

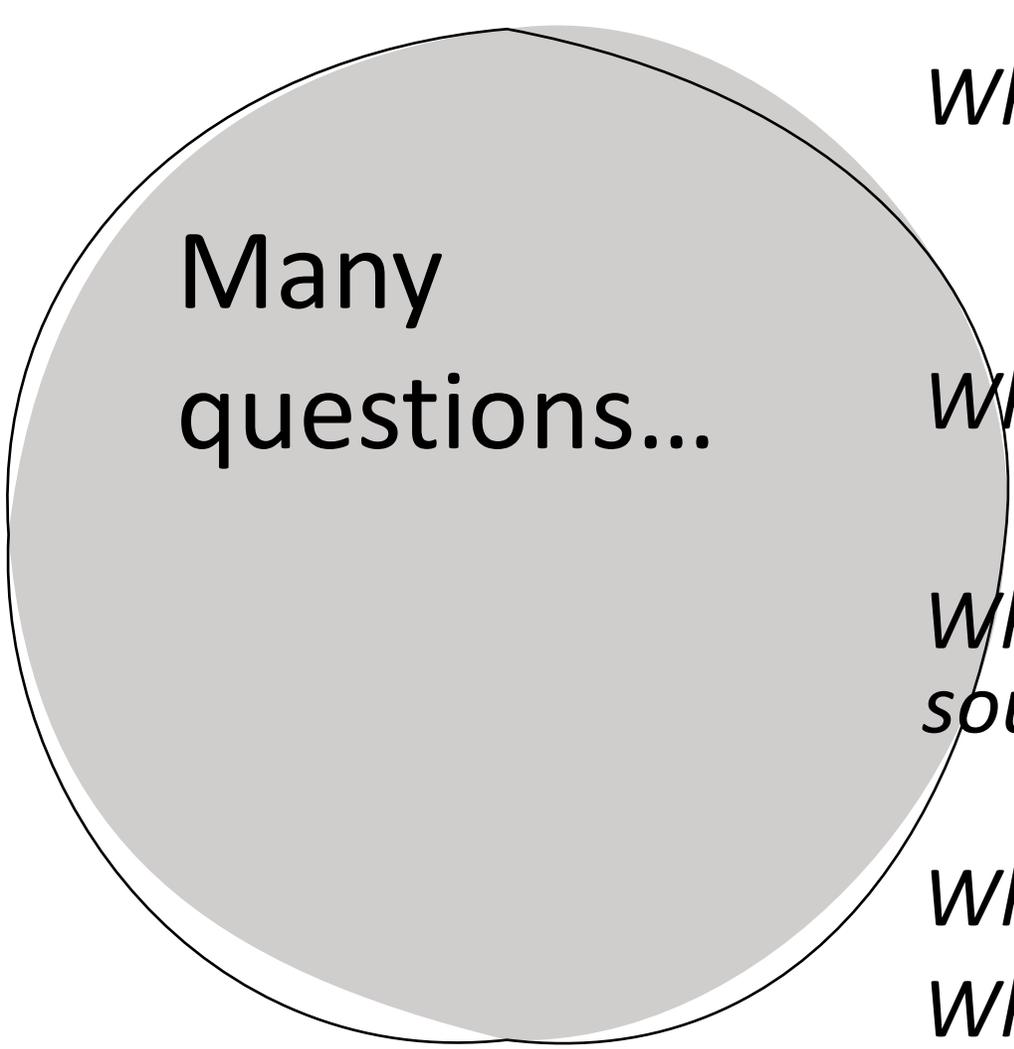
# Mapping Place



This year at The Storyhouse, we have been thinking with maps. Through the process of mapping, we hope to disrupt hyperindividualism and create conditions to share, not only materials, but also ideas, creating a space for collective work and to create knowledge together.

We have also been wondering how maps invite us to slow down and engage in the serious and difficult work of noticing.





Many  
questions...

*What stories do we have about this place?*

*What memories do we have?*

*What do we do here?*

*What paths do we take?*

*What does this place feel, taste, smell, &  
sound like?*

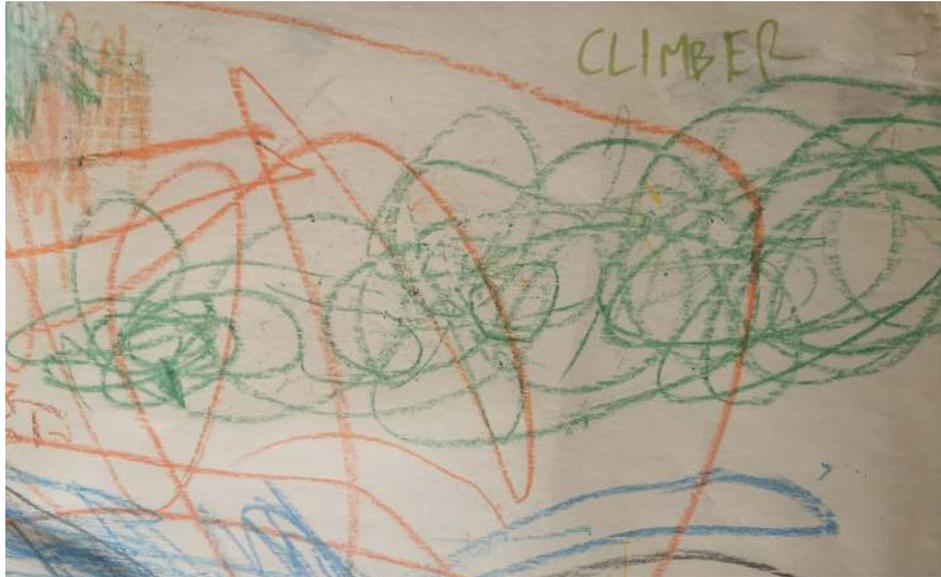
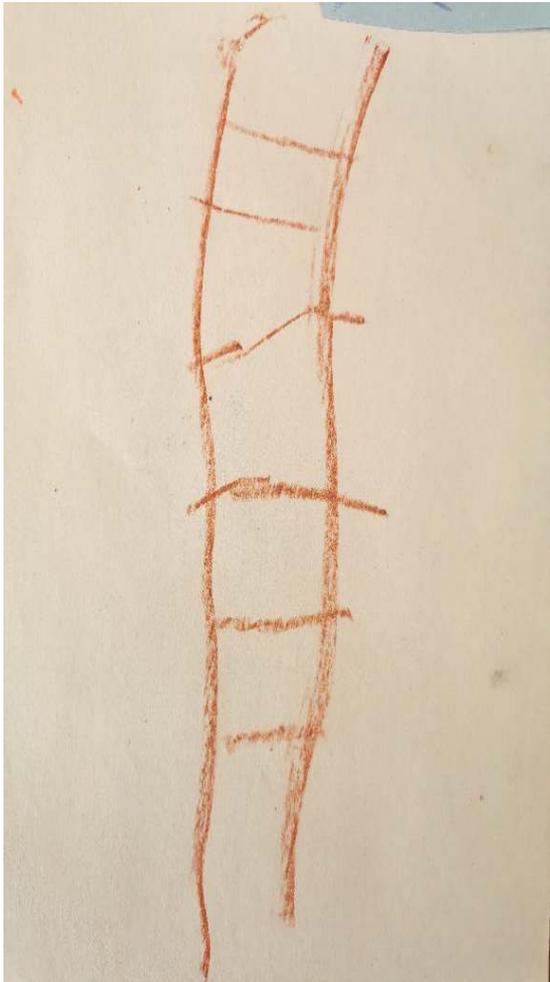
*Who/what else lives here?*

*What is invisible to us about this place?*

*Who else makes marks here?*

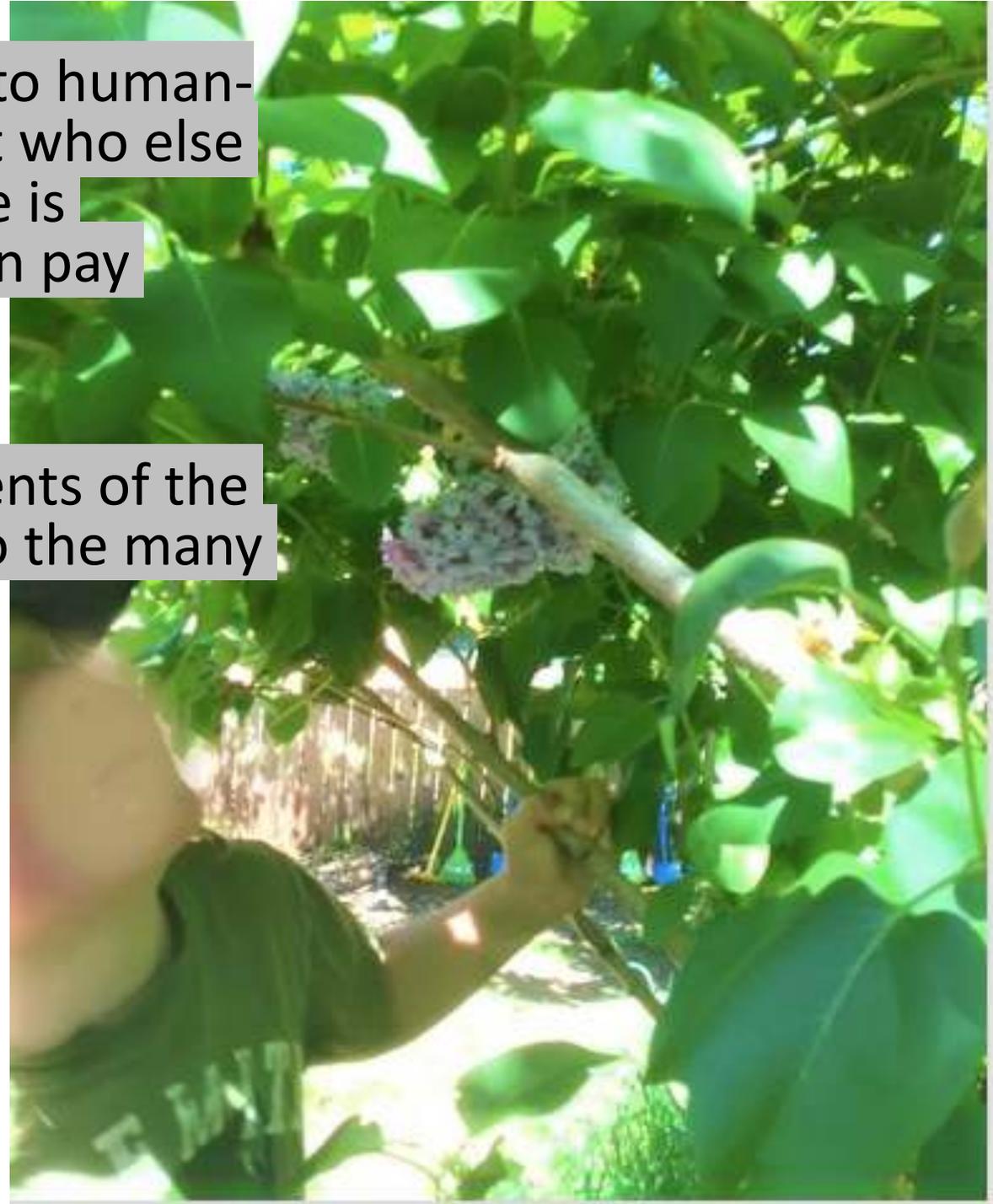
*How does this place change?*

Through drawing, we map structures that we find outside, like the ladder, the climber, the playhouse, the pretend boat, the green house and the swings.



