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James McMullan
in conversation with
Stephen Gaffney
and **Kurt McRobert**

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A Return to the Basics; or Who's Afraid of Steven Heller?
by Len Small

bfa-illustration 2024

• BFA ILLUSTRATION •
2024

When dust somehow settles after a long academic year, it's time to reflect, debrief and tackle this publication. We have been allowed a bird's-eye view of our seniors' skill, character and grit thanks to the process of curating and paginating the work; evaluating what was produced above and beyond our senior thesis projects; and actively reflecting on these last few months of frenetic activity full of momentous exhibitions, pop-up shows, festival participations, collaborations and industry events. But while holding their work in our hands, we, in turn, measure our performance too. This unique vantage point allows us to leverage vertical and horizontal opportunities toward growth in multiple directions. Like Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and endings who simultaneously looks forward and backward, we too use this double perspective to constantly evolve.

Now that our seniors venture beyond any familiar support that academic environments can provide, instincts, intuition and training in craft and concept are kicking in to help them navigate these open waters.

While this compendium showcases notable projects, it only represents a fraction of graduate achievements and processes progressing in sketchbooks and tablets even as we speak. Now that our seniors are venturing beyond any familiar support that academic environments can provide, instincts, intuition and training in craft and concept are kicking in to help them navigate these open waters.

In an industry where change is the only constant, we focus on solid fundamentals in technique, concept development, and expression of great ideas and powerful storytelling. These priorities give our graduates the ability to not only excel in a number of dynamic industries but also to creatively adapt to ever-changing technologies and modes. After all, we intentionally provide them with compasses, not maps.

This introductory note would be incomplete without recognizing the many talents going into a publication like this, from our gifted students to our long list of outstanding faculty and department team. Thank you to SVA President David Rhodes for his trust, meaningful guidance and ongoing support. I am deeply grateful to the tireless Carolyn Hinkson-Jenkins, Matthew Bustamonte, Jason Little, Kelsey Short, Heaven Boles and their passion for this project, their ideas and care in introducing our brilliant 2024 graduating class to industries they are about to dramatically transform.

As challenging as it is to crystallize the spirit of this department and provide a tangible memento of the work, thinking and spark that make BFA Illustration tick, this publication will come very close.

See you at school,
Viktor Koen
Chair
BFA Comics
BFA Illustration

SENIORS

BFA Illustration Senior Thesis Faculty

STEVE BRODNER
MARCOS CHIN
JOSH COCHRAN
JENSINE ECKWALL
LISK FENG
FRANCES JETTER
VIKTOR KOEN
ANTHONY MACBAIN
MARVIN MATTELSON
LILY PADULA
JONATHON ROSEN
MATT ROTA
CECILIA RUIZ LOPEZ
DOUG SALATI
YUKO SHIMIZU
VESPER STAMPER
SARAH VACCARIELLO
SAM WEBER

Cover: Jeanne Kim
kjeannne.weebly.com

Three Generations of High-Focus Drawing

Stephen Gaffney

Kurt McRobert

James McMullan

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JAMES (JIM) McMULLAN: Steve, you asked me an interesting fundamental question: How did I start teaching and how did I develop the philosophy of high-focus drawing? So I taught a semester's course in handwriting analysis at the New York Studio School. I thought if I could look at the students' handwriting, I could make a connection between what they were drawing and what in their handwriting could tell me the authentic self in it. They had to give me handwriting examples, and it quickly became clear that they didn't know how to draw! So this analysis didn't reveal anything about what they could do artistically.

After that first semester, I had to ask myself, "Jim, *you* can draw, but *why* can you draw?" I realized that there was a lot of intuition going on, but it was not programmatic. I didn't in my mind go through the steps of first you do this, and then you find the center line, etc. I discovered, when I was drawing, I went into a higher level of consciousness and my mind was flooded with things like logic and intuition, all operating together. I was having a real reaction to the figure, to the model I was looking at. I concluded that what had gone wrong in so much drawing instruction was people trying to make drawing simpler and easier by making it programmatic. I have to pull people away from that method of drawing and awaken this high level of intuition and logic. The mind is capable of all kinds of things without getting wrapped up in all these steps.

I don't know how I talked Silas Rhodes into giving me an undergraduate drawing class, but he did. I began to teach with this new philosophy in mind, and I had a hell of a time.

The first semester I taught, my students had these methods and routines they didn't want to change. I was lucky because this kid in my second-semester class was a real rebel—very tough and athletic—and suddenly he just *got* it! And, Jesus, the drawings he began to do were so full of life! The rest of the class couldn't fight me anymore. This one kid had shown that it really worked.

STEPHEN (STEVE) GAFFNEY: Thinking about what was going on in the art world in the late seventies with drawing, you would have definitely been a complete anomaly among your peers, Jim. All these methods, like *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* and following every page of every Andrew Loomis book—

JIM: To say that I was an anomaly when I first started teaching is quite correct. After teaching drawing for a few semesters, three instructors even went to the chair and asked that I be thrown out of the school because what I was teaching was so against what they believed in.

STEVE: I can imagine! But you have this ability to be free with your drawing. That's what I see now with Kurt after taking the High-Focus Drawing class. And, Kurt, I see the same intuition and logic happening in your drawings.

Kurt, when did you come back to life drawing? You had my class back in 2007 and you graduated in 2008?

KURT McROBERT: I think it was when we met at that sign painting workshop a while back, Steve. After we reconnected, I wanted to come back and start drawing from life again because that was my favorite part of art school—life drawing and life painting classes.

I was still doing illustration then, but I was obviously moving into sign painting. Life drawing felt like a fun activity rather than a supplement to my professional career. That's when I started taking drawing more seriously as a life practice. Now, 10 years later, here we are!

JIM: Kurt, looking at your work, you are very strong in your lettering. You have a strong cursive instinct. In other words, the curves that you need—you know, for "A" or "C" or a "G"—you do them so well. I have a feeling that's connected to that instinct of moving your hand and arm in a way that proves the philosophy of High-Focus Drawing. You're in control of it.

STEVE: Yes, that is something I was hoping to point out that connects the two of you. I paint signs, and Kurt is a sign painter, but the act of drawing is the big

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connection here. But, Jim, you also do your own lettering in your posters and commercial projects, and that's always been attractive to me.

JIM: I see lettering as art. For a poster, I always want the lettering to belong to the art. So, yeah, we're all letterers!

STEVE: I know Kurt's been working with some big-name brands, and these brands all have creative directors, and it all needs approval—

KURT: Once in a blue moon, you get a project where you send in a sketch, and they tell you "Great, go for it." It's obviously validating to have a client trust you, but, on the other hand, you start to question *why* no edits? It's very suspicious.

Most projects kind of fall in between that, and it can be very frustrating putting so much work into something and then having someone make you start over, but that is part of the process of being a professional. You have a client and they have goals that need to be met. Of course, they're going to have an opinion because it's their bar, it's their restaurant, their project. The client is also putting in effort into all the other aspects of it.

You learn to be diplomatic in a way and negotiate and navigate without getting irritated, and not irritating [the client], and find some sort of compromise—that's the challenge. I enjoy the craft so much that when a client comes to me with a complete design, I get to go straight to painting. All of the exhausting work is already done, and I get to do the fun part.

JIM: I had the great good fortune to work with Bernard Gersten, who was second in command at Lincoln Center for a long time. He saw my work *as art*, which was an unusual attitude to take. Most of the time for theater posters there is the worry about how people are going to see it. Is somebody going to be offended? Is this going to appeal to everyone? Bernie was different in that sense, so I got away with murder for years. Agencies now are trying to get a younger audience, so the fact that I don't work on the computer has become an issue because it doesn't give my work that flat, perfect look. All the things that I think make my work interesting—the sense of risk in it, that I'm right there in the drawing and painting—I can't replicate with a computer.

I wish that even if students are going to do the final art on the computer, [they would] spend time with a pencil and paper and experiment. Feel free to take risks until you build up your skill. My concern about the computer is that people go to it so quickly, but it doesn't allow them to experiment, to take the risk of being on the edge in an interesting way.

STEVE: That's what I try to push for in class, and over time it's changed. Kurt is in this middle ground where he's using the computer as a tool but still physically engaged in the act of drawing. I use your work as examples all the time, Jim, because we make posters in class.

KURT: Just to follow up on the use of the computer, I was at SVA from '05 to '09, and artists like James Jean and Tomer Hanuka, that generation just before me, were really coming up. They had all switched to using Photoshop or at least a hybrid. It felt very new, and there was an unspoken pressure to make similar work, but I still really preferred doing analog painting and drawing. During school I felt like I never really kept up with the times because I kept trying to do watercolors. Using the computer and Procreate is much easier when you have to crank things out so quickly. But you want to use that undo button so much, like when the line doesn't look right, and it's hard to leave the mistakes in when you can just correct them so easily. Now there is line correction stuff

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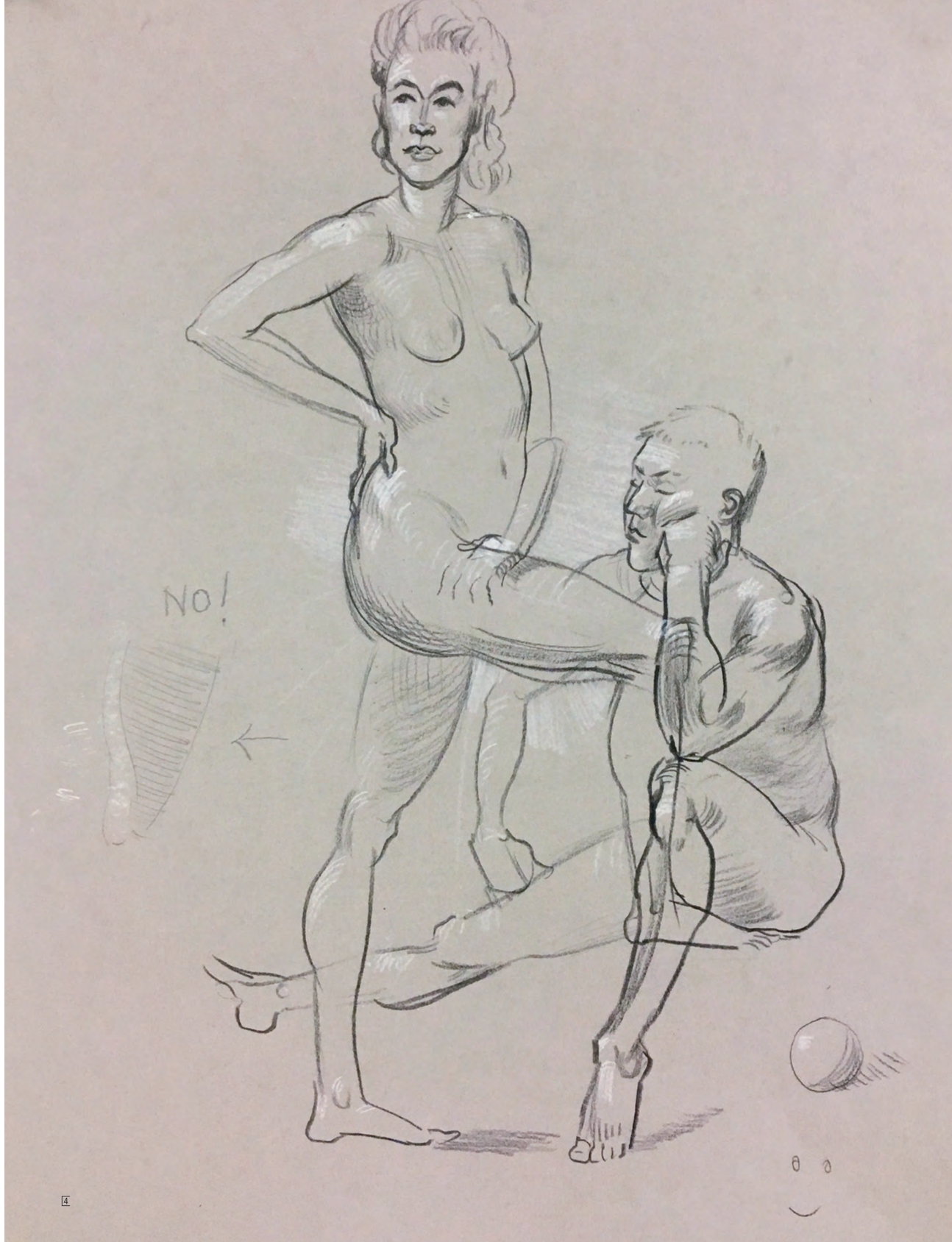
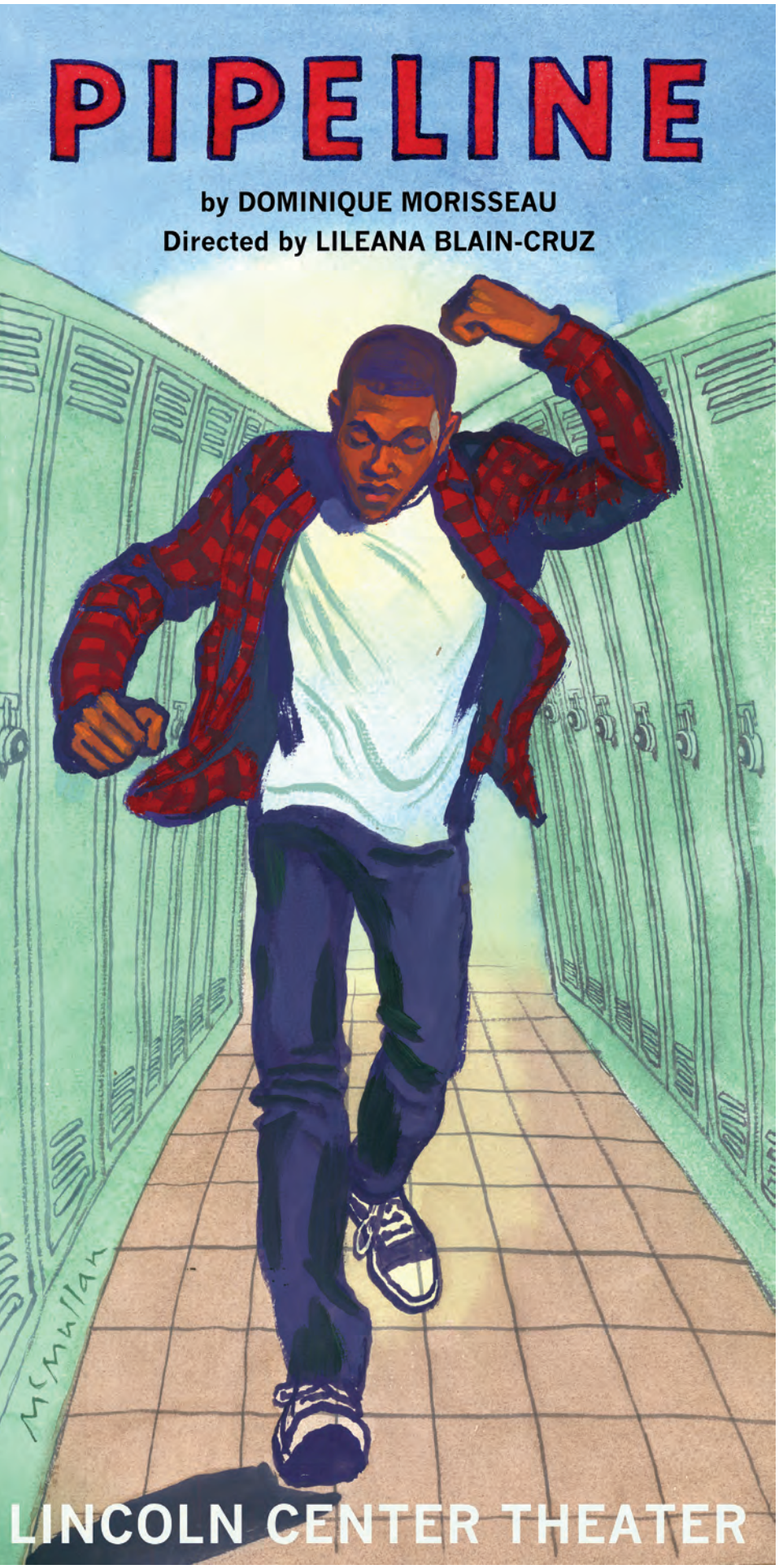
>
> —JAMES McMULLAN





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too—the algorithm will correct and make that curved line perfect. It means there is a lot of sameness right at this moment.

