

BRIEF B

Complex Narratives: The Library of Babel



The Brief:

We want you to create an outcome based on and inspired by the imaginary world of the short story 'The library of Babel' by Jorge Luis Borges.

Through this brief we challenge you to navigate in and create proposals for a complex (modern) world. You are free to focus on one element of the story, or focus on one possible book that could be found library of babel.

Work within the magic-realist world, or translate it to the current reality - but you should use the story as the basis to critique or highlight a complex contemporary issue or societal trend.



Figure 31. Dream, Video, 2023.

Delving into the intricate narrative of the short story, we were particularly captivated by the concept of characterizing the library as ‘the protector.’ In our interpretation, the protector assumes the role of an orchestrator, directing the movements of all inhabitants within the vast expanse of knowledge. This authority extends to controlling the flow of information, resulting in a state where the inhabitants lack free will. The narrative arc unfolds a compelling exploration of the consequences when not all books circulate through the infinite library, leading to a paradigm shift of imbalance and the subsequent loss of knowledge. Our art project aims to visually capture and convey the complexities inherent in these intertwined narratives.

Brief B: Complex Narratives

This Idea was partly based on the Principle of German mathematician David Hilbert's Infinite Grand Total Paradox.

A grand hotel with an infinite number of rooms and an infinite number of guests in those rooms. To challenge our ideas about infinity, he asked what happens if someone new comes along looking for a place to stay. Hilbert's answer is to make each guest shift along one room. The guest in room one moves to room two, and so on. So the new guest would have a space in room one.

$$n \rightarrow n+1$$

$$\infty \rightarrow \infty+1?$$

But what about when a coach containing an infinite number of new guests pulls up? Surely he can't accommodate all of them. Hilbert frees up an infinite number of rooms by asking the guests to move to the room number which is double their current one, leaving the infinitely many odd numbers free.

$$n \rightarrow 2n$$

$$\infty + \infty \rightarrow \infty?$$

(Britannica, 2023)

This Artwork also inspired us:

“Grand Hotel Paradox” by Elisabeth Kezia

“Grand Hotel Paradox explores the infinite possibilities within a two-dimensional plane of an image. It is an imaginary proposal to respond to the problem of limited space, which was reflected in both the physical shooting space and the bounding rectangle of the final digital photography.” (Print, 2023)

