Blue Hour: A Silent Graphic Novel Exploration of Psychosis in the Context of Loss and Suffering

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Abstract

Psychosis is known to disrupt a person's life and cause them confusion, delusions, and hallucinations simply because of their inability to distinguish reality. This not only poses risks of illness, injuries, and impaired daily functioning but can also heighten life-threatening situations if left untreated. This is why early intervention and treatment of psychosis are vital for preventing a range of problems and promoting overall well-being. It is from this context that my thesis unfolds. It will involve creating digital illustrations that will be assembled into a graphic novel. This graphic novel mainly conveys its storyline through a series of visuals only, meaning there will be no dialogues, emphasizing the illustrated images. Diving into the mind of an individual adrift in the aftermath of losing a loved one, my project sheds light on the difficulties of this emotional journey, which is a blend of bitterness due to the irreversibility of the past and sweetness stemming from cherished memories. This choice of subject matter offers a more intricate exploration of the human experience weighing a personal loss and encourages readers to reflect on their own struggles, as well as the ups and downs in life.

Keywords: psychosis, reality, well-being, personal loss, graphic novel

Introduction

When I close my eyes to dream, I see nothing but stray strokes of paint ready to cloud my entire vision. Undeniably, it is an escape, a safe haven only I have access to, yet relentless whispers of judgments never falter to crawl against my skin. I always tell, or rather assure myself, that "The world has slowed so you can rediscover." At this point, it feels as if it's a holy mantra I sing to keep me sane. I was never one to handle such piercing words. Most of the time, I'll simply brush it off like a piece of candy wrapper left unwanted on the concrete floor when, in reality, it actually consumes and builds me into the version everyone is expecting; it's exhausting, but that's just exactly what life is. So, I found a solution. Art came into the picture, and the day of its discovery might possibly be the climax of my story. It has become my medium to articulate my innermost thoughts and emotions, where I can be myself and communicate my feelings that are sometimes hard to express verbally. As an introvert, I appreciate the solitude that comes with creating art.

That being said, the rationale for this thesis project is rooted in the recognition of the connection between a person's perception of oneself and their well-being. Every day, people undergo similar forms of suffering, and how an individual feels about themselves is closely linked to their well-being. This is why talking openly about mental health issues can be very helpful, as it encourages people dealing with such conditions to get the support and treatment they need. In addition, open discussions can also help people develop healthy coping mechanisms and work towards recovery. This is where my project comes in. I have chosen to explore the subject of psychosis, mainly its risks, to provide a different perspective on the relationship between one's self-perception and their overall well-being. As we dive into the mind of someone coping with the loss of a loved one, my project's storyline mixes a blend of bitterness due to the irreversibility of the past and sweetness blooming from closed cherished memories. This also illustrates the emotional difficulties of the characters' journey. This offers a deep exploration of the human experience on the path of personal loss and suffering.

The story will center around Kayden and Seraphine, a young couple in their 20s, with the man being a hobbyist photographer and the woman as his subject. They were as happy as they could be, but that was until something tragic happened. On a gloomy afternoon, they find their world shattered when an accident claims Seraphine's life. Months have already passed since the incident, but for Kayden, every day was like that very day. His reality unravels in front of him as he experiences vivid and distorted visions of her girlfriend's death in different disturbing scenarios. These visions continue to disturb him and have become a daily occurrence wherever he goes. It eventually drove him into madness, making him withdraw from the world, which resulted in the loss of his job and deteriorating health. Kayden then falls into disarray, mirroring his own state.

With that, this project will be assembled into a graphic novel that mainly tells its storyline through a series of visuals, which is similar to a comic book but with no dialogues. This is to give way or to highlight the illustrations, putting emphasis on each scene. This also opens the door for interpretation, encouraging the audience to exercise their minds and derive personal meaning from the imagery. The project sheds light on psychosis on a person's well-being while fostering a greater understanding of the human experience in the face of personal loss and suffering.
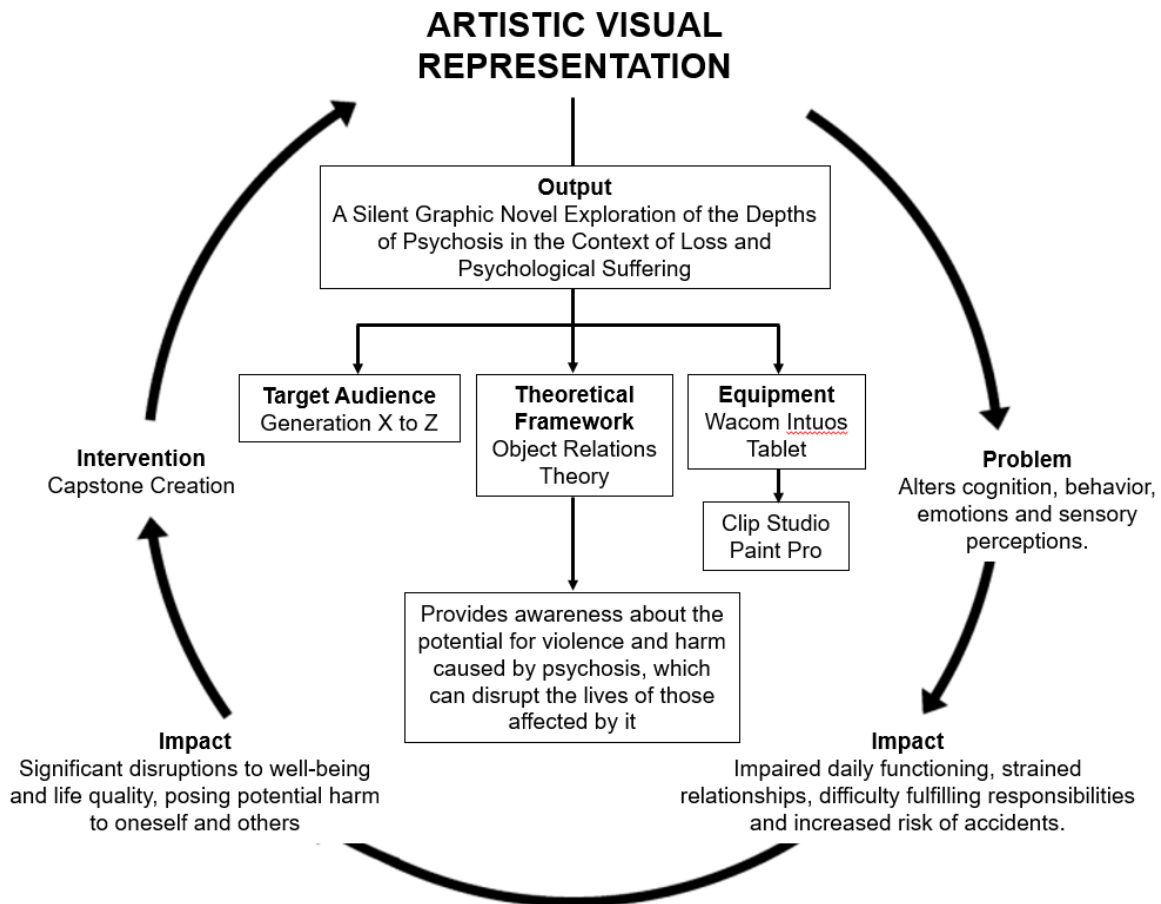
ARTISTIC VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Output
A Silent Graphic Novel Exploration of the Depths of Psychosis in the Context of Loss and Psychological Suffering

Target Audience
Generation X to Z

Theoretical Framework
Object Relations Theory

Equipment
Wacom Intuos Tablet

Clip Studio Paint Pro

Intervention
Capstone Creation

Problem
Alters cognition, behavior, emotions and sensory perceptions.

Provides awareness about the potential for violence and harm caused by psychosis, which can disrupt the lives of those affected by it

Impact
Significant disruptions to well-being and life quality, posing potential harm to oneself and others

Impact
Impaired daily functioning, strained relationships, difficulty fulfilling responsibilities and increased risk of accidents.

Figure 1. Framework Visual Representation of the overall project and methods of thesis project: silent graphic novel

This section outlines a detailed, systematic process that directs the project's progression from its initial stages through to its finalization. The primary objective is to ensure that the project successfully conveys the intricate emotional facets of the chosen subject matter, with the aim of presenting it to a broad audience, encompassing both online and in print. Additionally, this process features pre-production, production, and post-production phases to ensure that the project follows a logical progression, maintains high quality, uses resources efficiently, and adapts to changes as needed.

The Object Relations Theory will be adopted as the foundational theoretical framework, providing a fresh perspective on the exploration of the human psyche in the context of psychosis and loss. Object Relations Theory, developed by psychoanalyst

Melanie Kleint, focuses on the intricate dynamics of human relationships and their impact on mental states. This choice is made to deepen the understanding of how early emotional connections and internalized "objects" shape the individual's psychological well-being and self-perception. By utilizing digital illustrations, this project intends to visually depict the inner turmoil and confusion that often accompanies psychosis, allowing the audience to witness the interplay of internalized objects within the protagonist's mind. The project aims to delve into the complexities of self-perception, especially concerning the experience of psychosis. The theory underscores the significance of early emotional attachments and how these attachments shape the internalized representations of others (objects) within the individual's mind.

