sit down together; children could look at the pictures and parents described the story. I wanted my illustration work to be a first step of learning. Children could learn about nature and expanded their knowledge through pictures. This project aimed to activate the readers to know more about nature near them.

In addition, before the examination, I laid the texts in the edge of each page. Then at the examination, I got the feedback that I had arranged them in such a way that the texts were like disturbance to the picture. The picture would be clear, clean and stronger without a pack of texts.

For example :



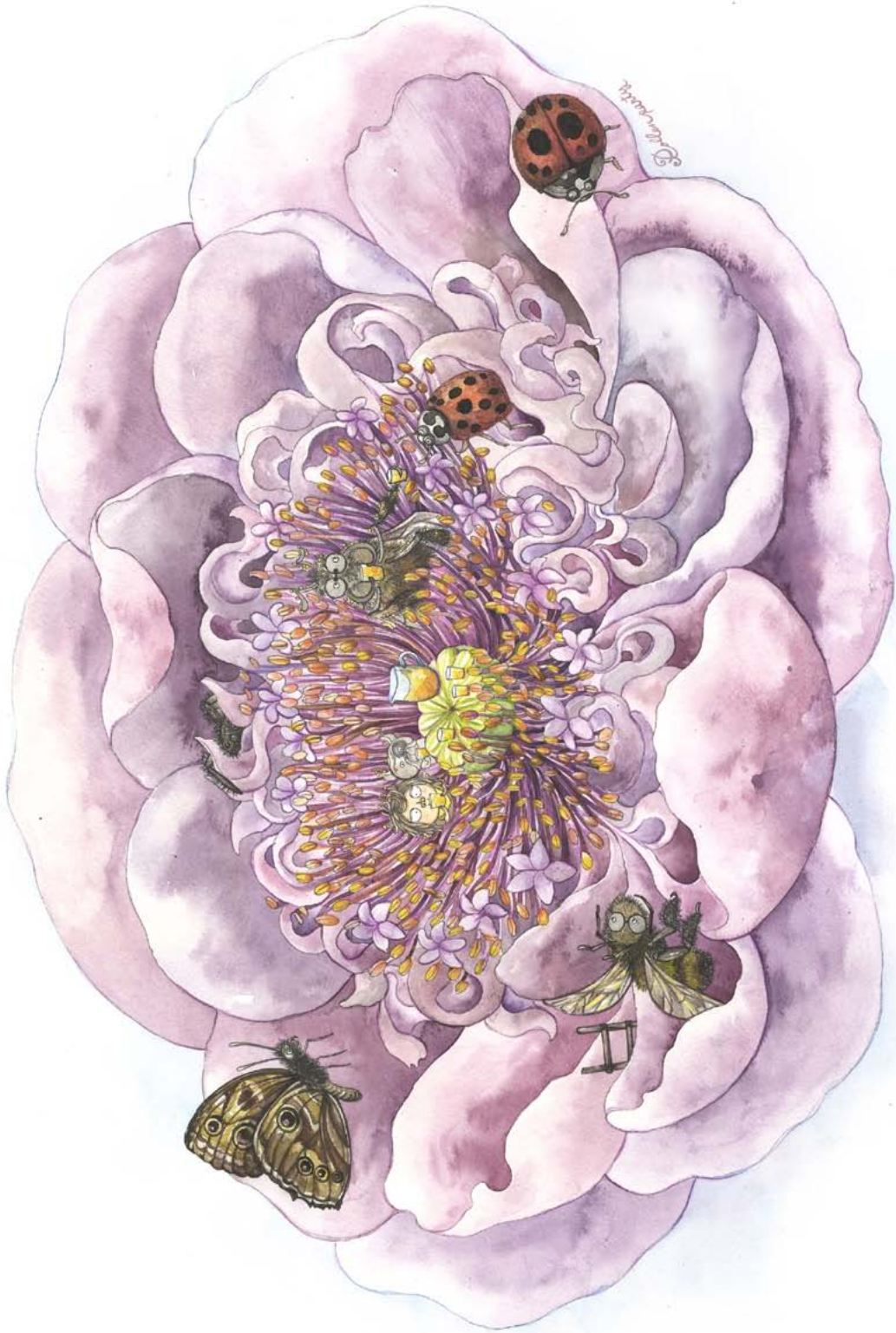


One of the most reliable of all natural weather indicators are pine cones as they change shape according to weather. When it damp and wet, they absorb moisture and remain closed. Heat and dryness of summer will cause the cones open to, then the baby seeds are released. Some pine species, known as fire climax pines, they only be opened by the heat of a forest fire. When a fire destroys living tree, fire climax pine cones release their seeds to repopulate the forest.



