Still Theatre

Design Arts Illustration Thesis Defense

2022 Spring

Elene Shavgulidze

Artist Statement

Elene Shavgulidze is an artist from Tbilisi, Georgia who studied illustration at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon.

With a love for classical art and digital art, she uses her contrasting backgrounds of academic drawing and digital exploration when creating her work, essentially using analog techniques in the digital space.

Whether it be a book, album, or film, she condenses narratives into visuals, creating pieces with the dramatic compositions and vibrant color palettes.

Proposal

For my thesis project, I will be designing and illustrating a series of five 36" x 72" posters for theatre productions of classic stories from around the world in a collage of traditional and digital techniques. The stories will have themes of heritage, the passage of time, and different relationships with the past.

Proposal

Context:

Coming from Georgia, an ancient country that has mostly known battle and occupation, I was raised on stories of how much our ancestors fought to maintain the culture we have to this day. It's a land still facing the risk of occupation that weeps for its great past, and what it could have been. I grew up surrounded by old Tbilisi streets oozing history and charm and grew a taste for all things vintage. On the other hand, I also grew up on American media. I was entranced by American cartoons and ended up knowing English better than my native tongue, often being mistaken for a foreigner. After I came to America to study illustration, I opened up like never before. I felt free to speak and express myself without hindrance or judgment. But the distance was just what I needed to have those stories come back and hit me like never before. I realized just how much home meant to me, how big a part of me these traditions I was raised on were, and I ended up connecting with it more across the world within three years than I ever did for 18 years while home. I was also filled with dread over the idea of my country disappearing one day, with barely any people to pass on its spirit. I've been processing the distance between me and my heritage and have concluded that the separation must be accepted, but that it doesn't also mean certain things from my past don't have a place in my life anymore. So, for my thesis, I'll be exploring theatre, a beloved part of my childhood, and sharing it using my new artistic expression, illustration. It will be an intentional process of exploring the balance of reconnecting with the past and remaining in the present, how much of the must we cling onto, and what has to go? All the stories I'm illustrating connect to these themes in different ways. The posters don't answer the questions I've been asking myself, they're simply illustrations of how other stories cover them.

Proposal

Process and Vision:

The stories I will create posters for are Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, Hunchback of Notre Dame by Victor Hugo, The Nutcracker by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, The Frogs by Aristophanes, and The Knight in the Panther's Skin by Shota Rustaveli. Their titles will be hand-written in the languages that the adapted versions were presented in. I'm doing this because I find that the titles often lose some context in translation. Luckily I speak three of the five languages involved, and the writing for the last two isn't too much different from what I already understand.

Proposal

Process and Vision:

I chose Romeo and Juliet because of its themes of heritage and unjust responsibility. I want to emphasize how young the couple were, and the pain of having to bear the pressure of the traditions upheld by their families. I was drawn to the Shakespeare version of it because he told the story with a more sympathetic light on the characters, showing them as children robbed of choice rather than people being punished for wrongdoing. I want to illustrate them being "bound" by their names, so I'll use rose vines and blood vessels going off the iconography on the Capulet and Montague houses. The imagery also loosely reminds me of the ways the characters died, poison traveling through blood vessels, and the dagger connecting to rose thorns. I'm looking at the arts and crafts design movement for inspiration for the floral theme.

Proposal
Process and Vision:

The Hunchback of Notre Dame intrigued me largely due to the reason behind why it was written. Victor Hugo wrote it to make his contemporaries more aware of the value of Gothic architecture, it's largely about how architecture will live on past us and tell the stories that surround it. The theme of the relationship between place and person, and the separation between them, and how it all connects to the passage of time. The piece will have the backdrop of the titular building and have loose projections of the main characters that die in the story. Because of the setting of the story, I'm taking design inspiration from gothic and Victorian-era design.

Proposal

Process and Vision:

The Nutcracker is a story I grew up with as a kid. The story has themes of childhood wonder; a symbol of the enchantment one feels as a child that is so hard to feel again as an adult. The longing for this lost past is how I relate the story to my thesis. I looked further into the production behind the first ballet adaptation of the story with the score by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and learned about how he experienced loss while composing the score, it gave the piece a somber feeling. I'm planning to make the piece show Clara as the only real subject, with all other characters appearing as projections.

Proposal
Process and Vision:

The Frogs is an ancient Greek play about the god Dionysus going to the underworld to bring back a deceased playwright. It has a comedic tone throughout the whole thing but offered interesting commentary at the time of its writing. A large theme of it, and the reason why I'm using it for my thesis, is criticism of the present blindly flimsily trying to imitate the past, but never being able to live up to it. I'm drawn to the story's comedic attitude towards the subject matter and hope to communicate it through the illustration by contrasting the dramatic underworld setting with exaggerated expressions and surrealism. Design-wise I was drawn to Art Nouveau posters for this.

Proposal

Process and Vision:

The Knight in the Panther Skin is a medieval Georgian epic poem written during the country's golden age, during the rule of our female king Tamar. The story is about many things but its driving conflict is Tariel's search for his lost lover Nestan-Darejan, the heiress of India. Tariel is the knight wearing tiger hide, the character the story is named after. She's a character inspired by King Tamar, so the story is essentially about him grieving for the loss of and searching for the golden age of Georgia. For design inspiration, I looked at old Georgian manuscripts.

Proposal

Technical Plan:

The posters will be mostly character-driven. They will all be designed digitally and rendered traditionally with different materials based on the different stories. With paints and pastels aiming for a soft look for Romeo and Juliet, Watercolors and ink painting paired with crisp linework for The Frogs, Watercolors and color pencils for The Nutcracker, line-based as well as washy ink work for The Hunchback of Notre Dame and Charcoal for The Knight in the Panther's Skin. The coloring for each poster and the way they overlay each other will be done digitally.

Proposal

Technical Plan:

I'm very drawn to vintage things but also personally have a hyper-saturated, clearly digital art style, so with this process I want to try and combine these jarringly different aesthetics while trying to maintain the charm of both.

