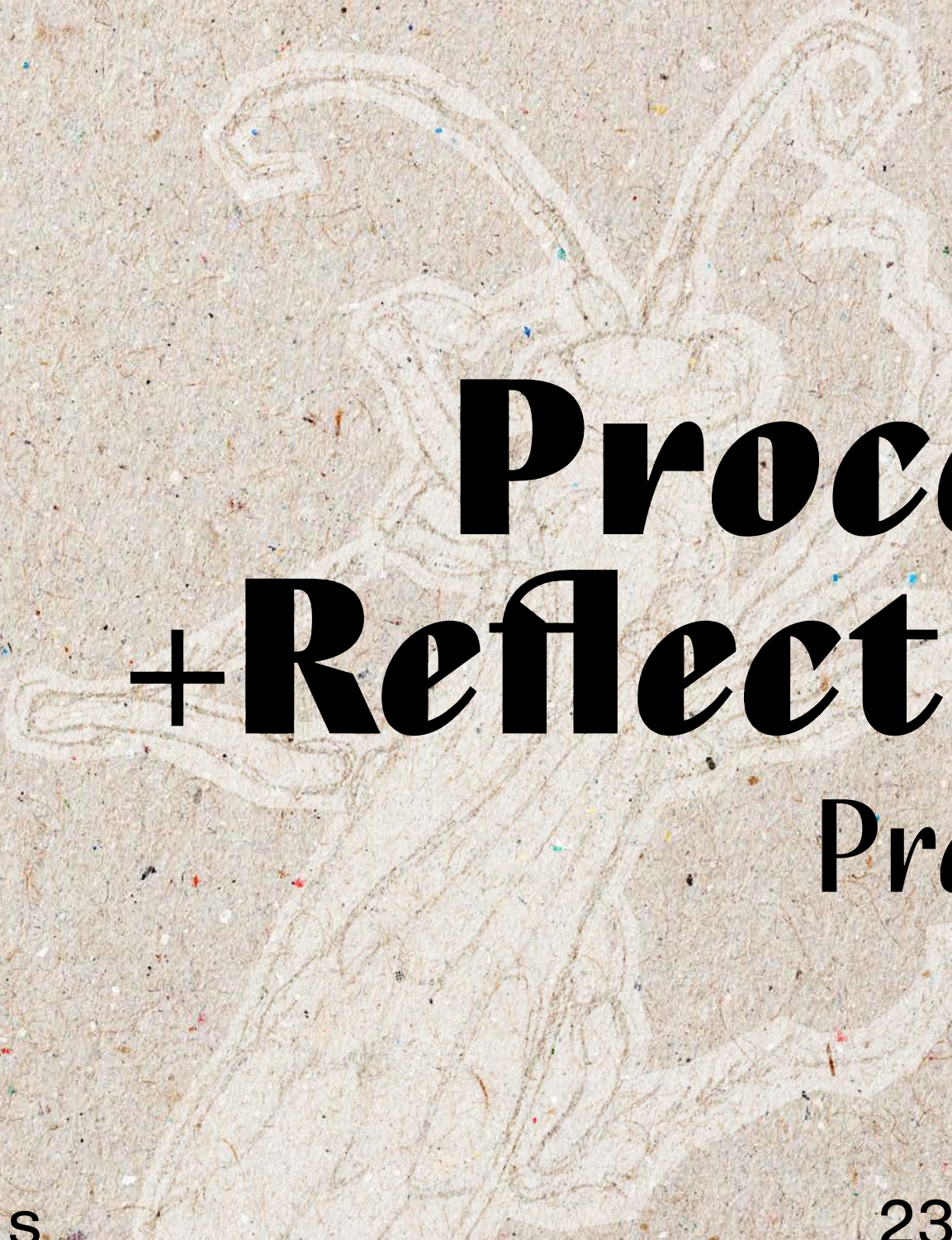




Process + Reflection

Project 3

Avril Pundzius

23.04.2025

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Introduction

My project is about **portraying insects**, specifically stinging hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants), **in a more empathetic and positive light**. An area of debate of my topic that interests me is how insects are generally perceived and treated by people; I want to explore and challenge negative vs positive conceptions of these animals compared to others.

A need I perceive is a **lack of understanding and acknowledgement of insects' existence** and their importance in our environment. I would consider everyone to be my target audience, but more specifically **people who have a usually overall negative impression of insects**, whether it be as simple as annoyance or as strong as aversion.

The goal of my project is to **challenge the usually negative knee-jerk reaction** towards insects and to instead foster a different kind of relationship towards them, whether it be fascination, respect, neutrality or other, to lead towards an understanding of their importance in our natural world. My initial project concept was a series of posters depicting various insects from the Schmidt pain index accompanied by the descriptions of their stings from the index and illustrative visual representations of these intricate and colourful descriptions, but I have pivoted my outcomes to accomplish my goal through **a series of informational, explorational zines that can fold out into larger decorative posters**.

Initial research and direction

excerpts from the are.na channel I created to keep track of my research (textual research will be found in my bibliography)

<https://www.are.na/avril-p/insect-art-and-design>

Info

project resource

tags:

SCI // empirical/scientific information

ENV // relating to the environment + how insects contribute to it

VIS // visual inspiration

POS V NEG // relating to exploring what challenges positive and negative associations

RELATION // relating to relationship between insects and humans



VIS // "Dinosaurs"
From Catherine Chalmers photo series, Residents



VIS // Giraffe weevil,
from Pheromone p.127

Chalmers doesn't kill the insects in her work, although sometimes that's how it looks. In a series called *Executions*, she placed cockroaches purchased from a biological supply company and kept in her New York City apartment in scenes of a hanging, an electrocution, a gas chamber and so on. In one, she filmed a live cockroach tied to a stake (she blew on it to make it move), then swapped in a cockroach that had died of natural causes before setting the stake on fire. The series elicited varied reactions, Chalmers says, from someone in San Francisco who ran out of the theater, to a man at her show in Boise urging her to kill as many cockroaches as possible.

"In her executions series, she really stirred emotions—you could argue in surprising ways—from people who might not think twice about spewing pesticide or squashing cockroaches," says Klein. The series raises an interesting question, he says: Does seeing a cockroach play the part of a human condemned to die change how you feel about the cockroach? "Do you extend your circle of empathy ... to a hexapod?"

POS V NEG // RELATION //
Excerpt / Catherine Chalmers



VIS // Fly,
from Pheromone p.31

Much of this work plays on the conflicting feelings we humans tend to have toward insects—we're simultaneously fascinated by their strange biology and unfamiliar lifestyles and repulsed or frightened by their stingers, toxins and the diseases they may (or may not) carry. Not to mention their sheer scuttling, swarming numbers.

"They don't live like us. They don't look like us. They do the things that we do in such bizarre and wild ways that it's just endlessly intriguing," says artist [Catherine Chalmers](#). "They offer a very, very different perspective on life on Earth."

POS V NEG // RELATION //
Excerpt / Catherine Chalmers

Angus continues to exploit that tension in her work. "A lot of people don't like insects, but they're OK with them when they're put in patterns, because a pattern is ordering and it's asserting a kind of control," she says. "When I put them into something that's sort of like a swarm, people find that very disturbing because that's mimicking what they actually do in the wild."

POS V NEG //
Excerpt / Jennifer Angus



"My collection is about the aesthetic and the attraction of fears," she explained. "In many cultures people wear masks to scare evil away, so the masks are decorated with frightening images from the wearer's own fears."

POS V NEG // Excerpt / Dorry Hsu

VIS // Jennifer Angus - Florence
Bedroom shawl detail (2019)

Concept 1

All 3 of my concepts were inspired by the sting pain index developed by Justin Schmidt.

Concept 1: Poster series

Idea: These posters would depict various insects from the Schmidt pain index accompanied by the descriptions of their stings from the index and illustrative visual representations of these intricate and colourful descriptions.

Audience: People with a usually negative overall impression of insects

Goal: Highlight an aspect of insects usually perceived negatively in an artistic way that piques curiosity and generates interest in order to change the usual perception of them.



Planche 5 by Eugène Seguy



Detail from *Progress* by Gijs Frieling

Concept 2: Mural/wall installation art piece

Idea: Similar to the poster, except the illustrations of the insects and the accompanying descriptions would be presented in a much larger, panoramic display, very differently from how we normally encounter insects.

