

MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI
FLOW

“The optimal state of inner experience is one
in which there is order in consciousness.”

Paulina M. Johnson

Packet No. 2 | June 12, 2017

Hi Tasheka!

REFLECTION/SUMMARY

Packet 2. Feeling better than Packet 1.

First, I decided to start all over with my writing. It was so hard to bring myself to do it, but now retrospectively super glad I did. I wouldn't say the new writing is very different in tone and content, but somehow it feels like it has more direction. Let me just stop right here and outright declare that my thesis is going to have a seriously deep cheese layer, sappy and goeey in-between. I can say however, that it's totally honest and completely genuine. I am a cheesy person and that's that. I don't really like poetry that much, but when I write, it just kind of comes out a bit like that. So rather than fight it, I'd like to somehow capitalize on it.

But let me backtrack because this has been a really cool month: So the last weekend before Memorial Day we flew back to South Carolina for our little neighbor's Bat Mitzvah. I will say that aside from the tiny bit of culture I got from living next to these beautiful people, I knew nothing about the Jewish tradition. So we showed up to support and walked away with loads of love and some serious education. The weekend was packed with services, and dinners, and lunches, and parties, and Hebrew, and then more services. And then I had this moment... we're sitting on Friday evening for the first service and we're called to reach for the book that was in front of us to follow a reading. I pick up the book and as if someone had pants-ed me, I didn't know how to interact with the book!! It took me a good 10 seconds to realize that the front was the back, the back was the front, and the sequence of pages streamed from right to left throughout. It was awesome. I've been designing books for years, exploring the form of the book in many different ways, and not knowing how to interact with this one was a huge breath of fresh air. So yeah, Hebrew reads right to left. Now I know. And now I also know Hebrew has no vowels. It's all consonants with little wiggly lines either above or below, in different quantities, which determine how the consonants should be pronounced and enunciated. It's pretty awesome.

But of course this whole experience led me to realize this is something I'd like to appropriate for my document. Whether it reads right to left or not, I want it to challenge my own, and perhaps others', preconceived notions of how to interact with a book (because **my whole thing is about challenging how we think about and interact with space**). Step one in the design process, check. Then... I had an even cooler idea. What if the book not only reads counter-intuitively, but has no ink at all. In essence the book will be blank, an entire piece of negative space. I think I need to explain further. Here's what I'm really thinking. I'd like to design a decent size book (dimensions will be determined once I find the right printer/press),

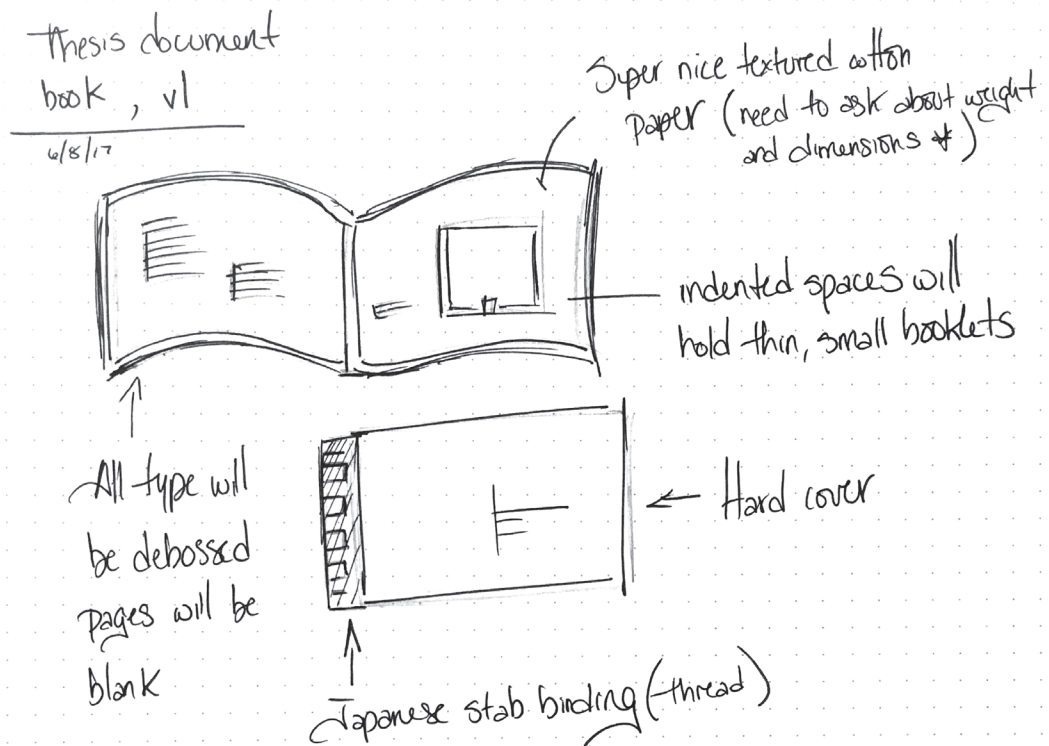
which will house small and thin booklets. The large book, will be letterpress printed.

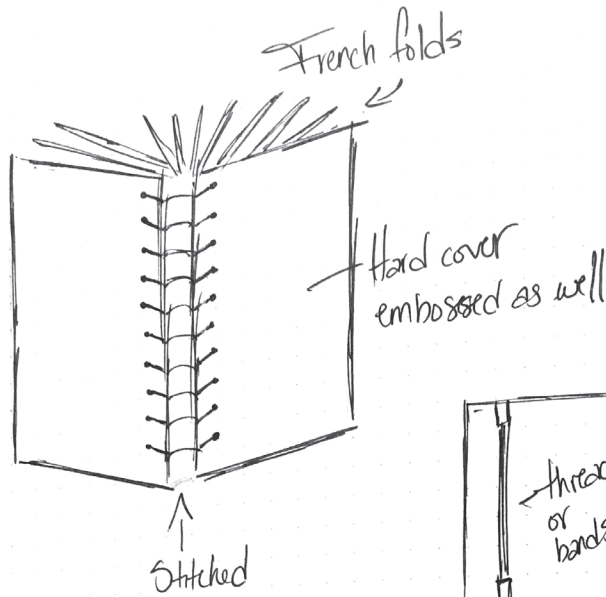
Well, actually, it will be blind-embossed, so that the content, and its accessibility, will depend directly on the space (and the lighting) within which it's experienced. I realize this is a pipe dream. I've started to contact every and any letterpress shop I can find in Colorado, to no avail. But I'll keep trying. I've also reached out to Erin Beckloff in hopes she can suggest a printer or two who may be able to help. So anyhow, this book will be embossed or debossed, which will include holding spaces for smaller booklets to live within. These small booklets will be either printed with my little Epson, or offset elsewhere. They will serve to create a multidimensional experience within the book, but also with the actual content; layers within layers.

