

# **Reflection Feminism - A Report on Margaret**

**Yiyang Cheng**

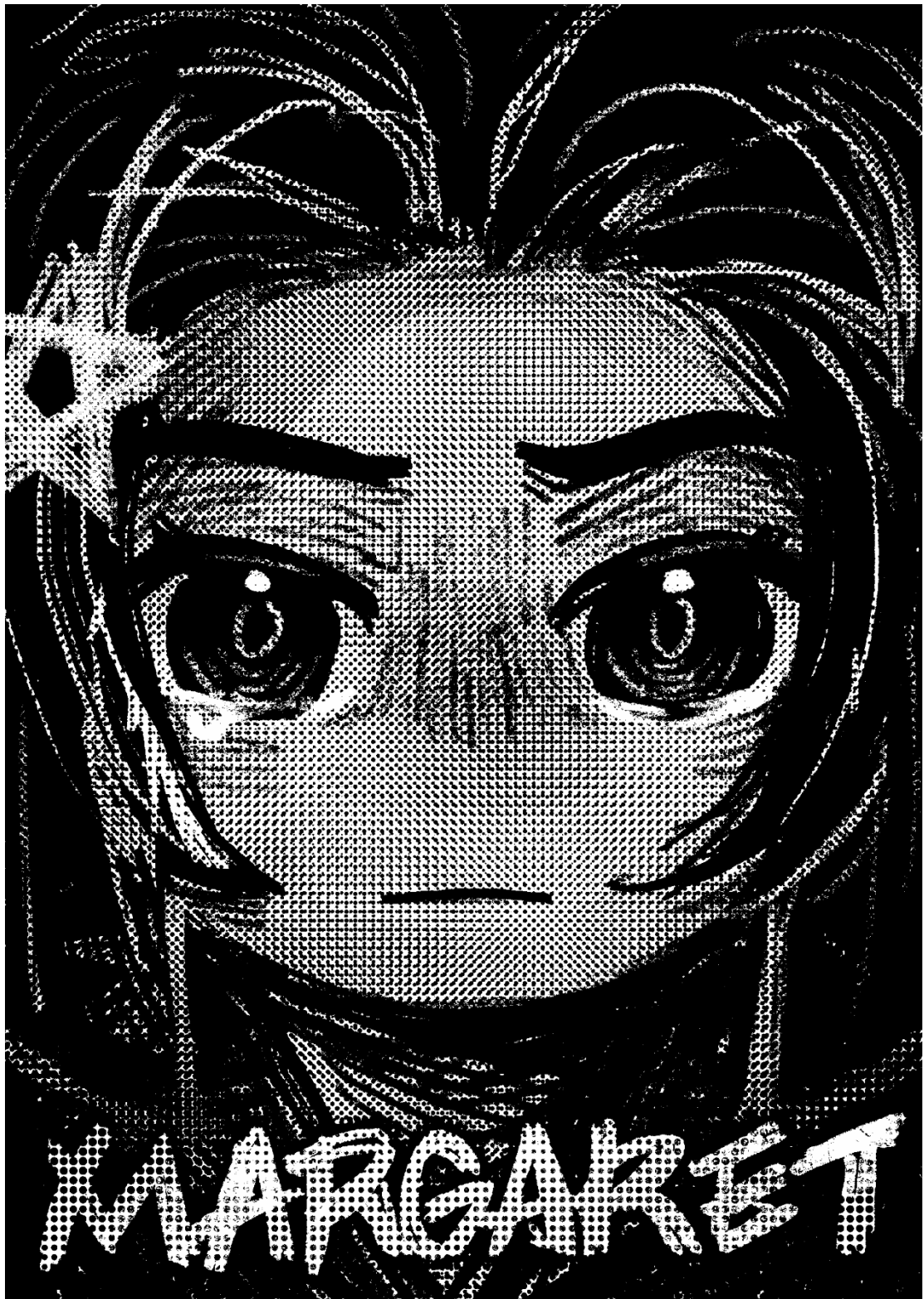


Fig 1. Cover Image of *Margaret*. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

## Introduction

“You won the reward,” she said cheerfully.

Caught off guard and overwhelmed by conflicting emotions, I could only say,

“Excuse me?”

“You won *The Woman of the Year Award*.” The police officer seemed to expect me to beam with joy, but I found the situation absurd. Speechless, I stared at her, struggling to suppress my anger and grievance.

Then I woke up with tears about to burst out of my eyes.

Ever since fascinated by *Inception* (2010) as a child, I have been training my ability to have lucid dreams, a skill that one being able to tell whether they are in a dream and control things (Van Eeden, 1913, pp.435-439). Although I have not mastered the ability to control my dreams consciously, the vividness and detail have grown, giving me many inspirations for both storytelling and reflection. These dreams often are scenarios that are ridiculous to my waking self because of the unreal and illogical it showed, leading me to question why my subconscious behaves in such way. Moreover, it led me to analyze the relationship between conscious and unconscious thought, as well as the narratives created by my mind.

Thus, in this report, the dream described above, which directly inspired my work *Margaret* during the Confirmative Praxis period, will be repeatedly mentioned and analysed. Even the dream occurs to me in Thought Experiment period, which is a long time ago, the fear, isolation, and the struggles women face still impact me. Experiencing these emotions from a first-person perspective, I revisited the dream repeatedly after waking, trying to seek better solutions to its dilemmas and exploring why I could not come up with these solutions in the dream.

Besides, the dream involved not only my personal experiences but also

stories I have witnessed or heard about. My brain conjures up these incidents into symbolic characters and events that revealed the social status of women. This report and the artwork *Margaret* are the reflection of the dream, exploring themes such as power dynamics, objectification, marginalization, isolation, and resilience. This report will start by looking into the plot of the dream, focusing on revealing a series of challenges faced by women as they navigate in personal, social and academic realms.

