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BlueRedMagenta; Effective Implementation of Color, Image, Animation, and Interaction in an Original Web-Based Sequential Art Narrative

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MESTRADO EM **DESIGN**
E CULTURA VISUAL



Faculdade de Design,
Tecnologia e Comunicação
Universidade Europeia

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Projeto apresentado ao IADE - Faculdade de Design, Tecnologia e Comunicação da Universidade Europeia, para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Design e Cultura Visual realizada sob a orientação científica do Doutor Eduardo Corte-Real.

Keywords

Visual Culture, Linear Storytelling, Comics, Graphic Novels, Animation, Illustration, Web-Comics, Film, Web-Design.

Abstract

This project is an attempt to review and explore the strengths and limitations of the technologies and tools in the web-based sequential art medium in order to find a process with which one can create more efficiency in delivering impactful sequential images to convey a narrative. The information gathered and analyzed here is then used to inform creative decisions in forming the final work, which is a web-based original sequential art narrative. The final web-based narrative endeavors to function as a 'proof of concept' for the topics discussed and analyzed.

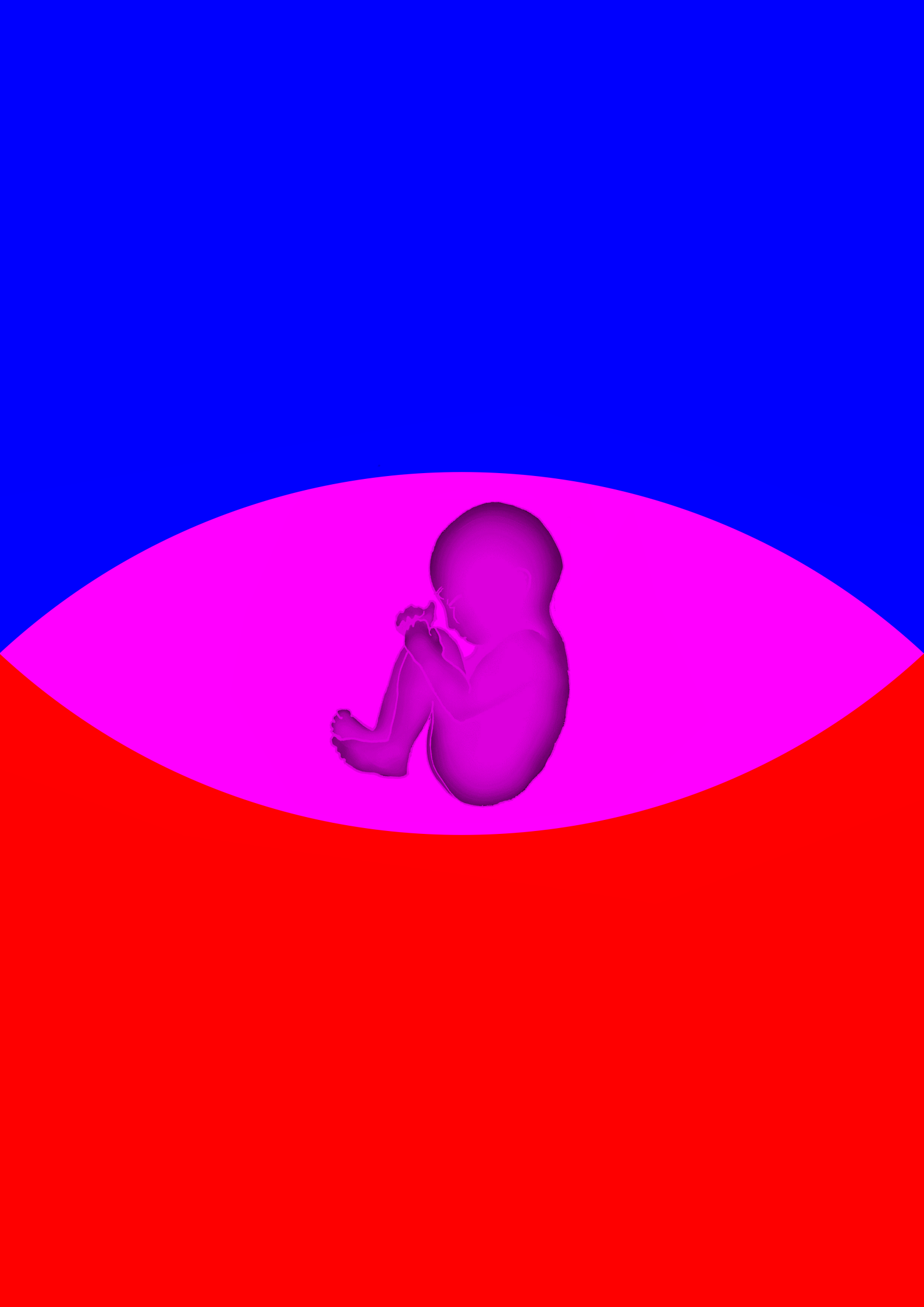


Table of Contents

1. Part One - Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	2-4
1.2 References	5
2. Part Two - Influences, References, and Readings	6
2.1 Objectives and Influences	7
2.2 Technical Aspects of the Digital Image, Animation, Interactivity and their Effective Use in Web-comics	8
2.2.1 The Digital Image	8
2.2.2 Color	9
2.2.3 Animation	10
2.2.4 Interactivity	10
2.3 Critical Reviews of Web-comics and Films	
2.3.1 Critical Review: <i>Pup Ponders the Heat Death of the Universe</i>	11-12
2.3.2 Critical Review: <i>Samsara</i>	13-14
2.3.3 Critical Review: <i>Odysée 2.0</i>	14-16
2.4 Meandering Thoughts on the Influences that Inspire the Narrative	17
2.4.1 Using Color	18-20
2.4.2 Blue, Green, Red, and Magenta in Nature	20
2.4.2.1 Blue in Nature	20
2.4.2.2 Green in Nature	21
2.4.2.3 Red in Nature	21-22
2.4.2.4 Magenta in Nature	22
2.4.3 Blue, Green, Red, and Magenta in Culture	22
2.4.3.1 Blue in Culture	22-23
2.4.3.2 Green in Culture	23
2.4.3.3 Red in Culture	23-24
2.4.3.4 Magenta in Culture	24
2.4.4 Light, Color and The Eye	24-26
2.4.5 The Screen and Additive Color	26-27
2.5 Constraints	27-29
2.6 Visual Cultural References	29-52
2.7 References	53-54
3. Part Three - Implementation of Readings and References into the Process of the Project	55
3.1 Color, Form, and Interactivity in Relation to the Themes of the Narrative	56
3.1.1 Color as Theme and Title	56
3.1.2 Color Saturation	57-58
3.1.3 The Loop and Interactivity	59-60

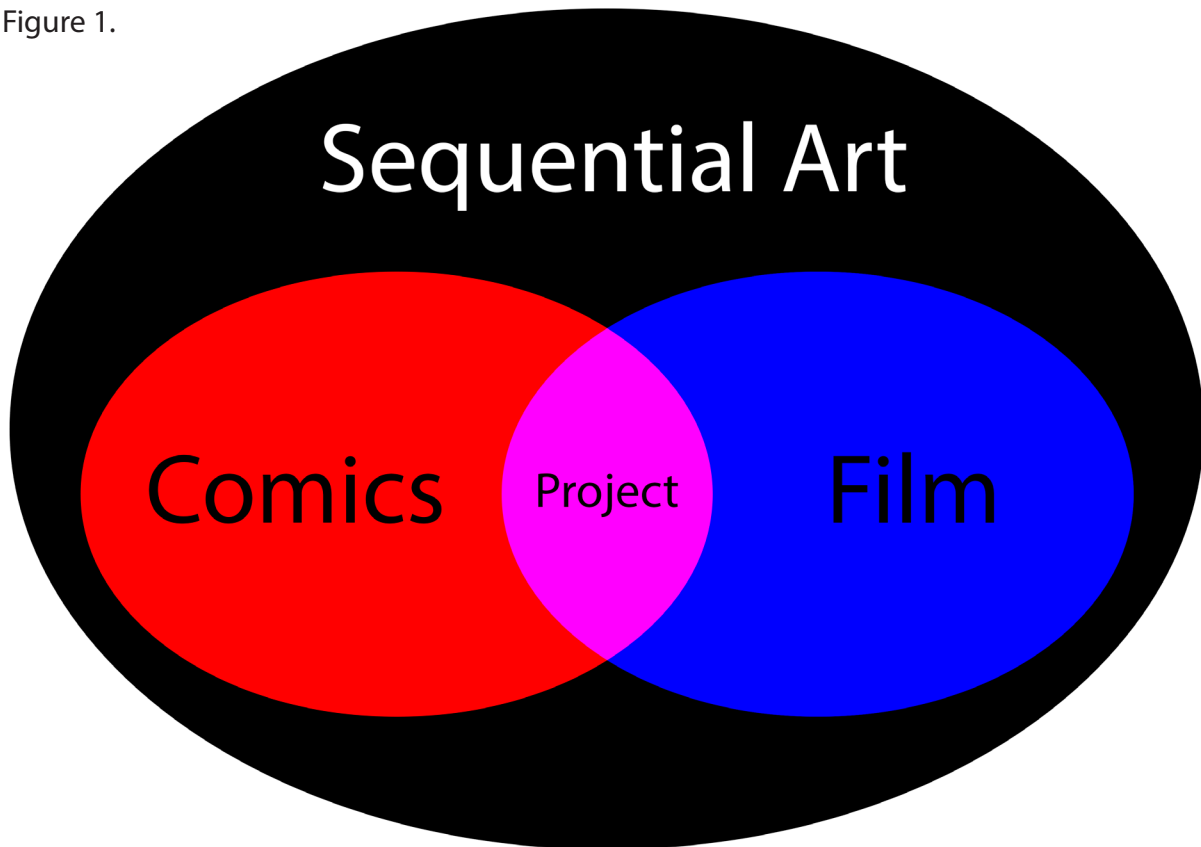
3.1.4 Lines and Shapes	61
3.2 Illustrations and Sketches	62-75
3.3 Inverted Aquarelle	76-77
3.4 Three Dimensionality and Dynamic Lighting	78-79
3.5 Procedure of Animating Frames	80-81
3.6 References	82
4. Part Four - Project	83
4.1 Link to Project	84
4.2 All Frames of Blue Red Magenta	85-86
5. Part Five Conclusion	87
5.1 Conclusion	88
6. List of Figures	89-102
7. List of Illustrations	103-108
8. Bibliography	109-110

Part One
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This document presents the research, preparation and development of a Visual Design project and, thus, is an endeavor to contribute to the field of Visual Design Studies by producing a work that explores the space between comics and film as web-based content. Both media are primarily visual and forms of sequential art, that have their artistic value in the effect of playing with sequence and rhythm. (Stam 2000:35) Although comics is an older art-form and is often a part of the process of creating film (e.g. storyboards), cinema has found greater appreciation and perceived artistic value in the public. “With its limited demand on a viewer’s cognitive skills, film makes the time-consuming burden of learning to decode and digest words seem obsolete.” (Eisner, Kitchen 2008:xvi) Because of this “in many respects, movies are usurping written works as the primary means of spreading ideas and educating the public.” (Drucker 2020:n.pag) Comics, which fills the gap between printed image/text and film, has never really stood a chance at being the main way of spreading ideas. (Eisner, Kitchen 2008:xvii) However, with the rise of internet usage in the beginning of this century, both cinema and comics have found themselves fundamentally changed. The traditional mainstream film industry has been affected by the accessibility of movies online, provided by torrenting and Netflix among others, in such a way that continually fewer audience members go to the cinema. Because of this, large studios, which are profit driven corporations, make movies with larger budgets but ‘safer’ subject matters. These films appeal to a wider audience but arguably often only offer a banal narrative face-lifted with the spectacle of CGI. (Anon. 2011:n.pag) Because of this, creativity in the types of narratives told (not the techniques developed to bring them to screen) in today’s mass-consumed film has arguably suffered. Comics have also been affected by the internet, but slightly differently. Pre-internet publishers, similar to traditional film studios, were the dominant force in the comic book industry. Printing and distribution of copies of comics required large and expensive infrastructure that made taking chances on niche comic book narratives too risky. (McCloud 2002:10) However, the internet has made distribution easy and quite inexpensive, removing the need for publishers and leaving creators with smaller audiences but with full creative control and financial stake in their art. And so, both film and comics have been democratized by the internet but gaining a large audience, as a result of such a saturated space, has become harder. This is where web-comics might have an advantage over film. On the internet, unlike in the past, comics and film now have the chance occupy the same screen real estate as each other and have the same method of distribution and consequently have a gained leveled playing field. However, web-based comics have much smaller overhead costs to create big and complex visual universes than film. This allows smaller teams or even individuals to create content that can premier on the same screen as the newest Disney movie. This has found an even larger advantage over film in the new quarantined world where the film industry is shut down, but web-comics can still be produced. (Flint, Watson 2020:n.pag) Secondly, while film

Figure 1.



is still primarily created using the same tools, moving images paired with sound (having some flirtations with interactivity), comics, who were previously static and constrained by printing technology, has gained a larger palette of tools with which to convey. And so, maybe the time for a greater appreciation for comics equal to that of cinema has yet to come. Arguably, this hopeful contemporary success of web-comics now hinges on a single condition: a deepened understanding by its artists of the powers and limitations of the digitalized medium in order to bring the visual impact of comics to a paramount comparable to cinema yet without simply becoming a poor imitation of it. To avoid this, the new expanded tool-set, which includes animation, interactivity, and sound, must not become gimmicks but enhancers of the narrative being conveyed. Following this logic, this paper will break down these new tools that are now available to creators of web-comics with the goal being to utilize them effectively to visually tell an original narrative. However, it is important to state early in this document that what this project seeks to create is a work that fits into the strict definitions of web-comic but also fits into the definition of what makes something a film. These two media are closely related and exist under the term Sequential Art. This work attempts not to be a full web-comic, although using most of the visual tools of one, and neither a full film, although it does use a lot of visual tools and references of film. The work that is eventually produced is then never referred to as a web-comic in this document because that would exclude its other parent, film. And so as is drawn in figure 1 above, the project exists as a combination of both.

The narrative of the finished work will be original but influenced by various philosophies both from the west and the east that may interest young western adults of today, who are the

intended audience. The narrative of the finished work is told purely visually so as to not be hindered by languages and will only rely on the more international visual language that is shared in the west. This project is then an attempt to use the tools and knowledge available to a creator in visual culture to effectively and concisely convey a multi-faceted story. To achieve this, the initial work of this project is amalgamating the various necessary studies available to a creator and then consecutively combine them as they pertain to this project. That is to say the research first leads the reader through some of the influences and readings that assisted in the completion of the project. Here, the technical aspects of what constitutes web-comics as well as how they are most effectively displayed are discussed. After having familiarized oneself with these aspects, some critical reviews of a few web-comics and movies are gone through as a further understanding of what comics can and cannot do so as to not become multimedia. After this, a dive into color and its use as a highly effective tool in visual communication and then using these different readings to inform the discussion on how color is to be used in the final narrative to convey various themes and ideas. After briefly discussing some constraints on this projects, both technical and circumstantial, the readings continue to go through the main visual cultural references that are made in the finished work. These visual references are both films, paintings, comics, and symbols that primarily come out of western culture.

After having discussed these various studies, this document proceeds to the next major part of the process for creating the finished work. These are the numerous chronologically displayed sketches and thoughts jotted down over the course of the project. Here the viewer can gain insight into the process of the work, hopefully giving a deepened view into how the finished work is ideated.

After the chapter displaying the creative process, the final work that was produced is shown in paper form. There is also a link available to the reader to view the work in its true form, as a web-based sequential art narrative.

Before continuing it is also important to note that this document in no way claims to be scientific, historical, make any claims at objectivity, or draw conclusions. Rather, this is an attempt to display, in an organized fashion, the erratic process involving research, ideation and creating of an artistic and highly subjective endeavor. With this out of the way:

Let's begin...

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Part Two
Influences, References and Readings

2.1 Objectives and Influences

One of the goals that the narrative seeks to achieve is to have the viewer see the same things that one sees in everyday life but from a slightly shifted perspective, where the ‘magic’ of the world is made more apparent. This ambitious goal forms the way the narrative is told. If one looks at the events that take place in the course of the narrative, one sees that all happenings and plot events are, yes, perhaps visually exaggerated but certainly not unrealistic in the sense that they can, and do, occur in real life. The exaggeration of these events in the story are then only used to emphasize and highlight them to show the true grandiosity that they exhibit if one only views them with the right kind of eyes.

To achieve this effect, film and photography work very well as sources of inspiration because these media require the ‘real world’ to be captured in order to produce images. An example of this is how film requires light, which is a physical phenomenon, to create images whilst painting and sketching can break these laws of physics. Yet film makers have never been constrained by this and have still created fantastical scenes and narratives that, to various extents, exist in reality. Because the story will be told purely through image, it is an exercise in wielding visual language to communicate ideas to the audience and so these images need to be legible to them. To do this, a clear and effective use of color, light, and composition is fundamental. Another aspect that needs to be considered is more technical: the finished work exists only as online content displayed on screens and so a deepened understanding of the underlying technology of screens, the true medium of this project, is necessary. This does not only include studying the screen but also how light and color gets processed by the eye. Therefore, to achieve a visual language for the final work that has depth both technically, thematically, and visually, the influences and readings that have formed the ideas, which aided in the creation of this narrative, have come from various cultures, time periods and fields.

2.2 Technical Aspects of the Digital Image, Animation, Interactivity and their Effective Use in Web-comics

Comics are primarily a visual medium that first and foremost rely on the picture plane to convey meaning. In order to fully harness the powers available to creators, one must first come to grips with how the characteristics of the ‘new’ picture plane, that of the screen, differs from the traditional printed page. A major difference between screen and print is that print usually has the resolution of 300 dots per inch (DPI) while screens are limited by their pixel dimensions, which vary greatly, and especially internet content, always needing to minimize its storage size, often resolves much lower. (Patterson 2017:n.pag) This means that print can sometimes allow creators to pack more pictorial information on the same surface area as compared to a similarly sized screen. This limitation of the screen can force a creator to make larger panels in order to accommodate the same information as a print would. However, this necessitates more space to display comic panels, which in the virtual world of the internet, there is an abundance of.

2.2.1 The Digital Image

Print-based comics traditionally structure their narrative around panels placed within the bounds of a page. But this is due to the nature of print and is not an inherent characteristic of comics themselves. (McCloud 2005) On a screen, however, the abundance of virtual space allows the page to be infinite. This ‘infinite canvas’, as coined by McCloud in *Reinventing Comics*, allows the boundary of the screen itself to become the panel, which the user scans across an virtual page. (2002:222) This solution, now quite common place, is a more apt approach to displaying comics online. Another method of counteracting this, is simply using larger screens to display web-comics.

Although the trend among today’s internet users is to use their smartphones to consume online content, most films on Netflix are still viewed on a TV. (Kafka 2018:n.pag) By displaying web-comics on a larger screen size, like one does with film, creators can have more visual real estate to work with. In the past, the visual real estate of comics could commonly be A4 or even A3 sizes, while phone screens, on top of having lower resolution, are less than half of that. And so, in the case of the two-dimensional visual plane, on which comics are displayed, more is better. Placing web-comics on a larger screen would help elevate it to a perceived value similar to that of film. Understanding, and ultimately using, the fundamental differences between paper and screen to their respective strengths and overcoming their weaknesses is at the heart of making web-comics more impactful.

Another, perhaps even more fundamental aspect of the digital image, which differs from print is how color is created and perceived. In print, one has an exterior light source containing the full visible light spectrum which illuminated the picture plane. Color is created by subtracting

wavelengths from this visual spectrum by use of dyes and pigments. In this way, to create red, one places an ink on paper that absorbs all wavelengths of light except the wavelength that is called red. This is called subtractive color and is commonly represented in print by mixing cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK) to create a wide, but limited, spectrum of color. (Raiselis 2019) Conversely, and fundamentally so, screen technology uses additive color to create images. Instead of starting with a white page one begins with a black screen, devoid of any color, and one adds color directly by filtering an internal back light through red, blue, and green (RGB) dots that together constitute a single pixel. (Westland 2019)

2.2.2 Color

This aspect of screen technology has many different characteristics that print, which in the large body of web-comic works available online today, has not been properly addressed or utilized. The first characteristic of RGB additive color is that it is much more capable at producing highly saturated colors than CMYK printing technology and consequently has a much wider color gamut. Arguably, this is a clear advantage for any artist as they have more colors available to them. The second fundamental characteristic, which is seemingly less utilized in web comics, is the fact that in additive color the visual weight of white is much greater than the visual weight of black. White, created by shining an unfiltered, complete wave spectrum into the eyes simply contains a lot more energy than black. In print, however, black is visually the heaviest color on the page. (Albers 2013:13)

A clear example of this phenomenon is how borders between panels in printed comics are left white (with the exception of some Manga) while in film the black borders that crop the image, are left black. In both circumstances this is done in order to allow the viewer to perceive what is important, that which is in the frame, and borders left unrecognized. Using black borders to separate panels in web comics is quite an obvious and utilized aspect of additive color theory in today's web-comics. However, bringing this concept further, what is shown within the panel is often still created on white paper, then scanned, and transformed into a digital version. And so, the content in the panel is created, as it always have, with subtractive color. Black (visually heavy) is put on a white background (visually light), then scanned and now black and white have switched roles and their combined visual effect has fundamentally changed. To counteract this, creators should perhaps create the content of the panel itself digitally, where one begins with a black background and adds light colors on top. Or, to maintain the visual characteristics of hand craft, drawing white on black paper. This could perhaps change the line drawing visual language of comics to a new shape-based way of creating form. Although these are just suggestions, being aware of the fundamental characteristics of the medium would allow web-based sequential art narratives to develop their visual language to new heights.

2.2.3 Animation

Animation in web-comics has been a natural progression in the art-form. Placing animated panels within the comic structure can, when done effectively, enhance the medium. However, because in comics visual space represents and equals time, meaning more space traveled equals more time passed. “What happens is that when you introduce sound and motion, which are temporal phenomena that can only be represented through time, then they break with that continuity of presentation.” (McCloud 2005) This break with the comic visual language when animation is introduced can be mitigated if one places some constraints on what an animation can show.

A distinction posed by Karl-Johan Thole in a talk at Malmö University states: “The reader should be able to look at the picture at any time of the animation and take in the whole meaning of the picture.” (2019) Similarly, because the space in-between panels in a comic strip represents a cut or transition, placing a cut inside of an animation also breaks with the time continuum. Consequently, this secondary distinction necessitates that all animation used within a comic should also be looped. Movement, as a newcomer to the palette of comic artists, should be similarly used as color was when first added to film. For maximum effect, as with *Wizard of Oz* (Fleming 1940), one refrains from using it until the story necessitates it for maximum effect. The human eye perceives movement instinctively and so movement calls for attention. This should perhaps also guide creators to limit their use of animation so as not to create a visual overload, unless, of course, the narrative calls for it.

2.2.4 Interactivity

Traditional user interaction with comic books involves simply scanning the page with one’s gaze then turning pages to progress in the story. Computers, on the other hand, are a step removed from the image because images on screens are inherently ethereal. This can often create a divide between what the user perceives and how he/she interacts with it. To combat this, touch screens have found a great way of minimizing this effect. When it comes to traditional lap top viewing, which provides a larger screen real estate so necessary for this project, the user is tied to using mouse and keyboard to navigate. Here the most appropriate approach, as proven by almost all modern websites, is scrolling. Scrolling, unlike clicking virtual buttons, requires the least amount of user input. On-screen buttons, require the user to navigate the mouse onto a small area, distracting from the content. Finally, scrolling, when using a mouse, is still most commonly a wheel interface, which is an apt metaphorical physical representation for traveling both in space and time. This allows users to completely forget about interface and immerse him/herself in the narrative. Ultimately the goal of user interface design should be to eliminate the perception of the interface all together.

Having gathered this information and attempting to digest it properly, one must now consider

how to incorporate this gained understanding into a web-based sequential art narrative. This perpetuates one to a phase of ideation where Scott McCloud's 6 step path comes into play. This path consists of: 1.Idea, 2.Form, 3.Idiom, 4.Structure, 5.Craft, 6.Surface. (McCloud 1994:170) A creator can approach their work from different perspectives. Perhaps focusing more on the craft and surface is the endeavor for some but because the ultimate purpose of this web-based sequential art narrative is based on a life experience and personal philosophy, this project begins its journey at step one: the idea. To coherently and effectively convey this idea through sequential images, all aesthetic and structural choices must have a purpose in their relation to the core ideas and themes of the narrative. In essence: narrative first, craft second. One way of studying how to effectively convey ideas and themes through a sequential art narrative is by reviewing some already published works that, to various extents, achieve this.

2.3.1 Critical Review: *Pup Ponders the Heat Death of the Universe*

This relatively early web-comic by Drew Weing is a very simple but elegant use of McClouds 'infinite canvas'. It is a short narrative of the main character 'Pup', sitting on a doorstep, visualizes in his minds eye how the earth will one day be swallowed up by the sun and then, itself, explode into a supernova. The narrative finishes of with a punchline where Pup is brought back to the current moment when his friends tell him to join them in playing baseball.

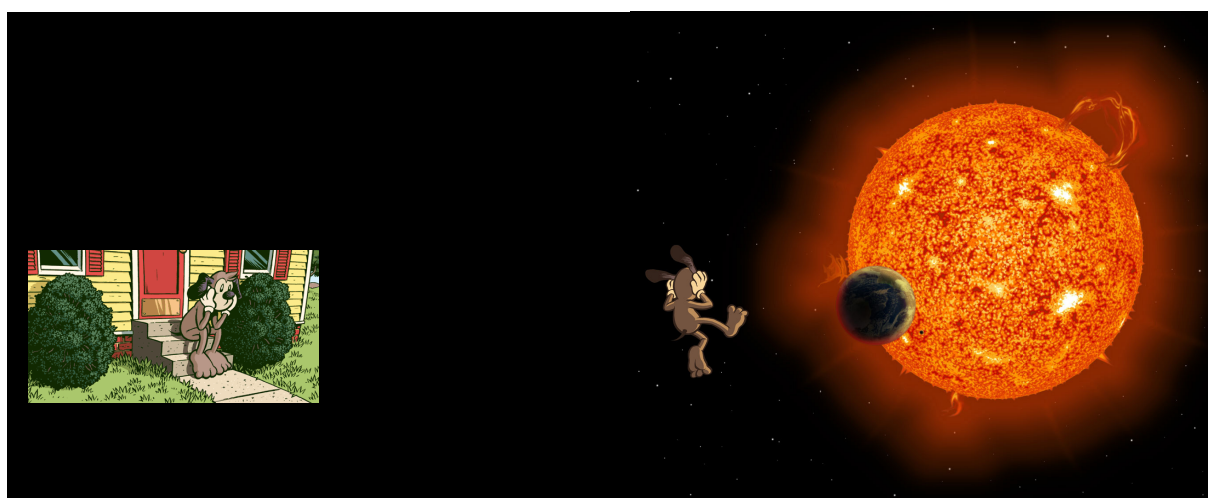


Figure 2. Frame from *Pup Ponders the Heat Death of the Universe*

The author's creative use and subversion of classical comic language makes the whole experience of viewing the comic very impactful. The comic begins by framing Pup in a traditional frame as he sits on the doorstep. However, as he begins to imagine space, and the viewer continues to scroll towards the right, Pup remains at the same scale as he was when he was within the frame but is now surrounded by the vast void of space. By keeping Pup's size constant and small in relation to what he sees, Weing manages to impart the scale of the thoughts of the main character. This is also helped by the effect of beginning with framing that is eventually dissolved to reveal space. Unbound by framing, Pup and the viewer are flying



Figure 3. Frame from *Pup Ponders the Heat Death of the Universe*

across space and time and see the future together. After seeing the beautiful and frightening sights that Pup imagines, he slowly hovers back on to the image plain to eventually land again in the same position he was when he began pondering. In the next sequence Pup is again framed in as his thoughts are interrupted by his friends. Interestingly, the blackness that represented the void in Pup's thoughts is relegated to the blackness in-between the frame. This beautiful detail, that Weing surely intended, brings another level of depth to the short comic and is arguably a wonderful depiction of the existential absurd, that lurks at the edges of the frame as Pup and his friends go and play baseball.

