Design Philosophy
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Design
Philosophy

Tell me about your creative process

I start with a mind map, which is a free form brainstorming session that lasts anywhere from 20 minutes to 1 hour. I like to start making associations with the theme I pick. I'll write or sketch out memories, sensations, and thoughts. For example, with my fear piece, I chose the fear of losing faith since it tied into my fear of loneliness and fear of lacking direction in life. The sensation of losing faith is similar to feeling broken, a loss of identity. So I portrayed the ground breaking underneath my body. The chains give a sense of gravity, being weighed down.
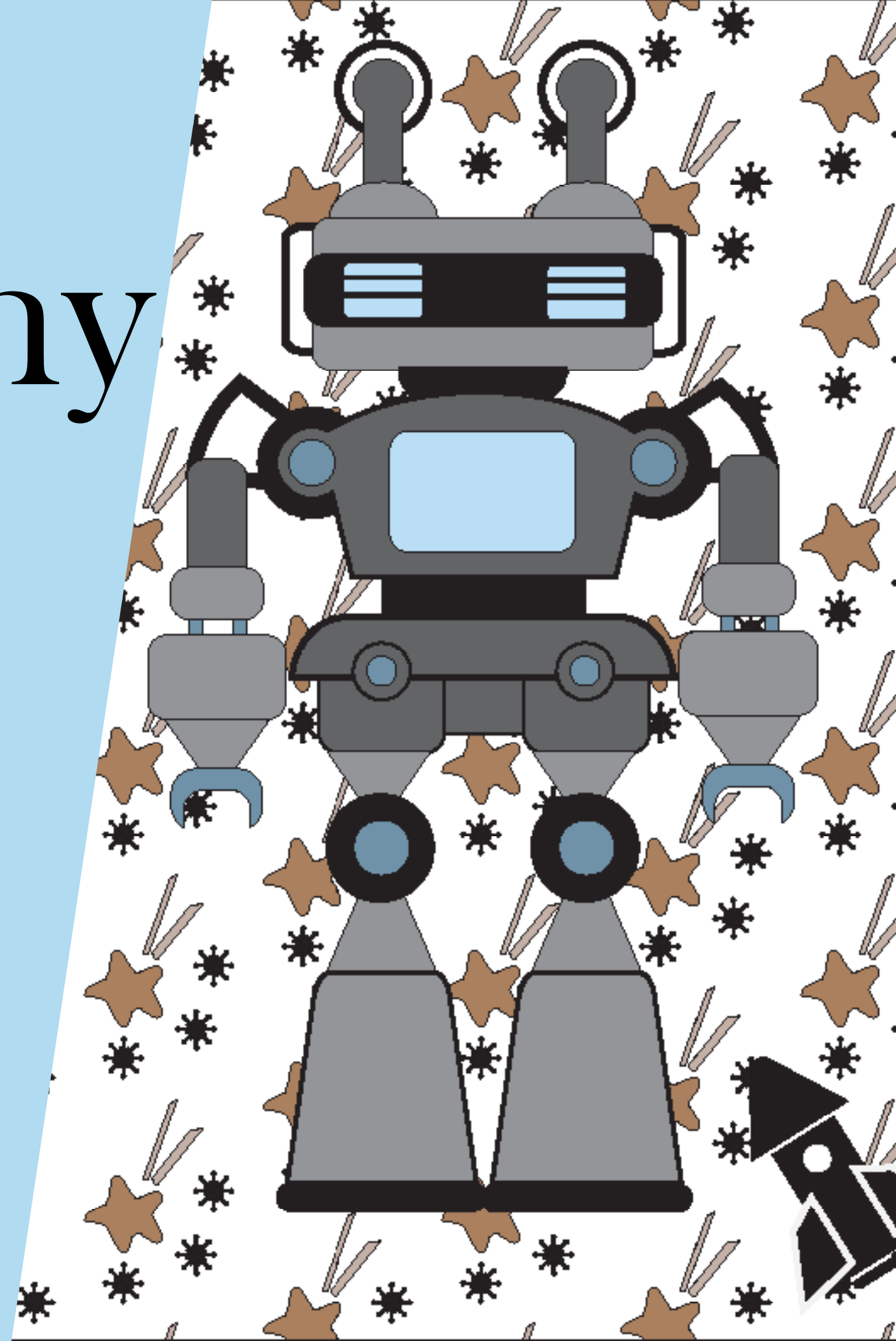
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was unlike my other pieces because it came together without too much thought beforehand. During my lengthy commute home on on a night with significant traffic, I thought of how roads carve specific paths for us to follow. Each lane is divided evenly by yellow lines, crisscrossed by hanging traffic lights that command our vehicles to move in prescribed ways. That's when I first saw that industry can be thought of as organized whereas nature tends toward chaos. Ding! Cue lightbulb.

