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How to Analyze Your Almond

For my thesis I have invented a new form of fortune telling called ‘Almondology’. Almondology is the study of the space that is formed between a couple’s clasped hands. This space is as unique as a fingerprint, and no two are the same. To study this space I have cast porcelain clay between a couple’s hands. The couple holds hands in whichever way is natural for them, and the porcelain retains the information from each person’s palm. I have named this porcelain object an ‘Almond’. The term ‘Almond’ comes from the object’s shape, and also from the Italian ‘mondorla’, or ‘becoming one’. This term refers to the almond shaped halo signifying Christ in majesty in early Christian iconography. As the couple’s relationship changes, their new experiences become visible in their Almond.

While studying abroad in Italy this past year I fell in love with an Italian boy. When I returned to Michigan I missed the feel of his hand in mine and became aware of the pocket of air that had existed between our clasped hands. I wanted to know what this intimate space looked like and meant, as a unique object shared only between two specific people. These questions started my inquiry into ‘Almondology’.

My study starts with looking at the human hand. Every hand is unique, with patterns and whirls that define the many intricate lines that each one of us has. My project has led me to study the history of the palm in illustration and the technique of palmistry.

Research is the most important aspect of my project, based on many texts on palmistry and the hand. I see my work to be a continuation of previous studies. My project builds on the work of previous palmistry masters like Magnus Hundt 1501, Wilhelm Pleydenwurff 1475, and Count Louis Hamon (better known as Cheiro) 1900.

Magnus Hundt created woodcuts representing the relationship of the hand to the cosmos. The hand represents a microcosm of the body, and the human being is a microcosm of the universe. The mounts and lines found on the palm are connected to the planets and stars, which is now the root of modern day palmistry. His woodcuts illustrate a book that documents his studies at the university of Leipzig as a physician and theologian. His understanding of the human body was about micro and macro elements that came together to form a whole. His perception of the hand reflects those ideals.

The shop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff created woodcuts of the hand as a devotion tool for prayer for the book *Schatzbehalter*. The saints and apostles are drawn in the fourteen joints of the fingers. These woodcuts have a correlation between the text and images. The Apostles' Creed is numbered in 12 sequences along the side of the left hand. The numbers correspond with the apostles starting with St. Peter on the lowest joint of the index finger. The saints on the right hand are placed opposite the apostle they relate to. St John the evangelist is opposite his namesake St. John the Baptist.

These artists and workshops influence my style and approach to this project. They got me started in the direction I wanted my project to go in, but the most influential writer for my project is Cheiro. The term chiromancy is a 20th century term coined after

Cheiro's book *The Language of the Hand*. Cheiro analyzed the prints of famous individuals to show the connection between the lines of the hand and their temperaments. His prints span from his most influential and prestigious contemporaries to the bottom of society, including the hand of Mark Twain, Dr. Meyer who was convicted of murder, and an anonymous hand of a suicide. The lines of the handprints presented with his studies can map out their personality traits.

For my study I have used Chero's names for the areas of the palm, the mounts of Mercury, Saturn, Luna, Mars positive, Mars negative, Venus, and Jupiter, and the three major lines; Head, Heart and Life. By utilizing the research of Chero and the influence of other historical artists and theologians who specialize on the human hand, I have used Palmistry as my starting point for my study of Almondology. Cheiro, theorized that the lines and mounts of a persons palm revealed their inner nature. By casting the almond of a couple, interviewing them with questions that correspond to the areas of the palm, and analyzing two palms as one, I have pushed the study of Cheiro one step further, to reveal the inner nature of a couple's relationship.

For my next step of research I have studied ten test couples. An important source of my Almondology study comes from interviewing participating couples. I have created questions that correspond to the character traits associated with each of the eight mounts and three major lines of the palm. For Example: for the mount of Mercury (the mount near the pinky finger) the arch contains information about communication. My corresponding question is "who said 'I love you' first?" I have simple questions that are

asked with both people present in the interview. When I ask these questions they inspire stories that reveal truths of the couple's relationship. The information from these interviews are then translated into short works of creative non-fiction and presented along with the couple's Almond. For the couples' stories I have collaborated with University of Michigan English major Shaylin Smith. From the information gathered through the interview process, Shaylin and I have composed each couple's unique story.

I have constructed boxes to present my study for five select test couples that exemplify the research of my work. Each handmade box contains the information of one couple. Inside is their unique almond and two handmade accordion books. One book is the couple's Almond story and the second is 'The Book of Almondology'. The couple's Almond story contains their work of creative non-fiction derived from their couple's interview, illustrations of each person's palm with analysis, and illustrated analysis of their Almond. The book of Almondology contains the description of the lines and mounts of the palm and how they relate to the Almond. Next is the diagram of questions for the couple's interview and their correlating map to their regions of the palm. Then there is an example couple with their almond and short analysis, and finally the different shapes of Almonds that further express the nature of the couple. All of these pages are the information needed to analyze your own Almond.

In addition to the accordion books, each box contains a special home for the couple's Almond, called a palm box. In the center of the larger box, there is a separate section that holds this distinct book, which, when opened, reveals the porcelain Almond.

The porcelain almonds have a specific construction process to ensure consistency between almonds. The cast almond is fired in a green ware kiln. A black wash is then used over the almond, which retains the lines impressed upon the almond. After a second firing in a high fire kiln, the almond is ready to be fitted into a palm box. Around each almond I construct a hand-made paper mache box that represents the two palms that created it. The box is sized and fitted into it's 4"x4" slot in the center of it's box binding.

This completed Almond book is something special for each couple. It is something unique for them, for their love for each other. It is also a way of visualizing their relationship in a small hand held stone. Any loving couple can participate in the study of Almondology. Almond analysis can greatly aid understanding between couples. The discovery of character through the palm can help people to understand themselves and their partner, and thus can help maintain a healthy relationship. Through Almondology, areas of conflict and compatibility can be thoroughly explored.