

# Process Journal

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GR 612 Integrated Communications

Fall 2012



Gus Van Sant Biograhpy

Director, Painter, Photographer, Author, Musician, Gay. Gus Van Sant's interest and talents range on a very broad spectrum each spilling over into the next. In 1975, Van Sant graduated from Rhode Island's School of Design (RISD) with a Bachelors in Fine Art. While attending RISD, he was exposed to Avant Garde films. This lead him to change his major from painting to cinema. His knowledge and passion of photography is evident through his cinematography skill of capturing beautiful compositions with each frame, his use of low depth of field or shallow focus and how he allows the lens to linger giving the viewer the essence of a still shot.

His respect for the written word is celebrated through cameos of and collaborations with American poet William S. Burroughs. As a writer, Van Sant has written the screenplays for most of his early movies, and has written one novel, Pink.

Drawing from personnel interest perhaps, gay themes and characters are often found in his films. His debut films, Mala Nouché

(1985) was adapted from a "Portland street writer, Walt Curtis' semi-autobiographical novella, featured the refusal to treat homosexuality as something deserving of judgement." This film was Los Angeles Times Year's Best Independent film.

A number of other themes can be found throughout Van Sant's film. His lead characters are often on a journey of self-discovery as a result of being abandoned or rejected from their family and often a father figure. Most of Van Sant's film have a less than story book ending. A typical ending is either murder, suicide or abandonment. One other stylistic theme of Van Sant is his use of orange. Pops of orange can be found throughout many stills of many of his films.

These talents have rewarded Van Sant with two Academy Award nominations for Best Director. Van Sant has received mainstream recognition from his Blockbuster films *Good Will Hunting* and *Milk* but Van Sant prefers to focus to his creativity into low

budget Indie films. He is more inspired by street life and society's outer fringes then the glam of Hollywood's lights. His films have dark and tragic undertones and are often the stories of ones personal journey to find a sense of belonging often exploring the concept of family.

Van Sant does not approach the movie set with a line for line scripted screenplay and expect the actors to just regurgitate his words. He provides the actors with more of an outline and encourages an organic process to emerge. Many scenes are shot are completely improvised and shot on the first take. It's an extension of his devotion to realism and an art form. Van Sant is an artist of blending realism with subjective points of view in his films. His films are inspired by be real people, real stories and real lives.

#### Feature Films

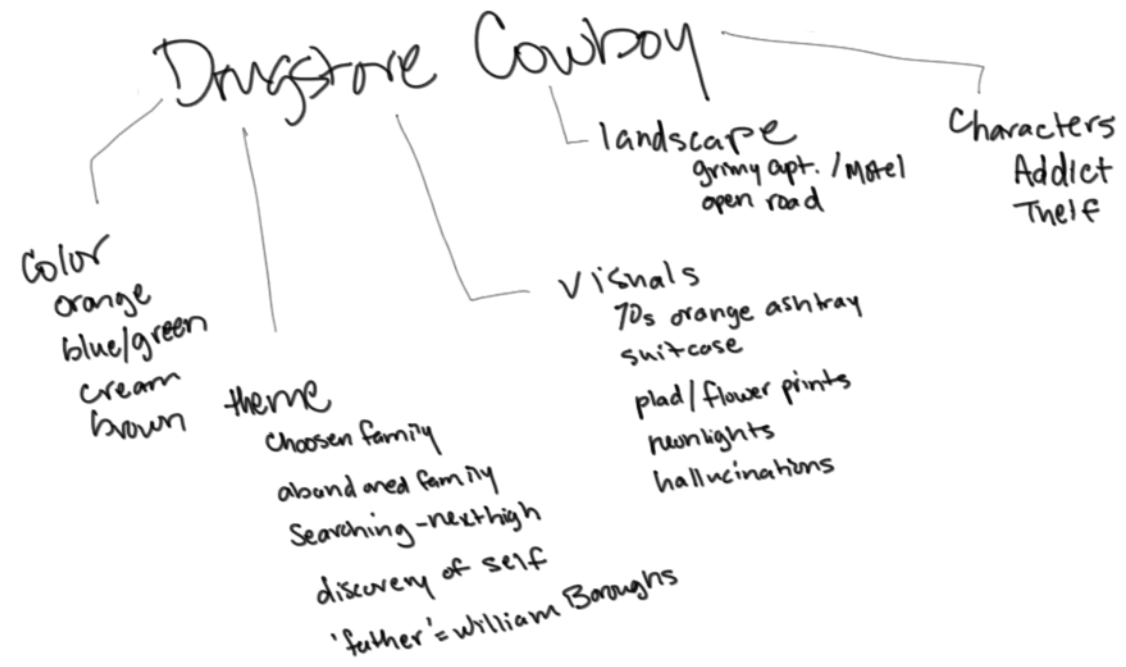
Mala Noche  
 Drugstore Cowboy  
 My Own Private Idaho  
 Even Cowgirls Get the Blues  
 To Die For  
 Good Will Hunting  
 Psycho  
 Finding Forrester  
 Gerry  
 Elephant  
 Last Days  
 Paranoid Park  
 Milk  
 Restless  
 Promised Land

#### Short Films

Fun with a Bloodroot  
 The Happy Organ  
 Little Johnny  
 1/2 of a Telephone Conversation  
 Late Morning Start  
 The Discipline of DE  
 Alice in Hollywood  
 My New Friend  
 Ken Death Gets Out of Jail  
 Five Ways to Kill Yourself  
 Thanksgiving Prayer  
 Four Boys in a Volvo  
 Paris, je t'aime  
 Chacun son cinema  
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# Film Research



