

Why Design?

*A visual compendium
by Carrie Ambo*

Hi there.

This visual compendium answers the question, *Why Design?* In sixth grade art class, I remember learning about visual perspective and using watercolor pastels for the first time. Throughout middle and high school under the direction of Enid Smith-Becker, I learned about gestalt principles and how they applied to drawing, sculpting, glass-fusing, printing, and photography. The variety of projects we worked on in art classes was coupled with learning about picas and typefaces in the after-school yearbook club.

When I entered my first year of undergrad at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, I fell in love first with the Reynolda House Museum of American Art, in which I had an art history class, and also with oil painting under professor Page Laughlin. The defining moment happened during a presentation from the designer at the Reynolda Museum. She showed a beautiful ad for a Romare Bearden exhibit that she had designed — and it was published in the *Smithsonian* magazine. That was the first time I realized that there were people behind ads and that was their *job*. I met with her for coffee and realized I had to transfer to a school that offered graphic design training.

From a young age, I paid attention to fonts and colors, playing with my mom’s heat embossing tool and craft supplies. This catalog is a collection of the museums that have been home to me, the art that has inspired me, the designers that have energized me, and the things I have collected that reveal my interest in all things visual. These are my muses.

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Fine Art & Museums



GABRIEL CAMPANARIO, 2011
View of the Montlake Bridge
between Portage Bay (Lake Union)
and Lake Washington.

Gabriel Campanario

MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND INDUSTRY – SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

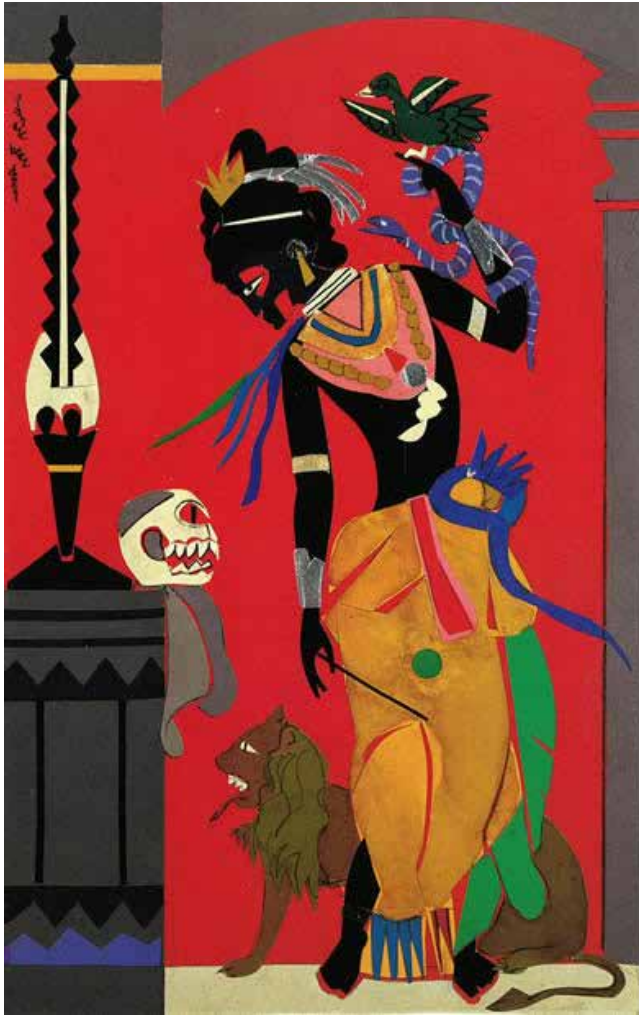
Gabriel Campanario, better known to Seattle residents as *The Seattle Sketcher*, is a Spanish journalist and watercolorist who now lives in Seattle. He works for *The Seattle Times*, where his watercolors are published weekly along with an article. His pieces usually spotlight a local event, historical building, or person.

His work was featured at the Seattle Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) in an exhibit called *Drawn to Seattle*, which I was able to see in the Winter of 2013. The exhibit featured sheets of his work, larger prints, and proudly displayed his worn sketchbooks.

I began clipping his articles a few years ago. Since then, I have moved away from Seattle and my mom has continued to pull aside his work for me. Campanario has also gone on to publish a book that includes a lot of his paintings for the *Seattle Times* and another that helps budding artists get started with Urban Sketching.

Campanario is perhaps best known for founding the Urban Sketchers, a non-profit. As stated in *MyMidwest Magazine*, the Urban Sketchers group have a manifesto that reads:

1. We draw on location, indoors or out, capturing what we see from direct observation.
2. Our drawings tell the story of our surroundings, the places we live and where we travel.
3. Our drawings are a record of time and place.
4. We are truthful to the scenes we witness.
5. We use any kind of media and cherish our individual styles.
6. We support each other and draw together.
7. We share our drawings online.
8. We show the world, one drawing at a time.



ROMARE BEARDEN, 1977

Though the wand held in Circe's hand is cited as her source of power in *The Odyssey*, Bearden's collage asserts that her femininity is the true source.

Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey

REYNOLDA HOUSE MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART – WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

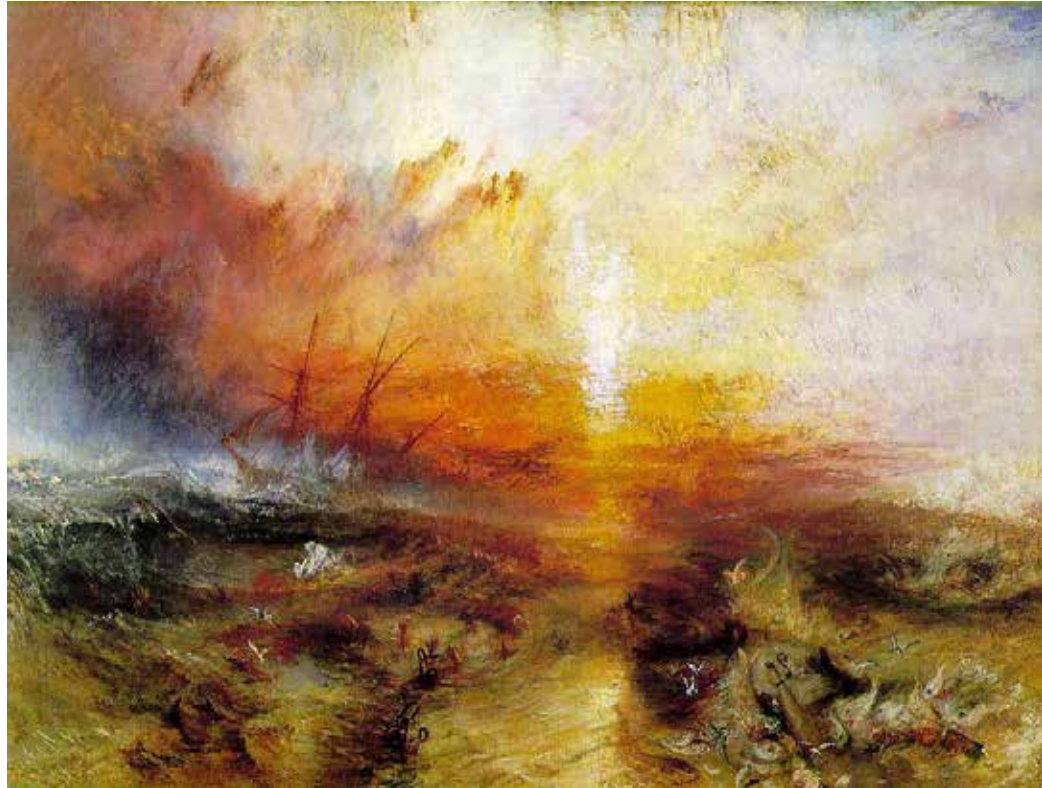
The Reynolda House Museum holds a special place in my heart. A stroll through the woods was all that separated Wake Forest's campus from the beautiful museum, and the crunch of fallen leaves still reminds me of the idyllic North Carolina campus.

Built in 1917 by Katharine Smith Reynolds and her husband R.J. Reynolds, it opened fifty years later as an art museum, displaying American art on its walls and restored furnishings in its rooms. A few of my favorites include Frederic Edwin Church's *The Andes of Ecuador* (a hazy golden sunset over looming mountains) and Charles Sheeler's *Conversation Piece* (a Precisionist rural-industrial piece).

However, the exhibit *Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey* is what really sticks out in my mind. The exhibit explored the theme of homecoming, retelling Homer's epic *The Odyssey* in a series of collages. Bearden intentionally depicted the figures as black in an effort to convey a sense of

the universal human condition, bridging classical mythology and contemporary African American culture. *Circe* (at left) is both goddess and seductress, her form imbued with sensual confidence.

While Bearden's work was inspiring, the personal importance of this exhibit in my life had more to do with the museum staff. One of the museum's designers showed my art history class an ad she had created for the exhibit, which was published in the *Smithsonian* magazine. It was at that moment that I felt the need to do what she was doing. Seeing her published work helped me to realize that design was a viable career, and pushed me to pursue graphic design, even though that meant transferring to a new school in a new city.



JMW TURNER, 1840
Slave Ship was originally titled *Slavers*
Throwing overboard the Dead and
Dying — Typhon coming on.

Slave Ship, JMW Turner

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS – BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Joseph Mallord William Turner's oil painting *Slave Ship* is one that I always return to when visiting the Museum of Fine Arts. Its vibrant warm orange-reds draw you into a false sense of comfort. It is only on closer inspection that you realize the seemingly harmonious scene is one of death and horror.

Carnivorous fish can be seen eating enchaind limbs that stick out of the water. The painting was based on a horrific event in the late 1700s in which the captain of the ship ordered 133 slaves be thrown overboard so he could claim insurance money. Many of the slaves were sick, but he would be paid only if the slaves were lost at sea, and not for any who died on board.

