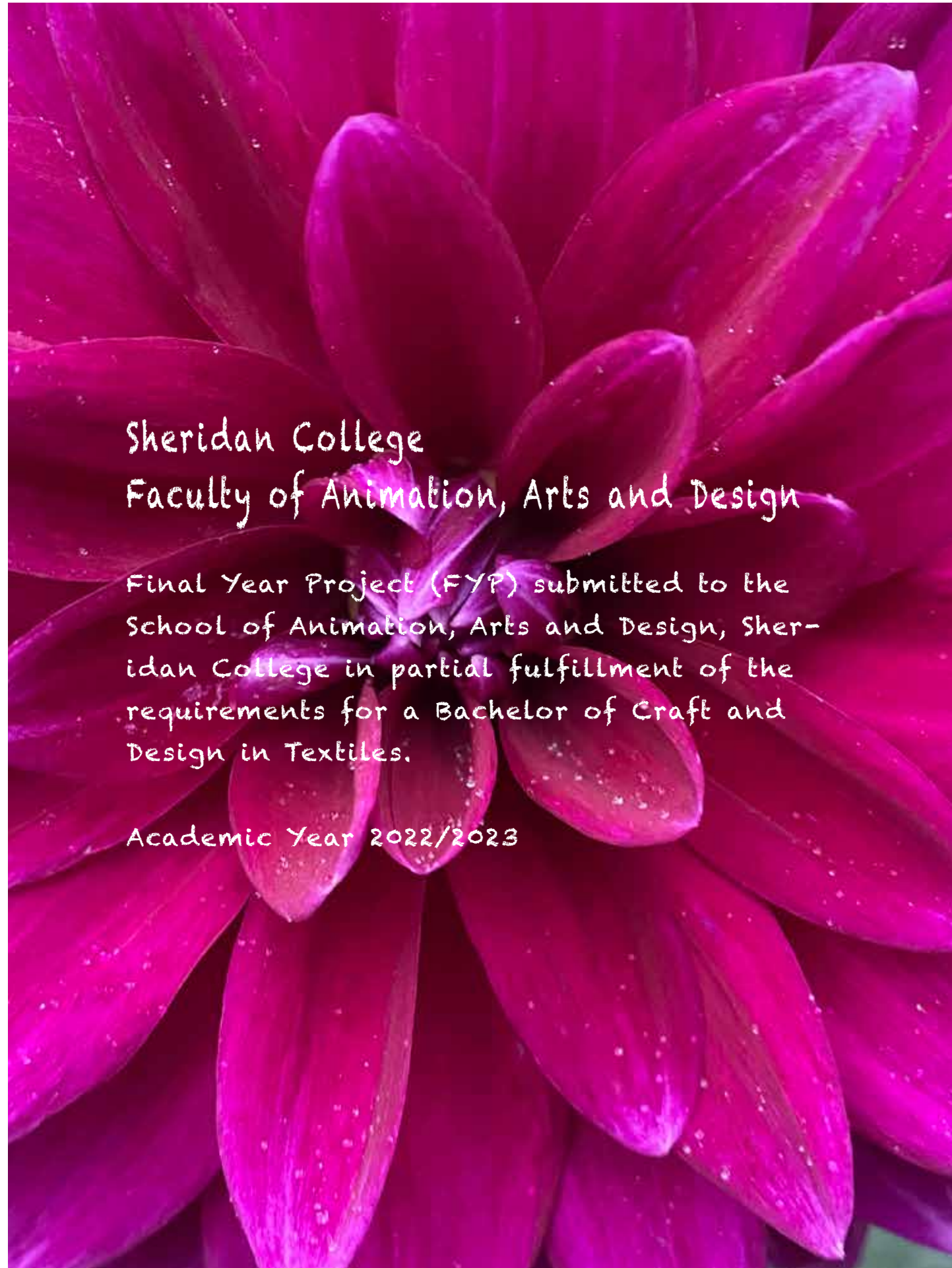


FLIPPEDS AND

FLOWERS

LEAH PHILLIPS  
CAPSTONE PROJECT  
2022/2023





Sheridan College  
Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design

Final Year Project (FYP) submitted to the  
School of Animation, Arts and Design, Sher-  
idan College in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for a Bachelor of Craft and  
Design in Textiles.

Academic Year 2022/2023

Fig. 1

## INTRODUCTION

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To clearly display my Capstone work in this document I structured my process chronologically by splitting both the Fall and Winter term into the first and last seven weeks. My work changed a lot through this school year where each week brought new challenges and insights. This document shows the gradual buildup of ideas over the weeks and gives insight into my creative thinking.

The final piece, *Flippers and Florals*, is of course the main event but it would not have been possible without the various stages of brainstorming, researching, sampling, and adding in final touches.



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# STATEMENT

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This wall hanging explores my happy memories on both the East and West coasts of Canada. I use photographs I took of flowers during the summers I spent working in the Halifax Public Gardens as well as flowers I saw in Vancouver this past summer.

I also include seal imagery as I was always fascinated by the seals in Nova Scotia and even more excited when I saw Vancouver had seals as well. My project explores the cycle of life of these elements. Flowers bloom and die as seasons pass but these photographs hold the perfect memory of each of their short lives.

Digitally printed images of the flowers are printed on fabric and structured with wire. They were then combined with large naturally dyed fabric stuffed seals: two mothers and two pups. All elements are thoughtfully appliquéd to a hand manipulated background which gives an illusion of a fantasy world. The seals appear as if they are swimming in space.

This project is happy, colourful and connects perfectly with my passion for nature. It playfully poses questions of the land and water divide and aims to bring a smile to everyone's face.

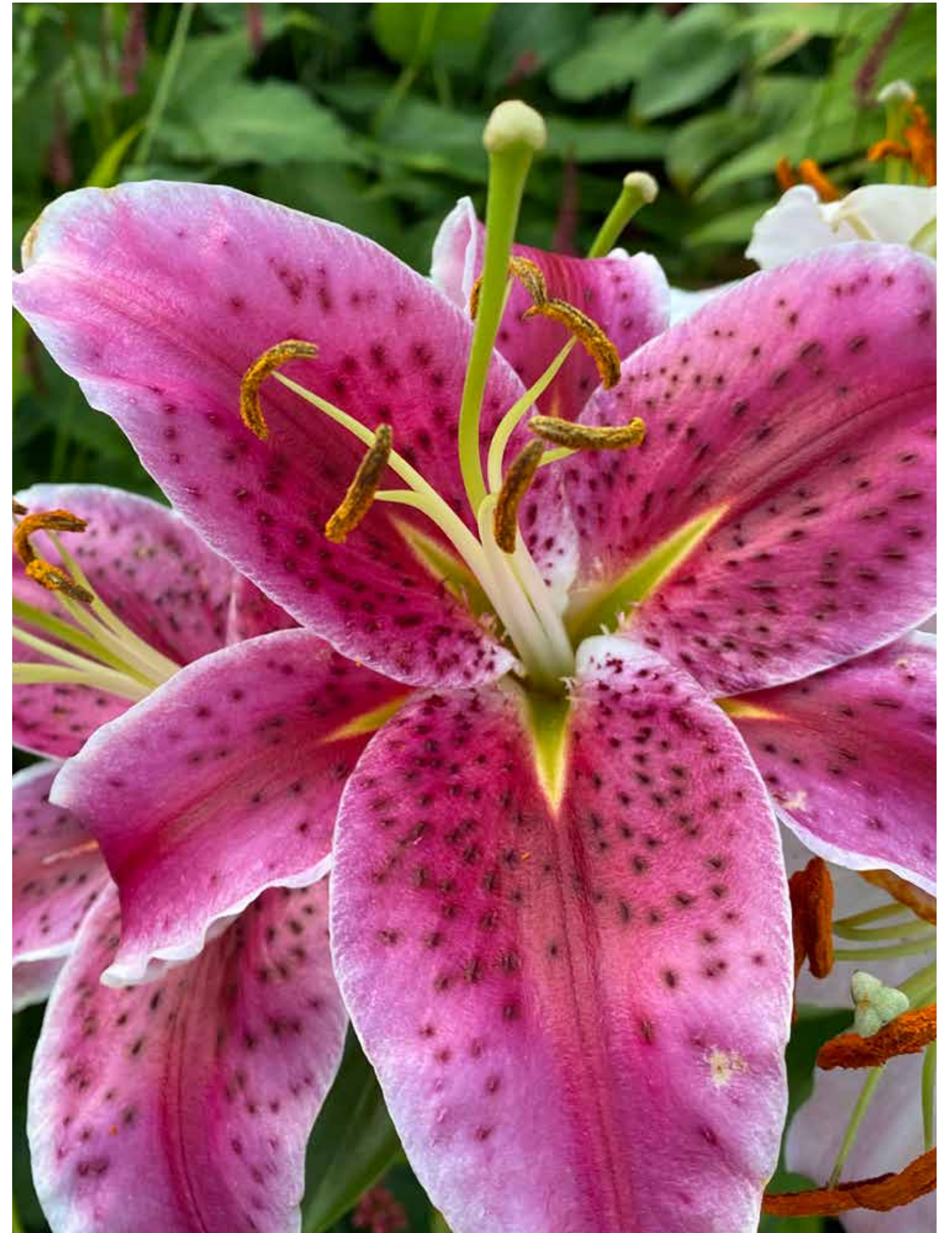


Fig. 2

# FALL TERM WEEKS 1-7

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My process for this project has been long and winding. I knew from the beginning I wanted to use my photographs of flowers from both Halifax and Vancouver in some way, but I did not know what I wanted to do with this. I began with thinking about what I liked in textiles, and I thought of embroidery and slow stitching immediately. I embroidered some of these flowers at a small scale, but they felt too abstract and did not capture the true beauty I wanted from the photographs. In response to this, I then switched to screen printing. By using Photoshop, I deconstructed the flowers and then screen printed them using different colours for each layer. Something still felt off though because they did not look like their photos. Then an ah-ha moment came. I decided that digital printed flowers on fabric would work best so the integrity of them would remain in perfect condition.

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# FLOWERS

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Flowers are so exciting to me and have always been a big part of my life. I used to garden with my mother in our backyard and when I got older I worked in the historical Halifax Public Gardens for a few summers. As I walked through every day I stopped and admired each flower's beauty and took many photographs as they bloomed. After spending time in Vancouver this summer, I was immediately taken by the array of flowers as I walked through neighbourhoods, gardens, and outdoor flowerbed displays. I had never seen anything like it in Halifax and many of the flowers I did not even recognize. I took hundreds of photos as I explored and almost every day there was a new flower I had never seen before. When I thought about my thesis through the summer, I knew I wanted to use these flower photographs somehow in my work. I really liked the idea of them being extremely oversized to add to my playful theme so after much trial and error in the first term to recreate the flower images with screen printing, I concluded they should be digitally printed on fabric. By digitally printing them their full beauty, colour, and vibrancy remains frozen in time. This figure shows some examples of these photographs.

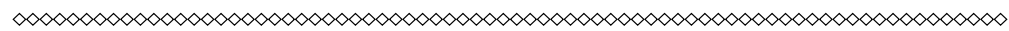


Fig. 3





Fig. 4



I wanted to become more familiar with each unique texture, shape and colour of the flowers so I began by roughly sketching based off my photographs.

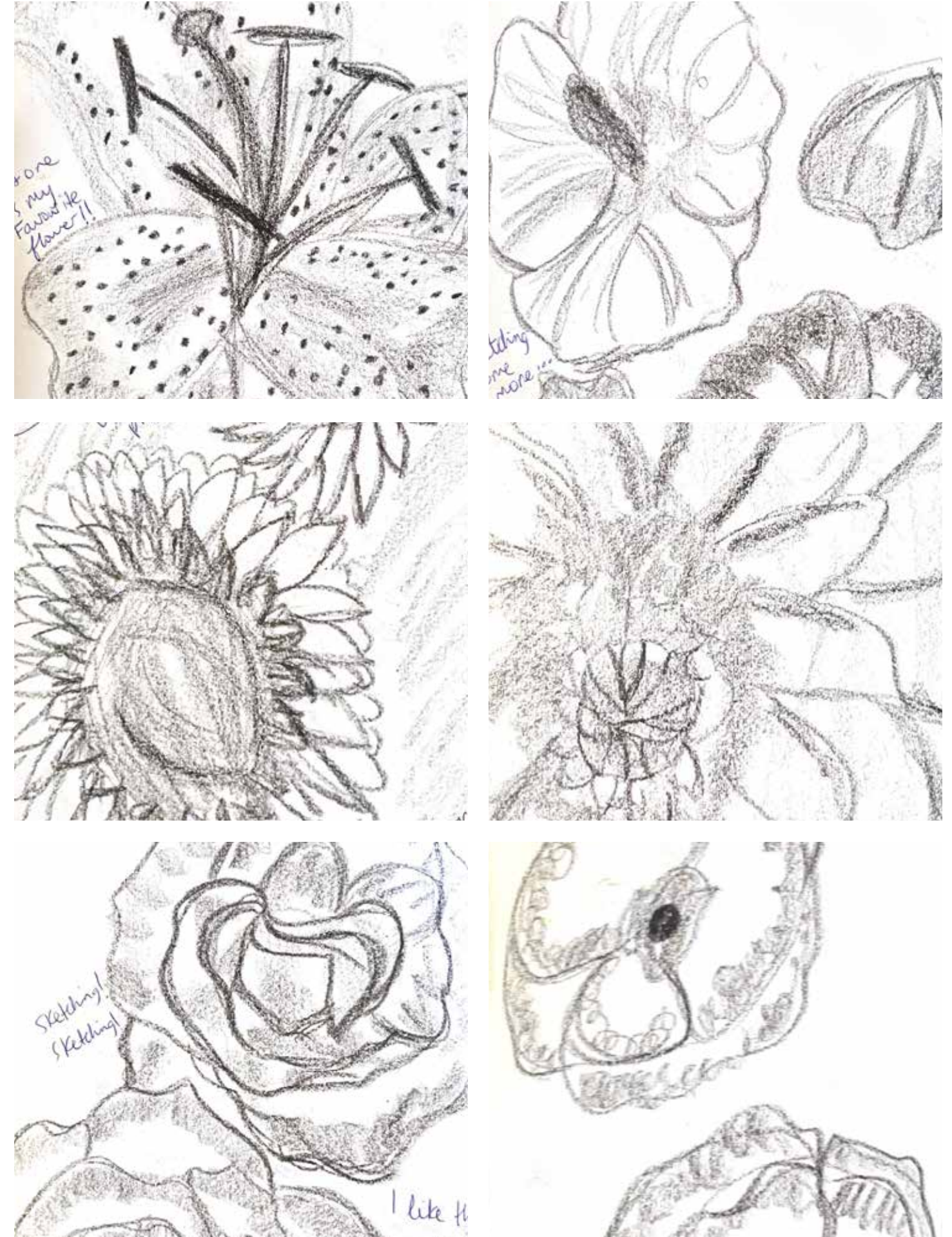
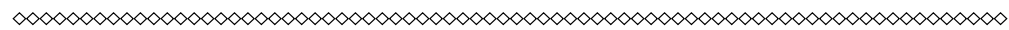


Fig. 5

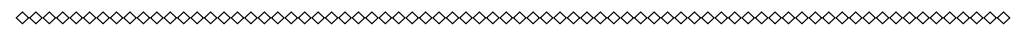




Fig. 6



Fig. 7



When I was deciding on colour palettes I thought it would be nice to have a variety of colours to create some samples with.

I used my flower pictures to draw colours from and made three different palettes.

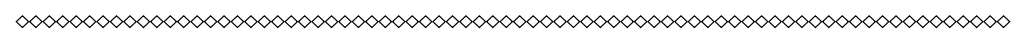


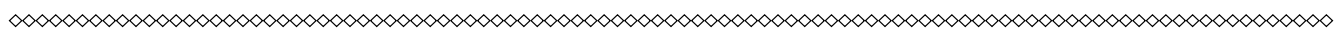
Fig. 8



# INITIAL TESTS: PHOTOSHOP PLANS FOR SCREEN PRINTS



Fig. 9



Through the early stages of my exploration, I used pigments to screen print images based off of these two flowers. I planned this out by using Photoshop to deconstruct each flower into parts and then explored possible different colourways. Figure 10 shows the Photoshop files of colour experimentation of these two flower photographs in Figure 9.

