... And They Read Books,
Which Sometimes Felt Like This.

An Honors Creative Project (HONORS 499)

by

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PROJECT RATIONALE

Thesis Objective:

The objective of thesis project was to create a body of works that responded to specific texts from post-modern literature and introduced them to a larger audience. Varied mediums (painting, print-making, collage, design/sculpture, book-making) were used to achieve these goals.

Philip K Dick: Ubik

Ubik is a story about a world where psychics exist and are hired out by people and companies as a sort of high class espionage tactic. As a natural counterpart, anti-psychics also exist and are hired out as a form of privacy protection. The head of one of the major anti-spy companies, a man by the name of Glen Runciter, is believed by his employees to be dead after a bomb detonated in a trap they had walked into. His second-in-command, a tester named Joe Chip, thinks it might have something to do with a shady new talent they had hired right before the job, a girl with the rare ability to re-write the past as she chooses. But, as the world around them starts to lose time and revert to an earlier decade, Joe begins to question whether or not it’s actually the crew that died, and that their boss is talking to what remains of their neural patterns in a half-life state. As time starts to slip away faster and faster pointed ads for Ubik spray become more prevalent. Ubik, a substance that can help things retain time, seems to be a saving constant in the chaos, except for the fact that it, too, keeps losing time and reverting to an earlier form.

I chose this book for this project because of the casual and breezy manner in which the author deftly tackles complex issues such as life and after-life, reality and the dream-state, and because of how he blends the typical sci-fi elements in almost as an afterthought. There’s a dark humor to the entirety of it, accented especially by every chapter beginning with an ad for Ubik, in each of which Ubik is an entirely different product with different features. Philip K. Dick, as an author, is famous for taking the perception altering experiences he had with drugs and extending them into a literary form that is at once both immensely readable and thought provoking, as well as often insightful.

To capture the feel of this work I decided to use an almost sculptural design piece which allows me to show for different ideas at once. In one piece I have a package design for four different products, each from a different time and done in an appropriate design style to match. The name of the product is never mentioned, helping to maintain the same air of baffled curiosity that the novel maintains throughout. As I mentioned, the chapters begin with ads in each of which Ubik is a vastly different product, so by only showing the retrograding suffix instead of the whole word I seek to impart the same sense of generic vagueness. The blurbs and verbage of the different package design serve to hint at the contents of the novel without making it clear what the story is, or how it ends. It suggests questions about what reality is, and what’s life and what’s death, without making it obvious that this is what it is doing.
The one direct "artifact" from the novel that I chose to use in this piece is the top of the carton design, which is marked with two underlined crosses. Within the story, Joe Chip uses this symbol in his evaluation of the aforementioned girl to tell his employer, Runciter, that the girl is dangerous and not to be trusted. Marking the package itself as dangerous and incapable of being trusted speaks not only to Chip's own distrust of everything as the story progresses, but of the treachery of trusting in a salvation that is itself prey to the very aging forces it protects against. It binds the four package designs together, speaking of the folly in believing in any of them. To the casual viewer, the marks are intended to be a source of provocation. They obviously don't fit with the four sides, which causes the viewer to stop and ponder their importance, which in effect should lead to a redoubled attempt to comprehend the imagery and verbage of the four main sides. As they are also unexplained within in the context of the packaging, and use a rather commonly understood symbol (the cross), they provoke curiosity, which I hope will lead to an attempt to intellectualize what the viewer is examining.

Mark Z. Danielewski: House of Leaves

House of Leaves is a nesting egg doll of a novel, with several layers of story layered on each other with an almost fractal complexity. The main story is about a photographer by the name of Navidson and his decaying relationship with his wife and family. To solve this, he decides to retire and settle down with them in a new house. But, as a final hurrah to his career, he mounts cameras in every room possible so he can document a family moving into a house. They then discover that the house is bigger on the inside than the outside, and discover a closet with infinite depth that keeps growing larger as it is explored. This whole narrative is revealed in the form of an essay written by a man blind from birth. The essay is dutifully reconstructed and annotated by a tattoo shop employee, who tells his own story through his footnotes. A myriad of other voices appear in the book, including cited sources in the book (all fictitious) and the letters from the tattoo worker's institutionalized mother. Beyond the story, the type itself becomes engaged in telling the story. Even though the revisions notice at the beginning is also a part of the lie, and the mentioned four-color edition does not exist, all printed editions have either the word "house" in blue or the struck comments in "red." The word "minotaur" is reportedly in purple in the non-existent first edition. The typeface is different depending on which narrator is speaking, and near the end the text starts to thin out and bounce around the page.

