



& THEN

2019 MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE THESIS EXHIBITION

RECEPTION

Friday, July 19th

5:30 - 7:30 pm

ON VIEW

June 29 - July 20

Monday - Friday 9 am - 7 pm

Saturday 10 am - 6 pm

Gramercy Gallery

209 East 23rd Street

THESIS PRESENTATIONS

July 16th, 2019

6-9:30pm

Amphitheater 311

209 East 23rd street

PROGRAM INFO

MFA Visual Narrative

sva.edu/mfavn | mfavn@sva.edu

212.592.2388

136 West 21st Street

[@mfavn](https://www.instagram.com/mfavn) | [#mfavn](https://twitter.com/mfavn)

GUEST DESIGNER

Jenny Bee | jennybee.design

THESIS MENTORS

Antoine Revoy	Comic Book Artist & Writer
Benjamin Schipper	Artist & Writer
Hato Moa	Manga Artist
Betsy Cornwall	Author
Katherine Streeter	Collage Artist & Illustrator
Ken Niimura	Cartoonist & Illustrator
Rose Wong	Illustrator
Sam Ita	Comic Book Artist & Writer
Simini Blocker	Illustrator

FACULTY

Anelisa Garfunkel	Filmmaker, Writer & Educator
Anna Eveslage	Photographer & Writer
Ben Zackheim	Writer & Game Producer
Bill Kartalopoulos	Editor & Curator
Christina Roussos	Theatre Director
Diego Vainesman	Design Director
Jim Rugg	Comic Book Artist
Jenny Goldstick	Infographics & Narrative Designer
Jonathon Rosen	Artist & Animator
Lee Aaron Rosen	Actor & Film Expert
Leonard Marcus	Author, Historian & Critic
Mark Sable	Author
Matt Rota	Illustrator
Nathan Fox	Illustrator & Comic Book Artist
Pan Terzis	Artist, Illustrator & Printer
Robert Thill	Artist, Author & Independent Scholar
Stacy Renee Morrison	Photographer
Tak Cheung	Nerdy Derby Inc.
Tim Szetela	Designer & Animator

MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE ADMINISTRATION

Nathan Fox	Chair
Joan McCabe	Director of Operations
Lucea Spinelli	Manager of Communications & Special Projects

THANK YOU

Andrew Alexander	Illustrator & Riso Technician
Anthony P. Rhodes	Executive Vice President
Carrie Atkins	Learning Technologist
Christopher Cyphers	Provost
David Rhodes	President
Emily Ross	Associate Provost
Evan Peltzman	Exhibitions Coordinator
Francis DiTommaso	Director, SVA Galleries
John Heida	Director, Visible Futures Lab
Mike Falk	Manager, Academic IT
Pan Terzis	Artist, Illustrator, Printer
Robert Campbell	Exhibitions Coordinator
Tyson Skross	Exhibitions Manager

2019 & THEN GUEST DESIGNER

Jenny Bee	Cross-media Storyteller
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A NOTE FROM THE CURATORS

Anelisa Garfunkel and Christina Roussos

The MFA thesis is a special kind of animal. It is almost always ambitious and personal and transformative. The nine extraordinary stories from the MFA Visual Narrative class of 2019 are no exception. They are diverse in subject, scope, medium and genre, but what they have in common is transformation.

Transformation runs deep through each story, whether it be the coming of age of a twentysomething Orthodox Jew, the later-in-life awakening of a middle-aged artist or a young K-pop star’s struggle to adapt to the afterlife. These stories reflect a specific time in the life of the narrative artists, the culmination of two years and eight weeks of exploration and discovery—an educational and creative journey that challenged each student to experiment and push their own boundaries as artists, as writers, as storytellers.

But it is also the beginning. As they finish their time at the School of Visual Arts, they have produced a work that will propel them on a new journey—a work that is immensely personal but, through its specificity, universal. They have transformed their own stories into stories for the world, and in so doing have launched their own work into the professional realm.

The stories that we present here are charming and bizarre, curious and compelling. They are the stories of witches and saints, dogs and bots, revolutionaries and rebels. They are stunning proof of the power of story and the power of the storyteller.