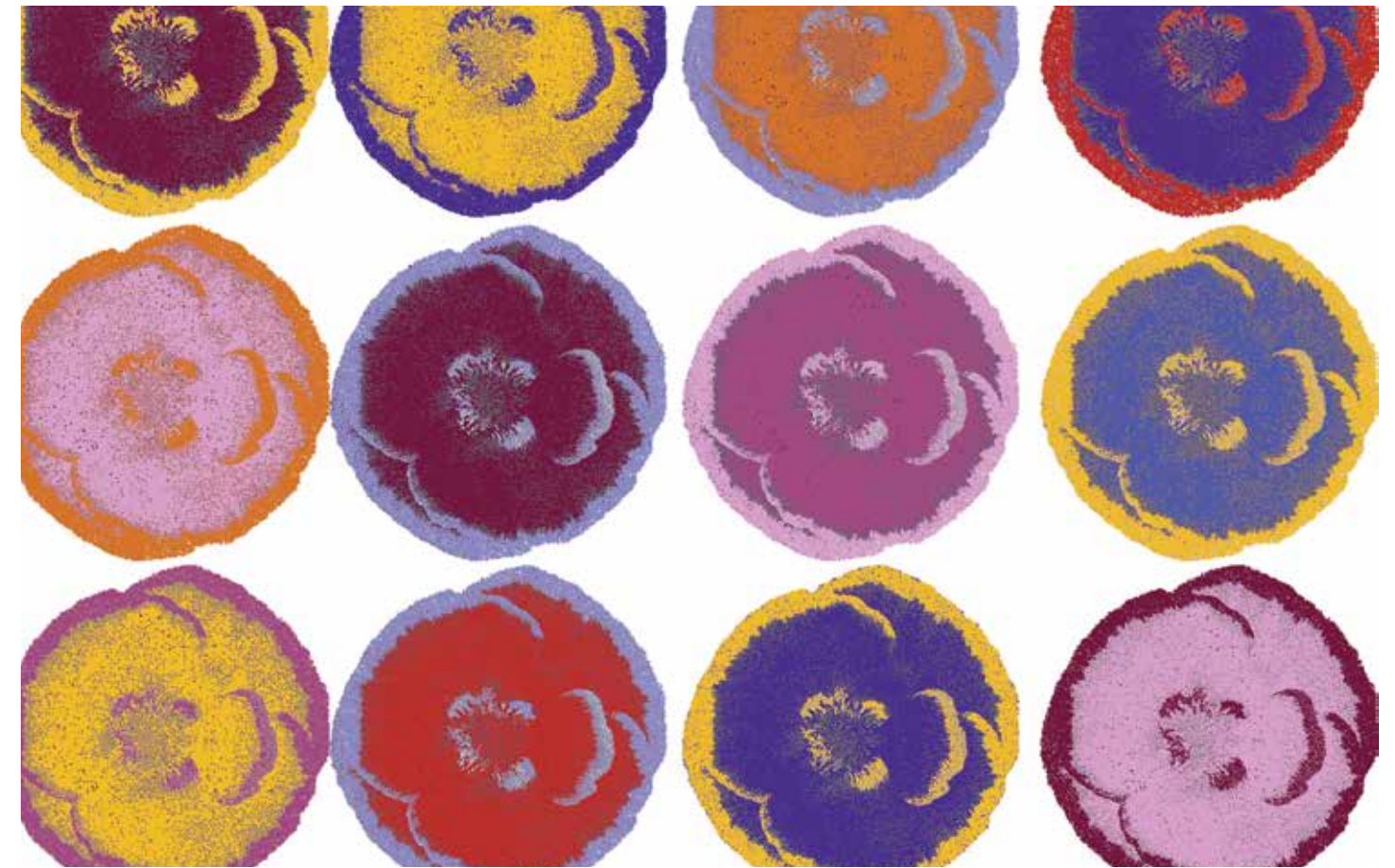
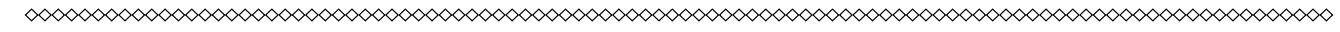
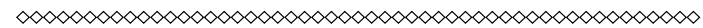


Fig. 10





Fig. 11



Figures 11 and 12 show the set up prior to screen printing. While printing, I like to have everything set up in a neat way so I can see all the colours of pigment and easily reach for the next one when needed.

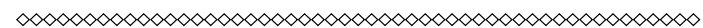


Fig. 12

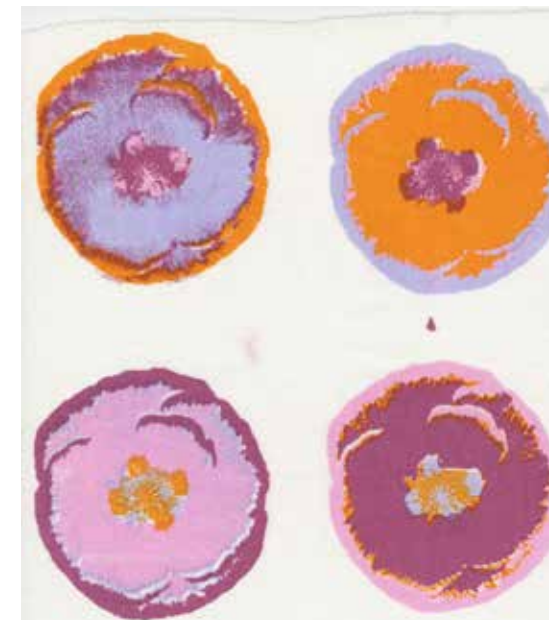
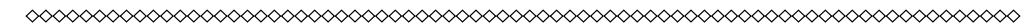
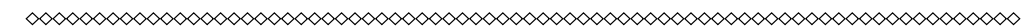


Fig. 13



At this point in my exploration, I decided to screen print two different flowers. Using the colours I chose in my three colour palettes, I layered multiple screens to fill different parts of the flowers.





# SWITCHING TO DIGITALLY PRINTED FLOWERS

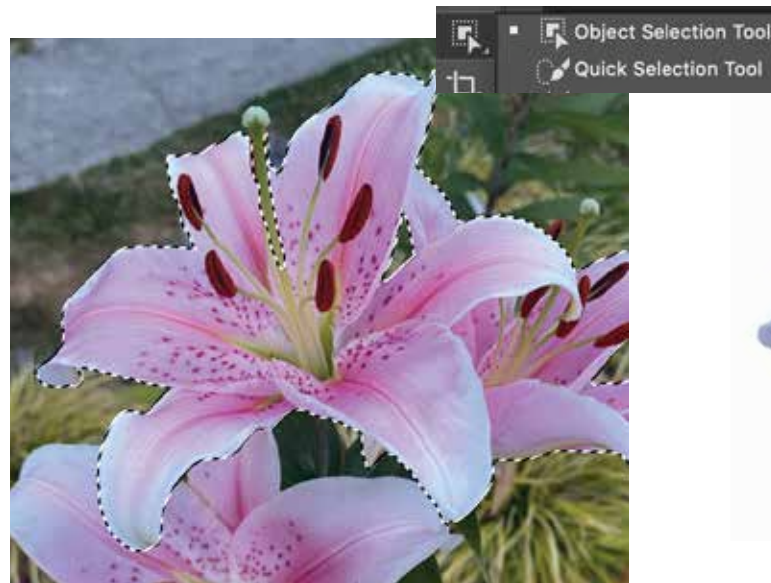
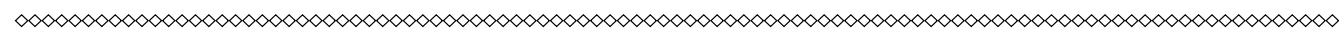


Fig. 14



Fig. 15



After I tested and screen printed some flowers, I thought they needed to be more realistic looking so I decided to instead get them digitally printed on fabric. Figures 14 and 15 shows the preparation in Photoshop where I used the object selection tool to delete the background of the flower. I then arranged a bunch of flowers in a large file on Photoshop and submitted them online to Art Fabrics to be printed (Figure 16).

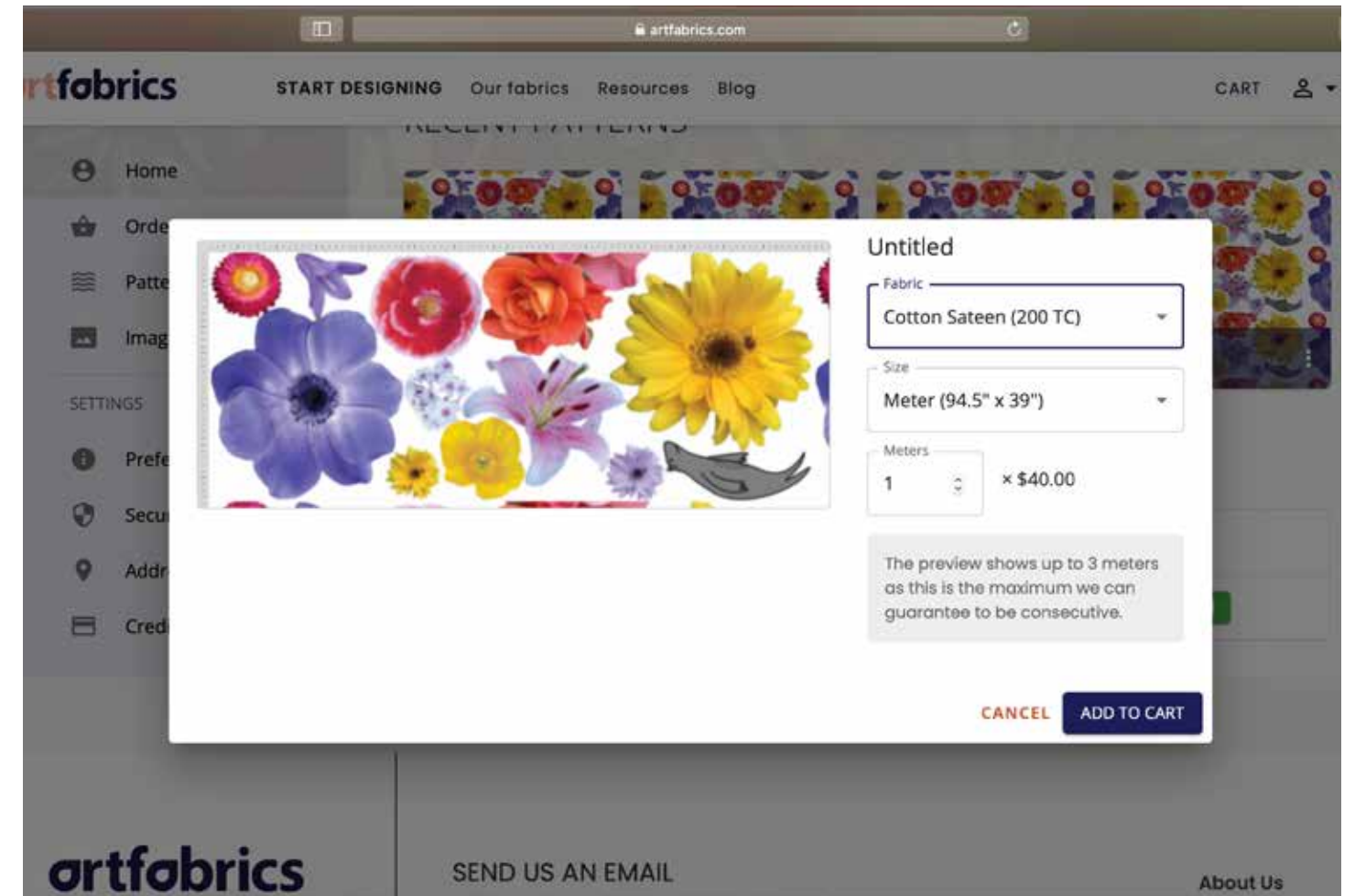
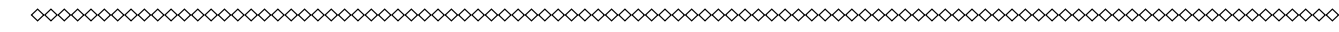
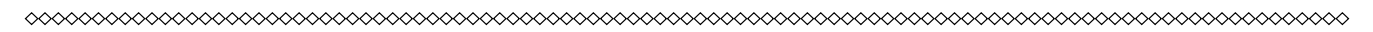
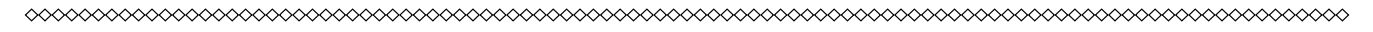


Fig. 16



Art Fabrics is a digitally printed fabric supplier based in Québec. Their easy-to-use website allowed me to submit my large flower file and choose the desired fabric. I made sure to custom scale this file in Photoshop to fit the measurements of one metre of Cotton Sateen (94.5" width). As shown in figure 16 I included many flowers on one piece of fabric. Figure 44 on page 45 shows the final fabric once it arrived a few weeks later.





# FALL TERM WEEKS 8-14

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While I was waiting for my digitally printed flowers to arrive in the mail, I thought the flowers needed something added to them to give some further interest. I looked back at my previous artwork from over the years and noticed my constant use of animals. To gain inspiration and to help me decide if I wanted to use animals in my Capstone, I looked at lots of children's books and stumbled upon a story of a seal. This triggered a flood of memories, and I felt an instant ah-ha moment. Another commonality both Halifax and Vancouver have is seals! To capture this happiness, playfulness, and childlike wonder I constructed two wall hangings with appliquéd seals. Once the flowers arrived, I had all the pieces I needed to make two individual seal wall hangings interacting with their own digitally printed flowers. Although the pieces were large and appeared 'finished' this was still only the exploratory stage of my project. There was still a long way to go but this certainly launched my creativity forward at an accelerated rate in time for the Winter term.

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# SEALS

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Growing up in Halifax I gained an appreciation for the ocean. I took comfort in knowing it was always there and as a family we spent many weekends exploring different beaches. We frequented Duncan's Cove which was near our house, and I was always excited to get to the part of the trail where we saw seals lounging on the rocks. Flash forward to this summer when I arrived in Vancouver and on one of my first walks along the waterfront, I saw a seal swimming toward me and I instantly felt that same childhood excitement. This is when I knew I wanted to use both seals and flowers in my project, and I thought about how to combine them. Figures 17 and 18 show seals from Nova Scotia and Figures 19 and 20 show photographs I took of seals in the Vancouver Aquarium.



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



# ARTIST OF INSPIRATION MARY YUUSIPIK SINGAQTI

A Baker Lake artist, Mary Yuusipik Singaqti, particularly interested me. Shown in Figure 21 is her piece called *Surviving on the Land* (2001) made with wool felt and embroidery thread on wool duffel. I really enjoyed this piece because of the multiple animal depictions within the work. I like how each animal has a little personality and they stand alone yet interact with each other through colour and stitching over top. Seeing her work inspired me to work with appliqué and stitch options.

Another interesting artwork by the same artist is shown in Figure 22. This piece is called *Night on the Land* (1980) and appears similar in style to her piece in Figure 21 with the same materials and techniques. In this work I also really enjoyed the animals but find particular interest in the way the people are interacting with them. I like how the little people are fishing and the animals are standing around watching. This made me smile and feel excitement from the story telling in her work.



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



## ARTIST OF INSPIRATION KANANGINAK POOTOOGOOK

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Pootoogook is a self-taught Indigenous graphic artist from Cape Dorset, Nunavut who developed a keen interest in Northern wildlife through his work (Dorset Fine Arts, n.d.). Figure 24 titled *Arctic Seals*, (2008) and Figure 23 titled *Mother's Embrace* (2005) show two of his prints depicting seals. I found inspiration in these images because of the simple shapes with intense textured details within them. I enjoyed how each seal has a unique facial expression and appears to be very happy and engaged with the viewer. Figure 23 was especially relevant to my process because of the mother and pup bond shown. The mother seal is nurturing and protective of her baby which is something I brought into my final piece where I developed a playful setting with two mother seals and their pups.



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



# ARTIST OF INSPIRATION MARY OKHEENA

Okheena is a printmaker and embroidery artist from Holman, Northwest Territories. Her work is playful and engaging and explores narratives of humans interacting with nature (Inuit Art Quarterly, n.d.). Although my wall hanging does not have people in it, I took inspiration from her animals and their expressions. Figure 25 shows one of Okheena's prints called *Whisper* (1993) where seals are swimming around a person with one predominate seal in front. I took interest in this seal because of its unique shape and positioning and brought this into my new seal designs in the first part of Winter term.

Figure 26 is another piece by Okheena which is a wool and felt wall hanging with appliquéd elements called *Untitled: Hunter Overlooking Seal* (1955). This shows a simpler seal figure where his fins are more spread apart. I designed my seals with these figures in mind and ultimately took elements of each to develop my own seal shapes.