House of Leaves is such an ambitious work of literature that it was hard to know where to start with it. Unlike the "Ubik" project, where I decided that less was indeed more, here I decided that as much as I could tastefully pull together would better serve to visually illustrate such a complex novel. The painting itself draws stylistically from Paul Klee and Kurt Schwitters, both wonderfully emotional and experimental artists whose works have the same feel as the experience of reading the novel had. The trick of embedding planes of plexi-glass into the painting and then mimicking them with tromp l'oeil planes elsewhere reflects Danielewski's attempts to blur the line between reality and fiction.
Within the painting, and especially in the frame, are reference notes, meant to call to mind immediately the prolific footnotes that are so much a part of House of Leaves. The colors are muted to reflect the bleak and low-key horror feeling the story has, and the use of bright blue in the spiral is a nod towards the word “house” being printed in blue. The spiral, which extends way beyond the canvas and eventually ends in a series of words, speaks both to the nature of the house in the story, which has spiraling hallways which extend far beyond the exterior dimensions of the house, and also to the dynamic text near the end of the novel.

To recreate the overwhelming feeling of the essay prose and the multitude of voices and influences the novel exhibits there is a trunk of loose essays in various states of repair which the viewer can sift through and try to piece together and/or understand as their own curiosity drives them to; recreating the experience the top-level narrator of the book has in dealing with his own story. The essays are on a random assortment of subjects and are written by a variety of personalities, all of whom generously agreed to contribute something to help me further the effect of the painting through this supplementary piece. Works were contributed by: Whitney Mayfield, Elizabeth Clay

David Mitchell: Ghostwritten

Ghostwritten is another ambitious novel, this time not in how it is layered but in how it progresses. It is comprised of a series of vignettes which start out only loosely connected to each other and get more and more interconnected as the novel progresses. It is also a fairly global novel, starting in Japan and ending in the United States’ east coast, doing an admirable job of representing the different cultural voices in between. Among the voices represented are a cultist and a record shop employee (Japan), a Brit working as a stock-broker (Hong Kong), a Chinese woman who endures the varied political upheavals on the 20th century (Holy Mountain), a ghost who keeps hopping from mind to mind trying to find where he came from (Mongolia), an art thief (Russia), a ghostwriter/drummer (England), a quantum physicist (Ireland), and a late-night DJ and an AI (New York).

I knew that what I wanted to do for this project was a series of collages, which I had originally intended to do as prints until I realized that Mitchell’s prose was so clear and convincingly real that I needed real imagery to convey the feeling of it. So, I switched to collaged found imagery instead and added the aspect of “fiction” back in by painting, drawing, and scratching away at the resulting images. The number of pieces in the whole (five) was chosen quite purposefully. Five is first off an even number, which keeps the works from getting mentally divided into sets in the viewer’s mind (as even numbers would be wont to do.) Five is also a visually significant amount of compositions, which helps to bring to mind Mitchell’s varied voices, yet is a small enough number to not visually overwhelm the viewer and tax their attention spans. Three pieces would have lacked the feeling of global-ness, seven would be too much to hold the viewer’s attention through.

Each of the compositions is fairly different feeling, with different sets of images and colors. Yet, each one is also connected somehow to at least one other image in the set.
through repeated images and image pieces. Smaller echoes of a main image, or even scraps from a cropping, end up in other compositions as lesser elements.

**Thomas Pynchon: The Crying of Lot 49**

*The Crying of Lot 49* is a book that’s about the postal service, mostly. Or, it’s at least about the history of the postal service, and also about the history of underground postal systems. It also has a conspiracy element which is slowly revealed as the main character, Oedipa Maas, is going over an estate willed to her. Among which she finds some stamps that are just ever so slightly wrong. Coupled with the discovery of a mysterious muted horn symbol, Oedipa quickly finds herself having to re-evaluate everything around her.