# 1. In Dream

## 1.1 Dream, Unconscious and Conscious

In psychological study, dreams have been considered a window into the unconscious and spiritual worlds for a long time, different schools' opinions on the definition and view of the unconscious are various, with interpretations varying across different schools. Sigmund Freud, for instance, viewed the symbolism of dreams as disguise of suppressed desires (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1983). In contrast, Carl Jung argued that the symbolism of dreams is not just repressed desires, but also representations of collective and universal psychological archetypes (2014, pp.3-5). Meanwhile, Van Eeden's work focused on lucid dreams, and he believes that dreams (especially lucid dreams) are a gateway to access self-awareness and knowledge of the universe (1913). Despite all their differences in opinions, their theories share a fundamental agreement: dreams have profound symbolic meanings and are

of great significance in revealing the workings of the unconscious mind.

Contemporary research reinforces this perspective. There are constant studies exploring the connection between dreams, unconscious and conscious, which has been suggested by research to be related to an individual's unconscious memories and experiences (Scalabrini, Esposito and Mucci, 2021). For instance, contemporary psychology uses dreams as a tool to explore the self and to enhance oneself and their emotional health (Epstein, 1980). In these examples, an individual's dreams are analysed and interpreted to uncover unresolved issues, incorporated into psychotherapy to improve the individual's condition, and even integrate the individual's identity in their conscious mind (Hill, 1996).

Although I have never undergone dream therapy, after being exposed to a Chinese forum of lucid dreams (Lucid Dreams Forum, 2011) at a young age, my fascination with dreams began and have not stopped, and I have been thinking about the difference between ordinary dreams and lucid dreams. At the time, I understood 'subconsciousness' intuitively, though I later corrected this term to 'unconsciousness' through research this semester. Over years of experimentation, I concluded, much like Van Eeden, that ordinary dreams are governed by the unconscious, while lucid dreams ruled by the conscious

(1913, p.433).

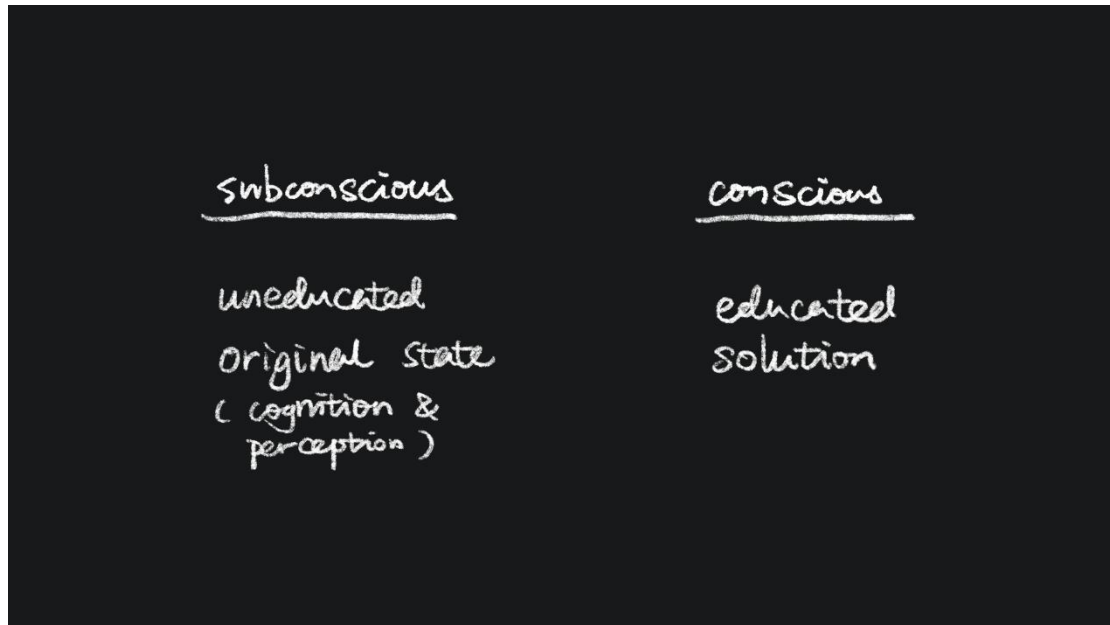


Fig 2. PowerPoint from Yiyang's Symposium 1. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

Upon waking, I often find my dream behaviors hilarious. In many dreams, despite considering myself educated, I seem to regress into a childlike state. For instance, when I was threatened or coerced in the dreams, I'd only give in, and the word *resistance* didn't exist in my dictionary. This aligns with Melanie Klein's theory in *Love, guilt and reparation: an individual's early emotional experiences manifest in adulthood's unconscious mind* (2011). I gradually became able to interpret my dreams myself. In reflection, I also connecting their content to personal and societal issues. My recurring dream described earlier became a central focus, and the symbolic and thematic



richness inspired the narrative of *Margaret*.

## 1.2 Margaret

Most of the time, my dreams do not adhere to linear logic. They are fragmented, rife with contradictions, and full of emotions. However, through weaving them with my imagination, I reshaped the dream into a coherent story, which when it is examined is also an interesting combination of unconscious and conscious. My unconscious behaviours mirrored outdated social constructs, while my waking consciousness sought to challenge and clamp them down. Ultimately, Margaret emerged as a story that both represent the age of patriarchy and the feminist thought, which could be structured as a five-volume manga, according to Chat GPT.<sup>1</sup>

In the dream, everything was set in the 1950s to 1980s. I found myself pursuing education in a small European town as an Asian international

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<sup>1</sup> Chat GPT was only used in help with the logic of the story and the grammar during the whole process of creation.

student. Because of the uncertainty of the new environment, I soon surrounded myself with party friends and began dating one of them. However, their different life concepts and our shallow connections left me feeling increasingly isolated.

As I questioning the value of our friendships, I discovered my best friend kissing someone of the same sex, only later catch her cheating with my boyfriend. Despite the betrayal, I chose to forgive them, attempting to maintain our fragile relationships by acting as the 'wise and good girlfriend'. However, my tipsy boyfriend boasting on taxi that he has an understanding girlfriend after a crazy party and attracted the driver's ill intention. It turned out the driver is a member of the local gang that does human trafficking. When danger escalated, both my boyfriend and best friend remained silent for their own safety. In desperation, I killed the driver to save myself and am left to face the consequences alone. I went to prison.