JIM: One thing I really like about your signage, Kurt, is the energy and the enthusiasm in it. You've moved into an area that is quite different from illustration, but you found a way to use your skill in illustration because it's in your drawings, and your signs are terrific. I think the future is that the people who love to draw and make images are going to have to find new ways to be in the world.

I think it's interesting that Stephen is teaching and finding enjoyment and satisfaction out of doing that. You're doing signage and me, the old guy, I'm doing fewer and fewer posters. In other words, I'm on my way out. But that makes sense— this June, I turn 90!

That's the other interesting thing about the three of us representing different age groups. We're also confronting this general question, as people love to draw and make images: How do we make a living?

KURT: Yeah, during school I was hyper-focused on becoming an illustrator, but if you can leave yourself open to other things, you might actually find something that suits you better along the way. When I was trying to be an editorial illustrator, I would get an article or a prompt and I would agonize trying to come up with a clever composition or just to *do* the assignment. Whereas with sign painting, it takes the analog and the craft part that I love so much about illustration and just focuses on a smaller, more digestible problem. I think it suits my practice and my temperament better than editorial illustration ever did. There's actually opportunities everywhere that I just didn't even know existed. I had no idea sign painting was something I could do for a living when I graduated.

STEVE: You sure made a career, wow! I mean, that's finding your niche. I think that's what Marshall Arisman was always talking about when he was the head of the program back when I was at SVA. It was called "media arts" when I was studying at SVA in the eighties.

You'll find your niche if you just stay open, and I think that is important. I gave up my fine art career before I even graduated. I told myself I didn't want to be an illustrator.

The idea of sign painting brought up all my drawing skills and my design ability. I like to fabricate things, and all of a sudden I could make this nice-looking thing and it was not subjective at all.
It was a hot dog and it said "hot dog" and that was all it needed. But if you make a sign look good, you're adding some beauty to the world in some way. It's how I think of the hand being so important.

JIM: And how you find your niche, as you were talking about. Stephen, you're a more analytic person than I am, and you have that kind of analytic intelligence. And so you brought that to your teaching of drawing. That quality of analysis enriched your teaching. I mean, you took what you learned from me and combined it with your analytic aspiration. I think that's another way in which you have found your niche, using what you got from me. But then you ask yourself, what do I add? How do I make this my own? And I think you've made it entirely your own.

STEVE: It's through research and seeing, you know, thousands of drawings and showing my students—there is this risk in a Rubens drawing that's palpable. One thinks that these master artists just sat down and did this thing perfectly from observation. And it's really this beautiful combination of a little analysis and knowing something about the body, but also being present while drawing. A leg is a leg, and it bends one way and has the same form, and you can see through generations of artists the same practices. But these tiny little stylistic shifts—they're a part of a process. Jim, you have revealed your process throughout your career. I think that has been so important to see.

JIM: I think that the discovery we make when we start to draw at a higher level is we find out more about ourselves.

"One thinks that these master artists just sat down and did this thing perfectly from observation. And it's really this beautiful combination of a little analysis and knowing something about the body, but also being present while drawing."

—STEPHEN GAFFNEY

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We realize that that higher sense of focus and involvement is also revealing us to ourselves—what our biases are, what turns us on. So it's a wonderful growing experience to draw and take yourself into those high levels of observation and reflection and reaction.

I draw in this group at the Century Club, and it's run by a woman who gets all kinds of weird models—often really old people. I realized that I miss youth in my models, because as you get older, the energy starts to slow down and everything starts to sit. That's a bias in myself, and I should look forward to drawing old people as much as I draw young people. But I love energy so much that it's hard for me to focus on all of the forms settling down. Like with Ellsworth Kelly, the abstract painter. People don't know he drew from life pretty well and it was alive. He did portraits of himself throughout his whole life up into his seventies and eighties.

STEVE: Jim, I know you have an upcoming show with your posters, and I was reminded of your journey, and I took out your book *Leaving China*. Is there anything when you were young and moving around the world that influenced you?

JIM: The Chinese scrolls were fascinating to me because it showed me what lines could do. You know, the lines had such power that they could describe these people sitting around a little table drinking tea, or they could describe the wind moving clouds through the mountains. The other thing that I loved was the point of view in those scrolls that was from above the situation, looking down into it. It was a point of view that I never had much chance to explore in my illustrations, but *Leaving China* was the book in which I took that point of view. That was going back to something very early in my life.

STEVE: Something that I teach is through my analysis of trying to break down composition and is not discussed in teaching drawing, even though I think it is so important. I think that helps see and reveal the interrelationships and then spatial depth. The down view, this presence of being distant and above everything, it's almost like being in the balcony of a theater or a stage. It was a really powerful viewpoint to encapsulate.

JIM: You're also teaching the rhythm of shapes going against one another, and when you open up to it—all these rhythms going on in a figure—it just makes a much better composition. I very much believe that.

STEVE: Kurt, what was your experience growing up in Florida? What were some of your first reasons for getting into art?

KURT: I'm not sure when or how—it's just something I feel like I've always done, and then I had parents who encouraged it. Eventually you're like the kid at school who can draw all the cartoon characters. We would go to the used bookstore, and they would have these boxes of 25-cent comics. I would pick out ones that I think looked cool, and I would bring them home and just copy the characters all day. Then in high school I was getting into music posters and album art. That's when I decided, rather than fine art, I want to study illustration because I want to do that kind of work. So typography has always been a part of my practice.

> "I wish more people would draw and not be too judgmental of themselves. It's just a good life practice, like exercising."
> —KURT McROBERT

JIM: Comics were important to me, and I know they were very important to Milton Glaser. When you're a kid, the ability to be able to draw the characters makes you a big hero among your peers. It saved my life, being able to draw well enough, because I wasn't good at sports and I didn't have many ways of finding my position within the groups of kids I was with.

STEVE: I don't know how many times I copied the Yes album cover and all kinds of curvy, funky things when I was young. So finding my niche in teaching definitely brought out my extrovert versus my artistic introvert, which is important to have if you're gonna stay focused on a career in the arts. Now I'm in Coney Island to do my third career as a bartender on the boardwalk. It's telling stories to people, and it's been an interesting ride.

Jim, did you ever feel like you figured out *why* you can draw?

JIM: Why do I think I can draw? I guess I've always been the kid standing outside the group and watching everybody else. That voyeuristic impulse probably has something to do with the fact that I draw. I think we all have gifts that we can't totally explain. I mean, Steve, you obviously have a gift for analyzing and explaining, and Kurt certainly has a gift for incredible clarity in his work. And I think you both enjoy making things clear for other people.

STEVE: We talked briefly about this because I've been struggling to write. But, Jim, you have a real gift for writing, projecting the feeling of your experience of drawing, which in a way culminated with *Hello World*. You might want to elaborate on the arc of your career and being able to kind of keep this energy alive in your work. What role does writing play for you?

JIM: Well, I guess writing came out of the fact that I reflect on all this stuff a lot, and writing gives me a chance to put it down and organize it, I suppose. Fortunately, one of the things about British boarding schools is that they put a lot of emphasis on writing, so I started writing very early.

KURT: I know that when I'm drawing, especially in the sketchbook, it is just a very personal and private space. And as nice as it is when you make a good drawing, even a bad drawing makes me feel whole as a person. I feel like people who don't draw are missing out. I wish more people would draw and not be too judgmental of themselves. It's just a good life practice, like exercising.

STEVE: I think the problem I've discovered over the years of teaching—even with my ability, as you say, to analyze and explain—has been discovering that in class, what if we have it all wrong, when being taught to draw creates a problem of not being able to draw, like because you're trying to copy something rather than feel expressively?

I do hope in my lifetime that more people draw and are able to distinguish the difference between risky drawing, present drawing, and then this very strategic way—I think you said earlier, Jim—about putting the center line and needing measurements and all those things. My approach in class is to not even use the word "proportion." I tell students it's just a fact of putting marks on a page. The first mark is a measurement. Where is it in the spring? How is it gonna lead to other responses? How do you get out into the things that I continue to talk about?

JIM: I think this has been very interesting, and I think that we found a wonderful connection among the three of us, which is terrific. And that even though we have very different lives and different circumstances under which we live our lives, we have found that connection. Thank you, Stephen, for asking good questions and keeping this going. You're obviously the teacher, the moderator. It was such a pleasure. ♦

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CAPTIONS
1. Painting by James McMullan.
2. Signage by Stephen Gaffney.
3. Painting by Stephen Gaffney.
4. Drawing by Stephen Gaffney.
5. Lincoln Center poster by James McMullan.
6. Drawing by Stephen Gaffney.
7. Painting by Stephen Gaffney.
8. Painting by Kurt McRobert.
9. Signage in progress by Kurt McRobert.

A Return to the Basics; or Who's afraid of Steven Heller?

by Len Small

Art Director, *Columbia University Magazine*

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1. An outpouring of fear

It begins first thing in the morning. We are off to the races, stung by the realization of a missing piece of the assignment, the goal. We are disassociated partners, inchoate phrases, stumbling to offices, studios or desks, until we are at our work, caffeinated (perhaps overly so), ready to head off the first call in our head. *But*—

Next comes the distractions of any day—texts and emails, the personal and practical (the doctor! The laundry! The needy, needy pet!), and this becomes a consequential slurry into social media, and there are videos and maybe some doom scrolls, until it's, wow, how long did I do that? *So*—

We are creatures of habit, bad and otherwise. But the creative mind must be able to avoid the "fracking of our attention," and look at the canvas, and be ready to start. *Then*—

We can open the application, reread the brief and start. And then we get past the fear that started the day. Because there is practice, and suddenly the challenge is not a dark specter—it is just a tension for us to pull our idea, and push the line forward. A new layer added, an old one gone. *Because*—

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2. A return to the basics

Illustrators begin their career at an impasse. When SVA started as a program for veterans interested in the commercial arts, illustrators were often just the extended arm of an art director, as they practiced the “invisible arts.” Seen, but not recognized.

Over the next century, a wave of inspired illustrators gradually changed that distinction. Making illustrative artwork has become easier and faster; with that pace, expectations have risen. Work moves faster, as does our attention span.

We are still relatively early in the century, but the shape of this era has started to coalesce. Working illustrators of this age have moved off of canvas and paper, able to remove the bulk of drawing linked with a mouse, to administer strokes and textures right on the screen itself. Already, we are in a stereotype of 20th-century science fiction territory, with Tom Cruise’s character in *Minority Report* as creative director, swiping through portfolios.

These leaps did not slow. Now illustrators animate, and can easily simulate textures from oil paints to Kyle’s brushes—textures with a touch. In this moment, there was beauty in the galloping changes. Previous borders dropped away—genres were defied, or ignored. The space between fine art and illustration developed a Gaussian blur.

However, things in motion might resist slowing down, especially as our audiences adjust to the pace. Not only were artists expected to share their work immediately (and often!) with peers on social media, but we also acted as jurors and PR agents, with a new ability to promote work almost instantly. Our appetite for this power of opinion becomes insatiable. Being bored is a danger for our work! Is there even profit to be made for someone? The old gatekeepers might have been knocked around, off their ledges. How quickly this happened to everyone.

It’s no surprise that as our minds spin, and our feet look for security on some slippery floor, that a new technology would appear to give everyone a shock. Would it be possible that, in the course of an hour, someone would be able to create a fully rendered image just by typing out the concept? *Or, worse, dictating it?*

Geologists, philosophers and other deep thinkers have named the era we are in as the Anthropocene; more importantly, they argue that this era might be over soon. It’s hard not to get caught up in the end of things: the end of seasons, the end of species, the end of the comforts of modern life. And how simple just to say, is this also the end of art? Were we so excited to move off the page that we also gave away the pen?

Luckily, life is more complex than just one fate or path. The fear that bubbles quickly like a geyser also subsides. An algorithm takes only one path. AI doesn’t have fear, or bravery to take a creation somewhere new. We might be surprised by generative artwork, but we will never be delighted.

The artist returns to their knowledge, their strengths. The artist reads the story, or they write it themselves. The artist iterates, and does it again, and our eyes know the difference.

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3.
A sweaty portfolio

Perhaps you might expect some wisdom from an art director. Expectations can be dangerous. However, I can tell you about fear, practice and confidence.

Before I was an editorial art director, I was a freelance designer, floating around on whims and trends. I was also an illustrator. A friend who was already on his way to a successful illustration career told me the *New York Times* editorial art director (or Op-Ed, as it was known) kept open two 10-minute slots for anyone who wanted an appointment. So I called in and took a 9:10am slot.

I went into the *Times* building, hands sweating through my portfolio. I entered the office of Steven Heller, who gave me a genial greeting, took my portfolio book and flipped briefly through my artwork. He closed the book, said thank you and gave it back to me. I was stunned, but somehow found the courage to ask for feedback. He sighed, took back the book and gave me one of the most sharp and succinct reviews of my work I'd ever received.

What is happening in the background? What is the story in this one? These portraits are okay, but they're not telling me anything. This one is fine. These feel incomplete.

After a few minutes, he again returned my portfolio, and I stumbled home. It wasn't until I was on the subway that I thought to write down what he told me. I felt humbled, and deeply grateful. What was missing? I had some raw talent (perhaps), and the beginnings of a voice. However, I was not practiced, or disciplined. I certainly hadn't put in my 10,000 hours. I was really stalled in my learning; an artist with a decent hand, needing more time and guidance.

I am still grateful for that first review with Heller, and the many other creative peers who gave me their time and interest to shape my work in my career. I moved my energy into graphic design, and eventually studied with Heller at SVA. I often wonder if he remembered me from that 10-minute review. I would expect not; then again, I don't think anything gets past him.

