

# Process

## Farewell **Kabarista**



By: Sarah Picavet

# Step One: The Concept



I want to make an animatic to the song **Farewell  
Kabarista** by Vagabond Opera.

The song tells the story of a guy who falls in love with a drag queen in the thriving queer<sup>1</sup> scene in 1920s Berlin. However, as Germany gets increasingly hostile towards non-conforming behaviour and Hitler gains power, they become more unsafe in their own country. Living openly as a gay couple is not as safe as it once was.

In 1933, they decide to flee the country and board a ship to America, where they are forced to live a closeted life, as it's illegal in America to be in a gay relationship.

The song ends with a message to remember the queer victims of the holocaust and the hope for a better future.

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this entire piece I will use the word queer as an umbrella term for the entire LGBT+ community. I am aware that not everyone likes this word, I personally decided to use it because it's more inclusive than  
LGBT+.

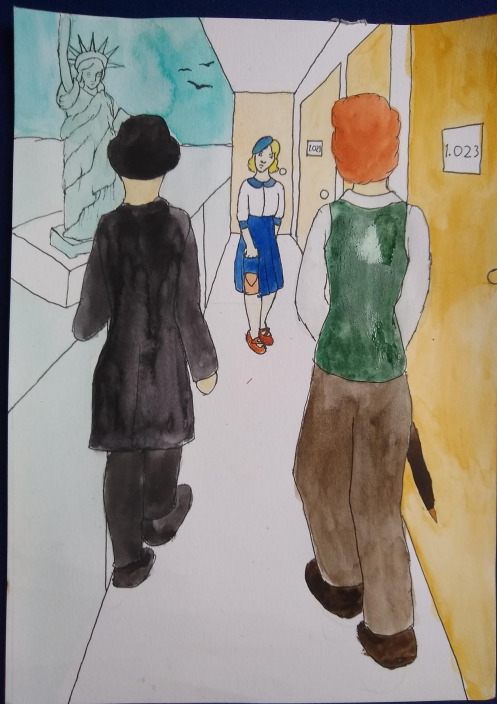
Animatics are a very commonly used medium of visual storytelling on the platform YouTube. It's mainly done by young fans who want to show their love for their favourite song by showing their version of the song's story, but don't have the time or resources to make a full animation. So they use a simpler form of animating instead.

Although animatics started out as a way to storyboard full animations, they have turned into their own genre, just as worthy as regular animation. Because animatics are less detailed and leave out backgrounds and such, they can achieve more abstract storytelling than regular animation.

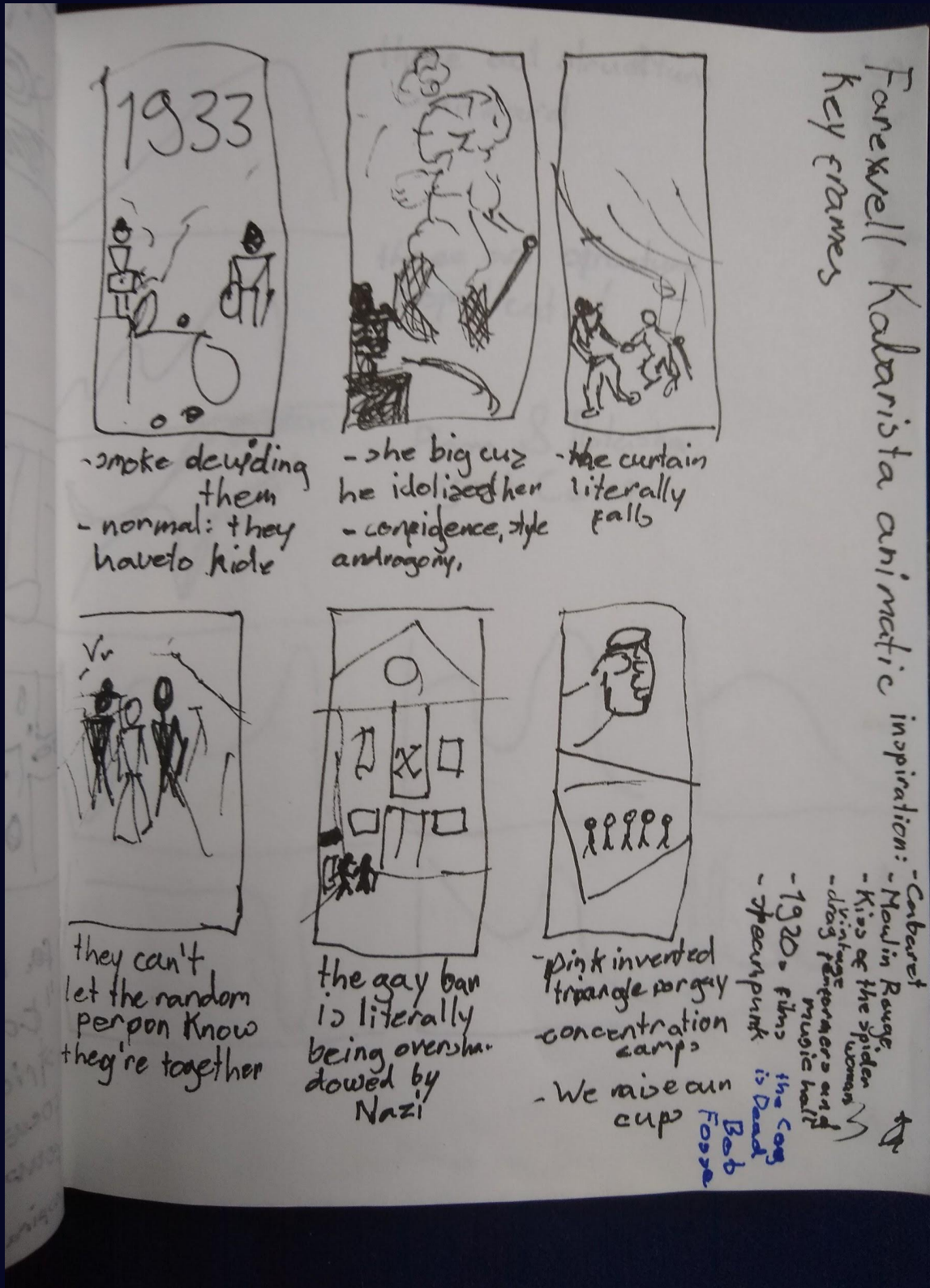
Here are some links to some of my favourite animatics. Go Tonight and Sara Berry tell a whole story in the way my animatic does too, while the other two show one scene within a larger story. I love how MissyAsylum uses white and black smoke to show JD's influence over Veronica and Miranda Pla makes the most detailed animatics I've ever seen.

