

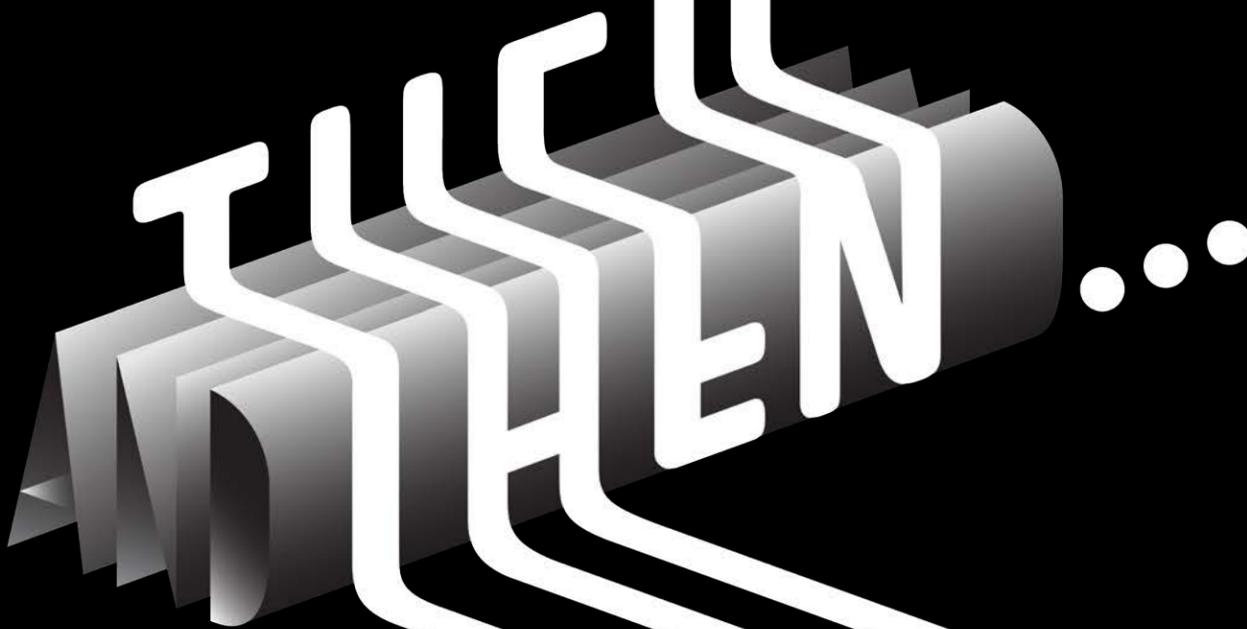
2018 THESIS EXHIBITION



AND THEN...

SVA MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE

SVA MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE 2018 THESIS EXHIBITION



RECEPTION

Friday, July 20th
6pm-8pm

RSVP: andthen2018reception.eventbrite.com

GALLERY HOURS

June 30-July 21
Monday through Friday: 9am - 7pm
Saturday: 10am - 6pm
Gramercy Gallery
209 East 23rd Street

THESIS PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday, July 17th
6pm-9:30pm
209 East 23rd Street, Rm 311

RSVP: 2018thesispresentations.eventbrite.com

PROGRAM INFO

MFA Visual Narrative
sva.edu/mfavn | mfavn@sva.edu
212.592.2388
136 West 21st Street
[@mfavn](https://twitter.com/mfavn) | [#mfavn](https://twitter.com/mfavn)

Guest Designer

Rachel Shim | rachelshim.com

THESIS MENTORS

Alexandra Zsigmond	Art Director
Asaf Hanuka	Comic Book Artist & Writer
Daniel Warren Johnson	Illustrator & Comic Artist
David Mazzucchelli	Comic Book Artist & Writer
Elinor Carucci	Photographer
Fran Krause	Illustrator
Melanie Hoopes	Writer
Patrick Crotty	Comic Book Artist & Publisher
Patty Paine	Author & Editor
Ryan Browne	Comic Book Artist & Writer

FACULTY

Ben Zackheim	Writer & Game Producer
Bill Kartalopoulos	Editor & Curator
Christina Roussos	Theatre Director
Diego Vainesman	Design Director
Ed Valentine	Writer & Puppeteer
Edward Hemingway	Author & Illustrator
Jim Rugg	Comic Book Artist
Jonathon Rosen	Artist & Animator
Lee Aaron Rosen	Actor & Film Expert
Leonard Marcus	Author, Historian & Critic
Lisa Cron	Author & Story Coach
Mark Sable	Author
Matt Rota	Illustrator
Nathan Fox	Illustrator & Comic Book Artist
Pan Terzis	Artist, Illustrator & Printer
Robert Thill	Artist, Author & Independent Scholar
Stacy Renee Morrison	Photographer
Tak Cheung	Visible Futures Lab
Tim Szetela	Designer & Animator

MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE ADMINISTRATION

Nathan Fox	Chair
Joan McCabe	Director of Operations
Lucea Spinelli	Project Manager

THANK YOU

Andrew Alexander	Lead Technician
Anelisa Garfunkel	Filmmaker, Writer & Educator
Anthony P. Rhodes	Executive Vice President
Carl Auge	Exhibitions Coordinator
Carrie Atkins	Learning Technologist
Christopher Cyphers	Provost
David Rhodes	President
Emily Ross	Assistant Provost
Francis DiTommaso	Director, SVA Galleries
Frank Bonomo	Manager, Academic IT
Jeff Nesin	Provost
John Heida	Director, Visible Futures Lab
Mike Falk	Academic IT Support
Pan Terzis	Artist, Illustrator, Printer
Robert Campbell	Exhibitions Coordinator
Tyson Skross	Exhibitions Manager

A NOTE FROM THE CURATORS

Ed Valentine, Writer & Puppeteer, **Jonathon Rosen**, Artist & Animator

Throughout human history, artists and storytellers have taken on the task of responding to the times in which they live. This work is not only necessary, but it becomes absolutely urgent in periods of great peril. Once again, we find ourselves living through a time where we are dependent on creative humans to sound warnings, to tell hard truths, to offer solace or respite—and sometimes, to point the way towards a better future.

The nine artist-storytellers in this show all use their considerable craft to respond to our current, and increasingly unstable era. Through their main characters, we see our own world reflected, and our own possible responses to the times foreshadowed.

In some of the projects, characters suffer shattering losses of loved ones. They slowly, fumblingly, learn to make sense of their lives again in the wilds of the jungle (*Aroe Maiwu*) or in the deepest reaches of space (*On Silent Ground*).

In others, characters battle entire worlds after their societies are revealed to be authoritarian (*Sun Cell*), diseased (*Medicine Man*), or literally crumbling apart around them, brick by brick (*Pericardia*).

When all seems lost, some characters hunker down in tight spaces and seek comfort in close relationships (*Coupling*), while others flee to the open highway, hitchhiking cross-country in hopes of finding freedom and a future (*Detour*). Either way, however, shadows of the past follow close behind, making true comfort and freedom hard to find.

Yet as dark as the times can be, we see these artists offering clear, bright flickers of hope. Whether their characters face off with dangerous sea beasts (*BöDaryah*), or whether they confront more farcical misunderstandings of their own making in the heightened emotions of art school (*Negative Space*), in the end these storytellers demonstrate a belief that the combined powers of pictures and words can help us find common ground.

Through it all, these students have experimented with form and materials, each finding a unique visual expression that perfectly suits each story. We are impressed with their artistry and dedication, and we are proud to send these nine students—and their responses to the times we live in—out into the world. We hope that you and many others will hear what they have to say.

