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When I was asked to illustrate a children's book by a cousin, also a 5th grade teacher, I decided to incorporate the aquatic theme into a series of studies, in preparation for the book. I've always been an illustrative artist and like to tell stories through my work. Starting out as a Painting/Drawing major at Purchase College and then switching to Printmaking gave me an opportunity to explore many techniques, without sacrificing the craft involved in fine arts, the most interesting to me was copper plate etching. Its exciting to experiment with line and tone to create a world that is so vast and so fragile.

I am interested in providing an awareness of our environment, because we only have this Earth and we are in danger of losing a lot of the amazing wonders we have here. In my research of the ocean and its abundance of creatures, I have learned that we know a lot more about the surface of the moon than we do about the ocean floor, which is upsetting, especially since our actions have become such a threat. Coral bleaching is caused by temperature changes and overfishing is a problem even to endangered species, from sharks to turtles, coral even krill.

I began this project with lots of sketches and experimenting with tone and color to recreate the experience of being under the sea. Not many people get the opportunity to live and breathe in this unique habitat, but I would highly recommend scuba diving, to everyone, at least once. To see the grace and purpose with which these creatures move and live is otherworldly and fascinating. It was very difficult to find a good jumping off point. I started with pen and ink drawings, which weren't working from an artistic standpoint. The simplicity of the drawings wasn't capturing the depth and spacial beauty of the ocean. So I decided to moved to a more favored drawing medium, chalk pastel. I also used black paper as a means of pulling this world out of a weighty place. However, becoming a printmaker, I didn't want to rob myself of the experience of working with etching, a medium I've come to truly enjoy working with.

My first piece, is also my largest, most difficult and took the longest to develop. I was getting uneven tones, nothing seemed to print right. It was brought to my attention that my techniques were tentative and unsure, I wasn't being rough enough with my plates. Copper, although a softer metal, is still a metal and can handle a lot of heavy treatments. So, once I got into the deep sea creatures I wasn't afraid to etch my plates for a few hours and with multiple levels of aquatint to achieve the rich inky blackness where some of the strangest animals thrive. I was really excited to go back into other plates, where I had some of the same printing problems. However, some of the more delicately detailed pieces needed similar treatment, so I didn't hesitate and tried desperately to bring the same intensity to more precious moments.

As a child, I had learned to swim before I could walk and always loved the water. We had a small family motorboat, tubing, water skiing, swimming, snorkeling, even just the occasional boat ride were frequented by my cousins and myself. I was fascinated with wildlife of all kinds and would often be in connection with nature. Catching jellyfish, shrimp, watching turtles hatch on my neighborhood beach, even fishing for the day were all daily activities, especially in the summer. My grandfather would take us out sailing as well. Vacations in the Caribbean heightened my sense of the vast amount of life in the ocean with nearby reefs, snorkeling was something that kept me in the ocean most of the day.

I got the opportunity to scuba dive when I was an early teen and the experience changed my life. It has been my dream to swim with whale sharks, the largest shark in the world, also a filter feeder. If I were to not pursue my career in art, I would choose a marine science of some kind. I excelled in science classes, especially of the aquatic variety. So much goes into understanding this underworld that makes up more than we have been able to comprehend until very recently. On one hand technological advances seem to hinder our connection with nature, but at the same time we are able to shed a light on what lives where the sun never shines. I can apply the same concept to the way I work with my plates. Etching is such a scientific process and deals with harsh treatments of metal with

acid and tar, and working with these materials to recreate such a delicate and fascinating place is difficult, but I hope to inspire people to take a closer look and see the beauty that could one day be lost if everyone does nothing.

On a segment of 60 minutes, and the topic was Robert Ballard, the finder of the Titanic. I was fascinated because he was talking about historical wrecks he has found in the ocean with such a passion that I felt matched my own. Ballard is often criticized for wanting fame and money, when in reality his passion has led to some amazing discoveries for history as well as science, such as Giant Tube Worms and countless shipwrecks. Tube worms are creatures that thrive around hydrothermal vents, which provide volcanic heat and near boiling temperatures in some of the coldest depths on Earth. On average they are a mile under the ocean and were a great find because until then, life wasn't believed to exist at such great depths in the ocean because of the lack of sunlight. However, with further investigation, science was proved very wrong. In fact, these animals survive off a process called chemosynthesis, where in the absence of sunlight, living things use energy derived from reactions involving inorganic chemicals. The worms are aided in survival by bacteria that live inside them that are able to process the chemicals and minerals produced by the vents into organic molecules on which the worms are able to feed. This symbiosis is an important part of nature and is exhibited throughout the species of the world.

