

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS

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## THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS

During the course of one summer and two semesters, I have been working on my senior thesis for my BFA at the University of Michigan. This paper is a cumulative documentation of the research, methodology, context and need for my project.

Initially, I began my research for this project on the topic of manipulation in graphic design. How mesmerizing and beautiful can a logo be on its own before it begins to misbrand the product it represents? Is it fair to consumers for unethical companies to have a fantastic visual branding system? The more I searched for the answers to these questions, the more upset I was becoming not at graphic designers like I thought I would, but the general attitude towards consumers as unintelligent cows who will graze on any field of seeds that a CEO will plant for them. This resentment turned my attention away from marketing and towards perhaps the greatest manipulative empire in the United States- the News media. Quickly, I learned that tragedies are not only necessary parts of life like I had originally thought, but they were also monopolies; one person's paycheck relied on the story that they could spin out of another person's bad day.

It did not take long for research on the sleaziness of news networks and newspapers to bog me down into feelings of hopelessness and loss of motivation. I needed to do research on something that excited and motivated me, so I turned around and began to research good news instead. This helped me to feel motivated and inspired, but was not of much use to my project. One day, tired of feeling lost over how I was going to turn my interest in good news and graphic design into a manifestable project, I ran across the street to the North Campus Union, and began

interviewing strangers for stories of good events that happened to them. And thus, this project was born.

The final product is a series of three hardcover books of poetry and illustrations entirely made by myself, meaning that I am the creator of all the content, design, printing and binding of the books themselves. The poems are a result of a mixture of interviews I conducted with strangers on stories of good events, random acts of kindness, or stories with strong silver linings that they witnessed, and my own personal experiences. The illustrations are drawn by me to accompany the text, the book is designed by me, and it will all be printed and bound together by- you guessed it- me. However, it would be inaccurate to say that the book is about me. Rather, it is about the existence of human kindness and silver linings, and the desperate need for stories containing those elements.

## **Contextual Framework**

In this section, I will cover the leading areas of research and movements of thought that tie this project into the current day world. I will also discuss the artists and authors that I find to be the most relevant to this project and its goals.

### **Historical Artists**

An extremely long line of authors and artists precedes me in the “art that includes text” camp. It would be impossible and needless to sit and create an exhaustive list of all relevant, impactful people that paved the way for this project. However, it would also not make sense to omit any discussion on them at all.

Sylvia Plath is important to note and an inspiration to me because she encapsulated all the

main aspects of a feminist writer of today, but seventy years ago. Her life was short (1932-1963) but entirely full of creepy nuances and a general fascination with death, and a constant process of recording her thoughts in poetry and in drawing (Steinberg). Her infamous suicide was well publicized, even to this day still creeping its way up into the press, but during her lifetime she was not well-published, having only authored two books and occasional poems, articles, and drawings in local magazines and newspapers, until the New Yorker contracted her in towards the end of her life (Steinberg)<sup>1</sup>. It is the intriguing, thrilling legacy of her thick, detailed journals and haunting poetry that has made her a modern-day ghost celebrity; she may have fit in more with mainstream media now. Her willingness to be fully, unashamedly herself in her writing and her post-mortem fame has given the female writers of today an opportunity to be like her with less of the public speculation of whether or not it is acceptable for a woman to be pessimistic and grotesque in the public eye; she was one of the many female trailblazers of poetry. I do not believe that my writing falls under the category of grotesque like much of hers, but it does at times get overly personal and critical with hints of maliciousness (in order to create better contrast with the later silver lining, and also to create a fair and realistic depiction of real life), behavior that is still sometimes criticized for a woman to emulate.

