INAUGURAL THESIS SHOW
MFA VISUAL NARRATIVE
A NOTE FROM THE CURATORS
Jonathon Rosen & Ed Valentine

Stories have a way of telling us where they want to go. We may not know where a story is leading us, or what it wants, but by following it we will always find ourselves in unexpected places.

This year, the drive to express a point of view, a mystery, or an obsessive-compulsive character in a dramatic situation, has led our inaugural thesis class in fourteen distinct – and visually stunning – directions.

Each student unveiled sharp and idiosyncratic visual language for a world they developed or discovered, and the character or characters who live there. These projects represent the culmination of the MFA candidates’ learning, not just in this class, but also throughout their entire SVA experience.

Whether accompanied by web-footed demigods, haunted by a woman’s voice emanating from walls, exploring a town built in a digestive system, standing restless on a suburban porch, entering tree house portals, eating alone or eating the world, we invite you to enjoy this exploration of their wonderful and wild worlds.

MFA Visual Narrative proudly presents to you the inaugural thesis class and their projects in this remarkable and groundbreaking installation.

Welcome to the journey.
BEYOND THE WILLOW
Medium: Graphic Novel

Beyond the Willow: In the wake of her mother’s death, eight-year-old Gracie retreats into the fantasy realm they once created together. Trying her best to keep what little she has of her mother intact, Gracie must defend the kingdom from the hands of savage forces.

As the family prepares to move into a new home, a dark presence once again looms over the fantasy realm into which Gracie has withdrawn. Fearing the loss of the only remaining connection she has left to her mother, Gracie battles to hold onto what she can of the kingdom, unaware of the family she might be leaving behind in the process.

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VISIONARY
Medium: Photoshop, InDesign, Edge Animate
Collaboration: Sydney Cook (Penciler/Inker), Simon Seauer (Composer), Jun Castro (Flatter)

Visionary: A sci-fi animated graphic novel app experience that you can access through your mobile device. Mai Petrus, an obstinate but encouraging Arydian soldier, is imprisoned in an enemy military lab. There she is subjected to experiments conducted to turn her into a bio-enhanced soldier that can alter molecules and bend matter. Mai plans to escape with her close friend Lyra, a fellow test subject. However, escaping proves to be easier said than done when the harsh realities of their situation catch up to them.

This is the first chapter in a long saga about the persistence of the human heart. This chapter explores what drives a person to live and what holds them back. In creating Visionary, Ann strives to prove that no matter the challenges you face, and no matter how hard you fall, if you work towards a goal and have faith, you will find a way. She takes inspiration from her own goals and aspirations, along with those of her peers, as she sets out to face the daunting task of adulthood. She hopes that this story will not only inspire her but others her age who are just beginning to blossom as young professionals in their designated fields.

When engaged in the graphic novel app, the user will be immersed in the world of Visionary through animation and sound giving them the full experience of Ann's vision.

LOUISA BERTMAN

MANMADE
Medium: Animation
Credits: My Life My Choice, Tanya Donelly

Manmade: An animated short commentary about “the demand side” of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (a.k.a. sex trafficking) in the United States of America.
EATING ALONE
Medium: Photography and Print

Eating Alone: As social creatures, food is something we generally share with friends or family. There are many aspects of our culture that are entirely designed around the sharing of food. But, what does it look like when we don’t?

Using food as a common element, Eating Alone looks momentarily into the lives of twenty-three different characters. Told through photographs and short written vignettes, the work goes beyond the simple act of eating and questions our perspectives on what it means to be alone. Sometimes, eating alone is an act of bravery. Sometimes, it is the result of being left behind. Sometimes, it is an act of necessity. Sometimes, it is something else entirely.

These stories ask us to reflect on our own feelings about being alone and compare them to the experiences of others. At different times in our lives, we’ve been or known each of the characters presented. While fictional, the stories speak to an emotional truth of what it feels like to be human.

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NADIA DELANE

SPILT MILK
Medium: Stop Motion Film

Spilt Milk: Inspired by diasporic consciousness, Nadia DeLane’s visual storytelling embodies diversity and variation. Over the past fifteen years, DeLane has independently produced written and visual content for commission, web and print media. DeLane’s Spilt Milk is a stop motion animated film delving into concepts ranging from childhood abandonment to the liquid nature of futures not yet beheld. Fabricating the family unit, DeLane’s handmade skills, complementary textures and puppetry visually communicate the emotional side effects of grief, care and longing. Though anchored by charge, the clock spins, shifting focus from what is lost with time, to what is gained through growth and experience. The viewer may ask: what is the function of a dream? A nightmare?

