

A stylized illustration of strawberries and leaves. The strawberries are pink with dark spots and green leafy tops. The leaves are light green with dark green outlines. The background is white.

SPROUT

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ARTIST STATEMENT

About Roswell

Roswell Evan Haynes (they/them) is a nonbinary graphic illustrator and comic artist studying Illustration at Pacific Northwest College of Art.

Roswell wants nothing more than to leave the world a little brighter than it was when they found it by creating empowering and nurturing narratives for women and LGBT people and tender moments with floral imagery, figurative work, and plenty of cute ladies kissing and holding hands.

Roswell creates art to connect and foster empathy. They work digitally creating comics and illustrations centered around tenderness and gentle, slice-of-life narratives. A storyteller at heart, their artwork is heavily narrative-focused, and features a host of fun characters.

Roswell was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest and has been drawing since before they could walk. They can be found in Portland, Oregon, with their two rowdy cats and arguably even rowdier house plants.



WRITTEN PROPOSAL

Introduction

I grew up without the vocabulary to describe what I was experiencing. All I knew was that I was doing something wrong; I couldn't be a girl the way everyone else wanted me to be, and the harder I tried the more wrong I felt in my own skin; my body was not my own, it belonged to my classmates, my parents, strangers I passed on the street who I didn't even know. The idea of being transgender at all existed in my mind as little more than bad jokes about men in dresses on terrible sitcoms, the idea of existing outside the gender binary had not entered my universe, and did not until I left home for college and came here, to PNCA.

Through art, I was not only allowed, but encouraged to explore my identity. I was given new words, new concepts, that slowly fit into place around myself, and in turn made me fit more solidly into my own body, my own life. Through my own art, and the art of other transgender people, I finally found the truth: I am nonbinary, and I am not alone in this.

Thesis Statement

Through a 24-page autobiographical printed comic zine, I will craft a narrative around my personal experience with gender and identity, and the journey to self-acceptance. Using abundant floral and figurative imagery, I will tell a tender story about growth and loving yourself that will give an audience of teenagers and young adults the concepts and vocabulary to begin their own journeys towards knowing and loving who they are, and knowing that they are not as alone as they might think.

Context

I've always wanted to create art that makes people feel less alone. I want to tell stories that make people feel connected, to let them know they are not the only ones going through what they are going through. And I want this project to do the same thing; I want to create a narrative that will hopefully reach other people questioning their gender and tell them they are not alone, especially teens or young adults struggling with identity issues at a very formative time in their lives.

While this project is designed to reach other trans people, it is at its core a means of catharsis. It serves to tell my own story, to make sense of my experiences and everything I felt along the journey of self-discovery and acceptance. After I realized I was nonbinary, all the self-hatred and self-destruction I had experienced in my childhood years seems to fade; I

learned to love my body, learned to embrace my life and take back my autonomy, and fully, wholly accept myself.

What I want to do with this project is give others that same vocabulary that helped me stop hating my own existence. I hope to share my story of experimenting with gender and embracing nonconformity so that others who have been living in the same shadow as I did might be able to finally start their own journeys into self-acceptance.

The narrative will be loose and slightly abstracted; it won't be like a superhero comic with lots of action and fights. Instead it will be more of an internal monologue, showing a somewhat abridged version of what it was like to realize I was nonbinary and how much that helped me accept myself.

The story will follow my own internal processes of self discovery and acceptance, using a vague version of myself as the main character. I will be telling this as a first-person narrative, but I want it to focus more on the emotions at the root of things than on specific events from my life.

The narrative will look like this: Beginning in my hometown as a teenager, I will lay out all the discomfort of being closeted, of having no vocabulary to describe why just existing felt wrong, what it felt like to try and make myself fit into a box with no airholes and sandpaper lining the walls.

The second act of the comic covers discovery: moving to Portland, learning that it's possible to exist outside the gender binary, finally finding all the language to put what I've been feeling all my life into words. Using art to process all these things, to explore these new words and figure out how they apply to me.

Finally, I will conclude my comic with empathy and acceptance. This sections shows viewers how choosing a new set of pronouns and using a chosen name and changing how I present myself to the world finally helped me stop feeling wrong inside my own skin, and finally learned to not only accept but actively love all the bits of me I'd always viewed as flaws to punish myself for when I was still trying to force myself to be a cisgender girl. This is where I try to make it clear: being transgender or nonbinary is beautiful, and there are other people who have struggled with these things and come out the other side. This is where I will make it clear that while all our journeys might be unique, none of us are in this alone.

Process

This story will take the form of a 24-page printed comic, printed on 11x17" paper (making each page 8.5x11") and saddle-stapled, with a live area of 6x9" where the panels will rest. I will print out 5 physical copies for presentation at my defense, accompanied by individual prints of each page to be hung on the wall at the time of my oral presentation.

I will use primarily figurative imagery, interspersed with floral elements, to symbolize the growth and beauty that comes with accepting your transgender identity. I want it to feel gentle and soft, so people who are perhaps not used to being gentle and soft with themselves might finally get to know what that feels like.

This comic will be created digitally. This process begins with an outline and a script, and then thumbs, which will actually be done traditionally, to get a basic idea of composition. After scanning all the thumbs onto my computer, I will move to rough sketches, where I will move onto making sure there is a clear flow between all the panels and pages. I find my art works better when I can keep things loose, so I will move directly from rough sketches to line work, then onto spot blacks. Color is usually the last piece of the puzzle, and for this project I think natural earthy tones interspersed with some pinks and reds will suit the content and subjects best.

Influences

Two people who influenced me to tell my story with my art were Rebecca Sugar and Noelle Stevenson. I've always been a huge fan of the optimism found in cartoons, and the tenderness found in the stories they tell. They are also two LGBT artists, who gave me inspiration to follow my own dreams and tell my own stories. Artistically, I have always found inspiration from comic artists like Tillie Walden and Carey Pietsch, both stylistically and tonally in their stories. Pietsch tells up-beat, fantasy stories often featuring LGBT characters, and Walden tells tender, intimate stories with themes of found family and acceptance.

