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Design book collage, mixed media, 3 x 5 inches, 22 pages.

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Design Book Collage, mixed media 3 x 5 inches, 22 pages

CHRIS JANZEN

I am fascinated by the sheer volume of visual imagery that is created for our consumption daily. We see advertisements in the form of video, magazines, newspapers, catalogues, bill-boards, radio, and the internet so often that we forget to consider the enormous wealth of unique (and often totally irrational) narratives that pile up in our collective subconscious. This is what my art strives to explore: composing with familiar images in unfamiliar ways to reveal insights which we might otherwise ignore.

Of vital importance to my creative research is “playing” with subject-matter and composition. Before painting on canvas, many hours of drawing and collage take place in small sketch books and design books without any specific goal except that it should hold viewers’ attention and get them to turn to the next page. I find that using a child-like mindset unburdens the pressures of success or failure, leading to the more important goal of revealing honesty and truth. On the rare occasion that this play with imagery yields something I feel is important, I paint it on canvas.

Included here is a reproduction of one such design book. It began as a small brochure for luxury cars. I then used a variety of commercial paper-based source-material (as well as ink, white-out, and glue) to play, improvising unique placements of objects, removing text and pictures, and sometimes cutting windows to allow a small view of the next/previous pages.

Three recurring themes that emerge as one evaluates this book are: 1. old vs. new, 2. formal simplicity vs. complexity, and 3. the redirection of thought from consumerism.

1880’s newspaper illustrations of people, games, and text are juxtaposed with 1990’s bathroom design photography and contemporary automotive imagery, creating an aesthetic middle-ground between 1800’s, 1990’s, and contemporary design. The old German typeface used on pages 11-12, for example,

becomes a rhythmic series of vertical lines which are contrasted to the sans-serif modern font and shiny new car engine on the lower right.

Some pages are compositionally complex, like pages 3-4, which utilizes imagery to imply great depth of field and multiple compatible viewing angles (it can be flipped upside down and still appear resolved because of the sink and bathtub images) to create a more conflicted ominous atmosphere. Others utilize just a few shapes to achieve a less cluttered resolution. Pages 19-20 have very little spatial depth and have fewer narrative implications, instead focusing more on visual composition.

A philosophy of redirection is also evident based on what text is left for viewers to read. Though the purpose of the original text was to convince individuals of a need to purchase a car, I whited out words to leave behind a more nonconformist message (pages 7-8), which is also visible in pages 9-10. This reads: “No, we will not compromise ideas. No, we will not do it the way every... No, we will not give in to mass-media...” Pages 17-18 include the text “good thoughts, creative visions.”

Taken as a whole, the design book gives viewers a look into the creative process. Elements from many different unrelated sources become visually intertwined, resulting in a work that explores visual design and our surrounding consumer culture.



