

# DAYS OF ALTERNATIVE COVER ART FOR COMIC BOOKS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

# 30 COVER ART FOR COMIC BOOKS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

EDUARDO OVIEDO | ART 483A | SPRING 2020

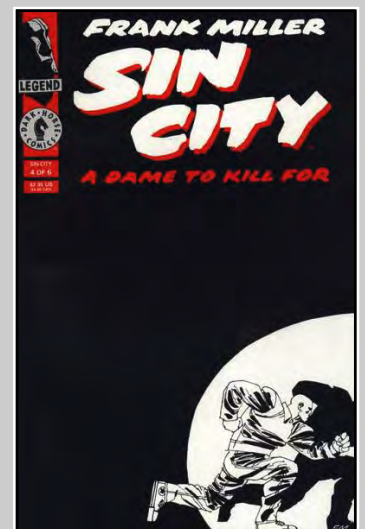
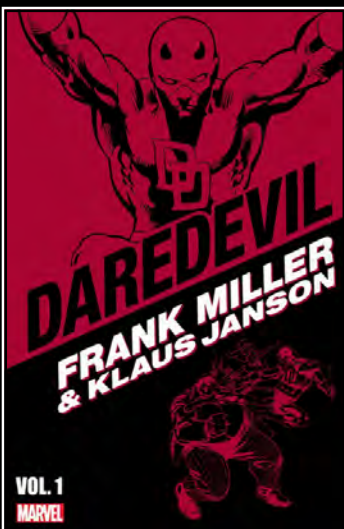
A collage of 30 comic book and graphic novel covers, including titles like 'The Man Who Has Everything', 'Iron Man: Demon in a Bottle', 'The Uncanny X-Men: Days of Future Past', 'The Silver Surfer: The Origin of the Silver Surfer', 'Batman: The Killing Joke', and 'Watchmen'. The covers are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some overlapping. The colors are vibrant and varied, including red, blue, yellow, green, and black. The art styles are diverse, ranging from classic comic book illustrations to more modern, graphic designs. The covers are set against a black background, which makes the colorful covers stand out. The overall composition is a visual representation of the student's work in creating cover art for comic books and graphic novels.

# OBJECTIVE

**F**or 30 consecutive days I created and presented a series of alternative book covers for comic books and graphic novels on Instagram. In order to accomplish this mission I had to formulate and execute a plan that would help me stay organized and consistent.

This project was heavily influenced by my interest in the comic book genre, which includes the art styles, storytelling, graphic novels, and today's digital platforms such as film or television entertainment. The visual elements of my project were inspired by the more minimalistic comic covers that already exist. These already-existing covers focus on a specific aspect of the meaning or turning point of the story by not filling the page with illustration like the traditional style would. While the traditional style for comic covers may also add to the excitement of the book, I wanted to find ways to introduce the story by using symbols, figures, and textures that are relative to the synopsis of each individual issue. My intended audience for this project includes publications of comics and graphic novels, such as Marvel, DC, Image, Dark Horse or other entertainment platforms connected with the comic book industry. Other platforms include film, tv shows, and major fan bases that exist on social media platforms.

# REFERENCES OF INSPIRATION



# FIVE PERSONAL STRENGTHS INPUT RELATOR INCLUDER LEARNER ANALYTICAL

## INPUT

A PERSON HAS A NEED TO COLLECT AND ARCHIVE. THEY MAY GATHER INFORMATION, IDEAS, ARTIFACTS OR EVEN RELATIONSHIPS. I USED THIS STRENGTH FOR RESEARCH IN THE BEGINNING STAGES OF EACH COVER. ALL STORYLINES HAVE A SIGNIFICANT DETAIL THAT IS THE HEART OF THE PLOT AND I HAD TO FIND A WAY TO VISUALIZE THAT DETAIL BY REFERRING BACK TO THE RESEARCH I COLLECTED PREVIOUSLY.

## RELATOR

WITH THIS STRENGTH A PERSON ENJOYS CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS. THEY FIND DEEP SATISFACTION IN WORKING HARD WITH FRIENDS TO ACHIEVE A GOAL. SIMILAR TO THE 'INCLUDER' I WAS OPEN TO TAKING CRITICISM WHEN IT COMES TO MY WORK. I TRIED TO VIEW MY WORK THROUGH THE EYES OF THE AUDIENCE. THIS WAY I WAS ABLE TO VIEW MY WORK FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES AND IT HELPED GUIDE MY OBJECTIVE AND BE SUCCESSFUL.

## INCLUDER

THE INCLUDER STRENGTH ALLOWS A PERSON TO ACCEPT OTHERS. THEY SHOW AWARENESS OF THOSE WHO FEEL LEFT OUT AND MAKE AN EFFORT TO INCLUDE THEM. ONLY A FEW PEOPLE, WHO ARE ALSO COMIC FANS, KNEW ABOUT MY PROJECT AND ITS OBJECTIVE. EVERY NOW AND THEN I WOULD ASK FOR THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT MY WORK TO SEE WHAT CRITICISM THEY CAN OFFER ME. I WOULD TRY TO SEE IF I WOULD BE ABLE TO INCORPORATE WHAT THEY SAID IN MY WORK.

