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Diary in a Shelter - Stories Set in Lockdown

Haoting Lei
2023

Abstract

Since December 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the globe, with lasting effects on most people. This project will document the issues arising in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the lockdown policy in Xi'an, China, from the end of 2019 to 2022, with a particular focus on the story of a young adult who encounters and experiences the lockdown within an ordinary community in Xi'an.

Inspired by graphic novels, *Diary in a Shelter* uses a sequential art approach to create a set of narrative scenes that explore how the visual medium can be used to represent people's psychological experiences during the lockdown.

This practice-based design research is focusing on personal narrative through non-fictional references, drawing thirteen key points summarised from media reports as the basis of the visual stories. This artwork aims to become one part of a printed collection, to resonate with community readers. The illustrated scenes in the project highlight how stories can be used by audiences to gain greater understanding and empathy for those who have experienced the lockdown to varied extents. The outcome provides an outlet to deliver messages and keep the stories of a memorable and emotionally impactful and challenging time.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Master's supervisors, Jacquie Naismith and Claire Hackett, and to my MDes coordinator, Deb Cumming. Your guidance, expertise, and unwavering support throughout the research process has been invaluable. Your dedication and feedback to my academic growth has inspired me to continue to push the boundaries of knowledge and pursue excellence. I am truly grateful for the time, effort, and wisdom you have generously shared with me.

I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my parents, whose endless encouragement, love, and support have been the foundation of my academic pursuits. Your faith in me has been a constant source of inspiration, even during challenging times. I am deeply grateful for the sacrifices you have made to ensure my success and I am fortunate to have you as my pillars of strength.

In memory of my dear grandfather who passed away from cancer last year, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the love, wisdom, and how to be a good man that he imparted to me. Although I was unable to return home to say my final goodbyes to him last year, he will live on in my heart forever. His strong belief in my potential and his encouragement to pursue my dreams has inspired me to overcome obstacles and pursue excellence.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all my friends and classmates who have supported me throughout my research. Your encouragement, understanding, and inspiring words provided me with the strength and resilience to overcome challenges and remain focused on my goals.

To all those mentioned and those who have supported me in various ways, I am deeply grateful. Your contributions have been instrumental in both my Master's research project and my personal growth. Thank you for being an integral part of my academic and personal journey.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	5
1.1 Research Context	5
1.2 Research Aims and Questions	7
Chapter 2. Context review	7
2.1 Methods Employed in Sequential Art	7
2.2 Design Precedents: Graphic Responses to COVID-19	9
2.3 Other Relevant Design Precedents	12
2.4 The Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Xi'an, China	17
2.41 Thirteen Points	17
Chapter 3. Project Method and Design Process	19
3.1 Project Method	19
3.2 Character Design	20
3.3 Iterative Developments and Critical Reflection	22
3.31 Early Renditions and Exercises	22
3.32 Layout Changes - Larger Format	26
3.33 Integration of Colour	27
Chapter 4. Design Outcome: Series of Sequential Art Pieces	29
Chapter 5. Conclusion	35
Bibliography	37
List of Figures	46

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Context

The word "COVID-19" entered our minds on December 8, 2019, when the city of Wuhan in Hubei Province, China, became the first place where pneumonia of unknown cause was reported. The pandemic then broke out and the highly contagious virus began to sweep through every inch of the world. When Covid-19 was first reported, it did not attract sufficient attention and concern, including from governments, medical institutions, and the general public. Many people dismissed it as a common cold and flu; however, it was later recognised as a disease as contagious and dangerous as SARS in 2002. Since before Chinese New Year 2020, confirmed cases of Covid-19 infection had been increasing daily and the outbreak having expanded. On the 30th of January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 a health emergency of international concern, with millions of people dying, suffering from illness and psychological distress.

Through the medium of sequential art and the exploration of personal narratives and media commentary, it aims to raise awareness of the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Xi'an, China. This is explored through the experiences of the main character and highlights economic disparities, psychological experiences, and social issues.

Diary in a Shelter portrays visual stories that take place in Xi'an, China, during the outbreak period of 2020 to 2022. To prevent the further spread of the virus, the Chinese government had implemented a strict city closure policy since 23 January 2020. Xi'an is the capital city of Shaanxi Province, located in northwest China, a city with a rich historical and cultural heritage, known for its ancient landmarks and the starting point of the Silk Road. According to the website of Shaanxi Provincial Government, Xi'an in 2022 had a citywide resident population of 12,995,900. By using Xi'an as a research site, the project attempted to illuminate the various experiences, challenges and social issues faced by individuals and communities in the region.

COVID-19 has had a variety of far-reaching and lasting negative effects on every aspect of the city. The pandemic disrupted the education system, leading to widespread school closures and distance learning, which created new challenges and inequalities in access to education (Wang et al. 1879). Disparities in access to health care were also created and widened, including difficulties in accessing medical resources and medical assistance (Choy 105). The pandemic has deepened existing economic disparities with many individuals and businesses experiencing financial difficulties (Zhang 738). In addition, while COVID clearly poses a threat to people's physical health, it also has a negative impact on people's mental health, including issues of anxiety, depression, and stress (Atalan 41). The social isolation measures implemented to control the spread of the virus have led to an increase in segregation and loneliness, especially for vulnerable populations such as the elderly (Holland 161). Furthermore, the social fabric of the city has been strained by the increased isolation because of quarantine and stigmatization of those infected with the virus (Bruns et al. 330). Alongside the economic and social consequences, COVID-19 also had a visible

impact on the environment. Segregation policies and the use of personal protective equipment led to a proliferation of waste, adding to an already growing environmental problem (Han et al. 90). However, there were also positive environmental effects, such as a reduction in air pollution due to reduced travel and industrial activity during the lockdown (Han et al. 11).

A set of narrative scenes inspired by graphic novels was used as the medium for this project because this illustrative approach has many advantages for the audience. The use of images and graphics helps to convey complex ideas and emotions that may be difficult to convey through words alone (Cohn 38). The reader can see the characters' expressions and body language, which adds depth to the story and makes it easier to empathise with them. According to Adler (2279), the gaps in between each frame of graphic novels and comics make this medium more 'silent' than others. In an interactive context, silence is a vehicle for the character's emotional and mental states, which the audience can observe and follow to understand the author's intentions. Adler also suggests that the gaps in the graphic novel frame provide space for reflection, which she likens to an invitation for readers to think and understand intensely and critique emotionally what is not explicitly expressed. The audience for this project is young adults, for whom the stories in graphic novels have developed more complexity and variety, as compared to common children's comics on the market. As *Diary in a Shelter* contains deeper fact-based realist themes, the literary and artistic quality also appeals to readers who are already adults. Young adults are often at the end of their school years or just entering the workplace, in a busy transition period, and they always expect more information (Brock 126). The lesser text in graphic novels is more accessible to the target audience (O'English et al. 178), with stories that can fill the limited free time in their lives.

"A well-done graphic novel offers the immediacy of the prose reading experience, with the pictures and the words working simultaneously, making a graphic novel not only something one reads but something one sees as well, like reading and watching a movie at the same time (Gallo and Weiner 115)." Therefore, in the medium of sequential art, without a good pictorial relationship to present the content, even a distinctive artistic style or great drawing skills will not bring out the maximum power of the work (Cohn 38).

In addition, according to Bonin et al. (376), the use of visual elements in graphic novels can make the story more engaging and emotionally resonant for the reader. By depicting the characters' expressions, body language and environment, graphic novels can create a more immersive and realistic world that readers can connect with on a deeper level. This can help the reader empathise with the characters and better understand their motivations and experiences.

Sequential art has often been used in the past to expose social issues and communicate sensitive topics. For example, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1992) uses anthropomorphic animals to tell the story of the Holocaust and the impact of trauma on survivors and their families, and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000) tells the story of its protagonist growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution and the impact of political upheaval on individuals and families. These graphic novels have been praised for their ability to convey complex ideas in a way that is more accessible and emotionally resonant (Bernard and Carter 2). Sequential art will be effective in conveying the complex and sensitive issues associated with the pandemic. Through the expression of visual art and text,

sequential art formats are able to convey complex ideas, social issues and personal narratives in a more nuanced and sophisticated way.

This project provides an opportunity to explore how a set of sequential art pieces can bridge social issues and personal narratives. The format is discussed as being more appealing to audiences and the medium was explored as being more effective in communicating complex and sensitive issues related to the pandemic.

Diary in a Shelter includes representations of anxiety, depression and stress as experienced by the main character in the story and how these reactions arose as a result of the effects of the lockdown. The project aims to link the main character's story to the psychology of the audience.

1.2 Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this project is to experiment with sequential art as a medium for communicating complex and sensitive economic and social issues related to the pandemic in a Chinese context. Drawing on real-time media reports and personal experiences, a personal narrative and non-fiction approach combined with artistic expression and storytelling techniques is used to create a continuous work of art that minimises the use of words. A case study of a specific community in the chosen region of Xi'an is analysed to understand and retrace their unique experiences and challenges through sequential art techniques.

This is designed with intentions to be collated within a printed collection of sequential art works, broadening the perspectives and reach to the audience. It is seen as important to see this design work as one voice among many.

Research Questions

How can narrative sequential art techniques represent people's psychological experiences during the lockdown?

How can the stories in this project be employed to gain the understanding of audiences who experienced the lockdown?

Chapter 2. Context Review

2.1 Methods Employed in Sequential Art

Sequential art combines visual storytelling and narrative techniques to convey stories, ideas and emotions through a continuous arrangement of images and words. The sequential arts include

graphic novels, comics, motion comics and other art forms, and the medium has its own unique theories and methods that contribute to its effectiveness as a storytelling tool.

