

No part of the candidate's evidence in this exemplar material may be presented in an external assessment for the purpose of gaining an NZQA qualification or award.



# Scholarship Visual Arts 2024

93307 Design

**TOP SCHOLAR**

### BRIEF

Get ideas to design and make manga format illustrations that tell a story of an original character "Ten". This manga explores her experiences as she navigates issues related to happiness and life. Within the theme of hope, the idea will explore in its development the meaning of life, something we all encounter with at some point in our lives.

"Endless Ocean" is about a woman who after entering society is faced with her life and cannot find the meaning of things anymore. After working for a while, she doesn't find any contribution to the society, and has no social interaction and no interest. She has no intention to anything, and things that her classes can't seem to lead to occur for her habitually to do. She encounters a cool and mysterious man in a physical representation of the soul or fun. Her only hope is to spend time with him.

The classification of the target audience is anyone who might resonate with the feeling this manga depicts. After all, this is a manga for entertainment. One of my reasons for creating it was writing for adults because I'd like to share some of my ideas and my perspective about things. My inspiration came from myself as I often get caught up in the world of thinking about meaning of life. What is the point of pursuing education, job, money, freedom and power? All that can you do to bring a good point for receiving the things and thoughts that never been receiving, what is it that you actually want?



### SKETCHES



### COVER DESIGN SKETCHES / CONCEPTS



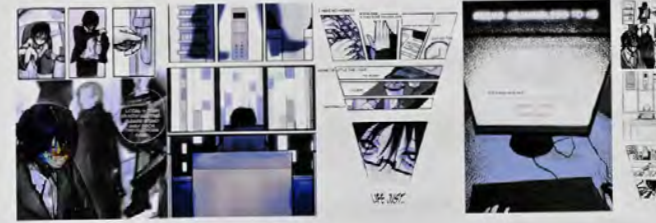
### DEVELOPMENT



### FINAL MOCKUP



### COMIC CONTENT



### COMIC CONTENT





## BRIEF

I am going to design and make manga-themed illustrations that tell a story of an original character, "Ten". This manga explores her experiences as she struggles to find her place in the world. Within the theme of "Endless Ocean", the idea will explore, in my perspective, the meaning of life, something we all encounter with at some point in our lives.

"Endless Ocean" is about a person who after entering society is loved with his life and cannot find the meaning of doing anything after working for a year, she doesn't feel any contribution to the society, and has no social interaction and no interest, she has no motivation for anything, with no sense of belonging, she hesitates to die, but encounters a soul-kind creature which is a physical representation of the soul of Jun, her only friend from school, who committed suicide.

The classification of the target audience is anyone who might resonate with the feeling this manga expresses. After all, this is a manga for entertainment. But all my reason for creating is not wanting to disclose anyone but to share some of my ideas and my perspectives about things. My inspiration came from myself as I often get caught up in this kind of thinking about meaning of life. What is the point of pursuing education, job, salary, position and power if all one can feel is fatigue and pain? Not following the values and meanings that others have identified, what is it that you actually want?

## ARTIST MODELS



## TITLE DESIGN



## SKETCHES



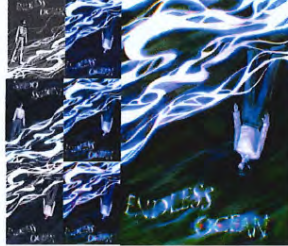
## CHARACTER DESIGN ILLUSTRATIONS



## COVER DESIGN SKETCHES / CONCEPTS



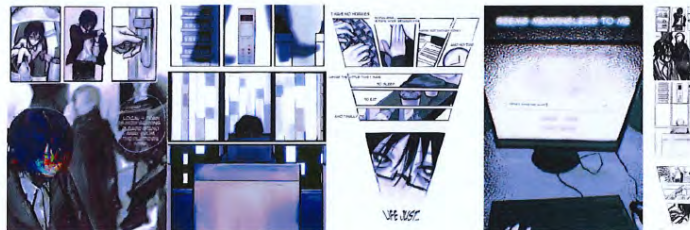
## DEVELOPMENT



## FINAL MOCKUP



## COMIC CONTENT



## COMIC CONTENT





# CONCEPT AND THEME



life?". I couldn't find the answer because I couldn't think of what was "meaningful." In my opinion, individuals themselves are greatly subject to the environment and society. If we seek the meaning of self-value fundamentally, in the ultimate meaning, the existence of ordinary individuals has no so-called "meaning".

Understanding the fact that people themselves can give it meaning in the process.

The stories I create in my boards also explore a number of sub-themes, including mental health, the solidification of personal thoughts, and the importance of returning to nature. Through this exploration, I want to leave behind the 'manuals of life' that others have given me, and find my own way of living and what I want to do with my life. Perhaps the process of exploration that I have shared may inspire others who are struggling in a similar way and to think about.

# DESIGN BRIEF

I am going to design and make manga formed illustrations that tell a story of an original character "Ten". This manga explores her experiences as she navigates issues relevant to happiness and life. The idea will explore, in my perspective, the meaning of life, something we all resonate with at some point in our lives.

## CONTENT

"Endless Ocean" is about a person who after entering society is bored with her life and cannot find the meaning of doing anything. After working for a year, she doesn't feel any contribution to the society, and has no social interaction and no interest, she has no motivation for anything. She encounters a soul-kind creature which is a physical representation of the soul of Juri, her only friend from school.

## INSPIRATION

Part of my inspiration came from myself as I often get caught up in this kind of thinking about meaning of life. Not following the values and meanings that others have identified, what is it that you actually want?

## TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience is categorised as anyone who might resonate with the emotions expressed in this comic, especially those prone to falling into these stresses and problems, the young adult student class like myself and the working class like the characters of the story. Part of my reason for creation is not wanting to educate anyone but to share some of my ideas and my perspectives about things.

# PROPOSAL

## PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

I've been illustrating similar themes since last year, as I started to face a new point in my life and a lot of thoughts arose, but this year I started to want to explore these thoughts and perceptions more deeply.



Personally I didn't really know what I was interested in. Maybe it's because I subconsciously took things I was good at as hobbies since childhood, such as drawing. But when I realized that I wasn't that good at it, and in fact where I thought I was talented I was always getting my confidence knocked down by other people being better than I was. Thus I gradually lost track of what I liked and what I could do in the future. Personally, I was interested in software development, but once I thought of going to university to study engineering, I panicked. I was not confident that I would be able to learn the necessary knowledge, such as math and physics, because I knew that I wasn't good at it. I was always trying to avoid things and ended up completely lost. Therefore, the character 'TEN' in my story was designed to be similar to me. She has no special hobbies, doesn't know what she likes, and doesn't have time to get into new things, thus gradually losing her ability to have fun. Even her major, her career plan, was to follow her parents' wishes and find a "stable" office job. I didn't set out to find a specific job, but she didn't have any enthusiasm or interest in the job, and therefore wasn't motivated or having any ambitions. It's a slightly well-paid job but the hours take up most of her life, including overtime, which all made her doing boring work every day like a robot and couldn't make time for herself. Gradually, she became confused about her life.

