

Nich... look/imagine

Sketchbooks today

Sketchbooks have been artist companions for hundreds of years.

Today, visual diaries or visual journals have become popular through brands such as Moleskine as a way to express a nomadic lifestyle.

But how is it the same and different to what artists have been doing for centuries?

And what opportunities does this format for capturing experiences hold for current day painters, fine artists or illustrators?

A sketchbook is a safe space for an artist where you can be unprofessional.



We all know the Nashua slogan, "Saving you time, saving you money" ;)

No jokes. With sketchbooks it works exactly like that.

The (small) multi-page format forces you to spend only a certain amount of time on a page, as well as using a fraction of the amount of drawing or paint materials you would have done on a bigger canvas, paper or board.

You try something and you move on. This encourages experimentation and play without worrying that you are wasting expensive paints or time as you would invest on a larger piece.

If you don't like, you move on. If you like it, you move on.



This artistic motion or momentum is good for three reasons:

1. You sharpen your technique. (*Practice practice practice – there are no short cuts if you want to be authentic.*)
2. In time, you will begin to notice a certain '**artistic logic**' in your own work when you flip through the pages, which might be the single most important aspect of being an artist.
3. You are able to work through any undesirable creative blocks or feelings of insecurity about what it is you are doing. (*There will always be artists who are more skilled than you and there will always be those who are not, and when you are seeking your own path as a creator, those comparisons become irrelevant.*)



Physical sketchbooks

In addition, you are holding something in your hands. It has texture and you are experiencing the motion of your hand moving across the page. There is a sensory experience.

Although, more pragmatic digital painters may argue they can achieve the same through a Wacom tablet.

In a digital age, we are increasingly confronted by “What is real?” and some artists, such as Milton Glaser, have expressed how they feel more engaged when physically drawing. And, thus, some research have explored the relationship of the hand to the brain in art creation.



But, this presentation is called “look / imagine”?

The title is based on the idea that drawing or painting from observation enables imaginative or creative work.

For the purpose of maintaining at least some focus in this presentation, I am not going to elaborate on the benefits of observation studies for fantastical illustration or even how the unexpected placement of elements in an artwork can be used to convey layers of meaning.

Rather, I am going to explain my understanding of how observational studies enable creative interpretation (the artistic logic).

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These things are different but not entirely unrelated.

In a moment we will look at a few of my own sketchbook drawings and paintings. Where these things were at least somewhere in the back of my mind while making them.

Drawing or painting from observation

So when I draw or paint from observation for the purpose of learning, I tend to look out for some of the following characteristics:

- Surface textures – *a wool jersey or a reflective motor car bonnet.*



- Opacity or translucency in objects – *such as how light moves through a hand in certain areas if it is placed in front of a light bulb.*
- Colour temperature – *a cool midday window lit scene or lit by a warm yellow light bulb.*
- Large and smaller shapes that I am seeing when squinting – *always beginning with the large.*
- The tonal shifts where the highest contrast is most likely going to become the focal point – *the white collar next to a dark blazer in a John Singer Sargent portrait.*
- Colour accents – *mostly muted colours with a splash of bright yellow*

- Atmospheric perspective – *how are the tonal values and local colours influenced as an object moves further away in a scene.*
- The knowledge of how something is constructed – *is the perspective of that construction vehicle believable?*

Drawing or painting as interpretation

Van Gogh did not only try to paint his own portrait as accurately as possible. Yet, he created numerous interpretations that in one way or another reflected his state of mind at the time. Also, you are able to see the little painting of neatly placed untied worker shoes and know Van Gogh painted it. That is because of his interpretation of the subject.



Also, in the Kind of Blue album by Miles Davis there are two takes (or interpretations) of the song, Flamingo Sketches.

It is perhaps an epic fail to talk about these masters before showing my own work, but the point I'm trying to make is that interpretation is central to artistic work, and sketchbooks allow you to explore just that as a painter (digital or physical).

So what can a painter look out for when interpreting subjects?

- Choose what to render and what to leave out or understate.
- Choose what characteristics to exaggerate.

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- One could explore the relationship between what is recognisable and abstract.
- Make decisions about how you apply line and tones.
- Play with different media and art tools, and then see if you can maintain a relationship between the various works.
- While working on the detail always consider the overall impression or composition.

Next, we are going to look at a few of my sketchbook drawings and small paintings that was created over the past few years, as well as a video on sketchbooks by Jeremy Mann.

