

POSITIONS THROUGH CONTEXTUALISING

INTERMEDIATE PRESENTATIONS

DRAFT CRITICAL ANALYSES

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1: ON STYLE - Sontag, Susan

FROM READING LIST

In my project, I explore the relationship between memory and perception using both realistic and abstract illustration styles. Susan Sontag’s essay On Style reinforces my understanding that style is not an afterthought or decorative element, but an essential vehicle of meaning. Her statement that “form is content” directly informs how I approach visual storytelling—not just what I draw, but how I draw it, becomes part of the narrative. I use structured, realistic drawing to reflect the stability and clarity of memory, and expressive, unstable lines to capture the ambiguity and emotional texture of perception. Sontag’s text has encouraged me to see style as a conceptual tool that can communicate psychological states, allowing visual form to carry meaning even in the absence of literal or representational content. This perspective reshapes my design thinking, positioning illustration as a way of constructing, rather than simply representing, inner experience.

| | |
|---|------------|
| U2.2 | Anari Wang |
| <p>Susan Sontag's article “On Style” discusses the author's view that style and form are elements related to the message of the content and not just decorations floating on the surface. The author uses many examples to support this view, such as Franz Kafka, whose work is itself a demonstration of this view in modern literature-content and form are interdependent and inseparable. Style plays a role in enriching the content of his works, expressing emotions and narratives. I chose this article as a reference for my project because in my project I tried to use illustration (both realistic and abstract) to show my memories of my upbringing and to try to perceive the situation from the point of view of who I am in the present. Illustration is an important form of expression in my projects and a way to show my personal style, while at the same time it becomes the content. In this project, the content is for me an image, a graphic, a composition, not just words. This style is therefore very important in the application of my work, and the article has given me a new perspective on how to use illustration as a way of integrating style and content, and the writing style of Susan Sontag shows the central thesis of the article, where all the arguments and the logic of the article are rational, and the content conveys the message and helps us to build the logical framework step by step. The content conveys information to us while helping us to build a logical framework step by step to help us better understand the concept of parallelism between style and content. Therefore, the author's style of writing already conveys the message to us, which also inspired me how to convey what I want to show - the gap between memory and perception - through the overall layout and style without focusing on the specific content of the illustration, and at the same time, her article challenges the modern graphic communication design, which needs to be accurate in conveying the message in our daily study, but the style of form is more important when it fits the theme. In everyday learning we need to convey information accurately, but style and form are more aesthetically pleasing when they fit with the subject matter. In the text, the author suggests that style is not a meaningless adornment, making it clear to me that I need to consider the rationality of style when creating visual presentations, not just the aesthetic. My abstract graphic or realistic memory images are used as a way to express “memory” and “perception”, and I have spent more energy thinking and trying to harmonize these two very different forms of illustration, while at the same time, better expressing My past and present mental state. Therefore, I thought that I could try to use unstable lines to express my perception. Memory may have a relatively small gap with the past, while the part of perception may change in understanding due to the passage of time, and unstable lines and structures are a way of visual presentation to reveal the emotions of the past. On the level of memory, I think I can use a more stable and realistic way to show the vague memories of the past, and use simple lines to collide with the sense of perception. Because the perception of the past that I am presenting now is a mode of delayed understanding of the mental state at that time, there is a gap between it and the memory, and this gap is also unstable. The two intertwined ways as my visual style also show my struggling inner emotions, which is also an inner phenomenon, in line with the author's idea that style and content are inextricably intertwined.</p> | |

2: Ingo Giezendanner's - Sloppy Sleep

Ingo Giezendanner's *Sloppy Sleep* offers a compelling example of how perception can be translated into visual form without relying on technical precision or conventional composition. His spontaneous, monochromatic sketches—created in a meditative, half-asleep state—foreground the immediacy of experience over the accuracy of representation. This perspective has deeply influenced both the theme and the visual direction of my own project. By observing how Giezendanner allows intuition and subjectivity to guide his hand, I began to question whether letting go of visual control might allow me to express the unstable and often delayed nature of personal perception. His approach encouraged me to narrow the focus of my theme—from a broad reflection on memory and perception to a more tangible symbol: the suitcase—and to explore how minimal, intuitive drawing might better capture the emotional texture of remembered experience.



RECAP


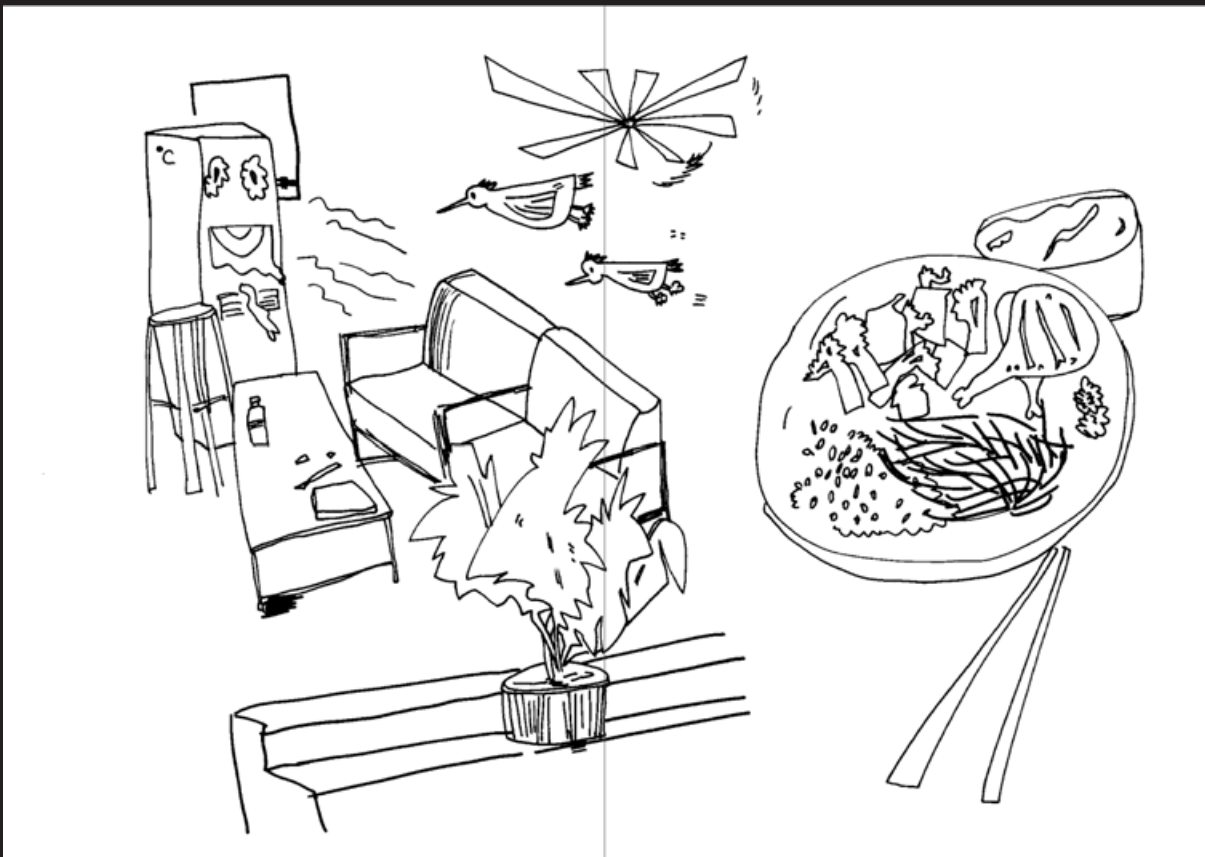



Content:
Growth journey and stages High school (Hangzhou)/University (Los Angeles)/Graduate school (UK)

Memory Specific memory scene

Perception Vision, felling, hearing, smell, touch and taste

Method:
Combining text with small illustrations Record the specific scenes in my memory by writing.
The small illustrations appear like draft notes, visually presenting the images behind the text.

