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Grad Design Studio  
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# Contents

02	The Project
03	Self-Cognition
08	Brainstorm
10	Primary Ideas
13	Idea Development
15	Creating My Poster
19	Final Poster
20	What I Learned

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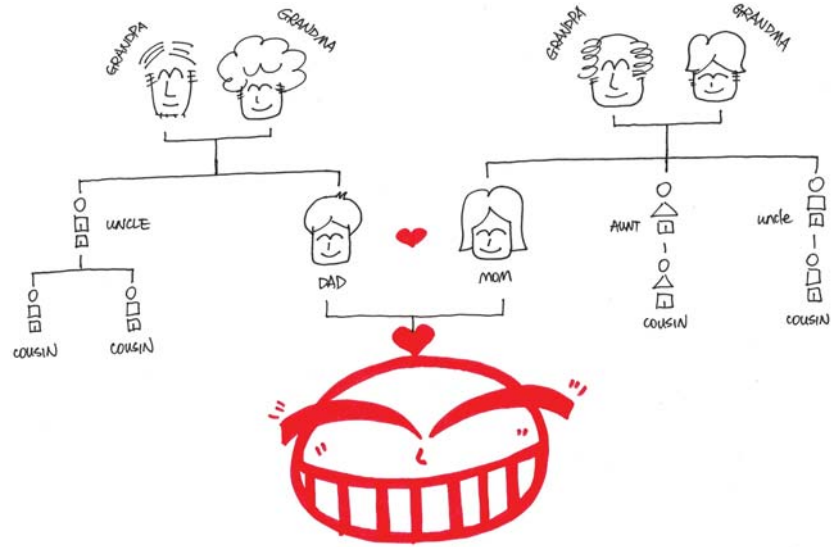
—R.S. Wurman

## The Project:

As my classmates and I embark on this two-year adventure together, we are relative strangers. How we introduce ourselves to each other is the premise behind this project. Ultimately, this is an information design problem.

My task is to create a self-portrait for my classmates using Wurman's five hatracks to organize data about myself into accessible information for my audience. The vital challenges are figuring out who exactly I am and what about myself I wish to communicate. Meanwhile, I must consider my audience and their expectations.

My final piece should employ hatracks for multiple layers and readings, and should be executed as a poster.



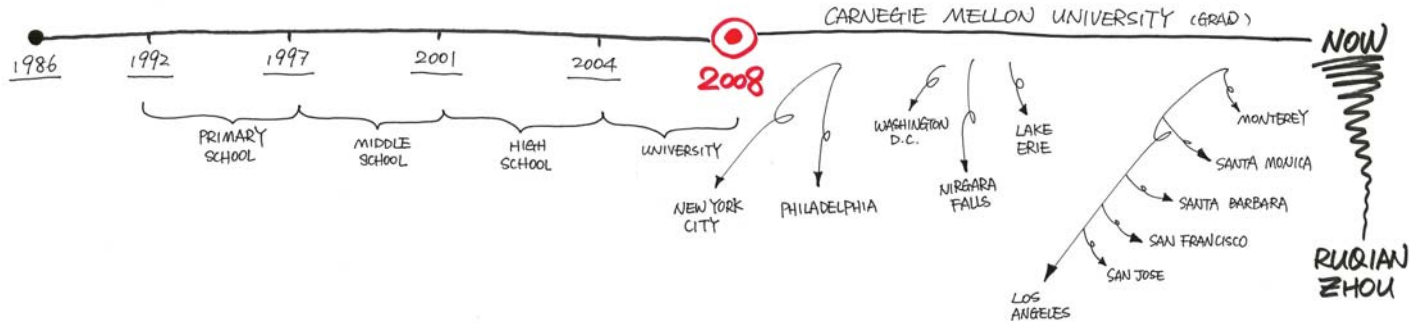
## Self-Cognition:

The first step I took was creating rough sketches. I started to recall my life randomly and tried to organize them by LATCH.

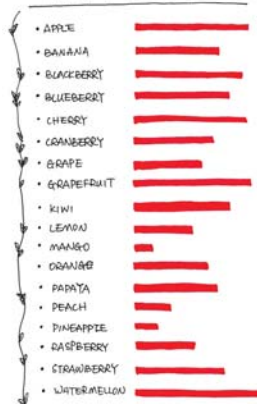
I called my mom in China. I asked her to remind me of some experiences I had, in order to look for more clues for recognizing myself. My mom did not fully understand my request. She sent me a long email, which was full of her love for her only child, but no more information. I realized that exploring my life would be difficult. However, at the same time, I was inspired that I might start from my parents, who play the most important role in my life.

