

*Dialogical Illustration,*

# **TONGUE IN CHEEK:**

*Shared experience through surface and scale*



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*May 18, 2018*

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***Dialogical illustration, Tongue in Cheek:  
Shared experience through surface and scale***

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# Abstract

This practice-led thesis takes the form of a narrative through dialogical illustration and has a strong image-led, storytelling focus that describes my perspective and everyday experiences as an Asian self-taught illustrator. These moments can be seen as a temporary journey of identity formation and transformation in Western society.<sup>1</sup> Creatively, the illustrations revolve around Asian thinking and subjects that are accessible, imperfect and playful, depicting details witnessed in daily life. Both Asian characters and Western characters emerge during the practice, reflecting friends and situations in a 'tongue in cheek' way. Composition and brush texture are used to represent the researcher's different emotions and aesthetics. The potential function of the illustrations has been explored by transferring the images to different textiles and surfaces, shifting from a two-dimensional, illustrative aspect to a multi-dimensional perspective. During this exegesis, particular artists who contextually influence my research are discussed and reflected on. These artists highlight naïve art approaches, psychological elements that influence character design, and relationships between colour and space.

These shifts through media and scale create a unique expression, enabling and enhancing each person's individual resonance and experience. The little, ugly figures and colourful language construct a different visual world, which is similar to but oddly differs from the real world. This work forms an active discussion; when people view the work, the illustrations produce a connection with people who have seen, heard, or engaged in the same activity. Additionally, when the illustrations are applied to various objects and surfaces, the visual effects become stronger than those of the paper-only versions, thereby kindling memory. "Visual recourses in communication are acknowledged to be powerful in cognition and memory, they are the products of the cultural histories and cognitive resources we use to create meaning. They can be seen as a 'set of overlapping concerns', focusing on the collaboration of 2-D and 3-D," according to cognitive science researcher Jana Holsanova,<sup>2</sup> and "the viewer's perception and interpretation play an active, dynamic and situational context of the visuals, co-creating its meaning, and consequently, providing a better understanding of interaction."<sup>3</sup> This can be seen as a 'dialogical illustration'.

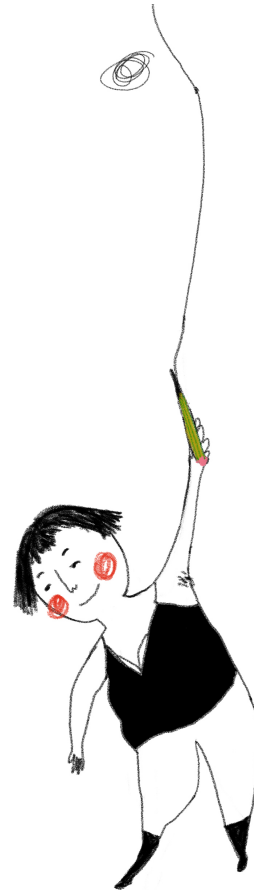
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1. Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2004), 59-62.

2. Jana Holsanova, "New Methods for Studying Visual Communication and Multimodal Integration," *Visual Communication* 11, (July 30, 2012): 251, accessed May 2, 2017, [doi: 10.1177/1470412912446558](https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412912446558)

3. Anna-Sara Fagerholm and Karina Goransson, "Towards Visual Strategic Communications: An Innovative Interdisciplinary Perspective on Visual Dimensions within the Strategic Communications Field," *Journal of Communication Management*, 22 (2018): 46-66,

This practical research started with fabric, as I use illustration to look for my identity and voice within a different society, expressed through narrative in illustration and materials. And in this process, the three-dimensional nature of fabric resulted in the development of a visual dialogue, explored through personal perspectives and reflections.



## ***Research question***

***What is the potential of dialogical illustrations to create shared experience through surfaces and scale?***





*Figure 1. Digitally printed textiles at Maraetai Beach. Photographed by Yadan Zheng, 2017.*

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# 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 university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dalwin'.

Signature:

Date: May 16, 2018



# Acknowledgements



I would like to express my appreciation of gratitude to my primary supervisor Doctor Mandy Smith for her helping and wisdom as well as secondary supervisor Doctor Miranda Smitheram for sharing her experience and knowledge.

I am sincerely grateful to the faculty and staff at the AUT School of Art and Design, Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies for their kindness and support.

I wish to thank all my peers in my studio and my friends who have given me their valuable suggestions and guidance which has been very helpful in various phases of the completion of the projects.

I would like to thank my parents for providing the golden opportunity for me to go abroad to study.

# Intellectual property rights

Because this work draws on the autobiographical it did not require University ethics approval.

Signature: *Dalidw*

Date: May 16, 2018



# ***Introduction and overview***

## Dialogical Illustration of an Asian Illustrator's Journey

The illustrated work *Tongue in Cheek* reflects my research's aesthetic concept and expressionistic skills by exploring my world view and philosophy of life. This is an autobiographical body of work that tells many stories about the self-discovery of an illustrator, which could be considered as a dialogue between the author and the art work. This means that the function of *Tongue in Cheek* is to enhance the participatory aspect of the project. The illustrations play a role in emphasising the participatory process in research.<sup>4</sup> The hardest part of the process was looking for a cultural identity with some form of Asian aesthetics in the drawings. As a self-taught illustrator, the act of creating illustration increases my confidence, and as a representation of my life, language and thoughts, it looks much more like psychotherapy through self-expression. In order to encourage people's visual perception through the illustrations, I have created iterations using different textiles, forms and surfaces. By exploring the potential of *Tongue in Cheek*, I aim to bring the images to life, instead of them lying flat on the paper and screen, and to draw more attention to the visual dialogue and interaction with the audience.

In supporting my work through this exegesis, the following discussion is divided into four chapters. The first chapter discusses my research position in art and design as a practitioner and how this project evolved through illustrations depicting my personal responses to my life experiences. The second chapter summarizes the main content using a contextual and literature review through both historical and contemporary lenses, which increases a general understanding of my work in terms of inspirational artists, artefacts and writing. The third chapter demonstrates the methodology employed herein. It also outlines the design process through diagrams and explanatory writing. The fourth chapter draws together conclusions and insights from the research through practice.

Due to my personal writing style, I have employed a particular design in the thesis, which includes some illustrations for the purpose of adding an energy and liveliness to the textual interpretation. Overall, therefore, the structure of this thesis follows a pathway from conceptualizing the main ideas to the experimental testing and final analysis of artefacts.

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4. Thomas Tufte and Paolo Mefalopulos, *Participatory Communication: A Practical Guide* (Washington DC: World Bank Publications, 2009), 2-11, accessed October 4, 2017, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/682081468166154717/Participatory-communication-a-practical-guide>

# Chapter 1. Positioning

This chapter aims to position my identity as a practice-led researcher, not only in a contemporary art and design context, but also to recognize the influence of researching and living in a different cultural background from that in which I was born and educated. In taking the authorial self to task, it is helpful to think of the subjectivity of the researcher in terms of identification, “relationships and experiences that are not in any way straightforward but are, rather, mediated by multiple historical and contemporary factors, including social, schooling and psychodynamic relations.”<sup>5</sup>

## 1.1 New in New Zealand

As an international student, I am full of passion for my disciplinary background, namely fashion design. Illustration and drawing have been consistent features throughout my studies. When I finished my papers during my first semester, I was still focused on fashion design and intended to extend my practice into the second semester. However, I have since changed the direction and focus of my thesis because, when I started to do the research, I found fashion design is not just about clothing. It is more about materials, colour theory and fashion illustration. Therefore, I began focusing on drawing doodles as a form of illustration. The illustrations become patterns once applied to textiles. As time went on, the illustrations became more and more like a personal diary. They attempt to “take into account the place of emotions and unconscious interference in relation to the researcher’s own subjectivity and the relationship between research and research participants in the understanding of research practice.”<sup>6</sup> This spontaneous action was pivotal in my design process.

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5. Margaret Walshaw, *The Researcher's Self in Research: Confronting Issues About Knowing and Understanding Others* (Australia: Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, July 2010), accessed October 3, 2018, <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=The+Researcher's+Self+in+Research%3a+Confronting+Issues+About+Knowing+and+Understanding+Others&id=ED520979>.

6. Ibid., 587

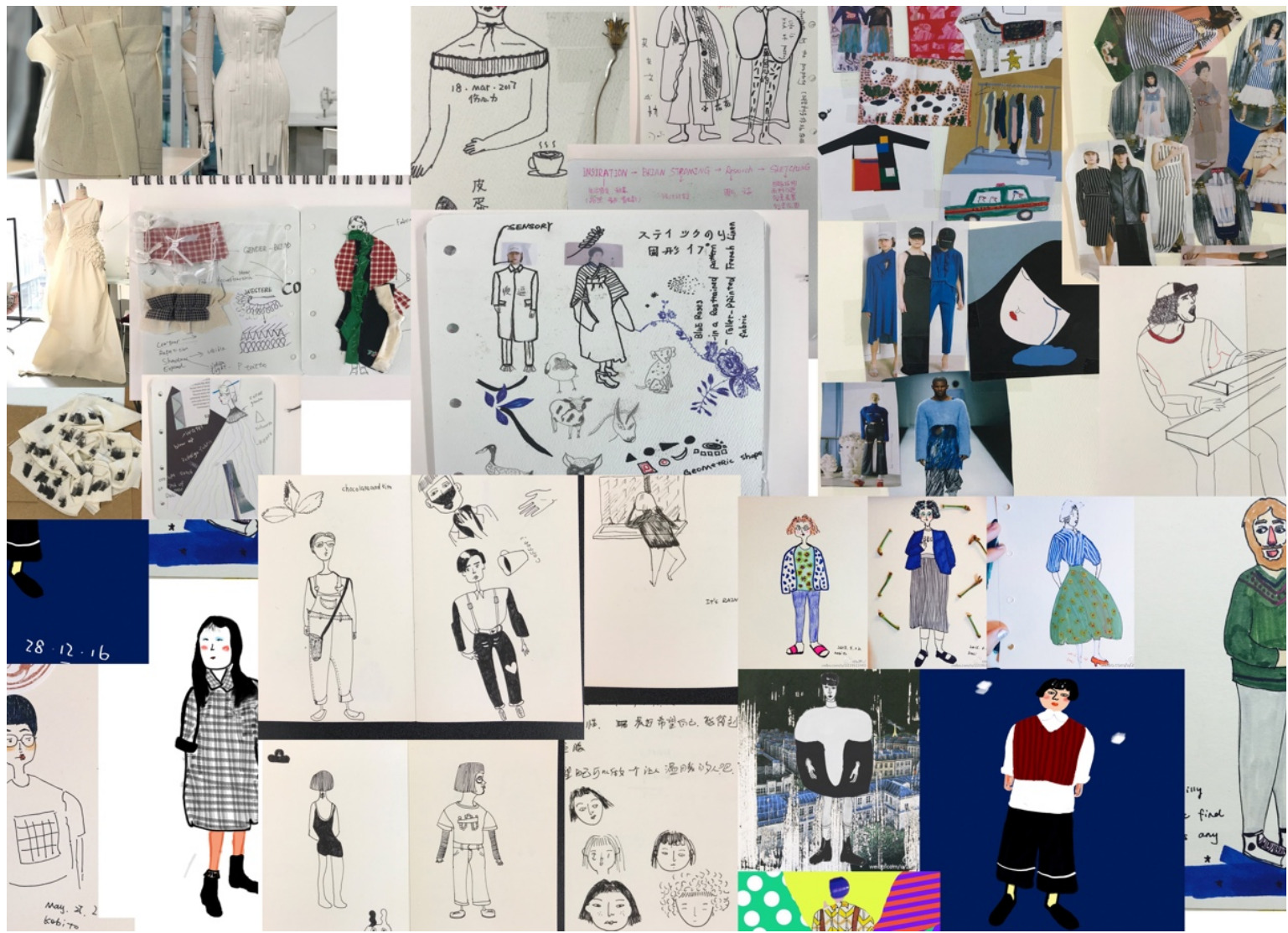


Figure 2. Doodling stage. Dali Lu, 2015.

