Abstract

"RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER" BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE:

A VISUAL INTERPRETATION

by

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APRIL, 2010

Chair: JOAN MANSFIELD
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This document is in support of my thesis work, a series of illustrative images. By allowing

readers a closer look into my creative as well as technical processes, I hope to provide a guide to

my visual artwork. I will describe the process of how I created the series of images and the

environment in which they existed. My thesis exhibition consists of a visual interpretation of

Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, "Rappaccini's Daughter" dated 1894. The two modes of

visual expression I have employed are digital illustration and installation. Digital illustration is a

broad term that references the use of one or more digital tools to create images. Installation is a

way of creating a focus on objects and their placement within a specific space. The intent of my

thesis exhibition was to marry the final illustrations with an installation of my studio source

materials as well as objects of inspiration for the final illustrations.

"RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER" BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE:

A VISUAL INTERPRETATION

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES

"RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER" BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE:

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INTRODUCTION

I first read "Rappaccini's Daughter" in the third grade and was reminded of the story when I traveled to Italy in the summer of 2008. "Rappaccini's Daughter" centers around themes of romance, danger, and tragic consequences. These are also the most common themes in my sketchbooks and my personal work. The images that would eventually appear in my thesis exhibition began as a series of collages that I composed from sections of my sketchbook pages. One of the more elaborate drawings from my Italy sketchbook was of a couple with a personified flower between them. The strange flower between the two figures seemed to interact with each of them and it's presence was ominous and imposing. The flower also seemed personified like a character playing an active role in the impending drama between the two figures. This was the central image that inspired my use of "Rappaccini's Daughter" as subject matter for my thesis exhibition.

STORY SYNOPSIS

"Rappaccini's Daughter" is a short story written by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1894 and set in medieval Padua, Italy. The story revolves around Beatrice Rappaccini, the beautiful, kind, and innocent young daughter of the infamous scientist Signor Giacomo Rappaccini. She has been isolated from all culture, civilization and friendship by her father's diabolic understanding of botanical poisons and has become the victim of his concentrated research. Throughout his daughter's removed and fragile life, Signor Rappaccini has raised a number of atypical poisonous plants in blind pursuit of scientific knowledge. Signor Rappaccini infected his daughter with poison so that her very touch will be fatal to all others.

Beatrice experiences a singular moment of pleasure when she falls passionately and innocently in love with a young science student, Giovanni Guasconti. Giovanni is renting an upstairs room that overlooks the garden that Beatrice tends for her father. Giovanni witnesses that Beatrice's touch and breath are both deadly to lizards, insects and flowers raised elsewhere. In spite of this knowledge he becomes infatuated with her beauty and charm. Beatrice and Giovanni share several emotionally intimate exchanges in the garden. However, physical contact is not made, until one day when Beatrice grabs Giovanni to prevent him from touching a poisonous flower, leaving a painful imprint upon his arm. Giovanni soon becomes aware that he too has become poisonous and that a life with Beatrice will come at the expense of any interaction with the outside world. In a fit of anger Giovanni accuses Beatrice of infecting him. His callousness, joined with her father's experiment, destroy the young woman and she dies tragically.

MY IMAGES INSPIRED BY THIS STORY

Rappaccini's garden is the most significant location in "Rappaccini's Daughter." This is apparent in my twenty-six final illustrations as only three of these resulting images were completely devoid of botanical elements. A few of the plants incorporated into the garden images were drawn from actual plants; some combined parts of several plants, while others were completely imagined. I often worked this way moving back and forth between drawing from source materials and filling in with decorative and intuitively elaborated forms. Several of my completed images contained anatomical drawings of human hearts, uprooted and disjointed plant imagery, snakes, spiders, and skulls which allude to impending doom. Their use creates an unexpected juxtaposition to a refined and feminine color palette.

The source for the story's most integral and venomous flower was a sketch I had done in Italy of a roadside weed that for me seemed to possess an otherworldly quality. This quality made it an appropriate visual reference for representing Professor Rappaccini's toxic and botanical abomination. In the final images I resisted the urge to anthropomorphize this flower, which would become like a character in its role moving the plot forward. The flower which Professor Rappaccini conceived, subjected the world to and irrevocably joined to his ill-fated daughter is the same flower, which so affected all involved, causing Hawthorne's cast of characters to cycle through drama and chaos and spiral toward their eventual demise.

Gardens are constantly in flux. They are changeable places with serpentine vines, repeating elements and organic flowing lines. The intensely layered visual information I included in my garden images also hint at the layers of meaning and moral complexity of the story. The use of repeating elements from various drawings expedited the process and worked equally well to make the garden images read as various views of the same space and to connect the separate images to one another as a set.

My biggest challenge in completing these images was depicting characters of different ages in a way that would be unique, yet bear my personal style. Making the characters consistently recognizable from image to image was also a challenge. Both challenges required me to be innovative and analytical. The use of a unified color scheme in the completed series of images also assisted in the creation of a cohesive body of work

REPRESENTATION: CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGES

From the pages of my sketchbook, I began tagging favorite and relevant images. I then photocopied the tagged pages and collaged cut pieces of the photocopies back together to create compositions that were either direct scenes from, or my own emotional and creative responses to "Rappaccini's Daughter."

After I had the collages composed to my satisfaction, I began the process of digitally adjusting value and color by adding areas of color behind the previously collaged images. The playful collages were populated by the stylized figures that characterize my illustration work. To hone the images further, I taped a large sheet of tracing paper on top of each collage and traced out the areas that I intended to fill with color. I developed a method of combining many sections of color on one page of tracing paper. Then I traced each image, knowing all the while that though I intended sections to be certain colors and values, I could change them once they were fully digitized. This process is described in detail in the section that follows.

I scanned each photocopied collage and each tracing into Photoshop. I found tabloid size paper (eleven by seventeen inches) to be large enough to house a complex collage and small enough to be manageable. Additionally, this size format fit comfortably on the Epson 10000XL scanner I was using to complete the next step. Scanning is a process of collecting digital information about a physical object or image. Much like a camera, a scanner makes an image based on light and information placed in front of it. Cameras however are usually kept still while their subjects can move and a scanner has a

moving band that collects close and detailed information. Scanners are also specifically designed to make digital images of two-dimensional objects.

The scanner was set at a resolution of five hundred dots per inch (500 dpi). I knew this high resolution would result in rather large image files and that while they would be less convenient to open, store, and handle, the large files would allow more options later in cropping as well as in the size they could be successfully printed. When I use the term "line art," I am referring to the outlines of the collaged material, which are eventually the top Layer. When I refer to "fills" or "fill Layers" I am referencing the areas that will visually fill specific sections of the line art later adding clarity. Once the collaged images and tracing paper fill Layers were all scanned and opened in Photoshop, I selected the areas that I intended to keep using the "select similar" tool and deleted the areas I wanted to become invisible by selecting and deleting inverse sections. I then stacked the aforementioned images on Layers according to the process that is detailed in the following section.

IMAGES OF PROCESS: PHYSICAL COLLAGE

Figure 1

The black and white collage, which appears in PROCESS: DIGITALLY COLORING LINE ART
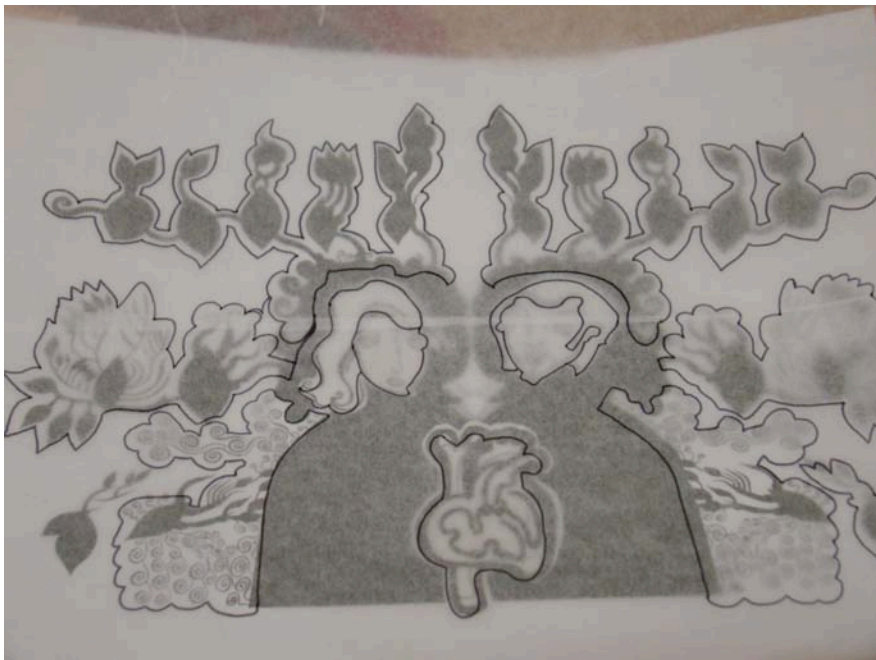

