

*MA Confirmative Praxis*

Project Report

Living in the Face of Death

Jinyi Wang 2025

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WORD COUNT: 5,354

## *Introduction*

Death, as the most fundamental and universal reality in human history (Bauman, 2000), constitutes the inevitable end of every life. It signifies not only the biological termination of the individual but is also regarded, across cultural, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions, as a sacred transition that profoundly shapes the modes of existence and self-understanding of individuals, societies, and even civilizations. However, life cannot foresee the moment of death's arrival, nor can it predetermine the meaning of its own demise. As Heidegger pointed out, it is precisely through the awareness and anticipatory comprehension of death as this ultimate possibility that humans are thrown into the questioning and construction of the meaning of their own existence. Therefore, death is far from a mere physiological endpoint; within the multiple dimensions of philosophy, art, and faith, it carries complex symbolic significance, becoming a universally and persistently examined theme (Betül AYTEPE SERİNSU, 2025).

Phenomena in the natural world provide an observation perspective that transcends anthropocentrism. Taking salmon as an example: they are born in freshwater, migrate to the ocean to mature, and ultimately return to their natal freshwater streams to spawn. Within this cycle, a significant number of individuals die during the upstream migration or shortly after spawning. Death

is an inevitable phase of their life cycle. Yet, the death of an individual does not equate to the complete obliteration of significance: their eggs ensure the continuation of the species, their bodies become sustenance for grizzly and black bears, and their remains transform into nutrients that feed the riverine ecosystem. Here, death clearly manifests its dual aspect the finality for the individual and continuity within a systemic context where the end of one life form may intertwine with the existential processes of others.

To transform this philosophical understanding into a visual form, the transformation sequence "Pomegranate-Fish-Tree" was created. This work is not a realistic depiction of the life process, but rather a metaphorical model to explore the core tension in Heidegger's ontology: on the one hand, the "death" of each stage in the sequence (pomegranate, fish, tree) marks the absolute end of a specific form of existence, which echoes the possibility of death as the most authentic and insurmountable possibility in "Being Towards Death"; on the other hand, the continuous transformation between forms intuitively presents the permeability of boundaries and the fluidity of existence, that is how the demise of individuality can be integrated into another form of "life" .

The form and material selection of the work also serve this theoretical exploration. The concertina binding structure allows each page to be viewed independently (emphasizing stages and individual conclusions) or unfolded into

a continuous scroll (presenting wholeness), which can be seen as a physical metaphor for the dialectical relationship between “the finite individual” and “the infinite system.” In the selection and use of mineral pigments, their material properties are themselves products of “material transformation” on a geological timescale. Using them to depict the transformation of the biological world establishes a resonance of material facts between medium and subject matter, suggesting that matter is, to a certain extent, in the process of transformation.

## *Chapter 1*

### Original source of inspiration

During my childhood, drawing had become a part of my daily routine. It was liberating, I could briefly escape from the real world and immerse myself in the world I had created. Art is a temporary release from “will” (the ceaseless desire). In the aesthetic experience, the subject forgets itself and becomes a purely will-less cognitive subject, thereby achieving temporary freedom and peace. Art is a way to gain freedom from the pain of life (Schopenhauer, 1819). During my university studies, I discovered that the once free haven had also lost its freedom. I was not allowed to express too many personal thoughts in my works. Instead, I was required to complete tasks mechanically according to a template. For me, this was no longer considered creation. The art education in university was contrary to my inner aspiration for art, so I became confused. I started to feel anxious and fell into deep self-loathing and self-doubt.

Most of the people around me, my relatives and friends, could not understand this struggle of mine. I almost felt that I was disconnected from the world. My thoughts at that time became somewhat extreme. I felt that my inspiration was drying up. I even tried to cut my hand and use the blood to draw on the paper, hoping to break through the depression and pain that overwhelmed me. During

those moments when the anxiety and pain gradually fade and become numb, I would think that if my life had come to an end right then, it would not have been any worse. I am not sure if my life would have had meaning if it had ended at that time, but people are bound to die, and everything a person possesses will dissipate with their death. So, is the pursuit of the meaning of life by a person before death meaningful at all.

This experience reminds me of Heidegger's description of everyday existence. He posits that Dasein typically exists in a state of "falling" (Verfallen): We busy ourselves with daily trivialities, conform to the opinions of "the they" (das Man), and evade the most fundamental questions, what is the meaning of my own existence. What does it mean for me that I will inevitably die (Heidegger, 2014). What I underwent was precisely a distancing from and questioning of this state of "the they". Within the rigid frameworks of academic assignments and the lack of understanding from those around me, I felt an intense sense of emptiness and unreality, which led me to a fundamental questioning of existence itself.

