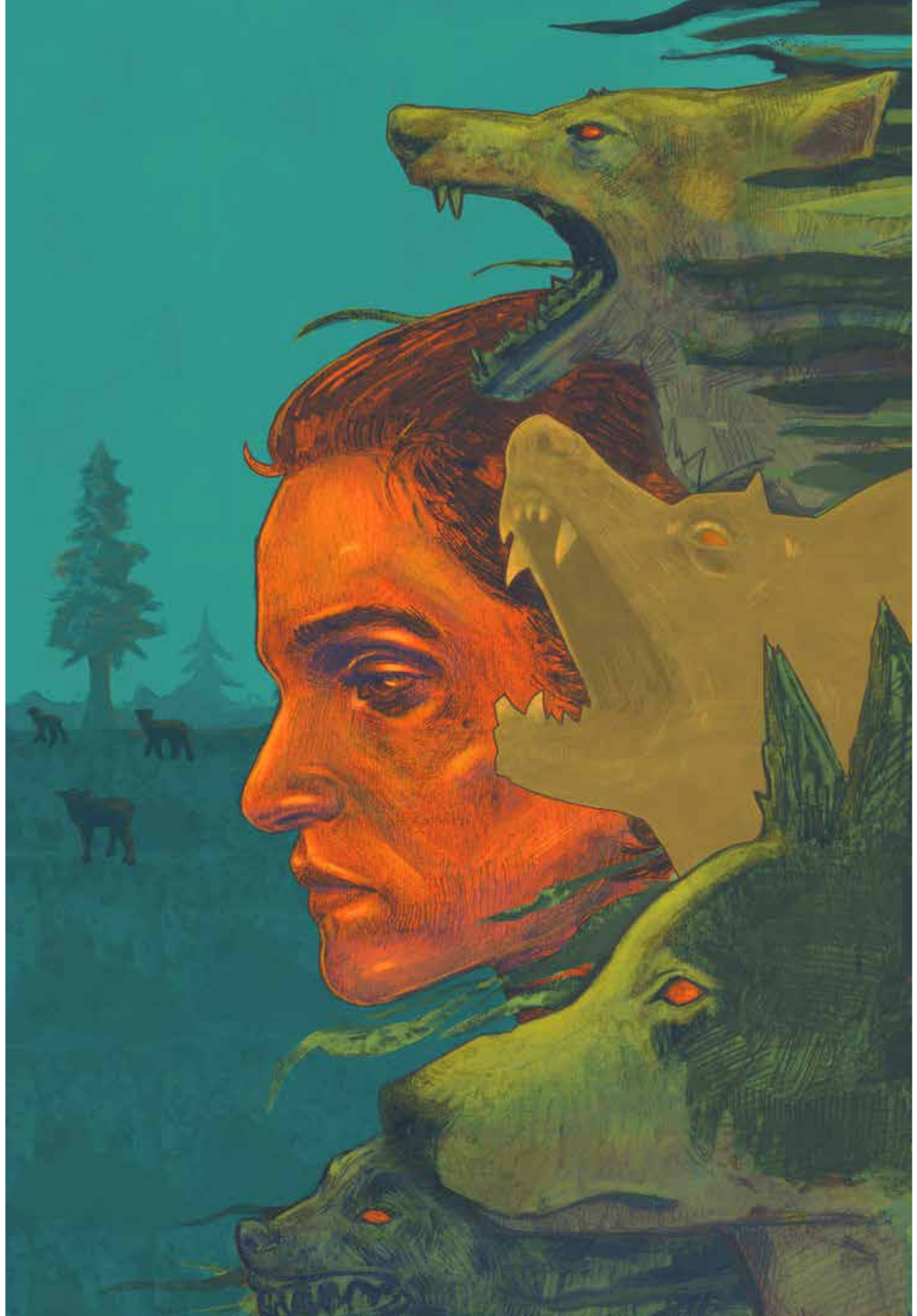
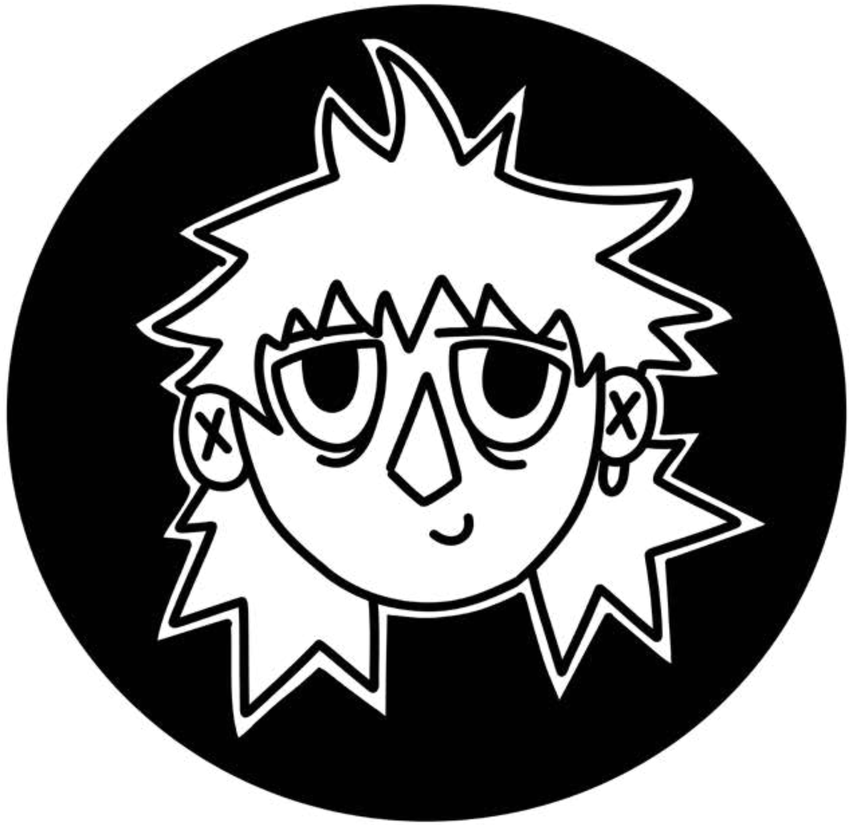


