

CLOSURE

Kieler e-Journal für Comicforschung

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Titel

Process Comic

Journal

Closure. Kieler e-Journal für Comicforschung #8 (2021) – www.closure.uni-kiel.de

Empfohlene Zitierweise

Gareth A. Hopkins: Process Comic. In: Closure. Kieler e-Journal für Comicforschung #8 (2021), S. [17–32]. <<http://www.closure.uni-kiel.de/closure8/hopkins2>>. 20.12.2021.

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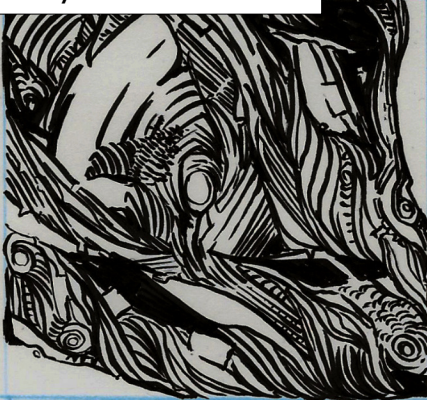
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Hi there.

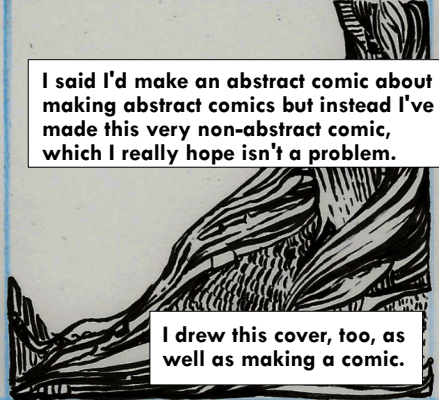
Kieler e-Journal für Comicfors

My name's Gareth A Hopkins.

I'm a comics creator and artist,
and mostly make abstract comics.



I said I'd make an abstract comic about
making abstract comics but instead I've
made this very non-abstract comic,
which I really hope isn't a problem.



I drew this cover, too, as
well as making a comic.

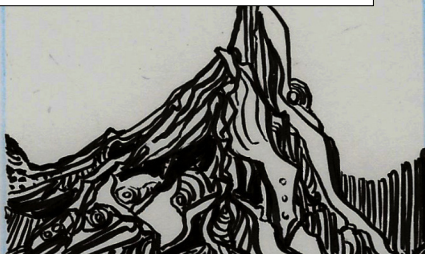


I wanted to use this landscape
style, just because I like it.



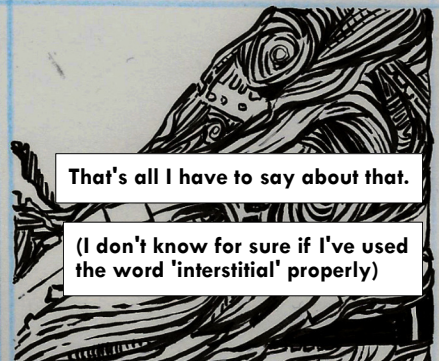
I made it look like a continuous land mass, broken up into
panels, except that the bottom left panel doesn't fit that,
making the reader question if it really is a single mass.

I also left my blue guide lines in, to show
the cover in an interstitial state, part way
between complete and incomplete.



That's all I have to say about that.

(I don't know for sure if I've used
the word 'interstitial' properly)



Here's how I started. I made a booklet out of paper that had misprinted when trying to print off other comics.

The cover is the logo for 'CLOSURE' from where I tried to print it as a starting point to make the main cover but got the settings wrong and made it much too big.

Here are some of the inside pages.

They're from when I tried to print out a copy of my comic 'Children Of The Valley' but forgot to select 'Print On Both Sides'.

