

What can nature teach us? The adjustment of moving to California led me outside into the unfamiliar terrain; I acted as a naturalist, studying native and invasive species. I also wanted to discover whether or not nature could take away the selfishness that inherently comes with being human. My work explores the boundaries of the natural world and how being in a new environment can completely alter a one's state of mind in a positive way. Understanding the geological and environmental history of a special place provides insight into the foundation that all plants, animals, and humans are built from. I tapped into this state of connected history when I began my art-making process.

I studied seven unique plants in the Bay Area and made traditional products from them. First, I painted abstract botanical illustrations, and then created an item out of each plant. For example, Oak acorns were originally used by Native Americans in Napa to be eaten as a soup for breakfast. I harvested acorns, removed the tannins, ground the nuts, and cooked them into a soup. I repeated this experimental processes until I had a salve created from yarrow, a syrup from horehound, an infused oil from Eucalyptus, a tea from Manzanita, a medicinal oil from Bay Laurel, and a tea from Chicory. I then mounted the illustrations and the liquids onto branches to create a coherent installation.

The installation highlights the importance of plants and the environment itself. I created a display that shows the significance of the natural world—the connection between nature in its purest form and nature in its utilitarian form. The viewer may view the product and the plant as separate entities, but together they make up the history of the earth.

Bailey

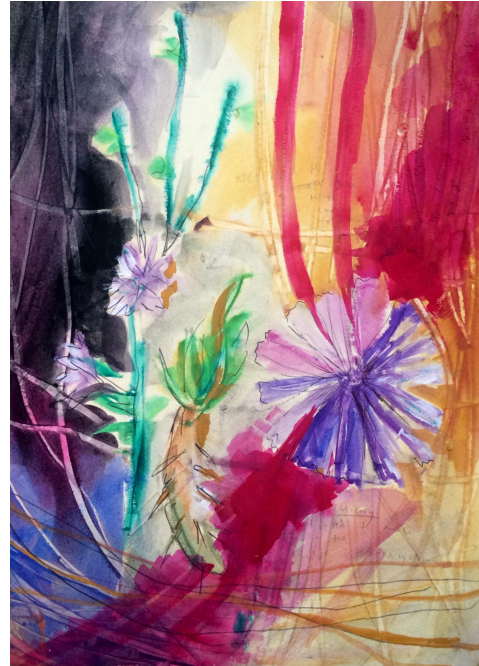








I took field notes and captured drawings about the specific plants I studied along my hikes. I then created a series of abstracted botanical illustrations, highlighting the remarkable qualities of the plants with bright colors and mark making. These images are a selection of the series. The plants shown are the eucalyptus tree, chicory, the bay laurel tree and the Manzanita tree.



“You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the woods that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns.”, Henry David Thoreau once wrote in *Walden*. When I came to California and spent time in the woods, my thoughts and feelings towards nature changed. I always had a connection to the natural world. But, being in the same environment for my whole life made me lose touch to my wild, exploratory self that existed in me as a child learning for the first time up close and outside. I was so thrilled to behave like a kid again when I roamed around the valley, hiking through Westwood Hills and Skyline Park feeling free. I was finally learning the way I wanted to learn, like the way traditional explorers learned. I looked at the landscape and I felt like I had never seen any sight so bewildering and fascinating. I assumed the explorers and Native People who observed the area before me felt the same as I did. As I behaved like a naturalist, I found I was most interested in plants and their exceptional understanding. Studying certain plants in depth gave me a personal relationship with them because I cared about their extraordinary intellect and evolutionary traits. And, because forests are infinitely connected by all species, I became connected to the whole environment. This made me observe the history of the forest and understand why it came to be so unique. This entire process of learning should be used by everyone as a way to aid themselves as well as the natural world. When we are connected to nature, we care deeply about what forces act on it. A person who appreciates a strong, living tree will be more willing to protect an entire forest. I understand why a person loses the touch they once felt with the environment, because I felt that way for some time. But, if someone wants to feel the childlike joy of learning, it can easily be accomplished. The selfish act of staying indoors and accepting humanity as the one true intelligent force can be counteracted by simply going for a walk. Breathing out the toxic forces of mankind and breathing in oxygen produced by the tree next to us changes us. It makes us aware, awake, and alive, just like the little plant learning about the world, growing next to our feet in the soil.

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