RODA AL-THANI

JIE REN

MATTHEW MURPHY

AND

LUISA ULHOA

JENNY BEE

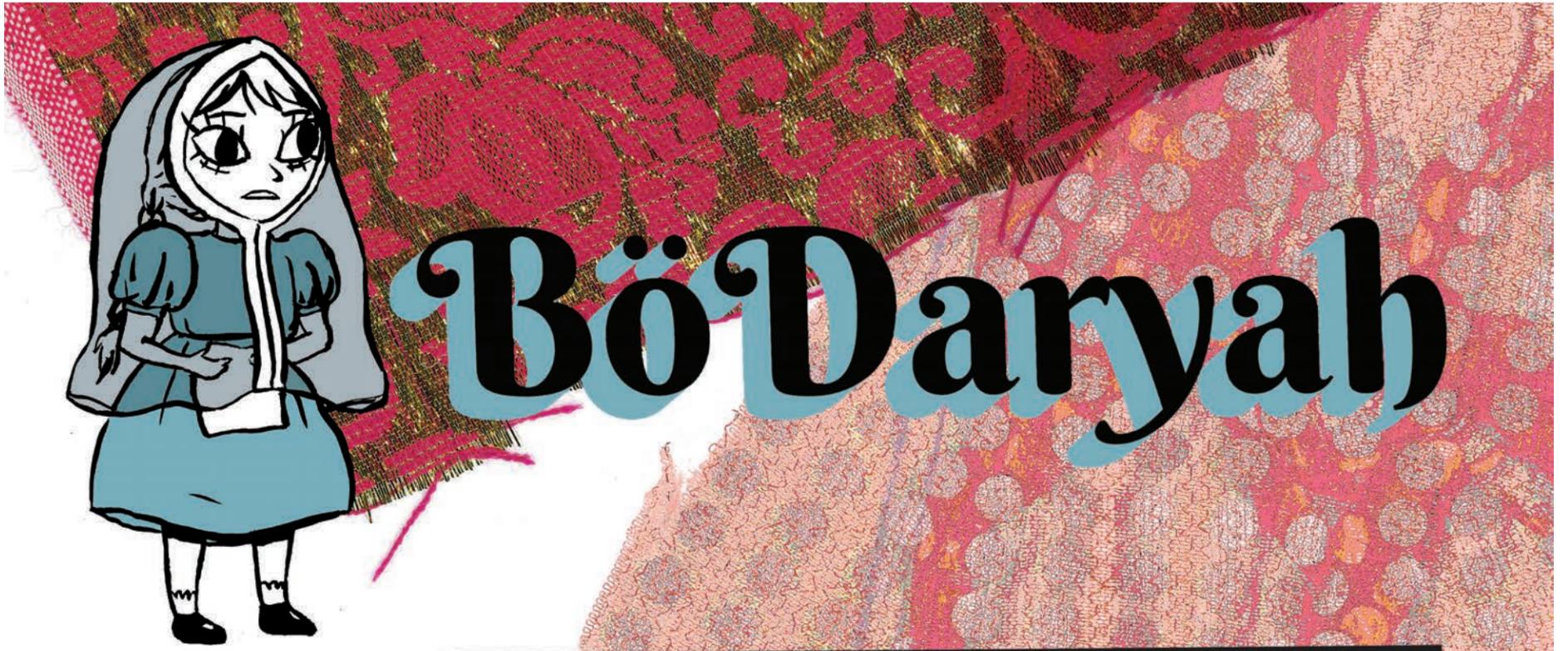
KENNY NAM

ETHAN GOULD

AND

SHANNON O'HALLORAN

ALEX BARSKY



MEDIUM: PICTURE BOOK
PUBLISHER: SELF-PUBLISHED

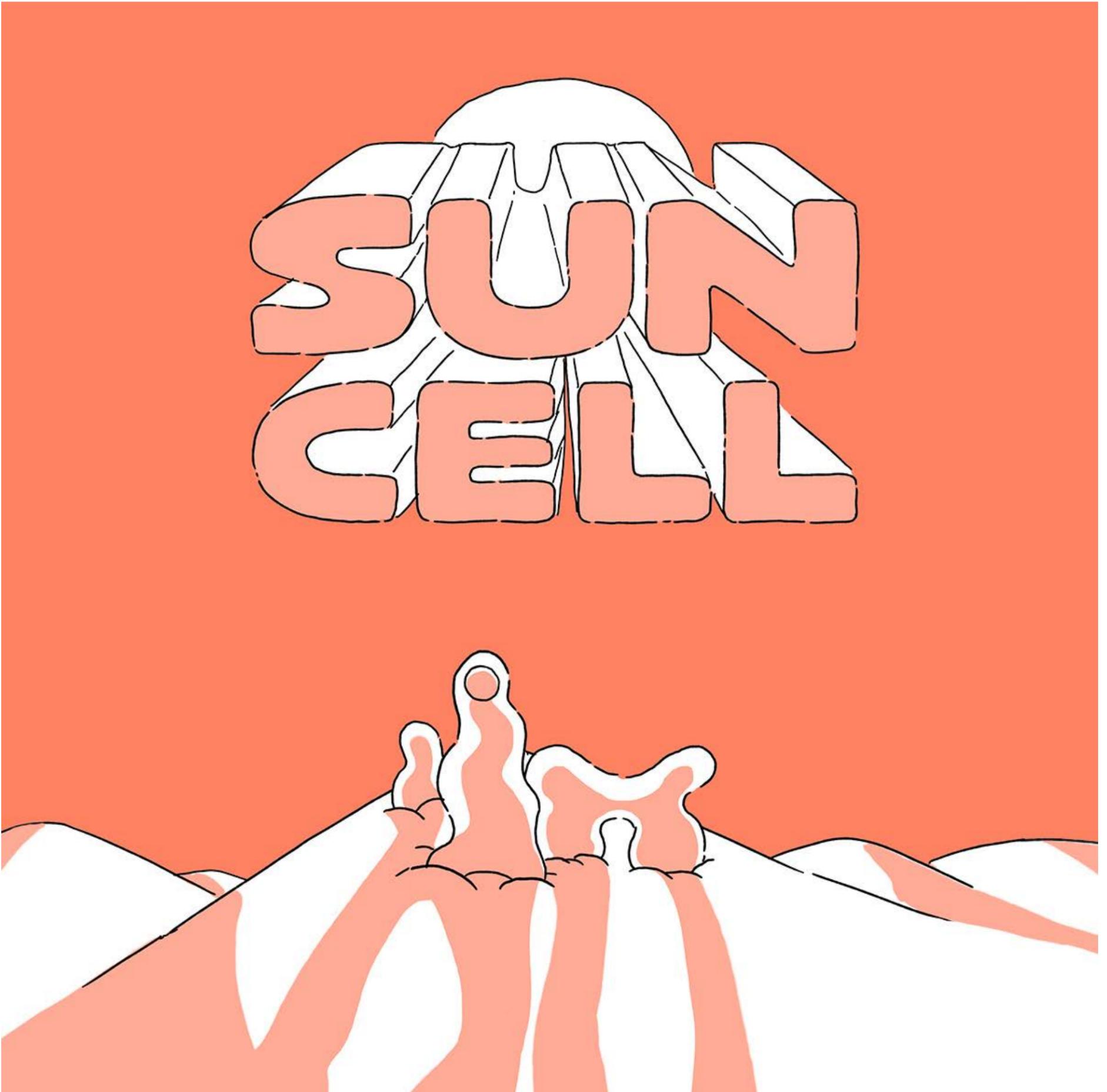
Lulwa, a young girl living in the port town of Doha, wishes to sail her own boat. Society deems that, and many other things, inappropriate for a girl. She also cannot go to school because there simply isn't one for girls!

