



# EVERYBODY IS A CRITIC

A Guide to the Critical Evaluation of Visual  
Media for Generation Z

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# FINAL SIGNATURES

*Everybody Is A Critic: A Guide to the Critical Evaluation of Visual Media for Generation Z* is a Masters of Fine Arts thesis prepared by Cody Rusk for Liberty University's Department of Studio and Digital Arts.

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*The personal, religious, philosophical, or political positions found in this project are solely that of the student, and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the committee or Liberty University.*

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# ABSTRACT

The youth of today, especially Generation Z, lack the ability to think critically. An area that seems to be especially difficult for Generation Z to critically evaluate is visual media. This is an issue because visual media has an influential hold (both emotionally and mentally) over this generation and is a key factor in swaying the opinions and behaviors of these young minds. Visual media is a powerful tool that should continue to be used by future generations, but with the knowledge that there will always be potentially negative influences, and more importantly, ways to identify and defend against them. This thesis is designed to explore a possible method to combat this lack of critical thinking in a visual manner by creating a beginner's guide to evaluating visual media.

The most important question to answer was how exactly visual media is used to mentally and emotionally influence people. Initial research investigated four areas of influence that exist in nearly all visual media: color theory, symbolism, literature influence, and emotion. Literature reviews explored each of these areas in greater detail. Next, case studies reviewed other similar projects and how they tackled similar issues in a visual way. Then, content analysis was used to dig deeper into the four areas of interest: color theory, symbolism, literature influence, and emotions. Finally, concept mapping and image boards were used to begin testing and establishing the best ways to tackle the visual deliverables.

In light of this research, it was determined that the deliverables would consist of five illustrations infused with color theory, symbolism, literature influence, and emotion, as well as four illustrated charts explaining the basics of each influential category, so the viewer can engage with the project.



# CHAPTER 1

## THE PROBLEM

# INTRODUCTION

## THE PROBLEM

The focus of this research is the critical evaluation of visual media and how it pertains to Generation Z. Visual media is a powerful tool that can have either a positive or negative impact depending on how it is used. This does not mean that the youth of today should never be allowed to have access to or view visual media. In fact, as mentioned above, visual media can be a great tool for teaching this generation useful lessons and concepts. Critical evaluation of the intents, themes, philosophies, and agendas behind visual media is a concept that Generation Z, as a whole, struggles

to comprehend. They consume this media daily and this has the potential to be a problem because without the necessary skills to guide them, their worldviews are open to corruption from destructive influences.

## THE GOAL

The primary goal of this project is to give Generation Z an awareness of the potential dangers that may exist in visual media, so that can safely (or at least with some understanding) navigate the wild world they will soon enter. The main questions this research aims to answer are:

1. What is critical thinking/evaluation of visual media?
2. How is color theory/psychology influential in visual media?
3. How is emotional psychology present in and affected by art?
4. Why is symbolism important and how does it affect the viewer?
5. How does literature influence the arts and visual media and why is this important?

## KNOWLEDGE GAP

After performing the initial research there are a handful of questions that will require further research to understand to a greater degree. These questions follow along the same path as the initial round of questions but strive to ensure that any loose ends are tidied up. Further research into these topics may also cultivate other questions, not yet considered, that would benefit this project. Most of these questions are meant to explore options for the visual solution. It is never too early to begin crafting ideas that may or may not end up making it in the final thesis document. It is better to have too many options than too few.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. What is/are the biggest influence(s) on Generation Z?
2. Can one introduce negative influences and critical thinking simultaneously?
3. What is the most impactful way to visually design a solution.
4. How can one simplify color theory/psychology, symbolism, emotional psychology, and narrative influence/agenda into an elevator pitch?



# CHAPTER 2

## THE RESEARCH



## RATIONALE

Critical evaluation of visual media, or the lack of it, is an issue that appears to plague Generation Z. A lack of critical evaluation is a serious problem for this generation, because visual media exists in ways and amounts that were unavailable prior to this generation.

The fact that this generation is saturated with a copious amount of visual media including: social media, tv shows, videogames, movies, art, design, etc. means there is a greater chance for the youth to be negatively impacted than ever before. While these items are each a form of visual media, this term does not make one or any of them inherently evil or negative, they do possess a potential danger in light of their visual nature. Due to this fact, it is important to understand where this visual media holds the greatest amount of influence and which types of visual media possess the greatest attraction for the youth, especially Generation Z. It is additionally important to deconstruct the manners in which visual media exhibits influence on the viewer (through color theory, symbolism, etc.), so they may be better introduced to a new audience.

## STAKEHOLDERS

### PRIMARY

The intended audience of this research is Generation Z. Generation Z, despite their lack of critical evaluation skills, and their willingness to go along with the crowd, is a generation that does not like being forced to do things against their will or to have their shortcomings pointed out to them, particularly by older generations. This generation is one that wishes to be independent and self-driven, but their lack of critical evaluation of society has coerced them into believing they somehow accomplish this goal by playing it safe and not disrupting the status quo. This is an idea that will be challenged through this project.

### SECONDARY

While Generation Z is the primary target of the research and the project, this project has the potential to be bigger than only this generation. There are both older and younger generations who could use a refresher course in the critical evaluation of visual media, especially in today's world. In order to affect the future generations, the youth of today should first be reached, because without

them there is no future. Reaching out to the present youth can also have an impact on the present older generations. This project and this research have the potential to be carried on beyond this generation. This idea of critically evaluating visual media is a concept that can be explored further than this project.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Several research methods were used to conduct the research necessary to prepare for the latter stages of this project. A selection of these methods required investigating written materials and other methods required visual analyses. Each research style employed as well as their specific objectives will be explored in further detail.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

Literature reviews were conducted at the beginning to explore the initial research questions. A variety of materials such as theses, dissertations, articles, books, magazines, journals, and websites were reviewed to gather a wide range of information and ensure a variety of opinions and sources. These reviews provided the framework for the rest of the research and brought to light additional research questions

that were unknown at the beginning of the research phase.

## CASE STUDIES

Three case studies were conducted to explore projects that possessed similar objectives to this thesis project.

The first case study reviewed a course offered by the National Gallery of Art in partnership with Harvard. The course is primarily employed to teach critical evaluation through art critique to grade school students, as well as provides courses for higher education students.

**THIS PROJECT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE BIGGER THAN ONLY THIS GENERATION.**

The second case study reviewed a YouTube video from the Wireless Philosophy channel. The video, narrated by Professor Geoff Pynn of Northern Illinois University, taught the basic concept of critical evaluation as well as the difference between a deductive argument and an ampliative argument. The video was additionally chosen for the simple animation style that accompanied the narration. The animation possessed a playful quality while still maintaining a level of professionalism.

The third case study was the film *Rebel Without a Cause*. Films are one of the most influential of the visual media types and this one was specifically chosen because it possessed similarities to this project. First, the film addresses an audience that is nearly identical to this thesis -- the youth of America and their struggle in adapting to an ever-changing world. Second, the film additionally touches on the idea that the roles emerging adults are expected to play have changed dramatically in the last century, and this concept could be perceived as a reason the thought process of today is vastly different than the youth of only seventy years ago. Second, the film deals with symbolism in several manners with the main method being visual symbolism, which plays directly into this thesis project.

Each of these case studies served a different purpose. The first proved that the topic of critical evaluation could be taught at any level, the second showed that this topic could be introduced in a playful yet professional manner, and the third illustrated that this topic could be explored on a larger scale with lasting impact.

## CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content Analysis explored articles and videos to gain further insight into the ways and manners in which Generation Z is influenced by visual media.

Additionally, the content analysis research method reviewed videos that demonstrated how the four areas (color theory, symbolism, emotional psychology, and literature influence) could be quickly covered in video and animated form.

## CONCEPT MAPPING

Concept Mapping was used to explore various manners that critical evaluation could be introduced to a new audience and furthermore give the audience a deliverable that would work alongside and complement the project's goal, which is to bring awareness to the idea of critical evaluation and how this method of critical thinking can be used with visual media.

## IMAGE BOARDS

Image boards were utilized to explore different options and styles for the finished look of the project. Different eras of America, comic book styles, and animation styles, and conceptual portraits were reviewed to decide the look of the completed project.

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

The additional research done was nearly entirely visual. Now, that the project's objective has been almost secured, attention shifts to the final deliverables. This additional research has been through social media, television, and inspiration from projects in other classes. The final visual direction is nearly in sight and additional research will continue to be a part of the process until this project is complete.

Now, to explore each research method in greater detail.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The initial research consisted of compiling sources and diving deeper into the five main topics. These topics included critical evaluation/thinking, color theory/psychology, symbolism, emotional psychology, and the literature influence/agenda found in visual media.

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critical thinking (or evaluation as it may be referred to throughout this project) is a crucial skill that this generation should strive to learn. It is crucial enough that a lack of critical

evaluation creates a stagnant society (Moon). Critical evaluation can be described as the "...cognitive skills that can facilitate problem solving..." (Shaw). Generation Z is content to follow along with whatever society conditions them to associate with being right or whatever maintains the status quo. This generation has a major case of F.O.M.O. (fear of missing out), which encourages them to go along with whatever society does or thinks. Generation Z, especially those living in the United States, possesses the ability to comprehend information, but it is becoming increasingly rare to find young people, who are able to form their own opinions and form their own new ideas, built off already existing information (McGuire). This is in part due to the fact that students are no longer required to struggle mentally in school (McGuire). School has become more interested in the participation of the students rather than in their comprehension of the subject matter and their ability to reach their own conclusions. People often mistake critical evaluation for common sense. While one often informs the other and vice versa, they are two very different concepts. Common sense is an awareness that most people are born with or learn subconsciously in their

day-to-day living. Critical evaluation is a skill that one must consciously strive to learn. There are people who believe that common sense is sufficient for their life and that critical evaluation is needed only in the worlds of business or academia. The truth is that at one point this may have been true, but with the birth of the Internet the need for critical evaluation in everyday life has grown exponentially. Certain people see a potential flaw in teaching critical thinking, such as the potential for it to make people critical of everything (Erickson). One could argue that that is essentially the point of critical thinking and a critical outlook on life could be a positive outcome.

## COLOR THEORY / PSYCHOLOGY

Color theory and color psychology are fascinating topics that would take years to master. Color is one the most basic elements of art and visual media. It awakens the senses and creates a sort of mental excitement. This can be used to prepare the brain to receive a more thorough understanding of the piece or even to hold the viewer's interest, so that they will be encouraged to further explore the work and its meaning/ intent. Color may be used

to determine a person's attractiveness (through means of health not race), the overall health of a living thing (person, animal, or plant), and can additionally be used to display dominance (Maier). If people were aware of how something as simple as color affected them, they would be more apt to have a critical eye in their lives. The color of the office wall might determine the productivity of the employees and fast-food chains use red and yellow to cause feelings of hunger in the people driving by (Maier). Color can furthermore be a signal of an emotional or mental state. Sadness is generally portrayed in dark and cold colors, while bright and warm colors denote happiness (Hartz). An example of this would be a playground. A playground with bright and energetic colors will always be preferred over one with dark and boring colors.

## COLOR THEORY AND COLOR PSYCHOLOGY ARE FASCINATING TOPICS THAT WOULD TAKE YEARS TO MASTER.

Now, while there are general rules and theories that seem to apply to most people, color theory is more complex than that. Color preference is the idea that certain people do not fall into these categories. One person may love blue



because it reminds them of the ocean, while someone else may have a bad memory of the ocean and despise the color blue. Color in its intricate nature is different for everyone. General rules of thumb may be a good fit for most people but may not apply in the exact same way for everyone. Other topics regarding color theory consist of color models/systems, the philosophy of color, color science, color symbolism, and color phenomena (Elliot). These are but a small selection of the many areas of color theory and hence is why it could take years to master this topic. With that in mind, it is important to consider the amount of time one has to share a topic with an audience, such as Generation Z and their incredibly short attention span. If one has a very limited amount of time and space to dedicate to a topic, then it is a good idea to start with the most basic and fundamental information (Yen). This provides the audience with a strong foundation for continuing to research said topic in their own time.

## SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is an immensely important topic to understand from a critical evaluation aspect. It exists all around in nearly every medium and every area

of life. Symbols may be used to self-express, or represent a person's fears, desires, relationships (between both people and objects), duality, and even the surreal - unconscious or imagination (Martínez). Symbolism can be defined as two different things. One is the use of literal symbols, such as color, icons, or images to denote abstract ideas and thoughts. The second is the Symbolism movement that existed from 1880-1910. This movement was created with the sole purpose of giving visual form to the surreal worlds and ideas (Symbolism Movement). This movement was also highly interested in the occult and hints of that inclination still exist and is a brilliant reason to ensure that this generation (Generation Z) possesses, at the very least, a basic understanding of symbolism. Symbolism can be used purposefully to influence thoughts and opinions (think marketing) in subtle ways that people may not realize while still having an incredible impact. Part of the reason that this is so successful, especially in visual media is that symbolism is very often paired with the fantastic, such as in one's favorite show or movie or even in a favorite artist's work (Weddle). One can get invested in

the media to the point that they allow their guard, against potentially bad influences or opinions, to momentarily relax. The arts (and visual media) and symbolism work together to enhance each other (Herr).

They are more powerful together. The more powerful the tool, the greater the influence. Symbolism is an influential

**ALL PEOPLE HAVE AN EMOTIONAL REACTION TO ART, WHETHER THAT EMOTION IS POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE.**

tool, and this generation would benefit greatly in learning to realize when the influence is not in their best interest.

### **EMOTIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Emotions are a large part of what makes art as successful and as memorable as it continues to be. There is a phenomenon known as “aesthetic experience” which simply put, is the idea that all people have an emotional reaction to art, whether that emotion is positive or negative (Mastandrea). Art is used in several types of mental therapy and for patients with different types of cognitive disabilities or decline, because it has been seen to

produce a re-stimulation of people’s emotional and mental states when viewed (Mastandrea). Art and other forms of visual media are unique in that they provide a way for people to mentally interact with an inanimate object and receive back a visual, emotional, or mental response. This is a large part of the reason that visual media is used in therapy (Mastandrea). A person does not even need to comprehend art to have an emotional response toward it (this goes back to color theory) (Leder). This addresses the next question of whether or not a person can have a real emotional connection with art. The answer to this is absolutely. One of the reasons that people have emotional connections to the visual arts is not simply because of the art itself. Often, the viewer is having an emotional connection with the artist and all the emotions and feelings that they imbued into their work (Sayers). Now, it is important to understand that emotions and moods are two different things. Art does not influence moods (at least not directly). Emotions require an object or a source to occur, while moods are seemingly born out of nothing (Gaut). This is important to keep in mind – emotions can be/must be triggered by objects

or an identifiable source. This ties directly into why critical evaluation is so important, especially in today's world. Corrupt influences, especially in visual media, tend to target people's emotions. People get emotional very easily and will make rash decisions because of this fact. People (in this case Generation Z) need to be taught how to not act on their emotions and evaluate visual media critically to understand when they are being conditioned or manipulated by that visual media.

## LITERATURE INFLUENCE / AGENDA

Literature is one of the oldest influences for the visual arts. When one thinks of ancient art, they will typically think of the works of art that depict the ancient Greek gods or interpretations of biblical stories. This is because these two genres, among others, were two of the greatest literary influences for the visual arts (Bensouda). Art is narrative at its core, even when it is professed not to be such as in abstract art. That being said, because art is inherently a visual narrative, it must perform an action, whether good or bad. An example is the word narrative itself. It can mean different things.

It might refer to a story such as Tolkien's "Fellowship of the Ring," which details an adventure story of epic proportions (Tolkien). Narrative might also describe an agenda behind a work such as C.S. Lewis's "The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe," which simultaneously tells an adventure story about four children in a fantastic world, while at the same time exists as an allegory of the Story of Salvation (Lewis). This story is not only meant to be an exciting tale. It is meant to embody much more than that and to encourage readers to discover its deeper meanings. Both of these great novels share this trait of being both kinds of narratives. The artist Caravaggio was famous for creating paintings that doubled as both stories and agendas. His work and its meanings were often disguised behind a contemporary look but were more effective because of this. His (art) work is among the most critically evaluated (Kinoshita). This is undoubtedly because Caravaggio possessed an immense understanding of color theory, symbolism, emotions, and was able to tie these elements together to create something fascinating, beautiful, and most importantly memorable in the most influential way possible - through a story.



## CONCLUSION

Each of these four elements is important for understanding how to critically evaluate visual media. First, color psychology is important to understand because color is the most unassuming influence and yet is one of the most powerful. It affects emotions and does so while its victim is most likely unaware of what is the source of the emotion. Second, symbolism is also important to understand. It is like a roadmap with all the signs laid out and the viewer needs only basic tools in order to start reading and to navigate through the treacherous landscape of good and bad influences found in visual media. Third, emotions themselves are deceptive because their source is often not immediately apparent. Learning to distinguish normal emotions from ones derived from visual media, purposefully designed to trigger the viewer, is essential for understanding the critical evaluation of visual media. Fourth, literature and narrative play two vital roles in this journey to becoming a critical evaluator of visual media. Its first role is that of influence, more specifically understanding where the influence of literature originates and what it means. Its second role is that it binds this project together. Stories

are the most effective way to ensure that an audience (Generation Z) retains information. Stories are important because stories tend to stick (Heath).

## CASE STUDY I

### PROJECT ZERO

Nelson Goodman began developing Project Zero, for Harvard University, in 1967. Harvard then came alongside The National Gallery of Art as well as several other museums, to provide teachers and their students, of all ages, with resources designed to enhance critical thinking skills through basic art critique (National Gallery).

Nelson Goodman and his team wanted to create a program that enhanced learning, thinking, and creativity. He wanted to do it in a way that married the theories being taught with real-world application and practice. He also wanted to create a program that made a way for learning and thinking visible, so teachers could see exactly how their students were learning, and students were given visible and tangible learning aids to reinforce abstract thought and help them develop critical thinking in every area of life and learning.

This project itself is a series of extracurricular courses offered through a collaboration of Harvard and The National Gallery of Art. It ranges from elementary level classes all the way through high school and higher education. These courses can be taught with visual aids offered through the course as well as any piece of art that the teacher/professor prefers, meaning that no traveling to museums is required. Museum pieces are offered to review online, but the course provides the tools to make any and every piece of art a learning experience.

The project develops critical thinking skills through three basic steps. First, students are asked to observe the work and describe their findings based on only their initial observation. Second, the students are asked to provide evidence for their initial findings; they need to be able to back up their observations with any level of thought. Third, the students are then required to ask questions based on their initial observations and their proposed evidence. As mentioned above, these lesson plans can be taught in a classroom with any piece of art or can be used as field trip material with a trip to the National Gallery or any other museum of interest.

Another interesting feature is the project introduction video located on the website. It is a simple animation done in an infographic style. This not only provides a level of interest right away, but also provides a clear and simple idea of what the program/project is all about.

When developing a course that covers a wide range of ages, it can be difficult to determine how to address specific age groups in terms of content comprehension. This carries into the challenge of which styles of art are best for specific age groups. Abstract art might be considered above the level of first graders, but the bright colors and shapes may be a better fit for first graders than a renaissance

**THESE COURSES CAN BE TAUGHT WITH VISUAL AIDS OFFERED THROUGH THE COURSE AS WELL AS ANY PIECE OF ART THAT THE TEACHER/ PROFESSOR PREFERS...**

painting that is highly detailed and realistic, but possesses a greater level of theological and mythological influence than can be comprehended by young, developing minds.

The project did not explicitly state issues in its development, but these are issues that would have to be addressed in this type of project.

The outcome of this project is a critical thinking course that is easily accessible to anyone. It is filled with visuals and many different styles and mediums of art that keep learning fun and fresh, while at the same time encouraging students of all ages to become critical thinkers. Besides the website, which provides lesson plans, visual aids, and access to a database of artwork, there is also a collection of YouTube videos which showcases these tools being used in classes at different age levels. This provides interested customers with a preview of the course and a look at how it can spark conversations and critical thought processes.

There were several elements in this project that lined up with what this thesis project (Everybody Is A Critic) strives to accomplish. While the goal of Everybody Is A Critic is not to write a course about art and critical thinking, the goal is to teach critical thinking through art. This course, by Mr. Goodman, not only assisted in pointing out things that could potentially be utilized in this thesis

project, but it also helped to identify what this project should not include. There is a consideration of creating simple animations to go along with this thesis project, and the animated intro to this case study's own project has inspired the possibility of incorporating animation into the thesis project in some capacity. Project Zero's view of marrying theory with practice is a concept that will be explored further in this thesis project. This approach appears to be a successful way to ensure a level of content retention.

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

The project consists of many different styles, genres, and mediums including art from ancient times all the way to contemporary artwork.

The project is aimed at school kids from elementary to high school ages (can be used for higher education as well). The content is flexible, so that the lesson plans can be adjusted to fit the comprehension level of any particular group. This allows kids with higher or lower comprehension skills to work at an altered pace.

The students first view the work and then are encouraged to participate

and interact with the work through questions and observations.

The text provides insight and thought-provoking material related to the imagery, but is withheld from the students, at first, to allow for comprehension and understanding to be reached on their own, through purely visual analysis.

The composition varies from piece to piece without any truly connecting elements. The pieces range in style, size, medium, and genre.

The content consists of art pieces spanning all of art history. The content is diverse and challenges students at different levels but promotes retention of information through evaluating the visual solution.

This project explores semiotics as taught in an art history class, but with a focus on how this thought process and study of semiotics can be applied to everyday life.

Iconography is explored in this project in the way that it might be in an art history course, but with a focus on learning to “read” visual content in a

critical manner, even outside of the classroom and art world.

The aesthetic choices are difficult to review because this project covers all of art history as a means for teaching critical thinking and evaluation. The fact that there are many aesthetic elements and styles combined keep this project fresh and enjoyable.

In the thesis project, it would not be realistic to use all of the different art mediums and styles displayed in this case study, because the thesis project requires a unified feel for the final presentation. However, there is the possibility of using a simplified animation to introduce and explain the project’s goals and mission.

## CASE STUDY 2

### YOUTUBE VIDEO

The founder of this project is Geoff Pynn a Professor at Northern Illinois University (Wireless Philosophy).

This project, in video form, is an introduction to critical thinking that is targeted at college students. The video covers the topics of critical

thinking, the definition of an argument, and the difference between deductive and ampliative arguments. While this video was made for a higher education audience, the video was still kept entertaining and engaging to retain the audience's attention.

The video, created by Professor Pynn at Northern Illinois University was uploaded to the YouTube channel Wireless Philosophy. The video is comprised of the professor's narration of the topic accompanied by several simple, animated graphics. The graphic elements are composed of cutout photos, text, and simple illustrated icons.

The YouTube video does not explicitly state what challenges or issues arose in the creation of the video, but the video itself is a solution to two issues. The first issue is that of teaching a complex topic like critical thinking. Thinking critically is a skill that is learned and can be a daunting task to undertake. A concise introduction to this topic is a wonderful avenue for new students to become better engaged with this topic. The second issue is a lack of visual material for visual learners. Higher education courses, unless explicitly

involved in the arts or another visual degree, tend to lack a visual approach, especially in abstract ideas such as critical evaluation or thought. This video takes this abstract idea and creates a way for visual learners to better comprehend the material.

The outcome of this project was an entertaining and yet informative video about the complicated topic that is critical thinking. It perfectly balances entertainment with information. This is an excellent way to teach a subject, because teaching any topic while keeping the audience entertained helps to guarantee that the audience's

**THE CONTENT IS WELL-STRUCTURED AND BALANCES ENTERTAINMENT AND INFORMATION TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.**

attention will be held longer. The voiceover accompanied by the animation was highly effective for this topic and project.

This video is relevant to this thesis project, because while not explicitly attempting to teach critical thinking



through art, it is doing precisely that. The animation style which combines hand-drawn animations as well as photographic elements keep the video entertaining, despite the topic being complex. This is a formula that might be interesting to mimic in the thesis project. Photographic elements would break the visual aesthetic of illustrations that the project will have, but it does cause one to consider creating something unexpected to capture the audience's attention. The three topics discussed in this video, critical thinking, defining an argument, and knowing the difference between a deductive and an ampliative argument, also make for additional and beneficial study topics, that might help to round out the project.

### VISUAL ANALYSIS

This project consists of an animated video, accompanied by a voiceover, that describes a simple introduction to critical thinking.

The specific audience is the student body of Northern Illinois University, particularly those enrolled in Professor Pynn's class. While this was the original audience, it is possible that the audience was expanded to college students in general, as the video was

uploaded to a public YouTube channel (Wireless Philosophy).

There are two different ways that this was/is consumed by the audience. Students, who did not have the chance to experience this lecture live, can listen to the audio of the lecture, while watching the animated pictures and text that complement the narration. Students, who were able to be in the live audience, saw the same visuals but were also able to experience the body language of the professor as he was teaching. These are both valid visual solutions and it is harder to say which was/is more effective. There are students who may need to see the physical speaker in order to learn better from a visual standpoint, and then there are students who may get distracted by the body language of the speaker and learn better from just the audio clip supported by the animation.

The text, in this video, acted as part of the visual solution. The text is often the keywords or phrases spoken by the narrator being displayed visually for greater emphasis and a better retention of information. The text is very specifically chosen to ensure that the student remembers the important information and does not

get distracted by information that does not need to be retained.

The composition is both interesting and creative. Even though the video is animated, it keeps the animation confined to a black rectangle, almost as though the student is in class watching it unfold on the blackboard.

The content is well-structured and balances entertainment and information to provide the best possible learning experience for the student. While the topic is complex in theory, the video does a great job of explaining it in a simplified way that did not feel overly dumbed down for its higher education audience.

Semiotics do not play a large part in this project. The information is as straight forward as possible and does not rely on or use signs and symbols (aside from the animated elements) to get its message across.

Iconography is found in the animation itself. The icons are literal and not figurative. This was an appropriate choice because the topic was complex, and it was easier to explain it simply and literally, rather than be overly metaphorical in the explanation and

risk losing the attention of the students in the process.

The whole aesthetic works perfectly for the topic. One may argue that both hand-drawn, and photographic elements might break the overall aesthetic cohesion, but in this case, they appear to work well together and help the overall flow and appeal.

The aesthetic choices made in this animation are similar to what this thesis project will attempt to accomplish in project. This video proves that it is possible to teach and bring awareness to this topic through simple animation. It is the hope that this concept will translate to animation's static cousin – illustration. This video will be a great reference for the thesis project.

## CASE STUDY 3

### REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

Director Nicholas Ray wanted to create a film — *Rebel Without A Cause*, that highlighted the troubled youth of America and their dissatisfaction with the status quo, while simultaneously exploring the reasons why this issue existed in the first place (Ray).

The project is a 1955 film about troubled youth navigating through the emotional waters of emerging adulthood, meanwhile looking for purpose and meaning in life. The story follows Jim Stark, a juvenile delinquent, who gets involved with other delinquents and spirals out of control until he hits rock bottom. The story aims to showcase the struggle of being a youth in 1950s America, when expectations for young adults were rapidly changing. The powerful visuals, the brilliant use of color, and raw performances of the cast create a movie that is timeless and carries a message that continues to resonate with young adults today.

This film met many challenges. A few more serious than others. Its first challenge arrived when the first screenwriter left the project and another had to be found to take his place. Next, the search for the main actor was a long process that reviewed many popular and well-loved actors who did not quite hit the mark for the part. At first, the film was only allowed to film in black and white because the studio did not have faith the film would do well, but as the popularity of young James Dean grew, the studio gave the green light for filming in color. A few

themes of the film, such as delinquent youths and problematic parents, did not bode well with all audiences, with some countries going as far as banning the movie. Much of the fear surrounding the film was that it would spark a surge of delinquency in the youth.

The outcome was an iconic movie that is still loved by and relatable to the youth of today. It was groundbreaking for social issues, cinematography, and filmmaking in general.

While bringing awareness to critical thinking is not in the mission statement of this film, it is a film that has been analyzed since its release and was clearly made with this intent. The movie encourages the audience to not simply dismiss the restless youth but to understand why their restlessness and rebellious predisposition exists in the first place. The film demonstrates that broken families and especially weak father figures are a key factor in the delinquency of children. This is similar to this thesis project and how it is centered around bringing awareness to the idea of critical thinking — of not just accepting something at face value. Another relevant point is the audience. Both the thesis project and this film



share the same audience — troubled youth. This film, while dated, still gives a decent idea of the best way to reach young adults who are transitioning into the real world. The key, as described in the film, is to treat them like adults and listen to their issues instead of simply dismissing them. Another relevant point is the emotion in the movie. *Everybody Is A Critic* will deal with emotions and their role in decision making. This concept of emotions and the symbolism in *Rebel Without A Cause* are both visual and non-visual inspirations for the thesis project. The last similarity is the style of the film. The thesis project deliverables will need to reflect different eras of time; the 50s being one of the biggest influences. The movie accomplished the task of serving as both visual research and content analysis.

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

The film depicts 1950s America through the eyes of its restless youth. This project/film is a response to the times. The obsession and highlighted research and application of nuclear energy was a problem for many people. People believed that nuclear power spelled a not too distant end to the world and that fear quickly turned into a numb and uncaring attitude. Thinking

that the world might end soon, morals were cast aside and wild lives ensued. Opulence became the end. Nothing mattered and everything mattered all at the same time.

## PLATO'S DIFFERENT COLORED SOCKS REPRESENTED A CONFLICTED AND MISUNDERSTOOD SOUL.

This film also heavily explores broken families. In the age of nuclear families, this project depicts anything but a nuclear family. Peer pressure, mob mentality, social acceptance, and guilt were also important issues in this film.

The audience is the restless youth of America. The audience has since expanded to include new fans and cult followers of the late James Dean.

