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MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE

THESIS SHOW 2022

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MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE

THESIS SHOW 2022

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

The MFA Visual Narrative program is proud to present the thesis stories from the class of 2022. For the first time in three years, we will gather as a community in New York to learn, live, and love story, in person. These students, unlike any previous MFA Visual Narrative cohort, have never met face-to-face. They have, nevertheless, learned from each other, grown with each other, and triumphed together through it all.

Their particular circumstances produced a collection of stories that speak to a time when we are desperate for understanding, connection, and empowerment. These five graphic novels bring us to new worlds, reveal new perspectives, and uncover what was always within.

They will take you from the streets of New York to the forest floor to a distant planet of strangely familiar creatures. They will show you the world through the eyes of a girl who must confront the magic within and a woman who must confront the specters of a past life. You will meet a tiny mushroom braving violent societal structures, a girl who chooses to leave home to learn how to write her own story, and a man forced to journey in aid of an alien creature. All of these characters, no matter where they come from or where they find themselves, leave comfort in favor of discovery. They shed what they know to change the world around them and achieve something greater than themselves individually.

We hope that, together, these stories—and the thesis show that they are a part of—will give us back some of what we have missed in these past three years and introduce us to people, worlds, and stories that we have never known before.

-Anelisa Garfunkel & Christina Roussos

MENTORS

Cici Suen, Artist
Evan Cagle, Illustrator, Concept Artist & Storyteller
Jared Cullum, Cartoonist & Illustrator
Ken Niimura, Author, Cartoonist & Painter
Mimi Pond, Cartoonist & Author