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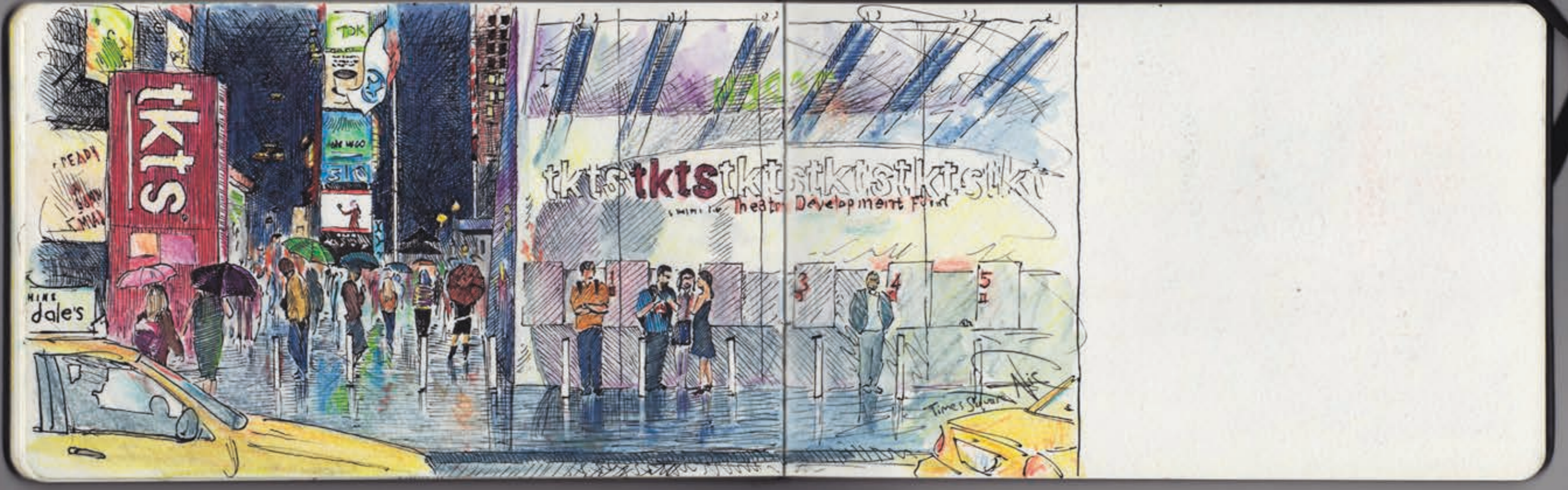
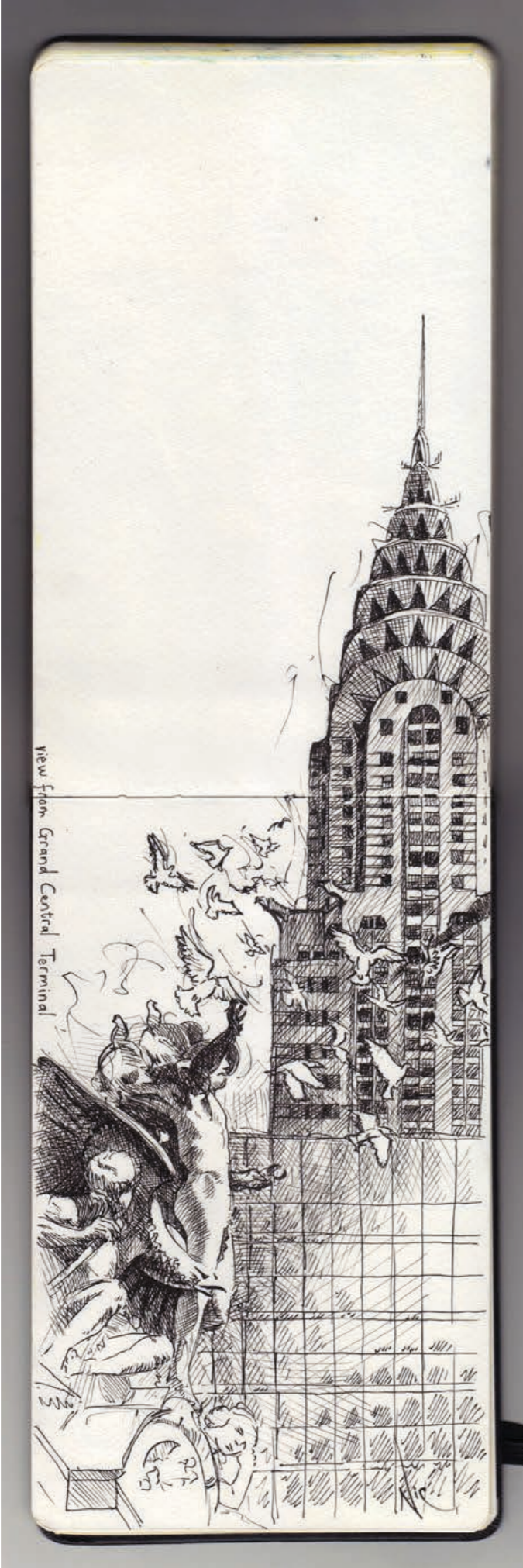
Watercolour and ink in sketchbooks - 2011-2013