Figure 2 shows the initial stage of the design process, including fashion design practice sketches depicting techniques such as draping, material collection, fashion illustration and doodle drawing. This process also indicates that all the practices were unconsciously influenced by elements of illustration. Initially, my fashion illustration skills were unprofessional as they looked like naïve illustrations. I lost interest in professional skilled drawing; rather, I kept my naïve style of drawing as it happened naturally and unconsciously and became my signature. "If an adult finds themselves striving towards achieving a goal in the creative field but comes to realise it is unattainable due to personal limitations, one may forget the basic theories of art. André Malraux once described Rousseau as 'being able to get what he wants like a child, and to be slightly devious with it'."<sup>7</sup> I support the idea that creation should not follow rules and general commands. It should follow the creator's nature.

During this research and in the process of gathering inspiration, I was attracted to specific

7. Natalia Brodskaya, *Naïve Art* (New York: Parkstone International, 2012).106

styles of illustration, especially when I saw “the attention to detail, the delicate line and the point of view of nature shows the simplicity and daily happiness.”<sup>8</sup> Over time I used this illustration style to draw fashion illustrations and, little by little, I grew to enjoy it.



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8. Ibid., 128.



Figure 3. Do you have three-butt? (Mobile phone wallpaper). Illustration design by Dali Lu, 2017.

## 1.2 A Cute Girl Caused the First Dialogue

The dialogue shifted from internal to external through conversation with a student in my studio. One of my peers offered me some advice about my design illustration. She suggested that I print it and stick it on a wall in my studio space. The first illustration she saw was the wallpaper on my phone's screen (figure 3). She expressed her basic emotional response to this drawing in one word: 'cool'. From this point, I began to see a little of the illustration's success – it captured people's attention and engaged with their communal beliefs, and thus they became active participants in the 'meaning making'.<sup>9</sup> This was the first dialogue between an audience and one of my illustrations. She might have been persuaded to comment by her own interest in illustration, or she may have just been being polite when she saw my drawing, but I still felt courageous. Thus, I built the first moment on my story-board, and I decided to continue drawing.

"The nature of illustrative communication is the persuasive capability of an image, and the evidence based on a story is intended to appeal to an audience."<sup>10</sup> As the illustration gets more and more detailed, the audience becomes more and more affected. The audience is a dynamic participant in the communicative dialogue, and the designer creates visual arguments designed in accordance with the audience's values and social common sense.<sup>11</sup> Through my peer, I experienced the connection that could be made through my illustrations, which encouraged positive interaction between myself and others as because of my shyness, I seldom talk to others actively. But that illustration helped us talk. I also realized that the illustrations could create a dialogue within myself, especially while studying in a strange country. As stated by Eugene Veron, "art work is the emotional expression of human personality".<sup>12</sup> I continued to draw because it made me happy and at ease, because it relieved my anxiety and just for the sake of it.

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9. Eden Potter, "Ducks, Decorators, and the Dialogical: An Examination of Approaches to Information Design" (AUT University, 2010), accessed February 27, 2018, <http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/1347/PotterE2.pdf?sequence=4>.

10. Ibid., 77.

11. Ibid., 83-91.

12. Eugene Veron, quoted in C.J. Ducasse, "Art and the Language of the Emotions," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23 (Autumn, 1964): 109-112, accessed January 2, 2018, [http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary\\_zabel/Courses/Spinoza/Texts/Art%20and%20the%20Language%20of%20the%20Emotions.pdf](http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Spinoza/Texts/Art%20and%20the%20Language%20of%20the%20Emotions.pdf).

### 1.3 The Autobiographical Narrative: A Dialogue with Myself

“An autobiography refers to the story of a person’s life, narrated by him or herself. When it is told as a story focusing on a few key events throughout the writer’s life, it is known as a personal or autobiographical narrative.”<sup>13</sup> My illustrations depict moments in an Asian researcher’s life that take a fragmented form; the stories and some moments are independent,<sup>14</sup> because they are disconnected. In *Tongue in Cheek*, “autobiographical research uses various empirical sources, such as life narratives, oral stories, documents, diaries, memorials, epistles, videos, photos and other things.”<sup>15</sup>

As an illustrator, I would like to make a construction through my empirical experience. “In creating the illustrations, I am endeavouring to give a voice to my personal identity story, which is communicated through the narrative of images,”<sup>16</sup> with a global view of Western cultural society. This personal narrative expresses my life experiences, emotions and concerns, as well as creating my sense of social reality.<sup>17</sup> In this exegesis, I attempt to clarify “how I work with memory in my efforts to develop life histories in autobiographical research, which makes use of the practice of memory as an important condition for existing in an exotic culture.”<sup>18</sup> This discovery process shows how I position myself when I encounter difficulties in communication and in incomprehensible lectures in New Zealand. This will be discussed in

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13. Angeliki Coconi, “What Is the Difference between Autobiography & Narrative?” last modified 2017, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://penandthepad.com/difference-between-autobiography-narrative-10006502.html>.

14. “Graphic Novels: Visual Memoir/Autobiography,” Norman Rockwell Museum, last modified 2015, accessed January 1, 2017, <https://www.illustrationhistory.org/genres/graphic-novels-visual-memoir-autobiography>.

15. Maria Helena Menna Barreto Abrahão, “Autobiographical Research: Memory, Time and Narratives in the First Person,” *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* 3, (2012): 29-41, accessed September 23, 2017, [http://www.rela.ep.liu.se/issues/10.3384\\_rela.2000-7426.201231/rela0051/rela0051.pdf](http://www.rela.ep.liu.se/issues/10.3384_rela.2000-7426.201231/rela0051/rela0051.pdf).

16. Don Yew Li Chooi, “‘Homebound’: The Illustrated Graphic Novel as an Autobiographic Voice for an Immigrant Asian Gay Male in New Zealand” (master’s thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2017), 20, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/eds/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=bbbdee82-5a6b-4ee1-a079-6ca8161c5530%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#AN=aut.b20612278&db=cat05020a>.

17. Ivana Marková, *The Dialogical Mind: Common Sense and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 64-84.

18. Barreto Abrahão, “Autobiographical Research”, 29.

more depth during the following two chapters.

## 1.4 Tongue in Cheek

*Tongue in Cheek* is a series of illustration works, including digital and textile versions. Any form of illustration be called by this title in this thesis. My supervisor gave me the title of the narrative. When she saw my work, she used the phrase 'tongue-in-cheek' to express her feelings. For this reason, I decided to use this phrase as a title for the all the illustration work. "*Tongue in Cheek* is a figure of speech, whose dictionary definition describes ironic, sly humour; it is not meant to be taken seriously, yet its sarcasm is subtle."<sup>19</sup> The illustrations correspond with the title – a sense of humour and authentic attitude are vital parts of the illustrator's aesthetic expression.

## 1.5 Aesthetic Concept

In this practice-led thesis, "humour is best understood as itself a kind of aesthetic experience, equal in value to any other kind of aesthetic experience."<sup>20</sup> Firstly, *Tongue in Cheek* reflects the influence of both Western and Oriental societies, which is a new artistic aesthetic in my practice. Its aesthetic interest created a stylization, through both the unexpected colour and the witty characters that have an Asian flavour, which were initially inspired through free-play and imagination. It is an approach to cross-cultural situations, where Asian behaviours occur in a Western country.

Secondly, our sense of humour enables us to identify ironically, cynically, sarcastically, wittily, ludicrously. *Tongue in Cheek* mainly takes the form of self-mockery, "which enables us to laugh not only at other people and funny incidents that we read or watch but also to laugh at ourselves."<sup>21</sup> Plus, when some social phenomena increase the illustrator's resonance, the illustrator uses visual language to represent that – with a sense of fun. According to Gordon, "humour allows us to view the world from a perspective that is amusing and comical rather

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19. Laqueshus, "Urban Dictionary ", accessed March 4, 2018.

<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=tongue+in+cheek>.

20. Mordechai Gordon, "Exploring the Relationship between Humour and Aesthetic Experience," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 46, (2012): 110-121, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jaesteduc.46.1.0110>.

21. Ibid., 111.

than serious or sad.”<sup>22</sup> Throughout this practice, the illustrations tended to begin with a little irony or sadness, the result of culture shock, instead of the superficial, which would simply please people through use of colour and character. Thus, these illustrations imply conflict, driving the audience to think about the authenticity of the world through the realistic details shared. Little things in life can also be charming and lovely. We should respect our own world view and personality, and sometimes we just follow what amuses us, and keep on going. One of the people in my audience said: “your works do make me think, I will think about why you have this idea in drawing, but I could not have this idea. So, I like the interest from your perspective.” This comment reminds me that we need to respect the uniqueness of every individual, because of the individuality that composes *Tongue in Cheek*.



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22. Ibid., 119.

# **Chapter 2. Context: The Critical Framework**

This chapter discusses the main context of the exegesis, including a review of my illustrative influences and a critical review of artists and selected academic texts. This research helped me to clarify the topic and build a contextual background for the dialogical research. It begins with a discussion of autobiographical illustrations that refer to personal moments. It then considers the different methods three artists used to develop their work. This chapter discusses Henri Matisse, Grayson Perry and Juli Baker and Summer, and explores how they influenced my own illustrated work in terms of colour principles, emotional expression and the different worlds of textiles and objects.