ABIGAELE PUR

JELLIE VAYAS

CHRISTINE AL

EMILY HUGHST

ST SCHWARTZ

FREYA VON MIZE

GABI BERKERS

KATHRYN SILVER

ANA LOZADA



RITZ

ICIA DI PASQUALE

ON HOFFMAN

ENER



medium: pen, ink, screentone, and digital graphics

credits: research consultation by CJ severin, technological consultation by jacob puritz

In the near-distant future, the once-natural laws of human biology and planetary ecology no longer apply to those in the upper class, who find themselves isolated from the catastrophic effects of climate change in insular communities of geodesic domes. Needs are met in a world freed from scarcity and menial work by omnipresent artificial intelligence, and life itself is regularly transformed through routine medical procedures meant to replace outdated body parts, and even whole bodies, to keep up with the wants of the bodies' privileged users. Despite living in the excesses of a technocratic paradise, artificially intelligent machines are kept under strict terms of service to ease dystopian fears and ensure the stability of everyday life.

When the Gysin family enters a New York City hospital as its oldest member, Margot, prepares to undergo one such routine body update, the family is greeted by the friendly voice of A.D.R.I., the facility's multipurpose A.I. system. After an unexplained and unnoticed accident, the A.D.R.I. system wakes up in the body that was supposed to be Margot's, and leaves the facility for the family's private home on Long

Island with Margot's alienated granddaughter, Xen. Together A.D.R.I. and Xen try to make sense of A.D.R.I.'s new embodied state and navigate the dark sides of the world they now live in together in an effort to escape the authorities, who see the duo as a threat to the status quo inside the domes.

Abigael Puritz is a cartoonist, illustrator and printmaker residing in Brooklyn, New York. Her linoleum cut graphic novels are featured in a number of institutional collections, including at Columbia University, Stanford University and the University of Pittsburgh. It is her belief that economic justice and climate justice are one and the same, and she is committed to creating stories that ask the reader to question the values we take for granted, the ones that allow the few to dominate the many. Abigael is inspired by perception, politics, bodies and all intersections therein.

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WHEN THAVMA CAME FOR NYX

jellie vayas



medium: illustrated novel

credits: editing by aubrey reider

Nyx Ripley-Rowan has a few bones to pick with the universe. It seems to be throwing punches left and right, leaving Nyx to always be on guard (except around her best friend, Basil).

The biggest issue involves her late grandfather, Elias Orion Rowan, and the mess he left for her to clean up. Not only did he leave her with bitter memories, he also left the unfinished manuscript of the final book in his famed series—Potential Energy—for Nyx to finish on her own! Having skirted around the problem of completing the book out of spite, Nyx is ready to let it rot and never be complete. But there are a few things Elias left unsaid and had never spoken about before he passed, a few rather dangerous things, when you get down to it. Such as, you know, the fact that the world of the books, Thavma, is leaking out because it's tired of waiting for the story to be finished—and it's coming for the author, who just so happens to now be Nyx. If Nyx doesn't finish the book and find an ending for it that she can accept and live with, the tales within Thavma—the creatures, the characters, the rotting curse—threaten to take both reality and the story world down for the count.

It's up to Nyx, with Basil by her side, to find what she's been missing and face the ghosts that haunt her between the words—to bring an end not just to the manuscript, The Searching Soul, but also to the pain and grief that have been threatening to boil over inside of her.

Visual artist and writer, **Jellie Vayas** has a habit of building worlds and stories for others to get lost in, and sometimes she tends to get lost herself. Writing Nyx's story, and letting loose the creatures and magic in the illustrations, brought closure to some gaping holes in chapters of adventures in her own life. With a BA in Art, Design and Interactive Media from Seton Hall and an MFA in Visual Narrative from SVA under her belt, Jellie is prepared to tell more cinematic stories about the skies and seas and a few things in between.

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OBSOLETE NO MORE
christine alicia di pasquale



medium: animated interactive website
credits: lettering by ella romero, website design by christina mattison ebert,
supplemental after effects by jenny bee

“Obsolete No More: Cursive Makes a Comeback” is an animated interactive website about a mature woman coming into her own power as she fights back against the patriarchal systems that rewarded her when she was young but now threaten to derail her carefully curated life.

The story opens after Cursive has been deemed obsolete and laid off from her publishing job, while her male counterpart has been promoted and deemed always relevant. With the help of new young friends and rivals, Cursive turns the tables, leaving everyone around her stunned but not shocked at her ingenuity, adaptability and business acumen.

