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Argent Sound Recordings: Multimodal Storytelling

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Matthew Klimas

2008

Argent Sound Recordings: Multimodal Storytelling





PROCESS SKETCH FOR ALBUM ARTWORK
ARGENT SOUND PROJECT SPRING 2007

Argent Sound Recordings: Multimodal Storytelling

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS OF VIRGINIA
COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE: MASTER IN FINE ARTS IN VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

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BFA GRAPHIC DESIGN 2002

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, MAY 2008

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David Holt



CONSTRUCTED FORM + TYPE EXPLORATION
SUSAN ROTH WORKSHOP FALL 2006



A CHARACTER FROM "THE SILVER BELL"
ARGENT SOUND PROJECT SPRING 2007

Abstract

ARGENT SOUND RECORDINGS explores the integration of visual, written and sonic elements to tell a story. "The Silver Bell," a fairy tale, is delivered through the internet – providing users an opportunity to experience and interpret a constructed narrative under the guise of an independent record label website.

Once upon a time...

Introduction

What is experience, if not a story?



FIG 1



FIG 2

I'M NOT SURE WHY IT WASN'T OBVIOUS TO ME SOONER – graphic design is storytelling. In fact, most of our existence is the constant creation, relation, and interpretation of stories.

“Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio’s *Saint Ursula*), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation.” (Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, p. 79)

Thus, a formal interest in the simple combination of media within the context of graphic design, slowly developed into a study of multimodal storytelling. This led to the incorporation of one of my favorite methods of telling stories, the concept album.

THE CONCEPT ALBUM HAS ALWAYS FASCINATED ME. As a graphic designer, I appreciate the album as a system of elements working together in harmony (the pun seems appropriate). A great concept album shares much in common with any great poster, book, or typeface. There is a long lineage of concept albums by such greats as The Beatles (*Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967), The Kinks (*The Kinks are the Village Green Preservation Society*, 1968) [FIG 1], and Pink Floyd (*The Wall*, 1979), but there are a handful of albums released in the last few years that proved most influential to me personally. Okkervil River’s *Black Sheep Boy* (2005) [FIG 2] and Pedro the Lion’s *Winners Never Quit* (2000) use a series of songs to tell a story. They rely on sequence and gestalt to construct an overarching story line. *Black Sheep Boy* sprang from an old folk song and centers around a central character. *Winner’s Never Quit*

ALBUM

WHAT IS AN ALBUM?
A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT?

Introduction (CONTINUED)

follows two brothers through a tale of corruption and redemption using a race as a metaphor. The artwork provides storybook style illustrations for various scenes from the tracks. Both of these albums were influential in how I approached the album as a story.



FIG 3

Albums with conceptual structure and presentation also informed my work. The Flaming Lips’ *Zaireeka* (1997) [FIG 3] is a four-disc set intended to be synchronized and listened to simultaneously. This requires the use of four separate stereos, thereby placing increased emphasis on social interaction and physical space. This establishes a precedent for expanding the relationship between the recorded music and its container. In a related way, the latest Nine Inch Nails record, *Year Zero* (2007), employs an array of fabricated websites tying into the thematic story behind the album. These sites are discovered through clues on planted flash drives and t-shirts. This method of promoting an album generates intrigue and provides opportunities for content beyond the capacity of traditional CD packaging. Taking cues from these examples, I worked towards pushing further what could constitute an album.

The expansion of the album beyond a collection of songs on a single disc – to one that involves several bands across several web pages – allowed for the exploration of contextual relationships and the ways they give rise to interpretation. The project employs communicative vehicles extant in popular music to carry content. These vehicles include: cover art, band photographs/graphics, lyrics, music, and biographies. Everything has been specifically combined to deliver a message and not simply compliment the music.



Matthew Klimas

FIG 4

8

Prologue

Argent Sound Recordings: Multimodal Storytelling

Precursors

For me, image and sound are inextricably linked.

FIG 4
“ANNIE” PROJECT FROM LEO DIVENDAL
WORKSHOP, VCU 2005
PHOTOGRAPHY, SOUND, AND TEXT

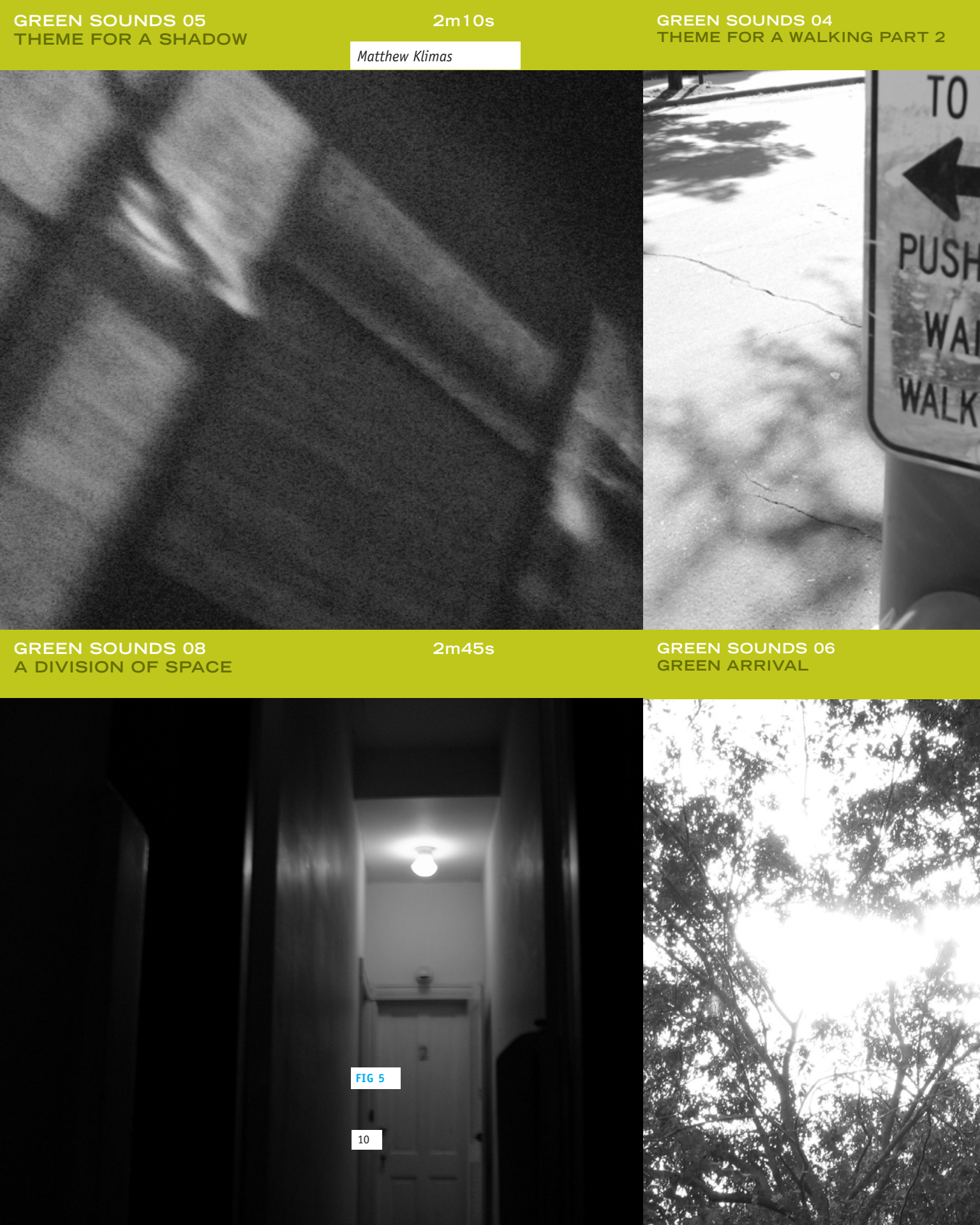
ANNIE

Annie
gently the passing spirit fled
memory, killed
and twelve days, only in death
affection and watch care
in this city, devoted
June
July
August
shed not for her the bitter tear
after, lofty courage

I ARRIVED AT GRADUATE SCHOOL WITH A MUSICAL OBSESSION. Eager to explore methods of combining image and sound, I found opportunities in workshops during the first semester with Leo Divendal and Sandy Wheeler. As I began learning formal aspects of semiotic theory, I started to apply those ideas to the relationship existing between sound and image. Roland Barthes’ *Image-Music-Text* further fueled my interest in semantic relationships of form. Through deliberate synthesis of sonic and visual elements, I wanted to illicit a new interpretation that would not be possible independently. Initially, I was using cinema as an important inspiration. I was particularly interested in the *Three Colors: Blue, White, Red* trilogy by Krzysztof Kieslowski and wanted to approach the use of sound thematically in a similar way that he used color.

Annie”

“The audio/visual piece, “Annie,” was the result of a workshop with Dutch photographer, Leo Divendal. We spent one week discussing, experiencing, and documenting history and memories. I produced a matrix consisting of thirty 8-inch square panels that contained either a photograph or text. These panels were viewed while listening to an original musical composition based on feelings evoked by the images. The text for the piece was created by recontextualizing words and phrases taken from gravestones in Hollywood Cemetery. I liked the idea of presenting the images simultaneously with music that felt cinematic—music that is flowing, complex in texture, and dramatic. This was my first focused attempt at combining image, music, and text. It served as a foundation and inspiration for much of my subsequent work.



GREEN SOUNDS 05
THEME FOR A SHADOW

2m10s

Matthew Klimas

GREEN SOUNDS 04
THEME FOR A WALKING PART 2

GREEN SOUNDS 08
A DIVISION OF SPACE

2m45s

GREEN SOUNDS 06
GREEN ARRIVAL

FIG 5

Precursors (CONTINUED)

An image evokes a sound, and the sound an image.



FIG 5
GREEN SOUNDS FROM GREEN PROJECT
SANDY WHEELER'S WORKSHOP,
FALL 2005

FIG 6
THE WHITE HORSE
1962
GELATIN SILVER PRINT
ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ

THE GREEN PROJECT PROVIDED A STRUCTURED PROCESS for combining sound and image. After being given the term “green,” we were asked to explore possible meanings by selecting a photograph that reflected an idea of “green.” As part of the morphological study of a photograph, I created time-based explorations were comprised of musical themes based on formal and conceptual ideas derived from the photograph. This was an exciting new way of working for me, although I was not entirely sure where these experiments would lead.

Green Is Space

The series of studies I dubbed *Green Sounds*, was an attempt to create sonic pieces inspired by ideas from a single photograph. I was working with André Kertész's photograph, *The White Horse*, which evoked ideas related to the division and experience of different kinds of space, including physical, psychological, and emotional.

Precursors (CONTINUED)

FIG 7

"THAT WHICH DOES NOT KILL US"
VIDEO STILL

FIG 8

"THAT WHICH DOES NOT KILL US"
EXCERPT FROM STORYBOARD BOOK

HAVING ESTABLISHED THAT I WOULD FOCUS on synthesizing media and experience in graphic design, I began my second year with more image and sound studies, which included a series of flash animations using simplified visual forms and sounds. The animations could be interchanged with the sounds to examine how the juxtaposition influenced the interpretation of the other.



THE CURTAIN RISES TO FALL
AND BE RAISED ANEW
WALKING DOES NOT PRECLUDE INJURY
THE FEELINGS THAT SPILL
PROVE FERTILE GROUND
POTENTIAL PREVIOUSLY ABSENT
BRANCHES FROM THE BLEED
PERSPECTIVE COLORS DIALOGUE
THE PIECES FALL WHERE THEY MAY
GIVEN THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF TIME
THAT WHICH DOES NOT KILL US
KNITS TOGETHER AGAIN
SUFFER THROUGH DOUBT
TO SEE THE NEW BLOOM
THE TRYING TRY
WHAT IS NOW ABLE

Ambient Graphics

The culmination of my explorations during the Fall semester of 2006 is the ambient-graphic, printed, and sound piece "That Which Does Not Kill Us." The visual forms are composed and based on a theme of growth through struggle. The idea behind the ambient graphic is that it would function as a poster projected in a space and would have subtly animated forms that would loop along with recorded sound. Text (left) accompanies the animations, adding an additional layer of content. The process also yielded an accordion-fold book exploring the same forms in a Saul Bass inspired storyboard.

