

I. Introduction / 5 minutes

- Hi, thank you all for being here today. My name is Izza and I'm an illustration major.

[Project Pitch and creative intention]

- Circuitboard is an illustration-based skate brand that explores wild self-expression, creative freedom, and the subconscious mind—using the human body as its vessel. It aims to express new avenues of design and illustration working together through 2D and 3D realms. Through these intersecting mediums, I am constructing a series that brings mixed media illustration and skateboarding together
- Creative freedom, in the context of this brand, means using intuition as a guide—trusting your instincts to create space for play and collaboration with the subconscious mind. It's about leaning into where your creativity naturally flows when you're simply having fun—drawing what you *want*, not what you *think* you want, or what you believe you *should* be drawing. It's like a voice that grows louder the more you choose to listen.
- “Pretend to be making something until you actually make something.” - Austin Kleon
- Skateboarding and art might seem like very different practices, but they actually have a lot in common. Both require a balance of discipline and play. Both are acts of presence and focus. In their own ways, they're practices of meditation.
- For me, art is self-care for the mind, while skating is self-care for the body—both are essential. I'm honored to be exploring the interplay between sport and art in my thesis.

[The Why]:

- The skate community is a vessel for all sorts of people of all backgrounds and identities, and once you start skating it becomes tied to your identity too. You look at the world differently, rails aren't just rails anymore, curbs aren't just curbs, hills aren't just hills. The same is true for illustration, you start seeing compositions, color palettes, textures and inspiration everywhere you go, you just have to train your eyes to pay attention. That's the best kind of research, the kind that happens unexpectedly.
- I chose to create a skate brand because the skate community is an expansive space for exploration and creativity. I wanted to see how far I could push the idea of a skateboard—both physically and conceptually.
- I've always been drawn to activities that let me lock in on a challenge, work through it, and level up. Life's challenges are often messy and multidimensional—oftentimes without a linear solution. But something like skateboarding gives you a sense of control: you assess the obstacle, make a plan, and get the satisfaction of pushing through and overcoming it.
- Today, skateboarding represents an endeavor to overcome fear, pushing me to test my own limits again and again and accomplish things I didn't think I was capable of. I realized a ton of life lessons can be explained through a skate metaphor, dropping in for example: you can't hesitate or do it halfway, you gotta commit. Same is true when going

outside your comfort zone in your creative life, you can't just do things halfway, you gotta commit.

II. Overview / 10 minutes

[My Story]

- I grew up 30 minutes outside a small town, deep in the woods. As a kid, I had the freedom to roam and explore the forest around my house. Boredom became fuel for my creativity. There wasn't much out there, but I made do with what I had—and in the process, developed an insatiable sense of adventure and curiosity that still drives me today.
- I first picked up skating during quarantine—tried it for a while, then let it go. I didn't have anyone to skate with. It wasn't until I moved to Portland that I really got into it, because for the first time, there was an actual community around it. For a while, I felt frustrated that I hadn't started skating as a kid. I kept thinking, *If only I'd picked it up sooner, I'd be better by now, less afraid.* But I've realized there's no point in thinking that way. Growing up in the woods with no concrete, no skateparks, no other skaters made it nearly impossible to even *imagine* skateboarding—let alone pursue it. So now, I just have to meet myself where I am, and keep moving forward from there

[The Body]

- “You are, in fact, a mashup of what you choose to let into your life.” (Austin Kleon)
- I'm abstracting the body to capture the layers that make up the human self. As we move through life, we gather things—objects, memories, regrets, opinions, inspirations—and we carry them with us. We are all infinitely complex, shaped by these pieces we accumulate over time. In my work, I want to invite a sense of vulnerability and acceptance, encouraging us to embrace all the small, intricate parts that form who we are and let our guts spill out.
- Skateboarding mirrors life's challenges, teaching us to adapt to the terrain we're given—whether smooth or rough, shaping how we move through the world. We don't control the hand we're dealt, but we're expected to play it. Our experiences leave their mark—etched into our bodies, woven into our subconscious. In that sense, the skateboard becomes an extension of you—of your body, and your mind.
- “At present, I am mainly observing the physical motion of mountains, water, trees and flowers. One is everywhere reminded of similar movements in the human body.” -Egon Schiele

