

## *Passing By*

### **Alice Shan**

Year 12 is filled with moments of bittersweetness as we progress through our last year of High School. Therefore, this sentiment initiated my complex and challenging idea of producing a storybook, titled *Passing By*, which captures my journey of Year 12. As a visual artist and designer, I wished to formulate a unique visual language to document these mundane, but personally relevant moments, through illustrations and storytelling techniques.

I was influenced by many illustrators who had a distinctive style of storytelling. The Taiwanese illustrator, An Ping, was the most inspirational, as her storybook, *The Calling*, is both rich in conceptualisation and whimsical in style. From her detailed, pencil renderings and warm, saturated colour palettes, her artwork integrates seamlessly with her thematic storylines, which convey deep, heart-warming stories. Ping also alters scale by enlarging mundane objects, like coloured pencils, forming an interesting juxtaposition and encouraging the audience to focus on minor items. Similarly, I incorporated this technique by enlarging Minties and an origami paper crane in my storybook, symbolising how even the smallest objects can be heart-warming. Moreover, Ping's illustration style is soft and slightly transparent in certain areas, emanating a dreamy mood, which appealed to my personal aesthetic. The drawings in *Passing By* echo this style, as my colour palette is not overly saturated or solid, but rather quieter and calming. Furthermore, I was particularly influenced by Ping's raw, short stories, which are printed on a grainy, uncoated textured paper that presents her delicate pencil strokes beautifully, which I thought was a clever way of maintaining the authenticity of her thoughts and original sketches. Therefore, I specifically chose to print *Passing By* on a suitable medium called Mohawk Eggshell paper, which is an archival-quality, uncoated paper with a rougher texture, reminding me of scrapbooks and sentimental letters.

Another influential illustrator was Fan Taixi, whose symbolic use of lighting and composition captured my attention. Many of his illustrations have warm, diagonal rays of sunshine streaming in from the side of the frame, illuminating the scene and characters like golden hour, which is a very fleeting moment as it is the last hour of sunlight in the day. Similarly, I decided to incorporate warm lighting in several illustrations to add warmth and symbolise how we are also in the last part of our schooling, just like the last hour of sunshine. However, although Fan inspired me to incorporate lighting in my illustrations, I decided not to use his style of sharp, harsh lighting, as it was too confronting for my softer drawings. Instead, I decided to adapt this style by using subtle rays of sunlight, which is most noticeable in my bus illustration, to effectively communicate my visual ideas. Furthermore, Fan's daisy drawings, symbolising purity and innocence, also prompted my idea of flower symbolism and inspired me to draw the field of daisies inside the train window on the front cover. This symbolises a new beginning, which is the starting point of Year 12, and the blurry scenery reinforces how time is passing by quickly, echoing the title beneath. Likewise, the jacaranda trees on the back cover are symbolic of graduation, as jacarandas bloom around November. This sentimental metaphor also parallels the daisies on the front cover, creating a coherent theme throughout the storybook.

My illustrations were also influenced by the Singaporean artist, PC Lim, whose use of borders are soft and complement their illustrations fluently. They use geometric, neat edges in some drawings, but they also use freeform, organic borders in other illustrations. I preferred the latter, as it reminds me of colouring outside the lines as a child, and emanates a feeling of freedom. In *Passing By*, the brushstrokes of all illustrations extend past the pencil outlines, except for the covers. I chose to keep the train windows on the covers geometric to maintain their structures, though they are still softened with rounded corners to stay coherent with the pages. This decision was made to reduce the audience's visual fatigue from constantly looking at perfectly straight lines and sharp corners, and it is a reminder that small, imperfect moments are the most precious.

To effectively communicate my visual ideas and fulfil my complex and challenging brief, I delved into various technologies. As I wanted to print my storybook, my files needed to be digital, but by presenting my text using digital fonts, I discovered that authenticity was lost, and my sentiments were not communicated accurately. Upon this discerning evaluation of the varying effects of fonts and handwriting, I discovered that handwritten texts held more emotion and personality. I also made this connection through Ping's short stories, where she handwrote her text. Therefore, to maintain my personal aesthetic, I handwrote my text within Procreate, which is the iPad app I used for my illustrations. This was an appropriate use of media and technologies, as it precisely conveyed my emotions in this personally relevant story. Throughout the development of my practical, my personal aesthetic has been continually refined, as I now have a collection of Procreate brushes which I have identified as my own visual language. This has helped my illustrations stay consistent and has enabled me to establish a distinct and personal style.

Overall, I feel that my brief was fulfilled to a high standard, as *Passing By* effectively communicates my personally relevant visual ideas through its storyline and illustrations. From the inspiration of illustrators and storytellers, my ability to convey a story with depth and clarity improved significantly. I was also able to extend my technological skills using Procreate and BookWright, which is the program I used to format my storybook, subsequently allowing it to be printed and published. Moreover, I incorporated various themes and ideas in *Passing By* to evoke nostalgia and bittersweetness from my target audience, which is my graduating year level, allowing them to relate to this shared story. Although this process was challenging, I am happy that it has enabled me to solidify my personal aesthetic and convey my message through a sophisticated and heart-warming way.