

02 November – 15 December 2012

PAOLO

ONE FOR EACH

SALVAGIONE

San Francisco Center for the Book

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The term Wunderkammer, often translated as “room of wonder,” is exactly literal, as is so often the case with German nouns. The word manages to lower expectations and raise them simultaneously. The term’s literalness is downright euphoric, a prime example of mundanity in celebration of, in service of, spectacle.

The literalness of “Wunderkammer” is splendid specifically because it frames something so transitory: moments of wonderment that are, by definition and purpose, transient, short-lived.

The less literal, and therefore more truthful, translation is “cabinet of curiosity,” and that particular comprehension—a collection of peculiar things, things that by definition might be considered to exist as refutations of confinement to category—serves Paolo Salvagione’s ends.

In ONE FOR EACH, he has produced a sensory Wunderkammer. His elegant cabinet of curiosities contains five drawers, one for each of the human senses. ONE FOR EACH exists as a compact set of drawers, a box of English buckram and black leather, nearly 250 cubic inches of sensory activity. Each drawer holds a distinct, self-contained object—and in the playful manner that routinely characterizes Salvagione’s work, the senses mingle in unexpected ways:

Three-dimensional projections emphasize the tactile nature of printed images; they embrace the mundanity of a universe ever so slightly apart from our own. Silhouettes of leaves ask you to gauge species by contour, yet the absence of color brings attention to the visual; they play on memory, serving up blank form as screens onto which one projects associated images. Talking tapes acknowledge a tangible aspect of sound; they ask just how much data, how much meaning, can be condensed in simple plastic. A musky, smell-based exploration summons up mental images of physical activity; it dissociates exertion by engaging with the clinical. A unique taste enhancer promises to temporarily bond to your receptors, making all things sour seem sweet; first, however, your fingers must negotiate the brittle blister pack.

And all, in combination and individually, show how our senses can deceive us, and in the process yield something akin to a child’s surprise at the roles these senses play in helping us navigate the world.





1 SIGHT

Sight and the Media of Immersion

As the future slides into focus, as we come to nearly inhabit it and to think of it as something increasingly proximate to the present, it retains nonetheless a lingering hint of the future-mess of times past. This isn't instant nostalgia. Quite the contrary, it's the trust form of future shock, the one that marvels at just how familiar everything is, despite all the buildup.

We are still making good on the promises of our futurist past. At an emotional level, the scenario resembles how we might try to please our parents and our grandparents long after they have passed away. At a functional level, it involves aesthetic approaches and illusory goals that persist even as technology purportedly evolves.

From surround-sound home stereo systems to the holodecks of starships galaxies away, from Alexander Pope's garden to Las Vegas simulacra, from the blue-and-red glasses of a long-ago monster machine to the headache-inducing multiple spectacles of our current moment, the media of immersion has been and remains a tantalizing cultural fixation.

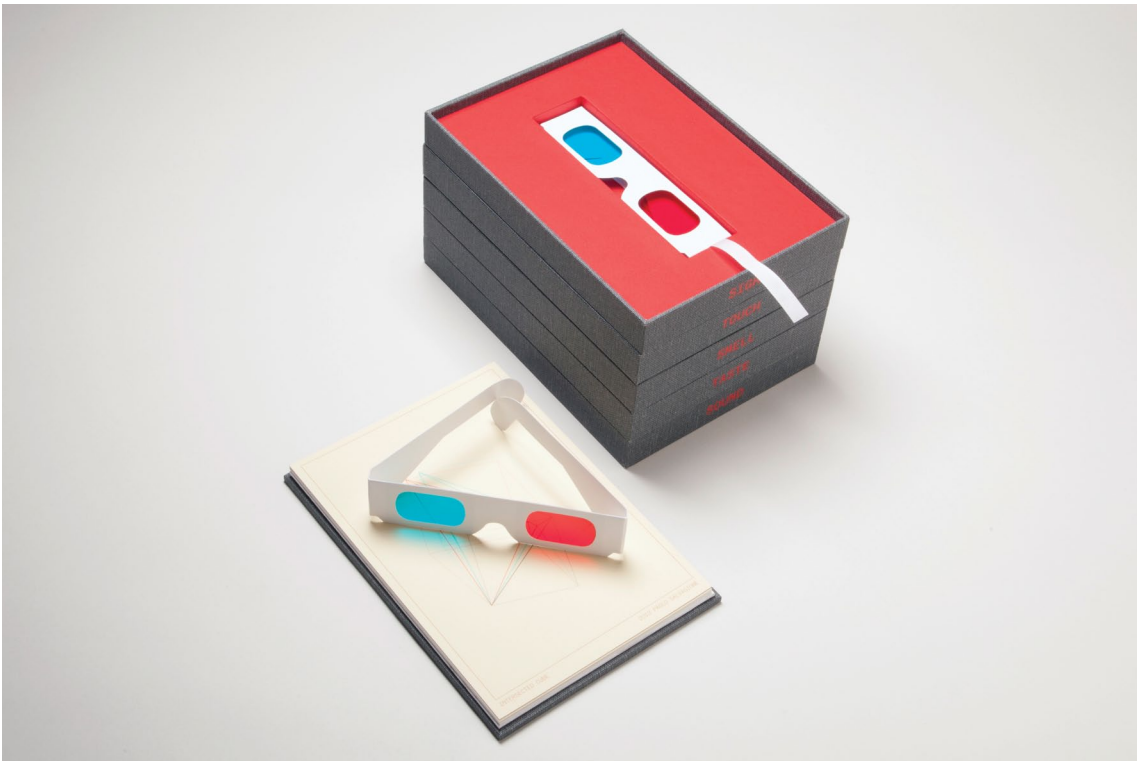
So, what if that anticipatory energy were focused on delicate objects? What if the power of three-dimensional illusions were brought to bear not on the fantastic but on the ordinary?