Second, perhaps on the complete opposite end of the spectrum of intensely personal and thought provoking writing, is the work of Andy Warhol. Similar to Plath, he has become a major post-mortem icon of American life, but unlike Plath, he thrived on the shallowness of consumer culture and the ruthlessness of the media. Yet, he was full of contradictions, as



Figure 2

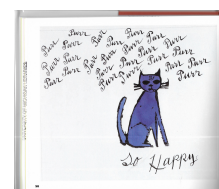


Figure 1

<sup>1</sup> Steinberg, Peter K. . "Biography." A celebration, this is. Accessed January 09, 2017. <http://www.sylviaplath.info/biography.html>.

he also had a tendency to incorporate text into his images that managed to make his pieces intimate and endearing when they otherwise would not have been. Take, for example, his drawings *You are so little*, 1958 (Figure 1<sup>2</sup>) and *So Happy*, 1958 (Figure 2<sup>3</sup>). He managed to incorporate very little text next to the images, but what he wrote captured the essence of a feeling, matched with drawings that were related but held an entirely different meaning on their own. At the same time, the text also would have lost meaning without the image. He created pages that were self-encompassing environments, ecosystems that needed each part of the puzzle to function as a whole. I have similar goals for each of the spreads of my own book.

### Contemporary Artists

Now, it is as common as art galleries themselves for artists to incorporate words into their final pieces. It has become the trademark for many artists and authors alike to use text and images co-dependently. Tracey Emin is a prime example of this current day practice blended with strong feminist themes, challenging the notion of what it means to be feminine. Her general practice involves using traditional methods of “woman’s work”, such as embroidery, and juxtaposing harshly honest, emotionally raw language<sup>4</sup>. This makes her work feminist in nature because sometimes, femininity is the equivalent to silence; by saying something at all, she is breaking that stereotype and forcing bystanders to listen and observe what she has to tell them. Two of my personal favorite works by

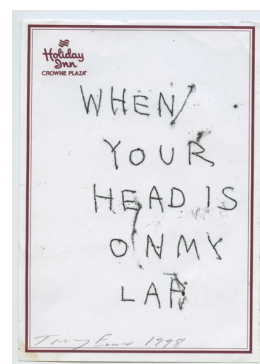


Figure 4



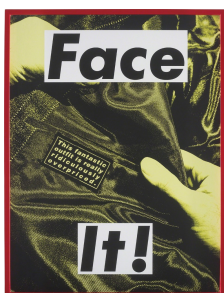
Figure 3

<sup>2</sup> Warhol, Andy. *Andy Warhol drawings*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2012. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Warhol, Andy. *Andy Warhol drawings*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2012. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Emin, Tracey. "Tracey Emin." Tracey Emin Studio. Accessed January 11, 2017. <http://www.traceyeminstudio.com/biography/>.

her are, *When your head is on my lap*, 1998 (Figure 3<sup>5</sup>) and *Wanting You*, 2014 (Figure 4<sup>6</sup>). *When your head is on my lap* is incredibly emotionally charged and insightful, looking like it was scrawled on a desk pad from Holiday Inn. It is difficult to look at it and not be able to relate what she is feeling; I have the utmost praise for her for being able to capture an emotion so well and succinctly. *Wanting You* is also lovely; to display an emotion as fragile as desire in a neon sign has a boldness that is respectable and charming, yet intimidating at the same time.



**Figure 5** It would not be fair to talk about contemporary American culture and textual artists without mentioning Barbara Kruger. In regards to her process, she strives to reflect onto Americans the things they are obsessed with, whether it be ideas, people, or objects. For example, in *FACE IT* (Figure 5<sup>7</sup>) she comments on the common worldly obsession with expensive clothes; in the fine print stitched onto the fabric, it is written, “This fantastic outfit is really ridiculously overpriced”. “FACE IT” being the first two words the viewer notices about the print adds additional nuance and humor to the otherwise critical subject. Ron Rosenbaum from *Smithsonian Magazine* had this to say of her practice:

She needs to wade into the muddy river of American culture, panning for iconic words and images like a miner looking for gold in a fast-running stream, extracting the nuggets and giving them a setting and a polish so they can serve as our mirror.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, I try to do the same in my practice for the content of my books. To collect stories through interviews and then abstract the essence of them, and then reflect it back to the

<sup>5</sup> Emin, Tracey. *When your head is on my lap*. 1998. *Old Rope*. In Tracey Emin Studio. Accessed January 9, 2017. <http://www.traceyeminstudio.com/exhibitions/2014/07/old-rope/>.

