

Design Course

Visual Syntactics 4 - Abstraction

Understanding Visual Language

by

Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/course/visual-syntactics-4-abstraction>

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But, to her surprise, unlike the bird had mentioned, her corner was a vast lake and it shimmered.

Her eyes gleamed as she looked at the shimmering beautiful lake.

To her surprise, her new found corner reflected whatever little light that came from the same dark world she



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Introduction

This is an exercise in exploring how one can transform a visual through graphically abstracting the forms.

Abstraction:

Abstraction is often defined as an operation that extracts elements or constituents common to a number of particular cases and presents them as a new sum or configuration.

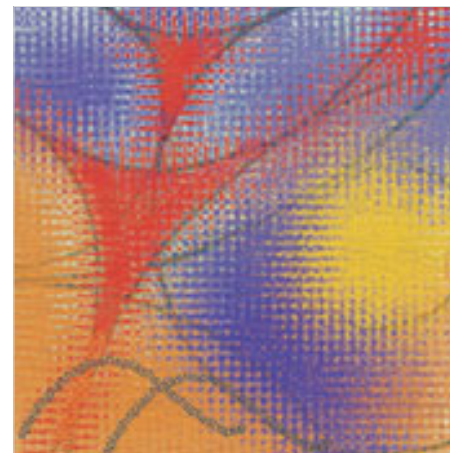
__Rudolf Arnheim

Visual Abstraction:

Visual Abstraction refers to the ability to transform a visual into its essential features - this could be achieved by transformation of any one or more of the visual elements such as shape, colour and texture. There is also the degree of abstraction from being very abstract to being less abstract (or being closer to realistic representation).

Visual Abstraction leads to the following:

- Higher level of visual order
- Reduction of information content
- Generality in the representation.



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Visual Order

‘Order refers to the degree and the kind of lawfulness governing the relations among parts of the representations. It applies to the makeup of each part within itself’

___Maldonado Y and Bonseipe G

Higher Level of Order:

A relatively high degree of order seems to be the key factor underlying the characteristics inherent in the abstraction of representation.

‘Order refers to the degree and the kind of lawfulness governing the relations among parts of the representations. It applies to the makeup of each part within itself’

___Maldonado Y and Bonseipe G

It applies to the over-all theme or structure, to which the relationship of all parts must confirm; it also applies to the makeup of each part within itself.

The visual principles that need to be explored to achieve a relatively high level of order are factors such as:

- Less visual details
- Simplicity of forms
- Recurrence of forms
- Alignment to grids
- Symmetry
- Balance of figure and ground.

At the next level, the order is influenced by visual features such as:

- the use of shapes that are simple, smoothed, geometric;
- textures that are even;
- tonal variations that are minimal;
- orientations along the horizontal, the vertical and diagonal axis;
- and size variations that are modular.

At the third level, elements such as lines that are used as outlines and in turn act as efficient containers of information, are treated in manner of having an orderly even thickness, a geometric linearity or circularity and are constrained in its direction to the major axis or the diagonal.

In Arnheim’s opinion ‘Order tends to reduce complexity and requires elimination of details that do not fit the

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principles determining the order'(1966).

The above-mentioned attributes that modify order bring about visual uniformity within and across images apart from restricting the information to the necessary details alone, as well as increasing the graphic quality of the representation.



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Design Exercise

Graphically abstracting the forms:

Exercise:

- Make a storyboard of five visuals (like comic strips) of your chosen story.
- Each frame represents a specific event, which document five continuous points in time (diachronic). In this exercise, you'll try to depict these visuals in abstract form.
- Abstract, graphicalise and simplify the forms or shapes of the elements in your visual (both the characters and the background environment) so as to represent a higher level of order.
- The visuals should make use of forms, textures, colours to express your story.

• **Visual Communication Students:**

- Task is to make a book of dimension 21cm x 21cm with 5 open page spreads of dimension 21cm x 42cm.
- You should represent your original story of 5 key frames as abstractions on the right half of book.
- Express your story using appropriate typeface on the left side of your book.
- Do a cover and then print and bind the book.

• **Animation Design Students:**

- Task is to make a Stop Motion presentation of your story.
- You should represent your original story of 5 key frames as animated abstractions making use of cut-outs.
- Use audio to narrate your story. You need to submit this as a movie file.

• **Interaction Design Students:**

- Task is to make an interactive presentation of your story.
- You should represent your original story of 5 key frames as abstractions with interactive features. Either use online text or audio to narrate your story.
- You can make use of flash or any other similar program to execute the exercise.

Total Time Duration: 15 hours of studio time.

