refracted

a card deck

A Colophon Report

By Meghan Halpin
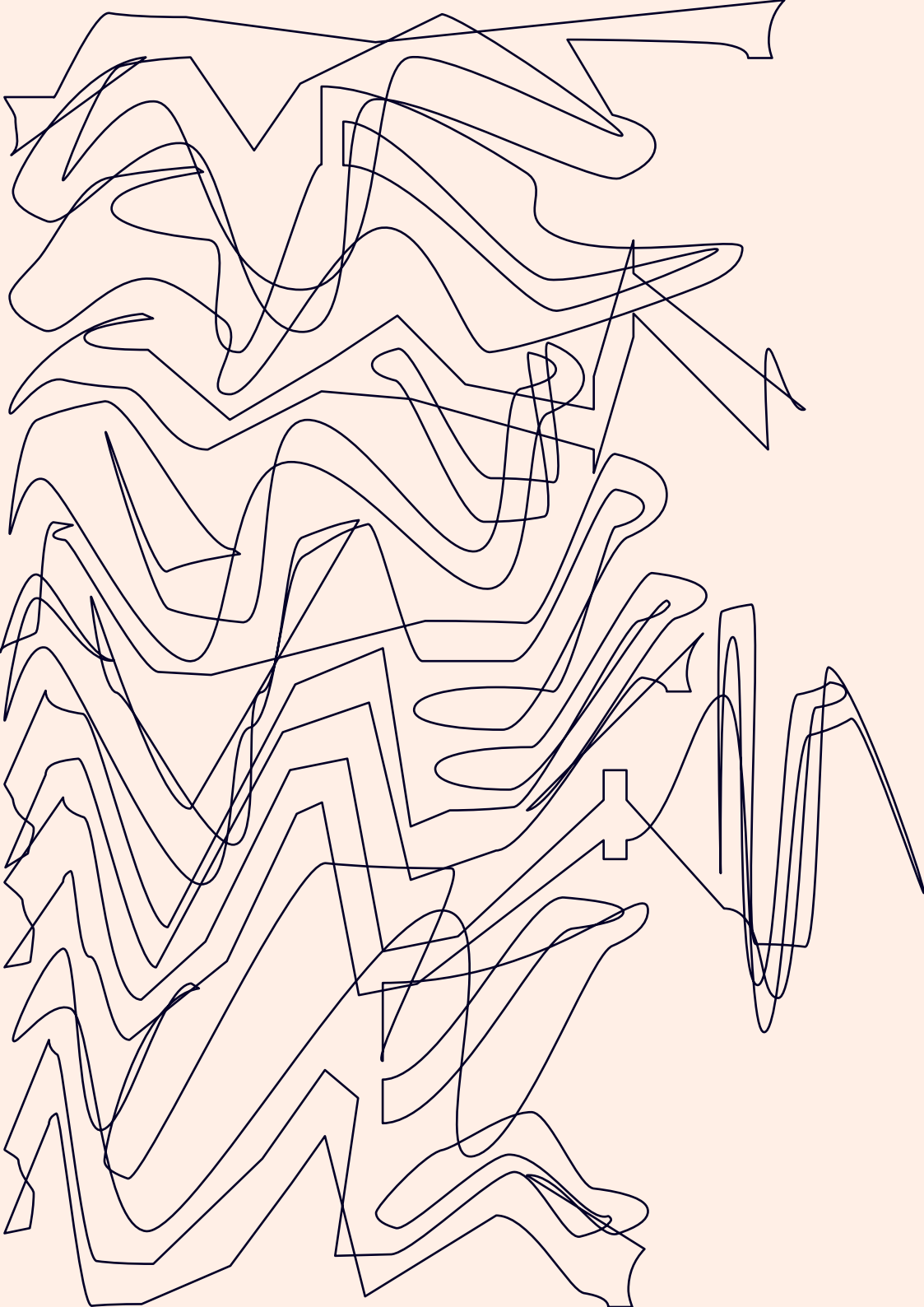
Contents

1. Introduction

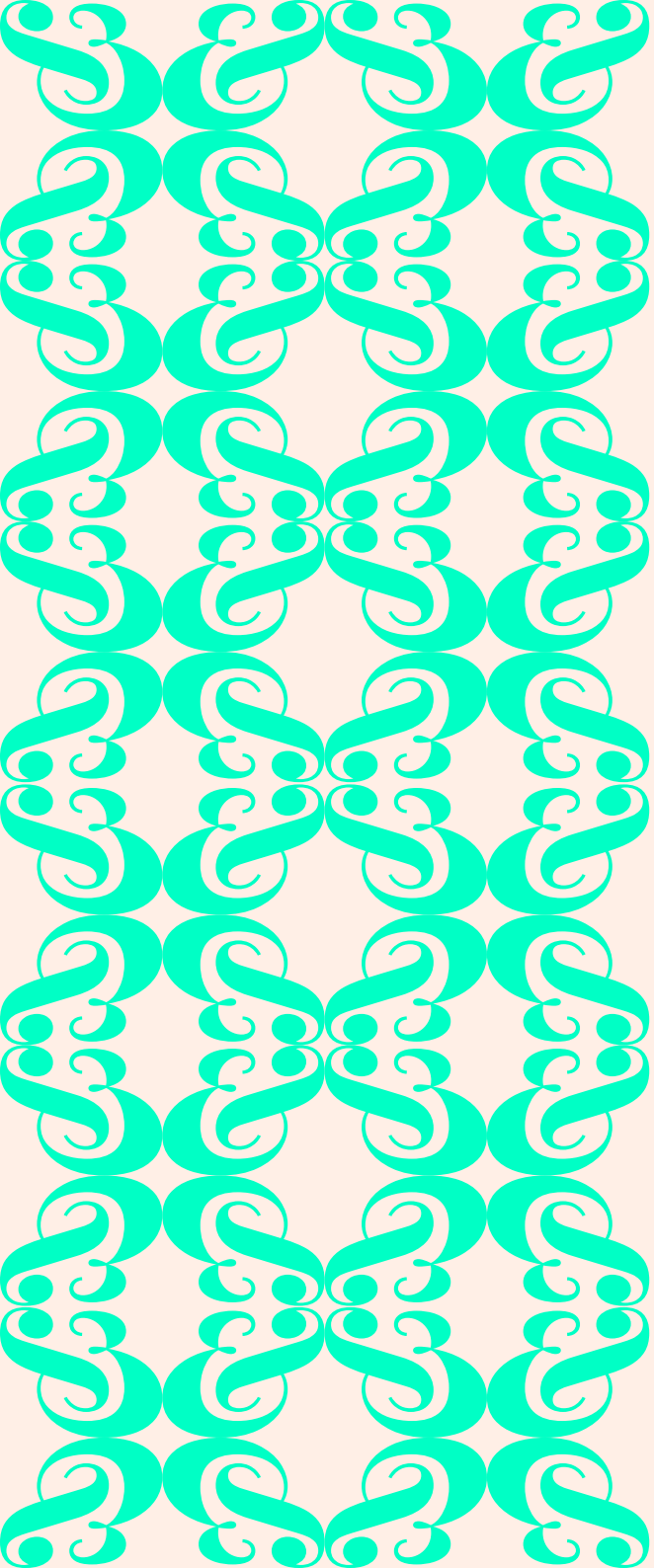I was a nightmare as a child, according to my mother, because I was the most curious little girl in the world, and more importantly, I knew when I was being lied to. I wanted to know how everything worked and she is adamant that if Sakichi Toyoda hadn't invented the 5 whys, I would have.

From no age, I wanted people to be honest with me and I wanted to understand why everything happens.

As an adult, I find it endlessly interesting trying to understand why humans behave the way we do, why we react to certain things in certain ways and how we interact to the world around us.

It's easy for me to suss out why my friends and family get annoyed by x, y and z. I'm the mate my friends come to when they want to be psychoanalysed, or if they need someone to hypothesise why someone said that one particular thing

Not everyone has the financial security to regularly see a therapist. With the multiple lockdowns we've had, people are getting increasingly withdrawn, struggling to open up to friends and family about how they feel.

