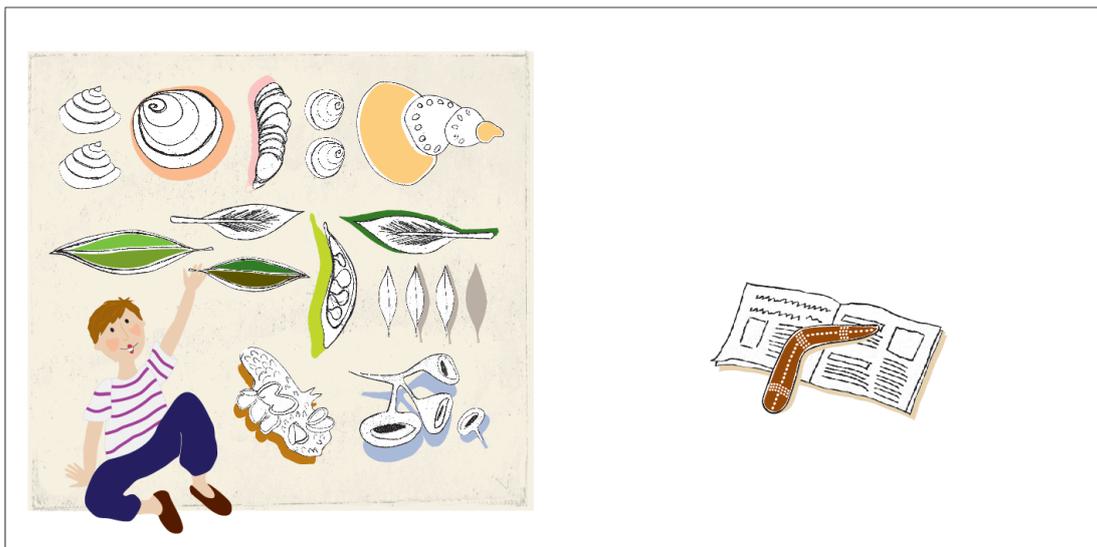


Stories for Simon

CREATING THE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR STORIES FOR SIMON BY LAUREN BRIGGS

While I started my professional life as a graphic designer and photographer, illustration and printmaking have always been passions of mine. My book ***Stories for Simon***, written by Lisa Miranda Sarzin, was a fantastic opportunity to use etching and drawing as the main style of illustration.

I thought I would share with you one of the pages from the book, and explain the process I used to create the illustrations from start to finish. This page showcases Simon's collection of objects from nature.



Explore and research

To start any project, you need inspiration. I began to collect and gather ideas that I then recorded in my visual diary. I filled my visual diary with pictures, photos, images, writings and drawings that resonated with me. I visited museums and art galleries and wrote down how I felt about what I saw. Sydney has some wonderful places to visit, such as its National Parks and beautiful, wind-swept beaches, which provided excellent reference material for creating Simon's collection.



Visual Diary: Drawings of nature, colour references and ideas on how to group a collection of objects.



Visual Diary: Photographs of a natural landscape

Style of illustration

I then needed to decide what style of illustration was best going to represent the text. I thought etching would be a perfect fit, as I love how the different textures and lines of a print can bring emotion to an image. I also wanted the illustrations to characterise the world as seen through the eyes of a nine-year-old boy. By layering the etchings with drawings and large areas of bold colour, I was able to create whimsical illustrations, dreamlike and naive in style, which would best represent a child's imagination.

