Disney Detail Collection

"Wishes," "Frozen," and "Tiffins"

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

Jessica MacNulty

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Timothy Berg

Ball State University
Muncie, IN

May 2017

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2017
Abstract

Walt Disney World Resort is a place filled with immersive, detailed experiences. When a guest steps into any park, resort, attraction, or restaurant, they are launched into another world. I wanted to dive deeper into why this phenomenon is so prevalent in Walt Disney World, and capture my findings visually. After spending five days at the parks capturing these details, I’ve compiled and thoughtfully designed three books encompassing three unique and immersive experiences. Through this creative project, viewers can get a taste of these experiences and see for themselves just how effective the details are to the overall storytelling that Disney Imagineers have intended from the start.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Timothy Berg, my thesis advisor, for being a source of affirmation, a constant supporter, and for asking the right questions to provoke my thought processes.

I would also like to thank my Disney crew, Jori, Jillian, Jenna, Ann, Amanda, and Alyssa for always being up for adventure. Without their support and ideas, this project would not be what it is today.
1. Preface

As I walked through the Ball Honors House for the first time during summer orientation, something caught my eye. I saw an old, silver SLR camera, not too unlike the one I owned at the time, sitting in a glass case in the main reception area. Surrounding this machine were black and white images, mounted on black cardboard. Upon closer inspection, I learned that this display was part of a thesis project that a senior Honors student had created. I knew that I would learn, grow, and change quite a bit in college, but I also suspected that as a senior, my thesis project would have something to do with photography.

I was not wrong. Here I am, reflecting on my experience completing not just a photography project, but a project that combined several more of my passions. I am excited and proud of this display of not just my time at Ball State, but my time in the Honors program as well.

2. Inspiration Into Ideas

As a telecommunications student here at Ball State, I’ve had experience with design, composition, aesthetic elements and principles, and, one of my favorites, creative storytelling. My classes where I was able to create something technically that also creatively conveyed a story were the ones that I tended to enjoy the most. With that being said, it might be obvious that the idea of creative storytelling kept running through my mind while brainstorming for my final thesis project. I wanted to create something that aided in telling a story, but also left my audience to interpret the project further. Photography allows audiences to infer and imagine,
and as one of my biggest passions, I thought this would be the best medium for my creative thesis. I was just missing the subject matter.

July 2010: The MacNulty Family visits Disney World. This was my first visit to Disney World with my very own, bright blue Coolpix digital camera. I loved all of the photo opportunities. From the biggest scenes (Cinderella’s castle on Main Street USA), to the smallest (a yellow flower in the UK pavilion in Epcot’s World Showcase), I was obsessed. My family constantly had to stop and wait for me as I was taking in each and every visual the parks had to offer. Through several more Disney trips, and several camera upgrades, my interest in capturing these Disney details has not wavered. As I would look through my images after each Disney trip, I noticed that the scenes and details told stories, just as the parks do. Disney has this incredible immersive feel. Guests enter the parks and are launched into different worlds. Each attraction, resort, and restaurant tells a different story.

A story to tell? A place to take incredible images? I had found my solution. As I luckily had a trip planned for December 2016, I decided to base my project around Disney World and the images I would take there. I wanted to focus on the storytelling of the parks, and I wanted those stories to shine through my photography, even if my audience did not know the whole story. Specifically, I hoped to focus on details within the parks, focusing on macro and still life photography; two styles that I wanted more experience in. Hopefully, I could also get the opportunity to strengthen and expand my technical skills through my project. In addition, I wanted to dive even deeper. Behind the creative process, I planned to research how the Disney parks told stories. Each detail makes every inch of Disney’s Florida property so immersive, and I
wanted to dive deeper into the how and the why of this phenomenon. I intended this research to inspire my photography.

At this time, I intended my final project to be a series of images, just one detailed image from certain experiences, accompanied by a small caption detailing where the image was taken, and its impact. This idea progressed and changed quite a bit, especially while I was at Disney.

The initial idea stemmed from passion. The project, which became much more clear and defined throughout this whole process, materialized as a combination of passion, planning, pursuing, and reassessing. My ideas for what I wanted for this final project morphed so much from its first conception, but I believe that it is that much better for it.