Today, when Dasein interacts with others through public transportation and communicates news through media such as newspapers, in such a public world, Dasein is all the more dissolved into the Being of others. Dasein is not itself; others take its Being away from it. In everyday being-with-one-another, Dasein is at the beck and call of others. Yet the distinctive others also disappear [...] The "who" that is there first and for the most part in everyday being-with-one-another is a neuter: the they (das Man).

Subsequently, I entertained the thought that it would not be bad if life came to an end at this moment, and this thought made me realize that, under the premise of death, how should I define my life. This idea might be “Angst”, which is not the fear of a specific thing, but a fundamental emotion that arises when facing the emptiness, freedom, and inevitable death of one's own existence.

What anxiety is about is being in the world itself. But the world as world is the condition for the readiness to hand of equipment [...] In anxiety, the totality of equipment within the world sinks away; the “world” can offer nothing more, nor can the Dasein-with of Others. Thus anxiety takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, falling prey, in terms of the “world” and the public way of being interpreted. Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that about which it is anxious, its authentic potentiality for Being in the world. Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being in the world, which, as understanding, projects itself essentially upon possibilities [...] Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its ownmost potentiality for Being, that is, with its being-free for the authenticity of its existence.

It is precisely through anxiety that death reveals itself to me as “my ownmost, unsurpassable possibility.” Its unsurpassability constitutes the unalterable boundary of my life. And it is precisely because of this boundary that the question of life's meaning becomes so urgent. I realize that my existence has perhaps always been a state of “being towards death”, that is, what Heidegger termed “being towards death”. Heidegger points out that death, as the most authentic possibility of Dasein, strips Dasein from the anonymity of “ordinary people”, forcing it to confront the irreplaceable nature of its own existence. It is precisely through confronting death, this ultimate boundary, that Dasein is

thrown back into the responsibility of its own being, and only then does the construction of meaning become possible. The absoluteness of death compels Dasein to make active choices and plans, and this process precisely reveals the most fundamental freedom of Being: death is a possibility that must be borne by oneself. This is an ultimate, personal freedom (Heidegger, M., 1927).



**Figure 1** Mineral pigment painting 1, completed in 2025

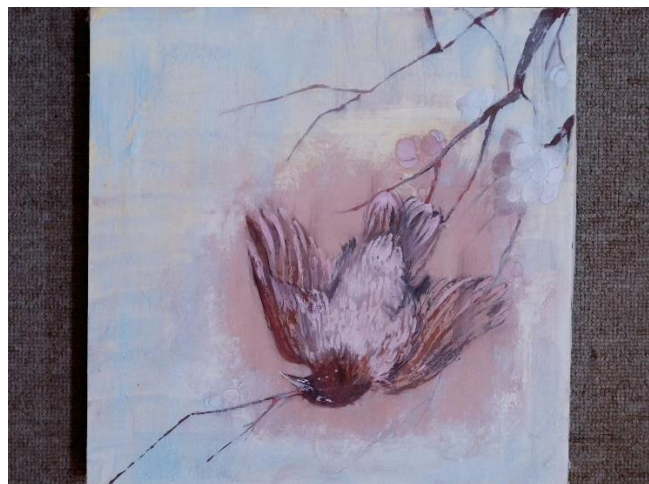


**Figure 2** Mineral pigment painting 2, completed in 2025

These two works constitute a preliminary visual experiment on the proposition of “being towards death,” with their core aim being to present the fundamental state of Dasein existing in a mode of “towards death.” According to Heidegger, death is essentially always “my own death,” which grants existence its irreplaceable quality of “mineness” (Heidegger, 1927). While death is an observable phenomenon, it differs from bodily sensations such as pain: pain can be directly felt, whereas death cannot be experienced. Human understanding of one's own death including the knowledge that “I will die” and any notion of “what dying might feel like” derives from observing and inferring from the deaths of others. Therefore, on the level of experience, death presents itself as a state of absence. No one can take away the death of another; even sacrificing oneself for another entails assuming one's own death, not the death of the other. What the works attempt to convey is precisely the intense sense of existence that life manifests within this premise of death.

The pierced hand and the dead bird in the paintings can be seen as metaphors for death as the ultimate state. The flower branch passing through them and continuing to grow constitutes a visual translation of the process of “being towards death.” This representation does not aim to celebrate the tenacity of life but rather to express an understanding and presentation of the constitutive relationship between death and existence in Heideggerian ontology, as well as

a preliminary response to my own reflections on the meaning of life and death.

