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Ideation into Action: Challenging Convergent Thinking

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Ideation into Action: Challenging Convergent Thinking

By

Margaret A. Giamo

An Abstract of a Project in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

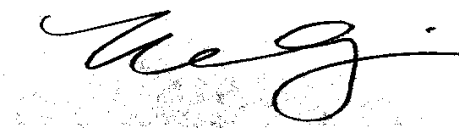
May 2020

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

ABSTRACT

Ideation into Action: Challenging Convergent Thinking

This purpose of this project is to challenge personal convergent skills through the creation of two completed children's books written and illustrated by Maggie Giamo. Both books, "*I Can Play Too!*" and "*Dia-badass*", are personal stories of triumphs that address topics of social awareness. "*I Can Play Too!*" is a story of a young female athlete's journey through a male-dominated sport. "*Dia-badass*" shares the story of a young boy who evolves from struggling to embracing his diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes. Both stories pave opportunity to create discussion and reflection regarding empathy of others' journeys.



Margaret A. Giamo

May 18th, 2020

Date

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

Ideation into Action: The convergent challenge

A Project in
Creative Studies

by

Margaret A. Giamo

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Spring 2020

Dates of Approval:

May 12, 2020



Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Associate Professor

Margaret A. Giamo
Candidate

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This end is bittersweet. I no longer must eat my dinners in the car or miss my Bravo TV series. Yet, I am not ready to stop learning. The tools, lessons, and stories I've absorbed through this program will equip me to be a forever student. To forever be self-aware, curious, and visionary. Thank you to the Creative Studies program for re-lighting that fire.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Mom and Dad. Without you both, I wouldn't be here; literally and figuratively. Your humor, charisma, banter, support, and compassion has never made me feel alone in this journey. I am the luckiest girl in the world to have you as my parents.

I would like to thank Dr. John Cabra. He was my first professor in this program and my biggest change maker towards success. His guidance, empathy, humor, compassion, and spark made it an easy decision to join the Myanmar program. Dr. Cabra gave me an opportunity to see the world from another lens, make life-long connections, and experience real social change. I am forever grateful for your mentorship and moth balls.

Jeremy "Thin Mint" Brewster, where do I begin? Thank heavens for John placing us "ideators" together at a table. I feel like you are the menacing stepbrother I never had. Thank you for being my best friend. If I say anything remotely embarrassing, I am susceptible to your black mailing. Look forward to sharing many durians and strawberry milkshakes with you in Myanmar.

Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers, thank you for your patience, open minded-ness, and gentle persuasion during my journey through this project. You have exhibited the true modeling of a

flexible educator. Without you, my book would still be sitting on my computer collecting virtual dust.

My dear friends and colleagues, thank you for reassuring me I still had some gas in the tank. Your love has been the best fuel I could have.

Most importantly, I want to thank my students. You are the reason I worked so hard to do this. Thank you for your quiet, and loud, reminders to keep pushing through sleepless nights of juggling multiple jobs and graduate school. I can't wait to share the world of creativity with you.

Lastly, a note to myself: Although you have been known for serial self-depreciation, I am proud of you.

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

Purpose and Description of Project

I begin writing this as a worldwide crisis struck. Currently, we are in a state of emergency facing an international pandemic called the coronavirus. Our local counties in Western New York have banned all unessential travel, businesses, schools, and public gatherings. Considering the drastic shift in daily life, my project needed to shift as well.

According to the Foresight model (Puccio, 2002), I am a driver; a hybrid between an Ideator and an Implementer preference in my problem solving. Lately, I've associated myself more with Ideator tendencies. My abilities to generate wild, unusual, and rapid ideas can be exhilarating. However, the ability to converge and implement those ideas have had major gaps.

As a visual artist, a large majority of my work is 75% complete. I begin to hit a plateau in my process once I lose passion, interest, and/or challenge. I am hoping that this project will help me build my implementation and converging muscles.

I have written a children's book, in 2016, that has been collecting virtual dust in my computer. Once teaching, graduate schools, and personal life became prioritized, the book became idle. Now, during this time of public quarantine, would be a pivotal moment for me to fill that 25% gap of my products.

For the first part of this project, I plan to complete the edits, illustrations, and layout of that forgotten children's book. We'll call Part One, the "appetizer"; feeding the neglected implementor in me. The second part of this project will be the "main course", a rapid-fire prototype of a children's book. A triathlon of writing, illustration, and implementing an entirely

new book from start to finish. Essentially, this will challenge my ability to exercise both Ideator and Implementor traits. I'd like to think that having a hybrid foresight as a "til death do us part" mantra. Having both ideator and implementor traits can be polarizing. There is a duality between diverging and convergent thinking, and irrational and rational thinking. This project will help me facilitate and develop a marriage between both traits to *truly exercise the capabilities of being creative and productive.*

Rationale for Selection

My personal philosophy of creativity is that all ideas stem from a space of vulnerability. In order to create change, specifically with creativity, you must allow yourself to become flexible. Whether that flexibility means tapping into self-awareness, viewing a problem from multiple perspectives, or sharing a story that served as a catalyst for an idea, they all share an element of vulnerability.

My first story, *I Can Play Too!*, is based off of true experiences during my childhood. Growing up as a young, female ice hockey player in the early 90's, the only female hockey teams available to join were in Ontario, Canada. I was left with the only option of playing on boys' teams. From the ages of 5-10, I was the only girl on my teams. Lucky for me, I had an older brother to play with for most of those years. Around 2000, a surge of female hockey teams began to pop up in the Western New York area. I transitioned to an all girls' team by middle school, allowing me to graduate from the countless first aid and referee rooms I silently sat in before games. As hockey became more serious in my life, I was dedicated to find as many outlets to improve my game. During high school, many of my female travel-hockey teammates were attending private schools. These private schools also had significant female ice hockey

programs. This gave many of my teammates, and competition, more advantages to improving their game. I was not able to afford private schools, so I turn to my boy's high school hockey team. It was a blast from the past, returning to alone female role on an all boys' team. However, returning to the spot was not the same. I no longer had my brother as security, and these boys were faster, stronger, and more opinionated. Before I could try out, I had to undergo a physical-stamina exam to see if I was able to "keep up" as a female. This was the beginning of a tone that I would experience throughout my career and boys high school hockey. The excessive hits, derogatory remarks, and bullying I experienced were a weekly occurrence on and off the ice. They were even parents who voiced complaints regarding their son competing with a girl for ice time. Regardless, I did this because my love for hockey outweighed the negative. Playing on the boy's team sparked an avalanche for the other public-school girls on my travel team. Soon, there were four of us that were competing on high school boy's hockey teams. We even broke history, since there were no other recorded women in history that played on Western New York boys' high school hockey teams.