<sup>6</sup> Tracey Emin, *Wanting You*, 2014, in Tracey Emin Studio, February 23, 2014, accessed 2017, <http://www.traceyeminstudio.com/artworks/2014/02/wanting-you-2014/>.

<sup>7</sup> Kruger, Barbara. *FACE IT* (yellow). 2007. In Artsy. Accessed January 11, 2017. <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/barbara-kruger-face-it-yellow>.

<sup>8</sup> Ron Rosenbaum, "Barbara Kruger's Artwork Speaks Truth to Power," *Smithsonian.com*, June 2012, 1, accessed January 11, 2017, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/barbara-krugers-artwork-speaks-truth-to-power-137717540/>. 1.

audience as a poem and illustration, does at times feel like looking for gold in a fast-running stream. Additionally, Kruger's ability to add quirkiness and whimsy to dark or serious subjects is a trait that she is well known for and is what makes many of her pieces identifiable as her own. Not necessarily her specific voice, but her strong sense of having a voice that is easily picked up in her work, has made her another one of the most relatable icons of the American arts and culture scene. I hope to emulate her precision and strength in my own work.

Lastly, on the topic of art and culture, another contemporary artist that works in between the intersection of art and text is Ed Ruscha. Unlike Tracey Emin and Barbara Kruger, Ed Ruscha is a fine artist that includes words in his work that have no personal or deep conceptual meaning to him. He intentionally uses words that he sees in his day to day life, to the purpose

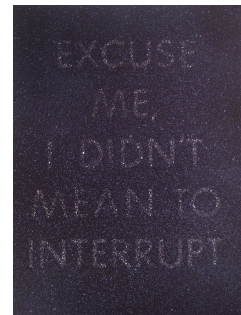


Figure 6

of forcing the viewer to think about what the possible meaning could be behind them, as there is no obvious one<sup>9</sup>. To the right is his lithograph *Excuse Me, Suite Fifteen* (Figure 6<sup>10</sup>). The richness of the purple background and the graininess of the entire texture produces an ominous tone, while the words add a linguistic value that does not quite match the style, but are incorporated smoothly enough that it is easy to read the piece as a whole; the style and words do not compete with each other. This blurs the lines between art and text, a practice that poets also commonly hold in concrete poetry, or poetry that typographically forms a shape and texture that becomes just as, or possibly even more, interesting than the poem itself.

<sup>9</sup> "Gunpowder on Paper: Looking Back at Ed Ruscha's "Ribbon Words"." Artsy. June 2, 2012. Accessed January 9, 2017. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-gunpowder-on-paper-looking-back-at-ed-ruscha-s-ribbon-words>.

<sup>10</sup> Ruscha, Ed . *Excuse Me- Suite Fifteen*. 1975. In Artsy. 2013. Accessed January 2017. <https://www.artsy.net/article/editorial-tamarind-institutes-suite-fifteen-takes-a-fresh>.

## The Community

Up to this point I have almost exclusively discussed fine artists, with the exception of Sylvia Plath. These, of course, are not the only professionals that paved the way for my line of work, but they have been notable influences in tying together the lines of written authorship and artistic practice. Had I attempted to do this project forty years ago, it may have been seen as “cute” or a hobby, maybe even coined as “progressive” because I am a woman. Now, however, it is completely valid for me to write poetry and illustrate and have it be seen as something more powerful than a mere craft or hobby, and it is more likely for an artful book like this to be sold by a commercial bookseller, because of the impact of the persons mentioned above.

Additionally, there is an organization I previously interned for that on a local scale has helped to build the foundation for community based stories and publications in Ann Arbor, where *this is what happens* was born. 826michigan is a non-profit based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, that provides free tutoring services to the local k-12 students, and offers additional expertise through writing workshops and field trips for schools in the Ann Arbor and metro Detroit area. Part of their program involves publishing student writing via small in-house printed chapbooks and, once a year, through a professionally printed and bound hardcover book. These books are especially important not solely because of the high quality compared to the chapbooks, but because they make for a more legitimate, professional presentation to give back to the students, giving them a higher sense of purpose and accomplishment in their writing. This is one of the reasons that community-based writing projects, and community projects in general, are so important; I believe that the closer the ties are to a specific place and people, the greater the impact it will have on that area. Those children will take the books home and have them for the



rest of their lives, and as the books are sold in the 826michigan storefront, they can honestly say that they are published authors. 826michigan has inspired me to make locals feel special, too.