2.3.2 Critical Review: *Samsara*



Figure 4. Still from *Samsara* (2011)

The 2011 film *Samsara*, created by Director Ron Fricke and Producer Mark Magidson, is a masterpiece in non-narrative documentary film and cinematography. Being the third project created by the duo, this film further develops the themes explored in *Bakara* (1992) and *Chronos* (1982). The film is neither a traditional documentary nor a travelogue, “(...) it takes the form of a non-verbal, guided meditation. Through powerful images, the film illuminates the links between humanity and the rest of nature, showing how our life cycle mirrors the rhythm of the planet.” (Magidson 2014: n.pag) It is a collection of scenes from 25 different countries over 5 years captured on 70 mm film.

What gives the movie its impact apart from its impressive cinematography is the fact that it

is profoundly non-verbal. As a western audience, one expects dialogue or at least narration to guide one through the images. Instead, the viewer is transfixed by an original and ethereal score, harmoniously combined with long lasting shots inviting one to explore the scenes as they unfold. One of the beginning shots is in a Tibetan Buddhist temple where a group of monks are diligently creating a sand mandala. This, along with the title *Samsara*, a Sankrit word for ‘the everlasting cycle of birth and death’ reinforce the Buddhist influences and motifs in this film. After the scene with the monks, the film abruptly cuts to ruins in a desert, and continues to carry the viewer through space and time. Because of the lack of narration, the viewer is encouraged to make up his/her own mind on what he/she sees. However, one could argue that the editing in the movie does have an opinion that speaks to the ideas of the creators. This is also true for the music. But the music is more subtle in its ideas and is more of an accompanying essence to the images. In their 2012 interview with Tyler Knowles, Fricke explains that they cut together the collection of shots they had without sound. In order for “the imagery to dictate how it wanted to go together” (Knowles) as opposed to matching the cuts of the film with the rhythm of the music. The fact that *Samsara* is non-verbal and primarily visual is what gives it its timelessness as well as its international reachability.



Figure 5. Stills from *Samsara* (2011)

However, one could argue that the movie still has an inherent bias because the eye behind the camera and the editors are both from the United States and therefore have a western outlook on the world. A hint of exoticism exists in the film because although the film claims to be somewhat impartial and international, there is more focus on non-western cultures and people than western ones. More over, western scenes are shown in a more negative light where as non-western or, perhaps more accurately, non-capitalist places and people are shown in a more favorable, or at least non-judgemental, light. The powerful close-up portraiture of



Figure 6. Still from *Samsara* (2011)

people of different cultures that are looking straight into the camera and are captured in such a large format and high definition, confront the viewer with faces from all over the planet although interestingly, not with any European/white faces. Perhaps, this could be because the creators, being western and creating for a western audience, did not find western faces to be of much interest. Like these film makers, the work that will be produced in this project intends to show to a western audience ideas and concepts from the east. However, unlike *Samsara*, where the imagery can be easily taken as the stereotype of the ‘noble savage’, this project will try to incorporate eastern philosophy in a life and visuality of the west. In the end of the film, the monks, having finished the sand mandala, begin to sweep it off. This ritual is an exercise in non-attachment and understanding of the transient nature of the world. The monks will then, once again diligently rebuild the sand mandala and the cycle begins anew. This feature length film leaves one as speechless as the film.

2.3.3 Critical Review: *Odeyseeé 2.0*

The *Odeyseeé 2.0* is a web-based comic produced by two students, Camille Prieur and Vincent Magras, at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in 2016. This comic is about a Native American who undertakes an epic journey through various landscapes where he faces many trials and tribulations to reach an unknown destination. The motive of the main character is unknown to the reader and one is immediately thrust into the journey without knowing why. The visual language of the comic references classic Hollywood Wild West movies and Franco-Belgian comics. The story features a very serious and stoic Native

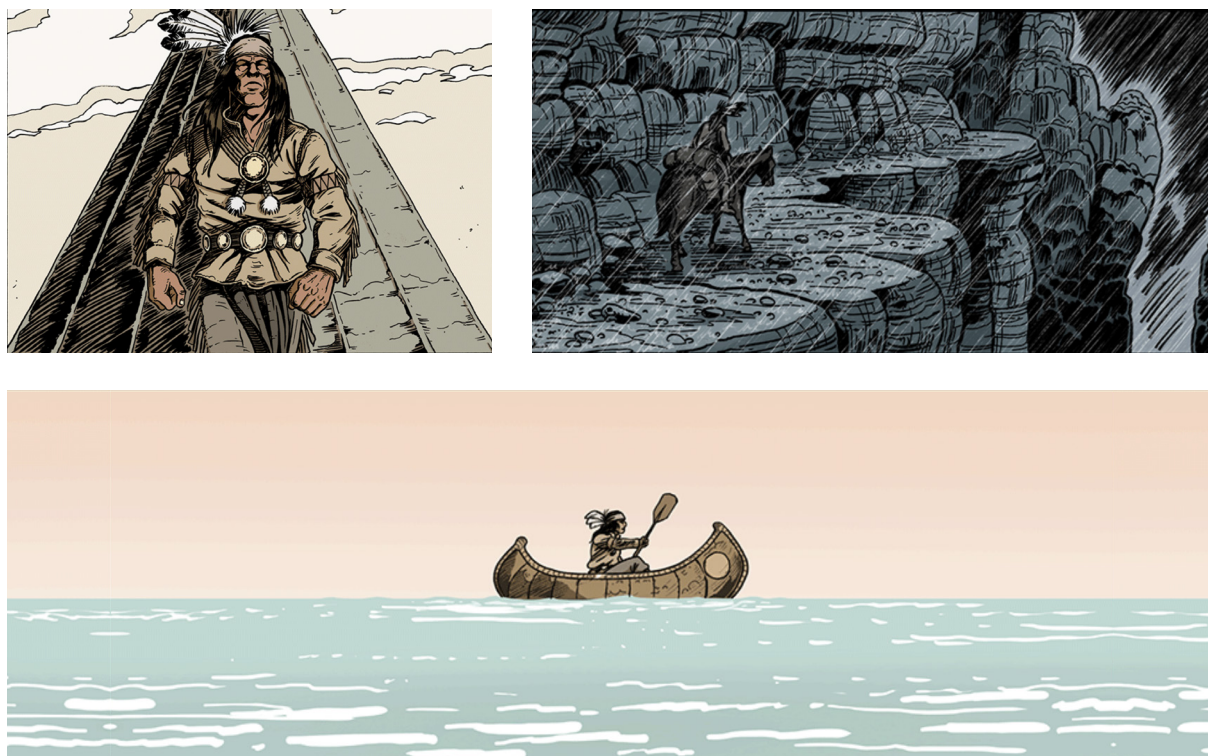


Figure 7. Frames from *Odeyseeé 2.0* (2016)

American as he goes through an arduous journey to arrive at an unknown location, which is at the end of the comic revealed to be an internet cafe where the only speech bubble is featured. A line spoken by the Native American serves as the punchline to a joke, which is based on the subversion of the readers expectations. He says (in French): “I can’t wait for the internet to be repaired at my place ... it’s a bit complicated to find WiFi ...” Regardless of whether or not this joke is enjoyed by the user, the visual language helps to subvert expectations. Other than the aforementioned references, the authors have also cited the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road* as an inspiration for the general aesthetic of the comic. This is revealed in the uses of oranges and teals as well as the aspect ratio of the panels which are reminiscent of cinema.

The panels in the comic are beautifully drawn using ink and solid colors in a similar style of the print comics from which they draw their inspiration. The animations are also very well made with incredible attention to detail showcasing talent of the authors.

One very powerful visual motif that the authors have used in creating this comic to show the transition between locations as well as the passing of time is the large vertical panels that fade between light and dark to signify a transition from night to day or a cold location to a warm location. This effect is also used to create a panoramic sense of scale in certain frames, which works magnificently. The interactive elements of the comic are almost nonexistent and the scrolling mechanism down the page is extremely user intuitive and does not at all distract from the narrative. However, the comics inspiration from movies takes a toll on the end product when it comes to the choice of using looped music to accent the narrative. The sounds begin as you log onto the website and is both a mix of foley and thematic music. As is the general consensus, music and sound effects do not belong in comics because of their temporal nature and the looping of the sounds in this instance mainly distract. The thematic music also shifts between different sections in the comic but these transitions between the music are very abrupt. This disregard for effective looping is also displayed in some panels



Figure 8 Frame from *Odeysee 2.0* (2016)



Figure 9 Static frame from *Odeysee 2.0* (2016) of a moment of action and two stills from an animated frame of the resolution of the action.

throughout the comic where the animations are more of a combination of many frames into one rather than displaying a single instance of time. This creates the effect of being a tiny video inside the larger format of a comic. In a panel where the main character picks up and looks at some berries in his hand, the authors have chosen to do a focus rack effect, which is an obvious call to the visual language of cinema and has quite a jarring effect in the comic format. By having a focus rack it is implied that the images are captured by a camera and not hand-drawn. This might work if the images were not obviously hand drawn and were instead of a more realistic nature. And so in this case, this effect is misused.

Towards the beginning of the comic the main character is riding in the mountains and is thrown off his horse. The way that the authors have chosen to depict this scene seems quite haphazard. This is because certain frames throughout the comic are chosen to be animated and others are not. However, in this instance, a moment of action, the authors have chosen to animate the resolution of the action rather than the action itself. If one were to use animation to its full extent, one would animate important parts that need attention called to them, such as moments of suspense. This was later corroborated in an interview with the authors where they admitted that they had simply animated frames without thinking of how they served the narrative. This reveals that the motivation for creating this work was more an exercise in craftsmanship rather than storytelling. The authors are very talented and enthusiastic illustrators and animators and that is what they focus on. In the interview, when asked about the choice of making the whole narrative a single punchline, the authors replied:

“The ending was the most controversial part of the project. Some of our friends, teachers and others hated it, but other people totally loved it. From our point of view, that ending made our comic ‘internet friendly’, because you can share it with your friends like a joke. Maybe a more poetic ending could be better but we love jokes, so we love that ending.” (Prieur, Malgras 2019:n.pag)

This showed once again that they were more interested in showcasing and spreading their work as animators rather than as storytellers. Finally, when asking who their target audience were, the authors replied they wanted to show any classic-comic enthusiasts who were also web-users. However, by writing the punchline of the joke in French they limited their audience severely. If the text had been written in HTML-code rather than embedding it into the frame, translations of the punchline could then automatically have been translated into whichever language the viewer spoke. He was a missed opportunity to use the available technology for the purpose of the final work.

2.4 Meandering Thoughts on the Influences on the Narrative

“Modernity, wherever it appears, does not occur without a shattering of belief, without a discovery of the lack of reality in reality.” (Lyotard 1993:9)

This statement rang true for me during my teenage years and brought on a nihilistic depression. After attempting to find meaning outwardly and finding nothing, I retreated into myself and accepting that there was no Truth with a capital ‘T’. After reading the Stoics, I decided to create my own interpretation of reality. The Stoics heavily emphasize disciplining the mind so that you can control how you interpret and process unwanted external forces. (Aurelius 1964:73) I was already nostalgically looking back at the last time life made sense and didn’t require too much thought, which was when I was much younger, maybe five. I found the easiest way to escape the adolescent depression and bring back a child-like state of mind was through wine, hashish, or LSD. These substances allowed me to, without much effort, artificially regain the lost paradise of childhood. As Aldous Huxley describes his mescaline fueled journey, he, too, finds “the eye recovers some of the perceptual innocence of childhood”. (1954:12) In this state, I discovered that many of the ideas that I had touched upon in my readings of Daoism and Buddhism were no longer ideas but were in fact concrete, in-your-face reality and had been all along. Literally seeing the depth of these eastern philosophies but finding them too complex to understand, I gained a great interest in further familiarizing myself with the various concepts within these ways of life. One of the effects of learning the way of Daoism and certain types of Buddhism is that they undo rigid cultural regulations and reveal the forces at play beneath the veil of everyday life. As a westerner, one can, and many have, fallen into the trap of trying to undo the western culture by adopting an eastern culture. This is done because the westerner links eastern tradition and cultural norms with Buddhism and Daoism, when in fact these philosophies are trying undo these cultures as well. (Watts 1957:48) So, as a westerner, I found guidance in Alan Watts, through this new and complex world of thought. In his lectures and literature, some new terms were discovered, which do not have a good corresponding word in English and are therefore referred to below in their original languages.

Duhkha: suffering, unhappiness, pain, unsatisfactoriness, stress;

Trishna: thirst, aspiration, longing, craving, or lusty desires;

Maya: the illusion of the material world, the act of conceptually separating things in ones mind;

Samsara: The eternal cycle of birth and death;

Nirvana: letting go, exhaling, enlightenment;

After learning these terms, I realized that I was caught in the ever-moving wheel of Samsara but I had not accepted that I was moving away from my childhood innocence. I was now older and thinking of myself as a separate entity from my surroundings, because my culture lacked an emphasis on the value of community and family. Not accepting that I was moving

away from my birth and towards my eventual death, I was caught in Trishna. I momentarily felt free under the influence of these newly discovered substances and many of the illusions of separation and fear of the other, Maya, was dispelled. In some instances, under the influence of LSD, the 'I' that I thought I was (and still do), disappeared completely. Here, I believe I got a taste of what Nirvana might be. However, as the drugs wore off, I would find my brain in pain and myself coughing, dehydrated, and out of breath. Whilst my mind was finding new heights, I quickly realized it was at the cost of my physical form. My body aged faster the more I experimented with these substances but my mind felt younger. I realized my enlightened state of mind was now tied to consumption of substances and I had found myself trapped, once again, in Trishna.

The depth and acuity of Daoism and Buddhism, I believe, surpass that of any other western philosophy and, as expressed by Alan Watts, it is only recently that western philosophy is catching up with what the east has known for millennia. (Watts 1957:32) Lately, I have on a basic level been studying the thoughts and ideas of Carl Jung. This is primarily because I found his theories on the collective unconscious and the archetypes fascinating and resonating with me. Secondly, I found that some of his theories, at least to the level at which I grasp them, seem to express similar thoughts as Daoism and Buddhism. Jung was, however, deeply influenced by Christianity, which means his concepts are more western and therefore connect on a deeper level with a western audience. Because of this, I intentionally attempt to implement some of the ideas on the archetypes into the finished work, elaborated on later.

2.4.1 Using Color

The use of color has been avoided in modernity, partially because it cannot be controlled. (Batchelor 2000:24) I have also felt this because color has so many complexities. A color by itself appears one way, but put it next to another color, and the original color has now changed in appearance. (Albers 1963:9) So, initially, I only used black and white when I first began with photography and illustration – this project is really my first attempt to use color intentionally. Perhaps because of my design education, I need to feel I understand why I choose to use a color and because of that, I have a need to link various colors to themes. Because our culture today seems to value objectivity over subjectivity, which to me seems impossible considering we are human beings, only when things can be quantified or made to conform with a system, are they accepted as truths. Similarly, the color spectrum is a gradient and any division or quantification is really an arbitrary one. As so eloquently put forth by Johannes Itten: “At the moment when thought, concept, formulation, touch upon color, its spell is broken, and we hold in our hands a corpse”. (1961:8) And so, the descriptions that follow in this chapter about the use of color in the final project, in a sense, ruin the goal of the final project by over-explaining in words what is attempted to be conveyed through image. This follows the paraphrasing Lao Tze’s teachings: He who knows does not speak, he who

speaks, does not know. (1996:1) This obviously says a lot about the length of this document. But I will not delve deeper into that paradox, I only suggest that experiencing the final work first and reading the uses of color in it second, is probably the most appropriate approach. Growing up in modern culture, few are religious and there seems to no longer be a grand narrative for the society, nor for oneself. However, after being exposed to stoicism through Marcus Aurelius and Seneca, a philosophy practiced by emperors and slaves alike, “if you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment”. (Aurelius 1964:201) The book *Meditations* as interpreted by my younger self into a subjective and somewhat idealistic perspective on reality, that gave me the impetus to create my own epic stories for myself and choosing to find signs and symbols in everyday life to embellish them. It is a kind of carefully allowing oneself to build a parallel reality, of apprehensively flirting with a controlled psychosis. In this designed reality, there *is* a flow of energy and consciousness and overarching themes *do* still exist. One of the main symbolisms I have chosen is color. The reason being that as an effective method of creating this parallel reality, I had been experimentation with LSD. And under the influence of these substances, very often the room I would be inside of would be flooded with a soft sourceless magenta light. I was seemingly bathing in a magenta fog. The recurrence of this phenomenon intrigued me. Why that color of all colors? This led me down a path of attempting to understand magenta as it pertains to my life. And this, in turn, led me to find and create meanings for magentas constituents, red and blue. Interestingly, throughout western culture, intense color perception is itself linked with both intoxication and the child-like perception. Therefore, using color to represent my attempts at reliving child-like wonder by experimenting with various psychoactive substances, is a visual symbol that the intended western audience is familiar with.

The use of color in this project is then an attempt to use it both expressionally and constructionally by attempting to create an essence for different colors within the realm of the narrative. (Itten 1961:12) Because the visual literacy of the audience is probably less based on analysis but rather on repetition (Howells, Negreiros 2012:2), the essence of the different colors in the story are created by relying on the audiences previous interactions with them but also through repeating certain colors throughout the narrative in relation with plot events or reoccurring themes.

It is important, before continuing further in this research, to make clear that the colors used for the final project are only produced by a screen, which means that all color used is additive. The color that was observed in the hallucinations was, if anything, also perceived as additive light. Although magenta is a distinct dye in the subtractive color space, the color of the magenta dye is the best approximation of what was observed. That is to say the color that appeared is best represented in the CMYK color space of this printed document as:

C,M,Y,K: (0, 100, 0, 0)

In additive color space of the screen and as web related code:

R,G,B: (255, 0, 255)

Hex triplet: #FF00FF

Because of this, that color is referred to as magenta in this document.

2.4.2 Blue, Green, Red, and Magenta in Nature

Although “there is no evidence to suggest a one-to-one relationship between a given color and a given emotion” (Tofle et al 2004:5), this has not stopped artists throughout time from linking colors with emotions and themes. These links are probably primarily a cultural phenomenon influenced by ‘social facts’ at the time of the artists. (Kromm, Benforado Bakewell 2010:10) However, to what extent these associations of color is *only* a cultural phenomenon is still not fully understood. One could argue that, although some social facts do change over time, these facts are also predicated upon natural forces outside of social control e.g. famines or floods. Secondly, the social facts that influence the artists are also heavily influenced by human psychology, a topic which is still heavily contested and itself a product of evolution. (Gombrich 1960:8) One mode of thinking that could potentially shed some light on this conundrum, is the Jungian approach of finding commonalities between appearances of color throughout time and space so as to hopefully find some archetypal ‘essence’ of a color. When following this trail of thought, being highly aware of one’s own biases is paramount and also very difficult. Therefore, I preface this section with the words: this work is created by and for a western audience and does not, and probably cannot, seek universality (Mirzoeff 2001:4) and is fully embracing its inescapable subjectivity. Having said that, perhaps a way to sketch out some sort of essence for a color is to begin by looking at what perception of a certain color is and also in what instances colors make an appearance in nature (in ‘acultural’ instances so to speak). This listing of instances of color appearing in the natural and biological world is a very rudimentary one and does not claim to state every instances of color. Rather, it is an attempt to list instances of color that many people, and in some instances all people, have had contact with. Only the colors relevant to this project are talked about in-depth in this chapter.

2.4.2.1 Blue in Nature

Blue never appears as a pigment in organisms. When it does appear it is only through refractive surfaces, such as the wings of the *Morpho Minelaus* butterfly. (National Geographic 2019) In nature, however, the day sky appears as a light shade of blue. Specifically, the morning sky often has a characteristically blue light. Morning light is something that our brains are very sensitive to. This will be further elaborated on in the coming sections. Consequently, Blue also appears at sea, where large quantities of water, in reflection of the sky, create blue hues.

2.4.2.2 Green in Nature

Green is the color of chlorophyll, the compound that aides in the transformation of sunlight into sugar. The proof of the effectiveness of this fantastic way of creating sustenance can be seen all around because plants are still very green. Interestingly, human eyes can detect more shades and nuances of green than any other color. Scientists believe this to be an evolved trait as a result of humans and our ancestors living in foliage heavy surroundings.

2.4.2.3 Red in Nature

Red appears in many places throughout the natural world and contrasts strongly with green foliage. One of the most obvious instances of red is in the plant kingdom. During spring and summer, plants grow their sexual organs, flowers, and expose them so that pollinators, attracted by the sugary nectar that the flower advertises with its bold colors, complete the plants reproduction. After pollination, the flower withers and grows seed filled fruit. In fruit and berries, red often signifies sweetness to animals, where, for example, the more red pigment an apple displays, the more ripe the apple is, and the more sugar it contains. Letting animals know that their berries and fruit are sweet and good to eat is fundamental to plant's reproductive cycle. So then, plants create red pigments in their reproductive organs, which links red to a sexual activity. However, to the pollinators and the consumers of the plant's fruit, red signifies sugar. Red in trees also makes a striking appearance during autumn, when its leaves, before they fall to the ground, turn bright yellow, orange, and red. This end of the warm season and the tree's dramatic transformation come to us as a sort of death. Sometimes, however, animals such as the lady bug have evolved red pigments in their shell to signify to potential predators that they contain poison and are not worth eating. This is also a factor for humans, where some red berries are delicious, while other red berries are poisonous to us and, in some instances, could even mean death. This brings another interesting twist to the color red in plants as it pertains to humans. In reference to Paracelsus maxim: "dosage alone makes it so a thing is not a poison", as humans have known for a long time, if one ingests the right amount of poison the poison does not kill but intoxicates. A great example of this is the Fly Agaric, the classically red mushroom with white dots, which is quite poisonous but has in many cultures, where it grows around the world, been eaten for intoxication.

In the human body, red is the color of blood. When one sees blood, a striking crimson red, it is in instances of injury or death, either of oneself, in which case it is a traumatic experience, or in an enemy, in which case it is violent, yes, but a sign of victory. It also, of course, signifies injury to an animal, perhaps prey, in which case red signifies food. Red, also makes an appearance in our sexual organs, where blood rushes in during copulation. Red in the cheeks and in the lips show potential mates that one is healthy and fit. In these instances red, again, has similar meanings as in the plant world. In the instances where red is a sign of intoxication,

sex, or sweetness, red is a signifier to our brains, that contained in the red object are releasing agents for high amounts of dopamine and serotonin. Finally, red makes a fundamental appearance in fire. Fire, being one of humans revolutionary technologies, can warm ones body through cold winters, cook food, and, when out of control, kill and destroy leaving burnt blackness. And so, an interesting dichotomy of the color red emerges.

2.4.2.4 Magenta in Nature

Magenta, like blue, rarely makes an appearance in biology. Magenta does appear in some flowers and briefly makes an appearance right after sunset, during twilight. However, it is very faint. Consequently, magenta appears to be a very unnatural color.

2.4.3 Blue, Green, Red, and Magenta in Culture

The references used in this section are mainly traditionally western, but as the west continues to become more exposed to the globalized world, some uses of color from other cultures have seeped in. These instances where color conveys meaning are not universal and are only chosen because they fit in with the already established themes in the final work.

A few of the references here are biblical and Christian in nature. That is not to say that this work itself is Christian, but rather that it is created in a society heavily immersed in Christian symbolism. The prevalence of this symbolism has resulted in it effectively hiding in plain sight. Secondly, Christianity is an incorporation of earlier pre-Christian symbolisms and themes and so some of these symbols are arguably much older than Christianity. Thirdly, when Christianity spread through Europe, like any religion, it merged and morphed to accommodate the already established traditions and beliefs of the people who lived there. Therefore, the use of Christian color symbolism in the finished work is an appropriate choice, since the intended audience is familiar with it and intuitively understands it.

2.4.3.1 Blue in Culture

When the sun rises in the morning emerging victoriously from its battle with the dark, the sky lights up in a distinct blue light. (Peterson 2017) Our eyes are sensitive to this blue light because it tells our brains that we are seeing the light of the morning sky. This has been determined as a result of studies on the effects of people viewing their screens at night. Screens emit a blueish light, that our brains correlate with morning light. This has the side-effect of our circadian rhythm getting confused. The brain, subconsciously believing the blue light to come from the morning sky, wakes the body up, making it harder for us to fall asleep. (Bhatt 2012:n.Pag) This is an example of how blue light has deep psychological links to the morning. The morning is arguably a symbolic rebirth, as the new day is also a new life. This

is echoed in Christian symbolism where blue is the color that drapes Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. Mary is arguably an archetype of the mother. (Peterson 2017) What also makes this connection between the color blue and the archetypal mother is that etymologically, the name Mary has its roots in the Latin word for sea, *mare*. (Watts 1966:28) The sea, as previously stated, is one of the most obvious occurrences of strong blue color in nature. Furthermore, biologists theorize that all life on the planet finds its cradle in the ocean. This gives further credence to blue as relating to the maternal. The maternal is itself inherently connected to birth, fertility, and childhood. And so blue water brings new life. This link is also reverberated in modern culture, where baby boys are dressed in light blue, or baby-blue.

Since humans began living agriculturally, survival has been heavily predicated on access to water. Crops do not grow on arid land and so sources of fresh water have been fundamental. One very obvious source of fresh water is rain. Probably because rain seems to just appear out of nowhere and fall out of the sky, impregnate the soil and sprout food, rain has long been viewed as the seed of God. (Allegro 1970:24) An example of this is the conception of Perseus in Greek mythology where Zeus impregnates Danaë with golden rain. The biblical garden of Eden, the mythological utopia in which the first humans lived, when studied etymologically, vaguely means the ‘well-watered lands’. (Cohen 2011:228) Again, one could argue that this has some scientific backing in the sense that archaeologists believe the first humans to have evolved in sub-Saharan Africa, a well-watered place.

2.4.3.2 Green in Culture

Rain-forests, drenched in water are, however, not blue, but green. This eloquently describes the basis of life (which if it were to be given a color would be green) necessitates there first being water, blue. Green is the color that the human eye can see the best. It lets us know that vegetables are fresh and healthy. This is making a big comeback in marketing and advertisement in modern culture where green signifies to consumers that a product is healthy, eco-friendly, and natural.

2.4.3.3 Red in Culture

In 1969, when studying the stages of naming of color within a culture’s language, Brent Berlin and Paul Kay discovered that first a language divides colors into light and dark. If a culture has three names for distinctions of color, the third identification of color is red (Kay, Berlin 1969:2) Red appears to have great impact in human culture. Arguably the reason for this is the instances of red appearing in nature that seem to share a similar dichotomous essence of both representing reproduction/intoxication on one side and on the other, death. Red in modern culture is often used in branding for fast food like McDonald’s as well as representing lust and romantic love. Red is consequently both associated with adult

entertainment and sin, arguably this shared use of red could have something to do with western cultures Christian view on premarital sex. Reds link with sin, could be because red is the color of fire and then also the inferno, linking red with Satan.

Ancient cultures anthropomorphized the sunset as a sexual act. Especially when the sun sets into the sea, the reddening of the sky was interpreted as the swelling of the celestial penis as it penetrated the blue sea. (Allegro 1970:24) The links here with the biblical conception of Jesus is quite obvious when considering that Mary was represented in the color blue.