Thorny, Plants grow sharp thorns to protect them from being eaten by plant-eating animals, since plants are unable to move or escape. The thorns are evolutionary developments that allow for group defense when plants grow in bunches. Thorns also allow for plants to travel to other areas as they can become stuck in animals' fur and skin.

Then, I decided to rearrange the text layout and created a new heading sentence of each picture. Then, the text blended more harmoniously with pictures.



No.1 Title name "the Pollen Part"



No.2 Title name "Mushroom the Fruit Body"
Representing the aesthetic of different types of mushroom, their shape, form and texture.



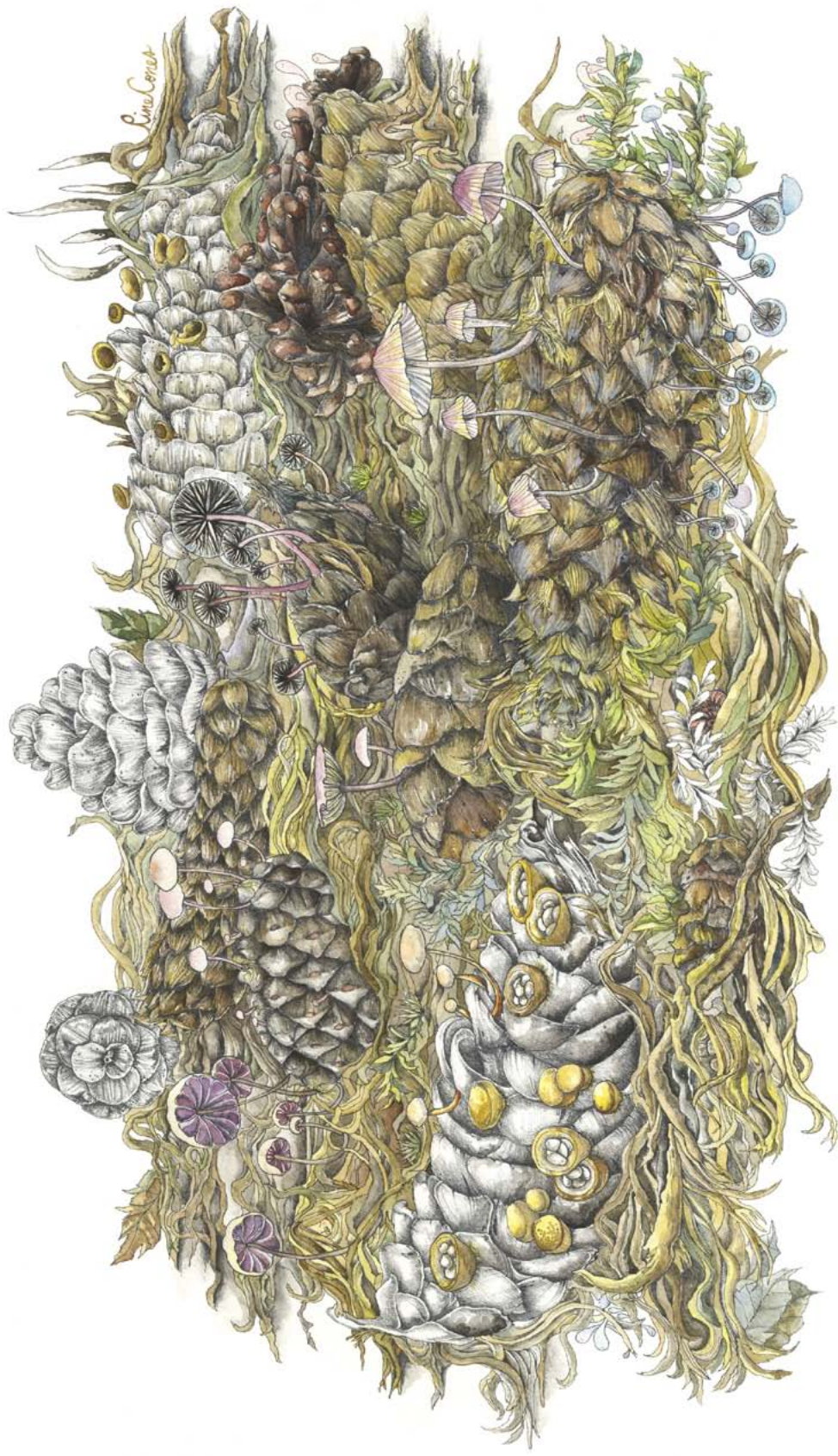
No.3 Title name "Cycle life of Fungus"

Representing a story of fungus life cycle, showing their important part called "Mycelium" which was almost invisible and hidden under a soil or wood. They got spores under their fruit body's cap, which we knew as a mushroom. The main character was two species of poison mushroom which were very well-known by their strong toxic.