Fig. 25

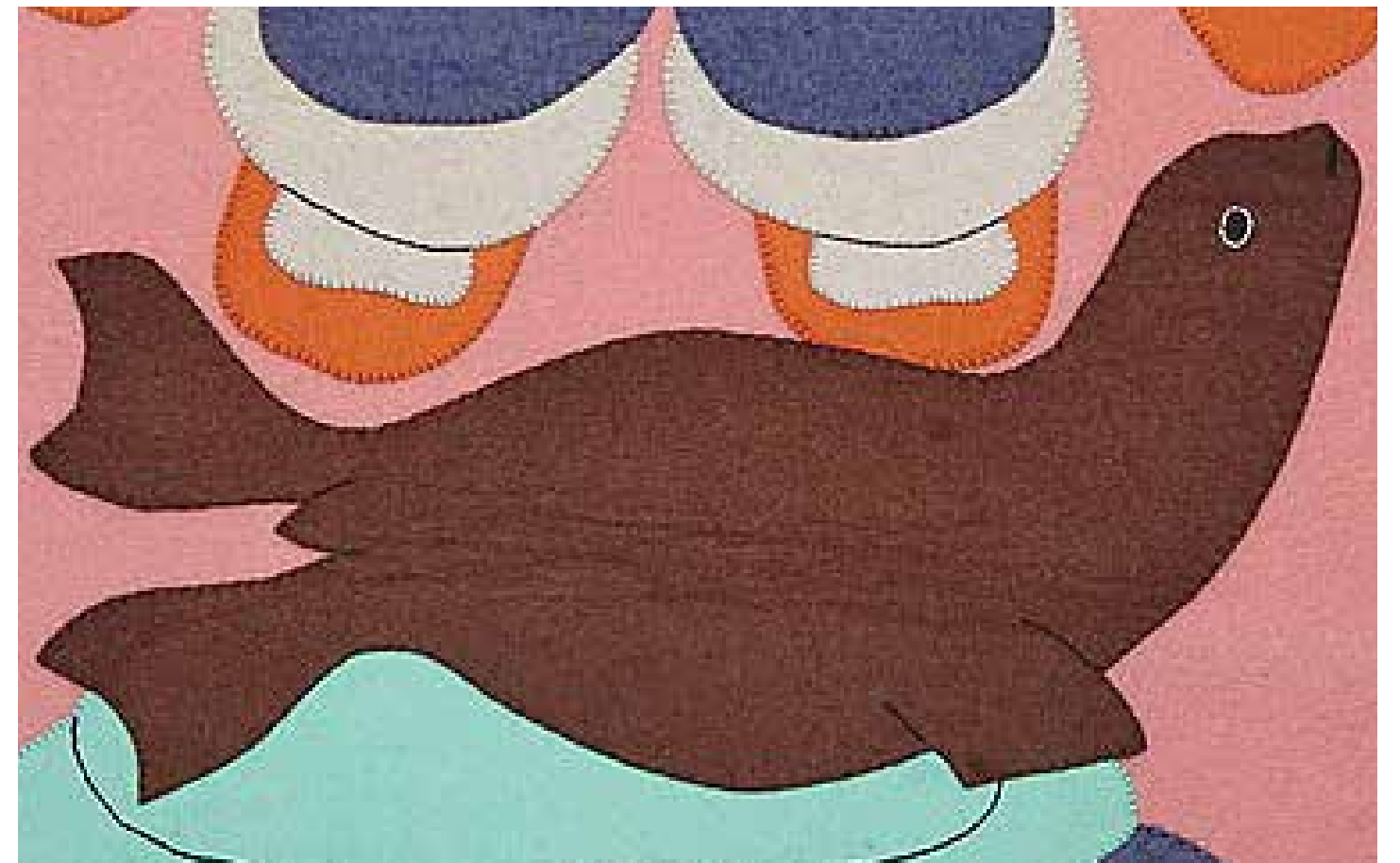


Fig. 26



# IMAGE INSPIRATION

These Stock images served as a perfect visual resource for this project as they combine the two elements I used in my project: florals and aquatic life. The way the whales express excitement and joy as they overlap and burst through the flowers fueled me to begin to creatively think about how my seals and flowers could interact in a similar way. I was surprised to find in my extensive research there were many images of whales and fish with florals, but it was harder to find ones with seals. Although this was a bit intimidating at first it ultimately made my ideas feel more unique and exciting. I think it can sometimes be almost more interesting when this happens because without a framework or reference to base an idea off it gives permission to be as wild and creative as you want. As I tested many different arrangements with my flowers and seals in the following weeks I kept referencing back to these whales. I am grateful I found them as they served as the jumping off point for the beginning stages of my final project.



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



# CHILDREN'S BOOKS INSPIRATION: ANTHROPOMORPHISM

Author Juliet Kellogg Markowsky wrote a journal article titled *Why Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature?* (1975). She says, "many authors suggest that all humans, not only children, need to participate in an occasional flight into fantasy" (p. 461) My Capstone project indeed has themes of anthropomorphism where the seals are interacting with each other, the flowers, and the audience in a human like way. I paid particular attention to facial expressions when I designed my seals and because they are happy and playful, I gave them all smiles. Through my research I found a children's book called *Klondike do not eat Those Cupcakes* illustrated by Amanda Driscoll (2018) which really inspired my reference for playful seal imagery. Figure 31 shows Klondike who was a big inspiration for my work early on in this project and I really enjoyed the playful/anthropomorphic elements of him. Figure 32 shows some rough sketches I made based off his figure.

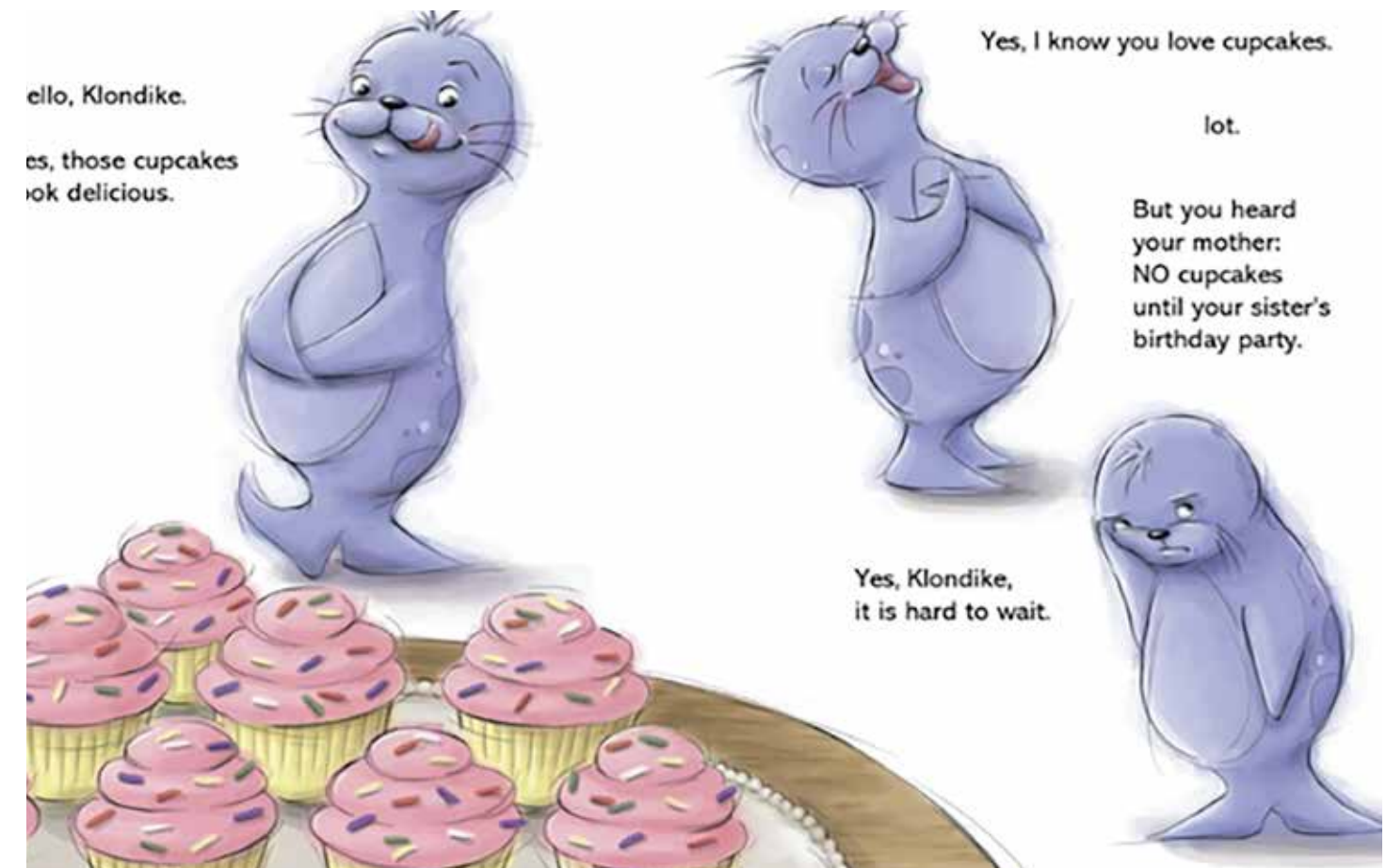


Fig. 31

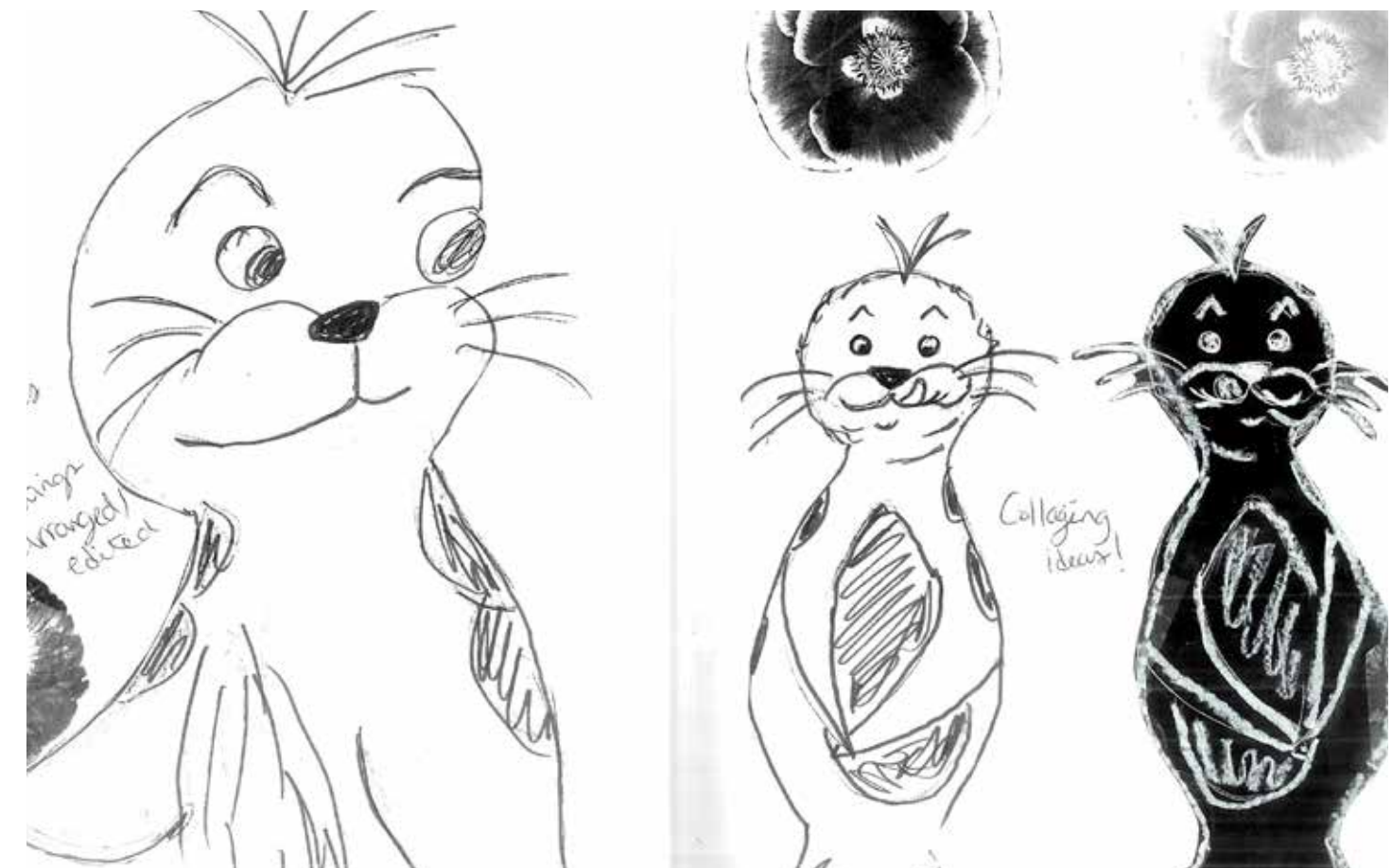


Fig. 32





Fig. 33



Fig. 34

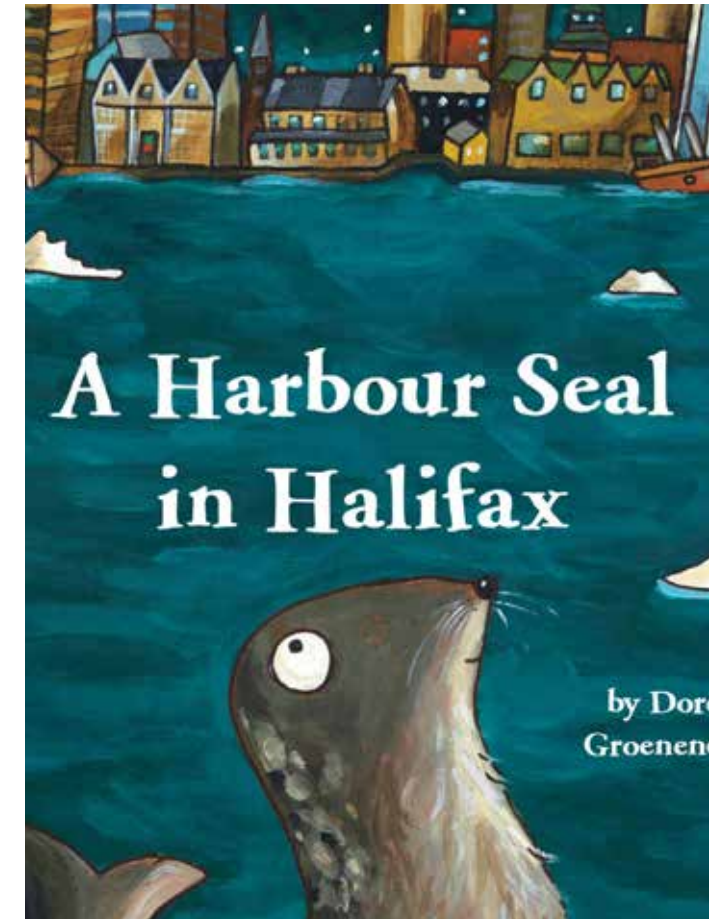


Fig. 35



Fig. 36

In my research I also found a book called *Swimming with Seals* (Figure 33) illustrated by Janice Kun. I drew a rough sketch to gain some practice with seal drawings (Figure 34) and ended up using her artwork as inspiration for the shape of my seals. Along with this, I really liked the texture and colour of the backgrounds in this book which I used as ideas for my final wall hanging background.

When I found the book *A Harbour Seal in Halifax* (Figure 35) illustrated by Doretta Groenendyk I was excited to see seals from Nova Scotia portrayed in a fun illustrated form. I really loved the way the seal's expression brought him to life and made me smile. I also sketched this seal out for practice (Figure 36).



## SKETCHING SEALS

---

To get a bit more acquainted with seal figures, I sat and drew close to 50 different iterations of seals based directly on the many children's books I looked at. After I felt I had gained some confidence of the seal figure I then drew out my own seal interpretations. These seal sketches in Figure 37 are entirely from my imagination and unique to me — I wanted my seals to be a bit quirky and imaginative. Once I narrowed down a few favourites, I brought some into Photoshop and spent some time editing in there. Although I do prefer Photoshop to hand drawing, it was valuable for me to get a bit out of my element and hand draw. I am glad I did this too because I ended up using two of these seals in my large sample wall hangings.