Goal: Same as concept 1, but with the added element of immersion and flipping the point of view on scale that we usually have with insects.



Detail from *Worry will vanish revelation* by Pipilotti Rist

Concept 3: Immersive/projected motion exhibition

Idea: Similar as concepts 1 & 2, but in a more digital conception with the added element of motion and transitions between insects and other visual elements.

Audience: Same as concepts 1 & 2, but also more specifically families and children in that category.

Goal: Same as concept 1 & 2, but again with the added element of motion and much larger scale.

The concept I had initially chosen from the three was concept 1, the poster series. However, it seemed too one-dimensional and focused solely around the Schmidt pain scale, and I brainstormed ideas based on my previous research on how to flesh it out more from that pain scale starting point.

Finding a system
way of organizing
different way of talking about our
relationship to them
recontextualizing
likelihood of interaction
juxtapositions
how can i explain it to people
finding other data points + pain
Systems of presenting data

Concept 1 notes

Accepting pain?

- ⊙ Aesthetic appreciation
 - ↳ showing insects in a positive light
 - texture
- ⊙ Rethinking human relationships w/ insects
 - ↳ accepting pain, recontextualizing
 - defense mechanism
 - not life threatening
 - ↳ size, seeing insects at a different scale
 - ↳ interactivity, experiencing insects in a safe, different way
 - fold out, discovery

This led me to developing my concept for Project 2, a series of informational and interactive zines, each focusing on a different insect, which fold out into a poster showcasing that specific insect.

Aesthetic appreciation

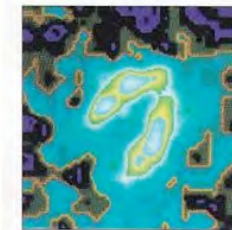
visual textures



categorizing/
compartmentalizing
visual textures



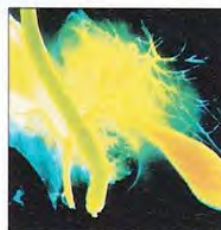
IMAGING THE BODY



SCINTIGRAM OF



ANGIOGRAM OF



CONTRAST X-RAY OF



DOUBLE CONTRAST
X-RAY OF COLON



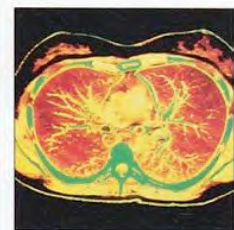
ULTRASOUND SCAN
OF TWINS IN UTERUS



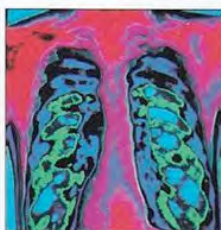
ANGIOGRAM OF
KIDNEYS



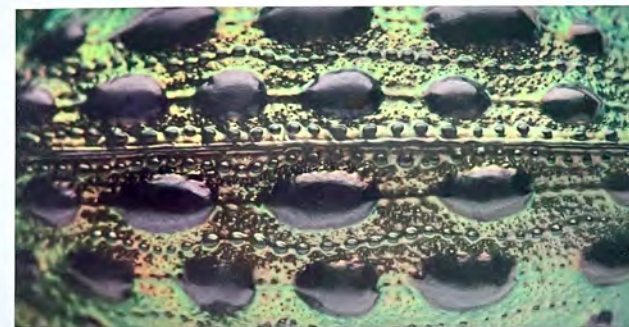
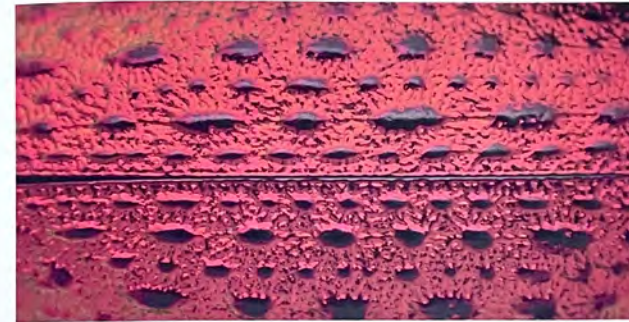
ANGIOGRAM OF
ARTERIES OF HEAD

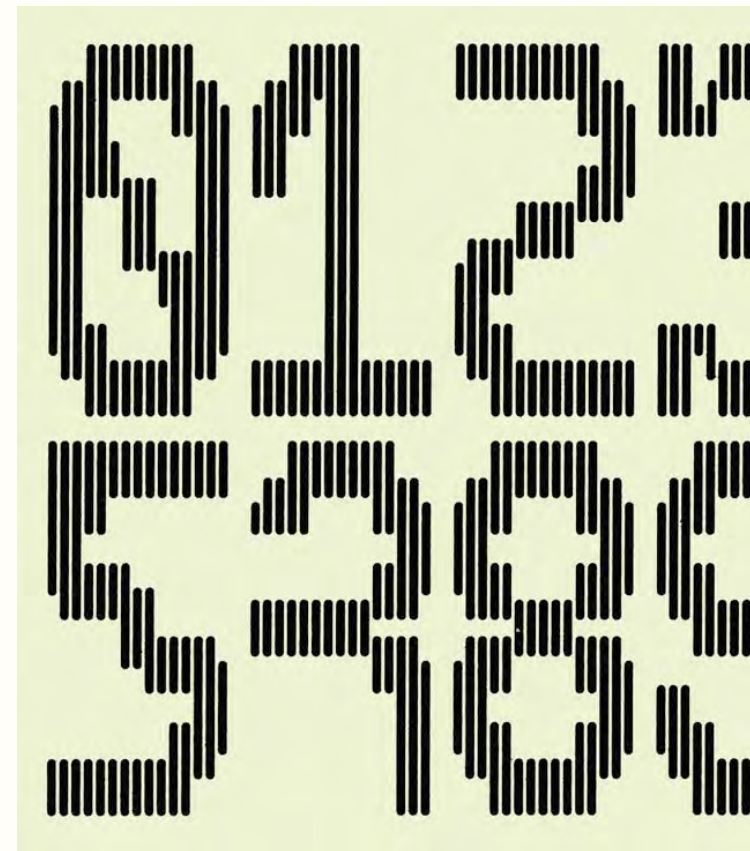
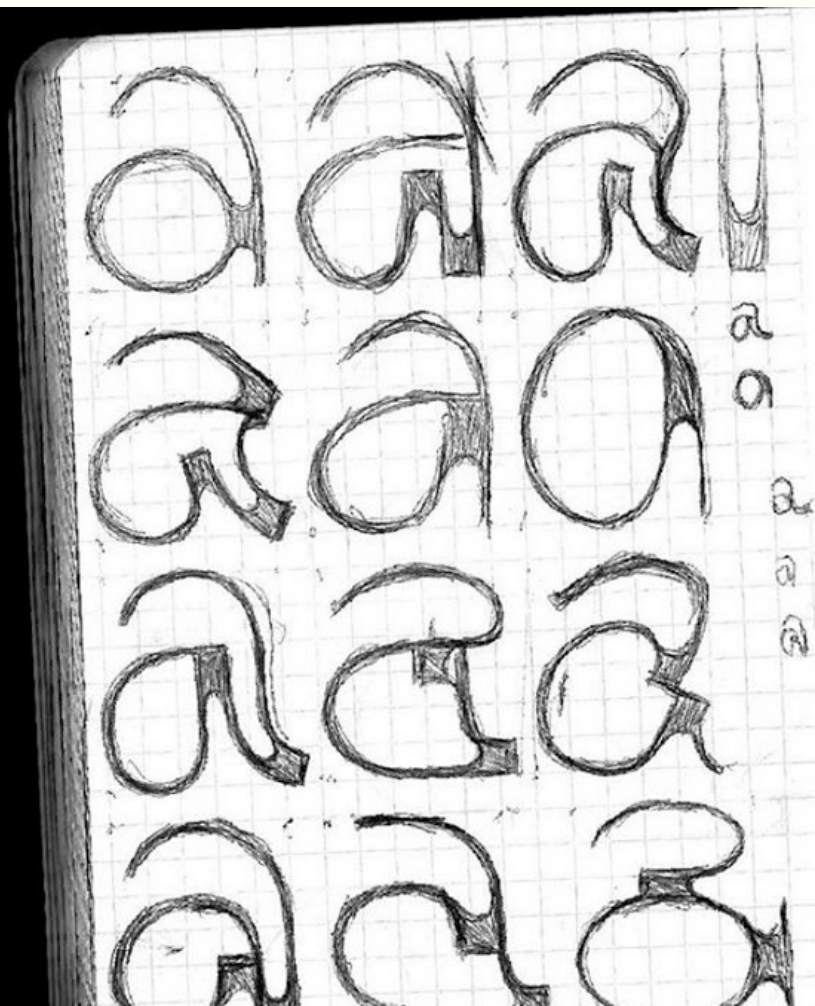