I truly believe this book was written at a heightened feeling of creativity, or flow. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) I was able to relieve myself of judgement or fear when creating this piece. Once I mentally revisited those past experiences, there was nothing to fear at that point. In fact, I experienced such ease with my writing when I placed myself in that past-perspective. This space of vulnerability was the root of my creative fruit.

In Part Two of my project, a fast prototype of a children's book, I will also create from a space of vulnerability. Having such success and enjoyment with my first approach, I emulated that same level of sensitivity when creating the second book. The second children's book, Dia-

badass, is the story of a young boy learning to accept his diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes. I wrote this book to eliminate the self-imposed stigmas individuals with Type 1 Diabetes experience. I, myself, was diagnosed with T1D at the age of 26. This was a major life change for me. Most of my life was spent without these habits I was forced to adopt. I wanted to share my insecurities, fears, and feelings of helplessness through the creation of this young character and storyline. I am hoping this book will encourage other individuals living with T1D to also celebrate their medical need. Similar to *I Can Play Too!*, I performed at a flow-like peak when I chose to create from vulnerability.

SECTION TWO: PERTINANT LITERATURE

I divided my literature into the following categories:

1. Models and Theories in Creativity
2. Illustration and Design of Children's Books

Selected Bibliography

Category One: Models and Theories in Creativity

Through the Creative Studies program, I have developed an understanding and improved practice of creative problem skills. The skills were easily clarified and analyzed through a diversity of creativity models, theories, and assessment taught in our curriculum. The three examples that had the most profound, personal impact were The FourSight Assessment (Puccio, 2002), Model of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), and Convergent and Divergent Thinking (Guilford, 1956).

Puccio, G. (n.d.). Home - FourSight. Retrieved from <https://foursightonline.com/>

Understanding my FourSight creative tendencies has been a catalyst for convergent production. Gaining insight and awareness to my own creative habits has helped me structure my environment and tasks to lead to success. Having scored high in Ideation, I knew that creating a rational and tangible plan would help aid in the successful implementation of these books.

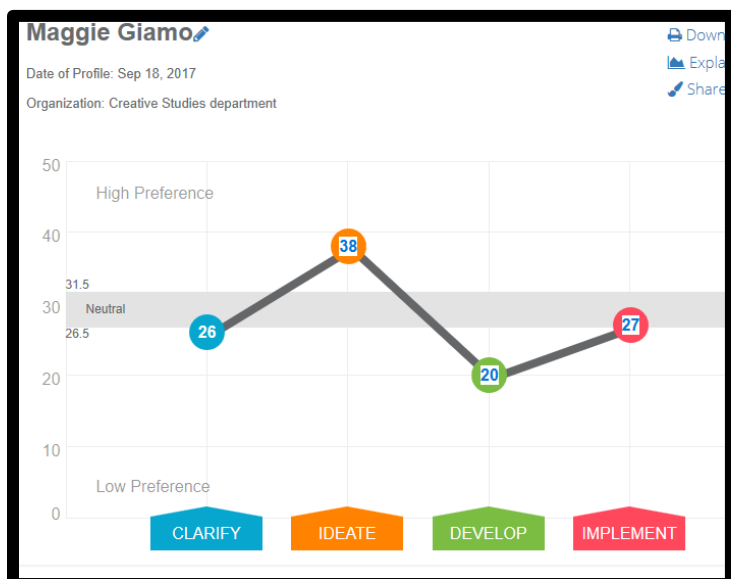


Figure 1: Personal Foursight Assessment Results (Puccio, 2002)



Figure 2: Tendencies of Ideator Preference (Puccio, 2002)

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997, July 1). Finding Flow.

Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/199707/finding-flow>

Having studied Csikszentmihalyi's model of flow, the background allowed me to identify moments of flow. When I was able to experience these moments, which variables seemed to be similar? How was the press, person, and product consistent? As I began to journal these experiences, I was able to better prepare myself and environment to accept moments of flow during my bookmaking process. Below is an image I used to help spark my own reflection and assessment of flow-like experiences. I really focused on the idea of concentrating on a task that involves a clear goal.

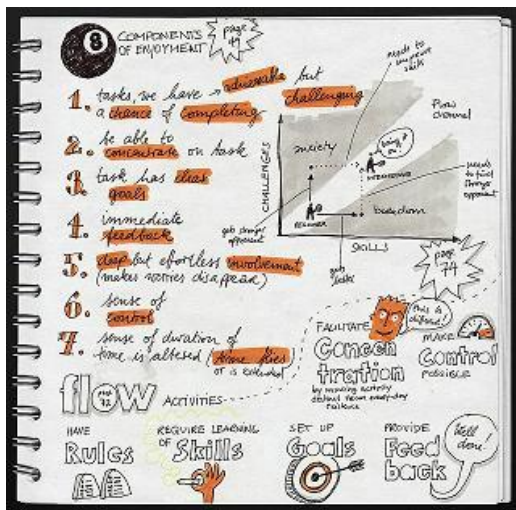


Figure 3: Visual representation of Csikszentmihalyi's model of flow

Guilford, J. P. (1983). Transformation abilities of functions. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 17(2), 75–83.

Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2162-6057.1983.tb00977.x>

Convergent and divergent thinking skills has been the most critical source of creative thinking habits I've learned. Understanding my convergently-challenged tendencies has helped me navigate in a clear, concise path to implementation.

