

# Time of the essence when it comes to polishing art portfolios

## Senior graduates early in order to perfect art portfolio and continue pursuing her passion

by **Christine Chang**

Senior Lulu Liu hasn't gone to class for the past 21 days and she's not planning to show up anytime soon. But Liu isn't your typical hardcore truant. In fact, she has technically already graduated from MVHS. She's already gotten to hold her diploma, which reads "December 17, 2009" as the graduation date.

But even with no classes to worry about now, Liu is too busy for senioritis to kick in. She has taken the entire semester off to complete her art portfolio for college applications, as well as work on additional art pieces of personal interest. But while this may seem like an easy evasion of school, Liu's free second semester came at the cost of an academically loaded first semester. This summer, Liu completed her literature credits ahead of time. And last semester, Liu took on a heavier course load by doubling in social sciences, thus finishing all course requirements needed for graduation by December.

"I think it's worth it to take an extra half a year to work towards a career or something you want to do because a lot of times in art college you'll be too busy to have time for personal projects," Liu said.

Ideally, Liu wants to be a comic artist. But since the comic field is increasingly competitive, Liu has chosen to major in animation for entertainment and design because it is more vocationally practical.

Senior Samantha Chen is one of Liu's fellow art enthusiasts who has looked at several of her art pieces, and sometimes offers her two cents.

"I think [taking a semester off] is good because [Liu] is very career-oriented, and she already has a path," Chen said. "She has a distinct style with definitely some Asian influence—like Asian art with an edge."

Chen often talks with Liu about the conceptual aspects of her art, though not so much the mechanical aspects. In addition, Chen has given Liu personal feedback on her comics, especially concerning the written dialogue that accompanies the art.

"With her comics, I help her edit story lines and ideas so she can flesh things out. For comics, a lot of times the writing and concepts need people to bounce ideas off of," Chen said.

Despite the "starving artists" stereotype, Liu's parents are supportive of her career path. Liu is confident that she will find a job with a degree in entertainment and design, but whether her dream job of becoming a

comic artist works out may be less certain.

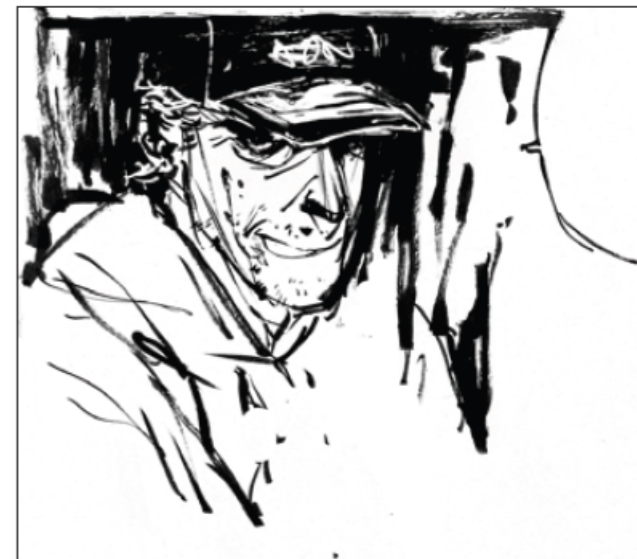
Art teacher Brian Chow, who has worked directly with Liu the past three years, acknowledges that her plan of action is suitable for students with certain qualities.

"It depends on the student. Lulu has this certain level of maturity and motivation, which are traits essential for her to pursue art on her own," Chow said. "For a lot of kids, those same skills aren't developed until college because the independent spirit that Lulu had early on isn't inherent in all high school students."

Chow is also aware of Liu's personal interest in comics and he encourages all art students to pursue side projects in addition to minimum course requirements.

"I think personal work is the most powerful work because only some skills are acquired from assignments and things done in class," Chow said. "My philosophy is that students reach a point where they need to create their own solutions. They need the freedom to personalize and to really make art their own."

So while Liu's name may have been wiped off attendance sheets for now, that very name may be the same one autographed on acclaimed comic books 10 years from now.



Courtesy of Lulu Liu



Christine Chang | El Estoque

### CREATING A NEW CHARACTER

Senior Lulu Liu (left) uses her personal tablet to sketch images, like a draft of the character for her future comic strip (above).

While some of Liu's artwork is simply for fun, others are part of her art portfolio, which she has taken a semester off of school to complete.