CT SCAN THROUGH
FEMALE CHEST



THERMOGRAM OF
CHEST REGION

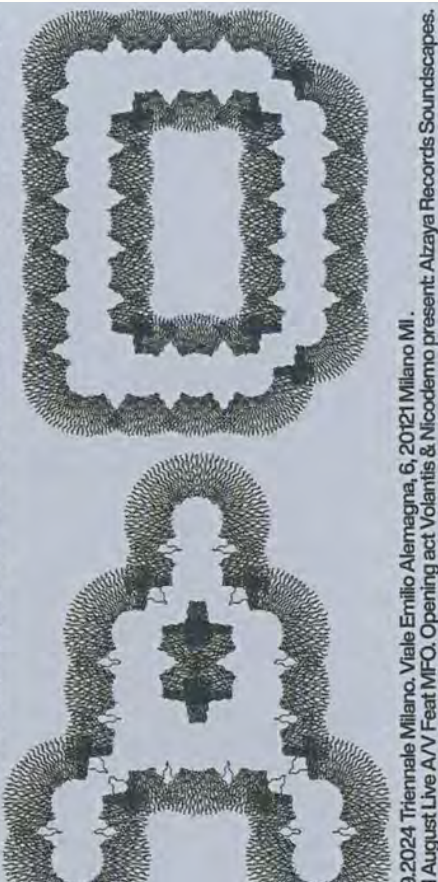




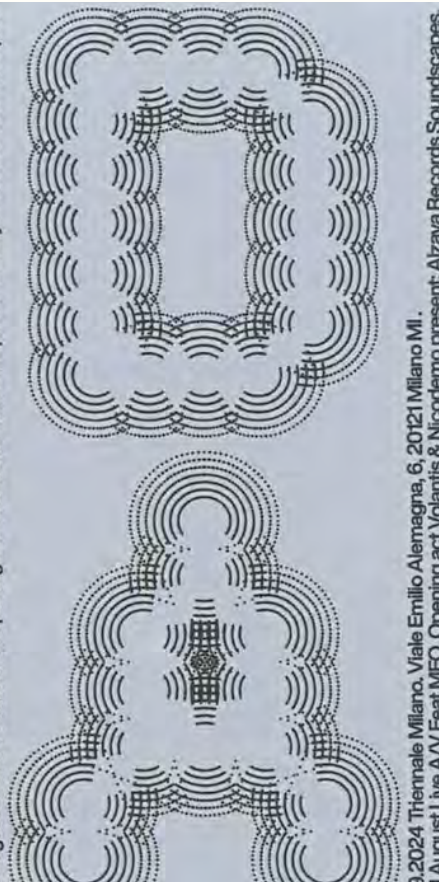
visual texture
in typography

GARCIA MARQUEZ
 WAS A COLOMBIAN
 NOVELIST, SHORT-
 STORY WRITER,
 SCREENWRITER &
 JOURNALIST. HE IS
 KNOWN FOR HIS

2.2.2024 Triennale Milano, Viale Emilio Alemagna, 6, 20121 Milano MI.
 August Live A/V Feat MFO. Opening act Volantis & Nicodemo present: Alzaya Records Soundscapes.



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 August Live A/V Feat MFO. Opening act Volantis & Nicodemo present: Alzaya Records Soundscapes.

CITY
 NASH
 VILLE
 NEW YORK

choice of colours



showcasing
colour palettes





picking
natural colours

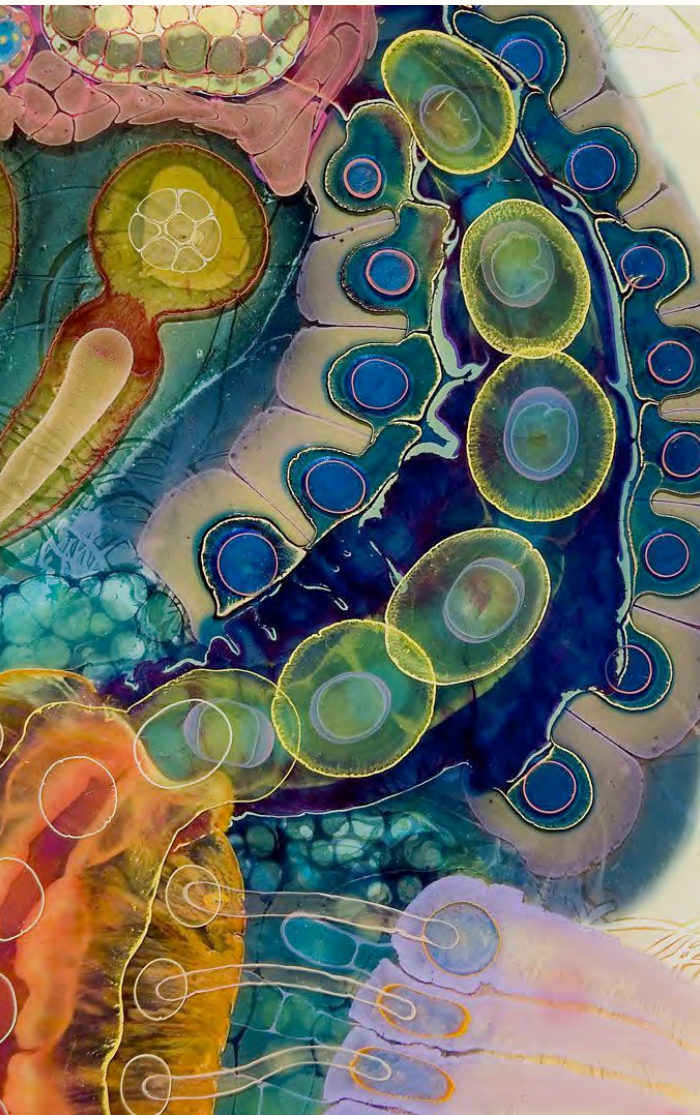
emphasizing and
showcasing **natural beauty**