3. Pulling Together A Proposal

With all of these thoughts in mind, I attempted to compile and condense them all into a cohesive and comprehensive thesis proposal. This step proved difficult, as I had the bare bones of this project, but knew I would develop more details and ideas as I executed. The Honors Thesis Guide was helpful for this process. It posed very important questions that I needed to think about before even beginning to write the proposal. I knew why I wanted to complete this project. I am passionate about it! I did have to take time and discover what the purpose of this project was going to be, and who my intended audience was.

My creative brainstorming processes always begin with many lists: To-do lists, lists about what to research, numbered steps outlining how I am to carry out the project, etc. This project was no different, and this technique aided me in my proposal stage. I immediately made a bulleted list, outlining different purposes of this project. It looked like this:
• Tell a story

• Enhance my educational experience (technical, research, etc.)

• Showcase specific details

• Enlighten others (even non-Disney people) why and how Disney tells stories through their park experiences

• Convey the importance of details in everyday life

• Show others why I enjoy Disney so much!

These notes are a bit rough, I know, but they helped me process what the purpose of this project was, and who this project is for. Around this same time, I was also on the hunt for a project advisor. I was lucky to secure Tim Berg as my advisor, as his input, questions, and encouragement were helpful during my first few meetings with him. I had combined thoughts from my meetings with all of my other brainstorming and completed my thesis proposal. Here are two excerpts from my proposal, discussing the purpose and audience, respectively:

“The purpose of this project is to bring to light the real influencers of guest experience, the tiny details, and assess the why and the how of why they are present.”

“This project is for Disney lovers everywhere. The Disney parks are beautiful and magical places, and any Disney fan I hope would love and appreciate looking at a photo series such as this. I hope others, Disney fans or not, would learn to focus on the details in life, whether that be a guest at a park, at work, with your family, or creating art. Details are
essential and important, and I hope to show others through this project that details make for a complete and creative story.

Before I turned in my proposal, I wanted to do a bit of preliminary research to ensure that I would have enough material to sift through to aid my project. I ended up watching several videos about the Disney experience, focusing mainly on newer attractions, and how they utilized details to tell immersive stories. I also at this time decided to include some technical research for this project as well. I planned on utilizing Lynda.com, an educational website with technological tutorials, and other sources to learn more about macro and still life photography. I even stumbled upon a few articles giving tips and tricks about specifically taking photos in Disney World. This, I knew, could launch me into many branches of research for this project. In hindsight, I was glad to get a grasp on the research aspect of this project early on.

4. Learning More

After receiving approval on my proposal, I was off to research further. I researched three different categories: Disney, photography, and aesthetics. For Disney related research, I found quite a few articles and videos that helped me think more deeply about my project, how I was conveying Disney's stories, and what specifically I should be focusing on. A video created by the Walt Disney company back in 2012 launched much of my thought. This video celebrated 60 years of Disney Imagineering, or the team of creative people who are behind every experience that Disney has created. One imagineer explained that "Walt [Disney] was a storyteller. He saw that the guests that would come in the [Disney parks] were clearly walking into a movie. So
everything that we put in the park, right down to the details, has to make cohesive sense” (DisneyParks, 60 Years of Walt Disney Imagineering). The video also explains the roots of the Imagineers, a small group of people working in a few buildings 60 years ago. Now, as the second largest media and business conglomerate in the world, Disney has seven immersive resorts all around the world (Milord).

Diving deeper into my own trip planning, I found a video about one of the experiences I was looking most forward to: Tiffins. This restaurant in Disney’s Animal Kingdom is brand new, and I was excited that my group was able to snag a reservation for lunch on our Animal Kingdom day. The video produced by DisneyParks began by explaining that this restaurant is placed in the center of the park, or Discovery Island. This area of the park is the center hub, with different lands such as Asia and Africa jutting off via bridges and paths. Joe Rohde, an imagineer focused on Animal Kingdom, explained that this placement was intentional, as this restaurant is meant to encompass and explain every part of the park, so it makes sense that it is located where guests depart from to go on their adventures in various places around the park. From this moment, 12 seconds into the video, I knew this destination would not just be a place to eat, rather it would be an experience and a journey. Rhode went on to explain the different rooms in the restaurant, food options and the stories behind them, and the unique decor. This video was a wonderful introduction to the experience, and I was able to jot down some notes of what specifics I wanted to focus on photographing while I was there.