Nic Baito
look/imagine



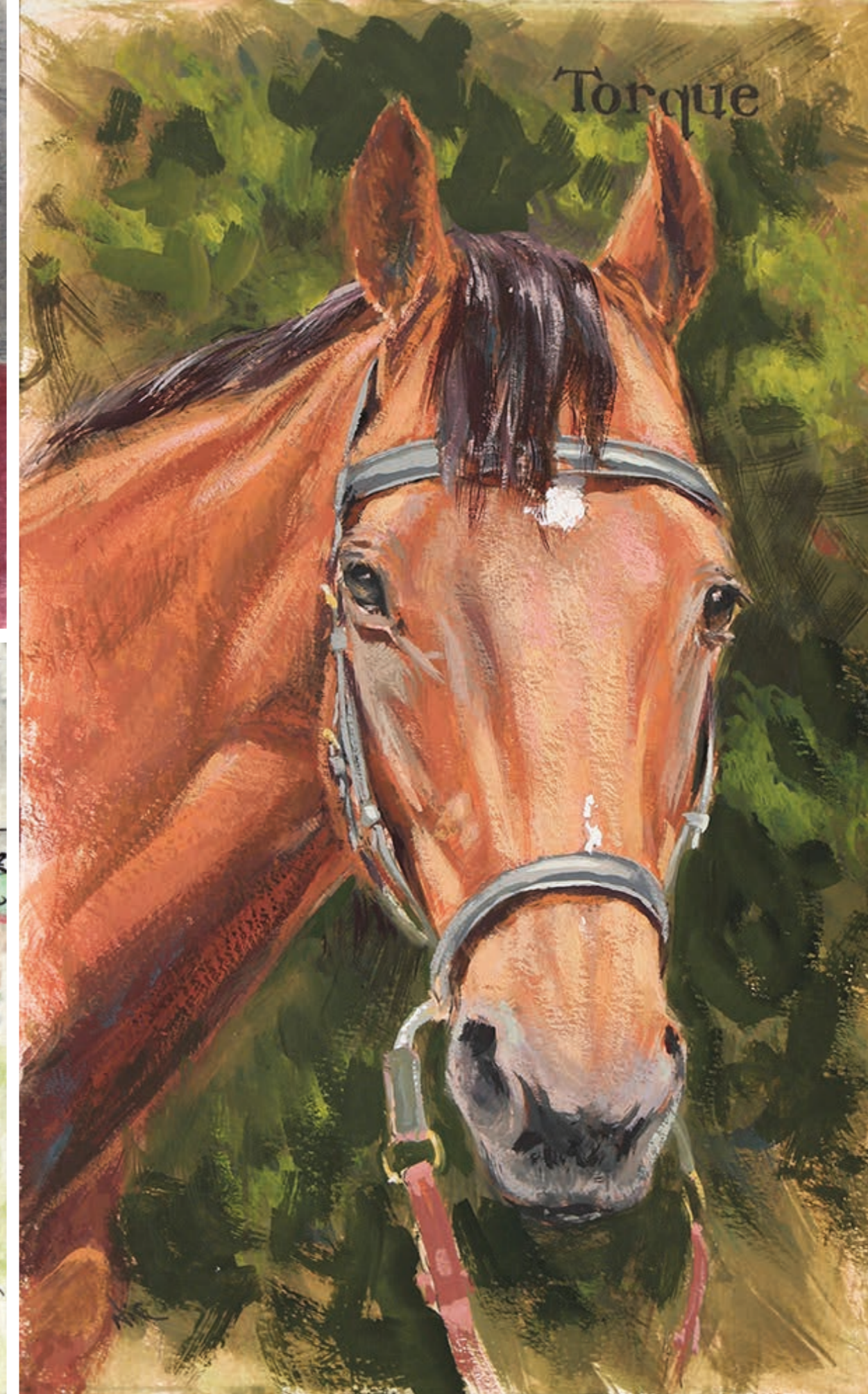
Watercolour and ink in sketchbooks 2011-2013



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Gouache and watercolour in sketchbooks – from my horse phase (2014-2017)



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Pen in sketchbook (2014-2017)



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Pen in sketchbook (2014-2017)



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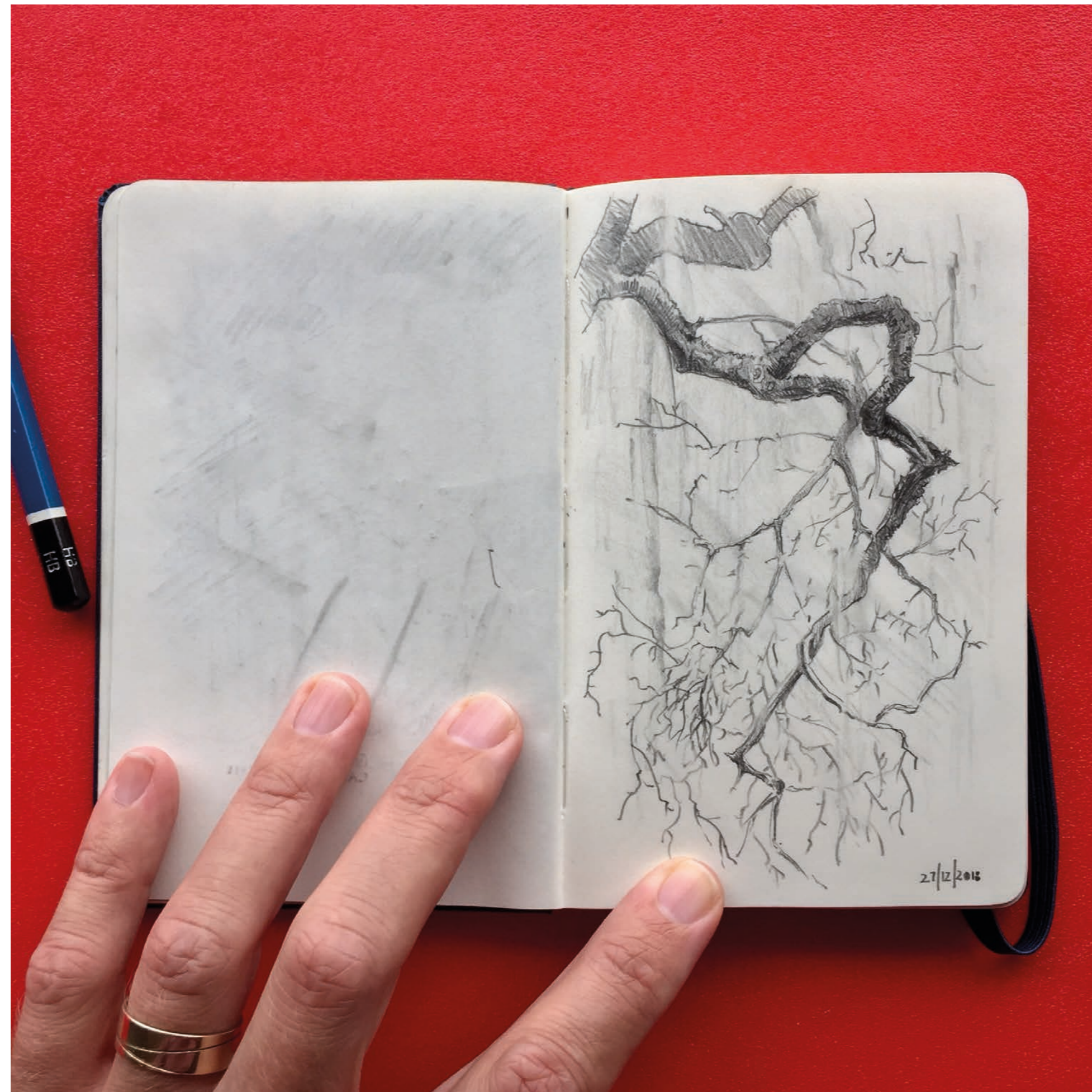
Gouache in sketchbooks (2016-2017)