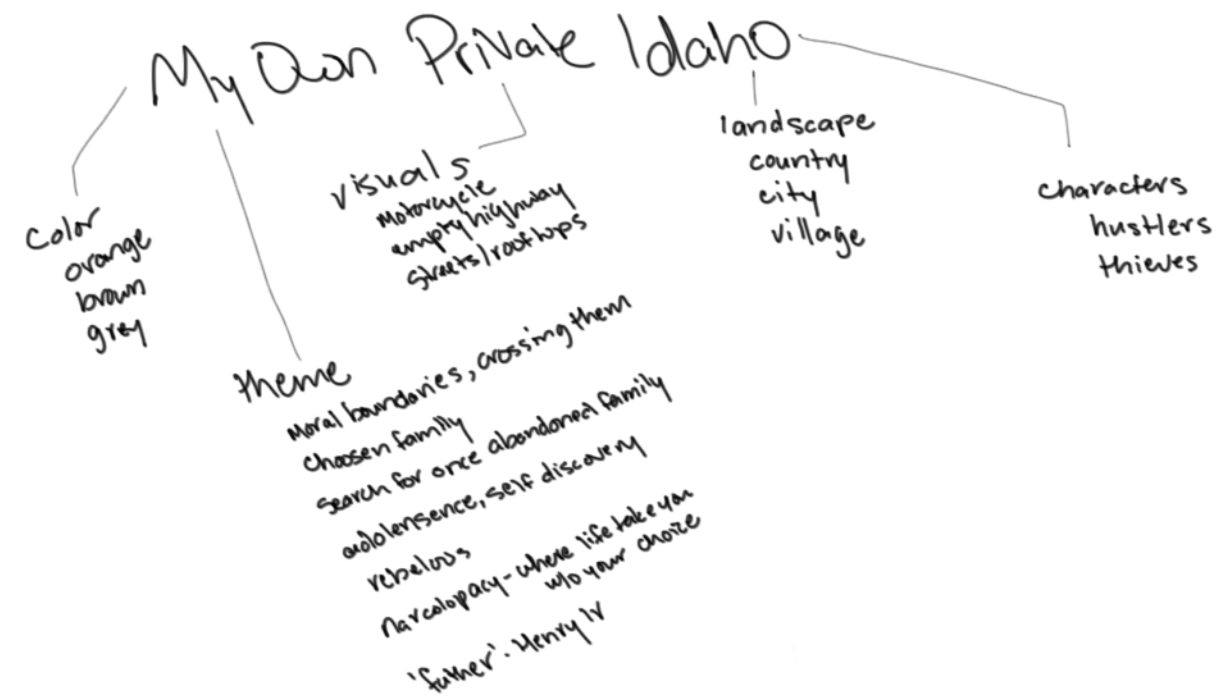


Drugstore Cowboy

Drugstore Cowboy was my first introduction to Gus Van Sant. It is also the film that mostly contributed to my picking Gus Van Sant and his films as the inspiration for this project. I have watched this film several times prior to this project and a couple of times during the course of this semester. It is a film that I always enjoy no matter how many times I have seen it.

There was so much inspiration in the stills of this film. Van Sant's composition of each visual element in each scene is a work of art all in itself and made it very easy to feel inspired. There were a number of particular detailed elements that were most memorable. The floral fabric print the looked to be untouchable because the fabric was so coarse. The consistent use of selective colors. The layers of imagery, to illustrate the main characters mental state. The physical object that very much date



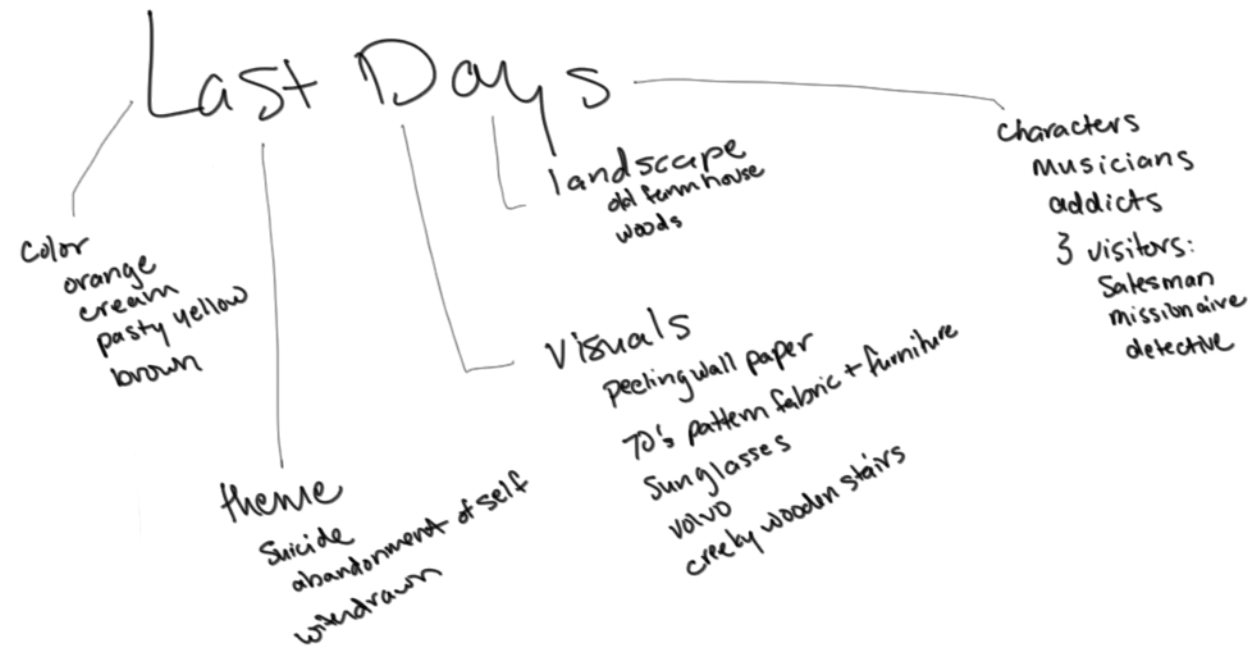


My Own Private Idaho

Gus Van Sant's dedication to color in this film is astounding. At this point color and selecting a color pallet became all that much more important for this project. Orange was used a lot in this film. Orange is not a common color for an entire screen composition. It was also a very specific shade of orange that Van Sant worked into nearly every still.

Tragedy exist more outside of this film than within it. Yes, the lead character ends up unconscious and alone but off the screen he was about to end his life from a drug overdose. Dark and tragic was becoming an emerging theme and having this connection so strongly embedded with the film, made this one an easy pic. I had not seen this film previous to this project, though I was very aware of its existence.