Regarding content: The large book, which for now I'm calling the holding book, will be home to writing that will resemble stream of consciousness, maybe a bit poetic, entirely sappy and cheesy, but also very personal. This is where I will describe my experience and outlook on the issue, and its associated feelings, conflicts, etc. Then each little booklet will delve into the research relevant to the ideas described. The writing will be more academic and to the point in those booklets. It is also where I'd like to incorporate imagery, which is not entirely figured out. I've been playing with abstract photos but I'm not sold on what I've got. We'll see. Then... extracting conceptual ideas from the cheesy writing, I will design the exhibition pieces. I seem to be making a bunch of metaphors which may be interesting to try to articulate visually and bring to life. That is where I'm at.

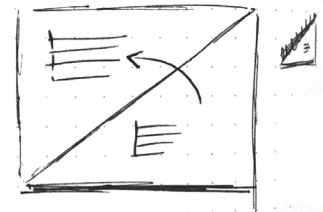
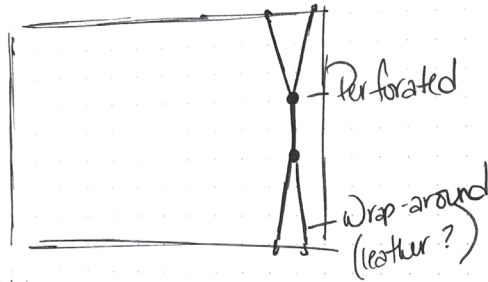
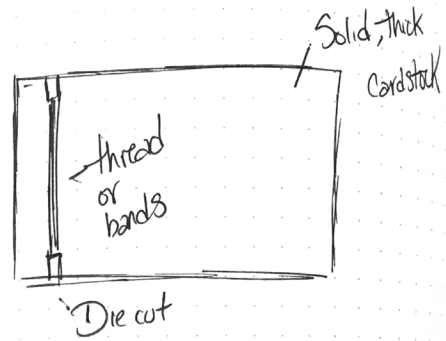
Some preliminary visual references:

THESIS DOCUMENT
STRUCTURE IDEAS

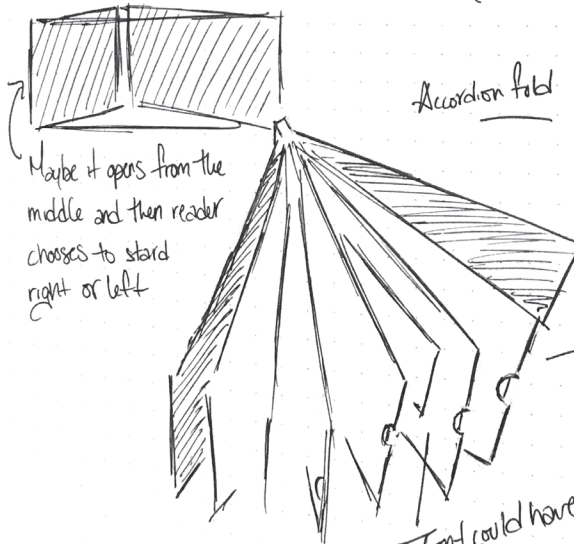




I think I'd rather design a horizontal piece.



What if it's a triangle?



Booklets could fold out instead of being saddle-stitched

what if the booklets live inside the pages instead of the inlets of embossing?

Front could have die cut.

This month I also was fortunate enough to spend a week in Mexico with some of our dearest friends. It turned out to be the perfect context to sit and think and be able to write. It was there that I began my current draft and it was there that I realized that the purest form of design for me, is that in which I can loose myself in the process.

Lastly, this month Sondra Graff was kind enough to spend some time with me over Skype to chat and help me think about my thesis. Our conversation was lovely, as usual, and of most importance was her notice that I gravitate towards thinking and reading about space because it's something I really need.

And it's so true! For about a year I've been sharing studio space with two other women. The space is just one large rectangular office of which i 'own' a wall. It's great when no one is there. Because I can just get into my work. I've learned the hard way that I do not like sharing work space, especially when I'm working on something as important to me and personal as this whole thing. Impulsively I gave my 30-day notice last week and all of a sudden had nowhere to be. I think I've got another option lined up, and it will be a space I can truly appropriate and share when I want to and retreat into when I don't. I'll be moving next week. I hope. I also hope it turns out to be a better place for me to think.

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Thesis Development Exercise & Project Schedule

Thank you for this!

Describe 3 things in graphic design about which you are passionate:

- I love designing books and working with paper
- I love creating harmonious compositions by considering and utilizing negative space
- I love using and organizing typography as a design element

What are the objectives/goals you would like the project to have?

- To explore and understand spatial theory
- To consider bringing spatial theory into the discourse of graphic design
- To create a large scale installation that portrays the different categories of space
- To design a unique set of books (or create pieces that draw from bookmaking practices) to explore space in design

State why the project will be worthwhile.

By becoming more aware of space and incorporating this awareness into their design practice, graphic designers can gain insight into the content and power of influence in their work. I believe design draws from, works within, and directly affects important aspects of spatial experience at every level. By being cognizant of this interplay, I hope to inspire a greater sense of responsibility within the graphic design community.

Define resources and research that will inform your project. (Initial list)

1. LeFebvre, Henri, and Donald Nicholson-Smith. *The Production of Space*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.
2. Bollnow, Otto Friedrich. *Human Space*. London: Hyphen Press, 2011.
3. Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009. IBooks.
4. Watts, Alan. *The Book; On The Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*. New York: Random House, 1966. IBooks.
5. Worringer, Wilhelm. *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*. Routledge & K. Paul, London, 1910.
6. Stella, Frank. *Working Space*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P, 1987.

On what existing ideas, analogies, models and/or examples will your project be based?

- I will part from LeFebvre's proposed triad of spatial categories (social, physical, mental)
- I will draw from Watt's philosophy on the interpretation of space
- I will draw from Worringer's theory about the creation of style in relation to space
- I will explore space as it is referenced within various contexts and as it is purposefully planned
- I will utilize paper, thread and wood (natural materials) to serve as visual metaphors for each category of space

What form will your project take

My project will take the form of 1) a series of books representative of the various forms of space [mental, social, physical, syncretic], 2) a large and corresponding installation that visually conveys these spaces, 3) a verbal/visual presentation that will bring ideas, methods and final pieces together.

List the tasks that will be required to complete your project.

— MONTH NO. 2

- Go Through Thesis Development Exercise
- Contact Mary to ask about installation space and resources
- Read at least three more books on spatial theory
- Create book summaries of each of those books
- Read at least three more articles or essays on the perception, creation or interpretation of space
- Create summaries of each of those articles
- Re-read previous packets to search, find, and extract relevant research and info from past semesters
- Create list of possible relationships found in all summaries and analyze those relationships
- Nail down a thesis statement
- Begin to create content for thesis document books

— MONTH NO. 3

- Create content for each of the 3/4 books that will become my thesis document (copy & imagery)
- Design each of the 3/4 books that will become my thesis document
- Send books to content & copy editors
- Research vendors for book printing/binding

— MONTH NO. 4

- Design installation space
- Create pieces that will become the installation
- Plan for packaging & shipping pieces
- Make revisions to thesis document books per editors
- Resend books to copy/content editors

— MONTH NO. 5

- Finalize vendors for book printing/binding
- Finalize books and send off to press
- Package and ship installation materials
- Create verbal/visual presentation of work

What criteria will determine success? How will it be measured?