Furthermore, the emphasis on self-perception and its role in responding to psychological suffering is aligned with the main principles of Object Relations Theory. It will explore how the protagonist's self-concept is influenced by these early relationships and how it molds their response to the challenges of loss and psychosis. The aim is to provide viewers with a compelling narrative that delves into the protagonist's psyche, unraveling the impact of early emotional connections and their influence on self-perception in the context of loss and psychological adversity. Ultimately, the adoption of Object Relations Theory as the guiding theoretical framework enriches the project by offering a unique lens through which to explore the complex relationship between psychosis, self-perception, and the enduring impact of early emotional attachments.

Design Process Creative Framework

The **target audience** for this project is intended to resonate with a broad range of people across many generations. Because the tale is told via pictures instead of words, people of many ages and languages may relate to it. Because there is no text in the story, readers of all ages and backgrounds can connect with the story in their own unique way. The story's themes of emotional challenges and self-discovery are relatable for both introspective Generation X and the modern perspectives of Generation Z. Because of its deliberate silent visual storytelling approach, the work appeals to a broad readership and provides each with a distinctive and captivating experience.

The **design process** is nothing too complicated. It is simply creating digital illustrations that are both emotionally and visually captivating. Dynamic visual storytelling will be the main focus in order to accomplish this. This method places a strong emphasis on the use of imagery to successfully communicate the emotional depth and complexity of the story. Without including the cover pages, the book is estimated to have a range of about 40 pages. The standard layout features three illustrations per page, following a consistent format. There will be differences in accordance with the setting and narrative that are being portrayed.

The color design process for the story is a deliberate reflection of Kayden's mental and emotional journey. The bed is depicted in blue and green tones as a peaceful haven during calm periods of time, expressing his desire for serenity. But these hues become more intense as the bed transforms into an unreal scenario, representing the intense emotions and uncertainties consuming Kayden's mind. This transition's dynamic combination of blue and green captures the ebb and flow of Kayden's inner struggles and acts as a visual metaphor for his emotional instability. In addition to enhancing the story's visual attractiveness, this well-chosen color scheme is a potent tool for illustrating the protagonist's changing emotional state as it progresses.

For the **research design**, the creative process diverges from the usual black-and-white panels associated with traditional manga. Instead, inspiration is drawn from manhwa, incorporating a vibrant full-color palette to infuse richness into the visuals. However, to match the novel's theme, instead of the vibrancy of colors, it will be minimalist in style, showcasing the various shades of blue depicted in the title. The art style is a blend of anime-inspired aesthetics with subtle elements of semi-realism. This not only imparts a unique, reality-like quality to the visuals but also introduces a distinctive visual dimension to the narrative. The characters are brought to life with more relatable and emotive features, gaining a deeper connection between the audience and the story.

To provide context, manga is a style of Japanese comic or graphic novel characterized by a unique artistic approach and often spanning various genres. In this particular project, drawing inspiration from manhwa—a term denoting South Korean comics or webcomics—brings the influence of full-color panels, deviating from the traditional monochromatic style of manga.

Storyline

One gloomy afternoon, a couple in their 20s decides to visit a brand-new cafe down the street. Kayden, an avid photographer, signals to Seraphine, his girlfriend, to pose for a picture. The girl chuckles and playfully stands with her back to the cafe's entrance. Before Kayden can get that perfect image, their moment is abruptly shattered by the screeching of tires on the pavement. Kayden freezes, his camera trembling in his hands. Suddenly, everything around him turns a haunting shade of red, and he can only utter incomprehensible pleas towards his partner, who remains lifeless beside a car's license plate.

In a split second, Kayden opens his eyes. The incident happened half a year ago, but he clings stubbornly to the hope that perhaps she's just running late from work. He begins to experience vivid visions. In one of them, he sees his lover cooking a meal in their kitchen. He eagerly calls out her name, but then the room shifts, contorting to the incident before. Everyday objects contort into disturbing shapes, casting an eerie

and unsettling atmosphere. Kayden bites his hand in an attempt to wake himself up. This event became a daily thing for him. He continues to see different kinds of visions before his eyes. And all of it was just distorted realities in which his lover dies a sick way every time. As time goes by, the burden of these visions begins to overshadow Kayden's daily responsibilities, including his job, which leads to his termination. Concerned colleagues reach out to him with mounting worry, calling and leaving heartfelt messages, desperately trying to connect. However, Kayden remains resolute, shutting them out and withdrawing from the world around him. He descends further into the harrowing and nightmarish fantasies that haunt his mind. The apartment starts to stink, its stench mirroring the decay of his mental state. The gradual unraveling of his grip on reality continues without pause. He lets out a tired laugh, burying his face in his hands with bruises evident on his body.

Up until the day, a familiar voice jolts Kayden awake. He opens his eyes to find himself in a cozy coffeehouse, surrounded by the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. As he gazes at the oddly lit sky, Seraphine approaches with two espresso shots, wearing a warm smile. For the first time in a long while, Kayden smiles back. Even as the room distorts, he walks what he believes is the path back to their apartment. What matters is that he finds her softly sinking onto their bed sheet in the stark, white light of the moon. And for once, Kayden finally falls asleep, feeling a sense of peace and closure in the arms of what he thinks is his lover. Ignoring the way his body becomes numb, and his vision turns black. Kayden lets go of the haunting visions, leaving his world behind to remain in the embrace of his beloved.

Pre-Production Stage

The characters are created with the intention of particularly complementing the project's subject and objectives. The main aim is to create something that would captivate the audience's emotions while still capturing all the minute details of the narrative. In light of this, they will seem genuine and flexible, giving the story more depth and passion as it progresses.

In the prologue, my main character Kayden is presented as cheerful and rather outgoing; yet, following the occurrence, he is shown as emotionless, in stark contrast to his previous state. In light of this, I created him with the appearance of being caged up in his room every day—as the narrative progresses, which is actually the case. His eyes lose their shine, and his face grows more distant. His movements are shown to be detached and sluggish, and his posture is stooped. As the readers watch the character attempt to return to a state of emotional wholeness, the contrast between his early vitality and his later emotional blankness is meant to arouse empathy and a sense of investment from the audience.

Figure 2. Kayden's Character Design

The project's narrative will center on Kayden. The story will revolve around him, immersing viewers in the disquieting sequence of events that carve the contours of his identity following the harrowing loss of a loved one. Through this journey, it will delve

into Kayden's descent into the abyss, providing a window into his inner world as well as the external observations of those around him.

Figure 3. Formatting page spread

The development of an outline and structure is a vital step in creating a cohesive and engaging narrative. I will make a detailed script for my graphic novel, ensuring that the storyline flows smoothly and effectively communicates the intended message. This part allows for the proper arrangement of each chapter and visualizes the sequence of scenes and visuals, ensuring that the storyboard effectively captures the emotional journey of the characters.

This serves as a visual script, offering a glimpse into how my story will be covered. I will also brainstorm and select illustration ideas that align closely with my project's theme. It's important that the ideas chosen are capable of effectively conveying the emotional nuances of the storyline. That being said, the goal is to select visual concepts that are capable of effectively showcasing the emotional journey present, all the while aiming for an impactful illustration process.

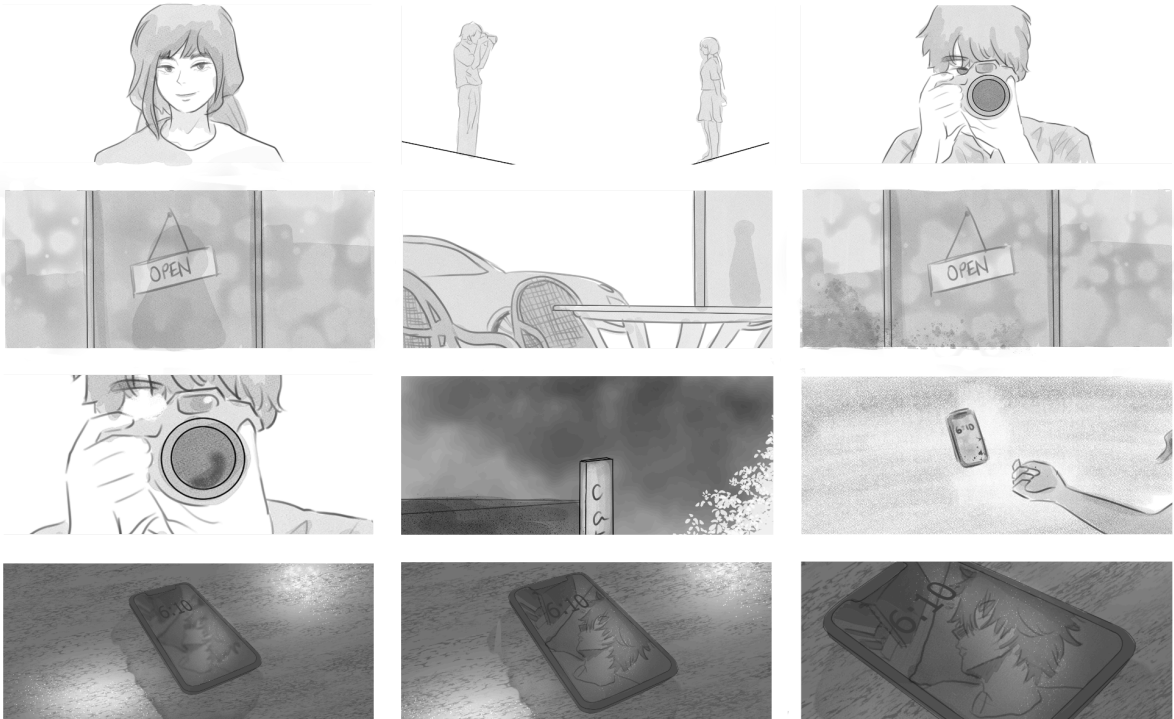*Figure 4.* Environment study of Kayden's reality