It's obvious that I take a lot of my inspiration from nature and science, and it's not that I don't learn from other artists, but my work is based on an awareness of our relationship with our habitat. I want there to be a better understanding for where we live and this body of work was inspired by a couple of books I found at the school library. One book was about the deep ocean and every single page is drenched in inky blackness and it was so beautiful to me I wanted to create my own world within this one. However, my research for this children's book was meant to be more naturalistic and it struck a chord with me that so little is known about the deep ocean, and it was there my focus stayed. I

found that I wanted to recreate this world and shed light on the beauty that occurs in this seemingly alien world.

Although my focus was not fully on the deep sea I feel I was able to capture the weight of the feeling of being underwater and the expansive energy created by what makes up at least 80 percent of the Earth. I have drawn inspiration from artists with imagination like Kiki Smith's etchings have a childlike quality that opened up a number of ideas and possibilities for me with etching. Janet Fish's paintings are another source of obsessive detail that I have tremendous respect for. I admire not only her skills as a painter but her ability to see and create with the mind's eye. Amy Cutler's monochromatic prints, as well as the unbelievable color available in the sea, inspired me to experiment with color. I struggled with it at first and stayed with simple black for developing my imagery which I saw as being much different than what was produced but, the subtleness of the blue really plays into the depth and diffusion or even absence of light. I found that allowing the stark white of the paper to shine through the blue-black ink left room for the imagination and still provided a basis with which to notice form and light and to see color with your mind's eye.

The mind's eye is something I learned about and practiced daily here at Purchase. It was a common reiteration in the classes I took with Professor Leonard Stokes. The mind's eye is a visualization tool that one must develop with practice and conviction. It's useful for just about everything and with daily exercise and application it becomes easier to mentally move past what your eyes see and notice what's happening with your mind. I started off in Professor Stokes' Black and White as Color class as a freshman. It was a challenge to be so limited in color when I used to drown my work in it. His Drawing Seminar class was another challenge for me, since I am used to just quick sketches, but this class stressed armatures and structured measurements as preliminary in order to get proportions to a place where they were not necessarily correct but believable. A quote Len shared with this drawing class that always stuck with me was one of Pablo Picasso, "Art is the lie that enables us to

realize the truth.” I came to appreciate the tediousness of the drawings and the freedom it allowed me, after much practice.

The ability to use my mind's eye was highly developed here and I am very grateful for the ability and to use it in the real world. Even in Len's Color Seminar class I was able to use this newfound ability with greater purpose. He always stressed seeing Color and not Colors, he was highly irritated to hear about Colors, because Color is what happens when one edge meets another. Therefore, colors in the presence of one another become color and allow for comparison, without which there would be no colors. Working with the mind's eye in this sense really gave me a challenge. We did optical color mixture, cast light and shadow with interpretations of the mind's eye, found equal tonal qualities within opposing colors, transposed color and so much more. Throughout every assignment we were tasked to create and compare color relationships. These classes taught me lessons applicable to almost every aspect of seeing, which is a very important part of making art.

Although I have a long way to go, I have learned so much at this school. My interest in children and how much weight they carry for the future is not something to be taken lightly. I think this is where my interest in children's books comes from. I want to be able to learn enough to teach future generations about things that I care about. A lot of my inspiration comes from my cousin, who's love for children shows in her enthusiasm and individual care she has for each student. When she asked for me to apply my artistic license to this book, I didn't realize what an opportunity this was. It has taken me a long time to get to this point, but she has renewed my passion for the ocean that I had, with the many pressures of becoming an artist, strayed from. I have always had a childlike enthusiasm for the ocean, but lost touch with it. The fact that this is geared towards children opened a more lighthearted opportunity for exploration. However, I took a very studious approach towards my prints and used my senior project as a basis for research. I felt I needed to know more about the ocean in order to create a realistic world for the book. This has also opened my eyes to the many threats that endanger the watery universe that we barely know and finally have the technology to explore.

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This project is a series of studies of aquatic life prefacing and inspired by a marine based children's book. An experimentation of medium and technique was applied in order to decide the medium of the book. Pen and ink, chalk pastel and etchings were used to try and recreate this underworld.