

MARTIAN
GANTZES

PRETTY
PICTURES

First published in the United Kingdom in 2015
by Thames & Hudson Ltd, 181A High Holborn,
London WC1V 7QX

Marian Bartjes Pretty Pictures © 2015 Marian Bartjes

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or
by any means, electronic or mechanical, including
photocopy, recording or any other information
storage and retrieval system, without prior
permission in writing from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-500-51700-0

Printed and bound in China by
C&C Offset Printing Co Ltd

To find out about all our publications, please visit
www.thamesandhudson.com. There you can subscribe
to our e-newsletter, browse or download our current
catalogue, and buy any titles that are in print.

Typeset in *Az* Outsiders by Henrik Kubel.

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vi
<i>Foreword</i> by Erik Poyner	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	ix
<i>History</i>	1
2005–2004	8
2005	25
2006	42
2007	77
2008	120
2009	160
2010	182
2011	206
2012	239
<i>Index</i>	255
<i>Books & magazines</i>	259
<i>Public speaking</i>	260
<i>About the author</i>	261

and passion since the mid-1990s, but where early digital design had often been about fragmentation and dissonance, Bantjes's pieces were lusty, smoothly linear and harmoniously interconnected.

The feistiness and self-belief are still there in her writing, but there is a chastening honesty, too. You gain a real picture from these pages of how and why the work gets made and what Bantjes feels about it, positive or negative. 'This is a terrible piece of shit,' she declares at one point. 'I am a terrible logo designer ... Whatever the rationale, it's no excuse for this mess.' And another time: 'I really blew this one, badly.' Such candid admissions, where others might put on display only their gleaming successes, make for a book that is truly instructive about the struggle to create great work and the unsurprising self-criticism this requires. It is surprising to see the number of rejected pieces – not because the work is lacking, but because of what this reveals about the unfathomable nature of some clients, and the toll this must take on a self-aware designer who has poured everything into delivering an exceptional design. From the outside, it can only seem perverse that *Western Living* magazine wasn't happy with the cover Bantjes devised (page 198), and that a country she must not name (now which could it be?) should be unwilling to accept a manifestly ravishing stamp design (page 222). She makes no secret that this episode rocked her confidence – it would rock anyone's.

This is the challenge and risk of importing so much art into design. It is the art – if by art we understand a profoundly personal degree of engagement – that elevates the work to another level of content. Bantjes's highly wrought filigrees, arabesques, patterns and intricacies come from obsession; the fibres of her emotional and intellectual being run deep in them. In her most unrestrained images, which often seem close to a lush, ornamental Surrealism – see, for instance, 'You're 3 AKA Alienhead' (page 79) – the tendrils branch and intertwine, ensfold and fendle each other like animated capricious. When a colleague proposed that 'Art and Design are cousins. They should not sleep together,' Bantjes strenuously objected. There is, of course, a place for design that abstains (at least consciously) from intimate contact with art. What Bantjes has shown with this triumphantly realized body of work is that graphic art that fuses the capacities of the two disciplines, because the maker is both designer and artist, has the power to captivate and astonish any viewer alive to its energy.

INTRODUCTION



has told me the experience was traumatic in one way or another. Mine has been no exception. There is a summing up, and a reflection on the body of work that is not always easy. I find that I swing between seeing it all as insignificant and unworthy of a monograph, and seeing things that I think are so great, but that I have never matched since. Going through my back catalogue has revealed many surprises – forgotten works, pieces that weren't as bad as I remembered, foreshadowings of things to come. Sifting through the past – old emails, old arguments, correspondences both comforting and painful – it's more than just a cataloguing process. At the end of it, it seems like something has to close a chapter of work at the very least, if not of life.

This monograph came about because Lucas Dietrich at Thames & Hubson nagged me, over a period of years, to do it, until I finally agreed that I was ready. And once agreed, an idea of the thing fell quite rapidly into place. My first decision was to do the whole thing myself: words editing, writing, designing, layout and production, with Lucas as sounding board and Elaine McAlpine as editor. This was against the advice of several people, who advocated hiring someone else to edit the works, and even design the book. But I'm far too much of a control freak for that.

My next decisions were to include almost all of my work in the past nine years and to arrange it chronologically. I wanted this partly for myself – to see the development of my work – but I also felt it would be most instructive for the viewer. Many of the people who are interested in my work are at the beginning of their careers, and I want them to see the progress and changeability of my work over time. As well, by including everything, from the good to mediocre to bad, I want to give some hope to people who struggle. There is trial and error, achievements and disappointments, both in myself, the process and in clients. It's a tale of triumph and heartbreak!

