



WHAT IS NATURE?

A visual research into
children's perspective on nature

by
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INTRODUCTION

This booklet presents the outcomes of drawing workshops on the theme of nature conducted with primary school children as part of my graduation project, titled “Nurture in Nature”. The drawings and their analyses featured in this book have fostered design choices made in the “Nurture in Nature” building design, which is further explored in the complementary graduation book. Additionally, the drawings represent independent outcomes of the graduation research.

Approximately eighty primary school children, around the age of 7, from two different schools in Rotterdam were posed the same question: “What is nature?”. To ensure individuality in their responses and minimize the influence of classmates’ ideas on their drawings, they were invited to contemplate the answer silently without expressing it aloud. The extensiveness of this question was deliberately a deliberate choice to encourage a diverse range of thoughts and interpretations from the students. The impact of this freedom on their drawing process, which is also compared to the surrounding environment of their schools’ neighbourhoods, played a meaningful role in the research outcomes and its implications for the design project.

In addition to the workshops conducted in Rotterdam, the question “What is nature?” was also posed to children in Liège, specifically in the Bressoux/Droixhe neighborhoods, as part of the Nurture in Nature project. This activity was organized in collaboration with social workers from Amis de l’Étang. The drawings and artworks created during this activity have been included in this booklet.

It is important to note that the circumstances in which these drawings were created differed significantly from those in the school settings in Rotterdam. Therefore, a direct comparison of the raw outcomes may not provide conclusive insights. However, when examining the drawing process and the children’s attitudes during the activities, a meaningful discourse can be established when comparing the processes to the school workshops.



C.B.S. BEATRIX GROOT-IJSSELMONDE, ROTTERDAM

Class 4a and 4b
Age range: 7-9 years old

A relatively green (sub-)urban neighbourhood. When asked the question: 'What is nature?' it was met with enthusiasm and excitement. There was little to no hesitation from the students to start drawing their 'nature'. Many animals and creative forms of nature were the result, leading to an estimation in medium to high nature connectivity. The small sample size of this research gives too little foundation to draw a correlation between the prominently present green environment and the ability to perform the task. However, the process of the workshop was in line with theoretical research on psychological development in relation to nature connectivity (F. Lederbogen) (F. Mayer). When relating their researches to each other it can be concluded that higher nature connectivity results in a stronger foundation for the development of concentration, impulse control and the ability to cope with stress.

Drawing observations:

- Trees with enormous tree trunks and small treetops
- Usually drawn in elevation/perspective
- Building or man-made space as anchor for a specific nature memory

MARIASCHOOL SPANGEN, ROTTERDAM

Class 4/5/6
Age range: 7-10 years old

A highly paved, urban housing area with a school demographic which is comparable to Groot-IJsselmonde (many students with a (multicultural) immigrant background and fairly low income households). However, the amount of green/ nature in this neighbourhood is radically different. Again, we cannot draw a singular conclusion or notice true correlations, but the school atmosphere differed by quite a lot from C.B.S. Beatrix. Conversation with teachers and personal observations showed a lower focus and attention span, as well as multiple students who were unable to play outside during the breaks as a result of violence and aggression. Many other circumstances other than nature connectivity, logically, have an impact on a child's psychological development, but the inability of more than 50% of the students to start individually on the nature workshop hinted at a relatively low nature connectivity level. Enthusiasm levels and variety in creative answers to the question resulted in different outcomes to the Beatrix school. While some students did not know where to even start with the broad question, others knew what they wanted to draw but not how to draw these desired answers.

AMIS DE L'ÉTANG DROIXHE, LIÈGE

Neighbourhood children
Age range: 4-12 years old

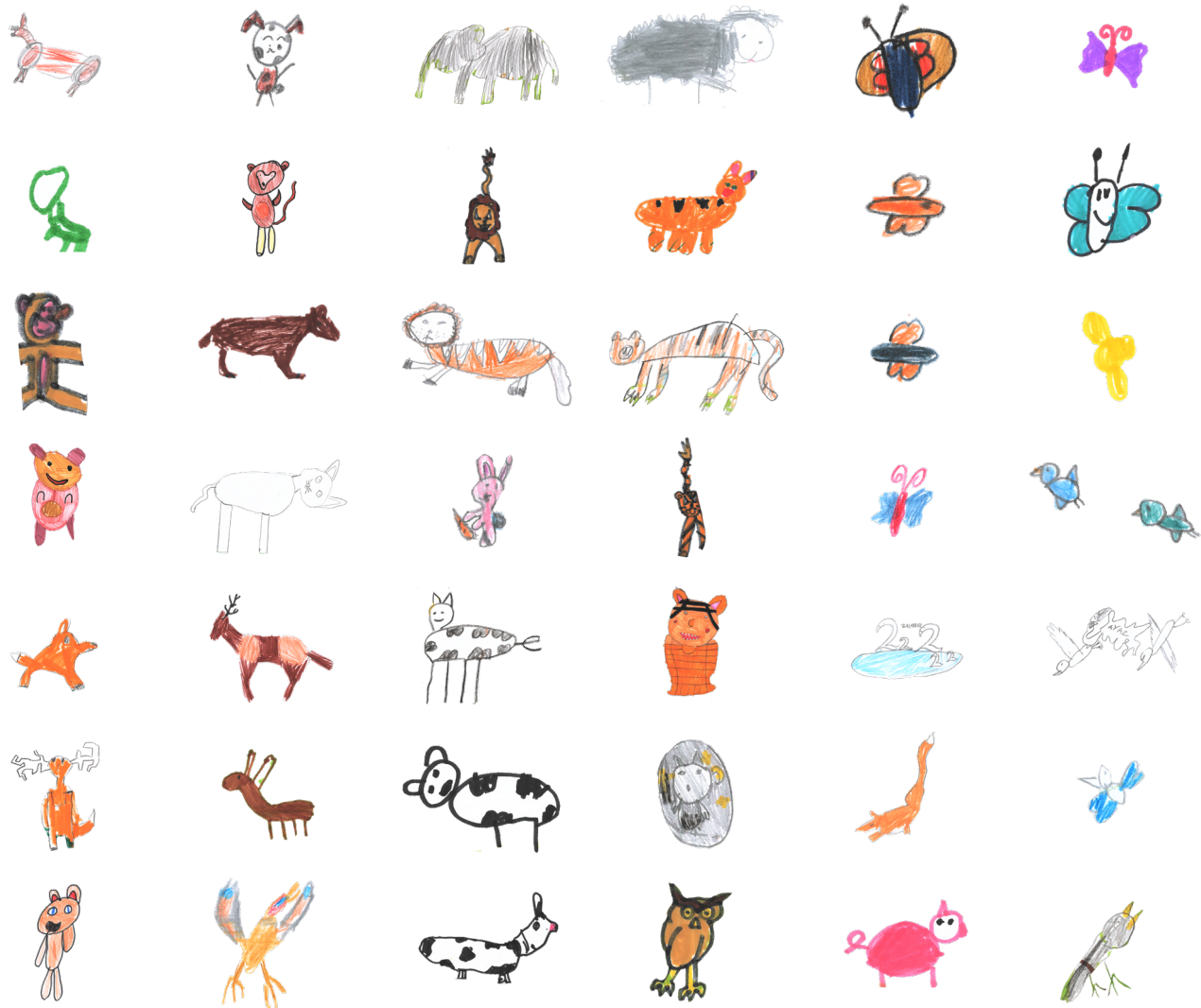
The age group of the activity in Droixhe was much broader than in the schools in Rotterdam, which resulted in much variety in ability to understand, reflect on and answer the question. Since it was an activity and not a school lesson, we had the chance to go outside and collect nature in the park ourselves. A few flowers were pretty, but the football was a lot more interesting. The drawings and arts and crafts that were created mostly turned into the direction of their bedroom, where nature would take on the role as the view or a houseplant. One girl, 8 years old, drew a very interesting picture of a house with nature/ outside on both sides. Interestingly enough, there was an extremely similar sunflower drawn by one of the kids in Liège and one of the students in Spangen, Rotterdam. Small petals in a circle and the inner part of the flower was drawn as a cross hatch. In terms of the process, it was in terms of enthusiasm in between the levels of C.B.S. Beatrix and the Mariaschool, but in terms of creativity and ideas on the meaning of nature it was more comparable to the Mariaschool in Spangen. Many children at the activity also mentioned not often visiting larger natural/green spaces.



C.B.S. BEATRIX - GROOT-IJSEL MONDE

MARASCHOOL - SPANGEN





C.B.S. BEATRIX - GROOT-IJSSELMONDE

MARIASCHOOL - SPANGEN





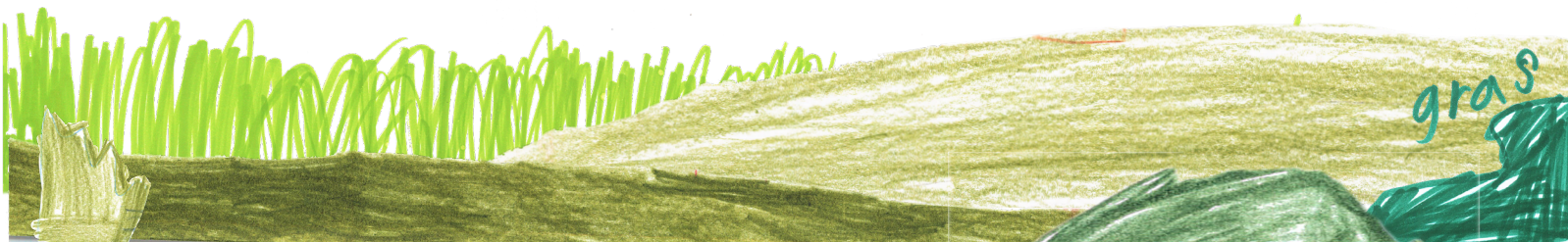
C.B.S. BEATRIX - GROOT-IJSELMONDE

MARIASCHOOL - SPANGEN









DRAWING COLLECTION



CBS.BEATRIX - GROOT-IJSELMONDE

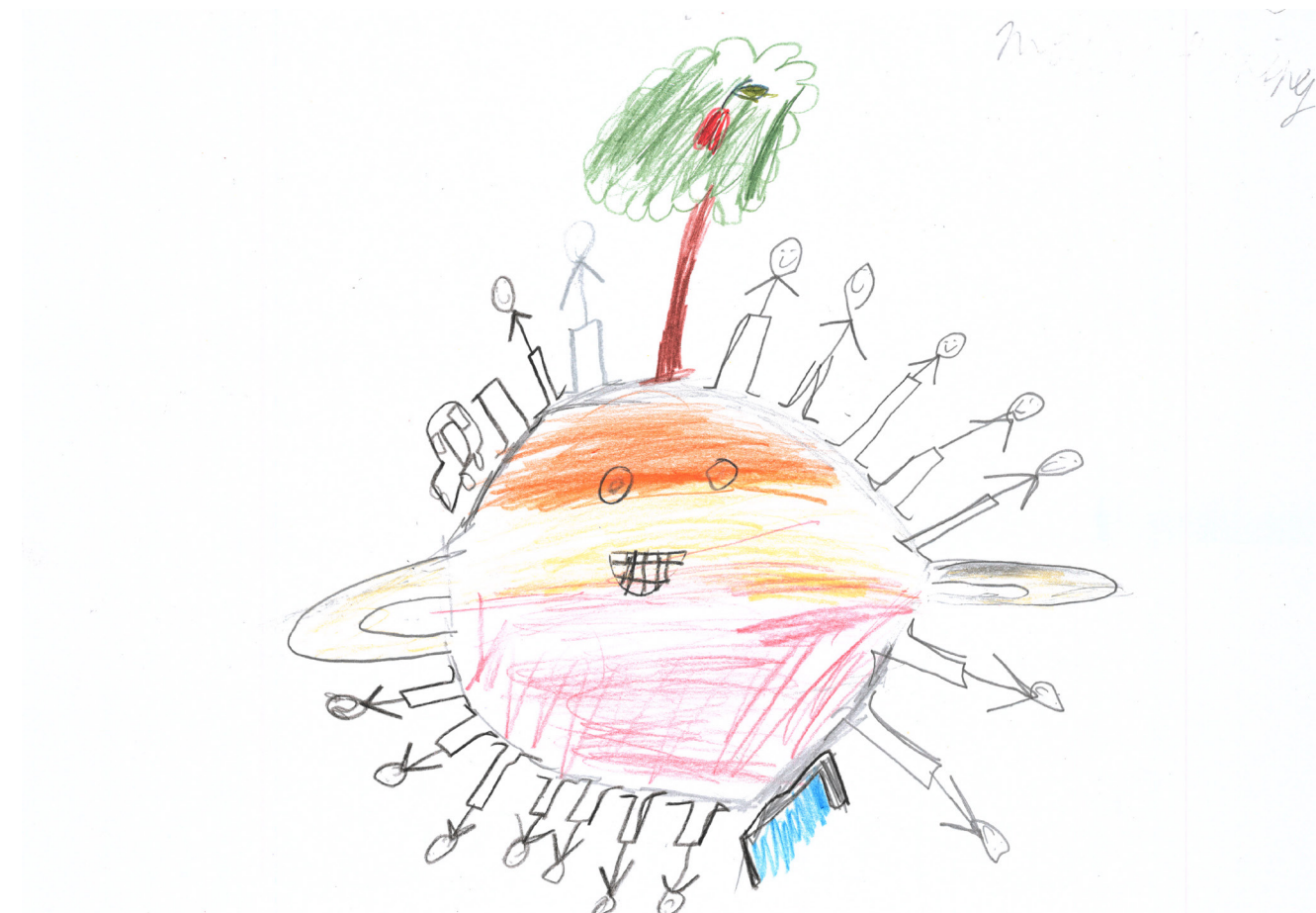
'DAY AND NIGH NATURE'
- BROOKLYN, 7 YEARS OLD