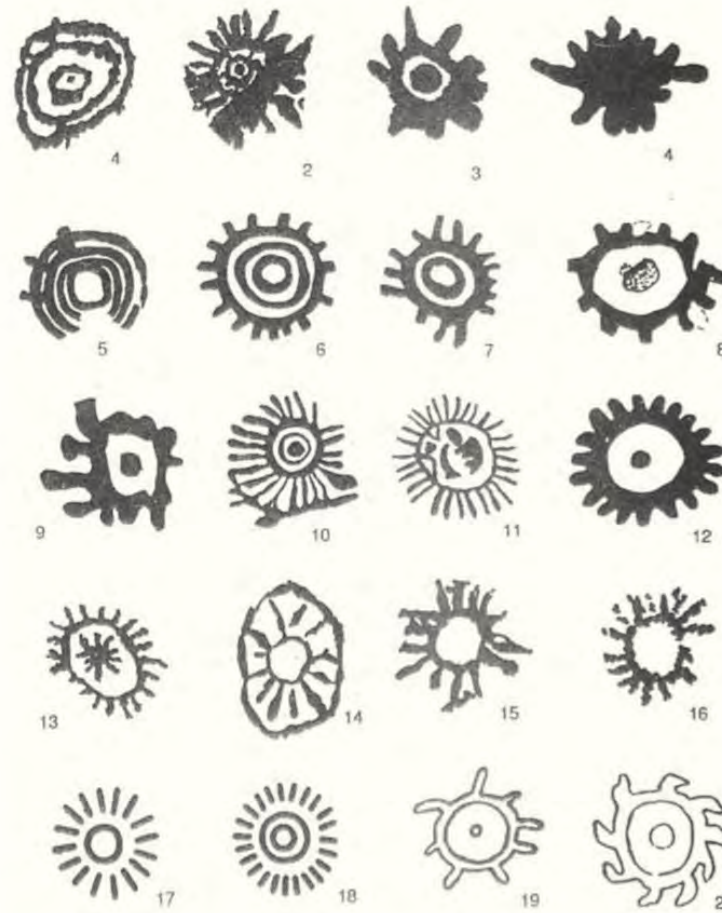
categorizing through
colour-coding

monochromatic/
duochromatic

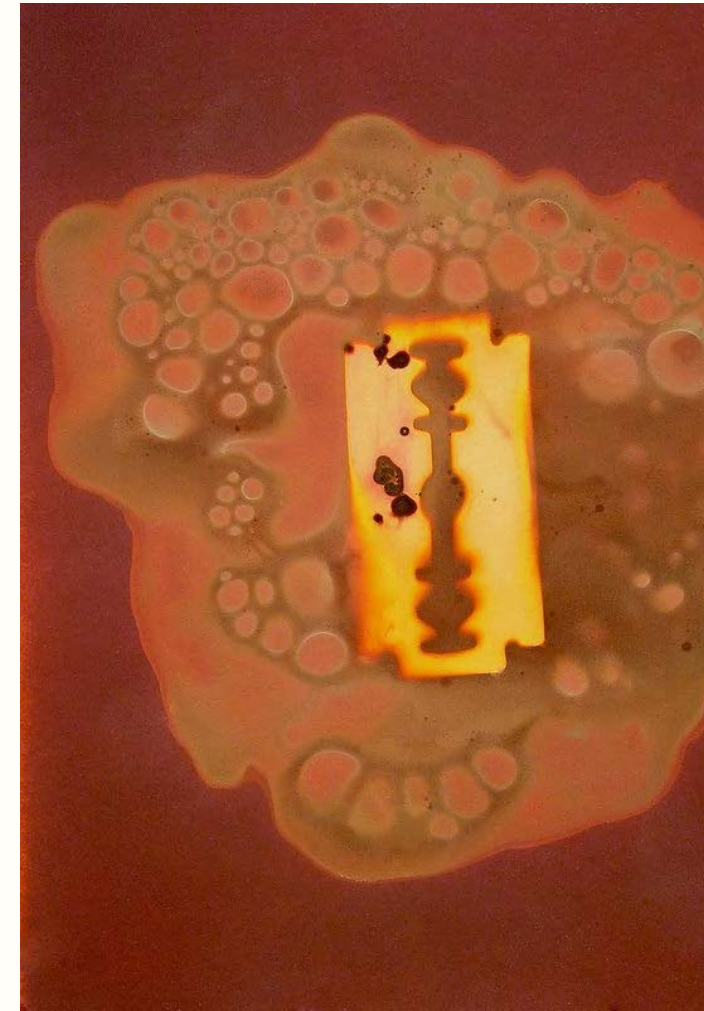
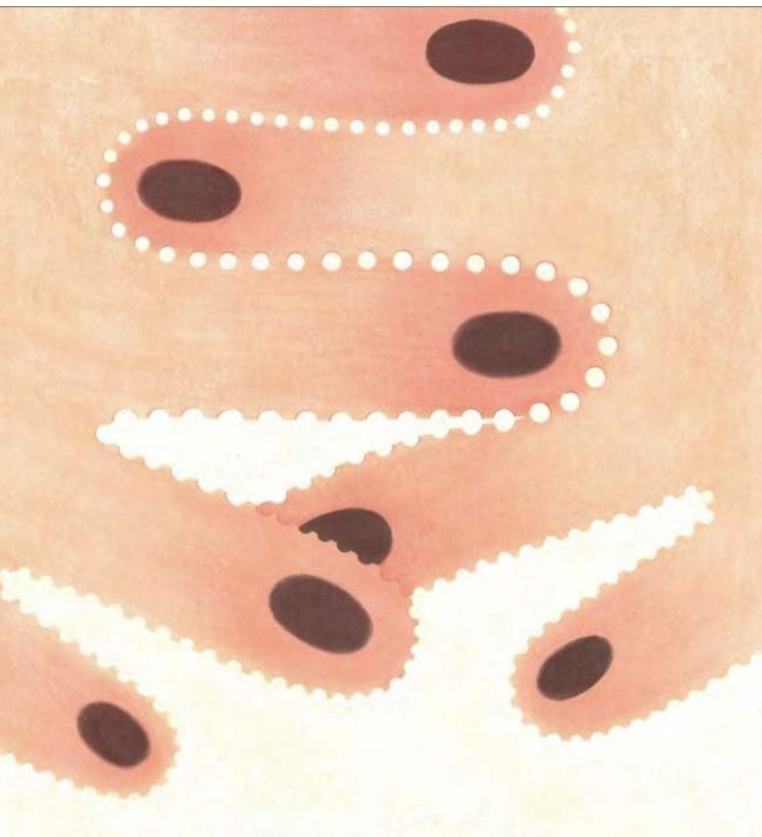
Rethinking human/insect relationships



