Fantastical Creatures: Folklore, Fact, and Fantasy

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Notes on the Existence of Illusive Critters is a collection of creatures that blend into contemporary urban life, framed as a set of notes produced by a young woman seeking acceptance into the local naturalist society. This project is comprised of notes and drawings from a nature journal presenting these fantasy creatures as real, and is rooted in bestiaries, folklore, creature design, and the concept of secondary worlds. Fantasy is at the core of this project, wrapped inside mock naturalism.

The setting of the project is a world that looks no different than our own, but is filled with creatures so good at hiding that most people do not believe they exist. In it, the scientific community has written them off as folktales, unswayed by sightings and stories from witnesses. The young woman presenting her notes, Mira Obermann, has witnessed and documented these creatures since childhood, and has gathered what she has learned to present to Mr. Johnson and the board of directors at the Region 2 Naturalists Society, a local group in the midwestern United States. They have ignored her applications for admittance in the past, stating that they only accept serious work.

This is her final attempt at recognition. The creatures that she documents are illusive, either hiding in plain sight or evading notice. It is these beings who are responsible for a host of common peeves, from lost wifi signals to misplaced car keys to extra malodorous dog poop. Their designs are based on real creatures, and are approached critically and thoroughly, to be believable and relatable. The goal is for the viewer, after having enjoyed reading the project, to feel a sense of wonder when these annoyances next happen to them.
Princess and the Dragon
Notes on the Existence of Illusive Critters also encourages the viewer to look more closely at the world around them and be motivated to discover and explore the natural world. The illustrations are treated as sketches from life, notes, and field illustrations. This approach is heavily influenced by the books Gnomes by Wil Huygen and Rien Poortvliet and Arthur Spiderwick’s Field Guide to the Fantastical World Around You by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black. The creators of these books approach their imaginary subjects as if they were real beings, with drawings and notes on their habits, habitats, size, etc.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

The fantastical dates back to antiquity, as humans have always used stories to explain things. Myths, legends, and folktales all grew out of the human need to explain the unexplainable with what little evidence is available. As they developed, narratives tied into religion and also served as amusement, teaching tools, comedy, and social commentary. Fantastical beings, settings, and feats abounded, and who could say that they weren’t true? Magic was real, the gods lived, and terrible beasts lurked in the unknown. The skull of an elephant could easily be interpreted as that of a one-eyed giant. An old woman with a talent for healing could only be a witch. And a traveller telling of a creature with the head of a snake, body of a leopard, and feet of a stag was clearly describing a questing beast, not the unknown giraffe. Until modern scientific discoveries, magic, monsters, and myths were the best explanations that people had to make sense of their world. As science was able to explain phenomenon, tales became no more than stories. Magic no longer had a place in daily life, but people still enjoyed and yearned for it. The fantastical turned into fantasy.

LEFT “Princess and the Dragon,” R. Anning Bell, from Grimm’s Household Tales by Marian Edwardes, 1912

“Arthur and the Questing Beast,” H.J. Ford, from The Book of Romance by Andrew Lang, 1902

“Witch riding backwards on a goat,” Albrecht Dürer, copperplate, circa 1500
What is today understood as the fantasy genre took shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Stories in the mid 1800s were told using fantastical elements, much like in the Romantic era which preceded it, but were approached more as parody or exploration. Phantasies: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women by George MacDonald, published in 1858, is considered to be the first fantasy novel written for adults. Author, admirer of Middle Ages, reviver of British handcrafts, socialist, and poet, William Morris wrote several fantastic romances and novels in the late 1800s that were the first to be set in entirely invented worlds. Other authors’ works were set in dream worlds, foreign lands, or the future, but his were the first truly fantasy worlds. Fantasy continued Romanticism’s interest in the Middle Ages and traditional stories, with many narratives using characters, settings, and elements from European legend and the Medieval era.