## LEARNER

A LEARNER HAS A GREAT DESIRE TO LEARN AND WANT TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE. THE PROCESS OF LEARNING, RATHER THAN THE OUTCOME, EXCITES THEM. MY INTEREST IN THE CONTENT OF THIS PROJECT IS WHAT BEGAN THIS 30 DAY JOURNEY. HOWEVER IT WAS THE PROCESS AND THE PROGRESS I MADE THAT REALLY KEPT ME GOING. MY THEME IS BASED ON SOMETHING I ENJOY AND IT KEPT ME INTRIGUED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROCESS.

## ANALYTICAL

AN ANALYTICAL PERSON SEARCHES FOR REASONS AND CAUSES. THEY HAVE THE ABILITY TO THINK ABOUT ALL OF THE FACTORS THAT MIGHT AFFECT A SITUATION. THIS STRENGTH HELPED ME UTILIZE THE STORYLINES SO THAT I CAN SYMBOLIZE ACTIONS OR CERTAIN EVENTS OF THE STORY IN A MEANINGFUL WAY. BY DOING SO, IT GAVE THE COVER ART MORE MEANING TO EACH SPECIFIC PLOT. I WAS ALSO ABLE TO SEE HOW THE ART WILL VISUALLY FIT WITHIN THE TEMPLATE I CREATED FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT.



# ADDITIONAL GOALS

**E**xpanding my skill set in illustration was also part of the objective. One of the elements that drew me towards comic books and graphic novels as a kid were the visual styles by so many talented artists. As I grew older I learned to appreciate their techniques. It then became a hobby of mine to research the techniques used by comic book artists and my collection of comics kept growing over the years. I had gotten so used to designing in layouts involving grid structure, symmetry, and precise measurements that I wanted to incorporate more “free hand” designs into my skills. I developed a process where I can try this new technique while staying true to a template I made for consistency and organization. This project was definitely a breath of fresh air especially now seeing the success and learning experiences I had with it.

I knew going into this project that consistency, time, and creativity were going to be a challenge but I went through it each day, proud of the work I put out. The challenges of consistency and time felt very similar to each other because posting the work each day was part of the objective and finding the time in the day to do so after creating the content was the obstacle. However, I found that creativity was the biggest challenge overall because of the amount of energy that was demanded throughout the project’s process. Each comic cover had to be unique in their way in order for it to reflect the strength of the story behind it. Some stories were more difficult than others in finding its iconography that represents the narratives well so I had to dig deeper into the research or go back and go through the story again.



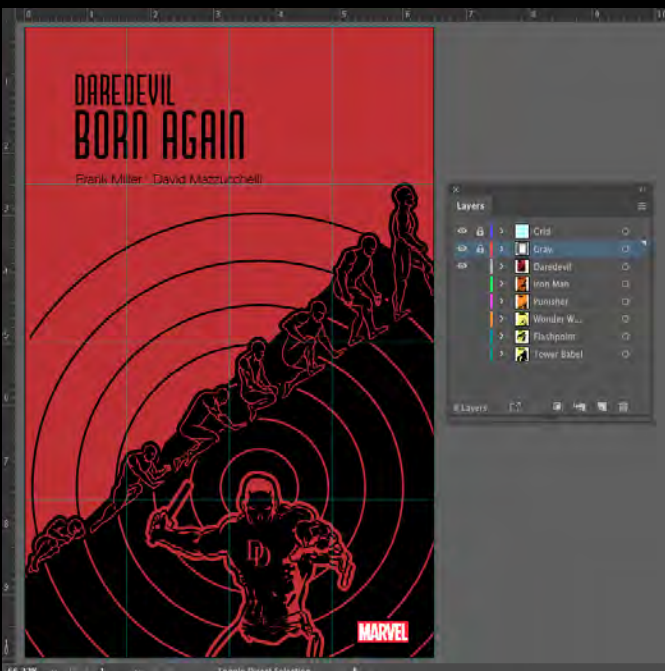
# THE PROCESS

One of the easier stages in this entire process was actually designing the content on Adobe Illustrator and plugging in the artwork on the template I made on Adobe Photoshop.

The more difficult stages began at the very beginning because it involved much research, planning, and experimenting.

**FEBRUARY 18, 2020**

Once I set the objective of the project, I began to gather a list of stories I wanted to work on. I finalized a list of 30 stories on the “Notes” app on my phone. Most of the comics I was already very familiar with. Some, I needed to review again to refresh my memory and a few were brand new to me and sparked my interest. The list was originally close to 50 stories and I had to narrow down which ones I wanted to use. One of the ways I determined my list was how the posts would look on my Instagram profile once it was completed. So I created a “rule of 3” for myself. Each row of posts (three posts) are going to be relevant to one another through their storyline, whether it is based on the genre, publisher, or the main characters. This would later influence the visual appearance of the covers later on in the process. The reason I also differed each row by publisher is because I also wanted to show a variety of publishers and not stick to just one for too long, like Marvel for example. By color coding the list and ordering it in a certain way, it became my guide/calendar for the month of March.



