



Exploration B

Part 5: Process Book

Marc Balderama

GDVX702 OL - Ideation Models and Process

Professor Rhonda Arntsen

Table of Contents

1. Discovery	3
2. Opportunity	5
3. Ideation	7
4. Refining	12
5. Building	19
6. Final Outcome	26

1. Discovery

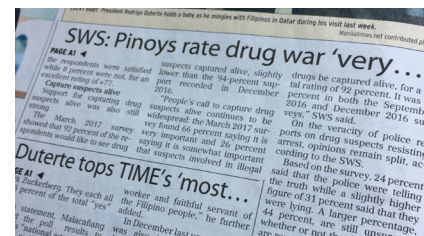
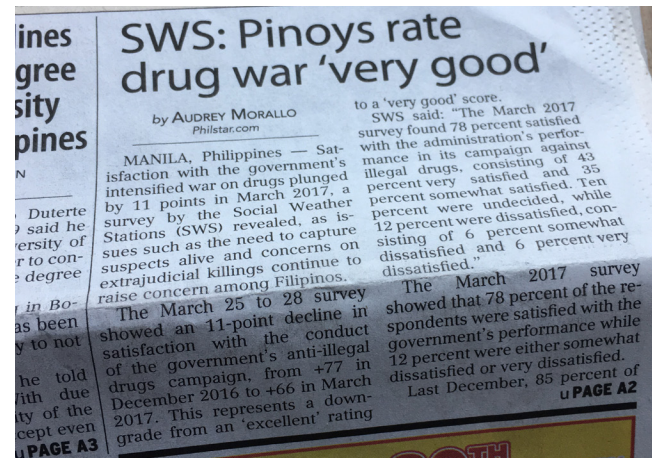
Newspapers

In order to discover a design opportunity, I gained inspiration from three articles from the newspaper *Asian Journal*. These articles included stories about the Philippine public opinion of the government's war on drugs, a gossip story about a celebrity's recent engagement, and an employment classified ad for a residential caregiver for the elderly.

After reading and assessing these articles, I thought about what connections could be made between these three very different pieces and what audience they maintain. Obviously, the readers of this newspaper are likely to be Filipino and Filipino American residents living in the United States.

Nonetheless, other ideas that came to mind were of a people who feel separated from a place they call home. These are people who want to maintain a connection to a place where they once were. This can include staying up to date with friends and family.

Thinking about this connection, I also realized that making sure one's loved ones are taken care of is an important value to this audience. This coincides with the communal nature of the Filipino culture. Even if they are far away, Filipino people try to strengthen connections through the act of nurturing.



2. Opportunity

Balikbayan Box

Through the newspaper connections, I focused on the Filipino act of sending balikbayan boxes to the Philippines. In this tradition, Filipinos who live overseas give back to the friends and family back home by sending boxes of goods such as canned food, clothing, toiletries, and toys. “Balikbayan” means “return [to] country” alluding to how the box is a representation of a person coming back home. The connection back home is maintained through these gifts.

However, I know from experience that sometimes the balikbayan boxes don't always offer an emotional connection the same way that it offers consumable items. At times, the sender of the box doesn't actually personally know the person receiving the box. While these items are greatly appreciated on the part of the recipient, I wondered if there was any way to establish a deeper sense of the connection between both sides involved.

Therefore, for this design opportunity, I decided to explore a way that the balikbayan box could be re-imagined so that it could instill a better sense of personal connection and shared experience. Rather than being reduced to the giving and receiving of consumer items, there could be ways to exchange people's emotions across large distances.

There could also be ways to integrate technology in ways different from social media to transfer communication between people.



3. Ideation

Meaning & Purpose

In order to figure out a specific design direction for this project, I first thought expansively about the meaning of the balikbayan box and what a new artifact should communicate. Figuring out a sense of purpose was a high priority for me, using the "5 Whys" technique to discover reasons why a balikbayan box re-visioning might be needed.

Through this process, I decided that I wanted to de-emphasize the material aspect of the box. I wanted to focus more on intangibles like feelings and moods. This opened the door to ideas that strayed away from thinking about simply an improved version of the balikbayan box. Rather this project should use the box as a launching off point to create an alternative method of expressing connection.

What does the balikbayan box mean?

- A return to home
- Giving back for the opportunity abroad
- Bringing back a representation of a foreign land / souvenir
- Making sure that family back home is taken care of
- A celebration of being reunited
- Sharing an experience with family
- Act of sacrifice
- Continued awareness of the people back home

Who is this communication for?

- Filipinos overseas who are sending the box
- Filipinos in the Philippines who are receiving the box
- Immediate family members?
- Overseas to support their family?
- Receiving the box due to need?
- People who have no other interactions other than the box?
- Should the solution be more for the sender or the receiver?
- Are they receptive, defensive, unaware, need convincing, just need a different perspective, need reminding, etc.

What do I want to disrupt?

- Allowing just the goods in the box be the only expression of the gift
- The box being ineffective at creating a shared experience
- Transaction happening without the sender and receiver not knowing much about each other.
- The expectations of both the sender & receiver
- Lack of motivation for sender & receiver in getting deeper connections
- Box is more about sending stuff over than "returning home"

The 5 whys (I)

1. Why do we need to revision the balikbayan box?
Because it can do a better job at strengthening the connection between sender and receiver.
2. Why?
Because much of the emphasis is on material goods.
3. Why?
Because goods have a more immediate benefit
4. Why?
Expressing a more emotional, personal experience is harder
5. Why?
People are not actually returning back home.

Metaphors

- The box is a person's heart/soul experiences
- The box represents the whole person
- An item inside represent a particular thought of someone back home
- An item/represents a different experience // Example - can of soup represents the hope of one day cooking home made soup
- Photos, videos, text posts as a representation of a person's life
- The box's journey is a person's journey
- Box as a miniature home/deliverable home

Criticisms of the box

- over-emphasis on the material aspects
- senders can see it as an obligation or a chore
- the expression of love can be lost in the gesture
- Mismatch between what is sent and what the recipient needs/wants
- People who ask for items but don't really know the sender personally
- not effective in forging connections?

Forming Ideas

Although I was developing a more distinct idea of what this design should communicate, the means to do it was still up in the air. I thought of many different ways this could go.

Possible ideas included campaigns to make people aware of the lack of personal connection, display pieces that showed a shared experience, or some ways to highlight the emotional nature of material goods.