IS ALL THE LOVE ALL THE LOVE YOU NEED

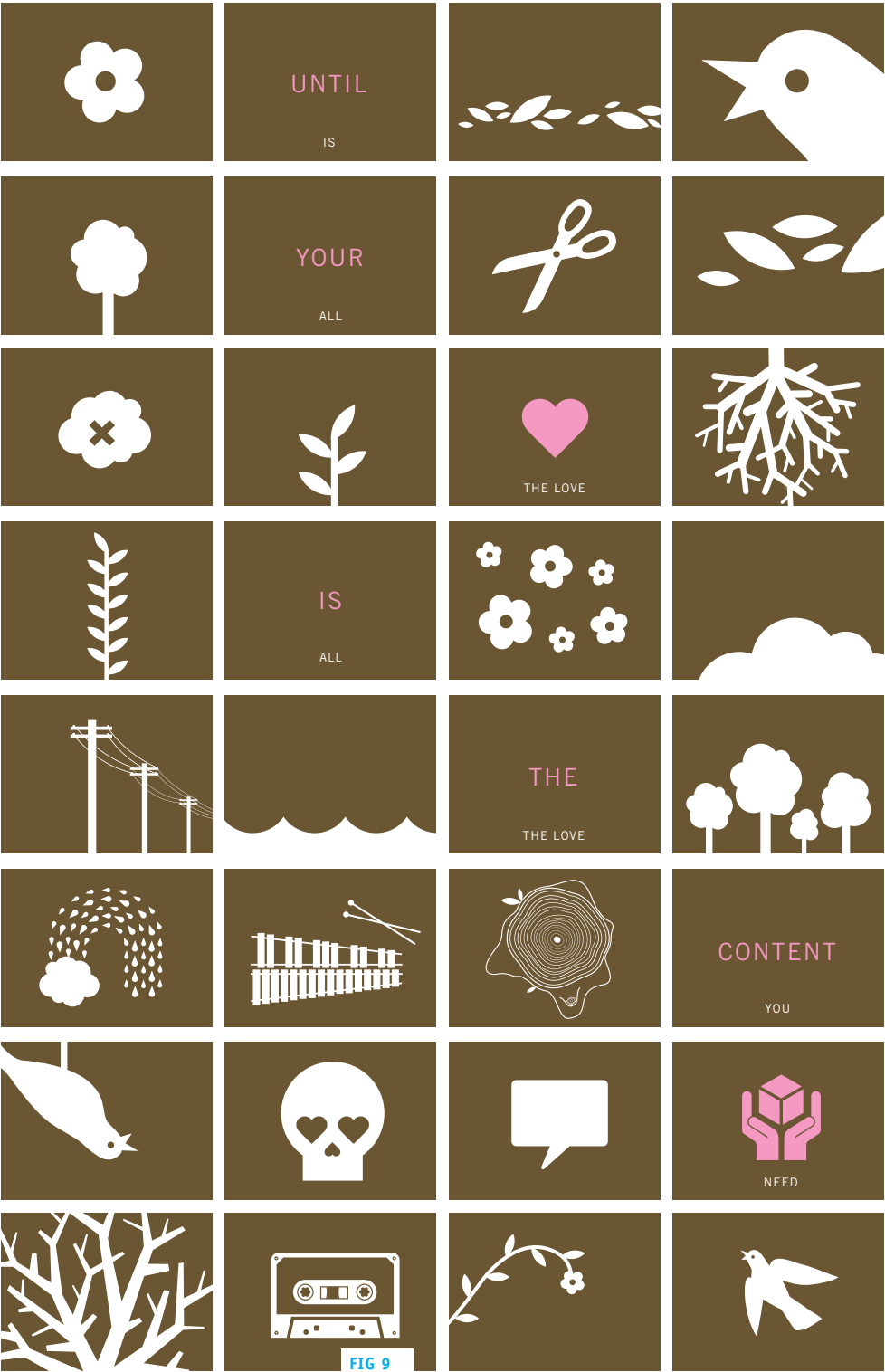


FIG 9

MK / 2006

Precursors (CONTINUED)

Experienced together, the sound and image produce a third idea.

“In design sometimes one plus one equals three.”
Josef Albers

FIG 9
“IS ALL THE LOVE ALL THE LOVE YOU
NEED” FROM STEPHEN VITIELLO’S
ADVANCED SOUND CLASS,
FALL 2006

WHILE FOCUSING ON A SPECIFIC THEME with the piece “That Which Does Not Kill Us,” I was experimenting with a more playful approach in my piece for Stephen Vitiello’s sound class. Continuing with emphasis on text, sound and image, the new video was more about the semantic possibilities provided by formal and sequential juxtaposition.

A Music Video
The video “Is All the Love All the Love You Need” served as counterpoint to the “That Which Does Not Kill Us” in that it focused on a linear sequence and specific relationships between images and text and what is heard in the soundtrack. Playing with cognitive dissonance, some frames show a word while a different word is spoken. Thus there is a disconnect semantically between what the viewer sees and hears.

Each of these projects proved to be useful experiences synthesizing sound and image in a way that denotes or connotes a specific meaning. This would be the core of the Argent Sound Recordings project.



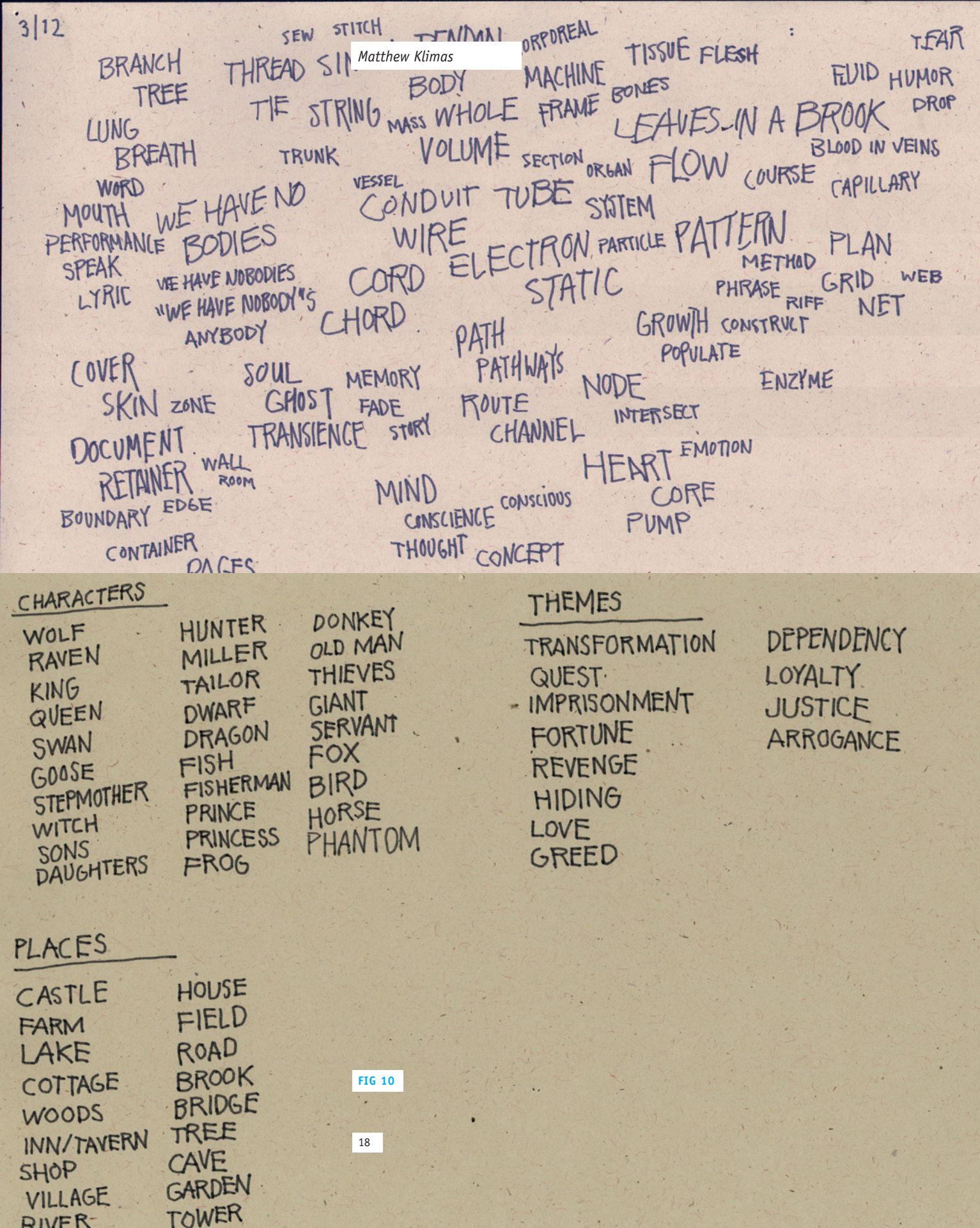
The Project

Argent Sound Recordings: Multimodal Storytelling

Methodology

Mommy, where does graphic design come from?

THIS PROJECT WAS BORN OUT OF AN IMMENSE HEAP of process work. While the core idea of the project remained consistent, the specific form it would take changed several times. Several iterations of the concept were explored through various diagrams and scenarios. Process has always been central to my design work, but I've seen it evolve into a more refined and deliberate creative process. The design process requires a balance of intuitive exploration and methodological discipline to be successful. This project achieved such a balance. The progression is clear. I began by using word lists and mind maps to generate ideas, then created diagrams to articulate meaningful relationships between those ideas, and finally realized the concepts with visual form.



Methodology (CONTINUED)

Things begin with a word, which leads to another, and another, and so on, and so forth...

"In any case, language belongs to the closest neighborhood of man's being."

Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* p 187

FIG 10
WORD STUDIES

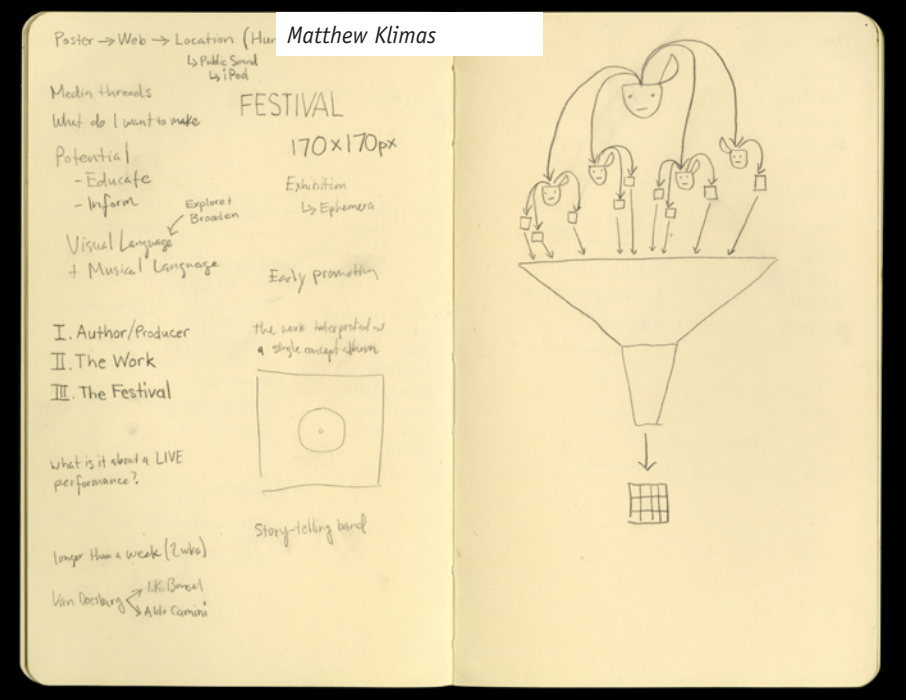
FIG 11 (FOLLOWING SPREAD)
MOLESKINE SKETCHBOOK
CONTAINING PROCESS WORK

LANGUAGE

At the onset of the project, I enjoyed using words and phrases to flesh out my ideas. This involved the creation of many lists and pseudo-statements that might be associated with my project. These could relate to both potential content as well as form and format. After reading *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, lists were used to extract key characters, places, and themes which would be the genesis of ASR. I then created more lists containing thoughts on musical genres, color, band names, band members, venues, and experiences.

Words are a significant part of my project. Every name, title, and lyric was considered for how it communicated a piece of the story. Word play and irony were useful in divulging clues. An example being the Phantom Lake album *The Vexed Snare*. The phrase "vexed snare" can refer to both a drum or an avoided trap. The track listings became poems themselves espousing portions of the tale.