Writing it all myself was a must. I had no intention of creating a picture book with just-the-facts captions, but wanted to tell stories about the work, much as I do when presenting on stage. In fact, originally I wanted to get everything I ever had to say about my work, about design, art and design, and various thoughts and ideas into this book, so I would never have to say it again. But to do it all would have included another couple of hundred pages of writing alone. That will have to come another time – so for this one I concentrated solely on the graphic work.

I've genuinely enjoyed the designing aspect of this working on a complex book design with myriad decisions on every page. Early attempts to work with a grid were just too restricting. The restrictions of chronology, importance, detail and narrative were enough. But this isn't to say that the pages are without structure – far from it. Each page spread has its own alignments and balance within the confines of the margins. While generally chronological, I took some liberties to create good pairings, and to fit multiple works together nicely on a page.

Indexing was quite fun, and I got into the categorization of works, while at the same time being more than a little shocked by the primitiveness of InDesign's indexing system.

Just the organization of the whole thing has been daunting. My records were not what I would have liked; but in the making of this project a database has been started, a physical file system

to ensure I've ever spoken to about doing a monograph

The title of this book, 'Pretty Pictures', was given to me by Rick Valicenti. It is both a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of a criticism that I sometimes leveled against my work, and a juxtaposition against what I hope is obviously more than it seems.

Some things of note occasionally, projects are identified as rejected, killed or died, and need might you wonder the difference. For my purposes, rejected work is that which the client didn't like. Killed projects are those that for reasons outside my control didn't go ahead, so they liked the work, but something else happened, and projects that died are those that just semi-mysteriously disappeared. It happens.

**RICK VALICENTI**

PEN & INK
17.5 x 18" • 28" x 38" CM

A personal piece for Rick.
Owned by Rick Valicenti.



PENCIL
9" x 10" CM • 17.8" x 25.4" CM
A fancy letter N.

DECEMBER • 2004

**STERLING BRANDS PATTERN**

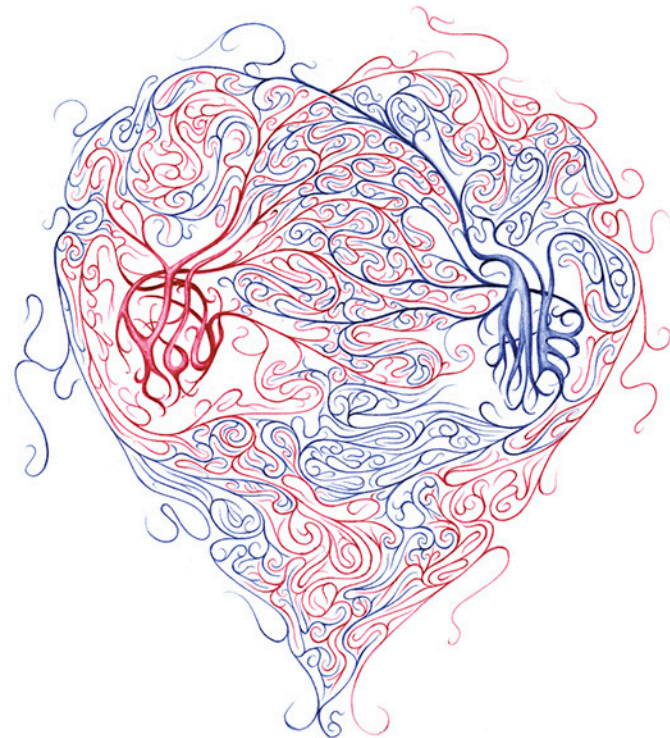
VECTOR

Created for the Sterling Brands special holiday season website.

**HERRAINCO CHRISTMAS PROJECT**

VECTOR
8.5" x 5.5" CM • 21.6" x 14.0" CM

There's a story behind this that is either too long, too boring or too contentious to tell. In short, I was hired by my friend Ray Hryshko in Vancouver to create the words "joy", "love", "hope", "charity" and "peace" for an extravagant Christmas mailout. He asked me to "do the thing that you do" (Not the last time that I would hear those faithful words.) I wanted each one to be slightly different and provided sketches for the above, which he very much liked. In the end, however, it appeared that the "thing" he wanted me to do was a recreation of the *Speak Up / American Preview* type. This was one of those situations where the deal was I would get in spirit of the mailout for my own use (booklets, tags and boxes of "artisanal" produce), so I was extremely reluctant to do something I'd done before, as it would cement in my clients' minds that that's all that I do, and worse, that I have no new ideas but to recycle old artwork. Finally, Ray won, and he got his *Speak Up* type (detail). I never used my copies.