Portfolio

My own style has always been soft, which fits perfectly with the story I want to tell. I draw figures, scenes, and objects that feel gentle and "cute." Some artists may take issue with the word cute being used in the context of their work, but I personally have always aimed to create the cute and the adorable through an artistic style that utilizes simple, often rounded shapes and colors that always hit closer to the pastel end of the spectrum. The

reality of living as an LGBT person is so often harsh and grating, but I use "cuteness" to create art that says things don't have to be like that. Our stories can be just as cute as any Hallmark movie, just as tender as any romance novel. I like drawing things that bring a smile to people's faces. Not only does my specific voice skew towards the gentle side of the spectrum, this is the tone I want to express in the stories I tell. I want to tell stories of acceptance, I want to create stories about LGBT characters for LGBT audiences, so I feel this project is not only an ideal addition to my portfolio, it will put a face on my art that I want people to see. I want to be a person people go to to help them tell these kinds of stories.

Conclusion

My thesis project will tell a personal story that can help myself and others heal. The goal here is growth through art, connection through storytelling. If I can find a way to make even one person struggling with their gender or their identity -- with the kind of self-worth issues that accompany not being able to force yourself into boxes you never wanted anything to do with in the first place -- feel less alone, that is a win in my eyes.

THESIS ABSTRACT

Abstract

Sprout is a 28-page, monochromatic, autobiographical comic taking the reader through my real life and struggles with identity and gender in a small, rural town. Using abundant floral imagery, working in tandem with tender figurative imagery, readers will witness flashes of my daily life through the years, using plants as a visual metaphor for growth and beauty.

Sprout is the story of how when I was growing up, I was never given the vocabulary to describe my experiences, which is something Sprout seeks to rectify for readers. I only knew that whatever I was doing, I was doing it wrong on some fundamental level. The only words I was given were 'girl' and 'boy,' and I couldn't make either of those labels fit me. I could never manage to fit into expectations, to fit my existence into the mold I was given.

This wasn't for lack of trying; for years, I tried everything I could think of to shape myself into the thing that I thought everyone else wanted me to be. The more I did this, the worse I felt; I just felt wrong, and it felt bad to exist in my own skin. It was like my body did not belong to me, but rather existed as public property. It belonged to friends and classmates and even strangers I passed on the street who I didn't know and would never see again.

The idea of being trans wasn't something that was ever presented to me as a real, viable way of existing. The only pronouns that existed were she and he, and god help anyone who tried to pick a set other than the ones they were handed at birth. In my hometown, trans people just existed as the punchlines to bad jokes on sitcoms, not as real, living, breathing people who might exist as the children or siblings or peers of anyone in town.

Sprout exists for other people considering their own identity, to hopefully lessen their pain just a little bit. The end goal of this project has always been to reach other people who might be experiencing something similar. Sprout will hopefully reach people who are questioning their own gender at formative periods of their lives such and tell them they are not alone. Hopefully, Sprout will open people up to new theories and vocabulary by sharing my own experiences with embracing and celebrating nonconformity.



ORAL DEFENSE

Introduction

Hi, my name is Roswell Evan, I am nonbinary and I use they/them pronouns. Thank you all so much for coming, I really appreciate everyone taking time out of their schedules to come see this. Today I'm going to talk to you about my thesis project: Sprout. Sprout is an autobiographical comic that takes you through my life and my struggles with identity and gender, which uses abundant floral imagery combined with figurative imagery and flashes of my daily life as I grew as a visual metaphor for growth and beauty. When I was growing up, I didn't have the vocabulary to describe what I was going through. The only thing I knew was that on some fundamental level I was doing something wrong. I couldn't be a girl the way everyone expected me to be. I could never seem to manage to fit my existence into what was expected of me. This wasn't for lack of trying. For years, I tried so hard to shape myself into the thing that everyone else seemed to want me to be, but the more I did the worse I felt. I felt wrong, and it felt bad to just exist in my own skin. It was like my body was not my own, but instead something that belonged to friends and classmates and even strangers I passed on the street who I didn't know and would never see again. The idea of being trans wasn't something that was ever presented to me as a real, viable way of existing. The only pronouns that existed were she and he. In my hometown, trans people just existed as the punchlines to bad jokes on sitcoms, not as real, living, breathing people who might exist as the children or siblings or peers of anyone in town. The end goal of this project has always been to reach other people who might be experiencing something similar. I will hopefully reach people who are questioning their own gender at formative periods of their lives (suchs as childhood or adolescence) and tell them they are not alone. Hopefully, Sprout will open people up to new ideas and vocabulary by sharing my own experiences with embracing and celebrating nonconformity.

Overview

Until I left home and moved up to Portland for college, I didn't have any resources available to me to try and understand what I was going through. I spent the first 18 years of my life feeling confused and utterly alone. I didn't realise what I was feeling might be something other people had gone through, and that there might be a whole community out there that would not only accept me but make me feel whole and loved not in spite of these feelings, but because of them.

There was a lot of self-destruction and even self-hatred in my past. Not all of it is tied into my struggles with gender and identity, but a good portion of it is, and this is what Sprout addresses. I was living for other people, which was not a fun way to live. It's hard to love your body or yourself when you don't even know how to exist in it peacefully, when it feels like a stranger rather than a home.

This isn't something I want other young trans people to experience.

Art has always been my main way of communicating with the world around me. I've always wanted to tell stories that make people feel less alone, to help them feel connected to something.

I connect through stories. Especially growing up with a sort of veil between me and the world, art and stories were the one thing I could always turn to to find some kind of belonging and understanding. The process of creating is the purest way I know how to express who I am as a person. A little bit of myself goes into every piece or art I create, and every story and illustration I put out into the world is done so with the hopes that someone else might look at it and see a little bit of themselves in it, too. I create to reach out, to connect.

