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26 Coffee Cups: An Exploration In Book Design

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Comments

As a graphic design student, within the past two years I have become increasingly enamored with the intricacies of book/publication design. For an artistic medium such as book design, that exists, as book designer Richard Hendel would describe, "as a craft with its own traditions and a relatively small body of accepted rules," there seems to concurrently exist many theories about how a designer might achieve a harmonious solution to the problems presented by the relationship of content (text and/or image) and the printed page. With this opportunity to present an Honors project, I have decided to research the topic specifically pertaining to photobook design and incorporate my background in photography and ceramics by experimenting with the content of imagery to achieve a printed visual narrative of a conceptual nature.

Initially, I needed to create the content, and the objects I decided on for this project were a series of coffee cups. I wished to incorporate a repeatable form that could provide subtle contrasts in shape and size and would yet be instantly recognizable despite these intended contrasts. Further contrast would be realized by experimenting with glaze chemistry to achieve an array of colors and textures in order to provide an additional element in the curating and sequencing within the design process that would follow. Next, once the firing and glazing of the subjects was complete, the series of 26 coffee cups was photographed in the controlled environment of the studio. Each coffee cup was rendered with the camera with consistent lighting and in four identical orientations; handle straight left, handle 45° from left, handle 45° from right, and handle straight right. Each photograph (of the 4 orientations x 26 coffee cups, 104 total photographs) was treated identically in the process of editing to minimize contrast in exposure. From these 104

26 COFFEE CUPS: AN EXPLORATION IN BOOK DESIGN

by

Scott Christian Hage

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

Jan Albert Gratama
Thesis Mentor

Summer 2017

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

Kee-Ho Yuen
Art, Studio Honors Advisor

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Scott Christian Hage

Spring 2017

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School of Art and Art History

As a graphic design student, within the past two years I have become increasingly enamored with the intricacies of book/publication design. For an artistic medium such as book design, that exists, as book designer Richard Hendel would describe, “as a craft with its own traditions and a relatively small body of accepted rules,” there seems to concurrently exist many theories about how a designer might achieve a harmonious solution to the problems presented by the relationship of content (text and/or image) and the printed page. With this opportunity to present an Honors project, I have decided to research the topic specifically pertaining to photobook design and incorporate my background in photography and ceramics by experimenting with the content of imagery to achieve a printed visual narrative of a conceptual nature.

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What I personally found most challenging with this particular project was the construction of a grid system that could successfully be employed throughout the sequencing of the page spreads to promote a continuous, harmonious flow of the dual narratives of the subjects and the abstract compositions created by the detail of the glazes. As of yet, I’m still undecided if I have approached my ultimate vision of a successful design, but at the very least, it gives me something to build on with my next attempt. By selecting one design from the many I deliberated on for the final book design, I found an increasing appreciation of just how detail-oriented this particular task can be. Successful photobook design often conveys an inherent simplicity, and can deceive one into thinking it was easy to create. The knowledge gained with this experience of trial and error proved to be greatly beneficial to me, and having gained these new insights along with a greater understanding of book design, this research effort has been time well-spent and beneficial to my growth as a designer.