## WHY THIS THEME?

I also often think about the meaning of things that I have done, it always turned out to be "actually meaningless". I was stuck in a negative cycle - everything I did always felt meaningless, so I couldn't get passionate about life, and it was hard to feel happy, so I spent my free time on other meaningless but relatively easy and relaxing forms of amusements and pastimes for brief moments of pleasure and relaxation, but because all my free time was spent, I didn't have time to try new things. If we want to live a "meaningful" life, we "need" to prioritize our needs and desires. In order to make the most of my time, I have to keep doing things that I don't enjoy but seem to be "more helpful" to my growth and future.

Even the process of life, I think it is nothing more than being bound invisibly from birth by the secular concepts of society that end in endless work.

I'm not sure how long the process of getting to the final destination is for the average person with no special talents, or even for those with dreams that are unfulfilled and for those with passions that are worn out in the process. I don't believe that there is no such possibility, and that makes me confused about the future. When the moments come when even my phone bores me, when I become indifferent to everyone, Throughout the board, it's going to bring out the original character and story I've created with that theme, exploring my ideas and insights and in the process also finding and sharing ways that might pull someone out of the mire.

## WHY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AS SUBTHEME?

I'm sure everyone has different reasons and limitations.

My character in a way represents the working class and one of the settings of her background is that even the direction of her work is chosen by her parents. If we go by the most traditional thinking and concepts, most people in today's society study hard to get into a good company, they work hard in the hope of contributing to society in various ways, or they hope to be 'happy' later in life and have the money to do what they really want to do. But this is only the template that most people create for a 'stable' life. People's identification with this template leads to a blurring of the distinction between what they want and what is required of them. For most ordinary people, we may not be able to achieve true freedom, but we can always find freedom of mind. Although the protagonist of the story, Ten, is living a well-paid job, this kind of robotic life makes her suffer and many depressions are caused. Ten in my story and even including me is one of those people and I want to explore it through the story.

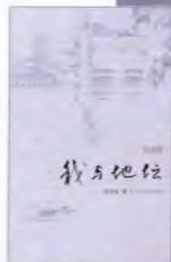
The undercurrent of youth culture experienced by young people growing up and entering society today, I believe remains confused and angry, with the footnote being the anxiety caused by never finding more fulfillment from society and life. And now the fast-paced society does not help to digest these emotions, for a large part of us, every day of life is like a clock wound up, in a fixed trajectory of non-stop rotation. Seeing everyone else in a hurry, we ourselves follow the rush to do this and that, but what are we really doing? In the end, what did you get? Seemingly nothing. At this time I'm in a muddle. I wonder why people must follow the term 'fast'. In today's society, everything is too fast, and this fast pace is also an objective factor that cannot be changed. So how people can slow themselves down, get their bodies and minds up to speed with what they feel comfortable living with, and get back to the essence of life, is what I want to explore.

For myself, I'm often anxious about a lot of things, and even have some anxiety disorder tendencies, because I always feel like a lot of things are vital to me, and if I make a mistake, it seems like it will seriously affect my future self and the way other people see me. So I was always regretting the past and anxious about the future. But on second thought, maybe my planning for myself is too detached from my perception of my self, and there are some things that even if I can't do them, in an objective sense, the consequences don't really affect me that much, it's just my own wishful thinking and caring too much. For example, even if I don't get the best grades on the exams, even if I make mistakes, I can still continue to study. I can still choose to live happily. By adjusting one's mindset, defining for oneself the dimension of 'excellence' that has nothing to do with other people or society, and expanding one's perspective. But not everyone understands or is able to do so. Therefore, the beginning of the story, that is, the backstory, is that Ten's friend in school, Juri, she couldn't bear the pressure, so maybe through this branching theme, it can cause readers to think about it and reflect on it.

In fact, life is actually quite large, and the intellectual utilitarian orientated way of thinking often makes us forget that life is essentially a journey. Like I believed, a lot of things actually have no meaning at all. What people think, when taken out of their subjective mind and thought about as a living individual, may not always be true. For example, eating, drinking and having fun is not a waste of time, and hard work is not necessarily worth being blindly imitated. Life is all about feeling and experiencing and loving what you love. But it seems that we always love to compare ourselves with others, adding to our own anxiety. I don't think it's necessary to do what everyone else in the world thinks is meaningful. Meaning has always been something you can only decide for yourself, and it shouldn't be decided by someone else's standards. If you want to laze around, watching the sunset and counting the stars, it can also be meaningful. We are all just here to experience life. I'm learning to slowly accept those grey parts of myself, to recognize and forgive my own slowness and mediocrity, and to allow myself to make mistakes, with shortcomings and regrets, keep trying, gaining, feeling and letting go.



# INSPIRATIONS AND INFLUENCES



My inspiration is from one of my favorite Chinese book "The Temple of Earth and I" by Shi Tie Sheng. I was shocked and lounded by a paragraph. *"A person's birth isn't a question for debate, but is the reality handed to him by God. When God hands us this reality, he has already incidentally assured its end, so death is something one needn't be anxious to bring about; death is a festival that is sure to befall you. After thinking this through, I felt greatly relieved; nothing would ever be so frightening again."*

The author, Shi Tie Sheng, was paralyzed in an accident at the age of 21. He then had kidney disease and progressed to uremia and was kept alive by dialysis three times a week. He died of a sudden cerebral hemorrhage in 2010 at the age of 59.

During forty years of battling death, he claimed that his profession was sick and wrote in his spare time. He wrote about his experience in "Fragments Written at the Hiatuses of Sickness". *"It takes a fever to realize how refreshing it is not to have a fever, and it takes a cough to realize how peaceful it is not to have a cough in your throat. When I first got into a wheelchair, I always thought, if I can't walk upright, won't I lose my human characteristics? I felt dark and gloomy. It was only when I got bedsores and could only lie in a twisted position for several days that I saw how sunny it was to sit upright. Later, when I suffered from uremia, I was often too dizzy to think, so I was even more fond of the old days. I finally realized that we are actually lucky every moment, because any disaster can be preceded by the word "more"."*



Often, we only realize how good we once had something when we lose it. Therefore, people in the ordinary need to know the value of the ordinary. Maybe people are not lucky all the time, because life itself is like an eternal dilemma, all people have different degrees of disability. He once wrote, *"Pessimism, in fact, is to see the eternal dilemma, and optimism, even when aware of this eternal dilemma, is to go on an unyielding and impassioned struggle."* There is only this one life to live, so if you don't have a goal, make yourself comfortable within your means. For the facts that cannot be changed, we can however change our mindset of looking at them. No matter what you think, some things are bound to happen. Instead of living them anxiously, worryingly, and regretfully, I think it's better to really think about whether or not these things actually have any objective impact on you, on your long life, so I'm learning to let go and move on. Through the stories I create, I want to provoke people to think about this, and the "good ending" I paint is the one where Ten realises this, thinks about what he really wants and needs, decides to quit his job and get a job that doesn't pay much, but is a lot easier, and gets some time for himself, and begins to learn to enjoy every little thing in life.