The emphasis of the painting is on light and color. The colors blur together for a dramatic effect. Nature overpowers man in this photo: the ship is small, secondary to the thrashing waves in the foreground and the impending storm in the background.

Turner first exhibited the painting accompanied by an excerpt from a poem that he never completed, titled *Fallacies of Hope*:

*Aloft all hands, strike the top-masts
 and belay;
 Yon angry setting sun and fierce-edged
 clouds
 Declare the Typhon's coming.
 Before it sweeps your decks, throw
 overboard
 The dead and dying – ne'er heed
 their chains
 Hope, Hope, fallacious Hope!
 Where is thy market now?*

But how is a Romantic painting from 1840 relevant to design? It is Turner's mastery of color and the intentional social commentary of the piece that is absolutely relevant to contemporary design.



John Singer Sargent

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM – BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Undoubtedly, John Singer Sargent is my personal inspiration to be a better watercolor artist. His ability to capture light and shadow is unparalleled.

Though Sargent is well-known for his oil paintings and portraits (Boston's well-loved *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, for example), his watercolor paintings are what drew me to his work. When the Museum of Fine Arts hosted an exhibit of his watercolors in the Fall of 2013, I fell in love. His work is also featured prominently at the beautiful, meditative Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Both Gardner and Sargent frequented Venice. The interior courtyard of the museum (left) boasts beautiful Venetian windows.

I traveled to Venice through Northeastern's study abroad program in the summer of 2014 and brought my watercolors, though the focus of the class I was taking was photography. Sitting under the sun with my sketchbook in hand, I remember sketching

the Santa Maria della Salute and pausing, thinking, "John Singer Sargent was here with his sketchbook." His ability to capture sunlight at specific moments throughout the day and not stay confined within guiding lines is something I aspire to be able to create.



JOHN SINGER SARGENT, 1911
View of the Santa Maria del Rosario (I Gesuati). When I studied abroad, I lived next door to this church in a building that used to be a monastery.

Design

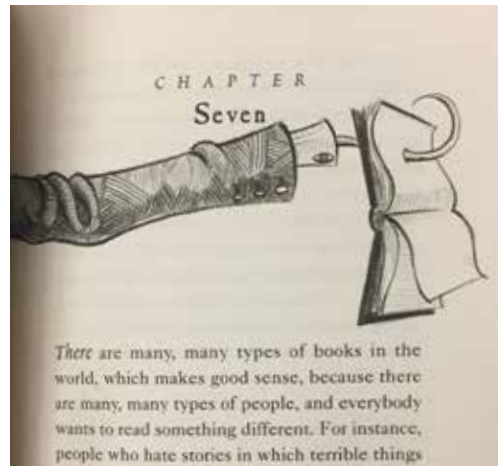
A Series of Unfortunate Events

As a second-grader, I would always stay up after my bed time, hiding under my covers with a flashlight and a book, hoping my parents wouldn't come in and make me stop reading. It was always obvious to them when I pretended to have fallen asleep with my glasses on and the flashlight still warm, but getting caught never stopped me from reading.

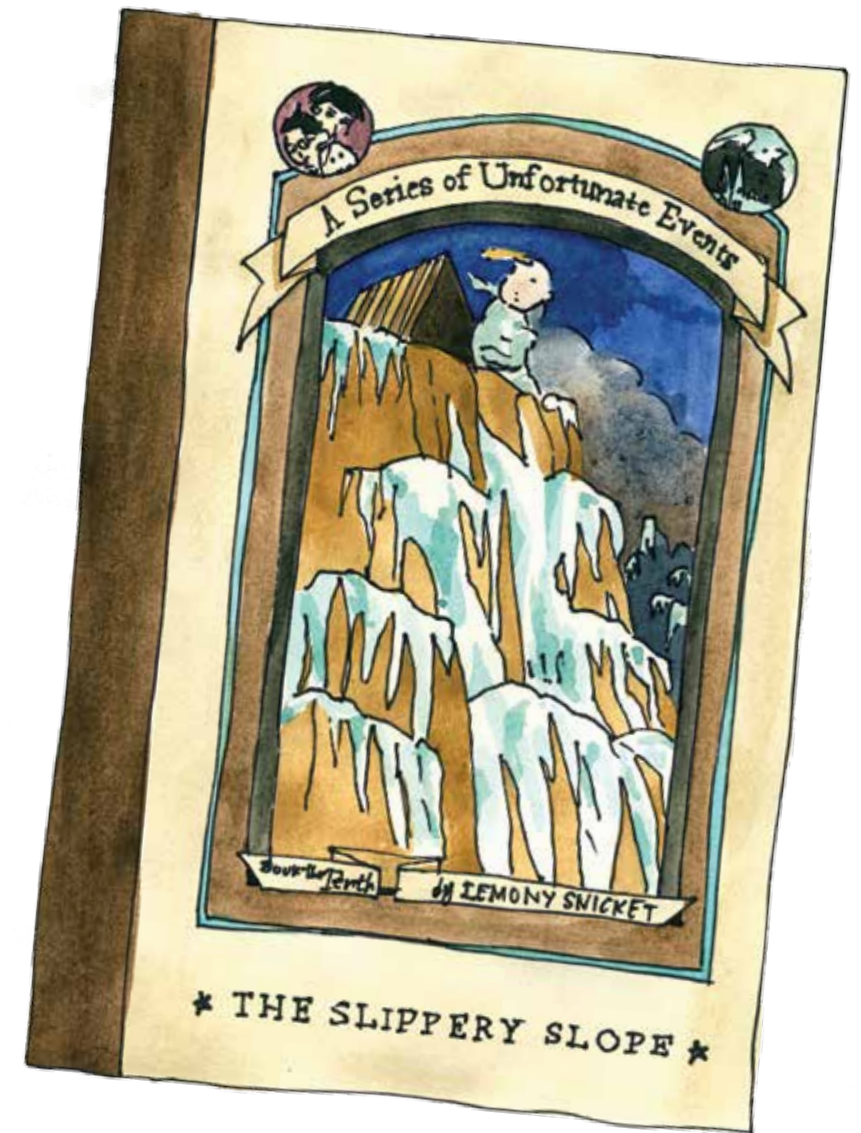
One of my favorite book series to read was *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Looking back, a lot of what got me excited about the books was their printed form. Written by Lemony Snicket (Daniel Handler's pen name), published by HarperCollins, and wonderfully illustrated by Brett Helquist, the books captured my imagination in both content and form.

