

Visual Diary

Reading Festival

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Visual Studies 2 M4X01603

Inspiration: The Stories



Cat Person

By Kristen Roupenian

Margot met Robert on a Wednesday night toward the end
behind the concession stand at the artsy movie theatre do
large popcorn and a box of Red Vines.

"That's an . . . unusual choice," she said. "I don't think I've
before."

Flirting with her customers was a habit she'd picked up ba
helped with tips. She didn't earn tips at the movie theatre,
did think that Robert was cute. Not so cute that she would
cute enough that she could have drummed up an imaginar
during a dull class—though she was pretty sure that he wa
He was tall, which she liked, and she could see the edge of
rolled-up sleeve of his shirt. But he was on the heavy side,
shoulders slumped forward slightly, as though he were pr

Robert did not pick up on her flirtation. Or, if he did, he sl
make her lean toward him, try a little harder. "Well," he sa

But the next week he came into the movie theatre again, a
getting better at your job," he told her. "You managed not

She shrugged. "I'm up for a promotion, so," she said.

After the movie, he came back to her. "Concession-stand g
and, surprising herself, she did.



The key themes I picked out from this story are relationships, deception, regret, confusion and paranoia. It is a complex story which demonstrates how quickly people can form connections but also that people are not always what they seem. It is a story that I would describe as 'anti-romance' where everything is clumsy and nothing turns out the way you think it should. I feel it would be difficult to draw visual concepts from this short story as I did not connect with it in the way I did with some of the other stories.

The Handsomest Drowned Man In The World

by: Gabriel Garcia Marquez

THE FIRST CHILDREN who saw the dark and slinky bulge approaching through the sea let themselves think it was an enemy ship. Then they saw it had no flags or masts and they thought it was a whale. But when it washed up on the beach, they removed the clumps of seaweed, the jellyfish tentacles, and the remains of fish and flotsam, and only then did they see that it was a drowned man. They had been playing with him all afternoon, burying him in the sand and digging him up again, when someone chanced to see them and spread the alarm in the village. The men who carried him to the nearest house noticed that he weighed more than any dead man they had ever known, almost as much as a horse, and they said to each other that maybe he'd been floating too long and the water had got into his bones. When they laid him on the floor they said he'd been taller than all other men because there was barely enough room for him in the house, but they thought that maybe the ability to keep on growing after death was part of the nature of certain drowned men. He had the smell of the sea about him and only his shape gave one to suppose that it was the corpse of a human being, because the skin was covered with a crust of mud and scales. They did not even have to clean off his face to know that the dead man was a stranger. The village was made up of only twenty-odd wooden houses that had stone courtyards with no flowers and which were spread about on the end of a desertlike cape. There was so little land that mothers always went about with the fear that the wind would carry off their children and the few dead that the years had caused among them had to be thrown off the cliffs. But the sea was calm and bountiful and all the men fitted into seven boats. So when they found the drowned man they simply had to look at one another, to see that they were all there



This story was a peaceful but strange one that I feel I was not able to fully comprehend. It had themes of death, voyeurism, respect and beauty. I found this tale very poetic but difficult to connect with creatively, perhaps because I drew such a diverse range of themes from it.

"Happy Endings"

Margaret Atwood

John and Mary meet.
What happens next?
If you want a happy ending, try A.

A.

John and Mary fall in love and get married. They both have worthwhile and remunerative jobs which they find stimulating and challenging. They buy a charming house. Real estate values go up. Eventually, when they can afford live-in help, they have two children, to whom they are devoted. The children turn out well. John and Mary have a stimulating and challenging sex life and worthwhile friends. They go on fun vacations together. They retire. They both have hobbies which they find stimulating and challenging. Eventually they die. This is the end of the story.

B.