'WHEN THERE ARE MANY LARGE TREES,
IT'S REALLY DARK UNDERNEATH '
- TASHIME, 7 YEARS OLD



'I THINK EVERYTHING IS NATURE!
SO THAT MEANS SATURNUS, CARS AND A POOL ARE ALSO NATURE'
- DARICK, 7 YEARS OLD



THE FOREST AS A HOME FOR ALL ANIMALS;
BEARS, DEERS, FOXES, OWLS AND PIGS
- ALEX, 7 YEARS OLD



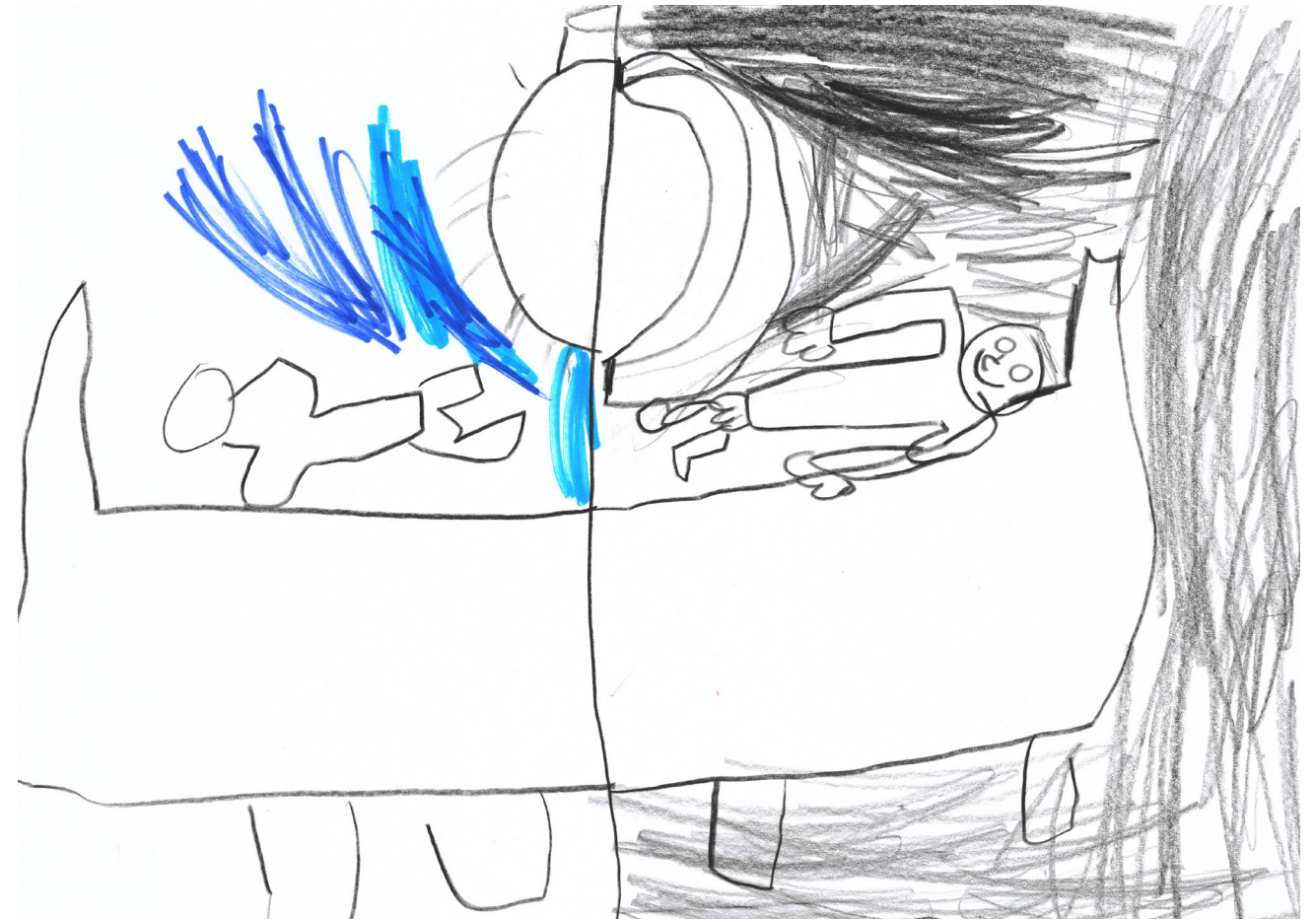
'NATURE IS PEACE'
- ASMIN, 8 YEARS OLD



'NATURE IS GOOD FOR OUR HEALTH AND PROVIDES FOOD,
TO US AS WELL AS THE ANIMALS'
- BADR, 8 YEARS OLD



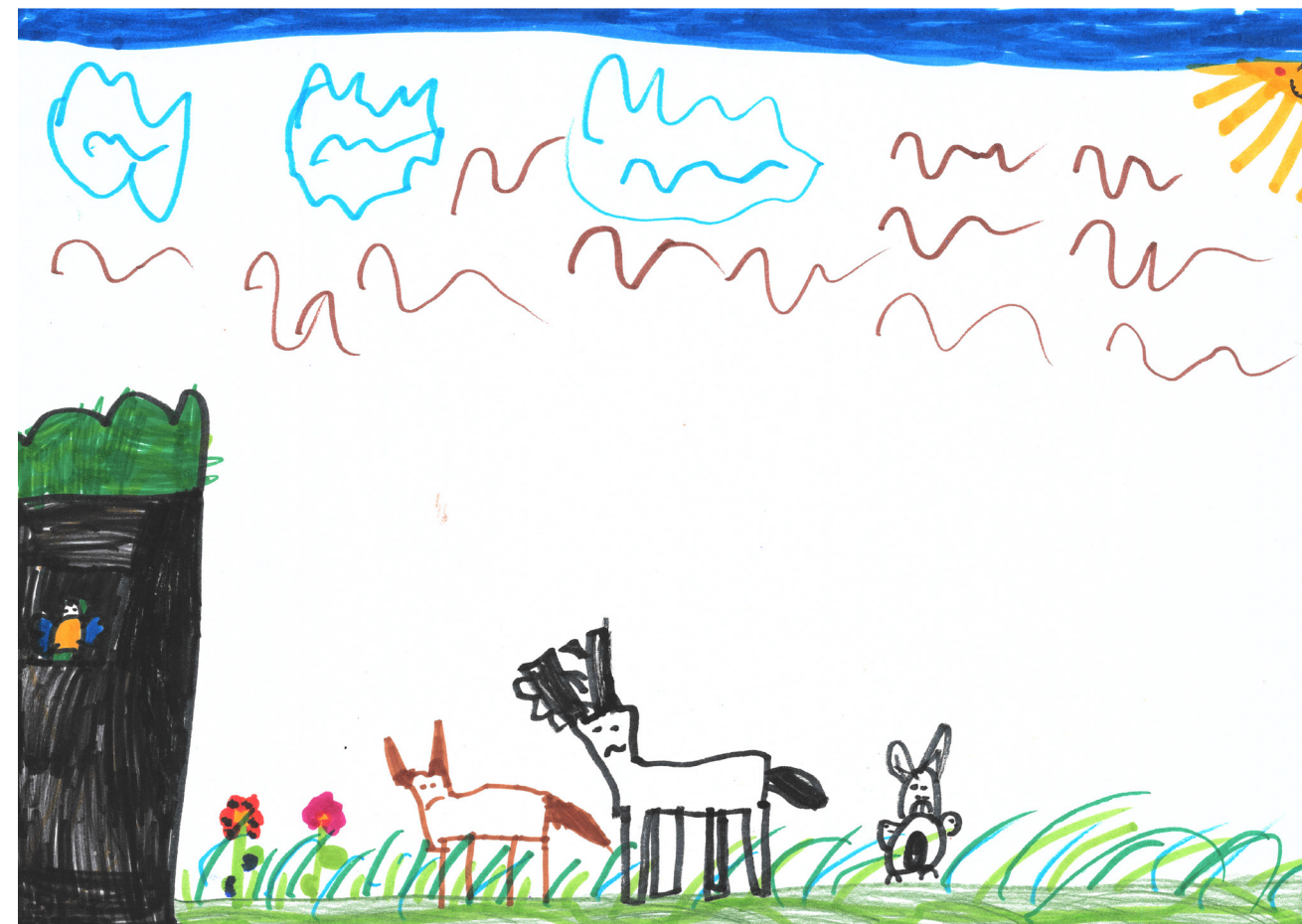
'NATURE IS WHEN IT GOES FROM DAY TO NIGHT
AND THE OTHER WAY AROUND'
- BRYAN, 7 YEARS OLD



THE ANIMALS LIVE IN NATURE, AND OUR HOUSES DO TO
- DARIO, 7 YEARS OLD



CATS AND BIRDS
- DEMI, 8 YEARS OLD



THE HUGENESS OF NATURE
- HAYLAB, 8 YEARS OLD



NATURE IN PERSPECTIVE
- JELAINO, 7 YEARS OLD



FALLING LEAVES IN AUTUMN
IS IT A TREE OR A CLOUD?
- JILL, 7 YEARS OLD



'THE TREES AND FLOWERS IN THE PARK BEHIND MY HOUSE'

- JOSHUA, 7 YEARS OLD



MY BACKYARD
- LEVY, 8 YERAS OLD



'THE FOXES IN THE PARK, ALTHOUGH I HAVE NEVER SEEN THEM..'
- LIAM, 7 YEARS OLD



'SUPPORT EACHOTHER AND NATURE'
- LIEVA, 7 YEARS OLD

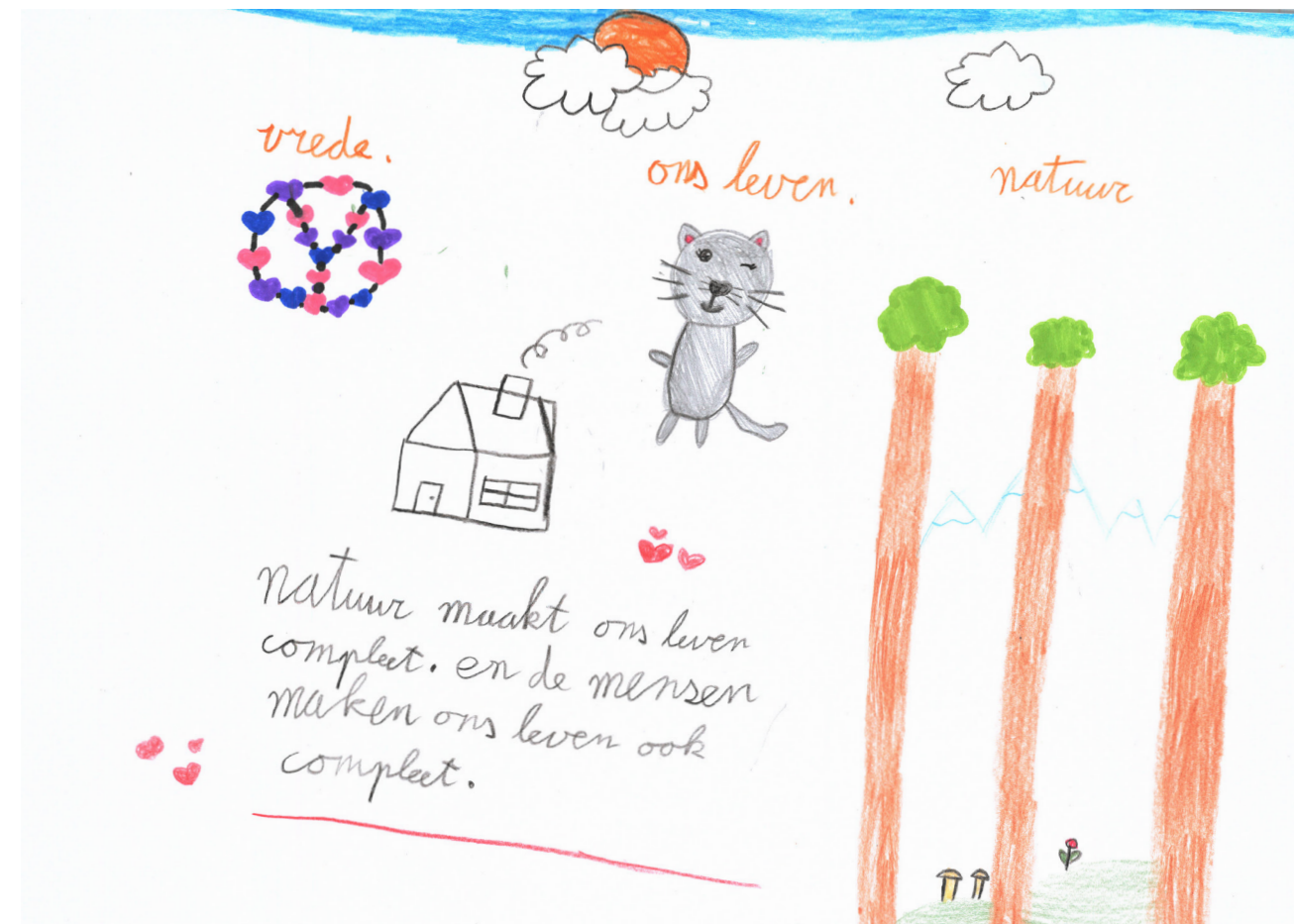


'TREES ARE GOOD FOR OUR LIVES AND WE NEED THE FLOWERS'

