



Deep Depths

Group 5 - 02

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Inspiration

The Ocean remains as one of the greatest inspirations to the fantasy genre of art. Its endless spread of creatures and mystery still fascinates many creators till this day. Our group was, too, inspired by its endless creative potential and the mystifying works of other artists that have brought out the mysterious, alluring creative potential of the deep ocean.

Our group seeks to create an immersive fantasy artwork that brings out the beauty of the ocean's creatures, all whilst giving the pure fantasy of mystical sea creatures a scientific and grounded twist.

Conceptualisation (Artist inspirations)

Subnautica

Amongst our inspirations, Subnautica stood out the most. Subnautica is an open-world survival game which focuses mainly on creature and environment design. Its beautiful ingame creatures, are masterfully blended fantasy with science, creating deep, rich lore for many of its creatures, allowing its creatures to feel like a work of art, yet staying semi-realistic. Whilst brainstorming for our theme, we looked for several artist influences. Their unique style of creature design [Fig. 1.1 & 1.2] and how they document them [Fig 1.3] were the two main parts that captured our attention.

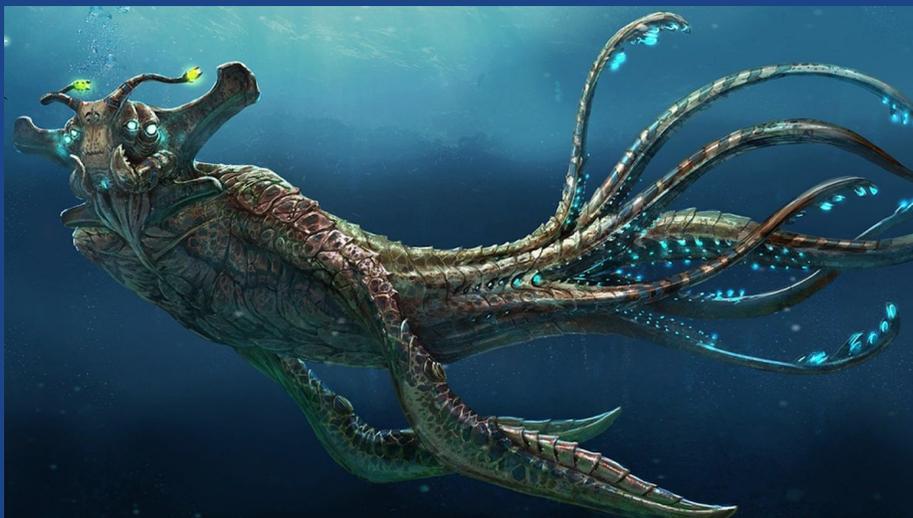


Fig 1.1

Sea Emperor,
Amalgamation of
Squids' tentacles,
Human-Like Torso
Sea Turtle Flippers
and Beetle-Like Head

creatures. Moreover, the creatures were documented in a very interesting manner, which also played a part in affecting our work.

ARK: Survival Evolved

Our second artist influence is ARK: Survival Evolved, which is another survival game. The part of this game that influenced us was also the adventure, primitive style of documentation of discovered creatures, whilst featuring the in-depth descriptions.



Conclusion

In general, we learnt a lot from our artist influences about layout and how to plan out documentation as well as power of good creature design.

Medium experimentation

We attempted drafts of documented creatures done in pencil, watercolor and digital art, trying to recreate ARK Survival Evolved, except with our own creatures.

In conclusion, during the Ideation process, we decided on our theme through our artist influences. After this, we proceeded to experiment with several mediums in order to decide on what our final work will be.