The only text in the film is its title "*Rebel Without A Cause*." The film brings the text to life in a visual and realistic manner.

The cinematography goes a long way in helping to describe what the youths are thinking and feeling.

The film's cinematography, as a whole, is fresh and experimental. This complements the fresh and

controversial subject matter of the film. Color is also heavily used both symbolically and aesthetically.

The content demonstrates that sometimes it takes a rebel without a cause to fix another rebel without a cause. Sometimes it takes seeing someone else hit rock bottom to realize that that is not where one wants to be. The content is also influenced by a growing juvenile delinquency problem in the 1950s, sparked by a dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Nuclear families of the 1950s are typically shown as happy and successful, but this film shows anything but happy families. The families instead have “nuclear” personalities. The car race scene represents wild lives that claim young lives too soon (strangely timed as James Dean dies in an automobile accident, later that year, at the age of 24). The opening scene represents a childlike innocence surrounded by a chaotic world. The red jacket represents a wild and untamable heart, and this idea is further seen as the jacket’s new owner ends up dying in it. The jacket represents a shedding of skin for one character and a death sentence for another, who could not be helped. The planetarium

scene reflected the hopelessness and fear that dominated the minds of the 50s youth. Plato’s different colored socks represented a conflicted and misunderstood soul. The red jacket being taken off to show the white shirt represented the good being hidden under a wild and rebellious persona. Father figures were also an immense piece of symbolism shown throughout the film.

The Hero’s Journey was the most significant iconography that could be seen throughout the film. Also, colors were used intentionally to illustrate important points, characters, and emotions effectively.

The vintage style and aesthetic of the 50s worked well, because the 50s youth still retained an innocent look overall, and this innocence contrasts well with the emerging gang and delinquent style and mentality explored in this film. A few special effects were outdated but this is to be expected from a film that is nearly 70 years old.

This thesis project will also possess a vintage quality to some extent. Films similar to this classic are fantastic image boards in and of themselves. The

color palette of the 50s is also great. The colors are soft and muted with pops of brighter colors.

## CONTENT ANALYSIS

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF PERSUASION

Generation Z has been called the generation with the shortest attention span. This Generation is alternatively known as Digital X and is the first generation to be raised alongside a massive growth in technology as well as the Digital Age (Kwaia, Tabassum, and Zaman). The age of the Internet has created a world that is more globally connected than ever before. The world being as connected as it is today, also means that this generation, especially those who ingest visual media daily, are receiving information in amounts that have never been possible before the Internet. The greater the amount of information that exists in a young person's life, the greater the risk that this person could be influenced by the media that they are consuming. This is not necessarily a bad thing as there are several positive influences that exist in visual media. The issue arrives when the negative influences get lost among the positive ones in the sea of information that is

visual media. There are individuals that count on the fact that people cannot determine positive influences from negative ones and use this knowledge to influence the youth of today. An example of an influence that could use this information is advertising. Now, this is not a blanket statement about advertisers in general; advertising like anything else can be used for beneficial or destructive reasons. It just happens that the amount of advertising that exists in the world means that there will always be wolves in sheep's clothing. One way that certain advertisers have the possibility to be a negative influence is through narrative or story driven ads. These are ads that attempt to influence individuals to buy or support things by way of triggering the viewer's emotions. Advertisers may rely on the fact that people automatically store information narratively in their brains. Movies and books work in a similar fashion. They are often stories that are emotionally gripping and are already in story format, so that they are easy for the brain to remember. This is the reason young kids in school are taught through stories – because stories are the easiest way for their brains to retain information. There are brands that purposefully use this form of

advertising to influence their customers to buy their products (Kwaia, Tabassum, and Zaman). Generation Z is more connected to the Internet (and often on many devices), than any previous generation before. This means that they are exposed to more of these emotionally triggering advertisement strategies than any generation prior. The youth of today also have access to unlimited amounts of information and while the Internet is a wonderful tool, it is also a privilege that should be taught to be respected, one that should be used cautiously. Marketing and advertising is one of the main reasons the youth should be wary of visual media, especially on the Internet. While every generation has had marketing that was targeted towards majority interests of society, this generation is unique in that products and services can now be targeted on an individual basis. Algorithms learn the user's habits and interests and begin to construct a personality map of that person. That is a large part of the reason Amazon, Facebook, and Netflix are all as successful as they are. Having service that is tailored to the individual is an amazing tool but one that should be utilized with caution. Advertisers now understand their customers better than ever before.

This means that advertisers (ones with malicious intentions) now possess the ability to emotionally manipulate their customers into making purchases.

Regarding physical products, this is not necessarily the most dangerous event, but this becomes less innocent when people start marketing ideas in this manipulative manner.

Persuasion knowledge is an important topic and one that relates to critical thinking, especially regarding advertising and other forms of visual media. Persuasion knowledge is essentially the knowledge of persuasive marketing strategies.

An example would be someone in a YouTube video talking about a product and how much they loved that product. This information would not give a viewer reason to doubt the sincerity of that person and might even convince that person to buy that product and try it for themselves. Now, let us go back and revisit that situation with one more piece of information... the person in the video was paid to talk about that product. Suddenly, the product and that person's opinion of it is thrown in a cautious light. The product may still be wonderful, and the person might actually love it, but as soon as they realize that the person was paid

to promote it, the product seems less likely to be a worthwhile purchase after all. That is the idea of persuasion;

## THE ISSUE ARRIVES WHEN THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCES GET LOST AMONG THE POSITIVE ONES IN THE SEA OF INFORMATION THAT IS VISUAL MEDIA.

as soon as a person realizes that someone may be persuading them to buy or do something, that someone or something suddenly has less merit (Kwaia, Tabassum, and Zaman). There are customers and viewers who have an innate sense of when someone may be manipulating or persuading them and therefore will probably form a more educated response to the persuasion, while others are not aware that this type of marketing exists and are susceptible to its influence. This idea of persuasion knowledge is something that, like critical thinking, can be activated in a person (Kwaia, Tabassum, and Zaman). Persuasive advertising is successful because it is often paired with narrative advertising. Establishing a narrative is a proven way to ensure that the viewer will remember the product. Research has shown that crafting a narrative or story

around a product or brand gives the consumer a more positive outlook on the brand and the brand/product is less likely to receive negative attention (Kwaia, Tabassum, and Zaman).

## PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Generation Z has had the unique ability to literally live vicariously through another person by way of social media and the Internet. Brands no longer sell only physical products but are now capable of selling experiences and lifestyles through their media influencers as a means of eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth), an advanced marketing strategy. Due to this ability to live someone else's life, Generation Z is the generation of ever-changing beliefs, desires, and a sense of global community. While those all sound like good things, they can also be destructive. What is good and desirable for one person is not always the same for someone else. These social media influencers or "powerful opinion leaders" have the ability to create a false sense of security around brands, products, and ideas while at the same time convincing their followers that having these things is a necessity (Hwang, Kumiu, and Zhang). Digital celebrities hold an immense



amount of influence in the marketing world and are often seen as more trustworthy than “traditional advertising” and are a cheaper marketing form for most companies (Hwang, Kumiu, and Zhang). The reason this strategy works is due to parasocial relationships - relationships that are unilateral (one-sided). This type of relationship forms when a follower or viewer of a digital celebrity/influencer attaches to them and feels as though there is an actual relationship or friendship occurring (Hwang, Kumiu, and Zhang). Another reason this is a successful marketing strategy is empathy. Empathy is a link that humans can acquire with each other that allows one person to experience the emotions or feelings of the other person. This is an important and useful connection that not every person experiences (at least not to the same degree). The ability to empathize with another person can be a downfall in certain situations, one of these situations being a parasocial relationship. Empathizing with someone who may or may not be taking advantage of that empathy, such as an influencer and their followers is dangerous because followers will adapt to ideas and opinions purely from a lack of self-esteem and a need

to feel socially included or seen by the influencer. Empathy drives these parasocial relationships to be stronger because people have an easier time feeling included and wanted in a virtual space than in reality (Hwang, Kumiu, and Zhang). Again, the community that the Internet provides is not always a negative thing but when influencers and digital celebrities capitalize on these cases of low esteem and the influence that they have over these “friends” (followers), it can lead to people being influenced to make bad decisions or purchases, purely out of a desire to be included. Another reason these digital influencers are effective is that they can track the likes and preferences of their followers in real time and can then direct their audience to a targeted advertising campaign (Hwang, Kumiu, and Zhang). Whenever a product is sponsored, it is required that the person state this so as not to confuse a truly personal opinion with paid advertising. The issue is that this is on the honor system and sponsored products are not always disclosed to the audience. The reason influencers try to get around disclosing this information is, as stated earlier, people’s positive view of a product will almost always dampen when it is possible that money was exchanged for

a positive review (Hwang, Kumi, and Zhang). This happens in things bigger than online shopping. Influencers may be paid to support political figures and social movements, all in an attempt to convert their following to an ideal or agenda. This is where persuasion knowledge would be helpful. Making people aware of potentially negative influences, especially in the form of these digital celebrities is an important step towards forming a generation of critical thinkers.

## A SYMBOLIC FIGHT

Symbols are powerful tools. They have the ability to unite or divide. They can inspire courage or create fear. They can bridge cultures and extend beyond language barriers. Symbols are essential to “organized” human life (Graeme and Angosto Fernandez). They define people’s perception, they communicate abstract thoughts and theories, and they are present in every walk of life (Graeme and Angosto Fernandez). Mentioned before, symbols can both bring unity or sow division. Waving at a person is the universal symbol for saying hello and one would be hard-pressed to find a person who did not understand the meaning of a friendly wave. Symbols such as the Christian cross are universally

recognized but are not universally accepted. Certain symbols close more doors than they open. Another trait of most symbols is that they are multivocal and not univocal, meaning that different people and different cultures do not always share the same opinion or give the same meaning to a symbol (Graeme and Angosto Fernandez). An example is the color red. Red is the most dominant color on the color wheel. It can stand for freedom, war, power, love, anger, and a multitude of other things. In politics, different sides fight for control to the meaning of symbols (Graeme and Angosto Fernandez). People within the same countries often see things differently because their political party identifies a symbol as having a different meaning. There are those who see the American flag as a symbol of hope and freedom and the blood spent to fight for and build the country, while others see it as a symbol for historic oppression and the use of other people’s blood to build the country. Each side has its own opinion, but at the center is the power of symbolism. This issue does not only apply to politics but it can be seen in nearly every area of life. The influence of symbols directly affects the condition of the future (Graeme and Angosto

Fernandez). As mentioned, symbols may hold different meanings for different people, but another trait of symbols is that they may evolve

## **EACH SIDE HAS ITS OWN OPINION, BUT AT THE CENTER IS THE POWER OF SYMBOLISM.**

in meaning over time. For example, playing cards was once prohibited in certain religious households because cards symbolized gambling. Today, games such as UNO are universally loved and can be played with anyone regardless of the language/culture barrier. Card games are now symbolic of friends and good times. The cards themselves have not changed but society's perception of them has changed. While something as harmless as playing cards shifting meaning is not something to worry about, there are far more important and powerful symbols that once changed, might usher in a darker future. The problem is that many people are not aware of symbolism, in idea or in physical icon. They go about their lives unaware of how symbolism affects and influences them like a vendor selling ideas that look and sound good, but in reality, are snake oil.

## **THE THEORY OF COLOR**

Color theory is a complex topic and one that is ever evolving and growing. There are basic ideas and concepts that have managed to remain because of their essential nature.

The first area is color terminology. In order for someone to evaluate art and then eventually other aspects of visual media they must first be introduced to terms associated with art. These terms are hue, saturation, value, shade, and color hierarchy. Hue refers to a color free of value (dark or light) or, simply put, the most basic form of a color. Saturation is a color's intensity. Increasing saturation will make colors as bright as possible while decreasing saturation will revert an image to grayscale (only dark and light). Value determines a color's lightness or darkness. Adding white to blue creates light blue and adding black to blue creates dark blue. Shade is similar to value, but value mixed with colors other than black and white. Blue and green make teal which is a shade of both colors. Blue mixed with grey does not create dark or light blue but instead a muted shade of blue. Color hierarchy explores the relationship between colors. Primary colors (typically described as red,



blue, and yellow) are said to create every other color in the color wheel. The primary colors mixed with only each other create the secondary colors orange, green, and purple which mixed together create the tertiary (third level) colors and so forth. (Intro to Color Theory). While these are simple ideas, they provide a framework for a person to begin thinking critically. If a person asked a non-artist to critically evaluate a piece of art, hue, saturation, value, shade, and color hierarchy would be a great place to start.

The second area is the color wheel. The color wheel is a tool, utilized by fine artists and designers alike, in order to create beautiful color palettes and stories. Colors on the wheel can be arranged into countless color schemes and a few of the most popular color schemes are monochromatic, analogous, complementary, split complementary, triad, and square (Intro to Color Theory). Monochromatic designs are made up of many shades of one single color. Analogous designs are made up of colors that are directly next to each other on the color wheel. Complementary designs are made with colors that are directly opposite each other on the wheel. Split complementary designs are

composed of one complementary color with the two colors directly next to its complementary partner. Triad designs are made with any three colors (touched by the point of an equilateral triangle) on the color wheel. A square color scheme/design is any group of four colors that is evenly spaced around the color wheel. Two other popular color schemes are color stories that consists of warm or cool colors. Cool color schemes tend to be filled with blues, greens, and purples, while warm color schemes tend to have reds, yellows, and oranges. It should be noted that warm and cool colors are subjective and not every artist agrees which are which. These setups that were just mentioned seem to commonly work for most artists.

The third area is color symbolism. This topic was covered in symbolism, but it is worth repeating. Just like symbols may have different meanings in different parts of the world, the meanings of colors might also change depending on where one is in the world, red being the example used earlier. Every color can be associated with different traits. Green is associated with health and life, yellow is warm and friendly, blue is cold and

distant, purple can denote royalty, pink and red can express love, and the list continues. Again, there may be many traits given to the different colors depending on the culture. The most important use of color, especially using them concurrently, is that they have the ability to tell stories (Intro to Color Theory). When films were shot in black-and-white, they relied on good writing and expressive performances from the cast. The introduction of color in films, opened the door to many new possibilities and stories to be told. One reason is that people tend to associate emotions and meanings to colors, so when they are not present, one has to work harder to form a connection with the media.

Each of these three areas introduce only the basics of color theory, but together create a solid foundation for thinking critically about visual media.

## GETTING EMOTIONAL

Emotions is humanity's way of conveying unspoken messages to each other. A mother does not need her child to tell her when they are feeling blue; she knows because she has learned to read their emotions. Emotions are when the mind and the body respond to cognitive stimulation;

it involves “expressive behaviors, physiological activation, and conscious experience” (Crashcourse). Emotions are strange in that when they are high or low, they tend to cause individuals to act out of character. Emotions are motivating. People often make split-second decisions based on emotions. Sometimes the best decisions are made on a whim and sometimes the opposite is true. The takeaway is that while spontaneous decisions are not inherently bad, it is still worth exercising caution in certain situations. Why do we experience emotions? One theory suggests that emotions are the brain reacting to a physiological response (Crashcourse). For example, do people smile because they are happy or does the physical act of smiling make people happy? Another theory suggests that these things happen simultaneously (Crashcourse). This would be similar to dreaming where the mind both facilitates and experiences the subconscious. Schachter and Singer theorize that to experience emotions a person must be “physically activated” and must know the source of the activation (Crashcourse). Regardless of how humans experience emotions, it is something people are cognitively aware of. This is known because

emotions are mental and physical experiences (Crashcourse). The High-Road is a type of emotional response that is controlled and allows one to be aware of the fact that they are emotional, while the Low-Road possesses a faster response time and is seen when someone experiences emotions to the point of lashing out, crying, or screaming with excitement (Crashcourse). There are people who shut down mentally when they experience intense waves of emotions. Others completely shut down to the point that they become physically handicapped and still others have experienced emotions so intense that their bodies could not handle the emotion and they died. Emotions are powerful. Therefore, it is important to make people aware of their emotions and how others may be exploiting their emotions. At the very least, knowing how powerful emotions can be, should give one pause to critically evaluate their own emotional state. Optimal activation is the point where a person is experiencing emotions but is also in control of their emotional state (Crashcourse). An example of this is a person who may be sad or happy or irritated but does not allow it to hinder their ability to think and does not make rash decisions before critically

evaluating their emotional state. That is the goal - to make people critical evaluators of visual media and their own emotions.

## LEGENDARY INFLUENCES

Literature has inspired visual media for thousands of years and myths and legends inspired literature in the same way. The influence of literature can be seen all throughout visual media. The masters of old like Davinci and Michelangelo used literary, mythological, and theological influences all throughout their work, oftentimes blending these influences together. The Roman gods and literature were highly influenced, and many times copied from the Greeks (Mythology). This shows how influential powerful literature can be that civilizations would steal each other's gods and then those legends and myths would become actual deities that future generations would believe in and worship. People become the things that most heavily define and influence them. The mixture of God and gods was a popular choice that worked because everybody, in those days, understood these influences. The idea of multiple gods, in the time of Davinci and Michelangelo, was merely influential as the gods of old no longer

represented actual beings. Eventually, Christianity would return to reign as the preferred religion and went as far as forbidding the study of ancient mythology because of its ties to Paganism (Mythology). Works inspired by theology were the dominant subject matter of the visual arts for over a thousand years, until the ancient myths returned to once again inspire and influence art and other forms of visual media. Several classic works such as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was simply a modern (at that time) retelling of the mythological story of Pyramus and Thisbe. *Romeo and Juliet* is considered among the most well-known plays of all time and yet many of its viewers do not realize that it is heavily influenced by ancient literature. A more contemporary version of this idea is the movie *My Fair Lady* which is a well-loved classic and yet many viewers do not realize that this well-known classic was also inspired by an

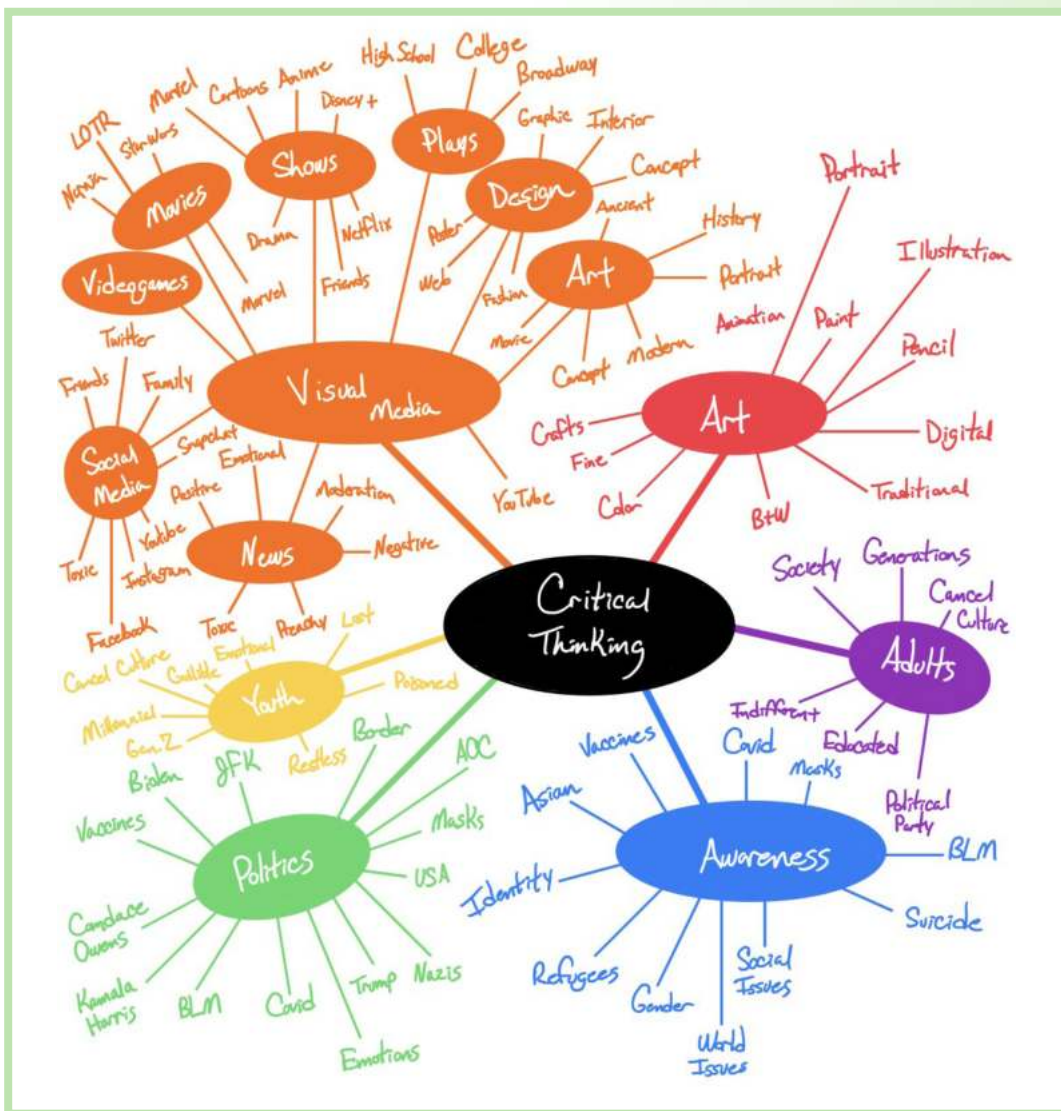
**OPTIMAL ACTIVATION  
IS THE POINT  
WHERE A PERSON  
IS EXPERIENCING  
EMOTIONS BUT IS ALSO  
IN CONTROL OF THEIR  
EMOTIONAL STATE.**

ancient Greek myth about a king who fell in love with a statue. These are examples of things that were explicitly influenced by literature and yet people did/do not realize the connection. It makes one wonder what affect the subtle influences, found in nearly every piece of visual media, is subconsciously having on its audience. Classic works were often only modern retellings, but today stories and visual media attempt to demonstrate that influence by incorporating ideals, figures, and stories into the modern world, not as a retelling but as a blend of the ancient and modern. Movies, shows, and art of today remain heavily inspired by mythology and a variety of religious themes, oftentimes unknowingly. This just shows how ingrained, into our culture, these ideas and themes truly have become. Once again, visual media is not inherently negative for being inspired by ancient myths or even more contemporarily classic tales. The point that this paper aims to explore is that once again, people do not realize that influence, both positive and negative, is all around them and that it is directly affecting them.



# CONCEPT MAPPING

Concept mapping is a great exercise for people who are not particularly creative. The map begins with one idea or word (the inception of the project). Then, words are written stemming out from the first one; any word or words that come to mind. There are not wrong answers in this exercise. The goal of this exercise is that as the words keep branching out and the map grows bigger, the brain starts making connections and ideas begin sprouting from just that first idea. This is a useful way to get out of creative ruts and to transform projects from simple ideas to complex ones, while still keeping everything in line because it can all be traced back to that first word.



# IMAGE BOARDS

The image board research method was used for additional research question number three: “What is the most impactful way to design a solution to this issue?”

The process consisted of creating eight image boards; each representing a different aspect of the project. Each board consists of ten images that all lend visual inspiration for the project. Image boards were created for the following sections:

**1. 1950s**

**2. 1960s**

**3. 1970s**

**4. 1980s**

**5. 1990s**

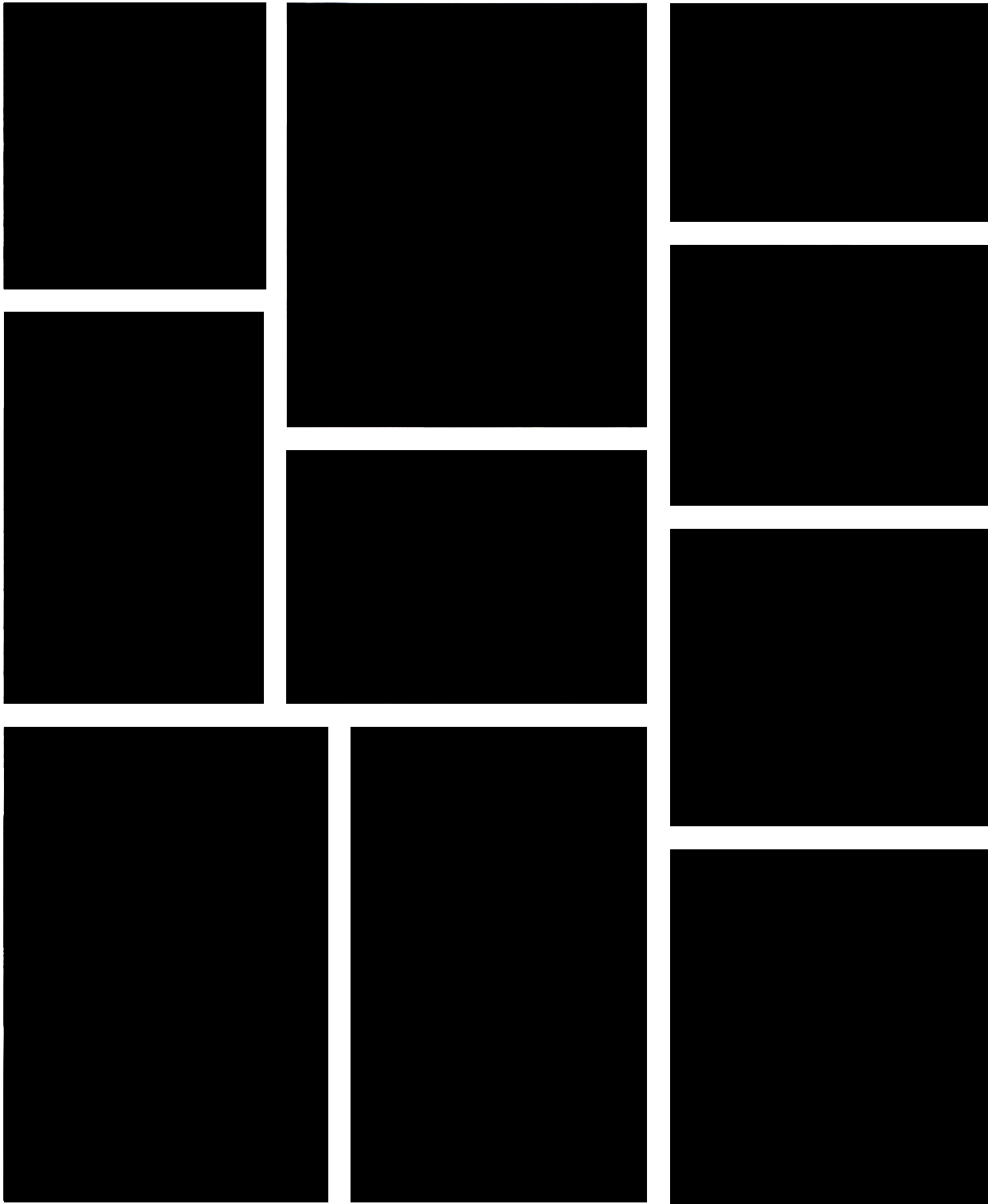
**6. Comic Book Style**

**7. Illustration Styles**

**8. Conceptual Portraits**

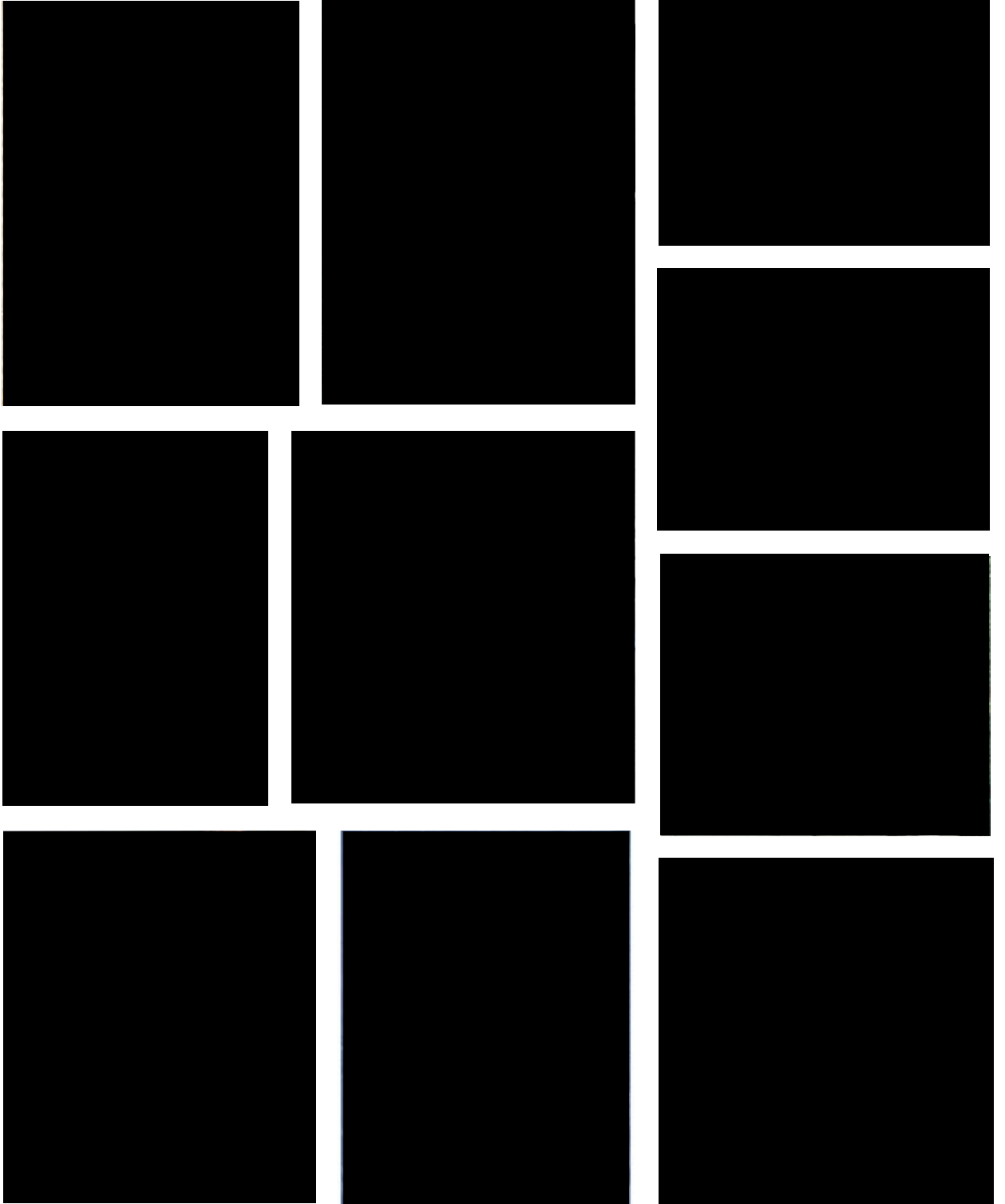


# 1950s



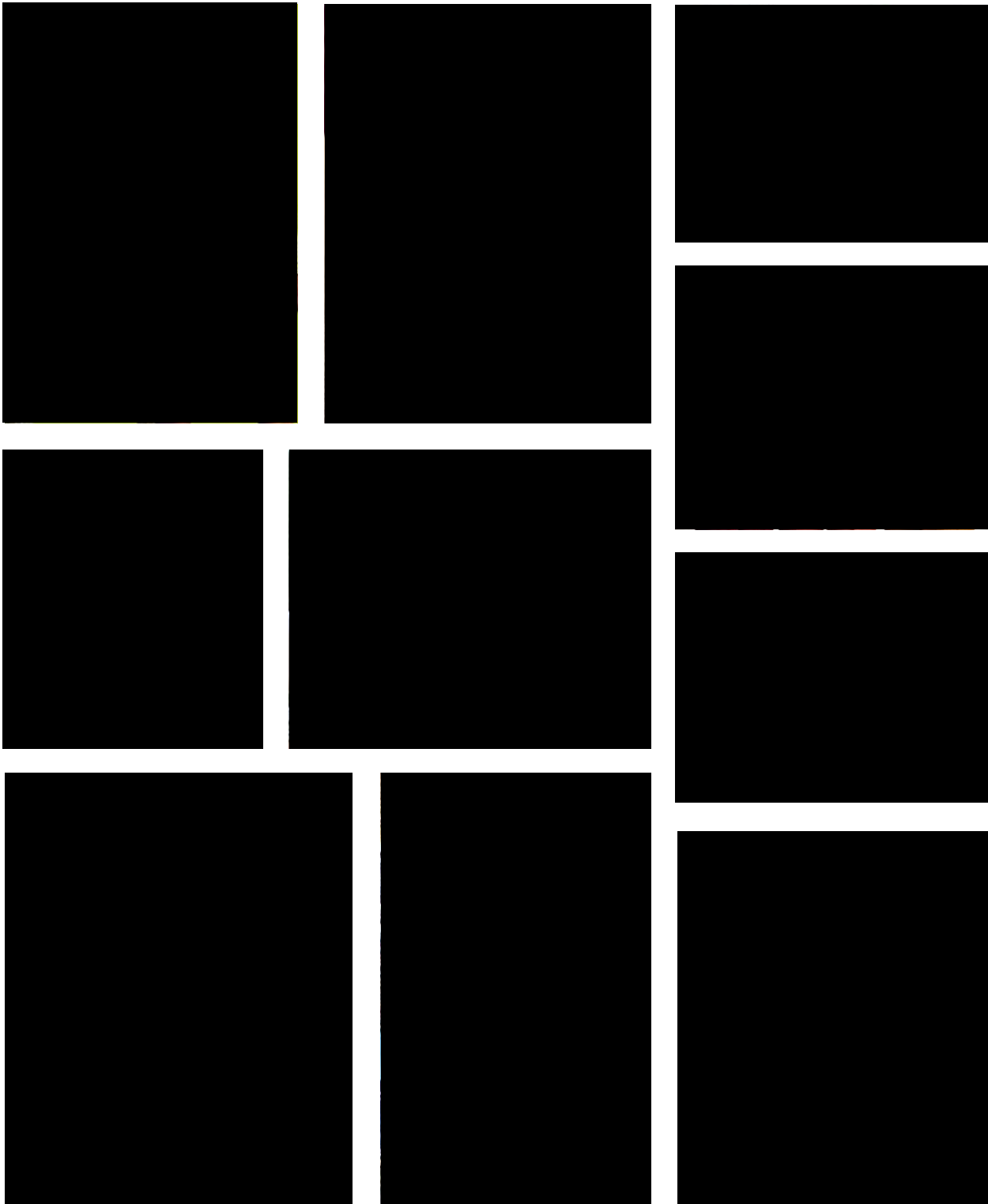
This board was used to explore the aesthetic of the 1950s.

# 1960s



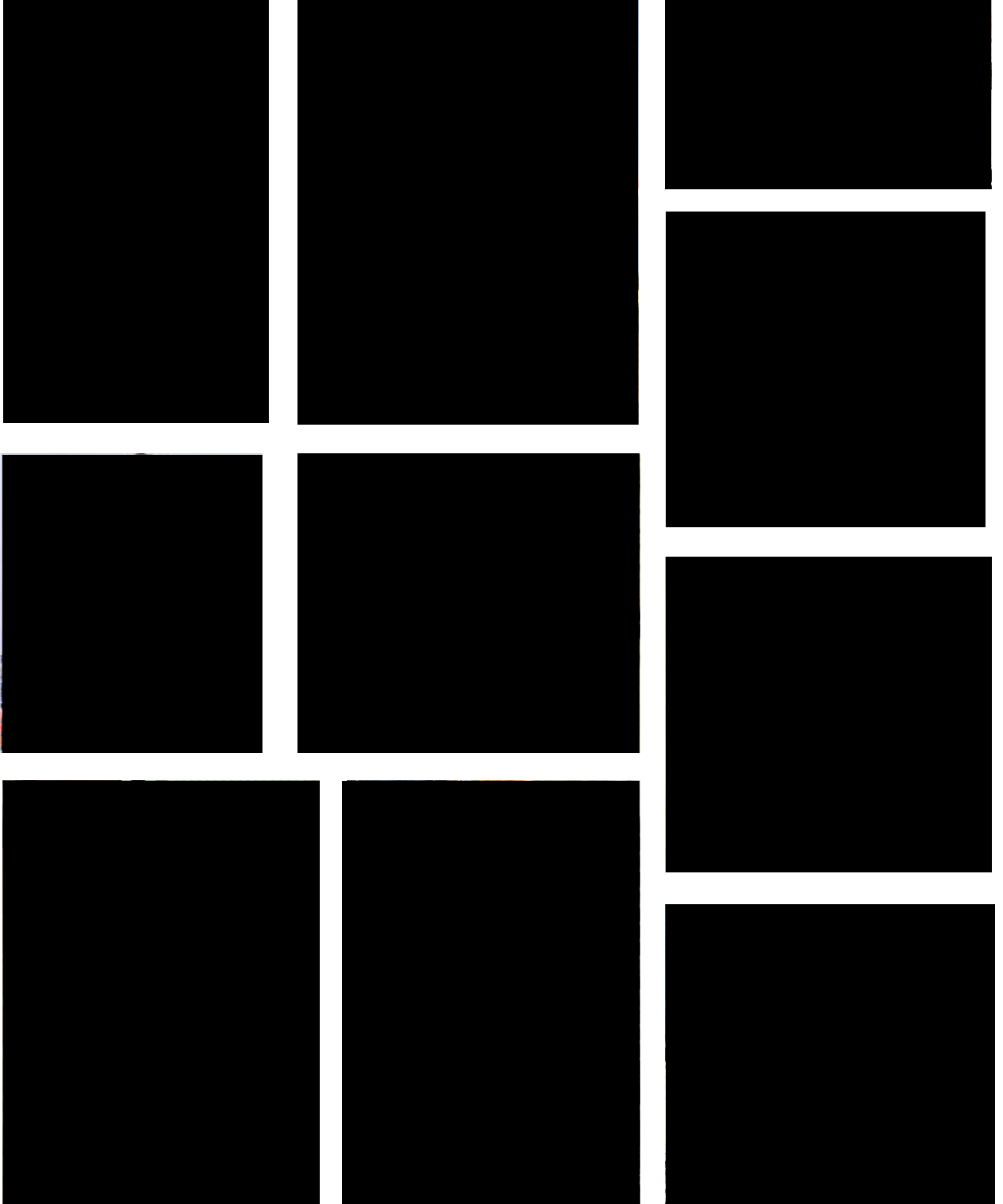
This board was used to explore the aesthetic of the 1960s.

1970s



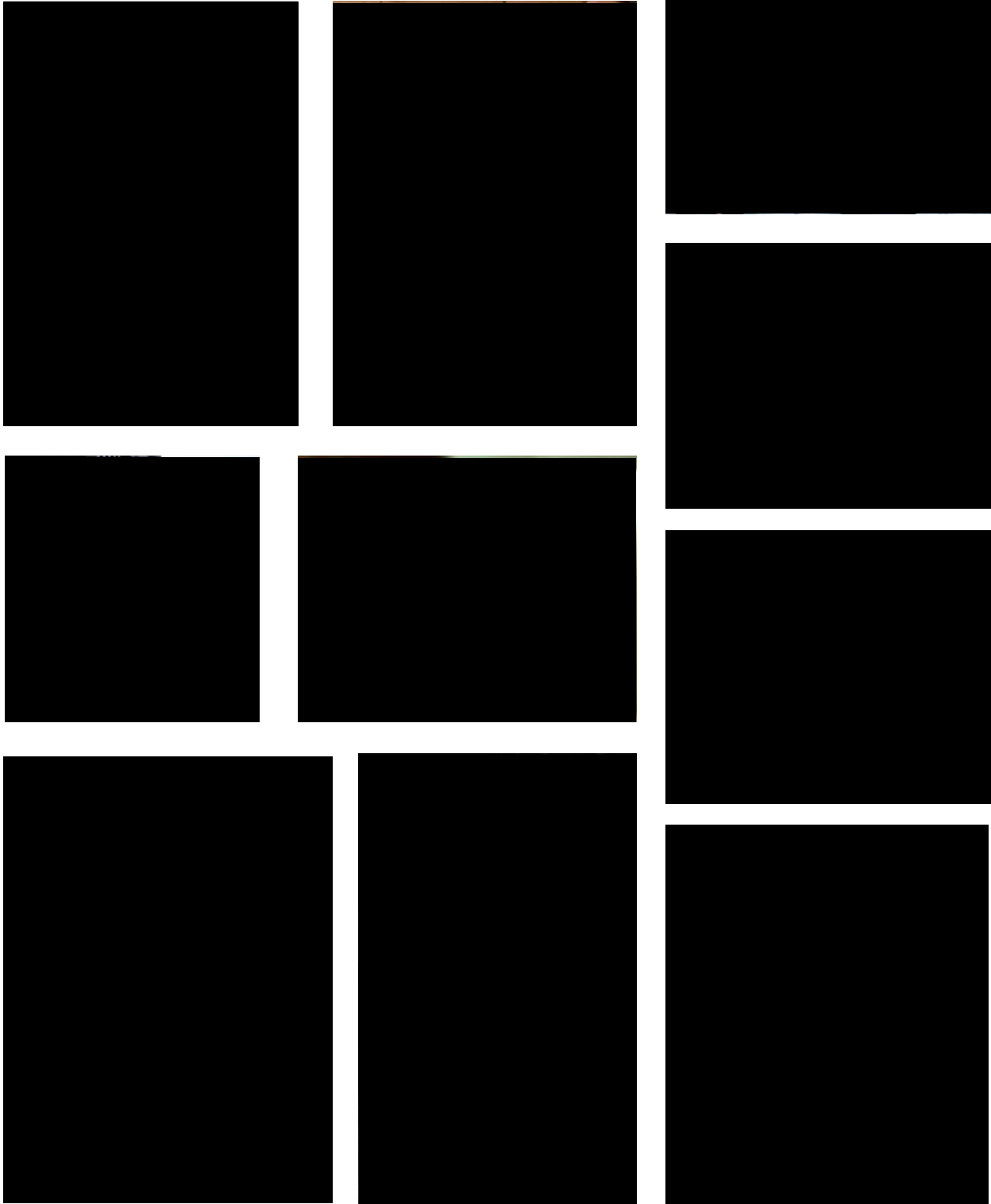
This board was used to explore the aesthetic of the 1970s.

# 1980s



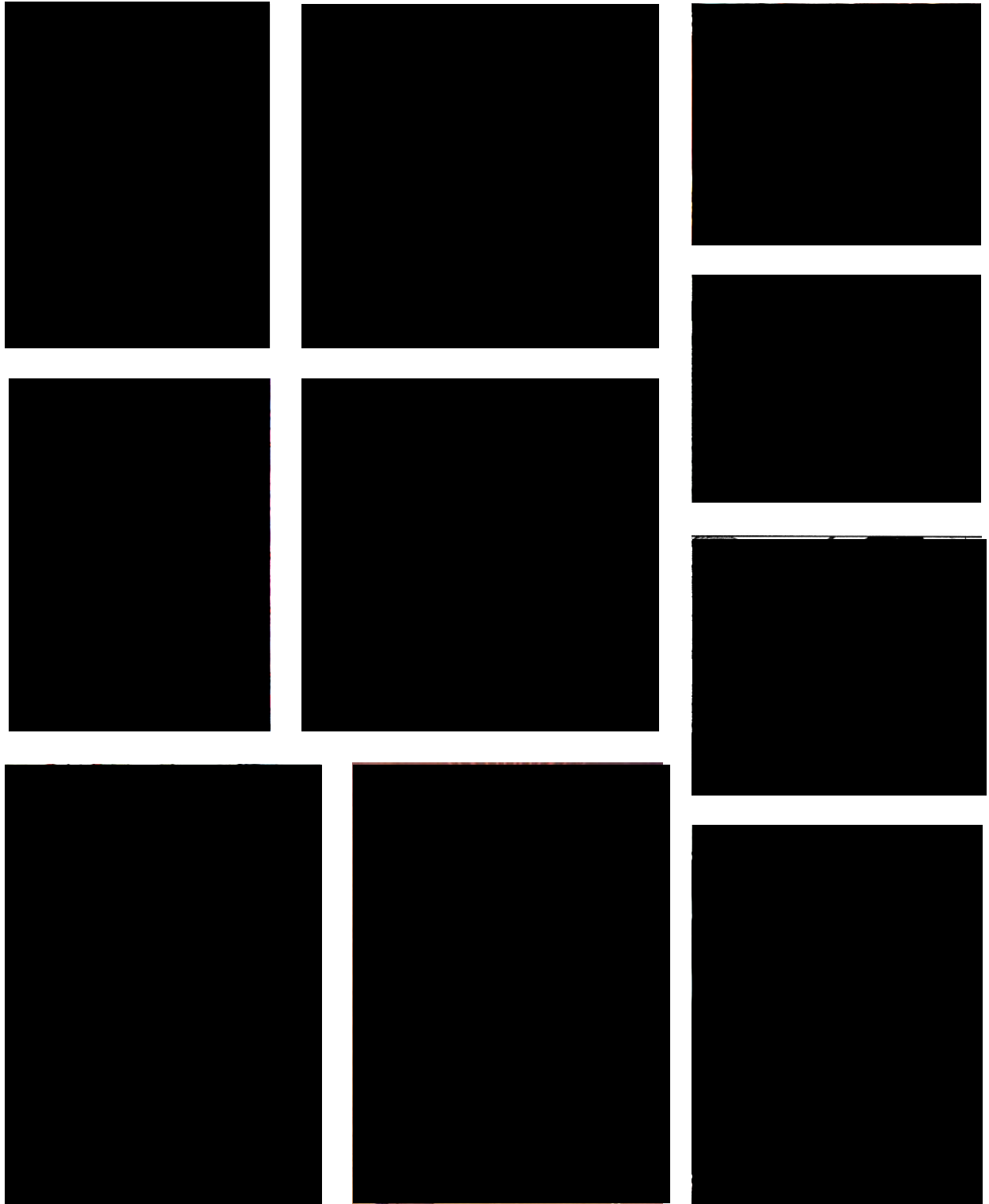
This board was used to explore the aesthetic of the 1980s.

1990s



This board was used to explore the aesthetic of the 1990s.

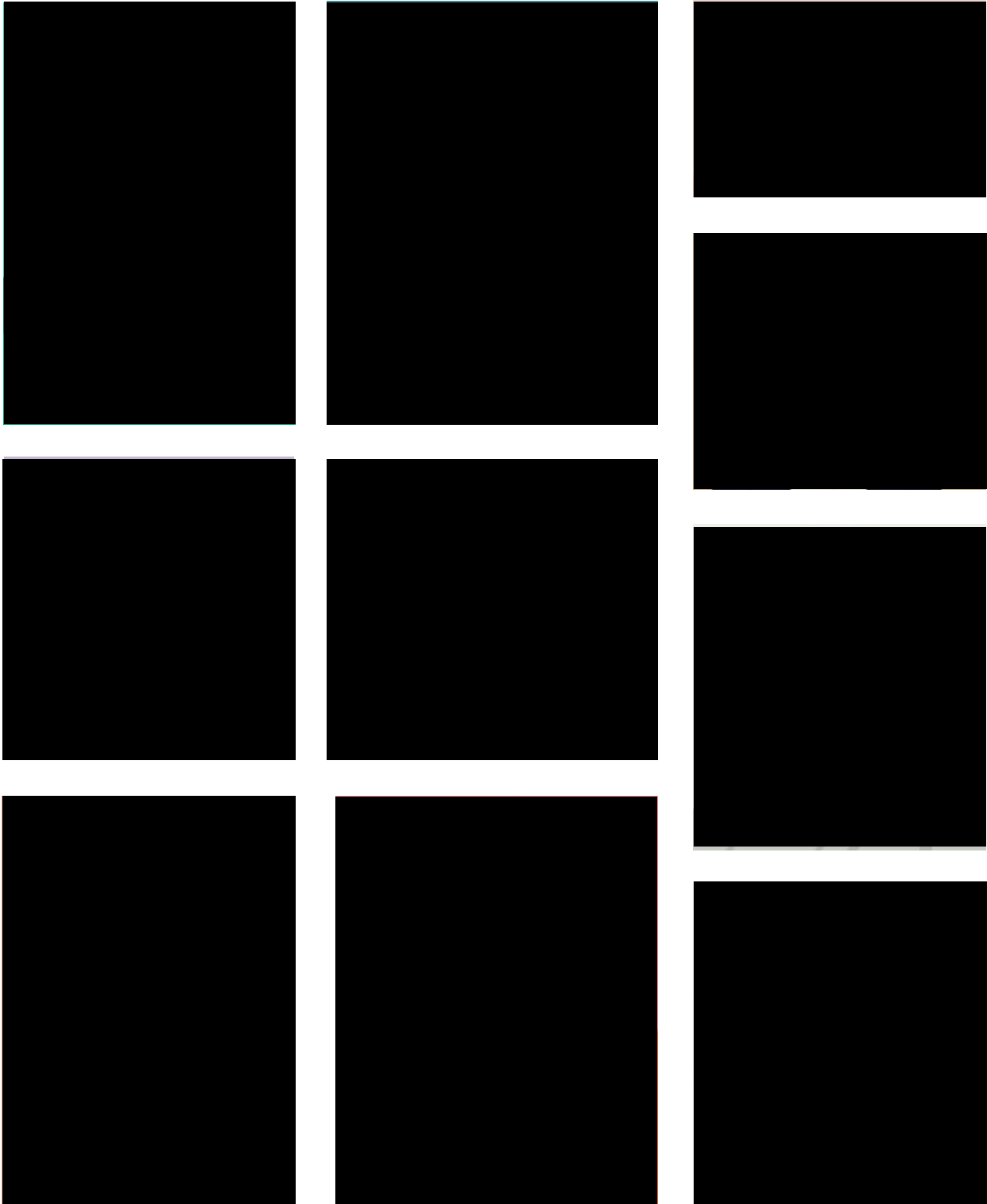
# COMIC BOOK STYLE



This board was used to explore comic book styles.

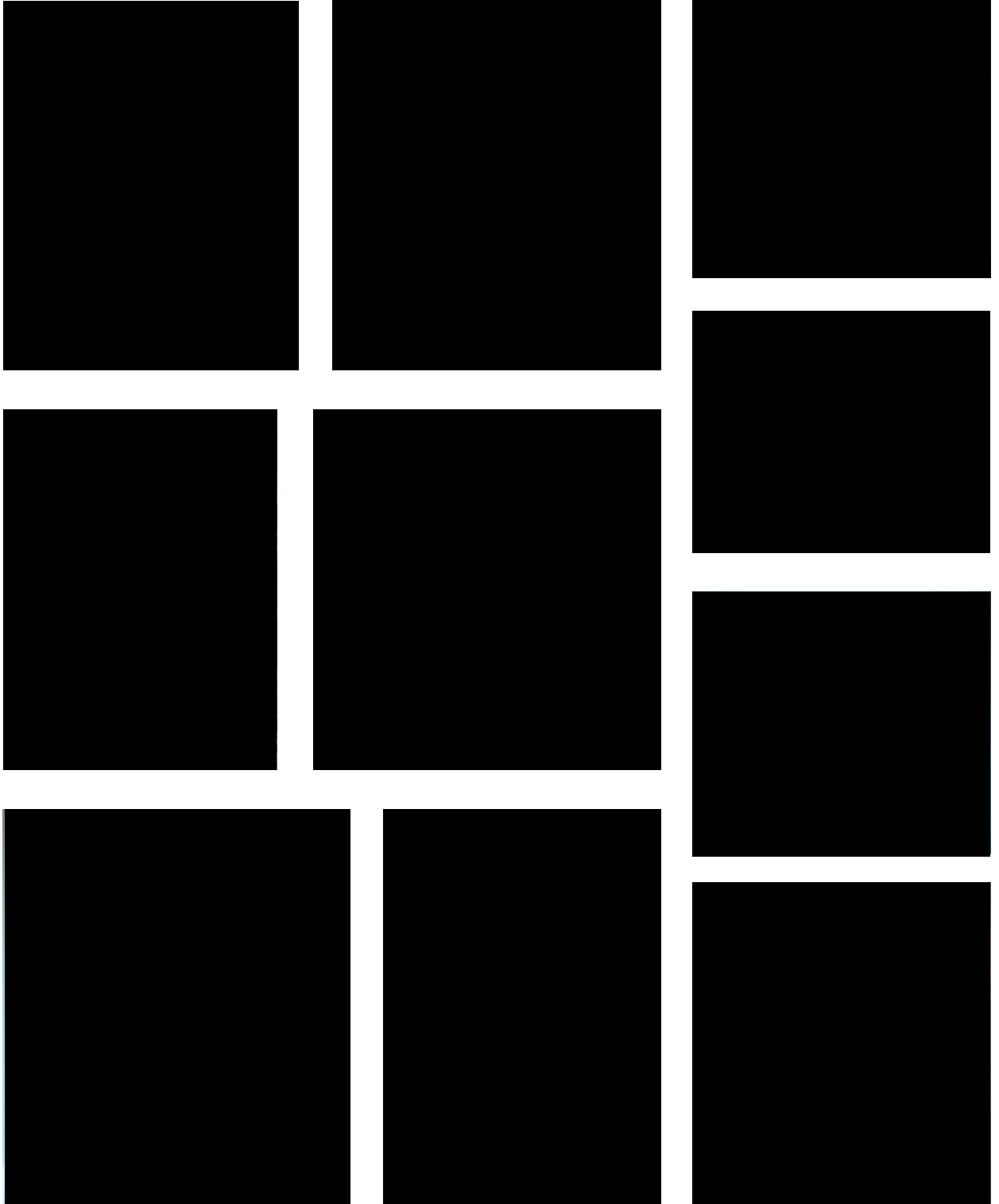


# FLAT ILLUSTRATION



This board was used to explore flat illustration styles.

# CONCEPTUAL PORTRAITS



This board was used to explore conceptual art.

# IN SUMMARY

This research, both read and visual, was immensely helpful in steering this project towards its final outcome. This issue of critical evaluation and how a lack of it is hurting Generation Z is important. Hopefully, through this research, a project will be created, that will not only bring awareness to this issue, but will also show its young audience that critical evaluation can be an enjoyable skill to learn. Research is long and difficult work, but it is the type of hard work that has the potential to bring awareness to important issues. The goal is that through this project, people will realize that visual media, while entertaining and certainly positive in several ways, does have its hidden downfalls. The idea is that, even armed with only a basic knowledge of these topics the audience, Generation Z, will be able to navigate confidently through visual media and the outcome would result in a new generation of critical thinkers.

## VISUAL SOLUTIONS

The proposed solution to this epidemic of a generation without critical evaluation skills is composed of two parts. The first part consists of illustrations that purposefully embody these four areas of color theory/psychology, symbolism, emotional psychology, and literature influence/agenda. This first part would be paintings depicting the five basic emotions fear, anger, sadness, disgust, and joy. The paintings will include subtle to more obvious components of the other three elements as well. The second part will consist of a guide to help the viewer further delve into the contents of the piece. The guide will contain simplified versions of each of the elements - color theory/psychology, symbolism, emotional psychology, and literature influence/agenda boiled down to their most basic and foundational elements, keeping in mind the idea that because there is a small window of time to present this information, it will be important to ensure that the most important elements of each topic are the

focus. The anticipated outcome of the project is that it will have equipped Generation Z with the basic and most foundational elements of each topic with the hope that they will be able to go out and have even the most basic idea of how to interpret visual media, whether on their phone, on their tv, or even designs and other visual media that they encounter in the world.

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**CHAPTER 3**  
**VISUAL PROCESS**

# VISUAL SOLUTION

The goal of this project is to promote critical thinking without being overly zealous about the fact that critical thinking is being taught. In one's mind, critical thinking might have a rather bland and flavorless sound. It comes across as both academic and stiff. The appeal of this project should be to young people, specifically Generation Z. It must furthermore possess generational attractiveness regardless of status. The project requires appeal and accessibility for it to be successful. The term "art critique" also approaches the realm of overly academic and even further, only applies to a small group within academia. The majority of people are not artists, at least not by profession. The working phrase that makes the most sense in regard to both the project's goal and the audience is "critical evaluation of visual media." There are two key reasons why this phrase works best. First, even though "thinking" and "evaluation" might have similar definitions and functions, evaluation is perceived as more casual and less taxing than thinking. Evaluation therefore suggests that there are no right or wrong answers; simply observations. The word "thinking" may suggest that a particular response is required. It is better that the viewer comes into the project with as fresh and open a mind as possible. No expectations allow for an open mind. Second, the term "visual media" is helpful because it exists everywhere at all times. Non-artists will not seek out meaning in historic art, because they will not be seeking out historic art in the first place. These same individuals will frequently have visual media close at hand, whether in the form of movies, social media, tv shows, plays, interior design, graphic novels, graphic design, or even their best friend's high school art projects. These two points, in reference to the term "critical evaluation of visual media," give the projects both the appeal and the accessibility required. The next step is to create visual media specific to this thesis project



After exploring many thoughts and ideas about how to best create this visual media, it was decided that the deliverables would consist of (1) five graphic illustrations based on the decades of the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s, as well as (2) four comic-book-page-inspired charts explaining the basic ideas of color theory, symbolism, literature influence on visual media, and the affect of visual media on emotions.

The form consists of several empty rectangular boxes with yellow borders, arranged in a grid-like structure. At the top, there are four small square boxes. Below them is a large vertical rectangle on the left and two horizontal rectangles on the right. Further down are two more horizontal rectangles, one spanning the width of the large vertical box and another below it. At the bottom is a wide horizontal rectangle. To the right of the main content area, there is a vertical column of five rectangular boxes of varying heights, also with yellow borders.

# FIRST STEPS

The beginning of this process was deciding what, in each of the five decades, to communicate through each piece, and furthermore to decide how to best communicate the concept. The goal is to have the audience evaluate the pieces on their own, but have fun while evaluating. An emotion was assigned to each of the five decades: sadness, disgust, joy, anger, and fear. Assigning an emotion to each decade was helpful in two ways. First, it helped to guide me through each illustration. Regardless of the content of the illustration, each one needed to communicate a specific emotion. This helped to keep the project directionally driven. Second, it is useful to have a device that can grip an audience's attention right away. Emotion is the greatest way to do this. Targeting an audience's emotions is the most effective way to sway their opinion. They do not need to understand context; they simply need to have an emotional bond established. The point in doing it this way is not to manipulate the audience but rather to demonstrate that manipulation is used in visual media by way of predicting (or even creating) and targeting emotions.

After determining the set of concepts that this project wished to explore in each illustration, the direction was then turned to visual research to establish the aesthetic and visual contents of each piece.

## SUMMER DAZE

This first piece was the catalyst of the project from a visual standpoint. It was an image that, as an artist, had been planned for a while, but lacked the time to create. The idea behind this piece originally was a girl with her arms propped up on the edge of an infinity pool, with giant sunset-colored clouds behind her, and one of those clouds would be an iconic shape of an atom bomb plume. At the beginning, this piece was supposed to be nothing more than visual eye candy and had nothing to do with the 1950s. This changed as with this project's study of the 1950s (in the United States). The 50s was seen as an idyllic time, with two world wars behind and a bright future ahead. This time is often portrayed, visually, as American perfection. Bright cars, colored television, beautiful homes, expendable money, as well as the ease of travel that family cars provided, the 1950s United States was seen as a utopia. In reality, this paradise was tainted by the ever-present knowledge that nuclear bombs now existed and the Space Race between nations left society with an uneasy feeling. This is

the message this project is attempting to visually communicate within this first illustration.



