

ORBIT

by

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Overview

My senior project is a pilot chapter and zine for an original dystopian science-fiction comic called *ORBIT*. The first part of this project, the pilot chapter, shows the beginning of a much larger story presented through five pages printed as large-format posters. The second part of this project, the zine, captures several standout panels from the pilot chapter and includes explanations for various details about *ORBIT*, from the characters and wider story to inspiration and artistic choices. Functionally, the pilot chapter and zine both come together to deliver a powerful glimpse into a new world, compelling readers to want to learn more and support the development and publishing of a complete comic.

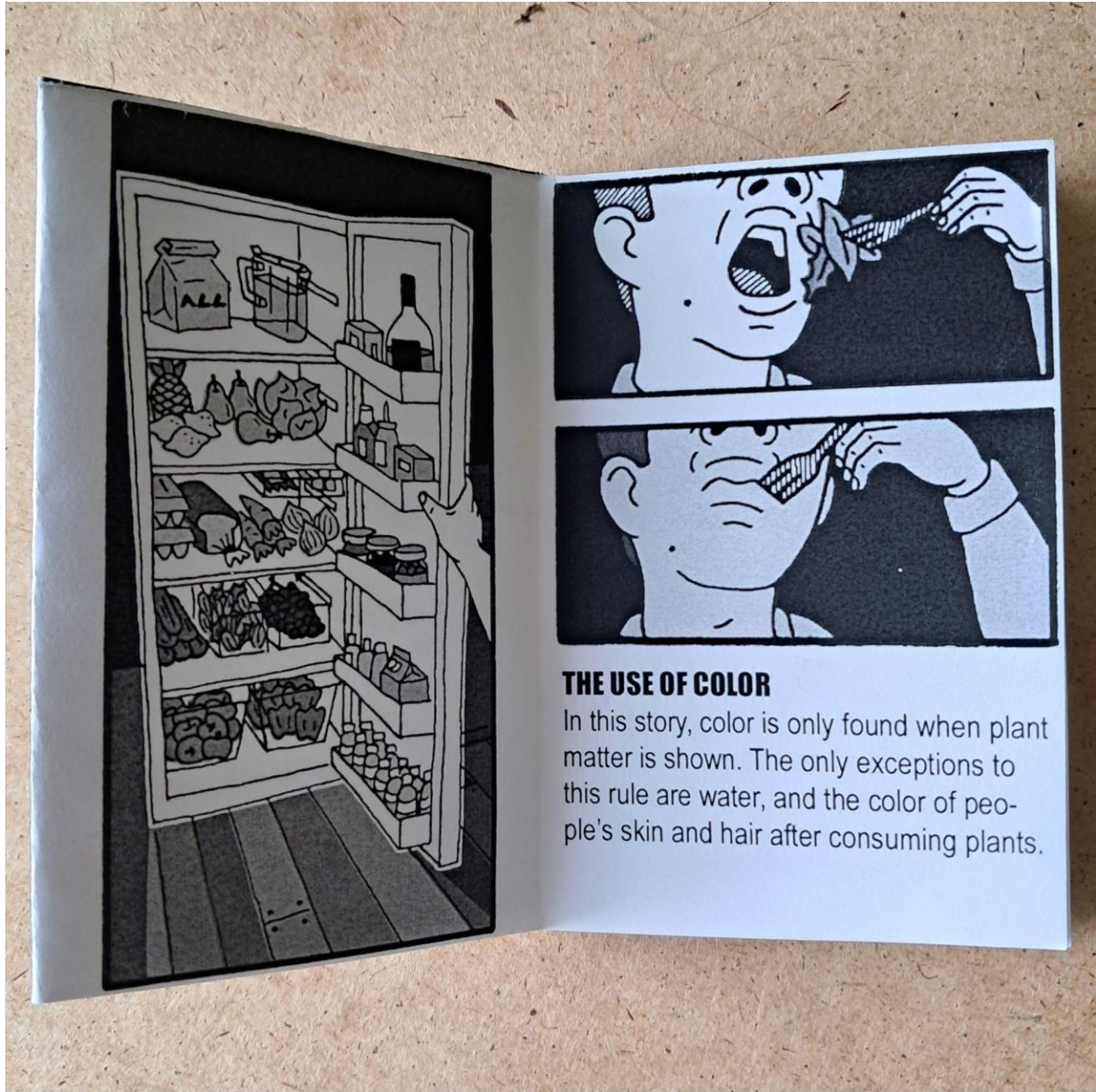
The story of *ORBIT* centers around Troy, a hard-working young man and his relationship with the setting, Satellite City. This city is a unique environment, with each building being its own independently operated space station, visually inspired by contemporary skyscrapers. Thousands of these buildings orbit a deserted Earth, abandoned after an apocalyptic war ravaged the planet. Satellite City is a society that mirrors the United States, with this story aiming to critique the system Americans live under today.