The series had a similar format for each book: thirteen chapters, illustrations at the end of each book with a hidden 'clue' about the next book, beautiful Victorian-style end leaves, and lovely deckled edges. The fun

was identifying the variation within the set and seeing the illustrations incorporated into the type in fun new ways. My love for the series had just as much to do with the writing as it did the book design of the series.



THE BAD BEGINNING, 1999
Helquist's pen illustrations are incorporated into *A Series of Unfortunate Events* in a playful way.



WPA ‘See America’ Posters

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) produced thousands of posters in the mid-1930s. In response to the Great Depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created a work relief program (the New Deal). Within this New Deal, the Federal Art Project created jobs for over 5000 artists, photographers, and painters who were unemployed.

The posters were designed to advertise for exhibits, community activities, theatrical performances, and other government-sponsored programs (such as the Ranger Naturalist Service, included at right).

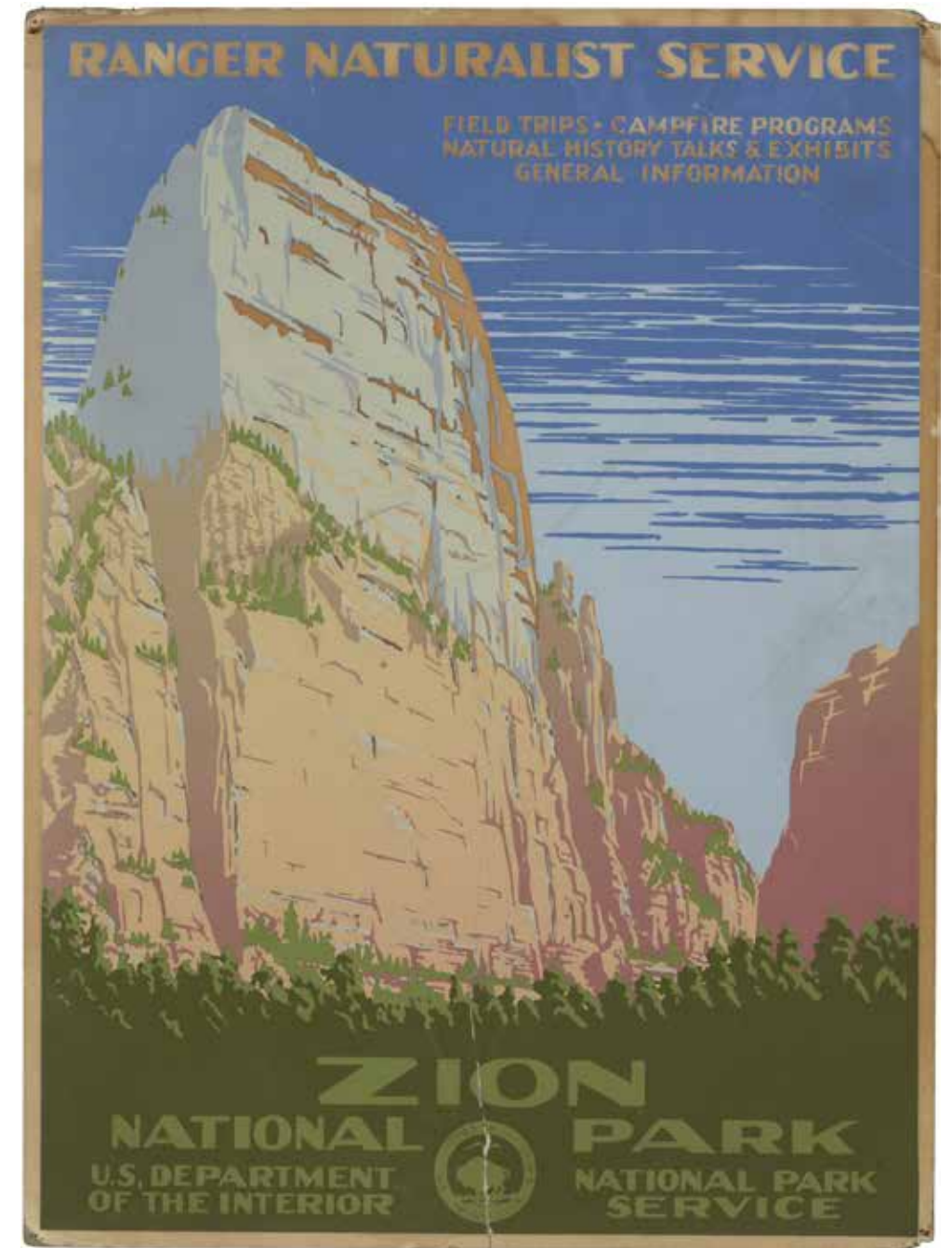
At right, the print of Zion National Park shows the Great White Throne. This particular national park means a lot to me — in the Summer of 2016, I drove over 7,000 miles on a road trip that took me across the United States and back. My absolute favorite destination was the beautiful mountains of Zion National Park.