Fig. 1.12

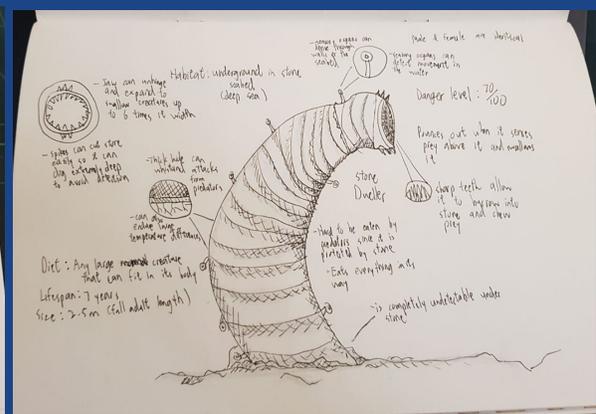
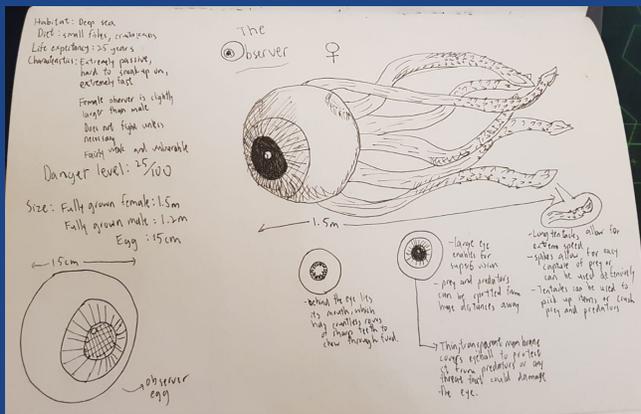
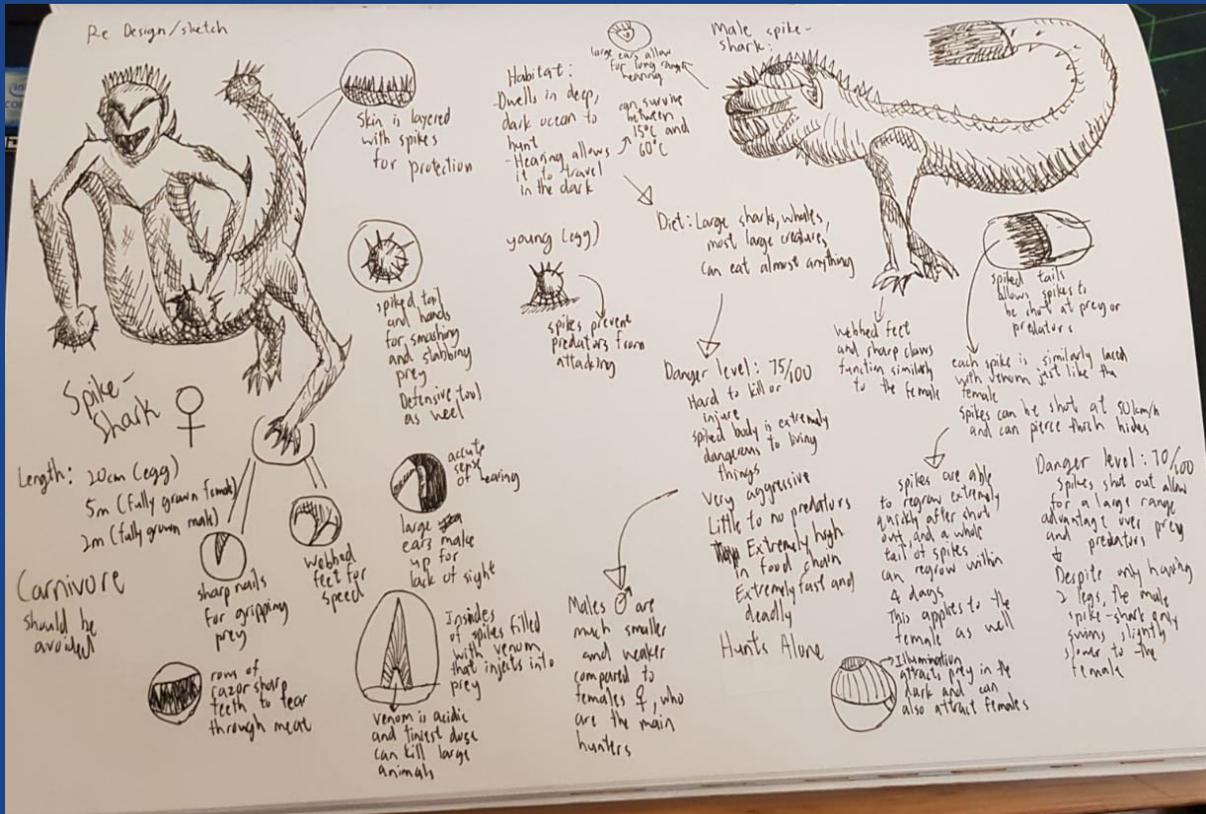


Watercolor painting, that was scanned and reprinted on transparent film, with lightbox as background

Learning about sketches and layout

In the beginning, we wanted to try to recreate the unique look from ARK: Survival Evolved's journal, where we made sketches with detailed information. However, we decided that it was too plain and could not convey our idea properly.

