

## Telling My Story Through Visual Images Guided by Arnheim's Visual Thinking

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The design project was guided by Rudolf Arnheim's two books: *Visual thinking* (1969) and *Art and visual perception: A psychology of the creative eye* (1974). Unlike Descartes, who defined man as its existence by ability to reason, Arnheim noted that creating and communicating with visual images is another essence of human nature (1969). Both reasoning and imagining with senses are important cognitive abilities and are inseparable. To solve a problem, human mind not only goes through reasoning process with given information, but also should go beyond using visual imagination with direct sensory.

According to Arnheim (1969, 1974), visual images (e.g., drawing) are associated with feelings and communicate things that language could not precisely. Conceptualizing the inner dialogue as a visual archetype began with Arnheim's image of visual shorthand – the drawing of smooth vs. jagged shapes. Numerous design sketches were created utilizing his concept to communicate my journey in dealing with medication and eventual recovery. Visual shorthand became a means for me to translate the incommunicable emotions I dealt with into unique silhouettes (see Figure 1). For the first look illustrated I played with the exaggeration of the smooth line and allowed for it to evolve and take shape. The smooth line to shape the sleeve grows bigger as it is followed up the arm, reflecting on the comfort an individual will find in taking a medication but a reminder that overtime amore is needed to achieve that same effect.

My design project, titled 'Adverse reaction', was inspired by a self-awareness awakening amidst the turbulence of chemical imbalances in the mind and how the toxicity of prescribed medication can intercept personal growth in the process of treatment. I use my design as a platform to discuss the feelings or lack thereof that occur while on prescribed medications, and how they might act adversely when other substances are involved or taken away. Creating a space for this topic to be acknowledged has allowed an opportunity to find true healing for myself and the others that deal with health issues and medications because it addresses feelings that can be hard to otherwise articulate.

To embody my vision, I created a mixed media illustration (see Figure 2). The figure is done in Micron felt-tip pen to achieve fine, smooth linework that paralleled the lines in visual shorthand. Prismacolor blending markers were used to color fill and to allow colors to bleed together, creating a unique palette. Observing the colors blend is to witness a small-scale chemical reaction in the way the pigments separate and form together. On the top half, a single puffer sleeve tapers down the arm while latching at the neck; under it a hooded crop top clings to the skin, covering most of the head and all of the neck. The compression fabric makes for a tight

constricting squeeze on the figure, while the puffer sleeve serves as a protective barrier. Adorning the bottom half of the body, compression leggings are concealed by a tiered puffer skirt that begins at the waist and ends at the ankles. The idea I wanted to convey with this garment is although outwardly the clothing would appear to be comfortable and protected, inside there is something more pressing going on, something underneath the layers of what appears to be good. Once the tactile portion of illustration was complete, I imported the image into the computer to create a backdrop to conceptualize the piece's narrative. An image I took of pill bottles was tuned in Adobe Photoshop and made flat so that the bottles became silhouettes of their original form. The white silhouette positioned over black signifies the sort of designed effect and side-effect of prescription medicine – the good effects that are inseparable from the inevitable negative.

Visual images can be instrumental to communicate what an individual wants to express that words cannot. When individuals struggle to understand and articulate what they experience, the loss for words can further withhold an individual from the social interactions they depends on. This design process leads to a new awareness of how visual images can speak and help individuals to communicate without a language.

Figure 1.

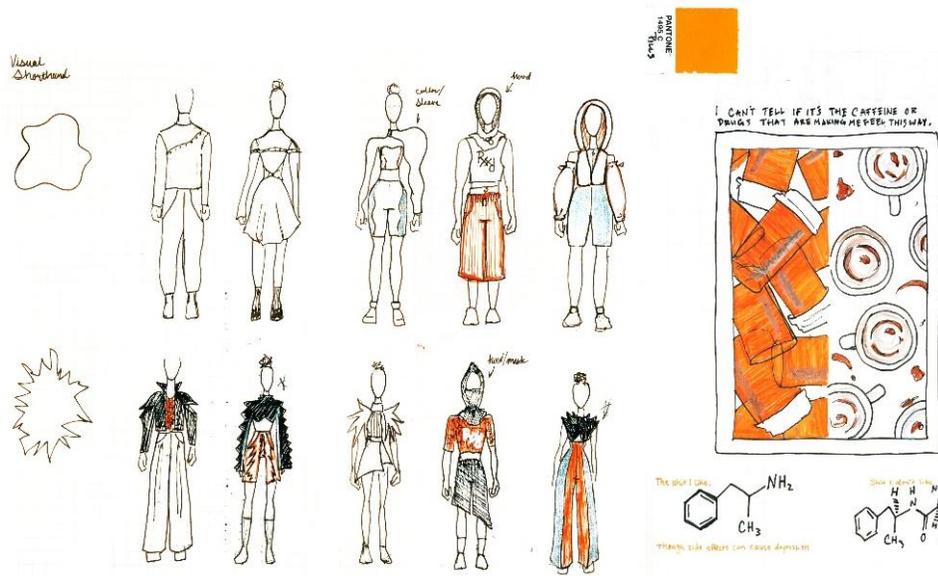


Figure 2.