## **2.1 Henri Matisse**

### **Colour, decoration, structure**

The French artist Henri Matisse (1869-1954) expressed his themes through colour, fluid line and structure. Matisse's impressionism and identity have played a vital role in contemporary art. His exploration of passion through colour and exaggeration stopped him becoming too objective. Instead he discovered his subjectivity in and through colour.

The paintings *Dance* and *Music* are from an early series of works, and depict the use of rhythmical lines and exaggerated bodies painted on a blue and green background with a flat coating of colour for the bodies, which has a strong, decorative implication.<sup>23</sup> In those two works, I also can see some of the naïve approach “that possesses that clumsiness which results in a characteristic manner of expression and which is itself responsible for the lack of balance in their words, resulting in outlandishly bold exaggeration.”<sup>24</sup>

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23. Bueloo, “Qin ai de ma di si” [Dear Matisse], Beijing bean network technology, last modified 2009, accessed April 12, 2018, <https://book.douban.com/review/2035203/>

24. Natalia Brodskaya, *Naïve Art* (New York: Parkstone International, 2012), 128.



Figure 4. *Dance*. Oil painted by Henri Matisse, 1909, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 5. *Music*. Oil painted by Henri Matisse, 1910, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.<sup>26</sup>

Both paintings focus on the nature of colour and line, which together make up the sense of spatial dimensionality. When comparing them with *Tongue in Cheek*, certain approaches may be noted as similar. Colour, colour blocking and line, all elements which can control dimensionality, have been used within my illustrations as a method of contrasting and constructing the images and depicting the narratives. In the immediate moment of captured work, this principle can be used to create a rough structured background in order to create a

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25. Henri Matisse, *Dance*, 1909, in Jean Guichard-Meili, *Matisse* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), 68.

26. Henri Matisse, *Music*, 1910, in Guichard-Meili, *Matisse*, 69.

quick visual effect and harmony within an illustration, before moving into detailing the character and other elements. Matisse helps me to understand the nature of *Tongue in Cheek* through these similarities. His works are not focused on fine details because they are always composed of these simple elements which he utilizes in the two-dimensional world of painting to express his passion and enthusiasm.

#### *Character and detail*

Matisse's work often depicts a female character. *Lady in Blue* is a portrait of striking immediacy in a high colour register lacking in subtle colours. When I view Matisse's painting, I notice that he paid more attention to the line and colour layout than to facial expressions, and he deals with the ellipsis of detailed character and background, brightly contrasting with blue, red and black, while the white fringe on the blue dress splits the whole picture. In other paintings, as in the *Lady in Blue* there are female figures shown in luxury and idleness as well as beauty and elegance. There is also a strong flavour of the West in Matisse's compositions,<sup>27</sup> such as the costumes, and the set-up in a room.

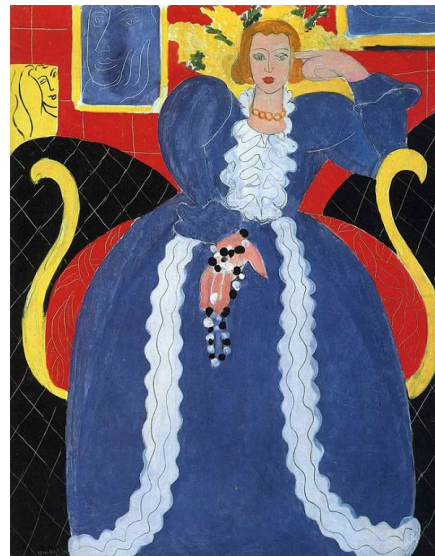


Figure 5. *Lady in Blue*. Oil painted by Henri Matisse, 1938, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.<sup>28</sup>

The main subject of *Tongue in Cheek* is also a female figure, but she is not exactly the same in every work: my Asian features are constant and don't change – the single eyelid, a flat and round face. Unlike in Matisse's universe wherein he was haunted by the female form, the

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27. Jean Guichard-Meili, *Matisse* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967).

28. Henri Matisse, *Lady in Blue*, 1938, in Julian Rendall, *The Art of Matisse* (London: Optimum Books, 1982). 70.

female in my illustrations is created in reference to myself and is autobiographical. The final outcome of the artworks has two layers that represent a cross-cultural female, the notion that she is symbolic of lifestyle.<sup>29</sup> Through the character's gaze we see a representation of the author's aesthetic interest, which is self-mocking and witty. The figure in these illustrated works identifies the author's identity within society; she may be imperfect, but she is good at posing. Unlike Matisse's women, simple, steady and elegant, my illustrations are always in motion. One of the aspects of character development that I focus on is a psychological exploration in and through physical appearance. Matisse also said: "the painter releases his emotion by painting; but not without his conception having passed through a certain analytic state."<sup>30</sup>

The imperfect figure I have drawn represents and reflects my personal confidence. That silly gesture-drawn person shows some of the disadvantages I do not admit to in real life, yet in the illustrated world I want to be honest, to bring my actual attitude to the illustrations. This authenticity might increase the audience's resonance with the work and their emotional response to it. Concurrently, the female character must have clear appearance characteristics that relate to where she comes from and her culture and identity in order to represent a clear idea of her mood within the illustrations.<sup>31</sup> So, not only the character but also other features in the drawings can be identified as having an Asian aesthetic, showing the influence of my Chinese background and culture. Parallel themes connect Matisse's work, and my illustrations centre around clearly depicted central characters modified by different emotions; they are constant, developing permanent personal features.

## 2.2 Juli Baker and Summer

Conflict world

Juli Baker and Summer is the brand of Thai designer Phaan. She is known for her unusual art, full of vibrancy and warmth. Her illustrated works tell beautiful stories and record her view of life. The use of bold, contrasting colours and the fluidity of her lines represent a gentle world, but her works also reveal a sense of wonder and playfulness. There is a femininity and a Southeast Asian flavour in her art. The social and environmental worlds both influence our subjective well-being. For people located outside their original society, their unique cultural

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29. Alexandra Catriona Holmes, "Imaginary Worlds: An Exploration through Illustration", (master's thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2011), 27-94, accessed March 3, 2018, <http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/handle/10292/4318>.

30. Jack D Flam, *Matisse on Art*. (New York: Phaidon Press, 1973), 58.

31. *Ibid.*, 98-121.

features are highlighted within their new environment and society.<sup>32</sup> In this way, the sense of Thai expression in her work catches people's eye. Illustration is used to indicate her cultural identity and personal style, which reveal her passion and optimism.



Figure 6. Image courtesy of The Jam Factory<sup>33</sup>

As I understand it, she uses a child-like gaze to create a 'place' that allows people to rest in her art as if they were in their own home, relaxed and happy. Perhaps this is the reason why art is beauty, because it can create an unreality and escape from the real world. She calls her works 'naïve art', which is the antithesis of perception and austerity.<sup>34</sup> "This kind of form can guide the brush and colour towards a creation of idealized images that hold a refreshing

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32. Fuguo Chen Fang Wang, "The Influence Features of Subjective Well-Being, "Zhu Guan Xing Fu Gan De Ying Xiang Yin Su", *Chin J of Behavioral Med Sci*, 14, no. 6 (2005), accessed April 21, 2018, <http://old.xwyx.cn/PDFQW/200506/20050653.pdf>.

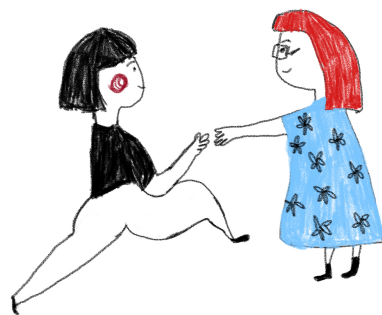
33. Neocha, *Untitled*, accessed January 3, 2018, [https://medium.com/@neocha\\_official/juli-baker-summer-1f5f713191f3](https://medium.com/@neocha_official/juli-baker-summer-1f5f713191f3).

34. "Juli Baker and Summer," *Bangkok Post*, August 19, 2016, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://www.pressreader.com/thailand/bangkok-post/20160819/282561607580976>

sense of innocence. The paintings reflect a brighter side of life.”<sup>35</sup>

*Tongue in Cheek* is more rebellious than *Juli Baker and Summer*. The research and practice developed through my illustrative works are not as positive as they first seem, and the implication of colour is not as passionate as it first appears. There is a sense of unease and aloneness in some of my work, because when I was creating the illustrations, I was not in the right environment, as it did not belong to me. On the other hand, not all the artworks tell of an unhappy moment; when I viewed things that might amuse me I was also willing to record them, and this shows, through the diverse content and development of my narratives, that any story can change emotion, any theme is life.

Phaan’s working studio can be seen as a tactile textile world, since it is a comfortable place to experiment and is viewed as friendly and safe. On her wall, there are many snapshots of daily life, rough sketches and cut-out pages from magazines, and the rest of the studio is populated with toys, vintage furniture and fabric of various patterns and textures. It is as though it exists in a world between reality and illusion.<sup>36</sup> This connects to my construction of my studio environment, and was an active influence in arranging the objects and surfaces displayed in my graduate exhibition.



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35. Silka P, "Charm and Opulence of Naive Art," *Widewalls*, last modified July 19, 2016, accessed April 21, 2018, <https://www.widewalls.ch/naive-art-movement-artists/>

36. Neocha, "Juli Baker & Summer", last modified September 25, 2017, accessed April 10, 2018, [https://medium.com/@neocha\\_official/juli-baker-summer-1f5f713191f3](https://medium.com/@neocha_official/juli-baker-summer-1f5f713191f3).



Figure 7. Image courtesy of The Jam Factory<sup>37</sup>

This space inspired hope throughout the process of creating my own physical space for exhibiting my final works, and informed what kind of environment I wished I could own. For this reason, I began exploring digital printing, which has been a good way to bring my art to life, enabling diversity, change and playfulness. I felt that my exhibition space should be a playful environment full of my life experiences. When people come into the space, they are allowed to touch anything in order to experience my story multi-dimensionally. My illustrated commentary follows a visual fashion trajectory, with large, printed textiles on cotton cloth and silk, and illustrations of different sizes, all of which take viewers and passers-by into a semi-surreal fashion world. In so doing, the alteration of the illustration's scale, from a small drawing to a large textile print, "impacts the way we perceive a given area – simply by modifying a point of view or a viewer's perspective."<sup>38</sup> By representing the environment in this way, each event is multiplied through its texture and size.

In this fashion-related practice, the illustrations have a strong decorative function according to their expression through colour. As Matisse said, decoration is an extremely valuable element in a work of art – it is an essential quality – and it is therefore not pejorative to say that an

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37. Neocha, *Untitled*, accessed January 3, 2018, [https://medium.com/@neocha\\_official/juli-baker-summer-1f5f713191f3](https://medium.com/@neocha_official/juli-baker-summer-1f5f713191f3).