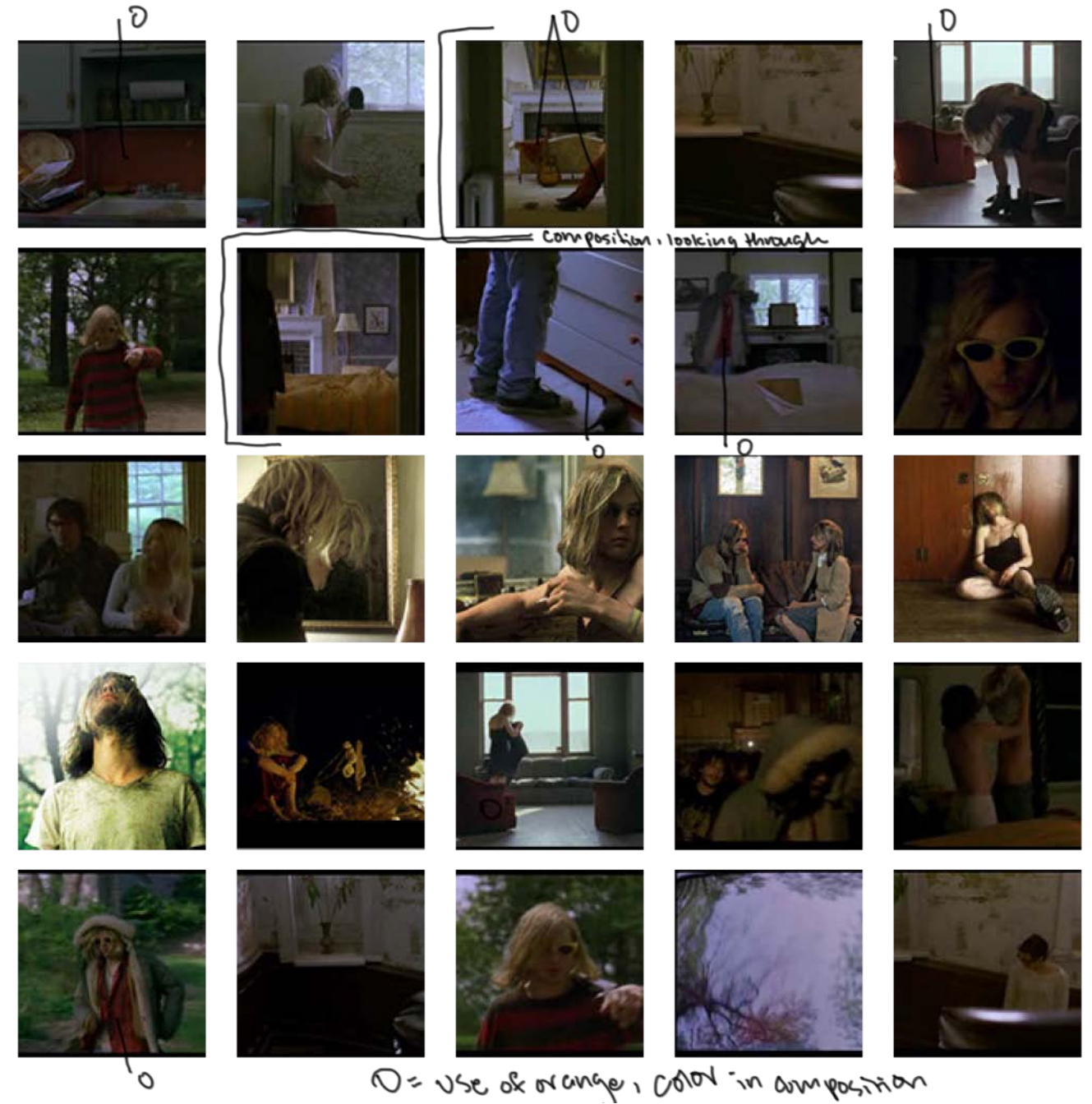




## Last Days

I have to be honest, I had very little expectations about this film but watched it if nothing else to rule it out as a option for this festival. It was the storyline, the base of the film that turned me off. A story about Kurt Cobain, hasn't someone already done that? Then again, I am questioning the director that re-shot Psycho frame for frame.

Having begun with little expectations, I was over whelmed by the visual imagery this film provided. Everything had a gritty distressed feel and like his other films a specific color palette. My mind went directly towards Kurt Cobain's quintessential tattered sweater. The unraveled imagery inspired the title of the festival, Frayed. I was also developing the entire festival identity around this one element but was challenged not to reference the visual elements of something being tattered or frayed. I accepted the challenge and my festival identity is stronger for it.