recontextualizing **pain**
using artistic **abstract**
representation



concept of
pain vs **danger**





emphasizing differences
in **scale**

**reversing/changing
the position** between
humans and insects





allowing to
experience insects
from a **different
perspective**



elements of
interactivity

discovering at
a **personal pace**



interaction
through **folding**
and **unfolding**

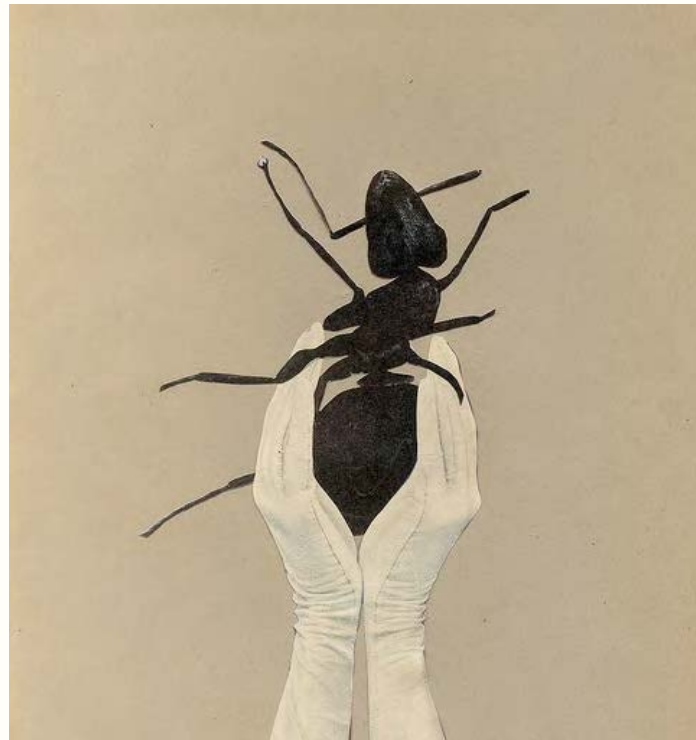


emphasizing
physical texture

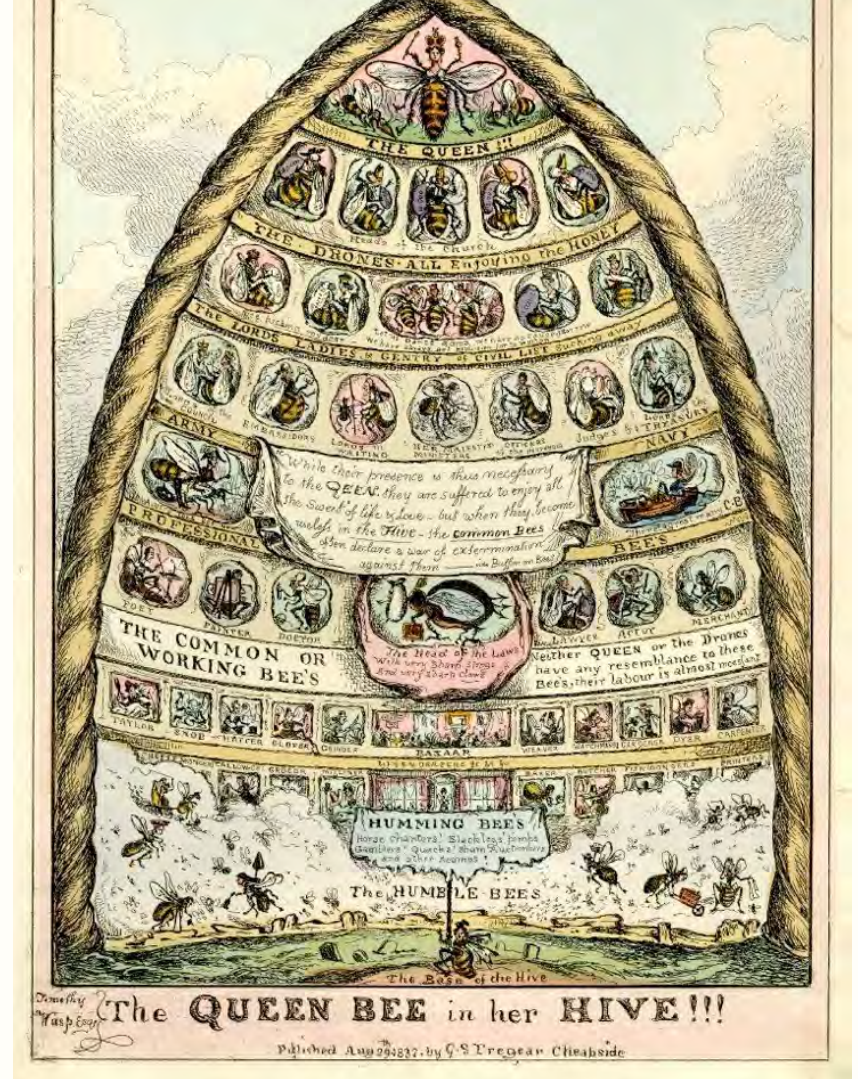
inviting touch



Recontextualizing insect behaviour

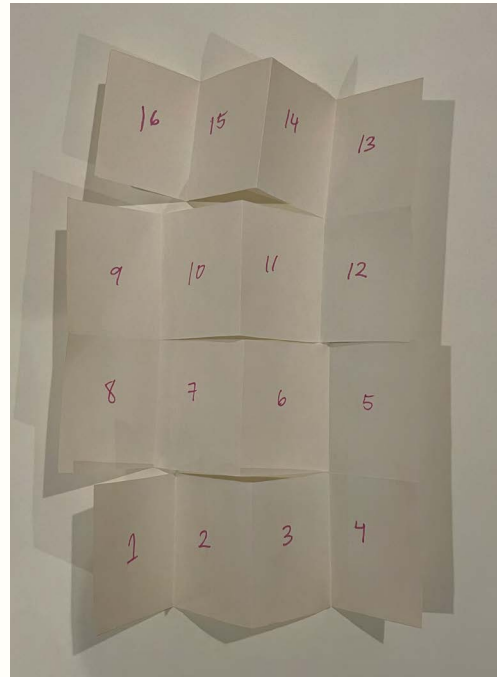
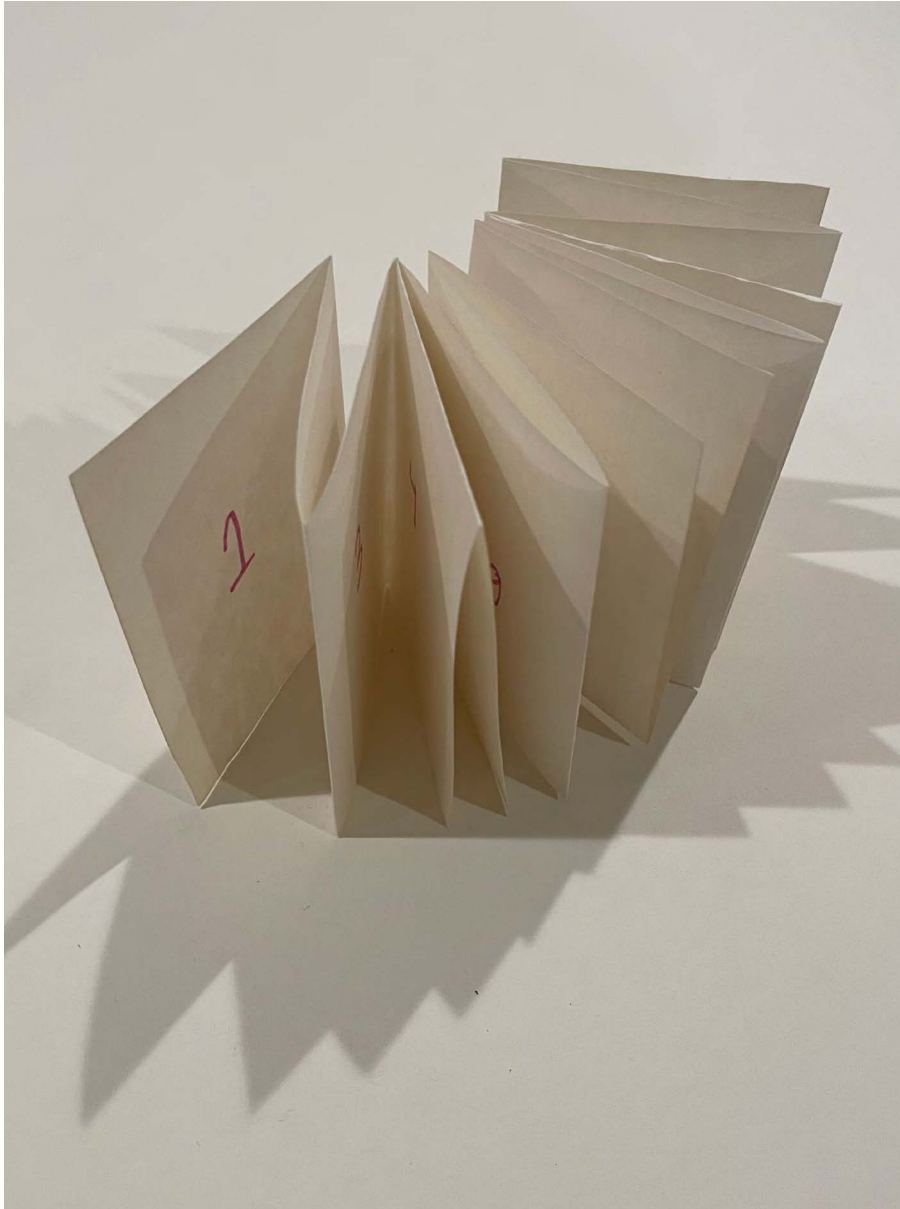


emphasizing
points of connection
between humans
and insects



explaining behaviours
and creating analogies

Folding explorations/1



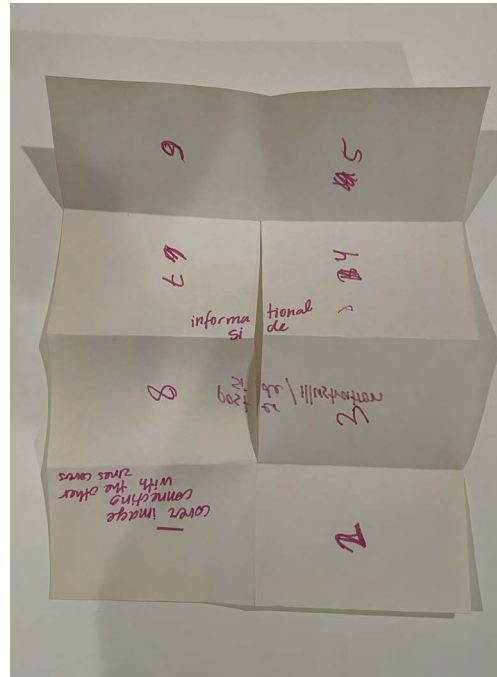
**Concertina
fold**

A bit too straightforward in the page format, not enough unfolding and exploration.

Too much cutting involved -> doesn't work as well in the folded out poster format.

Pages were also too small.

Folding explorations/2



Middle cut fold

Still bit too straightforward in the page format, not enough unfolding and exploration.

Middle cut not as prominent when unfolded, but still not ideal.

Page size is an improvement.

textures

exploration

cover
assembly
w/ the
17 others



No middle cut is perfect for the poster format.