2005

My life as a Graphic Artist began to seem considerably more viable in 2005. I was getting real, actual work, and while I was still taking advantage of "free printing" opportunities by contributing to small publications, I was no longer making myriad self-promotion pieces. I was feeling tentatively hopeful that my new career direction might actually work out for me.

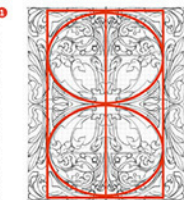
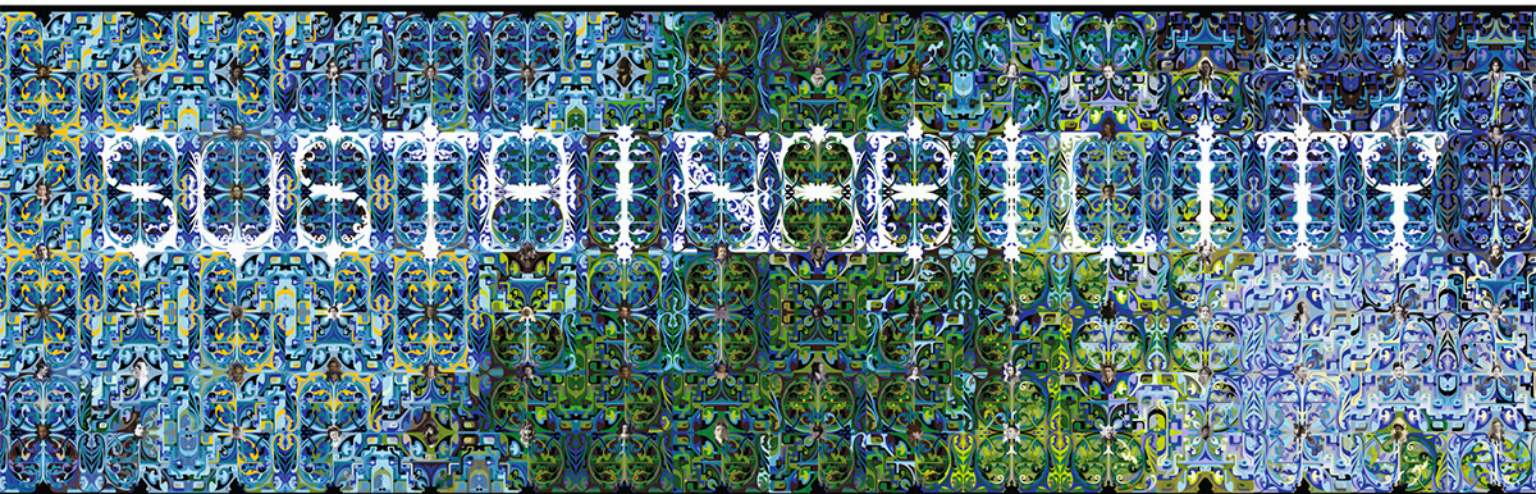
JANUARY • 2005

YOUNG'S A.K.A. ALIENHEAD

HALFPOINT PEN
15" x 20" CM • 38.1" x 50.8" CM

This is the third, and by far the most successful, of the *Young's* series, both in terms of execution and, shall we say, belovedness. The red and blue heart tendrils, or veins, cross only once, and for the rest, they intermingle, but never touch.

Owned by Rick Valicenti.



SUSTAINABILITY

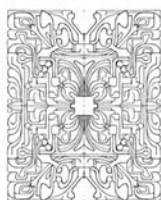
VECTOR
 36" X 36" • 96,3 x 91,4 CM
 © WINTERHOUSE • STORA ENSO

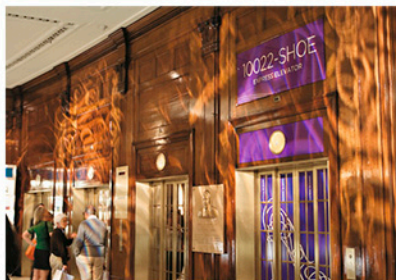
This is perhaps the best piece I have ever done. William Drentzel at Winterhouse hired me to create one of a series of posters for the paper company Stora Enso (the other two in the series are by Paula Scher and Christoph Niemann), with the only direction for the design being that it contain the word "Sustainability". I envisioned something that had to do with time and a sense of continuity, and started by designing a pattern based on historical, organic forms. This was also specifically designed around shapes that I could use to create letterforms for the title. By picking out these shapes in a contrasting colour in the pattern, I was able to create the word "Sustainability" so that it would be fully integrated into the patterned piece, instead of something separate placed on top.

