

## LEAF IT BEHIND

Ivy Hong

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### Abstract

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In Projection 2, my research focuses on how illustrations depict the subtle moments in parks that contribute to the natural healing of weary bodies and minds. This inquiry pertains to urban dwellers grappling with hectic work schedules, individuals seeking stress relief, patients in need of psychological therapy, and those interested in natural environments.

My project is inspired by the *Twenty-Minute Park Effect*, a study published in the International Journal of Environmental Health Research. The study indicates that merely 20 minutes in a park can enhance happiness and mental well-being, even in the absence of physical exercise. This methodology offers a brief yet effective form of therapy for our increasingly hectic lives. In particular, following the global health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a growing appreciation for the importance of mental and physical well-being, with an increasing inclination towards outdoor activities in natural environments.

Guy Debord's concept of *psychogeography*, which explores the influence of the environment on individual emotions, behaviors, and social interactions, has long intrigued me. Parks are the soul of the city, serving as the nearest sanctuary for our spirits. Regardless of the city, parks are places where we can relax, and recharge with oxygen and energy. They provide rest for our weary bodies and bring clarity to our blurred vision. They infuse cities with a light vitality, transforming them from burdensome shells into vibrant entities. Parks embrace those seeking an escape.

During the course of my research, I developed a survey questionnaire on the *Twenty-Minute Park Effect* aimed at exploring the psychological impact of park environments on individuals. Collecting 42 responses from various countries and backgrounds, I discovered that it is the subtle elements within parks that hold captivating power, drawing individuals closer and fostering feelings of healing and happiness. This finding inspired me to represent the healing elements or moments within parks through illustrations, with the aim of encouraging individuals in need of relaxation to spend more time in green spaces and experience the therapeutic effects of nature.

In my illustration work, *Leaf It Behind*, each image presents interconnected elements of park nature, forming a progressive narrative story. In terms of style, I employ digital colored pencils to create a soft and warm natural ambiance. Through the use of color, I aim to convey images filled with oxygen and warmth, providing audiences with an immersive sensory experience. The visual format of the concertina book serves as the medium for presenting the illustrations. Its concise folding structure

enhances the coherence of the illustrations' reading experience while adding interest and flexibility. Additionally, the concertina book format allows for the creation of postcard books, where readers can tear off their favorite postcards along the dotted lines and carry them with ease.

*Leaf It Behind* suggests a deliberate action of leaving behind one's burdens or concerns, symbolized by the word *leaf*, and encourages individuals to embrace green spaces and leave their worries behind.

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### Context

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1. *Riedelsheimer, T., 2017. Leaning Into The Wind — Andy Goldsworthy. BiliBili. Available at: <https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1YE411j7kG/> (Accessed: 16 January 2024).*

This documentary follows the renowned and great land artist Andy Goldsworthy in his exploration of the world and himself through both ephemeral and permanent creations on the landscape, in cities, and with his own body. Goldsworthy is an artist I greatly admire, utilizing all-natural materials provided by nature itself to infuse his works with inherent scarcity and serendipity. By combining art with existing natural elements, he has crafted several astonishing and awe-inspiring natural sculptures.

These fleeting creations come to life through nature and, in turn, vanish as part of the natural cycle. Their brief existence vividly embodies the processes of life—growth, stasis, decay—showcasing the immense power of nature and the ephemeral and minuscule nature of human existence. Witnessing Goldsworthy's sculptural work fills me with profound admiration. I appreciate his use of natural materials without disrupting the natural processes, a true collaboration with the art of nature. Through Goldsworthy, I understand the essence of “sourcing from nature and dissolving back into nature,” especially when the natural materials decay, driving changes in the artwork—a magnificent and authentic form of art.

I aspire to learn and apply this creative spirit in my work—sourcing from nature, incorporating nature into my creations, and infusing life into my artistic endeavors. Of course, this requires ample preparation, learning, and iteration, and I am actively practicing toward this goal. As Goldsworthy eloquently puts it, “My remit is to work with nature as a whole.”

2. *Yuen, H.K. & Jenkins, G.R., 2020. Factors associated with changes in subjective well-being immediately after urban park visit. International Journal of Environmental Health Research, 30(2), pp.134-145. (Accessed 10 April 2024).*

This research serves as the theoretical foundation for the development of my work. It aims to explore the factors contributing to the short-term enhancement of subjective well-being following

unstructured visits to urban parks. The findings indicate that just 20 minutes spent in a park can increase happiness and mental well-being, even without engaging in physical exercise. This methodology offers a concise yet efficacious therapy for our fast-paced lives, known as the *Twenty-Minute Park Effect*.

Especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of physical and mental health. In my city of Shanghai, more and more young people are inclined towards outdoor activities in nature, such as picnicking, camping, frisbee playing, and hiking, rather than indoor entertainment. This spring, many individuals have begun to practice and advocate for the *Twenty-Minute Park* natural therapy approach, with the majority experiencing positive effects on their mental well-being.

Let's go to a place without a ceiling together, where simply lying down feels comforting. Sunshine is always free, regardless of the circumstances, as it represents the indiscriminate love bestowed upon us by the world. Hence, whatever troubles may arise, they can wait until our return.

3. Gawool, L., 2022. *Dear, little flower. Notefolio*. Available at: [https://notefolio.net/ga\\_wool/302513?utm\\_source=pinterest&utm\\_medium=pinterest\\_nf&utm\\_campaign=illust\\_220525\\_2](https://notefolio.net/ga_wool/302513?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=pinterest_nf&utm_campaign=illust_220525_2) (Accessed: 18 April 2024).