What can technology do?

- Facilitate the sharing of photos, videos, sounds, text
- Ability to decide which media is most relevant to its audiences
- Create more immersive experiences of sights & sounds
- Allow people to see what you see
- Provide insights about a person's life that even they couldn't tell you
- Create a visual representation of traditionally non-visual things

What do I want this solution to communicate?

- Connect with your family
- This is how the other person lives
- This box/item has a lot of meaning
- There are other ways to give other than the box
- Reflect on what the box represents/is supposed to replace
- This is what the box is if you strip away everything superficial
- This is how the sender/receiver feels

Misc. Ideas (I)

- Instead of a box of items, a box of things that capture an experience // cultural probe
- A transferable method of sharing an experience (box as figurative idea)
- Image of a person who has qualities of the box - full of items, taped up, painted like a box, tattoos of items
- A compilation of many 1 second videos of a person's day to day life
- A visual wall of updating images, videos, social media posts, news of the other side

Avoiding the commercial nature

- Removing the physical elements
- Removing things that are buy-able
- Create more opportunities for the sender to express who they are
- Create more opportunities for the receiver to send back the experience of home
- Being able to "see" the person who sent it
- Focus on the culture surrounding the box rather than the objects, how it looks

Actually addressing the commercial nature

- Addressing commercial nature as a critique or as a more optimistic interpretation?
- Critique examples - the box compared to a store bought greeting card // A person composed of commercial items
- Optimistic examples - A beer bottle where the label is a photo or a story about an experience // Tie a product with the sender's thoughtfulness around it

Misc Ideas (II)

- Immersive VR?
- Merging of the 2 countries? Collage, mashup, remix
- Photomosaic
- A book/display of a box's items with writings from the sender about what each means
- Semiotics - what the box signifies vs what it is
- Tearing the box apart
- Any similar or associative practices? Christmas, souvenir, homecoming, reunion, care package
- Box that has qualities of a person.

Concepts & AR

After a few rounds of feedback, I thought more about the idea of transmitting an experience or a memory. I also thought about how to make personal connections more tangible and permanent.

This is where the idea of the artifact conveying sentimentality came into play. If an object develops sentimental value, then the object might transcend its physical qualities to become something more meaningful. It becomes associated with memories.

During this process, Professor Arntsen suggested the idea of augmented reality. After checking out the functionality of AR, I decided that it could be a good way to enhance communication. It could combine the real, tangible aspects of physical artifacts with the speed and the malleability of digital works.

Feedback Notes

- Transferring experience
- Book/display // what a book means // sharing knowledge?
- Black book - box is the cover // link products with narratives
- Updating media
- personal + permanent
- Responsibility on the sender
- AR - Aurasma
- digital vs physical // more
- update-able vs permanent

What can create a shared experience?

- Seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling, smelling the same thing
- Viewing the same media
- Having an interaction
- Telling a story
- Using descriptions
- Recreating the experience
- Encapsulating a life - photo album, baby book, autobiography, social network profile,

How to make something temporary more permanent?

- Give it sentimental value
- Give it monetary value
- Make it stronger and more durable
- Have it change/grow/update
- Make it useful for future situations
- Give it meaning/memory.
- Make it something you can pass on to someone else
- Make it more personal, unique, rare, customized.

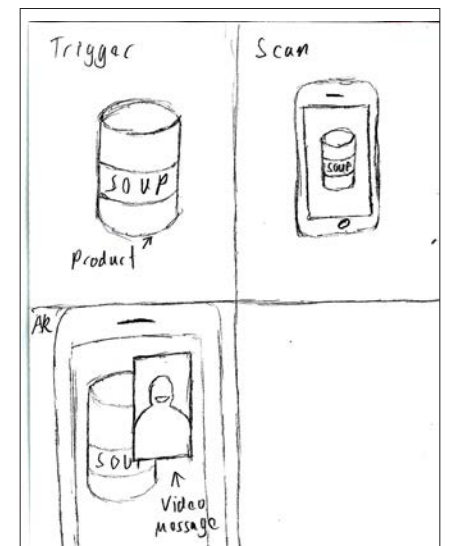
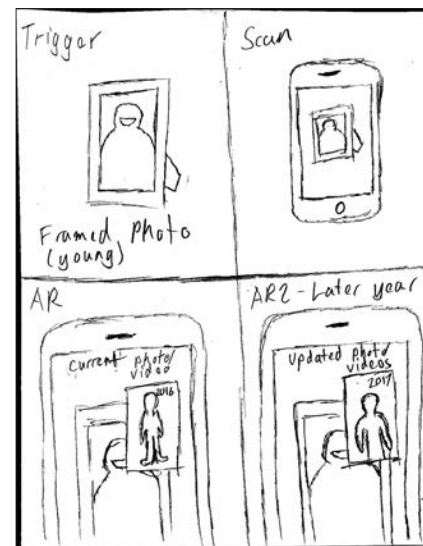
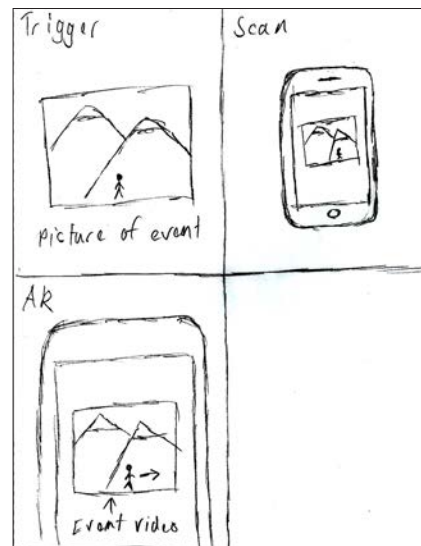
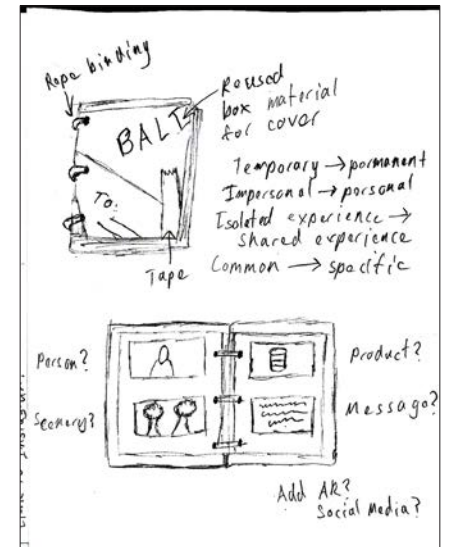
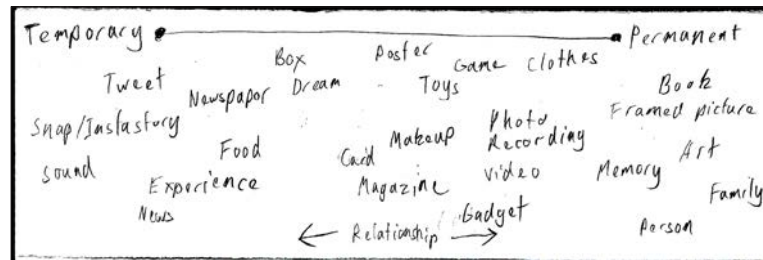
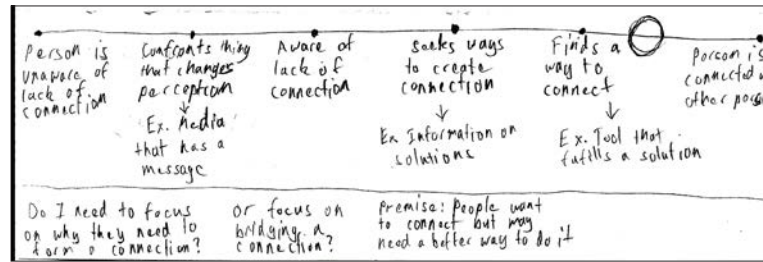
AR Ideas