After serving, I returned to find my former friends intentionally avoiding me and my landlord attempted to evict me because of my reputation. I formed an uneasy alliance with my in-town-famous roommate, by agreeing to help raise her adopted child in exchange for her acting as my rent guarantor. And with my social circles shrink, I dedicated to my academic research while struggling

to both pay my rent and raise the child.

Under these circumstances, I encountered setbacks in every aspect of my life, even having to fend off reporters that are probing into my time in prison. I almost mistakenly dismissed a reporter who was genuinely interested in my academic work and promised to help publish my findings. Trusting him, I shared my draft in the town square. At the same time, a refugee woman approached me, persistently asking if my wealthy roommate and I needed a nanny. Distracted by her and other people's suspicious eyes on her, I turned back to find the reporter had vanished with my draft.

Forced to rewrite my paper, I scrambled to submit it for publication. In the meanwhile, a police officer began prying into me and my roommate's personal lives. While trying to shake off these snooping, I submitted my research, only to find being accused of plagiarizing a professor's work. Without any proof that I was the one who was plagiarized, I was barred from publish any papers for five years, and my funding was cut off.

My suppressed frustrations reached a breaking point when a group of children stole my wallet in the square. This became the final straw. I lashed out, turning all the hatred I scraped up onto my roommate's crying child.

Coincidentally, the police officer who was spying on us was on patrol. She intervened and revealed that she had shared my story to a national press and called her friends in the big city to win the title *The Woman of the Year* for me.

Instead of feeling honoured, I was consumed by anger and despair. This title was meaningless to me. I no longer wished to live under public scrutiny ever since prison, yet when my life was about to be forgotten my story had been spread without my consent. I knew that from the officer's perspective, her actions were heroic, but for me, they are the last thing I need. Overwhelmed by grievance and sadness, I stood there speechless, looking at the officer with tear in my eyes – and then I woke up.

## 2. Outside the Dream

I remained deeply connected to the dream, struggling to distinguish myself from the protagonist. Most of the plot unfolded from a first-person perspective, but it also shifted me to a detached third-person view, observing coldly and objectively. In the final scene, however, I gazed through the officer's eyes, confronting my own anguish in a close-up shot. Being able to see and sense the anguish shattered my illusion of being an outsider. The shot left a profound impression, haunting me even till now.

As I retraced the dream upon waking, my consciousness gradually activated. The conflict between unconscious and conscious occurred, and it initiated a dialogue between my unconsciousness, the regressed self, and consciousness, the educated self, helping to explore the dream's issues more comprehensively.

One of the main reasons I experienced this dream during the Thought Experiment phase was that I had recently arrived in a new country, immersed in a cultural environment entirely unfamiliar to me. Despite my belief that I had successfully integrated, I frequently see other Chinese individuals expressing feelings of alienation online. The term 'objectification' appeared consistently in their discussions, influencing my unconscious to craft a dream where I, too, felt excluded. The feelings of marginalization were shown constantly in it, particularly the scenes I named *The Party Scene*.

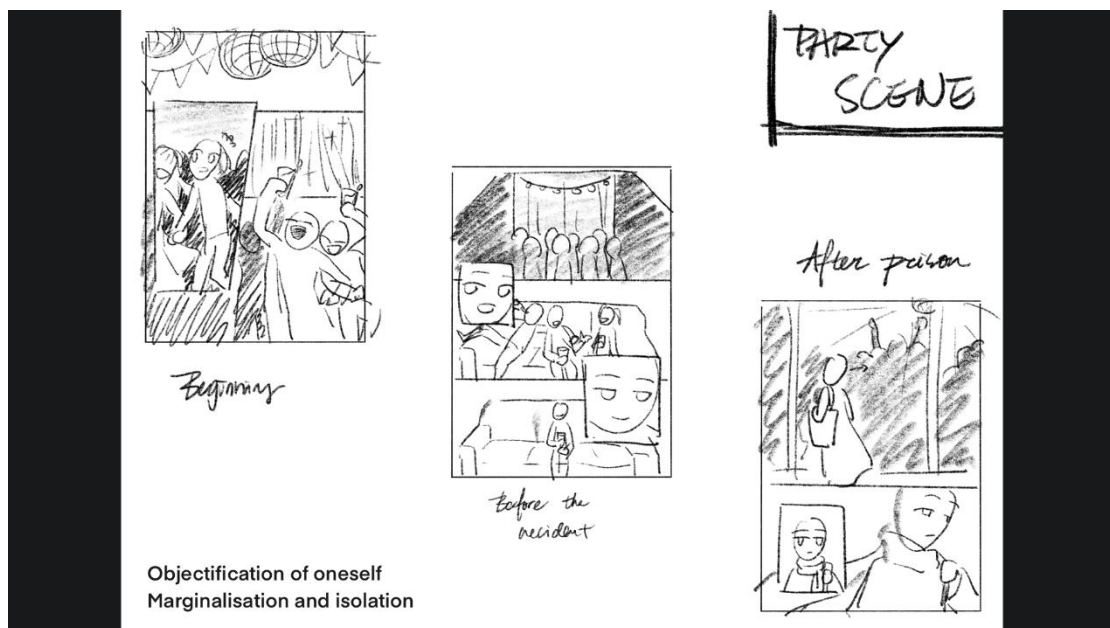


Fig 3. PowerPoint from Yiyang's Symposium 2. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

Tran and Vu's research pointed out that often face stereotyping and

objectification in foreign cultural environments, leading them to internalize these external perceptions (2018). This dynamic aligns with Fredrickson and Roberts' objectification theory. They argue that in a society where individual receives rewards or punishments based on their conformity, individuals adapt their behavior to meet these standards in order to gain acceptance, often unconsciously (1997, pp.176-181).