The main representative medium of sequential art is the graphic novel, and one of its key features is the concept of 'closure'. Closure refers to the reader's ability to mentally fill in the gaps between panels and create a coherent narrative flow. By presenting sequences of images with specific transitions, such as moment to moment, action to action or theme to theme, graphic novels allow the reader to construct a fluid and dynamic understanding of the story. As Adler (2279) suggests, the gutter invites readers to reflect and engage with the narrative on a deeper level. This mechanic comes from Scott McCloud's seminal work *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, which explores the principles and mechanisms of the medium, while this theory is supported by Goldsmith (25) "Unlike the cartoon, comic strip, or comic book, the graphic novel is complete within itself and provides a beginning, middle, and end to the story or information it places before the reader... before the reader... image and word are bound together in order for the narrative to unfold." *Diary in a Shelter*, on the other hand, deviates from the traditional narrative structure of sequential art, the story segments in this project use a linear narrative, but the method of compilation of the whole work is non-linear. This is to capture the complexity and unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic. By breaking the traditional narrative structure, the disjointed and chaotic nature of the lockdown period is conveyed, in which events and emotions may not fit neatly into a linear timeline. According to Breien et al. (244), a non-linear approach to narrative can have a positive impact on audience engagement, motivation, and learning. This deviation from traditional narrative rules allows for a more nuanced and realistic representation of the multifaceted experiences and challenges faced during the pandemic, providing the reader with a different perspective on the narratives unfolding within the sequential arts.

In terms of method, sequential art usually employs a combination of pictorial elements and textual components to convey information. Its visual aspect is crucial, as it allows for the expression of body language and atmosphere and, through both, enables the reader to experience the emotions involved. Artists use a variety of techniques such as composition, perspective, panel layout, line and colour to create a visually appealing and immersive experience. For example, Australian artist Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, who uses a linear art approach to drawing, where each frame is full of detail and no textual representation, makes the graphic novel look like an old silent movie. On the other hand, graphic novels also combine text with drawings, including dialogue, narration and sound effects, providing additional information and layers that facilitate the reader's understanding of the story while also complementing concepts that are difficult to explain through images alone. *Diary in a Shelter* uses minimal text to explain the context of the pictures that is difficult to represent directly through images, such as the knock on the door "Knock" to reflect the main character's attraction to a certain sound, and the news broadcast on television to reflect the context.

The advantages of using aspects of graphic novels as a medium in this project are numerous. Firstly, the visual nature of graphic novels allows them to be accessible to a wide range of audiences, including those who may have difficulty engaging with traditional text-heavy formats. The combination of images and text promotes a more intuitive and engaging storytelling experience,

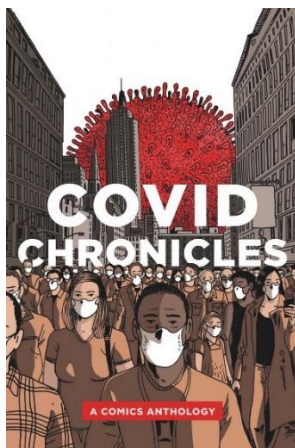
allowing readers to interpret and understand the narrative in a dynamic and immersive way. (O'English et al. 178)

In addition, this medium has the special ability to communicate effectively on complex and sensitive issues. Visual elements can evoke powerful emotions and create a visual projection that resonates with the reader (Santos-Silva 22). The combination of personal narrative and non-fiction in this project further enhances its potential to communicate the multifaceted impact of the pandemic. By blending personal stories with research-based analysis, the medium of sequential art can provide an emotional and intellectual understanding of the social issues being explored. According to the conclusions drawn by Oz and Efecioglu (2), sequential art can be an effective tool for enhancing learners' reading skills and motivation.

Sequential art offers a high degree of artistic and creative freedom. According to Heaney (72), as representatives of sequential art, graphic novels tell a very visual story at a very fast pace, which is not only interesting and helps readers to digest information quickly, but also aids in understanding the normal story elements. Artists can experiment with different art styles, layouts and visual techniques to convey the desired mood. "Red is usually associated with anger, green and brown are often associated with disgust, black and grey indicate fear." (Damiano et al. 10). Using a unique art style and linear expression, this project allows for detailed depictions of scenes and their nuances, bringing the story to life and immersing the reader in the world portrayed.

However, the medium of sequential art also has some limitations. According to the conclusions drawn by (Richardson 27), graphic novels rely on visual cues to convey information. While visuals are powerful, there is a risk of misinterpretation or ambiguity if the artwork or panel transitions are not clear. The artist must strike a balance between providing sufficient visual information and leaving room for interpretation by the reader. Another challenge is that there is limited space in each frame in sequential art. For this project, it is a challenge to cover a wide range of social issues in a comprehensive manner due to the limited number of pages. The project will need to carefully select and prioritise the themes and narratives it explores, ensuring that the elements chosen, effectively represent the broader social impact of the Xian pandemic.

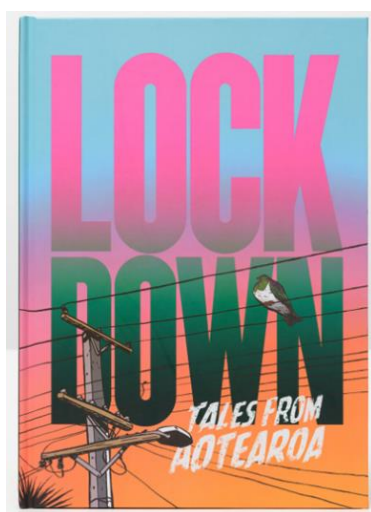
2.2 Design Precedents: Graphic Responses to COVID-19



(Fig. 1) Kendra Boileau and Rich Johnson, Cover of *COVID Chronicles: A Comics Anthology*, 2021

COVID Chronicles: A Comics Anthology is a collection of short comics that explores various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic by over 60 artists. The distinct advantage of this anthology is that it brings together artists and writers from around the world who share their perspectives and experiences of the pandemic. During this unprecedented global crisis, the artists' diverse styles, themes, and narrative approaches provide a comprehensive and multidimensional view of COVID-19 as opposed to providing a unidimensional narrative that may privilege certain communities or regions. *COVID Chronicles: A Comics Anthology* also has the advantage of capturing the variety of experiences and emotions surrounding the pandemic. The anthology features a wide range of stories depicting struggle and resistance, acts of heroism, social issues, and reflections on the impact of the pandemic on society in different cultural contexts. By showcasing multiple perspectives, voices, and ideas, it creates a large canvas for readers to learn about the same subject from different angles, engaging them while promoting empathy.

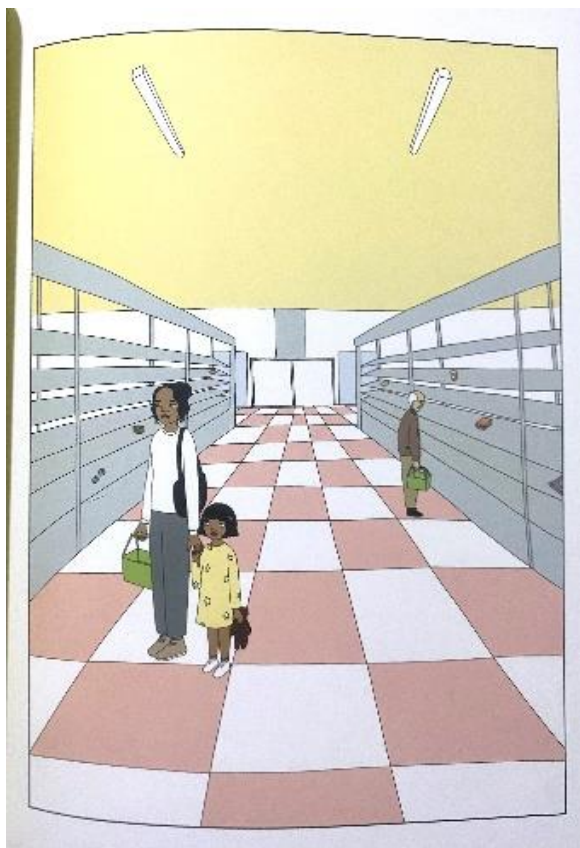
The use of sequential artworks from multiple artists' perspectives as a medium in *COVID Chronicles: A Comics Anthology* effectively communicates the multiple issues associated with the pandemic. The visual medium also allows the artist to convey information and messages in a concise and accessible manner. "Comic art is unconstrained by the rules of reality governing visual media (such as photography) . This allows abstract concepts to be made tangible such as showing coughs spread clouds of infective material, which is invisible in real-life, and representing the presence of infection." (Kearns 140). The combination of visual storytelling and textual elements allows for a nuanced exploration of the subject, with illustrations and panel layouts enhancing the emotional impact of the narrative and immersing the reader in the character's experiences (Heer and Worcester 144). This book is a collection of comics, which differs slightly from the graphic format of this project. But according to Freedman, sequential art is a generic term for a medium that sequentially mixes words and images while drawing on caricature, panels and speech balloons, etc. (30). And Harvey suggests that what distinguishes comics from other types of pictorial narrative is the combination of verbal content (25). It follows that comics can have a similar impact on the audience as other sequential art mediums.



(Fig. 2) Sarah Pepperle et al., Cover of *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*, 2020

Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa is a collection of stories and artworks created during the COVID-19 lockdown in New Zealand. The collection showcases the creative responses of New Zealand artists to the circumstances of the lockdown. Through a variety of artistic styles, the collection explores themes such as isolation, resilience, community and the impact of the pandemic on individuals and society.