With *refracted,* I wanted to combine psychology and my design skills to create something affordable and introspective that would lay the building blocks for getting to know yourself.

> With the multiple lockdowns we've had, people are getting increasingly withdrawn, struggling to open up to friends and family about how they feel.

2. Research

During my comparative benchmarking research, I noticed that other card games in this sphere-We're Not Really Strangers for example-are very much aimed at discussion between people. Exposing vulnerability to form greater and more genuine relationships.

While I appreciate and understand this particular angle of introspective work, it isn't what I seek to achieve with refracted. I want people to look inward and be able to do so in solitude.

Vulnerability is a terrifying concept for almost everyone, let alone attempting to be vulnerable in the presence of others, especially those you care about.

The research I undertook consisted of a lot of reading: the likes of 5 Minute Therapy (Crosby, Sarah, 2020), The Confidence Kit (Foran, Caroline, 2018), as well as endless articles on positive psychology and understanding the self.

I created specific group chats to gather

info from people I thought would enjoy the product. Asking questions about how they were coping, if they felt they could approach friends and family, how likely they actually were to ask for help when they needed it, if they'd be interested in something that could help them navigate their feelings in private etc.

I utilised polls in instagram stories to further gather research. The poll questions were all in relation to how everyone is feeling in a post-pandemic world, and what they believed would help them get through it.

Because reading between the lines and understanding behaviour has always been an innate strength of mine. For everyone that is, except myself.

The hardest person in the world to understand is the one living in your body. Our brains are constantly trying to protect us, but they don't always get it right.
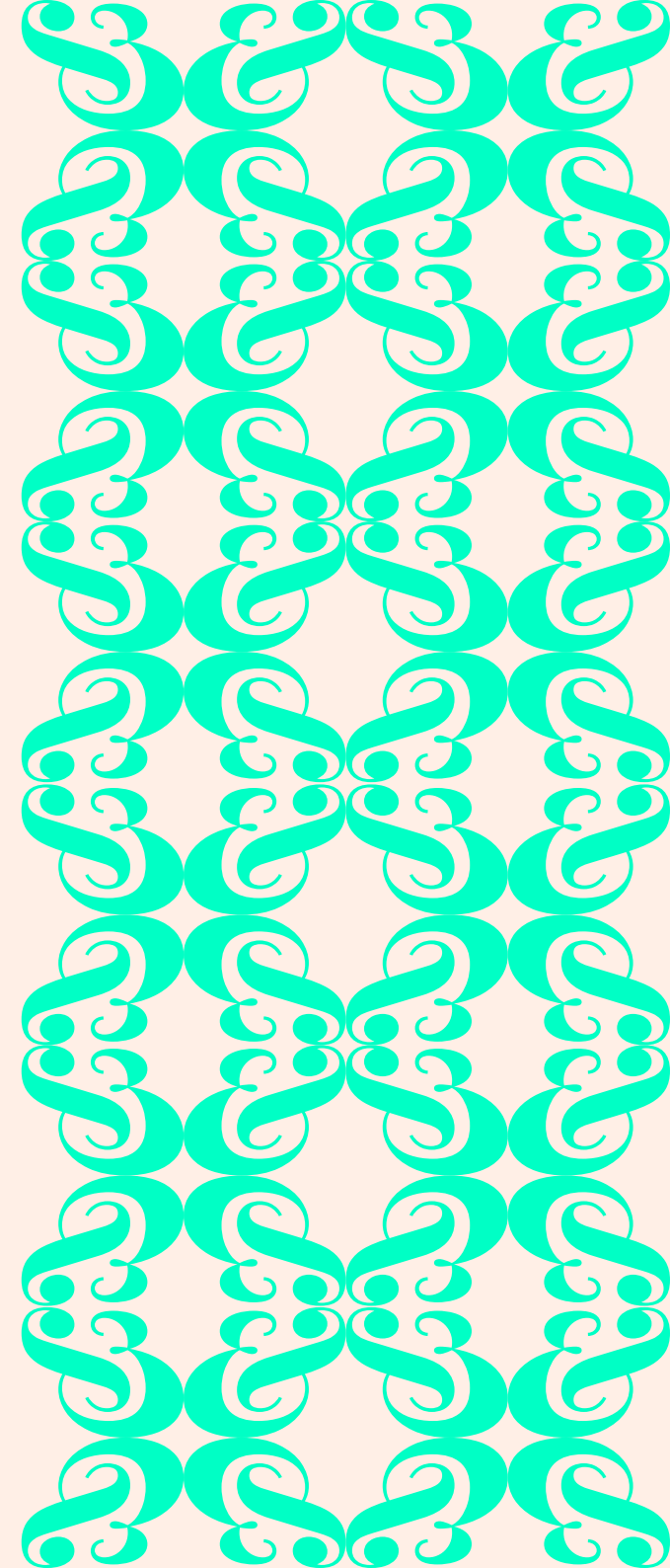
After all, we are only human. We can turn a blind eye to our own behaviour, our own coping mechanisms.

