10 Tarot Cards

I have a weird relationship with tarot, and I'm not a huge fan of how certain cards mean certain things and it's as if those are fated. I like open ended-ness, possibilities, and not being restricted by the idea of destiny. I think there are a lot of ways to view your future and who you are, and I think it's ever changing. **The first thing you see may not be accurate and it may take a bit of time for you to understand what lies ahead of you.** Everyone has their own perspective and seeks to understand the unclear in their own ways. It plays into the idea of abstraction and interpretation much like ink blots in therapy. Therefore, I wanted to make my cards abstract.

For this project, I wanted to create **abstract tarot cards of ambiguity and uncertainty** . I designed 10 tarot cards–5 in the major arcana, and 5 in the minor arcana. As I wanted to play with the idea of arbitration, I chose 10 cards at random, took them out of the pool, and then chose 10 cards from those that remained.

I was inspired by black and white circular art that, in my opinion, doesn't mean anything for most people who are looking at it. It's not explicit, it's not super tangible, and it's very open to perspective and interpretation. The lack of color and the usage of simple shapes to collage into an art piece inspired me to develop my own 10 tarot cards using nothing but linear lines at specified angles (every 22.5 degrees), and circles of various sizes. I even "hid" the names of the cards in linear lines as well. They are open to interpretation and unspecified. I also think black and white is symbolic in the way that that's how tarot is viewed a lot, and I'm skewing that by making it difficult to comprehend whilst still keeping that color scheme.

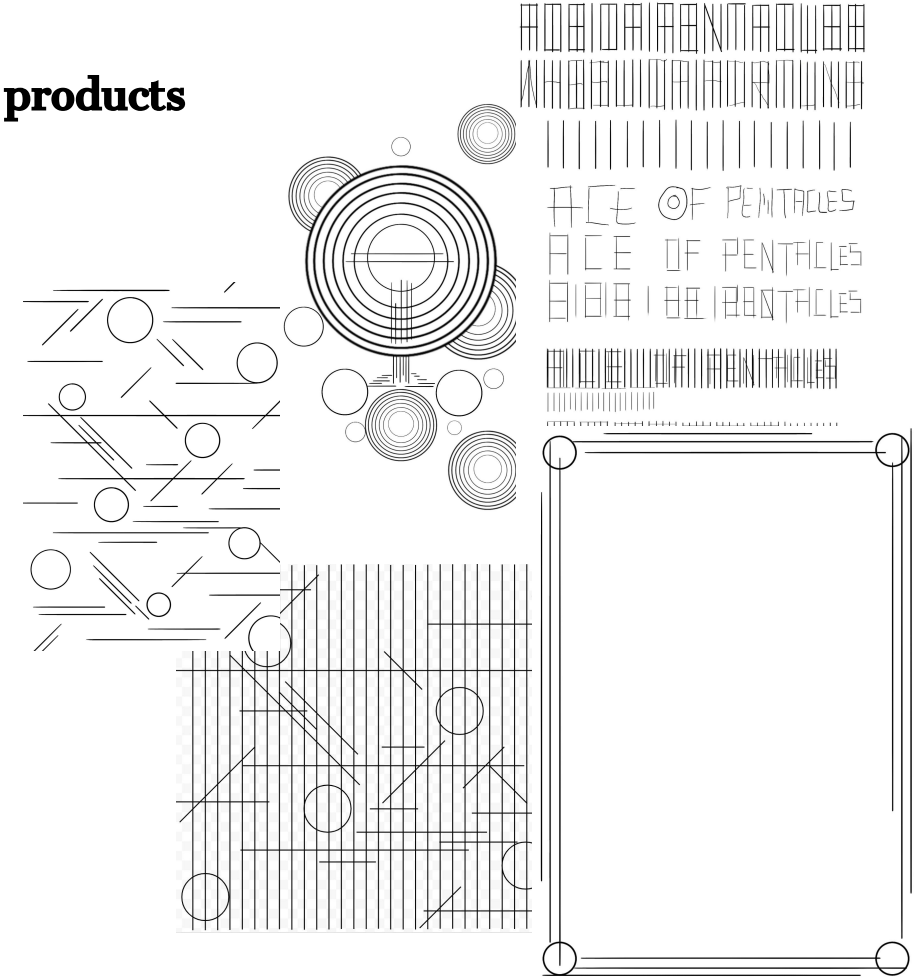
-Mark Park

Sketches and Initial Ideas …
which basically were super close to the final products

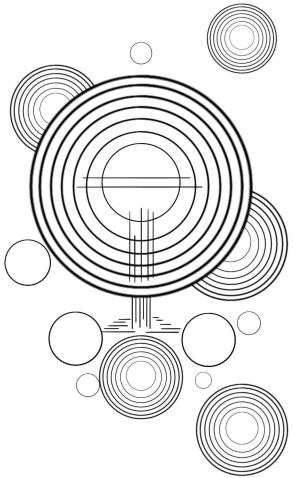
I started out by taking key elements of what would represent my cards and drawing them using the confines of circles and lines that I made for myself. I then sketched my ideas on ProCreate and Google Drawings. Then, I used Photoshop and made the cards into a specific aspect ratio that I could add a border to and have the main design sit inside.

For the back, I wanted to create a very abstracted pattern using the same lines and circles that composes the fronts of the cards. However, it is not without meaning (as with everything I do), and I will elaborate more on the back as we progress in the slide show.

The titles are also abstracted using the same idea of linear lines. They are designed so that it's not instantly clear what we are looking at whilst still following the visual theme of the cards.

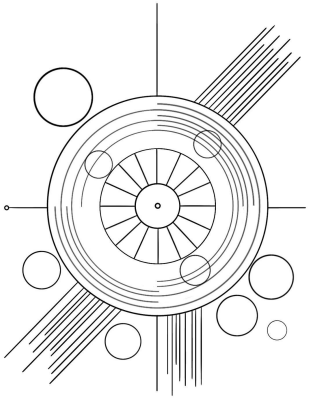


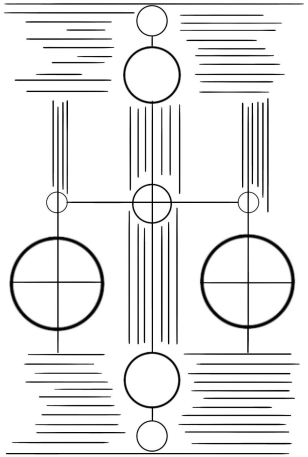
Sketches



Ace of Cups: One primary cup of overflowing water with 5 water streams

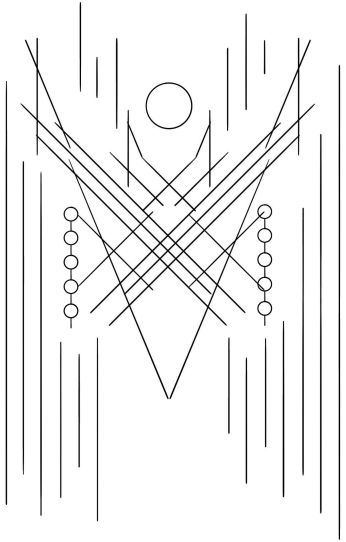
Wheel of Fortune: The circular wheel that has many directions it can point to

