

Zeitschrift: Trans : Publikationsreihe des Fachvereins der Studierenden am Departement Architektur der ETH Zürich

Herausgeber: Departement Architektur der ETH Zürich

Band: - (2022)

Heft: 40

Artikel: Part two : once jellyfish started to blossom and grow hair

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1037193>

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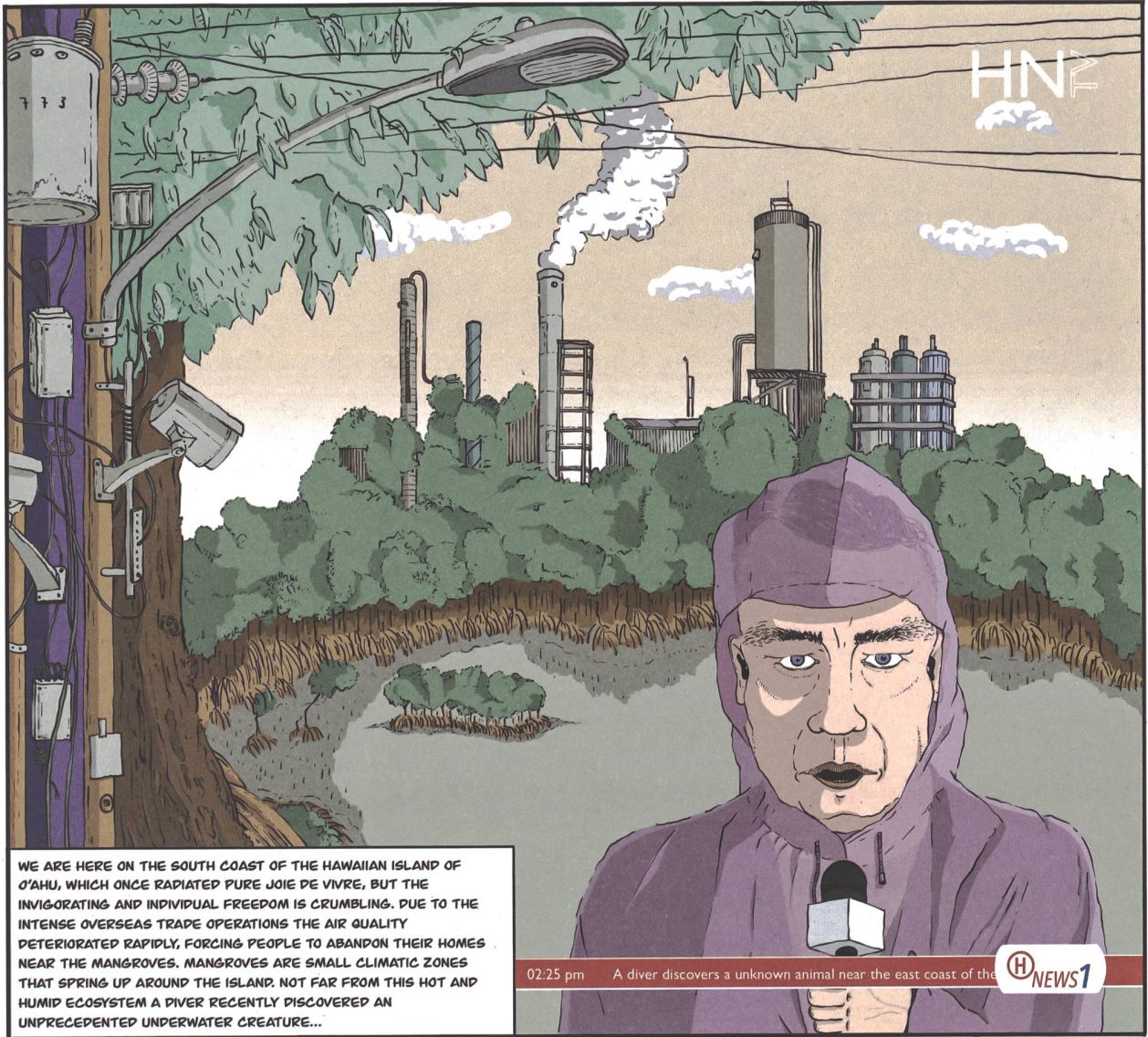
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PART TWO:
ONCE JELLYFISH STARTED TO
BLOSSOM AND GROW HAIR
Davide Morgillo