FIG 10



The Project

Argent Sound Recordings: Multimodal Storytelling

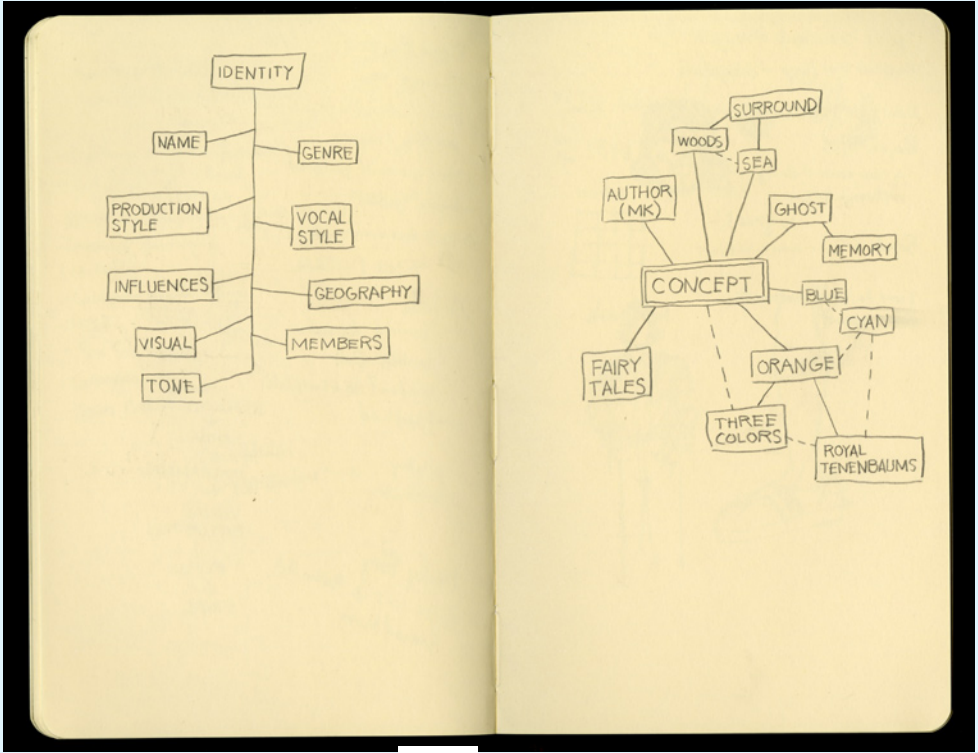
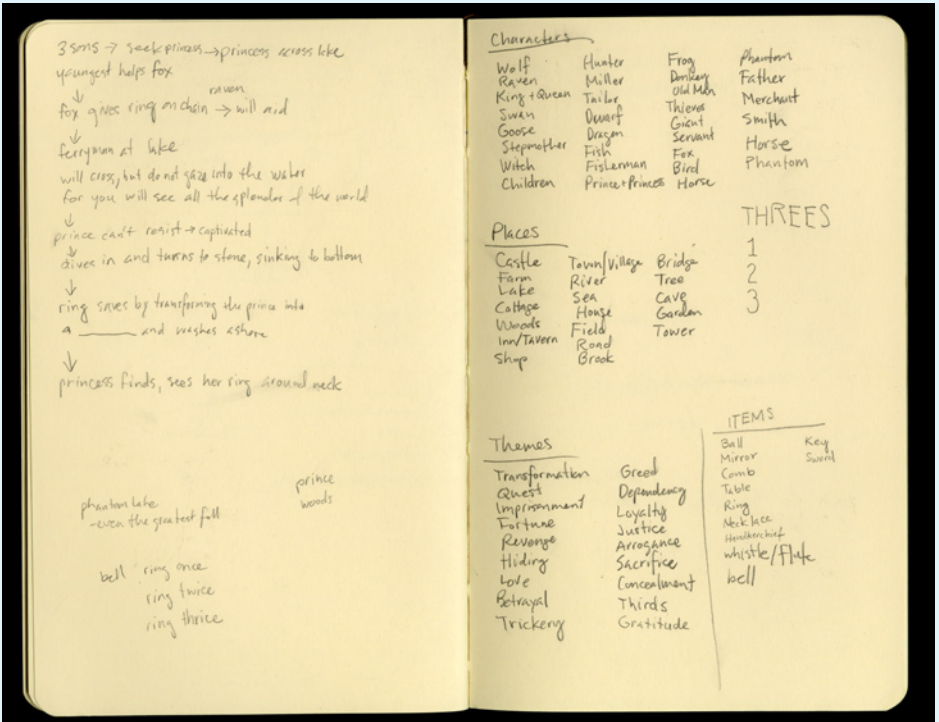
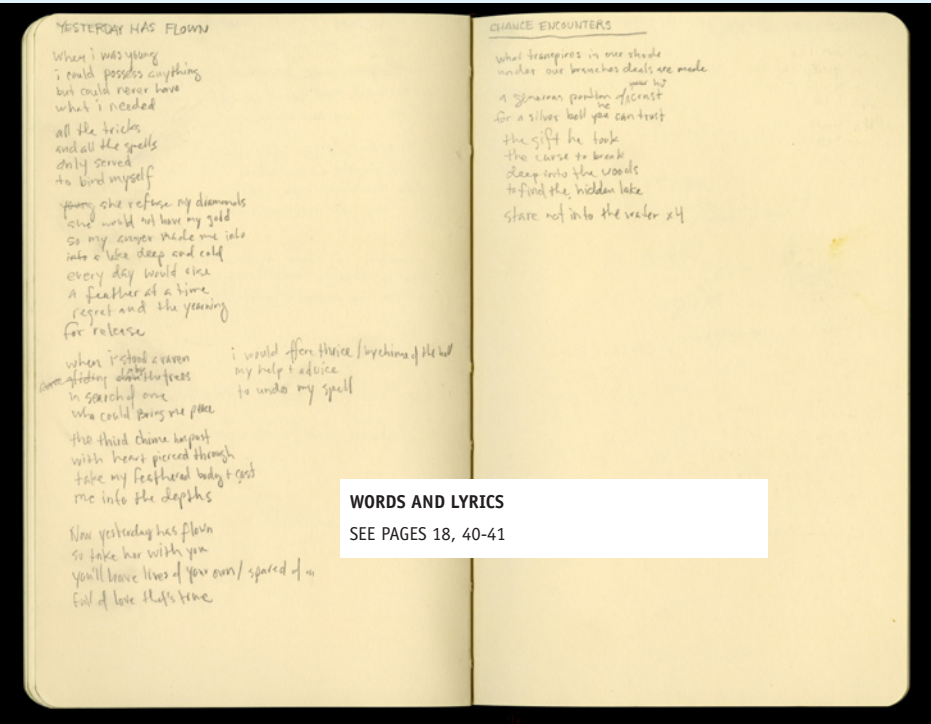


FIG 11



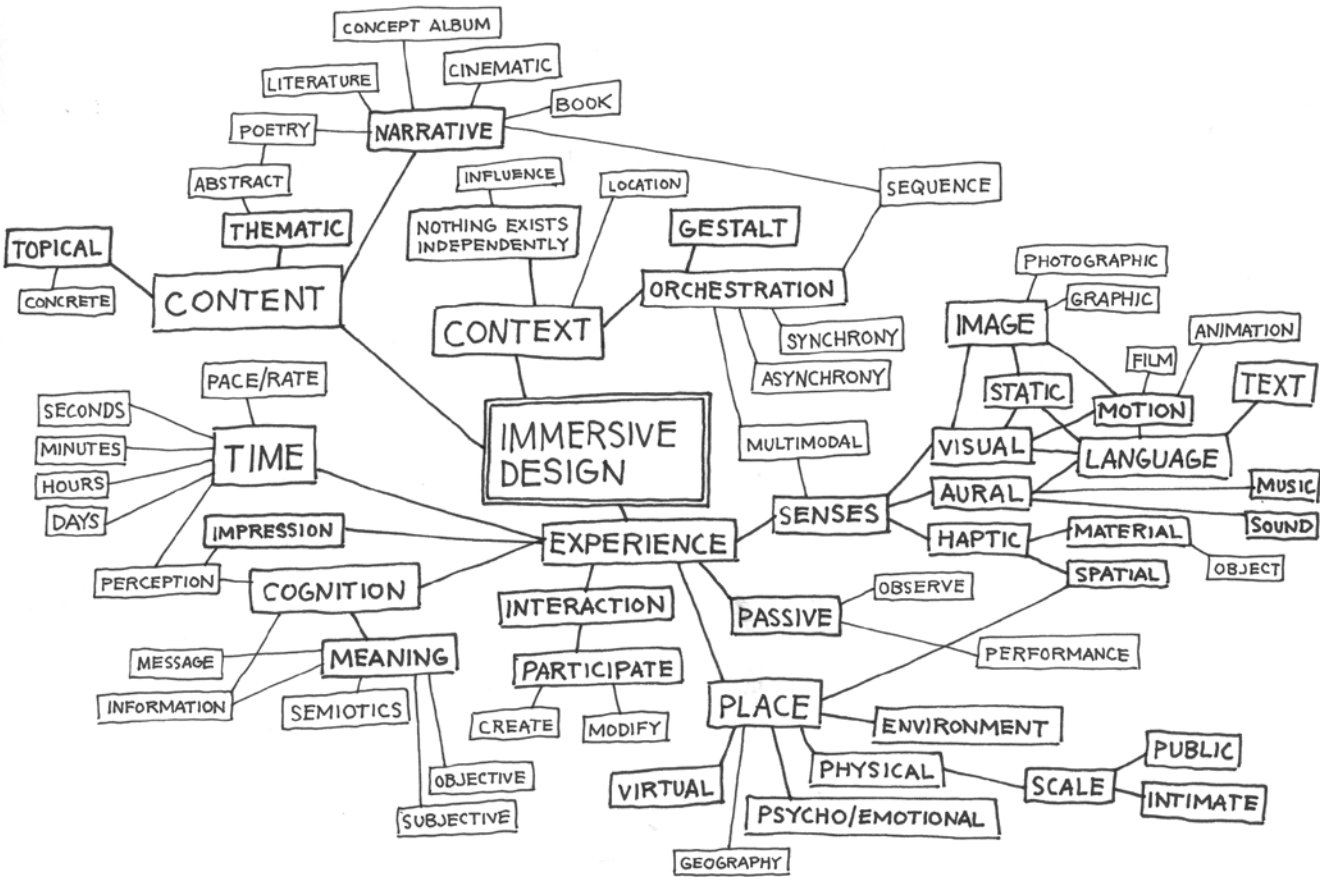


FIG 12

Methodology (CONTINUED)

Mind mapping: Putting the brain on the page.

FIG 12
IMMERSIVE DESIGN MIND MAP
ROY MCKELVEY WORKSHOP 2006

MIND MAPS
After generating word lists, I employed mind maps to begin making connections between words and phrases. I was introduced to mind mapping in undergraduate school. In graduate school, I began to understand the potential and significance of conceptual mapping as a method of giving visual form to thoughts and ideas. David Byrne’s book *Arboretum* was also an inspiration. It is a collection of sketches of tree-like forms and graphs exploring connections between everyday objects and abstract concepts.

The mind maps served as the foundation for the conceptual diagrams that would give focus and definition to the project.

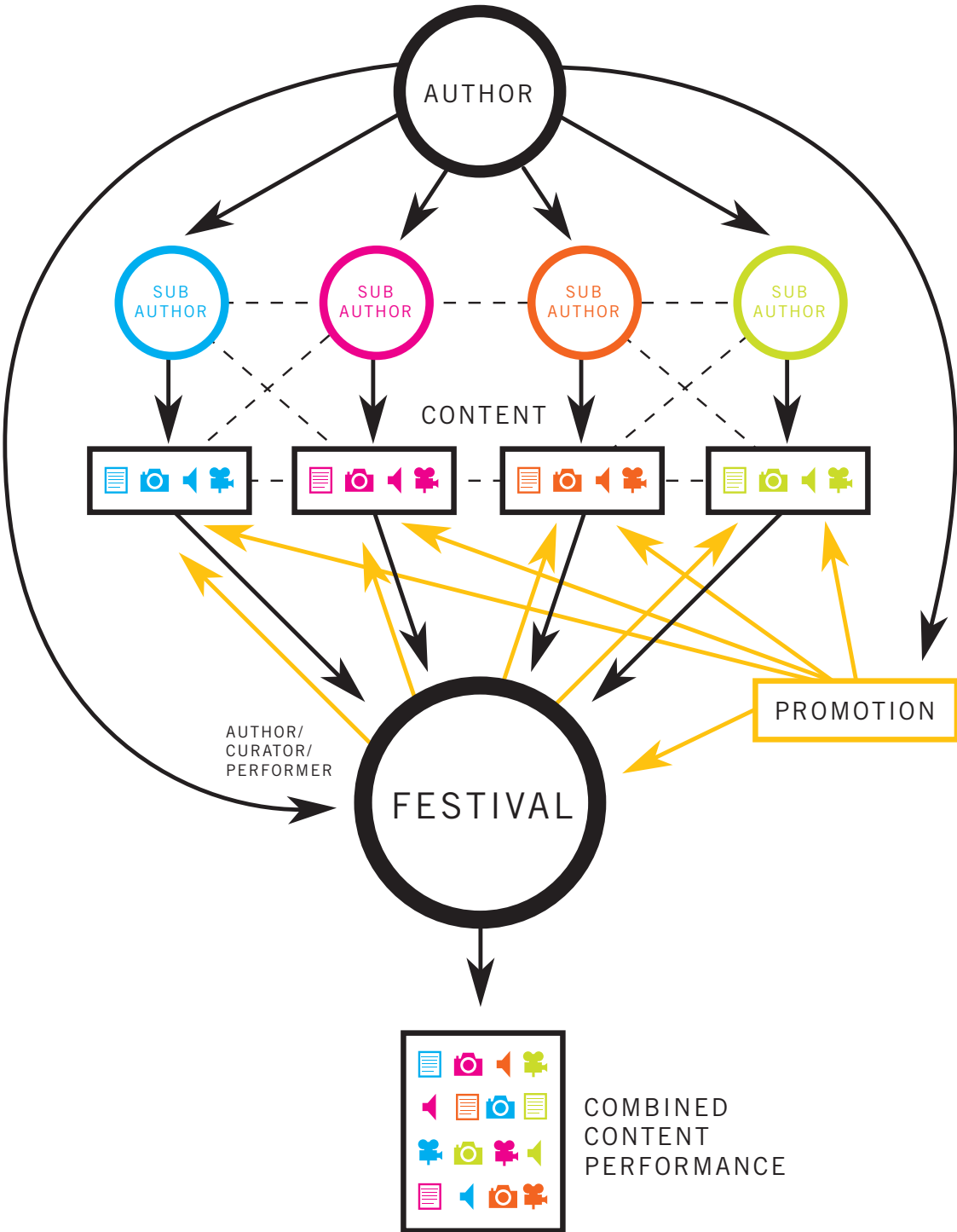


FIG 13

Methodology (CONTINUED)

A diagram begins to reveal that which is invisible.