- 35MM's [The Ballad of Sara Berry](#) by SoapTears
- [The Mad Ones' Go Tonight](#) by Miranda Pla
- [Heathers' Dead Girl Walking - Reprise](#) by MissyAsylum
- [Hadestown's Way Down Hadestown](#) by Miranda Pla

# Step Two: Sketching



# Sketch One



I started by sketching out some key frames I had in mind for major plot beats in the story. My main intent was to quickly put to paper what my vision for what this animatic was going to look like was.

# Sketch Two-Four



Then I worked the three most important of those key frames out in more detail. This was to get the flow of the story more clearly visualised and to see if my concept worked as well on paper as in my head.

I used black clothes and a bowler hat versus vibrant red hair and a cane to set my two main characters apart.

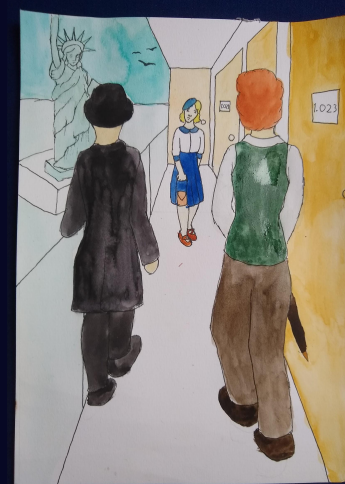
The black design versus the colourful design is supposed to represent how bowler hat guy is more worried and closeted and cane guy is more carefree and out in the open.



I really didn't like how the smoke of the train turned out, so I will need to create a different way to draw the smoke in the final work. I also realised that you can't see details in black pen on black paint too late.



After seeing the three drawings side by side is when I realised I had two colour schemes I could play with. Darker, warmer colours for the scenes in Berlin, colder colours for the scenes in New York. I really like this, because it gives the scenes in Berlin a warm, nostalgic feel while it gives the scenes in New York a cold, distant feel. This represents how Berlin is their home and they're forced back into the closet in New York.





# Step Three: Research



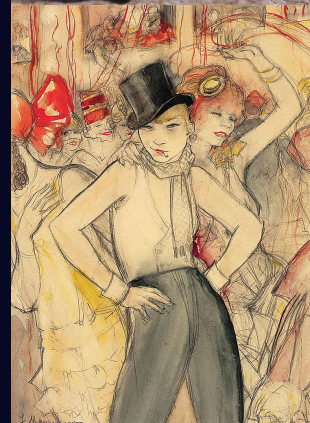
Then I started doing some historical research. The song is in the steampunk style and pretty vague about its subject matter, but I wanted my visuals to be more clear and grounded in history. I want my animatic to bring awareness to the oppression of queer people.

I searched for “queer scene 1920s Berlin” and I found a surprising lot of information. I found two great articles by the Advocate and the New Yorker and loads of primary source pictures, even films.

I learned that the queer scene in Germany in the 1920s was much more open and thriving than I originally thought. Queer bars were technically illegal, but they were tolerated so long as there was no violence, which was very rare. There was a huge variety of queer bars and clubs in Berlin, for all different social classes. There was a lot of experimentation with gender expression and gender identity, many people came to queer parties in drag.

I found the names of multiple gay bars, but all photos of which I could find the location were taken in the Eldorado. I also found a bunch of gay films that were made in 1920s Berlin, most importantly Anders als die Andern (Different from the Others). I wanted to watch it, but I unfortunately didn't have the time. Lastly, I found multiple queer magazines, most famously Der Eigene.

# The People



# Drag in the 1920s

*Ray Bourbon*  
UTC 2

**Contents**

- Life Goes to a Party
- Queen of the Y.M.C.A.
- Back in Drag Again
- Queen of the Ballet
- Peter Pan
- The Family Tree
- Queen of the Navy
- I Must Have a Greek

*Sparkling Bourbonky*

UTC 1: AN EVENING IN COPENHAGEN  
 UTC 2: YOU'RE STEPPING ON MY TITLASHES  
 UTC 3: DON'T CALL ME MADAM  
 UTC 4: A GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST  
 UTC 5: BOURBON-100 PROOF  
 UTC 6: CLAUDE-CLAUDE

UTC • 719 Tenth Avenue • New York 19, New York



LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY OPERATION

RAE BOURBON SPEAKING . . . .

UTC 7

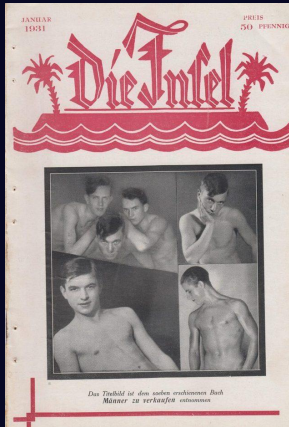
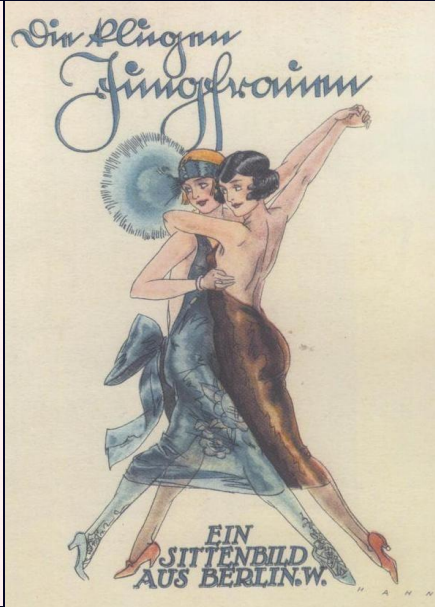
HIGH INFIDELITY  
A BEGAN, BANGS, BEARING