Noticing that the drawings made reference to human-made structures, we propose to think about who else lives outside. Together we wonder what else is happening outside each day and how we can pay attention to it.

We decide to take photos of different elements of the outdoors to help us attend more carefully to the many different ways of being in this place.

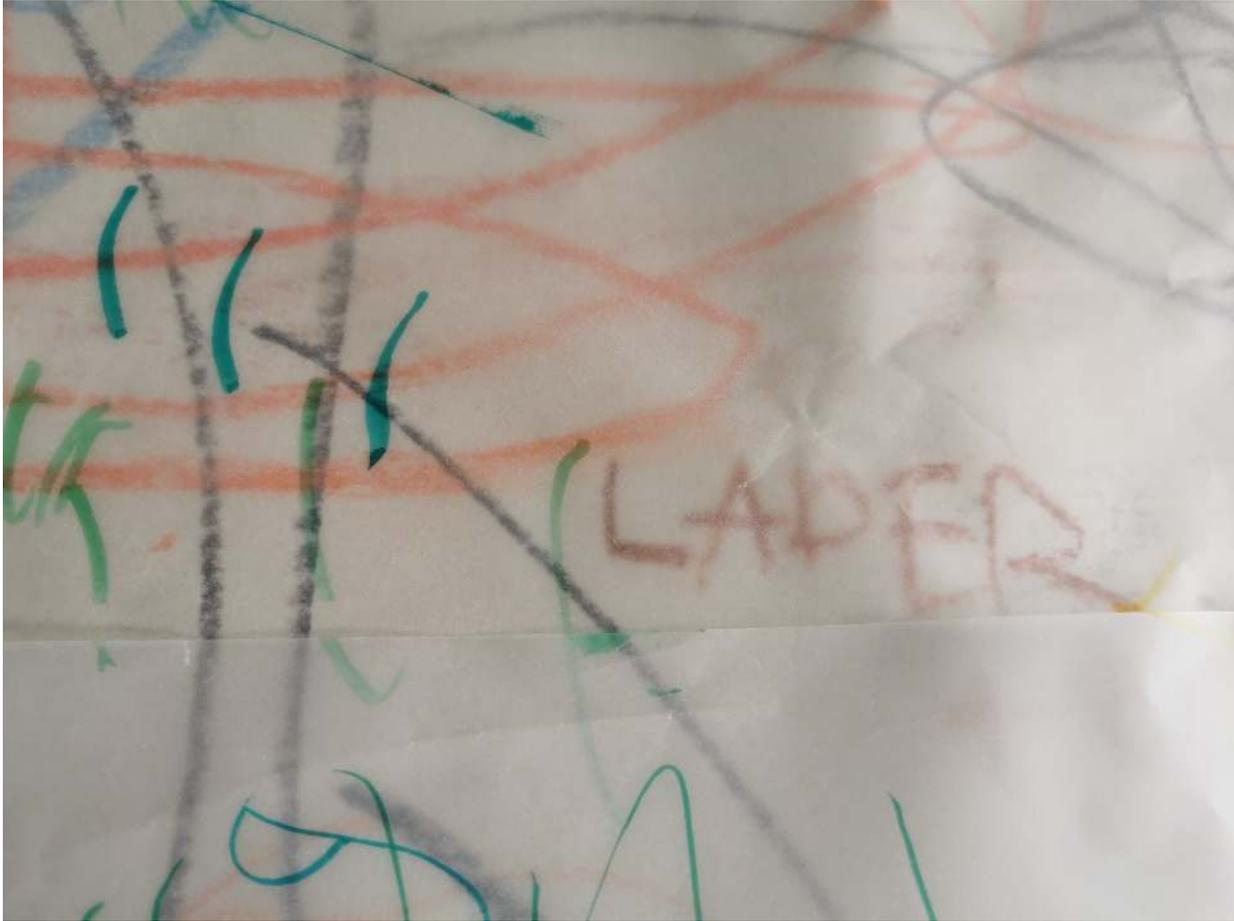


We are inspired by the counter-mapping of Rebecca Solnit, who has created atlases of several cities, mapping different representations of one place. This mapping disrupts the common way of representing place as static and without agency. Instead, it maps the unexpected and dynamic elements of places. Rebecca Solnit works with layers in many of her maps, juxtaposing different ways of knowing cities.



From Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas, by Rebecca Solnit, published by the University of California Press © 2010 by the Regents of the University of California. <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/artistic-atlas/>

We transfer the many maps we created to tracing paper and layer them to pay attention to changes we've been noticing throughout the months.



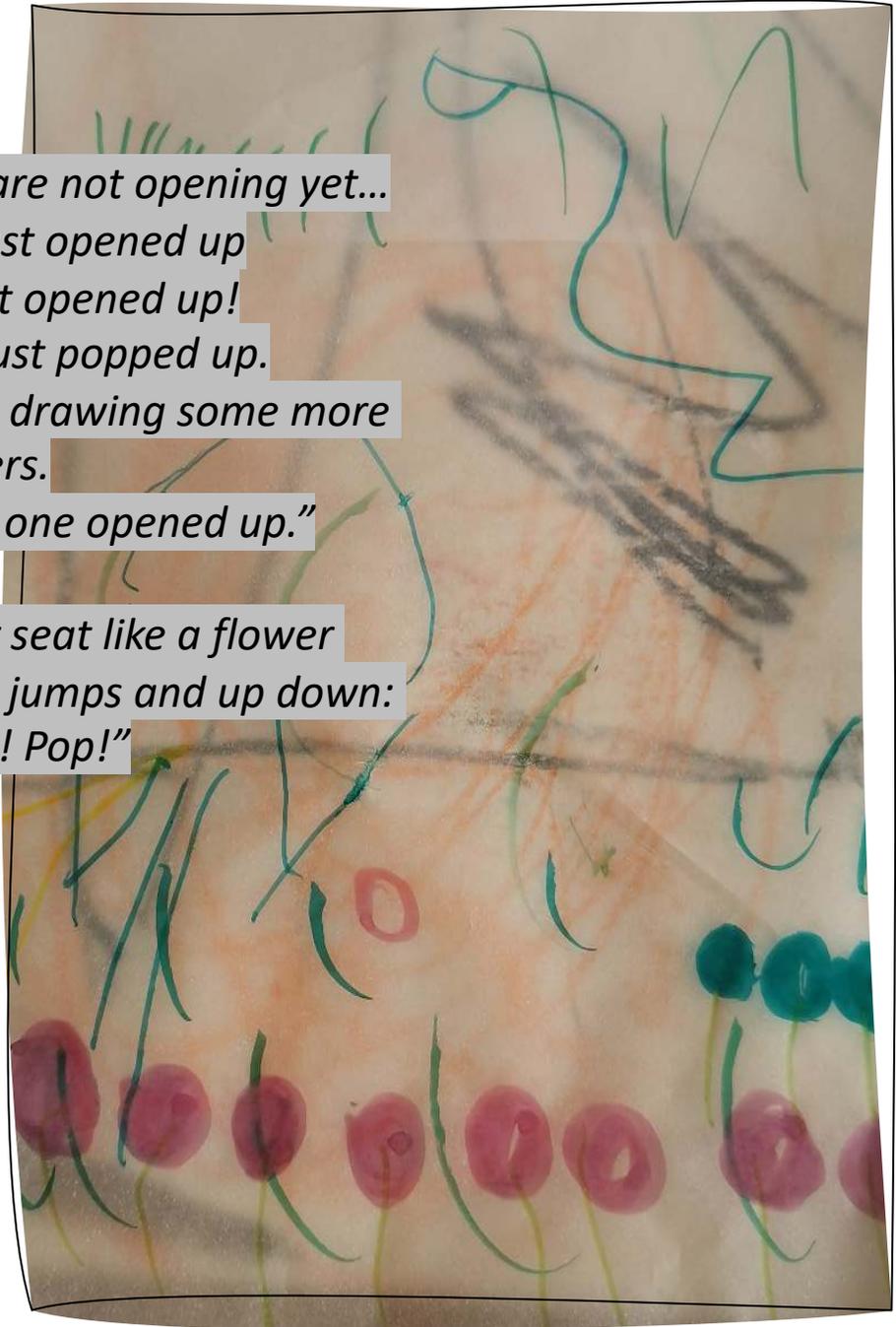
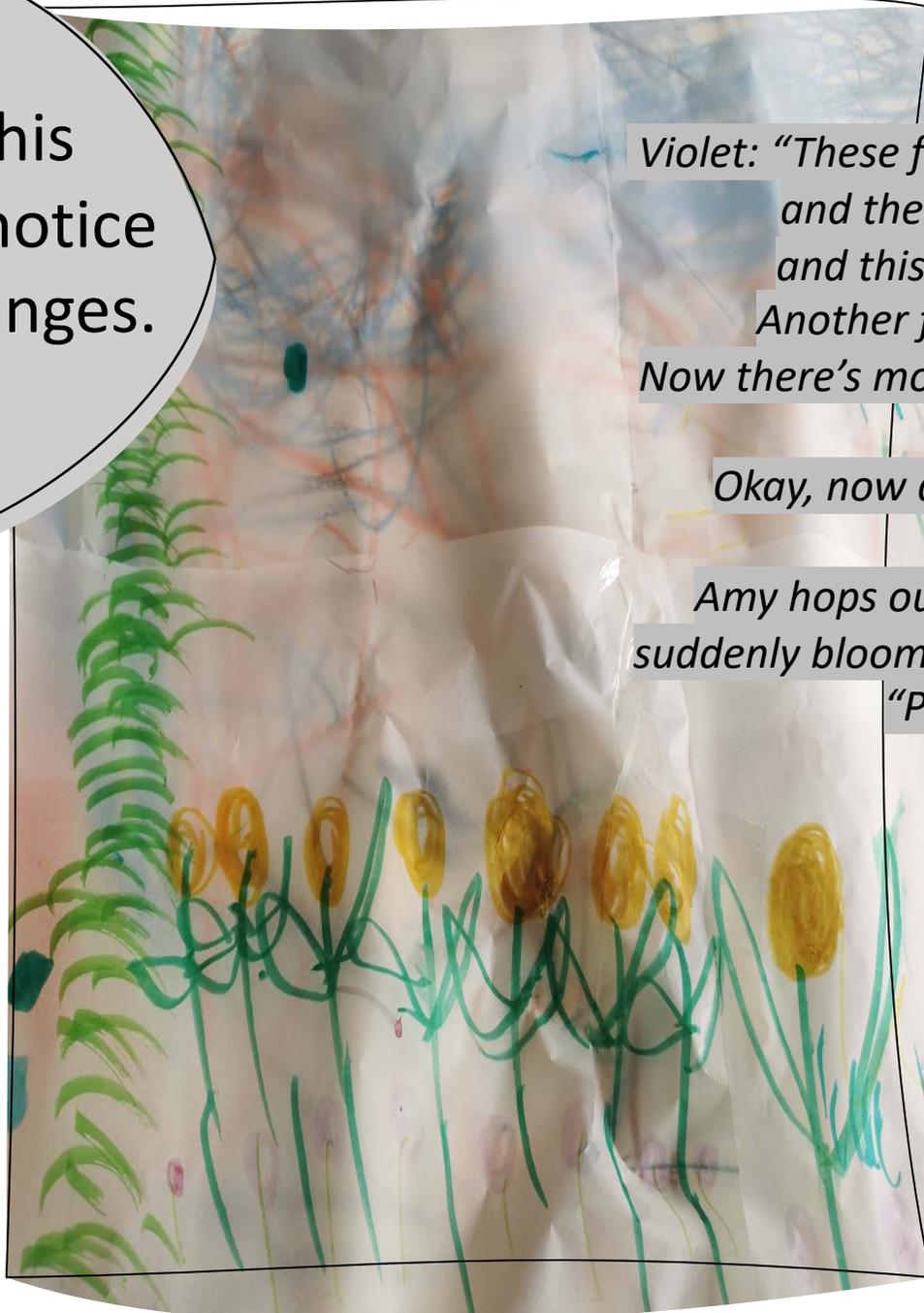
*"Now the grass is growingggggg ... up ... uuuuuup ... the grass growing ... uupp ... uppp up up up ... the grass is growing uuuuppp."*

