

San José State University
BFA GRAPHIC DESIGN
SENIOR THESIS PROJECT
spring '23

cabinet ^{of}
connection

THE PROCESS BOOK

designed by
PAULA PIVA

cabinet of connection

designed by
PAULA PIVA

SPECIAL THANKS

Professor Connie Hwang, Professor Randall Sexton, and Professor Sean Miller, for their support and guidance throughout this process.

DEDICATED TO

My family, Evan, and my dearest classmates, for always believing in me when it was hard to believe in myself. I'm more grateful to you than you could know. Lots of love.

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designed by
PAULA PIVA

advised by
PROFESSOR CONNIE HWANG
professor, graphic designer, SJSU

PROFESSOR RANDALL SEXTON
professor, graphic designer, SJSU

PROFESSOR SEAN MILLER
professor, artist, curator, collector, UF



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CHAPTER 1 : TOPIC + RESEARCH

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locating the thesis range

PART 1

PROMPT 1

Take note of three subjects or topics that are of deep and abiding interest to you. These can include abstract concepts and broad fields, as well as more specific items.

Within each of these fields, list qualities that further define your attraction to the subject or topic.

relationships → Friendships, romantic, familial, Re-framing the idea of compromise in a good way, not always a decision to settle or a sacrifice to be made, love as an continuous action, love as a choice.

fashion → The concept of originality, cyclical nature of fashion design, how we are always looking to the past for reference.

architecture → The relationship between man-made structures and nature, how does nature influence the spaces we spend time in? How does nature influence the form of physical structures?

collecting → What/why do people collect, why do we attach meaning to insignificant things, how does an event change the meaning of an object, why do we hold onto physical objects as a reminder?

TOPIC

collecting I want to delve deeper into why people collect, and why collections become so important to people. I personally feel a strong connection to my own collection, and want to explore the relationships people have with theirs.

*people, places,
and things*

PROMPT 2

Gather responses to create the mise en scene of your thesis area of interest.

3 physical places where your thesis thinking might be found

Museum, Someone's house, Convention

3 huge objects related to your thinking

Library of Congress, The Louvre, The Smithsonian

3 tiny objects related to your thinking

Coins, Stamps, Sand

3 abstract qualities related to your thesis

Sense of Identity, World Building, Escapism

3 physical qualities related to your thesis

Trinket-sized, Vintage, Grouped set

3 blue collar jobs that your thesis performs

Museum Docent, Librarian, Conservationist

3 foundations or organizations that commission your thesis

Certified Collectibles Group, History Channel, Pawn Stars

3 historical events that give your thesis context

Wunderkammer, World's Fair, Great Exhibition

3 supermarket items that could nourish your thesis

Rainbow pasta, Chex mix, Vegetable Medley

3 designers who could give a workshop related to your thesis

Aaron Draplin, Anna Sui, Cindy Steiler

3 films that are the start of your curated thesis film series

Night at the Museum, Pirates of Caribbean, Harry Potter

3 news items from the last two days where your thesis lives in the present

"Coin collector reflects on pennies, 10 years after they were discontinued"

Tyler Kelaher for CTV News Kitchner

Cryptex Finance's New Index Token to Track Top 10 NFT Collections

Max Koopsen for Decrypt

Copenhagen Fashion Week AW23: the key collections – in pictures

Chloe Mac Donnell and Jo Jones for The Guardian

abstract

Collection of artifacts and objects has existed for centuries, evolving and changing over time to reflect the character, wants, and aspirations of the collector. The sheer range of objects collected, the motivations behind the act, and the personal experience of the collector makes the attempt to create an all encompassing definition of the activity of collecting **nearly impossible**, despite numerous attempts. Treating its definition more so as a list of common characteristics supports the heterogeneity found within the topic. The intrinsic “collector-salient identity” found in each collector helps to provide a unifying element to the act of collecting (Spaid, 2018).

The unique experiences and motivations of collecting lend themselves to the discussion of the identity of the collector and its role in the activity. The notion of the “collector-salient identity” is the intrinsic desire to collect. This identity is **often engaged in a cycle** where the person is drawn to participate in collecting behaviors and motivations, and by doing so it in turn **strengthens the identity** and self image of the collector. While this phenomena is apparent in most if not all collectors, the individual expressions of their collections **can be attributed to the rest of the collector’s identities, personalities, principles, and values as a whole.** This may have implications for the objects and methods by which the collector chooses to engage within the

act. In amassing objects, experiences, and ideas that are imbued with significance, a person **can create a physical embodiment of themselves, knowingly or not.** This offers collectors and non-collectors alike the opportunity to connect with one another on a **deeper level** that never would have been possible without the displaying and sharing of collected objects. ✕

Through research and conducting interviews, **I intend to tell the story of the collector and collecting.** I will attempt to uncover how the spectrum of a person’s identities have an effect on the objects or items they collect, **and how a person’s collection is able to tell their personal story.** In discovering the intimate relationship the collector has with their collections, **we can foster human connection and develop our understanding of this activity** through the visualization of the motivations of the collector.

thesis statement

VISUALIZING THE **INTERSECTIONAL** RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COLLECTOR AND THEIR COLLECTION ALLOWS FOR **INTIMATE STORIES TO BE TOLD AND OFFERS A SPACE FOR HUMAN CONNECTION** FOR THOSE **WILLING TO LISTEN**



research questions

My search for what drives and motivates collectors and the ways in which their collection can tell a story was led by 3 questions. I began looking for answers by researching the topic using articles, peer reviewed journals, and academic literature to gain a solid context of understanding before starting to interview actual collectors.

1. How does someone's identity as a collector relate to their other identities as a person? How does it manifest in their collection?
2. What value lies in uncovering the intimate nature behind a person's collection?
3. How can motivations be visualized in order to aid in understanding the collector and collecting?

repository of insight

PROMPT 3

Produce a collection of your most resonant, salient quotations from your readings and research. Select one of these quotations and explain how it is relevant to your thinking. Aim for approximately 300–500 words

cabinet of curiosity

“Drawers and shelves housed original objects acquired through long journeys to faraway lands. Every object offered an opportunity to tell a story about an epic adventure or, more often, to fabricate one. Like everyone else, the wealthy liked to define their personalities through the possession of glamorous objects as tangible tokens of their intelligence, erudition, wealth, and taste.”

—Sotheby's

“In spirit, the cabinets were not meant to be scientific—they were a place of the imagination in which those who could afford to do so, constructed their own personal versions of the world.”

—Sotheby's

*repository of
insight*

CONT.

*collector
identity* “[The] more identity-related things we have, the more empowered (ergo confident) we feel about our ability to perform in the identity.”

—Susan Kleine

“The behaviors that result in the acquisition, possession and disposition of collections empower the activation and salience of the collector identity.” Additionally, because individuals “give prominence to those identities [they] perform well”, the salient identity is further bolstered.”

—Brian Spaid

*collecting
process* “[C]ollectors form an attachment to the desired object, or more appropriately, to the idea of owning the desired object...Collectors imagine owning the object and the benefits that such ownership might provide. Collectors may also anticipate searching for and purchasing the item. The object of desire is almost within grasp, and for collectors this can be an exhilarating and anxious time.”

—Brian Spaid

“The desire to acquire an object requires an external motivation, but collectors often report that hunting for the object is its own reward.”

—Brian Spaid

*repository of
insight*

CONT.

*collection
types* “Souvenirs are intrinsic parts of a past experience, but because they, like the human actors in the experience, possess the survival power of materiality not shared by words, actions, sights and the other elements of experience, they alone have the power to carry the past into the present. Souvenirs are samples of events which can be remembered, but not relived. Their tone is intimate and bittersweet, with roots in nostalgic longing for a past which is seen as better and fuller than the difficult present.”

—Susan Pearce

“Souvenirs, then, are lost youth, lost friends, lost past happiness; they are the tears of things.”

—Brian Spaid

“An approach to modern society which focuses on the material object always invites the risk of appearing fetishistic, that is of ignoring or masking actual social relations through its concern with the object per se.”

—Brian Spaid

“This begins to uncover the nature of fetishistic collections and collection-making. Such collections are often very private or rather, sometimes, the owner suffers a degree of tension between his urge for privacy and his desire to display his private universe to others.”

—Brian Spaid

repository of insight

CONT.

collection types “Systematic collecting, therefore, works not by the accumulation of samples, as fetishistic collecting does, but by the selection of examples, intended to stand for all the others of their kind and to complete a set, to ‘fill in a gap in the collections’ as the phrase so often upon curators’ lips has it.

—Susan Pearce

“The emphasis is upon classification, in which specimens (a revealing word) are extracted from their context and put into relationships created by seriality.”

—Susan Pearce



repository of insight

CONT.

SELECTED QUOTE

“[Collections] play the role of **intermediaries** between their **onlookers**, whoever they might be, and the inhabitants of the **world to which the former did not belong.**”

—Krzysztof Pomian



REFLECTION

The quote by Krzysztof Pomian on collections as intermediaries can also be applied to the way collections of artifacts and possessions significant to a person can provide insight into a their identity. Just as collections can bridge the gap between onlookers and objects from a different world, as stated by Pomian, a person’s collection can offer a glimpse into the life and experiences of an individual. Collections are often influenced by a person’s identity, and can have the ability to tell that collector’s personal story. By examining someone’s collection, we can gain a deeper understanding of their interests, values, and experiences, which can help us understand that person better. Personal collections can also reflect a person’s cultural background or personal history, providing important context to their identity. Without taking the time to listen to that person’s collector story, one wouldn’t have the opportunity to gain that context. In this way, just as collections can broaden our understanding of the world, examining personal collections can expand our understanding of an individual.

Gaining insight about someone through their collection can help us make human connections by providing a shared point of reference and a deeper understanding of that person’s experiences, values, and identity. By taking the time to learn about someone’s collection and the stories behind it, we can gain a greater appreciation for their perspective and a sense of connection with them. Whether it is a collection of personal artifacts, art, or cultural objects, the act of sharing one’s collection is an invitation to connect with others and gain a greater understanding of their world. By recognizing the importance of these objects to the collector and engaging with them in a respectful and curious way, we can bridge the gap between ourselves and others, fostering greater empathy and understanding. Ultimately, understanding someone through their collection can be a powerful way to create meaningful human connections.

proposal presentation

MY PROPOSAL

jan 27th, 2023

After spending winter break dedicated to gathering academic research I had a growing document about different kinds of collections, the collection process, numerous varying motivations that drive people to collect, and the different psychological effects of collecting among other subdivisions of my chosen topic.

