

A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Alfred University

Svenderful

Lauren “Ting” Germain

In Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for

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Under the Supervision of:

Chair: **William Contino**

Committee Members:

Judy Livingston

Stephanie McMahon

Svenderful

Honors Thesis Introduction

Ting Germain

For my honors thesis, I decided to make an illustrated book, with etchings and watercolor. The idea of story telling and graphic novels has always been intriguing to me, which is why I choose this type of project. Much of the process of my senior year was about exploring my emotions, improving upon my art, and trying new things I had never done before.

Comics go a long way into my past interests influencing me to want to create a graphic novel project. My interest started in middle school, where sometimes I would have no work left to do in study hall. Out of pure boredom I doodled in my notebooks. Most of these images were comics about random thoughts I had. I felt prideful in these little comics that I had just done in my free time and I ended up showing my mother. Seeing as I kept making these little drawings, my mom thought I'd be interested in graphic novels. At that point in my life, I didn't even know what a graphic novel was. My mother came home with the first graphic novel I'd ever read. It was called "Smile" by Raina Telgemeier, about the journey of growing up with braces and accepting yourself. At the time I thought it was really relatable because I had been getting braces myself and going through the process of aches and pains in my mouth, while dealing with a lot of social issues at school. I thought the story resonated with me so much, and ever since then, I liked the idea of using comic layout to tell more serious stories.

In high school I was also interested in creative writing. I wrote many poems that I stored on my notes app on my phone whenever I felt extremely emotional. These poems would influence the imagery in the book I created this year titled "Svenderful."

In my first year of foundations at Alfred, there was one distinct assignment that had a large influence on me. The assignment was to show an act of kindness. Most people had shown an act of kindness to a stranger, such as leaving nice messages around campus. What I chose

was to stop ghosting my ex best friend. She would send me a lot of uncomfortable messages all the time, and then follow up with “why won’t you talk to me?” So I thought my act of kindness was to “feel less bad” about talking to her and try to rekindle the friendship. In all honesty, it was exhausting. It was a lot of giving empathy for this person who never actually cared about me. When I got back to foundations class, I shared this experience, in which the professor stated that kindness is unlimited and that I did not understand the assignment. However, I disagreed with this notion. This disagreement led me to think more about what it is to be kind, who you should be kind to, and if empathy really is unlimited.

While my project idea did technically start even before entering college, I did not decide to go forth with the project until this year for my thesis. I thought that this was a good time to make a book, because I want my show to be personal and meaningful. I also wanted people to get to know my work better before I graduate. Many people do not initially view me as a very emotional person, but I feel deep down it highly influences symbolism in my work and my process.

The first difficulty of this project was writing the plot. I did not know what to write at first or how to even get started. Much like “Smile”, I wanted to have the plot be influenced around real life events. So I started writing about what had happened to me over the past year and how I felt. I had experienced growing apart from old friends, and flying home early from studying abroad in Italy due to the pandemic. There was a lot of nostalgia for pre-pandemic times and simpler life when I was a child. While writing and illustrating the story, I was also being diagnosed with mental health issues and trying to learn to cope with that while I was feeling swamped with work.

Why was this information important? Well this information did get translated into the book through my imagery and the plot lines. The main characters were based on a combination of my ex best friend who I had to cut off after knowing her for 15 years, and my fears about life and death. I purposely made the character really focused on the past, as that would be how I

felt about many events. I tend to be someone who looks into the past quite a lot, and even the way I speak comes in the form of true stories that take place in the past. The plot about trying to move on from the past also took a chunk of my mindset and put it onto paper. The sudden news of having to move away from my friends in Italy also made me feel like I had some sort of loss that played into the isolation and loneliness in my images.

I had images in my mind that I just had a hard time writing about. And because of this, it just made sense to start with creating a main image and work the story around it. To further figure out the setting and mood for the story, I had started off the year with a large print. This print served as the foundation for starting to add imagery. I transitioned to watercolor painting later. I used watercolor due to familiarity and transparency within the medium. Seeing as that process was not making as much progress as I'd like for the quantity of the images I needed, I later decided to use steel etching plates to create outlines of the imagery first, and then just have more fun with the painting after. In other words, I would carve into sheets of steel and then dip them in acid to create a groove in the metal. This metal sheet could then have ink rolled on it, and printed as an image.

The print process was slow at first because I had to relearn how to do this etching process. A lot of the relearning was through trial and error, as well as just to keep practicing over time. Eventually, the print process helped to speed things up as I got better at it and made me feel better about getting the images all done. I added the watercolor on top of the final prints to emphasize the use of color and lighting in the book. The colors would give Svenderful the more somber tone and atmosphere of the scenes. At the time I was having a lot of issues surrounding perfectionism and productivity, and so I also thought working with more "permanent" mediums would help me to accept mistakes more, not to mention that it helped with the aesthetic of the darker images.

I continued in this process for most of the year and while it was stressful, I think it taught me many things both personally and technically. This project allowed me to get an idea of what

illustrators have to go through when making images. It also allowed me to see what techniques and imagery I prefer to use in the illustration process. Because it was an assignment I created for myself, the thesis also allowed me to have more artistic freedom and really explore what style of art I like.

Another benefit to trying out a project related to a career I am interested in is that the experience really helped me to understand what it is I like about illustration, and why this project felt so important to me. I realized I put more of my emotions into my work than I initially thought. I was able to connect more emotionally to my images and experimented with making images with a darker theme. Most of my artwork in the past is about fun and unusual imagery, but this time I wanted to make that imagery that felt more raw and connected.

I did end with a printed book and some great images, but the project did not quite end at my goal. I don't necessarily think this is a bad thing though. Along the way, I learned that not everything has to be perfect, and this allowed me to also set boundaries for myself in commitments and schedules.

Looking forward, the process of making Svenderful did help me understand how long it takes me to create images using certain mediums. In the future this experience will help me to better plan if I ever decide to make a book again. The entire process of creating a book from start to finish also helped me learn that I can strive towards a goal, but I do not always have to meet such extreme expectations I set for myself.

This work has been very important to me in my journey, but also in its final creation. I think personal stories provide a sense of vulnerability and trust between people, even if they can't relate exactly to the details. Relatability is in sync with sharing moods and emotions. During a pandemic, the act of being vulnerable with each other is important. It allows us to help each other, even if it is not directly helping a person's situation. I think the theme of that being there for others while still being there for yourself, shows in my book.