[Audience]

- From the start, I knew this project would need to reach different audiences. I had to define the difference between an 'art board' and a regular popsicle deck. Making art accessible is key, especially in DIY and skate spaces, so I kept that in mind. Bringing skateboarding into the fine art world can make it less accessible, which wasn't my goal. I wanted to connect with those who simply want to skate and express themselves, as well as those curious about expanding the idea and potential of a skateboard deck in a more conceptual space. Knowing there's overlap, I decided to display my decks in two different ways to express both sides. But my main focus is on regular people who skate, like me.

[How did it change?]

- This project has evolved a lot since my proposal, my original pitch was pretty ambitious and a significant amount of the feedback I received revolved around me simplifying my project. The only thing I ended up cutting from my final deliverables was the animated promotional video I really wanted to make, everything else I was able to do.
- The animation is still something I'd like to do, as a post grad project. My brand is very sensory focused, with bright colors, I'd like to create some sound and visuals to accompany, to make it immersive.
- Because I chose a very open-ended project that I could basically take in whatever direction I want, there weren't any huge changes in the content.

III. Influences / 5 minutes

- My list of illustration influences is a few pages long so it was hard to narrow down. But here's a few that are relevant to this project.

[Jamie Hewlett]

- I've always admired the way Jamie Hewlett handles characters and stylization—his exaggerated proportions and that balance between semi-realism and cartooniness really stand out. I especially love how he draws hands, shoes, and character props; they all have so much personality. He's been a big inspiration for me ever since I started listening to Gorillaz when I was 14.

[Laprisamata]

- Laprisamata is a Madrid based mixed media illustrator. I'm drawn to his use of symbolism in his work, using objects and patterns in a collage-like fashion to depict personal narratives. I love the way he layers textures and patterns. His research process is similar to mine, where he finds his assets in his everyday life and then slowly builds up these magnificent pieces

[Toma Vagner]

- Toma Vagner is an artist who I reference for their technique in rendering objects and rectilinear forms. I'm drawn to the way they simplify these objects yet they still retain everything that makes them interesting.

[Jim Phillips]

- Jim Phillips is iconic for designing the Santa Cruz Screaming Hand and other classic graphics that have left a lasting mark on skate history—like the Rob Roskopp series. I love how that series tells a story over time, with each version of the graphic evolving and changing. The idea that someone might buy one board and only have a piece of the puzzle really speaks to me—it creates a larger narrative that unfolds across the series. This is something I was attempting to do in my project, creating decks that exist as a larger narrative.

[Body Artists]

- A couple of artists whose work often depicts the body, Instagram artist Lilctulhu on the left whose works definitely falls more within the horror space but I just love their depiction of anatomical forms and figures, the way they abstract the body in a truly visceral but fascinating way. And then Sachin Teng on the right, I'm drawn to their balance of organic forms in conjunction with human made objects and shapes.

IV. Process / 15 minutes

- The process of developing this project was pretty chaotic, and very un-linear. At the start, I really thought that developing my brand identity was the first step but I found out later that making the art and then developing the brand around it would have been the easier way to go about it. Nonetheless, it all worked out in the end.

[Developing the brand]

- Here's my brand description.
- Circuit Board is an illustration based skate brand rooted in community, self-expression, and pushing personal limits. Inspired by the diversity and camaraderie of the skatepark, it embraces the flaws and idiosyncrasies that make each skater unique. Through surreal depictions of anatomy and experimental board shapes, Circuitbox reimagines the skateboard as an extension of the body—blurring the line between art and function.

[Logo]

- I'd never made a brand identity before this, so it was a lot of experimentation and revision. This is a page of a lot of my original logo designs.