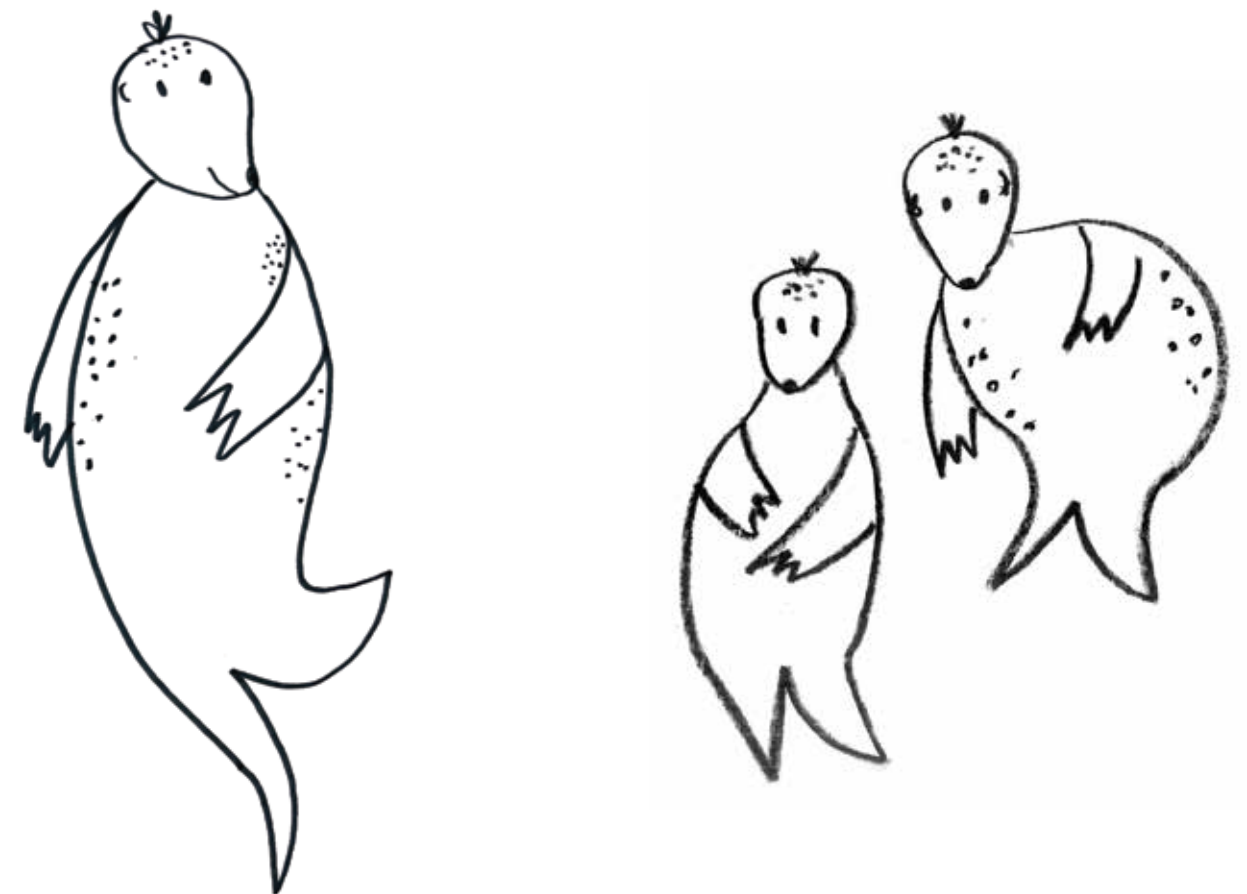
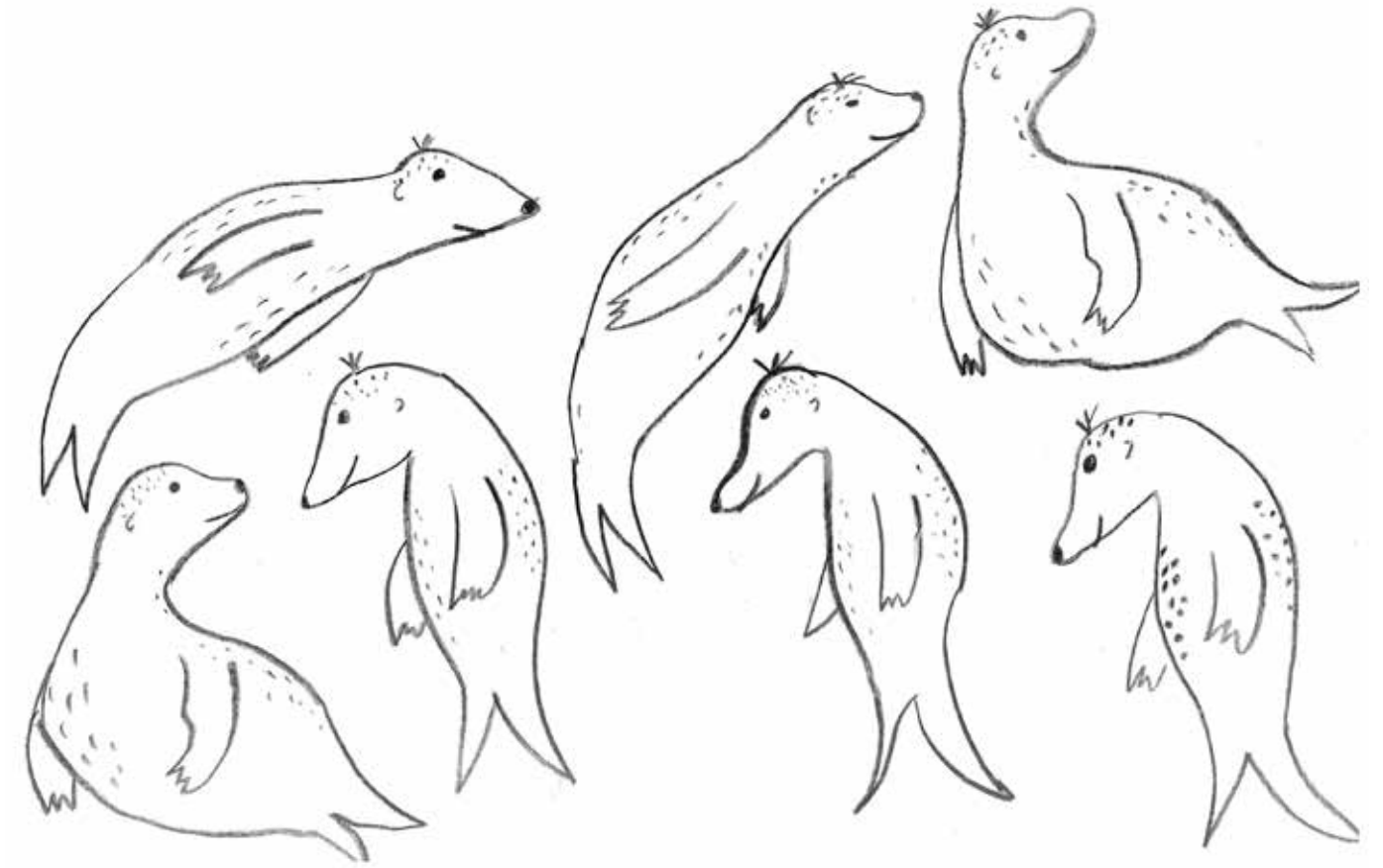


Fig. 37



# PLAYING IN PHOTOSHOP

I relied heavily on Photoshop for the design process of this project. It helped me draw the seals in different positions and decide on the seal images I wanted to use. I am a very visual person so to be able to move them around in different arrangements with the flowers and test scale was an amazing resource. It was a huge time saver which I feel advanced my ideas greatly. Figure 39 shows my Photoshop setup and Figure 38 shows a few of my preliminary ideas. I had a lot of fun with this process, and it really helped me to get more excited about my project.



Fig. 38

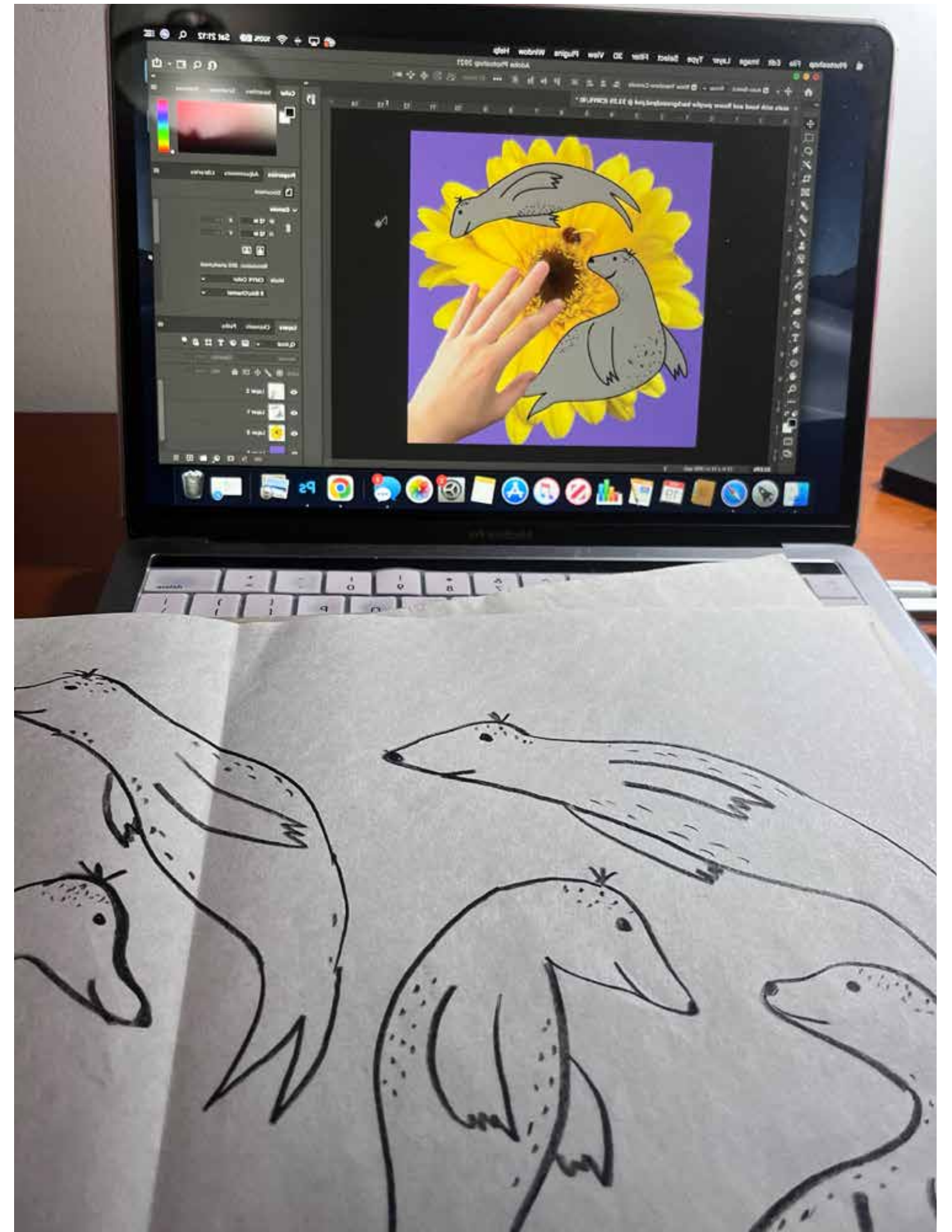


Fig. 39





Fig. 40



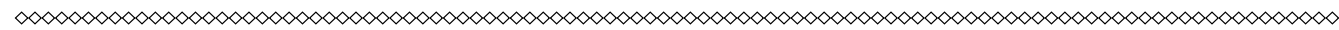
Fig. 41



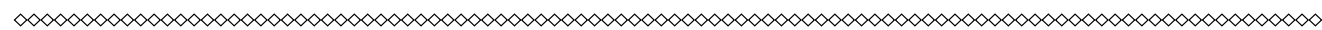
Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Photoshop allowed me to play around with all my ideas no matter how crazy they were. Figures 40-43 show only a small portion of these digital drawings. At this time, I still was unsure of what I wanted my final to look like and I thought it may be interesting if a human element was added. I took pictures of my hands in different positions and began to have some fun experimenting.





# DIGITALLY PRINTED FABRIC

This figure shows a picture of me the day I received my digitally printed fabric (94.5"x39") in the mail. I was surprised how big the flowers ended up being since I had only been working with them on Photoshop so far. Going from on screen to real life measurement was a big jump and hard to imagine until it arrived. I was super excited to cut them out and test out some arrangements in real life. The flower photos I took are very visually stimulating which is why they are digitally printed on fabric. As I look at these beautiful flowers I feel in awe of nature and the unique charm each floral has. By directly printing them onto fabric without any edits this locks their life in time. The colours make me happy each time I look at them and I am never bored with their intense detail. They are printed at an extremely large scale to highlight this beauty even more as well as add to the playful theme.



Fig. 44



## SAMPLE WALL HANGINGS: CONSTRUCTION

---

After the digitally printed flowers arrived and I saw just how big they were, I decided to make some sample wall hangings with my seal designs at a larger scale. To create these seals, I used a loofah with grey pigment and spun it around in small circles all over a piece of fabric to give a textured look (Figure 45). I then printed off two of my seal sketches and used them as a template to cut out this fabric (Figure 46). I then made two wall hangings with a variety of mixed media textiles.

These final sample wall hangings (shown on the following pages in Figures 48 and 55) were felted, embroidered, and beaded to provide the audience invitation to interact. Along with this, both seals were detailed with happy expressions to also make viewers smile. I made these two wall hangings to explore my ideas further and gave each a different environment: the first with a watery theme and the other with an outer space theme.

Note: This still shows the exploration phase of my project as they were made only at the halfway point of the thesis year.



Fig. 45



Fig. 46





Fig. 47

I used Photoshop through this process before finalizing my pieces to ensure the layout would work well with my seals and digitally printed flowers. Figure 48 shows me with one of my sample wall hangings (approximately 1m x 1.5m).



Fig. 48





Fig. 49



Fig. 50



Fig. 51

For this first wall hanging I used a variety of mixed media textiles (close up detailed shot in Figure 49). The felted, embroidered, and beaded parts gave the piece texture and interest. Figures 50-51 show the process of felting and embroidering the leaves and Figures 52-53 show beading with wire for an added three-dimensional bumblebee on the seal's nose.



Fig. 52



Fig. 53





Fig. 54

I made drastically different environments for these two wall hangings. The first with a watery background, and this one with an outer space theme. I did this to get better acquainted with my seals and have a bit of fun exploring options.



Fig. 55





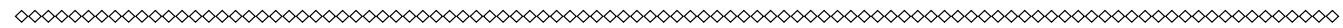
Fig. 56



Fig. 57



Fig. 58



I used stitching and beading for this seal to give an interactive element (detailed shot in Figure 56). Figures 57-60 show close up images of me slow stitching and Figure 59 shows a closeup of the gold boarder I made around the poppy. In the following weeks I carried this stitching idea forward and used it in my final piece to embroider a boarder around all the flowers as well.

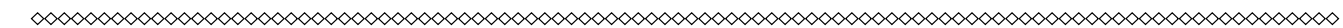


Fig. 59



Fig. 60



# WINTER TERM WEEKS 1-7

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At this point I was still not set on the designs of my seals, so I decided to re-search some more seal imagery. Once I found some seal designs, I rethought how they could interact with the digitally printed flowers more organically. Leaning heavily on Photoshop again to sketch ideas, I tried some different layouts with flowers in the background. To add to the playfulness of this project, I designed two mother seals with their babies and made them all bright colours. I experimented with layouts of the seals and flowers and came to a final plan. I did research into playful behaviours of mothers and their seal pups and used this in my display. With the flowers in the background, I experimented with ways the seals could be in front or behind them. I sampled with handmade mark making on the background fabric to create different watery textures and did some research into ways to tie it all together. As this project's overarching theme relates to the cycle of life of both the flowers and seals, I went down a research rabbit hole and found a symbol called the Flower of Life which I use in the background as well.

---







# PLAY BEHAVIOUR IN SEALS

---

An article called *Studying Seals* by Research done at Durham University discussed playful interactions between mother and seal pups. This was another idea I had for the arrangement of my pieces. Additional research from an article by NOAA Fisheries (2022) said mother seals surprisingly only have one pup at a time. In this article they discuss two behaviours mothers use to play with their pups. One behaviour is called nose pup which is when the mother uses her nose to move the pup into a desired direction and maintain contact (Figure 63). The other is flippering pup where the mother uses her front flipper to stroke the pup lightly. Other behaviours recorded in this research were additional play behaviours “like light biting, weak open-mouth threats to pup, climbing on pup, and placing a flipper on pup that are executed in combination.” In my design I decided I would use “nose pup” with two mother seals and their pups interacting with the flowers in playful ways.