What inspired me the most was one of his novel, "Like a Banjo String." In the story, a wise elder told a blind man to break a thousand strings by playing banjo and then take out the "prescription" placed in the groove of the instrument, and by going to a doctor to get that medicine he could gain his sight. But when he finally broke the last string and took out the prescription fifty years later, he was told that what he had taken out was a piece of paper with no words on it. He realizes that he has been fooled in his life, but looking back at the past fifty years, he remembered the joys and sorrows on the road of playing and singing, and how joyful all those trips over the mountains, the perseverance and hope, and even heartburn and worry were joyful, and he felt how meaningful this life was. Later he put this piece of paper into the slot of the young blind man's instrument, and the story began to reincarnate through generations. "Remember, human life is like this string, pull it tight to play it well, and it's enough when you play it well."

The meaning of life is to create the beauty and splendor of this process, and the value of life is to be able to appreciate the beauty and tragedy of this process with calmness and excitement. That string is the reason one lives on and it supports life, and the process of going in search of the string is one of the strings. Different people pursue different things in their lives, but you can't take any material things with you, so is the end of life really the most important thing? In the last moment of life, looking back at your life, playing like a film, whether it can get your high rating, maybe you did not achieve what you want to achieve, maybe you never wanted any achievement, then whether you lived this life well, completely depends on the process of your journey. All kinds of experience, whether you enjoy, even if ordinary, that's non-tragedy, this life is worth it. I want to be happy in this life, I want this life to be with happiness, even if it's unfortunate, as long as I like my life and I've enjoyed it, that's all that matters.

It is really about how people look at life and what is happening. They may choose to look at most things pessimistically, like TEN, who has no hope for herself and the future. But for many people, there may be a chance to live a better life, I don't want these people to set their sights too narrowly, it's all normal to be anxious about the future, but isn't the whole point of people setting goals in the first place to achieve happiness? It's the process of not being able to feel happy due to anxiety that makes life unhappy as well. Whether or not we will be happy in the future cannot be predicted, but the present, today, is where we can determine our own happiness. Some people's lives can be wildernesses, with infinite possibilities and the courage to go towards them. Some people's lives can be the woods, where the wilderness is too free, but the woods are full of trails that many people have trodden already, but more than that, they are woodlands that have not yet been waded through, and they can choose how they want to go. Some people's lives are tracks, some of them travelling on their own plotted routes with the certainty of knowing where they are going, but also lots of people can only travel on tracks built by others to an end that may not be where they really want to be. I think the TEN in my story was on someone else's track and gradually changed direction on her own and headed into the woods.

When I was creating this comic, I thought about how ordinary people, including myself, can combat the feeling of emptiness. For me, whether I'm a student or a working class person, people need to be themselves and take their own time to go, rather than live in this society as play-actors. Without more downtime, people don't have time to face their selves as a human being. As individuals who have their own lives, not as the student who makes their family proud, not the housewife who takes care of the family, not the wage slave who contributes to the functioning of the society, but time as a human being.

Although I have not yet experienced the life after entering the society, I have seen too many people who have lost a lot of their own time as a human being after stepping into society, but basically just to maintain the basic needs of life, and it is not uncommon for them to try to do a job they do not like for the sake of a 'secured life'. I believe that to solve the 'emptiness', it is necessary to step outside of other people's value systems and really find what you actually want.

内田樹の「土と我」

# ARTIST MODELS

## Sumi Eno/ Deki Hanae

MY WORK:



umi Eno's work and designs influence my character designs and cover art. Her characters have a lot of tension, and it's also related to the extreme use of lines and black and white relationships that are powerful. I long for the quiet, gooey, suffocating, complicated lines and images that her work brings.

I also want to learn how to draw "cross-page" in manga, and how to draw with the impact of a full sheet of paper. Although I can't draw cross-page due to the limitations of the number of pages in my work, I try to draw some spreads and full-sheet drawings without any storyboard.

It is worth mentioning that although her character style is like the traditional Japanese manga style of enlarging the eyes and weakening the other to enhance the drawing, the drawing of these characters is not exaggerated, but rather, the drawing of the face and features are slightly more realistic, making the picture and the theme not as 'cute' as it is in a lot of Japanese manga. This style of drawing is similar to my usual drawing habits, so I learnt and designed my characters.



## Sudo Yumi

The storytelling in her work as well as the design of the subplots and the simplifications she has made to the images make the overall look clearer and cleaner and easier to understand. Including her overview of the folds of the clothes, the hair, and the background, she is a bit different from Sumi Eno in her handling of details, meticulous without too many lines, and the overview of the shadowed parts and the darker parts with pure black of colours also makes the image very eye-catching.

In fact, most Japanese manga is black and white, using grey such as dot paper, black ink as well as lines and white paper to draw great beauty and detail, and the contrast is stronger as well as more eye-catching than in colour manga. However, given that I have no experience of drawing black and white manga, I don't have that level of mastery of the image, and for many New Zealanders, colour manga seems to be easier to understand. So I opted for a halfway solution, and planned for a low saturation, not overly coloured image in the first part of the comic, and gradually increased the colours, and started to use colour in the later chapters.





# PROCESSES CHARACTER DESIGN



## RESEARCH

Polish photographer Pawel Jaszczuk, who lives in Japan, photographed 'High Fashion', a series of work of drunk salarymen sleeping in the streets of Tokyo between 2008 and 2010, streets of Tokyo.

According to Pawel, the initial inspiration was simply to capture the contrast between people in nice suits and the dirty streets. As time evolved, his views gradually changed, and he hoped that the photographs would provide a somewhat humorous view of an overstressed society.

My character and the setting of the story are in a place similar to Asia. Japan. Because I'm Asian, I'm more familiar with Asian work and social culture, and compared to other environments, the Asian, especially Japanese, work environment and the situation of young people that I know seems more depressing and confusing. Plus although I explain this character in she pronoun but I didn't want to give my characters any gender-specific designs or occupations, so that I could be more gender-neutral and professionally immersed in the situation, and Japanese business uniforms are almost always dark colored suits, which are suitable for all female and male employees, as well as for most occupations.