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Pencil sketches in a little notebook (2018)



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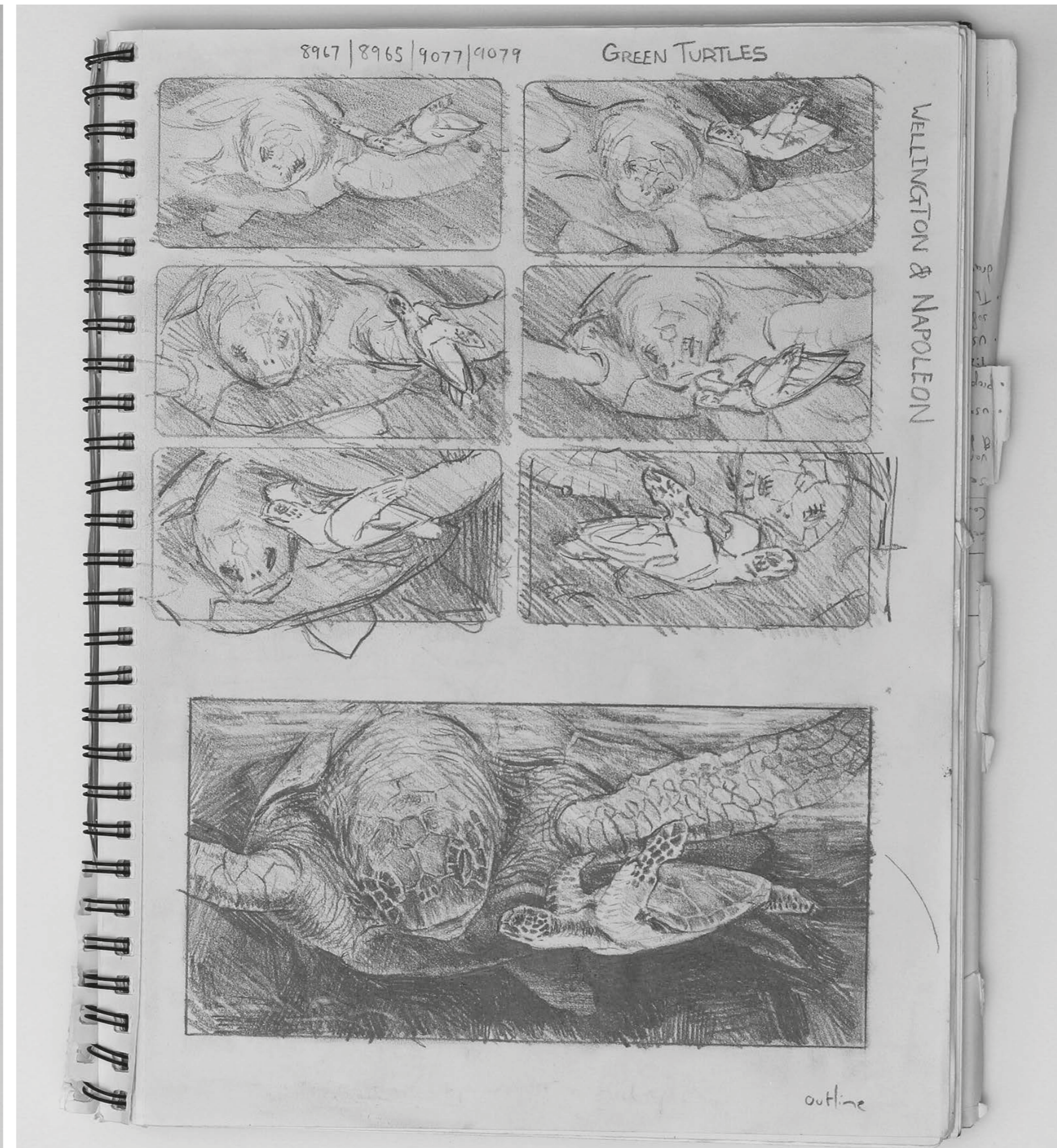
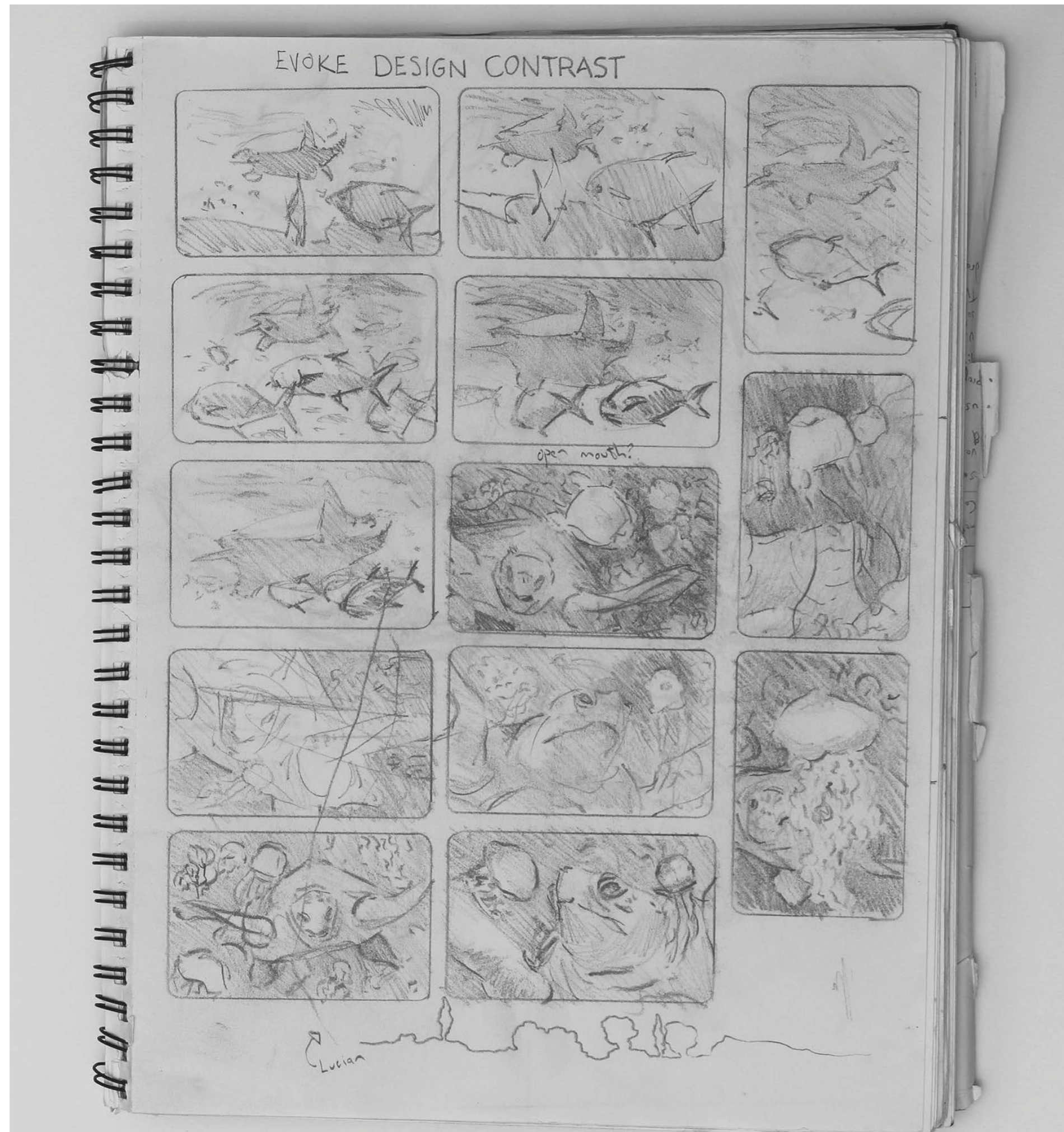
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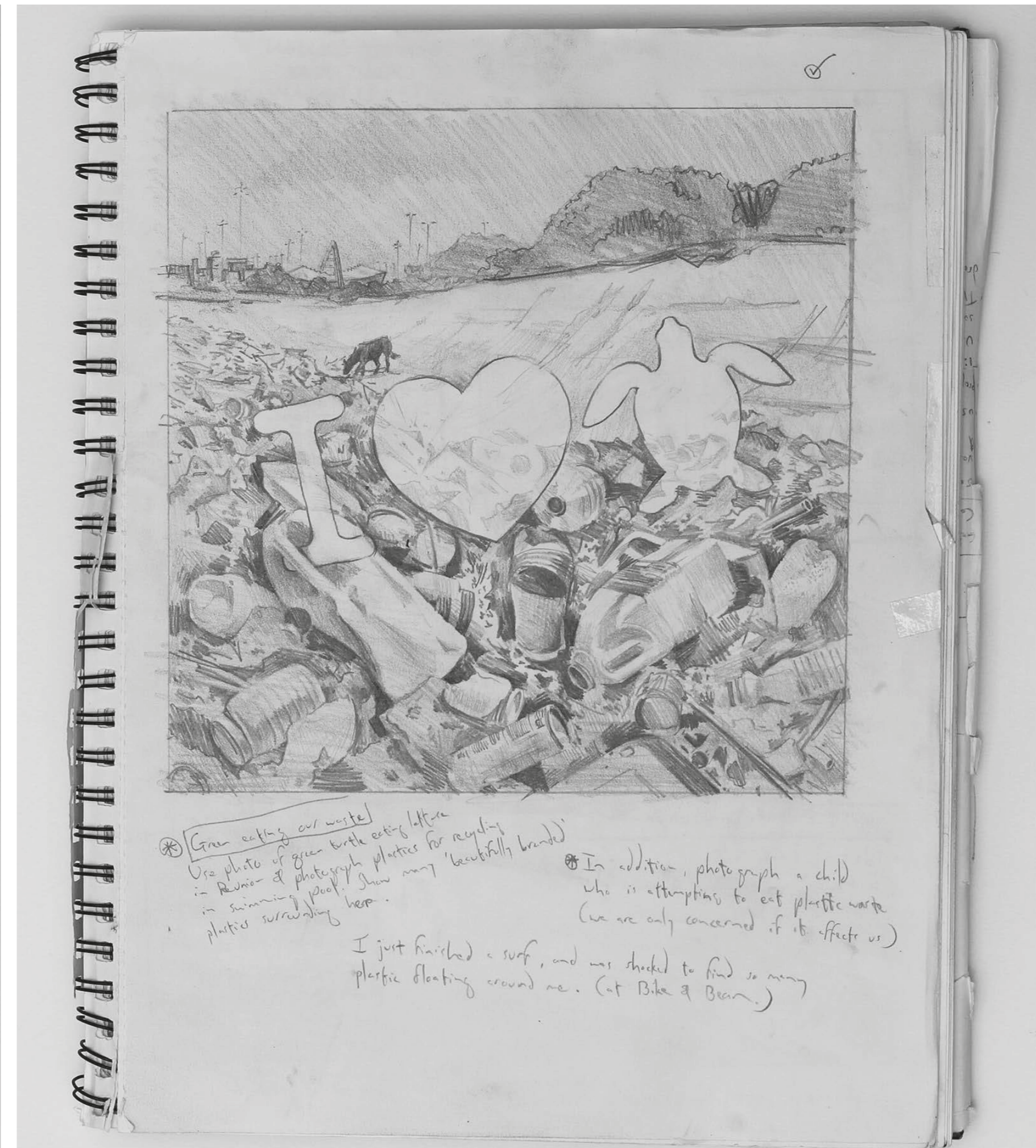