The *See America* campaign was sponsored by the U.S. Travel Bureau (which was in turn managed by the National Park Service).

Design-wise, the WPA posters have a stunning amount of realistic detail. The flat panels of color that result from screen printing are very appealing to me. The typography is also beautiful. In today’s day and age, very few designers hand-letter anything, but the slight variation that accompanies the typography in these posters is something that draws me in. The ‘thick-and-thin’ style is grounded in sign painting, which is fitting for both the style of poster and for the subject matter.

ZION NTNL. PARK, ca. 1938

This digital copy is one of the 41 known originals of the National Parks posters, held by the Library of Congress.



Saul Bass

Although I had never heard of Saul Bass until I was enrolled in Graphic Design I with Professor John Kane, when I began researching his work, I realized I had seen plenty of his designs in real life... The Girl Scouts logo, the United Airlines logo (pre-redesign in 2010), and the Dixie cup logo, to name a few.

Bass’ portfolio of work is widely varied, including corporate logos, movie title sequences, posters, billboards, CD covers, children’s books, commercials, product design, and more. It was largely his versatility and variety that attracted his clients. What I most love about his work is the hand-made quality, which is something a lot of modern, computerized designs lack.

Bass is perhaps most well-known for reinventing movie titles. In the 1950s, the increasing popularity of television led motion graphics to be a fast-growing sector, and Bass played a big part in developing motion graphics. When he spoke about his

title designs, he talked about setting the mood or showing a generalized metaphor for what the film was about. In short, that’s what *any* piece of graphic design should do. Rather than focus on a plot point or scroll through endless names, his work was about communicating ideas.

7th S.F. INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL POSTER, 1963

One of Bass’ defining characteristics is his hand-cut style of drawing and lettering.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS POSTER, 1973

Created for The American Civil Liberties Union, the poster uses broad strokes of patriotic red and blue.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM TITLE SEQUENCE, 1955

Stills from *The Man with the Golden Arm*’s title sequence, which used rectangular elements as a recurring design element.



*Personal
Collections*



License Plates

License plates are an artistic expression of the identity of each state. Of course, while most people have the standard state license plate design, I've always loved seeing the unique ones. While Washington's standard design features Mount Rainier (at left), there are also designs featuring orca whales, bears, lighthouses, and the University of Washington husky.

When I was growing up, I would often collect mini state license plate key chains with my name on it. I loved studying them and seeing the differences between them. Although I only managed to collect about ten of them (Colorado was my favorite, with its dark green mountains at the bottom), their miniature size and true-to-life detail made me keep collecting them as I traveled.

Looking back, my interest in license plates points to the prevalence of design in everyday things. As a kid, I didn't realize I liked them because they were a series of things with variation in their illustrations,

color, and typography, I just *liked* them. Design is often overlooked and taken at face-value, especially in something as commonplace as a license plate.

Mostly, when I was growing up, I only saw the Washington and Oregon state license plates. When I moved to Massachusetts for school, I immediately noticed that their license plate design was pretty lackluster. Red plate numbers on an essentially pure white background (the light grey double helix in the middle is, it turns out, a watermark for security purposes) and a round, italic, blue font make up the Mass plate. This minimal approach to license plate design made me appreciate the imagery of the Pacific Northwest license plates even more.



Craft Beers

Package design has always been an interest of mine. On the shelves of stores, packaging truly becomes a factor in the decision-making process — I’ve definitely bought a more expensive brand just because the packaging made it look better.

In 2015, I worked at the Boston Beer Co. for six months in their design department. In that time, I developed a love for craft beer. I worked on collateral for the Samuel Adams, Twisted Tea, Angry Orchard, and Traveler Beer Co. brands. Being surrounded by people who appreciated good beer and good design made me pay close attention to beer packaging.