I will be creating five 36" by 72" posters. I'm going with the larger scale for two reasons. First, the pieces will have several characters and many details, and I want all of them to be visible. Second, I feel like the scale will help immerse the viewers into the pieces.

I have broken up the process into five two-week sections. I'll be designating a day per week for each piece to separate the workload into small chunks to make it more manageable and also to practice following a consistent work schedule. This schedule also gives me extra time if I run into any unforeseen problems. If I fall behind on any piece I'll simply work on others as planned and catch up with the late piece during my free time.

Proposal
Technical Plan:

Weeks 1-2

I'll take this time to clean up my sketches to clean lineart level and discuss any anatomy or compositional issues with my mentor. This will all be done digitally

Weeks 3-4

This is the time I will be rendering the pieces out fully in black and white digitally, focusing on studying lighting and texture.

Weeks 5-6

Once the digital renders are finalized, each element will be projected and traced to scale, and rendered traditionally. This will be the most technically challenging part but by this stage I will have already have gone through the process of shading them, so I will be more confident while performing this step.

Weeks 7-8

After the analog pieces are scanned in they will be combined with their digital counterparts and colored/assembled in photoshop. I'm planning on also using highly edited photography on certain parts of the pieces for either a textural or a surreal touch. By illustrating the characters separately I'll have the freedom at this stage to make any needed last-minute adjustments more quickly before adding the final touches to each image.

Weeks 9-10

After final approval will be the printing process. I will be printing entirely through the PNCA Digital Print Studio on premium luster paper. I have already learned the pricing for this process.

Proposal

Influences:

For stylistic inspiration, I will be researching classic artists and draftsmen as well as modern digital artists in hopes of learning their techniques and finding a way to combine them.

For my classical inspirations, I will be looking at Jules Cheret, specifically trying to emulate the dynamic movement of his pieces through the loose figure work. When it comes to rendering the figures I'll be looking at Albert Joseph Penot for his soft way of rendering people. For shading and composition and expressions I'm looking at Caravaggio's dramatic pieces. My big inspiration for the shading is Irakli Toidze, a Georgian painter who is known for his contrasted shading and dynamic figure poses.

For my modern inspirations, I'll be looking at James Jean specifically at the reasons behind what he chooses to render and what parts he chooses to leave untouched. I will also be looking at my main artistic inspiration, Bengus, the designer behind many of Capcom's iconic characters. Specifically, I'll be studying his way of stylizing the figure, how far can one exaggerate anatomy before it breaks as well as his colorful shading techniques. I hope to add surrealism to the pieces by emulating heavy photo distortion and editing in select places, similar to Ira Cohen's "The Mylar Chamber". For the colors, I'm excited to mix the more down-to-earth palettes of my traditional inspirations with heavily digital iridescent-looking colors much inspired by the work of Martin Naumann.

Proposal

My Work:

Within my work, I lean towards character-driven pieces. I always utilize the digital medium but lately, I've been incorporating more traditional elements in my pieces which I feel greatly improves my work. I often work in black and white first, adding color at later stages which is one of the reasons I'm confident in my planned process for this thesis. I used my assignments this semester trying to streamline a process of combining digital and traditional that felt worked best for me, and after trial and error I've finally come to a result I'm happy with. That is the process I'll be utilizing for the thesis. My career goals are to work in commercial and editorial illustration. I'm very drawn to poster and cover illustration.

Proposal
Conclusion:

In conclusion, I'll be using this thesis to celebrate things from the past that I love, like these stories, traditional styles, and the art form of theatre. But I will be doing it through my current artistic expression using modern style inspirations. It will be a huge technical challenge for me as well as a lesson in maintaining a consistent work ethic. It has the potential to greatly improve me as an illustrator, and I will end my senior year with some strong pieces in my portfolio. I'm hoping to show technical prowess with the finished work and use my past to pave way for my artistic future.

Thesis Abstract

Still Theatre is a series of theatre posters exploring relationships with the past. The style aims to combine classic and modern aesthetics .

The stories being illustrated are Romeo and Juliet, The Frogs, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, and The Knight in the Panther's Skin.

The thesis was designed as a space for reflection and using literature to process and cope with personal relationship with time. The process of it is one of stylistic exploration and technical growth, on top of portfolio improvement.

Oral

Hello everyone!! Thank you for taking time from your day to attend my thesis defense. My name is Elene Shavgulidze, I'm an illustration major and this is my thesis project titled "Still Theatre".

It's a series of theatre posters exploring themes of past and present, designed in a style to encompass both elements of classical art and modern digital design.

I'll be talking about why and how I worked on this project and what this whole process means to me now that I can look back on it. I suppose if you're worried about spoilers for stories that are hundreds of years old, just a heads up I will be talking about Romeo and Juliet, The Frogs, The Hunchback of Notre Dame and The Knight in the Panther's skin.

Oral

My primary goals when designing this project were technical improvement and space for reflection. I started my first thesis semester at an absolute loss for where to even begin designing my big project. My head was filled with fears about the future, disconnection from myself, and the overwhelming desire to go back to my past. I had just gotten back from a month-long visit home after an unexpected two-year wait caused by the pandemic. My only thought when coming to America again was "I'm not ready". This was going to be my senior year, the end of another chapter of my life, nothing was going to be the same after this. I kept wishing I could freeze time, but instead I had to create a thesis project, a bow to wrap up all my years studying illustration, and I was at a loss of where to even begin.

Oral

Thankfully, in the design arts thesis development class, Martin French had us write about our histories with all forms of art, and it made me remember my nostalgia and fondness for theatre. By theatre, I mean anything on the stage. I had a history with ballet, traditional Georgian dance, general performance and so and so forth. I realized how it had shaped my attention towards gesture and dynamic anatomy, enjoyment of surreal liminal space, and high contrast spotlighting, all elements that I lean towards when creating my work. So that was the first step, I wanted to do something theatre-related and posters made quite a lot of sense. I didn't feel quite ready to create a magnum opus-type thesis that I would later advertise after school, I felt that I was lacking in skill and in my portfolio, so this sort of project allowed me to focus on my weaknesses.

