The Abstract Challenge

Show image of all the projects made during this challenge.
Collage

Naam:	Sem Sannen
Student Nr.:	4897455
Semestercoach:	Evert van de Grift

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Introduction

Hi, at the time of writing this writing this I have no idea if this document will ever be read by someone. This might be because it's currently 12.51 AM on a Friday night and my mind has started thinking of stupid ideas. This time feels different though, maybe this idea will change something.

When researching where to watch The Helvetica documentary a teacher mentioned I stumbled onto this Netflix show called *Abstract: The Art of Design*, I was immediately interested just by looking at the titles. Since it's midnight I wasn't motivated and had no energy left to watch it. But when I tried to sleep, I couldn't stop thinking about it.

That's when a stupid idea came to mind, what if I make a challenge around this show. I'm going to watch 1 episode per week, that's 14 weeks total. During this week I'll try to make something based on that episode. For example, the first episode called *Christoph Niemann: Illustration* is probably about illustrations. Remember, I have zero knowledge on this show and am just writing an idea for the challenge based on the titles so this could be a terrible idea. But I guess I'll find out eventually if it is.

So, the idea is to make something based on the episode of the week. If I want to make something I really want to stick to some rules I make for myself, I'll explain later why I want to do this challenge and what I think I'll gain from it. The rules are:

- Watch the episode on Sunday, the week after this Sunday is the week of this episode.
- While watching the episode, write down notes (including time stamps if necessary)
- After the episode, write down opinion.
- Also start writing down ideas for what the project of the week is going to be about, make a clear planning for the week. What is the (realistic) result?
- The project based on the episode on the week lasts 6 days, Monday till Friday.
- I must put a minimum of 6 hours into every project, more is allowed if I want to and have the time.
- Try to work at least 1 hour a day without breaks on this project, this makes the minimum of 6 hours easy. Use a timer. If I decide to work longer than 1 hour, breaks are allowed.
- During this hour I'm not allowed to use my phone, only if the project requires it.
- Make clear chapters for each week of the project, also divide the projects in days to make it clear what I did on every day of the project.
- Write down the time I work on the project. Also white a short summary of how it went that day at the end.
- At the end of each week, write down how I feel about the past week. What I thought of the subject and how the general study goals went.

- Clear structure of every project:
  - Week 1: Topic
    - Start day.
      - Notes
      - Idea for the week
      - Thoughts
    - Day 1
      - Planning
      - Content
      - Evaluation
    - Day 2
      - Planning
      - Content
      - Evaluation
    - Etc.
    - Final evaluation

Why am I doing this?

As you might've been able to tell I really want to make clear rules for myself, the main goal of this project is to make myself better at focusing. But there are also other goals I'm trying to achieve with this project, to make everything clearer I'm going to make a list of reasons below.

- As I said the main goal is to make myself better at focusing. Right now, I feel like I have bursts of motivation on random days of the week for short periods. This makes it hard to get a lot of stuff done during a week. If I work hard on a Monday, I'm less likely to do a lot on the other days of the week because I think that I've already done enough. By doing this project I hope I will force myself to be consistent with working every day.

- The second goal is to use my phone less. Or at least, go 1 hour a day without even touching it. Right now, I feel like if I'm working on a project, I have this constant urge to check my phone to see if I have received any new messages. Silent mode no longer works since it's always on silent. Me checking my phone every 10 minutes isn't good for my concentration. Every time I grab the phone and there is a notification, I'm going to be using my phone instead of working for at least 5 minutes, while this notification probably isn't even that important. And no notification might even be worse because no notification makes me check my phone even more. And sometimes when I check it, I also unlock it and get distracted and don't go back to working for at least 15 minutes. This is because with a notification there is a clear goal in mind when unlocking the phone, responding to the notification. Without the notification there is no end goal to go back to work. So, the goal of this project is to make myself to be able to focus for longer sessions without getting distract. That's why I'm going to try to work in a minimum of 1-hour sessions every day.

- Perseverance is important, all the times in the past where I've said goals for myself or made deals with myself, I just quit or changed the rules I made for myself to better fit my needs. With this project I'm going to keep going, even if I'm not motivated. And if I don't do anything for the project on a day, or don't follow my rules on the previous page. I'll document why I didn't do anything that day and try to learn from it.

- Right now, I think I want to do something with design in my future, I just don't know what type of design. By doing this challenge I'll encounter a lot of different sorts of designing, this will help me get a clear view of what I might like or what I don't like. I'll also be able to add this project to my portfolio of my study since I think it will be a great way of showing my skill. Even if I don't fully succeed in this challenge every time.

Log

During the entire 14 weeks I want to write down what I did that day and when I started and finished working. By doing this I get insight into how much time I've spent on the project and if I've been productive.