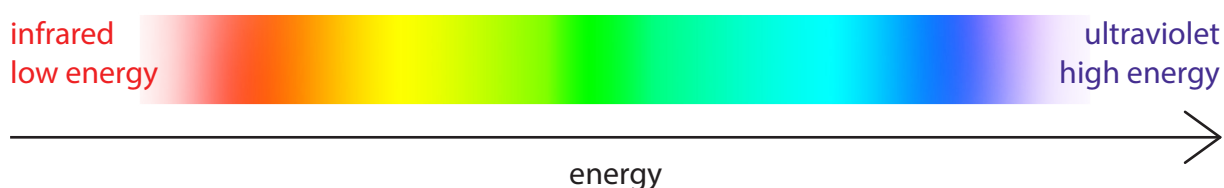
2.4.3.4 Magenta in Culture

Magenta and purple has long been associated with royalty in western culture dating back ancient Phoenicians. (Seneca 2019:81) This was due to the extremely expensive dye, called Tyrian Purple, that came from Lebanon as a result of a very labor intense process of extracting the dye form snails. Magenta, existing on the opposite side of green in the color wheel means it heavily contrasts in natural environments. This unnaturalness of magenta is echoed in modern culture, where photography that uses magenta lighting immediately creates the sensation of artificiality. Other than artificiality, magenta also has an air of transcendence and unearthliness. This is arguably reverberated in Hindu culture where the highest ‘chakra’, representing ultimate spiritual enlightenment, is depicted as magenta. (Judith 1996:306) Magenta is also a common color used in psychedelic art perhaps as a result of people intoxicated with hallucinogens claiming to see magenta around them. The Interesting properties of magenta as light is elaborated on in the coming section, which lends some perspective as to why perhaps the artificial and transcendental essence of magenta in culture might have a metaphysical basis.

2.4.4 Light, Color and The Eye

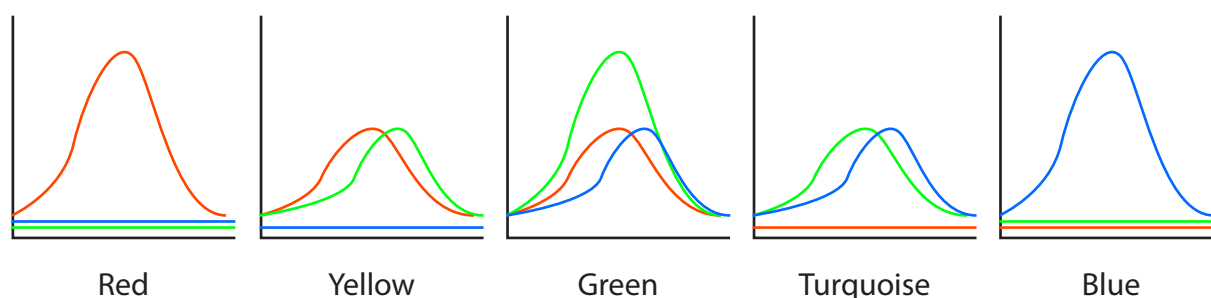
Humans are a highly visual creature. The primary way in which humans perceive the world is through the eyes. Because this project relies solely on visual perception to convey its meanings, it is pertinent to familiarize oneself with the organ with which the visual is created. The eye perceives electromagnetic energy to create a visual interpretation of the world. However, the eye is only capable of perceiving a sliver of the electromagnetic spectrum. This small portion of the spectrum is what is called the visible spectrum. On either side of the

Figure 10. The visible light spectrum



visible spectrum, the electromagnetic waves are invisible to humans. The color red, contains the least amount of energy and blue contains the highest amount of energy. The eye perceives light through cones and rods. Rods primarily perceive light as either light or dark. Cones are what perceives color. There are three types of cones in the eye and they each perceive different portions of frequency of light that constitute the visible spectrum. The red cone, perceives the low energy light, that we call red. The green cone, perceives the medium level

Figure 11

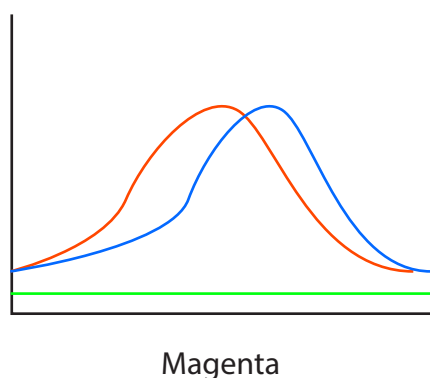
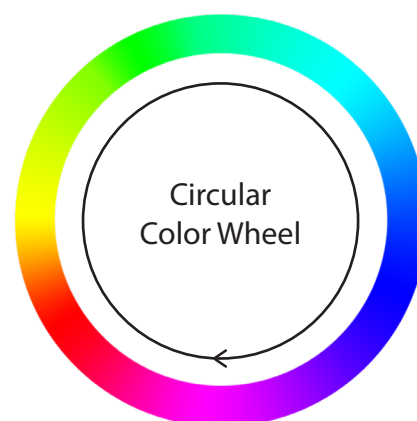


energy, which we call green. Finally, the highest form of light energy that the eye can perceive is blue and is perceived by the blue cones in the eye. Above, is a highly simplified collection of graphs that represent what cones are activated when perceiving different colors of light.

When red is perceived, only the red cone is activated.

When yellow is perceived, some red and some green cones are activated. When green is perceived, all cones are activated with the green cone being most activated.

This is because green is in the middle of the visible spectrum and so both blue and red are also a little activated. This has the result that green is the color which the eye can see most nuances of. When the eye perceives turquoise, some green and some blue cones are activated. Finally, when blue is perceived, the blue cone is activated. The electromagnetic spectrum is linear. That is to say it goes from zero energy to infinite energy in a single direction. However, the way in which the visible color spectrum, a small portion of the linear electromagnetic spectrum, is commonly displayed as a loop. The only way in which this linear spectrum can be closed into a loop is by inventing a new color: magenta. Magenta arises when red light is mixed with blue light. As displayed in the previous graphs, when the red and blue cones in the eye are activated, the green cone should also activate, because green light is in between



low energy (red) and high energy (blue). However, when the red and blue cone are activated, but the green cone does not activate, the mind creates a new color, which it in fact does not directly perceive. This color is magenta. (Itten 1961:15) An interesting example of where this is apparent is that magenta never appears in rainbows. Magenta does then really only exist inside the mind, giving it a metaphysical quality.

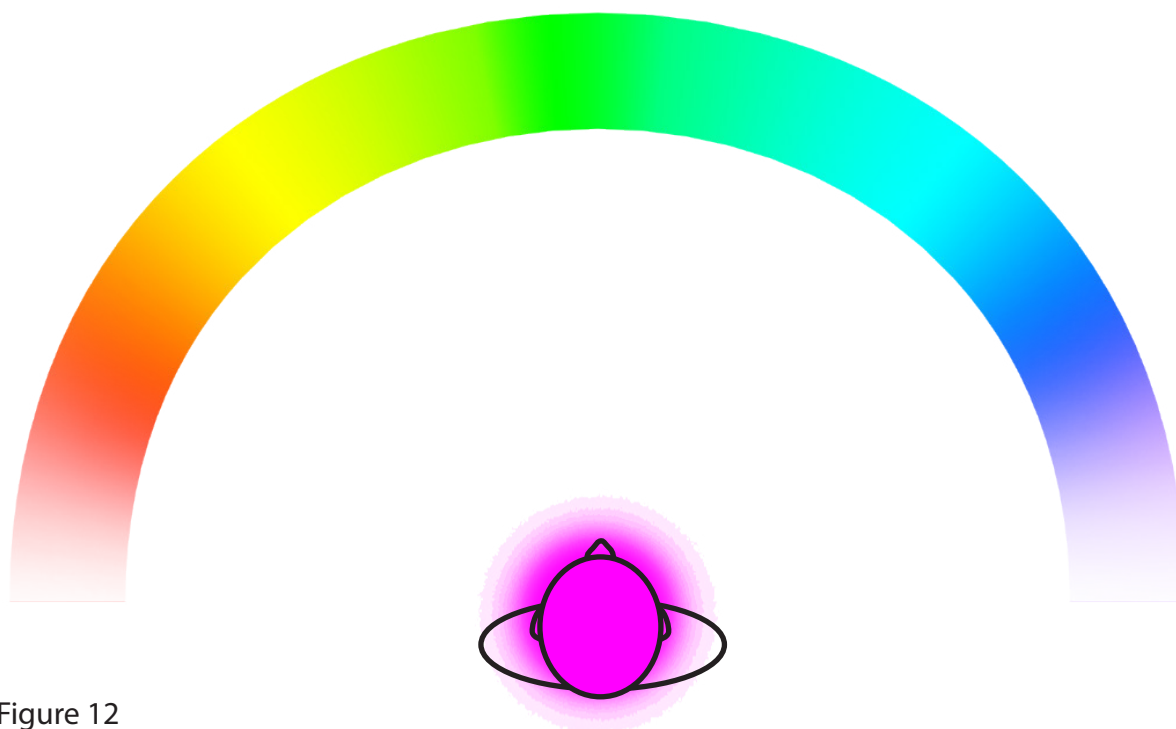


Figure 12

2.4.5 The Screen and Additive Color

Liquid crystal display (LCD) and organic light emitting diode (OLED) are the most ubiquitous screen technologies in today's phones, computers, and TV screens. OLED screens provide better contrast than LCD, but other than that they do not differ much in their image quality. This is because at their core, these two technologies use the same principles. Screens are composed of pixels, which are in turn composed of red, blue, and green subsegments. These subsegments can either be turned off, on, or somewhere in between to create millions of variations of colors. The choice of colors for the pixel-subsegments correspond to the cones that exist in the human eye. Combinations of either red, green, or blue light are combined together to make all the different colors that we see on our screens. This type of color is called additive color, as opposed to subtractive color in print. This difference is quite fundamental to how color is created as it has different primary colors than subtractive color. In

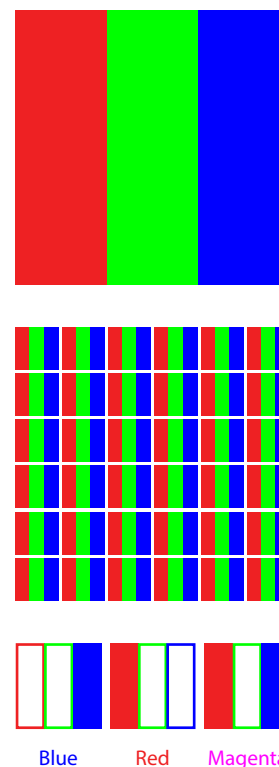


Figure 13

additive color theory, red, green, and blue are the primary colors. This means that in the final project, which only exists on screen (additive color) and never in print (subtractive color), just additive color theory applies. Because the main colors of the final project are blue, red, and magenta, understanding how they are created on screen is quite important. Red, being a primary color and having its own subsegment in the pixel, shines pure and true red. Blue, also primary and existing as a subsegment, also shines true blue. Magenta, however, does not have its own subsegment in the pixels and is instead created by shining both the red and blue subsegments simultaneously. This means that when the screen is completely magenta, it is actually not. Rather, it is shining red and blue. This technical aspect of how color is created on screen resonates with the thematic implications that will be further elaborated on in this document.

2.5 Constraints

There are quite a number of constraints that exist in the development of this work. Perhaps the most prominent limitation is the lack of knowledge in web design and coding by the author. Although a very interesting subject, which with due consideration could elevate the final work to new heights, there simply is not enough time to both deepen the understanding in the visual and learn to code at a sufficient level. This is perhaps quite revealing of the underlying reason of the state of today's web-comics. The producers of web-comics are often more interested in the story being told or the artistry of the frames than interested in the technicalities of HTML coding. This constraint is overcome by using website templates that allow one to easily drag and drop images into it and add a few simple web-based effects. However, this use of ready-made, unspecialized templates directly impact the extent to which one can create interesting compositions of image-frames, something fundamental when creating narrative, themes, and mood. The reason why creating these compositions are made even more complex on a website than on any other medium for comics is that web-design needs to be responsive to the size and dimensions of the screen of the device that is displaying it. This issue in the relationship between image-frame composition and responsiveness has yet to be resolved and will most likely result in simplified layouts, meaning more focus on the images within the frames rather than the composition of the frames themselves. Finally, there is an argument to be made for the maxim "bigger is better" in regards to the size of the screen. With the rise of smartphone use, the small display poses a large hurdle to the attractiveness of reading a screen-based comic. This is because although, as Netflix reports, a lot of their content is viewed on a smartphone, movies are generally still more attractive when viewed on a larger screen, such as on a laptop or a TV. (Kafka 2018:n.pag) Convincing a viewer that they should give the same amount of visual real-estate and time to a comic as they would to a film is quite difficult. All of these factors mentioned above are limiting but one can still achieve some level of originality in the approach to storytelling in this new medium. Another positive side effect

of this is that restrictions can often force artists to push media and available technology in new directions and to previously unimagined heights.

Related to this is the extent to which broadband capabilities, HTML-based websites, and online-image technology have advanced. These fundamental technologies are what first made internet-based comics possible but they still have their limitations. One such technology that has provided creators with new possibilities is Graphics Interchange Format, more commonly known as GIF files. This format allows one to create very small files of sequential images, that enables creators to make stand alone animations and can incorporate them into web-comics. The utility of GIF images lies in their small file size, but this is at the cost of the amount of colors that can be displayed in them – 256 different colors in a single file. Considering that sRGB, the standard color space for the internet, contains 16.7 million different colors, GIFs are quite limited in comparison. This means that high definition GIFs have problems with color accuracy and gradients, which require smooth transition between colors. GIFs can increase in file size, something to be avoided at all costs in web-based graphics, when they are in high definition or contain too many frames. And so, when GIFs are used, they need to have short animated loop and an economical use of color, in order to maintain image quality and reduce file size. The fast looping movements of GIFs is also highly eye-catching and should not be used too much, so the viewer is not over-loaded with visual stimuli – unless, of course, that is an intended effect.

Because the final project is a visual narrative, it was quickly apparent that to focus solely on the visual and not the field of narrative would be a mistake. Therefore, researching the narrative itself was equally as important for the success of the project. Through this research on storytelling, and ultimately finding examples of successful and less successful attempts, it seemed that the fundamentals to great storytelling, especially visually, is making all creative decisions to enhance the core themes, motifs, and goals of the narrative. By never being carried away with superficiality, the tone of the project in its totality will be more succinct. After having come to this realization, it was more important than ever to return to the narrative itself before attempting to create any visuals for it. And so, only once the fundamental concepts of the story were determined, could they be translated into the visual realm. This revealed the second major fundamental constraint of this project.

The second constraint that surfaced over the course of the preliminary research is the extent to which one can deepen one's understanding in the various fields within philosophy. The narrative of the finished work attempts to convey a personal journey from childhood through adolescence and into young adulthood, with the various concepts and states of mind that one comes into contact within this journey. Although the story is based on a personal one, the general human themes of the story are not unique and have been explored since time immemorial. And so, reading various philosophies, primarily Stoic and Buddhist ones, one comes to the realization that the problems aren't new and neither are the proposed solutions to them. These lessons have come down as legends and myths and have been immortalized

as archetypes. Learning this is humbling because these concepts are much too complex to understand at face-value and perhaps even too complex to understand in a single life time, let alone by a young design student.

To reiterate: the effectiveness of visuals that create the narrative are constrained by how well one understands the fundamentals of the narrative. The narrative is in turn constrained by the depths of ones understanding of the underlying philosophical quandaries that the narrative seeks to explore, which is by no means claimed to be fully resolved here.

This only leaves one to remix and rehash age-old concepts into a new version of the same general story, but, more importantly, to retell this story in a new way by using web-based animated and static sequential imagery.

2.6 Visual Cultural References

The final work that is produced relies solely on conveying its meanings and ideas through visual means. Arguably, this brings a universality to the work because it does not rely on a specific literal language to convey its message. It does, however, rely on a visual language. Because of this, referencing the appropriate and familiar signs and compositions helps to mediate the ideas and themes of the project to a larger audience than would be possible through text.

However, because both the narrative and the images are created by a European, and consequently created through a European perspective, trying to claim (and perhaps even attempt) a total universality would be a misguided endeavor. Understanding this, the images and works that are used as references for the work are carefully chosen because they are well established works within western culture. These referenced images have, to various extents, had significant impact in popular visual culture and consequently have a firm place in the minds of the intended western audience.

These visual references are sourced from various, primarily western, works spanning from 15th century paintings until present day TV series. These works are mainly sourced from film, photography, modern comics, and classical paintings. This is because they are geographically, temporally, and technologically nearest to the finished prototype.

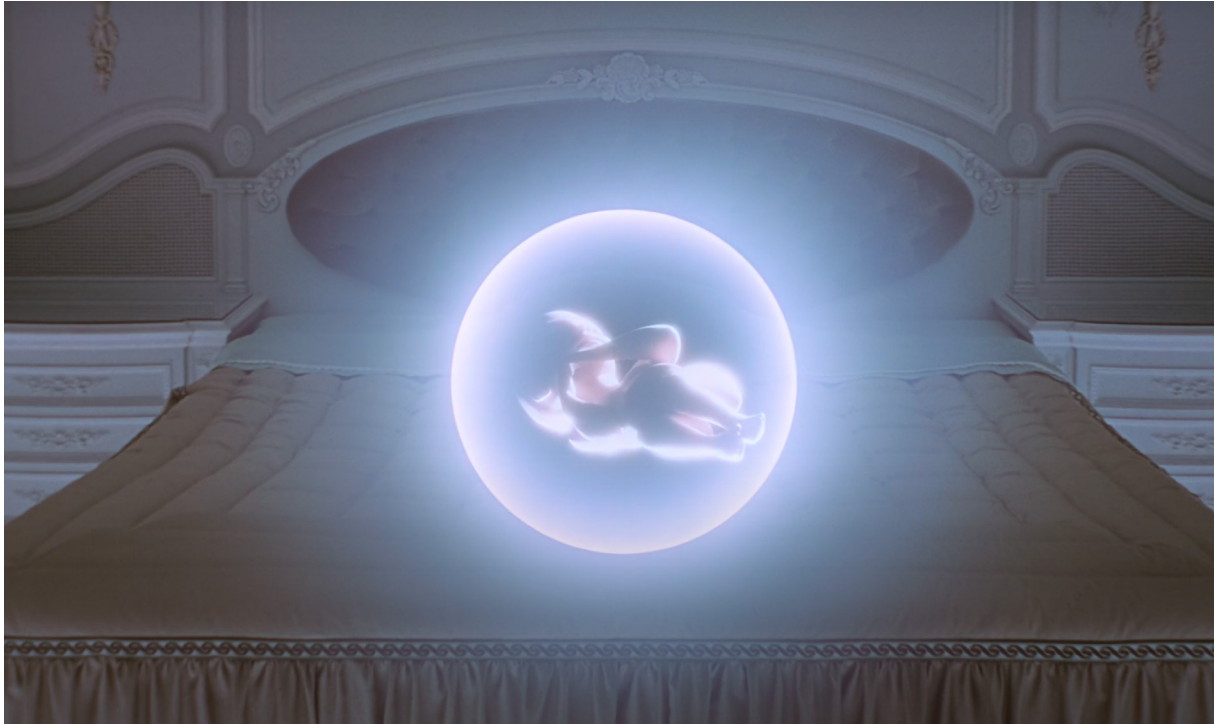


Figure 14.
Kubrick, Stanley(1968), *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick Productions & first frame in finished work.

As can be seen in Figure 14 above, the final scene in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* was the direct inspiration for the opening frame of the work. Like in the film, the baby is back-lit, in-utero, and slowly rotating. This image is perhaps more famous than the film it comes from and has been referenced many times in other works. This is probably because of its powerful, transcendent and archetypal nature. When this image is referenced in the finished work the color of the frame was changed from blue to red in order to fit the themes and visual language of the final narrative.

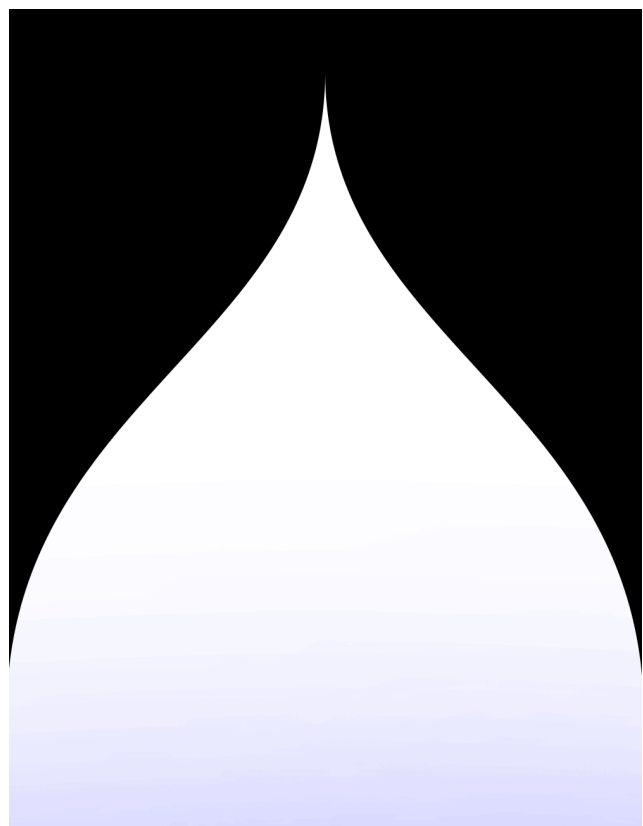


Figure 15.

Illustration of Parting Curtains, (1981) *For Your Eyes Only* Poster, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and frame of the finished work.

Parting curtains is a visual motif that comes from stage plays and was later applied to cinemas, working as a visual queue that let the audience know that the performance or film is about to begin. I believe the parting of the curtains has some fundamental visual connotations to the parting of the labia during child-birth. In the work the story begins with the dark background of the womb opening up to reveal the world. An interesting accident that arose by the implied silhouetted legs part to become the borders of the website is the suggestion that the whole narrative takes place in between a woman's legs.

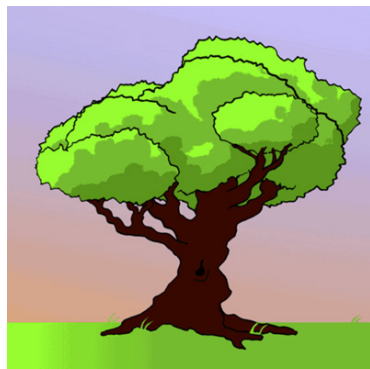


Figure 16.

Vecellio, Tiziano (1550) *The Fall of Man*, Madrid, Museum of Prado. Frame of the finished work.

The Garden of Eden imagery in the beginning frames of the final work are hopefully quite clear as the archetypal parents of the child are always silhouetted and placed in an idyllic natural space with a vivid tree and other flora. This also hopefully gives attentive viewers a hint as to who the welcoming friend of the child could be.

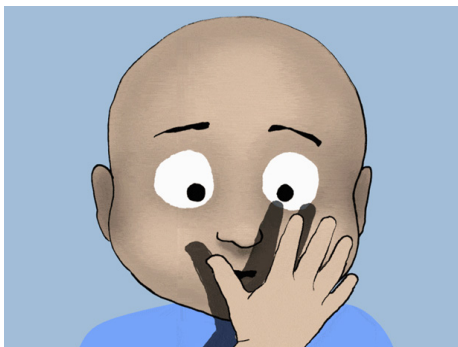


Figure 17.
Lang, Fritz (1927), *Metropolis*, Universum Film. and frame from the finished work.

In the figure 17 there is a still from the 1927 film *Metropolis*, which was a partial inspiration for the frame where the child is looking at his own hand. What this frame also seeks to represent is a part of the developmental stage in a human being when a child begins to recognize him/herself. This self realization is further emphasized by the fact that the hand casts a shadow on the baby's face, a nod to Plato's cave allegory. This is an attempt to convey the beginning stage of one creating both an identity and a definition for oneself. This is to say: by defining, one inherently has to divided the world into 'what is me' and 'what is not me'. This division is reinforced by society as one grows up. However, the definitions are arbitrary, but this is often forgotten. This slow descent into rigid definition, I believe, is where the end of childhood and the source of a lot of angst begin.

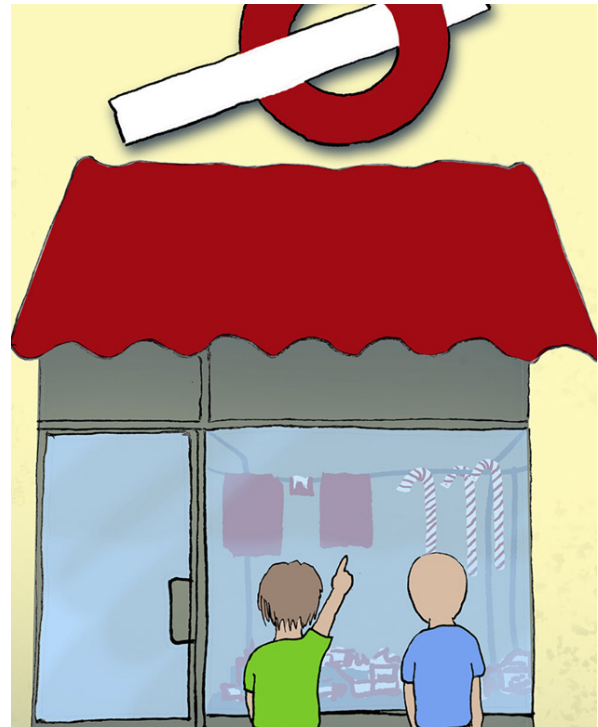


Figure 18.
Photo of Viennese Tobacco store and frame from the finished work.

The tobacco store in the finished work is inspired by the tobacco stores of Vienna, Austria. This is a reflection of my own childhood in that city. The unmistakable logo of the tobacco stores there allows me to signify what the store is without having to use letters. The suggestive nature of this symbol also helped reinforce the theme of the narrative. Leaving the cigarette symbol half out of the frame is a way to suggest how this does not yet exist in the mind of the character at this time of the story and is, instead, a foreshadowing of things to come. As a child one goes to the tobacco store to buy candy, and later this evolves into going to the same store to buy cigarettes, and explicit magazines. What all these different products have in common is that they can often manifest addiction. And so the store is a store of vices.

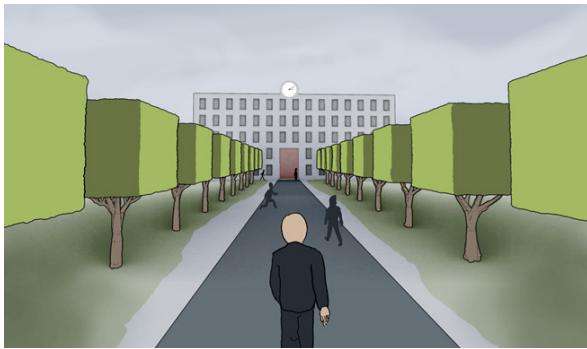


Figure 19.
Still from Kubrick, Stanley(1980), *The Shining*, Stanley Kubrick Productions. and frame from the finished work.

The central and symmetrical framing, of which Stanley Kubrick is famous for using throughout his filmography, fit well in the ‘conforming’ part of the narrative where the child is introduced and defined by his society. The square, being the primary shape used in this part of the finished work is emphasized by square framing where leading lines of a room direct the eye to a central point. This is also reflected in the 1:1 aspect ratio that gets tighter and tighter around the character within this portion of the story, emphasizing the rigidity of the square as a ‘defining’ and ‘dividing’ structure.

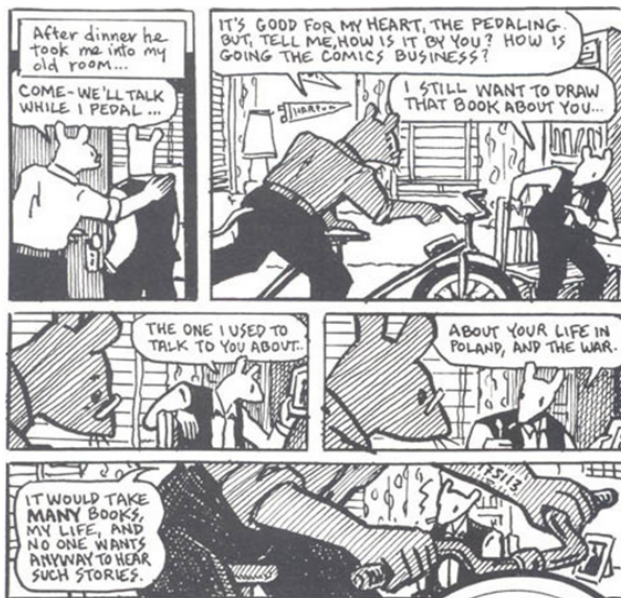


Figure 20.