## FINAL DESIGN

So Ten's clothing wise it's all about simplicity, a slightly baggy black suit and white shirt, belted leather shoes, a cross-shoulder bag for work, and glasses. Wearing glasses also side-steps some of the character's personality, as many nearsighted people might choose to wear contact lenses for more convenience, but TEN is someone who doesn't care anything about details or even herself, and it seems like contact lenses are what's more troublesome for her. That's also why she has slightly messy unruly hair and completely uncovered dark circles under her eyes.

## ORIGINAL SKETCHES



Through the expression of despair, the glitch, distorted and distorted effects focused on the neck, and the middle of the dress where the buttons are fastened drawn like suggestive twine, all of which evoke emotions such as boredom and depression, associating them with the theme of mental health.

## ORIGINAL IDEAS AND SKETCHES

I decided on the theme of water at the beginning because I drew this sketch, water has always been a source of life for me, but pessimistically, it can also destroy the existence of life. People are made of water and live because of water, but water can also bring despair and death. I myself am afraid of water and have experienced near drowning. How different people feel when they see water can vary depending on their personal experiences, state of mind and current situation. It may make some people feel peaceful and relaxing. For example, some people, when faced with the magnificent sea, will be filled with awe and longing for the wide world, and filled with courage and strength to face the challenges of life. But some people will feel some trepidation whether it is a tranquil sea or a rough sea. Sometimes, people even perceive the external world and their own physical existence through water. Different people produce completely different feelings, and this sketch explores that emotion. Some people look at it and feel depressed, others may feel peace as if their emotions have been taken away by the water. This different attitude is also interesting.

This is a rather scribbled sketch. I wanted to convey a feeling of doubt and confusion through the large overhead angle, the scribbled lines, the distorted background, and the white stripes suggesting a zebra crossing. There is also a sense of following the rules but stopping and staring up at the "camera". Begins to raise doubts and with an expression of questioning the person in front of the "camera".



## ILLUSTRATIONS

I illustrated some drawings for the character, as there are a lot of works in manga that also come with additional sets of illustrations that basically revolve around the characters and settings and are not used as covers for the work.

For example, the author of 'Full Metal Alchemist' published a book of illustrations.



The focus of this painting is on the character's work environment and state. I used a lot of black and dark colours to depict the environment and to highlight the main character in the middle who is illuminated by a computer light so that her expression and exhaustion can be seen.



In this illustration I wanted to draw the main character as she realises this 'endless' state and life. I purposely drew the character's face and complexion in white and grey-blue as if they were lifeless. For the lighting effects I drew the bright parts very brightly, but the dark parts seem to swallow her up, including herself dressed all in black standing in the light with a strong contrast. Combined with the overhead perspective, it also makes the overall look depressing, and the viewer can feel the mood of the painting at once.



Fatigue, like alcohol, renders her powerless. By framing the figure's pose, leaning against the flyover fence, she appears to be uninhibited, but in fact she has been confined for too long. A lot of bright colours are used because of the depiction of the lights of the city, but even when the light shines on the figure, she is all dark.



This is a background scene outside of the character's story. Because for the character I designed the only place she'll go besides her home and work is the convenience store.

The composition of the character in the image also implies that she always takes the nearest thing at hand, without any consideration at all. The use of cool colours in this painting is not only in keeping with the theme, but also because I have the impression that many convenience stores give off a feeling of "coldness".



There is no particular concept for this piece, it is more of an illustration depicting a character's demeanour and appearance. In order to highlight the character's features, I painted the lighting of the image as a spotlight, giving the bright parts an overexposure effect, which makes the grey surfaces extremely narrow, the shadows darker and the edges clearer. The increased contrast between light and dark attracts more attention and keeps the eye on the character's face, bringing the character closer to the viewer and giving the impression that the character is being caught and tortured. In the background, I blurred out the wrong sign and the circular line, two contrasting patterns that suggest the character's reflection and confusion.

## SECONDARY CHARACTER -- JURI



Juri's back story is that she's Ten's one and only friend in high school. They're not particularly close, but to each other they're the only people they could talk to at school. But Juri was suffering from depression, the stress of studying at school, her perfectionism, and other environment factors is constantly breaking her down.

I drew in the manga was her back at the beginning in TEN's reminiscence dream, as well as a side note to suggest that TEN's memories of her are blurring as well; after all, the two didn't actually see each other that many times.

## INSPIRATIONS

The inspiration for the creation of this character also came from a part of myself, but more so from something I heard about happening when I was back in China this year.

My hometown is a small town, which made me felt more real about the fact that the big environment is so tense in general that this happens everywhere and even close around me.

wondered what would have happened if the liberated person had continued to observe the world as a bystander.

and I made a superficial speculation about that. This is also the re-birth of the character of Juri as such a black, being in the story.

I didn't want to make the character image too scary, so even the hands are rounded instead of having fingers, but I kept the color black because I wanted to match the colour of the manga as a whole. Juri's set up to be a rather direct talker and not very expressive, so I also thought about not wanting readers to get tiresome with the character who talks without taking care of people's feelings and went for a slightly more endearing element. I simplified a lot of things, such as the fact that there are no other features on the face except the two vertical lines representing the eyes, so that the character doesn't have any emotions to show.





ENGLISH JAPANESE

# TITLE DESIGN

## TYPOGRAPHICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH

Considering for short comic like this don't necessary need a "logo" design.

I tend to focus on how to integrate the title design with the cover. One of the difficulties is that I am more familiar with Chinese and Japanese headline design because I am more proficient in their use, which is very different from English, which is not able to have the same effect as them to some extent. For example, Chinese Kanji, Korean Hangul and Japanese Kana can be written along either axis, as they consist mainly of unrelated logical or syllabic units occupying a square space, allowing flexibility in choosing the direction in which the characters are written, like horizontally from left to right or vertically from top to bottom.

This allows for more freedom and boldness in design but it's difficult to understand if English is written vertically.

### KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN DESIGNING A (SHORT) MANGA TITLE:

**- RELEVANCE:**  
The title should reflect the theme, tone, and genre of the story, maintaining consistency. It should give potential readers a sense of anticipation.

**- MEMORABILITY:**  
Choose a title that is easy to remember, such as a shorter title or a unique combination of words.

**- VISUAL APPEAL:**  
Consider how the title will look in different fonts and styles to enhance the overall aesthetics of the comic cover. Try to choose a simple design as too many lines, decorations, elements or colours can complicate the design and detract from the effect.



### EXAMPLE STUDYING :

"LOOK BACK" depicts the story of the protagonist, who used to create manga for the school newspaper during her primary school years, but after attending middle school, she started to draw manga with a friend who admired her talent, and then faced the experience of being separated from her friend when she grew up and became an adult.