[Little guy - mascot]

- This is one of my logo drafts, here I was deciding how to add the circuitry imagery in a simplistic way - with the guiding question: how does circuitry relate to the body and how does it express my brand? I decided this guy is going to be more of a mascot than a logo because he's pretty complex.

[Header/old name]

- My brand was originally called circuitbox, thinking of the body as a container almost, containing multitudes - of personality, memory, regret etc. I decided to change it to board because it's a play on words and relates more to skating.

[Final logos]

- These are my final logotype and logomark.
- The box imagery made it into my final design even though the name has changed but the conceptual reasoning behind it still stands.

[Texture]

- In the construction of my brand, I've been exploring how texture could be used as a branding tool. Specifically the visual interest created between a clean wood surface and the roughness of grip tape, a combo that I repeat a lot throughout the visuals of this project.

[Color Palette]

- This is my color palette.
- Yellow is for adrenaline, red for the body, teal for sport and outdoors, and a seafoam green to represent introspection.

[Branding board drafts]

- My brand has changed a lot since the start, almost every facet of it has been changed or swapped a couple times. The far left is my first branding board and the far right is the current one.
- I'm happy I made the colors more vibrant, as they depict the tone of my brand better.

[Branding board]

- Here you can see all those elements coming together in the final draft.

[The Deck Designs]

[Deck ideation]

- As you can see, a lot of different directions were explored while I was ideating for these. The biggest challenge with designing the decks was deciding on a board shape that was both simplistic enough that it didn't distract from the graphics, was interesting enough that it matched the tone of my brand, related to the theme AND was durable enough to still be ridden

[Original Ideas]

- My original ideas for decks were a lot more representational of real things, the animal bones series on the left is a direction I was sad to leave behind but since it has little to do with the content of my project, I decided I'll put it in a drawer and maybe pick it back up later. Just shows how much my project has evolved since my proposal, my decks ended up being somewhere between abstract and representational.

[MR FISH BOARD]

- I'll start by dividing into my prototype, because mr fish board here had a very important role to play in this project.
- I started out with a prototype so that I could test out each step of the process and know what to expect since I've never done anything like this before. I ran into a lot of roadblocks and turned out a lot of my original plans had simpler solutions. I problem solved my way through creating the prototype deck.

[The Start]

- Started with this drawing I did on a sticky note while I was bored at work, and I was like dang, wouldn't it be cool if a skateboard was shaped like a fish.

[Production pt. 1]

- Started out by taking an old deck and tracing it onto a large piece of newsprint, from there I sketched out my design by hand, starting with just the shape of the board. Since the image is symmetrical with the exception of the head, I chose the side which I liked better, folded the paper in half, cut along the line so the image would be symmetrical.
- Next was cutting the board, my dad showed me how to use his jigsaw and we used a spade drill bit to create a perfect hole for the eye

[Original plan]

- This was the original plan of action, was to cut the griptape that was already on the deck and peel it away in the shape of the fish bones. This didn't work at all for a number of reasons: a) the deck I used was old and had been ridden by multiple people over the course of maybe ten years, so grip that was on the deck was stuck on there real good b) in the process of cutting the tape with an exacto knife, I was damaging the nice wood underneath c) the grip left a sticky adhesion that I was only able to get off by sanding.

[Production pt 2.]

- So we changed our plan of attack, we peeled off all the grip with a putty knife, used a grinder to get all the stickiness off and then sanded it down for a smooth finish. I used paper to mock up the grip tape and labeled each piece to make sure I knew what went where, here's the grip tape before I adhered it to the deck.

[The Image I used]

- This is the image I decided to put on the bottom of the deck, it was a postcard design I did for advanced illustration in exploration of this project.

[Vinyl and Painting.]

- I overlaid the image onto the shape of the deck and printed it onto glossy vinyl paper, which I then stuck onto the deck. I messed up because I forgot to reverse the image before printing it, so the head ended up being completely the wrong shape. I made it work though, I just cut off the excess vinyl, painted over all the gaps with acrylic and it was a blessing in disguise because I realized that using a physical media on top of the vinyl gave it texture and was so much more interesting.