I was excited to look deeper into macro and still life photography, which is a genre that I would say I have the least experience in. Utilizing some Ball State resources, I was able to take a Lynda.com course called Photography 101 - Shooting Macro and Close Up presented by Joseph
Linaschke. Although I was familiar with many of the technical aspects of the course, he helped me begin to think about textures as subjects of close up shots, challenges of shooting macro outside, and I was even able to practice around my house. This helped me feel more comfortable with the style, and gave me ideas of the kinds of subject matter that would make the best macro shots.

As a telecommunications major, many of my classes have touched on visual aesthetics and principles, or how you utilize elements to achieve different overall looks. In my classes, aesthetics was typically taught in association with design or video, so I wanted to dive back into my notes from those classes and apply them more directly to photography. I also was able to research further a certain group of principles that was mentioned in my capstone class: Gestalt principles. I focused specifically on two principles, closure and figure/ground. Closure is the idea that a viewer will fill in the empty space if not all of the subject is included in the frame. This is a principle often used in macro photography, as the subject sometimes can exceed the frame. Figure refers to the form, silhouette, or shape that is differentiated from the background area, or ground. This principle works closely with contrast, and can be utilized with photography. A way to contrast the figure from ground is by using depth of field, and effect that makes the ground part of the photograph out of focus, allowing the eyes to focus on the figure. To achieve this, the photographer must be able to utilize a large aperture opening in the camera lens. In turn, the shutter speed must be fairly quick to compensate for the larger amount of light being let in because of the aperture size. Keeping this all in mind, I moved to my next step: preparation.
5. Preparing For Adventure

As my Disney trip approached, I began brainstorming more specifically what details and stories I should focus on. I was able to sift through these and create some guidelines for myself. As I had been to Disney several times recently, I knew I could afford to view the World through my lens a little more than I typically had in the parks. It is wonderful to take in all of the details, images, smells, and feelings, but I needed to dedicate some of my brain power to this project during my trip. In order to do this, one of my first tasks was to explain my vision to my vacation group.

My little sister had the opportunity to perform with her choir at a Holiday show in Epcot, so the main purpose of this trip was to support her. I was accompanied by my mother and older sister, both photographers and Disney freaks. We were also joined by my best friend, Amanda, and her mom and sister. We all share a deep love for Disney, and I knew by letting them in on this project, I would be able to tap into many more insights, ideas, and visions. I was also lucky to have my mom and sister there, as they both have wonderful creative vision.

The ladies on this trip love planning. We had several planning sessions as a group, discussing meal reservations, ticket types, park days, and so much more. This proved to be extremely helpful, as I was also planning a project. We decided which parks we were going to on each day, which helped me to mentally prepare for what kind of shots of what attractions I would encounter. We decided on dining experiences, and this allowed me to look up menus, watch videos, and prepare for the new restaurants we would be attending. Even though I've been to Disney many times, I've not yet experienced it all! I was happy to hear that we were going to make it a mission this trip to experience as many new things as possible.
Along with this trip preparation, I also needed to prepare my equipment. I own a Canon Rebel T3 DSLR (digital single lens reflex) camera. A DSLR is a camera that contains a mirror in the camera body, large sensors, and can house different lens types. This kind of camera allows for versatility, quick response time, and better quality images and depth of field than a digital point and shoot, or a phone camera. I knew this camera was coming along with me for this trip. I also own two lenses: my 18-55mm kit lens, and my 50mm prime lens. I debated which lens I wanted to use as I prepared for the trip. My kit lens has a zoom element, which is convenient for traveling, quick shots, and it can get a wide angle. My prime lens does not zoom, and is not a wide angle, but I prefer the quality of this lens, and it has the capability of a much shallower depth of field. So, both lenses had an upside. With the bustle of Disney, I could zoom and get wider angle shots with my kit lens, but I could get more detailed and artistic shots with my prime lens. Ultimately, I decided to bring both.

I had decided to invest in another tool to aid in my project, and also my photography in general. I wanted to ensure that my images were of the highest caliber for this project, as I only had five days to be in Disney World. If a shot was out of focus, or I realized I missed a shot that I wanted to get, I did not really have a chance to go back and reshoot. It’s difficult to see your images and determine if they’re of good enough quality from the camera LCD screen. This tool I purchased allowed my SD memory card to adapt into a lightning port plugin. This would allow me to view my images on my phone or iPad instantly from anywhere at all. I hoped this adapter would assist in my fast-paced project.

6. Shutter-Happy in Disney
December 16th, 2016: The day had arrived! The Disney crew and I were off to the Indianapolis Airport to prepare for takeoff to Orlando, Florida. We were ecstatic. I was sure to have all of my necessary equipment with me on the plane, as I knew our luggage would not get to our room until late that night.