This book has an odd feeling to it, like there’s a point it’s trying to make that’s just beyond what it is actually saying. Or that there is a joke in it that you just do not get. It is witty in a highly intellectual sort of way, with what are obviously carefully chosen character names and everything. But, for me—and for this project—the real over-riding feel for the book was how it was obvious that the muted horn symbol and the underground post were important, but that the reason why they were was always just out of reach. There was a dark conspiracy trying to obscure the truth, but it seemed to be only menacing in name, as it was hard to place exactly how it could be construed as actually threatening. The book seems to go to lengths to keep the reader as unsure as what is really going on, as it does the main character. So, to represent this, I chose to do a fairly traditional art form, lithography. This helps reflect the reverence that this novel gets within literature circles, and the subtlety of using the newer polyester litho plates instead of traditional stones is a subtle nod towards the inventiveness of the post-modern novel over its predecessors. The imagery is loose and vague, almost quagmireish. The imagery of the muted post horn is present, as I believe it is such an omnipresent icon in the story that it becomes more a part of the overall feel than a distinct image. Also, its inclusion will force the viewer to wonder its purpose, much as its appearances in the text do for Oedipa Maas. The word “Truth” lies obscured behind a mess of washes and lines, various elements conspiring to keep it hidden. The print quality is broken and feels incomplete, again a subtle echo of the impression left by Pynchon’s own work. The print is on cream paper to call to mind the very human, and somewhat organic, feel the prose has. I felt that printing the piece on one paper would cause it to be too stark, too clinical, to accurately reflect the feel of Pynchon’s work.

**Elmore Leonard: Touch**

*Touch* is the story of a man called “Juvenal” by the Catholic church, which he used to belong to as a Franciscan brother, who can heal people through the rare gift of the stigmata. Except, he is still just a normal guy, although maybe more down to earth than anyone around. Which is a nice contrast from the zealots who want him to endorse an ultra-conservative take on Catholicism, or the former religious promoter who just wants to find a way to capitalize on Juvenal to get back into the business. The only one who seems to understand Juvenal is a records promoter named “Lynn,” who used to work for
the religious promoter as a baton twirler, who falls in love with the disarmingly levelheaded former brother. The rest of the world has a problem with this, not being able to understand that Juvenal never claimed to be sent from God. In fact, he never claims to be anything. But, society has a hard time following his own rational approach, and prefers to believe the swindlers that his presence seems to attract.

For this piece I turn my attentions to the influence of the fifties’ action painters, most particularly Robert Motherwell. Motherwell at one stage in his career used a method of loose, abstract brushstrokes on a neutral but non-white background, and then later painted the background white, letting the underpainting show through around the edges. I look to this style for its simplistic yet elegant approach to content, which I feel echoes Elmore Leonard’s concise and word-conscious style. While loosely basing the style off of the abstract expressionist movement, the subject matter itself demands that it move away, necessitating more of a narrative. The figurative element is a roughly hewn man, rendered in simple and pure black, to represent the main character of Juvenal. Juvenal is such a simple, honest, and down-to-earth man that it would run contrary to the novel’s intent to portray him as anything more than the most basic and reliable of elements. Since the entire feel of the novel revolves around this interesting character and Leonard’s tight prose, I let that be the main focus of the piece as well. The figure dominates the figural plane, and stands in a very static and stable pose. Also visible, in an almost incidental manner which doesn’t attempt to draw attention to or explain itself, is a series of red marks which upon reflection represent the wounds supposedly exhibited by people with the stigmata. As much as I try to avoid illustrating actual story elements from these works, the feel of Touch is so heavily imbued with the theme of the stigmata and how radically and casually Leonard approaches it that it becomes transcendental of the story and approaches more the category of theme and style. The painting is done on a panel of birch instead of a stretcher because the panel gives it a more honest, real, “any man” feel than the more traditional, and higher culture, stretched canvas can provide. House of Leaves is an intellectual work, and so the use of canvas for it flows. This is not the same for a way to visually explain the simple and honest way Leonard wrote Touch.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.: Breakfast of Champions

Kilgore Trout, strangely renowned sci-fi writer (despite only being published in girly mags) is invited to speak in the same town where one Dwayne Hoover lives and works, selling used automobiles. Dwayne’s head is full of bad chemicals, which are unfortunately and unintentionally set in motion by Trout. The whole thing is told in past-tense, and asides to provide definitions, as if a history lesson for a future culture’s grade-schoolers. Breakfast of Champions is a cathartic exercise on Vonnegut’s part, by his own admission. A fiftieth birthday gift to himself, he attempts to come to terms with his family’s history of mental unhealth, with his world and culture, with his own writings, and with himself. The book is laced with Vonnegut’s unique black humor, as well as his own roughly drawn illustrations.

