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## Introversion, Play, and Childhood: The Ideas Behind the Remnants

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Murray State University Honors College

HONORS THESIS

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Introversion, Play, and Childhood: The Ideas Behind the Remnants

Sara Talwalkar

05/20

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Introversion, Play, and Childhood: The Ideas Behind the Remnants

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for the Murray State University Honors Diploma

Sara Talwalkar

05/20

## Abstract

Closed and confined spaces provide my introverted personality a place to examine, explore, and unwind. Being an introvert has inspired this senior thesis exhibition, exploring the relationship between interior and exterior spaces and child-like play. Growing up I didn't crave a social life outside of my nuclear family and home. I spent a majority of my time inside my bedroom, but curious about the lively atmosphere outside of my bedroom. The act of play with my siblings would break down my introverted tendencies and present me with new objects, toys, and materials to explore. Now, my dorm room has become my refuge, similar to my childhood bedroom, and play has been found when I experiment and make work in the art studios.

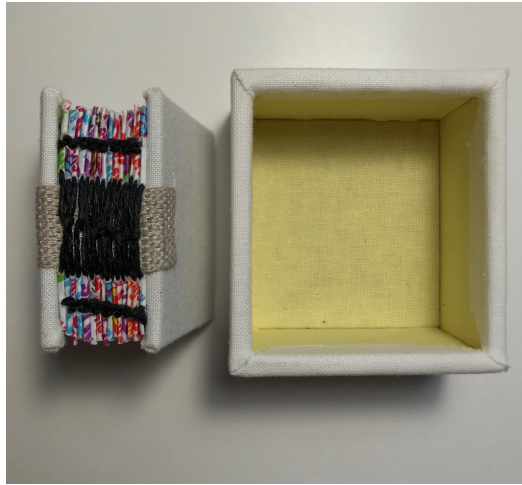
Inspired by my childhood toys, the books, boxes, and objects I make are derived from my introverted childhood. I use repetition within the candy wrapper folios of the books to give visual impact and mimic the multiples of the boxes themselves, as well as many of my childhood toys. Some boxes have been made to custom fit the item inside creating contrast between a nondescript exterior and a bright and colorful interior. Other boxes hold remnants of items from a celebration I would discover once the party was over when I felt comfortable emerging from my room. The text and imagery on the inside of the box lids, as well as using primary colors inside with a cream exterior provide context to the interior and exterior conversation. The archival boxes are in contradiction to the non-archival objects inside. This pairing comments on the relationship of precious versus non-precious and the celebration of commonplace items, like candy wrappers which are normally discarded.

I am interested in the relationship between the viewer, the object, and the space in between, while simultaneously inviting the viewer to interact with the work. The combination of

the formal qualities, the desired tactility, and the small scale of the pieces produces a coherent senior thesis exhibition that is interactive, targets a wide audience, and is adaptable to any available space. As a printmaker who is drawn to bookbinding, Barbara Barnes Allen and Subodh Gupta are two artists who influence my work. I have taken inspiration from Allen's use of everyday items and Gupta's use of sculpture and repetition. Taking inspiration from these artists and life experiences, I have used bookbinding and box construction in this senior thesis exhibition to portray fragments of the introversion from my childhood.



*Two Days and 3 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, linen thread, PVA, view 1



*Two Days and 3 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, linen thread, PV, view 2

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**Work 3:** *One Hour and Procrastination*, mystery Dum Dum wrappers, mulberry paper, PVA, linen thread, 1 ½"x1 ½"x 2"

**Work 4:** *1,800 seconds I and II*, Starburst wrappers, mulberry, PVA, linen thread, ½"x ¾ "x ¾"

**Work 5:** *One Week and 6 Hours and 7,200 seconds*, cherry, Dum Dum suckers, micron pen, linen thread, mulberry paper, 8"x 8"x 4 ¼ "

**Work 6:** *Two Weeks and 4 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, cotton fabric, PVA, linen tape, lightbulb, micron pen, (6) 1 ½ "x 2 1/8 " hexagonal prism

**Work 7:** *Four Days and 60 Minutes of Trial and Error*, binders board, bookcloth, cotton fabric, PVA, beer and Coca Cola bottle caps, copper wire, 6 ¼ " x 1 ¾ " x 2".

**Work 8:** *Three Days and 36 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, cotton fabric, PVA, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, mulberry paper, linen thread, 5 ¾ " x 2" x 2 1/8 "

**Work 9:** *Two Days and 200 minutes and 2,000 seconds*, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, mulberry paper, PVA, linen thread, 1 ¾ " x 1 ½ " x 5", and **Work 8**

**Work 10:** *One Semester and 8 Weeks and 16 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, mulberry paper, PVA, Thanksgiving remnants and found objects, 4" x 5" x 8"

## Chapter 1: Content Backed Up with References

### 1.1 Introversion

Growing up, I didn't crave a social life outside of my nuclear family and home. I spent a majority of my time inside my bedroom, but curious about the lively atmosphere in my home outside of my bedroom. I always preferred to listen to conversations between people rather than initiating them, getting along better with books, stories and my imagination than friends.

Introversion has several different definitions, one of which is being someone who is "oriented toward the internal private world of one's self and one's inner thoughts and feelings, rather than toward the outer world of people and things."<sup>1</sup> This definition is applicable to the way I function on a day-to-day basis. While some turn to many people to share each and every moment of their day, I share information with a very select few.

The dormitory and the studio are the same in that there are always people everywhere at all hours of the day. The studios are a place of constant action and commotion. Unlike in the studios, the dorms provide a place to retreat. There, I have much less contact with people, as my roommates and I are on four different schedules. When one of them invites over guests, my door remains shut, imparting a buffer to all the noise.

Closed and confined spaces have provided my introverted personality a space to examine, explore, and unwind. Another definition of an introvert is a person who is shy, quiet, and prefers

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<sup>1</sup> "APA Dictionary of Psychology." n.d. American Psychological Association. American Psychological Association. Accessed April 12, 2020. <https://dictionary.apa.org/introversion>.

to spend time alone rather than often being with other people.<sup>2</sup> I have always recharged by being alone in a quiet space. But life is not sustainable existing only from a bedroom so it has been a contrast between the desire for a reclusive existence and the need to build relationships and further my education. By using remnants from my childhood in my pieces, I am addressing the nostalgia and comfort of my childhood life in contradiction with the uncomfortable requirement of college in order to make meaningful connections in academics and social life.

These personality traits of desiring to be reserved and secluded, avoiding interaction and specifically conflict, and being carefully controlled can be seen within the sliding scale of Eysenck's theories of personality. Dr. Hans Juergen Eysenck was a highly influential German-born British personality psychologist,<sup>3</sup> who developed a personality theory that was based around "biological factors and argued that people inherit a certain type of nervous system that in turn affects their ability to learn and adapt to the environment."<sup>4</sup> Within a text by University of Manchester psychology researcher Saul McLeod, Eysenck goes on to claim that introverts are born with an over-aroused nervous system so they are typically quiet, reserved, in control of their emotions, and shy away from sensation and stimulation.<sup>5</sup> While Eysenck's theories have since been called into question over the legitimacy of whether or not personality is genetic, Eysenck's theory is one that considers the arguments of both nature and nurture.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Introvert." Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. Accessed April 12, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/introvert>.

