

RUGGIN'

The background of the image is a complex, abstract pattern of organic, wavy shapes. The colors range from light pink to a deeper, muted red. The shapes are irregular and fluid, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of a topographical map or a biological tissue structure.

AN INTRODUCTION

The background of the slide is a complex, abstract pattern of wavy, organic shapes. The colors range from a light, pale pink to a deeper, more saturated red. The shapes are fluid and interconnected, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of a topographical map or a cross-section of a natural material like wood or stone.



So what is Ruggin'? To put it in the simplest description... I make rugs. But not your traditional sense of rugs. Not a rug you lay on the ground, not a rug that you step on. I make rugs that you can use as wall decor, rugs that incorporate a mirror, rugs that don't fit the normal shape of a traditional rug. I was mostly interested in expanding the use of a traditional rug. Because why do rugs have to be so boring sometimes? They don't have to be, and I wanted to break through that stereotype of rugs.



Why AND WHAT IS RUG TUFTING



To back track, in the beginning of the pandemic I also discovered Tik Tok, a very famous social media platform as many know. This is where I initially discovered rug tufting. I saw creators making these custom rugs of anime characters, coasters, pillows, wall decor, etc. It inspired me, and I honestly needed a hobby during the covid pandemic, so I decided to look into it. I moved over to YouTube to do more specific research; and by research I mean falling into a deep, deep rabbit hole on rug tufting. What materials did I need? How much money was this going to cost me? Can I actually do this?

I discovered rug tufting consists of only a few materials needed: A rug tufting gun, a frame, a rug tufting cloth, and yarn.

If you are not familiar, I will compare these materials to the things you would need for a painting.

The frame: It is the structure for your work, I would compare the frame to the wood frame of the canvas if you were doing the painting, it's your support. You can buy a frame online or make it yourself. I decided to make it myself because it is the cheaper option, and with a little help from my father we were able to make it in about an hour. I decided to go with a four foot by four foot frame. I went with this size because I wasn't really interested in making a rug any bigger than that. Plus I am able to fit a lot more smaller pieces on one canvas. After you complete the frame you then attach rug grippers, which are nails attached to a flat board that are on an angle, around your frame so the rug tufting cloth can be secured around the frame.

The rug tufting cloth: It is pretty much your canvas, it is a blank slate. You can draw your design on it and it pretty much serves as an outline for your rug. The key to tufting comes with the cloth, you have to make sure your tufting cloth is stretched very tightly around the frame. You do this with the rug grippers surrounding your frame, you should be able to get the cloth so tight around the frame that a coin can bounce off of it. If it isn't this tight your rug tufting gun would not be able to make the knots it is supposed to make in the cloth. There are many options for a tufting cloth online, I prefer something a little more durable and thick so you can really apply some pressure. I have learned this the hard way. I guess I am a little more aggressive when tufting a rug and some cloth won't be able to support that pressure. Once I found a cloth I was comfortable and confident in I have not strayed from it since.

The rug tufting gun: This I would consider your paint brush, it is what you are using to apply the paint to the canvas. This machine does cost a pretty penny but is well worth your time if you are going to consistently make rugs. However, it does the majority of the work for you. You thread the yarn through the machine and move the machine wherever you want the yarn to go. It creates the knots for you through the cloth. There

are two types of rug tufting guns. A cut pile and a loop pile gun. Pretty much the key difference between the two is the way your finished product will look at the end. The cut pile gun will cut your yarn and give the finished piece more of a fluffier finish. While the loop pile gun will loop the yarn back into the cloth and will give your rug a more tighter finish. Mine is a cut pile gun, I went with a cut pile just because I believed it would work with the pieces I had in mind a little bit more.

The yarn: It's like your paint that you apply to your canvas. Finding the correct yarn did take some trial and error. Some yarn works better with certain clothes and guns, others not so much. I've tried very expensive yarn, and yarn that's easy to find at Michaels. I could have made either work but overall for my purpose the yarn found at Michaels worked just fine for me. I was able to find a lot of it, in a variety of colors, and I didn't have to wait for it to ship to me. It serves my purpose.

To learn how to tuft and to make a quality rug took a while. A lot of my research was done through watching other creators on youtube and trying their techniques and seeing if it worked for me. In the beginning I didn't go as smooth as the youtube videos made it seem. It took some work to get decent at it, and my craft of rug making wasn't really senior project worthy until the summer of 2021, right before my senior year. I did a lot of learning on my own, and I am still working on my craft to this very day.