Date	Day	Start Time	End Time	Minutes	What did I do?
18-03-2023	Saturday	12.51 AM	01.00 AM	69	Made the introduction and rules section
18-03-2023	Saturday	11.06 PM	12.00 AM	54	Watch the episode and made notes.
19-03-2023	Sunday	10.20 AM	10.40 AM	20	Added notes in document and wrote ideas and thoughts section.
20-03-2023	Monday	9.25 AM	9.45 AM	20	Started day 1, research on the Sunset Catch
20-03-2023	Monday	3.45 PM	4.30 PM	45	Made the first sketches and documented the ideas I've had so far + Evaluation
21-03-2023	Tuesday	4.30 PM	5.35 PM	65	Planning, changed idea, digital sketch phone vs image and evaluation
21-03-2023	Tuesday	11.00 PM	11.45 PM	45	Made another sketch using the polaroid idea. And wrote down new idea.
22-03-2023	Wednesday	11.00 AM	11.45 AM	45	Worked on perspective research and drew the 5-point perspective test
22-03-2023	Wednesday	10.10 PM	10.25 PM	15	Documented the process of today
23-03-2023	Thursday	4.45 PM	5.40 PM	55	Started making the perspective drawing
23-03-2023	Thursday	6.00 PM	7.30 PM	90	Finished the sketch, made good lines, and documented today.
24-03-2023	Friday	9.15 AM	9.30 AM	15	Made planning and list of people and texted people
25-03-2023	Saturday	8.00 PM	9.05 PM	65	Colored in the drawing, made evaluation and new idea, and wrote the final evaluation of the week.
Total Time Spent on the Project During the First Week					**603 Minutes**

Week 1: Illustration

Start day.

This is the first week of the project, right now I'm full of motivation and can't wait to start working. Since I'm going to be away all day on Sunday, I have decided to move the starting day to Saturday this week. Today I want to watch the episode, write down notes and evaluate what I think of the challenge so far. With that said I will start watching and working now at 11.06 PM. I just finished watching and making notes, those are seen below. It's currently midnight and I already have some ideas for the upcoming week, I will write those down tomorrow. Today's (almost) hour of work went great, I stayed focused pretty much the entire time while watching and only checked my phone once for notifications (I had one but didn't unlock or use the phone).

Watch intro for possible inspiration.

A thousand thoughts, keep two or three

Abstraction is getting rid of everything that's <u>not</u> essential to making a point.

Realism → teachers didn't like it.

Idea has an "abstract-o-meter". Example is a heart, from cube & ♡ → realism

New Yorker covers no correlation between cover and topic inside

lego creates restriction, desingin w/ lego

Idea: Create my own The New Yorker Cover.

Tried working at starbucks
didn't work. Real and
Work life not connected

No inspiration doesn't
matter, it's about showing
up and getting started.
Enable the chance for
Something to happen
(inspiration)

Yellow is the perfect
New York colour.

Idea: Maybe make New
Yorker cover but based
on Eindhoven.

"Put something in you
think you'll regret, that's
usually the most interesting
part."

Only way to grow is
to loosen up.

If experiencing Art is
this amazing, how amazing
would it be to actually
Create it.

Viewer already knows.
Artist and viewer's experience
coming together. Images
are the trigger.

Sunday Sketches,
object in combination
with illustration.

Idea: ♠

Some ppl love it, some
don't.

Sitting in front of
a piece of paper and
just creating. Not worrying
about the result.

Practice everyday as an
artist, just like athletes.

Take existing ideas and
make THEM different.
make them yours.

Never done

Idea for the week

This week I want to start by doing research on the 2 things that made me most interested while watching, the cover for the New Yorker and the Sunday Sketches. I plan to finish this research and inspiration on Monday and maybe carry it into Tuesday if not finished on Monday. Depending on how this research goes I think I'll mainly focus on the New Yorker cover and od the Sunday Sketches as a side project when I see something that looks interesting. Hopefully I'll have a fully realized cover of the New Yorker by the end of the week and a couple of Sunday Sketches.

Thoughts

So far, I've enjoyed the show. It's interesting and gives me stuff to think about. Not just when it comes to the design itself but also the process of designing something. The process is probably even more important than the result because the process shows progress. That's why I plan to just make stuff next week and not try to think about it too much. Remove the ideas that I don't like and keep the ones I do.

Day 1

This is the first day of working on the project, I'm also going to work on it whenever I'm at school and have nothing to do for a couple of minutes.

Planning

Today I want to start and finish doing research on the New Yorker covers and I want to make a Sunday Sketch. While writing something in my notebook yesterday I looked at the pen and thought "This could be a telescope", I'm going to make a first sketch of this idea today.

Research

I started by googling "New Yorker covers" and immediately found the official New Yorker website with their so-called cover story's https://www.newyorker.com/tag/covers.

Sunset Catch:

I started off by looking at Eric Drooker's *Sunset Catch* because I thought it looked interesting. Eric made the bridge because he really liked bridges as a kid. He loved looking out the window and looking at the Brooklyn Bridge as a kid. The same reason is true for the fishermen in the cover, as a kid Eric loved to go fishing. (Mouly, 2022)