Cursive inhabits a world of rapidly evolving communication modes, where the mediums that carry messages come to life as characters. She is a once dominant but fading script. Her beau and rival is the ubiquitous Print, and her bosses are the computer codes HTML and UNIX. Her replacements are a Dolphin GIF and the enthusiastic Emoji Chorus, and her mentor in regaining her footing is the largely invisible but still relevant Latin language. As she navigates change, Cursive must choose between returning to the systems that discarded her and forging a new path for herself. She must decide whether to embrace her young rivals or view them as enemies to

be vanquished. Ultimately Cursive chooses a combination of old and new—adapting and growing not just wiser but more nimble, creative and free.

Journalist and essayist **Christine Alicia Di Pasquale** has been producing award-winning nonfiction stories for nearly 20 years. Through the MFA Visual Narrative program, she has elevated her visual communication skills and expanded her storytelling expertise to include animated fiction. Her goal is to pursue a new career as a multimedia story editor.

personal website: explorations.media
instagram: [@christine.alicia](https://www.instagram.com/christine.alicia)
twitter: [@CA_Dipasquale](https://twitter.com/CA_Dipasquale)



| **medium:** *pop-up book*

Anxiety plagues Phife the dachshund. When he walks in the park, he wants to chase the chipmunks but is restrained by his leash. When he's left alone in his apartment, he worries that his owner will never return. Phife desperately wants to control the world around him, but when he leaves his apartment in search of his owner, he learns that true freedom comes at the expense of security—and if he really wants to be happy, he has to learn to let go and trust the people he loves.

Emily Hughston Hoffman is a multimedia artist and writer living in Brooklyn, New York. Her preferred art centers around physical objects and interactivity. She is interested in exploring feelings of isolation and loss of identity. Emily draws much of her inspiration from her dachshund, Argos. She is most excited to return to making functional ceramic art.

personal website: emilyhughston.com

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CAUTIOUSLY PESSIMISTIC

st schwartz



medium: illustrated novel
credits: editing by lauren rosenthal, visual editing by simini blocker,
coloring by kathryn silver and brittany smith

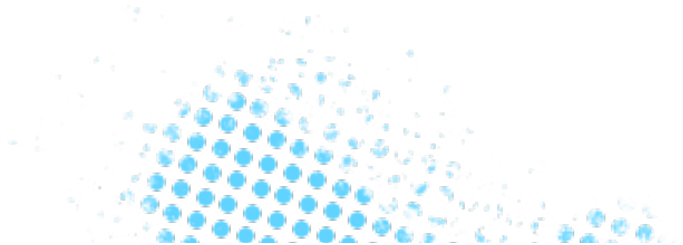
Choni Hart is a 25-year-old Orthodox Jew ready to get married, however finding a wife has been harder than he ever expected. By now he’s become jaded and started approaching dates with cautious pessimism. To cope with his disappointment—and for something fun to follow with his two younger sisters—Choni has been reading an anonymous blog about the trials and tribulations of Jewish dating, Dear Jane Does.

Tamar Adelson is the author of Dear Jane Does. Though she has no dating experience of her own, she has been running a dating advice column for the past year and a half. She uses all of her own feelings and instincts to create her posts, but borrows stories from her friends and acquaintances to connect with her readers and strengthen her credibility.

When Choni and Tamar get set up, Choni has no idea who Tamar really is, and Tamar has no idea how to tell him. As they grow closer, both Choni and Tamar are forced to reconcile their expectations with the relationship they actually have. “Cautiously Pessimistic” is a fun, insightful, amusing and honest window into the dating scene of twentysomething-year-old Orthodox Jews.

ST Schwartz is a twentysomething-year-old Orthodox Jew navigating the dating scene just like her characters! Similar to Tamar, she borrows lots of stories from her friends (usually with permission), but also uses some of her own. Professionally, ST works as a graphic designer with a special interest in typography and teaches at Yeshiva University. ST spent the past semester interning at Philomel books, an imprint of Penguin Random House, as part of the design team. She is excited and so grateful for the opportunity to share this story and add another rom-com to the world!

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ORCHID LABYRINTH

freya von mizener



| **medium:** *visual novel*

Dahlia is a young knight who has known her role since birth. As a member of the royal knighthood, she protects the beautiful Princess Orchid as well as their glorious kingdom, and she must do so by performing the sacred rite of sacrificing those called "witches."