December 17th, 2016: Our first stop: Epcot. I was particularly excited to explore this park through my project’s lens. Epcot has two main sections: Future World, and World Showcase. Future World holds the infamous Spaceship Earth (or, the big white golf ball), and several other areas surrounding around the Earth, technology, innovation, and the future. It’s fascinating, but it isn’t nearly as immersive and picturesque as the World Showcase. Disney’s World Showcase holds nine country pavilions, each launching guests into a different cultural experience. Walking from one country to another, everything changes. The sights, the smells, the cast members’ costumes, the music, the food, the feel. Each pavilion is full of small details to truly make the experience immersive. I wrote in my thesis journal, “Truly, I could come and walk around the World Showcase every day for a year and would still find something new each day.” I knew I would adore photographing the World Showcase for my project. I focused on details walking through Mexico, Germany, and Norway. The popular Disney movie, Frozen, takes place in Norway, so the pavilion has been morphed into a haven for the story. A Frozen ride was added, statues of the characters popped up, and a new meet and greet area opened up. As Frozen fans, we decided to brave the 30 minute wait to meet our favorite Disney sisters, Elsa and Anna.

Upon entering the waiting area (also called a queue), I realized that this 30 minute wait would fly by for me. Little did we know that the queue was a story in itself. The idea is that we,
the guests, are visiting Anna and Elsa at their Royal Sommerhus (or, vacation home), in the
countryside of Norway. Guests first enter their foyer, which connects to a dining room. Books
lined shelves, paintings and tapestries hung on the walls, and the place glowed with a sort of
warmth. So much wood was used in the space. It truly felt like I had stepped into a scene from
the movie. Moving through the rooms, we found small dolls that looked like Elsa and Anna
sitting on a toy chest, and a painting of the girls when they were younger. This is a place their
family had been visiting for years. These small details, while visually stimulating, were also
telling a story. In this case, they were clueing us into the parts of Anna and Elsa’s story that we
may not have known. It was eye opening, and an experience that inspired me to modify my
thesis project. The following is an excerpt from my thesis journal:

“My biggest discovery today is that I cannot narrow down the details. My original plan
for this was to take one image from some experiences for the final project. That
seemed cool and simplistic and narrow, but these stories are so much wider... I want to
create mini-books—I’m picturing 5x5, staple bound books, maybe 10-15 pages, each
page with an image, short title, and maybe some pages with words (poems, quotes? Just
ideas!). I want to make a series of these books (maybe 3-5?) diving into the details of a
certain experience in the parks. These experiences have so many components, and each
contributes to the story in its own unique way. I want to tell the story through images!
This excites me! The event that led me to this discovery happened today at the Norway
pavilion. We decided to wait in line to meet Elsa and Anna of Frozen... the queue was
incredible... I was so entranced by the intricacy of the story, I knew I couldn’t pick just
one detail! So, I think this experience will be one for a mini-book. I think I got some good shots!"

The image to the right is a centerpiece on a table in Anna and Elsa’s dining room in the queue. You can easily tell by looking at this image that the Imagineers for the experiences wanted to achieve the authenticity of what a home might have looked like in Norway in Anna and Elsa’s time. The details that are in this wooden flower centerpiece are so intricate, and as such a small part of a larger attraction, I would never have thought that the creators would spend time on something such as this. However, the experience is better because of it. The attention to detail truly immerses guests, who find themselves looking at beautiful pieces of art like this in line for the main attraction. This bookcase as seen to the left also was a piece of art in this same room, but came across to guests as just a bookshelf, housing items that Anna and Elsa and their family used during their summers here. Lifelike details like this transport guest to that time and place, and also can add to the background of the story. Perhaps Anna and Elsa’s family were big readers, and that’s why Anna is so imaginative. Maybe Anna’s mother was really into painted plates and cups and collected them, keeping them in pristine condition, and that’s why Elsa is so particular and concerned about what others may think of her. These details provide implications and background that a viewer cannot get strictly from the movie.
An area of the queue that especially furthered Anna and Elsa’s story for me was this staircase. Dolls looking just like Anna and Elsa sitting on that chest imply that the girls would play here when they were younger; the chest probably contains even more toys! I wondered how the girls played together in the vacation home after the incident that instilled a sense of fear and isolation in Elsa. Perhaps Anna played with both dolls, imagining what it would be like if Elsa would play with her. The gorgeous painting on the wall depicts Anna and Elsa’s family on a summer picnic. This painting is a bittersweet visual, as the girls’ parents died at sea when they were younger. This provides warm memories and a sense of acceptance in the house. The sisters have begun coming back to their summer home, and I’m sure it wasn’t easy to do this because of the memories of their parents. This detail gives a sense of reality to the home and the story. I was blown away by these details, and was excited to document them and hopefully be able to use these images to convey the immersive feeling that the queue emits.