Magazines devoted to fantasy fiction were important to the genre’s development, beginning in the 1920s. The pulp magazine format brought fantasy and science fiction to a wide audience in the United States and Britain. Fantasy did not truly enter the mainstream until high fantasy was introduced, particularly with J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Hobbit (published 1937) and The Lord of the Rings (published in three parts from 1954-1955). The immense success of these works led to many series by others that contained similar themes, and that utilized original fantasy worlds with detailed geographies, histories, and political landscapes. From the 1970s onwards, fantasy as a genre has cemented itself in popular culture, and is widely used in books, films, television shows, and video games.
Modern fantasy differs from these earlier fantastic works in three ways. First, it offers a different reality, a world separated or hidden from our own, where traditional fantastic tales take place in our world, a long time ago or far away. Second, the supernatural in fantasy is purposefully fictitious, not describing myth or legend to be taken as reality. Third, modern fantastic worlds are often created using traditional elements, but in a new arrangement with individual interpretation, as opposed to variations on a theme.¹

This approach to fantasy as secondary worlds, driven by modern advances in science and humanity’s perception of reality, continues to be the approach in contemporary times. We use fantasy as entertainment and escape as opposed to explanation. Stories offer us a momentary step out of real life, into secondary worlds, those created through tales. J.R.R. Tolkien, called the father of modern fantasy, coined the term “secondary worlds.” Tolkien argued for the importance of secondary worlds and the genre that would later be called fantasy in his essay, *On Fairy-Stories.*

¹ *Wizardry & Wild Romance: a Study of Epic Fantasy,* Michael Moorcock, 2004
My creative motivations and the main ideas of this thesis are reflected in *On Fairy-Stories*, particularly in regards to the importance of three topics: fantasy, quality content for all ages, and escape from reality. “Fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and the clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make.” The best fantasy is rooted in reality. The audience needs a point of entry, and the more realistic certain aspects are, the more believable the story is, and the easier it is to achieve a suspension of disbelief. For example, the television series *Game of Thrones* (based on George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* book series, aired 2011-2019), which takes place in a fantasy medieval setting, is driven by believable character motivations. The *Harry Potter* novels (by J. K. Rowling, published 1997-2007) is relatable for portraying teenage students and the joys and struggles of school. The author Brandon Sanderson (born 1975) writes fantasy novels steeped in magic based on physics. However they are packaged, these stories entertain, educate, and enlighten us. Well-crafted fantasy is difficult to achieve, and too often “remains undeveloped; it is and has been used frivolously, or only half-seriously, or merely for decoration: it remains merely ‘fanciful.’” But when fully realized, these stories refresh the mind so that we can better cope with troubles, build problem-solving skills through vicarious experience, and foster empathy through ‘living’ others’ struggles. Literary fantasy is, “a medium to sustain our need for heroes and our perpetual belief that good can overcome evil.”

These messages are necessary for children as well as adults. The difference between adults and children is experience. As we grow we learn what society expects of our behavior and gain skills in patience and understanding, but no subject should be reserved strictly for children. Nor should things be overly dumbed-down for a younger audience. From this too much low-quality garbage is created, and is accepted as decent fare because it is “for children.” Just as much low-quality content is created for adults, but children get less choice in what they consume.

4 *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults*, Pamela S. Gates, 2003
5 *Secondary Worlds*, W. H. Auden, 1968
Children are the only group that does not produce content for itself. They must be respected enough to be given quality works, not cloying banalities to distract them with. Good content uplifts children, sparks wonder, and helps them understand and face the world, especially when presented in the fantasy mode.

It is true that the age of childhood-sentiment has produced some delightful books (especially charming, however, to adults) of the fairy kind or near to it; but it has also produced a dreadful undergrowth of stories written or adapted to what was or is conceived to be the measure of children’s minds and needs. The old stories are mollified or bowdlerized, instead of being reserved; the imitations are often merely silly, Pigwig-genry without even the intrigue; or patronizing; or (deadliest of all) covertly sniggering, with an eye on the other grown-ups present.²