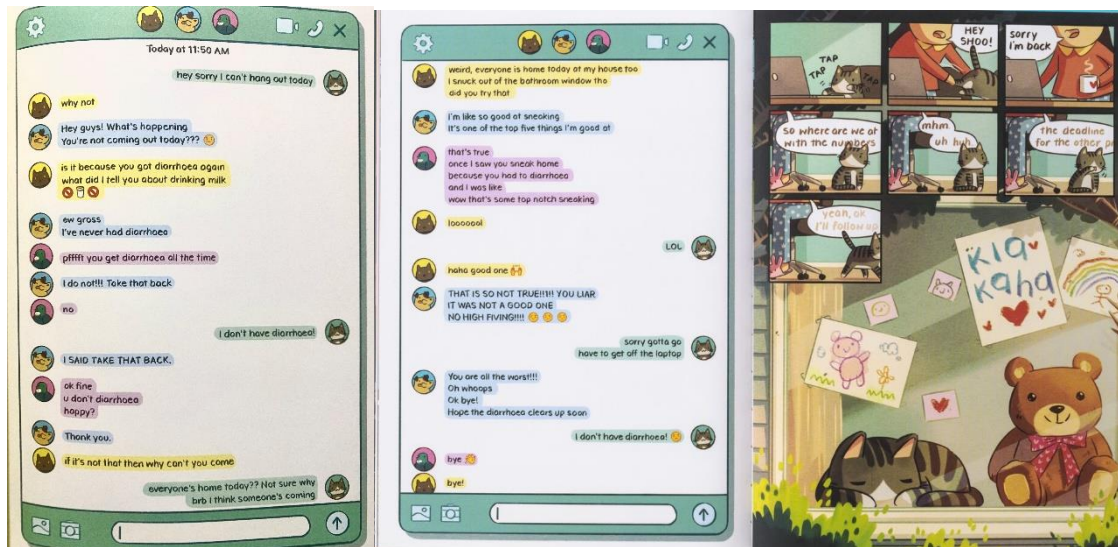
One of the strengths of *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa* is its ability to capture the spirit of the COVID-19 period and its impact on New Zealand society. The anthology presents a series of stories that reflect the experiences, emotions and challenges faced by each individual during this period. The narratives emphasise the resilience and adaptability of people in the face of adversity, and the importance of community and connection. The format of the graphic novel collection allows for a variety of different storytelling approaches and artistic styles, contributing to the richness, diversity, and inclusiveness of the anthology. The different stories, whether humorous, poignant, or reflective, offer a well-rounded view of Aotearoa's experience of confinement.



(Fig. 3) Ruby Jones. [Artwork in *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*]. 2020, *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*, 2020, p. 27. Digital medium.

For example, a one-page comic from artist Ruby Jones shows the madness of people stocking up on supplies before the lockdown policy was implemented. The empty shelves, the three characters with helpless and bewildered expressions, and the empty baskets in the hands of the characters,

all show that people at that time over-bought goods to avoid going out. The whole picture uses a one-point perspective to show a large space, and after a simple drawing of things through a thin linear art technique, it reflects the helplessness of people facing such an empty scene before the lockdown.

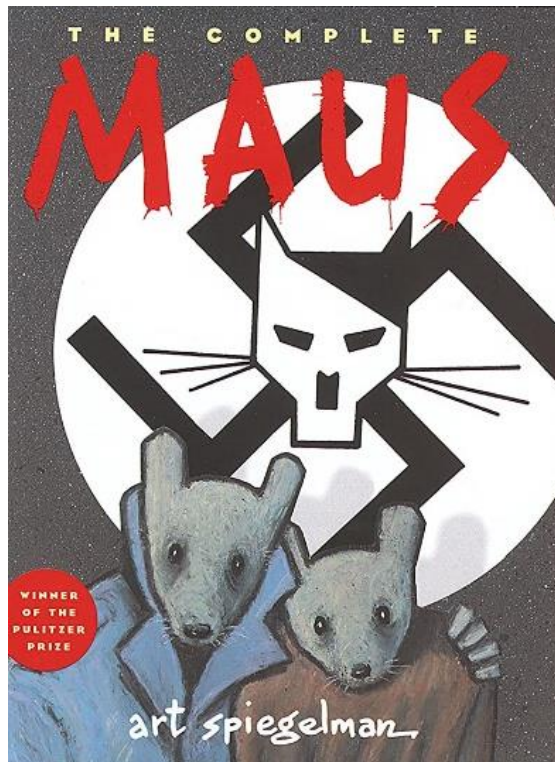


(Fig. 4) Li Chen. [Artwork in *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*]. 2020, *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*, 2020, p. 73 to 75. Digital medium.

Li Chen, on the other hand, humorously uses the perspective of pets to show unique ideas. In this short story, the pets use their owner's computer to discuss the unusual situation of "everyone is home" on a chat app without their owner's knowledge, reflecting the impact of lockdown on every family member, including the pets. The author's cute drawing style, bright colours, and big head-small body cartoon images show a childlike artist's response to lockdown. The Māori word "Kia kaha" in the last panel means "be strong", which shows the culture of New Zealand, confirming the title of the book, *Tales from Aotearoa*.

Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa and this research project share a potential weakness in their limited scope in terms of geographical and cultural representation. As the precedent focuses specifically on the New Zealand experience during the lockdown, it may not capture the broader global perspective of the pandemic. However, this limitation can also be seen as a strength as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the local context and its unique challenges and triumphs.

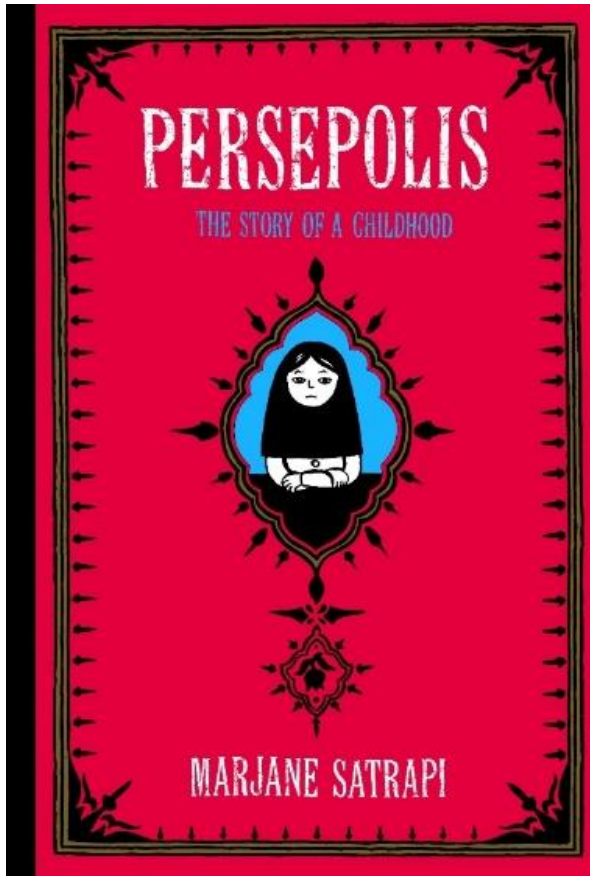
2.3 Other Relevant Design Precedents



(Fig. 5) Art Spiegelman, Cover of *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, 1996

Maus is a groundbreaking graphic novel that tells the story of the Holocaust. In the story Jews are portrayed as mice and Nazis are shown as cats. The author, Art Spiegelman, recounts his experiences during World War II by interviewing his father. The use of animals as metaphors downplays the brutality of historical events while reducing the sense of distance from the reader. According to Lin (6), this graphic novel uses animal figures instead of human figures because the historical reality of the characters is too painful and unfortunate to be fully realistically represented in the graphic novel.

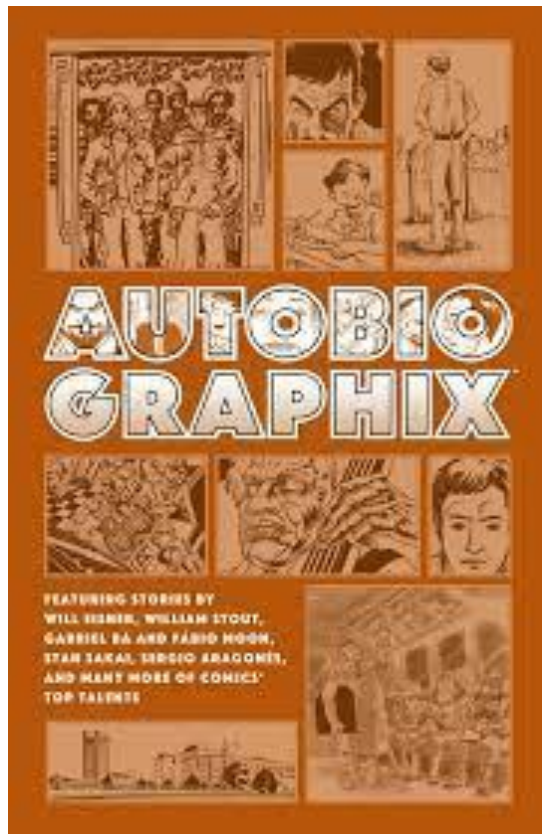
This precedent is linked to this project in terms of thematic direction as it demonstrates the power of graphic illustration storytelling to explore sensitive and complex themes. By combining personal memoirs and allegorical stories, Spiegelman uses his masterful artistry to depict the horror and oppression of the Holocaust. This visual medium adds depth to the narrative is thought provoking while also having a physical and psychological impact on the audience. The graphic novel also uses a non-fictional method, as it is based on the actual experiences of the author's father, giving the story an authenticity and a personal connection to historical facts.