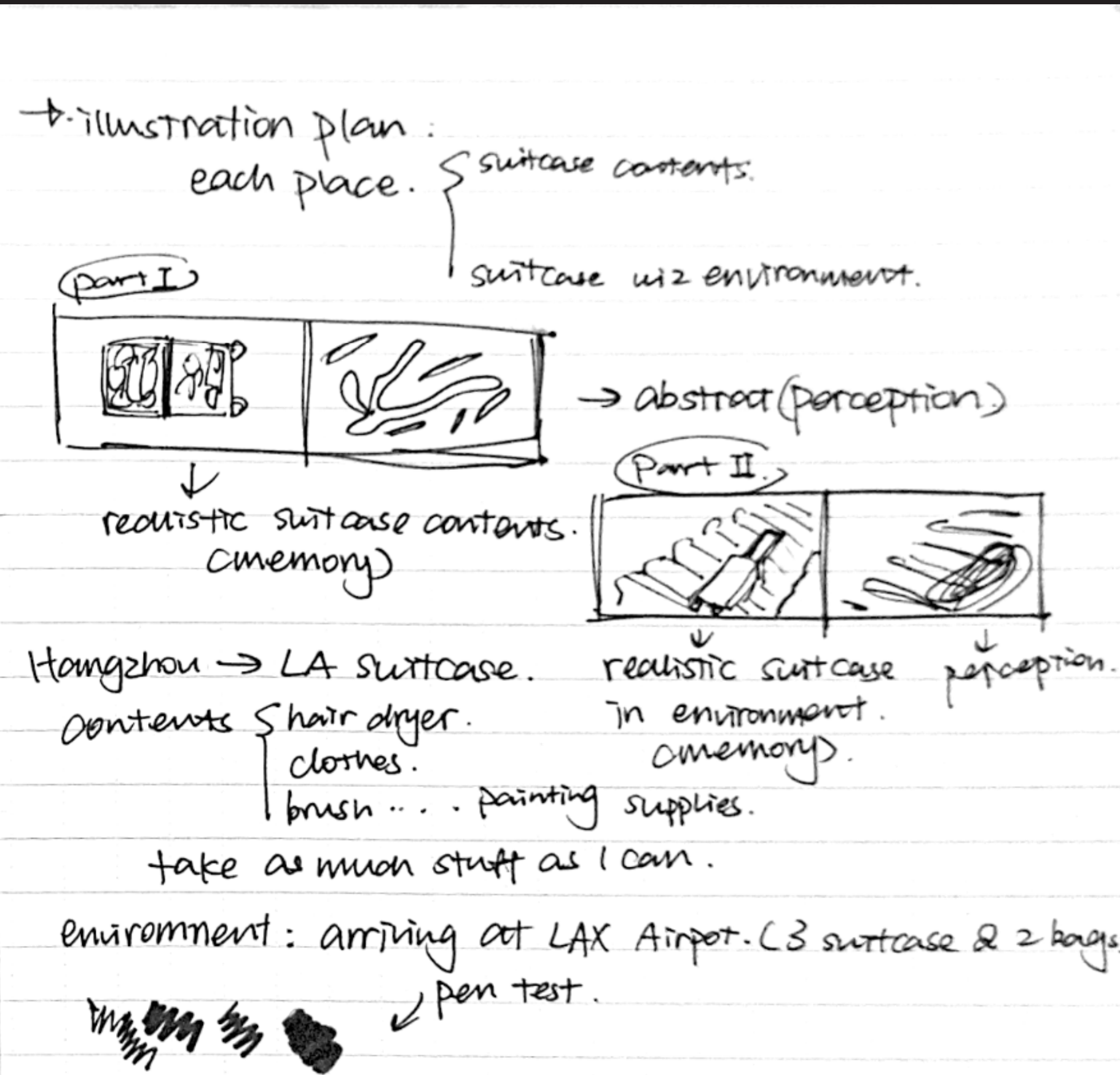
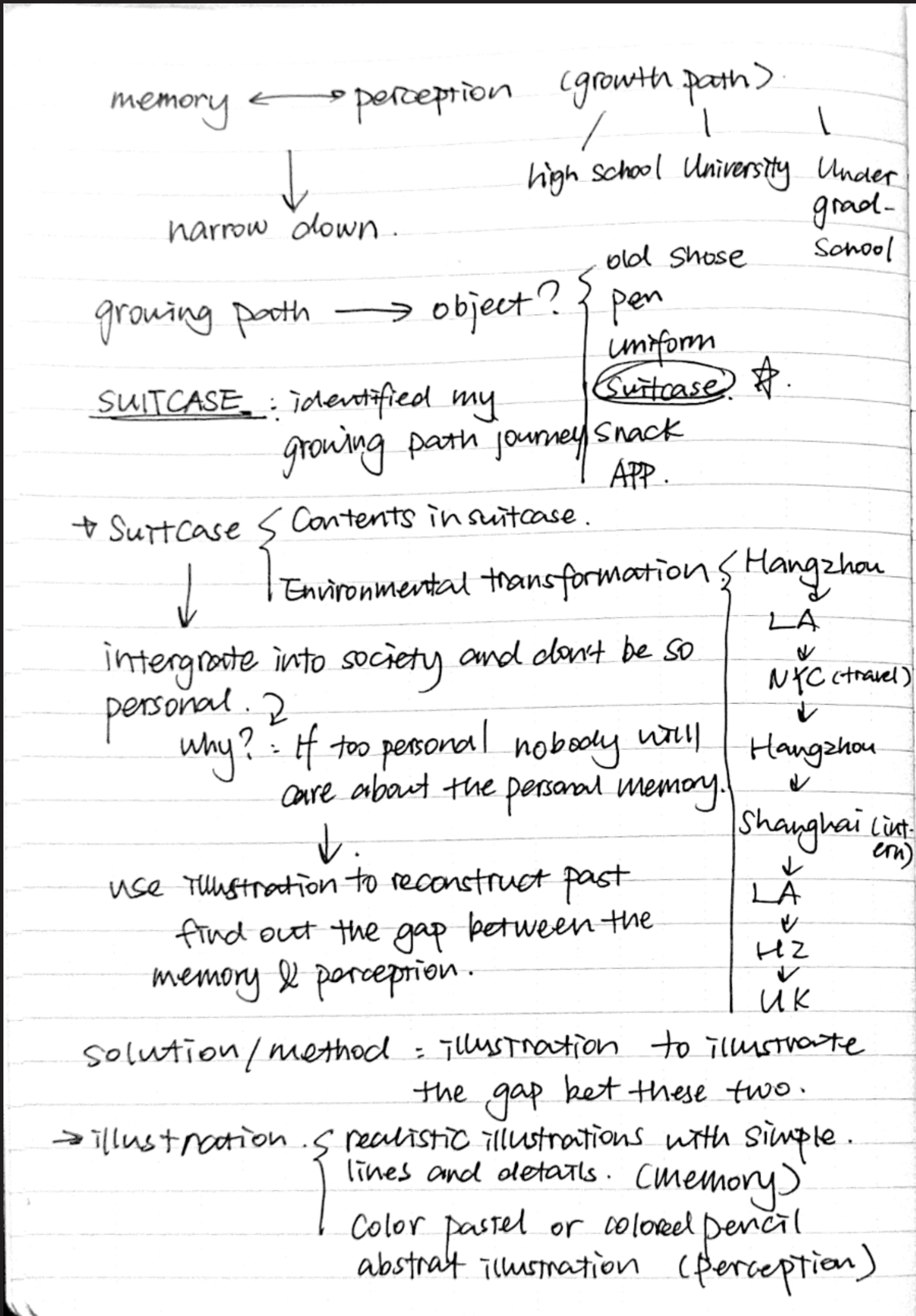
I try to use illustration to explore the gap between perception and memory in my personal growth, expressing subjective experience

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>I remember the summers during my three years of high school in Hangzhou — it was always [so hot it felt suffocating].</p> <p>The [ceiling fans spun endlessly], the [air conditioner hummed nonstop], yet they couldn't chase away the [waves of heat].</p> <p>During breaks, everyone would swarm to the back of the classroom, [chattering away]; some [laughed so hard they bent over], some [leaned by the window gazing at the playground]. Inside, someone always used [thick textbooks to cover their face], sneaking in phone time or [napping on the desk]. After school, we'd head to English tutoring in small groups, memorizing vocabulary, doing exercises, with [the air filled with the smell of stationery, paper, and sweat].</p> |  |  |
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THINKING PROCESS

“GROWTH” AS A CONCEPT FELT BROAD AND ABSTRACT, LACKING A CLEAR VISUAL FOCUS.

Through reflection, I realized that the suitcase has accompanied me through every transition—it carried not only physical belongings, but also psychological states of departure, arrival, and adjustment. Therefore, I chose the suitcase as the visual anchor of my project. By exploring its changing contents and contextual presence, I aim to visualize how memory and perception manifest across different stages of life.



THINKING PROCESS

To more concretely express the interplay between memory and perception during my personal growth, I divide the suitcase into two visual entry points:

1. The contents inside the suitcase

These objects not only reflected practical needs but also symbolized my emotional state, expectations, and a sense of psychological security. They act as visual traces of memory and illustrate how I related to each environment at that time.



THINKING PROCESS

2. The suitcase in relation to the environment

As an external object, the suitcase's position and state within different settings reflect how I perceived and interacted with my surroundings. These spatial relationships mirror my own emotional and physical presence in those moments.



VISUAL EXPERIMENT #1

Memory:

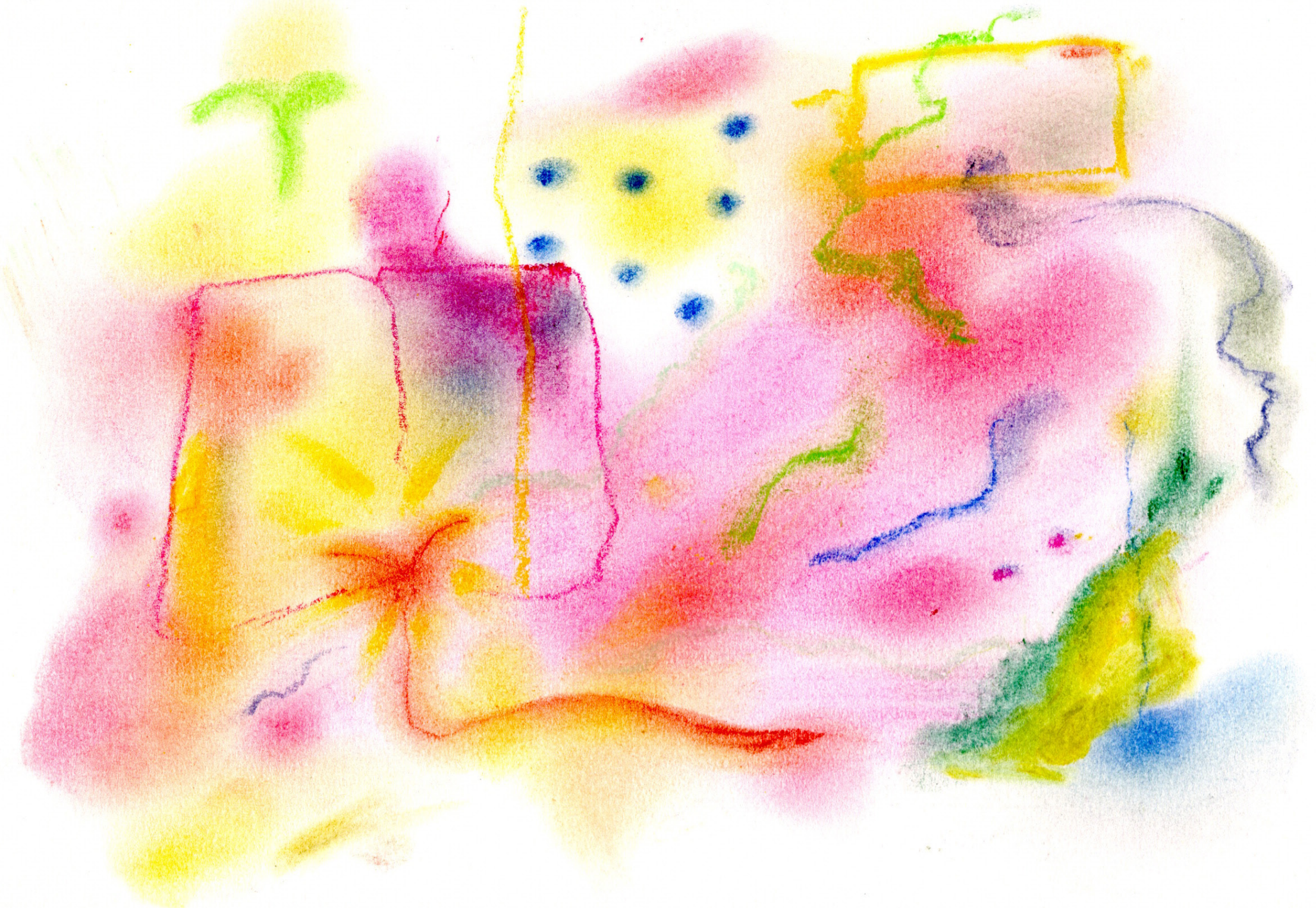
I use black, realistic line drawings to depict specific objects and scenes, representing my structured and reflective recollection of the past. The black-and-white aesthetic conveys clarity and control, emphasizing a reconstructed view of memory.

HANGZHOU → LA



Perception:

I use abstract patterns made with soft pastels to represent emotional and intuitive perception. These colorful shapes and unstable lines symbolize my immediate, often ambiguous responses to the environment—feelings that are hard to define in words.