♥ SHANGHAI, CHINA ♥

= PITTSBURGH, USA =



FRUIT I LIKE TO EAT:



THINGS I LIKE TO COLLECT:



WHAT I DREAM TO BE:





1. I was born on February 11, which was the third day of Chinese Lunar Year in 1986. I am the only child in my family. I am used to having two birthdays every year. I always eat cake <sup>for</sup> on one day and noodles <sup>on</sup> for the other day.
2. <sup>After I was born, my mom developed</sup> After my mom born me, she got a serious kidney illness. My dad worked <sup>during the</sup> on daytime and took care of my mom after work. I had to live in the kindergarten six days a week from the age of two. My mom recovered 5 years later and she is healthy now.
3. I had my special route from home to the kindergarten. I played with <sup>or</sup> one sculpture in the middle of the street garden, visited an old craftsman with a talking parrot, stopped by the statue of Pushkin, and ate one <sup>package</sup> pack of M&M chocolate.
4. My dad is good at riding <sup>a</sup> bicycle. He took me everywhere by bike. My dad rode <sup>with</sup> me by bike until I graduated from high school.
5. My dad is also good at cooking traditional Chinese <sup>food</sup> meat. He is my favorite chef <sup>in</sup> around the world. I cannot cook, but I strongly believe I <sup>inherited</sup> got the cooking gene from him and I would be a good cook in the future. I can bake <sup>cheesecake</sup> cheese cake, brownies, and cookies.
6. I hate <sup>potatoes</sup> potato but I eat chips and French fries. I hate beans but I love Tofu and soya milk.
7. I was bitten by a monkey when I was 4. I <sup>would</sup> could not close to the monkey and refused to see them in the zoo. I began to <sup>lose my fear</sup> no longer afraid of monkeys 10 years <sup>later</sup> after.
8. I had my first bicycle when I was 10. I <sup>won a prize and got it at half price.</sup> drew to win it in half price. I could legally ride a bike <sup>in</sup> to the streets after the age of 12. I was hit by a cab door when I passed by it at the same time the rear passenger was <sup>opening</sup> going to open the door inside.
9. I learned to play keyboard when I was in ~~the~~ kindergarten. I had ~~the~~ keyboard classes for 3 years. I dropped the class after I went to the primary school. I stopped playing keyboard after the age of 10.
10. I <sup>had</sup> received tonsillectomy surgery when I was 12 years old. I could not eat solid food for two weeks. I enjoyed eating ice cream during those two weeks but had to eat disgusting mashed potatoes <sup>at the same time, too.</sup> at the same time, too.
11. I started my life <sup>in</sup> in the middle school when I was 11 years old. I met my best friends there and had great time with them.

12. I was diagnosed with congenital diseases and I cannot do strenuous exercise. I had to go to the hospital once a week and took more than 10 pills every day. I stopped all my PE lessons in the middle school for 1 ~~year~~ and a half ~~years~~. <sup>1/2</sup>
13. I am interested in sports. I was good at playing Ping-Pong in the middle school. I was <sup>in</sup> a women's Ping-Pong championship in the middle school. I was a member of the Jump Rope team in high school. My team won the championship in the district and ~~the~~ <sup>third</sup> place in the city.
14. One of my friends killed herself when she was 14 years old. I attended her funeral, which is <sup>was</sup> the first and only one I ~~attended~~ <sup>had have</sup> until now. I still keep in touch with her parents and go to visit them on my friend's birthday.
15. My first boyfriend was my best friend in middle school. We lost contact after graduation but met again unexpectedly before we went to university. We had <sup>great</sup> time until he went to Australia. We did not contact each other for two years, ~~and~~ <sup>but then we</sup> became good friends again. Now he is studying in Australia and I am studying in the ~~US~~ <sup>U.S.</sup>.
16. One of my favorite books is <The Five People You Meet in Heaven>. I strongly believe that <sup>all things are</sup> ~~everything is~~ closely related to each other. "There are no random acts. We are all connected. You can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind."
17. I always <sup>dreamed of being</sup> ~~dream~~ that I could be a dolphin trainer.
18. I love dog ~~s~~ Old English Sheepdog ~~s~~ and Miniature Schnauzer ~~s~~ are my favorite dog breeds.
19. I am afraid of thrill rides but I experienced roller coasters ~~s~~ twice within two hours in Disney Land.
20. My roommate in <sup>undergrad</sup> ~~Undergrad~~ got married in 2009. She is the first person who <sup>was</sup> ~~gets~~ married among all my friends. I picked ~~one decent~~ <sup>out a nice</sup> wedding gift for her in Disney Land. I was excited and nervous when I was writing the wedding card for her. And I <sup>sent</sup> ~~expressed~~ the gift to her which cost me <sup>as much as</sup> ~~twice price than~~ the gift itself.
21. I got my driver's license in Shanghai when I was 22. I drive <sup>a</sup> ~~my~~ manual transmission car there. <sup>with</sup> ~~express~~ mail.