CLASS OF 2022

BINHUA
CHEN

LAURA
CATHERINE
BROWN

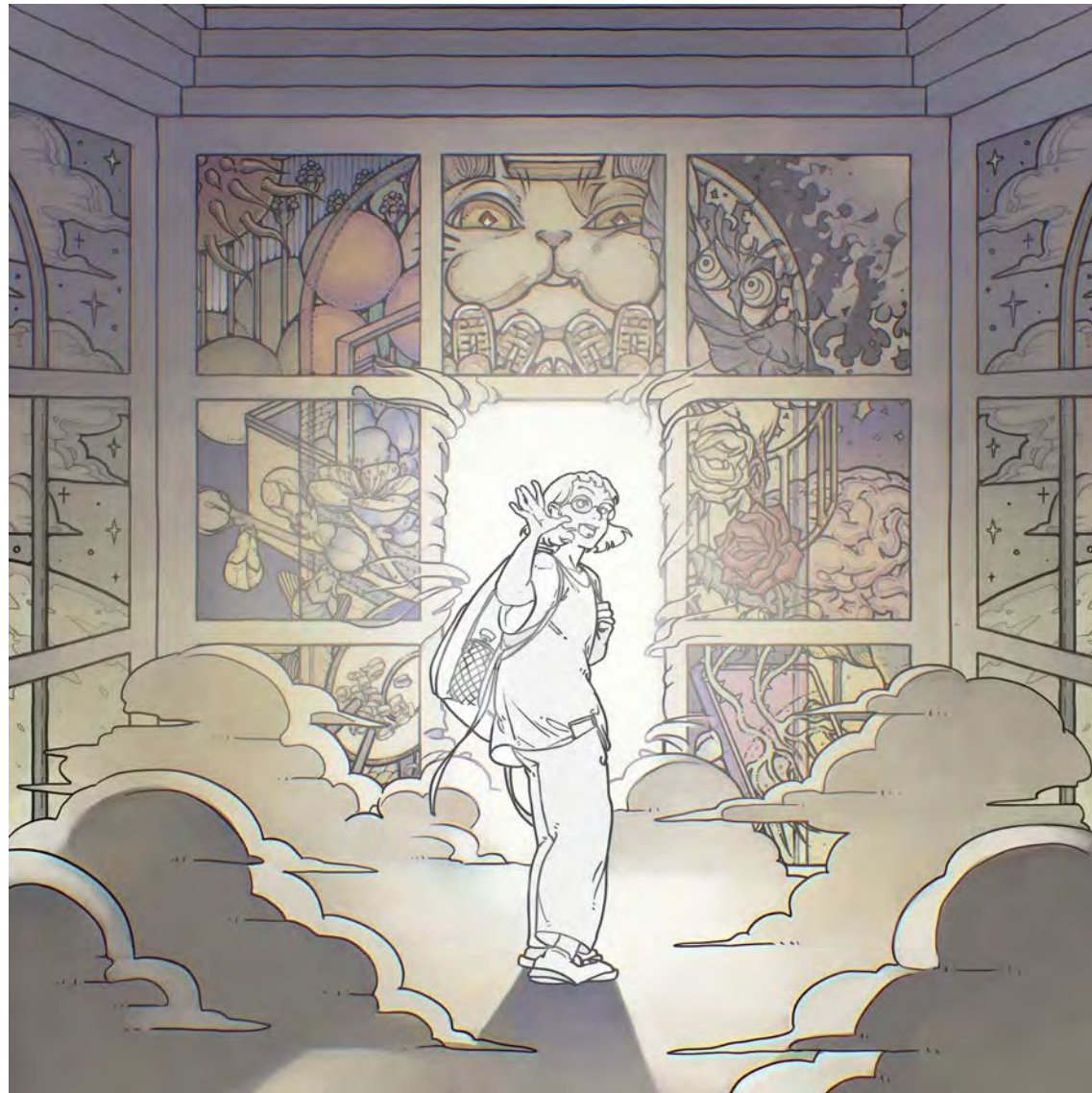
MORGAN
SAWYER

ORET
PEÑA

PORAD
