Celebrating Townsville

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Hervey’s Range [detail] by James Brown 1992, JCU Art Collection
ARTIST: LUCY T. SMITH
ARTWORK: The Melaleuca Woodlands

ARTIST STATEMENT

Smith has stated, “this piece represents the woodlands that I was illustrating for my Honours year BVA project when I was a student at JCU. I loved the way the woodlands formed horizontal stripes of colour, which were accentuated if you viewed them from the window of a travelling car, when they went blurry. Those colourful ‘stripes’ also neatly divided the woodlands into the three areas I would investigate – trees and epiphytes, shrubs and ground plants. The blackened trunks of the trees show that periodical fires occur here and are part of the natural life of the woodlands.

To do this whole project I volunteered as a field assistant to a JCU botanist/ecologist who was doing fire studies on these woodlands. In this way I was able to travel with him to sites between Townsville and Ingham, and even to Hinchinbrook Island. The painting was intended to introduce the viewer to this unique habitat and hopefully entice them in to look closer at it.”

QUESTION/DISCUSS

The illustrating of plants and animals has had a long and honoured history. If you think about the visual arts in general, what industries would make use of the work of nature or natural history illustrators like Lucy Smith?
ARTIST: LUCY T. SMITH
ARTWORK: Apollo Jewel Butterfly

Smith has stated, “within the Melaleuca woodlands there are some amazing plant and animal interactions. This was a page I invented to explain the relationship between a butterfly, some ants, and two plants. All depend on each other – the Melaleuca viridiflora tree is host to the epiphytic Myrmecodia becarrii, whose common name is 'ant plant'. The ants live inside this plant, and they look after the larvae of the Apollo jewel butterfly, keeping it safe from predators until it reaches maturity, transforms, and flies away. In return the ants get a special treat from the larvae – a sweet food which it produces for them as a treat. Everybody is happy.”

ARTIST STATEMENT

Lucy T. SMITH
b.1968 Australia
Apollo Jewel Butterfly 1994
Watercolour on illustration board with printed overlay
40 x 30 cm
Purchased by the Botany Department for the James Cook University Art Collection 1994
Photograph: Michael Marzik

QUESTION/DISCUSS

In this illustration the artist explains the narrative of the interaction between plants and animals through the use of images and text. What other examples have you observed here of visual material that makes use of this image/text combination?

Clue: posters, advertisements, signs.
ARTIST: LUCY T. SMITH

ARTWORK: *Grass Tree Xanthorrhoea johnsonii*

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**ARTIST STATEMENT**

Smith has stated, “a dominant feature of the Melaleuca woodlands are the beautiful, iconic grass trees. Instead of just painting one, I invented another informative page to illustrate the different stages of the grass tree’s flowering spike. I found the shape and patterns of the inflorescence fascinating, and hopefully communicated this to the viewer – perhaps they will stop and look closer next time they walk past a grass tree.”

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**QUESTION/DISCUSS**

Through the construction of their narrative elements, some illustrations can tell us more about a particular organism. In this work, has the artist been successful in giving us more information about the life cycle of the grass tree? If you were going to design a poster on grass trees, *describe* what would you do differently than the artist.
ARTIST STATEMENT

Smith has stated, “an earlier piece, this illustration aimed to tell the viewer a bit more about the common house geckos which can be found in Townsville houses. I always loved geckos. When it was made in 1993, producing an overlay with text and images was a difficult and time-consuming process – it had to be made from cut up bits of text and ruled lines which were photographed and then printed using a “bromide” machine. The same effect could now be achieved in about five minutes on the computer, using photoshop!”

INVESTIGATE

When artists observe a subject for long periods of time they become accustomed to the line, colour, texture and tonality of their subject as well as the way it moves and functions in its environment and they eventually devise ways to illustrate it. In this illustration the artist focuses on several unique parts of the gecko, like the feet, the eyes the tail and the skin.

If you were going to make a detailed illustration study of something from the natural world (plants or animals), what would you choose and why would you choose it?
What parts of the organism would you choose to focus on?
What medium would you use to make it, pencil, paint, pastel etc…?

From your answers above, **draw** your illustration in your choice of medium.