The craft beer industry prides itself on hard work, unmatched quality, and independence. Craft beer snobs tend to shun the bigger, industrial brands. Likewise, their design tends to reflect these values. While some micro-brewers feel packaging is secondary to the beer itself, others acknowledge the power of branding

and package design. I believe the two go hand-in-hand. A good beer without good packaging won’t find success in the same way that good packaging won’t find success without a good product.

The mobile app *Untappd* also became one of my favorites when I worked at the Boston Beer Co. The app allows you to keep track of and rate the different beers you have drank. Since downloading the app, I have tried more than 230 distinct craft brews, my favorites being Nitro Coffee Stout (Samuel Adams), 312 Urban Wheat Ale (Goose Island), and Coconut Hiwa Porter (Maui Brewing). Part of my love for beer is the taste and culture, but part of it also lies in the packaging. Although my appreciation for craft beer has only begun recently, it has more than reaffirmed my decision to pursue graphic design.



Gift Cards

As a child, I received many gift cards for Christmas and my birthday. My favorite stores were usually Target and Barnes & Noble, but the occasional Jamba Juice or Apple gift card were always exciting as well.

The designs of gift cards are unique because while they need to reflect a brand, they are also an opportunity to be playful. Their plastic weight gives the printed pieces more heft; I've always admired the way that gift cards *feel* in your hand.

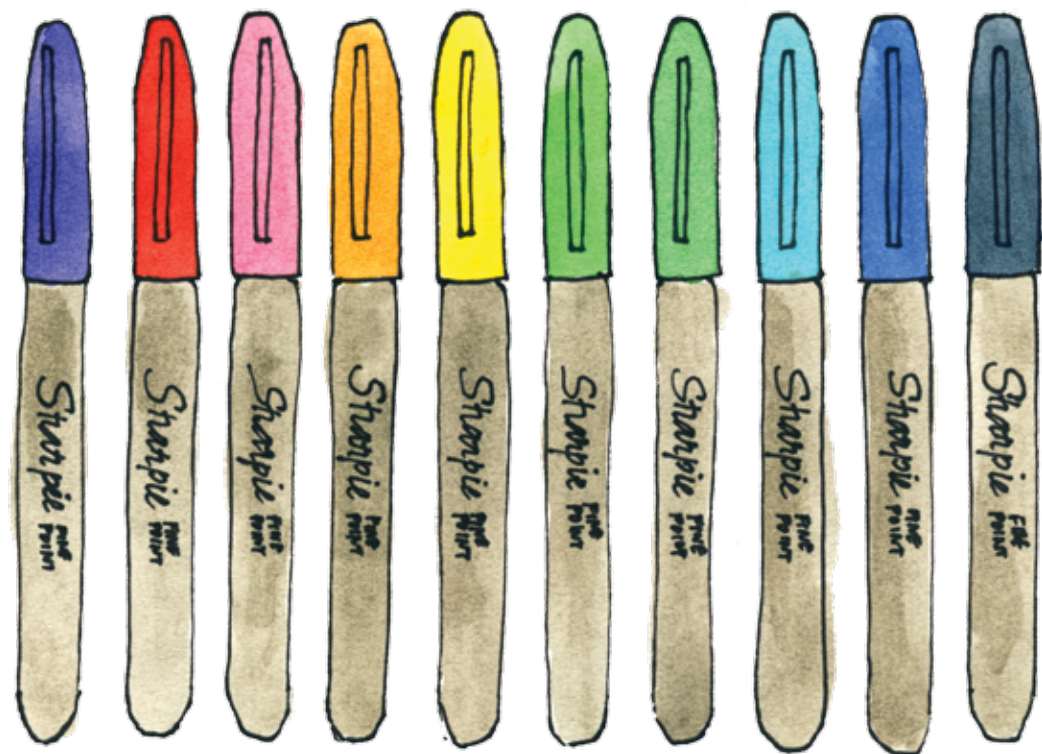
After the money on the gift cards was depleted, I would always ask to hold on to them. I never understood why cashiers assumed that most people didn't want to keep them (of course, keeping them soon got to be confusing and I would forget which ones had value on them and which ones didn't).

Another memory I have of gift cards is helping my mom choose which ones to buy as presents for my cousins. Target often had

fun die-cut shapes, and some stores took it another step further by designing the packaging the gift card would go into. The Container Store had a mini store-branded paper bag, and Home Depot had a small orange apron that held the card.

It was the illustrations, the patterns, the material, and the typography on the cards that made me want to hold on to them. Now that I'm older, I still love gift card designs and take pictures of particularly beautiful ones that I see in stores.

When I worked for the Boston Beer Co. in 2015, I finally got to put my own hand to work on a card. The Samuel Adams Brewery in Jamaica Plain wanted a loyalty card designed and printed, and I was able to combine various brand elements together to create one for them, even including an original illustration of a growler on the back.