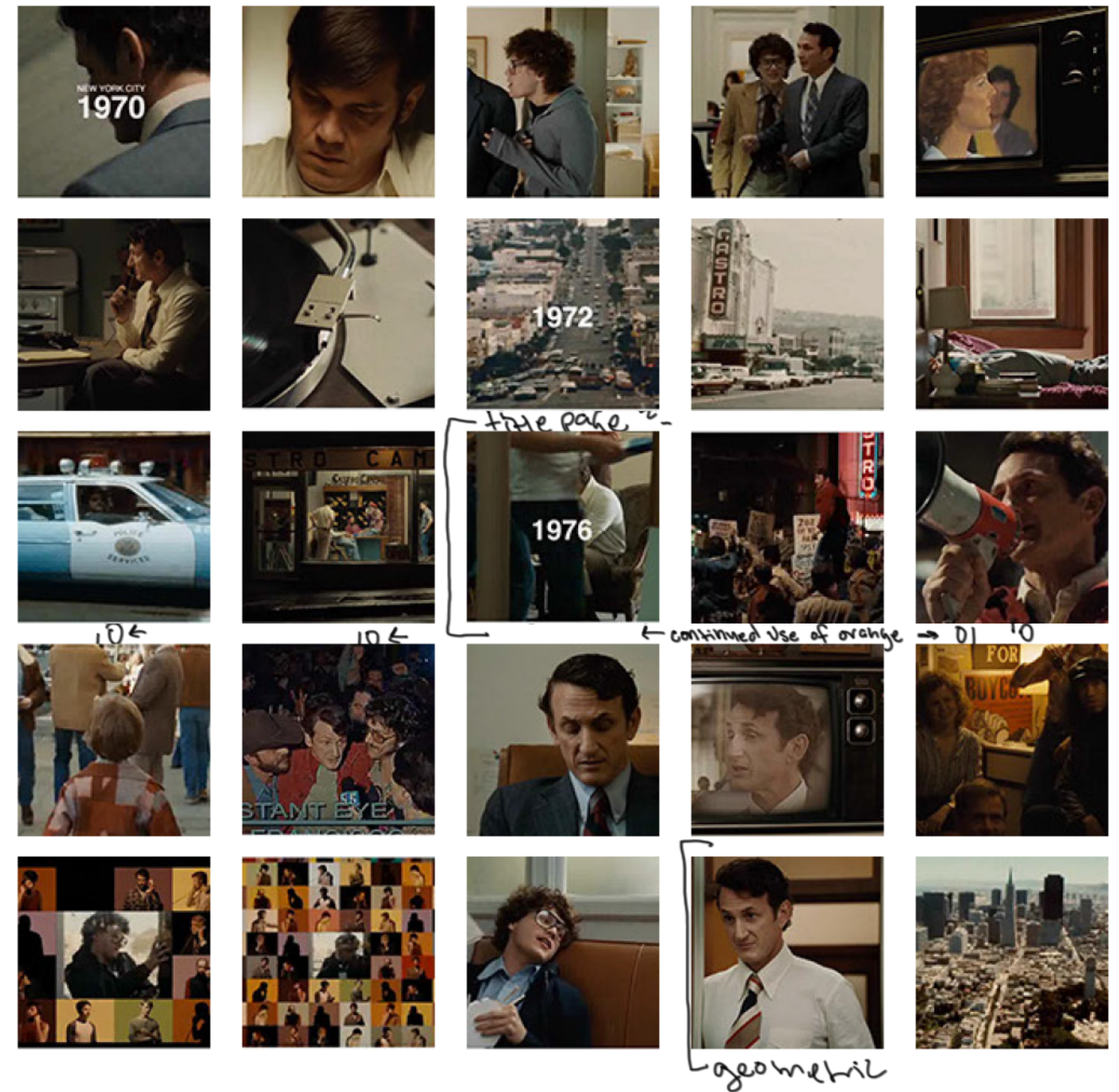




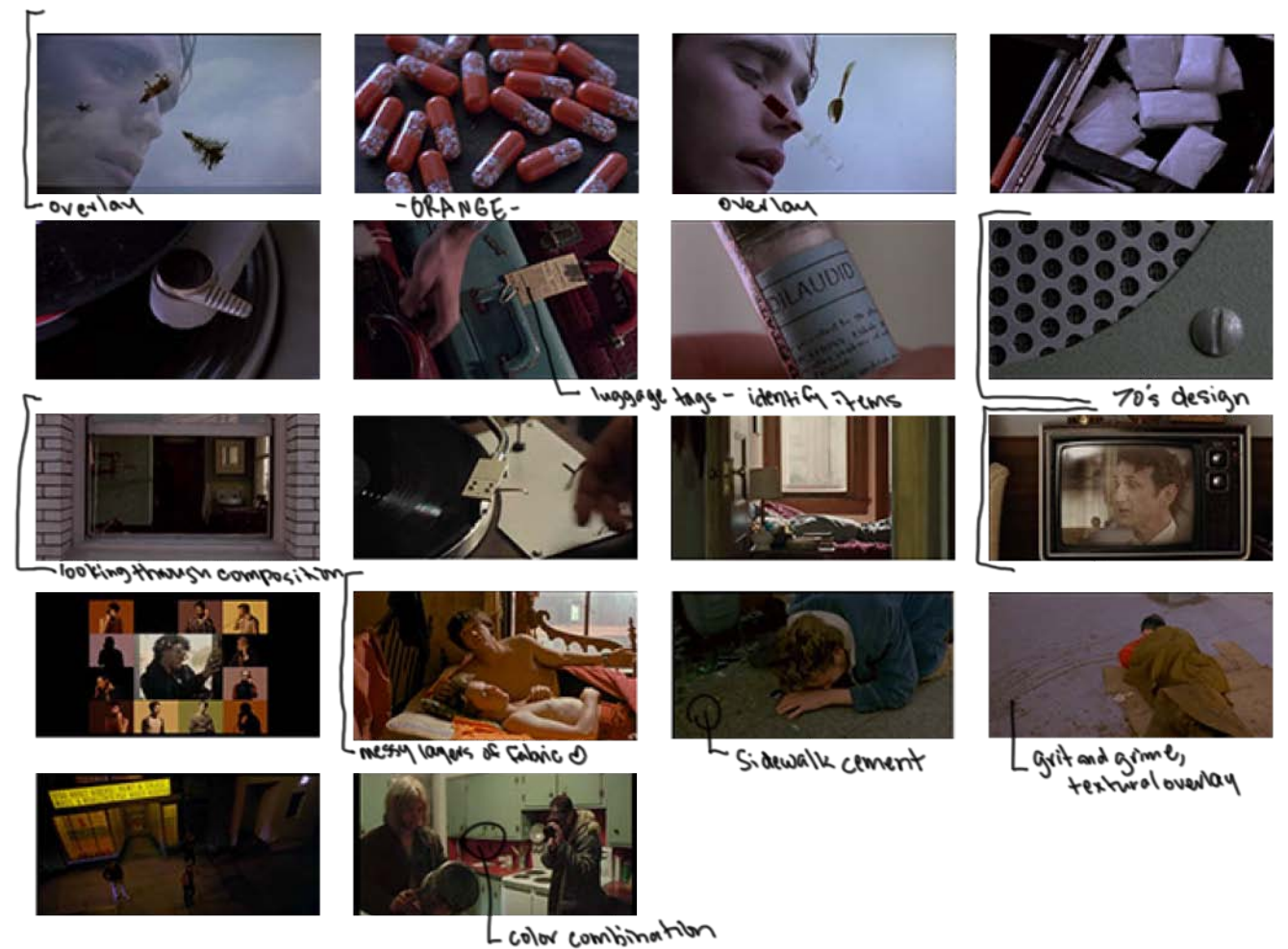
**MILK**

Unlike the other films, I remember when this one came out. It is an important story to tell and was told at the right time. A tragic story indeed by told beautifully through Van Sant. It was intentionally released 2 weeks prior to Prop 8 vote in California. Milk was a political activist for gay rights and Prop 8 was an important vote on gay rights.

The 70s are alive once again in this film. Browns, browns, browns everywhere. 70s design was an early inspiration for the identity of the festival. This film truly take on a complete submergence into an era and an aesthetic. Both the represented design from the 70s and Van Sant commitment to full submergence was inspirational.