I prepared a proposal to be presented in front of the full-time faculty in which I shared my initial thesis statement, my abstract, and my research questions.

While my revised thesis statement, abstract, and research questions are essentially very similar, my initial thesis statement was more-so focused mainly on the motivating factors behind what draws people to collect, and put emphasis on collector's having an audience.

THESIS STATEMENT

initial thesis
stance

The result of a person's collection can be attributed to the intersection of their collector identity alongside the multitude of expressions of their other identities. By visualizing the motivations that draw people to it, a deeper understanding can be made of the collector and the act of collecting. This allows a unique story to be told through someone's collection, and fosters a sense of connection between the collector and their audience.

ABSTRACT

Collection of artifacts and objects has existed for centuries, evolving and changing over time to reflect the character, wants, and aspirations of the collector. While there have been numerous attempts to define the act and what a collection is, the sheer range of objects collected, the motivations behind the act, and the personal experience of the collector makes the attempt to create an encompassing definition nearly impossible. Treating its definition more so as a list of common characteristics supports the heterogeneity found within the topic. The intrinsic "collector-salient identity" found in each collector helps to provide a unifying element to the act of collecting (Spaid, 2018).

The unique experiences and motivations of collecting lend themselves to the discussion of the identity of the collector, and its role within the activity. While the "collector-salient identity" can be found within all collectors, research suggests that a person's motivation to collect is closely related to their entire identity. This may have implications for the objects and methods by which the collector chooses to engage within the

act. In amassing objects, ideas, and experiences that are imbued with significance, a person can create a physical embodiment of themselves, knowingly or not. These ideas led me to self reflect on what influences effect my choices and decisions-making as I collect fashion. What parts of myself and my identity find themselves realized in the individual pieces I gather.

Through research and conducting interviews, I intend to tell the story of the collector and collecting. I will attempt to uncover how the spectrum of a person's identities have an effect on the objects or items they collect, and how a person's collection is able to tell their personal story. In doing so I aim to demonstrate the intersectional nature of a collector's identities and how they manifest themselves in a collection.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does someone's identity as a collector relate to their other identities as a person?
2. Do a person's other identities manifest themselves in their collection?
3. Can someone's collection tell their personal story?

*locating the
thesis range***PART 2****PROMPT 1**

Review the comments you received from the Thesis Proposal Presentation. Compare what you meant with what was heard. What was mentioned that you had not considered? Does this feedback help sharpen your path of inquiry? How will you take these responses into account to begin your thesis process?

jan 27th, 2023

REFLECTION

My thesis proposal overall went well, I felt as though I was able to express myself clearly and show my eagerness for my topic. I was able to receive some valuable feedback from the professors. In hearing my classmates' feedback, I was reminded to focus on the visual communication aspect of my thesis and to keep in mind how I will use design as a solution to answer my research questions. For specific feedback from my own proposal, I gained valuable insight from Professor Randall Sexton who encouraged me to think about my sample, depending on who I interview and whose collections I choose to reveal, the results might be very different. The contrast between the people interviewed and their collections could provide meaningful discoveries. Professor Chang Sik Kim commented on my research questions

and felt like they were already answered, and compelled me to think about what benefit my thesis will bring to the people who will view my findings. I need to provide adequate value and rationale behind completing my interviews. The feedback I received from the faculty during my proposal will be able to help sharpen my thesis in two ways. Firstly, if I am able to successfully utilize design as a solution to visualize personal connections/relationships between the collector and their collection, more people will have an increased understanding about the intimate qualities of collecting. Secondly, identifying what benefit or value learning about the collector/collection relationship will add substance to my thesis, making it something that outsiders will care about and may influence or provide insight into their own habit of collecting.



CHAPTER 2: GETTING STARTED

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interviews

PERSONAL RESEARCH

Feeling as though I had a firm understanding of existing discussions and theories about collecting, I wanted to talk to actual collectors to gain insight into the more personal, storytelling side of collecting that I was missing from my academic research.

As such, I conducted a series of five interviews with collectors (including myself) with the aim of gaining a better understanding of their personal experiences and motivating factors as collectors, as well as the items that make up their collection.

COLLECTORS

Paula



I have gone through a journey of self discovery, my collection has gone through phases and changes, and my clothing is a current expression of who I am here and now. As I become more sure of myself, the changes start to slow down.

Lori



Lori collects shells, sand dollars and white rocks as a way to bring home a piece of a place that reminds her of peace and serenity. Her collection started parallel to becoming diagnosed with cancer. Having overcome her cancer, she wants to make her life meaningful and create a positive impact in the lives of people around her

Zac



Zac currently collects vintage military and Americana style clothing from the 90s and earlier. Similarly, he's also gone through a journey of self discovery, but treats his collection as a holistic representation of who he was when he first started collecting clothes, up until now.

Bekah



Bekah collects snow-globes from places she has never been to before. Watching her hometown become developed she began searching for her forever home, and her snow-globes are a physical representation of that search. Realizing her home would be wherever she could be present in nature, her collection began to shift towards national park magnets.

Gregg



Gregg collects golden age and pre-code horror comics as a way to escape the craziness of every day life. In doing so he's able to express his confident personality that doesn't get easily persuaded by what's mainstream. He's confident being himself and doesn't mind if other people don't share his interests in comics.

telling the story

CREATING THE NARRATIVE

After going through transcripts of my conversations with my interviewees, I analyzed their responses, paying attention to what they said and how they said it in order to be able to tell their collector story.

I gathered quotes from each conversation that I felt were meaningful to their experiences and journey as a collector. By doing so, the quotes served to supplement the story and the reader's understanding of the collector.

—————▶ "I'm finally starting to feel like me."

—————▶ "The beach is my happy place, and the rocks and shells take me there."

—————▶ "It's kinda my whole life."

—————▶ "I had grown up with all this nature that wasn't there anymore."

—————▶ "I've always liked to do things differently than the person next door."

early process

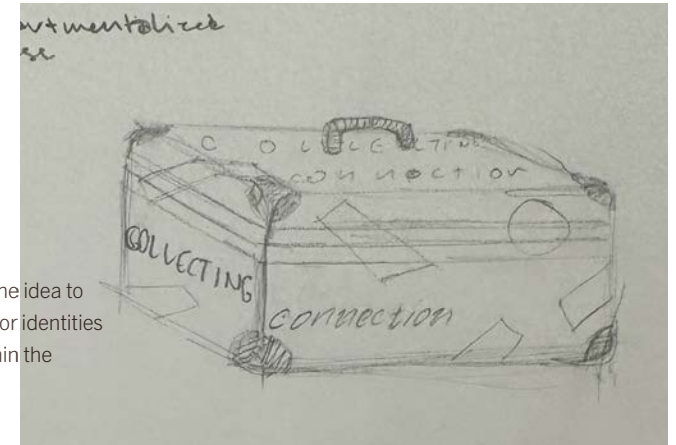
FIRST IDEAS

From my research I became inspired by the Cabinet of Curiosity. It is a concept I was already familiar with and was interested in because of its whimsical nature and aesthetic quality. I began imagining my thesis with this concept in mind and came up with a working list of possible outcomes.

- MY THESIS AS A PHYSICAL, TANGIBLE OBJECT (COLLECTIBLE?)
- MY THESIS AS A SERIES OF BOOKS WITHIN A BOX
↳ REF TO CABINET OF CURIOSITY
- MY THESIS EXISTING ON A SHELF?
- MY THESIS HAVING A MUSEUM/ARCHIVAL-LIKE FEEL
- MY THESIS AS A MUSEUM, BUT A BOOK

SUITCASE OF CURIOSITY

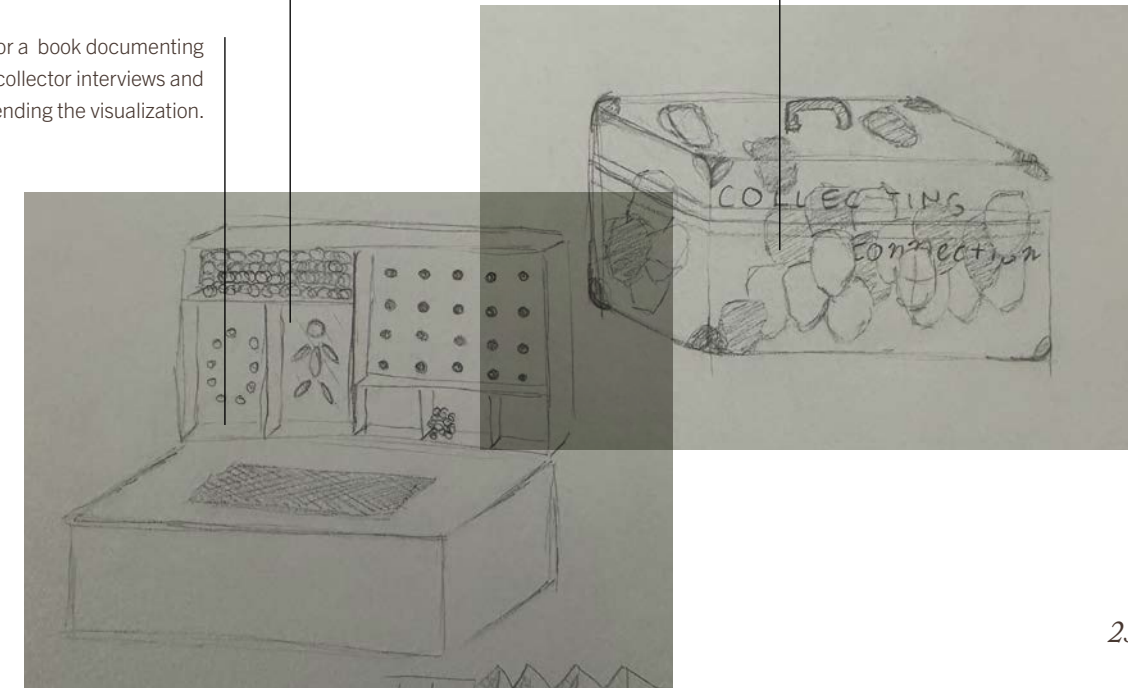
From my initial ideas stemmed the idea to visualize the motives and collector identities of my interviewed collectors within the compartments of a suitcase.