SOUNDCHECK

MIXED MEDIA ILLUSTRATIONS
BY GUIDIAN OWEN

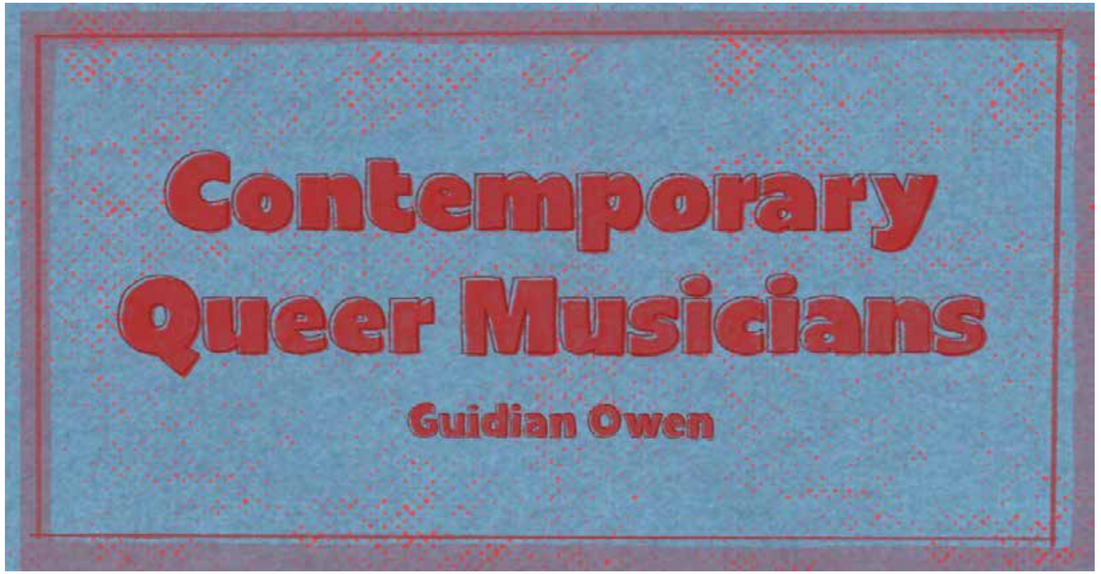
Thesis Fall 2025 • Mentor: Zachary Rau
Pacific Northwest College of Art



ARTIST STATEMENT

Guidian Owen is an illustrator raised in Hood River, Oregon. They are currently based in Portland, Oregon. They have a BFA in illustration from the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Their work primarily focuses on portraiture, often reflecting the themes of how queerness is expressed within pop culture. They use a lot of experimental analog textures within their work and combine them with digital tools to bring their illustrations to life.

THESIS PROPOSAL



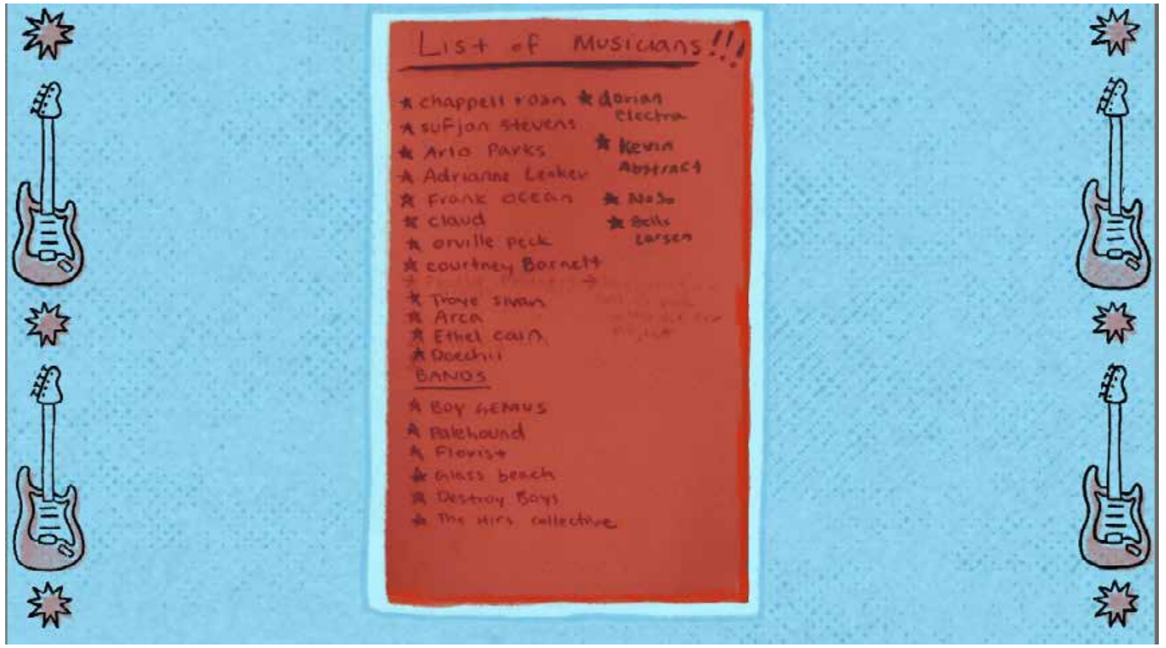
Thesis Statement

I am going to create six illustrations. Each one focusing on a different queer musician. There will be two versions of each image, one static and one that functions as a gif.

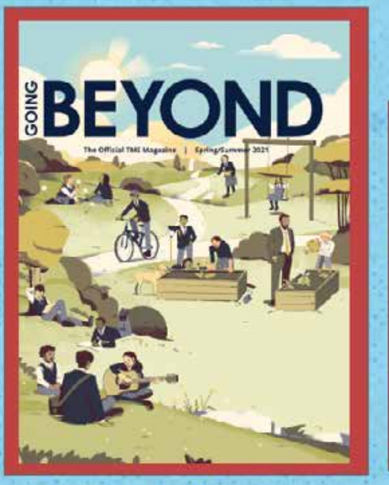
"79% of LGBTQ+ youth felt more secure in their identites when a musician came out as LGBTQ+" - The Trevor Project

90% of all LGBTQ+ youth surveyed said that recent legislative attacks on queer and trans rights had a direct contribution to their negative well-being.

"2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People," 2024 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health, 2024, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/.