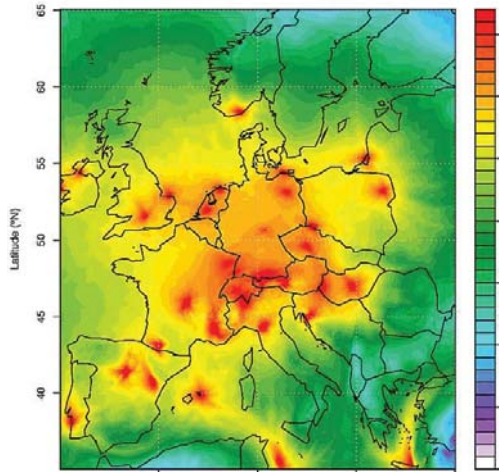
## Issues To Consider:

Story,  
words,  
images,  
words as images,  
mapping,  
macro/micro,  
layers,  
scale,  
grid,  
measurement,  
progression,  
time,  
type,  
color,  
visual voice,  
interpretation,  
clarity,  
ambiguity,  
intent.

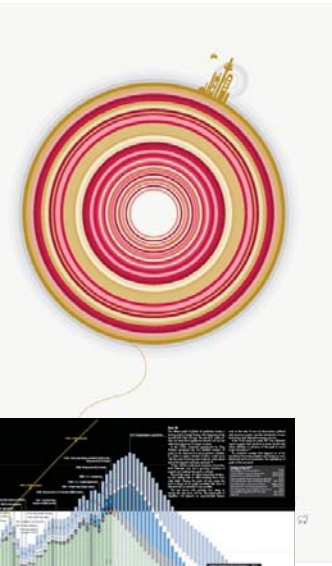
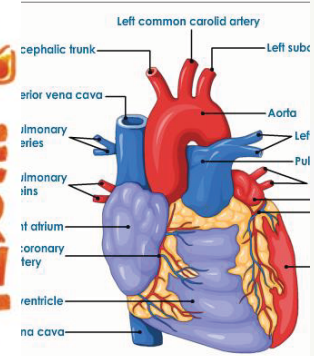
## Brainstorm:

When I was working on my life stories, I also kept thinking about form and tried to find a solution which could convey the information effectively and express my ideas appropriately. Meanwhile, I was fairly certain that I could not simply cover the moments of happiness or of sadness exclusively. Life is complicated. I realized that I could not define the stories in black and white. Thus, I would like to show my real life using a combination of good and bad memories.

The most difficult thing about the process was to express the meanings behind my stories. Obviously, the ones that I still remember are the stories that have had a significant impact on my whole life. There are multiple ways to show them. I prefer to focus on one theme, which could not only show my feelings but also represent my thoughts.