38. Shaoqiang Wang, *Installation Art*, (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 2010),12.

artist's paintings are decorative.<sup>39</sup> I aim to represent an individual space that I have designed with a simple purpose, to indicate my thoughts and ideas, irregular and chaotic though they may be. The results are more like a self-constructed setting full of imagination and emotion. This world also welcomes viewers to take part and engage in this playground of ideas, emotions and memories.<sup>40</sup> The differently scaled objects and textiles will be shown in this space, and the idea of illustration works will be seen. I hope the interaction between audience and illustrations brings viewers a visual meaning, when the characters and objects in the illustration become bigger, even as big as a human, viewers may have the idea that they've entered another world as they can see the story from a different perspective. A key similarity between Phaan's work and mine could be seen as a shared hope that our audiences feel our different worlds, that they look attractive and vibrant. I hope when viewers see *Tongue in Cheek* they are able to feel a deeper response and effect beyond what they see.



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39. Guichard-Meili, *Matisse*, 134-138.

40. Wang, *Installation Art*, 24.

## 2.3 Grayson Perry

Grayson Perry is an English contemporary artist. He is famous for his cross-dressing and ceramic tapestries, as well as for his observations of contemporary fashion. “Perry is a gifted storyteller, with a Dickensian eye for detail; he packs more narratives into one of his tapestries than some authors manage in several chapters.”<sup>41</sup> Of use to this exegesis is his exhibition (see Figures 9, 10 and 11) which is also described as being ‘tongue in cheek’. Grayson Perry created *A House for Essex*, which was finished in April 2014, in cooperation with the architect Charles Holland.



*Figure 8. A House for Essex. Photographed by Jack Hobhouse, 2014.*

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41. Alastair Smart, “Life's Rich Tapestry? You'll Find It in Essex: Grayson Perry Shows His Gift for Storytelling and Dickensian Eye for Detail in the Life of Julie Cope,” *Daily Mail* Online, December 31, 2017, accessed January 2, 2018, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/event/article-5205727/Art.html>.



Figure 9. A House for Essex. Photographed by Jack Hobhouse, 2014.



Figure 10. A House for Essex. Photographed by Jack Hobhouse, 2014.<sup>42</sup>

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42. Grayson Perry, *A House for Essex* [Figures 9, 10, 11], 2014, accessed January 2, 2018, <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/05/15/house-for-essex-fat-grayson-perry-charles-holland-living-architecture-alain-de-botton/>

*A House for Essex* offers a view into Perry's interior world. The message behind the work, which is symbolized by the building, can be seen as his youth and the foolish things he has done in the past.<sup>43</sup> The cottage is small and colourfully decorated with his fashionable elements and tells the story of an Essex woman, Julie Cope, who is a fictional character. In his narrative, she suffered from a troubled childhood, indifferent affection and family issues.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, in this work, he has attempted to combine art, architecture and decoration, and as a consequence, the audience may be surprised by the rebellious conflict shown. His work looks like a joke, but it depicts serious elements that navigate his personal culture and history. Perry states that this house is full of sadness and rich, strange and wonderful things.<sup>45</sup> He is happy to subvert people's surprise.

His work combines textile works with its sophisticated content. Perry said that: "I find this is something lacking, not only in the contemporary art world, but in 'digital' as well in a way, I am very much aware of this, and can appreciate the insane amount of something lacking in the output." He also observed that "I am heralded as this poster boy of hand-made crafts, because I make pots, and tapestries. But often I will just use Photoshop and a Wacom pad to make my designs. I then send them off to be digitally woven on a giant computer-controlled loom."<sup>46</sup> These comments are highly relevant to my illustrated work *Tongue in Cheek*, which contains narrative approaches that are similar to as well as divergent from Perry's work. He worries about this digital time, where people rely on technology so much in so many ways. In his work, I can see that he hopes to keep to the nature of art, reminding me not to forget how beautiful hand-made art can be. Part of the attraction of craft objects derives from an understanding of how they are made, what they are made of, and an appreciation of the skill required to produce them.<sup>47</sup>

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43. Rowan Moore, "Grayson Perry's *A House for Essex*: a stonking shrine to a fictional woman," *The Guardian*, May 10, 2015, accessed February 4, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/may/10/grayson-perry-a-house-for-essex-stonking-shrine>.

44. Alastair Smart, "Life's Rich Tapestry? You'll Find It in Essex: Grayson Perry Shows His Gift for Storytelling and Dickensian Eye for Detail in the Life of Julie Cope," *Daily Mail Online*, December 31, 2017, accessed January 2, 2018, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/event/article-5205727/Art.html>.

45. Ibid.

46. Memo Akten, "What I Learnt About Digital / Generative Art from Grayson Perry," last modified January 9, 2015, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://medium.com/@memoakten/grayson-perrys-who-are-you-at-national-portrait-gallery-vs-digital-art-3a610e0479e0>

47. Loh Paul, Jane Burry, Malte Wagenfeld, "Reconsidering Pye's Theory of Making through Digital Craft Practice: A Theoretical Framework Towards Continuous Designing," *Intellect Limited* 7, (2016): 187-206, accessed April 25, 2018, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=083a0435->

This gave me the confidence to use digital techniques in my hand-made work. For example, the combination of illustration and its digital printing is similar to Grayson Perry's work. One method of making the series of work in *Tongue in Cheek* was through digitalising the illustration, and digital printing became the predominant medium used within this research. Another similarity to Grayson Perry's work is the feeling of conflict within the work. Additionally, my illustrated work follows a dialogical approach, where readers are brought into a conversation through an illustrated environment. Many of the *Tongue in Cheek* illustrations are full of expectation, particularly through the use of the strong, happy colours that are used to illustrate unhappy moments. As a result, the audience may respond to and discuss the work in this way: 'Your choice of colour always lets me feel that even when the guy in the illustration is upset, it still makes me feel the character is happy.' This creates a shared experience for them and enables a personal response. This reflection can encourage people to see deeper meanings within the work itself. The viewer understands the illustrations by themselves, according to his or her cultural background and projected world view. When the illustration becomes an active participant in real life, it can change the meanings created within the space.

This is similar to Perry's work, which is arranged in an expressive fashion, where each work's provoking aesthetic makes the audience think about things beyond just the work itself and gives new and different meaning to the building housing the work. Moreover, Holland says that when certain ideas of authenticity and materials rub up against fantasy, the building stops being kitsch.

I employ both factual and fictional characters, which is one difference between my work and the installation house in Essex. My characters are used as a method of speaking both generically and specifically about aspects of autobiographical illustration. Some of the characters do really exist, and some come from my imagination, though they are still inspired by authentic life.

## 2.4 Viewer's view

"This *dialogical illustration* emphasizes the importance of social relations and interactions and the effect they have on my behaviour and how I make sense of the world."<sup>48</sup>

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[5a18-4cc3-8efe-34e4fc0806a8%40sessionmgr4007](#)

48. Marková, *The Dialogical Mind*, 74.

In this way, the dialogical illustration can be understood by the audience. After being attracted by the colour on the wall, people love to walk closer to view the stories. I recorded their reactions. Many laughed and said, 'These guys make me happy', and others said, 'They are so true. I have the same feeling sometimes.' I noticed that my drawings not only stayed with me, but they also affected my audience. The illustrations caused us to identify with each other. In this context, "identifying daily life through my designs gives the participants an opportunity to stand in a shared situation which accordingly fosters inclusive relations between participants."<sup>49</sup>

This poses another aesthetic concept. Professor of religious studies and philosophy, M. S. Friedman once said, "for a designer, empathy means treating other participants as "another I", and whoever treats a person as "another I" does not really see that person but only a projected image of himself."<sup>50</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

In writing about the shared experience and the methods that are utilized in my illustrations' visual dialogue, I have employed certain approaches in my illustrative work that are considered through this contextual review. This contextual review shows how the dialogue has been discussed by drawing parallels between others' work and its audience in terms of the nature of drawing skills and the central characterization of a female figure, as well as the compositional and eclectic elements. *Tongue in Cheek* is an opportunistic communication, because the audience has their own perspective to bring, and whether I explain the work or not, everyone's minds will naturally offer a reasonable explanation. If I explain, people understand; if I do not, the audience understands based on what they see. Visual art has also often been used as a medium in psychotherapy, guiding people to explore their own subconscious, which is an amazing thing. Illustration provides a platform for the author's and the audience's inner imagery, thus leading us to a deep self-reflection and improvement.<sup>51</sup> "The integration of textures and the colours of the fabrics and other materials draws on the sensory, cognitive, and emotional aspects of the maker. Collier and Reynolds said that

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49. Carla Cipolla, and Roberto Bartholo, "Empathy or Inclusion: A Dialogical Approach to Socially Responsible Design," *International Journal of Design* 8, no. 2 (2014), accessed December 22, 2017, <http://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/1255/633>

50. M.S. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, (New York: Routledge, 2002).

51. Xianbao Zhou and Di Huang, "Yi xiang yu dui hua" [Imagery and Dialogue] *Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music, China* 3, (2013): 144-50, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://dspace.xmu.edu.cn/bitstream/handle/2288/117520/意象与对话——表现艺术治疗中的媒介转换与心灵表达.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

working with them can also change a person's mood. Textile work is very healing on both the conscious and unconscious levels," which strongly supports my desire to continue practicing design around these poles.<sup>52</sup>



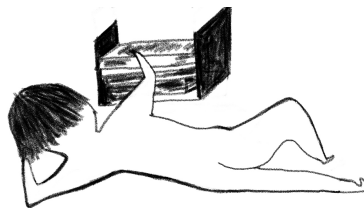
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52. Lisa Raye Garlock, "Stories in the Cloth: Art Therapy and Narrative Textiles," *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 33, (2016): 58-66, accessed April 16, 2018, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=974ea727-93de-4bd0-b50b-1991fa456c60%40sessionmgr101>

# Chapter 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Overview

This chapter is partly descriptive and partly reflective and evaluates the appropriateness or effectiveness of what I have done. Visual research and tacit knowledge are described in the next section through application of this method. In this research practice, many components are related to dialogical illustration, including fragments of time, illogical colour and actual character. The ideas generally come from my authentic life, with some from my personal experience and some gathered from the stories of other people. This chapter investigates the ways in which this practice can be understood as a process of inquiry. The use of colour combinations, the choice and depiction of characters when combined with theoretical knowledge provided me with a framework through which to develop a greater understanding of *Tongue in Cheek*.





used in evaluating my working process and work achievements. Ultimately, action research has helped me to improve my own practice and has provided a framework for evaluating what I have done and how to move forward at each step of the process.

