
Questions + *Answers*

+ QUESTIONS

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Questions + Answers

+ Answered by: [SANDRA ISLA]

+ INTRODUCTION

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Every design problem begins with a question. For design to be truly effective, it cannot only be aesthetically pleasing, but it must also have a framework on which it builds, on which it progresses and ultimately communicates its purpose. Yet how do we begin the process? With that first

question— a question is like a seed, a tiny little piece of potential that grows into more questions and despite its challenges (or perhaps because of them) develops into a thriving network of viability. Every design answer begins with one question.

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Answers

More Questions

Challenges

Questions

*When we have
arrived at the
question, the
answer is
already near.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



+ QUESTION

01

[PROJECT TITLE] In Crisis
[INSTRUCTORS] Brody Hartman, Phil Hamlett
[CLASS] Visual Communications
[FORMATS / PIECES] Books, Knitted Item, Cards
[ILLUSTRATIONS] Sandra Isla
[COPY] Sandra Isla
[TYPEFACES] Helvetica Neue

In crisis, are there always heroes and villains?

+ MORE QUESTIONS What makes people act the way they do in crisis situations? What is the difference between living in comfort and living in survival mode?

+ ANSWER

01

+ [CHALLENGE]

In Crisis is a book designed to delve into the way people react in survival situations in contrast to modern, comfortable surroundings found in middle class America. Initially, I chose the subject of crisis because I was interested in the way that people react in moments where they had to act rather than think, where instinct or

adrenaline ruled their decisions. An avid reader, I have read a variety of literature in which the true heart of a hero was revealed in the climax of crisis. And I wondered, is this only a fabrication of a writer's mind? Or is a person's true character, true heart shown in the heat of crisis?

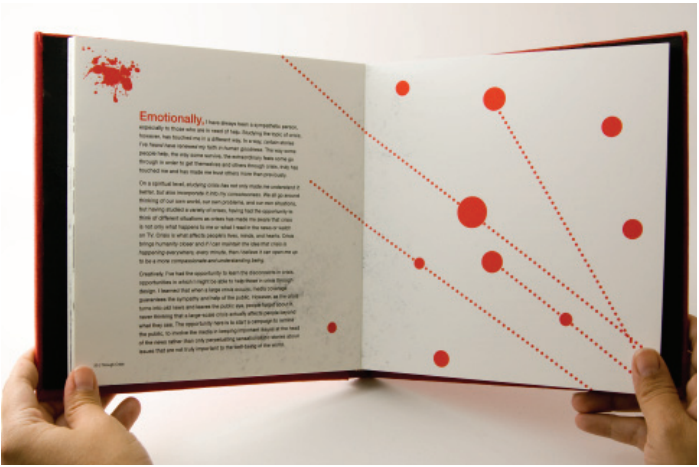
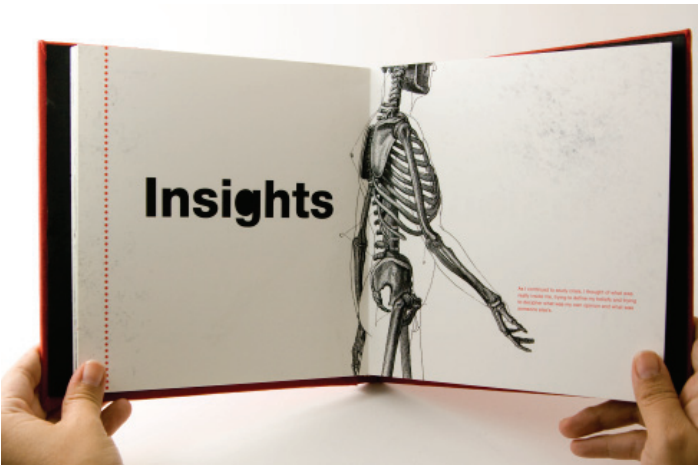
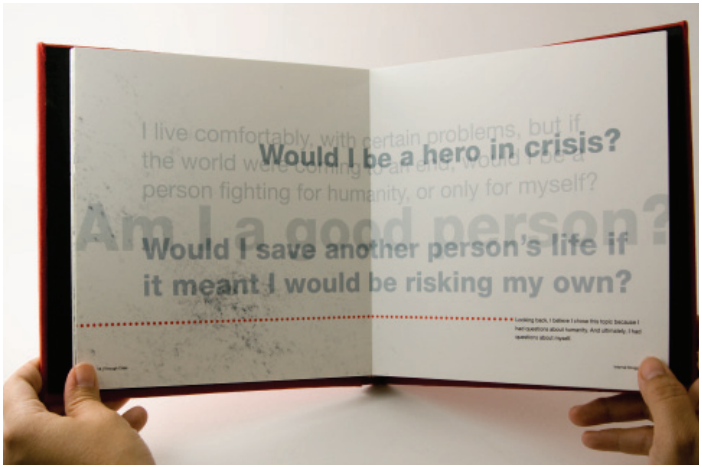
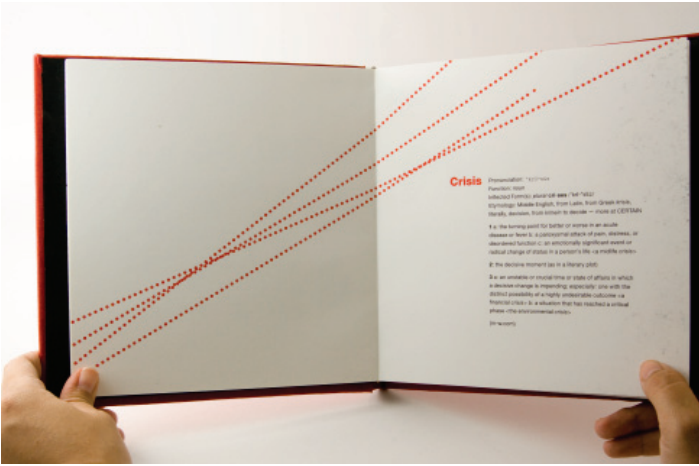
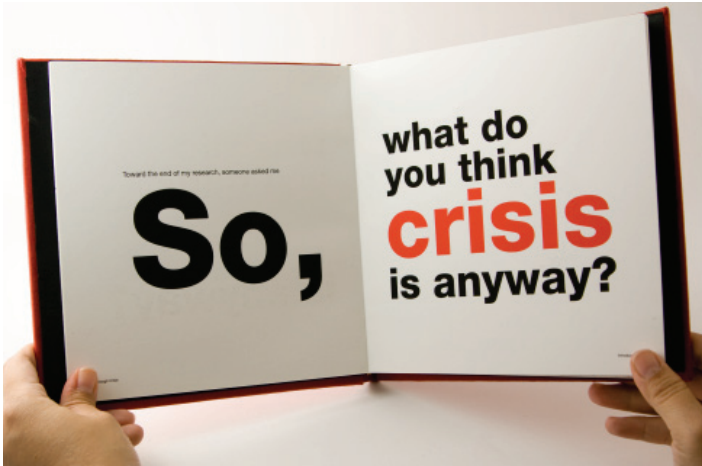
+ [ANSWER]

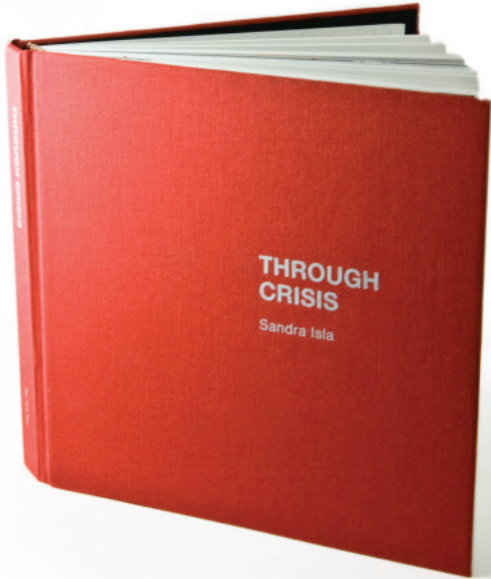
Looking back, I chose this topic because I had questions about humanity and ultimately, about myself. By exploring the meaning of truth (or the perception of truth), and by identifying my views of how crisis affects societies around the world, I came to the realization that crisis is not just in ourselves; it is all around us. This realization was the door into an opportunity. Crisis is never just

tragedy and despair. It gives us a chance to know who and what we are and to challenge ourselves to be the type of people we really want to be. As cliché as it sounds, by helping others out of their crisis situations, we help ourselves and create the world in which we want to live, becoming an active participant in our own realities rather than a victim of crisis.









[PROJECT TITLE] Turquoise
[INSTRUCTOR] Jennifer Sterling
[CLASS] Typography 4
[FORMATS/PIECES] Book
[PHOTOGRAPHY] Sandra Isla
[ILLUSTRATIONS] Sandra Isla
[COPY] Various Sources
[TYPEFACES] Filosofia, Sabon, OCR A

Is turquoise tacky or transcendent?

+ MORE QUESTIONS What is it about turquoise that makes it more interesting than other rocks? What can be done with turquoise beyond a pendant and a pair of earrings?



+ ANSWER

02

+ [CHALLENGE]

The assignment for this book was to select and delve deeply into any topic of our choosing. In choosing to design a book on turquoise (the stone and by extent, the color), I wanted to take an intensive view at an every day item that might often be overlooked as an object of little worth. Through the book and design, I wanted to give turquoise a

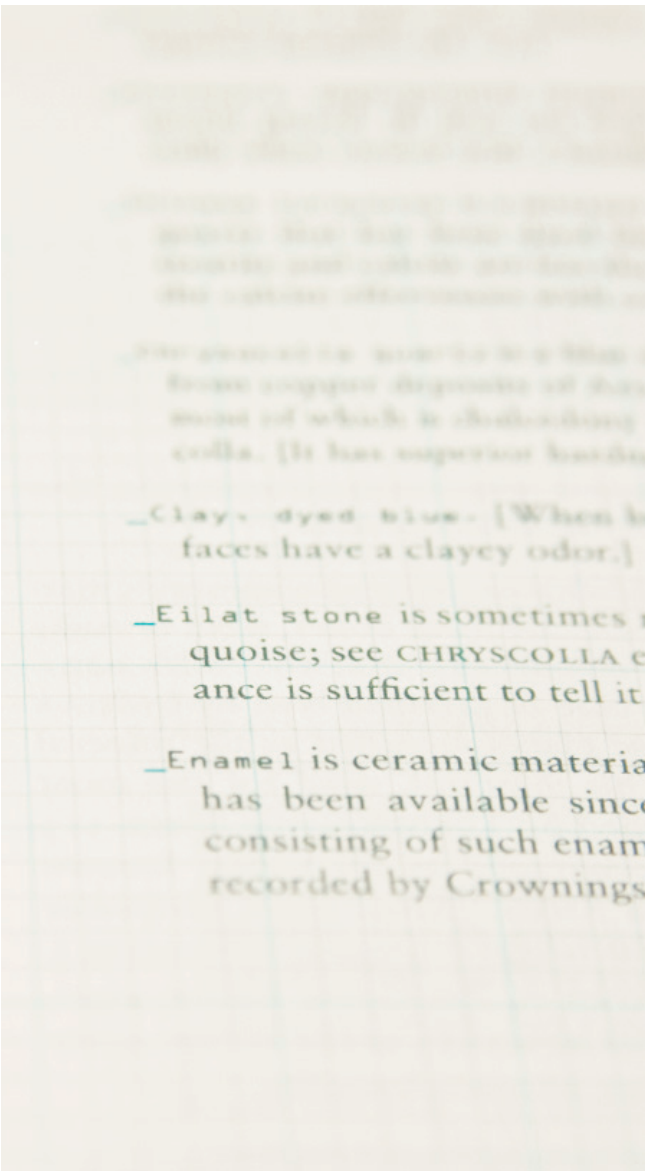
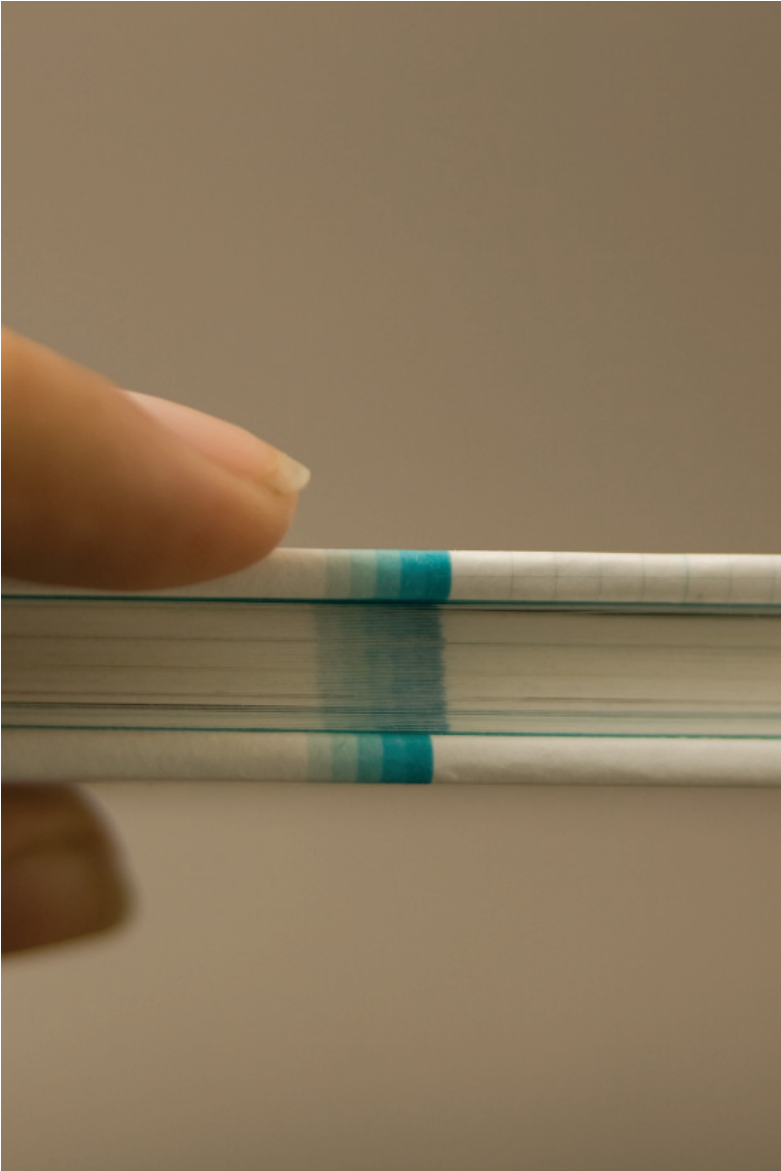
new level of depth and meaning beyond its mundane and/or trivial forms. This assignment was a bit risky because I knew very little about geology or jewelry and couldn't determine what I might find. What if turquoise really was just a cheap decoration on some knock-off silver jewelry?