Space for a book documenting the collector interviews and extending the visualization.

Different sized compartments holding objects visualized in different ways to represent nuances in collector types.

Imagery on the outside of the suitcase hints at what is within.



STORYBOOK

The decision to include a series of booklets as part of the suitcase came from the issue of the suitcase being unable to communicate collectors' stories on its own. The book would be used to contain a narrative storyline, and extend its visualization, thus highlighting the multifaceted nature of each collector.

Physical elements tie back to cabinet of curiosities inspiration



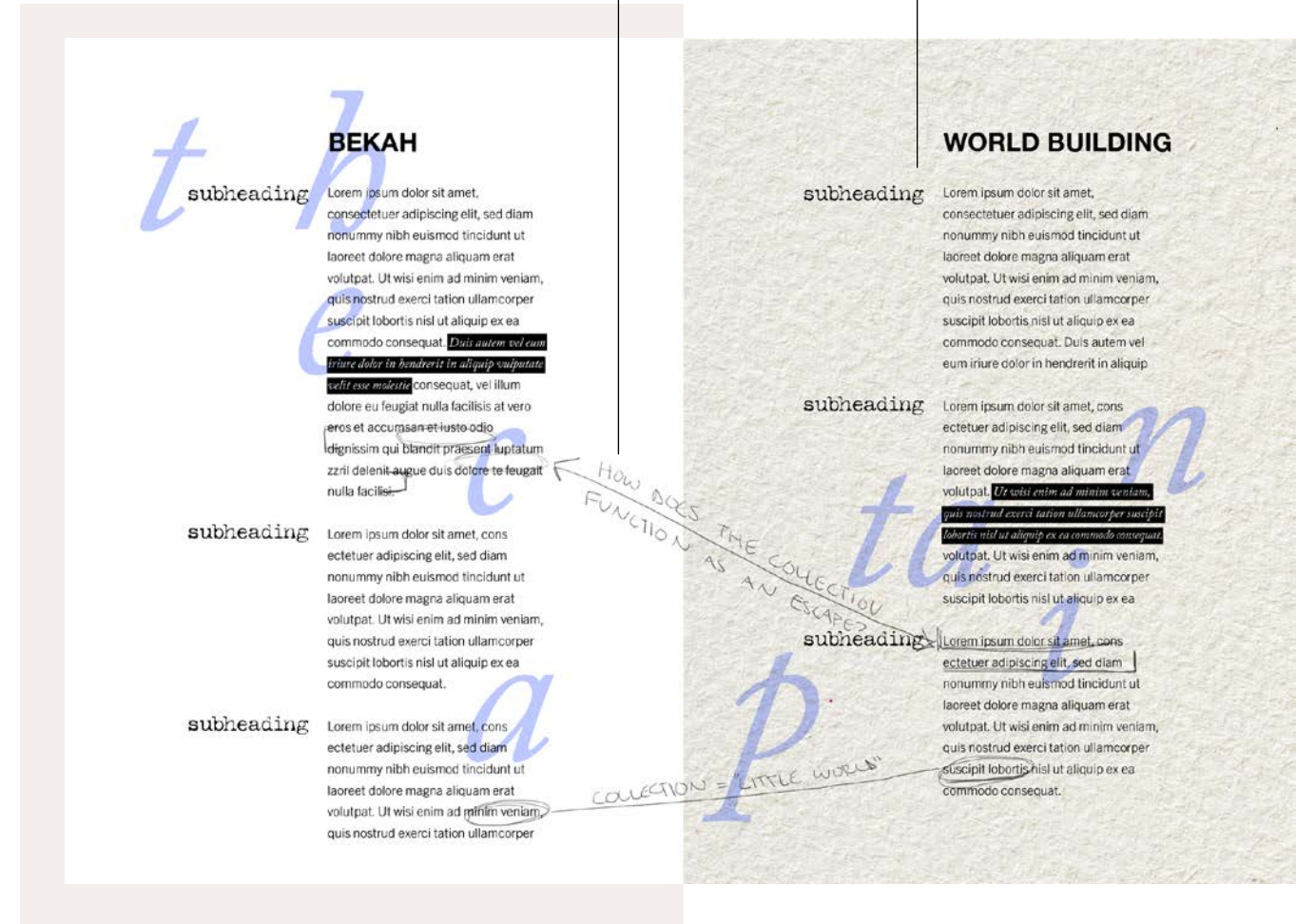
MULTIPLE VOICES

The intimate, personal stories of the collectors I interviewed, ultimately, were the most important to me to highlight within the book. However, I felt it was still significant and beneficial to include the research I had spent winter break gathering within the book, as well as my own conclusions and judgments I came to in regards to the collector's relationship

with their collection. As such, I experimented with how to highlight three distinct voices: The collector's story, my own thoughts and conclusions, and the research.

Handwritten elements highlight my own discoveries and connections between the collector's story and my research

Place holder for the research I have gathered to tie into relevant parts of collector story



WORLD BUILDING

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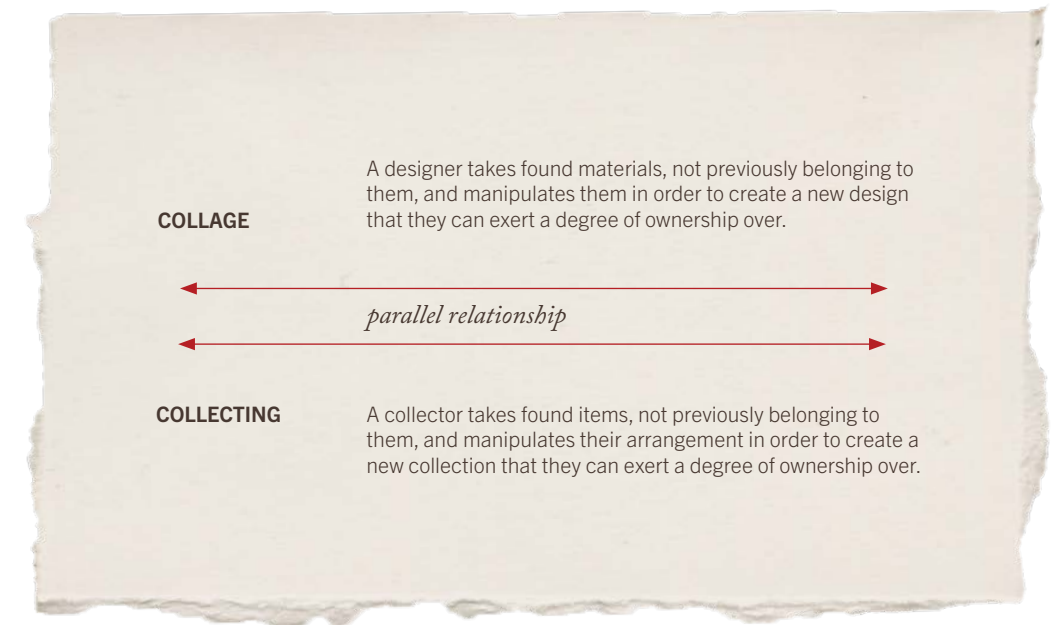
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HOW DOES THE COLLECTION FUNCTION AS AN ESCAPE?
COLLECTION = LITTLE WORLDS

VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUE

After continued thought regarding the suitcase and how to visualize each compartment, I felt it would be easier to create an object to represent each person and have it be placed within the compartment. Trying to make the compartment itself be representational resulted in me using very literal symbols to represent each collector.

The tangible and physical quality I was trying to achieve was reminiscent of scrap-booking or collage. I found collage to be the perfect technique to use in order to visualize the collector stories, given its parallel relationship to the activity of collecting.



first advisor check-ins

PROFESSOR RANDALL SEXTON

feb 15, 2023 In response to my outcome idea of a compartmentalized suitcase containing collage objects, Professor Sexton was interested in how far those collages could communicate without needing a story or explanation to go with it. In response to my early spread explorations, I received feedback to try to own the composition more, and to aim to give each booklet its own character reflective of the collector it is based on. Professor Sexton also mentioned that it would be important and almost necessary to have actual imagery included within the booklets of items from each person's collection, and recommended that I get creative with how to design using the imagery. Overall he had positive reactions to my early process and liked where I was headed.

PROFESSOR SEAN MILLER

feb 17, 2023 At first Professor Miller had a hard time understanding my thesis outcome, so we identified the confusing parts for me to analyze and refine later. One key area of confusion was my initial thesis which placed emphasis on collectors having an audience. To this he informed me that collectors don't normally have an audience, because most of them are person and/or private. In regards to my concept of visualizing the collector's story, Professor Miller stressed the importance of selecting stories where the collector/collection relationship is the most prominent, to ensure the point of the story comes across. In regards to the early spread explorations, Professor Sean Miller agreed that showing the actual imagery of a person's collection would help satisfy the reader.

SUMMARY

At first I was concerned about the conflicting advisor feedback and in-class I had received about whether or not to include actual imagery in my thesis outcome. However I was rest assured when my advisors suggested I treat them like any other design element and use the principles at my disposal to help give the collage compositions different feelings based on the collector they belonged to. Moving forward I aimed to use the collage as inspiration to create unique and interesting spreads. Keeping Professor Miller's feedback in mind, I went back to the collectors that I felt had potential, but weren't displaying a strong collector/collection relationship just yet, and interviewed them again to gain more insight.

*framing
reference***PROMPT 4**

Conduct a well-prepared, focused, and thoughtful interview with an expert in your field of interest, whose experience, knowledge, and expertise, can offer insight into your project.

who: Professor Sean Miller

timing: 15-30 minutes

format: zoom

1. On your website, you mentioned that the idea of the Wunderkammer is an organizing principle that surrounds many of your works, could you expand on that? What are your goals/what was the spark that engaged your methodology.
2. How do you determine what to include in your projects? For example, your project titled Drifting Cabinets, how did you decide what to display and how to display it?
3. How do you deal with or handle subjectivity in your work? What level of representation or abstraction do you feel is exemplified in your work? Are there any instances where you were stuck visualizing a concept or idea? If so, what did you do to overcome getting stuck?

