The Aesthetic Lives of Particular Nobodies

Exploring phantasmic fictional character narratives on Instagram

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<u>CONTENTS</u>

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed,

01.07.2019

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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And finally, I would like to thank my family for their ceaseless love and support throughout my study.

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

A vaporous body, that wanders along the hazy perimeter which lies between fiction and Instagram-reality, this visual illustrative project imagines Instagram as a physical urban place where lives unfold in a serial chain of image-making and self-performance. In my project I use digital drawing illustration and sound design to bring to life young Instagrammer characters and the aesthetic worlds they inhabit. My exploration of storytelling on Instagram has led to the formulation of an emergent new media narrative that is not only visual, but interactive. It is multi-layered, platform embedded, open-ended and responsive to its online social environment. My work demonstrates how Instagram can host original character development and dynamic roleplay. It enables the establishment of rich and nuanced character identity, persona and preferences, and the testing out of their virtual relationships with other characters through conscious interactions.

ACT 1 introduces the conceptual context of my project in depth, discussing relevant theories underpinning my practice and building on an extended metaphor that envisions Instagram as a district in a social media metropolis. ACT 2 discusses cultural and illustrative influences that were instrumental in the formation of my story content and the narrative's functioning. The multilayered workings of my project are unpacked in greater detail in ACT 3, followed by the many possible directions my project can expand in future.

The characters thoughts and voices will be included at times, during this explanatory text.

<u>ABSTRACT</u>

This visual illustrative project explores the inherent fictionality of Instagram. Imagining Instagram as an urban environment, it follows the fictional lives of two main protagonists and their virtual circle of friends. It was found that Instagram narrative requires an open-ended structure with no conclusive endpoint, wherein story is focused on character self-image and their place in a social network. This research project demonstrates how Instagram can host original character development through serial image-making and self-performance. Instagram enables the establishment of rich and nuanced character identities and preferences, and the testing out of their virtual relationships through conscious interactions.

PROLOGUE

Characters

The project began with my phantasmic cast of five characters who are: the longsuffering Lian, procrastinating Perry, the philosophical Favian, camera-ready Kimmie, and dear friend Daehyun. These characters become knowable through shared moments from everyday life in a large metropolis in a parallel universe. Of the five, my project has now intertwined the lives of Perry and Lian's into a double journey narrative that traces their platonic relationship from strangers to close friends, with the other three as supporting characters.

Background

The characters had their inception in my final undergraduate project as the development of a cast of five characters who haunt Instagram with their fictional presence. At that stage, they were developed as fledgling characters as a means to test out illustration on Instagram.

This Masters project is distinguished by its shift from singular standalone images, with no narrative, towards fleshing out the characters through developing more complex backstories, narrative arcs, narrative world-building, and an aesthetic cohesion. The interactions between them and the images they share from their invented daily lives draw together an open-ended and improvisational narrative about friendship, influence, perception and identity. Throughout this research, I have developed my characters through different perspectives.

Young Ghosts—The Phantasmic Five

Perry is a 20 year old student and habitual gamer who is disengaged from his tertiary study. He wants to travel and experience the world. His preferred Instagram aesthetic is trashy deep-fry, bad filters and unrefined crusty images, but he is far too cleancut to do that in reality. He longs to be cool and charismatic, and to be well-known as a trendsetter. He wants the colour cast of fame. If he was a tree in my yard, he would be a cherry blossom: ephemeral, fleeting, and pink. He is a conspiracy theory band-wagon rider who believes in Area 51 and aliens. Perry loves popular culture, and the only written texts he reads are comics such as Killjoys and Shanghai Red, or fan fiction, preferring to watch films like Blade Runner, Star Wars reruns, and anime series like Death Note and One Punch Man. He listens to EDM and synthwave retro-pop music and favours bouncy, upbeat rhythms and quicker tempos with varied dynamics.

Lian is a 24 year old loner that works at a convenience store in the CBD and casually keeps up with the activities of music groups and tv dramas in her spare time. She is diligent, faithful and

bold. Lian would be the false-cypress tree in my yard in recovery after recently being stripped of ivy—self-contained, but misshapen and idiosyncratic. She has a cold grace, covering herself up with heavy winter clothes and self-depreciating captions. Her ideal Instagram aesthetic is noir-esque, black and white, dim artificially lit images and grungy textures. Lian longs to find her authentic self, and to reveal her idiosyncrecies—she believes in a true self. Lian reads popular philosophical books like Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey*. Lian was into dark alternative '80s-90's bands like Radiohead, The Cure, The Smashing Pumpkins and Placebo, though, has more recently gotten into vaporwave for its irony and glitch.

Favian is in his mid 20s, and works in an art gallery. He is an aesthete who is too self-conscious to post 'selfies' but would make a fantastic model. He thinks selfie taking is embarrassing and cringeworthy. His Instagram aesthetic is washed out, desaturated, foggy, light and gentle sepias and purples, accompanied by a haiku in the caption. An atlas blue cedar with short silvery pine needles, Favian as a tree is evergreen, upright and high soaring. He secretly longs for understanding, relevancy, a listening ear, and someone to share his abstract thoughts with. Into Japanese aesthetics, Favian is currently reading *Wabi-Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence* by Andrew Juniper. He listens to slow ambient instrumental music that features a lot of broken-chords played on a distant and echoey piano.

Kimmie is in her early 20s, studying dance and performance. She owns an endless supply of clothing and is hardly ever seen in the same thing twice. She takes goofy selfies and loves to make puns in captions. Kimmie is a shameless Vogue poser who breathes fashion. She usually has a big smile in her photos. She longs for people, energy and fun. Her aesthetic is bright and poppy, and uses filters to boost her images with saturation and warmth. As a tree, Kimmie is a Japanese Maple - vibrant, versatile, with star-shaped leaves. Kimmie longs for the magic of theatre, mystery, enigma and stories. She loves reading fashion magazines and her favourite book Daniel Herwitz's *The Star as Icon*. Dance got Kimmie super into K-pop, and she favours the music of Hip-Hop idol groups that have fun choreography to learn.

Daehyun is a barista and manager at a small cafe in his mid 20s. He is best-friend to Favian and Perry, and is friends with Kimmie through his dance hobby. His Instagram aesthetic is coffee shop vibes, where he serves others more than himself. His selfies are always relaxed and never too posed, but usually taken with friends rather than by himself. His Instagram is like him, more in service to his friends' aesthetics than his own. His tree is a Phoenix Palm that hosts a hundred chattering sparrows at dusk. More interested in living texts, Daehyun doesn't spare much time to read, though he does occasionally indulge in the odd TV Drama or latest film release. Daehyun is focused on connection, companionship, and the people he experiences life with. He has a playlist in his cafe full of slow 80s pop, ballads, and gentle guitar, which he also plays at home for his growing collection of plants.
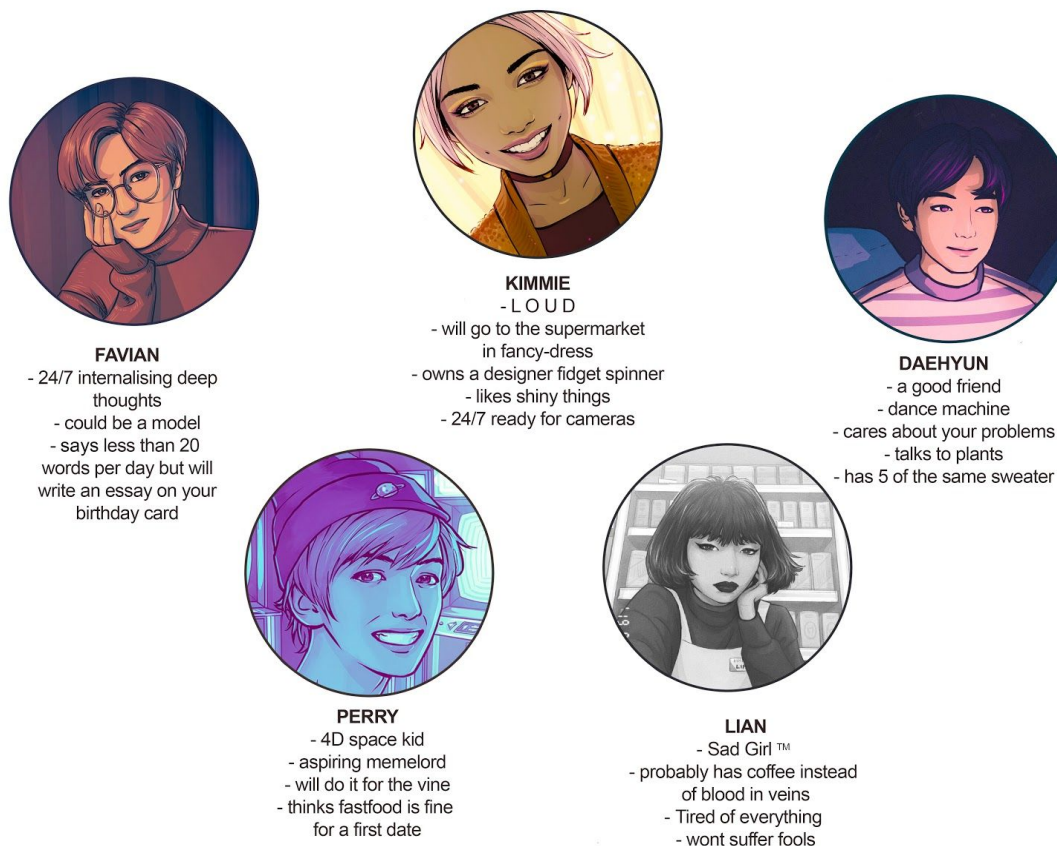
KIMMIE
- L O U D
- will go to the supermarket
in fancy-dress
- owns a designer fidget spinner
- likes shiny things
- 24/7 ready for cameras

FAVIAN
- 24/7 internalising deep
thoughts
- could be a model
- says less than 20
words per day but will
write an essay on your
birthday card

DAEHYUN
- a good friend
- dance machine
- cares about your problems
- talks to plants
- has 5 of the same sweater

PERRY
- 4D space kid
- aspiring memelord
- will do it for the vine
- thinks fastfood is fine
for a first date

LIAN
- Sad Girl ™
- probably has coffee instead
of blood in veins
- Tired of everything
- wont suffer fools

Image 1

A 'Tag-Yourself-Meme' of my characters detailing their personalities

Narrative sequence

The narrative centres around the double journey narrative of Lian and Perry turning from strangers to friends, and Lian's eventual inclusion in Perry's circle of friends. By the end of the project, the narrative centres on these two characters. Initially, their friendship develops through interactions on Instagram, beginning with small conversations in comments and later being tagged in each others' images and appearing in photos together. The increasing influence they have on each other is revealed in their Instagram profile aesthetic themes—which start separate and become less distinct as time goes on, eventually merging and even crossing over.

The world of the characters is a large urban metropolis of indistinct location. It exists in a parallel universe that bears striking similarities to many other 'glocal' places—both global and local at the same time. This idea is discussed in ACT 2. The narrative is set in our current time but

involves retro-futuristic elements in specific colour palettes, design and photo filters reminiscent of 1980s media. This aligns with contemporary millennial obsessions with the era of their parents, an analogue pre-digital world. Typography, objects, clothing and locations mirror the 'real world' in that they are composites of actual places rather than futuristic and imaginary.

Image 2

Perry captured this photo late one afternoon on the trip home from class.

Creative practice

My creative drawing practice commences with my characters, who are each imaginary composites based on K-pop idols, existing fictional characters, and real world people. I use my smartphone to photograph places and details that might serve as content for a scene. From there, I make hand-drawn pen studies of characters and objects that test affective or emotional communication, typographic tests, urban places as backgrounds and details such as products. From these studies, I develop scenes which I create within the digital art authoring program Clip Studio Paint using a Wacom Intuos drawing tablet. For each image I follow a conventional illustration style that aesthetically alludes to manga and anime (Japanese comics and animated films). My work is also heavily influenced by the media forces of the Korean Wave—K-Pop

(South Korean Pop music) and K-Dramas (South Korean TV Dramas). I have been learning Korean language since I became interested in these media in 2017 and currently take classes. These genres will be discussed in more depth in ACT 2.

Once the image is completed, to my satisfaction, I apply Instagram photo filters and third-party apps on top of my illustrations to bring media textures of photography (chromatic aberrations, digital noise, lens distortion,) into the images so that they can appear more photographic. As well as Instagram filters, third-party app filters intensify or fade the colour palette, and generate grain, date stamps and other elements to convey the retro effects that align with my characters imagined personas. The aim is to create the illusion of Instagram-life. These are drawings pretending to be photos. It is in this margin of real and unreal that my project operates. I will discuss this further in ACT 2.

The colour palette is a significant element in the narrative arc and storytelling process. In the context of instagram, the word 'aesthetic' is used to encapsulate a user's particular visual theme. In my characters' world, Perry is purple with accents of pink and cyan, and Lian is black and white. As they begin to connect in their real life, their aesthetics change.

Subconsciously, Perry wants to be more than he is. He wants his life to look vibrant and full. He wants to go to space, touch the stars, and meet the aliens he is sure are out there. Easily bored and unsatisfied with his reality, he spends time in colourful arcades and adventures though virtual game worlds to escape the claustrophobic grey classroom and uninspiring black text on white pages. Just as he prefers energy drinks and his bubble tea ridiculously sweet, he would rather be inside a game world with colour casts of vibrant purples and pinks; a world where there are no assignments, and more time to smell the roses. He is constantly pushing the saturation of his life, trying, through Instagram, to transform it into a neon arcade-game from the 80s.

Lian is kind of the opposite, but equally unsatisfied with her reality. Everything around her is too full of bright, clashing colours and the loud superlatives of cheap package design. She neutralises and silences her world by eliminating the colour, converting her images to grayscale. Black and white provides Lian with an aesthetic coping strategy, which also aligns with her 'sad girl vibe'. Having wound up in a convenience store job after her study, she is tired of the relentless parade of advertisements in her everyday surroundings, and would rather be living Perry's student life surrounded by interesting books and driven people, but she doesn't know it yet. They really should just swap bodies.