I then created a second pattern, based on contemporary plastic forms (styrofoam, extrusions, etc). This second pattern could be combined with the first in parts, to create more variation throughout the poster.

I also wanted to give a sense of time, so that sustainability could be thought of in familial generations. I used antique photographs of people — some were my own, some were from the Library of Congress — to fill the strangely shaped holes that appeared between the intersections of the patterns.

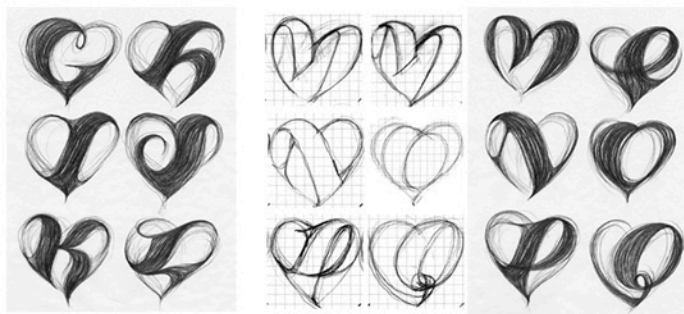
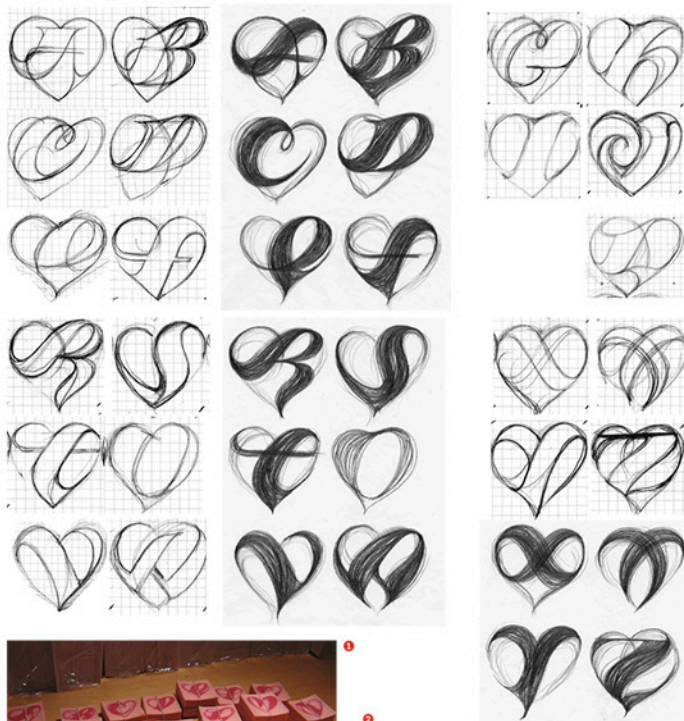
Finally, after all the tiling units of the poster were assembled, I coloured each individual part of the patterns in mostly blues and greens, until the whole of the poster, from a distance, looks a bit like a tree against a sky.





Inside the store itself, it was — in Michael Elmer's words — an infiltration of Marvin Burgin's *Tree* ... there were mainly things everywhere. Portions of the *Want It!* were enlarged and cranking up columns, around boxes, over shelves and into custom-made cages? By the elevators, they swirled around in lights, like a mad dance. Things hung from ceilings, sprouted from floors and in the centre of the store, high on a pedestal, slowly rotating, the shoe drawing had been made out of plastic, surrounded by *Want It!* and random awards. Add to that the bags and catalogues and brochures ... it was really, for me, an unbelievable experience.





FEBRUARY • 2008

VALENTINES '08
PENCIL DRAWINGS
9" x 11" • 5 1/2 x 5 1/2

After the hand-drawn valentines of 2007 (page 88), I had a desire to create a certain amount of individuality in this year's valentines. I started by drawing all the letters of the alphabet in the shape of hearts. For the press sheet I made some long-y words (because I'm somewhat opposed to anything that says "valentines"...). The printer cut the sheets of pink translucent paper down to squares and banded them ❶. I then assembled each person's name ❷, added an X, O, M, for myself, and a heart with my initial on it ❸. These then went into a translucent envelope ❹.