Brown, Clarence (1931), *Possessed*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. and Spiegelman, Art (1991), *Maus*, Pantheon Books. and frame from the finished work.

This scene from *Possession*, which works as a sort of meta-commentary on cinema itself, really intrigued me and fit quite perfectly into the subway scene of the finished work. Although the original scene is about cinema, both graphically and thematically, it applies very well onto the comic visual language and the intrigue of characters walking from frame to frame within the finished work. This also worked well in the finished work as another manifestation of the theme: trying to run but ultimately not getting anywhere; caught in a loop.

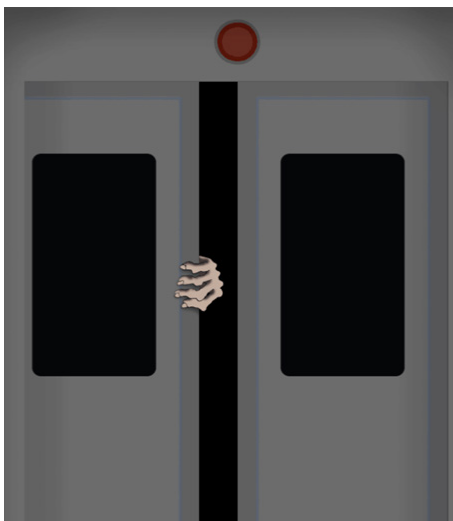


Figure 21.

Murnau, F.W(1922), *Nosferatu*, Prana Film. and Gilden, Bruce(2017), *Only God Can Judge Me* and frame from finished work.

The drunk character inside the subway scene is introduced first via his hands. The use of long-fingered hands to emphasize an eerie feeling in the viewer finds its source in the 1922 film *Nosferatu*. Both the hands and the way in which the character is introduced through the doorway were directly taken from this famous film. The portraiture featured in Bruce Gilden's work *Only God Can Judge Me* was the source of inspiration for the drunk face on the train.

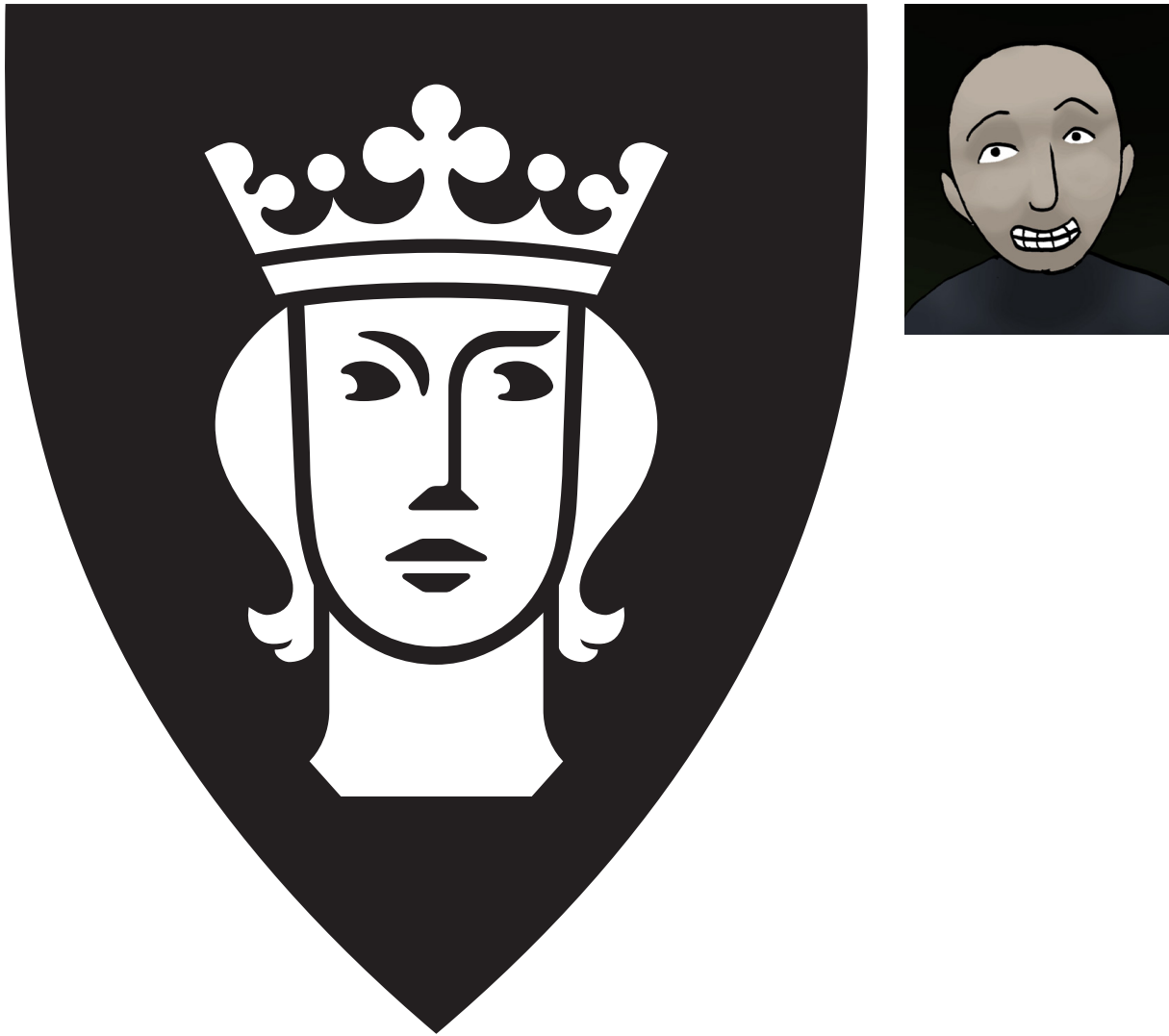


Figure 22.
Stockholm city logo and frame from finished work.

The face of the main character was partially inspired by the logo of Stockholm city, which is a simplified portrait of St. Erik, also called Eric IX of Sweden. He was a king who ruled Sweden between 1156 and 1160. However, the inspiration is purely visual, as I have been exposed to this face since I was young, and it has no thematic meaning. The main features that have inspired the main character's face are how the nose is created from a single line that then connects to the left eyebrow. The simplicity of this characteristic was the attraction. Also the simplicity with which the jaw is drawn is also a source of inspiration. This helped the main character to have a very simple but distinct face that differentiates it from other characters, is quick to draw, and is plain enough to allow readers to identify with it.



Figure 23.

Witchowski, Lana and Lilly (1999), *The Matrix*, Warner Bros. and frame from finished work.

Drawing the drug dealer as the actor Laurence Fishbourne portraying the character Morpheus in the 1999 film *The Matrix* worked well because of the famous scene where he offers Neo to either take the blue or red pill. This is probably one of the most obvious references in the finished work but fits well both visually and thematically on many levels. Morpheus being the god of dreams in Greek mythology ties well into the drug dealer being the character from which one can buy intoxicants. Secondly, the idea of a virtual reality in the movie and the same idea in the finished work are both revealed to the main character by the help of Morpheus's pill.

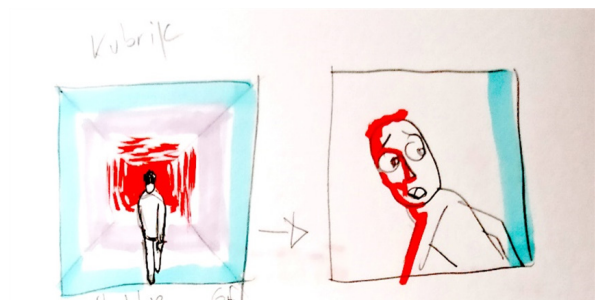


Figure 24.

Kubrick, Stanley(1999), *Eyes Wide Shut*, Warner Bros. and Stanley Kubrick Productions. and a sketch for the finished work.

The whole of the finished work finds a very large part of its use of light and color from the cinematography of the 1999 film *Eyes Wide Shut*, where both red and blue light play a very large part in displaying different themes and states of mind. A great example of this is how the bloomy light of the neon ‘Sonata jazz’ sign bathes the room in a single color. This was incorporated into the bar scene in the finished work, but the sign is instead red, serving the established connection between color and theme.



Figure 25
Kubrick, Stanley (1972), *A Clockwork Orange*, Warner Bros. and a sketch for the finished work.

The famous 'Kubrick stare' and specifically the three 'droogs' sitting in the bar became a good reference for the intimidating looks of the characters in the bar scene towards the end of the story. Again, Kubrick's powerful imagery works as great reference material both because viewers are familiar with it but also because the images have a guttural impact regardless of context.

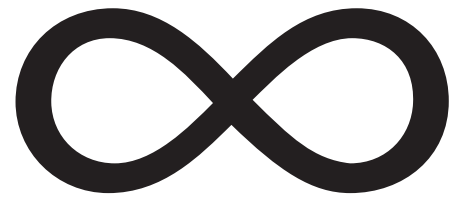


Figure 26.

Symbols of the Eight fold path on Buddhist temple in Tibet and Oldest representation of the Ouroboros in Egyptian relief and Symbol for infinity and a frame from the finished work.

A subtle reference to Buddhist symbolism is displayed by the clock in the classroom, which has eight increments instead of twelve. The number eight is important in Buddhism as it is the number of steps in the Eight-Fold Path. The symbol for the number eight, turned on its side, is also a symbol for infinity and commonly found in the ouroboros, again tying in with the endless time motif and the paradoxical themes of the story. Secondly, it also accentuates how slow time seems to move when the main character waits for the end of an unengaging class.

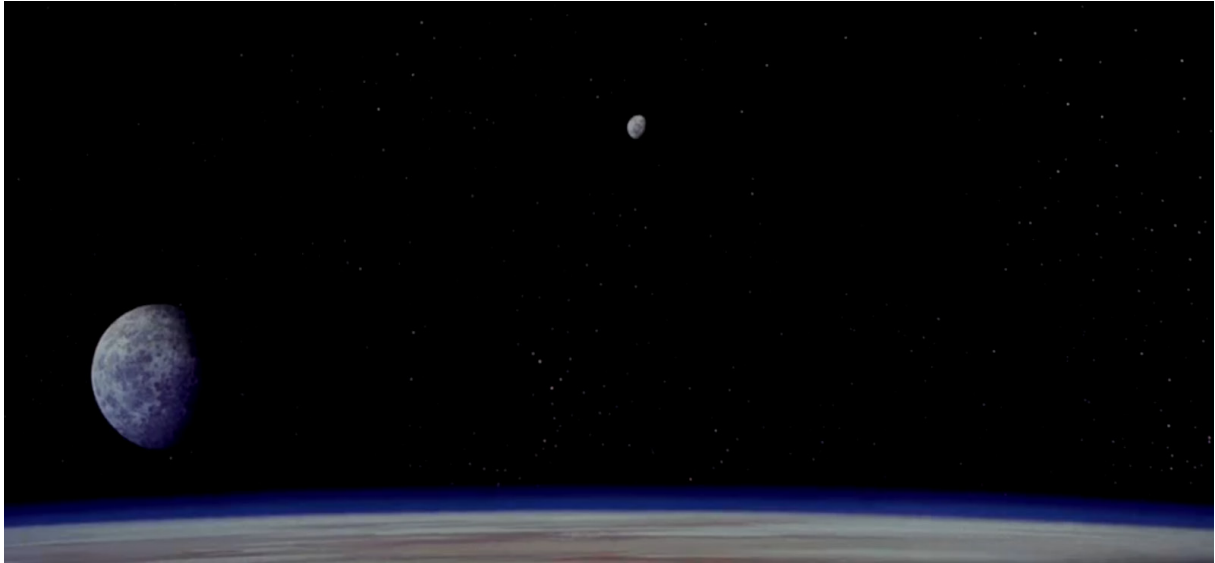


Figure 27.

Lucas, George (1977) *Star Wars - A New Hope*, 20th Century Fox and frame from finished work.

The reveal of the apartment complex in the finished work has some visual links to how the shape of the spaceships are only defined by their giant silhouettes blotting out the stars as they pass in the Star Wars films. Secondly it references how the setting of scenes are established on a planetary scale by panning the camera in space and eventually landing on a planet.

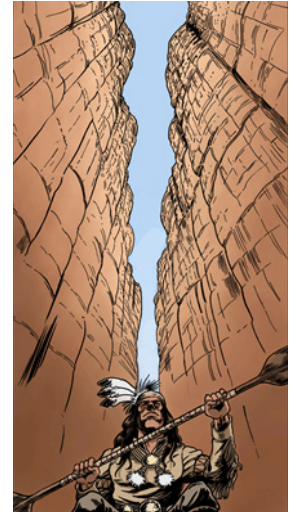


Figure 28.

Hitchcock, Alfred (1954) *Rear Window*, Paramount Studios. and Alfredson, Thomas (2011) *Tinker Taylor Soldier Spy*, Studio Canal. Prieur, Camille and Malgras, Vincent (2016), *Odyssée 2.0*, odyseedeuxpointzero.fr, 08/08/19. and frame from finished work.

The sound stage that was created for Hitchcock's *Rear Window* was a direct influence on the exterior apartment scene in the narrative. A tense scene in *Tinker Taylor Soldier Spy* is most likely also a reference to this sound stage but developed more strongly the sense of characters moving between windows/frames. Both of these movies served as inspiration for the apartment complex in the finished work, where each window also becomes a comic book style frame in which different people's stories are told. This also speaks to how each person is their own main character in their own comic strip.

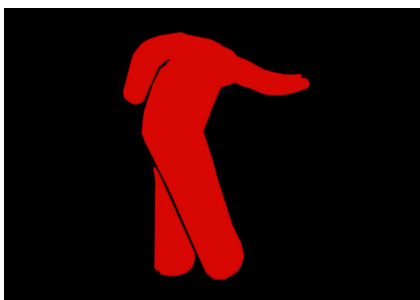


Figure 29

Fleischer, Max (1933) *Betty Boop in Snow White*, Fleischer Studios and frame from finished work

The dancing movement of the main character was directly drawn from the 1933 animated film *Betty Boop Snow White* sequence, where the ghost dances and sings *S:t James Infirmary*. The style of these classic black and white animations have a very distinct aesthetic that sometimes give off an uneasy feel. This is probably partially because of the fast, continuous looping of the animation. The dancing in this scene was traced by hand over a recording of Cab Calloway, a 1930s jazz musician who was famous for a very unique dancing style that lent itself nicely to animation. This helped early animators to get very realistic movement in their characters. Adding this same movement, but even more condensely looped, in the finished work, brings a kind of intoxicated and strange movement to the main character, but also quite nicely links this project with the evolution of animation in film.

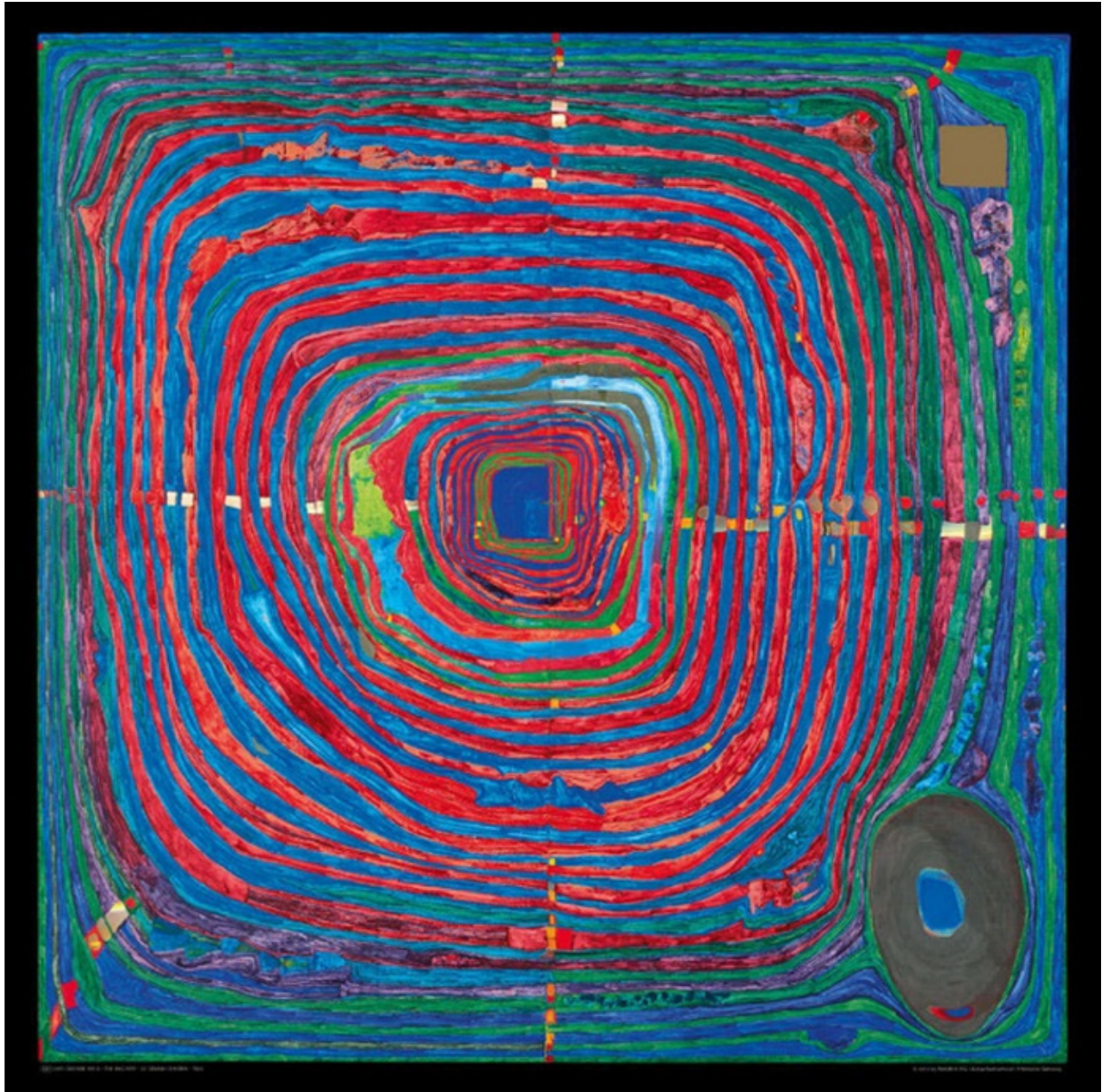


Figure 30.

Hundertwasser, Friedensreich (1955), *The Big Way*, Vienna: Belvedere Gallery.

Hundertwasser's painting *The Big Way* is an abstract painting that features a red and blue spiral that chromatically vibrates and draws in the spectator. Doing away with rigid and geometrical lines, Hundertwasser is deeply humanist and finds a lot of reference and inspiration in eastern philosophies. Aesthetically, this painting was an influence on the climactic scenes of the project. However, above all, the way in which Hundertwasser visually conveys his ideology and ideas through this painting was immediately clear to me upon first sight, and now serves as an example of what the project aspires to do through sequential art.



Figure 31.

Takahashi, Kazuki(1996) *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, Shueisha and frame from finished work.

The way in which eyes are sometimes animated in anime with a still image but the highlights of the eyes are animated in a loop was the source of inspiration for the second frame of the finished work. Although this technique exists in other older anime films and series, I was first exposed to this visual aesthetic during my childhood when I was watching *Yu-Gi-Oh!*



Figure 32.

Bertolucci, Bernardo (1970) *The Conformist*, Cinecittá Studio.

The last scene of *The Conformist* has the character facing away from the camera. At the last moment of the movie, he seems to have accepted a repressed version of himself and turns towards the red light, staring straight into the lens. This powerful ending is incorporated into the ending of the work and fits perfectly with the visual language of the narrative without any major changes.

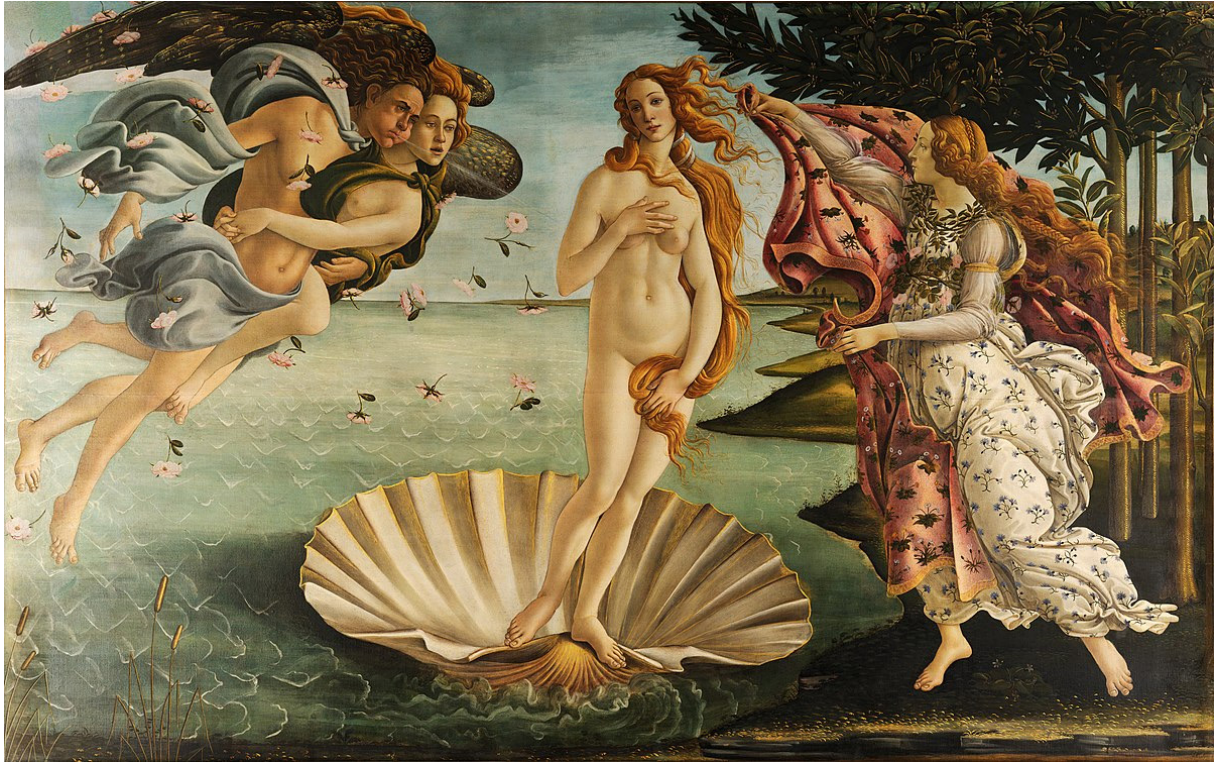


Figure 33.
 Botticelli, Sandro(1486) *The Birth of Venus*, Uffizi Gallery. and Robinson, Bruce(2011) *The Rum Diary*, Gk Films. and Keaton, Buster(1921) *The Goat*, Metro Pictures Corp. and a sketch for the finished work



Figure 34.

Young, Terence(1962) *Dr. No*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

The representation of the feminine figure, bathed in red light, who appears at the end of the story is inspired by many different sources. The stance and the hair in the wind are inspired by the form of Venus in the *Birth of Venus*, whilst the circular framing is taken directly from old cinema, where at the end of the movie the frame goes circular and shrinks the image to a point. This is also tied into the introduction of James Bond movies, where Bond is shown through the barrel of a gun. This draws a link between the gun and the camera shooting the main character. In the finished work, this circular framing references this, but also uses the gun both as a phallic symbol aiming at a woman and, at the same time, the view through a telescope, suggesting obsessiveness and voyeurism. Finally, the circular framing, quite literally, emphasizes the theme of circular, looping time.

“Why did she have to happen, just when I was doing so well without her.” – The words uttered by the main character to himself in *The Rum Diary* when he first meets the films romantic lead. This is what I want to convey visually in the final frame so as to suggest that the main character is still held in ‘Trishna’.



Figure 35.

Brooks, Richard(1967) *In Cold Blood*, Columbia Pictures and sketch for the finished work.

This scene where the water drops running on the window and are being projected onto the actors face, making it look like he is crying, is one of the most powerful images I have seen. The way in which practical lighting in the film is used to display the characters inner emotions is precisely the way in which I am trying to implement lighting into the finished work.

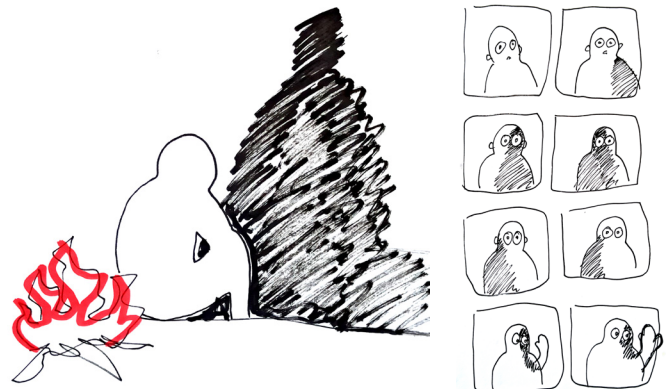


Figure 36.

Saenredam, Jan(1604) *Plato's Allegory of the Cave*, Vienna and sketches for the finished work.

Plato's allegory of the cave is referenced at various moments of the finished narrative to comment on perception of oneself and how it is more of an illusion than concrete reality.



Figure 37.

Steadman, Ralph (1973) *Untitled*.

Ralph Steadman's garish portrayal of western culture, capitalism, and consumerism in his illustrations has powerful gestural lines that bring life and uncomfortable movement to his perceptive caricatures. This was a good reference point for the more dark and psychedelic portions of the narrative.

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Part Three

Process

3.1 Color, Form, and Interactivity in Relation to the Themes of the Narrative

The aim of this project is for the finished work to exist like an ethereal force, more like an idea rather than taking a physical form. This endeavor is hopefully achieved by the fact that it exists only on screens, where it is just red, green, or blue light emitted from different combinations of pixels – it could be in the form of a mapped light projection on a building, as a series of sequential Instagram stories, or as a website. More fundamentally, the work only exists as a series of code that is translated into light. Although the production of the images in the finished work begin their creation in the physical world as sketches drawn on paper, these sketches are then scanned, edited, colored, animated, and finally combined on a computer. The finished product then only exists in an electronic format. More over, the work is an idea (the themes and thoughts behind the narrative) translated into a language (yes, the visual language but more technically, code) that is itself translated into pure light. And so, because it always existed in this ethereal format, there is no original copy of the finished work, meaning that either all manifestations or exhibitions are reproductions or all of them are the original. The only time when one could argue that the work is reproduced is when the images are printed in ink. (Benjamin 1969:3) The ultimate goal is for this project is to be a version of a timeless narrative – with symbols of archetypes found in many different stories – that can manifest itself in many bodies (the objects on which it is displayed). The characters that the protagonist or ‘hero’ meets through his journey are also modern occurrences and symbols of the various archetypes. (Campbell 2004:28) Apart from attempting to show how the aforementioned concepts of Dukha, Trishna, Maya, Samsara, and Nirvana unfold in everyday life, the project hopefully also accomplishes another one of its underlying goals: the attempt to bring back a sensation of magic wonder and meaning to everyday life in a primarily atheist culture.



Figure 38. Main characters in the finished work

3.1.1 Color as Theme and Title

The themes of the narrative are vaguely defined as childhood, adulthood, and the intoxicated state. Childhood is filled with wonder and innocence and one lives in the moment. Adulthood is filled with definitions. As a child, a tree is an amazing creature with a face and personality. The tree is also a fantastic thing to climb and make a little hiding spot out of. As an adult, the same tree is now just a *Malus Domestica*, that is not a creature but belongs to a ordered system of categorization of all the things in the world. The adult, however, loves to see his children experience the tree as he once did and lives vicariously through them, but the tree is

never the same. The adult can only truly re-experience this wonder and once again come face to face with the 'magic' of his surroundings through intoxication. In this world, he experiences again what he once knew but at the expense of his physical being. The intoxicant gives him a glimpse of his bygone childhood at the cost of killing him faster.