So, my goal is to use my own art to help ensure a little bit more understanding and compassion for other young trans people who might be struggling with their identities. I hope that, if I can be vulnerable and authentically human in Sprout, someone might see that and empathize. Or someone might see that and see a little bit of themselves reflected back, fostering a little bit more kindness and connection, or at the very least a little bit more open-mindedness.

It's harder to dehumanize and put down an entire group of people when the proof of their personhood is staring you right in the face.

Sprout, as a project, seeks to foster empathy and deepen the understanding of the trans experience. Hopefully readers will come away from this with their understanding of what it means to be human broadened, with the knowledge that some of us cannot fit ourselves into neat little boxes in order to be the most palatable, easily digestible versions of ourselves. To put it simply: Sprout preaches a message of the beauty and necessity of difference, the fact that everyone is different and that's more than fine: it's beautiful.

Of course, following all of that, that's still not the main goal of this project. While Sprout does reach to further that compassion and connection, it is also, at its core, a trans narrative for young transgender people, to foster that community and connection I always strive for when creating or consuming any kind of story, and the kind I was sorely lacking when I

Overview (cont.)

was growing up.

With *Sprout*, I have crafted a narrative centered around my personal experiences of gender and identity. I tell the story of how I went from care-free childhood, to a repressed, closeted adolescent, and finally the journey through adulthood that culminated with my struggle for self-acceptance, and the path towards something that looks like self-love.

Sprout is a tender, compassionate narrative that gives an audience of young, struggling readers a basic introduction to concepts and vocabulary that might not have been within their reach beforehand. Hopefully, with this, other young trans people won't have to experience the things I did; they will see that there are people out there feeling just like they are. People who spent months of years or decades feeling sad and afraid everyday, but who managed to somehow find a palace for themselves and find the inherent beauty within their lives and with their bodies.

Sprout tells transgender teenagers and young adults that they are not the only ones going through this. Hopefully, some of these teens might see themselves within these pages, and realize there is hope for them too. I aim to give those struggling people out there a few basic tools to begin their own journeys, to at least open the door to figuring out who they really are, and work towards loving themselves, armed with the knowledge that this is something countless people have experienced before them.

While this project is geared towards trans audiences, it's also a project for me. The story it tells also serves as a means of catharsis for me to work through and make sense of the muddy, complicated things I felt growing up closeted and confused. Since I use art as a way of connecting with the world, it is also a means for me to dig deep into my own life, to work on my own feelings and eventually find some peace with the darker parts of my story. It wasn't until after I realized I was nonbinary that all that self-directed anger and sadness seemed to finally fade, and I was able to settle into my own body and begin to build a life that felt like something I could love.

You need to treat a plant well to see it flourish. You can't stick an orchid in a dark closet and still expect it to bloom. *Sprout* is about gender, but it is also about the reclamation of autonomy, and relearning how to treat my body as kindly as I deserve.

I feel like this story exists best in comics form because of the specific way comics combine words and images. You can efficiently capture a moment through comics that I've never been able to capture through prose or illustration alone. Since this comic is deeply personal to me, comics is the best way I can find to get my thoughts and emotions out onto the page.

My illustrative "style" seems to flow better with the "work smarter, not harder" mentality that comes with drawing comics.

I have always drawn fairly simplistically. I don't work well with single, highly detailed illustrations. I like to be able to work sequentially, but I've never been drawn to picture books or animation. The actual labor involved with creating even the shortest animations means I usually lose interest in a project before it's even finished, and when I create picture books it always feels more like my process for creating singular illustrations and less like the storytelling process I want to do.

Comics wound up being the perfect fit.

This project hasn't changed since I originally proposed it so much as it has evolved. I have known for awhile that this is the narrative I would need to tackle in my Thesis year, but over the course of these two semesters it has gone from a vague, foggy idea to the reality of the story you see today. I had to narrow it down significantly, reign it in from something broad and abstract to something achievable and concrete.

And here is where the botanical imagery comes in: A central theme to *Sprout*, is, of course, plants. It's right in the title: a sprout is a seedling, popping out of the earth.

Throughout the comic, the main visual motif we see is a strawberry plant: from my garden in the Newport house, uprooted and taken in a tiny pot with me to Ashland, and finally, at the end of the comic, seen planted and growing in a forested park here in Portland. The visual metaphor is... probably obvious. The entire story centers around my personal growth, and what better way to illustrate that than to focus on something known for its growth: a plant.

I knew that when I think about that growth, three particular things come to mind:

- 1.) My early childhood, before I was bogged down by societal expectations and the concept of gender.
- 2.) The years I spent in Ashland, and especially at Ashland High School, which were, admittedly, some of the most miserable of my life, and the years when I was the most deeply closeted. The narrative of being closeted as a nonbinary person is an interesting one to explore, for me, especially when I didn't even know the word nonbinary and wound up so deeply repressed I was closeted to even myself. It felt like the most important part of this story, though, and something I knew I would need to unpack to write *Sprout* authentically. And, finally,
- 3.) My adulthood, leaving Ashland, moving to Portland and starting school here at PNCA. Over the years I've spent in Portland I was not only allowed, but encouraged, to explore my

Overview (cont.)

identity through art and through a community I cultivated for myself.

Something that evolved throughout the process of making is the structure of the entire story itself. Sprout started out as a loose concept; I knew I wanted to talk about gender through the lense of my own personal growth over the course of my life, but when I was proposing this project, I originally described it as a loose, nonlinear narrative.

I wasn't sure how I would fit those three, key points into one, short comic, and it wasn't until I reached this semester and began working on it in earnest that I figured it out: Sprout would be broken down into three "parts," or chapters.

The first part, which I titled "Strawberry Seeds," explores that early childhood experience. The second, titled "Rootbound," explores high school and adolescence, and is the longest, "meatiest" section of the comic with the most to unpack and explore. The third and final part of this comic, "All In Bloom," is where I finally delve into that awakening, that realization and exploration of identity. It's where the aspect of community and love and togetherness all comes together.

