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Benefits of Doodling

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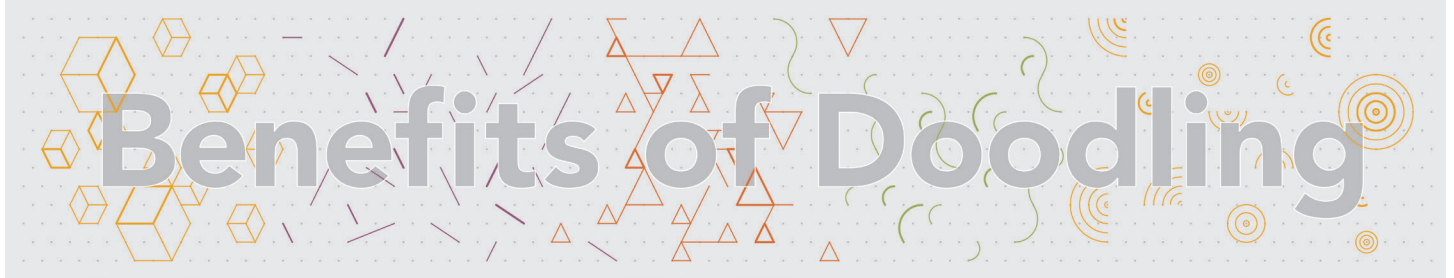
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Benefits of Doodling

A senior thesis by Olivia Bevacqua
Spring 2019

Thesis Statement

Growing up and into adulthood, doodling is seen as a frivolous act. Multiple studies have proven that doodling can be beneficial in many ways including relaxation, focus, and information retention. For these reasons among others, discouraging doodling during development and into adulthood is something that should be addressed. My planner encourages doodling in a classroom setting and gets rid of some of the unease or bias associated with it.

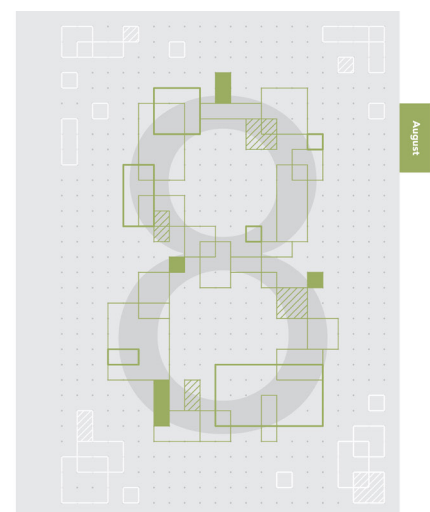
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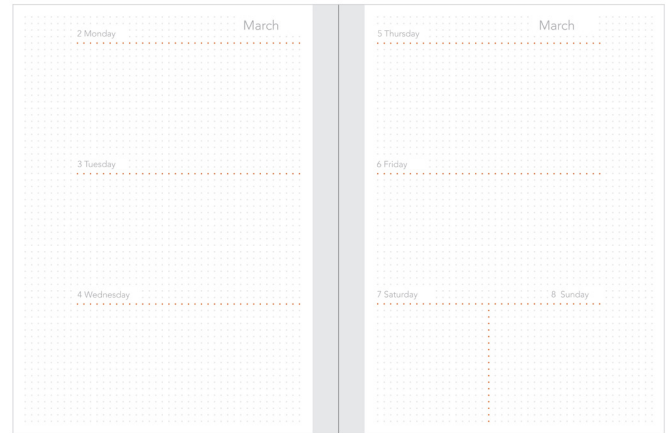
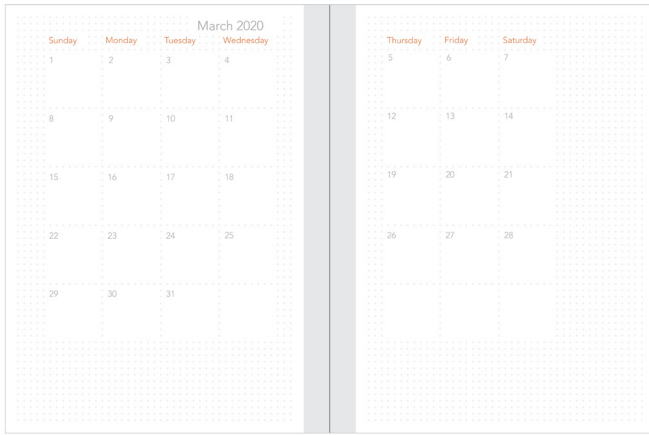
The planner starts out with a page for personal information and an introduction. This introduction briefly outlines the benefits of doodling and gives an overview of how to use the planner.