By embracing the most fundamental of three-dimensional apparatuses, the curious figures in the "right" drawer of the ONE FOR EACH Wunderkammer rest in the hand like trinkets plucked from a parallel universe, one just a few pixels differentiated from our own. They present themselves as prototypes—working prototypes, judging by the slight jiggle that results from the gentle tilting of paper or the eyes momentarily adjusting their viewing angle.

The figures are distinguished by modest dimensions, by impenetrable functionality, and by the retained documentary nomenclature and production markings. They hover on the page, that hovering is essential. While so much of three-dimensional creation asks the viewer to forget the medium on which it is projected, these slights of hand use the printed page as their lot. They suggest that if you look long enough they will be adjusted by self-propelled wrenches and levitating screwdrivers.

There are illusions whose implicit power—whose ability to engage and delight—resides in their appearance as blueprints of illusions.

Words: Disquiet
Design: Boon
Ink: SFCB



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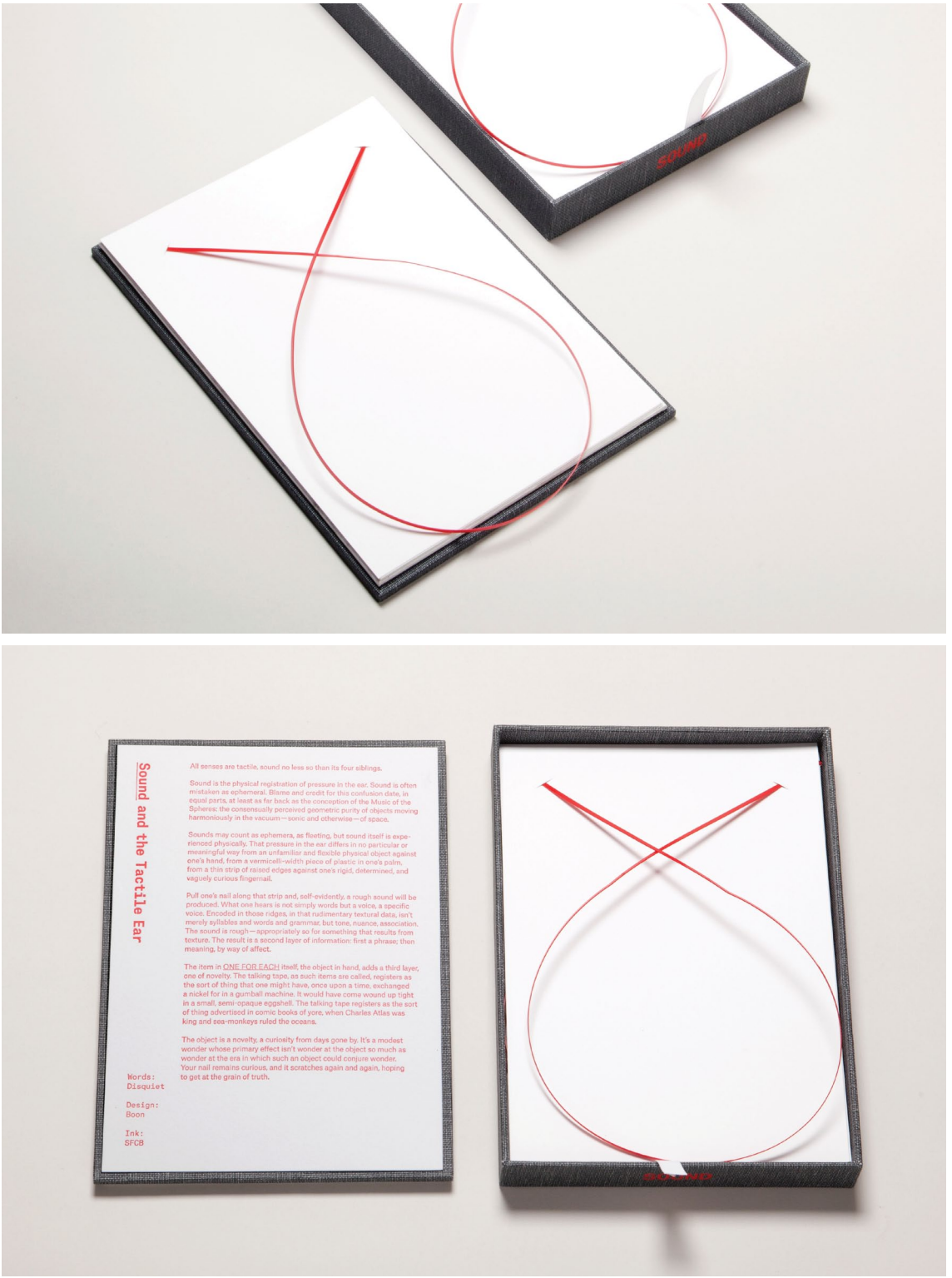
2 TOUCH