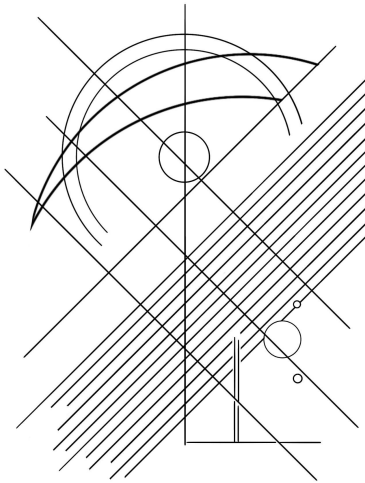




Justice: The scale, the sword, and the backdrop

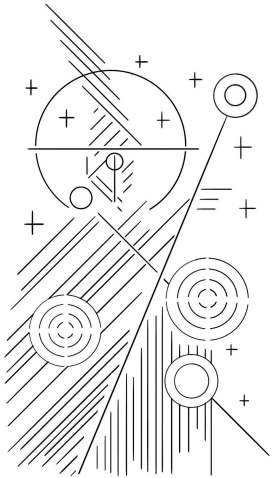
The Devil: Devil face, chains, devil horns





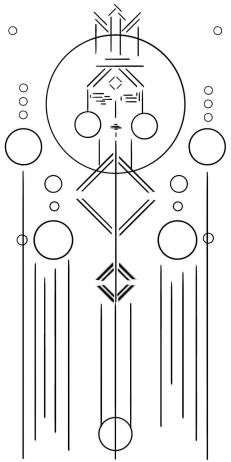
Death: A scythe, life lines that are being slashed through

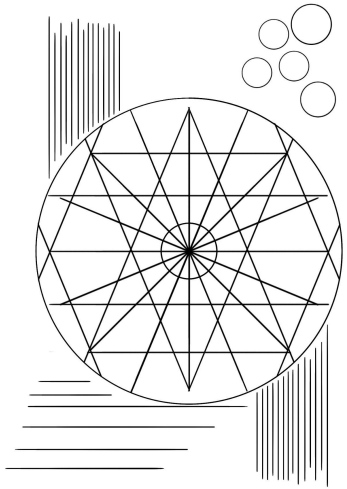
Sketches



The Magician: Pointing up and down simultaneously, one primary “magical” conduit

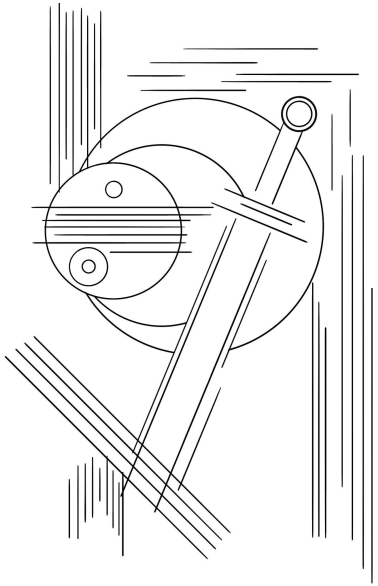
Queen of Wands: One queen, sunflowers (and vines), crown, a central wand

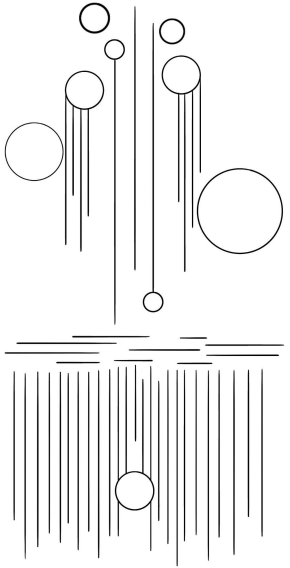




Ace of Pentacles: Clouds, vines, one primary circular pentacle with a star

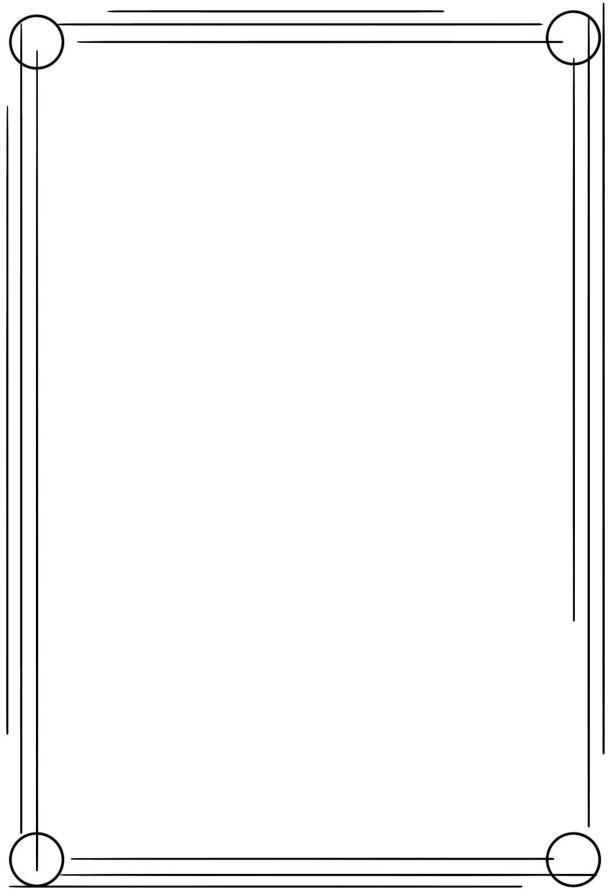
Page of Swords: Daytime (but why is it always daytime), one person with a sword,