The process of creating this piece began by drawing out a rough sketch of the concept. This can be referred to as the “Ugly Stage.” At this point, aesthetic is ignored and detail is not considered. The point of this phase is to establish the composition which best illustrates the concept or story. Nearly the entirety of this thesis project has been rendered digitally using the app Procreate. Working digitally allows for elements to be easily moved, colors changed, or even whole items (layers) to be removed/turned off without actually losing them. Procreate on the iPad was used for its quality and portability.



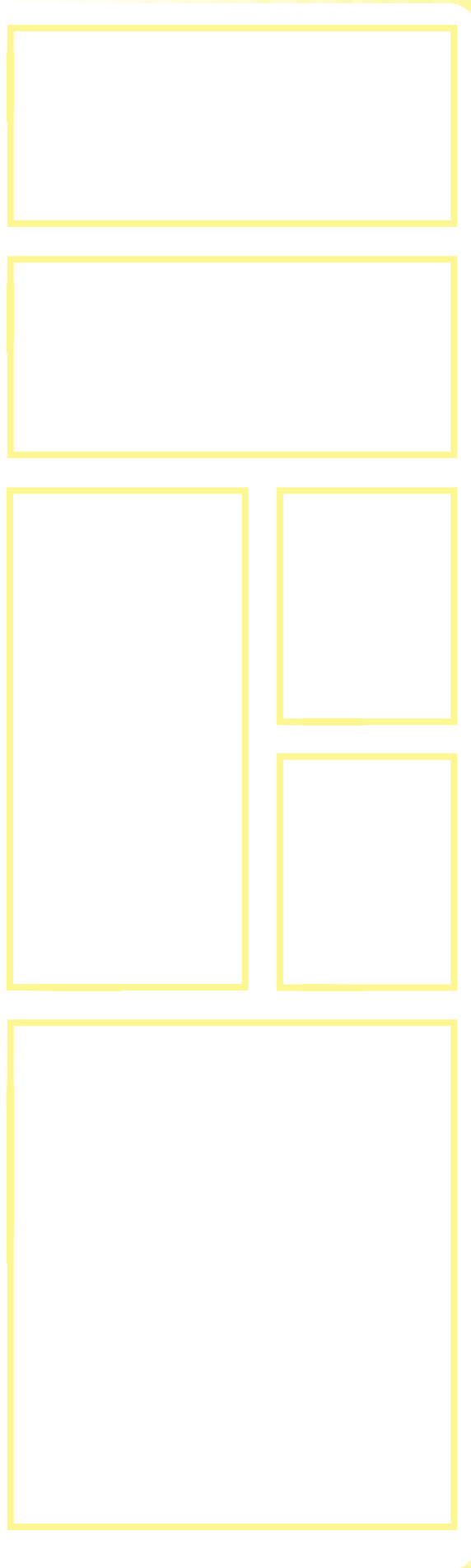
The next step is to create a clean and precise line drawing based off the original sketch. Again, doing this digitally provides the ability to retain both the sketch and other phases, whereas in traditional painting or illustration, the original sketch is painted over. The next step for this piece was to start blocking in only the solid colors over the entire piece. This method is a quick way to establish the colors and view them all against each other without lighting, texture, or detail getting in the way. It further helps to quickly establish the mood of the painting. If bright blues, whites, and greens had been used, this pool scene would instantly have transformed into a light and airy illustration. The use of moodier colors instantly helped to set the darker tone for this illustration.

Now, while this piece would have a darker tone, it needed to be an engaging and attractive piece to view. The use of complimentary colors (in this case orange and blue) assisted in, while still maintaining moodiness, allowing them to be as vibrant as possible. These bright colors were inspired by the bright and colorful aesthetic of the 1950s.



Another method was utilized to produce a piece that was fun and accessible to people, who may not normally care for traditional art. This method was to use a graphic style not so associated with the term “fine arts” — the comic book/graphic novel style. Comics have been used for generations as a fun and graphic style that has resonated with young viewers.

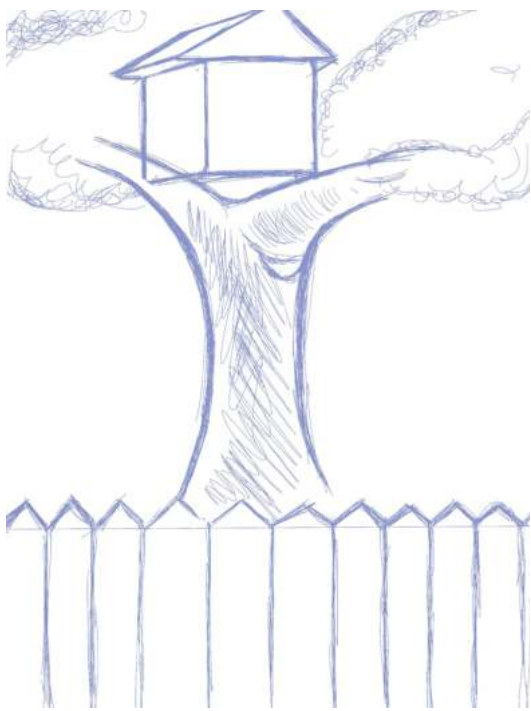
The simplicity and flexibility of the graphic style makes it suitable for illustrating stories of any kind. The use of this style was directly related to the concept of teaching evaluation of visual media to Generation Z. This is a style that they are comfortable with and will be more apt to explore in greater depth than the traditional realistic style. The simple graphic style is fantastic for the short attention span of the current generation. Graphic styles “read” quickly and effortlessly. Graphic design also uses a clean graphic style for ease of comprehension. This style has provided a unique way to incorporate both graphic design and fine art into this thesis project.





## SOFT DECAY

This piece, inspired by the 1960s, was a favorite to create. The concept of this piece was a commentary on the Women's Liberation Movement, which had its inception in the 1960s; women looking for elevated status, but who created a rift between the sexes that has never been mended. This issue of women's rights also created a rift between women of different political, cultural, and religious leanings.



The nearly fantastical atmosphere of the piece was not intentional, but rather a result of allowing the process to shape the direction of the piece. Unlike the 1950s piece, this illustration

was not drawn out in hard lines before adding color. This had both positive and negative affects on the process.



The treehouse was the first part of the design that preceded with a solid idea of how to execute the overall composition. The organic tree shape was a large part of the reason for the decision not to draw out the hard lines at the beginning. This made editing the flowing shapes of the branches easier. The addition of the fence helped to physically demonstrate the barrier between the sexes. The shape of the fence slats changed as the piece went along. The jagged edge of the fence was meant to emphasize the strained relations, but ended up being too literal. The next step is one that,



looking back, was not ideal for this particular piece. The decision was



made to fill in the dark areas with a sketchy stroke instead of a separate layer of the dark color. This choice was made to keep the sketchier overall look of the piece. This point was early enough in the thesis project where the decision was made to try a slightly different style from the first piece. The realization was quickly made that this new style was not the manner in which this project would proceed. Once again, the flat color technique was utilized to start establishing the color scheme. The emotion driving this piece was disgust, portrayed by the division between the characters. Green is the color of jealousy and disgust; therefore, it is the color chosen to be dominant in this piece.

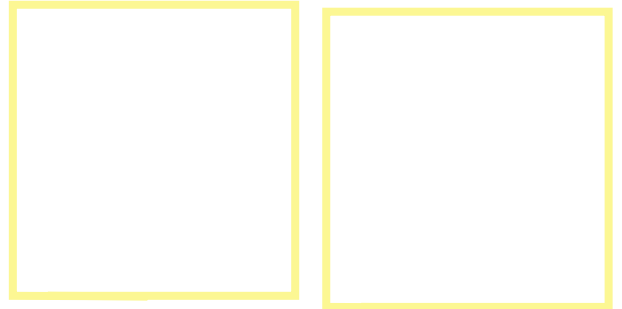
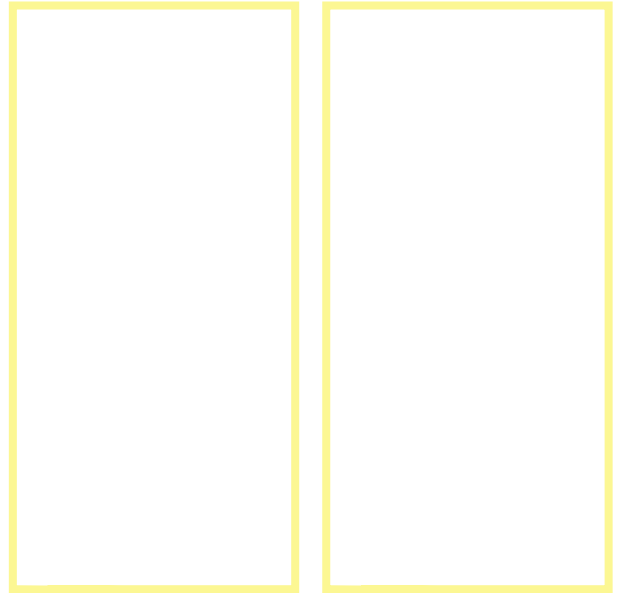
Purple is the color associated with pride and the treehouse eventually transitions to a purple shade. After seeing other artists use this trick, the decision was made to start putting color swatches directly on the canvas. This worked in increasing my workflow, at the solid color phase, but was distracting at later stages. The second image is a perfect example of the advantages of working digitally. The background was too light for the overall mood of the piece that was envisioned, so a couple color drops were used to change the tone. In a traditional piece it might have taken hours to make this change, working around all the individual elements and even then, might be only the first pass before finding the correct tone.



Digital painting makes this change momentary and non-destructive. The other reason this being a digital illustration paid off was realized later in the piece when it was noticed that the treehouse was larger than it should have been. Everything being on separate layers made this a simple fix. Again, had this been a traditional piece, it would have been a harder process than just changing a background color; resizing an object would have resulted in having to restart the entire upper half of the illustration. With a tight schedule to create the deliverables, this would have been quite inconvenient. The last thing done before taking this to the final detail stage was to start

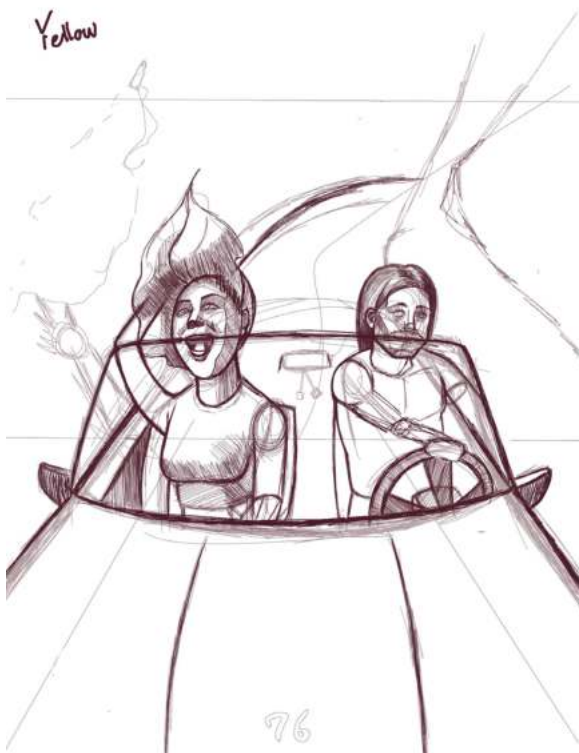


going back over all the sketch lines with a hard pen line. This is where the negative effects of not starting with hard lines, before starting color, came into play, because it was then necessary to go back and fix the color layers. This was a lesson learned.



# "PSYCHO"-DELICS

This piece was based on of the hippie movement and counter culture of the 70s. The emotion used as the foundation was joy. Similar to the 1950s piece, this illustration speaks to a darker reality surrounding the decade. The effects of the counter culture and drug use of the 1970s is still affecting the culture, especially the youth of the United States today.



The goal was to create a piece that was both happy and would describe an adrenaline rush. A car careening down a coastal highway would be the perfect setting. Visual research was performed to decide which car would be

appropriate for both the decade and context of the illustration. Research led to a yellow 70s Alfa Romeo Spider and it was decided that this sporty, little car would be a nice centerpiece for this illustration. Next, the driver/drivers of the car were considered. Thought was given to drawing a single person in the car. The idea of being happy and also reckless, was a concept that appeared to require at least two people to illustrate. Counter culture, and recklessness in general tend to rely on communities of likeminded people. An example of this would be friends who are more apt to be reckless and wild when they are together, than when they are alone. The concept of a cult is another example of people making reckless decisions, and is another





influence on this piece. The flower children of the 1970s were, in essence, a cult created under the guise of spreading peace and love, but ended up resulting in a hippie and drug positivity movement that never left society in the years that followed.



This piece began in a similar manner to the 1960s illustration. The process was started by sketching out main elements and almost ignoring the background completely. Famous people and everyday people were researched for inspiration on hairstyles and clothing options for best representation.

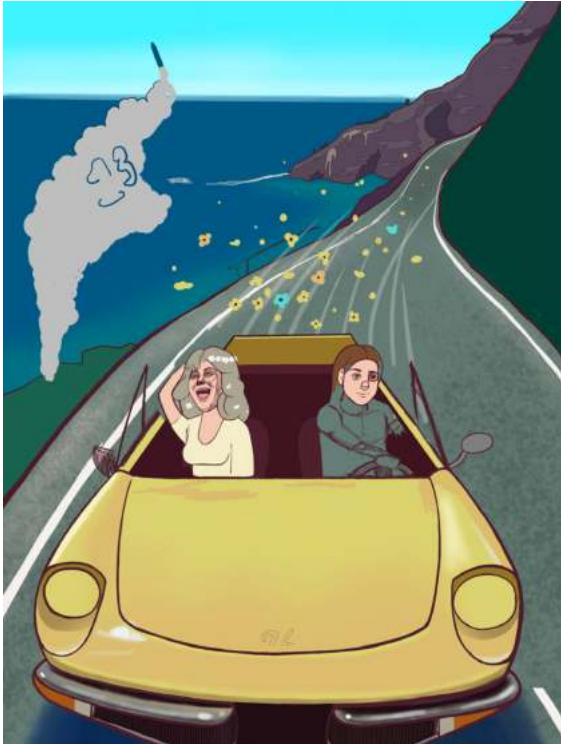
It was quickly realized that the car was far too close to in the frame. Originally, a tight closeup shot was wanted of the

characters, but then decided that if the illustration was framed in this manner, there would not be enough room to incorporate background elements which were in the plans to add. Pushing back the car, shrank my characters, and extended the road. Overall, this helped the composition and added a nice touch of perspective. The next step was to add elements such as textures and interesting shapes. Another step was to remove a few colors and add a few new colors. This illustration ended

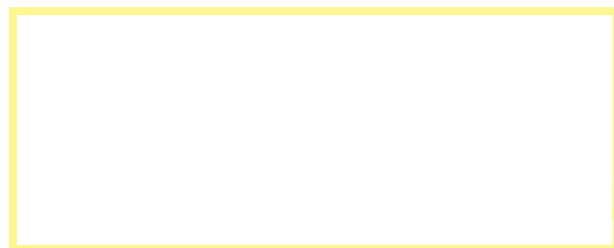
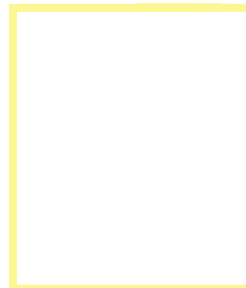
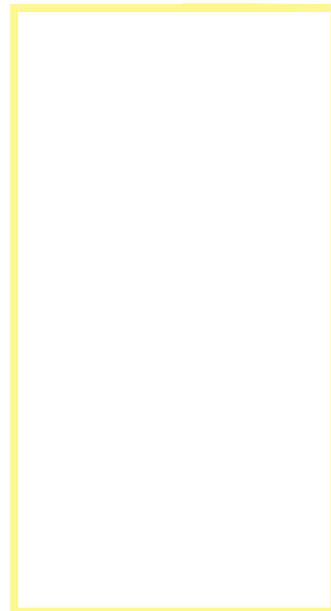
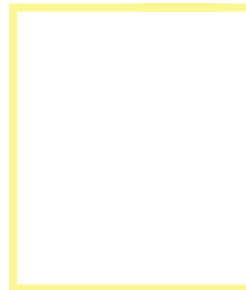
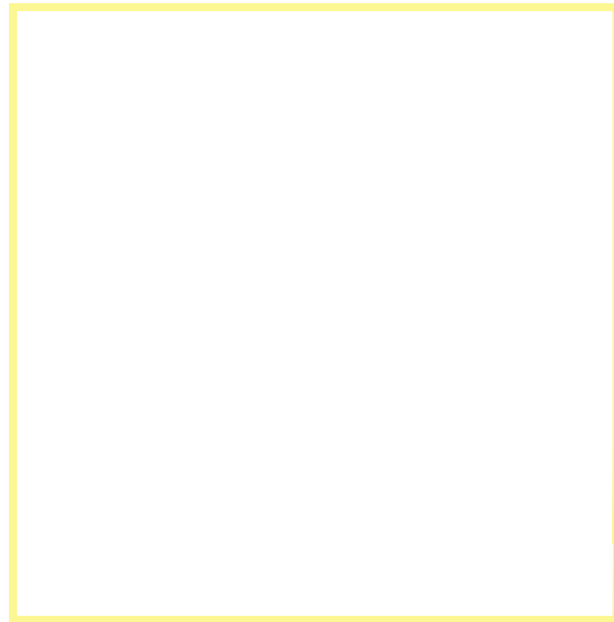


up having one of the strongest color schemes out of the five illustrations. In each piece Symbolic elements were incorporated in each piece. In this illustration, the elements were flower petals, a rocket taking off, a broken

license plate, and a roadblock. Each of these elements will be explored in further detail in chapter four, which will showcase the final illustrations and give further explanations and share various thoughts on each element.



This piece had a bit of trial and error in its creation. This piece needed a way to show speed and the translucent lines that are shown here are a preliminary version of this piece. The lines ended up being swapped out for a simple blur effect. The car itself was starting to take on a realistic render and was losing its illustrated qualities, so in the final, the colors on the hood were flattened. Most of the trial and error came in the form of figuring out a personal illustration style.



## THE THRILL

This illustration took on a mind of its own and was the one that possessed the least direction going in, but then became inspired during the process. The idea was to create an illustration based on 80s disco and the nightclub, fast-paced lifestyles of the younger working generation.



Originally, the intention was to produce an illustration depicting several people dancing to showcase this fast-paced lifestyle, but as the illustration went along the direction of the piece changed to depict another area of 1980s life, or in this case death. The focus was switched to make a statement about the AIDS epidemic as

well as crack cocaine, which was the highlighted drug of the decade.

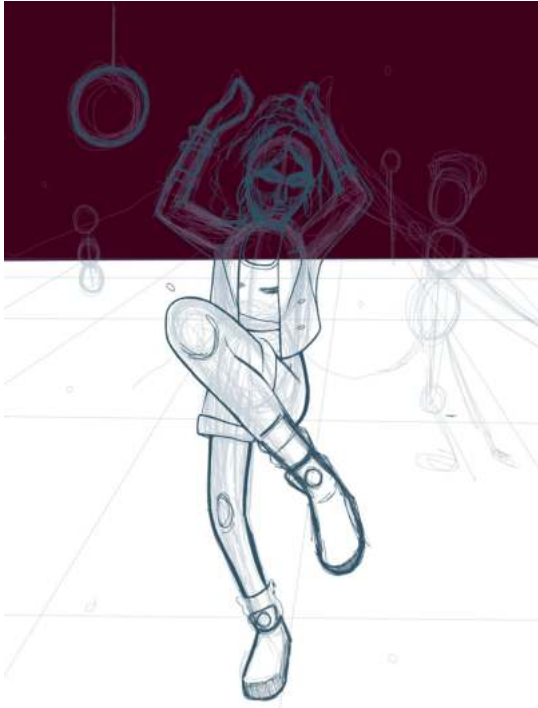
This is the first full figure illustration in the set, so extra attention was paid to the anatomy and proportions of the main character before considering color. Only simple shapes and lines were used to figure out my composition. I then added a new layer, bulked up the lines to attempt to define the pose, anatomy, and motion of the piece. The background figures never made it past this stage of the illustration, but would later make an appearance in a different form.



This block of color was used to separate the back wall from the floor. It created an interesting look with the



blue lines against the deep purple/red background, but was ultimately distracting. The opacity was lowered,



and in certain cases completely turned off layers to better see the detail.

When it comes to illustrating human figures or any detailed subject matter, it is crucial to make it read well in the stages prior to coloring. Strong foundations help to reinforce concepts.

The next step was, once again, to add solid colors. They were applied only to the main focal point (the girl) and ignored in the background.

The colors were placed this way so that the focal point informed the surroundings and not the other way around. Anger was to be the dominant

emotion in this piece, so red was the obvious choice. The bright and even mismatched colors were common in the 1980s, so this almost obnoxious color scheme would not have been out of place. After establishing the color scheme of the character, the next step was to start filling in the rest of the environment. There was no concern about how the flat colors looked in contrast with the main character, because the colors would later be edited. At this point, the concern was getting every spot on the canvas colored. Once there is color everywhere, it is to immerse oneself in the piece and let the process take over. Additional details were not considered at this point, so having the color all





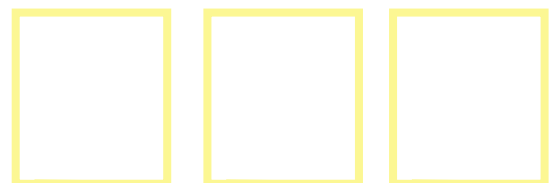
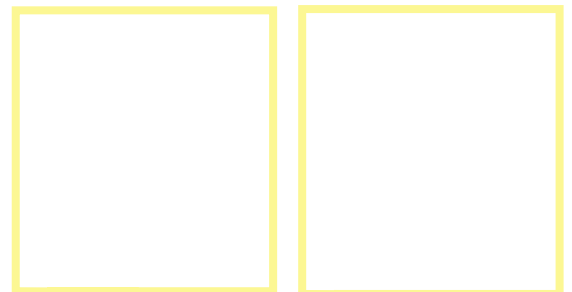
filled in was exactly what was needed to inspire the rest of the process.

The next step was to start deepening the background colors. This helped in setting apart the main focal point.

The different elements being on different layers made experimenting with the different hues a simple task. A soft airbrush was used to create a soft glowing effect on select dance floor tiles. That is another amazing perk of working digitally — different brushes and effects are always available and do not come with the additional set up and cleanup of traditional tools.

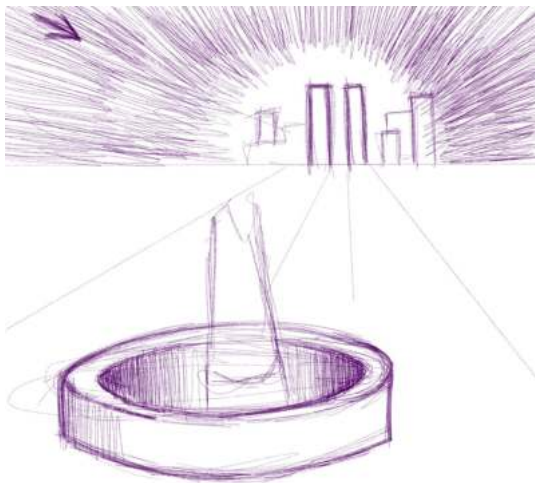
The only other task at this stage was to clean up the line work. Unlike traditional comic line work, newer illustration styles favor darker versions

of the local (main) colors instead of black for outlining. For example, the blue tights have a darker blue outline.



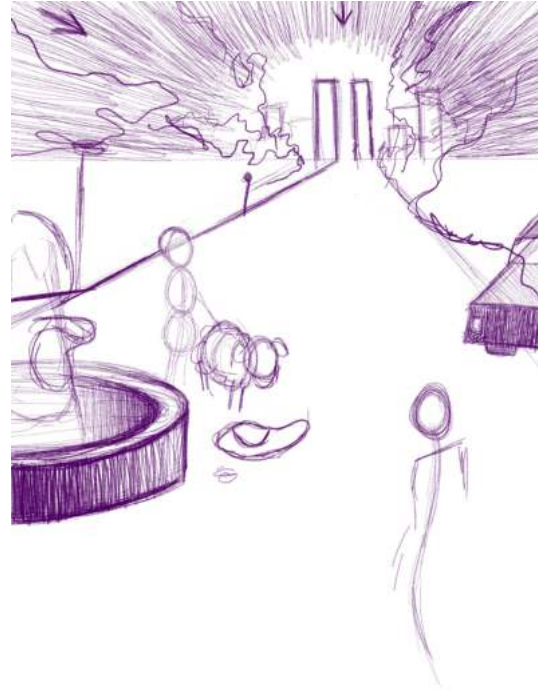
# A CHANGE OF CHARACTER

This piece was the most interesting in terms of concepts portrayed. The 1990s was a decade that was not filled with major events in the same way as the other four decades, at least not as obviously. The events in the 90s were ones that “flew under the radar” — a term that becomes important shortly after the 90s.



the next millennia. It can be seen as a slow build up to the events that would arrive in the early 2000s and beyond. Several key figures were brought into the spotlight. These included major political figures (many of whom are still in power today), famous criminals and America’s fascination with them on a national scale, unexplained deaths

(both at home and abroad), shady business deals, and the breach of



scientific boundaries and ethics. The 90s was a decade when the less than savory characters started to emerge publicly and unashamed, and it would all lead up to an event, in the early 2000s, that would change the course of the United States.

This illustration was started by considering what was needed to be included in this final piece. It was realized, immediately, that this was going to be the most complex composition of the five illustrations. Part of the reason for this was that the goal was to speak to how the 90s was when the world started to become overwhelming. Technology was speeding up, there was scandal



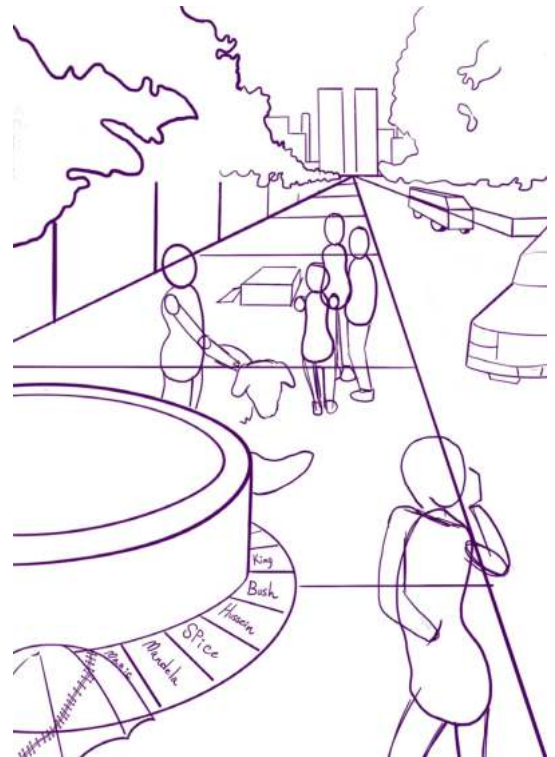
after scandal in the news, well-loved figures were mysteriously dying, and the world was quickly spiraling out of control. There was a wish to reflect this in the composition. The piece began with a simple sketch of a fountain and the plan was to have the characters all spread out from it, with it being the center focal point. It was quickly



decided that this was not the preferred composition and instead opted for the fountain to be off to the front left side of the composition and have a road leading farther into the canvas to signify the future and events to come. Next, came several additional passes, with sketch, to solidify the composition. The hard pen lines were used to clean up the illustration and give a better look at the piece.

There was little worry about the details in the beginning and rather the focus was to work through the different areas individually. Working in this manner allowed for adding and subtracting elements as it went along to make sure that the piece was cohesive.

Had everything been detailed out in the beginning, there would have been potential to waste time on elements that did not fit or distracted the eye. An example of this is that the original composition was going to have a Mars Rover going around sweeping up leaves on the sidewalk. While this element would have worked with the odd assortment of characters, it did not work for lack of room left on the canvas. It was helpful that time was not wasted detailing out the Rover



before making the decision to remove it from the final illustration. Purple was the last color in the series that was chosen and it ended up being perfect. It lent itself to the dark and mysterious theme the piece was aiming to achieve. This was the only monochromatic piece in the set of five. A variety of color schemes was another area that the project attempted to portray throughout these pieces to better visually explain color theory. A deeper look at each piece will be found in chapter four.

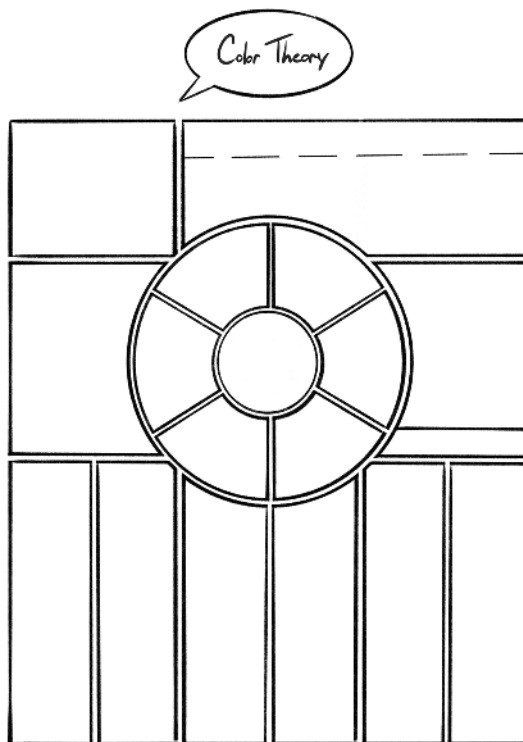


A large white rectangular area with a yellow border, containing several smaller yellow-outlined rectangular boxes of various sizes, arranged in a grid-like pattern. These boxes are intended for notes or commentary related to the text and image on the left.