Here are some of our beginning ideas and sketches:



Final Medium:

Instead, we considered a few to illustrate our theme of deep depths. We were trying to decide between watercolour and digital art when we stumble upon the use of lightboxes and transparencies to convey our idea.



We felt that the look that the transparency on lightbox gave was able to create the look of a lab, which we thought we could use in our final artwork.

In our final installation, we went with transparency on lightbox medium, which we thought was most suitable as it added some colour and life to our installation

Installation (Conceptualisation)

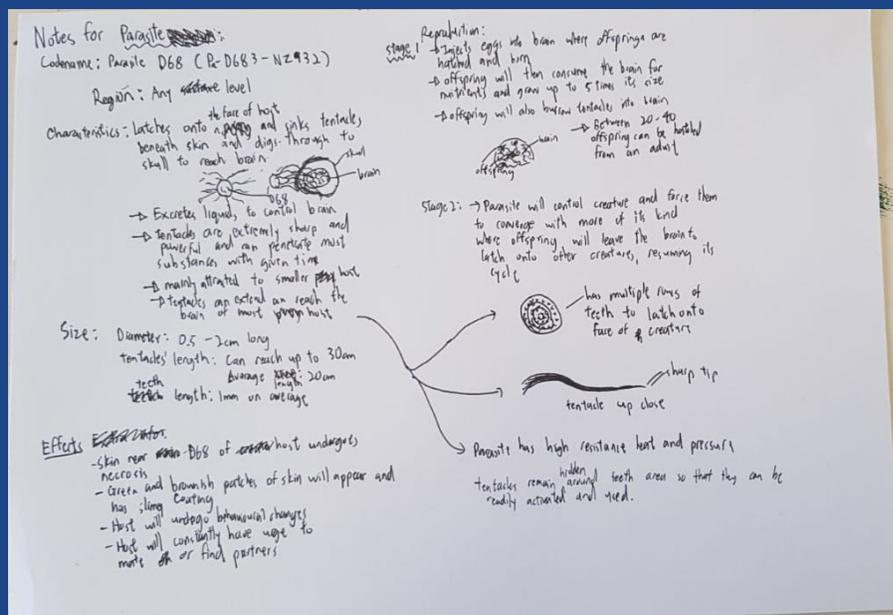
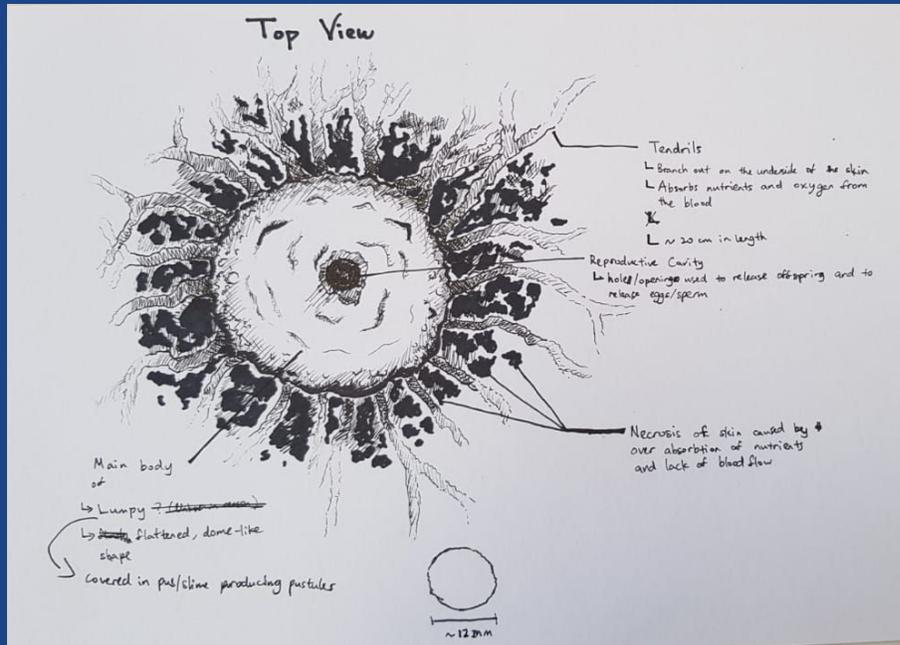
Scenario:

We decided to create a scenario for our installation as follows. We follow a man who is a scientist and is currently doing research on new creatures that he found in the ocean. He has done extensive research as a scientist and has accumulated samples of different creatures in test tubes and bottles. Sketches and drawings are scattered on his table where he does write-ups and analysis' for the creatures.

Sketches:

In order to add atmosphere as well as more information on each creature, we drew and added sketches to the work table, where viewers can flip through them and learn more about specifics and cool facts and characteristics of each. The sketches are highly detailed with consistent and well thought out lore and information.

Here are some of the sketches we made:



Notes: "Diamond Head"
Classified
Codename: shoaling fish (S) (Sh-C338-K320X)

Background: Act as guards to protect Queen from any danger and has 4 eyes

Characteristics: When danger is spotted, center will flash colours as commands to get fish to defend accordingly

Characteristics: When not in danger, shield remains on the fish's sides and acts as armour and eyes can observe sides and front side view.

Size: up to 25cm in length
 Shield: up to 20cm in length on each side, hinged when assembled
 Lifespan: 5 years
 Diet: sea seaweed, other vegetation
 Habitat: shallow water
 Normally very passive

When in danger, its shields will open and slide to the front, forming a shield and eyes on shield would replace the main eyes to track predator's movement

Front view with shield: eye camouflage with pattern on shield so predator cannot easily target it
 pattern on fish to scare away predators

fish will gather with other fish to form a formation:
 Diamond shape to form formation
 tight spot so predator cannot slip past

Vertical and horizontal fins that are collapsible
 vertical fin activated
 horizontal fin activated
 allows fish to rotate with pectoral fins and assists side fins collapse according to which tail is needed.

tail is quite large to carry the weight of the whole fish and shield

2 eyes on shields, one on each segment of shield
 - 2 eyes on main

Side view (shield activated)
 when shield is activated, side fins are retracted.
 top, bottom side fins are able to paddle like tails to move the entire fish in any direction with ease so it can face the threat with its shield without deactivating shield or turning

extremely solid material that cannot be pierced by teeth or ice attacks
 shield cannot open back if damaged!

Diamond Head Write-Up

Experiments:

Since the protagonist is a scientist, he experiments and collects different samples from the creatures. We did this with test tubes and vials where we filled them up, as well as Petri-dishes illustrating the growth of bacteria as seen below:



The chemicals are made with household materials such as soap and oil.

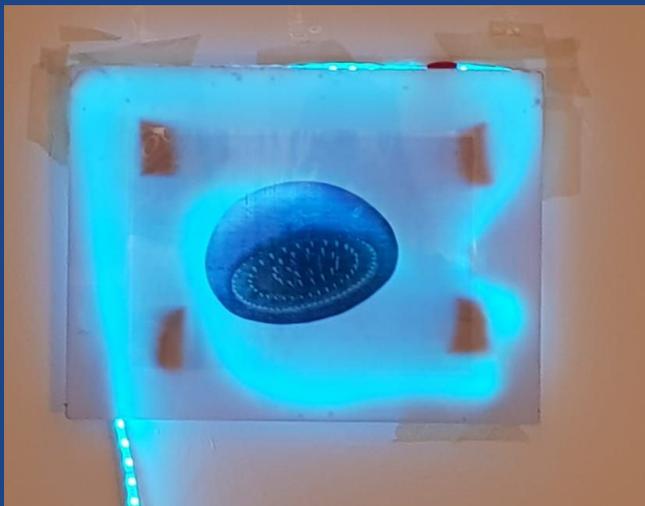


Lightbox design:

In order to display our creatures in an appealing way that blends well together with the installation, we opted for the creatures to be printed out on a transparency and placed against a lightbox where it is displayed. However, because of a lack of suitable lightboxes, we had to make our own.