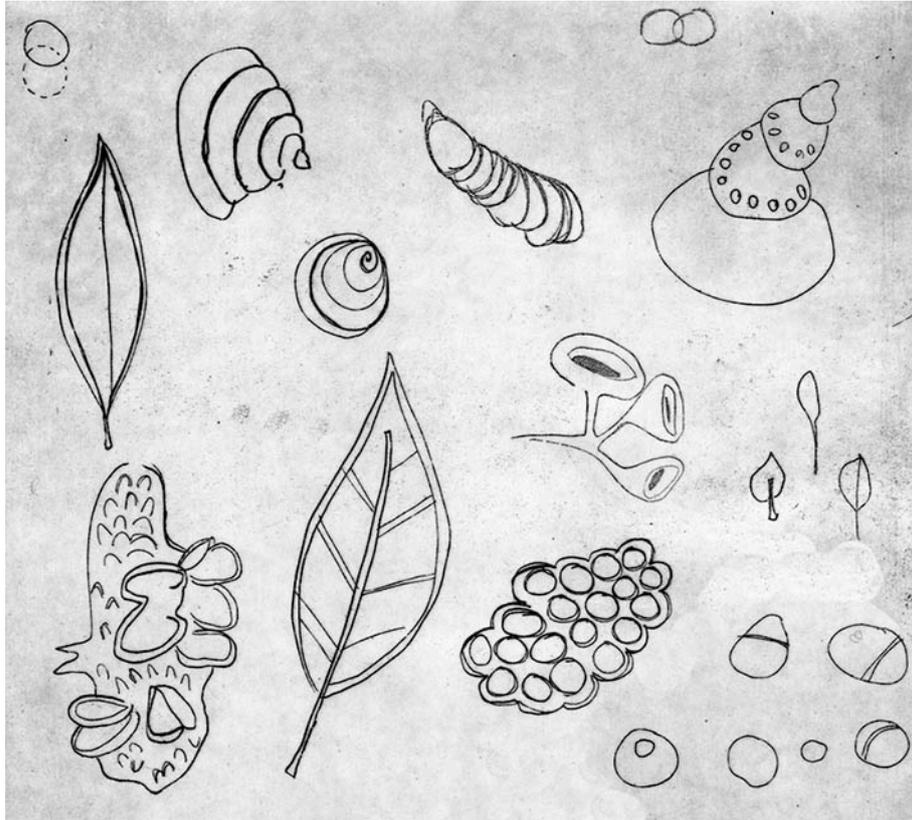
Design and layout

I felt it was important to create a framework or guideline for the layout of each page of the book, to help with the flow of the story and to ensure visual continuity between the pages. Having a graphic design background meant that this part of the process was just as exciting for me as the actual drawing. I designed a grid, or template, that gave the text and illustrations a place on the page. While the template anchored these elements on the page, I played with it just enough to create visual treats and surprises.

Storyboard and creating the illustrations

Using my visual diary as inspiration, I began to draw little rough sketches of each page as I had imagined it in my mind. This storyboard provided a visual reference for the complete book and I was able to see how all the pages related to each other and worked as a whole.

I then decided which elements of each sketch should be represented as an etching, and which as a drawing. For the etchings, I etched the images I wanted onto metal plates and printed them onto paper (see image below). The final etching, together with the final drawings, were then scanned onto my computer, where I was able to layer all the different elements into a single illustration.



Print of an original etching



The final layout for Simon's collection of lovely objects

Experiment with printmaking

Although etching is technical by nature, and for the most part has to be done in a special lab, there are many fun and practical ways to print by hand. If we look back in history, long before there were printing presses people turned to some of these methods as a way of making a living and as a form of artistic expression. These ideas have been around for thousands of years.

Try one of these printmaking ideas and see what you can design. I hope you enjoy the process of printing as much as I do!

Potato stamps

You will need:

- 1 potato
 - a knife,
 - paint in two different colours
 - 2 saucers (one for each paint colour)
 - paper to print on (either butchers' paper, plain or textured paper)
 - a few sheets of old newspaper
1. Place the newspaper on the surface you are working on to help keep the activity clean.
 2. Take a potato and cut it in half. Take one half of the potato and dip it into one of your paints and then stamp it onto your choice of paper. The same stamp printed on different surfaces will produce very different results.
 3. Dip the second piece of the potato into your second paint colour. Now you can start to make a colourful pattern. Feel free to add more colours – you might need to use more potatoes.

For a more intricate image, use a carving tool to carve a design out of the cut surface of your first piece of potato. (You could draw your design on paper, and then ask an adult to carve that design into the potato.)

One of the fun things that I have made using this technique is wrapping paper. You can make this by printing a repeating pattern on large sheets of paper. I have also pulled flakey pieces of bark from a tree and stamped onto it. Printing on bark can have a very beautiful and organic effect – after all, that is where paper comes from.

Hand-stamped stationery

You can create your own personalised stationery by printing onto cards and envelopes. This can have a great impact when presented to family members on birthdays or on special occasions.

Pencil rubbings

Collect a few objects from your playground or backyard that have a lot texture. You can use objects such as leaves, bark or even shells – anything that is textured.

Place a clean piece of paper over the object and begin to rub over the paper with a pencil, crayon or pastel.

Cut out your favourite rubbings and arrange them on a new piece of paper to create a collage.

You could also cut out your rubbings and add them to your stationery or wrapping paper.

Special t-shirt

Try printing your potato design straight onto a plain T-shirt. You might have to invest in fabric paint so that the paint sticks to the fabric, especially after being washed.

Good luck, don't be shy to experiment, and happy printing!