Eric mostly made the cover based on his own interests and memories as a kid. This made me remember yesterday when I was in Eindhoven Centrum we went to Burger King. I totally forgot that the Burger King building used to be a toy store (Bart Smit). And when I was looking at the shape of the upstairs room, I got this memory of walking down the small stairs to go to the other side of the building as a kid. I could do something with this idea for my own New Yorker cover. 2 worlds, a kid and now.
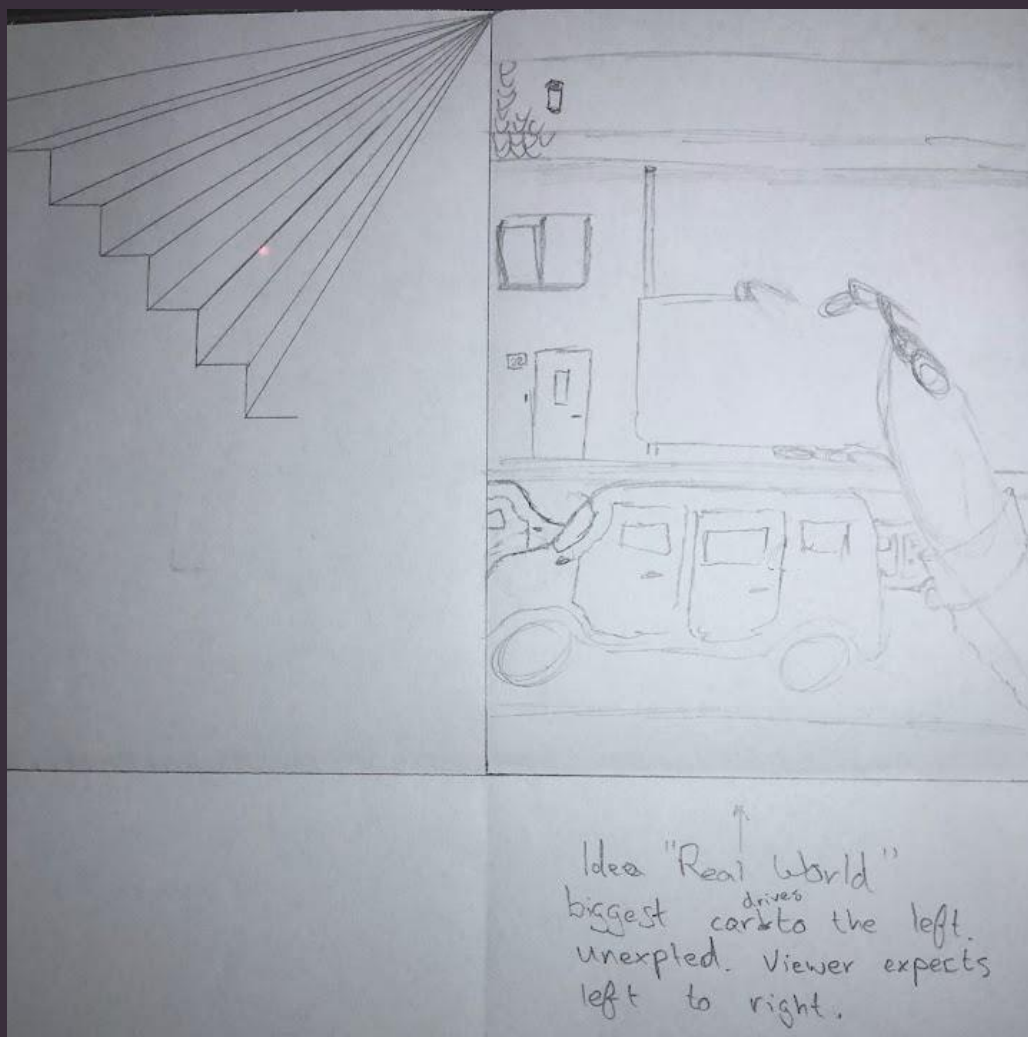
Sketches

After doing the little bit of research I decided I'd rather just start making stuff and starting to sketch something than spend too much time doing research. I do want to make the final cover digital so starting off by making some sketches on art will help me get a better vision of what I want to end up with when I try making it digitally. I feel like making it digitally will take me some time because I have no experience drawing something digitally.

My first idea that was never drawn was to recreate the Burger King building and split it in half, the one half will be Burger King and the other half would be the toy store Bart Smit. The idea and reason behind this were explained earlier in the research part. This idea was never actually sketched since I didn't really like it and felt like it was too basic.

The first idea I sketched was to draw stairs, underneath the stairs would be the "old" world and above the stairs would be the current world. After making a first sketch (top left) and thinking about it while drawing I scrapped the idea. The stairs don't really mean anything to me and aren't great as a symbol to display an old and a new world.

After scrapping this idea, I thought it would be a cool idea to use a phone and a hand holding that phone. On the phone there will be the old world, while in the background the viewer will see houses and a street. This stands for my old school I used to go to as a kid. We would always play soccer or hide and seek and that was always a ton of fun. This is what will be shown on the phone screen. However, this school has recently been destroyed and they started building houses at this location. That's why the background will be houses with a street.

The first sketch of this idea can be seen on the top right. After thinking about the idea some more I ended up coming up with some different ideas I could use to make it final. I could change the phone to someone holding a picture, this picture could be a real image since I'm making the final piece in Photoshop. However, this would kind of go against the idea of the piece, I'd rather have the background be a real image and the phone/picture be drawn in since this is the "fake"/"old" part of the piece.