ORBIT Exhibition, 5/2025, 32" x 24", Printed Paper

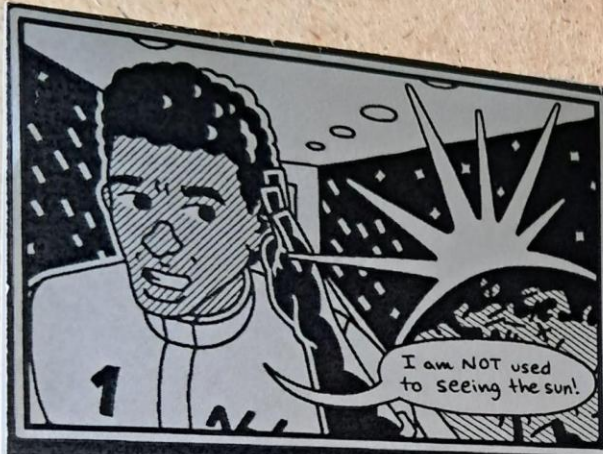


ORBIT ZINE, Front Cover, 5/2025, 2.75" x 4.25", Printed Paper



THE USE OF COLOR

In this story, color is only found when plant matter is shown. The only exceptions to this rule are water, and the color of people's skin and hair after consuming plants.



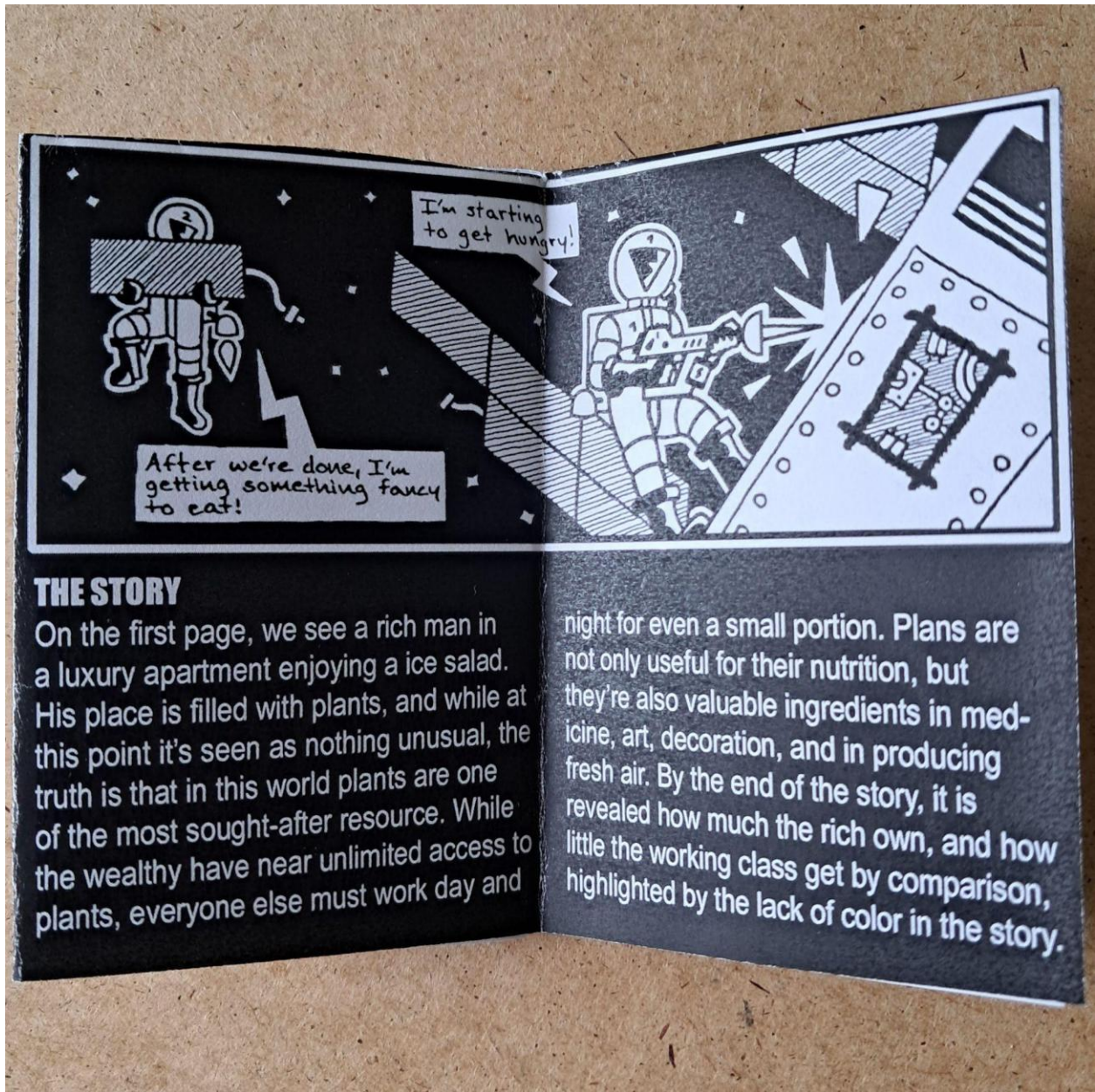
THE CHARACTERS

The first real character the audience is introduced to is TROY, a young, hard-working man stuck living paycheck to paycheck. Troy isn't the only one working though, he also has another coworker, CONNOR. Wearing the number 2 on his uniform, Connor is characterized as being impulsive and frivolous with his money. This clash in circumstances will inevitably bring tension between Troy and Connor.



THE SETTING

Over 1,000 years after the fall of Earth, the remnants of humanity live in a city like no other, SATELITE CITY. This cluster of thousands of space stations might seem like a utopia from the outside, but just beneath the surface problems fester. The biggest issue by far is class disparity, with the many possessing far less than the few.





INSPIRATION

This story is inspired by many things, both in fiction and real-life. This panel specifically was inspired by many first-person-shooter games, complete with a heads-up display and chat room. The concept of orbital lasers that can destroy a planet are also inspired by games like HALO. The white space suits are reminiscent of the stormtroopers seen in STAR WARS, although the design was meant to look more simple.

ORBIT ZINE, Back Cover, 5/2025, 2.75" x 4.25", Printed Paper

Background

When deciding what area of design to focus my senior project on, I was drawn to what first inspired me when considering a career in visual arts: concept art and illustration. Having always been interested in creating dynamic, engaging designs and compositions, mastering illustration became the key to moving my practice forward. This is especially true considering that while I had a strong desire to grow this skillset, I found very few opportunities to do so outside of independent artwork. Knowing I wanted to explore this type of work more and integrate it into my education, I saw my senior project as a great opportunity.