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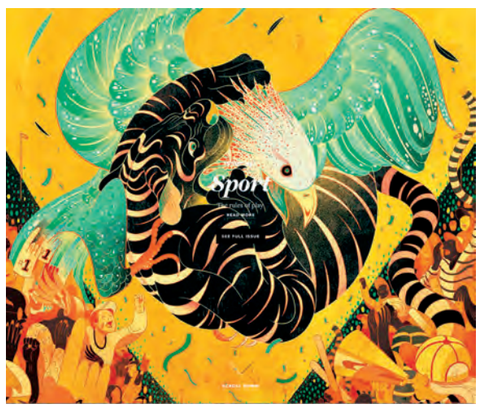

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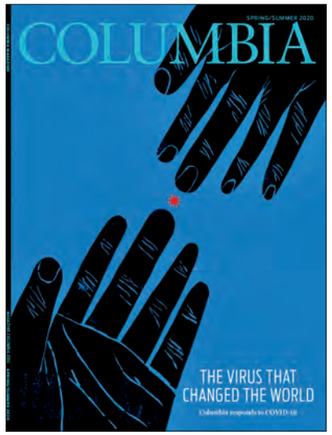

4.
The future, the future, the future

Several years ago, I went to hear Milton Glaser speak on *The Design of Dissent*.[1] The country was still reeling with a new president that had sharply divided people, and perhaps I was looking for my former mentor to clear the air about my fear.

Instead, Glaser asked the crowd to consider the errors in our process: "There's nothing more damaging than preimagining you know the answer to everything." In his thinking, Glaser never sat comfortably in any firm belief. "Consider the fact you are quite likely in error in whatever you do," he suggested. However, he then turned to the narcissism claiming the country, and rebutted that as well: "It's not about my life alone; it's a shared life with others."

The others, dear readers, are your colleagues, friends, family, pets, peers, and all of the amazing people who care about what you do. Fear, after all, can be as abstract as we let it be. Your work will take effort, failure, questioning, and the ups and downs of fate and fortune. The people around you can be part of the brick-and-mortar in your career. Specifically, those people you come up with—studio partners, classmates, digital friends—will be your community. They are good listeners, and they want to see you succeed.

We will wake up tomorrow, with old worries shedding, and new concerns beginning, but we can get to work, with aplomb, and just a little fear in our back pocket, for safekeeping.

[1] Milton Glaser conversation on *The Design of Dissent* on November 13, 2017, with Steven Heller, at The Cooper Union.

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CAPTIONS

1. Illustration by Marcos Chin.
2. Illustrstion by Chris Buzelli.
3. *Columbia Magazine* cover by Ellen Weinstein.
4. Illustration by Ellen Weinstein.
5. Illustration by Isabel Seliger.
6. Illustration by Yuko Shimizu.
7. Illustration by Vico Ngai.
8. *Columbia Magazine* cover by Melinda Beck.
9. *Nautilus* cover by Ralph Steadman.

DRAW WHAT YOU LIKE, DRAW WHAT YOU KNOW

I have been thinking about artist and former SVA department Chair Marshall Arisman a lot lately, specifically his stories and epithets and the proverbs he would provide whenever he was doling out advice. The one he repeated the most was “Draw what you like, draw what you know,” which has become a mantra among Marshall’s students after many years of art instruction. After coming to Marshall as a student in crisis because I had no faith in my own work, hearing those words felt … less than helpful. Drawing what I know and drawing what I like? How could such a simple answer be the solution to my existential woes about a future of making art for a living? It wasn’t until putting a few years behind me that Marshall’s deceptively simple advice was starting to click.

The solution I found is to draw a lot. There will be bad ideas and bad drawings, but the more drawings you have, the more likely inspired, impactful images you will create. This is where Marshall’s advice comes back to me. Drawing without fear is going to come much more easily when you are pulling from personal experience and drawing subjects you enjoy and understand.

“Simple” is often associated with “quick and easy.” It might be easy to make a simple drawing, but it’s another thing altogether to make a simple drawing *impactful*. This was something I struggled with so much during my own art study. How could anything I make be good if I didn’t labor and agonize over it for hours? This is very similar to writing, where weak ideas are easily dressed up with flowery language, when concise and powerful words can leave a reader with a lasting feeling and memory.

So how can you make lightning strike over and over again? Then there were the moments where inspiration strikes and I’m able to follow through with a great concept easily, but this is rare. The solution I found is to draw a lot. There will be bad ideas and bad drawings, but the more drawings you have, the more likely inspired, impactful images you will create. This is where Marshall’s advice comes back to me. Drawing without fear is going to come much more easily when you are pulling from personal experience and drawing subjects you enjoy and understand. Illustrators are largely commercial artists, so having a subject matter given on an assignment or a project that you love is a luxury. The most difficult part of being an illustrator is finding a connection between yourself and the assignment, no matter how disparate the two are. You take something you don’t like, something you don’t know, and find a way to turn it into something familiar and exciting.

Marshall’s key advice was simple, but it was in trying to understand those few words that the real learning began. Marshall put forth a simple puzzle, and it was up to his students to pull that puzzle apart and apply that advice to their own practice.