December 18th, 2017: The task of working on my thesis became difficult for unforeseen reasons on this day. I woke up with a fever. The day prior, I completely lost my voice. So, I was not feeling the best. I took the morning to sleep in while the rest of the gang headed to Hollywood Studios, and I was able to meet back up with everyone for our lunch reservation at Disney Springs. I was disappointed since I was missing out on opportunities to take pictures, but I knew that in order to feel up to taking pictures in the afternoon, I had to compromise. After a fun lunch, we were able to head back to Hollywood Studios for the rest of the day. I was really
looking forward to getting pictures of the new Star Wars fireworks show, and the new Holiday fireworks show. Hollywood Studios is undergoing many changes currently, and I would have to say out of the four parks, it is the least immersive. The park is based around being in Hollywood, but also is transitioning to being largely Star Wars themed. It's having a bit of an identity crisis at the moment. I figured, because of this, I wouldn't get many pictures here. However, I got some lovely shots of the main street in the park, which has the Chinese Theatre as the backdrop, and I got some cool sunset pictures from a different part of the park. I wanted to use these in my final project, but I knew I would not have enough shots from the day to make into a whole book.

December 19th, 2017: My personal favorite park was our destination on this sunny Monday. Animal Kingdom has been my favorite since age 5. I would consider myself an adventurer, and have always been an animal lover. This park takes you to Africa, Asia, Mount Everest, and you experience culture, food, animals, and some thrills too! Some people call it a glorified zoo. I say it is so much more than that. The imagineering that went behind Animal Kingdom from first creation to the continued additions being worked on today are all so innovative and immersive. I knew my camera would be getting a workout on this day. Each corner of the park throws guests into the experience, such as the image did for me on the right. The details, from the bikes, to the wires, to the laundry basket on the roof, to the realistic signs on the distressed wall, give the feel of authenticity, which is quite possibly the perfect word to describe the whole park of Animal
Kingdom. The other three parks embody imagination and magic, but Animal Kingdom does an incredible job of recreating the real. The stories that are told in this park through the details and immersion are often real, or based off of true places and experiences.

Our reservation for the new restaurant, Tiffins, was definitely something I was especially looking forward to. I had done some research on the new establishment and the story behind it, and at this point in my thesis journey, I knew I was going to create a mini-book about Tiffins. Upon entering the building, the story began to visually come to life. There were cases in the lobby area full of sketchbooks, drawings, paints, and pencils, which were actually created and used by the imagineers who travelled through Asia and Africa for their Animal Kingdom research excursions. It was so interesting to see these small beginnings of what is now Disney World’s largest park. I was drawn immediately to these artistic details. As I mentioned before, Disney does a great job of using details to tell make-believe. These details were as real as it gets. There was no re-creation, just raw materials displayed to help tell the story of the Animal Kingdom. This sort of breaks the wall between guests and the Imagineers, allowing us into their world where we can hear their real life stories. This is taken as a privilege for many!

We were led to our table in a room with a tree made out of paper and other materials on one wall, and an electrical box with wires going every which way on the opposite wall. The wall closest to our table was filled with different samples of textures and materials, all collaged and mounted together. We learned that these textures were a mix of samples that imagineers
created while on their excursions and samples from the parks. You truly couldn't tell which texture was from Africa or the park! On other walls were collages of notes and drawings from the imagineers' travels. They were actually very funny; the imagineers jotted down stories from tigers in hotel lobbies to eating lunch out of tiffin boxes on the savannah. These stories and sketches made their experiences that much more real to me.

I think the component of my Tiffins experience that made it the most immersive was our waiter. He was so knowledgeable about the origins of the restaurant, the adventures of the imagineers, and each and every dish and drink served on the menu. It was amazing listening to his descriptions of the food, where they came from, and what they represented in the restaurant's eyes. He also explained to us what a "tiffin" was, which I had already learned from my prior research. However, he added that the restaurant is named Tiffins because the fact that the imagineers had to protect their food in metal boxes because it might get crushed showed the intensity and immersiveness of the travels they took. I loved learning all about the different rooms, what all of the art pieces represented, and, of course, I loved taking pictures of these details.