In this story, the various stages of life are represented visually both through composition, color, and line work. Although these themes are loosely defined as childhood, adulthood, and the intoxicated state, these words are themselves too definite and so do not accurately enough describe the essence of what they seek to represent. Better, then, is to define the themes of the work with colors, namely: blue, red, and magenta. This way, sections of the story are not strictly tied to ages, but rather an unrestrained compilation of the emotions and sensations that unfold through life. *Blue Red Magenta* is also the title of the finished work. It was chosen because the work strives not to rely on words to convey its meaning although it does need a title to be referred to. Therefore, the name *Blue Red Magenta* is a kind of non-name because it does not describe the story, whilst still drawing the audiences attention to color and its use within it.

3.1.2 Color Saturation

Each rectangle below represents a part in the story. The beginning is filled with vibrant, saturated blues that are reminiscent of 'baby blue' and the morning sky. This saturation decreases as the character grows older over time to represent the loss of innocence. (Batchelor 2007:33) The first instances of red in the story are very bright and saturated in comparison to the surroundings. The red eventually brings on a highly intense magenta color. After these sequences, the colors decrease in saturation again but blue ceases to appear.

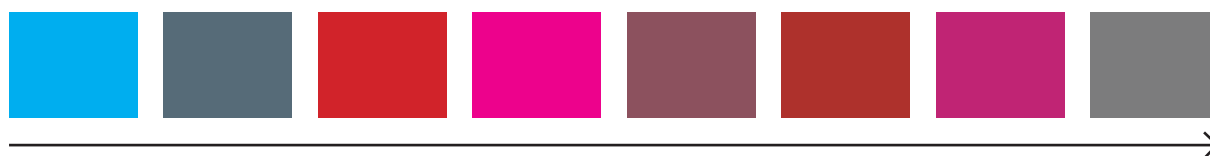


Figure 39. Progression of colors and their saturation levels over the course of the narrative.

Figure 40. A representation of the thematic colors used in the finished work and some words associated with those colors.



3.1.3 The Loop and Interactivity

To reinforce the theme of attempting to find peace within the eternal cycle of birth and death, Samsara, the concept of the loop seemed the most appropriate choice. The loop manifests itself in four aspects of the finished work. The first, and perhaps most obvious, use of the loop is in how the story applies McCloud's 'infinite canvas'. This concept, in web-comics, usually just refers to a long web-page where the screen scans across the canvas – it does, however, still have a clear ending and is, therefore, not really infinite. Taking this idea to its full extent, the canvas, in this work, is circular, and so truly unending. At the end of the story, the user will eventually find him/herself exactly where he/she began. (Figure 41)

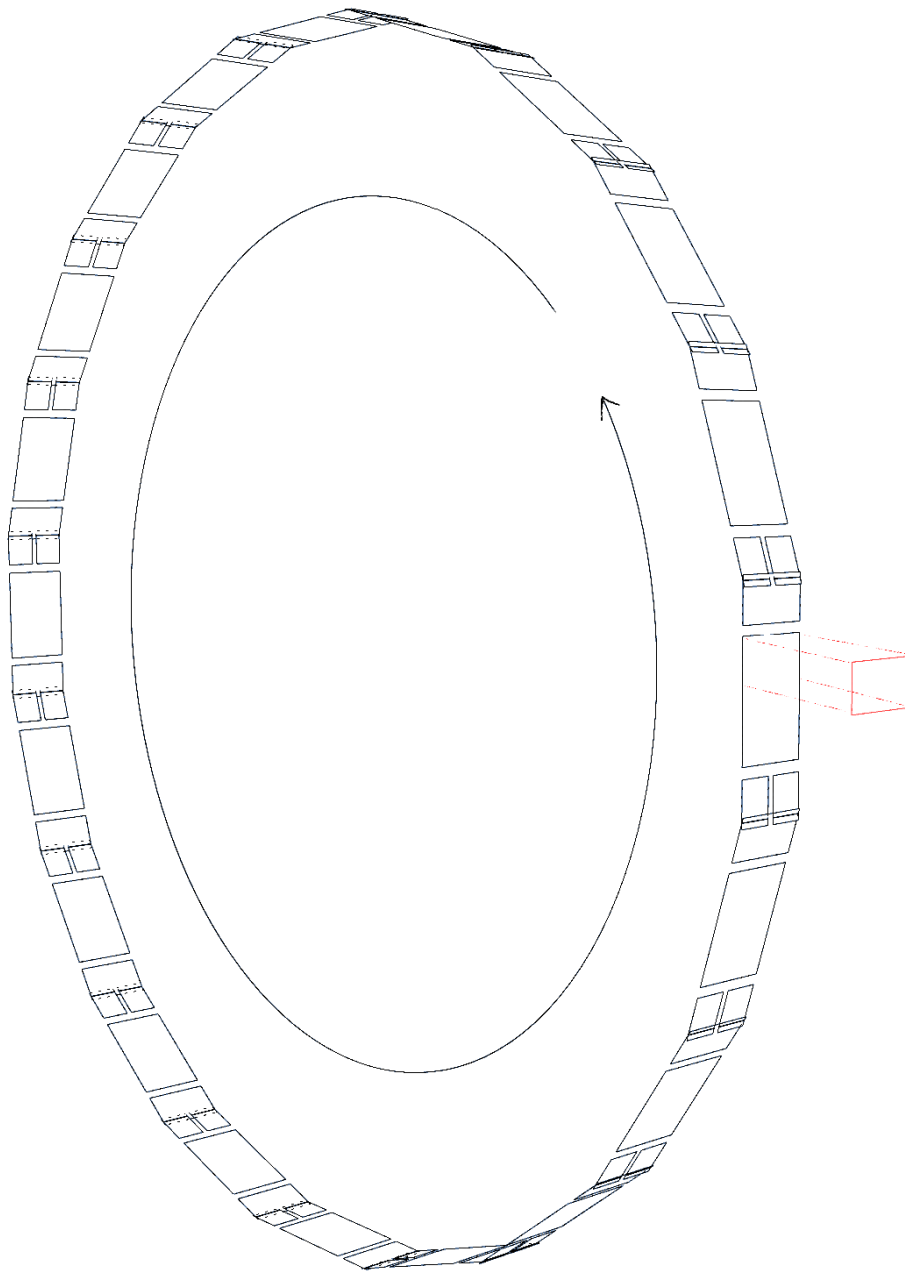


Figure 41. A visualization of what the infinite canvas of the finished work would look like in the third dimension, where the red rectangle is the screen of the viewer.

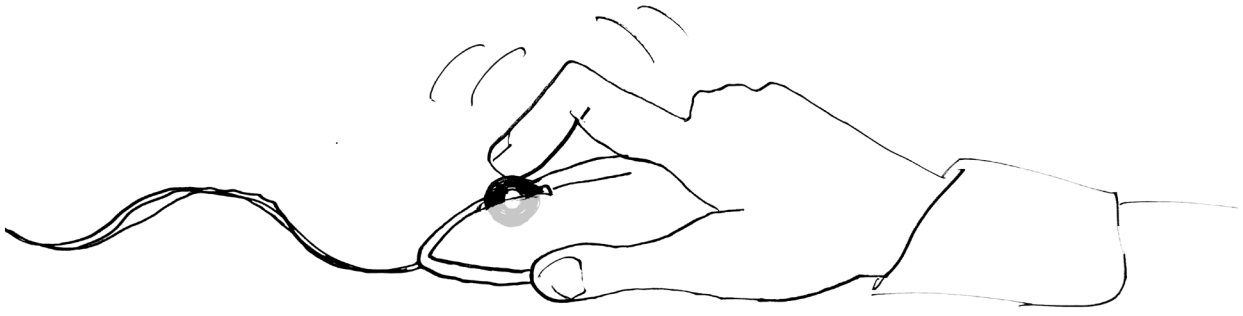


Figure 42. A visualization of the preferred method for how the viewer interacts with the web-page. The audience spin a wheel to travel through the narrative.

The finished work is interacted with by the user scrolling down the circular web-page. This method of interaction also emphasizes the loop theme and describes the idea of the viewer falling down through the endless story. To scroll down, the viewer uses his/her finger on the scrolling wheel of the computer mouse, which the preferred way of reading the finished work. This brings the loop motif out through the screen and into the physical world. The viewer will also only be able to scroll *down* the story and not be able to scroll back up, restricting the viewer to only travel in the same direction as time does for the protagonist. This hopefully makes the viewer more sympathetic to the main character's nostalgic pain of wanting to go back in time but finding himself physically unable.

Thirdly, the circle is used throughout the finished work both as the form of objects (e.g. a clock or a wheel) but also as a framing device. The first and the last frames of the work are both circular to reinforce the theme and to reference the visual language of classic films. If the infinite circular canvas is the macro manifestation of the loop, then the use of GIFs are the micro manifestations of the loop in the work. Many frames within the finished work are created as seamless looped animated GIFs. Being seamless, the GIFs, without breaking the laws of comics, showcase single moments in time but are nonetheless endless, reminding one of the Buddhist ideas of 'the eternal now'. Furthermore, as explained by Kate M. Miltner and Tim Highfield in their paper on GIFS:

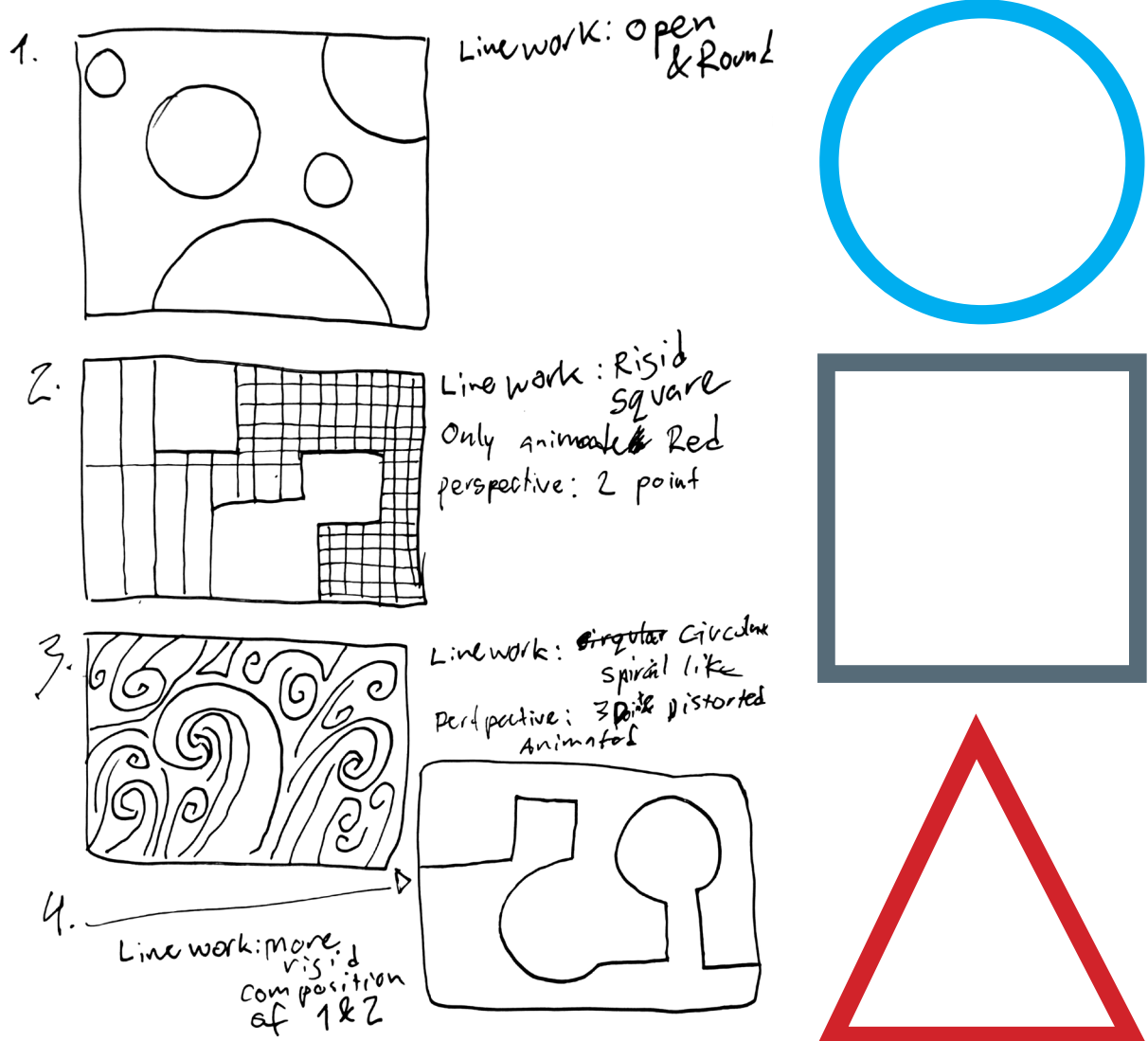
"Repetition adds to the polysemy of a GIF, simultaneously complicating and expanding the possibilities for meaning-making. The automatic looping of a GIF allows it to create meaning, provide layers of significance, highlight details and events, encourage and reward repeated viewing, and create seamless content through perfect loops where the beginning and the end are difficult—if not impossible—to identify."(2017:12)

The encouragement of re-reading the whole story is then not only created by the infinite canvas but also in the details of the animated frames within the canvas.

3.1.4 Lines and Shapes

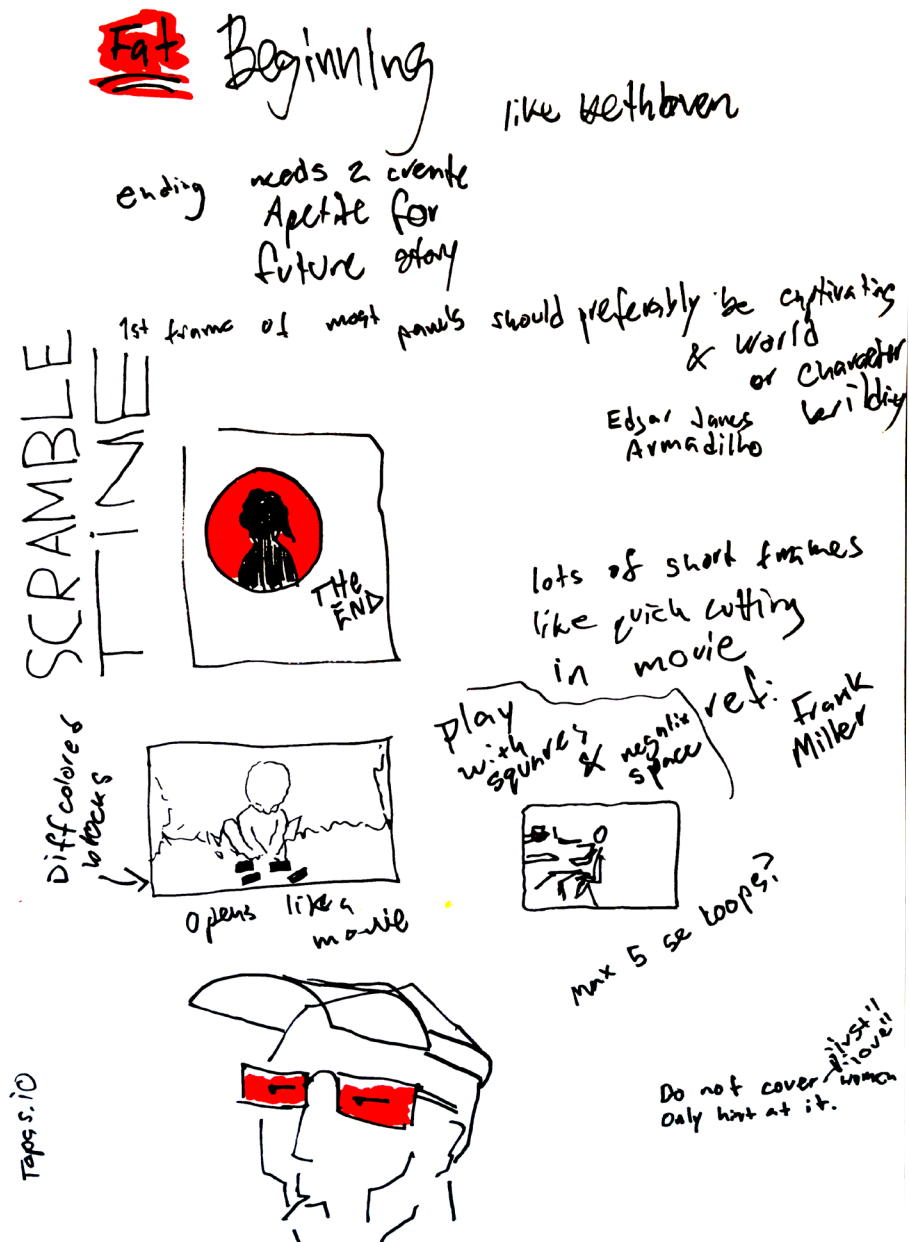
The use of different types of lines in the work will also help to develop the themes further in the story. The lines will complement the colors of the work and work as a sub-theme to color. If the colors are the drum beat to the story, then the line work is the base guitar. The line work is highly influenced by Tim Ingold's nominal study *Lines: a Brief History*.

Modernity and 'Maya' – as features of adolescence and adulthood – are represented through straight lines that connect to specific nodes and exhibit little character. They are Ghostly Lines. (2007:47) Childhood exhibits more round shapes as well as freer and more wandering lines. The intoxicated states of the main character in the finished work will be characteristically Hundertwasseresque, with free organic shapes and lines that exhibit a more human quality but at other times almost become labyrinths, that trap the gaze of the main character and the viewers. (Hundertwasser 1958:2) (Ingold 2007:53) Below, is a plan of the general line-work that is used in the different parts of the finished work. The four frames are an abstract representation of how lines and perspective will be used to convey the themes of the work.



3.2 Illustrations and Sketches

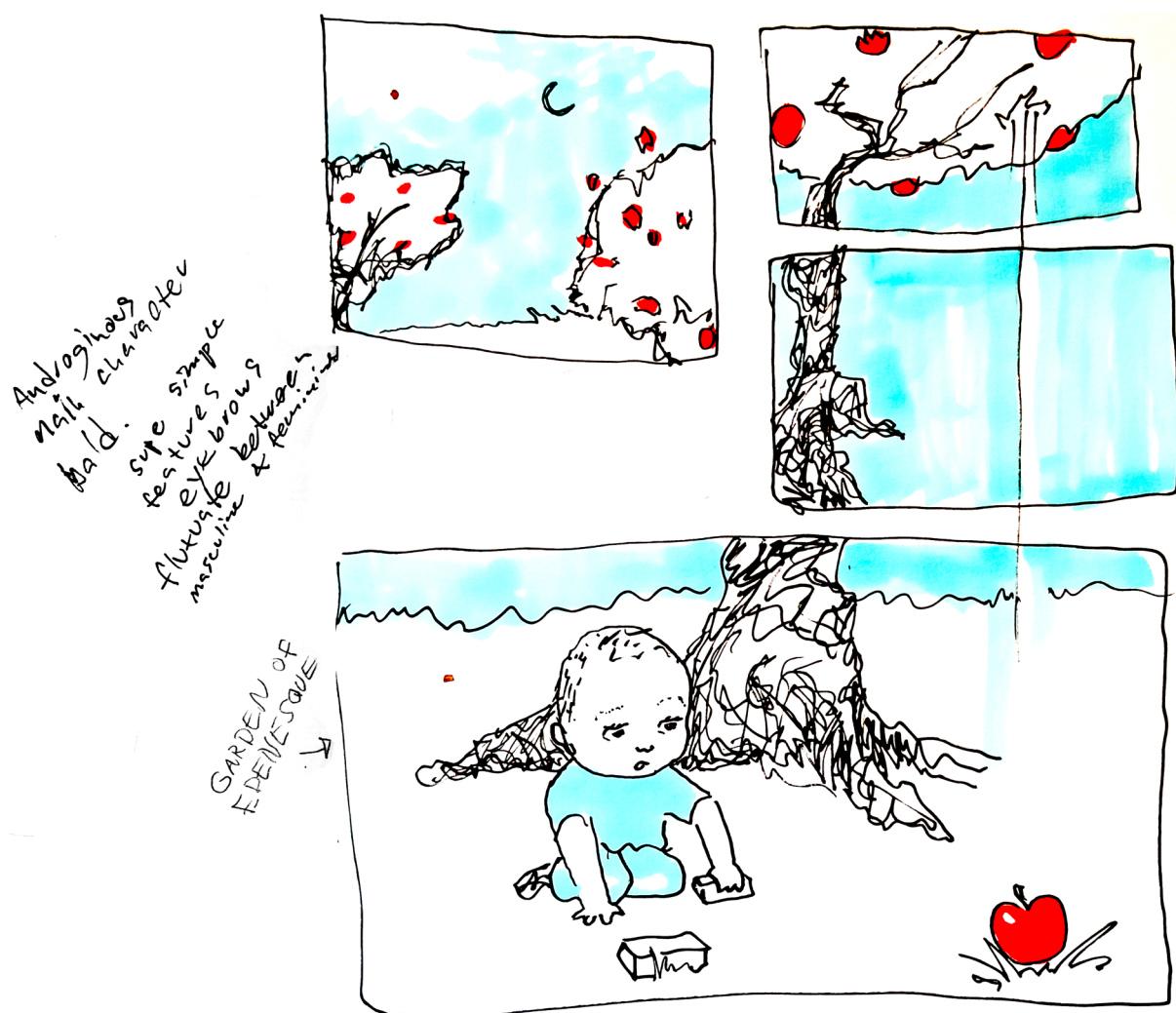
Ideas and notes for beginning and ending of the finished work and how they are linked visually.

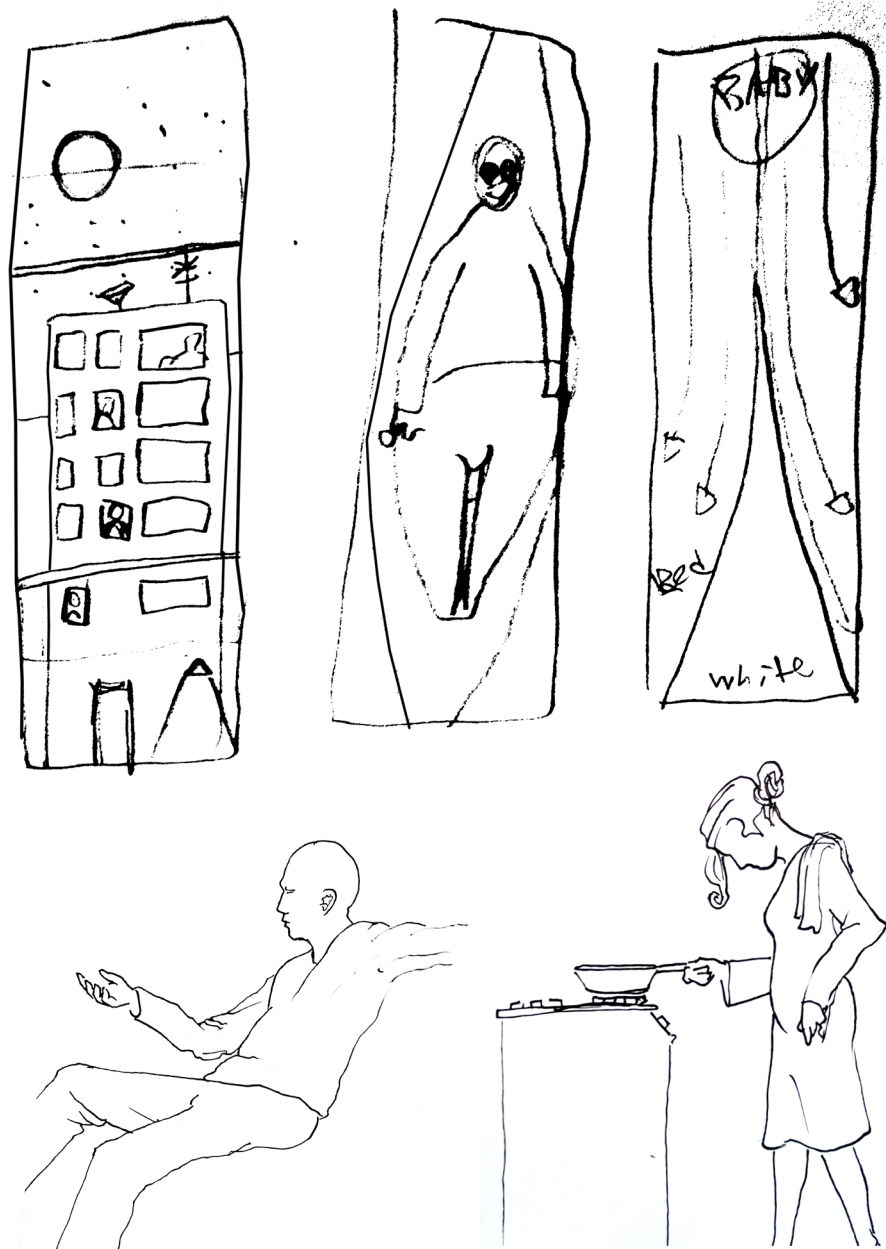


Elaboration of the first frames of the finished work, an attempt to make concise choices for how to efficiently tell the story.



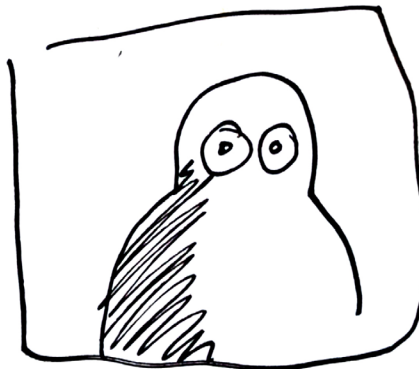
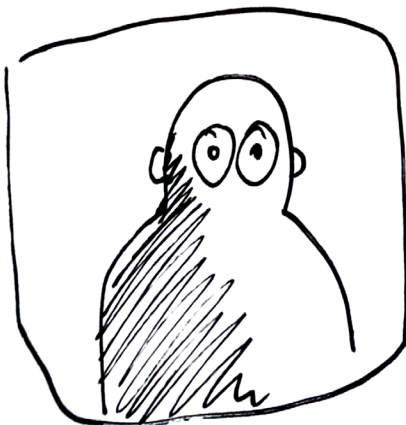
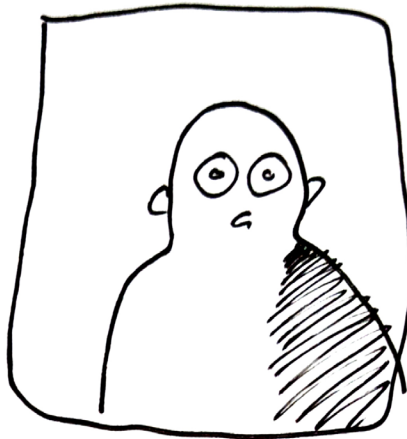
Below: Using color and a frame layout inspired by printed comics to begin the story. Using a waxing crescent moon as a sign of a new cycle instead of a sunrise. This was later changed because a sun rise is more obvious and also is more familiar to audiences e.g. *The Lion King* (Minkoff 1994).





