

Growing Up in Miami Illustrated Story | Jessica Vachon



Image: Four panels depict the life of a woman in Miami. Read Artist Statement for narrative.

Artist Statement

My project is a series of illustrated scenes that show our potential growth alongside our city and our environment through the perspective of a girl growing up in Miami. The creative solution my piece offers is mainly centered around transportation and urban infrastructure, and adapting it to better suit our needs and our planet. Instead of using technology in contrast with nature, I think the best solution is to find a balance and work together in harmony with our surroundings.

In the first scene of the narrative I depicted a child riding her bicycle along the coast of South Florida. The colors are bright and the mood is light and airy to portray a sense of cheer and that carefree feeling we often experienced as children. The bicycle is symbolic of older technology and the beginning of the industrialism that would later negatively influence our environment.

The second scene depicts a preteen riding a school bus in a suburban neighborhood. The colors are still there but not as bright as the previous scene because in the sequence of the narrative this is the calm before the storm. The bus and suburban neighborhood with manicured lawns is symbolic of humans now shaping the landscape for their own convenience and not yet or just starting to realize the problems they are creating.

In the third scene we have a very familiar sight if you live in South Florida. The scene is of an adult stuck in gridlock traffic with obvious frustration apparent on her face. The atmosphere is dark and stormy showing the air pollution of CO₂ emissions from the vehicles and evidence of climate change weighing down on us. This scene is the representation of our current struggles and our need for change.

The final scene is a positive and bright future. The potential utopia of an urban landscape that works in harmony with nature is seen depicted through the window of a train and our main character, now an old lady, is at peace knowing the world her descendants now live in is a better and brighter place. I wanted the final scene to be a hopeful one that inspires viewers to look towards a bright future and come up with their own solutions and change to make this world a better place in which urbanization and our environment have come together in unity.

The piece resulting from this project is greatly influenced by my own experience growing up in Miami from my carefree youth to my struggles as a young adult with transportation and climate change. The style of this piece is also influenced by illustrations and animations like that of Disney and Pixar that are geared towards a younger audience because personally as an artist I'm really inspired by animation studios and how they tell stories and infuse emotion into their work. I wanted to do the same with my own work using color to show the mood and emotions, and using a single character as a focal point to guide young viewers through the narrative.