Their aesthetics start to seep into each other over a twenty-seven post narrative, comprised of three nine-post-long 'Acts'. The narrative plot structure and numerology is discussed in ACT 3.
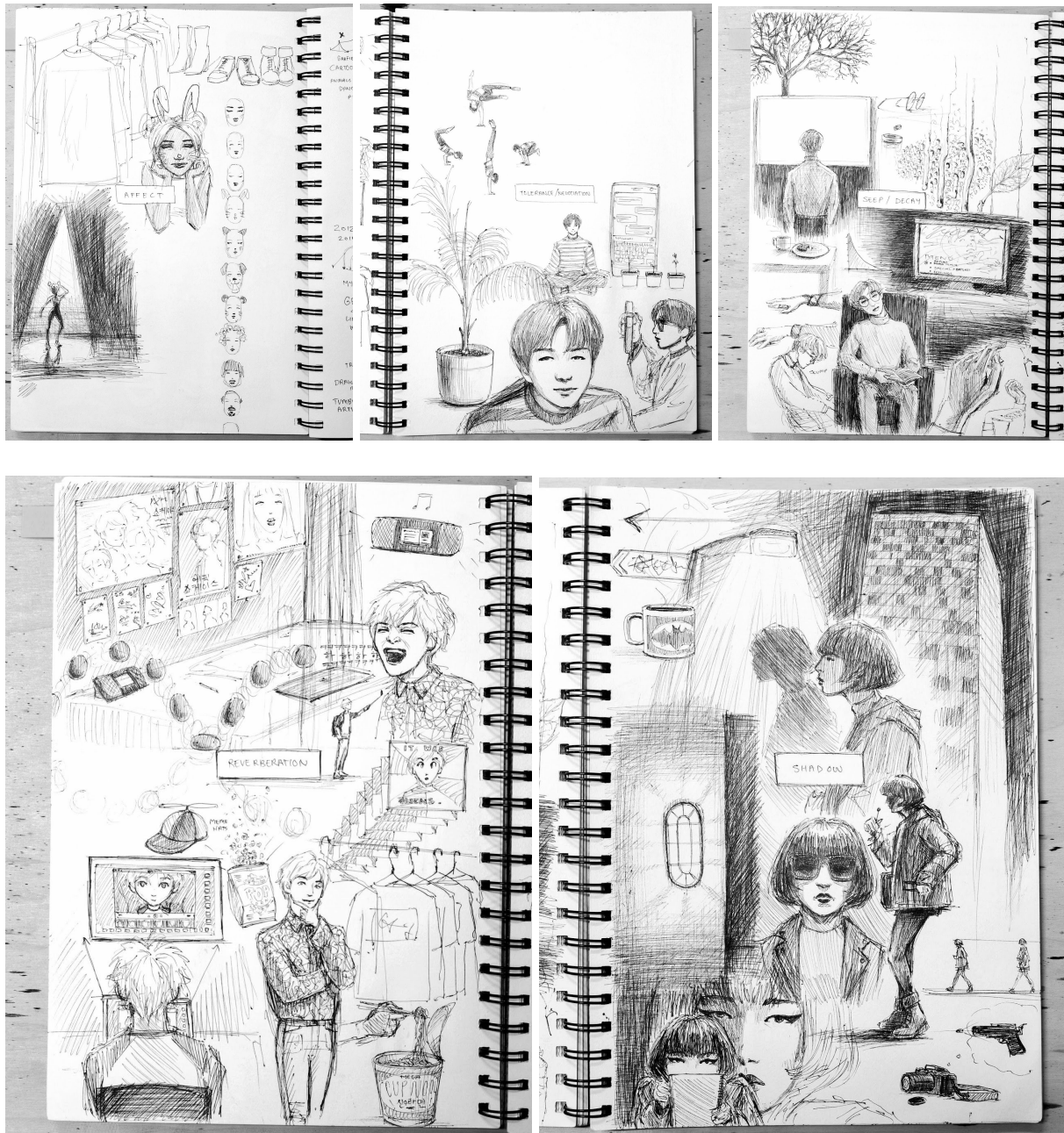
Image 3

Early visual diary pages drawing together character aesthetics from aspects

ACT 1: SURVEYING THE MEDIASCAPE

From Vaporspace

A shallow rectangle—carried in pockets and hands through the everyday world of the human—is a door to an alternative dimension. Entrance requires vaporisation into a cloud of numbers salvaged into a body of code. It opens to a vast and dense network of swiftly varying bodies, connections, ways and intersections. A digital megalopolis that is situated between cultural and technological horizons. Divisions and dichotomies—between public and private, real and unreal—fade in the fog. Its residents prize the recent, and strive towards centres of maximum visibility and interactivity (Page, 2011). Global and insomniac, the Interwebular is in a constant state of becoming, working and reworking itself rapidly without pause. For some, the smartphone may be a car with which to escape down the information highway. They drive at pace while endless works of content scroll past the window of the screen, gradually letting such scenery fuzz out to mere numbers once more, as their focus lengthens to the horizon beyond. In some way they must return, because in spite of the unfathomable chaos of high speed and density, perhaps what they prize above all else is the togetherness it enables: a sense of co-presence and co-spectatorship of the same life experiences (Page, 2011).

Social media is the metropolis, made of many platform districts. These are lively, thrumming mass centres for content such as cuisine, fashion, lifestyles, brands, businesses, identities, art, stories, and the everyday person-user. There, people are performers who exist primarily through avatars. Content presentation is largely intentional, coordinated through cultural and technological filters aiming for relevance among audiences (Page, 2011; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017). The government of the metropolis intends to be democratic (Manovich, 2017; Page, 2011). However, contemporary visual culture has created a throne upon which ideal content sits (Kirby, 2018). Content is made to be consumed, and so must please the consumer to ensure their devotion. Social media marketplaces are environments of divided attention (Manovich 2001). The user spares a short time to view and evaluate an item, because they must also maintain their own stall in the market. While necessary for perspective, viewing others' content takes time, time is limited and time is money and creating takes even more time. The content-creating user must endeavour to present that which is visually pleasing, interactive, and must do this frequently to maintain recency and the gaze of other users (Manovich, 2001; Page, 2011).

In the central business district of Instagram in June, 2018, the population reached one billion active user-accounts (Statista.com, 2018). These users make public[1] connections to each other

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[1] With the exception of private-accounts.

through objective interactions: likes, comments, tags and hashtags, and 'follows'[2]. More aggregated than any public centre bound by spatio-temporal physics, Instagram teaches users to negotiate the risks of performing to a partially attentive and varied mass, who may also be in close geographic proximity. It is in the user's interest to perform in a positive "face-enhancing" manner and avoid offending viewers (Page, 2011; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017). Contemporary digital technology has enabled "face-enhancing" to be quite literal, with the use of photo-manipulation software on portraits, but in a broader sense, all online performance is face-constructing. Ruth E. Page in *Stories and Social Media* likened this to pointillist art, saying "individual stories are brush strokes that are separate from each other but co-occur as part of a greater whole … reading one tweet, update, or blog post alone cannot capture the ongoing digital self-portrait that emerges as the archives found in those social media forms accrue over time" (Page, 2011). Online identity is a mask worn in discretion "[resembling] what celebrities have had to construct for their livelihood for at least the last century" (Marshall, 2014; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017; Herwitz, 2008). The digital persona is a ghost, a self-reported media presence, an aura that grows in brightness, opacity, and definition with each new post, each cloud of numbers entering into the screen and shining back out at the viewer (Herwitz, 2008; Nagaike, 2012).

My work questions how digital illustration can be deployed on Instagram, a primarily photographic space. Could a series of constructed illustrated characters be created as if they were real people participating in this social media visual space?

Image 4

The Ghosts of Gong Cha, visual diary pen study.

To Infrastructure

Image is primary on Instagram, with captions and other interactions being optional additions. New media software forms have led to valuing the DJ-like practice of selecting and combining pre-existing parts over 'creating from scratch', for both the end-user and professionals (Manovich, 2001). Since recency has priority, using existing elements to produce content is not only efficient, it is normative. This has rigged the online space for photos to dominate, and illustration to become unexpected. Cultural remix, Roland Barthes's text as a 'tissue of quotations' finds perhaps its most explicit rendering yet in the digital age (Barthes, 1967). Lev Manovich is a supreme figure in this academic district, standing upon numerous large-scale investigations of the digital. In his book *Instagram and Contemporary Image* (2017), he identified Instagram's inclusion of photo filters and basic editing tools as a prime factor of Instagram's dense user population and success. Manovich tracks the rise of Instagram which was built upon the introduction of the widespread uptake of what—since 2007—is now called the smartphone[3]. Seeing as Instagram is freely available to any smartphone owner with Wi-Fi, this has somewhat "democratized" the production of "good" photos (Manovich 2017; Toscano; 2017; Page, 2011). Any user's photos can be tuned and remixed with the application of adjustable filters, producing photos that are more visually appealing and harmonious. For the typical owner of a smartphone, which includes an in-built digital camera, the most accessible pre-existing element to generate content with is the everyday physical world before them.

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[3] Smartphone definition: 'a mobile phone that performs many of the functions of a computer, typically having a touchscreen interface, Internet access, and an operating system capable of running downloaded apps.' https://www.dictionary.com/browse/smartphone
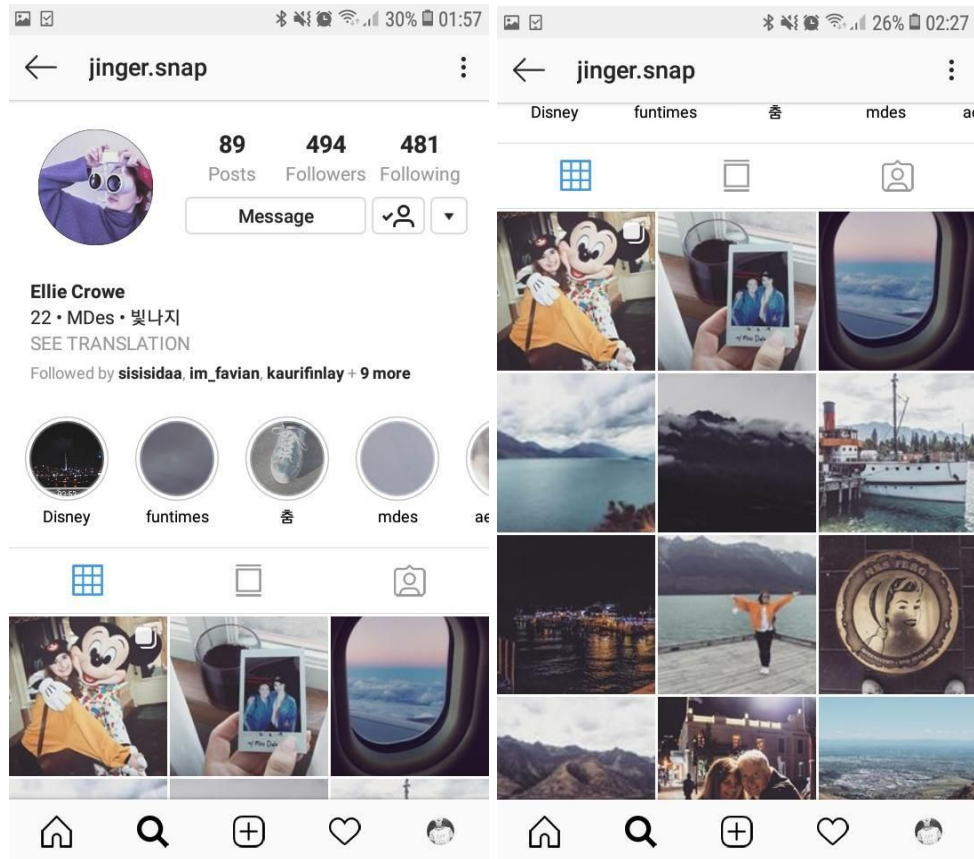
Image 5

Smartphone screenface of a typical Instagram profile

Instagram, as a facility for everyday casual photo sharing and social connection, has elevated aesthetics in contemporary digital society. The smartphone's affordability and large capacity have depressurised the confines of what is considered 'photo-worthy' (Daisuke & Ito, 2003). Presently, smartphone users are less inhibited by past costs of material resources—such as film and prints, and digital storage space—which has allowed them to record moments from their everyday more liberally (Manovich, 2017; Daisuke & Ito, 2003; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017). Manovich classifies this dominant style of image as the 'casual photo' (2017). However, because of their ubiquity, they must be aesthetically engaging to hold value for an unknown audience. A particular style must be implemented across all images on the profile for a user to gain success as an 'Instagrammer'. This helps to establish a coherent user identity, a sense of profile continuity and unity among the many things depicted in the images (Manovich 2017; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017; Kirby, 2018; McCloud, 2006). Individual aesthetic is a visual signature that affords a user recognisability, memorability, and ultimately, a more vivid digital persona.

As with the rest of the digital megalopolis, Instagram has an inherent fictionality. Digital objects are stored as code, which are easily mutable and variable. Using code-altering filters to combine

aesthetics with the everyday in such a way brings the romantic dream of life-as-art close for many users (Herwitz, 2008). An illusion is created, of being an ever-renewing source of art, worthy to behold, interact with, and deserving of attention (Herwitz, 2008; Manovich, 2017; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017). Similar to the theatre, the internet offers users a 'protean freedom' to transform into an alternative self before digital audiences, one that they may be unable to achieve in everyday physical reality (Kamachi, 2004; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017; Markham, 1998). Annette Markham detailed her encounters with this 'Avatar Dream' in her early research into Internet communities, noting that, "when you are what you say, and you can say anything, the possibilities are as endless as your imagination" (1998; Harrell & Lim, 2017). While the possibilities on Instagram are rather limited to what is achievable with a camera, filters and editing software, these photo-manipulation tools are increasing the amount of imaginative control that users have over their photos and ultimate message. The Instagrammer life is an ideal, romanticised life, filtered and responsively bent on satisfying face-needs to please a judging audience (Page, 2011; Dmitrow-Devold, 2017). Truth and authenticity are no objects in this land of veiled self-performance.

My project picks up on the 'Avatar Dream', not only exploring how imaginary illustrated characters might operate within this sphere, but also applying stock filters to 'enhance' the look of my illustrated images, in the same manner as a photo would be treated. An example of this is Lian's use of filters from third-party app '1976 Cam' to add textures that increase the old-photo-noir-snapshot-vibe.
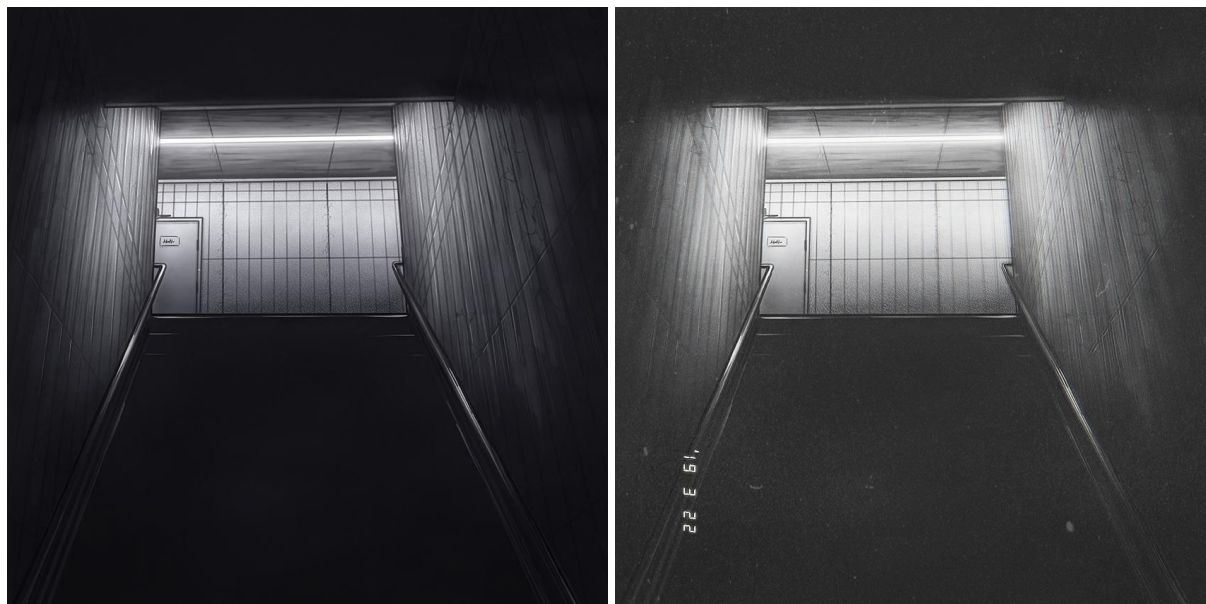

Image 6

Before and after 1976 Cam filter on Lian's 'photo' of the stairwell at the metro station.