Their analysis also highlights the sexualized 'exotic' gaze directed at non-European cultures in Western contexts (Mulvey, 1975, as cited in Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p.176). In my dream, this stereotype influenced my boyfriend, who chose me based on the perception of Asian women as docile and accommodating (Root, 1995, as cited in Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p.176). Subconsciously, I accommodated to this stereotype, enduring humiliation and forgiving his infidelity to align with societal expectations, which also left me feeling ashamed for failing to uphold my ideals. "Many women may learn to feel helpless not only to correct their physical 'failings' but also to control other people's reactions to their physical appearance," said Fredrickson and Roberts (1997, p.188).

Tummala-Narra's research offers another perspective, addressing the bicultural conflict experienced by woman who come to another cultural

environment. These women often face contradictory expectations that create inner psychological turmoil, significantly impacting their mental health and sense of self (2013, pp.184-185). This insight further illuminated the lingering feelings of marginalization and objectification in my dreams.

What my conscious self found most absurd was that, in *The Taxi Accident*, my unconscious self prioritized the fear of societal and familial judgment over the danger of being kidnapped, therefore she/I grabbed the driver's gun, killing him and venting the terror and anger with several shots. The persistence of virginity as a moral benchmark indicated the lingering influence of patriarchal norms. Virginity has historically been a criterion for marriage in China, and my unconscious, reflecting a childlike state, retained these deeply ingrained memories. Even now, in other part of the planet virginity still remains a merit quality (Olamijuwon and Odimegwu, 2022).

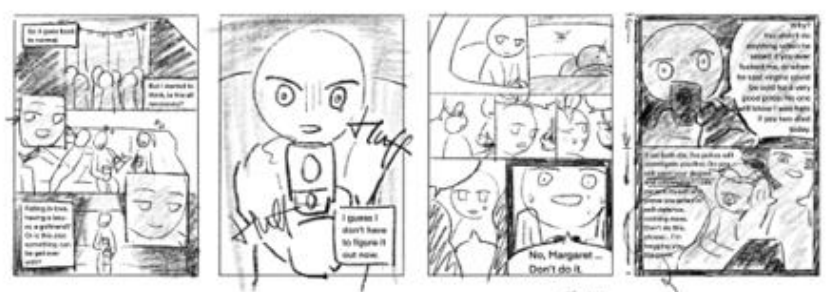


Fig 4. Storyboards of *Margaret 1*. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).



However, consciously training my dreams has allowed me to teach my unconsciousness. I once always fled from pursuers in my dreams, but as I began exercising, I increasingly turn to confront them. I seemed to have gone through the path of self-sex education again, but this time it was 'the liberated me' who was teaching 'the uneducated young version of me'. Through my work, I hope to inspire audiences to engage in similar introspection and confront their own unconscious biases.

Social expectations also shape our gender roles. Judith Butler introduced the concept of gender performance, which says that gender is not an inherent identity, but rather the behaviour and performance in accordance with societal expectations (2002, preface). This concept parallels Fredrickson and Roberts' self-objectification theory, which further explains Simone de Beauvoir's "woman's situation" (1956, p.567). My dream deduced it perfectly: my generous behaviour in forgiving my boyfriend catered to societal expectations, while my best friend's betrayal reflected a competitive performance under patriarchal norms.

Studies dating back to the 1950s reveal that many women only discovered their lesbian identity after marrying heterosexual partners (Kinsey *et al.*, 1998). Recent research indicates that individuals with non-heterosexual

orientations often hide their identity due to societal and familial pressures, with bisexual women being particularly likely to enter heterosexual marriages (Parker, 2015; Poitras, 2019). A milestone film for the LGBTQ community, *Carol* (2015), also revealed this situation. explores forbidden love between two women, highlighting the protagonist's struggles with societal expectations, and the open ending foreshadows the uncertainty of the protagonist's fate.

My dream lesbian friend was also struggling with this dilemma. After catching her kissing another woman, she attempted to prove her 'normality' to me by flirting with men, including my boyfriend. This betrayal angered my unconscious, which could not understand the situation. However, my conscious, feminist-educated self can relate her behaviour with closeted women. In *Lesbian Teachers: An Invisible Presence*, the author reveals how invisibility affects personal and professional identities, detailing in the fear and uncertainty that prevent individuals from coming out (Khayatt, 1992). My friend's actions reflected this dilemma, as she imitated societal expectations to conceal her true identity.

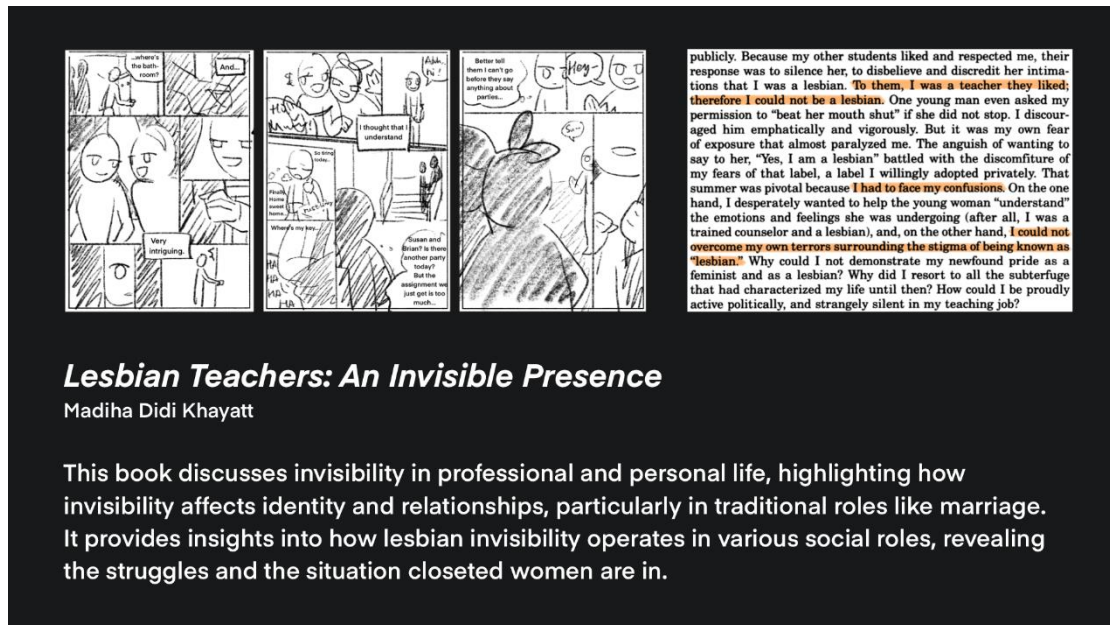


Fig 5. PowerPoint from Yiyang's Symposium 3. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