I threw out the idea of crafting an abstract, nonlinear narrative, and instead made it a very linear one, with three important stops along the path of my life. I feel I am a stronger storyteller when I explore narratives through a more cohesive, straight-forward lens, so I think in the end the choice to divide it up into three distinct chapters was a good one.

While the core idea of sticking with a sort of internal monologue stayed the same, in the end the most effective way to tell this story wound up being a more traditional one, following me as I grew older.

Process

Sprout is, when all is said and done, a 28-page comic. The exact number of pages fluctuated throughout the process of scripting, thumbnailing, and making, but in the end it wound up hitting a 28-page goal I had set for myself during proposals last semester. The comic is colored in monochrome palettes, and put together in a print-ready PDF which will include the full comic, 3 spot illustrations at the beginning of each chapter, a cover illustration, and artist/contact info.

The live area is 6x9 inches, and is based on a 6-panel grid system, with variations and alterations where it fits into the story. The last page of each section is a full bleed illustration. Some pages feature vignettes, or illustrations that break the grid format, or just variations

on the number of panels you see on the page.

For instance, in part three, "All in Bloom," specifically, I switch to using only 2 or 3 panels per page. The reason for this is, in this section, this is the part of the story that has the most "breathing room." The text is sparser, and everything is more open. This evokes the feeling of openness that comes with the gentle, more hopeful tone of this section of the story.

This is a contrast to part two, "Rootbound," which, as the title implies, is cramped and cluttered. It adheres more strictly to the grid format in most places, and is more text-heavy, to help symbolize the more chaotic and uncomfortable time in my life.

Following along with this, Rootbound is also the longest section of the comic. It covers the most content, digs the deepest into heavier feelings that were harder to dissect. The shortest section is "Strawberry Seeds," the first section. This section is the shortest both because it serves as more of a set up for the comic, but also because the ephemera of early childhood lends itself to memories which are harder to piece together, and instead follows content that relies more on the feelings the memories evoked rather than the specifics of the memories themselves. All in Bloom is longer than Strawberry Seeds, but shorter than Rootbound. It covers the most recent memories, and gets to the crux of the comic: the promised self-acceptance and exploration of identity.

With the creation of this comic, I was met with a certain amount of trepidation. Since the story is so deeply personal, I worried the fear of getting something wrong might keep me from ever starting. That paralyzing need for it all to be perfect has stalled my artistic process more than once in the past.

However, I didn't find this to be the case. When faced with a global pandemic, and the need to get this project done in order to graduate on time, I found it relatively easy to actually get started. I really had no other choice to just put pencil to paper (or, Apple pencil to iPad screen, in my case) and start drawing. And, I found, once I got started, all my fear evaporated. Just getting the story out of my head felt so good, that it didn't need to be perfect. The simple act of creating it offered me that catharsis I had been so seeking when I went into this project.

Another snag I ran into was that in my artistic career, I've never drawn very many plants. In general, I steer clear of botanical or any kind of floral or plant-based imagery. While I do love illustrations that can use this imagery successfully, I've always stuck with more figurative imagery, and interiors. However, the visual growth metaphor here was too good to pass up. I knew I would need to find a way to incorporate it, so the first step for me when

Process (cont.)

making this comic was... to spend a whole lot of time on google images looking at photos of rhododendrons and strawberries. Plants may still not be my favorite thing to draw, but I've found an ease with certain ones now that was not there before this comic.

Next, what I had to do was map the whole thing out. This began as a sort of "script." The script of Sprout doesn't exactly look like a traditional comic script. There's no indication for what visuals fit on each page, no breakdowns of pane-by-panel illustrations. I scripted Sprout out in a more abstract way. Instead I wrote out only the captions that would go on each page, and then built imagery around those words. There was no set panel number, no instructions for specific scenes. It began with vague ideas for what specific pages might look like, as I broke the narration down to a page-by-page system.

After writing the "script," I moved onto thumbnails. Thumbing is something that has historically also been a bit of a pain for me. It was probably my least favorite part of the process up until earlier this year. The process of creating this project, physically, also got easier the longer I worked on it. In March, just before the pandemic hit, I ordered an iPad Pro and bought Procreate. This has, honestly, revolutionized the way I do art.

Pre-Procreate, I used an Intuos pen tablet to do most of my finished art, and sketched analog in journals and sketchbooks. As a process, I always found this arduous. Analogue thumbnailing is just, honestly, annoying, but doing it on a tiny Intuos tablet annoyed me more. I like the feeling of being able to put pencil to paper and see the lines appear right there. However, I also love features like scaling objects, Control Z, and being able to just rearrange and move things with the click of a mouse. It's physically an easier process for me to sketch and thumbnail digitally.

So when I got my iPad, and found a way to replicate the feeling of sketching traditionally with all the perks of digital art, it was a game changer. This is something that has helped me make my art more dynamic, and get projects done faster. With my iPad, I was able to produce polished, dynamic thumbnails.

Even so, the process of thumbing was probably the part of creating Sprout that took me the longest; because my thumbs are usually so detailed and polished, it's essentially like I'm doing two steps in one: my thumbs sort of look like a hybrid between the thumbnail and the pencil stage. This ultimately cuts down the time I spend working on the project as a whole, but it does make thumbing an extremely time-consuming process and front loads the work I need to do.

I thumbed the pages in order of how they will appear in the comic. Because I had no set

visual instructions in the script, each image depended heavily on the imagery found on the page before it. Even if I had a few vague ideas for what imagery would go in certain parts of the comic, I couldn't thumb out of order because the exact placement of certain visual elements was highly dependent on what came before. I couldn't thumb page 2 without knowing what you would see on page 1, etc etc etc.

Again, this made the process of thumbing the most grueling and time-consuming part of the process, but after I had it finished the rest of the comic was fairly smooth sailing. The work in this comic was really front loaded, and hinging on the success of the thumbnails. I only got the thumbs finished three weeks ago, but with those done it feels like the bulk of the work is out of the way.

Since my thumbs are so tight, I was able to skip a step most comic artists will jump to next: pencils. Pencils, or sketches, are usually a more refined stage that comes before the inking. But since my thumbnails were so easily readable, this stage was one I didn't need to take. Sprout is a free range thumb-to-table comic.

