



Drawing As Note-Taking With The Objects At My Disposal

by Lisa Zhou

≡
A Drawing Series
of **SIGHTS SEEN
& IMAGINED**
IN MY SUMMER BACKPACKING.
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I DISTILLED MY MATERIALS to color pencil, oil pastel, and a B6 Maruman Sketchbook, all contained in a zip pouch I brought across my journey through Europe.

In much of my life, my work relies on digital tools. I took this opportunity travelling to create an agile toolset, so I

could draw whatever, wherever, and whenever. Although most people paid no mind, there was an intimate and public aspect to the practice. In particular, during an overnight layover at the Istanbul airport, a Turkish woman came over to watch me draw. Through a series of expressive blinks, gestures, and suggestions of phrases in our mother tongues¹ of Turkish and English, I learned she was also an artist, and she paid compliment to *Two-Faced Creature*. I learned, too, that Turkish and English are wildly dissimilar languages and felt grateful for her knowledge of English words like “art” and “good.” Were it not for my decision to pass the time in the airport terminal through drawing—while many were sleeping, on their phones, or walking around—we would not have shared that tender moment.

Working in artists’ studios, I consider how contemporary art has certain methods of display and dissemination through art fairs, institutional exhibitions, or artist monographs. Perhaps, in contrast, I wanted to catalog and showcase my drawings through this readily-shareable pamphlet.

The title was born from the practical goal to fold the paper to fit in an envelope and a poetic desire to allow the title to be read starting with any of the four lines.

I also wanted to play with the idea of drawing as documentation. In by no means a complete list, I have observed that visual representations have historically held power¹ through

1 LEGITIMIZING THE EUROPEAN FIELD OF BOTANY, where botanical illustration provided a visual element for taxonomic studies, contrary to a plants’ role in Indigenous histories and practices beyond their categories;²

2 ADVANCING THE AMERICAN SETTLER IMAGINARY, as drawings of landscape and people were utilized in twentieth century US military explorations to document westward expansion;³

3 DEMONSTRATING CRITICAL AND ANTI-FASCIST IDEAS through sketches and drafts, like the public sculptural project not yet realized, *Leader Swing* by Fernando Sanchez Castillo.⁴

With these ideas swirling in my mind, I sought to play in my journey drawing; letting my mind wander, growing familiarity with the tools I had equipped, and constructing images that I myself can only create.

NOTES

1 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978), p. 219. Said quotes French thinker Pierre Paul Leroy-Beaulieu: “Colonization...is its power of reproduction; it is its enlargement and its multiplication through space; it is the subjection of the universe or vast part of it to that people’s language, customs, ideas, and laws.” I want to emphasize the role of drawing, or visual representations, to his argument of colonization using self-reproduction as a power source.

2 Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013).

3 William H. Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance, From Fort Leavenworth, In Missouri, To San Diego, In California* (1848).

4 Fernando Sanchez Castillo, *Leader Swing* (2009), sketch held in the Skissernas Museum (Lund, Sweden).

LETTER PRESS is an experimental publication series. The guiding thread of each edition is in its form, able to be placed in an envelope & shared via snail mail.

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July
122 x 174 mm
Oil pastel on paper



Leigh Bowery
122 x 174 mm
Color pencil on paper
Source: Leigh Bowery!, exhibition at Tate Modern (2025).



The Bug Man's Kingdom
122 x 174 mm
Color pencil on paper



Axons
122 x 174 mm
Color pencil on paper



A Glimmer In The Night
122 x 174 mm
Color pencil on paper
Source: A woman in a bar in Kaş, Turkey.



Patches
122 x 174 mm
Color pencil and oil pastel on paper
Source: Graffiti in Rodos, Greece.



Two-Faced Creature
122 x 174 mm
Color pencil and oil pastel on paper