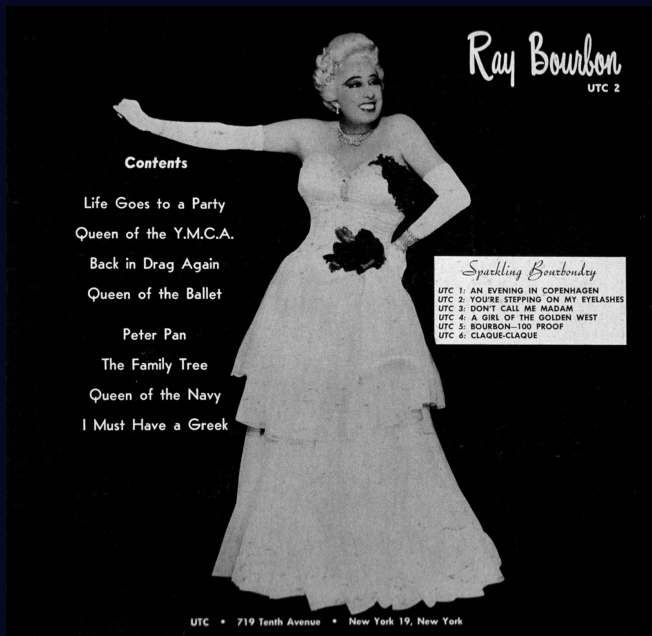
# Interior



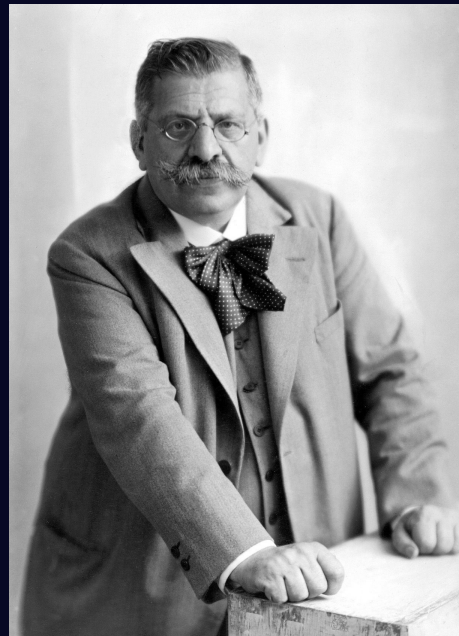
# Posters and Magazines



# Real People



Ray Bourbon



Magnus Hirschfeld



Friedrich Radszuweit



Christopher Isherwood

These are some important people I came across in my research. Rae Bourbon is a drag queen and Friedrich Radszuweit created multiple queer magazines. Magnus Hirschfeld and Christopher Isherwood were both prominent queer authors who are responsible for most things we know about the queer scene in 1920s Berlin.

# The Tiller Girls





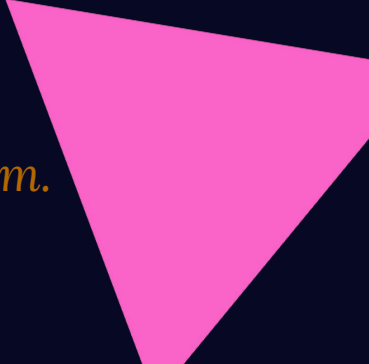
# Nazis

But as all good things, this too came to an end. When Hitler came to power, all the gay bars were shut down and many prominent figures fled the country and/or were murdered.

During Hitler's reign, many queer people (mostly gay men) were sent to concentration camps. There, they were treated as lesser beings, even by other prisoners. Many were castrated and some were used as guinea pigs in medical experiments. Others, the so-called "doll boys", were raped by other prisoners, coerced by more food or protection from hard labour.

During my research I came across another major historical event that I can use in my animatic. In 1933, shortly after Hitler became Reich Chancellor, the Institute for Sexual Science was ransacked and all its books were burned. These books contained much information about gender-affirming surgery amongst other things, and vital information to the queer community was lost. Also stolen were the Institute's extensive lists of names and addresses. This forced many queer people to flee the country, others were sent to concentration camps or murdered.

*Gay prisoners in concentration camps were forced to wear a pink inverted triangle on their uniform.*

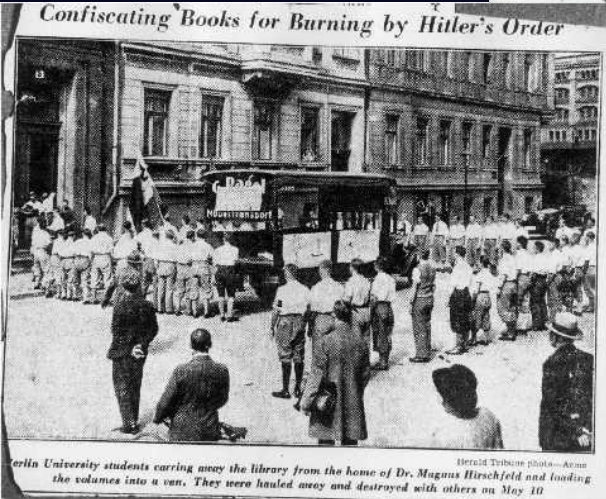


# A Dramatic Transformation



This is the Eldorado in 1932 vs in 1933.