## **Food?**

Creating a deliverable in small batches reaches a niche audience that tends to appreciate the process just as much, if not more, than the final product. This is one of the reasons that farmer's markets and art fairs continue to exist and even thrive in certain cities; the audience cares more about the community than the potentially better product that they could buy at a superstore. Fortunately, Ann Arbor is a model example of such a city. However, my original intention for this project was not to take advantage of my current location, but to create a deliverable that expounded on mass production and the media; I wanted to create a quarterly newsprint publication that highlighted events of good news in the local area. I was driven by the obvious lack of stories of human kindness in the community- especially a community as academic as Ann Arbor- but I was set on creating a publication that would inevitably be thrown out- or in this city's case, recycled. Eventually, I was redirected onto an adjacent path by the words of Mario Batali- yes, the Food Network Italian chef, of all people- in a foreword he wrote in a cookbook called "Pasta by Hand" by Jenn Louis<sup>11</sup> that I had picked up in Chicago during the fall of 2016 while visiting a friend. He wrote,

One of the main objectives of the Slow Food movement is to define and maintain rich regional traditions, ingredients, techniques, and products as a defense against the commercialization and homogenization and the subsequent or eventual loss of these cornerstones of excellence. The handmade Italian dumpling is indeed an exquisite example of a food well worth our "Slow" attention.

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<sup>11</sup> Louis, Jenn. *Pasta by hand: a collection of Italy's regional hand-shaped pasta*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2015.

His words weighed on me in a fashion that I was not expecting to receive from a recipe book. It was hypocritical of me to claim that I care about people and what they have to say, the necessity of preserving honest storytelling within a community, and the sharp, stinging lack of good news in society while presenting all of these passions through a disposable quarterly. Batali, in plain language, revealed that a precious idea needs to be executed by precious means; it becomes what it deserves. Thus, as I sat in bed reading my little cookbook, I made the formal decision to change my newsprint project into hardcover, bound books- the most precious platform I could think to spread the written word.

### **The Context of Books**

In the long run, this did more for my project than add sentimental value. It will help readers physically connect with the project in a way that they could not do digitally; feeling the texture of the paper, being able to mentally gauge how much of the book you have been through by the number of pages on either side of your current spot, and even being able to personalize it with scratches, dings, and bookmarks help the reader to personalize it and form a stronger bond with it<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, research has indicated that the human brain has an easier time picking up on written language if it is made a part of the physical world (as opposed to on a screen). This is because the brain does not actually have a specific designated center for the written word- it is a combination of other centers, such as spoken language, motor coordination, and vision<sup>13</sup>. Thus, the more “physical” a word becomes, the less strain it puts on the mind to interpret it. This is one of the many reasons that a large number of people prefer reading from books, instead of online,

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<sup>12</sup> Jabr, Ferris. "The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper versus Screens." Scientific American. April 09, 2013. Accessed January 16, 2017. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/>. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Jabr, Ferris. "The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper versus Screens." Scientific American. April 09, 2013. Accessed January 16, 2017. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/>. 4.

when reading for comprehension; the less strain put on your mind to read, the more energy there is to actually retain the information<sup>14</sup>.

As a book of poetry and illustrations, it is quite obvious that none of the ideas found inside will be hard facts or law; I do not expect anyone to live by them. However, it is still important that a sense of trust is built between the reader and the book. If my intent is to help normalize the telling of good news, of stories of human kindness, contrasted with deeply personal hardship, than it would be counterproductive to present the final product in a form that the audience cannot connect with well, let alone trust. As explained before, there is a sense of intimacy that printed books create for the reader. This is the final reason that nailed into the ground my conviction to create books; in a world where insatiable news networks and a genuine trust in chaos exist, there has to be somewhere that a person can find words they trust.