One of the draws of the planner was that it had the option to be used inconspicuously. My design accented this by disguising the front as a regular planner. However, for in-store promotional purposes I created a removable wrap-around vellum strip that featured some of the marks from inside the planner.

The hope with these divider pages would be that students would use the planner, use this toolbox of visual aesthetics, and then doodle with them outside of the planner as well as inside.

I wanted to keep it visual with only a small indication of the basic shape on the backside of the divider. This simple form is a more quiet approach of urging the user to start doodling.





This is the planner portion of the doodle planner. The monthly color is carried through in small portions.

The planner is spiral bound for a couple of reasons. You can stick a pen in the spine, which is convenient. Additionally, you can choose to use the planner with the full spread laid out or page by page.

Doodling is something that's really important to me as an artist and a human. I doodled growing up a lot, especially in high school. It's something that I often do when I'm bored or when I need something to ground myself during lectures.

Audience

My audience shifted throughout the process. Towards the beginning of the project I focused on teachers in K-12 education and changing their minds about doodling. However, as I started the research process, I found that it would be better to focus on students over teachers. This was for a couple of reasons. For one, the K-12 education system and lesson planning were fairly out of my depth. There were things that I frankly didn't have the background to address. Additionally, as I interviewed educators in K-12 and higher education I found that these days doodling may not be as discouraged in the classroom as I originally thought. Still, that observation would have required a more extensive, widespread study than I had time to dive into.

I chose high school students specifically because this is when traditional lecture settings start and when some students begin getting disenfranchised with drawing and mark making. In addition, I had been a high school student not too long ago so this audience wouldn't be as hard for me to relate to.



Goals

After this audience shift, I solidified my goals. My primary goal was to promote doodling and mark making as a learning and relaxation tool. My goal with my designed object was to create something that would give high school students the opportunity to doodle without fear of judgement. On a larger, more macro scale, I wanted to promote visual learning and thinking.

Research

My research process started with reading scientific studies and interviewing people in and around the K-12 education field. This is where I learned about the benefits of doodling. My main two takeaways from this were that doodling could help with information retention and relaxation. I had read studies that had shown that more structured mark making could help with retaining audio information. The most common place for this tactic to be used would be lecture settings but it could also be useful while on phone calls or watching videos. The second thing that I kept coming across was doodling being used as a tool for relaxation. Many art therapy studies I read characterized doodling and mark making as meditative.

As part of my research I also put out a google survey that asked people about their thoughts and experiences surrounding doodling. This survey solidified a lot of the things that I had already learned from the interviews and studies. Out of the people I surveyed (who were mostly college students in majors including fine arts, product design, business, and education) a really small amount were completely opposed to doodling in K-12 education. In addition, the top two answers for things that doodling helped them do was relaxation and focus, which again, went along with my research.