Kelsey Short
Illustration Coordinator
BFA Illustration

2024
BFA ILLUSTRATION

Portfolio Selections

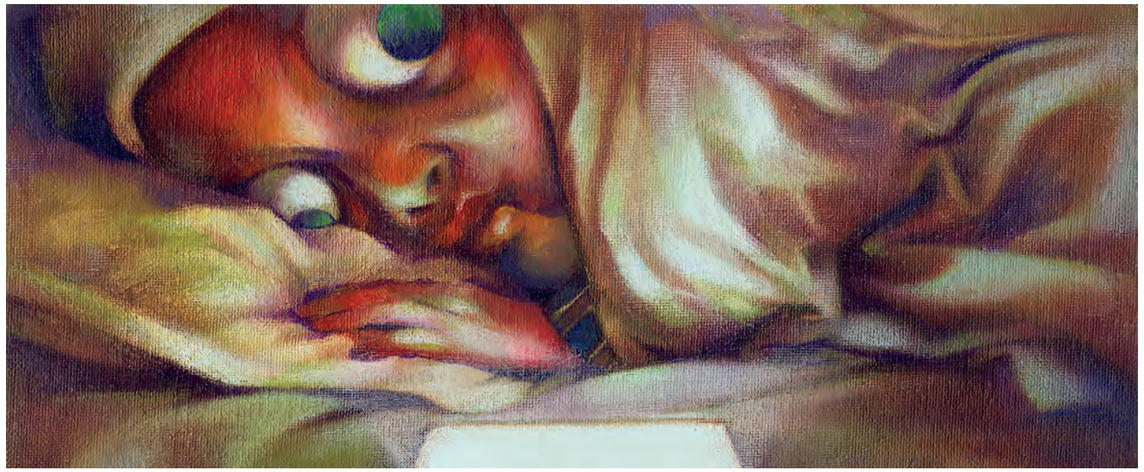
Junhan Shen
JUNHANSHEN.MYPORTFOLIO.COM

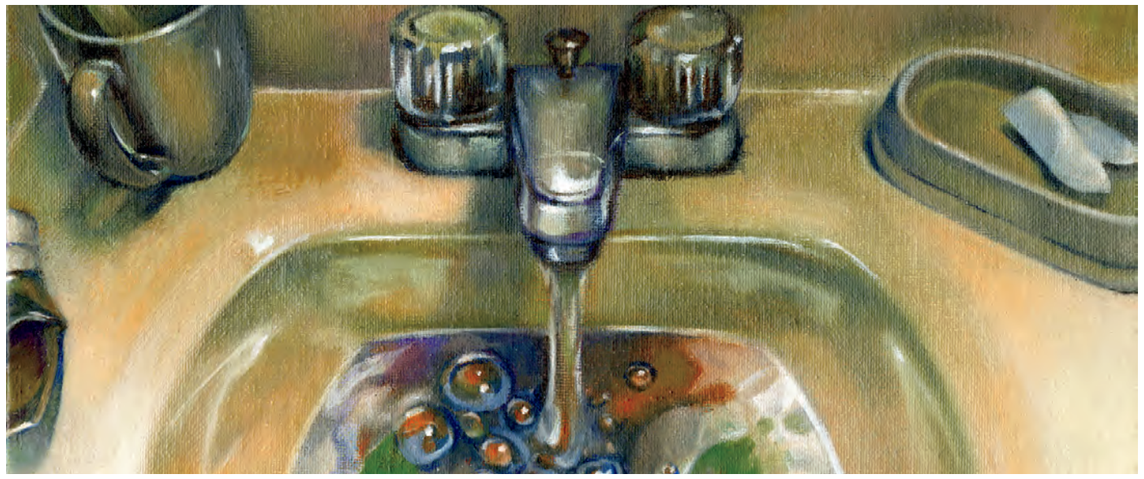
Monty Vazquez

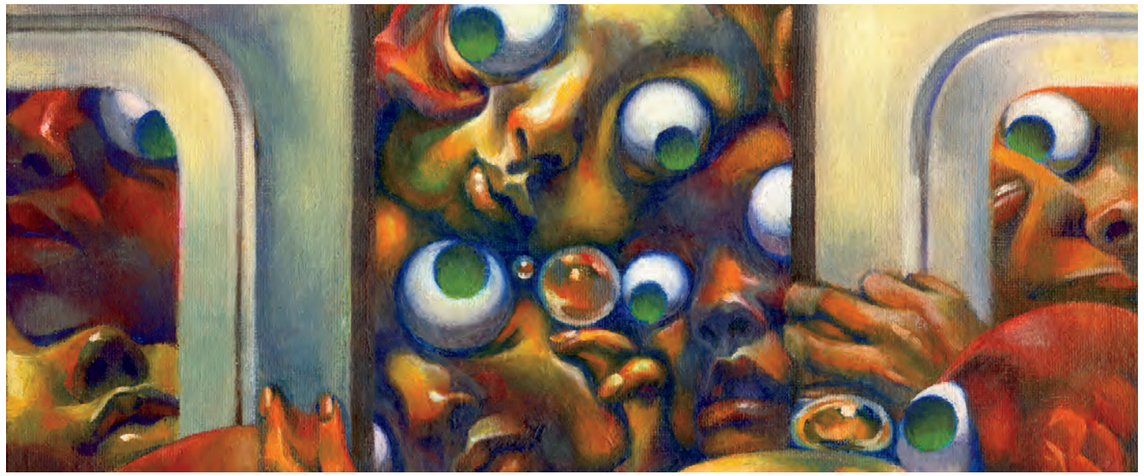
MONTYVAZ.COM

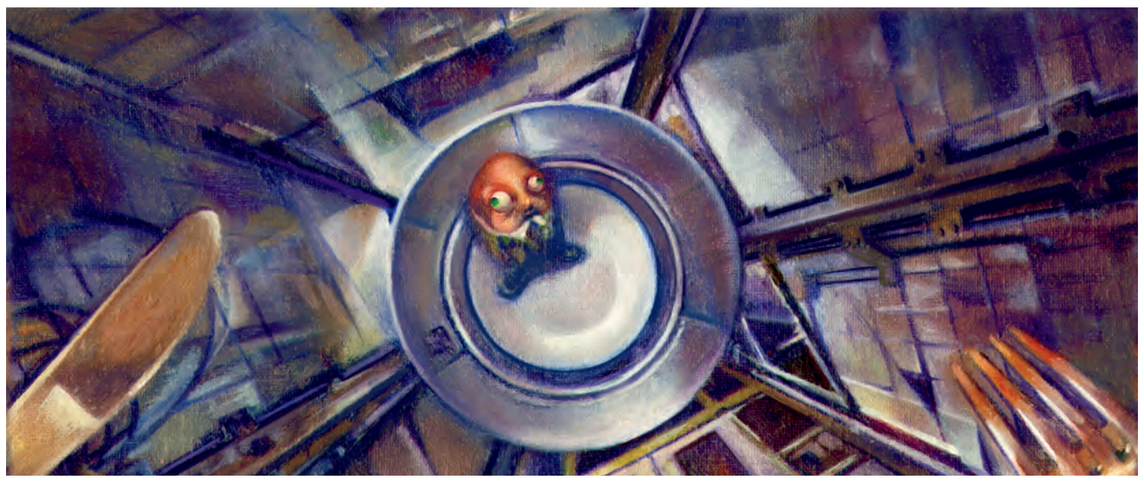
Vivian Zhang

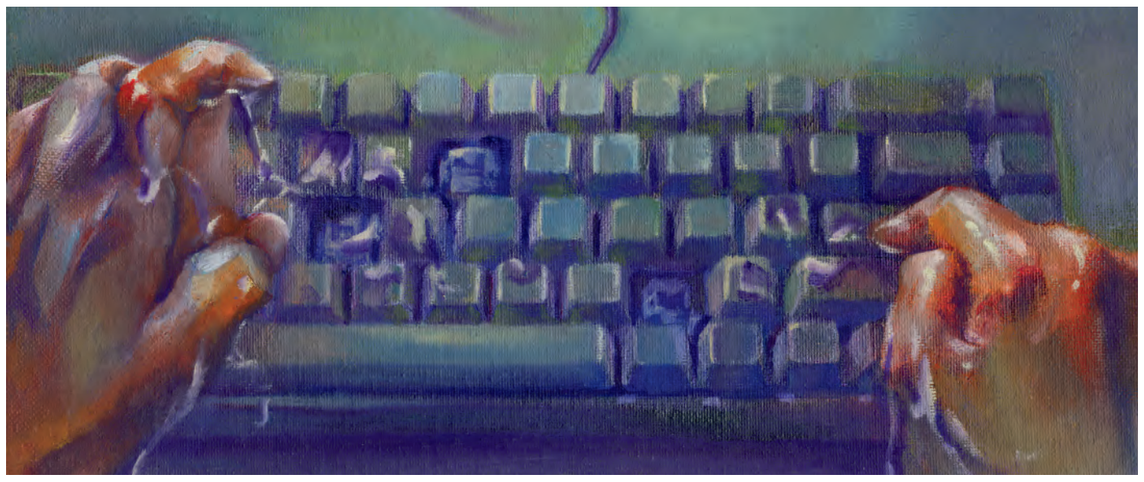
@YIZHISSTUDIO











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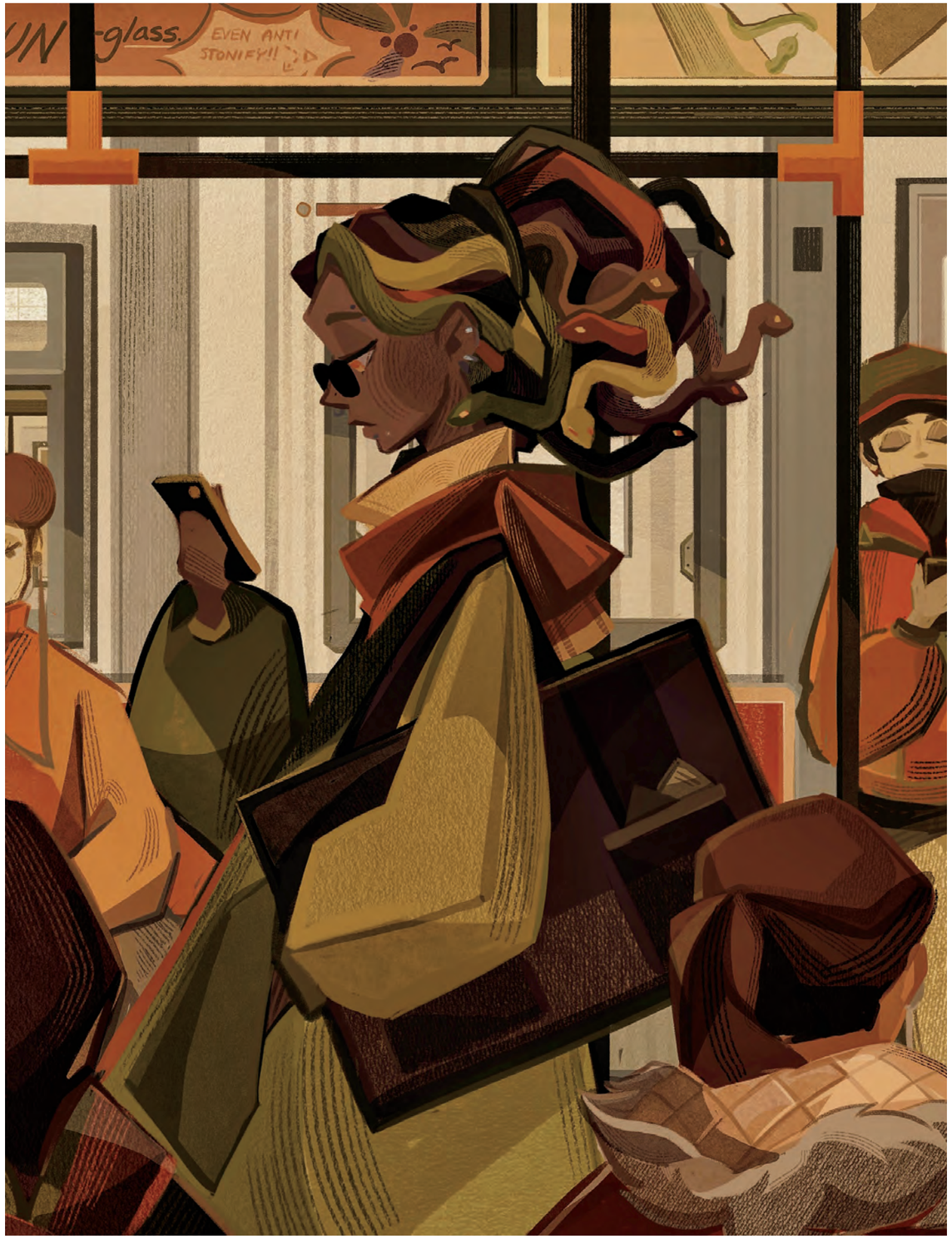
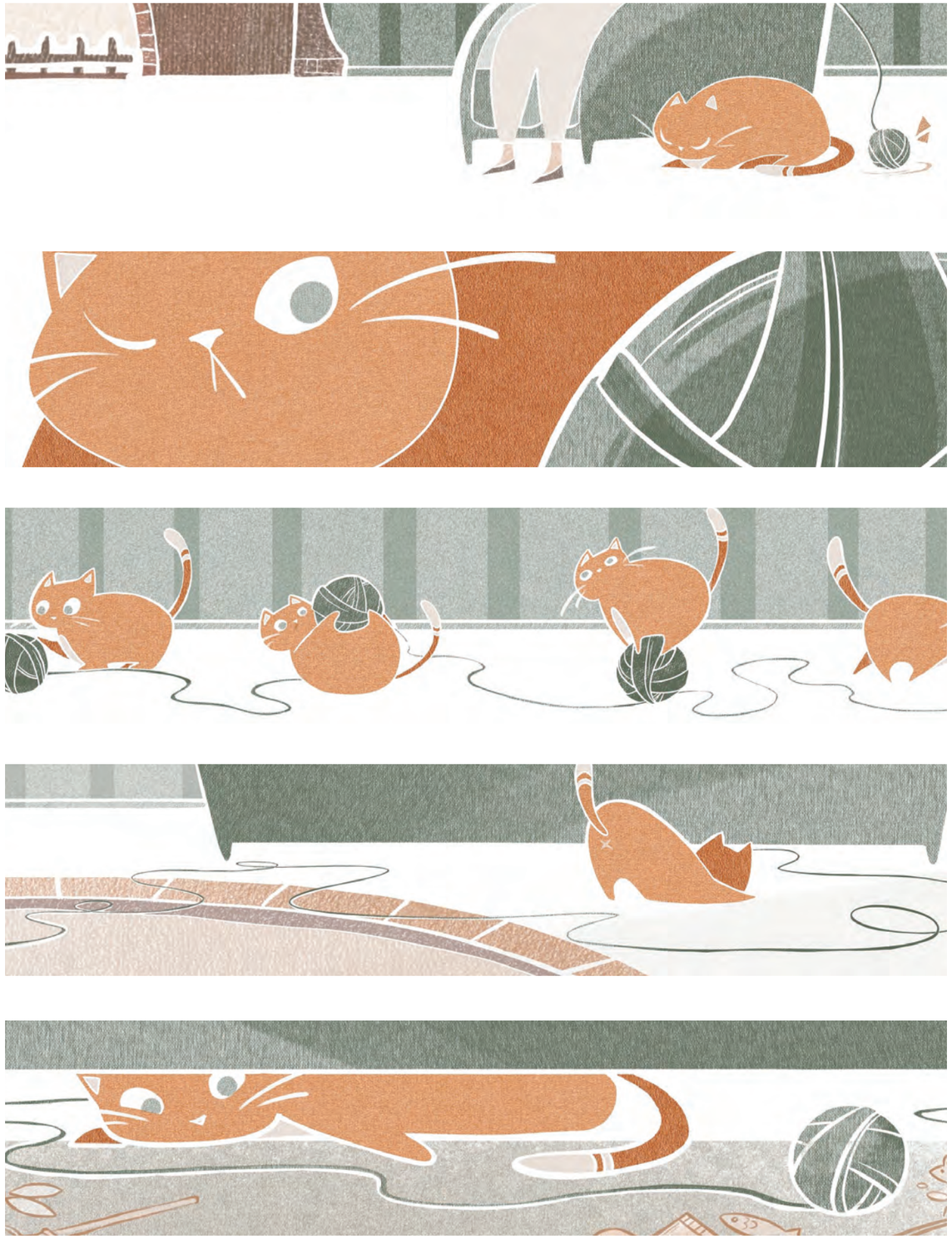