- If all the program prerequisites met
- If I address and consider my topic from a variety of angles
- If I present and include all of my research, including my own perspective and opinion
- If the visual work corresponds to and addresses all ideas conveyed in the books
- If my works invites conversation about spatial theory within the field of graphic design
- Success will be measured by 1. How much I got out of the process and 2. How much fun I had.

Questions to consider:

- What is graphic design theory?
- What is spatial theory?
- Would graphic design theory benefit from the insight into human behavior that spatial theory offers?
- Why isn't spatial theory a part of current design pedagogy?
- What does spatial theory have to do with graphic design?
- How does graphic design frame/affect spatial consciousness?
- How does spatial consciousness affect the graphic designer?

DEFINE YOUR PROJECT PROPOSAL:

I'm interested in learning how space is conceptualized so that I can understand how it affects my sense of self and the way I work. With this insight, I hope to bring spatial theory into the discourse of graphic design.

Following is my first attempt at drafting my thesis document (totally a work in progress). Because the bodycopy will have several levels of information, and each which will be treated differently within the overall design of the book (or sets of books), here I am creating a sense of hierarchy and differentiation, with color and type size. Hope it makes sense. I still do not have a solid thesis statement, but I have a feeling as I continue to write, it will magically materialize one day.

I suggest reading the copy for the holding book first, then going back to address the sidebar and small book content.

Moment, Place and Space: A Syncretic Exploration Into My Making

COPY FOR HOLDING BOOK
THE SAPPY STUFF
(PART I)

Every day, even if for a fleeting moment, I find myself in a space of peace. It's a lovely feeling, imbued with silence, and order, and a sense of ease. For the duration of just that moment, time stops, entirely. Everything within comes together effortlessly. There is no need for questions or answers or any thoughts in-between. Peace permeates every corner until there is no distinction between me and that space usually seen outside of me. Then, as it came, it disappears. **Fractal separation** sets in.

POTENTIAL EXHIBITION IDEA »

BODYCOPY FOR BOOK ONE

Book One: Illusion of Separation

▼

My first study plan at VCFA, was inspired by a book I had finished prior to residency called *The Book*. Throughout this insightful piece, British philosopher Alan Watts argues that we live an illusion of separation, not only from our natural environment, but also from ourselves. This illusion fosters a false sense of individuality and, according to Watts, lies at the root of all personal and human conflict.

Watts begins his argument by drawing from the insights of Vedanta, a Hindu philosophy based on the doctrine of the Upanishads. According to the Vedanta Society of Southern California, this philosophy affirms “1) The oneness of existence, 2) The divinity of the soul, and 3) The harmony of all religions”. Oneness of existence lies at the heart of Watts’ thesis. We live with a misconceived notion and false sense of individual existence that leads to the illusion “that ‘I myself’ is a separate center of feeling and action, living inside and bounded by the physical body—a center which ‘confronts’ an ‘external’ world of people and things, making contact through the senses with a universe both alien and strange.” This leaves us feeling lonely, as temporary and disconnected visitors, which is in actual contradiction to everything Western science knows and Eastern philosophy postulates. We don’t come into this world, but come out of it, just as the grass does from the fields and the leaves do from the trees.

This prevalent illusion paves a path of resistance, hostility, and conflict which fosters the need to ‘conquer’ rather than ‘cooperate’ with the natural environment. We do this at every scale of our natural environment, from the micro to the macro, including atomic particles on one hand and cosmic energy on the other. But by attempting to conquer our environment we ignore “the basic interdependence of all things and events—that the world beyond the skin is actually an extension of our own bodies—and will end in destroying the very environment from which we emerge and upon which our whole life depends.”

According to Watts, there are a few reasons why we do this. First and foremost is how we experience the world. From an early age we’re taught to notice that everything we know about our environment stems from the information we get through our five senses. But this, as Watts explains, can be deceiving. Although at first glance each sense is completely different and unique, in actuality they are all slightly different versions of just one basic sense—the sense of touch. The eyes feel light waves for example, just as the ears touch sound waves in the air. They do this, not in the form of continuous stimuli, but from on/off signals which are then interpreted by neuron units in the central brain. Our entire system of

perception is based on complex on-and-off patterns. Yet, while our senses register all on's and off's around them—the ups of a vibration or the downs of a wave—the mind only passes on to our consciousness what is in essence the 'on' of that experience. Whether we notice them or not, on's do not exist without off's, and vice versa. This evolves into a process, and then a deep-rooted habit, of **ignoring space intervals**. “Attention is narrowed perception. It is a way of looking at life bit by bit, using memory to string the bits together—as when examining a dark room with a flashlight having a very narrow beam.” This practice and subsequent habit makes us believe that the world is truly made up of separate pieces, without realizing that it is our way of seeing them that makes them seem separate, not the fact that they truly are.

Adding to this quandary is the fact that we live our lives using systems of communication, like alphabets and musical notes, that are in fact parts to be put together to make a whole. This, according to Watts, is not the root of the problem. The problem is we don't realize that 'parts' of the universe aren't separate and that all opposites, such as on/off, light/dark, solid/space, peace/conflict, “are poles or aspects of the same thing”. We get so caught up in our habit of focused attention that we begin to believe the world is really an assemblage of disjointed parts and that we, our lives, are one of those separate entities. And so human history has been a constant battle of on versus off, when in reality on inevitably always goes with off.⁰¹

NOPE, DON'T EVEN LOOK AT THIS WIDOW!

COPY FOR HOLDING BOOK
THE SAPPY STUFF
(PART II)

Sometimes the moment crashes in quickly, almost imperceptibly, like the flash of a lightning storm acknowledged only for its lingering roar. Other times the moment lasts forever, as if loosing its way into the eternal, echoing from place to place, lost thought, found thought, and reverse. I love these moments, in fact I live for them. They are profound and almost perfect, if there really was such a thing. Moments of inner peace serve as gentle guides and sometimes pivoting forces, which catapult me on to the next; the next moment, the next place, the next space.

BODYCOPY FOR BOOK TWO

Book Two: Considering Spatial Theory

▼ At this juncture I'd like to make a distinction between three key concepts that will guide this inquiry. The first is the concept of place; that which can be defined as “a particular portion of space, whether of definite or indefinite extent.”⁰² I will reference place, specifically, as an entity which I can purposefully access and can affect, physically and metaphysically. Place will represent the product of a conscious effort, which will lead to the consideration of other aspects including control, perfection, and awareness; propelling forces behind my art & design practice.

The second concept is space; a term I find utterly fascinating, while both vague and all-encompassing. Throughout this inquiry I will not seek to define space. Rather, I will explore how it is conceptualized, and more specifically, how it is accessed, produced and experienced by the self. In my life, space will represent

TRYING TO LEARN HOW TO WORK
WITH FOOTNOTES IN INDESIGN

⁰¹ Watts, Alan. *The Book; On The Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*. New York: Random House, 1966. IBooks.