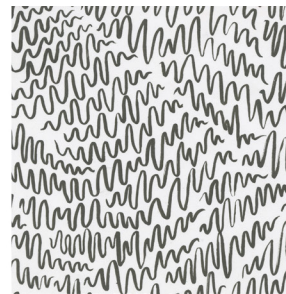
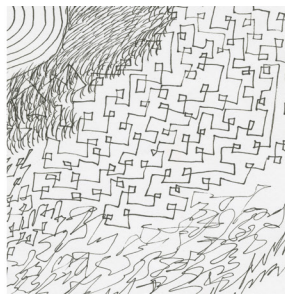
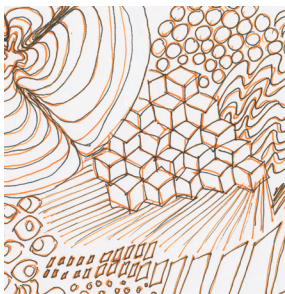


Inside a local Kalamazoo high school science classroom.

As I went further and further down the rabbit hole of research I decided to pull back and get closer to my subject matter and my audience.

I visited a local high school to try and get back into the mindset of a high school student. I observed the classrooms and hallways where they might end up using my planner.

Throughout the research process I took time to doodle. At one point, I listened to different things and doodled in order to see if/how the forms would be impacted.



In order from left to right, listening to fleet foxes, nirvana, moth radio hour, and then nothing.



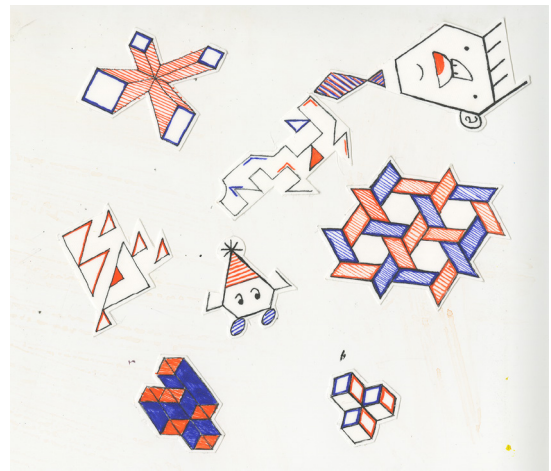
Filled in bullet journals I found on Instagram. (see references for credit)

Design Process

It was at this point that I landed on my end product: A doodle planner. Before coming to this decision I had thought about doing a few things including a webpage, and informational packet, a social media campaign, and an infographic. I decided on a planner over these options for a few reasons.

1. The planner could be used in all subjects
2. It would hopefully be used on a daily basis
3. Classmates and teachers would be less likely to pry if it's a planner, taking some of the pressure off of the student.

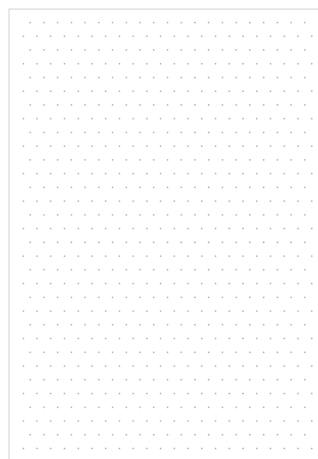
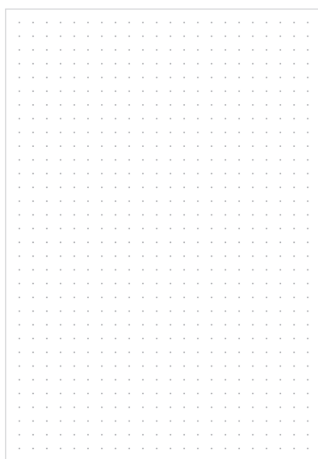
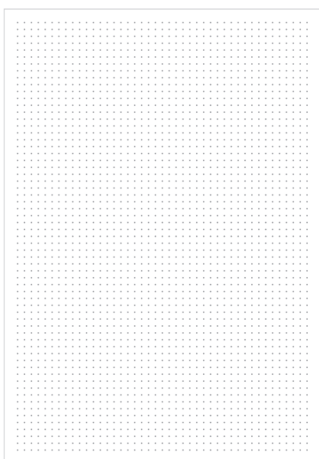
When it came to designing the planner I started by looking at what was out there on Pinterest and the like. I knew I didn't want too much decoration because I wanted this to be a gender neutral product that would allow the user to let their mark making really shine. I knew I wanted this planner to act as a structured blank canvas for students to let their mark making shine. This was when I started thinking about grids.