BöDaryah is a mythical creature that haunts the ocean. Manipulating the weather and capsizing boats, his wrath has always been felt throughout the past century in the Arabian Gulf Sea. As a captain of a ship and his crew go missing during their pearl-diving voyage, Lulwa daughter of the Nokhida (captain), suspects her father was captured by BöDaryah. The town learns of this news and is furiously prepared to end BöDaryah once and for all. Leaving her mother to mourn, Lulwa sets off on a quest, equipped only with the hope of finding her father and a magical seashell. During her journey, she challenges traditions and makes new friends along the way.

BöDaryah is an ode to Roda's great-grandfather Shk. Faleh Bin Nasser Al-Thani who was a well-known pearl merchant in the GCC and, most importantly, an advocate for education for all.

Roda Al-Thani is a Qatari graphic designer based in Doha, Qatar. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar with a BFA in Graphic Design. Her work ranges from game design to publications and posters. During her four years in VCUQ, she received several awards most notable the 2015 World Men's Handball Championship Mascot design. Since then she co-founded a design studio called Asterism Studio and she continues to work as a freelance graphic designer. She hopes that through her stories she brings back interest in Qatari folklore and history.

PROJECT WEBSITE: BODARYAH.COM
PERSONAL WEBSITE: RODAALTHANI.COM
INSTAGRAM: [@CTRL.ALT.RODA](https://www.instagram.com/CTRL.ALT.RODA)



MEDIUM: RISOGRAPHED GRAPHIC NOVEL

PUBLISHER: ZINE HUG WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE RISOLAB THESIS PUBLISHING FELLOWSHIP

CREDITS: STORY AND ART BY ALEX BARSKY, ART ASSISTANCE BY ANA LOZADA AND ZACK LYDON

Yam is a teenage boy that lives in Battery City, a militaristic commune with a daily conscription lottery. The society within Battery City is very insular and information about the outside world is unknown. Yam realizes his desire to find out what exists outside of Battery City and is drawn to the nuclear wasteland beyond the city's protective shield. This wasteland is rumored to be inhospitably polluted and filled with mutants affected by nuclear fallout. Even so, Yam can't shake the feeling there is something else out there...

The *Sun Cell* series explores humanity and nature surviving in a dystopian, post-nuclear society. Those living in this society face the aftermath of irresponsible past generations. Yam experiences the trials of adolescence, all while an oppressive government presence closes in on him.

Alex Barsky is a Brooklyn-based illustrator, animator and storyteller. Originally from Southern California, she moved to New York to study animation at the School of Visual Arts. Her work is influenced by world issues faced by humanity today. She believes that human ingenuity and collaboration can create a future of peace and abundance for all creatures on Earth.

PERSONAL WEBSITE: ABARSKY.COM

PUBLISHING WEBSITE: ZINEHUG.COM

INSTAGRAM: [@ZINEHUG](https://www.instagram.com/zinehug)



MEDIUM: FILM

PUBLISHER: VIMEO

CREDITS: PRODUCED BY FATCHIX FILMS
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY - EMILIA AGHAMIRZAI
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - JULIA TRINIDAD
SOUND - KATERINA AURIGEMA
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR - KEITH BURGUN

STARRING: KYLE LEVENICK AS REED BENTON
KAYTE ZHANG AS BRENNA FANG
JENNY BEE AS THE DOCUMENTARIAN
DENNIS PACHECO AS ART BUCK

Brenna and Reed are two art students that view media in vastly different ways. Brenna is extremely critical, wanting perfection in everything, whereas Reed prefers to give media a pass, liking most things. This is a source of friction between them. But when their hard-to-impress professor pairs them up on an assignment that will determine their ability to move forward in class, they must navigate their stark personality differences and grow as people, all the while being followed around by a documentarian who is skeptical of their ability to do so.