In total, our DIY lightbox went through 3 editions:

This is our first iteration: Total disaster



Our first iteration of our lightbox suffered from 2 major problems:

1. Overuse of tape
 - a. Amateurish/unprofessional look
 - b. Not secure enough
2. Bad lighting
 - a. Dark spots appear on the lightbox

As you can see, it was very unappealing to the eye and looked nothing short of amateur.

This is the second prototype of the lightbox that was not shown.



Unlike the first iteration, there were three diffuser plates being used in the lightbox, making it much bigger. Thus, we were unable to mount it on the wall with tape.



Yet, it still suffered the issue of dark spots, which were caused by the stacks of styrofoam that were used to hold up the diffusion plates, lastly we changed to the final rendition of our lightbox.

This is the final design we opted for which was shown during Final evaluation.



As you can see, most of the previous problems are solved. Areas improved:

1. Planned, measured and cut styrofoam pieces so that all the pieces would be able to form a box when assembled

2. Long styrofoam strips were used to prop up the plates sufficiently and to cover up the sides
3. Using a hot glue gun, attached the entire structure together (to ensure stability)
4. Using the black electrical tape to cover the sides and further refine the look.

With these changes, the box ended up being extremely durable and looked fantastic, making our four-week long process of meticulously crafting the box all worth it.



In order to support the weight of the box on the wall, we used velcro strips stuck onto the back of the lightbox to mount it on the wall, carefully checking if it was centred and aligning it straight with a spirit level. The velcro strips were very successful as they were very strong and could easily hold the weight of the entire box and could be removed easily when needed as well.

Extras:

To complete the installation, we added extra props such as a laptop, pen holder, crushed paper, tape, notepads and files for the work station while we added safety goggles and a lab coat for the scientist.

Design and Layout:

For the layout of the installation, we changed the position of the two tables multiple times.

The first one had the two tables linked together.



This was presented during the Mid -Term evaluation.

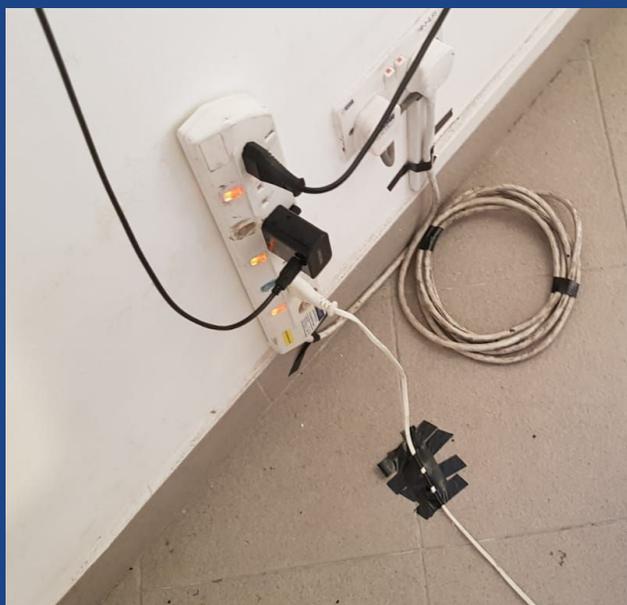
Unfortunately, we soon felt that the table was blocking the entrance and did not seem inviting to the audience to sit. Thus, we moved the table to the other side to open up the area.



However, after some feedback from the judges that the set-up was not convincing it seemed weird that the table with the chemistry experiments being conducted was connected to the main work table, we decided to separate them and push the table with all the experiments closer to the wall.



We arranged the wires so that it would run along the floor and taped it down so that it would not be a tripping hazard to those who wanted to enter.



Creature design:

In total, for our project, we made 3 creatures, each with their own unique characteristics and are completely original, with highly detailed information for each of them. These creatures were carefully chosen out of many that we created and thought of, and further developed and illustrated. This makes our creatures seem more grounded and realistic.

This is the first creature that we created and illustrated.