Spilt Milk is an abstract stop-motion animation taking audiences through the eyes of Carmen, a milk-loving child with an invisible friend named The Clear One (TCO). TCO, an entity left behind by his own family, fosters a friendship is soon interrupted by Carmen’s impending adolescence and inability to see or recognize her friend. Carmen’s inability to see TCO results in nightmares visions and physical pain. While experiencing grief over the changing dynamic, TCO anonymously heals Carmen’s illness. A visual metaphor for the bone-fortifying power of milk, Spilt Milk’s skewed imagery asks the viewer to look inside out for answers to life’s lingering questions.

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ANNABEL EVESlage

CARRIED INTEREST
Medium: Mixed Media, Photoscopic Cinema
Collaboration: Thesis Advisor Anthony Molina, Team FMWN
Credits: IDyll, Bloomberg News, and my family

LIMITED PARTNERSHIPS: Fiscal Q4 / 2014

Dear Investors,

We are recapping the last part of 2014 - October, November and December, and the great supply of actions that occurred throughout. The emergence of cities, unbound wealth, love, sex, helicopters, snow-capped mountains, and penthouses - these are the positive spikes in the trajectory of this Quarter. The crude oil unrest, Greek national debt, Russian aggression, police brutality and rioting – these were the nearly daily troughs.

Limited Partnerships, LLC is a New York City-based financial management firm, actively trading and, with the help of proprietary algorithms, acquiring every dollar, pound, ruble, yen, and deutsche mark we can and currently in charge of assets totaling four billion dollars. This vein of Quarterly Reports is the supplementary social side of the firm’s decisions, actions and reactions.

Technological development and aggressive intelligence have garnered a large portion to us who are dedicated to seeking and constantly advancing investment strategies. Now, coupled with sound risk management, we are leveraging scale and deploying elaborate acquisition strategies, enabling us to become “just medium enough to keep winning.

All the Best,

Hedge Fundy, Manager

STEVEN LITTLE

JENNY GOLDSTICK

THIS IS MY MEMORY OF FIRST HEARTBREAK, WHICH I CAN’T QUITE PIECE BACK TOGETHER
Medium: Interactive
Credits: Heather Feats and Owen Fehrs - Video Animation Assistance, Vassi Spanos - Exhibition Consultant

This is My Memory of First Heartbreak, Which I Can’t Quite Piece Back Together: A graphic memoir exploring the author’s memory of her first heartbreak. Created as an interactive, sequential experience, This is My Memory of First Heartbreak, Which I Can’t Quite Piece Back Together (TMMFH) attempts to convey the fluid and subjective nature of this highly emotional, complex, and (increasingly) distant memory.

While at its core, this is a story of two young adults who argue on a suburban front porch late one summer night, it is really the story of the arc of their entire relationship. It is the complex set of circumstances surrounding the actual moment of heartbreak that make up the very fabric of it.

Using her background in information graphics, Goldstick designed the experience of TMMFH as logically as possible, attempting to quantify and string together the events of the memory in a way that felt executive and nostalgic. Ultimately, the goals of the project were to tell a subjective, emotional story that an informational, diagrammatic approach could be applied toward and to watch the consequences of that experiment unfold. It quickly turned into an interactive endeavor when it became clear that the story should be told non-linearly.

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ANNA EVESLAGE

EATING ALONE
Medium: Photography and Print

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THE BOY WHO ATE WORDS

Medium: An iOS app (for the iPad)
Publisher: In & Salt

Credits: Luis Gethman, Programmer; Yiqiao Wang, Character Sketches; Rainy Orteca, Sound Designer

The Boy Who Ate Words is an interactive narrative-based game. The protagonist lives in a world where he is constantly given commands: “Keep your dog off my lawn!”, “Put out your ashes quickly!” The directives become invariable and he becomes increasingly more and more frustrated. One day, in a spontaneous gesture, without thinking, he grabs a word and shoves it in his mouth! Much to his astonishment, he could eat words. words are edible! He grabs another word and another one! He was on a rampage – eating every word in sight. Unbeknownst to the boy, every time he eats a word, the corresponding object disappears. Also, his world is vanishing! Words construct our meaning and understanding of the world in a world where words cease to exist, our constructed world would cease to exist! The boy finds himself alone, scared, and lonely. In a blank space void of objects and meaning, he is forced to match the letters to create words, transforming them into objects.