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Figure 6. Present time (Initial sketches)

Production

This is the part where creating draft layouts for each page, carefully considering visual flow, composition, and emotional impact are made. Preliminary sketches will determine the basic structure of each scene or panel, laying the groundwork for the final illustrations. This acts as the bridge between conceptualization and realization.


Figure 7. Rendering process (from left to right: sketch, flat colors, shading, final render)

The creation of the final illustrations for each panel is the main stage of the project. Artistic techniques will be employed to make the characters and scenes look alive, making sure that every little detail is done carefully. These illustrations are the visual representations of the narrative, responsible for evoking emotions and messages. Once the illustrations are complete, I will print a draft version of the graphic novel with its finished format. This physical draft serves as a guide for assessing layout, quality, and errors. After all, it is essential to identify any areas in need of revision. After a comprehensive evaluation of the printed draft, revisions will be necessary to refine the visual storytelling and the message of the story.

Based on the review outcomes, adjustments are made while considering the layout, illustrations, and overall presentation. The primary goal is to ensure that the imagery effectively conveys the intended emotions and messages, resulting in a polished final output.

Figure 8. Final piece with lighting, color adjustments and filter
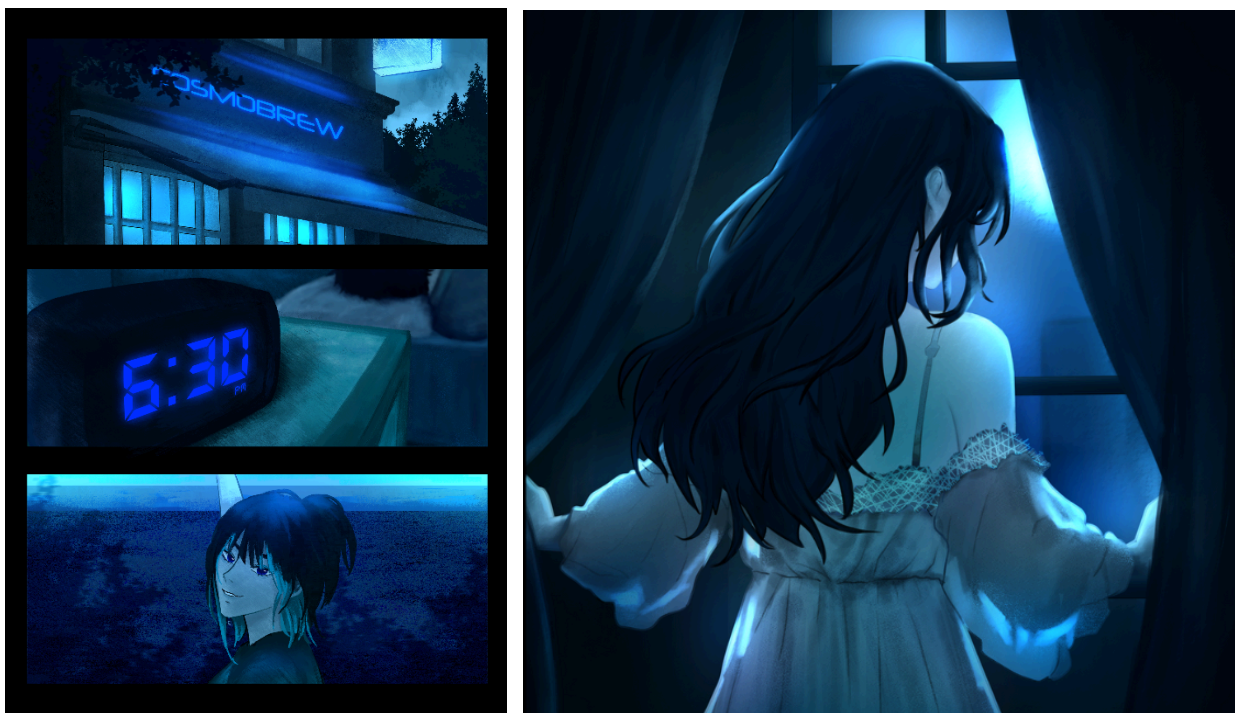
Figure 9. Rendered pages

Each graphic novel panel adheres to a 2.35:1 aspect ratio, resembling the Widescreen Cinemascope format. However, there's intentional variation in sizes and overlapping elements across the pages as the story progresses. This dynamic layout aims to enhance reader engagement, offering an interactive experience that goes beyond simplicity.
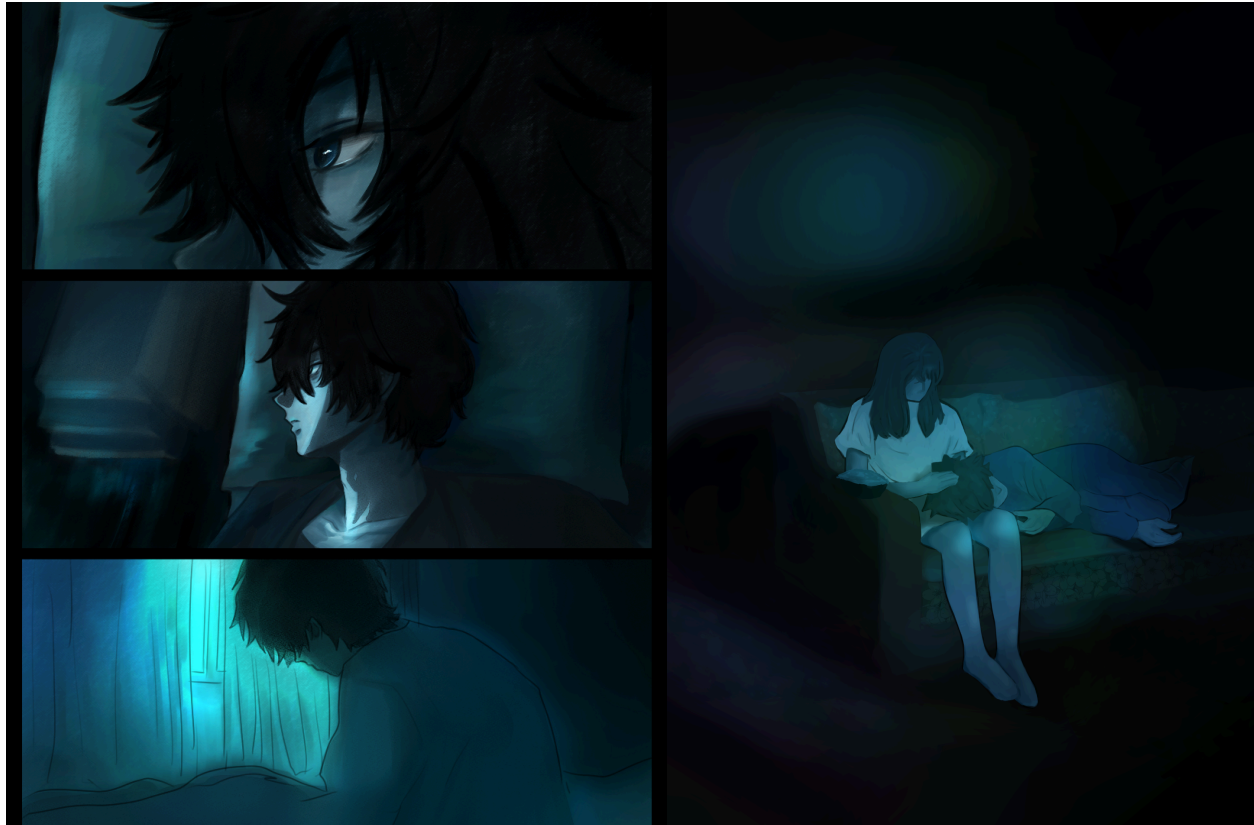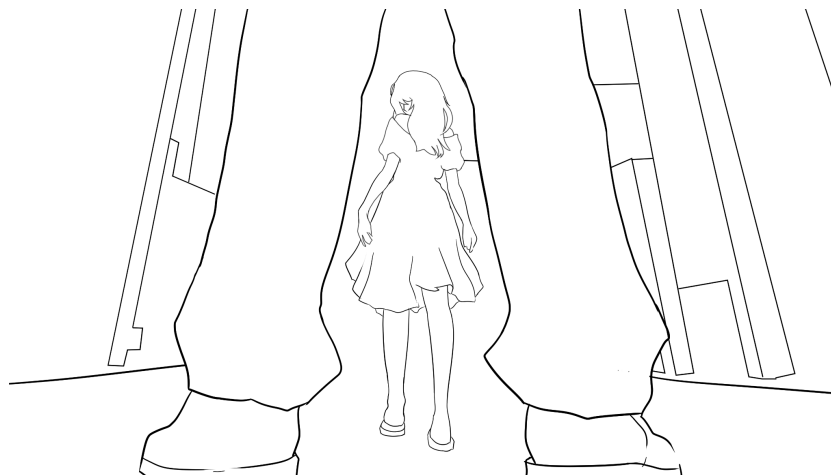