Name: Parasite D68 (Pa-D683-NZ932)

Size: Diameter: 0.5-2cm long

Tentacle length: Reach up to 30cm (average length: 20cm)

Average teeth length: 1mm

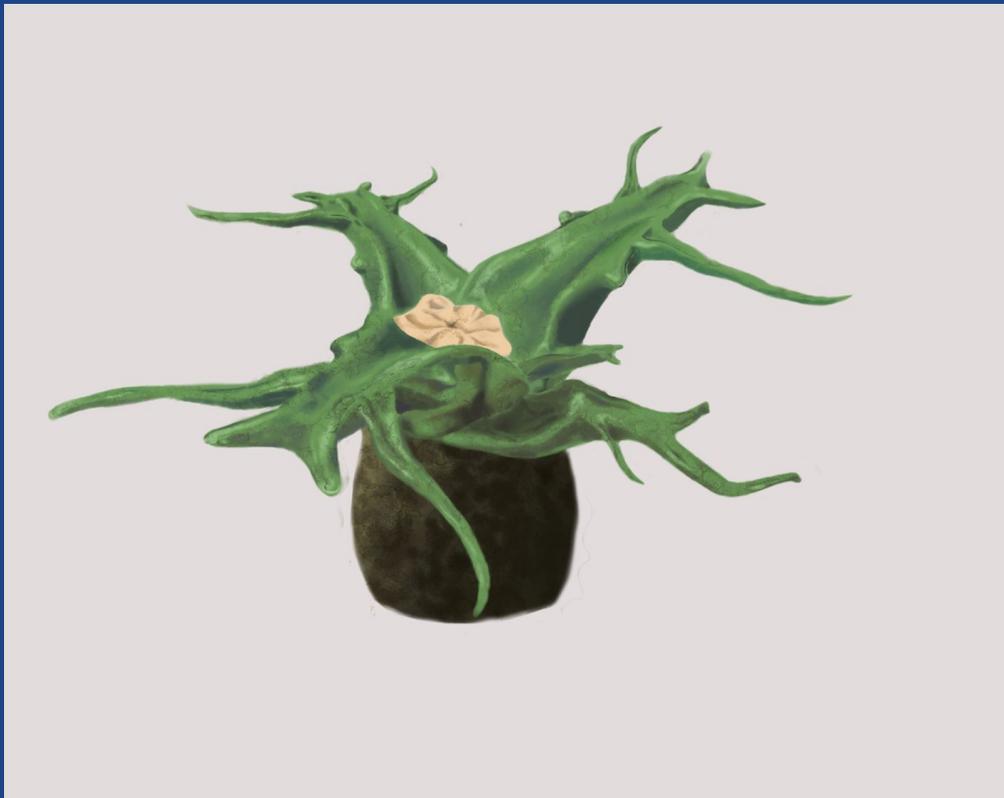
Average lifespan: 6 months

Reproduction and life-cycle: Latches onto smaller creatures with sharp teeth and digs tentacles through the skin toward the head, and continues through the skull to access

the brain, where chemicals are injected into the brain to cause the creature to swim next to similar species of its kind. Offspring (around 20-40) are also injected through tentacles onto brain where it latches on and consumes the brain as nutrients. As they grow into adulthood, they leave the brain and latch onto closeby creatures to resume the life-cycle. The skin near the entry point of tentacles also start to undergo Necrosis and decompose due to over absorption of nutrients and lack of blood flow.

This is our final iteration of a parasite creature that we created. We went through much thought process and design changes. One of the major changes is for the parasite to conceal its tentacles inside its body around the teeth area, and they only come out when needed, when at first we wanted them to be on the outside. This is to allow the parasite to be more practical as it would be easier for the tentacles to enter the body near the teeth area, where it is already latched on. More things we added to the creature that was not in our original ideation include the sharp row of teeth for the parasite to latch on and the mysterious purple colour of the body of the parasite.

This is our second creature.



Flora name: Exploding plant "Sap Field"

Habitat: Commonly found in large sand plateaus, rich in minerals

"Sap field" is a bulbous shaped, fleshy plant that mainly produces food through photosynthesis and through no other method. This plant has a very unique defence mechanism, which it uses the surrounding minerals in the ground to synthesize compounds that react vigorously with water, samples of compounds include acetic anhydride amongst other explosive or rapidly decomposing compounds. The plant funnels the compounds that it creates inside its bulbous stem into its roots. The roots' insides are coated with a substance that naturally coats these compounds, preventing them from immediately reacting with water the moment the compound leaves its tubular roots. The reactive compounds are released as bubbles, which can be popped if any animals touch it, thus protecting the plant. This allows the plant to grow in large "forests", which can create a large area of "minefields" eliminating nearly all potential threats.