FIG 13
INITIAL DIAGRAM FOR FESTIVAL CONCEPT

FIG 14
SECOND DIAGRAM FOR IDEA AS A
CONCEPTUAL PERFORMANCE

FIG 15
FINAL DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING RECORD
LABEL AND COMPILATION ALBUM CONCEPT

DIAGRAMS
Developing diagrams was particularly useful in visualizing and realizing abstract concepts and relationships. I spent a significant amount of time creating diagrams to illustrate how the various components of the fictitious Argent Sound Recordings would function being comprised of a highly complex system of verbal, visual, and aural content.

As my idea for the project evolved from a conceptual festival to a performance, and finally to a compilation album, these diagrams provided the structure for how everything would be revealed.

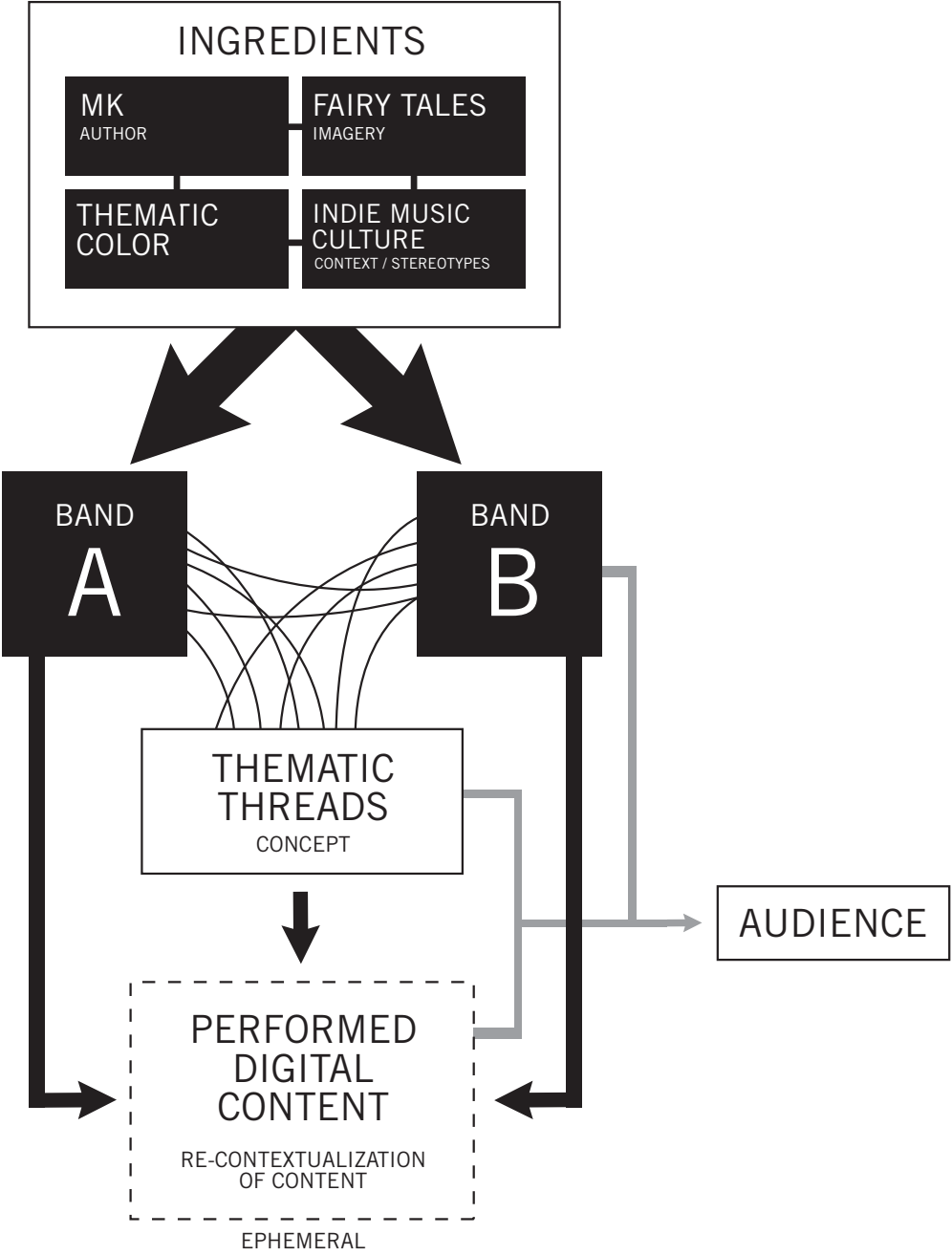


FIG 14

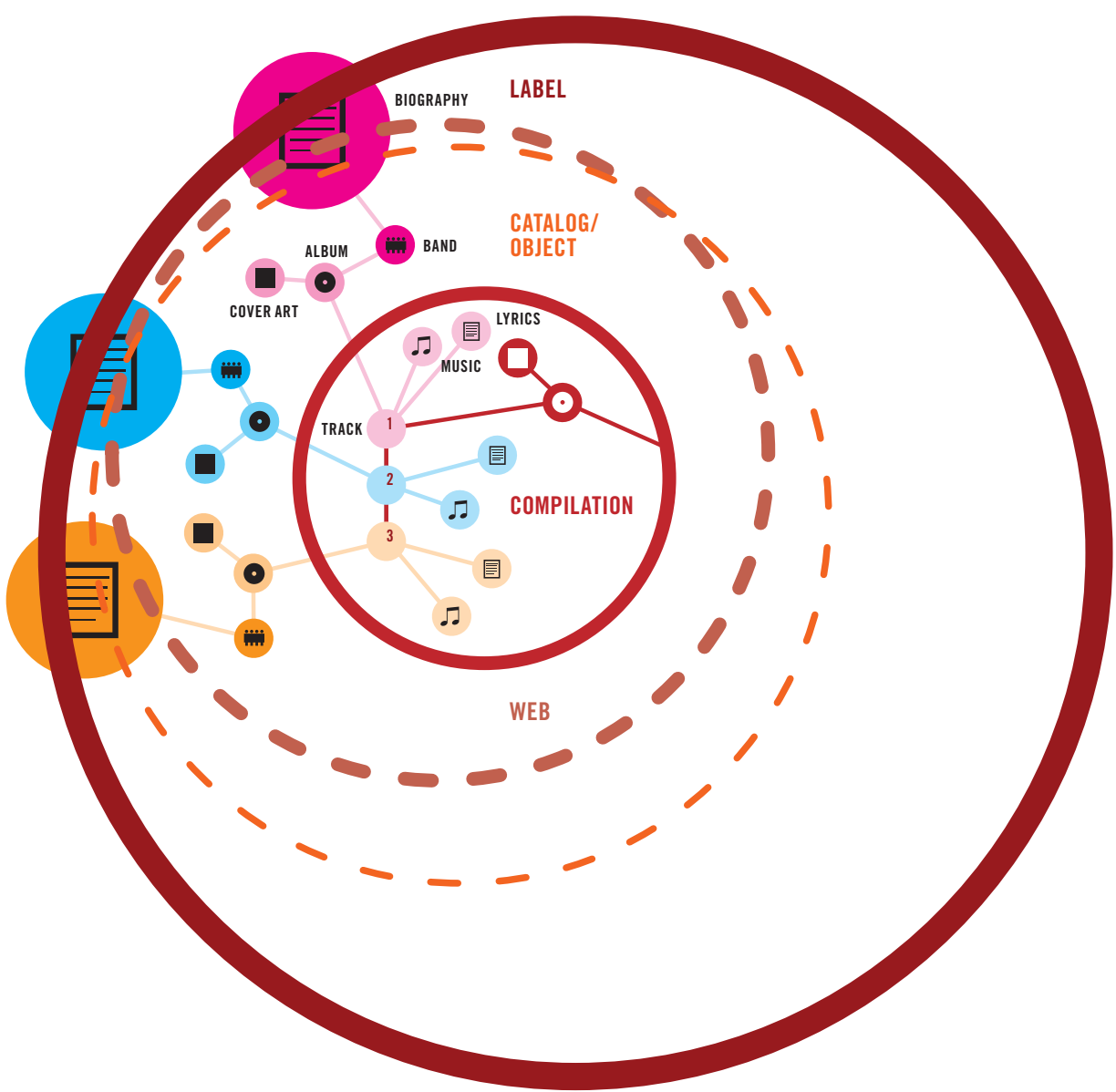


FIG 15

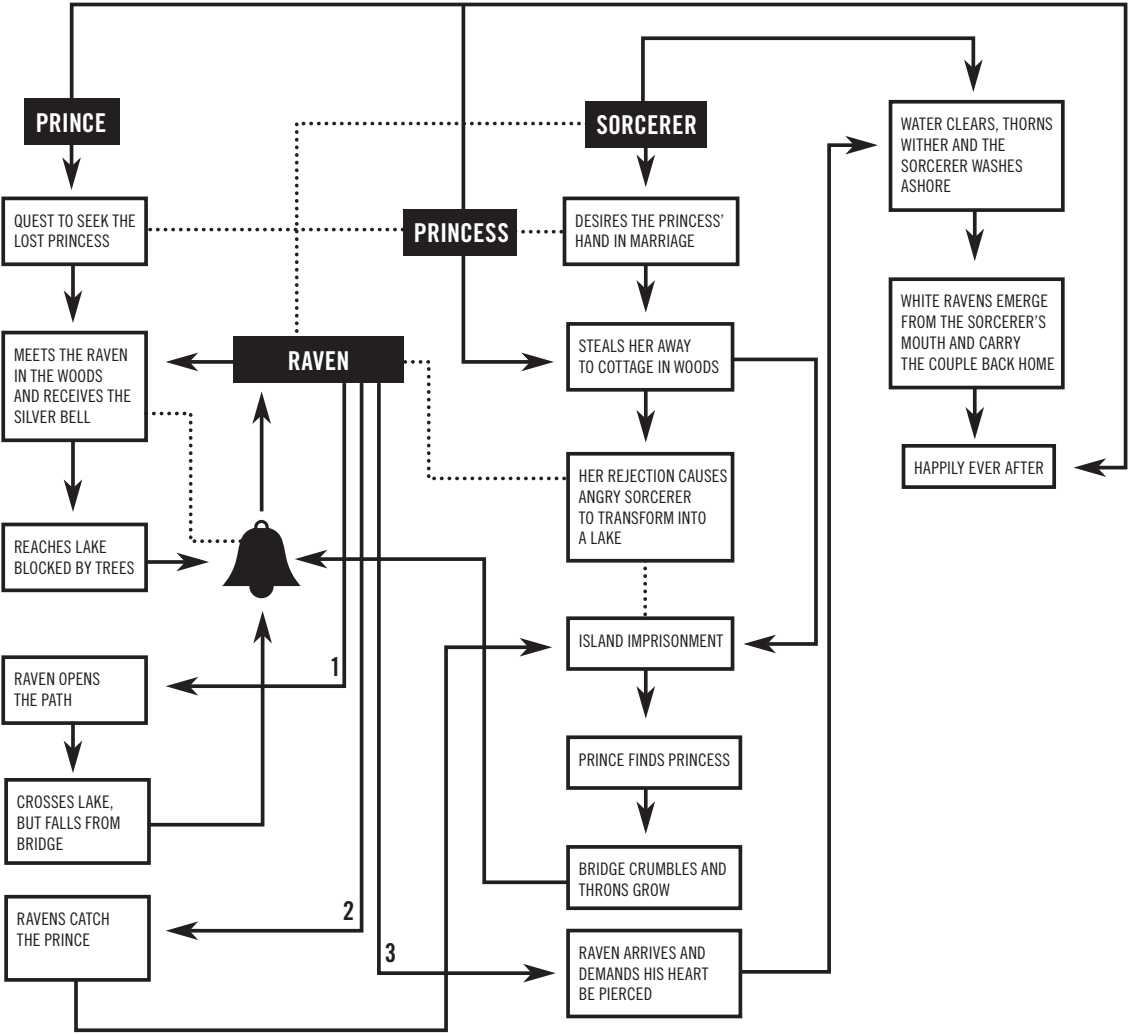


FIG 16

Methodology (CONTINUED)

A story is essentially a map of characters, places, and events.