After the list was completed I began working on possible templates that would unify my project as a whole. The reason I wanted a template was so my project can stand strong on its own without being misinterpreted with other forms of comic artworks. I wanted my project to be unique as a collection rather than focused primarily on one individual instagram post. Part of the objective was to create these covers in a minimalistic form contrasting the traditional covers that are very detailed or colorful. I did so by limiting myself to using only the color black and one more additional color that is relative to the comics storyline or theme. By adding the diagonal border down the cover, it creates opportunity for dynamic illustrations which adds excitement to the artwork. I wanted to incorporate gestalt techniques as well to connect both the upper and lower half of the cover. This template was used for Adobe Illustrator. I also used a grid structure to keep the typography uniformed as well.

Now that my template for the book cover was ready I needed to solve the issue for the secondary template that would work best for the Instagram profiles appearance. My book cover took up about 70% of the 1:1 ratio of an instagram post as it appears on the profile. I brought the book covers from Adobe Illustrator into Adobe Photoshop and I chose to fill up the remaining space with original panels of artwork from the comic issue of that day. However, I didn't want the comic art to be distracting so I added blur effects and a dark overlay above them to make the book cover the main attraction. The original comic illustrations worked as secondary images to support the main image and give a subtle preview to the storylines inside. Since this was a comic book themed project it also felt right to pay homage to the original work that the covers were based on as well.



## FEBRUARY 23, 2020

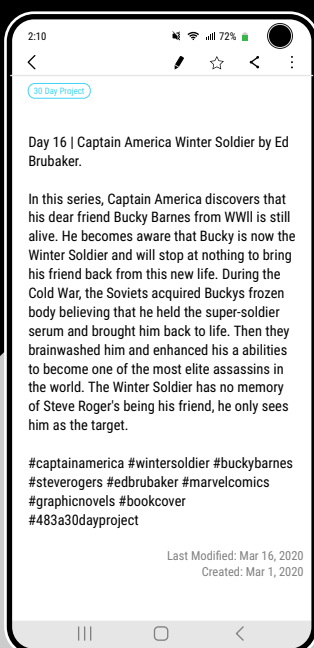
I began sketching ideas for each cover in very minimal thumbnails for several of the Instagram posts in advance. My goal was to stay at least a day ahead with an idea of the cover art. This is the stage where I conducted more research of the storylines to see if there were any elements from the plot that I can depict on the cover.





MARCH 1, 2020

Later on once we entered March, on the day of each post, I would either make more detailed sketches which I would use for the final covers or begin directly to Adobe Illustrator and begin the free-handed illustration. Sometimes I would trace reference photos if it was necessary such as human anatomy. If I couldn't find a reference photo with the angle that I wanted, I would take my own photos and trace over them on Adobe Illustrator.

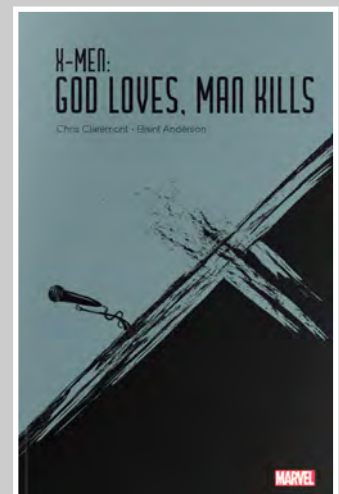
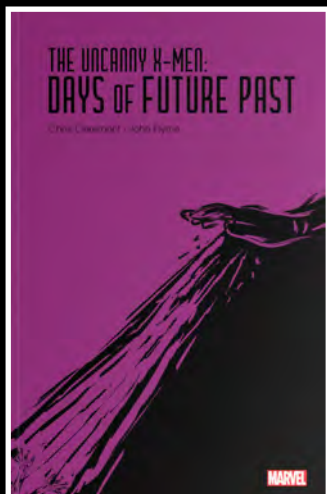


After this creative process is complete, all that is left is to post the work on Instagram. However, I wanted to give an engaging background description to each storyline as an introduction to what each story was about. I would go back into the Notes app on my phone and write a description that was accurate to the story as if it were a synopsis on the back of a book you would find in a bookstore. After this I would use the appropriate hashtags in the description, post it on my profile and this would complete my creative process.