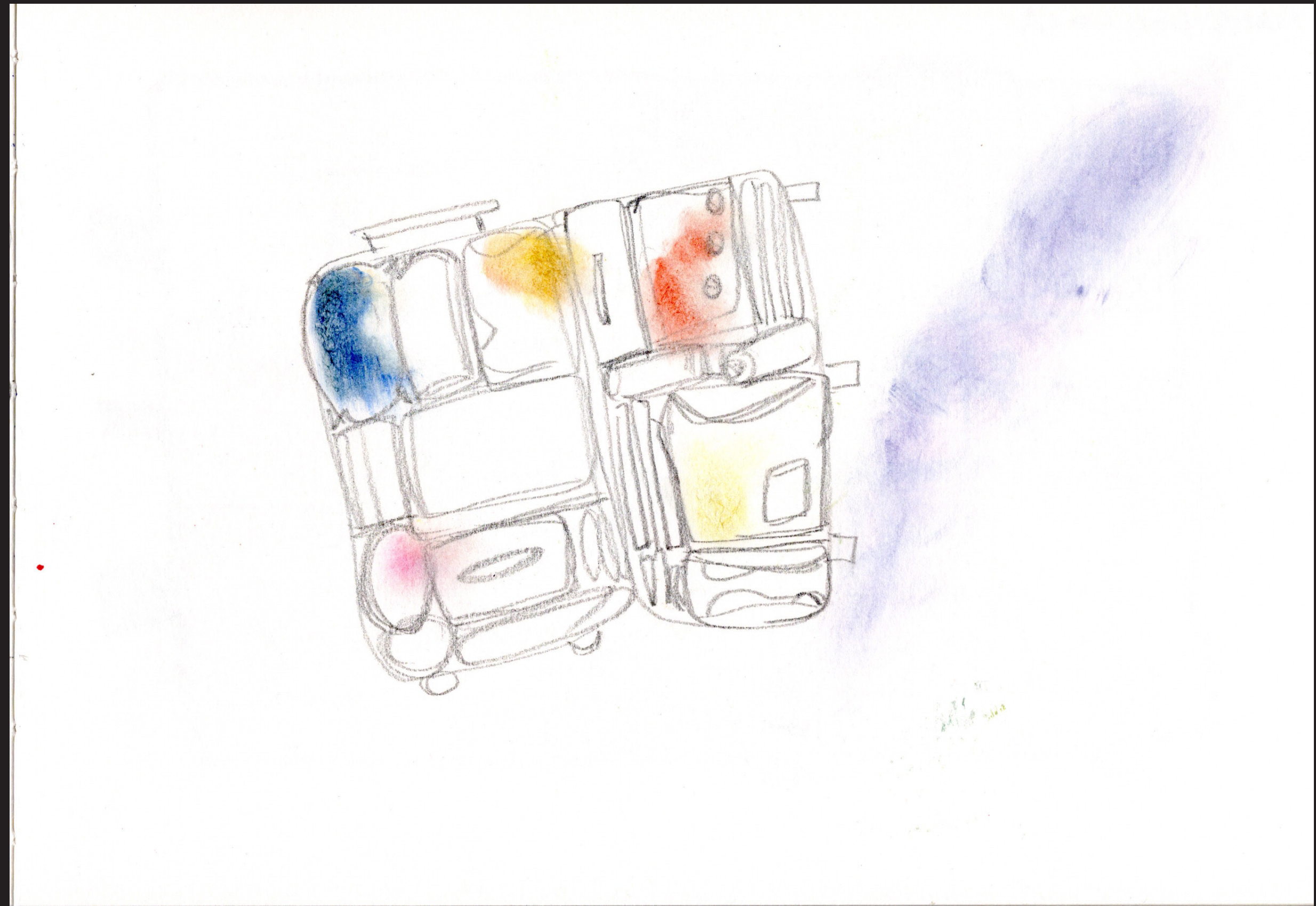
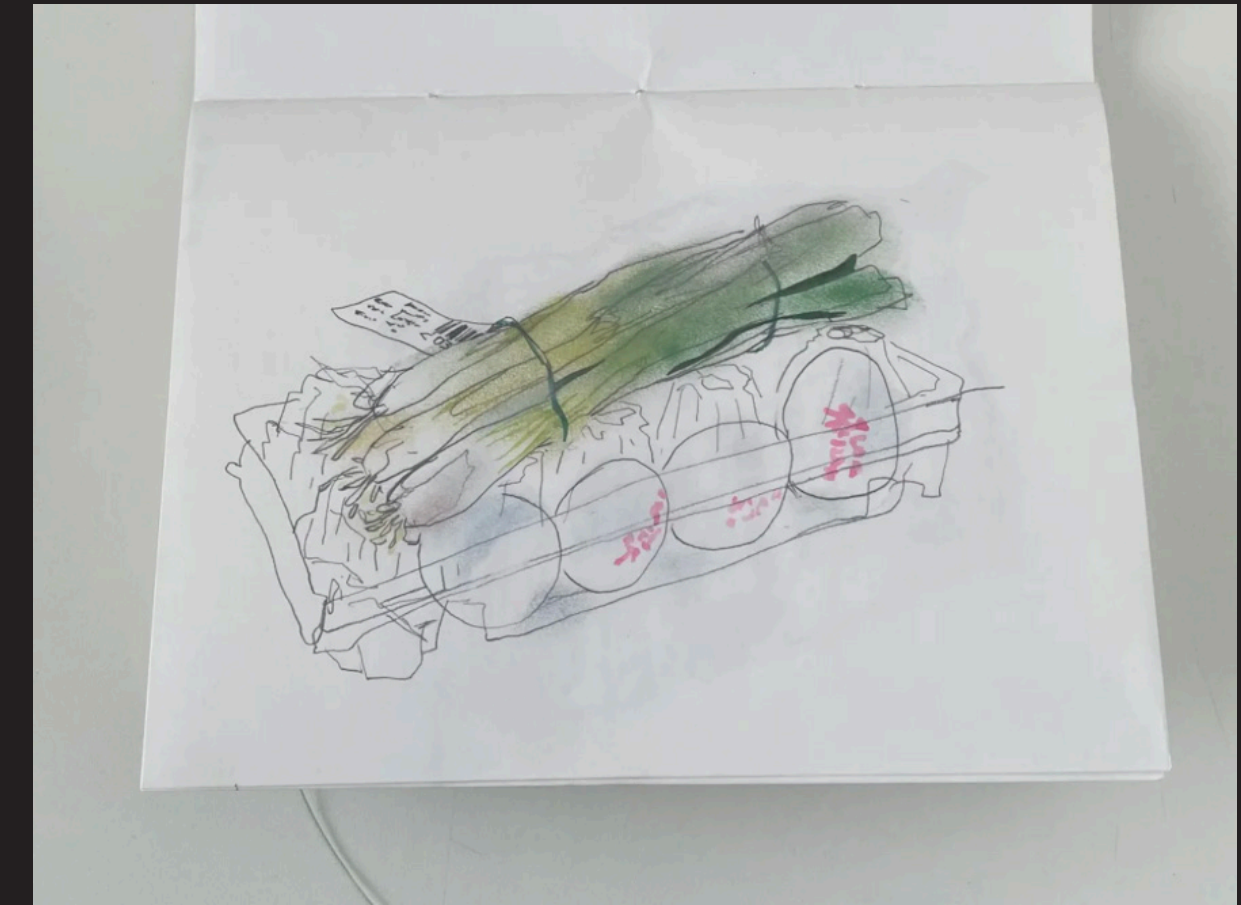


VISUAL EXPERIMENT #1

I use pencil drawings to depict the items inside my suitcase from memory, representing clear and structured recollection. On top of that, I overlay pastel patterns to express my emotional perception. The combination of memory and perception in one image reflects how emotions alter and reshape the way we remember.

For example, I packed clothes for all seasons before going to Los Angeles. By adding both cool and warm colors over the sketch, I visualized my anxiety about the unknown. This combination of realism and abstraction reflects the overlap between memory and perception.

reference



POSITIONS THROUGH CONTEXTUALISING

FINAL PRESENTATION

“I TOOK MY SUITCASE TO LOS ANGELES”

RECAP

I defined my theme around the suitcase to explore memory and perception. I analyzed On Style and Sloppy Sleep as key references, and chose to present my journey from China to Los Angeles in a zine format—using black-and-white lines for memory and pastel textures for perception.

memory ↔ perception (growth path)

↓

narrow down.

growing path → object?

SUITCASE: identified my growing path journey

old shoes
pen
uniform
Suitcase ★
snack
APP.

→ Suitcase { Contents in suitcase.
↓
Environmental transformation { Hangzhou
↓
LA
↓
NYC (travel)
↓
Hangzhou
↓
Shanghai (int-
ern)
↓
LA
↓
HZ
↓
UK

integrate into society and don't be so personal. ?
why? : If too personal nobody will care about the personal memory.

↓
use illustration to reconstruct past
find out the gap between the memory & perception.

solution/method : illustration to illustrate the gap bet these two.

→ illustration { realistic illustrations with simple lines and details. (memory)
Color pastel or colored pencil
abstract illustration (perception)

→ illustration plan : each place. { suitcase contents.
suitcase w/2 environment.

Part I

→ abstract (perception)

↓
realistic suitcase contents. (memory)

Part II

↓
realistic suitcase in environment. (memory)

↓
perception.

Hangzhou → LA suitcase.
contents { hair dryer.
clothes.
brush painting supplies.

take as much stuff as I can.

Environment : arriving at LAX Airport. (3 suitcase & 2 bags)

pen test.



CRITICAL QUESTION/IDEA

Theme:

Using the format of a zine, I illustrate my journey from China to Los Angeles for university, exploring the suitcase as a vessel of personal memory and perception—visually expressing the relationship between emotions, space, and objects.

Critical Question:

Is there a gap between how I perceived my experience during the journey and how I remember it now?
Can this gap be communicated and felt by viewers through visual style and illustration?