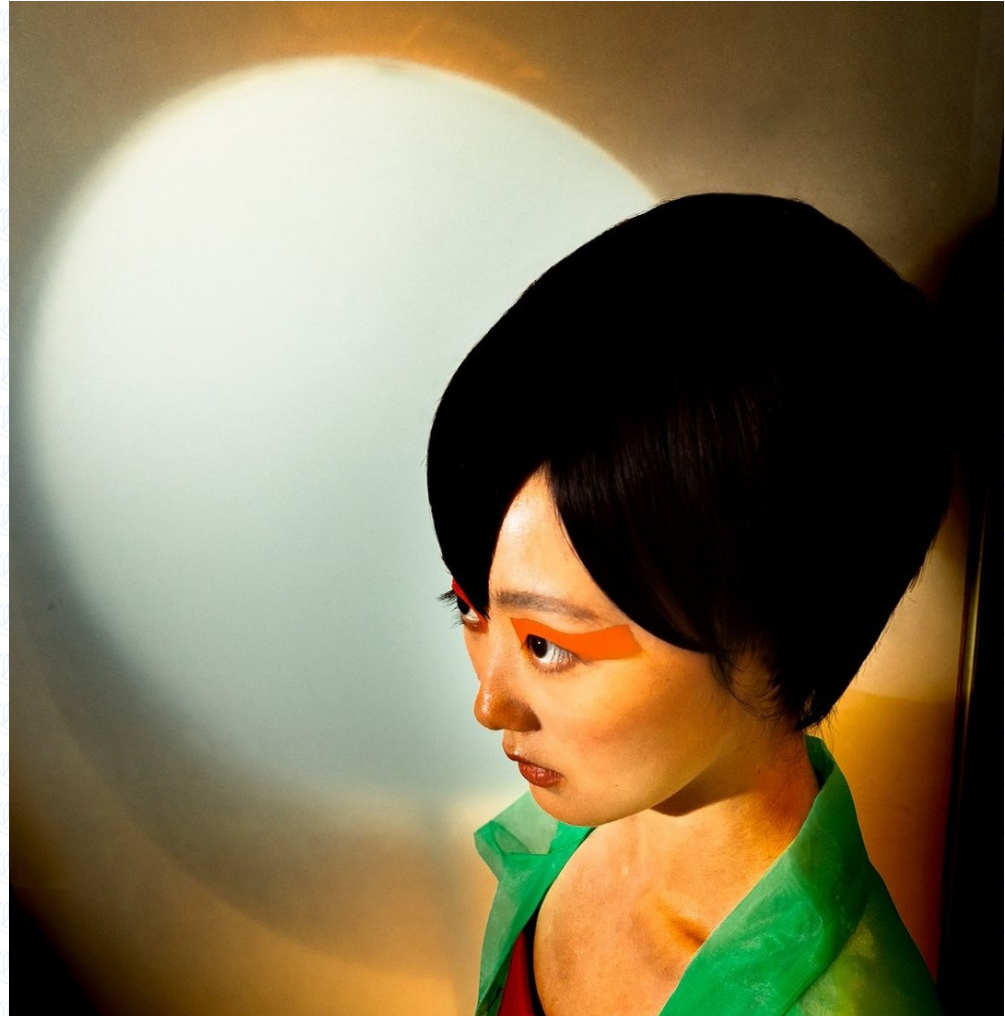


Figure 32. Elisabeth Kezia, ‘Grand Hotel Paradox’, 2021.
(Print, 2023)

Brief B: Complex Narratives

After receiving feedback on our idea, we wanted to continue exploring, so we used the aspect of “Complex Stories” as a basis, which yielded these results:

The exploration of the themes of time, nostalgia, and memories delves into the concept of time as an illusion, where the past and future are non-existent, and what has occurred cannot be altered. In this context, the present emerges as the only tangible reality.

One significant aspect of this exploration is the role of memories and nostalgia as a form of escapism. People often reflect on the past, seeking solace and happiness in the perceived simplicity, innocence, and certainty of bygone days. This inclination towards nostalgia serves as a shield against the harshness of the present reality, encompassing political, cultural, and social complexities. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that nostalgia can present an idealized, vague and unreliable view of history, glamorizing uncomfortable truths through the lens of memories.

Symbols and semiotics play a vital role in conveying these concepts, with the circus serving as a metaphor for nostalgia. The circus, often associated with escapism and connoting dreams, fantasy, and chaos, becomes a symbolic representation of the desire to return to a past era. In this narrative, the circus becomes a tool to tell a story about the bittersweet truth of time.

The proposed metaphor involves a circus that seemingly transports people back in time, allowing them to ‘re-live’ a life and yearn for a better future. However, the reality is that those entering the circus are merely exposed to an illusion of the past, and time continues to progress in the present.