Figure 2

The same collage with tracing paper overlay, which contains outlined areas

Figure 3

The collage and tracing paper overlay shown separately

Figure 4

Cutouts of photocopies from sketchbook pages ready to be collaged

Figure 5
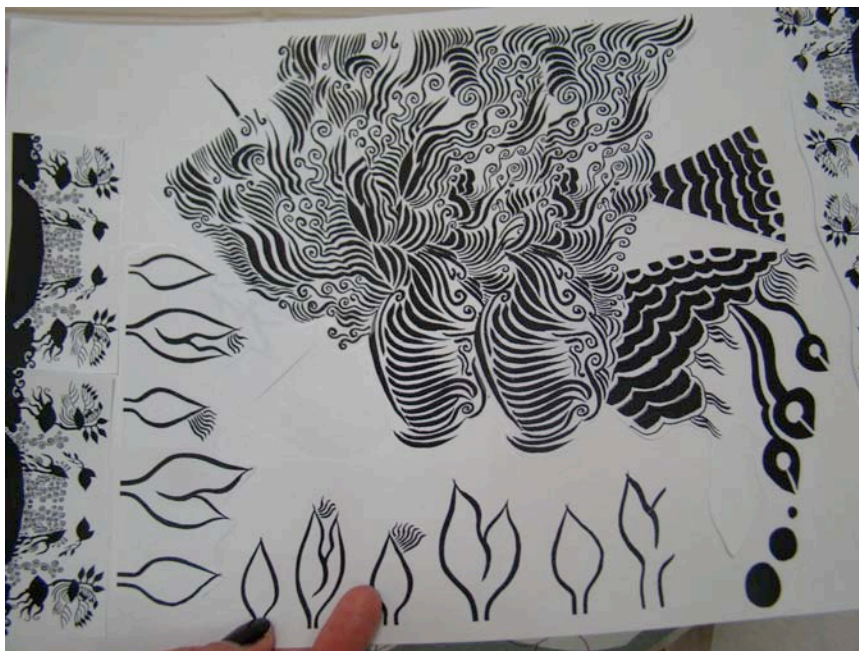
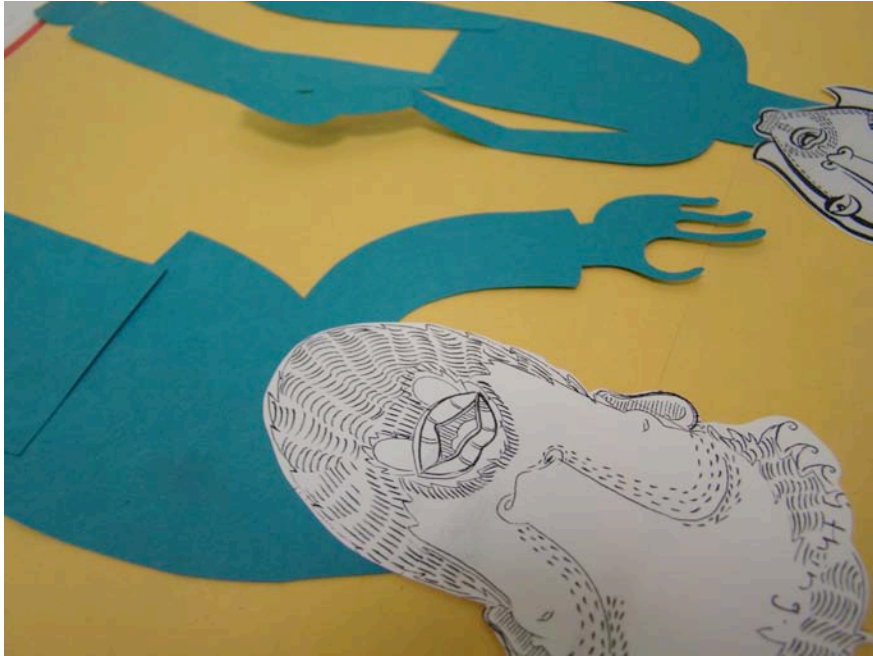Photocopied cutouts applied to red tabloid size paper

Figure 6

Photocopied elements combined on a page

Figure 7

A detail of an image of Baglioni and Giovanni (Both character faces are photocopied and their bodies cut from colored paper.)

Figure 8

These tracings would become the "fill Layers" behind the image of bottles from Rappaccini's laboratory
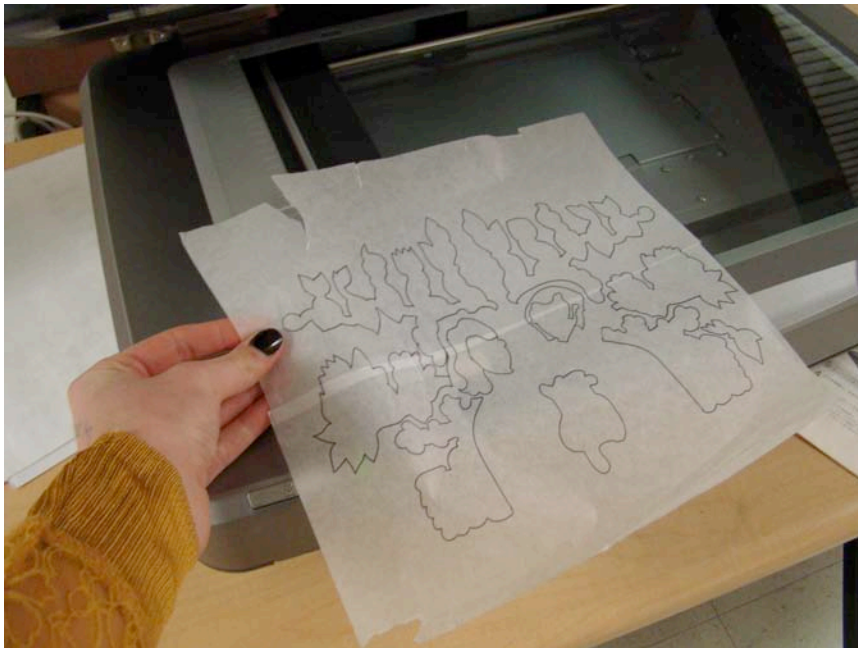
Figure 9

Placing a tracing paper overlay "fill Layer" on the scanner bed
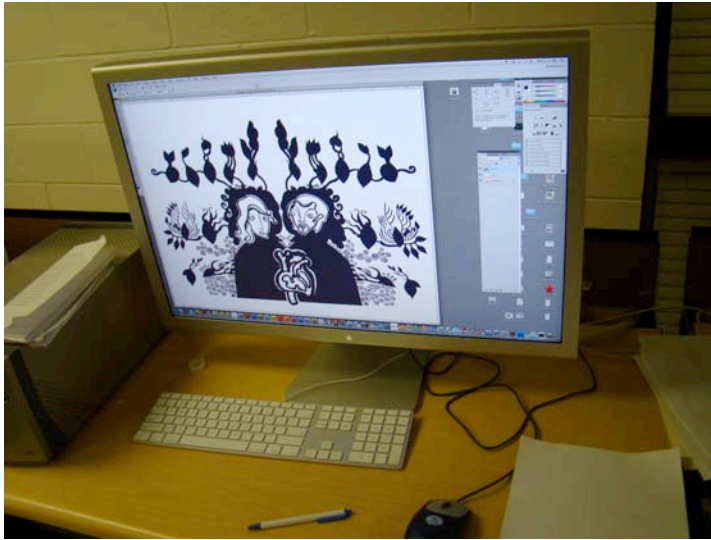
Figure 10

The workspace where I applied digital color

PROCESS: DIGITALLY COLORING LINE ART

The scanner I used to apply digital color to linear images is a thirteen by nineteen inch

Epson 1000XL. I placed the prepared line art face down on the scanner bed and used the

scanner's edge to ensure that it was straight. I opened Photoshop and navigated to FILE,

then to IMPORT, selected Epson Expression 10000XL, and changed the scanner settings

to 500dpi and 24-bit color. I then adjusted the marquee and clicked the SCAN button as