This project took me the longest over-all time to decide on a course of action for, and also took the longest to finish as result of my decision. The intent of the project, as
stated, is to visually convey the feel of reading these books. The problem I encountered here is that everything that makes Breakfast of Champions the tour de force that it is a literary element. Vonnegut's writing is so honest to the medium that, save for his particular illustration style, the only way to show what reading him is like is through words. I had originally intended to do his book Cat's Cradle as my piece for Vonnegut, but after my realization that whatever represented him had to be largely written, that changed. I liked that Cat's Cradle was much less renowned than Breakfast of Champions, and had first been drawn to it because it has a less daunting reputation. But, Breakfast of Champions is the most distilled version of Vonnegut's post-modernism, it's his writing at it's most convention-breaking. And so I switched over to Breakfast of Champions, which justified my idea to turn my planned gallery book into a piece itself. The blurring of the line between what was the piece and what was the documentation seemed to reflect Vonnegut's own blurring of what was biography and what was fiction. I wrote the gallery book using a style and verbage as similar to Vonnegut as I could manage, not worrying too much about being an exact copy because the idea is to capture the feel of the piece, and not recreate it. I also used his simple drawing style to illustrate the guide and the six pieces (this one included, in a bit of self-referentiality that also strongly echoes Vonnegut's execution of Breakfast of Champions), as well as his section dividing asterisks (or, more particularly, "assholes" as he says in the book itself.)

Beyond the writing, the book is hand-made and laid out by myself, to further contribute to the autobiographical feel and also to justify its co-existence among the rest of the body of work. The outer cover gives the illusion of a typical book, which elegant paper and hard covers. But, inside the expectations are broken down by two removable pamphlets, each one bound in manila card stock and labeled by hand with a blue sharpie marker. The marker is a continuation of the use of Vonnegut's color preferences and rendering methods within his own works for the purpose of mine.

Final Notes

Almost nothing about the actual methodology used in creating these pieces was purely "traditional." The frame for House of Leaves was painted, unprimed, with oil paints, which will eventually destroy the frame. The print for The Crying of Lot 49 had its roots in lithography, but used the newer polyester plates over the traditional stones or aluminum plates, and was rolled up with etching ink and printed on an intaglio press instead of the appropriate litho counterparts. I felt that even though little touches such as these would be unapparent to the viewing audience that they added an authenticity to the pieces, which using traditional means would not have.

Additionally, for the show each piece was labeled simply by its title, author, page count, and year of publication. Other than on the announcements the name of the exhibit and my own name appear nowhere within the exhibit itself. This serves two purposes. The first purpose is to emphasize the importance of the writer over my own interpretations. By doing this, I make it so that each piece becomes associated with its author instead of with my name, which might spur some incidental research. The second purpose this serves is to break down even what the pre-conceived notion of the exhibit should be, allowing the works to exist in a contextual setting much more closely aligned to their own intellectual intents.
...And they read books, which sometimes felt like this:

A senior thesis melding literature and art,
by Derek Martin
And they read books, which sometimes felt like this...

This is something of a cathartic project for me. Catharsis is a way of working out your issues, or of releasing something emotional. This is a project about my feelings on literature; on books. When you read books for classes, in high school or college or wherever, they always cheat the modern works. The post-modern works, too. Post-modernism is a type of literature. In post-modernism the idea is to subvert the ideas of 19th century realism. Things written in post-modern styles sometimes felt like this.

As a genre, post-modernism is fairly broad. To be broad means that it incorporates a large range of sub-genres and styles and authors. It means that post-modern literature includes things like cyberpunk, or such. Cyberpunk is a sub-genre. It likes to talk about men, and machines, and men who want to be more like machines. It also talks about machines who want to be more like men. Such is the way things go.