Ace of Swords: One sword, crown, vines, water/lands

Border



164:236

82:118

~~41:59~~

card

82mm by 118mm

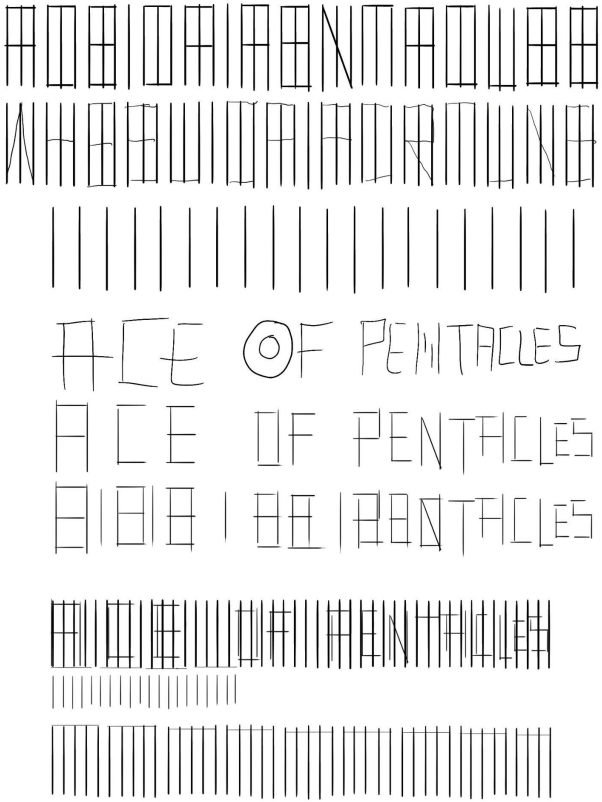
border

86mm by 122mm

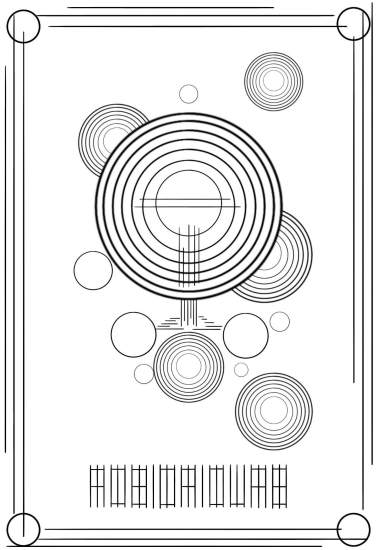
holder

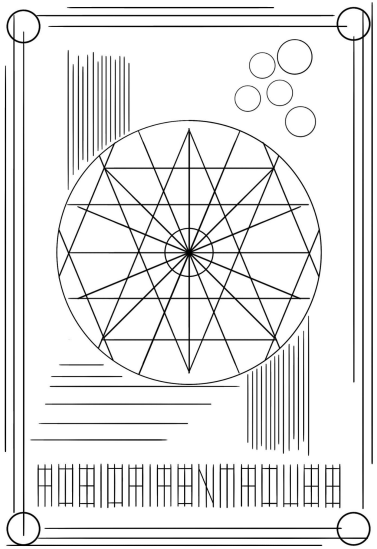
92mm by 128mm

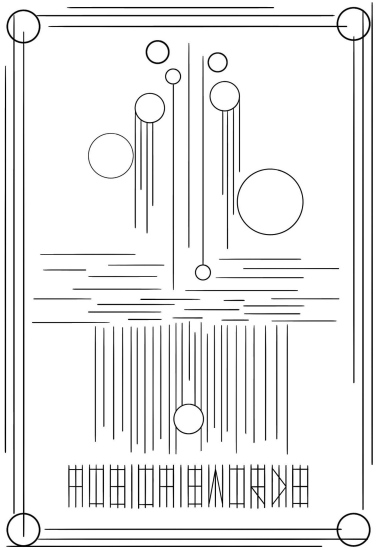
Titles

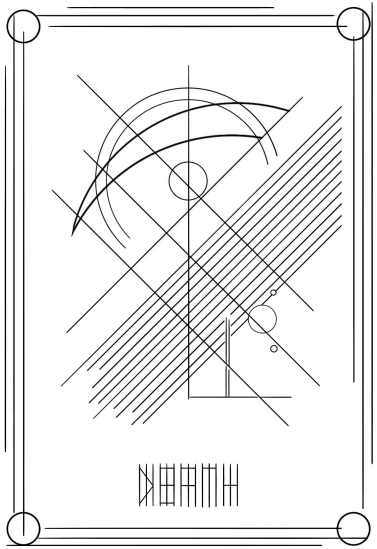


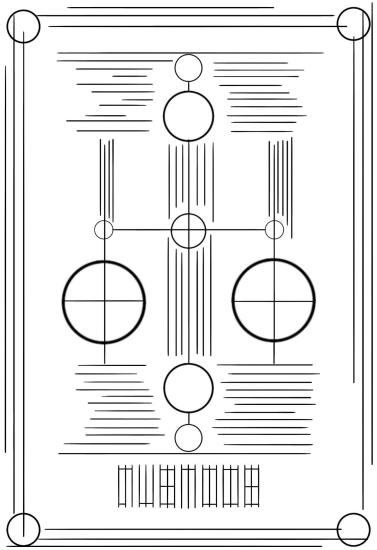
Initial Card Designs



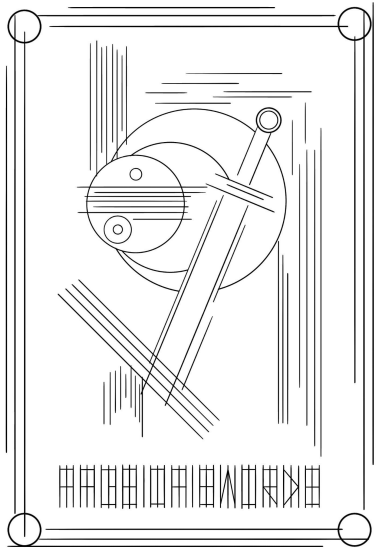


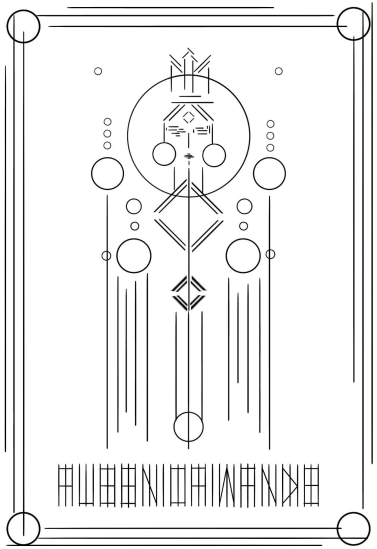


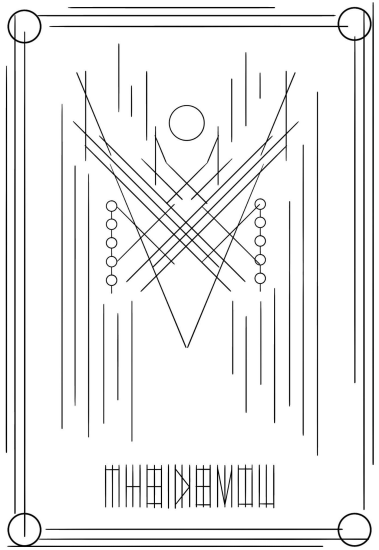