in Figure 11. Figure 12 is a detail of Figure 11.
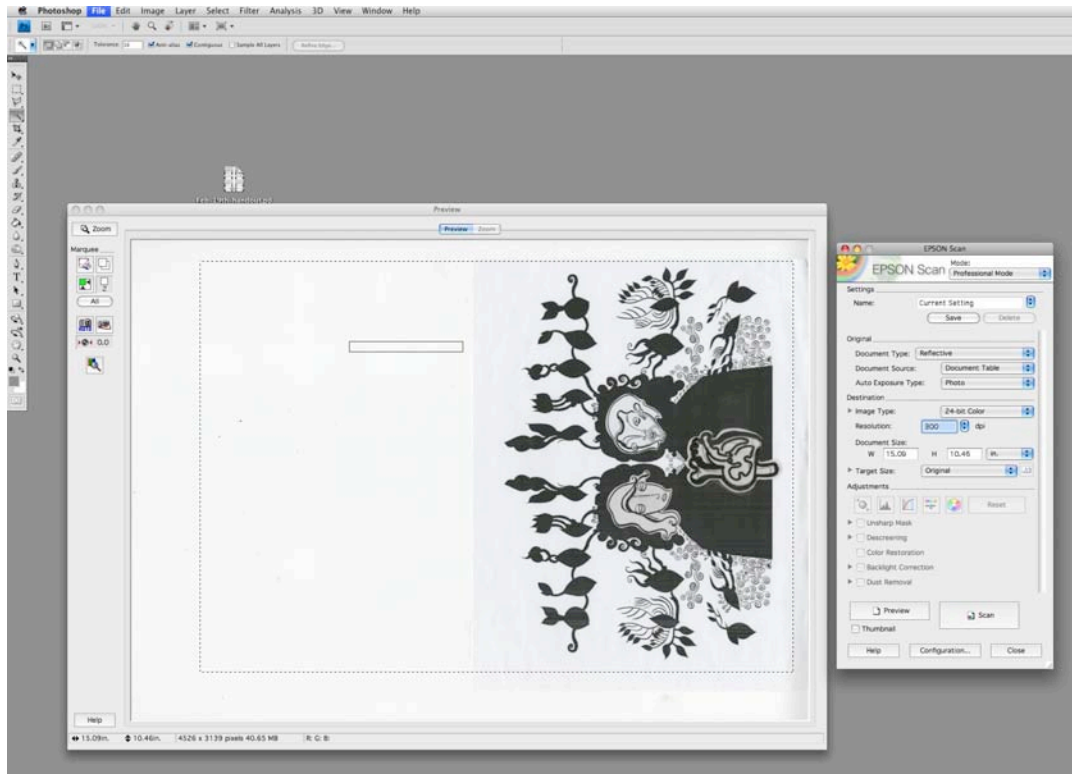
Fig. 11
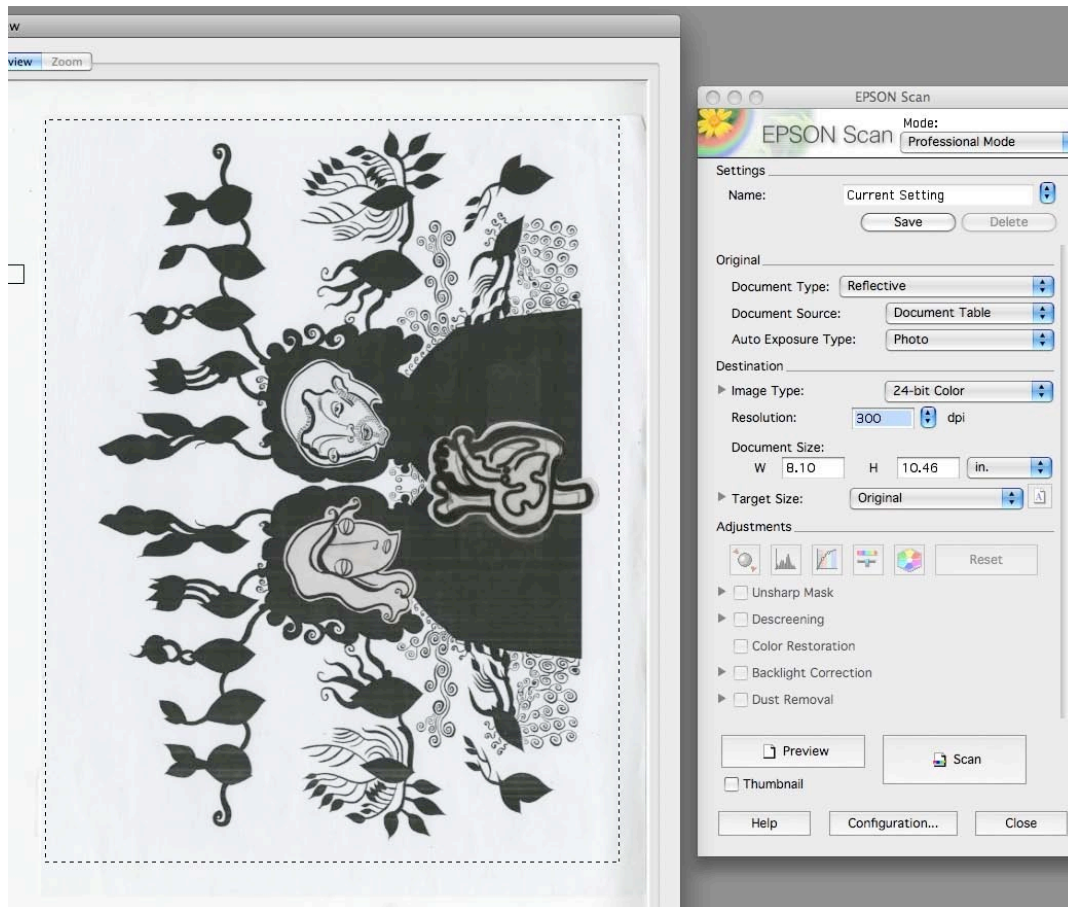
Fig. 12

I rotated the image-using IMAGE, IMAGE ROTATION, 90 degrees CW. I zoomed in

using MAGNIFYING GLASS, to see the actual pixels at 100%.

Fig. 13

I unchecked CONTIGUOUS (un-checking contiguous ensured that all related areas would be selected rather than just those areas that were touching one another). While zoomed in, I selected the line art using the MAGIC WAND tool. I held down the SHIFT key while clicking on additional areas of line art, which needed to be added to the selection. I then used the key command APPLE zero to view the entire image in the window checking that all necessary line art was included in the selection.

Fig. 14

I changed the foreground color to a "guide color" (a bright color) that does not exist

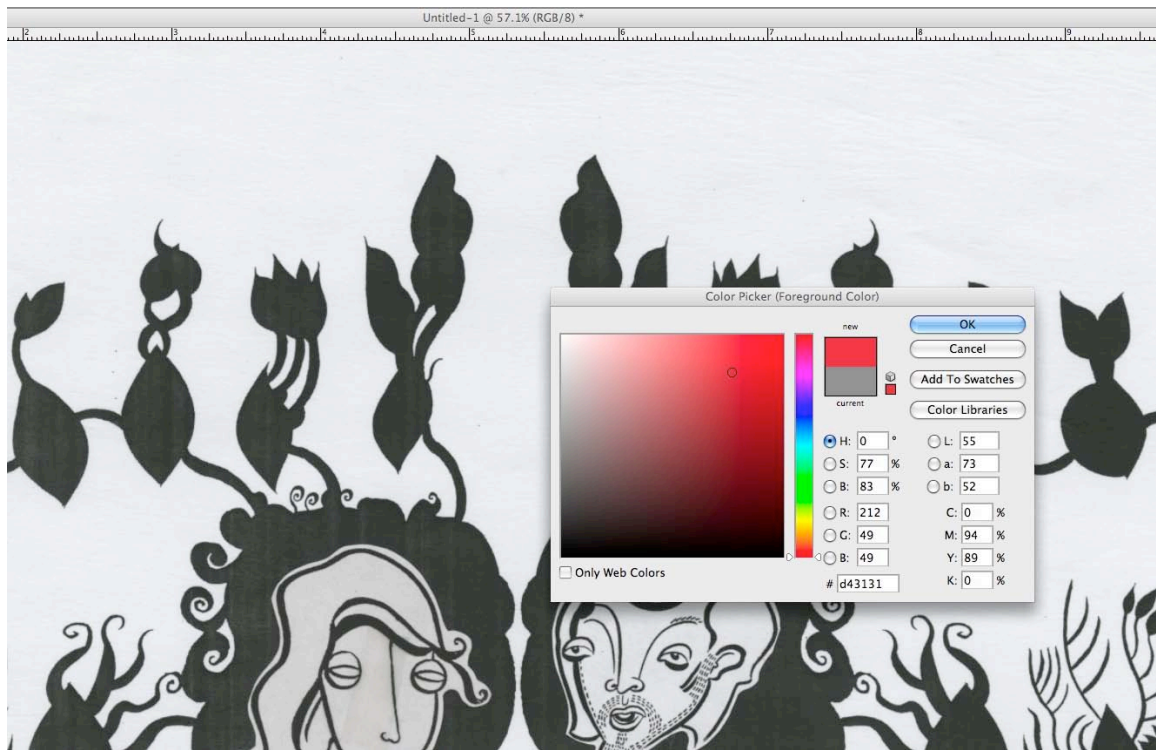elsewhere in the image as seen in the Color Picker in Figure 15.

Fig. 15

Next I navigated to EDIT, FILL and selected USE: FOREGROUND COLOR. I made

sure that at this step the blending mode was set on normal and opacity was set at 100%.

The "line art" had now been changed to the red guide color as is visible in Figure 16.

Fig. 16

Some of the line art was not included, as seen in Figure 16; so I held down SHIFT key and used the MAGIC WAND tool to add this to the selection. Figure 17 is a detail of Figure 16.

Fig. 17

In Figure 18 all of the intended line art areas are filled.

Fig. 18

Before clicking elsewhere I selected the inverse and deleted it. Then I selected the inverse once more and copied it. This copied information (shown in red in Figure 19) is the actual line art.
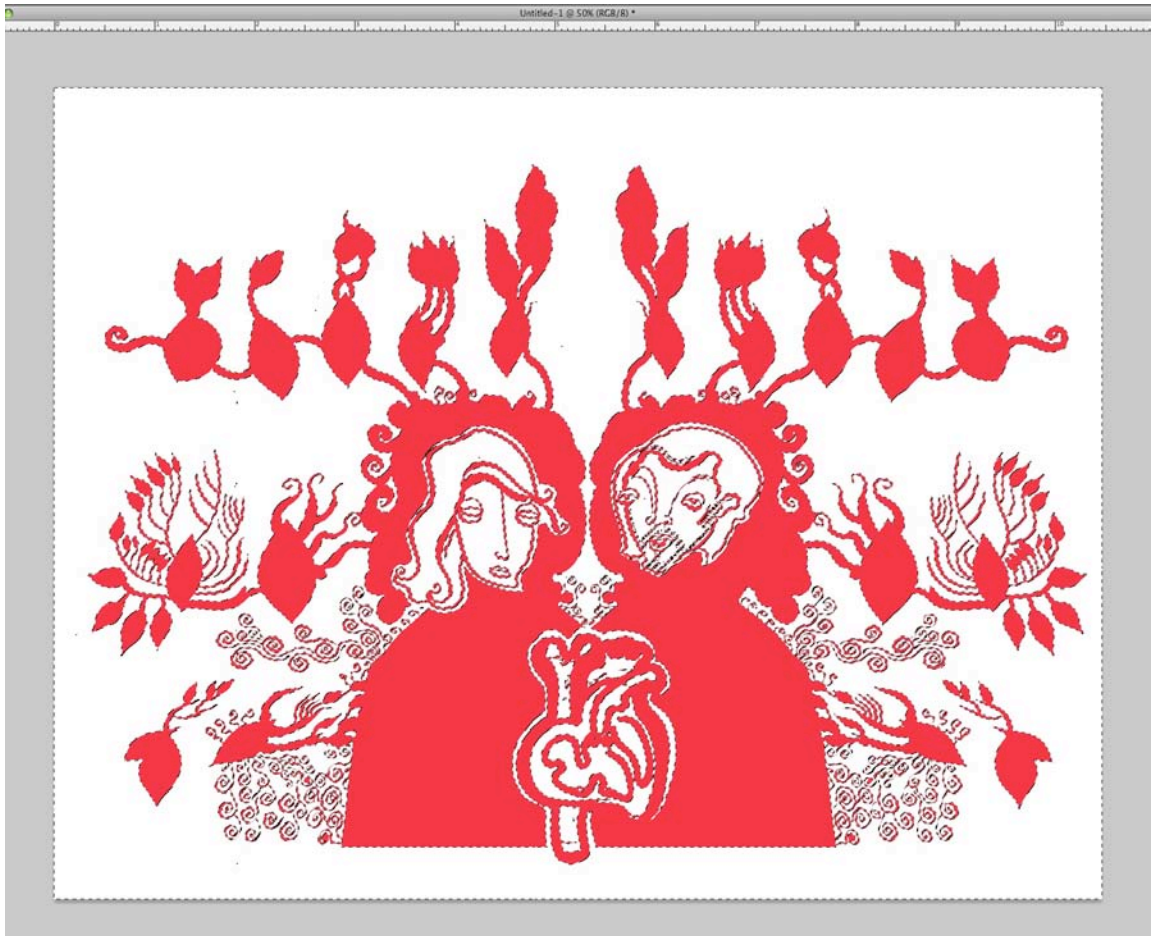

Fig. 19

I then created two new Layers by clicking on the new Layer button shown in the center of
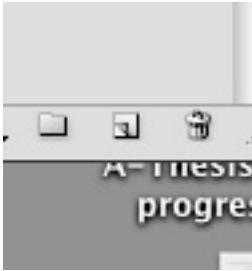
Figure 20.