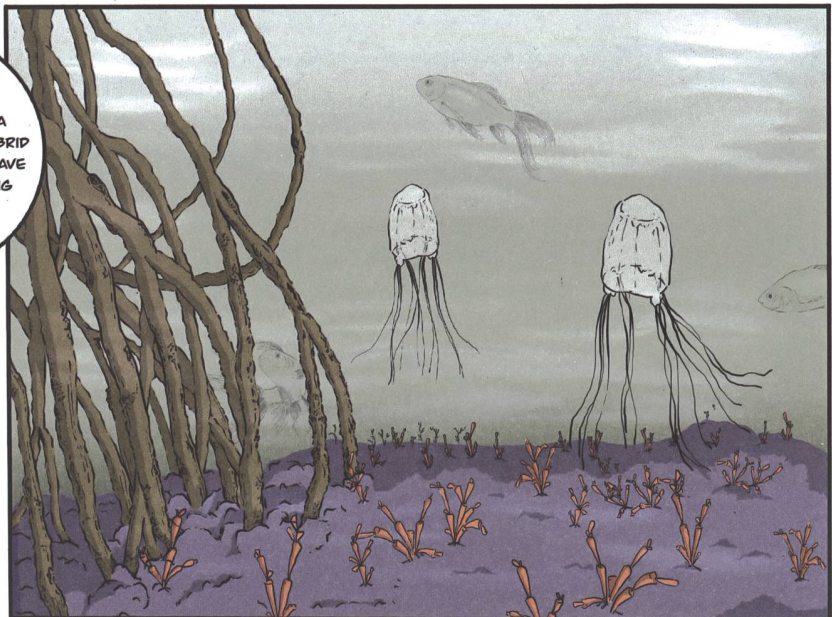


WE ARE HERE ON THE SOUTH COAST OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLAND OF O'AHU, WHICH ONCE RADIATED PURE JOIE DE VIVRE, BUT THE INVIGORATING AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM IS CRUMBLING. DUE TO THE INTENSE OVERSEAS TRADE OPERATIONS THE AIR QUALITY DETERIORATED RAPIDLY, FORCING PEOPLE TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES NEAR THE MANGROVES. MANGROVES ARE SMALL CLIMATIC ZONES THAT SPRING UP AROUND THE ISLAND. NOT FAR FROM THIS HOT AND HUMID ECOSYSTEM A PIVER RECENTLY DISCOVERED AN UNPRECEDENTED UNDERWATER CREATURE...

