



THE CULTIVATED CRITTER





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Massachusetts College of Art and Design
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*Thank you,
Friends and family for your support,
and Margot for putting up with me all semester.*



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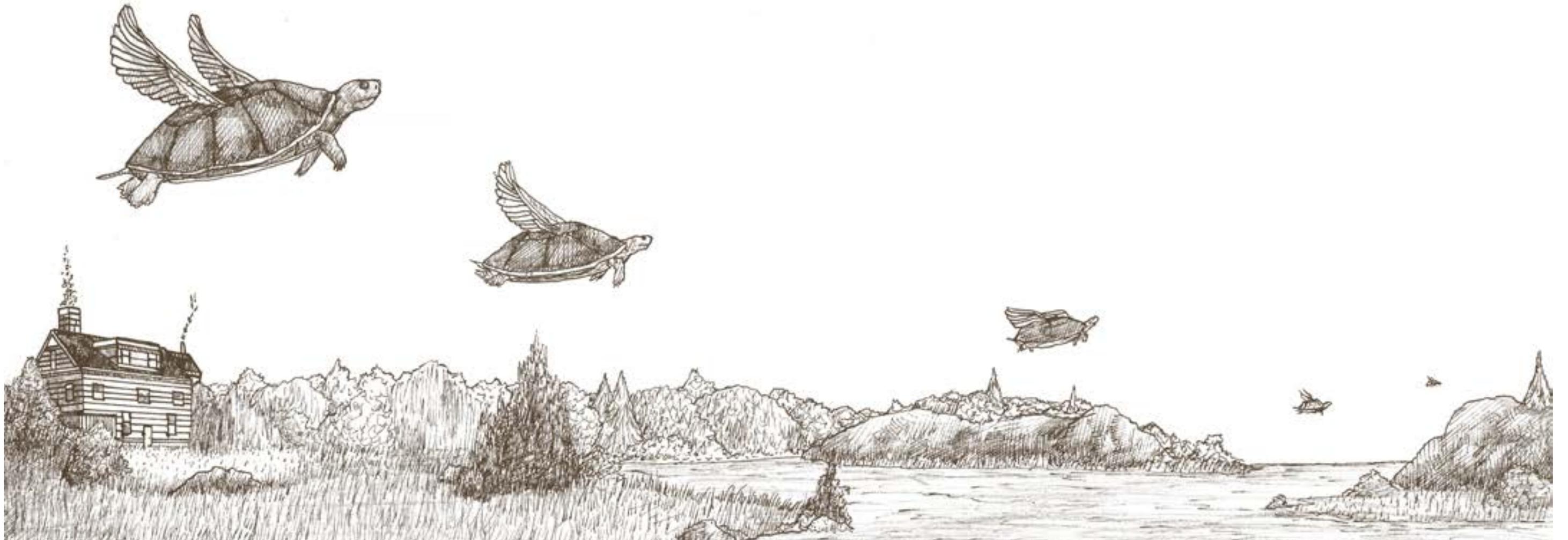
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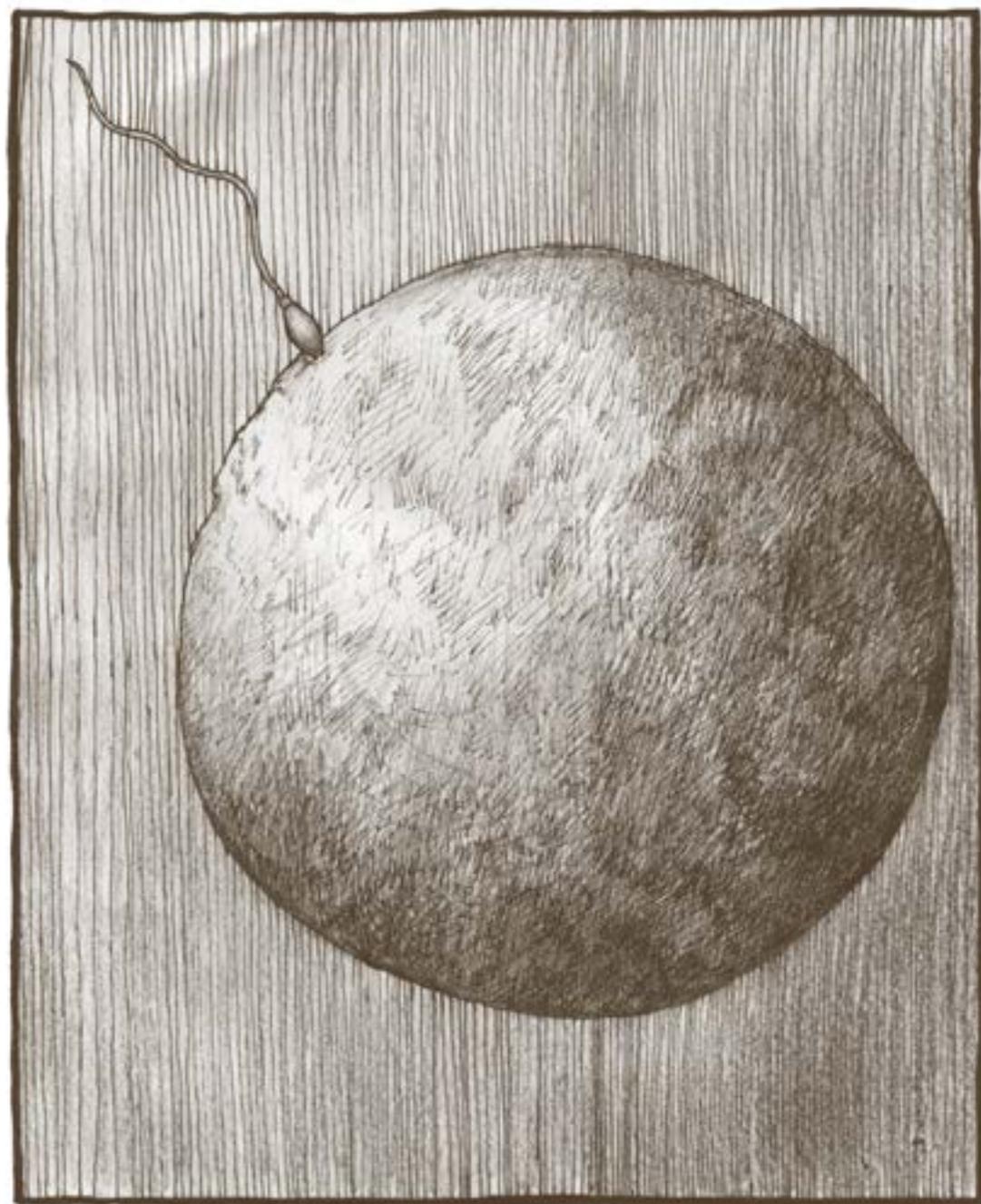
Designed by John Rego