Mary falls in love with John but John doesn't fall in love with Mary. He merely uses her body for selfish pleasure and ego gratification of a tepid kind. He comes to her apartment twice a week and she cooks him dinner, you'll notice that he doesn't even consider her worth the price of a dinner out, and after he's eaten dinner he fucks her and after that he falls asleep, while she does the dishes so he won't think she's untidy, having all those dirty dishes lying around, and puts on fresh lipstick so she'll look good when he wakes up, but when he wakes up he doesn't even notice, he puts on his socks and his shorts and his pants and his shirt and his tie and his shoes, the reverse order from the one in which he took them off. He doesn't take off Mary's clothes, she takes them off herself, she acts as if she's dying for it every time, not because she likes sex exactly, she doesn't, but she wants John to think she does because if they do it often enough surely he'll get used to her, he'll come to depend on her and they will get married, but John goes out the door with hardly so much as a good-night and three days later he turns up at six o'clock and they do the whole thing over again.

Mary gets run-down. Crying is bad for your face, everyone knows that and so does Mary but she can't stop. People at work notice. Her friends tell her John is a rat, a pig, a dog, he isn't good enough for her, but she can't believe it. Inside John, she thinks, is another John, who is much nicer. This other John will emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon, a Jack from a box, a pit from a prune, if the first John is only squeezed enough.

One evening John complains about the food. He has never complained about her food before. Mary is hurt.

Her friends tell her they've seen him in a restaurant with another woman, whose name is Madge. It's not even Madge that finally gets to Mary: it's the restaurant. John has never taken Mary to a restaurant. Mary collects all the sleeping pills and aspirins she can find, and takes them and a half a bottle of sherry. You can see what kind of a woman she is by the fact that it's not even



The main theme I picked out from this short story is relationships as it is a story that I feel portrays the various different aspects of relationships. There are many examples of unrequited love, death and a reoccurring theme of fantasy vs reality. The story depicts how death is unavoidable and how people can live their life in whatever way they chose yet it will always end the same.

"Paper Menagerie"

by Ken Liu

One of my earliest memories starts with me sobbing. I refused to be soothed no matter what Mom and Dad tried.

Dad gave up and left the bedroom, but Mom took me into the kitchen and sat me down at the breakfast table.

"*Kan, kan*," she said, as she pulled a sheet of wrapping paper from on top of the fridge. For years, Mom carefully sliced open the wrappings around Christmas gifts and saved them on top of the fridge in a thick stack.

She set the paper down, plain side facing up, and began to fold it. I stopped crying and watched her, curious.

She turned the paper over and folded it again. She pleated, packed, tucked, rolled, and twisted until the paper disappeared between her cupped hands. Then she lifted the folded-up paper packet to her mouth and blew into it, like a balloon.

"*Kan*," she said. "*Laohu*." She put her hands down on the table and let go.

A little paper tiger stood on the table, the size of two fists placed together. The skin of the tiger was the pattern on the wrapping paper, white background with red candy canes and green Christmas trees.

I reached out to Mom's creation. Its tail twitched, and it pounced playfully at my finger. "*Rawrr-sa*," it growled, the sound somewhere between a cat and rustling newspapers.

I laughed, startled, and stroked its back with an index finger. The paper tiger vibrated under my finger, purring.

"*Zhe jiao zhezhi*," Mom said. *This is called origami*.



This was a beautiful depiction of love, family and racism. It displays the heartbreaking effects of racism on families. I really enjoyed reading the story but I did not feel like it inspired me in a way I could produce visual content that I feel represented the story well. I do like the idea of working with paper at some point in the future with my work.

Lamb to the Slaughter

Roald Dahl

The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alighthers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket.

Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come him from work.

Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin -for this was her sixth month with child-had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger darker than before. When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

"Hullo darling," she said.

"Hullo darling," he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closer. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side.

For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel-almost as a sunbather feels the sun-that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved intent, far look in his eyes when they rested in her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whiskey had taken some of it away.



I found this story really interesting and I really liked the themes of complicated relationships, panic, crime and death. I felt that this was a very well written story, and I would have liked to work with it. However, I didn't think I could make the images in the way I would like as I do feel limited due to the current circumstances. I might like to revisit the story in the future when I have access to more locations and props etc.

Angela Carter, "The Company of Wolves"

Published in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979). The footnotes are not part of Carter's text; they have been added to this version for classroom use.

One beast and only one howls in the woods by night.

The wolf is carnivore incarnate and he's as cunning as he is ferocious; once he's had a taste of flesh then nothing else will do.

