

EXERCISE 2: PLAYING CARDS

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RESEARCH

Masqualero

A typeface inspired by Miles Davis

Jim Ford was driving on Route 14 from Chicago into Wisconsin, in the middle of a snowstorm. It was still early, but road conditions were bad. He pulled over to take a break, hitting repeat on the song playing on the car speaker—Miles Davis's "Masqualero." As he sat there, he sculpted the letters of the song title in his head. He sketched out those letters when he got home, eventually building a full typeface around it. That typeface, called Masqualero after the song that inspired it, was released by Monotype in 2017.

As for how and why it was designed, Jim Ford says it best:

"I approached drawing the letters as if they were marble sculptures. Many sharp, black, modern sculptures filling a large park. All of them created with the same qualities—the flair of Miles' electric funk and rock sounds, the sparkly smooth finish of the design, serifs like trumpet bells and the sweet lyricism, tone and clarity of Miles' horn. ... I was aiming for the highest level of detail, quality and sophistication that I could make, as if it really was for Miles... [Masqualero is] for the finer things. It dresses up words. It's the black tuxedo or the stiletto heel."

Monotype describes it as enigmatic, complex, cool, contradictory, still, restless, dark, and flamboyant—also an apt description of Miles Davis himself. Fonts.com, Monotype's online store, describes Masqualero as "eye-catching and subdued, aggressive and warm, dark and bright... a design with a strong presence and a bit of attitude. Like the legendary jazz song of the same name, Masqualero is haunting and sophisticated."

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rstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 12345
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Typeface Comparison: Masqualero vs Sabon

It's hard to classify which style Masqualero is, and it's even harder to find a similar typeface. One of the closest I found was Sabon, an old style typeface. However, several elements of Masqualero could be considered transitional or even humanist. The brackets on the serifs are much more prominent than Sabon. Looking at the O, Masqualero's angle of stress is only slightly oblique, almost unnoticeable. The contrast between thick and thin strokes is rather high, certainly higher than Sabon. The letterforms are very organic, because they were hand drawn, but are still somewhat precise because, as Ford put it, he drew them "as if they were marble sculptures." Like Sabon, the lowercase ascenders are angled and taller than the capital letters. At first glance, the crossbar of the lowercase 'e' appears to be horizontal, a feature often seen in old style typefaces. Upon closer inspection, however, it is very slightly angled.

Masqualero
Sabon

Card Suits

I examined my (too many) decks of cards to see what they use to represent the suits. Most of them are standard. One deck uses other objects instead of the typical hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades. One deck does have the standard suits, but has a more decorative design for each.



Card Fronts

Most of my cards also have standard designs on the front. The deck that has other objects instead of typical suits uses those objects in the card front designs, but they are still in typical layouts. Others have a different object on each card, because the deck's theme is "Agates of North America" or "Famous Shells." Cool idea, but not something I have time for. One of my decks, the one with decorative suits, has a different image for each number. All 3's are Earth, every King is the sun, every 10 is a quasar, et cetera. I like this idea.

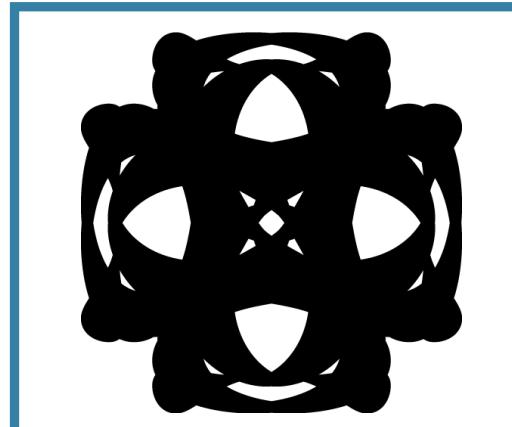
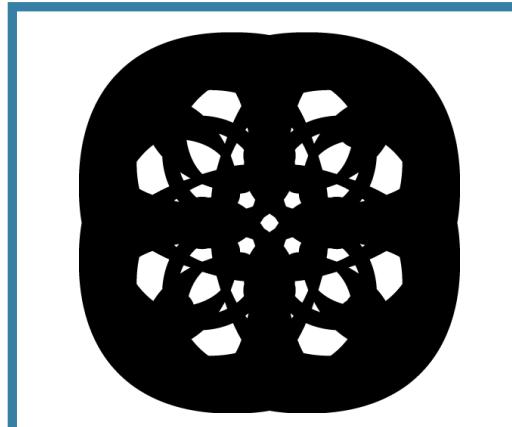
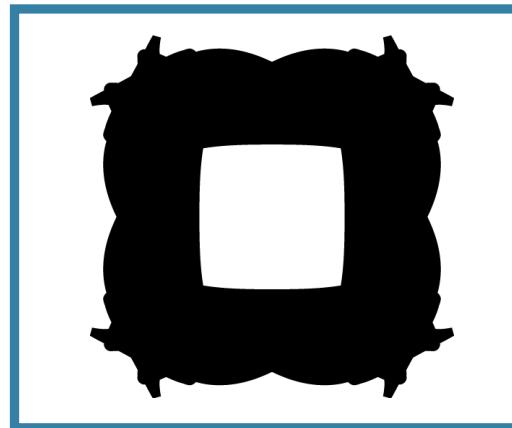
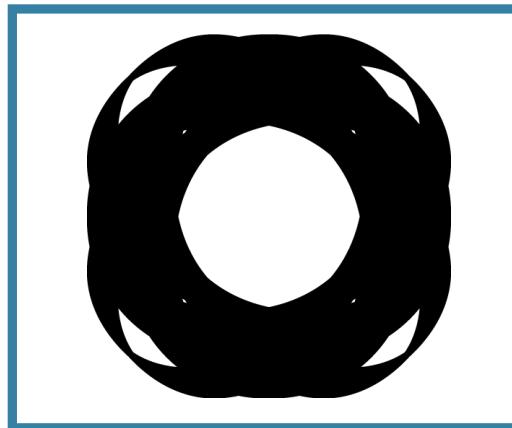