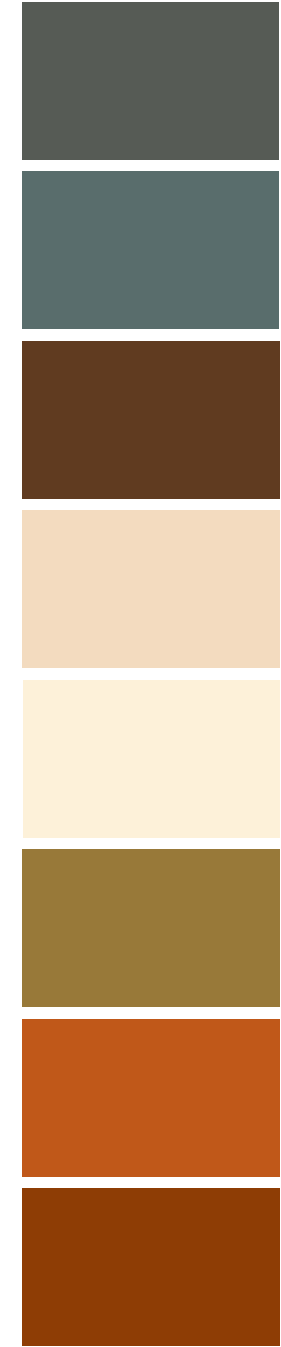
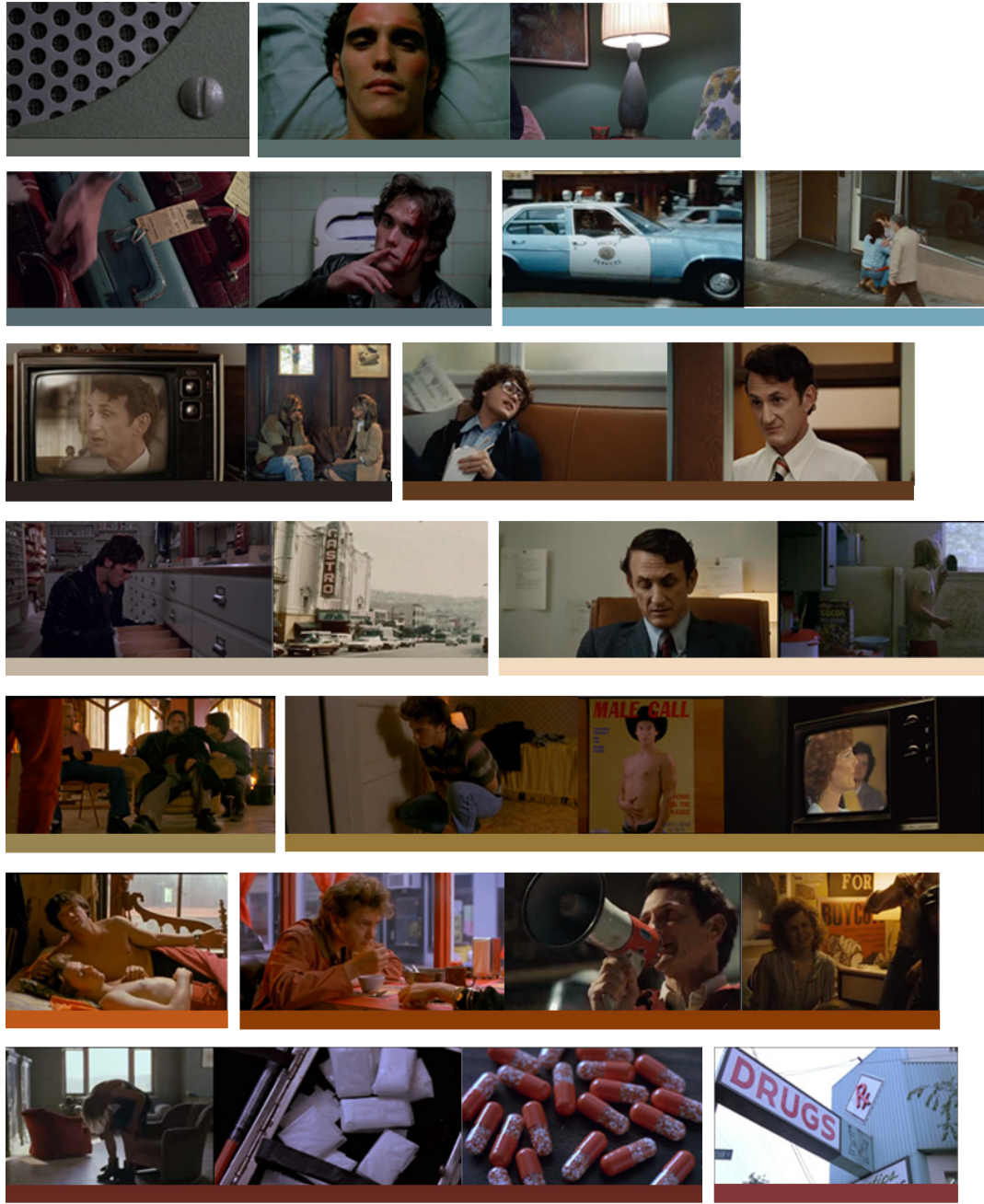


The visual approach that will become the identity of the Festival's brand are inspired by common themes in Van Sant's films: Realism, his creative process and the characters from the films.

The common themes that will be explored visually are Realism and dark undertones. Cinematic Realism is not in the style of a documentary but merely finds its basis in reality or is an abstraction of reality. In creating the identity for the festival, I would like to create imagery that is not a recreation of reality but transform and comment on the reality. Staying true to the theme of Realism, it is only appropriate that photography and video footage be

incorporated into the Festival's identity. Van Sant's films are often stories that lead to an impending doom. This angst of tragedy can transform visually into a thread that is unraveling everything until there is nothing left. An exposed flaw that when not mended could lead to the end.

Van Sant's process allows for unscripted scenes to develop organically. He embraces these moments allowing a certain degree of chance into his process. I like the idea of using something unpolished and raw as a visual technique rather than something polished and finished.