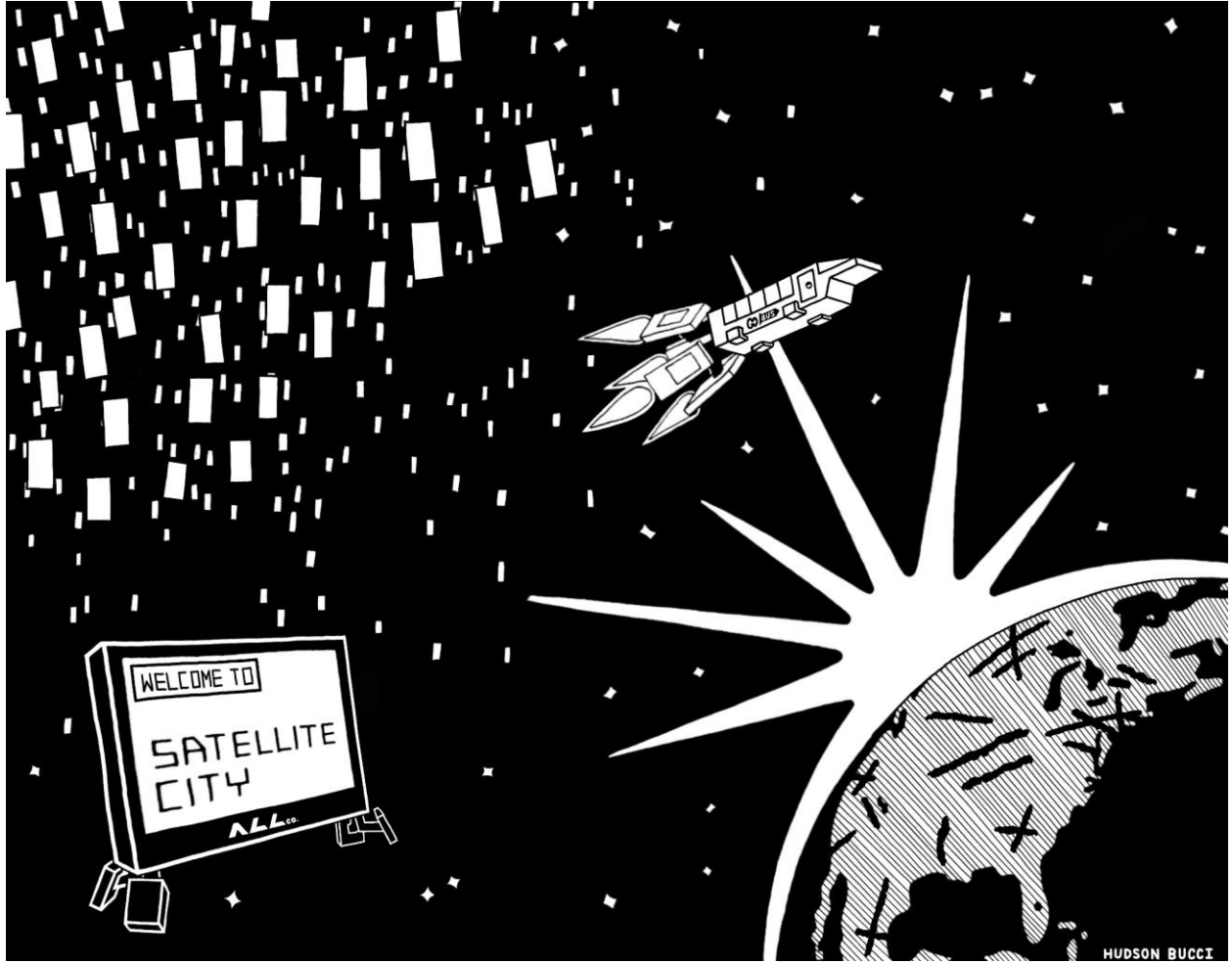
Once I started brainstorming what kind of concept art I should make, it was clear to me that I needed some kind of framework. For this I decided to craft a setting and a narrative, eventually deciding to follow Satellite City, and the struggles of the working class through a first-person perspective. While the story was originally intended to be more of a simple background for a series of concept art pieces, I found myself becoming more and more captivated by the world I was creating. After developing the setting and a possible story more, I ultimately decided to abandon the concept art portion of the project entirely, pivoting my focus into a comic chapter that would balance design and narrative as two parts of a greater whole.