Fig. 63





Fig. 64

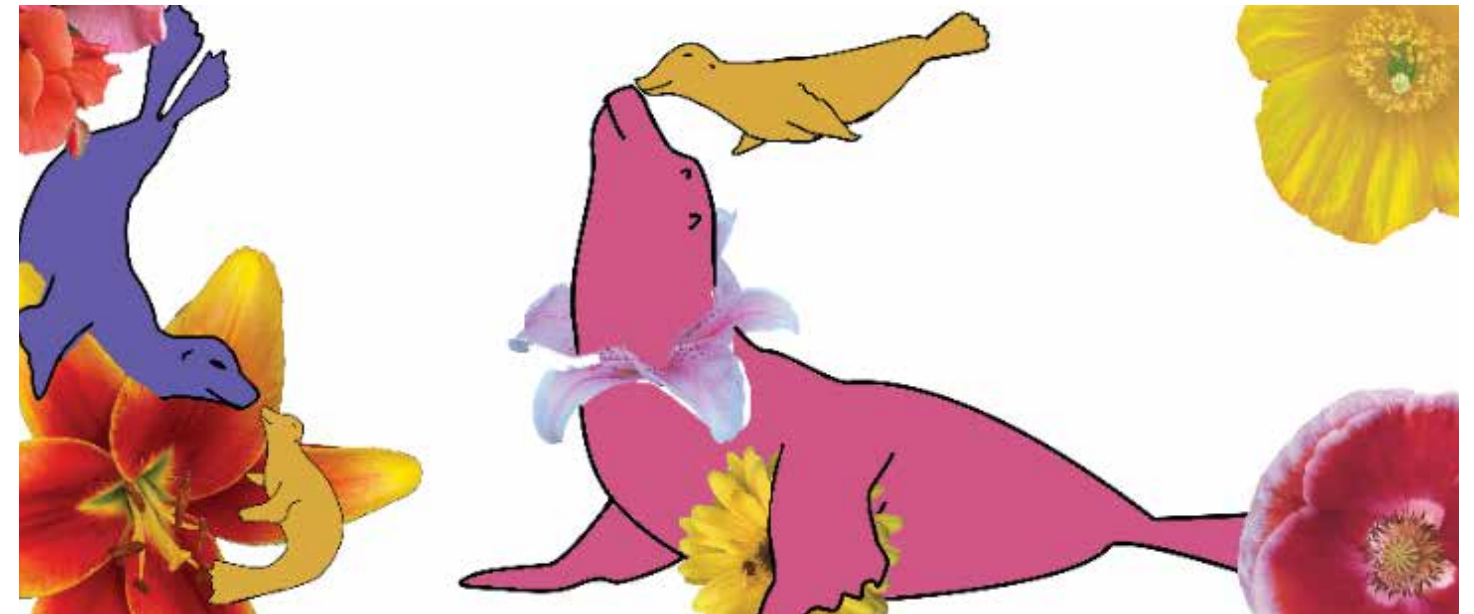
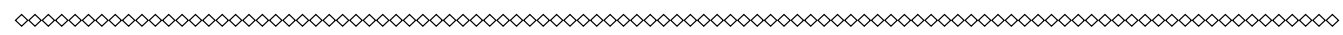


Fig. 65



My direction from the first term changed when I experimented with different layouts using my new mother and baby seal designs. Through using Photoshop to fiddle around with the layouts this provided me with a quick way to come up with new layout ideas.

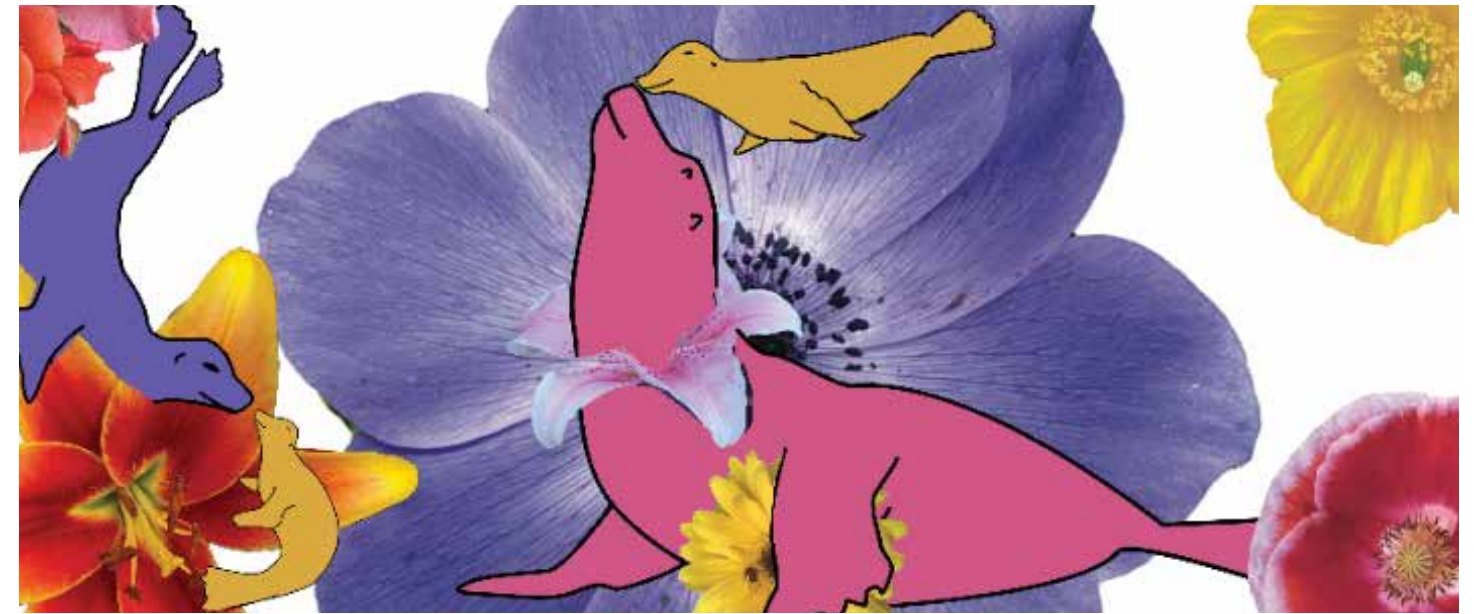
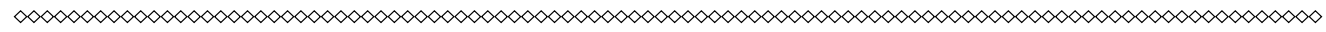


Fig. 66



## NATURALLY DYED FABRICS

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I made the seals colourful to match the flowers and accentuate the playfulness of the piece. Natural dyes are fitting since my project contains elements of nature and so it is appropriate the seals fit into this as well. Logwood is a natural dye which comes from the bark of a logwood tree. It creates a purple colour when applied to fabric and is used for one of the mother seals. (Logwood extract, n.d.). Cochineal is another natural dye I used which created a pink colour for the other mother seal. The company the dye comes from, Maiwa, says it is derived from ground female *Dactylopius* bugs. These bugs are shipped mainly from Peru and colonize in a pear cactus (Cochineal from Maiwa Supply, n.d.). The baby seals are natural dyed yellow with the dye plant weld. Maiwa says it is traditionally grown in Europe and is found on the side of railways or roads (Weld raw material, n.d.).

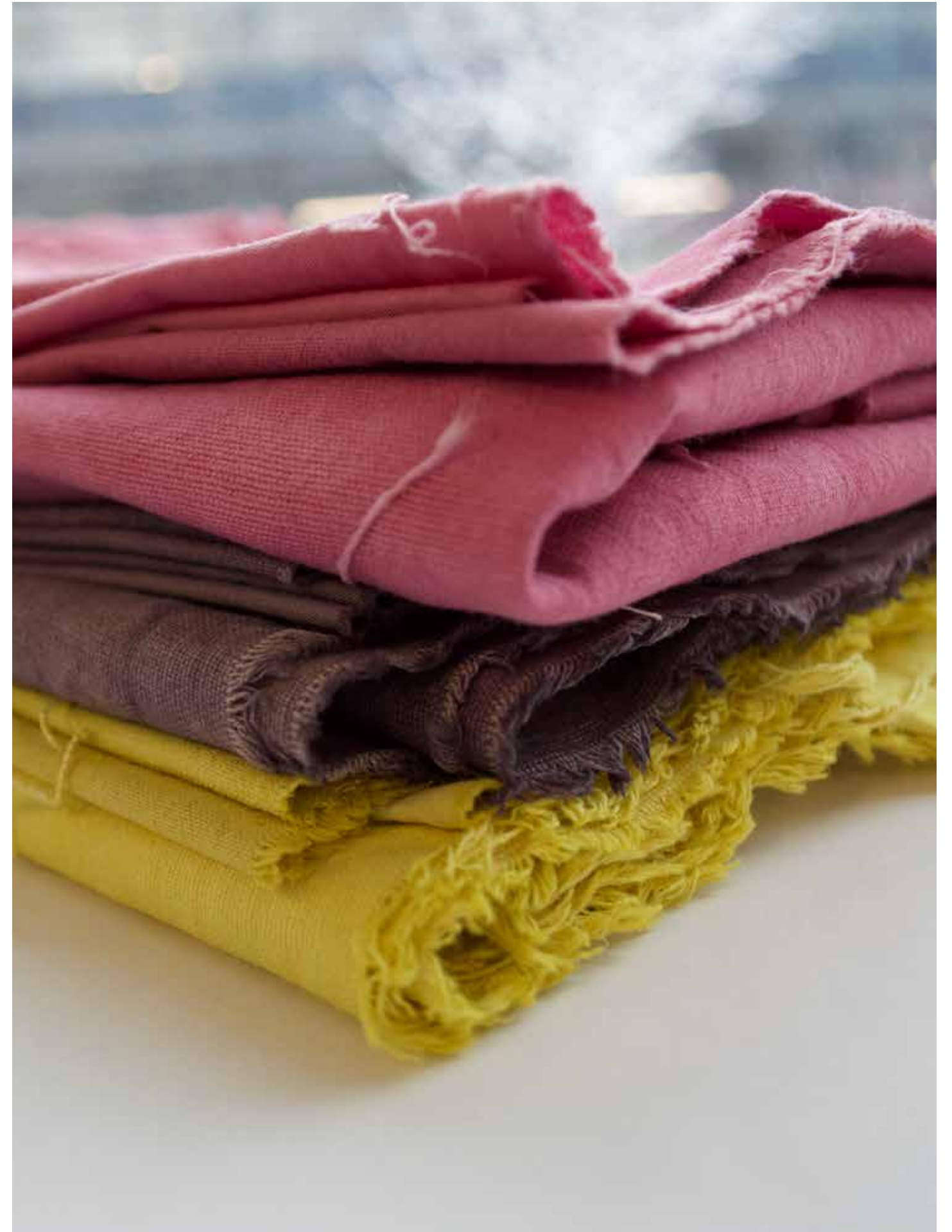


Fig. 67





Fig. 68

Natural dyes need to be cooked on the stove for several hours with the fibres submerged to create a deep and lasting colour.

This figure shows me ambitiously cooking all three colours at once which required lots of multitasking and stirring.



Fig. 69



Fig. 70

Weld, logwood, and cochineal dye pots with their corresponding dried dyestuff beneath.





Fig. 71

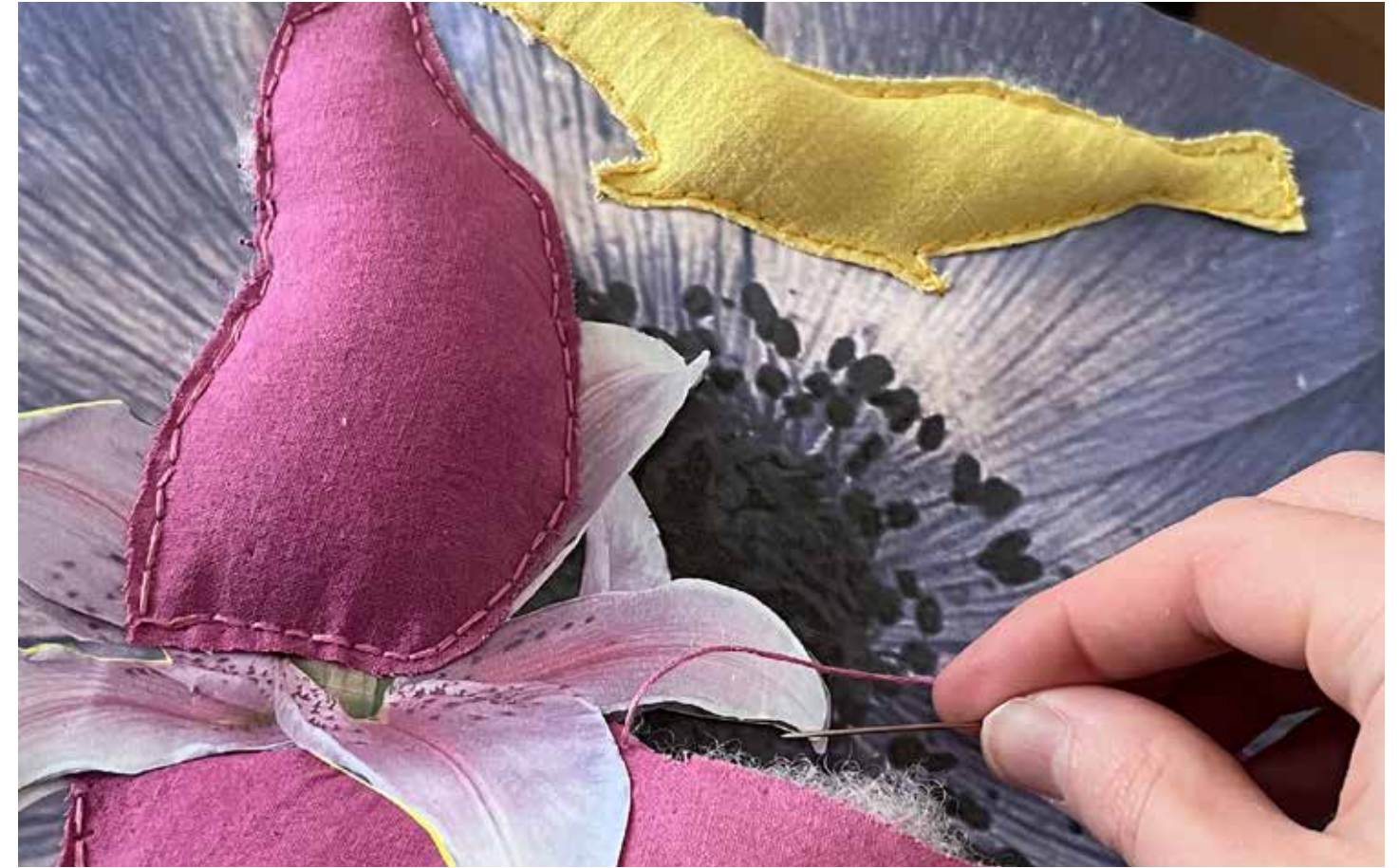
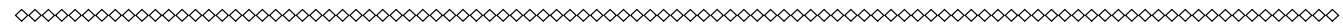


Fig. 72



Fig. 73



Using naturally dyed fabrics for the seals also furthers themes of the land and water divide since these dyes are only found on land and seals are water creatures. Before I created my final wall hanging piece, I tested ideas on a smaller scale by using paper backgrounds with my different flower designs (Figure 72-73). I tested out appliqué and stitching techniques for the seals using these naturally dyed fabrics.

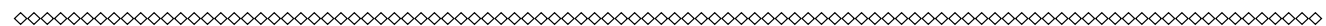






Fig. 74



Fig. 75

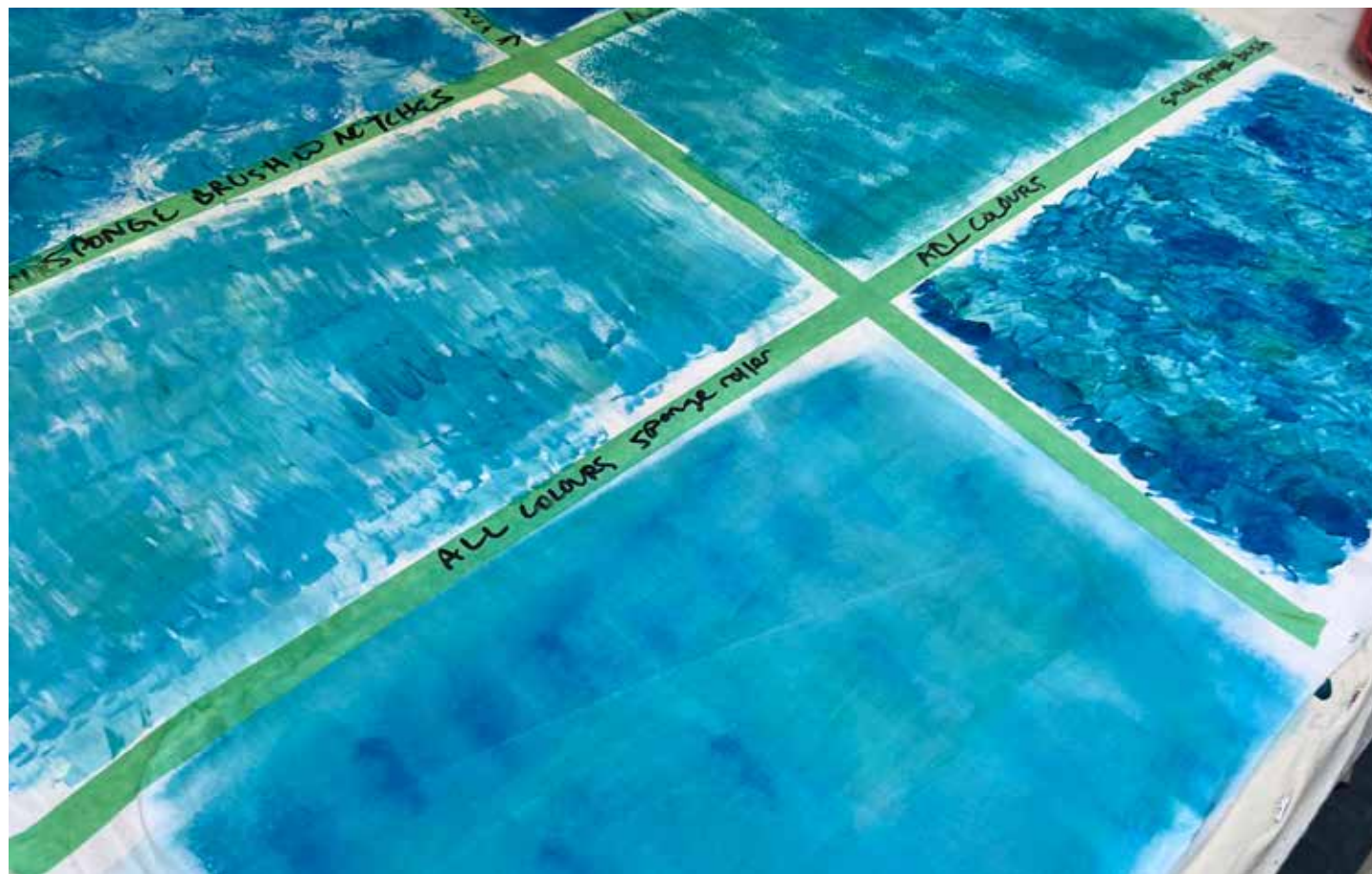
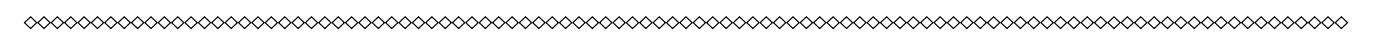


Fig. 76



Fig. 77



I tested out many mark making techniques to come up with the final background for my wall hanging piece (Figures 74-76). I knew I wanted it to be a combination of blues and greens to give a watery look to show the seals swimming. Figure 77 shows a mock-up of the seals with one of these test backgrounds

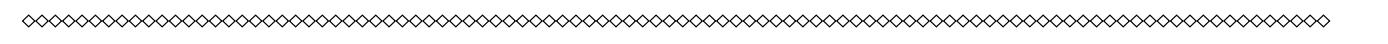






Fig. 78

After experimenting with backgrounds my final decision was to use a large sponge to dab the piece of fabric by selecting from the blue and green pigments I made.