Fig. 20

I clicked on Layer two, pasted the copied information (the line art), and used the MAGIC

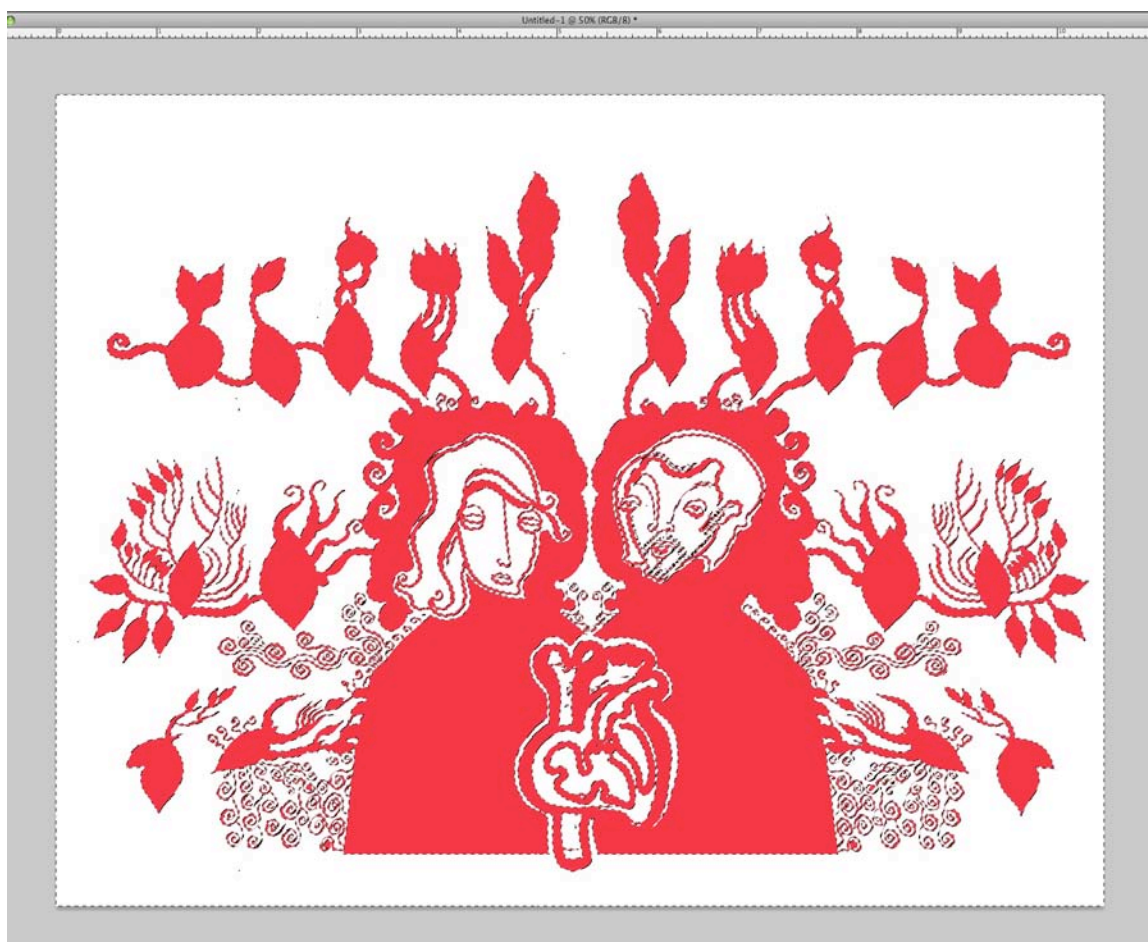WAND to click on the line art (which is now red).

Fig. 21

I changed the foreground color to the desired final line art color and filled the selection with this color using EDIT, FILL, USE: FOREGROUND COLOR. In Figure 22 the line art has been changed to the desired final color.

Fig. 22

In Figure 23, I scanned the tracing paper fill layer using FILE, IMPORT Epson

Expression 10000 XL. I used the same size marquee and the same scanner settings used
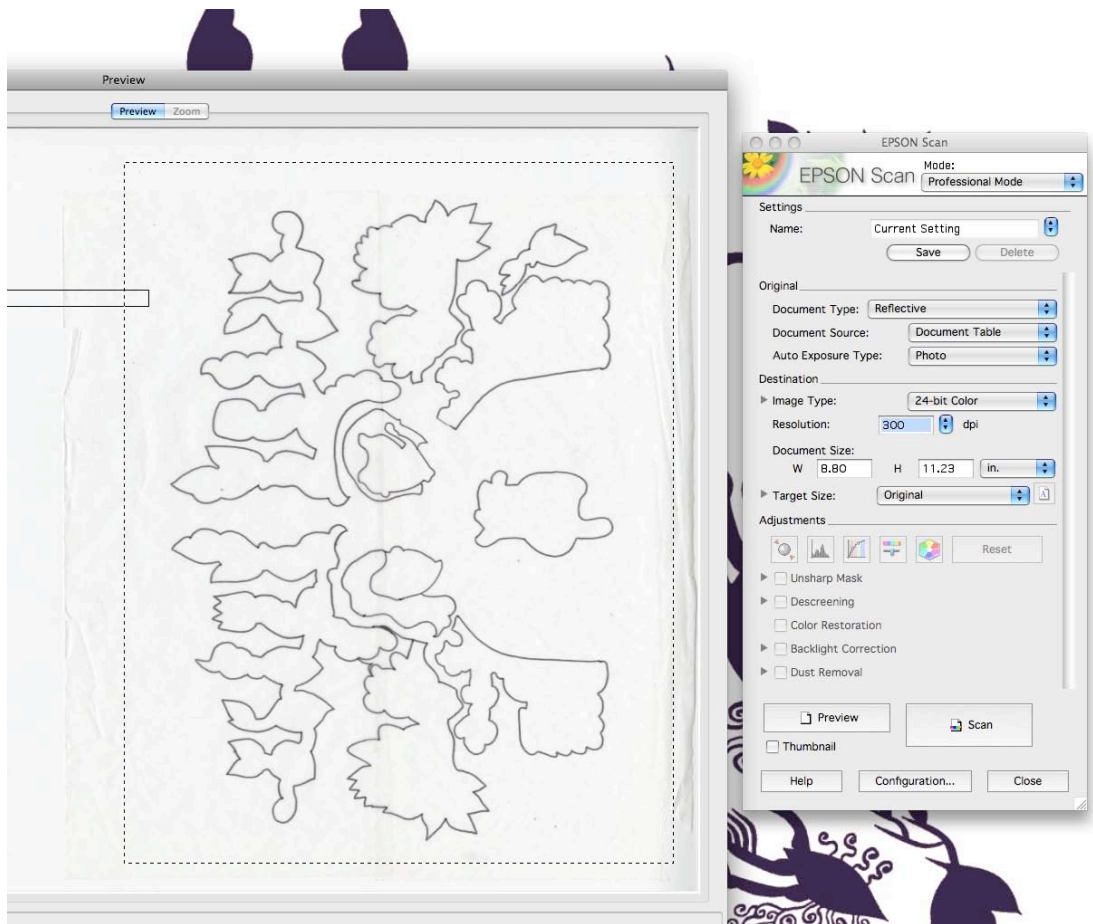
previously to scan the line art.