<sup>3</sup> Revelle, William. "Hans J. Eysenck" *Personality Project*, March 1, 2014. <http://www.w.personality-project.org/revelle/publications/eysenck.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> McLeod, Saul. "Theories of Personality." *Theories of Personality | Simply Psychology*, January 1, 1970. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/personality-theories.html>.

<sup>5</sup> McLeod, Saul.

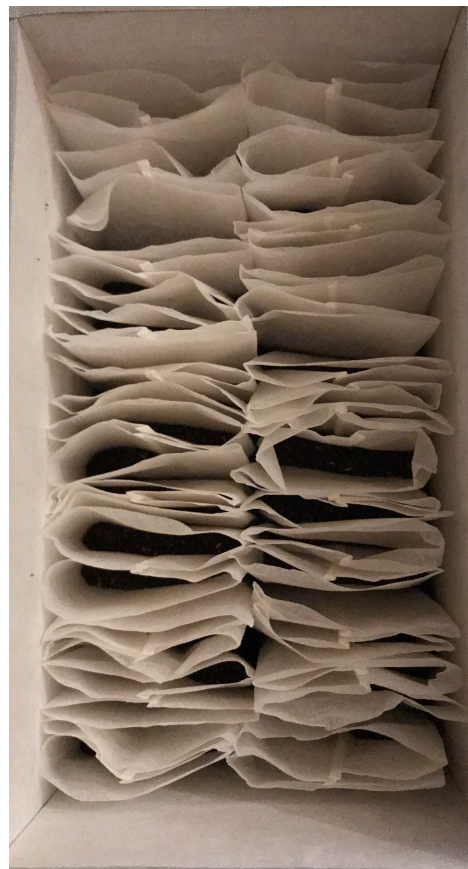
<sup>6</sup> McLeod, Saul.

This theory is applicable to this senior thesis because of the sliding scale that Eysenck developed and has been normalized as a way to describe one's personality. He argues that introversion and extroversion are at opposite ends of a scale and that a person can fall anywhere between the two extremes, allowing for a variety of traits. I see this as realistic, as not everyone falls exactly at one end or another and it can be seen depicted in my books and boxes. These works show both sides of the sliding scale with the bright interiors and subdued exteriors. Each box tells two tales. While I am an introvert, I do not seclude myself at all hours of the day. When needing to recharge, quiet is the best way to feel energized and sociable again, yet on the other hand being alone for too many hours in a day can drive me towards being anxious and moody.

The work completed for this exhibition is inspired by both ends of what can be considered my spectrum. A variety of the boxes in this senior thesis exhibition contain books made from candy wrappers that I have accumulated. Other boxes hold remnants of items from a celebration I would discover once the party was over and I felt comfortable emerging from my room. When I do emerge, it is during the quiet moments or once everyone has dispersed. I experienced the remnants of life, and that is why I now display them within this exhibition. They were important because they were, and still are, my daily experiences that I find to be important, even though they come from the quiet depths of an event. There may still be people at the event, but it is much more subdued than at the height of the evening. I am presenting these objects and items to you in a celebratory manner so the viewer can experience what I did, and still do on a regular basis.



2419200 *seconds*, several views, binders' board, bookcloth, screenprint, mulberry paper, found objects, 4"x6"x5"



*One Semester and 8 Weeks and 16 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, mulberry paper, PVA, Thanksgiving remnants and found objects, 4" x 5" x 8"

One artist whose work connects to introversion is Joan Snyder. Born in 1940 in Highland Park, New Jersey, Snyder broke onto the art scene in the late 1960s with a series of stroke paintings.<sup>7</sup> Her work has evolved over the last 60 years and contains a wide variety of color, texture, and geometric patterning.

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<sup>7</sup> "Biography of Joan Snyder." *Joan Snyder*. Accessed April 13, 2020. <https://www.joansnyder.net/about-joan-snyder>.



*Symphony for Felicia*, by Joan Snyder, featured in the *New Works on Paper* exhibit

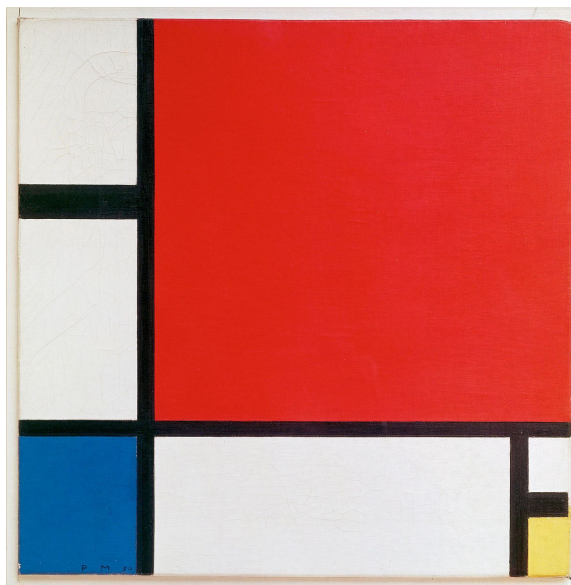
She was featured in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1981 titled *New Work on Paper I*. In the catalog, curator John Elderfield describes her paintings as “a sense of technical introversion.”<sup>8</sup> Snyder uses a wide range of materials, graphics, and liquid media on top of a base of highly structured and controlled geometric design. Often times her canvases would be “damaged” through “tearing, scoring, and painterly scratching.”<sup>9</sup> These alterations to the surface were seen as the artist conveying her experiences, creating disorder from a very orderly existence. I relate to her use of geometric shapes versus the organic alterations she is adopting on top. My box forms have been constructed are very geometric in form and that is contrasted by the more organic books inside. These box forms are very structured and orderly, a requirement for each piece to fit together seamlessly. The candy wrappers are not perfectly flattened and are

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<sup>8</sup> Elderfield, John, *New Works on Paper I*. Edited by Susan Weiley (New York, New York: Rapoport Printing Corp., 1981), Exhibition catalogue.

<sup>9</sup> Elderfield, John 8.

flexible which creates a more organic movement. The books are able to be twisted and manipulated, and they do not like to be still. Once released from the box, some of them spring open to create cylinders if held or open books if put on a flat surface. Both structure and control are important in the making of the books and boxes, as mentioned above. When making the boxes, I have a need for absolute perfection in the finished product. This desire to control every aspect of the process of making is why I am inspired by Piet Mondrian's post-WWI grid paintings, specifically *Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow*. The precision of the grid-work and color fields speak to my desire for the corners of each box to come together at 90 degrees without gaps.



*Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow*, Piet Mondrian, 1929<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Chadwick, Stephanie.. "Mondrian, Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow." *Smarthistory*. April 27, 2016. <https://smarthistory.org/mondrian-composition-ii-in-red-blue-and-yellow/>.





*Two Days and 3 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, linen thread, PVA, view 3



*One Hour and Procrastination*, mystery Dum Dum wrappers, mulberry paper, PVA, linen thread, 1 ½”x1 ½”x 2” [Back] **and** *1,800 seconds I and II*, Starburst wrappers, mulberry, PVA, linen thread, ½”x ¾”x ¾” [Front]

## 1.2 Play

Play is what children do from the moment they wake up to the moment they go to bed. It's what adults tell teenagers to grow up from. It's what adults dream of doing if they wish to escape reality. It's what I am capturing within my senior thesis exhibition, to hold onto my inner child.

We all do it at some point or another, and it has been a staple in a child's activity that can be traced back to Ancient Greece<sup>11</sup> and occurs around the world. Children play in whatever environment is provided to them, using available objects to entertain themselves to stimulate their creativity and growing brains. When playing, children pick objects and form a bond with them from a young age. This item acts as a comfort blanket as they grow older and begin exploring the world around them.<sup>12</sup>

Children also play with toys to exercise their imagination and, as they get older, to pass time and combat boredom. Within my show, I have made a set of peg board games seen at every Cracker Barrel. It has become very iconic imagery, and I have recreated it because it was a quintessential game growing up. My siblings and I used it to pass the time waiting for dinner and distracting ourselves from the length of the wait.

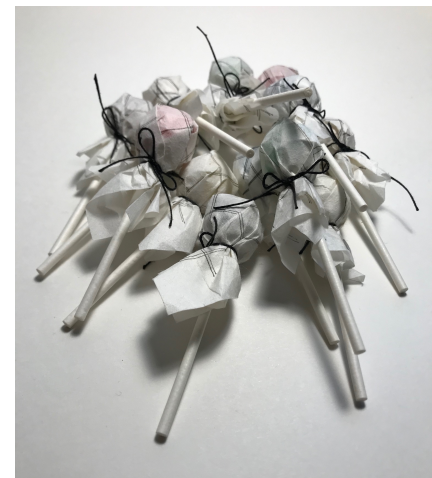
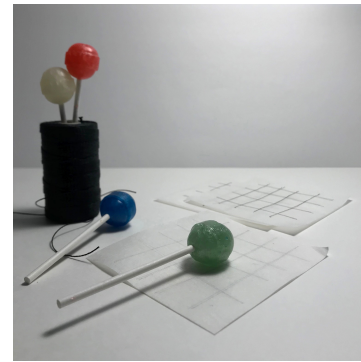
The idea of play is one that I use throughout my entire senior thesis show. This made the scale very important. Most of my work can be held in one or two hands and can be played with, flipped through, or manipulated. Children innately want to play, and the books I have made are the adult mediation of that. The repetition of the actions that go into creating a book or a box

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<sup>11</sup> Frost, Joe L., *A History of Childrens Play and Play Environments toward a Contemporary Child-Saving Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Habermeyer, Sharlene. 2020. "4 Reasons Children Treasure Their Blankets in Happy & Uncertain Times." Good Parenting Brighter Children. April 7, 2020. <https://goodparentingbrighterchildren.com/reasons-children-treasure-blankets/>.

parallel to the actions of building things as a child. The games are able to be played and the suckers have games of tic-tac-toe on the outside of the wrappers. There are extra suckers that people can take away from the exhibit so that they can have a sucker and a game. The materials of my books are also significant to my childhood, which was a time that being carefree and playful was accepted.



*One Week and 6 Hours and 7,200 seconds, cherry, Dum Dum suckers, micron pen, linen thread, mulberry paper, 8"x 8"x 4 1/4", several views*

There are also artists that I draw inspiration from that work within the idea of play. One influence is a trio of artists who displayed together at an exhibition at the Simone DeSousa Gallery and called themselves RaRoCo. The artists are Rachel Reynolds Z, Robert Zahorsky, and Corrie Baldorf. The exhibition is an amalgamation of different mediums of works that all touch on whimsy and play.



*Awareness Potatoes*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> RaRoCo. 2016. "Three Artists Blur the Line Between Art and Play." *Hyperallergic*. Detroit Michigan: Hyperallergic Media Inc. <https://hyperallergic.com/316883/three-artists-blur-the-line-between-art-and-play/>.

The use of non-traditional materials and bright colors help reinforce those ideas. Within the gallery, there are games of corn-hole with text printed on the faces of the boards, rainbow poly-optic potatoes, and large scale interactive sculptures. Each work was designed to be light in subject and enjoyed by the viewer for what it is. This gallery also has created a way for art to be easily accessible and very much approachable by the general public. By including objects of art that are not the typical frame on the wall, the exhibition invites a wider range of participants.

### **1.3 Childhood**

Childhood. It is the time of life where nothing important matters and when it is okay to be carefree and at ease. It is this time that personally holds the strongest memories and comfort, from the idyllic moments at home to traveling with the family. Memories. They are a fickle thing, coming and going and being altered, distorted, and manipulated. The hippocampus is responsible for the “formation of memories of events that happen to us”<sup>14</sup> because it is one of the parts of the brain that keeps growing and developing post-birth and continues to make neurons into adulthood. This also means that if the hippocampus is in high production from a young age, it can be a reason why children are more prone to forgetting things. The new neurons may be disrupting previous existing network connections of already-formed memories.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ikeda, Kaori, and Hayley Teasdale, eds. “How Our Memory Develops.” Curious. Australian Academy of Science, September 26, 2017. <https://www.science.org.au/curious/people-medicine/how-memory-develops>.

<sup>15</sup> Ikeda, Kaori, and Hayley Teasdale, eds. “How Our Memory Develops.”

These memories of security that are formed during childhood are what have driven this senior thesis exhibition. The boxes within this exhibit have been created so that each book has a home, a safe space to rest. They are also why I have tried to use bright, inviting colors. The desire is that there is an air of whimsy to the entire senior thesis show. The books are small enough for a child to easily hold but has the added complication of opening a box lid and removing the book inside. As children get older, the toys they play with become more complicated and complex.



*Two Days and 3 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, linen thread, PVA, *views 4 and 5*

Not all the boxes contain books though. Some hold objects. Inspired by my childhood toys, the books, boxes, and objects I make are derived from my introverted childhood. Most of the objects that I am using within the books and boxes are abandoned after their primary use has

passed and are then easily overlooked, much like a childhood toy is when the user begins to grow up. The contents of these boxes are not toys though. Candy wrappers, bottle caps, light bulbs, daily objects that have no use other than their immediate purpose were chosen because of the lack of ties between the item and the viewer. These objects have been bound, linked or glued together and preserved inside a vessel made specifically for each finished product. I wanted them to become precious objects such as a treasured childhood toy through the treating of it as a sacred object by placing it in a box with a lid.