# CHARTS

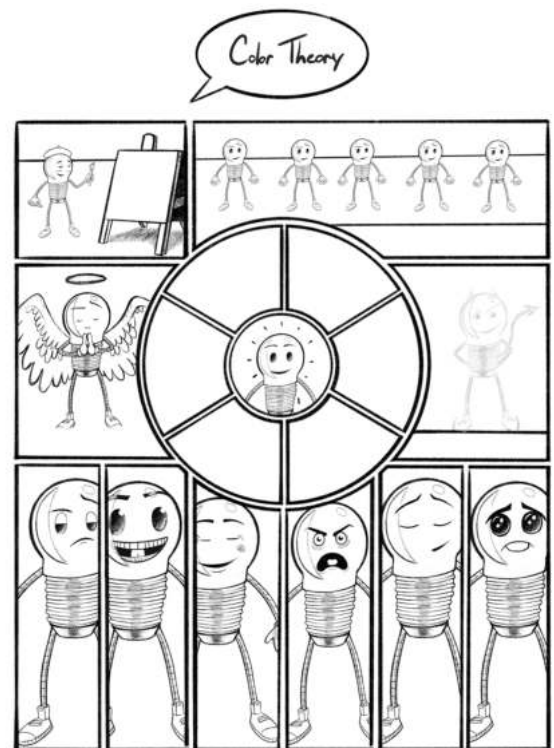
## COLOR THEORY

Color theory was the first comic page/chart that was created. Color is among the most basic concepts that a person can learn. Babies learn color before almost anything else, and new language learners often learn colors first for the precise same reason — color is a basic concept. Regardless of how basic the concept of color is, it is a crucial time to understand basic color theory in order to fully appreciate and evaluate visual media.



The first step was to plan out a composition for the chart. This chart

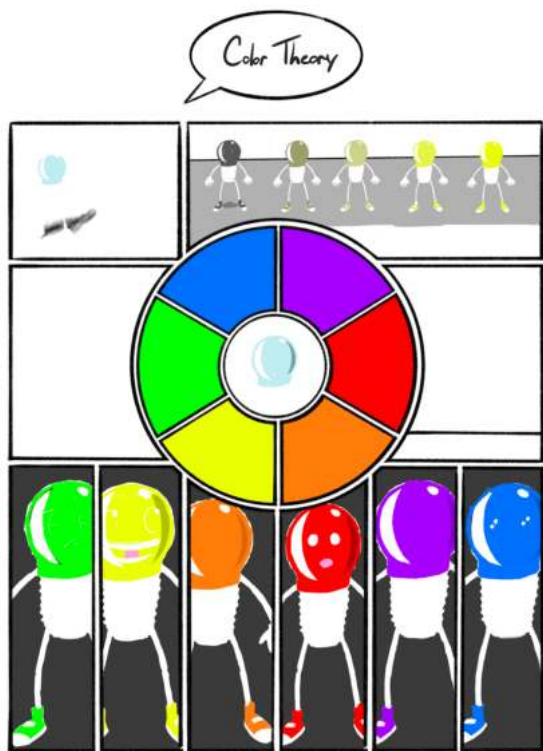
was possibly the easiest to plan but the most difficult to execute. It was the easiest to plan because I knew going in that the whole composition must house a color wheel. A color theory chart without a color wheel would be a waste of a color theory chart. Initially the concept was sketched out on paper and then recreated in digital form.



Drawing it on paper felt like the appropriate first step, but looking back could have been done without. It is nice to be able to physically sketch concepts out, but it is faster to make edits digitally. Next, came the line work for all of the characters and objects on a separate layer. At times, the line work was done on several different layers, but then merged them once

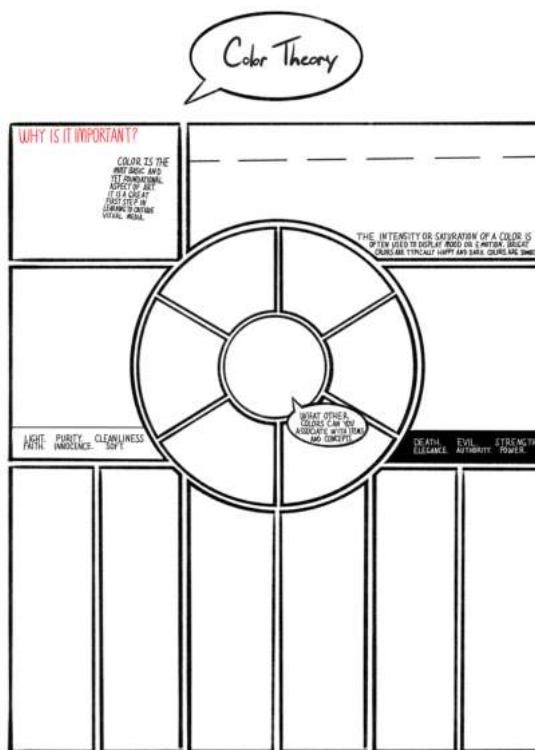


happy with each layer's content. The decision was made to not leave similar items on different layers to create a strategic workflow. In traditional comic books, all ink is done on the same layer. This means that the boxes, the lettering, and the interiors are all done on the same page and therefore cannot be edited. The advantage of working digitally is that multiple layers can be used for the line work so that it is easy to move and edit each frame. Using shape and line tools was the best way to create a base. I made sure to create a solid foundation before adding the text and color layers to the chart.



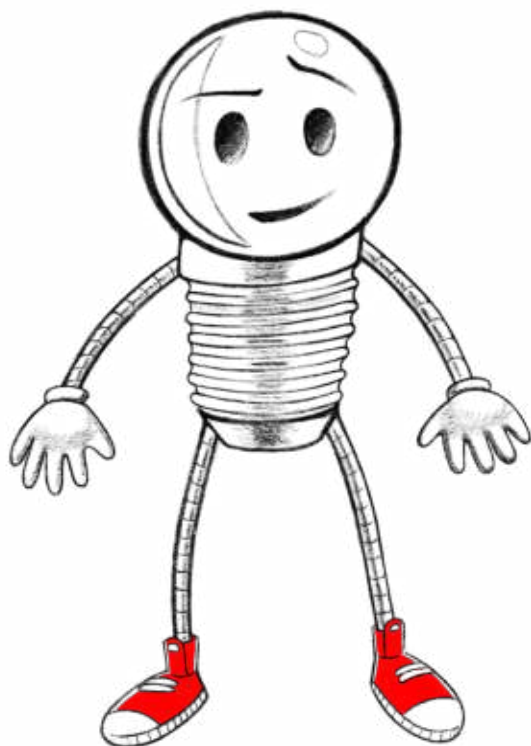
Adding color is always the most rewarding part of the comic book

process. Line and shading give the structure, but color is what gives the page life. When one views the color layer without the line work it resembles



the back of a quilt where one can see a jumble of colors but which lacks the fine details. This shot of the color layer, by itself, was included to showcase this effect. The goal is to not reveal the final product until it can be discussed in-depth in chapter 4. The choice was made to only use primary and secondary colors on this page. This method was employed for the simple look and because this project is meant to introduce these concepts, with the hope that the viewer will do extra exploration on their own.

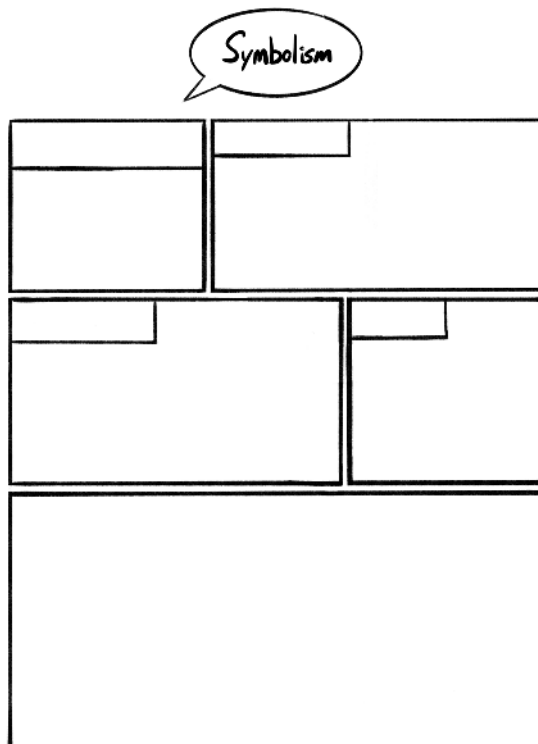
Text was the last part added to each section. The choice was made not to write the script before making the rest of the piece. The chart was used to inform the writing, instead of having the script dictate the drawings. This was by far the most tedious part of the entire process because the choice was made to use a handwritten font instead of regular text. This helped to make the project unique and also pulled a bit from the way comics traditionally made before the age of computers and digital applications.



The lightbulb mascot originally had a perfect circle for his head, but this was replaced with a traditional lightbulb-shaped glass piece.

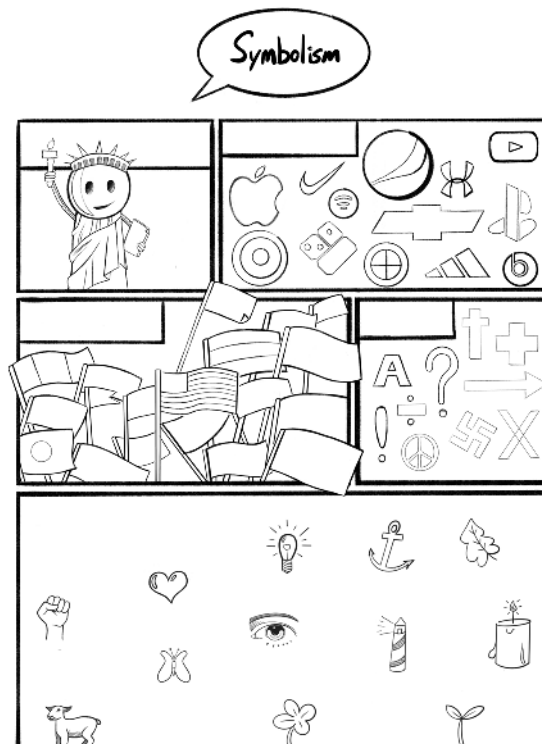
# SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is the next step in the illustrated charts. An issue that was encountered, while researching these topics in chapters 1 and 2, is that these topics have areas of overlap. An example of this is that color can be symbolic but several aspects of color were already addressed in the “*Color Theory*” chart. Instead of being concerned with the overlap, the decision was made to lean into it and allow the overlap to create natural stepping stones between topics.



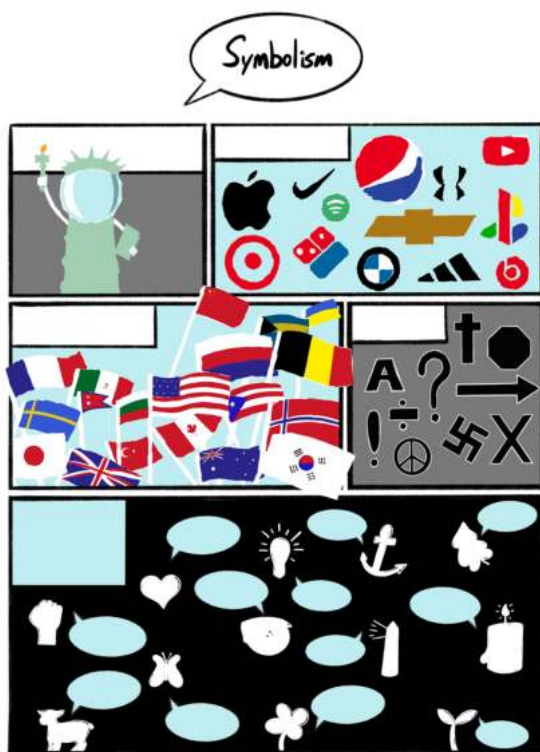
The initial line work for this chart ended up being far more simplistic composition than the first chart.

This was a smart choice, in the end, because this was a slightly more advanced area of visual media critique, than the previous area of color, so a simplistic composition was needed to contrast the slightly more complex topic. All of the line work in the charts (the initial frames) were illustrated with a brush that simulated a 6B pencil. Originally, the idea was to create a completely clean look and utilize the perfection that working digitally can afford, but opted to use a less perfect method to create the line work. It made the process and final outcome more unique and grounded than using harsh pen lines. It gave the whole digital project a contrasting traditional feel.

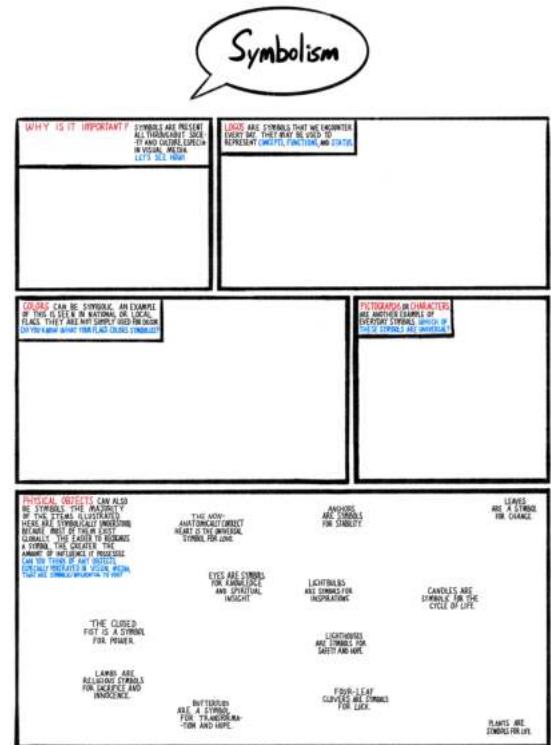


The next step was to fill the frames with logo, flags, characters (letters, symbols, etc.), and objects in an attempt to explore as much symbolism as could be covered in a single comic book page. In creating these charts, the idea was to explain as much as possible visually rather than rely on writing to tell the whole story. The creating of this piece was sped up a bit, because a handful of these symbols came from an earlier draft version of this chart. No need to let the failed first attempt go to waste.

The next step, for this second chart, was to add color. This chart was filled with objects, which made the coloring process a bit more tedious this time



around. Keeping all the color on a separate layer below the line work made this process easier. A little creativity was required as there were a



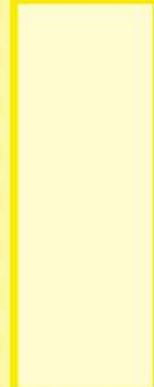
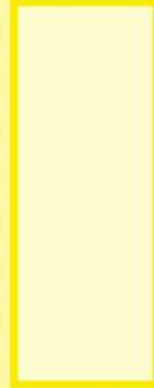
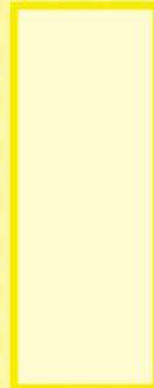
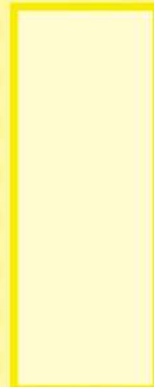
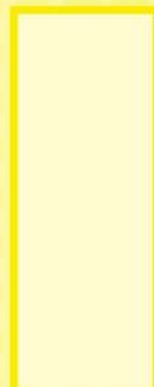
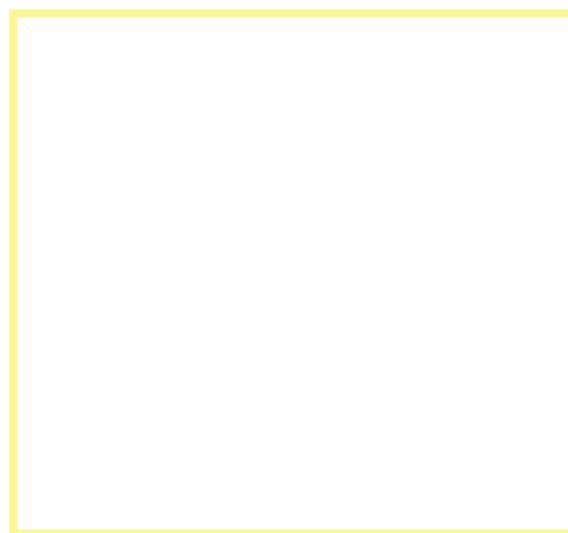
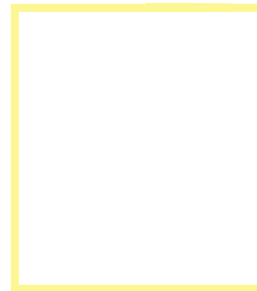
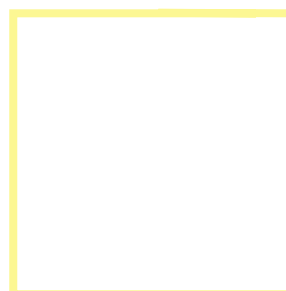
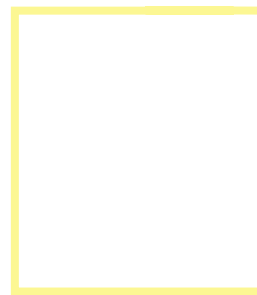
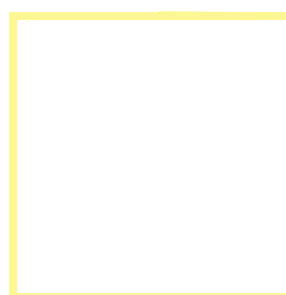
limited number of layers available due to the document's size. At times, there was confusion as to which layer was being worked on, which in turn meant that there was the choice to either undo the last little bit of work, that had just been completed, or try to select certain elements and move them to a different canvas. A combination of both of these methods ended up doing the trick.

Knowing the colors of the flags of different countries is not only a good exercise for the viewer, but was also

a good personal exercise. Each flag was specifically chosen. Each one needed to be relevant to either the project or have personal relevance.

This page is the second most text heavy. The number of images within the panels helped to balance the text out and in the end the text does not appear to come across as overbearing. However, a couple of extra precautions were taken to ensure the text could be read quickly.

First, I did a handwritten sans-serif font for ease of reading. Comic Sans is the font typically used in comic books, but due to the stigma surrounding that font, in the graphic design world, the decision was made to locate a different font. Second, color was added to parts of the text that were most important. This was done so even if the viewer did not take the time to read the whole paragraph, they would probably have their eyes drawn to the highlighted words. This trick was learned from illustrated children's chapter books. The young audience of this thesis project, with their short attention span, was considered in this choice.





# PROTOTYPE

## Tips 4 Visual Media Evaluation

**Color Association**

**Symbolism**

	+		=	Purity
	+		=	ELEGANCE
	+		=	Violence

**Emotion**

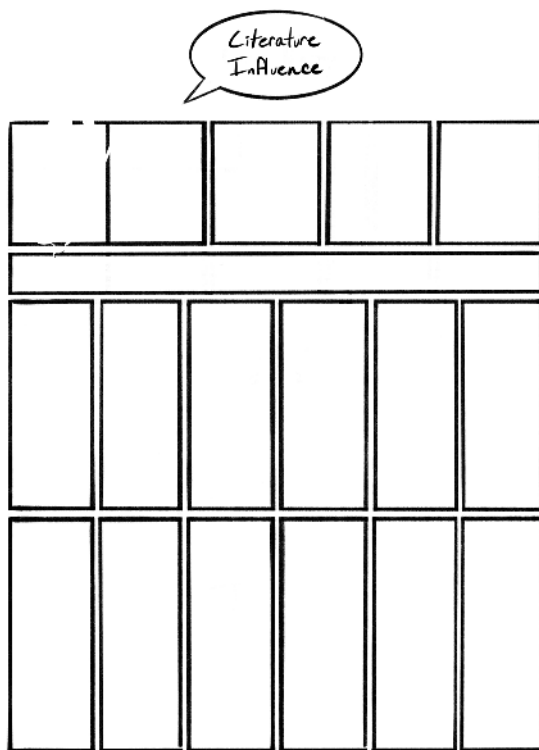
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**12 Character Archetypes**



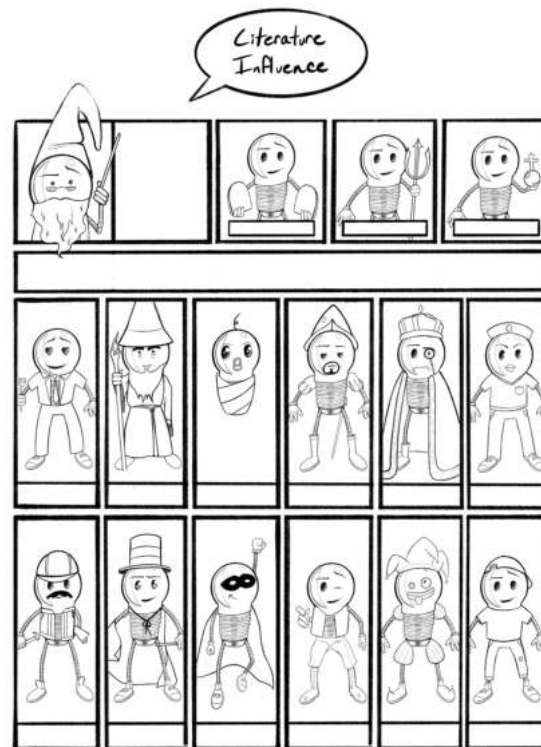
# LITERATURE INFLUENCE

This chart was a favorite. The little lightbulb mascot, Lucius, was purposefully designed to be a flexible character. This chart would require characters that could embody theological, mythological, and historical concepts, as well as play dress-up as the 12-character archetypes. Lucius, was the perfect mascot for this thesis project.



The beginning of this chart was an interesting task. The chart needed to fit 12 characters, as well as explain why these archetypes were important on a single page. It quickly became apparent that this would present challenges.

It was made less simple when the design worked the first time in sketchbook form, but then the measurements did not translate well into digital. After a bit of finessing, the issue was fixed and each frame was spacious enough to hold every element. The erased lines in the top image are an example how working in different layers can be difficult. It is easy to forget which layer is being used and erase lines, but then not realize this until hours later.



Getting to design each of the twelve archetypes was thoroughly enjoyable. Lucius' design allowed for a wide variety of expressions and costumes, which was exactly what was needed to portray these wildly different

personalities. The most difficult part was making sure that each character had a distinct personality and purpose. Originally, each of the twelve archetypes would be shown as a character and a symbol, but this method was later changed/improved.

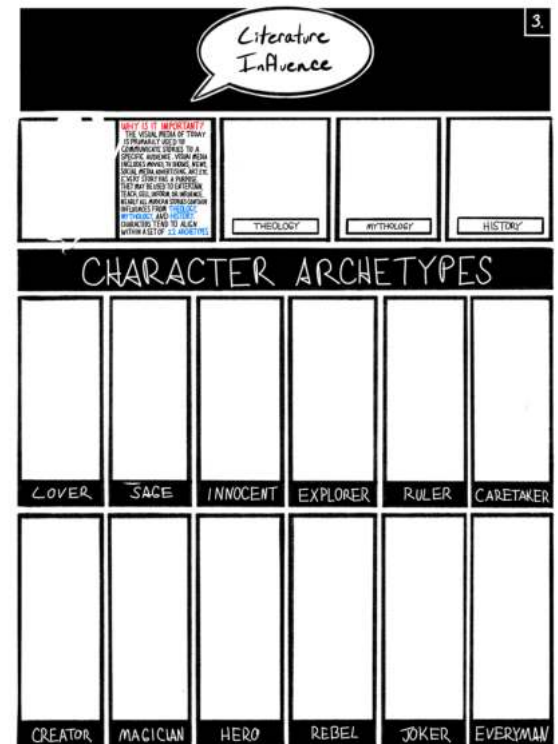


This round of coloring was also one the most enjoyable experiences of creating the charts.

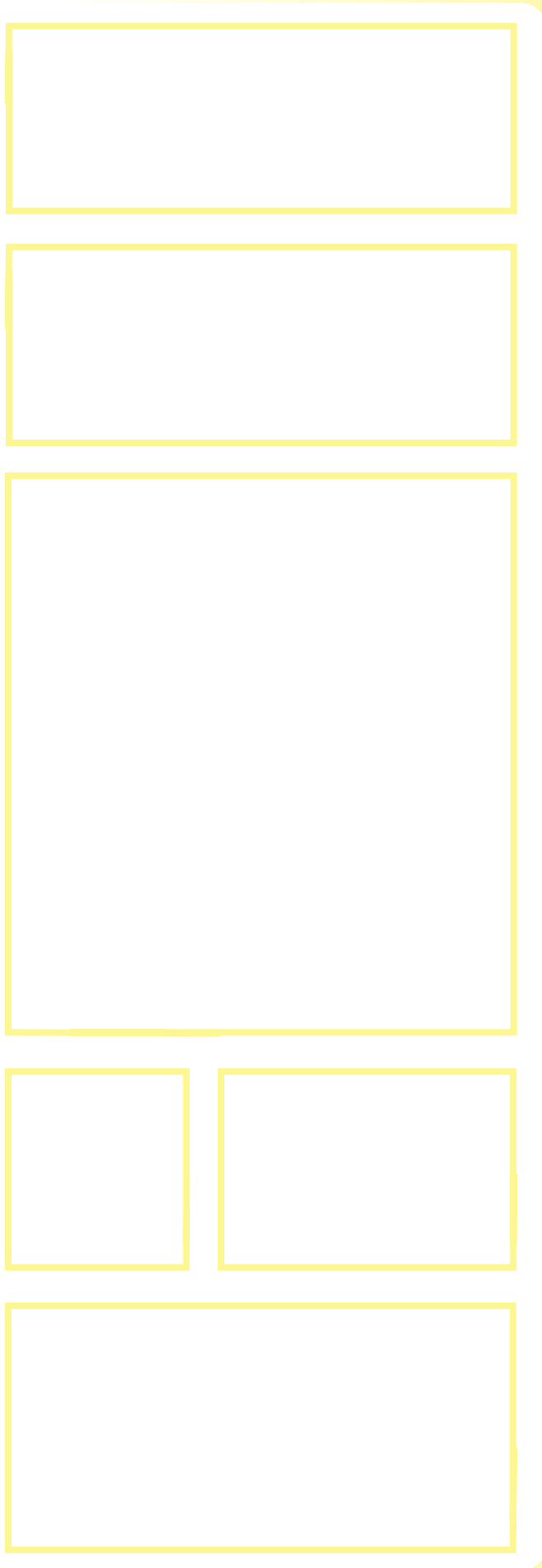
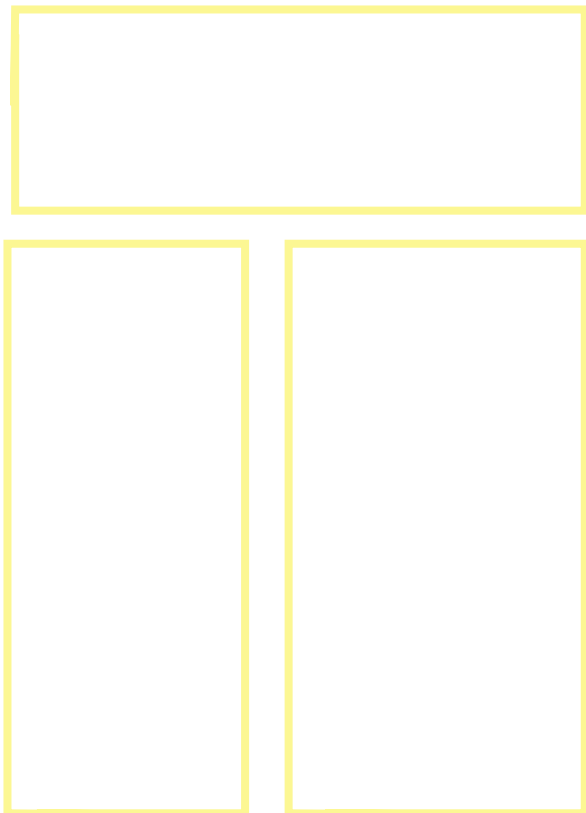
Color theory and symbolism both played a role in this process, once again, reinforcing the idea that these concepts have overlap. This rogues gallery-like composition was immediately brought to life as each character was given a fresh coat of digital paint. Color helped to reinforce the expression and personalities of

each rendition of Lucius. Lucius' design was originally meant to be completely white and have his accessories be the only part of him with color. Old comic and animation styles followed this method and were influential to his design. Once Lucius had been used in a few panels, throughout the whole charting process, it felt like an element was still missing. After adding the blue glass, he changed from being a simple doodle into being an actual character.