Through this layering we notice the many changes.

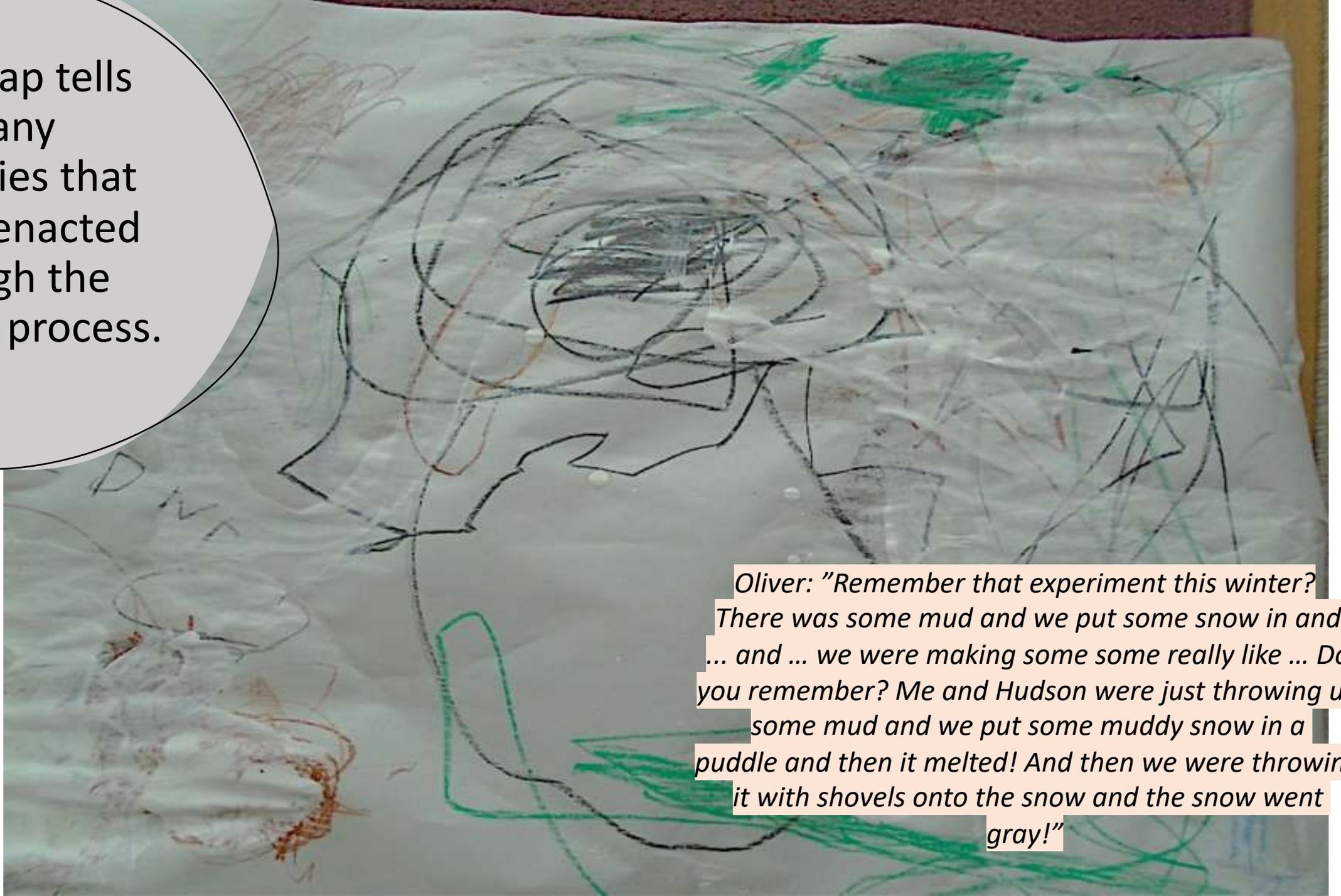
*Violet: "These flowers are not opening yet... and then one just opened up and this one just opened up! Another flower just popped up. Now there's more... I'm drawing some more flowers.*

*Okay, now another one opened up."*

*Amy hops out of her seat like a flower suddenly blooming and jumps and up down: "Pop! Pop! Pop!"*



This map tells many memories that get re-enacted through the drawing process.



*Oliver: "Remember that experiment this winter? There was some mud and we put some snow in and ... and ... we were making some some really like ... Do you remember? Me and Hudson were just throwing up some mud and we put some muddy snow in a puddle and then it melted! And then we were throwing it with shovels onto the snow and the snow went gray!"*



We continue drawing, juxtaposing the layers and drawing again. Using crayons and paint we add another layer of drawing, of the ground and the crocuses that are starting to peek out as the snow melts.

Every day we notice more and more.  
Weather patterns become part of how we  
know this place as we notice how the light  
changes.

*Oliver: "Do you know what is here? I'm trying to  
get through the clouds, but I can't, 'cause gray  
covers it up ... It's a gloomy day ... Look,  
there's some sun in it, in the clouds."*

*Pippa: "Oh. Okay ... Yeah, sometimes the sun is  
hidden."*

*Oliver: "Look ... look (drawing sideways with his  
crayon to make a wide yellow mark) ... Look,  
there's some sun in it."*

*Pippa: "Oh, some sun in the gray ... Sometimes  
the sun shines through the clouds."*