Figure 10. Page spread example

Figure 11. Sketch study on composition

Figure 12-13. Rendered spread and semi-rendered panel

Post-Production Stage

The focus is on preparing the project for distribution in print format. After everything has been set, I will arrange each page in its correct sequence to prepare it for the final print. The aim is to ensure accessibility to a diverse audience through physical copies. This involves formatting the content for seamless presentation and functionality in print environments. After thoroughly assessing the finished output to

gauge its quality, impact, and alignment with the goals and objectives. Gathering feedback from peers and the target audience is crucial to learn how to make future improvements. This process ensures that the graphic novel effectively captures the emotional depth and complexity it aimed for.

Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, the paper conducts a critical analysis of necessary studies and research findings. It explores the effects of psychotic episodes on individuals, marked by distressing symptoms like delusions and hallucinations, frequently accompanied by fear and anxiety. Additionally, it also includes the aspect of trauma among individuals experiencing psychosis, about the exploration of the protagonist's emotional journey.

Symptomatology of Psychosis

Psychosis denotes a detachment from reality. It manifests in various conditions, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Psychotic episodes, with their distressing symptoms like delusions and hallucinations, often accompanied by fear and anxiety, pose significant challenges. Disorganization in thought and behavior, along with negative symptoms like limited emotional expression, diminished motivation, anhedonia, and impaired social interactions, characterize certain psychotic disorders. These negative symptoms are commonly linked to schizophrenia spectrum psychoses. Conversely, disturbances in mood and anxiety may take precedence in affective psychoses.

One of the most concerning aspects of psychotic disorders is how common they are, especially since they can persist into adulthood and later in life. People with these disorders often struggle with long-term social and work-related issues, which can be caused by a mix of factors like poor functioning before getting sick, how severe their illness is, and gaps in getting good care, job support, housing, and treatment for other problems like anxiety or substance use. Unfortunately, people with psychotic disorders also tend to die earlier than others, often due to heart disease, suicide, or cancer. This means much suffering for them and their families, costing society much money. Because of this widespread impact and the suffering it causes, especially the early deaths, psychotic disorders are a major public health concern (Malla & McGorry, 2019).

This concept connects with the project's exploration of the effects of psychotic episodes on individuals, especially their self-perception and emotional struggles. It offers a broader perspective on the recovery process, emphasizing the potential for personal growth even in the face of psychiatric conditions. Just as the project aims to understand and represent the protagonist's emotional journey in the context of psychosis, this article adds depth to the discussion by acknowledging the potential for personal growth and transformation as part of the recovery process.

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Impact of Traumatic Experiences

Despite high rates of trauma among individuals with psychosis, inquiries about possible traumatic experiences are infrequent. While there are barriers to discussing trauma in clinical settings, research according to Campodonico (2022) demonstrates that disclosure can be beneficial for both psychotic and traumatic symptoms. In semi-structured interviews with eleven participants who had experienced both psychosis and trauma, discussing trauma generally proved advantageous. However, the participants often associated the prolonged absence of such discussions with negative self-feelings and a decline in mental health. These findings underscore the perceived importance of addressing trauma in psychosis and suggest adopting a *"trauma lens"* This shift in approach could help overcome clinicians' concerns about discussing trauma with service users, emphasizing the need to systematically assess trauma history and symptoms in psychosis and promote trauma-informed practices to better understand clients' challenges and offer support.

While childhood trauma is a well-established risk factor for psychosis, recent traumatic events can also play a crucial role in triggering or exacerbating psychotic symptoms. Freedman (2017) suggests that traumatic experiences, regardless of when they occur, can lead to the development of psychotic symptoms and increase the risk of psychosis. Recent trauma can contribute to the onset of psychosis by affecting an individual's mental health, triggering stress responses, and influencing cognitive and emotional processes.

In the journal article titled "Beyond Recovery: Exploring Growth in the Aftermath of Psychosis" by Lee, Verma, and Subramaniam (2020), it is said that in the context of trauma recovery, transitioning from a victim to a survivor mindset has been a common therapeutic goal, but it has its limits. Embracing the concept of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), it is now understood that individuals can not only recover from mental health crises but also experience personal growth as a result. This shift emphasizes the evolving role of mental health professionals, expanding beyond traditional rehabilitation and recovery to actively harness patients' traumatic experiences for personal growth amid psychiatric conditions.

The article highlights the often-overlooked aspect of trauma among individuals with psychosis and the reluctance to discuss traumatic experiences in clinical settings. According to Annibali (2015), when individuals go through traumatic experiences, they often lose their innate sense of safety or security. Trauma can disrupt their perception of the world as a safe place. It becomes challenging for them to effectively process the memories and emotional effects of the traumatic event.It also highlights how psychosis, characterized by symptoms like hallucinations and other perceptual disturbances, can exacerbate the impact of trauma. In the case of an individual with psychosis, these symptoms may cause them to relive or re-experience the incident. This means that hallucinations and other symptoms might make them feel as if the event is happening again or intensify the emotional distress associated with the trauma. Although, it's important to note that not everyone who experiences trauma will develop psychosis.

Nonetheless, It demonstrates that discussing trauma can be beneficial for both psychotic and traumatic symptoms, which resonates with the exploration of my protagonist's emotional journey.

The Theory of Object Relations

As mentioned, the project's theoretical framework will be the Object Relations Theory. According to Shahar (2021), it is a comprehensive framework within psychoanalysis, encompassing and assimilating various theoretical strands. Its remarkable applicability to clinical practice beyond traditional psychoanalytic approaches sets it apart. This theory, influenced predominantly by Melanie Klein, acknowledges the significant role of biological drives in human psychology and behavior, emphasizing that these drives inherently revolve around interactions with human figures. Unlike many other psychoanalytic theories, where anxiety takes center stage as the quintessential negative emotion, Object Relations Theory presents a more nuanced perspective. In this broader spectrum of negative affect, one encounters many aversive emotions. The well-recognized ones include sadness, anger, and guilt, making the landscape of human emotions far more intricate than a sole reliance on anxiety as the prime mover of the psyche, as Aristotle might suggest.

Žvelc (2010) suggests that the fear of separation or abandonment from loved ones is quite common in adult relationships. This separation anxiety serves the purpose of maintaining the connection with a partner and is triggered by the prospect of losing them. This fear acts as a driving force, compelling individuals to keep their loved ones close. Those affected by it often display high dependence on their relationships, dread the idea of abandonment, struggle with solitude, and employ transitional objects to alleviate their separation anxiety. However, when they face a loss, they develop their own coping mechanisms. In my protagonist's case, he clings to the belongings left behind by his significant other, ultimately leading to delusions and hallucinations.

Moreover, the theory's intricate understanding of negative emotions, deeply corresponds with the emotional richness of my project. It recognizes the presence of a diverse array of distressing feelings, such as sorrow, anger, and guilt, constituting fundamental aspects of human existence. This multifaceted comprehension of negative emotions harmonizes with my project's objective to convey the intricate web of emotional reactions in the context of psychological suffering and personal loss.

While the theory initially focused on the early relationships between infants and their caregivers, it has since evolved to encompass a broader range of interpersonal relationships. Object relations theorists recognize that individuals form internalized representations of various figures with whom they have significant emotional connections throughout their lives. Chaplin (2015) stated that object relations theory is well suited for analyzing how losing a loved object may impact intrapsychic functioning. *"Loss of a love object"* refers to the experience of losing someone with whom a person has a deep emotional connection, such as a romantic partner, family member, or close friend. *"Intrapsychic functioning"* refers to the individual's internal psychological and

emotional processes, including thoughts, feelings, and how they perceive and relate to themselves and others. Therefore, this theory is a suitable and useful framework for exploring how the loss of a loved one can influence an individual's emotional and psychological well-being, self-perception, and how they continue to relate to the memory of the person they lost.