The atmosphere of the friendship theme is expressed in bright and warm colours, and the captions are made with the ink strokes used to draw the manga and the marker colours applied outside the lines to correspond to the theme of the drawn manga, with relevance and aesthetics to guide the reader.

# GENERATING AND DEVELOPMENT

I chose 'endless ocean' as the title because an ocean with no end sounds a bit disorientating in itself.

Feeling directionless in life is like being lost at the ocean, desperately searching for the right path, and when experiencing sadness, powerlessness, or even depression, it's like being surrounded by a seemingly infinite ocean, with no destination in sight, and no sense of hope. The sea may be calm or suddenly stormy, and throughout life, we ourselves can be in times of sudden, unexpected change. These periods can dramatically alter one's path, sweeping one like a storm on the sea into all sorts of, completely unfamiliar places. And such an ocean is endless.



But on the other hand, there is no end of the sea, people in addition to overwhelmed and hopeless in the vast waiting for the end, one may also choose to enjoy the various experiences that this endless sea brings, either way we are waiting for the same result, is it possible to do it the way you really want?

# COVER DESIGN

## SKETCHES / CONCEPTS



The idea at first was to zoom in more on the character's share of the figure to bring the character closer to the reader, which would also make the design more appealing to the eye. Associated with the story and mood as well as the title it is impossible to leave out the water element. I tried to draw TEN lying in the water, the shiny water can contrast with her image. However, on second thought, as a cover, it might create some horror elements and diverge a bit from my story.

I sketched the character's connection to the sea in relation to the story. The way the character stands in the sea and walks into the sea is filled with an atmosphere of confusion. For the colors, I preferred to keep the character in the dark, with the sea glowing in the background, and the character's light and shadow backlit to complete the effect and make it easier to notice. The position of the characters can be in the middle or on the right. The reason for drawing the white bird is also linking to the manga content, flying around the character representing a little bit of hope in the character's heart.

I then started experimenting with painting environments and backgrounds by reducing the size of the figure in the picture.



The character is still standing in the water but the overall color is black, part of the natural light shines on the character, although it makes the character stand out but I used a lot of grey brightness painting to draw her with a sense of weakness. The light, shining on the surface of the sea with a white line vertically cuts the center of the drawing, and the character is standing in the center of the line guiding the readers' eyes to fall on her.

For the title I tried to use a design that stands out but blends in with the picture like many Japanese manga covers do. Usually their designs are bright colours, stark paintings with dark or even black title designs, which makes the title stand out while having an overall great design. So I used this in reverse, as the painting itself is in dark colours, so I chose a very sharp cyan colour, interspersed between the characters and the background. The handwritten font and angle of the title, framing the character, and also contrasts and echoes the regimented feeling of the "line" formed in the image.



I played around with font's positive space and negative space by adding a black rectangle to the background of the font, this cuts horizontally through the whole picture. By hollowing out the font, the hollowed out part is also the part of the cover painting that is blocked out, so it is not too rigid like normal white text on a black background, blending the design with the whole painting. In the concept of this cover, I used the character's back facing the "camera", standing in the waves. I didn't use too many bright contrasting colours, but rather grey tones, to express the gloomy and humid atmosphere, and also to give people a feeling that they can't clearly guess the character's mood, which also correlates and corresponds to my original concept of the end of the story. It's all about reader's imagination. What is her vision across the ocean?

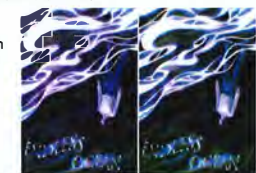
## IDEA AND DEVELOPMENT

I wanted to show a dream-like thematic suggestion, I tried a more abstract way of portraying the element of water, generalising the water, ripples and waves into curved lines and waves of varying thicknesses, so that the protagonist stands on the 'water' from an upward perspective, suggesting the feeling of the 'ocean'. The composition still uses a tilted pattern across the page to give a sense of continuity, and the whole image is also tilted to direct the eye by putting a sense of weight on one side of the character. The character with no movement just looks up at a place unseen off the page, giving the reader room to imagine.



I experimented with flipping the image vertically. The overall atmosphere is more oppressive and disorientating, and less 'positive' than the upright version. This puts the weight of the image on the top half of the page, and the inverted characters also direct the reader's eyes to the title in the bottom half. For the colouring I added a blue-violet tint to the solid black back colour, and used a soft brush and paint on the black background to simulate the ripples of the sea.

By experimenting and comparing the colours of the picture, I chose to add a version of the contrasting green color to enrich the picture as a whole and brighten it up compared to the whole purple hue. Dark green also gives a more grotesque feeling than purple.



## FINAL DESIGN

I've added more glitch effects, not just coloured but also black squares, which makes the whole picture blend in better also makes the white messy curves less jarring. I then drew the back of the book in a continuation of these curved waves, learning from the way many manga artists, including Sumi Eno, and cover designers choose to span pages. Because the continuation of the shapes would take up most of the area, which would make the image look too full and messy, I darkened the overall colours and added the Japanese version of the title's characters on top in color white, blurred them because it would be too clear to be a back of the book, and because of the difference between the Japanese language and the English language, the strokes and the shapes look like part of the decoration for those who can't understand them. I enlarged the character '海' (sea) and blended it with the curve that's representing the sea, which echoes and enriches the image. I have also added fake barcodes for authenticity, and small passages of words for foreword for the book.

## FINAL DESIGN

I used the font 'Georgia', but changed it myself to make it thinner, with a sense of hiddenness that blends with the light blue of the background, reflecting a sense of fragility, and with a disjointed colored glitch that at the same time hints at and encapsulates the protagonist's thoughts and state of being. This design makes the title 'endless ocean' easy to read and understand, without being too cluttered. The white highlights also help the reader to notice the title on the cover. The greens and blues of background also correspond to the manga's colour scheme and don't feel out of place, as well as both being colours and shapes reminiscent of water. At the same time, the design of the ambiguous spirituality gives a dream-like feeling of unreality. It also correlates with the story, suggesting that the ten's experiences will be somewhat surreal as if they were dreams that maybe didn't really happen.





# COMIC CONTENT SECTION 1 DEVELOPMENTS

The order in which I draw my comics is to draw them all as drafts first, then outline and refine each draft separately, and finish them all in black and white before starting to colour them separately, so that I can maintain the consistency of each one.



The first page of the manga is a subconscious memory of the protagonist 'Ten', a dialogue between her and her friend 'Juri'. This serves as a preface to the book, highlighting the theme, explaining the background, and leading up to the title. The feeling of water and the title in the second half of the book serve as a segue to the following dream memories of Ten. By not drawing the heads of the characters retains some mystery and suspense, so that even if reader can't be sure who the two are for a while they will remember the image later in the reading.