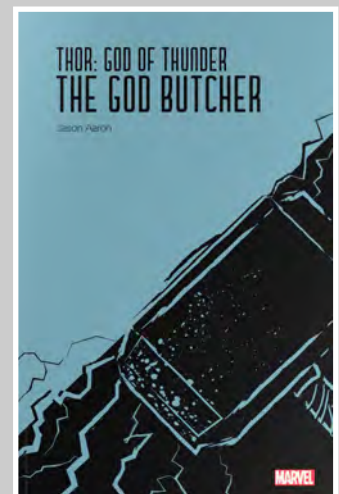
# BODY OF WORK

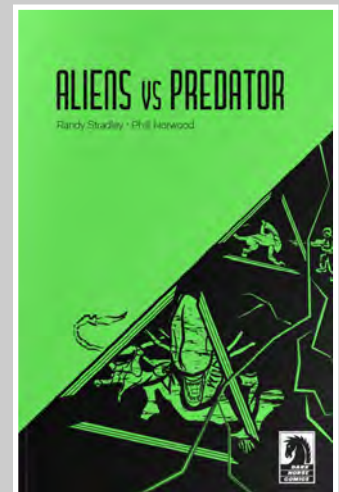
## ORDERING STRATEGY

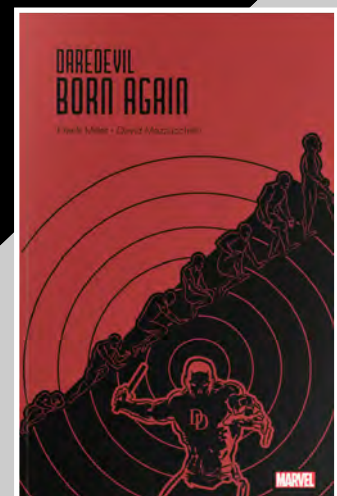
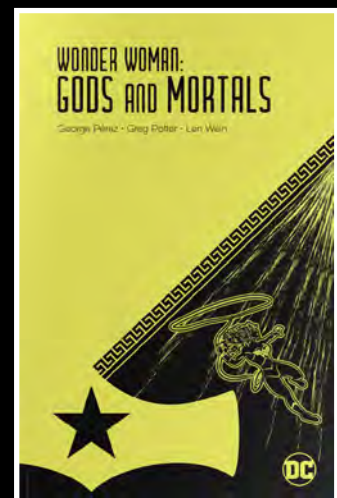
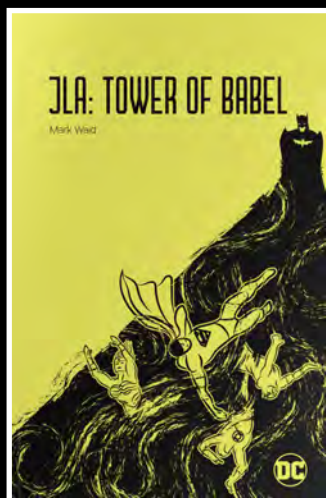
I wanted to start strong and end strong with this project. The first three covers of the month were Old Man Logan, Watchmen, and V For Vendetta. The similarity these storylines shared was the grand question of, “what if these characters really existed in the real world?” These stories get as close as they can get with gritty writing and tackles the dynamic psychology of how people could truly react to these superpowered beings. Also, these three stories are some of pop-cultures best known stories due to their adaptations to the big screen and currently the small screen for Watchmen.











The last three covers were Punisher: The Slavers, Iron: Demon in a Bottle, and Daredevil: Born Again. The reason I saved these for last was because I felt the storytelling held a great importance and could probably be the most inspirational of the 30 stories I covered. The related theme amongst these three was that they were all street-level characters, meaning they were human and vulnerable to real injuries and death just like the rest of us. The main protagonist of each story faced real-world issues that actually exist. The Punisher battles against a massive human-trafficking operation and the story shows how a group like this can negatively affect the world. Then, Iron Man battles his biggest foe, alcoholism, a chronic disease that millions go through and struggle to defeat. Then, there is Daredevil who reaches the lowest moments of his life, as most people experience, he doubts his faith in spirituality and humanity, and it takes a long time and many stages before he is able to pick himself up and continue living his life. To me these are powerful stories because they can relate directly to us, the readers, and to the world we live in. These characters face adversity and find a way to overcome them no matter how long it takes or how difficult it may be.



# SELF REFLECTION

This project definitely felt like a breath of fresh air because it gave me a chance to try something new in a way that I am not used to. The theme of the project made it something to look forward to everyday and not dreadful. With each storyline, I got to work on content that is exciting to me and practice my skills at the same time. It was also an excellent way to challenge myself by sticking to a process that I created in order to stay consistent and unify my work in the end. My illustration skills in Adobe Illustrator improved and I now have a better understanding for using the tools at my disposal. Time management and consistency definitely challenged me throughout the course of this project but I overcame the obstacles each day in order to meet the deadline. If I could have done something differently in the duration of this project I would have still tried to manage my time better because even though I took planning precautions, there were times where I had to work faster in order to stay on track or catch up.