How do manage expressing what you want to express, while still being understandable/relatable?
4. Do you have any advice would to give me in my attempt to visualize the stories behind a person's collector journeys?

EXPERT

Professor Sean Miller teaches at the University of Florida at the School of Art and Art History. He is also an artist, curator, and collector, and uses the Wunderkammer or "Cabinet of Curiosity" as a guiding concept in many of his pieces of work.

feb 17, 2023

The interview was held over zoom after our designated advisor check-in meeting, so our minds were freshly prepped to discuss my questions. Professor Miller stated that one of the reasons the Wunderkammer is such a significant source of inspiration in his work is because it makes him think about the mechanisms that surround the art, or the things that are ignored in art. He also stated that the Wunderkammer makes him consider the idea of wonder and storytelling, and how certain events can help capture the public's imagination. In discussing one of his art pieces titled "Drifting Cabinets" he mentioned that where items get placed involves considering how the viewers would move through the collection. For this piece in particular, it was intended to be a portable collection, and thus steamer trunks were used to contain it. When asked

about how he deals with expressing matters of subjectivity, and maintaining a certain level of understanding by others, Professor Miller stated that he often looks to his peers for advice. He uses a network of people to review what he is working on, and if enough of them have a positive reaction right away, then he knows he's on the right track. One thing that stood out to me was that Sean mentioned that he also has to be as excited about his work as the positive feedback reactions he receives. He stated that he won't go along with an idea simply because his network of peers likes it if its not something he is passionate about. In closing, Sean mentioned that for my thesis, having a symbol or icon designated for each of my collectors can help other people to organize their understanding of my thesis outcome.

midterm presentation

MIDTERM REVIEW

mar 3th, 2023

I was nervous for the midterm presentation, as approval at this stage was important in order to continue with my thesis outcome. I presented my finalized thesis statement, abstract, and research questions, as well as my completed research and written collector stories. I shared the collages that were finished or in progress at the time and an updated version of my cabinet from the previous suitcase and in progress spreads from my process book.

REFLECTION

Overall the presentation went fairly well and I received lots of helpful critique. Professor Chang Sik Kim was excited about my topic and mentioned that I should keep in mind that other people may have interpretations of my collector stories different than what I intended and that I should continue to strive for meaningful executions of my collages. Professor Randall gave me feedback on my type treatment and suggested it could easily become convoluted and difficult to discern, and to handle it carefully. He also mentioned to that the collages needs to be at high level of craft and hold clear, communicated meanings.

THESIS STATEMENT

*revised thesis
stance*

Visualizing the intersectional relationship between the collector and their collection allows for intimate stories to be told, and offers a space for human connection for those willing to listen.

ABSTRACT

Collection of artifacts and objects has existed for centuries, evolving and changing over time to reflect the character, wants, and aspirations of the collector. The sheer range of objects collected, the motivations behind the act, and the personal experience of the collector makes the attempt to create an encompassing definition of the act of collecting nearly impossible, despite numerous attempts. Treating its definition more so as a list of common characteristics supports the heterogeneity found within the topic. The intrinsic “collector-salient identity” found in each collector helps to provide a unifying element to the act of collecting (Spaid, 2018).

The unique experiences and motivations of collecting lend themselves to the discussion of the identity of the collector and its role in the activity. The notion of the “collector-salient identity” is the intrinsic desire to collect. This identity is often engaged in a cycle where the person is drawn to participate in collecting behaviors and motivations, and by doing so it in turn strengthens the identity and self image of the collector. While this phenomena is apparent in most if not

all collectors, the individual expressions of their collections can be attributed to the rest of the collector’s identities, personalities, principles, and values as a whole. This may have implications for the objects and methods by which the collector chooses to engage within the act. In amassing objects, ideas, and experiences that are imbued with significance, a person can create a physical embodiment of themselves, knowingly or not. This offers collectors and non-collectors alike the opportunity to connect with one another on a deeper level that never would have been possible without the displaying and sharing of collected objects.

Through research and conducting interviews, I intend to tell the story of the collector and collecting. I will attempt to uncover how the spectrum of a person’s identities have an effect on the objects or items they collect, and how a person’s collection is able to tell their personal story. In discovering the intimate relationship the collector has with their collections, we can foster human connection and develop our understanding of this activity through the visualization of the collector’s motivations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does someone’s identity as a collector relate to their other identities as a person? How does it manifest in their collection?
2. What value lies in uncovering the intimate nature behind someone’s collection?
3. How can motivations be visualized to aid in our understanding of the collector and collecting?



CHAPTER 3: PRODUCTION

- 36 *second advisor check-ins*
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second advisor check-ins

PROFESSOR RANDALL SEXTON

mar 8th, 2023 As Professor Sexton had seen most of my progress already from the midterm review, our meeting was relatively brief. He reiterated his previous feedback and mentioned to keep the collages at a high level of craft so as to avoid them looking like an arts and crafts project. Together we reviewed the book spreads I had in progress, and he gave me feedback to make the type treatment regarding my 3 voices a bit more legible, and to figure out the hierarchy of which one I want to be read first, second, third.

PROFESSOR SEAN MILLER

mar 10th, 2023 During this meeting I updated Professor Miller with my revised these/abstract and research questions. I also shared my finalized thesis outcome and how I had applied his feedback from last time by emphasizing the collector/collection. Professor Sean made the suggestion that the collages might not be necessary in my thesis project, as the book does an adequate job at providing my own discoveries. So as not to discard the collages so late in the game, he also mentioned that more representation of the collector's items would be necessary to allow a viewer the ability to read and come to their own conclusion's about the collector and their relationship with their collection. He suggested taking a more systematic approach to some of the imagery so that viewers can look at the collection and come up with their own judgments

SUMMARY

Both Professor Randall and Professor Miller provided me with helpful feedback during this last stretch of the thesis process. Professor Randall's advice will be useful in ensuring that I strive for meaningful visual representations within my collages. It will also be helpful in ensuring the three voices that I emphasize in my book remain legible throughout and yet still maintain a sense of connection and variation in terms of their layout. Refining the hierarchy will also make it easier for the reader to understand how to read the book and in what order.

later process

COLLAGE CREATION

Keeping in mind feedback that I received from the midterm meeting as well as from my advisors, I tried to pay additional mind to the materials, techniques, and objects I would use to make the remaining collages. In doing so, I would ensure a top quality object that was meaningful and would provide impact.

Getting rid of items that don't work anymore or are too similar to other collages help each on to stand out on its own.

Being more intentional with what I include on the collage allows for deeper meaning to be shared with others.

before



after



COMPANION BOOK DEVELOPMENT

Creating the spreads for this book was some of the hardest parts of this project. However, once I got the hang of the type treatment I created, several of the pages came into place naturally. Whenever I had an idea for a spread I would sketch it out and try it to see if it would work. If it was successful enough, I would refine it until I was satisfied and keep it.

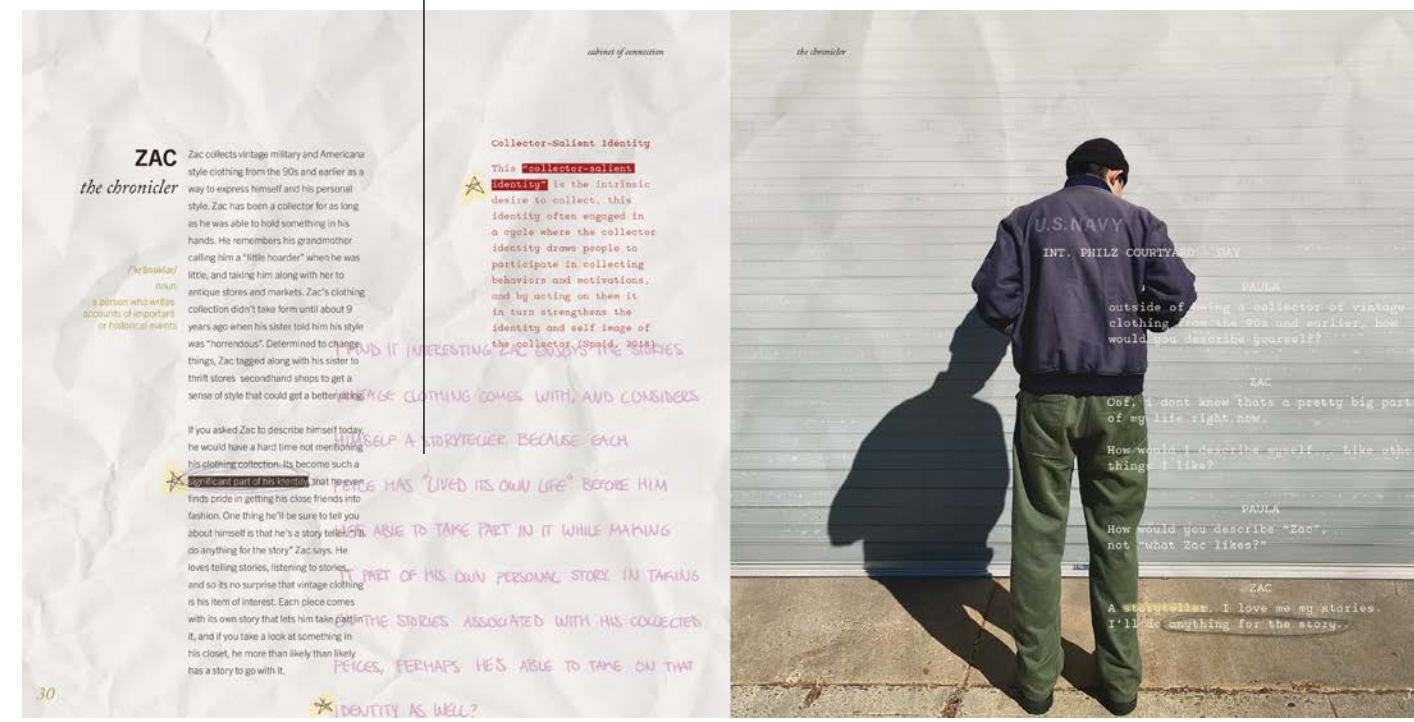
midterm review progress



By the midterm presentation I had almost reached what I was aiming for with this type treatment. But still, the pink box competes with the text around it, and the white text is hard to read against it.