# The Book Burnings



# Concentration camps



**Kennzeichen für Schutzhäftlinge  
in den Konz.-Lagern** IV/5  
*form und farbe der kennzeichen*

	Polnisch	Berufsverbrecher	Emigrant	Pöbelreicher	Homosexuell	Rassistisches Merkmal	Previdentären Demeriten
Grundfarben :							
Abzeichen für Rückfällige :							
Häftlinge der Strafkompanie :							
Abzeichen für Juden :							

**Besondere Abzeichen**

			2031	
Jüdischer Häftling	Katholischer Häftling	Staatverderblicher	Häftlingsnummer	1a Häftling

**Beispiel :**

Polnischer Jude, rückfällig, Mitglied der Strafkompanie	Sonder-Partei Wehrmacht
Polen	Italiener

# Sources

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Whisnant, C. J. (2016b, July 19). A Peek Inside Berlin's Queer Club Scene Before Hitler Destroyed It. Advocate. <https://www.advocate.com/books/2016/7/19/peek-inside-berlins-queer-club-scene-hitler-destroyed-it>

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institut\\_f%C3%BCr\\_Sexualwissenschaft](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institut_f%C3%BCr_Sexualwissenschaft)

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution\\_of\\_homosexuals\\_in\\_Nazi\\_Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_homosexuals_in_Nazi_Germany)

# Step Four: More sketching





# Sketch Five



After having done all my research, I sketched out the people that you would see in a queer club in 1920s Berlin. I also used this as an opportunity to experiment with free sketching without polishing it too much.

# Sketch Six

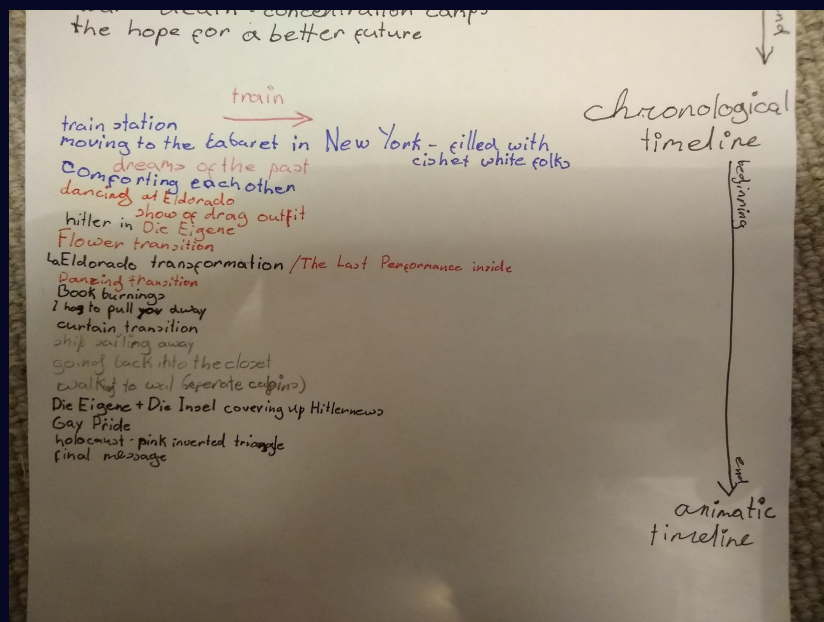
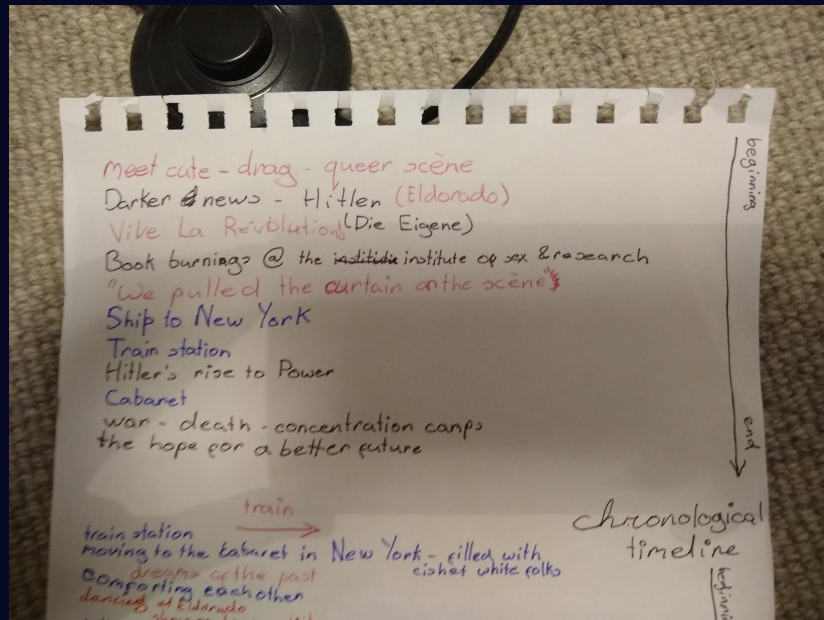


I wasn't quite happy with my design of cane guy, so I redesigned him to fit the 1920s aesthetic more and also to be a person of colour. I also used this as an opportunity to learn lighting in digital art, as I haven't done digital art that much before.





# Sketch Seven and Eight



I wrote down both a chronological timeline of the main events of the story and the order in which they're introduced in the song, so that I know exactly what story I'm telling. Red pen is the couple in Berlin, pencil or blue pen is the couple in the US, and black pen is what's happening in the rest of the world.

meet cute - drag - queer scene

Darker news - Hitler (Eldorado)

Vive La Revolution (Die Eigene)

Book burnings @ the institute of sex & research

"We pulled the curtain on the scene"

Ship to New York

Train station

Hitler's rise to Power

Cabaret

war - death - concentration camps

the hope for a better future

beginning

end

train →

train station

moving to the cabaret in New York - filled with cis het white folks

dreams of the past  
comforting each other

dancing at Eldorado  
show of drag outfit

hitler in Die Eigene

Flower transition

↳ Eldorado transformation / The Last Performance inside

Dancing transition

Book burnings

I had to pull you away

curtain transition

ship sailing away

going back into the closet

walking to wall (separate cupins)