This is our third and final creature.

Name: Diamond Head



Size: Up to 25cm in length

Shield size: Up to 20cm on each side (40 when assembled)

Lifespan: 5 year

Mechanics: Shields on both sides of fish will assemble by sliding past its head, covering its entire head when the queen is under attack. Fish will form a tessellation with the rest of the fish (shield is in a diamond shape) to form a large shield wall to protect the queen from predators. There are eyes on each side of the shield that replaces the main eyes in order to allow the fish to see, that also camouflage with the pattern of the fish so it cannot be targeted by predators. When the shield is activated: extra fins on the top, bottom and both sides of the fish will be revealed as shield moves away. Fins are used as tails to propel the fish in any direction necessary to face the threat head-on by turning the shield toward the threat. The shield is extremely durable and when not active, acts as armour for the fish. The main body is quite weak in terms of durability but packs a lot of swimming power. These shield fishes are known as the guard fishes to protect the queen and will risk their lives in order to protect her. Queen has no defensive capability but is able to communicate with the guard fish by changing its colour to show signals.

Scrapped ideas:

These are some ideas that we did not use for our creature design.

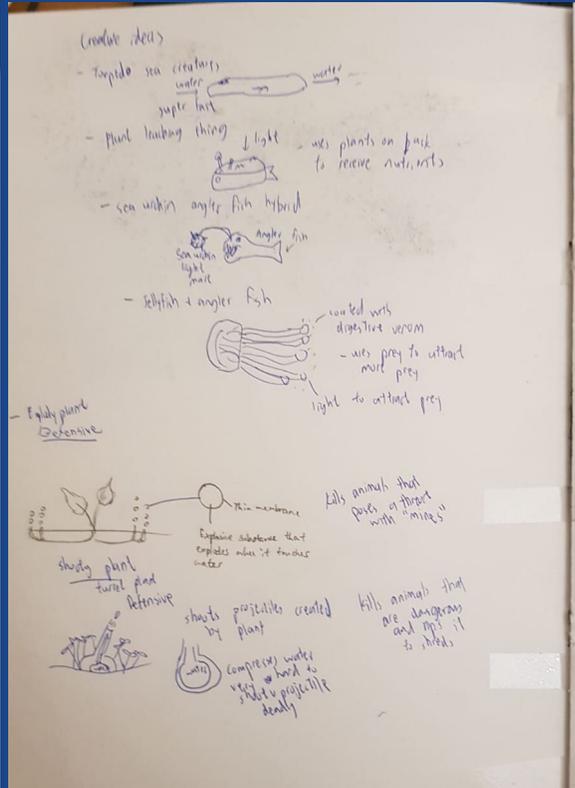
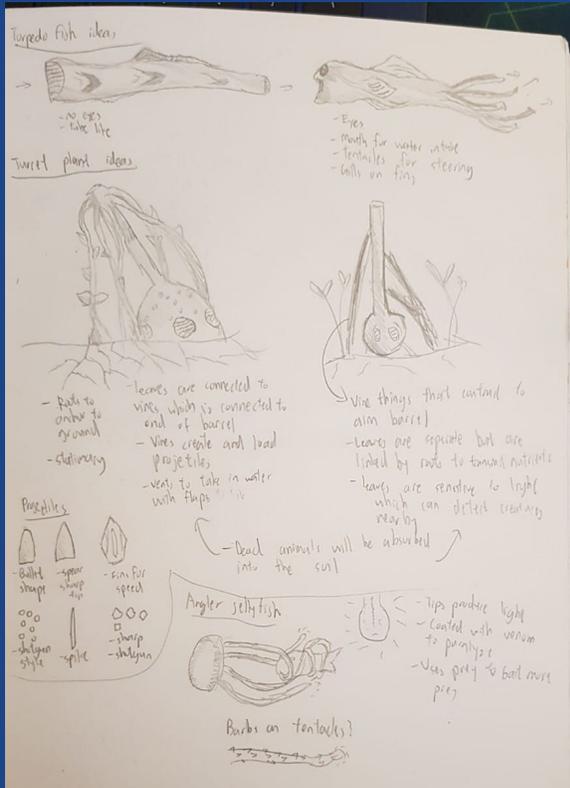