02:25 pm A diver discovers a unknown animal near the east coast of the 

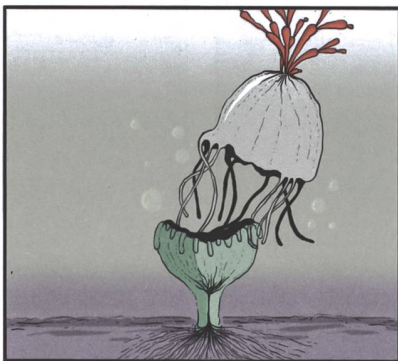
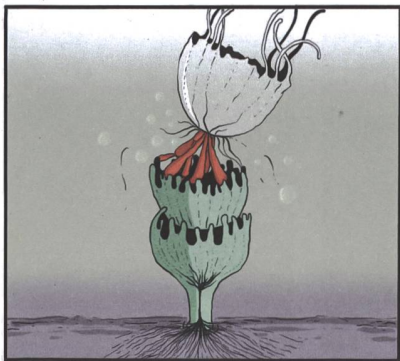
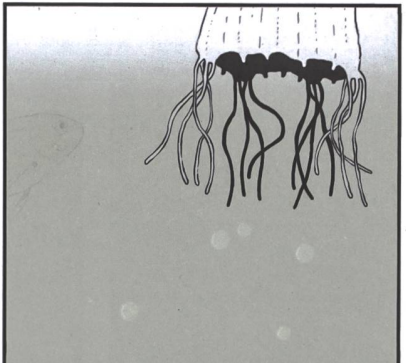
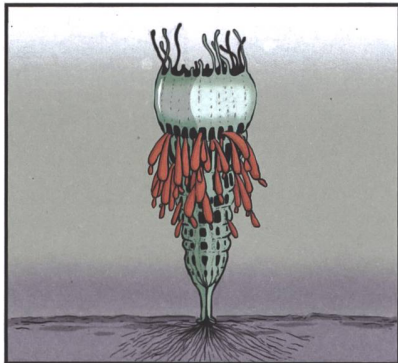
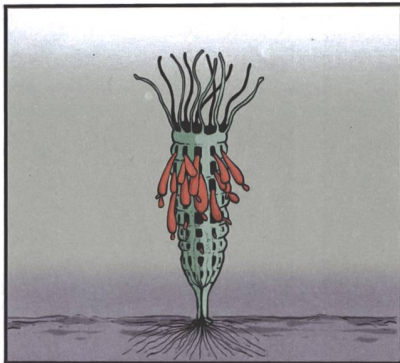
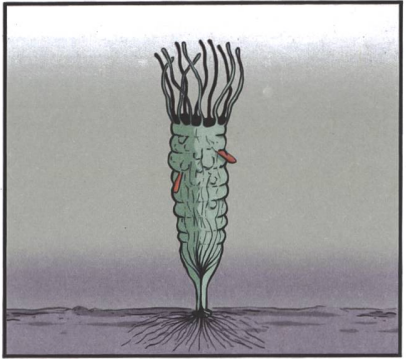
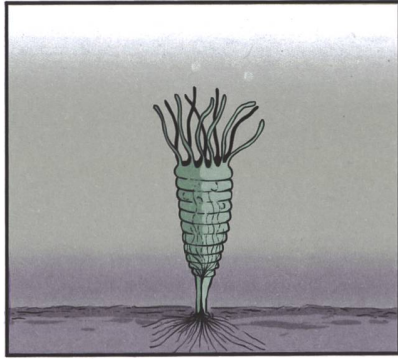
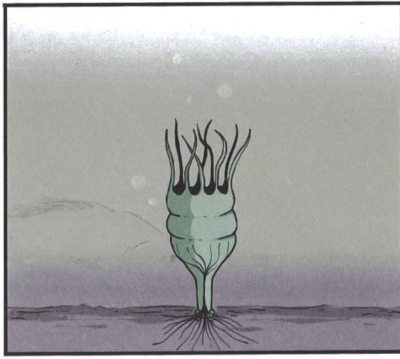
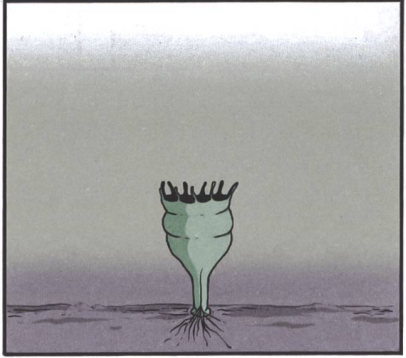
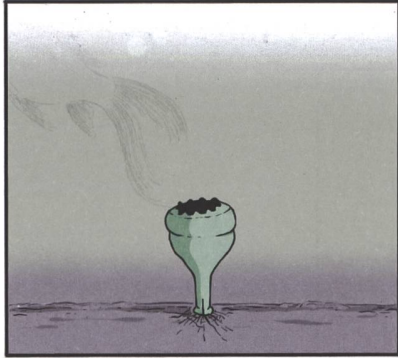
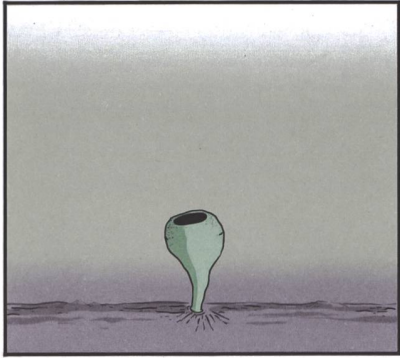
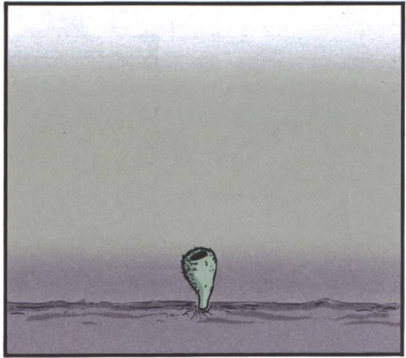
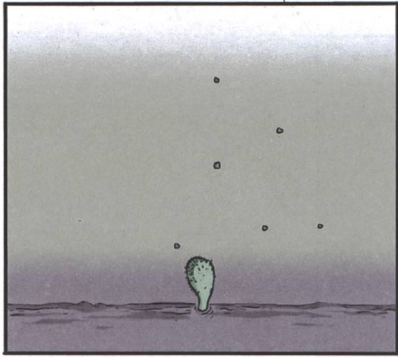