*Two Weeks and 4 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, cotton fabric, PVA, linen tape, lightbulb, micron pen, (6) 1 ½ “x 2 1/8 “ hexagonal prism



*Four Days and 60 Minutes of Trial and Error*, binders board, bookcloth, cottonfabric, PVA, beer and Coca Cola bottle caps, copper wire, 6 ¼ “ x 1 ¾ “ x 2”, view 1.



*Four Days and 60 Minutes of Trial and Error*, binders board, bookcloth, cotton fabric, PVA, beer and Coca Cola bottle caps, copper wire, 6 ¼ “ x 1 ¾ “ x 2”, view 2.

An artist that uses childhood in their work is Alexander Calder, and he was chosen specifically for his work with toys. An American multi-medium artist born in 1898, Calder would go on to create both small and large scale works after returning to art after receiving a degree in engineering. From a young age he showed an acute interest in sculpture and would manipulate wire and sheet metal into small animals. Throughout his career, Calder would dabble in many different skill sets, from illustrating the Barnum & Bailey Circus to making a two-week long series of oil paintings, only to discover he truly did prefer sculpture.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “BIOGRAPHY.” *CALDER FOUNDATION*. Accessed April 13, 2020. <http://www.calder.org/life/biography>.



The works that are being included here fall within the toy category and are composed with sheet metal, found objects, wire, wood, and other building materials. The first piece is *Dollhouse*, c.1945. The second piece is titled *Kangaroo*, c.1927.<sup>17</sup> Both of these pieces evoke a sense of childhood and the childlike play that occurred. Dollhouses and toys on wheels were, and still are, easily found in a household with children.



#### 1.4 Found Objects

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<sup>17</sup> “CALDER FOUNDATION: WORK: BY CATEGORY.” *CALDER FOUNDATION*. Accessed April 13, 2020. <http://www.calder.org/work/by-category/toy>.

One of the four primary concepts that is incorporated into my senior thesis exhibition is the utilization of found objects. This comes from my nature to save remnants from events as a way to preserve these events and memories. I have a strong fear of forgetting all of the memories I have, good and bad, so I hold onto reminders from almost everything, as well as document daily itinerary during all travel.

The found object movements started in the 1900s when artists began using objects they had discovered, treating them as fine art objects and incorporate them into assemblages. Picasso has been attributed with being the first artist to incorporate these found objects, specifically newspapers and matchboxes in collages and cubist constructions. From there, the movement gained popularity through dada, surrealist, and pop artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Carl Andre, Salvador Dali, and Damien Hurst among many others.<sup>18</sup> I am personally inspired by Carl Andre's work both because of his use of found objects and orderly compositions.

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<sup>18</sup> "Found Object – Art Term." *Tate*. Accessed May 1, 2020. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/found-object>.



*10x10 Altstadt Copper Square*, Carl Andre, 1967<sup>19</sup>

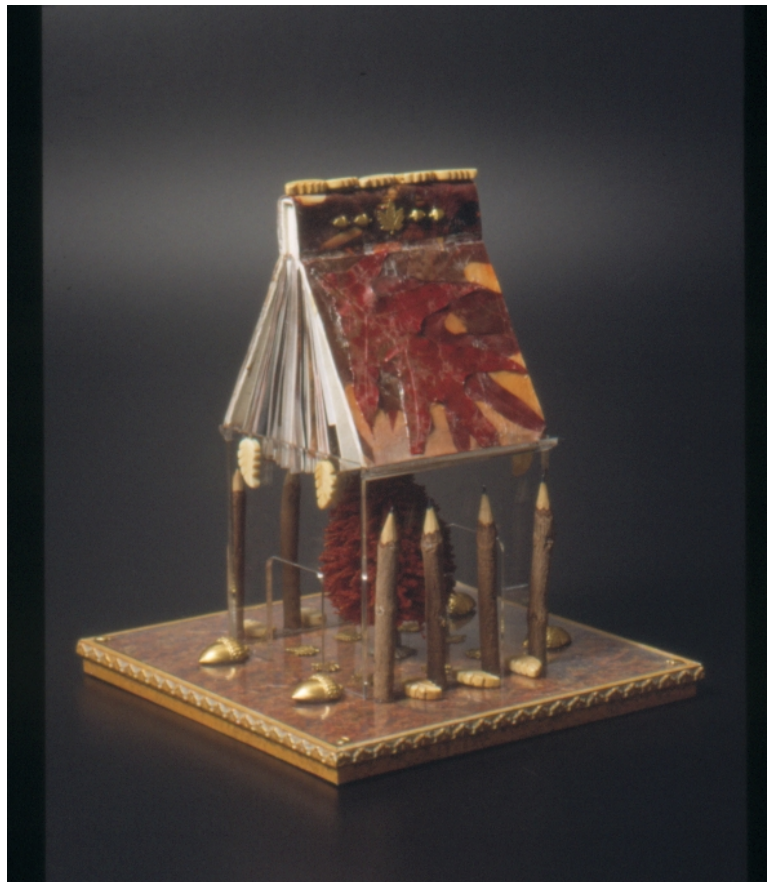
My artist statement references two artists that made or currently make work that is related to the idea of found objects. The first artist is Barbara Barnes Allen. Allen is a Seattle-based artist who completed her studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art and the Ringling School of Art. Her art-making practice centers around intricately executed, architectural artist books. She uses items that could be easily found in daily life and alters them to complete a narrative. For example, in her piece titled *If Trees Could Write Poems*<sup>20</sup> (shown below), Allen uses the process of assemblage to create the base of the structure. She incorporates pencils made from twigs, acorn decorations and leaf charms to tie the content of the book to the rest of the piece and create a narrative. The book itself is made up of copies of paintings of landscapes that have quotes from poets and philosophers superimposed across the images. The narrative she wanted to tell with

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<sup>19</sup> Lauf, Cornelia. "10 x 10 Altstadt Copper Square." *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, April 16, 2020. <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/214>.

<sup>20</sup> "Barbara Barnes Allen." n.d. *Woman Made Gallery*. Accessed April 12, 2020. <https://womanmade.org/artwork/barbara-barnes-allen/>.