- LISA, 7 YEARS OLD



'NATURE MAKES OUR LIVES COMPLETE AND THE PEOPLE
MAKE OUR LIVES COMPLETE AS WELL'
- LIZZI, 7 YEARS OLD



'THIS IS WHAT I SEE FROM MY WINDOW'
- MARKO, 8 YEARS OLD



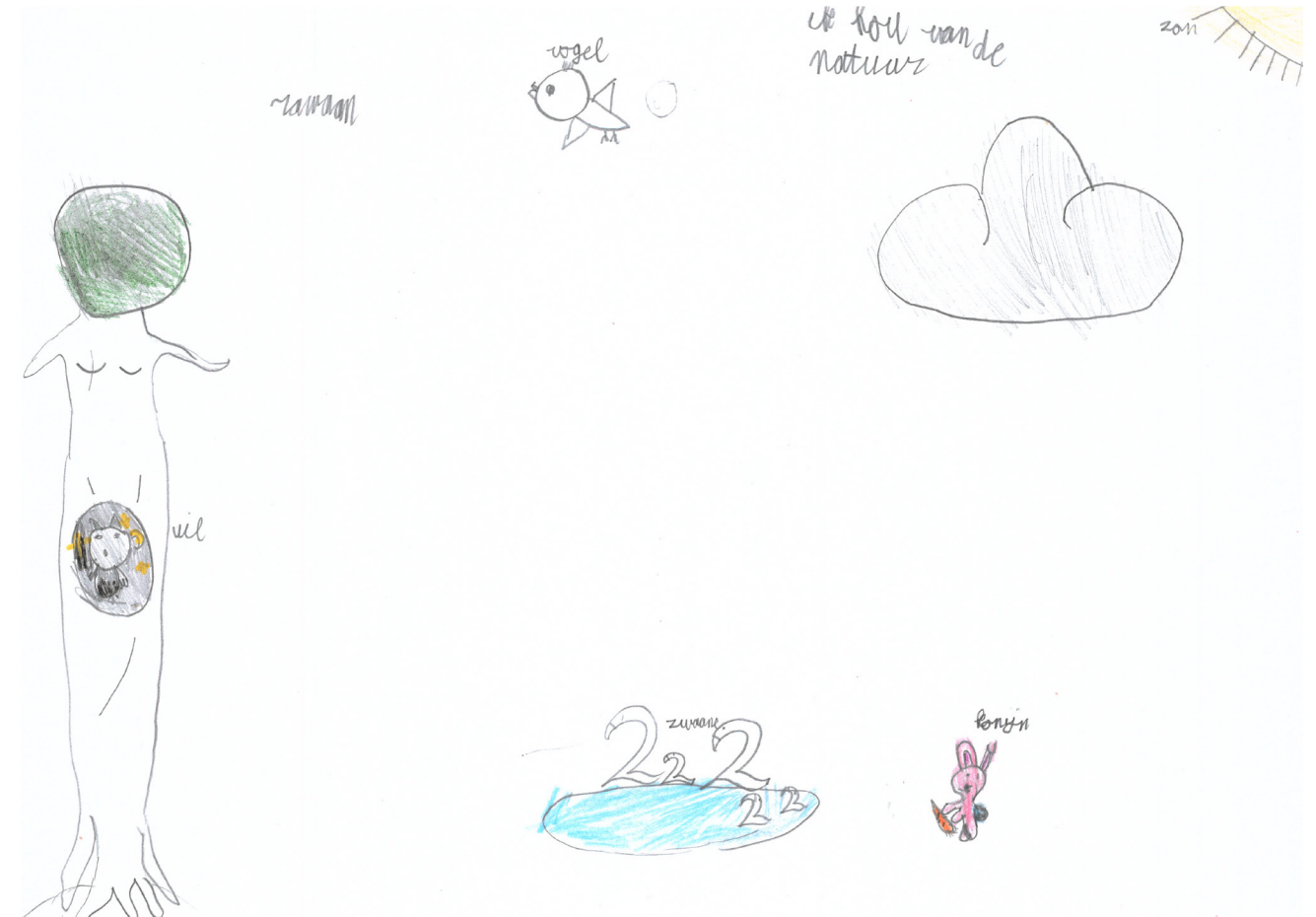
'NATURE CANNOT GROW WITHOUT RAIN!'
- OLIVER, 7 YEARS OLD



FALLING LEAF
- OMAR, 7 YEARS OLD



MOTHER NATURE
- RAWAAN, 7 YEARS OLD



'WE HAVE FLOWERS AT HOME TOO'
- ZÜMRAB. 8 YEARS OLD



'I THINK I'M GOING TO DRAW THE BRIDS POOPING, BECAUSE
THEY ALWAYS DO THAT NEAR MY HOUSE. EVEN ON MY HEAD..'

- AYAZ, 8 YEARS OLD



THE FOREST PATH
- BRANDO, 8 YEARS OLD



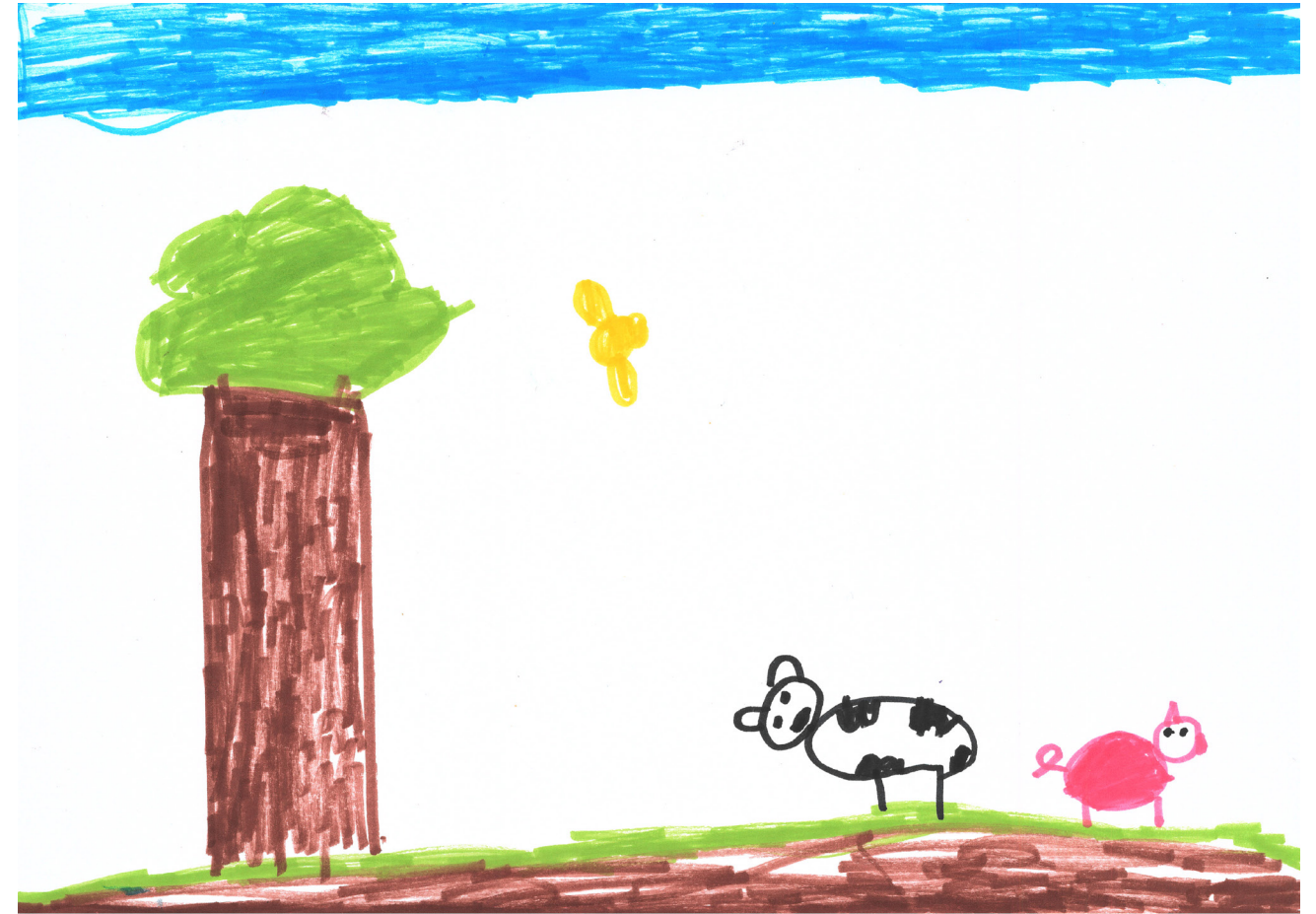
'I'M DRAWING MYSELF WITH MY DOG AND CAT IN THE JUNGLE'
- CHARLIE, 7 YEARS OLD



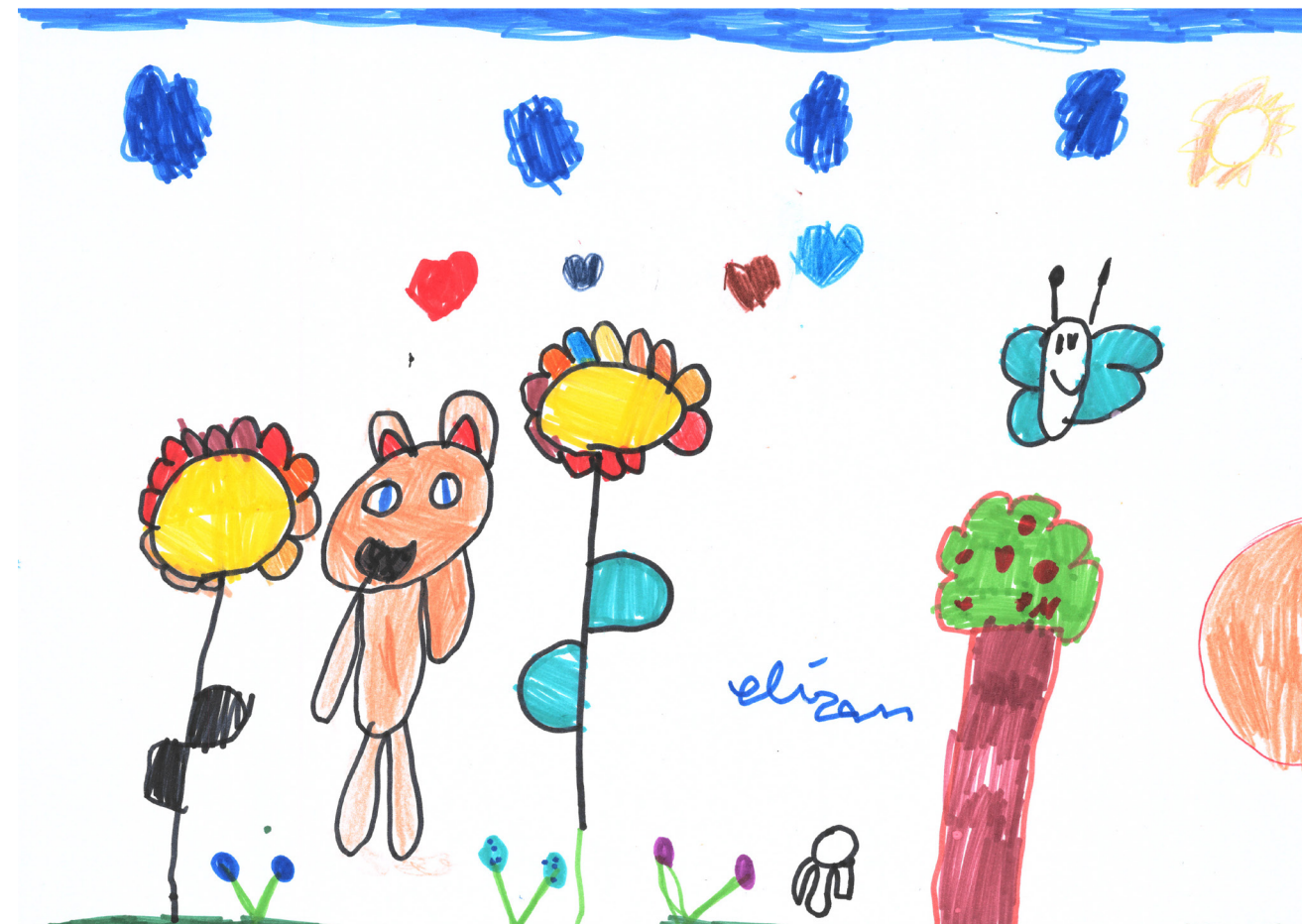
DRIVING THROUGH THE FLOWER FIELDS
- DAVY, 7 YEARS OLD