The book was created for myself, but there is something special within the story sharing process and act of someone picking up a physical book to read. Stories can help other people to feel less alone. Stories can help people feel like they are not the only ones struggling in the world, and that there is still hope. This also pertains to the message at the end of my book about new beginnings.

Personally, creating the book fulfilled my childhood dream, and also helped me to learn to keep persevering in a long-term project, while also trying to manage mental health in general. I have come a long way on my journey as an artist through this thesis.

All of this project couldn't be done either without the help of my advisors, William Contino, Judy Livingston, and Stephanie McMahon. I thank them for giving me advice and being there to help guide me in my last semester of college. As a last project before a new beginning, I'll look towards a brighter future.

Svenderful

Ting Germain

Concept

Brainstorming

Dreams

thoughts/poems

Notes

Outlines

Characters

experiences

Outline? 2017

- Chip scene
- Filling cooler thing
- Gets kicked out
- Remembers Nia
- Dashes and finds out about lasers, solid t thing happens (solid t tells about it's a place
- Effie falls and finds Sven
- Soil saves them and then kicks out of house (soil never reveals his name)
- Sven proves to be useful(persuasive/distraction) because reminds others of loved ones and themselves, and can get back to old world to meet nia
- Effie who is suspicious asks Sven basic things that he doesn't know about himself, decides to find sven's home, but first go meet nia: decide to camp in gas station, Nia finds Sven sitting on top of station roof looking at huge sun (add some deep analogy)
- Effie finds that she actually has a lot in common with Sven (same likes), and the two get closer as they learn how to use syzygy's survival tools and weapons
- One of the tools is a mini cowtar. The cowtar will play music if you are will be a hero, and it won't if you are evil. It talks to Effie , but then sags when Sven holds it. Effie tells Sven the tools aren't accurate since he seems like a good person. (Then take in cowtar as pet), who rides on Effie's head
- Cowtar's only words are beware of Sven, hes capable of too much, (end of night)
-
-
-
- Reach ice cream bar, but Nia is actually gone, Nia's soul resides in sven but Effie doesn't know, but she is reminded of Nia
- Sven is confused and they continue the journey to return Sven to his home
-
-
-
- Effie finds out Sven is a collection of every soul in this dimension, upset about Nia, Effie decides to bring soil and friends to syzygy
- They all sit down around syzygy to honor him in the last hour before the end of the world
-

Outline, August 2020

- Sven intro., Sven school
- Sven transports as little skunk fox
- Sven's journey in new body as skunk
- Sven is taken in by Effie???
- Effie takes in as pet companion
- Effie intro
- Look into effie's life, live forever back story, talk about losing purpose
- Switch to Sven view, questions about daily habits of Effie/living condition
- Sven slowly starts to transform back into human self
-
- Living with Effie has made Sven gloomy. Becomes toxic.
- Conflict of wanting to help, but also wanting to explore outside/ become own person
- Not sure if anything is helping, not sure if what he's doing is right
- Has to report each month tk Sven school on phone
-
- Other Sven comes to visit, other Sven new person. Talks experiences, new look, feeling better.
- Sees other Sven getting dragged out, ask Sven for help, but Effie keeps him inside, begs to be kept inside
-
- Eventually escapes, but doesn't know who he is. Doesn't know what he wants.
- Whenever he is vulnerable he turns back into a skunk. Takes longer to turn back into human, but skunk is immediate
- Decided Effie needs him, goes back to help, although not willing
- Effie does the same thing
- Sven decides to drink a bucket of paint to try to pass out. "at least I can drown in my favorite color"
- Immediately sent back to Sven school
- Sven school not happy. Reassigns to another person, mooseman.
- Sven reincarnates as new being. Being Sven to mooseman.
- Mooseman is kind. Too kind. Sven becomes absorbed in moosemans's life. everything resolves around mooseman.
- Mooseman misses his youth. Wants to
- Sometimes passes effie's station, urge to help, but lost cause. Decides not to help.
- One day hears Effie calling for him. He is right there but doesn't say anything.
-
-
-
-
- Sven decides he's not done, he doesn't want to die, he wants to live forever
- Sven comes back as effie

Dreams

- Child , young boy
- Goes to house because grown-up party
- Sewing
- Feels sad inside
- Tries to escape
- It is evening/night, must make it to beach
- Turns into black fox baby, must make to beach and avoid predators, even dinosaurs
- Turns back into child at beach
- Little cut open pails float, water inside sinks them, water turns into animals that tried to attack him earlier
- Wait for empty pail, jump inside
- Hearing calls of hunters. Bullet flies past, lands in water
- That causes water to flood pail
- Child struggles, then turns pail to different side to keep balanced.
- Pail goes into jungle
- Eventually wash up at building/rock beach in cave
- There is old marble building
- Go inside
- There is a ghost simulation of a woman in a dress, in blue. He tries to avoid her and go to the next room.
- She heard a noise.
- He goes into what looks like an abandoned school. Makes a right and finds White Rock sand
- Looks up. It is cave with a beautiful pool.
- Pool is mesmerizing, brings you to it
- Side of wall has chalk image of man, with writings pointing to pain indications depending on how deep the pool is
- Side also says highly acidic
- Boy takes closer look at pool as it draws him nearer.
- Stays at stairway of pool, but then the image scares him off as it speaks to him and makes him dizzy/lose mind
- Runs away/back off
- The ghost woman comes in running, saying to come to her. She knows what's best.
- He throws rocks at the ghost stomach, and she feels it
- She asks "why would you do that to your mother"
- He runs out and makes his way back by to the pail

A dark house

A double chin feared man

Weapons to defeat power people

Lowering voice " you belong to me"

High pitch voice

Every coupon, every tv show is threatening, sit in front of big screen at table

Windows become TV's to project the images

Message during egg phone call, turns dark, later another call from friend
mistake for monster

Notes to Self/ poems

When the planets merge,
When suddenly the last moments of our lives were here,
We looked into the sun.
Scary but bright.
Let me hold your hand one last time.
Cold against the fire,
Let's look up at tomorrow.
We're on the same planet now.

Sometimes I wish things could be as simple as drinking coffee.
The same order,
People watching.
Little to no thought.
But the taste is still great.
Bitter, and that's okay.

Humming a little tune
In the quiet
The sound so small

We walked side by side
Matching footsteps

But I'm stuck here,
With my memories
Locked in time

Again, I hum a little tune
The sound so small
space doesn't move.