- Product scan → message from sender about why they got it
- Photo book - still images → video of the experience
- Photo of sender - receiver holds phone on it to see updates of their life
- Photo of grandchild when they were young → photos of them growing up / now / updating
- Book page, collage of product labels → video of an experience, connect temporary products with more lasting memories

Initial Sketches

Toward the end of the ideation phase, I decided that I wanted to create a physical book that would tie in augmented reality elements to give the contents of the book different dimensions. Thinking about what AR could bring to the table was one of the major parts to this project.

I also thought about the audience for this design. This is why I mapped out where a person might be in realizing that they might need to form greater personal connections. Another map consisted of items from a spectrum of temporary to permanent. My goal was to figure out how my design would become a more permanent and long lasting item rather than something that is throw-away.



4. Refining

A Gift

Having decided that this artifact is going to take the form of a book, I also decided that this should also be a personal gift. Although the balikbayan box is a gift, the fact that it isn't for one person limits its ability to connect on an extremely personal level. Therefore, I thought the content of the book should be specific to one person's life.

This allowed me to get started on thinking about the visual look of the book. Being a personal gift, I thought this design should have handmade elements to prevent it from looking cookie-cutter. If it looks too polished, it might not resonate on a personal level as well.

Feedback

- Different types of content
- Have content that truly matches the media format
- Think about what makes it personal / a gift
- What would I do if I were giving it to someone special to me
- Will know someone at Aurasma
- Start to think about the vessel // What form is this thing going to take

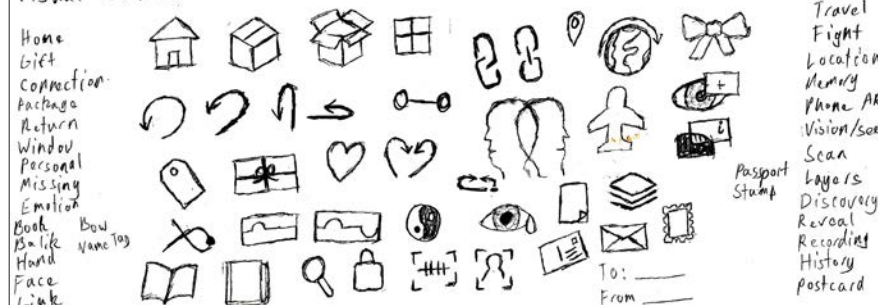
What makes a thing a personal gift?

- Given made it themselves
- Comes from "the heart"
- Includes personal details
- Reflective of personal knowledge
- Can't be bought/replaced
- More sentimental value than market value
- Recipient can only be one person
- All content is unique
- Took time, effort, thought to create
- Experience - given as a whole package
- Mystery / don't know what's inside
- Makes someone feel happy / loved / appreciated / remembered

Page Ideas

- Your favorite foods
- Your favorite places
- People who miss you
- Your favorite shows
- Your favorite things
- When you come back (places to go, places to eat, things to try)
- Your favorite activities
- Why I miss you
- Something I wish you were here for
- How I feel about you
- Pictorial story