The break from reality offered by the secondary worlds of fantasy offers us recovery, escape, and consolation. Stories, told throughout time, offer us a momentary step out of real life, into secondary worlds. W.H. Auden writes, “Present in every human being are two desires, a desire to know the truth about the primary world, the given world outside ourselves in which we are born, live, love, hate and die, and the desire to make new secondary worlds of our own or, if we cannot make them ourselves, to share in the secondary worlds of those who can.”⁵ We each desire to create or inhabit other realities as momentary freedom from the pain and drudgery present in life. Rest is pivotal for health and productivity, and fantasy gives a mental rest from reality. In it, the author brings the reader to experience a world which is consistent and rational. “Yes... fantasy is escapist, and that is its glory. If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don’t we consider it his duty to escape? ... If we value the freedom of the mind and the soul, if we’re partisans of liberty, then it’s our plain duty to escape, and to take as many people with us as we can.”⁴ Fantasy offers momentary escape and space to recover, so we can face our duties refreshed. Also, living vicariously through a story’s characters can build courage and skills for approaching real-world problems. My goal with this work of fantasy is to offer a small escape which, through contents that are easily applied to our own world, triggers flashes of escape as the creatures are remembered. In producing a work aimed at older children, I have striven for a quality of research and a presentational style that delights the imagination.
Notes on the Existence of Illusive Critters is presented as a nature journal of fantastical creatures drawn from life. Fantastical creatures are as old as fantastical stories. The earliest European sources for these creatures were Greek and Roman writers. Classical writers like Aristotle and Pliny entertained the idea that mythical beasts could exist in distant lands, having foundations in the real world. Medieval bestiaries of the fourth through fourteenth centuries, then, contained such creatures, and assigned moral principles to the beings depicted. The mermaid, for example, “symbolized sin versus salvation, the dangers of material world versus cultural order, and the fluctuating world of water versus the stability of land.” Animals we know today to be real were also included and given some overtly “mythical” lore, such as the tiger, beaver, and boa constrictor. Early travelers brought back tales of exotic beasts with strange characteristics: quadrupeds with human faces; creatures that were half-human, half-fish; horses with horns; and hybrids of different animals. These stories excited the imagination and fueled interest in unknown lands.

7 Juliette Wood, Fantastic Creatures in Mythology and Folklore: from Medieval Times to the Present Day, 2018

RIGHT “Herakles and the Hydra Water Jar,” Etruscan, circa 525 BC

“Charles Owen’s An Essay Towards a Natural History of Serpents (1742) distinguishes the snaky basilisk from the more reptilian cockatrice.” Juliette Wood, Fantastic Creatures in Mythology and Folklore: from Medieval Times to the Present Day, 2018

“Monoceros and Bear,” The Ashmole Bestiary, early 13th century
“Sebastian Munster’s description of the griffin quotes the classical writer Aelian, one of the oldest authorities on the existence of these mythical beasts.”
Juliette Wood, Fantastic Creatures in Mythology and Folklore: from Medieval Times to the Present Day, 2018

“A bizarre double-spouting whale nurses two equally bizarre offspring from Ulisse Aldrovandi’s sixteenth-century description of the aquatic world.”
Juliette Wood, Fantastic Creatures in Mythology and Folklore: from Medieval Times to the Present Day, 2018
Europe’s colonization of other lands in the fifteen to eighteen hundreds fueled a rapid expansion in scientific discovery. Isaac Newton published his theory of gravity, telescopes and microscopes were invented, specimens of new plants and animals poured in from Asia and the Americas, and European science seemed poised to conquer all of nature. At the same time, printing developed, and information could be disseminated between more people more quickly. The first scientific journals appeared in 1665, *Journal des Sçavans* in France and *Philosophical Transactions* in England. Over time, the number of these sort of nature and science journals grew and diversified, until the explosive success of gossip science in the nineteenth century. In the late 1700s to early 1800s, mass production printing exploded, leading to higher literacy and demand for niche subject material. Wood engravings of images could easily be incorporated in print, and illustrated publications abounded.

In this time before photographs were widely used, researchers had to make drawings of their observations. In the Victorian Era (1837-1901), the scientific illustrations published did not just come from scientists, but nature lovers as well. “Victorian research was very different from research done today. It was largely driven by amateur scientists who were not necessarily trained in scientific observation but had a deep enthusiasm for the natural world.” One amateur researcher whose extensive studies were highly influential is John James Audubon (1785-1851), who was committed to find and paint every bird in North America. Despite numerous accusations of plagiarism, lies, and scientific fraud, his influence on ornithology and natural history was far reaching, so far that Charles Darwin quoted him three times in *On the Origin of Species*. His field notes contributed significantly to the understanding of bird anatomy and behavior, he discovered 25 new species and 12 subspecies, and his book *The Birds of America* is still considered one of the greatest examples of book art.
Other amateur scientists who were not as meticulous created drawings that, despite their lack of scientific basis, were still published and spread. However, at the same time, animals that were thought to be imaginary, like giant squid, or widely unknown, such as the platypus and kangaroo, became accepted and integrated into a developing knowledge of the natural world. Despite the popularization of science sparked by content that was often sensational, the frivolous journals were forced to close because of an increasing professionalization of science in the 19th century.