Through pursuing this project and the type of artwork it requires, I gained new experience in digital illustration with Procreate, image scanning, zine making, and exhibition setup. Additionally, I also grew my skills in areas of design which I already had experience in. For example, through this project I was able to continue practicing layout and typography. While I've designed posters, packaging and a variety of other kinds of projects, organizing the layout of a comic is a completely different job.

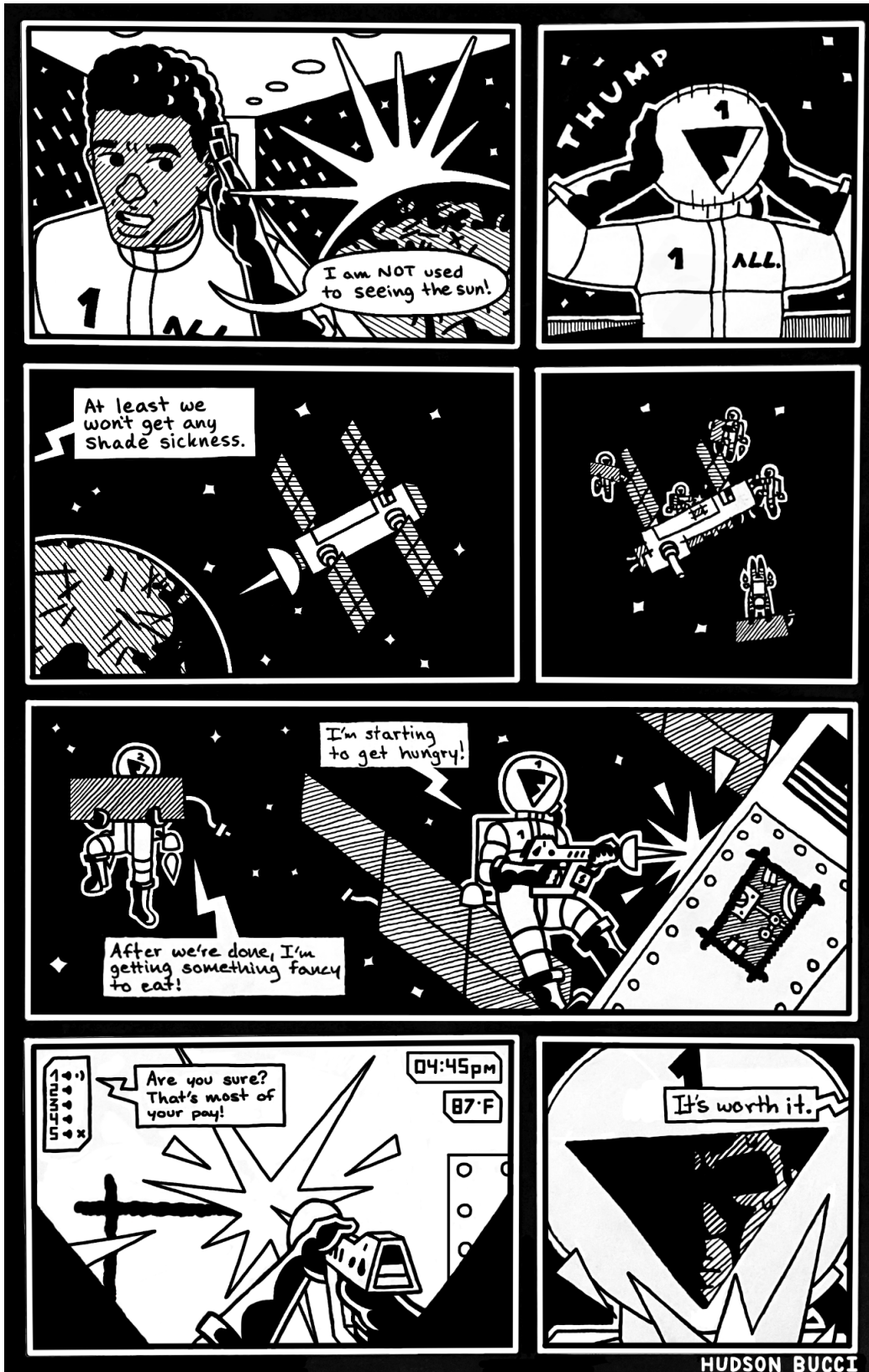
Finally, the background of this project will focus on assessing and critiquing aspects of the contemporary United States and its relationship to capitalism and classism. The specific topic I chose to unpack in this narrative is the difference between the accessibility to necessary resources between the wealthy and the working class. My goal in this aspect of the project was to make my audience more aware of class-based issues being faced today.