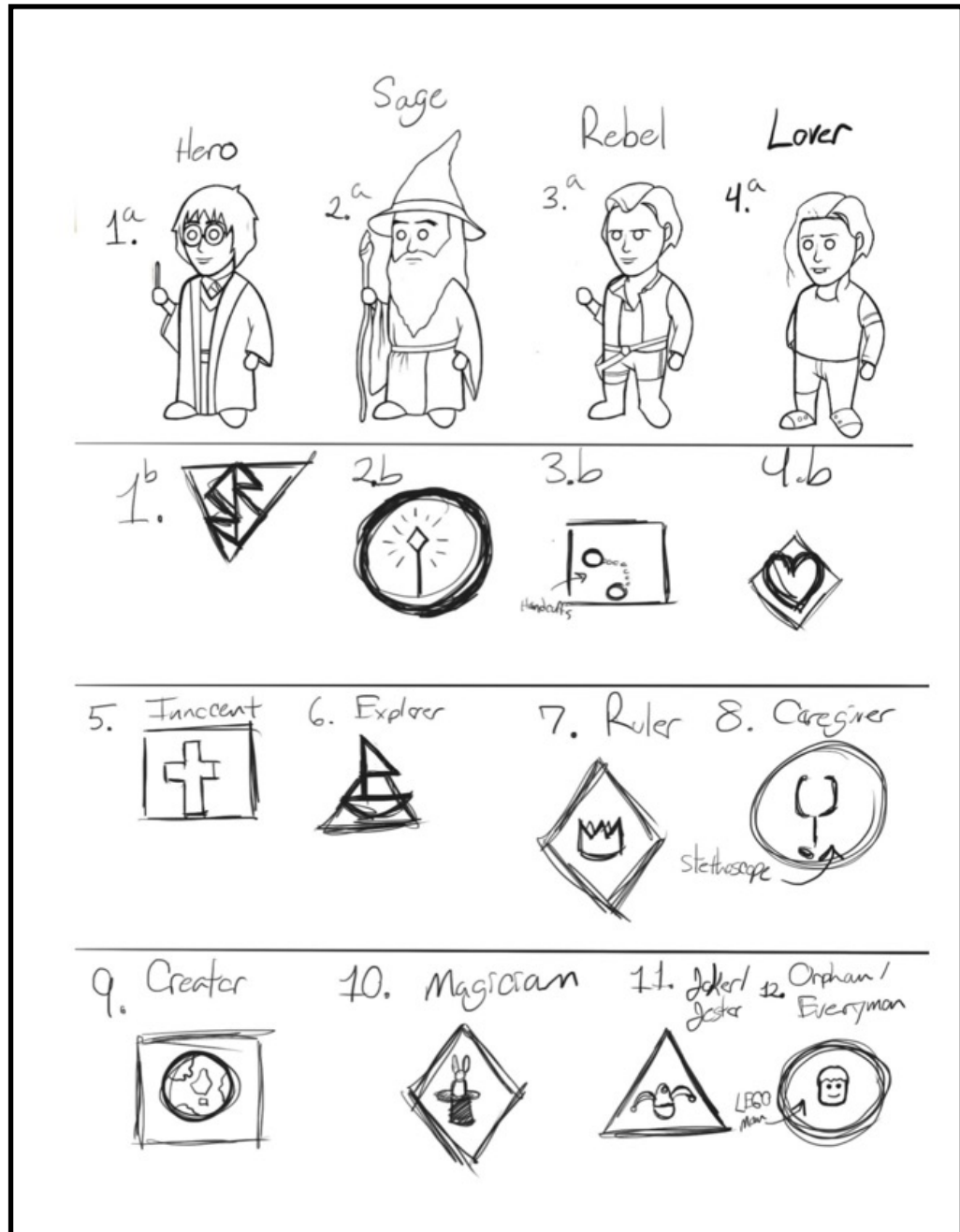
This chart had potentially the least amount of text but was the most frustrating to add. The dialogue text was relatively easy to add, but the real struggle came in the form of the archetype names. This was done and re-done about five or six times,



as the handwritten attempts were not satisfactory. Black on white text, white on black text, all caps, lowercase/capital letters, and different font styles were all tried. There was also consideration of simply typing this portion out. Eventually, a label was created for each character, that was satisfactory. What was making this process difficult was the small amount of space which was available. The lettering needed to be big enough to be a label but small enough to fit in the cramped, black rectangle. Finally, the chart came together in a pleasing manner. The final chart can be seen in chapter four.



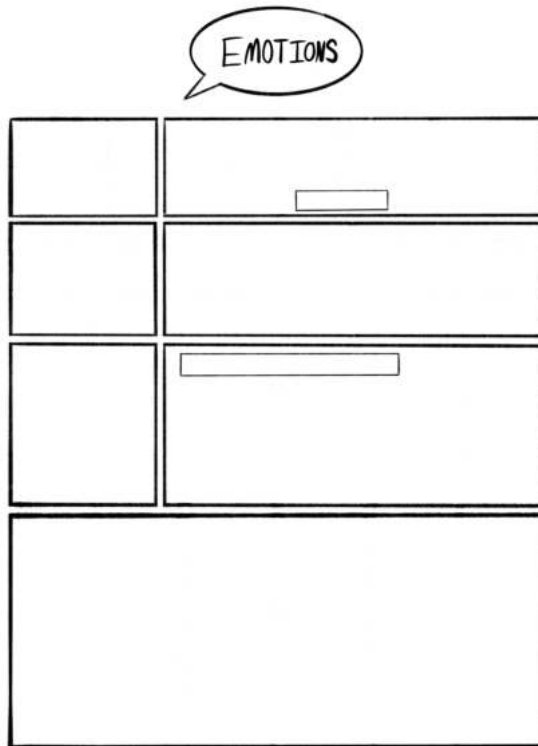
# FIRST ATTEMPT



# EMOTIONS

This chart was the most nerve-racking to create simply there was no established plan for it before going straight to digital. Saying that there was no plan is not completely true. The research for this chart had been done. The material was understood. What had not been counted on was the realization that emotions are not only a separate category of art critique in regard to visual media evaluation. Emotions are additionally a result of the visual media's incorporation of color, symbolism, and literature influence. This chart was no longer about simply showcasing the emotions attached to art, but about exploring the roots of those emotions, questioning the legitimacy of those emotions, and most importantly learning to control those emotions.

The final chart was designed in a type of waterfall composition where each row became a bit deeper than the last. This was not done in level of importance but rather to represent the journey and the level of difficulty each chart possesses. Each row is started with a paragraph explaining how each section is relevant to the topic of emotion and visual media.



This composition ended up becoming a favorite. It provided the perfect amount of space to include everything needed to be in this final chart.

As far as visuals in this page, the selection of each item was purposeful. This chart was the final chance to leave the audience with a message, so the visuals needed to be strong. This page was possibly the least visually chaotic and that was the goal. This was also the only page where the real reason behind this entire project was introduced — why people need to understand the importance of visual media's emotional influence. That was always the endgame and the buildup was worth it.

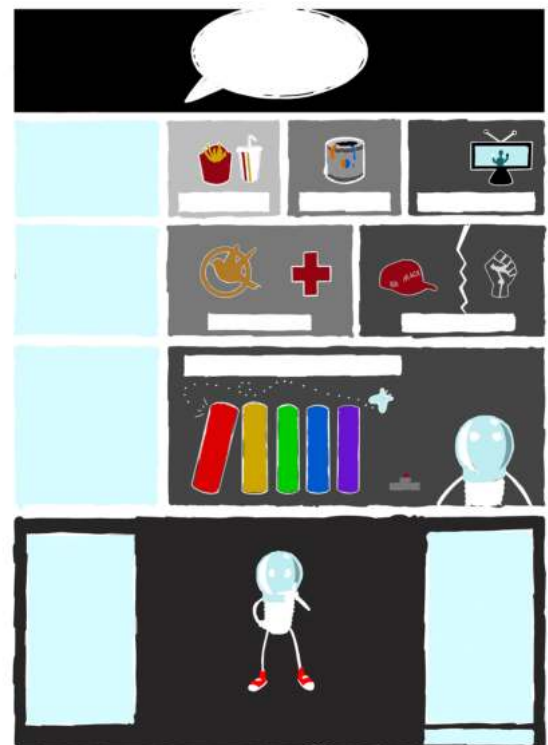




Color was, once again, exactly what was needed to bring this page to life. The idea was that the color on this page should not be distracting but purposeful. The coloring on the other three charts was also purposeful, but there was a need to push the color theory that much further for this final page. The cascading grey tones that accompany this piece are part of the reason that this page works cohesively. The greys cause the colors to pop but not be distracting.

This page was by far the most text heavy and this was purposefully done. There was thought put into how a viewer would approach the chart, and it

decided that the viewer would most likely rather read one text-heavy page, than read four pages with a moderate amount of text. The heavy text complements the fact that there are less visuals on this page. Chances are that this page is the last part of the



project that a viewer sees, so this would be the final chance to impart a few thoughts which felt important to communicate.

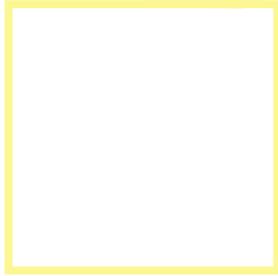
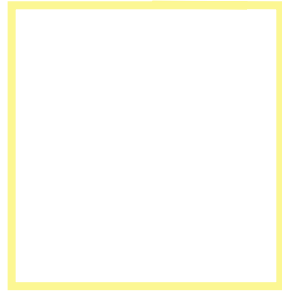
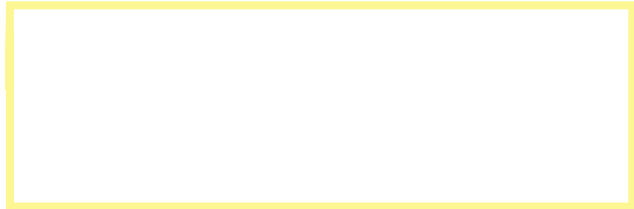
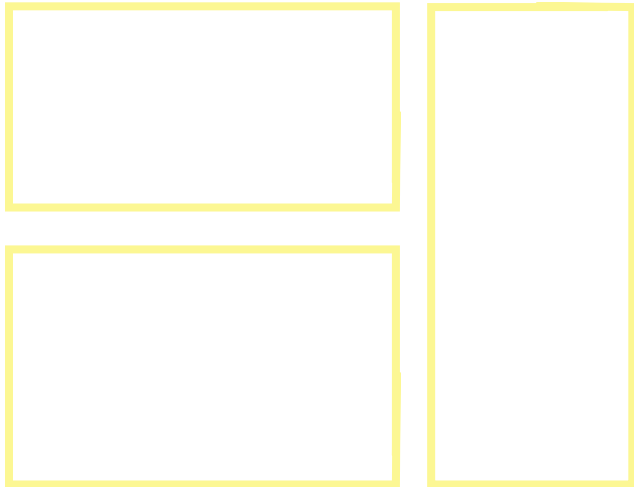
The text itself was by far the most rewarding area of the entire chart creation process. It took many hours to write these out by hand but the outcome delivered surprisingly pleasant results. Once again, it was kept in mind that even though everything written was important, not



everyone would take the time to read it, so the most important parts of the text were highlighted. The decision was made to keep all the text, because even if just one person took the time to read through the whole page, and it affected them in a positive way, then the entire year of work, that this project required, would be more than fulfilled.

EMOTIONS

<p><b>RIGHT TO UNKNOWN? CONSUMER</b> EXERCISES MARKET THAT PEOPLE MUST NOT HAVE CONSIDERED AND THE SURROUNDING BY COLOR AND WE WILL KNOW OF ITS BEAUTY AND WE CAN BE THE OWNERS OF THE APPROPRIATE OR EVEN UNDERSTANDING THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE THAT CONSUMER SHOULD BE MADE THE ACQUIRED, DISCOVERED AND MEDIA INFLUENCE ALL THESE COLORS TO EMOTIONALLY INFLUENCE THEIR BEHAVIOR AND THIS IS NOT QUOTE A NEGATIVE THING, IT IS SIMPLY TO CONSIDER BE SUFFICIENT.</p>	<p><b>MARKETING</b> PALS AND YELLOW AND AND IF I DON'T HAVE ANOTHER OPTION, I COULD BUY FROM THE STORE.</p>	<p><b>DESIGN</b> THE COLOR OF BRANDS REPRESENTS LATEST TRENDS AND USE HIGHLIGHTS.</p>	<p><b>MEDIA</b> WE SHOULD NOT BE AWARE OF THIS AS WE ARE NOT?</p> <p>DIFFERENT TV PROGRAMS USE DIFFERENT COLOR SCHEMES TO ATTRACT VIEWERS.</p>
<p>TELEVISION IS ONE OF VISUAL MEDIA THAT FIRST PIONEERED THEM. SOME SHOWS WITH SYMBOLS, MARKERS SUCH AS THE CARICATURES OF THE BRANDS THAT WE HAVE AND EMPLOY THE CONCEPTS THAT WE BELONG TO AND ALSO IN OUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCES, STRINGS AND DECISIONS TO RECEIVE VISUALS AND LAST, VISUALS, OUR WILLING TO BUY FOR SYMBOLS AND THEIR BEHAVIOR, THROUGH VISUALS, PEOPLE HAVE EMOTIONALLY MANIPULATED THEM WITH FALLS THROUGH OF OUR LAST, WE CAN BE SUFFICIENT.</p>	<p>STIMULUS MAY <b>INSPIRE AND INFLUENCE</b></p>	<p>STIMULUS MAY <b>HURT AND DIVIDE</b></p>	
<p>TELEVISION AND SOCIAL HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND POP CULTURE AS WE AS A CULTURE ARE COMING TO REACT AND RESPOND TO THESE VISUALS. VISUAL MEDIA INFLUENCE AFFECTS OUR BEHAVIOR AND THROUGH PROCESS, AND EMOTIONAL DIRECTION.</p> <p>WE ASK WHAT WE CONSUME. KNOWING THIS, IT IS CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT INFLUENCES THE THINGS WE CONSUME AS LIKE THE <b>TELEVISION</b> THAT VISUAL MEDIA IS THE MAIN PART OF THE VISUAL MEDIA THAT WE CONSUME. VISUAL MEDIA IS NOT LITERATURE SUCH AS <b>TELEVISION</b>, <b>TELEVISION</b> AND <b>TELEVISION</b> THROUGH VISUAL MEDIA, WE CAN BE SUFFICIENT. VISUAL MEDIA INFLUENCE AFFECTS OUR BEHAVIOR AND THROUGH PROCESS, AND EMOTIONAL DIRECTION.</p>	<p>LITERARY INFLUENCE + VISUAL MEDIA + SOCIAL CONDOMING - EMOTIONS</p>		
<p><b>VISUAL MEDIA IS DESIGNED TO BE AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND A NEGATIVE THING, WE CAN BE SUFFICIENT. VISUAL MEDIA CAN BE A NEGATIVE THING, WE CAN BE SUFFICIENT. VISUAL MEDIA CAN BE A NEGATIVE THING, WE CAN BE SUFFICIENT. VISUAL MEDIA CAN BE A NEGATIVE THING, WE CAN BE SUFFICIENT.</b></p>	<p>IS THE GOAL OF THIS VISUAL MEDIA TO CHALLENGE EMOTIONALITY?</p>	<p>AM I IN CONTROL OF MY EMOTIONS THROUGH VISUAL MEDIA?</p>	<p><b>VISUAL MEDIA IS A POSITIVE THING THAT SHOULD BE USED, CONTROLLED BY THE CONSUMER. VISUAL MEDIA IS A POSITIVE THING THAT SHOULD BE USED, CONTROLLED BY THE CONSUMER. VISUAL MEDIA IS A POSITIVE THING THAT SHOULD BE USED, CONTROLLED BY THE CONSUMER.</b></p>
<p>WHY MIGHT VISUAL MEDIA BE USED TO FACILITATE AN EMOTION RESPONSE FROM ME?</p>	<p>WHY MIGHT VISUAL MEDIA BE USED TO FACILITATE AN EMOTION RESPONSE FROM ME?</p>	<p>WHY MIGHT VISUAL MEDIA BE USED TO FACILITATE AN EMOTION RESPONSE FROM ME?</p>	<p>WHY MIGHT VISUAL MEDIA BE USED TO FACILITATE AN EMOTION RESPONSE FROM ME?</p>
<p>DO I MAKE SURE TO LOOK FOR CONTEXT BEFORE REACTING EMOTIONALLY?</p>	<p>DO I MAKE SURE TO LOOK FOR CONTEXT BEFORE REACTING EMOTIONALLY?</p>	<p>DO I MAKE SURE TO LOOK FOR CONTEXT BEFORE REACTING EMOTIONALLY?</p>	<p>DO I MAKE SURE TO LOOK FOR CONTEXT BEFORE REACTING EMOTIONALLY?</p>





# CHAPTER 4

## VISUAL SOLUTION

# VISUAL DELIVERABLES

The task of introducing the idea of critical thinking without coming across as dry or even overbearing was challenging. The part of this project that was the most difficult was determining the amount of information to incorporate. An over abundance of information might alarm the audience and a lack of information might leave them with not enough to process. In order to complete this task, the project would require an art style that was flexible.

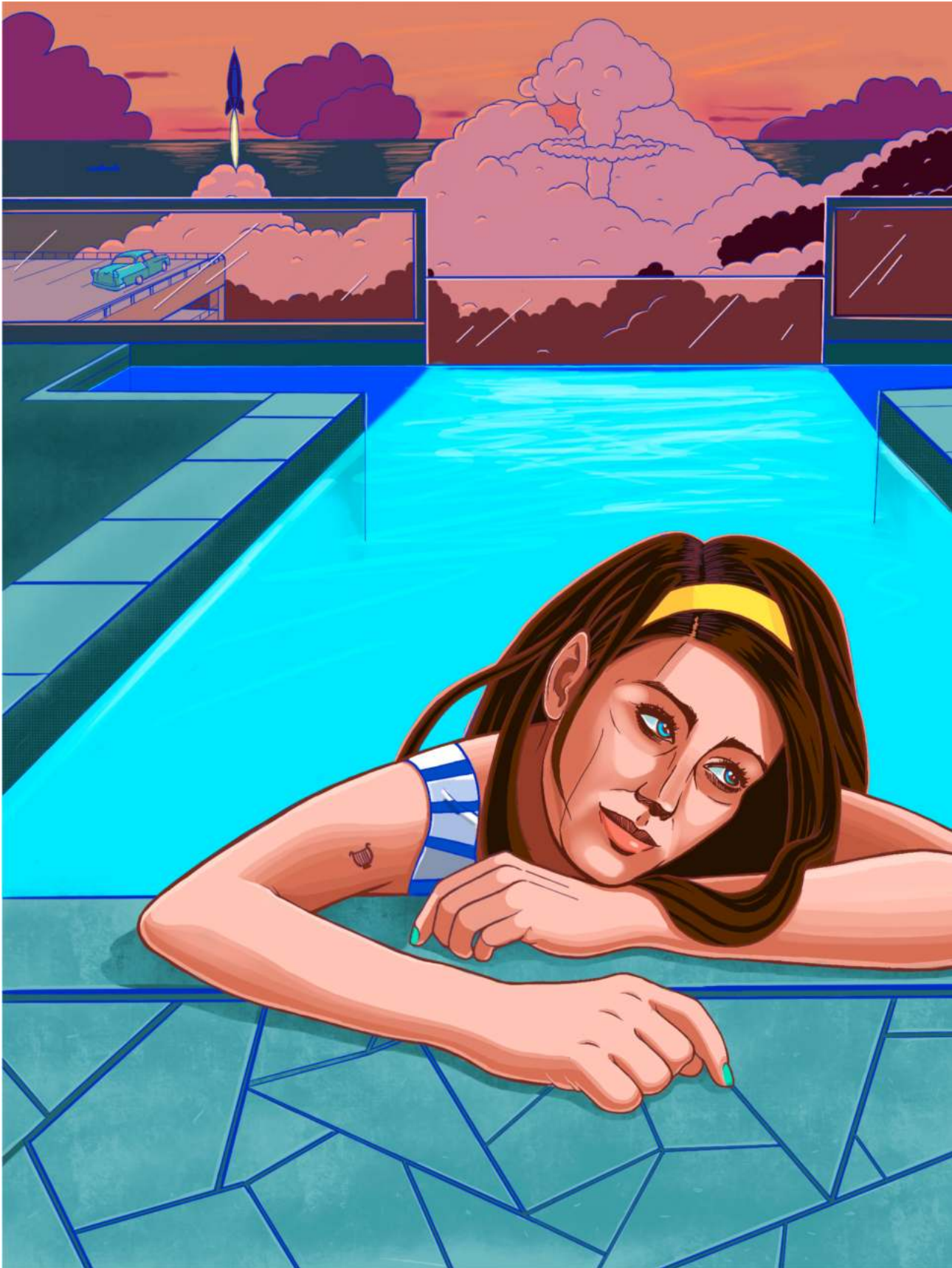
After much research, illustration became the clear winner in this task. Illustration, unlike other art forms, is flexible. This is why it is used as often as it is in different types of media. It allows for the level of detail to be determined by the individual project. In contrast, photorealistic art requires a certain level of detail regardless of the project, in the same way that abstract art requires little to no detail. Illustration is a useful middle ground and was the right choice for this project.

The project's goal was to demonstrate how one might critique the visual media in their everyday life, as well as be aware of the influence that visual media has on their emotions. It would have been a simple matter of finding famous pieces of visual media and simply telling the audience what they meant, but this would not have accomplished the goal in the correct way. Part of chapter 2 introduced the idea of creating challenges/struggles for the student (viewer), to help them learn how to form their own opinions based off existing information (McGuire). That was the thought process for the illustrations. In order to accomplish this goal in the way this thesis project envisioned, fresh and original pieces needed to be created. This gave control over what influences were included. The influences needed to be purposeful and precise.

The next step, after illustrating the main pieces, was to create a guide to evaluate the influences of visual media. This would require a slightly different version of illustration — comics.

Comics have been used to tell stories for decades. This was perfect because the goal of this project was to display the information in a story-like format. People tend to remember information when it is displayed in story form (Heath). Now, a closer look will be taken at each deliverable separately.

The image shows a template for a comic book page, consisting of several empty rectangular panels of different sizes and orientations, arranged in a grid-like fashion. The panels are outlined in a light red color. The layout includes a large panel on the left side, a smaller panel at the top left, two panels at the top right, two panels in the middle right, a wide panel below them, two panels at the bottom left, and a wide panel at the bottom right.



"SUMMER DAZE"



## ILLUSTRATION 1

The first illustration, which I have titled, “*Summer Daze*,” was where the project first felt like it came to life. Before creating this piece, the project was only ideas and concepts, which were not guaranteed to work. The aesthetics of the 1950s - 1990s have been personal inspirations for a long time. Exploring these time periods provided the perfect setting for this project, both aesthetically and in terms of material to evaluate. The 1950s image board was helpful in determining the 1950s aesthetic (See page 39).

The goal of each illustration (from a visual standpoint) was to provide the viewer with an “aesthetic experience” (Mastandrea). Each piece needed to be both beautiful and functional.

### COLOR THEORY

This first piece displays sadness. The goal was to display one primary emotion in each illustration. The choice was made to pair blue with orange because the contrasting colors represented contrasting ideas. The 1950s outwardly appears to have been a perfect utopia. People’s everyday lives (in general), were fulfilling. While not everyone lived the glamorous lifestyles of Hollywood, the average American was decently healthy and happy with the state of their lives. Orange is a color which represents health and contentment. While outwardly, 1950s America was content and healthy, there was also a sadness under the surface. This sadness can be attributed to a couple of factors. First, the world was not far out from the end of World War 2. Second, the arrival of nuclear weapons promised an uncertain future (more on that later). Blue was used to represent this sadness. Different shades of blue displaying different types of sadness. Together, this complementary color scheme tells a story. Two thirds of the illustration is dominated by blue, which was intentional to establish sadness as the primary emotion in this piece.

Even though people do not need to comprehend the piece to have an emotional response to it, the choice was made to try and invoke the response by including emotion as a main element within each piece (Leder).

## SYMBOLISM

As this was the first piece, it was additionally the first chance to decide how to include symbolism in this project. The rocket and atomic cloud represent the Space and Atomic Ages being in the back of people's minds regardless of their happy lives. The car represents how people at this time found distraction in entertainment. Even though the future was uncertain, they could not get enough of it the excitement. The lyre tattoo is a literary reference (see Literature Influence). The sunset is meant to represent the idea of the sun literally setting on this idyllic America. The girl being half in and half out of the pool represents her contrasting emotional state. Part of her being happy and the other part sad.

## LITERATURE INFLUENCE

This project has defined literature influence as one of three things: historical, theological, or mythological influence. There is overlap to be found but they can be seen as three distinct categories. This piece mostly utilizes historical references such as events and the visual aesthetics of the 1950s. Another literary reference can be seen in the tattoo of a lyre. This is a reference to Emperor Nero who played his lyre while Rome burned. This reference is meant to display the idea of distracting oneself while the world starts to fall down, or even the person mentally checking out.

## EMOTION

Sadness



"SOFT DECAY"

## ILLUSTRATION 2

This piece titled, “*Soft Decay*,” was inspired by the 1960s, particularly the inception of the Women’s Liberation Movement. This piece is not meant to get into the politics of the movement, but rather to illustrate a major affect of the controversial movement. The 1960s aesthetic was inspired by the corresponding image board (See page 40).

### COLOR THEORY

Green and Red-Orange, while being another complementary color scheme, were meant to represent division. Green can represent several things, but in this particular illustration it represents jealousy and disgust. Red and orange are colors that hold symbolic meaning, however in this illustration the red-orange color is only meant to represent division. The purple of the treehouse represents pride and power.

### SYMBOLISM

This piece was an interesting one in which to incorporate symbolism. The treehouse that the girls are on was always planned to represent the idea that, in the 1960s, women and men no longer were able to see eye-to-eye on issues. A big reason for this had to do with the Women’s Liberation Movement. Women’s voices were being elevated, hence the treehouse. The fence is a physical divide that represents the mental and emotional division between men and women, enhanced in the 1960s. The tree itself additionally represents two things. First, the tree’s branches were used to display the reach of this movement’s influence. The Women’s Liberation Movement, from its beginning spread like wildfire. The shadow of the tree represents the level of influence that this movement had. It was the topic of the time and remains a significant part of cultural conversation today. The boy’s drooping, purple flower is meant to represent wilting pride. The carved hearts with arrows going through them, containing the initials “RFK” and “JFK” represent the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy. The etchings

in the tree symbolizes the lasting impact of their deaths. There was slight unsurety of how to incorporate this idea at first, but then after remembering how teenagers carve love hearts into trees, it was decided that this could be an interesting take on that idea. The girl waving represents two things. First, not all women were happy with this women's movement and, secondly, she was meant to represent the frowning on of mixed couples in the 1960s. This was a small nod to that idea, and was not meant to be the focus of the piece, but it did feel necessary to add that. The two girls, wearing their green dresses of jealousy, represent women who did follow the women's movement. The fact that they are identical was to display the idea of mob mentality or groupthink. Again, this piece was not meant to explore the morality of this movement, but rather to display it for the sake of it being representative of 1960s culture.

### *LITERATURE INFLUENCE*

The name on the treehouse is "Saigon" which is a nod to the Vietnam War and the city of Saigon. There was originally a helicopter toy, in the tree, that represented the infamous airlift, but this did not occur until the 1970s, so I opted to revisit this idea in the next piece.

Each piece was designed to feel similar to a story. This was done so that both forms of the word narrative were incorporated into each piece (See section on Tolkien and Lewis in chapter 2).

### *EMOTION*

Disgust/Jealousy





"PSYCHO-DELICS"

## ILLUSTRATION 3

This piece titled, “*Psycho-Delics*,” was inspired by the counterculture of the 1970s. Drug culture was popularized in the 1970s. The goal was to address this topic without making blatant references to the topic. The decision was made to illustrate two youths recklessly hurtling down a coastal highway. The style and aesthetic of this piece was inspired by the 1970s image board (See page 41)

### COLOR THEORY

Yellow was the main color in this piece. This happiness or carefree nature of the hippie movement, which was most likely drug-induced, was pervasive in the 1970s. Purple was used here as a complement to help the yellow pop. It was also useful in establishing yellow as the dominant color. The blues, greens, greys, purples, and yellows were all extremely natural colors. The decision was made to not use any harsh or unnatural colors, in this piece, to represent the focus on nature and the being-one-with-nature philosophy of this time.

Each chart was kept to simple color schemes. This was done because of color preference (Hartz). The idea was to use color schemes that historically appealed to most people such as primary, complimentary, monochromatic, and natural colors. This was so that the proposed aesthetic experience had a better chance of working (Mastandrea).

### SYMBOLISM

This illustration was a favorite in terms of symbolism. The first and most important piece of symbolism is the bright, speedy car ignoring the barriers and careening down the highway. This represents the reckless and “happy” lives of many youths in the 1970s, and how they set society on a dangerous path (similar to riding along the edge of a cliff). The flower petals symbolize the spread of counterculture and drug culture. I used flower petals because they are both beautiful and innocent, but flowers can also be poisonous. This represents

the idea that dangerous ideas and habits were being spread under a false claim of “peace” and “love.” Flowers were additionally a significant part of the 1970s aesthetic. The girl can be seen sporting a peace symbol on her necklace. The guy is also seen wearing the popular “rose-colored” glasses symbolizing the idea that this generation chose to live in a society of false happiness, because they were blinded to the things that were actually happening in the world. The broken parts of the car symbolize the broken and reckless half of society. The Concept of this piece symbolizes the idea of a parasocial relationship where these influencers/ “powerful opinion leaders” are selling a lifestyle to people who are social outcasts and want to belong to a group (Hwang, Kumlu, and Zhang.)

The last illustration review spoke about the city of Saigon and how it was originally the plan to represent its fall in the 1960s piece, and how it was decided to push that concept to this 1970s illustration. In the bottom left corner, there is a black license plate with the phrase, “2A1G-ON,” which stands for Saigon, and the fact that it is broken and leaning represents the city’s fall. The flowers all over the hillside represent these dangerous lifestyles, and harmful ideas taking root and thriving all over. The road itself is a reference for a safe and secure past, dangerous choices in the present, and an uncertain future.

## LITERATURE INFLUENCE

The rocket ship can be seen as a distraction that caused the driver to not see the road barriers (that is how I see the 1970s), however it is furthermore a reference to the tragic Apollo 13 mission, another reference to how the 1970s set a bad trajectory for the future. The number 13 can be seen in the cloud of smoke following the rocket.