The sequence formed by the two works from human to animal can be understood as a spatial expression of the temporal structure of the “towards” in “being towards death.” “Being towards death” does not point towards an end but reveals that Dasein always unfolds its existence in a mode of “towards death.” The act of “passing through” in the imagery can be interpreted as a metaphor for life carrying and traversing death while continuing to unfold: it is not a denial or evasion of death but an assumption of death as an internal limit, continuing to exist within this boundary. This aligns with what Heidegger identifies as “authentic being towards death”: only by confronting and accepting the absoluteness of death can Dasein awaken from its fallen state in the “they” (das Man) and thereby attain authentic freedom and resoluteness.

Thus, through visual form, these two works translate “being towards death” into a diagram of existential structure available for contemplation. They do not provide answers about life but present how death, as an inalienable dimension of existence, is encompassed within the process of life. Here, art becomes an exercise in thought, compelling the viewer to confront the dialectical state in which “penetration” and “growth,” “termination” and “continuation” coexist, thereby gazing upon the constitutive position of death within existence.

## Chapter 2

### Further consideration

After completing the two rock painting illustrations mentioned above, I was always haunted by a vague yet persistent feeling that the exploration of this topic was still incomplete. This sense of incompleteness persisted until an ordinary family event unexpectedly provided a turning point.

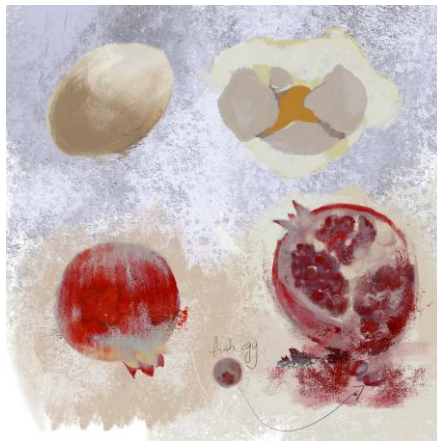


**Figure 3** Eggs pomegranates and fish egg, sketch, 2025

One morning, while preparing breakfast, I accidentally dropped an egg I had just taken out of the refrigerator, and it broke. My roommate witnessed this and put the broken shell, along with the spilled egg white and yolk, into a flowerpot containing a plant. Watching her busy figure, I suddenly realized what I had overlooked. The moment the egg broke, its “life” could be considered over. However, within the context of the soil and plant roots, the broken pieces of the

egg were re-contextualized into organic nutrients, becoming a source of vitality for another living entity.

In the previous two paintings, the essence was to express living in the face of death. The hand and the bird represent death, and the plant growing through it represents a state of living towards death. But by associating this with the act of breaking an egg, could it also be understood that the dead thing pierced by the plant has completed its journey, facing its own death, but in doing so, brings life to the plant? The boundary between life and death is blurred at this moment. Death is something that an individual must experience, but the end of one life may be intertwined with the existence of other lives.

This simple and trivial event became a crucial catalyst, shifting my focus from an exclusive preoccupation with the existential ontological framework of "being towards death" toward a complementary, yet fundamentally different, plane of observation: the material and systemic continuity of life processes beyond the individual. While Heidegger's analysis peerlessly elucidates how death constitutes meaning for a self-conscious Dasein, the incident of the broken egg illuminated a parallel truth operating on a material level, independent of ideation.

I realized that my previous focus had been primarily on the existential structure of death, that is, how it defines the self from within. The egg incident drew my

attention toward the visible, material condition of things after an ending has occurred. This is not a discussion of an ecological cycle, but about a basic, observable fact: a broken or terminated thing (the egg) could be placed in a new context (the flowerpot) and appear to contribute to the continuation of something else (the plant's growth). This expanded my inquiry from the singular question of what death means to me, to also include what happens to the remains after an ending.

This idea connects with the example of salmon migration I mentioned earlier. The individual death of a salmon is final. Yet its body does not disappear from the world; it physically remains in the river, where it may be eaten by a bear or decompose in the water. Here again, the key is not complex ecosystem science, but the visible fact of material persistence and transformation. A bear does not contemplate the meaning of the salmon's existence; it merely treats the salmon's body as a physical resource.

Contemporary illustration research has repositioned the field from its traditional role of servicing narratives to a form of critical practice and independent visual inquiry (Gannon & Fauchon, 2021). Within this expanded view, illustration is no longer merely a tool for explicating text, but an autonomous medium capable of exploring abstract concepts and inner experiences through formal experimentation (Lord, 2014). Building on this foundation, the creative work of

this project can be regarded as a form of visual-philosophical investigation. It originates from my ongoing interrogation of the ontological proposition of “death,” and attempts to employ the language of illustration to synthesize personal experience, philosophical theory, and natural observation. The ultimate aim is to produce a series of visual statements that explore the finitude of individual life and the potential for transformation between different life forms.