Lim's collection of flower illustrations has evoked a deeply soothing sensation within me. Upon viewing it, I felt an irresistible urge to venture outdoors and bask in the beauty of nature. Her warm color palette conveys the warmth and vitality of nature, creating a sense of comfort and aspiration. Through various mediums such as illustrations, accordion books, stationery, postage stamps, and photography, Lim has explored numerous avenues to express her creativity, offering a rich tapestry of possibilities and expressions in her work. Furthermore, I was captivated by her distinctive printing and framing techniques, which exude visual appeal and evoke a sense of natural ambiance.

Her profound love for nature is evident throughout her work, providing viewers with a sense of emotional healing and resonance. Her creations have sparked inspiration in me regarding color, mediums, and printing choices, leading me to appreciate the diversity and adaptability of visual presentation. Specifically, my project focuses on evoking emotional connections to parks through childhood memories. Therefore, I can employ various methods to invite audiences from different countries to share their memories, allowing their recollections to become a part of my project, thus fostering an open-ended exploration.

4. Alex, A., 2023. *Natureways. Ual*. Available at: <https://ualshowcase.arts.ac.uk/project/443461/cover> (Accessed: 18 April 2024).

Abadjieva's work intention is fundamentally aligned with mine, we both aim to inspire individuals to spend more time outdoors and foster connections with natural ecosystems through our work. Parks

serve as the focal point of our shared research interests. In her practice, Abadjieva has devised a physical illustration map that, through captivating visuals and narrative storytelling, aids visitors and volunteers in identifying various trees, flower sources, birds, and pollinators within the Duncan Terrace Garden. This innovative approach to species identification is particularly intriguing.

Furthermore, through her practical work as a designer and a nature enthusiast, Abadjieva has actively immersed herself in the local ecology and community management of parks, a dedication that I deeply admire. She not only imparts knowledge about nature and ecology but, more importantly, stimulates further awareness and even participation in the parks where she operates. This practice-based creative approach brings real benefits and significance to her audience and community. I have greatly benefited from this methodology.

5. Hu, L.J., 2023. *In Search of Meanwhile Garden. It's Nice That*. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/lucy-jiachun-hu-in-search-of-meanwhile-garden-illustration-publication-project-150224> (Accessed: 22 April 2024).

The inspiration for this project stems from the profound connection between the collective trauma experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the healing power of nature. Through her unique experiences as a community garden volunteer, Lucy created an illustrated book imbued with therapeutic qualities. This book features hazy colors and adorable illustrations, radiating a gentle yet resilient energy.

In her collection of illustrations, Lucy captures the small discoveries she made in the garden, through meticulous depictions that transport readers into the embrace of nature. Her story is not just a personal journey of the soul but also a hopeful invitation encouraging readers to step outside, explore their local community gardens, and reconnect with nature.

Lucy's portrayal of these fleeting yet precious moments deeply resonates with me, and I greatly admire her creative work. Most importantly, we both firmly believe that nature possesses an intangible and organic healing power, capable of soothing the wounds of the soul and bringing lasting peace and comfort.

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### Project Contribution

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#### From a practical standpoint:

This project delves into the depiction of subtle moments in parks through illustrations, aiming to convey the natural healing they offer to weary bodies and minds. Practically, this project showcases how graphic communication design can serve as a powerful tool for conveying complex concepts and emotions visually. By portraying the healing properties of parks, it establishes an emotional

connection between individuals and nature. Additionally, the creation of the illustration series *Leaf It Behind* demonstrates practical skills in illustration, publication design, printing production, etc., showcasing the ability to translate conceptual ideas into visually compelling narratives. Also, the phrase *Leaf It Behind* suggests a deliberate action of leaving behind one's burdens or concerns, symbolized by the word *leaf*. By evoking imagery of nature and foliage, the title conveys a sense of tranquility and rejuvenation, inviting readers to immerse themselves in the soothing embrace of nature and find solace away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

#### From a theoretical perspective:

This project is founded upon theoretical concepts, including the *Twenty-Minute Park Effect* and Guy Debord's *psychogeography*. By investigating the manner in which the environment affects individuals' emotions and behaviors, the project contributes to theoretical discussions surrounding the intersection of urban green spaces, psychology, and well-being. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the project enriches the theoretical understanding of how graphic communication design can promote mental and physical health in urban environments.

#### From a professional standpoint:

This project demonstrates a commitment to evidence-based practice by conducting research and applying its findings to design decisions. Throughout the research process, it adheres to an exploratory, critical, and open-minded methodology, fostering the discovery of new insights and solutions. Furthermore, the creation of *Leaf It Behind* showcases not only a keen perception of color and aesthetics but also proficiency in illustration, layout design, and narrative storytelling, thereby enhancing professional credibility. Moreover, this project aligns with the increasing recognition in post-COVID-19 society of the importance of mental health and natural therapies. Its objective is to encourage people to engage more with green spaces through graphic communication design, allowing them to leave their worries behind and contribute positively to mental well-being.

#### Beyond the limits of the course:

Parks have always been my spiritual sanctuary, offering gentle and effective healing whether in my hometown of Shanghai or London. The vibrant tapestry of natural elements, intertwined with light and shadow, has breathed new life into me during my lowest moments. I am delighted to create and share something I love in Projection 2 and the Graduation Showcase.

I intend to evoke a profound sense of healing and warmth with *Leaf It Behind*. If my work can transport you, even for a fleeting moment, to a place where worries dissipate and the embrace of nature beckons, then it has fulfilled its purpose.

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## Annotated Bibliography

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