(Fig. 6) Marjane Satrapi, Cover of *Persepolis*, 2006

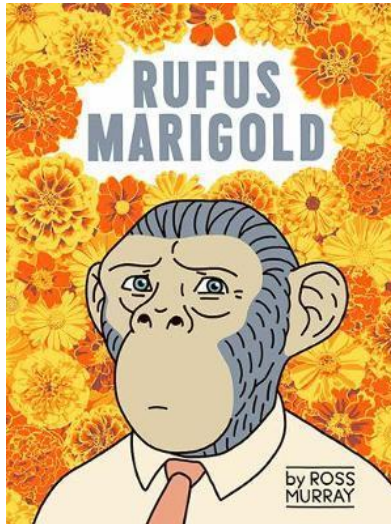
Persepolis is a personal narrative graphic novel depicting author Marjane Satrapi's experiences of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. Through a series of black and white illustrations, Satrapi explores themes of identity, politics, and social reform. The impact of the revolution on Iranian society is described in depth, honesty, and in detail, revealing the political and social issues that affected her family and life during the turbulent times. The graphic novel format allows the author to convey complex emotions and ideas in a way that is both attractive and comprehensible, effectively capturing the emotions and struggles of her youth in the book and allowing the reader to empathise with her experiences.

This precedent is relevant to *Diary in a Shelter* as it exemplifies the use of personal narrative to address social and political issues, an approach that visually represents complex historical and cultural contexts and enhances the reader's understanding of the social circumstance and its aftermath. This project also uses a personal narrative approach to narrate and document the story of the period of closure caused by COVID-19, from the perspective of an ordinary young adult. The personal narrative provides a nuanced perspective on historical events, enabling readers to understand the impact of the revolution on their personal lives. Worth (143) likens the personal narrative approach in this graphic novel *Persepolis* to that of a solo performance, and she also believes that the best graphic novels are the middle ground between fiction and drama.



(Fig. 7) Will Eisner et al., Cover of *Autobiographix (Second Edition)*, 2021

Autobiographix (Second Edition) is a graphic novel anthology of autobiographical stories by various comic artists, presenting diverse personal narratives and experiences through the medium of sequential art. The anthology offers a rare and intimate look into the lives of the contributors, allowing the reader to connect with their stories on a deeply personal level and to gain knowledge of the autobiographical genre from them as a learner. The book is able to demonstrate the power of each artist's personal story through the graphic novel format. The combination of visual art and text allows for a multi-dimensional exploration of the author's life, emotions and memories. The use of sequential art allows the artists to communicate not only events and experiences, but also the subjective perspectives and emotions associated with them. This makes the reading experience more immersive and empathetic and makes for a compelling and relatable read. According to Duncan et al. (11), sequential art offers the reader a form of representation that fuses image and text, capturing the movement and communication of characters in specific places on the page, unlike any other art form or medium... Creating a three-panel comic to explain a newly learned idiom or a short graphic novel to address a social issue, this art form requires only the most basic drawing tools, a space to draw and one's imagination.



(Fig. 8) Ross Murray, Cover of *Rufus Marigold*, 2019



(Fig. 9) Ross Murray. [The first story in *Rufus Marigold*]. 2019, *Rufus Marigold*, 2019. Digital medium.

Rufus Marigold is a graphic novel by Ross Murray that explores the life and experiences of its title character, Rufus Marigold, as he navigates the challenges of living with anxiety. The graphic novel delves into Rufus' daily struggles, his relationships and his ongoing journey of self-acceptance and understanding. This graphic novel has an honest and realistic portrayal of the main character's mental health. This story has a unique perspective and presentation of anxiety, capturing the internal struggles and external effects of anxiety on the main character's life. The use of graphic novels allows for a visual representation of Rufus' anxiety, using creative and expressive illustrations to convey his inner turmoil. This visual approach enhances the reader's understanding

of anxiety as they witness Rufus's experiences first-hand. "The simplification of characters in comics shift visual representation of people from the realistic towards the symbolic, with a 'stick figure' being an extreme example. This makes it easier for viewers of any demographic to project their identity into the narrative and empathise with characters, giving more relevance to the situations observed. A variation on this idea of abstraction is the use of non-human characters." (C. Kearns 140), the author uses the image of a monkey as the main character, which humanises anxiety while allowing the reader to let go of their wariness of anxiety disorders and understand that the target individual's experience is linked to every race; challenging stereotypes and fostering a sense of solidarity through animal imagery. (Bonin et al. 22)

One of Murray's distinctive strengths as an artist is his skill in depicting emotion. Whether capturing the anxiety of Rufus Marigold in his graphic novel of the same name or conveying the turmoil and inner conflict of his characters in other works, Murray's illustrations excel at conveying the complex emotions of his characters. His ability to convey mood and atmosphere through his artistic choices is evident, immersing the reader in the emotional landscape of the stories he illustrates. For example, the main character Rufus Marigold often frowns, the common "gasp" when he speaks, and the beads of sweat on his forehead when he has problems, all of which convey the emotion of the story to the audience. In addition, when the main character does not have other characters to talk to him, the author adds his own imagination from Rufus Marigold to the picture, which reflects the mood in the moment. Murray's attention to detail is another outstanding feature of his artwork. His illustrations often display intricate lines, textures, and patterns that add richness and depth to his visuals. This meticulous approach enhances the storytelling and allows the reader to explore the illustrations, discovering new details with each viewing. Murray's use of colour is also a study in this project, using a large number of unsaturated colours from the 'flattening technique' to fill in the whole picture on the basis of thicker black lines. His work may look colourful, but in fact he only uses concentrated colours in permutations to achieve diverse visual feedback. Influenced by this, each story in *Diary in a Shelter* utilises no more than four colours, and in most of the stories, the same colour range is used; according to Hu et al. (76), this harmonious colour scheme can be visually pleasing to the audience.

The above precedent has had a significant impact on the project, shaping its methodology, theme, and artistic direction. *COVID Chronicles: A Comics Anthology* and *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa* provided information for the project to participate in the context of COVID-19, and gained inspiration from the different perspectives and storytelling styles found in the selection. MarJane Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* demonstrate the power of sequential art media in depicting personal narratives and addressing sensitive social issues. These works affect the integration of storytelling skills and personal experience in the Distinct society background of the project. *Autobiographix (Second Edition)* provides inspiration for incorporating autobiographical elements into graphic novel formats. Ross Murray's *Rufus Marigold* influenced the use of non-human characters as protagonists and also provided direction for the use of colours in this project. Overall, these precedents contribute to the artistic vision of the project and its exploration of personal experiences in the social context of Xi'an, China during the pandemic period.

2.4 The Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Xi'an, China

This project is set in Xi'an, China, and the time interval is the COVID-19 pandemic period of 2020 to 2022. This set of sequential art pieces focuses on the various events experienced by the main character during the challenging period of the lockdown in Xi'an, with the story *Diary in a Shelter* based on the author's experience, as well as representative stories in the news media and those of family and friends.

There are thirteen main summary points from the following news media in 2020 to 2022, Shaanxi Provincial People's Government official website, Xi'an People's Congress official website, BBC News China, Shaanxi Daily, Sohu News, Sina News, 21st Century Jingji, which I have listed below to facilitate my visual storytelling process. These points have been chosen because they are the most common of the sources mentioned above, and this project is part of a sequential art storytelling collection, so in the future I will also select relevant and challenging points to enrich this work. These points are arranged in the order of the story content of the artwork for this project, and all of them relate to the situation in Xi'an during the period of lockdown, or to events that happened to the government and citizens of Xi'an as a result of the implementation of national policies.

2.41 Thirteen points:

1. People being confined to their homes for long periods of time can lead to psychological problems, impatience with life's events, and people living in a tense atmosphere. (Roxby 2020) (Atalan 41) (Mucci et al. 64)
2. COVID testing was performed almost every day during the lockdown, leading to cross-infection between building passages, resulting in an effect which was, in practice, equivalent to no lockdown. (BBC News China 2022)
3. Manual workers, independent professionals, migrant workers had difficulty in accessing economic resources and are not supported by their families. (Holland 161)
4. Chronically ill, elderly people who live alone, and people with disabilities did not have access to good care, continuous medication, and effective medical support. (Lim et al. 548)
5. Pregnant women and patients with acute illnesses could not receive timely medical treatment, and incompetent medical personnel lead to serious consequences. (Sina News 2022) (Choy 105)
6. Inadequate stocks of food, vegetables, meat, eggs, and milk and other necessities, and soaring prices in the early days of the embargo. (Sina News 2021) (Wang et al. 8, 10)
7. The elderly and children did not have cell phones and could not use their ID cards to generate QR codes for negative COVID testing results. There were people in charge of the epidemic who were not professional, resulting in people not being able to get government-issued supplies. (Shaanxi Provincial People's Government 2022) (Shaanxi Daily 2022)
8. Students who lived in school were unable to go home and were forced to be sealed in their school dormitories. (21st Century Jingji 2021) (Wang et al. 1879)
9. Travel time was restricted, all recreational facilities were shut down, public transportation was paralyzed, and courier services were suspended. (BBC News China 2022)
10. The workload became greater and the income was reduced while the expenses became scarcer. (Sharma 1405, 1406)
11. Coinciding with the 2022 Winter Olympics, the lockdown policy had become stricter. (Wang et

al. 1879)

12. Small and medium-sized enterprises faced a crisis and even closed down. Large companies had to lay off workers, resulting in a vicious cycle for working families. (Sohu News 2022) (Zhang 738)

13. People were spending so much more time at home, leading to an increase in household waste. (Xi'an People's Congress official website 2020) (Han et al. 90)

During the time of the lockdown in Xi'an, people were forbidden to leave their communities or even their homes, (Atalan 41) which resulted in most of the psychological responses of people during the COVID-19 pandemic being feelings of stress and depression. Mucci also mentioned that the length of the lockdown was proportional to the likelihood of psychological distress, with people becoming more anxious and aggressive the longer they were confined (64). This confinement in the home for long periods of time lead to various psychological problems.