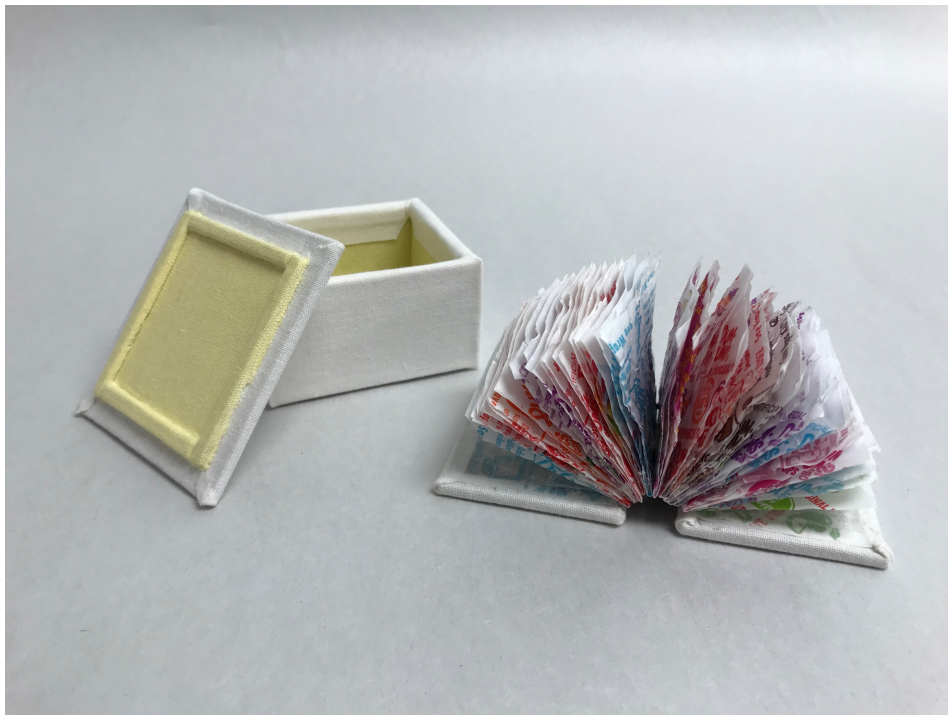
this work is the idea that while trees themselves cannot speak out, they are an inspiration to many people, hence the use of wood, acorns and leaves as a direct reference to the trees themselves.



*If Trees Could Write Poems*, Barbara Barnes Allen

This connects to my work through collecting and altering objects. My senior thesis show revolves around the act of collecting objects from my daily life existing in my room, altering them from their original form, and preserving them in artist books and/or boxes. One of the collected items that is reoccurring throughout my senior thesis show is candy wrappers. They are taken from Dum Dum suckers primarily and bound into several versions of books, some of

which are paired with custom-sized boxes and some of which stand on their own, as seen below. While Allen left some of her found objects as is without any alterations, I try to alter what I work with so that it doesn't come across as just preserving trash. My pieces are also dealing with one general theme across the whole of the works, instead of each piece telling its own narrative.



*Two Days and 3 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, linen thread, PVA,  
*view 6*

The second artist in my artist statement is Subodh Gupta. Born in Khagaul, Bihar, Gupta received his Bachelors of Fine Arts in Painting from the College of Arts & Crafts in Patna, India and now lives and works in New Delhi and is seen as a highly prolific Indian artist. He has been

a part of many international exhibitions with his variety of media, primarily painting and sculpture, but also installation, photography, video and performance. His relocating from the village he grew up in to the city center tells a story of the modern-day India.<sup>21</sup> There is rapid urbanization occurring throughout India, and Gupta captures that through a broad use of stainless steel utensils within his bodies of work. He is interested in the things that vanish and disappear as a natural reaction to urbanization and his own personal change of location. His works are an accumulation of stainless steel household kitchenware and utensils to create very large scale installations, such as the work below titled *Ali Baba*, and was made in 2011.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “Subodh Gupta.” Galleria Continua. Galleria Continua. Accessed April 12, 2020. <https://www.galleriacontinua.com/artists/subodh-gupta-33>.

<sup>22</sup> Galleriacontinua. “Subodh Gupta.”



*Ali Baba*, Subodh Gupta

This relates to what I work on because of the amalgamation of objects. Gupta's works all fall under the same concept and use a narrow down collection of items, and while all of mine are within one concept, I use a larger range of objects. Similarly, the objects I use are autobiographical in the sense that they are fragments of my life. Both of us are using objects that are culturally significant to each respective person, but the items Gupta uses are important on a much larger scale. The culture of his entire community and the evolutions that are occurring within that culture have shaped his entire body of work. My artifacts are much more intimate and personal because they are based off of my life specifically, not an entire culture.

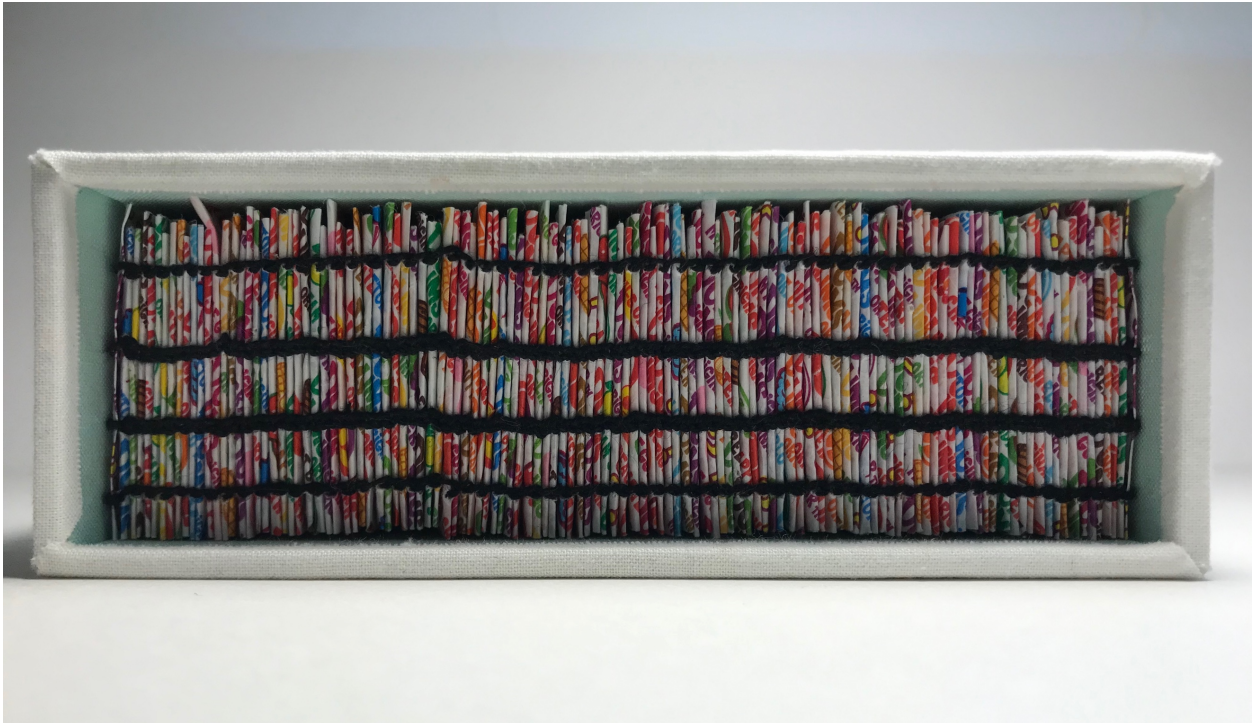
## Chapter 2: Process, Materials, and Method

### 2.1 Repetition

As I have made work over the course of the four years of college, I have discovered that repetition has a significance within everything I have made, particularly within the books and boxes. The repetition within the candy wrapper pages of the books gives visual impact and mimics the multiples of the boxes themselves, like many of my childhood toys. By using a visible Coptic stitch, which forms a chain of loops along the spine, on several of the books, I am able to increase the visual interest through the repetition of the pages. When viewing a book bound by a Coptic stitch, the eye is drawn across the spine from left to right. There is intrigue based around the quantity of the wrappers that causes the repetition, and the variations in the candy wrappers create a variation in imagery that keeps the eye interested as it travels the length of the spine. Since there is no added imagery or text, the repetitious color variances and imperfections become the means of communication to the viewer.