Influences



Nathan Hackett

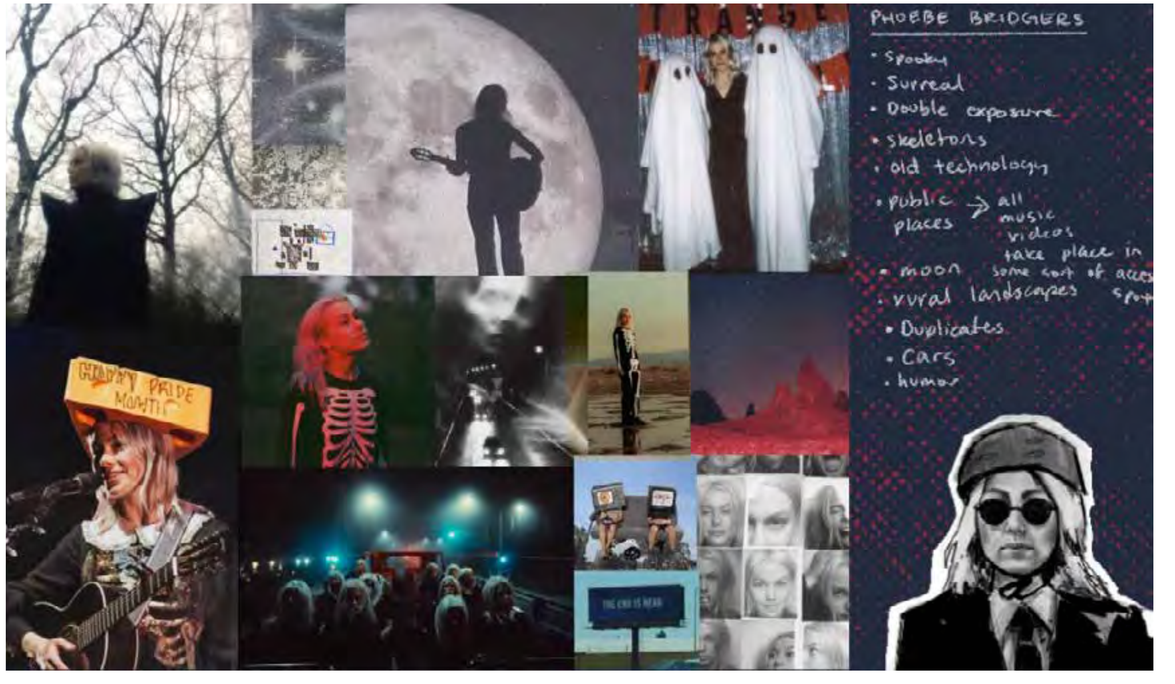
Charlotta Notero

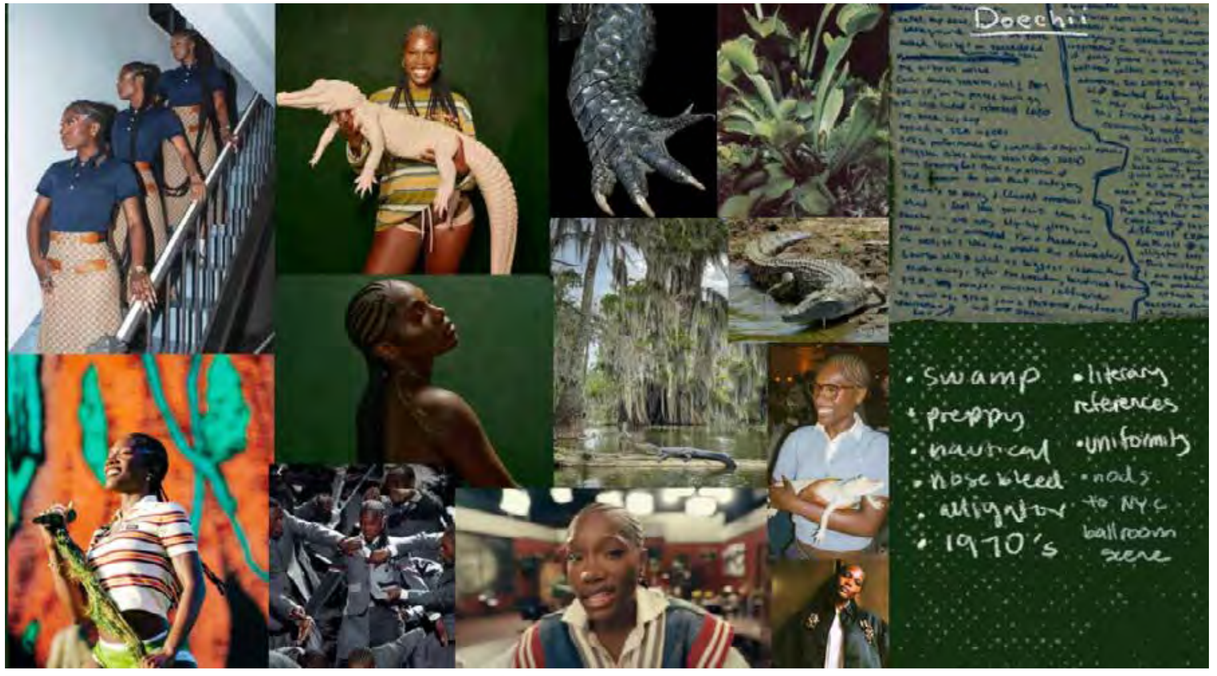
Laura Liedo

@peachcreep

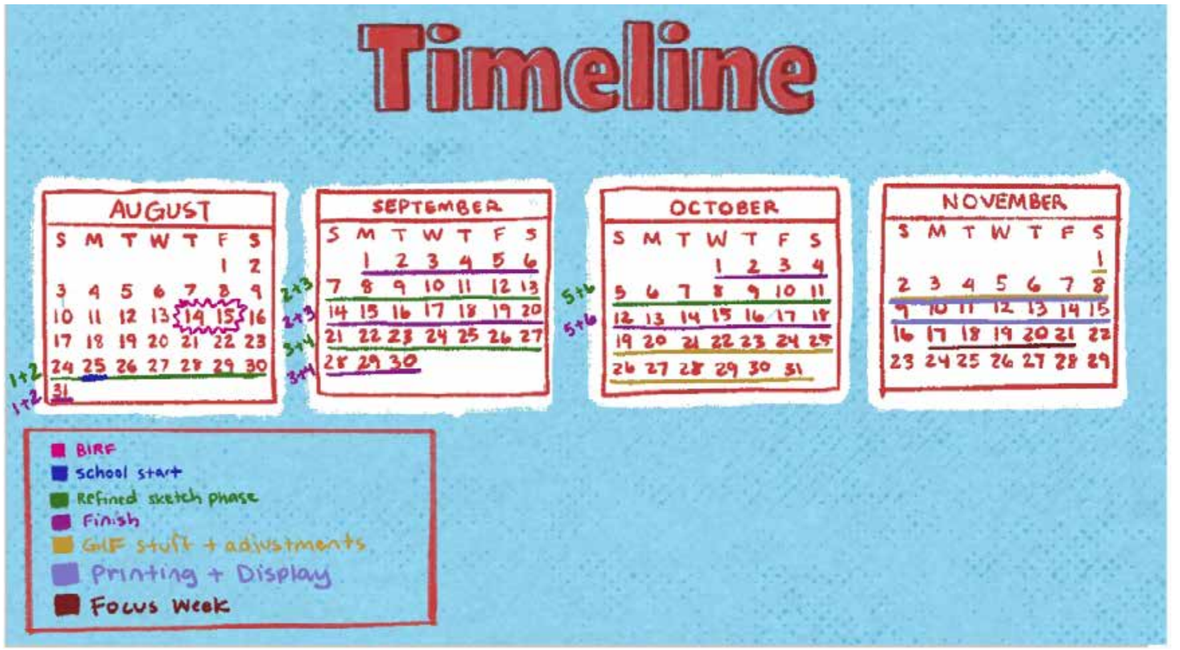
@fleshpng

Toma Vagner




Doechii
• swamp
• prepping
• nautical
• nose bleed
• alligator
• 1970's
• literary references
• uniformity
• nods to NYC ballroom scene