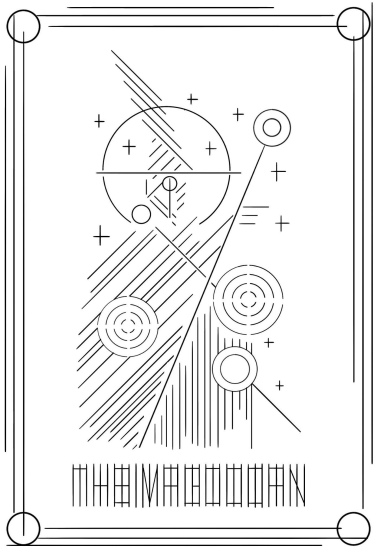


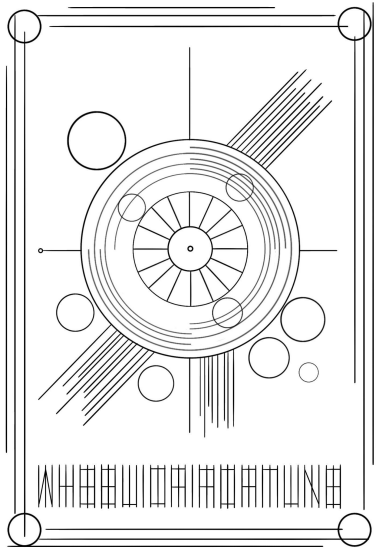
Initial Card Designs



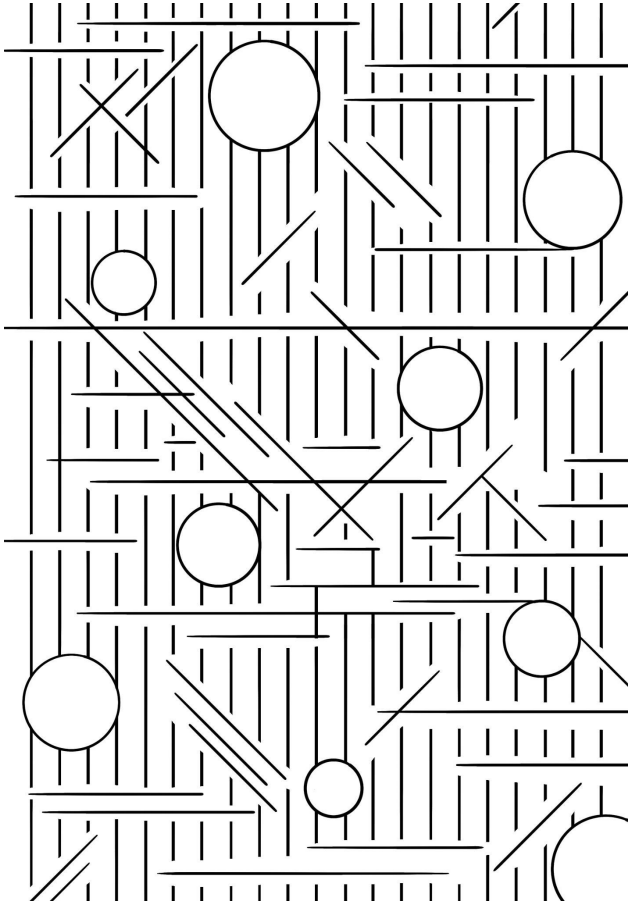








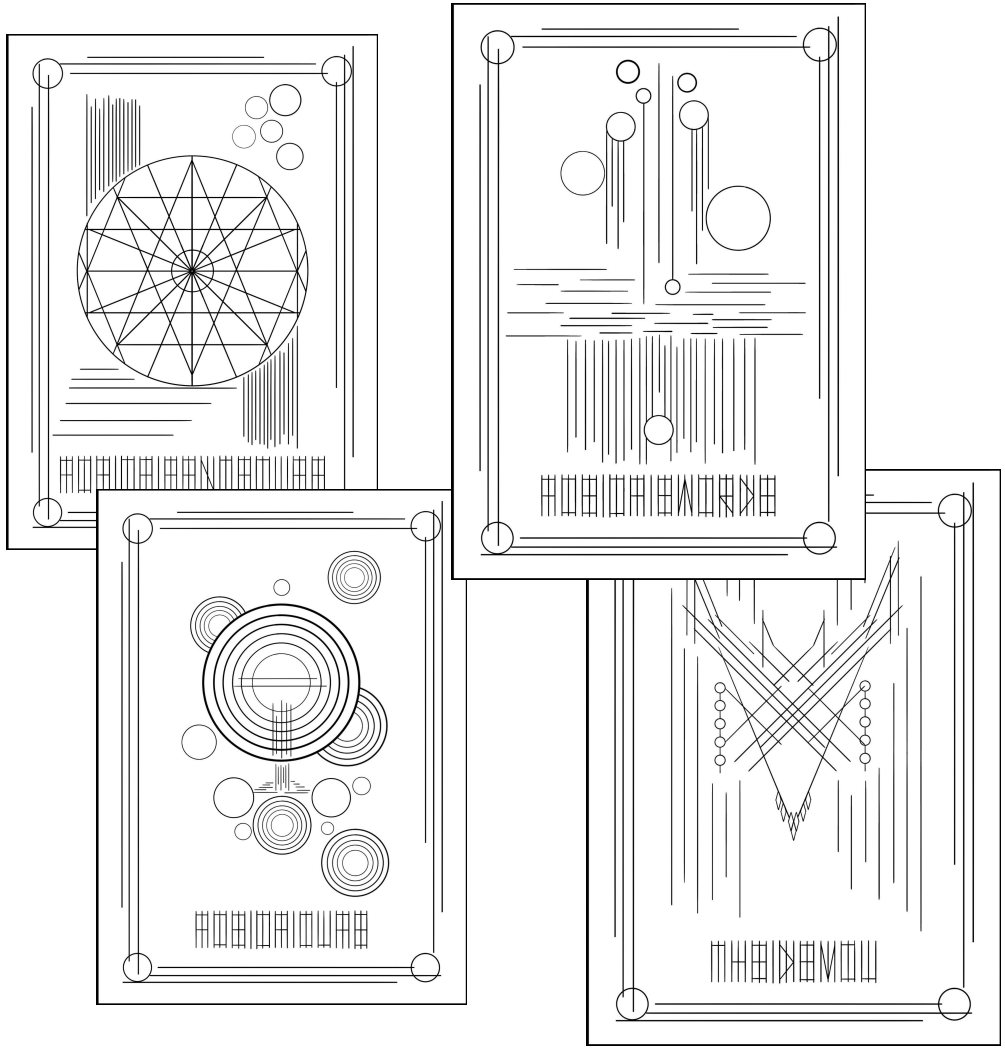
Back of cards



Slight Modifications

I used ProCreate to redraw any circles that looked faded or not as crisp as I wanted. I also made minor design adjustments to some designs, especially if I wanted things to maybe look a little more symmetrical, or I thought some circles weren't working, or if I decided it needed to fill up more/less space, etc.