Sometimes all it takes is the right question to open our eyes. We look in mirrors every day but I don't think we see who we *really* are unless we're forced to.

3.Strengths and Weaknesses

I have always been a people person.

Since I was young I've never struggled with talking to people, making friends or understanding why people behave in certain ways.

As such, user centred design came very naturally to me. Throughout my time studying Interaction Design I have honed my skills in research, ideation, content design and visuals.

My main weakness is that I have a tendency to get ahead of myself when I'm caught up in the energy and excitement

of a new project.

I always want to walk straight into the visual design element of the project before I've even entertained the idea of addressing the content. So this time round I having to go out of my way to ensure that all the content design is nailed down before I embark on the visual journey.

After all, content design informs your brand guidelines which then inform the aesthetic of the project.

Regarding strengths and weaknesses of the project itself, I believe *refracted* is filling a niche in a newly established market. I also truly believe that it has the potential to help people in an ever changing world.

I do think it could use more work, but as a designer, I don't think I will ever be truly satisfied by the completion of a project. Not this side of the grave anyway.
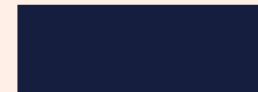
True Navy

#030027
RGB (3, 0, 39)

Nude

#FFEFE6
RGB (255, 239, 230)

Electric Teal

#00FFC5
RGB (0, 255, 197)

Navy

#151E3F
RGB (21, 30, 63)

Playfair Display Bold

Used for headings, symbols and quotes

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvxyz
1234567890~!@#$%^&*()_+{}|:"?

Playfair Display Regular

Used for body text

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvxyz
1234567890~!@#$%^&*()_+{}|:"?

Playfair Display Italic

Used for questions and quote attributions

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvxyz
1234567890~!@#$%^&()_+{}|:"?*

4.Challenges Faced

From the get go, the concept of this project through up a lot of obstacles. I knew I wanted it to be card based, and arrive in the form of a "game." The contents of refracted, the questions it asks the player, are *heavy.* So it made sense to juxtapose that depth, that vulnerability, with gamification.

Most people can't stand to be vulnerable, even with themselves. So gamifying the questions and tasks helps. The concept of finding out who you really are is a lot less daunting when it's a playing card asking you questions instead of a therapist.

It has been an immensely rewarding challenge trying to figure out the right questions to ask. I read very deeply into the benefits of positive psychology, impacts of journalling on mental wellness etc.

I have a tendency to run away with my research, it it one of my favourite parts of any project. So it was a challenge deciding which facet of psychology I wanted to focus my research on and what would have the most positive impact on the greatest number of people. But it was worth it.

5.Technology Used

My process is very much analog ↠ digital.

I start by making lots of notes and getting all my ideas down on paper. I use research to inform my ideas and begin the content design process, figuring out which content to include on which side of the cards, if we have introduction cards etc.

Then it's onto the iPad Pro and start sketching. The simplicity of the notes app on my iPad lets me just move straight into digital sketching.

Sometimes if I move into design software too early on it overwhelms me and I end up fiddling with typefaces and colours instead of sorting out the layout.

Affinity designer is my go to design software. It has an incredibly intuitive UI and in my experience I find it to be a lot easier to utilise and my workflow has become very quick using it compared to adobe illustrator. It also has the benefit of various personas: pixel, vector and export, allowing me to ready the cards for print without leaving the one piece of software.