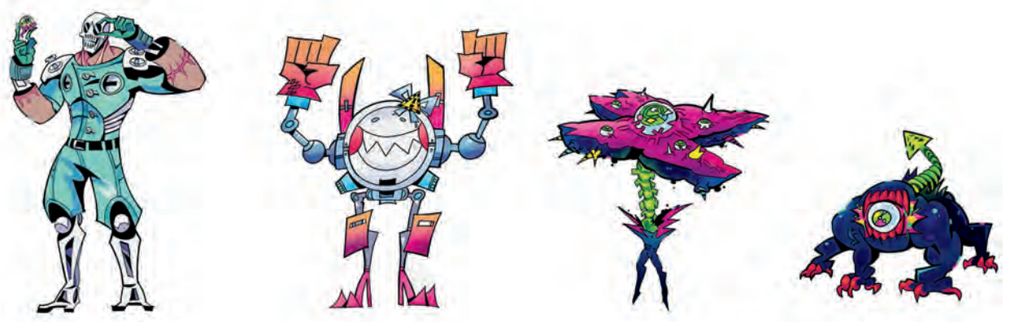
Shanglin Li

SHANGLINART.MYPORTFOLIO.COM

Zitian Wang
ZWANG45.ARTSTATION.COM

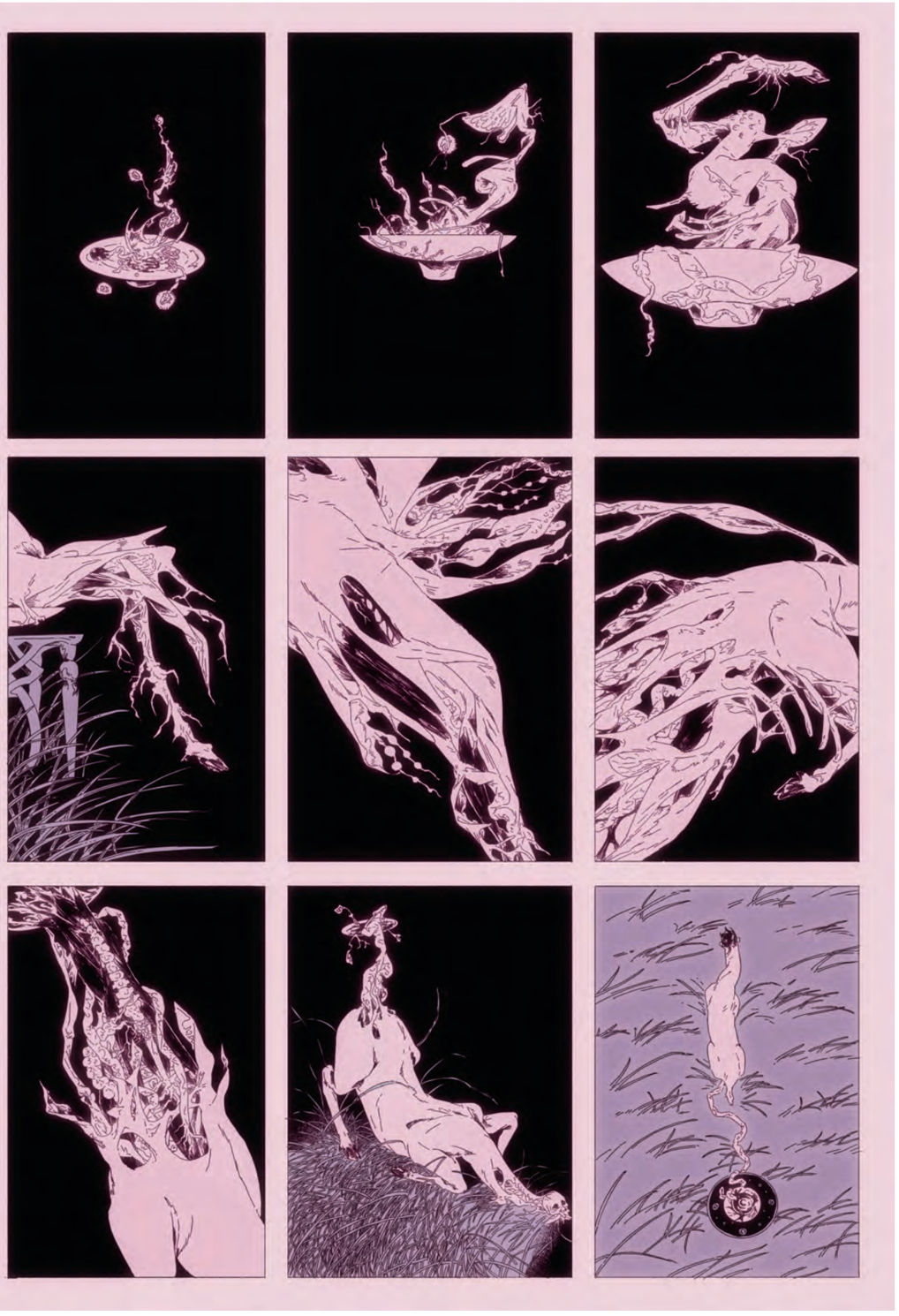
Justin You

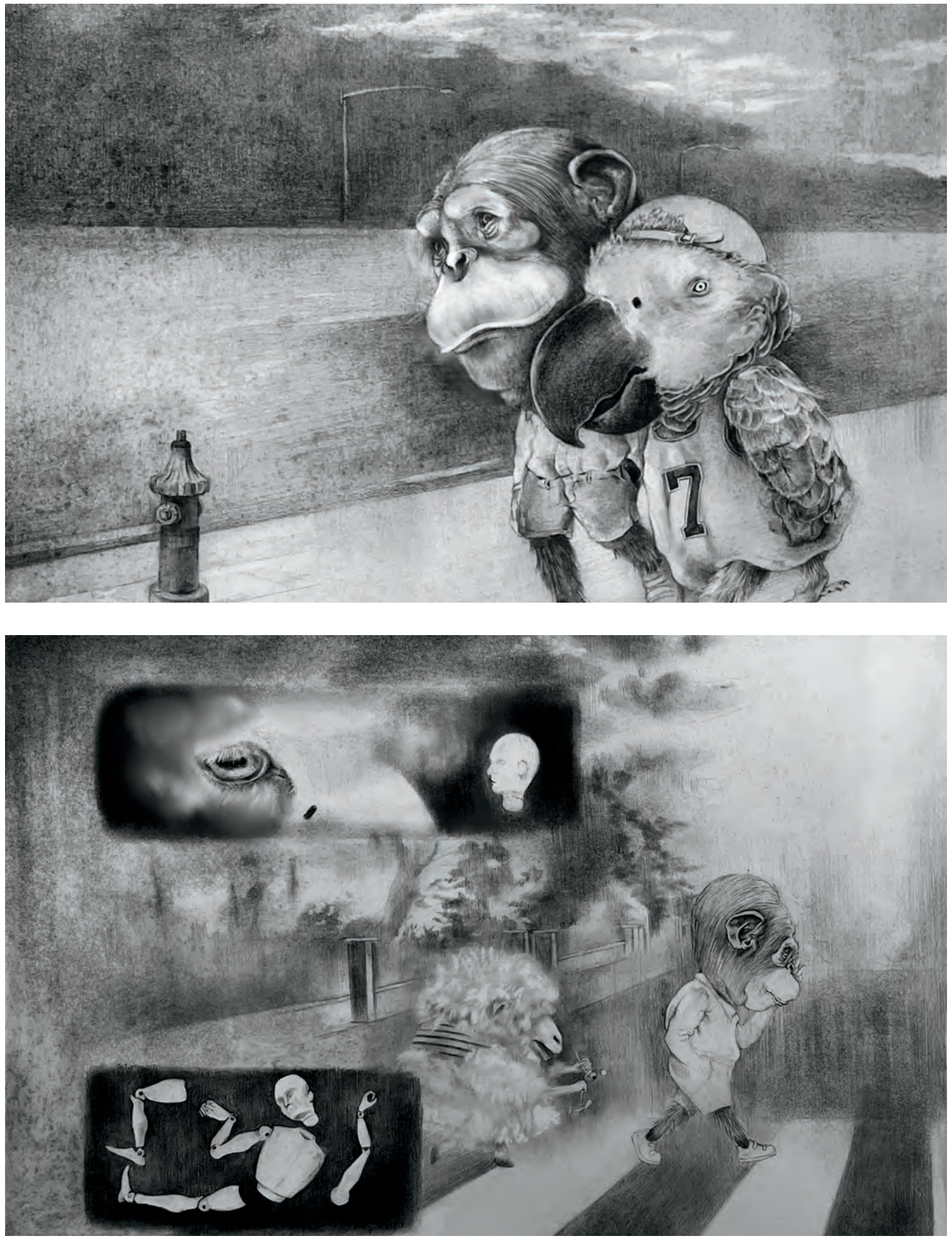
JIANSKETCH.COM

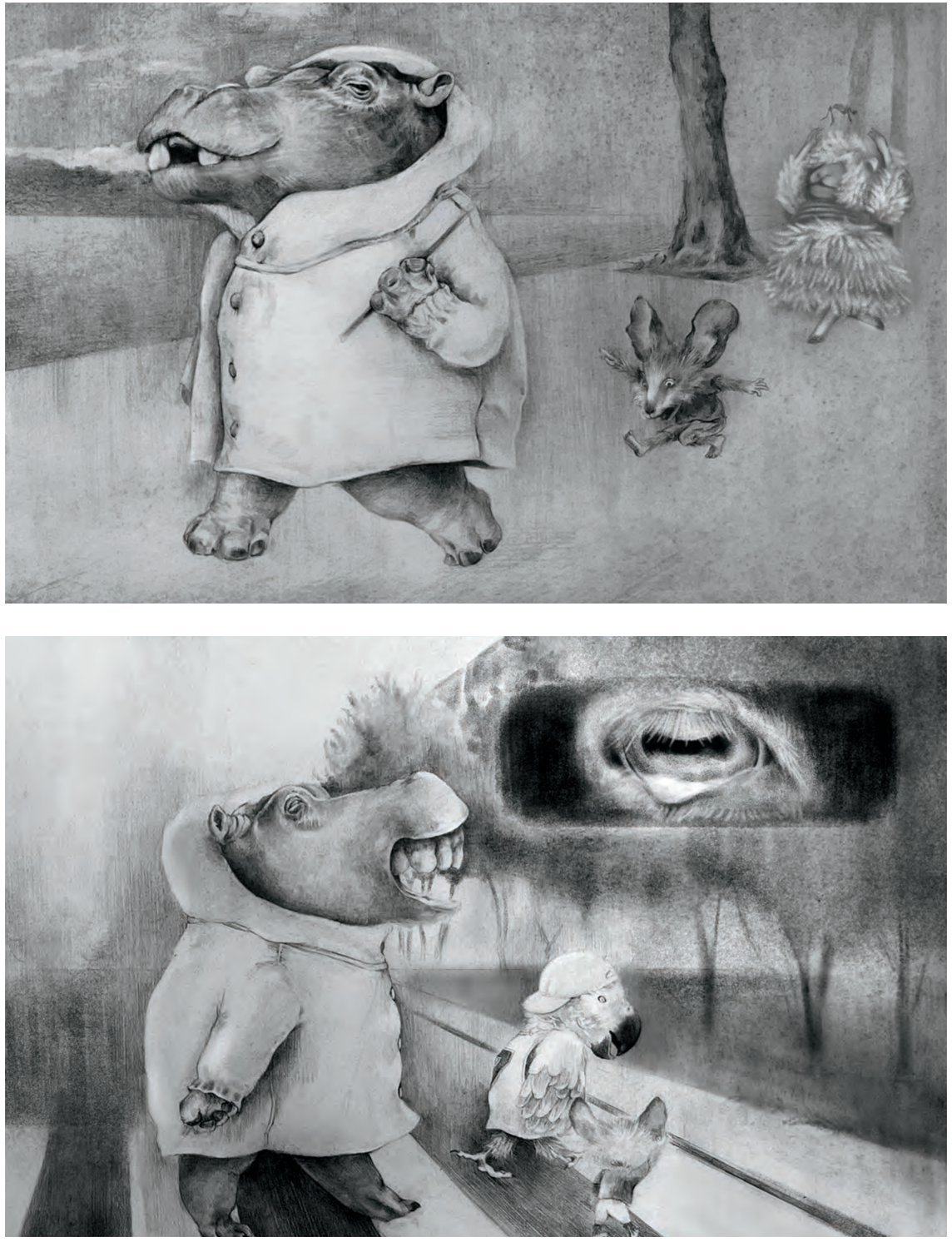


Yanjun Shang

@CHHIMODRI_ART







Alyssa Mao

@CIYAMEE

Yu Ke

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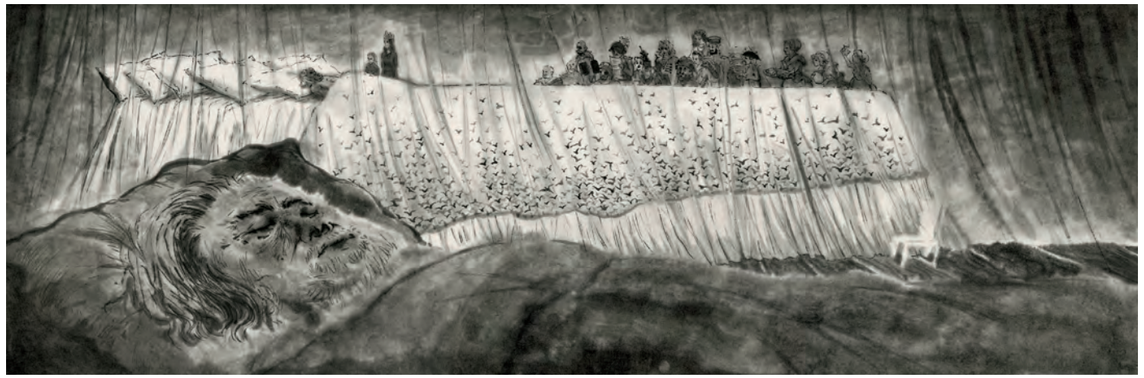
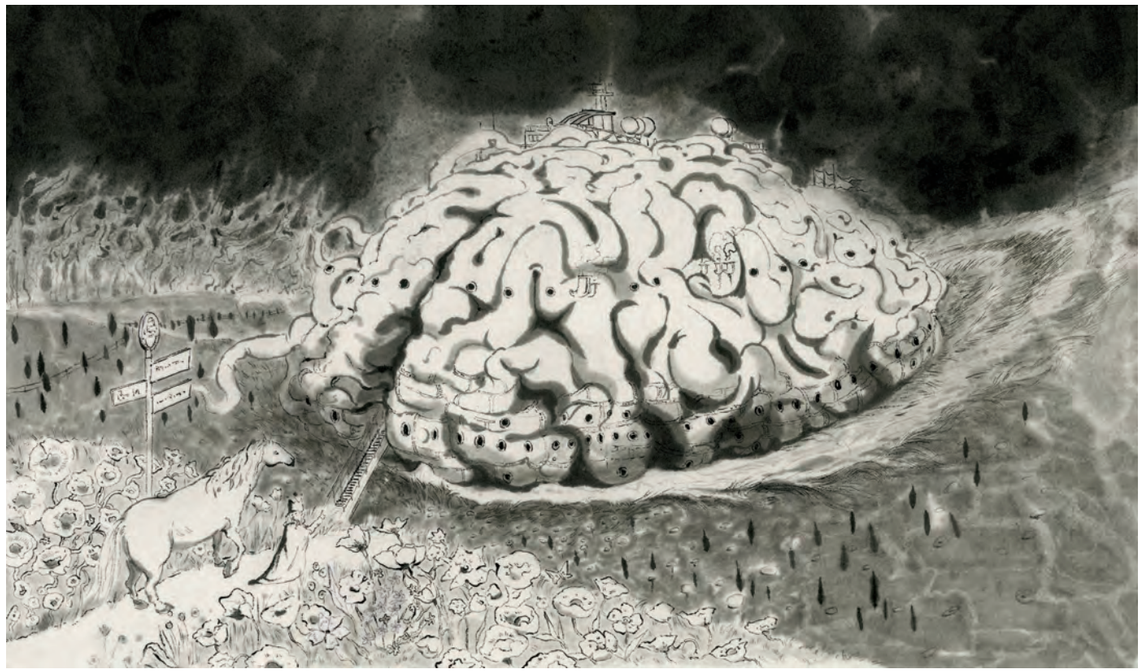
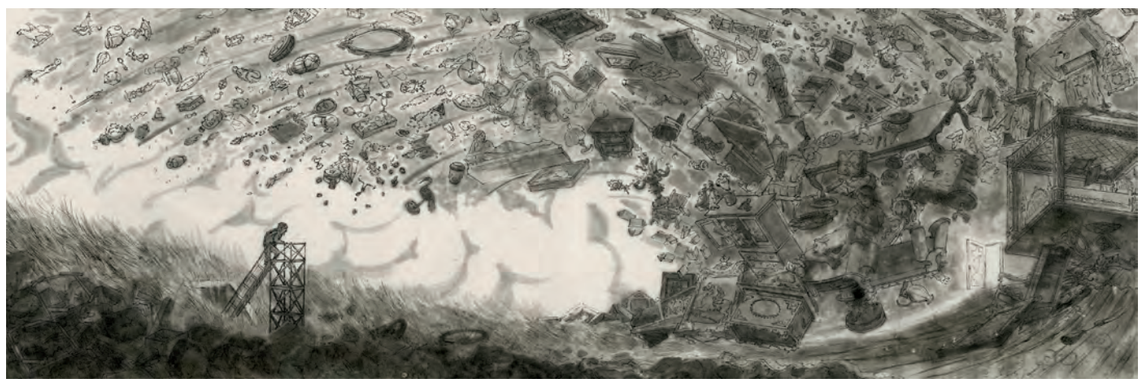
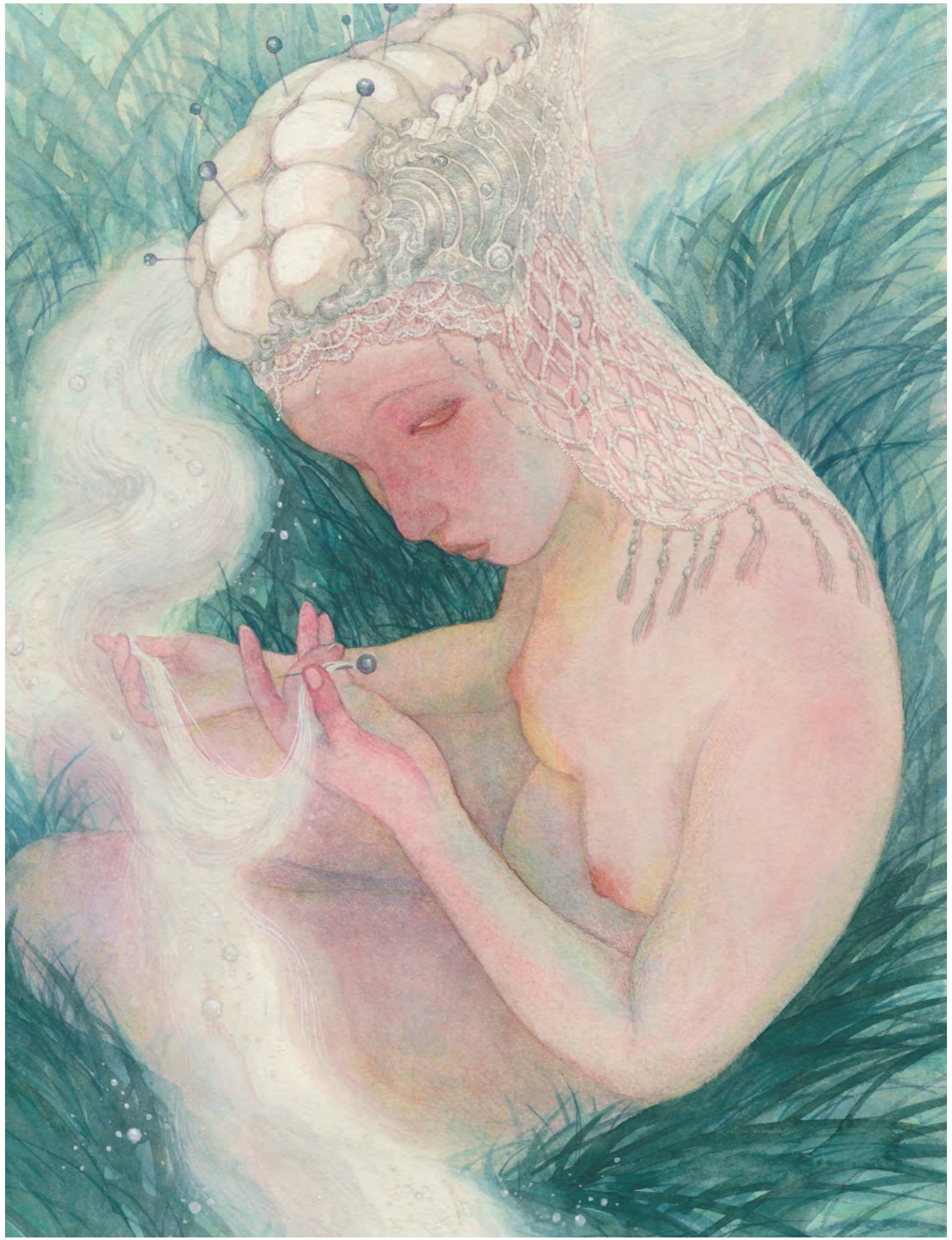






Zhilei Feng

ZHILEI.MYPORTFOLIO.COM



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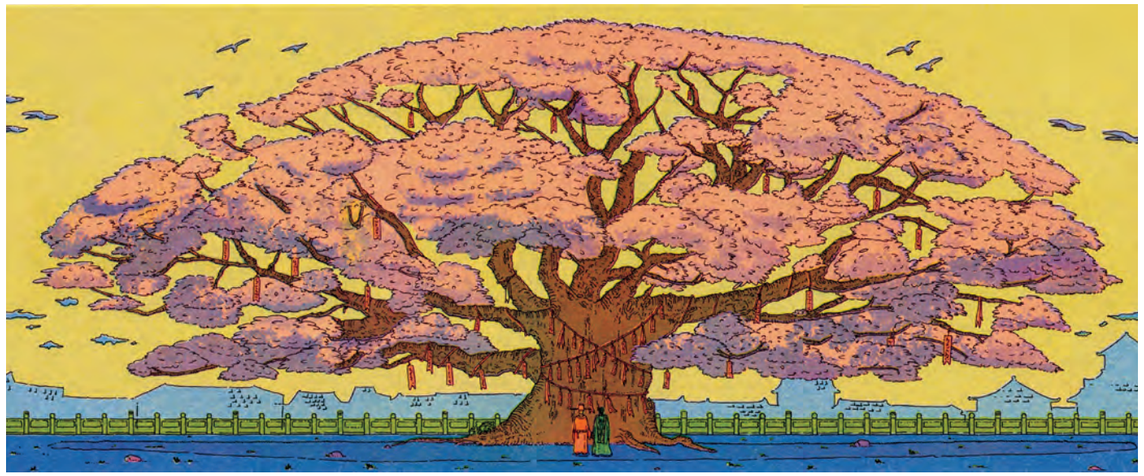