Still room for improvement on the unfolding aspect, but I decided to go with this format for my initial version.

Pain sketches/1

Abstract illustrations drawn for each insect I plan on including in my series based on the description of their stings in the Schmidt pain index.

Bornean Carpenter Bee

“Electrifying, sharp, and piercing.
Next time hire an electrician.”



Pain sketches/2

Western Honey Bee

"Burning, corrosive, but you can handle it. A flaming match head lands on your arm and is quenched first with lye then sulfuric acid."



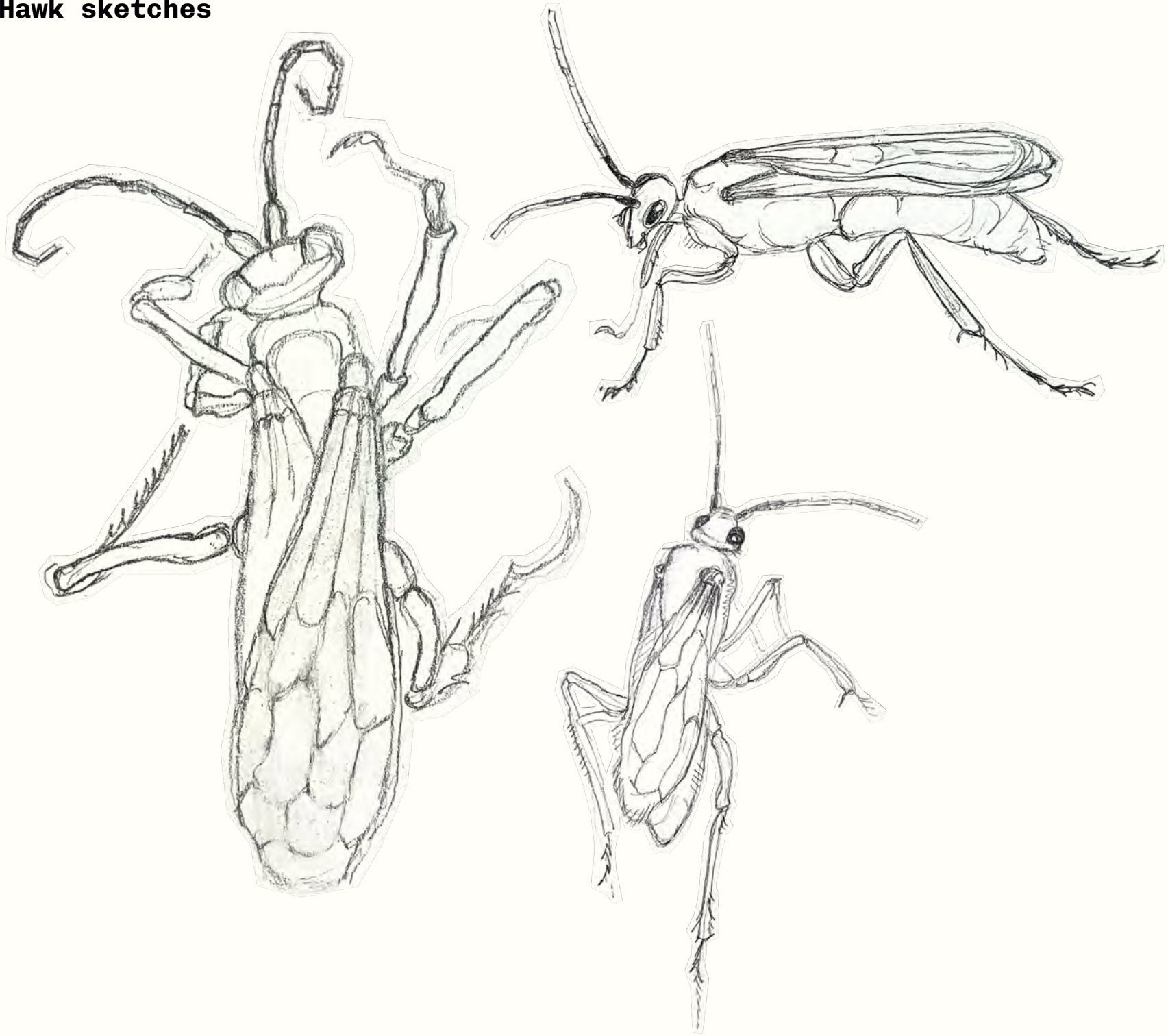
Pain sketches/3

Tarantula Hawk

"Blinding, fierce, shockingly electric.
A running hair dryer has just been
dropped into your bubble bath."



Tarantula Hawk sketches



Pain sketches/4

Red Paper wasp

“Caustic and burning, with a distinctly bitter aftertaste. Like spilling a beaker of hydrochloric acid on a paper cut.”



Pain sketches/5

Warrior wasp

"Torture. You are chained in
the flow of an active volcano.
Why did I start this list?"



Pain sketches/6

Velvet ant

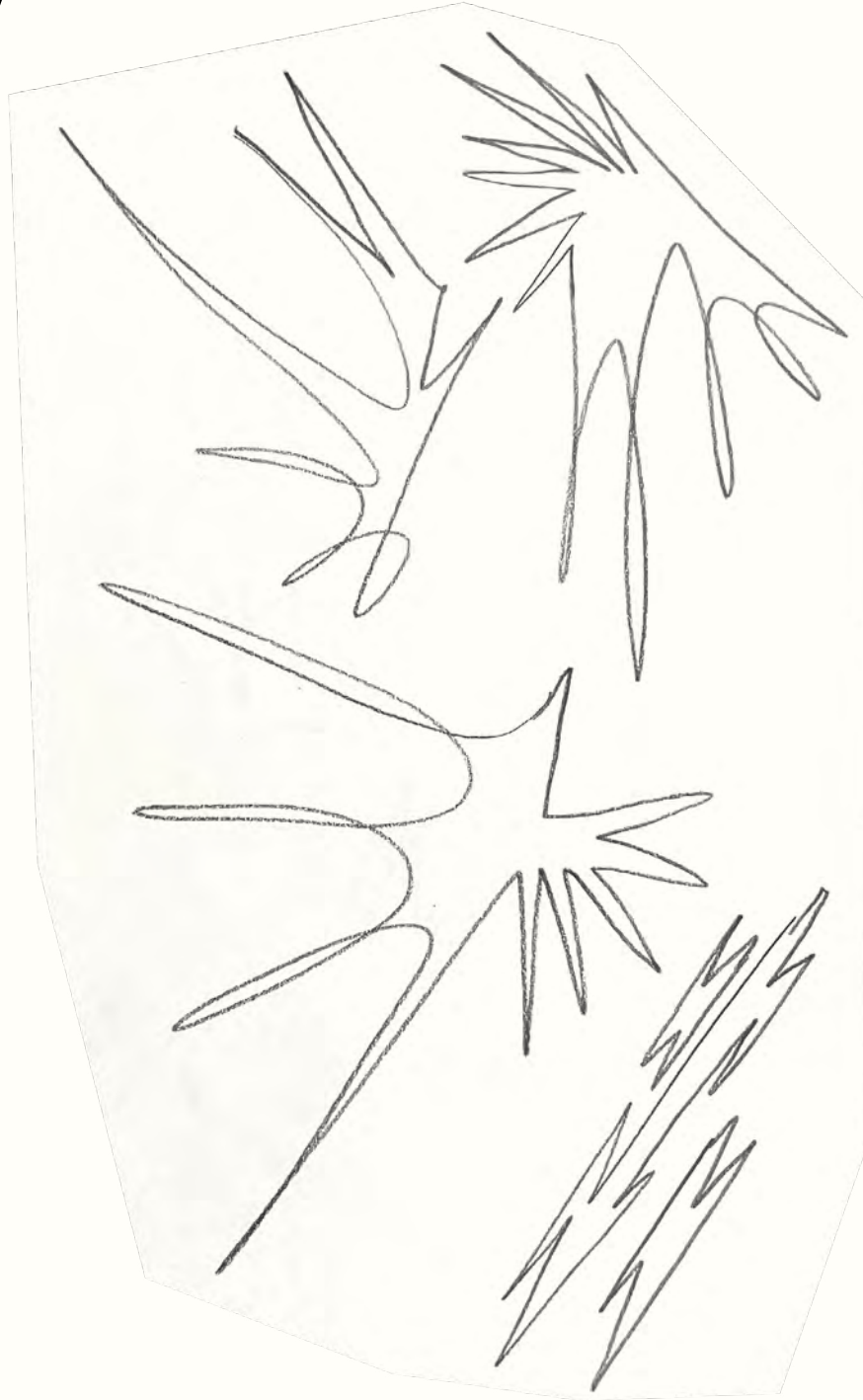
"Explosive and long lasting, you sound insane as you scream. Hot oil from a deep fryer spilling over your entire hand."