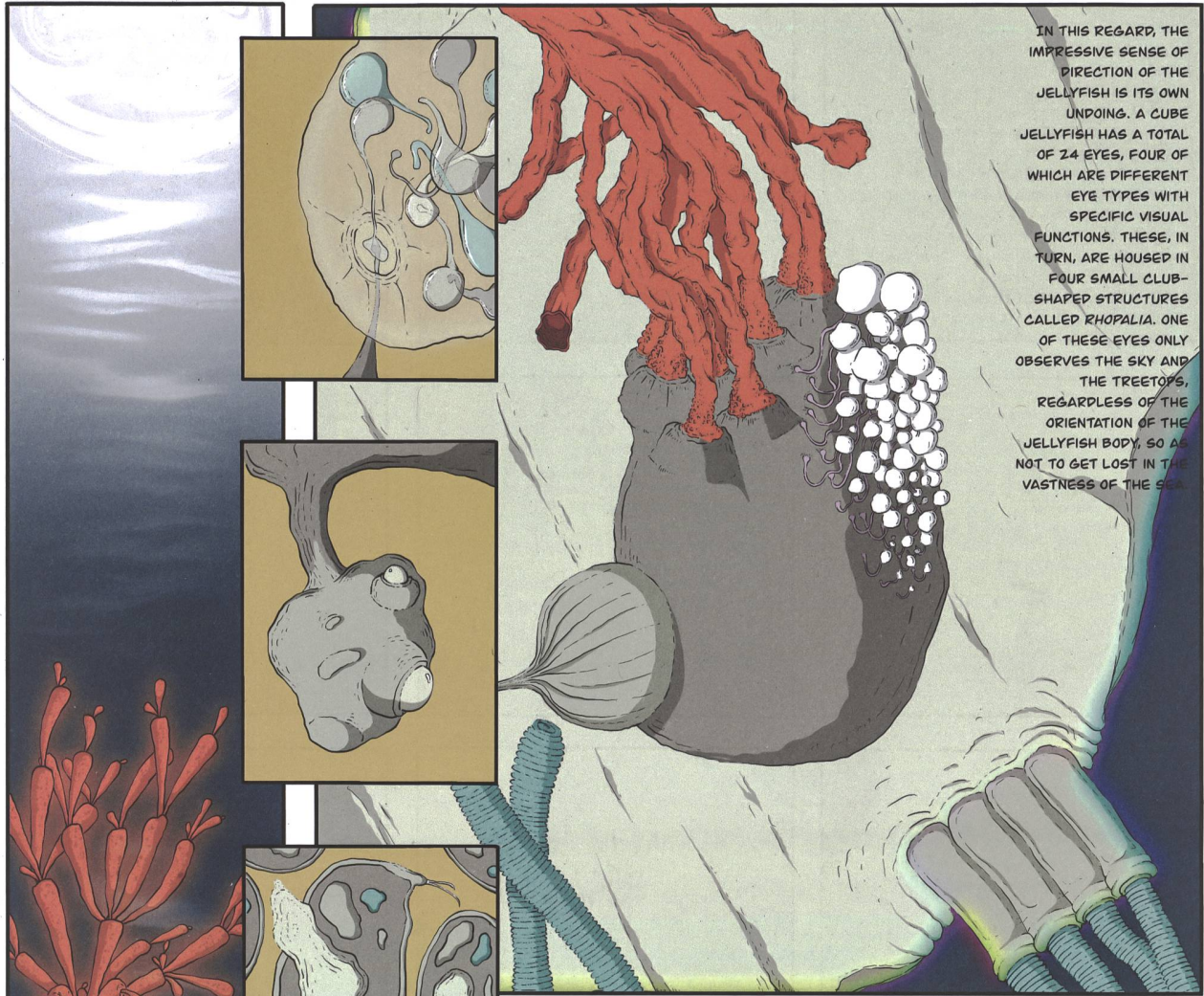
IT'S LIKE A MIXTURE OF AN ALGA AND A JELLYFISH, A HYBRID BEAST, A CHIMERA! I HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.