⁰² “The Definition of Place.” Dictionary.com. Accessed June 06, 2017. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/place>.

the outcome of surrender, giving way to the subconscious. Place and space will situate the intent and origin of my thoughts, ideas and actions, as well as the tendencies of my creative process.

Space is never disconnected from time however, so the third key concept I will reference is moment. A moment can be loosely defined as “a brief period of time”⁰³ or “a modality of presence”.⁰⁴ Within physics, “a moment of a force is a measure of its tendency to cause a body to rotate about a specific point or axis.”⁰⁵ In this inquiry, I will focus on defined, time-based moments as they occur from either an un-planned abstract space or a more purposeful personal place of intent. Moments of our lives, while framed by time, have a lasting effect and can be recollected beyond their place or space of origin. They can act as powerful pivoting forces, influencing beliefs and future behavior. Moments, strung together create memory and, in turn, a narrative of meaning.

“Spatial theory is the study of space and place. It involves, but is not limited to geography, material objects, the built environment, social institutions, the body, imaginary sites, and ideological positions.”

According to Robert W. Preucel and Lynn Meskell in “Places” from A Companion to Social Archaeology, “space is the physical setting in which everything occurs. Place is the outcome of the social process of valuing space; a product of the imaginary, of desire, and the primary means by which we articulate with space and transform it into a humanized landscape.”⁰⁶

In Humanistic Geography “space is something abstract, without any substantial meaning, while place refers to how people are aware of/attracted to a certain piece of space. A place can be seen as space that has a meaning.”⁰⁷

** I will be looking for more comparative interpretations of place and space to be included here*

Moments lived within this space, albeit elusive, are always encased by the same fabric. Like the fragile and infinitesimal pulp fibers that shift, dance, and rearrange, bonding together to form a blank slate, the threads of my understanding come together and coalesce. Over, under, overlapping to produce volume, they twine in tandem. **Thread by thread**, trust, gratitude, discovery, balance, hope, and reflection, are gently woven into a structure that is equally undefined and intangible.

03 Google Search. Accessed June 06, 2017. <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=definition%2Bof%2Bmoment&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>.

04 Hammond, Paul. “The Theory of Moments and the Construction of Situations.” Situationist International Online. Accessed June 06, 2017. <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/moments.html>.

05 Luebke, Chris H., and Donald Peting. “What Is a Moment?” Architectonics: The Science of Architecture. Accessed June 06, 2017. http://web.mit.edu/4.441/1_lectures/1_lecture5/1_lecture5.html.

06 Gunderson, Jaimie. “Introduction to Spatial Theory.” Theory and Methods in the Study of Religion. December 9, 2014. Accessed June 06, 2017. <https://sites.utexas.edu/religion-theory/bibliographical-resources/spatial-theory/overview/>.

07 Selten, Marjolein, and Fleur Van Der Zandt. “Space vs. Place.” The Human Geography Knowledge Base. September 19, 2012. Accessed June 06, 2017. http://geography.ruhosting.nl/geography/index.php?title=Space_vs._place.

This metaphorical structure is held together by all that I am and all that I know. It's where every idea and belief, every memory, every dream, and all that has meaning for me comes together and coexists. Like a meandering net submerged in water subject to the flow of the currents it falls under, the woven net of my understanding encases an elusive space within. This space, seemingly lacking form and definition, or even content, is where I long to be, somehow centered within.

BODYPY COPY FOR BOOK THREE

Book Three: Core Values

- ▼ My first semester at VCFA I was prompted to use graphic design as a medium to express my personal core values. Since then, I've been reflecting on and trying to figure out what those values are. Surprisingly difficult, almost two years later, I feel I have finally come to a good resting place. I understand now that this is a life-long inquiry and an ongoing process of self-reevaluation.

Being aware of what I truly value, and why, creates a genuine lens through which I can view and assess the quality of my work. It provides a guiding light to developing my voice as a maker. It paves a path of contribution and awareness, in the areas I treasure most. I hope with time my values become more clearly defined as they continue to influence my perspective and as I gain greater self knowledge.

Trust, gratitude, discovery, balance, hope and reflection are my personal core values. Articulating and understanding these is critical. They not only guide behavior and decisions, but also help determine my surrounding culture. Whether consciously or subconsciously, all of us use them to select friendships & relationships and manage our personal resources such as time & money. Knowing and understanding these values helps us stay true to interests, our history, our aspirations, but most importantly, to ourselves.^{o8}

COPY FOR HOLDING BOOK
THE SAPPY STUFF
(PART IV)

Through life, I make my way as a classic introvert, seeing and feeling, acutely aware of the invisible nuances that surround me. Most of the time, this is a gift. I can hear in others, that which is not said. I can understand, without a question being made. I am somehow in tune with the relationships that inevitably exist in the spaces that surround us. As such, I find reprieve in solitude. Separated, momentarily away from input and intake, I can regroup and recharge. Isolation opens up into a place of introspection and reflection where I can have a brief nonsensical conversation in my head or release into the depths of a deep, lung-full, uninhibited breath.

BODYPY COPY FOR BOOK FOUR

Book Four: Quiet

- ▼ Throughout the book Quiet: The Power Of Introverts In A World That Won't Stop Talking, Susan Cain makes a compelling and thoroughly researched argument for the recognition of introverts in our society. She begins her literary journey by exploring the root & definition of 'introvert' and 'extrovert', as both

^{o8} Jeffrey, Scott. "7 Steps to Discovering Your Personal Core Values." Scott Jeffrey. May 06, 2017. Accessed June 12, 2017. <https://scottjeffrey.com/personal-core-values/>.

psychological terms and deep-rooted and complimentary personality traits. She exposes how these have evolved from what Warren Susman calls a Culture of Character to our current, postmodern Culture of Personality.

Historically, around the turn of the twentieth century, America made an important cultural shift which deeply affected our collective sense of self. Prior to industrialization, at a time when Americans lived on small farms, in small communities, interacting with the same people they'd known since childhood, the ideal self was serious, disciplined and honorable. "What counted was not so much the impression one made in public but how one behaved in private." Following the Industrial Revolution, mass immigration, and urbanization however, Americans started to focus more intently on how others saw and perceived them. Everyone found themselves working with, and surrounded by, strangers to whom they had no civic or family ties, "facing the question of how to make a good impression." This gave way to floods of self-help books, mass personality-driven advertising, a fascination with Hollywood movie stars, and most notably, the rise of the Extrovert Ideal.