[Finished fish board]

- I then lacquered it with about 4 coats and this is the finished product. This is the only deck I have here that isn't attached to anything, so if anyone wants to touch it, hold it or ride it, please be my guest.

[THE TRIPTYCH]

- Once it got time to make the final triptych for this project, I was feeling pretty confident I knew what I was doing. The process actually ended up being very different.

[OG ideation .]

- This is some of my original ideation. The rendition of this concept was

where each board was a vertebrae and they connected together to create a spine, but that would involve making more decks and three felt like enough, the other idea was a rib cage where each deck was a rib but that didn't make sense for many reasons.

- I ended up settling on each deck being a collection of 3-5 vertebrae, and when placed in a line next to each other, they connect to create a human spine.

[Circuitry]

- The vertebrae in my deck designs are my way of expressing the skateboard as an extension of the body—by literally making it a body. I think of vertebrae as the body's circuitry: pieces that fit together, linking different parts of yourself. On a larger scale, this circuitry speaks not just to the internal workings of a person, but to the idea of community—especially within art and skate culture. Each of us is a circuit, and together we make up something greater
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[Ceiling mockup]

- I ended up settling on each deck being a collection of 3-5 vertebrae, and when placed in a line next to each other, they connect to create a human spine.
- I hung my skateboard from my ceiling to mockup what that might look like and realized that hanging the boards would be a perfect way to display them.

[Grip color ideas.]

- My designs evolved into three stylized interpretations of the spine, pushing the form and playing with distortion. I shaped them to resemble Rorschach inkblots, alluding to the way perception is shaped by the subconscious and how we each bring our own meanings to what we see.
- I had a few different ideas for color, one was alternating between my brand colors, another being plane black grip with classic wood, the third being a black stain for the wood and white grip which would look a lot more like bone.

[Grip color decision.]

- However, this project isn't meant to be realistic so I went with an alternating a darker cyan/magenta combo, two of my main brand colors with black as an accent.

[Spine]

- This is all three in the correct order, each deck fitting together to make a

spine. Each vertebrae is unique and fades into its neighbor, changing and morphing as you scale your eyes from the bottom to the top and vice versa.

- Although I didn't end up doing an animation, I think it's fun that the pieces of the spine can look animated if you view them in this way.

[Animation]

- This is what they all look like as if they were frames of an animation, I thought that was pretty fun.

[Production pipeline]

- The shaping of the boards started out with the laser cutter, the decks had to be less than 28 inches to fit in the bed and because of the curve, the beam would go out of focus for the nose and the tail, making the laser beam less effective. But there was nothing I could do about that and after repeating the cut job 6 times, I decided to do the rest by hand. This image shows the design pipeline: the left is a deck straight out of the laser cutter, in the center is after I've sawed off all the pieces and on the right is after I've dremeled and sanded it down.

[Power tools]

- The dremeling and sanding took forever because the edges literally caught on fire and I had to get rid of all that charcoal, it was pretty messy.
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- Although the laser cutter didn't cut all the way through, it was still incredibly helpful at nailing in the shape and making the deck easier to saw by hand.
- Here's a process photo showing the three stages of the process.
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- This is me when I locked myself in my basement for six hours to play with power tools.

[Spray paint grip]

- I spray painted the grip tape with my brand colors.

[Finished project]

- This is them once i've attached the grip and added wheels and trucks

[are they rideable?]

- This is a question that's come up a lot, understandably so, and it also relates back to my inquiry of creating decks that are both physical art pieces and rideable boards. And the answer is yes, they are rideable. We learned a few things during this photo shoot though. Board one, at the top here has more of a tail than the other two, this made it significantly more

rideable. After attempting to ride board 3, my model Otis commented that it's a bit small, and that in conjunction with it's lack of a nose or a tail presented a real challenge. However, smaller boards are more lightweight and can be a better choice for tricks, so the question of whether or not a deck is right depends entirely on what you're using it for.