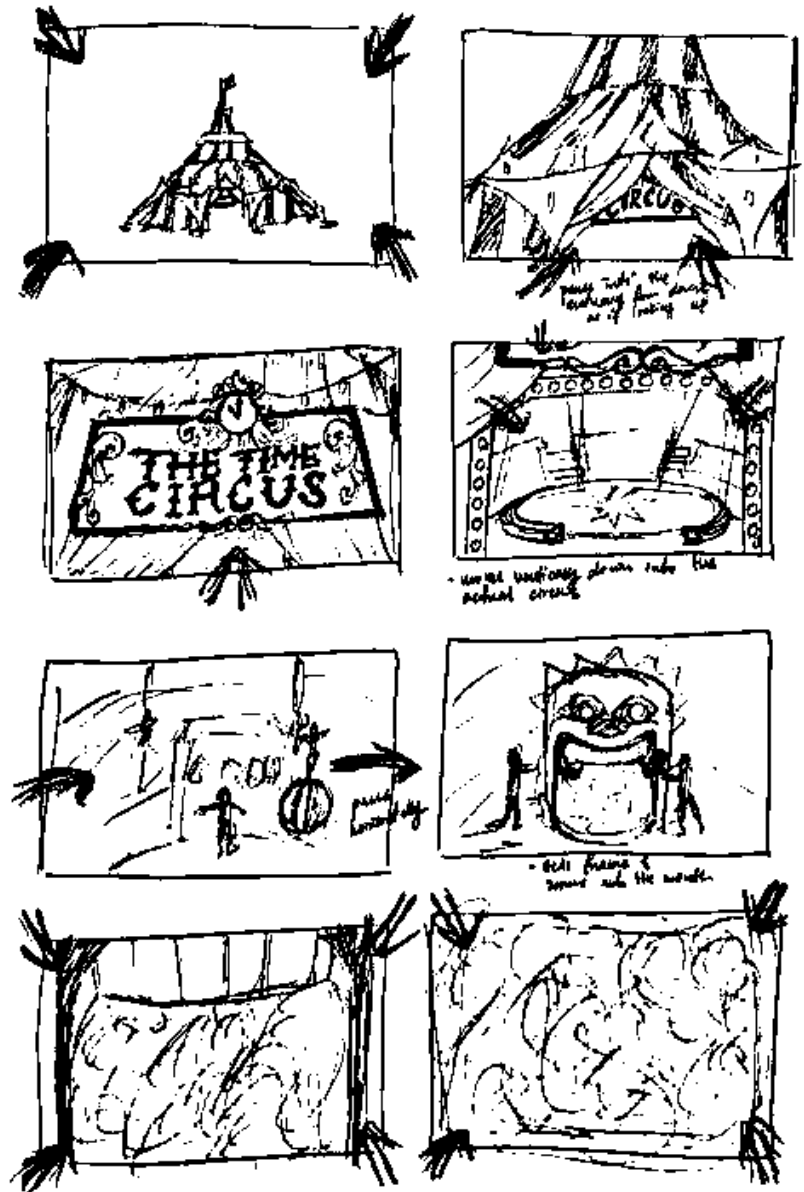


Figure 33. Sketch of Storyboard.

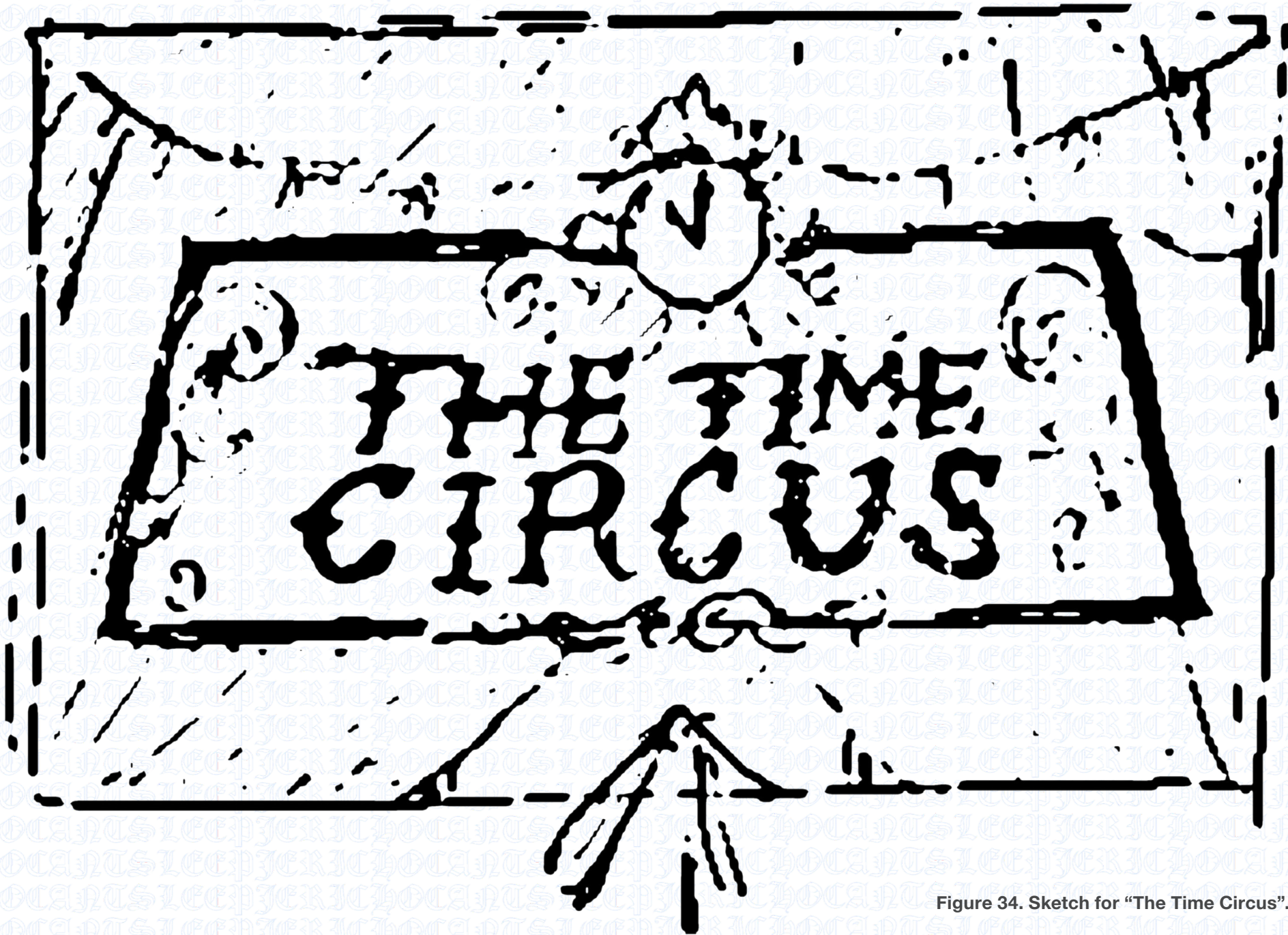


Figure 34. Sketch for "The Time Circus".