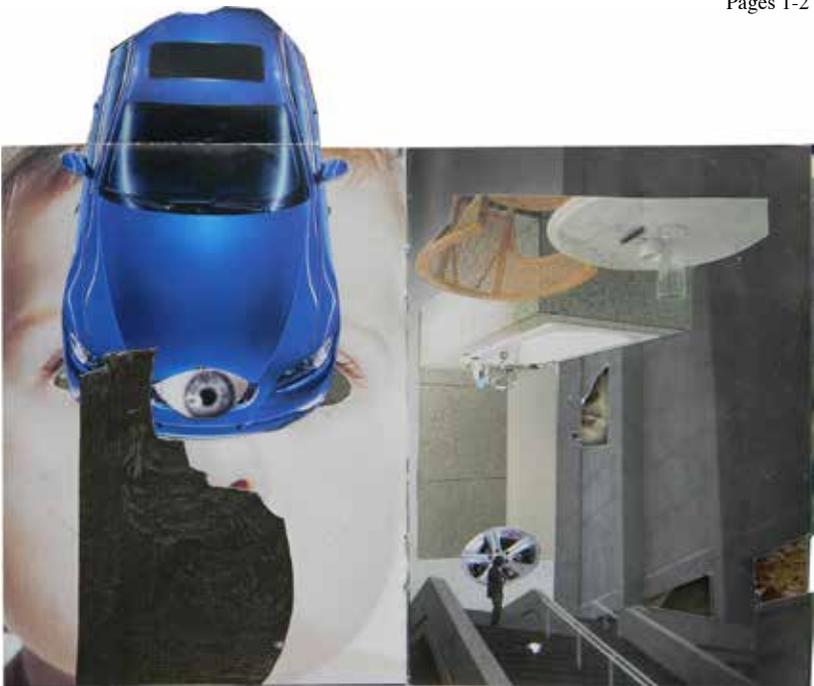
Front Cover, closed flap



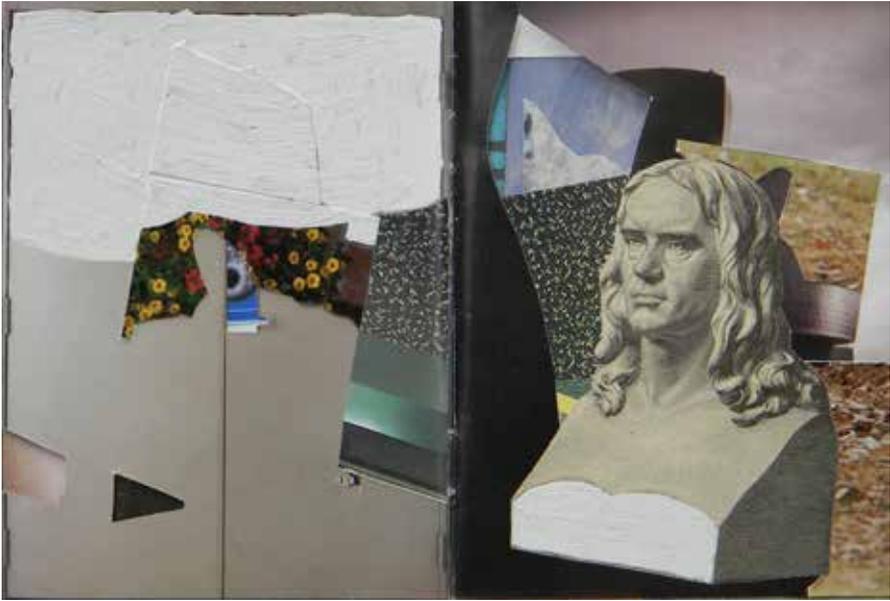
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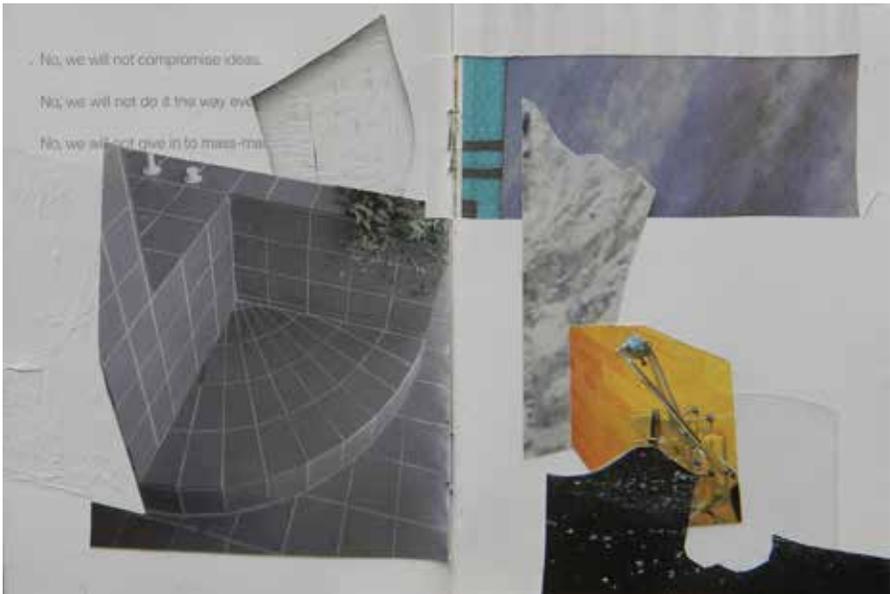
Pages 1-2