This page tells part of the backstory through Ten's memories. In the beginning, the news of her friend Juri played in the classroom, indicating that she is also aware of Juri's tendencies. In first draft I wanted to use repetition composition to show only the main character reacted. Portraying the stress of learning in this classroom, the numbness of the students. However, I dropped that idea and chose a more open format by removing the borders and enlarging the main character's reaction to bring the overall atmosphere closer to the reader.



The colour palette changes, the pink and purple environment suggests and expresses a somewhat gloomy environment without sunlight. Although the colour is pink, it is combined with green and blue to create a feeling of indifference and depression. The colour palette changes, the pink and purple environment suggests and expresses a somewhat gloomy environment without sunlight. Although the colour is pink, it is combined with green and blue to create a feeling of indifference and depression. The over-exposure of the mobile phone's screen also suggests the darkness of the room, forming a contrast. For the wake-up scene, I used a freeze-frame-like technique to draw the same scene at different times, creating a sense of exhaustion and repetition in the character's life.

4.

This is also a continuation of her commuting life. The only change is that the sketch of the fridge from the first point of view has been changed to a 'first point of view of the fridge' to depict the character's movements. The items inside the fridge (rice balls and canned drinks) have been shown too to depict the character's careless way of living, while the fisheye point of view has enriched the experience reading the image. This also allows for consistency and balance with the presence of the main characters in all three compartments above.



5.

In the draft idea, I wanted to explore the feeling of regularity and constraint, because it is a drawing of the character and the company which can be like a confining factor in her life. So I cut the image into nine grids, the top three grids, the company, the lift buttons, the arrangement of the workstations, all using positive and negative space to form the visual effect of a vertical bar in the middle creating links and patterns, and the overall direction of the image from left to right getting lower and lower. In the remaining grids I drew an overall picture, but cut it with a border of windows, as well as with the change of time, from day to night. Depicting the sheer number of hours the character works. On top of these I felt that the image was a little too regimented, with too much black underneath and the weight of the image too far down. To balance this I added a black walking foot movement shadow on top of the top three grids to add to the dynamics of the image. In the final colouring adjustment I split this footstep with white grid frames as well, so it doesn't look too jarring.



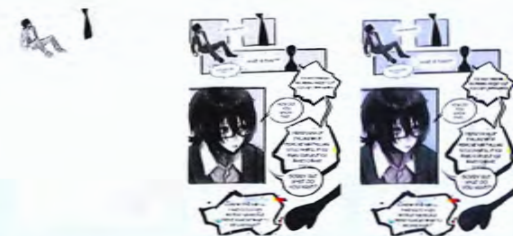
6.

In this image I tried to enhance the visual guide and connectivity of the image. In the draft I decided that the whole image should take the shape of an inverted triangle/trapezoid, to enhance the emotional rendering and to pave the way for the impact of the next page. In this geometrical planning the images in the grid could also have some connection. The top image as a whole goes lower and lower from left to right, so as to connect with the three grids below, and in these three horizontally spanning grids, the shape of the bed connects with the shape of the dining table and shape of the cemetery's steps, which expresses the character's understanding of life, and these three images which are her only hopes in life form a straight track that also tilts to direct the reader down to the left and lands on the character. The character in the first draft focus on the movement of typing, leading to the next page. But I came up with more attractive and expressive image zooming in on the character's eyes from the computer's point of view, using the white screen reflections in the eyes to show the presence of the computer and also to echo and lead to the use of the computer in the first-person point of view on the next page.



8.

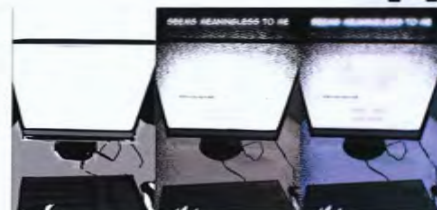
I changed the grid layout in the bottom half of the draft, mainly balancing grids. Having the movement and orientation of the two characters adjusted to enhance the interaction, so that the reader could understand what was happening at a glance. The position of the two eyes and the sight guide also points to Juri, whose orientation brings the sight back to the left. Making the second half of the page make sense no matter what reading order it's in. There are some details in the image, including the hunched sitting position of Ten, and in the frame where the character falls I used messy lines to express the character's panic and fear. Also, Juri's dialogue box (speech bubble) is irregular, oddly shaped, and has some glitch effects to convey that Juri's voice is somewhat monster-like with a strange, lagging sound that is also part of the character design.



9.

I start gradually adding some more obvious colors, rendering the beginning of the 'unreality' and setting the stage for the emergence of the colours later on. I changed the eyes that the character was looking to the right to the eyes looking upwards at Juri. At first, the idea was to not look at Juri because Ten was impatient with Juri's direct and self-serving speech that didn't care about the Ten's mood. The change to upward staring eyes was a kind of confrontation from TEN because the annoyance she felt was greater than the fear.

7.



The first person point of view as well as the band of text in the image enhance the impact of the image, and the addition of black lines and patterns around the perimeter, as well as the blurring at the edges of the image also allow the reader to experience the mood and atmosphere of the first person point of view.



# COMIC CONTENT SECTION 2 DEVELOPMENTS

The order in which I draw my comics is to draw them all as drafts first, then outline and refine each draft separately, and finish them all in black and white before starting to colour them separately, so that I can maintain the consistency of each one.



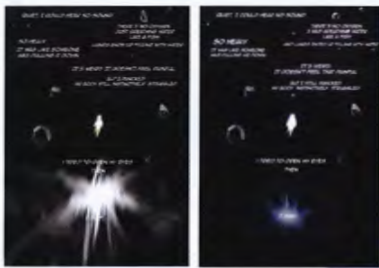
I made several experiments and improvements to the arrangement of the image. In the first draft I left a lot of blank space to express the shift in time and place, to make a graphic break. But to include some images from the first point of view I added a first person view of the sea of the character standing on the edge of a bridge. This also had too many grids and clutter, so again a more open layout was used, removing grids and resizing each section according to priority.

10.



11. My idea for this one was to have an impact. I really long for the shock of turning to the next page of a comic and seeing a larger, more detailed drawing in relation to the rest of the page. So this one has no grid, it's a single drawing that fills the entire page. I wanted to enhance the dynamics of the fall by drawing the flow of time through a cross-section of water, within a single frame. I almost used a rather extreme black and bright colour combination to express the impact with this contrasting colour.

12.



This one didn't exist in my original draft, it was drawn to overload the story a bit more naturally, depicting the character's feelings in the water. I referenced my own drowning experience here, and conducted some research for reference, including what people shared online about how they felt when drowning, both of accident

and that it was only after they were rescued that the organs that had gone into the water began to ache intensely. So in this piece, the character's feelings about drowning are also 'surprisingly not too painful'.

