REFLECTION ON PRACTICE

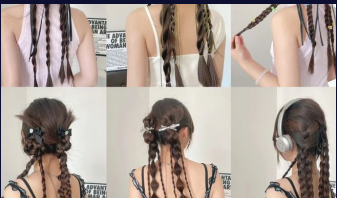Capstone P2: One/Another

Madison Wang

PART 1: PLAY

We were tasked to intentionally document day-to-day activities in order to get us to think about a topic to continue with.
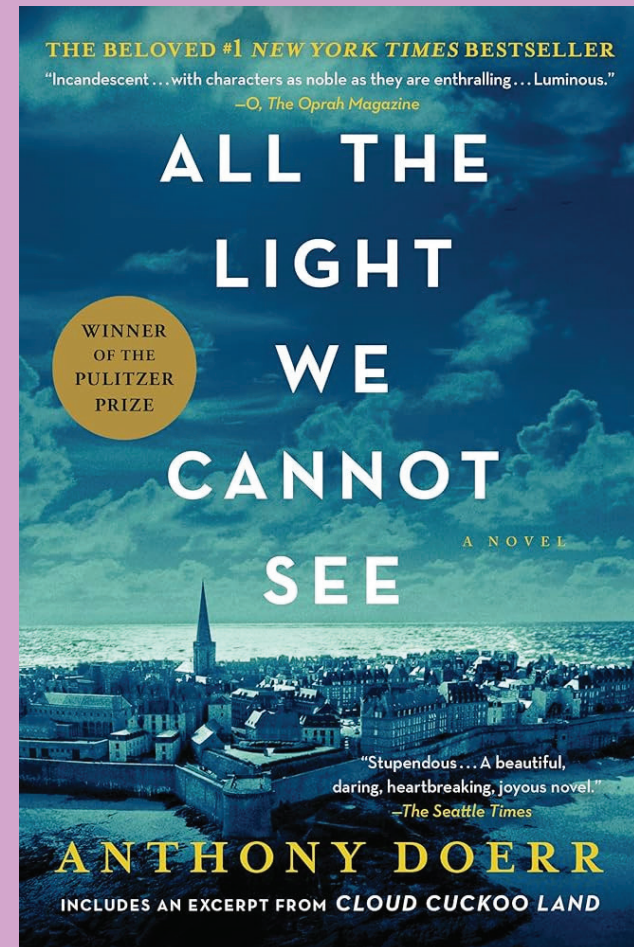

Watch a movie.

Cafe hopping.



Experimenting with hairstyles.

Rock climbing.

**Re-familiarize yourself with a book:
All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr**

Set in WWII, I first read this book in 8th grade english class. Out of all WWII books, this one truly stuck with me. It follows two characters, a blind girl who is part of the french resistance and a german boy who has to fight in the front lines. At its core, it is about doing good, regardless of where you come from and especially in a time like that.

I knew from the start that I wanted it to be an experiential and interactive project with a form that unravels a message as we lead ourselves through it.
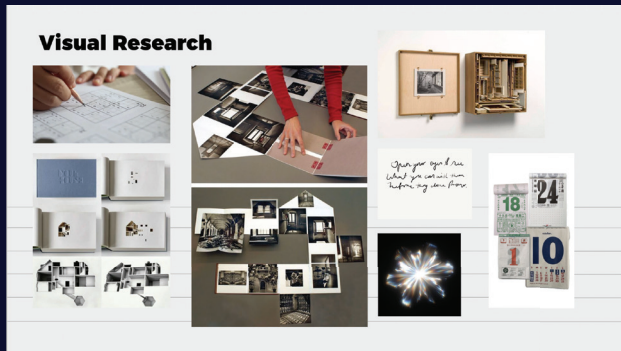
Original Plan:

I originally wanted the entire form to be a non-traditional calendar because I wanted to build a linear narrative with the dates as markers. One of our contraints is that it couldn't be a linear book, so I thought playing with the idea of a calendar could work.

It includes a non-traditional way to think about a time-based form that all of us have used before. After the user is taken through it, I want them to realize that it wasn't their decisions that brought them to the end, but what they did throughout the experience made each individual's experience different. Like how the characters in the book ultimately did good in spite of their circumstances.