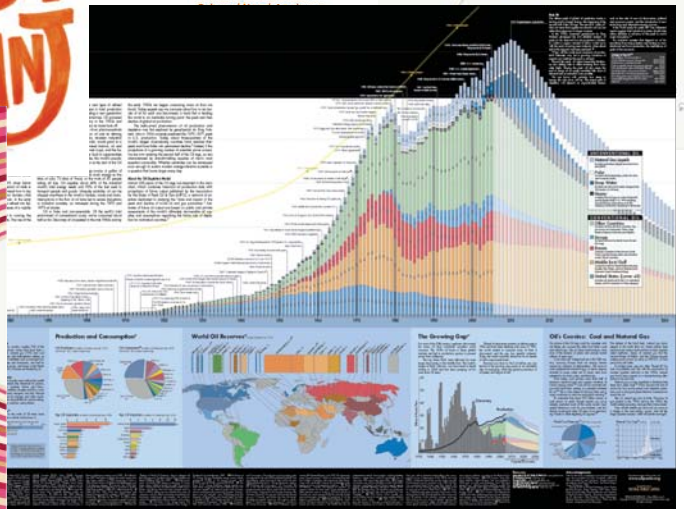


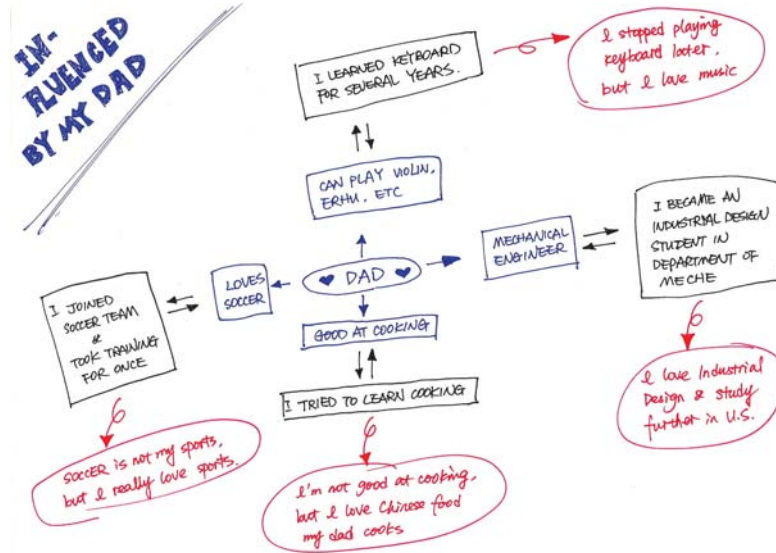
REDUCE  
YOUR  
CARBON  
FOOT  
PRINT



WELCOME TO  
THE LAND OF  
**NEVER-ENDING  
POSSIBILITIES**

**KNIT FEST**  
METRO TORONTO CONVENTION CENTER  
ON DECEMBER 7-9, 2007



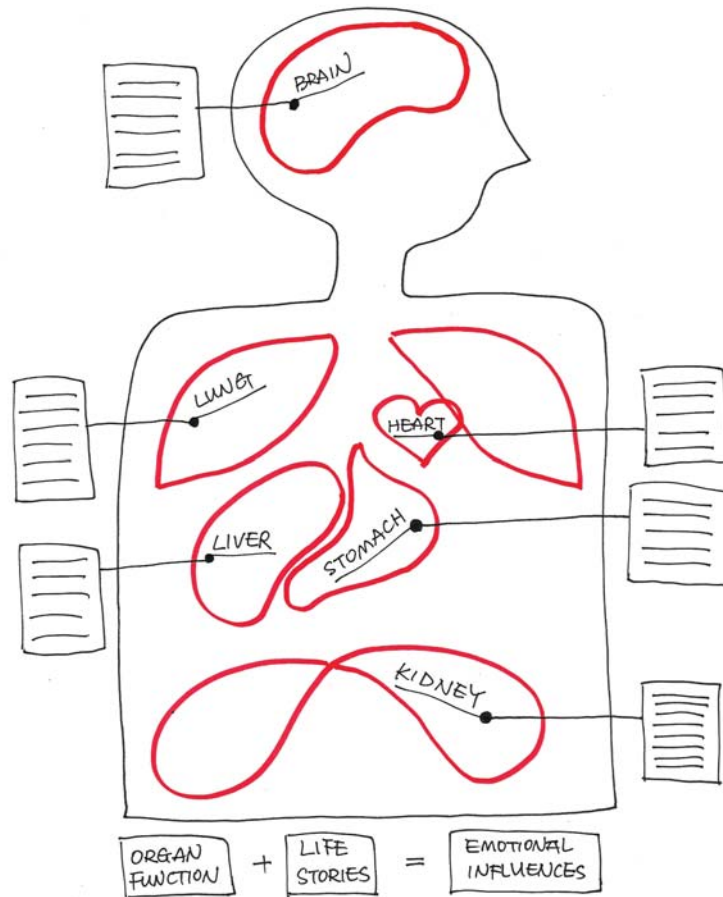


## Primary Ideas

I generated some ideas and came up with three main forms as follows:

### "Influenced By Others"

Beginning with my dad, who has played a vital role for me during the past 23 years, all the people and environments around me shaped my lifestyle and characteristics to some extent. Sometimes the influences are not straightforward, and sometimes they are surprising. I appreciate all of them.