Like anything that is written, things in the post-modern style have authors. These authors have names like Kurt Vonnegut, Philip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon, Mark Z. Danielewski, David Mitchell, Chuck Palahniuk, Elmore Leonard, and William Gibson. Other than being post-modernists in some way, these names all have something in common. These authors are fairly unrepresented in academic curriculums. There are possibly reasons for this. There are often reasons for everything. It is not my intended purpose to give reasons. It is my purpose to help give an audience an introduction to these works. An audience is a group of people of a certain size looking at something. An introduction is a statement or series of statements much like these that you are reading.

What I am showing you is art. Art is a form of creative outlet, sometimes used as catharsis, and sometimes used to make a point. This art is used for both. The works you are looking at, which sometimes look like this book, are made on purpose. They exist to get the ideas out of my head. They exist to show an audience what post-modern books feel like. Because, while there are books and authors and audiences; most people don’t like to take the time to take a chance with reading. So I have done the reading, and am using it to make art. Art is more immediately visible than literature. People like to like art. So, maybe people will like to look at what books can feel like. Maybe they’ll even want to read books afterwards. A book, by the way, is a bound collection of papers with words printed on them.

It sometimes looks like this.
I read a lot of books for this project. I read a book from each of the authors mentioned before. More than one, for some of them. I wanted there to be a range of styles represented when I was done. I wanted to show a variety of themes, and ideas, and imagery as well. So I read a lot. Reading is easy; it’s the thinking that is harder. My idea was not to just create artifacts. An artifact is a physical representation of something from a story that a person can keep around to remind them of specific details. I did not want to create artifacts. Rather, I wanted to summarize how what I read felt. If prose had a color, what color would it be?

The project started with a beginning. This beginning was a book called “Ubik” which was written one thousand nine hundred and sixty-nine years after an arbitrarily picked date concerning the birth of an influential Jew. The book was written by an author, and his name was “Philip K. Dick.” The piece produced for this book is a sculptural design piece. It looks like this:
I wrote a summary of this book for my documentation. A summary is a shorter version of something. Documentation is something my department required. I have done a lot of both summarizing and documenting for this project. I made a summary of what the book was about, so people could get an idea for where I was coming from. That summary looked like this:

 Ubik is a story about a world where psychics exist and are hired out by people and companies as a sort of high class espionage tactic. As a natural counterpart, anti-psychics also exist and are hired out as a form of privacy protection. The head of one of the major anti-psychic companies, a man by the name of Glen Runciter, is believed by his employees to be dead after a bomb detonated in a trap they had walked into. His second-in-command, a tester named Joe Chip, thinks it might have something to do with a shady new talent they had hired right before the job, a girl with the rare ability to re-write the past as she chooses. But, as the world around them starts to lose time and revert to an earlier decade, Joe begins to question whether or not it's actually the crew that died, and that their boss is talking to what remains of their neural patterns in a half-life state. As time starts to slip away faster and faster pointed ads for Ubik spray become more prevalent. Ubik, a substance that can help things retain time, seems to be a saving constant in the chaos, except for the fact that it, too, keeps losing time and reverting to an earlier form.

And it seemed to me that this summary was likely to bore people, and maybe make them sad as a result. So I made a visual piece, also, to help cheer people up. People like looking at things.
Then, after this, I had the great fortune of reading a book from an author much more talented than I. I have heard that this man spent a decade writing a book. So I’ve read. He called this book “House of Leaves.” And so, I made something from it also, to help make people happy. The book is a little bit distressing, though. So, to keep people from getting too happy, I wrote a summary for this book too. It looked like this:

*House of Leaves is a nesting egg doll of a novel, with several layers of story layered on each other with an almost fractal complexity. The main story is about a photographer by the name of Navidson and his decaying relationship with his wife and family. To solve this, he decides to retire and settle down with them in a new house. But, as a final hurrah to his career, he mounts cameras in every room possible so he can document a family moving into a house. They then discover that the house is bigger on the inside than the outside, and discover a closet with infinite depth that keeps growing larger as it is explored. This whole narrative is revealed in the form of an essay written by a man blind from birth. The essay is dutifully reconstructed and annotated by a tattoo shop employee, who tells his own story through his footnotes. A myriad of other voices appear in the book, including cited sources in the book (all fictitious) and the letters from the tattoo worker’s institutionalized mother. Beyond the story, the type itself becomes engaged in telling the story. Even though the revisions notice at the beginning is also a part of the lie, and the mentioned four-color edition does not exist, all printed editions have either the word “house” in blue or the struck comments in “red.” The word “minotaur” is reportedly in purple in the non-existent first edition. The typeface is different depending on which narrator is speaking, and near the end the text starts to thin out and bounce around the page.*
That's long and a little windy. It's not at all in keeping with the purpose of this project. So, to make up for it, here is what the piece looked like:

Then I met with some disappointment. The library didn't have a copy of "Ghostwritten," which is a novel David Mitchell wrote to be the first piece in his career. Wasn't that nice of him, to devote his first effort to our enjoyment and gain? So I asked them to see if they could get me a copy from somewhere else, which I could. And then I got it, and I read it. I was so impressed with it that I decided to make a piece out of it, too. That piece looked like this:
Now, people who have also read “Ghostwritten” might summarize it. One such summary might read like this:

**Ghostwritten** is comprised of a series of vignettes which start out only loosely connected to each other and get more and more interconnected as the novel progresses. It is a global novel, starting in Japan and ending in the United States’ east coast, doing an admirable job of representing the different cultural voices in between. Among the voices represented are a cultist and a record shop employee (Japan), a Brit working as a stockbroker (Hong Kong), a Chinese woman who endures the varied political upheavals on the 20th century (Holy Mountain), a ghost who keeps hopping from mind to mind (Mongolia), an art thief (Russia), a ghostwriter/drummer (England), a quantum physicist (Ireland), and a late-night DJ and an AI (New York).

Do you know who Thomas Pynchon is? Thomas Pynchon is a man forty-six years my elder. He is also a talented and renowned writer. Mr. Philip K Dick, whom I mentioned earlier, is considered the poor man’s version of this man. So I’ve read. I’ve also read his book called “The Crying of Lot 49.” As is becoming the status quo for this, I have a summary. This one is short, though, because it is hard to say something about Mr. Pynchon without ruining the story. I will do my best.

**The Crying of Lot 49** is a book that’s about the postal service, mostly. Or, it’s about the history of the postal service, and also about the history of underground postal systems. It also has a conspiracy element which is slowly revealed as the main character, Oedipa Maas, is going over an estate willed to her. Among which she finds some stamps that are just ever so slightly wrong. Coupled with the discovery of a mysterious
That's it. Really. That's all I can say about the book without ruining it for you. It's more than that. But, it's indefensibly more than that. I can show you what it looked like. Or, rather what the piece I made for it looked like. It looked like this:

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Now, another man I want you to know is Elmore Leonard. Elmore Leonard is famous for writing cool caper stories. You probably know a couple of them. He wrote the books that “Get Shorty” and “Be Cool” were based on. The movies, that is. He also wrote a rather different kind of book, and he wanted to call it “Juvenal.” It was to be named after its main character. However, his publisher couldn't figure out how to market it. A publisher was a type of business responsible for making an author's life difficult, and in exchange they would sell people the author's work. The publisher had him change the name to “Touch,” and after some more history it eventually got released to the world. I rejoice that it did. It is a unique story, and its boring description read like this:

\emph{Touch} is the story of a man called “Juvenal” by the Catholic church, which he used to belong to as a Franciscan brother, who can heal people through the rare gift of the stigmata. Except, he is still just a normal guy, although maybe more down to earth than anyone around.
Which is a nice contrast from the zealots who want him to endorse an ultra-conservative take on Catholicism, or the former religious promoter who just wants to find a way to capitalize on Juvenal to get back into the business. The only one who seems to understand Juvenal is a records promoter named “Lynn,” who used to work for the religious promoter as a baton twirler, who falls in love with the disarmingly level-headed former brother. The rest of the world has a problem with this, not being able to understand that Juvenal never claimed to be sent from God. In fact, he never claims to be anything. But, society has a hard time following his own rational approach, and prefers to believe the swindlers that his presence seems to attract.

That should be sufficient to have bored you. I am again sorry. To make up for it, I will once again show you what the result looked like.
The last man you need to know for the night is Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. He’s from Indiana, which is a Midwestern state shaped kind of like a boot. A boot is something a person would wear to protect their feet. Kurt wrote a fabulous book which I enjoyed very much. He called it “Breakfast of Champions,” which is a misleading title as his book is not about cereal. What is it about?