Die Eigene + Die Insel covering up Hitler news

Gay Pride

holocaust - pink invented triangle

final message

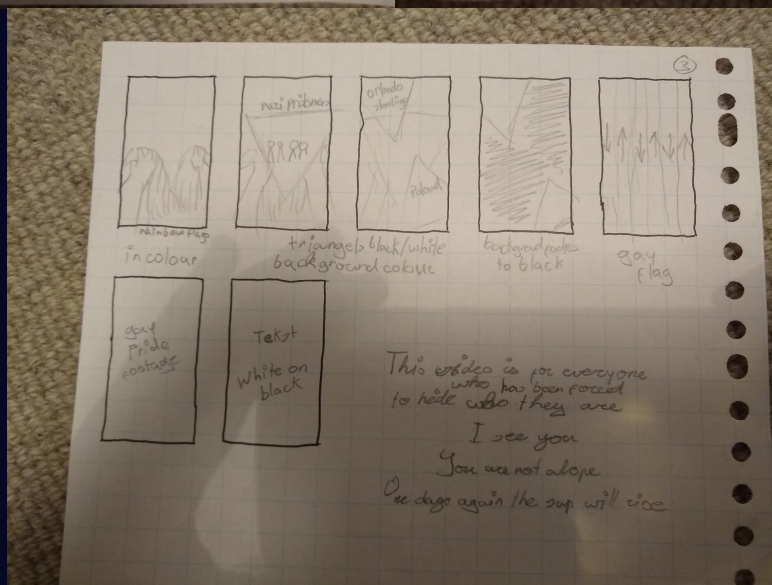
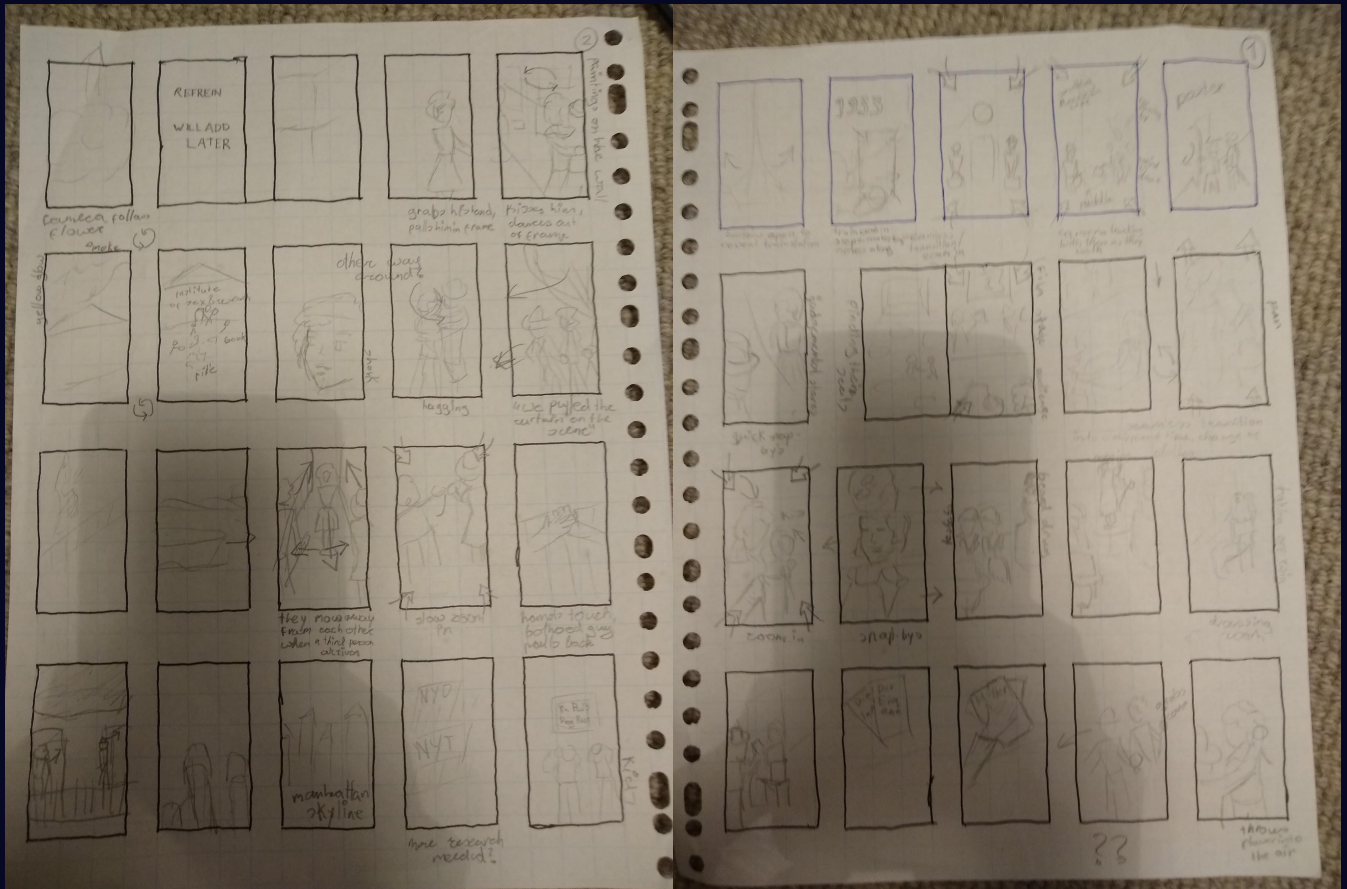
chronological  
timeline

beginning

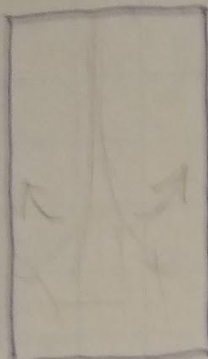
end

animatic  
timeline

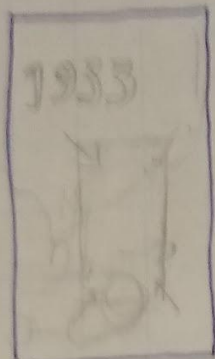
# Sketch Nine



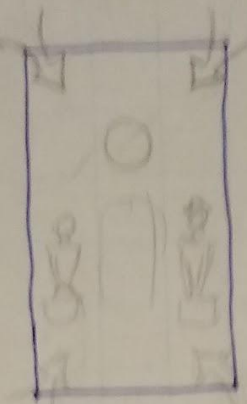
Then I made a storyboard for the final animatic.