The Extrovert Ideal—an idealization of the way in which the extroverted understand and navigate the world—has been a largely influential force in how we do business and structure the work place, how we teach our children and rate their social and academic performance, how we seek friendships and closer relationships, how we frame a number of spiritual and religious organizations, and most importantly, how we value ourselves. On one end of the spectrum, those who fall into the loud & gregarious, comfortable-in-the-spotlight side, benefit from constant social validation and admiration. While on the opposite end, those who prefer solitude and space for introspection, have been cast aside as second-class personalities, save the few quiet and technological geniuses who launch fortune 500 companies in their garages. Our culture "sees extroversion not only as a personality trait, but also an indicator of virtue." Studies consistently show that talkative people are seen as smarter, better looking, more interesting and more desirable. It's no wonder why many introverts pass as extroverts so often. Whether consciously or subconsciously, a survival instinct urges us to conform to the norm and aim to be how and what society deems best.

COPY FOR HOLDING BOOK
THE SAPPY STUFF
(PART V)

This solitude and the sensory relief it brings, opens up into an ideal space for making. Here is where I am able to think differently and produce work that is honest. All my life I've had an affinity towards making with my hands. This affinity has manifested itself in many different ways and has morphed into my current profession as a designer. It's taken much time however, for me to realize that I make art, I design, for no other reason than to loose myself in the act of making.

As I make to loose myself, I make to find myself anew, not in the outcome or in the end-product, but purely in the immersion that organically happens. When I am finally able to surpass my intellectual interpretations and my ego's aspirations, and become completely absorbed in the making, I flow. I converse with my tools and materials and retreat into a limitless, borderless, timeless space and peaceful space.

Self Critique:

I feel like I am finally on to something here. There's still tons of research and content that needs to be included, so I will need to figure out how to make it all fit right. What's great is that I've found a way in which I am actually referencing and synthesizing research I've done throughout my whole time at VCFA.

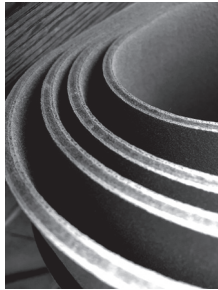
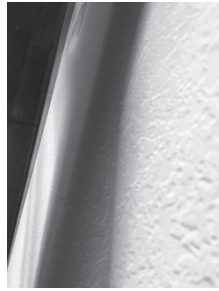
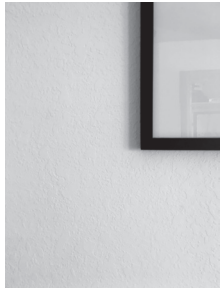
Regarding 'space' I actually omitted in this packet like three paragraphs that took me forever to write in which I try to digest Henri LeFebvre's *The Production of Space*. What's great is that I can now see past it. Although I do still think it's a great point of departure, there are many other conceptual ways to consider space, some which I hope to be able to incorporate alongside his. Because I think this whole idea of space will be the bulk of my research, I will also need to figure out how to incorporate it into my thesis document. There's too much to think of it in terms of thin booklets, so maybe then I'll need three 'pieces' or levels of information. I'll think about that.

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On a side note, I have not included in this packet summaries of other books I've taken on. I know I'm supposed to stop reading now, but it just feels like I need to read more in order to become this supposed 'expert' on the subject. FYI, I'm in the middle of reading *Art History for Dummies* (ha!), *Flow*, and *Graphic Design Theory* by Helen Armstrong (which is so boring!) but I'll get through it.

A (brief) visual study of space:

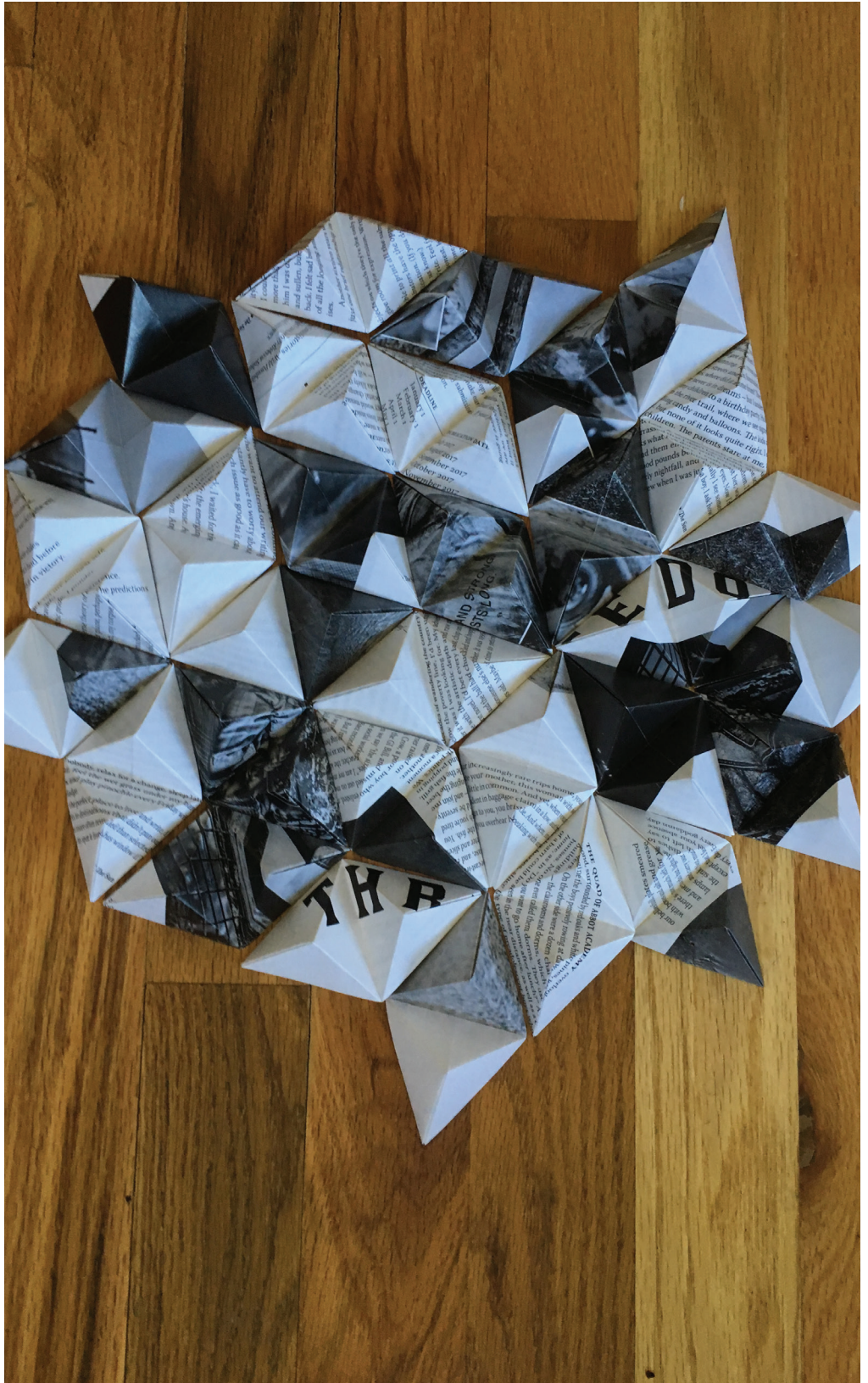


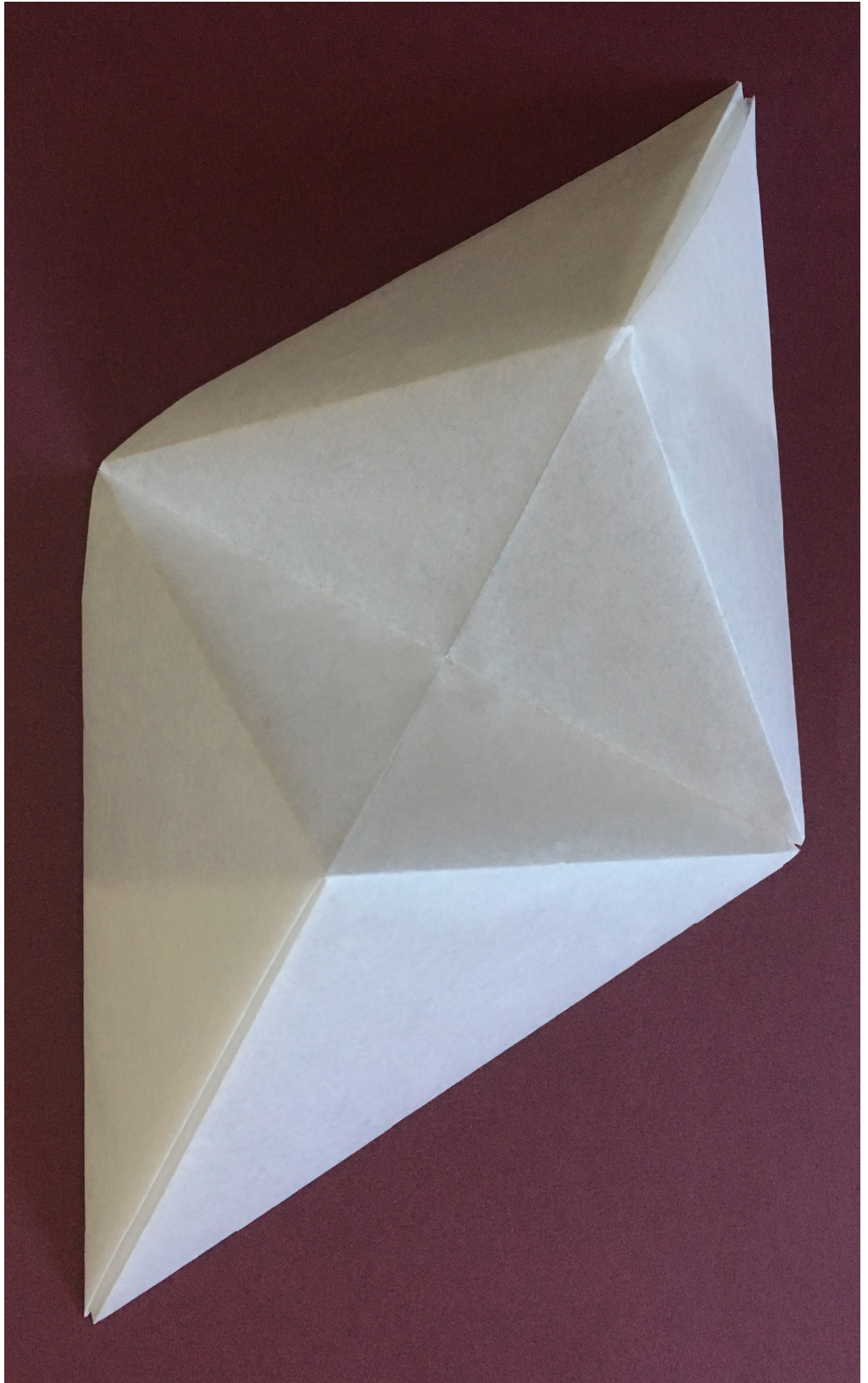


A (brief) turn-back to re-purposing
magazines & junk mail.

Exploring modular form:







Notes, Writing & Ideas:

This month I decided to take on a daily writing practice in which I'd start compiling sources and notes. This happened before I started the new draft which is on page 7. I will eventually go back & cross-reference to include relevant content.

May 15

We create our understanding of the world through our senses. Each of them provides us with countless bits of information about our environment and our immediate surroundings, from which we gather knowledge and which we reference to make decisions both seemingly inconsequential and of the gravest weight. Each of our five senses, according to Alan Watts in *The Way of Zen*, is basically a different form of one basic sense—"something like touch." Our eyes feel light waves, for example, while our ears 'touch' sound waves in the air. This information is then transmitted to the brain where neurons switch either on or off in direct response. We function much like the binary 0/1 code of a computer, from which we create the incredibly complex patterns that make up our understanding. As such, our brains work within a continuous framework of either yes's or no's, and an inevitable tendency towards ignoring the in-betweens. This we call noticing or, more precisely, conscious attention. "Because of this habit of ignoring space-intervals, we do not realize that just as sound is a vibration of sound/silence, the whole universe (that is, existence) is a vibration of solid/space." This is how our perception works. Bit by bit, and referencing the memories we create of those bits, we string it all together. We remember that which we notice through our conscious attention, while inevitably ignoring the rest. Many times what we come to notice is that which either ensures our basic survival, uplifts our social status, or that which guarantees the security of our ego. This is how our brain is wired, which many times we have little room for control.

Space, according to Watts, is "the relationship between bodies" without which there could be no energy or motion.

If that is the case, I wonder, do we have a firm grasp of what solid really is? And conversely, do we understand what its necessary companion, space, really means?

May 16

According to Jaimie Gunderson in *Introduction to Spatial Theory*, "spatial theory is the study of space and place. It involves, but is not limited to, geography, material objects, the built environment, social institutions, the body, imaginary sites, and ideological positions."

According to *A Companion to Social Archaeology*

"Space is the physical setting in which everything occurs.

Place is the outcome of the social process of valuing space; a product of the imaginary, of desire, and the primary means by which we articulate with space and transform it into a humanized landscape."

“Since the spatial turn, space is no longer viewed as static or inert background action, but as an arena of struggle that shapes ideas, beliefs, principles, and values.” “Space is intertwined with embodiment and lived experiences, touching every arena of social and cultural life.”

Places are created in space through ritual and design is largely responsible for organizing and influencing those rituals. Design produces spaces and influences how they are experienced.

Thinking about graphic design through the lens of spatial theory may provide insight into its power of influence within society and within the individual.

Graphic design plays a large role in converting space into place, that is, injecting meaning into spatial experience.

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Spatial theory and religious studies

In 1933 Gerardus van der Leeuw published *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* which “catapulted the topic of sacred space to the forefront of the study of religion.” This concept was later cemented by Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (1957). “The theoretical study of space was ushered into contemporary studies of religion by Eliade’s student and toughest critic, Jonathan Z. Smith.” In *Map is Not Territory* (1978), he proposed that the concept of place is more than natural or material space. “Rather, space is lived and socially organized, from which sacred and profane space is produced.” Additionally, he argued that places are “created through ritual — a process by which people make their world (the space they inhabit) meaningful.” It’d be interesting to consider the home as also a sacred space where, through the ritual of daily life, meaning is integrated. Products that have been carefully branded, books that have been meticulously designed, posters, etc., come into that sacred space and become part of it, affecting its associated feeling and influence on mental space.