**Figure 4** sketch, 2025

In my creative process, I did not simply view visual elements as a reproduction of natural phenomena, but rather as a visual vehicle for reconstructing philosophical concepts. My goal was not to calmly narrate a phenomenon, but to attempt to construct a self-consistent visual argument system through the transformation relationship between the composition and visual elements, thereby revealing and exploring the abstract logic hidden behind concrete phenomena.

Based on this, I performed a symbolic transformation within the imagery system, replacing the “egg” with a “pomegranate.” The dense seeds inside the pomegranate, both structurally and symbolically, correspond to the egg white and yolk, both carrying the potential for life. In this visual metaphor system, the natural process of an egg hatching into a chick is transformed into a surreal sequence of a pomegranate “hatching” a goldfish. I constructed a complete transformation path, the pomegranate nurtures fish eggs, the eggs hatch into fish, the fish undergo their life cycle until death and decay, and finally, from their remains, a pomegranate seedling emerges.

In this sequence, the pomegranate and the fish, as two distinct life forms, each face the inevitability of individual death. Yet, their material existence and life trajectories become profoundly interwoven through the process of transformation. The pomegranate giving birth to fish eggs, and the fish's remains nourishing the pomegranate seedling, serve as a concrete expression of this relationship of “material persistence and formal transformation.” As the core image, the pomegranate is itself an exceptionally rich and complex cultural symbol within both Eastern and Western art history and symbolic traditions, encompassing multiple dimensions such as death, rebirth, abundance, unity, and even temptation and knowledge. Formally, pomegranate seeds and fish eggs share a visual isomorphism both exist as dense, clustered entities, acting

as collective vessels for potential life.

Thus, the transformative sequence of “pomegranate, fish, tree” can be regarded as a visual metaphor for the dialectical relationship between existence and termination. The maturation and eventual rupture of the pomegranate symbolize a state of “being towards death,” while the fish eggs and fish that emerge from it become the material legacy of its continued life. The death of the fish marks the end of a particular consciousness and form, yet simultaneously, its material existence serves as the foundation for a new cycle to begin. This sequence is not a linear replacement of life but a dialectical movement of continuous transformation at the material level and ongoing regeneration at the formal level, thereby constructing, on a visual plane, a contemplative model concerning the finitude of life and the possibility of transformation.