4 TASTE







Sight and the Media of Immersion

As the future slides into focus, as we come to nearly inhabit it and to think of it as something increasingly proximate to the present, it retains nonetheless a lingering hint of the future-ness of times past. This isn't instant nostalgia. Quite the contrary, it's the truest form of future shock, the one that marvels at just how familiar everything is, despite all the buildup.

We are still making good on the promises of our futurist past. At an emotional level, the scenario resembles how we might try to please our parents and our grandparents long after they have passed away. At a functional level, it involves aesthetic approaches and illusory goals that persist even as technology purportedly evolves.

From surround-sound home stereo systems to the holodecks of starships galaxies away, from Alexander Pope's garden to Las Vegas simulacra, from the blue-and-red glasses at a long-ago monster matinee to the headache-inducing multiplex spectacles of our current moment, the media of immersion has been and remains a tantalizing cultural fixation.

So, what if that anticipatory energy were focused on delicate objects? What if the power of three-dimensional illusions were brought to bear not on the fantastic but on the ordinary?

By embracing the most fundamental of three-dimensional apparitions, the curious figments in the "sight" drawer of the ONE FOR EACH Wunderkammer rest in the hand like trinkets plucked from a parallel universe, one just a few pixels differentiated from our own. They present themselves as prototypes—working prototypes, judging by the slight jiggle that results from the gentle tilting of paper or the eyes momentarily adjusting their viewing angle.

The figments are distinguished by modest dimensions, by impenetrable functionality, and by the retained documentary nomenclature and production markings. They hover on the page. That hovering is essential. While so much of three-dimensional creation asks the viewer to forget the medium on which it is projected, these slights of hand use the printed page as their foil. They suggest that if you look long enough they will be adjusted by self-propelled wrenches and levitating screwdrivers.

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The silhouette appears both modern and antiquated. A still object in the hand, it nonetheless vibrates in place—it vibrates in time between present and past, back and forth, back and forth, as its various qualities come into focus and fade, rotating around each other, vying for prominence in one’s imagination. It’s a silhouette, after all. What does a silhouette do better than to ask its viewer to take care of most of the heavy lifting, to fill in the blanks? Or, in this case, the blank.

Which silhouette, then, will gain prominence: the new or the old? Is it an industrial prototype or a cameo illustration? The matte black is fiercely modern. The thick-rag material seems to entirely predate the concept of the Internet, if not of the combustion engine. The cut is laser sharp, literally—the fine edge was created in the fierce, narrow, cyclopean gaze of a light-powered cutter. The shape itself is premodern, foliage that harks back at least—in terms of American artistic life—to the transcendentalists, New England’s answer to the Greeks of yore. The conceptual component, the framing of a natural object as an artistic readymade, is straight out of a Fluxus handbook. The notion of a still life, however, extends the timeline considerably further back, indeed.