'THE PARK BEHIND MY HOUSE'
- DWAYNE, 7 YEARS OLD



'NATURE IS BEAUTIFUL'
- ELIZAM, 7 YEARS OLD



DOGS IN THE PARK
- GIOVANNI, 7 YEARS OLD



THE COW, THE LION AND THE FOX
- JANA, 7 YEARS OLD



HOW DO I DRAW A SUNFLOWER?
- JAROY, 8 YEARS OLD



'THIS IS WHERE I LIVE'
- JIAHAB, 8 YEARS OLD



THE TRUSS SYSTEM TREE AND A WATERFALL
- KAYNE, 7 YEARS OLD



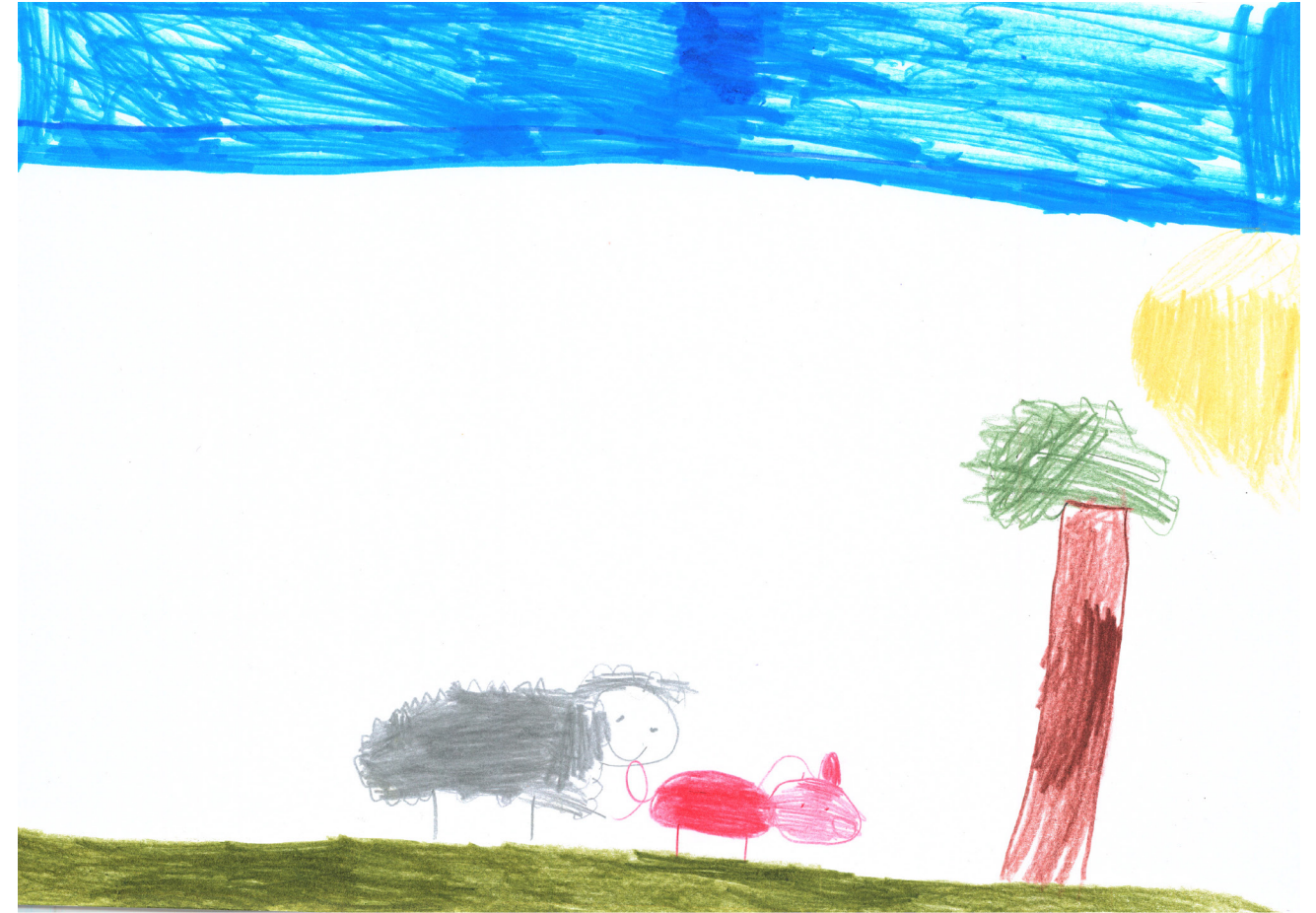
MY CAT IN THE PARK WHERE I'M GOING TO LIVE WHEN I'M OLD'
- LIAM, 8 YEARS OLD



THE JUNGLE
- MARLEA, 7 YEARS OLD



'THE GRASSFIELD NEXT TO MY FLAT'
- OMRAM, 8 YEARS OLD



WATERFALL
- QUINCY, 8 YEARS OLD



THE FENCE AROUND THE PARK
- SKREYA, 7 YEARS OLD



TIGER, BEAR, MONKEY
- TEODORA, 7 YEARS OLD



RAINBOW
- WAEL, 8 YEARS OLD



'THE NATURE HUT'
- YOUSSEF, 8 YEARS OLD



'FALLING RAIN CAUSES A WET GROUND'
- ZAKARIA, 8 YEARS OLD

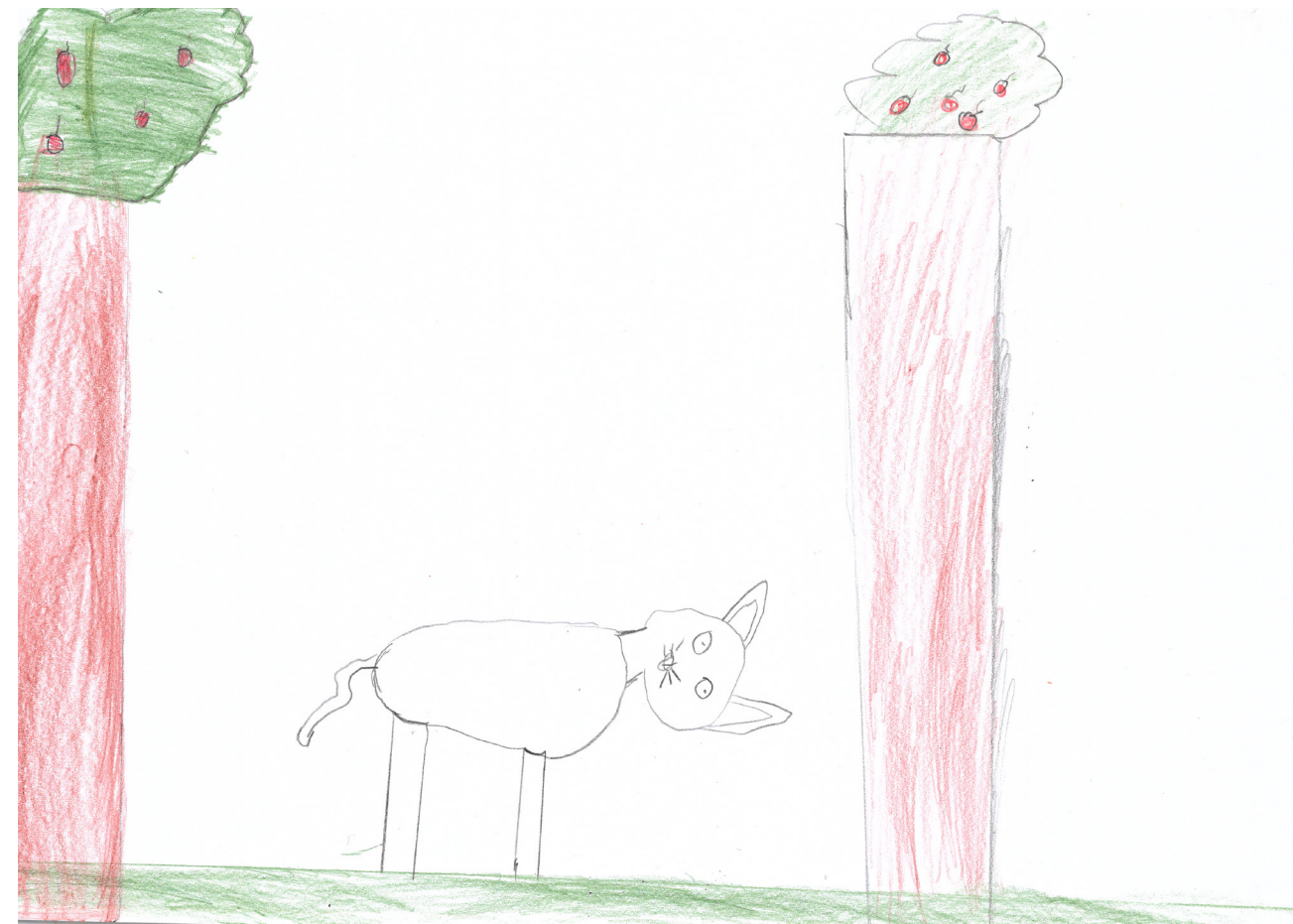


'CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME HOW I DRAW A CAT?'

'THINK ABOUT A CAT, WHAT DO YOU NOTICE FIRST?'

'THE TAIL AND THE EARS?'

- ZEINAB, 7 YEARS OLD



MARIASCHOOL - SPANGEN

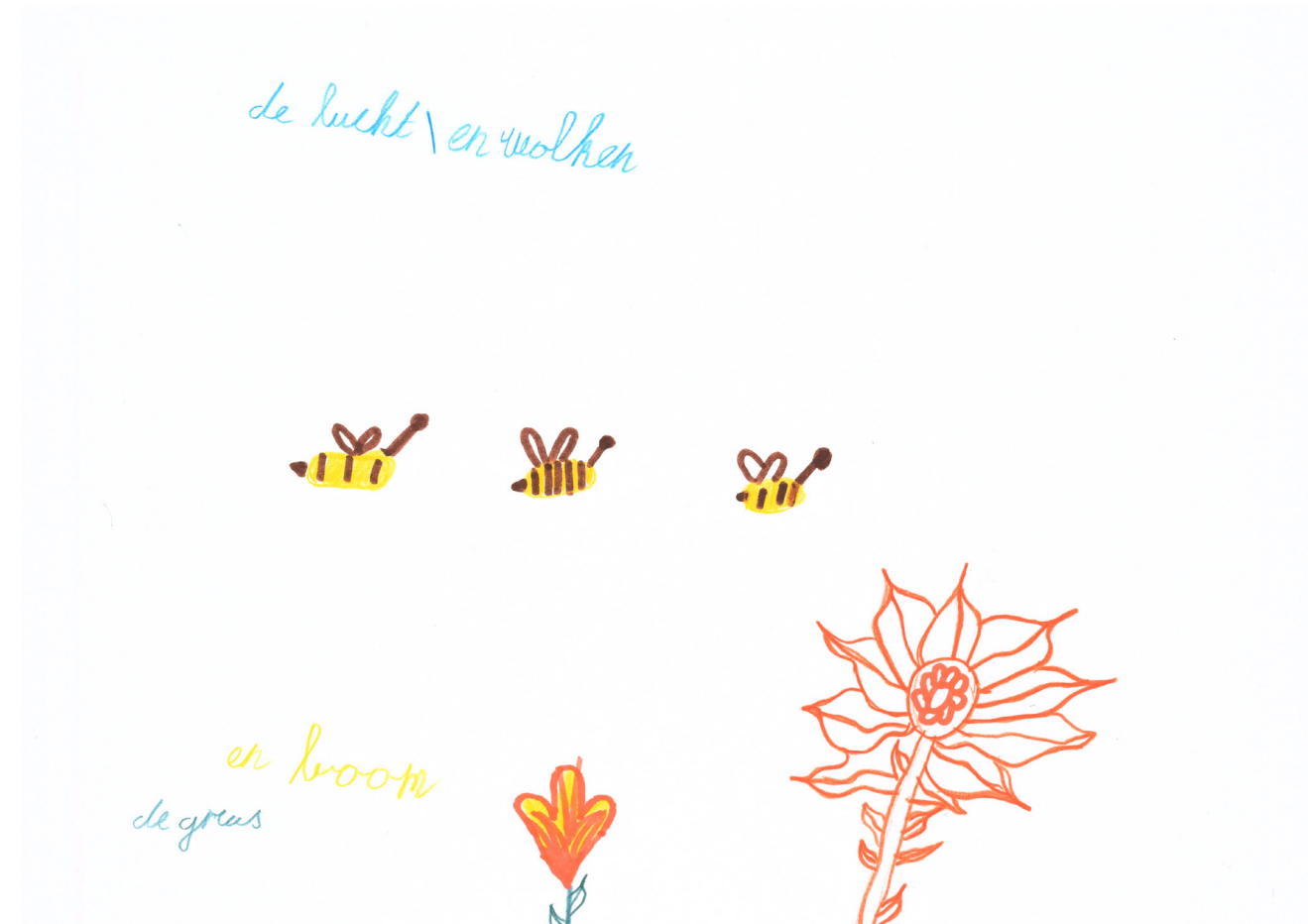
RAIN AND THE RABBIT
- EBRU, 8 YEARS OLD



THE FLOWERS AND THE BEES

'I FORGOT TO DRAW THE REST, CAN I WRITE IT DOWN?'