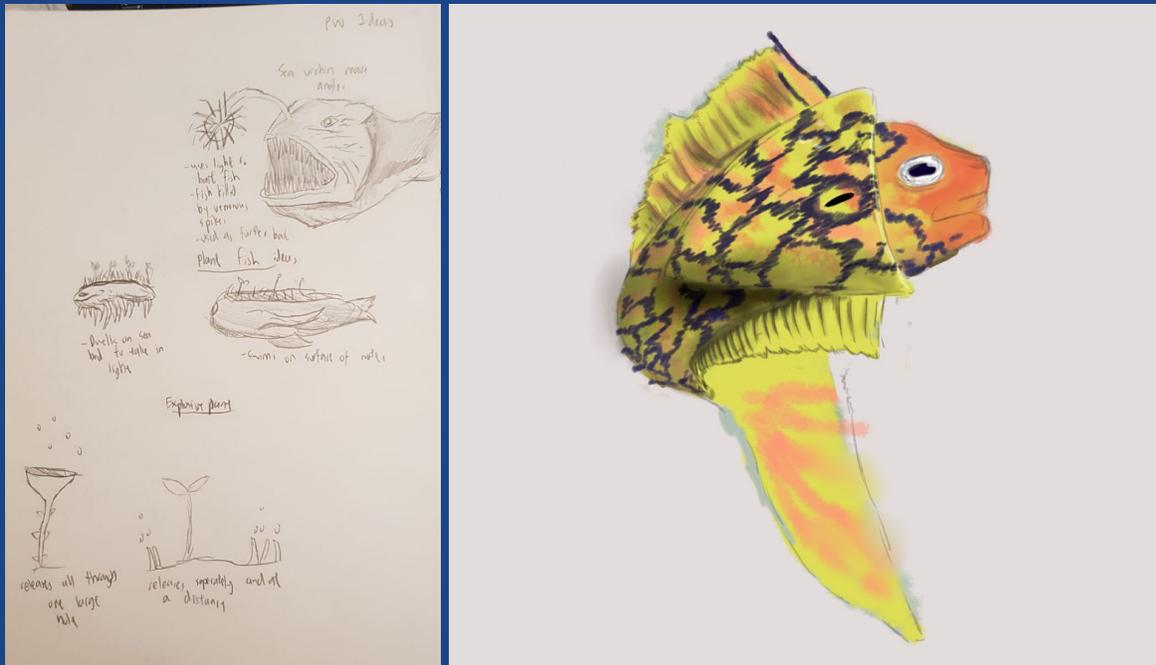
Creature that can travel at high speeds was scrapped as it was too hard to conceptualise into a proper painting.

Non-developed ideas:

Here are some ideas that were rejected:

1. Plant that uses plants on back to absorb nutrients
2. Angler fish that can use its light as a mace to hunt prey
3. Plant that can shoot projectiles at threats with deadly power
4. Shark covered in deadly spikes





This is one of the rejected illustrations of DiamondHead.

Reflections

Yu Ke Mi (L): Throughout this entire experience, I learnt a lot about time management as this entire project was very huge and time-consuming. I was also exposed to a whole new medium and gained new experience with creating installations. This project was extremely meaningful and fruitful.

Sherlock: This project has forced me to learn about skills and techniques in digital, watercolour amongst other forms of painting, as well as how to create a workflow that combines them all together. I have also learnt about the difficulties of creating an installation artwork and the huge amount of thought that goes into a single artwork.

Ansel Lee: After embarking on this project for over 6 months, I have learnt that communication and trust are key in increasing chemistry between members. Furthermore, we all tried out several entirely new mediums for all of us, and I realised that being able to manage one's time well can increase our learning abilities.

APA Citations

ARK: Survival Evolved - Dino Dossier: Triceratops - Tips for Taming and Breeding. (2019, February 01). Retrieved August 6, 2019, from <https://survivethis.news/en/ark-survival-evolved-dino-dossier-triceratops-taming/>

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