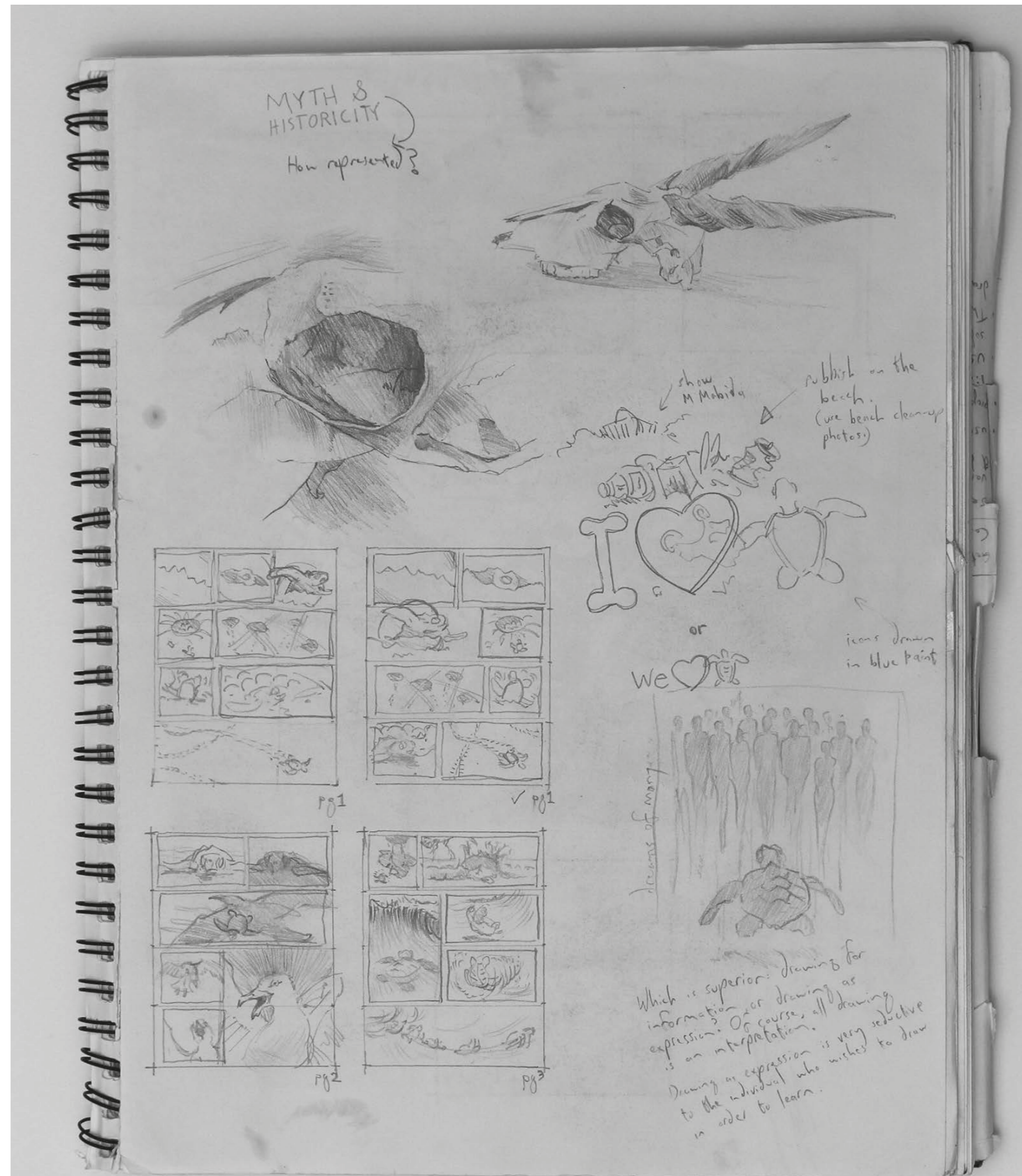
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Preliminary workbook sketches (2017-2020)