Sufjan Stevens
• maps/location based stuff
• collage
• death
• lots of colors
• body
• planets, space
• wings
• stars
• instruments → banjo, flute, guitar, oboe, etc
• animals
• nature
• historical


Timeline
AUGUST
S M T W T F S
1 2
3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10 11 12 13 14 15 16
17 18 19 20 21 22 23
24 25 26 27 28 29 30
31
SEPTEMBER
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30
OCTOBER
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30 31
NOVEMBER
S M T W T F S
1
2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27 28 29
BIRF
School start
Refined sketch phase
Finish
GIF stuff + adjustments
Printing + Display
Focus Week

Research Sketches

Research Sketches

My Work

ABSTRACT

SOUNDCHECK is a series of four mixed media posters highlighting queer musicians. I wanted each illustration to feel unique to the style of music, attitudes, and aesthetics of each band. The artists I depicted are Um, Jennifer?, Glass Beach, Kevin Abstract, and Adrianne Lenker. I was interested in depicting queer musicians because I have always been interested in how queer musicians generally express their queerness through both visuals and lyrics. I also grew up listening to queer musicians, they made me feel more comfortable in my own queer identity and inspired me to express my queerness through my art.

ORAL PRESENTATION

Hi everyone, thank you for coming to my thesis presentation! My name is Guidian! For my thesis, I created a series of mixed media posters featuring queer musicians. Music has always been a major part of my life. I grew up playing a variety of instruments such as the drums, the bass, and reluctantly, the flute. My early memories consist of both of my parents quizzing me on their favorite music artists. Framed concert posters lined my dads house, around instruments that hung up on the wall. I was quite literally surrounded by music. I came from a very homophobic household, anytime queer media would play it would instantly get turned off. However, music from queer musicians slipped through their filters, queer expression in the form of lyrics and performance wasn't judged. Because of that, I was inspired by music made by queer musicians because it was an unfiltered form of expression that I didn't get to see in other forms of media. It was a way to make sense of my own identity as a queer person. While these artists didn't raise me, apart from Sufjan Stevens, I realized halfway through the project that I ended up choosing artists that I related to.

When I initially proposed my project, I was unsure of what artists I was going to feature. I had an overwhelming list of artists, including popular musicians such as, Chappell Roan, boygenius, and Frank Ocean. I also had a lot of smaller artists such as palehound, florist, and pinky lemon. It was important to me that I had a mix of well known and lesser known artists that I featured within the project, which is something that I stayed somewhat true to in execution.
My larger artists being Adrianne Lenker and Kevin Abstract and my smaller artists being Um, Jennifer and Glass Beach.

When I made my proposal I was convinced of three things, I wanted to draw portraits, I wanted them to feature queer musicians, and I wanted to experiment. In my illustration classes, I have always struggled with making my work too rigid and playing it too safe, while also only illustrating things digitally. My sketchbook work in comparison was very loose and used a variety of mediums and had a quality that my assignments were lacking. My goal for this project was to experiment with combining both analog and digital mediums. Another way I proposed to experiment was by making these posters with moving assets, a gif. That was an idea that was abandoned very quickly because of the amount of time it would've taken to figure out how to do that in a way that made sense for the project and what I was going for, while having a limited experience with making gifs. My audience doesn't differ from my proposal. I intended to make this project for queer people that enjoy music as much as I do. I also wanted this to be an opportunity to promote and celebrate queer artists that I think are cool, in a way that reflects both the artists' expression and my own.

When I proposed, I had a very vague idea of what these images would look like. I was unsure of whether or not I would use typography. I didn't know if I was going to feature full figure poses or just focus on the face. By the time summer arrived, I felt very unconfident in my idea because it was so vague, I didn't know where to start. Despite having a decent sized list of possible queer musicians from my proposal, I felt like I needed more. I ended up spending all summer researching, finding musicians that I liked the music of and making list after list of different artists, giving myself too many options. I did discover some really cool music through this though