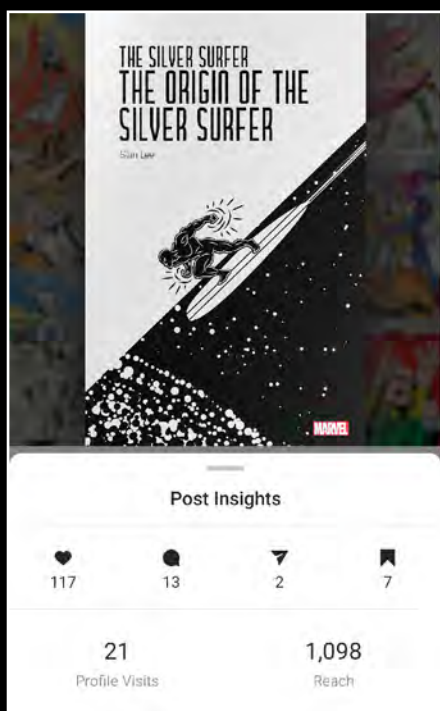
Figuring out Instagram's algorithm can be tricky sometimes and takes some test trials to see accurate results. Certain patterns that I noticed affected the engagement of some of my posts. For example, the hashtags I used and the users that I tagged to my posts affected my posts' insights. If I used one hashtag repeatedly for more than about 3 or 4 posts, my engagement for the next post would go down. If I consecutively used different hashtags for a few of the posts, then the next post would get higher engagement. It also depended on what the hashtags were specifically, who I tagged, and the time of the day it was posted. Rarely, were the insights affected because of the artwork itself.

## WHAT CHANGED?

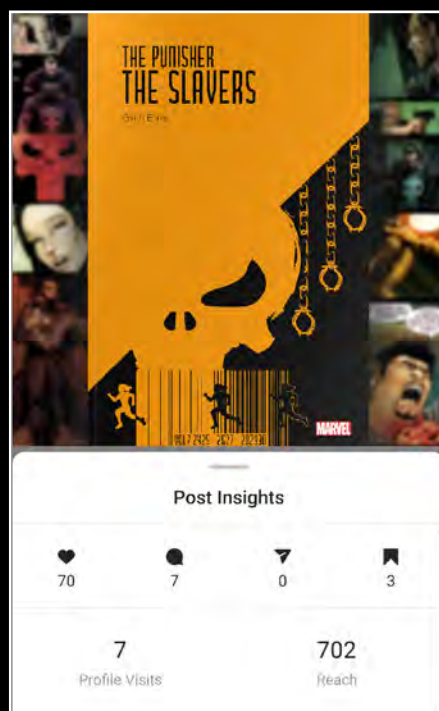
My illustration process went through a change halfway into the month. I began adding more small details into the entire page because I noticed myself getting faster using the many brush strokes in the program. I was mixing a lot more brush styles and making changes to them so that they wouldn't be recognizable brush strokes. I began a color-theory strategy for some of the rows of posts. For example, the Alien and Predator covers were the same green because they both shed green blood in the story. Another example would be the row of Superman covers being the colors of Superman's suit, which is yellow, red, and blue.



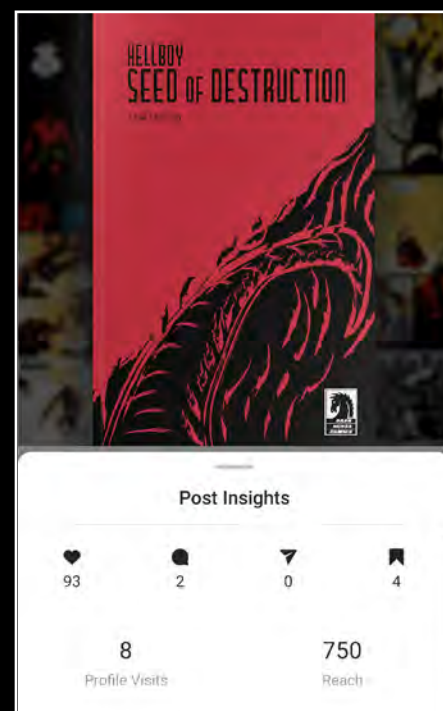
## ENGAGEMENT



As far as the cover art goes, this version I created is by far one of my favorites and definitely feels like a WIN to have it do so well in my Instagram Insights. Aside from the visuals, I believe this one did the best of the 30 because I tagged @therealstanlee, who is beloved among many communities and not just the comic book community. I used hashtags: #silversurfer #stanlee #galactus, which are both relevant to the story and currently a popular topic among these communities. This post was uploaded on a Saturday night when my community's activity was really high.



Although the art wasn't as well as some of the other covers, the tools I used for this post was quite effective. I tagged @hellboymovie, which is still fairly recent as it was released in theaters about a year ago. It was also posted during high user activity on a Tuesday afternoon while most Instagram users are on lunch breaks. I also suspect that it got people's attention on explore pages because of the color scheme (red) as well.



This post was also in the top three with the most engagement for a few reasons. I tagged @thepunisher, which was a very popular Netflix series and holds a very large fanbase. This post was also uploaded on a Saturday night, which is high activity of Instagram users. The hashtags: #thepunisher and #frankcastle gave me wider a reach with more audience communities. Not only did I get the attention of comic book fans but I also got the attention of firearm enthusiasts and people that just love the Punisher symbol. The skull is really noticeably large on the and I am certain it grabbed people's attention on explore pages.