My friend's behaviour also illustrated *Female Intrasexual Competition*, a phenomenon unique to patriarchal societies where women subtly compete for male attention and sexual resources. This behaviour is both a self-objectification on the need to conform to societal norms, and a reflection of hiding their sexual orientation under various pressures.

Like 2024 Paris Olympics opening, talking about LGBTQ and open relationships in public, sparked controversy particularly its depiction of diversity and progressive ideals. The chapter *Sororit * in the opening ceremony is an unprecedented feat, all-female sculptures on both sides of the

Seine were raised. *Sororité* gained popularity from the second wave of feminism to promote gender-neutral solidarity, especially with the book *La sororité, c'est le pouvoir (Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement)* (Oxfam France, 2021). The all-female sculptures can be related to the famous quote Ruth Bader Ginsburg said when all the judges are male:

When I'm sometimes asked when will there be enough [women judges on the US Supreme Court bench] and I say, 'When there are nine,' people are shocked. But there'd been nine men, and nobody's ever raised a question about that.

(BBC, 2020)

This illustrates the lingering shock surrounding feminist progress. In academia, similar challenges persist. Margaret W. Rossiter proposed the Matilda effect, which describes that women's contributions are underestimated or completely denied, and their contributions are attributed to male colleagues or collaborators (1993).

"Herstory", She makes comic  
The Aeronauts (2019)

fraud & sexism  
in academic  
field

The Story of  
Art Without Men  
↓  
disappeared  
women researcher  
↓  
Matilda Effect  
↓  
Olympic 2024  
"Sororité"

The protagonist devoted herself to research.

Otherwise, can you explain why your dissertation is highly consistent with Professor Anderson's?

...who?

Professor Paul Anderson?

No, no, it's the exact opposite! he's the one approached me!

He stole my research!

Do you have any evidence to support your point? It might be some mis-understanding.

He's a pro-fascist! He has been researching this far longer than you!

Sorry! Not personal, but you're banned in the lab. You won't be able to publish for 5 years.

I can't believe she said Paul stole her work...

Uh, your funding has been suspended.

Margaret! How's things going? Did they approve your research? Has the funding come in?

Fig 6. PowerPoint from Yiyang's Symposium 4. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

In the dream, my research results were seized by a professor in the same faculty, and my gender and my criminal past compounded the disbelief that I, a female student, could achieve such results. Historical parallels, Rosalind Franklin's academic results and contribution to the discovery of DNA's double helix, underscore this systemic bias (Passing By and Listening to Her, 2023; Slice Plan, 2024).

These things encouraged women stood up and rewrite history from a female perspective. Feminists coined "herstory" to critique traditional historiography and celebrate women's narratives, though some debate that 'his' in 'history' does not refer to men (Oxford Reference, 2025; Wikipedia, 2025). Works like

*She Makes Comic* (Stotter, 2014) and *The Story of Art Without Man* (Hessel, 2023) embodied this movement. Similarly, the 2024 film *好东西* (*Good Thing*) by a Chinese female director, directly translated the name into *Her Story*, symbolizing the ongoing fight for gender equity.



Fig 7. Herstory | She is writing herstory in her own room.

However, feminism's limitations also require reflection. There is an issue that I have overlooked but began to reflect on in the comments of Chat GPT, namely, the negative impact that Feminism and its movements have on women.

In Sunera Thobani's article, she criticized the Herstory movement's focus on ideology excludes the experiences of non-Western women, which reproduce the situation of them being ignored and erased in male narratives; its one-sided focus on ideology and the narrow time focus were also criticized

(Looser, 2000; Sommers, 1995).

Bryson, Légier, and Ribieras critique second-wave feminism for centering white women while neglecting the unique struggles of women of colour, such as the stereotypes and exotic impression (2024). They also explain the challenge of the second wave of feminism to traditional family roles reinforced social expectations, moreover, further underestimated the labour of traditional roles under patriarchy, resulting in alienating women who embraced these roles (2024, pp.2-18).

In my dream, the feminist police officer exemplified these tensions. Her expectations, shaped by feminist ideals, clashed with my own experiences and needs. While she believed she was speaking out for me, her actions further constrained my autonomy, thrusting me into unwanted public scrutiny. This reflects how feminist movements, despite their good intentions, without reflection can inadvertently deepen existing struggles for women of different backgrounds.



Fig 8. PowerPoint from Yiyang's Symposium 5. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

Ultimately, this dream, integrated into a 'herstory' framework, made me reflect on feminism's complexities. It revealed the contradictions between my unconscious and conscious states, indicating challenges faced by women across history and today. Margaret's story is not just my own, but a story being told by women everywhere.

And I decided to tell this story.



### 3. Tell the Story

During the period of *Exploratory Research and Praxis*, I had the idea of turning my stories into a book. However, the diversity of the content I explored prevented the implementation. Over the summer, I began a new project with the same research content, to test whether creating a book within a limited time frame was feasible. I used animation to refine the storytelling techniques storyboard, and later confirming its practicality in *Confirmative Praxis*.