Sven



Whether we know it or not, we all desire that one companion, whether a friend, lover, fan, just anyone that seems...relatable. Someone who understands, or who we want to be, Svens are these people. Everyone's Sven is different. From the appearance, to personality, to how they mesh with their original being.

*People will have met their Sven at somepoint in their life. How long? Depends.

But I'd never thought I'd meet a real Sven.

What I didn't know that day

Is that svens are self destructive.

The closer you get, the worse they become, but they are the ones who try to get close to you in the first place.

We all have to become svens eventually, whether we like it or not.
In the end,
There doesn't need to be a lover or friend,
All that was needed was a sven.

On my way,
I look to the skies.
A reflection bounces.
Hidden behind my ear, I'll keep it safe, my mind.
My will power.
A reason.

A box, everything is an image of yourself.
Nothing is real, or is it?
Reaching out to only grab myself, walking to trip on my own two feet, and hearing my own voice.
It's so empty with just my thoughts.

Fragility.
Sometimes you just want someone to support you, be your strength.
To touch your soul, to be with you in that moment.
People travel across the world in search of their Sven,
Looking in fields, cabin, and the like
But as the saying goes,
A Sven cannot be summoned,
they will always find you first.

Walking

Silence.
Little whispers in my hair.
They dance, twirl and move on.

Flickering, wires show the way.
Both Artificial and natural.
The little whispers follow me,
Wrapping cold around my head.
It's peaceful.
But I'm not alone.

Feeling-based

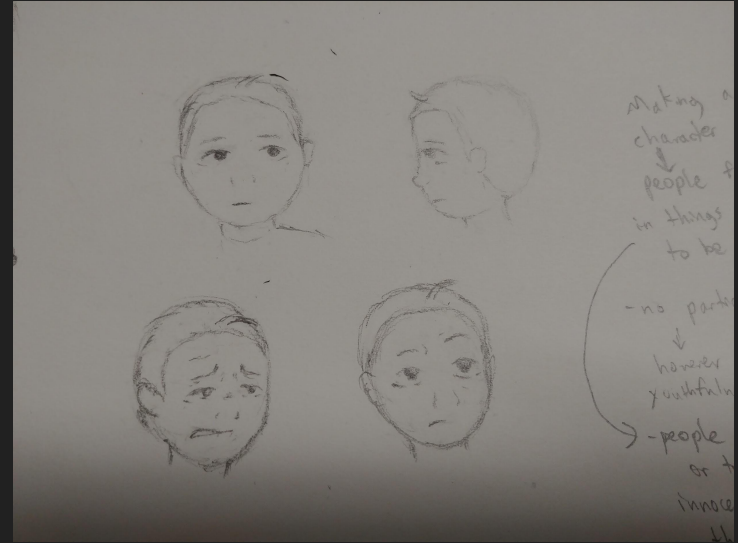
- Sven became more realistic:
 - kindness project for foundations
 - added experiences of being older and being in Italy during lockdown→ mental health drop
- Emotions and feelings became my focus on the story-->heightened fear of death, feeling boxed in for decision making
- Emulated in both Sven and Effie, competing my two major “roles”/modes???
- Meeting new people→ explaining not about what makes sense, but how you feel

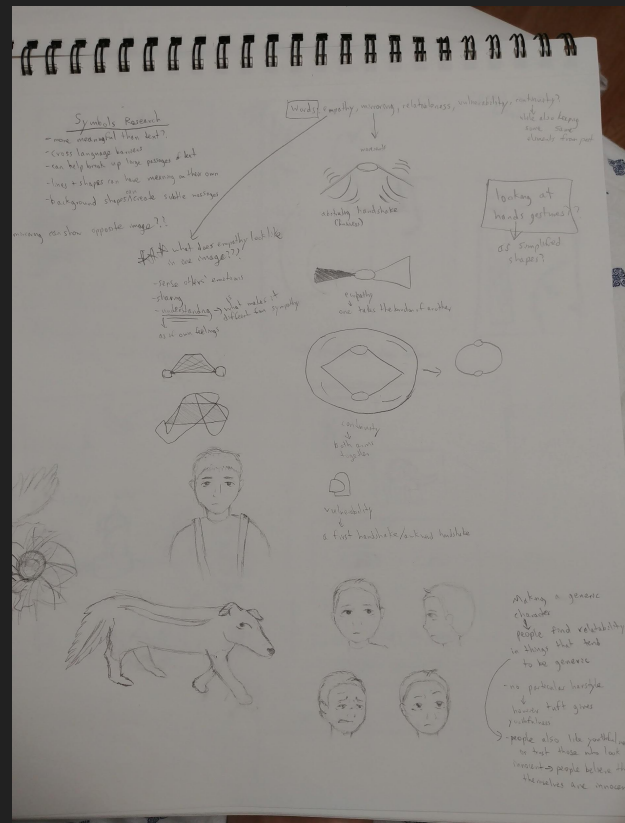
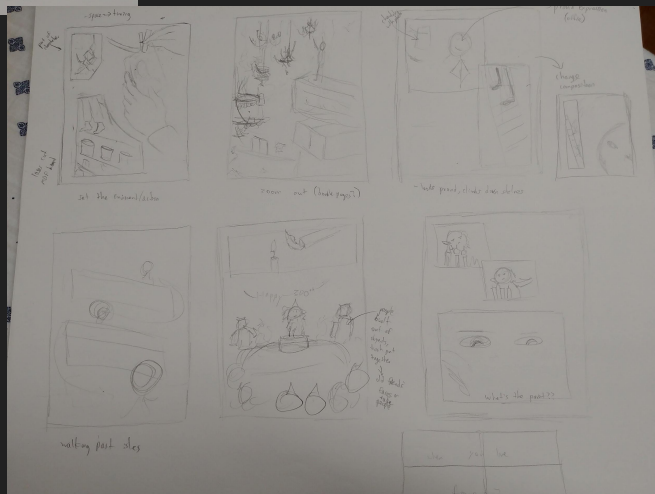
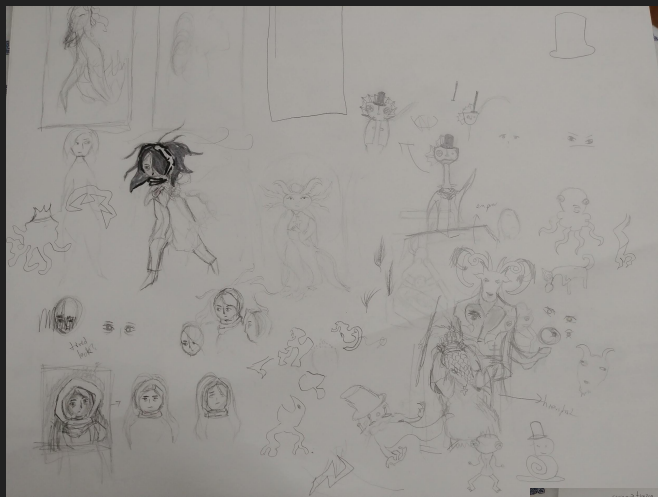
Effie character development