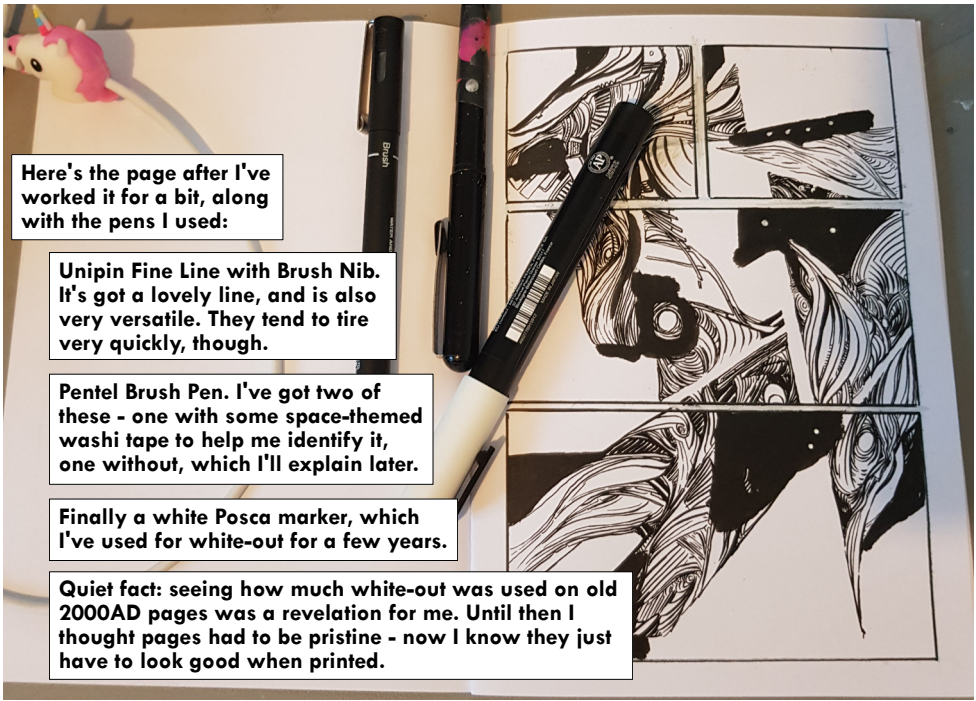
Folding those pages in half meant that I had six pages with black and white line-work on them, and six blank pages. I had no idea what to do with the blank pages, so started to rework the existing pages.

I drew a new grid in blue pencil over the existing page, and then used a white Posca marker to colour the gutters in with white.

When I plot out panel layouts, I tend to keep them pretty plain. I usually work with four, five, six or nine panels on a page, and they tend to be boxes with right-angles.

Plainer panel layouts make it easier for me to control the flow through the page, because they don't distract from the shapes that I put into them.

That's the general rule I follow, anyway.



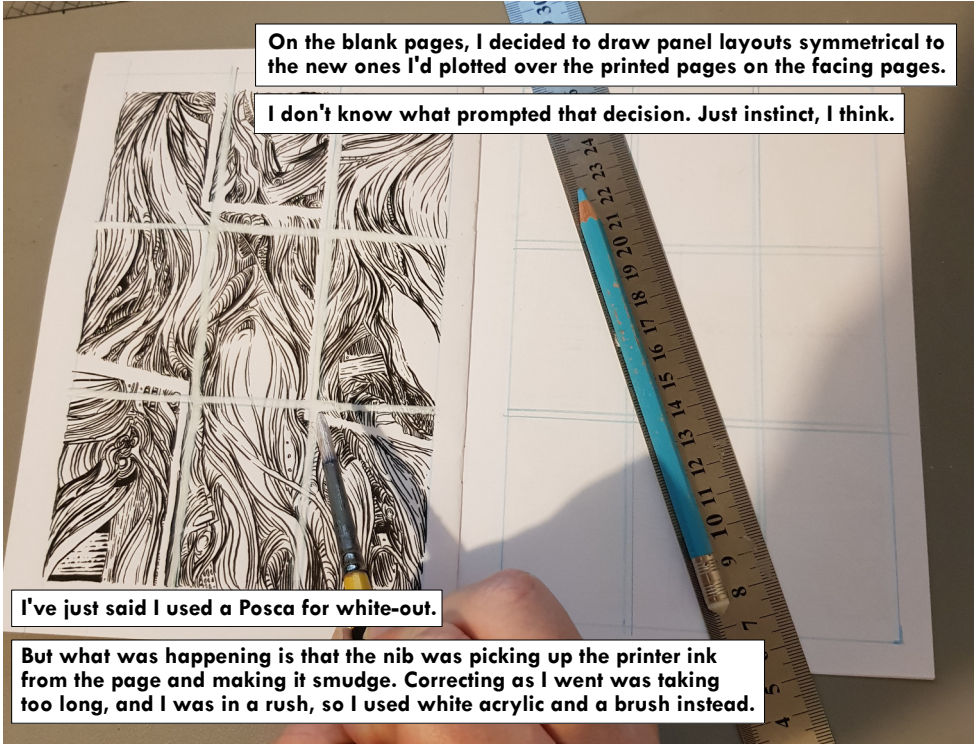
Here's the page after I've worked it for a bit, along with the pens I used:

Unipin Fine Line with Brush Nib. It's got a lovely line, and is also very versatile. They tend to tire very quickly, though.

Pentel Brush Pen. I've got two of these - one with some space-themed washi tape to help me identify it, one without, which I'll explain later.

Finally a white Posca marker, which I've used for white-out for a few years.

Quiet fact: seeing how much white-out was used on old 2000AD pages was a revelation for me. Until then I thought pages had to be pristine - now I know they just have to look good when printed.



On the blank pages, I decided to draw panel layouts symmetrical to the new ones I'd plotted over the printed pages on the facing pages.

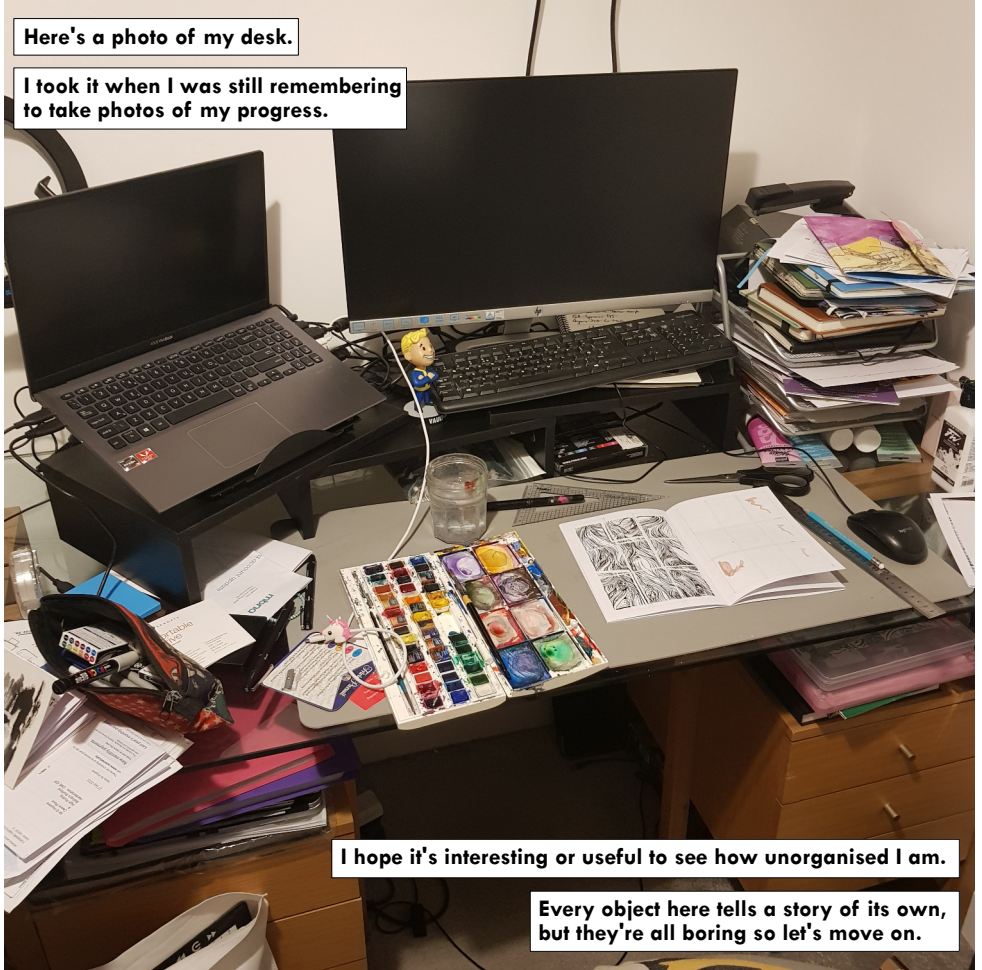
I don't know what prompted that decision. Just instinct, I think.

