



MY ZOO

FOR MEMBERS OF WOODLAND PARK ZOO • **SUMMER 2017**



SOAR THROUGH SUMMER!

ADVENTURE STARTS HERE



UNCOVERING THE UNDERNEATH

Part explorer, artist and entomology enthusiast, Melinda

Hurst Frye dives into her backyard to discover a world teeming with underground creatures. Using just a shovel, a stick and a scanner, the Seattle artist reveals an entire world right under our feet. The final product is a compilation of several scans as well as some added photographs of specific creatures, such as a mole or a caterpillar. The artwork has a magical quality to it, but all the subjects are representative of what's really there.

Soil is home to almost 25 percent of all living things. Billions of microorganisms aside, the very dirt in your backyard is a layer of life that supports and sustains a healthy landscape. Ask any kid and they'll tell you your yard is full of all kinds of living things: fungi, grubs, worms, ants, centipedes, moles, voles, snails and slugs. Melinda celebrates the diversity of creatures here and gives us a glimpse into a terrestrial kingdom not often seen by humans. We chatted with Melinda about what makes dirt so downright fascinating.

It's about letting the wonder of what is happening underground surprise the viewer into studying and protecting their space and the ecosystems within it.

WPZ: *What made you want to start digging?*

MHF: Digging in the dirt and exploring our garden is part of our family's outside play. We have a space (a large planter box) set aside for the kids to dig, experiment and get dirty. This space now looks like an overgrown excavation site, with parts of toys, cups and spoons reaching out and plants growing through the toys that were abandoned over the winter.

As artists, we mine our own lives and experiences for subjects and ways to make work. One day we followed a beetle from one corner of the yard to another, as far as we could. We watched it duck around rocks and through the strawberries until it dove underground. I am not sure what my kids were thinking about at that moment, but I was overwhelmed with wondering where the beetle had gone and who it had joined forces with below me. From this moment (just a couple of years ago), I have been digging, photographing, scanning, and collecting images and specimens to bring together in these large scale images.

WPZ: *How does your work help educate others about the role of bugs in a healthy ecosystem?*

MHF: My hope is that the work inspires a connection with the viewer and their natural world. The images are intended to encourage stewardship of our unique residential spaces and environment

through visually emphasizing the diversity and coexistence of species underground. It's about letting the wonder of what is happening underground surprise the viewer into studying and protecting their space and the ecosystems within it.

WPZ: *What is the most interesting thing you've discovered?*

MHF: The eggs! Worm eggs and slug eggs and all kinds of other tiny eggs that I have been unable to identify. It is almost as if some of them glow, they are so beautiful. It is like a treasure hunt to try to find them in the layers of soil. I try to photograph them quickly and then cover them up again so they can get back to growing, and maybe we will meet again later in my yard!

WPZ: *What do you hope people feel when they look at your work?*

MHF: I hope they feel the wonder that I felt when I watched the beetle traverse my yard and disappear into the soil, and invest interest in the habitats of their own spaces, to be overwhelmed with nature cycles that are happening in their own backyards.

WPZ: *Do you visit the zoo for inspiration?*

MHF: I grew up in the Seattle area, so I have been coming to the zoo with my family since I was little, and now I get to bring my kids. They could spend their entire day watching the penguins or the



Kids (ages 2–10) can enter the Creature in the Yard contest, details on page 30.

monkeys while I am trying to check out the terrariums and the small vignettes and habitats.

WPZ: *If you could stick your scanner in any one square foot of the earth, where would it be?*

MHF: That's a hard one! I love making these images because I get to explore my region. I enjoy learning about our area, examining and building these images about the NW. I am in the research stages of the next iteration of this work and interested in focusing on Washington's forests through various forest types, logging sites, former wildfire locations, fungal networks, old growth and nursing logs.

That being said, doesn't a lovely and warm, sandy beach with seaside insects and critters sound delightful? Or the moon. What would that look like?

For more dirt on Melinda Hurst Frye's artwork, visit: www.mhurstfrye.com

Kirsten Pisto, Editor





Win a special ZooParent orangutan adoption or an overnight zoo campout!

Backyard Creatures

MYZOO KIDS SUMMER ART CONTEST

If you could design a backyard creature, what would it look like?

NAME _____ AGE _____
(First) (Last)

PARENT OR GUARDIAN'S NAME _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____ @ _____

THE NAME OF MY CREATURE _____

MY CREATURE IS:

- Nocturnal (*active at night*)
- Diurnal (*active at day*)
- Crepuscular (*active at dawn and twilight*)

My creature eats: _____

My creature lives in: _____

My creature likes to: _____

CONTEST RULES

1. Have an adult help you tear out this page. Draw in the white space using pen, crayon, paint, markers... anything goes!
2. Fill out the questions on this page. Include your name and age, your parent or guardian's name and phone or email.
3. Send your submissions to us directly:

MAIL TO MyZoo Kids Contest c/o Pisto
Woodland Park Zoo
5500 Phinney Ave. N.
Seattle, WA 98103

OR

DROP OFF You may deliver your submissions to the
South or West Entrance during zoo hours.

All entries must be received or postmarked by June 25, 2017.
Visit www.zoo.org/magazine to view the fine print contest rules.

PRIZES

Two runners up: Woodland Park Zoo t-shirt and 2 giraffe experience tickets.

Grand prize winner (ages 3-5): ZooParent orangutan plush and animal adoption kit.

Grand prize winner (ages 6-10): Overnight at the zoo for yourself and your favorite adult in August.