I also added a rectangular border around the edges of the cards just to know where to cut once they were printed. This is why I didn't mind that they weren't perfectly even on all sides.



Printing onto Paper

Then, I printed all my designs onto 9 inches by 12 inches Mixed Media paper to test out how it would print. I decided to make the card 82mm by 118mm, and the border 86mm by 122mm. These were all done digitally before I had to consider how to make my edges clean or any further details I would want to add afterwards.

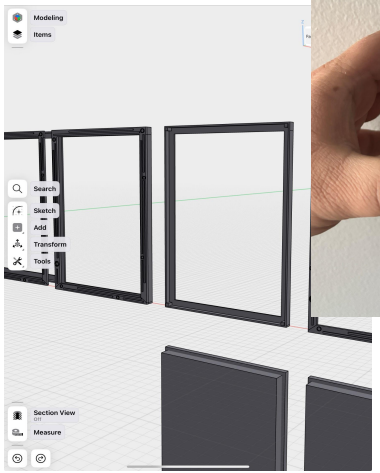
It took a little experimenting with printing the cards on paper because it didn't print the EXACT size I wanted, but I realized there was a 4mm difference, so I just adjusted the cards to be 4mm larger all around. Once that was complete and I knew I could get all the right sizes, I oriented them onto Photoshop and printed everything on 300g hot pressed watercolor paper.

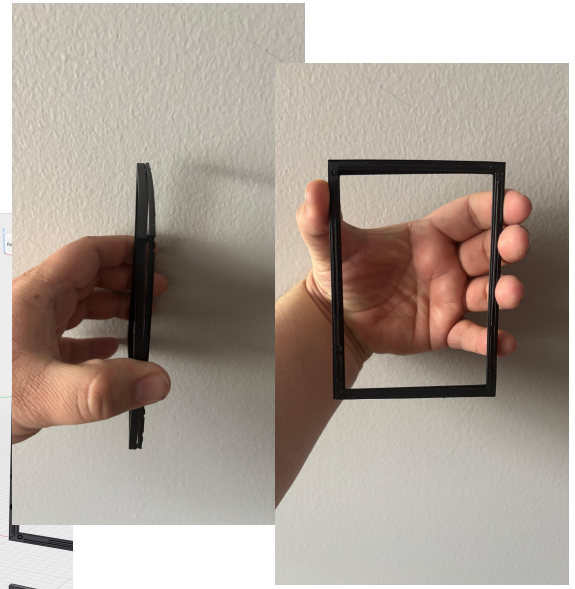
Cleaning up Those Edges Part 1

After cutting out the cards and putting together the front and the back of the cards, I realized that I needed a way to create a neat border without getting gesso or buying any other materials. Looking around at what I had available to me for free, I decided the best way to do this would be through 3D modeling and printing, so I used Shapr3D to design a draft border.

I tried printing it so that it would be a front and a back piece that would fit together one on top of the other, sandwiching the watercolor card in between. I could then glue the two 3D printed pieces together to create a permanent card border.

There were a few problems with this–the channels I printed were too shallow as the card border is quite thin, glue would cause potential ugly borders if not done super precisely, and it would also be permanent (just in case I want to make changes to anything later).



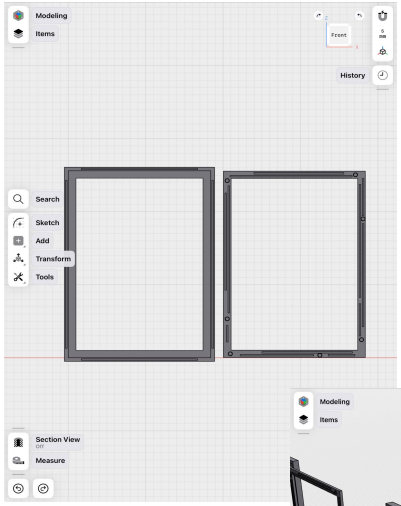


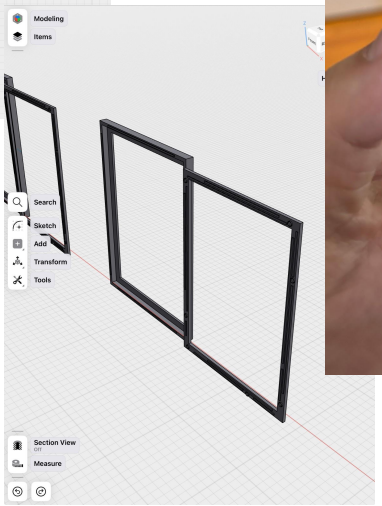
Sent the file to my boyfriend who printed the tester. It did not fit properly with channels, so onto Version 2!

Cleaning up Those Edges Part 2

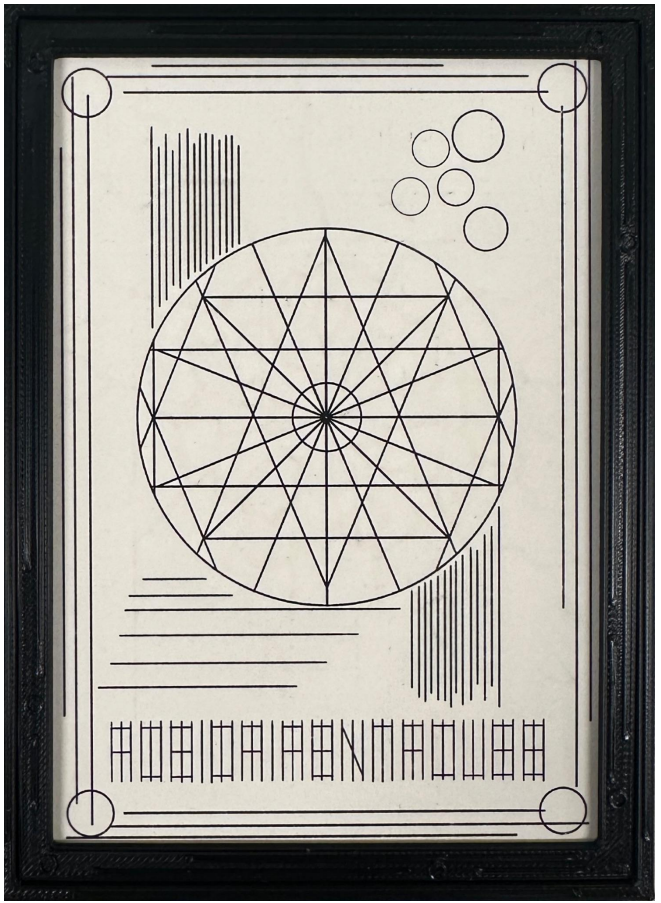
My next prototype featured a 2 part border that fits together by having one part be just slightly smaller than the other, allowing it to click together as a 2 part frame. I made sure to have a backing space for the back part, making the opening just big enough for the actual card design size. This means that I had to make sure to cut out the cards 2mm longer on all sides.