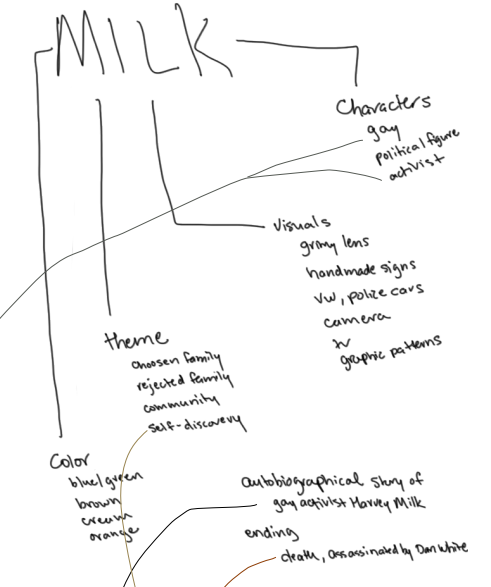
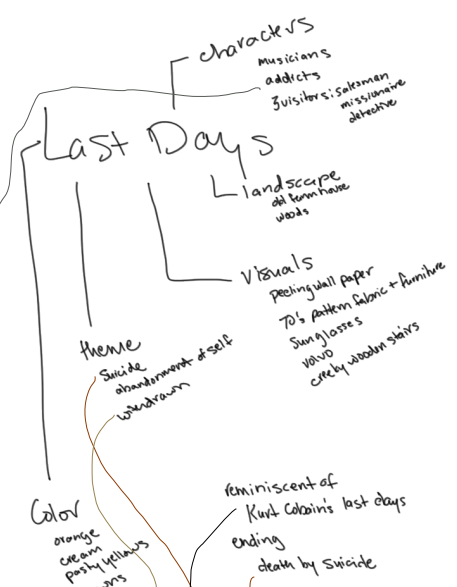
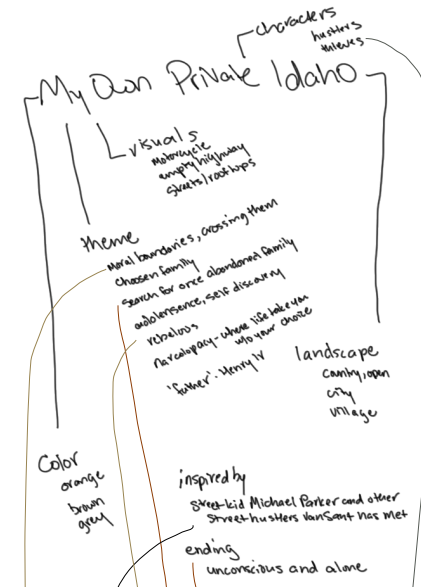
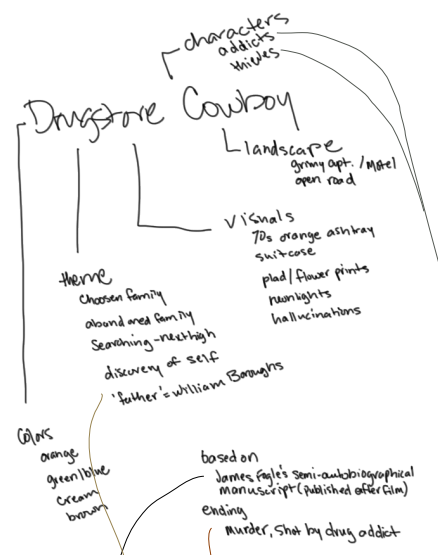
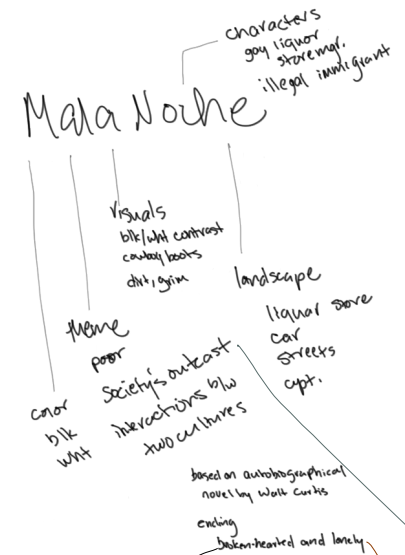
Color

The green/blue hue is necessary to break up the one note palette that was forming. The palette needed a complementary hue from the opposite side of the color spectrum.

The brown is just an additional dark complement to the eggshell color. The eggshell color is to evoke a "dirty" white. The color pallet should not include a clean stark white because the feel of the filth and grit is important to the overall aesthetic.

The yellows are a wonderful hue and a personal favorite at the time. It is also a prominent color used in the films and is often the overall tone of many scenes.

The orange is an important color because Van Sant uses it in all of the films as a 'pop' piece in many scenes. Most scenes contain a bright orange object in the background.



real people/real stories/real lives

As the lines draw out, all of these selected films are based on real people. The element of realism is true to Van Sant's films.

personal journey

The characters journey to personal acceptance form the content of the films. It is always during this process of self acceptance that the main character finds a sense of belonging within their chosen family. The concept of family is a constant theme that is explored.

lives outside of mainstream

The main character is typically out casted from their family or society and because of this rejection are not comfortable in their very own skin.

dark and tragic undertones

Gus Van Sant's films have dark and tragic undertones. Often the main character is met by death or an impending death at the end of the film. Rarely is there a storybook happy ending in Van Sant's films. There is always an overwhelming theme of realism throughout his films. The stories are mostly inspired by personal stories and real lives.

# Explorations



#### Target Audience

The demographic for this festival are students of Visual Arts, patrons of the arts and those that always know where the place to be is. This festival goer is someone who has a passion for one visual art or another, rather it be cinematography, photography, or design. This person is not interested in following main stream trends. They would rather make or alter their cloths to express their individuality and would never purchase anything from the Gap. They would rather spend their evenings working on an art project or getting waisted in a dive bar then sitting on the couch watching trashy reality TV.

Also in the audience are those who can identify with or greatly intrigued by the characters portrayed in Van Sant's films. These characters live on society's margins are on a journey searching for a sense of belonging.



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Baskerville Bold  
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Typeface

The selected typeface for the text is News Gothic. News Gothic is a realist sans-serif typeface that follows the grotesque model. It was designed by Morris Fuller Benton. This typeface differs from other realist sans-serifs in its organic shapes and subtle transitions of stroke width, all contributing to a less severe, humanist tone of voice. Realism, organic and humanist tone are all features of this typeface but could equally describe Gus Van Sant's films.

For the Logo and titles, I wish to explore more of an experimental typeface or handwritten titles.