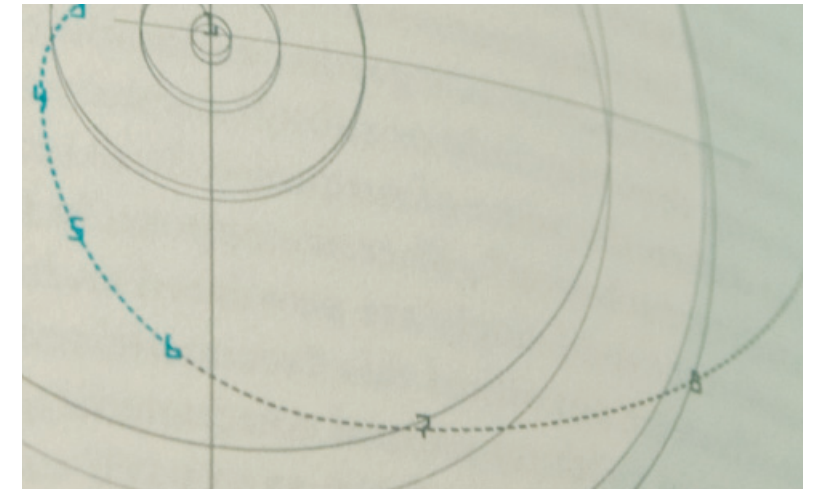
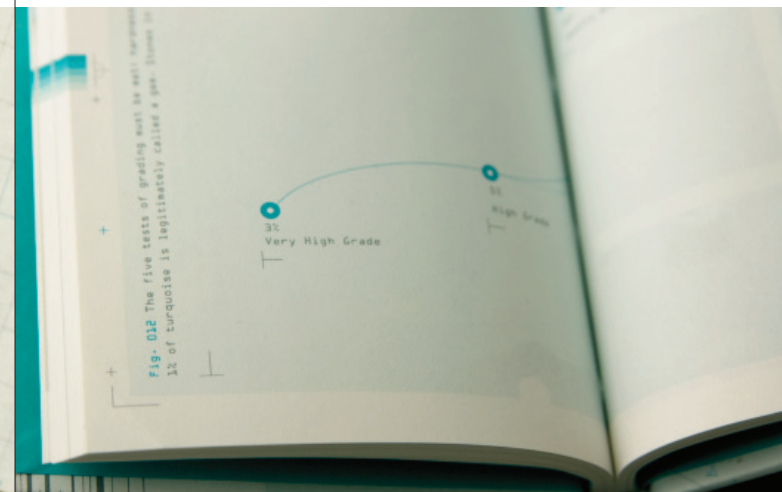
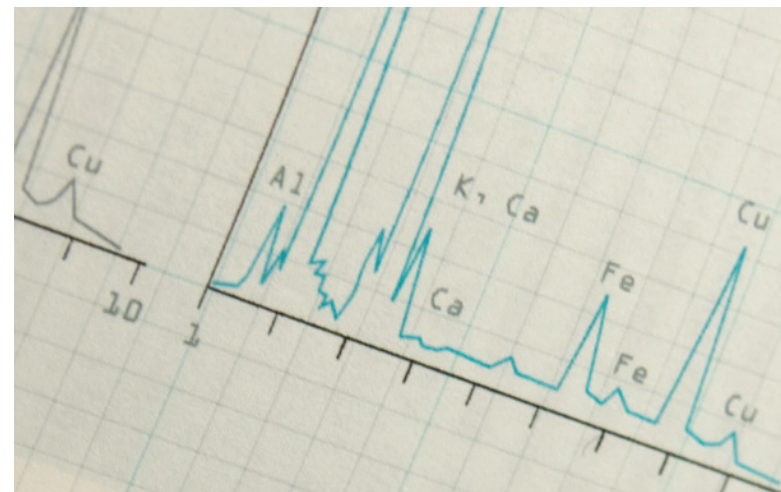
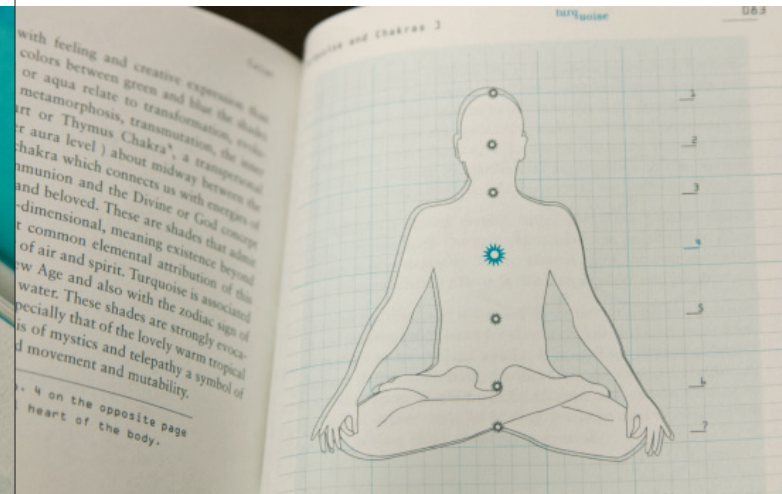
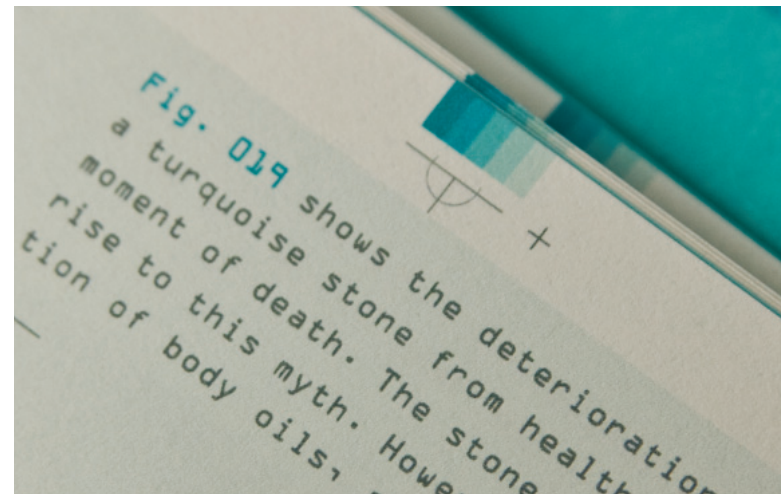
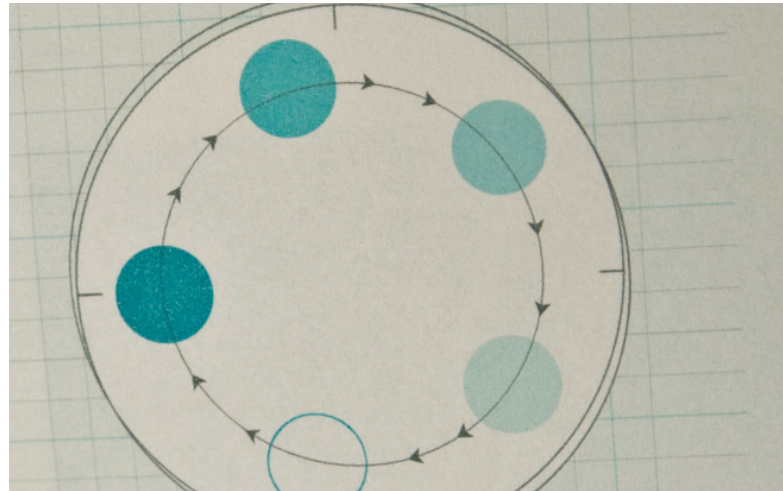
+ [ANSWER]