The Boy Who Ate Words is an exploration into interactive storytelling and visual representations of voice. The typography is original, done entirely on a letterpress machine using type sets dating back as early as the 1870s. The prints were then scanned and turned into font files. Each story character was given a distinctive font, adding weight and individuality to their voice, style, and tone. Designed for children ages 8 & up, including parents, educators, design aficionados, any and all linguaphiles at heart. The essence of this story is to provoke language, literacy, and responsibility of restoring his world is up to the player by matching the letters to create words, transforming them into objects.

MELISSA MALZKUHN

A TYPOGRAPHIC EXPEDITION!
A NARRATIVE DRIVEN ADVENTURE!

THE BOY WHO ATE WORDS

IVORY NUÑEZ-MEDRANO

INTERNAL MATTER

Medium: Printed book

Internal Matter: A book telling the story of Daniel, a self-taught plumber with poetic sensibilities, who becomes a most wanted man after accidentally discovering a major threat to the sewage system of his native city. While running for his life, Daniel is forced to join a clandestine army in need of his plumbing expertise to execute their radical agenda, which includes a coup.

The series of events in Daniel’s life takes place in Someday City, a post-apocalyptic society founded inside the monumental statue of Fray Orteca. Daniel has no plumbing expertise, but he has poetic sensibilities, who becomes a most wanted man after accidentally discovering a major threat to the sewage system of his native city. While running for his life, Daniel is forced to join a clandestine army in need of his plumbing expertise to execute their radical agenda, which includes a coup.

IVORY NUÑEZ-MEDRANO’s Internal Matter explores the narrative possibilities of digitzed handmade illustration, amateur poetry, descriptive writing, and vintage handbook layouts, to produce a third world sci-fi tale.

ALISON PAUL

EQUINOX

Medium: Multi-Plane Stop-Motion Animation

Equinox: The story of a man in a lighthouse in the middle of the Arctic Circle. His days are long and lonely, and the memories of his beloved is everywhere, a constant reminder of his new life of solitude. He tries to find solace in his work, tracing the movement of the sun throughout the day and operating the lighthouse at the night, but it’s not the same without her.

As the Equinox draws nearer, his spirits lift slightly, but the anticipation is almost worse. When the time comes, our sailor shaves off his months of beard growth and dons a full t-shirt and top hat. He locks the door to the lighthouse and, with the setting sun he walks into the icy water…

… but what he finds below is not the end, just another beginning.

In this, her third short film, Alison Paul continues to play with the limitations that analog animation presents. Creating all effects in-camera, Alison fabricates all assets in paper and animated every scene by hand, exploring the answers to the questions: How expressive is the face of an etching? How does the ocean move in analog animation presents. Creating all effects in-camera, Alison fabricated all assets in paper and animated every scene by hand, exploring the answers to the questions: How expressive is the face of an etching? How does the ocean move in...
Journal No. 034:

A risk analyst for the Are They The OneTM mobile dating application, the sashimi chef believes the matter is not a simple one. While trying to find some clues, he accidentally falls into a strange underwater world. There, he discovers the real cause of the strange event. Meanwhile, a more fearful truth is beginning to emerge, worse than he ever could have imagined...

The mystery and suspense develop with the main character’s mental illness, and he is increasingly unable to tell the difference between what is a dream and what is reality. The story is inspired by Ruan’s nightmares. It expresses the feeling of fear and brings the nightmares to life.

Ruan approached the work in a unique style meant to reflect the dark and heavy tone of the story. In terms of format, Ruan experimented with a few different directions and ended up making a unique picture book/graphic novel hybrid. This book will deliver a tangible representation of a beautiful nightmare – Good Night.

To those who have picked up this gem of a publication, thank you.

Five years ago when President David Rhodes and Provost Jeff Nesin approved the design of the MFA Visual Narrative program, I could never have foreseen where we would be by 2015. It was unimaginable how the thoughtful insights and remarkable imaginations of the faculty and students would come to define and truly shape the program’s focus and fulfill its potential.

This exhibition introduces our inaugural graduating class of 2015 and their thesis work, fourteen unique and singular visual artists and authors, truly representing the future of visual storytelling and embodying the mission of the MFAVN program. I could not be more grateful for the opportunity to have worked together or more proud of their progress and accomplishments.

I would like to thank our illustrious faculty and mentors for their time, dedication and generosity, Joan McCabe and Lucea Spinelli for their partnership and wisdom, and David Rhodes and Jeff Nesin for their ever-present support and vision.

My hat and heart goes out to you all. Cheers!!!

Nathan Fox | Chair, MFA Visual Narrative
June 29, 2015