James Spencer (Creator). (2019, February 18). Convergent Thinking versus Divergent Thinking [Video File].

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmBf1fBRXms>

I am a visual learner. I remembered Dr. Roger Firestein showing this video during his facilitation class. Referencing back to this video helped me better understand these skills and how I may relate to them. Not only does the video serve my visual learning needs, it helped inspire to format some of my illustrations to become more intimate and engaging.

Category Two: Illustration and Design of Children's Books

My experience as an artist has been primarily in hyper-realistic painting and drawing. Most of my subject matter involves the intimacy of the human portrait and figure. I have had mostly classical training the elements of fine arts, and less experience with the elements of design and illustration. Although many of these principals and elements are similar in both domains, I needed some help before I dove into my illustrating. I chose to focus my direction and inspiration from three illustrators: Shel Sivlerstein, Julia Williamson, and Christoph Niemann.

Silverstein, S., & Harper & Row, Publishers,. (1981). *A light in the attic*.

This has been my favorite book from my childhood. I think Shel Silverstein had a major influence on the infusion of my humor and cleverness into my art. His work was classic, gestural, and confident. He was unapologetic in his story writing and illustrating. His poetry and visuals demonstrated confidence, risk-taking, and creativity. I wanted to channel part of him within the implementation of both *I Can Play Too!* and *Dia-badass*.

Julia Williamson is a Buffalo-born author, illustrator, and a dear friend of mine. I met Julia while playing roller-derby in Buffalo. She studied graphic design at Fredonia College. She currently is the lead graphic designer for a real estate company, a free-lance designer, chalk artist, and published author and illustrator. I really admire and look up to Julia's work ethic, vision, and wisdom. So, it was a no-brainer to seek out illustration, design, and publishing advice from Jules. I also was luckily enough to have copies of several books she created to inspire and motivate my process.

Lastly, my favorite designer of ALL TIME. Chrisoph Niemann, a German designer known for his iconic illustration covers for *The New Yorker* magazine. I have admired Niemann's illustrations the moment I discovered his work. He is the king of simplifying an image. I wanted to create clean, appealing, and non-distracting illustrations for both of my stories. I knew that reviewing the elements and principles Niemann masterfully executed in his work would help my approach.

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

Structuring for Success

In this section, I will include the action plan for both *I Can Play Too!* and *Dia-badass*. This was a critical piece of planning that provided momentum to implement the project. Reflecting on my Foursight assessment (Puccio, 2002), clarifying and developing tendencies were areas that were lacking. Rationalizing my goals into a process plan helped slow my habits down and establish clear, sequential steps for success.

Project Timeline: *I Can Play Too!*

Considering this book had already been written in advance, the main trajectory for this plan is centered around illustrations. My personal investment in this book effected the window of time to complete these illustrations. I wanted to give myself a significant amount of time to master the visual look of this book. Within this larger window, I established strict deadlines to keep a realistic management of time.

Task	Deadline	Amount of Time to Complete
Edit story of I.C.P.T!	March 30 th	2 hours

Story Boarding	April 3 rd	5-6 hours
Establish Visual Identity of Maggie May	April 4 th	1-2 hours
Illustrate pages 1-5 (Pencil & Pen)	April 10 th	15 hours
Illustrate pages 6-11 (Pencil & Pen)	April 15 th	12 hours
Illustrate pages 12-16 (Pencil & Pen)	April 20 th	15 hours
Complete front & back cover (Pencil & Pen)	April 24 th	3 hours

Research & Execute self-published book	April 30 th	2-3 hours
		Total number of Hours: 60

Project Timeline: *Dia-badass*

For Part Two of this project, the window of time was significantly shorter. This book was rather a quick prototype challenge. The process plan for *Dia-badass* needed to be far more rigid with structure and deadlines considering the smaller segment of time. The prior experience of modeling after a project timeline for *I Can Play Too!* gave me more confidence to achieve success for completing *Dia-badass*.

Task	Deadline	Amount of Time to Complete
Incubate/ Brainstorm theme for next book	March 30 th	1-2 hours
Edit script	April 15 th	1 hour

Storyboarding	April 15 th	2-3 hours
Illustrate pages 1-4 (Pencil & Pen)	April 20 th	4 hours
Illustrate pages 5-8 (Pencil & Pen)	April 24 th	6 hours
Illustrate Front & Back Cover (Pencil & Pen)	April 28 th	2 hours
Research/ Practice Watercolor methods for Illustration	April 30 th	1 hour
Execute color application through Illustration	N/A	In-process

		Total number of hours: 18+ hours
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Project Timeline: Completion of Masters Project Paper & Presentation

Task	Deadline	Amount of Time to Complete
Concept Paper	February	2 hours
Section 1-3	March	4 hours
Sections 4-6	May 2 nd	15 hours
Research	Throughout	6 hours
Editing	April 30 th	2 hours

PowerPoint visual for Presentation	May 1 st	2 hours
		Total number of hours: 31 hours

Total number of hours for *I Can Play Too!*: **60 hours**

Total number of hours for *Dia-badass!*: **18+ hours**

Total number of hours for Masters Project Paper: **31 hours**

TOTAL HOURS FOR PROJECT: 109 hours

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

Introduction

Illustration of *I Can Play Too!*

Having written the story for this piece prior to the start of this semester, my sole goal was to visually bring this story to life. Although I am an artist and teacher, I have never professionally illustrated a book. Since I had such a strong connection to this piece, I felt it was critical to pour my all into these drawings.

Having noted earlier that I am an ideator and implementer, my first reaction was to begin final sketches right away. I sometimes tend to put on the convergent breaks. I slowed my urgency to begin by establishing a plan. A plan...what's that?! I first began organizing the visual layout of words with images. I had to decide, first, how many illustrations this book would need. I first dissected the language of the book and segmented harmoniously sound sentences to a page. Once all the words were divided and accounted, I was left with 20 divided pages of words.