GASAN-ZADE

XU IS COMING

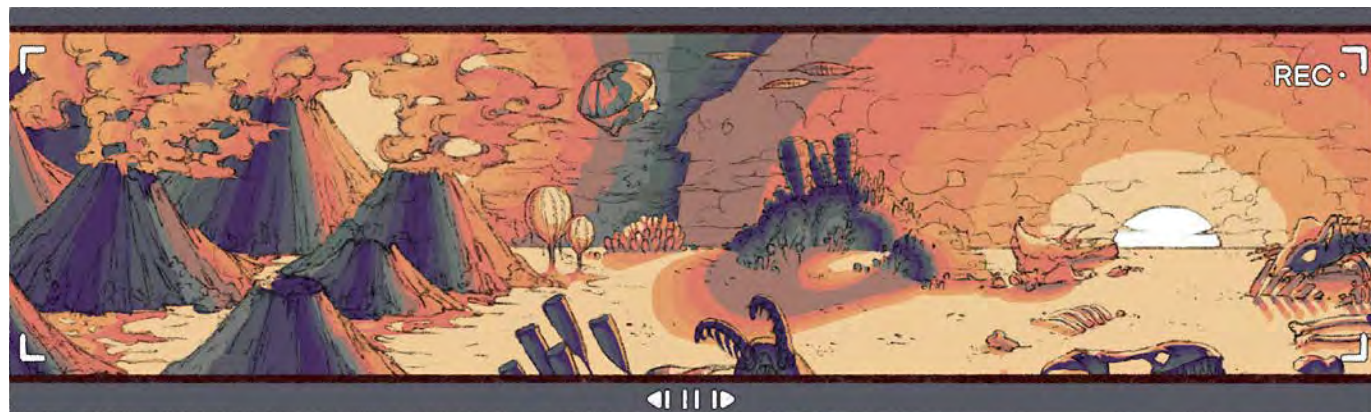
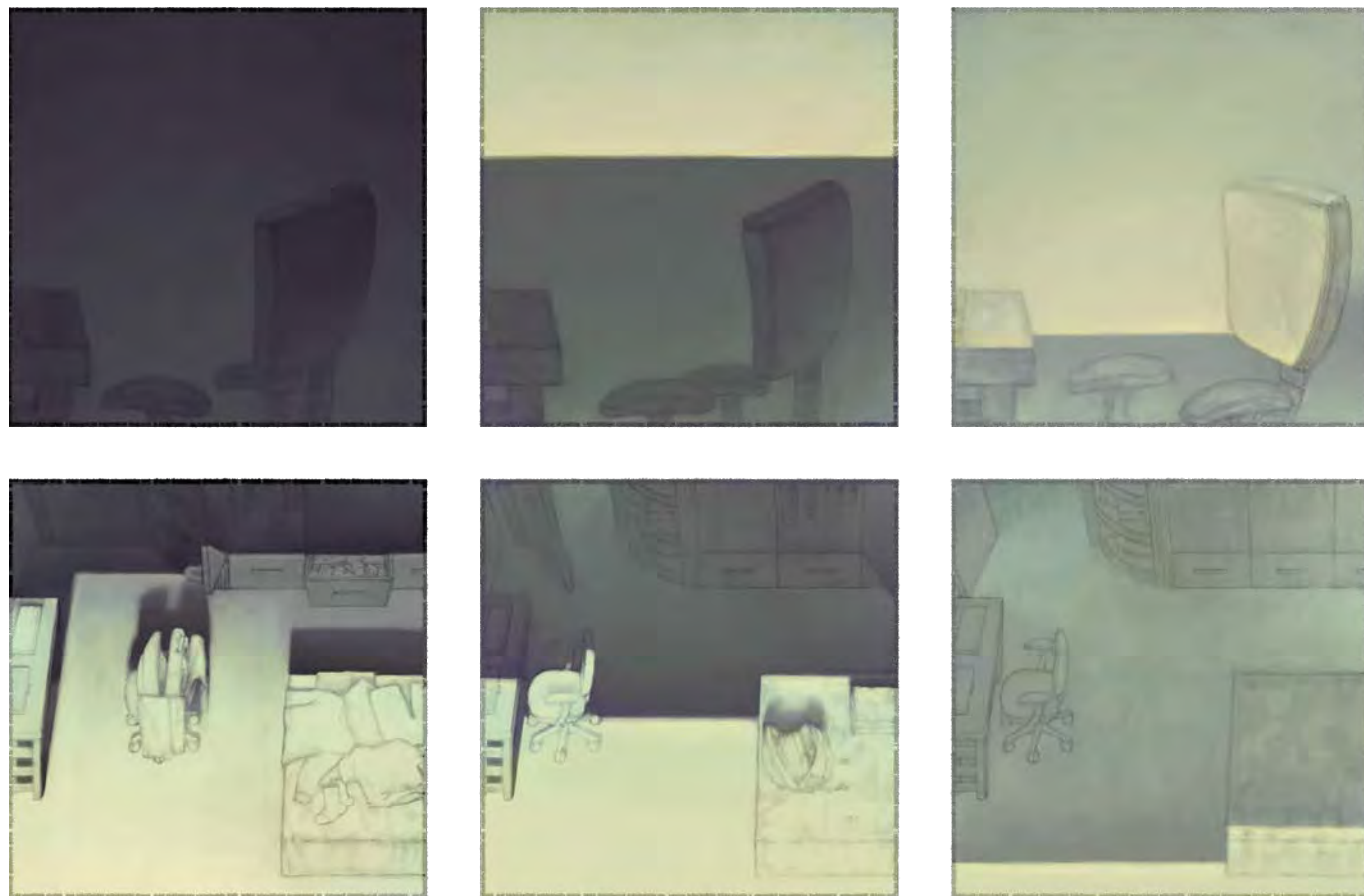
BINHUA CHEN