There seems to always be a direct correlation between space, time and history.

“Frederic Jameson observed that the postmodern world was dominated by categories of space rather than time.”

could graphic design be considered a spatial entity? Can we apply spatial concepts to the material use, social influence and cultural locations of design?

“In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre argues that there is not only power in conceived spaces and perceived spaces, but also in spaces of lived experiences.”

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In *Consciousness and Space*, Colin McGinn begins his argument by noting that “Descartes famously held that, while the essence of body is spatial extension, the essence of mind is thought.” He continues to note that although there may be a certain spatial characteristic to an experience, as in the actual and physical neurons in the brain within a specific area of the cortex that detect light, the actual experience of seeing the light does not have spatial characteristics. It does not take up any specific volume or take on a specific shape. The experience may only be described by describing the viewer, speculating on intent, or its interpretation. The viewer, in this case, is the space within which the experience exists.

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Wikipedia:

Michel Foucault defines space as; “The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space.....we live inside a set of relations.”

Nigel Thrift also defines space as; “The outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that divide and connect things up into different kinds of collectives which are slowly provided with the meaning which render them durable and sustainable.”

Create a long list of different definitions of space.

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I need to identify all the different physical spaces within which design exists.

I believe the product of graphic design, is an agent of the physical realm. Graphic designers create materials that are meant to bring ideas to life through visual communication, and thus create connections. We devise brands, for example, that embody the essence and ethos of a specific company. That brand and its assets become a recognizable visual representation, which is then applied in different ways and forms to merchandise, or collateral, or signage; all in the name of brand recognition and building a cohesive experience. Without such branding strategies, products would lack differentiation and corporations would be nearly impossible to be set apart. Brands are said to be the face of a company, and as such are charged with evoking the personality and archetypal characteristics most desirable to its target audience. Brands make what would otherwise be blank spaces, into places.

I need to describe how these physical spaces become part of the construct of social space and also how they affect them. What role does the design play?

In turn I need to speculate on how the physical work, set within the social space, becomes part of the more abstract mental space. Or conversely, how mental space constructs out of physical space, social space.

May 17

We are beings naturally situated in space. What are the struggles, insights, moments, we encounter as such?

While many disciplines focus their attention on planning and the building process of physical spaces, I wonder how many people consider how this affects the user's mental space.

It's important to think about the relationship between spaces as they influence and affect each other and as they affect us.

A Pattern Language

Sequence of construction from the largest, regions and towns, neighborhoods, clusters of buildings, buildings, rooms and alcoves, to finally the details of construction.

"This is a fundamental view of the world. It says that when you build a thing you cannot merely build that thing in isolation, but must also repair the world around it, and within it, so that the larger world at that one place becomes more coherent, and more whole; and the thing which you make takes its place in the web of nature, as you make it."

In architecture, "there are two fundamentally different kinds of outdoor space: negative space and positive space." Outdoor space is positive when it is clearly defined, much like a room in a house, and whose shape is just as important as the shapes of the buildings around it. Conversely, outdoor space is negative when it is shapeless and it feels like residue of the structures that surround it. This is important because people feel most comfortable in spaces which are "positive" and tend to use them more often, while negative spaces seem uninviting and thus remain largely unused. Enclosure, or at least partial enclosure, provides a sense of security which may tap into our primal survival instincts. While at parks, we naturally seek grounding shelter under trees. This is likewise the case for interior spaces. People work most effectively when set within a space that provides a good balance between exposure and enclosure.

May 18

How do the words space, location, position and movement have in common?

What is the relationship created between space onto affect, emotion, vision, embodiment, and memory?

LearnNow.org What does spatial thinking mean?

"Spatial thinking is seeing in the mind's eye. We can picture the locations of objects, their shapes, their relations to each other and the paths they take as they move."

Spatial thinking is encouraged and monitored in early education as children learn to identify

shapes and then make them fit into their corresponding counterpart. It is also through spatial thinking that the concepts of numbers and counting are introduced.

May 21

Notes from Graphic Design Theory

Graphic Design theory is all about asking and considering ‘why’ we do what we do. This is not always an intuitive reflection amidst the many ‘how’s’ that engulf our daily activities. In order to practice graphic design today, we must know how to use software, how to work with vendors, how to utilize type and image, etc.

“While our work is exposed and highly visible, as individuals we often remain anonymous, our contribution to the texture of daily life existing below the threshold of public recognition.”

“Design is visible everywhere, yet is also invisible — unnoticed and unacknowledged.”

Design theory provides a platform for us to make design visible.

Whether a designer is seeking to express their individual point of view through their work, or hoping to efface their own person in service of a corporate image, the end result inevitably creates an experience and populates space. Visual work injects meaning and message onto otherwise seemingly blank slates or vast empty spaces. Within the 2-dimensional realm, graphic design creates the illusion of space, utilizing photography, for example, to directly depict it, or resorting to image or type to represent it.

Graphic design has the ability to reshape society while also responding to its current state.

Vast and open natural spaces, where graphic design is less pervasive, provide us with just as much meaning. That meaning must be created and found in different ways. We learn to find our way through nature by taking in and noticing subtle cues such as following the current of a river or keeping on the path of the sun. We orient ourselves by referencing characteristics of nature and to do so, we must turn to innate instincts.

“Today we have two dimensions for the word. As a sound it is a function of time, and as a representation it is a function of space.” That is exactly what design does, it takes an idea (the product of mental space) and makes it accessible within the realm of physical space. Sometimes design takes on the challenge of organizing space. Sometimes it’s a matter of filling space. Sometimes it’s about inventing an entirely new space, or escaping from space altogether. Sometimes it’s about questioning it. Sometimes it’s about demystifying space or bringing foreign space into someone else’s consciousness, in their face. Sometimes it’s about grounding space, enclosing it to an extent, to make it feel safer. Sometimes it’s just about helping others navigate through space and creating functional patterns or systems for ease of recognition.

Sometimes it's about implanting a desire. Sometimes it's a vessel for sublime thought. Sometimes design is a conduit of ideas, an invisible conduit between writer and reader.

Beatrice Warde "The book typographer has the job of erecting a window between the reader inside the room and the landscape that is the author's words." "...you may spend endless years of happy experiment in devising the crystalline goblet that is worthy to hold the vintage of the human mind."

May 22

I think I need to reconsider my choice of words. I'm interested in exploring space as a critical factor in experience. I want to know what kind of relationship I have with space. What is it about my relationship to space that makes me seek order and pattern. Is it my need to predict and thus better control my environment. I seek order in the immediate space that surrounds me. Literally, this means that my home, is crucial in providing peace of mind. When I feel that my home is in a state of chaos, I have a difficult time focusing on other things. Cleaning it and organizing it becomes a priority, above all other tasks. Should I be forced to work on something else because of deadlines for example, or explicit outside demands, it is exponentially harder for me to focus on those tasks. In this sense my immediate physical space populates my mental space.