There’s a temporal stalemate, and at its focal point sits this simple, black leaf. What’s in the “touch” drawer of ONE FOR EACH is a black hole in the semblance of a leaf, one that has consumed the colors one associates with foliage, with “fall.” It’s the most fallen leaf of all, severed from tree, severed from the chromatic spectrum. Thanks to acid-free paper, it is severed even from decay. It’s a shadow severed, as if in an environmentalist horror story, from its source.

In time what comes to the fore isn’t the object but the absence. What makes the leaf tactile, what makes it wondrous to touch, isn’t how it provides an ideal simulacrum of a leaf—it’s how it creates a tangible shadow.

Can liquids be thought of as sleeping soundly—or do they lie in wait?

These tidy vials contain especially intense odors—they hold in a liquid state things generally thought of as vapors. They are condensed odors awaiting the enlivening act of dispersal. They are unassuming trinkets—trinkets loaded with potential energy.

The liquids are bottled here in small glass containers, elegant objects whose refined contours, whose economical dimensions, whose almost entirely transparent presence, belie what they are capable of. Only a tiny cotton ball keeps them from virtual invisibility, and its inherently cloud-like appearance suggests it as an illustration of vapor itself. Dropped on the floor, any one of them could clear a packed room in a matter of seconds. They’re a glass menagerie of disruptive action.

Take a whiff. What are those smells, what have they in common? It’s musk. In other circumstances, the collective odors might even be said to reek. Musk is, of course, the smell of exertion, of anxiety, of sweat, of fear—of exhilaration.

That word, “musk,” isn’t so unlike the vials themselves; it’s a familiar enough term whose common usage serves to mask its more salacious provenance. What is culture but an opportunity for humankind to subsume its animal nature in everyday normalcy, routine, in ritual, in language? The word “musk” is said to derive from the Sanskrit for “scrotum.”

If there’s a tension at work, it’s the anxiety intentionally inherent in the clinical presentation. A Wunderkammer, a cabinet of curiosities, presents itself as a collection of wonders. But if wonder is understood to be a form of power, then in some way that power must strain in captivity. The tension at work here is the gap between exertion and containment, between the acts these smells suggest and the tidy nature of their display.

Do these odors, seemingly sedate in their liquid state, so refined in their small glass enclosures, sleep soundly—or do they plot escape? Why not open a bottle and come to your own conclusion?

There are, sadly, those for whom cilantro tastes like nothing so much as soap—to eat it is to feel as if one is washing out one’s mouth. There are those for whom even the hint of meat in a meal summons up human-kind’s countless sins against the natural world. There are those for whom licorice is a form of corporal punishment. There are those for whom spice is a severe deterrent. There are, in fact, few among us for whom one taste or another doesn’t serve as the gustatory equivalent of a bright red octagonal sign that reads “STOP”—or worse yet, a more generic, rectangular one that reads “DO NOT ENTER.”

We frown because we live in civilized times, times when regional cultures relocate on a regular basis—Turkish workers in Germany, Vietnamese shrimpers in Louisiana, Filipino laborers in Dubai, Indian technologists in London. All of these populations become unintentional cultural missionaries, bringing their foodstuffs and recipes and related practices along with them. And these missionaries do what missionaries have done for millennia. They make a temporary peace with the culture in which they find themselves. Add to the mix the world-travellers, the ones in constant motion, dealing with pungent fish sauce one day and heavy wine reductions the next, moving from business meeting to business meeting, smiling through the disorientation and the discomfort toward some greater corporate objective.

We smile because we live in technologically mediated times, and we expect technology to aid us toward our individual goals. What form would such a technology take? What would it mean—what, in fact, does it mean—to be able to simply pop open a blister pack, a single-use serving of temporary cultural reeducation, and to make almost immediate peace with our culinary circumstance? What if each time we’re faced with a fermented soybean appetizer, or an incendiary bit of fried vegetation, or a greasy region of an animal’s belly, we could easily transform it into something familiar: a sweet bite of chocolate, a comforting serving of mashed potatoes, a room temperature glass of spring water?

Would this give us comfort? Or would it induce a new sense of disorientation, one situated in the gap—a gap both understood and incomprehensible—between what we put in our mouths and what we register as flavor? Would this make us frown, or would this make us smile?

All senses are tactile, sound no less so than its four siblings.