Visual connections



Visual Style Ideas/Form

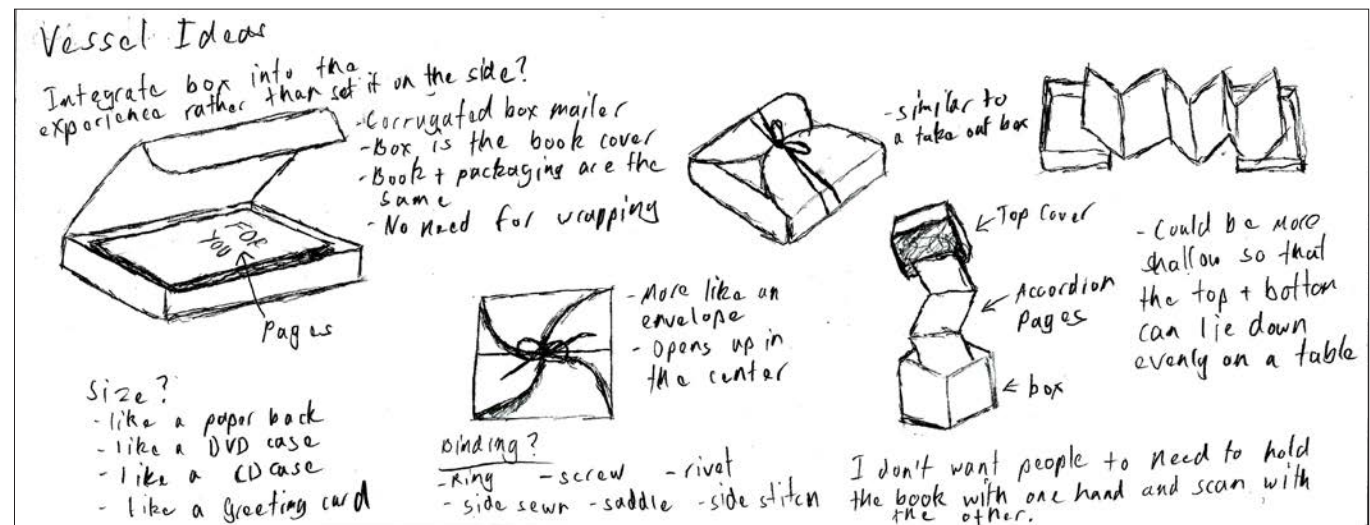
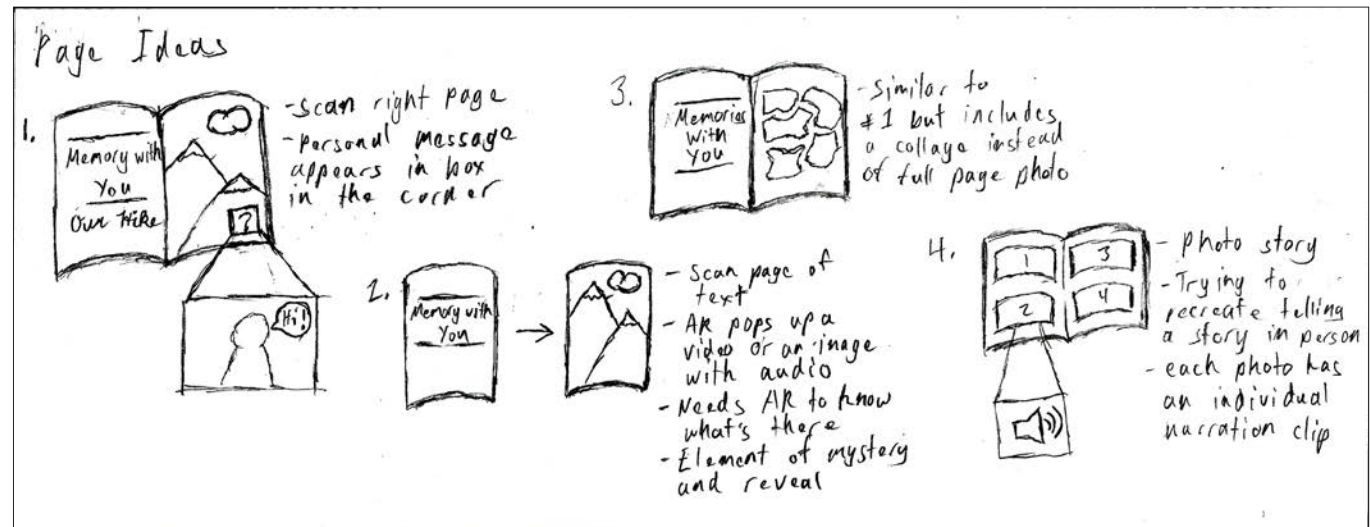
- More handwritten contents
- Craft-like
- Imperfections
- Casual / warm rather than professional / cold
- Humanist / script / hand lettering
- textures / real feel
- Box is part of book // Corrugated Mailer // also is book covers
- Full bleed pictures / photos / drawings like a window to home

Format

I continued to think about more specifics like the type of content and the overall delivery of the design. I explored ways that the type of content could affect the page layouts and the use of AR.

In addition, I thought about ways that the book could be created outside the regular format. I learned that I could use an accordion-style book contained within a box to convey both connection and the preciousness of memories.

Memories became a major factor in this book's content since past experiences can add sentimentality and permanence to an object.

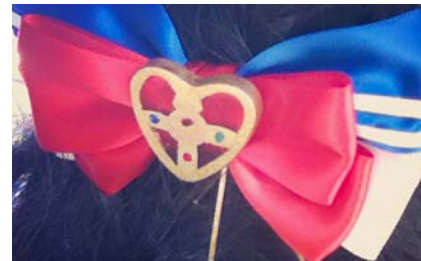
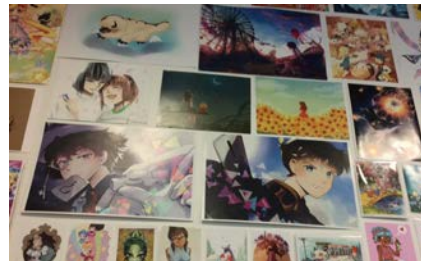
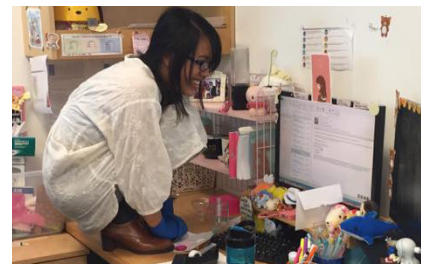


Rea

I decided that in order to make this project very personal, I should design this around someone genuinely close to me in my life. This is why I chose Rea, my fiancée, as the audience for this design.

I started collecting pictures that I felt were representative of her life, relationships, and personality. By focusing on these, I hoped that I can get a better sense of how this project could be personalized and communicate on the right level.