The final iteration of this type treatment feels more natural and authentic, and doing it in my own handwriting allowed the words to flow more freely.

final review progress



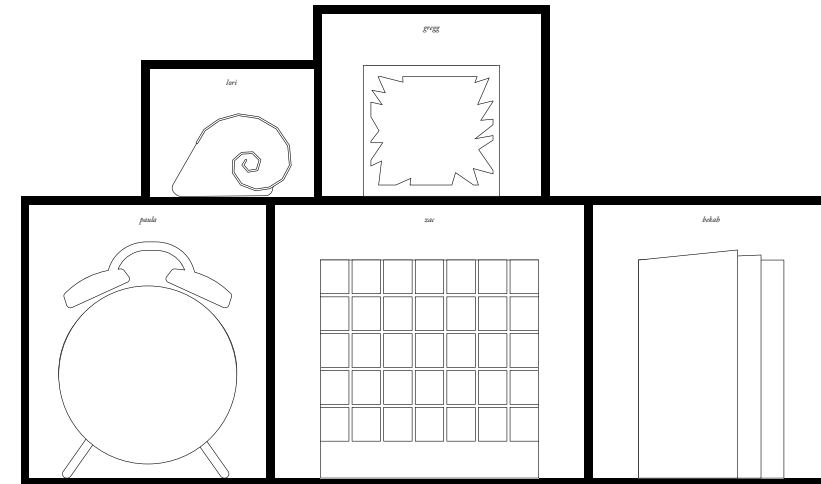
CABINET ITERATION

One of my first inspirations for the outcome of this project was the Cabinet of Curiosity, and thus, once the compartmentalized suitcase was scrapped my first iterations more closely resemble a cabinet. The final cabinet comprises the feelings of discovery and reveal for a stronger connotation of the objects being on display.

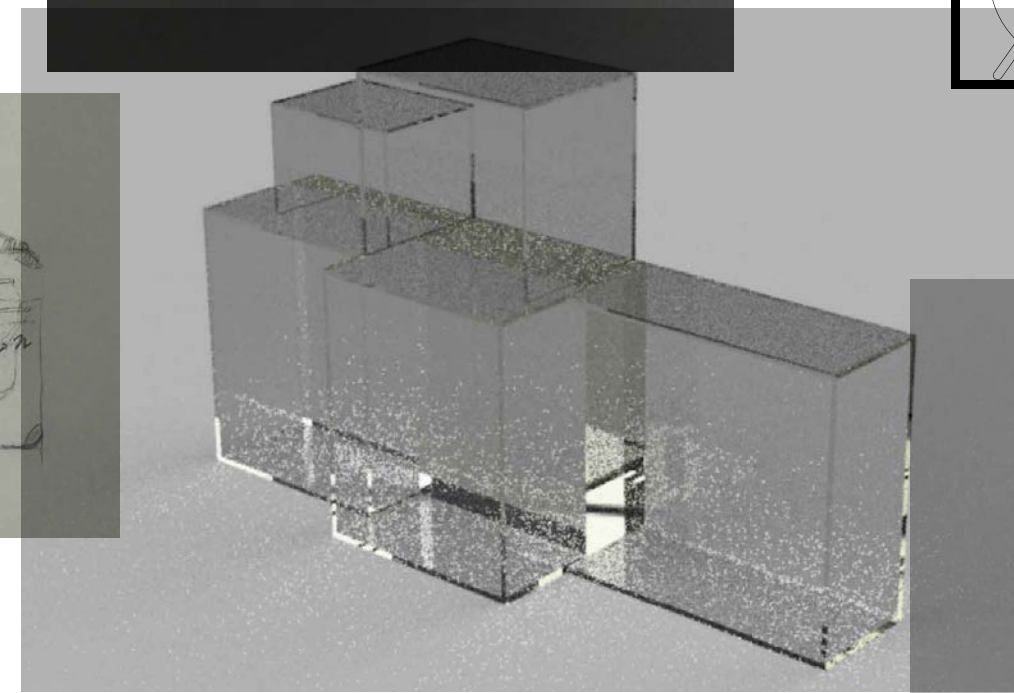
While a favorite of mine, the cabinet of drawers could possibly make it difficult for viewers to take the items in and out safely.



3.

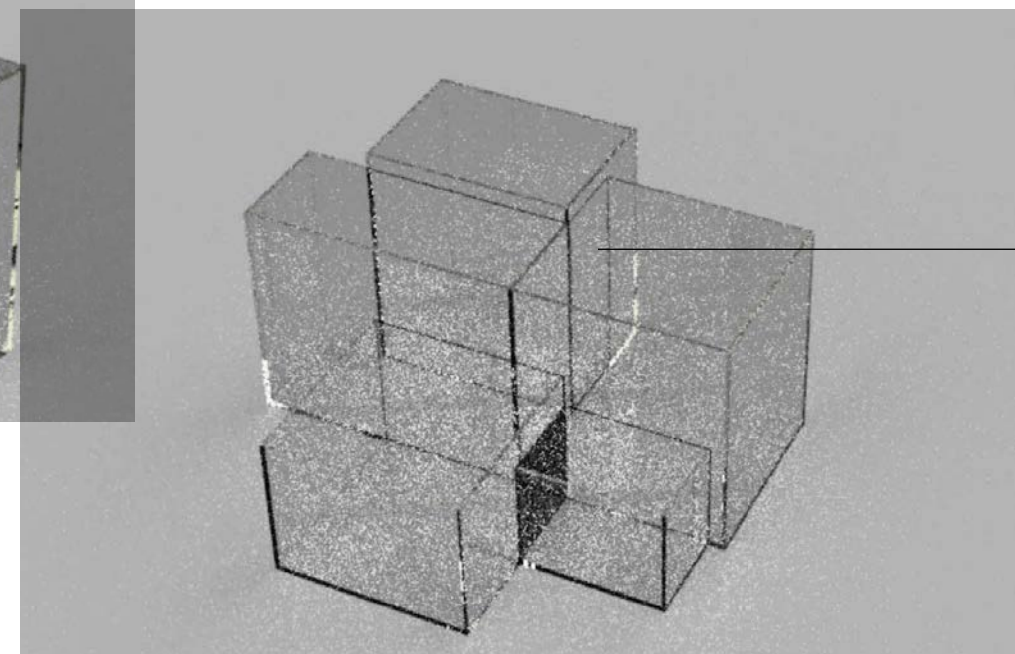


1.



4.