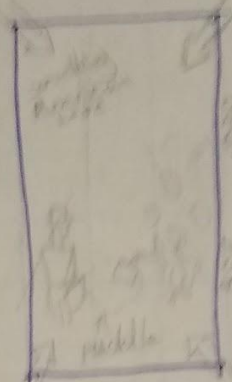
vertical aspect to  
current transition



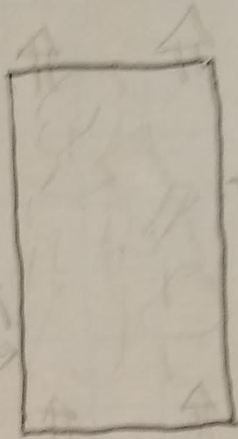
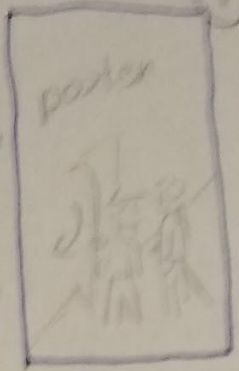
1953  
train comb in  
steps, moving  
notes along



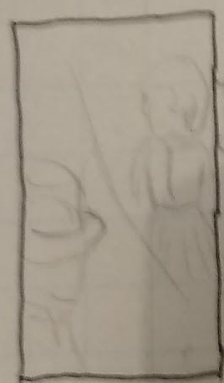
transition  
from  
to



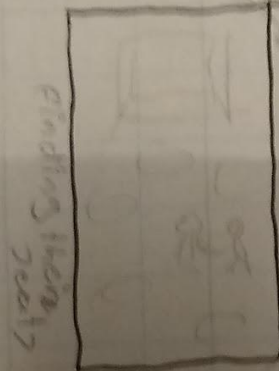
eyes are tracking  
with lips as they  
work



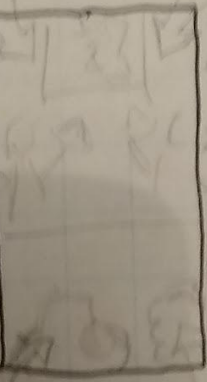
pan



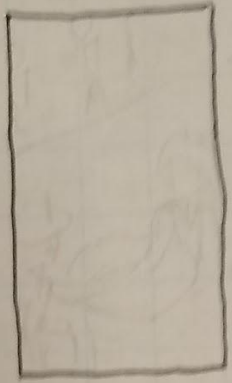
spiderwebbed stare



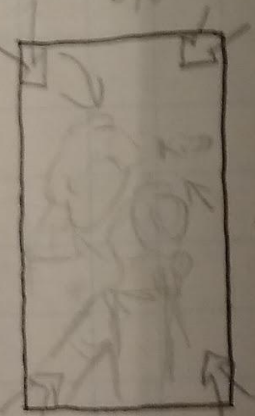
finding their  
tools



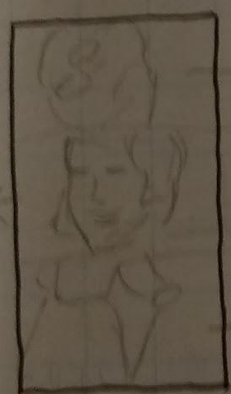
fine stage  
captures



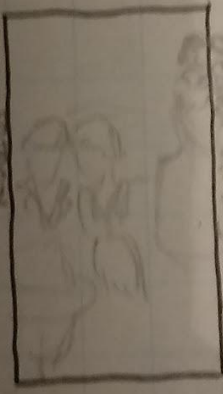
smooth transition  
into a different time, change of  
again clothes



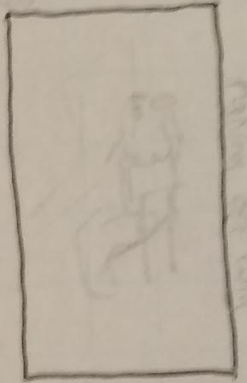
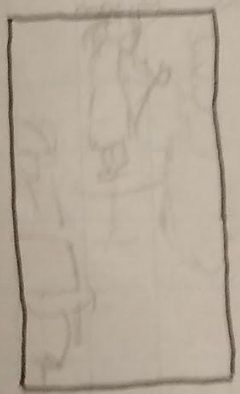
zoom in



snap by

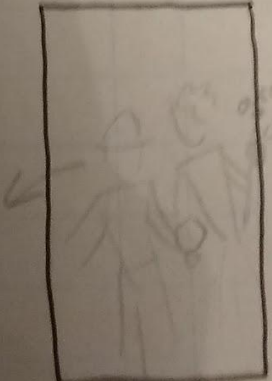
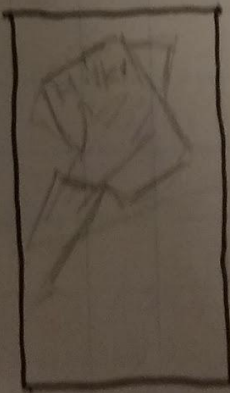
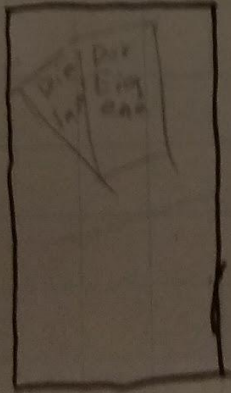
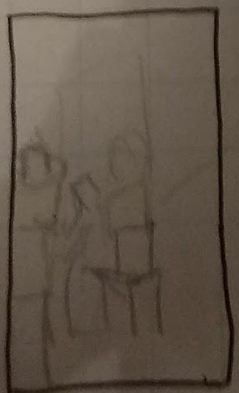