Evaluation

I finished what I wanted to get done today, I did some research and started making some sketches. I didn't draw the Sunday Sketch idea yet. I plan to do this tomorrow since I don't have any more motivation left after writing this evaluation. Tomorrow, I want to figure out what style I want to use for the idea I made today, I'm happy with the idea so don't want to change it too much. The style of the piece is very important because depending on the style I choose the final piece will be very different. Today I split the 1-hour session into two smaller sessions, I did the research at school while I didn't have anything else to do and the rest I did at home. During this hour of work, I didn't check my phone once and didn't even feel the need to check it.

Day 2

The second day of this project, I didn't have any time to work on it during school because I was busy with the UX project and my own Portfolio. We had the team meeting about the wireframes and for my portfolio I worked on the JavaScript Tests.

Planning

For this project today I want to make the document in the same style as my portfolio website and documents and do research on the style I want to use for the cover. I might also start to make the sketch digitally or work on the Sunday Sketch, this depends on the time it takes to choose a style.

Style and idea

While thinking about the style I want to go for during the past day I decided I'd like to make it look more comic book/animated style. I do however think it'd be a great idea to mix 2 different styles. I'd like to take a real picture of the buildings and draw the hand with the phone/picture on top. By doing this it makes it clear to the viewer that the phone isn't the real world while the background and the buildings are real.

Then I just need to figure out how and what I want to put into the phone/picture. I wanted to do my old school, but I feel like this would be too boring of an image since it looks like the "real world" background. That's why I want to change the story a bit, still 2 worlds but instead of something specific that fits my memories I'd like it to be more general. I want to do this by changing the school into nature, in this picture of nature the viewer will see 2 kids playing. This will keep the old idea of younger and older me but also add another layer.

This layer is climate change, a bunch of places that used to be places full of trees and nature are now being destroyed to build houses. Right now, I will draw 2 different sketches with a real background. One with the phone idea and one with the picture idea. I personally like the picture idea better since this also reflects on older times, when we didn't use phones so much.

Digital sketches Phone vs. Image

I decided to make a sketch for how it would look like with a phone vs what it would look like with a picture. The results are seen below. I'm going to ask some friends what they think of both when I explain my idea and ask for their opinion. With this idea I'll continue tomorrow.
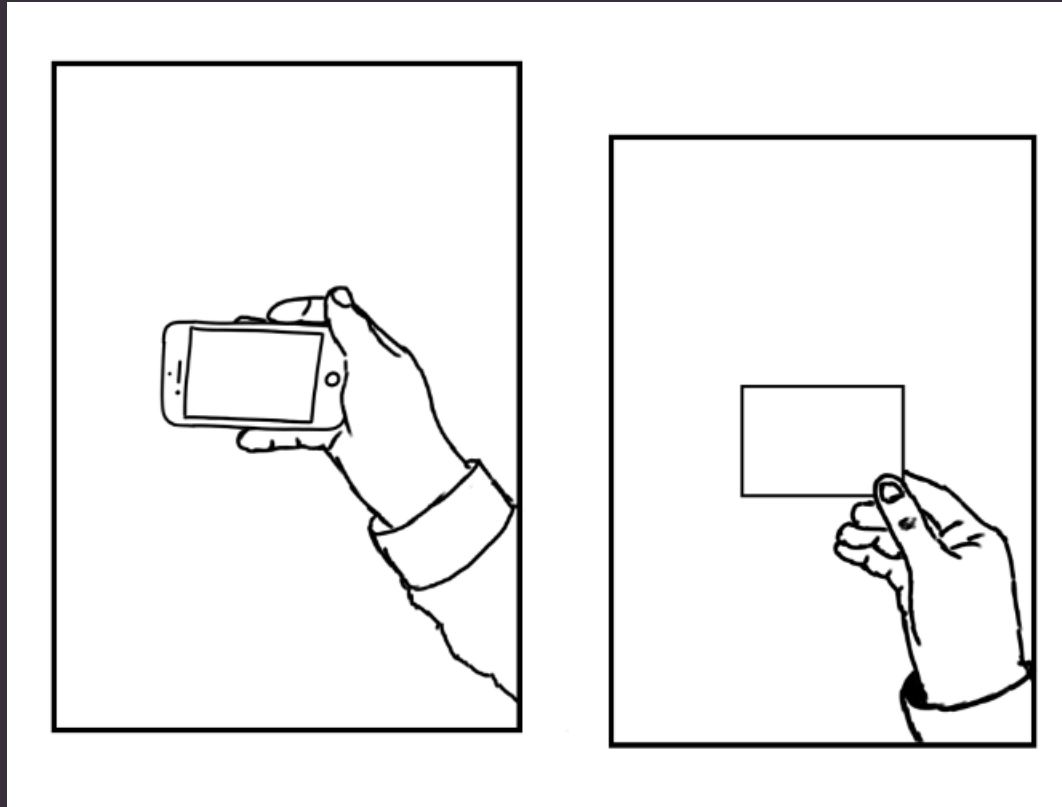

Evaluation

Today went great, it took me exactly one hour to change the style of the document, write the style/idea change, make the sketches. I only almost checked my phone once and stopped myself. I did use my phone as a reference for how my hand looks while holding something, but I didn't unlock it. I'm happy with how the sketches turned out and look forward to figuring out which ones to use and what exactly I'm going to put in them.