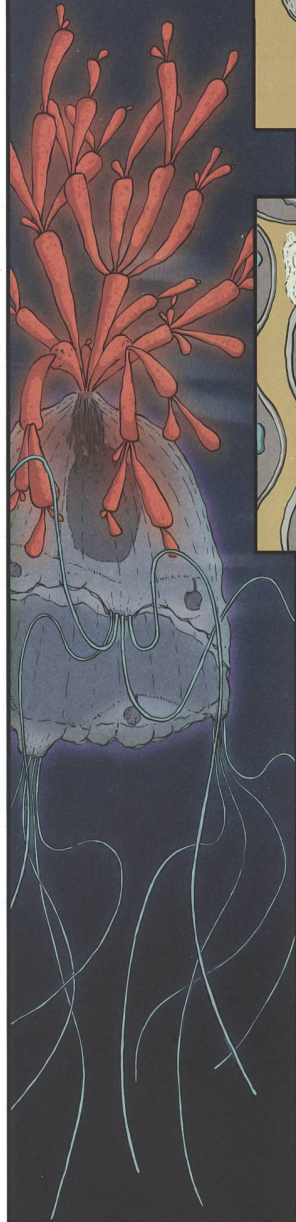
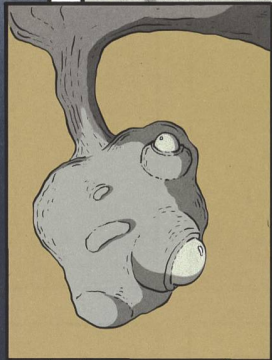
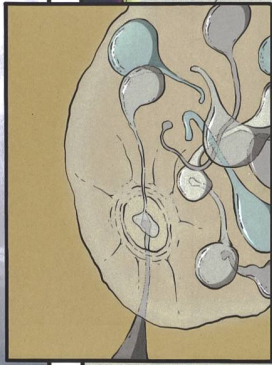
THE TWO LIVING ORGANISMS, THE LOCAL BOX JELLYFISH AND THE ALGAE SPECIES *GRACILARIA SALICORNIA* SHARE AN ENVIRONMENT DIRECTLY ON THE SHORE OF THESE MANGROVES. ON THE ONE HAND, THE CUBE JELLYFISH, FOR HIS ORIENTATION RELIES ON THE TREETOPS VISIBLE THROUGH THE WATER SO AS NOT TO GET LOST. THE ALGAE, ON THE OTHER HAND, FIND THE BEST GROWTH CONDITIONS IN THIS PARTICULAR BIOSPHERE AND SPREADS UNHINDERED INTO AN ORANGE-BROWN CARPET.

TO REPRODUCE, THE CUBE JELLYFISH RELEASES FERTILISED EGGS INTO THE WATER, WHICH SLOWLY SINK AND STICK TO THE SEABED. THE POLYP, GROWING OUT OF THE BOTTOM LIKE A PLANT, GRADUALLY MORPHS INTO THE NEXT STAGE OF GROWTH, THE EPHYRA. STROBILATION OF THE EPHYRA FINALLY FORMS THE JELLYFISH WITH A MEPUSA AND TENTACLES AS WE ARE USED TO PERCEIVE THEM. HOWEVER, SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY HAPPENS IN THIS LIFECYCLE: THE ALIEN ALGA, WHICH SHARES THE SAME SOIL, SNEAKILY AND INSIDIOUSLY NESTS IN THE INTERNAL ORGANISM OF THE JELLYFISH. A PARASITIC RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPS.

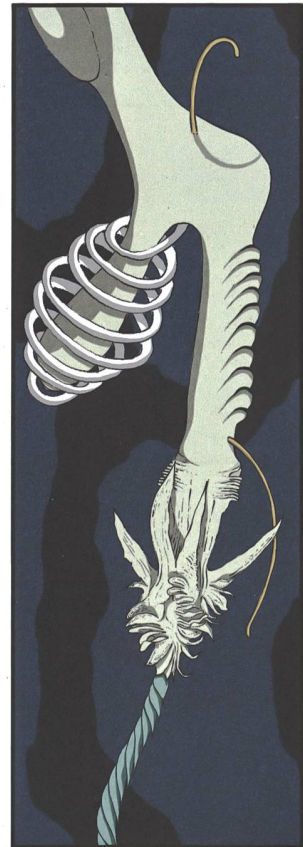




IN THIS REGARD, THE IMPRESSIVE SENSE OF DIRECTION OF THE JELLYFISH IS ITS OWN UNDOING. A CUBE JELLYFISH HAS A TOTAL OF 24 EYES, FOUR OF WHICH ARE DIFFERENT EYE TYPES WITH SPECIFIC VISUAL FUNCTIONS. THESE, IN TURN, ARE HOUSED IN FOUR SMALL CLUB-SHAPED STRUCTURES CALLED RHOPALIA. ONE OF THESE EYES ONLY OBSERVES THE SKY AND THE TREETOPS, REGARDLESS OF THE ORIENTATION OF THE JELLYFISH BODY, SO AS NOT TO GET LOST IN THE VASTNESS OF THE SEA.