Silence in Graphic Novels

Adler, S. (2011) says that silence serves as a vehicle for a wide range of emotions and mental states related to the protagonists, in addition to just being the lack of speech, particularly in settings where there is interaction. Additionally, the narrator may choose to cut off the verbal channel to leave information on the implicit level, let symbols and icons "talk," and encourage the reader to comprehend through observation and inference and decipher the narrator's (or the protagonist's) intentions. Interaction through talking is a type of engagement where verbal statements get the most attention. On the other hand, interaction through silence is defined as an activity where participants concentrate their attention on nonverbal cues, both in sending and receiving messages.

The journal also looked at the graphic novel's argumentative values of silence. Two authors of a silent graphic novel were selected for illustration review. The following scenarios were linked to the idea of silence: instances in which the showing takes priority over the telling; silences that happen in the gutters (a space between frames that forms a sequence); and, lastly, silences that interact verbally with the frame or sequence in multiple manners. Readers may have a more engaging and interactive reading experience by deducing the meaning of events from the illustrations. Furthermore, silent graphic novels are globally appealing and accessible to various viewers due to their use of imagery that crosses language borders.

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Review of Related Creative Works

This chapter contains a selection of gathered works that hold significance. These visual references shape the overall tone and progression of the story's theme, particularly in terms of visuals. They provide valuable insights and inspiration, influencing the content and techniques. Additionally, the selection of films used as inspiration drew on the cinematic approach of the compositions that influenced the creation of panels of the graphic novel.

"Fallen Angels" directed by Wong Kar-wai (1995)

Figures 14-16. Some notable scenes in the film

A Hong Kong movie known for its stylized visuals, fragmented narrative, and exploration of themes like urban alienation and unrequited love. The film follows the interconnected lives of several characters in the city's bustling streets, showcasing their struggles and desires. This highly inspires the overall aesthetic and atmosphere I wish to evoke. The film's moody cinematography, vibrant urban setting, and nonlinear storytelling influence my graphic novel's narrative style and artistic choices. Drawing upon its use of color, lighting, and camera angles helps create visually compelling panels and derive transitions for each scene.

The continuous use of first-person perspective is integral to my storytelling approach. By adopting a similar narrative device, readers are immersed in the

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protagonist's subjective experience, allowing them to see the world through the main character's eyes and experience events firsthand. This intimate perspective deepens the readers' emotional connection to the story and characters, drawing them further into the story.

"Shutter Island" Directed by Martin Scorsese (2010)

This psychological thriller film resonates deeply with the themes and objectives of my graphic novel. It immerses viewers in the haunting world of Teddy Daniels, a U.S. Marshal investigating a patient's mysterious disappearance from a psychiatric institution on a secluded island. While watching this film, I was struck by how it masterfully portrays the unraveling of Teddy Daniels' mental state, blurring the lines between reality and illusion. This film offers a unique perspective on the effects of trauma and profound emotional experiences on one's perception of reality. The character of Teddy Daniels undergoes a profound internal struggle as he confronts the haunting specters of his past and grapples with the weight of guilt and loss. This struggle reflects the complexities of self-perception, which my project aims to explore.

It also serves as an example of how psychosis can disrupt and distort an individual's perception of reality, a theme central to my thesis project. Teddy Daniels' descent into psychological torment mirrors the emotional turmoil often associated with psychotic episodes, highlighting the urgency of addressing mental health issues. This film not only complements the core themes of my project but also reinforces the importance of exploring the intricate aspects of self-perception and the influence of surreal and disorienting experiences on mental well-being. It exemplifies the power of visual storytelling to convey these complex themes, encouraging viewers to engage with the material personally and derive their meanings from the imagery.

Figure 17. The train scene is crucial in the film, as it reveals important details about Teddy's past and emotional state.

Figure 18. The lighthouse scene. A moment of great tension and suspense, where the
character faces his demons and the disturbing reality of the island.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll (1865)

This novel is a whimsical and surreal narrative that takes readers through a fantastical world filled with bizarre characters and surreal situations, ultimately transforming the protagonist's self-perception, Alice. Her self-perception undergoes a profound transformation in response to these bewildering events. It serves as an example of how external experiences can challenge and reshape one's sense of self. As Alice navigates this bewildering and disorienting world, her self-perception transforms profoundly in response to these surreal events. This transformation, in essence, mirrors the emotional journey I aim to depict in my creative project—a blend of bitterness due to the irreversibility of the past and sweetness stemming from cherished memories.

Furthermore, it emphasizes the power of visuals and imagination in storytelling. In my project, I will also use illustrations to convey the storyline, allowing viewers to derive meanings from the imagery and encouraging them to exercise their minds in interpreting. The film not only complements the core themes of my project but also highlights the importance of understanding how surreal and disorienting experiences can influence self-perception and mental well-being. It showcases the transformative potential of external experiences on one's sense of self, aligning with the central exploration of my creative project.

Figures 19-20. The Mad Tea Party and The Cheshire Cat in the book

       The film adaptation is also something to note as it goes into the story's dark themes and imaginative imagery in a live-action format. With Tim Burton's directive, his unique Gothic style and surreal storytelling create a mesmerizing world where nothing is ordinary. Through elaborate sets, intricate costumes, and innovative special effects, Burton explored deeper psychological themes while offering a fresh yet different perspective on the timeless tale.

Figure 21. The Mad Tea Party depicted in the 2010 movie

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Figure 22. The Cheshire Cat depicted in the 2010 movie

"Coraline" Directed by Henry Selick (2009)

Figures 23-24. Official posters

This film holds a special place in my heart and is one of the top inspirations for my graphic novel. Coraline Jones, the child protagonist, is on an intriguing yet unsettling voyage into an alternate realm within her home. Her sense of self and reality are put to a serious test as she navigates this surreal world and runs into unnerving doppelgängers of her loved ones. This voyage effectively highlights the adaptable

quality of self-perception and the potential for transformation while experiencing strange and unsettling situations. The film explores a range of emotions, weaving moments of unease and fear with instances of wonder and courage. The emotional journey of the character in my project, who is lost in the aftermath of losing a loved one, is mirrored by this emotional complexity.

What makes Coraline particularly relevant is its emphasis on visuals. Each scene uses imagery and colors that are well-arranged and thought out very deeply. Additionally, it arguably has one of the best art styles in the animation industry, and the art of stop-motion makes it unique and pleasing to the eye.

I aim to draw inspiration from its color direction. The interplay of colors in the film, which mirrors the complexity of the narrative, is a valuable reference for my work. I intend to emphasize using color to evoke specific emotions, reflecting the character's journey through bitterness and sweetness as they struggle with the irreversibility of the past and cherished memories. The way "Coraline" employs a vibrant yet eerie color palette, with a balance of warm, inviting hues and cool, unsettling tones, is an essential element of its storytelling. This approach to color influences the atmosphere and emotions conveyed in the film.

Figure 25. The tunnel or door scene. A part in the film where Coraline's journey and the obstacles she faces in this strange and disturbing "Other" world unfolds.

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Figure 26. The confrontation scene marks a turning point in the story, as Coraline's bravery and understanding of the situation become evident.

Figure 27. Coraline is thrown into a mirror by the Other Mother. In this scene, the ghostly, button-eyed apparitions of the children who were previously trapped in the Other World begin to possess Coraline's body.

"Black Swan" Directed by Darren Aronofsky (2010)

In this psychological thriller film, the mental unraveling of a ballet dancer is explored, portraying her descent into psychosis and the blurring of reality and hallucination. Nina's journey as the main protagonist is fraught with fear and anxiety, mirroring the emotional turmoil often associated with psychotic episodes. Her relentless pursuit of perfection, coupled with the fear of failure, drives her to the brink of

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psychological collapse. Nina's identity and self-image undergo a profound transformation as she becomes increasingly immersed in her role, blurring the line between reality and fantasy.

The experience of psychosis and its impact on self-perception is vividly portrayed, providing valuable insights into the emotional struggles faced by individuals navigating psychological challenges. The film not only mirrors the emotional complexities of psychosis but also underscores the transformative potential of artistic expression. It will significantly contribute to the depth and understanding of the human experience within the psychological suffering and personal loss explored in my project.