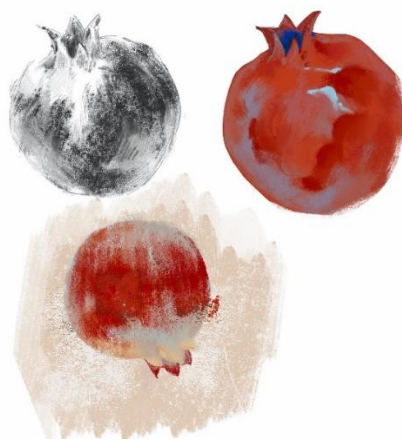


**Figure 5** sketch Pomegranate, 2025



**Figure 6** sketch, 2025

## Chapter 3

### Final illustration

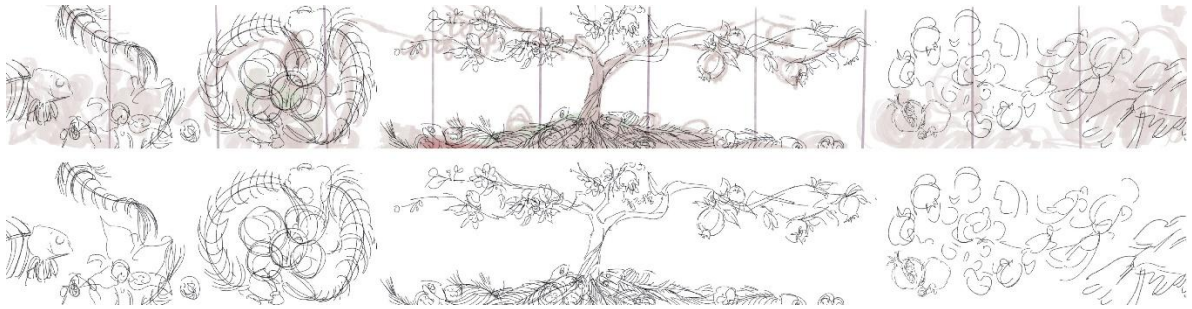


**Figure 7** First draft, 2025

This is my initial draft, inspired by the Möbius strip. I intend to design the content of the concertina into a visually closed loop, where the end connects back to the beginning. At the center of the image is a pomegranate tree, with flowers blooming on its left side and mature fruit hanging on its right. Corresponding to the flowers on the left, the adjacent section depicts fish and fish eggs in a state of decay, giving rise to new life. Similarly, adjacent to the fruit on the right, the section illustrates the process of pomegranates ripening, falling, splitting open, and releasing fish eggs that hatch into fish. The fish forms on the left and right can visually connect, but the left side is rendered as fish bones, representing the gradual transition from life on the right toward decay and death. This overall composition serves as a visual depiction of the state of “being towards death.”



**Figure 8** Color and style experimentation 1, 2025

Figure 8 documents my initial attempts with colour and style. At this stage, I first established blue as the dominant colour to create a calm, profound, and unified visual experience, laying the foundation for the subsequent narrative of morphological transformation. During the colouring process, I tried incorporating symbolic visual elements to enhance the layers. For example, when depicting the tree trunk and fish bones, I used a darker blue on top of the base colour to draw symbols resembling circles, bones, and radial patterns. However, the overall image at this stage still appeared monotonous, lacking variation in colour rhythm and failing to fully convey the dynamism and tension that the transformation sequence should possess. The red of the pomegranate blossoms appeared isolated and abrupt within the overall cool colour scheme, disrupting the balance of the image. But changing it to blue would lose the characteristics of the pomegranate blossoms themselves. Given this, I felt I needed to try other approaches.



**Figure 9** Colour and style experimentation 2, 2025

Building on the previous round of attempts, I further enriched the compositional relationships and elements within the image by transforming the fish bones into symbolic elements, giving them a more flat and decorative quality. I also experimented with simulating the transparent, layered texture of watercolor through the overlay of brushstrokes and colour. However, I found that the newly added elements failed to establish a clear visual hierarchy or rhythm within the picture. The overall composition appeared uniform and loose, and due to a lack of strong contrast and focal points, it lacked tension, failing to effectively convey the internal conflict and flow of energy inherent in the transformative process. Personally, I was not satisfied with the visual outcome of this stage.

Upon further reflection and visual experimentation, I realized that the root of the problem lies in the narrative logic embedded in the composition. The current organization of the image leans toward a descriptive presentation of a linear

event or biological process, conveying a sense of a straightforward “storyboard”. However, my original creative intent was not to tell a concrete story, but to visualize an abstract concept namely, how death, as revealed by Heidegger in “being towards death”, constitutes the most authentic and unsurpassable possibility that forms the existential foundation of Dasein, and on this basis, the potential relationship of “material persistence and transformation” between different life forms. If I continue with the current, almost diary-like composition that merely displays the succession of life stages, it would be difficult to reach the core of this concept. It fails to convey the ontological absoluteness and individual responsibility of death as “always one's own”, and it weakens the urgency brought by life's finitude and the dialectical tension between rupture and regeneration inherent in “transformation”. This type of composition may only present a natural relay of matter, yet it struggles to become a philosophical possibility that is comprehended at the level of consciousness and reconstructed at the level of form.

After discovering this issue, I conducted a new survey on illustration composition and style, studying the works of several illustrators. One illustrator who impressed me most was Yang Yunshu, who maintains her own social media account on REDnote (@杨云舒 Lesley). My research focused on the illustrations in her graduation project illustration collection. The entire collection revolves around a world she constructs, its concept exhibiting a certain cyclical

nature. In her description of her constructed world, she describes it as flat, self-rotating, repetitive, systematically roaming all things, merging chaotic and unknown, unrelated to any referent, with all things existing in parallel. Perhaps this world exists above our world, or perhaps it exists below our world. Fragments of stars transform into birds, wind, clouds, water. After stars perish, they become all things, and after all things perish, they become distant stars (Yang, 2024). There are some works from her portfolio below.