Next, I needed to storyboard the illustrations onto their rightful page of words. Let me tell you, had I not tapped into my convergent side and created this plan, I would not be typing an outcome for this section. Creating a skeleton for my drawings alleviated a significant amount of pressure. I was able to create a vision map, that in turn, gave me the confidence I needed to implement the illustrations into action. (See Figures 1-2).

The protagonist of the story needed to have a consistent, visual identity. As I began to illustrate the very first page of the book, I realized that every mark and decision had to stick. There was little room for errors or inconsistencies. If my character was wearing tube socks with

one stripe, every frame of an illustration had to have those exact socks. Granted, the timeline of this story occurred in a single day. The neighborhood, weather, and scenery all had a visual effect on the story. I wanted this story to reach many types of female athletes. In this book, race, gender, and socioeconomic background are not generalized to a sport.

As I began to finish the first few illustrations, I was happy with the consistency of elements of design: line, shape, color, etc. However, I wanted to take more risks. Having never created a book before, there were no rules I established for myself. All experimentation, with justifiable cause, was welcome. What I found lacking was an intimate lens of Maggie. So, I began changing the space, view, and perspective the reader had. More zoomed and angled views of Maggie heightened the visual experience and association with the character.

At April 26, I was still finishing illustrations. Initially I wanted to add color. With a high investment into this book, I wanted to really perfect the format, style, and composition of each illustration to marry the words and mood of the story. I decided to keep the illustrations black and white, truthfully, because I was too nervous to damage or ruin the illustrations I was so pleased with. It was a very challenging process, because I have never really committed to drawing something of this length or nature before.

I am used to very rapid, kinetic, and hyper realistic painting. Paint is a medium that I find I can bounce around with, which is seemingly familiar with my personality. My attention can be challenged when I must focus on a single task or area for an extended amount of time. I find, with paint, that I can jump around in different areas; building up on layers, saturation, and value. With drawing, it is simply drawing: outlining and completion. Very straight forward. Little room for self-distraction or procrastination within the composition. This was a challenge

for me. Every line that I drew mattered. If I messed up once I began outlining, there wasn't any painting over the mistake. Precision and hyper attention to detail had to be consistent throughout this project.

My largest obstacle throughout this process was staying on task. Tapping into self-awareness, I knew that I needed to list small tasks to complete daily. Holding myself accountable through the understanding of my own tendencies and habits were critically helpful. These skills were influenced and shaped by the Foursight model and J.P. Guilford's divergent and convergent thinking.

Self-reflecting on days that were productive, through notetaking and journaling, was a helpful reminder to remain productive. Csikszentmihalyi's theory of "flow", an effortless action people experience in moments that stand out, was a model I tried to embody throughout this journey. Athletes refer to it as "being in the zone," religious mystics as being in "ecstasy," artists and musicians as "aesthetic rapture." The involvement in something so deeply that you seem to lose track of time. There were pockets of these flow moments throughout this project, and I sought daily to experience that state of being. These were the moments where my writing, illustrating, and thinking were hyper present and productive.

"It is also important to develop the habit of doing whatever needs to be done with concentrated attention. Even the most routine tasks, like washing dishes, dressing, or mowing the lawn, become more rewarding if we approach them with the care it would take to make a work of art. We must then transfer some psychic energy each day from tasks that we don't like doing, or from passive leisure, into something we never did before, or something we enjoy doing but don't do often enough because it seems too much trouble. This sounds simple, but many people

have no idea which components of their lives they actually enjoy. Keeping a diary or reflecting on the past day in the evening are ways to take stock systematically of the various influences on one's moods. After it is clear which activities produce the high points in one's day, it becomes possible to start experimenting, by increasing the frequency of the positive ones and decreasing that of others.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, 6)

At times, I feel that I can be two polarizing people in one body; a voice of reason, perhaps a mother forced to nag, and a hyperactive, curious child that is rebelling the confinement of a structured scheduled. I know there are tasks that need to be completed, but I tend to drag my heels if possible. The study of creativity has been a critical and honest mirror I have been needing to face. When I completed the Foursight Model assessment (Puccio, 2002), the results of my creative preferences were strikingly familiar. Ideators tend to prefer generating wild, unusual, and rapid ideas.

I am happy with the results of this book. Although there a few pages left to be complete, I am confident it will be published by this summer. What I never thought I would have is the strength to share a personal story. I've come to appreciate the strength that comes with being vulnerable. This program has allowed me to tap into myself, intrinsically, to build creativity. I truly believe, from my own experience, the most optimal moments of flow and creativity come from a place of vulnerability, authenticity, and self-awareness. Figures below include images of rough draft and final illustration pages from I can play too!

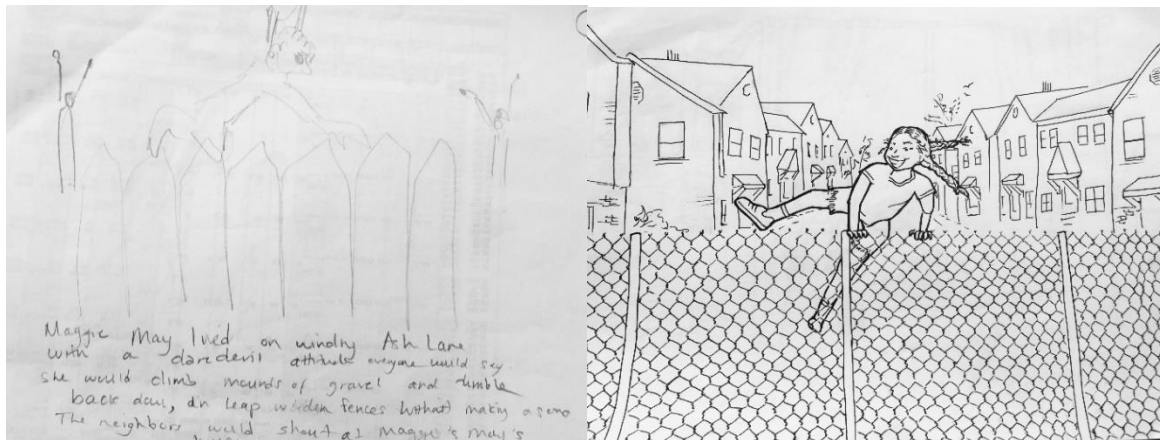


Figure 4: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 1 in *I Can Play Too!*