Initial Concerns/Questions

What ways can I make this interactive in a repeatable way?
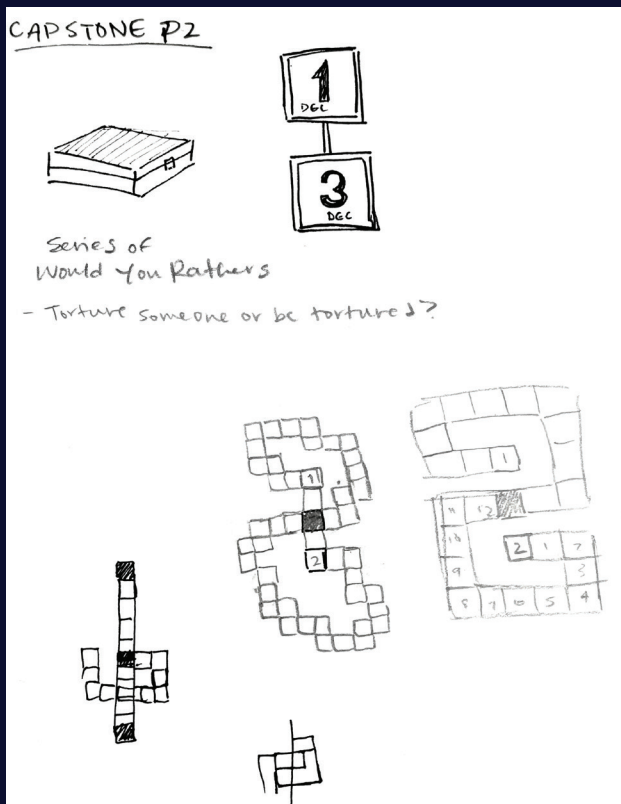
Should it be a one-time experience?

What form could the box/package be?

Does this make sense ???

As it seems... no one really understood what I was trying to convey, especially the reason why the form was a calendar. I realized I needed to pivot because my content really depended on the experience I wanted to portray. I was feeling a little lost at this point...

PART 2: CONTENT

Initial thoughts on final form and how the two paths intersect

Idea 1: Extreme Would You Rather

Questions related to morality and the high stakes of war that cause the reader to question how they would react. Each decision would lead them down a new smaller path but eventually still end up in the same place (also a commentary on fate).

(Would you rather torture someone or be tortured?)

Idea 2: General Anecdotes

More linear and focused on the separateness and intersection between two people. For this, I would create my own copy of two personas that can be applied to and relatable for a majority of people, without the emphasis of a specific environment/ event like war.

(How two roommates' lives intersect.)

Idea 3: Linear Retelling of the Book

I would take content directly from key moments of the book. Because the book is formatted in a non-linear manner, this would create a shortened version where one moment between the main characters is emphasized.

(I ended up going with this option because I am not interested in writing my own copy and also because it already sets itself up for a dramatic intersecting moment.)

Marie & Werner content BEFORE

1. Childhood / Early Paris
I follow Father's footsteps through the museum.
The air smells of dust and varnish.
He lets me hold the key—
cold, certain, small enough to lose.

→ what if I dropped it?
(the flap opens to a small black square of paper—vanished key)

2. Learning to See Without Sight
I count steps to the bakery, the bridge, the gate.
Every sound builds a map.
I see through distance, through touch.

3. The Miniature City
The model of Paris fits in my hands.
Streets shrink to whispers, rooftops to breath.
He says, "If you can imagine it, you can find it."

4. The Flight to Saint-Malo
The train trembles like a heartbeat.
Salt enters the air.
The city by the sea folds open before us.

→ what if we had stayed in Paris?
(reveals a dead end — faint drawing of the locked museum door)

5. The Occupation
The house is quiet except for the sea.
Voices speak through walls.
I turn the radio on and wait for something human.

6. The Secret Broadcast
A man's voice speaks of science, of wonder.
I think of my father.
I write his words on a scrap of paper.

→ what if the voice had never returned?
(flap opens to faint embossed sound waves, fading to blank)

7. The Siege
The bombs make the house shudder.
I count to stay calm: one, two, three—
a rhythm of surviving.

8. The Moment Before Meeting
Static fills the room.
Someone is calling through the storm.
I press my ear to the radio—
and answer.

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1. Childhood / Orphanage
Static. Then a voice—clear, patient, kind.
It speaks of light, of how it travels.
Jutta listens beside me, eyes wide.

→ what if we had turned the dial?
(flap reveals empty grid lines, as if the signal had never arrived)

2. Discovery
I fix the broken radio.
Sparks dance between copper and breath.
The world rushes in.

3. Recruitment
They say I have a gift.
Numbers, patterns, precision.
Becomes orders, uniforms, silence.

4. Training
The others march. I listen.
Every step echoes through the ground.
Sound has weight.

→ what if I refused to listen?
(flap opens to static printed in blind emboss)

5. The Warfront
Cities fall in frequencies.
I trace signals across ruined air.
Every transmission a ghost.

6. The Assignment in Saint-Malo
We arrive at the edge of the sea.
The air tastes of salt and electricity.
There's a voice hidden in the noise.