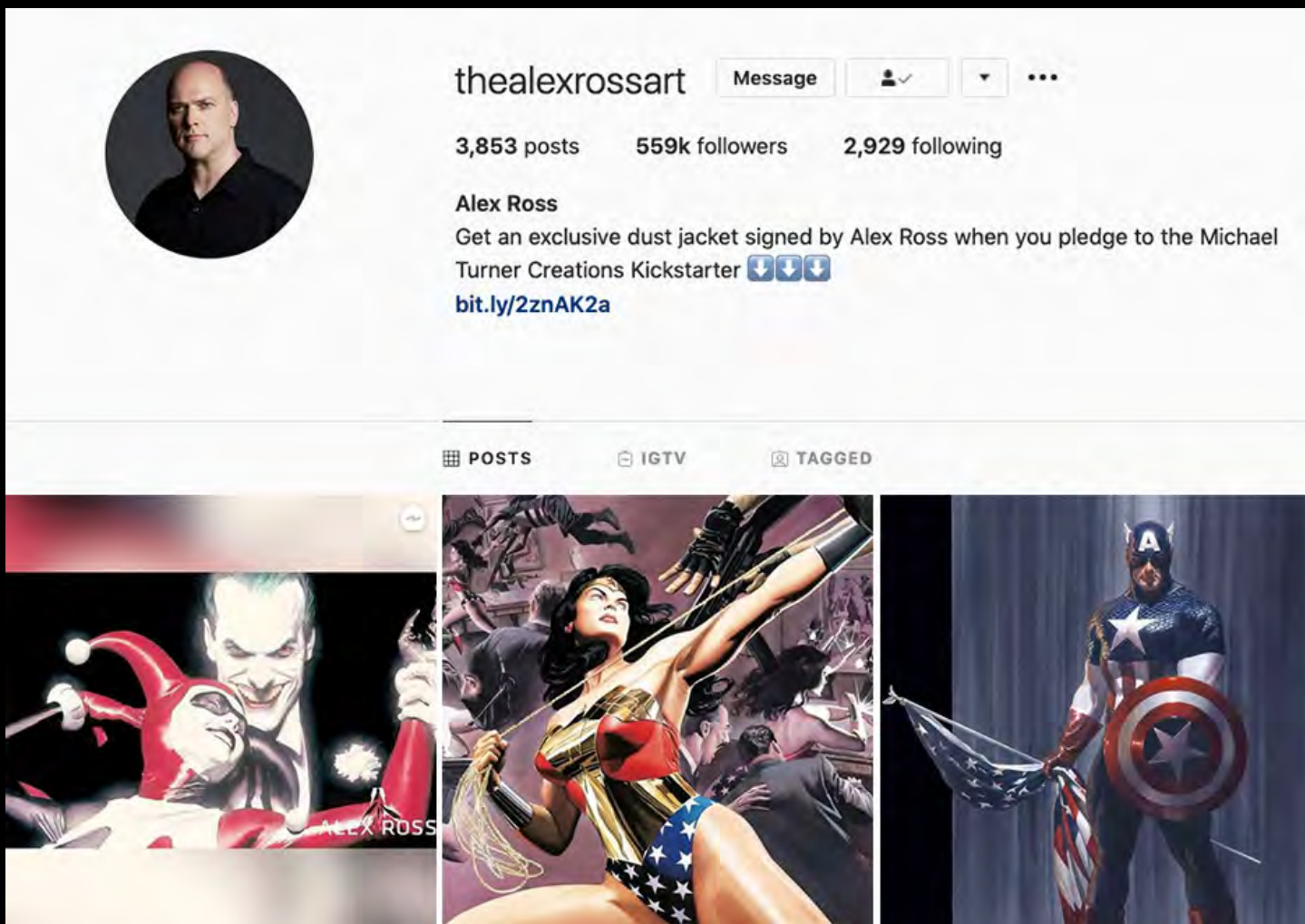
## HELPFUL FEEDBACK

**Day 4 @reynachabeli:** I like the balance you have between your text and your illustration!

**Day 17 @ryan\_low.idd:** Love the incorporation of both the cap star and iron man chest piece! Awesome configuration. This is just my thought but what if you placed something on the grey side and let it be defined by negative space? Just my thought tho but other than that, it's lookin fire!

**Day 19 @ryan\_low.idd:** That's what I'm talkin about! the usage of the negative space and gestalt principles to close that space. Awesome!

