





## Corie Audette

*Once upon a reality, mutant animals inhabited altered environments and dimensions. These animals had foreseen the change coming in sea and land, from which the cause was of the wayward humans' span. In time came life and death, with moments of transition, and from the past wherein they strengthen. The trees and things made by man that once did matter became an icon, lost or forever altered. And through these passages of existences, a world of imaginative meaning did once arrive. – Corie Audette*

My work illustrates narratives of impacting realms through fragments of changing moments and cultural interpretations. I remember the first time I saw the image of Sandy Skoglund's *Radioactive Cats* and being deeply impacted by it. The piece had an innate notion of conversion that struck me; I wanted to understand and become a part of that world crowded with those mutant cats. I think this is where I was influenced to create art that expressed a serious matter but in an uncanny approach. I am not trying to force a statement about preserving life exactly the way it is now; I know change is inevitable to this world and it happens all the time, but I simply want to preserve these minute moments of transitions by collecting glimpses into possible realities.

I am fascinated by how humans and nature deal with loss or change. There is a duality between preserving and adapting. Typically after something catastrophic has happened, life will not only adapt to this new situation but become stronger by putting the past in retrospective. For example, years after the meltdown at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine, the flora and fauna have reclaimed the site almost double in numbers. Humans now value Chernobyl as a place to tour, recollecting remnants from the past and trying to understand this new realm. There is a convergence of two worlds, forever changing, growing and evolving. The environments and creatures I create convey these shifts of boundaries. It is not necessarily the mutation or multiplicity of the animals in my natural landscape that gives an enigmatic standpoint, it is the juxtaposition manner in which they are presented. In my piece *Twas the Nightmare before Countdown*, I illustrate raindrops that converge and spill from an umbrella. Each drop filled with a

frog in different stages of life and some of them have become radioactive mutations with multiple limbs and growths. This piece is based on journal accounts from J. Robert Oppenheimer the night before the first atomic bomb was tested when his brother Frank witnessed a foreboding prophecy moment during a rainstorm when hundreds of frogs, or most likely toads, awakened in a mass gathering to procreate. Thought of as a Last Judgment moment when the world was about to change, nature knew what must be coming and what must be done. I was intrigued by this notion of frogs being a symbol of existential growth or fertility and because they can evidently achieving multiple evolution stages in one life cycle, they are able to adapt to peculiar situations. Humans have tried to adjust or improve the world around them, but in the end what truly inspires me is how nature always finds a way to survive. This is their reality, their life and conversion from human impact. Similar to Skoglund's glowing green cats, they have transformed but are still surviving, coexisting and in fact thriving in this evolved reality.

It is interesting how complicated and important the relationships or experiences between humans, animals and personal artifacts really are. A lot of my art addresses the progresses and conceptualizations that emerge, such as anthropomorphism. My take on history is that humans tend to evoke animals or inanimate objects as a shadow of our consciousness and a way of configuring the world around us. For the past ten years, I have researched both ancient and contemporary cultural iconography along with animal symbology. The "beings" I create take on the role of this alternate awareness through their mutation and presentation. Their context has been altered similar to religious icons or reliquary pieces, they become more than just an object for function or in the case of animals more than just a source for food or physical aid; they have become a body of veneration. Some of the contemporary artists whom I value for their collation of religious, animal and human imagery include Kiki Smith, Shahzia Sikander and Leonora Carrington. I also admire the visionary works from traditional artists such as Hieronymus Bosch. My art has a similar captured landscape or a specific period focused around an anthropomorphic transformation, mergence or incarnation of human, nature and artifact into one another. For many of my pieces I also draw inspiration from Non-Western art and the way these cultures have a sense of imbued sacredness or life-force behind everything.

Within *My Curiosities* piece I was interested in Eskimo goggles and their iconographic use of eyes or the circle-and-dot motifs to represent a passageway where humans and animals have the ability to transcend from one world or status into another. This notion of circle-eye-shapes as a source of transformation inspired me to create beings that possessed many eyes or *ocelli* mimicry eyespots to communicate their mutation from something else. I also began thinking about the symbol of a human hand and how for many cultures, including the Inuit and Australian Aboriginal, it is an instrument of remembrance or connection to alternate states of being or time. I decided to use latex gloves, an item created by man and in the shape of man's hand, to transform them into anthropomorphic creatures that are a part of their own hybrid kingdom. With my piece *Once Upon an Object*, I illustrated six iconographic animal-like deities that personify important personal objects, which over time have transformed into distinct allegories. Much of my presentation, compositions and detailed ornamentations were inspired by the sacred or religious imagery found within Christianity, Hinduism, Islamic, Greek, Native American, Celtic, ancient Egyptian. Certain rites and specific symbolic references such as reliquary-like guardian figures created by the diverse cultural groups from Africa and the South Pacific region also had an influence on me to create works with this relational mergence between human, animal and object.