- ADAM, 8 YEARS OLD



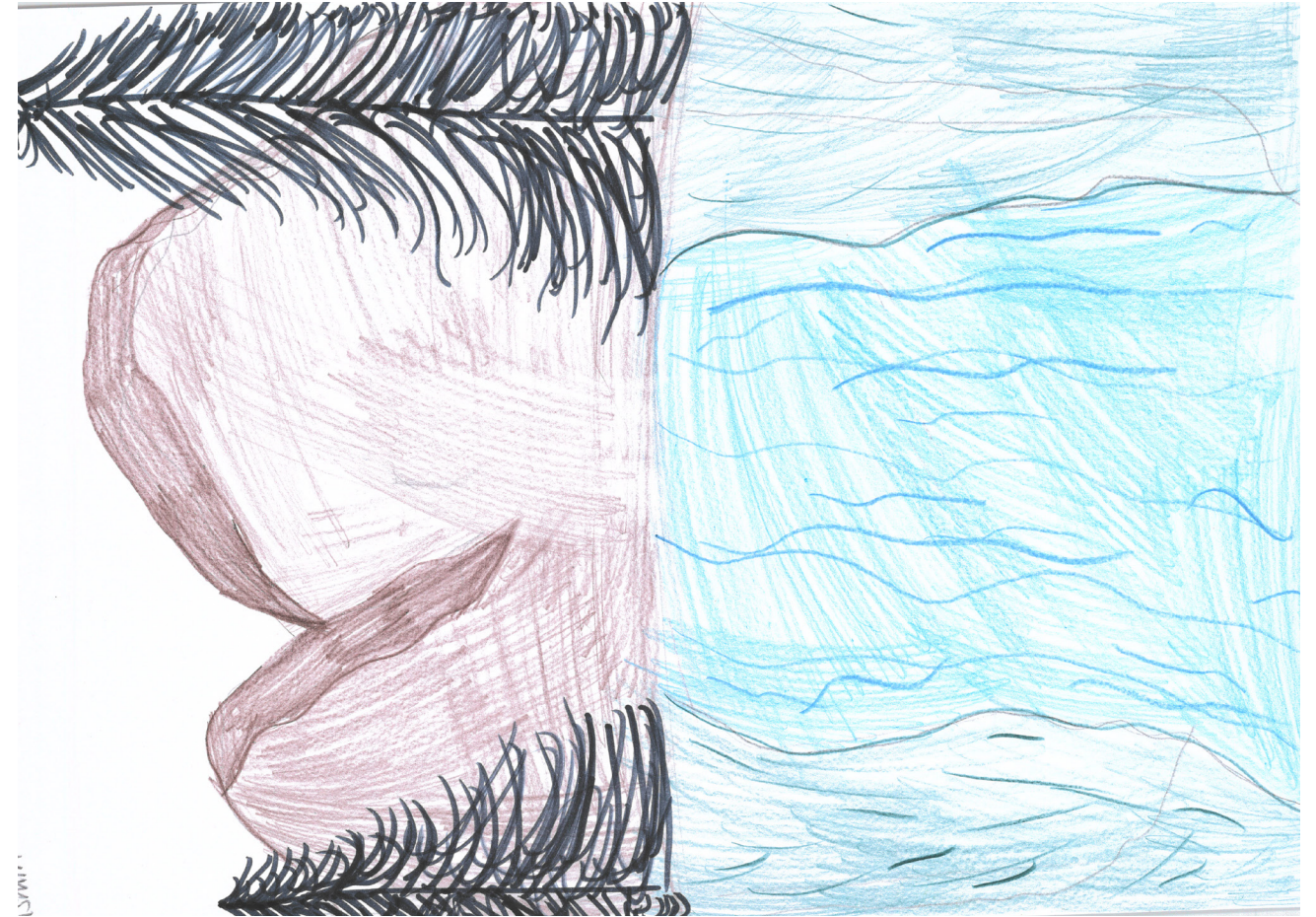
'IT ALWAYS RAINS IN NATURE'
- ALANA, 10 YEARS OLD



'RAIN TO GROW ALL THE FLOWERS'
- ANISA, 8 YEARS OLD



'THE WATERFALL FROM WHERE I WAS BORN'
ASMIN, 8 YEARS OLD



'NATURE AROUND MY HOUSE AND THE PLAYGROUND'
- BEYDA, 10 YEARS OLD



'I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DRAW NATURE IN A NICE WAY'
- DAVID, 8 YEARS OLD



'THE SUN SHINES THOURGH THE CLOUDS, THAT'S HOW
YOU GET A RAINBOW!'
- DION , 8 YEARS OLD



'I GUESS WIND IS NATURE?'

- DJAYDJAY, 8 YEARS OLD



FLOWERTREE
- EFLIN, 9 YEARS OLD



THE FOREST FAIRY AND ME
- ELIF-LINA, 8 YEARS OLD

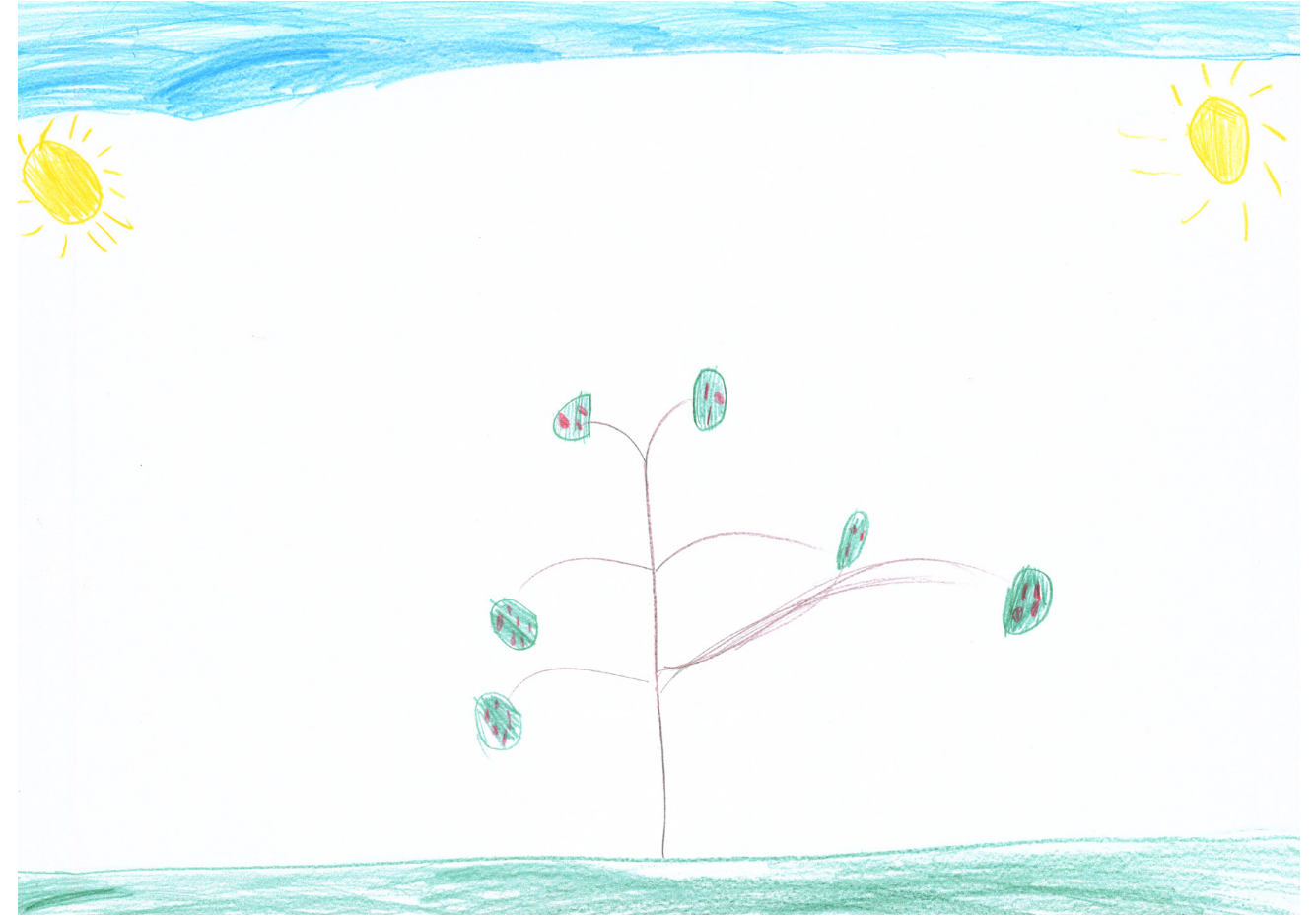
Elif-lina



THE BIRD'S FLOWERTREE
- ELIF, 9 YEARS OLD



THE APPLE TREE
- ...

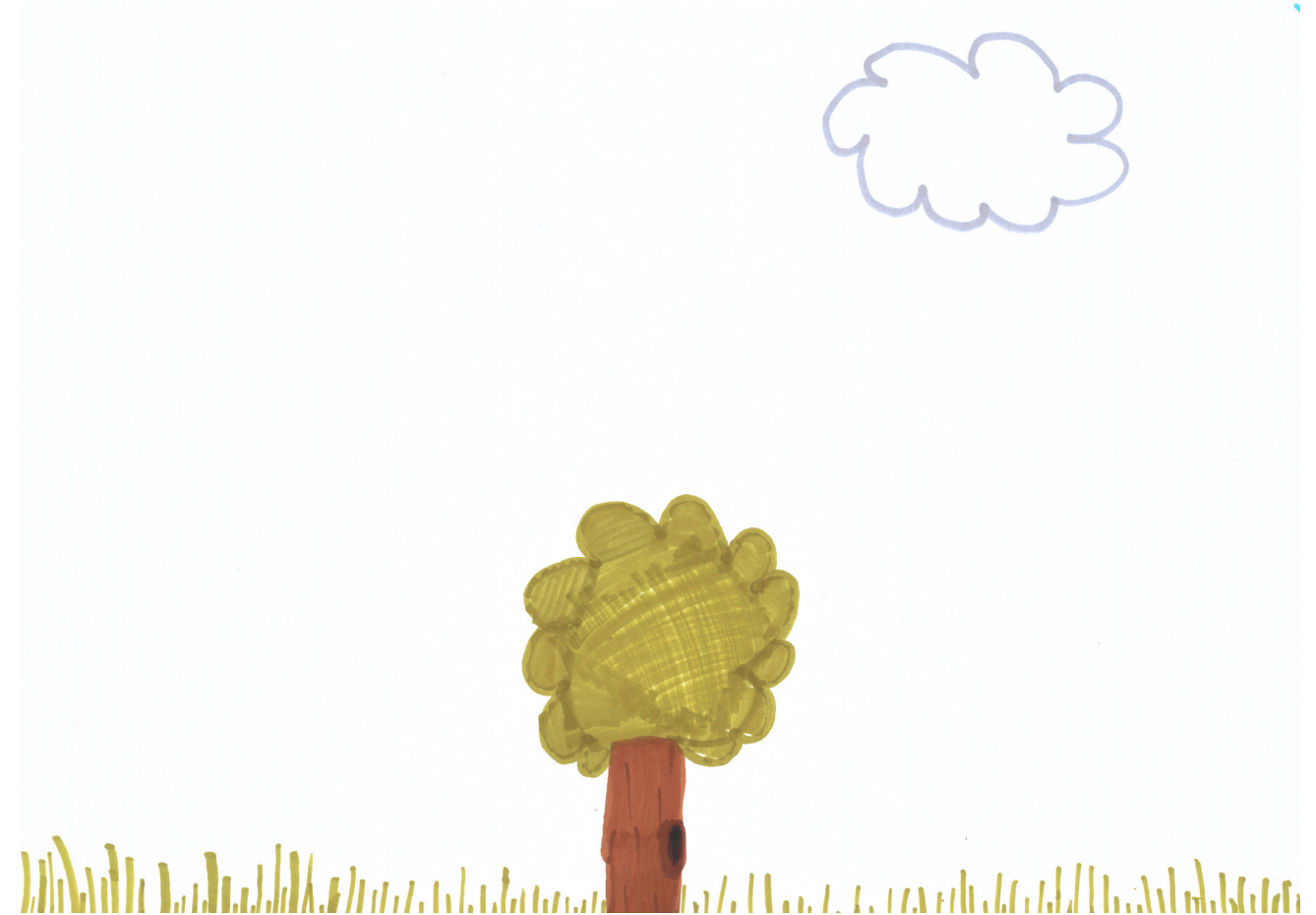


'I DON'T KNOW ANY NATURE.. MAYBE, FLOWERS?'

