

TYPOGRAPHIC & IMAGE EXPLORATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

These typographic and image based designs explore multiple components of design including: legibility, manipulation, communication, and conventionalism with an emphasis on information graphics. Drawing from influences of the Futurist designers and Dadaist typography, I take the mundane details of an object such as a baseball or car to create excessive amounts of visually stimulating graphics. Through this process of gathering detailed information, I take photographs, draw by hand and scan images to fully understand and portray an objects identity until I feel satisfied that the objects visual potential has been exhausted. These personal expressions are combined to form printed material and book designs. These works explore the experimental use of type and image montage to break the rules of graphic design while keeping some of the traditional aesthetics associated with this discipline. My love for detailed subject matter may be seen in my books, *The Baseball* and *1 (One)* which include subject matter from my childhood interests such as rare 1/1 baseball cards.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	v
TYPOGRAPHIC & IMAGE EXPLORATIONS .....	1
Mishap Series.....	8
Spilt Paint.....	10
Scrupulous .....	16
1: Honda Pilot Book.....	18
The Baseball Book.....	21
Conclusion .....	24
REFERENCES .....	25

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: <i>Gambler Shot</i> , Acrylic.....	2
Figure 2: <i>Mishap Series</i> , Ink Jet Prints .....	10
Figure 3: <i>Spilt Paint</i> , Ink Jet Prints.....	11
Figure 4: <i>SCRABrrRrraaNNG</i> , Filippo Marinetti.....	13
Figure 5: <i>Dadaist Advertisement</i> , John Heartfield.....	15
Figure 6: <i>Scrupulous</i> , Book.....	17
Figure 7: <i>1: Honda Pilot</i> , Book.....	20
Figure 8: <i>The Baseball</i> , Book.....	23

## TYPOGRAPHIC & IMAGE EXPLORATIONS

Whenever I sit down to start a new project I need to feel that spark of excitement that one may get when unwrapping a really cool present or when pulling a rare 1/1 signature cut Babe Ruth card from a single baseball pack. It's this kind of excitement that is necessary in order to create a project that I believe will meet my own expectations. Yet, there is something even greater than a spark to get me going. My faith keeps me creating. It plays a key role in helping me to achieve the successes that I know could not be achieved without it. This faith is found in my belief in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; it's a personal relationship and the greatest support system I could ever find to guide me through not only my work and accomplishments but every aspect of my life. Though the spark gets my motor running, it's my faith that acts as the fuel, always filling me up when I get in a rut, and keeping me going until I complete a project.

From my first memory, I have always enjoyed art. As I grew, I began to realize why I needed art and why I found it so appealing. It was simply because art is my form of communication. It is my internal being that I desire to express. I have never thought of myself as a good speaker, so I shifted toward the world of making art to do the speaking for me. My graphic design is the best way for me to communicate things that I can't express well through words. As long as I make my art; my interests, loves, emotions, and desires naturally reveal themselves. I believe that if I try to explain my work in too many words I could dilute what it's actually about.

I'm a detail oriented person. It wasn't until high school that I recognized this in myself. I enjoy creating the little things that can easily be missed if you look too hastily at my art. This is reflected in my trompe l'oeil paintings I chose to concentrate on for my Advanced Placement (AP) art portfolio in my senior year of high school, 2004. The details involved in painting these hyper-real works were to such an extreme that it literally could fool one's eye into thinking that the painted objects were actually there. My paintings were never as realistic as the master trompe l'oeil painters such as William Harnett, but they became the starting point in my visual expressing my love for detail.



Figure 1: *Gambler Shot*, Acrylic

My friends, professors, and colleagues would attest to my quietness and shyness. They could also attest to my visual communication through my projects. Instead of communicating orally, I prefer communicating visually. This goes back to the

old phrase “a picture speaks a thousand words” or, in my case, a picture may speak every word.