Repetition can also be seen in my art making practice itself in both the boxes and the books. Each of the boxes I make follow the same proportions but vary in scale. To make each box, the binders board must be measured and marked out, cut, and assembled. This creates a repetitious action that is completed over and over again until each box and box lid had been completed. Each book is comprised of many folios that are stitched together to make a final product. The action of stitching each folio to the last one added makes a very repetitive task. It is this motion of repetition that is just as important as the work itself.





*Three Days and 36 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, cotton fabric, PVA, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, mulberry paper, linen thread, 5 ¾ “ x 2” x 2 1/8 “

The idea of repetition can also be seen in many of my childhood toys. While I did grow up with Polly Pockets and Barbies, I also enjoyed playing with my brothers’ Lincoln Logs and Tinker Toys at a young age. Both of these are made up of sets of wooden pieces that can be assembled, disassembled, and then reassembled in hundreds of different arrangements. Lincoln Logs come as a set of different length logs with grooves for easy stacking, and each piece was the same color and diameter. Tinker Toys come as a set of different colored and different length rods that get connected to wheels to build any shape imaginable. The repetition in shape, color,

and amount ties into my use of repetition seen in the Coptic bound books and within the chain of bottle caps.



*Two Days and 200 minutes and 2,000 seconds*, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, mulberry paper, PVA, linen thread, 1 3/4 " x 1 1/2 " x 5" [Front] **and** *Three Days and 36 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, cotton fabric, PVA, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, mulberry paper, linen thread, 5 3/4 " x 2" x 2 1/8 " [Back]

As I got older, I became interested in Legos for the same qualities. Legos have a wider variety in piece size, shape, and color, but because the number of pieces found in a set reach upwards of hundreds to thousands, I believe it can be seen too as repetition. One of the first things I did with my brothers once we started a new set was open the first couple of bags and organize pieces by similar shape and color to create organization out of disorganization. Repetition is important to my entire senior thesis show and has been an influential factor from a

young age through the constant exposure to toys and games that used the repetition of items, color, and text as their means of communication.

## **2.2 Bookbinding**

One of the two primary techniques used within this senior thesis show is bookbinding, the process of “joining together a number of leaves or folios within covers to form a codex or book.”<sup>23</sup> The folios in this case are the variety of candy wrappers. When choosing the right candy to use in these books, there are three different criteria; the size of the wrapper, if it can be unwrapped without any damage to the wrapper, and a variety of colors. Before a book can be stitched together, the wrappers have to be folded in half, and then in quarters depending on the starting size. The spines then need to be reinforced with mulberry paper, a lightweight Japanese paper. This provides support and strength for the folio and allows the folios to be stitched together without the holes tearing out.

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<sup>23</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2015. “Bookbinding.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. February 3, 2015. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/bookbinding>.



In Progress: *1,800 seconds I and II*, Starburst wrappers, mulberry, PVA, linen thread,  $\frac{1}{2}$ "x  $\frac{3}{4}$ " "x  $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Once all the reinforcements have been glued in place, a template is made to determine where the holes will be punched. The determining factor for this is the type of stitch that will be used to join the leaves of the book. I have two different stitch patterns that I tend to lean towards, a French binding and a Coptic binding. I prefer the French binding (see Image A) for books that have a longer spine length because with this stitch the folios are bound with linen tapes that span the depth of the book. The threads weave the tapes into the spine of the book and are used to attach the covers to the text block. If the text block is too short, then the spine will not have the visual balance of linen tapes and folios. The Coptic binding (see Image B) is a chain stitch that

exposes more of the bound spine and creates a more flexible and manipulative end product.

There are no linen tapes in this binding. Instead it is bound by a connective stitch that creates the spine of the book. This stitch has been my preferred stitch for many of the books in this senior thesis show due to its flexibility.



Image A



Image B



Work in Progress: *Two Days and 200 minutes and 2,000 seconds*, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, mulberry paper, PVA, linen thread, 1 ¾" x 1 ½" x 5"

### 2.3 Box Construction

The second primary technique used within this senior thesis show is box construction. The majority of the books in this show have a box that is designed specifically for it. These boxes are made to the specific measurements of each book and used as both a display and housing method. The boxes are made out of binders' board, a compressed cardboard sheet, polyvinyl acetate (PVA), a non-acidic glue, and two different colors of bookcloth. Bookcloth is any thin piece of cotton or linen that has been backed by a piece of lightweight paper. All three

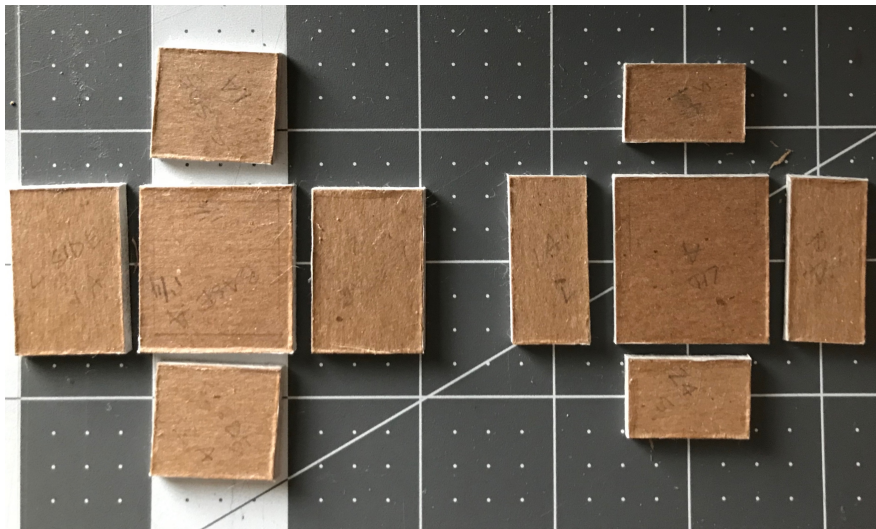
materials are archival, or that they are meant to last without deteriorating the quality of the artwork.