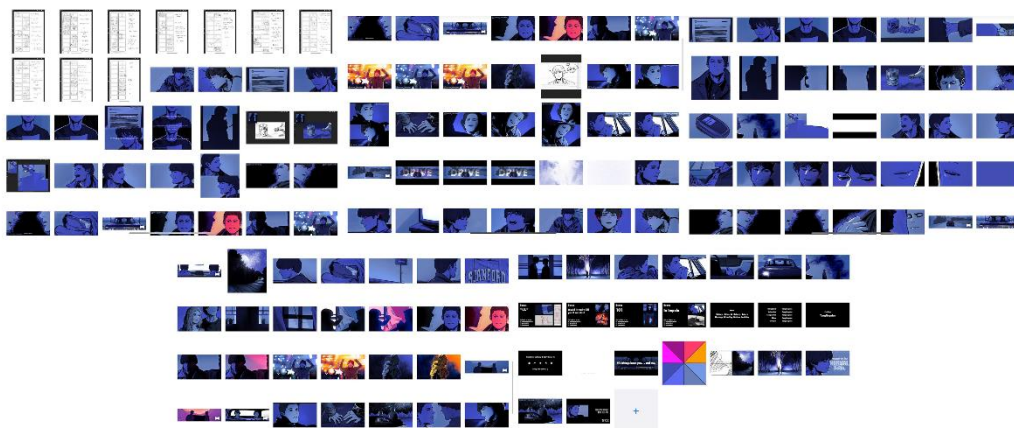


Fig 9. Storyboards of *Drive Into the Colors of You*. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

One key reason I started with cinematic lenses was the enhanced storytelling possibilities offered by wide-screen frames. Harper Cossar's research focused on the advantages of wide-screen formats, such as reducing the complexity of background design and alleviating challenges in artistic composition (2009, p.3-5). Wide-screen framing also provides a better control over the balance of main and secondary information, which allows me to explore how to draw a series of compositions while ensuring that no extraneous details interfered with the story's flow (BOBO, 2024).

This project enabled me to complete Margaret's storyboard successfully. However, while manga shares common knowledge in composition, I discovered that it has its own graphic language that needs further study. Unlike movies, comics require using frames to make rhythm on single page, which involves balancing panel.

Over the years, I have unconsciously learned and internalized lots of techniques shared by manga artists on social media. Nevertheless, I directly referred to Wu Xian's guidance on using storyboards to express characters' emotions: focusing on the importance of varying frame sizes and numbers to highlight emotional intensity (2024). This technique aligns with my understanding of cinematic expression, where directors use close-ups, mid-

shots, or full-body shots to emphasize specific emotions. In comics, artists achieve similar effects by enlarging or adding frames or focusing on facial expressions. This summary is consistent with André Bazin's exploration in *What Is Cinema?*, where he argued that detailed shots capture more subtle expressions and evoke emotions that might be missed in broader compositions (2004). My attempts during the experiment once again reinforced this method's clarity.



Fig 10. Storyboards of *Margaret 2*. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

While insightful, BOBO's tutorials overlooked the role of white space in comic layouts. My background in Chinese painting provided me with a strong foundation in utilizing a technique called 留白 (*leaving blank*), which is consistent with Western concept where creating flow and rhythm through density of an artwork. This intentional emptiness is not an absence but a

manifestation of philosophical depth with Daoist principle (Laozi, 2014). This is proposed and developed in Wang Wei and Ni Zan's representative art 雪溪图(Snowy River in a Clearing Mountain) and 容膝斋图(Rongxi Studio).

While not get into details due to space and relevance, this principle influences my approach. In Chinese painting, blank space is a symbol of natural flow, while in comics it leaves breathing space in regulating the story rhythm. Crazy Cowboy, whom I referenced, opts for full canvases throughout, creating a dense format that doesn't leave room for breathing. Observing this, I applied the technique in my work, deliberately avoiding overcrowded pages.

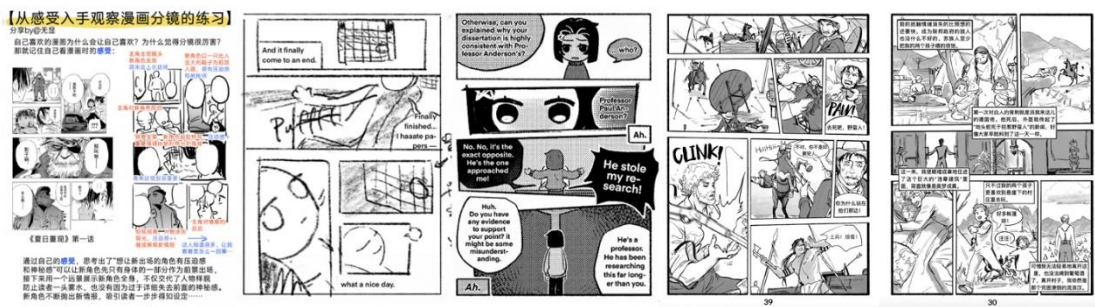


Fig 11. Storyboards Learning 1. Wu Xian and Yiyang Cheng, (2024)

Another essential language of comic storytelling also is showed in my work above in figure xxx. Years of accumulation have allowed me to utilize visual symbols such as sweat droplets, anger lines, and speechlessness indicators easily. These symbols enhance narrative dynamics efficiently through their

iconicity, while auditory elements are visually represented through linear expressions like speed lines and onomatopoeia. This language are vividly reflected in the comics of Osamu Tezuka, who is known as 'the god of comics', and was also deeply analysed by theorists like Scott McCloud (1993).

Dialog boxes further influence character expression through their size, shape, and texture according to my observation in years of reading and learning from manga. For instance, sharp-edged dialog boxes convey stronger emotions or louder volumes, while uneven frames signify plot twists or escalating conflicts. Darker dialog boxes suggest ominous content, and dialog boxes that break through the frame emphasize urgency or emotional intensity. My experience helped with refining the visual presentation of Margaret's storyboards.