My interest in communicating visually lends itself almost entirely to my love for letters - in graphic terms: typography. American type designer, Frederic Goudy states; “Of all the achievements of the human mind, the birth of the alphabet is the most momentous.” There’s something strangely interesting and wonderful about the idea that we can read and communicate through a simple form such as a letter. And the possibilities available to communicate with these letters are endless! It is amazing that a bunch of lines and curves which form what we call a letter can be combined together to make a word which can be combined with other words called a sentence that can then multiply and turn into a document that can hold knowledge which can change the world. It is this simple yet profound idea of typographical communication that is my passion. I am interested and inspired to push the limits of communicating visually with letterforms and imagery. Typography is a fascinating way to communicate an idea, thought, or message. As a designer, I have control over how clearly or how vaguely I want to communicate the content. James Cobden-Sanderson, an English artist and book binder from the early 1900’s states: “The whole duty of typography is to communicate to the imagination, without loss by the way, the thought or image intended to be communicated by the author.” This quote is meaningful to me because I particularly enjoy the legibility factor involved with typography. Making the viewer work, but not work too hard for an answer or information, is a challenge. If I’m not careful I may become so vague with my legibility that I risk losing the audience all together. This is the fine line



that I try not to cross in each of my projects. It is essential that I clearly define what I want to be perceived in my design in order to communicate my complete message successfully.

When I enrolled at Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, I initially thought I was going to be a painter, but I quickly changed my major to Graphic Interactive Communication due to a fascination with type. I may have found painting detailed paintings in high school fulfilling but now it was time to translate my interests and skills to the realm of graphic arts. The next four years at Ringling drew me closer into my interests in typographic and image manipulation. I began to feel at home on the computer, creating designs that communicated “me.” After completing my BFA in Graphic Interactive Communications, I felt I had acquired extensive knowledge, but there was more I needed to explore and communicate. I turned my attention to getting my MFA at the University of Central Florida as it allowed limited instruction and room for personal expression. It was the perfect environment for me to let loose and create art that truly represents who I am as an artist. With additional time for personal expression in my MFA program, I began to expand my interests in typography and image manipulation to what I consider to be more sophisticated levels of book making and the combination of digital graphics and painting.

Some of the first artists who inspired my love for art were NC Wyeth, Claude Monet, Vermeer, and William Harnett. Though I consider myself a Graphic Designer, works by these painters are still highly inspirational to my aesthetic knowledge of design. NC Wyeth often used thick dark outlines in his illustrations, creating a graphic

texture I find intriguing. Monet and Vermeer's vibrant use of light are inspirational in itself. The emotional appeal the lighting portrays in their paintings is something I attempt and aim to translate into my graphics.

Everyday there is something that I see that intrigues me. I do not have to look hard or long to find some form of visual stimulus. My earliest forms of influence I remember started with my fascination with baseball cards. To me, they were truly great pieces of art. They were available in endless shapes and sizes with designs varying from vintage to futuristic. Many had intricate die-cuts with great use of typography, holographic imagery and interesting use of inlayed foil. I enjoyed critiquing their designs and picking out what I thought were flaws, or just poor design. I even remember telling my parents that one day I was going to be a baseball card designer.

My greatest influences now come in the form of flipping through *How* magazine, design annuals, browsing artists websites, vintage books, and other periodicals. Especially interesting to me is the American graphic designer David Carson. He is widely known for his experimental typography and innovative designs. His work is especially intriguing because he never received a formal graphic design education. Another influence is Brazilian graphic artist Eduardo Recife who is a master of composing vintage-esque imagery with touches of type and graphic elements. His work is highly inspirational because he creates his designs to make himself happy. Imagery from the turn of the century often has a primitive style that is not easily accessible today. These vintage images, especially old methods of typography such as wood type and handset type, have an appealing aesthetic that I enjoy incorporating into my designs.