What I have come to believe is that humans and nature are all connected and must respect each other. What I found most interesting from studying cultures and art history is the sacredness of life, death, nature and the symbiotic relation we all share. A lot of my art reflects this sacred connection and preservation. Not only do I express a connection between humans and nature, I also try to preserve the veneration of the past and how we remember these beings or moments in history. By the "past," I mean transitional moments in life and death. Some of my pieces such as *Lost Collection*, *Living Ancestry*, *At the Shoreline - Where Bombed Beaches Meet Enchanted Waters*, *Tracing Memories* and *Passage to Transcendence* convey this connection and regard to the past. The ways in which I express the past is through my materials, the lack of colors and the hollow subject imagery. I tend to use transparent paper, graphite or ephemeral materials to represent a potential loss with time. The utilization of only black and white is to convey the absence of the vibrancy in life. I specifically illustrate my subject matter as if it is missing from the reality we are in. There is a certain composed, memorial quality to my pieces that



embody the past. They are treated with delicacy and preservation. Through structured compositions and sometimes literally suspending pieces in space, subjects are caught transitioning into another moment of existence; one that is still part of the viewers and at the same time a reality of the past.

Each of my works has a lengthy translation behind it; in other words, I create my own narratives of specific scenarios or meanings based on events in reality and convey them in my drawings. This is why I like 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century scientific illustrations. These artists who would venture out into the world to try to understand and preserve every natural phenomenon, would end up classifying their findings and provide explanations. Although my art does have meaning behind it, it does not however simply regurgitate everyday observations in our reality. I tend to meticulously capture and explain the happenings of imaginable realities based on real possibilities. As John Lennon said, “Reality leaves a lot to the imagination,” and it is our imagination that leads us to altered realities. A lot of my works that invoke the hybridity between human, animal and artifact are presented in this classification manner. For example, in both of my pieces *My Curiosities* and *The Strange and Hidden Existences of the Common Household*, my “creatures” composed of man-made materials take on the form of natural beings are arranged as if they were specimen in a laboratory, museum or Cabinet of Curiosities with scientific evidence or illustrations to prove of their existence. In my piece *Nature, Science and Artifice*, there is the same demeanor of traditional scientific illustrations but depictions of anthropomorphic animals enacting similar moments seen within classical art paintings. One of my more recent works titled *Toxic Utopia* presents an alien terrarium-like world with an arrangement of flourishing mutated life created after a possible nuclear fallout. I want to make viewers question what if this really happened or could happen in some other time or place. Similar to my sublime moment when viewing Skoglund’s *Radioactive Cats*, I hope those who truly observe my art will be able to walk away with the same motivation of curiosity.



	<u>Title</u>	<u>Media</u>	<u>Original Format</u>
<b>Figure 1:</b>	<i>Lost Collection</i>	Installation, drawing	Graphite and pastels on paper, tissue paper and tracing paper with pins; dimensions vary, installed approximately 90 in. (H) x 80 in. (W) x 2 in. (D)
<b>Figure 2:</b>	<i>Living Ancestry</i>	Drawing	Graphite on paper; 48 in. (H) x 80.5 in. (W)
<b>Figure 3:</b>	<i>At the Shoreline, Where Bombed Beaches Meet Enchanted Waters</i>	Drawing, photography, installation	Pastel on tracing paper and photographs in album; 12 in. (H) x 12 in. (W)
<b>Figure 4:</b>	<i>The Creation of Chameleon and The Birth of the Hippopotamus</i> from <i>Nature, Science and Artifice</i> series	Drawing, painting	Graphite, gouache and ink on paper; installed dimensions vary, each 6 in. (H) x 9 in. (W)
<b>Figure 5:</b>	<i>Tracing Memories</i>	Drawing, installation	Graphite on tracing paper, string, and candles, installed dimensions vary, each drawing 14 in. (H) x 14 in. (W)
<b>Figure 6:</b>	<i>My Curiosities</i>	Mixed media installation with drawing	Gouach and ink on latex gloves with wire, polyfill, graphite on paper, and other mixed media; dimensions vary, installed approximately 72 in. (H) x 84 in. (W) x 60 in. (D)
<b>Figure 7:</b>	<i>Zebladeer</i> from <i>My Curiosities</i>	Sculpture, painting, drawing	Gouach and ink on latex gloves with wire and polyfill, installed dimensions vary, sculpture 10 in. (H) x 7 in. (W) x 7 in. (D)
<b>Figure 8:</b>	<i>Crested-Allinor</i> from <i>My Curiosities</i>	Sculpture, painting, drawing	Gouach and ink on latex gloves with wire and polyfill, installed dimensions vary, sculpture 6 in. (H) x 16 in. (W) x 12 in. (D)
<b>Figure 9:</b>	<i>Passage to Transcendence</i>	Installation, fibers	Tree twigs and sticks with yarn, and string; dimensions vary, installed approximately 96 in. (H) x 70 in. (W) x 72 in. (D)
<b>Figure 10:</b>	<i>The Strange and Hidden Existences of the Common Household</i>	Mixed media installation with drawing and photograph	Mixed media (found materials from the common household, including plastic bags, aluminum foil, toilet paper, laundry lint, clothing, etc.) with ink, gouache, graphite, chalk pastel and soy sauce on paper, and photographs; dimensions vary, installed approximately 72 in. (H) x 84 in. (W) x 60 in. (D)