My PROCESS



So now that I knew how to tuft rugs I would have to come to the conclusion of what I wanted to make for my senior project. Like stated before I did not want to make your "ordinary rug", I wanted to stray away from what a traditional rug would look like. Finding inspiration online was a really big help to me. I noticed that the rug tufting community was already straying away from these "traditional rugs" and they were leaning more into wall decor, or coasters, even pillows. Even if it was a rug it was not a square or rectangular basic rug (nothing against square and rectangular rugs they are great for certain things). These rugs had curves, different colors, unique patterns, these rugs were dynamic. And that was something I was aiming for as a creator.

For my final piece I took inspiration from two different places, one place was online through the rug tufting community and one was from my childhood.

Online I saw a lot of different creators creating rugs that bordered a mirror. Whether the mirror was a full body mirror or just a small little circle I found myself drawn to that. I believe I was interested in this due to the fact that it was not only evolving the rug into wall decor, it was evolving the mirror as well. It wasn't a basic mirror any longer, it was a mirror that had flare, a mirror with some charm as I like to say. It didn't have to be a mirror that was completely functional in a mirror sense. Some of the designs I saw had a full body length mirror bordered with funky patterns, while others had just a miniscule circular mirror that you could only see your eyeball in. The point is that the mirror did not have to serve a function. This idea was dynamic to me, and I knew that I wanted to include mirrors in my final pieces. But I didn't know how I wanted to border them with my rugs. I wanted it to be somewhat personal to me, this is where I took inspiration from my own life, and from my own drawings.

As a kid I was always drawing, what I like to call, drips. I did it when I was in class, or when I was bored. It was just something that I was just consistently drawing throughout my life. I found myself drawing them one day and I figured if I could connect these drips in a circular fashion I could use this type of design as a border for my mirrors.

And that is what I did. I started, where every idea for an artist starts, with basic sketches in my

sketchbooks. My goal was to find the initial shapes I wanted to make, also to see how these droopy drips would work in a circular fashion around the mirror. Once I got my basic idea down I started to tuft them.

First drafts went really well I believe. It was exactly the starting point I wanted if I am being honest, the shape and size felt right. It looked like something that I would personally hang on my own wall. I started to make a lot of them with different colors and various shapes. I realized not all of them had to have the same exact shape. Since I have been drawing these little drips for as long as I could remember it was easy to free hand sketch right on the tufting cloth, as long as I was able to dictate how big I wanted it to be.

As I created more of these pieces my thoughts about them started to evolve. I was thinking how I could make this differ from the other pieces I see online. It was already quite different shape wise, but how could I really make it stand out? The idea came across of including multiple pieces that fit together in one set. I started to align my mirror pieces so the drips would almost interlock with each other in a vertical manner, kind of like a puzzle. Eventually each set would have a distinct color palette that would further make it known that these three pieces were a cohesive set. For instance, "the forest set" would include three vertical mirrors that would interlock as well as have greens and browns as the color palette for the mirrors. I then moved away from the vertical mirror set and started to make sets with four mirrors in a square formation. They would still have a cohesive color palette, but it was just arranged a little differently.

Eventually, I broke a little away from these mirror sets and started to create the same mirrors but instead of using a singular solid color for one piece I started to use multiple colors for one piece. So they became a stand alone mirror. I wanted to start creating stand alone pieces due to the fact that, even though I liked these sets, they did take up a lot of space on the wall. The thought of selling them started to come to mind, and maybe not every consumer would want a three piece set. I wanted to add some variety to my work while keeping these rugs very similar.

Throughout the semester these were my main focus and creations, I feel as if they were a really

steady idea that I could really focus on and perfect... Something that would become like my signature piece when it comes to tufting rugs. My next step was doing research on how I could possibly get these rugs out to the world, and what type of branding I want to stand behind them.



My RESEARCH



Now that I started to create these rugs it was time to decide how I would brand them. How was I going to brand these items, and how was I going to get them out into the world? I figured as a brand new business my best bet, where all craft makers go, is Etsy. That would be my main way of selling these rugs. While I could use TikTok and Instagram to promote my work, an Etsy shop would be the simplest way to sell them. As a new creator these platforms like Tik Tok, Instagram, and Etsy allow me to get my merchandise out there more quickly and efficiently. They can easily spread the word of my brand and with a platform like TikTok it can have the potential to blow up over night. However, I did want to focus on opening up an Etsy shop first so I decided to focus on that particular algorithm.

So I thought to myself how could I become successful on etsy, what did I have to do to get my work noticed. I started to look into the Etsy algorithm. That gave me a lot of the motivation I needed to continue and to become successful in making these pieces. So how does the etsy algorithm work? Etsy is a program where you pretty much type in key words and those keywords bring you to the popular items associated with those words. The overall goal (currently still my goal because Ruggin' is still a very new small business) is to make Ruggin' appear when you are talking about unique, trendy, wall decor.