Oral

When writing the paper that I had mentioned before, I also realized that I leaned towards two contrasting aesthetics in my work. On the one hand, I was a heavily digitally based artist. Growing up I often tinkered with any drawing or editing programs I could get my hands on so it's not surprising that digital was the primary medium that clicked with me. I enjoyed the many surprises things such as blending modes and adjustment filters had to offer, as well as the vivid colors and of course the forgivingness of the medium.

On the other hand, I was raised on a lot of classical art. I loved looking through the books of famous painters that lined our shelves. My father took me to any art exhibits he could, and my family signed me up for academic drawing classes that greatly helped my artistic development. My favorite traditional medium was charcoal for its starkness and unique line quality. I greatly enjoyed the process of drawing studies and the world of gallery art.

Oral

With this thesis, I was hoping to find a more solid place or label for my art style and process, since that sort of self-understanding is something I always struggled with. All throughout my time at PNCA I felt like my work only utilized one of the two backgrounds at any given time, so this year it was finally my time to combine them in a way that felt true to me.

Next up, I was told that there should be a reason behind the plays or stories I'd be illustrating. My mind was flooded with thoughts about my past and questions on how to accept changes that inevitably come with time, and I wondered what classic authors had to say about such topics. I had turned to literature many times in my life when seeking guidance and comfort, so I decided to design a thesis that would let me do that again.

Oral

The stories I looked at all explored the relationships between past and present. I felt these stories should have broad appeals as well as elements I could personally focus on when examining them in relation to the themes of my thesis, specifically how I related to them. I decided on stories as follows: Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare. The Frogs by Aristophanes, The Hunchback of Notre Dame by Victor Hugo and The Knight in the Panther's Skin by Shota Rustaveli. With the exception of The Frogs, there were all stories that I was familiar with but hadn't ever really read, so in a way, this thesis was an excuse to catch up on some reading I had been putting off. Now I'd like to go over each story to explain why exactly I decided to include it.

Oral

First, Romeo and Juliet, I'll assume we all know Romeo and Juliet. The classic tale of star-crossed lovers destined for tragedy instills a great heartbreak and rage in me. It makes me think of themes of unjust responsibility. At the end of the day, it's not about these characters, not about these kids, but about the feud that was to run their whole lives. It's a tale of how blind loyalty to the past could poison any hope for the future. The titular characters have the option to escape their fates but die trying to follow their hearts while staying under the approval of arbitrary traditions. It made me think of my heritage, coming from Georgia, a country with an already low population and with a trend among its youth to leave. We're raised on literature that instills feelings of guilt and hopelessness in living anywhere else, we're raised with the responsibility to stay in and fix the country left by the previous generations, one that we might have no future in. I wanted to focus on this element of the story, of the responsibility and shackles the titular characters were born with, with lives that don't fully belong to them since birth.

Oral

For its design, I decided to illustrate a quiet somber scene of them embracing. Over them, I'd show imagery of a heart with blood veins, and a thorny vine of roses, constraining them. These are the emblems of their houses, Hearts for the Montague and Roses for the Capulet. I also imagined an irony in the visual allegories of Romeo's heart pumping the poison through his blood vessels along his body, and Juliet stabbing herself as if being pricked by a rose thorn. I went with this Red and Blue color palette to further show the distance between the two titular characters. I took inspiration from intricate nature-themed ornamentations of the arts and crafts movement when designing the border.

Oral

Second is The Frogs by Aristophanes, a relatively obscure ancient Greek play by the "father of comedy". It follows the god of wine and in this case theatre, Dionysus, as he and his servant Xanthias travel into hades to bring back the recently deceased Euripides, Dionysus' favorite playwright. In the play, Dionysus is wearing a lion hide, in order to resemble Heracles, a hero who has actually gone through Hades. Right with this design element we're introduced to the themes of the story, of shallow imitations and things not always being as they seem. At the end of the play, there's a vital scene that sparked something in me. Dionysus does find Euripides, but the playwright ends up in a debate with an older one, Aeschylus, on which of them is the superior playwright and should be brought back to the world of the living. As the judge, Dionysus decides to bring back Aeschylus, the playwright that came before Euripides. The play is full of political commentary and very much comments on how the Athenian government at the time of the writing of the play didn't measure up to the leadership that came before, so you could take the message that older is better, but I personally took the message that this claim is a never-ending chain. Dionysus travels to hades because the people that came after Euripides simply are not as good. He ends up bringing back Aeschylusm someone that came before Euripides. I'm guessing if he found them, he would bring back someone from before Aeschylus. I very much enjoyed the way the play mocks this grandiose idealization of a specific time, and shows how the focus on the greatness past gives no substance to the present. We must create our own rather than just try to imitate. It was oddly cathartic seeing a story that pokes fun at something I am so attached to.

Oral

Design-wise I based this composition on Art Nouveau design. I wanted to contrast this high drama setting of hades and the grandiose self-images of the playwrights, with the wonderfully ridiculous imagery of the singing frog choir that welcomes our heroes into hades. The colors of purples and greens were meant to symbolize the dark swampy setting and the yellows and golds were meant to bring out the comedic tone of the story.

Ἀριστοφάνης.

Βάτραχοι

Oral

Next up is The Hunchback of Notre Dame by Victor Hugo. To be fully honest with you, the first reason I started thinking of including this book was because my grandmother absolutely adored a song "Esmeralda" from its stage musical production. I was pleased to confirm that it fit right into the themes of my thesis. You see, Victor Hugo didn't care too much about its characters, the book was made to spark interest among his peers in the Notre Dame. He speaks of Architecture as a form of storytelling. The book starts by describing a mark found within the walls of the cathedral, and only through that do we jump to the story more people are familiar with, one about Quasimodo, Esmeralda and Frollo. Hugo wrote the Notre Dame as its own character, as almost a god-like figure. What's vital about the Notre Dame is how it will outlive all of us. Of course it's not indestructible, but it has gone through hardships before, and after all its wounds, it still stands and tells a story that spans hundreds of years. The homesickness of last fall had me thinking about the age of my surroundings quite a bit. Though it was at first just a reminder of how different my surroundings are from what I knew for most of my life, it slowly shifted into an appreciation of all space as a form of connection. Of course nothing here will rival the chills I feel when visiting one of the many ancient churches from home, I've been trying and finding more success in connecting with people that at some point inhabited the same space as I am right now. With my final semester possibly reaching its end, I've been wondering about people I will never meet that will interact with spaces that I have interacted with, that I have left some minuscule mark on. I think this was a great step in me being able to form comfort, connection, and familiarity with wherever I end up.