<b>Figure 11:</b>	<i>Linter Cameish</i> from <i>The Strange and Hidden Existences of the Common Household</i>	Mixed media installation, drawing and photograph	LinterCameish: Dryer lint with socks, plastic, and paper, graphite and gouache on paper, and photograph; installed dimensions vary, sculptures together 3 in. (H) x 14 in. (W), drawing 12 in. (H) x 12 in. (W)
<b>Figure 12:</b>	<i>Once Upon an Object</i>	Drawing, painting, installation	Graphite with gouache on paper, foam board, fabric and nails, each drawing 10 in. (H) x 10 in. (W) x 2 in. (D), installed approximately 18 in. (H) x 84 in. (W) x 2 in. (D)
<b>Figure 13:</b>	<i>From the Beginning</i> from <i>Once Upon an Object</i> series	Drawing, painting, installation	Graphite with gouache on paper, foam board, fabric and nails; drawing 10 in. (H) x 10 in. (W) x 2 in. (D)
<b>Figure 14:</b>	<i>Virtue of You</i> from <i>Once Upon an Object</i> series	Drawing, painting, installation	Graphite with gouache on paper, foam board, fabric and nails; drawing 10 in. (H) x 10 in. (W) x 2 in. (D)
<b>Figure 15:</b>	<i>Toxic Utopia</i>	Installation, drawing	Graphite with gouache on tracing paper, washi tape, masking tape and acetate; dimensions vary, installed approximately 96 in. (H) x 84 in. (W) x 60 in. (D)
<b>Figure 16:</b>	<i>The Survivors</i> from <i>Toxic Utopia</i>	Installation, drawing	Graphite with gouache on tracing paper, washi tape, masking tape and acetate; dimensions vary, installed approximately 26 in. (H) x 36 in. (W)
<b>Figure 17:</b>	<i>Orchidamphibiae</i> from <i>Toxic Utopia</i>	Installation, drawing	Graphite with gouache on tracing paper, washi tape, masking tape and acetate; dimensions vary, installed approximately 26 in. (H) x 20 in. (W)
<b>Figure 18:</b>	<i>Twas the Nightmare before Countdown</i>	Installation, drawing	Graphite, ink and gouache on tissue paper, acetate, umbrella and string, dimensions vary, installed approximately 96 in. (H) x 36 in. (W) x 36 in. (D)
<b>Figure 19:</b>	<i>Remnants</i> from <i>Toxic Utopia</i> (detail)	Drawing, installation	Graphite with gouach and ink on paper, tracing paper, tissue paper, glue, frames; installed dimensions vary, drawings approximately 12 in. (H) x 15 in. (W) x 1.5 in. (D)
<b>Figure 20:</b>	<i>The Beginning</i> (detail) from <i>Remnants</i> from <i>Toxic Utopia</i> series	Drawing, sculpture, painting, installation	Graphite with gouach and ink on wood with tracing paper, tissue paper, glue; installed dimensions vary, each piece approximately 5.25 in. (H) x 1.75 in. (W) x 1.75 in. (D)





Figure 1: Lost Collection.