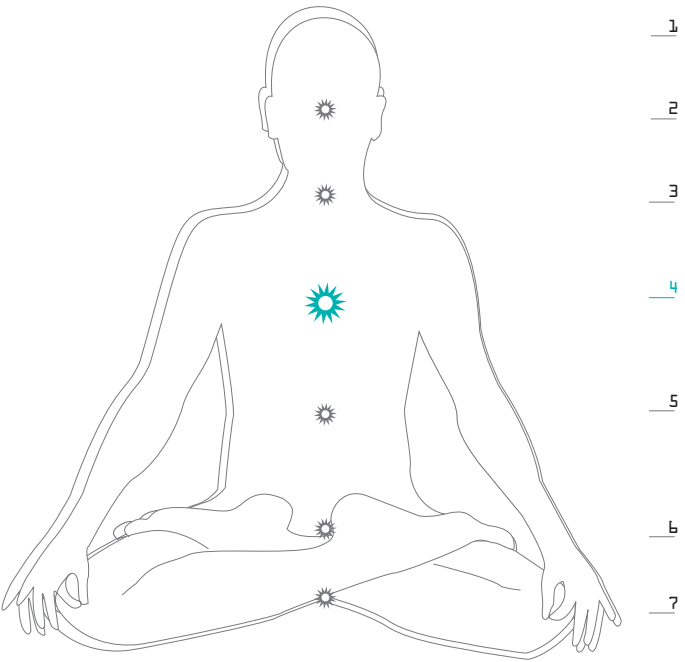
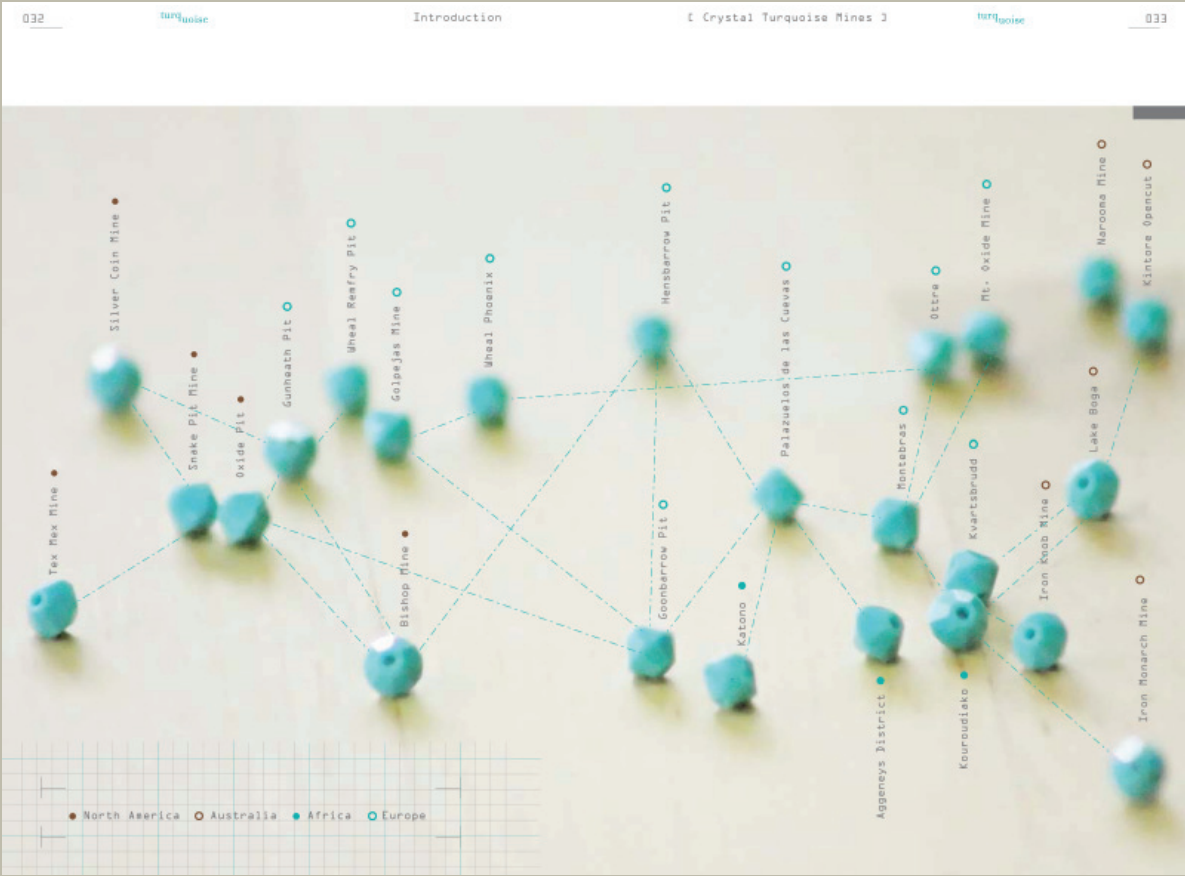
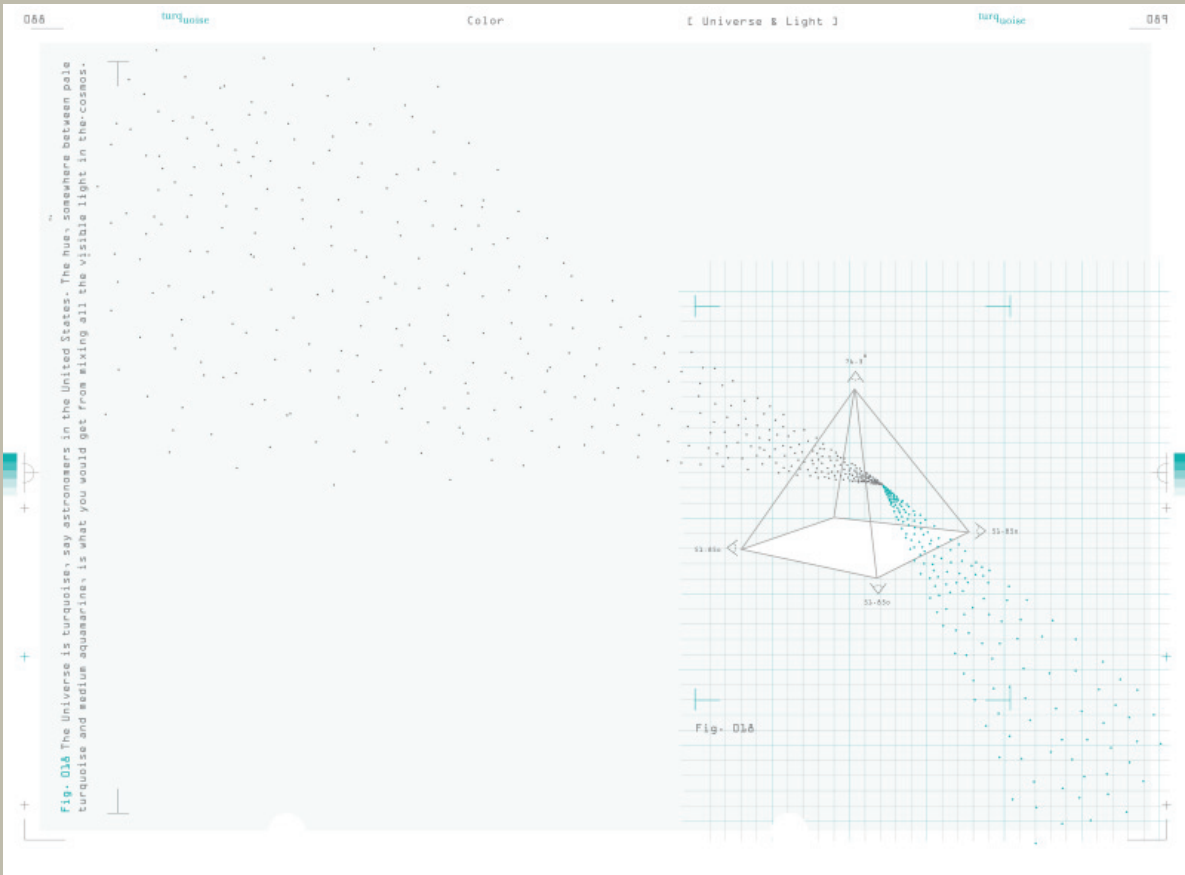
After extensive research, I found that the true value of turquoise is not just found within its beauty, but beyond that, in its history, its origins and its scientific makeup. This stone has been revered through time as a talisman from harm and mentioned in several religious texts; it's been associated with the elements of water and sky and

the notions of healing and protection. The answer to my question about turquoise's worth is that, like many everyday items, the value of turquoise is that it is a window into discovering that each small object's meaning is derived from its multi-faceted uses and symbolisms, and thus, it has an inherent value greater than its surface.











*To find the
exact answer,
one must first
ask the exact
question.*

— S. Tobin Webster

[PROJECT TITLE] Bindi on the Mirror
[INSTRUCTOR] Michael Sainato
[CLASS] Integrated Communications
[FORMATS / PIECES] Poster, DVD packaging, Process Book, Brochure,
Tickets, Promotional Item (Necklace)
[PHOTOGRAPHY] Sandra Isla
[COPY] Sandra Isla
[TYPEFACES] Trajan, Optima

*Do movies
reflect us or
do we reflect
the movies?*

+ MORE QUESTIONS How does a filmmaker bring different cultures, different stories, and different characters together to weave a common humanity?



+ ANSWER

03

+ [CHALLENGE]

This film festival project was an endeavor to create a group of individual objects that work together as a set in order to promote a film festival of my own making, from conceptualization to production. Because of my interest in her films and in her person, I chose director Mira Nair, most famous for her international hit, *Monsoon Wedding* and *Kama Sutra, the Perez Family* and *Vanity Fair*.

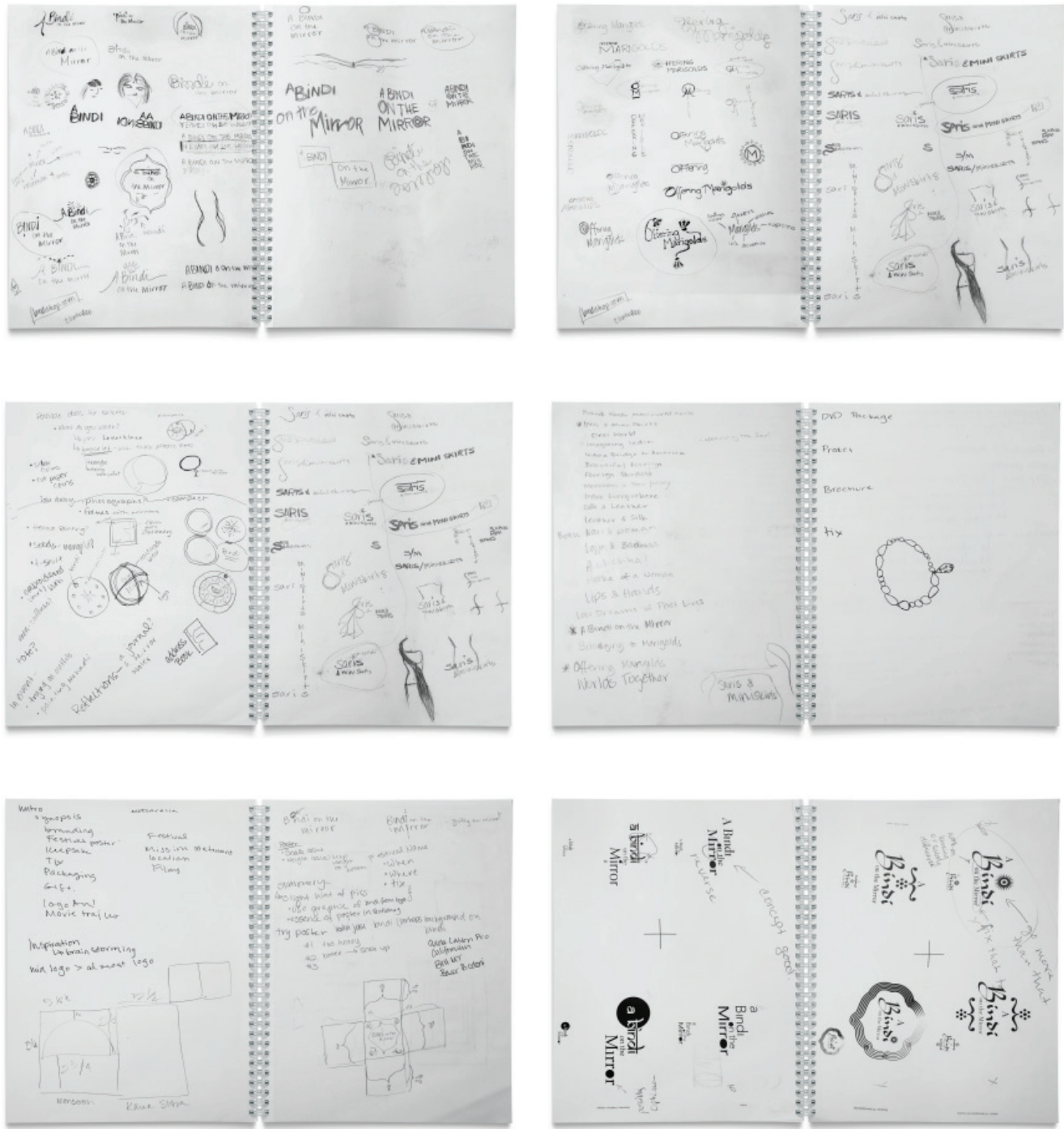
Bindi on the Mirror is a festival that seeks to celebrate Mira Nair's cinematic visions and the characters she has brought to life for her audience. The objective of this festival is to recognize this acclaimed director's work as unique and multi-layered reflections on relationships, love and the depths of human experience.

+ [ANSWER]

I chose the name "Bindi on the Mirror" because of the symbolism behind the Indian "bindi"—a female facial decoration worn according to custom and style—and the custom of storing adhesive bindis on mirrors, as well as the symbolic concept of reflection of what it is to be a woman. Because the main focus of Nair's films revolves

around human relationships in general and female experiences in specific, I chose textured handmade paper and orange petals to be a theme throughout the festival as a representation of individual women who although separate, are connected through the experience of being a woman (metaphorically, "the flower").





Bindi on the Mirror











INSPIRATION

For inspiration, I researched everything from photography form to visual representation of feelings (for example, a photograph of satin for sensuality). I also attempted to research oppositions of rich and poor, female and male, in order to understand what a festival was heading. Additionally, since Nair's movies predominantly have to do with India or some facet of India, I researched things that an American audience would identify as inherently Indian, such as the Kama Sutra, henna drawings, saris, bindis, and Indian gods like elephant-headed Ganesha. My resulting inspiration had to do with something that looked both inherently womanly and Indian simultaneously.



[PROJECT TITLE] Portable Baby
[INSTRUCTOR] Winston Wier, George Slavik, Mark Roudebush
[CLASS] Information Design
[FORMATS / PIECES] Book
[ILLUSTRATIONS] Sandra Isla
[COPY] Sandra Isla
[INFORMATION GATHERING] Sandra Isla
[TYPEFACES] Clarendon, Helvetica Neue

*Can babies be
as upwardly
mobile as
adults are?*

+ MORE QUESTIONS Does having kids mean we’re doomed to go stir crazy in our own homes until they are finally old enough for school? How does a baby’s mood affect the amount of time we venture outdoors?