If I had made any other word, like "adorable" or whatever, the recipients would have had difficulty figuring it out, and most probably wouldn't have tried. But people do have a remarkable affinity for recognizing the letters of their own names, and I was counting on this for them to be able to quite quickly get it and be pleased with the result.

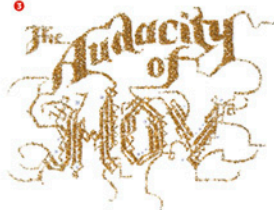




THE AUDACITY OF HOV

GLITTER
ORIGINAL APPROX. 18" X 26" • 45.7 × 50.8 CM
BY MARK SHAW

When Mark Shaw contacted me with an idea to do some titling in glitter, I said yes. Yes, I want to work with glitter. He sent me a box of several kinds of glitter (most of which I still have) and I set to work on this title for an article in *Vibe* about Jay-Z, who is known as *Jay*. (Actually, being a middle-aged white woman living on an island in Canada, I didn't really know who Jay-Z was. *Atom*) Created in much the same way as the sugar series, but with an initial sketch. I put the glitter on a white surface and pushed it around. Shooting glitter is difficult, and I tried different lighting and angles. I think my favourite, by a small margin, is the version shot in sunlight, above, but a less intense version is the one that ran.



DEAR

PERIL CRAYON
6 1/2" X 11" • 16.5 × 28 CM
BY MARK SHAW AND
JILL MARLBOROUGH

An illustration for a women's magazine article about handwritten letters.

Size Matters

SIZE MATTERS

SECTION
BY MARK SHAW AND
JILL MARLBOROUGH

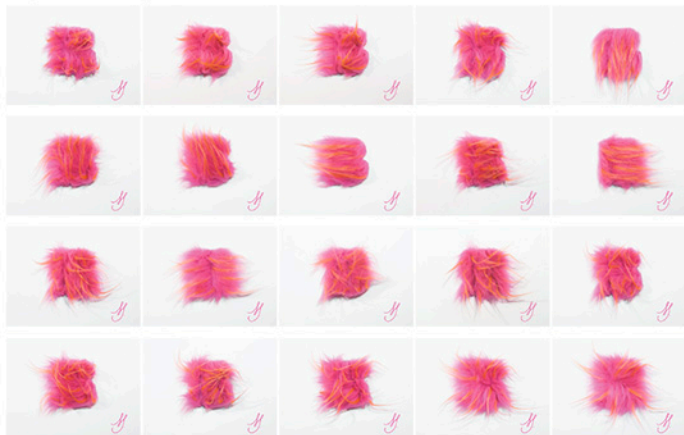
A book title.

BUNCH

POWDER
3 1/2" X 1" • 5.1 × 2.5 CM
BY BUNCH

A design company in the UK called Bunch asked a number of well-known designers to create some kind of iteration of their logo without restrictions. It was a bit of an audacious request, but for some reason I responded — with this, my first (albeit primitive) animation. I've always liked it. It's hilarious in motion.