COVID-19 testing was carried out almost daily in selected areas during the closure, while public places where no, or sudden temporary controls were in place also risked significant cross-contamination. According to the BBC (2022), residents of a residential area in Xi'an were asked to move to a quarantine facility after midnight, and cross-contamination had already occurred in this neighbourhood during the COVID-19 testing process. People were forced to wait for hours in the winter, with images circulating on the internet of elderly people standing alone on cold winter nights waiting to be transferred.

The lockdowns had a further impact on vulnerable groups. According to (Holland 161), people with disabilities had difficulty obtaining work prior to the outbreak, and the experience of employees working from home as a result of the embargo made it more difficult for people with disabilities to obtain work during the outbreak, causing the likelihood of losing their economic resources to rise. Lim et al. (548) suggests that older people have a higher mortality rate for COVID-19, while people with chronic diseases are at an increased risk of death. Additionally, a journal article by (Choy 105), outlines how a woman eight months pregnant lost her baby when the most authoritative hospital in her district refused to treat her because of the strictest lockdown policy in Xi'an at the time. This story caused an uproar on the internet, and the author also mentioned cases of hospitals in Xi'an refusing to treat heart patients or elderly people with coronary heart disease for fear of taking the risk of positive cases, which directly or indirectly led to the loss of many non-pneumonia patients.

The lockdown exacerbated the problem of uneven distribution of the supply of essential goods to Xi'an residents. According to (Wang et al. 8, 10), the uneven spatial distribution of courier station logistics stations in Xi'an limited their ability to provide emergency support to neighbouring residents. Moreover, under the influence of traffic lockdowns and city closures during the outbreak, supply and demand channels such as vegetables and fruits, in particular, were disrupted, resulting in a disconnect between supply and demand, and the increased number of orders made logistics even less efficient.

Following the outbreak, schools, in addition to public spaces, needed to comply with unpredictable lockdown policies and transitions to online teaching. According to (Wang et al. 1879), on 23

December 2021, the city of Xi'an was closed again due to a sudden increase in cases. The difference between the city lockdown in Xi'an and Wuhan was that university students in Wuhan were at home during the winter break, whereas students in Xi'an were in the middle of the semester, resulting in their forced lockdown at the universities. Wang also mentioned that students were denied face-to-face interaction with their parents and peers other than their roommates at the closed schools, and that the lockdown also triggered feelings of anxiety and loneliness due to the psychological uncertainty of the students' future.

The lockdown led to a decline in business revenues, which was the principal reason for business layoffs. According to (Zhang 738), in early 2020, the unemployment rate in China's cities and towns was above 5% and 72.5% of food and beverage suppliers experienced a decline in revenue, with 15.3% of them planning to shut down and the rest planning to lay off staff. Those who were not affected by the layoffs were forced to start working from home. In China's social and work environment, leaders demanded more from their employees, despite employees having to integrate their personal and work lives, making it difficult to distinguish between them. According to Sharma's (1405, 1406) findings, 60% of respondents in Xi'an strongly agreed that working women worked more hours than normal during the outbreak and 52% strongly agreed that "working from home is more challenging than working in an office", while only 5% of respondents chose "Strongly disagree" for each of these two questions.

Municipal solid waste consists of a variety of household wastes, and people create more household waste during the time they are restricted from travelling. According to (Han et al. 90), during COVID-19, the surge in domestic waste volumes, long collection intervals, service disruptions and suspension of rubbish collection scheme operations overwhelmed municipal solid waste disposal facilities. He also mentioned that improper disposal caused by communities such as haphazard dumping can lead to cross-contamination by people in the vicinity who are exposed to virus-contaminated waste.

Chapter 3. Project Method and Process

3.1 Project Method

This research project employs personal narrative and non-fiction research with iterative design methods to explore the social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. By combining these approaches, the project aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences, challenges and resilience of individuals and communities during this unprecedented period.

Personal narrative is an important part of the design approach for this project. The stories in *Diary in a Shelter* are represented from the main character's own singular perspective, making sense of the information as he witnesses and experiences the events of the lockdown with those who are

in a different position from him. Therefore, the personal narrative approach allows for the sharing of different perspectives in this project, which includes real stories from different professions or social classes that have been experienced based on media reports. This project is constructed as part of a larger blueprint, and *Diary in a Shelter* will continue on the concept of this project as more experiences and information become available in the future, reaching the goal of continuity. Personal narrative not only amplifies the voices of those directly affected, but also illuminates the wider social dynamics and systemic issues that affect their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (4) state that the focus of the narrative is the audience, and that the narrative researcher must reproduce the issues relevant to the audience, then articulate the purpose and context of the narrative, and then lead the reader to believe in the truth of the story. Hence, by showing the diversity and authenticity of these events, this project can provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of the pandemic on the people and society of Xi'an.

Non-fiction is another important approach used in this project. By integrating data and contextual information, the project provides a comprehensive understanding of the social issues and impacts associated with the pandemic. The non-fiction element, and the critical research required, ensures accuracy, credibility and depth of analysis, allowing the storytelling to be based on the realistic context of Xi'an. According to Caulley (426), non-fiction writers limit or construct the subject matter they write about, with certain facts and details being included by them. This means that non-fiction is based on real places and times but is also artistically embellished to suit the author's needs. For example, in *Diary in a Shelter*, an unfortunate story about an pregnant woman who had a miscarriage, the case started when the husband of the pregnant woman posted a video on social media asking for help, and after the hospital received a lot of attention and pressure from the Internet, the pregnant woman was rushed to the operating room, but her eight-month-old foetus was not saved in the end. In the story line of this project, the main character encounters an anxious couple calling for an ambulance on the road, and after suggesting a ride in a police car and arriving at the hospital, the main character helps the couple convince hospital security staff to treat the pregnant woman before leaving. This integration of non-fiction enhances the significance of the project as a scholarly contribution, while maintaining relevance to the reader.

The benefits and uniqueness of this project lies in its ability to combine two approaches—personal narrative and non-fiction—in a multi-dimensional exploration of the social impact of the pandemic that can bridge the gap between personal experience and official social issues. By blending personal stories with research-based analysis, it not only shapes a more engaging and relatable storytelling experience, but evokes empathy, reflection, and a deeper connection to the social issues explored through the richness of the narrative. The actions and voices of the main characters presented in the project humanise the experiences of individuals affected by the pandemic, making the stories more accessible, understandable, and relatable to the audience, and also providing valuable insights into the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of the Xi'an pandemic period.

3.2 Character Design



(Fig. 10) “A Terracotta Warrior Terracotta Warriors A statue of a Tang maid The Great Mosque The ancient city gate tower of Xi'an”. Ji Yuqiao & Li Yuche. Global Times. Jan 13, 2023. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202301/1283734.shtml?id=11>

The figure of the Terracotta Warriors is a fascinating and symbolic choice for the main character in this set of sequential art pieces project, exploring the social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Xi'an. The Terracotta Warriors are a group of life-size clay sculptures that are an iconic representation of Xi'an's rich historical and cultural heritage. Their inclusion as protagonists adds a layer of profound meaning and symbolism to the narrative, enhancing the depth and resonance of the story. The Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, where the Terracotta Warriors are located, hosted more than 9 million visitors in 2019, and the COVID-19 epidemic also affected the museum with a short-term shutdown, after reopening at 30% of its capacity and not allowing group tours for visitors (CGTN). To this extent, the Terracotta Army suffered the effects of the epidemic and the closure. The drawings in this project, on the other hand, preserve the unique appearance of the Terracotta Warriors, while giving him a modern costume, periodically integrated into the present life and cultural environment.

The Terracotta Warriors embody the concept of resilience. These ancient sculptures, created over two thousand years ago, have stood the test of time and experienced the challenges of history. They have witnessed the rise and fall of civilizations, including past pandemics and crises. By using them as protagonist figures in the set of sequential art pieces, the project emphasises the resilience of the people of Xi'an, according to Sohu (2023), the Terracotta Warriors, through their long history, embody the Xi'an people's courageous spirit of "the mighty and the unbreakable", and therefore draws a parallel between the strength of the Terracotta Warriors and the community's ability to overcome adversity in the face of a pandemic.

The Terracotta Warriors represent a collective identity and a shared history. Each warrior is unique, with distinctive facial features, costumes, and poses. This diversity reflects the diversity of

experiences and perspectives within the pandemic-affected community. By using them as protagonist, narrative format can capitalise on this shared cultural heritage and create a sense of unity and connection in the audience. These figures are a bridge between the past and the present, reminding us of the enduring nature of the human spirit and the continuity of our collective story.

The visual appeal and recognizability of the Terracotta Warriors make them an intriguing basis for character design. Their unique appearance and historical significance capture the reader's attention and stimulate their curiosity. *Diary in a Shelter* achieves innovation in this regard, as the use of such characters has not been employed in graphic novels. The level of detail and uniqueness in the craftsmanship of the Terracotta Warriors employs visual art to bring their story to life and evoke a sense of awe and curiosity.

The inclusion of the Terracotta Warriors is in keeping with the project's aim to explore the intersection between culture and the contemporary social impact of the pandemic. By juxtaposing the ancient warriors with the modern challenges faced by the community, this set of sequential art pieces emphasises the continuity of human experience and the enduring nature of history. This narrative device helps to deepen the reader's understanding of the complex layers of Xi'an's identity and the lasting impact of the pandemic on its cultural fabric.