Preliminary workbook sketches (2017-2020)



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Gouache in sketchbooks (2017-2020)



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Gouache in sketchbooks (2017-2020)



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Aquarium colour studies in gouache (2019)



I wanted to first hand capture the underwater light and colours.

So I set my alarm to go off every 30 minutes and allowed myself one and a half hours per frame.

The following 16 frames were done over 4 days.

Aquarium colour studies in gouache (2019)



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Pencil sketches in a little notebook (2017-2020)



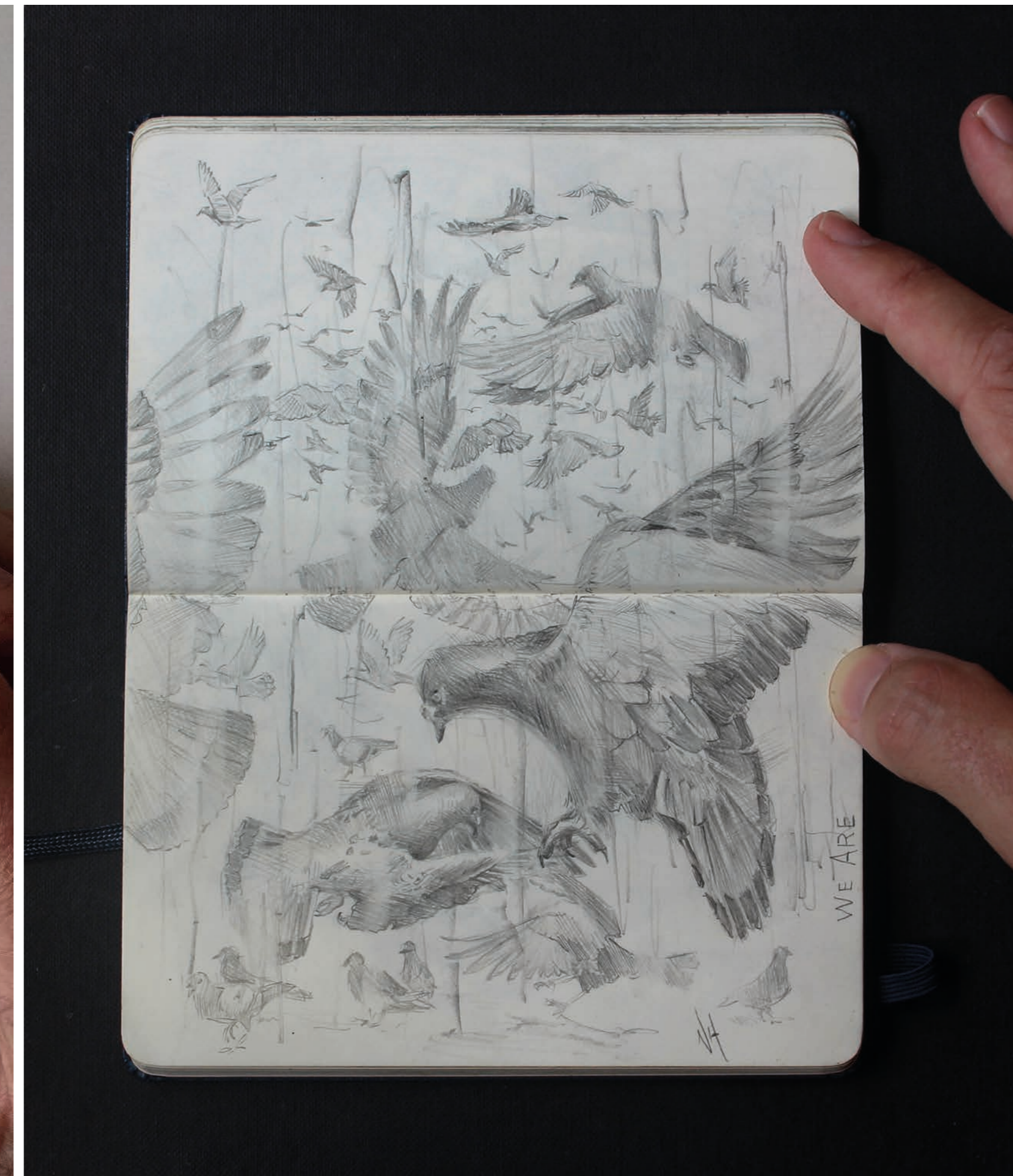
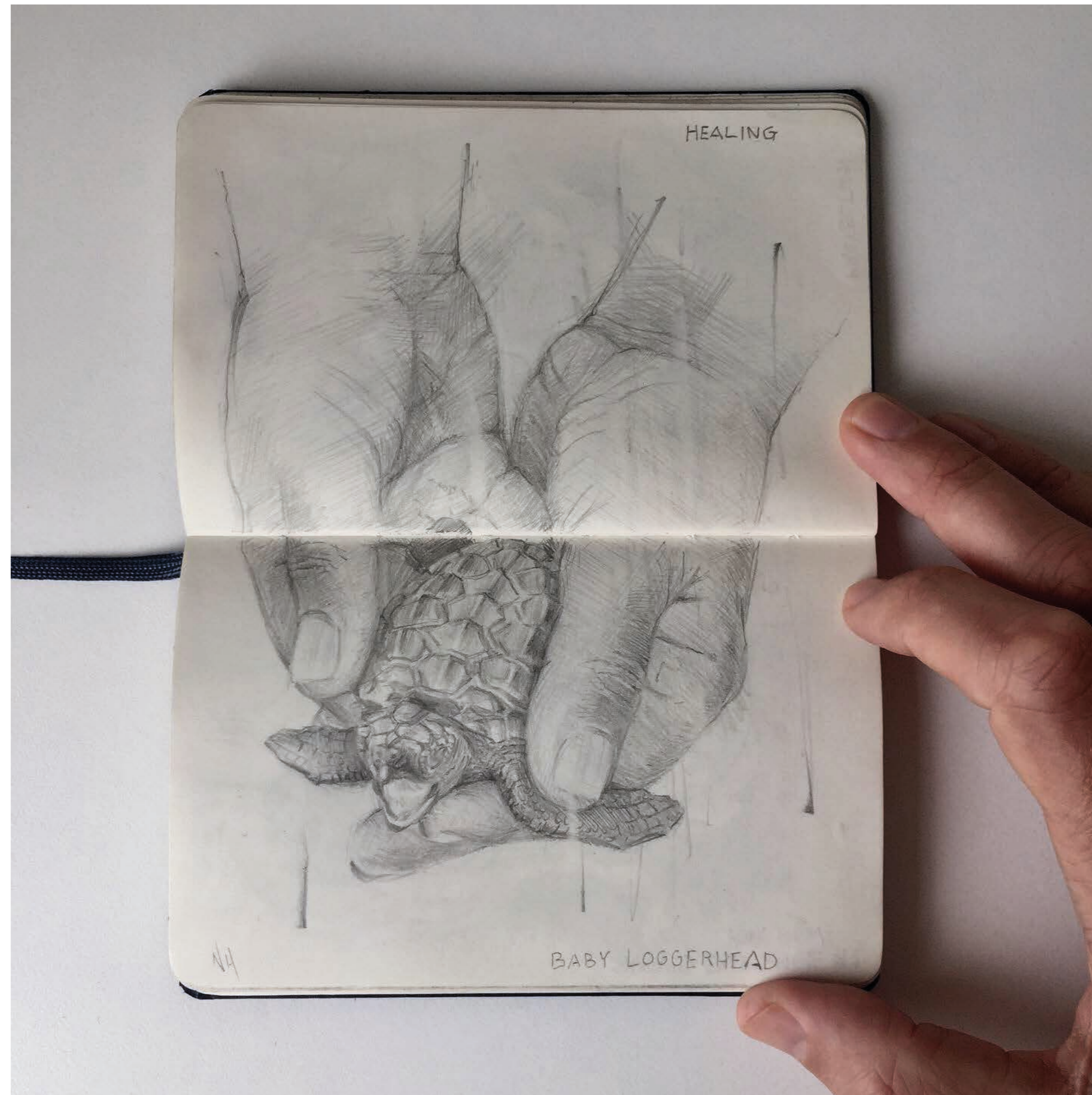
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Pen in sketchbook (2017-2020)



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Pen sketches in a little notebook (2017-2020)



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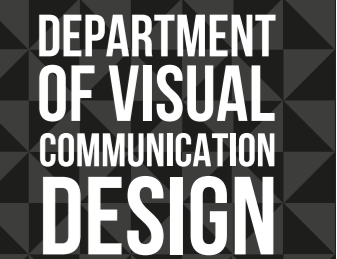
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the sketchbook series:

Jeremy Mann – YouTube Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3ls_XzDLn4

Nadezda – YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZnFMjU-7K4>

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Thank you for attending