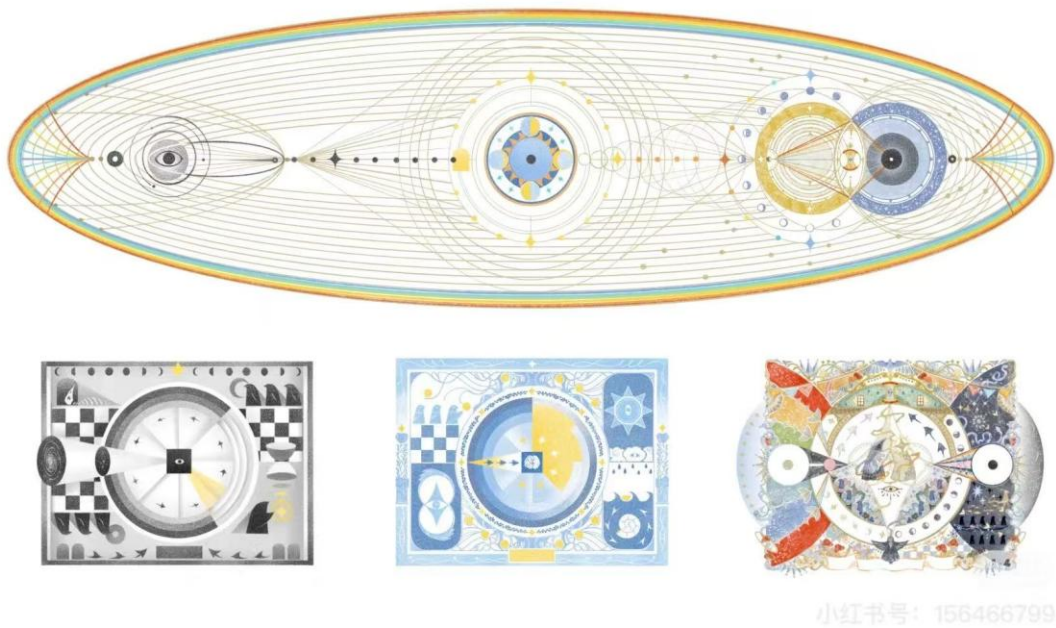


**Figure 10** Worldview, Yunshu Yang, 2024



**Figure 11** *A dying star*, Yunshu Yang, 2024



**Figure 12** *Totem (Chapter Four)*, Yunshu Yang, 2024

The final presentation of my illustration will be in the form of a concertina.

Initially planned to consist of eight pages excluding the front and back covers, I

found myself constrained during the early conceptual stage by the physical framework of “page count.” I became overly focused on the independence of each individual page and the transitions between them, resulting in a composition that felt fragmented and approached a nearly linear visual narrative. While this approach ensured a sense of rhythm during page turning, it ultimately weakened the holistic expression of the philosophical concept I aimed to convey. The work of artist Yang Yunshu inspired me to reconsider this format. I realized that the entire eight pages sequence could be approached as a single, continuous scroll like illustration, ultimately executed in the form of a totem. The compositional logic of totemic patterns ensures that each individual page carries sufficient information and visual weight, allowing it to be meaningfully viewed both as part of the integrated whole and as a self-contained entity.

Because the composition of the illustrations has shifted from narrative to the construction of conceptual totems, the images no longer rely on a chronological order. Instead, through the relevance, contrast, and echo of forms, they simultaneously present the state of “existence toward death” and the state of transformation between matter within space. This allows the viewer to gradually enter this totem system, experiencing the process of piecing together its meaning through visual wandering. Through this transformation, I hope the work can move beyond the description of natural processes and truly become a contemplative, autonomous visual model. It unfolds a contemplation of the

possibilities of death and the transformation of matter within the limited space of the page.



The pomegranate, as the main subject of the image, leads to a blue triangular area, roughly dividing the picture into three parts. The white area along the blue region is intended to represent the process of the pomegranate hatching into a fish, the fish rotting into bones and then giving birth to a new pomegranate, but the effect is not good.



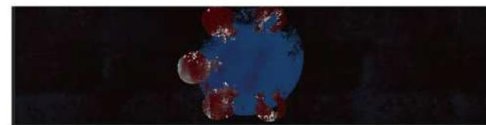
The pomegranate, as an important element, divided the image into two areas, but it was a bit too regular, so I didn't continue with this approach.



In this image, I used the fishbone giving birth to a new pomegranate as the main subject, and followed the idea from the initial draft, dividing the pomegranate tree into two parts, left and right. The left side is the flower and the right side is the pomegranate, but the flower growing into a pomegranate is not the focus of what I wanted to express, so it doesn't feel right.



I can't come up with a reason, it's too ugly, next one.



I wanted to use the process of a pomegranate going from whole to cracked to introduce the fish that hatch from the pomegranate, but I found that other elements were not good at representing this.