## BACKGROUND MATERIAL: COTTON

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I work almost exclusively with cotton in this project. I use it for the digitally printed fabric, the naturally dyed seals, for the background, and in the embroidery floss. I have always enjoyed working with cellulose fibres and feel I gravitate towards them more than protein fibres. I like the way cotton feels natural and I enjoyed using different forms of it in this project. The flowers feel softer and thinner as they are printed on cotton sateen whereas the background has rougher and thicker cotton to stabilize the heavy elements on the piece.



# FLOWER LIFE SYMBOL

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After the background was complete I thought it needed a bit more detail for added texture. This is when I went down a research rabbit hole and found the Flower of Life design. The Flower of Life is an ancient Egyptian symbol that contains equal sized circles overlapping to create a pattern which resembles a flower. Author Caroline Cory from the History Channel (2019) says it is “the information behind how the universe was created. Everything in the universe is geometric”. It was used in ancient architecture and art and Da Vinci even used it famously in much of his artwork. Author of *The Ancient Secret of The Flower of Life* (Melchizedek, 2000), says the symbol represents the life of a fruit tree. As the tree grows it starts with a flower bud and then forms into fruit which contains seeds. As the fruit ages it falls to the ground and grows a new tree and so the cycle continues. Figure 79 shows an image of this symbol in repeat.

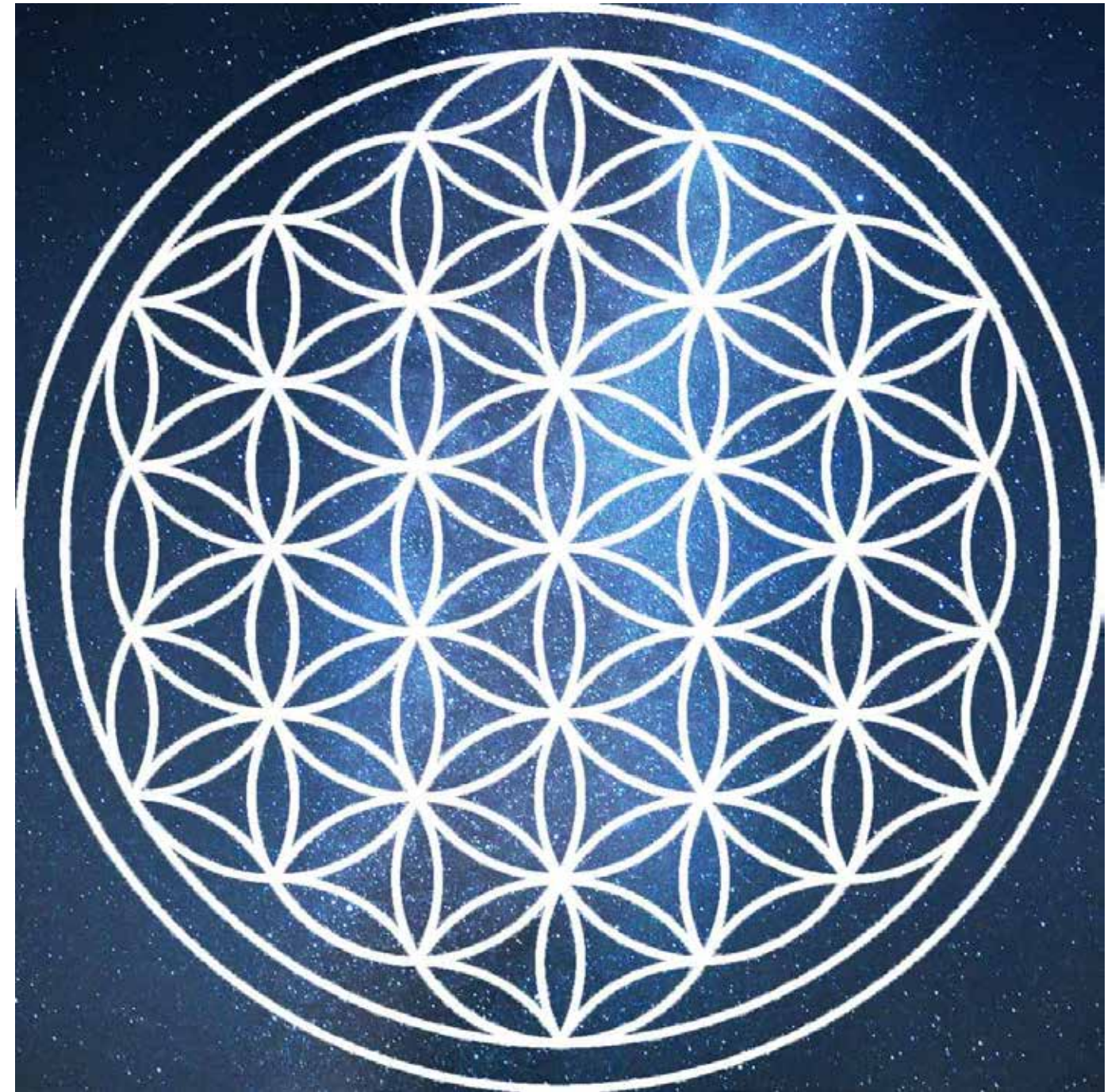


Fig. 79



# PRINTING THE FLOWER OF LIFE SYMBOL

I chose to include this symbol in the background of my work because Melchizedek's fruit tree analogy explained the cycle of life as it associated with my flower photographs as well as the bond a mother seal experiences with her pup.

The digitally printed flowers in my work capture the moment in time where they were at their peak beauty. Soon after I took the photos the flowers would have died as the season changed but I take comfort in knowing there is the promise that next summer they will re bloom. Along with this, the mother seal and pup bond displayed in my work retells this story of the cycle as well. Mother seals only have one pup at a time and therefore their special relationship is heightened. As the baby ages the mother teaches him all she knows and then releases them to continue the cycle. Figure 80 shows me printing the symbol in repeat onto the background and Figure 81 shows the final result once complete. I carefully chose to only faintly print this symbol on the background to not draw attention away from the flowers and seals. It is not meant to be part of them but more used as a narrative.



Fig. 80



Fig. 81



# WINTER TERM WEEKS 8-14

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In the last few months of the school year, I focused on completing my final wall hanging piece. At this time, I began working on the background using hand mark making techniques as well as I screen printed the Flower of Life design on top. Along with this I solidified the designs of my seals and used my naturally dyed fabric to sew and stuff them. After I received my digitally printed flowers, I began to experiment with layouts including the seals. Since the seals were stuffed, I added some dimension and structure to these flowers as well using wire and structured fabric. I spent a lot of time slowly stitching the details on the flowers and testing them in the perfect positions on the background. To complete the piece, I experimented ways to attach all these elements to the background and finally decided on Velcro. With lots of trial and error the piece finally all came together, and my project was all done. Eight months of hard work paid off and it was displayed in the graduation show at Sheridan College and then made its way to the Textile Museum of Canada for a few months.

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# MAKING THE SEALS

I made the seals in a lighthearted way with unique gestures and form. To give a playful feeling they were made using coloured fabric, which was naturally dyed pink, purple, and yellow. I positioned the mothers and their pups facing each other so they could express their smiles and joy to each other.

This whole process was a lot of fun and I had many moments of reflection and joyful memories associated with these flowers and seals. Figures 82-83 show the process of making mock-ups of the seals before sewing the finals.



Fig. 82



Fig. 83



Fig. 84





Fig. 85

Creating these rough drafts allowed me to see how they looked with the final background and flowers (Figure 84). After I was satisfied with their designs, I sewed the final seals with my coloured fabric and made them using the same technique as I did for the mock-ups. The only change I made was adding some stuffing since the mock ups were too flat.



Fig. 86



# MAKING THE FLOWERS

The flowers use colour, form, and material to make them appear playful and interactive in my final piece. Figure 88 shows how I made the flowers three dimensional by adding structured fabric with wire which allowed them to bend and shape around the seals. The flowers were digitally printed at an extremely oversized scale to maintain their colourful appearance and intense detail. Figure 87 shows the flowers slightly bent after their wire backs were applied.



Fig. 87

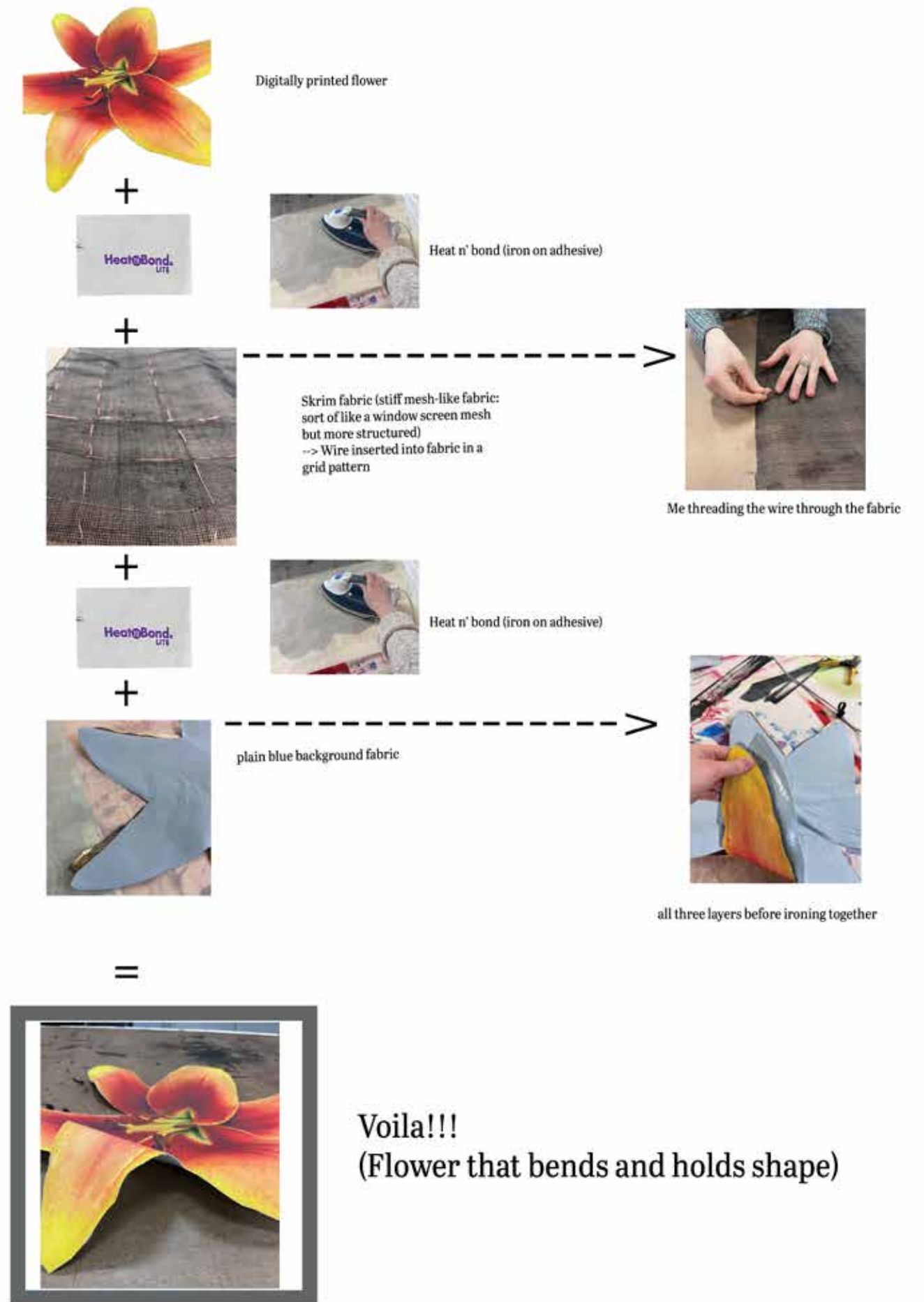


Fig. 88



## FLOWER DETAILS

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After the flowers were finished I changed my mind on how the backs were made. They were originally a plain blue background but I did not like this anymore. I felt it looked messy since the iron made the wires show through the fabric and cause discolouration. In response to this I made a silk satin background with embroidery stitch details instead. This was a big learning curve because since I had changed the background again this meant I had to finish the edges of the flowers once more. Although I am very happy I made this change it did take a lot longer than I thought to do this. I thought about dyeing the silk backgrounds for all of them but instead kept the silk white and added embroidery stitches instead. I was happy with the contrast this provided to the piece and how it gave it a small detail. Since these flowers pop out away from the seals on my wall hanging I wanted to make sure the backgrounds looked okay since viewers may try to look around or underneath the flowers. Figures 89-90 shows close up details of their backs.



Fig. 89



Fig. 90



## FLOWER DETAILS: A DEDICATION

Towards the end of the school year my dear friend Mia passed away after a two-year battle with brain cancer. To honour her memory, I stitched a little note on the back of my three flowers. Her laugh was infectious, and she remained positive and bubbly despite her tragic circumstance. She will truly be missed by so many. Figure 91 shows us together in 2013. Figures 92-94 show the messages: For Mia, my beautiful friend. May your laugh light up the heavens and may your spirit live on.



Fig. 91



Fig. 92



Fig. 93



Fig. 94



# SLOW STITCH

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My project contains elements of slow stitch in the details on the flower edges as well as on the seals and in the background. A slow stitching book by Claire Wellesley-Smith (2015) describes the history of the Slow Movement. In the mid 1980s this movement started in Italy by Carlo Petrini to protest fast food restaurants and encourage people to use local sources in a more sustainable way. Wellesley-Smith quotes Carl Honoré in this book by saying “the slow philosophy can be summed up in a single word: balance” (p. 9). These ideas soon bled into the everyday lives of people and eventually trickled down into fashion and textiles. Relating to this, an article on hand stitching by Emma Shercliff (2015) describes stitching in an interesting way as well. She says, “the focused hand-eye coordination required for the precision and repetition of needlework can engender an almost trance-like state of mind” (p. 196). I relate to this feeling as this is the reason I chose to include slow stitch in this project.



Fig. 95





Fig. 96



Fig. 97



Fig. 98

Stitching the borders of all the flowers was a very slow process requiring many hours of work. The three flowers with wire took approximately eight hours each and since I changed their backs this took double the time. Although this task was repetitive it was quite relaxing once I got into the flow. Figures 96-97 show the borders close up.

I also used stitching on the seals to give the fins a quilted feel. The decision to do this felt intuitive as seals are large animals so they could use some puff. Figure 98 shows me stitching a mother seal in the studio.