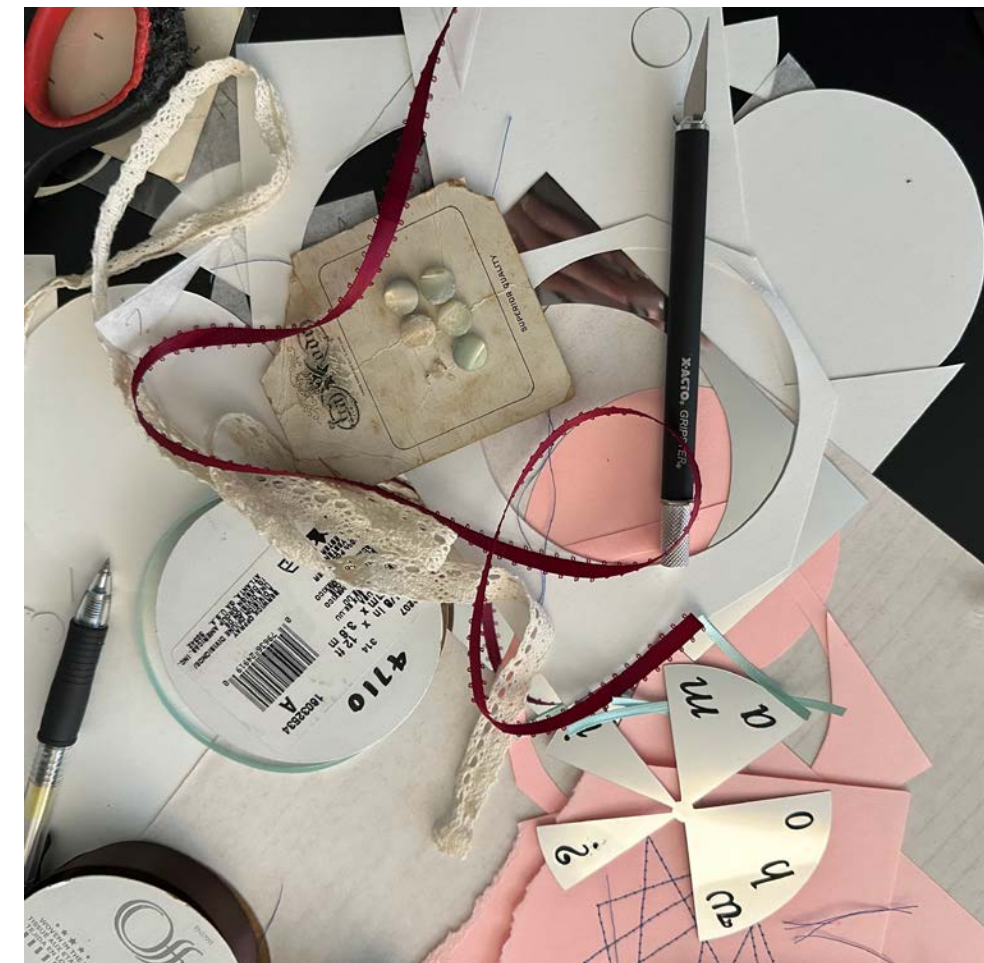
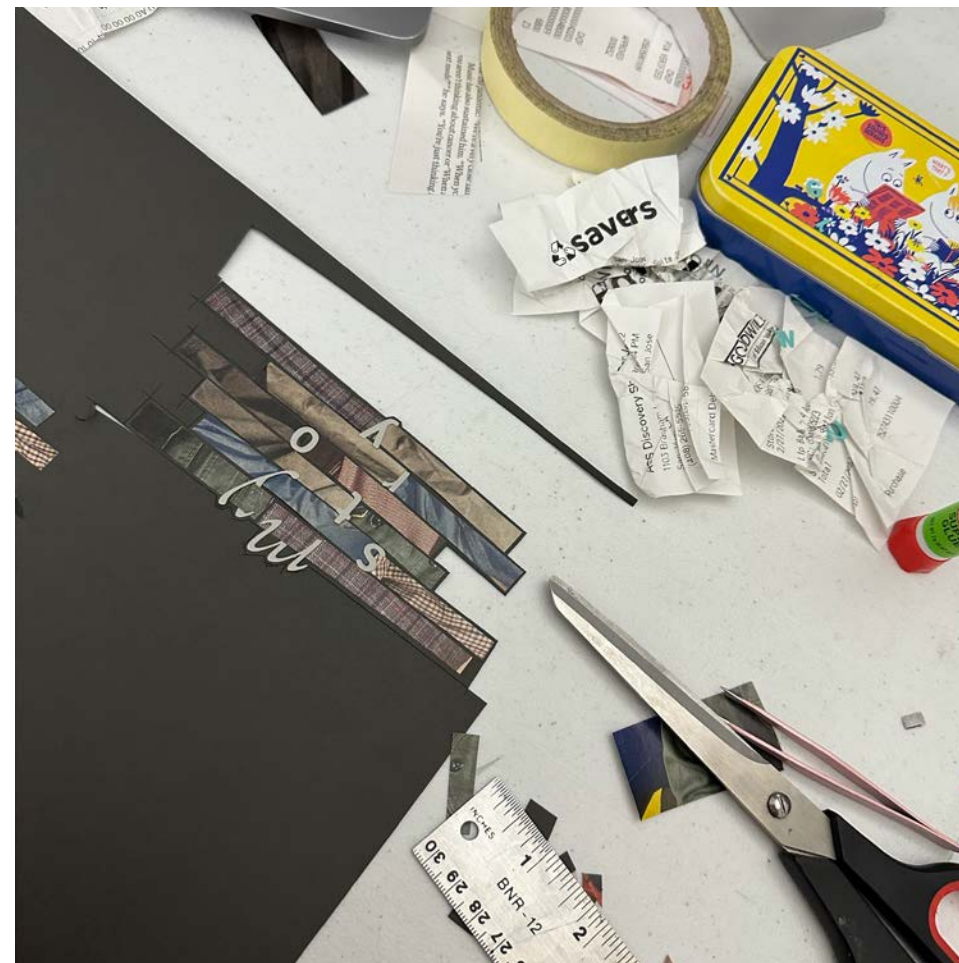
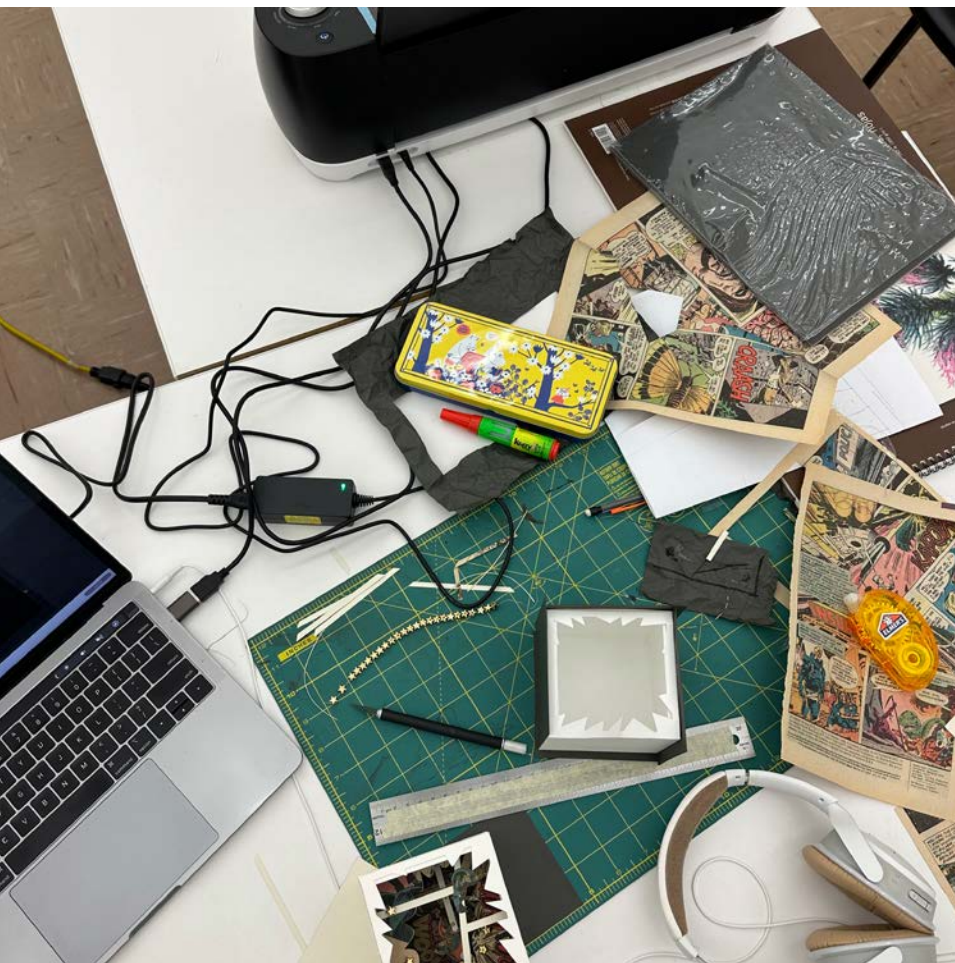
5. the winner



The final iteration of the cabinet allows for easy access to the collages, and sufficient visibility for those that don't want to pick them up. The clear acrylic is also reminiscent of museum display cases.

EMBRACE THE CHAOS!

I found myself dealing with a lot of anxiety finishing up the final bits of this project. It was like pulling teeth forcing myself to work even though I was scared of imperfection, even though that sounds silly to say. With the help of my friends and professors I was able to accept what I could and could not control, and accept that nothing will ever be 100% perfect, but its still worth trying your best.



*manifesto***PROMPT 5**

A manifesto is a written statement of beliefs or aims. The word derives from Latin, to make public. Writing a manifesto is a gesture of self-definition and self-advocacy. It is a way of testing and articulating the tenets of your design practice, and may be a step toward working out your own design philosophy. Write a short manifesto as a way to invite others into your way of thinking.

PAULA'S MANIFESTO

1. Start with a sketch, you don't need the whole picture at the beginning
2. You can't get to the second step or third step without taking the first step.
3. Get at least one more pair of eyes on it.
4. Whoever you're doing it for, make sure yourself is included.
5. Asymmetry over symmetry.
6. Strive for meaningful connections.
7. Go crazy first, pull back later.
8. Don't take critique personally, find the gold nugget.
9. Leave some room to let people make their own conclusions.

final presentation

FINAL REVIEW

apr 7th, 2023

I was nervous for the midterm presentation, as approval at this stage was important in order to continue with my thesis outcome. I presented my finalized thesis statement, abstract, and research questions, as well as my completed research and written collector stories. I shared the collages that were finished or in progress at the time and an updated version of my cabinet from the previous suitcase and in progress spreads from my process book.

1. How does someone's identity as a collector relate to their other identities as a person? How does it manifest in their collection?

2. What value lies in uncovering the intimate nature behind a person's collection?

3. How can motivations be visualized in order to aid in understanding the collector and collecting?

REFLECTION

Throughout this process I have learned a lot, and wanted to take a look at my research questions again. I learned that passage of time, life experiences, interests, passions, and principles all can effect why a person collects and is drawn to the activity. I also learned that everyone has a story to share and you only need to take the time to listen in order to hear it. Collecting becomes a truly intimate experience between the collector and their collection, and thus all the more meaningful. I learned that in trying to visually represent their motivations, I had to find ways to bring other's into their world. I leaned into the physicality of collage and in using imagery, hand lettering, layering, rips, cuts, etc. I was able to create a range of visual texture that helped to tell the story.

Passage of time, life experiences, interests, passions, and principles all can effect why a person collects.

Everyone has something valuable to share. You'll only hear it if you take the time to listen.

World building creates a story without the use of words.



CHAPTER 4: FINAL OUTCOME

- 52 *cabinet of connection*
- 62 *collages*
- 72 *companion book*
- 84 *concluding reflections*