+ ANSWER

04

+ [CHALLENGE]

For this semester assignment, students in my class were asked to observe a social phenomenon and create a project based on the data we gathered. When I began exploring topics for this assignment, I found myself researching with my six month old daughter in a carrier on my back. Then I came to the realization that my child herself was an opportunity for observation on how my life had changed

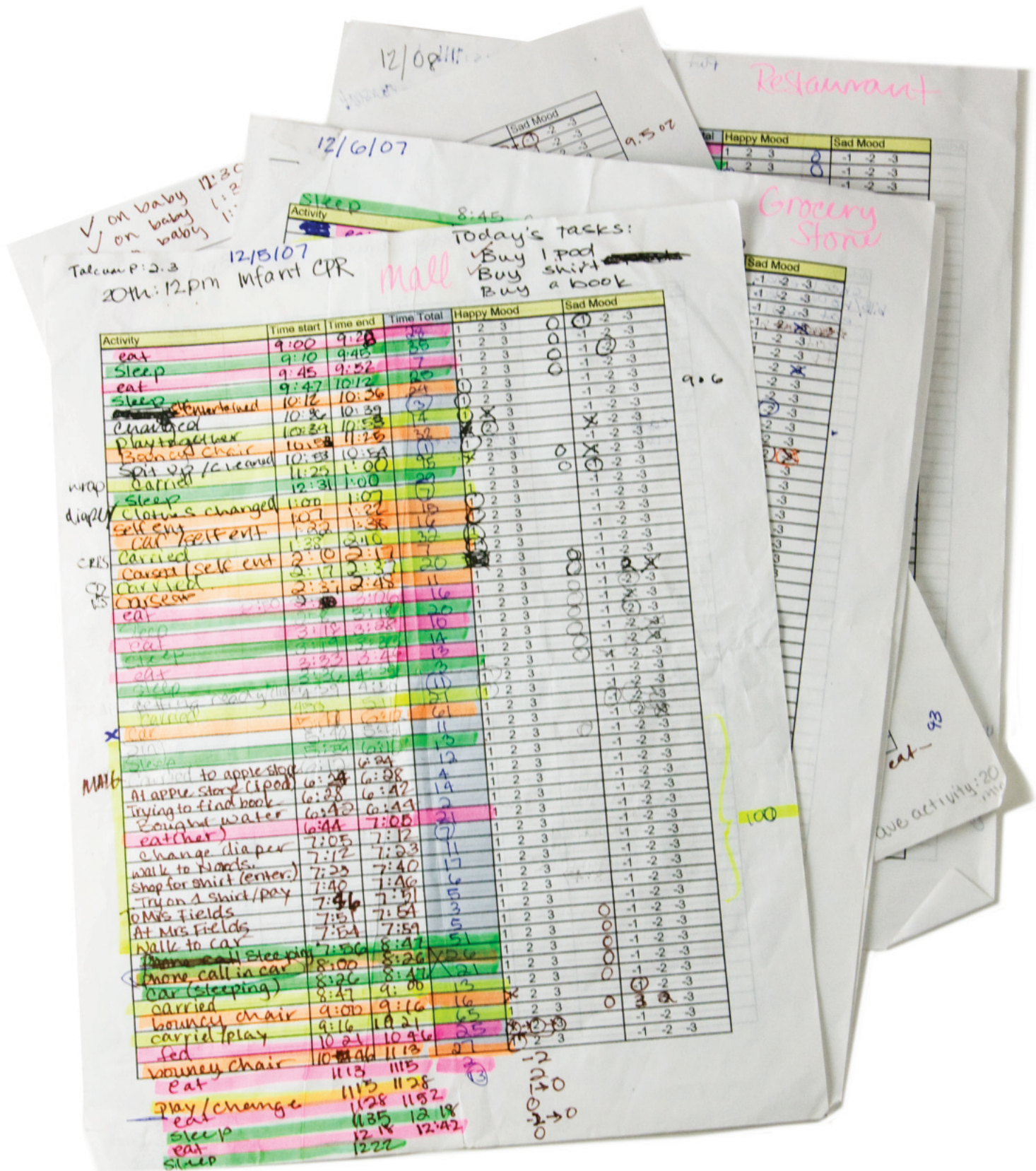
from a singular focus on my own circumstances, to juggling the lives of my husband, my daughter and myself. Does taking care of a baby while performing all the tasks I used to do (school, errands, family responsibilities, etc.) mean that daily life just becomes more difficult? And how do her needs and her comfort through these tasks affect the way I perform them?

+ [ANSWER]

For this book, I started with the assumption that childcare outside the home is difficult and time-intensive and I chose to compare a “home day” with several other common tasks: grocery shopping; a trip to the mall; and lastly, a restaurant day. I took careful notes and while performing each task, observed several different variables, including the times the baby spent being fed, being cleansed, being

carried, entertaining herself and sleeping. With each activity, I also measured her mood. I then took this information and combined it into multi-variable graphs that helped accentuate and narrate my selected days. This exploration made me more aware of my ideas about parenting and childcare outside the home, and the balance between childrearing and functional “adult life.”





[SHOWN ABOVE]

To document each day, I used a spreadsheet to record each activity performed on each task day from the moment the baby wakes up to bedtime. I wrote the time start, end time and total minutes that it

took to complete each activity. I also noted her mood during each activity, using the happy face scale above, ranging from Very Happy to Neutral to Very Unhappy.

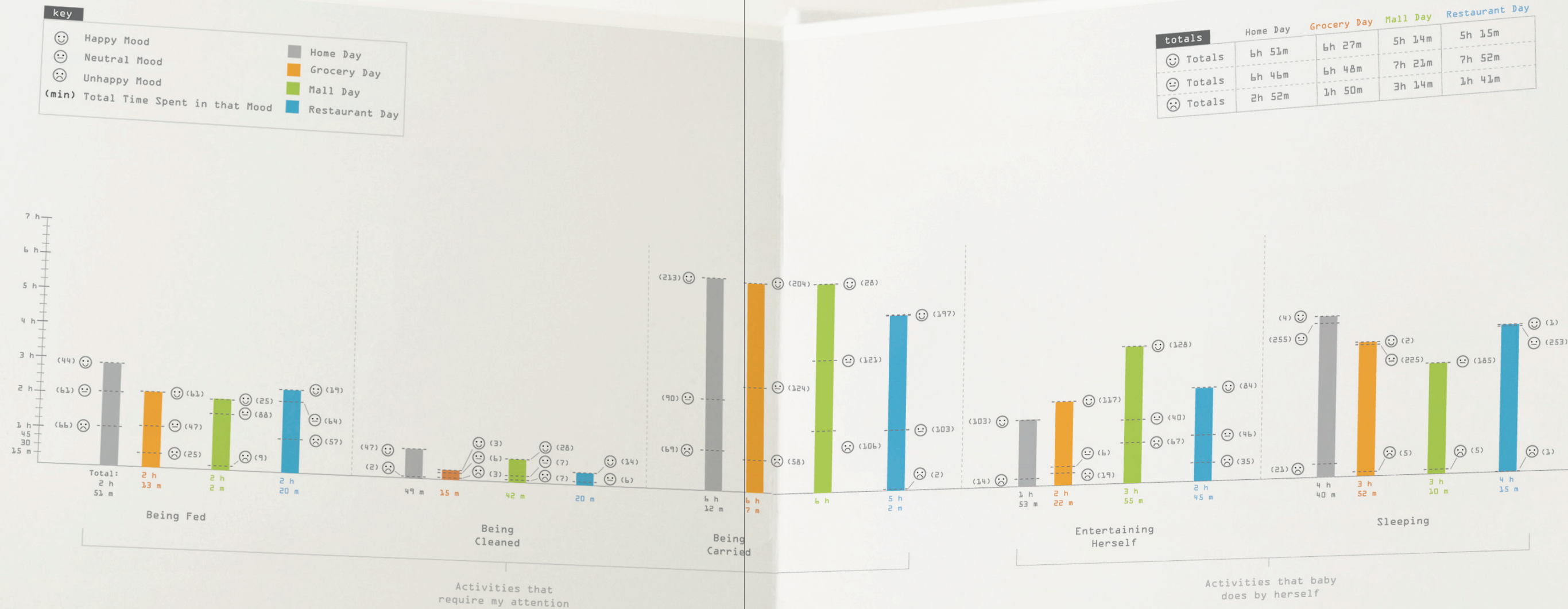
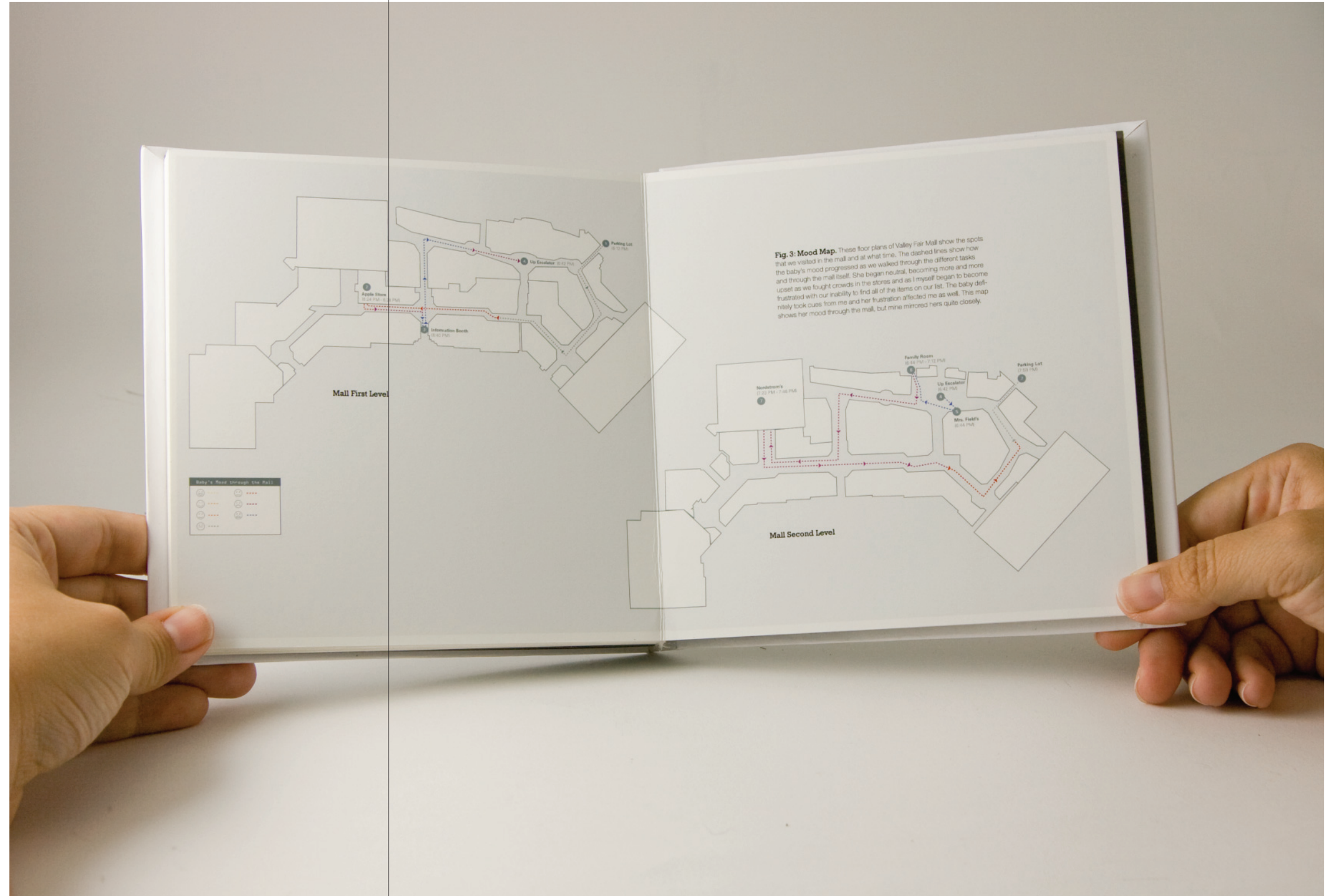


Fig. 6: This chart shows all four days in comparison to one another. By this chart it is easy to see that the baby received the most attention and had to entertain herself the least on Home Day. On task days, she slept less, ate less, was cleaned less and entertained herself more than on Home Day. Also as expected, she was happiest on Home Day and least happiest on Mall Day.

Certain observations of this chart can seem predictable: she's happiest when she is carried, so carrying is our top activity. Diaper changes take an average of 3 minutes (see fig.1), so we spend the least amount of time changing her diapers. She sleeps (daytime naps) fairly often during the day, roughly three hours on a bad day and up to almost five on a good day.

One seemingly irregular observation is that both on Restaurant Day and on Home Day, she ate most, but was also most unhappy when she ate. This could be due to the fact that breastfeeding babies sometimes feed for comfort rather than to eat. So if she eats and is unhappy, she eats more. Another curious fact is that despite being carried often and loving that activity the most, the baby is fairly happy or at least neutral when she is left to entertain herself (as long as it does not involve long carseat rides, like the one hour ride that we took on Mall Day). This is an indication of a certain amount of adaptability given a situation.