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ORBIT, Pages 2 and 3, 5/2025, 6.625" x 10.25", Digital Illustration





HUDSON BUCCI

Core Ideas

At the core of my senior project are the ideas of systemic awareness and cultivating a desire for change from the status quo. When a viewer reads *ORBIT*, I want them to be made aware of how the societal issues Troy faces are all present in the world we live in today. The audience should be surprised to learn that something that happens in the story can and has happened in real life. The main issue that this pilot chapter brings attention to is the reality of classism under capitalism, and what social challenges corporate greed and wealth disparities create.

Satellite City is based on the United States, a place where people have an abundance mindset that fuels a rampant consumer marketplace. According to *Objectified*, a documentary film by Gary Hustwit “Designers spend most of their time designing products and services for the 10 percent of the world’s population that already own too much, when 90 percent don’t have even basic products and services” (*Objectified*, 0:56:35-0:56:48). To mirror this disparity between the wealthy and the poor, I chose to use plants as a token of value. In Satellite City, plants are one of the most sought-after resources, whether for their use in food, medicine, or the arts. Plants are near essential to human survival, so the notion that their use is barred by fortune and privilege should be very disturbing to viewers. Unfortunately, that’s the way our system works in real life too, whether it's homelessness, hunger, or a lack of accessible medical care.

At the core of this story, there is a message about the flaws of capitalism, and how those in power exploit those who are not. The goal of this project is to highlight these issues for readers in a creative way that doesn’t talk down to them or trivialize anything.



ORBIT Concept Drawing, 1/2025, 3.75" x 3", Ink on Bristol Board

Story

The themes and real-world implications of *ORBIT* shouldn't be taken lightly, but that doesn't mean the story can't also be entertaining. While wider systemic issues are the backbone of the narrative, the comic also needs compelling and relatable characters and settings to act as the face of the narrative.

Starting with the setting for this novel, Satellite City is a cluster of space stations orbiting a post-apocalyptic Earth. Each space station resembles a skyscraper one might see in a city today. While the setting is important, the main focus is on the issues being faced by the characters who live there. While Satellite City may appear to be a utopia far away from the problems down on Earth, that couldn't be farther from the truth. This city exploits its people who spend day after day working to mine raw materials. In return, Satellite City provides protein paste to feed the workers, and a small salary.

After the setting, we have the characters who inhabit it, and the roles they play in that society. The primary character this story follows is a young worker named Troy.