Digital presence on social media is largely fictional, a persona that hovers in ghostly disembodiment between actual-self, imagined-self, code, and audience perception. A place where users stretch their personal identities and truths, Instagram should be a prime location for fictional narrative. In opposition, Manovich claims that narrative is of little importance on Instagram:

Instagramism does not care about "telling a story" and it does not feature proper "subjects". Instagram video and photo show very concrete things … but at the same time, they blur, so to speak, the semantic function of a representation. They are not about showing, or signifying, or registering, or narrating, or convincing. – Manovich, 2017

Yet, he also draws similarities between Instagram users' self-featuring photos and third-person narration in video games and literature. On the other hand, Ruth E. Page places narrative in the centre of social media use, that "stories are important discursive and social resources that create identities for their tellers and audiences" (Page, 2011). However, fiction only lurks around the edges of her discussion. On social media, being as true-to-life and 'authentic' as possible still seems prized. Page proposes that altering the definition of narrative linearity is necessary for it to be bestowed with 'authenticity' online. She writes that, "closed narrative sequences are thus associated with a particular, constructed linearity, and artificial narrative genre, while open-ended narrative sequences are considered closer to day-to-day lived experiences, and so more authentic" (Page, 2011). While artifice is rife in online social practices, it appears it should remain undetectable in photos to maintain audience acceptance.

Page's solution to artificial linearities turns to the network as a new framework for narrative coherence. In this structure, story "events are subordinated to the relational work accomplished by the storytelling" (Page, 2011). While this also undermines authenticity, and produces content I would see as tending toward banal self-commentary spurred on by instant gratification, the social aspect of storytelling is elevated. The network as narrative meta-structure, opposed to the teleological structures familiar to 'canonical' narratology, poses a fundamental shift in the way such a narrative would operate—a shift I found necessary for my Instagram narrative which I cover in more detail in ACT 3.

Beneath the crust of our digital metropolis are tech-tonic plates, tremoring with the tensions between story and information, reality and fantasy. The interwebular is overloaded with information and spectacular fantasy objects. Online, "significance comes second to experience, if it comes at all," (Basset, 2007; Hedges, 2009). Many would argue that stories make human experience meaningful, that they stimulate the imagination and teach us how to perceive and respond to situations—that stories can help us make better futures (McCloud, 2006; Scruton, 1998; Basset, 2007; Hedges, 2009; MacWilliams, 2008; Cron, 2016). I see fantasy as a distancing technique, bubbles of discretion that stretch the story lesson beyond unnecessary details (McCloud, 2006; Rimer, 1995; Scruton, 1998; Basset 2007). Japanese literary figure Prince Genji, cited by Thomas Rimer, defended fiction:

The storyteller's own experience of men and things, … has moved him to an emotion so passionate that he can no longer keep it shut up in his heart. Again and again something in his own life or in that around him will seem to the writer so important that he cannot bear to let it pass into oblivion. – Rimer, 1995

The idea of fictional characters using Instagram is too good for me to let it remain simply an idea. Throughout my research, I have tried to implement it. The following grid shows early examples of how my five phantasmic characters posted about their lives like 'real people'. If story is put to death in the cultural sediment, as some scholars assert, then it slips away to rise again, vaporous, haunting human practices '*in the slender margin between the real and unreal*' (Rimer, 1995; Basset, 2007).
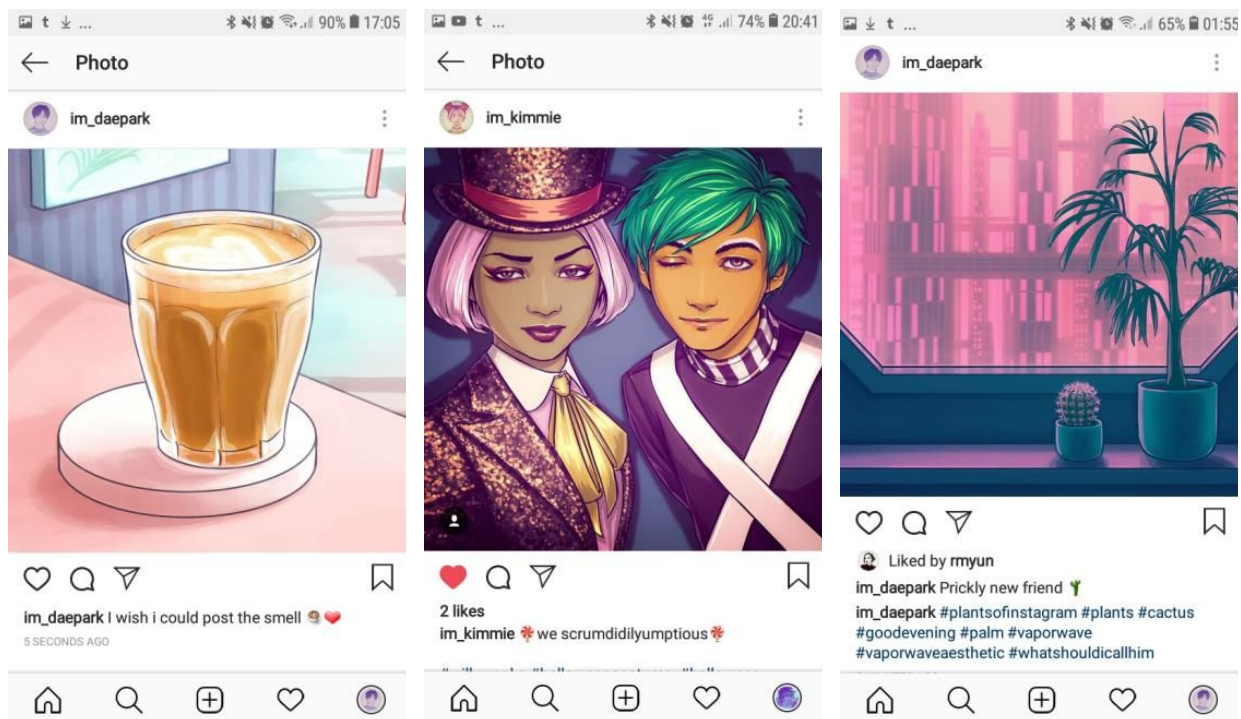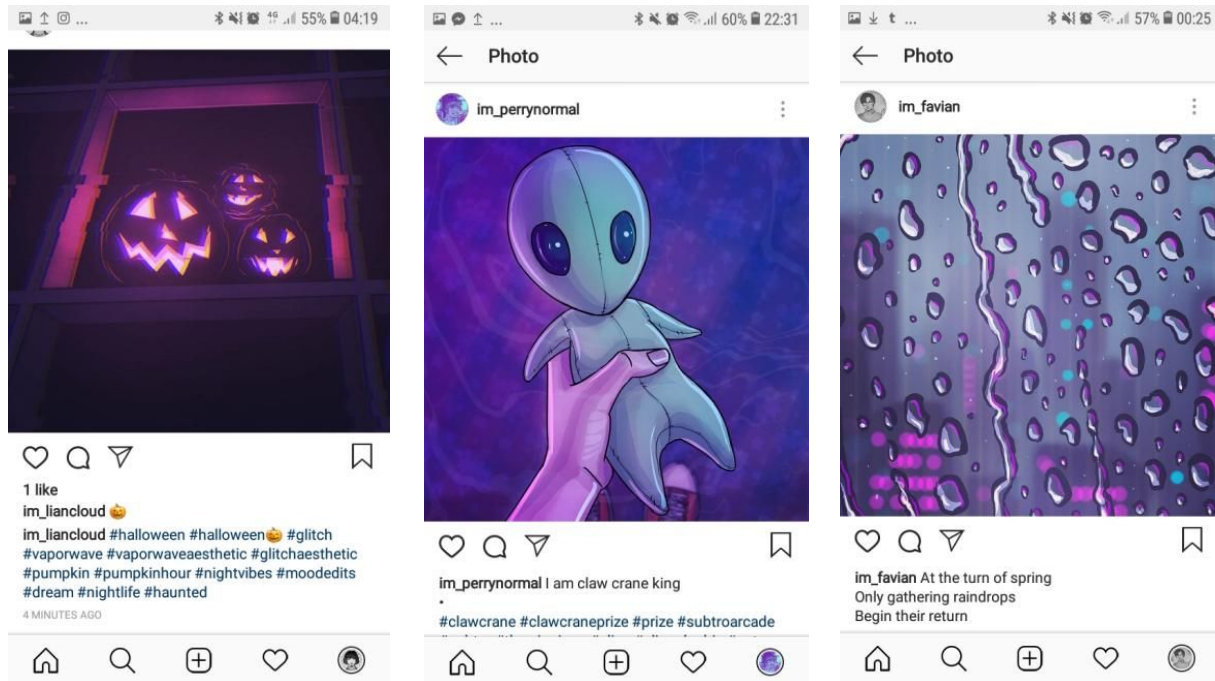
Image 7

Early Instagram posts

ACT 2: SAMPLING INFLUENCE

Social media sites such as Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest have been likened to museums (Manovich, 2016). Users can wander through various wings of keyword searches and view a plethora of exhibited things removed from their particular contexts. One could alternatively view these as convenience stores or supermarkets: urban, easily accessed, frequently appearing, dealing for the mass, plastic smelling. Items are reduced and packaged into digital image files, stocking the shelves according to tags. If images are representations, messages are sold to the viewer. The smartphone may otherwise be a compact entertainment arcade.

My project locates the characters in arcades, convenience stores, public transport facilities and other urban locations considered local to the global, or 'glocal', seen in the image backgrounds of the narrative. I am interested in the 'glocal', global popular media, and the image of a city that could be anywhere, since the majority of Instagram users physically reside in urban areas around the globe (Toscano, 2017; Manovich, 2017). Let me now take a moment to discuss some of the global popular media packages that have influenced the dynamics and aesthetics of my young ghosts since their genesis.

Manga and Anime

Manga—Japanese comics and graphic novels—are 'mass art': stories created deliberately to appeal to a mass audience out of hand drawn image sequences, and formed from capitalistic, urban culture (Carroll, 1997, MacWilliams, 2008). Manga—along with its moving image adaption, anime—is exoteric and accessible for the average Japanese consumer, and "often reflects rather than transgresses conventional tastes" (MacWilliams, 2008). The art style employed within comics generally remains consistent across all panels to maintain continuity (McCloud, 2006) I have combined the linework and still image of Manga with anime film tonal spectrums to form my own drawing style for the narrative.

Image 8

Visual diary pages containing observational line drawing practice in urban spaces.

Linework is not a convention that is necessary for legibility in digital media. I have deliberately chosen to utilise it in my image-making for its aesthetic allusion to comics and manga. The resemblance serves also to quickly establish my work as visual storytelling and fiction. Speech bubbles, action lines, and stylised sound-effect lettering are key signifiers of comic art, however, these are absent in my 'silent' images, which function more like scene-establishing panels. Conventions facilitate a graphic simplification conducive to storytelling, yet, my images must also preserve a level of realism to emulate the surrounding casual photography. My aim is to create an illusion of Instagram-life, that is identifiably illusory.

I use digital art authoring program Clip Studio Paint with a Wacom Intuos drawing tablet to

construct my narrative images. Creating the linework is the first part of my image-making process, and also the most integral, and time consuming part. The linework traverses a world of unique unknowns to establish the entire composition and definite boundaries of all that is to be depicted in the completed image. After linework, I add flat colours, cell-shading[4], and then, extra atmospheric and lighting effects on subsequent layers to finish the image and add a more photographic feel. I follow this same process for each image I generate for my characters' posts so that aesthetic consistency and story continuity are upheld.