At night, the eyes of wolves shine like candle flames, yellowish, reddish, but that is because the pupils of their eyes fatten on darkness and catch the light from your lantern to flash it back to you – red for danger; if a wolf's eyes reflect only moonlight, then they gleam a cold and unnatural green, a mineral, a piercing colour. If the benighted traveller spies those luminous, terrible sequins stitched suddenly on the black thickets, then he knows he must run, if fear has not struck him stock-still.

But those eyes are all you will be able to glimpse of the forest assassins as they cluster invisibly round your smell of meat as you go through the wood unwisely late. They will be like shadows, they will be like wraiths, grey members of a congregation of nightmare; hark! his long, wavering howl . . . an aria of fear made audible.

The wolfsong is the sound of the rending you will suffer, in itself a murdering.

It is winter and cold weather. In this region of mountain and forest, there is now nothing for the wolves to eat. Goats and sheep are locked up in the byre,[1] the deer departed for the remaining pasturage on the southern slopes – wolves grow lean and famished. There is so little flesh on them that you could count the starveling ribs through their pelts, if they gave you time before they pounced. Those slavering jaws; the lolling tongue; the rime of saliva on the grizzled chops – of all the teeming perils of the night and the forest, ghosts, hobgoblins, ogres that grill babies upon gridirons, witches that fatten their captives in cages for cannibal tables, the wolf is worst for he cannot listen to reason.

You are always in danger in the forest, where no people are. Step between the portals of the great pines where the shaggy branches tangle about you, trapping the unwary traveller in nets as if the vegetation itself were in a plot with the wolves who live there, as though the wicked trees go fishing on behalf of their friends – step between the gateposts of the forest with the greatest trepidation and infinite precautions, for if you stray from the path for one instant, the wolves will eat you. They are grey as famine, they are as unkind as plague. .

The grave-eyed children of the sparse villages always carry knives with them when they go out to tend the little flocks of goats that provide the homesteads with acrid milk and rank, maggoty cheeses. Their knives are half as big as they are, the blades are sharpened daily.

But the wolves have ways of arriving at your own hearthside. We try and try but sometimes we cannot keep them out. There is no winter's night the cottager does not fear to see a lean, grey, famished snout questing under the door, and there was a woman once bitten in her own kitchen as she was straining the macaroni.

Fear and flee the wolf; for, worst of all, the wolf may be more than he seems.

There was a hunter once, near here, that trapped a wolf in a pit. This wolf had massacred the sheep and goats; eaten up a mad old man who used to live by himself in a hut halfway up the mountain and sing to Jesus all day; pounced on a girl looking after the sheep, but she made such a commotion that men came with rifles and scared him away and tried to track him into the forest but he was cunning and easily gave them the slip. So this hunter dug a pit and put a duck in it, for bait, all alive-oh; and he covered the pit with straw smeared with wolf dung. Quack, quack! went the duck and a wolf came slinking out of the forest, a big one, a heavy one, he weighed as much as a grown man and the

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[1] byre: a small building for livestock



The Company of Wolves is a dark and twisted fairytale style story. There are themes of vulnerability, fantasy and naivete. I feel I could have drawn from the story to create visuals but perhaps they might have been cliché and not very original. I like the link with little red Riding Hood and I feel I could've produced strong visuals if I worked with this theme however I did not want to do something that had probably been done before.

Everyday Use[1]

For Your Grandmama

I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.

Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eyeing her sister with a mixture of envy and awe. She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that "no" is a word the world never learned to say to her.

You've no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has "made it" is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent

1. From *In Love & Trouble* (1973).



This story is one of powerful women and heritage, there are also themes of trauma, pride and family. It is an intricate tale with lots of facets of information and details with them within it. Descriptions of sounds and colours are also prominent throughout, I felt the story was good but that I did not connect with it in a way I could make work.

Haruki Murakami

THE YEAR OF SPAGHETTI

1971 was the Year of Spaghetti.

In 1971 I cooked spaghetti to live, and lived to cook spaghetti. Steam rising from the aluminum pot was my pride and joy, tomato sauce bubbling up in the saucepan my one great hope in life.