Jinyue Yang

@YJJJJ_Y

Yilin Pan

YILINPAN.UNIVER.SE

Annabella Clarkson

BELLACLARKSON.COM

Chalzea Xu

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Sage Deng

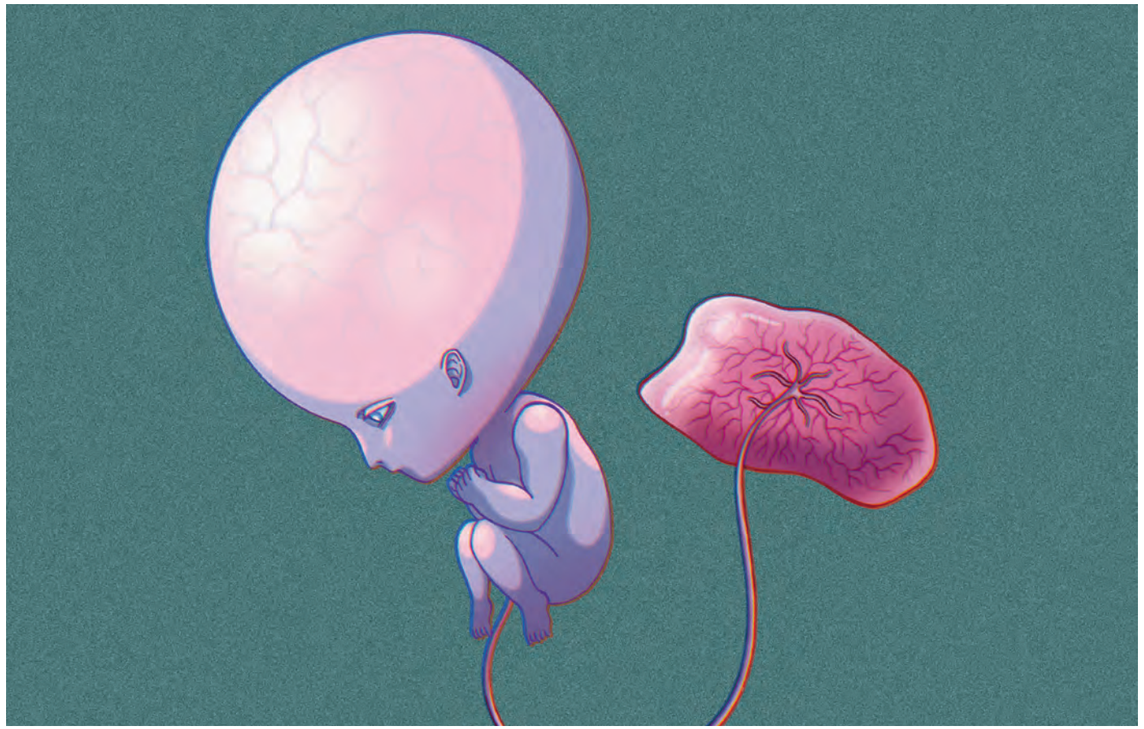
SAGEDENG.WORK

Kristopher De Leon

@MOTTINEVART

Yiyun Ye

@YE.YIYUN



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ISALEEART.COM

Candie Xiao

YXIAOARTPORTFOLIO.COM

Gabriel Pilar Pala

GABRIELPILARPALA.COM

Viiin Wang

@VIIIN_WANG

Tyler Chen

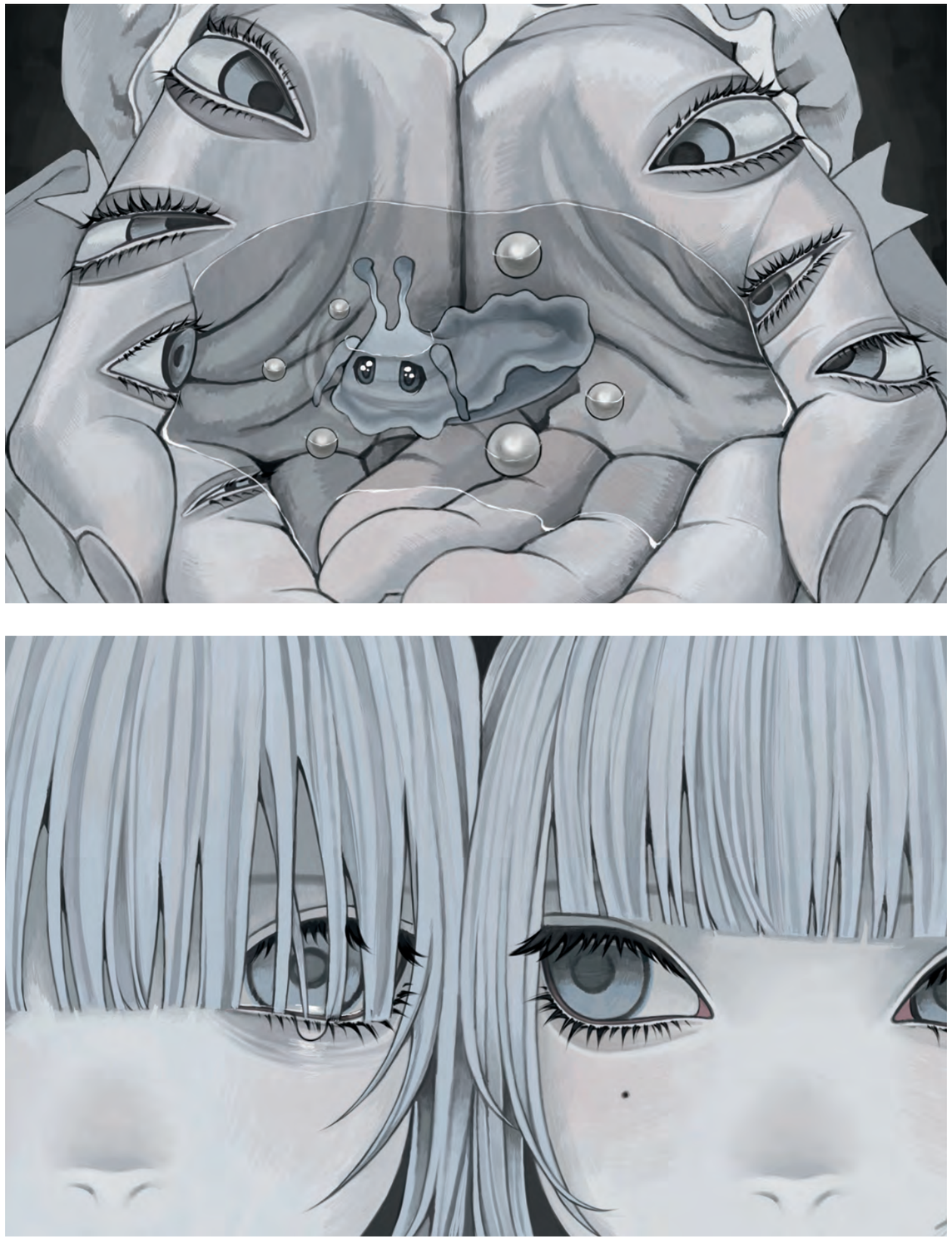
@TAIZHISTUDIO

Jack Spencer

JASPINSPORTFOLIO.COM

Zi Tang

SHIROISEKAI.UNIVER.SE



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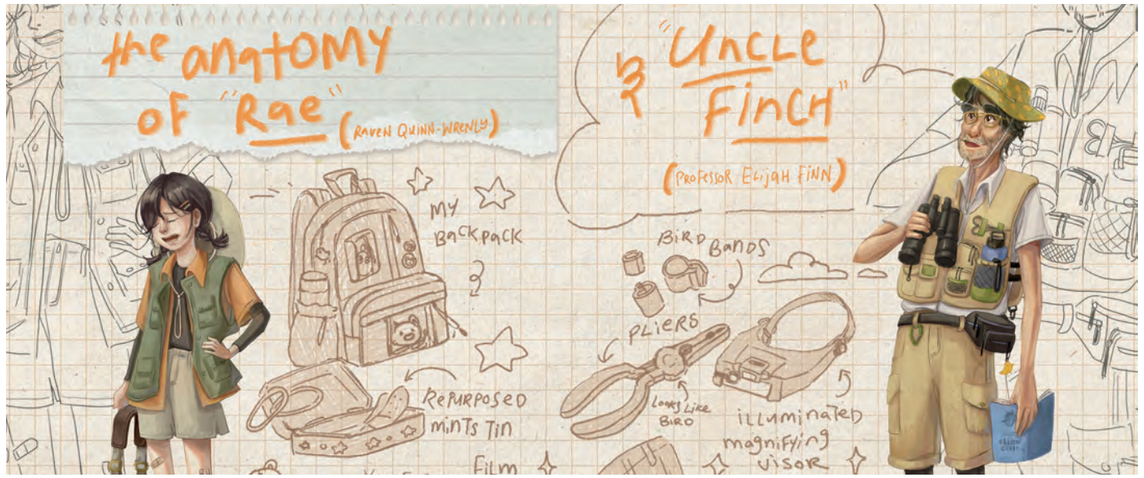

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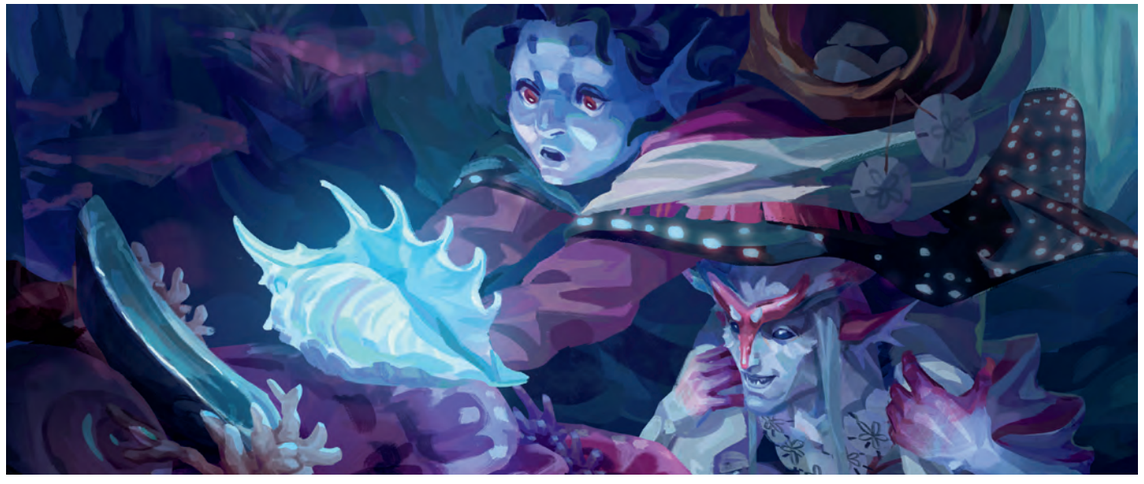

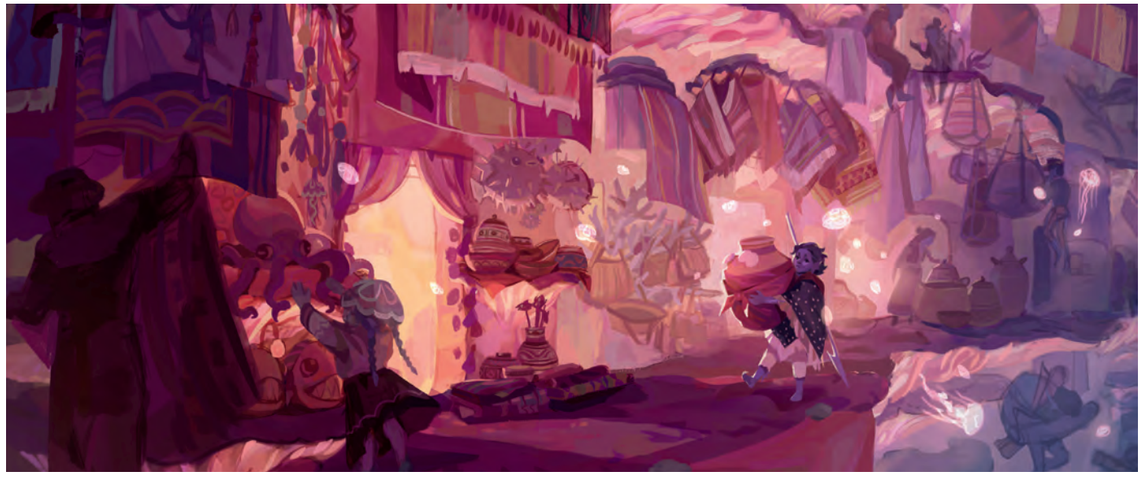

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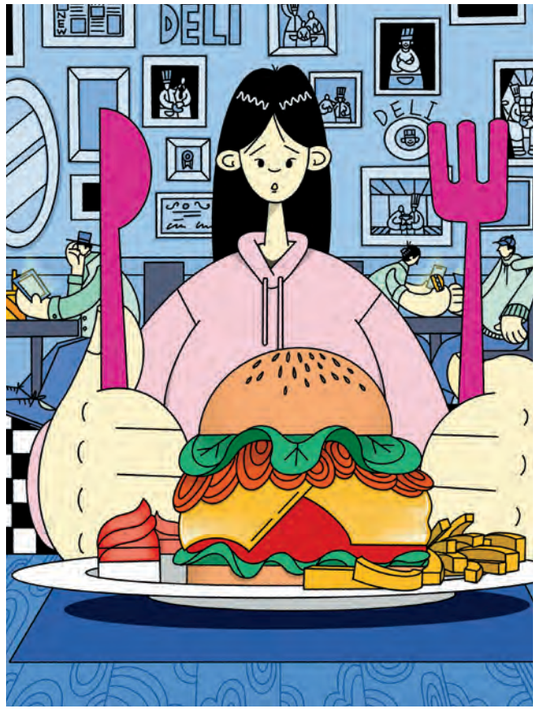