- Lamp section→ fascination with light and collecting/home depot lamp section
- Plays a negative role in sven's life
- Conflict based on a friendship in the past
- Effie→ “Ephemeral” (short lived)--> found it ironic, kind of like the friendship, contrasts with character problem
- First iterations were of a young person, but later become older→ relates to what types of people you see in stories a lot
- Metaphor??? For my fears, the past, and being stuck in the past

Sven character development

- Based off of my cat!--> the healing of animals→ influenced sven to have animal-like traits
- Analyze anime tropes→ “generic character”





Writing

Misc. research

Creating other work

Looking into metaphors

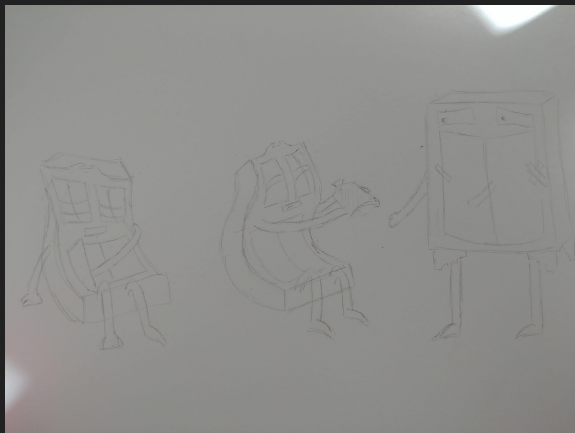
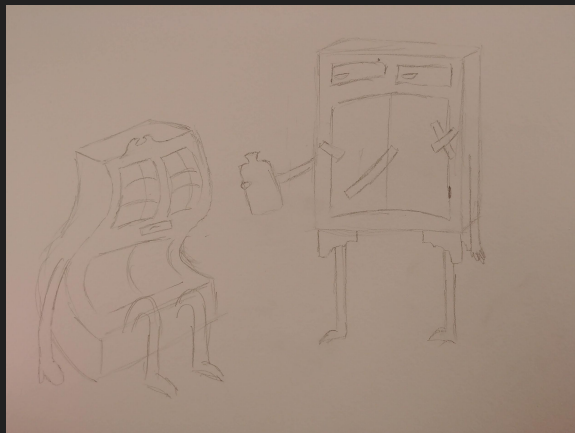
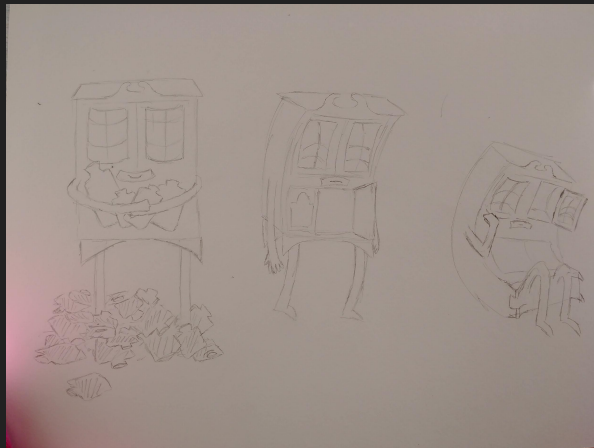
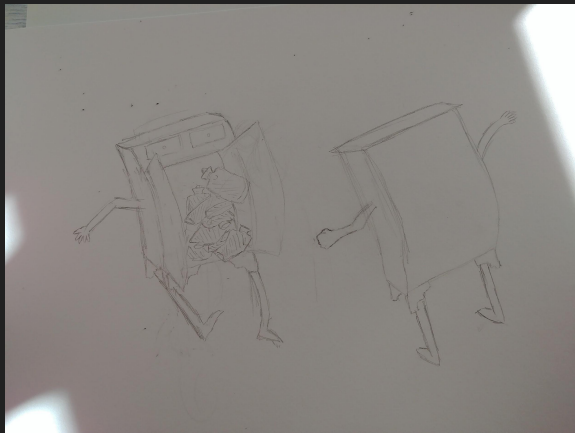
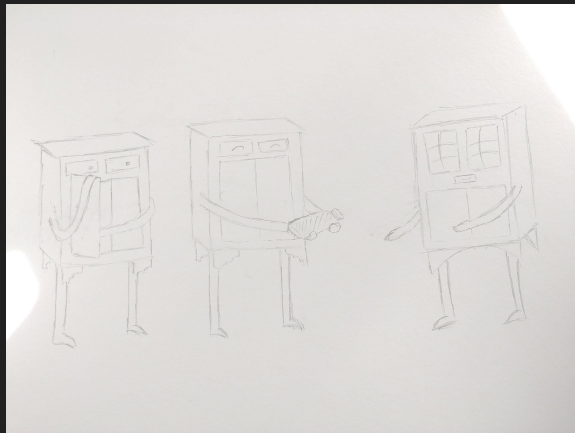
Adding more detail