Once I have digital sketches done and the layout nailed, all content locked in, I move onto brand guidelines and how I want *refracted* to feel. I start looking at colour palettes, either on coolors.co or looking at pieces of art and photography and eye-dropping palettes for inspiration.

Then I look at various font pairs and try
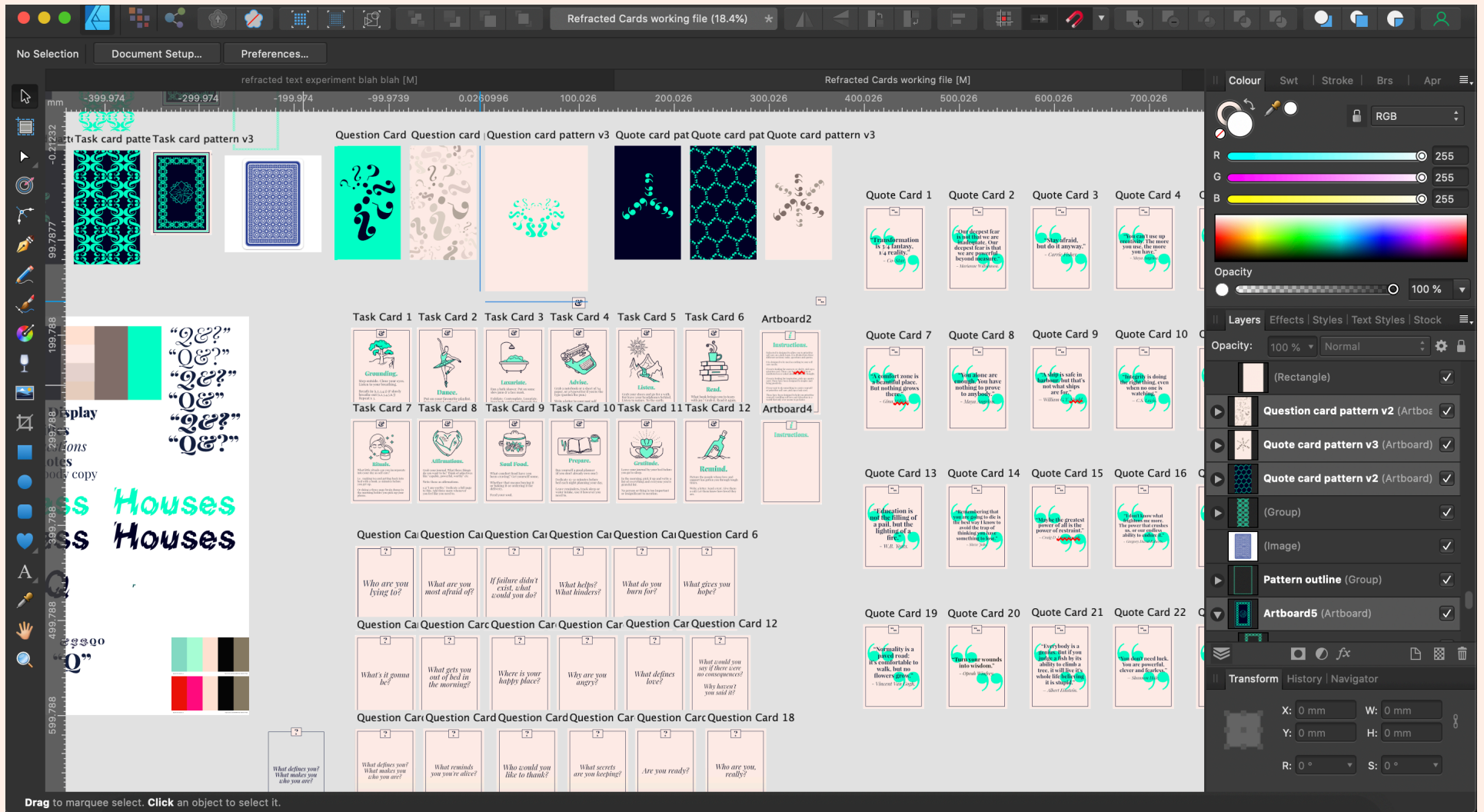
brand develops.