FIG 16
PLOT DIAGRAM FOR FAIRY
TALE, "THE SILVER BELL"

HAVING ENGROSSED MYSELF IN FIVE HUNDRED PLUS PAGES of *Grimm's Fairly Tales* and the film *Pan's Labyrinth*, I set out to construct a story of princes and princesses. Being a graphic designer, work began on the plot as an infographic. Turchi's *Maps of the Imagination* offered inspiration in how metaphor is used in the creation of narratives. It was a great point of departure for me, primarily a visual person, trying to write a story. The diagram proved valuable in organizing the desired characters and events. It went through three iterations before the final plot (left page) was established.

8 RAVEN	There once was a young sorcerer who had fallen in love with a beautiful princess. The king did not approve and would not give his daughter's hand in marriage to the sorcerer. One night the sorcerer entered the castle and while everyone was fast asleep stole the princess away to his cottage deep in the woods. The princess did not return his love and though he lavished gifts upon her, she longed for home. The embittered sorcerer vowed that none shall have her. Consumed by anger, he was transformed into a deep lake surrounding the cottage. The king issued a decree that whomever could rescue the lost princess shall have her for his bride.
1 PRINCE	One day a young prince set forth to seek the lost princess. Throwing a feather into the wind, he followed it into the woodlands.
2 WOODLANDS	When the prince stopped to eat, he was met by a raven demanding a portion of his meal. The prince was kind and so gave generously to the raven. The raven then presented with a silver bell which upon sounding would thrice afford the prince assistance in his quest. The bird directed the prince to the thickest part of the forest, where the way to the lake could be found. The crow then warned that upon crossing the lake, he must not gaze into the waters, lest he be compelled to its depths.
3 WOLVES	The prince found the thicket the raven spoke of, but could find no way through. He rang the bell once and the raven appeared, cawing thrice. Upon the the third harsh caw, the trees parted revealing the way and forming a high bridge that spanned the lake to an island.
4 PRINCE	He began crossing, but halfway there, forgot the raven's admonition and gazed into the murky water. He then saw in the reflection all the riches of the world and was dove in, forfeiting his life to his greed.
5 LAKE	During the fall, however, he remembered the bell and upon ringing it a group of ravens caught him up and rested him safely on the island's shore.
6 PRINCESS	The prince found the beautiful princess in a small cottage in the middle of the island. When she saw her rescuer, she was overjoyed. As the two crossed the threshold of the cottage, a great hedge of thorns emerged from the ground, driving them toward the water and the bridge crumbled into the lake.
7 SHORE	The prince sounded the bell for the third time and the raven appeared. The raven demanded that they must pierce his heart and throw it into the black lake. Though reluctant to kill his aid, the prince obeyed.
8 RAVEN	As the raven sank into the depths, the thorns withered and the water became sparkling as crystal. Then the body of the sorcerer was washed ashore and they saw his pierced heart.
9 KINGDOM	Out of his mouth emerged a group of white ravens who then carried the two lovers safely back to her kingdom where there was great rejoicing and they were married and lived happily ever after.

FIG 17

Methodology (CONTINUED)

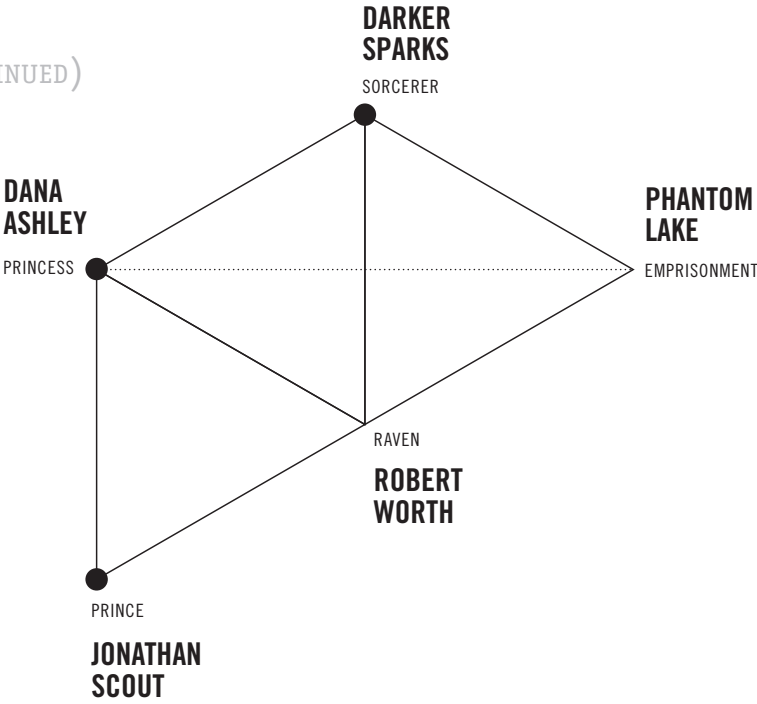


FIG 18

FIG 17
TEXT FROM “THE SILVER BELL”
BROKEN DOWN BY CHARACTER/
BAND OR SCENE/BAND

FIG 18
CHARACTER TRIANGLE FOR
“THE SILVER BELL”

LIKE KUROSAWA'S FILM *RASHOMON*, the story would be presented from different points of view. I took the text I had written and divided it up according to each band that would represent a particular character or scene. Then, aspects of the tale would be revealed through their eyes.

Taking the classic idea of a character triangle, showing the tension and relationship between the primary characters, I created a character trapezoid. The most interesting thing in this case is the sorcerer/raven character who exists in three different states. Although it seems the story is about the prince's quest for the princess, the story is actually about the development of the character Robert Worth.

http://

argentsound.com/



A PORTRAIT OF MATT KLIMAS AS JONATHAN SCOUT
ARGENT SOUND PROJECT SPRING 2007

Argent Sound Recordings

I am them and they are me.

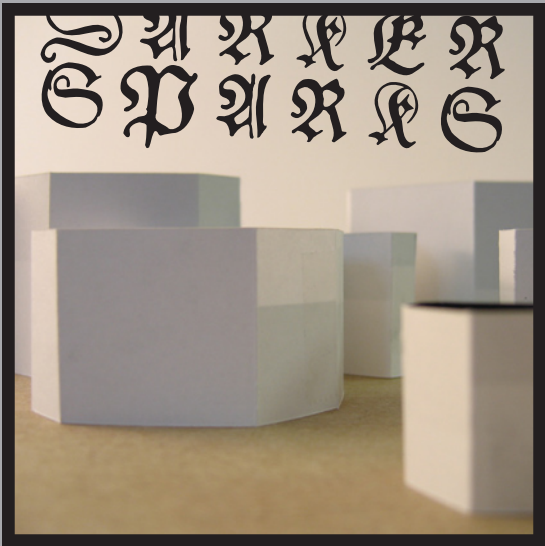
FIG 19 (FOLLOWING SPREAD)
ALBUM COVERS FOR ARGENT
SOUND RECORDINGS ARTISTS

ONE OF THE MORE EXCITING AND CHALLENGING ASPECTS of the project was that there were various characters and personas for which I would have to create both visual and sonic languages. This was a great opportunity to stretch myself as a designer and musician, exploring new conceptual and stylistic directions. In some cases, this meant using typefaces and colors that I might not typically use, but were well suited for content. The imagery was to be as diverse as possible, reflecting the individual character of the groups. The same went for the music. Attempting to be all characters, the songs challenged my vocal range to extremes. I forced myself to become a sonic and visual pluralist, being conscious that the very fact that being the sole producer would provide an underlying unity.



FIG 19





1



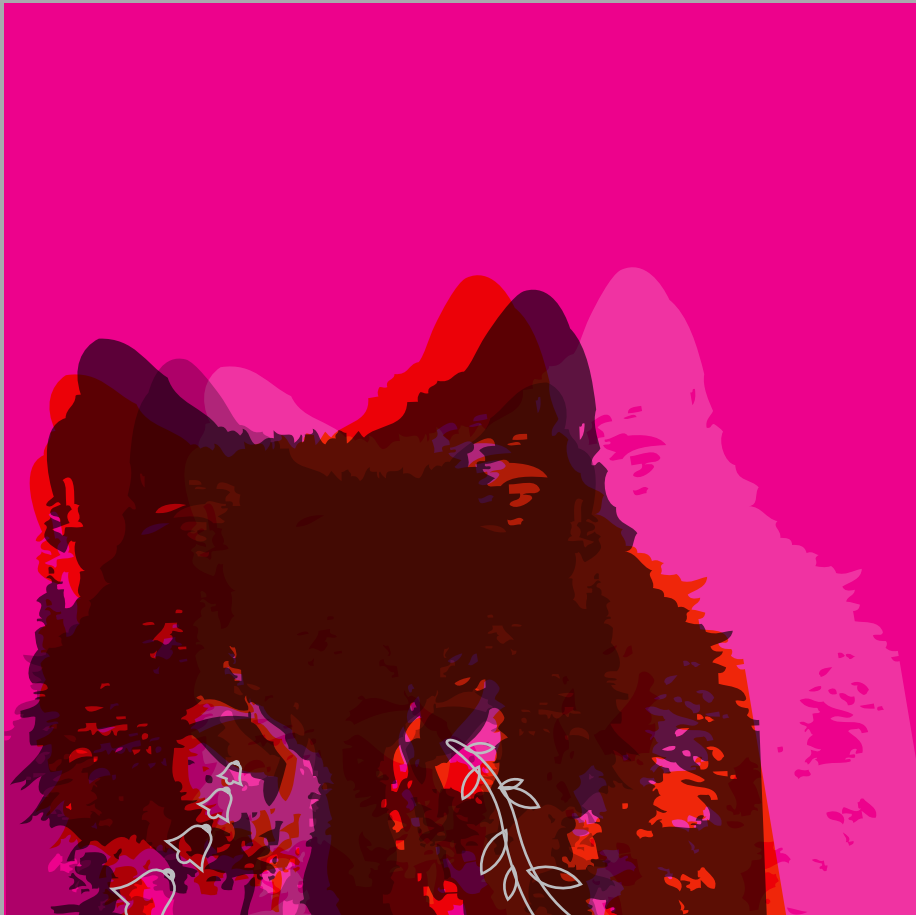
2



3

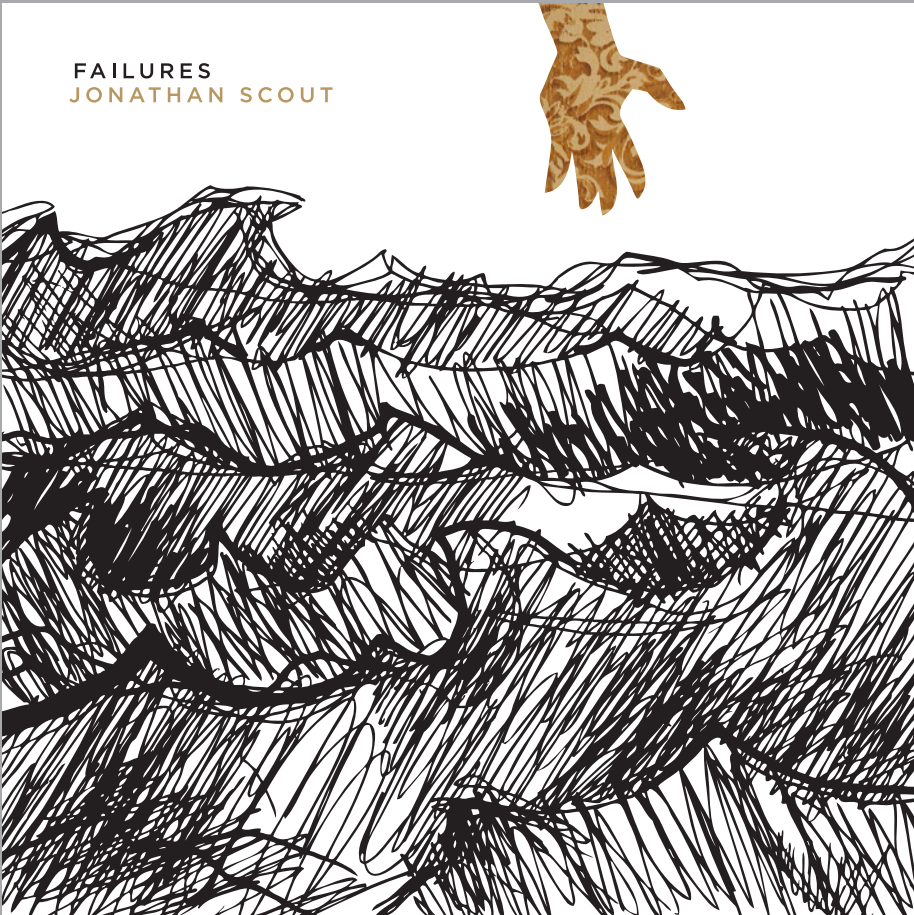


4



5

- 1 MANCER'S WISH / DARKER SPARKS
- 2 VANISH / THE PINK CLOUD AND MIDNIGHT SKY
- 3 ONLY EP / JONATHAN SCOUT
- 4 JONATHAN SCOUT / JONATHAN SCOUT
- 5 SPECTRES, SPECTATORS AND SPECULATIONS / WOLF WOLF