Fig. 23

I selected the lines and deleted the inverse as I did with the line art. Once again using a bright color works best at this stage.
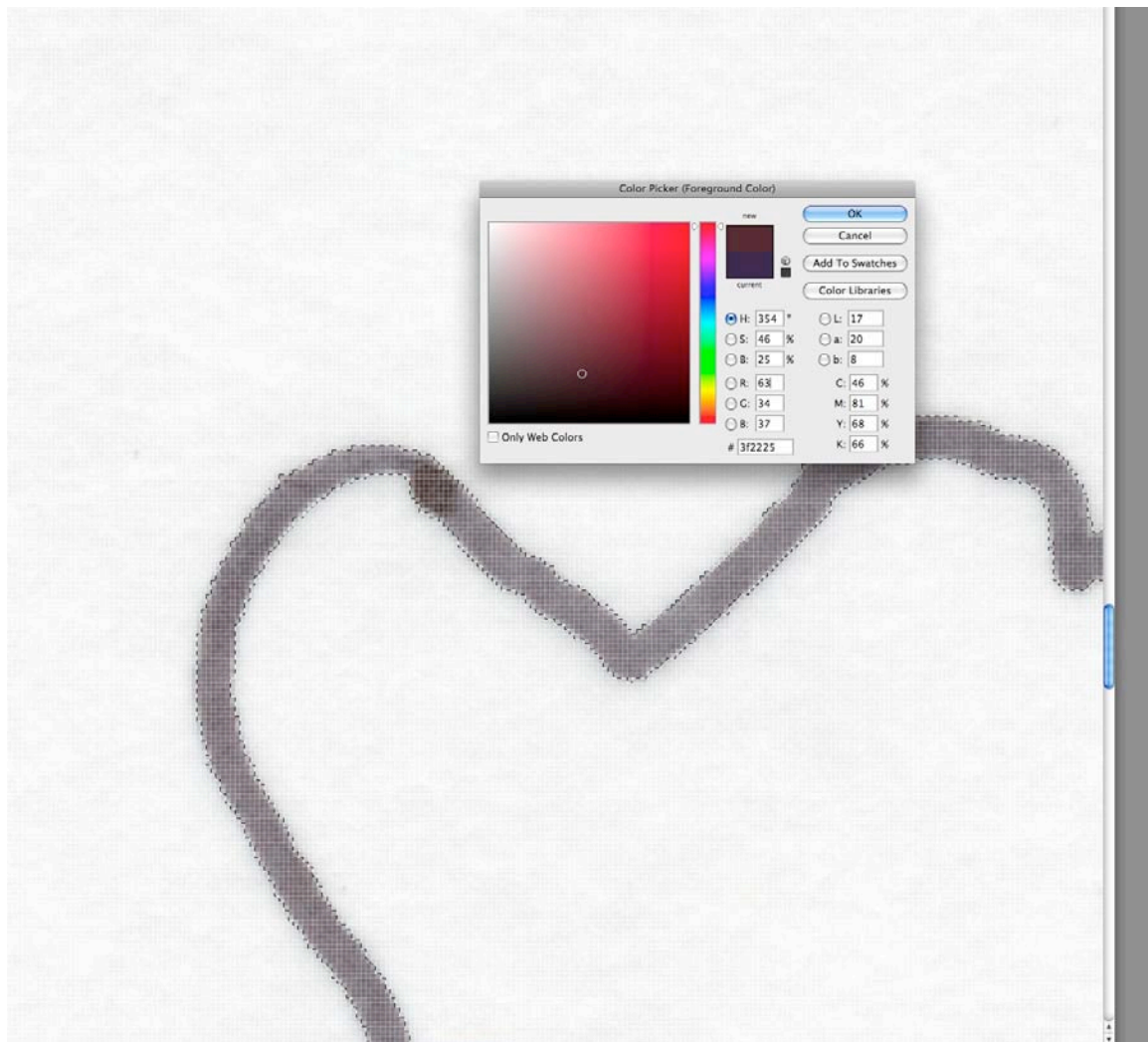

Fig. 24

At this time I also checked to be sure all lines intended to connect were in fact connected. The connections do in fact meet as seen in Figure 25.

Fig. 25

Under the SELECTION bar I chose DESELECT. I selected the MAGIC WAND tool and checked the box marked CONTIGUOUS. Contiguous settings deal with whether only sections that touch are selected rather than all sections within a range. Then I selected and filled individual areas with color.
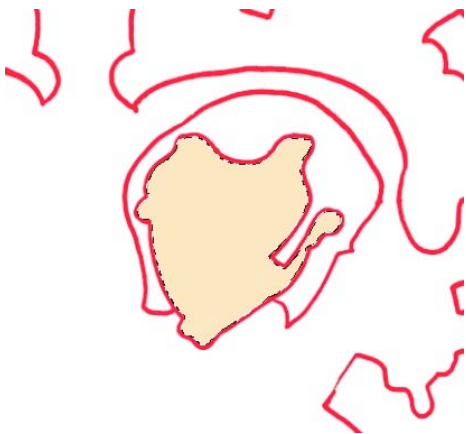
Fig. 26

Fig. 27

I also filled the remaining outlines (shown in Figures 26-28 in red) with colors intended

for the final image. Depending on the situation, I chose to use the EYEDROPPER tool to

pick up a color. Or I would choose to make note of, copy, and paste a specific Pantone

color to replicate a previously used color. I also changed the tolerance (sensitivity of the

magic wand tool) as needed to affect how much information the MAGIC WAND tool

was picking up.

Fig. 28

I wanted to make the fill areas behind the plants and around the character heads a pale

creamy skin tone that was close in value to the white. I filled the surrounding area with

bright blue (a color that will not end up in my final image) to avoid selecting the
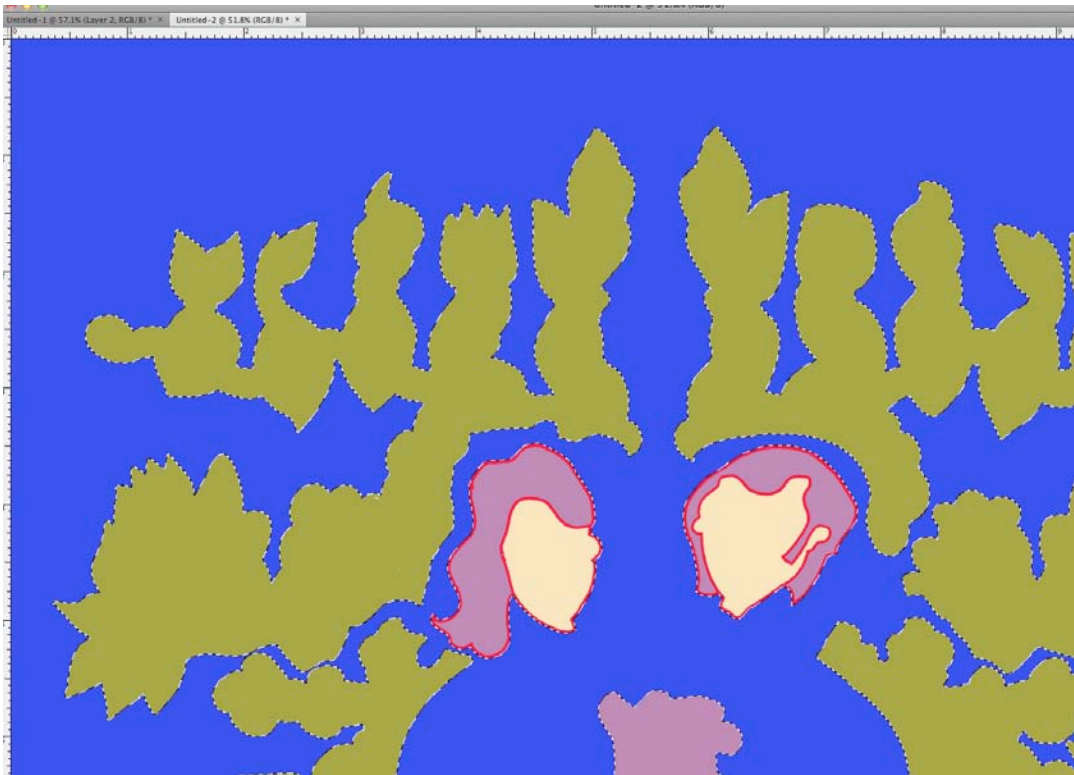
background with these shapes later.

Fig. 29

In Figure 30 I have changed the green plant shapes to the same cream color used for the

faces and selected the red outline color to be filled with the cream color as well. Figure
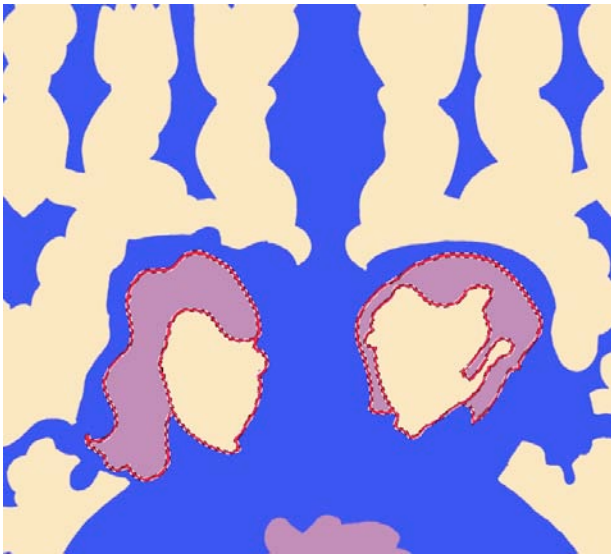
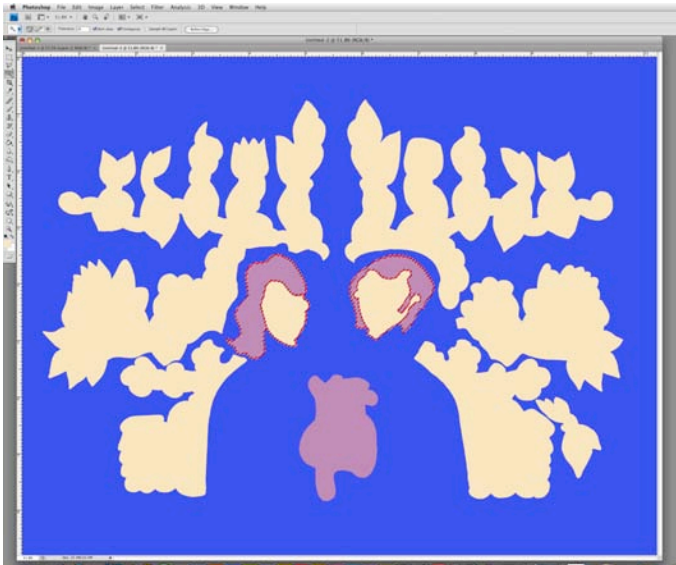30 is a detail of Figure 31.