### 3.3 Visual Research

“*Visual research* is defined as the research of images and objects in both visual and material culture.”<sup>55</sup> Action research, however, is the methodological framework used for self-reflection and evaluation, which generated the iterative and incremental changes and improvements that gave the work in *Tongue in Cheek* a more visual form. Throughout the development of the work in *Tongue in Cheek*, this method of evaluation of the research practice helped me understand the illustration work from a visual perspective. Visual research and culture studies can be described as “the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively”<sup>56</sup>. The reason why visual and material cultures are grouped together under the banner of visual research lies in the fact that we perceive them in visual terms, regardless of whether we deal with two-dimensional images or three-dimensional forms.<sup>57</sup>

In this visual project, the interaction creates a dialogue between the observer and the multi-dimensional materials and images, which also means that the interpretation of objects and visual images comes from both the designer and the viewers. This image-led project focuses on the importance of graphic illustration, which allows people to interpret a visual message easily. This research continued to develop the illustrations by experimenting with different mediums or substrates to create a translation of the illustration from two dimensions to three. The images have been turned into three-dimensional pieces, largely produced in a textile form. Through this transformation from two dimensions to three, the audience’s response changes from an understanding of the practice as an illustration to one of three-dimensional decorated surfaces and useable objects. The illustrated textile-object further evokes the relationship between illustration and audience in the form of a dialogue so, when doing printing tests with the illustrations, I also chose an object that can be used and seen in our daily lives. This gave my illustrations another meaning, as well as changing both the illustrations and the object in a way that is not usual. In this way the visuals illustrated function by producing effects every time they are looked at or used. John Berger argues that we never look at just one thing, instead, we are always looking at the relations between the ‘thing’ and

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55. Ibid., 159.

59. Ibid., 159-160.

57. Ibid., 159-184.

ourselves.<sup>58</sup> This move from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional form extends the dialogue with both the viewer and the researcher.

### 3.4 Tacit Knowledge and Spontaneous Action

Social philosopher Karl Polanyi states that, in the process of action research, the designer tends to use both external knowledge and knowledge processed unconsciously. He describes this as tacit knowledge.<sup>59</sup> It is not easily shared or articulated in writing; in fact, it often consists of habits and culture that we do not recognize in ourselves.<sup>60</sup> Theorist Donald Schön also explains that tacit knowledge is “actions, recognitions, and judgements which we know how to carry out spontaneously. We don’t need to think about the priority of them during the performance.”<sup>61</sup>

According to these statements, I have drawn from my tacit knowledge through this research practice by infusing Asian elements and Chinese culture and habits into the illustrations. This has informed a personal drawing style that has become recognizable and iconic, creating a personal style and reference, no matter what colour or theme or content is used. During the process of creation and development, I was not consciously aware of their presence or the development of a personal style and content, since these elements came out of spontaneous action and through an unconscious action. The process of development is fast and allows for a smooth flow of unconscious action that produces a vast number of illustrations.<sup>62</sup> The tacit knowing depicted in *Tongue in Cheek* illustrates both Asian and Western elements, but highlights differences between Asian and Western living habits. The images illustrate a cultural comparison and merging of how the illustrator has been influenced by the external habits of New Zealand, while some embedded habits and understandings remain visible.

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58. Ibid., 162.

59. Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi, *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*, (London: Oxford University, 1995), 8-9.

60. Ibid., 8-12.

61. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, (London: Routledge, 1983), 204-236.

62. “Illustration for Narrative,” Monash University, accessed June 25, 2017, <http://www.monash.edu/pubs/2016handbooks/units/CDS1531.html>.

### 3.5 Research Methods

“Action research is learning by doing.”

#### 3.5.1 A method to capture moments

I normally begin my day with joy. I like to notice what people say, their actions or stories. These little pleasures inspire me, and I hope to remember these moments and make them memorable, not only for me, but also for whomever else is affected. Little things contain big meanings. These notes were accumulated little by little; below is an example of notations taken during a normal day.

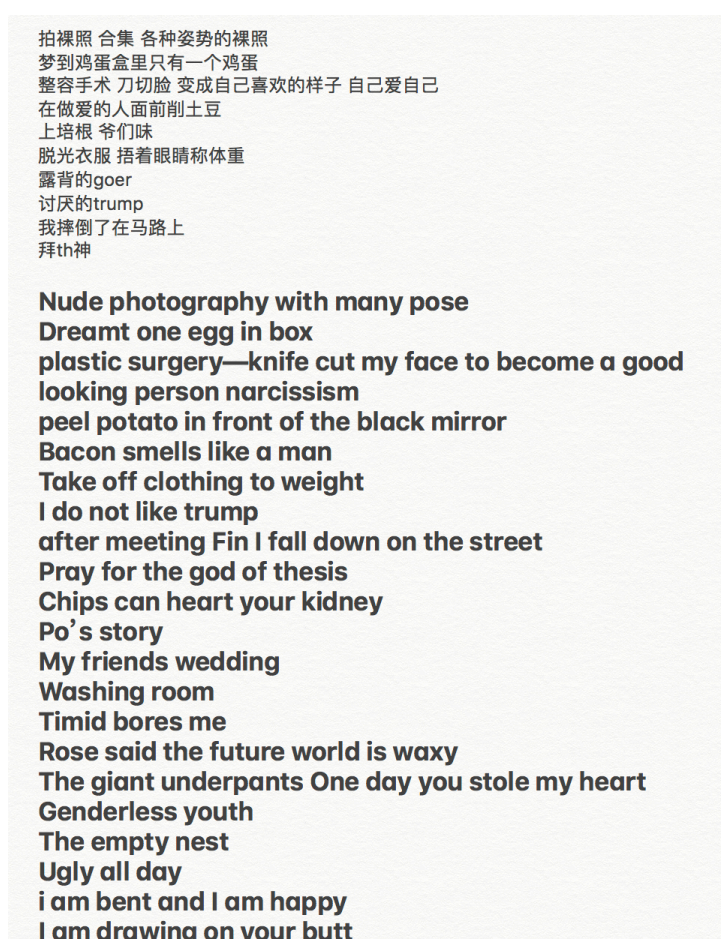


Figure 12. Note taking (the English translation is below the Chinese notes). Noted by Dali Lu, 2017-2018.

Taking daily notes helps me to remember and capture the moments that make the illustrations begin to come alive. As a moment capturer, sometimes I sketch the ideas in a notebook to make them easier to draw in Photoshop and to make the composition clearer.

### 3.5.2 Capturing the Moment

For a self-taught illustrator, Photoshop software is a powerful image-editing technology. It provides sophisticated features for managing colour and producing consistent colours.<sup>63</sup> It does not need any pigment and paper and costs very little; open it up and there are many digital painting materials to use. Its ease of use and convenience make it suitable for this less-experienced illustrator.

By personalizing my illustrations through Photoshop in this research, I recognized that the digitalized image was used in an organic way for creation. It also proved to be an efficient way of creating. By working in layers and handling each element separately, a much greater and more thorough control is offered over the image content.<sup>64</sup>

Digital illustration captures the imagined moment and transforms the moment into a digital drawing. Life experience becomes the basic material used to develop personal and original illustrated worlds, "which take place in a situation or life context where the people involved in the design process are able to relate dialogically."<sup>65</sup> The *Tongue in Cheek* illustrations were stuck on the wall in our studio and visitors were welcome to look at them, creating an opportunity for active communication. Before printing them, I produced all the illustrations in Photoshop via a tablet, which made the drawings more intuitive and immediate. Throughout the process, detailed narratives turned into illustrations and transferred memory, life and story into figures and colour. Illustrator Micke Tong said, "I see my illustration as a personal memory or as a conversation with the spectator, because like life itself, my art and techniques evolve over time."<sup>66</sup>

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63. Kit L. Yam and Spyridon E. Papadakis, "A Simple Digital Imaging Method for Measuring and Analysing Colour of Food Surfaces", *Journal of Food Engineering* 61, (2004): 137-142, accessed January 25, 2018, [https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Kit+L.+Yam+and+Spyridon+E.+Papadakis,+A+Simple+Digital+Imaging+Method+for+Measuring+and+Analysing+Colour+of+Food+Surfaces&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjQrN\\_y1oHbAhUfKJQKHcrjA0YQgwMIJw&biw=1561&bih=875&dpr=2](https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Kit+L.+Yam+and+Spyridon+E.+Papadakis,+A+Simple+Digital+Imaging+Method+for+Measuring+and+Analysing+Colour+of+Food+Surfaces&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjQrN_y1oHbAhUfKJQKHcrjA0YQgwMIJw&biw=1561&bih=875&dpr=2)

64. *Ibid.*, 138.

65. Carla Cipolla and Roberto Bartholo, "Empathy or Inclusion: A Dialogical Approach to Socially Responsible Design," *International Journal of design*. 8, no. 2 (2014), accessed December 22, 2017, <http://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/1255/633>.

66. Micke Tong quoted in Cristian Campos, *Illustralia: Cutting-Edge Digital Illustration*, (Palermo, Italy: Promopress, 2008), 7.

Drawing the sketches again using Photoshop gives me the opportunity to produce an image quickly with more colourful possibilities. Digital drawing in Photoshop is much faster and more organic. See an example below (figure 14).

“A graphic tablet or digitizer consists of a flat surface upon which the user can draw an image using a stylus (pen) that comes with the tablet. The current styli have pressure-sensitive tips capable of recognizing several levels, just like a graphite pencil.”<sup>67</sup> The use of a tablet offers a less-experienced illustrator a different composition skill-set. When I draw with a stylus pen, the line-work is not smooth like a line drawn by a real pen – it emphasizes a sense of the naïve. It also leads to the whole picture structure being asymmetric and slightly askew, which gives each illustration my signature ‘handwriting’.

I edit layer by layer, evaluating the detail and colour through Photoshop. This process takes time. During this process, the consideration of colour and character are important. Matisse said that taking into account the different qualities of the colour tones and their relationships is important.<sup>68</sup> I fix the details, re-editing them until I am satisfied with the final harmony and effect.



Figure 13. *Smoking Lady* (capturing the digital moment and layering). Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.

### 3.5.3 Experimentation

Technological experimentation was carried out with the illustrations to verify the potential for moving them into or onto other media, which included screen printing, digital printing and heated print transfer. This process again included reflection and discussion, talking to peers and friends via my on-line blogsite to gain feedback. The general consensus and feedback

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67. Jose Antonio Guerrero, *New Fashion and Design Technologies* (London: A&C Black Publishers, 2010), 38.