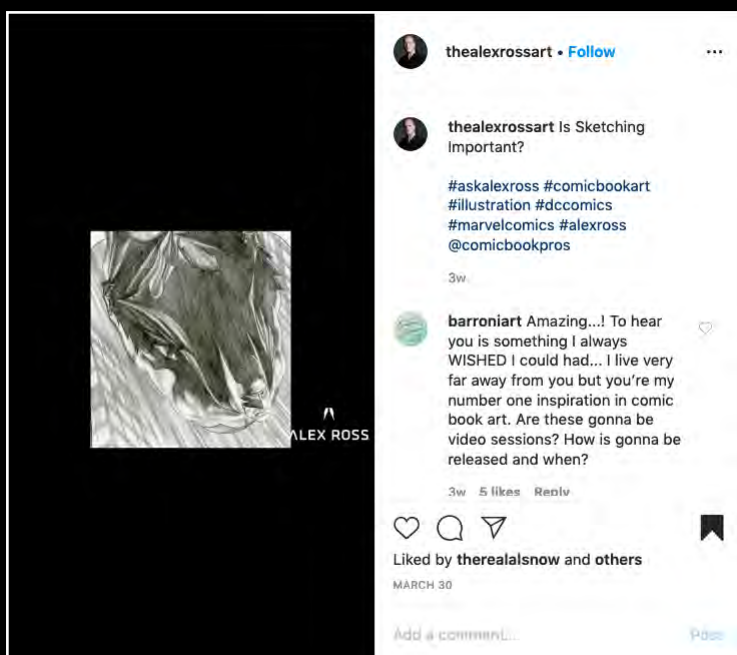
**Day 27 @halieprusaart:** Love the attention to detail on this one and how you applied Gestalt in the bottom left corner. Very eye catching! Great job!



## Alex Ross

[www.instagram.com/thealexrossart/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/thealexrossart/?hl=en)

One of the first graphic novels I ever obtained was illustrated by Alex Ross. I remember being about 13 years old and fell in love immediately with his art style and till this day I am still amazed by his work. I began following him on social media a few years ago and one of the aspects I enjoy about his feed is he allows his audience a look into his process for his past and present work. He posts old sketches and studies for iconic panels and spreads that he has worked on to show his viewers how and why they were successful. His custom videos are helpful as well as they go into detail of why certain stages of the process are important. It is inspiring to see the results of such a long process and he showcases that well. In this particular post Alex Ross explains in great detail why sketching your ideas is important. The beginning stages are all about finding your idea so you shouldn't get caught up in perfecting it in the first sketch. It is a good practice to get in the flow of sketching because it can guide you to the finished concept.



[www.instagram.com/p/B-Xx29nFhdR/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B-Xx29nFhdR/)





mexifunk

Message



2,448 posts

26.2k followers

2,298 following

orlando arocena

Mexican 🇲🇪 who changed the look of vector

Gold Clio Award Winner

@zbyhp Global Brand Ambassador

Member of @theposterposse

mexifunk@gmail.com

[www.heavymetal.com/news/covid-19-mexifunk-coronavirus-poster](http://www.heavymetal.com/news/covid-19-mexifunk-coronavirus-poster)

POSTS

IGTV

TAGGED



## Orlando Arocena

[www.instagram.com/mexifunk/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/mexifunk/?hl=en)



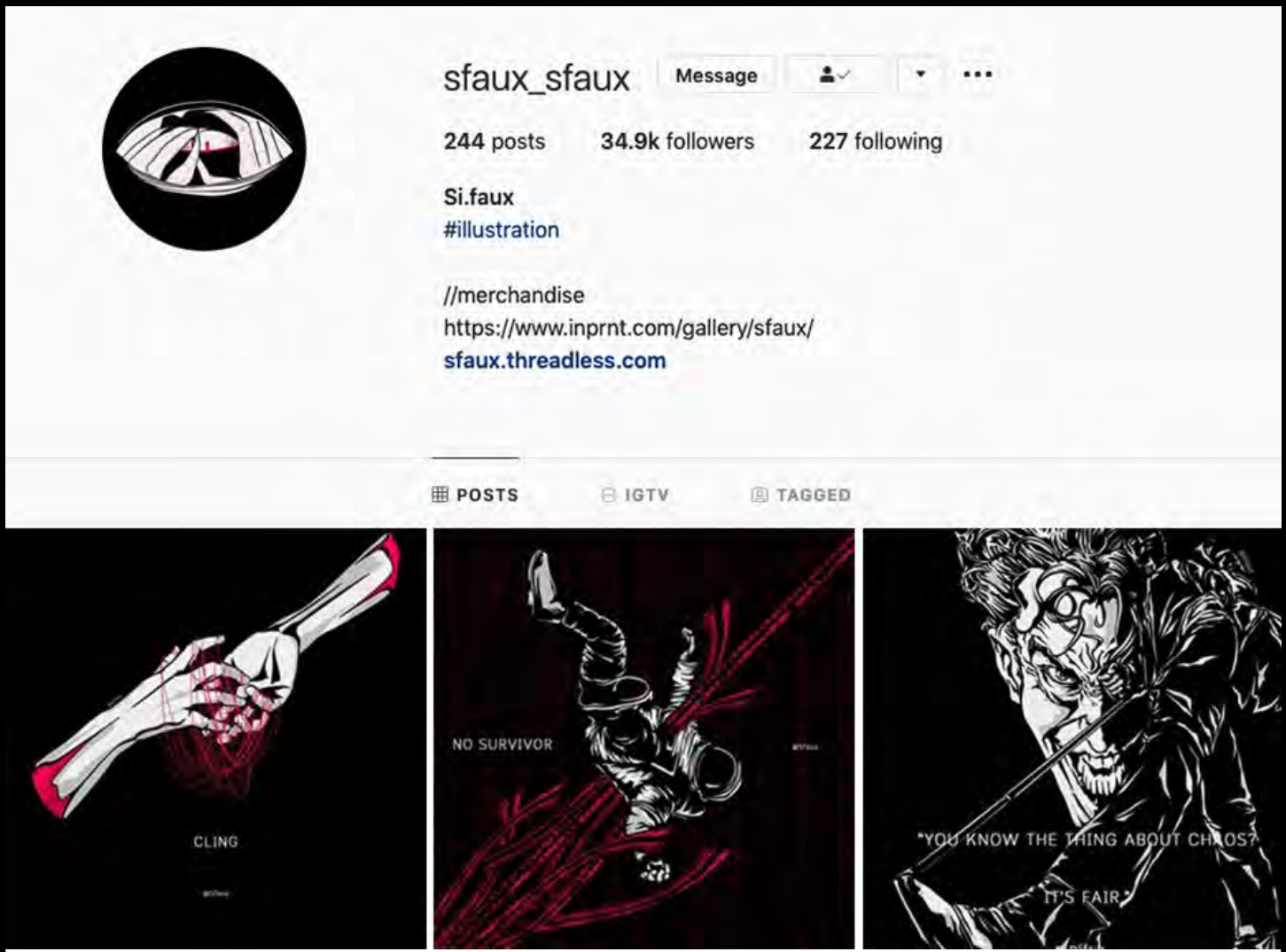
[www.instagram.com/p/B0TjVC4nLBR/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B0TjVC4nLBR/)