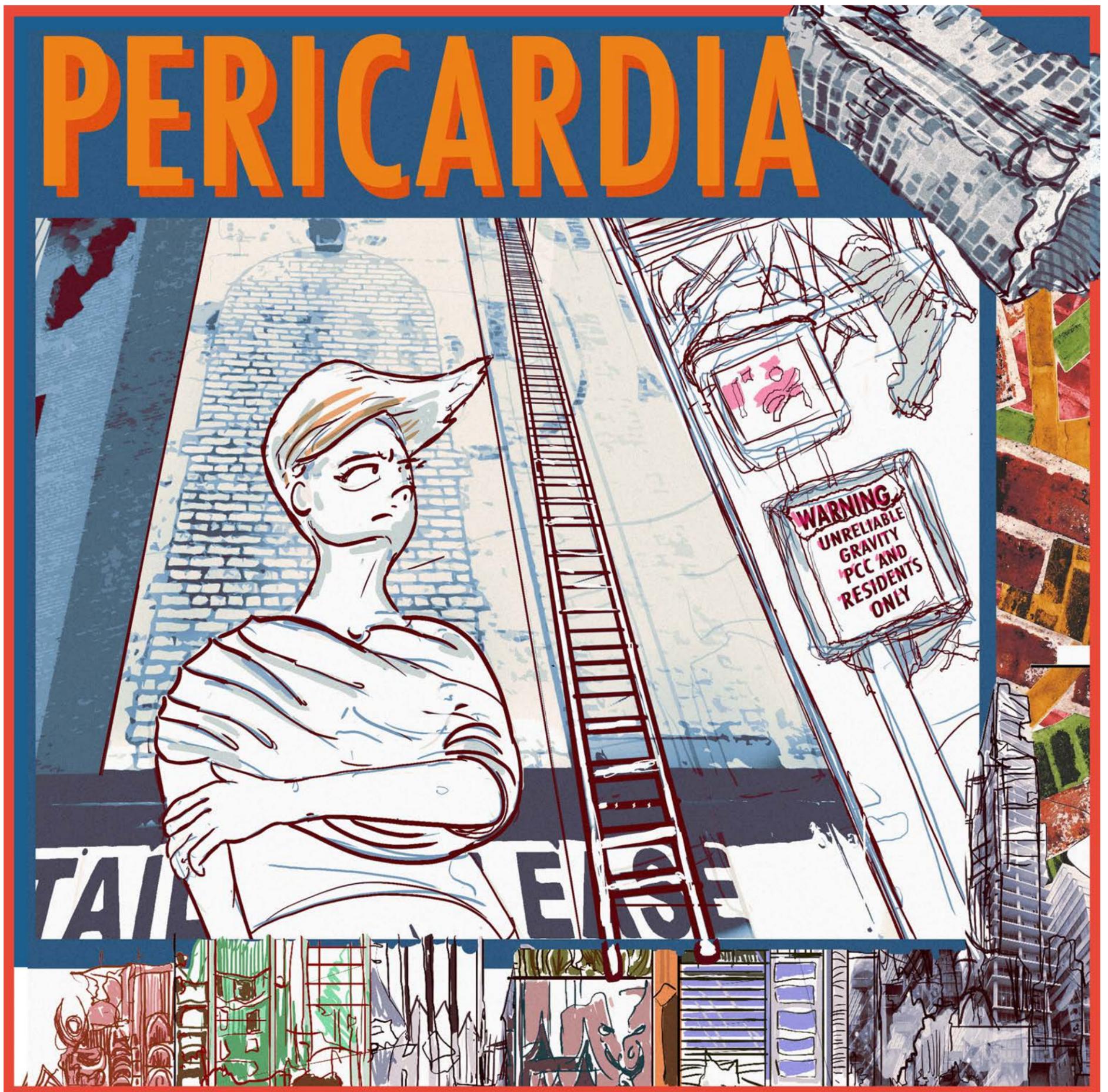
Through the power of group projects and bad 80's animation, can they overcome the obstacles of creative collaboration? Or are they doomed to a life of repeating courses and missed opportunities for radical friendships?

Jenny Bee is a New York-based motion graphic designer and storyteller, making things that move, and things that move you. She's a jack-of-all-trades, so *Negative Space* showcases this aspect of her personality as she writes, directs, acts, and motion graphic designs. She is often very tired, but the existence of plot holes in the world keeps her awake at night. Reach out to her if you're interested in collaboration, whimsical work or zany hijinks.