My process starts with a spark of an idea that is derived from an interest of mine. From there, I delve deeper into the idea as I plan exactly how to start, and then, I wonder if I'll be able to accomplish the idea fully and successfully. Next, I try to visualize the outcome before I begin. Even though I start with a general outcome in mind, I do my best not to get stuck thinking about the one initial idea. If I do, I know that my project will lack creativity and interest. Pablo Picasso said, "You have to have an idea of what you are going to do, but it should be a vague idea." For me, having only a vague idea and not one set in stone is important for creativity to continue to flow freely. I try to keep an open mind to whatever happy mistakes or exciting discoveries I may run into as I proceed along with my project.

The technical part of my art embodies the majority of my work, that being: the computer and the software therein. The creative software programs I use are essential to create my geometrical shapes and images. Adobe Illustrator is an extensive program I use to create geometrical images called vector graphics. Vector graphics play a large role in my design work. The pen tool in Adobe Illustrator is used to create my vector images and is an ally when it comes to design. I use this tool for nearly every one of my projects in one way or another. Using the pen tools bezier curves I can create just about any iconic form I can imagine. All type-able text is made up of bezier points that can be adjusted and changed with minuscule detail with the click of a mouse or finger pad. The great thing about vector-based images is that they can be scaled indefinitely without degrading their quality. Because of this feature, extreme detail can be created making

my needs in 2-D based design, logo creation, poster, book design and type manipulation easier and more successful.

Another element I use extensively in my work is texture, one of the most enjoyable and engaging elements I use in my designs. It goes back to my interest in painting. I find myself scanning 1200 dpi or higher resolution images into my laptop to capture odd textures I can use digitally to manipulate my design work. From crumpled and torn paper, old documents and photographs, to hand drawn elements such as paint splashes and pencil sketches, the list of possible textures is endless, as is the possibilities for implementing these textures into my designs. I have become an expert in using Adobe software which allows me to create the designs I desire. The Photoshop software today offers a substantial amount of workability to ensure I am able to incorporate elements seamlessly. Using these textures from extremely high resolution scans, I expand and enlarge them over one hundred times their original size, cropping and layering to form dynamic and intriguing imagery.

When I entered into the MFA program at UCF, I started projects that were different from what I had intended to work on when I had applied. At Ringling, I had missed the hands on experiences of painting, and thought while at UCF I would concentrate much of my time in the fine arts. But after working on a few paintings, I realized that my true interests lies in the world of graphic design. Thus for the past three years I have expanded my knowledge of design while also exploring as many different methods of experimental and traditional design available to me. By doing this I believe I have worked to discover and find my personal design style. It is important for a designer

to develop a specific style that defines who he or she is. Today, I think of myself as having an almost “scatter brain” approach to developing designs and I now realize that that’s not such a bad thing. In fact, I would say that my design style could include adjectives such as bold, detailed, and even unexpected! I sometimes have been called a “schizophrenic” artist. And some days I feel like one. But I do believe that all my work does have an underlying theme. That theme is: Typographic and image informational graphic exploration. What I want my art to communicate is a sense of fascination for its details.

### Mishap Series

A project that I call the *Mishap Series* took an everyday object of communication and altered its familiar form of reality. I took two images of everyday scenes; a magazine rack and a cereal aisle in a grocery store and created a series of altered images to see how much a person relies on perceiving text versus image. For the first part of the series, I erased all traces of text found on the magazine and cereal boxes leaving them hauntingly empty in appearance. I found that to have only the images present it is difficult to recognize the cereal’s and magazine’s true identity. We rely on text to recognize and understand what a product is or to identify the magazine. Secondly, I erased all forms of imagery, leaving only the text floating in white space. When I did this, I began to realize how much text is used in the designs to communicate. With the images absent, I became aware how much the familiar images of “Tony the Tiger”, “Toucan Sam,” and the “Rice Crispy characters” assist me in recognizing the cereal. Our minds create visual connections differently depending on

whether there is an image to interpret, text or a combination of both to interpret. This project was an interesting experiment in exploring how one comprehends the familiar and how one's cognition differs when image and or text are absent and what happens when the familiar is altered.