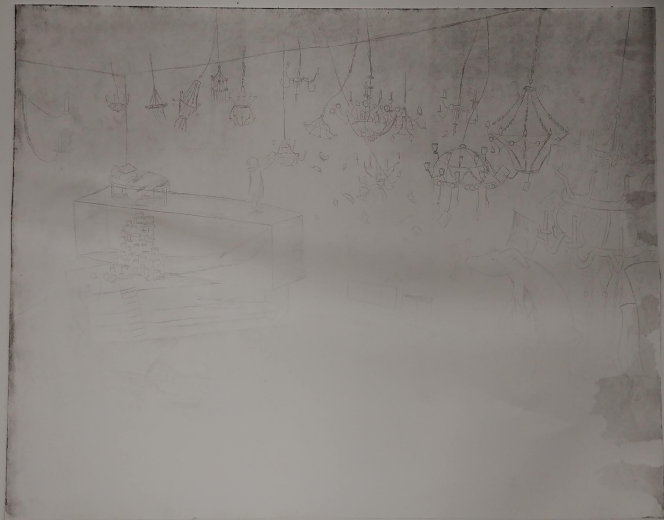
Organizing order of paragraphs

Cabinets



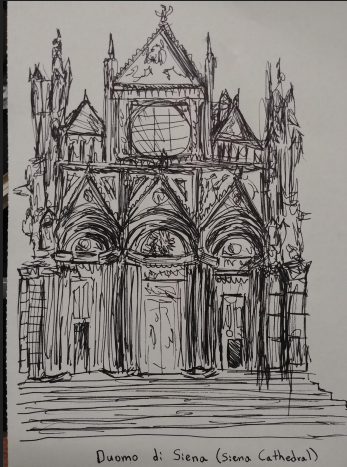
Cabinets











Final outline

- Sven intro., Sven school→ what happens at sven school, each sven assigned to study ONLY the person
- Sven assigned mission, transports as skunk dog hybrid thing
- Sven finds Effie, Effie trusts him as he is an animal, establishes as pet named “Bear”
- Look into effie's life, finds out that she lives forever, and having no purpose, establishes trust (confiding in secrets establishes trust)
- Sven starts becoming human(becomes less relatable as an animal, and has to rely more on body language and speaking to have relatable moments)
- Still relatable moments with gestures, but distant enough to where Effie does not listen to Sven, but lingers and wants to keep him around for loneliness
- Sven feels that there is no progress, starts to give up. He wants to help but ultimately decides it is time he is done. Tries to escape the convenience store, Effie drags him back. He eventually does escape successfully.
- In the real world, he finds that since he only studied Effie, he does not know how to interact with anyone else.
- He has a hard time and is wondering who he really is, and if being a Sven really was his true purpose
- Runs into another person, talks casually, it is revealed to the reader that the person is Sven's Sven

Other events

- Learning to get away from perfectionism
- Feeling alone→ coming back from pandemic
- productivity→ feeling trapped
- Falling out with ex friend
- Worries of life and death
- Obsessions with collections
- Learning boundaries
- Compassion fatigue

Layout and Composition Research

Panels separate

Panels together

Pages

Lettering

Format

Film/Cinema

(stringing together panels)

- Watch people analyze music videos,
Usually the production and video portion
- 3 shots to create one small scene
-
- Idea of close, close, far
- Or far, far, close----->

BTS “Blood, Sweat and Tears MV”



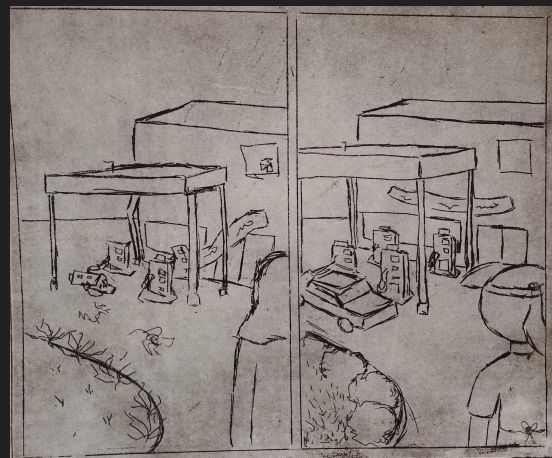
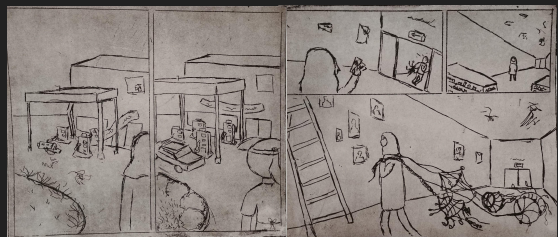
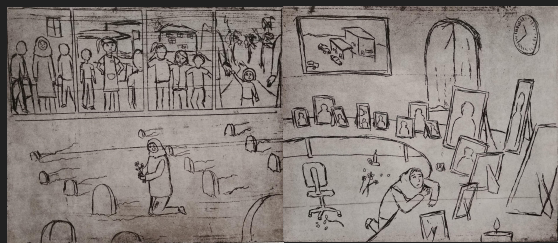
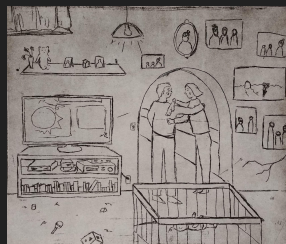
“Close, Close, Far” example: The Shape of Water (2017)