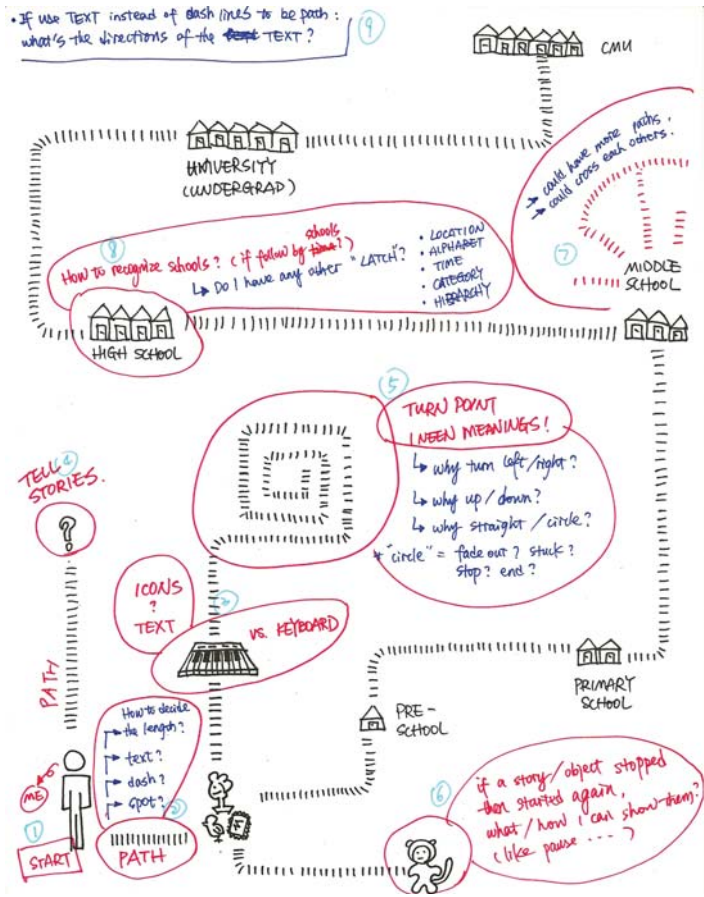


## Primary Ideas

### “Organic Life”

The second idea is related to the human body. I wanted to combine some organ functions with my life stories, in order to explain my feelings. First, I located some main organs in the body using abstract shapes. Next, I searched functions of these organs and tried to figure out their advantages to human beings. Then, I analogized the functions of my organs to the meanings of my life stories. I hope to explore some long-term influences with this idea.





## Idea Development

After I made the decision to develop my ideas, I started to consider the details. At this point, more and more questions appeared in my mind.

- How do I define the viewer's entrance?
- How do I design the form of paths?
- How to highlight the key points?
- How to use icons or text appropriately?
- How to organize the stories by using LATCH?
- How to show the connections among these stories?
- Why make the paths turn right/left/up/down?



## Creating My Poster

Using one of my favorite quotes as the theme for my poster, I wanted to claim that all things are closely related to each other.