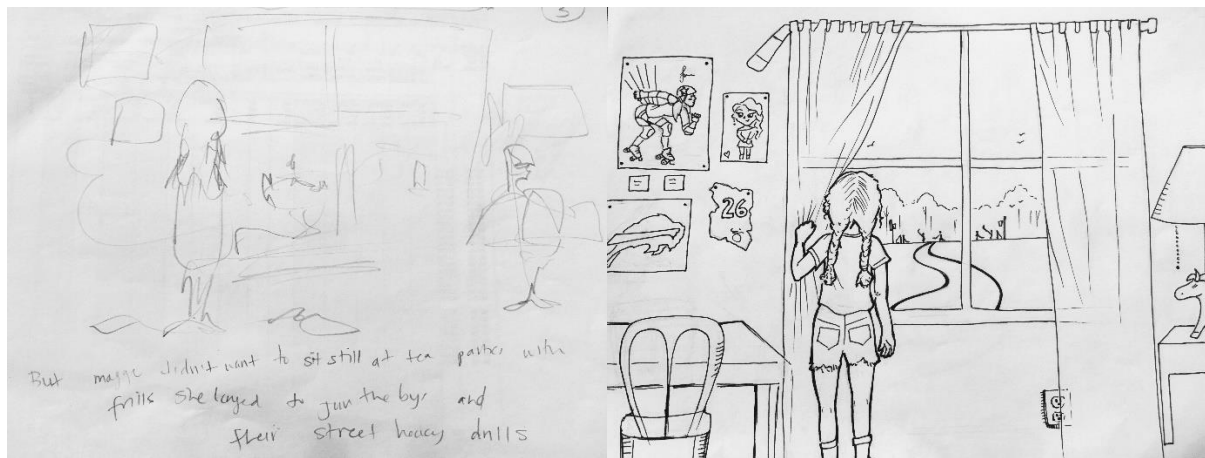


Figure 5: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 2 in *I Can Play Too!*



Figure 6: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 3 in *I Can Play Too!*



Figure 7: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 4 in *I Can Play Too!*

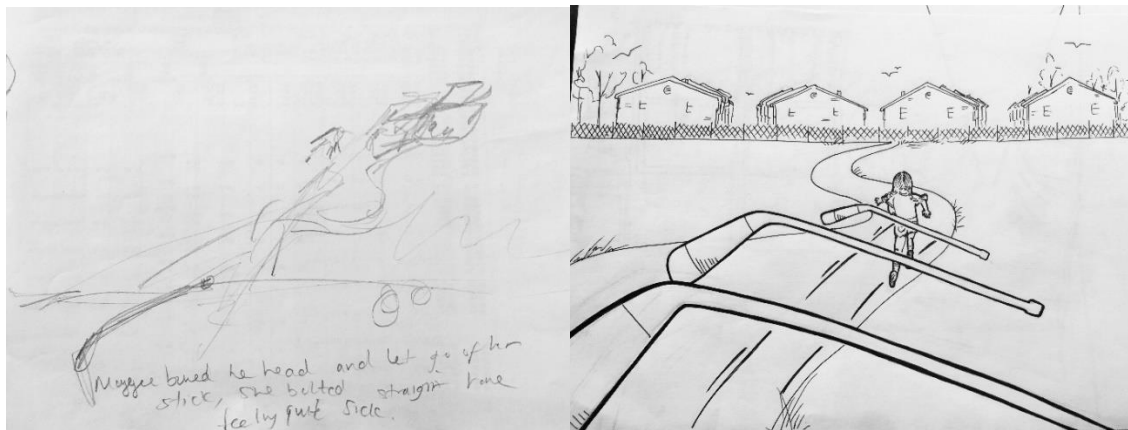


Figure 8: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 5 in *I Can Play Too!*



Figure 9: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 6 in *I Can Play Too!*

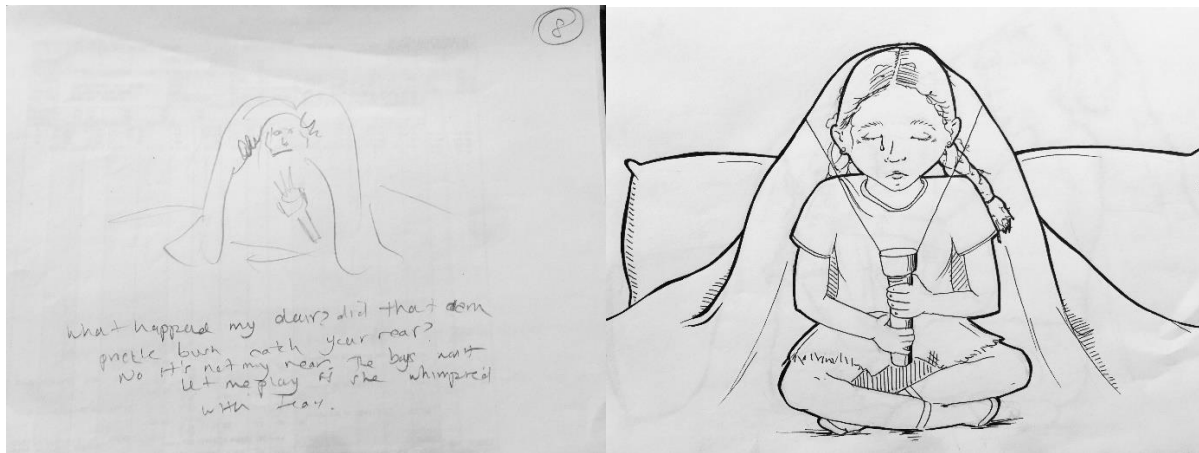


Figure 10: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 7 in *I Can Play Too!*

