

# The Power of Visual Encoding: Ti Xu's 'Almost' Series Captivates with Subtle Narratives and Rich Emotions

*Ti Xu's 'Almost' series showcases her encoding personal experiences into compelling comics and illustrations, creating a world of subtle expressions.*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, July 17, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Ti Xu](#) is a Chinese illustrator based in New York. Trained as a product designer, Ti developed the systematic thinking required to create a holistic experience through objects and their relationship to people. As she gradually became drawn to the idea of furthering her vision about existence through visual storytelling, Ti decided to go into illustration for a freer and more visually engaging expression.

Major influences include Aubrey Beardsley, traditional Chinese woodcuts and brush paintings, and noir film and comics. "I have always appreciated hues, but linework in black and white has a much stronger appeal to me," says the illustrator. "Growing up I had been pretty much immune to the current trends in everything, I find charm and relatability in these 'outdated' things, composed solely of rhythmic linework and old films in black and white."

When it comes to storytelling, Ti integrates her own experience into comics – in a non-straightforward way. "I like to think of my creative process as encoding the truth. I value



Fig.1 Second piece of the illustrations in the exhibition



Fig.2 First piece of the illustrations

experience from real life because it is the starting point of all imagination and is closely linked to my emotions, which are the basis of my creative adventures," says Ti. "On the other hand, I avoid showing things outright. In part, this comes from my nature that feels insecure about laying my own experience bare to the public eye, but from the aspect of art, I consider this more intriguing when what is there leads people to wonder what is not there."



Fig.3 last two pages of the comic

The series entitled "Almost" is an excellent example of the artist's statements above. It consists of a short comic and two pieces of illustrations, all drawn in black and white digitally. The comic depicts the story of an unrealized romance between two introverts whose expressions of love are too subtle for each other to notice; as a result, the attempts to confess on both sides end in failure. The illustrations reveal the richness of the characters' emotional world. Adopting a matter-of-fact voice in storytelling, the comic presents little surface drama. Nevertheless, beneath the surface, there is a wealth of emotion and complexity. The illustrations complement the comic by portraying the hidden drama that the narrative does not explicitly convey.

The comic explores the theme of love at its inexperienced, awkward stage. "To me, the clumsiness at expressing love, romantic or not, at whatever stage, is more pure and sincere than when the way of communication is established or ritualized." "People who grow up in a culture that highly values a sense of propriety tend to handle interpersonal relationships as something fragile, avoiding moves that cause irreversible negative changes. Confessing to a friend is one such tricky situation. Figure 1 shows the confession from the man goes unnoticed as the woman casually puts the jacket he lent her into the washing machine, unconsciously destroying the letter he is too shy to give her. The words on the fragmented paper are illegible to a non-Chinese reader, yet the nature of them is clear when placed in the context of the whole story.

The first piece of the illustrations uses the motif of eyes, disguised as different forms of plants. The dewdrops are reminiscent of tears, a common symbol of sadness. The second piece uses hand-shaped fronds to evoke a sense of longing and disturbance. Across many mediums and genres, it is a custom to use the landscape as an insight to a person's subjective realm. By using these body parts, expressive imagery in themselves, as materials of a wondrous world, Ti aims to visualize the idea of "projection." "People project emotions onto what they sense from the world. We can even say that emotions serve as a filter to what they perceive."

Ti's current body of work spans across many different mediums, from comics to drawn and stop-motion animations. However, her interest and focus on storytelling stand out regardless of the

medium. "I see stories as the best stimuli for my creations," said Ti. "Stories have the natural power of make-believe, like the effects of dreams. For dreams, no matter how incredible the elements in them seem upon awakening, they are convincing and engaging when one is having them. I hope that, no matter what medium I use, I can make a convincing reality out of my visual stories."

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