This book was set in Noto Serif and Cormorant Garamond

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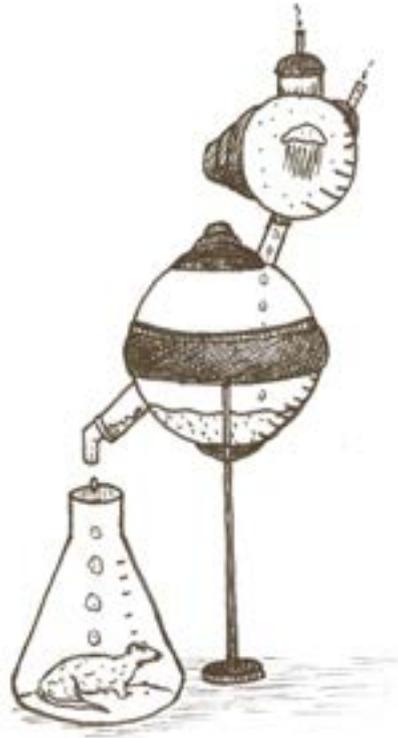




John Rego circa 1995

ABOUT THE ARTIST

John Rego was born in the state of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations during the year of the 1996 Olympics. As with anybody born on an Olympic year, it was John Rego's destiny to become an Olympian. The sport, synchronized swimming. Throughout his youth Rego mastered the event. He had the finest backstroke in town, an astonishing butterfly flip, and could dolphin kick better than any dolphin in the Narragansett Bay. However, John Rego was hospitalized with a bad case of the gout in his teens. He was forced to abandon the sport entirely, and turn his attention to visual arts. Armed with a crusty paintbrush and an even crustier tube of cobalt blue, he began to explore the realm of painting. As an outdoors person Rego tends to fixate on the natural world, and is hypnotized by the tiny details of the land around him. He enjoys pushing these details into a surrealist sometimes ridiculous domain. By masking problems facing nature in a relatively humorous way, Rego subtly attaches a deeper meaning to his pieces. Yet he always makes sure to delve into the nonsensical imagery of his cranium in each piece. His work is inspired by a mixture of renaissance, early American, scientific, and pop surrealist painting. Rego enjoys working with a variety of pigments, but since health issues down the road sound delightful to him, he is particularly fond of the cadmiums and cobalts. Rego will continue to combine his exploration of nature and visual arts in future creative practices. Rego also hopes to jump back into synchronized swimming, and win 37 gold medals in the 2024 Olympics.



INTRODUCTION

Five years ago the pet market was in decline. Pet owners were growing bored of the classic pet breeds, and a new type of animal was needed to revitalize the stagnant industry. After much discussion, The Cultivated Critter decided to hold a contest. A contest that would challenge breeders across the country to create the next hottest pet on the market in five years. Due to time constraints, most breeders used genetic modification to manufacture their animal. Although genetic modification is costly, The Cultivated Critter tempted breeders with a humdinger of a prize. The prize, \$100,000, a grant to mass produce their animal, and 1% royalties on every animal sold. Runner-ups will receive \$1,000 for their efforts along with a complimentary The Cultivated Critter t-shirt. To apply, breeders were required to submit a comprehensive plan to The Cultivated Critter outlining their intentions. The Cultivated Critter monitored accepted breeders throughout the process, and closely observed the development of each animal. After half a decade four finalist were chosen. Reader's may select which of the four creatures they would like to see on the market, and can mail their votes to The Cultivated Critter (mailing information is attached to the voting ballot). The winner will be announced in three months at The Cultivated Critter's headquarters in Cambridge Massachusetts. The Cultivated Critter would like to thank everybody involved with the contest, and wish best of luck to the finalist.



THE FINALISTS



TIE DYE RABBITS

BRED BY: FRANKLIN PIERCE PIGMENTS

Franklin Pierce Pigments is a paint company that has been in business since Franklin Pierce's second year in office. They offer a wide array of pigments for their water-soluble oil and gouache paints. Franklin Pierce Pigments was one of three companies to enter The Cultivated Critter's Competition. While other companies feel flat, Franklin Pierce Pigments' Tie Dye Rabbits dazzled the judges. We asked the company's owner what inspired him to enter The Cultivated Critter's competition, he replied, "Here at Franklin Pierce Pigments we are not afraid to think outside of the box. We may be a paint company, but does that mean we cannot venture into other industries? Of course not! This competition provided us with a chance to show that Franklin Pierce Pigments is more than just a paint company. We are a trusted brand that has the ability to create a multitude of new and unique products. This philosophy led us to create the Tie Dye Rabbit. We wanted to offer pet owners a colorful animal that resembles their favorite childhood stuffed rabbit. We believe the Tie Dye Rabbit will showcase science's potential in improving pets". The development of the Tie Dye Rabbit began five years ago. Franklin Pierce Pigments hired a team of geneticists, and constructed a laboratory in their headquarters. The geneticists used a controversial gene editing technique known as CRISPR to create the rabbits. Genetic material that allows rabbits to produce colorful fur coats was added to a mother's DNA. The DNA was passed down to the next generation of rabbits, and the added trait appeared in some offspring. The second-generation rabbits with brightly pigmented fur were then bred with each other. This process was repeated until the majority of offspring had the desired coloring. Due to rabbits' fertility and short gestation period, Franklin Pierce Pigments was able to create a line of colorful rabbits in five years time.

The Tie Dye Rabbit requires the same treatment as an ordinary rabbit. The Tie Dye Rabbit is large and needs a spacious cage, plenty of rabbit feed, and time to walk around. Like other lagomorphs, the Tie Dye Rabbit endlessly chews with its large incisors. It may gnaw through wood cabinets and other household items. Under no means should the Tie Dye Rabbit be allowed outside. Its bright coat makes the rabbit easily visible, and this will attract predators. Although the lack of outdoors may aggravate your rabbit, it's best to be safe. If your rabbit seems depressed try to simulate the outdoors in the rabbit's habitat. Since a foreign gene was introduced to the rabbit's DNA, the Tie Dye Rabbit is susceptible to disease and mutations. It is important to take your rabbit to six veterinary check ups a year. This will improve your rabbit's wellbeing and longevity. The Tie Dye Rabbit is a friendly animal that will bring joy to its owners. If cared for properly, this living stuffed animal will be a part of your home for years to come.