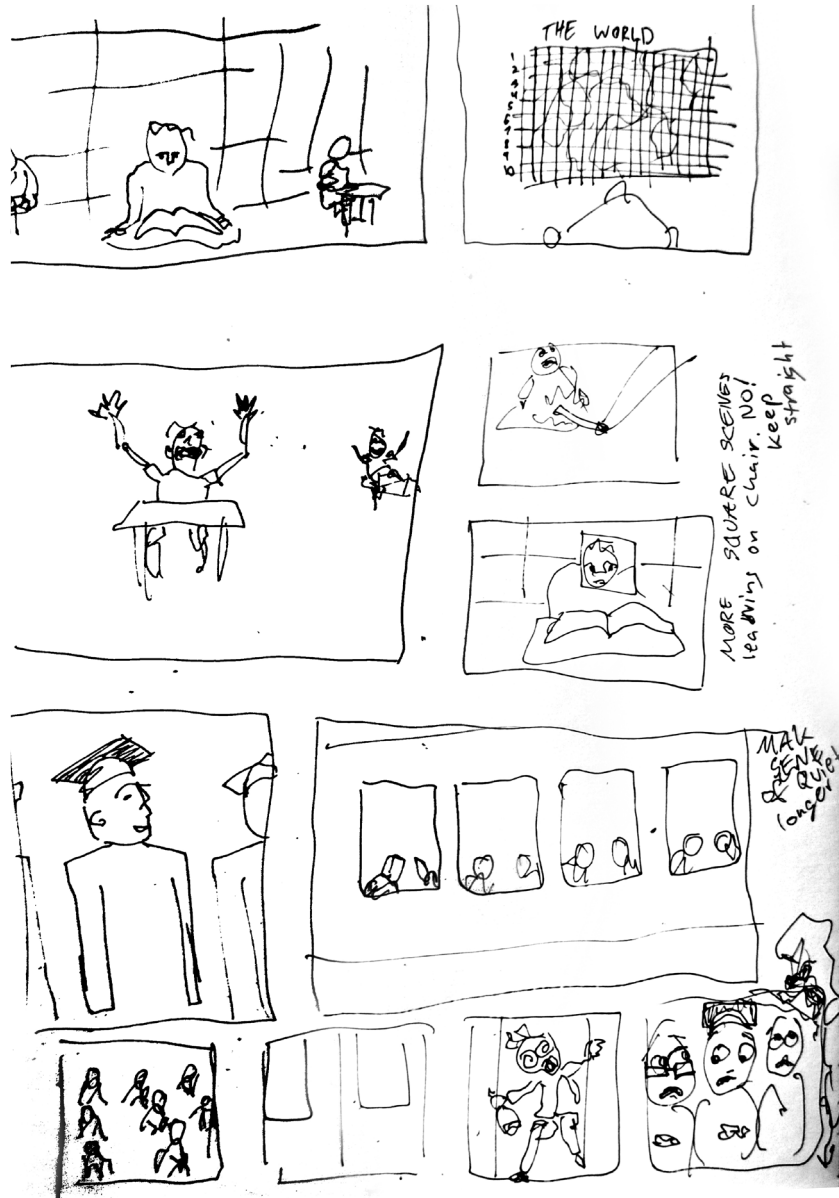
The finished work will play with the frame as a medium of conveying single instances of time. At some points, the screen will serve as a massive frame scanning the infinite canvas. (McCloud 2002:222) At other points in the story, to serve the motif of confinement through 'Maya' and conformity, the frames will shrink into small squares. Finally, to play with the medium and to further enhance the idea of confinement and separation of the individual in western culture, the frames will exist within the world of the story: a window frame as an example.

Above: sketches for the apartment scene as well as ideas for how to structure the first frame of the parting curtains at the beginning of the story.



Opposite page: a frame-by-frame sketch of how one of the first animated frames of the story will play out. Inspired by the Plato's Cave allegory.

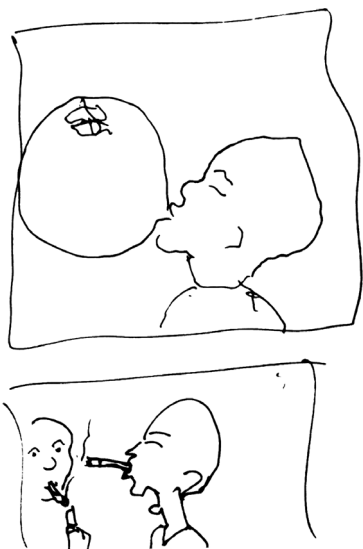
Below: different ways of displaying the concept of 'Maya' being taught in school. This is represented through everything having right angles, grids, squares, and cubes.



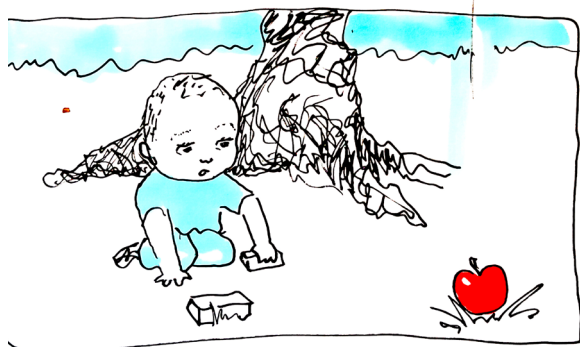


Ideations on using the moon as a lighting source in the work as well as an interpretive drawing of the scene from *In Cold Blood*. (Brooks 1967).

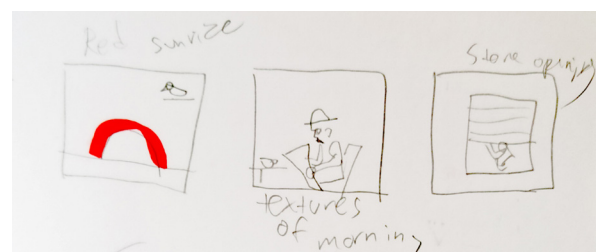
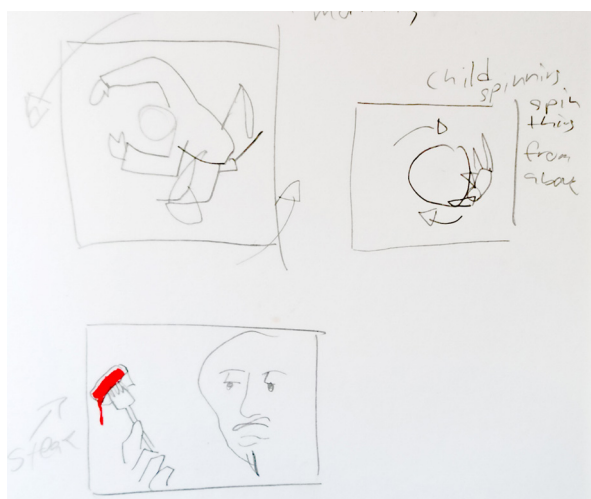
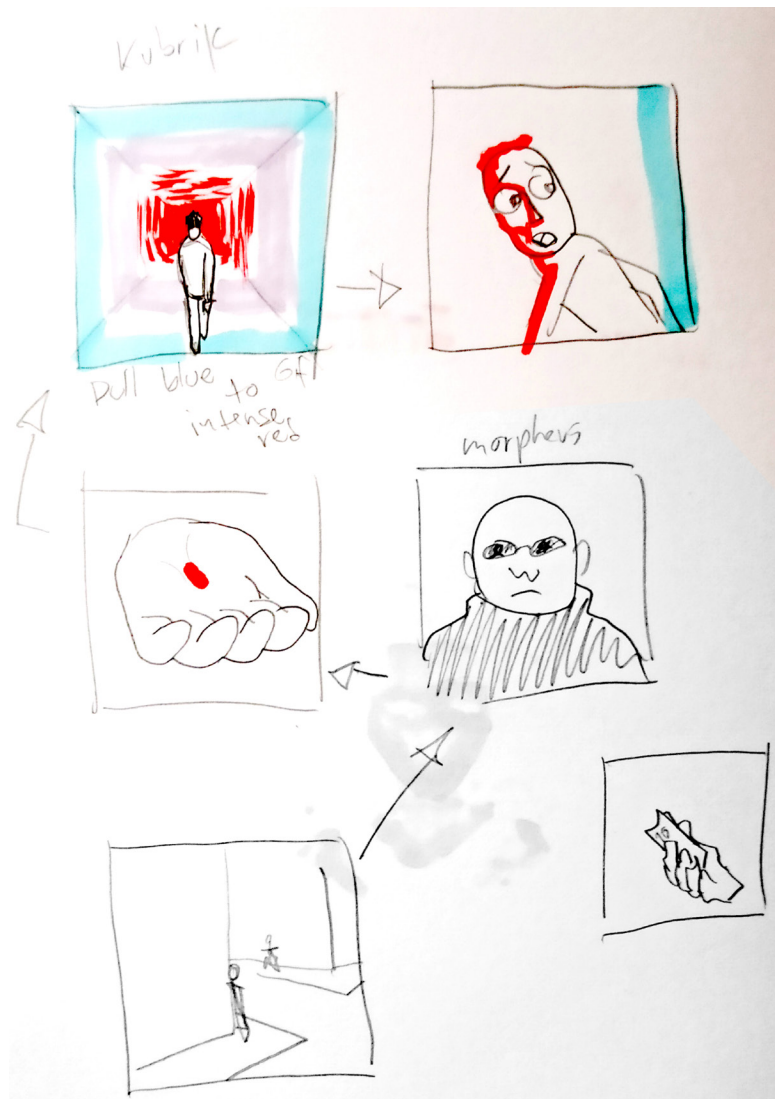
Distinguishing and then juxtaposing different instances of 'Trishna', a craving or a thirst, as an adult and as a child.



An exploration of using the red apple as a visual motif and metaphor for degradation over time. The apple in the second frame has ants on it, an idea inspired by the 2011 film *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (Ramsay). This idea was later disregarded because the reference to the biblical garden of Eden seemed to become too obvious.



Sketches drawn while viewing the 1999 movie *The Matrix*. Identifying different visual motifs used in that movie that could be co-opted into this work. As well as finding instances of color in, the other 1999 movie that is heavily referenced in the final work, *Eyes Wide Shut* because it uses a lot of blue and red light in its cinematography.



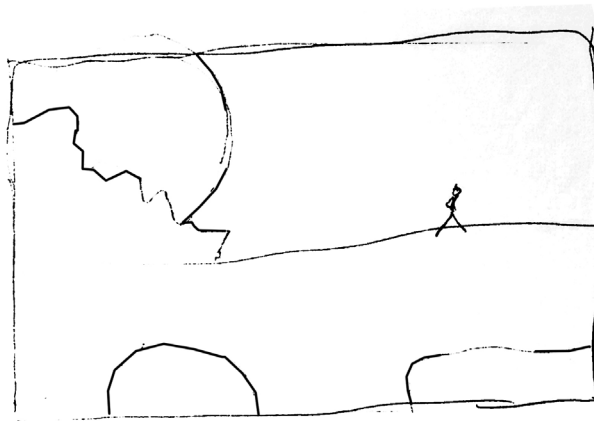


Investigations into creating faces out of continuous lines, which have quite a mesmerizing effect. This is to give a similar effect that one sees when one is intoxicated by psychedelics and looks at faces. Using the labyrinth, as described by Ingold in *Lines: A Breif History* (2007), to trap the viewer one can impart a sensation of for the first time seeing the incredibly high amount of complexity in a person's face that one is usually oblivious to.

Ideas jotted down about how the ending sequence will show the character, while looking at the sun set, put out his cigarette, fed up with consumption of harmful substances. Then to turn and see a woman clad and surrounded by red light, maybe finding some truth or perhaps just caught again, in a new drug.

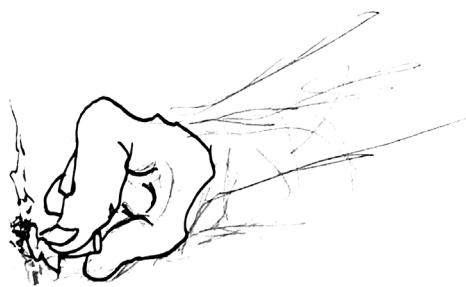
Handwritten notes in the top left corner, partially obscured.

Only way to visually represent time is through sun - so at sunrise or midday.



- 1st blue
- then desat blue as innocence lost
- then red introduced as vibrant in desat blue frame.
- then magenta as they mix
- then desat red.

By copying images that are obvious to the viewer you can visually reference ideas without explicitly saying it.



Red pill.
the matrix

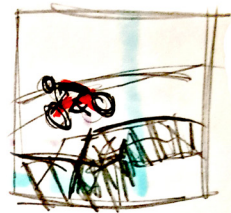
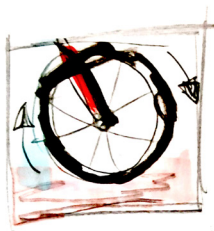
Blue ~~sea~~ St. Maria
Wave
SEA

first scene as baby
by ~~scene~~ sea



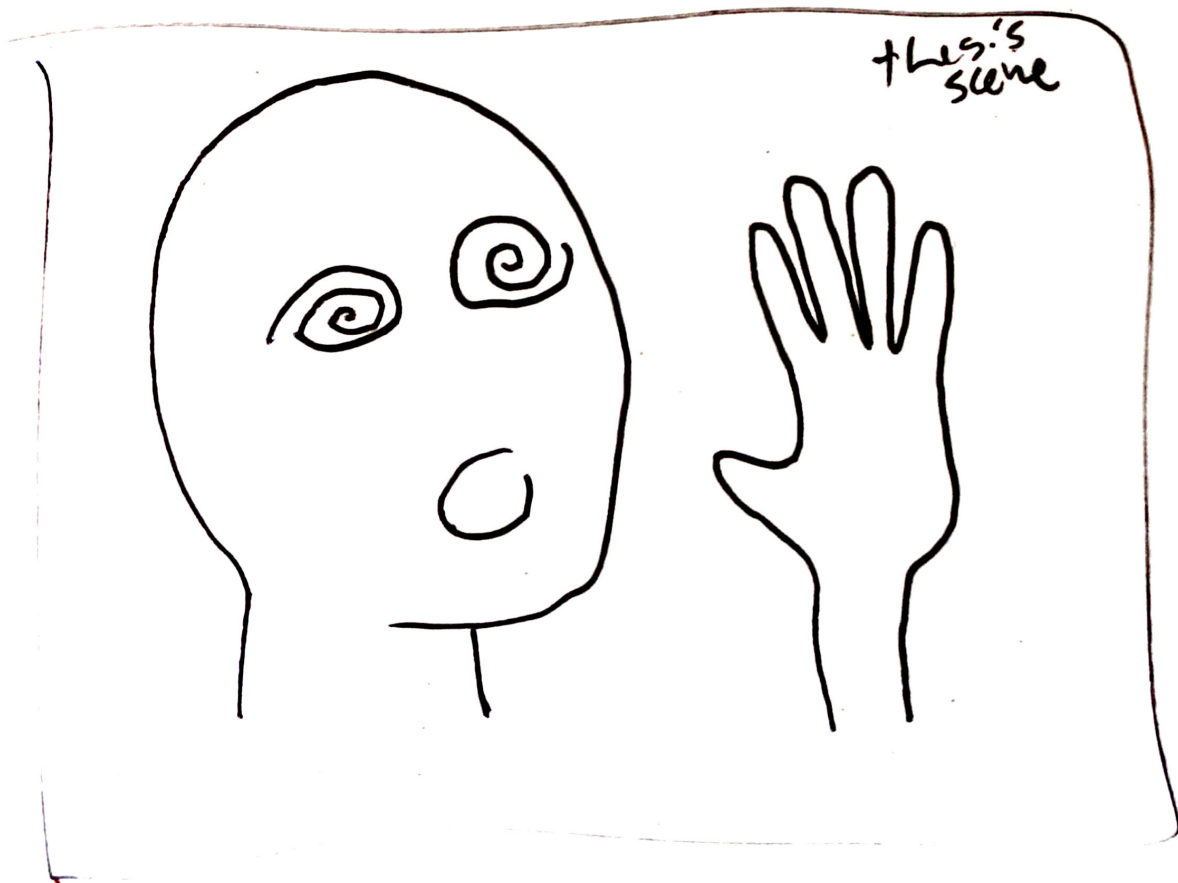
car pulls in
and creates
red light
only eyes are
pure white
don't know if its a wave or
warning

wheel as motif.



end stone is round

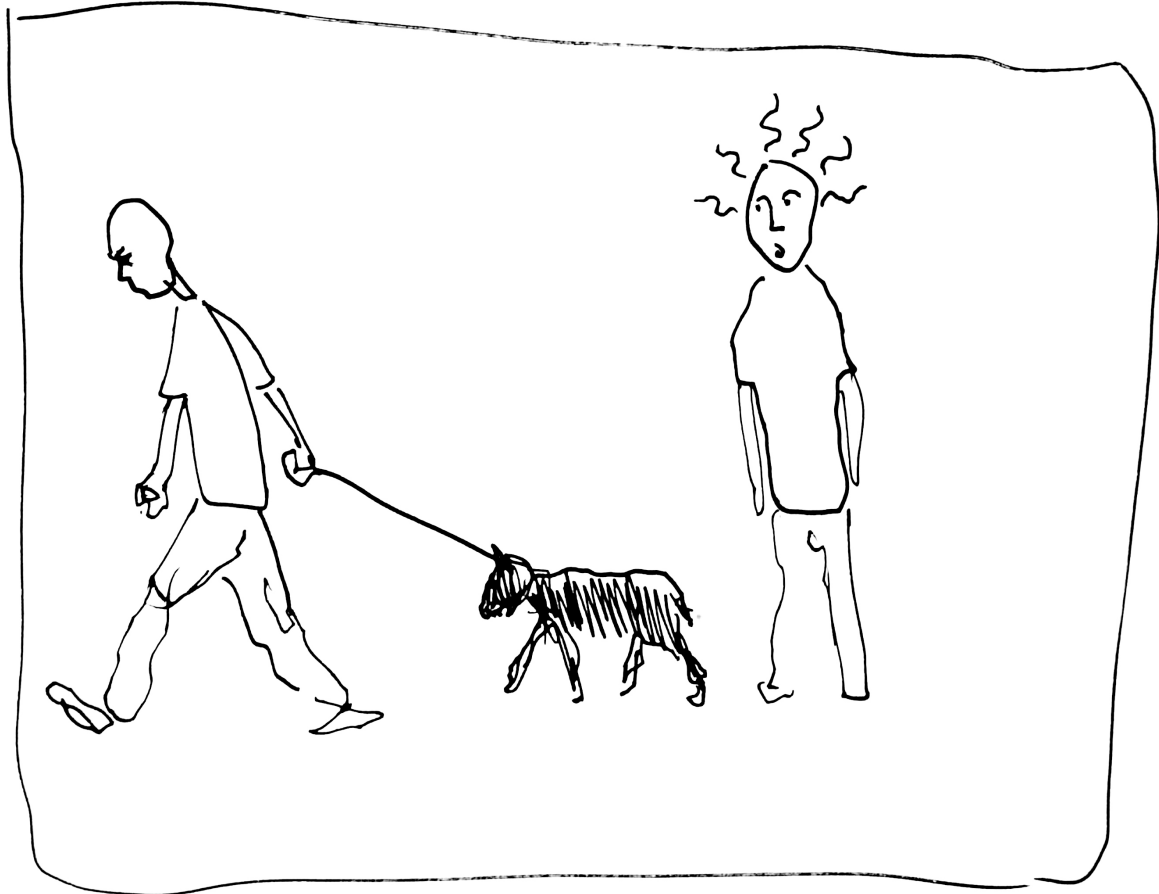
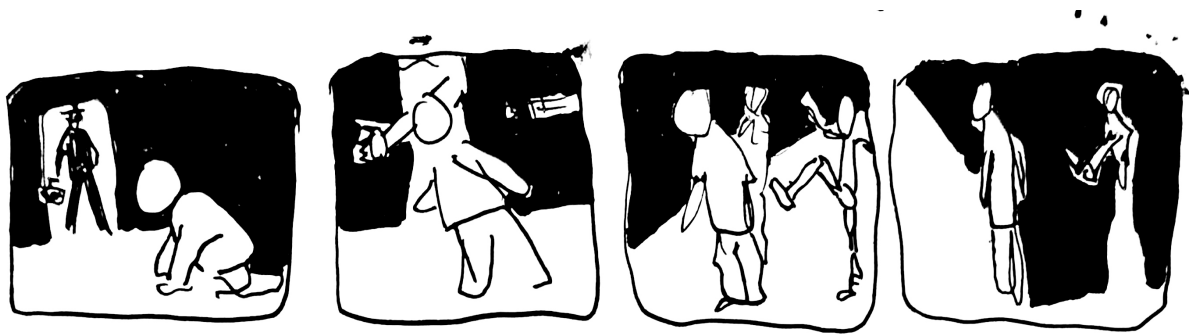




Platos
cave



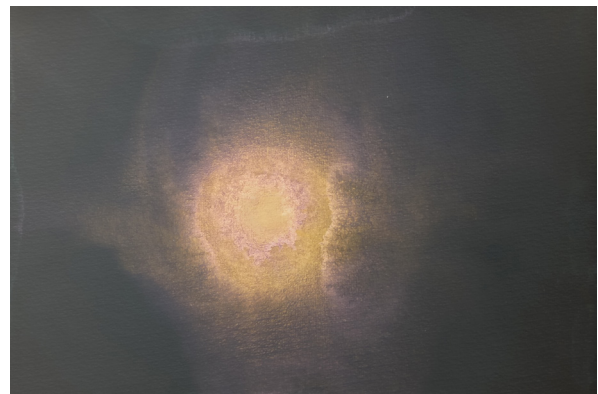
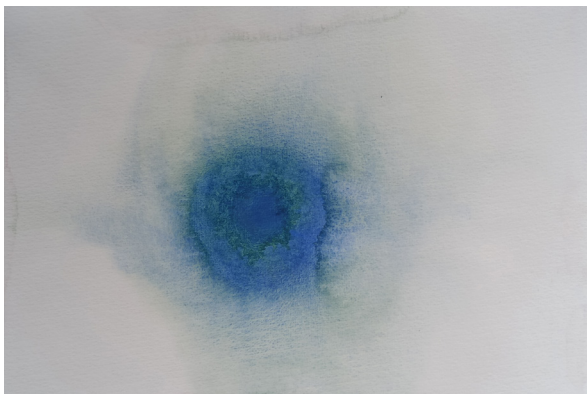
Some variations on Plato's cave and the symbolic meanings of shadows, where the hand casts a shadow on the main characters face as he looks at it. This is meant to symbolize the discovery of the self. This happens twice in the story: once as a child and once under the influence of substances.

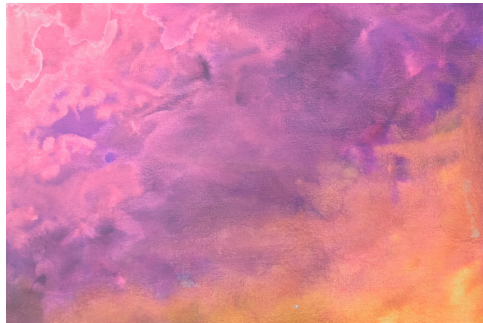
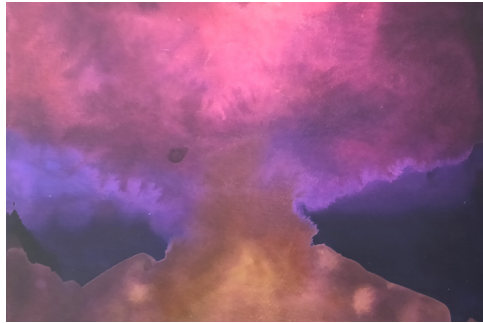
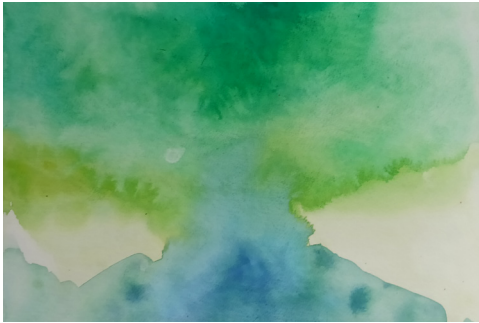
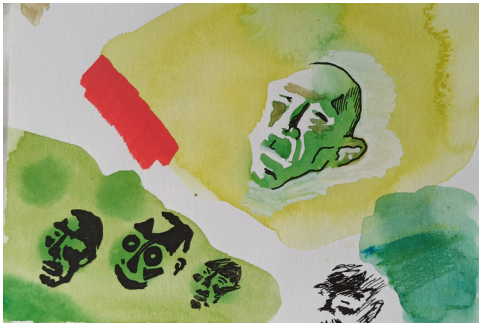


Preliminary sketches on how to showcase the character realizing that his looped existence is intertwined with other characters, who are themselves caught in their own loops.

3.3 Inverted Aquarelle

The finished work is created both digitally and analogically. Both methods of creation have their drawbacks and their advantages and so a mix of the best of both was used. When creating digitally, there is less room for spontaneity and randomness, both in gestural strokes as well as in texture, which is why aquarelle was used. However, the visual aesthetic of aquarelle on paper does not have the same visual impact when it is scanned and digitized. This is again because of the different effects additive color has to subtractive color, as discussed in the previous chapters. And so, in order to use additive color to its maximum effect while still getting the interesting shapes and aesthetic of aquarelle, which is hard to reproduce digitally, some experiments in inverted colors were undertaken. As shown on the opposite page the first tests involved drawing faces on aquarelle paint, scanning the paper and then inverting the colors digitally. This process involves some understanding in complimentary colors as well as thinking in opposites, where white becomes black and vice versa. This method showed itself to be most powerful when used to paint backgrounds and skiescapes. What quickly became apparent is that painting in blue and green hues and then inverting them to create glowing magentas, oranges, and reds, created the most interesting effects when viewed on screen. This also fit in perfectly with the general themes and meanings for the colors in the narrative because green represents everyday natural world whilst magenta, its opposite, represents the mental, spiritual and ethereal realm. Of course, this document, if printed, cannot showcase the interesting effects of displaying the inverted pages in additive color.



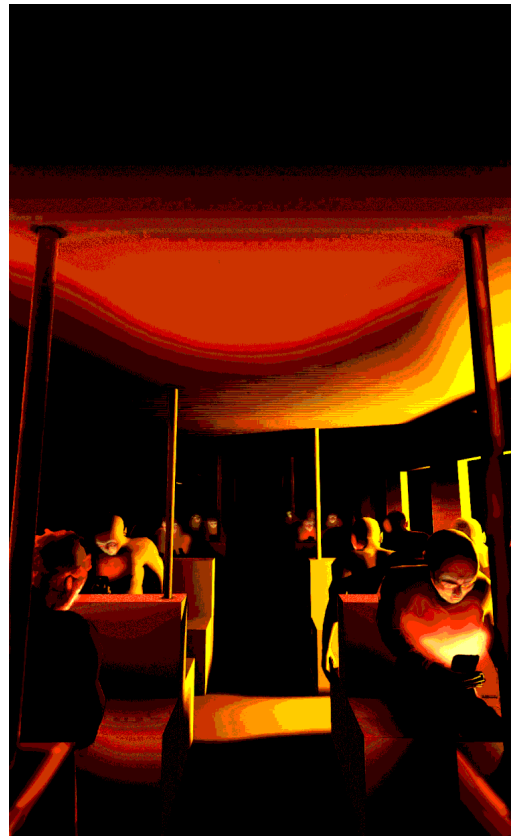
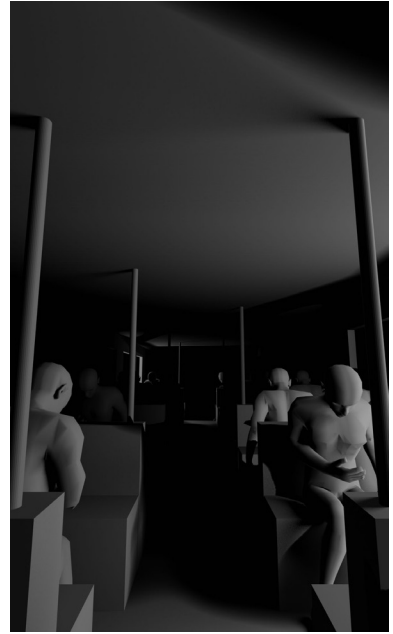


3.4 Three Dimensionality and Dynamic Lighting

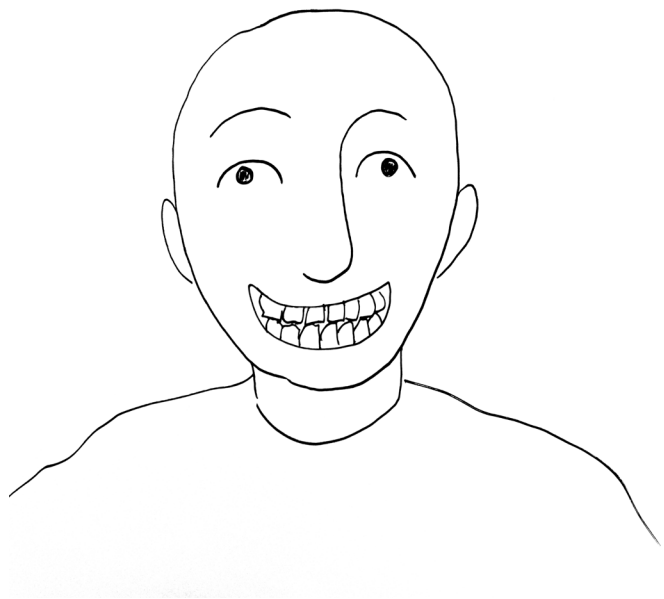


In order to efficiently create scale and perspective, some of the frames within the work are first created in 3d modeling programs (Blender and Rhinoceros). These models are primarily static and are used to create a realistic rendering of 3d space. The renders are then used as a template to trace over by hand so as to imbue them with an imperfect human touch. Finally they are colored digitally, where shadows and light sources are added.