According to Henri LeFebvre, we can categorize space in three ways; physical space, mental space and social space.

How can I quantify and qualify my personal interpretation of space? How can I describe my spatial consciousness?

Although it's vagueness is driving me crazy, I love the word 'space'. I love the idea of 'holding space', I love considering space as that which holds our common existence, that which we know, but we don't. I love thinking about space as that which defies definition and distinction, because it holds and includes everything. I love space as the possibility of everything at once, beyond linear time. I love space as that which can hold us and shelter us, ever-inclusive. I love space as that which holds the now.

Spatial vs. Temporal Consciousness

Only the present moment is spatial, everything before and everything after is temporal.

What are spatial properties?

May 23

Space is a vessel of input, from which we intake. Space defines physical form by providing a void of separation between things.

Quiet

“Introverts focus on the meaning they make of events swirling around them; extroverts plunge into the events themselves. Introverts recharge their batteries by being alone; extroverts need to recharge when they don’t socialize enough.” “Shyness is the fear of social disapproval or humiliation, while introversion is a preference for environments that are not stimulating.” We live in a culture of personality, imbued with the extrovert ideal.

The way in which I view and experience the world is through the lens of an introvert. I am easily overwhelmed

Around the turn of the 20th century, and as a result of the Industrial Revolution, American culture underwent incredible changes.

My very first study plan, for my very first semester at VCFA, stated my desire to explore the idea that all of us, in our common human experience, do not live as isolated beings, disconnected from each other or the rest of the world. Today, as I sail through the storm of my last semester, I’m back to that same premise, except I have found the vehicle to tell the story. Space. While at first glance it may seem that it’s space that creates and enables our separation, I believe it is actually what holds our connections. The word ‘space’ has so many different meanings, yet it embodies everything.

My VCFA journey has been a persistent and almost subconscious desire to acknowledge everything as ONE. Every book I’ve read and everything I’ve made has somehow been about acknowledging and sharing the idea that all of us, in our common human experience, do not live as isolated beings, disconnected from each other or the rest of the world. All of us share in the joy and the pain that is at the core of being alive. We travel through space and time absorbing experience, with the sole intent of creating story and finding meaning. So much of our time and effort, as we write our individual life stories and hinge on the meaning we attach to them, is spent making ‘different’. This thesis is about making ‘same’. I believe when we are able to see past perceived differences and seemingly vast voids, we find a common space filled with love.

May 24

Graphic design has been largely influenced by the need to create that which can be reproduced. Whereas a painting is always meant to be a singular entity, design in the form of book-making and posters, for example, and especially since the invention of the printing press, are made to be in multiples. This need has inspired the creation of materials, methods and technologies to enable reproduction and multiplicity. The first form of printing was invented over two thousand years ago in China. Seals, called chops, were made by carving flat surfaces of jade, silver, gold or ivory, with calligraphic characters used to sign documents.

Woodcut book illustrations are inherently 2-dimensional.

During the fall of 2016 I was introduced to a book entitled *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*. Published in 1908 and written by German art historian Wilhelm Worringer, this doctoral thesis, in short, turned my world upside down. His theory that all art expression can be boiled down to two distinct experiences posed some interesting questions. However, it was his assertion that all art experience is a direct reflection of the maker's relationship to space, that posed the most important question. What is my own relationship to space? How does this relationship influence my making tendencies and preferences?

LeFevre's triad could be a useful analytical tool for considering the impact of graphic design on the self and on society. Knowing where it fits into that equation, and how it affects the interaction of those spaces could help designers understand _____.

Greek and Roman art centered largely around the creation of large architectural structures to assert their power.

May 26

Every day, even if for a fleeting moment, I find myself in a space of peace. It's a lovely feeling, imbued with silence, and order, and a sense of ease. For the duration of just that moment, time stops. Everything comes together and fits together, effortlessly. There is no need for questions or answers or any thoughts in-between. Peace permeates every corner of my being until there is no distinction between me and that which I would otherwise think of not anymore, me. Then, as it came, the moment is gone.

Sometimes this space of peace comes and goes so quickly, almost imperceptibly, like the flash of a lightning storm acknowledged only for its lingering roar. Other times they seem to last forever, as if loosing their way into the eternal, reflecting back and forth between thought and thought. I love these moments, in fact I live for them. They are profound and almost perfect, if there really was such a thing. They are gentle guides which catapult me onto other moments, some not as easy or effortless, or quiet in peace. It is in seeking out these moments however, that I quantify and arrange my life, moment by moment, lived.

[Sidebar: Definition of moment

Moments that hold peace, although elusive, are always made of the same fabric. Thread by thread respond to and reflect an honest picture of my state of mind and my state of being, as well as my immediate surroundings.

I make my way through life as a classic introvert, seeing and feeling, acutely sensitive to the invisible nuances around me. [Sidebar quote and definition of introversion from Susan Cain's Quiet] Usually, this is a gift. I can hear in others, that which is unspoken. I can understand, without asking. I am somehow always in tune with the relationships and the in-betweenness of things. [Include Alan Watt's definition of space as relationship between bodies] . As such, I find reprieve in solitude. Separated, momentarily away from input and intake, I can regroup and recharge. Isolation creates a safe space for introspection and reflection, for having a brief nonsensical conversation with myself or plunging into the depths of a deep, lung-full sigh.

It is also in isolation that I produce my best work. All my life I've had an affinity towards making with my hands. This affinity has manifested itself in hundreds of different ways and has ultimately morphed into my profession as a designer. I make art to loose myself in the act of making, hoping to arrive at what's been dubbed the state of flow. [Sidebar Flow definition] I also make art to find myself, not in the outcome or product, but purely in the process. Every piece and every project evolves out of a method, which progressively informs the next. Those projects, or more specifically those processes, which create a gateway into moments of peace, are of most value to me. Those are the projects which I seek.

[1. Sidebar: Henri LeFebvre, in *The Production of Space*, speculates about three categories of space which coincide with the production of my ideal syncretic and peaceful space. According to LeFebvre, spatial existence entails 1. Our mental space, that is, the abstract, conceptualized space of perception and thought, 2. The physical space of our sense experience including nature and the concrete, and 3. What he dubbed as social space; representational space "directly lived through its associated images and symbols."]

May 29

Perceived space (Spatial practice): "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it." (38)

Think of this as physical place.

2. Conceived space (Representations of space): "Conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent -- all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived." (38)

Think of this as mental place.

3. Lived space (Representational spaces): "Space as directly lived through its associated images

and symbols.” (39)

Think of this as social place.

June 5

Within our urban spaces opposition and new representations appear in the form of street art, graffiti, vandalism, protest rallies and street marches.

<https://2113humtheresnospacelikehome.wordpress.com/lefebvre/>

Pascia Italian paper

June 8

“The argument is, rather, that things create people as much as people create things.”

Thank you!