1
B



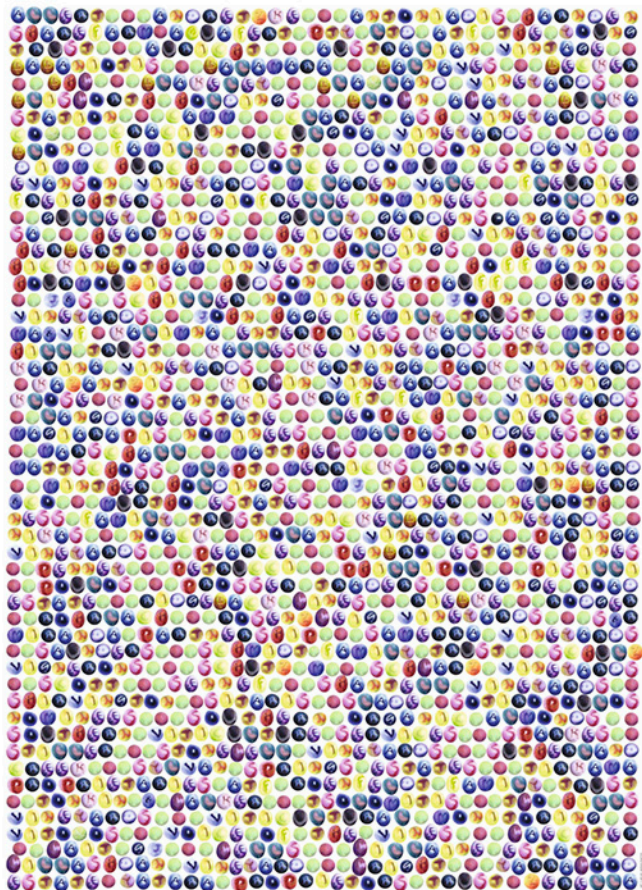
GRAPES POSTER

PERNILL CARLSON
 84 x 55 in. • 61 x 88.9 cm
 © THE SEABRIDGE PALACE

The *Catapult* Palace is a company obsessed with luxury. They also have a wine-distribution arm called *R. Wines*. Based in Australia, *R. Wines* harvests wine from around 200 growers. They asked me to create a poster with the names of their growers on it for an event celebrating them all. My first thought was that I would not do anything with grapes. My second thought was... grapes! I started looking at photos of grapes and was pleased to discover that they come in a surprising variety of colours. I decided to draw grapes with the letters of the alphabet in them, as though they appeared there naturally, either as a bluish part of the colouring or as though in water on the dusty surface of the grape. I drew all 26 letters, plus an ampersand, a hyphen and two blanks for spaces. I then scanned them and arranged them in Photoshop to

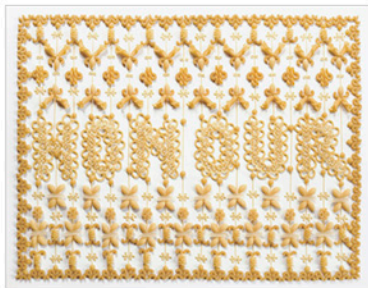
spell out the names (using a typeset template). I placed somewhere around 2,500 grapes in the poster.

When the poster was presented to the distributors at the event in Australia, I was told their reaction, which was exactly what I wanted: at first they thought it was just a pretty poster, then realized it was grapes, and then that there were letters in it and they spelled something... names! Then they searched for their own company name. This is the kind of 'slow reveal' that I love to achieve in my work: an unfolding of curiosity and surprise.



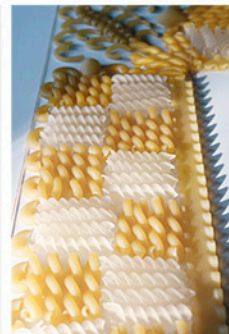
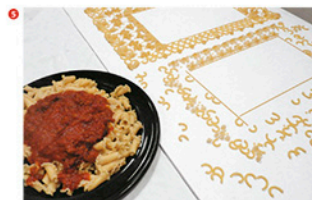
R. WINES GROWERS, VINTAGE 2008

R. WINES



For the chapter on honour I decided to work once again with macaroni (page 83) – or, rather pasta of all kinds, as an homage to the craft works that children make, which are usually given to their parents – that's a form of honour. For this I bought many different shapes of pasta, poured them into bowls and made the frames in situ, without sketches or any idea of what they would be like before I began. I was not gluing them down, so to keep them straight and to leave the right amount of space for the text, I used pins and thread to make a temporary page outline. Cutting the pasta to sit straight on the right places was very fiddly work, but enjoyable, and I spent many happy afternoons listening to music and moving bits of pasta around.

When a spread was finished, I photographed it in my high-tech kitchen studio, and when I was sure I had a good shot, the piece was destroyed and the board cleared for the next page spread. I made seven spreads in all. And when done, I ate them for dinner.



There is one chapter of the book that has almost no words: a chapter on cemeteries. I am a big fan of cemeteries, and I try to visit them whenever I travel, taking lots of pictures. They are incredibly poignant places, full of beauty and sorrow. They are steeped in memory and the passage of time. I am fascinated by the graves of people remembered and the people forgotten. In the old cemeteries some of the graves have been abandoned for decades until they themselves begin to crumble and die. Flowers wither, and even plastic flowers fade, gather dust and finally succumb to time. Recently I became obsessed with taking portraits of the figures of statuary, with their faces stained by rain, growing looser and disintegrating. It was these portraits I used in 16 pages of the book. To frame them I returned to working in tin foil (page 153), this time with the addition of India ink. For some I put down the ink, then scratched through it, or I worked into it with a pen, and for others I used a black pen to make the marks in the foil. The result is beautifully funereal.