## EMOTION

Happiness



"THE THRILL"



## ILLUSTRATION 4

This piece titled, “*The Thrill*,” is inspired by events of the 1980s. The introduction of crack-cocaine into society, and the emergence of the AIDS epidemic was an emotional time. It furthered and worsened the United States’ ongoing drug culture problem, and added to the death toll, especially in a culture that was becoming increasingly promiscuous. These were sensitive topics that were tricky to handle, but this piece found a workable solution. The 1980s aesthetic was inspired by the 1980s image board (see page 42). The emotion of this piece was heavily inspired by the idea that emotions are activated responses and the idea was to show the cause and effect of the emotions (Crashcourse).

This piece leaned more heavily into the conceptual/surreal realm than the other pieces and was inspired by the conceptual portraits image board (see page 46.)

### COLOR THEORY

Red was the primary color for this piece. Red was chosen because, while researching the 1980s, particularly about the crack and AIDS issues, the same recurring emotion in society was anger. Parents angry that people seemed to just drop dead overnight, anger at the people responsible for these deaths, and the most anger at a government that seemingly did not care about handling these situations. Additionally, the illustration used a red, yellow, and blue primary scheme. Main characters are often portrayed in these colors and it was a color scheme that had not been previously used for this project. Blue and pink were added. They were used to denote gender (see symbolism section).

### SYMBOLISM

Once again, the issue came up of how to address dark issues without being overly graphic or upfront about the issue. The choice was made to illustrate a girl, dancing alone in a place that should be crowded. It seemed that the impact



of this was an appropriate way to set the mood of the piece. The sign “Krackens and Mermaids” symbolizes crack and AIDS respectively, hidden in the name of the disco, which always seem to have unusual names. The way that neon lights always seem to be missing letters was used advantageously. The blue and pink orbs symbolize the spirits of people who have died from either crack or AIDS as denoted by their matching colors from the neon sign. Blue and pink were also used to represent the idea that both men and women died from these causes. The shattered disco ball is meant to symbolize just how prevalent crack-cocaine use was becoming. It broke society and seemed to be popping up everywhere as shown by the scattered pieces. Discos used to have light up dance floors, and the choice was made to only light the red tiles to further emphasize the anger that this lonely, dancing girl is feeling. The red jacket further reinforces anger as the main theme. The idea of showing a youth, who feels alone and lost in the changing world, was inspired by Case Study 3 (Ray). The heavy use of symbolism in this piece was used to portray self-expression, relationships, fears, and the surreal (Martinez)

## LITERATURE INFLUENCE

Old versions of famous logos were included for both the sake of Easter eggs (hidden references in media), as well to point out the growing obsession with branded items being important for someone to feel like they could be accepted. Her name tag reads “Yuppie,” which is a reference to a subculture in the 1980s, of young, working people who were obsessed with making money and possessing material wealth. Mermaids and Krackens were considered dangerous killers lurking quietly beneath the surface. One caught voyagers by surprise and the other lured them in with false promises.

## EMOTION

Anger



**"A CHANGE OF CHARACTER"**

## ILLUSTRATION 5

This piece titled, “A Change of Character,” was inspired by events of the 1990s. The theme of this piece is fear and mystery and how bad things occur under the cover of darkness. The 1990s was a decade that was quieter, at least in terms of outward appearance, with the events happening throughout. Big events were taking place and shaping but most people were simply unaware. The aesthetic was inspired by the 1990s image board (see page 43).

The flat illustration style in each piece was inspired by a mixture of the Flat Illustration and Comic book style image boards (see pages 44-45).

### COLOR THEORY

The choice was made to use a monochromatic color scheme for this piece. Purple is the color of pride and mystery. Purple can additionally be used to create an atmosphere of fear (or at least one of unease). Monochromatic color schemes are helpful in giving unity to a piece, which was extra helpful here, because it helped bring together several pieces that did not have anything in common other than being from the 90s. The only colors used, other than purple, were then tinted over with purple, once again unifying them.

### SYMBOLISM

This piece was lighter on symbolism and heavier on references than the other four. Due to the quieter nature of the 1990s, this format worked better. The road with its assortment of strange characters and items symbolized the strange events that were happening, quietly, in the 90s that would lead up to an eventful early 2000s. The patched up umbrella was a reference to the Berlin Wall being torn down, reuniting both halves of Germany.

## LITERATURE INFLUENCE

There are several references in this piece, which made it a favorite to create. The girl with the cellphone is a reference to Princess Diana, in her “Revenge Dress,” walking into the path of a car (a reference to the accident). The car is a white Ford Bronco (from the O.J. Simpson car chase) with a plate reading “S1MP95.” This is a reference to the infamous event which took place in 1995 and the word “Simp,” which is a modern reference referring to a person who is strangely obsessed or in love with someone and willing to do anything for them. There is a white Waco van referring to the Waco Siege, and the idea of religious cults. The fountain and girl with the dog are a Friends reference. The dog (a sheepdog) seeing its reflection are a reference to Dolly the Sheep, a leap in science that a majority of people felt crossed a line in terms of humans playing God. The ship floating in the fountain is a reference to the Titanic movie. The three people in the middle are a reference to the Clinton scandal and the fact that they seem to be at the center of everything shady. The writing on the fountain references NAFTA and major names from the 1990s. The street is meant to be a street in Central Park, where shady things do occur at night. The plane heading for the city is a reference to the future September 11, 2001 attacks. This entire decade was a quiet lead up to one of the most horrific events in the nation’s history that would bring about a change of character in our country.

The way that Caravaggio and other artists incorporated seemingly unrelated elements and references in their work was influential to this piece (Kinoshita).

## EMOTION

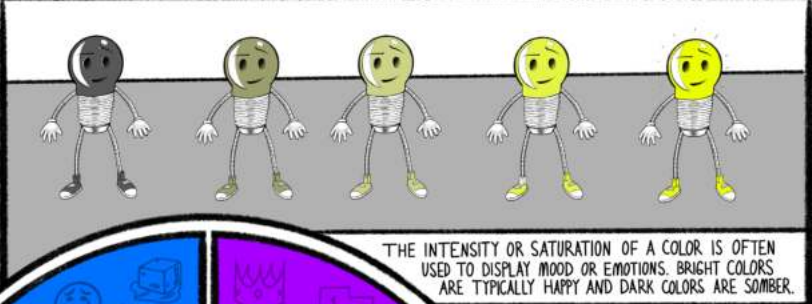
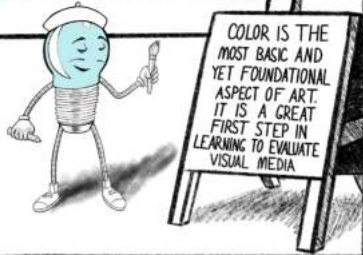
Fear/Unease



# Color Theory

1.

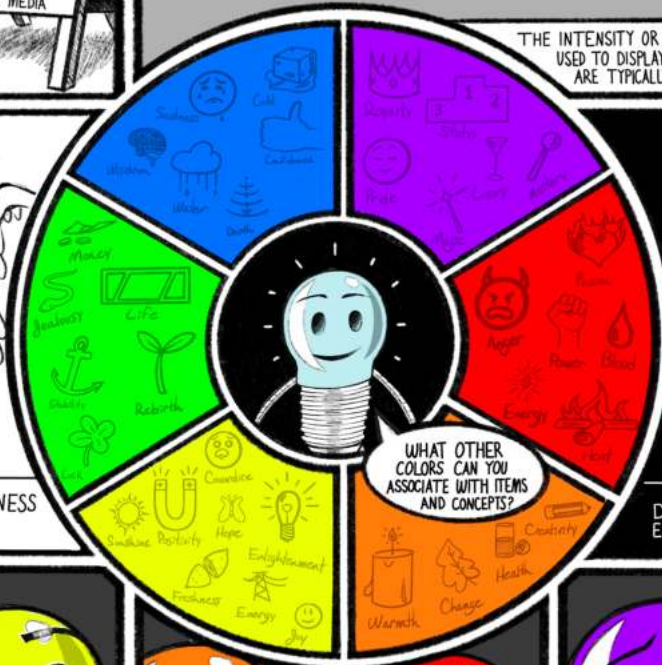
## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



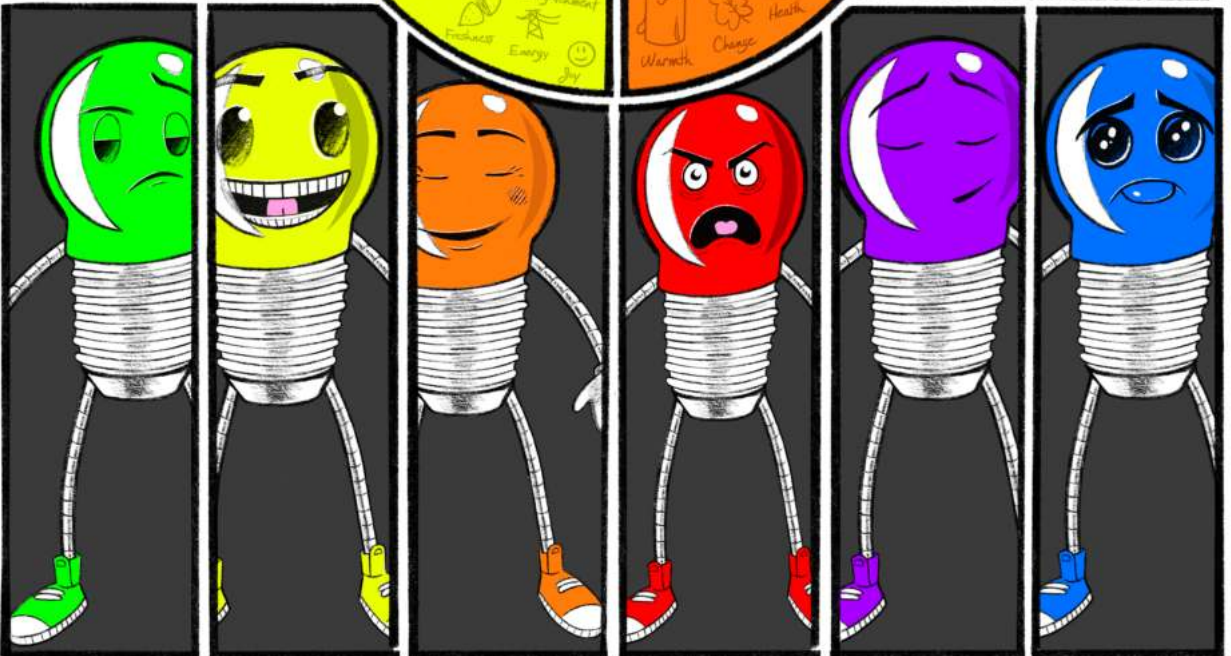
THE INTENSITY OR SATURATION OF A COLOR IS OFTEN USED TO DISPLAY MOOD OR EMOTIONS. BRIGHT COLORS ARE TYPICALLY HAPPY AND DARK COLORS ARE SOMBER.



LIGHT. PURITY. CLEANLINESS  
FAITH. INNOCENCE. SOFT.



DEATH. EVIL. STRENGTH  
ELEGANCE. AUTHORITY. POWER.



## "COLOR THEORY"



# CHART 1

## PANEL 1

This chart was opened with a bold, red question asking, “Why is it important?” I wanted to make sure that within the first panel of the first chart the project’s purpose was made known – evaluating visual media.

A common challenge in the charts was to only say what needed to be said. Operating on the premise that there would be limited time (and definitely space) to communicate with the viewer, these charts only cover the most basic and foundational aspects of each subject (Yen).

After chapter two was completed, I took a class where the entire course book was a giant comic and that book was the main inspiration to teach critical thinking through comic panels (Eisner).

## PANEL 2

This panel introduced the viewer to the idea that color has more of a purpose than simply being beautiful. It explains how the saturation of color in visual media is often a good indication of the media’s mood. This is demonstrated by showing a lightbulb progressively going from off, to dim, to brighter, to completely lit. Color terminology was kept basic and to the point as the goal is to teach awareness and not mastery of each subject (Intro to Color Theory).

## PANEL 3

This panel explained the color white and listed several items and concepts associated with the color.

## PANEL 4

This panel is made up of a color wheel containing the colors, red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. It displays several items and concepts associated

with each color (Intro to Color Theory). This unusual panel shape breaks through the surrounding shapes and gives a uniqueness to the overall panel composition. A smaller panel within the color wheel was included. It includes the mascot encouraging the viewer to explore the meanings of other colors not represented in this basic color wheel. This is purposefully done. The idea is to encourage the audience to start using these concepts on their own outside of this project, without directly stating this. It was a discreet call to action.

### **PANEL 5**

This panel was used to explain the color black and listed several items and concepts that can be associated with the color.

### **PANEL 6**

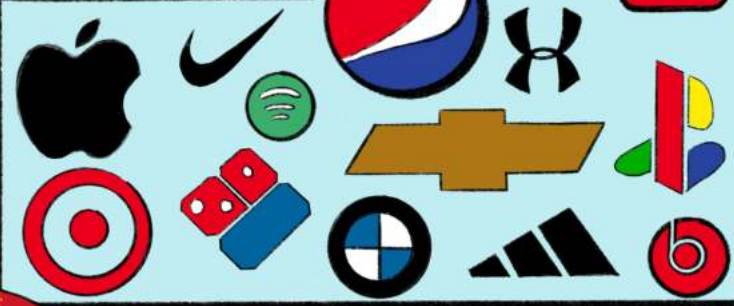
This panel was the one that originally gave reason to believe believe that the charts would work. The idea was to demonstrate emotions and characteristics associated with each color, by illustrating the mascot with different colored bulbs and expressions. The fact that the mascot is a cartoon allows for his expressions to be pushed. The choice was made to not explicitly label each emotion and to let the audience interpret it and assign the emotions to the colors on their own This would help to cement the concept by allowing the audience to connect those dots.

# Symbolism

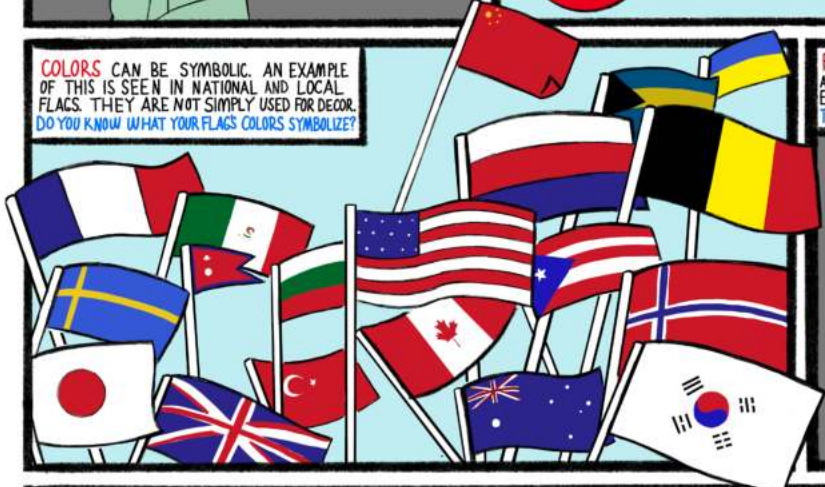
**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?** SYMBOLS ARE PRESENT ALL THROUGHOUT SOCIETY AND CULTURE. ONE AREA THEY CAN BE FOUND IN IS VISUAL MEDIA. LET'S SEE HOW!



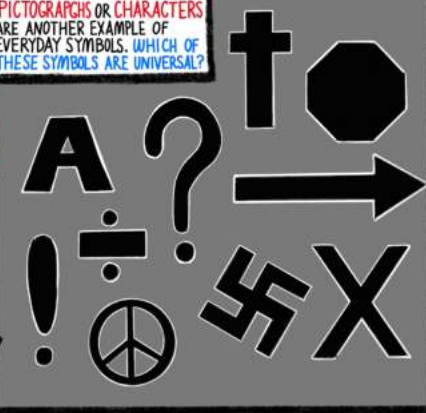
**LOGOS** ARE SYMBOLS THAT WE ENCOUNTER EVERY DAY. THEY MAY BE USED TO REPRESENT CONCEPTS, FUNCTIONS, STATUS, ETC.



**COLORS** CAN BE SYMBOLIC. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS SEEN IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL FLAGS. THEY ARE NOT SIMPLY USED FOR DECOR. DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR FLAG'S COLORS SYMBOLIZE?



**PICTOGRAPHS OR CHARACTERS** ARE ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF EVERYDAY SYMBOLS. WHICH OF THESE SYMBOLS ARE UNIVERSAL?



**PHYSICAL OBJECTS** CAN ALSO BE SYMBOLS. THE MAJORITY OF THE ITEMS ILLUSTRATED HERE ARE SYMBOLICALLY UNDERSTOOD BECAUSE MOST OF THEM EXIST GLOBALLY. THE EASIER TO RECOGNIZE A SYMBOL, THE GREATER THE AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE IT POSSESSES. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OBJECTS PORTRAYED IN VISUAL MEDIA THAT ARE SYMBOLIC OR INFLUENTIAL TO YOU?

- THE NON-ANATOMICALLY CORRECT HEART IS THE UNIVERSAL SYMBOL FOR LOVE.** (Illustration of a heart)
- ANCHORS ARE SYMBOLS FOR STABILITY.** (Illustration of an anchor)
- LEAVES ARE A SYMBOL FOR CHANGE.** (Illustration of a leaf)
- THE CLOSED FIST IS A SYMBOL FOR POWER.** (Illustration of a closed fist)
- EYES ARE SYMBOLS FOR KNOWLEDGE AND SPIRITUAL INSIGHT.** (Illustration of an eye)
- LIGHTBULBS ARE SYMBOLS FOR INSPIRATIONS.** (Illustration of a lit lightbulb)
- CANDLES ARE SYMBOLIC FOR THE CYCLE OF LIFE.** (Illustration of a lit candle)
- LAMBS ARE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS FOR SACRIFICE AND INNOCENCE.** (Illustration of a lamb)
- LIGHTHOUSES ARE SYMBOLS FOR SAFETY AND HOPE.** (Illustration of a lighthouse)
- BUTTERFLIES ARE A SYMBOL FOR TRANSFORMATION AND HOPE.** (Illustration of a butterfly)
- FOUR-LEAF CLOVERS ARE SYMBOLS FOR LUCK.** (Illustration of a four-leaf clover)
- PLANTS ARE SYMBOLS FOR LIFE.** (Illustration of a small plant)

"SYMBOLISM"

## CHART 2

### PANEL 1

This panel was used to open the chart by explaining why this concept was important. It is important to establish the concept's relevance at the beginning.

### PANEL 2

This panel is filled with several, popular logos to demonstrate how symbols can be found in everyday life. It felt important to remind people of how logos are symbolic, because society uses these logos to define themselves and establish their importance to other members of society. This is ridiculous but a reality of the times. The idea is to get the audience thinking about the power of symbols, as well as to cause viewers to begin questioning and evaluating the visuals they surround themselves with regardless of their conclusion.

### PANEL 3

This panel was used to demonstrate the overlap of color and symbolism, or more specifically how colors can be symbolic. IT was decided that national flags were the best and most accessible way to describe this concept. Flags are important because they are made up of colors with symbolic significance. The color on one nation's flag may hold a completely different meaning in another country. It is important to understand that not all symbols translate across borders. This information might help a viewer who is evaluating visual media, especially in this global age. They might come across something offensive on social media and then stop, evaluate, and realize that context matters and this media might not actually be considered offensive.

## **PANEL 4**

Not everyone realizes characters and icons they see everyday are also considered to be symbolic. Most People know that letters and numbers are symbols in name, but they use them so often they they become numb to the importance of symbolic images in general. It is important to take a step back and view everyday concepts in a new light. This panel was additionally used to reinforce the idea that certain symbols are universal (as opposed to only locally understood to be symbolic), which makes them extra powerful.

## **PANEL 5**

This last panel was used to demonstrate how everyday objects can hold symbolic meaning. This is particularly helpful to know when evaluating visual media such as art, design, movies, plays, or even simply objects encountered in everyday life.

This chart posseses direct influence from the article and ideas mentioned in the “A Symbolic Fight” section of chapter 2 on pages 31-32 (Graeme and Angosto Fernandez).



# Symbolism

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?** SYMBOLS ARE PRESENT ALL THROUGHOUT SOCIETY AND CULTURE. ONE AREA THEY CAN BE FOUND IN IS VISUAL MEDIA. LET'S SEE HOW!

**LOGOS** ARE SYMBOLS THAT WE ENCOUNTER EVERY DAY. THEY MAY BE USED TO REPRESENT CONCEPTS, FUNCTIONS, STATUS, ETC.

**COLORS** CAN BE SYMBOLIC. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS SEEN IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL FLAGS. THEY ARE NOT SIMPLY USED FOR DECOR. DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR FLAG'S COLORS SYMBOLIZE?

**PICTOGRAPHS OR CHARACTERS** ARE ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF EVERYDAY SYMBOLS. WHICH OF THESE SYMBOLS ARE UNIVERSAL?

**PHYSICAL OBJECTS** CAN ALSO BE SYMBOLS. THE MAJORITY OF THE ITEMS ILLUSTRATED HERE ARE SYMBOLICALLY UNDERSTOOD BECAUSE MOST OF THEM EXIST GLOBALLY. THE EASIER TO RECOGNIZE A SYMBOL, THE GREATER THE AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE IT POSSESSES. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OBJECTS PORTRAYED IN VISUAL MEDIA THAT ARE SYMBOLIC OR INFLUENTIAL TO YOU?

- THE CLOSED FIST IS A SYMBOL FOR POWER.
- LAMBS ARE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS FOR SACRIFICE AND INNOCENCE.
- BUTTERFLIES ARE A SYMBOL FOR TRANSFORMATION AND HOPE.
- THE NON-ANATOMICAL CORRECT HEART IS THE UNIVERSAL SYMBOL FOR LOVE.
- EYES ARE SYMBOLS FOR KNOWLEDGE AND SPIRITUAL INSIGHT.
- LIGHTBULBS ARE SYMBOLS FOR INSPIRATIONS.
- ANCHORS ARE SYMBOLS FOR STABILITY.
- LIGHTHOUSES ARE SYMBOLS FOR SAFETY AND HOPE.
- FOUR-LEAF CLOVERS ARE SYMBOLS FOR LUCK.
- LEAVES ARE A SYMBOL FOR CHANGE.
- CANDLES ARE SYMBOLIC FOR THE CYCLE OF LIFE.
- PLANTS ARE SYMBOLS FOR LIFE.

## "LITERATURE INFLUENCE"

## CHART 3

### PANEL 1

This panel describes why the concept of literary influences is important for evaluating all types of visual media. This was the most advanced part of the visual media evaluation process. In one sense, the people in my decade-inspired illustrations were not assigned to follow strict archetypes models, but it still felt important to discuss this part of the evaluation process. The illustrations provide them a chance to assign the characters themselves. The idea is to encourage the viewer to think through these concepts on their own, and not to simply create a project about critical thinking, where the answers are provided.

### PANELS 2-4

This panel demonstrates the 3 types of literature influences: theological, mythological, and historical (Bensouda). The decision was made to not dress up the mascot in these panels, but instead to illustrate him holding objects, with similar colors, that represented the three influence types. This choice made it possible to display this concept while still maintaining a cohesive look in the panels. The objects that chosen to illustrate these concepts were the Ten Commandments for the theological influence, Poseidon's trident for the mythological influence, and a globus cruciger for the historical influence. each of these objects appeared to clear representations of the influence styles assigned to them. It would have been possible to illustrate outfits on the three panels, but there was concern as to whether or not this might have confused the viewer and taken away from the illustrated characters in the main twelve archetype panels.

### PANEL 5-16

This set of 12 panels was another part of this project that caused the belief that this project could work in an almost completely visual format. Almost

from the beginning of the project there was a plan to illustrate the twelve character archetypes, but there was unsurety of exactly how go about this. Consideration was given to making basic human versions of each archetype but this did not provide satisfactory results. Additionally, there was a need for them to feel unified or part of a set, where they each shared a definitive feature. Furthermore, keeping in mind the idea that Digital X (Generation Z) has a short attention span, the decision was made to only include the name of each archetype and no further details (Kwala, Tabaassum, and Zaman.)

### *BONUS*


This is a bonus snippet of why the lightbulb mascot was originally designed. There was a need for a character that represented the theme of the project — critical thinking, but who was also extremely flexible in terms of playing characters, and could furthermore pull off a range of emotions. The lightbulb mascot ended up being perfect for all the above. The next step was to dress the mascot in twelve different outfits to visually depict the twelve different archetypes: Lover, Sage, Innocent, Explorer, Ruler, Caretaker, Creator, Magician, Hero, Rebel, Joker, and Everyman. There will be more about the actual design process of the mascot later in this chapter.



# EMOTIONS

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?** COLOR INFLUENCES EVERYDAY LIFE IN WAYS THAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT HAVE CONSIDERED. WE ARE SURROUNDED BY COLOR AND WE ARE WELL AWARE OF ITS BEAUTY. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT ALWAYS APPRECIATE OR EVEN UNDERSTAND THE LEVEL OF INFLUENCE THAT COLOR POSSESSES OVER US. **MARKETING AGENCIES, DESIGNERS, AND MEDIA INFLUENCERS** ALL UTILIZE COLOR TO EMOTIONALLY INFLUENCE THEIR AUDIENCE. WHILE THIS IS NOT ALWAYS A NEGATIVE THING, IT IS SOMETHING TO CONSIDER. **BE SKEPTICAL.**

**MARKETING**




RED AND YELLOW ARE USED IN FAST FOOD MARKETING BECAUSE THESE COLORS MAKE YOU HUNGRY.

**DESIGN**



THE COLORS OF AN ENVIRONMENT CAN AFFECT YOUR EMOTIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY.


**MEDIA**



WE SHOULD RATE EVERYONE IN THE NAME OF EQUALITY!

DIFFERENT TV PROGRAMS USE DIFFERENT COLOR THEMES TO EVOKE PARTICULAR EMOTIONAL RESPONSES FROM PARTICULAR AUDIENCES.

**SYMBOLISM** IS ONE OF VISUAL MEDIA'S MOST POWERFUL TOOLS. SYMBOLS HAVE BOTH STARTED AND ENDED WARS. WE ARE A SYMBOL-DRIVEN SOCIETY. THIS CAN BE SEEN IN THE BRANDS THAT WE WEAR AND SUPPORT, THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE BELONG TO, AND ALSO IN OUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCES. SYMBOLS ARE DESIGNED TO **IDENTIFY, DESCRIBE, AND LABEL OURSELVES, OUR LIKES, AND OUR BELIEFS.** THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO DIE FOR SYMBOLS AND THEIR MEANINGS. THROUGHOUT HISTORY, PEOPLE HAVE EMOTIONALLY MANIPULATED OTHERS WITH FALSE SYMBOLS OF HOPE AND UNITY. **BE CAREFUL.**



SYMBOLS MAY **INSPIRE AND UNITE**

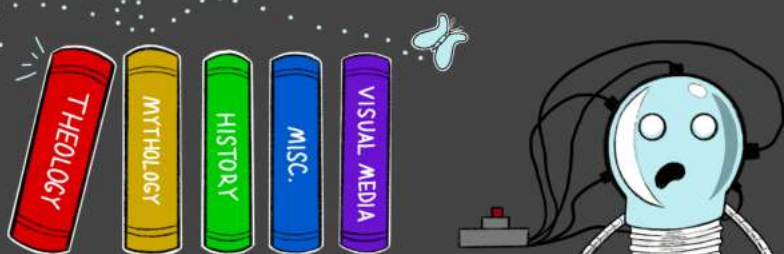


SYMBOLS MAY **HURT AND DIVIDE**


**LITERATURE** AND STORIES HAVE A MASSIVE IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND POP-CULTURE. WE, AS A CULTURE, ARE CONDITIONED TO REACT AND RESPOND TO THESE INFLUENCES. VISUAL MEDIA DIRECTLY AFFECTS OUR **PERSONALITIES, OUR THOUGHT PROCESSES,** AND ESPECIALLY OUR **EMOTIONS.**

WE ARE WHAT WE CONSUME. KNOWING THIS, IT IS CRITICAL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT INFLUENCES THE THINGS INFLUENCING US. LIKE THE **BUTTERFLY EFFECT,** THE VISUAL MEDIA OF TODAY IS A DIRECT RESULT OF PAST LITERATURE SUCH AS **THEOLOGY, MYTHOLOGY, AND HISTORY.** PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS ARE UNDENIABLY **TRIGGERED** BY THESE CONNECTIONS TO THE PAST THROUGH VISUAL MEDIA. UNFORTUNATELY THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO **WARP AND REWRITE** THESE STORIES TO **MANIPULATE OTHERS' EMOTIONS.** **LEARN.**

LITERARY INFLUENCE → VISUAL MEDIA → SOCIAL CONDITIONING → EMOTIONS



**VISUAL MEDIA** IS DESIGNED TO BE AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE. THIS CAN BE BOTH **POSITIVE** AND **NEGATIVE.** THE VARIETY OF EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES, CREATED BY VISUAL MEDIA, CAN BE A WONDERFUL SOURCE OF **ENTERTAINMENT.** THE NEGATIVE PART IS THAT PEOPLE ARE EXCESSIVELY USED TO BEING ENTERTAINED BY VISUAL MEDIA TO THE POINT WHERE SOCIETY HAS LET DOWN ITS GUARD AGAINST NEGATIVE INFLUENCES. COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH **MALICIOUS INTENTIONS,** ATTEMPT TO USE THE DISTRACTION OF ENTERTAINMENT TO INTRODUCE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS TO AN **IMPRESSIONABLE AUDIENCE.** IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP THIS IN MIND AS YOU NAVIGATE VISUAL MEDIA. **HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT YOU CAN ASK:**



IS THE GOAL OF "THIS" VISUAL MEDIA TO TRIGGER ME EMOTIONALLY?