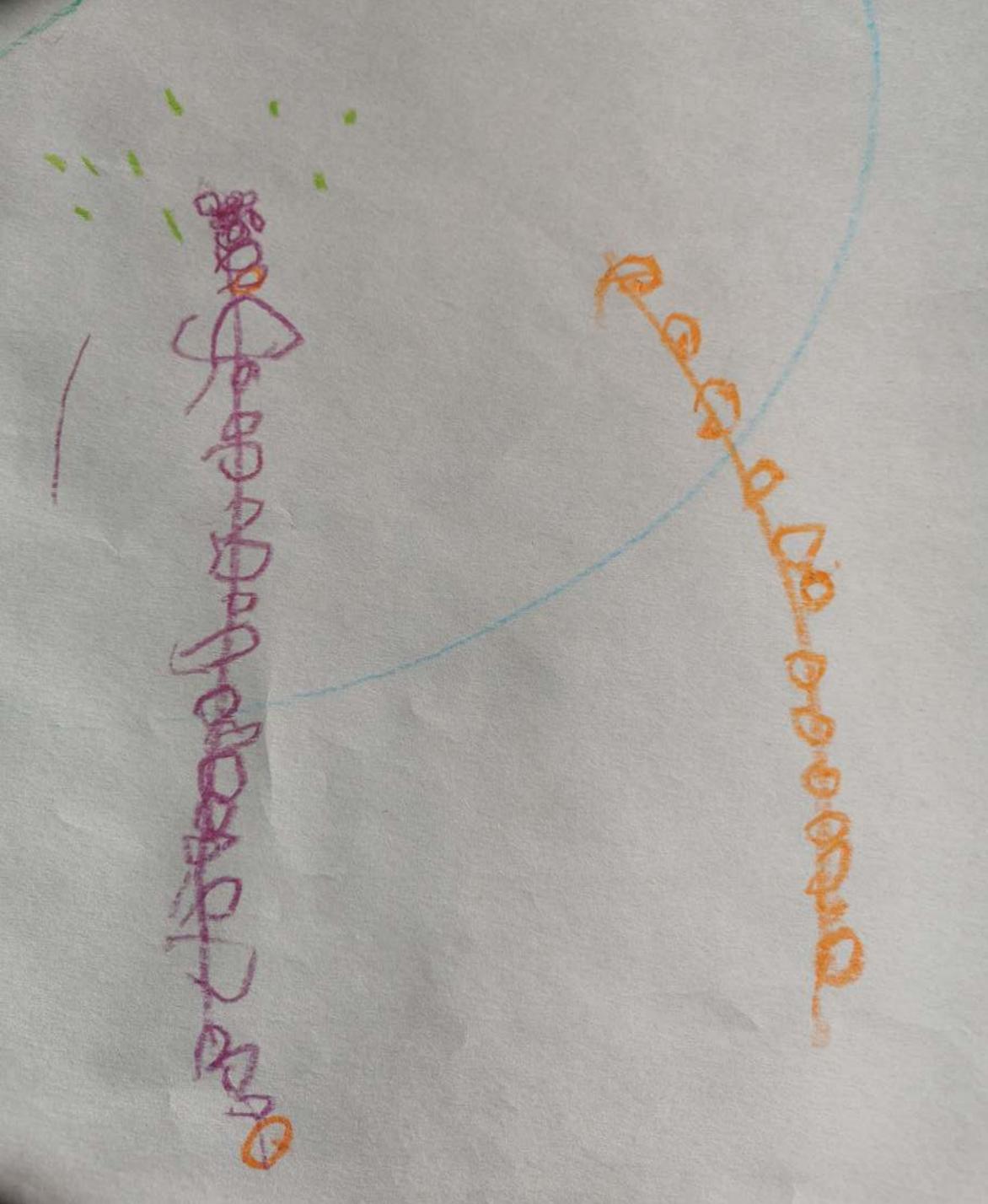
We read *If You Come to Earth* by Sophie Blackall. This book is a guide for a visitor from outer space coming to earth. The protagonist explains what they think the visitor would need to know about earth.

We make a guide to our outside space. Through photography we revisit our memories of the chickadees, blue jays, crows, robins, and woodpeckers who spend time with us. We count and find out we have 12 trees in our outdoor space. We add the hazelnut tree, the lilacs, and plum trees in our book.





## Trees as Companions

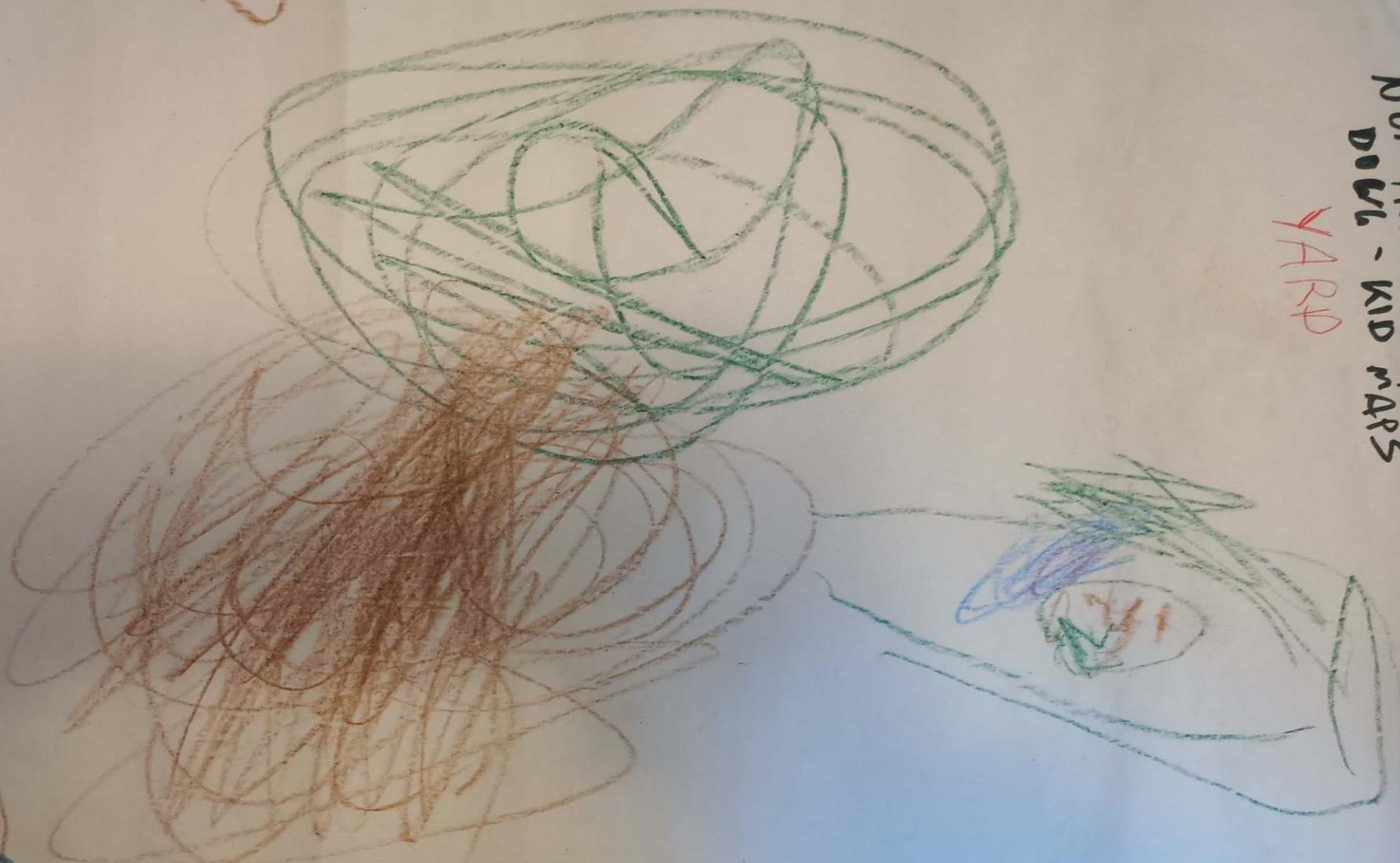


Given the children's close relationship with trees, Pippa proposes to the children that we draw our tree companions. Violet carefully draws two trees. She focuses on showing how the hazelnuts make their way to the ground to reach people.

*“I’m making a funny tree!  
This is a cactus tree. These are all the walnuts going down at the bottom so everyone can get them ... This is the walnut tree. Actually, this is the hazelnut tree!”*

D D U Q

NUT TREASURE HUNTS  
DOWL - KID MAPS  
YARD



"The tree has hidden nut treasures in it."

map to  
nuts  
hidden  
in tree

Tucker suggests that a map of trees also needs birds.

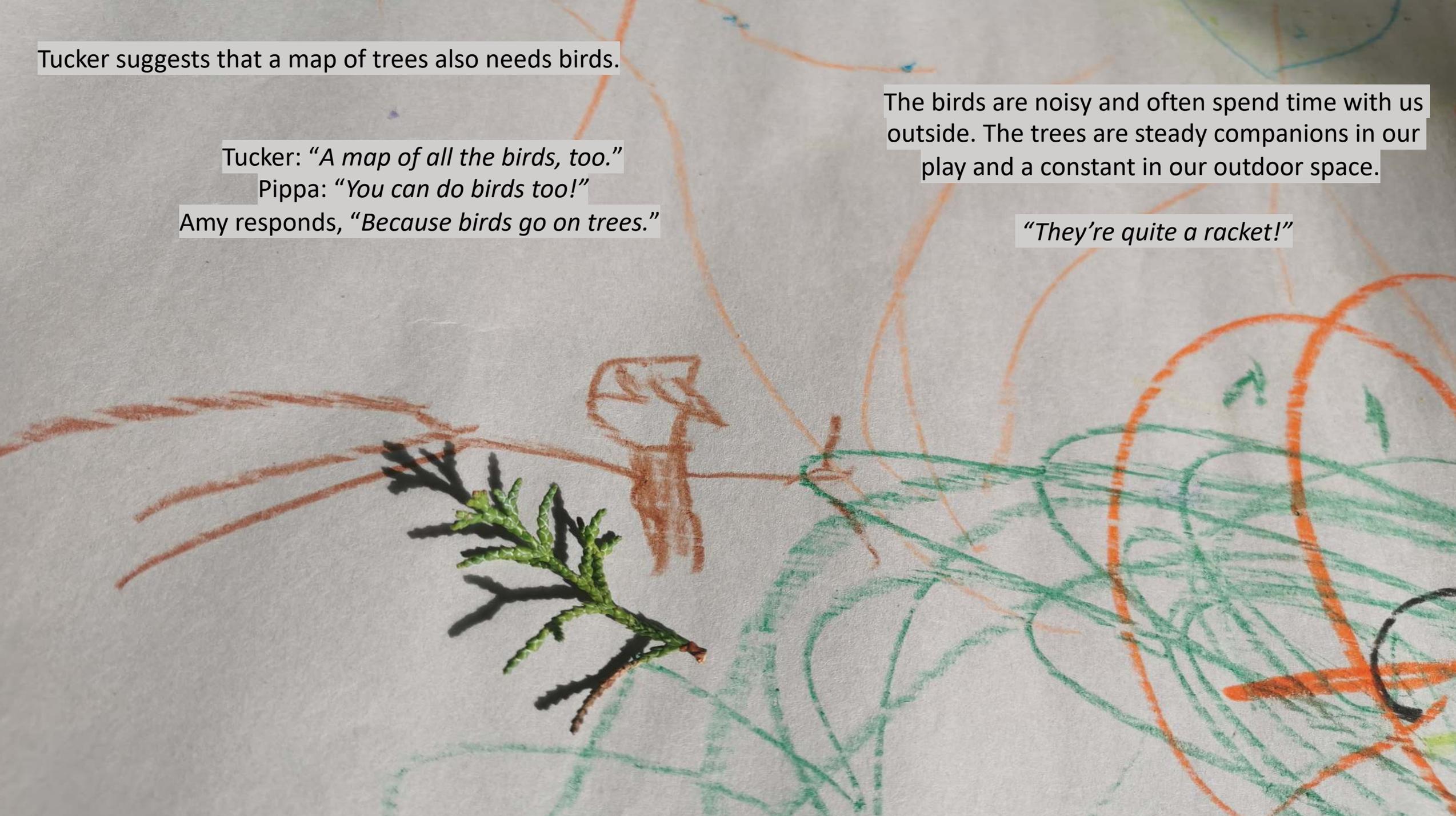
Tucker: *"A map of all the birds, too."*