Fig 12. Storyboard Learning 2. Yiyang Cheng, (2024)

Last semester, I explored using glass as a medium and was fascinated. The exploration significantly influenced *Margaret's* visual presentation. Glass, with its dual qualities of hardness and fragility, perfectly mirrors Margaret's journey. It reflects both resilience and vulnerability as she suffered in the bizarre social whirl. Furthermore, the transparency of glass is a perfect metaphor for protagonist's life, which being scrutinized by society, further emphasizing her isolation and perseverance.

Choosing glass also influenced my choice of colours in the comics. My original plan to use three colours was shelved because of the time-consuming screen printing on glass. Initially, I planned to use a three-color scheme to highlight key narrative elements and to link this colour to my work, where reader can directly find my comics by recall the colour, inspired by Tsumuji Yoshimura (2018-2022) and Sumiko Arai (2021-now). However, the time-intensive nature of screen printing on glass requires a simpler approach.



Fig 13. Manga by Tsumuji Yoshimura and Sumiko Arai. (Unknow)

To maintain uniqueness, I left the outer frames transparent. This choice was confirmed right during workshop sessions, and I developed my theory to reverse the transparency for specific scenes in working. In a scene where Margaret faces public gossip after prison, the transparency visually conveys her vulnerability and transparency under scrutiny. And in the next section glass represented clarity and resolution since Margaret's life was back to tranquillity.



Fig 14. Physical Work of *Margaret*. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

For the character design, I referenced to vintage clothes and magazine styles of the 1980s. Through years of sketching practice, I've observed how facial expressions and body posture significantly influence a character's image and temperament. I drew inspiration from artists' studies of cartoon facial expressions, particularly the technique of exaggerating personal traits to emphasize individuality (Starr, 2024).



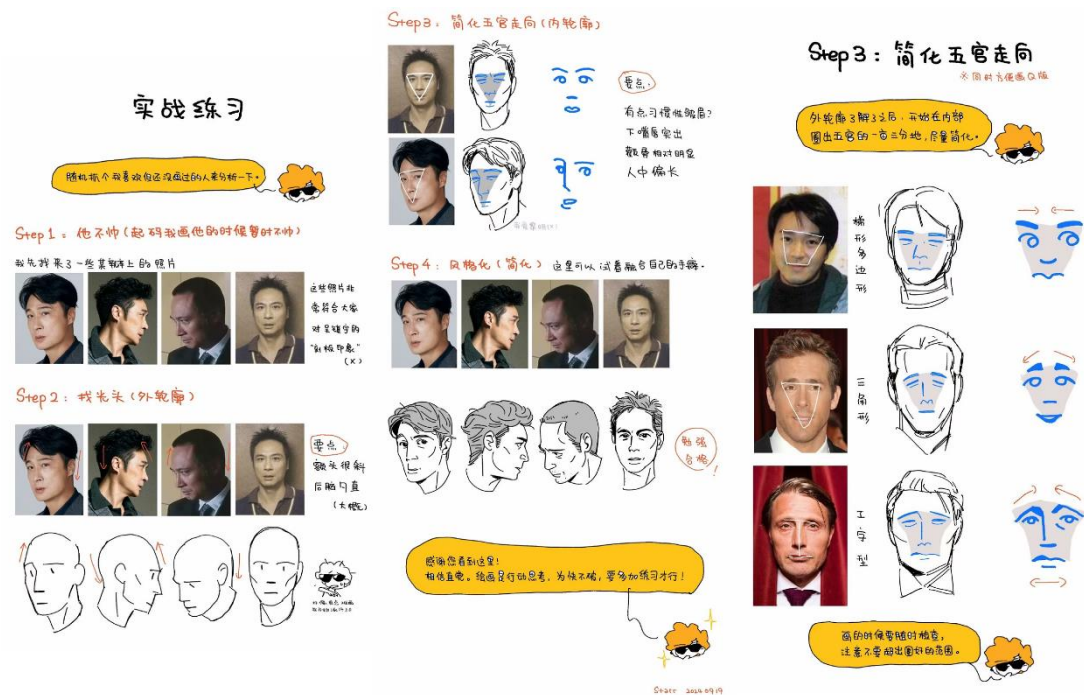


Fig 15 How to Simplify the Direction of Facial Features. Starr, (2024).

As for posture, I found, narrow, restricted movements suggest reservation and lack of confidence, while open postures reflect individuals confident. I assigned Margaret a restrained posture, mirroring my own during a similar stage in life, with hands awkwardly positioned to convey unease. For the party-oriented friends and boyfriend, I referenced the poses of 1980s partygoers in magazines and old photos. Her roommate, the wealthy and fashionable local celebrity, was modelled after magazine figures with a sense of arrogance. Lastly, I designed the female police officer that was absent from the exhibition as a confident, extroverted, and hopeful representation of white feminism.

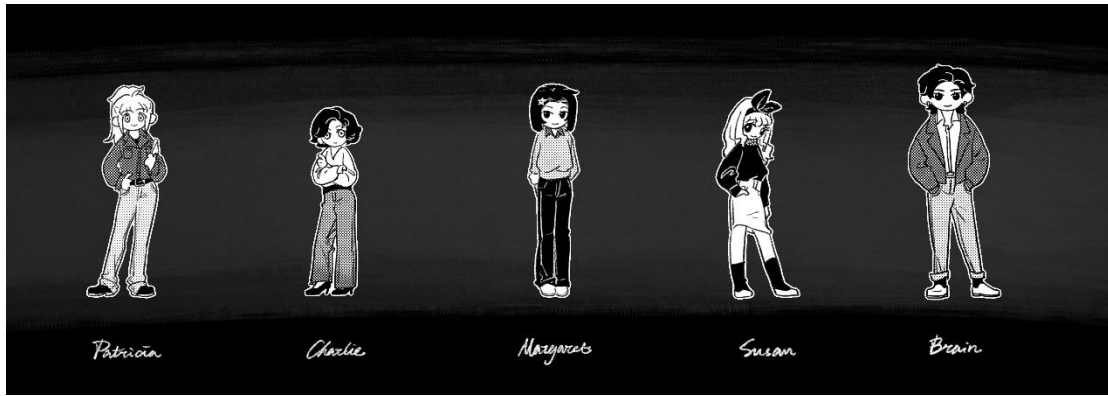


Fig 16. Character Design for *Maragret*. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

Another crucial element I designed is the proportion of black and white on the clothes, which significantly impacts the visual rhythm. Dengdao's study online pointed out that in famous IP, such as *One Piece*, the black-and-white sketches of characters are often contrast with colour comics (2024). Other artists mentioned in the reposts that prioritizing the placement of black areas is an essential thing in manga creating (Ail and Yanshu Yu, 2024). This principles inspired me to focus not on copying the colour scheme from old photo, but on subjective processing it so that the comics have rhythm in detail.