Figure 35. Digital Render of the Logo for "The Time Circus".

Mood board





Figure 36. Mood Board, ownership goes to the respective creators.



The requirement was to produce a “re-imagined storyboard that reflects your story,” with the key components of the research encompassing the book concept/narrative, the storyboard of the narrative, and a presentation that incorporates the research, process, and rationale.

To fulfill the storyboard component, we developed an immersive presentation and delivered it in a manner consistent with how we would present the story idea to both tutors and peers.

Final Visual Outcome



Figure 37. "The Time Circuit".

Upon entering, characters undergo an illusionary experience of a potent memory that clings to their ego, ensnaring them in a deceptive space. The narrative draws parallels with the Library of Babel, embodying an infinite amassment of characters and a suspension of time within the illusion, representing a decay from seeker to babblers.

In Narrative 1, the focus is on loss. The character grapples with nostalgia and sadness linked to a past loss, unable to accept its fate and consequently becoming mentally and physically entrapped in the past. Meanwhile, Narrative 2 explores wrongdoing, as the character relives past mistakes, acknowledging and evolving from them. This acceptance dissolves the memory, allowing the character to break free from the circus.

Leaving the circus signifies releasing the memory's grip on the ego, liberating oneself from the toll of the circus, which ages the body while keeping the mind in a static state. This departure is a symbolic act of regaining control over one's narrative.

The contextual mystery within the narrative centers on the circus itself and its intentions. The question arises: Is the circus inherently malevolent? This enigma adds depth to the storyline, prompting further contemplation on the nature and purpose of the surreal circus in the characters' lives.

Reflection on the project, personal creative journey, critical analysis of the achieved visual outcome, analysis of feedback, reflection on collaboration, and contemplation of experimentation and process.

Within the project's setting, the environment serves as the backdrop for the creative "re-imagination" of the storyboard. Employing Microsoft PowerPoint, a blend of still imagery, animation, and stock footage seamlessly incorporates research into the storyline, fostering its continuous evolution.

Navigating through the phases of conception, development, and creation presented an array of challenges, primarily centered around technical issues. Effective and fluid communication among involved parties fueled ongoing discussions about various project elements. Creative control remained unimpeded, with tasks and their visual or conceptual impacts thoughtfully distributed to encourage diverse creative input. While technical issues were eventually resolved by the project's end, the significance of careful planning for future projects remains a crucial consideration.

The project's strength emanated from the unique experience of collaborating with a single partner, deviating from the conventional four-member team structure (BRIEF A). This shift provided greater creative influence but demanded increased initiation, communication, and involvement. In a duo, the absence of a clear "person-in-charge" necessitated shared responsibility for upholding guiding principles, emphasizing the need to establish project direction from the outset. The absence of a language barrier between collaborators proved invaluable, fostering the natural growth and complexity of the conceptual narrative.

We received largely positive feedback on our presentation, accompanied by insightful suggestions for improvement. The project was well-received, earning the commendation of being labeled “the strongest story so far.” This acknowledgment was particularly gratifying, given our concentrated efforts on crafting a compelling narrative that reimagined the library of Babel within the context of a storyboard and the theme of complex stories.

One notable suggestion for enhancement involved adding another layer to the narrative, allowing characters entering the illusion through the time circus to choose whether to remain inside or leave at their discretion. While intriguing, this idea posed challenges when applied to complex stories. The concept of characters overcoming the illusion and then leaving parallels the structure of a dream, where awakening follows the resolution. Relating this to the project’s brief, the mystery surrounding the circus reflects the limits of human knowledge. To explore whether characters have left or still exist inside, defining the circus’s intention becomes crucial. Similarly, like the library, the pursuit of ultimate truth may not align with the library’s interests.

Another feedback point addressed the absence of nostalgic videos in the presentation. This was a deliberate technical choice, as we prioritized the narrative due to its perceived greater value within the limited presentation time.

Acknowledging the feedback about the clarity of the “dual-narrative,” I agree that a more focused approach could have been beneficial. By allocating specific segments to distinguish the two narratives and utilizing film for more effective communication of characters’ memories and appearances in the circus, the presentation could have been clearer.

A key takeaway for future development is the need to balance contextual and visual storytelling. The suggestion to emphasize how to visually bring the story to life and incorporate possibilities for the continuous narrative serves as a valuable guide for improvement. In conclusion, I am proud of the collaborative effort with Michelle and look forward to implementing these insights for future projects, ensuring an even more refined and impactful presentation.



Figure 38. Digital Render of the Circus.