68. Flam, *Matisse on Art*, 50.

was that transferring the illustration on to textiles created a strong visual effect, yet the colour changed to some extent during the transfer. When an illustration is shown on the screen or printed on paper the colour is vivid, but it is more subdued when the image is printed on fabric. The commentary suggested that this is an interesting phenomenon, with the illustration on the textile transforming and being adapted taking on a diversity through the textile form. I also agree that this transformation happens spontaneously and adapts to the new substrate. I did not worry about the difference but appreciated this reaction, which was kept.



Figure 14. Screen printing and heated transfer practice. Made by Dali Lu, 2017.



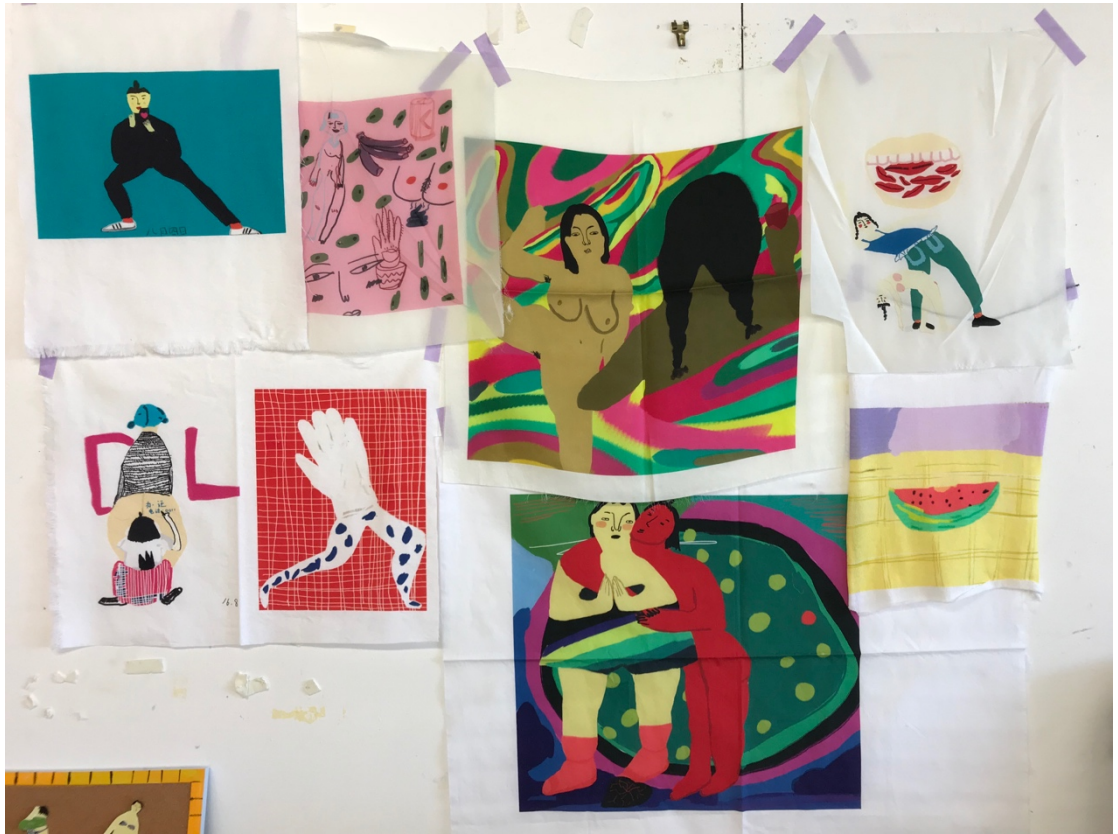


Figure 15. Digital printing practice. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.

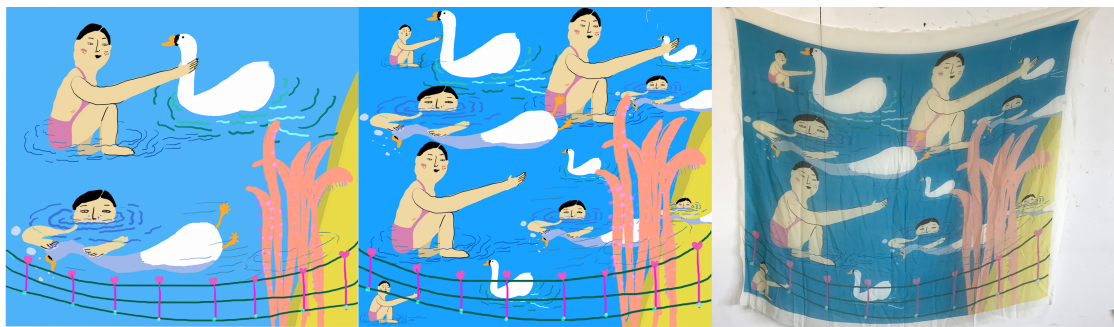
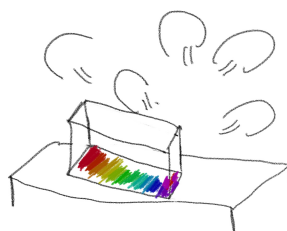
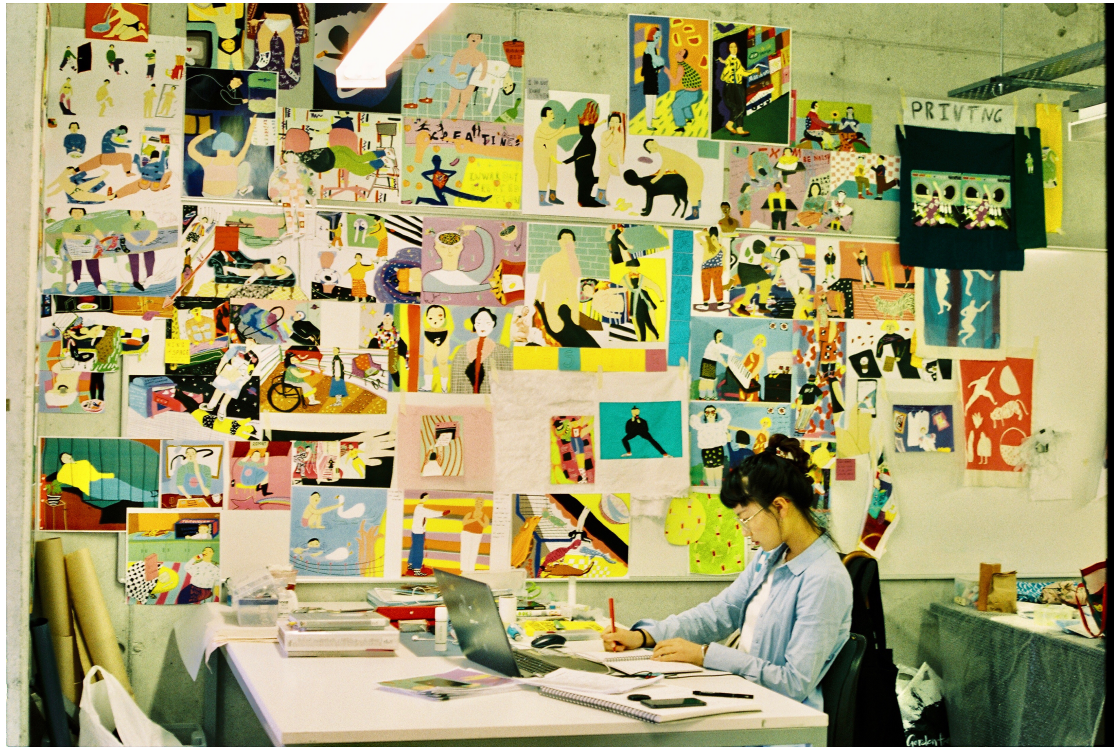


Figure 16. From digitalizing to re-evaluating to printing. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.





*Figure 17. Immersing experience. Photographed by Yadan Zheng, 2017.*

### **3.6 Illustration concept/character and development**

#### **3.6.1. Defining the characters**

The ugly character is used to create empathy about the imperfection of the body and to create connections. Almost no one considers themselves to be perfect, and it is my experience that when people see something beautiful they feel distanced. My 'ugly guys', however, are imperfect and authentic, making them more accessible to people.



Figure 19. Swimming pool. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.

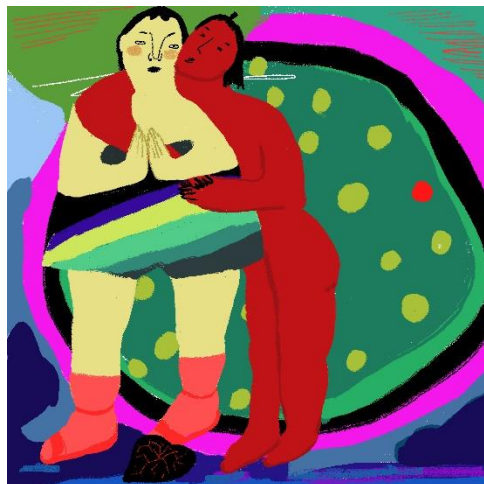


Figure 18. My heart is a pair of giant underpants. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.

How is this female character informed?

### 3.6.2. Self-reflection

One was the studio space, which provides an immersive experience that made it easy for me to focus on the main theme and media being used. This was also an interactive space where many suggestions were gained from my peers, supervisors and visitors in the studio.

When I began making the drawings, most of the stories talked about myself, and the figure

has a recognizable look that references me, with my hairstyle, small eyes, and acne-marked face. Upon further development, the figure changed with my change of appearance; since I cut my hair, she changed to having a short haircut. Sometimes, this figure is slightly ambiguous with genderless features. This open character was created in some works by excluding such strong visual identifiers, removing the figure from the personal to the impersonal.



Figure 19. Selfie. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.



Figure 20. Selfie II. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2018.

### 3.6.3. The identity of facial expression and body language

Exaggerated body language and loud personalities are rare and often unseen in daily life, because people are judgemental towards others. As a result, people are always trying to fit in well with other's opinions. This is observed as a commonly occurring phenomenon. However,

to what extent do we lose our individuality through this? *Tongue in Cheek* has helped me to realize my own uniqueness through the visual illustrations. Compared with my real world, in this imagined illustrative world it is easier to become myself and reveal my true identity. By using exaggerated gestures within this imagined but real world I come to be implicated and realise the lack of confidence within myself, and that I am afraid of express my real feelings. The illustrated world I built is the fantasy but also enables the development of a perfect world in which to protect myself. Inside this world my character is what I truly am. Through this illustrative world and the real world I live in, I begin to understand the confidence issue I have.



Figure 21. Apartment girl. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.

#### 3.6.4. The other characters

In the next phase of development, the main personal character was added to, with more than one person illustrated. These new characters are people from my life who helped me to interpret my story clearly and allowed me to become more playful. They also build up new characterizations and other people's identities, and make clearer my own personal worldview and where I belong and fit in in this Westernised and other place. These figures are the real people around me, and their depictions add to the authenticity of the stories in my illustrations. They also show that I attach importance to the external environment and the influence it has on me daily.

