

Emily Young

926 Commerce St. 308

Lynchburg, VA 24504

330.690.7787

Conceptual Self Portrait: Graphic Design, Illustration

Research Week Proposal

Research Problem Statement

This project was presented after learning about the use of semiotics and symbolism within conceptual designs and imagery. The class consists of all majors, but most of the students are various art majors. The goal of the class is to learn various ways to communicate through art. The objective of this project was to create a conceptual piece with myself as the subject matter in any approved medium, but I was not allowed to use any imagery of myself. We had to get our concept approved and convey both a strength and a weakness. The goal of this project was to use a medium I am comfortable with to stretch my conceptual approach to a conventional project. This project relied heavily on research as it informed our project in a conceptual sense. I had to brainstorm the use of symbolism and semiotics to portray myself in a conceptual manner. I researched the various potential symbolisms by using polls, consulting people who know me well, and taking tests and reading on the personality types such as the Enneagram and Myers-Briggs. The results of this research were word lists, brainstorm sheets, and thumbnail sketches. This information helped assist in creating my project by researching unique visuals and symbols to represent myself without using literal imagery.

Communication Objective

Through my solution, I communicated various characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses about myself without using any literal imagery. For my conceptual portrait, I chose to design a set of playing cards displayed in four different colors. I grew up playing cards with my entire family, and I am quite competitive when playing a game that involves strategy. Choosing to design playing cards represents some of my favorite childhood memories and also my competitive spirit. It also symbolizes the sociable hostess side of me, who loves inviting friends over for game nights. One of my favorite games to play with friends is a chaotic game called Dutch Blitz, which involves four normal decks of playing cards. Each deck has its own design and color on the back to set them apart from the other and calculate points at the end of the round. I love the chaos-to-order aspect of Dutch Blitz as I am a very organized, perfectionist, numbers-minded individual. I struggle with anxiety and can get easily overwhelmed, just like any player can feel throughout a round of Dutch Blitz. Organizing the cards at the end of the game brings me peace, as if I am organizing my schedule or to-do list.

Visual Solution

Dutch Blitz contains four playing card decks with varying backs, so I chose to design a backing and display it in 4 of my favorite colors. The actual design of the card plays into a lot of symbols for my life. Being a Myers-Briggs ESFJ and an Enneagram 1w2, I have a very bold and distinct personality. I am called the “Provider” and the “Advocate.” I love to make people feel valued and have very black and white views on things. The overall design comes from my love of neutral, dull colors, and design style of a mix between trendy and traditional/classy. The use of the marquise shape and floral illustrations represents a coffee plant and demonstrates my love for coffee and greenery. The “xox” on both sides symbolizes my love for people and my desire to help them be the best version of themselves—the two P’s stand for Peter, my boyfriend, and

Piper, my cat; the two things I love the most! The Christian fish-like symbols surrounding the “xox” represent my faith in Jesus. The ampersand symbolizes my love for typography, and also ties together the two P’s. The four filled in circles on the border represent my immediate family, and the four outlined circles represent Peter’s family. The various roman numeral dates represent 1996, the year I was born, 2015, the year I was baptized, 2018, the year I met Peter and found Piper, and 2019, the year we are getting married. Everything else is a decorative element alluding to my detail-oriented personality using repetition and cohesive design elements.

Production

The production of this project involved a lot of brainstorming, research, word lists, and thumbnail sketches. Before this project I had the desire to create my own card game, but this prompt was a great way to bring my competitive side to life and attach meaning to my desire. At first, I could not decide what direction I wanted to go in for this project. I looked at many different examples of art styles that I could portray within my cards, and I did not know how detail-oriented I wanted to be. At the beginning, I was not even sure if I wanted to do one design in four colors, or four designs in one or four colors. I used Illustrator, and I simply started designing out some of the icons and imagery from my wordlist. It was almost like a puzzle as I was placing icons and coming up with a pattern as I continued designing. I started to really like the direction I was going in, and I changed my mind a few times on the imagery I incorporated into my cards. At first, I started out very literal and eventually learned how to change those icons into more conceptual pieces as I felt inspired. I changed the card colors at the last minute, after I had already created my first round of Photoshop mockups. I am really happy with the end result, and I am glad that I pushed myself to use the pen tool in Illustrator to create something I had desired to create for a while with an attached meaning.