Pain sketches/7

Bullet ant

"Pure, intense brilliant pain. Like walking over flaming charcoal with a 3-inch nail embedded in your heel."



Pain sketches/8

Harvester ant

"Bold and unrelenting. Somebody is using a power drill to excavate your ingrown toenail."



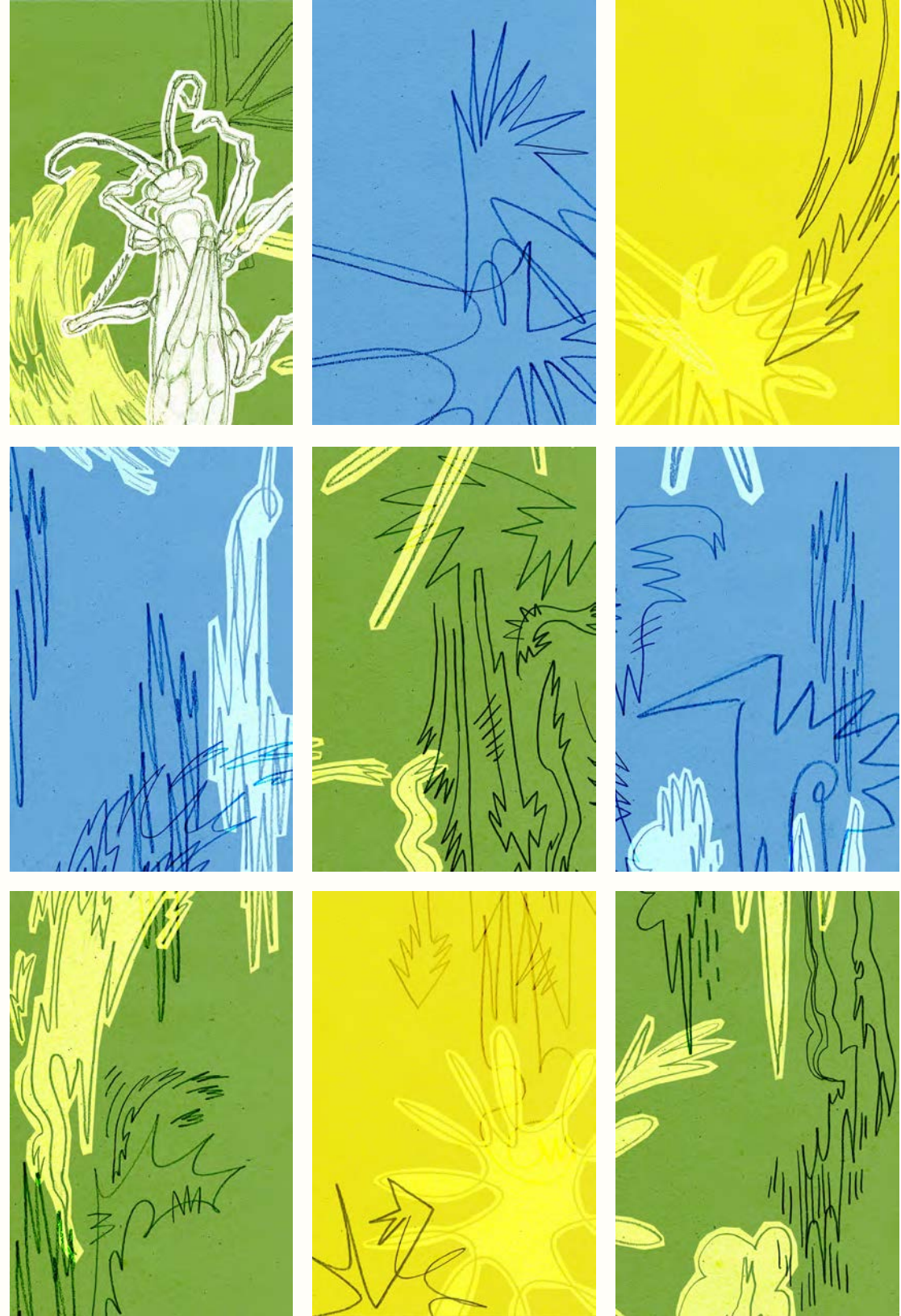
Connected covers layout concept

Tentative layout concept for the interconnecting covers of all the zines in the series. I changed my initial planned number of 12 zines to 9, because the 3.5 x 5.5 format of the individual zines made a combination of 12 look too long and awkward when assembled.

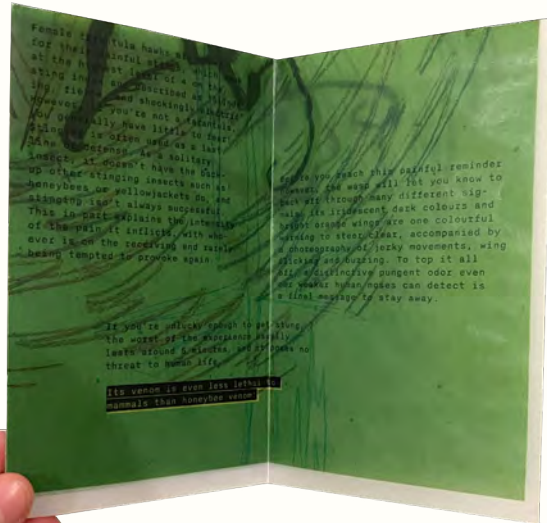
Missing are also some future sketches of the insects themselves, other than the tarantula hawk which was the subject for my initial plan zine.

From left to right, top to bottom:
Tarantula hawk, Bullet ant, Bornean carpenter bee, Maricopa harvester ant, Warrior wasp, Florida harvester ant, Velvet ant, Western honey bee, Red paper wasp.

Wasps are colour-coded green;
Bees are colour-coded yellow;
Ants are colour-coded blue.



Printing tests/1



Initial test print on 90gsm vellum.

The translucency was an interesting effect but made much of the text illegible. The thickness of the vellum also wasn't ideal for a zine format as it was hard to fold and it ripped in some of the creases.



Printing tests/2



281b shiny

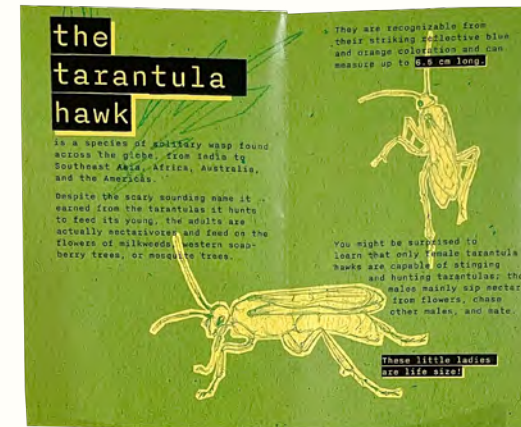


801b matte

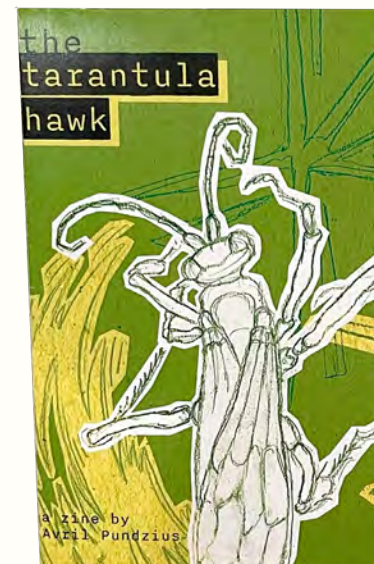
Test prints comparing 281b shiny vs 801b matte.

I decided on using the 281b shiny since the colours appeared more vibrant and the thinner paper lent itself better to folding and unfolding.