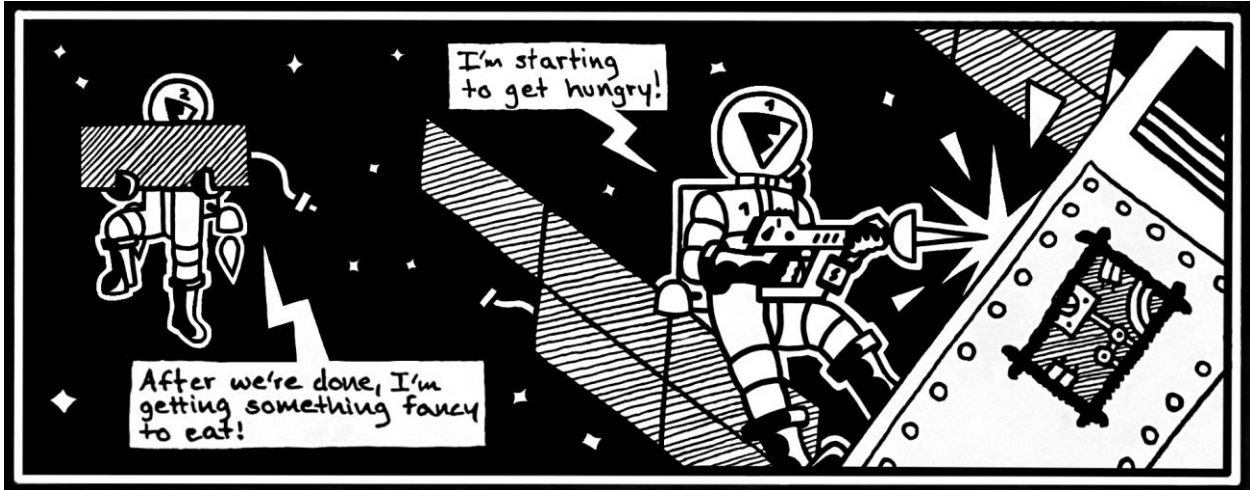
Techniques and Media

One of my main project objectives was expanding my skills with digital illustration. While I have experience with Adobe Illustrator, it was an important goal of mine to explore other options as well, or maybe different ways to utilize the same programs I already have. One way I chose to explore digital illustration outside of Adobe was to go back to my roots and try revisiting traditional illustration. It is common for many artists to create drawings on paper or bristol board, only to then scan and digitally-color them in. This method guaranteed quality line art with precise movement and contours, while also allowing the color flexibility only digital art can provide.

Another alternative was to learn a new, more intuitive digital illustration program such as Procreate. To do this, I had to get an iPad and Apple Pencil, but since this is an area of design I'm passionate about, I knew it would be worth it. The benefits of using Procreate are that I got the same precision as traditional pen and paper, but with the editing capabilities of digital illustration. I can also explore different brush types right on the program, making illustrations that appear to be made with a variety of media like paint, pastel, pencil, etc.

Outside of drawing and illustration, the topic of layout and typography is important to cover too. The layout for the graphic novel panels were a different type of challenge entirely. Using my previous experience with organizing page layouts, I decided to try a simple, straightforward grid approach. After looking through the graphic novel section of the Purchase College library, I found two great example comics: *Saga* (Vaughan, Brian K., and Fiona Staples), and *Waterloo Sunset* (Goring, Stephenson). Both of these comics helped me grasp a better idea of what my project would look like. When reading *Waterloo Sunset*, I noticed that the book was mostly grayscale. Feeling inspired by this, I chose to have my comic be black-and-white, with the added twist of color only being used on plants. When reading *Saga*, I noticed that while most of the book had the traditional white background, certain scenes were given a black background instead. I thought this creative decision really helped to create a sense of separation between two scenes, so I chose to use a black background only for pages set in space.

Finally, I needed to create several zines to be given away at the exhibition. Following an online guide, I successfully created 14 grayscale zines to be placed on the podium beneath my posters. The tutorial I followed called for an A4-sized document with eight individual panels, though I opted for letter-sized paper instead (How to Make Your Own Zine).



ORBIT Panel 13, 5/2025, Digital Illustration



ORBIT Panel 20, 5/2025, Digital Illustration

Summary

Overall, I feel confident in the pilot chapter of this story, and I'm excited to see what direction any future installments will take. This project proposes a rich story, from the issues that are being covered, to the unique art style that is being used. Having the opportunity to expand my skill set and grow as an artist and designer while also leaving the door open to new chapters has given me an exciting and enriching senior project experience.

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