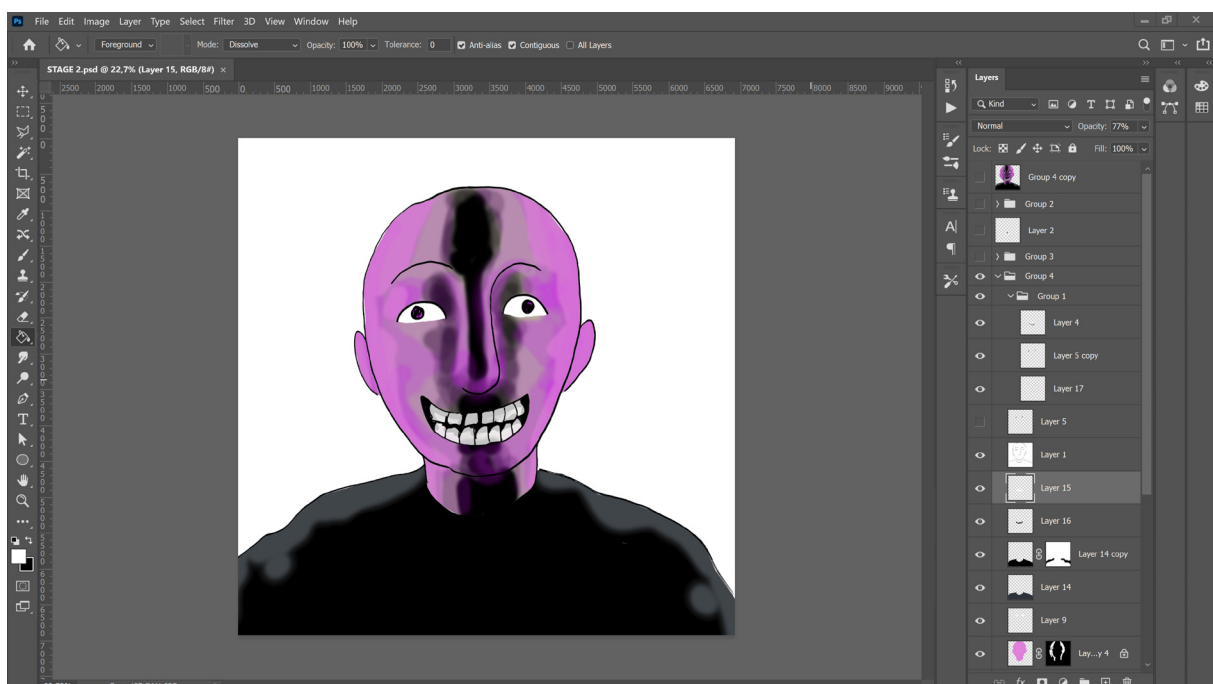
The general aesthetic of the finished work is quite two dimensional, which leads to the intended effect of, when three-dimensional frames appear, they have a stark contrast with the established visual structure. In certain portions of the narrative, full visual excitement and immersion are created in the story by the use of maximum saturation of colors, three dimensionality, and dynamism. Here, the use of 3d rendering is very helpful. On the opposite page, one can see how, in the 3D program, two light sources are places outside the carriage. These light sources are animated in a continuous, seamless loop, and infer movement of the carriage. As the light passes, it scans through the dark, casting dynamic shadows throughout. The complexity of the light interaction in this frame is something that would be very time consuming and complex to create without the use of 3d modeling tools. The looped black and white render of the light sources passing through the carriage are then overlaid a static traced drawing of the same scene. This brings about the result of a hand drawn environment being dynamically lit in a seamless loop with three-dimensional lights.

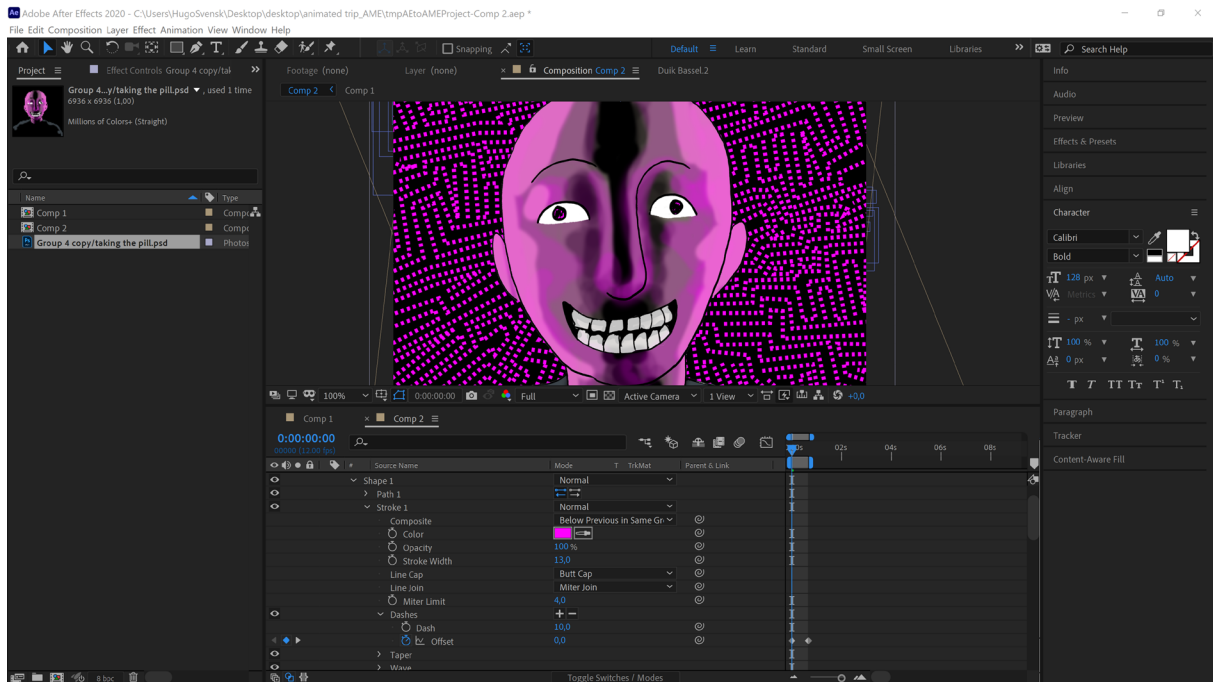


3.5 Procedure of Animating Frames

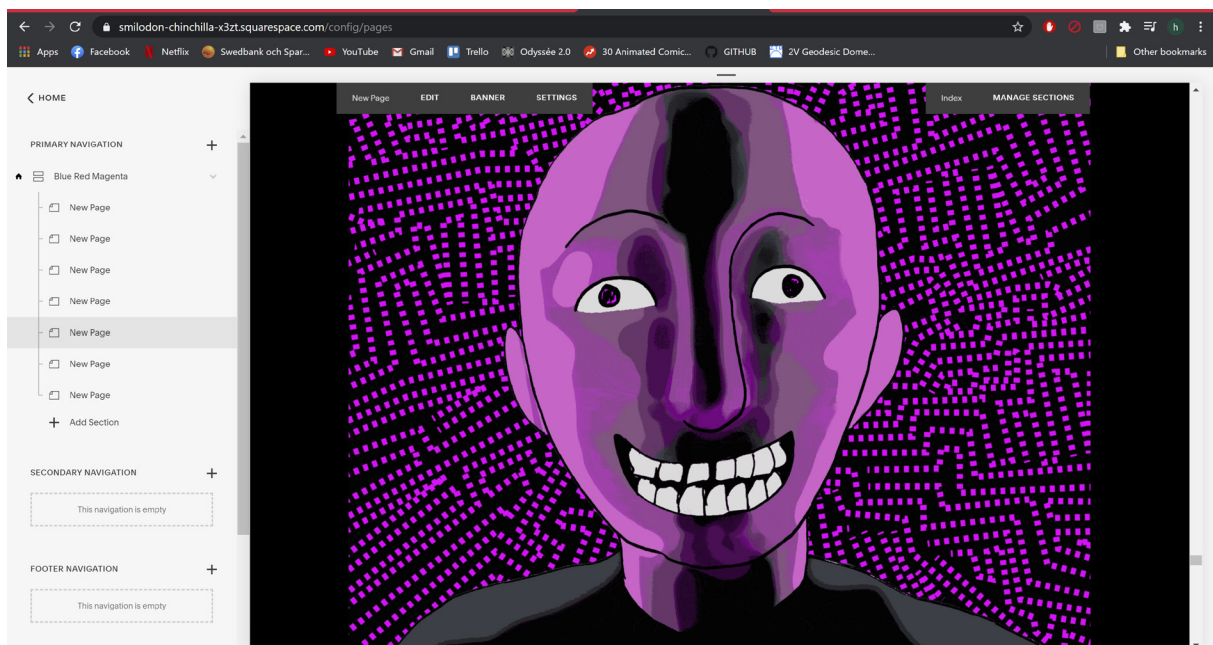


There are other animated frames in the finished work, which are animated in 2D. The frame that is referenced on these pages works as an example of how most animated frames were created. First, a sketch is made in order to work through the aspects of the image (in this case it was done as a spray-painting). Here, the concepts were developed for the lines and the parted eyes. When the idea was deemed ready, a final drawing was made in black ink on paper, which was then scanned and digitized into the computer. This was done again to make the lines possess an imperfect human quality, that is harder to reproduce on a tablet with a stylus. Importing the drawing into Adobe Photoshop, the drawing is colored in an additive color environment so the final effect of light, shadow, and color is exactly as it will appear





on the web-site. The colored drawing is then imported into Adobe After Effects, where the background is created by manually drawing the dashed magenta lines as 'splines' that are successively animated in a seamless loop. After exporting the animation as an animated GIF file, the file is re-imported into Photoshop where the colors, and file size are optimized for the web. The file is then uploaded in its correct space on the website. Here, the interactive elements of the website design are chosen so the image will resize and re-frame according to the of the viewer's screen type and size.



3.6 References

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- Itten, Johannes(1961) *Elements of Color*. New York: Van Norstrand Reinhold Company
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- Miltner, Kate, Highfield, Tim(2017) *Never Gonna GIF You Up: Analyzing the Cultural Significance of the Animated GIF*. London: Sage Journal

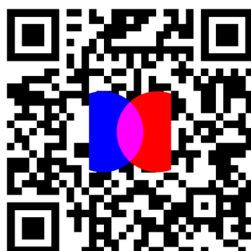
Part Four
Project

4.1 Link to Project

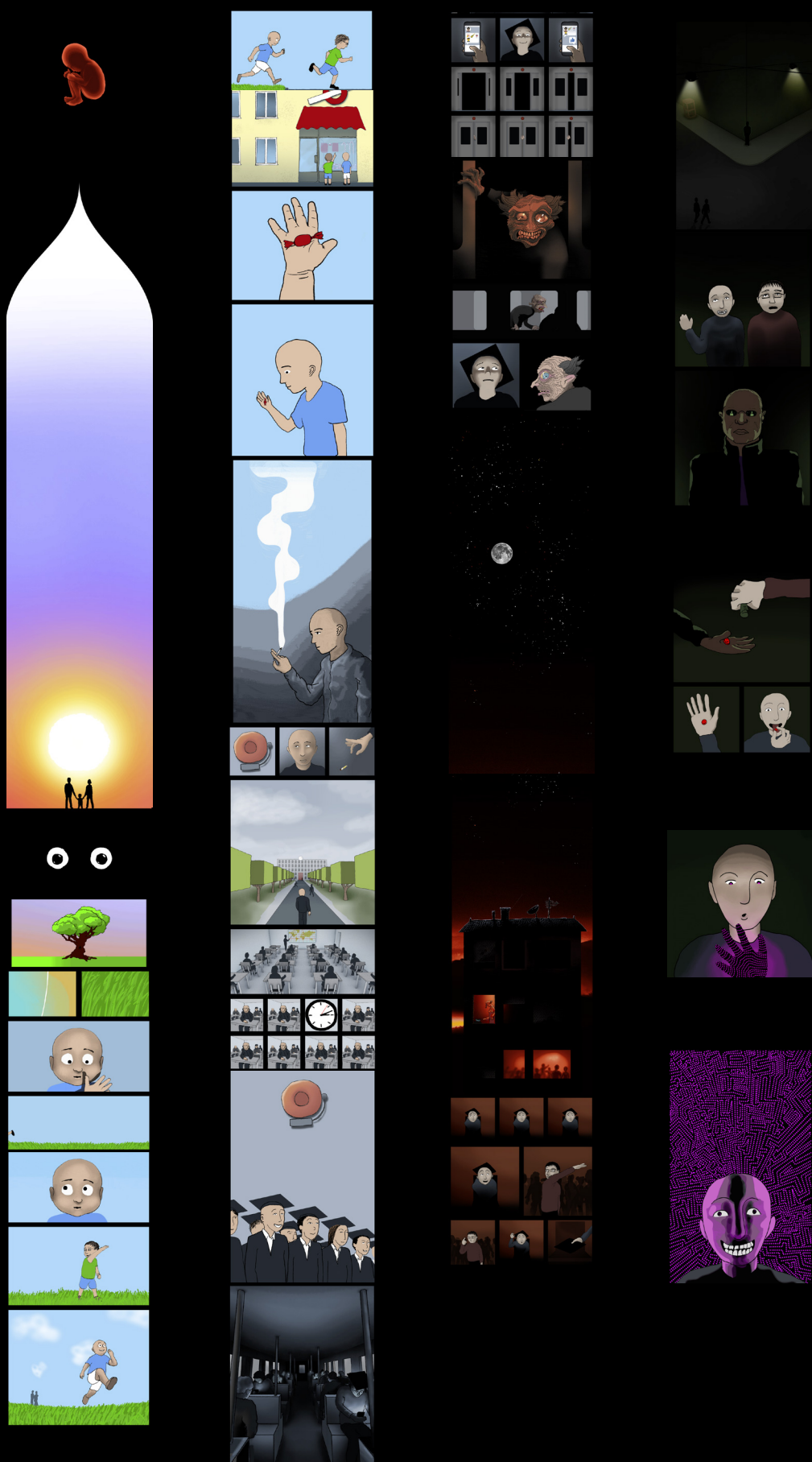
The final work can be found at:

www.blueredmagenta.com

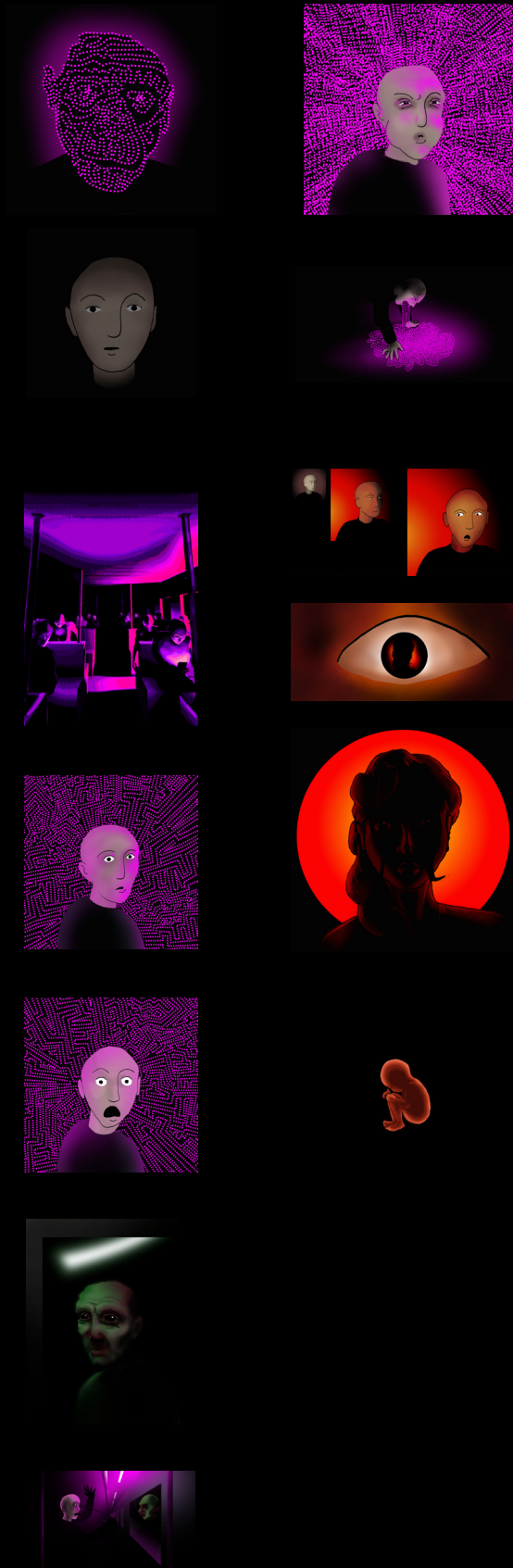
or scan the qr code with your phone:



4.2 All Frames of Blue Red Magenta



4.2 All Frames of Blue Red Magenta



Part Five
Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This is the documentation of how a project, which attempts to be a new take on how to use web-based media to tell an original story, was produced. This was done by researching the various theories that have been identified in visual culture studies and carefully combining them with techniques used in effective storytelling in comics, film, and website building. Some of the tools used to visually tell the story are visual references, symbolic use of colors and shapes, movement in the form of GIFs, the infinite canvas, and much more. The end result of this work is an endeavor to create a compelling narrative that is told in a big way by using effective and intriguing visuals that lie at the forefront of what a single content creator can produce in a web-based medium. Apart from telling the story, the project is also an example of how an artist, in today's media landscape, has a much greater potential to connect with other people through entertaining and informing. Because more people continue to consume all their media from the same device, anyone has the same opportunity to display their work as large corporations or studios do. Moreover, by having access to what is essentially the same tools as these large corporations, individual creators with individual perspectives can share their view on the world, allowing for a more beautiful, diverse, and democratic internet.

List of Figures

Figure 1

Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project Diagram

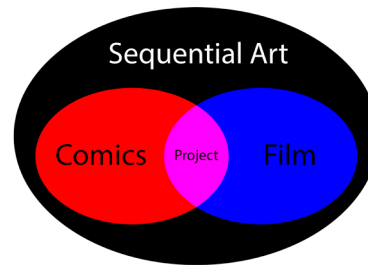


Figure 2

Weing, Drew (2004), *Pup Ponders the Heat Death of the Universe*



Figure 3

Weing, Drew (2004), *Pup Ponders the Heat Death of the Universe*

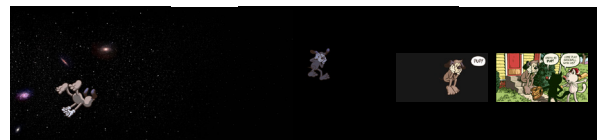


Figure 4

Fricke, Ron (2011), *Samsara*



Figure 6

Fricke, Ron (2011), *Samsara*



Figure 5

Fricke, Ron (2011), *Samsara*



Figure 7

Prieur, Camille and Malgras, Vincent (2016), *Odyssée 2.0*, odyseedeuxpointzero.fr, 08/08/19

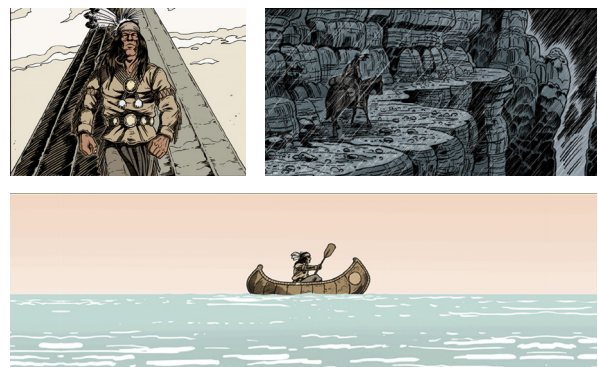


Figure 8

Prieur, Camille and Malgras, Vincent (2016),
Odyssée 2.0, odysseedeuxpointzero.fr,
08/08/19



Figure 9

Prieur, Camille and Malgras, Vincent (2016),
Odyssée 2.0, odysseedeuxpointzero.fr,
08/08/19



Figure 10
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of the visible light spectrum

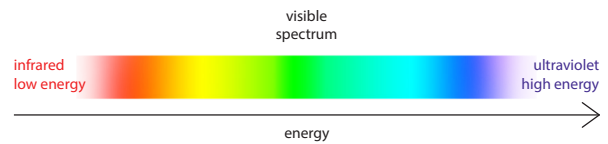


Figure 11
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of the visible light spectrum

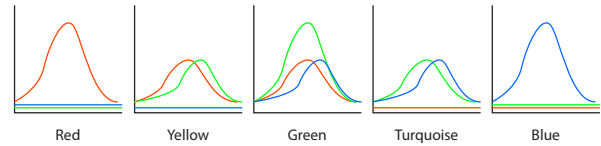


Figure 12
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of linear color spectrum

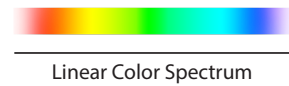


Figure 12
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of color Wheel

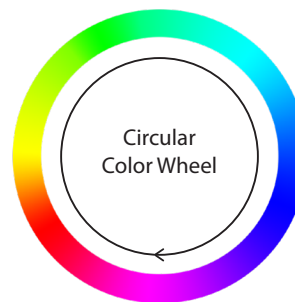


Figure 12
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of the visible light spectrum

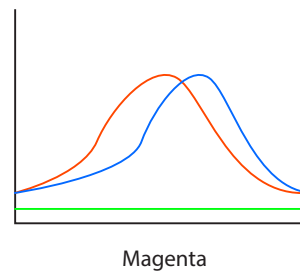


Figure 12
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of the visible light spectrum

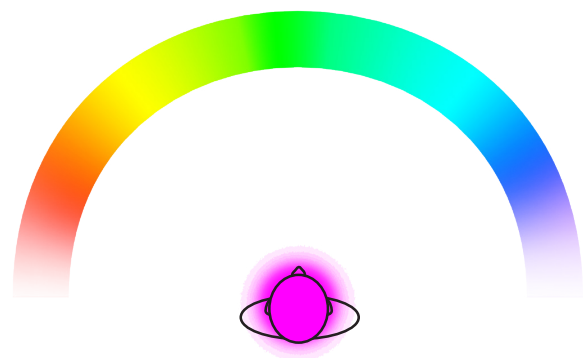


Figure 13
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of the constituents of a Pixel and how they create the impression of various colors

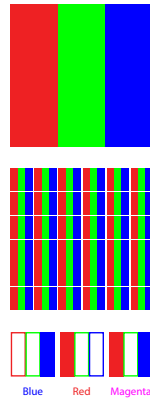


Figure 14
Kubrick, Stanley(1968), 2001: A Space Odyssey, Stanley Kubrick Productions

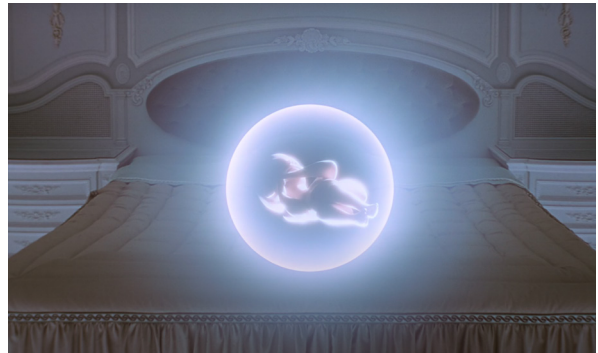


Figure 15
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Illustration of Parting Curtains



Figure 15
Anon. (1981) *For Your eyes Only* Poster, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

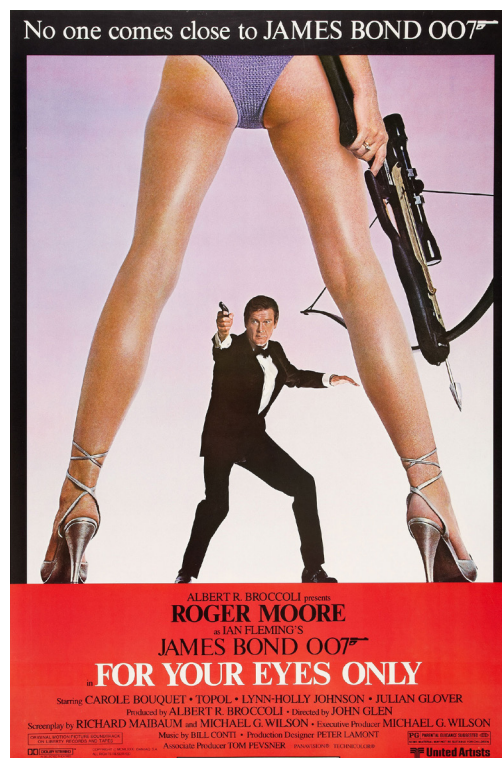


Figure 16

Vecellio, Tiziano (1550) *The Fall of Man*,
Madrid, Museum of Prado



Figure 17

Lang, Fritz (1927), *Metropolis*, Universum
Film



Figure 18

Anon. Photo of Viennese Tobacco shop.
<https://s3-media0.fl.yelpcdn.com/bphoto/Wa8n0QsQlbzIPYbk98ZLug/ls.jpg>



Figure 19
Still from Kubrick, Stanley(1980), The Shining, Stanley Kubrick Productions



Figure 20
Brown, Clarence (1931), Possessed , Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer



Figure 20
Spiegelman, Art (1991), Maus, Pantheon Books

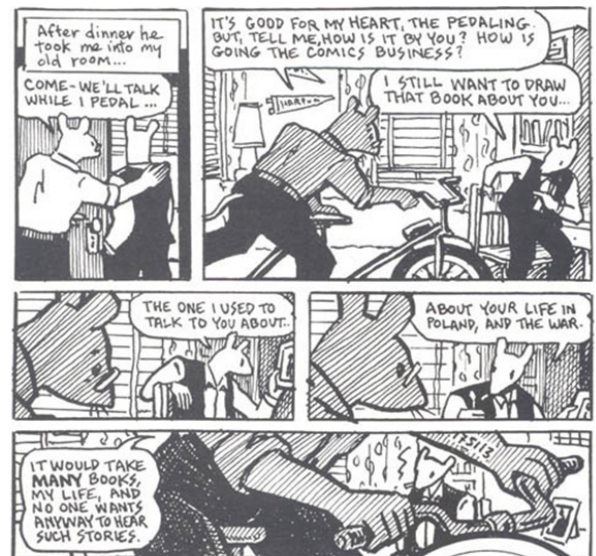


Figure 21
Murnau, F.W(1922), Nosferatu, Prana Film. and Gilden



Figure 21

Bruce(2017), Only God Can Judge Me



Figure 22

Stockholm city logo



Figure 23

Witchowski, Lana and Lilly (1999), The Matrix, Warner Bros.