- JAH, 8 YERAS OLD



THE HOLE IN THE TREE
- JAYLEE, 10 YEARS OLD



NATURE IS FUN?
- JERNAIN, 8 YEARS OLD



'GIRAFFES EAT FROM TREES'

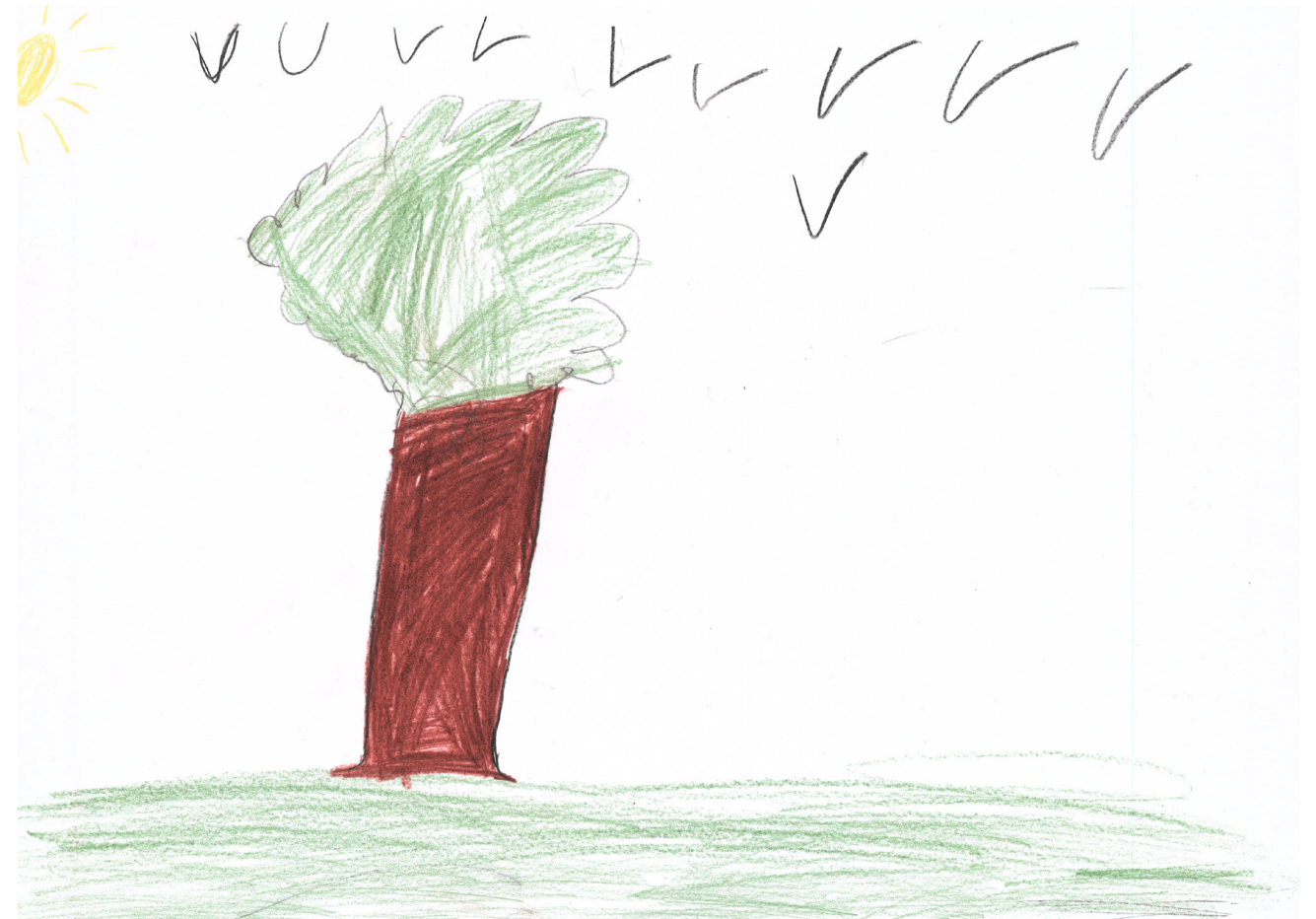
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BIRDS, FLOWERS AND A WHOLE LOT OF GREEN
- JOSHUA, 9 YEARS OLD

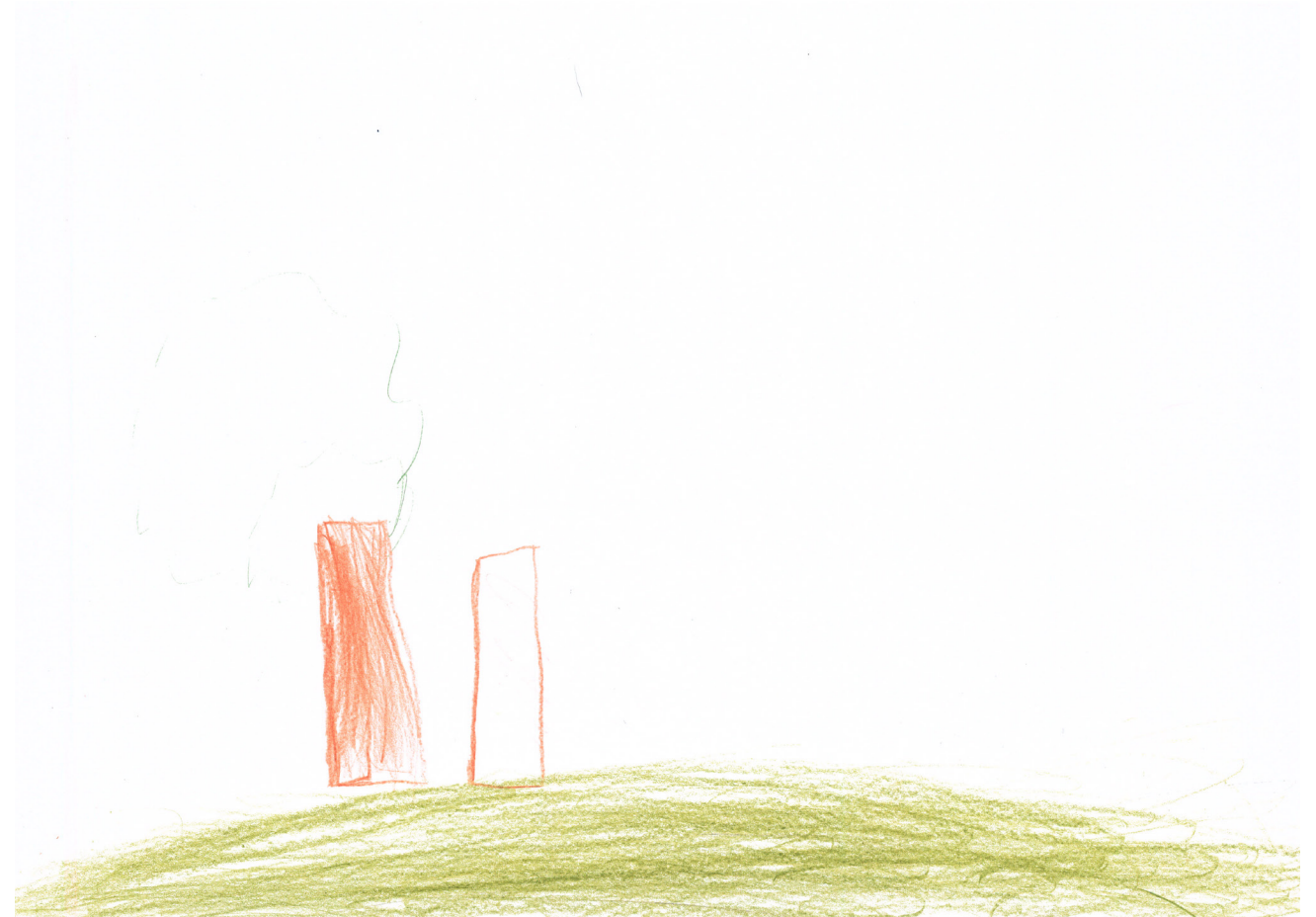


THE HOME OF BIRDS
- JULIANO, 7 YEARS OLD



'WHERE DO I START?'

- KATIENE, 9 YEARS OLD



'I LOVE TO DRAW!'
- KEYSER, 9 YEARS OLD



PLANTS, TREES AND FLOWERS
- KHADJID, 9 YEARS OLD



'IS THE SEE ALSO NATURE?'