My project is influenced by the work of these eighteenth and nineteenth century documenters, who recorded what they observed without necessarily possessing a deep understanding of their subjects.

8 Sam Kean, “Historians Expose Early Scientists’ Debt to the Slave Trade.” 2019.
10 D. B. Dowd, Stick Figures: Drawing as a Human Practice, 2018

**LEFT** Ruffed Grouse, John James Audubon, Plate 41 of *The Birds of America*, 1827

"Illustration of the Lama, a mythical half-human half-dog creature reported by sailors, in Hardwicke’s Science Gossip. Credit: Biodiversity Heritage Library"

Kangaroo, New London Magazine, 1788

Cacao from Jamaica, from the journal of Hans Sloane, circa 1700
Other artists that have made books of fantasy creatures with detailed sketches and notes include Wil Huygen and Rien Poortvliet, Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black, and Brian Froud. These makers have all published books delving into the lives and lore of fantasy creatures that have existed in myth and legend. Gnomes and Secrets of the Gnomes by writer Wil Huygen and illustrator Rien Poortvliet, published in 1976 and 1982 respectively, goes into great detail about the tiny people as if the creators have firsthand knowledge. Poortvliet’s images are persuasively rendered in watercolor, surrounded by handwritten notes in ink. The introduction to Gnomes describes how the two creators decided to publish their twenty years’ worth of observations, after permission from a gnome council. Originally published in Dutch, it is filled with beautiful renderings and detailed observations, presented like a science textbook. Topics include the gnomes’ history, physical appearance, remedies for ailments, family life, daily routine, house-building, hobbies, and other beings. The final section is entitled “Legends of the Gnomes,” and tells nine stories recounting interactions with humans and trolls. Secrets of the Gnomes is largely narrative, and tells how the creators themselves were turned into gnomes for a time in order to more fully understand the culture and fix misconceptions that they had reported in their first book. The main theme of these books is harmony with nature, as the gnomes urge humans to stop attacking each other and destroying the environment.
Basketry and Weaving

The so-called "wood weave" for circular forms.

Circular woven floor mat

Plaited basketry

Woven fence (the technique speaks for itself.)
Arthur Spiderwick’s Field Guide to the Fantastical World Around You, written by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black and illustrated by DiTerlizzi, was published in 2005 and preceded by five of the Spiderwick Chronicles children’s novels. The Field Guide is presented as a worn and aged book containing notes and drawings from the early 1930s, compiled and presented by DiTerlizzi and Black. Graphite sketches and mixed media paintings depict thirty-one creatures from folklore and legend as they were observed and depicted by the enthusiast Arthur Spiderwick. These include brownies, hobgoblins, leprechauns, sprites, unicorns, dragons, will-o-the-wisps, and more. The depictions are not approached as they have been in popular media, but with reference to real animals. For example, the unicorn looks like a shaggy deer with a pale dappled coat, long tail, short snout, and three toes on each foot. The written description that accompanies the drawing and handwritten notes affirm its healing powers, but also mention how dangerous they are, their horns’ telepathic powers, and their behaviors’ similarity to that of zebras. All these creatures are invisible to humans, unless one has been born with or uses some method to obtain the Sight. Nevertheless, evidence of their presence can be found. Diary entries, newspaper clippings, and woodblock prints serve to convince the reader of the book’s veracity. Spiderwick’s written observations flesh out the world and hint at the larger narrative of this man’s journey from discovery to his ultimate disappearance.
Brian Froud, a fantasy illustrator and conceptual designer, creates art inspired by myths, legends, and fairy tales, primarily of faeries, goblins, and trolls. He has illustrated over thirty books since 1971, and has most famously done concept work for Jim Henson’s films *The Dark Crystal* (1982) and *Labyrinth* (1986). His exploration of what he calls the Faerie Realm is again based in realism, “grounding fantastical elements with ordinary imagery, which gives plausibility to the first and enchantment to the second.” His book *Trolls*, in collaboration with his wife Wendy Froud, exhibits this. The beings are treated as real, living creatures, as the book explores their culture, home life, philosophies, and views through their tales, mythology, and archaeology. Graphite sketches, colored renderings, photos of puppets and artifacts, and decorative graphics are packed onto every spread. It reads more as a concept book than a scientific document, but is thorough and detailed in its presentation. Themes of Froud’s works include connection with the wonder and mystery of nature and our own souls, and that old stories can help to achieve this link.