**Figure 13** Different composition ideas (discarded), 2025

Figure 13 illustrates several compositional attempts I made after defining the illustration style. These attempts all exhibited problems to varying degrees in color distribution or graphic composition, specifically manifested as overly rigid compositions leading to a static image, a shift in visual focus, or a lack of organic coordination between elements. Overall, they shared common issues such as stiff structure, unnatural image transitions, and insufficient visual expression. After reflection, I believe the problems may have partly stemmed from the excessive use of colour in the initial sketching stage. The richness of colors somewhat distracted me from the compositional structure. To focus more

purely on the relationship between form and space, I decided to uniformly set the background to black and use white lines for the sketches. This adjustment helped me eliminate color interference, allowing me to more clearly grasp the rhythm of the image, focus on the core imagery, and ultimately determine the final compositional scheme.

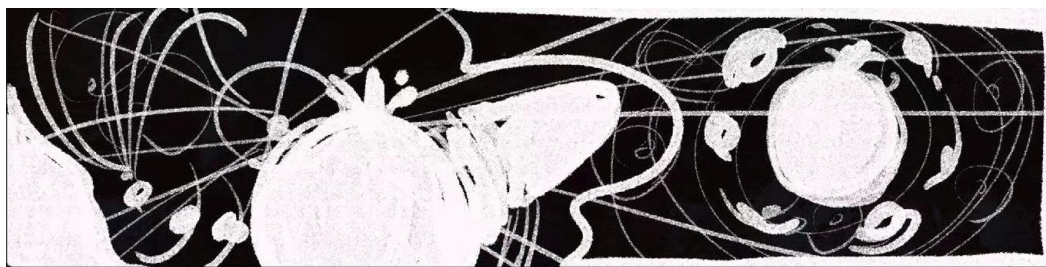


**Figure 14** Final composition 30cm×120cm, 2025

In the final colouring stage, I established two parallel background versions: black and white, to construct two complementary visual experiences. Visually, using black as a base creates a deep and profound psychological space. Black here is not “emptiness,” but a “space” that accommodates all possibilities and transformations. The main elements (pomegranate, fish, tree) emerge from the darkness with high brightness or saturation, like the manifestation of ideas in consciousness, simulating the dynamic of life struggling out of a void background in “existence toward death,” and ultimately returning to it. The white base, on the other hand, is like a clear, breathing open space, dissolving the heaviness and highlighting the structure, outline, and pure relationship between elements of the form itself. White weakens the narrative atmosphere and

strengthens the sense of construction of the conceptual totem as an autonomous visual model, clearly presenting the abstract relationship of material existence and transformation.



**Figure 15** Untitled (Black), Jinyi Wang, 2025



**Figure 16** Untitled (White), Jinyi Wang, 2025

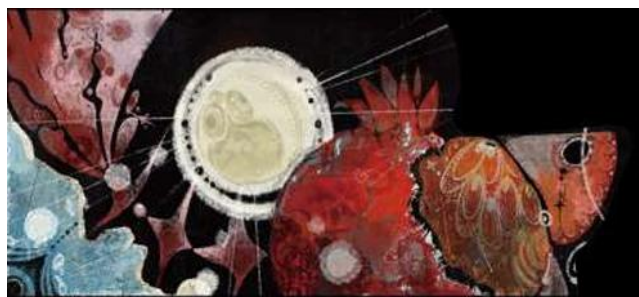


**Figure 17** Part of the illustration, Jinyi Wang, 2025

This section consists of fish eggs, fish, fish bones, and a pomegranate. As the

pomegranate grows, the fish eggs inside gradually hatch into fish. The goldfish's form changes from fish bones passing through the pomegranate to a goldfish wrapped in flesh and blood, symbolizing a state of “existence towards death,” and also depicting the goldfish's decay and transformation into a pomegranate tree. The fish eggs are an inevitable part of this process, and therefore appear as a totem symbol in this section.



**Figure 18** Part of the illustration, Jinyi Wang, 2025

This section centers on a pomegranate tree, with circular lines starting from fish eggs to form a sequence of material transformation. The pomegranate tree blossoms, the flowers wither and bear fruit, fish eggs are conceived within the pomegranate, and the eggs hatch into fish. The fish then transform into fish

bones and regenerate into new trees. This is a summary of the transformation.