The etsy algorithm takes into consideration various amounts of information, but the majority of the information in consideration comes into play when you are talking about the title of your piece and what the buyer is searching for. Etsy states that "Items in Etsy's search results must match the buyer's search word or phrase. Items that do not match a buyer's search won't be included in results." So if a consumer were to search "rug mirror" the title of my piece should include the two words "rug" and "mirror" in them or else my piece would not be relevant to the search.

Etsy's algorithm also takes into consideration item attribute relevancy. Which is a way of saying that "the key information provided in item attributes is considered in Etsy search, similar to keywords in item tags and titles." So if you were to include a description with your item the etsy algorithm would pick up on those key words, as well as hashtags and comments. The algorithm also considered listing qualities, which is considered to be how well individual items tend to do in searches. So if one of your items is picking up a lot of frequency then it is more likely that your other products will start to pick up more traction as well.

The Etsy algorithm also takes into consideration smaller details like how well is your shop being received, are consumers enjoying your product, are they leaving you good reviews. The more good reviews you receive the more frequent you become in a search. Finally, on smaller details, the algorithm takes into consideration

how frequently a new item is listed or if an item has been relisted. And lastly, it takes into consideration what is your location in correlation to the consumer.

After learning this information I started to reconsider how I would title my pieces. Initially I would call these pieces "blobs" because that is what they kind of looked like. However, "blob" is really not a name that would be located under the Etsy algorithm with rug decor in consideration to the consumer. So I decided to opt for a more traditional name in a sense. For example I would title a piece on Etsy "Rug Wall Decor". Something simple, so that the algorithm picks up on it fairly easily. In my description I would include keywords like "rug tufting" or "mirror rugs" so the algorithm picks up on that as well. Overall I have come to the conclusion that being kind of blunt in your title and description can lead you to more successful interaction.

Even though I have not officially started putting my pieces on Etsy I was eager to learn about the algorithm because it would be beneficial to me soon after my senior project is over. As stated before, rug making will carry on with me even after my senior project is completed so all this information I am learning is being helpful for my life after Purchase as well. Learning how to work Etsy will make it easier for me to set up a fully running shop in the future. And lead me to a more successful business venture.



DESIGN AND PHOTOS





After conducting the research the final part of my project was the branding aspect of it. I already had an idea of what I wanted my branding to look like. It needed to be trendy and fun, something that is funky but gives off the idea of my pieces being handmade and high quality. I wanted my demographic to be (very specifically) people like me. Someone who needs a fun piece of wall decor for their living arrangement. Someone who needs something for their college dorm room or their new apartment. It would most likely be people from the age 20 and up. I wanted to be able to reach these people through not only my rugs but also through my branding. I want them to be intrigued throughout the whole process... From viewing the photo of the rugs on the etsy shop to opening the fun packaging, to reading the pamphlet, to finally hanging the final pieces on the wall.

Even though I took the physical photographs later in my process, due to the fact that I wanted all the rugs to be completed. I want to talk about photography first, because that is the first thing that people see when they go to view the piece. This is why the photographs are so important. The consumer will base their initial opinions based off of those first photos they see. This idea is scary to me... because I personally did not know anything about photography or even where to begin. Again I brought it back to falling into a deep rabbit hole on youtube on how to make your own home studio and how to take professional photography from your own home.

I was already equipped with the two major items I needed. A DSLR camera and a white table cloth. The only thing I needed was a white light that would project a steady light source from the side, which was easily accessible from Best Buy. I first set up my "studio" by hanging up my white table cloth on the wall. The first photos I wanted to take were the photos of my rugs hanging on the wall like they intentionally should. I set them up either individually or in their sets and started to shoot them. Since I was not really knowledgeable about working a DSLR camera I decided to set it on auto mode, which seemed to do the trick for the photos. Once I got all the photos that I wanted of the rugs hanging I then moved them down on the ground. I piled them up according to the set and started to shoot them from a bird's eye view. I did this with every single set and then I shot the box from an opened and closed angle. Once I got the photos I liked collected I set them up in photoshop to do some minor editing and touch ups. Now do I believe that these are the best photos ever taken..no, obviously not. However it was a learning experience for me and a skill that became beneficial to me at the end of the day, even if I am not the best at it.

As stated I wanted my branding to be fun and trendy, but also have an undertone of being high quality handmade rugs. There were three main components to

my branding, they consisted of the logo, the packaging, and finally the pamphlet.

I first want to talk about the guidelines I had for this project overall. My color scheme would be a monotone pink which consisted of colors f15e61, f6a6b5, and fac7ca. I chose pink because it's a bright and uplifting color and overall just fit what I wanted to do. These colors were used in all of my packaging and as well as my logo. The typeface I chose to go with are Pinot Grigio Modern and Gotham-Light. I wanted the typefaces to have more of a serious tone than anything else. I wanted them to be a little bit calmer and have a tone of seriousness which would contrast my main design which is more fun and outgoing.