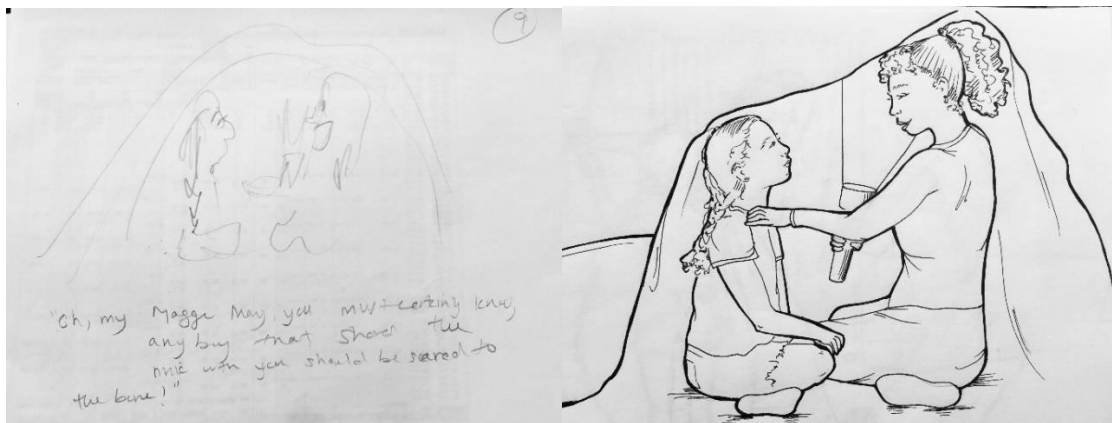


Figure 11: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 8 in *I Can Play Too!*



Figure 12: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 10 in *I Can Play Too!*

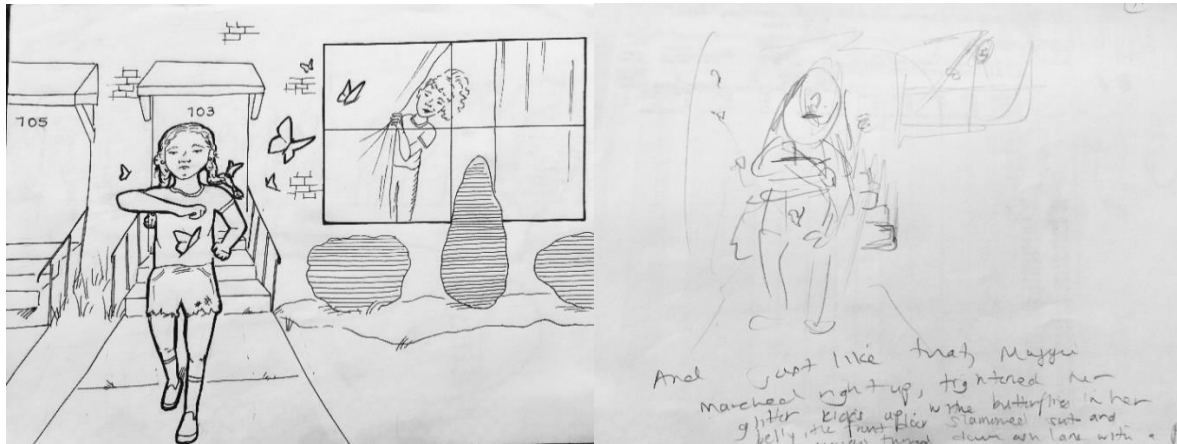


Figure 13: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 10 in *I Can Play Too!*

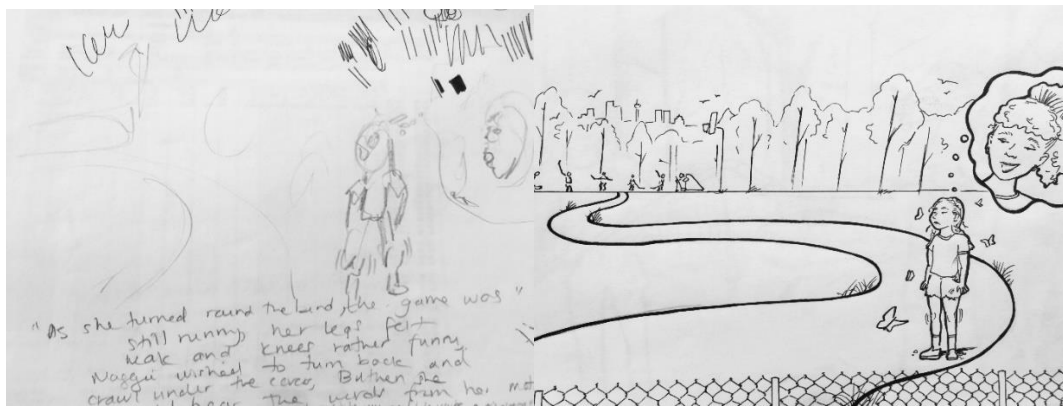


Figure 14: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 11 in *I Can Play Too!*