PERFUME SKUNK

BRED BY: RUTHERFORD B. HAZE

Rutherford B. Haze is a man of scents. Throughout his life Haze has experimented with a wide range of fragrances from lavender to wormwood essence. In 2010 Haze took a leave of absence from his geneticist job, and explored the Amazon for rare and peculiar scents. Unfortunately his two year expedition was a failure, and all he discovered was palm oil plantations. Upon return Haze detected The Cultivated Critter's competition, and his spirits were promptly lifted. Haze stated, "The Cultivated Critter's competition could not have arrived at a better time. I was feeling disgruntled from my trip to the Amazon, and needed a new project to occupy my mind. I am a man of fragrances, and knew I was going to create a scent based critter. After much brainstorming, I landed on the skunk. An animal I have always respected for its pungent spray. However the skunk is flawed... its odor is putrid! I wanted to create the perfect skunk, a skunk that blows an exquisite perfume out of its anus". Haze began by creating the scent his skunks would spray. He made three variations of Perfume Skunk, and crafted rosewood, lavender, and coriander based fragrances. Haze then gathered striped skunks, and isolated the genes responsible for its spray. Through chemical treatments, he saturated the genes with molecules from his fragrances. The molecules intoxicated the skunk's genes, and they produced an odor comparable to the exposed scent. Haze continued the molecular manipulation of the skunk's scent glands, and bred the skunks who underwent the treatment. By breeding the skunks at the earliest possible age, Haze was able to create a generation of skunks born with rosewood, lavender, or a coriander spray. In addition, Haze also provided supplements to dye the skunk's stripe in coordination with its scent. Pink for rosewood, purple for lavender, and light green for coriander.

The Perfume Skunk is tricky to care for, and may cause mischief around the house. It's wise to lock cupboards and draws, and keep debris off the floor. Consider hiding valuable objects, and remember that the Perfume Skunk will climb cabinets. Like all skunks, the Perfume Skunk is a nocturnal animal. Allow the skunk to rest during the day, and be active at night. Due to chemical exposure, the Perfume Skunk is susceptible to cancer, and regular checkups are necessary. The wild skunk's spray is the animal's primary form of defense. Since the perfume skunk no longer has its noisome spray, the animal is especially vulnerable to predators. Make sure that your skunk does not wander off alone, and always keep an eye on it while it's outside. A predator may be around the corner, and it's up to the owner to protect his or her Perfume Skunk. That being said, the Perfume Skunk must be kept indoors for its safety. Due to this, the skunk should be played with regularly to prevent a sedentary life. While difficult to care for, the Perfume Skunk is a wonderful pet. This animal is as loving as any dog, and its spray will freshen your home for the foreseeable future.



JACOBIN COCKATOO

BRED BY: DR. MARCY VAN BUREN

Dr. Marcy Van Buren stands out amongst our other breeders. She does not have a background in genetics, a laboratory, or even a basic biology textbook. Her PhD is in plum farming! However, Marcy's passion for cockatoos led her critter into the finals. Ever since a trip to Australia, Van Buren has obsessed over the cockatoo. Owning fifteen at a time, she immersed herself in cockatoo culture. Her home resembles a rain forest; fake trees, jungle murals, and enough fruit to feed fifteen birds can be seen around every corner. A decade ago a good friend introduced Van Buren to the Jacobin Pigeon, and Van Buren was instantly inspired to create a cockatoo sporting the Jacobin Pigeon's hood. For years the Jacobin Cockatoo remained a figment of Van Buren's imagination, however once she heard of The Cultivated Critter's competition Van Buren sprung into action. In her interview Van Buren stated, "A wave of excitement shook my body. The Cultivated Critter provided me with the opportunity to create the cockatoo I have been dreaming about! I had to go for it. I may not have known what I was doing... I still don't, but I couldn't pass up the chance to create something special". Van Buren purchased a basic transgenic kit, and got to work in her shed. She began by breeding a Jacobin Pigeon with a Sulfur-Crested Cockatoo, however since they are different species this did not work. Van Buren decided to open the transgenic kit, and acquired DNA samples from a Jacobin Pigeon. After months of trial and error, she managed to extract the gene that creates the Jacobin Pigeon's hood. Once a significant supply of this gene was collected, Van Buren injected the gene into developing eggs of Sulfur-Crested and Citron-Crested Cockatoos. The first batches shortly perished, and did not gain the traits of the Jacobin Pigeon. Eventually, Van Buren was able to inject the Jacobin Pigeon's gene at the appropriate stage of development, and the Jacobin Cockatoo was born.