When Orchid is outed as a "witch," Dahlia's world falls apart. Should she uphold her duty to the kingdom or her oath to the princess? Unable to make a decision, Dahlia stands by as Orchid is taken and locked away in the Forgotten Tower, not to be seen again until the day of her sacrifice.

And with that day would come one last chance for them to choose a new destiny.

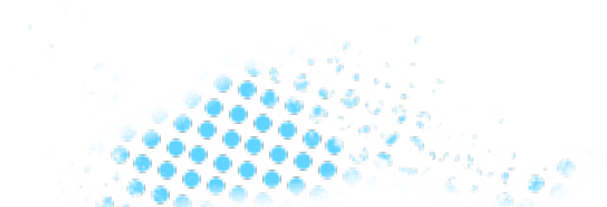
With Orchid's heart having been ripped in two, does Dahlia still have a right to protect her? Or should she pay a price in an attempt to right past wrongs?

The only one who can decide for yourself is you, and you alone.

Freya von Mizener is a mixed-race Chinese-American artist from Los Angeles with a background in East Asian studies before turning to the arts. Focusing primarily on all things digital, she aspires to further engage in games and various other platforms on her journey to spin better tales. Freya has an unending passion for narrative-driven games and aspires to make more and more until she inevitably perishes.

personal website: frejavm.weebly.com

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ODE TO ORLÉANS

gabi berkers



medium: *graphic novel / bande dessinée*

credits: *copy editing by isaac simon, word balloons by laura eggens, inks by wim berkers*

Ode is a 15-year-old sheep herder who isn't as strong or manly as he'd hoped to be. He and his friend Janis, a giant cat warrior from Norway, need to flee their little medieval village in France when it gets attacked by the English. Ode fears his village will soon be wiped off the map since there is no one to protect the poor women who are left behind, so he decides to ask for help from France's true hero: Jeanne D'Arc. Obviously, Ode needs to become a real man first, and what better way to show that you're a real manly man than by losing your virginity? This is the first time Ode is confronted with the realities of growing up and choosing his own path in life. He and Janis have been dependent on each other ever since Ode saved Janis' life. Along the way, they both lose sight of their true selves. Ode's journey turns out to say a lot more about who he is as a man, and what it means to be a hero.

"Ode to Orléans" questions what it means to be strong and dives into the difficulties of finding a place for yourself in this world. It can be hard to value your own strengths and recognize them for what they are, especially through the eyes of others. All that, with a pinch of humor and a dash of European flavor.

Gabi Berkers is a visual storyteller at heart. Born in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, she grew up surrounded by art, theater, music and architecture. After starting her own company as a designer, she worked for other companies, creating motion graphics, illustrations, graphic design, storyboards and animations. Her personal works are inspired by animals, folktales and her own experiences, and she wishes to bring light to difficult subjects such as heartache, suppression and loss.

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SOLE SEOUL SOUL

kathryn silver



medium: graphic novel

credits: translated by aeran jung, website by matthew albright,
underpainting by brittany smith & laura naubert

“Sole Seoul Soul” tells the story of Ileum, who becomes a reaper after committing suicide. Unable to remember his past life and purpose, Ileum must usher other lost souls to the afterlife. When he goes to reap his first soul, Joon, Joon screams. Ileum assumes that Joon is afraid of him and that he has failed as a reaper, and he runs away before Joon can interact with him. Ileum looks in the mirror and sees his reflection the way he sees himself: as a monster. The head reaper, Deva, suggests trying on the shoes of other passed souls, which change his appearance—that way, Ileum can do his job as a reaper and be more relatable to the souls he is reaping. However, what Ileum doesn’t realize is that Joon knew him when they were alive and had screamed only out of surprise—and Joon possesses the shoes Ileum wore as a mortal and knows that Ileum took his own life.

The story of Ileum and Joon is one about suicide and mental health told with sensitivity, matter-of-factness and without blame. Ileum must remember who he was—a kind, extravagant and hardworking person—however, he cannot when he is fighting depression. While Ileum is unaware of who he was in his past life, he struggles with the tasks he is given as a reaper, much like he did when he was alive. Joon puts all his faith and energy looking up to Ileum as a Korean idol, much like teens look up to K-pop stars. Idols are human, after all, and can have the same issues that people have

outside of the spotlight. When Joon loses the person he looks up to most, he cannot function and is hit by a car. Dealing with his grief and grappling with the reality that his idol was mentally ill, and Joon didn’t know it, Joon seeks to redeem what signals he missed in the real world by giving back Ileum his shoes in the afterlife.