## Figure 2: *Mishap Series*, Ink Jet Prints

### Spilt Paint

Traveling is a great inspiration for me. When I travel to Europe I am flooded with visual stimuli. From the high-tech city of Berlin to the natural and beautiful Fiords of Norway: inspiration is found in every nook and cranny among the history and architecture. On a missions trip to Poland in 2009 I visited an old WWII ravaged part of Wroclaw, where a beautifully green painted church stood out amidst all the worn down apartments still strewn with bullet holes. It was inspirational to see this solitary painted building standing strong in the middle of a city in need of hope and knowledge of the Truth. The visual inspiration was there, in front of me, and with the assistance of a fellow peer I came up with the idea to create posters to act as a form of advertisement for the church. After gathering many photographs of the surrounding area, I began to develop a series of posters that I call *Spilt Paint*. These posters refer to this beautiful green church as the stronghold in the community with an emphasis on the idea of “spilling the paint” or “spreading the good news” to the people in need living in Wroclaw, Poland. I intended for these posters to reveal the dark, gloomy surroundings of the community by concentrating on the dirt and grimy atmosphere that was present. The logo I designed for the church was referenced from a bird I found in one of my photographs taken on site, which signified hope in a dark place.





Figure 3: *Spilt Paint*, Ink Jet Prints

On another trip to Europe in 2008, I visited the Bauhaus and its museum. Herbert Bayer's philosophy of type rings true to me as he wrote: "The aim of typographic layout is communication (for which it is the graphic medium). Communication must appear in the shortest, simplest, most penetrating form." In the 1920's and 30's the Bauhaus set forth the basic principles of typographic communication, which were the beginnings of a style termed "The New Typography." This form of typography was contemporary for its time and still holds great relevance in today's design standards. This new philosophy rejected the typical layout for type and explored the possibilities for asymmetrical type and image where it broke out of the columns and the traditional structure of the clean and organized page of type to create remarkable compositions never seen before.



Before the Bauhaus there was a period of experimental typography and image making founded in 1909 by the Italian, Filippo Marinetti called Futurism. In his book, *The Futurist Manifest*, he stated: "Futurism is grounded in the complete renewal of human sensibility that has generated our pictorial dynamism, our anti graceful music in its free, irregular rhythms, our noise-art and our words-in-freedom...By the imagination without strings I mean the absolute freedom of images or analogies, expressed with unhampered words and with no connecting strings of syntax and with no punctuation." Marinetti's aim was to create a visual compliment to the "new century" environment. He wanted a style that could express the chaos and ruckus of the changing times as industrialism was quickly on the rise in the western nations. There were very few guidelines involved in Futurist typography because everything was experimental and "out of the box". The Futurist designers based their typographic work on the principles of experimentation and working outside of traditional formats. In *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* Marinetti explains his method in more detail concerning the use of typography to create a more powerful and visually exciting message: "...My revolution is aimed at the so-called typographical harmony of the page, which is contrary to the flux and reflux, the leaps and bursts of style that run through the page. On the same page, therefore, we will use three or four colors of ink, or even twenty different typefaces if necessary. For example: italics for a series of similar or swift sensations, boldface for violent onomatopoeias, and so on. With this typographical revolution and this multicolored variety in the letters I mean to redouble the expressive force of words." Author Richard Lanham describes Marinetti's approach to Futuristic typography in his

book *The Electronic Word* by saying: "The book is seen as static, inelastically linear, sluggish; the new cinematographic form as dynamic, interactive, simultaneous, swift. This war on the book chose as its immediate target typographical convention, with results like SCRABrrRraaNNG. Here we see the book and all it represents in the act of deconstructing itself— all unawares the little children played, even as early as 1919— explosion at its center literally shattering typographical convention into distended fragments." Richard Lanham believes that Marinetti has taken book design to a new level of sophistication and visual intrigue as he broke the rules of conventional typography. Marinetti's risk taking approach to design influences my approach to gambling with outcomes and experimentation overall.