Notre Dame De Paris

Victor Hugo

Oral

Back to the actual story now. The atmosphere is dreary, dark and gloomy. I wanted to go with an almost greyscale palette with some green glow to add to the macabre look. Due to the nature of their endings wanted to illustrate the three characters (Quasimodo, Esmeralda and Frollo) as almost spectral, as wandering ghosts who's stories will keep echoing through the Notre Dame. the main element of the poster was to be the cathedral itself. I went with Victorian style design for inspiration and of course I looked at the ornamentation actually present in the cathedral.
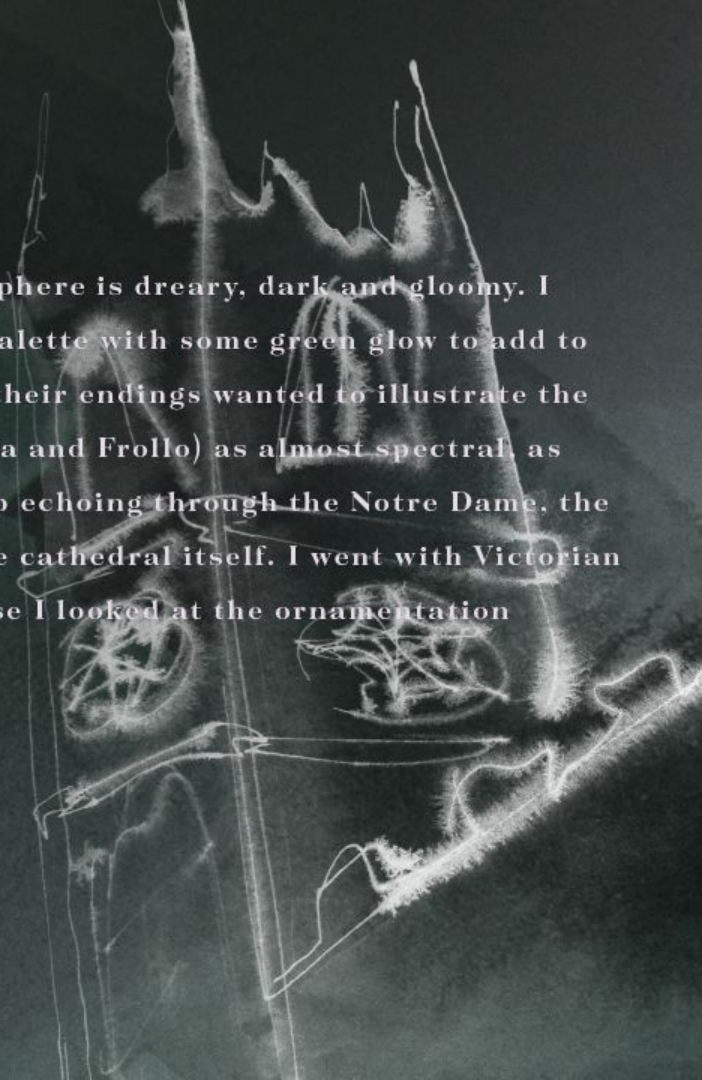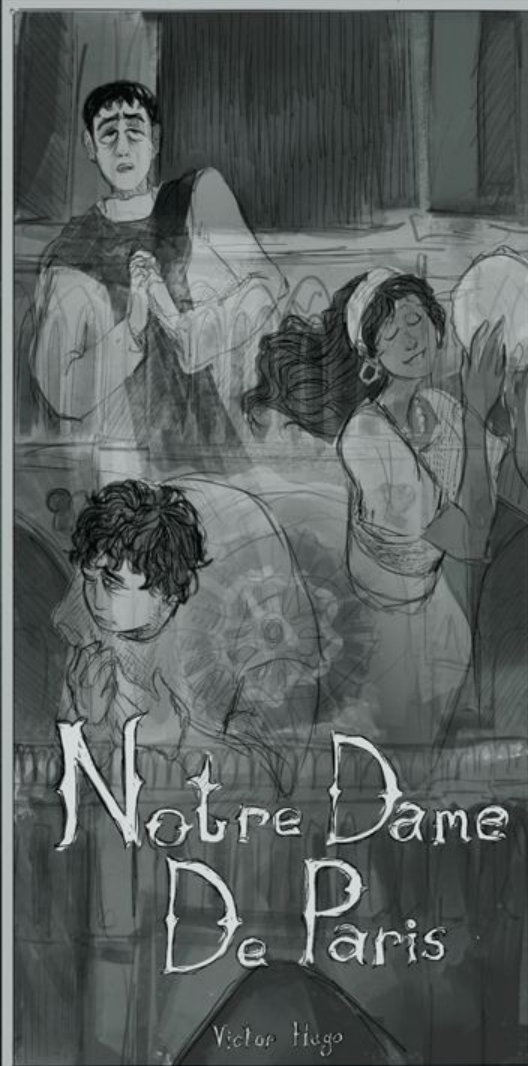
Oral

