

# *Syrian bear*



“This commission piece depicts a portrait of a Syrian brown bear that was inspired by a colleague involved in setting up a national park in Armenia. Unfortunately, the project was called off, but the artwork remains as a reminder of the flagship species intended to promote the project. The establishment of the park was a controversial issue in the area as mining in the Syrian bears’ habitat was a major industry for local people. However, it was noted that the locals had a passion for artwork and it was hoped that by producing art that represented the beauty and vulnerability of the species and environment that their mindset would begin to shift. The expression on the bear’s face, particularly in the eyebrows, personifies the animal and its vulnerability to the mining industry. In addition, exposed palms are a common symbol of honesty in art and this has been represented by the exposed sole at the base of the work. All these elements were intended to capture the public’s imagination and hopefully aid the conservation project. The detail, exaggerated by the greyscale tones, is another element that brings the texture and detail associated with real life, but in a more abstract and emotive style. This illustration serves as an example of how art can be a valuable asset in the conservation industry as it connects otherwise disconnected people with the world around them. I hope that all these elements create an image in your mind in which the bear could simply turn its head and walk out the page.”



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