## **Methodology**

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Psalm 4:23 NIV). Interestingly enough, my initial course of action for the Integrative Project was to research and reveal the truths behind an industry that monopolizes on the easiness of pulling another person’s heartstrings. Yet, while doing this research, I simply could not get my mind off of the heart itself. When I began collecting stories from strangers to write poetry from, I tried so desperately to essentially reiterate what they told me in prose, but every single time I tried my mind either wrote an embarrassing haiku about someone finding a dollar on the ground, or I

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<sup>14</sup> Jabr, Ferris. "The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper versus Screens." *Scientific American*. April 09, 2013. Accessed January 16, 2017. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/>. 8.

jumped directly to the deeper heart issue behind the story. For example, I collected several stories from young girls my age about surprise birthday parties their friends threw for them, and instead of writing poems about parties, I could not help but jump straight to writing poems about the need for girls (and all people, but in this context, girls,) to feel loved and accepted. Thus, the deeper condition of the human, instead of the surface level story, became the focus of the poems.

### **Poetry**

There is an unarguably obsessive tendency with the News to focus on bad news and tragedies- perhaps for the sake of building business. Regardless of why, there are severe consequences to the lack of publication of good news or stories of human kindness. I initially set out to write stories of good news in a journalistic fashion- short, blunt and easy to understand. Yet as I explored this idea it began to lose footing; it did not make sense to me to gather stories from strangers in a local, small town way and then reproduce them in generalized, sterile snippets. I needed a new method of story writing. As poetry is on the rise in mainstream American culture in bookstores, on clothing and on social media, I thought that it would be an appropriate way to share stories creatively that could potentially reach a growing market.

From this point, the poems started to flow out of my hands like a plastic straw with a hole in it- you go in expecting to take a drink and end up soaking yourself in the process. The poems just felt right- what better way to honor a person's story than to retell it in the most beautiful way you know how? My project quickly turned into a manifesto about the importance and value of human beings, and delicacy quickly became a root word. Every word I chose to use became top priority, not wanting to reflect the wrong message in my writing but also wanting to stay true to

what happened. After all, there are major differences between “kind” and “nice”, “green” and “moss”, “chilly” and “biting”. Yet, this was also just the beginning.

## **Illustrations**

As a designer and illustrator, I receive the most satisfaction out of drawing and putting together publications from top to bottom, meaning that every printed mark on the page is entirely done by me. No stock photos here. When I began the process of illustrating images to go alongside the poems, I wanted to create an effect that “felt” authentic, which to me meant clearly hand drawn and highly detailed.

Important to point out is that I intentionally did not give any of the illustrations shadows underneath or around them. They are not supposed to be rooted in any kind of space, because the text on the page does not have that opportunity, either. I wanted them to together create their own ecosystem feeding off and into the other. If the illustrations rooted into the page and the words did not, or vice versa, the other would suddenly appear artificial, which would immediately reduce the impact of the content itself.

Additionally, I wanted the illustrations to become a space where the viewer could get lost in thought. Similar to mandalas, the heavy cross-hatching, patterns and textures within some of them are intended to be mesmerizing without actually distracting from the poem next to it. They create their own textures, similar to the way that text on a page also creates its own texture with the letters and lines building upon each other. From a distance, paragraphs of text and lines of cross-hatching all look the same.

## Curation

For several months, the initiative was to create a single book, about 60 pages thick and an average size that could potentially be sold at any book retailer. However, this posed some challenges that I did not anticipate. Curating the order of poems was immensely difficult to do, because whether I liked it or not, their order will always have an impact on how the reader interprets them. I tried solving the issue by categorizing them into chapters, but even this was not as effective as I wanted, because then each chapter still read as its own story, an effect that does not work for individual, autonomous poems all sitting next to each other.

One day, I was yet again sifting through the poems on my apartment floor (I had printed and cut out each individual one so I could physically move them) and I was finding that there were three natural categories that they fell into: hopeful, comforting, and fiery intense. I wrote down the new order, and in figure 7, this is how it appeared. At the same time I finally resolved this issue, I simultaneously cracked open another can of worms. How? Well, as I looked at my updated curation, the thought popped into my head, “Why have three chapters, when I can have three books?”. Ah, yes. Classic Sarah.