Last but not least we have The Knight in the Panther's Skin or Vepkhistkaosani by Shota Rustaveli. I will make a quick point that the animal the titular character wears the skin of is a tiger, so if there's any confusion on the tiger stripes pattern present in the illustration or me saying tiger instead of panther, that is why. Vepkhistkaosani is a classic Georgian epic poem about too many things to count. It talks about faith, love, friendship, and morality, it's altogether a beloved text of the nation. The primary reason I'm including it in my lineup though is because of the titular tiger skin wearer, Tariel, and the reason behind why he wears it. The other figure you see is Nestan Darejan, a lover of Tariels. She's a woman known for her fiery and stern personality, reminding him of a tiger. She's been kidnapped and Tariel has been on a treacherous search for her, wearing the tiger hide as a source of comfort. Nestan Darejan is largely based on a real historical Georgian figure, King Tamar. Her reign is associated with the golden age of the country's history, one that it years and mourns for. I saw a parallel between Tariel and Nestan and the Georgian populous and Tamar. This longing for the golden age, this story of hope and loyalty. I saw an interesting contrast between Tariel and Dionysus, with one wearing the animal skin to imitate, and the other to remember. For me, the simple act of finally reading the story was important in processing my situation. Not only was it a wonderful read on its own simply for the quality, but it was also something I should have done years ago, it was an instance of me reconnecting with my nationality that I often felt distanced from. In a sense, it was a message of hope, that even if I grew up largely separated from my national identity, it didn't have to be the end for that, and that even across the world I could become closer to my home. Vepkhistkaosani is about many things, but to me, at its core, its about a man that doesn't lose hope or the drive for reuniting with his love. It instills hope in me that my country will have a golden age again, and though I more and more often see this as naivete, it's just what I need every once in a while.

Oral

The tone of the story is dramatic and passionate, I wanted to cover the composition in reds and golds to call to the golden age and the fiery nature of the two illustrated characters. I looked at ancient Georgian manuscripts for design inspiration. Tariel is often depicted crying in the book, and that was important to me, so I wanted to show him at the same time as powerful and vulnerable. I wanted to communicate Nestan's bitter character at the same time with the real love and sorrow about the separation between the two characters. She is vividly described as being adorned in jewelry and I also wanted to illustrate her as larger to allude to how she represents more than just her character.

Oral
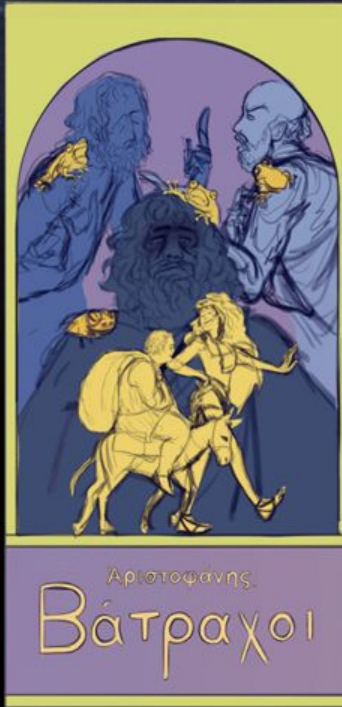
This was all from the first semester. I actually had designed five posters instead of four and I'm sure some of you might be wondering about the middle piece that stands out quite a bit from the rest. Firstly, I'd like to talk about the changes I made from the proposal, and then I would like to go through this semester mostly chronologically because it's been quite a formative process.

Oral

First of all, I had originally designed five posters instead of four. The fifth poster was for the nutcracker and though I greatly enjoy the ballet and the poster design, it simply didn't fit quite well with the themes of my thesis.

Second, the posters were of a very different size. I changed them to be 24 by 36 inches because I was informed that is the standard poster size.

Third, I had originally included text in the designs. Though I saw potential in playing with the text, I preferred to focus fully on designing the image and leaving room for text as is with many illustration projects for things such as covers.

I had a very specific process I had decided on mostly because I didn't see enough validity in my almost fully digital approach to drawing, I never did end up using it, and it's because I didn't truly feel like I needed it.

Oral

Weeks 1 - 2
Anatomy/Design Cleanup

Weeks 3 - 4
Digital Rendering

Weeks 5 - 6
Analog Rendering

Weeks 7 - 8
Combining

Weeks 9 - 10
Printing

Last but not least, this was my planned schedule, something I wanted to do was develop a consistent work ethic since I had a nasty habit of procrastinating and having both my health and my work suffer for it. I did not end up following this schedule, but I instead learned unexpected lessons for setting actually achievable goals rather than idealistic ones.

Oral

In the winter break before my final semester, I felt like I had simply forgotten how to draw. The process no longer felt natural to me, but it felt like I was imitating the motions of drawing and not yielding results.
On top of this of course I had the urge to redesign all my posters from scratch and also add animations to them if the time allowed, very much coming from insecurity about the posters not being able to stand on their own.

Oral

At the start of the semester, I was in the state when I started working on the Romeo and Juliet piece. After cleaning the sketch with a new photoshop brush that my mentor helped me install (this is what got me to start working in photoshop) I was quite surprised to be having a hard time with the illustration. This is also when I really had to admit that I always forget to draw eyelashes for whatever reason, a lot of feedback I got over the semester was at first eyelashes, then more about hands, and by the end, ears. I believe I was relying too much on sculpting figures and blocking in surfaces not to add depth but to simply flatten out a surface and try again over it. It was again a disconnected process. This poster took me five weeks to finish and I wasn't happy with the result at all, but my mentor said it would be best to work on others first and I agreed.

Oral

I did end up making some adjustments to it by the end. Though this piece still ended up beign my least favorite out of the bunch, I felt very happy when going back to it because of how much easier the process was than when I first started working on it. It also taught me about just how much the right blending layers can carry an image.

Oral

While I was working on the Romeo and Juliet piece, I was making one more thing. For the first assignment for my Advanced Illustration Studio II, I had to design promotional art relating to my thesis. At a loss for how to summarize four different stories in one, I decided to go with general theatre imagery and sketched a portrait of a pierrot. The composition looked very much like a painting in my eyes. After I showed the sketch to my mentor, he suggested that I scale it up and render it at that scale, which I agreed to. I was pretty happy with how the render turned out since I thought it had interesting texture and composition, but it felt like it was missing something.