Figure 28. The scene where the Black Swan takes its wings.
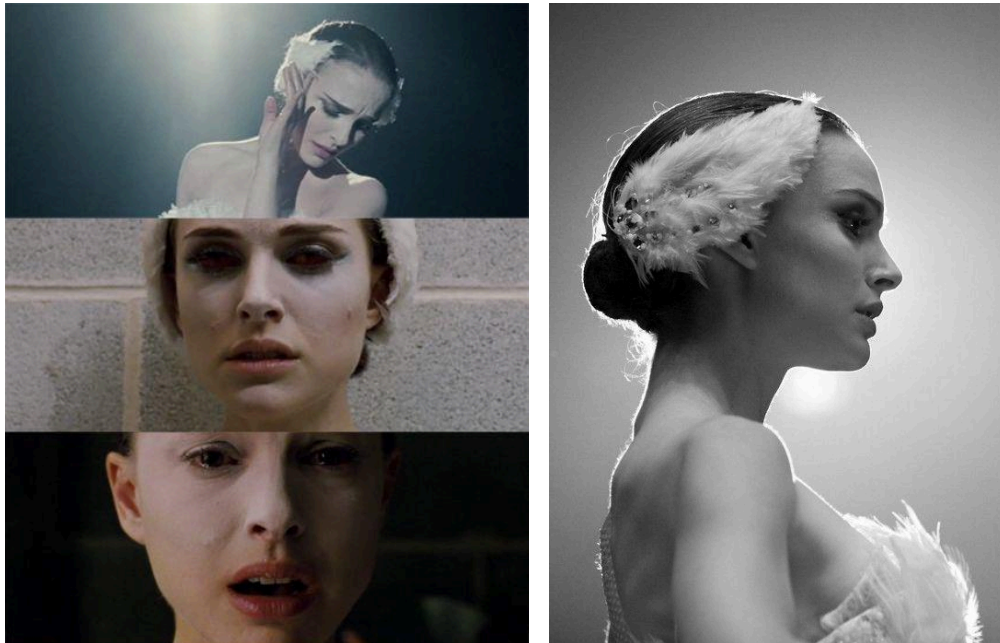
Figures 29-30. Scenes in the Black Swan

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"The Summer Hikaru Died" By Mokumokuren (2021)

This beautifully illustrated manga, also known as *Hikaru ga Shinda Natsu (光が死んだ夏)*, is an emotionally driven exploration of loss, grief, and the intricate web of emotions that come with coping with the death of a loved one. It tells the story of Yoshiki and Hikaru, two adolescents in a quiet rural Japanese town. Although their personalities and interests diverge, they share a strong bond of friendship. Nevertheless, after a fatal incident, their lives take a dramatic turn one summer when Hikaru becomes the host of an alien presence.
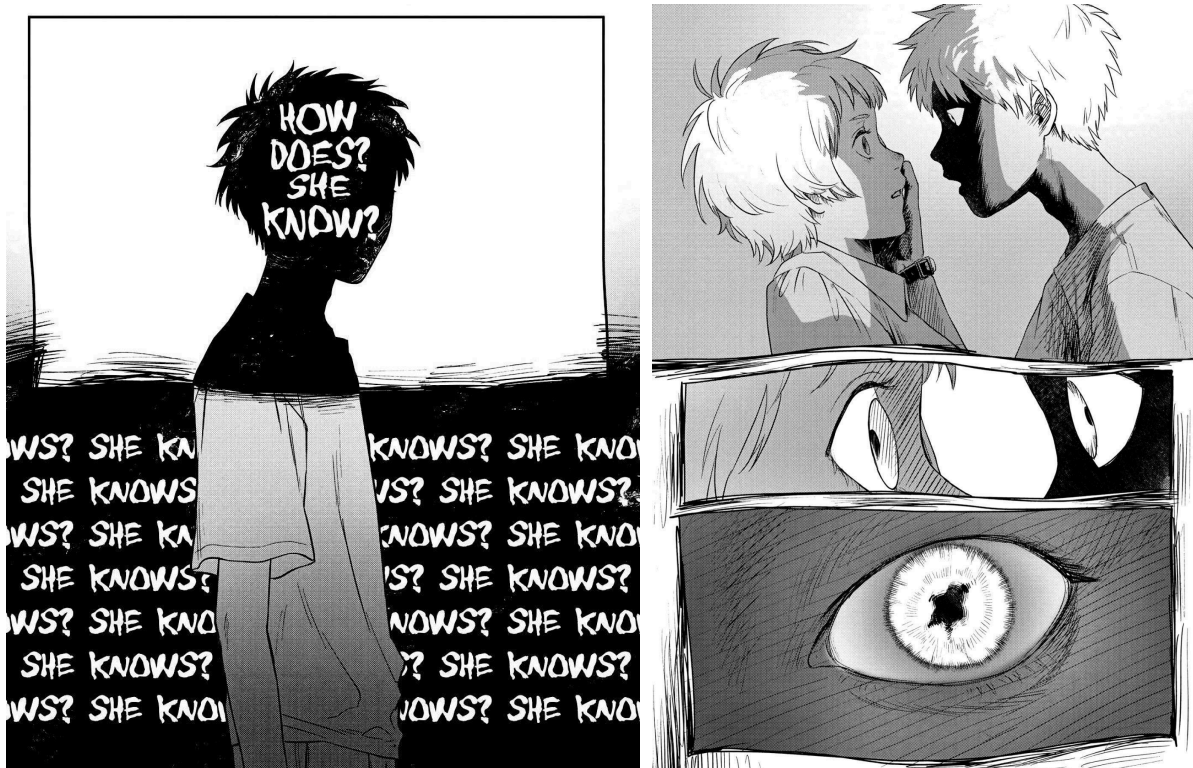
Figures 31-32. In this scene, the girl Asako harbored doubts about Hikaru, who was under the influence of the alien entity. Sensing her skepticism, Hikaru responds with intimidation and threats.
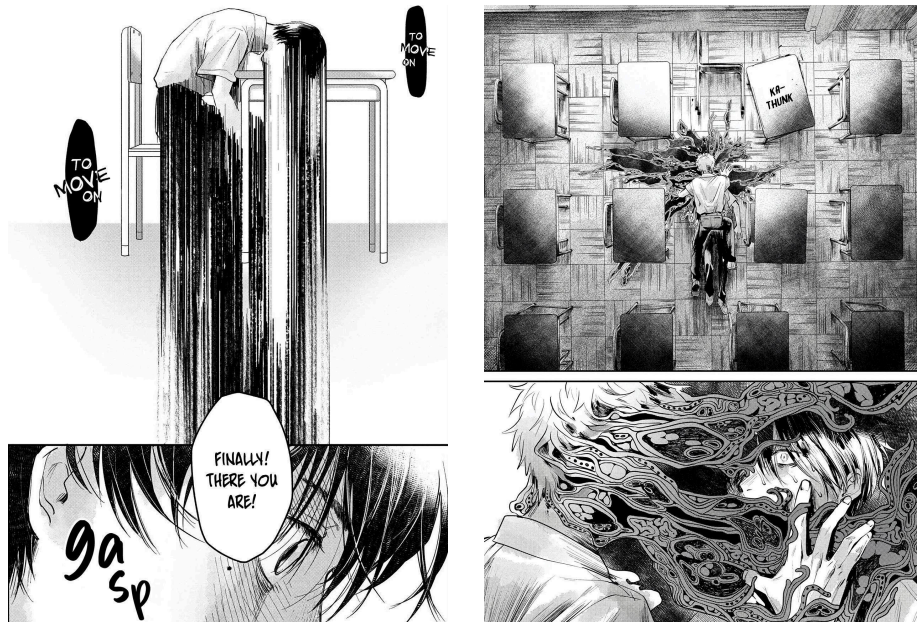
This manga offers readers a journey into the depths of human emotions and the challenges of processing personal tragedy. Mokumokuren's artistry allows readers to dive deep into the protagonist's inner world, where sorrow, confusion, and longing appear on each panel. Visual storytelling is not just aesthetically pleasing but a powerful means of understanding the character's emotional state. As readers follow the protagonist's journey, they witness the transformation of self-perception in the face of loss. This thematic exploration aligns with broader questions of how individuals view

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themselves and adapt to mental health challenges, which makes "The Summer Hikaru Died" a relevant source.

In addition, the visual elements of my project will draw significant inspiration from this manga, particularly its evocative exploration of darker themes and the skillful use of color palettes to convey strong emotions and moods. I will also incorporate the effective utilization of surprise elements, mirroring the approach seen in the panels. These serve to captivate the audience and deepen the engagement and emotional resonance of the narrative. By strategically employing unexpected twists and revelations, the project aims to create a more immersive and thought-provoking experience for the viewers.

Figure 33. An original illustration by the author, Mokumokuren, features the two main characters, Yoshiki and Hikaru.

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Figures 34-35. In a moment of regret and revelation, Yoshiki enters a state of anguish, staying sane and pretending everything is normal as his dearest friend's body has fallen under the control of an unknown entity.

Figures 36-37. Original illustrations provide a visual narrative of the main characters' journey and a glimpse into the intricacies of their relationship.