Xu Is Coming is a digital comic story about Xu, a girl who is a comic book character, with different art styles and storytelling strategies used in each page.

One day, Xu receives an invitation by spam fax to visit a place called Brand New Page, leaves her home, and steps into a fantasy journey among pages where she encounters the stories of other characters.





BINHUA CHEN

Website: n-s-never-mind.lofter.com
esinthal.lofter.com

Instagram: [@esinthal_studio](https://www.instagram.com/esinthal_studio)

Other social: [pinterest.com/Esinthal](https://www.pinterest.com/Esinthal)

Binhua Chen is a designer, illustrator, and storyteller. She is very interested in social events, documentaries, metaphors, sleeping, and chatting with strangers (online). She is planning to create additional short digital stories to be available online to everybody for free. Binhua will be designing related products to sell as a way for her and her audience to enjoy her storytelling to the fullest.

FALLING

LAURA CATHERINE BROWN



Falling is a graphic novel about friendship, loss, and redemption, revolving around Kelcee, a caustic, anxious woman in her 30s trying to be somebody in New York City. She's sent into an emotional tailspin by the suicide of her former friend and mentor Josephine who was, at 51, a popular author and self-help guru.

For a decade, Kelcee had served as Josephine's confidante and ghostwriter. But the friendship ruptured under the pressure of skewed power dynamics. At the time of Josephine's death, they'd been estranged for months. Yet, Kelcee is compelled by Josephine's imperious mother to visit Josephine's apartment and catalog her belongings. Resenting the role of servant, Kelcee compulsively steals a few items. Clearly, Josephine can't use them anymore.

But once in Kelcee's possession, each item summons Josephine's ghost. Josephine, in various guises, pulls Kelcee into risky predicaments, forcing her to grapple with the pain she'd refused to recognize when Josephine was alive, and to recognize the suffering and courage in both of their lives.





LAURA CATHERINE BROWN

Website: lauracatherinebrown.com

Instagram: @downtownlauracbrown

Other social: Twitter: @lauracbrown

FB: @Laura Catherine Brown LinkedIn: @lauracatherinebrown

Laura Catherine Brown is a writer and visual artist. She started writing because reading saved her life, providing an escape from chaos and a glimpse into infinite realms. Now, she creates her own imaginary worlds full of characters caught in dilemmas that disrupt their complacency. Her short stories have been published in numerous literary journals. Her first novel *Quickening* (Random House) was a Barnes & Noble Discover pick and her second novel *Made By Mary* (C&R Press) received an Independent Publisher Silver Medal award. The gift of residencies at several artists' colonies enabled her to complete those novels. In 2019, with three other writers, she cofounded Rowland Writers Retreat, a fully funded residency for women writers, to pay the gift forward. She tries to practice gratitude and looks for the funny in any sad situation. The words of Samuel Beckett have become her mantra: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." She's lucky to have a fantastic husband and family, and many wonderful friends, all of whom make life worth living and failing worth trying.