- Thanks to Otis Aiello for being my amazing model, they're also talented skaters and they did such an amazing job. And thank you to Shaun Crabb for taking these photos, they're a fantastic photographer. So grateful for you guys!

[The Graphics]

- The graphics themselves were formulated around the poster. I needed a way to tie them all together, each deck being individual yet being a part of a bigger whole.
- This poster is a map of the human person, all layers and gross innards spilling out, it's vulnerable. Of course the person in the image is me, but the map of you is meant to symbolize the viewer and inspire introspection.

[Ideation]

- This was my initial mockup of my poster, it didn't become a self portrait until way down the line but it started out as this silly little see through guy with all his guts visible as a human map.

[Split body]

- And this is where the split body idea came about, what if there was a person splitting into 3 pieces? I Redesigned it a lot. The challenge was designing 3 images within a single image, with each composition being able to exist independently, and then filling in the gaps in between them.

[Scaling]

- Another big challenge was scaling it. My plan was to print in the DPS, and the largest they can print is 44" x 90"(roughly 4x7 feet), of course a standard skate deck is about 30" x 8" inches so I had to configure a way for all 3 decks to fit within those dimensions, which would have been easy if they weren't fanned out in the way that they are.

[Mockup]

- So I made a rough mockup in my living room and then a real mockup in my studio using string to grid it out, overlaid a deck on top to plan out the spacing and placement.

[METHODS AND MATERIALS]

- The whole ideation process was digital, and I redesigned it like 8 times as you saw, and I realized that the problem was the image was just too detailed, I needed to split it into pieces and then composite it later. So I started with this guy, the most recent version and traced it in 3 pieces.

[Light table]

- These are two of those pieces taped together. This is the point in the process where I was like, what do I do with the face?? I wanted it to be semi realistic, but whose face do I put on there? And then the solution became obvious, of course it should be my face, I mean it's a surreal depiction of the body in fragments meant to represent identity, experience and personhood, I guess it should be a self portrait.

[Refined linework]

- So I then took it back into digital and did the coloring that way. This is my refined likework.

[Value comps]

- Started the coloring process by doing my value comps

[Color comp]

- And then messed around with a couple different gradient maps and used pieces of each to create the value comp.

[Found textures]

- I used found textures in my illustrations—photos I took and layered digitally. One of my favorites is deck scratch: the natural wear of a board where paint and wood blend through use. The uneven breakdown creates a raw, layered look that's both chaotic and beautiful.

[Spray paint]

- I also used spray paint and experimented a lot with soft vs hard lines used together, the texture that spray paint makes is almost similar to that of grip tape with the stippled pattern which I thought was pretty cool.

V. Application + moving forward / 15 minutes

[Market application]

- It's hard to say where I want this project to live in the world now that it's done. I wouldn't mind my decks existing in a gallery as an installation

piece, I also wouldn't mind my brand evolving into something real within the skateboarding market of skateboarding. I'd like to continue to develop my voice in this brand with that short promotional video I mentioned, so I guess I'll continue to build on this foundation and see where it takes me.

VI. Conclusion / Closing Remarks / 5 minutes

Summarize your presentation, thank everyone for coming, and invite the panel to ask questions.

45 Minutes Total

[CONCLUSION]

- This project has been a journey of experimentation, self-discovery, and learning to trust the process. Circuitboard became a way for me to merge my passions—illustration, skateboarding, anatomy, and storytelling—into something tangible, something that moves. I learned to embrace intuition, let go of perfectionism, and lean into the unknown.
- Through it all, I kept coming back to the idea of the skateboard as a body—flawed, flexible, powerful, and personal. Each deck in this series is a piece of a larger story about growth, vulnerability, and the connective tissue of community. The act of skating, like art, asks you to keep trying, to get back up, to commit even when you're scared. That's what this brand stands for.
- Circuitboard is more than a visual identity—it's a philosophy: that we are all a collection of pieces in motion, constantly rewiring ourselves through experience, risk, and expression. I'm proud of how far this project has come and even more excited for where it's going next.

Q + A / Approximately 30 minutes.