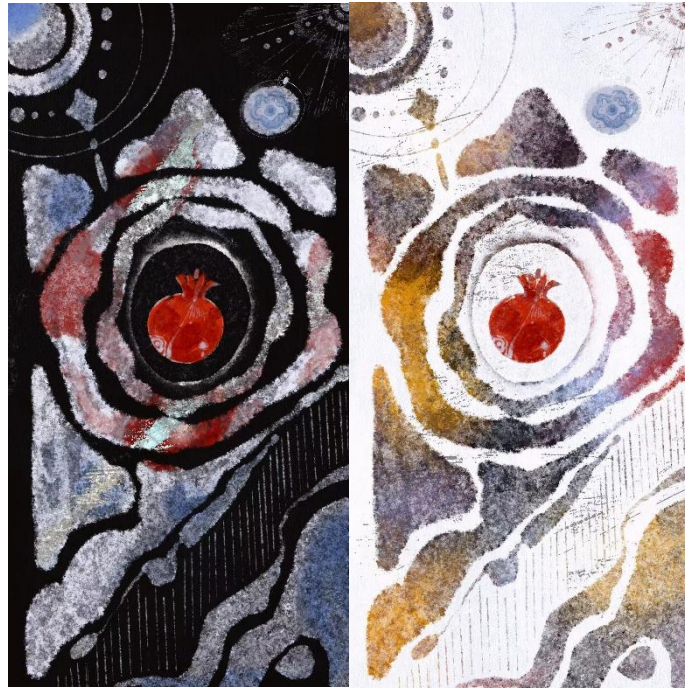


**Figure 19** Cover, Jinyi Wang, 2025



**Figure 20** Back Cover, Jinyi Wang, 2025

The cover and back cover are more like a collection of totems, mainly highlighting a simple yet mysterious feeling, and are also available in black and white versions.

After completing the concertina, I chose to use traditional painting methods with mineral pigments to recreate the totem of this series. I chose to use mineral pigments again because, in my opinion, the process allows me to immerse myself in the creative process and experience the meaning of creation. Starting with mounting the paper, I first need to make a paste from flour, and then use the paste to glue the linen paper onto the wooden board. After gluing the paper, I cannot paint directly. I need to mix powdered shellfish with professional liquid glue to form a solid lump, and then melt the lump with warm water and apply it evenly to the paper as a base.



**Figure 21** Production process

Only after the base layer is prepared can the initial sketch and subsequent

colouring begin. My favorite part of the entire creative process is the colouring stage. Mineral pigments follow a layering logic; each layer must be completely dry before the next is applied. Its unique sense of depth stems not only from the granular and powdery texture of the material itself, but also from the gradual accumulation and protrusion of the pigments on the paper through repeated layering, creating a subtle bas-relief effect. Therefore, I use this method to emphasize the shapes of objects. To unify the overall tone, I first apply a layer of colour to the entire painting, and after it dries completely, I carefully sand the surface with sandpaper to reveal the underlying base colour. This process is both covering and revealing, both constructing and subtracting.

Every step in the process of applying mineral pigments from mixing, laying down, waiting, layering, and finally polishing, is like a slow rebirth and transformation. What I need to do is to find the order and meaning that belongs to the painting and to myself within these layers of time and material traces. Even if this means going through layering, waiting, and polishing again and again, this process itself is the creative state I pursue: a laborious contemplation that gradually manifests itself in materiality and temporality.



**Figure 22** Production process

## *Conclusion*

This project began with a personal philosophical inquiry into death. Through an engagement with Heidegger's concept of "being towards death" and observations of material transformation, it ultimately employed illustration as a medium to construct a visual model that explores the finitude of life and the potential for formal metamorphosis. The journey progressed from the "Through" series to the "Pomegranate, Fish, Tree" sequence, culminating in a "conceptual totem" realized through a concertina format and mineral pigments. This practice traces a path from internal experience to formal construction, and through formal reflection, back to the heart of the creative process. The work seeks to elevate illustration into a form of visual-philosophical investigation and an autonomous critical practice, visually juxtaposing the existential structure of "ownmost death" with the systemic perspective of "material persistence and transformation", thereby establishing a dialectical mode of viewing.

In reflection, I also recognize certain limitations of the project. As a practicing artist, my integration of philosophical theory relies more on personal interpretation and affective resonance, leaving room for further depth in terms of argumentative rigor and systematicity. The exploration of visual language underwent a shift from linear narrative to conceptual totem, yet the purity of formal refinement and clarity of expression could be further enhanced. Although

the use of mineral pigments carries significant procedural meaning, the material presence and spiritual intensity of the final presentation have not fully met expectations. Moreover, as a visual system rich in philosophical metaphor, balancing the “readability” and “openness” of its meaning without textual explanation, and guiding viewers more effectively into engagement with it, remains a question for ongoing consideration.

Overall, this project does not seek definitive conclusions about life and death. Rather, through the act of creation itself, it materializes individual uncertainty and philosophical reflection into a ritual that can be contemplated and touched. It documents an attempt by a creator, in the face of finitude, to open a space for meditation through visual form. Its imperfections and sense of incompleteness may, in fact, be an authentic part of both life and the creative process itself.

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