MUSHROOM TRIP

MORGAN SAWYER



What if a forest where all plant life is interconnected falls out of its natural order? A mushroom spirit maintaining this network of plants must set forth on a journey to discover what has disturbed the forest's connection and reestablish it in order to save their home.

This story is presented as a 60-page, wordless graphic novel, hand painted in watercolor.





MORGAN SAWYER

Website: morganksawyer.com

Instagram: @morganksawyer

Other social: Twitter | @morganksawyer

Morgan Sawyer is an illustrator and cartoonist who has worked on a variety of projects from tee shirt designs to video games. However, he has found the most success and enjoyment in comics, being fortunate enough to work on several titles including *Welcome to Paradise* published by Scout Comics, *Gaffe*, set to be published by Iron Circus Comics, *The Hall of Taxidermied Presidents* for MSCF Magazine and more. Morgan's voice as a visual storyteller uses a combination of technical skill and introspection, displayed through a use of humor, direct commentary and just a smidge of sarcasm, with the goal of circumventing expectations.

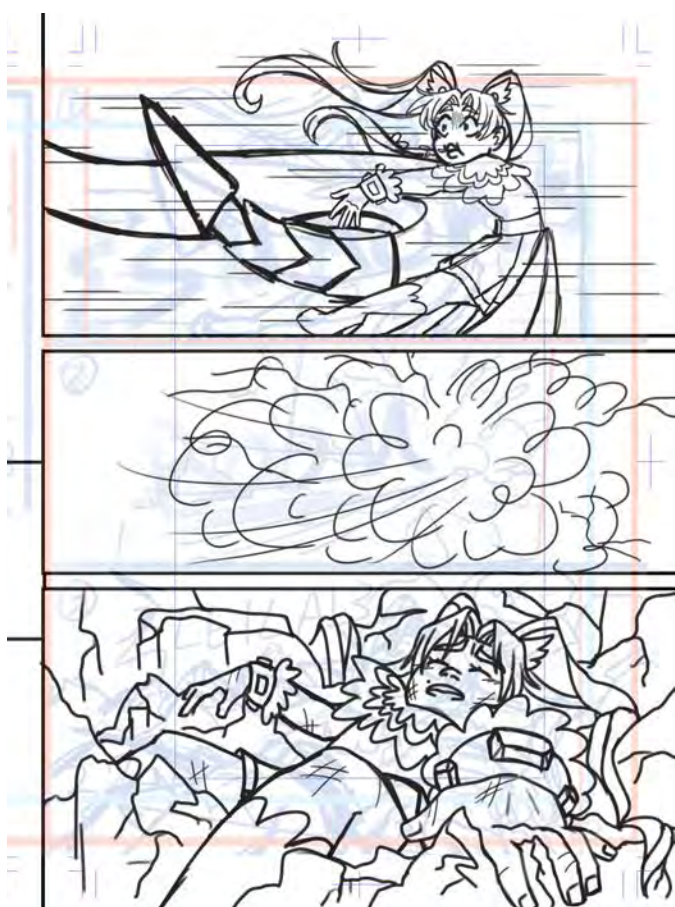
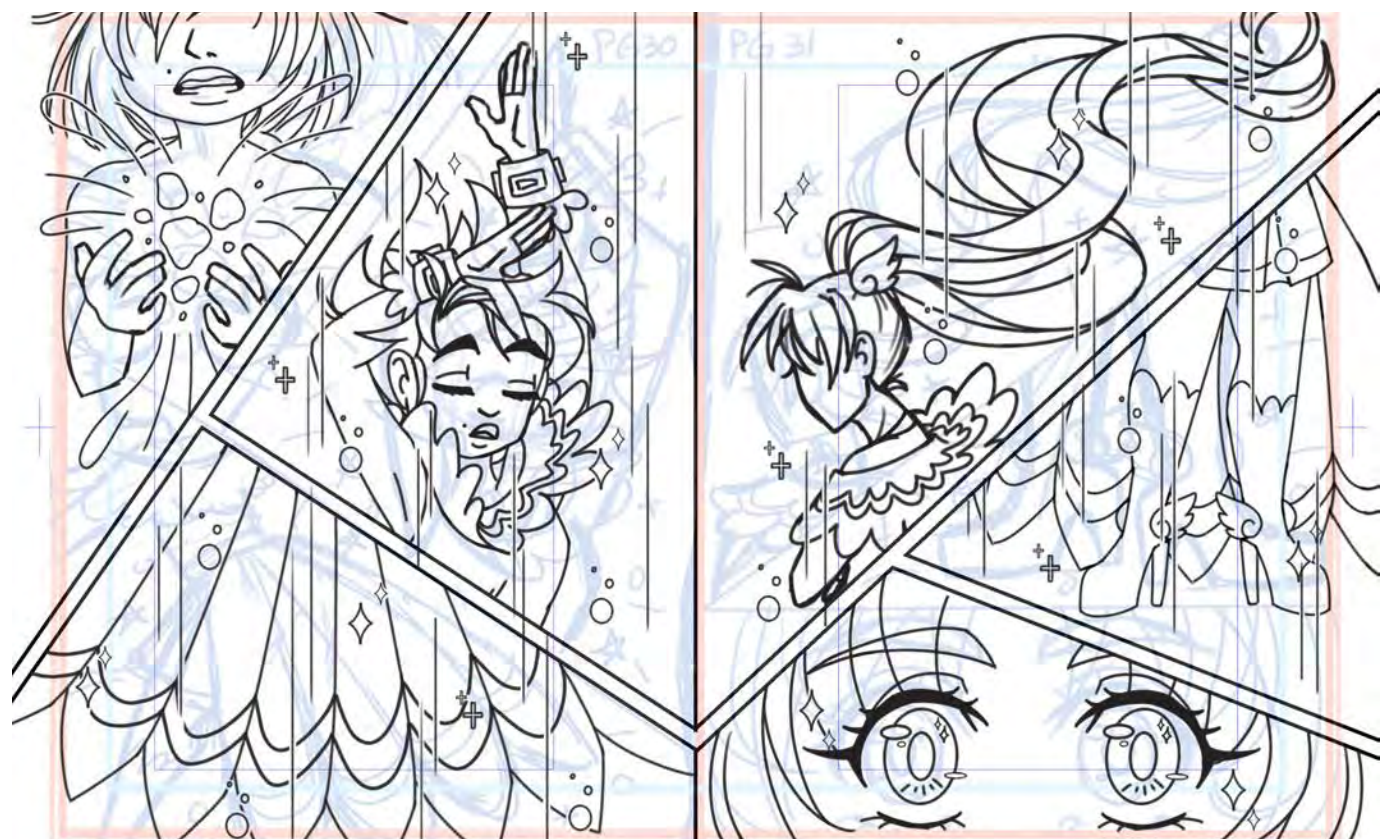
MAGICAL GIRL LEILA