I've just said I used a Posca for white-out.

But what was happening is that the nib was picking up the printer ink from the page and making it smudge. Correcting as I went was taking too long, and I was in a rush, so I used white acrylic and a brush instead.

Here's a photo of my desk.

I took it when I was still remembering to take photos of my progress.



I hope it's interesting or useful to see how unorganised I am.

Every object here tells a story of its own, but they're all boring so let's move on.



This is a photo of my window sill, and my plants.

The smaller spider plant is a child of the larger one, and the larger one has sprouted a new tendril to create more baby spider plants.

The three other plants are growing from seeds I had left over from eating a pepper at my desk.

When I re-potted them I used the wrong soil (it was soil designed specifically for succulents - cactuses, basically) and it's got pesticides that will make any fruit that comes off them poisonous. That's what my wife reckons, anyway.

This box is where I keep any partly used paper - printer errors, or old homework from my kids, colouring sheets they've tried to throw away. I nearly always use that paper to start new projects - for one, I don't like throwing things away, but also I find it more interesting to work up from existing shapes.

You know how earlier I said I liked using simple panel layouts? Well, I usually do but in this instance I instead plotted out this double page spread full of triangles, using this big set-square as a guide.

I regretted plotting it out like this, as I found working in it really difficult.

I got bored of working carefully with pens and rulers so as a break I slapped paint all over the cover.



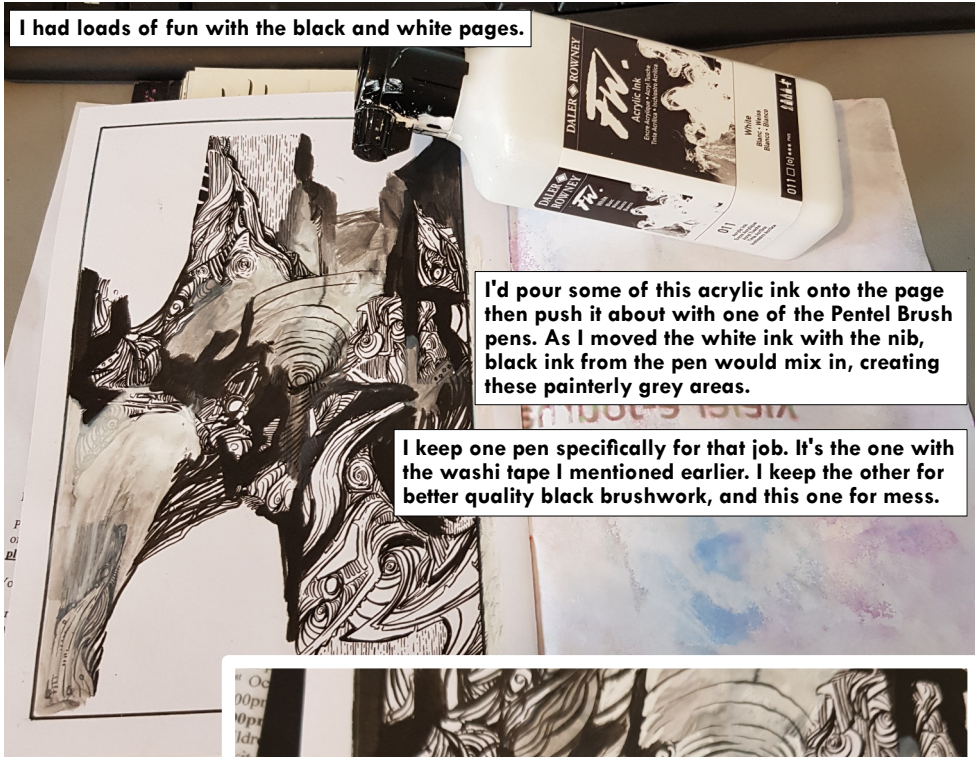
If you've noticed an emerging theme of 'allowing mistakes and bad decisions', let me give you some more examples.

The purple acrylic paint I used here? When I bought it I hadn't realised it was 'iridescent', so all the paintings I've made with it have an extra shimmer to them.