# MY FINAL WALL HANGING

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After all the elements were made, I began piecing together my final wall hanging. I thought it would be interesting if the parts could be taken off and put back on, so I used Velcro to attach both the seals and flowers. This proved to be useful so I decided this is how the wall hanging would be attached to the wall as well. Through much trial and error and repositioning the Velcro I finally finished and presented it to the class in mid-April for our final critique. I am very happy with the way it turned out and feel proud of all my hard work. It was very well received by my classmates and instructors and made everyone smile.

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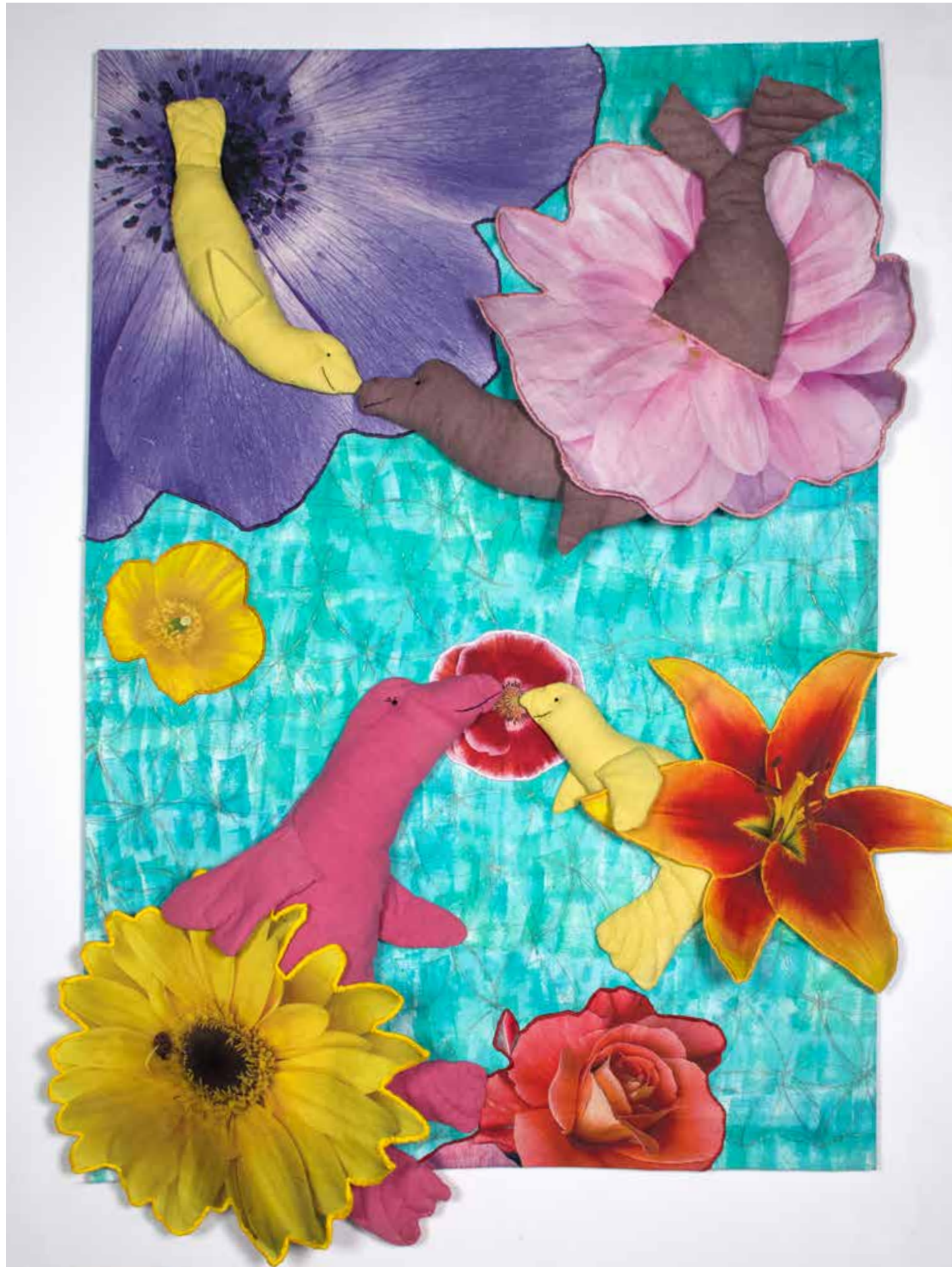


Fig. 99

## FANTASY

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My final wall hanging was created with the intention of producing a fantasy world for the seals as well as the viewers. I combined two elements which challenge the concept of life on land and life in water: flowers and seals. As I designed and worked on this, I imagined the mother seals showing their pups a magical world with flowers in a secret spot of the ocean. It is meant to be a fun, playful, and exciting scene and I am happy with how it was achieved.

Dr. Seuss once said, “fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it’s a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope and that enables you to laugh at life’s realities” (Dr. Seuss Quotes, n.d.). I really love this quote because it gave me permission to go all out with my ideas and take my seals into an unknown world. At times through this process I felt like my ideas were upside down and possibly too fantastical but seeing the final wall hanging puts it all together. Once it was up on the wall and displayed nicely it really all made sense.





Fig. 100

Me happily standing with my wall hanging. It is a very large piece so for size reference I am 5'10. This piece is 48"x70".

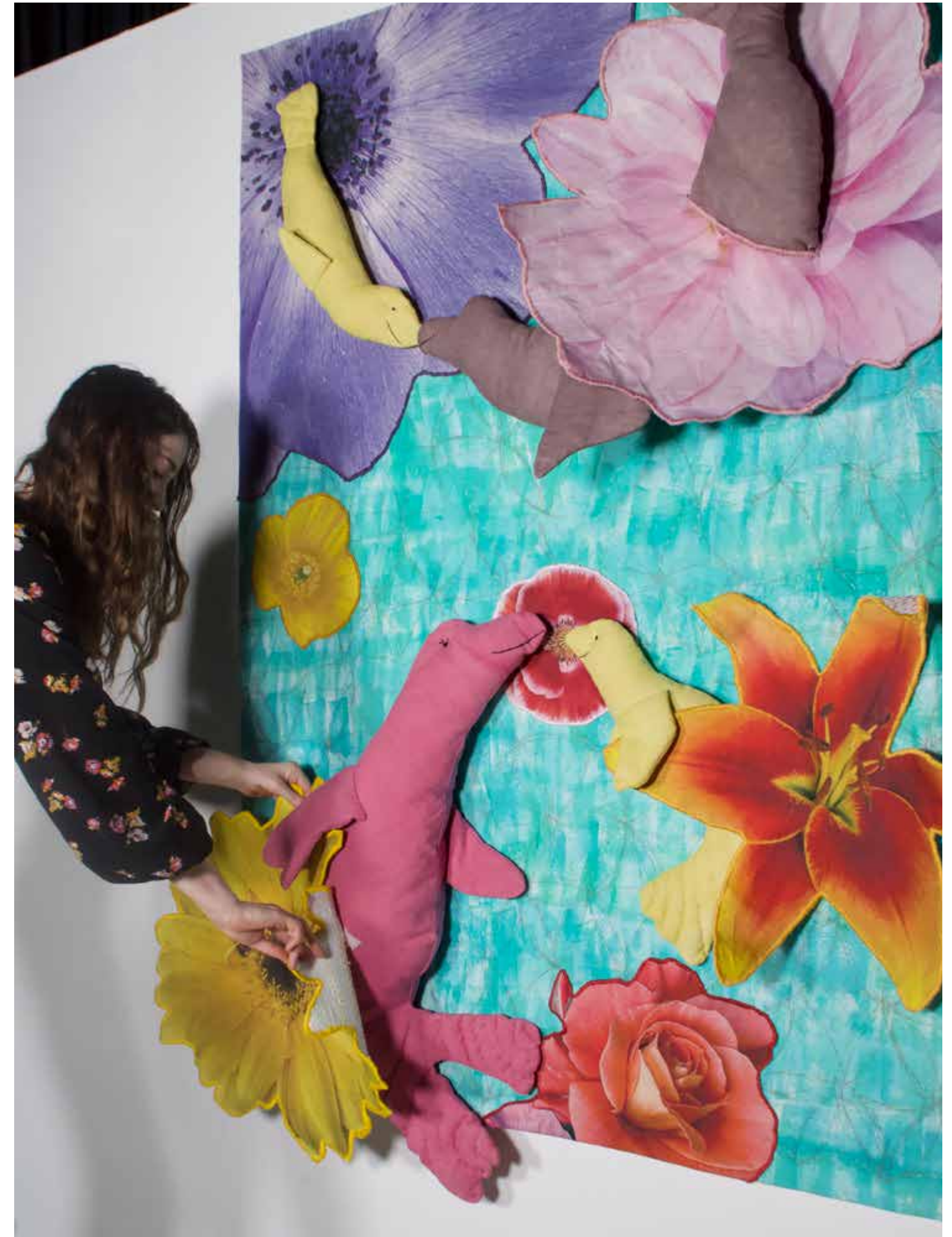


Fig. 101





Fig. 102



Fig. 103



Fig. 104



Fig. 105

# APPLIQUÉ

Appliqué is the process where patches of fabric are sewn to another piece of fabric for various reasons. It was historically used to strengthen worn clothing to extend its life instead of throwing them away (My Modern Met, 2018).

Today appliqué is mostly used in an ornamental way such as patching jeans or creating a quilt. I relied heavily on this technique for my project and applied it both to the flowers and seals. To separate them from the background I sewed each seal separately and to create a sense of dimension and invite interaction I added their fins on so they could be lifted and moved. The flowers were also made separately with their detailed borders. This process was enjoyable and at times challenging. There were so many options of arrangements. It was nice to be able to move the pieces around on the background fabric before securing them and this gave me more opportunity to lay things out and plan as I went.

In order to apply (appliqué) all of these elements I used small strips of Velcro which allowed for easier packaging as well as playfulness. Figures 102-105 shows me attaching the pieces with Velcro.





Fig. 106

These pictures show a close up image of the two mothers and their seal pups interacting with each other and the flowers. They are facing each other smiling and touching noses in a playful way. I am proud I took a lot of care placing all the elements on the wall hanging and made sure it was all lined up well before I added the Velcro. A comment I was particularly happy with from my classmates and instructors at the final critique was how happy it made them feel.

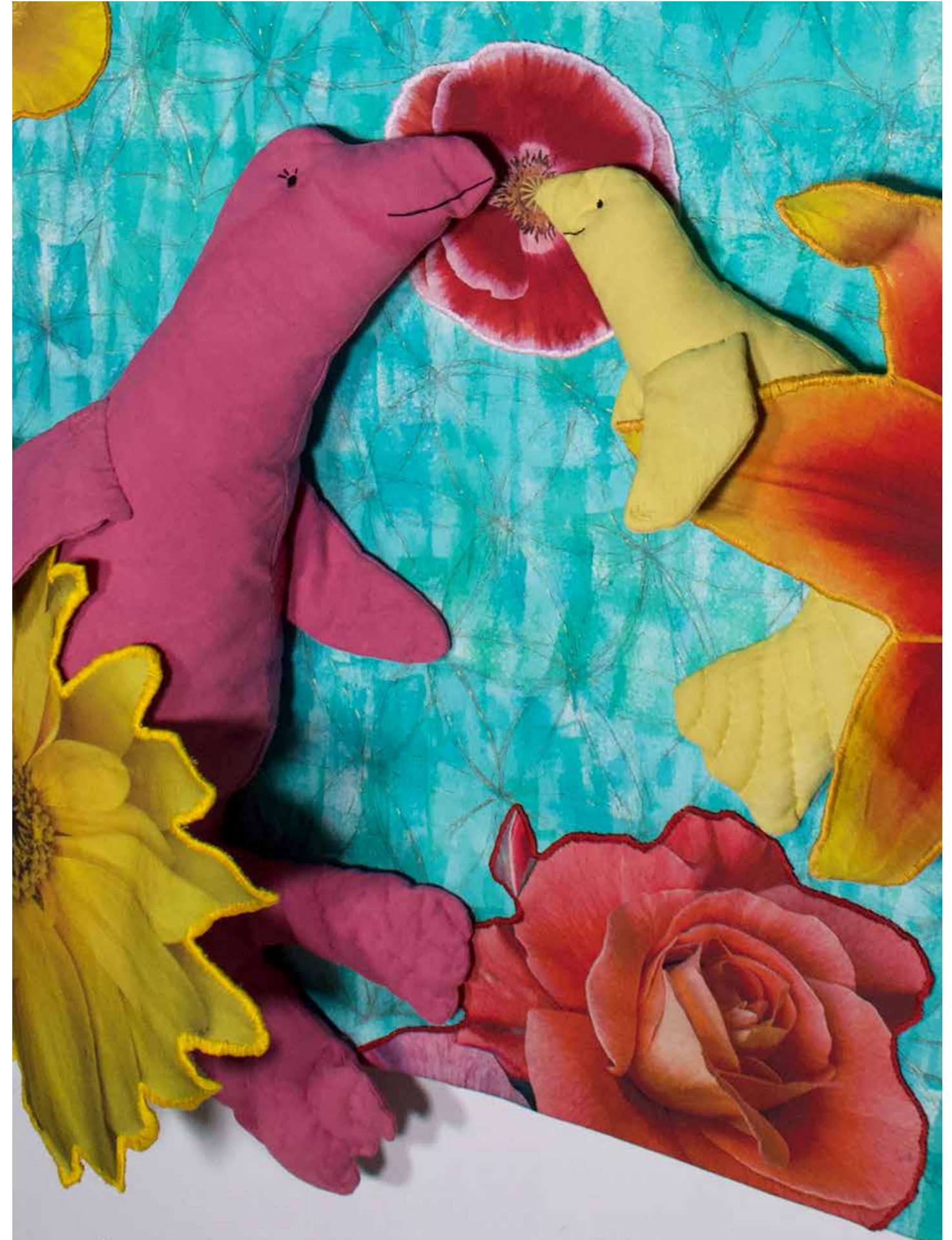


Fig. 107

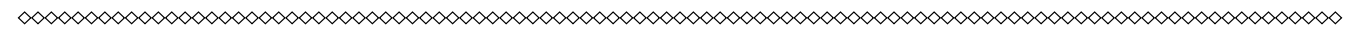




Fig. 108



Fig. 109



These figures show some close up pictures of small details I added in with stitching to give texture and interest to the seal's tails and fins. I almost changed my mind and thought the purple seal should have been placed behind the pink flower, but I am happy I decided to make her swimming through it instead (Figure 108). The way it makes her look like she is wearing a tutu makes me laugh and smile.

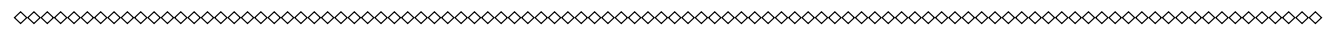


Fig. 110



## FOLLOW THE GOLDEN THREAD

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Throughout this whole thesis process whenever I felt frustrated and lost not knowing where to go next, I would call my mother. She encouraged me through the hard times and gave me many new insights. One conversation that stuck with me was when she told me to listen to what my heart wanted and “just follow the golden thread” with my wall hanging. Her saying this gave me the idea to add some golden thread in the final wall hanging. Figure 110 shows the final touches I added on my background with some stitching in gold thread.