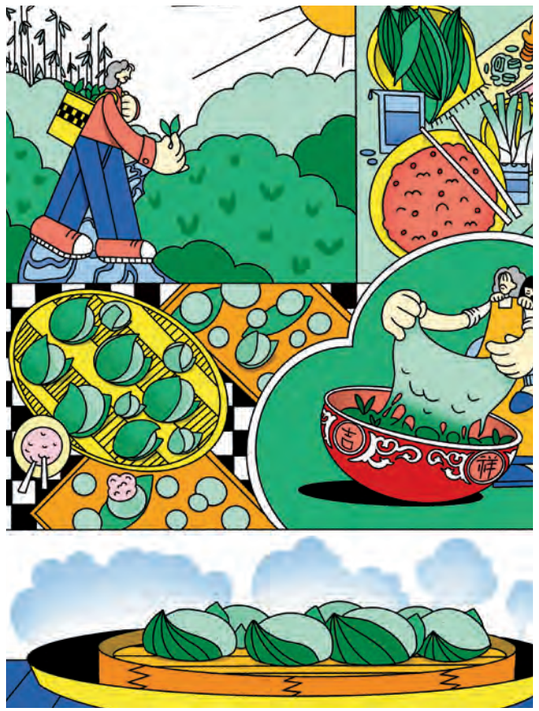

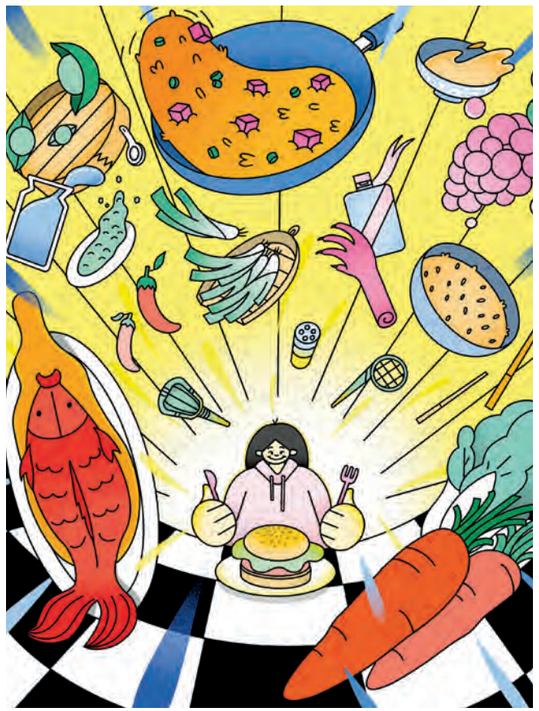

Yue Kou

@DRAGONSAUCE408

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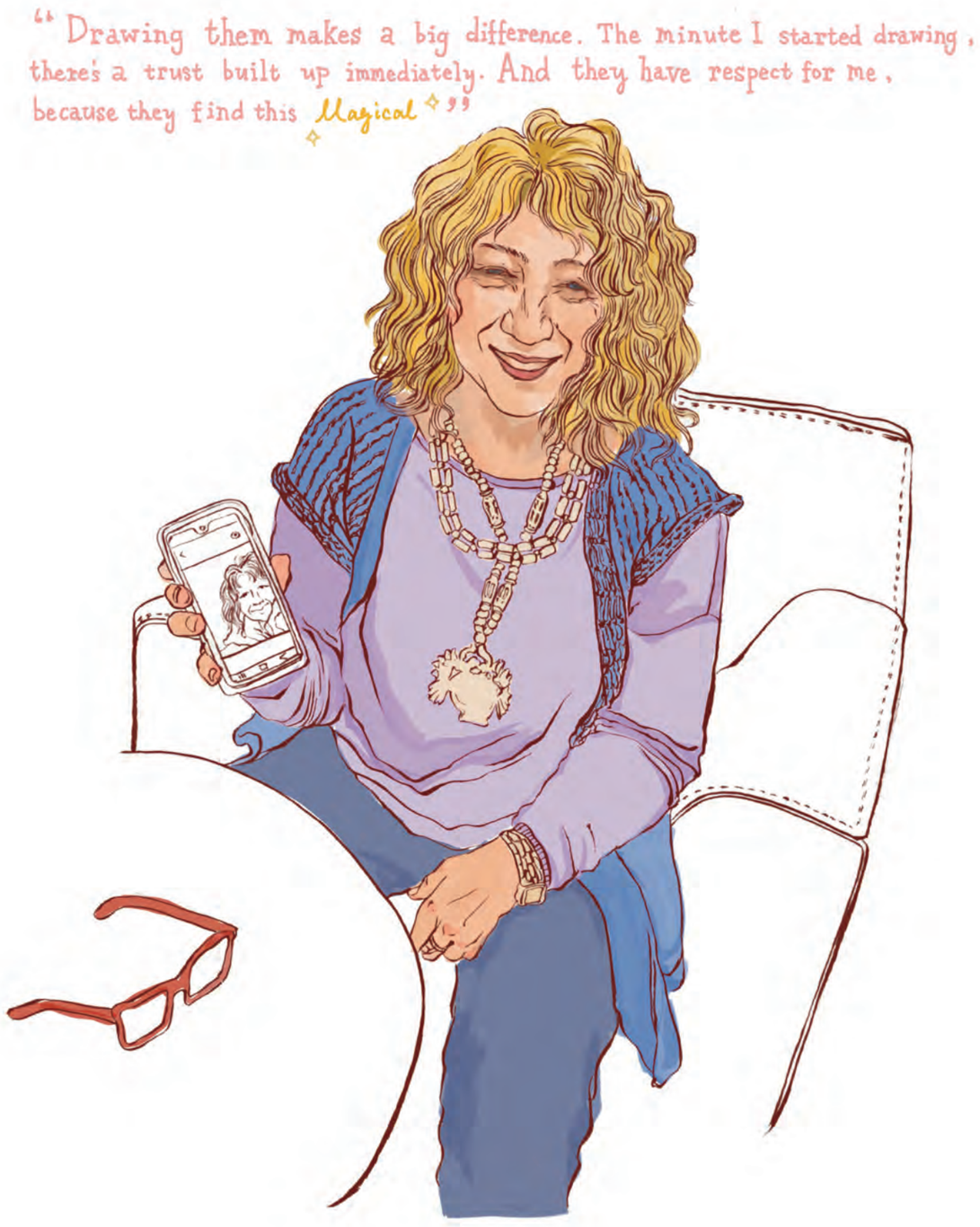

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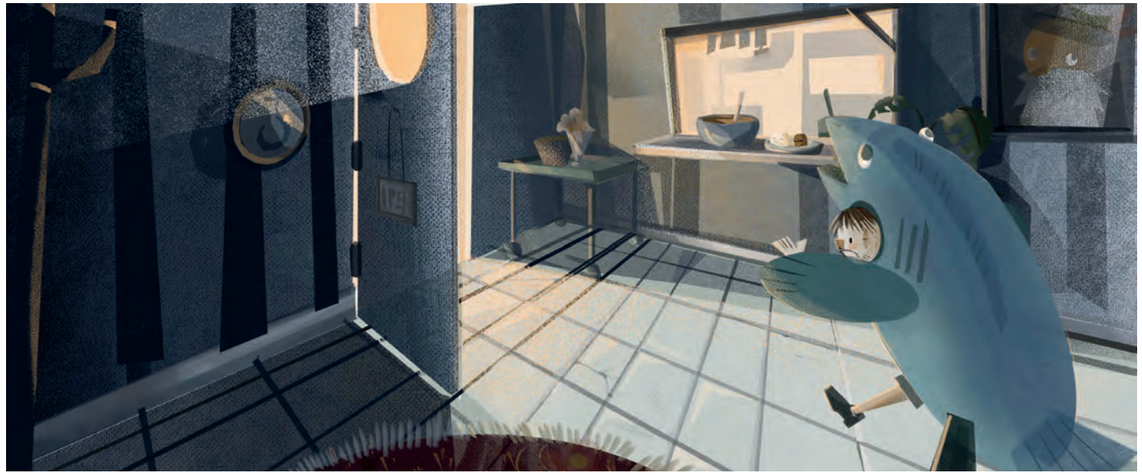

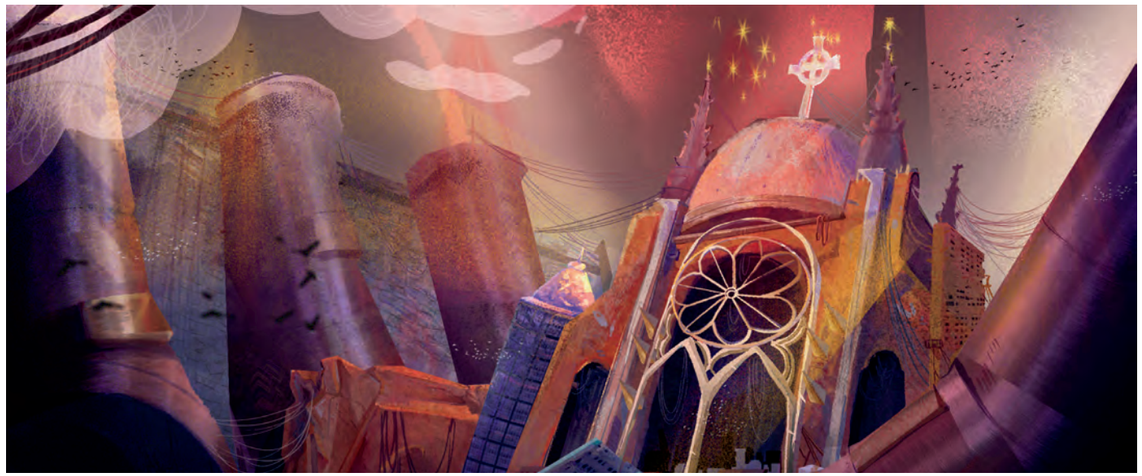

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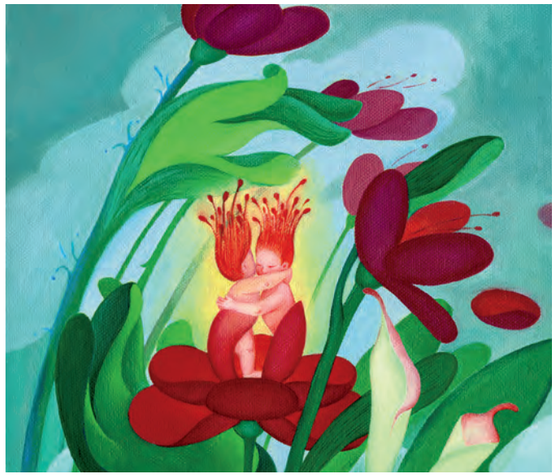

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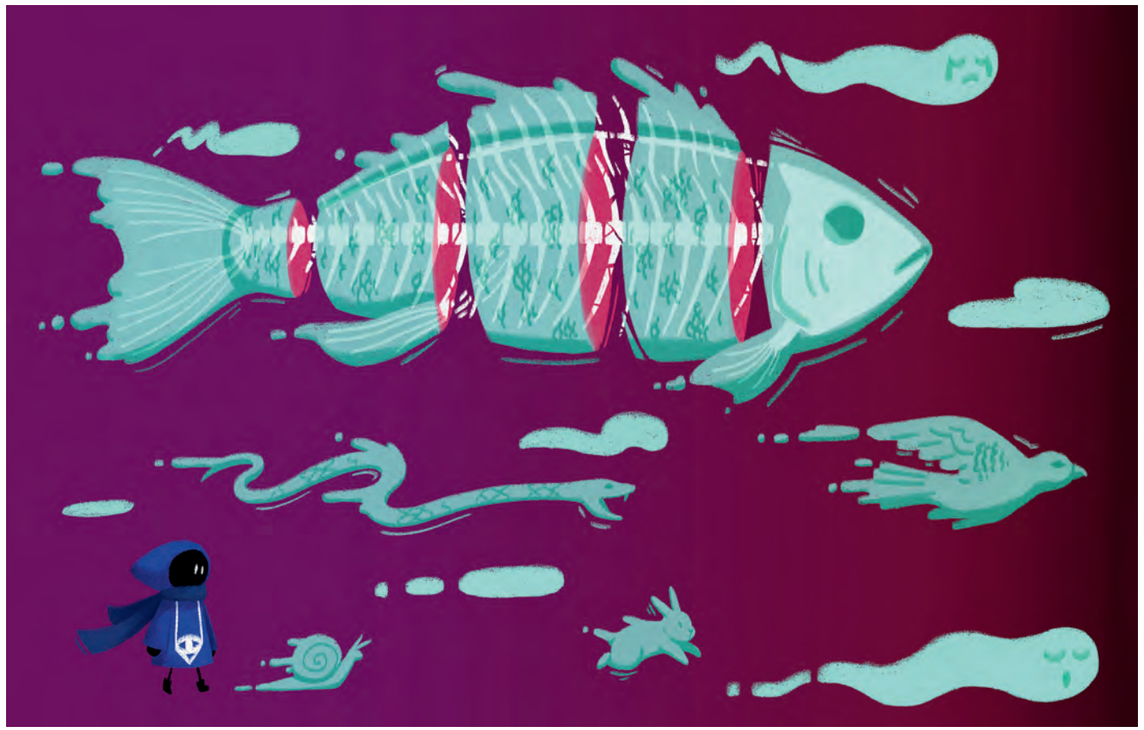

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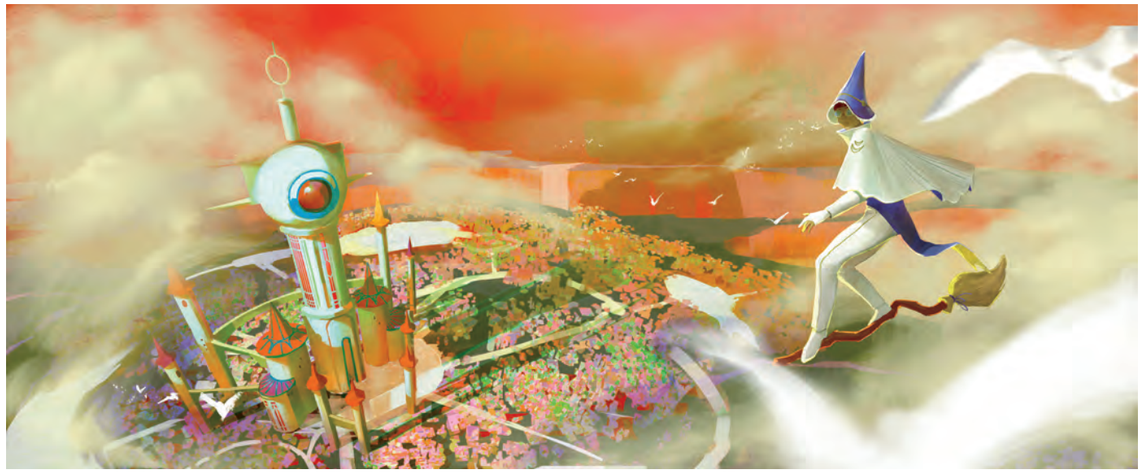

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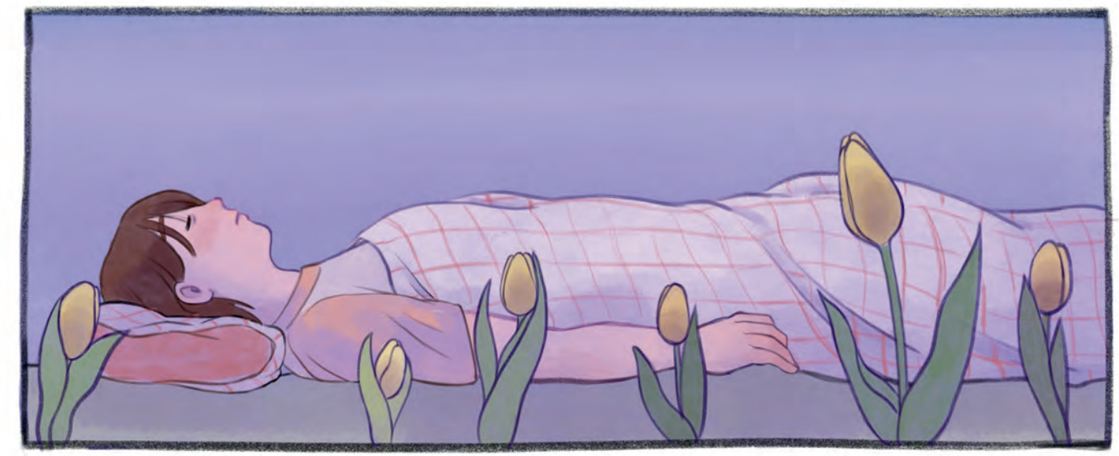