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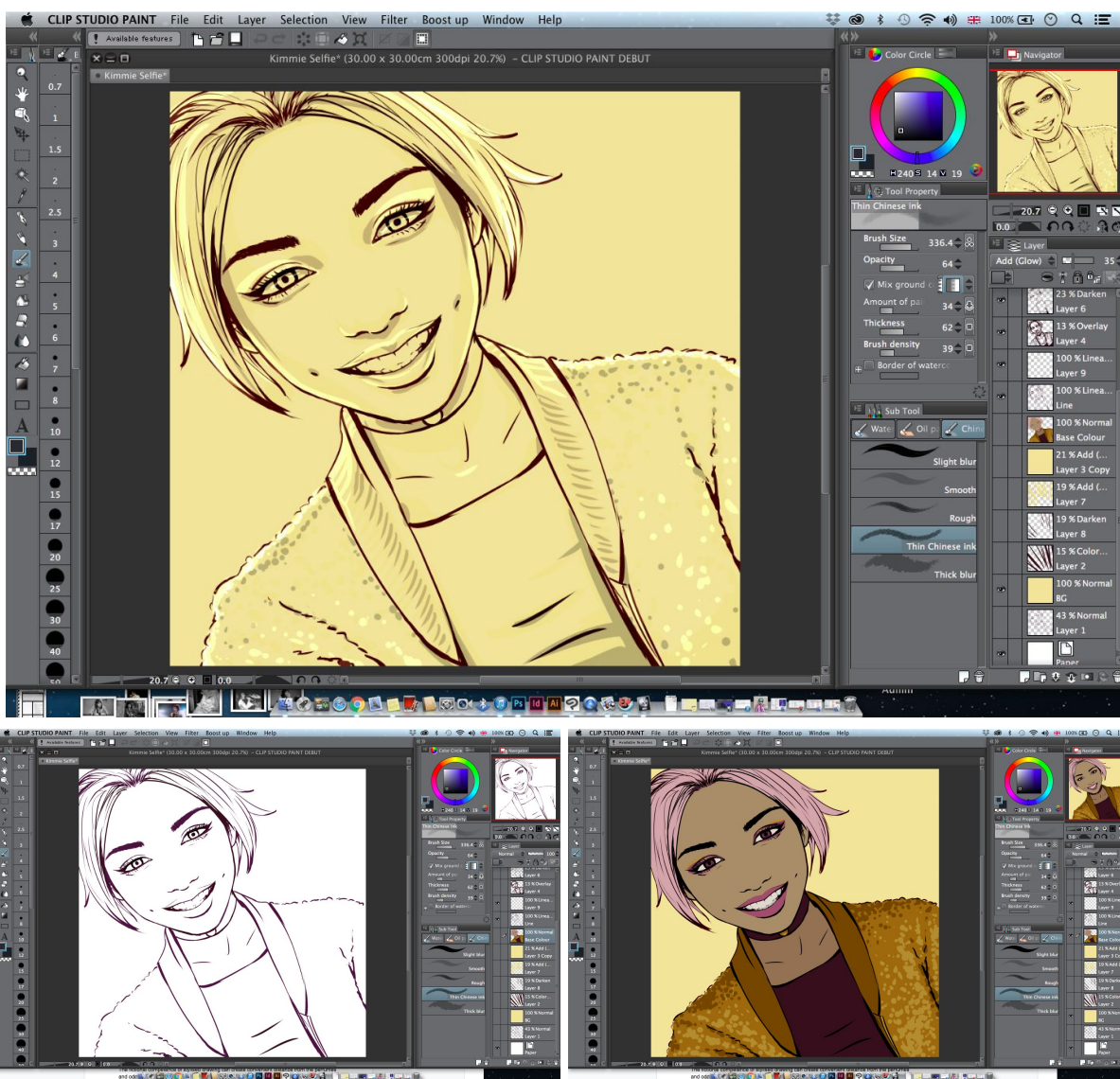
[4] Cell-shading is the technique of defining shadow areas with a semi-transparent, crisp-edged, slightly darker tint. My cell-shading is drawn as a flat block of the colour I use for the lines, created on a separate layer which is set to a low opacity. Often I will use more than one layer of this shading to achieve greater depth in the forms.
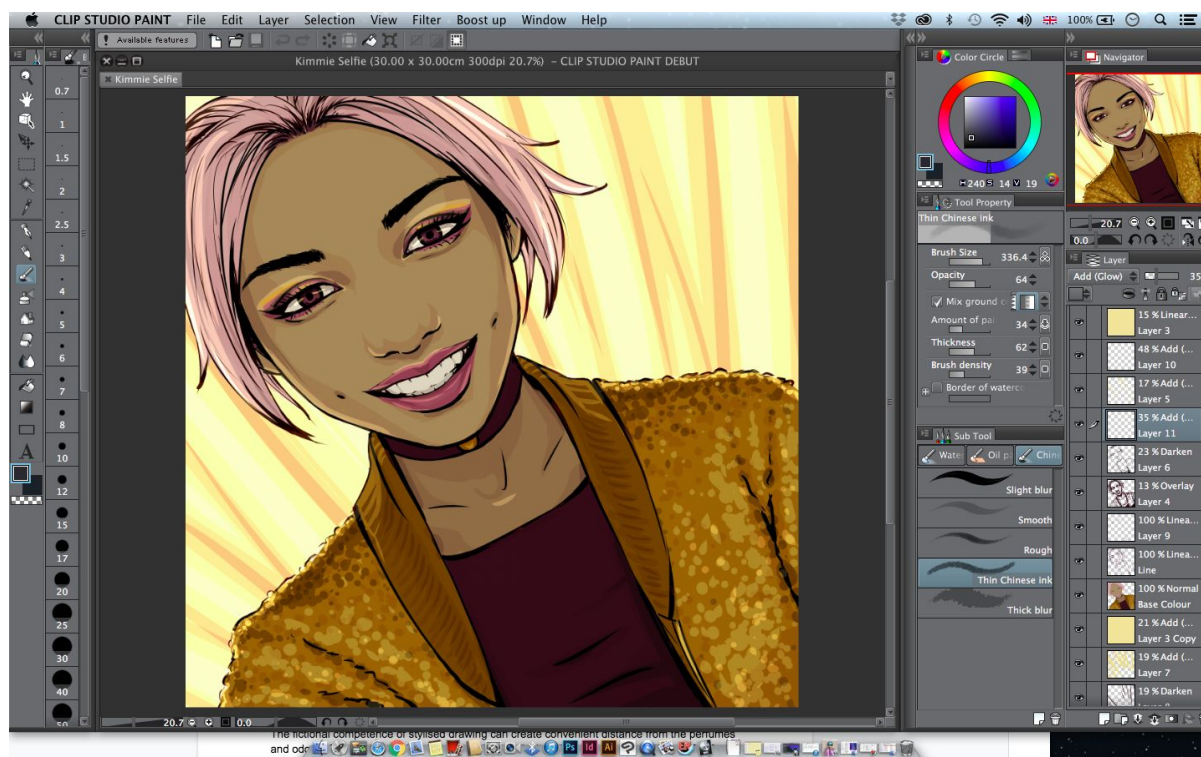
Image 9

Drawing progress screenshots showing how I construct my characters' images in layers: linework atop flat colours with cell-shading, in Clip Studio Paint.

The fictional competence of stylised drawing can simplify the complexities of culture. Manga has been described as "culturally odorless"—a term coined by Koichi Iwabuchi—due to the richness and distinguishing elements of Japanese culture in manga reportedly reducing (Altarac & Shari, 2008; MacWilliams, 2008). This allows international audiences to identify with the characters and their experiences more easily, making manga somewhat of a globalised package. This is a good thing for one aiming for large audiences, though, may lead to sour disappointment in a reader with "besides-the-mark" expectations to be *informed* of the true cultural context of Japan (Iwabuchi, 2008; MacWilliams 2008). In my early work, I situated my narrative in an urban space that appeared culturally specific through the use of Korean text. Now, as I continue to pursue the Korean language and have moved past the novelty of reading and writing in Hangul[5], I feel my yet small understanding of the culture is not sufficient for me to include it in my image representations completely respectfully. Since Mark W. MacWilliams and Iwabuchi brought this aspect of manga to my attention, I have shifted the characters to a more "culturally odorless" world. Informative or not, manga is a powerful means for re-imagining the self. The cultural filtering and stylisation that manga demonstrates are also integral to Instagrammer practices.

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[5] The Korean writing system commonly used since its creation by King Sejong the Great in the. Hangul is known as Joseongul in North Korea.

Scott McCloud observed that there are certain features of manga that increase its global appeal. Manga contain less text than American comics, and frequently include wordless panels. The storytelling has greater reliance on image, which enables readers who can't read Japanese to understand storyline. The flow of the images is also important. Manga makes much use of 'aspect-to-aspect' transitions between panels: scenes are often presented in fragments that the reader can assemble according to their own experiences and memories. These are typical transitions between images on my characters' Instagram profiles, as I draw smaller aspects suggestive of larger familiar scenes. This approach can elicit a stronger sense of place, mood and atmosphere, which is, interestingly, commonly sought after by Instagrammers (McCloud, 2006; Manovich, 2017). McCloud puts the success of manga down to the increased interactivity and immersiveness these features provide. My Instagram narrative could have even greater interactive potential, as the audience is granted the ability to comment and directly engage with my characters. While manga has been a strong influence on my image making practice, my characters live in a parallel world that owes more to the K-Pop phenomena.

K-pop and Idol Culture

K-pop is South Korean popular music, that I have been listening to since I discovered it in 2016. K-pop idols are entertainers who work within the genre, mainly young people who pass auditions and undergo rigorous training in the performing arts such to make their 'debut' alongside others in a group. Idols must "embody multiple signifiers of desirable global Korean citizenship", which, beyond music and dance talents, includes maintaining a fit, "aesthetically pleasing" body and fluency in foreign languages (Tilland, 2017). K-pop is a main media force of the Hallyu phenomenon[6]. Dal Yong Jin and Kyong Yoon (2017) noted that social media and its participatory culture has played a significant role in spreading K-pop media among global audiences since the early 2010s. Media critic Koichi Iwabuchi observed that "media flows have improved the mutual perception" between Korea and Japan (2010). The sound and vision of K-pop is changing South Korea's image: "now South Korea is recasting itself on the world stage as a nation of overachieving, passionate idols and their creative, loyal fans" (Tilland, 2017).

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[6] The global popularisation of South Korean culture is popularly referred to as The Korean Wave, or Hallyu

Image 10

Visual diary pages featuring pen studies of K-pop group VIXX, for affective communication drawing practice

Drawing similarities between K-pop music videos and poetic design on Instagram, Manovich argues that K-pop, too, is disinterested in storytelling (Manovich, 2017). In these videos, idols are placed in highly considered aesthetic situations, often 'glocal' images of the everyday, yet with vague storylines. I have experienced that in the vacuum of story clarity, I am driven to interact, to rewatch these music videos and search for story line threads. *Surely there must be a meaning behind something so visually considered*. Fans use fragments of information available both within the music video and beyond it on the idols' social media platforms to draw together intertextual narratives and to picture their personalities. Idol inaccessibility prompts a fan to engage with others in the fandom online, an environment encouraging 'prosumption'[7] (Tilland, 2017).

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[7] Prosumption refers to using one's skills to engage creatively with the original content, to consume productively

Image 11

Visual diary pages showing an exercise in consistency—to practice cleaner, more minimal linework, following an aesthetic theme through a small series of illustrations. Each portrait also aimed to capture the essence of the VIXX members' stage personas with minimal detail. My own K-Pop 'prosumption.'

Page's network frame for narrative coherence can be seen at work here. Niche within the group is an important facet of idol identity, as off-stage and behind-the-scenes interactions between members are often recorded and posted on their social media. Speaking of a similar idol culture in J-pop, Kazumi Nagaike says that "by integrating their differing personal characteristics into the group, each group member attains greater potential attractiveness" (Nagaike, 2012). I designed a cast of five protagonists so that I could utilise this dynamic of the group in my narrative. Denied physical access, 'netizines[8]' may access K-pop idols through their stories on social media that follow the open-ended trajectories of their trials and successes—personally and professionally. My characters will be accessible to their audience in much the same way, as incorporeal and similarly distant beings.

Image 12

The initial character cast of my 2017 undergraduate project: Favian, Perry, Lian, Kimmie, and Daehyun.

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[8] 'Netizine', citizens of the Internet, is a popular term for people who spend significant amounts of time participating in online culture or fandoms. In the world of K-pop, this term may be used to refer to geographically distant international fans, who only have online access to the content.

Over the course of the project my line drawing has become cleaner as I spend a lot more time on it. While this image shows the cast, it also shows that the drawing style was flatter and less complex and nuanced. This image is more in the language of TV show marketing for cast characters, rather than for Instagram.

Synthwave and Vaporwave

Synthwave and vaporwave are both digital music micro-genres that have recently emerged from Internet culture. Both are created mostly within DAWs[9] and evoke nostalgia for the 1980s-1990s, albeit in different ways. Synthwave producers rely heavily on synthesizers, software and electronic sounds to create music that is reminiscent of '80s pop, arcade-game and video-game soundtracks, yet makes use of contemporary popular electronic music structures and editing styles. Synthwave is often accompanied by images and video one would expect to see in a game arcade: an aesthetic of purple cityscapes and neon palm tree lined highways driving towards a pink VHS scanline cut sun just beginning to sink below a grid horizon. Perry loves this aesthetic.

I have drawn on the genre of synthwave to experiment with composing soundscapes for my narrative. The synthwave piece I created in 'Level Up' musically encapsulates the mood and tone of a fictional game arcade environment. The instruments used in this composition largely consist of synthesisers and drum samples from the software library of Logic Pro X, the DAW[10] I use to create my soundscapes (Figure 13)

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[9] Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) are computer programs for sound design, music composition and production. They enable users to edit audio files and music samples, and synthesise music with MIDI information and software instrument sounds from the library. DAW software downloads and numerous tutorials on how to use them are available and easily accessed online. Along with sites such as SoundCloud and YouTube offering sound and video file publishing to any signed-up web user, creating and sharing mixtapes, albums, and developing a profile as a music producer in the digital metropolis has become a very achievable dream.
[10] Logic Pro X https://www.apple.com/nz/logic-pro/

Image 13

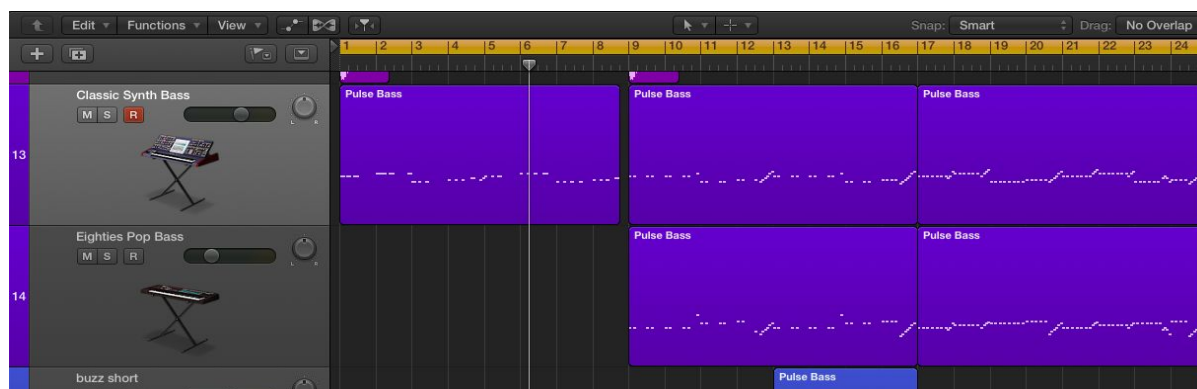Logic Pro X Screenface of my 'Level Up' composition

Image 14

Logic Screenface, showing synth bass MIDI note progression

This composition has three stages, differentiated by the foundational rhythm most evident in the synth bassline. The first stage bass rhythm has more empty space (or 'rests'), which remains, albeit altered, in the transitional second stage, while in the third stage (which repeats), the bass notes are made continuous (Figure 14) This creates the illusory feeling of going faster in the third stage, though the tempo remains constant. The combination of this rhythm change, the

synth bassline notes ascending toward the end of every fourth bar (Figure 14), and use of major chords in this composition creates a sense of optimism, a 'winning' feeling for frequent-gamer Perry. I also used drum samples reminiscent of 'Linn Drums', an electronic drum sound that is prevalent in 1980s pop music. Utilising synthwave elements in my compositions provides a sonic palette of nostalgia and retro-futurism for my story.