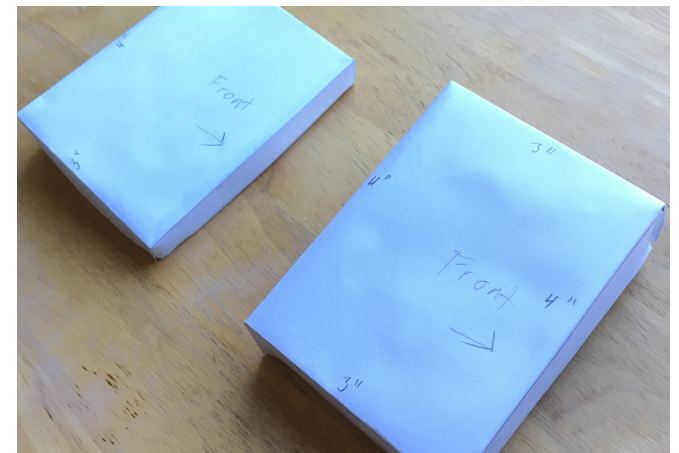
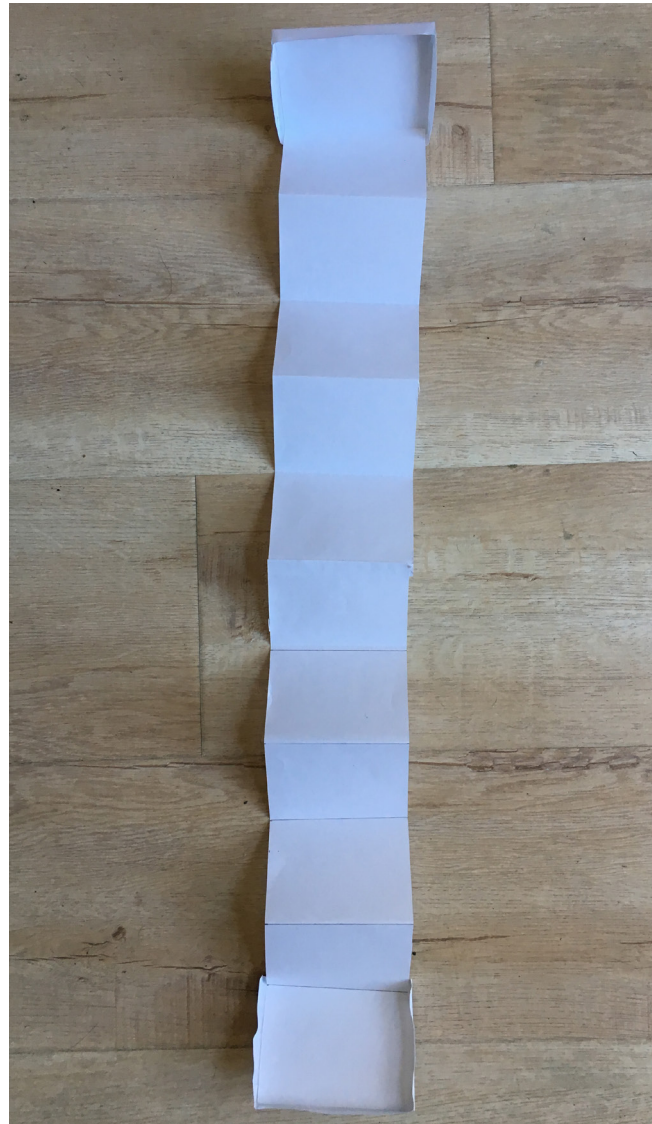
My premise was to figure out how to communicate and strengthen a personal connection if Rea and I were to ever live far away from each other. If we couldn't physically see each other on a regular basis, what is something that could have more meaning than letters, email, text messages, and video chats?



Box Prototyping

To get a better sense of the size and the form of the box, I decided to make quick prototypes of the box.

I learned that I wanted a box that is roughly 3"x4" since it was a good hand-held size that can be taken anywhere. Also, the size was good for a person to AR scan the page. A person's phone could be a comfortable distance between the book and the person's eyes.



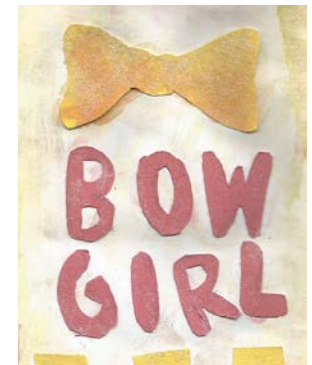
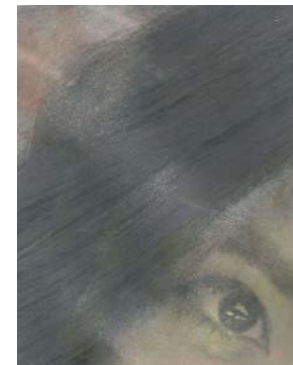
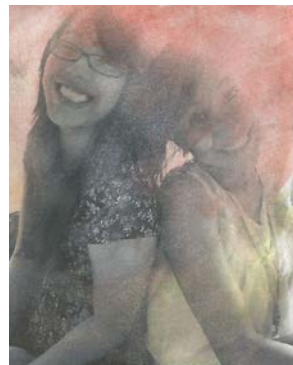
Style Exploration

In figuring out the visual style of this book, I decided to do very rough and dirty exploration with different materials like watercolor, oil pastels, cutouts, and photo prints.

I got the feedback that this gift should be emotional and intimate. I believed that watercolor would be a good fit to communicate on a more emotional level.

For these, I used an example of a page that highlights Rea's friendship with Justine. When scanning this page, the augmented reality app will pull up a video message from Justine to Rea.

These explorations also allowed me to figure out what works and what doesn't regarding AR scanning. Some were abstract while some were more detailed. I learned that objects that scanned well were photographs, type, and lettering with a lot of contrast with the background. Basically, ones that had finer detail.



Messages and Content

In order to strengthen Rea's connection to home, I figured that "home" was more than just me and our house. It should include a community like her family and friends. Therefore, I wanted the content of the box to have messages from several people. I believed that this would be able to communicate Rea's multiple connections and cover more areas unique to her life.

I decided to combine static imagery with digital imagery brought on by AR. Whereas something like a photo album could convey memories, digital media can bring access to a person's movements and voice.

However, one-way communication didn't seem like a good way to reinforce a personal connection. This is why I started thinking about how Rea could send a message back to all the people who create a message for her.

Notes / Ideas

- Have most of the pages include a message from a friend
- Last page, when scanned, goes to a link where Rea can record her own video
- Encapsulate / make permanent memories?
- Mixed media - images, quotes for memories // color for emotion
- Materials? - paper pages, water color, handwriting, transfer paper?
- How to transition to AR? - make it not feel tacked on // scan pages to make them the beginning of the video

Notes / Ideas

- A series of messages from friends is there a way to tie them together? (narrative, imagery, theme) // make a story from the messages?
- How to speak to Rea's context / situation
- If she's been away from home, she'll want to:
 - hear people's voices
 - see people's faces
 - know that people are thinking about her
- The AR messages seem to do a lot of the legwork. How can the static pages pull their weight?