Kilgore Trout, strangely renowned sci-fi writer (despite only being published in girly mags) is invited to speak in the same town where one Dwayne Hoover lives and works, selling used automobiles. Dwayne’s head is full of bad chemicals, which are unfortunately and unintentionally set in motion by Trout. The whole thing is told in past-tense, and asides to provide definitions, as if a history lesson for a future culture’s grade-schoolers. *Breakfast of Champions* is a cathartic exercise on Vonnegut’s part, by his own admission. A fiftieth birthday gift to himself, he attempts to come to terms with his family’s history of mental unhealth, with his world and culture, with his own writings, and with himself. The book is laced with Vonnegut’s unique black humor, as well as his own roughly drawn illustrations.
As for the piece I made off of it, it looked like this. It looked exactly like this book which you have been reading. Or maybe just flipping through. But, this is it. Just so I make sure I haven’t lost you, it looked like this:

And, that ends this project. Look around the room. Books, good books, from a genre called “postmodernism” sometimes felt like this.

And they signed registers. Goodbye, Blue Monday!

The End
Thanks to:

Dr. Troy Holaday, my advisor on this project, and a useful font of information on literature and much more since before that.

Ryan Miller, who facilitated the usage of this gallery space.

Whitney Mayfield, Max Brustkern, Kristin Roose, Nick Henry, Scotty Dougherty, Cory Long, and Nicole Hanley for many varied reasons and for their help in various ways as I worked on this.

My family for their support, both ideologically and financially.

Fred Bower, Sam Minor, Chris Satory, Ken Preston, Sarojini Johnson, Scott Anderson, and Ron Rarick for exposing me to skills, artists, styles, techniques, and sensibilities that have been used in the work for this project.

And of course, thanks go to Philip K. Dick, David Mitchell, Mark Z. Danielewski, Thomas Pynchon, Elmore Leonard, and Kurt Vonnegut for making literature good enough to aspire me to do this project.
For anyone interested in perusing post-modernism more, the following works were also considered for this project:

Kurt Vonnegut’s  Cat’s Cradle
Hermann Hesse’s  Damien
Richard K. Morgan’s  Altered Carbon
William Gibson’s  Neuromancer
Tom Robbins’  Fierce Invalids Home from Hot Climates
Chuck Palahniuk’s  Diary
December 17, 2003:

Bringing stories to life
Nelson Runger '53 makes second career of recording books

Nelson Runger '53 has read out loud all his life. When he was a child, his mother, an elementary school teacher, encouraged him to do so, to improve his verbal skills. In 1985, recently retired from public relations, he saw an ad in the New Yorker seeking book narrators. He called, eager to find something to keep him intellectually active. After a successful audition with Recorded Books™, an audio publishing company, he got his first assignment, Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Great Stone Face."

Eighteen years later, he has narrated more than 160 books, mostly biography and history, including Princeton professor James McPherson's Crossroads of Freedom and John McPhee '53's Irons in the Fire. Last year he won the Audie for Unabridged Nonfiction, the audio publishing world's equivalent of an Oscar, for his narration of David McCullough's John Adams.

A reviewer from the Philadelphia Inquirer has called Runger "one of the most remarkably talented narrators in audio books" with "a talent for making even pedantic history come alive with his remarkable voice." When Runger narrates, it doesn't sound as if he's reading. Instead, he's telling a story he knows very well. During suspenseful sections he pauses, having marked up the text with slashes to remind him how long the pauses should last. For battle or chase scenes, he quickens the pace. To achieve a "happy, light, relaxed" sound, he smiles as he reads.

Last summer he recorded McCullough's Truman, totaling some 60 hours on 43 cassettes. To make the characters come alive, Runger drew on his memory. F.D.R. had a "rather high aristocratic sort of voice and talked in a rather forceful manner when the occasion required it," says Runger, mimicking the late president. Sir Winston Churchill, he continues, "had that marvelous British Midland raspy approach to any sort of speech, whether it was funny or deadly serious." For people whose voices he has never heard, Runger conjures someone he knows with the same characteristics and imitates them, using similar inflections.

Recording sessions last five hours and produce about two and one-half to three hours of finished work. Recording demands tremendous concentration, says Runger, who majored in English and lives in Pennsylvania. "I'm pretty much bushed when it's over." ♦

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