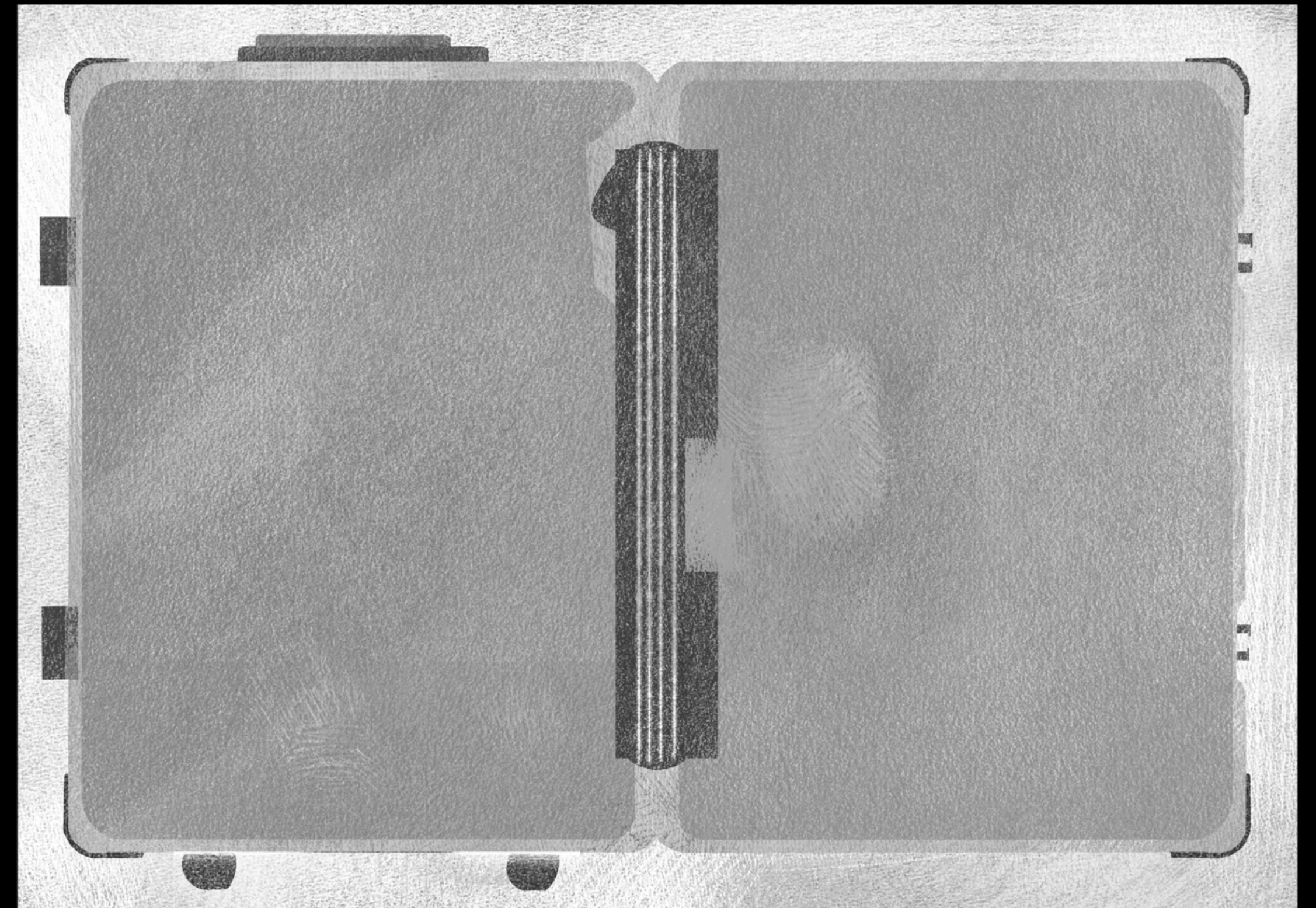
EXPERIMENT

WHY DIGITAL PAINTS?

Editable and reversible nature, which mirrors the way memory works. Memories are not fixed—they are constantly rewritten, layered, and reshaped by time and emotion. The ability to undo, overlay, and modify allows me to visually express the instability and fluidity of personal recollection, especially when layering perception over structured memory.

WHY PENCIL BRUSH TEXTURE?

I chose pencil textures to represent memory because of their soft and fragile qualities. Unlike ink, pencil lines are more tentative—like vague images in the mind. The grainy texture of the pencil adds a sense of intimacy and subjectivity, reinforcing the idea that memory is personal, delicate, and always open to reinterpretation.



EXPERIMENT

COLOR CHOICE

I chose black, white, and grey for memory to suggest clarity, structure, and neutrality—like stored, processed images in the mind.



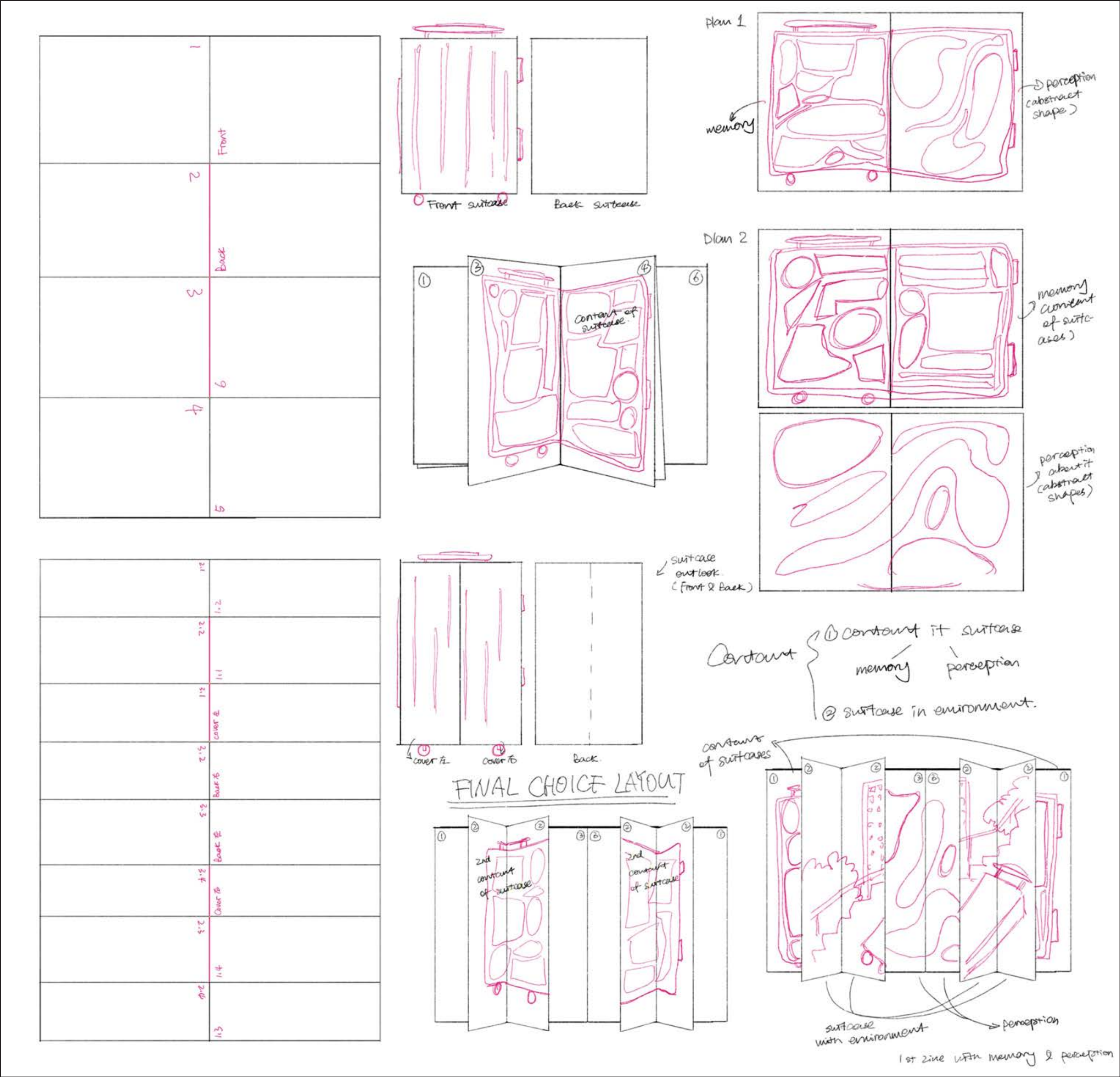
In contrast, I used color for perception to emphasize emotional intensity and subjectivity. Color here is not realistic, but symbolic—it helps express mood, uncertainty, and inner tension rather than represent external reality.



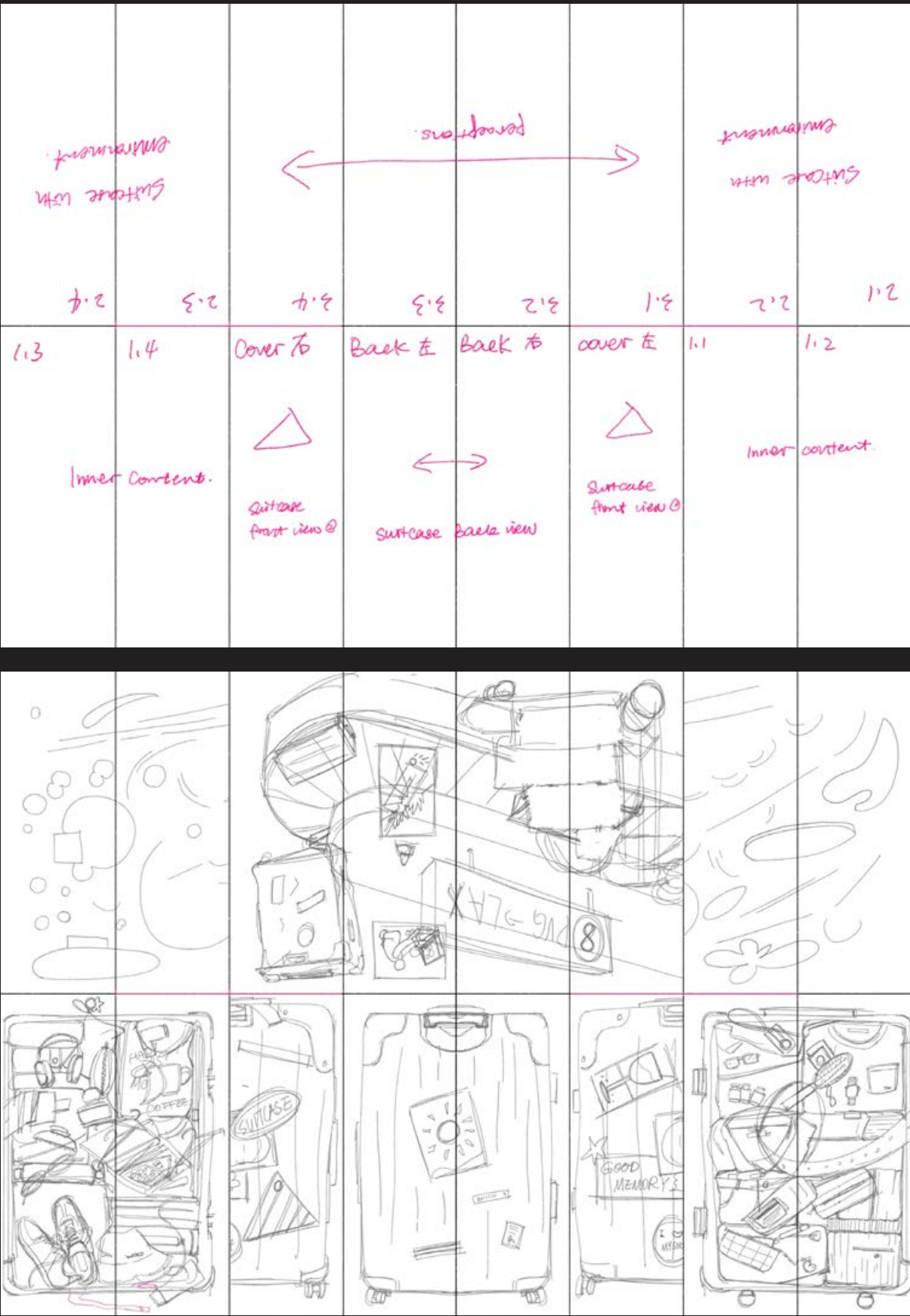
ZINE LAYOUT DESIGN

I'm going to present my ideas in the form of zine.

