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MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE

INAUGURAL THESIS SHOW

Curated By Jonathon Rosen & Ed Valentine

SVA GRAMERCY GALLERY
209 E 23 Street, NYC

OPEN GALLERY HOURS
July 10-24, 2015
M-F 9-7PM, SA 10-6PM

CLOSING RECEPTION
Friday July 24, 2015 / 5-8PM

A NOTE FROM THE CURATORS

Jonathon Rosen & Ed Valentine

Stories have a way of telling us where they want to go. We may not know where a story is leading us, or what it wants, but by following it we will always find ourselves in unexpected places.

This year, the drive to express a point of view, a mystery, or an obsessive-compulsive character in a dramatic situation, has led our inaugural thesis class in fourteen distinct – and visually stunning – directions.

Each student unveiled sharp and idiosyncratic visual language for a world they developed or discovered, and the character or characters who live there. These projects represent the culmination of the MFA candidates' learning, not just in this class, but also throughout their entire SVA experience.

Whether accompanied by web-footed demigods, haunted by a woman's voice emanating from walls, exploring a town built in a digestive system, standing restless on a suburban porch, entering tree house portals, eating alone or eating the world, we invite you to enjoy this exploration of their wonderful and wild worlds.

MFA Visual Narrative proudly presents to you the inaugural thesis class and their projects in this remarkable and groundbreaking installation.

Welcome to the journey.

THESIS ADVISORS

Agnieszka Woznicka, Artist
Anthony Meloro, Illustrator
Barron Storey, Novelist
Catya Plate, Visual Artist
Chris Buzelli, Illustrator
Graham Rawle, Writer
Jim Rugg, Cartoonist
Justin Thompson, Artist
Kevin Fenton, Writer and Strategist
Marc Zegans, Creative Advisor
Paul Briggs, Story Supervisor
Richard McGuire, Designer
Ross MacDonald, Artist and Printmaker
Ryan Stegman, Comic Book Artist

AND THEN...

Ryan Ansel

Louisa Bertman

Ann Coddou

Craig Coss

Nadia DeLane

Anna Eveslage

Jenny Goldstick

Steven Little

Melissa Malzkuhn

Ivory Nuñez-Medrano

Alison Paul

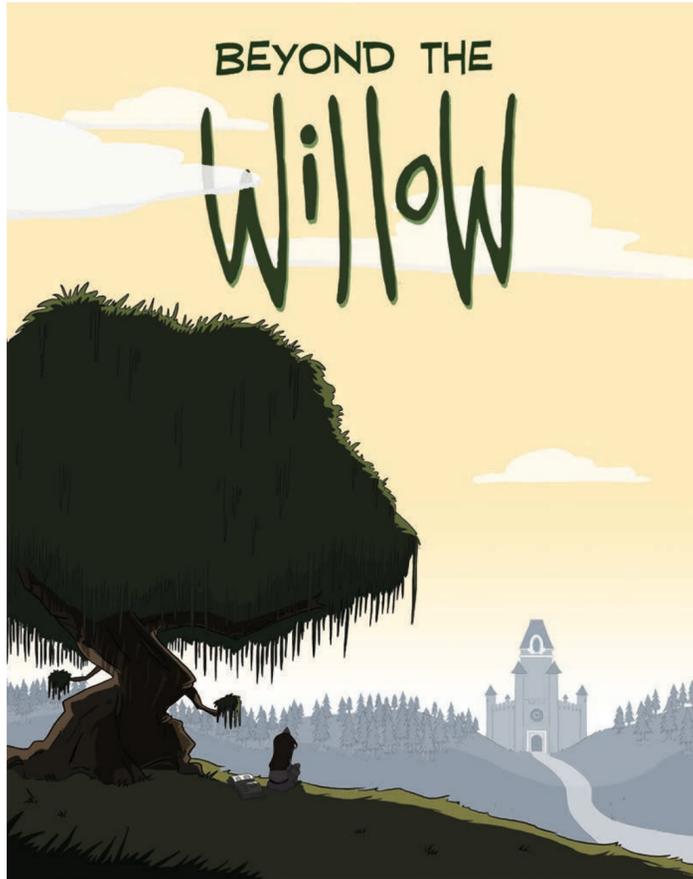
Jacob Reilly

Feifei Ruan

Ryan Weber

MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE  INAUGURAL THESIS SHOW

RYAN ANSEL



BEYOND THE WILLOW

Medium: Graphic Novel

Beyond the Willow: In the wake of her mother's death, eight-year-old Gracie retreats into the fantasy realm they once created together. Trying her best to keep what little she has of her mother intact, Gracie must defend the kingdom from the hands of savage forces.