Fig. 30

Fig. 31

I filled the background area (shown in Figure 30 in blue) with the green that would be
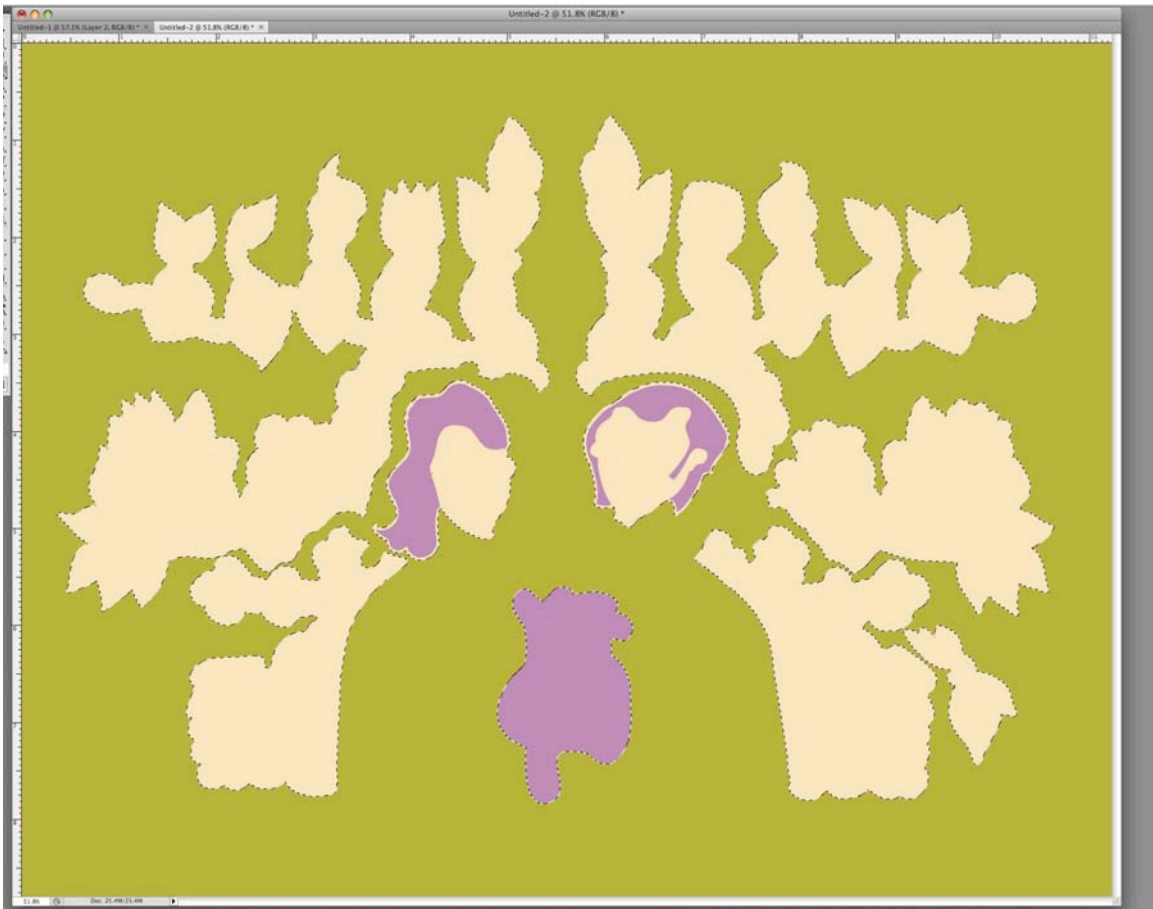
used in the final image.

Fig. 32

Next I zoomed in to view the actual pixels at 100% and checked that all guide colored

sections were filled. In Figure 33, I located a remaining speck of the red guide color. I

turned the tolerance down to 1 or 2, and still using the magic wand tool, I clicked this

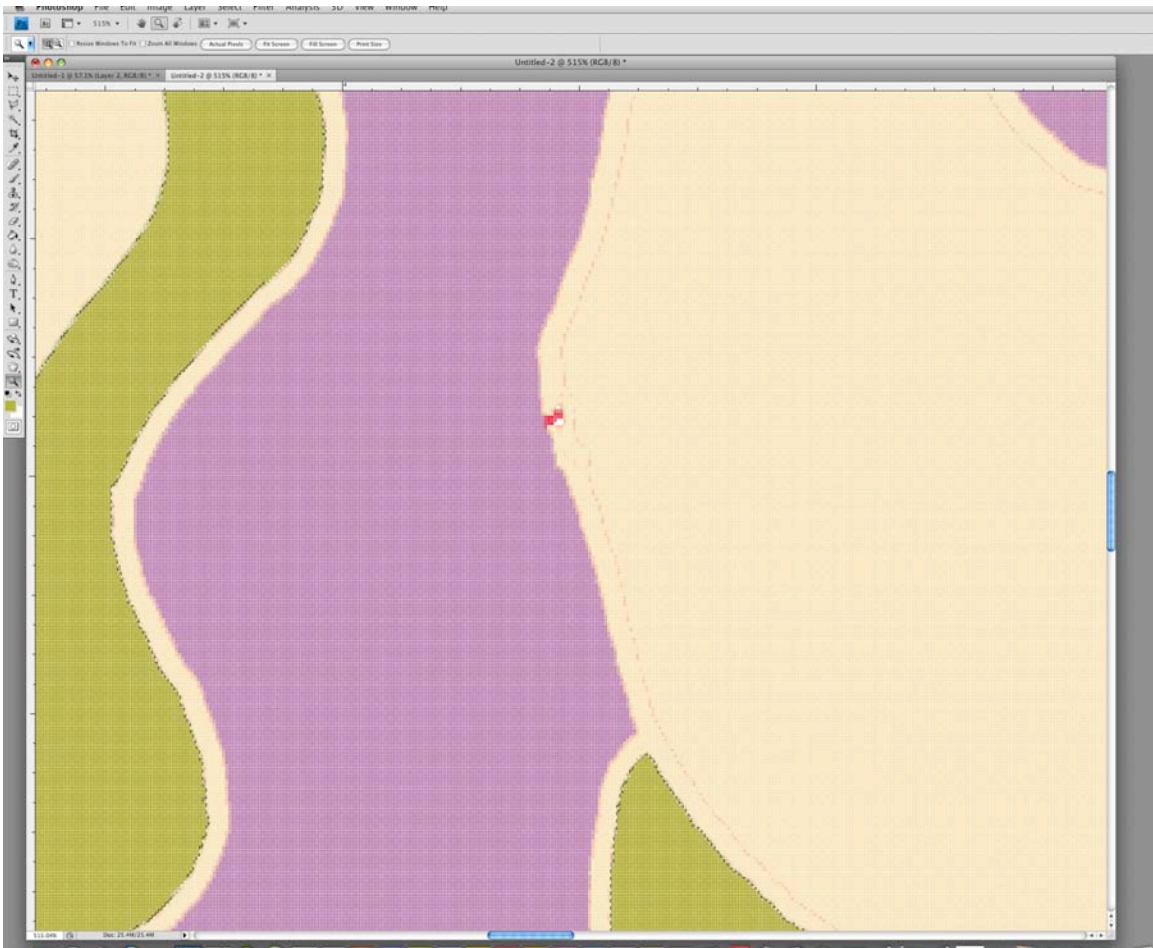speck as well as any similar flaws and filled it with the intended color.

Fig. 33

In Figure 34 all of the bright blue and red guide colored sections are filled with colors
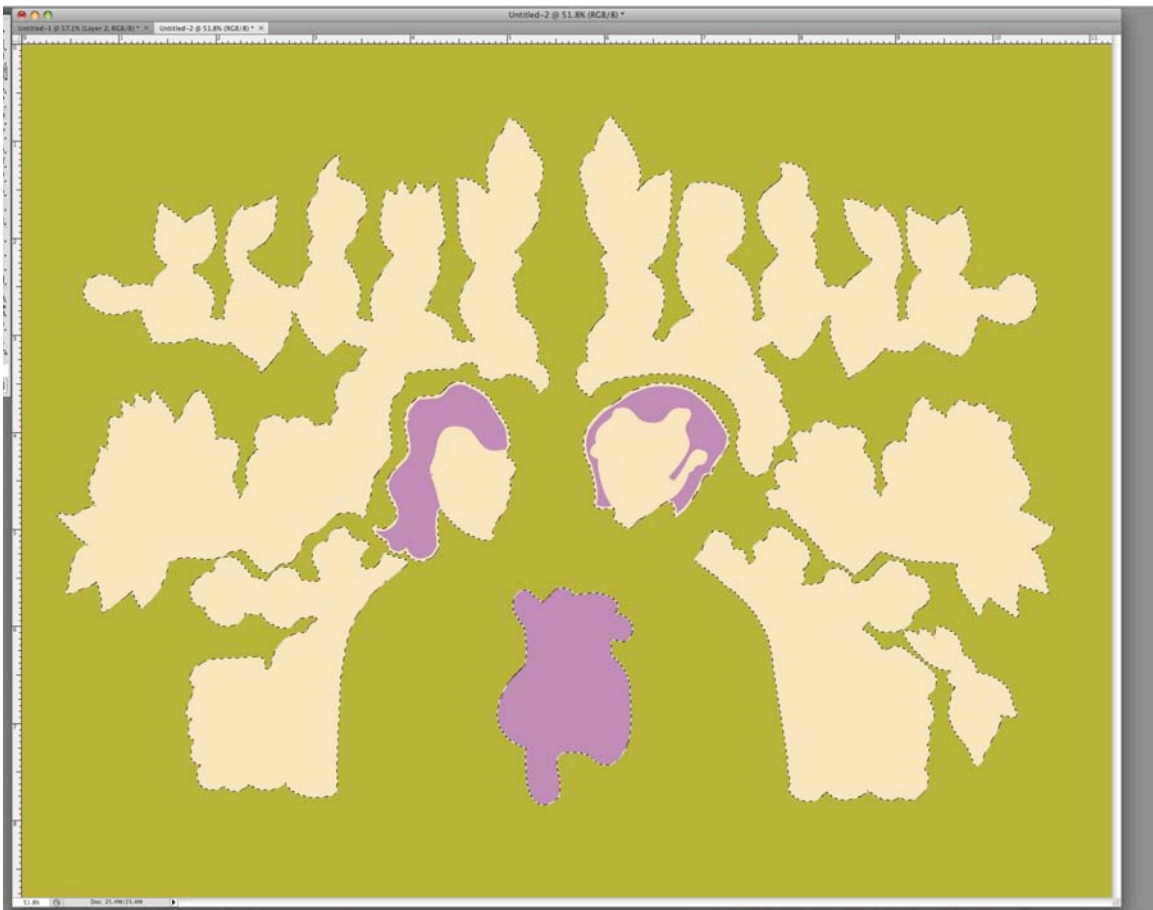that will exist in the final image.