ORET PEÑA



When Leila Rodriguez saves the life of a strange-looking creature, she gets more than she bargains for. The creature, Rom, reveals to Leila that she is descended from an ancient group of magical warriors. With Rom's help and the power of a magic gem, Leila embarks on a quest to save all of humanity from a mysterious cosmic evil while overcoming her own insecurities, navigating her university courses, and making sure she keeps it all secret.





Oret Peña

Website: digitlartmonstr.com

Instagram: @digitlartmonstr

Twitter: @digitlartmonstr

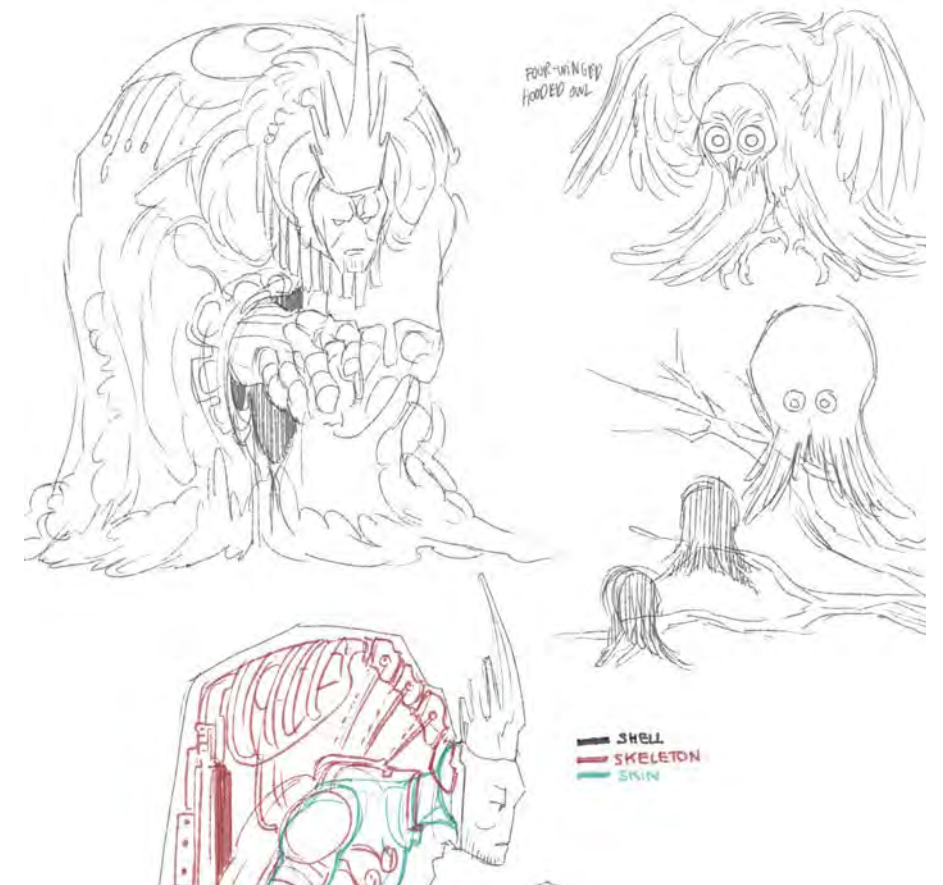
Oret Peña, a.k.a Digi, is an NYC-based artist, SVA graduate, and popcorn gremlin who specializes in character design, illustration, comics and the occasional animation. Her love of all things animated started when she was young and drove her to pursue art as a career. Oret's ultimate goal is to have her own animated show from a story of her own creation- hopefully, it'll be Magical Girl Leila!