Vaporwave is a more subversive music and art genre which inspired much of the early conception of my project. Its music often relies on actual '80s pop music samples, which are stretched out, slowed down, chopped up and looped[11] to emphasise the glitchy effect of rough editing and the editability of digital music (Tanner, 2015). Grafton Tanner and Simon Chandler paint 'glitch' as the fascinating spectacle obsessively elevated by vaporwave – excessive repetition that transforms the familiar and lively into the alien and void (2015; 2016). Relentlessly warping '80s pop music samples creates in the listener an unsatisfied desire to hear them play straight, intensifying nostalgia. Ambient sounds recorded in spaces common to urban capitalist societies are also fodder for vaporwave producers: street traffic, supermarkets, pre-recorded loudspeaker announcements reverberating in shopping malls. Incorporating such recordings in music introduces melancholy. They carry a similar aura of redundancy as the songs played over and over in the background of supermarkets: chosen not for their particular qualities or message, but simply because they help facilitate an atmosphere conducive to consumption. Vaporwave expresses much of Lian's disenchantment with her circumstances, she feels a kinship with the tired and tortured samples, and the products steadily gathering dust on the shelves of her store.

These nostalgic music genres embody an interesting balance between romantic digital ideals, and the horror of meaninglessness in daily routine and postmodern existence online. While my sound compositions are still experimental, the balance of these two moods deeply influence my Instagram narrative, in aesthetics and ideas.

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[11] A looped audio file plays the file sound contents over and over again, files can be looped as many times as desired by the producer

ACT 3: HAUNTING THE METROPOLIS

Particular Nobodies

Telling a fictional narrative on Instagram is constructing franken-media. It is character-centric. My characters are in a constant state of realisation; images without bodies, ghosts that grow in richness, solidity, complexity and intensity through their consistent reappearance in each new story fragment added. They are free of the challenges of the physical body and geography, existing from and within online cultures, of fandom, celebrity, and Instagramism. They are particular nobodies; images of global digital youth mass intersecting with K-pop and manga comics. Their figures aesthetically reference these cultures from the global mediascape.

I write the characters and their stories from my own experiences of growing up in a multicultural urban society and using social media. I aim my narrative at the young global Instagram user who may participate in online fandoms, and perhaps familiar with K-pop, manga, and anime. My characters are incorporeal, existing across multiple layers

Layers of Instagram Storytelling

My story is in a perpetual state of establishment; an incremental revelation of characters that are themselves growing and changing, animated by my imagination. United by username, different fabricated parts of them are, post by post, stitched together into a media-form, then re-animated by the imagination of an interested reader. Story activation happens in the fragments: releasing pieces of information about character personality and outlook, circumstance, appearance, and preferences. In my project these fragments fall across different layers of user-data on Instagram I organise into three[12] types: the content layers, the text[13] layers, and the network layers.

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[12] Instagram 'story' and 'live' may be regarded as a fourth layer, however, in the interest of keeping my research practice more straight-forward and contained, I have decided to exclude this area of Instagram from my explorations.

[13] Here I mean 'text' in the sense of digital visual representation of verbal communication
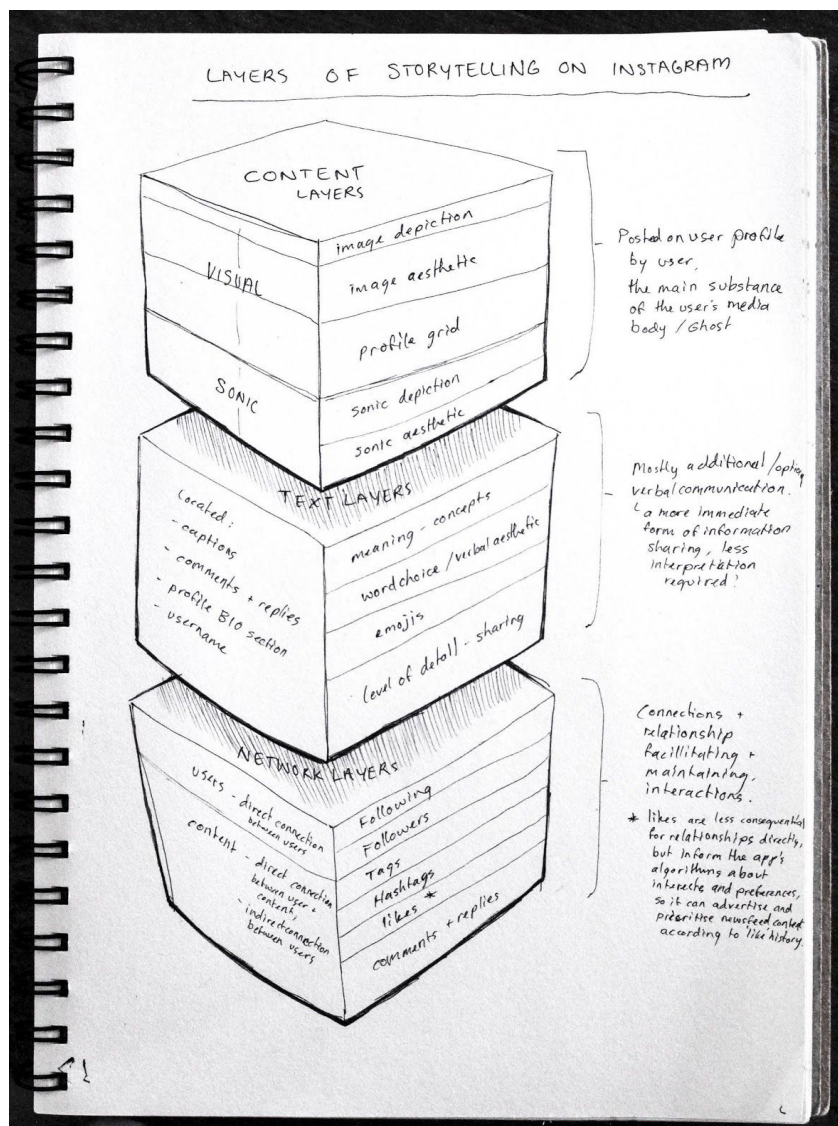
Image 15

Visual diary infographic organising the story information layers

Content Layers

Content encompasses images, videos and sound that the user has uploaded to their profile. These contain the richest storytelling information, and perform most of the world and character building. Visual image is the primary focus of Instagram, and works on at least three layers.

First, *image depiction* informs of the existence and appearance of characters, surrounding objects and environments. This information is denotative, but can connote a character's preferences and interests in the look and any apparent functions of the things they choose to be surrounded by.

Second is *image aesthetic*, which refers to all the representational and design elements. This includes composition, and all the visual properties affected by filter choice and image 'adjustments': colour temperature, saturation, hues, tint, brightness, contrast, vignette etc. Aesthetic is more symbolic communication of mood, tone, and atmosphere.
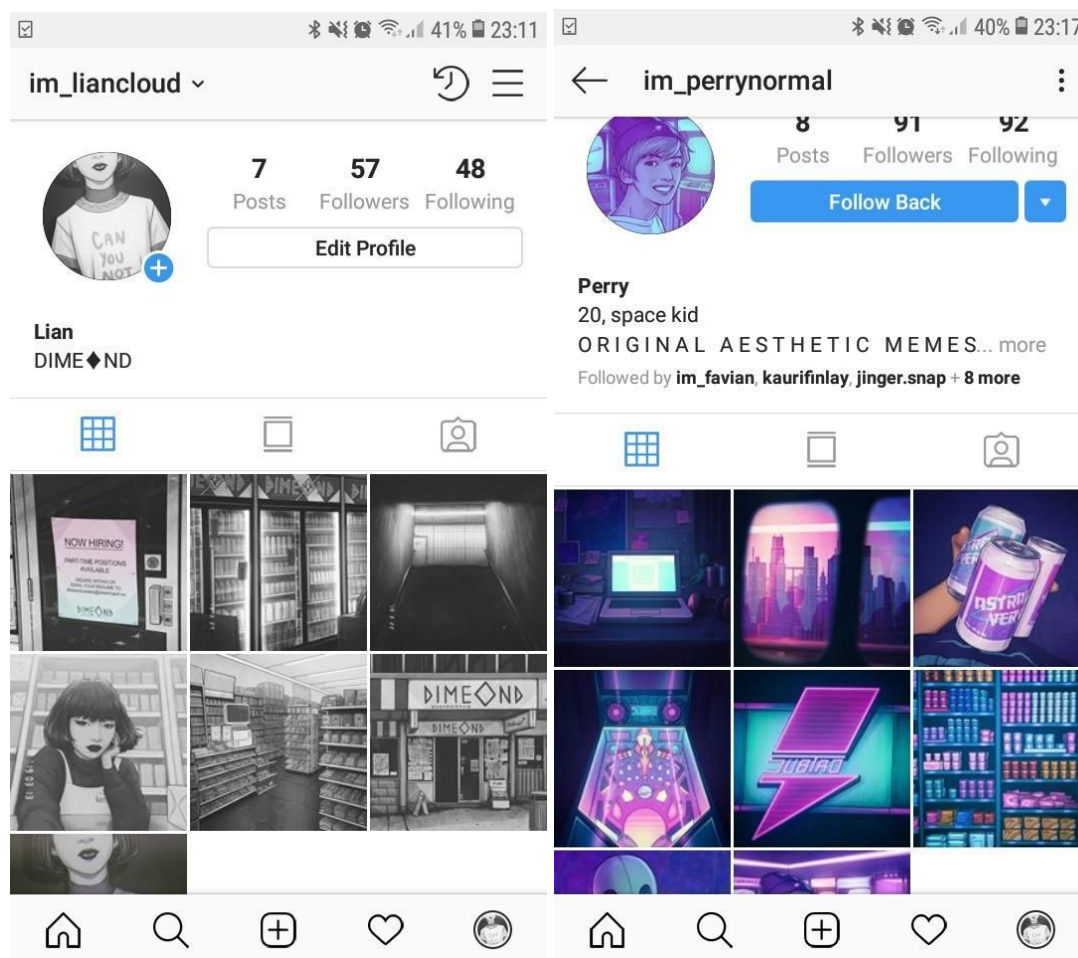

Image 16

Lian and Perry's Instagram profile grids, showing their individual 'aesthetics'.

Finally, the *profile grid* lays out image post thumbnails in order, three wide from bottom to top. The grid binds images of separate story moments into a readable whole, where Image Aesthetic becomes most apparent: aesthetic consistency, visual patterns and sequences come to the fore. The overall mood and atmosphere of the image series constructs a representation of the characters' general aesthetic awareness and preferences. As can be seen in Figure 16, my characters' consistent filter choices construct for them particular self-images. Aesthetic choices in self-representation through images can reveal something of a character's outlook on life. The

grid offers a topographical perspective to view users' shared moments. Consistency is the language of the digital ghost, as through seriality, persona is revealed (Marshall, 2014). The Instagram profile Grid is where the digital ghost resides most visibly.
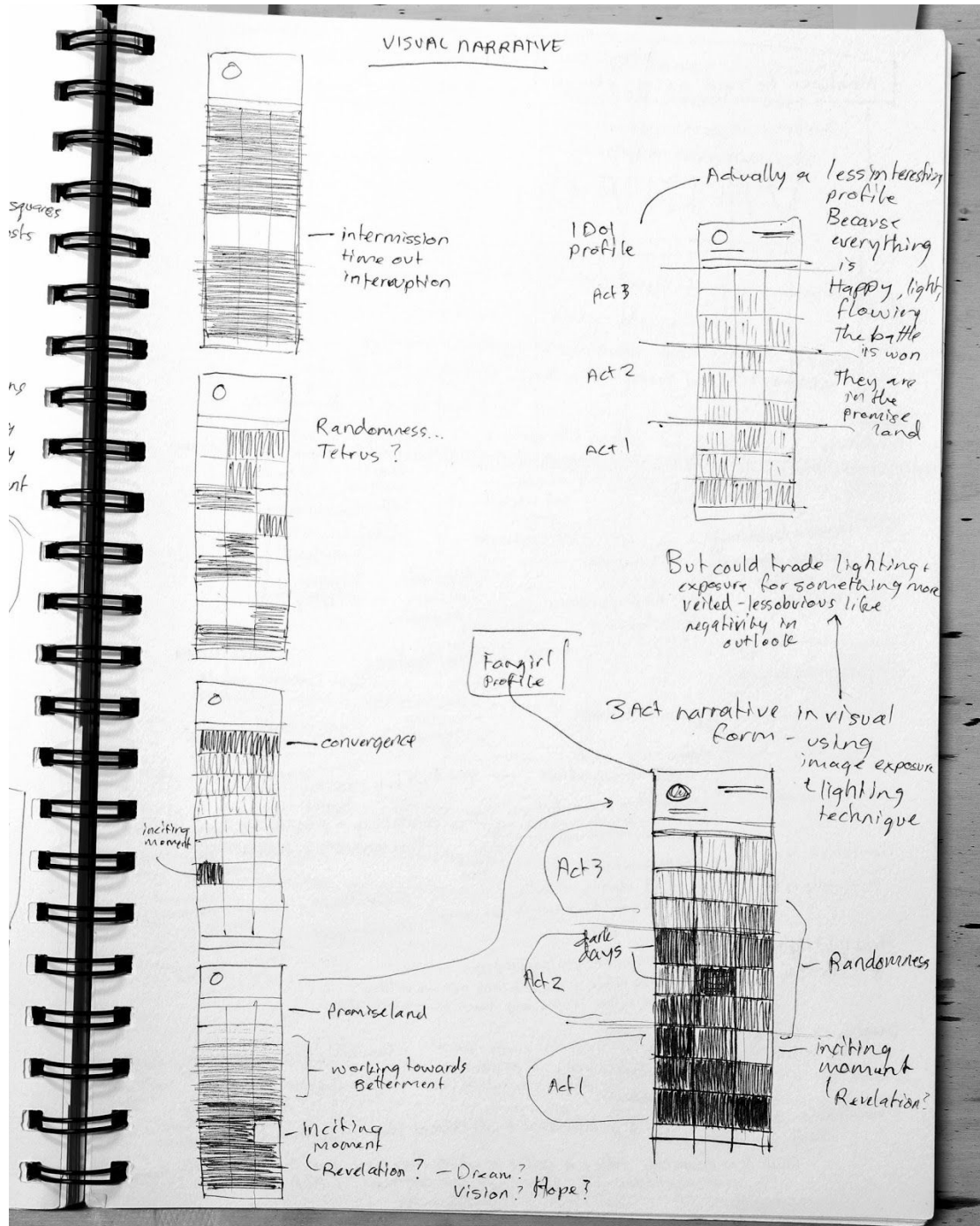

Image 17

Visual Diary profile grid thumbnails exploring how character development works aesthetically

Image may be the primary form of content on Instagram, but with the capability of video, comes a world of sonic possibilities. Like images, sounds can work on a denotative level to inform the listener about the surrounding environment through spatial ambience, voices and dialogue, sound effects, foley, and music. Sound also has aesthetic, and certain sound qualities can foster particular moods and emotions. Music is able to denote genre preferences and locate the character within certain areas of culture. The addition of sound to a video post can add a significant level of realisation to the moment or story event, contributing a vibrancy to the worldbuilding that strengthens the illusion of life.