Skipping the sketch stage also helps me keep my cartooning loose and dynamic. By skipping a "refining" stage that can be helpful for some cartoonists, for me taking that extra step can just make things feel stiff and lifeless. The more I rework something, the more rigid it becomes, and the less it looks like a fun and enjoyable drawing. This is another way my iPad has improved my art; finding a way to keep it as dynamic as possible, and streamlining the process of creation, means I am able to create better, more fluid comics in less time. I would make edits to thumbs as I went, receiving feedback and making adjustments as needed so no major revisions were necessary to the overall structure and success of the comic.

With this thumbing process, the entire creation of this comic felt streamlined and natural. Comic thumbnails are different than you might encounter in traditional illustrations; when someone draws a typical illustration, they might make 20 or more thumbs of the same scene. With only one illustration to capture a moment, everything needs to be perfect: the composition, the subject, the colors. Every choice needs to reflect tiny, explicit details for the viewer to pick up on.

With comics, thumbing is different. The idea of creating several different thumbs for a page of comics that will itself have sometimes up to 9 separate illustrations on it seems insane; there's no way to get a comic finished if you approach thumbing the same way you do with typical illustrations.

So, when thumbnailing a page of comics, it's typical to thumb up a page, get feedback on

Process (cont.)

it, and then make tweaks and changes based on that feedback. It's less about getting every detail in every illustration exactly right, and more about telling the best story possible. The details in the panels need to reflect the narrative, serve the story. You can give your reader a certain amount of trust, give them implicit cues in storytelling and the jumps between panels.

With no need for pencils or refining the sketches, the next step in creating this process was inking. Inking is a process I enjoy when creating comics; there is always a satisfying feeling to it. It usually marks a turning point where I'm closer to being finished with the comic than I am to beginning it, so I always feel a sense of accomplishment when I get to the inking stage. It took me a while to select the perfect inking brush, looking for one that allowed me to create linework that would fit with the aesthetic and the tone of the comic: I must have gone through every brush I have on Procreate trying to find one I thought fit the vibe for Sprout. Eventually, trying to find the perfect brush was just holding me up, so I just forced myself to choose a brush and move forward with the comic.

After I selected the brush, I inked a page, and moved onto colors. When I started Sprout, I had certain plans for the execution. I proposed it as a comic using limited color palettes, with a different palette for each section, using green in each one to connect all three. The chapter, "Strawberry Seeds," would use lively greens, yellows, and oranges, to symbolize a bright and earthy start to my journey. The second chapter, "Rootbound," would use darker, more muted hues of greens, blues, and purples, as this was the "darkest" part of my life, and blue is often used to symbolize sadness and depression. The last section, "All in Bloom," was to be told through peppy greens, pinks, and yellows, as a sort of light at the end of the tunnel, returning to life and happiness.

However, I quickly had to scrap this approach. After I began lining, I attempted to color a page using the aforementioned palette. I must have spent a good hour just trying to make the colors work, and I never found a way to do it that I felt satisfied with. After countless recolors, and at my wits end with frustration, I finally accepted that my original plan just wasn't going to work. Coloring is always something I have struggled with, and with the pandemic adding to the stress of creating a thesis project, trying to work with palette choices I've never tried before at this pivotal point was just putting way too much pressure on myself.

After some thought, I scaled the whole thing back. I went from a limited, three-color palette, to a monotone, single-color palette. I've always had success with monochrome

palettes, and I enjoy working with them and trying to find unique ways to make them look as successful as possible. I chose a single color to best represent each "section" of Sprout, and began coloring in the pages in various hues of these colors.

For section one, I chose green. This is still the care-free, down to earth section, and green felt like a good, lively choice. For section two, I chose blue. This is still the heaviest section, and coloring it in muted blues matches the somber tone. For section three, I went with a pink color. This color is soft, but bright, which feels fitting for the bright future this section opens up onto.

All throughout these sections, they are connected by a pop of red in the strawberry, which stands out more against the earlier sections but blends in a bit more with the third section, which feels right since the entire third section is about being open and growing and finding the place you fit.

Using this monochrome palette, I was able to produce a result I was actually happy with. The colors had been a fairly significant roadblock to actually producing the comic, but pivoting and changing my vision for the project just a little bit created exactly the breakthrough I needed to finally start working towards getting it done.

This breakthrough happened around the time we had midterm reviews. These reviews wound up being a huge source of anxiety for me right up until they actually happened. I had no idea what they would actually entail; in fact, I hadn't even been aware midterm reviews were a thing until about two weeks before they happened. I spent a lot of time worrying that my work wouldn't be up to snuff, that I wouldn't know what to say.

Once again, though, my fears were unfounded. My review panel was extremely helpful. Getting feedback and affirmation from people who are out there doing what I want to do, creating comics and stories by and for trans people, was such a good experience. The feedback they offered me was kind and helpful and right to the point.

Something about me: I have ADHD. Something that comes along with that is my tendency to infodump and overshare. I can use too many words in order to make sure I'm understood, because being trans and neurodivergent already puts a roadblock in the way of being understood. This manifested in the script: with their feedback, I cut out superfluous details, made the story more streamlined, gave up a little bit of control in order to put more trust in my readers.

After finally getting the heavy lifting out of the way, the process of creation was fairly simple. I continued to ink, using the brush I had already selected. I just put on a TV show or a podcast in the background, and it essentially became like busy work. The process of inking

Process (cont.)

and coloring went hand in hand: I would ink a page, and then color it. Sometimes I would ink several pages at a time before finally moving onto colors, but now that all the hardest work was out of the way, the actual order of things didn't matter to the overall finished product. If I just sat down and churned it out, it was really simple.