No.4 Title name "Fungus on a log"

Representing fungus that usually grew on a dead log. They were the main recycler in the ecology. Each species had different abilities to decompose each part of wood so they took turn to grow on a dead log until there was no wood left to eat.



No.5 Title name "Pine cone"



No.6 Title name "Thorny"

Representing the aesthetics of thorny plants and fruits; they were thorny creatures which developed thorns on their body for protecting them from being easily eaten by other animals and for better blending with the surrounding environment.



No.7 No Title name

Representing the feeling of resting and relaxation from being among nature. Here I tried to build up the cozy and friendly emotion between man and nature.



Leaf decomposition

No.8 Title name "Leaves decomposition"
Representing the important recycler in ecology system. This tiny creature took responsibility to clean a waste material in the ecology system. They slowly ate dead plants and wood, turning them to simple food substance for plants. Then, plants can grow and enter the cycle of life again.



One of the most reliable of all natural indicators for weather are pine cones, because the cone's shape changes according to weather. When it wet or damp, the cones absorb moisture and remain closed. Heat and dryness of summer will open the cones which will, in turn, release the baby seeds. And one pine species, the fire climax pines, the cones will open only by the heat of a forest fire. When the fire destroys living trees, the fire climax pine cones will release their seeds to repopulate the new forest.



Hidden underneath the ground is the fungi kingdom, woven with delicate tiny webs. The only visible part of them is their fruits, or known as "mushroom". Beneath the umbrella cap stores thousand tiny fungi seeds or spores, which will fall out and be carried away in the wind. If the spore lands in a good spot, new web begins to grow.



Honeybees are all excellent dancers. They dance to communicate, especially to signal the way to the sweet nectar, their source of honey making. The bees are hard worker, they never sleep. They hop around 100-1500 flowers a day, sucking nectar through a tube like tongue and storing it in their honey backpack in their stomachs. When they return to the hive, they pass the nectar onto other worker bees by kissing. These house bees then chew the nectar for about half an hour to turn it into simple sugar so it is more digestible for the bees and less likely to be attacked by bacteria. The bees then spread the nectar to the honey combs where water evaporates from it, turn it into a thicker yummy honey that we all love!



Fungi are the main recyclers in nature. When a branch falls down, they eat it and turn it to soil which is a perfect food for plants. Some fungi like to eat wood while others prefer leaves. A whole dead tree is a feast for them, they will eat until there is nothing left to be eaten.



Plants grow sharp thorns to protect them from being eaten by plant-eating animals, since plants are unable to move or escape. The thorns are evolutionary. They are a group defense, when plants grow in bunches. Thorns also allow plants to travel to other areas as they can stick on animal's fur and skin.



Leaves are like candy for fungi and bacteria on the ground. After a plant dies, fungi recycle the plants into more simple nutrients, which will mix into the soil and be used by plants. So, the plants can grow and enter the food chain again.

Text

Book blinding



Reflection

Question frames

- Why I was so impressed with nature, small plants and creatures in the macro world?

This was the first question I had discussed with myself, in detail. Did I really enjoy nature, why? Nature was always the source of my working inspiration but I never asked myself seriously why.

After a deep consideration, the answer I found was that through nature, I saw a relation and reflection of my life and habit. I saw nature and its small creatures as my close friends.

I found that I was calm and at peace every time I put myself among them. They had silent power to cure my soul. And I was simply happy when I was close to nature. I felt this happiness was real and it lasted long compared to the illusion happiness in my life. The small creature's life was full of story. And the stories led me to the more understanding of true life. They helped me to understand more of my own life.

Moreover, I appreciated their artistic appearance. There was no boundary of beauty. There was no right or wrong in nature society, no good or bad, no beautiful or ugly. Their life began and ended functionally on their own; there was no complication or confusion.

Therefore, I found it interesting to learn more about nature and its small creatures; and I would like to share this simple happiness with the readers my work.

- The value and meaning of this project
- Why people needed these things? What was its value and meaning?