Also, I started this comic by folding pages and stapling them together as a little booklet. But that meant that if I put paint down anywhere, I'd have to wait for it to dry before I could move onto another page in the comic.

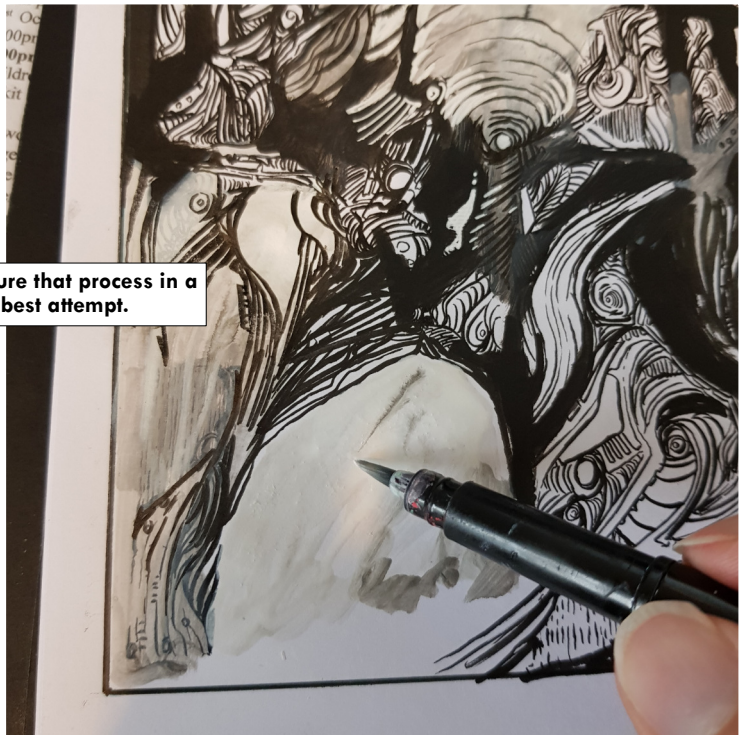
I had loads of fun with the black and white pages.



I'd pour some of this acrylic ink onto the page then push it about with one of the Pentel Brush pens. As I moved the white ink with the nib, black ink from the pen would mix in, creating these painterly grey areas.

I keep one pen specifically for that job. It's the one with the washi tape I mentioned earlier. I keep the other for better quality black brushwork, and this one for mess.

It's very hard to capture that process in a photo, but here's my best attempt.



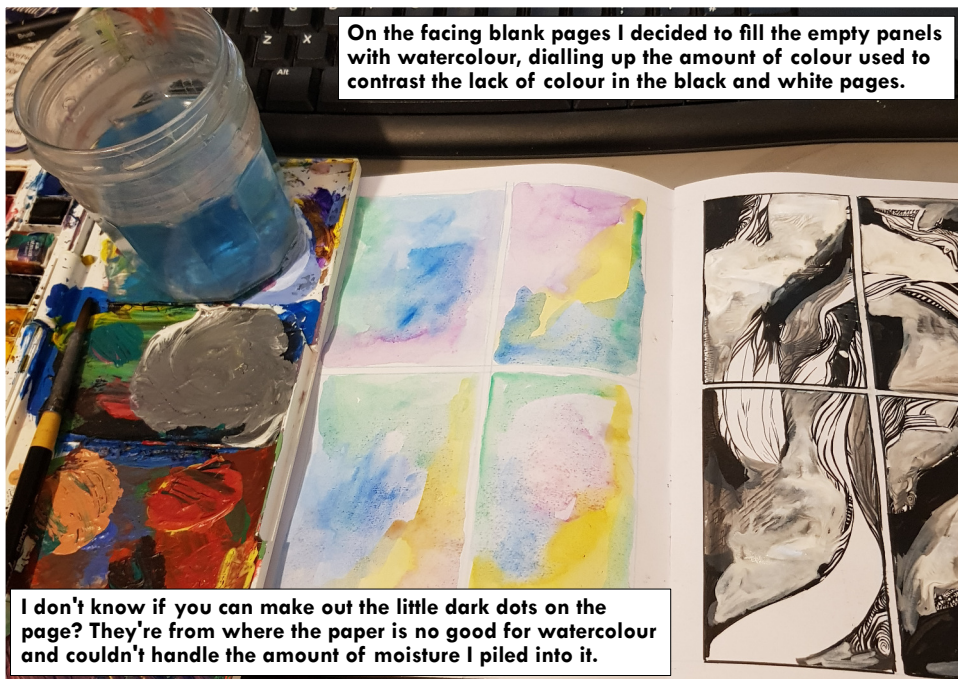
I'm still really excited by how great I think these black and white pages look. They remind me of 1940s cartoons, if you can see what I mean?