Communication goals

- Rea should feel:
 - Connected to every one back home
 - Reminded of her relationship / connection with every one
 - Like she's carrying a little bit of home wherever she goes
 - A rush of memories and emotions, thinking about good memories from the past + look forward to reuniting in the future
 - Like she know exactly how people feel about her
 - Like these messages should have a sense of permanence

What I think of when I think of human connection

- personal, not formal
- Trying to understand each other
- Being exactly who you are / no facade
- saying what's on your mind // no filters or scripts
- Not playing external roles
- Being honest
- Acknowledging the different parts of a person // good qualities bad qualities
- Treating someone with higher priority than everyone else // "special"

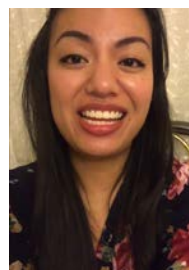
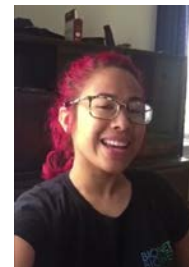
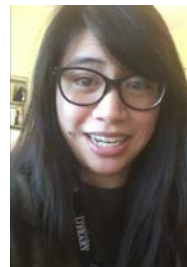
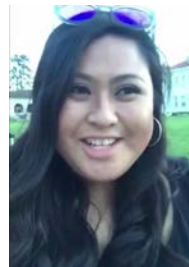
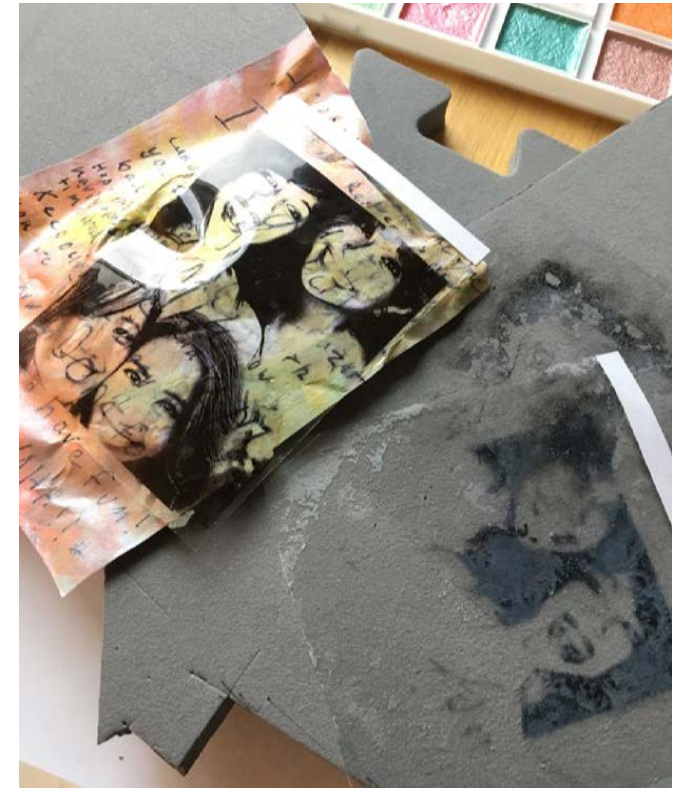
5. Building

Gathering Materials

To start building, I had to gather both physical and digital materials to create the form and content of the book. Through my box prototyping, I was able to find a box that fulfilled my desire to have a portable and personal vessel for memories.

I also wanted to experiment a lot with physical media. An area that I'm not so familiar in. This led me to explore different uses watercolor, image transfer, and bookmaking. Many of these explorations weren't successful by any means.

I also started gathering personalized messages from Rea's friends and myself. These messages would be the main content accessible through the AR functions.

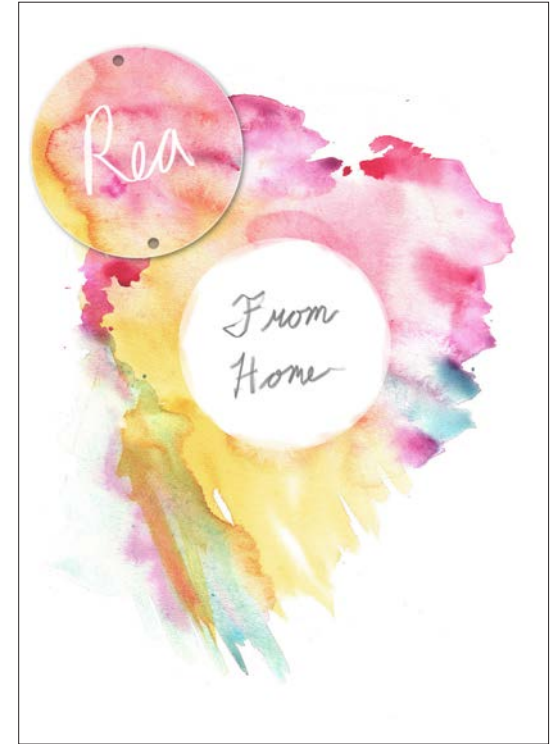


Cover

I explored an idea for the cover to have a watercolor flurry. There is a tag saying “Rea” that is held on the cover by a gift string. When Rea opens the box, she’ll remove the string and the tag with it. Underneath the tag are the words “From Home.”

In this way, the cover represents a heart, Rea’s home, and her experiences. The separate tag with Rea’s name shows how the picture is not complete without Rea in there.

Rather than being thrown away, the tag is something that will become useful later on. Rea is separated from home, but still very important. She also carries parts of her experience with her wherever she goes.



Page Designs

In my initial attempts at the page design, I decided to combine photography, quotes, and watercolor. The photography and quotes could communicate a personal memory and relationship on an factual level whereas the watercolors could communicate on a more emotional level. I also wanted to include photos that I felt represented Rea's relationships well.

I wanted to set the text using handwriting so it would also communicate on a personal level. I figured that using digital type or even a script typeface would be too artificial to convey a genuine connection.

After different rounds of feedback, I learned that I needed to find a better use of the watercolor. Namely, the colors ended up looking like decaying matter. In addition, the application didn't communicate specific meaning as well as it could.