→ what if I changed the frequency?
(reveals nothing but silence—pure blank page)

7. The Search
I find the house by listening.
Each floor a deeper current of sound.
Static sharpens into breathing.

8. The Moment Before Meeting
A girl's voice through the dark.
Counting, calm, alive.
I press my ear closer—
and answer.

Marie & Werner content INTERSECTION

The city hums with the sea.
A voice breaks through the static.
Two frequencies align.

Werner (faint underlayer):

"Can you hear me?"

Marie-Laure (embossed above):

"Yes."

Marie & Werner content AFTER

Fold 1 — "The city exhales."
Dust drifts. The guns are quiet. She counts her breaths.
What if: The quiet never ends, and she stays buried in it.

Fold 2 — "Her hands find the model again."
Streets under her fingers. A map of what was.
What if: The houses stayed locked forever.

Fold 3 — "Salt and ash in the air."
Each step forward feels like remembering.
What if: She never stepped out of the cellar.

Fold 4 — "Years pass like wind through leaves."
The city changes. Her hands still know every wall.
What if: She forgets which way the door faces.

Fold 5 — "The radio hums."
She turns toward it, as if toward the sea.
What if: The signal fades, and she listens anyway.

Fold 1 — "A voice through static."
Clear, then gone. He listens harder.
What if: He had turned the dial the other way.

Fold 2 — "The signal pulls him forward."
He can't stop following. It sounds like hope.
What if: He had stayed below ground, soldering and waiting.

Fold 3 — "The war cracks open."
Every machine he built now burns.
What if: He had never heard her voice.

Fold 4 — "He remembers sound more than sight."
A breath. A name he never says aloud.
What if: He forgets the sound entirely.

Fold 5 — "The frequency drifts."
Somewhere, it goes on without him.
What if: Only the static remains.

Even after figuring the concept, I realized that getting the content was a really big struggle for me. Eventually, I ended up splitting the entire experience into three parts: their lives before they met (8 folds), the one moment of intersection (3 folds), and their lives after they met (5 folds).

Because I was operating in a system where the content is linear, I made sure the mechanism for how they discover more content was one that "uncovered" content as you go.
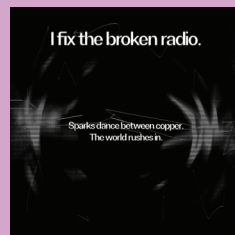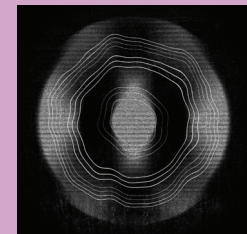
PART 3: VISUAL FORM

END MAP:
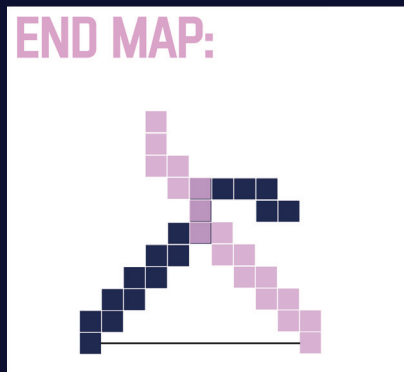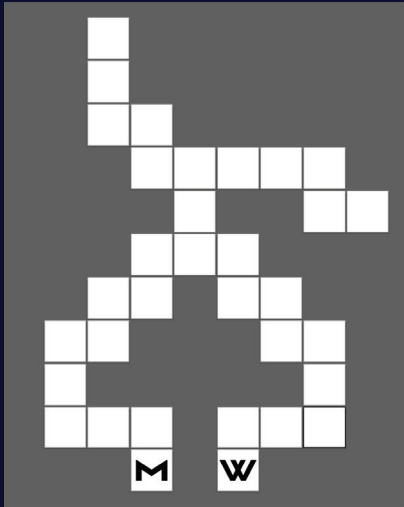
With my content down, I began experimenting with how I wanted the final sprawl to look like. I landed on two paths using roll binding in the form of two books. The system starts far apart, converges, and then separates again. Marie-Laure's continues uwards because of her longevity of life while Werner's goes down because he dies.

I approached the visual system by taking characterisitcs of both characters and translating that to abstract motifs.