break down

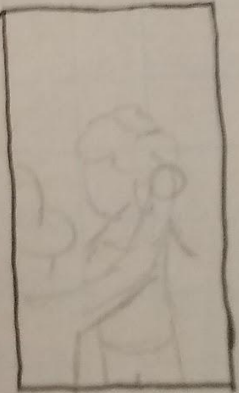


faded out calm

dressing  
work



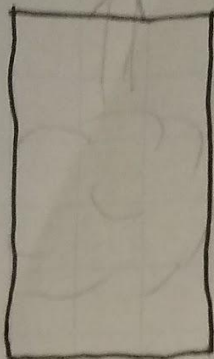
also  
close  
one



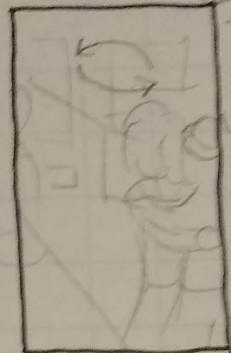
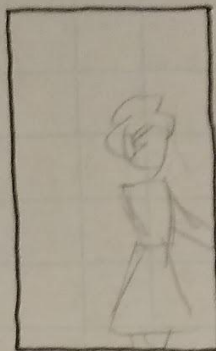
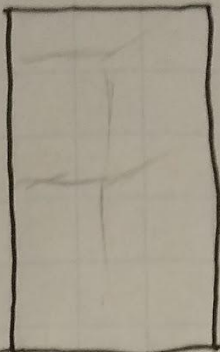
throws  
flour into  
the air

??





REFRAIN  
WILL ADD  
LATER

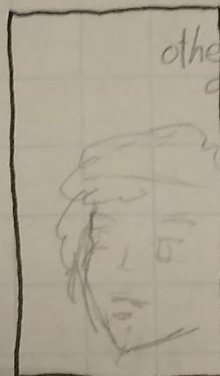
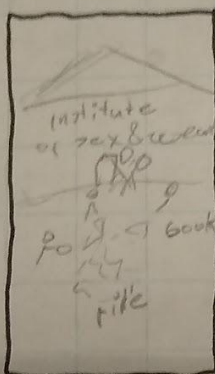
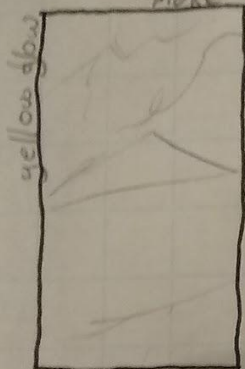


Paintings on the wall

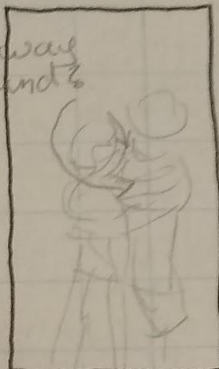
Camilla follows  
flower  
smoke

grabs h/stand,  
pulls him in frame

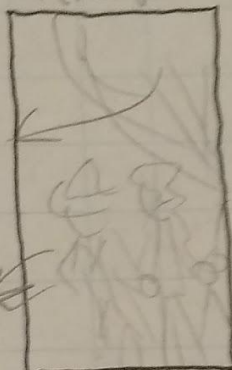
kisses him,  
dances out  
of frame



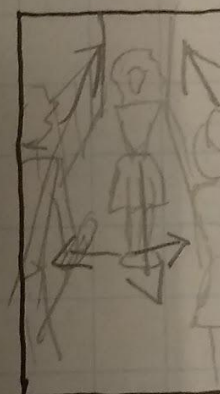
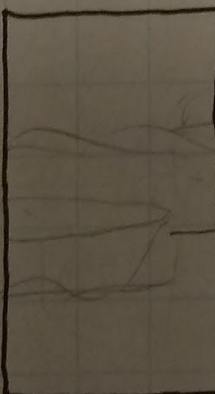
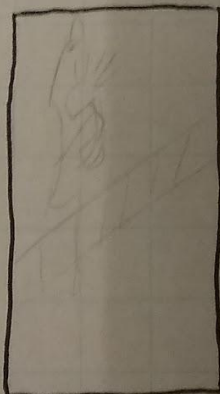
shock



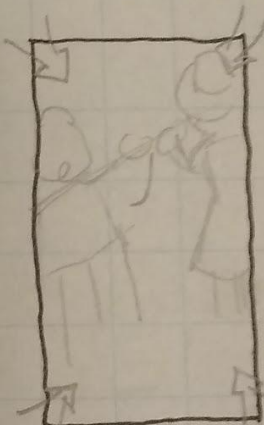
hugging



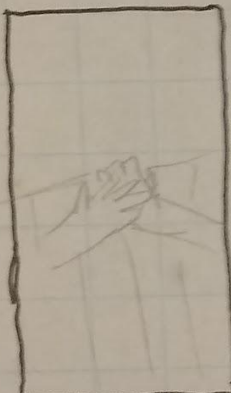
"We pulled the  
curtain on the  
scene"



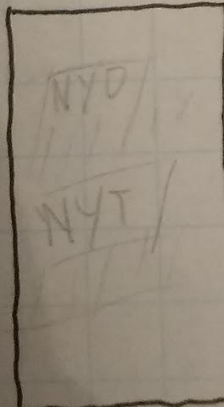
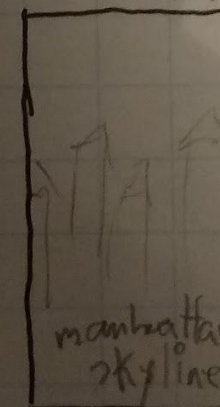
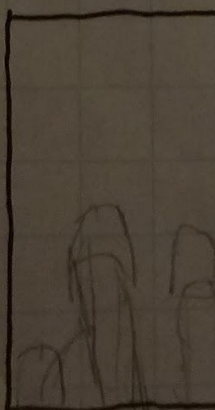
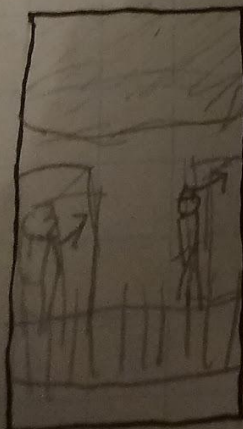
they move away  
from each other  
when a third person  
arrives