Another way in which I had to pivot while making this project was in the deliverables: my original plan had the final product listed as a saddle-stapled, printed zine. Thanks to circumstance, this plan changed. With social distancing, and the distance between myself and PNCA (where I always used to print my comic zines), I didn't feel comfortable actually producing printed versions of this comic right now. So I'm instead presenting Sprout as a PDF that is formatted and ready to print when circumstance and situation allows for it. Sprout is currently very near completion. It is thumbed, and inked, and coloring is well underway. I have all the extra artwork like cover and spot illustrations done. I have hit some production delays, but I think they were quite reasonable, as all of them were related to the pandemic and the state of the world. Creating is hard right now, and I have not been unaffected. That being said, I am quite proud of the progress I have made on Sprout, and, realistically, I can easily see it being done by the end of the semester.

Influences

When I talk about my influences, I could talk about famous artists who have inspired me. And there are plenty of those; among others, I count artists like Rebecca Sugar, Noelle Stevenson, Jillian Tamaki, Tillie Walden, and Carey Pietsch as influences. These artists tell the type of stories I would like to tell; they are LGBT people creating LGBT stories, both about being LGBT and just stories from slice of life to grand fantasy featuring LGBT characters. People like Sugar and Stevenson helped me realize I wanted to go to art school and pursue my dream of building a career around art. As a teenager, I saw them out there doing it, and knew I had a chance of doing it myself. So, I did a complete 180 from the biology programs I was applying to, and started applying to art schools instead, so I could learn how to tell stories that reached people the same way these people did.

Once I was in art school, I turned my attention to people like Tamaki and Walden and Pietsch. It took me a few years, but in my junior year I took Intro to Graphic Novel class and knew comics were the medium I wanted to use to tell my stories. And the way these

people create comics influenced and inspired my own practice. Walden, especially, was a huge influence to me. The natural flow, the tender moments, the simplistic but massively expressive style; Walden uses comics in such a vivid and beautiful way that it makes me want to keep pushing myself to create better comics myself.

And these people are great influences of mine; I take great inspiration from their stylistic choices and their color choices and their storytelling itself.

But, I cannot honestly credit any of these people as my primary influence when creating Sprout, or really when creating any of my work. My biggest influence has always been the artistic community I've built up around myself over the years. From classmates, to friends, to mutuals on Twitter and Instagram, the best source of inspiration I can ever find for my art is looking at the creations produced by the people I care most about.

And, I think, that's fitting for this project. A project surrounding and celebrating the community of artists and trans people I have built for myself since moving to Portland should take inspiration from that community. I would not be the creator I am today without the support of other young and aspiring artists. Seeing the talent I am surrounded by pushes me to take my style further, to try and tell the best stories I can.

Project In Culture

I think this project fits in well with the current climate of graphic novels and comics. Currently, graphic novels, especially graphic novels aimed towards young audiences, are the biggest and most successful field in publishing. There is a massive demand for these types of stories.

There is also a massive demand for diverse voices in graphic novels especially. There has been an influx in demand for stories with LGBT subject matter, whether it's informative comics about being LGBT or stories featuring LGBT characters and themes. These are the stories I'm most desperate to tell, so my work, and Sprout especially, fits right in. It is an LGBT comic aimed towards young audiences, so it fits perfectly into the current graphic novel climate.

There is also a massive push to be more inclusive in the art world these days. People are exploring pronouns and gender and being more open than ever. Every year, new steps are taken to try and be more open to other experiences. Publishers -- such as First Second, Scholastic, Northwest Press, Oni Press, etc -- are actively seeking out the voices of trans

Project In Culture (cont.)

and other LGBT people in order to get more and more stories like this out in the world. And the entire purpose of Sprout is to try and foster that kind of open-mindedness. As for the future of Sprout, I will be exploring various avenues of putting it out into the world. Currently, it is set to exist as a print-ready PDF, so my main method of distribution is certainly going to be digital. I have been looking into Gumroad, and plan to distribute it on that platform once the comic is finished.

I don't see myself ever sending Sprout out to publishers as is, but I can see myself printing it and distributing it in zine format at conventions or markets once the world goes back to normal and it will be 100% safe to return to activities like that.

That being said, I absolutely want to pursue comics and graphic novels as a career. As I said, I came to art school to learn how to tell stories, and I feel comics is the most effective format for me to tell the type of stories I want to tell. I connect with the world through my characters and stories, and creating Sprout has only furthered this ambition. While I don't plan on sending this particular story to publishers, I do plan to try and publish graphic novels at some point in my life. To do this, I will have to query agents and pitch myself to publishers, and perhaps I can use Sprout to do that.

Conclusion

I think Sprout is a perfect way for me to end my college career at PNCA. This project shows not only how I have grown as an artist, but as a person, as well. It's a perfect visual representation of the skills in storytelling, pacing, and cartooning that I have spent the last five years meticulously working on, and will continue to work on over the course of my career as an illustrator. It proves I can work on stories and finish them with an effective beginning, middle, and end. It's a perfect bookend to all the work I have put into myself and my artistic career these past five years, and I am very proud of it.

Once again, I'd like to thank everyone so much for coming, and I'd like to thank my friends and my classmates especially for being there to help me grow these past few years. It means the world to me.

[open to question!]



CREATIVE BRIEF

Brief

Through a 28-page autobiographical comic using abundant floral and figurative imagery, I will craft a narrative around my personal experience with gender and identity, and the journey to self-acceptance. This story will have three parts to it; the first focusing on childhood, a denser middle focusing on adolescence and the struggles of growing up without the vocabulary to understand myself and my experiences, and finally a section focusing on college and young adulthood, where the story will conclude with my finally coming to understand myself and taking the steps towards acceptance and self-love.

Sprout will tell a tender story about growth and loving yourself that will give an audience of teenagers and young adults the concepts and vocabulary to begin their own journeys towards knowing and loving who they are, and knowing that they are not as alone as they might think. This comic will be created digitally in Procreate on my iPad. First I will script and thumb out the entire comic, then line and finally color each page in a monochromatic color palette, with a different color for each "section" of the comic.