AM I IN CONTROL OF MY EMOTIONS TOWARDS VISUAL MEDIA?

WHY MIGHT VISUAL MEDIA BE USED TO TRIGGER AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE FROM ME?

AM I AWARE OF MY EMOTIONAL STATE BEFORE VIEWING VISUAL MEDIA?

DO I MAKE SURE TO LOOK FOR CONTEXT BEFORE REACTING EMOTIONALLY?

**VISUAL MEDIA** IS A POWERFUL TOOL THAT SHOULD BE USED, ESPECIALLY BY THE **YOUNGER, RISING GENERATIONS.** THE SAME AS WITH ANY OTHER TOOL, VISUAL MEDIA, AND THE CRITICAL EVALUATION OF IT SIMPLY TAKES PRACTICE. START WITH THE BASICS AND WORK YOUR WAY FORWARD. **FIRST,** LOOK AT HOW COLOR IS BEING USED. **COLOR** IS A QUICK WAY TO SET THE TONE. IT EASES YOU IN. **SECOND,** INVESTIGATE ANY **SYMBOLISM,** WHETHER THAT BE IN THE FORM OF LOGOS, COLORS, PICTOGRAPHS, CHARACTERS, OR OBJECTS. DO NOT BE AFRAID TO DO RESEARCH TO INFORM YOURSELF. **THIRD,** EVALUATE ANY **LITERARY INFLUENCES.** **FOURTH,** DETERMINE HOW THESE COMBINED ELEMENTS AFFECT YOUR **EMOTIONS.** THE CRITICAL EVALUATION OF VISUAL MEDIA IS SIMPLY A PERFECT STARTING POINT.

**NOW, WHERE ELSE MIGHT YOU USE CRITICAL THINKING IN YOUR LIFE?**

## "EMOTIONS"

## CHART 4

This chart was originally going to be used to illustrate the mascot reacting in different emotional ways when confronted with different forms of visual media. After a bit of thought, it was decided that this chart would be used to describe how visual media, using color theory, symbolism, and literature influence, attempts to purposefully evoke emotional responses from the viewer.

The illustration style of each chart was inspired by a mixture of the Flat Illustration and Comic book style image boards (see pages 44-45).

### PANEL 1

This panel is used to review the importance of color theory while introducing ways that color theory is used, in visual media, everyday. The text panels in this final chart are purposefully text-heavy because it is the final chance to make sure that the true goal of this entire thesis project is made clear. The goal was not to simply bring awareness to the concept of visual media evaluation for the sake of evaluating visual media. The true purpose was to encourage people to think critically about the things that influence them visually, and to then evaluate their own emotions, recognize the true roots of those emotions, and most importantly learn to control those emotions. Important parts of the text are highlighted to ensure viewers can get the important information quickly.

### PANEL 2-4

These panels illustrate how color can affect our emotions, through different types of visual media every day. This is important to understand so that the viewer is alerted to the possibility of hidden influences in everyday life. The idea of color affecting hunger and productivity came from the article referenced on page 13 (Maier).



## PANEL 5

This panel reviews the importance of symbolism and introduces the idea of how symbolism can affect a person's emotions through forms of visual media.

## PANELS 6-7

These panels demonstrate examples of contemporary symbols that holds emotional significance to society.

## PANEL 8

This panel reviews the importance of literature agenda and explores the idea of how the literature affects people emotionally everyday through social media.

## PANEL 9

This panel illustrates how much like the Butterfly Effect, literary concepts, authors, and stories from thousands of years ago, still have emotional impact on society.

## PANEL 10

This text-heavy panel is the final call-to-action. This time there is no hiding the true intention of this thesis project. The panel explains exactly why it is important to know how to evaluate everyday visual media – to be aware of one's emotions are influenced by said visual media (Crashcourse). Once again, important text has been highlighted for ease of information retention. Additionally, this panel makes sure to end with a question that challenges the viewer to explore critical thinking in other areas of life. The goal is to create a new generation of critical thinkers.



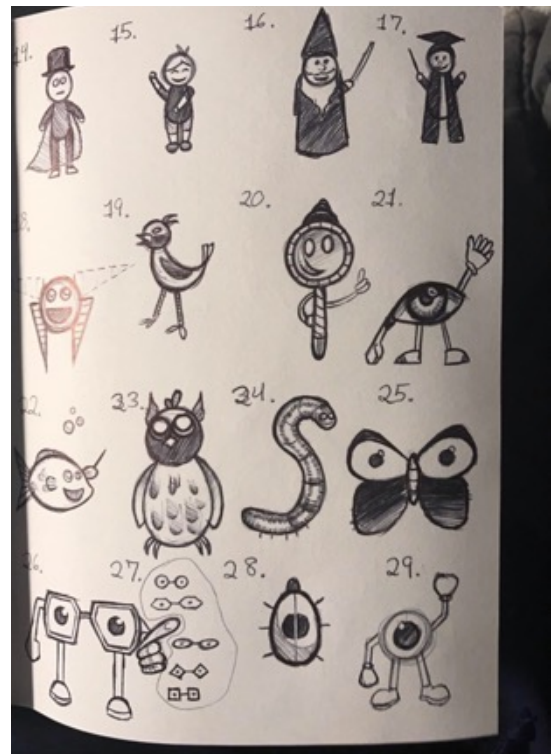
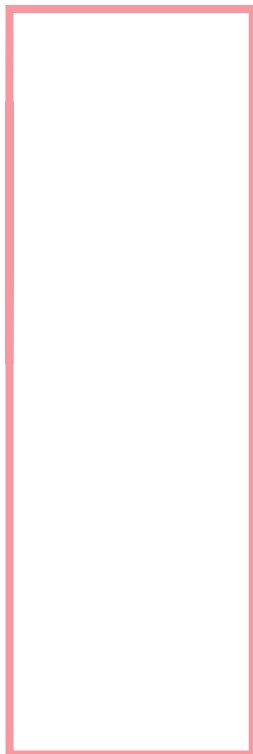
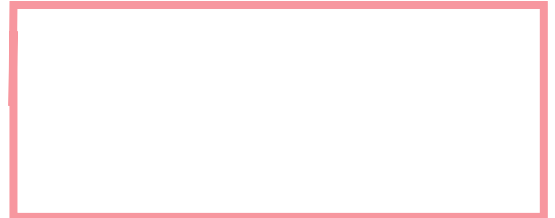
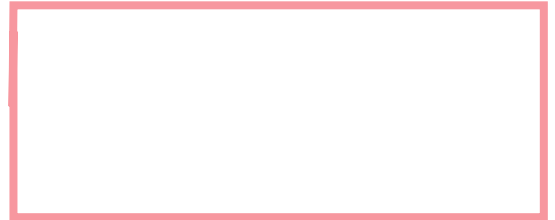
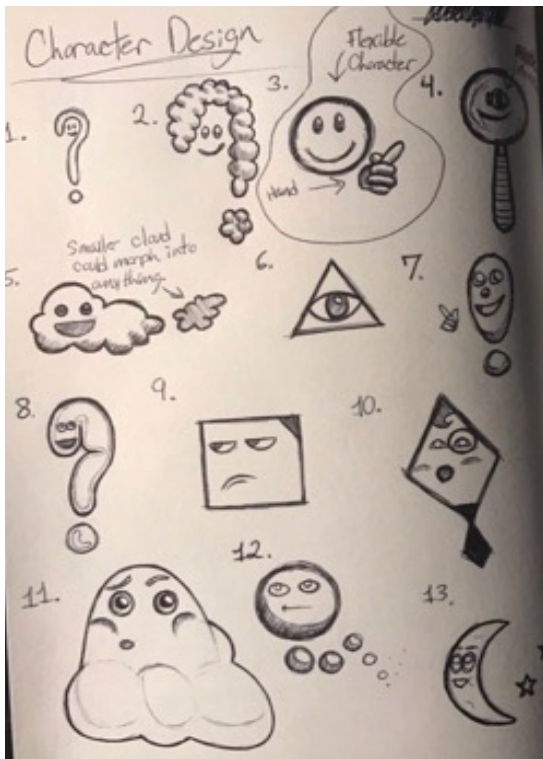
**BONUS**  
**LUCIUS**

## LUCIUS

While not technically a deliverable, the mascot, Lucius, played a big role in this project, so it only makes sense to go through his design process. Almost from the beginning of this project there was a plan for a mascot or little character to be present on the charts to help guide the viewer through.

The creation of the mascot began in an illustration class, where the assignment was to design a character, and this felt like the perfect time to start working on this character. The first step was sketching a variety of characters. There were a few that worked and several that would not have worked. At this point, the idea was to draw whatever came to mind, with the hope that something would suddenly click. This process delivered a variety of shapes, forms, and styles. A simple smiley face was the first concept that might have worked, because it could be expressive, but it was generic, and this concept needed to be pushed further. There was a need for a character that represented the concept of my thesis. A few options that were tried were a wizard, a teacher, an owl, an eye, and even walking glasses. Clouds, punctuation marks, and magnifying glasses were other options that were explored for the mascot, but none of these ideas were quite hitting the mark.

There was consideration of giving up on having a mascot because a satisfactory design could not be found that was loved and that fit with the thesis project, except for a simple, generic smiley face. The smiley face remained the favorite because it could express emotion. There had to be a way to use a version of this concept for the mascot of the thesis project.

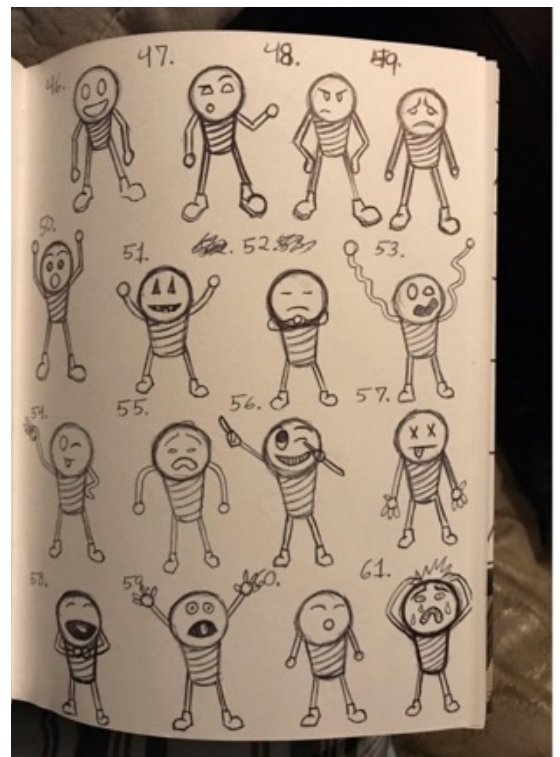
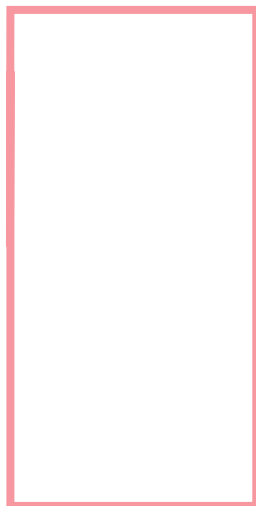
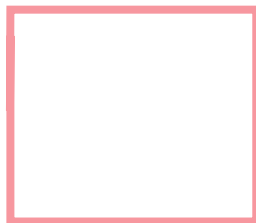
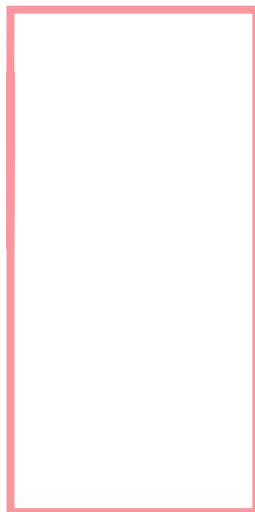
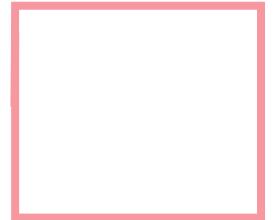
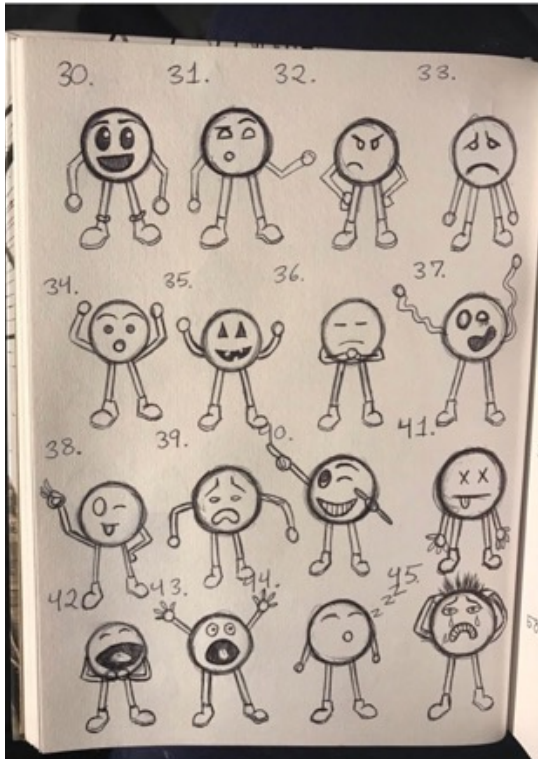


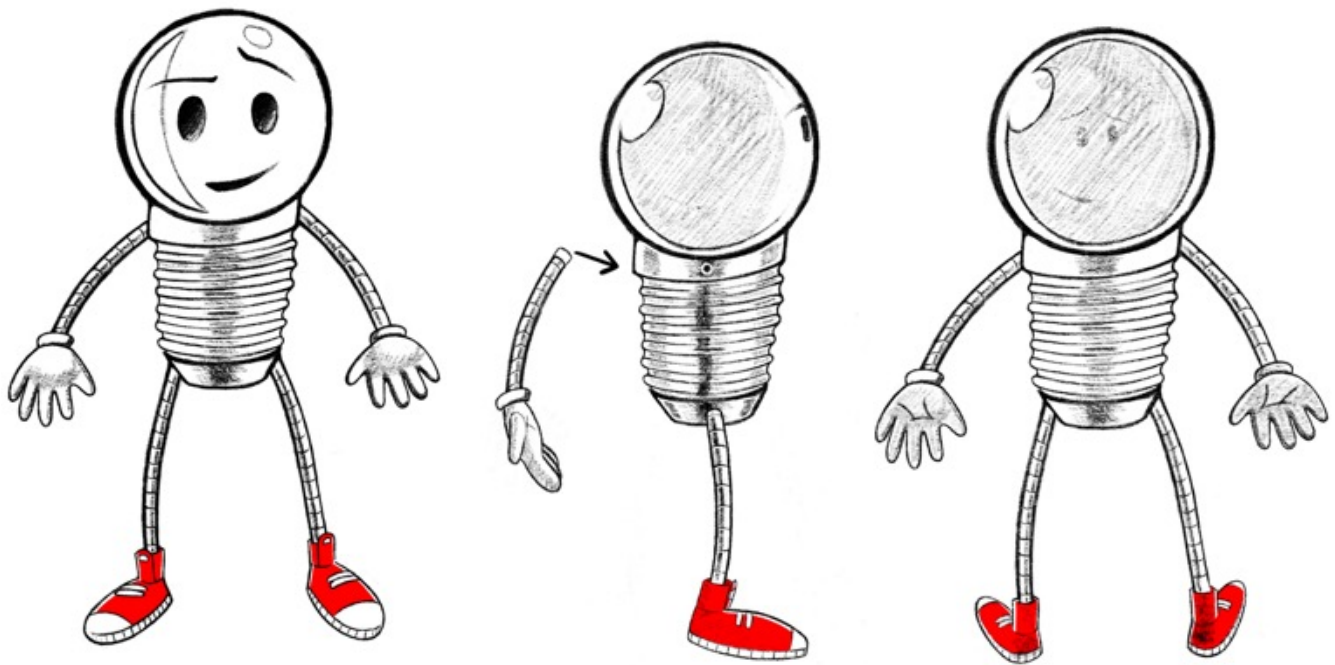
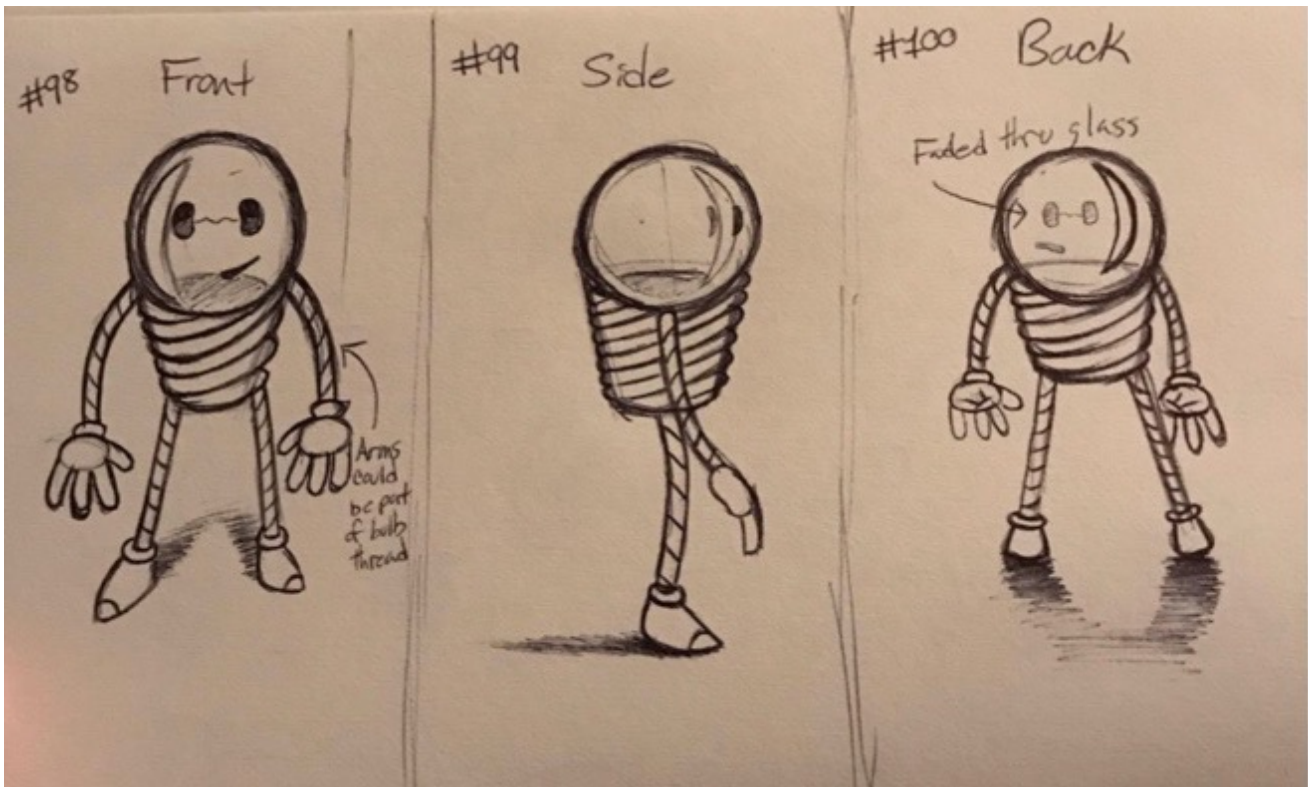
Shortly after came the idea of adding arms and legs to the smiley face. This accomplished two things. First, it added another level of potential expressiveness to the character. A mascot can only be so expressive with just a face, so adding arms and legs allowed the emotion to be emphasized by his limbs. The second thing it accomplished was that it still allowed for keeping the smiley face design, but it was now not so generic.

Several sketches were used to explore expressions and poses. The class required 100 sketches for this project, which was helpful because it helped to encourage the exhaustion of potential design options. Additionally, there were pages of arms and legs drawn out (they are not shown here because they were copied from other artist's hands and feet charts just for practice). The was to thoroughly explore every part of the character. The character was purposefully designed as a bare bones mascot, with no clothing or accessories because this would be added as needed within the charts.

It suddenly occurred that one small change and make the character infinitely better, while also making it relevant to the thesis topic. A simple shape was added to the bottom of the circle and that shape turned the character into a lightbulb. The lightbulb retained the animated personality and expressiveness of the smiley face, but also became an instant symbol for thinking and ideas. It was immediately clear that this was the mascot that this thesis project needed. There was an instant connection, and this character right away began providing inspiration of how to improve the charts that had not yet been made. It became obvious that this little character would be an important part of the project.





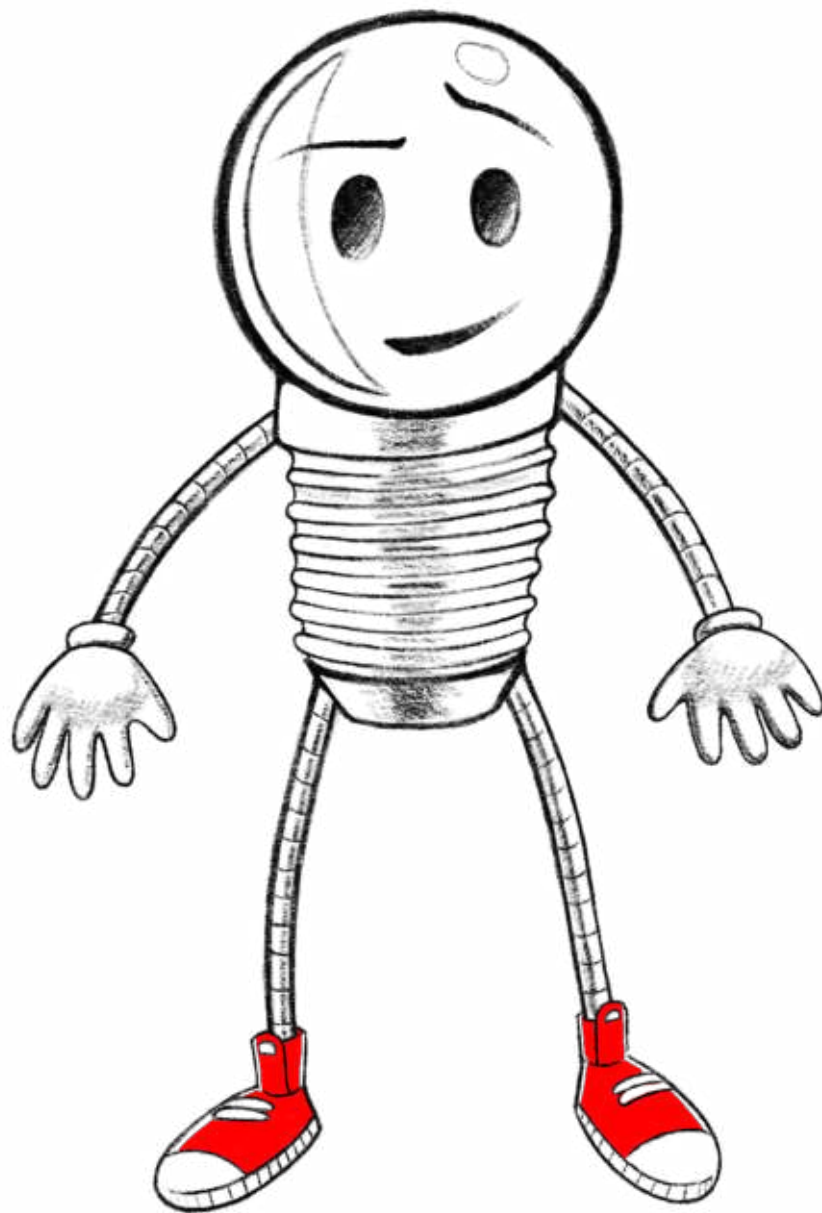


The original turn-around was unrefined and crude. The overall design of the mascot, Lucius, was inspired by the old design styles of illustrations from the early 1900s, especially the gloved hands. His arms and legs were designed to have that lightbulb threading style. The original body shape was not satisfactory, so actual photos of lightbulbs were consulted to explore the variety of shapes and sizes in which lightbulbs are available.

In the end, the decision was made to go with a generic lightbulb shape, with the thought that his character could trade out bulb shapes at any time. That was the amazing thing about this character — his flexibility. Because of the fact that lightbulbs' shapes vary so widely, there is an unlimited amount of version that could be created, possibly even making an entire host of future characters.

Another way that Lucius is flexible is his light. Lightbulb colors can be changed, which is an interesting way to display the character's emotions. The last way that this character is flexible is his face. Because lightbulbs do not typically have expressions, they have to be painted on the glass bulb. That is part of his design - his expressions are painted on, which means that his expressions cannot only change, but even the style of expressions can change. For example, he could have realistic expressions painted on or he could have anime eyes with stars, and it all works because his expressions are simply glass that has been painted.

The final thing that changed was the shape of the glass bulb. There are lightbulbs that are perfect circles, but after starting to create the charts, he was reading not as well as intended. After erasing the lower part of the circle, he immediately read better as a lightbulb. The finished result of this mascot has been pleasantly satisfactory the plan is to continue his journey past this project. He will be great branding for future projects inspired by this thesis project. Though Lucius was not a listed deliverable, he deserves to have his story told.



LUCIUS





**CHAPTER 5**  
**CONCLUSION**



# DEFENSE OF WORK

This thesis project was born of the times. The world, especially the youth, was showing increasing signs of lacking the ability to think critically about society and culture, and it became apparent that this issue had the potential to create a strong thesis project that was not only interesting, but also one that had the potential to do good in the world. The thesis project originated out of a necessity to address a contemporary problem, but it became important to not only address the issue, but additionally to explore one of the biggest reasons that the issue exists in the first place - visual media, and more specifically the emotions experienced when viewing visual media. Emotions are one of the key factors in the decline of critical thinking. It is difficult to think at all, let alone critically, when one is emotional. After researching this issue in-depth, it could be seen that visual media was comprised of several areas that all worked together to evoke an emotional response from the viewer. These areas were color theory (psychology), symbolism, and literature influence. These three areas combined have the ability to create powerful and emotional experiences. The idea is that teaching people to be aware of their emotions and how critically evaluating their emotion's origins may help them to not be as easily triggered, because they will now be critically evaluating and actively searching for signs of targeted emotional triggering.

The next step in the process was figuring out a way to make people aware of the potential dangers of visual media, by using visual media. The problem was actually the answer. The answer was to create new visual media that included these areas of color theory (psychology), symbolism, and literature influence, but with the intent of using that visual media to showcase exactly how people use it to emotionally trigger their audience, and better yet, how to fight it. Accomplishing this would require not only creating pieces infused with these influences, but also charts or graphs with illustrated and easily understood explanations of these emotionally triggering influences.

In the end, the purpose of the thesis deliverables was to create pieces that could be explored and analyzed, and charts that would be used to show the viewer how to

approach this exploration and evaluation. Research, along with additional visual research, eventually led to the creation of five illustrations, based on the decades of the 1950s-90s, all infused with color theory (psychology), symbolism, literature influence, and emotion, and, in addition, four comic-book-page-themed charts. The charts were accompanied by a lightbulb mascot (Lucius), who served as a symbol for the purpose of this thesis project – critical thinking/ evaluation, as well as guided the viewer through the illustrated charts.

## FURTHER DEVELOPEMENT

The most exciting part of this project is its ability to grow and evolve outside of this thesis project. This project explores only one art style and medium to accomplish its goals. There are a countless number of styles and mediums that can be explored. Certain audiences may require different versions of this same project, in order to communicate with them in the most successful way possible. There will inevitably be new issues to be addressed and visual media will continue to be a tool that possesses the potential to accomplish great feats or terrible deeds. This project is flexible and can be adapted to take on new challenges and provide viewers with visual media that is reflective of current events.

The charts also have room to grow. Each area of color theory (psychology), symbolism, literature influence, and emotion were each only addressed in one page. This was purposefully done so as not to overwhelm the viewer. The point of this thesis project, as it stands right now, is simply to bring awareness, but the potential to expand on these and other topics, in comic book form is monumental. This project can be evolved to tackle other abstract ideas and to teach them to an audience in this visual form.

The mascot, while not technically a deliverable, also has amazing potential. An entire career could be created around this project with the mascot to help serve as part of the future branding.

The next step for this thesis project would be its deployment. The plan is to post the charts and illustrations to social media such as Instagram. There would be a staggering of the posts. First, an illustration would be posted to give the audience a chance to view the art with an unbiased mind. Second, a chart would then be posted to give the previous illustration new depth. This format would continue until each illustration and chart had been posted. This would prolong the experience allowing the viewer, after viewing the final chart, to go back through each illustration with a full understanding of the project. This format allows for each section, which includes color theory, symbolism, literature influence, and emotions to be digested individually.

The project does not end here. After the pieces have all been posted, new illustrations would be made and the charts would be expanded to further explore each section as well as explore new topics. A few topics of interest would be mythology, cultures around the world, and song lyrics. This project has great potential to continue growing. There is no end to the possibilities.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

This project was created to address an issue that I was witnessing in the world. This journey began as a project to fulfill a graduation requirement but has grown into a passion project that I am excited to continue building after my schooling is finished. Artists often struggle to discover direction and purpose in their work. This project has provided me with a promising future filled with direction and purpose. There is an immense amount of potential to be explored surrounding this project and I look forward to building and evolving it for years to come. This thesis project required a great deal of work, but I feel as though the project is already giving back to me. I hope that through this and whatever projects this is the catalyst for down the line, benefit the world and that these projects jumpstart a new generation of critical thinkers.

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