- KINAYO, 9 YEARS OLD



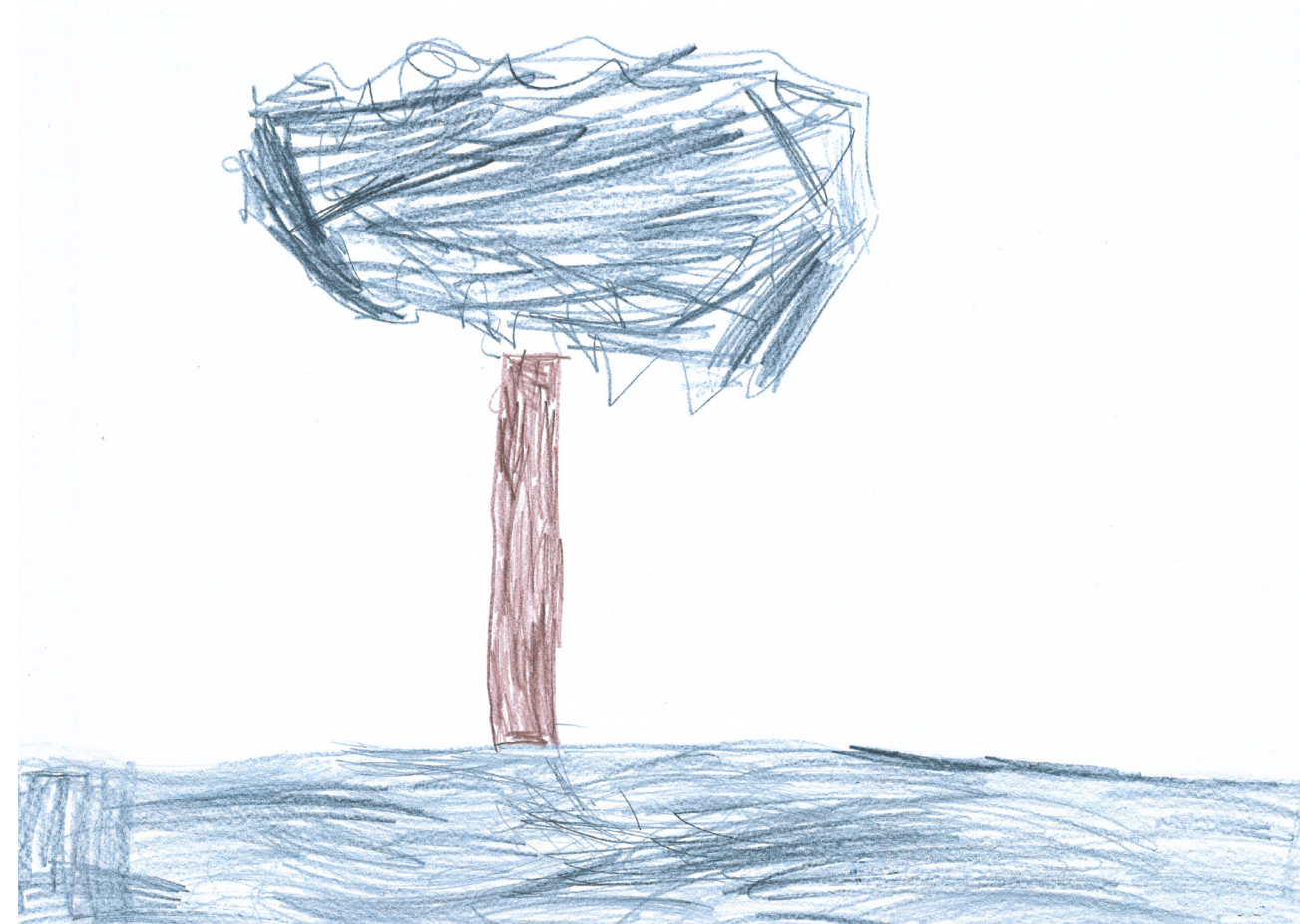
WALKING HOME
- KLARA, 10 YEARS OLD



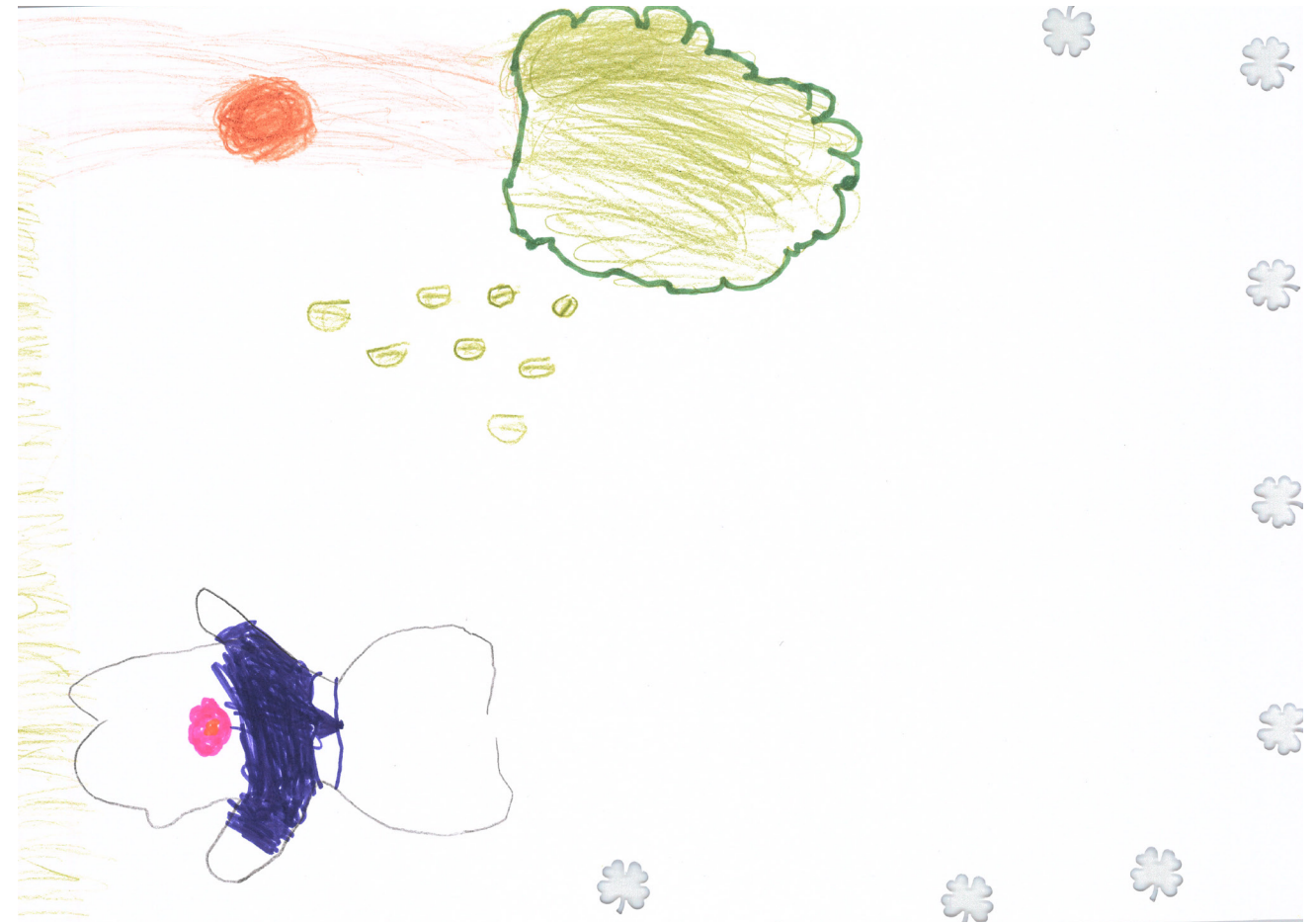
RAINBOW COLORING THE GRASS
- LUS-SHAINY, 9 YEARS OLD



'BOMEN'
- MILIDON, 8 YEARS OLD



FALLING LEAVES
'CAN I DRAW HELLO KITTY?'
- MINA, 8 YEARS OLD



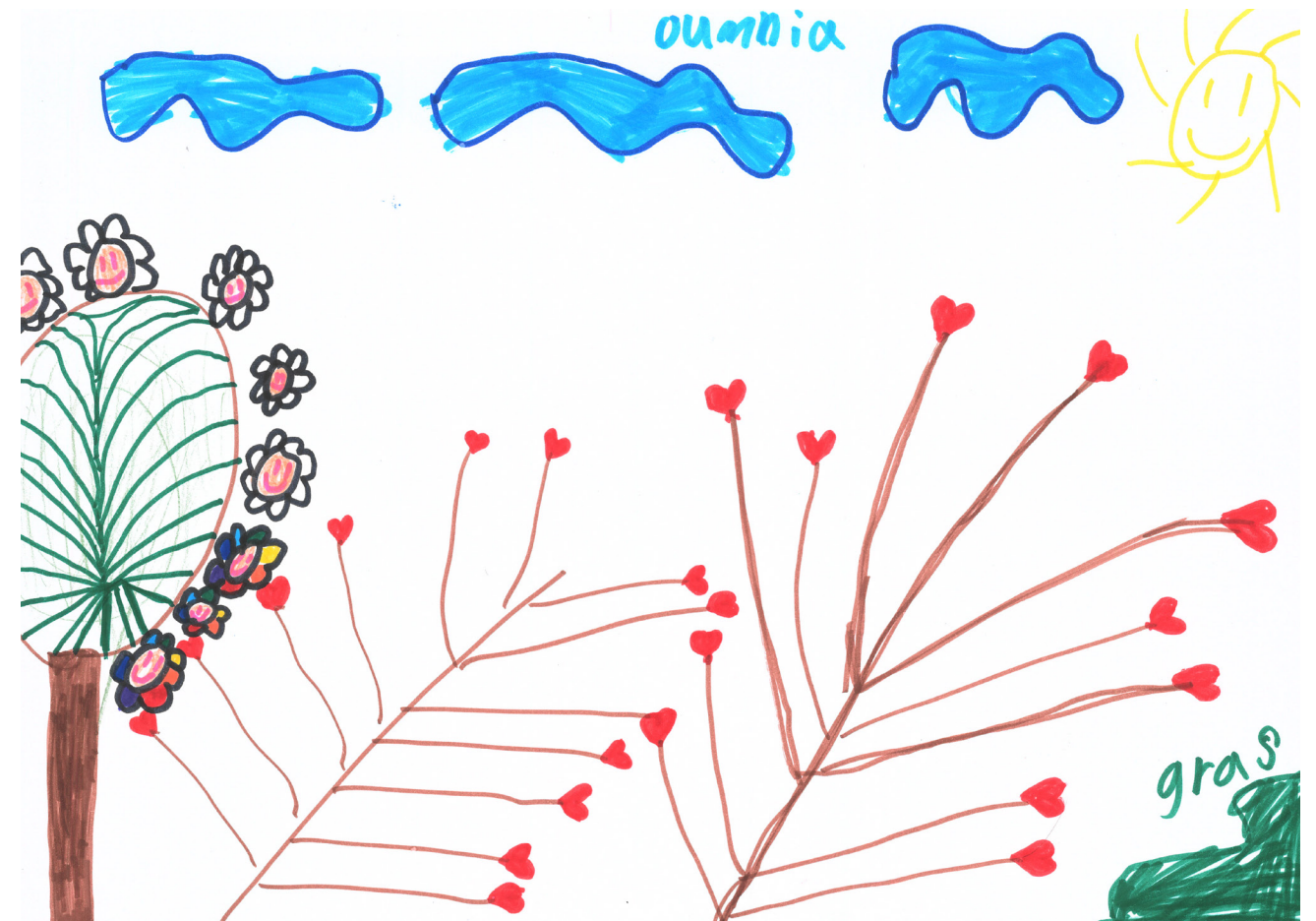
'APPLE TREES AND THE TREE WITH THE PINK FLOWERS,
WHAT DO YOU CALL THAT ONE?'
- MITOVO, 9 YEARS OLD



'ANIMALS LIVING IN THE FOREST'
- NISA, 10 YEARS OLD

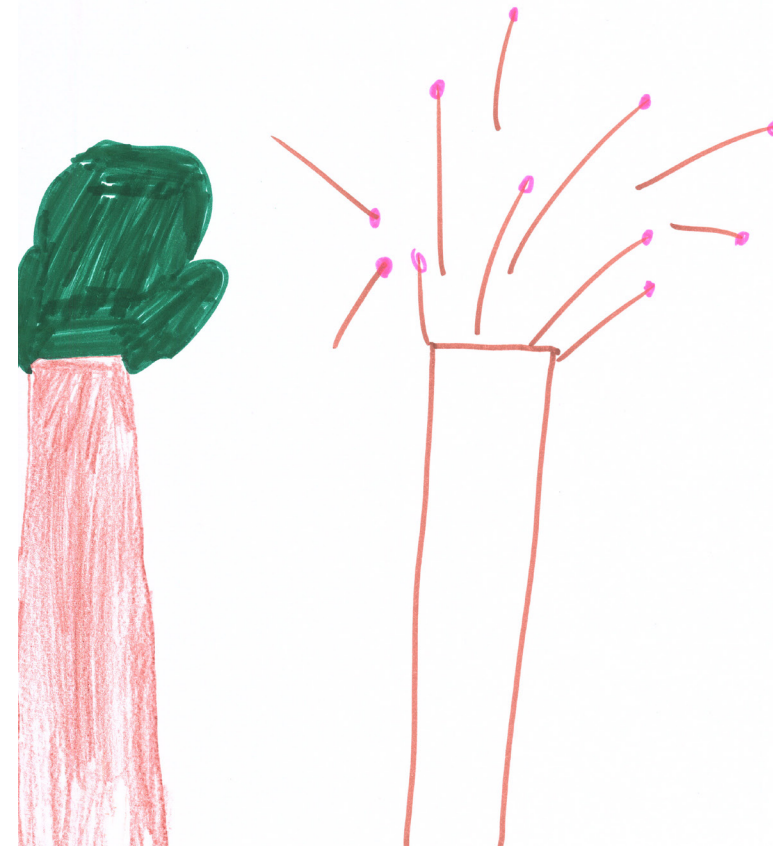


'FLOWERS ARE NATURE'
- OUMNIA, 7 YEARS OLD



NEIGHBOUR INSPIRATION
- RALAYAN, 9 YEARS OLD

209ayah



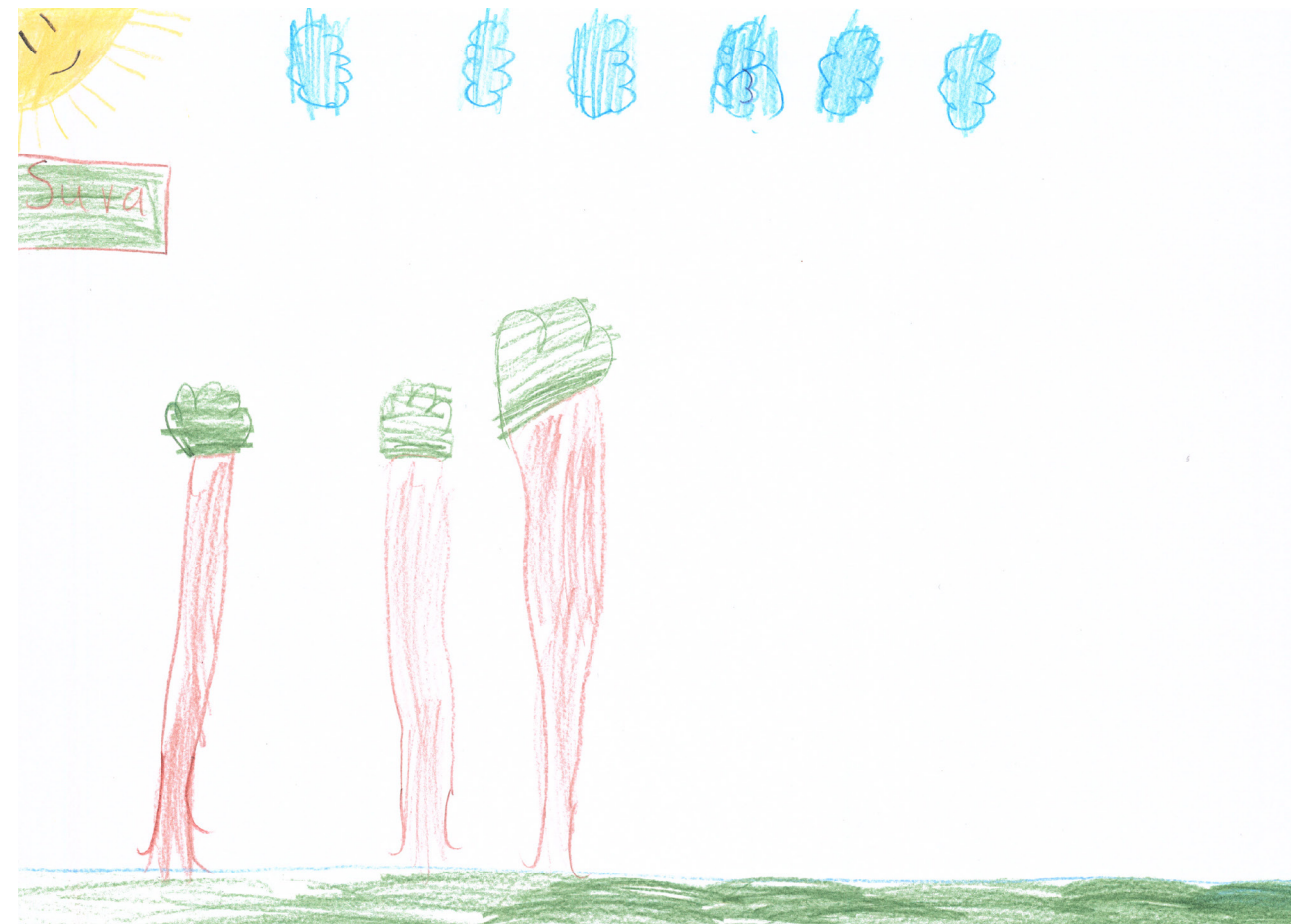
WATERFALL AND A LAKE
- RANYA, 9 YEARS OLD



