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The Waste Land

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Books have always been a source of inspiration to me, and have continued to open up my imagination. Not only is the story a source of creativity, but also the design of a book is what always sparks my attention and makes them special to me. My collection of books contains different styles and designs that make each book unique. Since studying book arts abroad in Italy this past summer, my interest in physical books has heightened as well as the learning the process behind creation. We studied typesetting, letterpress printing, and focused our learning on very old books. The study abroad program also helped land my internship at the Kalamazoo Book Arts Center, which has also broadened my education in book arts. I then realized my interest and passion for book arts, so for my senior thesis I wanted to put my knowledge to use and practice book design and book making. As a graphic designer, having skills in digital technology is vital, but handmade creations are just as important. In such a digital society, I wanted to focus on how design can activate the senses while keeping printed books relevant. Ebooks and books on tablets are becoming very common, and I believe it is important to bring a special element back to physical books. To begin, I thought of techniques and materials that could not be translated through eBooks. I concentrated on the senses, and what

techniques and materials can alert those as well as keeping the reader engaged.

Another key aspect to my project was allowing for the product to be reproducible on a large scale. This limited the materials and techniques used, and also forced me to create a system in which all the elements were consistent throughout the design. My intentions are to appeal to readers all over, and English and Art/design majors.

After searching for a strong literary piece with strong imagery, I chose *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot, a series of poems written in 1922. I did extensive research and studying on Eliot's work to find themes and motifs throughout the story. I then narrowed it down to the most dominant and reoccurring motifs within *The Waste Land*. The idea of fragmentation was repeated throughout Eliot's writing, he presents this overall theme, which is his representation of humanity's fragile state of mind. The world before him had transformed after the First World War, becoming fractured, chaotic, and damaged. *The Waste Land* is filled with incomplete thoughts, allusions, and literary texts that were Eliot's way of representing this change in society relating to history. With this theme of fragmentation in mind, I then experimented with techniques that could be visually represented. I tried several different techniques, but the one that displayed the most relevance was a technique of perforations into the text pages. To me, this represented the idea of fragmentation by taking away

something that was once whole. It also created miniature eyelets that allowed the text from other pages to be shown through a bit. The texture was subtle yet interesting. From here, I then started thinking of the format of the book and how that could be transformed. To try to differentiate the book from the norm, I subdivided a sheet of paper into four pieces. I played with angles within a signature to create an interesting form for the book. This was important because it also represented taking something that was once whole and breaking it into pieces that became chaotic, similar to how Eliot wrote.

The most successful part of my senior thesis was how I learned to go in depth into literature and translate ideas and themes into my design. I extensively studied the literature and experimented several ways different themes and motifs could be translated into graphic design. Finding themes, motifs, and symbols throughout *The Waste Land* really inspired and drove my design. During my education one of the main objectives we learned is how to communicate through design. My final project was executing exactly that; every element that I designed was thoroughly thought out in a way that would effectively communicate the story. It was a way for me to tell the story through my designs, which was very successful. This process is important to me because it has proven my interest in book design, and it is a field I would like to pursue. Areas I thought could be improved would be craft; I am a perfectionist and

would like to be able to produce the book with no flaws. Also, I would like to typeset and print the title page on book cloth, to give it a more professional look. This is something I still might pursue. Although I would like the book to look perfect, my skills in craft and book design developed greatly from all of the sketching and practice. There were so many elements that had to be hand crafted and planned so my techniques advanced. I opened up the potential for book design within my design abilities and graphic design in general.

I learned that book design and book making is something I really enjoy. I've always had an interest in books and reading, but this proved that this is a route I want to take in design. This process showed me that the literature and design really could go hand in hand, in every aspect. Every element that I designed was based solely off of the literature, so I also practiced having a strict system within the designs. Using logic and a consistent system, I was able to make the book a vehicle for the story to live in. I wanted to do so much more with the design (color, typography, etc.) but because of the literature I had to take a step back and focus on the themes and relate that to my designs. It also showcased my weaknesses, which is time management. I wish I had spent more time designing and actually making the book, so that I could try to make it look perfect. My time management could have been much better planned out and executed. I spent a lot of time researching and experimenting and I wish I had

gotten into the actual design earlier. I feel I could have spent more time on craft and made it look more reproducible. Although it did prove beneficial to spend a lot of time on my research and sketching because that allowed me to try many different things and find the best solution for my design.

A struggle I had throughout was trying to make it so the book could be reproducible so something I would research more would be how and what can be mass produced. This could help me with any further studies and designing of books. Incorporating tactile qualities but also staying within boundaries of what could be mass-produced was difficult, so I wish I could have spent more time researching and learning about more techniques. After making slight changes, I would like to continue this process and possibly create a series of poetry books.

I learned that I love working with different mediums through design, and using my hands to create is essential. For me, designing with several different mediums is what will inspire me the most. I hope to pursue a career in which I can bring together many different elements and mediums in my design process.