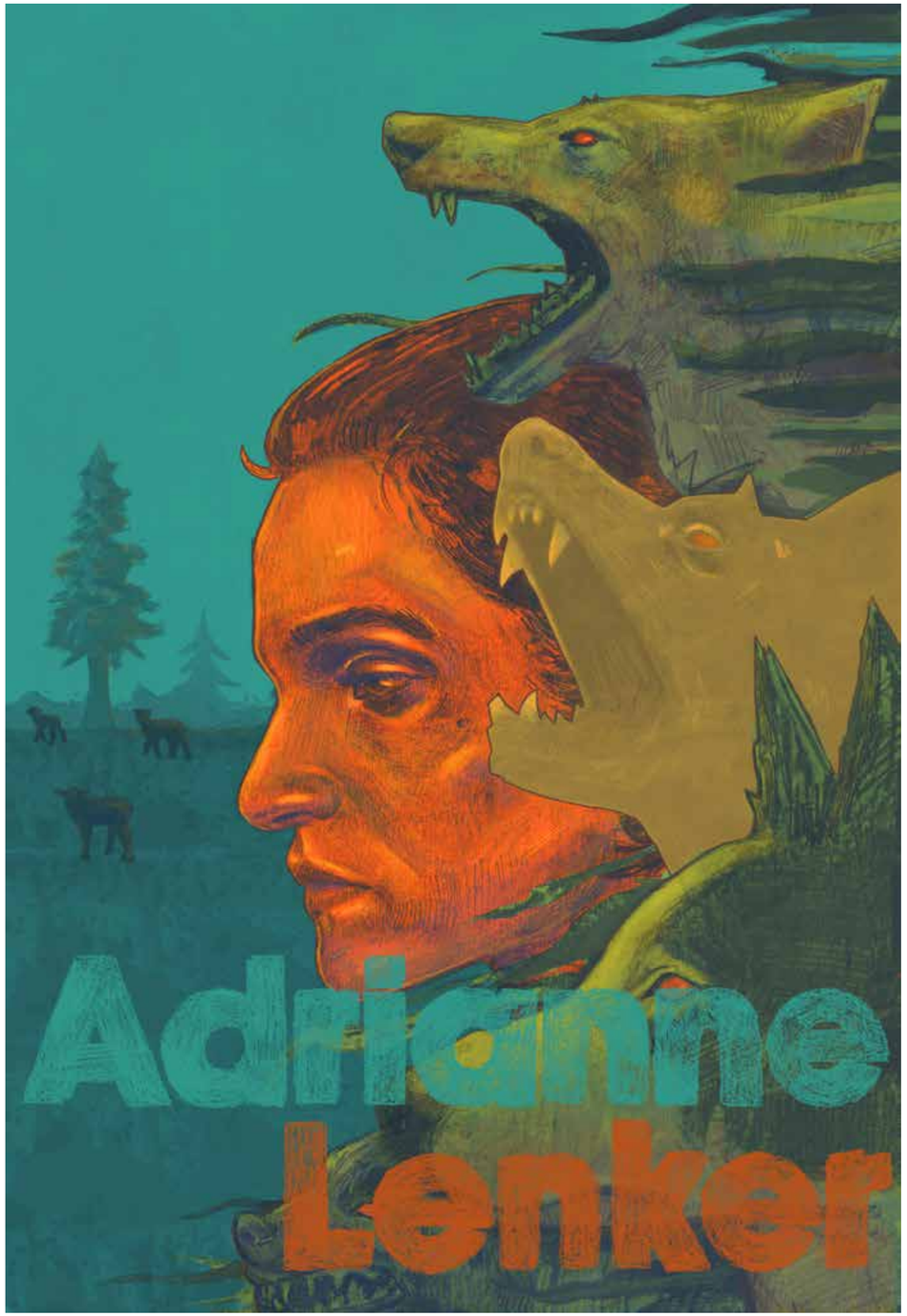
. By the time school started, I narrowed down my list to ten options, which eventually went down to eight, and after that down to six. I then made moodboards to explore the aesthetics of the artists and to get a better understanding of what I wanted these posters to look like for each individual. I then went into thumbnails for Adrianne Lenker, Kevin Abstract, and Um Jennifer. I wanted each poster to feel unique to the style of music, attitudes, and aesthetics of each band. I initially made Um Jennifer very similar in composition to Kevin Abstract, using the same paneling in both pieces, which made me rework my initial idea for Um Jennifer, because I wanted these pieces to feel very different from each other. I then went to a refined sketch phase, where I tried to get the composition settled before I started drawing my assets. The first piece that I drew any assets for was the Adrianne Lenker poster. I started out with

the portrait and drew a lot of dogs and wolves which I pulled from hearing lyrics. I experimented with graphite, charcoal, and using an electric eraser to make subra five marks into the powdered pigment. This was to add an interest and unexpected texture within the piece. I believe the most successful usage of this was in the Adrianne Lenker portrait, specifically in the hair. It was also successful in two of the dog drawings.

I then moved onto the assets for Kevin Abstract and Um Jennifer in a similar fashion. I drew more graphite assets, but they all seemed to come out looking slightly different. I approached the rendering and markmaking slightly differently due to the style of music they play. Um Jennifer is more playful and poppy so I wanted to convey energy and movement that is inherent in their music and shows. For Kevin Abstract, I focused on his irreverent digital persona to drive the imagery.

After all of these assets were complete, I scanned them and roughly composited them together in photoshop, to mock-up different layouts for these illustrations. This brought up a new set of problems, it made me realize some compositional issues that I didn't originally see. In the Adrianne Lenker piece there are a lot of dog drawings that I didn't end up using, that I had to edit out. In this process I learned to detach myself from each of the assets to prioritize the quality of the poster. I was happy with the layouts of Kevin Abstract and Adrianne Lenker in this phase, but I was really struggling with making the Um, Jennifer one work. I was encouraged by my mentor Zack to completely start this one over, which I was kind of stubborn about at first, but it was what I really needed to hear, because it got me unstuck and the composition became a lot better as a result. I had to execute new assets like the primary drawing in the poster. Redrawing and starting over made it easier to see what flavor I wanted for that poster rather than just copy the Kevin Abstract piece.

I isolated all of the lineart and properly composited all of the assets between the three pieces and then migrated them into procreate. I worked at 13 x 19 inches, which only gave me 8 layers to work with, which was the biggest problem for the Kevin abstract piece, because there were so many individual assets, that I was flattening my image pretty consistently, which made it difficult to edit and change things later down the road. In this part of the process, I spent a lot of time experimenting with color, this is particularly prevalent in the Um Jennifer one, where I made a lot of different color and texture variations. The last piece that I started working on was the glass beach poster, I created a set of four thumbnails, chose one, and went straight into creating assets. I had the most fun with this piece because it was more intuitive, especially when creating the background pattern and accompanying textures. The textures I created in the background are made with ink, using a wet on wet technique and a lot of splatter painting. I drew out the portraits in charcoal and then went over them digitally. These portraits have a few iterations.