BIG TREETRUNK SMALL BRANCHES
- RILEY, 9 YEARS OLD



TALL TREES
- SURA, 8 YEARS OLD



MOUNTAINS, WATER, WEATHER AND TREES
- YUSUR, 9 YEARS OLD



ME IN THE PARK
WITH A MOON
- ZELIMA, 8 YEARS OLD



'APPLE TREES, BECAUSE THEY GIVE US FOOD!'
- STIJJAN, 10 YEARS OLD

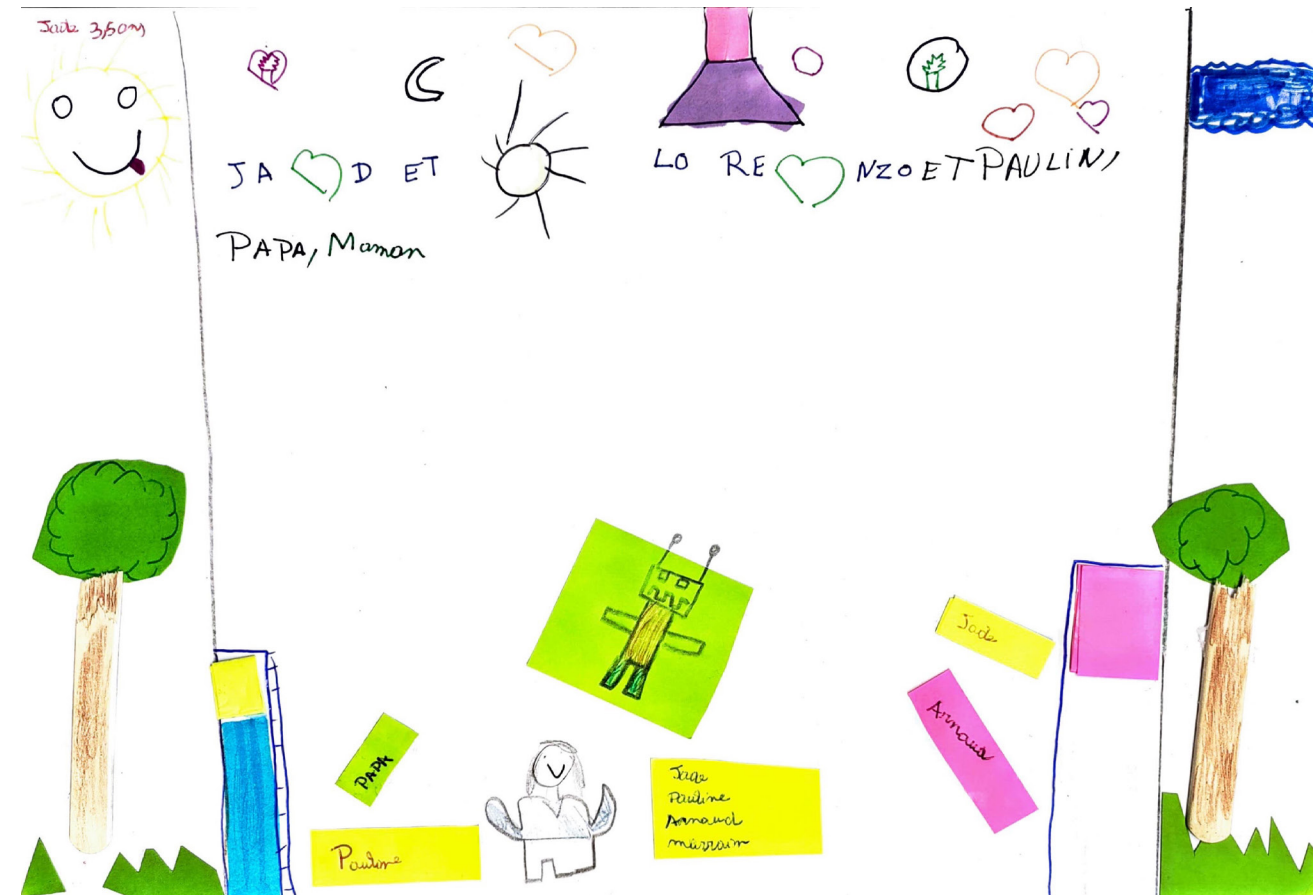


'I ALREADY DREW A TREE, BUT HOW DO I DRAW A SUNFLOWER?
I CANNOT THINK OF MORE NATURE ANIMALS OTHER THAN
BEES, MAYBE A WASP?'
- ZAKARIA, 9 YEARS OLD

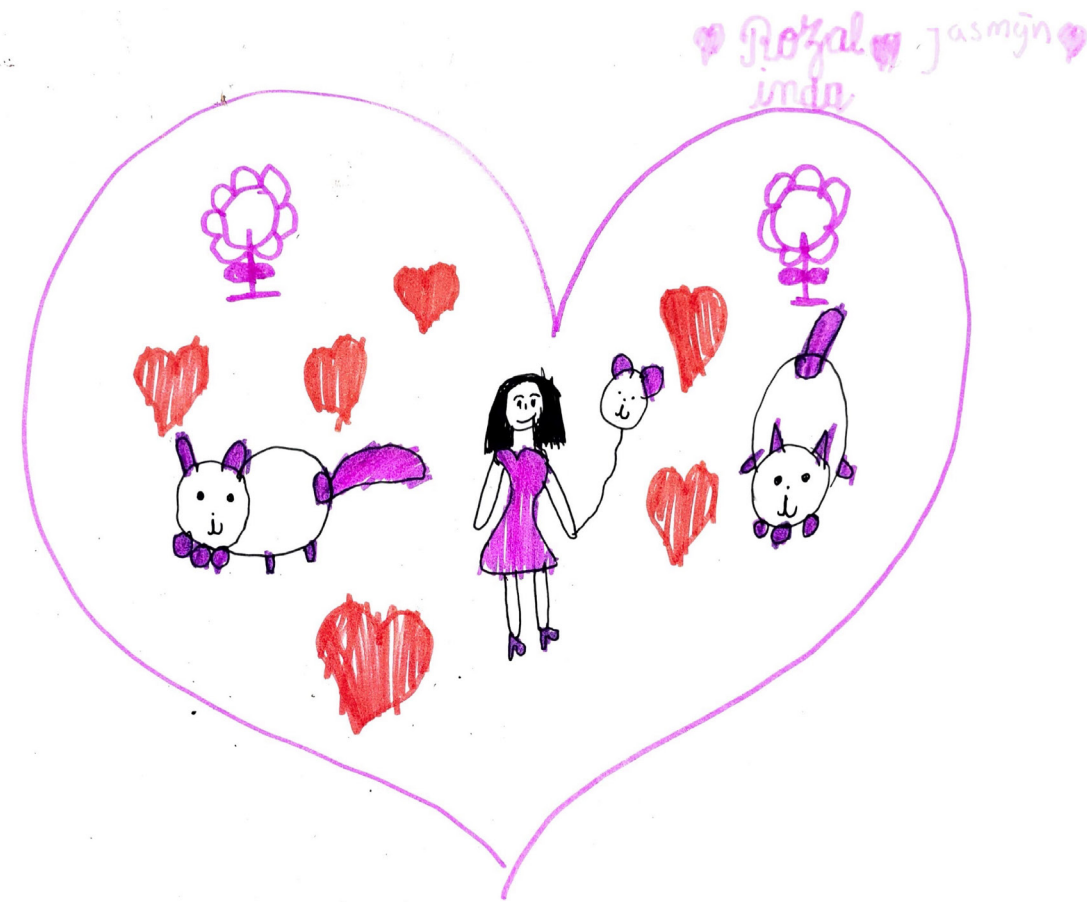


L'AMIS DE L'ÉTANG - DROIXHE

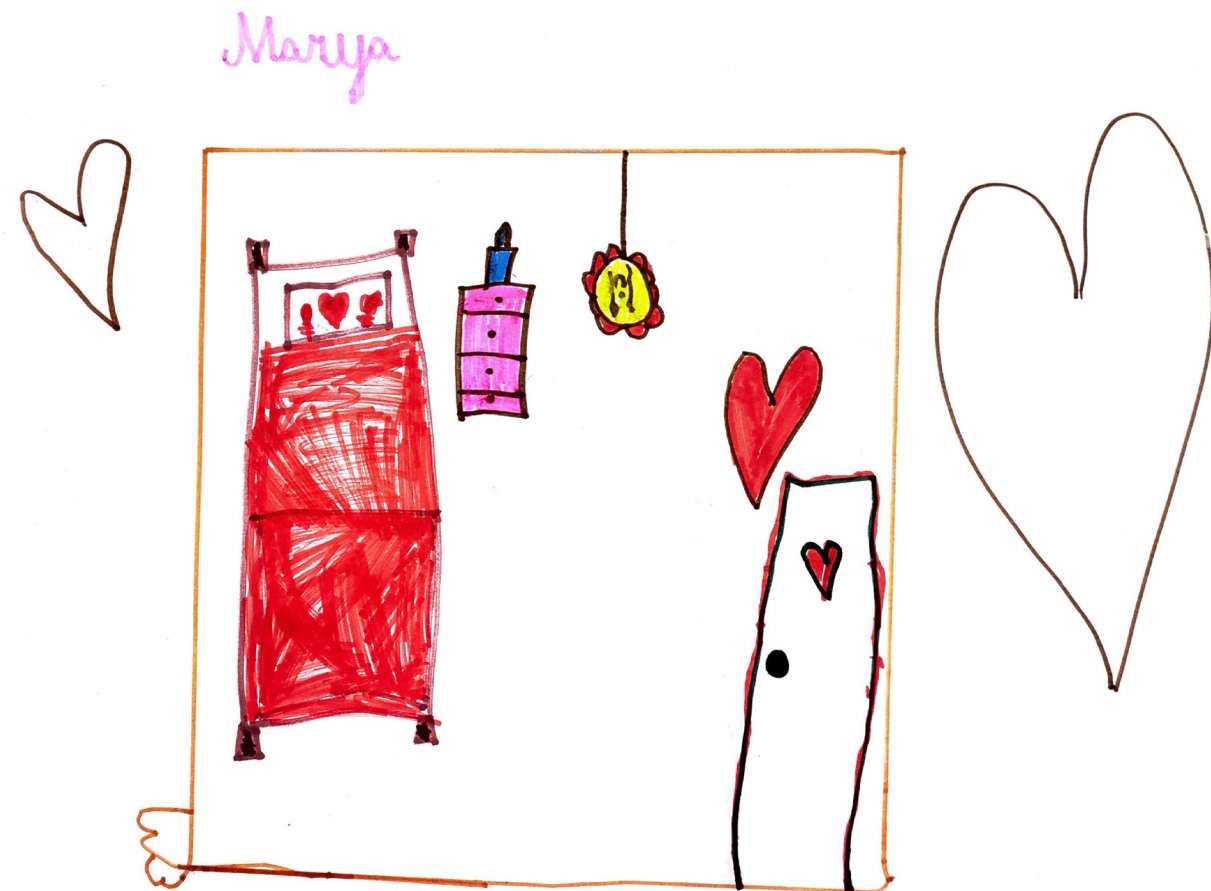
MY HOUSE IN THE PARK
- PAULINE, 6 YEARS OLD



NATURE IS CATS AND FLOWERS
- ROZALINDA, 5 YEARS OLD



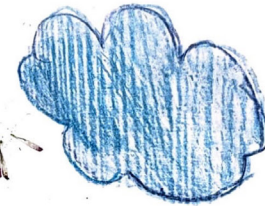
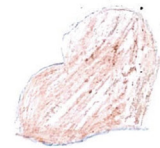
MY BEDROOM!
- MARYA, 5 YERS OLD



'I MADE A PARK FOR THE CAT'
THE PLANTS GROW FROM THE PEBBLES
- ROZALINDA, 5 YEARS OLD



'THIS LEAF LOOKS LIKE A TREE'
- ASSIA, 11 YEARS OLD



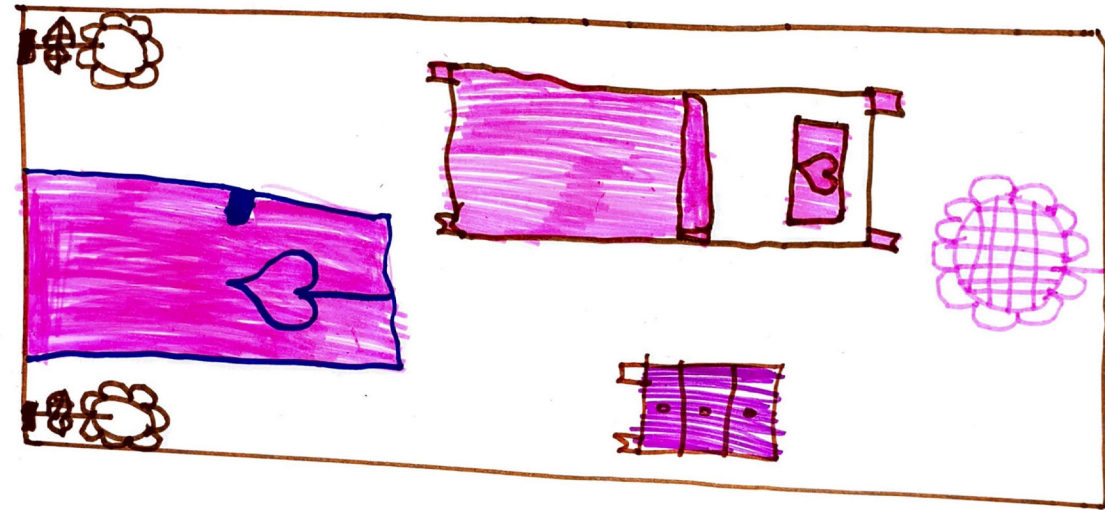
ASSIA



Art



'I WANT TO HAVE MANY FLOWERS IN MY ROOM'
- ROZALINDA, 5 YEARS OLD



Rozalinda

'THE YELLOW FLOER IS THE SUN'
- MARYA, 5 YEARS OLD