When the cards are fully designed, I move into the rear design, paying homage to the playing cards of old. In order to tie everything together, elements of the brand such as questions marks and ampersands will be utilised to brand the box, all designed within affinity. After liaising with printers I have opted for plain boxes branded with stickers, while custom boxes are an option, they're wildly out of the current budget for card production.

I then allow the brand guidelines to inform the aesthetic of the promotional website, which will be built through landen or a similar platform.

Mock ups have been incredibly useful to give an idea about what the potential end product will look like, as well as visualising merchandise such as branded journals, pens and phone cases. I believe merchandise would be an excellent route to develop funding

for further production runs, I know as a customer myself that people will support a brand they believe in if they feel it is trying to do some good.

After I have a roughly established set of brand guidelines, I move into the visual/aesthetic end of things. I peruse the likes of behance and dribble consulting various illustration and icon styles, then I begin working on my own illustrations, fleshing the

icons out, polishing the design, deciding where pops of colour will hit hardest etc.

6. Target Market

The target market for *refracted* is primarily anyone being negatively effected by the drawn out isolation brought about my multiple lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic.

The secondary target market is anyone

looking to get to know themselves better. Anyone struggling with understanding their mental health.

Or just anyone wanting to work on self improvement and needing some deeper understanding of themselves.

I believe introspection is so important in order to understand ones' self on the deepest level.

I am also very much of the belief that there is no one who would be worse off from knowing themselves better. It is a product that benefits anyone who chooses to use it.
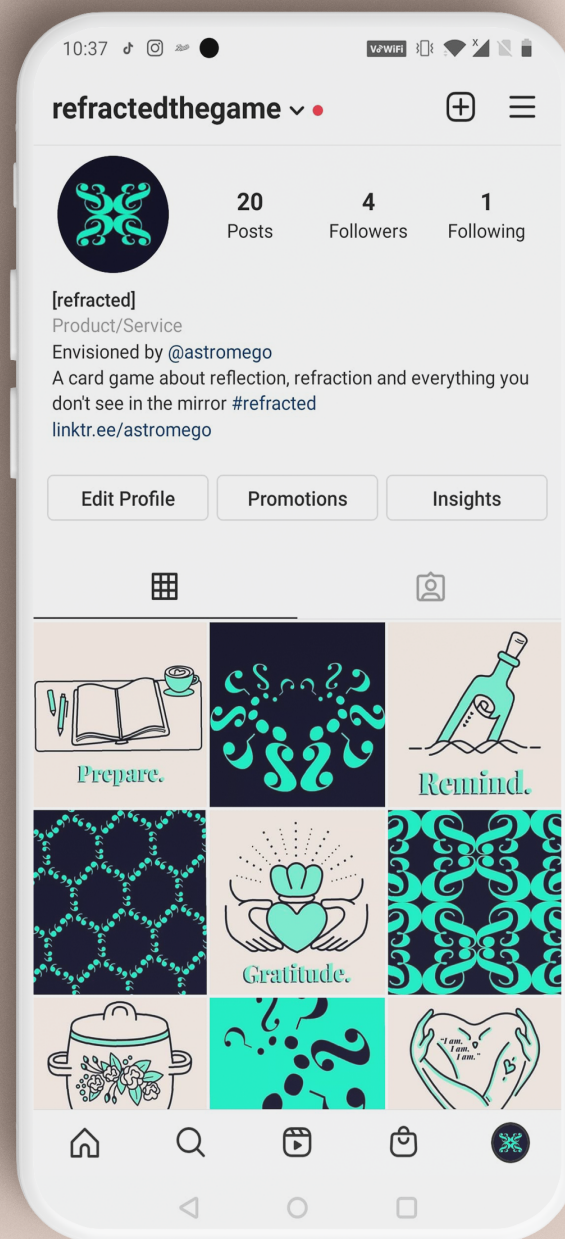
7. Conclusion

Refracted has been a massive challenge, yet so immensely enjoyable. Every minute of sketching and research and reading up on psychology was glorious.