The Jacobin Cockatoo is a moderately easy bird to care for. It requires the same amount of attention as an ordinary cockatoo, and has a similar diet. You can purchase the Jacobin Cockatoo with a sulfur or citron crest. Since the Jacobin Cockatoo is a new creation we are not aware of its longevity. Yet, it can be assumed that the bird lives for at least five years. Be weary of the Jacobin Cockatoo's hood. While fashionable, it inhibits the bird's ability to fly, and may cause discomfort and bacterial infection. The bird should be regulatory checked for infections, and placed in a comfortable setting to prevent stress. The hood can affect the bird's vision, and your Jacobin Cockatoo may appear clumsy. Do not attempt to breed the Jacobin Cockatoo. The DNA that provides the bird with its hood is still volatile, and will mutate in the second generation. Remember, nobody likes an ugly cockatoo. Only purchase Jacobin Cockatoos from The Cultivated Critter or reputable breeders. In conclusion, the Jacobin Cockatoo is an imaginative twist on a common bird, and is a pleasure to keep around the house.



KING LOUIS XIV FANCY GOLDFISH

BRED BY: GROVER S. CLEVELAND III

When notified about The Cultivated Critter's contest, renown goldfish breeder Grover S. Cleveland IV sought to create something exceptional. Cleveland stated, "It was time to create the fanciest fancy goldfish known to man. I threw modesty out the window and crafted something bold, something unique, something never seen before. Thus the King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish was born". Cleveland's words perfectly describe the fish. The King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish hardly resembles a goldfish at all; instead it seems as if it was plucked from a Rococo themed coral reef from another universe. The fish is pink and white, has a lengthy body, and an enormous bulbous wen on its head and stomach loosely resembling a powdered wig. The King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish was bred by meticulously combining the DNA of three fish species. To achieve King Louis XIV's unique shape, koi fish DNA was injected into an embryo of a Sarasa Comet Goldfish. Several hours later, Cleveland infused the developing fish with the genes that produce the Lionhead Goldfish's wen. The wen of the first King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish was much smaller than the fish photographed. However, the fish's short breeding period allowed Cleveland to selectively breed the fish until the desired traits were achieved.

The King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish is a difficult fish to care for, and is not recommended for beginners. The fish is large, and requires a 75 gallon freshwater tank. The water should have a Ph between 6.8 to 7.2. The fish's wen may become stuck, so large accessories in the tank should be avoided. As with the Oranda and Lionhead variety of goldfish, King Louis XIV's wen must be trimmed to prevent overgrowth and blindness. Remember to proceed carefully, and to tranquilize the fish before trimming to prevent injury. The King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish is a notoriously picky eater similar to its human counterpart. The fish will only eat fresh chopped vegetables, and minced sardines. It is important to feed the fish regularly, but not too often. King Louis XIV has difficulty swimming due to its short dorsal fin, you must artificially create a current in the tank to give the fish the illusion that it's swimming. The King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish is a beautiful specimen, and will provide much joy to the owner. If you are up for the task, the King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish is well worth the effort.



RESEARCH SUMMARY

I have been captivated by animals for most of my existence. From learning about the various ecosystems of Rhode Island as a child, to spending hours studying the geese at the Public Gardens as a larger child, wildlife has always enchanted me. Maybe in another life I was a biologist, but alas I made some mistakes and chose to pursue the arts. Going into thesis, I knew I wanted to do something with animals. Exactly what proved to be a challenge, and I often asked myself, “What am I going to do for thesis?”