In summary, the terracotta figures are used as the main character in this project, symbolizing resilience, reflecting a shared history and collective identity, engaging the reader's vision and exploring the intersection of history and the contemporary social impact of the pandemic. Their inclusion adds depth, symbolism and a sense of connection to the narrative, enhancing the overall storytelling experience and creating a special and compelling set of sequential art pieces that resonates with the audience.

3.3 Iterative Developments and Critical Reflection

3.3.1 Early Renditions and Exercises



(Fig. 11) Haoting Lei's photo, Group view of design results – iteration 1, May 2022

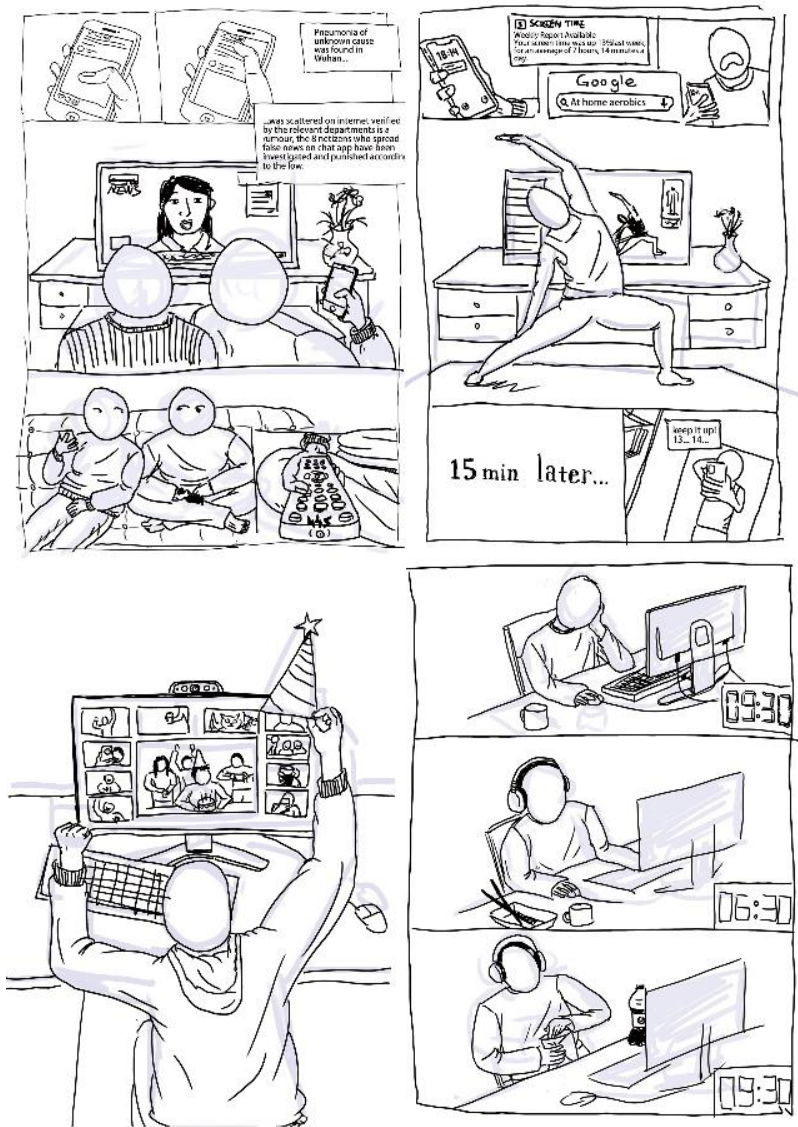
These are the first sketches with a general conceptual direction of the sequential art to be produced. The idea was to chronologically document what happened during the outbreak, and to tell the story of the effects in a specific area of the chosen city, Xi'an, from December 17, 2019, when the first case of unexplained pneumonia was reported in Wuhan (Davidson), to the beginning of the government's lockdown policy. The project was initially planned to focus on an ordinary family in Xi'an rather than an ordinary young man, so the sketches include a number of unidentified characters interacting with each other. At this stage the drawing style and sub-setting was in draft iterative testing. I wanted to be as authentic as possible to what I had personally experienced, so this employed a personal narrative approach. Being influenced by American and Korean comics, such as comic artists Stan Lee and Kim Jung Gi, I wanted to use a linear drawing style to reveal the project in a way that was nuanced and true to life.

The first drawing in the top left corner of Figure 11 is the first drawing of the project and is about the main character sitting on a sofa watching television about COVID-19 having arrived, but the two characters are not interested in this and change the channel.

The second drawing is about a patient who starts coughing when the doctor asks him what symptoms he has. Then the virus starts to spread through the air and attach itself to wherever it is.

The third panel shows a comparison between before the outbreak and during the outbreak. Before the outbreak started there were lots of people huddled together watching the show. The latter image shows people huddled together just to get into the supermarket to grab the necessities of life.

The other initial five images are similar in concept to the later pieces, focused around the main character during the lockdown. For example, the main character doing exercise at home, celebrating his birthday with his friends through video chat, or the amount of rubbish on the main character's desk to show that he spends the whole day in front of his desktop.



(Fig. 12) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 2, August 2022

Figure 12 shows an iterative refinement of some of the sketches from Figure. 11. Text has been added to some of these drawings to help the readers understand exactly what is happening, for example the main character spending a whole day in front of his computer in the bottom right corner, incorporating a change of time.



(Fig. 13) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 3, October 2022

Figure 13 shows an experimental drawing in a section on 'four frames'. According to Tanaka and Sasaki, each of the four frames of the comic is a specific and temporal one, but the connection between the first and the fourth is not insignificant either (267). It is like drawing a line linking two given points, but each connects at a different distance (274). This means that within the limited space of four frames, there is also diversity in the story, an exercise that helps the artist to freely choose the focus and fragments of the narrative, using visuals and words to help the audience understand what is happening in it.

I wanted to tell a complete story through only four frames, i.e., one page per story. The tone of the story was transformed from a representation of the psychological changes caused by the lockdown to a humorous form of self-deprecation or satire about the troubles caused by the lockdown. According to Yovetich (57), humour can reduce the audience's anxiety level. And Kingery (17) likewise argues that humour can close the emotional distance with the audience. *Diary in a Shelter* is a work based on a real disaster, which will have a negative impact on the audience such as stress, and I tried to use humour at this stage to reduce the level of threat of this subject to the audience. However, the results of this four-frame test were not as effective as expected, and most of the work was difficult for the audience to understand. For example, with the four-panel test with the characters in protective clothing in the upper right corner, I wanted to convey a busy day for the volunteers, delivering supplies to residents, calling residents upstairs for COVID-19 testing, and using video calls for meetings and cheering up each other. But in critical reflection, the content was "fragmented," with the characters in each frame appearing to be performing unrelated body movements. I experimented with a variety of drawing styles to see what would suit the story I wanted to tell for this project. The framing angles of the story in the top left corner of Figure 13

utilised cinematic angle switch. The focus of the image starts from the feet of the main character sitting at home and moves up to the face of the main character looking out of the window, and then the last frame turns to the window with the text "freedom outside the window", combining both text and image. According to Hua (2018), this technique expands the confined two-bit space in the frame.

I experimented with different thicknesses and mediums of the brush tool in Photoshop for the linear art style of drawing, and the addition of more black and grey blocks of colour in individual works was to reflect the stress and negativity people felt during the period of prohibition (Kaya 6). As I was conducting research on humour at the time, I deliberately visually exaggerated the protagonist's looks in some works, and according to Callister and Stern, humour caused by techniques such as visual metaphors and exaggeration can lead to more goodwill from the audience (11). Eventually, I settled on the use of linear art, which, according to Courtright, increases the level of detail in the image (494), and the use of this drawing technique allows the viewer to fully appreciate and engage with the visual effects.

3.32 Layout Changes - Larger Format



(Fig. 14) Haoting Lei's photo, Group view of design results - iteration 4, February 2023

Figure 14 is a sketch based on individual points after summarising the thirteen points I identified in the previous section, 2.4.

From top left to bottom right: people were kept at home creating a lot of rubbish; the main

character was given a travel permit; the price of fresh vegetables and fruits skyrocketed during the lockdown; people worked more at home but were paid less; COVID-19 testing and cross-contamination between buildings; workers with no income marching in the streets to get back to work; volunteers distributing fresh food and supplies to everyone; elderly people without mobile phones not knowing how to use the health code. In these sketches, the main character takes the role of leading the reader to discover problems, such as seeing workers marching in the streets demanding to return to work through the news on television, and the main character getting a travel pass, but he leaves the community only to find that all the shops are closed. According to the personal narrative approach, the audience can witness these events that are narrated while emotionally experiencing them with the main character. The outline context of these stories is drawn from the thirteen key points summarised in Chapter 3, which adds accuracy and credibility to the stories in this project and can add relevance and interest for the audience.

From reflection of the four frames, I expanded the layout of the drawing to a full page because this approach creates a greater visual impact and thus captures the reader's attention (Cohn 14). The full-page composition allows me to draw larger, more detailed artworks that showcase and emphasise important visual elements, people, or scenes. This allows the audience to fully absorb and appreciate their meaning as a way of enhancing emotional impact or creating a dramatic pause that creates anticipation for what is to come (Cortsen 409). The sketches laid the groundwork for the subsequent works in this project, and the story line of the subsequent works is based on these sketches.