As the family prepares to move into a new home, a dark presence once again looms over the fantasy realm into which Gracie has withdrawn. Fearing the loss of the only remaining connection she has left to her mother, Gracie battles to hold onto what she can of the kingdom, unaware of the family she might be leaving behind in the process.

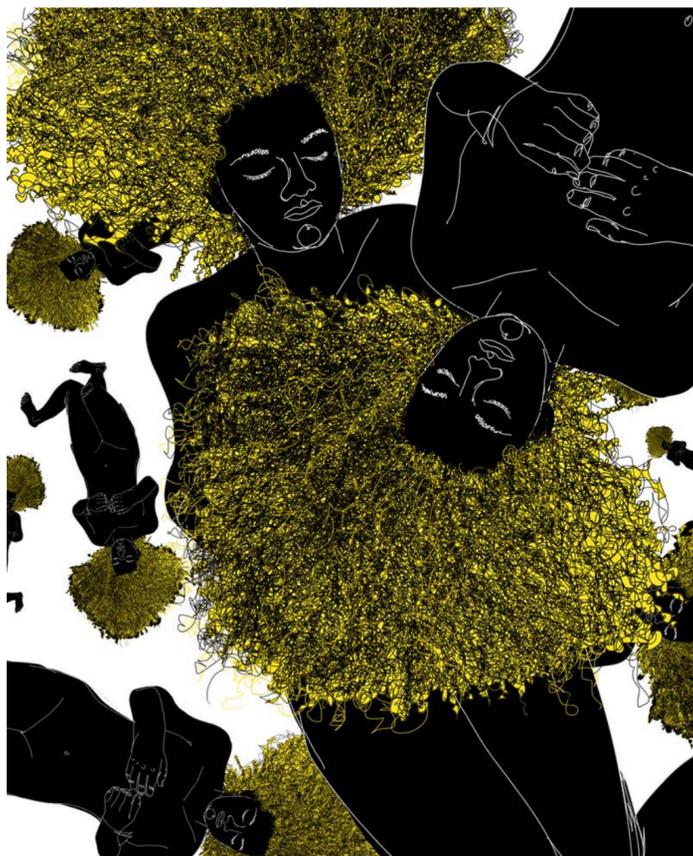
Thesis Website: raygunjunction.com/beyondthewillow

Personal Website: raygunjunction.com

Twitter: [@raygunjunction](https://twitter.com/raygunjunction)

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LOUISA BERTMAN



MANMADE

Medium: Animation

Credits: My Life My Choice, Tanya Donnelly

Manmade: An animated short commentary about "the demand side" of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (a.k.a. sex trafficking) in the United States of America.

Thesis Link: vimeo.com/louisabertman/manmade

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ANN CODDOU



VISIONARY

Medium: Photoshop, InDesign, Edge Animate

Collaboration: Sydney Cook (Flatter/Animator), Stinson Seuser (Composer), Juan Castro (Flatter)

Visionary: A sci-fi animated graphic novel app experience that you can access through your mobile device. Mai Petrus, an obstinate but encouraging Arydian soldier, is imprisoned in an enemy military lab. There she is subjected to experiments conducted to turn her into a bio-enhanced soldier that can alter molecules and bend matter. Mai plans to escape with her close friend Lyra, a fellow test subject. However, escaping proves to be easier said than done when the harsh realities of their situation catch up to them.

This is the first chapter in a long saga about the persistence of the human heart. This chapter explores what drives a person to live and what holds them back. In creating Visionary, Ann strives to prove that no matter the challenges you face, and no matter how hard you fall, if you work towards a goal and have faith, you will find a way. She takes inspiration from her own goals and aspirations, along with those of her peers, as she sets out to face the daunting task of adulthood. She hopes that this story will not only inspire her, but others her age who are just beginning to blossom as young professionals in their designated fields.