THE ALGA EXPLOITS THIS ASPECT DIABOLICALLY BY GROWING OUT OF THE JELLYFISH HEAD, THUS FORMING A SMALL, CONSTANTLY PRESENT TREETOP IN THE ANIMAL'S FIELD OF VISION. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO CREATURES IS ONE-SIDED. THE ALGA HAS GROWN UP WITH THE JELLYFISH AND FORMS AN INNER WORLD ENTIRELY ACCORDING TO ITS WILL. THE ALGA DEPRIVES THE JELLYFISH OF IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS AND DISTURBS PROCESSES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, WHICH ON THE ONE HAND LEADS TO THE ALGA GAINING CONTROL OVER THE JELLYFISH, AND ON THE OTHER HAND THE JELLYFISH CONTINUES A LIFE IN A HALF DEAD STATE, AT SUBSISTENCE LEVEL. THE JELLYFISH TRANSFORMS INTO A NEW CREATURE THAT SEEMS TO SERVE THE ALGAE ABOVE ALL. THE CREATURE LEAVES ITS NATURAL HABITAT AND DISTURBS THE BALANCE OF NATURE.

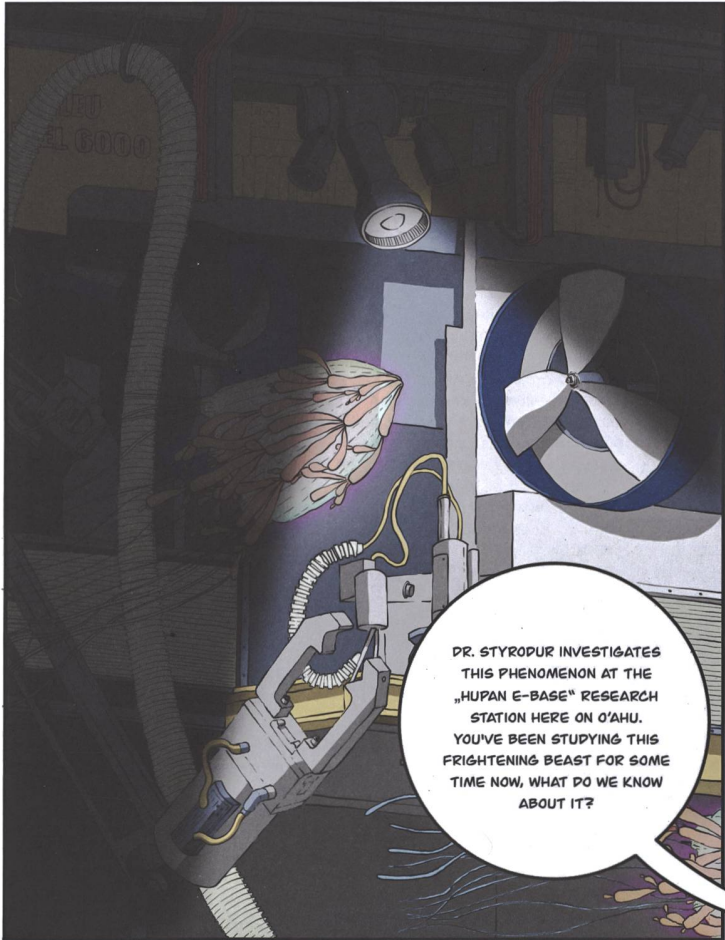
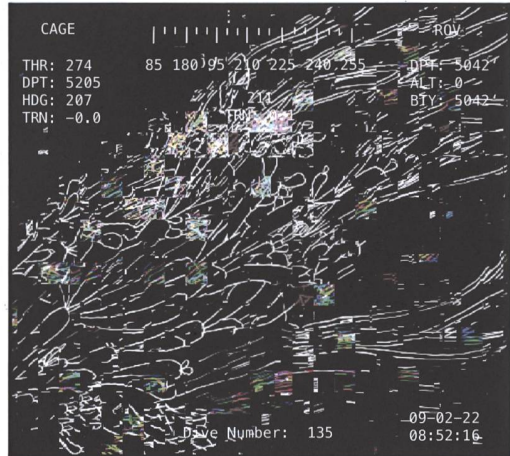
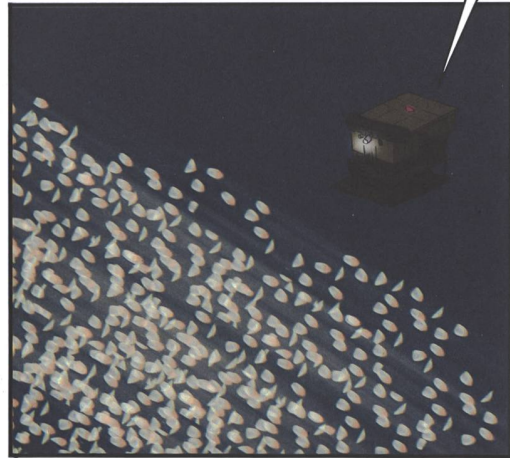