18.

For this page I went bolder and added a more striking pink colour, partly to lead into the pinkish-purple tones of the next page, and partly to echo and contrast with the lighter cooler pink tones of the previous ones.



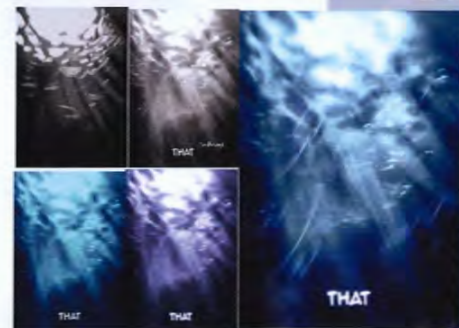
17.

Echoing nature's original truth, breathing to truly interact with all that exists, different feelings both subtle and vast flow through the mind. There are too many people as well who have forgotten their true nature as a living human being but think that it is the vast social machine that keeps them alive. But in fact just by awakening the senses, the world has brought a whole new experience to the character.

For this page, I used the woods as the background for the entire page and used small grids to draw details in the woods as seen by the characters. This reduced the number of pages needed for this scene in its plan, and increased the readability of the page to the max. I kept altering the placement of each grid so that they didn't look cluttered, that the associated grids were more compact, and that there was some distance between each group to make the whole easier to read and understand. Because the woods in the background make the whole look a bit too much and too cluttered, a white border was added to the black border of each grid to make the grids more visible and separate them from the background. Each font also uses black spray gun to deepen the background so that the white font is separated from the background and easy to read.

16.

I added the branch and the bird in the bottom grid so that it can be used as a transition into the next page, otherwise the next page will seem too abrupt. Once again, I have reduced the number of grids and the amount of text. The leafy background in the middle serves as a bridge between the previous page and the next, and also hints at the place where Juri is taking Ten.



13. I wanted to show the impact of the scene on the character, to give the reader a sense of shock, so I once again filled the page with the drawing under the water. The light that shines in the sea, the light that has been absent from the character's life for so long, the light that sustains life, is so blinding after she opens her eyes in the darkness, so inviting to people's original phototaxis. I experimented a lot with the colours, too much blue was more realistic but didn't blend with the comic as a whole, and too much purple-grey tones were less realistic for some people's perception of the colours of the sea, so I neutralised the two choices and added some fuzzy white strokes to represent the bubbles and the flow of the water as seen by the character's first point of view, to enhance the sense of carry-over.

14.

Once again I used only one image in a page, drawing the character's either out of survival instinct, or gut regret, her hand reaches out and begins to struggle. Again I avoided overly solid blue tones because I wanted consistency of images throughout the story.



15.



I've tried to use an open format for the layout of the image, including Juri's head in the bottom right corner in the border of the platform of the shore, which adds to the size of the richness of image without going too far out of sense. The action of coughing water in the draft is a bit stiff, as well as illogical, and I can't fully explain the reason for all the images in this page, for example, the character is rescued by Juri with her ability, but in the drawing maybe it looks like Ten got to shore on her own because of a less than clear connection between the front and back, but if reader relate it to the previous pages where Juri's words stated that Ten couldn't swim, so this actually solves the problem, even if it could be misinterpreted.





# COMIC CONTENT SECTION 3 DEVELOPMENTS

The order in which I draw my comics is to draw them all as drafts first, then outline and refine each draft separately, and finish them all in black and white before starting to colour them separately, so that I can maintain the consistency of each one.



**19.** Although this page is basically a text narrative, the images couldn't be too minimalist which would make the text look too much and too stagnant. So I wanted to try to blend the text and images as much as possible, so I also didn't use any grids and added more images and patterns. At last, white leaf shapes with low transparency were added to connect the pages above and also to contrast with the black city shapes below.



Thinking about stepping outside of the value system that others have brought to us, human flesh and blood is experiencing everything on this magnificent planet and being exposed to everything that is happening. Human beings as themselves can only live this once in a limited time, life is meant to be so precious.

**20.**



In contrast to the feelings of stress in the image on the previous page, in this painting I wanted to express a feeling of freedom, freedom from the constraints brought about by social factors, the constraints brought about by other people's perceptions, and the constraints of people's own bondage. In terms of colours, I tried to use different bright colours because I wanted to express a more positive attitude, but it seemed a bit too bright for all the pages, and the whole painting itself was a bit too harsh to find the focus, so I reduced most of the saturation, and retained the eye-catching colours needed for the key text and visual effects. The idea of breaking free, as expressed by the broken black vertical bars, contrasts with the regular grid lines of the previous page where the character is working.

**22.**

This page and the next one I put on the portfolio as a mockup, because it's not part of the story, but rather an afterword about how the character starts to change and find a life she likes if she slowly builds up the mood and courage to change over time, more of a 'happy ending'. Because the text can be hard to read when turn into the mockup, I tried to make the images more comprehensible. This page is all about the character deciding to start experiencing life, perceiving the world as an individual, experiencing and enjoying the little things in life, and realising and valuing the little benefits and privileges that come with being a human being in this world.



**21.**



In this painting I repeated the opening painting, like a loop, she continues her life as usual, but she seems to start making changes and pulls back the curtains. This arrangement also made everything that had happened before that seem like a dream. This is the part that I later decided to use as the ending, the open ending. It hints at the gradual changes that are beginning to happen to the character, but will other changes happen later? Unlike the opening, the colors on this page are also more muted in tone, with greens and blues becoming less and less depressing. The reason why I've left this page as an open-ended ending is because I feel that even after getting "enlightened" in this way, in many situations in real life, it's still possible that nothing can be changed, or that people don't have the courage to make changes. Being able to change your mindset and actually be more positive is not that simple. That's the advantage of an open ending, some people will think she's starting to make positive changes in her life. Others might think that it looks a bit unreal to them to just change like that, and will continue to think in the worst possible direction about the character's next move. And still others, while they may not think change will be that easy either, will still wish her a better life in their hearts. That's what I wanted to explore from the beginning, the idea that different people see things differently and understand them differently, that no one's ideas can be wrong, but people have all experienced different things and have different perceptions, beliefs, and ideas, and that's something very interesting because people themselves may too, become aware of their own ideas, the ones that reflect back at them.

**23.**



I explored possible changes through the characters, many of which are also things I would love to change and do. For Ten, the biggest act of courage was quitting the job that was consuming her, finding a job that allowed her to get her own hours, and trying more things to find a life of her own. Among other things, in her spare time, the character is inspired by playing games and learns to clarify small goals. Because small goals lead to motivation and the ability to enjoy the process of achieving them and the joy of achieving them. This is one of the ways I try to enjoy life, and one that many people experience. The joy of leaving perfectionism behind and going with the flow may be no less than the joy of material achievement.