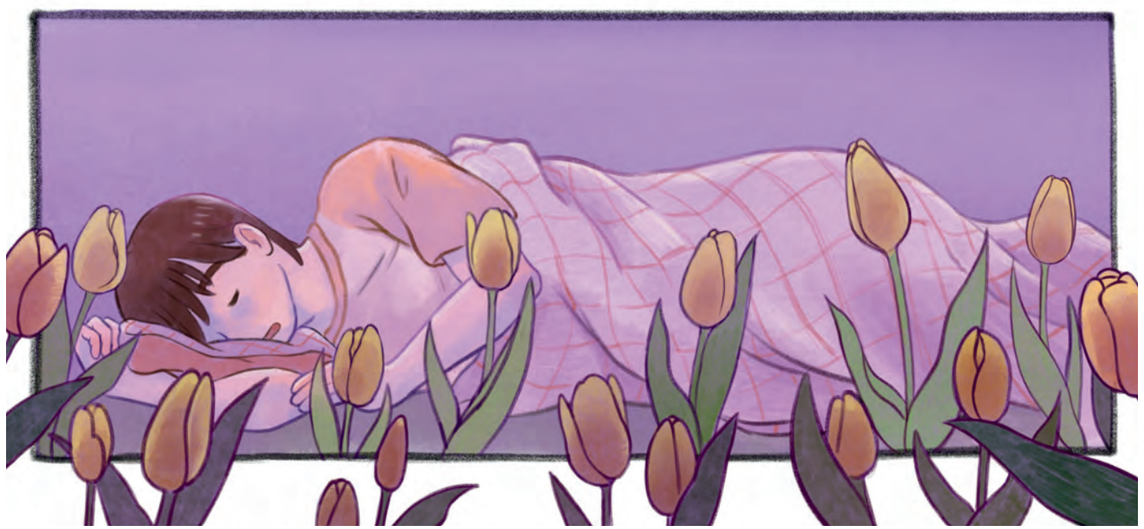

GG Gao

@GG.GAGALLERY

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Lee Ferrel

@LEEFWORKS

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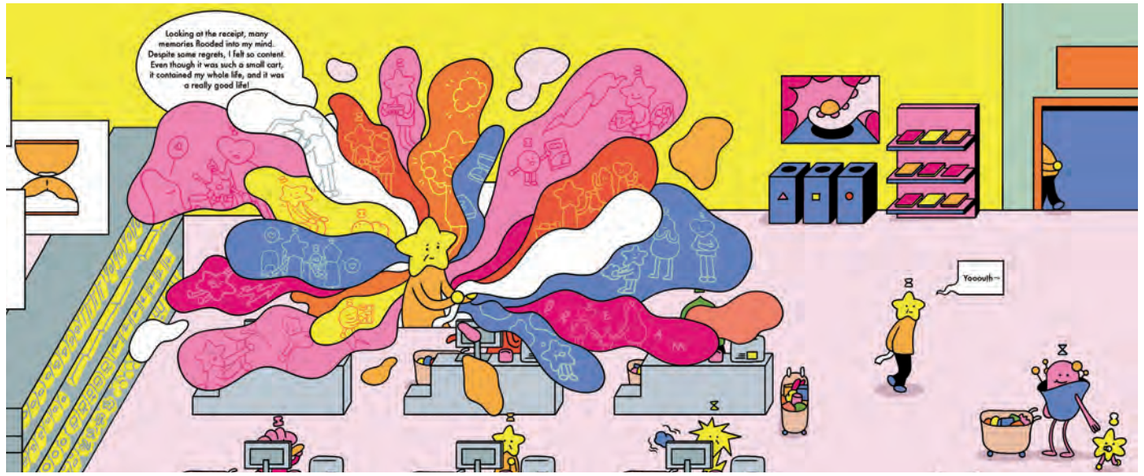

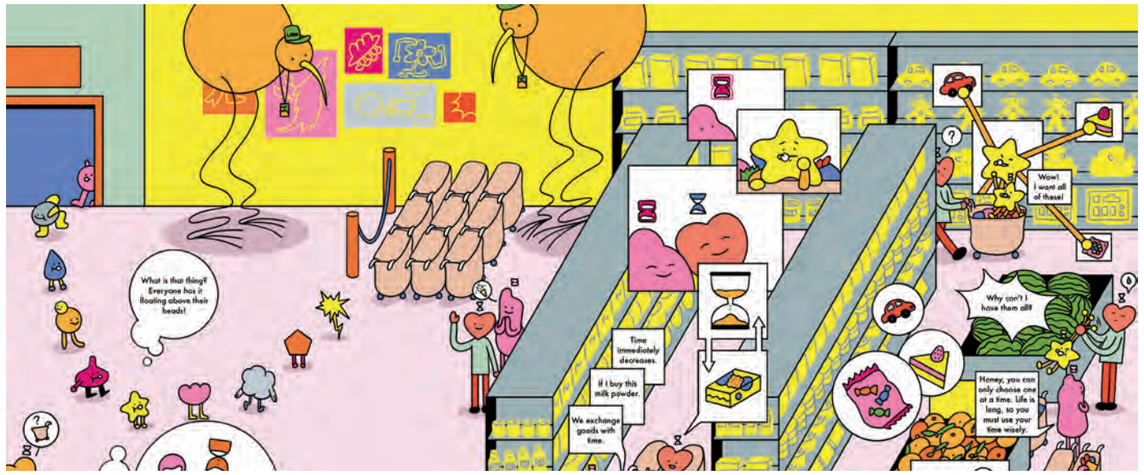

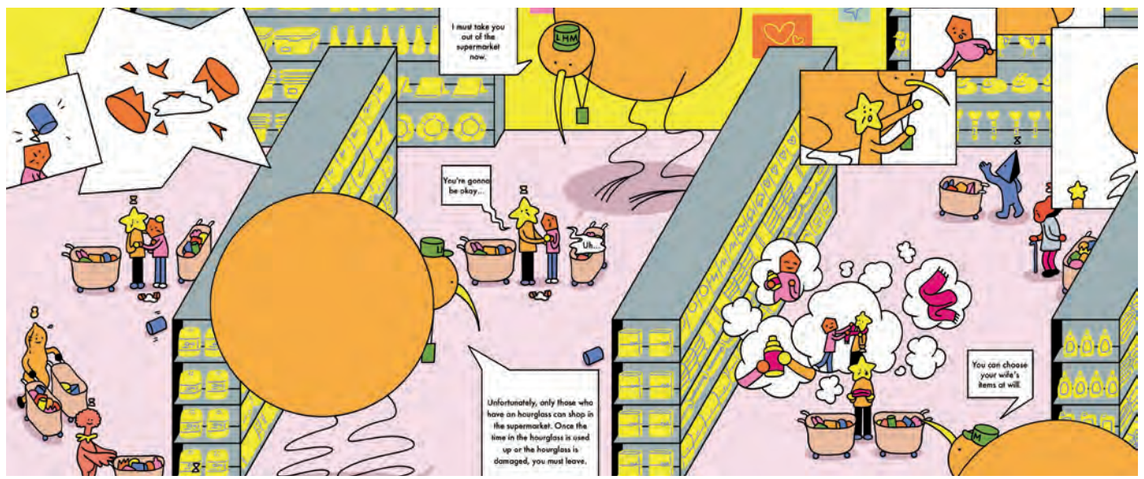

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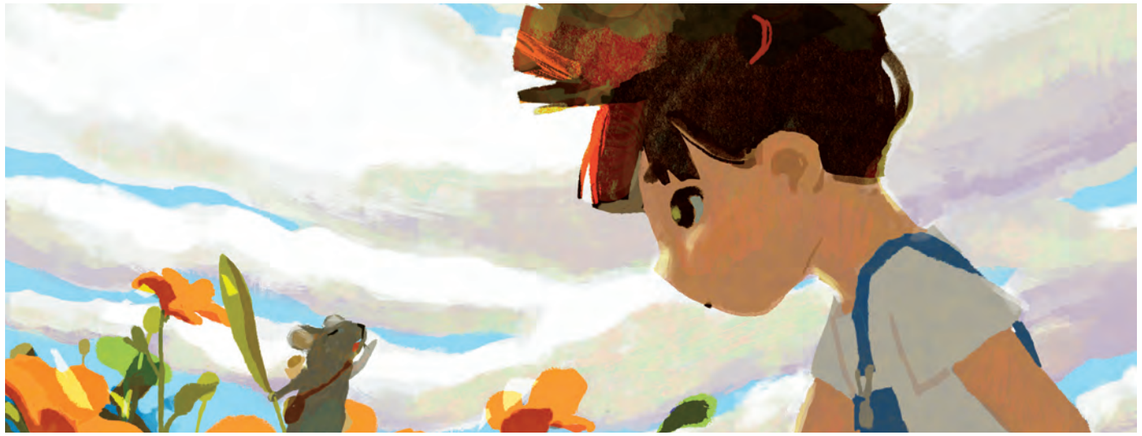

Jingtong Yan

@YOLANDE_DOUBLE

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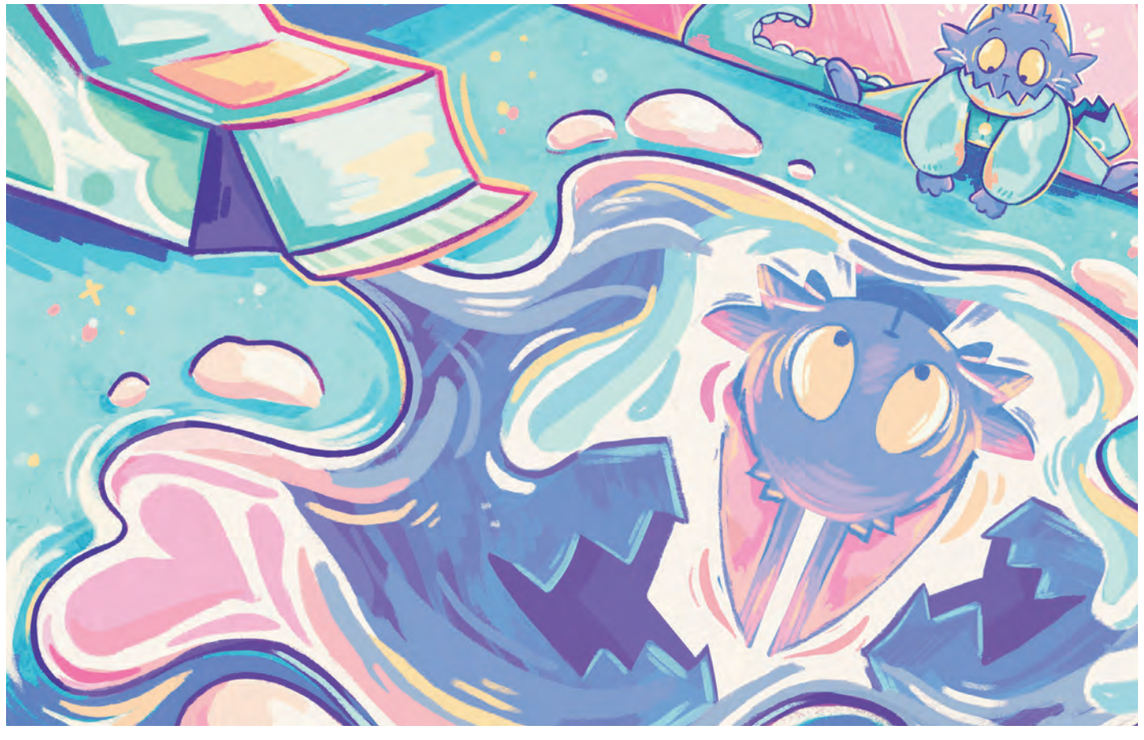
BROOKSODELL.WIXSITE.COM/BROOKSODELL



Alexander Shannon

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Shuting Yang

@TRACYA_ART

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YIRANTSUII.CARGO.SITE

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Yuyun Chen

@REINA.CYY

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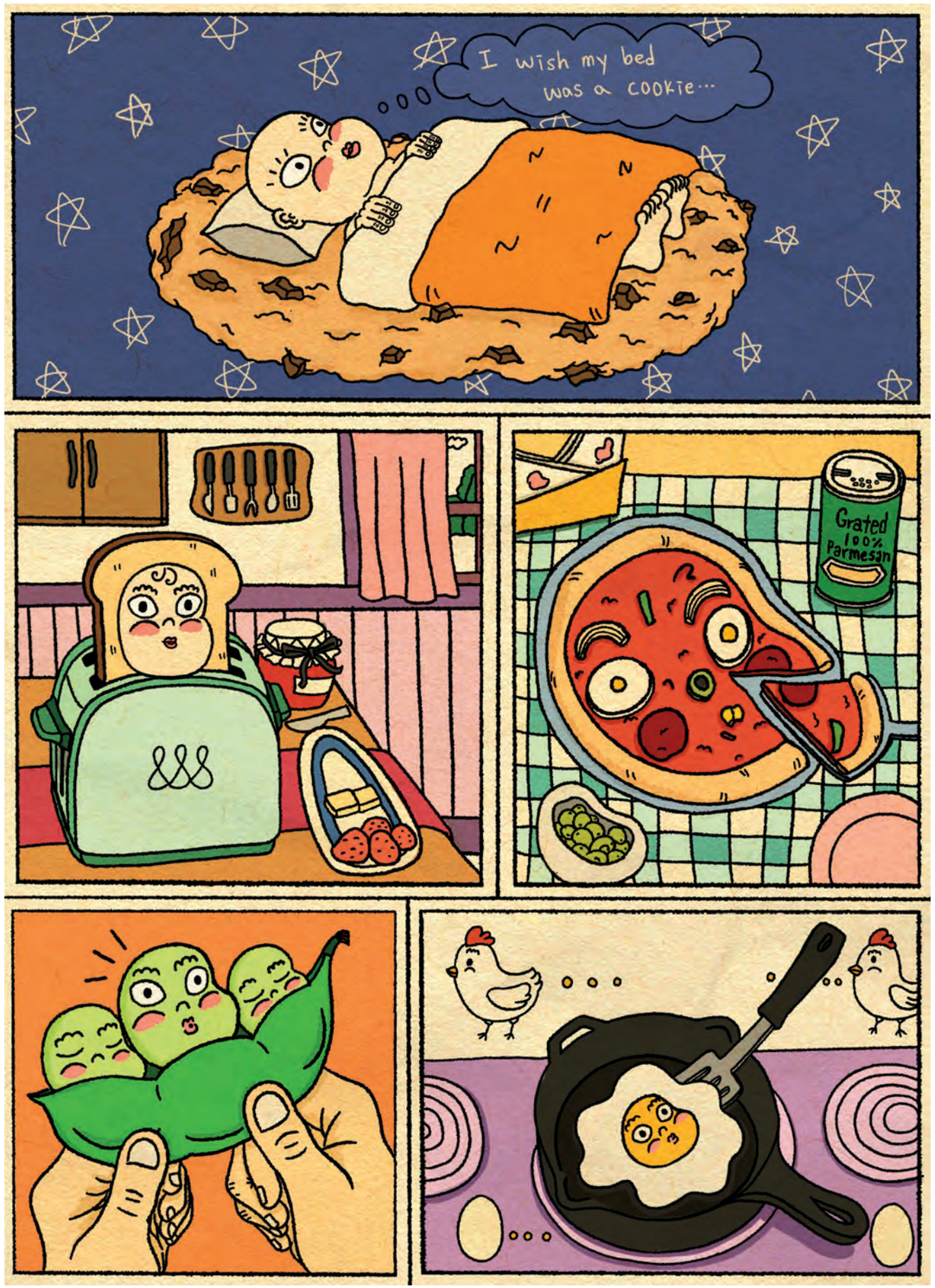

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