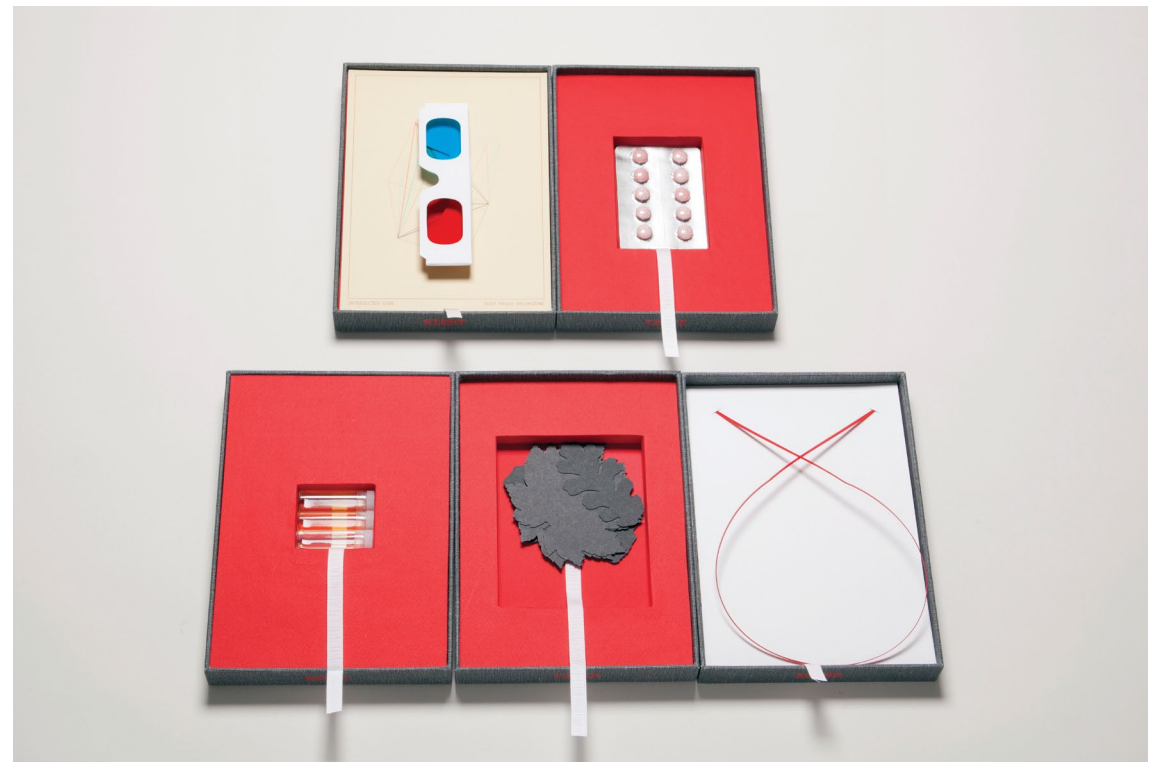
Sound is the physical registration of pressure in the ear. Sound is often mistaken as ephemeral. Blame and credit for this confusion date, in equal parts, at least as far back as the conception of the Music of the Spheres: the consensually perceived geometric purity of objects moving harmoniously in the vacuum—sonic and otherwise—of space.

Sounds may count as ephemera, as fleeting, but sound itself is experienced physically. That pressure in the ear differs in no particular or meaningful way from an unfamiliar and flexible physical object against one’s hand, from a vermicelli-width piece of plastic in one’s palm, from a thin strip of raised edges against one’s rigid, determined, and vaguely curious fingernail.

Pull one’s nail along that strip and, self-evidently, a rough sound will be produced. What one hears is not simply words but a voice, a specific voice. Encoded in those ridges, in that rudimentary textural data, isn’t merely syllables and words and grammar, but tone, nuance, association. The sound is rough—appropriately so for something that results from texture. The result is a second layer of information: first a phrase; then meaning, by way of affect.

The item in ONE FOR EACH itself, the object in hand, adds a third layer, one of novelty. The talking tape, as such items are called, registers as the sort of thing that one might have, once upon a time, exchanged a nickel for in a gumball machine. It would have come wound up tight in a small, semi-opaque eggshell. The talking tape registers as the sort of thing advertised in comic books of yore, when Charles Atlas was king and sea-monkeys ruled the oceans.

The object is a novelty, a curiosity from days gone by. It’s a modest wonder whose primary effect isn’t wonder at the object so much as wonder at the era in which such an object could conjure wonder. Your nail remains curious, and it scratches again and again, hoping to get at the grain of truth.