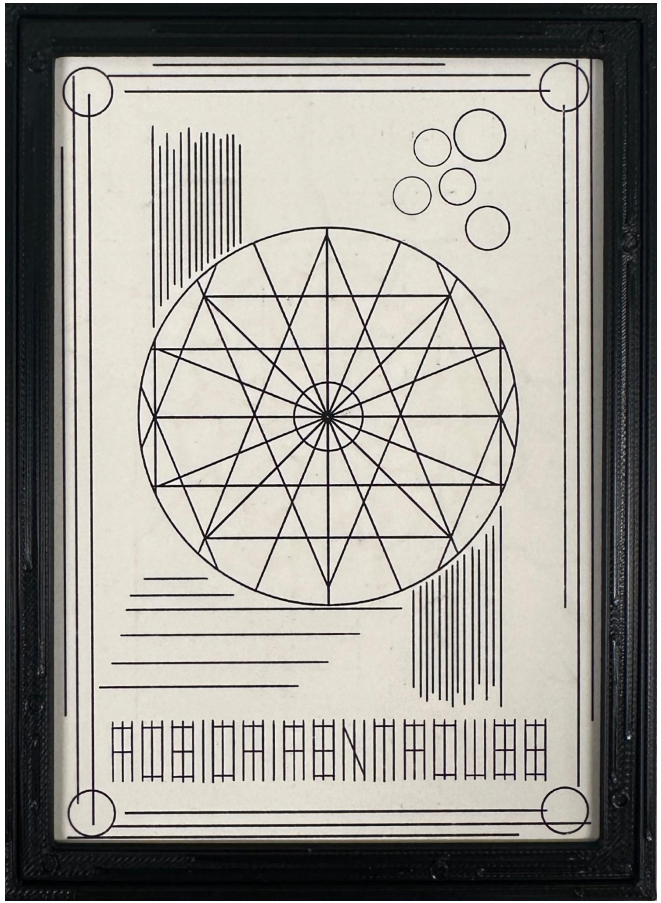
I found that printing the smaller piece at 99.65% scale allowed for the 2 parts to fit the best including the card put in between the frame parts. I cut the printed cards around the borders and sandwiched the front and back of the cards in between the 3D printed frames.