Stickers I made during the process to take a little break from designing and get some inspiration for more visual prompts.

I was inspired by bullet journals. I liked the underlying structure and sense of freedom they gave the user. Still, I wanted to provide more visuals and information than a blank bullet journal alone could.

While I didn't want decoration, I also wanted to create something aesthetically pleasing and easy to use. That's where the idea of the more illustrative monthly divider pages came from. This is also how I would introduce the visual "prompts" for the month.

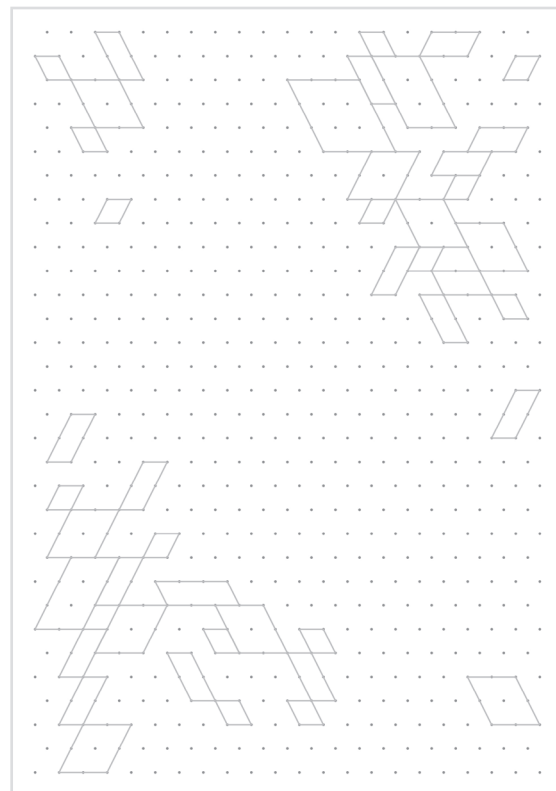


These were the grids I ended up landing on. Technically they could be considered one grid because the second two fit into the first one.

When I say prompts, they're not really prompts. They are more like doodle inspiration. Each month has a different kind of form associated with it.

One of the last things I did was create my introduction. I ended up going with something completely written to contrast the mostly visual nature present in the rest of the planner. Still, I kept the writing short and simple so that the user might actually slow down and read it before diving in. Even so, reading the introduction isn't vital to the purpose of my planner.

To reiterate, the planner at its core is a structured blank canvas for students to use. My hope with my design is that there's just enough interesting visuals to keep them engaged and inspired but not so much that it's overpowering. The space between these visuals is equally as important. It allows the user a place where they can let their doodles and mark making really shine.



An early digital sketch for a monthly divider page.

Reflection

This process revealed a lot of things to me. Defining the problem and creating the solution to said problem was very difficult. I was forced to get creative in a way that was different from the way that I had been approaching assignments in the past. If I had more time to develop my thesis I would definitely start by having real high school students test my product and see what they thought about it and if it actually helped them.

As far as my process goes, my biggest regret is not landing on my end product earlier. Even so, this is about a way of thinking and researching a topic and I feel that I researched doodling very well. I feel that I was able to take something that has very positively impacted my life and create a designed object that does it justice.



Earlier versions of these divider pages had the concept that the user would complete various shapes and bring their own twist to it. I decided this was too rigid.

For additional supplemental images, please visit my behance entry at:
<https://www.behance.net/gallery/79380677/Olivia-Bevacqua-Benefits-of-Doodling>

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