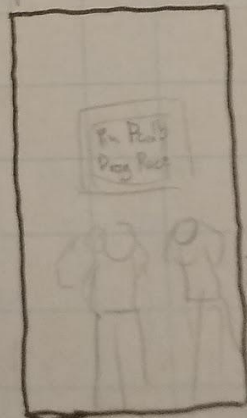
slow zoom  
in

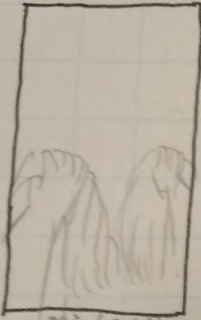


hands touch,  
both of guy  
pulls back

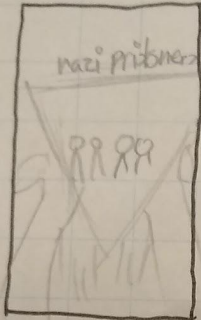


more research  
needed?

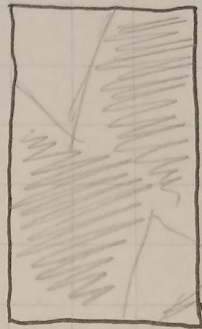
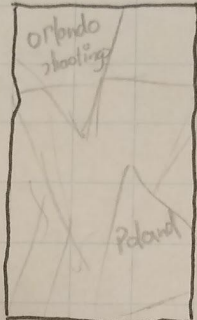




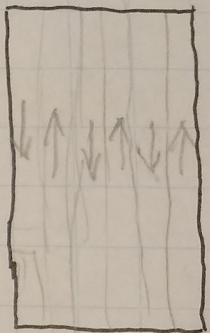
rainbow flag  
in colour



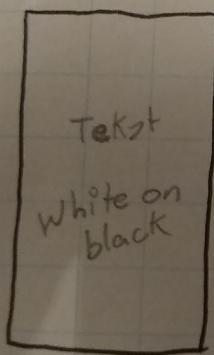
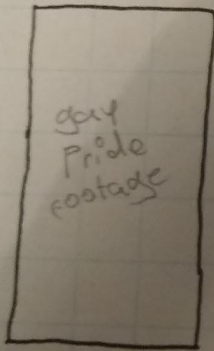
triangles black/white  
background colour



background fades  
to black



gay  
flag



This video is for everyone  
who has been forced  
to hide who they are

I see you

You are not alone

One day again the sun will rise

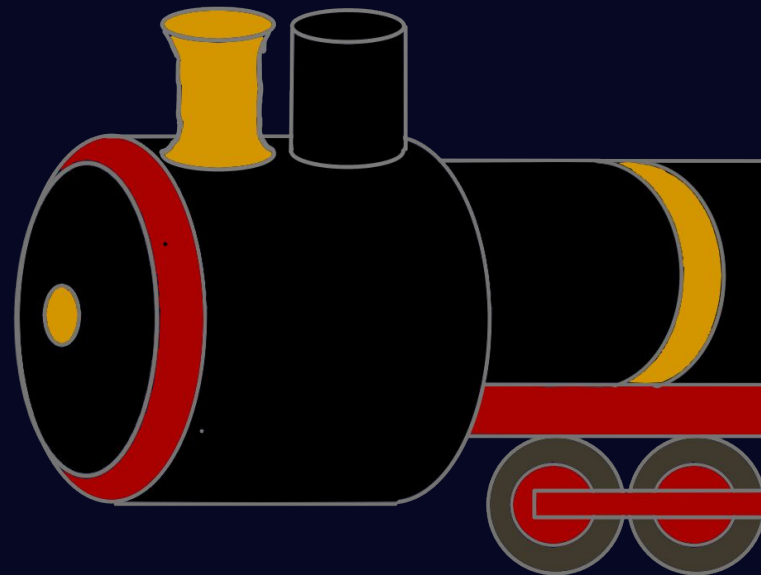
This is my first storyboard for the final animatic. It is not perfect, so I will definitely be making a second one before making the final animatic, but it's not bad for a first draft. There are some great moments there that will definitely make it into the final version. I think especially the moment where I draw the connection to modern times is really powerful.

I couldn't figure out what to do during the refrains, so that will still be needed to be storyboarded. I asked the teacher for advice and I will use that in a later draft.

I also realised that I need books to feature in the first half of the animatic for the book burnings to have an emotional impact. I also realised that I needed bowler hat guy to have more personality so that he becomes more likeable.

So now my plan is to fix two problems at once. Cane guy is the more outgoing partner in the relationship, who is involved with queer clubs and the drag scene. Bowler hat guy is the more introverted partner in the relationship, who is involved with the Institute for Sexual Science and gay literature. You will see both of them in their natural habitat, having fun and doing good, before you see both of their worlds being torn down by the Nazis. Hopefully it will have more emotional impact that way.

# Step Six: Animating



Then I could finally start animating. I have never done this before so I started out by watching tutorials for Adobe Animate and making a short video just trying out the possibilities of the program. I also made a video experimenting with Adobe Character Animator, but I eventually decided not to use that program in my final animatic.

Then I started animating the first 20 seconds of my final animatic. At first, I tried drawing everything in Adobe Animator. After I had frustratingly managed to draw the background, I decided to give up and start drawing the objects in Medibang. I then exported them into Adobe Animate, where I animated everything. That worked a lot better.





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The teaser for the animatic  
can be found [here](#).

Enjoy!