It's very rare for me to look at a page after finishing it and still really enjoy it, rather than just objectively decide if it's good or not.

I say I decide 'objectively' but I don't know how I come to that kind of decision, so it's probably subjective, based solely on my personal taste and not a lot else.

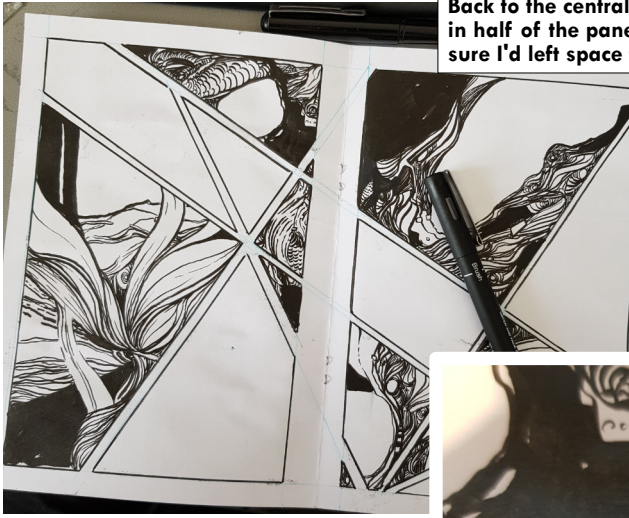


On the facing blank pages I decided to fill the empty panels with watercolour, dialling up the amount of colour used to contrast the lack of colour in the black and white pages.



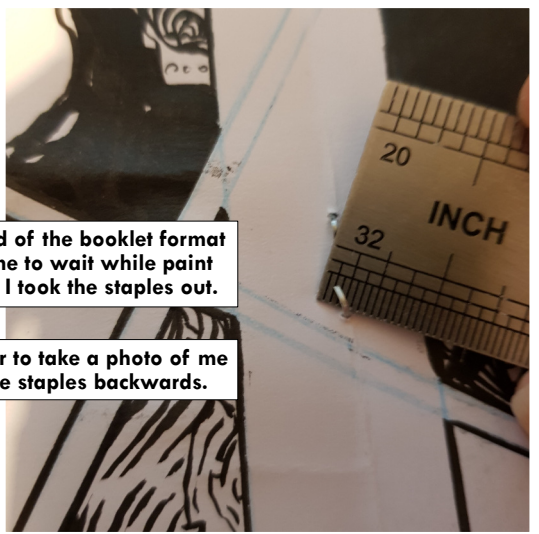
I don't know if you can make out the little dark dots on the page? They're from where the paper is no good for watercolour and couldn't handle the amount of moisture I piled into it.

Back to the central double-page spread - I filled in half of the panels with black line-work, making sure I'd left space to pour white paint in afterwards.