When deciding on the production of the zine, I came up with two different plans and made some attempts at layout. Ultimately, I chose the second approach because I hope that the entire visual memory can be seen layer by layer, which also resonates with the act of opening a suitcase.

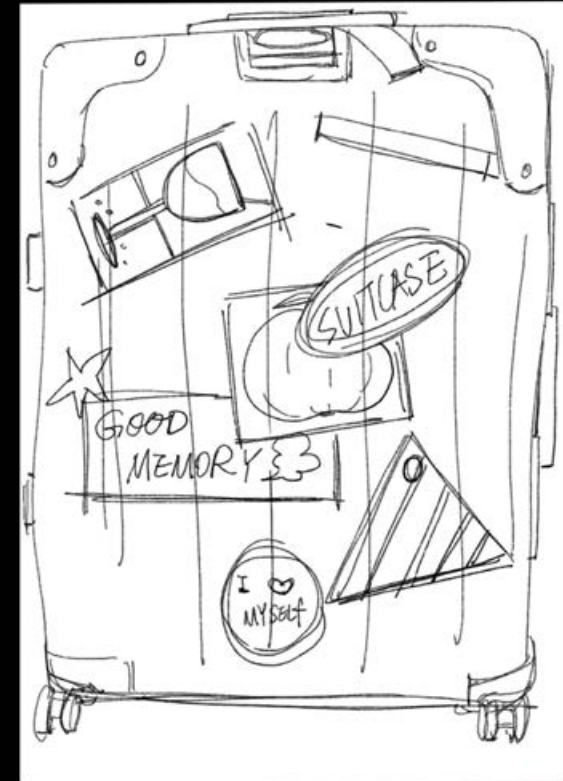


From items to space, cover/back cover: Front and back of the suitcase, Inner pages: Actual contents of the luggage carried - The relationship between the suitcase and the new environment - My subjective perception of this memory

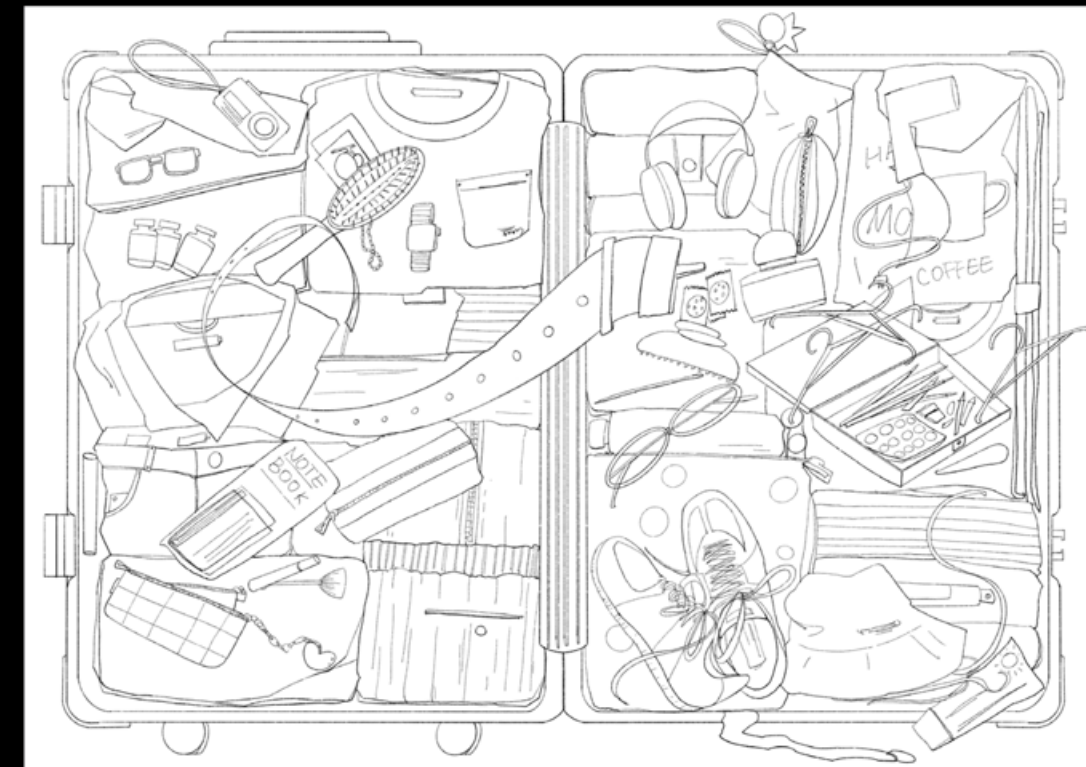
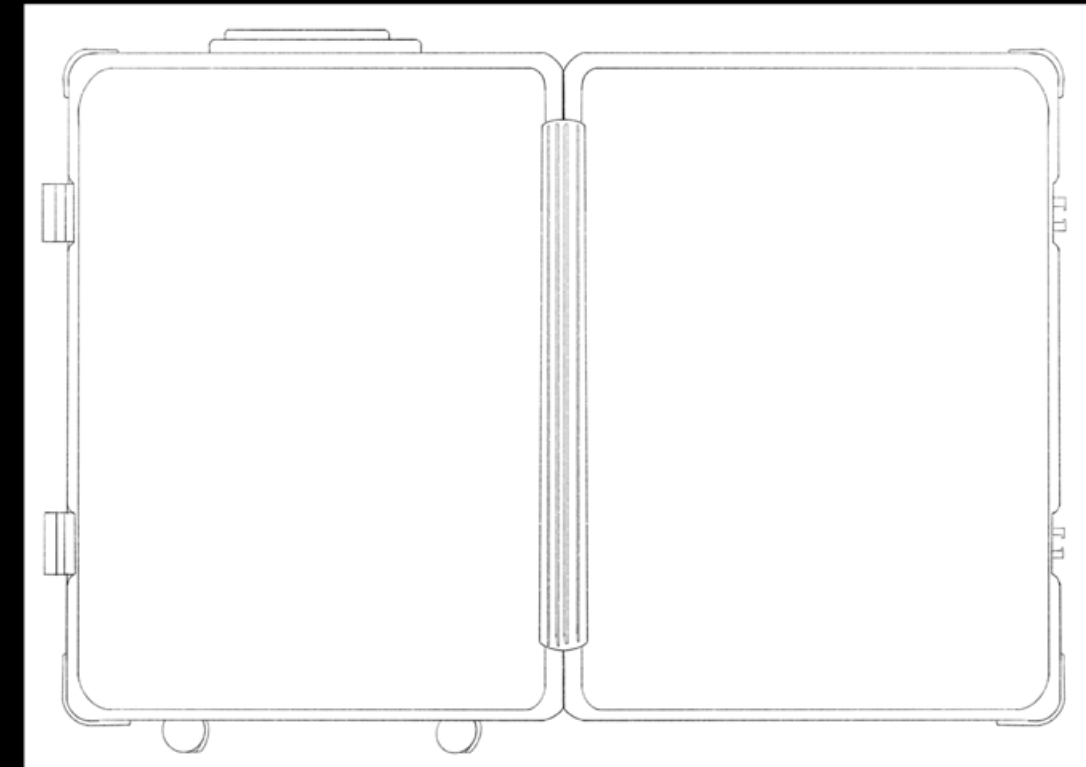
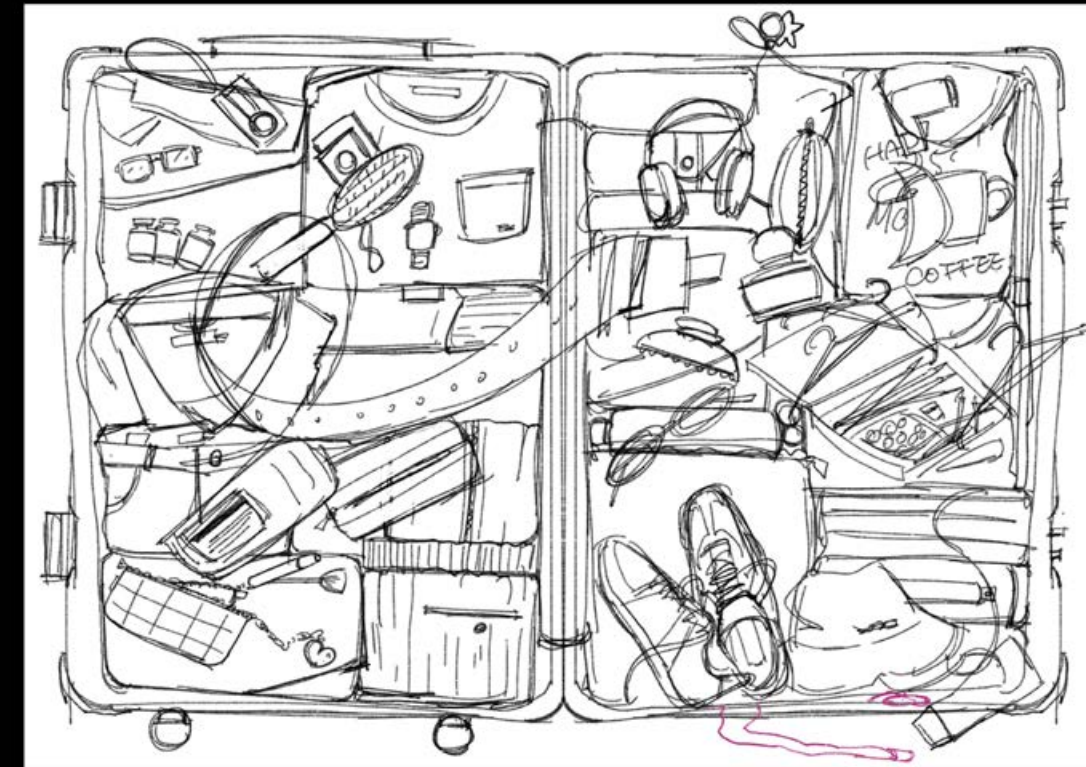
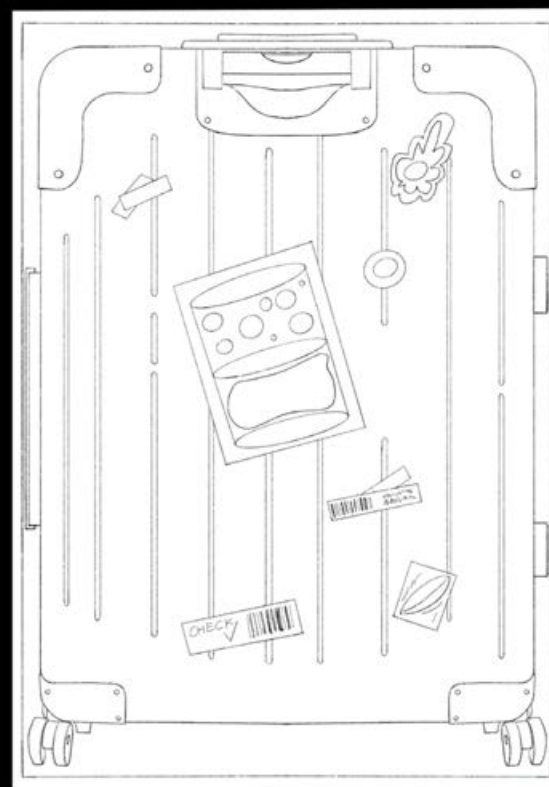
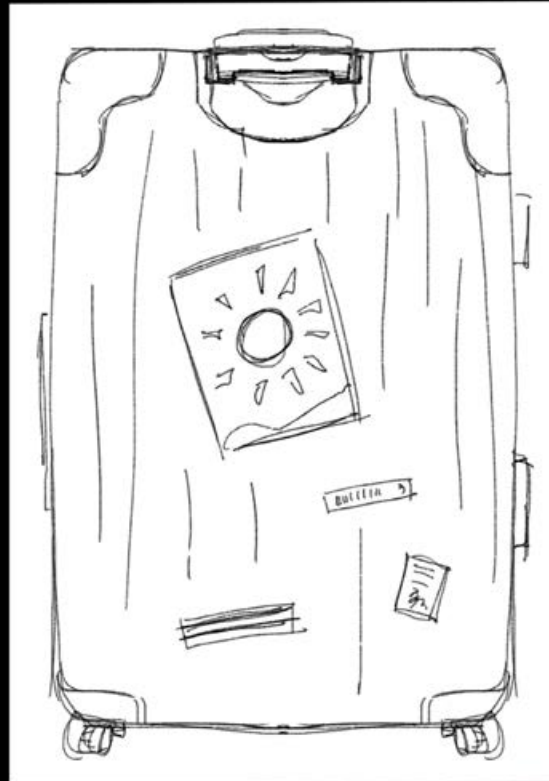