METHODOLOGY

I began with the concept “gnomes/FAE in your house/neighborhood.” This fit with the themes of the magic and little wonders of the everyday which I wanted to explore; it would allow exploration of my aesthetic and conceptual interests, which include fantasy, nature, and animals; and it aligned with my driving theme of finding and holding onto hope, especially when there is none. When considering this concept, several questions came to mind: Why do these creatures live near people? How do they benefit from this proximity? and How have they adapted to this environment? These questions sparked months of contemplation into how these creatures could be constructed, both physically and in regards to purpose, and how the project would be presented.

I mused over what a fantastical creature’s purpose was: blame deflection; a warning; as explanation for phenomena; to make bitter happenings sweeter; or as an entertaining concept. I landed on explanations for contemporary annoyances, like many beings from folklore. The concept of blaming occurrences on unseen forces as a way of explaining bothersome or frightening happenings has always delighted me. Folklore creatures that I researched included British brownies - household spirits that are often helpful but also mischievous, performing chores at night or pulling pranks. Envisioned as small humanoid creatures, they must be appeased by offerings, usually bowls of milk, can turn invisible or appear in the shape of animals, and will leave if given clothing. Similar creatures appear in the mythology and folklore of other regions, such as the Danish nisse, Norwegian tufta, Swedish tomta, and Finnish tonttu, which all have an appearance somewhat similar to the garden gnome. In North American folklore, Fearsome Critters came from tall tales told in logging camps, especially in the Great Lakes region. Examples include: the hidebehind, an animal that seizes loggers, devours them, and disappears behind the nearest tree so quickly it is never seen; the squonk, which can be heard weeping because of its ugly and ill-fitting skin; and the agropelter,
a beast that enjoys throwing twigs and tree branches at passerby. In other areas, Qalupalik dragged Inuit children under the ice, massive South African Grootslang ate elephants and guarded diamond caves, and the Wendigo possessed men and led them to cannibalism, as told by the Algonquin tribe of south eastern Canada. Whether the stories are light or terrifying, tales of mythological creatures around the world offer insight into the human psyche and need to control and categorize a world that is often overwhelming and overpowering.

I came up with a list of contemporary peeves, inconveniences, and troubles that could be caused by beings. I didn’t want to tackle creating a plot, so decided on a descriptive collection of creatures instead of a story. Wanting a sense of realism, I worked through how a fictitious documenter of these critters would approach the project, who this author could be, what their motivations were, how their voice would come through, and how their history could package and give reason to this collection of images. This mysterious author developed into a young creature enthusiast presenting her drawings and notes to a committee for recognition and approval.

While pondering, I took hundreds of photos in and outside of houses and apartments, in urban and suburban areas, of any space I could imagine a creature occupying. Trees, gardens, headstones, telephone wires, windowsills, garbage bins, and gutters were all inspiration as possible locations. This exercise gave me lots of mental fodder for how the creatures could inhabit and interact with the world.

Communicating my ideas got easier once I began sketching my concepts and writing descriptions. With words and images to respond to, my classmates and professors were better able to understand my vision for the project. I incorporated feedback, and chose the best ideas to develop. Over winter break I finalized who my author was, and as spring semester began I started creating art for the book. With many external stresses to navigate, my timeline and projected output kept shifting. In the fall I anticipated creating artwork for twenty creatures, with six full spread illustrations of environments. In the end, time allowed for thirteen creatures, as I aimed for fewer, more well-developed creatures as opposed to many half baked ideas.