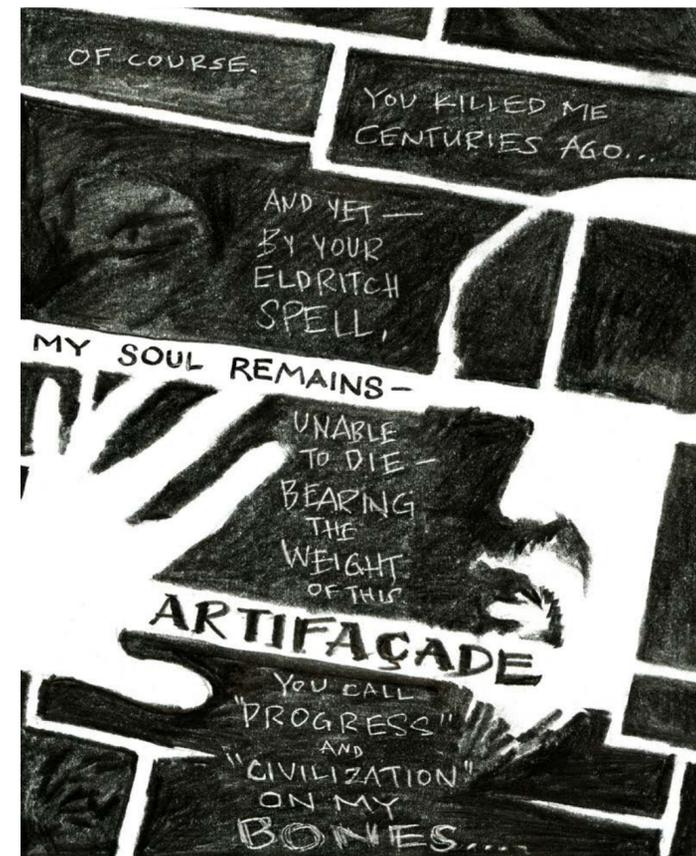
When engaged in the graphic novel app, the user will be immersed in the world of Visionary through animation and sound, giving them the full experience of Ann's vision.

Thesis Website: <http://visionarycomic.tumblr.com/>

Personal Website: anndorphin.com

Tumblr: <http://anndorphin.tumblr.com/>

CRAIG COSS



ANGELICA

Medium: Graphic novel in pencil

Publisher: Tatterhood Press

Angelica: The story of Brother Bernard, a fifteenth-century friar who has been sent on a mission to a valley bordering the Ottoman Empire to find an herbal remedy rumored to cure the bubonic plague. While the friar stays as a guest in the castle of the local lord, he becomes entangled in the family intrigues and learns of a female ghost who haunts the castle. When Bernard intervenes, he is caught in a struggle, not only for his life, but also for his soul's redemption.

The story was inspired by a pair of parallel folk tales—the Romanian ballad of the architect of the Monastery at Arges, Master Manole, and the Hungarian legend of Kelemen, the stonemason who built the castle at Deva, of which only a ruin remains today. Both of these legends tell of a location that could not be built upon until a woman was sacrificed by being immured in the walls of the building. But why do these legends indicate that such a sacrifice is necessary? In Manole's legend, the prince insists that the architect build on the site of an ancient, ruined wall that was already haunted. Why? What made that old wall so accursed that it would require such a sacrifice to build upon it? What cultural shifts might these rituals symbolize? What do we sacrifice today to build the structures of our contemporary culture?

Intrigued by these questions, author/illustrator Craig Coss responds to them through this penciled graphic novel. Part ghost story and part detective story, part historical fiction and part fairy tale, *Angelica* tells a story of a simple man's quest for beauty, healing, and wholeness that pulls him into the darkness concealed, not only in his own unconscious psyche, but in the foundations of today's Western civilization.

Thesis Website: [CraigCoss.com/Angelica](https://craigcoss.com/Angelica)

Personal Website: CraigCoss.com

NADIA DELANE



SPILT MILK

Medium: Stop Motion Film

Spilt Milk: Inspired by diasporic consciousness, Nadia DeLane's visual storytelling embodies diversity and variation. Over the past fifteen years, DeLane has independently produced written and visual content for commission, web and print media.