Tattered and Torn  
films by Gus Van Sant

Tattered and Torn  
films by Gus Van Sant

TATTERED AND TORN  
films by Gus Van Sant



we die young

we die young

we die young

underbelly

underbelly

underbelly

strung out

Strung Out

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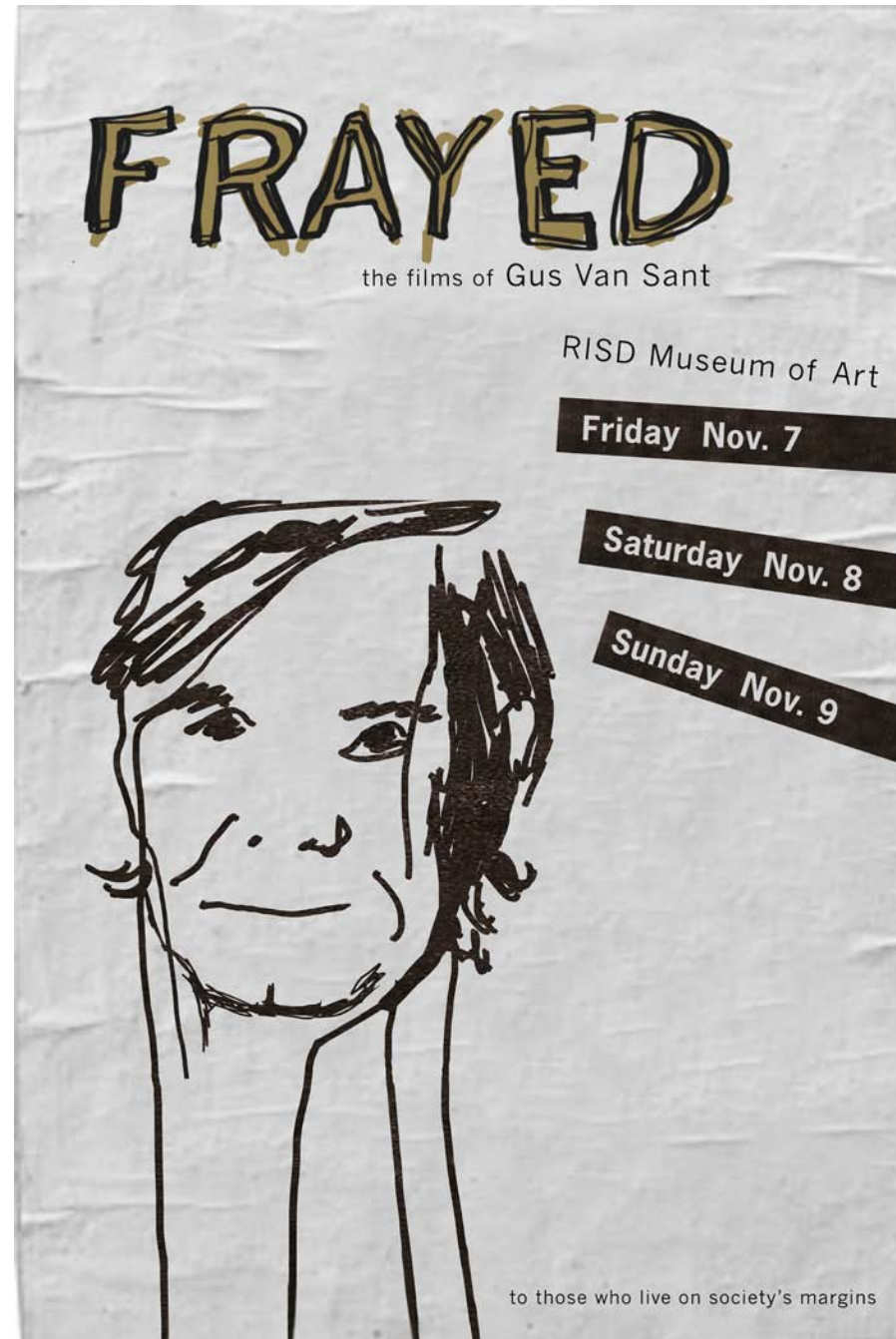
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# **Deliverables**



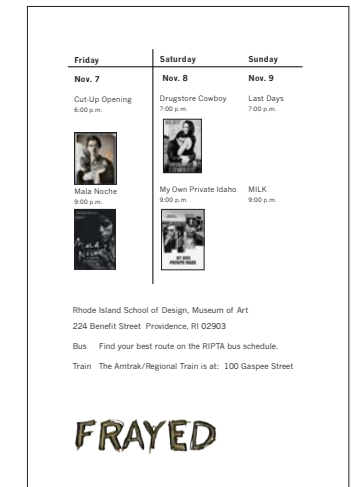


#### Strategy

The film festival products will exist in the marketplace as a badge for those who resist mainstream society. The brand will celebrate those who defy social norms and rebel against the customary rules that govern behavior in society. The logo or identity image will become a symbol of rebellion much like the symbolic raised fist or a tattoo of the Harley Davidson logo or the t-shirt of Che's image.

#### Positioning

The film festival products will be targeted to those who seek out their entertainment. Similar to 'underground music' and the venues from which they perform, the marketing is far from commercial. The festival will not be in competition with the larger festivals whose goal is to appeal to the masses.



#### Poster

Wheatpaste posters pasted around the campus are the large advertisements for this festival.

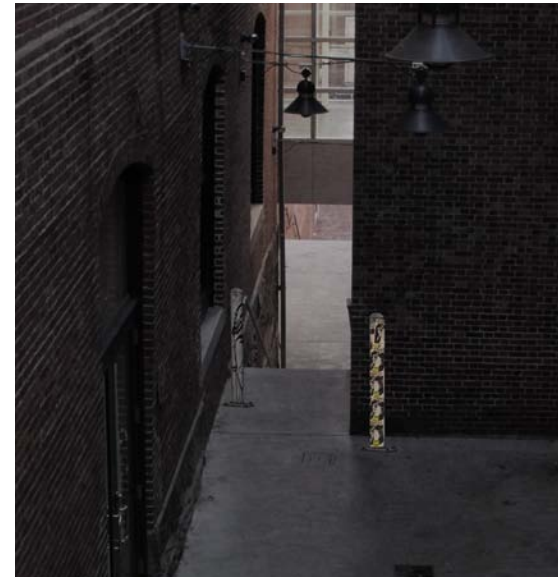
#### Handout

The handout is postcard size and is designed to be placed in local cafe's and dive bars. I imagine that these selected films would attract a gay audience so the handout was designed to appeal to these select fans. I also wanted to use an additional image to avoid overkill on one design.



### Guerrilla Ads

Guerrilla advertising will be used as it will strengthen the overall theme. Guerrilla Ad possibilities could include covering manholes and storm drains (the frame) with an ad specific for this location. Paper cups that will have specific advertising for this product will litter the campus. Pedestrians will be encouraged to pick these up and keep them, college students love free stuff. Post (plastic) that would be placed throughout the campus and downtown that would be covered with stickers, graffiti and other specifically designed advertising the festival.