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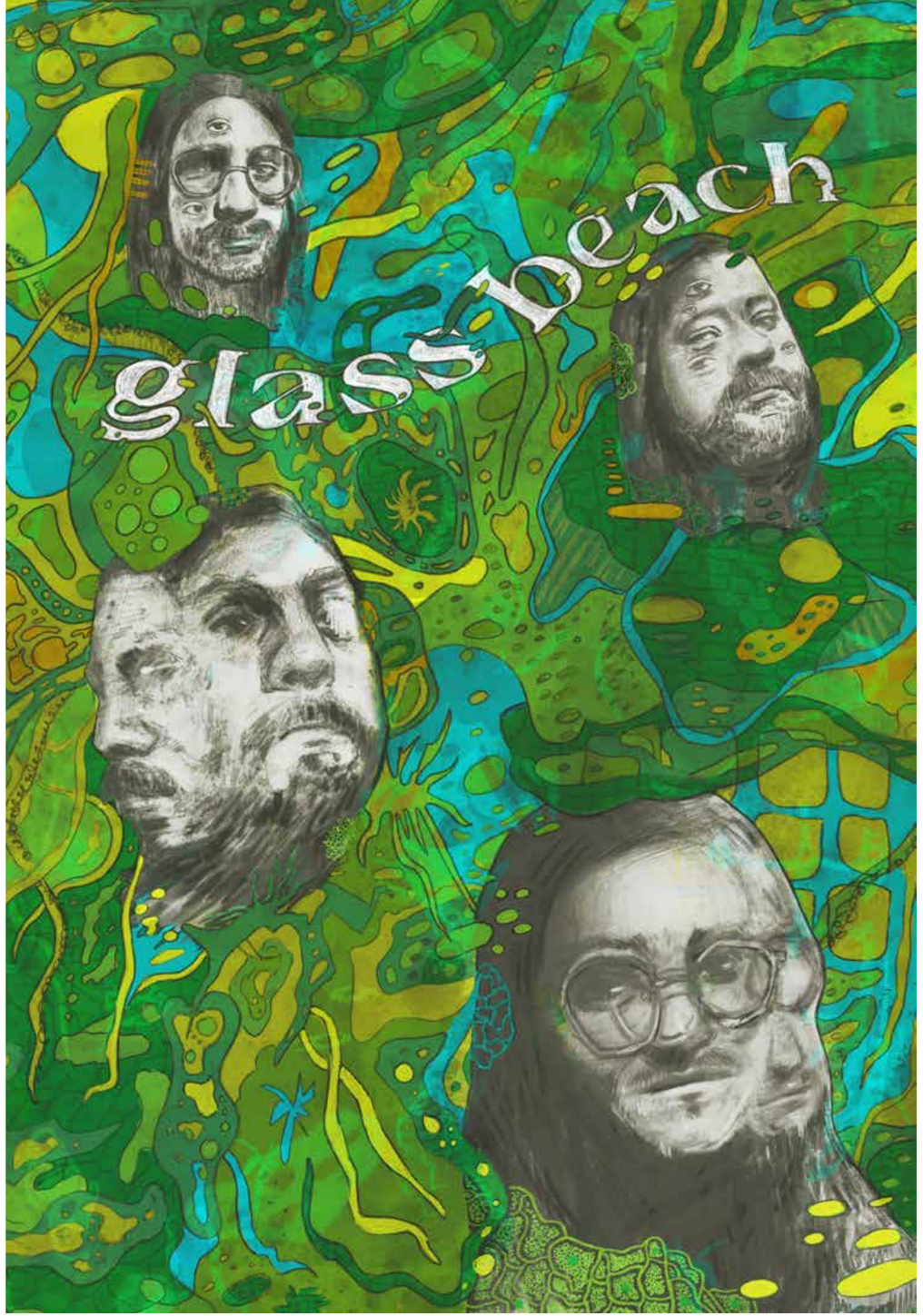
My influences for this project were mainly the artists themselves. I was interested in Adrianne Lenker as an artist because of her lyrics that often talk about androgyny and fluidity in both gender and sexuality. She also often talks about the violence and beauty of nature and the cycle that perpetuates, as well as the idea of the interaction of love and resentment. All of these ideas influenced the idea of using wolves, dogs, and sheep in the piece.

Kevin Abstract is a R&B, alternative rock and pop musician and producer. I was drawn to him because he doesn't shy away from talking about his life experiences. His songs have a variety of different subjects, but he often describes his experiences with growing up in a household that was unaccepting of him being gay, which is relatable for a lot of people. I decided to use somewhat subtle internet motifs. Earlier on in his career he had a big internet presence, he actually started his first rap collective through a subreddit when he was 13, and later on became one of the founders of Brockhampton which was another music group founded on online forums.

Um Jennifer is an indie pop/rock band, self described as, "trans slut rock". I was drawn to them because they are a duo and they're both trans. Most of the artists that I chose are kind of moody, so they're a breath of fresh air by being playful and energetic. Their lyrics talk a lot about transness and love, but they're also very unserious. Their band name is derived from a fictional god that they created named Jennifer, who they make music for. She's not that into it though. Because of that I decided to have them as puppets on a string controlled by Jennifer to play their instruments. Last but not least, glass beach is an indie rock band that dabbles in math rock.



I liked them for their soundscapes that feel large and all encompassing. I found out later that all of the members are nonbinary, which is really cool. For this piece I mainly played on the idea of trying to capture their soundscapes but in a visual form, while also playing with their band name. I wanted to emulate sea glass, and other sea motifs. For this piece, I looked at the cellular structures of seaweed, sea anemone, and ferns to get the patterns present in that poster.
For the market application of this project, I can see this living in a band poster, music editorial, or book cover space. Which are all facets of illustration that I am really interested in. I think this project in my portfolio would prove to clients that I can complete a project this complicated. This project is also relevant to contemporary culture because it features contemporary musicians that push boundaries both artistically and as people.

Moving forward, I want to continue drawing other musicians that I didn't quite get to, like Sufjan Stevens and Arca. I made moodboards for both of those artists, and I want to see how I would progress those further. I think this project was also a stepping stone to feel more confident taking on bigger projects like this. Throughout this process I was battling a lot with my self confidence as a creative, and I spent a lot of time just worrying and beating myself up over things rather than just problem solving and moving forward. I think going through this process of doing constant iterations and refining, while also learning how to move on and let go of things was a very helpful and necessary lesson that will help me with whatever I do next.

I want to thank Lily and Alex for hanging all of this up. I want to thank all of my amazing friends for always giving me pep talks and offering their support, and advice. I want to thank my mentor Zack for teaching me so much, believing in me, and offering support that I've never really had before. Everyone I mentioned has really taught me that I have a lot of value both as an artist and as a person. Overall, I feel very lucky to have your support as an audience. I appreciate you listening to me talk about really cool queer musicians that you should totally check out. Thank you.

CREATIVE BRIEF

PROJECT VISION

Soundcheck highlights queer musicians from a variety of genres and backgrounds. All of these musicians have blatantly queer themes depicted within their music. The goal of these posters is to celebrate queerness. This project was also my way to figure out my own queer identity through the musical and visual language of others and taking elements from that and making it my own.

METHODS + MATERIALS

Methods + Materials: I started out by rendering most of the assets in graphite, ink, or charcoal, scanning them in, and compositing them into Photoshop. In Photoshop, I would then experiment with the layout and color. I would create additional digital assets in Procreate.

COMPARATIVE MEDIA

The most comparative media would be band posters. Band posters often convey important imagery and the aesthetics of the artist they represent, this was the purpose of the project. However, I intentionally didn't look at band posters for inspiration because I didn't want to tie myself down to a particular format.

AUDIENCE

This project is for queer people who enjoy music. The audience for these posters is not limited to any particular age group, it is for anyone who connects with the artists that are depicted.

MARKETPLACE APPLICATION

I can see this project living in a band poster, music editorial, or book cover space. Which are all facets of illustration that I am really interested in. I think this project in my portfolio would prove to clients that I can complete a project this complicated. This project is going to be primarily used for self promotional purposes.