#1 memory

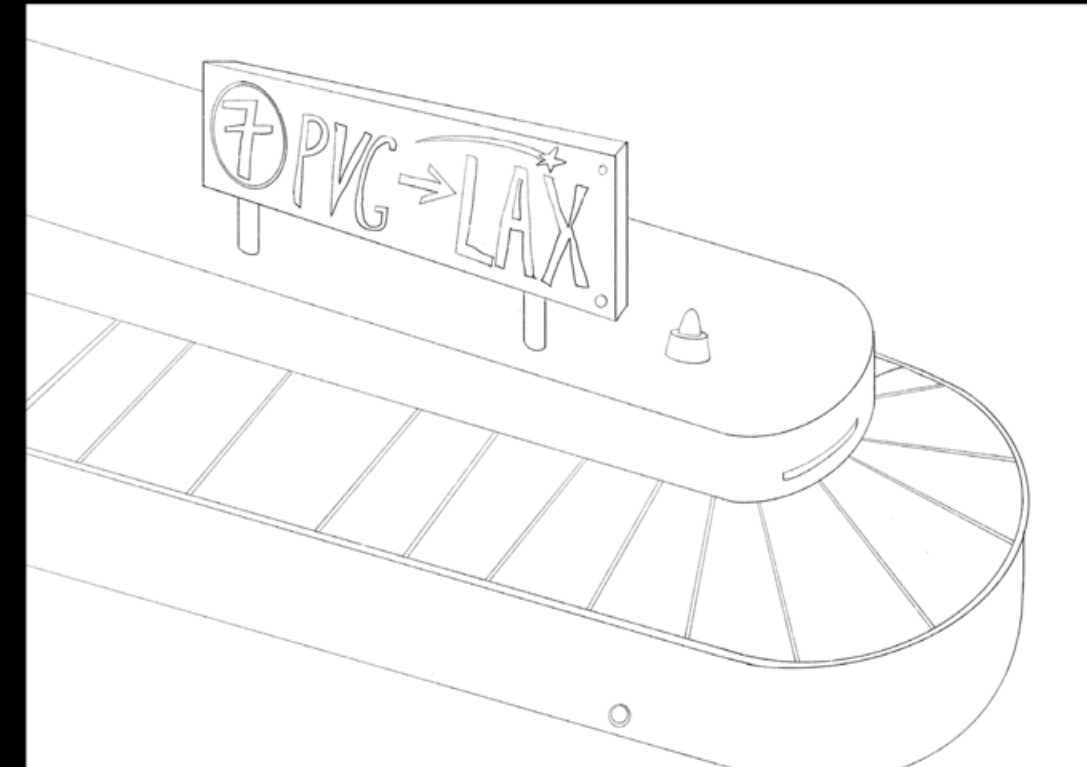
cover



back

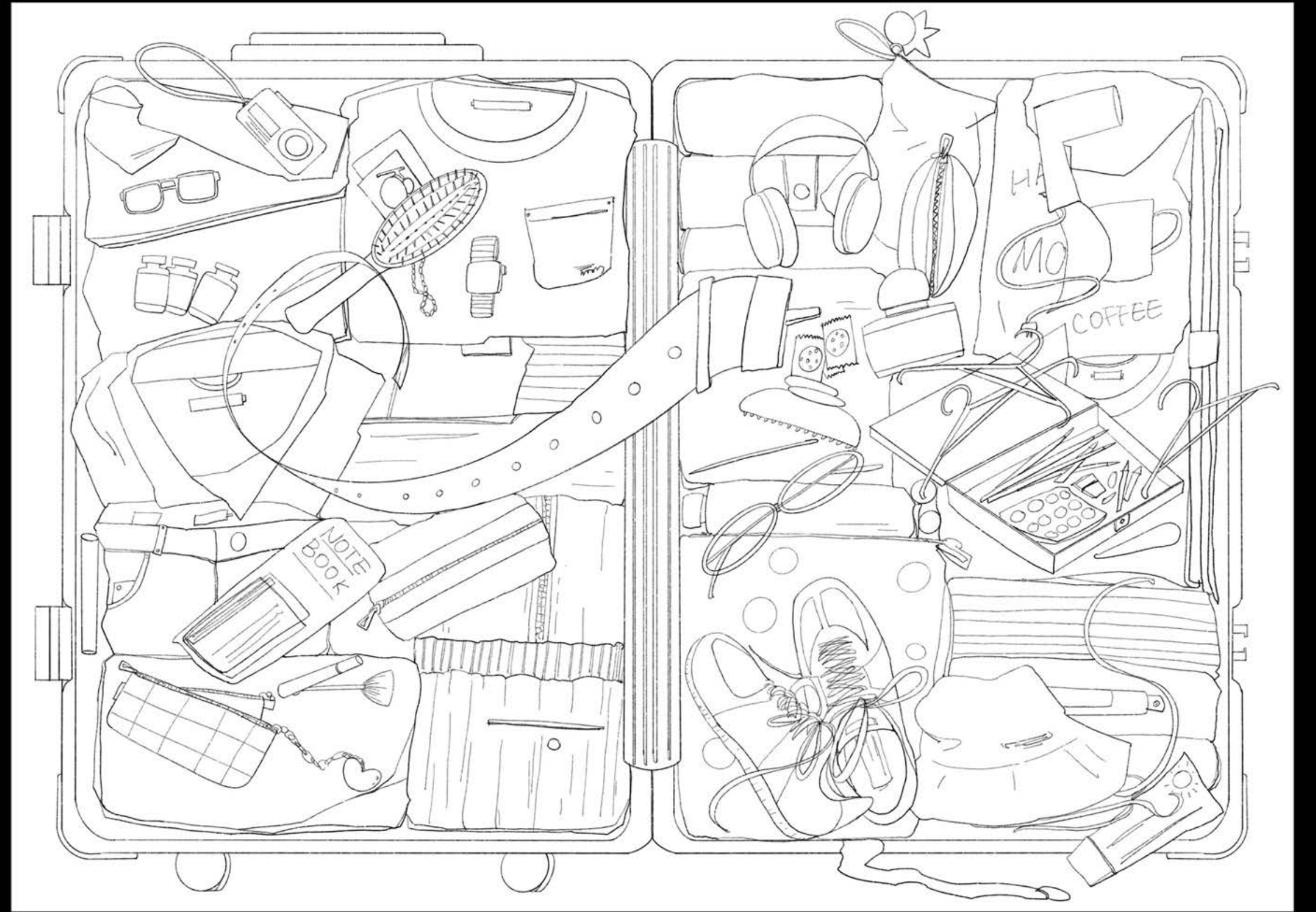
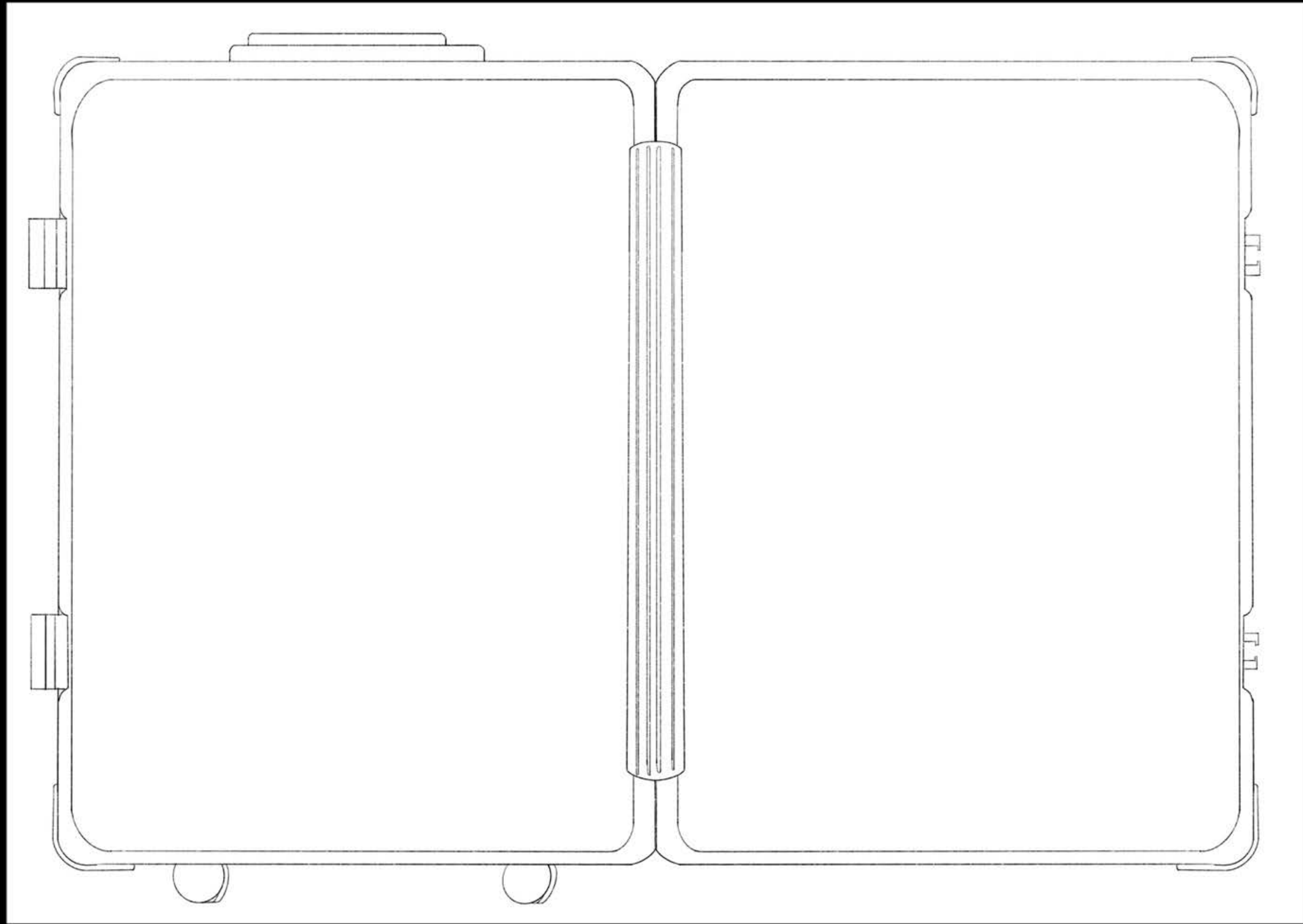