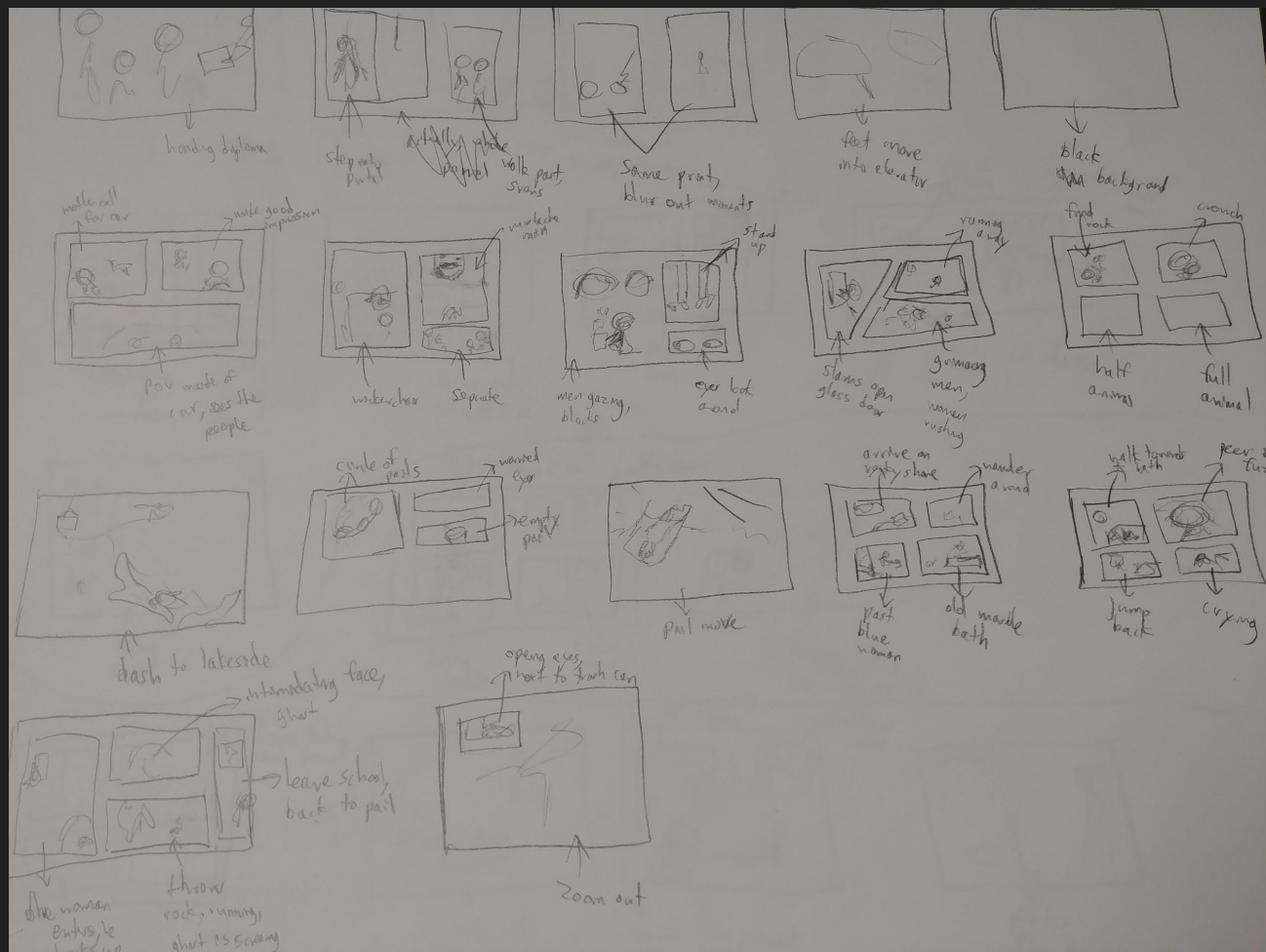
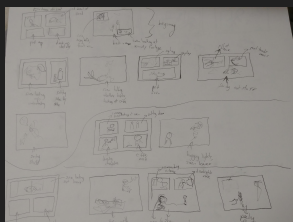
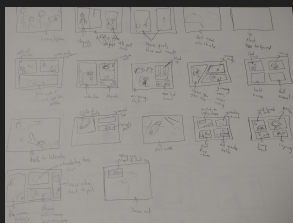
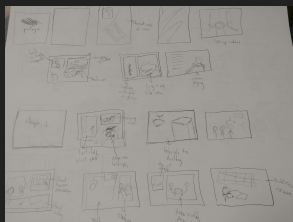




- Close, close, far







Adding Text



Walking around, he noticed a woman on top of a bunch of shelves. It was her. It was his person. She seemed to be clipping pictures to



His person muttered to herself something along the lines of "all my friends are here," as she placed the photo right on the metal of the light fixture.



Walking around,



he noticed

a woman

on top of a bunch of shelves.

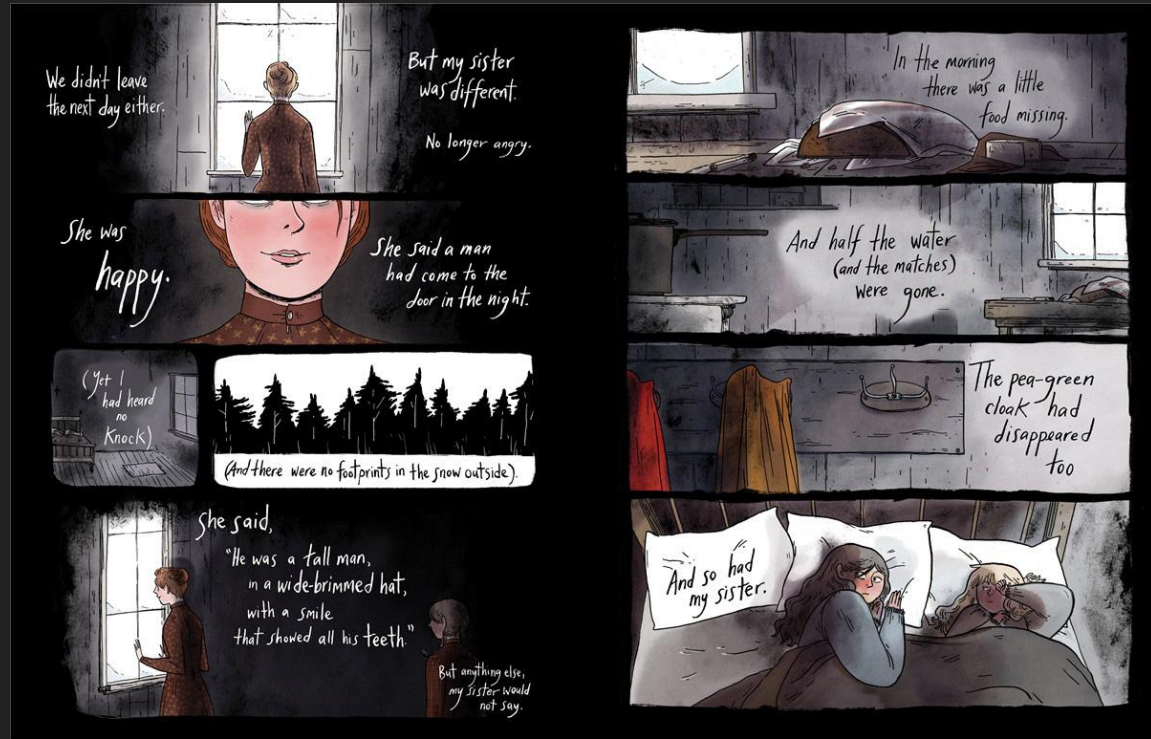


She seemed to be clipping pictures to the chandeliers.



It was her.

Text Examples



Most graphic novels tell stories in text/ dialogue.