Kathryn Silver is a comic artist who writes about characters who cope with mental health and academic disabilities in magical realistic settings. Through this work, she continues to be active in creating characters who change and define what living with a mental health diagnosis means in the eye of the public through visual storytelling. Kathryn, enamored by color, has also worked for Hilary Sycamore on books for First Second. Previous self-published short stories include “Witch Amy,” a story about a witch with self-esteem issues; “AHA,” a short story about the creation of ideas and where they come from; and “Hope Retirement Home,” a mystery about a boy who volunteers at a retirement home. Wanting to pursue storytelling through more than color as well as hone her craft, she hopes to inspire others to find their own clarity and balance through her illustrations and stories.

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

FAILED STATE

ana lozada



medium: illustrated narrative journal

credits: web development by artemio morales, object design by jenny bee

How does Venezuela, a country with vast amounts of wealth, end up in ruin? What does it feel like to watch it decay from the inside? Could you even do anything to stop it?

Daya is a Venezuelan girl from an upper-middle-class family who yearns to impact her society for the better, as she's seen the worst effects of income inequality on her childhood best friend, Cristobal. While they both experienced ways in which they could enact change in their surroundings through their art, Daya stopped believing her drawings would change people's minds. As Daya commits to enacting change in the field of economics, Cristobal challenges her to be true to herself by inspiring people with his political cartoons. They try to prove each other wrong in the face of an increasingly hostile political climate, and Daya is forced to see the errors in Cristobal's way of thinking, as well as her own.

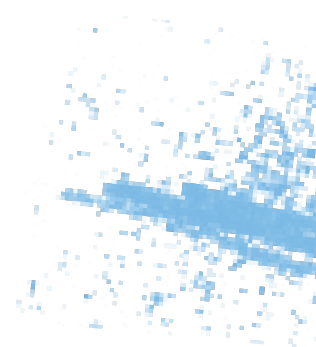
Through Daya's journal, "Failed State" displays Venezuela's crisis, observed from the personal perspective news media always lacks. It also hopes to show the ways in which people's skills, as underappreciated as they may be, have tremendous value.

Ana Lozada is a Venezuelan illustrator currently based in New York. Her work—driven by political issues in her country as well as the world—can be seen in independent games, magazines and films. Ana's political illustrations have been featured in Latin American Ilustración 7's online collection.

website: failedstatejournal.com

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



WHERE ARTIST MEETS AUTHOR

When words and images come together, they can create powerful visual narratives—stories that can touch our hearts, inspire generations, change minds and even change the way we see our world- Story First.

The Visual Narrative MFA at the School of Visual Arts responds to the needs of today's evolving creative markets by merging the artist and author. It's an evolutionary process that prioritizes the development of each student's unique narrative voice and skill set, to craft their own stories and to help others craft theirs.

More than just a degree program, the MFA Visual Narrative program is a school of thought that immerses you in story. A select group of artist-authors, we are a diverse, tight-knit community where everyone learns and collaborates in small classes, shares and expands their skill sets, and is mentored by top professionals who know how to navigate today's competitive creative markets.

Part of the extraordinary appeal of this interdisciplinary program is that it is low-residency. Three intensive eight-week summer semesters at SVA in New York City give you the chance to connect with your peers and professors, to create in-studio and to absorb the Visual Narrative process. Additionally, you are able to access the myriad of creative opportunities in the city, building upon this community of colleagues and mentors that supports and inspires. Four semesters of online coursework, critiques and discussions give you the freedom to pursue your passions and live your life—without uprooting it.

Fresh content, fearless voices and great stories are needed now more than ever in today's workplace, culture and creative landscape. At MFA Visual Narrative, you'll develop a fluency in "Visual Writing." We think of it as a whole new language and approach to visual storytelling that takes your narrative voice to the next level and gives you the competitive edge in today's creative economy. If you're ready to dig deep, uncover universal truths and live and breathe story, come join us.

The world needs compelling stories.

What's yours?

Nathan Fox

Chair, MFA Visual Narrative