For my meal, I ate 72-hour beef short rib served with carrots, chimichurri, and jade black rice, Berkshire pork masa tamale with Hominy succotash and red mole sauce, and washed it down with an Annapurna Zing, or Bombay Sapphire east gin, passion fruit puree, mint, lime juice, and ginger beer. Not only was the food amazing and interesting, it was extremely picturesque. I couldn’t wait to include my shots of these dishes in my mini-book.

Finally, we were able to explore the Nomad Lounge area of the restaurant, and all over the walls and ceilings were these small slips of paper. Upon closer inspection, each slip had a
handwritten message on it, answering a prompt provided on the top. The prompt read “My True Tale of Adventure.” Responses ranged from adventures in the wild to adventures in the backyard, to advice for travellers, to messages to the restaurant as a whole. The guests were intentionally made part of this story. Imagineers know that the story of Animal Kingdom is far from over, and the idea to incorporate the present and future of the story in this restaurant all about the beginnings I think is genius. This detail meant a lot to me, and I’m sure it meant a lot to many other guests too. I felt honored to be witnessing this story at such a deep level, and it was incredible to be a part of the ongoing narrative as well. Overall, the experience was truly wonderful. I was so glad to dive deeper into the history of the Animal Kingdom, and enjoy it in an artsy and delicious way.

December 20th, 2017: The weather cooled down a bit for our Magic Kingdom day. The park known for its magic and wonder did not disappoint, and I was happy to experience and photograph many immersions. I again worried about finding an experience to create a mini-book about on this day, but I took so many pictures nonetheless. One of my favorite parades, Festival of Fantasy, was on our schedule for the day, and I decided to focus on the costuming, floats, visuals, and overall feel of this exciting experience. Photographing a show of any kind is difficult, just because the performers move so quickly. Festival of Fantasy was no exception. However, it was nice not to have to worry too much about lack of light. It was bright day, so I was able to up my shutter speed to freeze the motion of the performers, and still atta
properly exposed images. The costuming for this parade is simply incredible. Each performer wears something different, and each detail on each costume completes the story of the Festival of Fantasy. The idea collects Disney favorites, such as The Little Mermaid, Frozen, Brave, and Peter Pan, and emits each story through floats, music, and performers. The costumes for the Lost Boys of Peter Pan particularly wowed me. The characters were displayed through the raggedy, mismatched outfits, with touches of each of their animal counterparts. The fabrics made the texture of the costumes stand out. Each costume added to the story, and helped the guests feel a part of Peter Pan's story.

I was also able to really focus on taking images around the main hub of the park. This recently renovated area holds the focal point of the park, Cinderella's Castle, many statues, beautiful landscaping, and grassy areas for guests to relax on. I utilized a lot of shallow depth of field, macro shots here.

Character meet and greet venues exist all over Magic Kingdom park. If you're lucky, you might get to see a character roaming around the park, playing with guests and riding attractions. These are some of my favorite experiences, as they allow guests (especially the younger ones,) to fully immerse themselves and experience not only the visual details of the parks, but the personal details as well. We were lucky enough to witness Alice from Alice in Wonderland ride Mad Hatter's Teacups with a few younger guests. Alice was waiting with her new friends to board the ride, and she waved at the Dormouse, who had popped out of the tea
kettle in the middle. She exclaimed to the young girl holding her hand, “Oh, it’s the Dormouse! Hello! Oh, he’s so silly.” The girl was in awe of this interaction, and I can say personally that it truly brought the story of the attraction alive for me. I never ride this ride, as I get dizzy very easily, but the character interaction added a whole new level to the experience and the story. These personal details can make all the difference.