cabinet of connection





Paula's collage

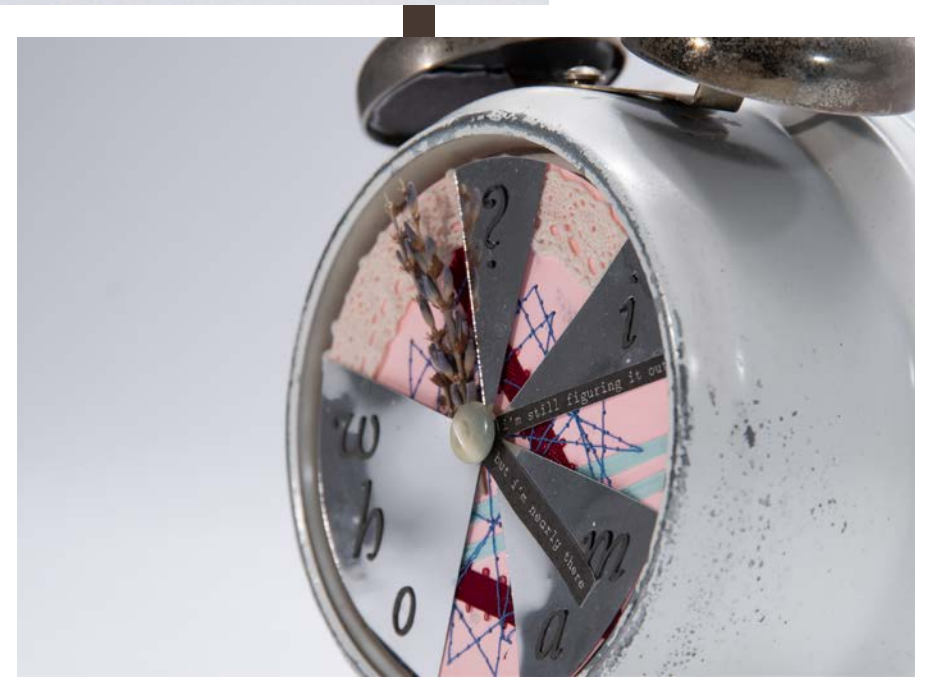
who am I?
I'm still figuring it out



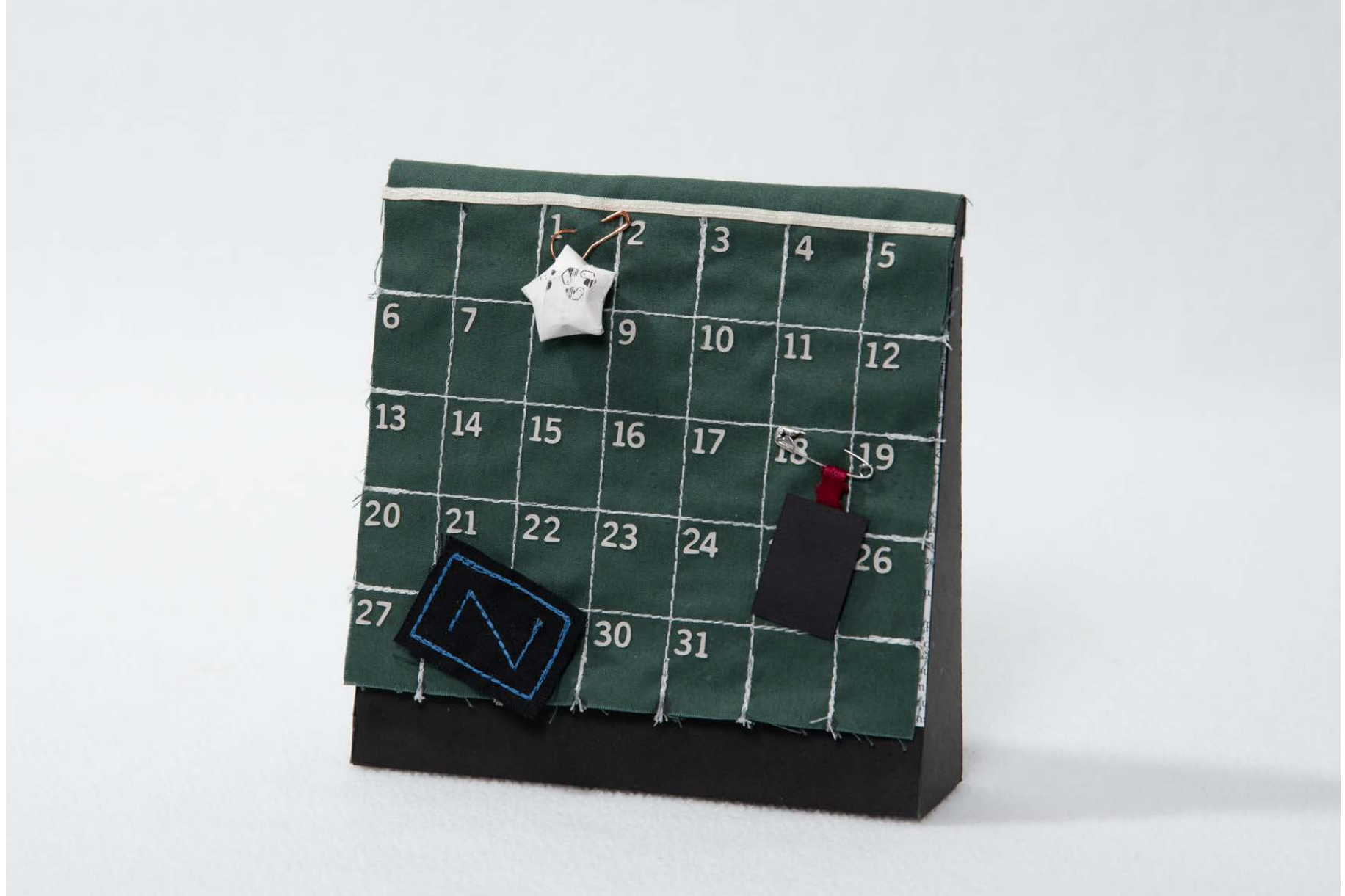




collages











*companion
book*





DURING THIS TIME I WAS RAPIDLY ADDING TO MY
 COLLECTION. TRYING TO STAY ON TOP OF TRENDS, I FOUND
 MYSELF [HOLD] EXHAUSTED WAITING FOR PACKAGES OR SOMETHING
 * HERE FROM [CLOTHING STORES] THAT I WAS ACTUALLY

CLAUDE: WHATEVER WITH I HAD ACQUIRED.
 piles of clothing and spending so much money
 but never feeling like I had anything to wear since
 I was doing it for other people, not myself. All
 that mattered was that I was "in fashion" at that
 time. It felt like the excitement that my clothes
represented was the only thing that mattered. people
 who I would probably never actually meet or have
 a conversation with. There was no point in discussing
 * let for [something] points, when I didn't feel connected
to those items in the first place.

I had to get changed, so to speak. Every addition to
 my collection came with my conscience asking me
 if it was really something I needed. The result was
 growing pains as I tried to exert more and more self
 control, and trying not to feel frustrated or dumb
 when I acquired something out of impulse, only to
 be met with disappointment. I had to really analyze
my [something] clothes, my habits, what would be
helpful for me to wear and use when trying to
figure out who I was.

cabinet of connection

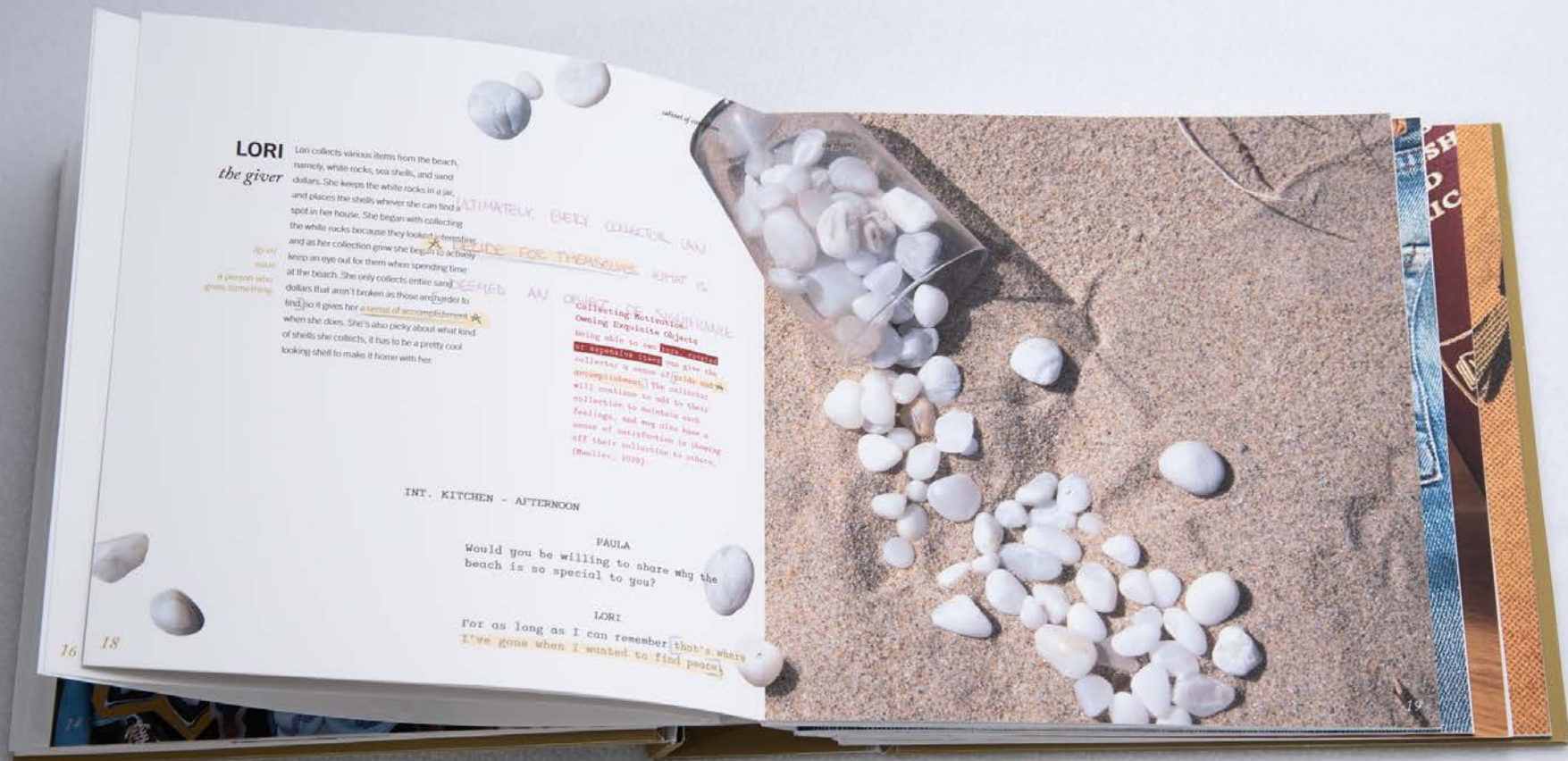
* 1
 an [something] material, "who am
 I" or "what is my [something] the
 placement of [something] to a [something]
 allowing myself to self reflect.

* 2
 a [something] to the [something]
 [something] [something] as my
 [something] [something].