6

- 6 FAILURES / JONATHAN SCOUT
- 7 PROVINCE AND PROVISION / THE SUMMER OAKS
- 8 PRESERVATION / A LONELY BIRD
- 9 THE VEXED SNARE / PHANTOM LAKE
- 10 LIFE SPENT IN A COTTAGE / THE PINK CLOUD AND MIDNIGHT SKY



7



8



9



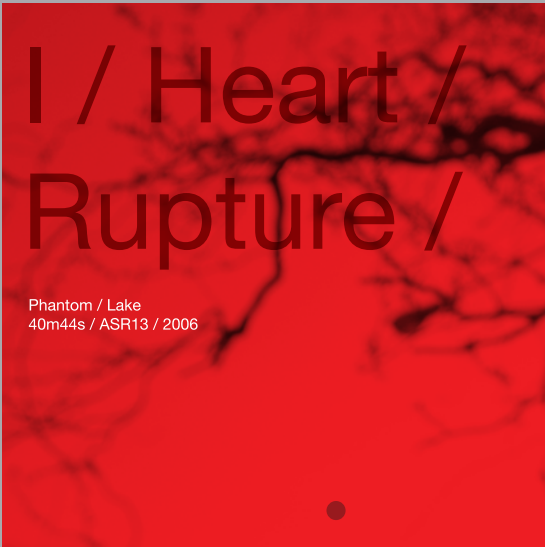
10



11



12



13



14



15

- 11 *CLAIRE* / THE PINK CLOUD AND MIDNIGHT SKY
- 12 *AMONG THORNS I* / SANGUINARY COAST
- 13 *I HEART RUPTURE* / PHANTOM LAKE
- 14 *EXPIRATION DATE* / A LONELY BIRD
- 15 *WE'VE ALWAYS DREAMED EP* / THE PINK CLOUD AND MIDNIGHT SKY & JONATHAN SCOUT

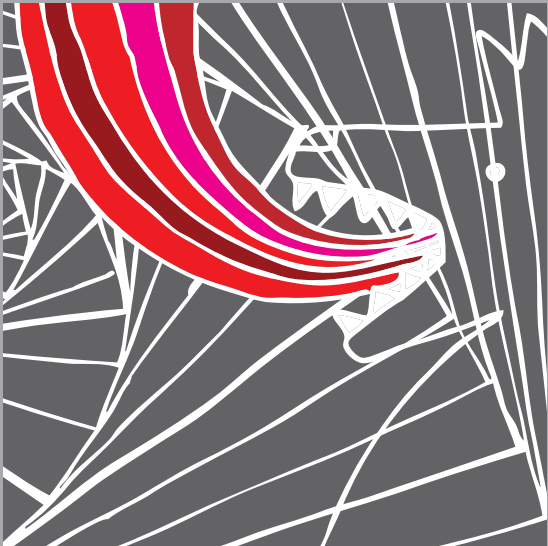


16

- 6 SUNSET LARKS / GOOD LUCK HAVE FUN!
- 7 AMONG THORNS II / SANGUINARY COAST
- 8 SOON THE QUARRY / WOLF WOLF
- 9 WINGS OVERHEAD EP / THE SUMMER OAKS
- 10 ARGENT SOUND COMPILATION 2007 / VARIOUS



17



18



19



20



FIG 20

Argent Sound Recordings (CONTINUED)

Music

FIG 20
GIBSON J-50, MY FIRST
GUITAR AND ONE OF THE
PRIMARY TOOLS USED TO
WRITE AND COMPOSE SONGS
DURING THE PROJECT

UP TO THIS POINT, MOST OF MY SOUND EXPERIMENTS coupled with graphic design consisted of abstract and experimental approaches to composition. However, the Argent Sound project involved the creation of more traditional songs to convey the content. As a proactive consumer of, and contributor to, music, I began compiling my experience of genres and trends within the Indie music scene. In the same way that I was seeking to stretch myself as a designer of visual form, I wanted to extend myself into musical forms that were outside of my experience. I wanted to incorporate as much musical diversity as possible.

The bands, based on sub-genres, were identified and selected from my album collection as well as online sources such as Allmusic.com. For instance, the group Summer Oaks was created as a “shoegaze” band in the vein of groups like Slowdive and My Bloody Valentine. The selected genre also influenced the visual aesthetic and conventions I would use in designing each band’s visuals.

Recording the tracks took about a month to complete and was done in my studio apartment.

Lyrics

“Declination” by Darker Sparks
from *Mancer’s Wish*

You could have had an ally
A minor setback really
She may be the king’s ward
But I can bend time with my hands
I’ll make my own answer

“To Seek Tomorrow I”
by Jonathan Scout from
Jonathan Scout

The whisperings of sparrows
Fell upon my ears
How swirling depths held
A fair maid in tears

But all the gold in this keep
Cannot save me from being alone
So I’ll go

What good is today
Without a bride
I’ll seek tomorrow
With you at my side

With a saddle on my best horse
And a satchel full of bread
Will I return with company
Or will I come back dead

The gate is open
And the road lies ahead
So I’ll go

“Chance Encounters”
by Summer Oaks from
Province and Provision

What transpires in our shade
Under our branches deals are made

A generous portion of his crust
For a silver bell he could trust

The raven’s gift he took
The curse to break
Deep into the woods
To find the lake

Stare not into the water (4x)

“Earnest Men and Funny Birds”
by Wolf Wolf from *Spectres,
Spectators and Speculations*

Two wolves are we
Two eyes a piece
That makes four
That makes four

Young prince
Up against
Such stubborn trees
Stubborn trees

Ding ding ding
Caw caw caw
Raven black
Makes trees so slack

Earnest Man
Where are you going
‘Cross the bridge (echo)
Silly bird
Why’d you let our
Meal escape

“The Depths” by Jonathan Scout
from *Failures*

The waves and foam
Are becoming clear
The surface must
Be drawing near
I cannot abandon
Yhis wreck
I’ll sleep in my bed made
In the depths

To think how bright
Your face would’ve been
Standing together,
Alone in the sand
The salvation
I would bring
Yet now it’s me
Who needs saving

I fall

“A Light Came from the Shore”
by The Pink Cloud + Midnight
Sky from *Claire*

A light came from the shore
And all of the things i asked for
Are coming true

A light came from the shore
So rabbits and squirrels and the
Things on my floor
Get out of the way and let the
Person through
And everything that i wanted is
Now coming true

A light is overhead
And crossing the lake is a thing
That i said
Would never happen

A light came from the shore
And how i could be anything i
Wanted anymore

A light came through the door
And took me in arms
And took me in arms
And said that i was all
That i should be

A light, oh a light
A light, oh a light

“Yesterday Has Flown” by
A Lonely Bird from
Expiration Date

There was a time
I could possess anything
But could never have
What I wanted
All the tricks and all the spells
Only served to bind myself

She refused my diamonds and
She would not have my gold
So my anger made me into
A lake deep and cold
Yet, every day would rise
A single feather to the sky

When I stood a raven
High atop the trees
Searching for one
Who could restore my peace
Now the third chime has past with
My heart pierced through
Take my feathered body and cast
Me into the depths

She refused my diamonds and
She would not have my gold
So my anger made me into
A lake deep and cold
Yet, every day would rise
A single feather to the sky
But today I’m whole

Yesterday has flown
So take her with you
You’ll have lives of your own
And a love that’s true

Today I’m whole

“The Return” by
Good Luck Have Fun! from
Sunset Larks

On white wings
Like a son and daughter
Of kings and queens
Tthe missing have returned

On white wings
Like we were dreaming
Of brighter days
The lost are here to stay

The return, the return



CONTENTS

NEWS

CATALOG

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ARTISTS

A Lonely Bird

Darker Sparks

Good Luck Have Fun!

The Pink Cloud and

Midnight Sky ♦

Phantom Lake

Sanguinary Coast

Jonathan Scout

The Summer Oaks

Wolf Wolf



NEW RELEASES



Good Luck Have Fun!

Sunset Larks

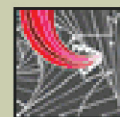
ASR19 : CD/LP



The Summer Oaks

Wings Overhead

ASR18 : CD/EP



Wolf Wolf

Soon the Quarry

ASR17 : CD/EP

NEWS

4.7.2007

Argent Sound Recordings

Argent Sound Compilation Album

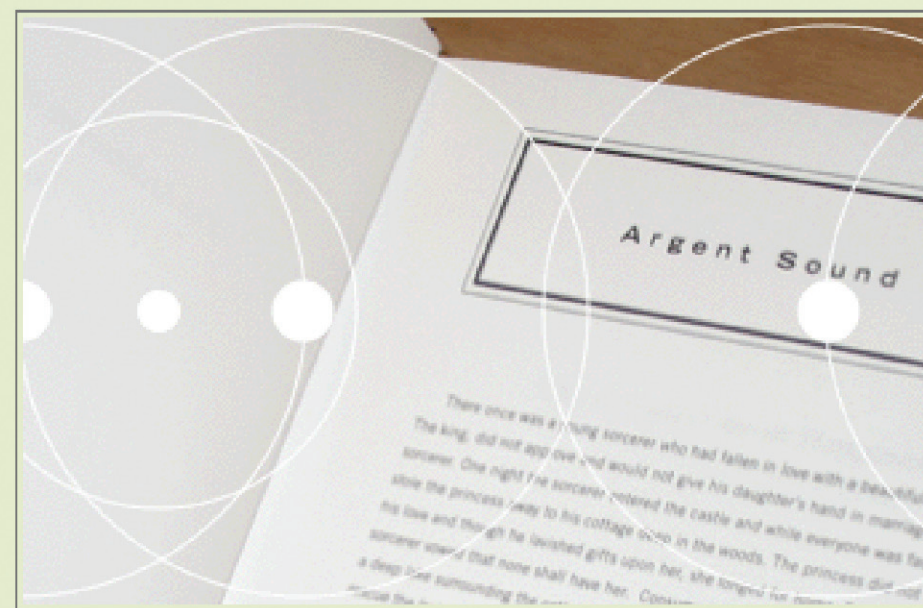


FIG 21 2003-2007 Compilation, yay!

50 The first compilation to be released on ASR spans the last
Bird to Wolf Wolf.

Argent Sound Recordings (CONTINUED)

The site is the label is the album.

argentsound.com

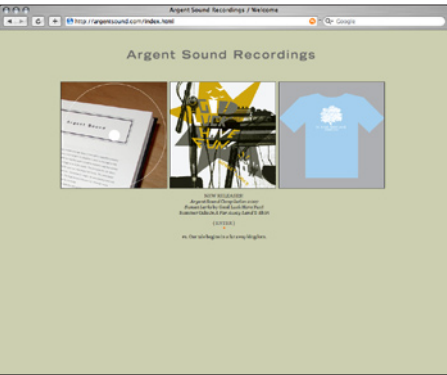
FIG 21-22
SCREENSHOTS OF
ARGENTSOUND.COM

THOUGH A BIT LEERY OF USING THE INTERNET as the vehicle for the project, it ended up making the most sense (my hesitation was based primarily on personal cynicism and aversion). The web offered the ability to present content in a non-linear form and have multimedia elements immediately accessible. Due to the growing number of music-centric sites – including labels, myspace, etc. – there was the opportunity to exploit the record label website convention.

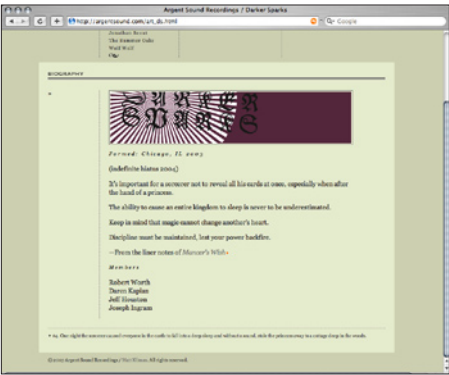
The Argent Sound website takes the appearance of a typical independent record label site, but rather than functioning as a collection of disparate artists and works, the site as a whole functions as a singular work. Similar to Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, it is a narrative, which on first glance seems to be made of incongruous parts.