Fig. 34

I saved the image to the desktop as a Photoshop file titled "FILL Layer." I clicked back

on the first scan, which was the prepared line art document and saved it as a Photoshop

file titled "LINE Layer." The "LINE Layer" Photoshop file is shown in Figure 35.

Fig. 35

I separated the two files, then clicked on Layer 2 of the file titled "LINE Layer." The

dark colored line art was still selected. Within the "FILL Layer" file, I select Layer 1

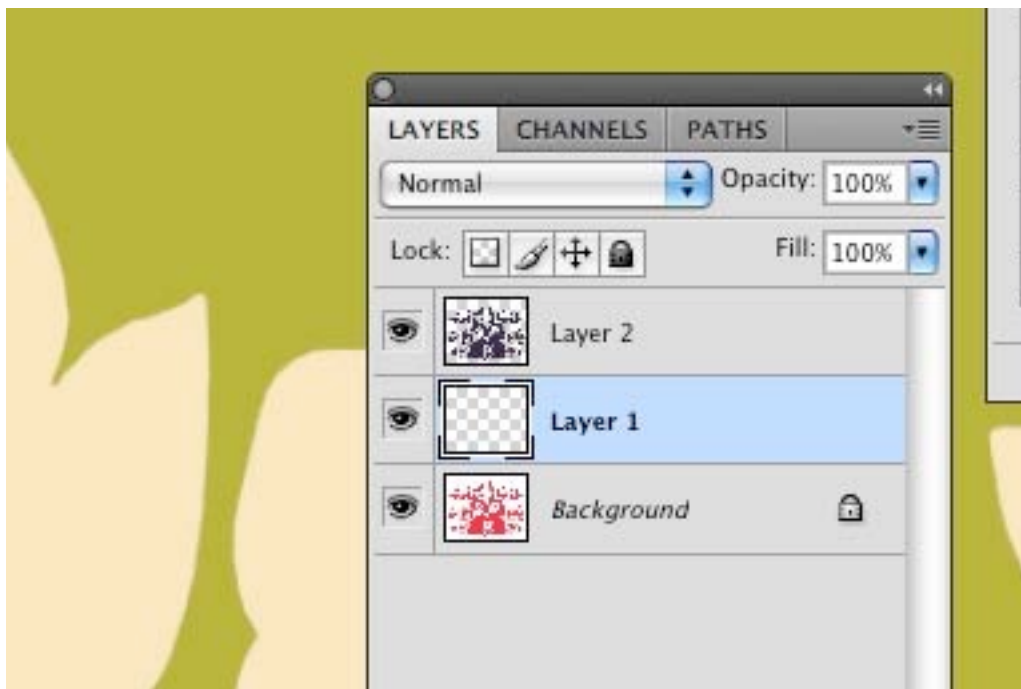(shown in Figure 36 between background and Layer 2).

Fig. 36

I clicked back on the "fill Layer" file. Created a new Layer (Layer 1). On the Background

Layer, I selected all and copied this selection and pasted it onto Layer 1.
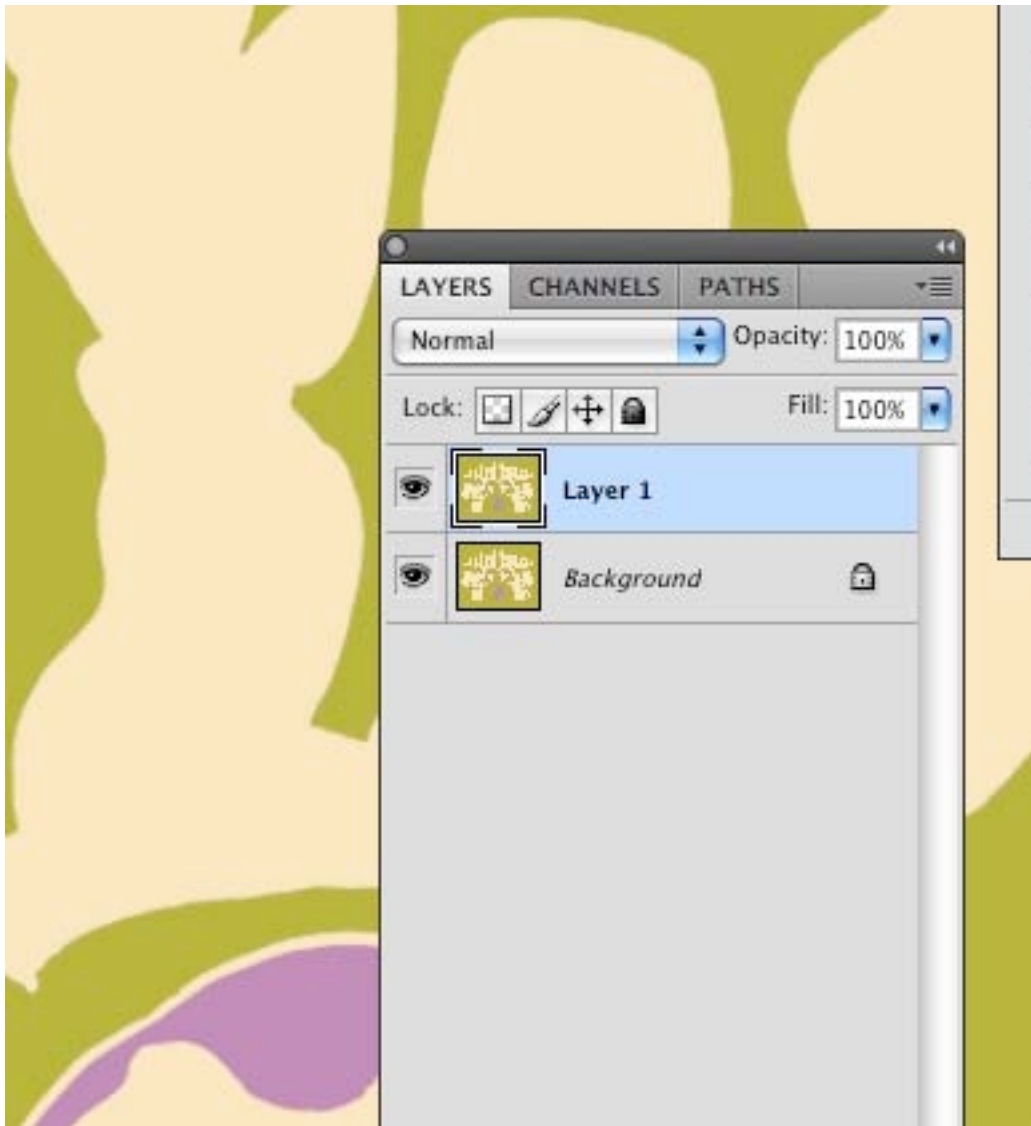
Fig. 37

As seen in Figure 37, Layer 1 is still selected. Using the arrow tool, I dragged Layer 1 from the "FILL Layer" file into the "LINE Layer" file. At this time the Layer was assigned the name Layer 3.
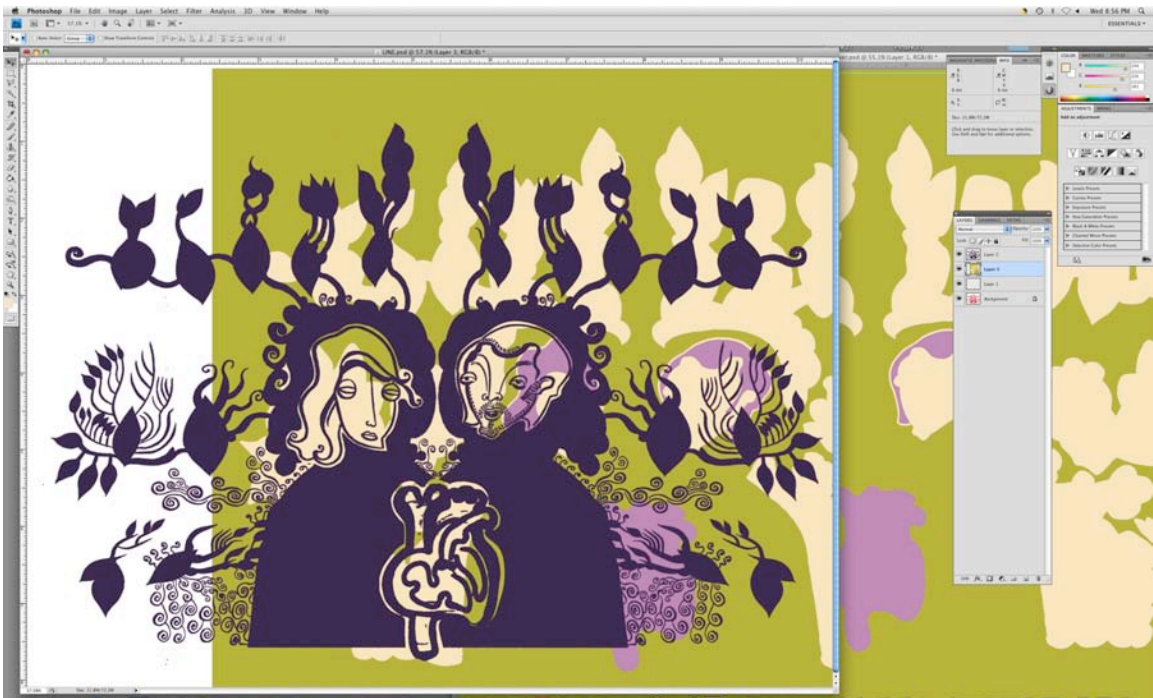
Fig. 38

I clicked on the image frame and moved the Layer until it fit comfortably behind the line art, which was on Layer 2.