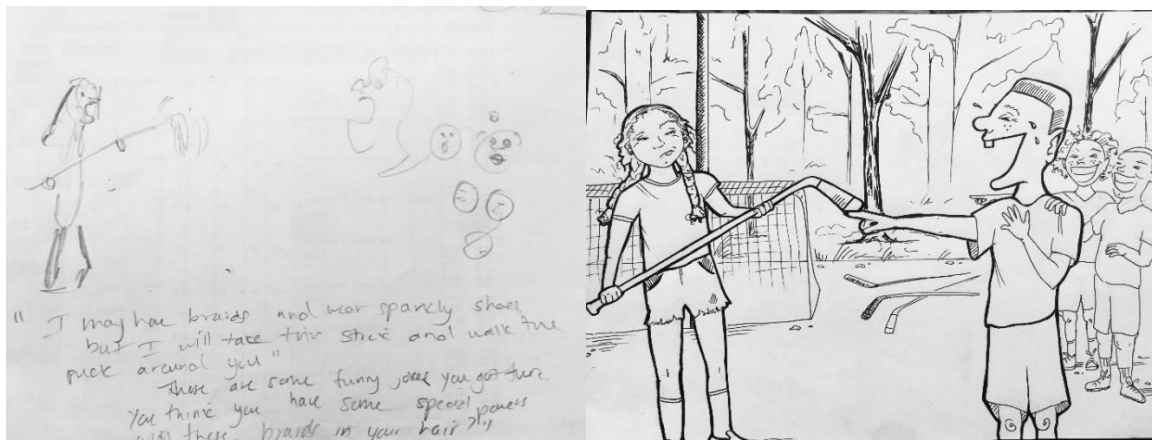


Figure 15: Rough draft vs. final illustration of page 12 in *I Can Play Too!*

Writing and Illustration of *Dia-badass*

I have written book #2: *Dia-badass* in one evening on a whim of creativity. I had taken a break from my illustrations of “I can play too!”. I was discussing with my mother about the idea for my second book. It was a raw discussion that touched upon my own insecurities within my experience of Type 1 Diabetes. I knew, in that moment, I should write. As I began to write, I experienced a flow-like state very similar to one I had endured when writing “I can play too!”. There were times I struggled with forcing rhymes into each stanza, but the hyper-focus fueled me to continue. As I was near completion, I wanted to share the story with my mom. As I finished and looked up, she was crying. That was the only other seal of approval I needed.

Writing the story took 35 minutes to be exact. That was the easy part. Writing has always been easy and natural for me. Illustrating has been the most challenging for this second book. Time consuming, yes. But the thought of messing up or doubts of not marketing the right image were the biggest obstructions. Yet, the heightened self-awareness I developed through this program allowed my flexibility to peak through during the illustrating process. I felt more confident to take risks with my style.

I was overwhelmed at the small window of time to produce this second book, the competitive nature in me was ready to perform. Based off previous success, it was essential for me to storyboard my vision of the book first. That was my lifeline in this process. It allowed me the freedom to no longer focus on the concept of the drawing. I already had a plan. What I could focus on now was how to execute that plan through the elements of design. Although this second book was a quick prototype, I now have the blueprints to complete and publish an entirely new book. Figures below are selected images from the process and implementation of “Dia-badass.”

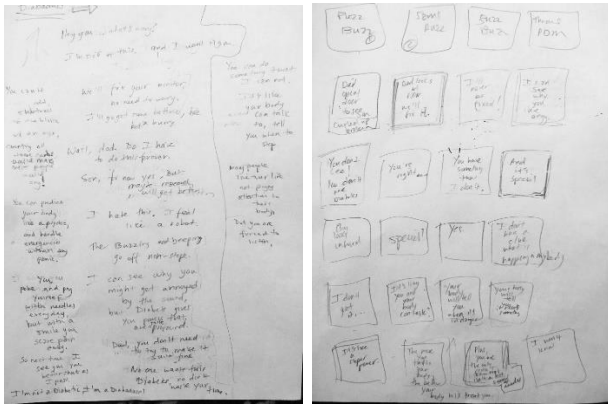


Figure 16: Script and storyboarding of Dia-badass.

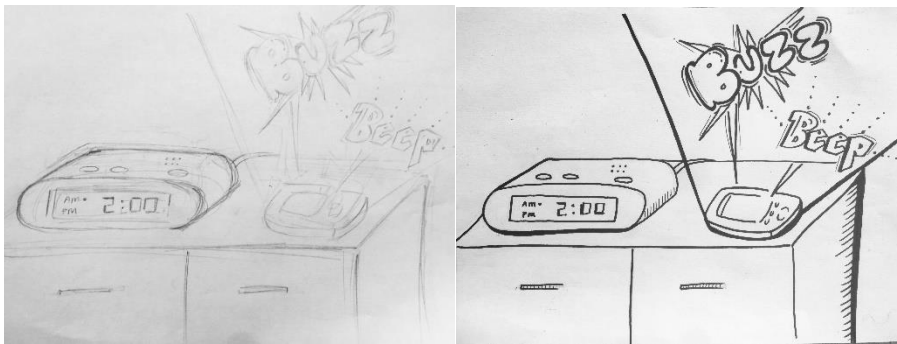


Figure 17: Rough draft vs. final illustration of Dia-badass.



Figure 18: Rough draft vs. final illustration of Dia-badass.

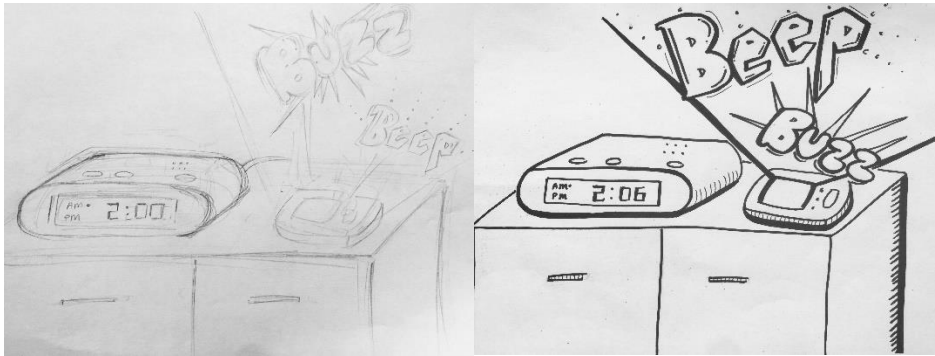


Figure 19: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.