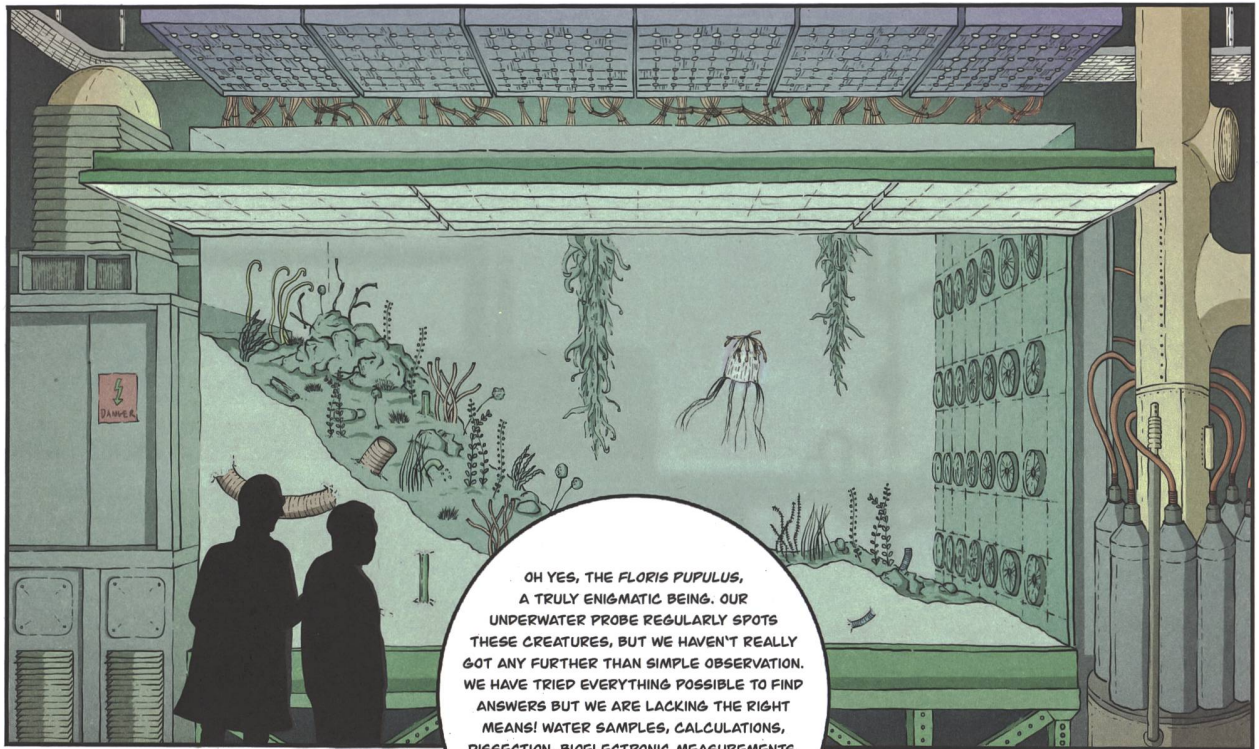
THE ALGA PROVOKES THE MOVEMENT OF THE BODY AND STEERS THE JELLYFISH FURTHER INTO THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS OF THE SEA.