Oral

I knew I wanted to figure out how to add digital elements to the piece and then I turned to chromatic aberration. I had used the technique of separating the image into three versions with Cyan Magenta and Yellow colors and then moving them around to create an effect, but that process often left the image looking too blurry for my taste. But then I decided to try my new digital best friend, The Paint Tool Sai Smudge Tool. With this, I was able to not only target smaller areas and prevent the image from becoming blurry, but I also could also create shapes and marks with it that would be impossible with simple distortions and transformations. After I was happy with the little RGB trails all over the image, I wanted to experiment with one more thing. I took my highly textured brush, lowered its opacity, and started erasing away at the CMY layers set at shade, the places I erased barely changed in luminosity but they changed in hue, which gave the iridescent effect you can see here. Other than adding iridescence, I used this to do subtle color shifts such as adding red to the characters' cheeks, etc.

Anyways I drew this piece and I refuse to let anyone forget about it, I finally had something that I could say combined my two clashing senses of artistic taste very well. I would use this piece a lot as inspiration and as a style blueprint when working on the thesis more.

Oral

The next poster I illustrated was for The Frogs. This one was the most detailed and meticulous out of all of them. It had the most detail, the most characters, and the technique I used was the least conservative with time. After adding a faint layer of clean lineart I started rendering everything in grayscale. Each character was on a separate layer. I was actually quite surprised with how the sketching and cleanup stages went for this piece. I have a lot of familiarity rendering female figures but when it comes to male figures I would always hesitate due to unfamiliarity. I kept saying I didn't know what possessed me to draw Dionysus and Xanthias the way I did without much struggle but it was a pleasant surprise. In my value rendering phase, the only real changes I had to make were in terms of likeness when it came to Euripides and Aeschylus, I referenced their statues when drawing their faces.

Oral

This stage is where I was at when I had my midterm meeting. I really couldn't be more thankful for the wonderful feedback I got there. Something that really stuck to me (which admittedly should have been obvious) is that the main feedback I got was about the looks of the posters, not the symbolism behind them, this is what my job is, and this is where I should focus. I got tips on how to change the composition of The Knight in the Panther's Skin and was suggested to change the Notre Dame piece to match the compositions of the rest of the works better. After the meeting, I was also much more confident in the compositions I had sketched the previous semester. It gave me confidence in my own judgment so to say, I saw people responding to the compositions with the pros that I had in mind when creating them. There was so much more wonderful feedback than what I'm talking about here and I'm very grateful for having such a great midterm panel.

Oral

I hit my first roadblock with this piece when it came time to color. I originally kept trying to color Dionysus and Xanthias normally but after I got positive feedback on the color choices, I simply proceeded till it came to conclusion. With being the most complicated designed piece, it was also predictably the most complicated to print. Since it had many groups of different colors doing color balance adjustments could help one area and ruin the other. After my first attempt at printing a poster for the frogs, I started bringing in entire PSDs with separated and grouped layers to make adjustments quicker and more targeted.

Oral

After the frog piece was complete my mentor suggested I work on The Knight in the Panther's Skin. I was convinced this piece would be finished through spring break, but this was the time I had to accept a simple but for me hard to swallow truth.

I can't make myself work for an entire day.

Mind over body doesn't work.

Especially in art, where you can spend hours working and get nowhere.

This is the time I actually started making a conscious effort to listen to my body when it came to working and breaks, of course, it would take weeks to get semi-decent at it.

But as I kept doing it more the anxiety I'd feel before work would ease up as well. Of course, not being able to spend the whole day working anymore also meant that cramming for the last day simply wasn't an option anymore. It was really a fair trade, I managed my time more and got rewarded by positive working conditions.(who would have known)

Another thing I had started doing was timed warmups before drawing for work.

It was a way for me to develop a rhythm when drawing and avoid second-guessing and wanting to re-do everything.

This is also when I became consistent in reference creation, I'd take videos of me posing in front of the camera, screenshot them and then warp them to the proportions I wanted. This not only helped me with proportions but with shading references as well, greatly speeding up my process.

Oral

The process on this one was much different than on the previous two posters. On those two I attempted to work in a painterly style but all I really had were pencil brushes, here I used the pencil tool almost like an airbrush. Though this process made mistakes harder to fix, it gave everything a very pleasant texture.

Of course, only by the time I had almost finished adding colors to Tariel, Adobe made a photoshop filter that auto-matically colors a black and white image, so do with that what you will. I personally enjoy adding it as a faint overlay layer.

This piece had another case of possession for me which was with this hand, I didn't know how I did it. One hand was mostly reference based and the other I somehow managed to get like that.

Oral

The tiger stripes you see through the piece are all thanks to my best friend, Paint Tool Sai Smudge Tool, I first used a highly textured brush to make rough stripes and then slowly went in with the smudge tool to clear some edges and give that look of almost flames in certain parts of the piece. I realized at that point that my style was at, it came from the act of using traditional techniques in a digital space.

Oral

Last but not least, With barely any time left, I drew the poster for the hunchback of Notre Dame fastest, and it ended up being one of my favorite pieces of the four. I think it's me being proud with a hand again but just felt so amazing being able to focus on drawing and not feel like I was fighting against myself to do it. I got it to what I found to be a done state but with all the layers intact for final feedback, this also let me see the results of my feedback in real-time instead of having to commit to a path Id later regret. I could see how the advice would look in the final stage right away.
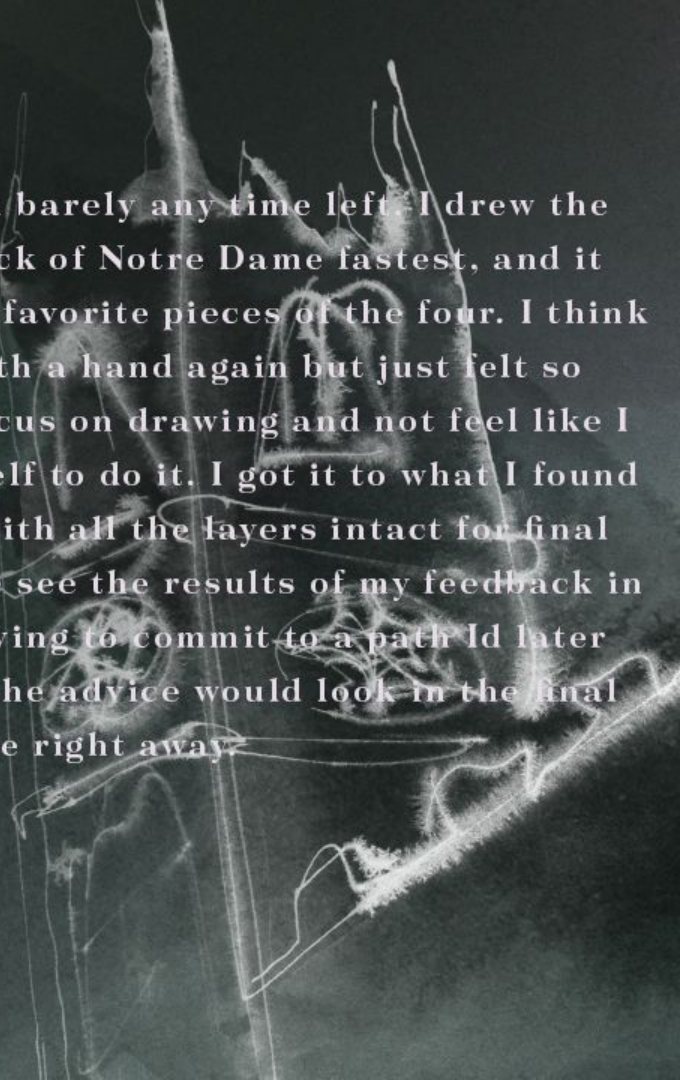
Oral