Figure 4: SCRABrrRraaNNG, Filippo Marinetti

In addition to New Typography and Futurism, my work relates to Dadaism. In 1916 Dadaism began in Zurich Switzerland. Dadaist graphic design was an extreme

example of exploring the many possibilities of experimental design. Dadaists ran wild with their designs, breaking all the traditional rules by mixing multiple typefaces, using radical punctuation, and experimenting with text manipulation and legibility. This experimentation reflects their fascination with the newly universal print culture. But the Dadaist designers rejected the existing traditional culture created by WWI. Their art was created in a protest against the cruelty of the war that they believed was an oppressive intellectual invariable in both art and everyday society. Dadaist artist and French avant-garde poet Tristan Tzara states: "Each page must explode, either by deep and weight seriousness—the whirlwind, the vertigo, the new, the eternal—by the crushing jokes, by the enthusiasm for the principles, or by the manner of being printed." John Heartfield was a German artist in the Dadaist movement who also explored experimental forms of graphic arts and photomontage. His powerfully graphic illustrations were banned from Germany during the Nazi leadership. However, today I am inspired and influenced by his unconventional work. Futurism and Dadaism's approach and methods to typography and design are not much different from my approach today.

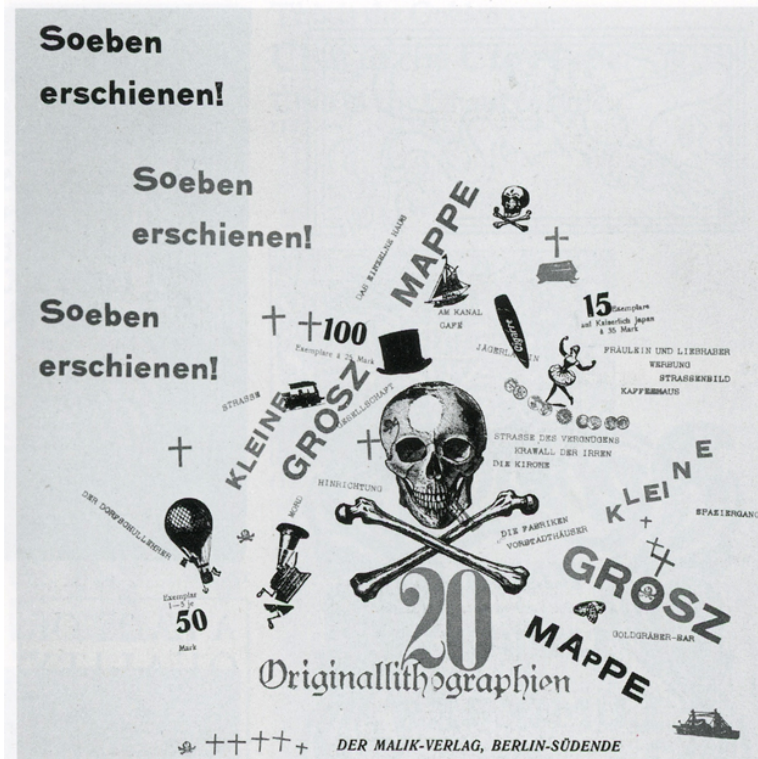


Figure 5: *Dadaist Advertisement*, John Heartfield

All art is influenced by the previous work of an artist or movement. Most likely one can always categorize or reference a person's art from something produced in the past. But no matter how much art is produced decade after decade, ingenuity will always be found. For every artist brings his or her own personal touch to each and every design or painting created. My thoughts about ingenuity and originality can be summed up in this quote by Jim Jarmusch, an American Independent Filmmaker. "Those who do not want to imitate anything produce nothing. Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light

and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concealing your thievery-celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: 'Its not where you take things from- it's where you take them to.'"