Media that I always compare Sprout to are other comics by LGBT illustrators such as Tillie Walden, Cerey Pietsch, and Maia Kobabe. I think it is most comparable to Kobabe's Gender Queer, a graphic memoir, and would fit into a similar market niche for comics that focus on identity-related storylines and non-fiction LGBT stories for teens and young adults.



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(2) leaving New Port
 "trans plant" → not oregon native
 uprooted

Berkeley → Newport → Ashland

in hospitable soil?
 *saw + low

uprooted, transplanted, growing things

*adaptable
 *roots shallow?

Olear! Growth.
 New growth?

* No childhood home;
 transience; what is "home"? → moving around a lot, no belonging, etc.

THESIS
 JOURNAL

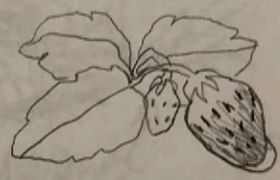
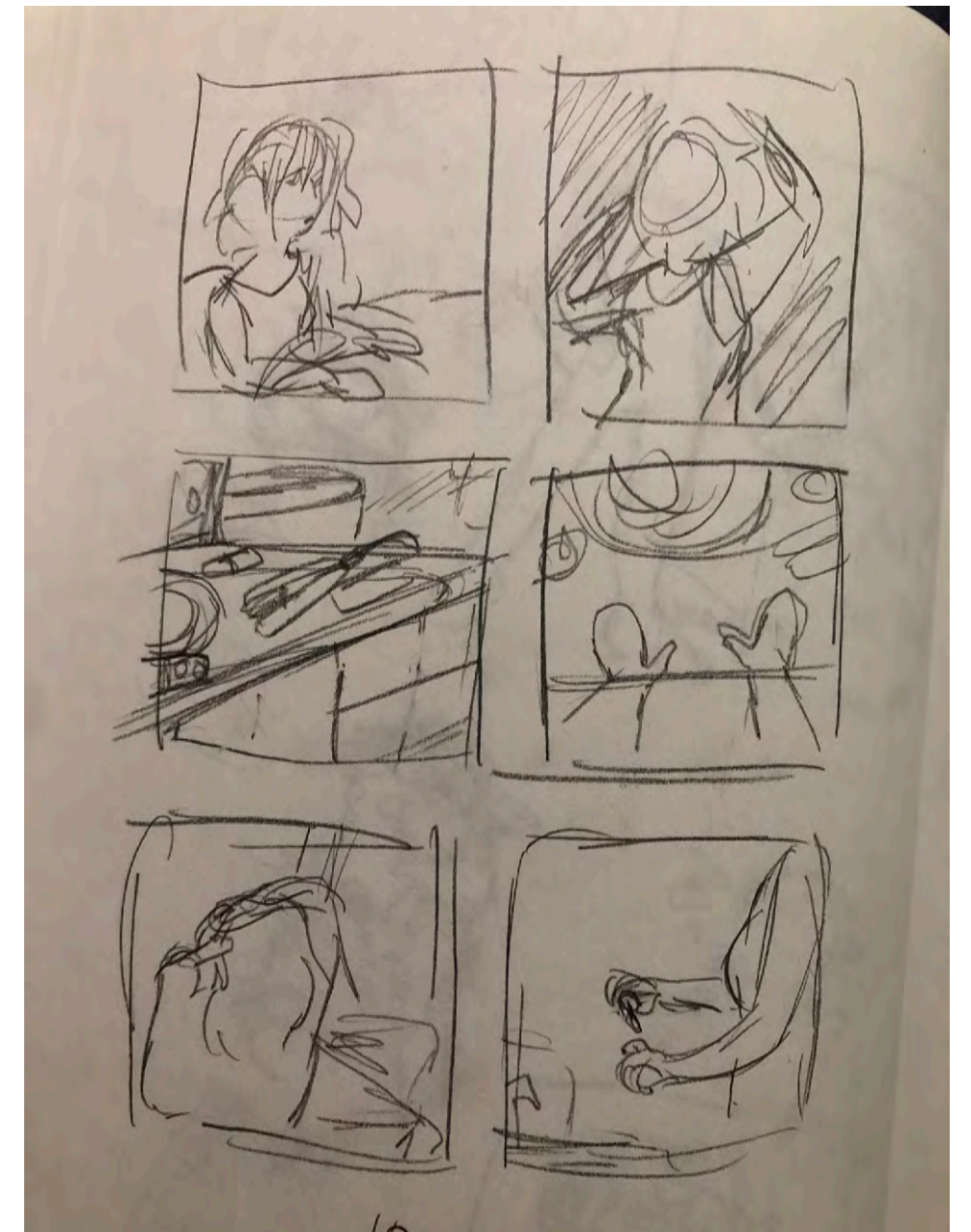
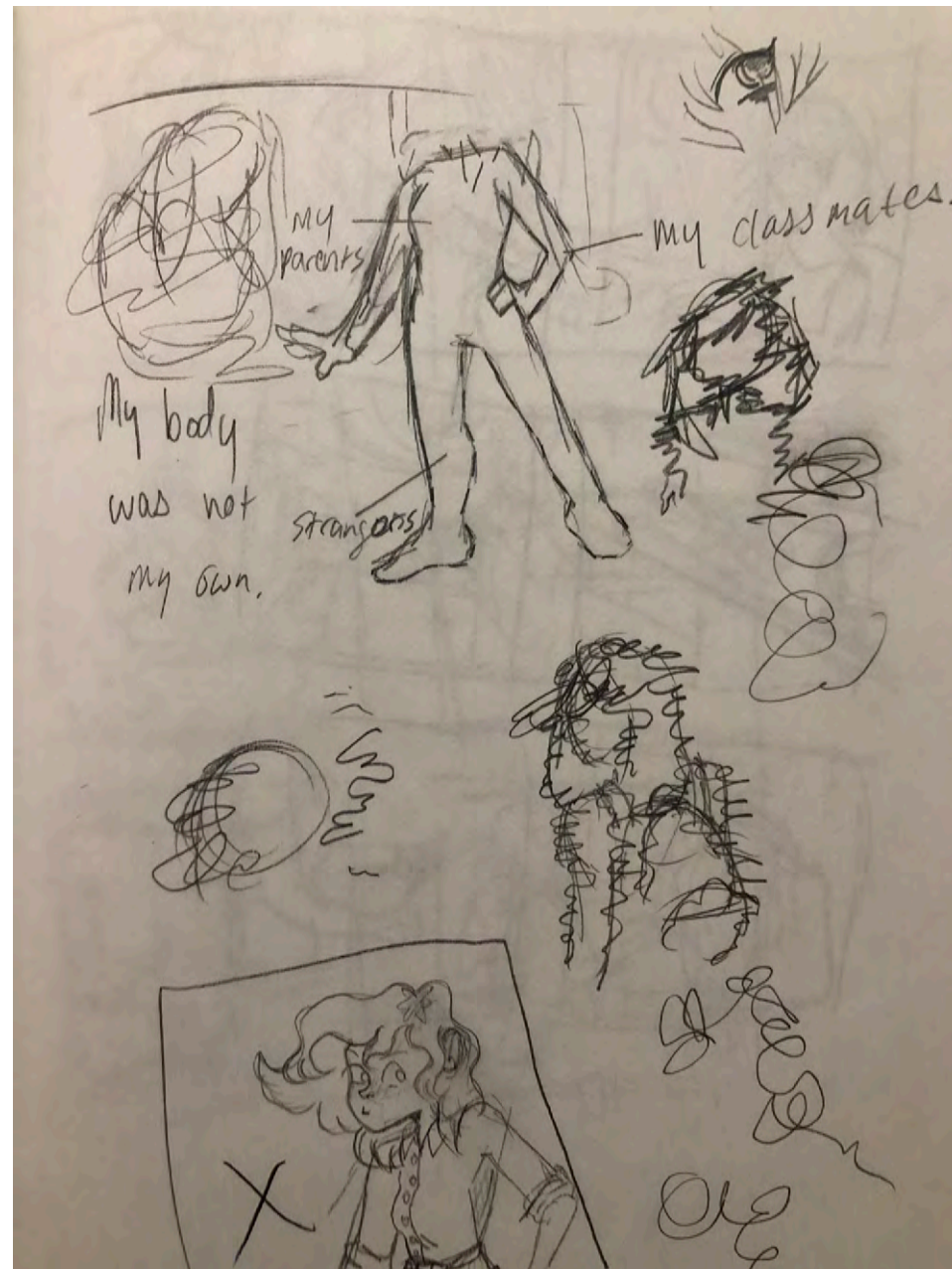
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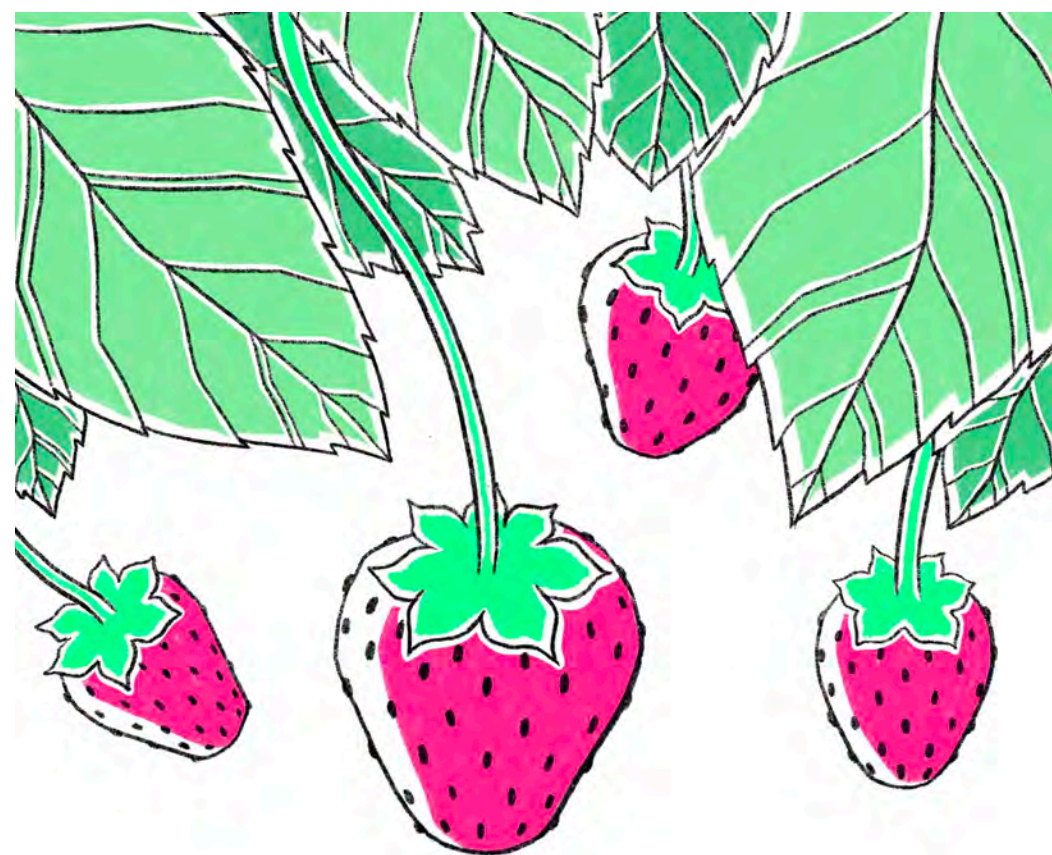
"growing"

Newport house → beach house

Rhododendrons, strawberries

"remembered and catalogued only by the things that grew there; Rhododendron bushes by the ~~front~~ front door, strawberries in the garden patch out back. Me, in the halls and over unpolished wood floors"



sprout

ROSWELL EVAN HAYNES

Front Cover



Back Cover

VISUAL
DOCUMENTATION



STRAWBERRY SEEDS



ROOT BOUND



ALL IN BLOOM

Interior Spot Illustrations



Sample Pages