At 11.00 PM I got a random boost of motivation, so I decided to draw some more, this session was 45 minutes and all of it went to just drawing. No distractions, just working for 45 minutes straight. The sketches I made during these 45 minutes are seen below.

Digital sketches with polaroid

I just started drawing stuff. The first background sketch was to draw the beach, this sketch can be seen below. I ended up not using this idea because I couldn't figure out what to make the background that would fit the beach.
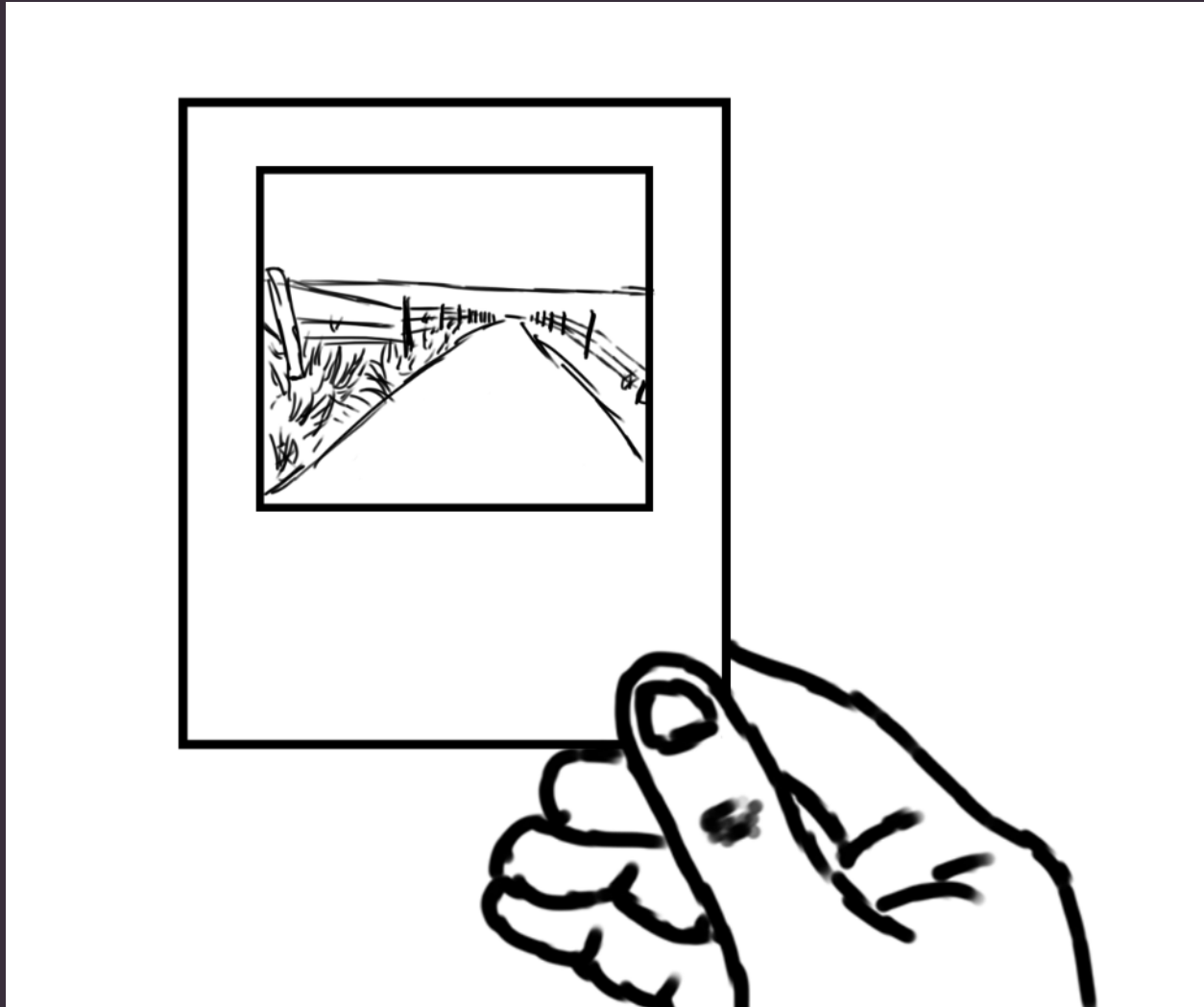
After making this first sketch, I decided it would be amazing to make something similar with the two worlds but just make them the same visually. The polaroid and background should fit each other and move over smoothly. That's when I thought of a memory I have as a kid that I will never forget, I would ring and run with a friend and one time the neighbors got so mad. After this I never did ring and run again. That's the idea I went with for the next sketch, I feel like this will be the final idea since I love the idea and it just looks good.