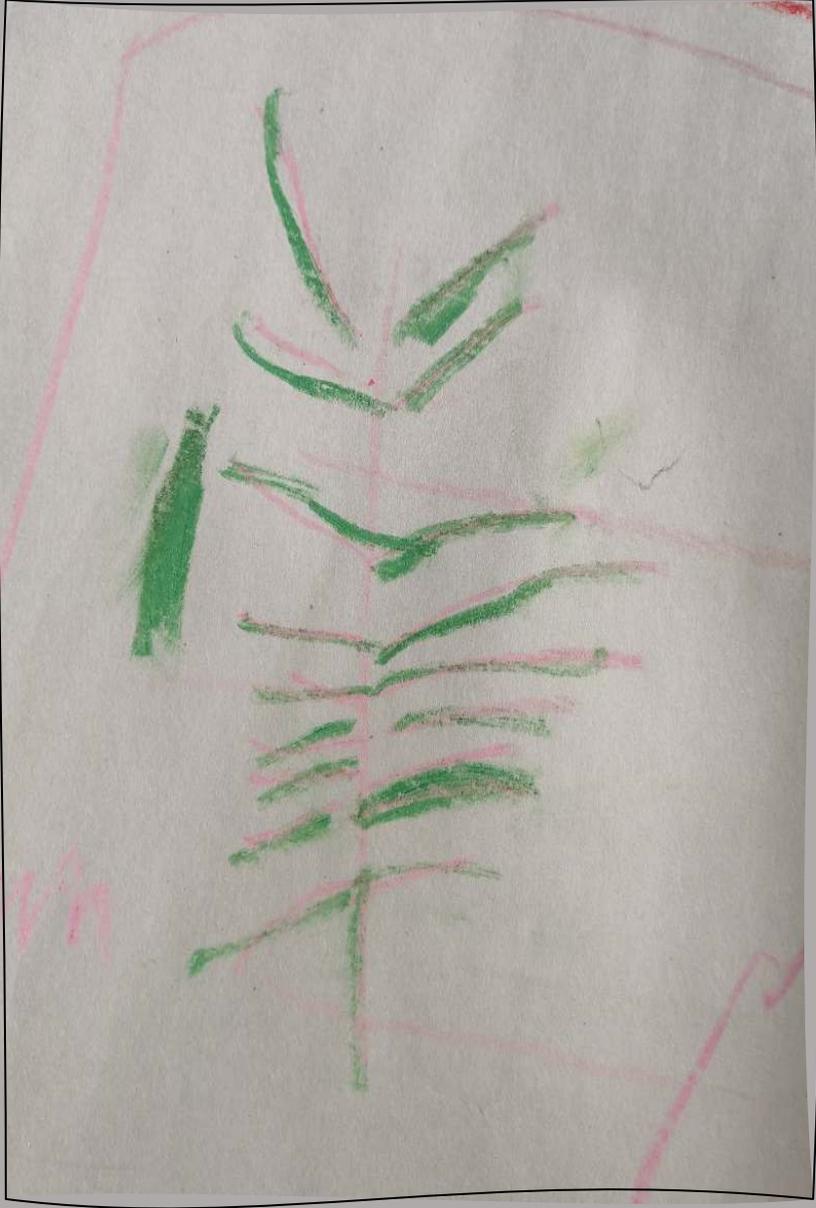
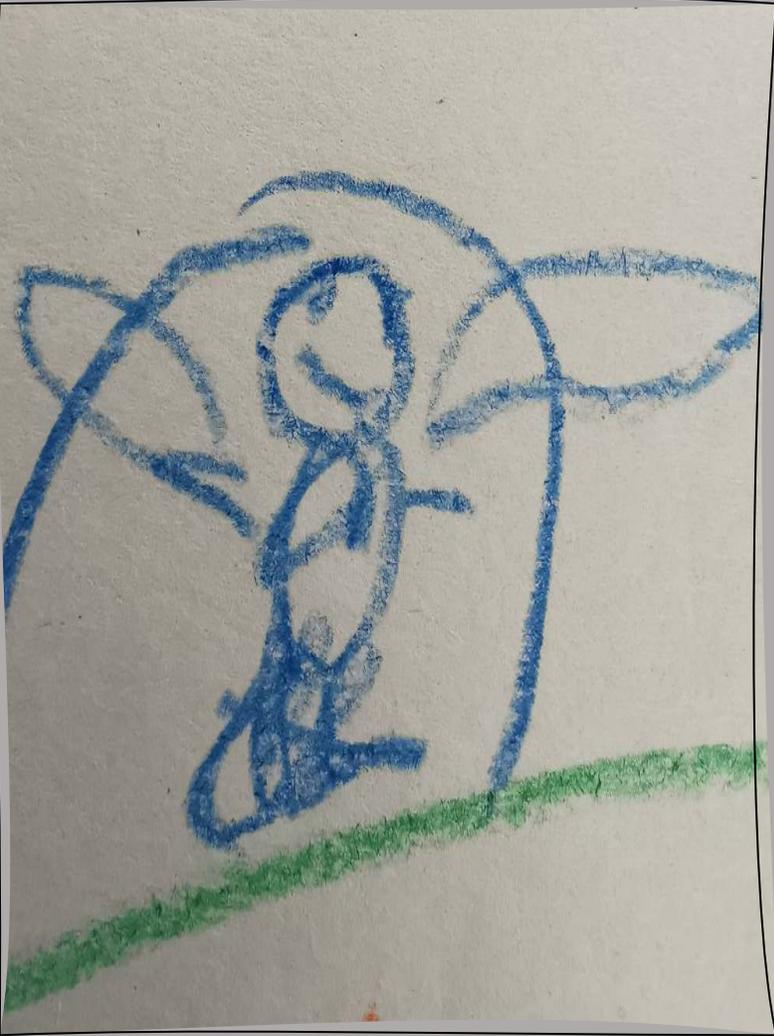
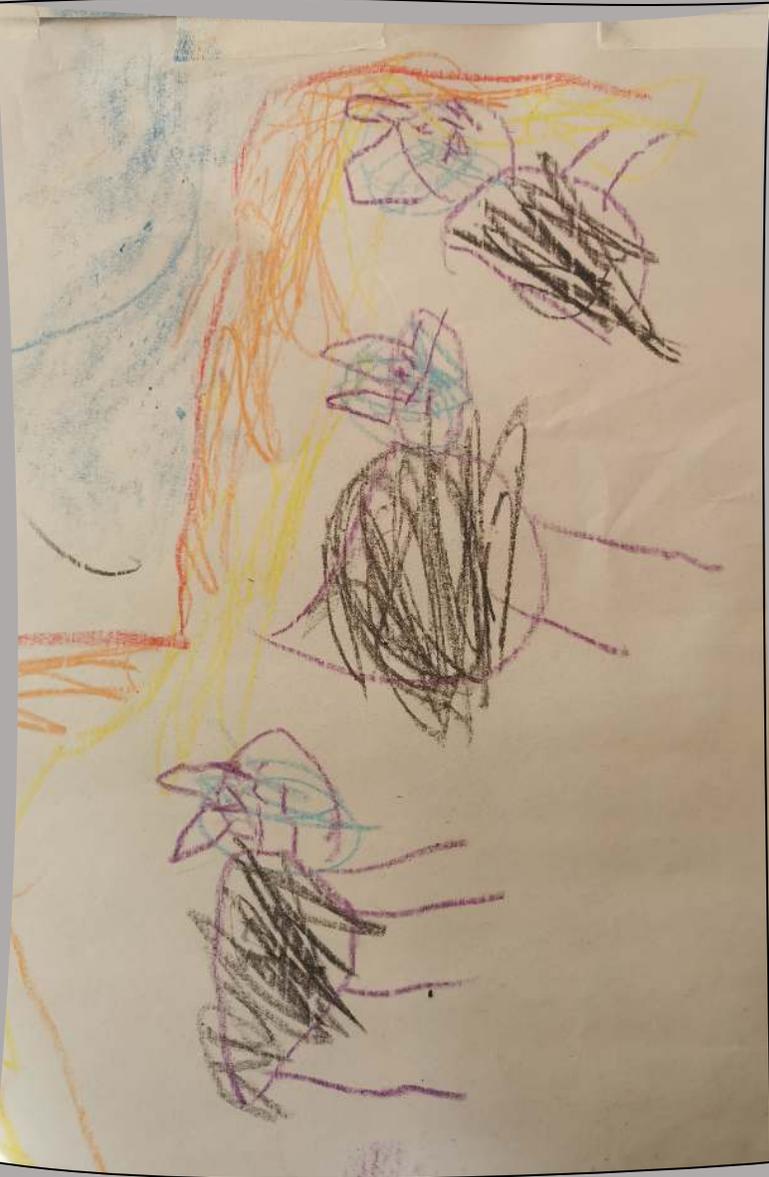
Pippa: *"You can do birds too!"*

Amy responds, *"Because birds go on trees."*

The birds are noisy and often spend time with us outside. The trees are steady companions in our play and a constant in our outdoor space.