DeLane's *Spilt Milk* is a stop motion animated film delving into concepts ranging from childhood abandonment to the liquid nature of futures not yet beheld. Fabricating the family unit, DeLane's handmade dolls, complimentary textures and puppetry visually communicate the emotional side effects of grief, care and longing. Though anchored by change, the clock spins, shifting focus from what is lost with time, to what is gained through growth and experience. The viewer may ask: what is the function of a dream? A nightmare?

Spilt Milk is an abstract stop-motion animation taking audiences through the eyes of Carmen, a milk-loving child with an invisible friend named The Clear One (TCO). TCO, an entity left behind by his own family, fosters a bond with Carmen founded on play and mutual "seeing". However, their friendship is soon interrupted by Carmen's impending adolescence and inability to see or recognize her friend. Carmen's inability to see TCO results in nightmarish visions and physical pain. While experiencing grief over the changing dynamic, TCO anonymously heals Carmen's illness.

A visual metaphor for the bone-fortifying power of milk, *Spilt Milk's* skewed imagery asks the viewer to look inside out for answers to life's lingering questions.

Personal Website: www.nadiadelane.com

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JENNY GOLDSTICK



THIS IS MY MEMORY OF FIRST HEARTBREAK, WHICH I CAN'T QUITE PIECE BACK TOGETHER

Medium: Interactive

Credits: Stephen Betts and Owen Roberts – Development, Kelvin Fadul – Video Animation Assistance, Vassi Spanos – Exhibition Consultant

This is My Memory of First Heartbreak, Which I Can't Quite Piece Back Together: A graphic memoir exploring the author's memory of her first heartbreak. Created as an interactive, sequential experience, *This is My Memory of First Heartbreak, Which I Can't Quite Piece Back Together* (TMMFH) attempts to convey the fluid and subjective nature of this highly emotional, complex, and (increasingly) distant memory.

While at its core, this is a story of two young adults who argue on a suburban front porch late one summer night, it is really the story of the arc of their entire relationship. It is the complex set of occurrences surrounding the actual moment of heartbreak that make up the very fabric of it.

Using her background in information graphics, Goldstick designed the experience of TMMFH as logically as possible, attempting to quantify and string together the events of the memory in a way that felt evocative and nostalgic. Ultimately, the goals of the project were to tell a subjective, emotional story that an informational, diagrammatic approach could be applied toward, and to watch the consequences of that experiment unfold. It quickly turned into an interactive endeavor when it became clear that the story should be told non-linearly.

Personal Website: jennygoldstick.com

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ANNA EVE SLAGE



EATING ALONE

Medium: Photography and Prose

Eating Alone: As social creatures, food is something we generally share with friends or family. There are many aspects of our culture that are entirely designed around the sharing of food. But, what does it look like when we don't?

Using food as a common element, *Eating Alone* looks momentarily into the lives of twenty-three different characters. Told through photographs and short written vignettes, the work goes beyond the simple act of eating and questions our perspectives on what it means to be alone.

Sometimes, eating alone is an act of bravery. Sometimes, it is a result of being left behind. Sometimes, it is an act of necessity. Sometimes, it is something else entirely.

These stories ask us to reflect on our own feelings about being alone and compare them to the experiences of others. At different times in our lives, we've been or known each of the characters presented. While fictional, the stories speak to an emotional truth of what it feels like to be human.

Thesis Website: www.annaeveslage.com/eatingalone

Personal Website: www.annaeveslage.com

STEVEN LITTLE



CARRIED INTEREST

Medium: Pen, Ink, Photocopier, Cintiq

Collaboration: Thesis Advisor Anthony Meloro, Team MFAVN

Credits: SVA, Bloomberg News, and my family

LIMITED PARTNERSHIPS : Fiscal Q4 | 2014

Dear Investors,

We are recapping the last part of 2014 - October, November and December, and the great supply of actions that occurred throughout. The eminence of desire, unbound wealth, love, sex, helicopters, snow-capped mountains, and penthouses - these are the positive spikes in the trajectory of this Quarter. The crude oil unrest, Greek national debt, Russian aggression, police brutality and rioting - these were the nearly daily troughs.