### Scrupulous

I enjoy creating designs that have an aesthetic appeal. This simple statement was the foundation for my project I call *Scrupulous*. I desire to portray the beauty and the core of typographic and image exploration. *Scrupulous* is the backbone and starting point to accomplish it. The book is titled *Scrupulous* because of my love for carefully crafted details. This book consists of an accumulation of design "eye candy" or visual stimuli acting as a visual reference guide for myself, other designers, artists, or anyone who enjoys graphic design in general. Sometimes I find that following the rules of design hinder my creativity such as: 1) following a grid, 2) making sure I don't use more than three fonts per page 3) clearly stating my message; and making sure it has cohesion. I believe that sometimes the rules are meant to be broken.

In *Scrupulous* I chose not to follow any grid or layout, nor did I attempt to create a specific style or theme. Each page is different. The book has no chronological order. It can be flipped through in any order because each two page spread is visually complete. Whatever thought, idea, or spark of inspiration came to my mind, I created it. Thus resulted in some pages being easily read while others were more experimental in nature. The viewer of *Scrupulous* sees a collection of multiple forms of vintage imagery,

photography, hand made drawings and sketches collaged together in multiple design methods.



Figure 6: *Scrupulous*, Book

As the digital age continues to expand and become more complex it can be easy for me to get overwhelmed with all the new software that designers need in order to stay

ahead in the industry. As a remedy sometimes I focus on the other side of design, which involve the hands-on methods of crafting a book, mixing colors, applying paint to a painting, and experimenting with ink, graphite and other media in illustration. No matter how incredible and innovative computer software and technology becomes for displaying and showcasing art, it can never replace the traditional aspects found in a hand made book containing hand crafted printed material. There is something special about the ability to hold an actual book in your hands that a computer screen or website can never replace. This passion for holding and viewing an actual artifact comes from my dislike for the appearance of the imagery created from the pixels on the computer screen. These images are just temporary and exist only in the cloud of technology. A book is a treasure that can be cherished and enjoyed because of the imperfection of the human touch. I admire the imperfections and even find these imperfections aesthetically pleasing. Imperfections make each physical object of art unique and may even create a luxury item, which is impossible to reproduce identically again.

### 1: Honda Pilot Book

In 2008 I purchased a brand new 2009 Honda Pilot. Owning it and experiencing it triggered a great design opportunity. For the next two years my new car became an extensive research and information gathering graphic design project. My plan for the next 365 days after I purchased it was to keep every gas receipt and to gather as much information as I could about my car. When the year was up, I began the tedious process of organizing and compiling my data. Not having thought to photograph each gas station I visited during the year, I matched up my gas receipt addresses and navigated my way

back to each station to get a photograph of the place. I found it interesting that a few of the gas stations I had visited, were no longer in business. But for the sake of including every detail in the book, I felt the need to still take a photograph of the facility anyway. The gas receipts contained the majority of information I needed to conjure up my information graphics. Each receipt contained valuable information including the date, where I got the gas, how much I spent, how much the gas cost per gallon, and how many gallons of fuel my car gulped up. So after many mathematical calculations, bar charts, photographs, and more research on fuel, the Honda Pilot book slowly came together. I chose to title the book *1* due to the one year of research involved in creating the book. Not only was the book titled *1* but after printing the large 13x19 inch pages, I cut each page into the form of the number 1. For the cover I carved a sheet of Plexiglas to resemble a windshield, and for the back I used a black Sintra, which is a pliable and thick form of plastic. Deciding how the book should be bound was a challenge due to its large size and heavy weight, but I soon decided that it would be best to drill two holes in the serif of the 1 and put in two lug nut screw posts to act as the binding. The end product showcases an obsessive collection of information graphics that many would consider mundane and useless. But it's not mundane and useless to me. For example in the book I compare the cost of fuel for the year to the number of McDonald's double cheeseburgers I could have bought with that money. It's these details that make the book unique and peculiarly interesting to experience.