"Goodbye, Eri" By Tatsuki Fujimoto (2022)
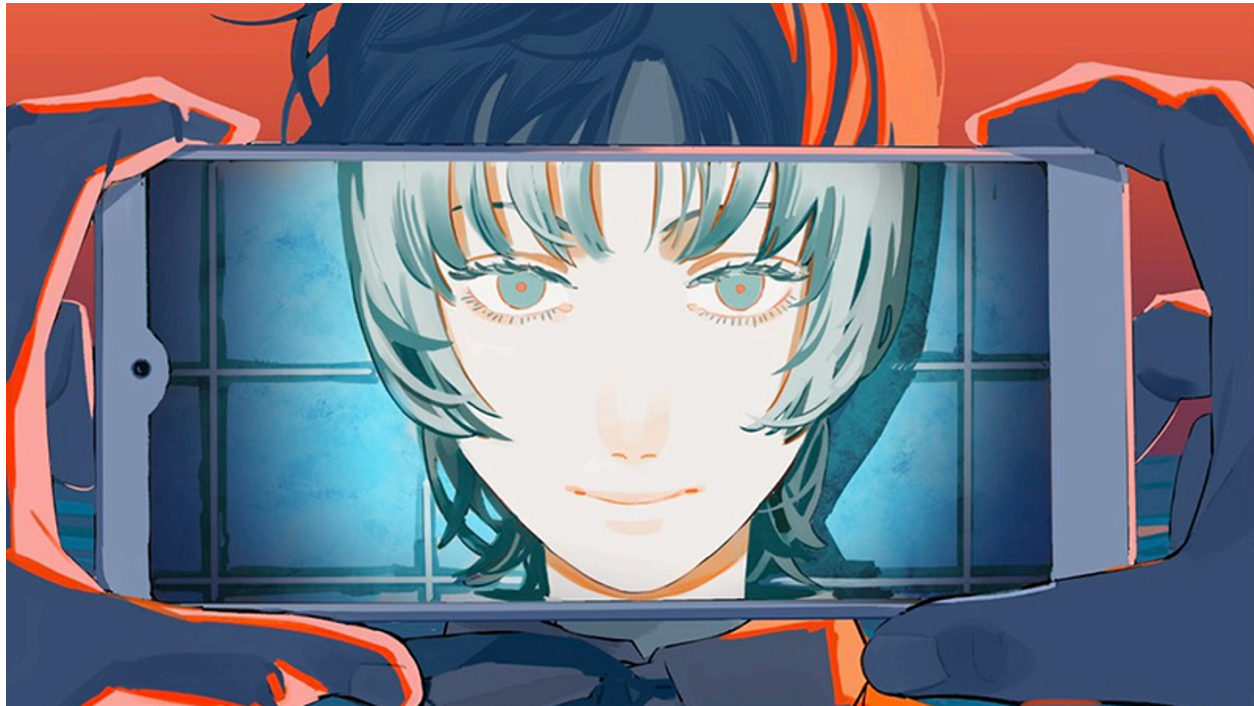
Figure 38. Front page of the manga

This one-shot tells the story of Hiroshi, a high school student whose classmate, Eri, suddenly vanishes without a trace. Overwhelmed by her disappearance and haunted by memories of their time together, Hiroshi journeys to unravel the mystery behind Eri's absence. As he dives deeper into the enigma, Hiroshi uncovers unsettling truths from their seemingly ordinary school life. Along the way, he surfaces with his own emotions and confronts the complexities of human nature. With its engaging narrative and artwork, it delves into themes of loss, friendship, and the darker aspects of human relationships.

It provides valuable inspiration for my graphic novel's dark themes and visually enhanced elements and fits well with my storytelling style. Seeing the story through the main character's eyes and using the manga's unique paneling techniques help convey emotions and suspense. Studying Tatsuki Fujimoto's work gives me insights into portraying human relationships and life's darker aspects in my own story. This one-shot serves as a guide, helping me create a graphic novel that draws readers into the protagonist's journey with haunting imagery and thought-provoking themes.
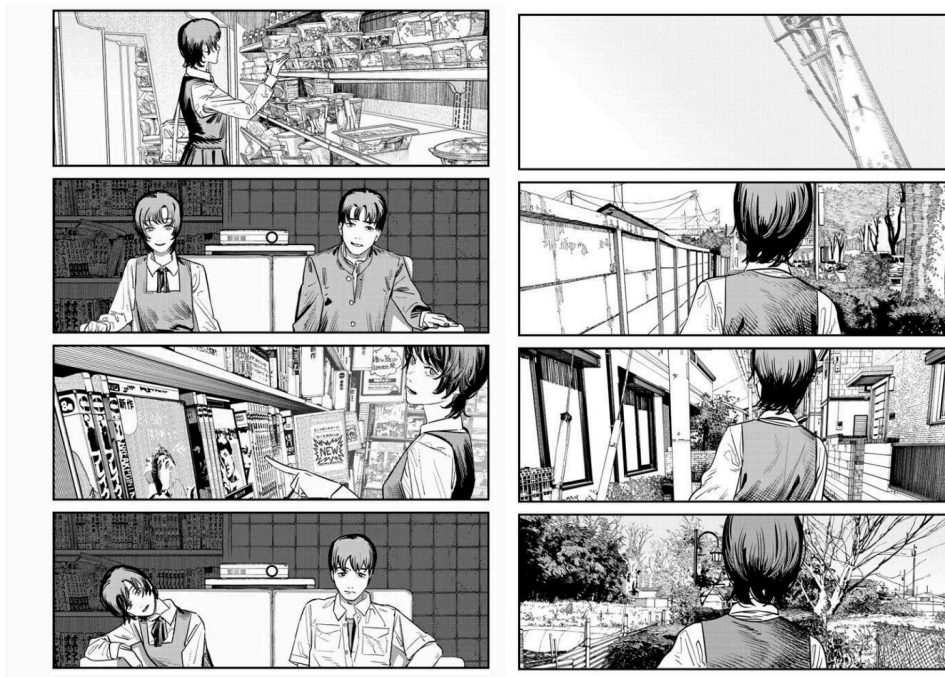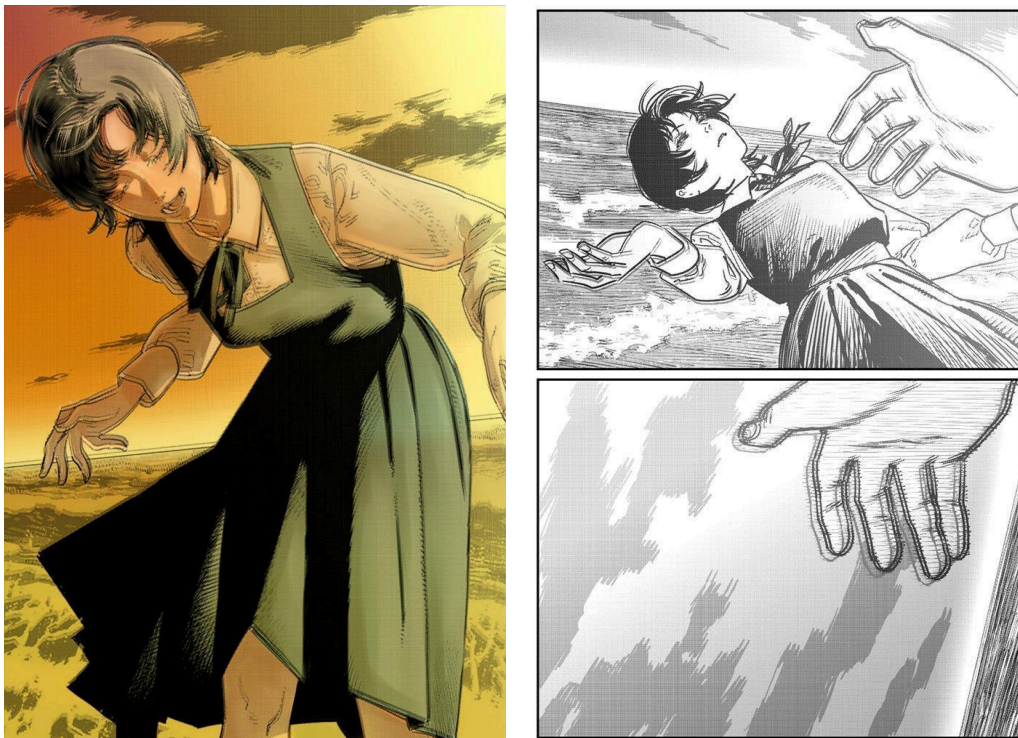
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Figure 39-40. Use of the four-panel layout

Figure 41-42. Colored panel by de future on X

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"Light" by Rob Cham (2015)

Figure 43. Official cover of the book

This wordless comic book follows the adventures of an ambitious traveler on a mission to unearth a secret treasure. The illustrations, framed in black along with stunning pops of color, appeal to various readers. With his new work, he wanted to show the audience this time that illustrations speak louder than words and that they are enough in this book. Every page tells a tale that is rather simple to comprehend. Scene changes also happen seamlessly. Additionally, certain pages build up to a montage, which is, in my opinion, a unique approach to saving pages without sacrificing the plot's advancement. The amount of detail is also now more apparent, but what stands out is how it keeps everything from being crowded. What I first noticed, however, was the fact that each illustration takes up the whole page, unlike the standard comic books. It's like reading a comic book for the first time again, and this discovery alone inspired me to employ the same technique in my silent graphic novel.