Text Layers

Verbal communication takes the visible form of digital type on Instagram. Text takes many forms on the app, each with a different function. With the exception of profile-text – usernames and 'bio' sections – text is secondary to image. Fuzzing out beneath posts like cast shadows, text appears as captions, comments and replies. This post-text gives contextual form to the image. A character's personality can be revealed in their word choice, and the subjects they choose to mention.
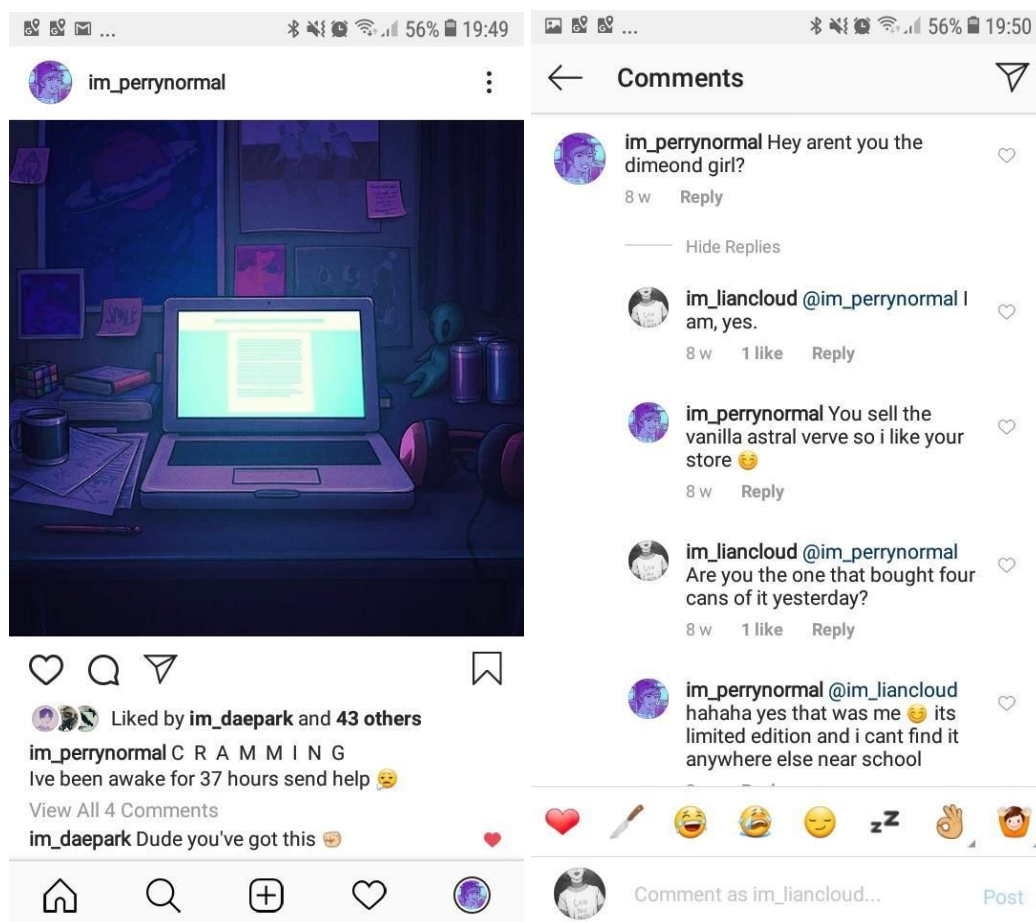
Image 18

Screenshots of Perry's 8th post, and the comments on Lian's 4th post.

Figure 18 demonstrates how a caption can locate the image of a post in a more specific situation that may not be immediately obvious from the image alone: the image of a laptop on a desk in a dark room is transformed by the caption into the event of Perry forfeiting sleep to complete his assignments. The comments section of a post can host dialogue between characters, each of which presents a unique context for character personalities and story events to be revealed (Figure 18). From dialogue also comes information about the relationships between characters – whether they are strangers, acquaintances, or good friends. Whether or not a character uses full punctuation, correct grammar, or Emojis and emotional cues in their communications with other users can indicate both personality traits[14] and their level of regard for the users. The immediacy of text offers the ability to easily elaborate on moments they share in the images, and quickly react to other users and their posts. While secondary on Instagram, the affordances of verbal language makes text still a significant contributor to the story.

Network Layers

Dialogue in comments can also initiate connections. Tags, hashtags, likes, and comments are interactions that connect a user with particular content or subjects, and 'follows' connect users to other users. The sorts of people characters choose to associate with can be seen in their 'following' list, the type of attention they draw can be seen in their 'followers' list, both visible on the profile. Unlike Facebook, where friendship is always a mutual engagement, an Instagram 'follow' does not necessitate one back. This positions Instagram users as performers and audience members rather than peers or friends. In this way, Instagram is geared towards facilitating celebrity culture more so than community, which has implications for Instagram storytelling. The size of a user's audience may influence the way in which the user relates to them, constructs their images and writes captions (Page, 2011). The ratio of 'followers' to 'following' numbers which appear on a character's profile can tell a reader about their willingness to follow back, how accepting they are of others, or perhaps their level of self-absorption.

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[14] Traits such as openness, extraversion, emotional stability, gregariousness, assertiveness, etc. (El-Nasr et al, 2009)
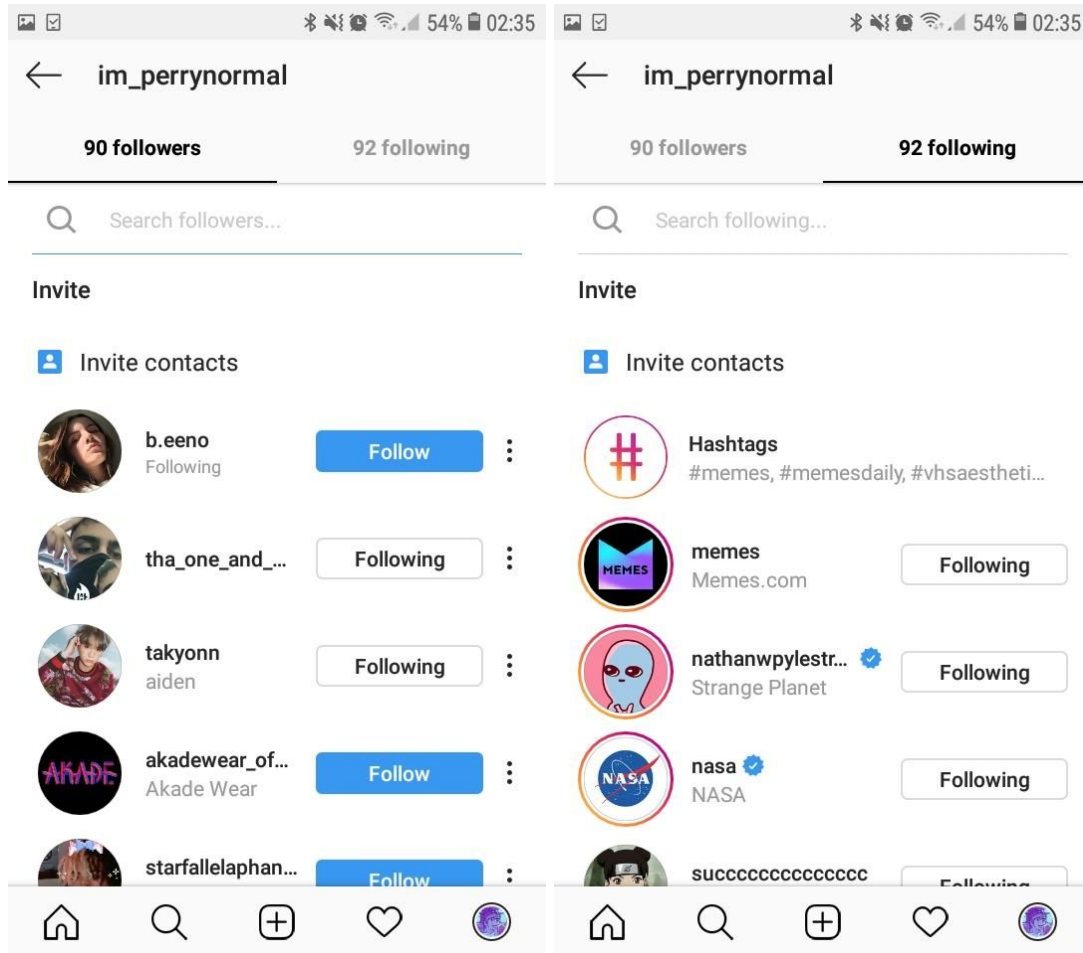
Image 19

Instagram screenfaces showing Perry's 'followers' and 'following' lists.

I have aimed to engage with Instagram storytelling, which is a nuance-rich and multilayered process, where intention mixes with spontaneity and improvisation, through my characters' narrative arc. Information from the content, text communications and network layers together form the Insta-ghost.
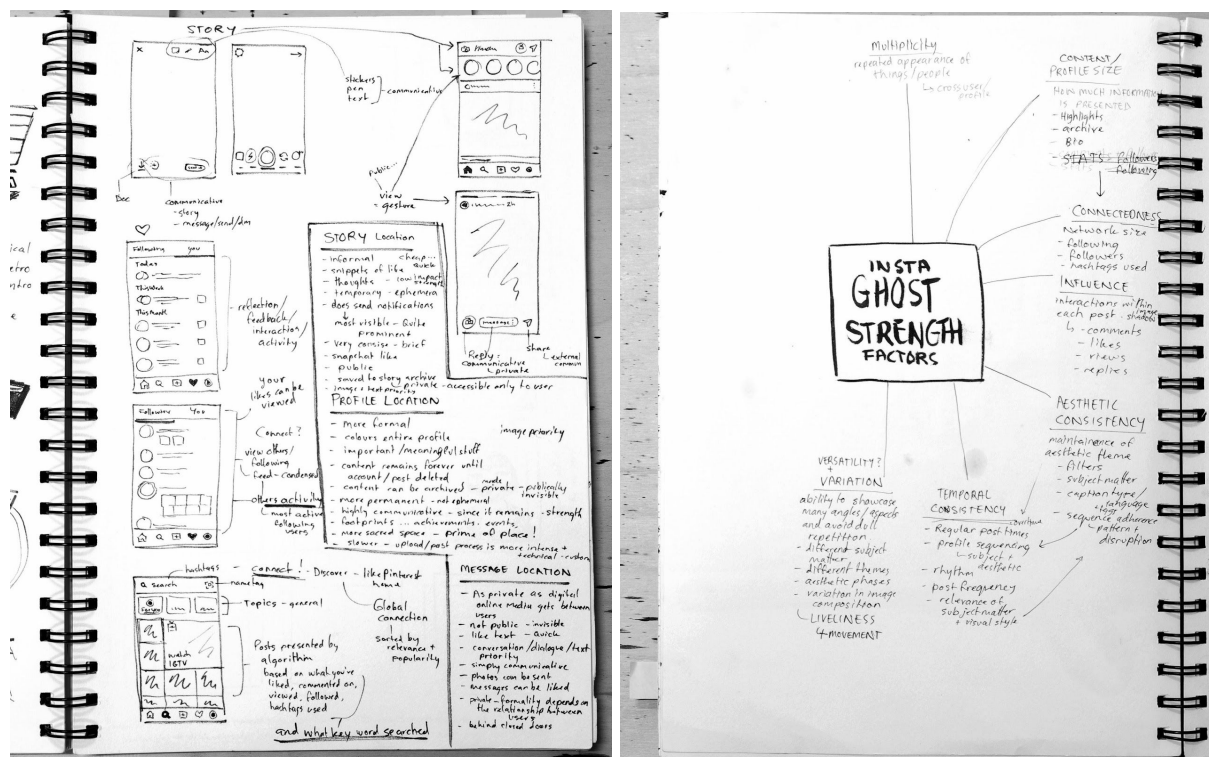
Image 20

Visual diary pages mapping the locations of Instagram, and my thoughts on how the different layers of information presented at each location strengthen the Instaghost

Linearity and Coherence

The reverse chronology of Instagram profiles means a story occurring over several posts is linear, though the posts may not be read in order. The story is inherently open-ended, as there is endless potential for more posts to be shared. My near-random images and fragments of story information are made coherent in relation to the particular character who posted them. The characters' locations on Instagram are social. They are placed in relativity to the other users they follow and interact with. The story information becomes most interesting and meaningful when it has higher interactive intensity. Lian begins her Instagram profile as a loner—her posts do not receive many comments by other users, whereas Perry receives comments and is tagged in posts by his friends, Kimmie and Daehyun.
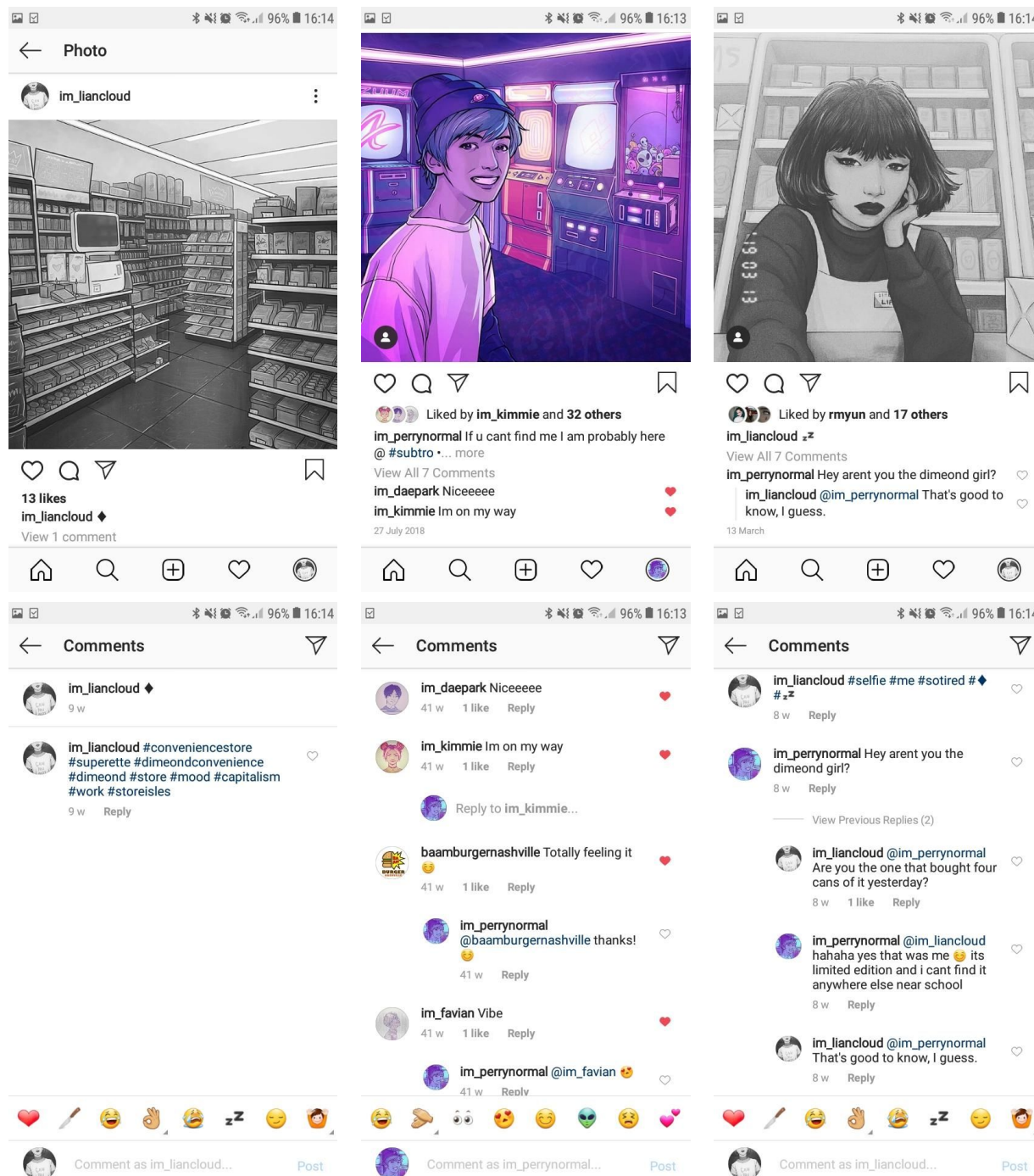
Image 21