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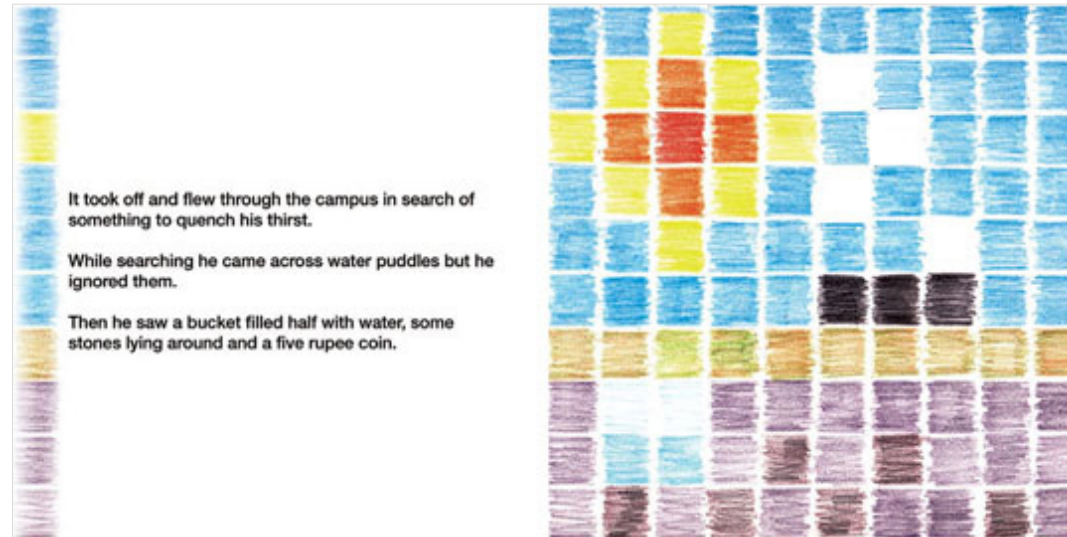
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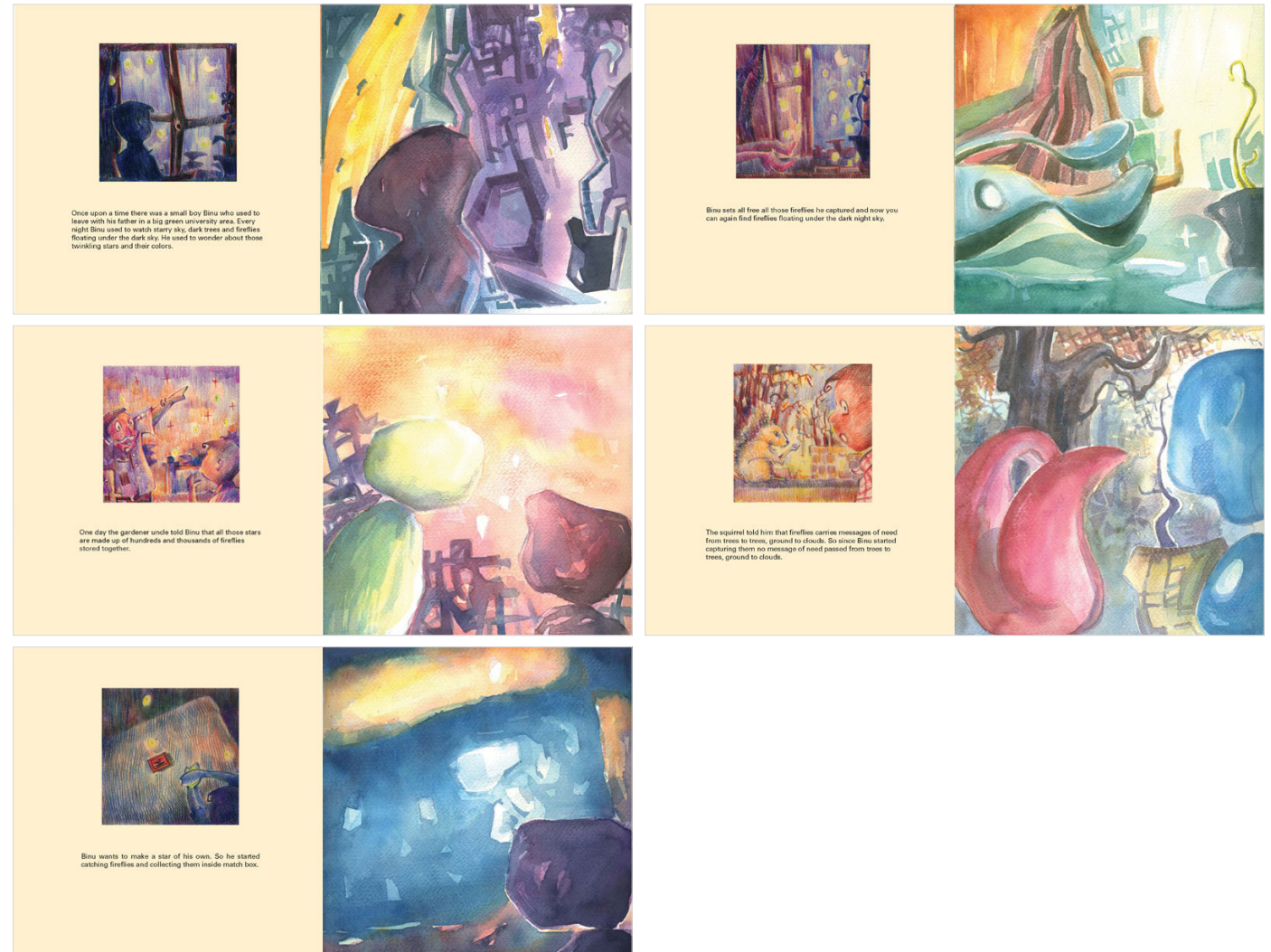
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Explorations

These are sample explorations done by M. Des. student.



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Abstraction

Here are examples of visuals of the story represented through visual abstraction:

Cycle Friends:



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Kaka the Crow:



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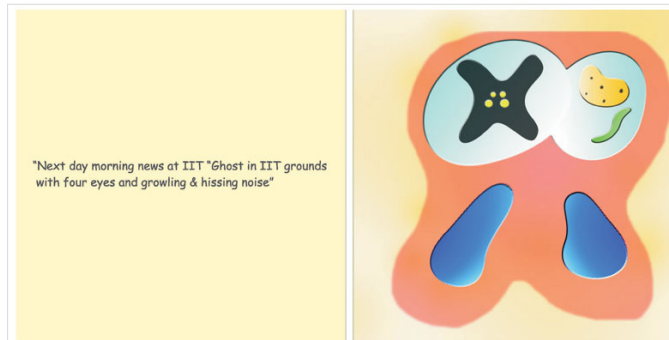
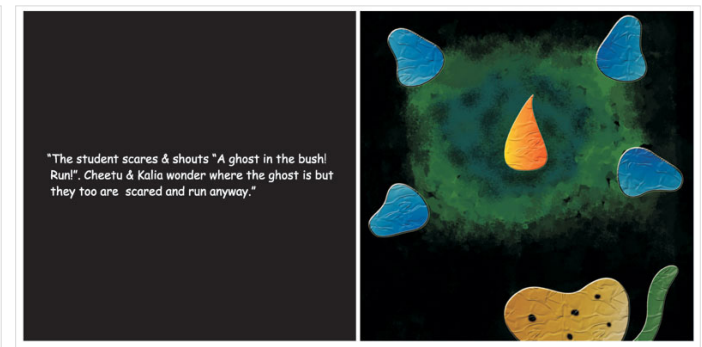
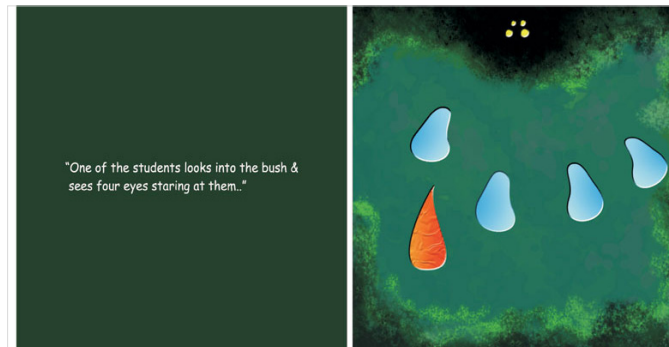
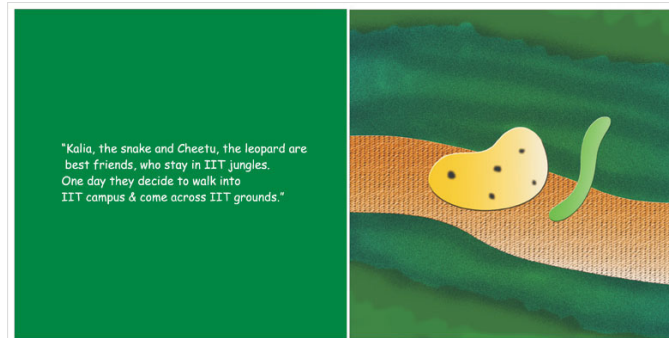
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Ghost at IIT:



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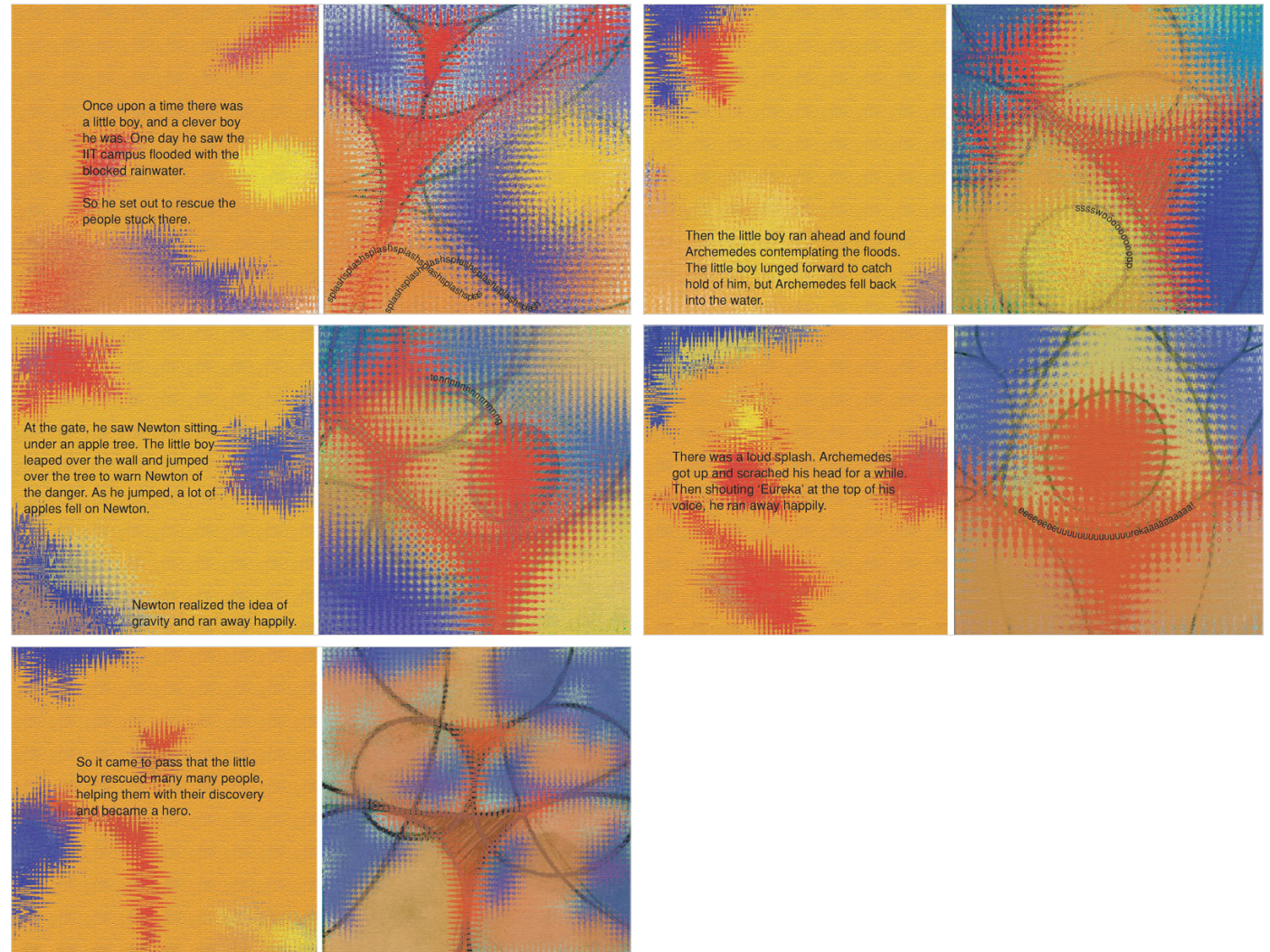
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The Rescue:



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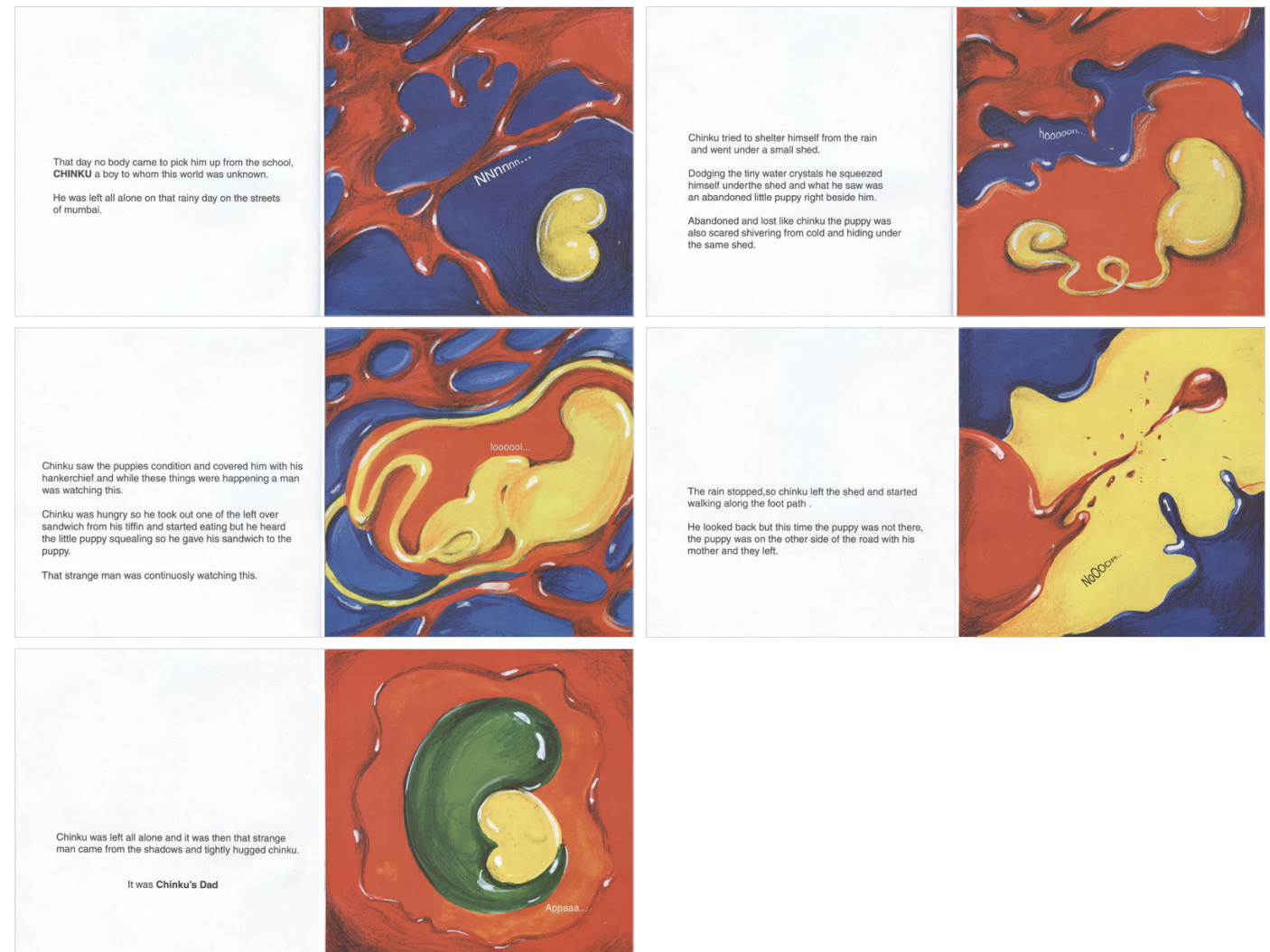
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Chinku:



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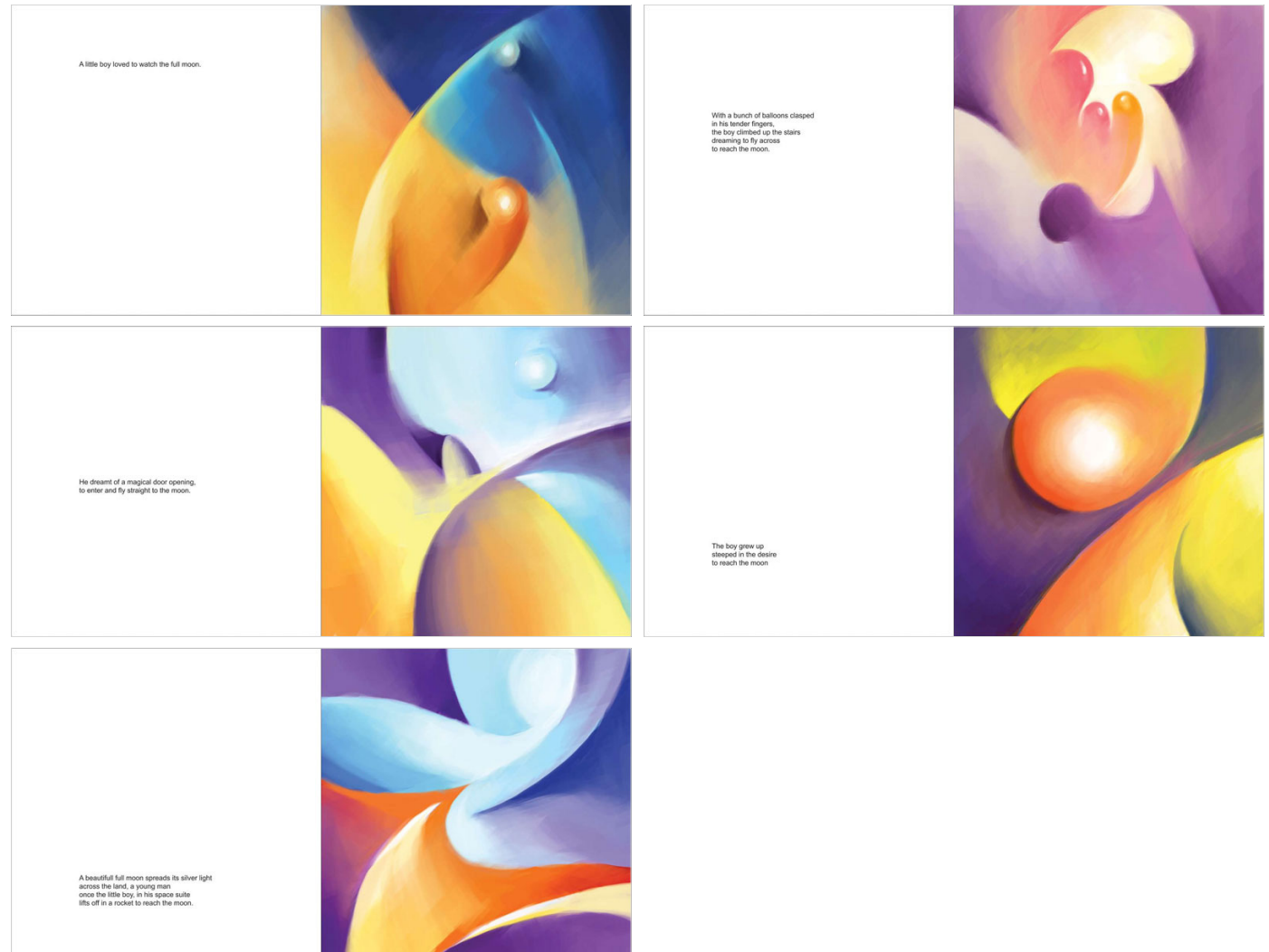
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The Moon's Spell:



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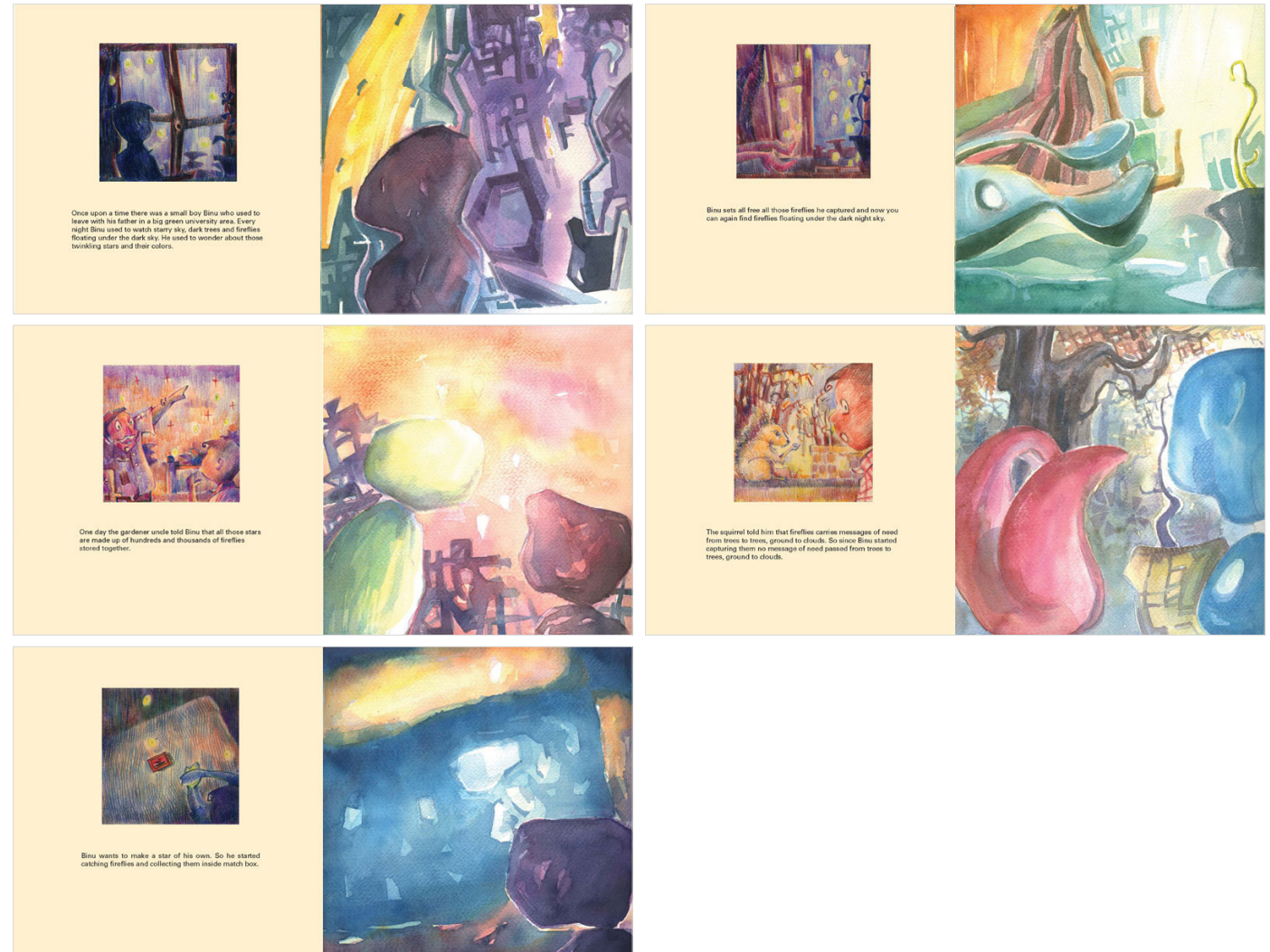
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Binu and Fireflies:



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Hero Cycle:



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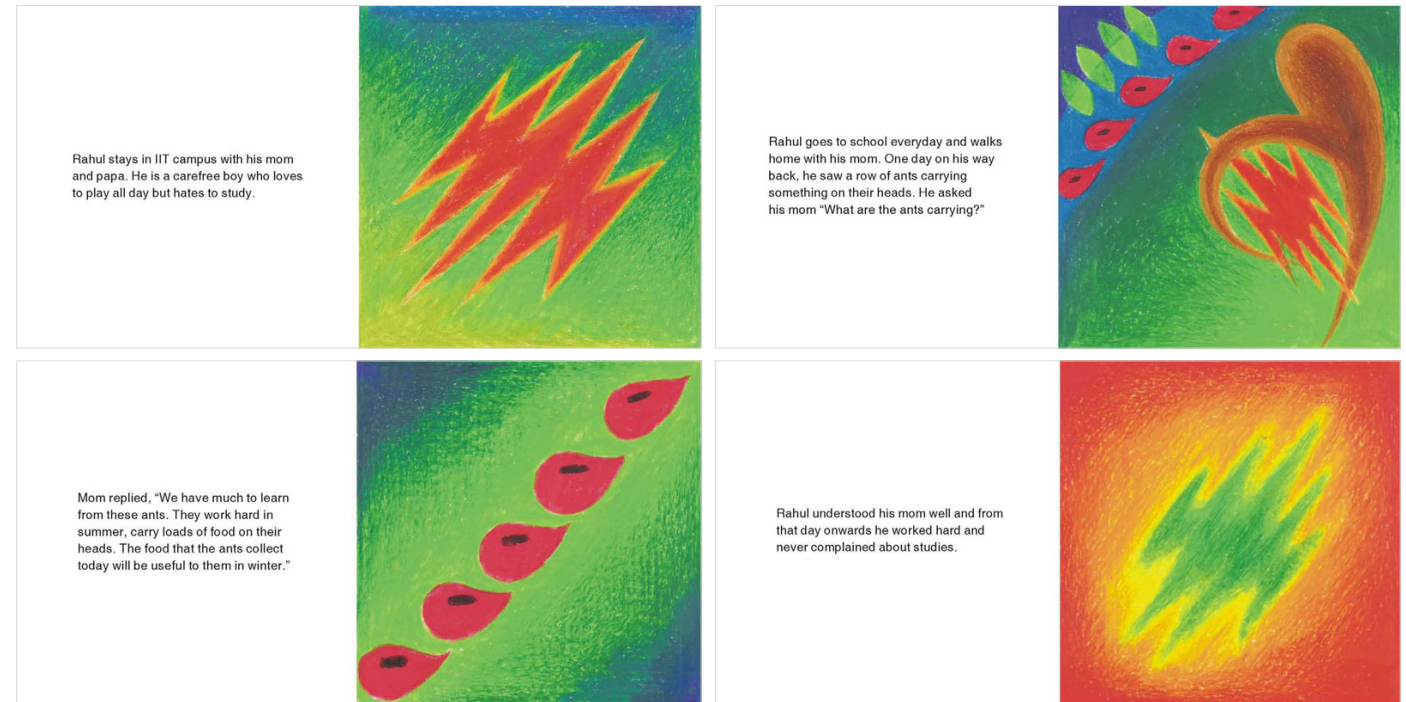
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The story is about Rahul:



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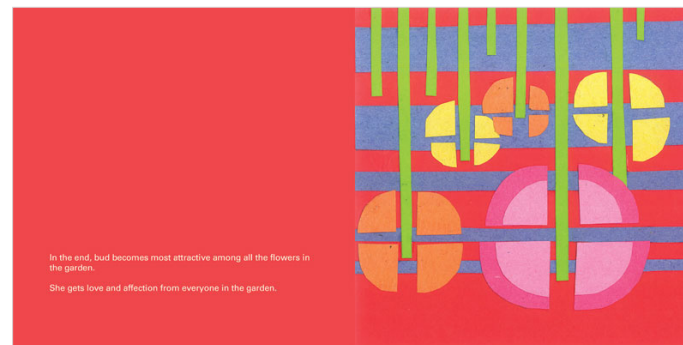
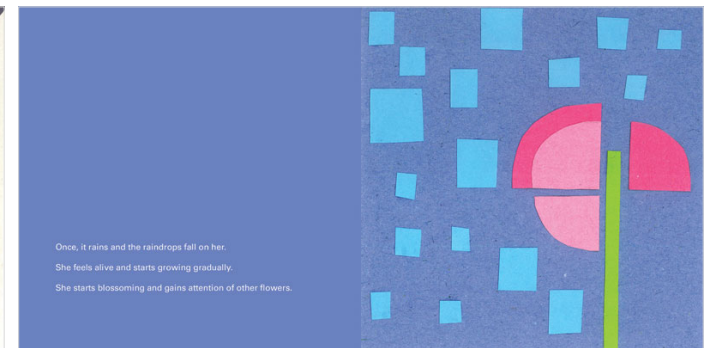
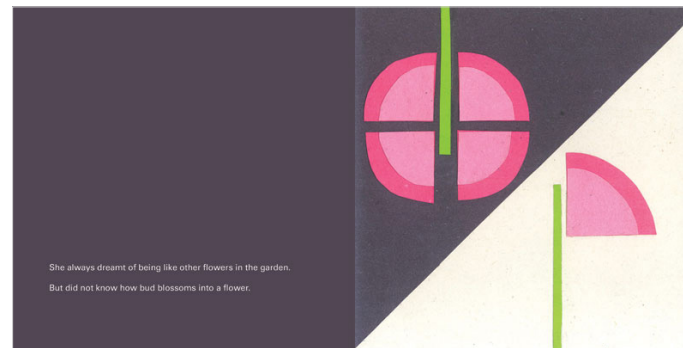
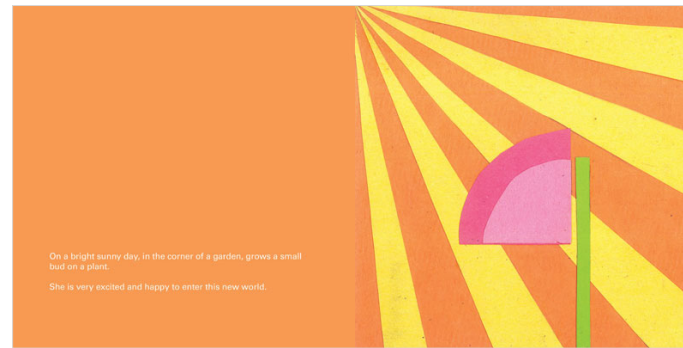
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A Bud's Life:



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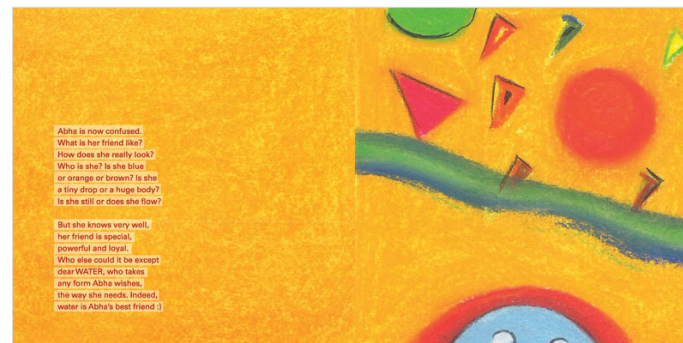
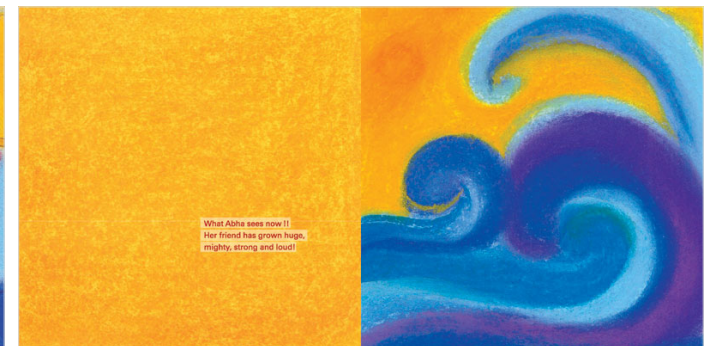
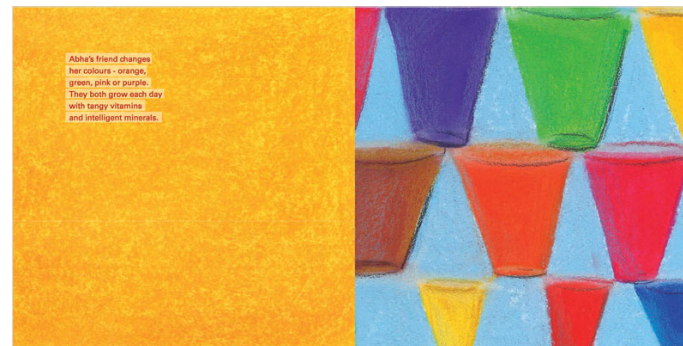
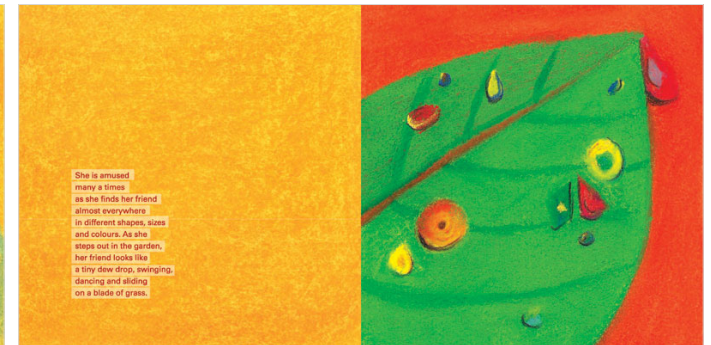
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Abha's Imaginary Friend:



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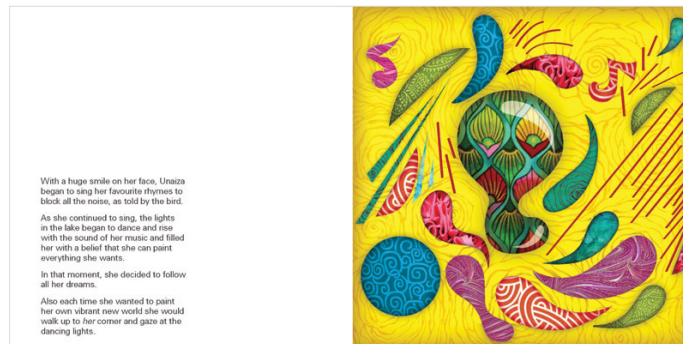
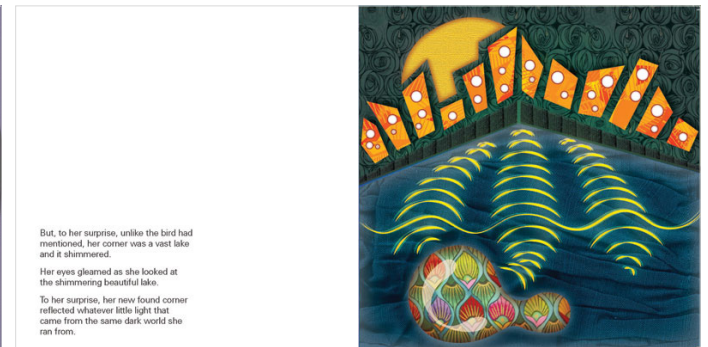
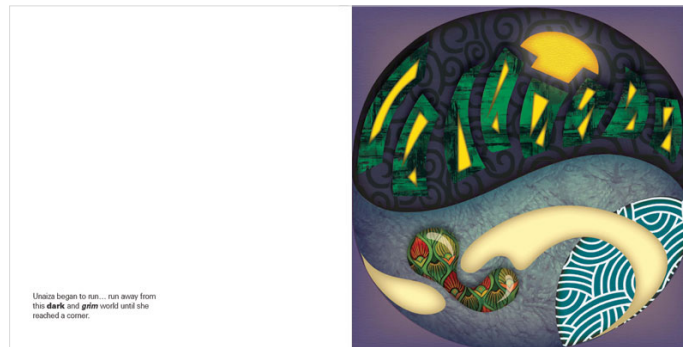
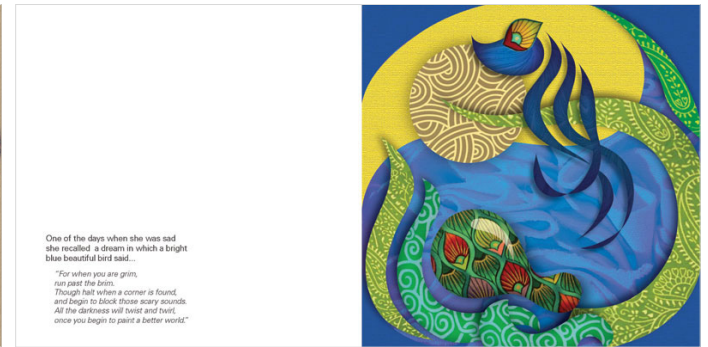
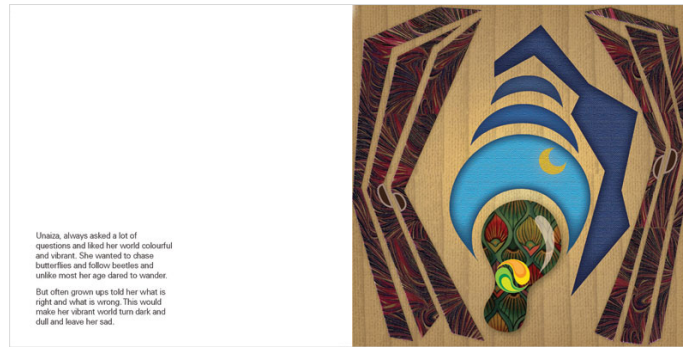
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Dancing Lights:



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Lily My Friend:



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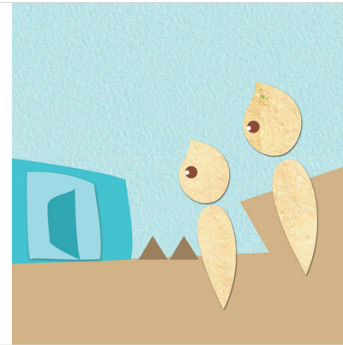
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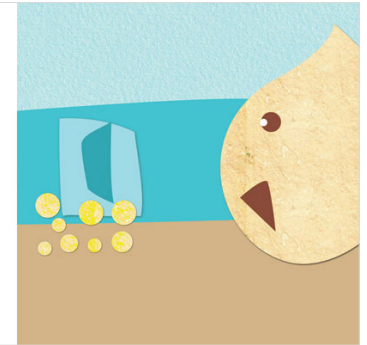
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Sitha School Uniform:

Everyday Sitha and her father go to the riverside, to wash the clothes. There she always sees a primary school, where the kids of her age group used to study, play and do many activities.



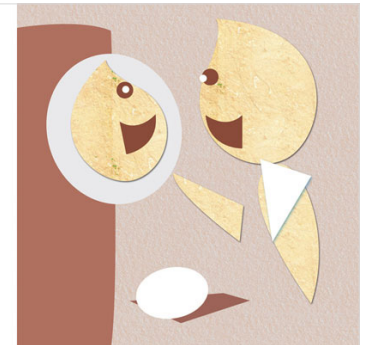
That makes a strong feeling inside her to be the same as those kids. And as she keeps on seeing again and again, the desire of getting into the school gets stronger.



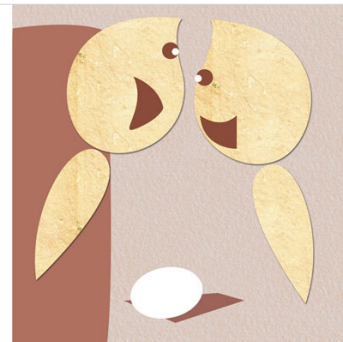
One day the clothes her father brought for washing consisted of the school uniform of a kid. As Sitha saw that uniform, she became very happy.



And soon Sitha wore that uniform and stood in front of the mirror. She started acting like the kids she used to see everyday while passing by the school. And she started dreaming about the school, playground, lunch break, parade and many more things she used to see.



SUDDENLY!!!! Her father entered. Sitha somehow managed to cover herself, mainly the uniform with an old curtain. Ranga approached and grabbed the curtain out. A truth revealed.... Sitha in school uniform. Ranga realised that it was school she wanted to have. This incident opened his eyes.



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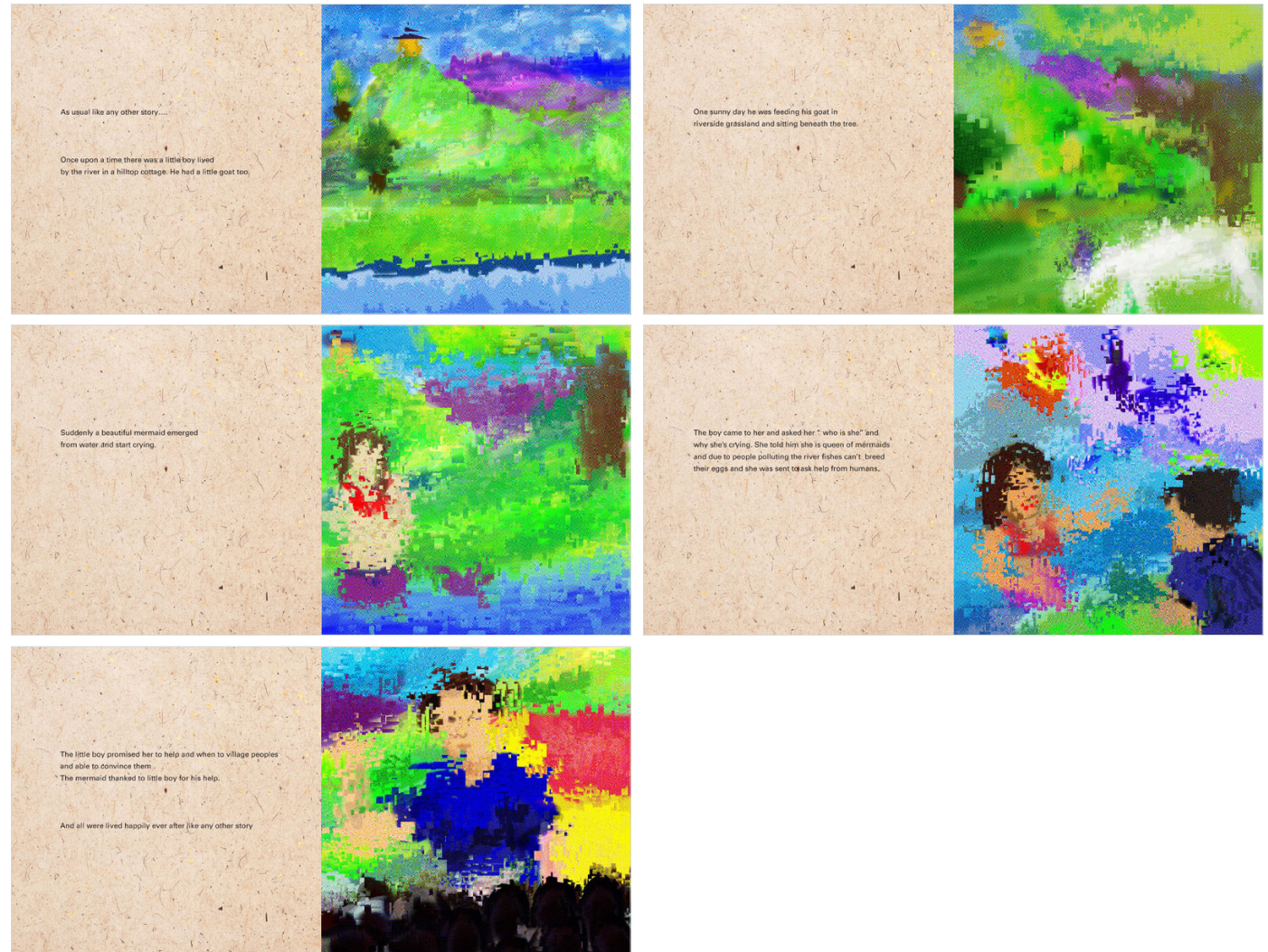
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Mermaid & Little Boy:



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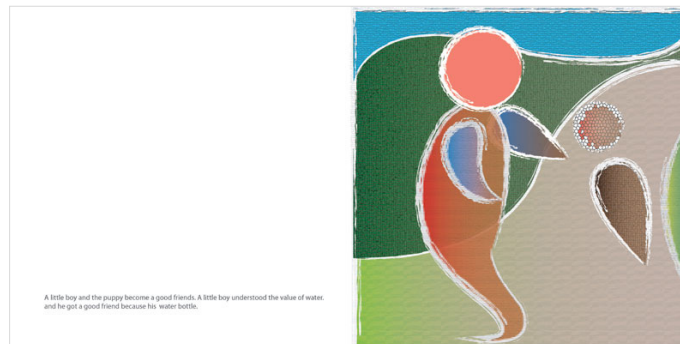
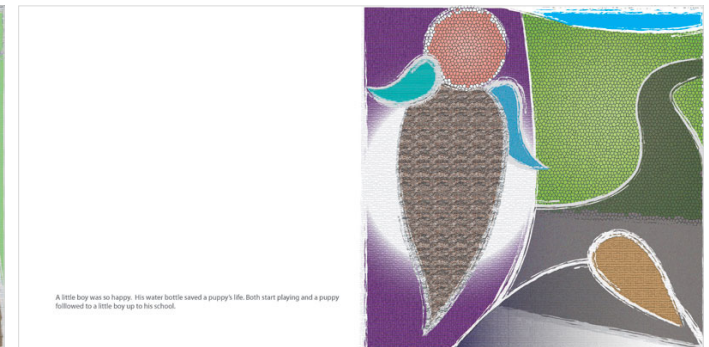
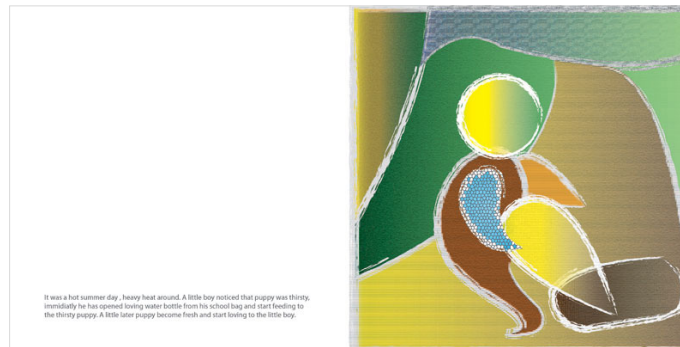
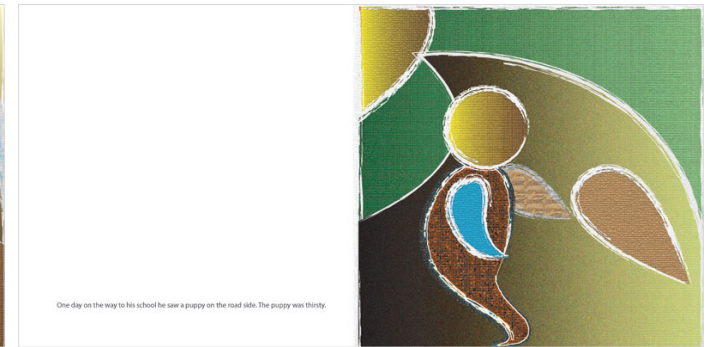
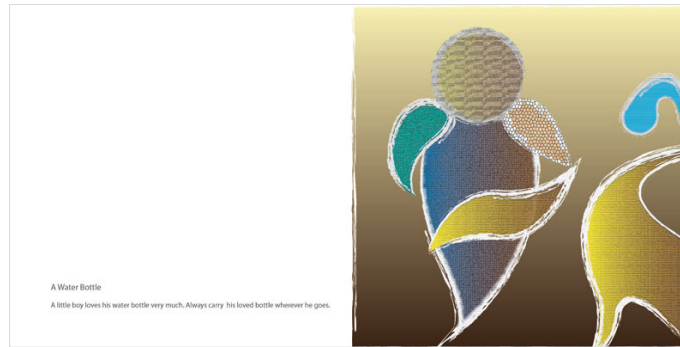
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A Water Bottle:



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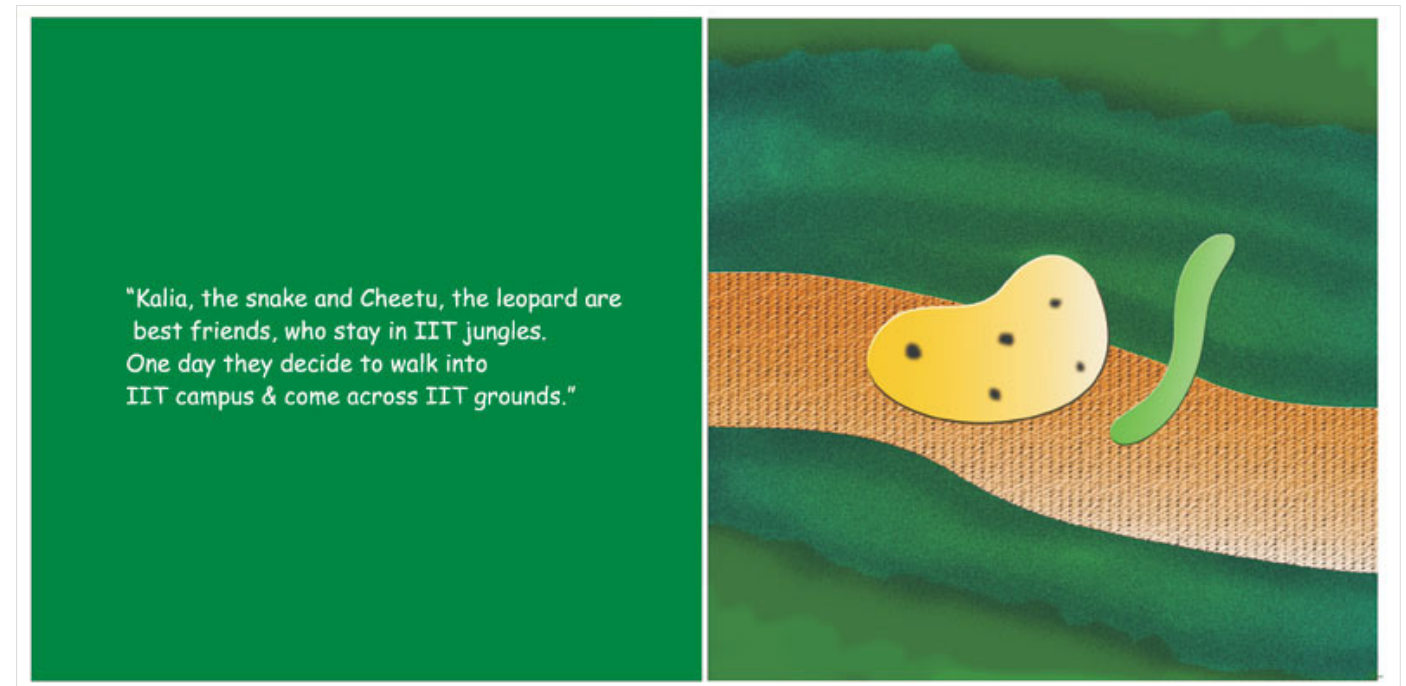
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Further Links

- Identity programme at designofsignagesystems.com
- Useful resource e-links related to 'Graphic Design' in India - includes Communication Design, Publication Design and Packaging Design
- International resource related to 'Graphic Design'
- Visual Communication Design at IDC IIT Bombay



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Contact Details

This documentation for the course was done by Professor Ravi Poovaiah, faculty at IDC, IIT Bombay.

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Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)

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