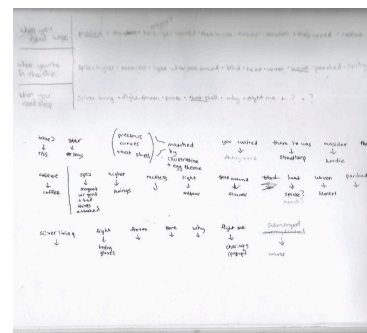


Figure 7

However, I quickly wrote off the idea of having three completely autonomous books because, again, they would still encounter the problems I was having just moments before. What I decided instead was to have three independently bound chapters, all sitting within the same spine. I understand this is difficult to imagine, so in figure 8 can be found a mockup of the idea made out of butcher paper. The three “chapter books” will each have their own cover and their own spine, but will sit vertically down one large, all



Figure 8

encompassing cover. The order of the chapter books goes as follows, from top to bottom: “When You Need Hope”, “When You’re in the Fire”, and “When You Need Sleep”. With the ideas finally solidified, the project was ending its second trimester and the only job left was for me to feverishly create.

## Design

The overall design of the three books was perhaps the most fun for me out of the entire creation process- after all, I am a designer and illustrator. My process worked from the inside out, meaning that I began with choosing typefaces, to creating illustrations, to layout, binding the small books, and then, finally, designing and creating the large cover. I chose a clear, enigmatic typeface for all the book content (Avenir book) except for the beginning pages that read in Baskerville semibold italic as follows:

“Where is the hope?

Here I am, love, in the flames

I was always here”.

Before adding the notes of Baskerville, there was clearly something lacking in the book. Avenir definitely did the job it was supposed to do, but the typography overall wasn’t fun. I additionally hand-lettered some of the poem titles, and in the end decided to hand-letter the book titles, in order to add elements of fun and personal touch to the typography that was otherwise boring.

Simultaneously, I worked through the layouts of the spreads. An engaging book needs much more than typography alone. I had the daunting task of creating three books that could stand alone and be visually exciting by



Figure 9

themselves, but also be interesting and coordinated when the viewer read them in the gallery setting. I had to design laterally and longitudinally- one spread in a book had to work with the pages before and after it, but also with the spreads above and below it. Above in figure 9 is an example of the importance of the spreads working together vertically.

## **Creative Work**

The final culmination of my work resulted in three nine inch by six inch books, (width being 18 inches when open), saddle stitched and encased in their own hard covers. Then, there is a larger hard cover that acts as a case for the three; they are arranged vertically and held in place magnetically in order to allow the reader to cleanly pick them up and move them around individually if need be.

## **Materials**

When it came time to choose what material would be best to use for the giant cover encasing the three books, it made the most sense to use something that looked and felt natural. I initially wanted to use embossed paper, and as I laser cut my designs onto thick chip board to use as the embossing plates, I quickly fell in love with them as they were. Thus instead of using paper, I used the engraved chipboard itself as the cover, leaving the natural color and texture as it was, mimicking the natural aspects of my illustrations.

The paper used inside the books is a thin, almost-opaque linen paper, meaning that it appears woven like fabric and a single sheet allows some light to pass through between the



fibers. This kind of paper parallels the style of the illustrations, tight fibers mimicking the oodles of cross hatching and tiny patterns I used in the pictures.

## **Illustrations**

The illustrations are all done in black ink on a white background, with the occasional pop of color that I included in Photoshop after I scanned and edited out the white background of the paper in them. I wanted the reader to be able to read the poetry and then get lost in a detailed illustration of something interesting- a nest, a pair of boxing gloves, or a thorny bouquet of flowers. I was afraid that using a multitude of colors in each illustration would serve as a distraction instead of an aid for my goal.

In some of the illustrations, I actually incorporate the white of the original paper in them as a third color. Already on the page are the black of the stroke and the crème of the background I placed in Photoshop. Including the original white here and there adds a nice richness to the page as it contrasts with the crème and makes the black pop just a little bit more.