Limited Partnerships, LLC is a New York City-based financial management firm, actively trading and, with the help of proprietary algorithms, acquiring every dollar, pound, ruble, yen, and deutsche mark we can, and currently in charge of assets totaling four billion dollars. This vein of Quarterly Reports is the supplementary social side of the firm's decisions, actions and reactions.

Technological development and aggressive intelligence have garnered a king's portion to us who are dedicated to seeking and constantly advancing investment strategies. Now, coupled with sound risk management, we are leveraging scale and deploying elaborate acquisition strategies, enabling us to become "just medium enough to keep winning."

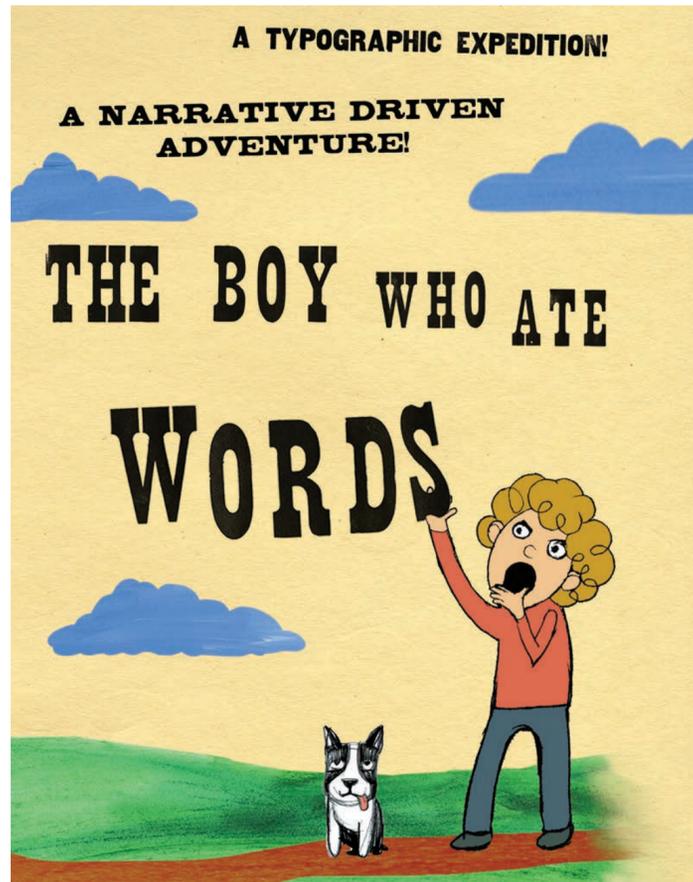
All the Best,

Hedge Fundly, Manager

Thesis Website: www.idyllc.com

Twitter: [@stevenlittle](https://twitter.com/stevenlittle)

MELISSA MALZKUHN



THE BOY WHO ATE WORDS

Medium: An iOS app (for the iPad)
Publisher: Ink & Salt
Credits: Luke Gehorsam, Programmer; Yiqiao Wang, Character Sketches; Rainy Orteca, Sound Designer

The Boy Who Ate Words is an interactive narrative-based game. The protagonist lives in a world where he is constantly given commands: "Keep your dog off my lawn!", "Return your overdue books!" "Put your shoes away!". The directives become insufferable and he becomes increasingly more and more frustrated, everyday and everywhere, everyone telling him what to do and what not to do. One day, in a spontaneous gesture, without thinking, he grabs a word and shoves it in his mouth! Much to his astonishment, he could eat words; words are edible! He grabs another word and another one! He was on a rampage – eating every word in sight. Unbeknownst to the boy, every time he eats a word, the corresponding object disappears. Alas, his world is vanishing! Words construct our meaning and understanding of the world; in a world where words cease to exist, our constructed world would cease to exist! The boy finds himself alone, scared, and lonely, in a blank space void of objects and meaning: not to mention – slightly bloated with a stomach full of words! Sniffing and sniveling, he starts to hiccup – "HICCUP- HICCUP" and out come letters! With that the game begins. Now the responsibility of restoring his world is up to the player by matching the letters to create words, transforming them into objects!