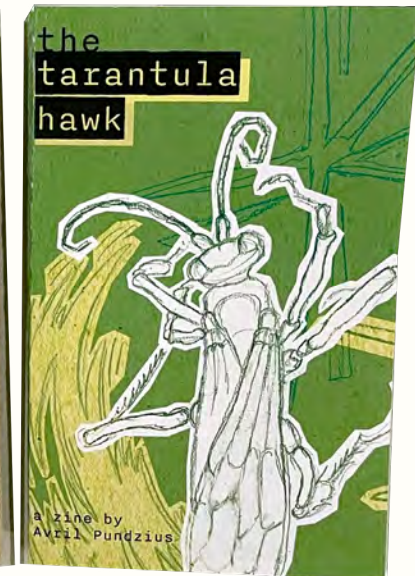
281b shiny



801b matte

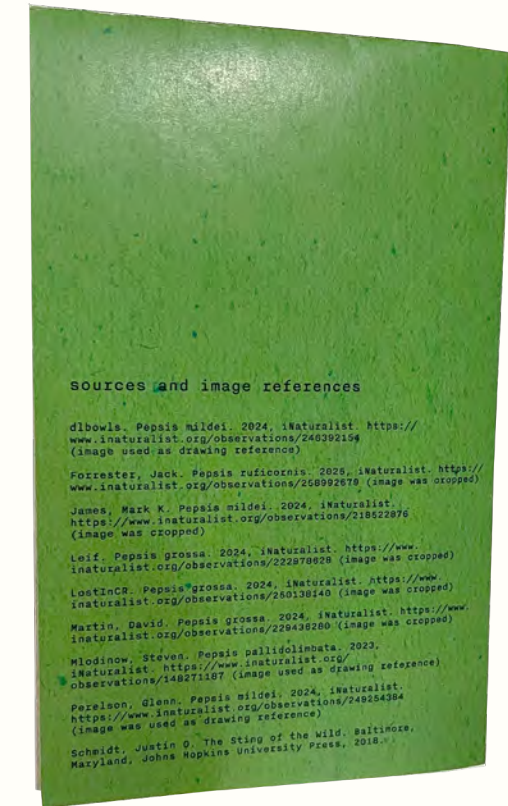
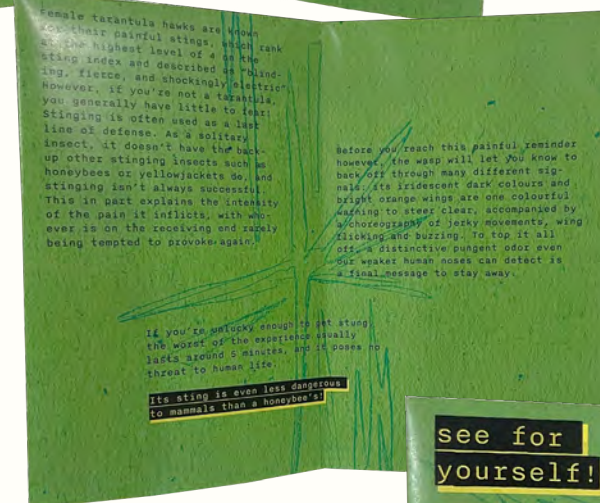
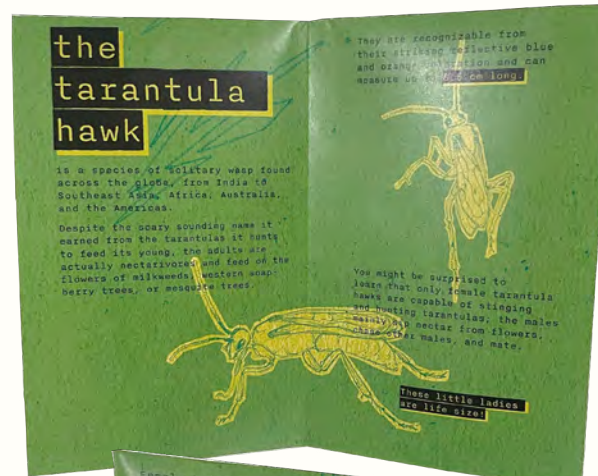


281b shiny

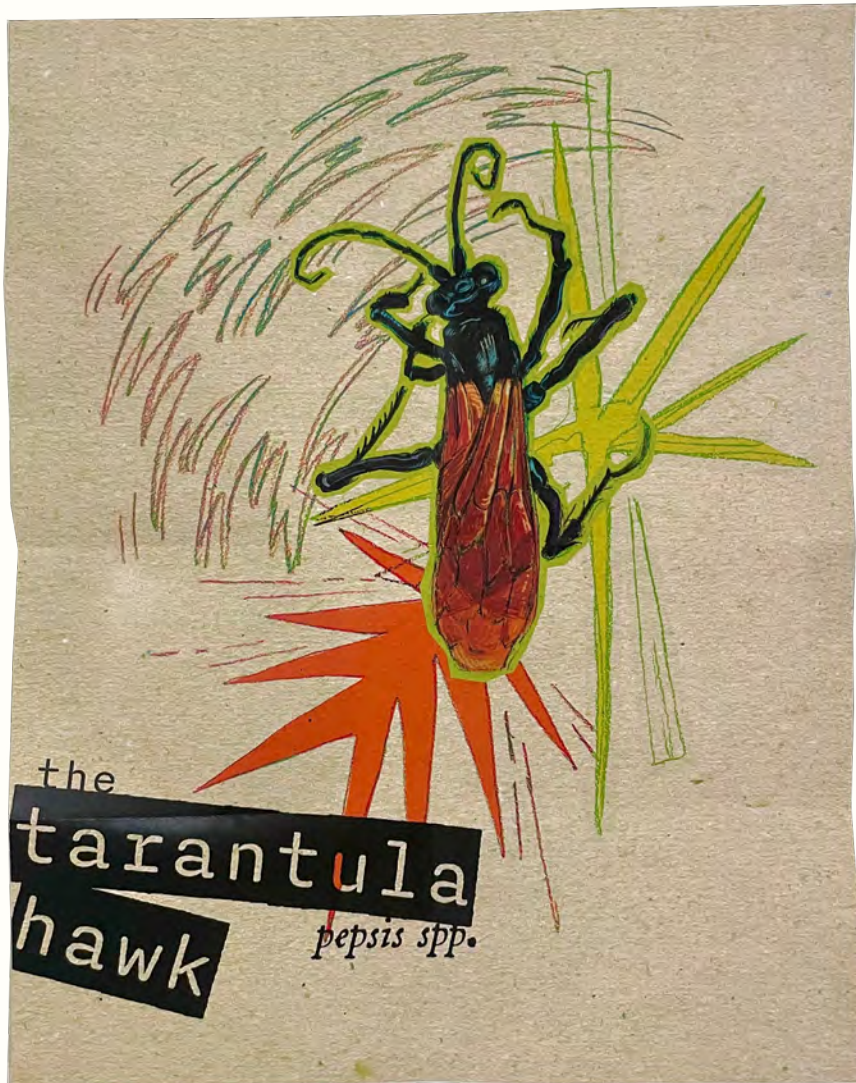


801b matte

Final documentation/1



Final documentation/2



Reflection

I think the biggest success I achieved is creating something I'm overall pleased with and having a concept for a project that I would be motivated to continue beyond the scope of this class. This seems like a simple answer, but it happens often that I run out of steam towards the end of a project and make something that I don't feel satisfied with. I could still improve on what I made, but I'm happy with where I finished for now. My biggest challenge with this project was finding a way to distill all my research into an outcome that still worked somewhat within the initial project I wanted to create. By reworking the ideas that I had and researching other projects with similar contexts, I was able to pick and choose which ideas made most sense with the goal I was trying to accomplish. Something I've learned about myself as a designer is to be able to trust my own ideas, even if they just need to be developed further. I think one strong point of my design practice is my sense of visuals and aesthetics which I think I developed from my background in illustration, but I would like to be able to loosen up and be more dynamic and expressive in my graphic design style. I think I'm more open to bigger self-directed projects, since I know it's within my capabilities, but it still feels daunting. In that regard, I would tell myself to plan solid deadlines and find ways to hold myself accountable to them.

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