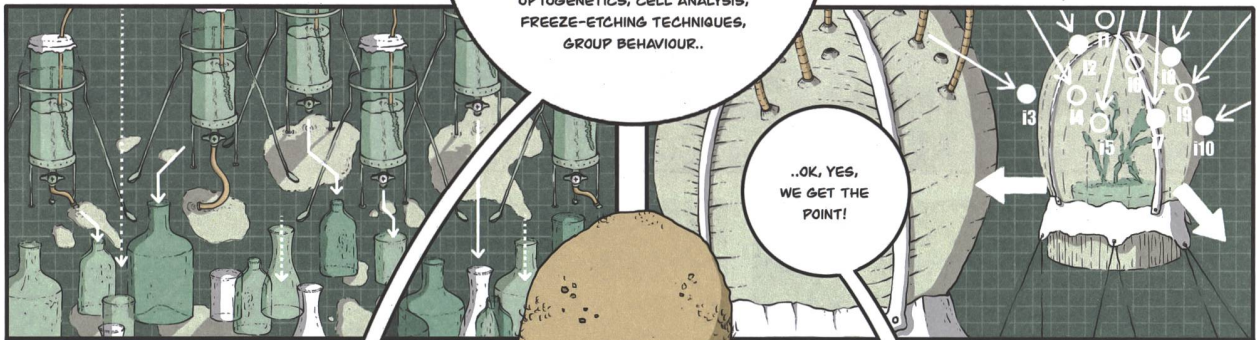
LIKE MARIONETTES THE POSSESSED ANIMALS PULSATE THROUGH THE WATER IN UNMANAGEABLE NUMBERS AND DISTURB THE CALM OF THE SEA. THE JELLYFISH CAN SWIM RAPIDLY BY DEFORMING AND PUSHING ITSELF FORWARD THROUGH A FULL-BODY CONTRACTION.



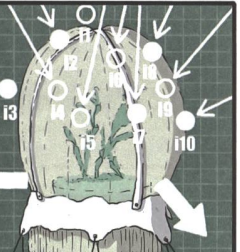
DR. STYROPUR INVESTIGATES THIS PHENOMENON AT THE "HUPAN E-BASE" RESEARCH STATION HERE ON O'AHU. YOU'VE BEEN STUDYING THIS FRIGHTENING BEAST FOR SOME TIME NOW, WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT IT?



OH YES, THE FLORIS PUPULUS, A TRULY ENIGMATIC BEING. OUR UNDERWATER PROBE REGULARLY SPOTS THESE CREATURES, BUT WE HAVEN'T REALLY GOT ANY FURTHER THAN SIMPLE OBSERVATION. WE HAVE TRIED EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO FIND ANSWERS BUT WE ARE LACKING THE RIGHT MEANS! WATER SAMPLES, CALCULATIONS, DISSECTION, BIOELECTRONIC MEASUREMENTS, OPTOGENETICS, CELL ANALYSIS, FREEZE-ETCHING TECHNIQUES, GROUP BEHAVIOUR..

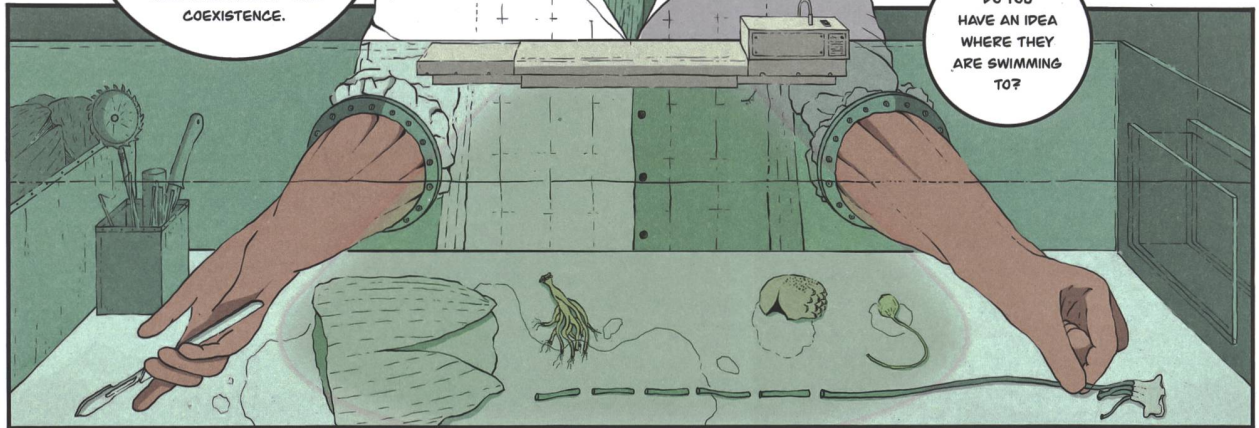


..OK. YES, WE GET THE POINT!



IT IS A CRIME OF NATURE, I TELL YOU! WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING! THE LIFE CYCLE OF A PARASITE IS DIFFERENT FROM ALL KNOWN LIVING THINGS. HOW THEY MOVE IN THE ALIEN BODY AND WHICH GRADIENTS THEY FOLLOW REMAINS INEXPLICABLE. NEITHER DO WE KNOW THE TRUE INTENTION OF THIS COEXISTENCE.

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA WHERE THEY ARE SWIMMING TO?



DEEPER THAN WE
CAN IMAGINE..