## **Poems**

The voice of this project held the most significance in the poems themselves, as they instantly gave connotations to the illustrations and determine whether or not the reader can easily connect with the project as a whole. For example, in “Higher”, I wrote, “...shrieking for more, higher”. Using adverbs allows the reader to paint a picture in their minds of an action that is currently happening, in this case, a child having fun on the swings. If I had written, “she shrieked for more, higher”, the sense of finality changes the meaning and creates a more distant tone, because the action has already been completed and in the reader’s mind, the child is no longer

happy- she already was. Thus, in all my poems, I was careful to analyze the overall tone of each poem just as much as each individual word choice.

Another difficulty I encountered in creating poems that could be relatable was determining the use of first, second or third person. My collective poems use a mixture of all three, varying from poem to poem by what forms are the most appropriate. Using “Higher” as an example again, I used, “...thrilled by the possibility of a mighty fall, is how it felt when I first met you”. The reader can then interchange “you” for whomever it is this poem might remind them of- using him or her adds a specificity that tells the audience of the experience more than it allows them to recreate it in their minds.

## The Title

The name, “this is what happens” derives from a poem that I wrote that also served as a tool to separate the project into three books. The poem goes as follows:

this is what happens when  
you ask a stranger  
to tell you a story  
about true human kindness.

this is what happens when  
you sit down and try  
to collect all your past hurts  
into a bouquet.

this is what happens when  
the human spirit has to  
rummage for answers  
before it can rest.

Thus, *this is what happens* became an appropriate, encompassing title for the project as a whole. Yet while it

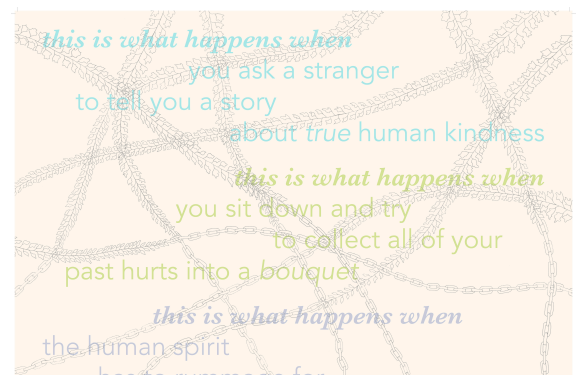


Figure 10

is technically the title, I was careful not to post it anywhere on the large front cover of the book. I left the front side to be blank of words and only have the engraved design of vines and chains, and left the title work to the inside. The entire inside cover is a spread of the poem in large Avenir (and Baskerville for emphasis words), coordinated to the color themes of the books (figure 10).

### **Front Cover Designs**

All three books are arranged vertically inside one giant, independent hard cover made out of exposed chip board with a laser cut design on the front. It is made independent by the use of magnets that allow the three smaller books to be held in place or removed from inside it. The edges are lined with the same heavy, aubergine colored linen paper that the small books are covered in.

The lasered design on the large outside is based off an illustration I made of vines of ivy morphing into linked chains, repeating a couple of the motifs found throughout each of the three books. The same design can be found in its non-vector, original illustrated form as the background of the large inside cover (underneath the poem).

I kept the outside and inside covers of the three books as clean and simple as possible. There was quite a bit to look at already on the outside jacket and no need to go overboard in pattern on the three smaller covers, too. However, I still wanted to mimic the use of texture in the engraving on the chipboard

## **Conclusion**

At the end of the day, I am very proud of the work I produced in “this is what happens”. I set out to create a project that highlighted small town stories about preciousness amidst trials of life, and I do believe that I accomplished this through the writing, illustrations, and form that this project took. As I wrap up this project, I am simultaneously trying to sell prints of a few of my illustrations and poems and get my name out into the area as an illustrator and designer. I know that in the future I will pursue many more book and illustration projects as I work through the materials I have leftover from this project and get inspired by the world around me. I am exiting this project with even more excitement than I began with for the world of books and publishing and the endless list of possibilities for new concepts and creations. At the end of the day, what “this is what happens” taught me most strongly is that there will always be people whose stories deserve to be told, and that I will also be passionate and ready to share them.

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