+ QUESTION

05

[PROJECT TITLE] Waiting Room
[INSTRUCTOR] Michael Kilgore
[CLASS] Elements of Typography
[FORMATS / PIECES] Book
[ILLUSTRATIONS] Sandra Isla
[COPY] Sandra Isla
[TYPEFACES] ITC New Baskerville

*Is our present
made up of
words from
our past?*

+ MORE QUESTIONS In a radiation therapy waiting room, does mortality affect the memories of the patients waiting? Does a life become more vivid or more grave in the face of death?

+ ANSWER

05

+ [CHALLENGE]

Our assignment in this class was to write a book about a memory that we could make it into a story. I chose to write about the people I met and listened to in the time I spent in a radiation therapy waiting room, everyday for 7 weeks, waiting while my grandfather received therapy. This memory was about opportunity, living, and surviving,

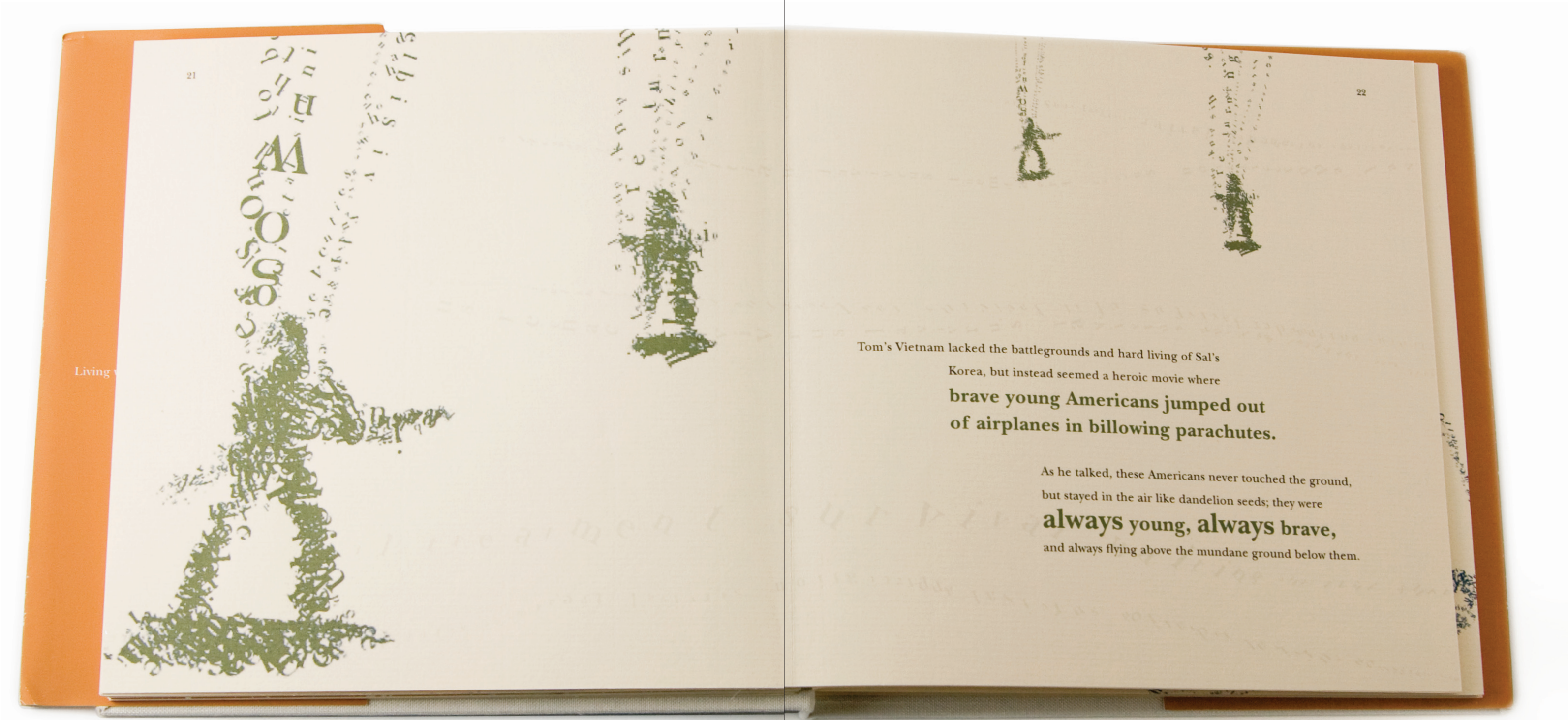
but it was also about words and the meaning and history behind the words of the people in that waiting room, people who were not waiting to die but drawing parallels between their former experiences and the therapy and rehabilitation that they were experiencing now.

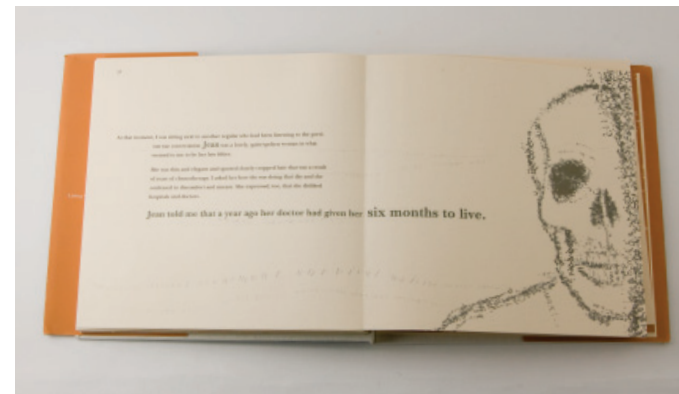
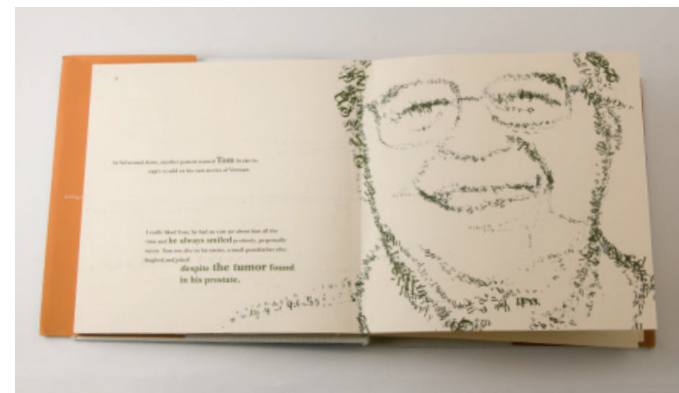
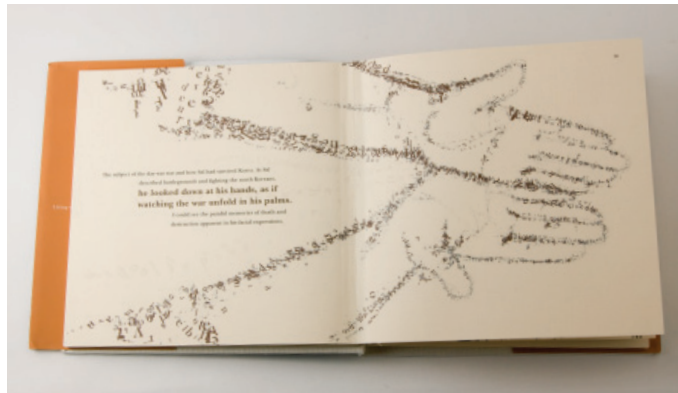
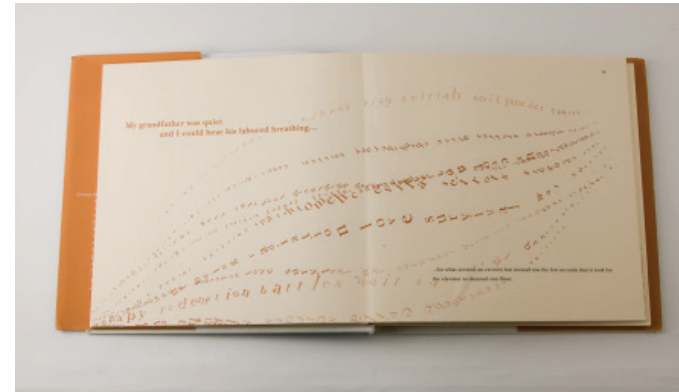
+ [ANSWER]

The question I had to answer for myself was: What type of memory do I have of these people? Do I remember what they look like? Do I remember how they moved? What visuals can I use to illustrate my book? After thinking a while about what those people meant to me, I realized that although I didn't remember every feature of their faces, it

was their words that I remembered. What struck me about these people was their stories, their words of bravery, of adversity, and of overcoming death—first in wars and later in battling the cancer that consumed them. At that point, I felt the only appropriate way to illustrate them was using the words that I remembered from our conversations.









[SHOWN RIGHT]

Each image is made up of words from their own stories. The typeface that was used is Baskerville, chosen for its classic characteristics and its subtle dignity.



*Who ques-
tions much,
shall learn
much, and
retain much.*

—Francis Bacon

06

[PROJECT TITLE] Gasoline
[INSTRUCTOR] Beth LaDove
[CLASS] Photo Narratives
[FORMAT] Book
[PHOTOGRAPHY] Sandra Isla
[COPY] Sandra Isla
[TYPEFACES] Berthold Akzidenz Grotesk

From the ground to the pump, how does gas reach our tanks?

+ MORE QUESTIONS Where does crude oil come from? How is it transported? How far does it travel?
Why did I almost get arrested for taking pictures of a refinery in plain sight?



+ ANSWER

06

+ [CHALLENGE]

This book, based on an assignment that asked us to photograph that which is invisible, is about a resource that millions of us use every day but hardly ever see. How is it that I’ve never actually seen what gasoline looks like, so that I can barely say what color it is? (Yellowish?).