The background's darkness provides a striking contrast, making the colors look more vibrant. The hues give the creatures and surroundings a particular warmth. The light, or more precisely, the way the light interacts with the objects, is another obvious feature that I really liked.
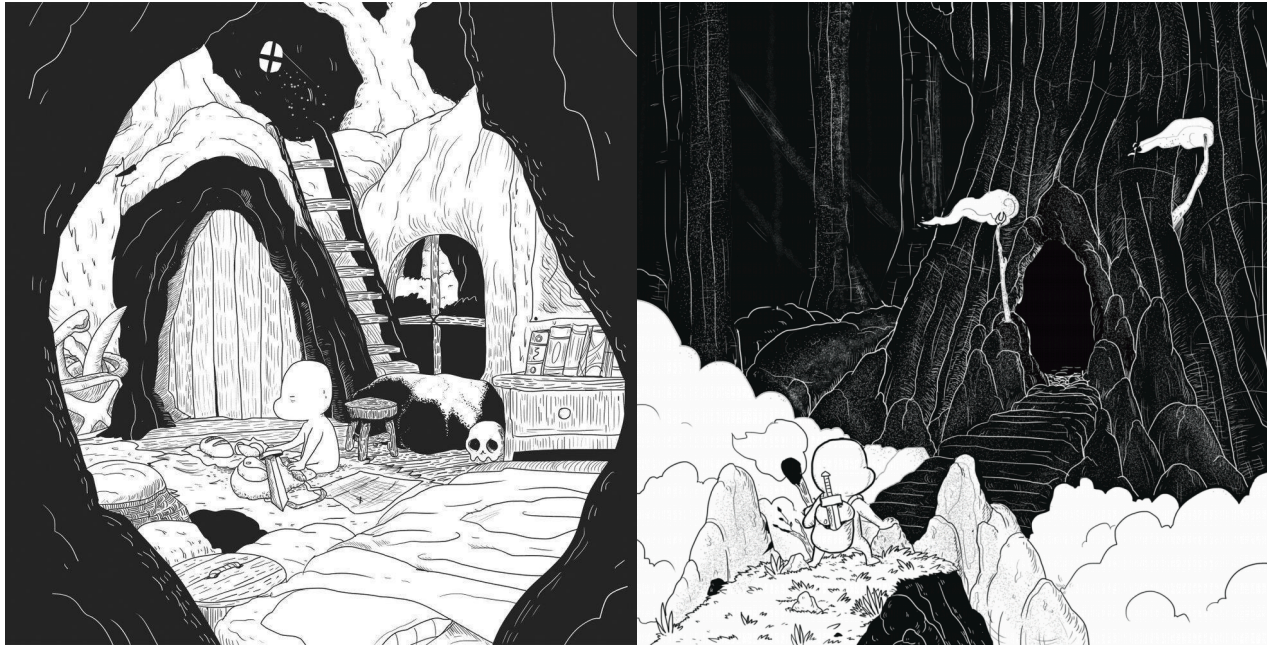
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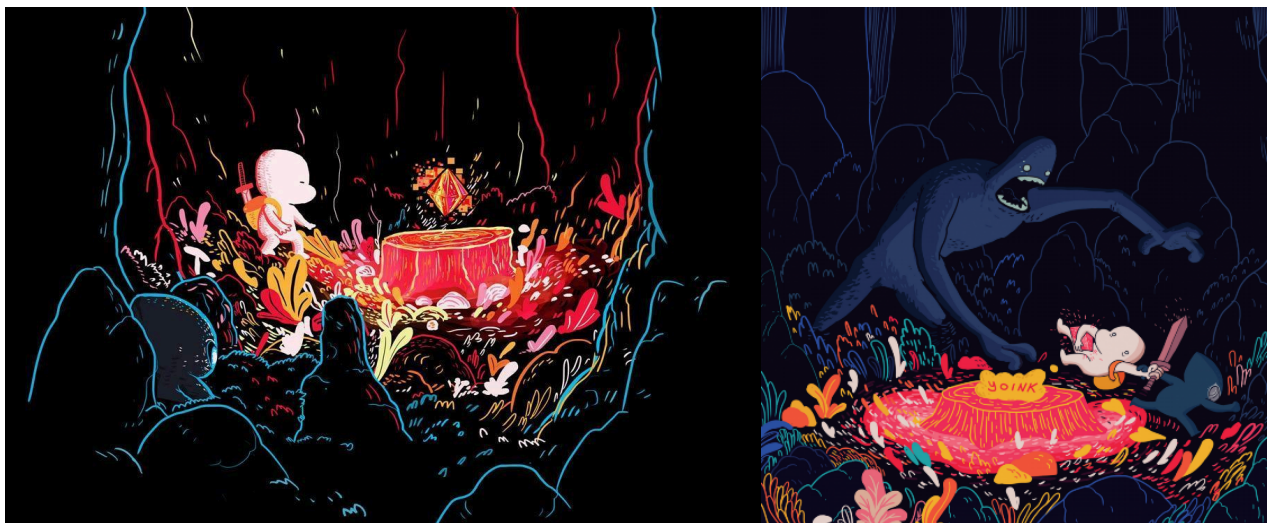*Figure 46-47.* Official monotone-colored pages in the book

Figure 44-45. Official colored pages in the book

Results and Discussion

This thesis aims to explore the representation of psychosis in a silent graphic novel format, focusing on visual storytelling to depict the psychological and emotional aspects of the illness. The lack of words will be enhanced and examined by looking at how it is portrayed in this medium as the reader engages in the protagonist's subjective reality. Silent graphic novels break language's constraints to provoke physical and emotional reactions from the reader, delivering a different kind of output than is typically seen, particularly when examining the details of psychosis. By carefully analyzing the visuals, composition, and sequential storytelling, this novel allows readers to step inside the protagonist's head and experience their hallucinations, delusions, and overall warped perception of the character.

I conducted a desk research analysis for this thesis. This provided me with the opportunity to gather important data on the risk of psychosis and how it affects one's perspective of self. This process's primary contribution is a thorough analysis of the environmental and personal elements that raise the possibility of developing psychotic disorders. It draws attention to the connections between these multiple elements in determining an individual's vulnerability to psychosis and sense of self. This study can assist in the development of risk-reduction and outcome-improvement measures for individuals with psychosis.

On psychosis, it is a mental health condition that can cause people to experience a detachment from reality. This may include hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thinking. Stress and an awful life experience are two things that might make someone more likely to develop psychosis, as my graphic novel demonstrates. Determining the individuals who could be more susceptible to psychosis also requires an understanding of the possible risk factors. A person suffering from psychosis may have a skewed sense of who they are and how they see the world, resulting in a disjointed and disjointed sense of self. This can cause emotions of loneliness, bewilderment, and terror, as well as a decrease in confidence, self-doubt, and trouble believing their ideas and experiences. Furthermore, the person's capacity to make decisions and solve problems may be impacted by their distorted perspective of reality, making it much more difficult to get by in daily life. It may be exceedingly challenging for people to carry out their everyday activities successfully due to this disruption in their sense of self. (Heckers, 2009)

Conclusion

The studies offer insights on psychosis and its influence on personal growth. The studies emphasize the distressing symptoms commonly associated with psychotic episodes, like delusions and hallucinations, as well as the emotional turbulence marked by fear and anxiety. These findings emphasize the importance of adopting a holistic approach to mental health care, extending beyond recovery and recognizing that individuals can not only recover from mental health crises but also undergo personal growth, even in the wake of psychosis.

Furthermore, the analyzed related works elegantly illustrate the intricacies of self-perception amid surreal experiences. "Shutter Island" vividly depicts how psychosis can disrupt an individual's grasp on reality, plunging them into an intense internal struggle. "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" offers a whimsical yet thought-provoking exploration of how external experiences can challenge and reshape one's self-image, akin to those confronting mental health challenges, including psychosis. "Fallen Angels," "Coraline," "Black Swan," "The Summer Hikaru Died," and "Goodbye, Eri" provide compelling narratives that delve into the transformative potential of facing unfamiliar and disturbing experiences, showcasing the adaptable nature of self-perception.

Both literature and creative works highlight the significance of comprehending and addressing the intricate relationship between psychotic experiences, self-perception, and mental well-being. This understanding opens the path for a more sympathetic and thorough approach to assisting people in negotiating the challenging conditions of undergoing psychosis.

Recommendations

Research Topic

Psychosis poses a serious threat to people's mental health as it impairs behavior, perception, and thought processes and frequently results in a warped sense of reality. Untreated psychosis carries risks that go beyond one's health. This condition is characterized by delusions, hallucinations, and disordered thought patterns, which can be dangerous to the afflicted person as well as anyone in the vicinity of them. This research topic can still be improved to provide a more in-depth understanding of personal development. Furthermore, broadening the target audience may improve the data and findings' efficacy and clarity in the future.

Creative Process

Further improvements can be made to enhance the graphic novel's creation as my study's thesis output, particularly focusing on ensuring consistency in textures and managing the production timeline. This complex and time-consuming process calls for careful attention to detail and the implementation of an integrated approach. Improvements are also needed to keep the graphic novel's visuals consistent from panel to panel. I experimented with different textures and brushes to create the ideal graphic style required to highlight the character's disoriented lifestyle. The layout can also be improved, especially in terms of exploring panel transitions to more accurately depict the main character's journey. The palette's color choices were thoroughly chosen to capture the character's inner suffering. This decision is intended to support the character's emotional development and a stronger bond between the reader and the graphic book. Finally, the Gantt chart and the production timeline serve as a guide to help me plan and have an effective workflow, ensuring a desirable output.

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