When redoing the composition I went more with the idea of the Notre dame being a god-like figure, that's why all the characters ended up looking up, also showing how they might reflect on themselves and their actions when meeting such an entity. I wanted to draw Frollo distraught, knowing fully well every sin he had committed, For his design, I took inspiration from the 1935 film adaptation of Midsummer Night's Dream.

Esmeralda is entirely innocent in the books, so I wanted to draw her as kind and soft-looking. I acknowledged that there was a problematic aspect to her writing in the book but I imagined such details being changed for the production I was illustrating. I took inspiration for her from macabre vintage photography.

For Quasimodo's design, I took inspiration from The Closet of Doctor Caligari. I wanted him to come across more tired and confiding, questioning the world that did nothing but wrong him. I imagined these characters wandering the cathedral forever, simply reliving the lives they shared with it.

I had to trust myself with the design of this piece and am glad that I went with my idea of using the silhouette of the iconic stained glass windows of Notre Dame as a spotlight.

This piece felt the most natural to work with, it was such a huge contrast from jsut a few months ago. I genuinely felt like I learned how to draw all over again.

Oral

All artists have a favorite part of drawing, the moment is all comes together. For some it's posting it for the world to see, for others its seeing that clean edge after removing masking tape, for me it's getting to put my pieces in poster frames. It felt like when people put varnish over paintings, absolutely made them come to life in my eyes. I printed these posters at the DPS with the help of Tiara Johnson. With the repetition of printing several times I developed a plan for efficiency in printing and have been feeling more and more comfortable with the process. A very fond memory of mine when printing was seeing my hair reflect in the notre dame piece and match esmeralda's.
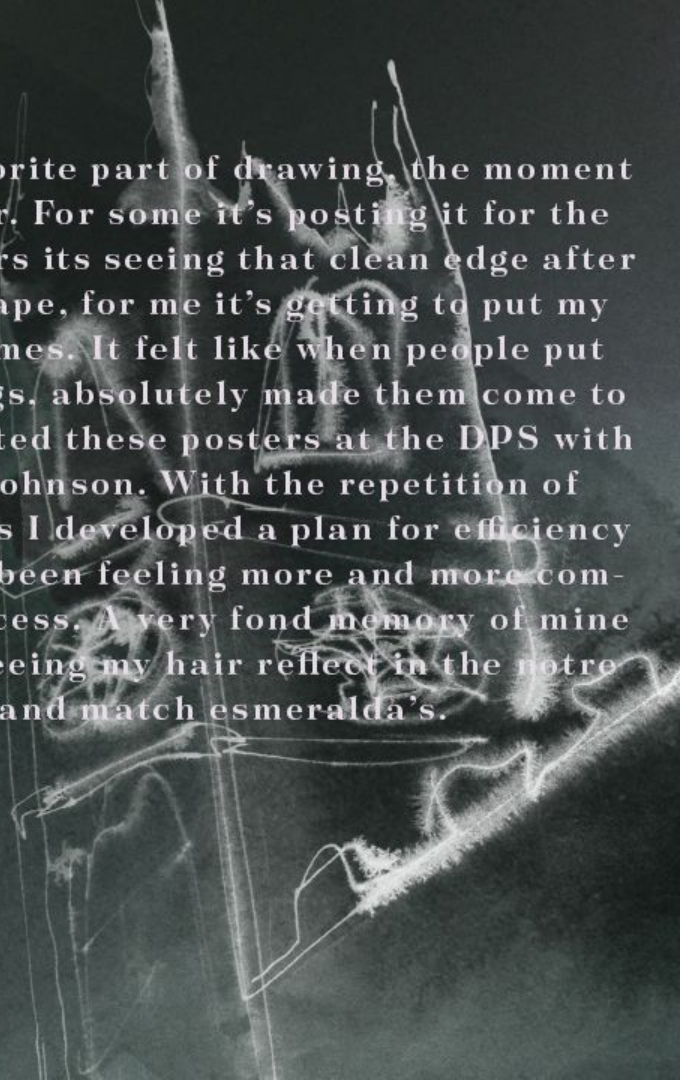
Oral

A big source of inspiration for this project was James Jean, in particular his poster illustrations for Mother! The Shape of Water, Cyberpunk 2049 and Everything Everywhere All At Once. I loved his blend of realism and surrealism as well as his focus on character and emotion. Conceptually I was greatly inspired by the Laz Luhrman directed Romeo + Juliet, I actually saw it on my last flight to America and it became my favorite film, this is where I got inspired to take the classic and add modern spin to it while remaining faithful to the spirit of the original.