In terms of graphics, I planned though in my drafts to show the transformation of the characters, including the dynamics of walking, in contrast to the more static movements and forms of the characters in the previous story elements. I attempted to draw many different walking poses. It was finally decided on a slightly elevated angle, a striding action, which makes the picture more positive overall, and the reader can, at a glance, understand the transformation of the character as well as the feeling of a more relaxed state of mind. Another thing is that the whole picture is tilted, from left to right is from low to high. This gives the impression that the character is on an uphill path in her new life, and although the uphill path represents positivity, it also suggests that she is no longer running away from and fearing the hardships of the uphill path compared to the flat one, because she is experiencing what it is like to be alive, and that whatever she encounters, whether it's good or bad, it's all a part of it.



# WHAT'S NEXT

If I were given another board, I'd want to give the character a fuller story and explore more themes, such as conceptualising and portraying her backstory, family factors, upbringing.

Maybe love, for example.

People always say we can't live without love. What on earth could it all be without love?



Would the character in my story, Ten, have lived better with that friend from her student days? Holding on to a little bit of love in this world. For me, I would always think of my family, friends, and the people around me who still cared about me, and I would choose to never do anything about it. But what would happen without that little bit of love?

I want to explore how exactly what values were subconsciously instilled in Ten's upbringing.

Because I wasn't sure why and when I myself had been influenced and accepted the value system of others, believing that studying was all about exams, exams were all about being recognised by others, about going to a good university, about getting a good job, and most importantly, about money. It was as if money, positions, and achievements were the only way to happiness. But I realised that this is not my path, maybe some people enjoy this kind of life, but I know I will not enjoy this, because once I think of this as future, I feel tired, but also because this is not my own choice of future, but too many people in the environment I grew up in blindly go with the flow of this 'standard' life pattern.

With the development of time, I gradually came into contact with more terms, such as gap year, which I only learnt about in the past two years. However I found out there's still many people that always use their own values to measure and evaluate other people's lives. For example, I think one of the meanings of gap year is to make people stop and think about their future paths, and explore more about themselves, while there are still a lot of people who think that gap year is a kind of escapist lifestyle. In these people's values, it seems that one has to follow all the "life nodes", going to school, working, buying houses, getting married, having children, and finally the offspring start the same cycle, as if this is the meaningful life that everyone should have, and to give up on any of the nodes as if it would really affect one's life. I'm not saying that such a life is meaningless, but I'm against imposing such a mode of life on everyone and making others feel that whichever node they give up is giving up their happiness. Using my upbringing as an example, and linking it to Juri in my story, a lot of stressed out students even think about I think that perhaps because too many people receive education and environmental influences that make them think that failure, giving up, or deviating from the path that most people take seems to make the rest of their lives a complete failure. Perhaps Ten may have grown up in such an environment, and it was only because of this custom of going with the flow, living as the crowd. It's also a kind of behaviour but the thought of quitting the job never came up'. But in fact, maybe Ten just didn't want to live like this.

I also want to explore more about the relationship between Ten and Juri. I want to create and portray more of Juri and make her character traits fleshed out as well.

# EVALUATION

Through the rigorous design of the character, the relationship between the character and the story is presented to the reader in a realistic and immersive way, so that the character brings to the reader the same feelings and thoughts as the message I plan to convey. This was my goal for this character design. And I think my design is a good visual representation of that, as Ten's appearance, dress, and demeanour, as well as her portrayal in the story, are clear enough to make people understand the monotony and depression of her lifestyle, as well as her feeling of being lost.

For the title design as well as the cover design I have achieved a basic overview and conveyance of the story and atmosphere of the manga. It was also designed to catch the attention of potential audiences who might be able to resonate with the feeling that the cover exudes.

As for the content of the comic, I think this whole work of mine conveys and explores my understanding of lifestyle and life through visual expression, which is perhaps not only sharing my concepts, but also at the same time my thoughts about myself. My character design has a lot of relevance to myself. I also decided when designing the character and creating her story that I must at least be able to do this work to influence and reflect on me first before offering inspiration and reflection to the readers. Regarding the arrangement of these storylines, in fact, during the process of my creation, as I had a lot of things happen in less than a year, my state and thinking were always updated and changed, so sometimes when I was overly anxious and pessimistic again, in the midst of the chaos, I looked back at the draft story that I drew in March or April and to be honest, I felt it was a little bit thin and weak, and maybe even some ideas seemed a little bit of childish. But I actually felt my ideas grow a lot in the process along with my creation of the story, its development, and those dissatisfactions from myself. Gradually, I've started to enjoy how I see my work differently at each point in time, and it's made me feel my changes, and it's also made the work richer and more mature. Maybe when I graduate and enter another new phase of my life, I'll look back at the work I've left behind that contains my current thoughts and ideas. I'm looking forward to what I will think at that time. So even though I may not be satisfied with my understanding of some of the images or the storyline, I have enjoyed the time I spent creating these works, and even if I don't achieve anything, it's still meaningful to me, and it's a small part of my life that I have spent in this way. Just like what I'm trying to convey with my work.

## FOR NEXT

### POSSIBLE INSPIRATIONS -- "THIS IS GOING TO HURT," AND EXPLORATIONS

In "This Is Going to Hurt," Shruti is a medical student, and the show uses her journey to highlight the challenges faced by those entering the healthcare industry, including the immense pressure and emotional toll it takes. As a dedicated medical student, Shruti faces a variety of obstacles, including long hours, demanding rotations, and the pressure to stand out in a highly competitive environment. Her character often reflects a struggle between her personal life and professional ambitions. The issues faced by people in the medical profession is also relating back to the real world. There's a scene where she learns in conversations with more experienced female doctors that her life situation is not going to get any better after, "its a difficult job, what do you want me to say? 'it gets easier'? It doesn't. . . if you can't handle that fact, maybe you should get out now, no one's making you be here." But this 'consolation' is only a blow to Shruti, whose career is unlikely to allow her to start over or make new choices. She has paid too much to get to this point, too much in terms of time and money, and realizes that the future holds nothing but endless exhaustion and tragedy from all kinds of pressures. Her story gave me a lot of feelings and thoughts. One of the reason of that might be that she didn't know how long she'd last before she could catch her breath.

The pressure and despair when one has put in so much effort that one can hardly breathe but still cannot fulfill one's expectations due to various external factors. I felt in her the reality that there is no way for an individual to change. This sense of desperation made me think about what it takes to truly save. I'd like to explore this by illustrating Ten's first year work life, would it be pressured like this? Or if Ten observed her colleagues going through these pressures which reminds her of Juri, ect. This is a good exploration through creating more stories that happened in her worklife.