### Products

The buttons showcase the three main images of this branding campaign. These would be in a huge fish bowl and available for the taking. A token add to ones favorite bag or jacket.

The magnets are a reduction of the poster design. These will be stuck to anything metal around the campus, also available for the taking.



### Tickets

I pursued a less conventional style of ticket. I imagine that cash would be accepted at the door in exchange for a stamp on the outside of your hand. So for the physical item I designed a stamp with a stamp pad.



18 19

## Drugstore Cowboy

**Cast**  
 Mark Simon as Bob Hughes  
 Kelly Rowland as Diana  
 James La Gries as Paul  
 Heather Graham as Valerie  
 Max Perlich as Don  
 James Breen as Jerry  
 Steve Corbett as My. Higgins  
 William B. D'Elia as Tom

*(Small text on the right side of the page)*

22 23

## My Own Private Idaho

**Cast**  
 River Phoenix as Mike Salko  
 Keanu Reeves as Scott Faye  
 Anthony Quinn as Ed  
 Alison Folland as Lisa  
 Bruce Campbell as Carlotta  
 Lisa Bonet as Lisa

*(Small text on the right side of the page)*



26 27

## Last Days

**Cast**  
 Michael Pitt as Jim Jones  
 Ginnifer Gooden as Mary  
 Jeff Bridges as Paul  
 Ryan Murphy as Don  
 James Breen as Jerry  
 Steve Corbett as My. Higgins  
 William B. D'Elia as Tom

*(Small text on the right side of the page)*

30 31

## Gus Van Sant

Director

*(Small text on the right side of the page)*

40 41

## Food

**Cast**  
 Michael Pitt as Jim Jones  
 Ginnifer Gooden as Mary  
 Jeff Bridges as Paul  
 Ryan Murphy as Don  
 James Breen as Jerry  
 Steve Corbett as My. Higgins  
 William B. D'Elia as Tom

*(Small text on the right side of the page)*

35 36

## Where to go

1 RISD Museum of Art  
 2 RISD Center  
 3 RISD Center  
 4 RISD Center  
 5 RISD Center  
 6 RISD Center  
 7 RISD Center  
 8 RISD Center

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38 39

## RISD Museum of Art

**Cast**  
 Michael Pitt as Jim Jones  
 Ginnifer Gooden as Mary  
 Jeff Bridges as Paul  
 Ryan Murphy as Don  
 James Breen as Jerry  
 Steve Corbett as My. Higgins  
 William B. D'Elia as Tom

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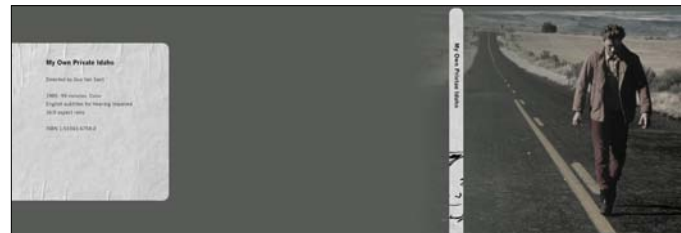
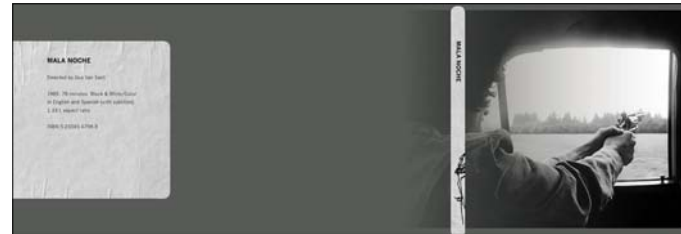
46 47

## Cut Ups

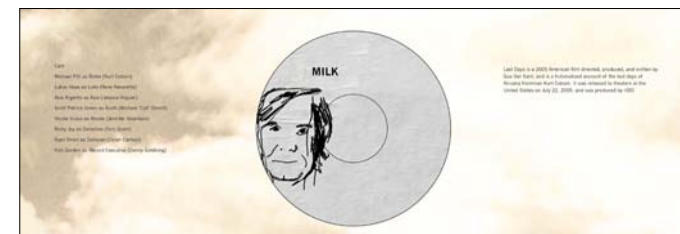
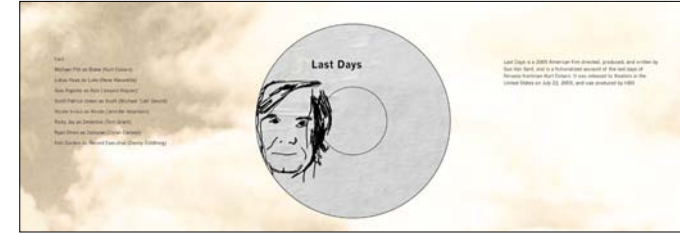
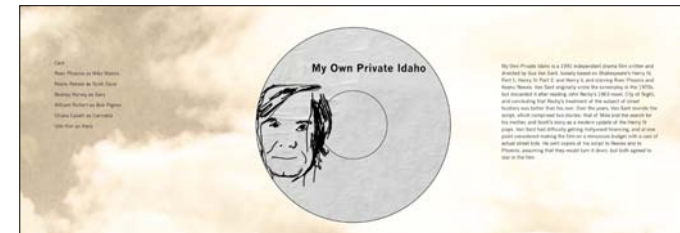
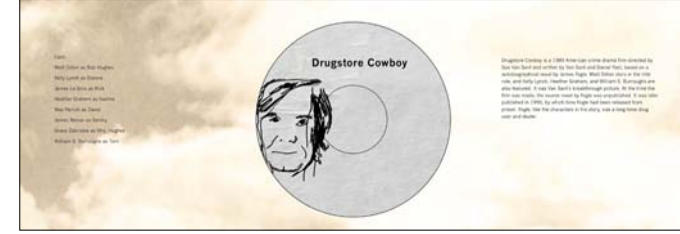
**Cast**  
 Michael Pitt as Jim Jones  
 Ginnifer Gooden as Mary  
 Jeff Bridges as Paul  
 Ryan Murphy as Don  
 James Breen as Jerry  
 Steve Corbett as My. Higgins  
 William B. D'Elia as Tom

*(Small text on the right side of the page)*

Outside cover



Inside



Soundtrack