PERSONAL WEBSITE: JENNYBEE.DESIGN

TWITTER: [@JENNYBEEDESIGN](https://twitter.com/JENNYBEEDESIGN)

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



MEDIUM: PRINTED GRAPHIC STORY WITH DIGITAL EDITION
PUBLISHER: SELF-PUBLISHED

Val, a young scavenger with a strange medical condition, navigates the layers of the city of Pericardia. Val feels a kinship with Pericardia: burdened with an autoimmune disorder that causes architecture to exude from the sufferer's body, Val blends in with the junk towers at the outskirts of a city on the verge of collapse. A chance encounter with an exuberant member of the city's Civil Corps named Entri sees Val thrown into the ranks of the Pericardia Civil Corps when it turns out Val's illness can repair the city's ancient, malfunctioning infrastructure on the spot. Val struggles to find a sense of purpose and self-worth after a life of isolation, as Entri must show just how important Val is to the city's survival.

Pericardia explores the hazards and possibilities of starting over, touching on illness, imagined worlds, and the ways that people and places grow one another.

Ethan Gould is an artist and writer living Brooklyn. Ethan has created sets, props and puppets for off-Broadway and television, and art for galleries, games and journals. His critical writing has appeared in academic imprints such as *Postmedieval Studies*. Material history, world-building, speculative fiction and biology are all inspirations for his work.

PERSONAL WEBSITE: SPECTRAL.HOUSE
TWITTER: GOULDINI [@SPECTRALHOUSE](https://twitter.com/SPECTRALHOUSE)



ON SILENT GROUND

MEDIUM: GRAPHIC NOVEL

PUBLISHER: SELF-PUBLISHED

CREDITS: MATT MURPHY - WRITING, PENCILS, INKS
JULIE LERCHE - COLORS, LETTERING

On Silent Ground takes place in the 67th century and follows Jenart Bench, a posthuman Sycean Machine. In the fall of 6659, Jenart takes his son, Aleph, to shadow him at his job, as a superintendent of ship construction. Jenart hopes that Aleph might follow in his footsteps, but recognizes that his calling is being a pilot. Aleph strays away from Jenart to speak to a young cadet about being a pilot, drawing his father's ire. But as Jenart begins to chastise his son, he is shocked as the station monitor announces that a heavily damaged ship has docked.

As time wears on, Jenart witnesses more and more ships coming into the dock with damage and missing crew. He knows that pushing Aleph away from his desire to be a pilot will damage him emotionally, similar to how Jenart's father screwed him up. But he finds himself giving in to his fear, terrified of Aleph dying in service.

As the allied nations declare war, they demand that his station build more ships to aid in the conflict. He all but forces Aleph to volunteer and put his plans on hold. Months later, Aleph confronts his father about the refugee camp and the atrocities he saw there. Jenart forbids him from joining the stellar navy, and Aleph storms off vowing to do what he thinks is right.

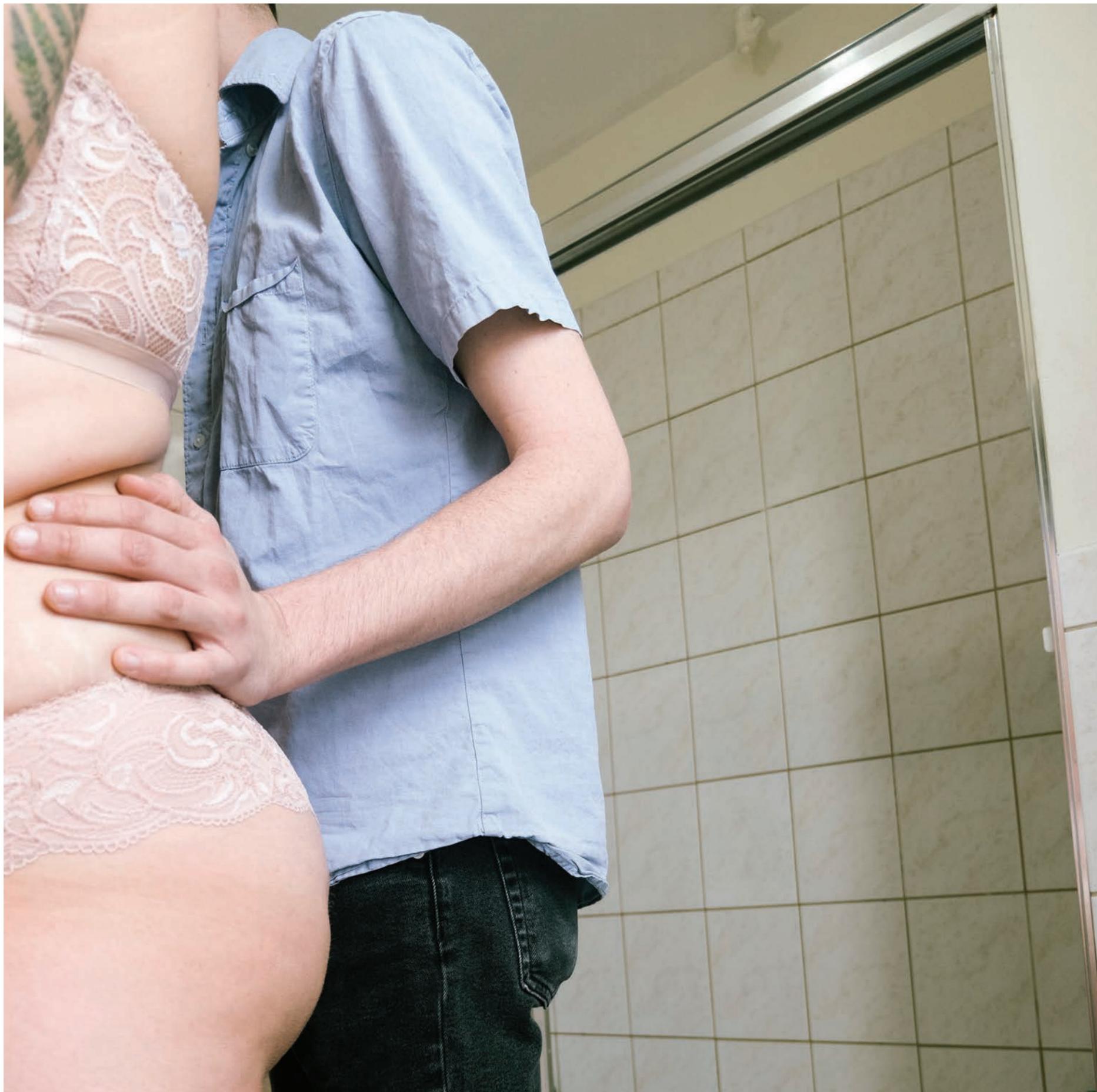
Jenart then witnesses the pain and suffering in the refugee camp himself, reminded how he felt called to work and how his father refused him as well. Jenart frees his son from the volunteer contract, but still hopes that Aleph won't put himself in danger and put himself fifty years away from his father. As Aleph graduates, he chooses leave and Jenart has to come to grips with the sense that he somehow failed to keep Aleph safe.