Figure 24

Kubrick, Stanley(1999), Eyes Wide Shut, Warner Bros. and Stanley Kubrick Productions



Figure 24

Kubrick, Stanley(1999), *Eyes Wide Shut*, Warner Bros. and Stanley Kubrick Productions



Figure 25

Kubrick, Stanley (1972), *A Clockwork Orange*, Warner Bros.



Figure 25

Kubrick, Stanley(1968), *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick Productions and Kubrick, Stanley(1980), *The Shining*, Stanley Kubrick Productions and Kubrick, Stanley (1972), *A Clockwork Orange*, Warner Bros. and Kubrick, Stanley (1987), *Full Metal Jacket*, Warner Bros.



Figure 26

Anon. Symbols of the Eight fold path on Buddhist temple in Tibet.
<https://samyeinstitute.org/arts/dharma-wheel-pair-deer-buddhism/>



Figure 26

Anon. Ancient Egyptian representation of the Ouroboros, <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/enigmatic.htm>



Figure 26

Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Modern symbol for infinity

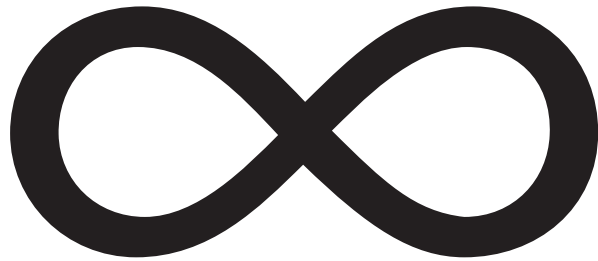


Figure 27

Lucas, George (1977) *Star Wars - A New Hope*, 20th Century Fox



Figure 28

Hitchcock, Alfred (1954) *Rear Window*, Paramount Studios



Figure 28

Alfredson, Thomas (2011) *Tinker Taylor Soldier Spy*, Studio Canal



Figure 28
Prieur, Camille and Malgras, Vincent (2016),
Odyssée 2.0, odysseedeuxpointzero.fr,
08/08/19

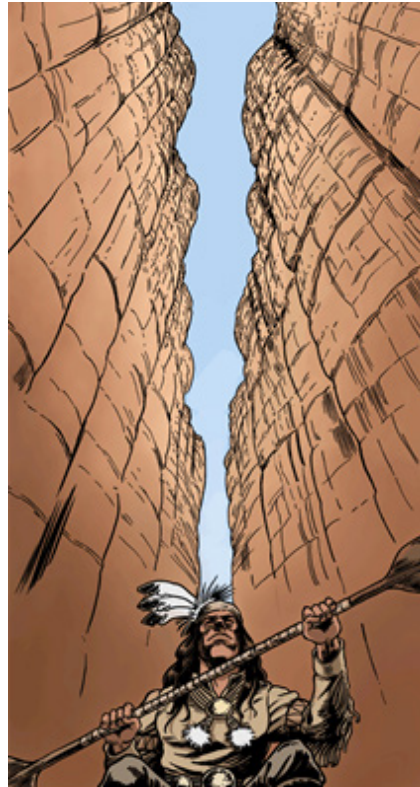


Figure 29
Fleischer, Max (1933) *Betty Boop in Snow White*,
Fleischer Studios



Figure 30
Hundertwasser, Friedensreich (1955), *The Big Way*,
Vienna: Belvedere Gallery

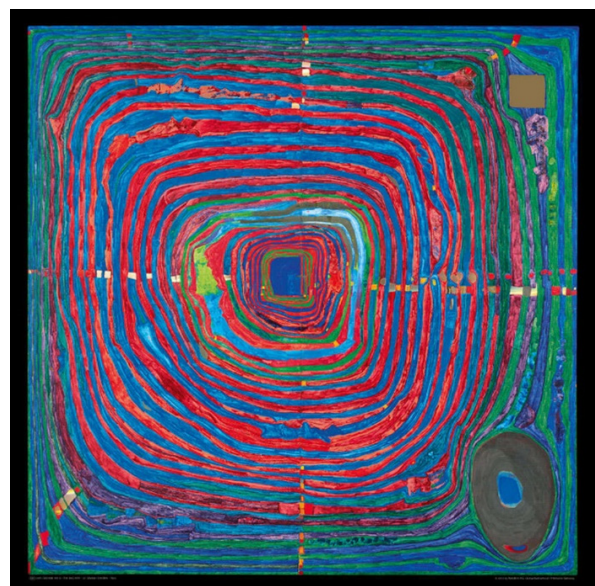


Figure 31
Takahashi, Kazuki(1996) *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, Shueisha



Figure 32
Bertolucci, Bernardo (1970) *The Conformist*,
Cinecittà Studio



Figure 33
Robinson, Bruce(2011) *The Rum Diary*, Gk
Films



Figure 33
Botticelli, Sandro(1486) *The Birth of Venus*,
Uffizi Gallery

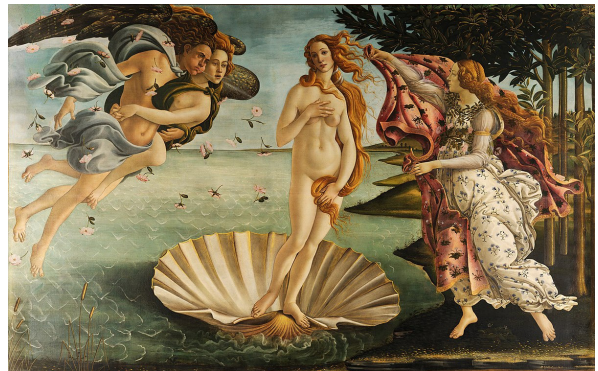


Figure 33
Keaton, Buster(1921) *The Goat*, Metro
Pictures Corp.



Figure 34

Young, Terence(1962) *Dr. No*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer



Figure 35

Brooks, Richard(1967) *In Cold Blood*, Columbia Pictures



Figure 36

Saenredam, Jan(1604) Plato's Allegory of the Cave, Vienna



Figure 37

Steadman, Ralph (1973) *Untitled*.



Figure 37
Steadman, Ralph (1973) *Untitled*.



Figure 38
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Collection of main characters in the finished work



Figure 39
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Diagram of the progression of colors and their saturation levels over the course of the narrative



Figure 40
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, A representation of the thematic colors used in the finished work and some words associated with those colors



Figure 41

Bergman Svensk, Hugo, A visualization of what the infinite canvas of the finished work would look like in the third dimension, where the red rectangle is the screen of the viewer

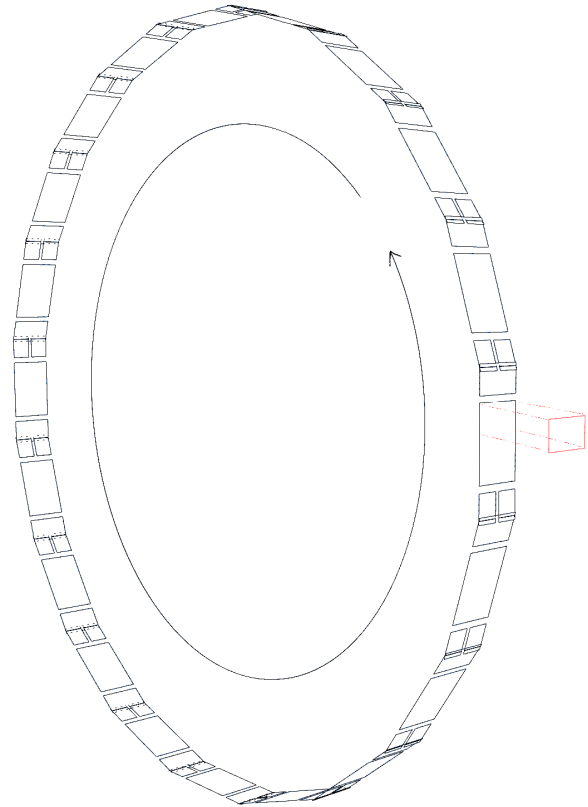
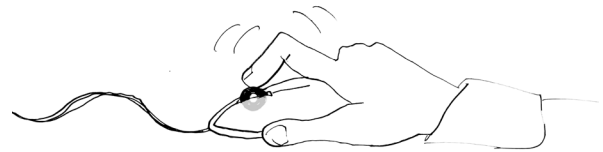
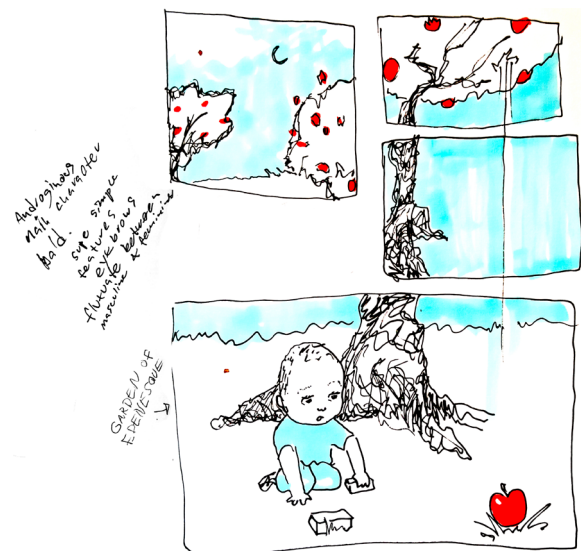
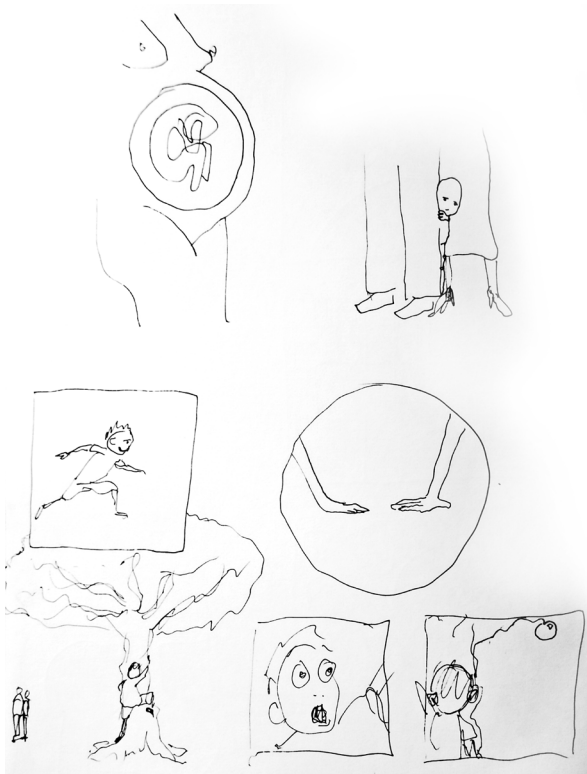
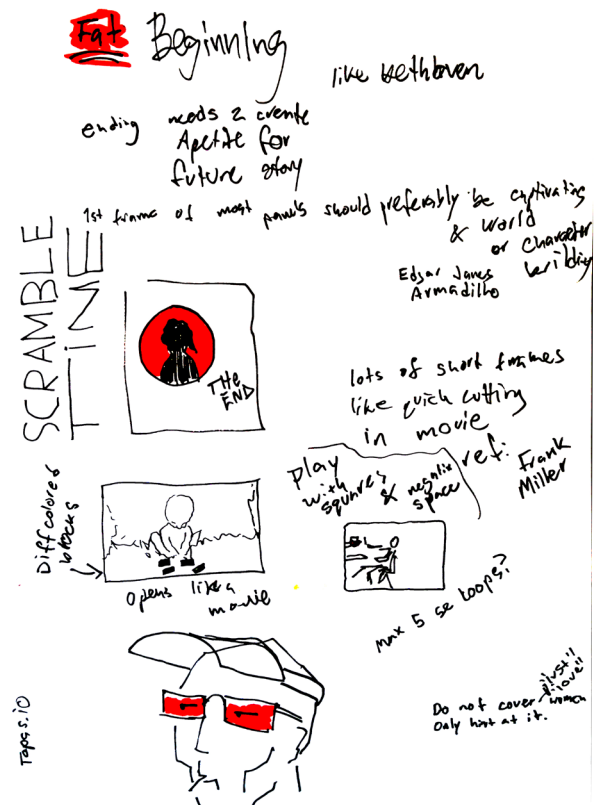
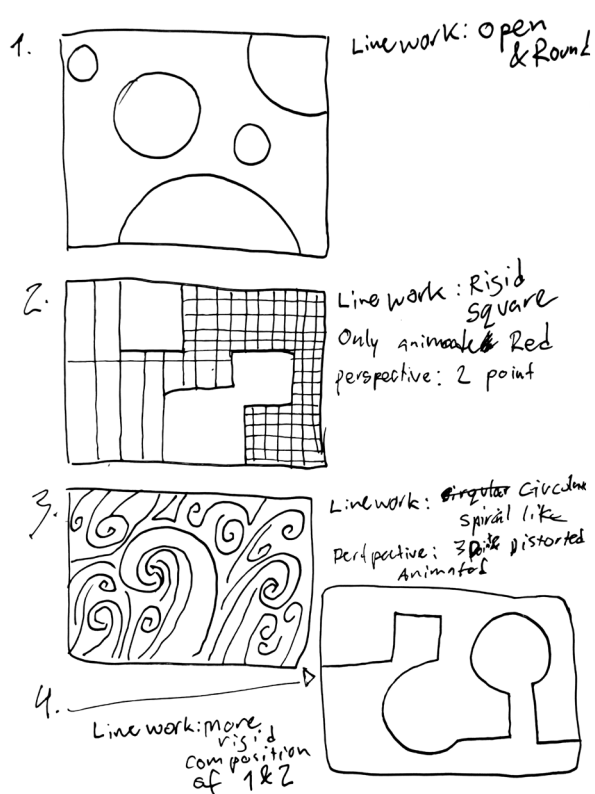


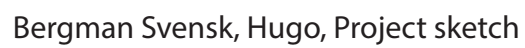
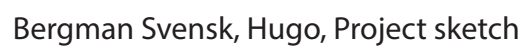
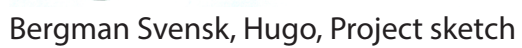
Figure 42

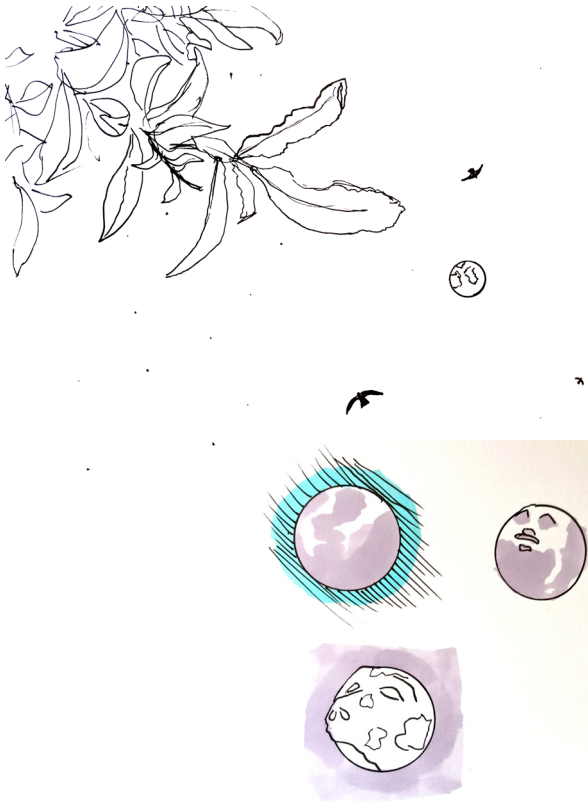
Bergman svensk, Hugo A visualization of the preferred method for how the viewer interacts with the web-page. The audience spin a wheel to travel through the narrative



List of Illustrations



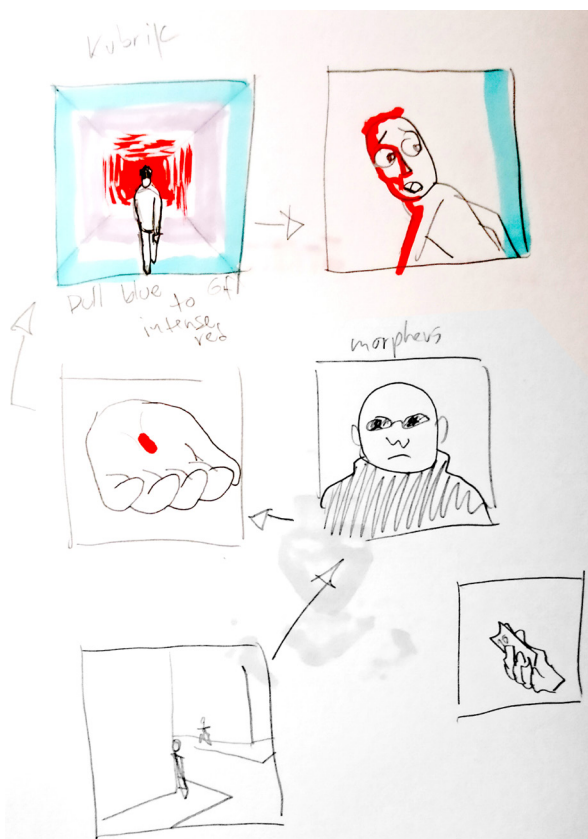




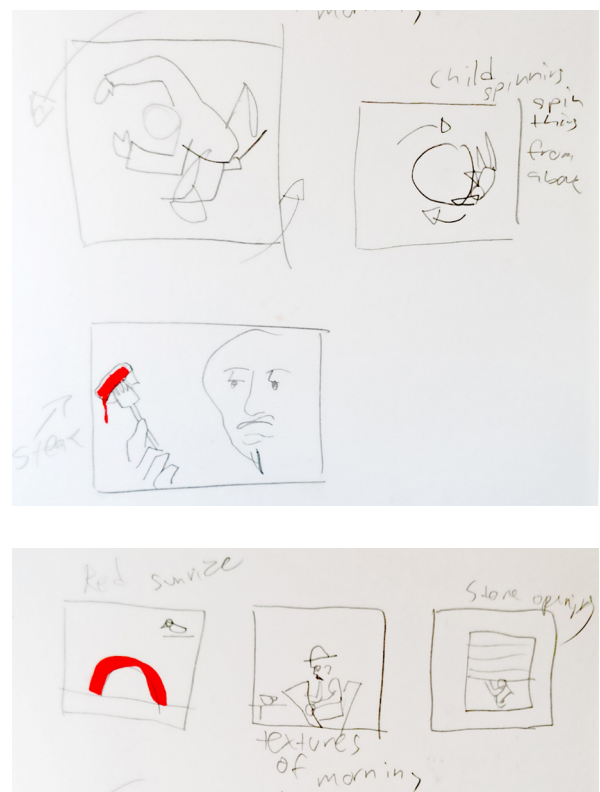
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch



Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch



Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch

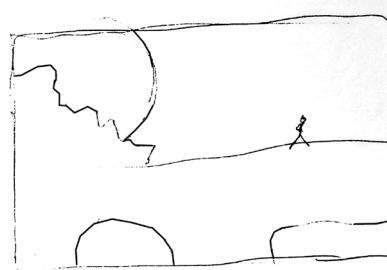


Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch



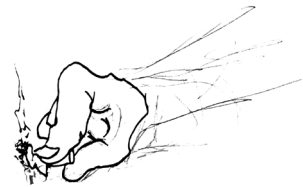
Red pill
Blue pill

Only way to time visually
represent through sun.
is at perpetual sunset
So sunrise or midday.



- 1st blue
- then desat blue
as innocence
as lost
- then red introduced
as vibrant in
desat blue frame.
- then magenta
as the milk
- then desat
red.

By copying images
that are physical
to the viewer
you can visually
reference ideas
without explicitly
saying it.



Red pill.
the matrix

Blue ~~sea~~ St. Maria
Wave
SEA

first scene as baby
boy scene sea

Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch

Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch



car pulls in
and creates
red light
only eyes are
pure white
don't know if its a wave or
warning

wheel as motif.

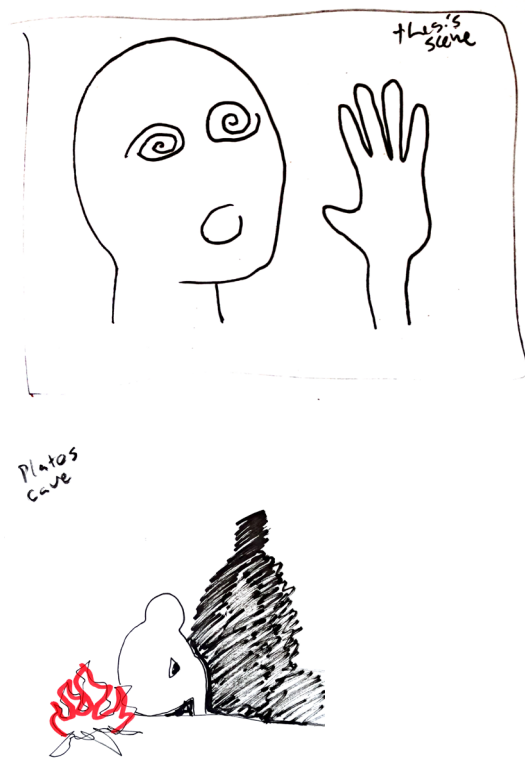


end scene is round

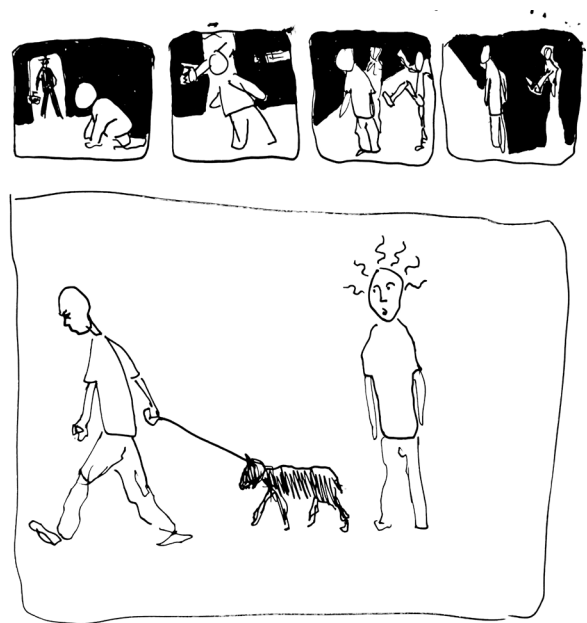


Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch

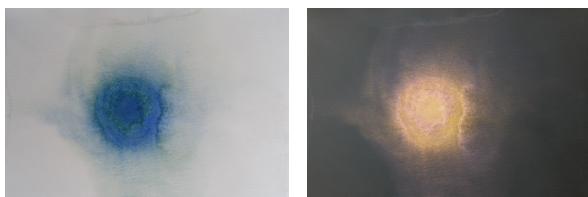
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch



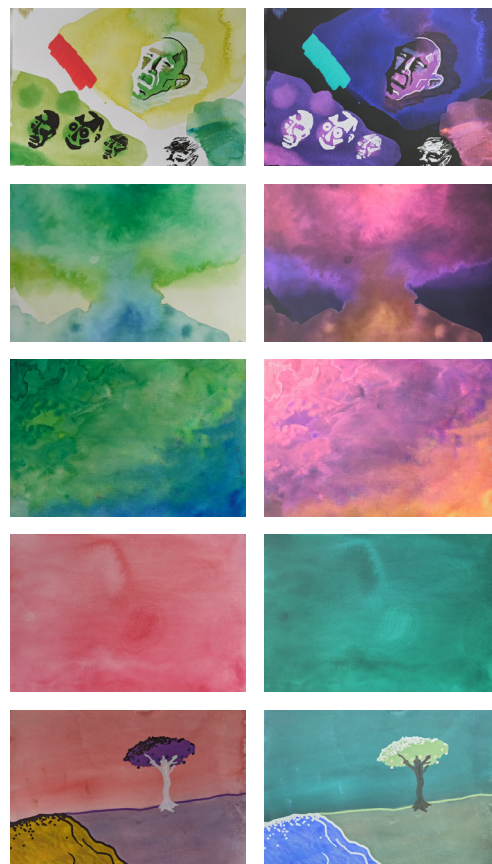
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch



Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project sketch



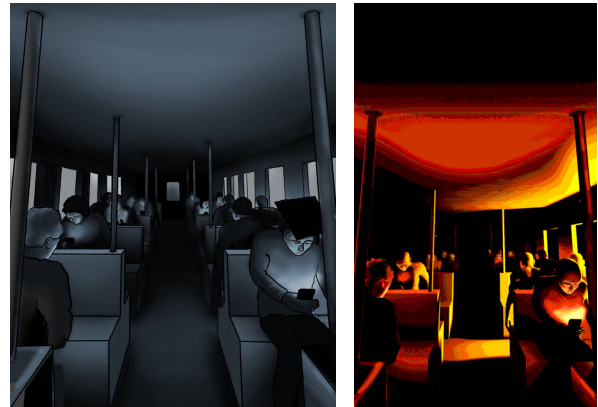
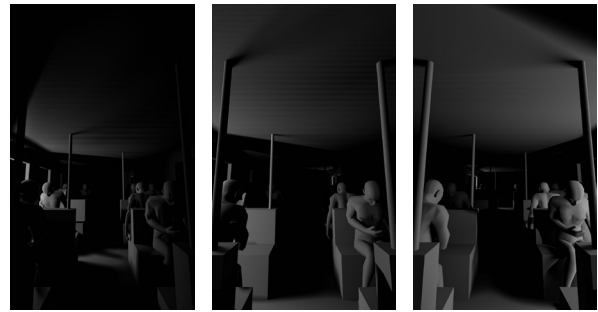
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, inverted painting test



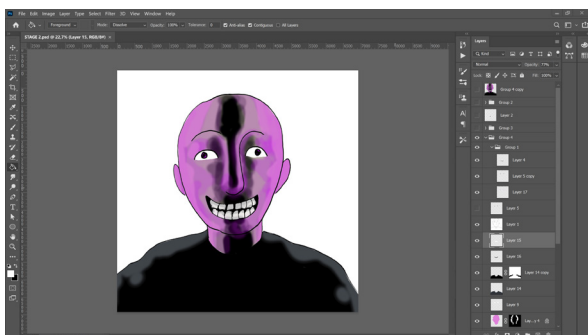
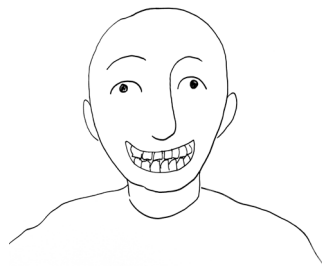
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, inverted painting test



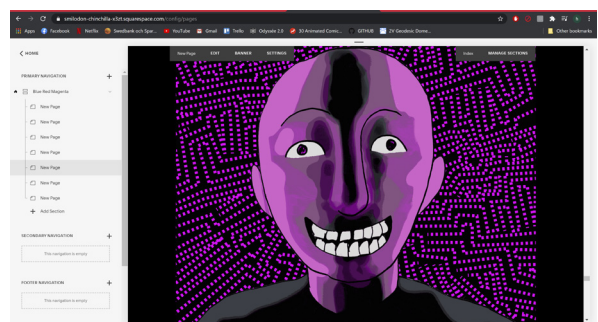
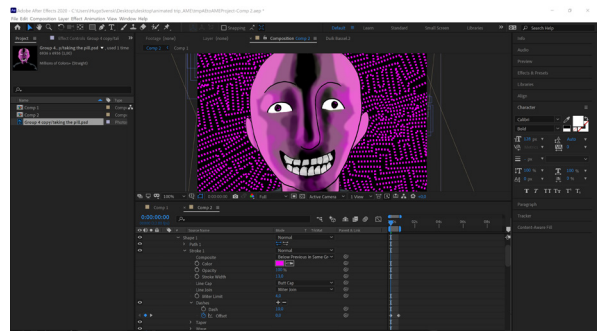
Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project frame made in 3D modeling program



Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project frame development from 3d to colored



Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project Frame development from sketch to coloring in



Bergman Svensk, Hugo, Project frame development from colored to animated and uploaded on website

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