I'd gone to a cooking specialty store and bought a kitchen timer and a huge aluminum cooking pot, big enough to bathe a German shepherd in, then went round all the supermarkets that cater to foreigners, gathering an assortment of odd-sounding spices. I picked up a pasta cookbook at the bookstore, and bought tomatoes by the dozen. I purchased every brand of spaghetti I could lay my hands on, simmered every kind of sauce known to man. Fine particles of garlic, onion, and olive oil swirled in the air, forming a harmonious cloud that penetrated every corner of my tiny apartment, permeating the floor and ceiling and walls, my clothes, my books, my records, my tennis racket, my bundles of old letters. It was a fragrance one might have smelled on ancient Roman aqueducts.

This is a story from the Year of Spaghetti, 1971 A.D.



I think that the story has become more relevant to people reading after the isolation we've experienced due to the pandemic. There are themes of loneliness, routine, fear and repetition which are portrayed well in a confusing tales of spaghetti and how this has shaped his routine. Perhaps it is metaphorical but that is up to our own interpretation. I think this story has provided me with lots of inspiration as I feel I can really relate as this isolation period at the moment is very challenging and this is what I will base my work off.



The Year of Spaghetti

The magic trick:

Setting up what seems to be a melodramatic moment but then showing great restraint

This is a wonderful story about isolation. The narrator takes great care to mention all the great care he took in cooking and eating spaghetti every day in 1971. He has buried his past – whatever that might be – and blocked out everyone else – whoever it might be. It is him alone in his apartment behind a wall of spaghetti-based routine.

Now that would be a pretty good story by itself.

But something happens in this story. The phone rings. In most stories, I think the author would succumb to the temptation of making this a melodramatic moment, some kind of shocking voice from the past. But here, it's a mere acquaintance – the ex-girlfriend of an ex-friend. It's someone the narrator barely even considered. This allows the focus to remain on the narrator's present state. The reader doesn't drift into considerations of backstory or analysis of some new revelation. We lock in on the narrator as he is – alone, selfish, scared, lonely with his spaghetti. And that's quite a trick on Murakami's part.

https://shortstorymagictricks.com/2017/08/31/the-year-of-spaghetti-by-haruki-murakami/

I have been anxiously waiting to draw another diamond card so that I can finally read something by Haruki Murakami and "The Year of Spaghetti" did not disappoint. I absolutely loved this short-story! It took me a while to warm up to him but he is quickly becoming one of my favorite authors. There are not too many gifted writers who come to mind that are able to perfectly encapsulate the overwhelming sadness from loneliness and self-alienation with such poignant brevity. He cultivates a concise and elliptical style through accessible language, transforming the banalities of ordinary life into something magical. His beautifully constructed sentences pack an emotional punch with only a few lyrical brush strokes.

On the surface, a story about a guy cooking spaghetti in his apartment might sound pretty dull but somehow Murakami takes this simple premise and molds it into an illuminating and meaningful whole. For those who might not be familiar with Murakami, nothing is ever simple despite their outward appearance. His stories are not constrained by the narrative conventions of plot; rather, they ebb and flow with unpredictable spontaneity like a jazz piece. Dreams and reality are not always so distinguishable from one another--the defamiliarization of objective reality being a distinctive pattern in his work. Ambiguity and equivocal endings abound. Yet, "Year of Spaghetti" is one of his more understated and straightforward narratives without any encounters of the uncanny or metaphysical intrusions. The short-story's brevity engenders a heightened intensity with an unexpected tenderness of vision towards suffocating loneliness.

http://literaturefrenzy.blogspot.com/2020/01/the-year-of-spaghetti-by-haruki-murakami.html

Ideas

- Represent isolation and loneliness
- Take the same picture over and over to represent repetition- this could be self-portraiture or landscape
- Photograph things that I have been doing in isolation: Uni work, exercising, watching tv etc.