Sharpies

Going grocery shopping with my mom was always fun when I was younger. We would usually go to Fred Meyer together, but sometimes we would also venture to Costco. I remember when I saw the Sharpie collector's set at the warehouse: 60 beautiful Sharpies lined up perfectly. The box included 24 fine tip, 24 ultra fine, 4 metallic silver, and 8 retractable Sharpies. After eyeing it for a long time, my mom finally agreed to get it for me.

My mom has always been a collector of craft supplies, rubber stamps, embossing powder, and pens, so her decision to buy the collector's set of Sharpies was not *all* for me. Being around art supplies my whole life has definitely instilled in me a love for ink and paper. The hands-on approach has always been fun, and even after moving away from my mom's wealth of craft supplies, I have acquired enough paint, paper, pens, and glue to last for decades (my most recent purchases were a heat embossing tool from Paper Source).

The bold strokes of vibrant color that come from Sharpies are definitely part of what led me to love design. When choosing between fine art and design in my AP Art class, rather than the 'mark-making' of fine art, I felt more drawn to the broad strokes and design principles that could be achieved with drawing implements like Sharpies.

Signing yearbooks was always a big deal at the end of every school year in middle and high school, and I remember bringing different combinations of Sharpies to school so that my notes to friends would be colorful. My favorite combinations were often analogous colors (I remember using yellow-green, lime green, and dark green a lot). This attention to color is something that has stayed with me now that I am a designer.





Nail Polish

When I was in first grade, my cousin bestowed upon me her collection of nail polish, which effectively multiplied my collection sevenfold. I had always enjoyed painting my nails, and as a child, this was definitely the form of painting that I did the most. Now that I'm in college playing a sport that doesn't allow for long nails, as well as running an Etsy shop that sells watercolors, it's safe to say that my painting habits have shifted.

I loved my collection of nail polish and lined them all up on a large bookshelf in my room. There were so many that they stretched the entire span of the shelf. I would spend time organizing them by shade of color (the variations between the numerous shades of pink were a little tricky), then by brand, and then switching it up to be in order of the bottle size. Negotiating these differences and organizing the bottles was only a small preview of my future in design.

In my first year of college, I constantly gave manicures to my roommates. Candy cane stripes and presents around the holidays, school colors, polka dots, flowers... anything we could think of, I painted on their nails (that was also the year I became obsessed with henna, but that's another story).

This tendency to pursue art in my free time reinforced my decision to become a graphic designer. Although some people say that your hobbies should be separate from your job so that the stress of work doesn't overcome your love for your hobbies, the opposite is true for me. After a forty-hour work week of designing, I have still made time to take on personal design projects and watercolor painting in my free time. If you've found your happy place, why leave it?



Video Games

Growing up with two older brothers, video games were always a part of my life. I loved playing Super Smash Bros. Melee and Mario Kart: Double Dash on the Nintendo GameCube, mostly because they were multiplayer games that my cousins and my brothers always played together. However, the original PlayStation Spyro trilogy will always have a special place in my heart.

The immersive world of those video games is a big part of my (nerdy) childhood. One of the premises of the game involved portals that allowed you to travel a wide variety of different worlds — the wild west, glacial caverns, volcanoes, castles... the list goes on.

The graphic conventions that the game used are interesting to look back on. There was a gem counter in the upper left corner that would constantly update. When characters would speak to you, the words they spoke would appear in time with their pace of speech (though you could also skip through them). The

shape and color of the gems signified their worth (the pink-purple diamond-shaped gems were worth a whopping 25, while the royal purple rectangular gems were only worth 5). Additionally, your companion dragonfly, Sparx, indicated your health: for every hit you took, his color would change. These design choices helped me to absorb signifiers and get comfortable with digital spatial relationships.

The design of the different worlds and their unique scenery helped my imagination unfold. For underwater worlds, the color palette would change ever-so slightly, while in a moonlit world, the surfaces were luminescent. These subtle differences in color are important in design, especially when taking on jobs that are heavily illustrative.

Seahawks Paraphernalia

My love for the Seattle Seahawks runs deep, mostly because of their hard-hitting work ethic. However, as a designer, I also have to appreciate their visual identity.

On April 3, 2012, Nike took over the NFL. The Seahawks' previous jersey sponsor had been Reebok. Although Nike updated all the teams uniforms, the Seahawks were the only team to get a major re-brand. The new jerseys are edgier than the old, including neon green neck and shoulder details. The texture of the jerseys were also upgraded: the old material looked easily snag-able and poorly-made. The re-design also spoke to the team's locale. Native American art and totems heavily influenced the imagery.

The feather pattern design element shows up as a faded background texture on the helmets, in a vertical stripe down the pant leg, and also on the neckline of the jerseys. On the pants and the neckline, there are 12 feathers, which is a nod to Seattle's 12s. Besides the jersey design, I also am an

avid collector of anything else Seahawks-related. The combination of their deep navy blue color and neon green (officially called 'action green') is a personal favorite. Starbucks has released specialty Seahawks gift cards and coffee sleeves, which of course I now own.