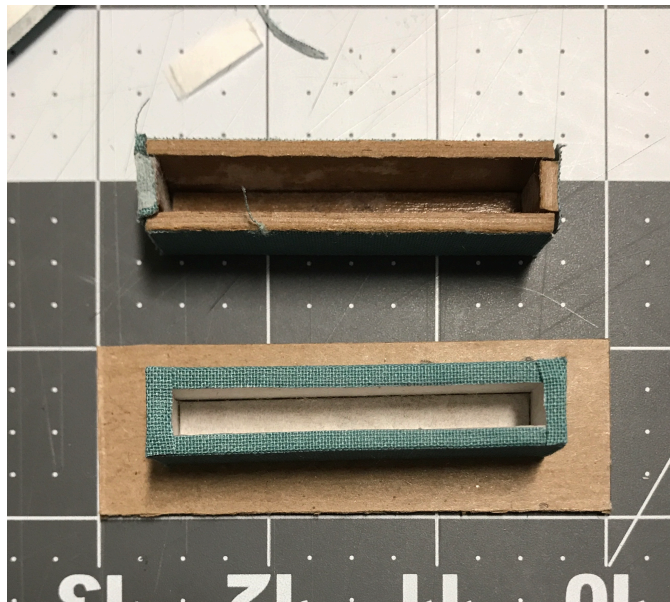
Binders board that is measured and ready to be cut.

Using a ruler, I mark out the dimensions of a bottom panel and the two short ends. From there, the long sides are determined. It is in this specific order because the long sides have to include the additional thickness of the short ends of binders' board, otherwise there will be gaps in the corners of the box. These pieces are then all cut out using a box cutter and adhered down onto a piece of colorful bookcloth; bottom panel in the middle, short sides above and below the

bottom panel but still in line with it, and lastly the long sides on the left and right of the bottom panel.

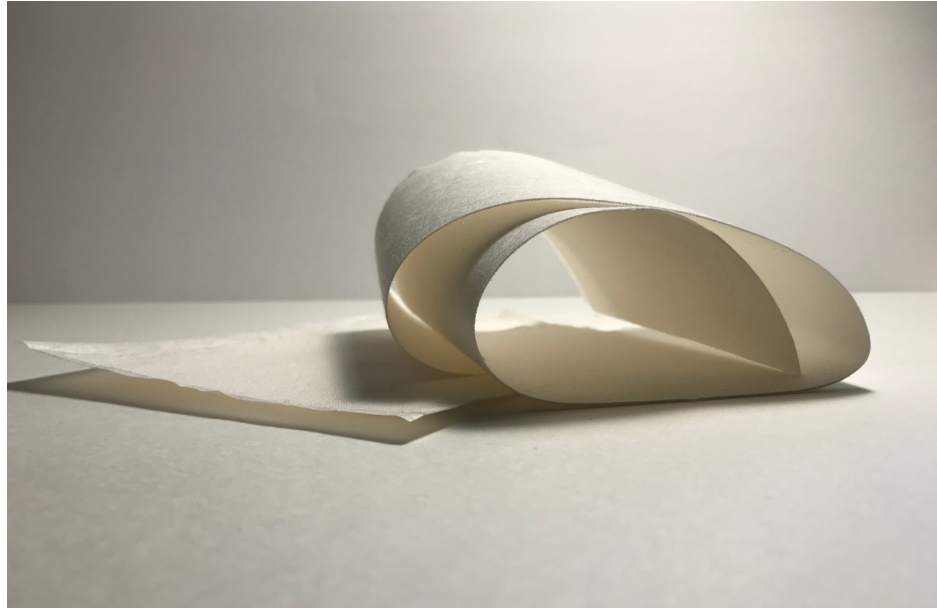


Prepared binders board, laid out, and ready to be assembled.



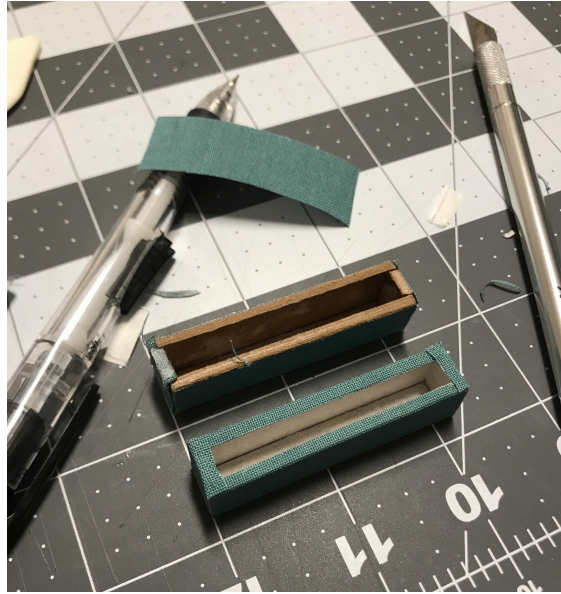
One test box [above], and one completed box [below].





Finished Book Cloth

These pieces get folded up so that the colored side is on the inside and then pasted into place. To wrap the outside, a separate sheet of bookcloth is cut into a strip slightly taller than the box and long enough to wrap around once fully. It is then adhered to the outside, and the excess is folded over the top edge and under the bottom edge and pasted down. The lid is assembled separately and added afterwards.



One completed box, one in progress.

## 2.4 Formal Qualities

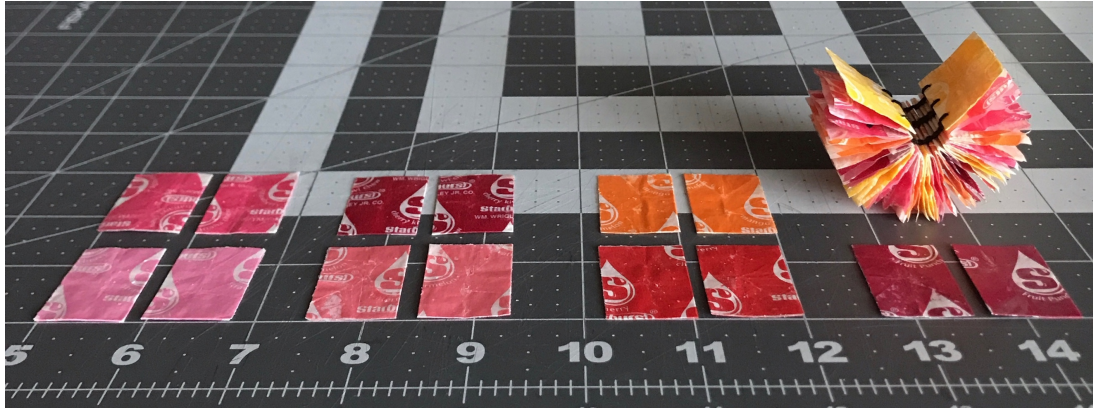
When making art work, there are two aspects to consider: content and formal qualities. The formal qualities that will be addressed in this section are color, size, and text.