The aesthetics of argentsound.com were developed to have a literary feel, reinforcing the idea that the site itself conceptually functions as a book.

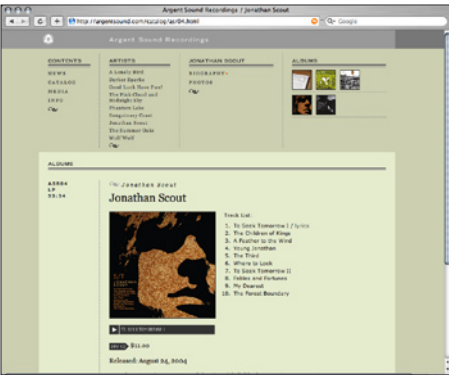
Let's browse.. <http://argentsound.com>



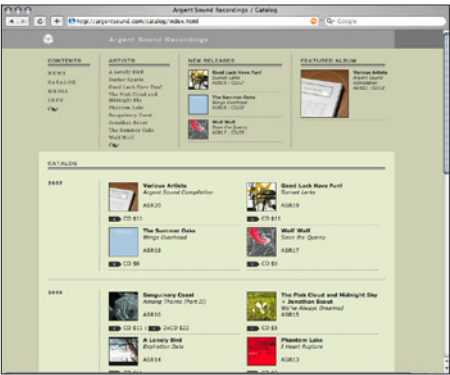
1 /index.html



4 /art_ds.html



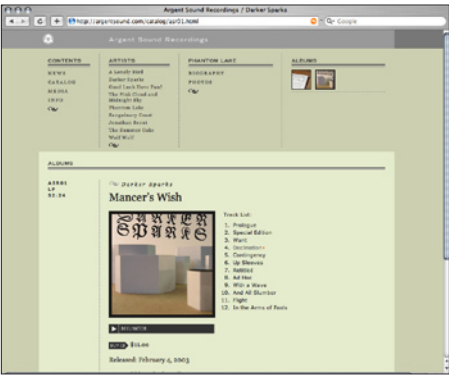
7 /catalog/asr04.html



10 /catalog/index.html



2 /news.html



5 /catalog/asr01.html



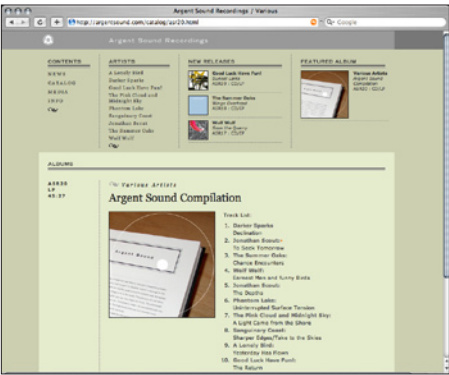
8 /art_js.html



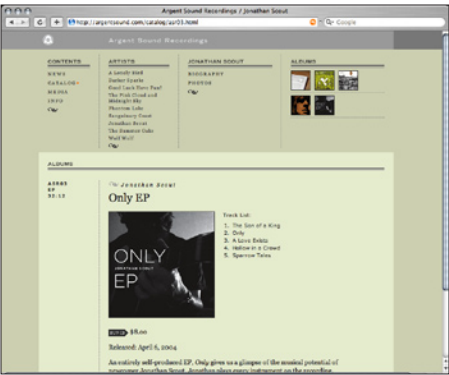
11 /catalog/asr10.html



3 /art_pcms.html



6 /catalog/asr20.html



9 /catalog/asr03.html



12 /art_pl.html

FIG 22

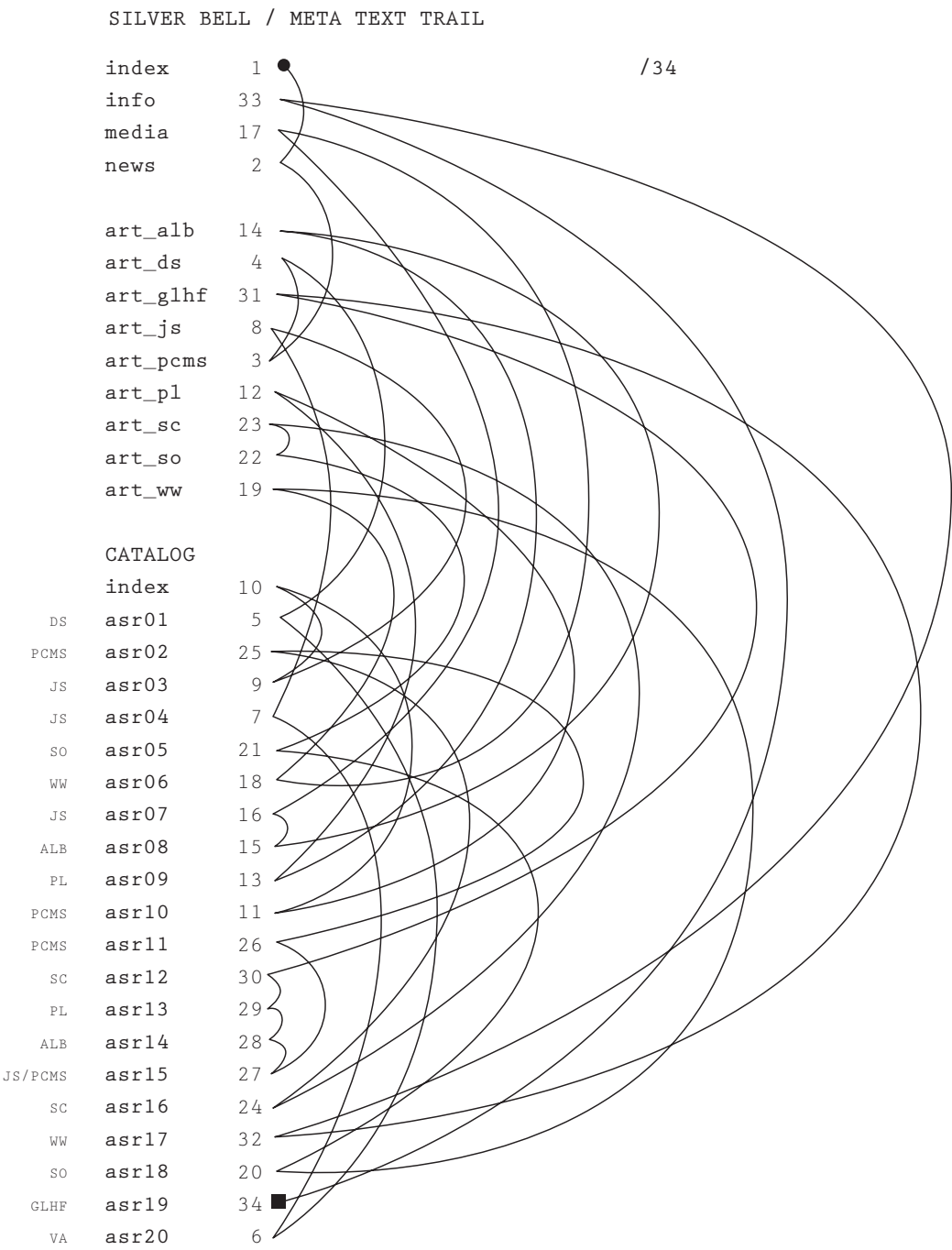


FIG 23

Argent Sound Recordings (CONTINUED)

Linear v. non-linear presentation

FIG 23
DIAGRAM OF ACTUAL STORY
TEXT SEQUENCE PER EACH
HTML PAGE THROUGHOUT THE
ARGENT SOUND SITE

THE ARGENT SOUND WEBSITE PRESENTS TWO WAYS of navigating a story. The first is a typical, non-linear navigation of the site, which allows the user to view the content independent of a prescribed sequence. This is how users typically interact with websites – moving freely throughout by the provided navigational links.

Additionally, users can follow a specific sequence through the site. To accomplish this, excerpts were inserted from the actual story text as a footnote on each page. An orange diamond bullet was placed next to the link that would take the user to the next page in sequence.

By following the trail of diamonds, the user could read the complete text and interpret it in context with the specific content the label and its constituents. The trail would also lead the viewer through every page of the Argent Sound site.

Argent Sound Recordings (CONTINUED)

Exhibition

ARGENT SOUND RECORDINGS
AS PRESENTED AT RE:SEARCH
2007 MFA EXHIBITION



USERS WERE ABLE TO BROWSE
THE WEBSITE

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREA QUAM



PROCESS WORK WAS
DISPLAYED AS SUPPLEMENTAL
MATERIAL TO THE PROJECT

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREA QUAM

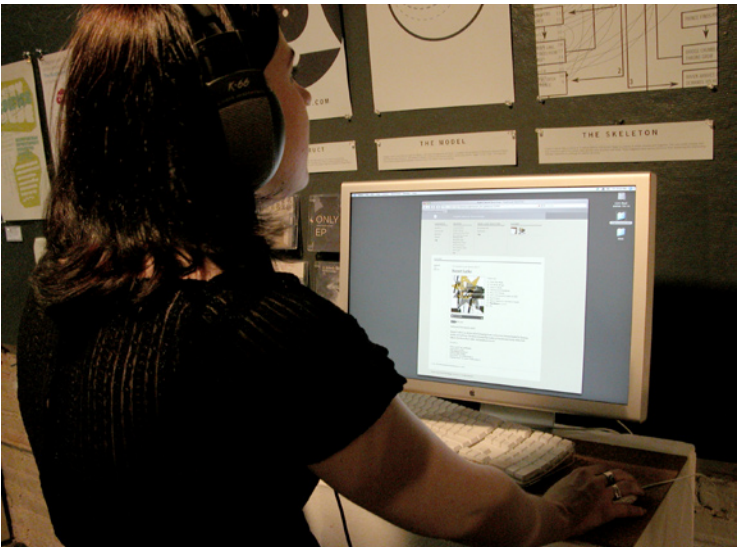


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREA QUAM





FIG 24

Argent Sound Recordings (CONTINUED)

Performance

SELECTED SONGS FROM THE ARGENT
SOUND COMPILATION ALBUM PERFORMED
AT RE:SEARCH 2007 MFA SHOW

FIG 24

“A Light Came from the Shore” / The Pink
Cloud and Midnight Sky

FIG 25

“Declination” / Darker Sparks

SETLIST

“Declination” / Darker Sparks

“The Depths” / Jonathan Scout

“A Light Came from the Shore” / The Pink
Cloud and Midnight Sky

“Yesterday Has Flown” / A Lonely Bird

“To Seek Tomorrow I” / Jonathan Scout

THE SECOND NIGHT OF THE MFA EXHIBITION my fellow graduate student, Ben Gaydos organized a screening and performance of his creative project, and gave me the opportunity to perform songs from my project. I performed five songs solo, representing each of the main characters from the story. I was able to incorporate projected visuals complimenting each song.

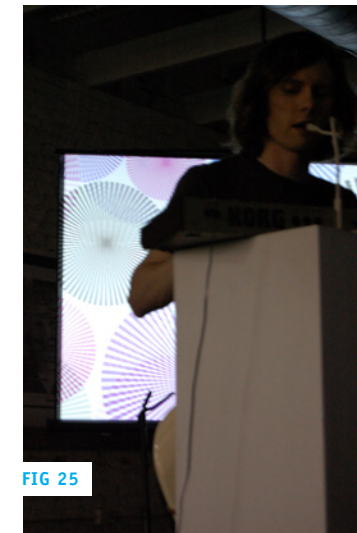


FIG 25



Endings/Beginnings

The curtain falls and rises again.

Evaluation

THIS PROJECT WAS SUCCESSFUL in creating a new format for experiencing a narrative through interaction design and music. The project takes a significant step in demonstrating a method of coopting the conventions of media to communicate in a fresh way.

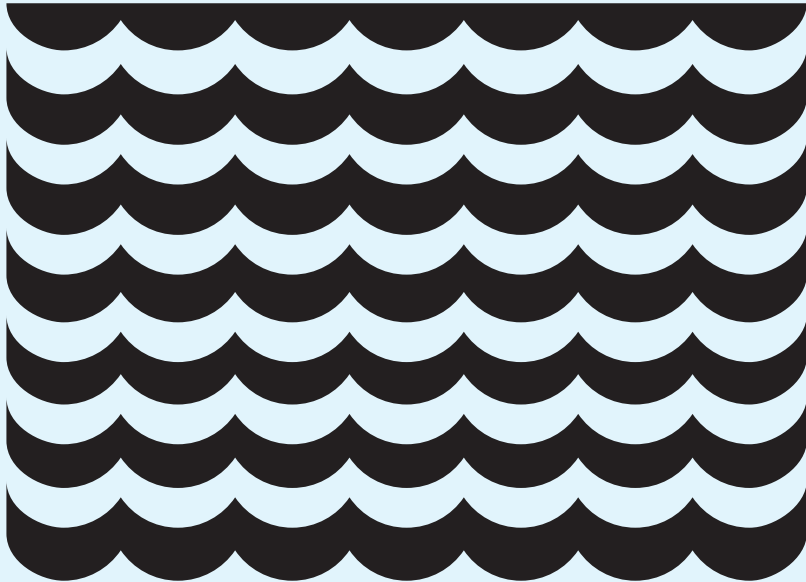
The project would have benefitted from more time, given its scope. Some of the content areas, while successful at presenting necessary content essential to experiencing the story, could have been more thoroughly developed. In spite of these deficiencies, the project does stand as a cohesive and intelligible work.