The image seen below is the sketch I made for this idea, it was a quick sketch as you can tell by the perspective. I will have to figure out how to make a point outside of the canvas in Photoshop but that's something for tomorrow. I drew the kids as silhouette for now and I might keep it like that because I think it adds to the composition very well.
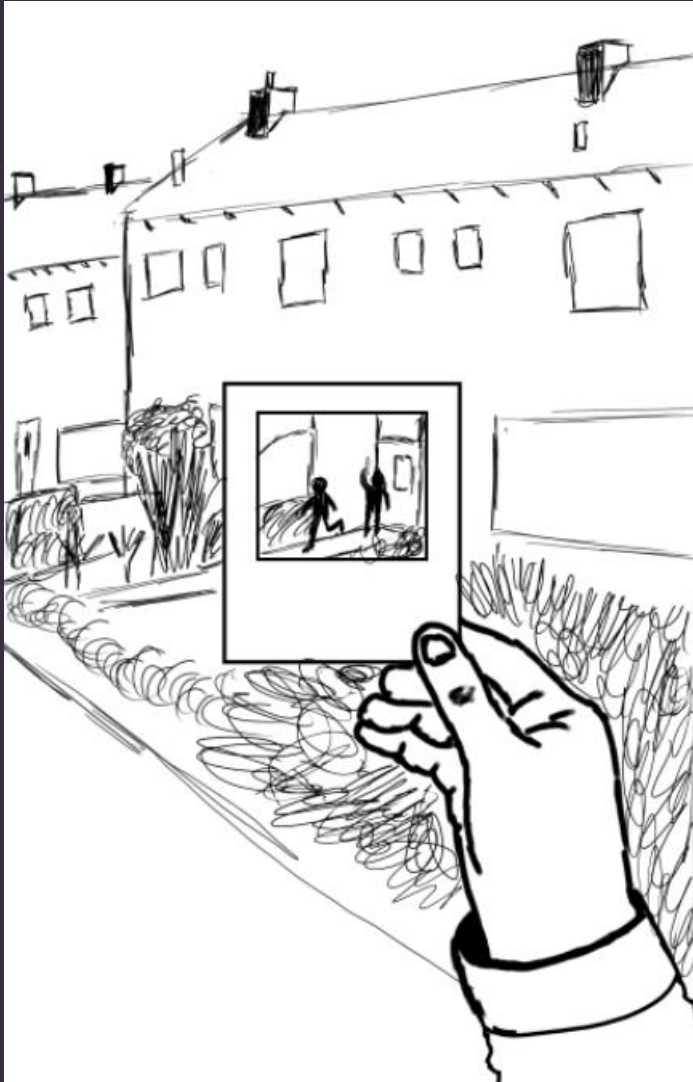
Day 3

Planning and evaluation

Today didn't go amazing, I didn't make any documentation before I started drawing. I tried to fix the perspective on the sketch seen above and it didn't work. I felt like trying to make a fisheye perspective sketch in Photoshop, so this is what I started working on for 30 minutes. In the morning I spent 45 minutes working on stuff related to this project at school. Now I'm documenting the stuff I did today, this will take about 15 minutes. Making the total for today exactly one hour. Checking the phone didn't go very well. During the 40 minutes of work, I kept getting distracted by my phone, the sessions didn't last more than 30 seconds though.

Fish-eye perspective sketch

Instead of working on the poster I tried to make a fisheye perspective in Photoshop. When I started, I didn't really have a reason to why I wanted to do this. I just felt like drawing something in Photoshop, this ended up being a good idea because I learnt about different perspectives and got better at drawing in photoshop. This sketch didn't end up being completely useless because I learnt and got more experience drawing using Photoshop and my tablet. The sketch can be seen below. I didn't really have a plan while sketching, I just tried making a room with 2 chairs, a table, a carpet, a window, and a door. That's when I quit drawing because I needed to work on my school project.
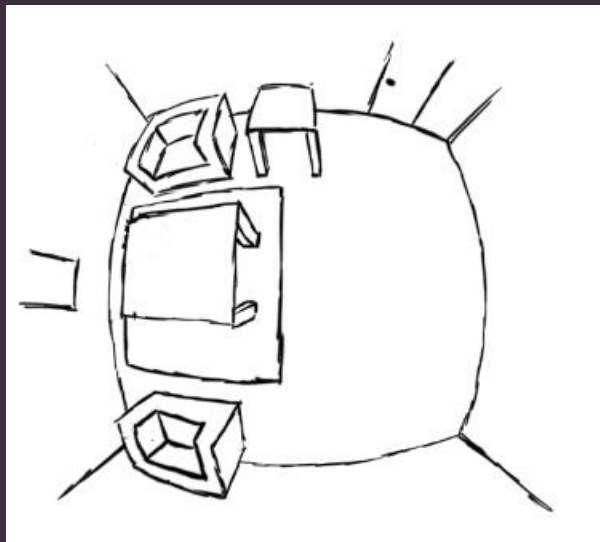
Day 4

Planning

Today I want to finish the sketch phase, this means fixing the perspective on the cover and making it look straight. I also want to find a way to color it in, since right now I don't really know I want to do it. I hope I think of something by the end of the day.