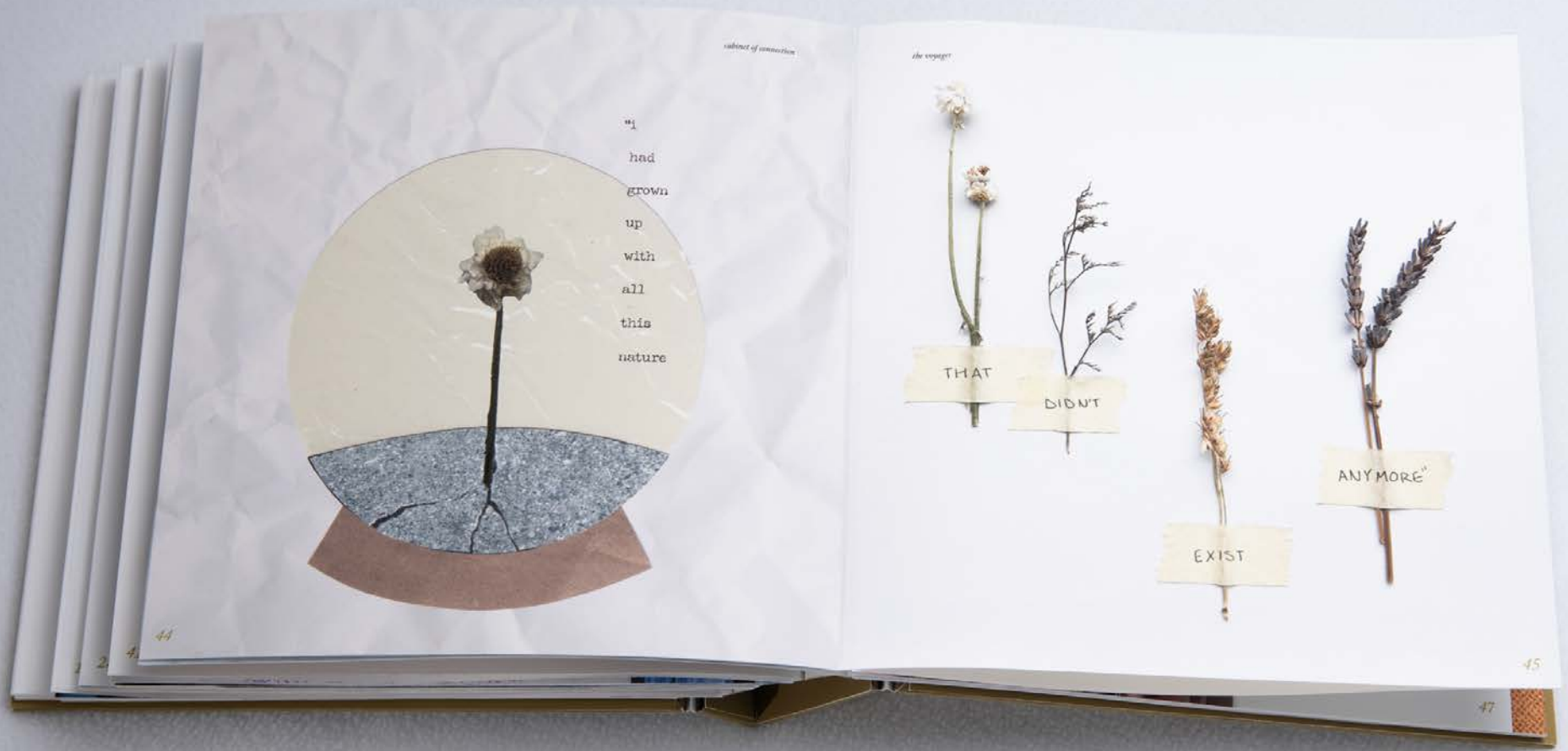
* 3
 a [something] [something] of [something]
 to [something] [something] [something]
 what to wear [something] to [something].



Paula's collage









concluding reflections

REFLECTION

I can honestly say this thesis is one of the hardest things I've ever done. It truly feels like I have employed all the skills I have learned and developed over the past two years in order to produce my thesis outcome. Having that feeling makes this thesis project all the more fulfilling to me, and I have never been prouder of a design project.

In addition, this project feels like me. I've struggled feeling connected to my design work in the past, as it pretty much always felt only like an assignment to be completed. Cabinet of Connection, even with all its imperfections and opportunities for improvement, is something I am beyond proud to call my work. I finally did something for me, and designed something that I wanted to see exist.

I think the biggest theme throughout this process was wanting and needing more time to develop all parts of this process. Regardless, I put my best effort forward every day, and I want to believe that my physical outcome is a testament to the dedication, blood, sweat, and tears I have labored lovingly for my thesis.

All the breakdowns, sleepless nights, and times where I felt like giving up, lead to finding myself, getting well-earned rest, and proving to myself that I can do hard things. If I remember to put one foot in front of the other, and take things one step at a time, I can do anything.

FROM THE INTENSE SCHEDULE, STEEP SLOPE OF MY THESIS OUTCOME,
ROUGHING IT OUT OVERNIGHT AT THE LAB, I AM RELIEVED THAT ALL THIS
IS OVER. THAT BEING SAID, I FEEL BEYOND FULLILLED SEEING MY
THESIS IN ITS FINISHED FORM. INSANELY CHALLENGING AS IT WAS,
I MANAGED TO PULL THROUGH! THIS WILL ALWAYS SERVE AS A
BITTERSWEET REMINDER THAT IT'S NEVER GOING TO BE EASY, BUT I AM
CAPABLE REGARDLESS, AND MY EFFORTS WILL BE ALL THE MORE

MEANINGFUL BECAUSE OF IT. ♡

NEXT STEPS

I see this project as a starting point for a bigger body of work. I love talking to people and learning about their passions and sparks, and I can see myself interviewing a broader range of collectors, when time and resources are more available.

If this project were to go further, I would like to dedicate more of my time to the interview and book production portion of it. During the course of this project, I would have liked to have several interviews with each of my interviewees to gain more context and understanding about themselves as collectors and to get to know their collections a bit more. In addition, in the future I would ensure ample time to be able to photograph the collections of my interviewee's myself, in order to have more freedom with how I use the images taken to visualize their collector/collection relationship within the book.

credits

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apostolou, Menelaos. “Why men collect things? A case study of fossilised dinosaur eggs.” *Journal of Economic Psychology* 32, no. 3 (2011): 410–417.

Apostolou discusses the non-utilitarian nature of collecting and possible motivations for why collectors have this habit despite its nature. While Apostolou focuses mainly on men in this article, it was still insightful to understand a perspective focusing on the rarity, aesthetics, and size of objects being significant factors in a collector’s decision making process.

“Cabinet of curiosities,” Wikimedia Foundation, last modified Feb 26, 2023, 13:33, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_curiosities.

This article highlights the history and characteristics of the Wunderkammer, also known as the “Cabinet of Curiosity.” I used this article to build upon my previous knowledge of the Wunderkammer, and get a better understanding of its purpose and use. I found it helpful in organizing my ideas for potential thesis outcomes.

“Cabinets of Curiosities and The Origin of Collecting.” Sotheby’s. Accessed February 24, 2023. <https://www.sothebysinstitute.com/news-and-events/news/cabinets-of-curiosities-and-the-origin-of-collecting>.

This article contains a brief yet descriptive explanation of the Wunderkammer. Highlighting its use by aristocrats to entertain their guests as a method by which they could make themselves appear to be intellectual and worldly hosts. The article also contains a selection of images that help the reader to visualize what the “Cabinets of Curiosity” looked like.

Formanek, Ruth. “Why They Collect: Collectors Reveal Their Motivations.” *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality* 6, no. 6 (1991).

Formanek reveals the results of a survey investigating why individuals collect, and highlights common motivations. While the survey might be limited, it provides insightful findings about why individuals are drawn to their habit. I found this article helpful in building upon my understanding of collecting and the motivations involved.

Ijams Spaid, Brian. “Exploring Consumer Collecting Behavior: a Conceptual Model and Research Agenda.” *The Journal of consumer marketing* 35, no. 6 (2018): 653–662.

Spaid investigates the behaviors that surround the act of collecting, and the motivations behind those behaviors. Spaid also delves into the psychological effects as a result of engaging in the activity. This article was significant in building my understanding of why people collect, the process of collecting, and how a collector’s identity plays a significant role in this activity.

McIntosh, William D., and Brandon Schmeichel. “Collectors and collecting: A social psychological perspective.” *Leisure Sciences* 26, no. 1 (2004): 85–97.

This article takes a look at collecting through the perspective of a psychological lens. It seeks to reveal the motivations that create a habit out of the activity, as well as explain why. It provides the explanation that collecting is a compelling habit as a result of a process of setting goals and achieving them in order to maintain the positive feedback loop of progress or success in doing so.

Pearce, Susan M. “Collecting Reconsidered.” *In Interpreting Objects and Collections*, 193–204. Routledge, 1994.

Pearce analyzes three different methods of collecting, and the motivations behind them. Souvenir collecting pertaining to the collection of objects stemming from a place of nostalgia or personal connection, fetishistic collecting stemming from a sense of compulsion or addiction, and systematic collecting stemming from a desire to classify a complete set of objects.

Pearce, Susan M. “The Urge To Collect” *In Interpreting Objects and Collections*, 157–159. Routledge, 1994.

Pearce focuses on what draws people to collect, and the motivations and desires that are a part of the activity of collecting. Delving into the urge to collect, Pearce suggests that there is no one all defining motive, but rather a series of numerous urges that can be experienced. This article was helpful in plainly stating what I had been discovering throughout my research, namely that the act of collecting doesn’t have one neat and tidy explanation. This article was significant in my process of figuring out the scope of my thesis outcome, as I focused in on wanting to showcase the individual experiences and motivations for every collector.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pomian, Krzysztof. "The Collection: Between the Visible and the Invisible." *In Interpreting Objects and Collections*, 160-174. Routledge, 1994.

In this article, Pomian describes various types of collections throughout the world and throughout history, offering discussion and insight for each, ranging from conquered booty to religious offerings, to royal treasures. In the end, Pomian prescribes a meaningful purpose to collections, that being their role as intermediaries in helping an onlooker understand the world from which the objects in the collection came from. I found this aspect of the article especially meaningful, as it became the purpose I wanted my thesis to live up to.

Rykwert, Joseph. "Why Collect?" *History Today*, 12, 2001, 32-37, <http://search.proquest.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/magazines/why-collect/docview/202814873/se-2>.

Rykwert attempts to find the reasons why individuals collect by analyzing specific individuals, groups, and cultures. In doing so, Rykwert manages to find display a varied assortment of reasonings that paint a multifaceted image of the motivations behind collecting. I used this article to get a sense of context and build my understanding surrounding the topic.

"Wunderkammer: A Century of Curiosities." *The Museum of Modern Art*, May 20, 2008. <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/272>.

This article highlights a modern interpretation of the traditional "Cabinet of Curiosities" and brings together several collections by different artists. I used this article to gain insight into modern reflections on the idea of the Wunderkammer, and to serve as inspiration for my thesis outcome.

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