There have been discussions regarding the accessibility of the project. Some felt it would benefit from more explanation within the site as to what the project was about. Others, however, argued that the mystery and inherent act of discovery were more desirable in experience the “secret” narrative.

The execution and documentation of this project has profoundly helped me to understand the role that storytelling plays in all communication.

Perhaps it is because I am a perpetual tweaker, but it seems like design is never finished. The design process never reaches its ultimate conclusion, only the best we can accomplish within a set of constraints and time.

I am not disappointed with where this project had to end (for now).



Endings/Beginnings (CONTINUED)

New Directions

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS for the project to expand into new directions. Given more time, I would have extensively developed the content for each band – including complete albums, actual member photographs and individual sites. The expansion of the network to include other sites and online experiences like Myspace and YouTube would be a natural progression for the project – to infect the Web 2.0 sphere.

Within the site itself, the catalog and shopping cart pages could be developed further to interact in unexpected ways to reveal additional content. Or perhaps make them fully functional and allow users to actually purchase (or simply receive) story content.

I would also be interested in the role physical artifacts might play in the project. These could consist of the actual albums or artist merchandise (posters, t-shirts or buttons).

Even with a few gaps, the project serves as a good prototype on which to build. Being the compulsive tinkerer that I am, I can imagine reconstructing the entire project down the road.

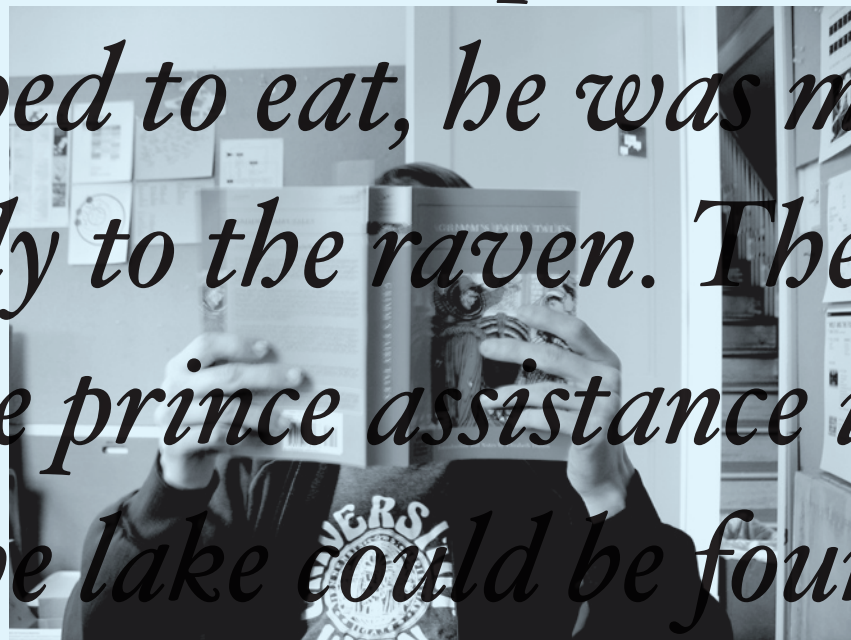
It has encouraged me to think more pluralistically about design, music projects, and collaborations. Taking what I've learned from the project, I am currently working on a several musical/visual projects.

NEW MUSIC/DESIGN PROJECTS IN THE WORKS

NOUN – experimental project with Ben Gaydos based on improvised sound to projected visuals.

SNOWY OWLS – My own songwriting outlet

THE LAGOMORPH – Annual, contribution-based web-zine centering around creative response and reflection on music
<http://thelagomorph.com>



What am I talking about?

Experience (n.) The apprehension of an object, thought, or emotion through the senses or mind

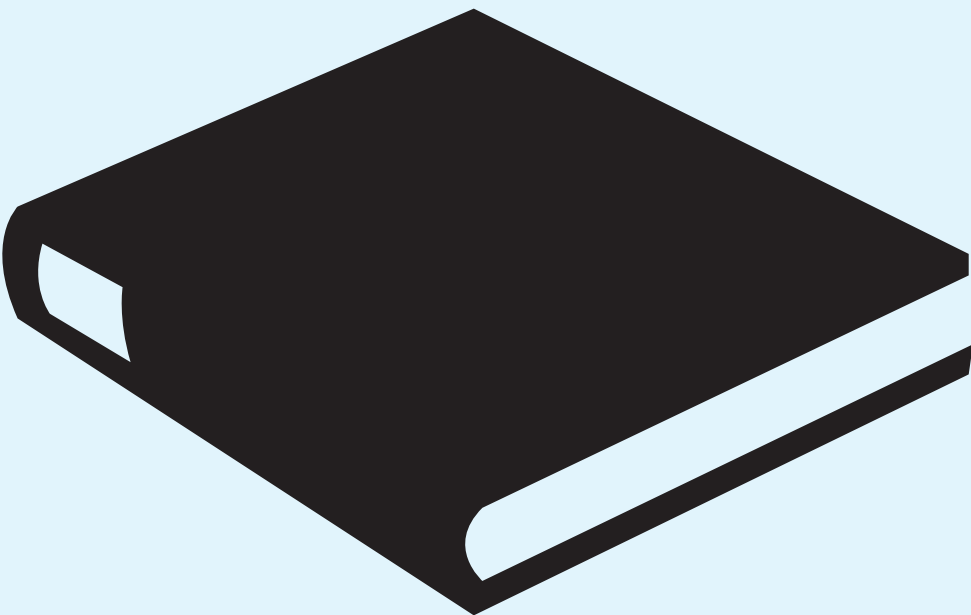
Multimodal (adj.) Characterized by several different modes of activity or occurrence. A mode refers to a method of sending or receiving information as related to a specific sense. In the context of this project it has to do with the integration of different media

Orchestration (adj.) an arrangement of events that attempts to achieve a maximum effect.

Harmony (adj.) congruity of parts with one another and the whole

Concept Album (n.) a collection of songs based on a specific theme or process intended to function as a singular piece.

Gestalt (n.) a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts



Bibliography

On my shelves

Haunted Weather: Music, Silence, and Memory / David Toop
Five Star, 2006
[This book offers an accessible look into current trends in experimental music and sound art.](#)

.....

Else/Where: Mapping New Cartographies of Networks and Territories / Abrams, Hall / Univ Minnesota Design Institute; 1 edition, 2006
[Nice overview of current trends in abstract and practical mapping](#)

.....

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[Conceptual tree sketches](#)

.....

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[Maps of the Imagination was incredibly helpful in making a connection between writing fiction and visual form.](#)

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[One of the cornerstones of western fairy tales. This provided a lot of inspiration in terms of characters and thematic content for the project.](#)

.....

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[Inspiration in the form of experimental narrative](#)

.....

Invisible Cities / Calvino / Harvest Books; 1st Harvest/HBJ Ed edition (May 3, 1978)
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.....

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(September 1, 2000)
[Visual reference on album design and packaging](#)
.....

Image-Music-Text / Roland Barthes / Hill and Wang (July 1, 1978)
[Reference on semiotics](#)
.....

Poetry, Language, Thought / Martin Heidegger / New York: Harper and Row 1971
[The title says why it’s helpful](#)
.....

[FIG 1] *The Kinks are the Village Green Preservation Society* / The Kinks / 1968 / Reprise / Design: Paul Bevoir
[Concept album](#)
.....

[FIG 2] *Black Sheep Boy* / Okkervil River / 2005 / Jagjaguwar /
Design: Darius VanArman
[Concept album](#)
.....

Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band / The Beatles / 1967 / Capitol
[Concept album](#)
.....

Winners Never Quit / Pedro the Lion / 2000 / Jade Tree
[Concept album](#)
.....

[FIG 3] *Zaireeka* / The Flaming Lips / 1997 / Warner Bros. /
Design: Particle
[4 disc, synchronous concept album](#)
.....

Year Zero / Nine Inch Nails / 2007 / Interscope
[Concept album](#)
.....

Three Colors: Blue, White, Red / Krzysztof Kieslowski (director) /
1993/1994
[Conceptual film trilogy](#)
.....

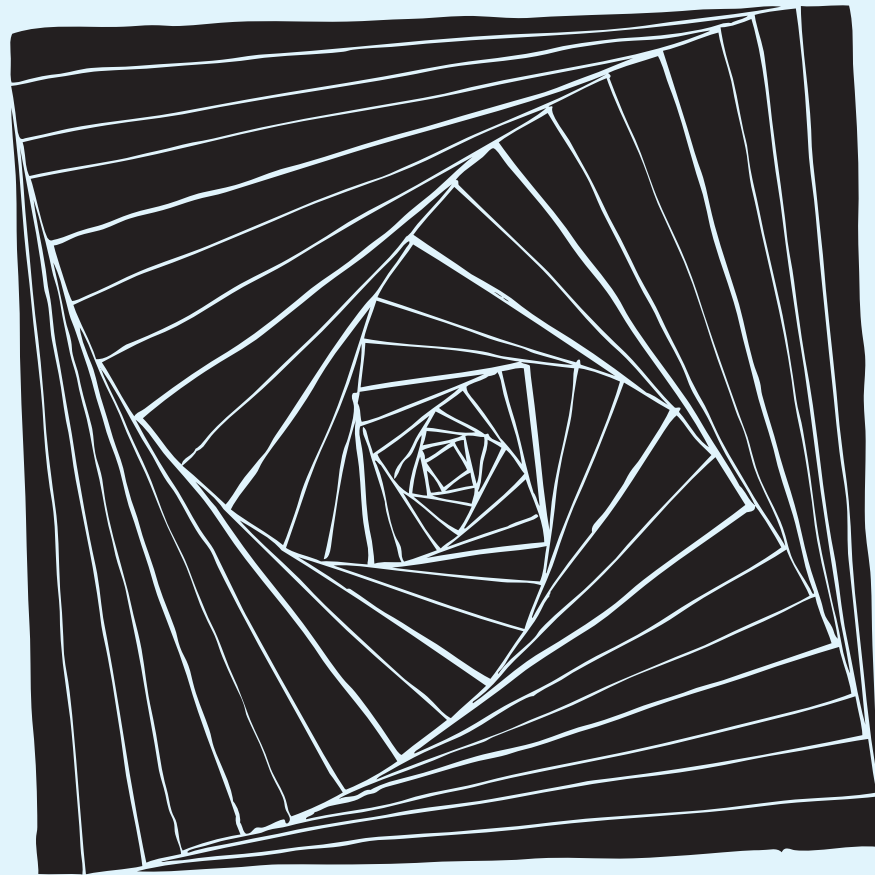
[FIG 5] *The White Horse* / André Kertész / 1962 / gelatin silver print /
24 × 19.7 (9 7/16 × 7 3/4) / Estate of André Kertész, New York
[Photographic muse for graduate workshop project](#)
.....

Pan’s Labyrinth / Guillermo del Toro (director) / 2006
[Filmic inspiration](#)
.....

Rashomon / Akira Kurosawa (director) / 1950
[Filmic inspiration](#)
.....

Souvlaki / Slowdive / 1993 / SBK
[Shoegaze music reference](#)
.....

Loveless / My Bloody Valentine / 1991 / Sire
[Shoegaze music reference](#)
.....



Colophon

All music recorded using
Logic Express 7
on an Apple PowerBook G4

GEAR

Motu 828
Fender Twin Reverb Reissue
Vox Pathfinder 15
Fender Jazzmaster
Fender Mustang
Fender Musicmaster Bass
Gibson J-50
Rhodes MK-80
Microkorg
Roland Juno-106
Shure SM58
Shure SM57
Behringer B-1
Boss DR-202

Images appearing on the left hand blue pages are excerpted from various stages of process work

Note: all photographs, maps, and images by Matthew Klimas unless otherwise noted.

Paper = French Durotone Butcher Off White 80#T
Type = ITC Officina (Sans and Serif)

Printed with a Canon i9900

Video and sound works can be viewed/downloaded at
<http://mattklimas.com>
<http://argentsound.com>

Contact
mk@mattklimas.com

this one is for the dreams that dream of themselves