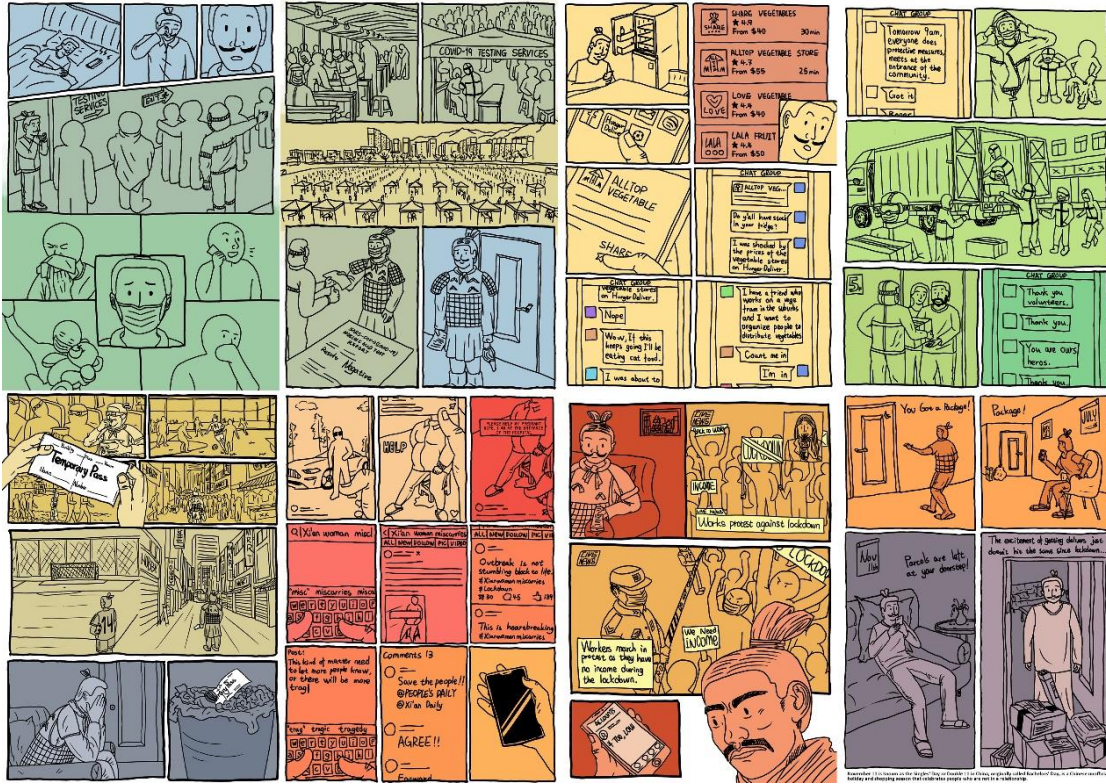
3.33 Integration of Colour



(Fig. 15) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 5, March 2023

Figure 15 shows the first time this project began to incorporate colour. Influenced by Ross Murray, this work has been using less chromatic colours as the dominant colours. I used a specific colour language, influenced by Kauppinen and Jauffret (111). "Based on the relationship between symbol and object, blood is red, which means that red can represent anger and anxiety Green has a positive association with environmental issues in some scenes." Kauppinen and Jauffret also refer to blue representing healing and calmness, so where I have chosen blue in my drawings it is often to show an atmosphere of calm and peace. For example, in the lower right corner of Figure 15, I used red in the first frame to match the scene of the main character exercising at home, reflecting the main character's eagerness to find some activities for himself to pass the time when he has just started to experience the lockdown effects. I used a less pure blue colour in the second frame to show that the protagonist's state of mind is calmer than at the beginning, as he sits on a chair and rests his feet on the edge of the table. This body language also reflects the relaxation and calmness of the main character and is accompanied by an increase in the amount of household garbage around him. In the third frame, I used a dark blue colour to reflect the time of night in this scene, and a light-yellow colour to show the bright light from the main character's mobile phone. The dark blue colour reflects that the main character has given up the active sports mood in the first frame. The lazy body language lying on the sofa, the small screen cell phone that attracts his attention, and the further increase of household garbage at home all reflect the main character's acquiescence of the lockdown.

However, there were still problems with the storytelling and the split-screening of these drafts. For example, the image in the top right corner tells the story of the main character who has been given a travel permit, but when he goes out to find that the shopping and entertainment venues on the street are forced to close, he returns home sadly and throws the permit away. There are problems with the split-screening of this picture, which makes it difficult for the readers to understand the meaning and emphasis, and the choice of colours is not very effective. The painting does not work very well in terms of division and use of colour, for example, in the first frame the main character imagines four scenes and I have used four colours to differentiate the four scenes rather than cutting them into four grids. This makes it difficult for the audience to understand the meaning and emphasis. The red in the top left corner does not match the other three cooler tones, disrupting the harmony and balance of the image.



(Fig. 16) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 6, May 2023

Figure 16 primarily shows the implementation of text in the work, while the visuals became clearer, the excessive use of text resulted in a distraction from the sequential art I wanted to present. This mainly consists of news text, chat boxes, and off-screen comments. I used a lot of mobile phone images because I wanted to reflect the fact that the protagonist is unable to leave the house during the lockdown and must use the internet to find out what is happening in society. According to Stephens' proposal "The scholarship would be accomplished by the visuals, rather than by the text primarily (333)". This means that the use of continuous artistic imagery increases the audience's understanding and can be explained with less text while the image holds their attention.

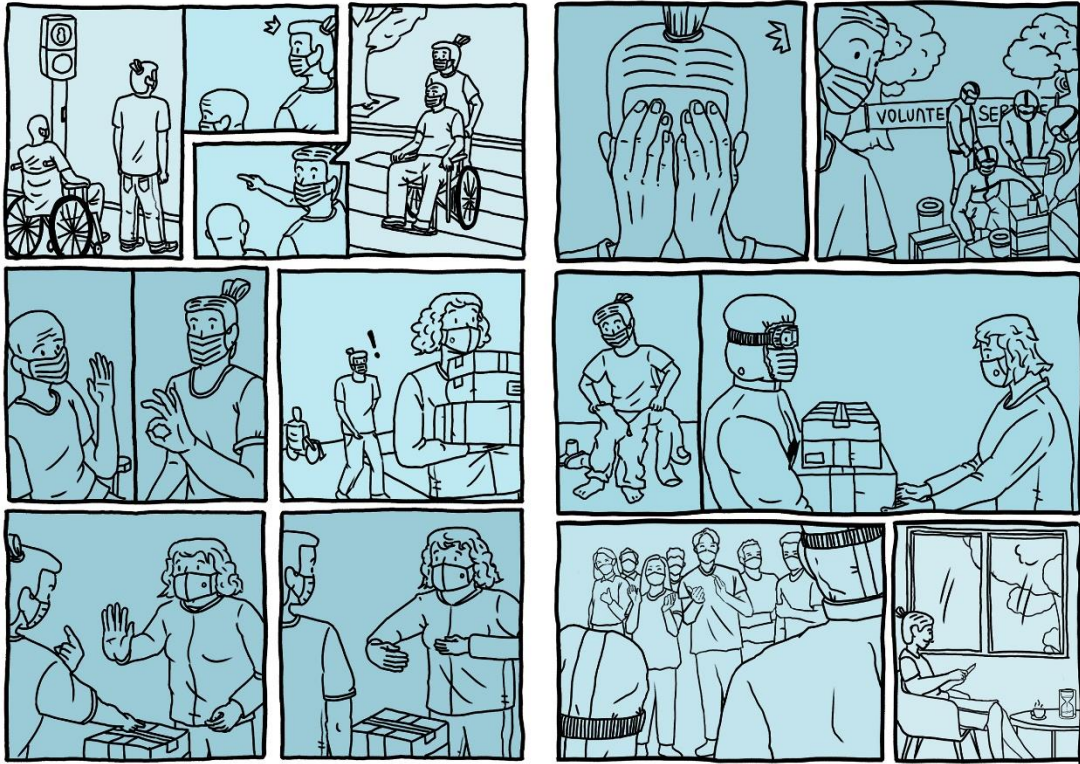
Chapter 4. Design Outcome: Series of Sequential Art Pieces



(Fig. 18) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Caged Bird*, June 2023



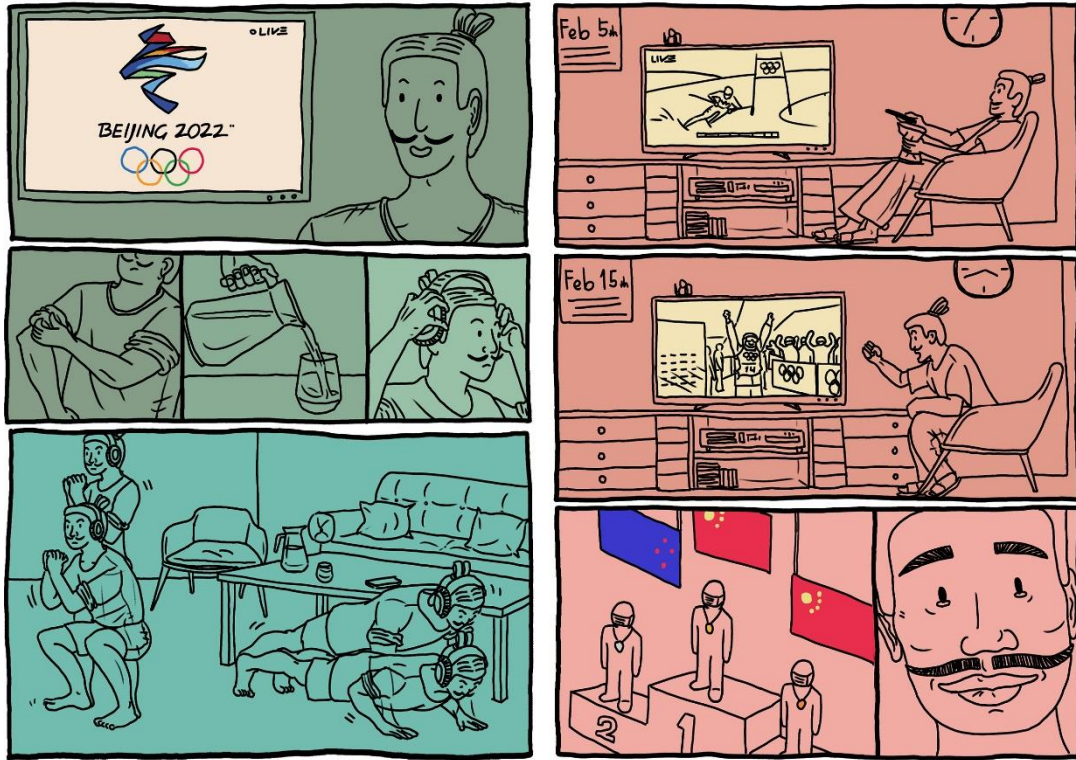
(Fig. 19) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Big Purchase*, June 2023