December 21st, 2017: Our last day in the parks, sadly, had arrived. We were spending the chilly day in Epcot, the park where we began. I was glad. Epcot was so big, and I was excited to return to World Showcase to take pictures of more details. We spend a large majority of our final day strolling around the World Showcase, taking our time to stop in each pavilion and take in all the sights and smells. We took advantage of many movies and documentaries, as many of the pavilions have these sort of attractions. They’re typically overlooked, but I find them so interesting. Even if they aren’t telling a story specifically about the park, the movie clues audiences in as to why the pavilions were created in the way they were. For example, the movie in the China pavilion talked about our country’s origins in a panoramic view, and the pavilion lets us discover these traits of the country ourselves. After a long day, we collected our things and headed to the airport to return home. As we waited at the airport, I was grateful that I had invested in an SD card to iPhone adapter. I was able to view all of my images and even begin mentally preparing for the next step in my thesis journey: editing and designing.
The Editing Aftermath

I took 1,541 pictures over the span of 5 days. Honestly I wasn’t expecting this number to be that much lower. I think I was especially shutter-happy this trip because I wanted to ensure I got the perfect shots for my mini-books. Upon returning home, I uploaded all of these images to my laptop, and began the sifting process. This took a substantial amount of time, as I not only needed to go through every image and pick out just a few of the best ones, but I also needed to solidify what the themes of my mini-books would be. As I clicked through the hundreds of pictures, I knew for sure what two of my books would be: Anna and Elsa Meet and Greet, and Tiffins. These, both new experiences for me, were immersive, detailistic, and told a story. They were perfect subjects for a book! I tossed around the idea of creating a book for the Festival of Fantasy parade, but I didn’t have enough images that I loved to make a whole mini-book about it.

After finding several other pictures from all around all four parks that I absolutely loved, I decided to have one final mini-book encompassing the story of Disney World as a whole, and its immersive qualities. I decided to call it “Wishes,” and fill it with the miscellaneous photos that I definitely did not want to exclude from this project.

My next step in post-processing was editing the images. I use an Adobe program called Lightroom to process my images. I proceeded to throw my final image choices into Lightroom, and began to tweak them. My process for editing images is different for each type of photo and location, and that was no different for this project. I toyed with the idea of making all of the images black and white to go along with the simplistic book design I had in mind at the time, but I decided against it. A huge part of the story and the details are in the color, so if I made
them black and white, I feel that I would have taken out main plot points. Since I felt this way about color, I knew I wanted to boost the vibrancy of the colors in each image. Typically I did that first, and then I would do minor corrections to exposure, contrast, and sharpening. Then, if needed, I did some color correction. I focus a lot while shooting on obtaining proper exposure and composition, so my post process usually is just minor tweaks and corrections. After exporting my fully-edited images, I separated them into three folders, one for each mini-book.

Brainstorming, sketching, and organizing was my next step. I went to work sketching out what I wanted each page of each book to look like, and I jotted down numbered lists of what images I wanted to put on each page. This process was extremely intentional. For example, I knew I wanted the Anna and Elsa book (that I decided to name “Frozen,”) to be mostly in chronological order. This was because the story is experienced that way, and I wanted my audience to grasp that fact. For “Tiffins,” I organized the book partially based on order, but also through grouping like subjects together. “Wishes” was probably the most difficult to organize, as the theme was sort of scattered. I wanted a variety of locations and feels throughout the book.

While the storytelling was one factor in these mini-book layouts, the other factor was design principles. I wanted the book to seem balanced, in many senses of the word, and I wanted my designs to make sense. Page layout played the biggest role in this. I varied my page layouts, the content of my images, and made sure that the visuals along with the stories were cohesive. Page layout drove the design for “Wishes,” especially. I was careful to vary my designs, contrasting full two-page spreads with collages, in which I was able to group like images together.
After the rough sketches were completed, I opened up inDesign. The blank screen was daunting at first, but once I embraced the feel and theme of the designs, I got to work. I designed a rough draft of “Wishes” in just a few days, but I was not in love with the feel I had created. I utilized a lot of circles, many words, and a more bubbly-feeling font. It felt childish, which is what I thought I wanted at the time. It’s about Disney World after all! However, the purpose of my thesis was more mature. Digging into what makes the park experiences so unique and immersive called for a more simplistic design. I thought the pictures do the talking for themselves. I’d rather have my audience focus on the images and how they tell the story rather than excessive design elements. The design of the mini-books should support my content, not be the content. So, I reworked the book. I simplified the design, leaving almost no space untouched by an image. I utilized some text in this book, as I wanted my audience to understand where each of these images were taken. I changed my font as well to a more classy, structured serif font. This theme would run through the other two mini-books, encouraging and supporting the images. The cover of each book contained the one word title in black on a white background, juxtaposed by a fun Mickey ear punctuation at the end.