[Video - Testing the video messages](#)



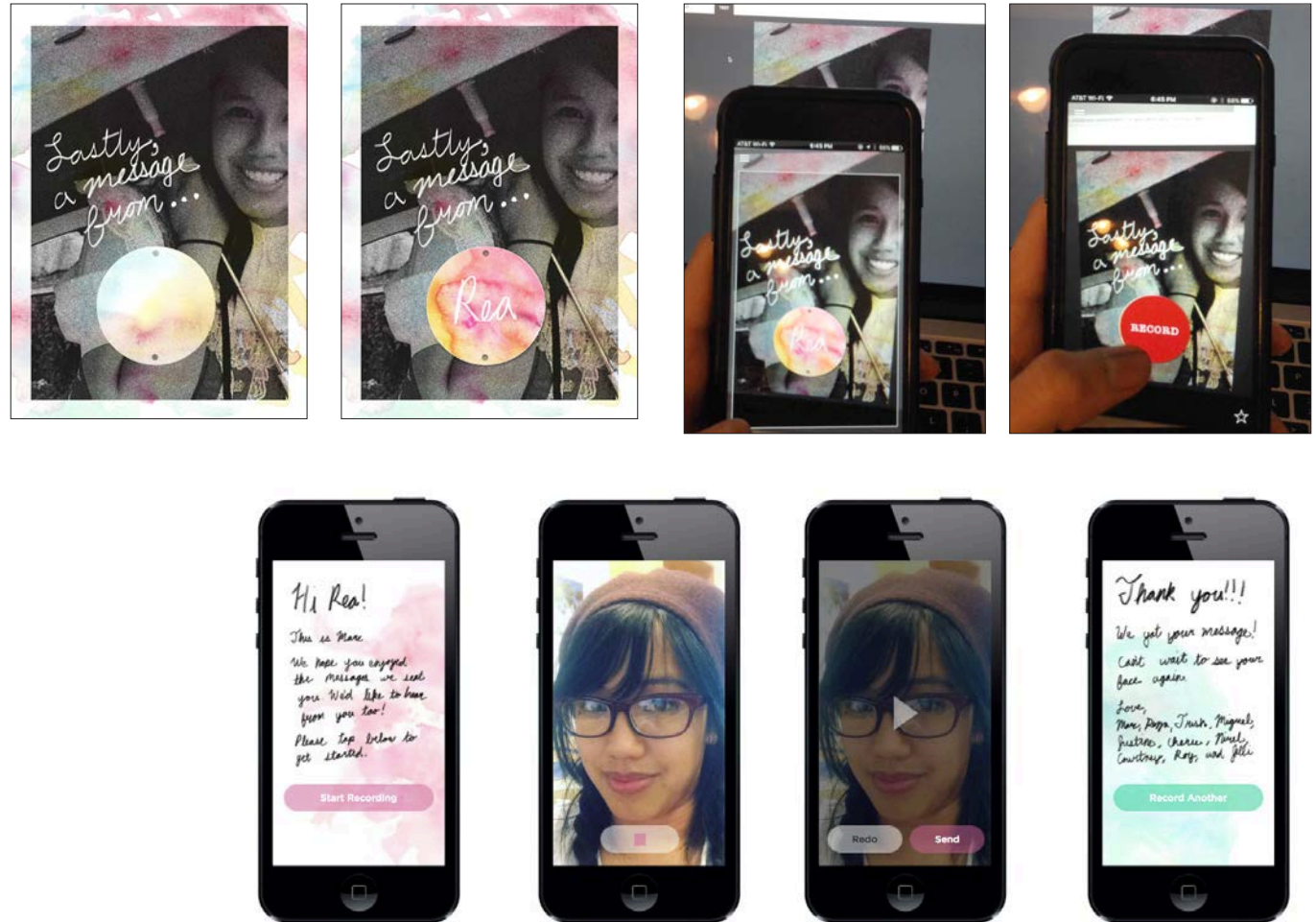
Last Page

Rea is a big fan of escape room puzzles. Often these escape rooms would introduce an object that would be useful later on like a key or a puzzle piece. This gave me an idea of an additional way Rea can interact with the book. For this, tag from the cover makes a return.

After Rea has gone through all the pages and messages, she'll stumble upon the last page. This page features a picture of just her and a conspicuous empty circle area. The tag from the cover is needed in that empty area to AR scan the page properly.

Once Rea scans the page, she sees a button that she can tap on her phone that will take her to a micro-site with messaging instructing her to record one message that will be instantly sent to everyone featured in this book.

[Video - Testing the AR button](#)



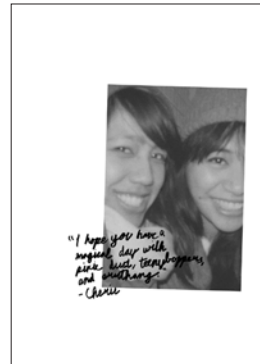
Page Refinement

In addition to previous feedback, I also received suggestions to have the text reflect the diversity of past experiences. Therefore, having the text be set in similar ways obscured the specifics of a memory. This is why I went in and explored different ways I could write the text so that it would better match a particular mood or personality.

Some memories are intense, some are mundane, some are immensely expressive, some are intimate and subtle.

I removed all other elements and color entirely for the time being to focus on the text. I believed that I needed to rethink how I would incorporate other visual elements like watercolor.

In order to add more visual meaning to each page, I thought about the different word associations that I had for each relationship, situation, and quote. While I didn't come across anything concrete initially, these would allow me to think about how additional visual elements can add to the meaning.



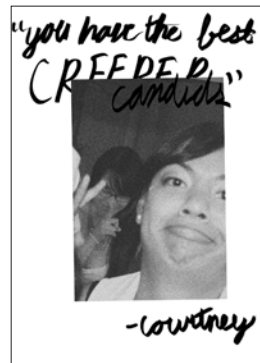
Words

New York, city, subway, winter, snow, concrete, well wishing, long-distance, visit, tourism, reuniting, storm, lost



Words

College, house party, diva, Davis, outsider, apartment, impressive, witty, silence, shy, fierce, emulation, aspiration



Words

Barbecue, reunion, summer, hot, pink, creepy, face, gathering, united, celebration, community, reaction, quick, pride, hidden, sneaky, stealth



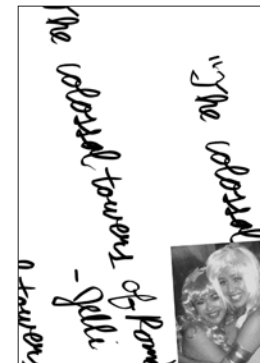
Words

Couch, hangout, casual, catch phrase, exasperation, fun, familiar, excitable



Words

Wedding, theme, semi-formal, family, black sheep, theft, negligence, nonchalant, sisters, sharing, ingenuity



Words

Halloween, birthday, night club, neon, cosplay, mocking, weirded-out, protection, audacious, ridiculous, gossip

Watercolor Explorations

Having gone through word associations, I decided to take a stab at more watercolor explorations. These explorations led me to visual elements that related to each page's person and memory in a specific way.