I was anxious about coming into a final

"A ship is safe in harbour, but that's not what ships are for."

— William G.T. Shedd.

10:37

refractedthegame

20 Posts   4 Followers   1 Following

[refracted]
Product/Service
Envisioned by @astromego
A card game about reflection, refraction and everything you don't see in the mirror #refracted
linktr.ee/astromego

Edit Profile   Promotions   Insights

Prepare.   Remind.

Gratitude.

year digital design degree with what is, in essence, a physically designed product. But I needn't have worried. If there's one thing ixd faculty do well, it's support and encourage innovation!

I don't regret it for a second. Mental wellness and true self care have become a massive focal point during the pandemic and to have created something that has the potential to help people, even just a little, means so much to me.

And of course, having a printed, finished set of *refracted* cards will be a conversation piece long after I've graduated.
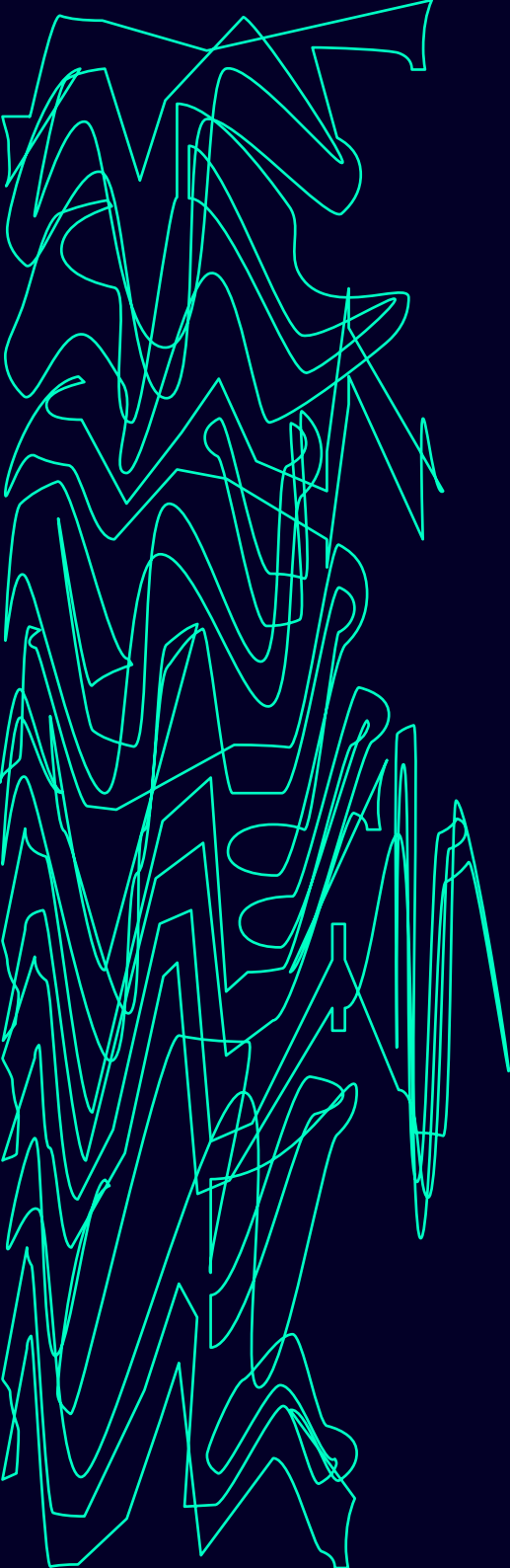
"It is never
late to be wh
might have

— Geor

What defines you?
What makes you
who you are?

A huge, stinking, gigantic thank you to...

Simon, my partner in crime, for listening to me go on tangent after tangent about my project and providing endless cups of tea.

Kyle and Paul, my lecturers, for the endless support, for pestering me when I'd hole myself up and for being the best ixdads anyone could ask for!

To Ciára, Oliwia, Iain and all my other mates who were so incredibly enthused and excited about this project.

And finally to the entire 2021 class of iXD. You're the nicest bunch of folks I've ever had the pleasure of calling classmates. This isn't the end. It's the beginning.