There is an importance in the colors of the bookcloth of the interior of the boxes versus the exterior. I made the decision to have the interiors brightly colored so they catch the eye and attention of the viewer. This is in sharp contrast with the cream exterior of all the boxes in this show. This was to emphasize the relationship of interior and exterior spaces and its connection to introversion. The interiors of the boxes and the bright colors found there symbolize my bright, open, cheerful personality that is revealed in the company of the people I trust and am most comfortable around. These personality traits are normally hidden away during general daily interaction. The cream colored exterior space creates a seamless blend into the background,

much like how an introvert desires to be unseen while interacting with a large group of people or within any uncomfortable social situation. It is this duality between the neutral and colorful bookclothes and the personalities they symbolize that connect the spaces within and outside the boxes to the idea of introversion.

Secondly, each item in this show is small enough to be held in one or two hands and is made to be manipulated because I wanted everything in the show to be interacted with and to provide an intimate moment. There is something extremely intimate about holding an object in a hand and examining it up close, and the intention is that the entire exhibition is remnants from my daily life and artifacts of personal memories. By putting objects into a custom built container, there is an added sense of preciousness and celebration around the object. It elevates the priority of the objects and causes the viewer to see it with added intent and more than just a discarded item.

Lastly, the text on the inside of the books from the candy wrappers forms a pattern which creates visual intrigue as the viewer looks through. This was chosen, as there is no added text or imagery, and I wanted the candy wrapper text to speak for itself. Part of their allure is from the repetition of the folios and stitching, and the other part is from the repetitious pattern of color and text inside.



In Progress: *1,800 seconds I and II*, Starburst wrappers, mulberry, PVA, linen thread,  $\frac{1}{2}$ "x  $\frac{3}{4}$ " "x  $\frac{3}{4}$ "



*Two Days and 3 Hours*, binders board, bookcloth, Dum Dum sucker wrappers, linen thread, PVA, *view 7*

## 2.5 New Technical Skills

While making these boxes and books, there have been several new technical skills that I have had to master in order to be successful in the completion of the works, the first of which is making bookcloth. Bookcloth, as mentioned previously, is any kind of cloth adhered to a lightweight backing paper. This opens the door for any and all kinds of fabric to be turned into bookcloth. I started making my own with a pale cream colored cotton fabric, mulberry paper, PVA, a foam brush, acrylic sheeting, and an ink roller.

There are several ways to make bookcloth and this is the one that worked the best for me. To start, I take a sheet of fabric and cut it down to the dimensions needed. From there, the mulberry paper is cut down to a size slightly larger than the fabric so that there is a border around all edges of the fabric. These will be used to hold the bookcloth in place while it dries. Next, using the foam brush and paint a thin layer of PVA glue onto mulberry paper, making sure not to make it too thick. The glue could seep through if the fabric is too thin, and once the glue is spread, lay the fabric onto the mulberry paper, centered in the middle. Gently smooth. Lastly, turn the mulberry paper upside down onto a sheet of acrylic and use a roller to remove the air from between the fabric and paper. While doing this, the edges of the mulberry should seal onto the acrylic, creating a very smooth surface. This can be checked by looking at the underside of the acrylic, if it is clear. Try to get rid of as many bubbles as possible for the best end result. Let the bookcloth dry, then remove and trim off the edges.



Book Cloth in Progress

The second skill I have had to master is how to sew with the right amount of tension as to not tear the folios. The wax paper-like material of the candy wrappers proved to be more delicate than I had originally thought, and it took several attempts of trial and error to learn the correct type of thread and how tightly to pull to achieve a highly polished book. Through these tests, it was discovered that un-waxed linen thread is preferred because there is less friction between the thread and the edges of the punched holes. It has also been determined that for the best results, it is best to reinforce the spines of the book with a lightweight yet durable paper. This second layer of material allows the eye of the needle to go through the holes without immediately tearing them.

## Chapter 3: Reflection and Analysis

### 3.1 Lessons Learned and Appreciated

Over the course of the past four years at Murray State University, I have learned many lessons, both in academics and about life. Two of the most important lessons that I have learned are the merits of hard work and to not take every critique personally. Early on in my printmaking career my major professor said to all of us, “If you learn nothing else in this class, you will learn how to work hard and how to think critically.” That quote has stuck close with me and I am now able to truly understand what she meant. No matter what information is absorbed and learned across the four years, nothing can be accomplished without hard work and dedication. This hard work has turned into many late nights in the studios and many weekends planning and printing, and many art studio critiques have allowed me to develop a higher level of critical thinking.

The second lesson that has left its mark on my time in Murray is the ability to not take every critique personally. There were many critiques that left me close to tears. After conversing with peers and professors, the conclusion was made that I took the feedback provided personally. From that has come the learning curve of understanding what the professors are relaying through critiques on how to make the work more successful while simultaneously allowing the comments to not affect my emotions.

A third thing I have learned being an art student at Murray State is that I will never have access to these kinds of studios again in my lifetime. The quantity and quality of studios here are excellent and that wasn't something that I realized until the opportunities to visit other studios arose. There are a wide variety of processes to be found here with all of the supplies either

purchasable or readily available. That has allowed me to explore several different mediums and access to techniques that might not be found elsewhere. One of these mediums is bookbinding, and if it had not been for the class taught in the Spring of 2018, this show would not look like it does now. From the extensive programming offered at Murray State has come a love of bookbinding and box construction. I participated in a study abroad program to Florence and Rome, Italy for 17 days during the summer of 2018 to learn more about the history of book craft. Over the course of the two weeks there was the opportunity to visit several bookbinderies and paper shops. The precision and care that the artists put into their craft is what drew me to learn more about the skill of bookbinding.

### **3.2 Exhibition Reflection**

Over the course of the last year I have been making art work in preparation for a solo exhibition to fulfill the requirements of a Bachelors in Fine Arts. The ideas that I have been working with have changed and altered, but that has resulted in a senior thesis exhibition dealing with found objects, introversion, play, and childhood. The art works are made with bookbinding techniques and box construction, which play a role helping emphasize and support the content.

This senior thesis show has been in the works for longer than solely this last semester though. Over the span of the last three semesters, there have been four separate reviews of my artwork by a committee of professors of my choosing. They have given feedback an insight on how to strengthen this senior thesis show, which did not start out looking remotely how it does now. At the start of those three semesters, the show consisted of paper prints and architectural imagery of containers and plant-life. There have been dramatic shifts in both content and



presentation, with some iterations being more successful than others. Through these reviews and critiques has emerged the senior thesis that is being presented within my BFA exhibition.

At the start of this process, I wasn't prepared for all that goes into organizing and running a show, but now I understand more of the work and steps that go into a well-put-together exhibition. The amount of prior planning and paperwork has now all fallen into place, and while there is no physical exhibition within a gallery space due to the closure of the university campus, all of the elements are completed in case an opportunity to display this art work arises.

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