Posts with comments

When my characters appear in posts by other characters, their connection is strengthened, and with it, their individual personas. Their content and participation in Instagram gains meaning with more interaction. Discovering Page's network as a framework for narrative coherence was a

turning point in my research, as it has proved to be a necessary guiding structure. However, that the images are artificial and chronologically sequenced may generate an expectation for plotted narrative in the audience. Hence, the teleological framework I initially set out under is still important. In my project I fit these two frameworks together. The network exists as a meta-structure over multiple entire user profiles and mostly pertains to character identities. Smaller teleological plots spanning a certain number of posts pertain to circumstances, relationships and events. Smaller story arcs can exist within a profile, ending the character's narrative in the partial conclusion of chapters or seasons.

Image posts advance the narrative in evenly sized blocks on the Instagram profile, therefore, a particular numerology can be drawn from the grid. The number three and its multiples signify completion, as the grid is three posts wide. The original Instagram image post was strictly square. Though alternative image dimensions have been introduced in the app's updates over time, images still appear in the grid as square thumbnails. This means the number nine signifies more total completion, as it is a square number. Indeed, Instagrammer Beth Kirby adheres to grid phases of nine or twelve posts to weave aesthetic themes within her profile (Kirby, 2018). I have used this numerology to formulate a structure for the story plot. In my structure, the completion of nine posts signals the conclusion of an 'Act', and twenty-seven posts signals the conclusion of a 3-Act narrative season.
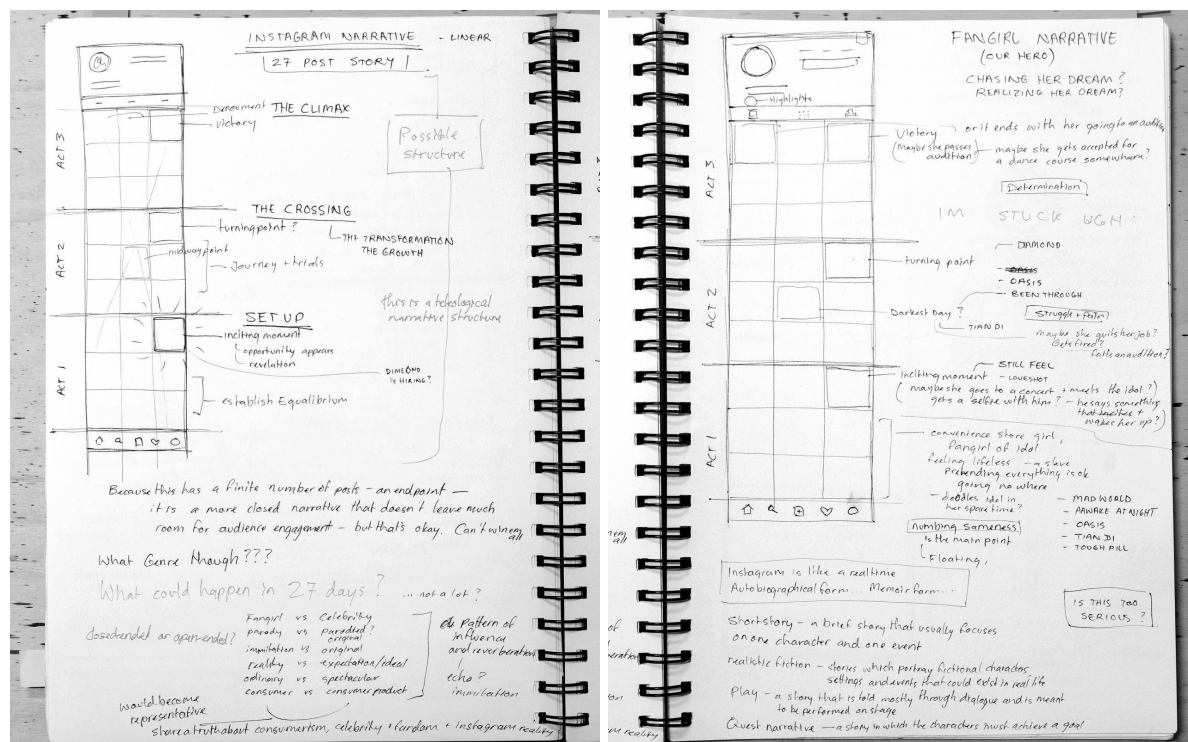

Image 22

Visual diary pages showing how I began to use grid numerology to formulate plot structure
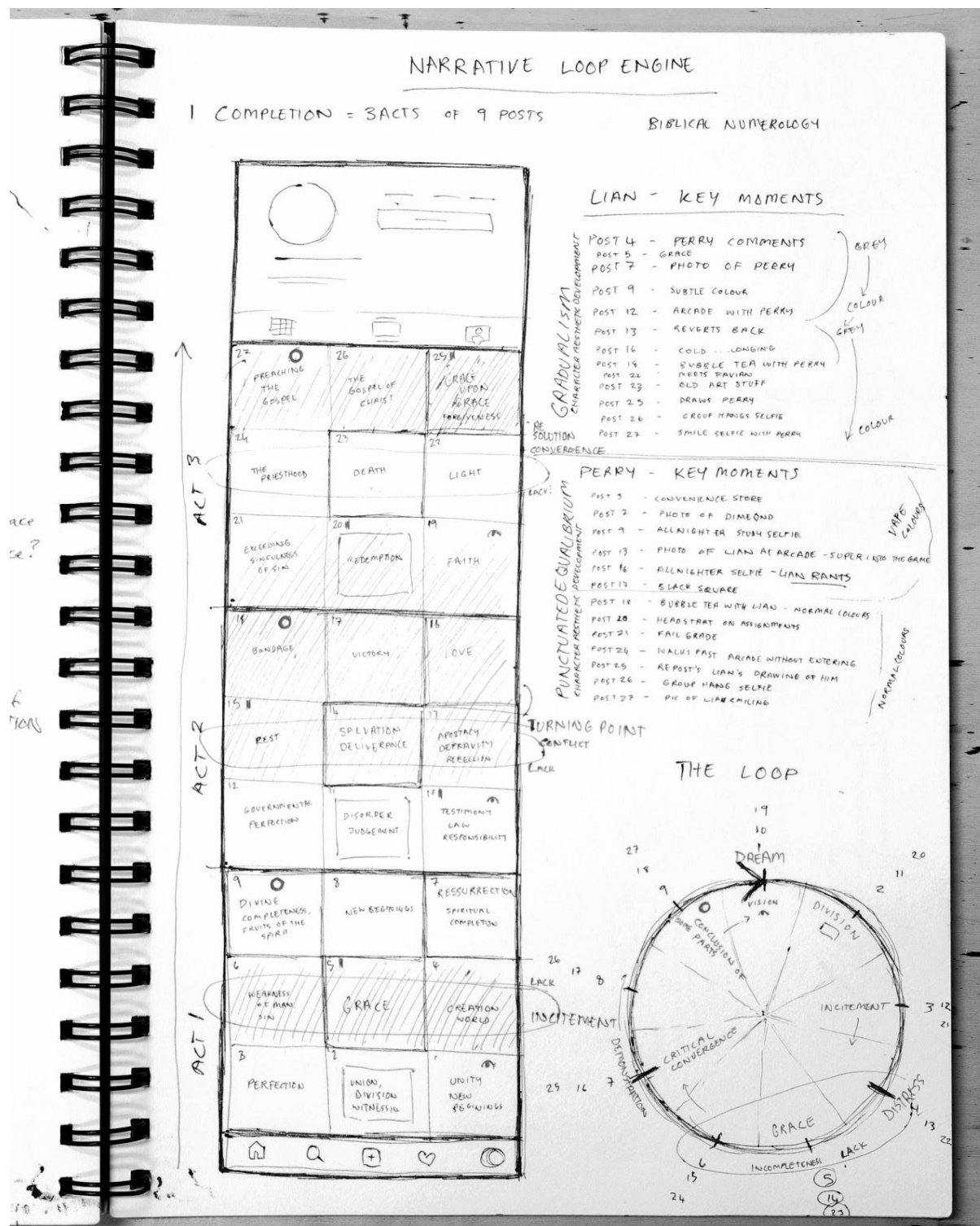
Image 23

My narrative loop engine

Within such a post-frame, more numbers find significance, for instance, post fourteen is the exact middle, so could signify a turning point in the narrative. Numerology can be employed as a structural aid for narrative plotting on Instagram. From this numerology I have created a narrative loop-engine that can be used to create an endless, open-ended story that cycles through phases of incitement, turning point, and resolution.

Embedded Themes

The double-journey narrative of my two main characters, Lian and Perry, is predominantly an aesthetic one relying on colour symbolism. Lian's low contrast grayscale images may evoke sadness or boredom for some, while for others it may seem stable, sophisticated, or even transcendent. Perry's aesthetic of over-saturated pinks, cyan and purples may be interpreted as fun and energetic—or alternatively, tacky, artificial and over-compensative. The heteroglossia of colour symbolism enables more subjective interpretation. As time goes on, my characters share more images and become better friends, their particular profile grid aesthetics will change and blur together, symbolising the influence they have on one another. Their aesthetic development symbolises their personal development, and a shift in outlook. This demonstrates themes of connection, and influence and filtering that are embedded in Instagram as a medium and culture.

This Instacomic is both nostalgic and future-oriented. It reaches backward into my knowledge amassed from experiences past and media consumed, passes through the filters of vaporous user-characters, and lies in wait for a reader to reconstitute onto their own horizon of future decisions (Basset, 2007). It mixes old narrative frameworks and forms valuing retrospection with the new that favor high interactivity, 'authenticity', improvisation, and frequent updates.

<u>ENCORE: FUTURE VENTURES</u>

My story-world has only just begun. Owing to the structure of Instagram, the potential for my narrative to further develop and expand is endless. Instagram is making celebrity status more easily attainable for the everyday user, through careful curation of personal aesthetics in casual images and audience engagement to earn micro-celebrity 'influencer' positions. Hence, it is theoretically possible for my fictional characters to become what David Marshall describes as "celefiction" (2014). The size of the audience will impact the way my characters relate to them in captions and in their visual self-performance in their images. It would be interesting to find out whether or not corporeal existence is an unspoken prerequisite for Instagram acceptance and fame. Would real brands sponsor an illustrated fictional character?

While my work at this stage paints a general and culturally odorless picture of the world, with time my story-world can grow more specific. New characters can be created who are able to tell more particular stories from experience in unique cultural contexts, in other languages. Imaginary brands, businesses, activities, objects and places can arise. Other illustrators could jump on board and contribute to this alternative universe. The project could eventually expand beyond Instagram into an intertextual space across multiple platforms.

My project may be classed into the 'slice of life' genre, though, it would be interesting to see how action, horror, science fiction, thriller, and so on, could take form. These genres may require different illustration styles and drawing conventions, or require well rendered animation and more creative sound design. Exploring different genres would help better define the limitations of illustrative storytelling on Instagram. Further embedded themes could emerge—villainous Monster-grams could be created to demonstrate the impact of 'Internet trolls' and identity thieves on protagonists. Perry would personally like to see how space aliens would use Instagram.

Instagram is updating with big and small changes, like, all the time. More formal investigation is also needed to understand the possibilities of this emergent narrative. My current research practice excludes Instagram 'Story' and 'Live' functions, yet, this area of media is rapidly growing and gaining significance in online culture across many social media platforms. Other new features the future holds, are new areas to investigate fictional storytelling online.

CONCLUSION

I aimed to find out if Instagram could support a teleological narrative arc. However, this project mirrors the platform which has no conclusive endpoint, but instead, is a place where self-image is built over time from fragments and recurring themes. In my project, this social media platform becomes an expanded field where fictional illustrated characters could become actualised as influencers. The audience can engage with the narrative directly through interactions such as likes and comments, and this increases the meaning and significance of the content. Instagram storytelling is rich and nuanced, working on multiple layers at once, finding coherency in their network connections.

Using the numerological structure and narrative loop-engine I developed out of my observations and contextual research, I can continue to grow my characters and expand their world in potentially endless plot cycles.