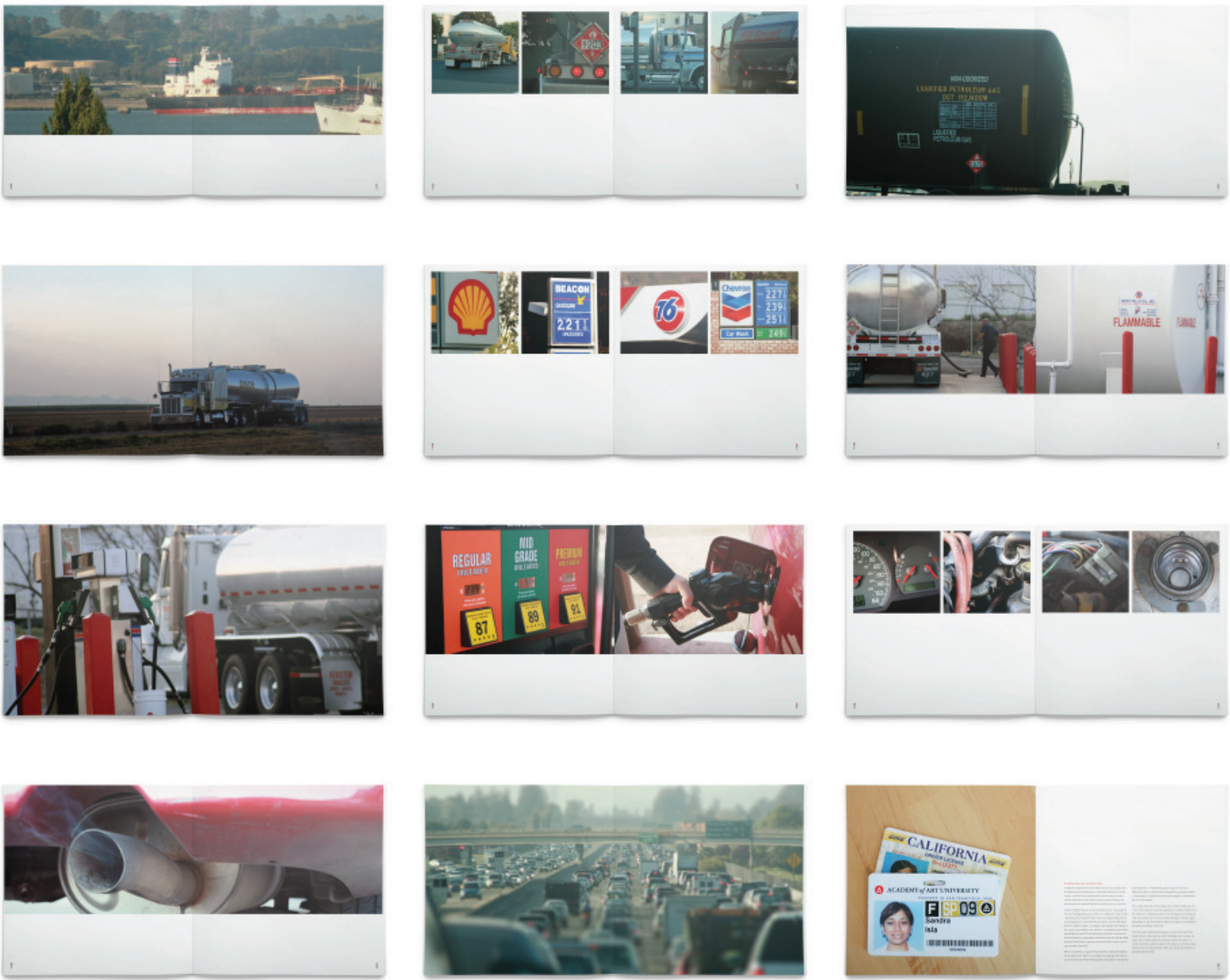
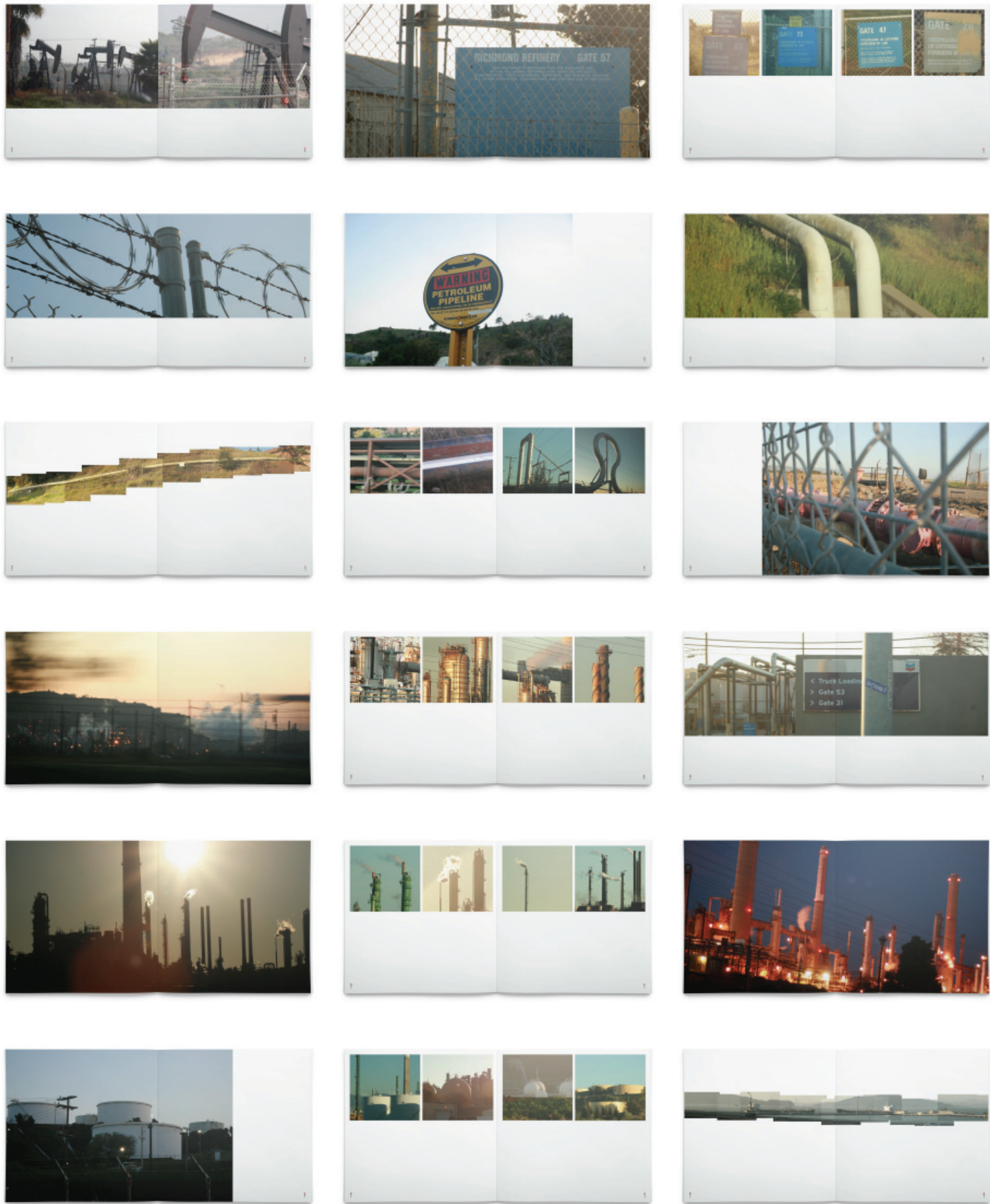
The news reports its price, its desirability, the wars fought over it, yet does the average person know how it makes its way from the ground into our gas tanks and ultimately, the air? Because we never *really* see it, out of sight, out of mind. We might as well be paying for something invisible.

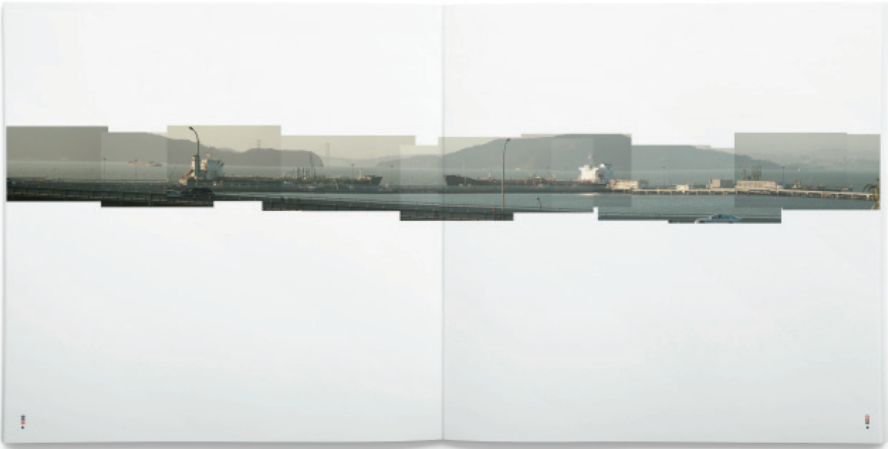
+ [ANSWER]

Part of the reason for gasoline’s invisibility is not just that the public only interacts with it at the pump, but because oil companies who handle it keep it a mystery. Even though oil refineries are often in plain sight of the public, extreme measures are taken so that the public is unable to get close enough to see what’s really going on.

As I photographed the process of oil from ground into refineries, I was stopped several times by security and asked to hand over my information to Homeland Security for trying to photograph that which I could plainly see from the sidewalk—not gasoline itself, but instead, the refineries that suggest its existence.





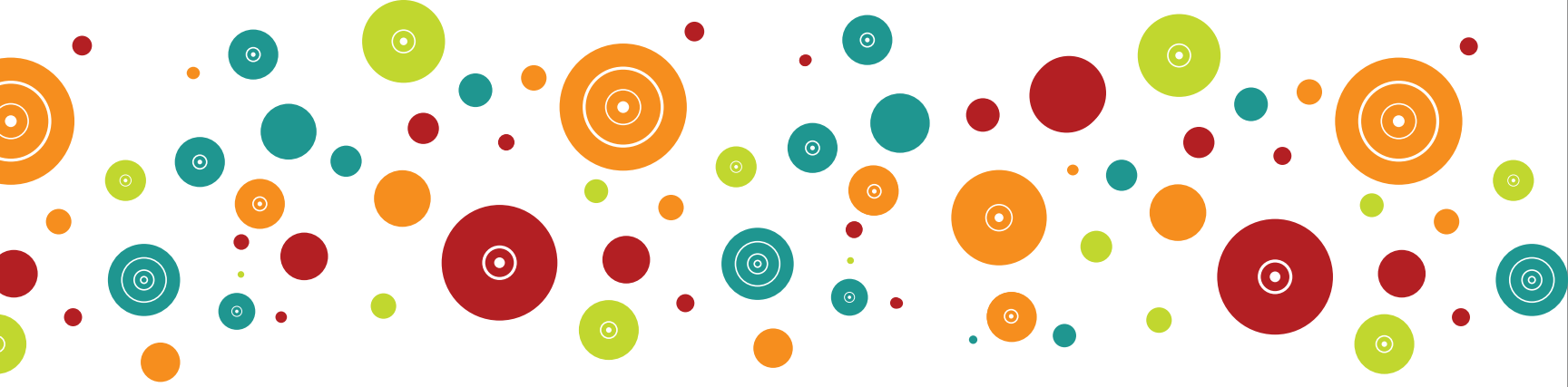


[SHOWN ABOVE]

Chevron oil tanker docked at the Richmond Chevron refinery. This a main form of oil transportation, along with trans-state pipelines.







+ QUESTION

07

[PROJECT TITLE] Ferrara Pan Redesign
[INSTRUCTOR] Hunter Wimmer
[CLASS] Nature of Identity
[FORMATS / PIECES] Book, Packaging
[PHOTOGRAPHY] Sandra Isla
[ILLUSTRATIONS] Sandra Isla
[COPY] Sandra Isla
[TYPEFACES] Bauhaus, Avenir, Clarendon, Futura Md Cn

*Can candy
make you a
kid again?*

+ MORE QUESTIONS What feeling does candy inspire in a person? Can candies with memories be instilled with new memories?

+ ANSWER

07

+ [CHALLENGE]

For this project, we were assigned the rebranding of a dying or defunct brand of our choice. After some initial research, I decided to choose a little-known candy brand named Ferrara Pan, which had the potential for a fun and youthful direction, but who's current look and feel was not only stuck in the past but was stifled with the inability to expand beyond its initial market.

Currently, Ferrara Pan is exclusively a candy company that creates traditional candies, such as Boston Baked Beans, Red Hots and Jaw Busters. Their main audience consists of children and teenagers and the company's 45 years of making the same candy lines has continued steady sales but no real increase of revenue.

+ [ANSWER]

In the past, Ferrara Pan products have been aimed at children and had the look and feel of children's products: traditional candy flavors, shiny packaging and cartoon characters. FP's past spoke of childhood and playfulness, an important part of the company's public face. Adults that grew up on FP continue to buy the

products and the new FP seizes the opportunity of the adult market. Turning its packaging from cartoons to hip representations of young adults and updating old candy lines while expanding to other products such as sodas, gum and gourmet lollipops, FP rolls into the 21st century with a edgy look and the potential of a larger market.





