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is described only as beautiful and young, with red lips, white skin, and black hair. Is she tall or short, thin or curvy? Is she smart, talkative, stubborn, athletic, kind, jealous, lazy, funny, or mean? We have to imagine for ourselves.

I set up parameters that would force me to branch out. I decided to focus on narrative content and use design to tell a story rather than sole a problem. I chose Snow White, a story familiar enough to be recognizable but not so well known to be boring or repetitive. I mined the story for visual content, listing colors, objects, characters: anything I could find that might give birth to imagery.

And so it began: experimentation with no outcome in mind. My only goal was to make anything and everything I could and to do so through intuitive making, not analysis. I made 100 representations of the apple. I marbleized stills from the 1938 Disney film. I created icon sets to represent important scenes, gradients to evoke these scenes, and spoof iPhone apps that a modern-day Queen could use to calculate her beauty. I painted. I drew. I took pictures. I made vector illustrations. I collaged.

Conflict

Some of this work is beautiful and some conveys the story in an interesting way, but to me it all felt empty.

Without knowing what I was trying to communicate and why, I had no value system on which to decide if my attempts were successful. I quickly ran out of ideas. To find more fuel for the fire, I broadened my research past the tale itself and into its history and cultural meaning.

The Grimm brothers thought the stories they recorded represented German identity. It's an odd set of values to hold dear: vanity, narcissism, cruelty, and revenge.

I was excited by what I found. And when I spoke about the story, my peers and mentors were excited too. They were intrigued by the Grimm brothers, surprised by the parallels I found between Snow White and Jesus, and in love with the cheeky psychoanalysis that came to me much more easily than imagery.

My ideas were good, but it didn't translate: my making still fell flat. I failed to create imagery motivated by the research. In one hand I had piles of visual work and in the other I had writing, but I could not fit them together.

I almost gave up. I cursed myself for trying to develop a new method so far from my comfort zone. I fell fully into analytical mode. I stopped painting apples and started

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