DESIGN

Suits

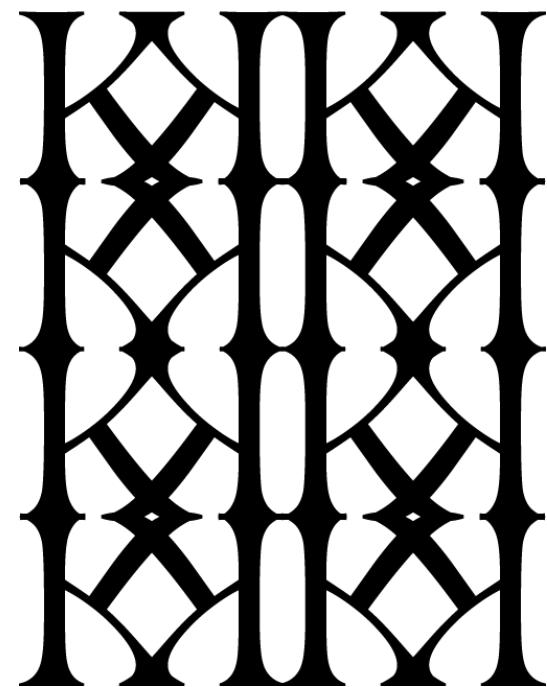
The four suits for the deck. Each is a single glyph mirrored and rotated over itself.
Clockwise from top left: capital Q,
lowercase u, lowercase g, italic ampersand.