These figures depict voyeurism in a sense, meaning that I almost do not have a sense of presence in the physical world. Normally I wish to be ignored when I walk on the street, which results from a negativity about my place in this society. This stems from personal societal

influence; I have experienced that when people find it hard to be understood, they tend to be less communicative and to be more self-protective. Consequently, they make their voices heard in other places. Through these illustrative expressions I have found my place both in the fantasy and the real world.

In some of these illustrations the face is non-emotional, which means the figure feels disappointed in real life, representative of the disappointment in my own personal and interpersonal relationships. I aim to show the character's personality completely and enhance the close relationships that links me to others in order to let outsiders know of the love of making friends. These personal expressions and their external elements play a significant role in the illustrated creations within this practice.



Figure 22. G-cup Lisa. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.



Figure 23. Meet you at the Subway. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.

### 3.6.5. Asian blending in Western society

The stories happen in a Western cultural context. The character is open-minded, and these illustrations demonstrate that she yearns for and respects this foreign world. Conversation is the loveliest way to gain stories from others but, as a shy person, I am not one to actively communicate. However, once there is a chance to communicate, I am excited and happy to participate. My illustrations develop and start to include Western behaviours and socializations and how they affect me, and the stories become annotated by new themes and grow through new uses of media. For example, the girl with the avocado shirt is my Kiwi friend, I met at AUT University. We went clubbing one night and she told us a hilarious/shocking story about her witnessing a lady poo herself when she was drunk. The illustration that came from that night is below. Clubbing is a popular western activity, like karaoke in the Asian world. Going clubbing once a week is a new thing for me and I enjoy it a lot, but I still don't go there frequently like all my western friends. Clubbing in the western world with multinational friends is a new experience and an interesting feeling for me.



Figure 24. Her clubbing night. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.



UGLY

### 3.6.6. The ironic meaning of illustration

Some of the illustrations contain ironic implications, such as a satirical portrayal of myself. I really want to draw some detailed things in order to emphasize my strong personality, which is often perceived as timid. The use of the body became a figurative method used in *Tongue in Cheek*; its direct expression shows the ironic sense of an indirect society and how I navigate within it. The illustration *friendship company* shows this. It was inspired by the idea that making friends is a complicated and indirect thing that I am not good at doing. I wish there was a company or factory that could produce a type of person born to be good at making friends with everyone, including me. But the value of friendship is because it cannot be programmed. People cannot build a friendship in a production machine; it is impossible and ironic.



Figure 25. *Friendship Company*. Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2017.

### 3.6.7. Conflict between colour and narrative

When the character is blending into colour structures and patterns, this creates a visual conflict. Colour always makes people cheerful and happy, but the character living in the story is touched with a little sadness, and both elements indicate the illustrator's interior world as one full of contradictions. However, those choices are from my heart and show that symbolic emotion and colour narrate an escape from the everyday into a colourful illusion.

### 3.6.8. Another world.

My initial purpose in creating this illustrated space is to provide me with a means to escape from the real world and immerse myself in it every day. Based on the potential of illustration and through my aesthetics, the created world is composed of illustrations and the changeable material and media. This, along with the vibrant colour, makes an environment with a sense of the surreal.

How do I make a textile world? Every object I have made has an identity which connects back to this textile world. When I chose which, object should be printed or covered by my illustration, I chose the daily materials that surrounded me every day. There is a large-sized bean bag, irregular ceramics, and decorative textiles in cloth and on the wall. They can be anything, in any shape and material from my objectified world. The printed objects do not need a connection with illustration, as the functions of a daily object become a surface to transfer the story from two dimensions to multi-dimensional forms. Designing is a “reflective conversation with the materials of a situation.”<sup>69</sup> My illustrated fantasy world becomes embedded within and upon the objects in my daily world.



Figure 26. Setting up testing. Photographed by Dali Lu, 2018.

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69. Donald A. Schön, "Designing as Reflective Conversation with the Materials of a Design Situation," *Research in Engineering Design* 3, (September 1992): 131-47, accessed May 3, 2017, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBF01580516>



Figure 29. handbook testing (how to use toilet). Illustration designed by Dali Lu, 2018.

### 3.7 Conclusion

The methods discussed above have helped to order, track and develop self-reflective, autobiographical observations that have been moved from two-dimensional illustrations into three-dimensional objects. They have also been used as a method to develop a personal communication tool with which to connect to the external world.

Practice-based design research has been used as method for creating a vivid illustrative new world, bold in colour and in design character. Using these methods to create illustrations on different surfaces and sizes of objects becomes transformational for unremarkable objects. It has also been used as a method of self-discovery and as a means to find and understand myself in the illustrative and the real worlds. The final products and illustrative narratives may

also draw attention from the viewer as they engage with the naïve, fantasy world created, without realising that they are becoming implicit participants in a personal narrative of a journey of discovery.

This chapter has explained and unpacked both methods and the further meaning and understanding behind this research, *Tongue in Cheek*. Action research created the close connection between the design process and myself as a researcher and, through self-reflection as the work progressed, it was moved forward, giving the work greater meaning and impact. The visual and material culture studies provide a bridge between the artefact and the audience visiting my interior world. The work also has a further message because it can provoke a dialogue between people who share similar experiences. More importantly, this visual illustrative work will always provide a colourful, temporary place of play away from the realities of life.





## **Chapter 4 Conclusion**

The illustration project *Tongue in Cheek* is all about an Asian female illustrator's life and moments in New Zealand. Initially she cannot find her identity in this westernized society. The sense of unease and lack of belonging led to issues of self-confidence. By creating illustrations about different moments and characters within her real world, with bold colours, she finds a way to illustrate ideas and feelings in a positive manner. The researcher becomes more confident, creative and talkative in and through this illustration world, which also helps her to gain confidence within the real world. Discovering the ability to depict her-self through a sense of humour also affected the relationship she had with people in the real world. In order to discover the potential of her illustrations and research, she began to build connections with the real world, as her illustrations started to be discussed. This process started by printing the physical illustration onto a piece of paper then showing it in the studio environment, generating a discussion between peers. The researcher wants her illustrations and final works to encourage discussion and generate opportunities for others to find their own solution and ways to have confidence and embrace this beautiful world.

The author employs the critical review in terms of three resources, Henri Matisse, Juli Baker and Summer, and Grayson Perry, who provide *Tongue in Cheek* with a supportive framework from which to draw comparisons and see similarities and differences in approach. A vital development for this dialogical project was finding a way to increase the interaction and shared experience of the research, illustrations and final objects through both physical illustrations and discussion as well as through the on-line portal. The audience's reactions and the connections aided the expansion of the designer's world. The female character is a central role in each work, and the different looks of the characters are influenced by psychological elements as well as by the visual techniques used, such as the discipline of colour when used as a visual tool to capture the audience's attention. When the illustration works were transferred onto various surfaces and substrates and altered in scale, the works started to move away from fantasy and became closer to the realization of 'another world'.



# Appendix 1

This research practice culminated in a graduate show at St Paul Street Gallery, Auckland University of Technology on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2018. This was a group show, for Master of Design students. I requested a space with walls, in order to create a specific micro-environment within the large open gallery. This space allows the audience to go close and feel my narrative on different surfaces, rather than standing far away from them, thus they are physically drawn into the space and the narratives. My exhibition space was a playground full of my life experience illustrations, explored through different materials and surfaces to achieve the goal of bringing two-dimensional illustration into multi-dimensional life.



1 Lu, Dali. *Hand sewn letters: Tongue in cheek*. Digitally printed textile, acrylic stuffing. 2018.

2 Lu, Dali. *Various textile samples*. Digitally printed textile, 2018.



2.1 Lu, Dali. Digitally printed textile: *Oral ulcer*. Linen material, Size: 84.84 x 120cm. 2018.



2.2 Lu, Dali. Digitally printed textile: *Finn's bakery*. Linen material, Size: 76 x 90cm. 2018.



2.3 Lu, Dali. Digitally printed textile: *Black mirror*. Linen material, Size: 38 x 26.87cm. 2018.



2.4 Lu, Dali. Digitally printed textile: *Picnic*. Linen material, Size: 49.5 x 70cm. 2018.



2.5 Lu, Dali. Digitally printed textile: *Pain*. Linen material, Size: 68.01 x 68.01cm. 2018



3 Lu, Dali. *Digitally printed textile: Samples book*. Cotton canvas material, Size: A3; A4.  
2018



4 Lu, Dali. *Heated transfer on apron.* 2018



5 Lu, Dali. *Sewn and iron illustration on the Demin shirt.* 2018.



6 Lu, Dali. *Sewn and iron illustration on shoes' surface.* 2018

7 Illustration on everyday objects



7.1 Lu, Dali. *Frame: self-drawing transfer into fabric*. 2018





7.2 Lu, Dali. Ceramic transfer on One tea pot and four cups and three plates. 2018.

8 Beanbags



8.1 Lu, Dali. *Hand sewn and digitally printed Beanbag*. Size: 150 x 103.87cm. 2018



8.2 Lu, Dali. *Hand sewn and digitally printed Beanbag*. Size: 150 x 114.83cm. 2018.

Go big. Following exercise number 9, the illustrations become the leading characters themselves in my exhibition.



9.1 Lu, Dali. *Digitally printed: G cup blue lady. Cotton lawn material. Size: 144 x 203.64cm. 2018.*

I don't have an impressive cup size but my friend does, and I admire her G cup whenever I can.



9.2 Lu, Dali. Digitally printed: *Open the door*. Cotton single jersey material. Size: 120 x 121cm. 2018.

*Stranger Things* is a one of my favourite TV shows that I ever watched. This is me pretending I am having the superpower like Eleven when she yelled "Open the door".



9.3 Lu, Dali. *Digitally printed: Halloween*. Linen material. Size: 100 x 85cm. 2018.

Last year I didn't have time to go out to celebrate Halloween. This is my imagining of what kind of costumes people will have on Halloween.



9.4 Lu, Dali. *Digitally printed: Goose Intestine*. Silk charmeuse material. Size: 120 x 120cm.  
2018

My friends told me goose intestine is so delicious and tasty, but I never have the guts to try it.



9.5 Lu, Dalí. *Digitally printed: Peter*. Cotton canvas material. Size: 83 x 40.5cm. 2018.

Peter was my friend, a story of bad friendship.



9.6 Lu, Dali. *Digitally printed: Left*. Linen material. Size: 120 x 60cm. 2018.

Time goes by, and some people left my life without saying goodbye.



9.7 Lu, Dali. *Digitally printed :Turkish Bath*. Cotton lawn material. Size: 72.03 x 42cm. 2018.

My family runs a Chinese bath, and I have always wanted to try a Turkish bath in Turkey.