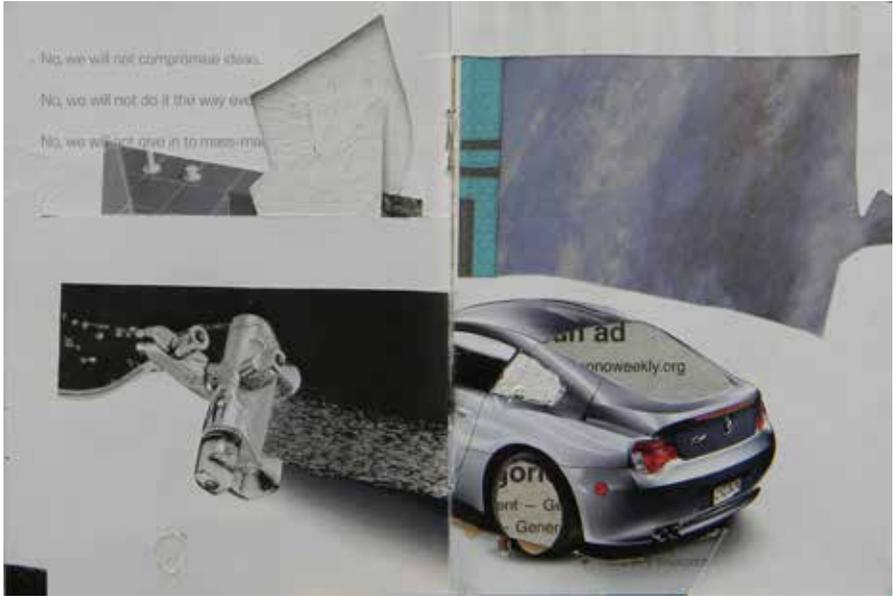
Pages 3-4



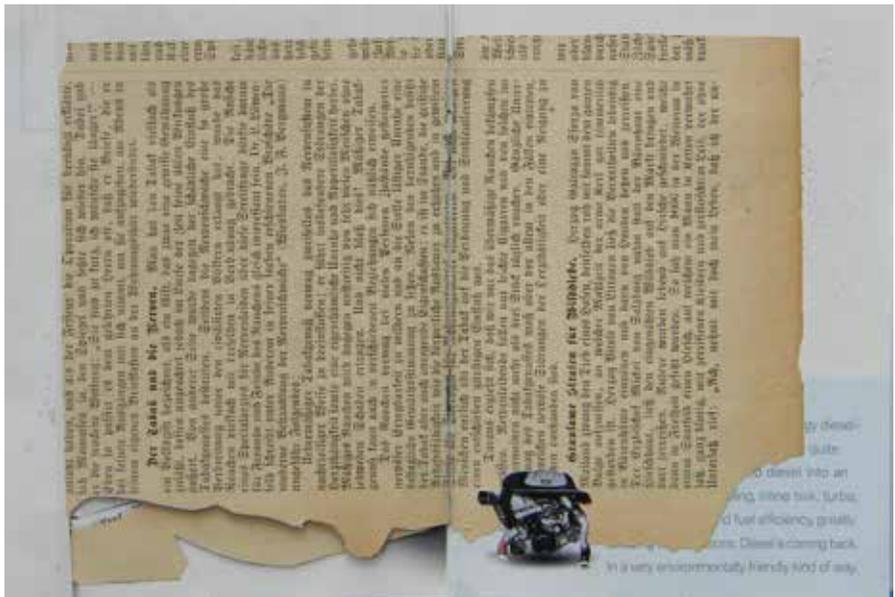
Pages 5-6



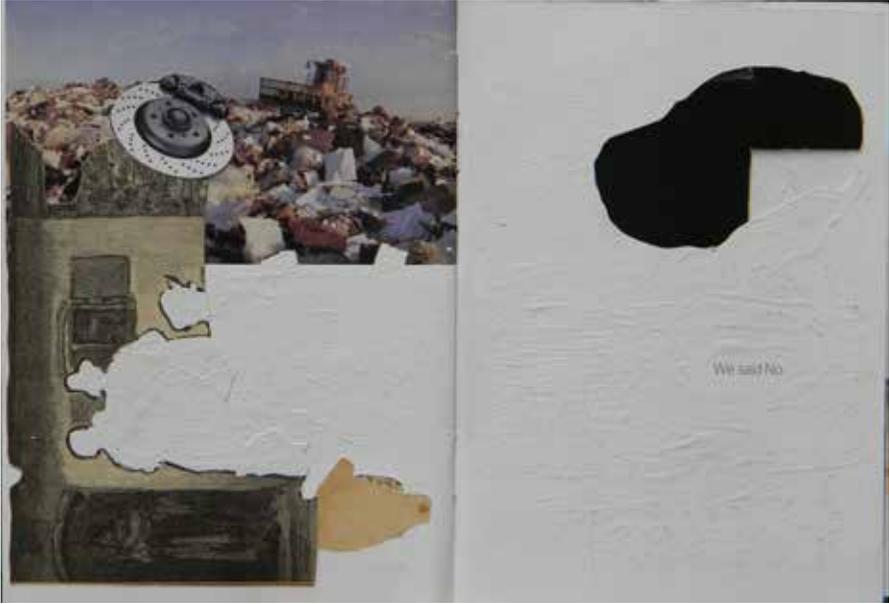
Pages 7-8



Pages 9-10



Pages 11-12