Q u
& g



Face Cards

The design for the king card



Number Cards

The number cards: three, eight, and ten

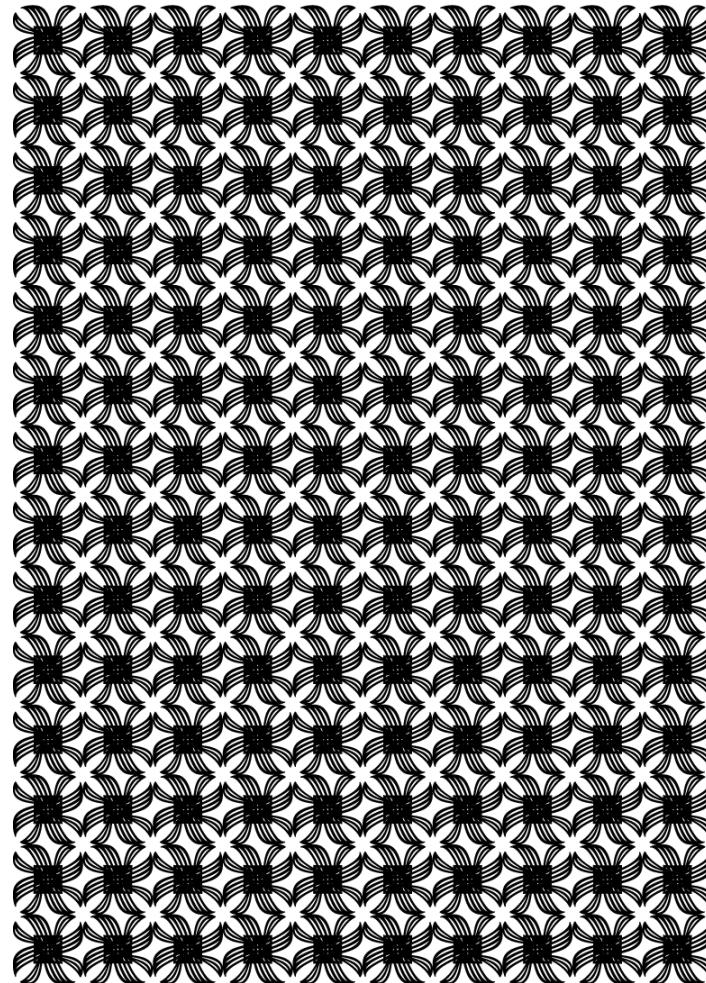
three

eight

ten

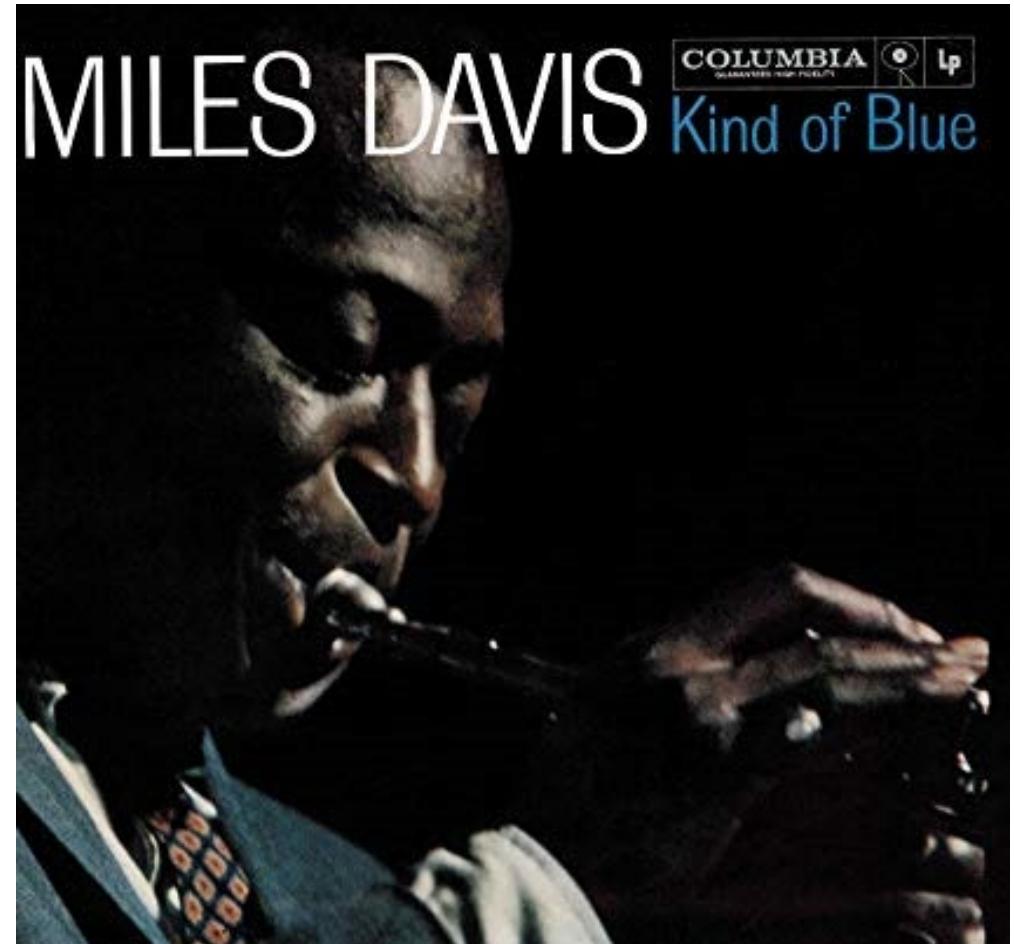
Card Back

This is the card back design I created. It was made from the Y in one of Masqualero's decorative fonts, Groove.