**Figure 2: Living Ancestry.**





**Figure 3: At the Shoreline, Where Bombed Beaches Meet Enchanted Waters.**





Figure 4: The Creation of Chameleon and The Birth of the Hippopotamus from Nature, Science and Artifice series.





**Figure 5: Tracing Memories.**



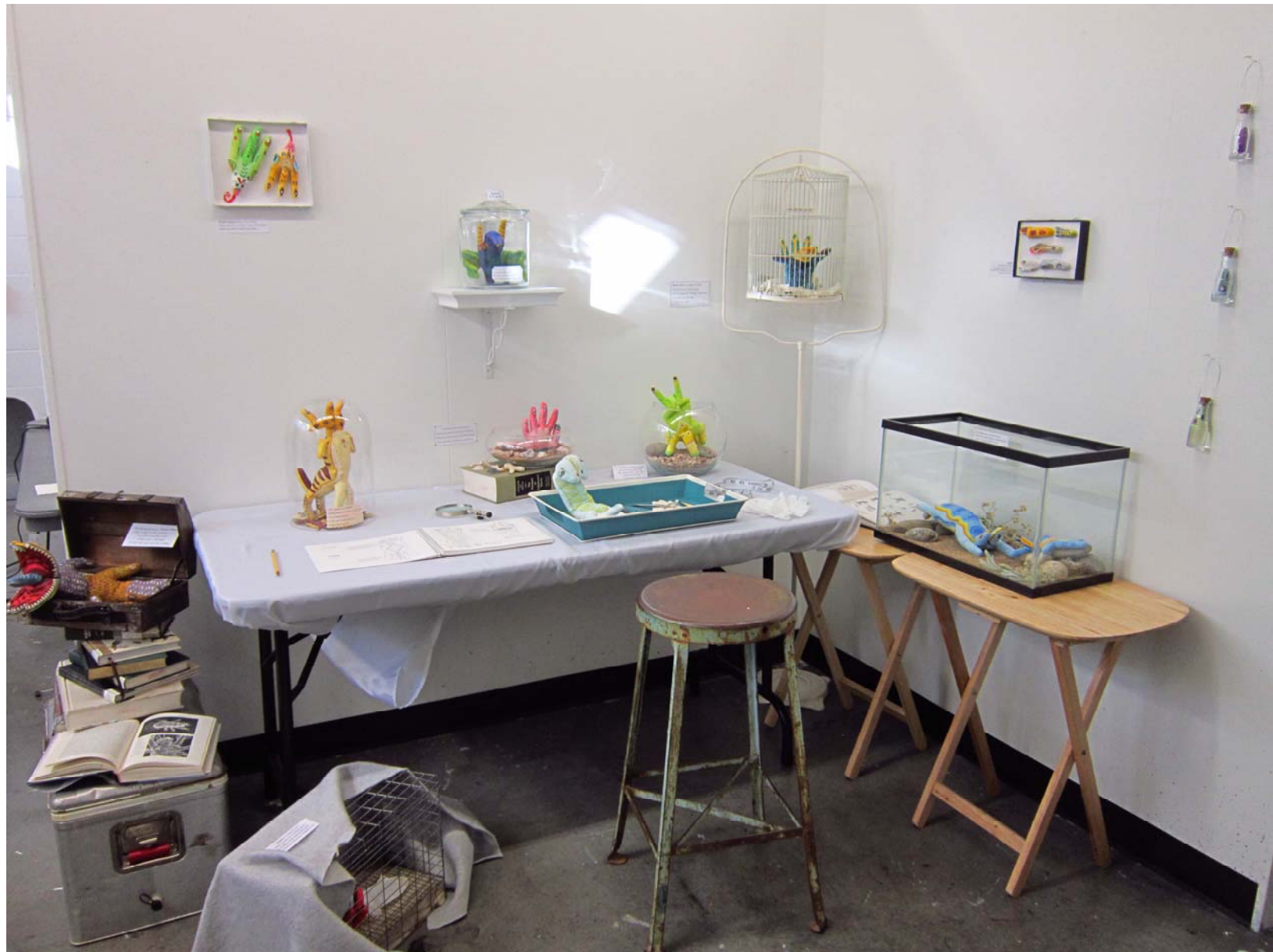


Figure 6: My Curiosities.





Figure 7: Zembladeer *from* My Curiosities.





Figure 8: Crested-Allinor from My Curiosities.





**Figure 9: Passage to Transcendence.**





Figure 10: The Strange and Hidden Existences of the Common Household.