I couldn't have produced this edition without the help of dozens of people. First, I would like to thank the San Francisco Center for the Book Imprint committee, Michael Bartalos (then chair), Penny Nii, Patti Quill, Anne Smith, Kathleen Burch, James Tucker, Colleen Stockman, Rocket Caleshu, and Emily McVarish, for selecting me as their 2012 Imprint Artist in Residence. Without the guidance of the Imprint Manager, Rhiannon Alpers, and the amazing volunteers at SFCB, this project would have been difficult, if not impossible, for me to produce. Thank you, Hope Amico, Juliayn Coleman, John DeMerritt, Sarah Erickson, Hannah Fariss, Nina Grosser, Meredith Hudson, Malgosia Kostecka, Patricia Leal, Brian Lieske, Tami Lovett, Lanea Lyden, Ayo Roberts, Jonathan Sadama, Jamie Sandoval, James Tucker, and Hannah Waldschmidt, for all of the printing, counting, wiping, measuring, cutting, sanding, marking, gluing, covering, turning-in, tabbing and trimming.

I built many maquettes, of different designs, in the months before production started. Without access to a laser cutter I wouldn't have been able to iterate as quickly as I did. And, given the number of parts in the final design, the daunting task of hours at a bookboard shear were replaced by minutes on a laser cutter. For this I am indebted to Reason Bradley — thank you for squeezing me, and this project, into your busy schedule.

From the general to the specific. There were many people who helped with specific aspects of ONE FOR EACH:

SIGHT

I'd like to thank Rolf Pixley for introducing me to phantograms and providing me with early publications on the making and usage of this arcane art. Don Farnsworth, at Magnolia Editions, provided the knowledge to print the phantograms on contemporary presses, along with an endless supply of enthusiasm and encouragement; I marvel at how much he gets done while still having time for my unannounced visits. John Sullivan, at Logos Graphics, advised me in my early attempts to letterpress the phantograms, something I was unable to do only because we couldn't find the proper weight and colored paper without custom ordering it. Meredith Hudson was my presswoman for those early experiments; she spent many hours printing prototype phantograms on the Vandercook press.

TOUCH

I leaned heavily on Jennifer Berry for help with the touch part of the edition. Her knowledge of plants and their uses is encyclopedic. I've spent many an afternoon hiking and listening to her elucidate the verdant world around me.

SMELL

Smell first appealed to me as an entry into memories. I enjoyed the way certain smells allow me access to memories that I have no other way to access. I have to thank Headlands Center for the Arts for providing the space and the audience for my early explorations, Mandy Aftel for her knowledge about the world of natural fragrances, and Jennifer Berry for putting up with countless stinky concoctions.

TASTE

Max La Rivière-Hedrick has been instrumental in shaping my ideas around food and taste. He probably wouldn't approve of my inclusion of the flavor berry as the taste part of the edition but it wouldn't be the first time he didn't approve of something I did. Thank you, Max.

SOUND

This was by far the most difficult sense for me. I wanted to keep it analog and interesting, which is hard to do in this digital age. I would be remiss if I didn't thank Thomas Edison, posthumously, for all the various ways he encoded sound. Talking Devices Company has been making talking tapes since the early 1900s; they were helpful with this part of the edition. The biggest thank you goes to Marc Weidenbaum, who knows way too much about sound, for patiently watching me come up with something compelling, and for rewarding me with that sage smile when I got it right.

THE BOX

John DeMerritt was instrumental in the design and foil stamping of the box. He continues to amaze me by what he can do as well as how he does it. My grandmother used to say "If you want something done give it to a busy person." John is an excellent example of that motto. Rhiannon paved the way for John by reducing the number of parts and simplifying the design.

TYPOGRAPHY

Truth be told I absolutely needed two people to pull off this edition. Brian Scott of Boon Design was one of them. His keen eye and economy of words are my guides as a deadline approaches. Most of how this edition looks can be attributed to his nudging.

ESSAYIST

The other person I couldn't have done this project without is Marc Weidenbaum. Writing about my work while making it is a daunting task for me. Countless lunches and conversations about this edition reappear before me as if from another world. Marc consistently sees beyond the surface and pulls the reader deeper into the piece.

Paolo Salvagione
31 October 2012
Sausalito, California

ONE FOR EACH

Paolo Salvagione

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About the Edition

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The mission of the SFCB Artist-in-Residence program is to raise awareness of book arts as a vital genre in contemporary art, to bring fresh perspectives to the field, and to support artists in their vocation.

The Artist-in-Residence program is made possible through book sales, donations and artist sponsorships.

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