Figure 7: 1: Honda Pilot, Book

## The Baseball Book

As a child I collected baseball cards and loved looking up their value in Beckett, a baseball card price guide. Whenever I pulled what I thought to be a valuable card from a pack, I cherished it as if it were the most valuable thing I'd ever own. But there was always one kind of card that I hoped and prayed I would be lucky enough to pull one day. That card was a 1/1. A one of one card means that only one is made in the entire world and that meant it was an object of great value. I never did pull that 1/1, so that is why fifteen years later I had the inclination to make a unique book. Not just any unique book, but a 1/1 hand made book.

A professional Major League Baseball is not cheap. In fact, they cost over fifteen dollars per ball. As a kid that was a lot for something that gets scratched and torn up the instant its used in a game. And when my brother and I played catch, we tore up baseballs left and right. So when I got the honor of owning a MLB baseball I rarely dared to play with it, and even today it is still a valued treasure to me. Thus to make a special book about the baseball and for it to be the only one available in the world was a great challenge and an exciting experience! There were many questions I wanted to answer in this book such as: 1) What are the differences between a little league, high school, college, minor league, and MLB baseball? 2) What is the origin of the baseball? 3) What is inside a baseball? 4) How is it made? and 5) and other interesting facts can I muster up. The challenge I embarked on was much greater than I anticipated but well worth the effort. Working my way through the project I learned a great deal about the importance of organization and consistency in design. I started with literally manually

dissecting each one of the different types of baseballs, photographing and documenting each step as I made my way to the “pill” (core) of each ball. Calculating and organizing lengths and weights of the each ball’s contents was a monotonous process and caused many headaches as I tried to visually communicate my findings in a cohesive layout. The last few pages of the book contain dedicated autograph pages. To create these pages I used a linoleum block and carved out the stitches of the baseball with an “Autographs” insignia on the top, and proceeded to then print the design with an oil-based red ink for another hand made textured technique. Once the content was finished, I printed and hand stitched the pages together with coptic binding and formed the front and back covers out of the actual leather hides of the baseballs. They were pieced together like a puzzle and pasted onto the circular boards that formed the shape of the book. This book symbolizes the principle aspects of me being a designer of unique ideas and objects. It covers every method of design that interests me including texture, hand created elements, vector graphics, informational graphics, and combinations of typography and images. It embraces and celebrates what I find valuable and worth the effort investigating and documenting as an artist.

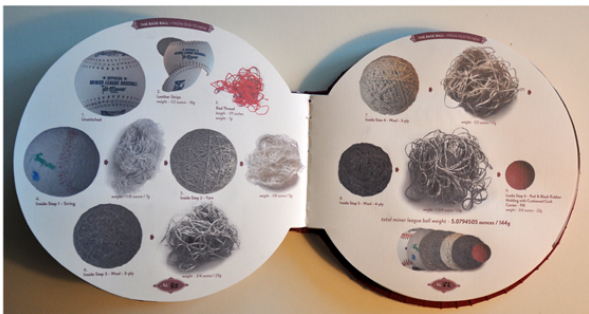


Figure 8: *The Baseball, Book*

## Conclusion

The last three years have been invaluable to me as an artist. I feel I have achieved an extensive collection of work that truly displays who I am as a person and artist. This doesn't feel like the end to me, as there is much more I wish to communicate through my art. I know that I will take what I've gained from this experience to expand my thoughts and knowledge of art as I enter into another path. God has blessed my time here and I know that everything I have accomplished could not have been done without Him. My personal development as an artist has grown substantially from many new experiences including working in a collaborative environment. This has given me a better understanding of how best to cooperate and communicate with others in order to accomplish tasks that I wouldn't have been able to achieve on my own. Finally, I've also gained a new perspective and appreciation for other forms of art having been immersed in fellow peers' critiques and discussions.

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