Mark Oliver, “11 Mythological Creatures That Reveal Humanity’s Deepest Fears,” 2020
Each creature started as a concept —– annoys your dog, poops on your car, tends to the garden snails, drawn to music, etc. Next, sketches were made, either responding to a concept from the list or as a general exploration of form. Ideas were combined and modified, and the strongest were chosen, yielding over twenty-five beings to develop. Working off of the initial sketches and descriptions, the creatures were approached one by one, with the aim of realizing as many as time allowed. I did research on what real-life animals a creature’s form would reference, to give a sense of realism. I aimed for variety of form so that my creatures would not look too much like each other. I combined animal parts to make distinct beings that retained a sense of otherworldliness, while pursuing what I find visually pleasing. Once a creature’s form was finalized, sketches were made to show it from multiple angles and in action. I made a full color image for most creatures, laying down a field of color in gouache and rendering in colored pencil. Images were then scanned, linework was isolated, and the drawings and descriptions were arranged on pages in Adobe InDesign. To give the impression that the document was a cobbled-together collection of notes and drawings, I also scanned paper textures and ephemera such as paper clips, masking tape, ink spills, and coffee rings to be incorporated. I created a template, so that each creature had a slip of paper on the left side with their name, description, and other facts written in a typeface that resembled a typewriter. On the right side of the page and filling any following pages were drawings and notes, some treated as though they were attached with tape, paperclips, or on post-it notes. I then printed out each page and laid them out on the floor to arrange them in a satisfying order. I received and applied copy edits from peers. The final pages and cover were printed in the Weil Hall studio, and professionally cut and bound at Wrap-Ups, Inc. in Fenton, Missouri.

RIGHT House Goblin process: initial ideas and sketches, photo reference, final design and notes, drawings and painting for final art, formatting in Adobe InDesign
The skatolic skink is not a skink, but resembles one, with its lizard-like anatomy. I couldn’t resist the... contents of one’s trash.

**HAIRLESS DOB**
- **SIZE:** pigeon
- **Crepuscular • Uncommon**
- **HABITAT:** outdoor
- **DIET:** garbage

...tricks if offended. Somesuch, and become an offering of milk or... if you’ve pleased them... towards people and... Scavengers, they can be... and horizontal pupils.

**HOUSE GOBLIN**
- **SIZE:** guinea pig
- **Nocturnal • Rare**
- **HABITAT:** indoor/outdoor
- **DIET:** Insects

...sneaking. Their grabby paws and... hands are... perfect for their favorite... activity - taking...
The gallery show at the High Low literary arts cafe in St Louis was set up to mimic one wall of the author’s study. Removable wall paper and a large rug were purchased, and the space was decorated with furniture, plants, a wall shelf, framed artworks, small taxidermy, books, and knick-knacks. The book was displayed on a pedestal, and images from the book were framed or pinned to the wall, alongside two large posters purchased at Artmart in Brentwood, Missouri and prints from the Library of Congress’ image collection that fit the project’s mood. A display case held objects “collected by Pimm the house goblin” with an itemized list and one of her “nests.”

RIGHT Notes on the Existence of Illusive Critters display, High Low, St Louis, Missouri. On display May 1-15, 2021

Display set up with assistance from Stephen Hagen, April 29, 2021

Mrs. Lee, Leah Kurth, gouache and colored pencil, 2021

MFA IVC show opening, May 1, 2021
The project has been realized as a collection of notes and drawings of thirteen original creatures. It is presented as a manilla folder of information submitted to a local naturalist society by a creature enthusiast. This amateur nature documenter, a young latina woman named Mira Obermann, has noticed these creatures all her life, and recognizes that most people, especially adults, believe them to be fictitious. The contents of the document include a letter of intent, sketches, full-color renderings, in-field notes, and descriptions of the organisms. The images are created with a variety of media: graphite, ballpoint pen, gouache, colored pencil, marker, and conte crayon, to give the impression that the author used whatever she had on hand at the time. One to six pages are dedicated to each creature. Some creatures are based on existing fantasy beings from folklore, and all have aspects of real animals woven in.
AUDIENCE AND DISTRIBUTION

The project is aimed at pre-teens and up, but any fan of fantasy creatures or those inclined to exploring everyday wonders could enjoy it. It will reach people through Instagram, Facebook, leahkurthart.com, the gallery show in May 2021 at High Low in St Louis, a short print run of the finished book, and prints of the artwork.

RESULTS

My main goal was to make people smile and relate to the content with this project. I have received much positive feedback on the ideas and design of the creatures from classmates and working artists. The creation process did not go as smoothly as I had hoped, but was a learning opportunity. I purposely aimed to produce many low-stakes drawings to relieve pressure on myself, as opposed to a lower number of highly realized images. I intended to create work I could be proud of, and was successful.