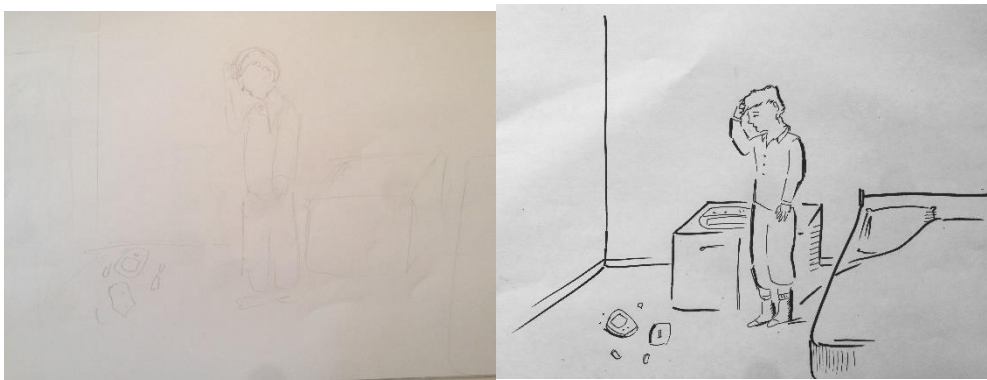


Figure 20: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 21: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 22: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 23: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 24: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 25: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 26: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 27: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.

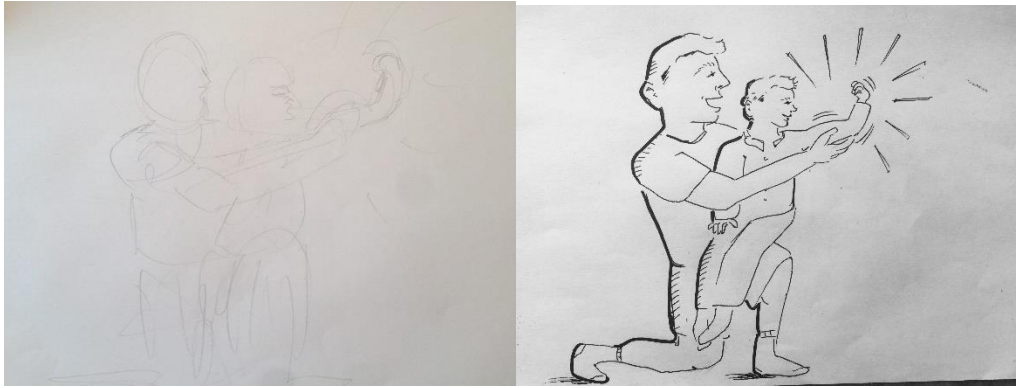


Figure 28: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.

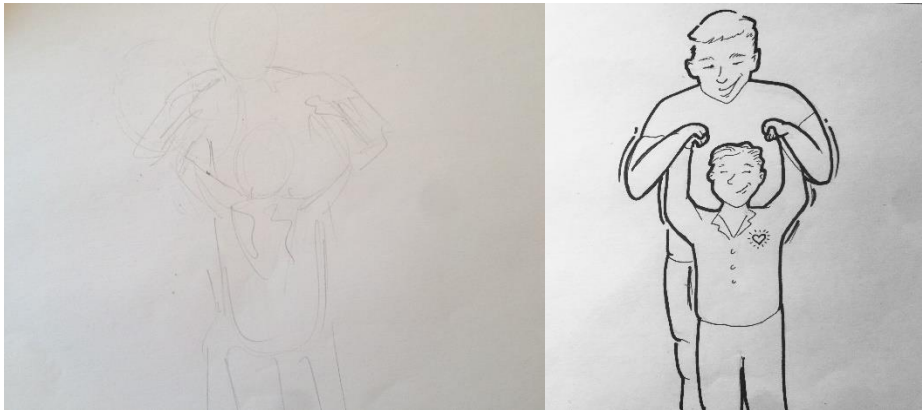


Figure 29: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.



Figure 30: Rough draft vs. final illustration of *Dia-badass*.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

Introduction

Through this project, I have an even better understanding of myself. Although I may have tendencies that could hinder the implementation of the process, the tools I've learned from this program helped me maintain structure. I have organized my key learning into the following:

Key Learning One: Time is of the Essence

Time was my friend, and also, my enemy in this process. I have a habit of waiting until the very last minute. I am confident that with all of this time I will just “get it done.” With a project of this volume, every moment of time needed to be planned and accounted for. The personal importance of these pieces meant that it was not done hastily. Having a timer and hourly plans helped break down the weight of the tasks. I am grateful that all of this quarantine time allowed for thorough focus and effort.

Key Learning Two: Having a Plan does not Hinder the Creative Process

As a high ideator and divergent thinker, I believed that “winging-it” or working “spontaneously” were the only ways to truly work creatively. The process of creativity can also include intention and rationalization. I usually hate planning, in fact, despise it. However, for example, I made a storyboard for each book because I knew I needed it to ensure its implementation. In fact, the discipline of creating a storyboard allowed freedom to explore skill, technique, composition, and style. Had I been distracted with establishing the layout, I may have had less time to take risks with the elements of design in the illustrations.

Key Learning Three: Take Risks

As mentioned in the outcomes, at first I was scared to make mistakes. I had invested emotion, time, and effort into the creation of each story. I didn't want to make drastic changes or risks to effect the vision of the story. As I began to play the illustrations safe, I found the process less exciting. In order to stay engaged, I needed to challenge myself as an artist. Once I let go of my restriction of fear, I began to really see a change in my illustrations. Beyond page 2 of "I can play too!", you can see that the perspective of space begins to change. The diversity of size, shape, and treatment of line also begins to evolutionize. The ability for me to be open to new experiences within my illustrating process was, by far, the most enjoyable part of this journey. I have never drawn anything like this before. And for that, I am proud.

Key Learning Four: Enjoy the Ride

Of course there were times I became frustrated. Unsure if I would even finish. That's when I needed to direct myself. I had to practice mindfulness and enjoy the opportunity of just creating. When would I ever have this amount of time to create something so special to me? Probably when I retire. So, I learned to enjoy the ride. Even through the late nights when I was tired, cranky, and hands were giving out. When I look at these pieces now, I am reminded of the memories with myself that I made along the way.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

I have surpassed my expectations. Said before, I am a habitual self-doubter. I know I am creative, but my intrinsic fears have prevented me from many opportunities to implement. I truly believe the mapping of this project was for a reason. This journey allowed me to quiet my fears, doubts, and insecurities of commitment and failure. I am grateful that this process not only heightened my self-awareness and self-love, but helped me create products that can hopefully heighten others too.

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