#2 memory

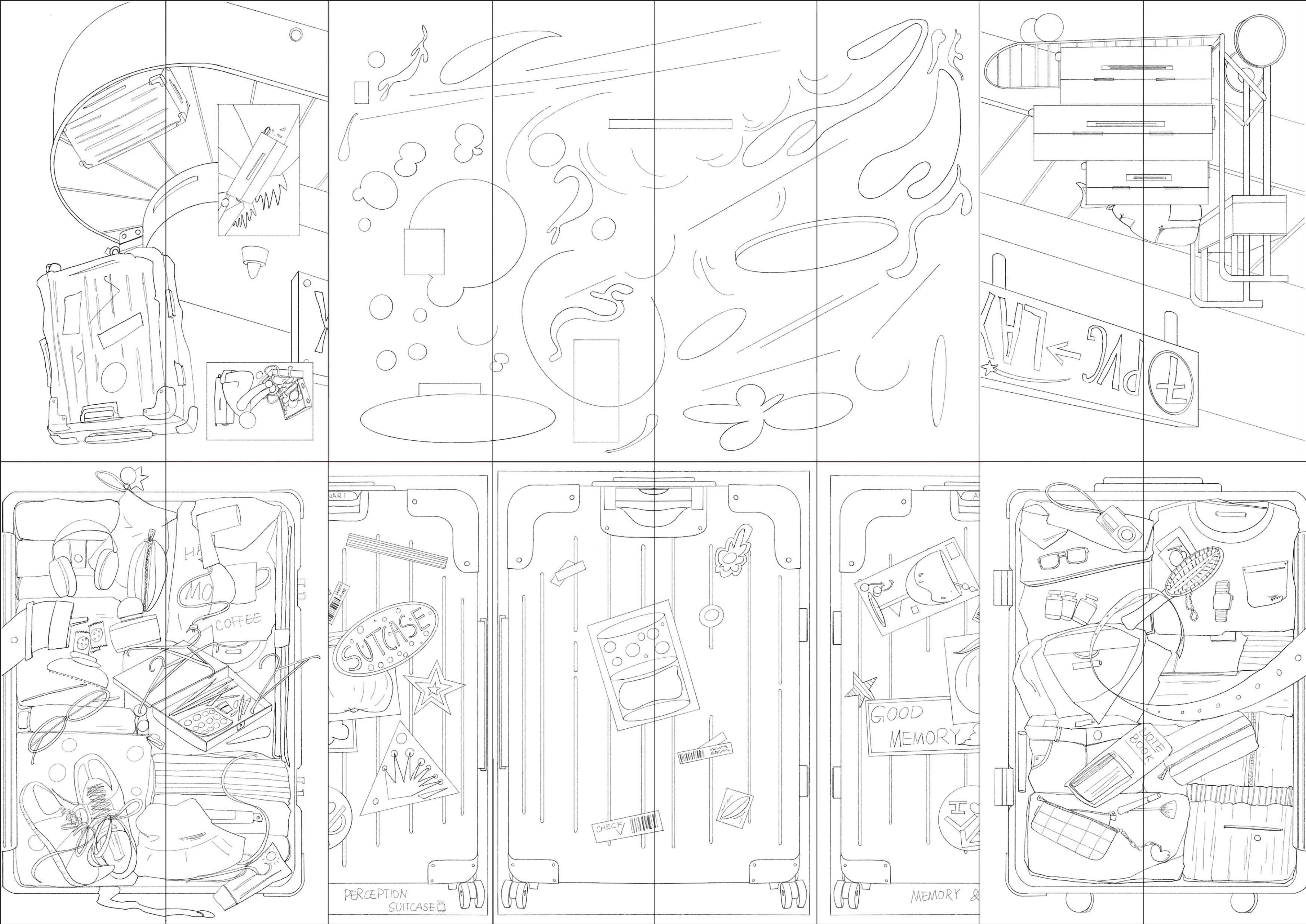


#3 perception

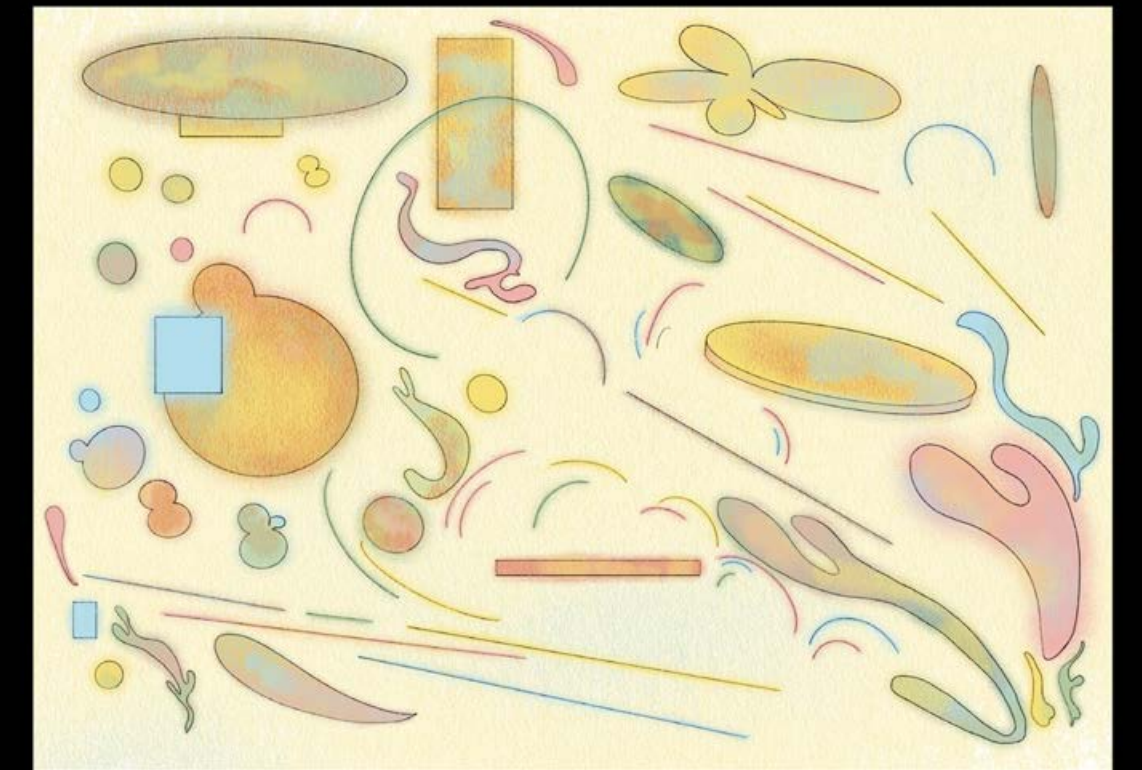
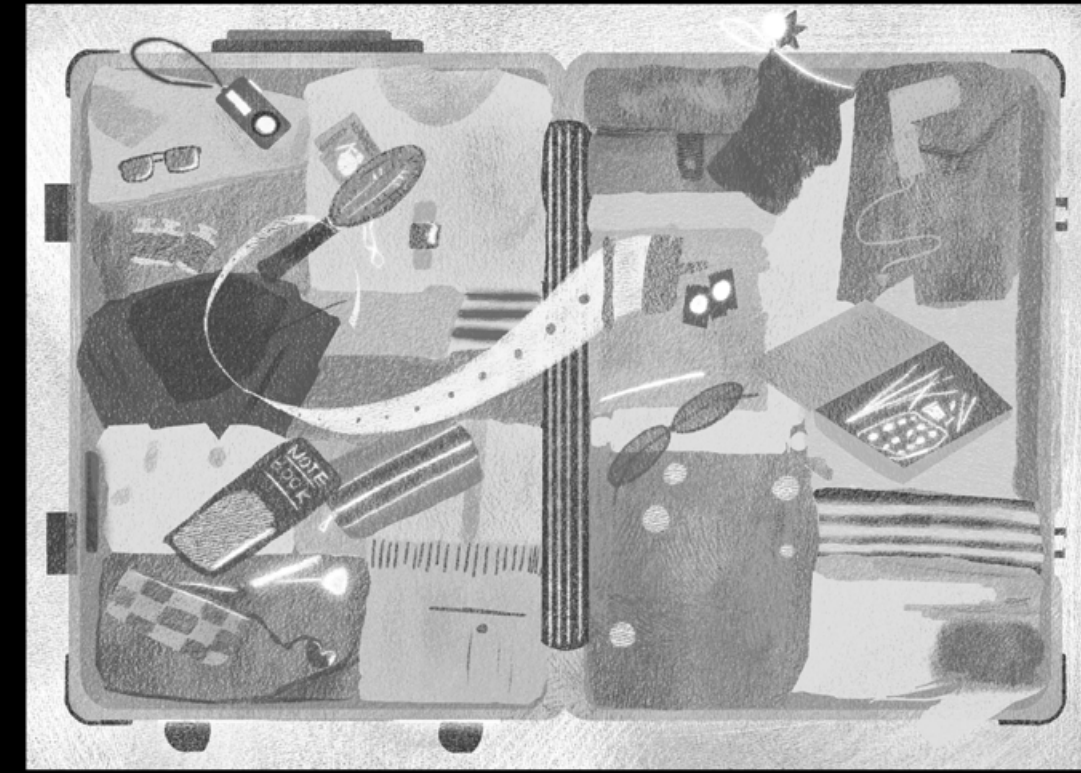
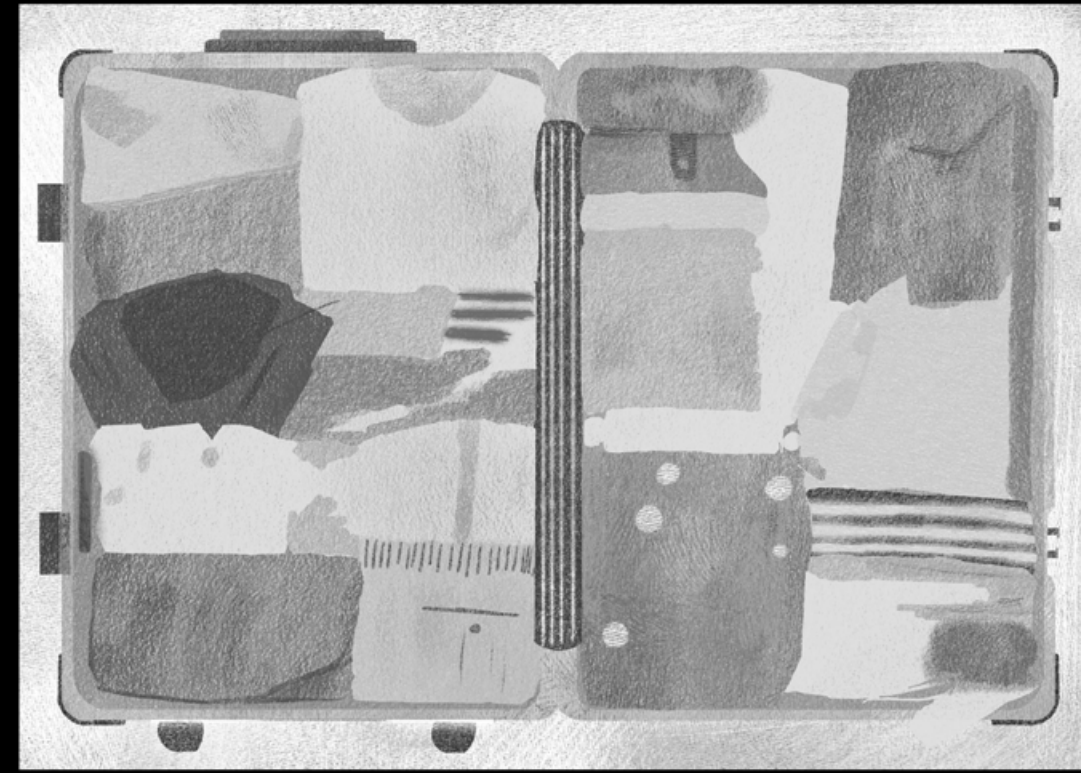
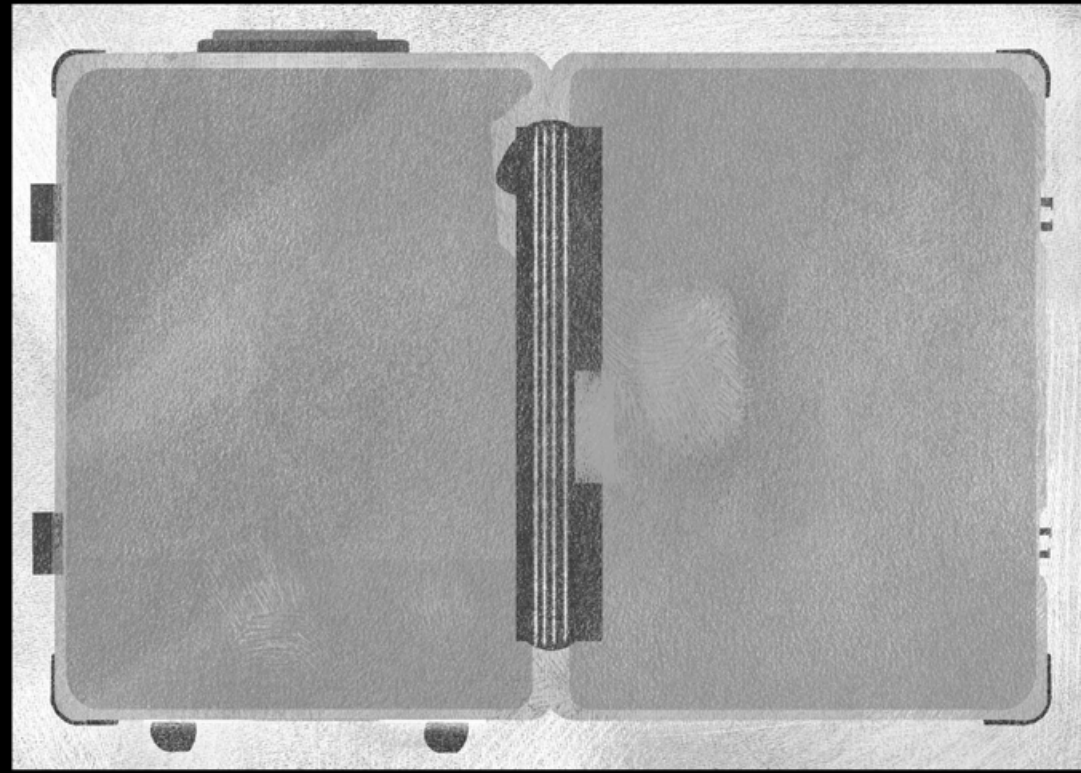




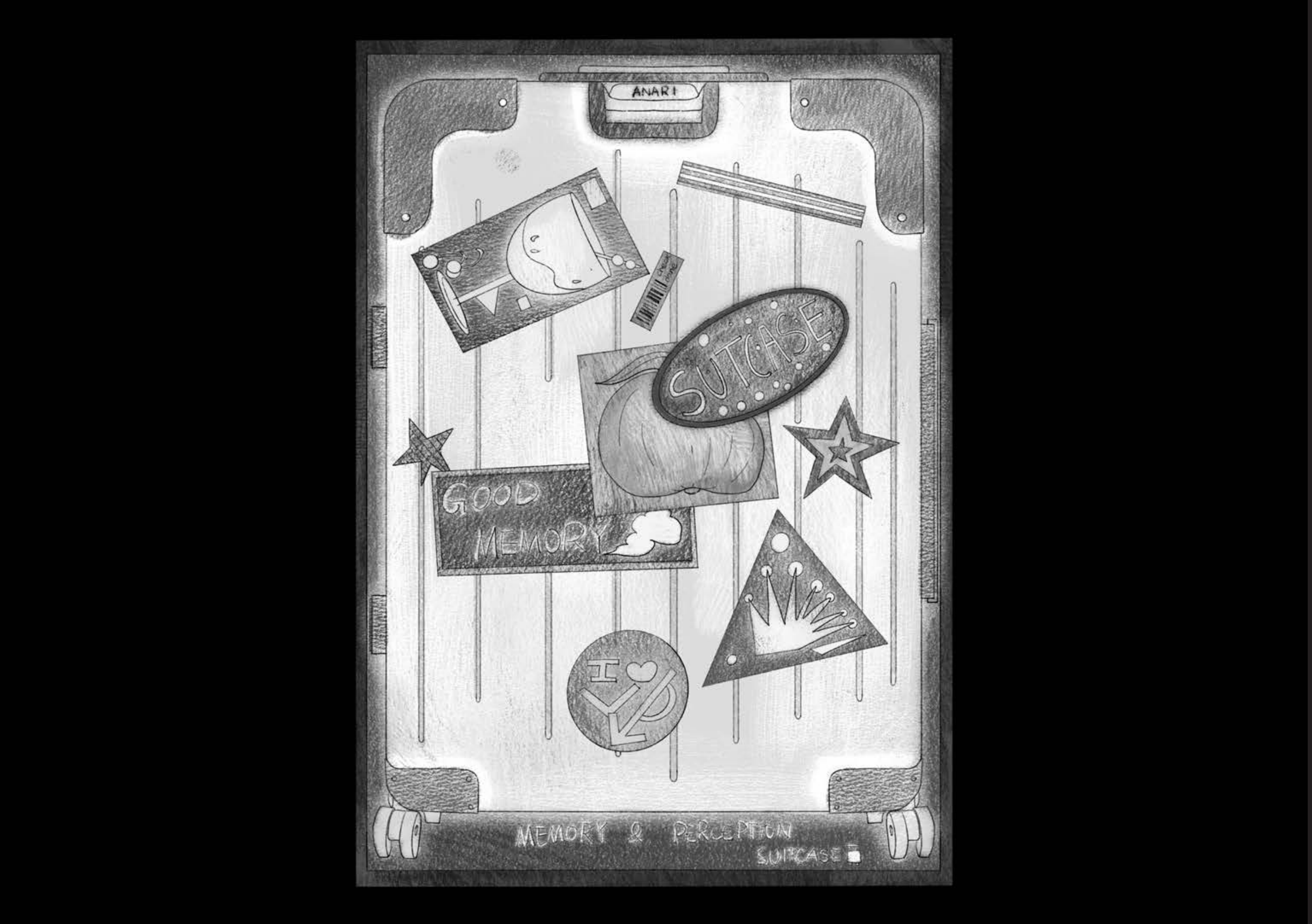
LINE WORK



WORKING PROCESS



A black and white illustration of an open suitcase lying flat, showing its interior compartments and various items inside. The items include a small box with circular patterns, a small round object, a small rectangular object, a small square object, and a small rectangular object with a leaf design. The suitcase has a handle at the top and wheels at the bottom.



A detailed black and white illustration of an open suitcase, viewed from above. The suitcase is packed with a variety of items, including clothing, toiletries, and personal belongings. On the left side, there's a dark jacket, a pair of glasses, a small electronic device, a hairbrush, a watch, and a small bag. A long, light-colored strap with dark dots runs across the middle. On the right side, there's a pair of headphones, a small bag, a box of tissues, a pair of shoes, a small bag, and a small electronic device. The illustration is done in a detailed, sketchy style with cross-hatching for shading.



RENDERED VERSION



RENDERED WORK