As I mentioned before this project was primarily for me, it was a portfolio piece and a challenge in many ways. I believe I could use each piece to show different clients I would like to work with, such as using the Notre Dame piece to show skills in depicting atmosphere and mood if I reach out to The Folio Society, The Frogs piece with its concept based design would possibly work for Soulpepper Theatre, and I also do want to try applying for more gallery spaces when I can, So the local Gallery Nucleous for example.

In conclusion, this semester has been one of great growth for me. I started at feeling like I was merely imitating the act of drawing, to being confident and efficient in my drawing skills. I think the work I do in the future will look quite different from this as I hope to explore more looseness and exaggerated proportions in my style, but I feel confident in my personal medium of classical digital draftsmanship.

Oral

First and foremost I'd like to thank my mentor Zach Meyer for not only pushing me to improve technically, but also providing me with support and assurance in my skill, those words meant a lot at the times when I was itching to hide my art from everyone. You also offered great patience and understanding when I would struggle with this process and I truly can't thanky ou enough for that. I'm forever grateful for all the wonderful faculty and staff I got to meet in my years here that helped me grow immensely, I'm grateful for my friends and family for their constant support and encouragement, shout out to my partner for making sure I stay healthy while working and helping me develop healthy work habits. And I'm so grateful for my wonderful peers that provided me with wonderful company, crucial feedback and more inspiration than they could imagine for the past frour years. And last but not least, thank you to my panel and to all of you lovely visitors for taking your time and sharing this with me. I'll now be open to any questions

Creative Brief:

Project Vision:

Still Theatre is a series of illustrated theatre posters. The stories feature here are ones that talk about different relationships between the past and present. The stories are: Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, The Frogs by Aristophanes, The Hunchback of Notre Dame by Victor Hugo and The Knight in the Panther's Skin by Shota Rustaveli.

Audience:

Righ tnow we live in an uncertain time, and many of us reminise for the ways the past was much simpler. Online there has been a boom in nostalgia based content and appreciation for classical art and literature. I feel right now is a good time to look at and create work that examines our relationship with the past.

Methods and Materials:

I'll be striving for a style that combines the look of classical paintings and design movements with digital distortions, colors and aesthetics. For this, I'll be rendering out the posters digitally in black and white and replicating them in analog with materials such as charcoal, ink and watercolor to add as texture in the digital space. I will then be coloring them using gradient maps and blending modes.

Comparative Media:

A big source of inspiration for me were the film posters created by James Jean for "Mother!", "Bladerunner 2049" and "The Shape of Water".
Other comparative work would be Edel Rodriguez's posters for Soulpepper Theatre.

Marketplace Appliccation:

This project will be a great addition to my portfolio. Not only will I be showing it when trying to reach out to possible future clients such as Soulpepepr Theatre, I also am hoping to try and participating in gallery shows such as in Galler Nucleus uwing this series.

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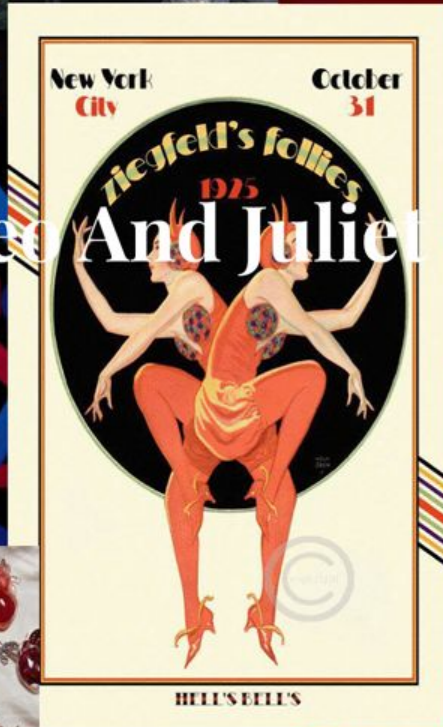
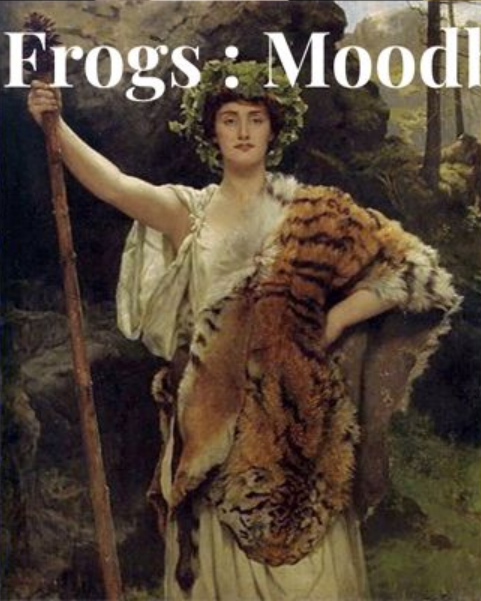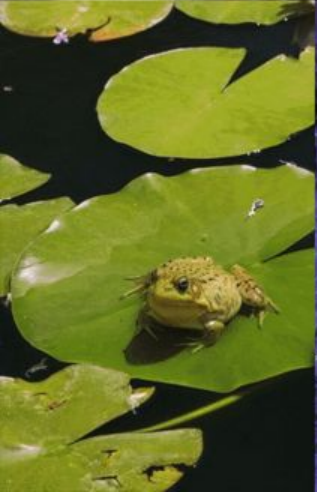# Documentation

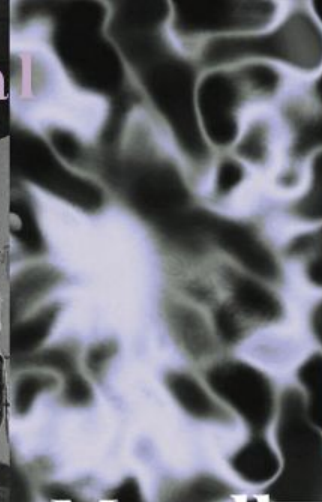# Documentation

Documentation

Romeo And Juliet : Moodboard

The Frogs : Moodboard

Hunchback of Notre Dame : Moodboard

Thesis Journal

Knight in the Panther's Skin : Moodboard

Thesis Journal

rendered
flat
gradient