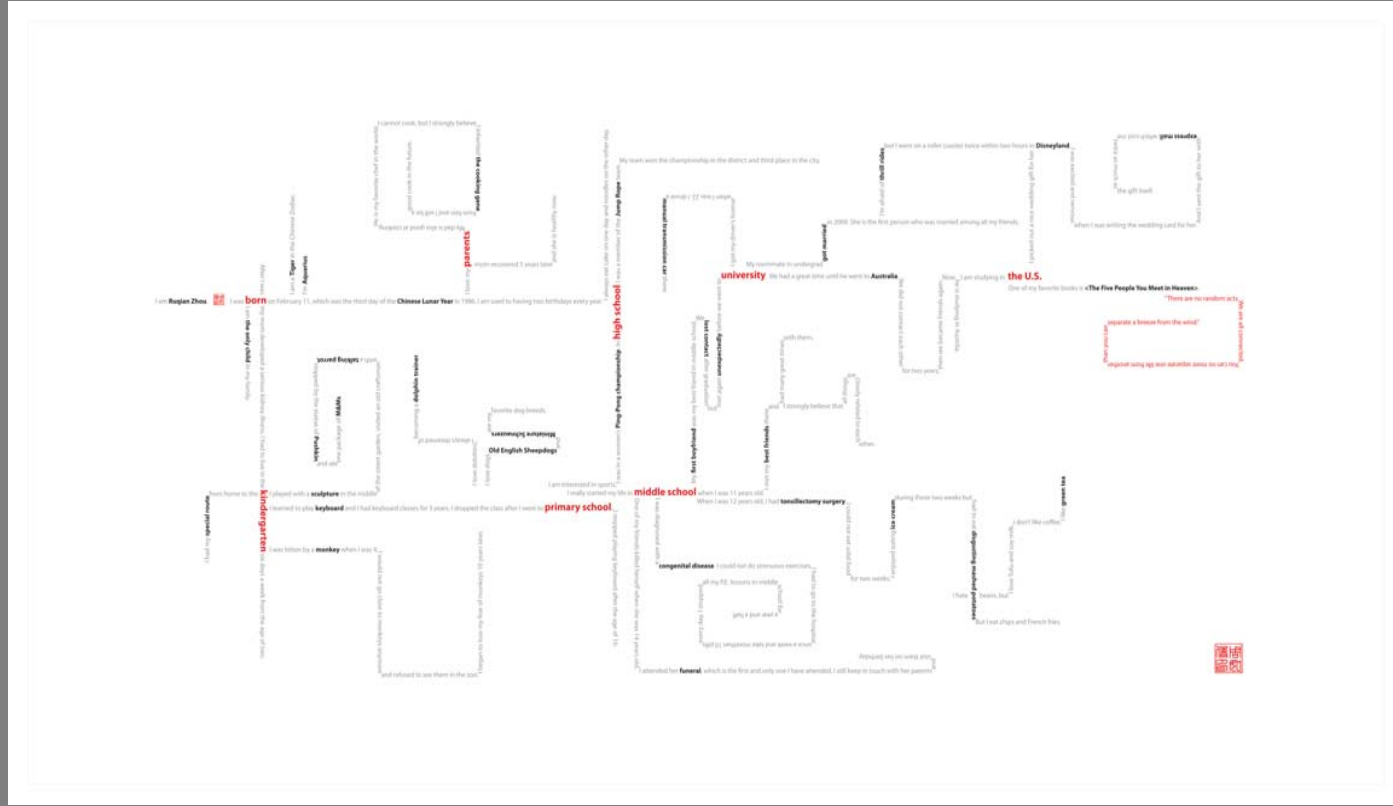
I used my name with a red arrow to indicate the viewer's entrance and used the same red color to highlight my categories. I made these categories a little bit bigger than the content text, which can easily catch one's eyes and lead the audience to some new stories.

I defined the directions of the paths by their meanings; turning up is positive and turning down is negative. It is obvious that some stories turn up and turn down for several times, which explain a realistic life.

I chose to use text rather than dashed lines to represent the paths. It is interesting because the text is also the pattern. In macro way, when the audience stands far from the poster, they can only see the big picture, which looks like a maze with twisted channels. However, in micro way, when the viewers approach more closely, they can read all the sentences and follow the directions by turning their heads.







## Final Poster:

During the whole week, I received lots of feedback from my professor and my classmates. The feedback was positive and exciting. At the same time, I was inspired by them to make some adjustments for my final poster.

My final poster uses the idea of paths to tell my life stories. The paths are written by text, which are connected to the main categories and expanded in multiple directions. I defined the turning point as up for positive and down for negative.

There are three layers in my final poster. The first one is category. The names of the categories are bigger, bolder and in red. The second one is keywords in sentences. They are regular size, bolder and in black. The last layer is descriptions, which are regular size, regular weight and in 50% grey. I also adjusted the color balance of red in order to express my emotion more directly. Basically, the final adjustment makes the layout much more dynamic and attractive.

I accepted professor Dan's suggestion and used my Chinese name stamp to replace the arrow as the viewer's entrance. I also use the same, larger version on the lower right corner, where is the traditional position for name stamps. The traditional Chinese name stamp indicates my cultural background and brings closure to the poster.

My final poster is simple and clean. From a macro perspective, it is a maze to show my life track, which is versatile and full of challenges. From a micro perspective, it is composed by multiple stories, which are independent but also related to each other. I highlight my theme in red as an exit to echo the viewer's entrance, which is one of my favorite quotes: "There are no random acts. We are all connected. You can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind."

## What I Learned:

During the whole process, I found the most difficult part is to figure out who I am. Sometimes I avoid recalling the past or choose to ignore the details around. However, experiences shape one person. If I can step back for a moment, it is obvious to see the influences directly or indirectly. At the same time, I delight in realizing that even the unfortunates can play a positive role in my life.

The other thing I learned from this project is that, it is necessary to consider my goals, my audience and both of our expectations. I have to decide the content I wish to communicate and choose the appropriate form to convey the information. It is better to begin with one main perspective and using LATCH to build the structure of data, which makes the understanding of data more organized but dynamic.