I realized that it was tricky to strike a final balance for these paintings. On one hand, I didn't want to include anything that was too expected or trite that would distract from the authenticity of the personal communication. On the other hand, I didn't want something that was too elusive and mysterious that it didn't communicate.

I also wanted to create small-scale tests of my book to test out the construction. I was fearful about my materials breaking apart or not working in any way.



6. Final Outcome

Cover

Once I got the concept for the cover down, the next part was to execute it. I prepped the box and the tag to accept watercolor paint. From there, I directly painted on the box with the tag on it. Once the paint was dry, I filled in details such as the center of the heart shape and the lettering.

When the book was complete, I was able to use white cording to tie all the elements together so that it would look like a personal gift.



Pages

I decided to scan the watercolor paintings and use the digitized versions instead of painting directly on the pages. This would allow me greater freedom to rearrange the paintings.

As much as possible, I wanted to ensure that the size, placement, and orientation of the text, photo, and watercolor added layers to the meaning. I also spent time switching out different images and quotes to make each page more cohesive.

Going back to the cover, I remembered that it contained the colors red, blue, and yellow all mixed in together. I also remembered that the cover is supposed to convey different experiences and memories of home.

Therefore, I decided to make each watercolor element either red, blue, or yellow. In this way, they each represent a memory that when mixed together, provide a complete experience of home.



Pages

Since all the page layers were assembled digitally, I just needed to printout each page of the book. However, I had to print individual pages multiple times in order to correct issues such as text not showing clearly, photos printing out dark, and details not being picked up by the AR scanner.

After each page was successfully printed, I assembled them together in the accordion format and attached the collection into the box.

There are a few different ways to view the pages. You can spread out the accordion across a flat surface. You can stand up the entire book like a frame. You can also hold the two covers together and flip through individual pages like a regular book.



Augmented Reality

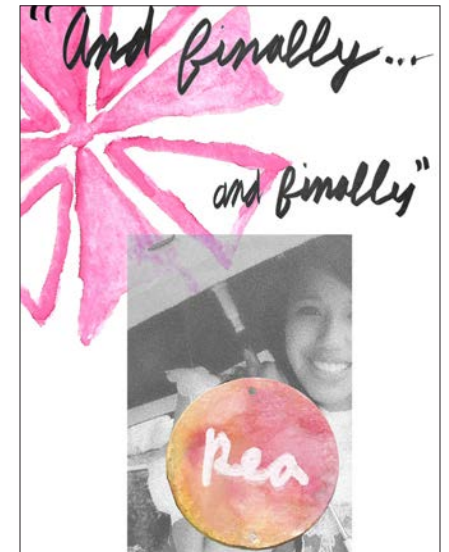
For the augmented reality portion of the project, I used the Aurasma platform to transform the photographs in each page into video messages that Rea could watch from her phone.

Each video message can be updated, so although the photos on the pages stay the same, the video message that appears can be changed.

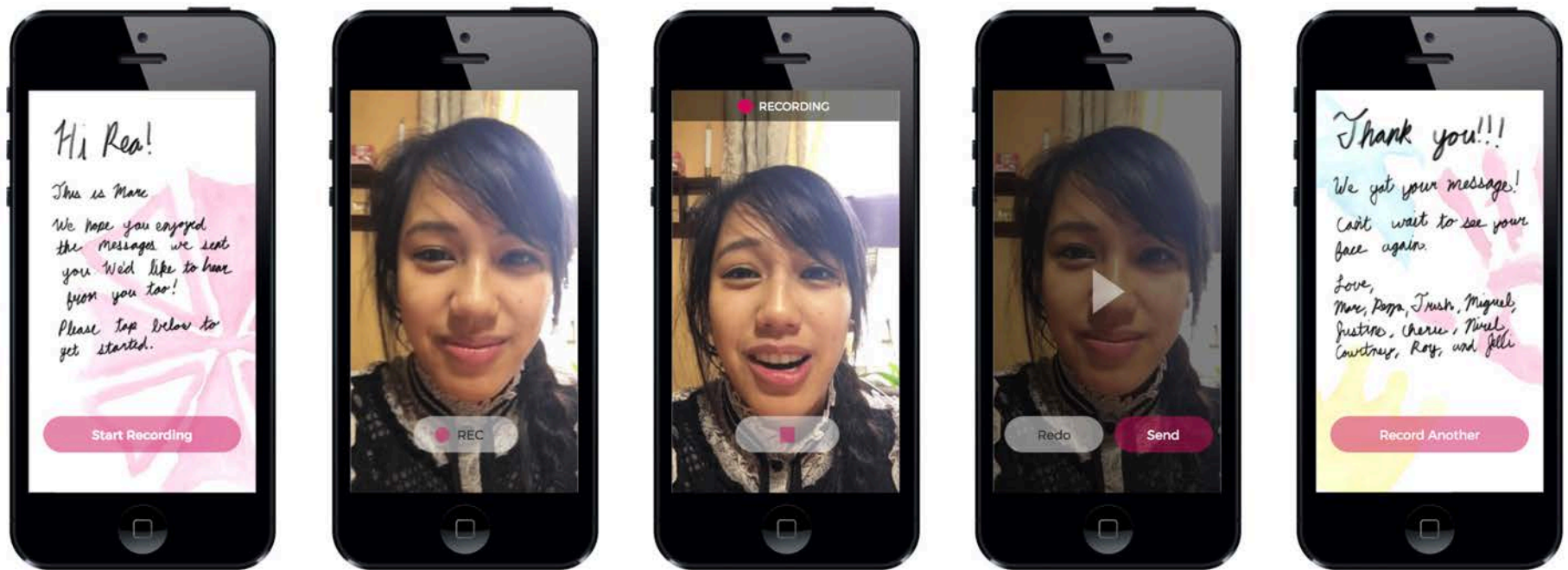
As mentioned earlier, the last page displays a button over Rea's name tag when placed on the last page. Upon tapping this button, Rea is taken to a website where she can record her own message to send out to everyone who contributed to the book.

[Example 1 \(no sound\)](#)

[Example 2 \(no sound\)](#)



Return Message



For the return message, I created the prototype using Axure. I kept the experience relatively simple and linear. There's an introductory screen, a screen for Rea to check herself before recording, the recording screen, a place to review her recording, and a "message received" screen.

The screens continue the visual motifs of the book in order to have greater cohesion and to carry over the themes of being personal and emotional despite being in a digital format.

[View Prototype](#)