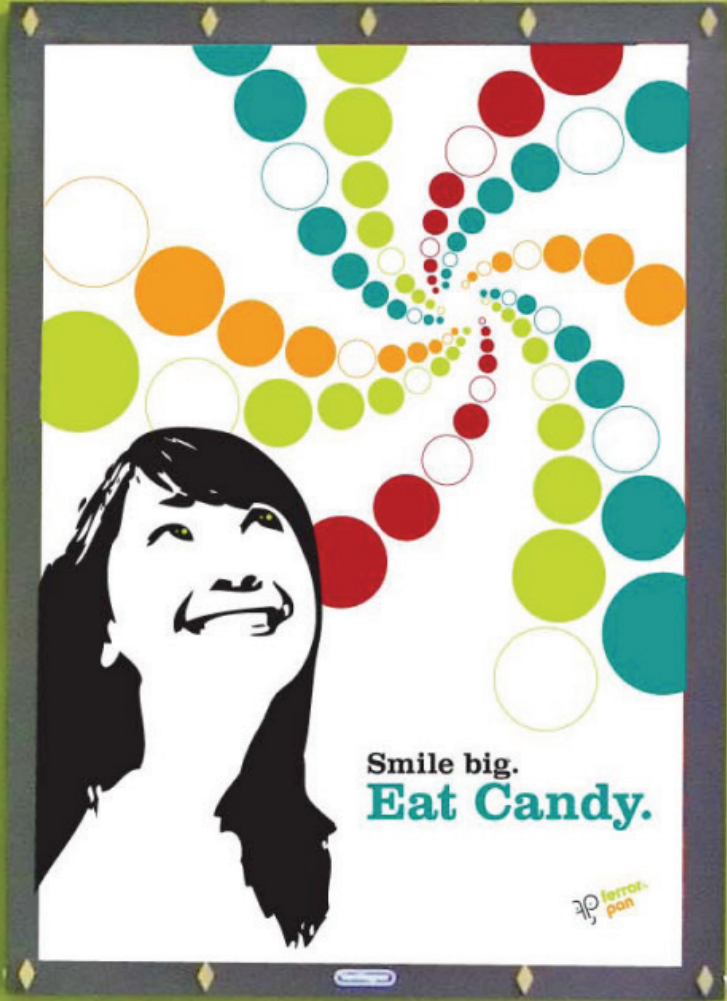
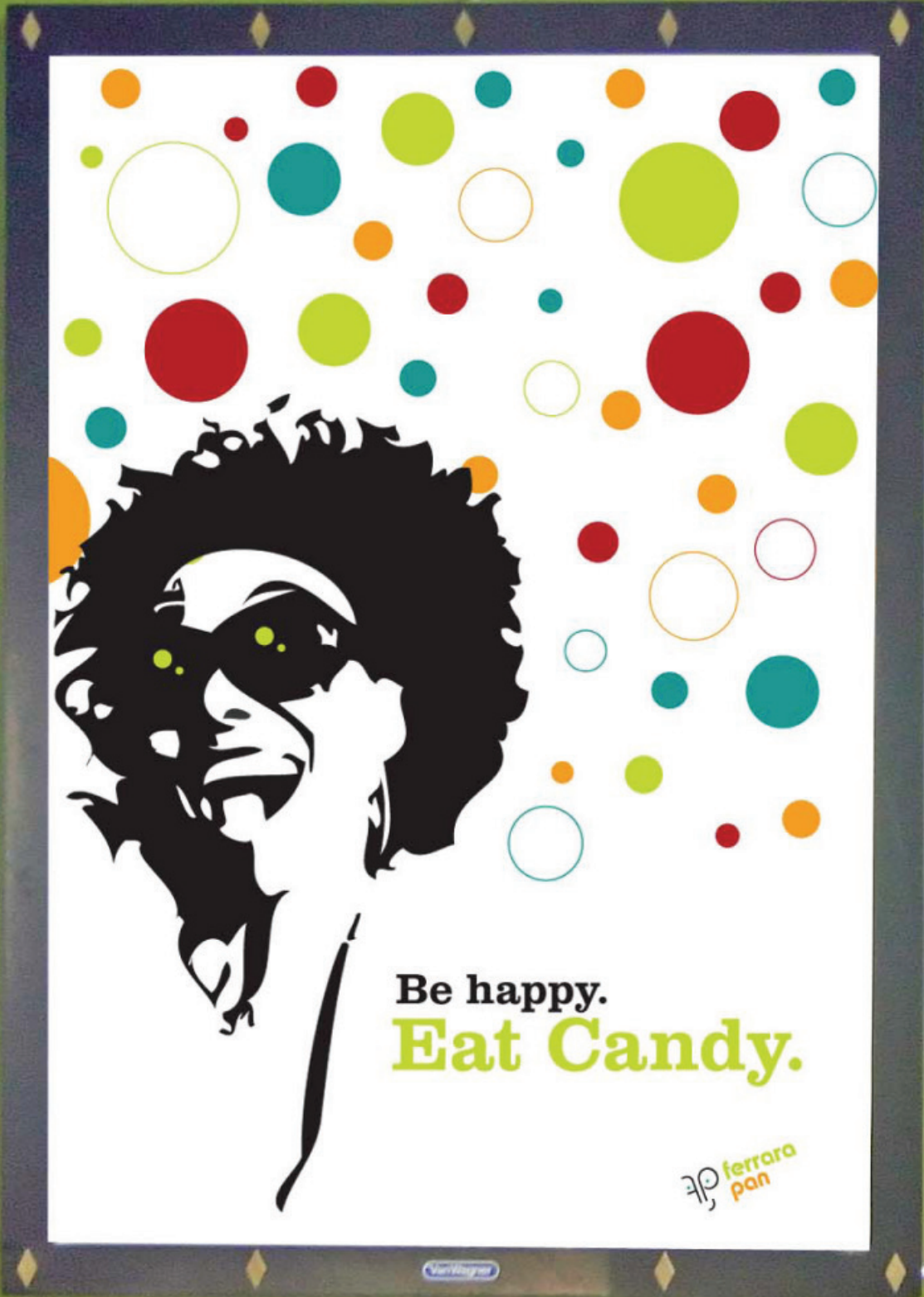
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A brand grid showing the attributes of the original Ferrara Pan brand. The grid to the right shows the type of youthful attitude and feeling that comes with rebranding.



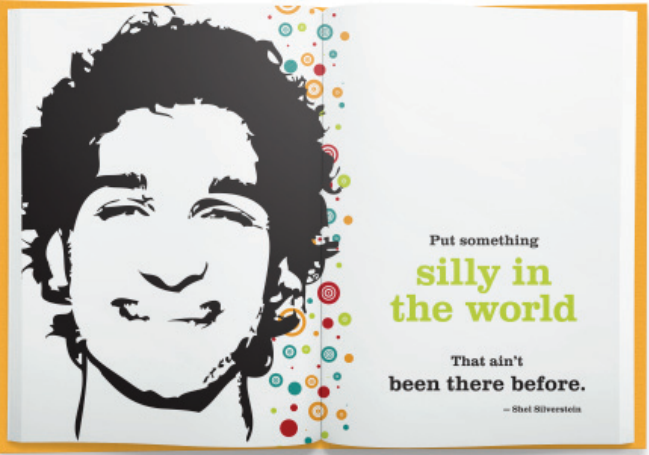
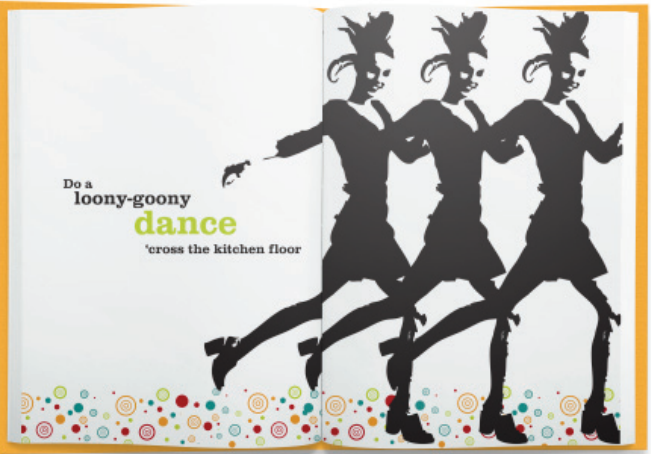
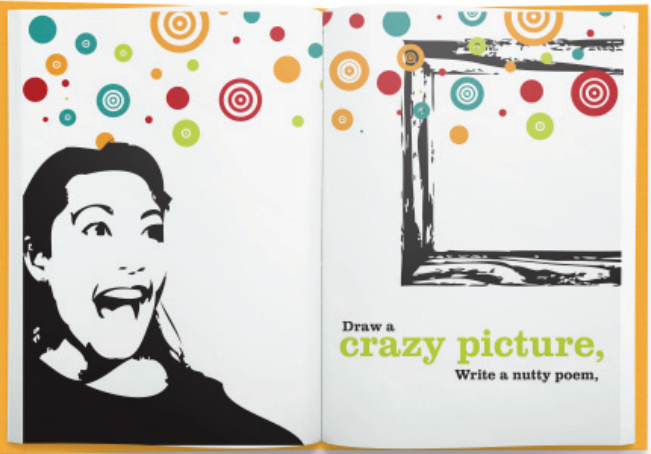
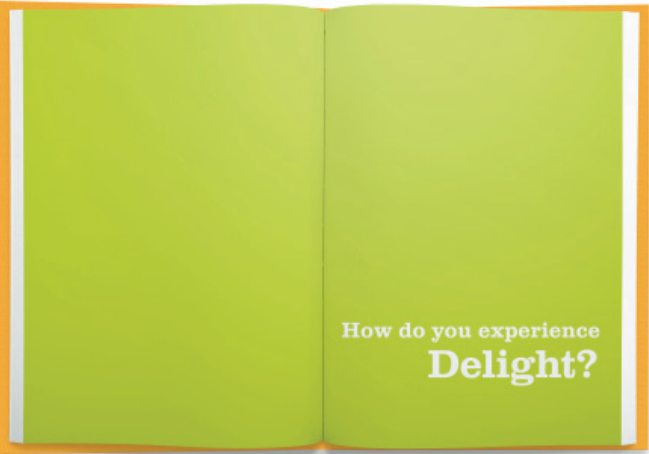












[SHOWN ABOVE]

Youth and *Delight* are two words I chose to describe Ferrara Pan's brand both in the past and after rebranding. Note the dichotomy between using young children in the first set of spreads, while using

adults in the second set; this is to suggest a movement from a young audience to an older one, thereby expanding Ferrara Pan's current market audience.

*The MFA
Thesis is an
answer to
a big set of
questions.*

—Sandra Isla

[PROJECT TITLE] Travelist

[INSTRUCTOR] Brad Rhodes, Carolina de Bartolo, Christopher Morlan

[CLASS] MFA Thesis

[FORMATS / PIECES] Books, Products, Website, Phone App

[ILLUSTRATIONS] Sandra Isla

[COPY] Sandra Isla, edited from various sources

[TYPEFACES] Archer, Helvetica Neue

How can we travel sustainably but still feel like we're on vacation?

+ MORE QUESTIONS Will people abandon sustainable travel if they are too inconvenienced? How can we keep the responsibilities of traveling on the traveler, but still keep focus on travel?



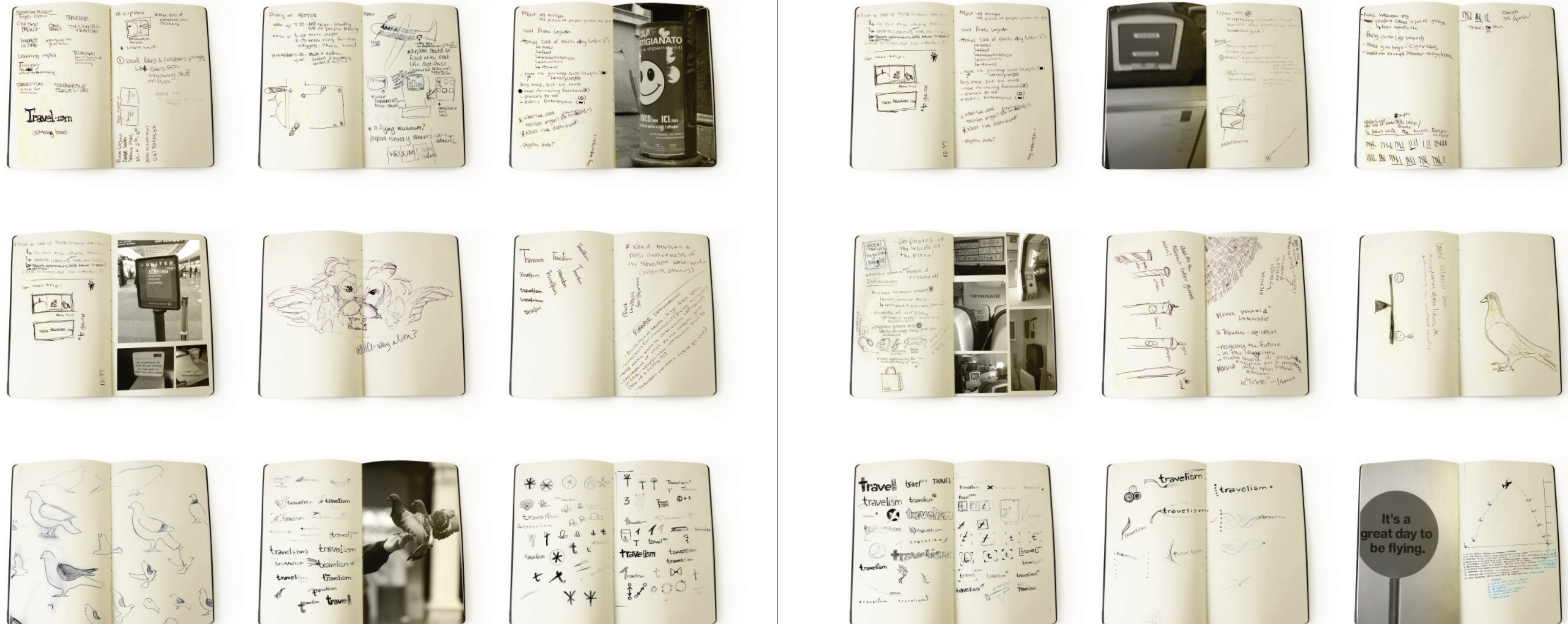
+ ANSWER

08

+ [CHALLENGE: MFA THESIS]

An MFA Thesis in Graphic Design is a long-term, in-depth project that begins with an idea generated by the student and develops into a communication system with multiple angles and design solutions. The MFA Thesis project can be designed by the student to display information in a variety of mediums which ultimately come together to convey the same themes, messages, and commentary.