The Boy Who Ate Words is an exploration into interactive storytelling and visual representations of voice. The typography is original, done entirely on a letterpress machine using type sets dating back as early as the 1870s. The prints were then scanned and turned into font files. Each story character was given a distinctive font, adding weight and individuality to their voice, style, and tone. Designed for children ages 8 & up, including parents, educators, design aficionados, and all linguaphiles at heart. The essence of this story is to provoke language, literacy and literality.

Thesis Website: theboywhoatewords.com
Personal Website: mezmalz.com
Twitter: [@mezmalz](https://twitter.com/mezmalz)
Instagram: [@mezmalz](https://www.instagram.com/mezmalz)

ALISON PAUL



EQUINOX

Medium: Multi-Plane Stop-Motion Animation

Equinox is the story of a man in a lighthouse in the middle of the Arctic Circle. His days are long and lonely, and the memories of his beloved are everywhere, a constant reminder of his new life of solitude. He tries to find solace in his work, tracing the movement of the sun throughout the day and operating the lighthouse at the night, but it's not the same without her.

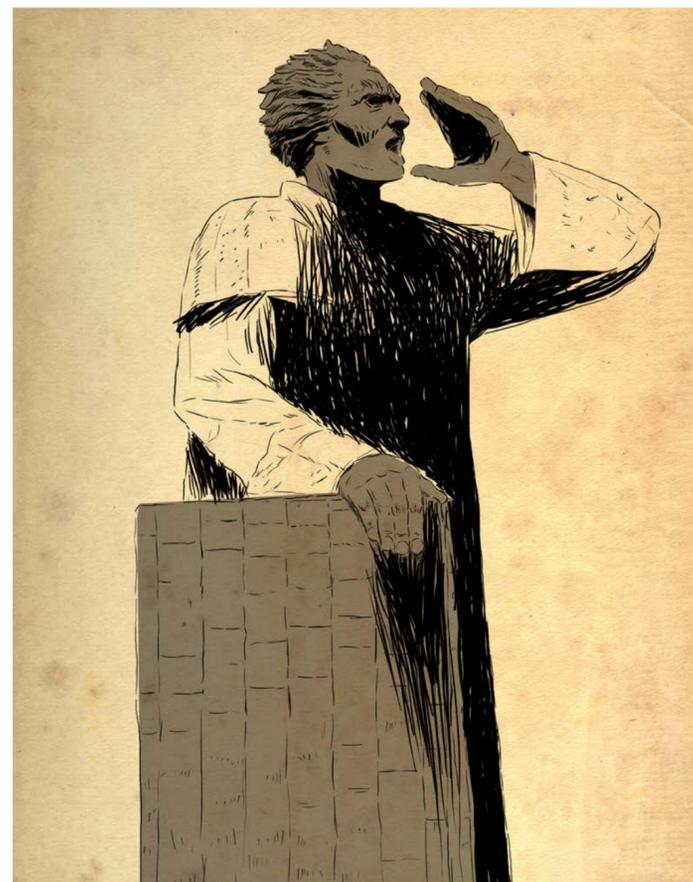
As the *Equinox* draws nearer, his spirits lift slightly, but the anticipation is almost worse. When the time comes, our sailor shaves off his months of beard growth and dons a full tuxedo and top hat. He locks the door to the lighthouse and, with the setting sun he walks into the icy water...

...but what he finds below is not the end, just another beginning.

In this, her third short film, Alison Paul continues to play with the limitations that analog animation presents. Creating all effects in-camera, Alison fabricated all assets in paper and animated every scene by hand, exploring the answers to the questions: How expressive is the face of an etching? How does the ocean move in three planes? How does the sun set in a paper sky?

Thesis Website: AlisonPaulArt.com/animation.html
Personal Website: AlisonPaulArt.com
YouTube: [YouTube.com/user/AlisonPaulArt](https://www.youtube.com/user/AlisonPaulArt)
Vimeo: [Vimeo.com/131119896](https://vimeo.com/131119896)