Found example that is incorporated into image more, tells things in a more narrative way.

observing the
interior,

Sven notices
a chair placed
awkwardly in
the hallway

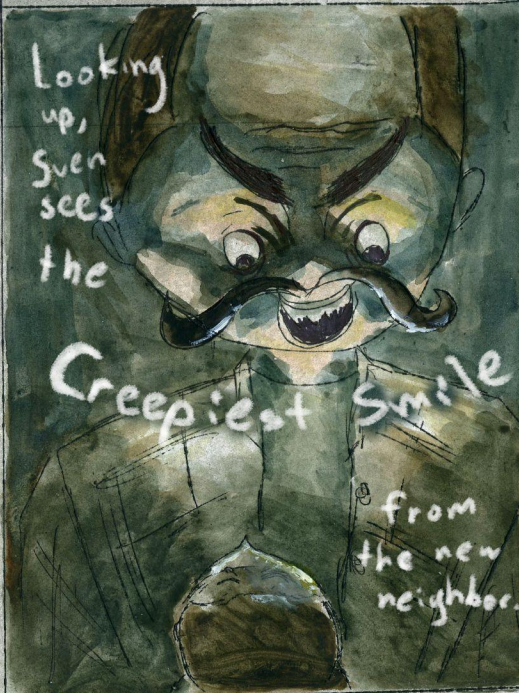


welcome
to our house!

Looking
up,
Sven
sees
the

Creepiest Smile

from
the new
neighbor.



The woman separates
everyone.



Sven is left helpless.

Text

- Used stylus on touch screen laptop
 - Handwritten
 - Later used Wacom tablet to finish up text
-
- Editing down text to what was important
 - Imagery can account for less text
 -

Indesign

- Pages bleed→ crop marks
 - Smaller size book→ more intimate
 - Physical book-->more personal
-
- Needs page numbers divided by 4
 - Preview vs normal viewing mode



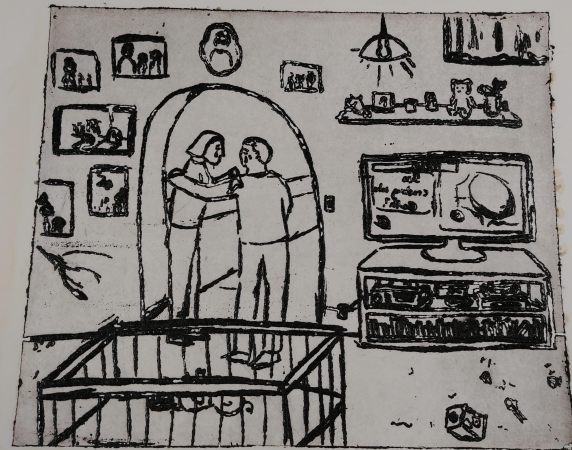
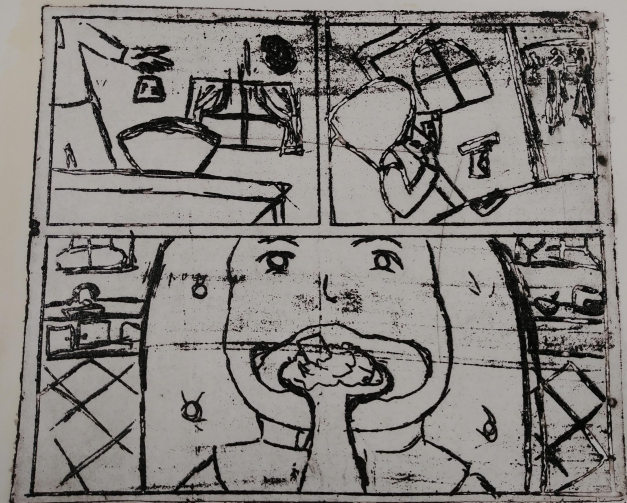


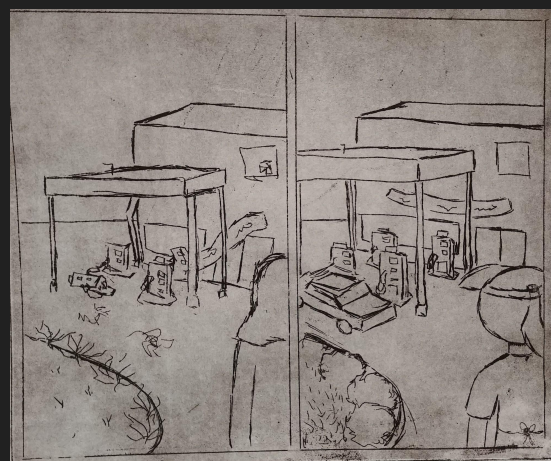
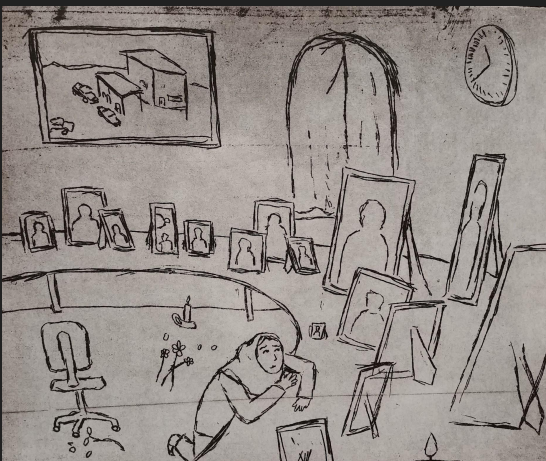
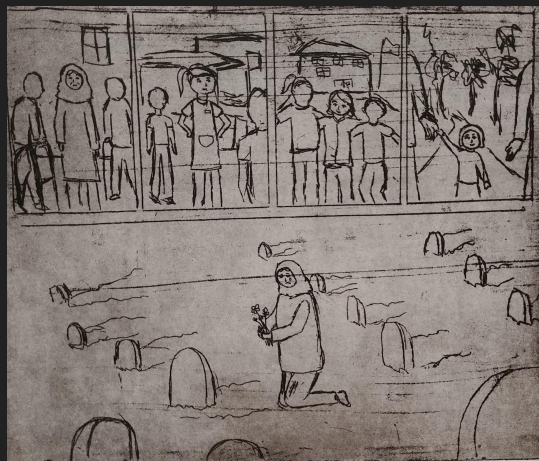
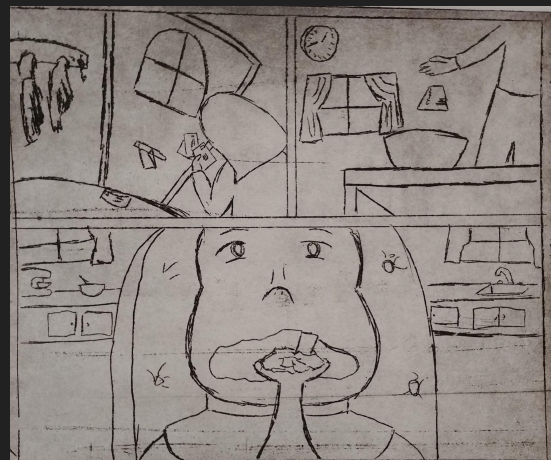
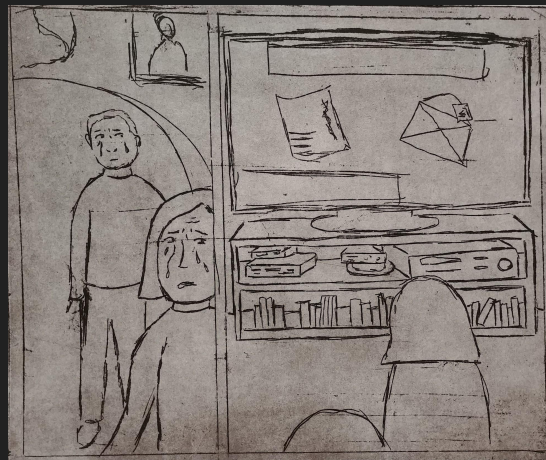
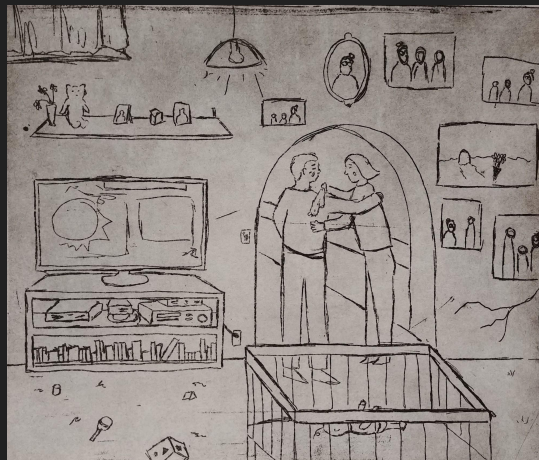
Beginning prints