*"They're quite a racket!"*

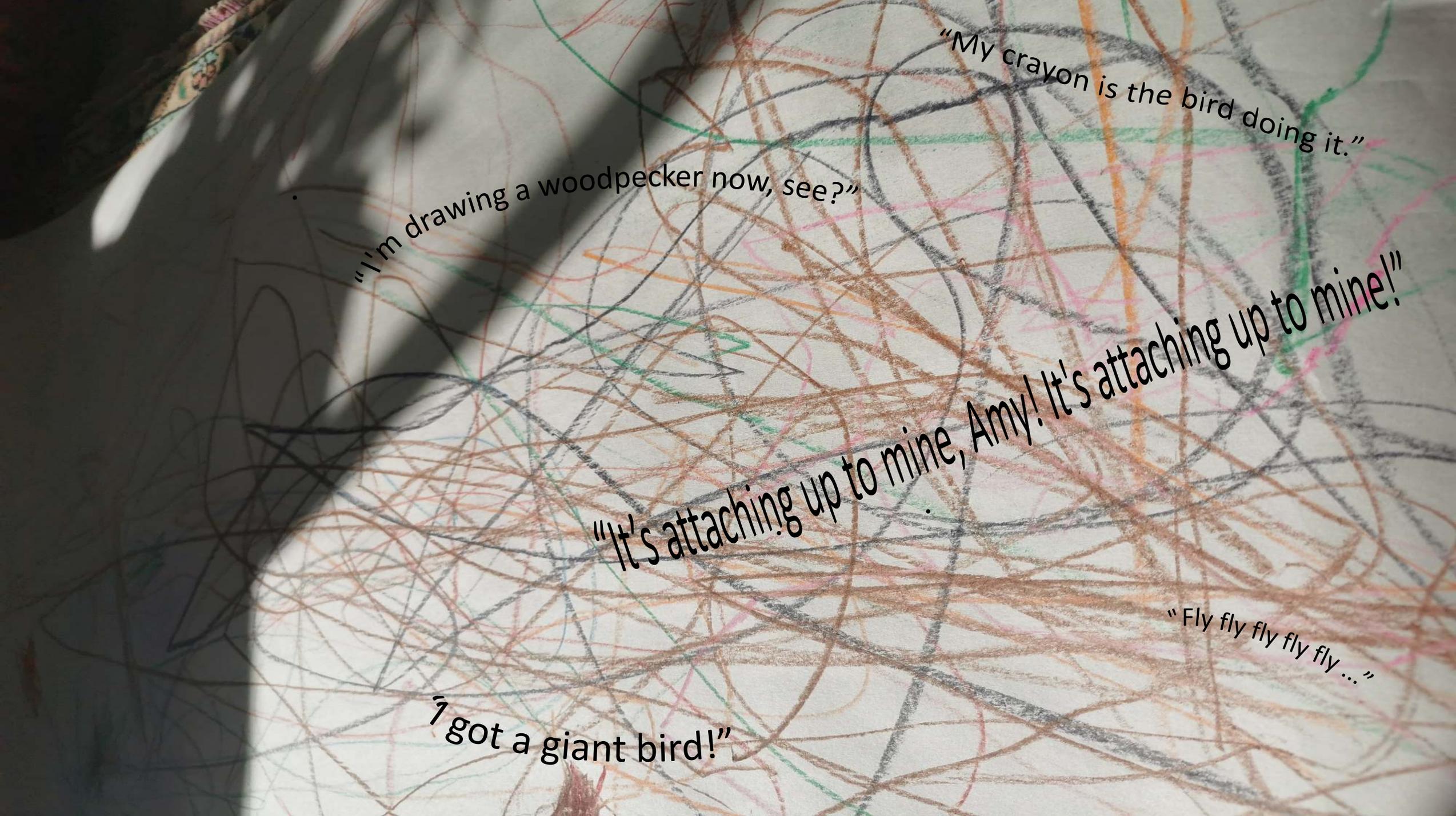




We experiment with how these noisy birds fly around this place

Crayons become birds flying on the paper, their trails marked in colour as they fly around the page. The crayon-birds argue and play as their paths intersect and take up more and more space on the shared piece of paper. The crayon-birds' flight is loud and chaotic but also collaborative and interactive.





"I'm drawing a woodpecker now, see?"

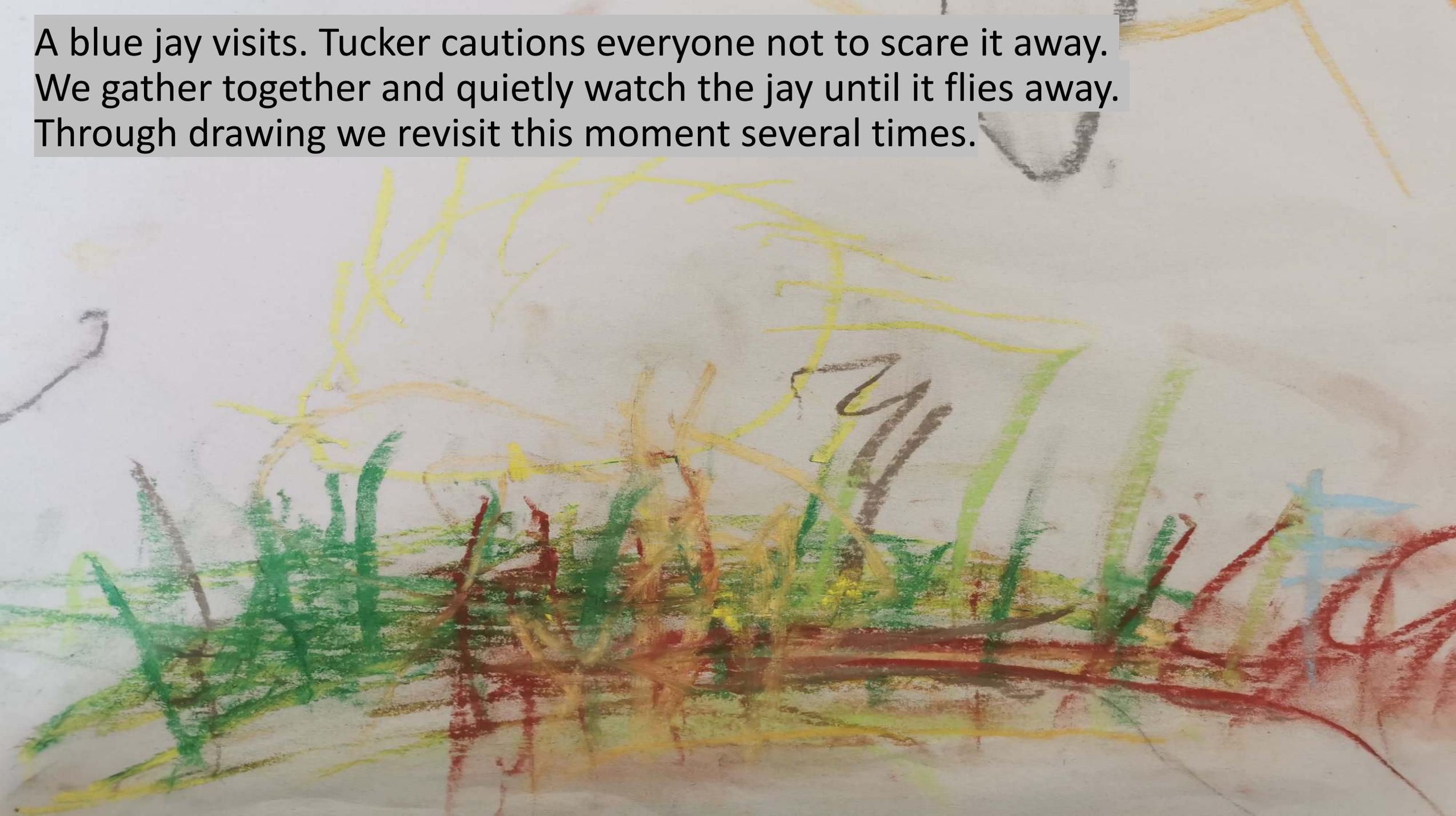
"My crayon is the bird doing it."

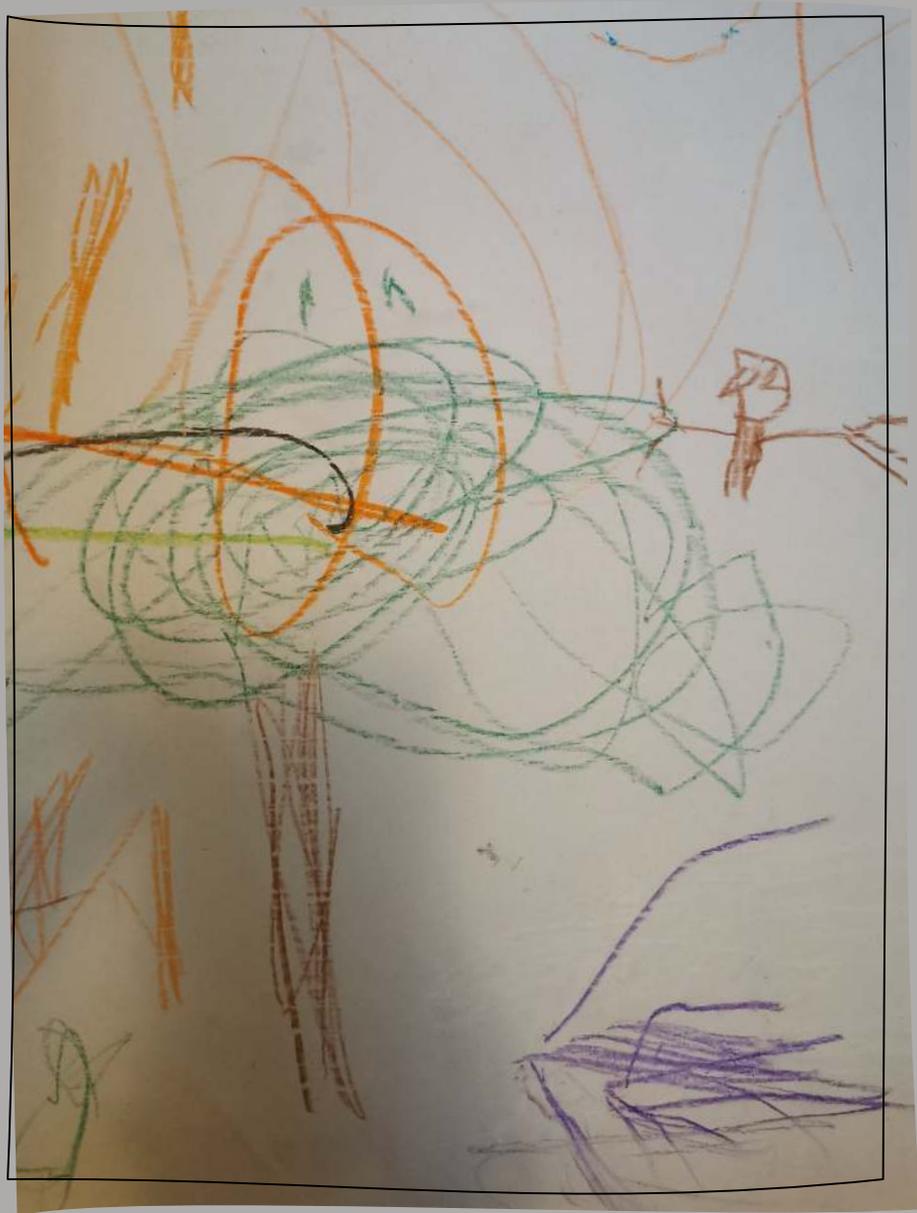
"It's attaching up to mine, Amy! It's attaching up to mine!"