Fig 17. Manga Rhythm Learning. Dengdao, (2024).

This approach can also be observed in Figure xxx, where within a sequence of similar frames, I intentionally reduced the contrast in one of the frames to prevent visual monotony. To further abate viewer fatigue, I varied the size and positioning of characters and adjusted background tones, ensuring a dynamic flow in every page.



Fig 18. Storyboards learning 3. Yiyang Cheng, (2024).

In terms of storytelling, I sought to externalize the heavy emotions in my dreams that had remained internalized and unspoken. While drafting the storyboard, I encountered Crazy Cowboy's *Indian Tale 1870* (2024). Despite its roughness, her comic's coherent narrative and storyboard resonated with me. The straightforward, chronological storytelling encouraged me to use a similar narrative structure, presenting the story plainly to evoke emotional depth.

This decision does not go alone just because of one artwork. My narrative style is also deeply influenced by films I have watched. Margaret's concluding scene paralleled with *Capernaum* (2018), a film that profoundly affected me. *Capernaum* tells the struggle of a child abandoned by his parents in a subdued and emotionless tone, until the final scene, where the protagonist's radiant smile pierces through the audience's heart. Inspired by this, I envisioned using Margaret's final expression as the cover image, hinting at the story's emotional core.



Fig 19. *Capernaum*, (2018)

I always am captured by thought-provoking endings that invite reflection rather than offering closure. Films like *Capernaum*, *The Danish Girl* (2015), *The Imitation Game* (2014) and *The Dressmaker* (2015) demonstrate the power of open-ended or documentary-style conclusions. My study emphasized on the effectiveness of unresolved close-ups in evoking deep emotional resonance, to express the shocking concluding scene. In the study, it is learned that these films abandoned dramatic expression, opting instead

for subtle emotional impact with shots that focus on the facial expressions, which later adopted for Margaret's final scene.



Fig 20. Close-up of *The Imitation Game* (2014), *The Danish Girl* (2015) and *The Dressmaker* (2015).

I also employed an open ending for *Drive Into the Colors of You*, an animation exploring the forbidden love between brothers. The main focus is on the tug-of-war between the characters and the mutual attraction between the two. To emphasize the characters' emotional struggle and mutual attraction, I deliberately removed explicit hints about their relationship. The story end with facial expressions to suggest future possibilities. Much like *Carol* (2015), the ending is hopeful yet unresolved, implying that the characters' challenges remain. Unlike *Drive Into the Colors of You*, which offers a hopeful hint, *Margaret's* looming ending provided uncertainty about the main character's future, suggesting the future struggles and leaves readers questioning and reflecting on her journey.

## **Conclusion**

In Confirmative Praxis Phase, in theory, I examined the relationship between my unconscious and conscious mind through the study of dreams, unconsciousness, and consciousness. This analysis also extended to reflections on my personal experiences and the challenges faced by women in society. In practice, my primary focus was on investigating narrative expressions within storytelling.

For the research on feminist issues, I adopted a comprehensive approach rather than limiting to a single point to address a broad spectrum of concerns. These range from traditional challenges, such as the societal obsession with virginity, to more contemporary and newly raised issues, like the limitations of feminism movements and their lack of consideration of minority women group. By using comics as a medium, I aimed to present these themes in an

universal and youthful way, hoping to inspire reflections and encourage more women to speak up.

Moreover, being discussed does not signify their resolution or irrelevance. In some regions, gender equality has advanced significantly, while others continue to enforce regressive ideals, such as viewing virginity as a measure of morality. These persistent challenges show the ongoing problems to solve and rights to fight for. Margaret is me, her, and all women in the world. It does not indicate that women in disadvantaged area lack education, but the education about women's rights is required, as I told my unconscious through this narrative, that there are many options for things to go.

At the same time, I have deepened my understanding of comics. Years of exposure have unconsciously shaped my knowledge of it, but practical application was relatively new. By externalizing these theories, I have gained a clearer understanding of how to utilize the visual language of comics, such as frame sizes, character-focused lenses, dynamic elements like speed lines, etc.

This process has also prompted considerations about my future career.

Holding degree in BA Chinese Painting, I previously explored combining

traditional Chinese painting with illustration, which challenged Chinese painting's system. In the early study of MA Illustration, I focused on experimenting with various materials and expressive techniques, and this semester, I returned to the exploration of illustration while continuing to refine my earlier research topics.

While my passion lies in comics and animation, which made me lean towards digital painting, I also recognize the value of physical media. In Chinese painting faculty, the emphasis was often placed on traditional methods, with little attention on digital painting. However, in today's era, integrating tradition art with contemporary tools is essential. I frequently reflected and experiment on how to balance the proportion of using them during my MA Illustration time, and from my perspective, the combination of digital painting and glass in my recent project is successful. Initially I relied more on digital painting, but after the workshop session, I shifted focus after workshop sessions to leverage the unique properties of glass in my final presentation, which resulted in designs that appeared ordinary on screen but come alive when printed on glass.

As I resume study in MA Chinese painting, which I suspended in pursue of illustration exploration, I intend to continue the exploration of combining traditional and digital media. My work this semester has demonstrated that these two methodologies can coexist; the next challenge is to discover how



their combination can create an effect greater than the sum of their parts.

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