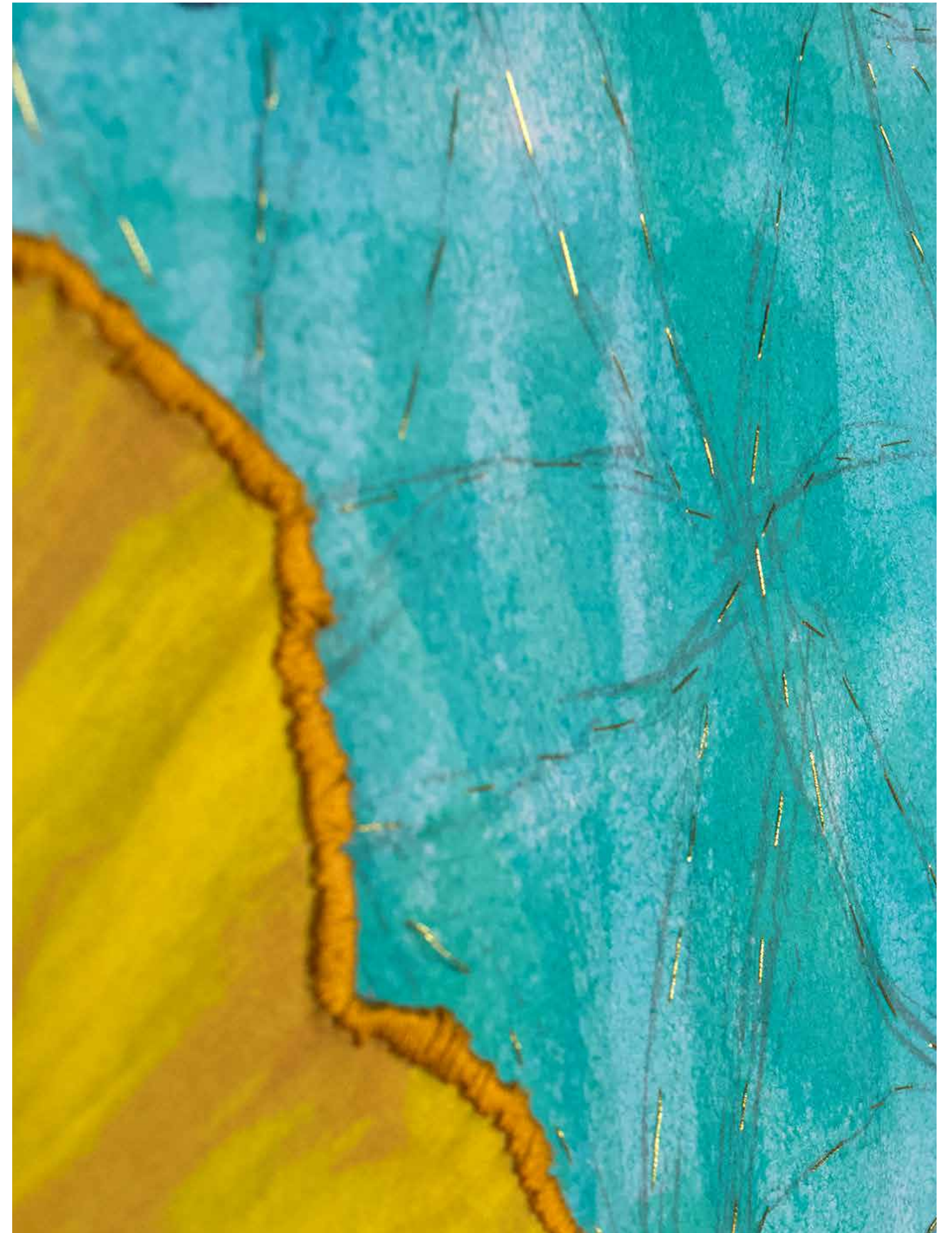


Fig. 111



# SYNTHESIS

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This project was certainly challenging at times, but my overall experience was positive. It was anxiety provoking at first to think I had to choose a project that would last a full year but looking back, it felt more like many mini projects all adding to one large final result. This year was a learning curve and sometimes it felt like I was in the dark and confused on what I wanted to do for the final, but I learned to get excited for those ah-ha moments which ultimately propelled my ideas ahead.

I learned how to research effectively and bring these ideas forward through my work. For example, I did not know that much about seals before this and through research I discovered many interesting things such as play behaviour and the bond a mother has to her pup. Along with this I became more comfortable with Photoshop and heavily relied on it to flesh out my ideas quickly. Sometimes it felt like I had too many thoughts and so Photoshop helped keep up the momentum and allowed me to make multiple digital drawing files with slight changes. It helped me see the bigger picture and allowed me to combine pictures of my physical work into a digital format which made it easier to manipulate them and see many iterations side by side. This also helped me when I felt stuck on what to make for my physical samples and

allowed me to think and plan before starting. I knew from the beginning I wanted my project to be playful, colourful, and joyful but along the way I changed my mind slightly on other themes. I originally was only going to use my photographs of flowers from Vancouver and was basing the seals off ones I had seen there. After a few months of thought and reflection I began to realize I had many photos from flowers in Halifax as well and remembered seeing seals there when I was young. It was through this realization I shifted my project to consider both coasts of Canada as inspiration for both the flowers and seals. Along with this, I originally thought I would make multiple single seals interacting with their own flowers on their own wall hanging panels. I tested this out in the second half of fall term but felt like something was missing so this is when I shifted gears and made multiple seals interacting with each other as well as the flowers. This was when I discovered the playful behaviours mother seals have towards their babies and began to consider this for my project. At this point I noticed a theme emerged relating to cycles of life. Flowers flourish and die through the seasons and it was in my photographs their memory was held. Relating to this, I recognized mother and baby seals illustrated this cycle of life well too. It is the mother's duty and instinct to show her pup all he needs to know before he can be released and continue this cycle. Most importantly, I learned how to trust myself and keep moving forward with certain ideas and concepts and



by doing so the answers revealed themselves slowly. Through looking back at my past work over the years I followed these threads and themes and stayed true to my brand of work. I knew I liked to make colourful textile pieces usually relating to animals or nature, so I continued along this path by choosing flowers and seals. I was proud of myself for sticking to what I knew and expanding it into something beautiful and true to myself. Towards the end of the school year, I got into a strong rhythm and learned to allow room for ideas to evolve quickly on the fly. This was especially true when I decided last minute to add stuffing to the seals as well as include structured fabric and wire to my flowers.

Sometimes I felt like my project was taking two completely different elements and squishing them together and it may be confusing to viewers. At times I was even confused myself! This piece is playful and happy, but it is deeper than merely seals and flowers. It was made to display important parts of my life where I remember being very content and deeply inspired. I have always been excited by nature in its truest form and always looked for its magic and beauty. It may appear strange to mix both flowers and seals but the more I ponder their similarities and meanings to me the more excited I become. This project shares parts of myself and my memories which are personal and highlight times of my life I will never forget. Ultimately happiness was the driving force behind it all.



Fig. 112



# PHOTO APPENDIX

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- Figure 1: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of flower in Vancouver. June 2022.
- Figure on Page 4: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of flower in Vancouver. June 2022.
- Figure on Page 5: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of flower in Halifax. June 2018.
- Figure 2: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of flower in Vancouver. June 2022.
- Figure 3: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of flower in Vancouver. June 2022.
- Figure 4: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of flower drawings. September 2022.
- Figure 5: Phillips, Leah. Scan of sketchbook page of flower drawings. September 2022.
- Figures 6-8: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop file of colour palettes based off photographs of flowers taken. October 2022.
- Figure 9: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of flower in Vancouver. June 2022.
- Figure 10: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop file of flower drawings in different colourways. October 2022.
- Figure 11: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of pigment colours. October 2022.
- Figure 12: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of Leah mixing pigments taken by Viktoria Shirk. October 2022.
- Figure 13: Phillips, Leah. Scan of screen printed flowers. October 2022.
- Figures 14-15: Phillips, Leah. Screenshot of Photoshop object selection tool to take background out of flower. November 2022.
- Figure 16: Phillips, Leah. Screenshot of Art Fabrics file preparation for digitally printed fabric. November 2022.
- Figure 17: Cumes, Julia. Picture of seals on rocks. Photograph. 2020. The Canadian Press. <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/seal-attack-on-nova-scotia-island-leaves-quebec-hunter-with-26-stitches-1.4792329>

- Figure 18: Gallant, Jeffery. Harbour Seals. Photograph. 2010. GEERG. <https://geerg.ca/en/who-is-the-corkscrew-killer/>
- Figures 19-20: Phillips, Leah. Photographs of seals taken at the Vancouver Aquarium. November 2022.
- Figure 21: “Yuusipik Singahti, Mary. Surviving on the Land. wool felt & embroidery floss on wool duffel. 2001. Marion Scott Gallery. <https://marionscottgallery.com/work/surviving-on-the-land-2001-wool-felt-embroidery-floss-on-woolduffel-52-x-59-in/>
- Figure 22: “Yuusipik Singahti, Mary. Night on the Land. wool felt & embroidery floss on wool duffel. 2001. Marion Scott Gallery. <https://marionscottgallery.com/work/night-on-the-land-1980-wool-felt-embroidery-floss-onwool-duffel-55-x-27-in/>
- Figure 23: Pootoogook, Kananginak. Mother’s Embrace. Print. 2005. Canadian Arctic Gallery. <https://www.canadian-arctic.ch/product/mothers-embrace-p919/>
- Figure 24: Pootoogook, Kananginak. Arctic Seals. Print. n.d. Made in Canada Gifts Website. <https://www.madeincanadagifts.ca/products/arctic-seals-kananginak-pootoogook-canadian-inuit-art-print>
- Figure 25: Okheena, Mary. Whisper. Print. 1993. Inuit Art Quarterly. <https://www.inuitartfoundation.org/profiles/artist/Mary-Okheena>
- Figure 26: Okheena, Mary. Untitled (Hunter Overlooking Seal). wool felt & embroidery floss on wool duffel. 1955. Inuit Art Quarterly. <https://www.inuitartfoundation.org/profiles/artist/Mary-Okheena>
- Figure 27: Idinka. Whale with flowers artwork Watercolor composition with blue whale and anemones, roses, fern, peonies bouquet Hand painted animal silhouette isolated. Adobe Stock image. n.d. <https://stock.adobe.com/ca/155404018>
- Figure 28: Yuliya, Zusar. Whale with Flowers. Digital image. n.d. [https://www.freepik.com/premium-vector/whale-with-flowers\\_27354714.htm](https://www.freepik.com/premium-vector/whale-with-flowers_27354714.htm)



Figure 29: Vasia- illi. Watercolor illustration with a large blue whale and lilac flowers and leaves peonies whale mammal. Digital image. n.d. [https://www.freepik.com/premium-photo/watercolor-illustration-with-large-blue-whale-lilac-flowers-leaves-peonies-whale-mammal\\_25297724.htm](https://www.freepik.com/premium-photo/watercolor-illustration-with-large-blue-whale-lilac-flowers-leaves-peonies-whale-mammal_25297724.htm)

Figure 30: Luizovall. Lovely whale made with watercolor pencils and love for your good mood. Digital image. n.d. <https://www.dreamstime.com/whale-flowers-lovely-made-watercolor-pencils-love-your-good-mood-image104911597>

Figure 31: Driscoll, Amanda. Klondike Do Not Eat Those Cupcakes. Illustration in book. 2018. Random House. <https://www.rhcbooks.com/books/546892/klondike-do-not-eat-those-cupcakesby-amanda-driscoll>

Figure 32: Phillips, Leah. Scan of sketchbook page of seal based on children's book: Klondike do not Eat Those Cupcakes. November 2022.

Figure 33 Kun, Janice. Swimming with Seals. Scan of illustration in book. 2018. Orca Book Publishers.

Figure 34: Phillips, Leah. Scan of sketchbook page of seal based on children's book: Swimming With Seals. November 2022.

Figure 35: Groenendyk, Doretta. Halifax Harbour Seal. Scan of illustration in book. 2016. Nimbus Book Publishing.

Figure 36: Phillips, Leah. Scan of sketchbook page of seal based on children's book: A Harbour Seal in Halifax. November 2022.

Figure 37: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop file of seal drawings. November 2022.

Figure 38: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop file of seal drawings with flower photographs. November 2022.

Figure 39: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of setup of computer and drawings: Photoshop files on computer of seal drawings. November 2022.

Figures 40-43: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop file of seal drawings, flower photographs, and Leah's hand. November 2022.

Figure 44: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of Leah holding digitally printed fabric taken by Deborah Chappel. December 2022.

Figure 45: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of preparation of pigment on fabric. December 2022.

Figure 46: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of Leah cutting out seal pattern with fabric taken by Gabbi Knapp. December 2022.

Figure 47: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop drawing of first sample seal wallhanging: watery themed. December 2022.

Figure 48: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of Leah with first sample wall hanging: watery themed taken by self timer. December 2022.

Figure 49: Phillips, Leah. Photograph closeup of seal's face in the first sample wall hanging: watery themed. December 2022.

Figures 50-51: Phillips, Leah. Photographs of Leah felting leaves for first sample wall hanging: watery themed. December 2022.

Figure 52: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of Leah's hand holding beads and wire. December 2022.

Figure 53: Phillips, Leah. Photograph closeup of seal's nose with wire and beaded bumblebee on his nose in the first sample wall hanging: watery themed. December 2022.

Figure 54: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop drawing of second sample seal wall hanging: outer space themed. December 2022.

Figure 55: Phillips, Leah. Photograph of Leah with second sample wall hanging: outer space themed taken by self timer. December 2022.

Figure 56: Phillips, Leah. Photograph closeup of moon in the second sample wall hanging: outer space themed. December 2022.

Figures 57-60: Phillips, Leah. Photographs of Leah stitching details onto the second sample wall hanging: outer space themed. December 2022.



Figure 61: Algol. Digital render of two playful seals swimming together. Digital image. n.d. <https://www.dreamstime.com/royalty-free-stock-image-two-seals-image4882096>

Figure 62: Phillips, Leah. Photoshop drawing of coloured seals. January 2023.

Figure 63: Shuert, C.R. One of Our Study Females Nosing Her Pup. Photograph. Studying Seals: research at Durham University on the behavioural ecology of the grey seal in the UK. 2017. <https://sealbehaviour.wordpress.com/2017/02/09/behaviour-of-the-day-mum-pup-interactions/>

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## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Driscoll, A. (2018). Klondike, do not eat those cupcakes! Alfred A. Knopf.

This children's story book shows a cartoon seal named Klondike in his daily life, focusing particular attention on his desperate attempt to eat his sister's birthday cupcakes. This book is what inspired me to consider focusing my attention mainly on seals to join my flower imagery for this project. I had originally thought of using a variety of animals but when I saw this book I was really interested in the unique illustration style of Klondike. I enjoyed how happy and playful he looked and his rounded childlike features. He really inspired me with my sketch exploration and propelled my ideas forward. Since looking at this book my ideas have shifted slightly and I am still exploring the exact style for my embroidered designs. However, I do know wherever my future research and experimentation take me I will always refer back to Klondike's innate playfulness.

Meilach, D. Z., Menagh, D., & Meilach, M. (1978). *Exotic Needlework, with Ethnic Patterns, Techniques, Inspirations.* Crown Pub.

This book explores many unique embroidery stitches from varying cultures and traditions. It helped me in the early stages of my research when I was gaining inspiration for different stitches. Within this book I found some stitches which I had never heard of such as fly stitch, some laced and threaded stitches such as Pekinese, and also some cross over stitches like herringbone. Through my experimentation I looked at a series of stitches in this book looking for ways to embroider animals and flowers with unique and interesting embroidery combinations. Since experimenting with this book



my idea slightly shifted into a direction of screen printing combined with stitch. Even though I will not be relying as heavily on this book I still have all the samples of stitches I made from it and will be referring back to this in the future when I explore more with stitching.

Seal behaviour. (2017, February 9). *Behaviour of the day...mum-PUP interactions*. Studying Seals. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://sealbehaviour.wordpress.com/2017/02/09/behaviour-of-the-day-mum-pup-interactions/>

This article looks at playful interactions between mother and seal pups in the wild. I felt this article was a great source of ideas for different postures my seals could have in my final project. I knew I wanted my seals to exhibit playful and happy feelings but I was unaware my research into seal behaviour would bring me to this article. In turn, this article shifted my idea a bit and I began to think of including mother and seal pups into my embroideries. Information found in the article described mother seal interactions with their pups showing a bit of playfulness in every day life. One of the behaviours was called nose pup which is described as a mother seal moving her baby into the direction she wants by pushing the pup with her nose. Another behaviour is called flipper pup which is when the mother lightly stokes the pup with her upper fins. As soon as I read the nose pup and flipper pup behaviours my mind began to wonder how this could be used in my project. In my future explorations of creating my seals I will definitely be exploring this further.

Wellesley-Smith, C. (2015). *Slow Stitch*. Batsford.

This book looks at the meditative and rhythmic effect stitching can have for an artist. Not only does this book share different stitching practices but it also shines light on how these practices can be created in a mindful way with minimal waste and using natural

dyeing processes. What interested me about this book was the concept of slow stitching. After all, this is one of the main reasons I wanted to include embroidery in my project. Ever since I was a child I have always enjoyed stitching and expressing my ideas through design with threads and fabric. One of my main goals this year was to slow down and enjoy my final year and be proud of my thesis work however, I began to feel the pressure quickly as the term progressed. When I found this book I think it helped to re centre my mind and bring me back to some sort of calmness showing me why I am here and how I can stay true to myself as an artist. This book also provides information on how to reduce waste and work in more sustainable ways with stitching. I am definitely going to keep this in mind with my continued sampling and ultimately my final project. Whether this looks something like adding natural dye processes in the future or dyeing recycled threads I could think about exploring this in the remaining time left this term.

Wilson, E. (1973). *Erica Wilson's Embroidery Book*.

This book was very helpful in the very beginning stages of my project exploration when I was set on using all embroidery for my project. I remembered that my grandmother gave me this book awhile ago so I checked inside to see if there was any information on satin stitch. I was surprised to find lots of different satin stitches in here and I decided to test them out in one of my first samples this term—my bunny embroidery. I was excited by the way it turned out since I had never used all of these satin stitches before. Before I looked at this book I thought satin stitch was just one thing but I was happily surprised when I saw there was also slanting satin stitch, satin stitch with back stitch, and padded satin stitch! After I tested these ones out I decided to get creative and make some stitches in all different directions and was happy how this sample turned out. I changed my idea slightly since looking at this book since this bunny sample took approximately 7 hours to complete. However, I do think I will go back to satin stitch in the future when I decide to add in small details or texture in my work.