"I got a giant bird!"

"Fly fly fly fly fly ..."

A blue jay visits. Tucker cautions everyone not to scare it away. We gather together and quietly watch the jay until it flies away. Through drawing we revisit this moment several times.







What might a map for the birds look like? What might birds need to know about our outdoor space? What would we want to tell them?

“Seeds! Hazelnut seeds!”  
“What are hazelnut seeds?”  
“Hazelnut seeds are hazelnuts.”  
“The nuts are the seeds.”

“That we have trees!”

“Here’s the hazelnut tree and then an arrow will be there so for the birds to know.”

“I’m making a bird, and here’s his little toe.”

"The birds are like us. They play with the tree."  
"Yeah, they eat hazelnuts too."

A photograph showing two children in raincoats (one red, one blue) kneeling on the ground, surrounded by a large pile of dried, yellowish-brown grass. They are actively picking up and arranging the grass to create bird nests. The child in the red raincoat has a circular logo on the sleeve that says "Tuffo".

To welcome the birds, we make nests in the early spring with dried grass left over from the fall. The children fill their hats with grass to shape the nests. They carefully pick up the bits and pieces of grass while they talk about what baby animals would want from a nest.

*"Should it be wet, dry, soft?"*  
*"I need some wet grass to cover my baby.. Wet grass covered in dry grass"*  
*"My baby likes dry"*  
*"My baby likes wet today and dry tomorrow"*



We notice after a few days that our grass nests are still empty. Pippa suggests to the children to make birds out of plasticine and small beads and to use clay for the nests.

Birds are hard to make. We struggle with shaping them from an unfamiliar material, pinching with our fingers to make tails and pinching again for beaks. We add wings, legs, and other bird parts. Tucker and Pippa make an eagle with a hooked beak.

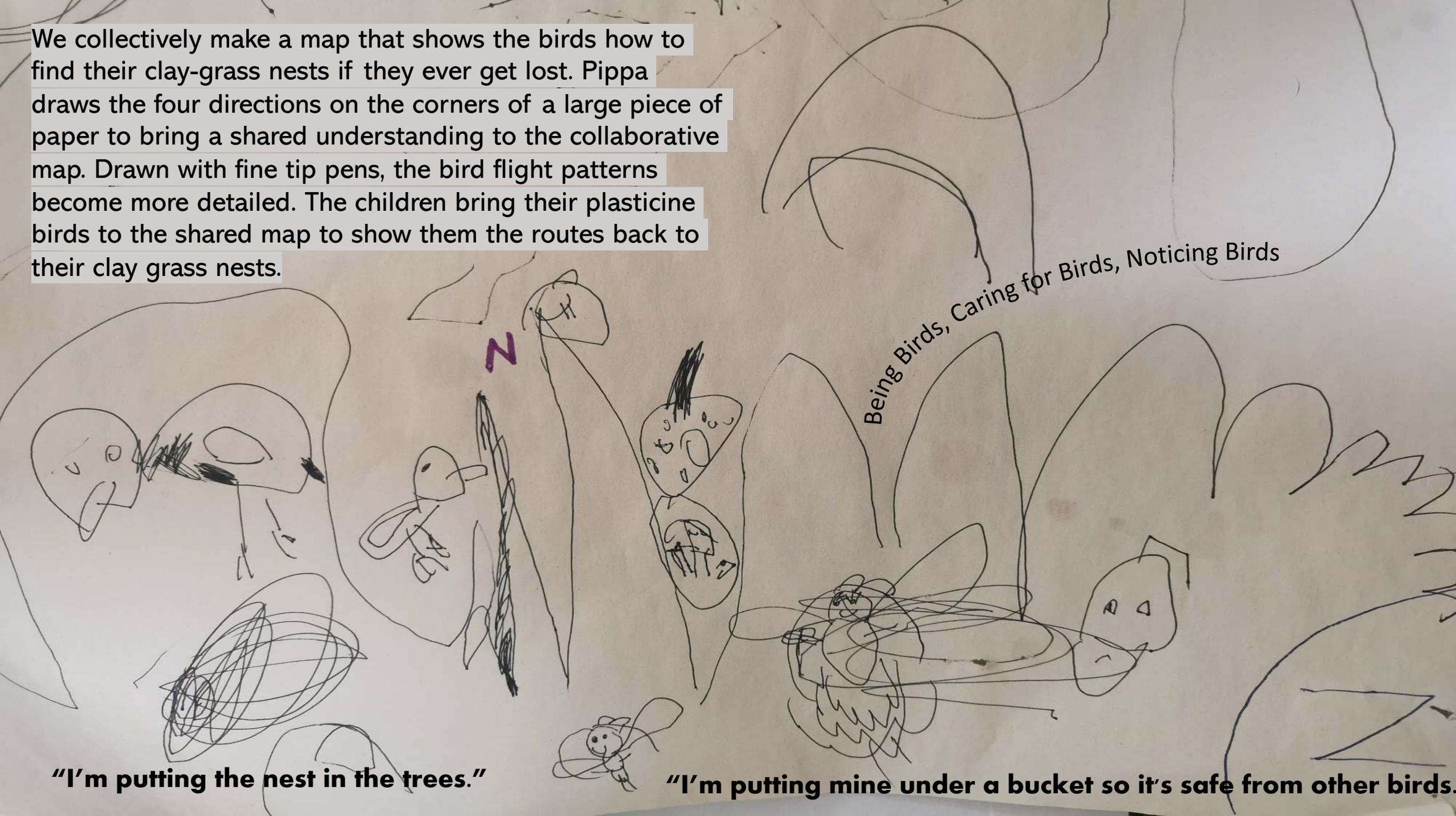


We return to mapping through nests. The children thoughtfully place nests and birds throughout the outdoor space. They think about what is safe for their birds. Some feel that safe means very high up in the trees away from predators like cats. Others want to hide them down low, protected and hidden under a bucket. The bird under the bucket is being kept safe from other live birds.



We continue to experiment with the many layers of how we know this place.

We collectively make a map that shows the birds how to find their clay-grass nests if they ever get lost. Pippa draws the four directions on the corners of a large piece of paper to bring a shared understanding to the collaborative map. Drawn with fine tip pens, the bird flight patterns become more detailed. The children bring their plasticine birds to the shared map to show them the routes back to their clay grass nests.



Being Birds, Caring for Birds, Noticing Birds

"I'm putting the nest in the trees."

"I'm putting mine under a bucket so it's safe from other birds."

**The relationship with birds is not always simple. Through mapping, a plan is hatched to trick the birds into being eaten by a bear.**

*Tucker: "I'm showing how to get to the bear because he wants to get eaten. Hudson, is this a bird landing on here? I'm going to draw a line to there to the bear to get eaten."*

*Hudson: "Hey, good idea!"*

*Tucker: "Hudson, he went to there to the bird to the bear to get eaten."*

*Oliver: (drawing his bird over to Violet) "I'm leading the birds to this bear over here ... so they both get eaten 'cause I don't want the blue jays to make such a racket."*

*Hudson: "I'm going to make a scare bear ... That means it's like a scarecrow but it's a bear."*

*Oliver: "What are scarecrows?"*

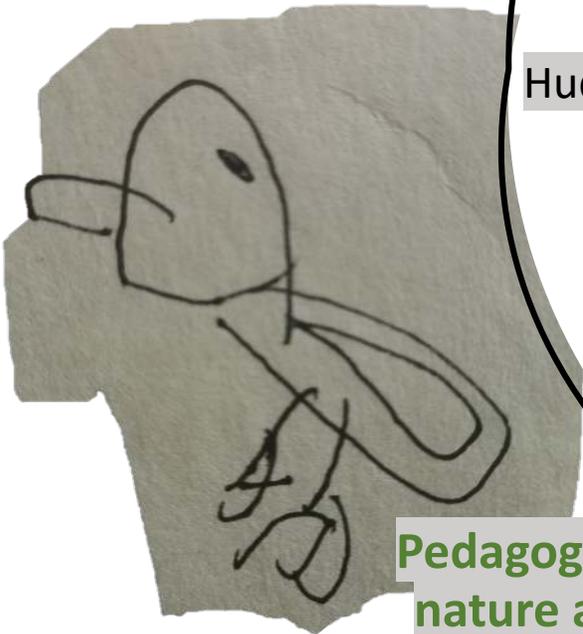
*Hudson: "They scare the crows."*

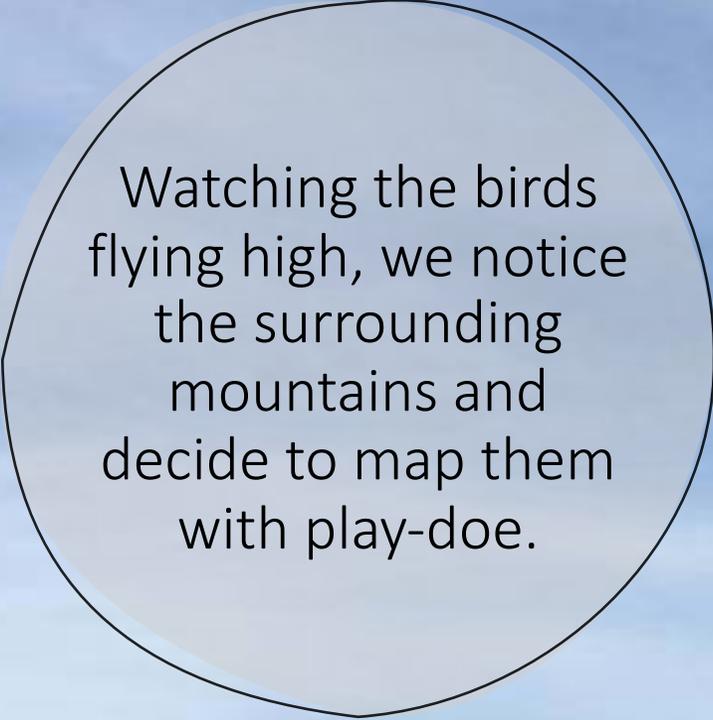
*Tucker: "They're um ... they're um ... "*