Initial Photoshoot

My initial response was to take the same photo of the view outside my window. I planned to take a picture several times a day in order to represent the isolation and routine I have been feeling



IMG_6276.HEIC



IMG_6277.HEIC



IMG_6278.HEIC



IMG_6282.HEIC



IMG_6283.HEIC



IMG_6284.HEIC



IMG_6285.HEIC

I quickly realised that I wasn't inspired by this idea and therefore decided to refer back to my ideas list and to try again



Research

Paul Politis- Disconnected

Before my second photoshoot I decided to research some photographers, who worked in a way similar to what I wanted to in order to provide me with inspiration. I found Politis who did a project in 2010-2012 and then revisited it in 2018 where he investigated the theme of isolation and produced a series of images titled 'Disconnected'. I was really drawn to his work as I loved his use of light and water in order to create some really interesting looks which I feel definitely are able to convey the emotions he wanted to get across. Unlike him I don't think that I will include people in my photographs as I want to give my images quite a poetic sense of isolation.

https://www.paulpolitis.com/photo-galleries/disconnected/







Masha Demianova- Isolation

Another photographer that really inspired me was Demianova, who has recently started a project during the pandemic where she photographs her everyday life and creates artistic work with it. I find it really interesting that she mainly shoots in black and white as this seems to give the photos a magical quality to them as if they are not displaying simple everyday things. This is something I think I will experiment with when taking my images as I don't often work with black and white and it feel that when working with this theme of isolation that it would work very well with my concept.

https://www.russh.com/photographers-in-isolation/



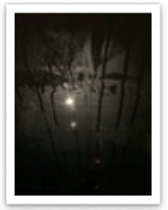


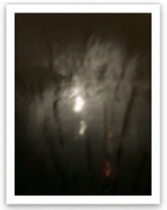


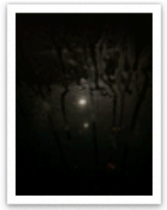


Second Photoshoot

I really like this image and the way the light falls between the water


IMG_6279.HEIC


IMG_6280.HEIC


IMG_6281.HEIC


IMG_6286.HEIC


IMG_6295.HEIC


IMG_6299.HEIC

I had planned for all my photos to have quite a natural colour scheme but I saw this when out which was something new and really wanted to photograph it


IMG_6287.HEIC


IMG_6288.HEIC


IMG_6289.HEIC

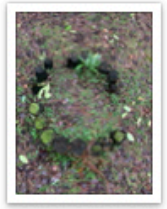

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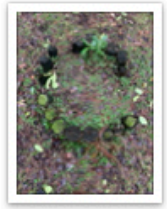

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IMG_6297.HEIC

I decided that I would take picture of things that I saw out on my daily walk

I tried to take photos of things which were natural and had no people in to give a sense of loneliness

Experimenting with Presentation



















Initially, I experimented with the idea of creating a triptic of images in order to represent my themes of loneliness and isolation. I originally had the idea of including a singular coloured image in order to inspire hope and positivity, however, I decided that this was overpowering my other images. Additionally, I decided after the last crit that my images did not work well together in this particular sequence.

Final Photos









Evaluation

Overall, I feel that this project has challenged me creatively and made me think hard about my concepts and ideas. I am pleased with the final outcome as I feel it has come from a good process of development and I have been able to work well with my source material to produce images. The current situation has made it difficult to be inspired by this project however, I do feel it also helped me to relate very strongly to 'The Year of Spaghetti' and this allowed me to produce work that I felt connected to. With my photographs I wanted to produce a sense of loneliness and isolation by capturing images of things within my current repetitive routine. All my photos are natural and quiet which portrays a stillness representing life at the moment. I was inspired by the work we did in the last module looking at poetic images and I wanted to work in a similar style to this. Another creative decision I made was to only take photos on my phone as I feel we are in a time (especially during the pandemic) where we are living through the lens of a smartphone and I felt creating images in this way would be a good way to demonstrate how unescapable this all is. I feel making my photos black and white is a decision that works really well with my concept as it helps to give the photos a timeless and perhaps slightly eery feel. My favourite photograph is the image of the broken bench as I feel this really displays the the life we are living where we are afraid of human contact and seeing this manifested visually was something that really resonated with me. I think I was able to pull well from the story and it was interesting to have to work off content like this as its not something I have much experience of from before this module. I'm not sure that I would work off these type of short stories again if given the choice because I didn't feel very inspired and I prefer to work off my own ideas. In conclusion, I am happy with the work I have produced and although it was a challenge it do feel the experience of working through will benefit me and my practices.

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