(Fig. 20) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Social Distance*, June 2023



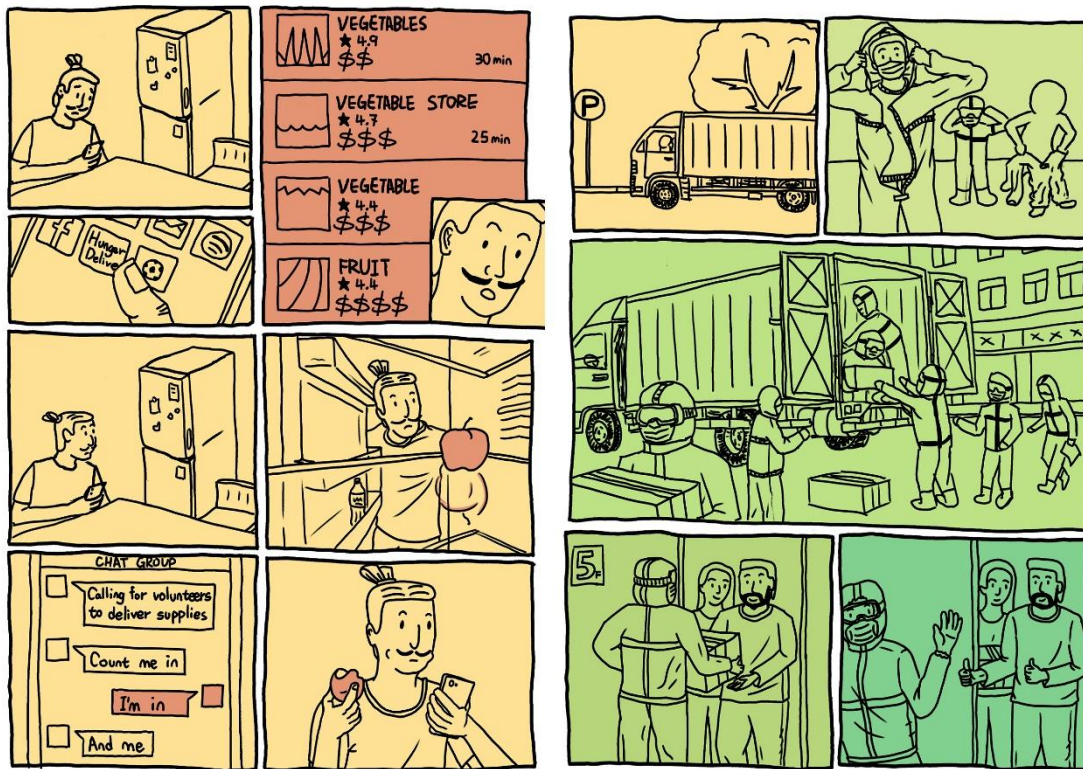
(Fig. 21) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Cross-infection*, June 2023



(Fig. 22) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Winter Olympics*, June 2023



(Fig. 23) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Helping Hand*, June 2023



(Fig. 24) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Hunger Delivery*, June 2023



(Fig. 25) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Tragedy*, June 2023



(Fig. 26) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Green Code*, June 2023

The above is the story of *Diary in a Shelter*, and I have mainly corrected the problem of using too much text by switching to more exaggerated body language expressions. For example, in Figures 20, 24, 25, and 26, there are two different characters in the same frame communicating with body language. In Figures 19, 22, the use of overlapping drawings is used to represent multiple actions made by the protagonist in a single moment. These two drawing methods limit the large areas of text that appear in the picture.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

The *Diary in a Shelter* project experimented with sequential art as a medium to communicate complex and sensitive economic and social issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Xi'an, China. Through a combination of personal narrative, non-fiction, and artistic expression, this set of sequential art pieces provide a window into the psychological experiences of individuals during the lockdown and reveal the social issues and disparities exacerbated by the pandemic.

Through a study of frames, colours, text, characters, drawing styles, and various artistic elements, the project conveys themes of complexity and sensitivity in the form of sequential art. The selection and arrangement of visual and textual elements create a layered narrative that draws the reader deeper into the intricate story. The use of frames and panel layouts directs the reader's attention and enhances the overall narrative experience. The choice of colours and drawing styles add depth and emotional resonance to the narrative of this project. The interplay of these elements provides a rich exploration of the subject matter and creates a deep connection with the audience.

My design research has shown that sequential art may have advantages in representing people's psychological experience during lockdown. Visual elements, such as facial expressions, body

language, and the environment create a more immersive and realistic experience for readers, allowing them to empathise with the characters and understand their motivations and experiences. In addition, the use of images and graphics helps to convey complex ideas and emotions that may be difficult to convey through words alone, making the story more accessible to a wide audience and providing a nuanced and complex platform for discussing the impact of the pandemic. Through the power of storytelling and artistic expression, this project aims to promote understanding and empathy among readers who have varied experiences of the pandemic.

As a record of an ordinary family's experience during the COVID-19 lockdown in Xi'an, *Diary in a Shelter* captures real-life examples from a wide range of communities and groups within Xi'an, allowing the project to be further enriched by additional art responses in a collection, providing a valuable range of insights into the psychological activities and socio-economic challenges faced during that period, as well as contributing to future measures.

Overall, *Diary in a Shelter* demonstrates the power of sequential art for storytelling and representation. It highlights the importance of using visual elements to convey complex ideas and emotions, and the potential to promote social justice and understanding. By combining multiple approaches, the set of sequential art pieces can convey the complexity and sensitivity associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an artist, from this design research project, I have learnt how to better use narrative sequential artworks to represent psychological activity and explore personal experiences, explore different storytelling techniques, character development, and the use of media. In terms of communicating with the audience, I consider I have learnt the importance to convey emotion, evoke empathy, create understanding and develop a sense of connection through visual art. It allows me to push the boundaries of my creativity and has the potential to explore new artistic styles and approaches in the future. I am hoping this project can open doors to working with people from different fields, such as writers and cultural experts to enhance my work. This interdisciplinary approach could lead to richer, and more impactful stories that could attract other creative platforms and may lead to new opportunities to further explore sequential art projects.

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List of Figures

(Fig. 1) Kendra Boileau and Rich Johnson, Cover of *COVID Chronicles: A Comics Anthology*, 2021

(Fig. 2) Sarah Pepperle et al., Cover of *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*, 2020

(Fig. 3) Ruby Jones. [Artwork in *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*]. 2020, *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*, 2020, p. 27. Digital medium.

(Fig. 4) Li Chen. [Artwork in *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*]. 2020, *Lockdown: Tales from Aotearoa*, 2020, p. 73 to 75. Digital medium.

(Fig. 5) Art Spiegelman, Cover of *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, 1996

(Fig. 6) Marjane Satrapi, Cover of *Persepolis*, 2006

(Fig. 7) Will Eisner et al., Cover of *Autobiographix (Second Edition)*, 2021

(Fig. 8) Ross Murray, Cover of *Rufus Marigold*, 2019

(Fig. 9) Ross Murray. [The first story in *Rufus Marigold*]. 2019, *Rufus Marigold*, 2019, p. 1. Digital medium.

(Fig. 10) "A Terracotta Warrior Terracotta Warriors A statue of a Tang maid The Great Mosque The ancient city gate tower of Xi'an". Ji Yuqiao & Li Yuche. Global Times. Jan 13, 2023. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202301/1283734.shtml?id=11>

(Fig. 11) Haoting Lei's photo, Group view of design results – iteration 1, May 2022

(Fig. 12) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 2, August 2022

(Fig. 13) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 3, October 2022

(Fig. 14) Haoting Lei's photo, Group view of design results - iteration 4, February 2023

(Fig. 15) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 5, March 2023

(Fig. 16) Haoting Lei's work, Group view of design results - iteration 6, May 2023

(Fig. 17) Haoting Lei's artworks, Group view of design final results (single page stories) - iteration 7 - Definitive version, June 2023

(Fig. 18) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Caged Bird*, June 2023

(Fig. 19) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Big Purchase*, June 2023

(Fig. 20) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Social Distance*, June 2023

(Fig. 21) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Cross-infection*, June 2023

(Fig. 22) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Winter Olympics*, June 2023

(Fig. 23) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Helping Hand*, June 2023

(Fig. 24) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Hunger Delivery*, June 2023

(Fig. 25) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Tragedy*, June 2023

(Fig. 26) Haoting Lei's artwork, *Green Code*, June 2023