IVORY NUÑEZ-MEDRANO



INTERNAL MATTER

Medium: Printed book

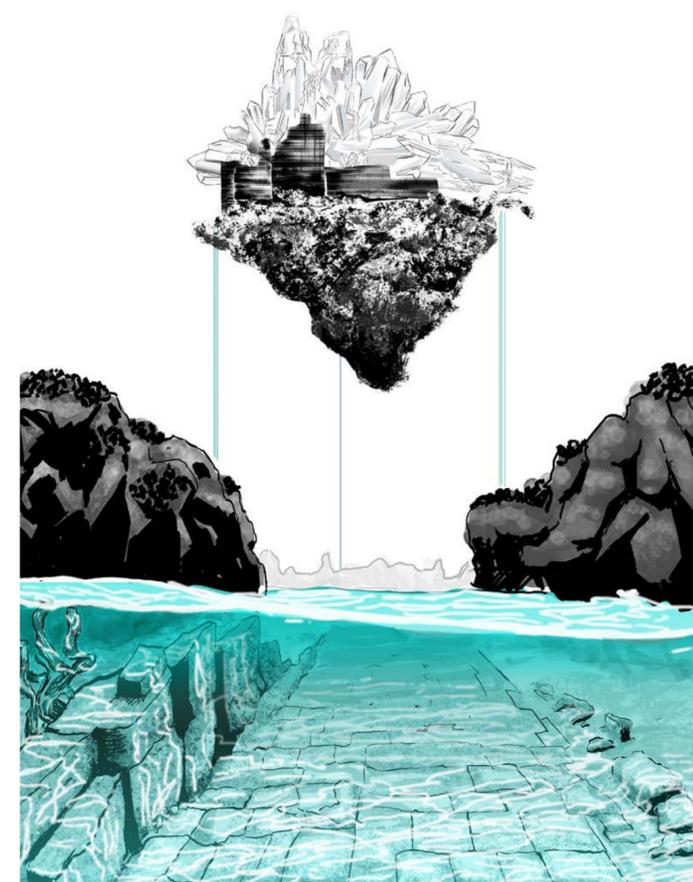
Internal Matter: A book telling the story of Daniel, a self-taught plumber with poetic sensibilities, who becomes a most wanted man after accidentally discovering a major threat to the sewage system of his native city. While running for his life, Daniel is forced to join a clandestine army in need of his plumbing expertise to execute their radical agenda, which includes a coup.

The series of events in Daniel's life takes place in Someday City, a post-apocalyptic society founded inside the monumental statue of Fray Montesinos, the first Dominican monk who condemned the crimes against the indigenous people of the island of La Hispaniola, perpetrated by conquistadors in the 16th century.

Ivory Nuñez-Medrano's *Internal Matter* explores the narrative possibilities of digitized handmade illustration, amateur poetry, descriptive writing, and vintage handbook layouts, to produce a third world sci-fi tale.

Thesis Website: ivorynunez.com
Tumblr: [ivorystuff.tumblr.com](https://www.tumblr.com/ivorystuff)

JACOB REILLY



AQUATIGRAPHICA

Medium: Comic Book

AQUATIGRAPHICA: Before we existed on this planet, the gods created many slave species - each new creation supplanting the last as their usefulness passed into history...

Or they became too hard to control.

Nereus is a servant to the creator-gods. He acts as liaison between master and subject. That is not, however, how his people view this relationship - to this race of sea-people, the Telchines, they are nothing but slaves. They live their entire lives on this island, all the while shadowed by the looming crystal citadel that floats above them in the distance.

His people were made for a purpose. They were gifted with the ability to mold water to their will. They use their skills to build homes, grow food, and work metal in steam-heated, underwater forges, making them highly-prized by their masters. Nereus, however, has no such ability. But when everything our hero knows begins to sink into a sea of betrayal and fear, he must stand up for himself and the people who labeled him an outcast.

He feels he has no hope of putting a stop to what's coming... like he's losing his mind... he's even hearing voices. Are those voices only in his head?

Now seen for the first time, having been conceived in 2012, the generations of this story have been a multitude. Now boiled down to its essence, the first issue of *Aquatigraphica* introduces us not only to Nereus and his struggle for survival, but also to the forgotten world of gods beyond the knowledge of the most ancient of legends. Enjoy this issue while you can. What comes next turns...