Sketching with help lines

This was my first time in a very long time drawing in perspective, so the result doesn't look as good as I'd like it to be. It's also the second time ever drawing perspective in Photoshop so I don't really have experience on how to draw perspective and how to draw perspective but below you can see the way the sketch ended up. Including the lines and points I used to make the perspective look as good as I could.
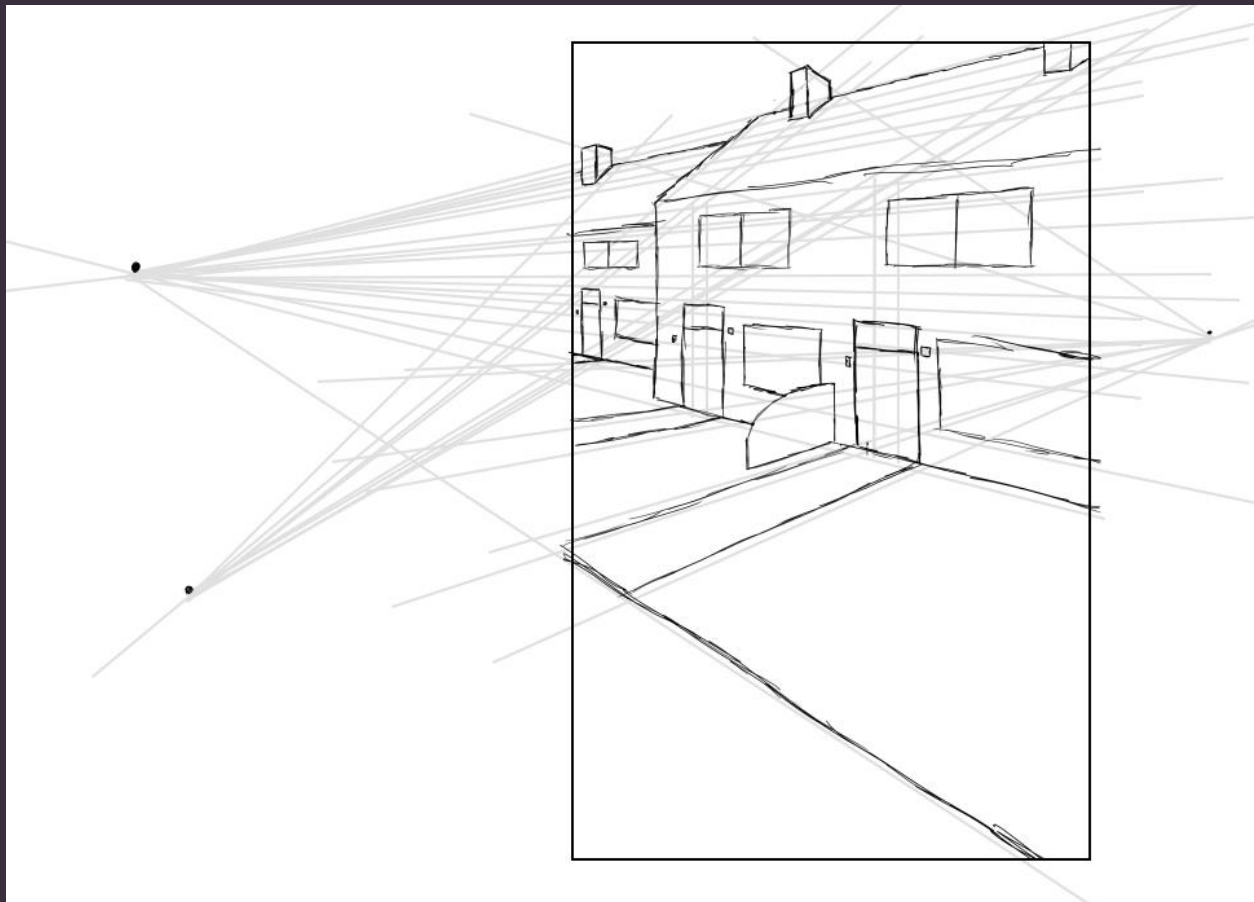
Fixing lines and hand

After I made the sketch for the buildings, I added the hand I made before. But the lines were still the sketch lines so I decided I would trace everything over smoothly. The result of this process can be seen below.
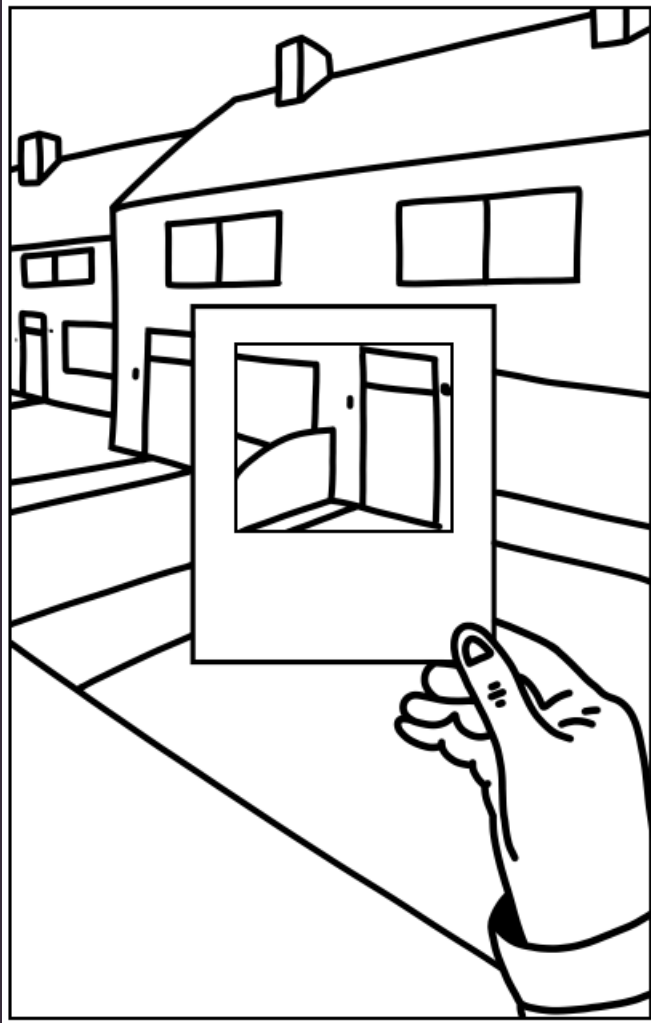
Color