To put it plainly, an MFA Thesis is an answer to a big set of questions: How can my creation bring meaning and understanding of my topic to the greater public? How can I demystify this topic through design so that people not only grasp it, but take it in, embrace it, and apply it to their own lives? How can I change views, habits, ways of living through this thesis project in design?



+ [ANSWER]

For my thesis, I created a system called Travelist that supports functionality and pragmatism in travel while at the same time encouraging a sustainable mentality beyond the home. Through research and surveys, I found that a lot of people participate in ecological and sustainable practices at home, but at the same time do not carry that

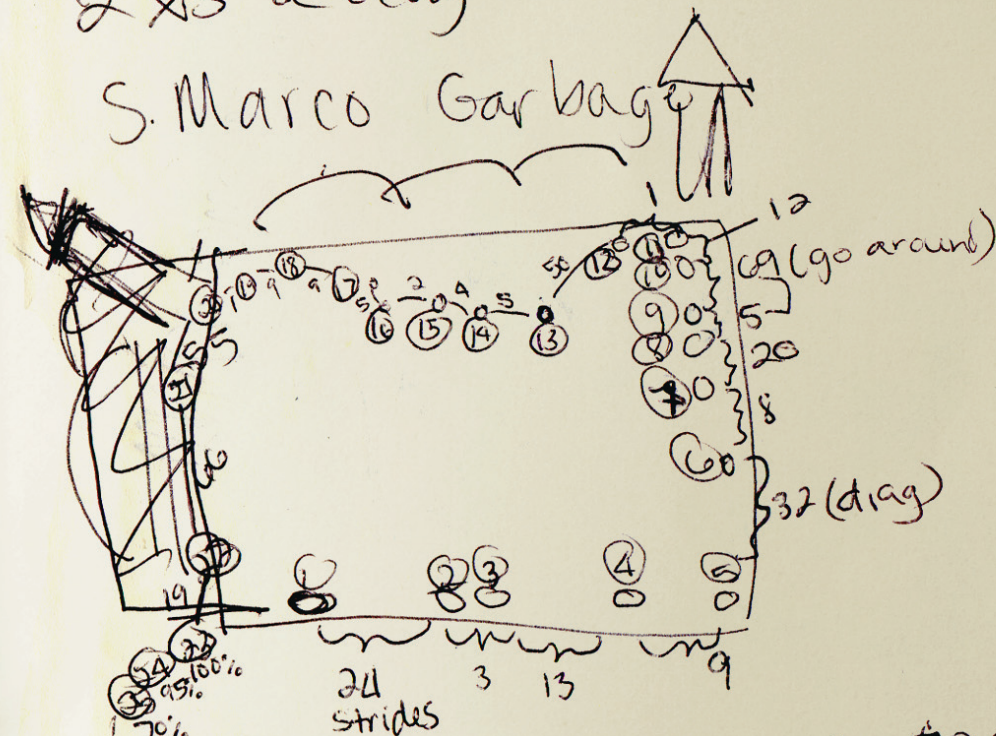
same mentality when they are on vacation. Travelist uses simple, useful tools like the Travelist Backpack Kit and Guidebooks to remind travelers that the mindset of sustainability is easy to apply abroad and is simple to integrate into any travel routine.



recycle
 20 boots - 20 tense & a:
 on weekly basis
 this week (festa)

garbage in Venice - Wide article
 2 xs a day

S. Marco Garbage



1 50%	6 84%	12 30%	18 62%
2 100%	7 66%	13 25%	19 50%
3 80%	8 50%	14 12%	20 58%
4 45%	9 50%	15 90%	21 100%
5 95%	10 38%	16 83%	22 100%
11 100%	11 100%	17 62%	23 100%
24 100%	25 100%	26 100%	27 100%

26-31 > 45% / 48% / 43%

+ [RESEARCH]

Research for my thesis included a variety of different mediums. First and foremost, there was a vast amount of reading and general research, articles and written content from both “green” and travel sources. I also made a research trip to Venice, Italy, to gain an appreciation for life, culture and tourism in the city. I collected empirical

data through observations in Venice (e.g., the preceding page shows garbage calculation in St. Mark’s square) and performed several surveys and interviews with my target audience. I also had a panel of women who gave me feedback/suggestions on making my products more user-friendly and in-tune with the end-users.

✦ [VISUAL DIRECTION]

Travelist's visual direction was inspired by the idea of open air and traveling lightly. In order to avoid the stigma of sustainability as a "hippie" or "granola" movement, a conscious effort was made to keep the illustrations structured and authoritative, rather than giving them the typical homemade feel of "green" campaigns. Even so, the idea of sustainability as the individual's responsibility was enhanced by the organic feel of the handwritten logo

and the element of hand-drawn lines. The colors chosen for Travelist's palette were decidedly feminine, bright and upbeat, to appeal to the intended audience—the women in families and couples, according to my surveys and research, that take an active role in travel decisions and travel planning in their households. The typefaces used in the text, Archer and Helvetica, were chosen in the light weights for their friendliness, openness, and likability.

Travelist



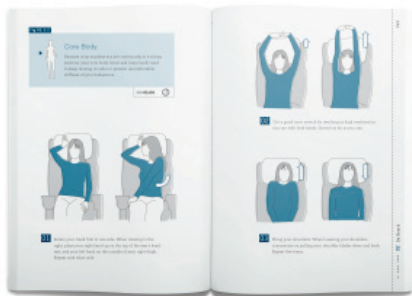
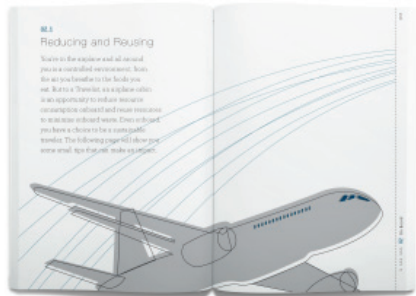
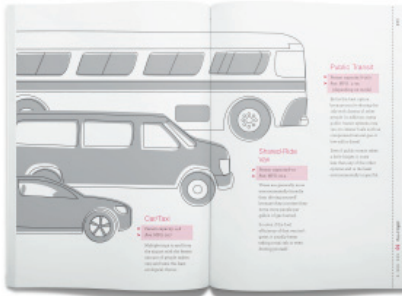
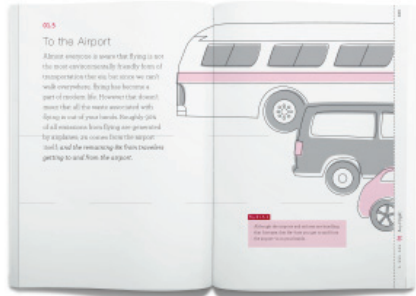
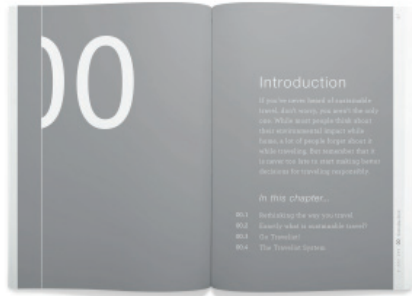
[PRE-FLIGHT AND ON BOARD GUIDEBOOK]

–Helps Travelists prepare for a sustainable mindset beginning at home

–Explains importance of keeping resources in mind when you are in transit

–Informs about choices the traveler of which the traveler may not be aware

–Promotes comfort of traveler as part of the idea of sustainability





[VENICE CITY GUIDE]

...Complete guide to the city, with information on hotels, activities, shopping, etc.

...Includes sustainable choices but also how to keep sustainability in mind when choosing from less or non-“green” choices

...Encourages different types of sustainability— not only sustaining resources and lessening negative travel impact but also supporting and sustaining Venetian culture

...Focuses on fun, not just sustainability





+ [PRODUCTS]

Travelist products are meant to not only enhance the travel experience but also make up an integrated system whose parts works together for high functionality with keeping sustainability in mind. The Travelist Backpack Kit provides a concrete set of tools to help the traveler, while the website and Phone App keep the organizing and

managing the details of the trip on hand and readily available at any time. The three sets of products support each other and work together to promote the Travelist ideal that sustainability does not come at the price of function, comfort, or simplicity.



[TRAVELIST BACKPACK KIT]

The first component of the Travelist Kit is its container, the backpack. The backpack—like the rest of the system—is designed first and foremost to be functional for the traveler, while at the same time having sustainable features that demonstrate to the traveler that mindful sustainability does not have to be sacrificed for the sake of comfort, style, and functionality. The kit includes the backpack, a wet bag (for wet garbage), a travel scale, a USB foreign

adapter, a laundry bag, a luggage tag with registration number (trackable on the website/Phone App), and a reusable water bottle.

Some features of the backpack itself are: 100% PET recycled fabric; a hidden solar panel for charging electronics; and side compartments that separate from the backpack and zip together to form a smaller bag for multipurpose use.



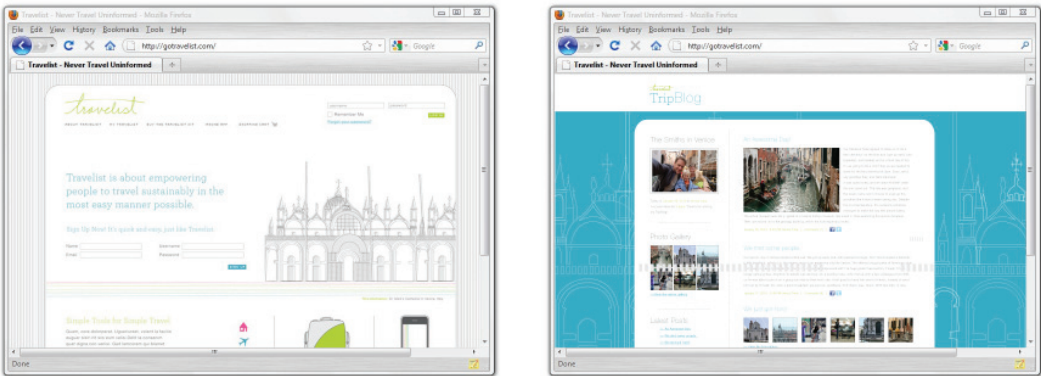
[WEBSITE]

Travelist members can access the website to enter their travel details such as flight information, hotel reservations, and their transportation arrangements.

As part of the Travelist system, the website features include:

packing lists that display the weights of each item to raise awareness about the correlation between weight and fuel consumption; a Luggage Library to track lost luggage and create a report for a lost

bag, reducing time and resources spent on lost luggage reports and also register luggage tracking numbers; and keep a travel blog with an image gallery. The website integrates completely and expands the functionality of the Phone App, but presents an expanded version of each piece of functionality; for example, the TripBlog, while it exists on the website and the Phone App, the website provides a WYSIWYG interface in which the Travelist can change the look of the TripBlog.





[PHONE APP]

Although the website is more comprehensive, the more travel-ready Phone App allows a Travelist to access almost all of the functionality found in the website. *Travelist Phone App* features include automatic synching with the website on exit, and you have the capability of accessing your packing lists, your luggage library, and upload to your

TripBlog while using your phone to take pictures. An additional feature is the ability buy an electronic version of the City Guides, or, if you've bought a hardcopy, you can download an electronic version free of charge.



What more can I ask for?

—Sandra Isla

+ ABOUT QUESTIONS

00

Questioning life is what led me to graduate school in the first place. As I searched for my place in the world, I asked myself what more I could do. Making the decision to pursue an MFA in graphic design was not an easy one, as my life decisions also affect my husband, my daughter,

and my family life. At times it was trying, to say the least; at times it was exhausting; at times it was exhilarating; but it was always challenging and ultimately rewarding.

What more can I ask for?

+ THANK YOU

01 FAMILY

I couldn't ask for a more supportive cheerleader all through grad school than my husband, Marco. Thank you for everything you do for me. To my mother, who was indispensable and ready to help at a moment's notice. To my daughter Mia, born in the middle of my degree, and who put it all in perspective. To the rest of my family who has been supportive and have helped me in ways I couldn't imagine. Thank you all.

02 FRIENDS

A big thank you to the classmates that have helped me through all the trials, tribulations and triumphs throughout school. Thank you Beth Wong, Liana Lawrence, and Supriya Kalidas. A special thanks, as well, to the wonderful, tolerant, and gentle moms at Babywearing International (San Francisco Bay Area Chapter), who were truly patient with me as they modeled for photos, took (and distributed) countless surveys, accompanied me on thesis errands, and were generally cooperative and generous with their time; thank you, Nicole Alger, Terri Burtin, Karen Chin, Karisa Flores, Karen Parodi, Sydney Tai, and Amanda Tobler.

03 INSTRUCTORS

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An extra special thanks to Carolina de Bartolo, for being so dedicated to my education and who was willing to put as much time into my learning as I was. Also to Christopher Morlan, who taught me to trust my design voice and confirmed (and re-confirmed) my belief that the true efficacy of good design is in its usefulness.