I also started following artist Orlando Arocena a few years ago. What drew me to his artwork was the immense detail and realism he is able to apply using Adobe Illustrator. His style is also reminiscent of many vintage style movie posters. He has a nostalgic style in his work and he brings it into modern day by using sharp vector paths and blending color gradients together all on Adobe Illustrator.

His process videos were very insightful because I was able to see the amazing potential that can be created on the same creative program that I am using.

Orlando Arocena also uses a lot of intersecting lines and gradients that create movement and dimension in his work.

This process video stood out to me because he presents to the viewers every single element and path in chronological order. From start to finish, he shows us that there can be many steps to reach the final product. I found it to be motivational because it gave me hope that I can also create such dynamic pieces of artwork on the same design program.



## Si.Faux

[www.instagram.com/sfaux\\_sfaux/](https://www.instagram.com/sfaux_sfaux/)

This mysterious artist doesn't reveal his real name on social media but he is known as "Si.faux." I believe I first came across his work last November and was so attracted to his style and somewhat hidden messages in his art. His color choices and usage of space are minimalistic but it is beneficial because the viewer focuses on the meaning of the artwork itself. I was also attracted to what seemed like the brush styles in his work that seem distorted where it is meant to be. The minimal style made it seem like everything had a purpose.

The distressed brushstrokes in most of the work really caught my attention because it is directly related to the artwork's message. The common theme in the work relates with social/political satire, human vices, and psychology. I felt that the message behind this post was relative to what my objective was. The message is: "WHEN DOES THE PATH WE WALK ON LOCK AROUND OUR FEET" and it is referring to getting stuck to a habit or routine that is difficult to escape. One of my goals was to try something new to break out of what I was doing before and the result was so refreshing.



[www.instagram.com/p/B6YMn7TIS79/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B6YMn7TIS79/)

# NEXT STEPS

The skills I developed for this project will directly influence my future work in several ways. The first way relates to the planning portion of the project. I learned that in order to execute a large project well, strategies must be developed and tested in order for the project to become successful. This includes taking the time in the early stages to conduct research, identify the problem to be solved, and being patient to finish the first steps before designing anything. I also learned that without a plan in place, it is difficult to complete a project like this that has deadlines, daily. This project also motivated me to take on large tasks like this more often because it challenges me to accomplish great things. I could see what my limits are and I am eager to see if I can push them further. I can already predict that being consistent and staying true to a plan can be applied to the future projects I take on.

If I were to create another 30-day project, the advice I would give myself would be to stay on track, be consistent, and always try to find new ways to learn. Part of staying on track deals with managing your time wisely. Being ahead of schedule is where you want to be instead of falling behind and possibly missing deadlines. In order to be consistent, you must first formulate some kind of plan or visual strategy and stick to it no matter what. It can be different variations of the plan as long as the whole thing is unified and makes sense. This can exercise your creativity because you are challenged to find new ways to make something new while sticking to the same plan. This brings me to my last piece of advice, which is finding new ways to learn. The benefit of a 30-day project is doing something new everyday while keeping the theme or goal fresh in your mind. Yesterday's work can inspire or give you an idea for today's work, which could influence what you will create for tomorrow. Your inspiration and creativity keeps building and by the time you reach the end of the 30 days, you see a drastic development in your skills and become more confident in your craft. A bonus piece of advice would be to look forward to the project everyday by finding the excitement in it, otherwise it can be dreadful. In other words, just have fun.



# THANK YOU

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 @oviedo.designs

[www.instagram.com/oviedo.designs/](https://www.instagram.com/oviedo.designs/)