My project demonstrates how Instagram can be used by illustrators as a dynamic roleplay facility and for developing original characters. I found that Instagram is fantastic for establishing character identity, personality and preferences, and for testing out their relationships with other characters through their reactions and interactions online. The story I have made is fragmented and incomplete—itself a ghost that hovers in wait to be assembled and revealed by one who stumbles upon its wavelength when tuning in to Instagram.
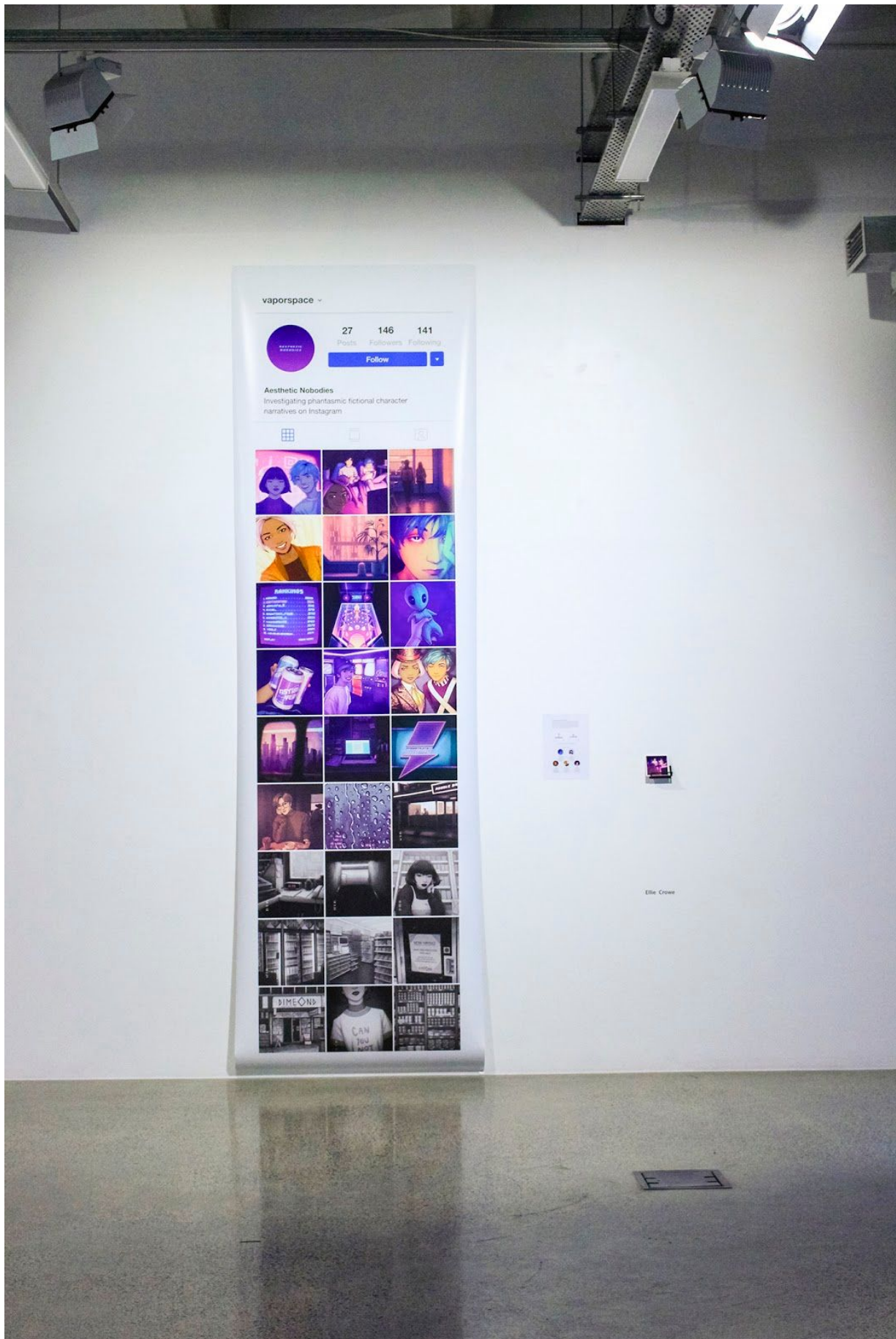
Ellie Crowe

Ellie Crowe

The Aesthetic Lives of Particular Nobodies

Standing in the hazy gap between fiction and reality, the digital persona is a ghost. A self-reported media presence that grows in brightness, opacity, and definition with each cloud of numbers that enters into the smartphone to shine back out through the screen. Instagram is a central business district in a digital metropolis where lives unfold in a series of image-making and self-performance. Playing with the inherent fictionality of this social media platform, this illustrative project brings to life two young phantasmic protagonists and their circle of virtual friends.

IM_PERRYNORMAL   IM_LIANCLOUD
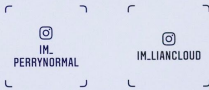
Scan with Instagram Nametag to meet the Instaghosts

'Tag Yourself' Meme

Image 24

My project at Auckland University of Technology Matariki Post-Graduate Exhibition. I made a 3.7 metre long print of a mock-Instagram-profile containing 27 illustrations from all five of my characters' archives. This print demonstrates my early idea of the aesthetic gradient, moving from grayscale to vibrant colour images. Alongside the print is an abstract, containing Perry and Lian's Instagram 'Nametags', of which exhibition goers were encouraged to use Instagram Nametag to scan and locate each character profile. The abstract also included the character 'Tag Yourself Meme' included in the prologue of this text. My favourite illustrations were made into 4x4" semigloss prints as ephemera for exhibition goers to take away. These photos were taken by myself on 15/06/2019, the polaroid from the exhibition opening night was taken on my camera by my supervisor Natalie Robertson.

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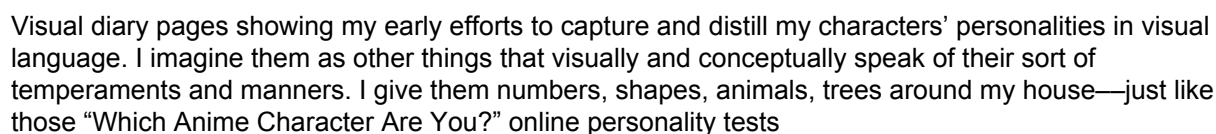
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APPENDIX

Visual diary pages showing my early efforts to capture and distill my characters' personalities in visual language. I imagine them as other things that visually and conceptually speak of their sort of temperaments and manners. I give them numbers, shapes, animals, trees around my house—just like those "Which Anime Character Are You?" online personality tests

CHARACTER MIND TIME FOCUS SPECTRUM

Favian | Perry | Kimmie | Lian | Daehyun

PAST — near past — PRESENT — near future — FUTURE

CHARACTER SATURATION

Favian | Lian | Daehyun | Perry | Kimmie

GREY / LOW — MID — HIGH / CONCENTRAE

BURDEN CHARACTER LUMINANCE TONE VALUE / KEY

Lian | Favian | Daehyun | Perry | Kimmie

BLACK / LOW KEY / PESSIMISTIC / YIN — GREY MID / FULL REALISTS — WHITE / HIGH KEY / OPTIMISTIC / YANG

LOGIC REASONING – ASSORTMENT
DECISIONS RANDOMNESS ASSOCIATION

Perry | Perry | Favian | Kimmie | Lian | Daehyun

GAS — LIQUID — SOLID

CHAOS / ARBITRARY / LATERAL / SUBVERSIVE / HIGH SCATTER / ATONAL — DISPERSED / DIFFUSED — LIQUID HARMONIC — MELODIC — LINEAR ORDER / DIRECT / CENTRAL THEME ADHERING / CLOSE CORRELATION

BLURRED SHALLOW — **SHARPNESS** ATMOSPHERE VISIBILITY — DEEP FOCUSED

Favian | Perry | Lian | Daehyun | Kimmie | (Favian)

WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL STUFF

Favian | Perry **GUILE** | Lian Daehyun Kimmie

INNOCENT — MENACE

Visual diary page—I placed my characters on made up personality trait sliding scales as another way to differentiate them and make them their own people.
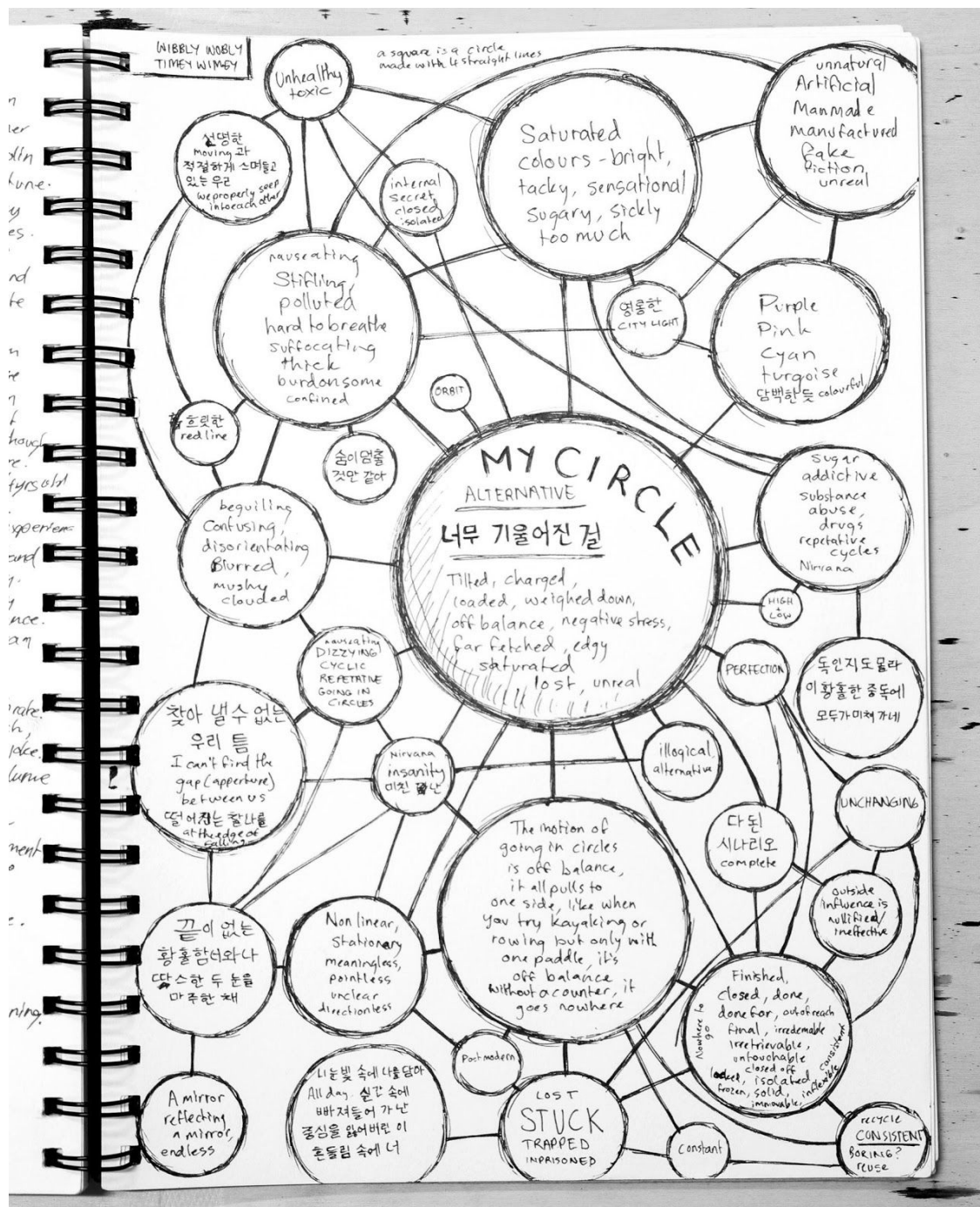
Visual diary mapping to conceptualise and draw connections between aesthetics I was interested in and the fictional world of the characters - to understand my whims. The process of making this diagram was more important than the readability of it as a finished page.
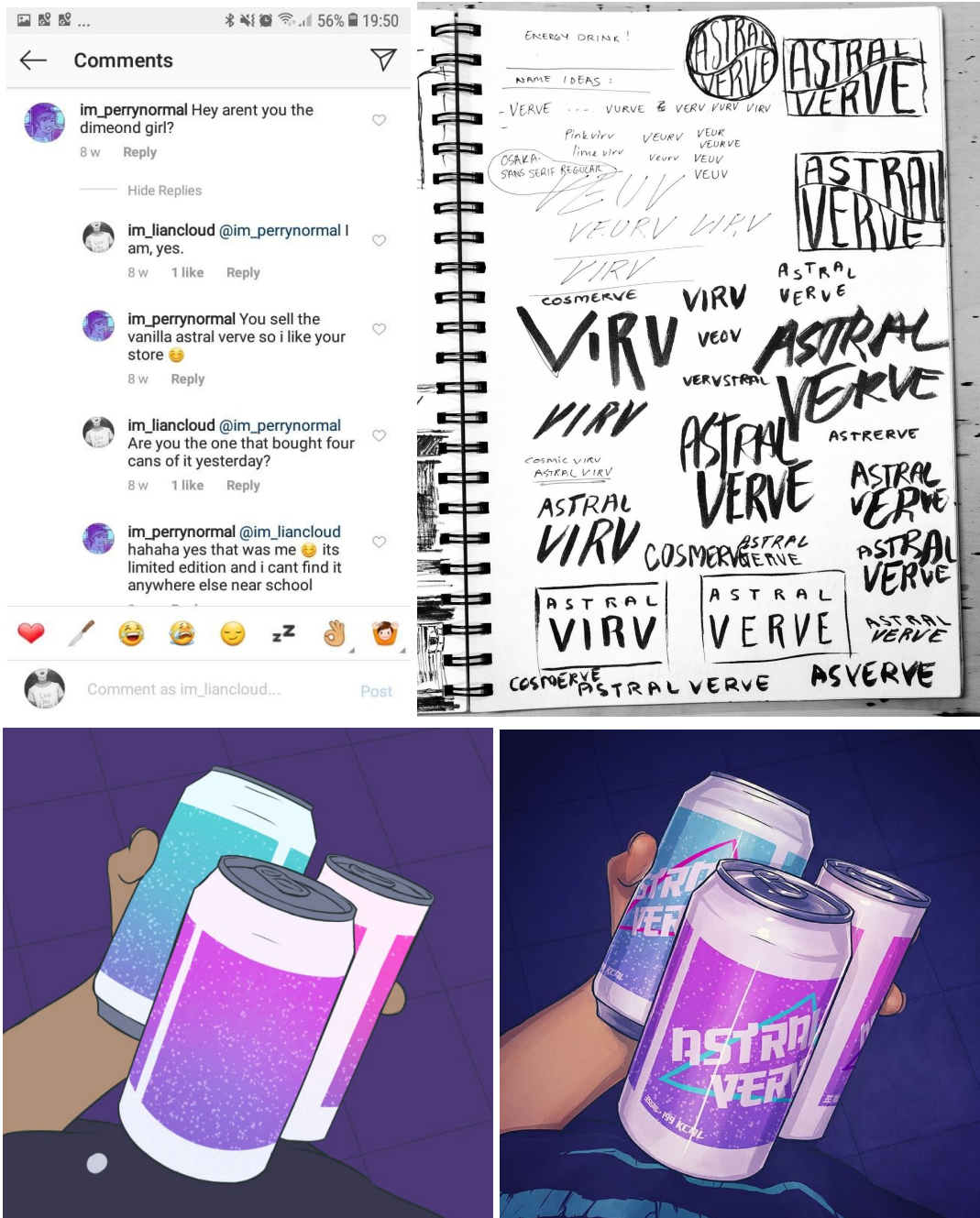
The design of 'Astral Verve' soda brand came out of improvised dialogue in the comments. This is an example of how the storyworld can grow and develop in improvisational character roleplay. These soda cans are likely to reappear in more images now that they have been introduced, to further establish their presence as products in the story-world.