For example, Marie-Laure is blind which is a major aspect of story so I thought that the design could incorporate a tactile element (braille and embossing) to help guide the reader. Werner is a very talented radio technician so I referenced that when creating the image-making of radio signals and static.

I originally thought it would be black and white because I also wanted to reference some WWII ephemera, but later decided against it because though the situation was war, that isn't as essential to what I am trying to say. Instead, I went the more abstract route.

Initial Visual System Experiments

Marie-Laure

MARIE-LAURE

PARIS
The museum air smells old. I follow in my father's footsteps, and he lets me hold the keys.

SEEING WITHOUT SIGHT
I count every step. Every sound builds a map and I start to see through distance.

MINIATURE CITY
The model of Paris lies in my hands.

THE M...
If you can imagine it, you can find it.

THE SEIGE

"YES."

MINIATURE CITY

HER HANDS
They find the sound. Streets under her fingers. Now just a map of what once was.

OCCU PATION

SAINT-MALO
The train trembles. Salt enters the air. The city by the sea unfolds below us.

BROADCAST
I turn the radio on and wait for something human. The house is quiet except for the sea. A voice speaks of science. I think of my father.

YEAR PASS...

THE RADIO
It stops humming. The city changes, yet the still knows every wall.

She faces the quiet.

I finalized my design system to be more vector-based so it is easier to emboss. I chose two colors that contrasted pretty well but also felt cohesive. I wanted there to be pretty big type moments and scale shifts because initially it was too body-text focused.

ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE ANTHONY DOERR

SET IN WWII

WE FOLLOW TWO CHARACTERS UNTIL THEY INTERSECT

WERNER
A German orphan with a talent for radios and engineering. His skills pull him into the war, where he struggles between duty and conscience.

MARIE-LAURE
A blind French girl who learns to navigate the world through sound and touch. Living in occupied Saint-Malo, she becomes a quiet part of the Resistance, transmitting hope through hidden radio signals.

INSTRUCTIONS

THIS EXPERIENCE REQUIRES TWO PARTICIPANTS

PLACE BOTH BOOKS ON THE GROUND AS FAR AS THE RIBBON ALLOWS YOU AND OPEN

THE PERSON ON THE LEFT SHOULD START UNFOLDING FIRST FOLLOWING THE ARROWS

《 ≋ ≋

TAKE TURNS UNFOLDING ONE SQUARE AT A TIME

RIGHT SIDE ALWAYS GOES ON TOP

END MAP:

This project is designed and typeset by Madison Wang at the Sam Fox School of Visual Art & Design at WashU. The typefaces used are PH Oscar for Werner, Gambetta Variable for Marie-Laure, and Plaak for the display type.

I also created instructions that allow the users to understand how this experience works and provide a little context.

Werner

WERNER
There's a voice hidden in the noise.

STATIC
I hear a voice: clear, patient, kind. It speaks of light, of how it travels.

A BROKEN RADIO
I fix it. Sparks dance between copper and the world comes rushing in.

GIFTED
What came naturally: numbers, patterns, precision start blending in with the orders, uniforms, and silence.

SEARCH ING
I call out.
I feel the hope before listening.

"CAN YOU HEAR ME?"
A voice sharpens into breathing.

It's clear then gone. He can't stop following. It sounds like hope.

THE SIGNAL
It pulls him forward. He can't stop following. It sounds like hope.

SPL...

TRAINING
The others search and I listen. Sound has weight.

WAR
Cities fall in frequencies.
I trace signals across ruined air.

SAINT-MALO
We arrive at the edge of the sea. The air tastes of salt and electricity.

THE LITS O...

WAR OPEN

DRIFTING
Circuits fail. He remembers a name. I hate myself that it's all necessary.

The quiet stretches out without him.

FINAL

To encase the entire project, I decided to create a box. Because it is a two person experience, I also added a ribbon to measure the starting distance they should place both of the books that the instructions are tied to. I cut out "All the Light We Cannot See" into the outside of the box to make it obvious that it is referencing something.

CRIT

I think the biggest problem that wasn't completely resolved was how to instruct the users to interact with it in the way it is intended. Especially because there were multiple directions that the pages could be rolled, it was very easy to mess that up and inevitably rip the pages.

Many of my peers thought the interaction was really cool and the intersection part made sense. The embossing was particularly successful and added an extra element of tactility and experience. The only downside is that because there is that element, the other side (Werner's) feels like it's missing something/unbalanced.

Because I came to the content really late in the project, I crammed all the visual elements at the end and felt really stressed out. This made me realize the fatal flaw in my design process and am working on it.