CREATIVE BRIEF

Project Overview

- **6 illustrations @ 13" x 19"**
- Mixed-Media - Analog + Digital Composited Images
- Laser Prints
- Subject Matter: **Modern Queer Musicians** from a variety of genres
- Audience: **Queer People** interested in music.
  - Adrianne Lenker
  - Kevin Abstract
  - Glass Beach
  - Um, Jennifer?
  - Arca
  - Sufjan Stevens

Synopsis

This project highlights queer musicians from a variety of genres and backgrounds. All of these musicians have blatantly queer themes depicted within their music. The goal of this project is to celebrate queerness.

This project was also my way to figure out my own queer identity through the musical and visual language of others and taking elements from that and making it my own.

Thumbs

Um, Jennifer?

Genre: punk-ish indie pop

- Trans-masc and fem duo — self described as "Trans Slut Rock"
- Chaotic, energetic, and humorous songs about gender identity and love
- Found out about them through t-boy wrestling
- They make music to serve a vengeful deity named Jennifer.

In Progress

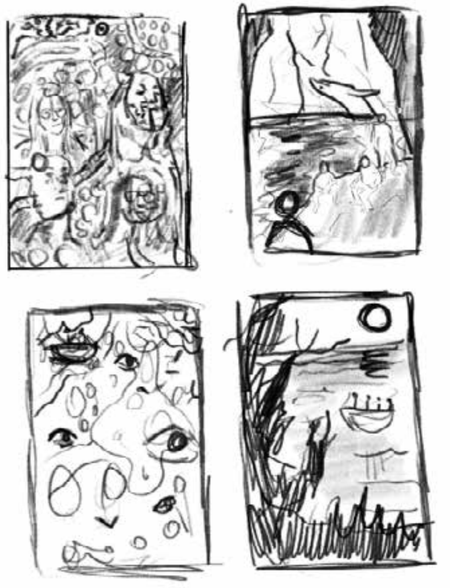
Thumbs

ARCA

Genre: experimental electronic, orchestral, and deconstructed club music

- Sings about: gender identity, love, and sexuality, with dark sci-fi themes
- She has consistent body horror and gothic visual language
- Active since 2012, she has never shied away from queer themes
- Producer and DJ
- She was a composer on the RDR2 soundtrack

Thumbs



Glass Beach

Genre: indie rock, math rock

- Very cool instrumentals
- Sings about: isolation, burnout, repressed memory/trauma, queerness
- Four-piece band that is all non-binary

In Progress

Thumbs

Sufjan Stevens

Genre: indie folk, electronic, chamber pop, orchestral

- Sings about: religion, grief, love, nostalgia, trauma, specific places and their history
- I grew up with his music
- Multi-instrumentalist
- Started his own music label with his stepfather
- "Is this song gay or about god?"
- Does his own thing, flip flops between genres and aesthetics a lot

Influences : 1920's-1970's Soviet Film Posters

Derek Hess

Flesh.png

Edward Kinsella

To-Do

Week 10: Finish Adrianne Lenker, Kevin Abstract, and Um Jennifer illustrations. Refined sketches for Arca

Week 11: Finish Glass Beach and Arca illustrations

Week 12: Revise all of the images, start thesis defense deck. Print out images.

Week 13: Focus Week

Questions

- Is there a sense of consistency throughout the project? Do you have any strategies for creating a cohesive series?
- What strategies do you have to create more dynamic compositions?
- What is your process for compositing analog and digital media?
- If you need to finish a piece, but you're getting stuck, how do you get out of that?

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https://open.spotify.com/track/7gqxtKyCAnEj5AmxKmoXU0.