After several years, Aleph returns home with his own son, and Jenart recounts to him the way he felt all those years ago in the fall of '59.

Matt Murphy is a comic book artist and illustrator whose practice centers on a fictional culture of machines. He's an avid proponent of small press publication and has passionately served in the education of special needs students in the arts. He was awarded the Will Eisner Sequential Art Award by the SVA Alumni Association in 2018 for his work on this project.

PERSONAL WEBSITE: MATTHEWMURPHY.COM

INSTAGRAM: [@R.MATT.MURPHY](https://www.instagram.com/r.matt.murphy)



MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK AND NARRATIVE DOCUMENTARY FILM

PUBLISHER: SELF-PUBLISHED ARTIST EDITION

FILM CREDITS: CINEMATOGRAPY AND DIRECTION BY SHANNON O'HALLORAN

MUSIC BY TONY BEMRAN AND TRES STEWART

Coupling follows two artistic lovers, with past failed marriages, struggling to live together for the first time. Set amidst the violence and loneliness of New York City, it deals with issues of mental instability and past traumas. Created as a response to the social media saturated world we live in—where people perpetually present their best selves; *Coupling* reveals the things we would rather not see—body imperfections, drugs and medications, anger and raw emotion. What happens when the mask of the performer is dropped to reveal the true self below? It is based on the author's own experiences.

Untitled Intimacy Project is a totally unscripted and raw narrative documentary featuring original music. It shows the profundity of intimacy between a real life couple. These are the same characters from the book in familiar environments set against the loneliness of New York City. In this modern romance, there are intense emotional highs and lows—the sort that only exist between two people who are incredibly vulnerable with each other.

Shannon O'Halloran explores her own emotions and life experiences in her work. She is inspired by the likes of Sally Mann and Nan Goldin and aspires to combine the rawness of intimate photography with the modern capabilities of video. Much of her work deals with facets of feminine identity and larger cultural issues of gender and medications. She lives and works in Brooklyn as a multi-media artist and commercial photographer/videographer.

PERSONAL WEBSITE: SLOHALLORAN.COM

INSTAGRAM: [@SHANNONSHOOTSFILM](https://www.instagram.com/shannonshootsfilm)



MEDIUM: GRAPHIC NOVEL

PUBLISHER: KENNYNAM COMICS

CREDITS: KENNY NAM AS WRITER, PENCILER, INKER, COLORIST, LETTERER

Dancing Ghost is born into a royal family of the Red Valley, home planet of the intergalactic exorcists. As an only child of the queen and the sole heiress to the throne, Ghost is raised in a heavily guarded castle, away from all the dangers of the world. All the power and wealth loom large within her reach. However, she begins to have qualms about her birthright, questioning the justification for her privileges. When she finally finishes her training and becomes a denominated exorcist, she ventures outside to prove herself as the rightful queen.