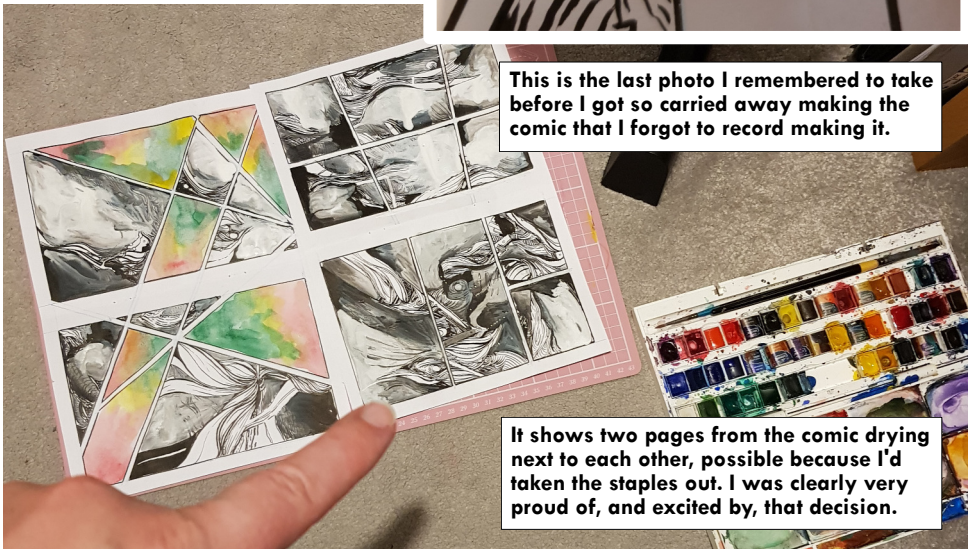


I got tired of the booklet format forcing me to wait while paint dried, so I took the staples out.

I managed to remember to take a photo of me using a ruler to bend the staples backwards.



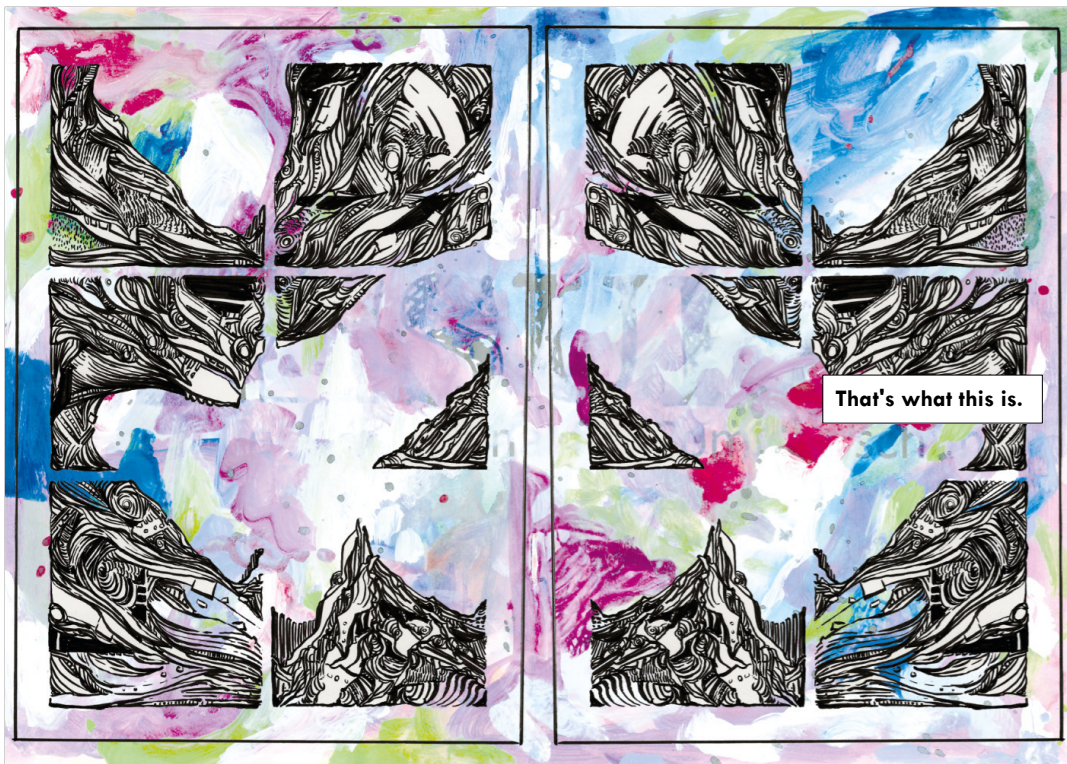
This is the last photo I remembered to take before I got so carried away making the comic that I forgot to record making it.



It shows two pages from the comic drying next to each other, possible because I'd taken the staples out. I was clearly very proud of, and excited by, that decision.

Once the comic was finished, I liked it enough to print it out with a view to selling it.

The painted cover wasn't quite enough as it was, so I cut the line-work from the other cover I did and pasted it onto a scan of the painted cover - twice, to make a wrap-around cover.



And that's it, I think?

I can't think of anything else to tell you.

If you get to read the comic I made, I hope you like it.