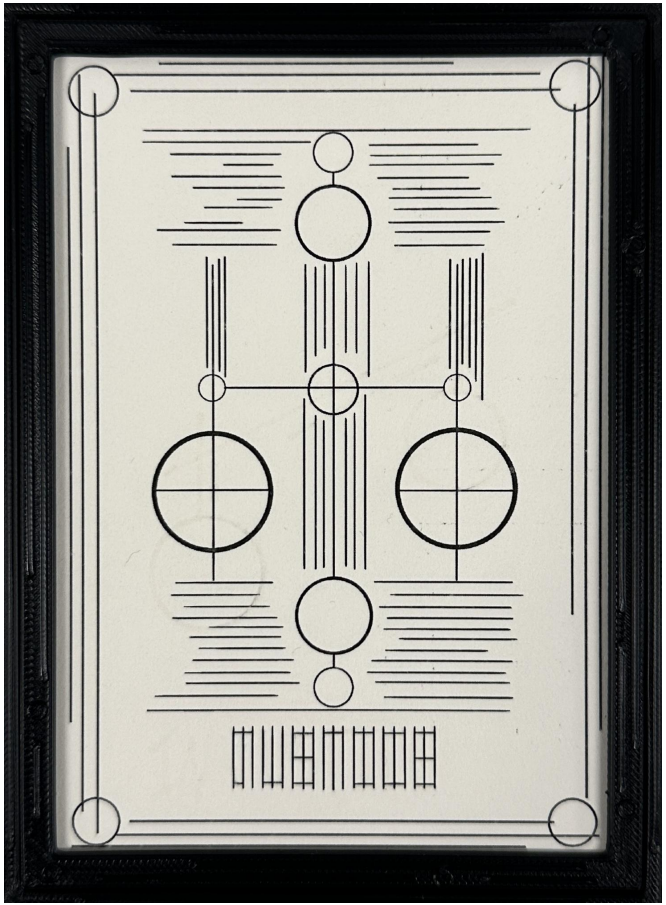




Cards Placed in 3D Printed Frames

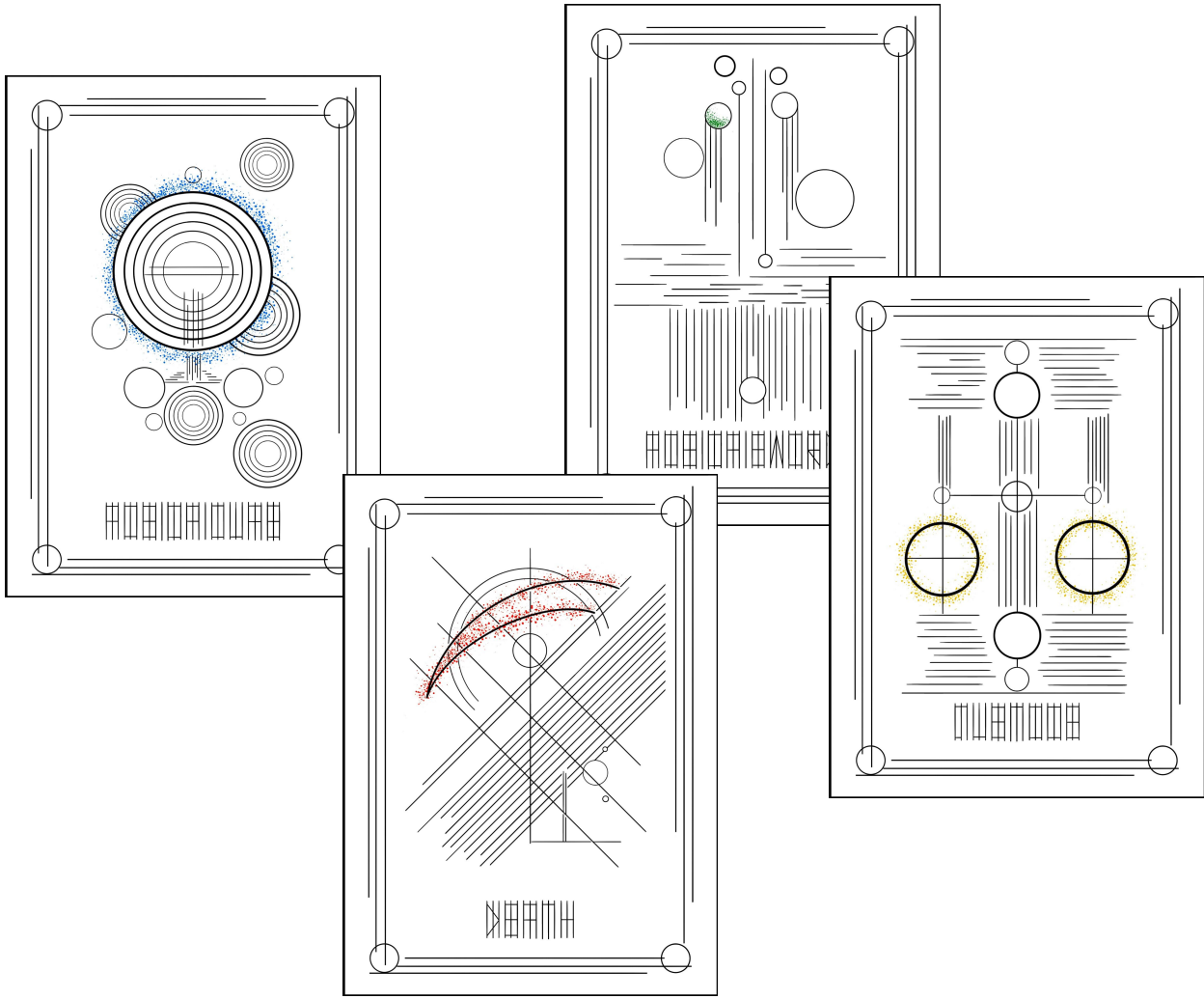


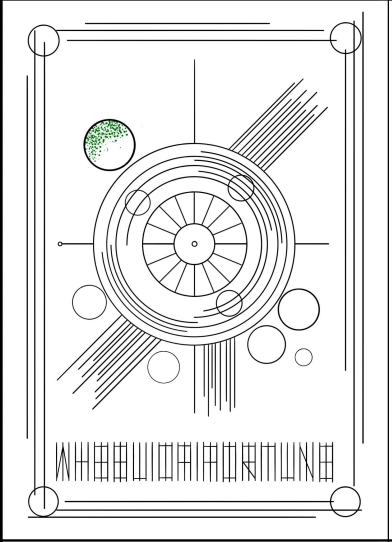


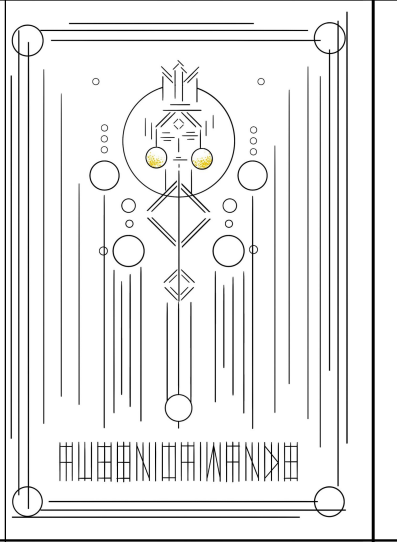


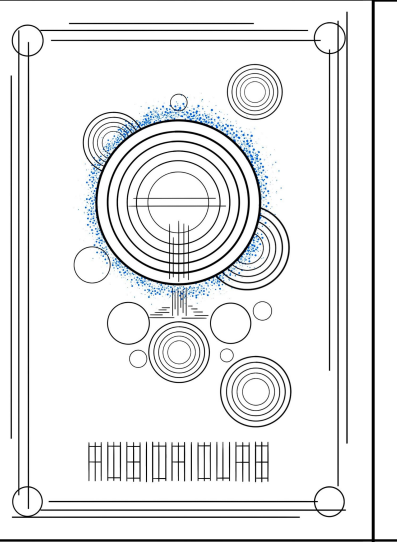
*Color on the Cards
… What could have been.

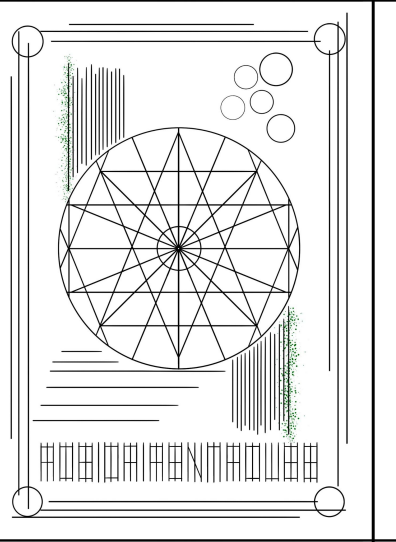
There was a world in which I added color to the cards, but it felt like a completely different story from what I was trying to tell with what I eventually decided to go with. I think they are 2 different worlds: the first being black and white with hidden , and the other being a black and white base with a highlight of one aspect using a little bit of a color.