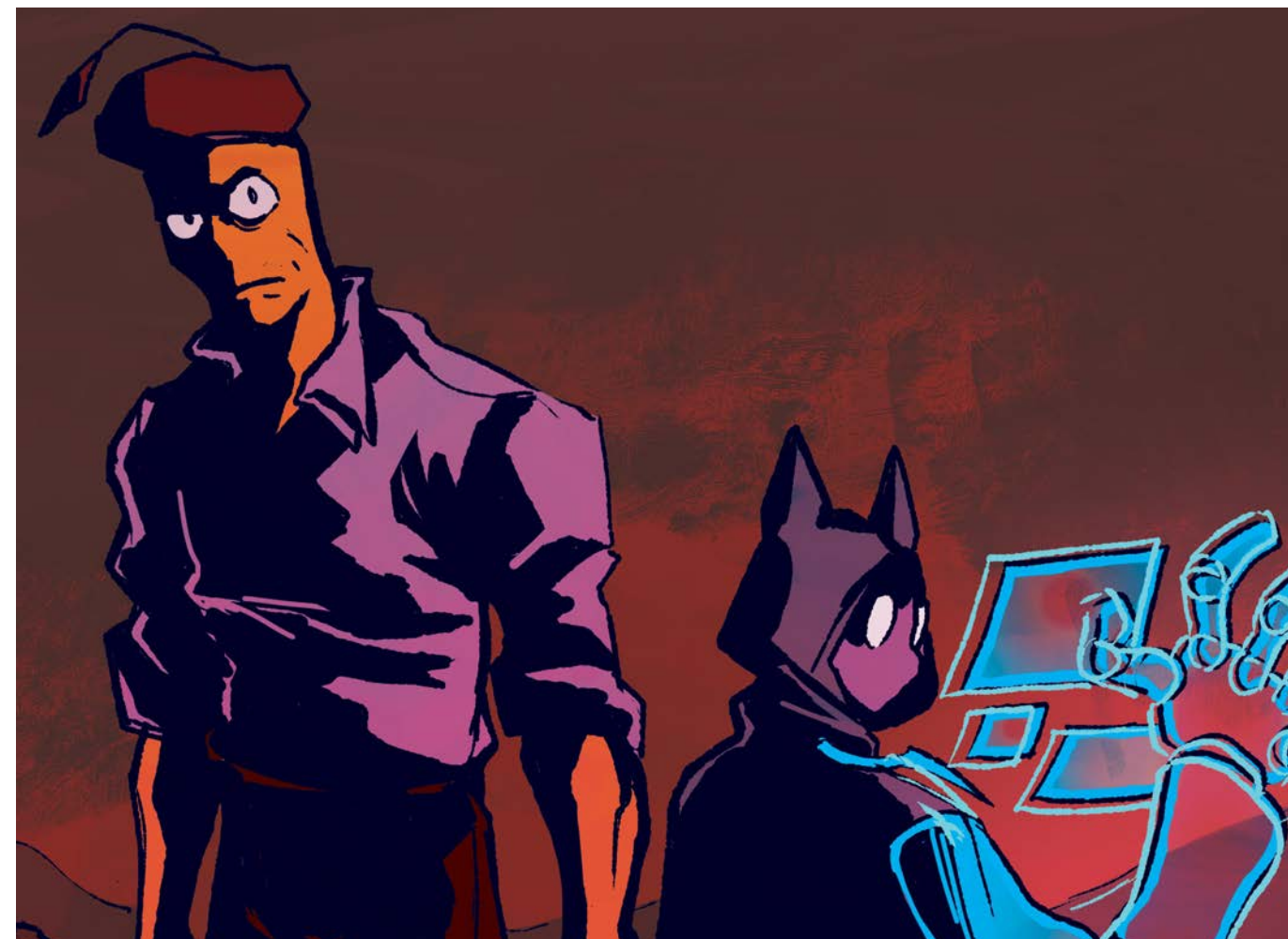
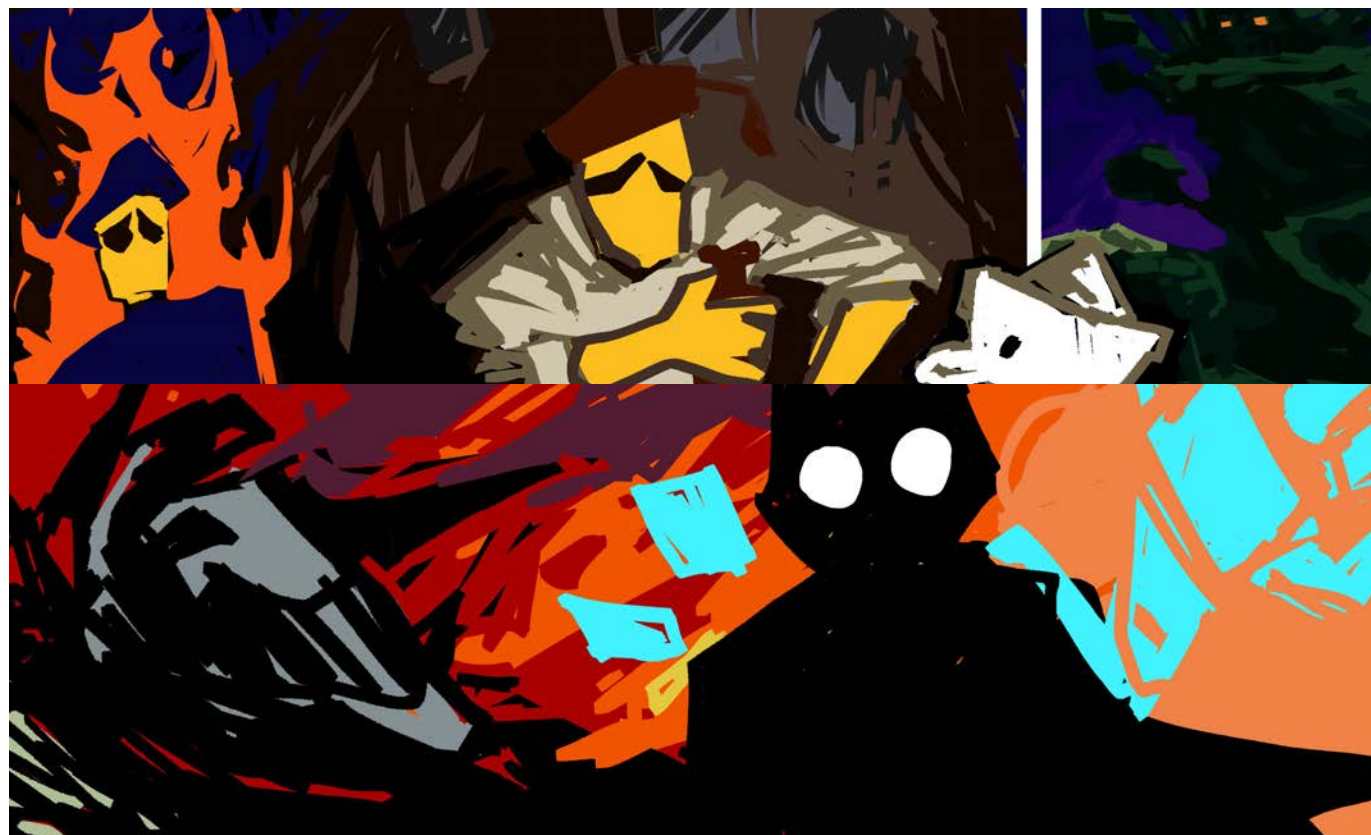
THE HATLAND ODDITIES