Figure 12: Once Upon an Object.



Figure 13: From the Beginning *from* Once Upon an Object series.





Figure 14: Virtue of You from Once Upon an Object series.



Figure 15: Toxic Utopia.





Figure 16: The Survivors *from* Toxic Utopia.

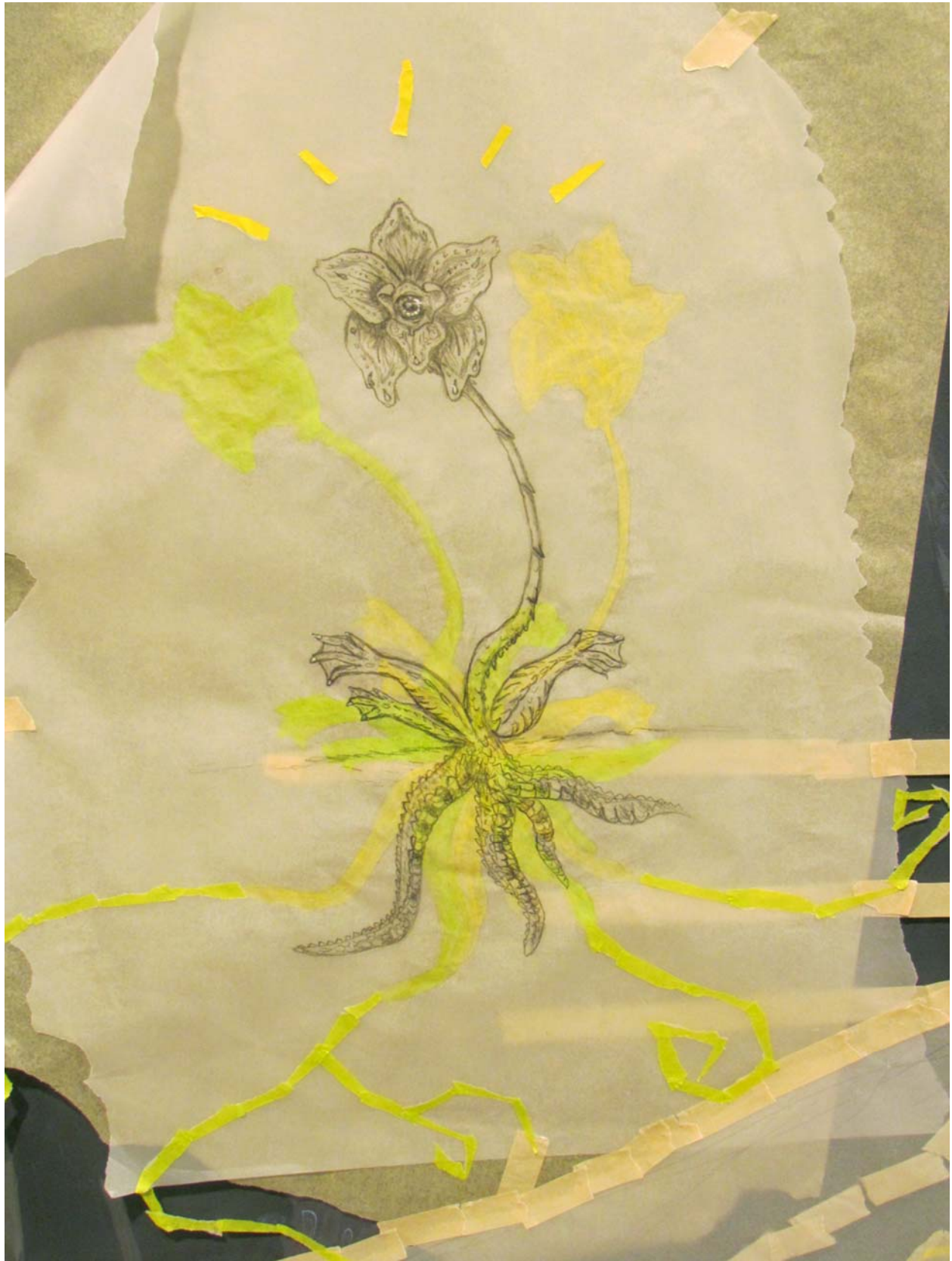


Figure 17: Orchidamphibiae *from* Toxic Utopia.





**Figure 18: Twas the Nightmare before Countdown.**



Figure 19: Remnants from Toxic Utopia (detail).





Figure 20: The Beginning (detail) *from* Remnants from Toxic Utopia series.