I worked through designing “Tiffins” and “Frozen” in very similar ways, although I did not use text nearly as much in these books. Since the experience was pretty narrow, I decided I did not need to specify details through words within the book. Instead, I decided to create an introduction page to be included in each book. The introduction would provide a bit of background, and would prepare the audiences’ minds for the visual journey they were about to take. After these final touches, it was time to send them off for printing.
8. Final Product

After researching many different places to get my small, 5x5 books printed, I finally was able to get a reasonable quote from the University’s printing services. After working with them for about a week, I was finally able to hold the physical books in my hands. As a college student, I don’t have too much money to throw around, so I had to sacrifice some of my vision to attain a reasonable price for all three books. The final products ended up being spiral bound, printed on 100lb cover and 80lb text paper, and 5x5. They turned out nicely, although if I had it my way regardless of the price they would have been hard-cover, spine bound, with thicker paper, but I had to remain reasonable. The quality of the printing was pretty good. I was happy with how my images turned out, although the spiral binding I think distracted a bit from some of the full page spreads. Flipping through the books, I was happy with the overall effectiveness of the design elements and aesthetics, and I think each book visually tells a pretty detailed story.

It was a bittersweet moment getting these books printed. I had spent so much time and effort designing and redesigning them, and I was excited to be done. However, I truly enjoyed the process, and was a bit sad to see that it was over. This six-month experience was exhausting at times, but I truly learned so much about myself, my passions, and how I see the world through my own lens. I was so happy to dabble in areas that I was interested in but hadn’t been able to practice much within my school work. This project challenged me to research what I didn’t know, and also trust in my own creative intuition, especially out in the field. I hope that others can look at this project and get a glimpse into the stories and experiences that Disney tells so well. As such a visual and creative project, I hope to evoke emotion and even nostalgia in my viewers. Disney is a very common experience for many, whether that be through movies
or the parks. I also hope that these books spark the curiosity and attention to details not just in Disney Parks, but all around us. Stopping to see the why behind the visual experiences all around us can be eye-opening, and these books are a testament to that idea. Imagineers know this first-hand, and have created such amazing and detailed experiences based off of small, preliminary ideas. I think Walt Disney said it best: "If you can dream it, you can do it."
Work Cited


INTRODUCTION

"Some people are worth melting for."

Walking into the Norway Pavilion in Epcot's World Showcase, guests may scoff at the hour long wait time to meet the beloved sisters, Elsa and Anna, from Disney's Frozen. Little do they know that the time waiting to chat with the Ice Queen and her quirky red-headed sister is not time wasted whatsoever. Guests waiting in line experience Anna and Elsa's Royal Sommerhus, with each room containing hand-painted decorations, accurate and intricate architecture, and even some of the girls' childhood toys left from the summers the family would spend at this vacation home in the mountains. Each turn tells a new story and adds background and depth to the story and sisterly relationship that we all know and love. Let it go, and enjoy the wait time.
INTRODUCTION

"Adventure is out there!"

Opened in 1998, Disney's Animal Kingdom is an adventurer's paradise. Disney Imagineers spent months researching and preparing for the creation of this park, and much of their research was hands on. Their adventures in Africa and Asia are documented artfully in a new, fine dining location on Discovery Island, the central hub of Disney's Animal Kingdom park. The restaurant is a full experience in itself, allowing guests to visualize, learn from cast members, and even taste the findings from the park's research adventures. Named after a lunchbox of sorts, Tiffins embodies the creativity of the Imagineers and the intensity of their travels to achieve the overall feel of the Animal Kingdom. Embrace and enjoy the adventure!
TIFFIN NOUN. INDIAN ORIGIN.
A SNACK OR LIGHT MEAL.
USUALLY EATEN MIDDAY.

TIFFIN BOX NOUN. INDIAN ORIGIN.
A TIERED AND STURDY CONTAINER
USED TO CARRY A LIGHT MEAL.
INTRODUCTION

"Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow, and fantasy."

There is something about Walt Disney World that attracts guests young and old alike. The sights, the smells, the tiny details make each experience on Disney's Orlando property immersive and unforgettable. "Wishes" dives deeper into this visual journey. Embark on an adventure to the Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Animal Kingdom, and Hollywood Studios through images that capture the feel of youthful exuberance, intricate charm, and unending imagination. As the quote found above the entrance to Disney World's Magic Kingdom indicates, entering these parks includes a one way ticket to a whole new world, a world where wishes can come true.