



4-20-2017

# 1984: Book Arts as a Driver of Thought Expansion

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## Recommended Citation

Brandon, Kelly, "1984: Book Arts as a Driver of Thought Expansion" (2017). *Honors Theses*. 2855.  
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A full write up with images can be found at: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/52007819/Kelly-Brandon-1984-Expanded>

## **Thesis Statement**

George Orwell's *1984* is a dystopian book that was published in 1949. It presents many themes still relevant today. This project delves into the use of literary analysis combined with visual and interactive design as a catalyst for critical thinking.

## **In the Beginning**

When you think about reading, there is a certain experience that you get. You are able to delve into the world of that book, you are using your imagination more, you are getting an emotional response and a cognitive one as well. And the same is true when you look at visual art. I began to think to myself what happens when you combine literary analysis with interactive and visual design? How can the end product act as a driver for critical thinking?

My goal for this project was to create a product that has the ability to draw people in and inspire them to think more critically about what they are seeing and experiencing. This project is geared towards anyone who has read or have had an experience with *1984*. It can also be geared towards people who are not fond of reading but have an interest in visual or interactive art.

## **Research: Beginning**

In the beginning, I read the book a total of three times, once to experience, once to analyze, and once to curate passages for the final project. I was looking into the character development, and the tonality of the novel, as well as the overarching themes that run through it. I was conducting interviews and doing research, anything I could do to understand the novel, the historical context in which it was written, and George Orwell himself.

## **Research: The Bulk**

After I was through reading the book, I began to research book arts, book makers, and color theory. I looked into kids books, and collectors editions of books as well. When you look at a kid's book, there is the element of interactivity for knowledge. The kids interact with the book, and get some sort of knowledge base out of it. When you look at a collector's edition of a book, the focus tends to be more on aesthetic. As I looked into doing this I knew that I needed the interactivity and learning that comes from kid's book, the aesthetic qualities that comes from collector's editions, and I needed the technical skill that was gained from researching book arts and book makers.

## **Initial Sketches**

Moving past my research and into my beginning sketches, I was attempting to conceptually link the visuals on the page to the passages that they were displaying.

## **The End Product**

As I continued to experiment, a heavily interactive product began to emerge. Sketches that began in the digital realm began to take shape in the form of material explorations, and previously unexplored

opportunities for interactivity began to take root. In the end, this project took the form of a portfolio box that housed eight spreads. They all differ in terms of interactivity and materiality, but they are all heavily conceptually linked to the passages that they are portraying. Working digitally in the beginning allowed me to get my ideas out fast and in numbers. However, after curating down the sections, and really analyzing the chosen sections, going back and being able to use materiality and interactivity to push the conceptual link between the language and visuals was a must.

## Conclusion

Throughout the research and implementation process I was able to learn about book arts and book making, an area that I wouldn't have been able to study otherwise. The project as a whole has successfully drawn people in and encouraged their interaction, my main goal. As I worked, my biggest limitation became time. Understanding and implementing the various parts of the project took more time than anticipated, and if I were to go back I would've started much earlier. As a designer, I was able to work more playfully and freely, which is something that I haven't done in a while. Pushing myself to try new materials and methods really expanded my abilities, and moving forward, this method of working will be a good tool to work with again.

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### Interviewees

Nick Kuder, Professor of Graphic Design at WMU  
Martin Burch, Professor of Graphic Design at WMU  
Paul Sizer, Professor of Graphic Design at WMU  
Scott Friesner, Lee Honors College and English Department at WMU  
Jeff Abshear, Kalamazoo Book Arts Center

### A Special Thanks To

Ryan Lewis, Professor of Graphic Design at WMU, Thesis Chair

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