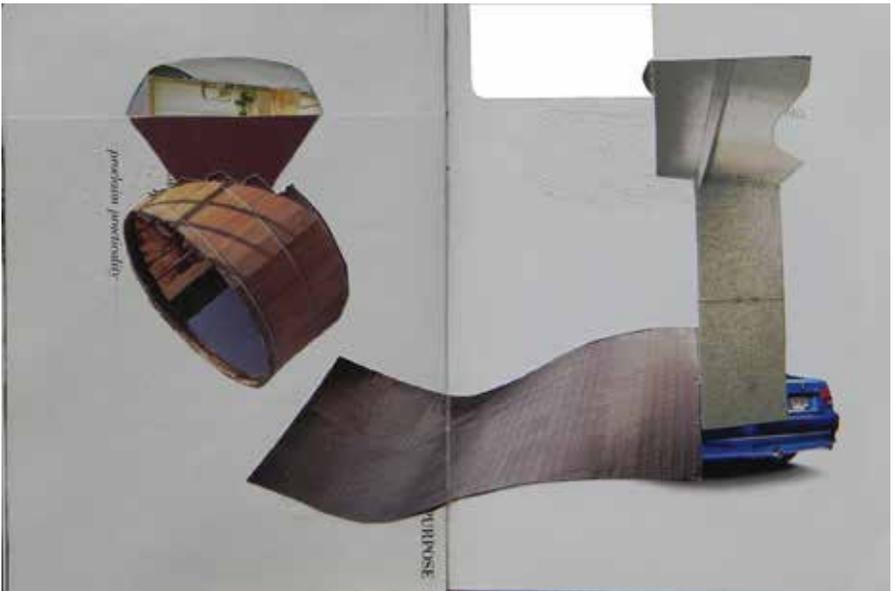
Pages 13-14



Pages 15-16



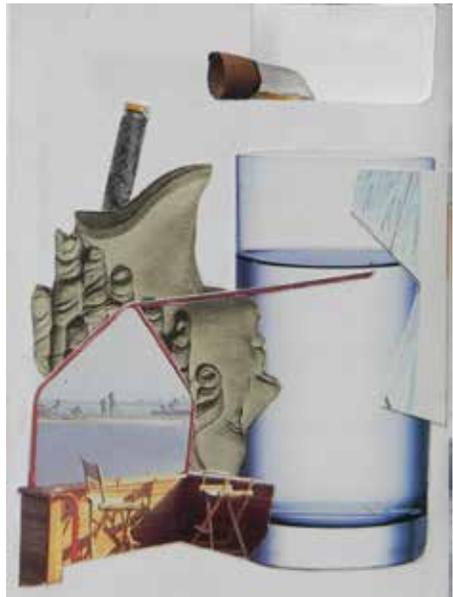
Pages 17-18



Pages 19-20



Back Cover



Back Cover alternate rotation