To emphasize the organized look of industry, I tucked my hair into a loose bun, with some of my strands still poking out. To my surprise, the compliment I received the most was the hair detail I included, even though I had anticipated that more eyes would be drawn to the high-res photo of the railroad. It's funny to see the disconnect between what I thought looked good and what my classmates thought looked good. I'm not complaining, though.

As far as how I divided my time, I would say masking the hair took almost no time compared to choosing the image beneath my silhouette. I spent a good two hours experimenting with images of smokestacks, streets lined with taxi cabs, and other generic photographs on Pixabay until I came up with the idea of incorporating a bit of history into my piece.

It goes without saying that industry is lightyears ahead of natural evolution. The invention of the railroad propelled the Industrial Revolution, and led to the rise of big business, the factory system, and other archetypes that we have preserved today. Once I saw the black and white photograph of the railroad (the image I ended up using), I knew it was a winner! I liked that the image was simple but detailed, akin to my silhouette. Just one set of tracks, sitting on a bed of pebbles. Black and white, clean and simple.

"Genius is only a greater aptitude for patience" - Stefan Sagmesister

Which piece was hardest for you? What made it challenging?

Without a doubt, the nature piece was the hardest one for me. I was tasked with coming up with a way to represent nature and industry, and unify the pieces with some sort of overall theme. I put my literary brain into high gear and thought I was supposed to come up with a grand, philosophical message. So I brainstormed by sketching and mind mapping, and I kept trying to think of Pinterest-worthy ideas. I wanted something profound. The funny thing is, I'm not sure anyone else felt this awkward pressure except me.

I also learned to accpet that there would be a giant chasm between my quality of work, and the work I saw while surfing the internet. While I created my nature piece, I became wedded to using my own photographs (maybe because I'm stubborn as

a mule and because I love a good reason to use my sister's awesome camera). I frequented the Trader Joe's near my house and a couple local gardens to take photos of flowers, grass, and trees; everything was fodder. When I started playing with the idea of turning my hat into a bed of flowers, I thought I was brilliant! (oh, the irony bites hard).

What ended up happening was that the double exposure effect I tried to produce made me look like I'd grown a beard; the flowers on my hat looked like a collage produced by a six year old. I finally discarded the nature piece once I saw that my industry piece was overall a much stronger portrait. In the end, the water piece was inspired by the industrial one.

BEND&
BREAK

Which project did you learn the most from? What did you take away from it?

I felt a wonderful learning curve as I started learning Illustrator, wrapping my mind around concepts such as hierarchy and composition. It was challenging to learn the keyboard shortcuts for Illustrator and develop a level of comfort with digital art. It was super fun!

Both my fear and love pieces taught me valuable lessons. I learned to be patient with myself, as one needs to be when using the pen tool. I also learned to play, to use my senses for inspiration. For both pieces, my kinesthetic sense helped me pick poses that felt appropriate for my concept. As I described, my fear piece involved quite a bit of planning beforehand. With this piece, I tried different prayer positions, as I wanted to capture several emotions- feeling small, heavy, alone. I also played around with the angle of my photos to get a silhouette that was easy to understand and detailed enough to have shadows.

While I was creating drafts of my silhouette project, I learned to silence my inner critic, at least during the early stages of a project. It's really hard for me to predict what looks good, so instead of shooting ideas down prematurely, I'll try an idea and see if I like it. Then make incremental tweaks or just scrap the whole thing and start from scratch.

There were days when I wasn't in the mood to work on my art, be it my love/ fear project or my nature/ industry project. But I knew that if I waited until the last minute to work on my drafts, they wouldn't turn out well. Even if I wasn't feeling inspired, I still tried to get something on the page. Once my gears start turning, I find that it is easier to come up with ideas and keep creative energy circulating.

"Design is so simple. That's why it's so complicated."
- Paul Rand

Final thoughts on graphic design? Plans to continue in the future?

I like to say that my experience in AVT 180 with Professor Nahidian overall was lots of hard fun. She's tough, but I think as a class, we performed well because of her encouragement. There was this mentality of pushing the bar and taking pride in the process of making art.

I'm not someone who was born with natural talent in art (or much talent at all-ha!) so crafting a portfolio these last few months has bolstered my confidence in my artistic and design abilities.

In the future, I hope to continue making art in some way, shape, or

"Fail more often in order to find out what you're capable of learning." - *Milton Glaser*

Before I took this class, I was a neuroscience major at William and Mary. I spent two years doing lab work as well as learning the science gamut- from organic chemistry to physics to cell biology. Before I took AVT 180, there weren't many chances for me to exercise my creativity, The unique feeling of stretching my right brain, tearing my creative muscles, and all of the experiences I had this semester are things I will carry with me when I return to college. I especially liked Professor Nahidian's emphasis on giving and receiving feedback this semester. I only wish I had asked for her feedback more often!

form. Before I found out about AVT 180, I tried to sneak my way into Mason's web design course (which 180 is a prerequisite for). I've been trying to combine my interests in art and technology for a while now, so I think web design might be a nice blend. Or I might try my hand at painting or figure drawing. Who knows? I like to keep my options open.