Thesis Website: AQUATIGRAPHICA.info
Personal Website: jacobatom.com
Twitter: [@JacobAtom](https://twitter.com/JacobAtom) / [@AQUATIGRAPHICA](https://twitter.com/AQUATIGRAPHICA)
Instagram: [@CosmicAwareness](https://www.instagram.com/CosmicAwareness)

FEIFEI RUAN



SASHIMI

Medium: Digital

SASHIMI: One day, in a small fishing village, a strange plague strikes. Many seagulls die mysteriously and the villagers don't understand why. A young sashimi chef believes the matter is not a simple one. While trying to find some clues, he accidentally falls into a strange underwater world. There, he discovers the real cause of the strange event. Meanwhile, a more fearful truth is beginning to emerge, worse than he ever could have imagined...

The mystery and suspense develop with the main character's mental illness, and he is increasingly unable to tell the difference between what is a dream and what is reality. The story is inspired by Ruan's nightmares. It expresses the feeling of fear and brings the nightmares to life.

Ruan approached the work in a unique style meant to reflect the dark and heavy tone of the story. In terms of format, Ruan experimented with a few different directions and ended up making a unique picture book/graphic novel hybrid. This book will deliver a tangible representation of a beautiful nightmare – Good Night.

Thesis Website: FeifeiRuan.com/sashimi
 Personal Website: FeifeiRuan.com
 Tumblr: FeifeiRuan.tumblr.com
 Facebook: [Facebook.com/ruan0v0](https://www.facebook.com/ruan0v0)
 Instagram: [@ruan0v0](https://www.instagram.com/ruan0v0)

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To those who have picked up this gem of a publication, thank you.

Five years ago when President David Rhodes and Provost Jeff Nesin approved the design of the MFA Visual Narrative program, I could never have foreseen where we would be by 2015. It was unimaginable how the thoughtful insights and remarkable imaginations of the faculty and students would come to define and truly shape the program's focus and fulfill its potential.

This exhibition introduces our inaugural graduating class of 2015 and their thesis work, fourteen unique and singular visual artists and authors, truly representing the future of visual storytelling and embodying the mission of the MFAVN program. I could not be more grateful for the opportunity to have worked together or more proud of their progress and accomplishments.

I would like to thank our illustrious faculty and mentors for their time, dedication and generosity, Joan McCabe and Lucea Spinelli for their partnership and wisdom, and David Rhodes and Jeff Nesin for their ever-present support and vision.

My hat and heart goes out to you all. Cheers!!!



Nathan Fox | Chair, MFA Visual Narrative
 June 29, 2015

RYAN WEBER



JOURNAL No. 034

Medium: Manuscript/Mixed Materials
 Format: Writing, Drawings, Ephemera
 Repository: Manuscript Division
 Call Number: m/mm009327, box 1

Journal No. 034: Within the pages of *Journal No. 034* is captured a yearning for an analog romance in the digital age, a questioning of the world around us, and an exploration of debilitating self-doubt.

A risk analyst for the Are They The One™ mobile dating application, the writer casts himself as a modern age Cupid, aiding others in the pursuit of love, but paying little attention to his own. That is until one Thursday night, while on the train home from the office, he stumbles on a missed connection and a token left behind in its wake. Intrigued by this chance event, he develops a compulsion to discover its owner's identity and putting the skills of his day job to work to solve this mystery. As he dives head-first into this search, the pages of his journal become flooded with an uneasy obsession to discover as much information about this individual as he can.

Journal No. 034, which holds careful records and thoughts of the world around its writer, becomes a manifestation of how far from reality a mind can spin. Its pages struggling with just how much must be sacrificed for a shot at true love. The tables take a turn however, when we find the writer's own heart involved in the investigation at hand. He is forced to face the indecision that has held him back in the past and how he will handle what may become just one large chain of missed opportunity and destruction.

Thesis Website: RyanMatthewWeber.com/No.034.html
 Personal Website: RyanMatthewWeber.com

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- Benjamin Marra, *Writer and Artist*
- Bill Kartalopoulos, *Editor and Publisher*
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- Edward Hemingway, *Writer and Illustrator*
- Eric Baker, *Designer*
- Jeff Rogers, *Designer and Artist*
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- Jim Rugg, *Illustrator and Designer*
- Jonathon Rosen, *Artist and Animator*
- Lee Aaron Rosen, *Actor and Film Expert*
- Leonard Marcus, *Historian and Critic*
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CRAIG COSS

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