9.8 Lu, Dali. *Digitally printed: My creation formula*. Cotton twill material. Size: 55.1 x 42cm. 2018.

Creation = physiological + psychological reflection.

## Appendix 2

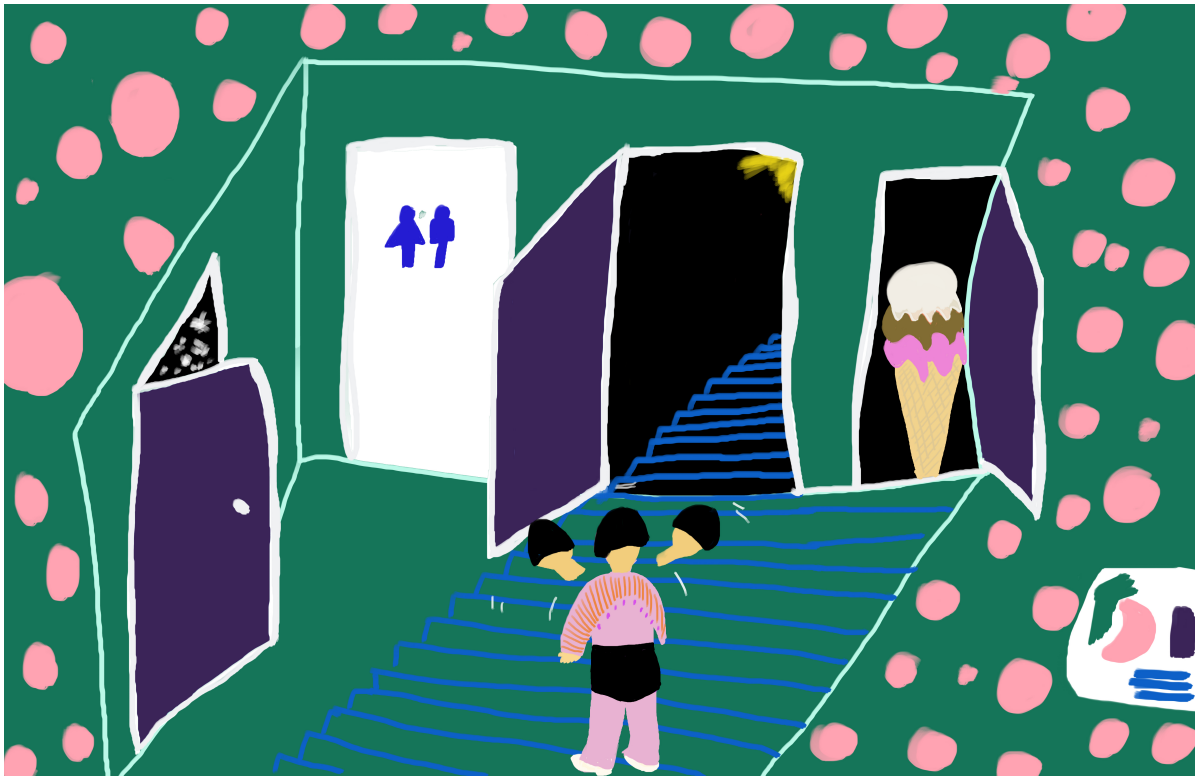




*Parallel tools*



**Struggle**



**Choice**



**Filter**



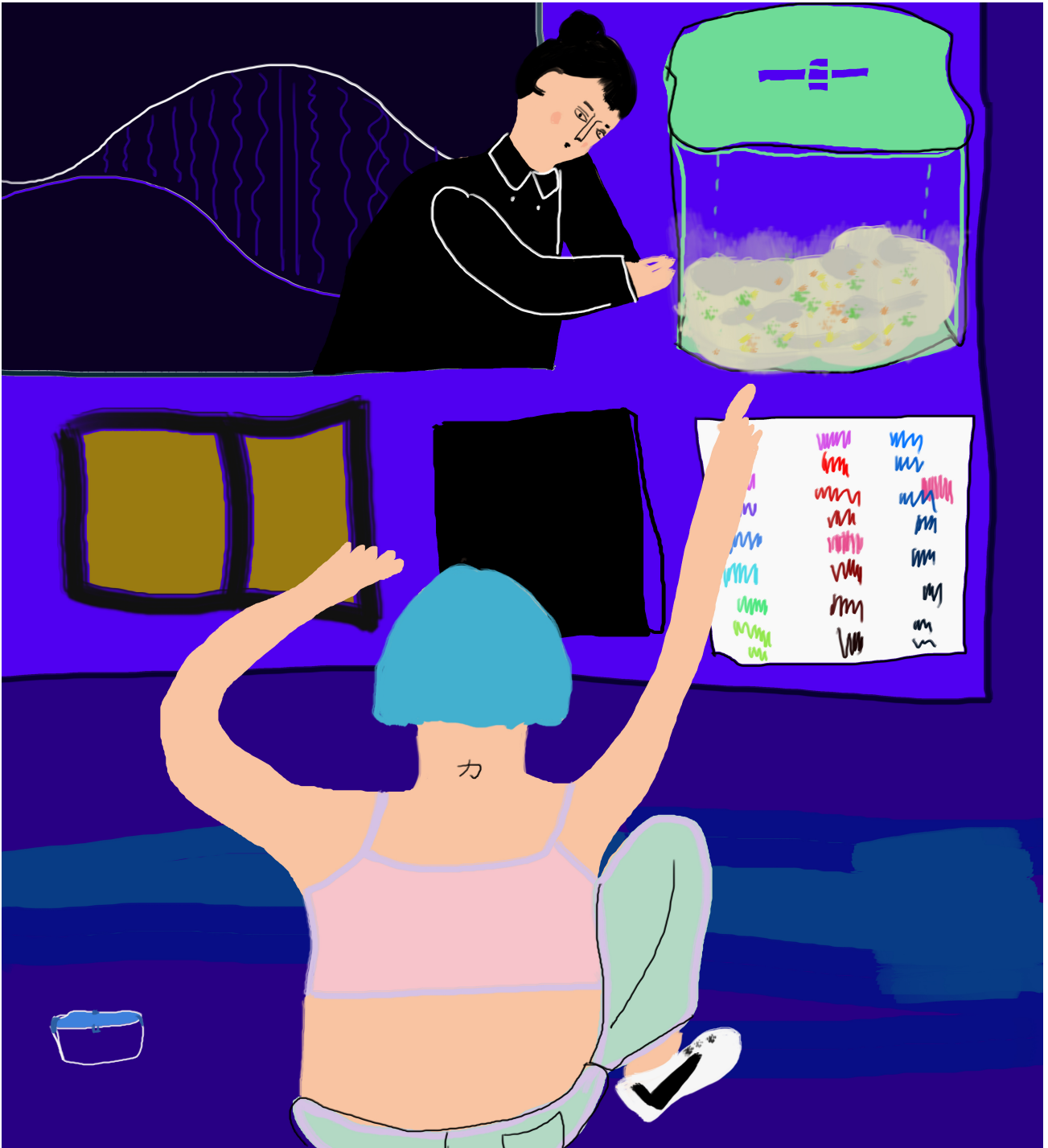
**Table**



Zoo



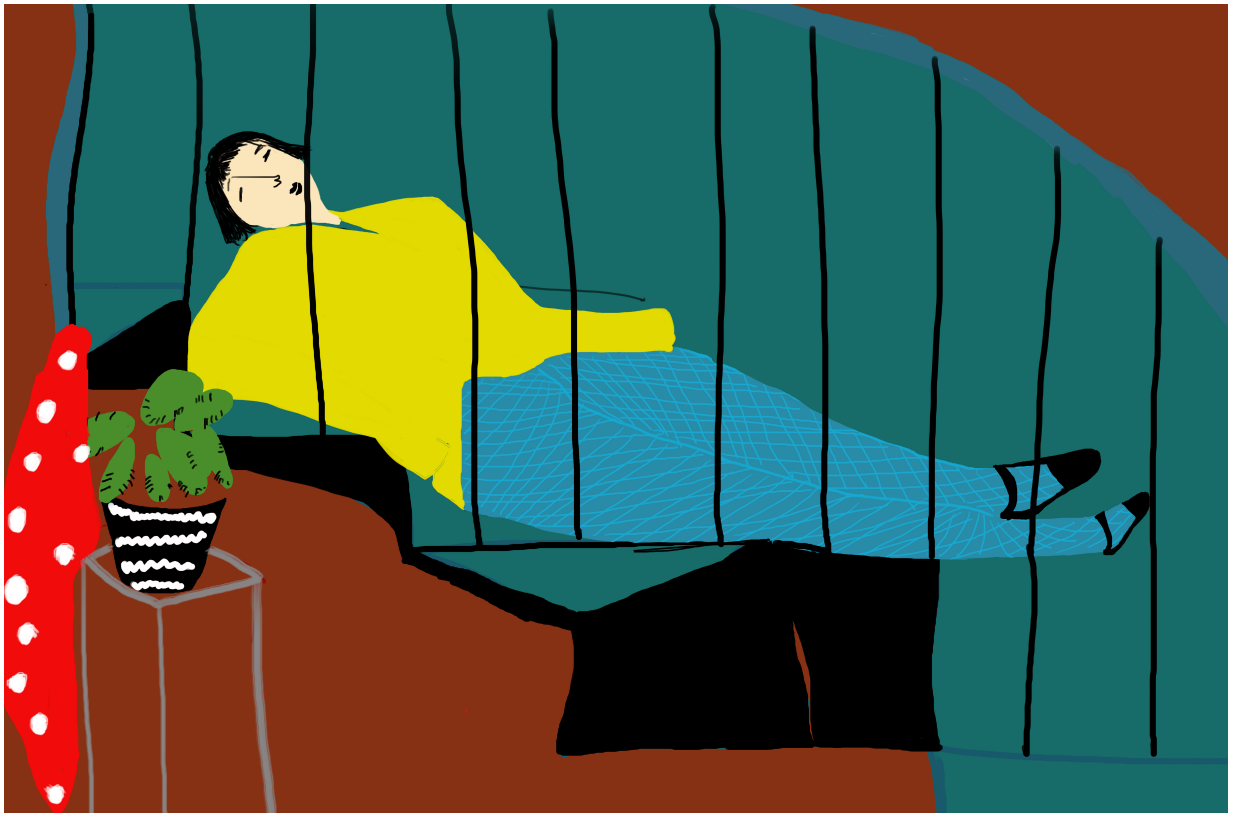
Cosmos



*Mind*



*Fish*



Cage



Gone

**Friendship**



**Transposition  
consideration**





**Sofa**



*Hide*



Fin

**Pain**





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