I also have a couple of small bags emblazoned with their logo, a number of shirts, temporary tattoos, a small flag... I even made Seahawks gingerbread men around Christmas time. It is their strong brand (both the team and the visual identity) that has won my loyalty. One day, maybe I will have the opportunity to create collateral for the NFL and create designs that will inspire others just as I am inspired by the Seahawks.





Flags

My brother — a middle school contestant in the district-wide Geography Bee — used to have a large poster that hung in his room that proudly displayed all the flags of the world. It was with this poster that I would spend time hunting down the similar ones (Indonesia is simply the inverse of Poland) and noticing the overall color trends (reds, blues, and greens tend to dominate).

My interest in flags has also been spurred on by my love for watching the Olympics. The national flags have always been a big part of the Games. I remember seeing the bright green, yellow, and black of Jamaica and the unique shape of South Africa and committing them to memory.

When I acquired a massive set of Sharpies, one of the first things I did with the bold-colored pens was draw some of my favorite flags. The colors of the Sharpies were so vibrant and matched the flag colors so well that it seemed only natural for me to draw them.

Most of the flags also bear symbols, many using stars, shields, crosses, and suns. While all the flags are colorful, the most-used main color is red. Colors hold a lot of significance for different countries, each imbued with meaning. Red often signifies blood shed for the country, Green, the landscape or natural resources of the country, White, purity and peace.

One of the most unique flags is that of Nepal: it is the only non-quadrilateral national flag. The triangular shapes are said to symbolize the peaks of the Himalayan mountains. Another unique flag is the South African flag, which sports six different colors. The green Y of the flag symbolizes converging cultures.

National flags are important pieces of design that make use of bold color and symbolic imagery. Their duty of representing countries is one that can't be taken lightly.

inverse

$f(g(x))=x$

trapezoids

$\frac{1}{2}(b_1+b_2)h$

derivative

$f'(x) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x+h) - f(x)}{h}$

order of magnitude

logs

power

exponential

fundamental theorem

$\int_a^b f'(x)dx = f(b) - f(a)$

L'Hopital

if direct substitution doesn't work, use the derivatives!

corollary

$\frac{d}{dx} \int_a^x f(t)dt = f(x)$

calculator

ndDeriv (function, X, X)

int (function, X, 0, 3)

IVT

check for max. value

EVT

check for max. value

NUM. leading coefficients

DEN.

NUM. polynomial long division

DEN. do and - on

NUM. trig derivatives

DEN. $y=0$

NUM. $\cot x$

DEN. $-\csc^2 x$

NUM. $\tan x$

DEN. $\sec^2 x$

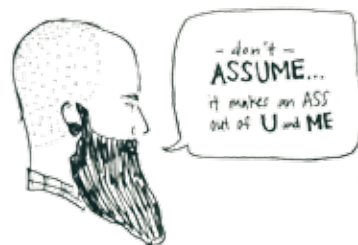
NUM. $\sec x$

DEN. $\sec x \tan x$

NUM. $\csc x$

DEN. $-\csc x \cot x$

caric Ambo



CREATIVE MORNING BOSTON #CMBOS
@ADAMCONNOR - THANKS GA!

Sketchbooks

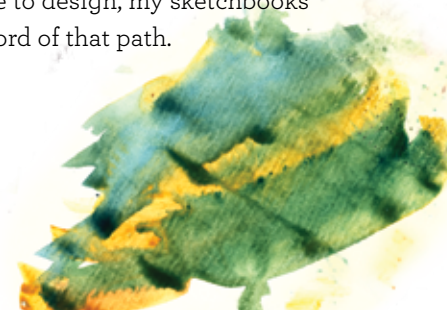
I began using sketchbooks in middle school for art class. At the time, it was a required assignment. Every week, we were given a theme and had to fill a spread according to the prompt. It was only in ninth grade when the assignment changed that I began using my sketchbook regularly. Instead of using one spread and treating it as a full 'piece of art,' we had to fill at least four spreads. However, the pages didn't have to be cohesive — and that made all the difference. I filled them with small sketches of things I wanted to remember or new techniques I hadn't yet tried. It was a nice break from trying to create a complete, finished piece.

Over the years, I have filled a number of sketchbooks — at least one every year. My favorite size sketchbooks are half-letter and full page books. I have also come to love binding my own sketchbooks. That way, I can control the binding style, paper type (90lbs is my usual go-to), and what is on the cover. Bookbinding requires attention to detail and craft.

Since Northeastern students can get free admission to the Museum of Fine Arts, I have also taken to collecting my ticket stubs. Those tickets line the insides of my sketchbooks, and my sketchbook always accompanies me on trips to the museum.

Looking back at old sketchbooks is like opening a time capsule. My favorite sketchbook is probably the one I took to Italy on my Study Abroad trip. I used it largely as a travel journal, and the drawings and watercolors of Venetian canals and the Roman forum bring with them a rush of nostalgia.

Sketches are a crucial part of the design process. They help you lay out and organize your ideas before jumping into the aesthetic decisions. I believe that thoughtful sketches are a sign of better designers. In a similar manner that this book is a compendium of what has led me to design, my sketchbooks are a visual record of that path.



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All images without captions were watercolored by the designer.