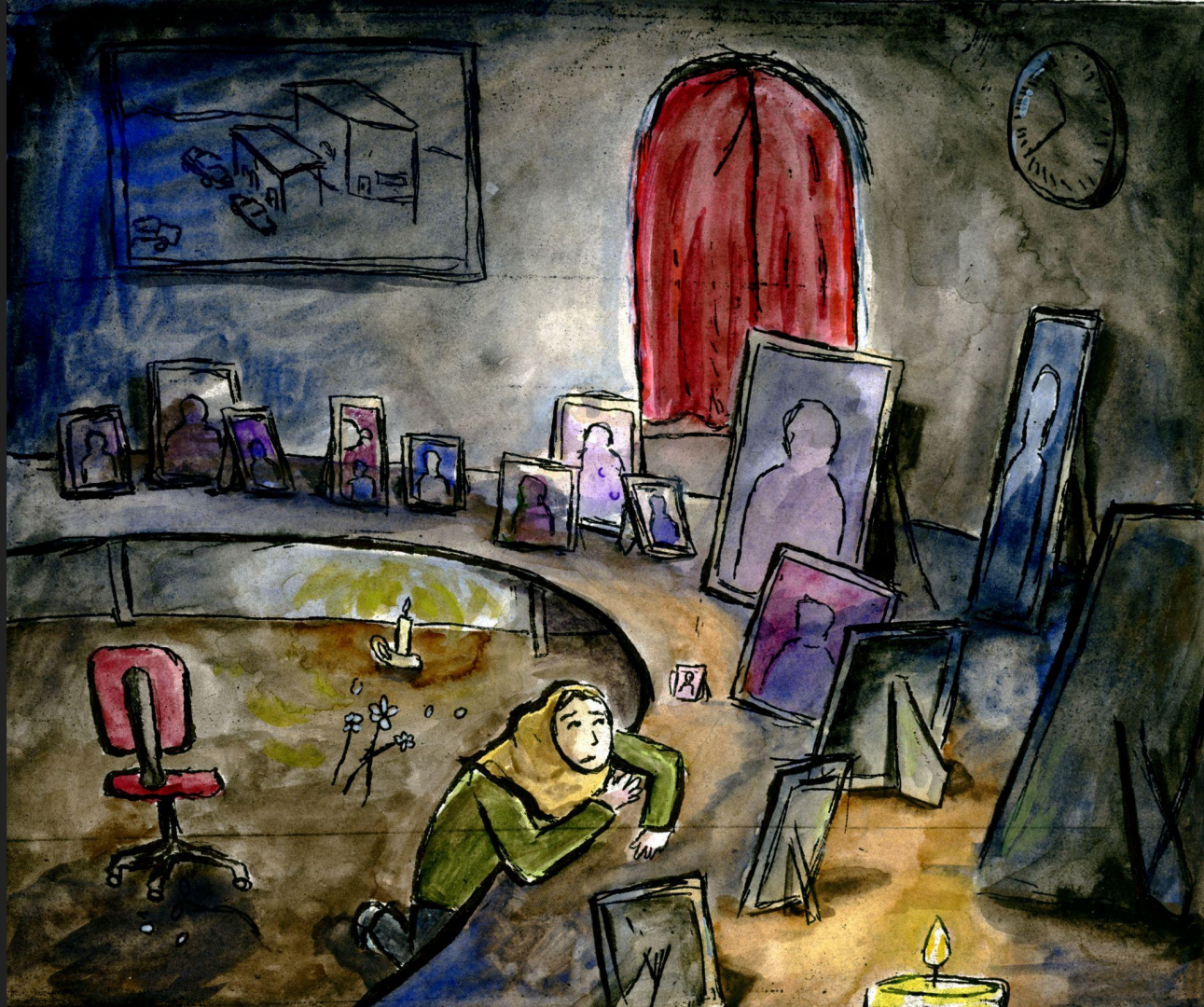
Other

- Erasing part of etchings for lighter value
- Focus more on larger images and making images more ambiguous
- Changed brand of watercolor to Winsor and Newton→ improved color vibrancy
- Practicing etching over time
- Coated plates over December break









Medium

- Etching due to time
- Watercolor for transparency
- Permanence of mediums used
- Able to improve my quality of work over time

More influences

- Surrealism
- Idea of dreams/the mind
- Personal iconography
- Narrative in imagemaking
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Remedios Varo

Armonia

1956



Leonora Carrington

And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur

1953



Quentin Blake

Ebenezer Scrooge

1995



Going Forward

- presentation→ conflicts between book vs. exhibition presentation
- alignment/organization of plates on paper
- More planning/time for printing
- Have the story more clear