Fig. 39

I saved this file (shown in Figure 40) which included the line art and fill Layer as a

Photoshop file titled "combined."

Fig. 40

At this stage I easily adjusted colors and tried several color combinations. Figures 41-44 are examples of several color combinations applied to the image.

Fig. 41

Fig. 42

Fig. 43

Fig. 44

After saving I flattened these images to conserve space, keeping in mind a flattened image cannot be edited in the same way. I kept the previously saved file until I was completely satisfied with edits and color choices. The flattened image shown in Figure 45 was now ready to be resized and printed.

Fig. 45

INSTALLATION: OBJECTS IN SPACE

The completed digital illustrations were displayed in an environment I created in the gallery space. I chose to install fabric and paper flowers that played off the colors in the images and balanced the composition of the space. I hung the images in groups rather than at eye level around the room to create visual balance. I was essentially composing the entire room as a painting. I chose to include a couch that related well to the color scheme. The couch, flowers, and fabric bathed the room in color. The couch also invited viewers to rest and view the images from a slightly different point of view. I also chose to use my maternal grandmother's collection of antique perfume bottles to contain some smaller prints of my digital illustrations printed on vellum. The bottles were feminine and decorative, and functioned as picture frames in how they contained, protected, and displayed images.

The following is a series of images of the "Rappaccini's Daughter" installation. These images demonstrate the appearance of the exhibition as it was installed in the gallery space.

Fig. 46 A view upon initially entering the room that housed my thesis exhibition

Fig. 47 The green velvet couch with four digital illustrations displayed above it

Fig. 48 A group of five digital illustrations

Fig. 49

A decorative pedestal, paper elements,

and two frames assembled to form an altar

Fig. 50

A group of six digital

illustrations displayed on the right side

of the room's main wall

Fig. 51

Five digital illustrations displayed on the

left side of the room's main wall

Fig. 52 Ten digital illustrations displayed on the room's far left wall

Fig. 53

A detail of a paper element that was

suspended from the draped fabric

Fig. 54 A view of how an illustration was displayed within the space

Fig. 55

Examples of how perfume bottles framed/contained a reduced image

Fig. 56

Fig. 57 A view past the suspended flowers to a constellation of images

Fig. 58 A partial view of three illustrations and two suspended flowers

ILLUSTRATIONS

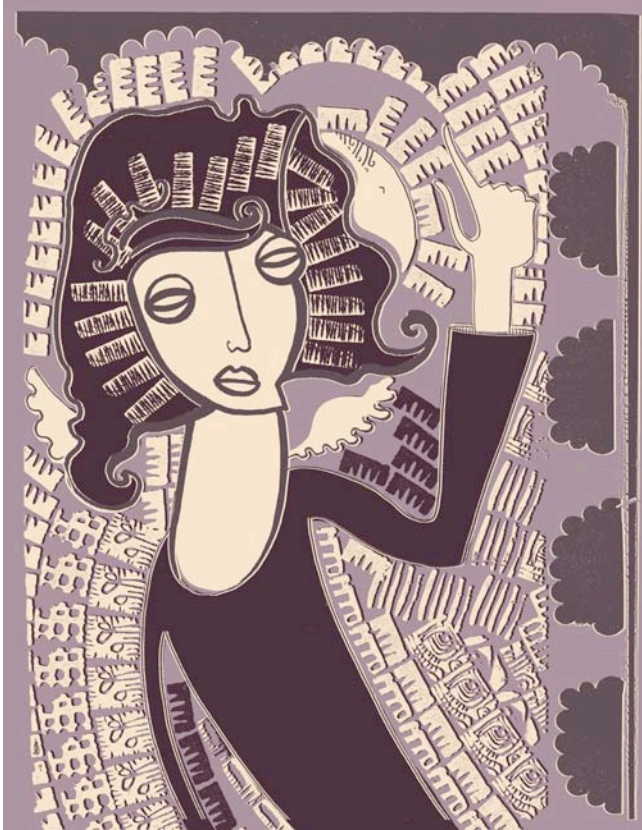The following are the final digital illustrations along with titles.

Fig. 59 "Beatrice"

Fig. 60 "Baglioni and Beatrice"

Fig. 61 "Giovanni Enclosed"

Fig. 62 "Rappaccini in the Chaos of the Garden"

Fig. 63 "Double Flower"

Fig. 64 "Beatrice in a Dress in the Center of the Garden"

Fig. 65 "Fountain"
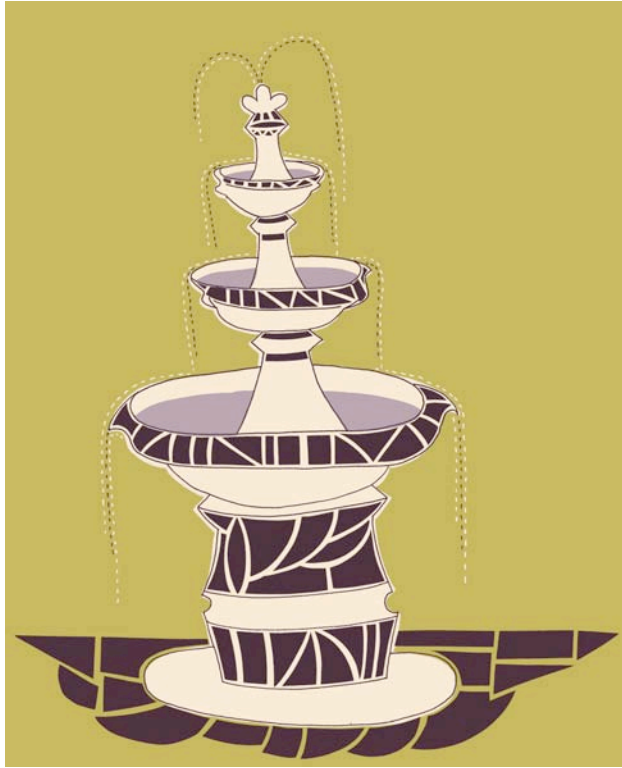

Fig. 66 "Botanical Heart"

Fig. 67 "Beatrice's Heart"

Fig. 68 "Embrace"

Fig. 69 "Extension"

Fig. 70 "Bottles from Rappaccini's Laboratory"

Fig. 71 "Outside View of the Villa"

Fig. 72 "Beatrice as Plant"

Fig. 73 "Giovanni in the Chaos of the Garden"

Fig. 74 "Beatrice and Giovanni"

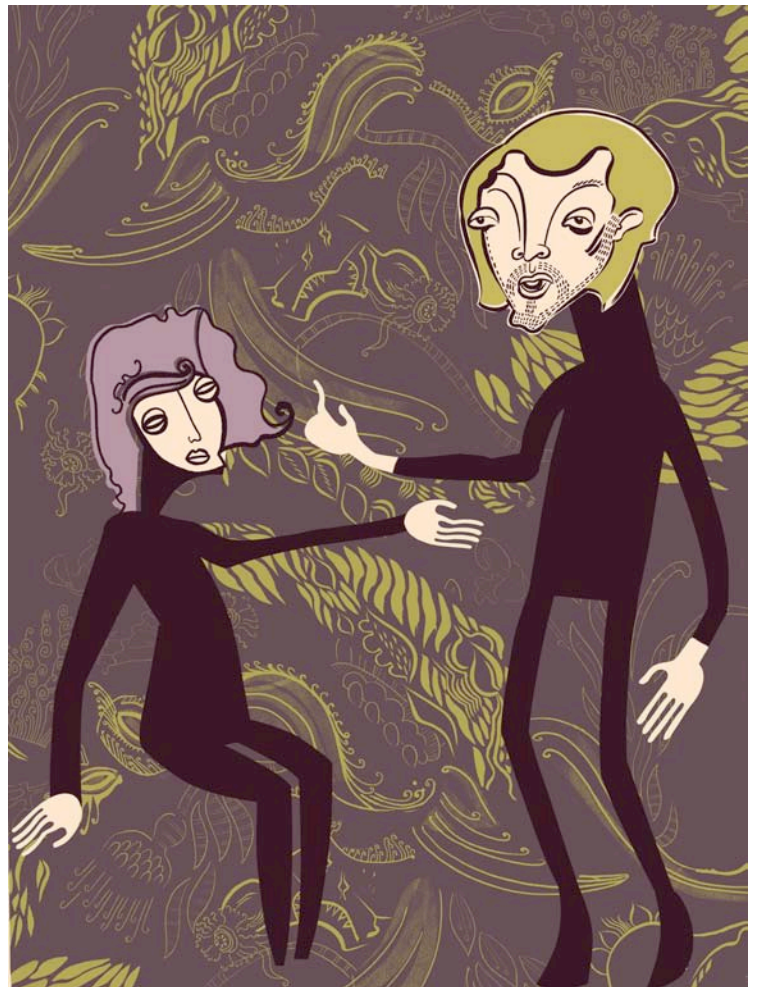Fig. 75 "Beatrice in Pattern"

Fig. 76 "Conflict in the Garden"

.

Fig. 78 "Giovanni Watches from his Window"

CONCLUSION

My creative responses to "Rappaccini's Daughter" took the form of over a

hundred collages. Sixty of the collages were colored digitally and twenty-six were

displayed in the exhibition. Through this creative thesis I discovered an image-making

process that combined hands on work and the digital realm. The illustrations were

intuitive they were composed of repeating botanical elements and populated by the

stylized characters common to my work. The installation I created to showcase the series

of digital illustrations served to express the relationship between my intuitive creative

studio practices with the final illustrations. My purpose in creating this series of digital

illustrations was to bring Hawthorne's famous and fascinating story to a new audience.

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