Through my work, I would like the readers to appreciate the nature near them. I would like to remind them to cherish the value of nature. And I would also like to encourage people to enjoy the beauty of nature world. I do hope that the people would get the pleasantness and enjoy the imagination in this book.

- How could I get started? Where? What's structure?
- What was the story's content? boundary?
- What kind of illustration? feeling? style? story? technique?

I started this project by collecting my own inspiration and digested it, and I just followed my own imagination. I let a sketch take place in a natural way; what the inspiration went, I just followed and made sketches. So, in the beginning, there was no clear structure or storyline for the sketch.

However, I always kept to my project's concept and I always sketched in that direction. The concept of project was with me all the time.

As I would like to show the story of nature life and their aesthetics, I focused on their beautiful shape and form with the mixture with my own imagination, which I expressed through my drawings. Simultaneously, I continued my search of facts and I found more inspiration through books and websites. It was such a pleasure and wonder every time I read new books and read from new websites; I found new interesting creatures and new information about nature I had not known before. I also made visits to nature many times, in winter and spring time, for first-hand information and also to get into the feeling of my inspiration.

I was confident that if I was to work an illustrated project, I needed to get firm inspiration and imagination so as to make the project true and correct.

After the mid-presentation, I continued to manage and arrange my entire sketch in a new order so that I could conclude my work as a book. At this stage, I made each piece of sketch to connect to each others, in order to make it one story.

In the working process, I chose to work with pencil drawing because I believed it was a beautiful way to make the illustration realistically, for all those nature shape and form. And I added the water colors later on in order to mix the reality with the abstract style.

In the future, I wish to continue working on "My Backyard Series" in a new and different direction. I will love to continue it into a new and different project of some other ideas. I would like to go deeper into these small creatures' life detail; and I hope to present more of them in pictures so that it will be easy to understand. I would like to try to describe their story through pictures. Moreover, I would like to push my imagination to go wilder, stronger and most importantly, useful.

Another aspect is that I will try to make my books something of "edutainment"; so they will provide fun and a touch of information in such a fun way, and very easy for children and grown-ups alike to understand.

Reflection in term of learning

From this exam-project, I had a chance to learn new and different things.

Most of all, this project gave me a chance to find myself, by self-inquiries and pondering. I also learned to be able to manage my idea and imagination; and I could transform the abstract inspiration into a designed context.

Through the working process, I learned how to deal with the illustration project. I never was a good planner and I found it really important to plan a working process because of the important condition of time frame. I discovered my working style, which was a mixture of different technique. I found it really fun while working and it was always refreshing to try out new techniques in my project. It was quite a development in my working skill; I was now more confident in my sketching. I learned new aspect of a book making. For instance, the detail about book format and size, to work with computer program, how to arrange pages and other smaller details. I never knew before this that a book project would be such demanding. It was both picky and sensitive. So, it was such a valuable experience for me and I learned a great deal from making one.

Furthermore, this was the first time I made my own binding of a book, by my own hands. I had a great experience by experiment as you always discovered a direction during a working process.

However, the road does not yet have an ending; I would like to continue working as a nature illustrator. I would like to make a repairment and to support a relationship between nature and man, so that they can smoothly co-exist.

At the examination, I started the presentation with background and description of my project idea and concept. I showed my inspiration, materials, sketches and development, displaying direction and decision. I presented how the project would be able to come real. And I also showed the real pieces of work. The feedback from the examination was very important and useful to my development.

The strong comment was on the text issue. We much discussed about the text position and layout, the meaning and scenes, and the use of languages.

The good comment also included the combination and balance between texts and pictures. I learned that the texts could easily disturb the pictures if they were added in bad positions.

From this feedback, I realized how important the text could be for a story book. There will always be new things for me to learn and I still have a long way to go on for this task. But now I have gained more confidence that I can do it, and I can do it good. The process and the art of making a good illustrated book will require me more time to learn and achieve; I will need a period of time to gain experience and perfect my skills. And I now have a firm determination to go on.

However, at this stage, I am quite satisfied with my project result. I feel good that I have finished one goal. At least, I have tried and put my efforts into it. I was happy to accept that I have failed in some points and I tried to fix it over and over. I would say that sometimes I was so sick of the project but, then, I realized that it was a part of learning and also a part of my working life. There is no actual ending, there will always be another new task to overcome, another new step to go; and new learning will happen all the time. I was happy that finally, I found what I wanted to do, the way to be happily working. Even though, it made me exhausted sometimes but all in all, I had to say it was all worth it.

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