Pleurotus

Raina Sparks
Why Fungi?

Source: National Forest Foundation
New England Mushrooms From Hikes!
Hiking Mushrooms Part 2!
Part 4!
Substrates: Farm Wheat and Rye!
Growing My Own:
Blue Oyster Mushrooms
Pasteurizing the Substrate
Choosing a Growing Container: Burlap?
Inoculation!
Inoculation Setup
A Look At Current Progress!
Part 2: A Minor Roadblock!
Why Pastels?

- Cheap and forgiving of beginner error
- Playful and fun! Like adult crayons
- As a medium shares many of the qualities I admire in fungi: the colors mix and collaborate, the results are coarse but colorful and playful, it is an interesting tactile experience!
Piece One: “Breakfast in the Woods”

- I’ve always thought this mushroom, a Hemlock Varnish Shelf variety, looked like a pancake
- This variety is not edible, but like a pancake is bulky, abundant, and golden
- A celebration of (metaphorical) nourishment and abundance from the forest
Piece Two: “Love Story”

Mycorrhizal hyphae intertwine with plant root systems to effectively extend the root network. This increases nutrient uptake for the plant and connects plants to each other. In return, the plant gives sugars to the plant (1). This healthy, symbiotic “love story” is what initially inspired me to center fungi in my project, and I wanted to celebrate this symbiosis with the complementary colors pink and green, and with soft, romantic pinks and purples to celebrate the beauty and abundance of the relationship between roots and hyphae.
Piece 3: Shades of Blue

- In every comprehensive study done, the world’s favorite color has emerged as blue (2). Blue represents largely “good” things for survival, like blue sky or water
- The Blue Oyster Mushroom is a sub-variety of the Oyster Mushroom, which was first cultivated during WW1 as a subsistence measure when food got scarce (3)
- The Blue Oyster, both in color and history, represents survival. My drawing is intended to be reverent to that symbolism by centering the mushroom and using light, sky-blue shades in the background
Shades of Blue Pt. 2: The Violence in Survival

- Oyster mushrooms are one of the only known carnivorous mushroom varieties, consuming bacteria and nematodes, small round worms (4).
- Oysters also consume decaying wood, which allows it to decompose faster and get the nutrients back to the soil.
- It is possible that Oyster Mushrooms could use similar methods to suck toxins out of the soil, and are currently being studied as a possible future direction of soil and atmospheric health.
- I chose to use varying shades of blue in the piece to represent the complicated nature of the Oyster Mushroom: violent yet compassionate, a tool for subsistence yet perhaps also the key to thrive.
Sources

(1) https://yupthatexists.com/the-mycorrhizal-network/
(2) https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-blue-worlds-favorite-color
(4) https://specialtyproduce.com/produce/Oyster_Mushrooms_703.php