I first started out with the packaging. For a consumer I wanted the packaging to be just as fun as the item they are getting themselves. I for one always get excited about getting a package especially if the packaging is good. I wanted the packaging to be more of an experience than anything. My main struggle, however, is that I could not roll up these wall hangings due to the fact of the mirror in them. So they had to lay flat. The way I got around this was to design a pizza box, but obviously except holding pizzas it would hold my rugs flat on their backs. And it worked. I designed a fairly simple pizza box which consisted of these flowy thick lines against a solid background and the title going straight across.

These flowy thick lines became a staple throughout my whole branding element. These lines play with the idea of my rugs. For instance, each of my rugs have this flowy pattern whether its included in the shape of the rug, or the lines flowing through the rugs breaking apart the different colors. Overall, the thick lines in my design played off my rugs and their design.

These thick flowy lines made their way into my pamphlet as well, where they served as the main background. Making a pamphlet was necessary due to the fact that the rugs do come in sets and have to be arranged in a certain way. The pamphlets guide the consumer to hang the rugs in the intended way, or they could hang them however they please. The pamphlet also includes instructions on how to properly take care of the rugs and gives you a photograph on how the rugs should be arranged on the wall. Also depending on the set the consumer bought the photo in the pamphlet will change to show the set you have purchased. The pamphlet also set up my brand language. My project consists of very little word in general so having a little blurb that sets a tone for language is really beneficial for myself and my connection with the consumer. The pamphlet will be placed in the packaging so it will be the first thing you see when you open up the pizza box.

The logo took me the longest to come to a conclusion about. As a graphic designer, logos are not my strong suit. I have always struggled with the creative process of making a logo. For me a logo is pretty much the first thing you see when you are looking at a brand. It is a symbol that represents the entirety of the brand. To find a symbol like that is quite intimidating to say the least. That was something I had to overcome when creating the logo for Ruggin'. There were a lot of variations when it came to the logo, and a lot of trial and error. I wanted to go with a design that was sleek but also made it seem like my product was handmade. I always knew I wanted my logo to incorporate yarn, I was also playing on the variation of my logo also including text (that did not pan out the way I wanted it too). Eventually after drawing yarn over and over again I decided to simplify the form of yarn. I then matched the colors with the same colors as my pizza box design. I proceeded to get the logo printed in a sticker format so I could insert them on the inside of my packaging.

With all of these combinations I was able to achieve the goal that I wanted, which was to make my branding and design look trendy but handmade. The packaging came out fun not only for me but for the consumer as well. Which is what I wanted, I personally believe that getting an item is not just about the item the consumer bought... It somewhat becomes an experience when it comes to opening and unboxing a package. That is why, to me, the branding matters so much. Overall, the branding looked like it would connect with the demographic I was aiming for, I was really happy and pleased with the final product. From the packaging to the pamphlet to the photographs and logo as well. There is such an added value when something is handmade, when something is handmade you know it is that person's passion, that they enjoy doing it. That is why I believe small creators are so important because, like myself, small creators really care for the consumer and the product. They take the time and effort to make sure the packaging and branding and overall experience is pristine.



CONCLUSION

The background of the slide is a complex, abstract pattern of wavy, organic shapes. The colors range from light pink to a deeper, muted red, creating a sense of depth and movement. The shapes are irregular and fluid, resembling liquid or smoke captured in time. The overall effect is a textured, almost topographical surface that changes as the viewer's perspective shifts.

As stated in the beginning Ruggin' was not only my senior project, it really brought together my design and craft skills into a singular focus. I had high expectations for this project, and I was looking forward to it for a very long time. My main goal of this project was to create as much as possible, which I did. I was creating these rugs every week, I was constantly working on something I truly loved to do. I would not change my focus for my senior project to anything else, I honestly never got tired of doing it or bored. This project really combined all of my skills and education into one project. My craft, my design, and even my business skills were elevated and expanded. I have used traits that I learned from freshman year into this project, for example I have not used a DSLR camera since freshman year for the class Lens and Time and I found myself needing to use it now in my senior year. However, I am a person who decided to do my whole project in one semester. While it was totally doable it did come with some challenges I had to meet. For instance, I would have loved to create a website for Ruggin' but never got a chance too just because of the time crunch. If I honestly were to do it again I would take my senior project in two separate semesters. It seemed as if I was rushed due to this. Overall though, I loved creating Ruggin' it is something that is fully mine and something I created and built from the ground up and it is something that I am truly proud of.