Throughout the story, Medicine Man refers to professional exorcists who protect the galaxy and its citizens from the demons. However, it also connotes the traditional definition: a spiritual leader of a tribal community. Throughout Dancing Ghost's journey, her concept of an ideal leader changes dramatically, forged by a variety of people she meets. By following Dancing Ghost's understanding of her responsibilities as a leader, the story aspires to point out the crack in the current political system and question what can be done to remedy the polarization of socioeconomic classes in our own society.

Kenny Nam is a comic book artist who writes, pencils, inks, colors, and letters his own stories. Before diving into the field of comics, Kenny studied biomedical engineering and researched in molecular biology laboratories. Kenny is of Korean descent and wishes to use his experience and background to make comics with a large spectrum of perspectives.

PROJECT WEBSITE: MEDICINEMAN.SPACE

PERSONAL WEBSITE: KENNYNAM.COM

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



MEDIUM: GRAPHIC NOVEL
 PUBLISHER: SELF-PUBLISHED

His whole life, Jay has craved success. As a talented and ambitious young artist, Jay attends the best school in his native country of China and becomes a great local success. Knowing there is more out there, and under great pressure from those closest to him, Jay travels to New York seeking the fame and fortune he feels he deserves. However, from the moment he arrives, his dreams and aspirations collapse into nightmares. He starts to run out of money. His girlfriend leaves him. No one in New York pays any attention to his artwork. Things hit bottom when his best friend commits suicide. In short, his world is over. While confused and lost, Jay runs into a stranger that offers him a detour from his troubles. Shang—a writer and vagabond—convinces Jay to hitchhike west along Route 66. As their surroundings change, Jay sees a different side of life. He and Shang join forces with Tony, an army veteran who wears Buddhist monk robes and carries his father’s ashes at all times. Jay and Shang follow him to the Grand Canyon and Zion National Park. There, Jay faces death, his past and the chance for renewal.

Detour is a graphic novel based on Jie’s experience as a Chinese immigrant. Jie explores questions of identity, nationality, and alienation through an odyssey across an American landscape that is at once hospitable and hostile. *Detour* is a journey to the heart of the United States as seen through the eyes of a Chinese artist.

As a child, **Jie Ren** fell in love with manga and was determined to become a comic artist. He eventually left his small industrial hometown by gaining admission to the prestigious Beijing Film Academy. Following that, he began his career in Beijing as an illustrator in *Esquire China* for two years. In order to pursue comics full-time, Jie took another detour to NYC to attend the MFA Visual Narrative program at SVA.

PERSONAL WEBSITE: KIDRENJIE.TUMBLR.COM
 INSTAGRAM: [@KIDRENJIE](https://www.instagram.com/KIDRENJIE)



MEDIUM: INTERACTIVE VIDEO
PUBLISHER: SELF-PUBLISHED

When a young woman unexpectedly loses her father, the only member of her family she felt that loved her unconditionally, she feels lost. She was preparing herself to go on a trip to Pernambuco, a place known for its gorgeous beaches, as part of a military governmental program for university students. But with her father's passing, she feels an urgency to disappear, to go to a place distant, isolated, disconnected. She flees to the Amazon. But when she gets there, reality is quite different. She has to struggle with the strictness of a military routine—waking up at the crack of dawn, having little freedom, and with an early curfew. Dealing with the indigenous people is also a challenge, as she is ashamed of their nudity and has a hard time understanding a culture so unlike her own.

Little by little, and with the help of Izabel, a spirited woman she befriends in the program, she begins opening herself up to this new world. Her lived experiences in the Amazon open her eyes and change the way she sees herself and her family, giving new meanings to family, morals, freedom, life, death and the role her father had in her life.

Aroe Maiwu is a story about dealing with grief, self-discovery, unconditional love, and how one woman's personal journey to the Amazonian unknown makes her reevaluate her ideas and show her a bright side of a loved one's death. Through her video-diary

entries, we follow her own perspective of the events, and extra photographs and information help create a bigger picture of her life, of Brazil in the dictatorship years and the indigenous culture.

Luísa Ulhoa is a multimedia artist and a book editor. She has been working in the Publishing industry since 2009, both in the role of text editor and editorial designer. Her love for books soon revealed itself to be a love for storytelling. She is fascinated by how media changes message, and because of that she uses several media in her work. Increasingly interested in how technology can create new possibilities for narratives, she explores available forms to find the perfect way to tell each story.

PROJECT WEBSITE: AROEMAIWU.COM
PERSONAL WEBSITE: LUISAULHOA.COM
INSTAGRAM: [@LUISAULHOA](https://www.instagram.com/LUISAULHOA)
FACEBOOK: [LUISAPULHOA](https://www.facebook.com/LUISAPULHOA)

WHERE ARTIST MEETS AUTHOR

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

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

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

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

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

The world needs compelling stories.

What's yours?

Nathan Fox
Chair, MFAVN