PORAD GASAN-ZADE



In the deepest crevice of space, there is a peculiar planet called the Hatlands, where everything is hat-shaped! A man of former high status known as Hatmann lives in solitude with his own herd of hat creatures, miles away from his hometown, which lies in ruin from past disaster. Hatmann's life changes forever when a scientist adventurer named Mem crash lands her ship near his home, destroying it and scaring away his beloved hat creatures. Mem wants to get off of the planet as quickly as possible and Hatmann wants his herd back, so they're forced to strike a deal to help each other. During their adventure, Mem's intellect and eagerness to explore reawakens Hatmann's curiosity and he rediscovers lost knowledge that could make his hometown flourish again or throw it into further shambles.





PORAD GASAN-ZADE

Website: poradical.com

Instagram: @pOradical

Project Collaborators: **Colorist:** Tyler Furey - tylerfurey.com

Editor: Paolo "PJ" Piccolo - @piccoloproductions

Po Gasan-Zade is a storyteller, illustrator and full-time cryptid who loves to draw people when they aren't looking. In 2018 they graduated from SVA with a BFA in cartooning: their curiosity for many things resulted in a fondness for drawing monsters, nature, erotica and mythological concepts. In their stories, Po explores complex topics while balancing seriousness and humor. Po is currently working on a WW2 graphic novel, told from the perspective of a Russian soldier fighting in Belgium who has gone mad from his experiences, and independent projects including character design and storyboarding. In their free time, Po enjoys the comfort of dark forests where they play and write concepts for video games, sculpt, and experiment with food recipes.

THANK YOU

FACULTY

Anna Eveslage, Photographer & Writer
Anelisa Garfunkel, Filmmaker & Writer
Bill Kartalopoulos, Editor & Curator
Christina Roussos, Theater Director
Diego Vainesman, Design Director
Jim Rugg, Comic Book Artist, Illustrator & Designer
Jenny Goldstick, Infographics & Narrative Designer
Jonathon Rosen, Artist & Animator
Lee Aaron Rosen, Actor & Film Expert
Leonard Marcus, Author, Historian & Critic
Mark Sable, Author &, Screenwriter
Matt Rota, Illustrator & Author
Nadia DeLane, Visual Storyteller, Multimedia Designer & Creative Consultant
Nathan Fox, Illustrator & Story Development Artist
Robert Thill, Artist, Author & Independent Scholar
Stacy Renee Morrison, Photographer & Author
Tim Szetela, Designer & Animator

THESIS MENTORS

Cici Suen, Artist
Evan Cagle, Illustrator, Concept Artist & Storyteller
Jared Cullum, Cartoonist & Illustrator
Ken Niimura, Author, Cartoonist & Painter
Mimi Pond, Cartoonist & Author

SVA STAFF

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Andrew Alexander, Illustrator & Riso Technician
Anthony P. Rhodes, Executive Vice President
David Rhodes, President
Emily Ross, Associate Provost
Evan Peltzman, Exhibitions Coordinator
Fan Feng, Exhibitions Coordinator
Francis DiTommaso, Director, SVA Galleries
Christopher Cyphers, Provost
Pan Terzis, Artist, Illustrator & Printer
Sarula Bao, Illustrator & Riso Technician
Tyson Skross, Exhibitions Manager

2022 SKETCHBOARD PRO THESIS SPONSORSHIP AWARD

Craig Adams, Chief of Operations, Braintreehouse
J.J. Harrison, Co-Found & Studio Director, Braintreehouse
Jeff Nesin, President, Visual Arts Foundation

2022 AND THEN... GUEST DESIGNER

Jacquelyn Kirby '21

MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE

Nathan Fox, Chair
Joan McCabe, Director of Operations
Lucea Spinelli, Manager of Communications & Special Projects
Leandra Solovay, Production Administrator

A STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR

The MFA Visual Narrative program offers a fresh perspective and a bold alternative to traditional MFA programs. We do so by recognizing that a command of story is the most powerful and fundamental foundation an artist in any creative profession can possess. Exceptional and effective storytelling isn't conveyed in beautiful words, images, or plot alone. Audiences only become invested with an insatiable "need to know what happens next" when they connect and empathize with a story's message or protagonist on a personal and internal level—the challenges they face, why they make the choices they do, and how they become fundamentally changed by them. That realization and empathy with the true meaning and purpose of a story's message or protagonist's struggle is what makes stories so powerful, immersive, and moving—and why stories matter to us all.

Our educational mission is to inspire all students to harness their collective creative writing and visual development talents in order to master their personal command of story. Our graduates are empowered to be the next generation of transformational, relevant original content creators. The MFA Visual Narrative program prepares them for leadership, with the confidence to own their personal voice and the visual narrative expertise to change the world through story.

If you are ready to test the limits of your skills and what your stories are capable of, we invite you to join us!

Nathan Fox
Chair



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MFA Visual Narrative

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