*Hudson: "People on a stick."*

*Tucker: "Uhhh that scare away crows."*

**Pedagogically, this conversation reminds us how easily we can slip into a romantic notion of nature and children when, really, childhood is complex and political and part of our messy world.**





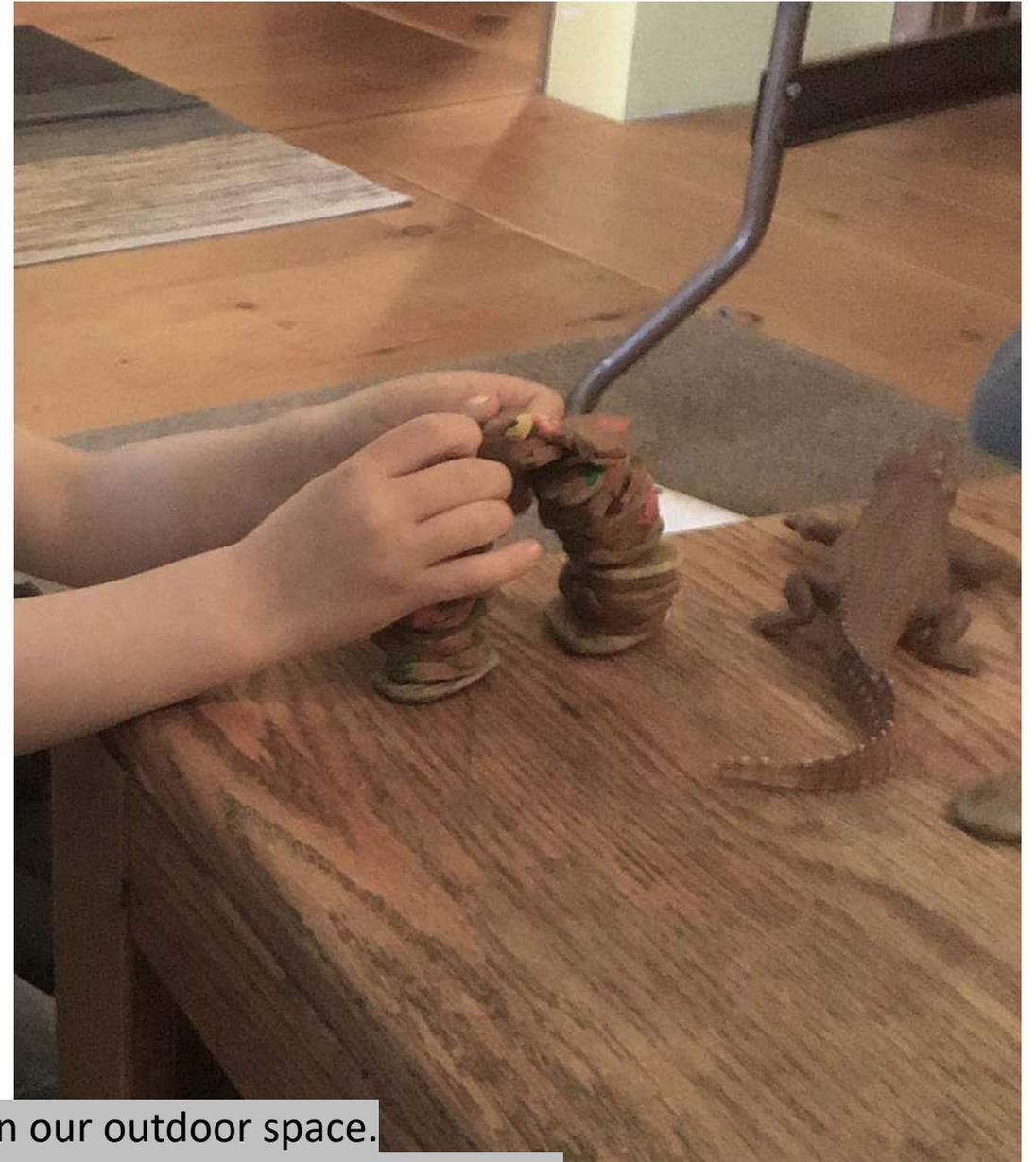
Watching the birds  
flying high, we notice  
the surrounding  
mountains and  
decide to map them  
with play-doe.





The delicate play-doh mountains keep bending. Tucker remarks that the mountains are now an archway. Other children join Tucker and make arches, too.

Creating maps is not only a way to get to know the outdoor space and to make it lively. It's also a way to imagine and reimagine this space.



We create a plan to build an arch in our outdoor space.  
Knowing that this is a complex task, we test our design with clay and rocks.

Collectively we decide that we want to make an arch high enough to be able to walk under it and agree that it would make sense to make it with wood blocks. We first experiment with plastic blocks.



After we experiment with temporary archways, we refine our initial designs. Using hammers, an electric drill, wood blocks and wood pegs, we build an arch and paint it yellow and orange.



The arch is the safe place when we play tag."

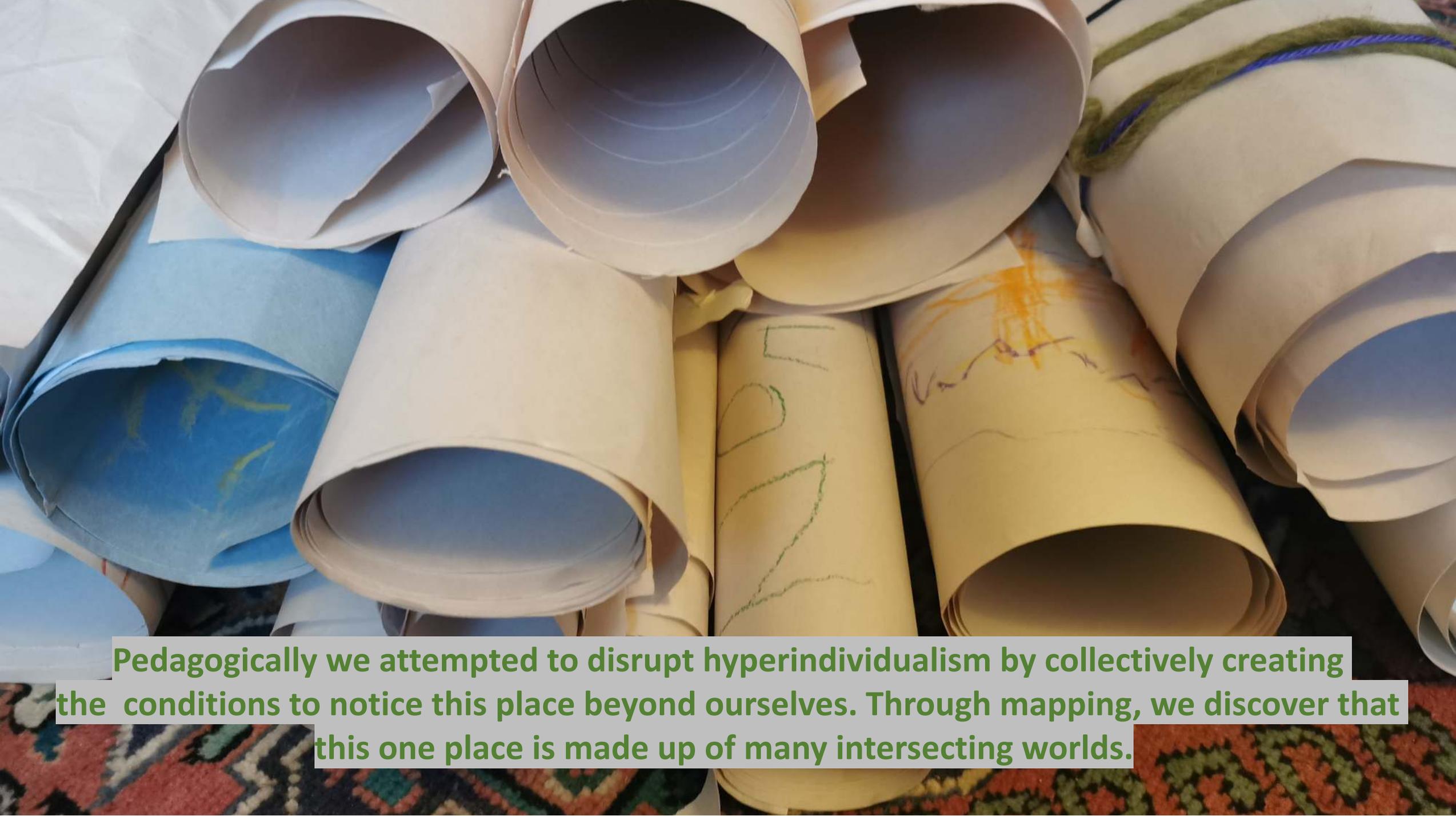


"Its how we go into our hazelnut tree."



"Its a magic door to another land!"

This archway is a gift for the outdoor space, as many of the children will continue on to kindergarden in the fall. Younger siblings will use it when they join next year, and perhaps animals will use it, too.



Pedagogically we attempted to disrupt hyperindividualism by collectively creating the conditions to notice this place beyond ourselves. Through mapping, we discover that this one place is made up of many intersecting worlds.