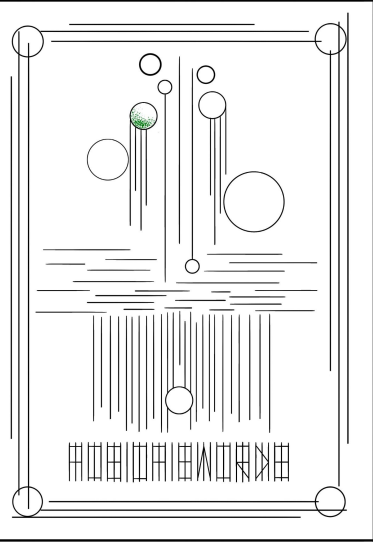


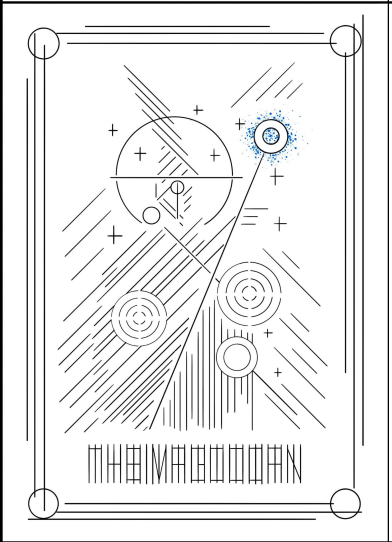


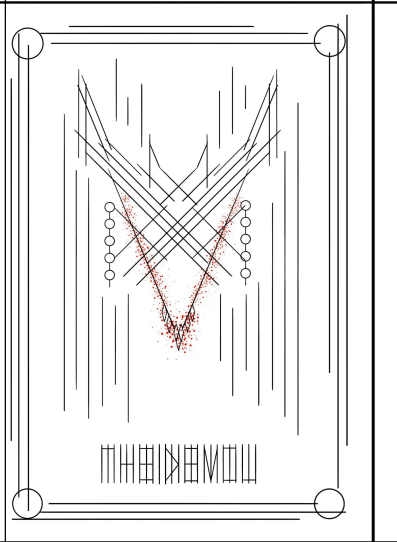


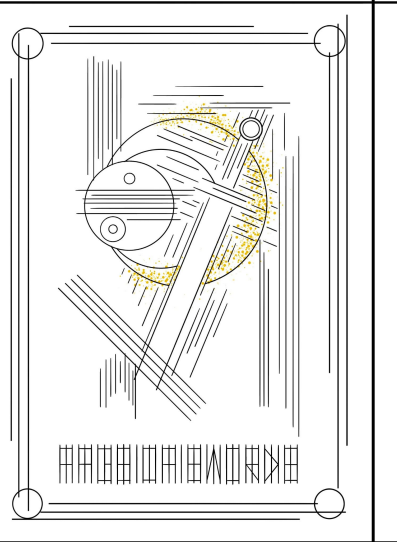


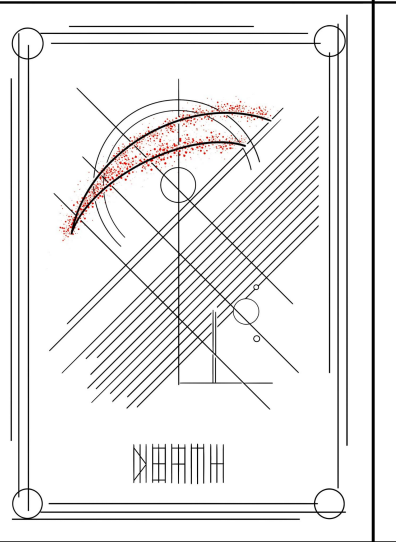


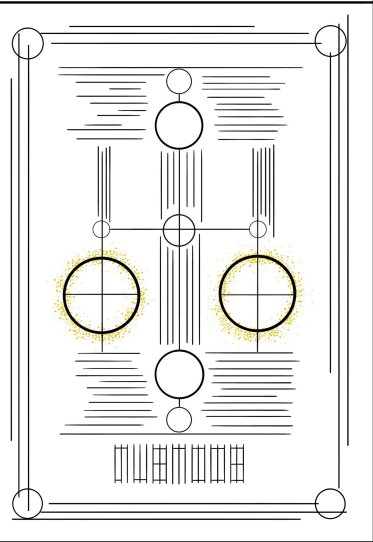












With tarot, we generally assume that the first thing we see is all that there is.

The Truth Is…

It’s not just black and white.
If that’s all you see, you’re not looking at it correctly.

A Hidden Element

In addition to the base cards I designed and created, I used a UV makeup product I had on hand to add hidden details on the cards to reveal even further possibilities. For half of them, UV lights reveal affirmation and enhance the idea that's already there: magic runes for the magician, water droplets for Ace of Cups, sunflowers for Queen of wands, etc. For the other half, however, UV lights reveal opposition. It goes against the tarot nature showcasing a devil with angel wings and a halo, or an unbalanced scale, or even the scythe of death being broken. I wanted to further add to the idea of perspective and how it's not always one path. Sometimes it's opposite, sometimes it's dangerously accurate.

*Hint: The idea of highlighting something in blue to reveal its hidden nature also applies to the "the first being black and white with hidden UV elements" a few slides ago. If you take your mouse and drag across that area to highlight it in blue, you will reveal the hidden words.

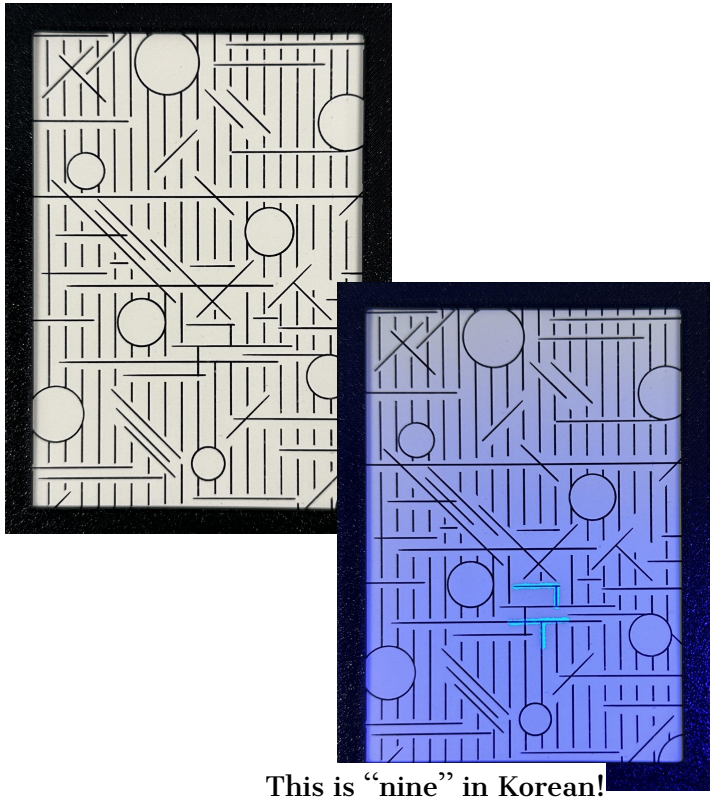
ACE OF CUPS
ACE OF PENTACLES
ACE OF SWORDS
Not today
DEATH?
JUSTICE
PAGE OF SWORDS
QUEEN OF WANDS
THE DEVIL
THE MAGICIAN
WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Did you think I forgot about …
The BACK?

Lastly, each card also has a different number written on the back in Korean revealed with UV light, further mixing up the linear path of traditional tarot and allowing major and minor arcanas to coexist while also adding additional factors to consider in what your cards may represent. When designing the back, I already had the constraint of circles and lines set, and then I remembered that Korean characters are basically all circles and straight lines. So I designed it so that I can write basically any Korean number within the artistic grid format that I set up.

If you're asking "doesn't this mean the front of a card is always associated with the number that's on the back?" The answer is no. Remember, I 3D printed these borders so that I don't have to use any glue to attach the back and front of the cards. The 3D frames are also detachable, meaning we can mix up the backs as much and as often as we want. Because you can't see the number written on the back without UV lights, it's very arbitrary.

People feel that tarot is naturally black or white, but even black and white can be abstract. Plus, if you shine a little more light on it, it opens up even more possibilities that you weren't able to see before, but were always there.



This is "nine" in Korean!

Back of cards
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10