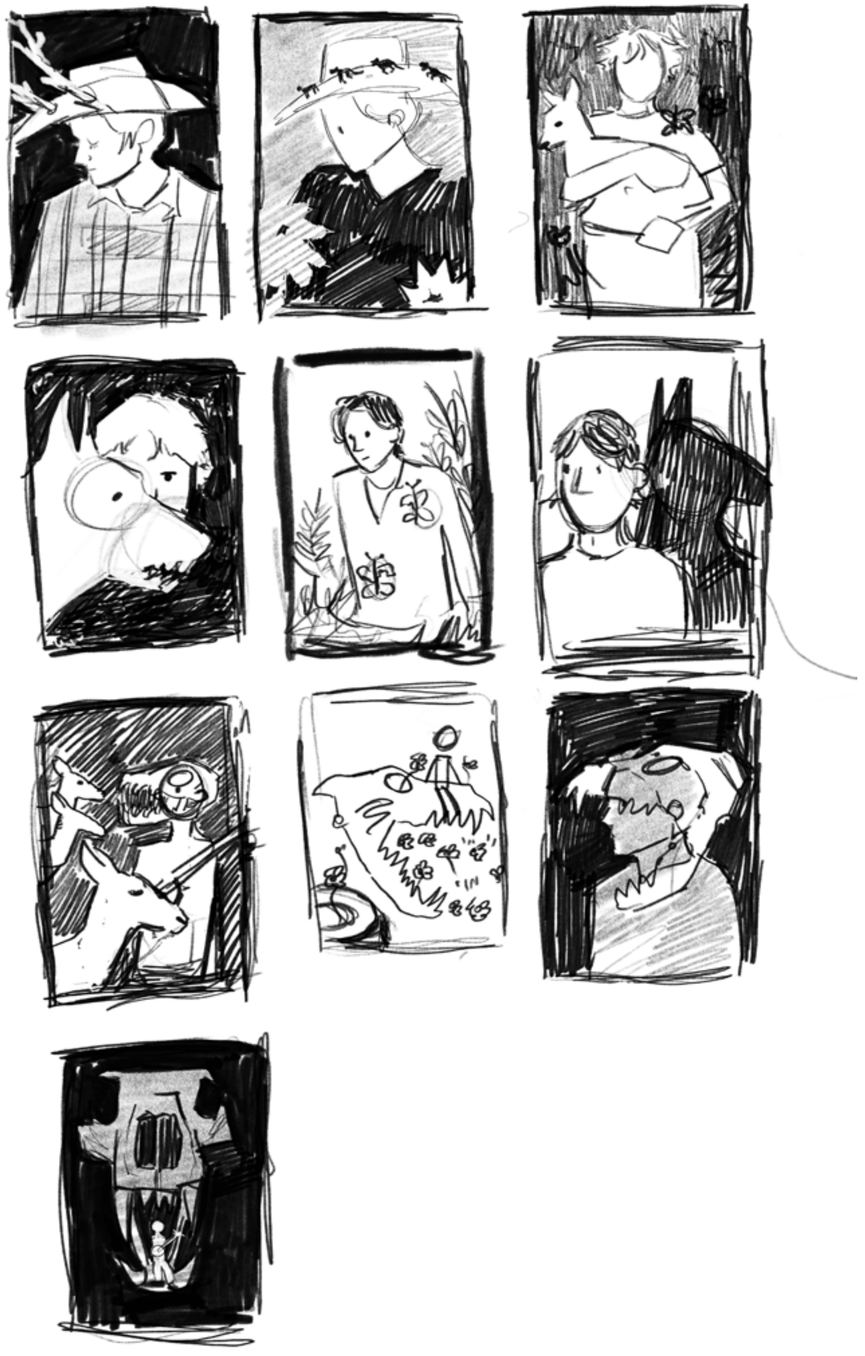
DOCUMENTATION

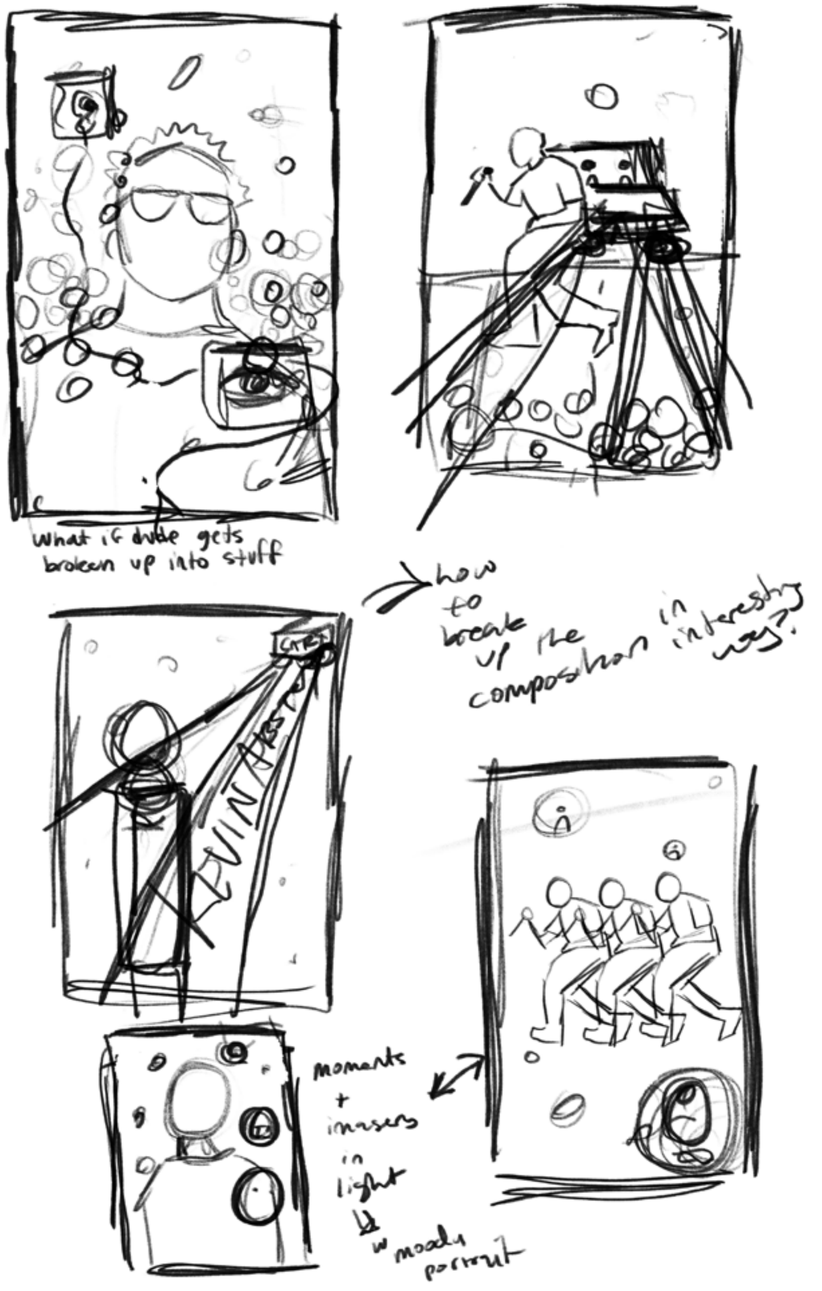
UM, JENNIFER?
UM, JENNIFER?
UM, JENNIFER?

Adrianne Lenker

Kevin
Abstract
glass beach

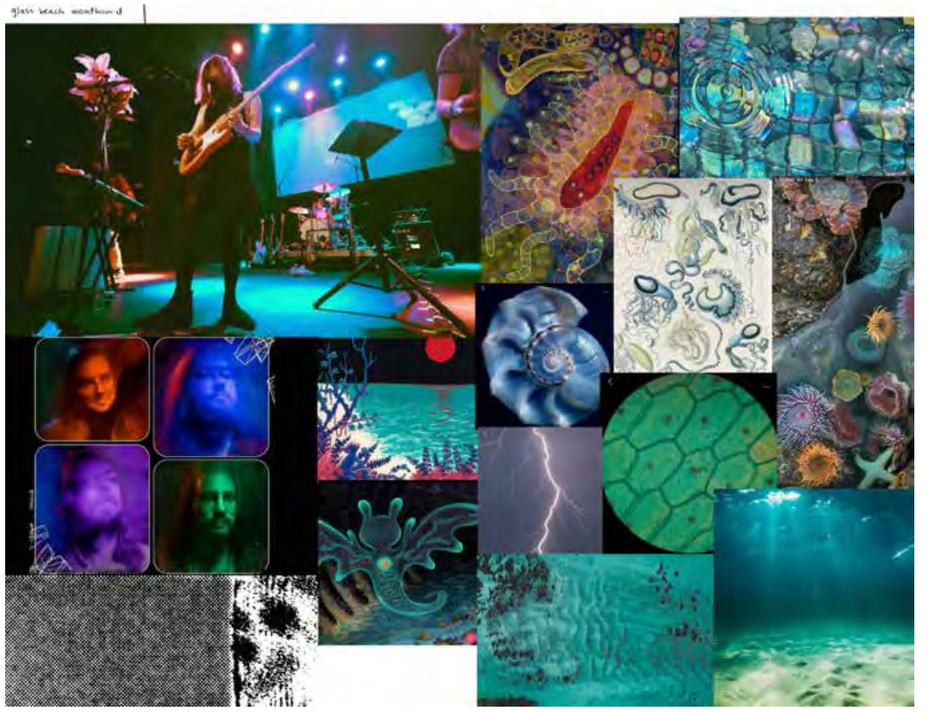
THESIS JOURNAL





UM JENNIFER ?

Kevin Abstract



CINEMA
Vienna