In early September that question was answered. In the midst of summer boredom I watched a few documentaries on genetically modified crops, and developed a brief fixation on the gros-michel banana. Scientific manipulation of nature was in the back of the mind going into the semester, and I started to seriously consider this topic for my thesis. With rudimentary knowledge on genetically modified animals, I gave the topic a closer look. The Frankenstein-like livestock that exist were not exceptionally surprising, corporations are always looking for a new way to increase profits. However, genetically modified pets sucked me in like a vacuum. Humans have modified animals to the point that there are rats that glow in the dark, gilded seahorses, miniature pigs, pigeons that resemble bowling pins, dozens of ornate goldfish, and the list goes on. While most of these creatures are aesthetically pleasing, there’s a dark undercurrent in their synthesized evolution. Many selectively bred animals experience health problems, provide an eerie glimpse into the future, and their entire existence is to benefit humans. Instantly, I knew my thesis was going to be on genetically modified animals for the use of pets.

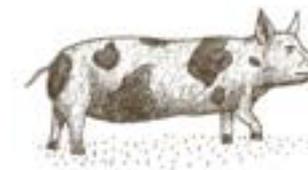
I went back and forth on different approaches to the topic, but ultimately decided to write a fictitious prompt involving transgenic animals. In the prompt, the pet industry is experiencing lackluster sales, and The Cultivated Critter is looking for a new unique pet to reignite consumer interest. Genetically modified animals are the clear solution to tackle such a task, and the magazine held a contest to see who could create the hottest pet on the market. The winner is to receive \$100,000, a grant to mass produce the animal, and 1% royalties on each animal sold. Many applied, but only four finalist were selected. The four finalist will be featured in The Cultivated Critter’s magazine, and reader’s can vote on which breeder’s animal they will like to see in stores. As an employee for the magazine, my job is to photograph (paint) each of animals, write a brief description, and document the creation process of the four critters. My documentations are to be displayed in the magazine, so voters are “fully” informed on each creature.

Now we will travel out of the land of the Cultivated Critter, and back to reality. For the primary thesis pieces I painted portraits of the four finalists. The painted creatures are fictional, however they are loosely based off of selectively breed animals that exist. This was done to disconnect the paintings from reality, and subtly allude to the controversial practice of genetic modification. Before each selection I familiarized myself with artificially breed animals that exist, and the procedure or genetic modification. Although humans have been selectively breeding animals for over 15,000 years, genetic modification did not occur until

the 1970’s. Transgenic organisms may be created in many fashions varying in method and simplicity. The most common practice is to inject foreign DNA into an embryo, and allow the selected gene to change the development of the host. The external trait is usually selected from a different animal, for example a genetically modified bioluminescent cat has been injected with a gene that makes a species of jellyfish glow. Since transgenic animals are created via in vitro fertilization, it is difficult to successfully produce animals at first. Once created, genetically modified animals can pass their unique traits down to the next generation.

Once familiarized with the process of genetic modification, it was time to paint. Each painting is a portrait of an unnatural creature in a somewhat natural environment. This pushes the fact that something is off with each animal, and gives context to the animals size and habitat. For the paintings I referenced 1800’s photography portraits, animal illustrations, and an assortment of classical portraits from the Museum of Fine Arts, Harvard Museum of Art, Peabody Essex Museum, RISD Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History. With the exception of King Louis XIV Fancy Goldfish, I traveled to various places and captured reference photos. The environment for the Perfume Skunk is based off of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Watertown, Massachusetts, the Jacobin Cockatoo is Sachuest Beach in Middletown, Rhode Island, and the Tye Dye Rabbits reference a particular room at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts. Once the references were collected it was time to paint. The paintings were done in acrylic and watercolor on wood board. Throughout each piece I learned a bit about the animal being painted, and familiarized myself with the anatomy of four different species.

Although my thesis is fictional, the research was immensely important. Informing myself on the subject of genetic modification assisted in the construction of a thought out body of work. Transgenic animals are quite fascinating, and flaunt the true power of modern science. It is against my beliefs to manipulate nature in such a way, nevertheless I find GMO animals awe inspiring, and am interested in seeing what is to come in the future. In addition to the research, my knowledge on painting increased over the semester. Through critique and referencing successful paintings throughout history, I picked up tricks, techniques, and learned to layoff poor painting habits. Overall, I plan on taking what I learned from thesis, and applying it to my future artistic practices.





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