While drawing the sketch above I got a great idea for coloring it in, it started to look like a page from a coloring book. So, I got the idea to draw it in like a coloring book. But what's the fun in that if I can add extra meaning to the cover by making random people in my life tell me their favorite color. By doing this I'm going to make it look more like a kid's drawing and that would help, I'd like to make the inside of the polaroid more realistic colors and let the outside be picker by people. They won't know what it's for I'll tell them to give me a random color and this is the color the number they were given by me will turn into. I will also do the hand myself.

Evaluation

Even though my focus during today's session wasn't the great and I got distracted from my work a couple of times I still managed to regain my focus very quickly every time. I was also very motivated to draw more because I wanted to get the nice lines done today. The break in today's sessions was because I had to eat dinner and had to leave the tablet. As soon as we finished eating, I went upstairs again and started drawing again. Tomorrow, I want to make the list of people I'm going to ask for a color and I want to add some depth to the windows and door. I also need to figure out how I'm going to add the New Yorker logo or if I might change the rules a bit or even change the name. I also want to add the silhouette of the kid.

Day 5

Planning

Today I want to add the colors to the drawing and make my own part of the colors.

Colors

1 = Jorg = #D81FF7
2 = Yui = #5FC5A7
3 = Chika = #8F76A3
4 = Fred = #FFA700
5 = Ivan = #424632
6 = Paulina = #BE94E0
7 = Karolina = #9D94E0
8 = Jos = #5154C4
9 = Ingrid = #27A0B3

Day 6
Planning and evaluation from Day 5

Yesterday was the first day I didn't work 1 hour on the project. This was because I worked on it at school for 15 min and then went straight to work after school. After work I had 0 motivation left so I didn't do anything. This means that today is the last day of the first week and at this moment I honestly don't have a lot of motivation to continue this project, I will try my best to regain the motivation and keep going since I really want to finish what I started. This being the last day means I must do the stuff I want to get finished today. I did ask 9 people total to pick a random color, the other 3 colors will be generated randomly online. I also need to color in my own part of the drawing. When this is finished, I want to add the New Yorker logo on the bottom of the polaroid, this goes against their rules about the logo but since it's my project I decided that that would be the best location for it.

Coloring

10 = Random = #84C3BE
11 = Random = #2C5545
12 = Random = #45322E
13 = Random = #403A3A
14 = Random = #231A24
15 = Random = #252850

After spending 35 min to color everything in the result can be seen on the following page. I went with more realistic colors for inside the polaroid because I felt like this would fit the realistic hand. The idea sort of shifted into a real person looking at a picture of the real world how it used to be, but since the colors are so weird and dystopian it doesn't feel the same. This is supposed to symbolize climate change, the weird colors stand for an unlivable world while the color inside the polaroid is the world when we could still live freely. The world will turn into the weird color world if we keep threating the climate like we threat it right now.

Evaluation

After finishing the drawing, I started documenting the drawing and at of the moment I'm writing this I have 10 more minutes until I hit the 1-hour mark for today. Today overall went well the coloring was relaxing after a long day at work. I didn't check my phone and was listening to a podcast pretty much the entire time.

Final Evaluation

The last week was the first week of the project and I already feel like I learned a lot, I spent a lot of time working on the project without using my phone, so this already improved. Because of this project I feel like I'm also more motivated to work on school projects. Since last week at school was one of the first weeks where I didn't feel like I didn't get enough stuff done. I've also learned how to draw using Photoshop, how to draw hands and perspective. The hands and perspective I learned at secondary school, but I pretty much already forgot everything. So, this project also helped me refresh my memory with those things.

The finished product isn't exactly what I had hoped for but I'm still happy with it, I feel like I could've done a lot better though. That's where the next 16 weeks are for, improving. I'm looking forward to the next episode and starting to work on a project surrounding it.

Extra

After finishing this first week I showed some of the people the result. One of the reactions was great. She said that she though the meaning of the colors outside the polaroid and the regular colors inside the polaroid was how you look differently to the world as a kid. As you get older the fun and bright colors start to disappear and the bright fun colors are supposed to resemble childhood.

Break

After thinking about it before starting the second week I realized that this project is too much work too maintain while also having the school projects and needing my time for hobby's work and general free time. That's why I have decided to move the rest of this project to the summer break since I still want to finish it but simply don't have enough time. I could make time but then I feel like it won't help me learn things and just put an extra layer of stress on myself and my mental health.

Week 2

Sources

Mouly, F. (2022, October 3). *Eric Drooker's "Sunset Catch"*. Retrieved from New Yorker: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cover-story/cover-story-2022-10-10

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