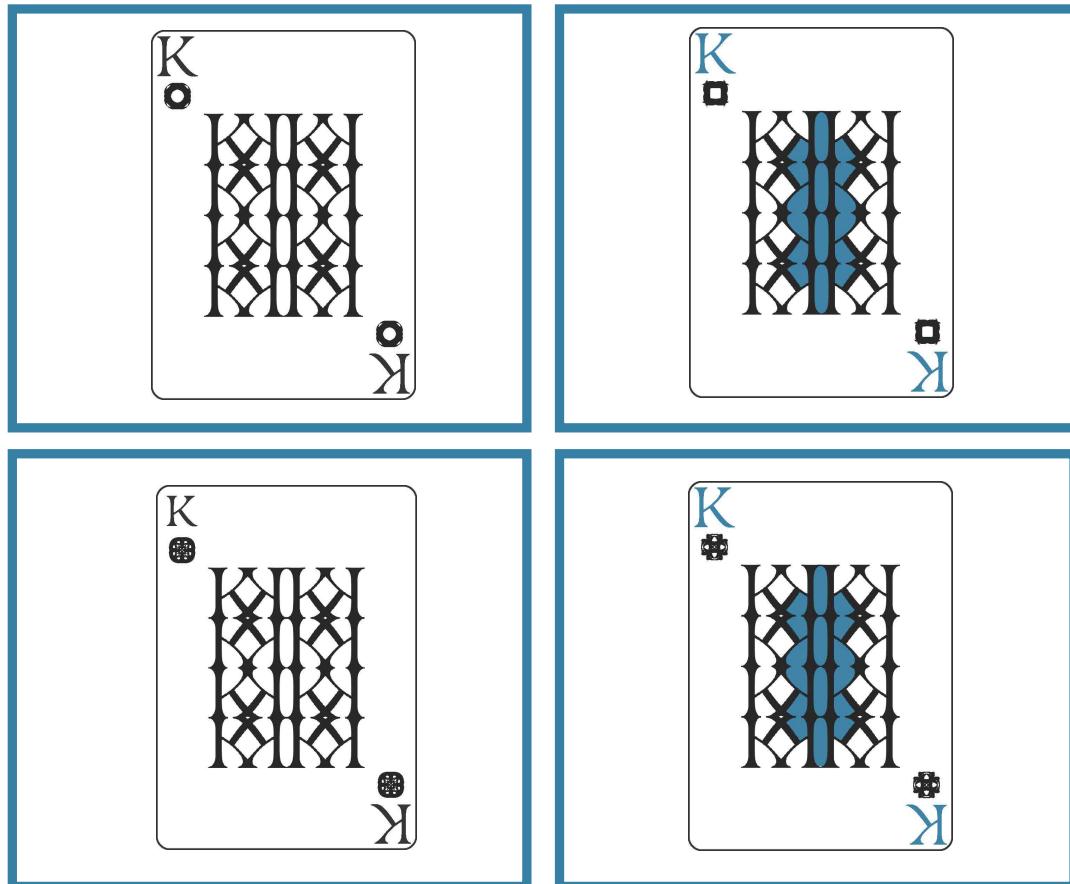
Adding color

Masqualero is a typeface inspired by jazz musician Miles Davis. Several of his more popular songs are from his album, Kind of Blue. I used the blue from the album cover as my color to further distinguish the suits. Most card decks have two main colors, each with two suits. This is the method I used.



Face Cards

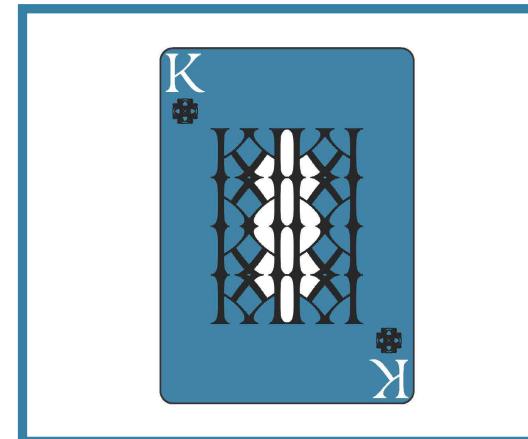
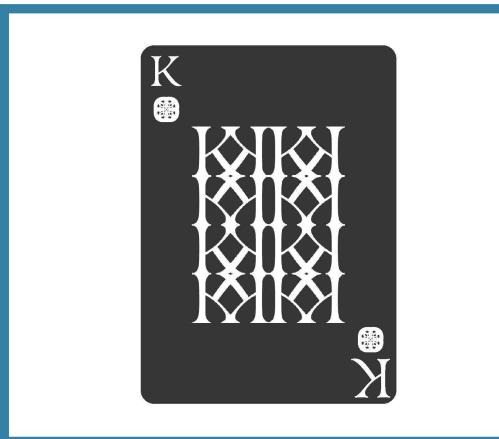
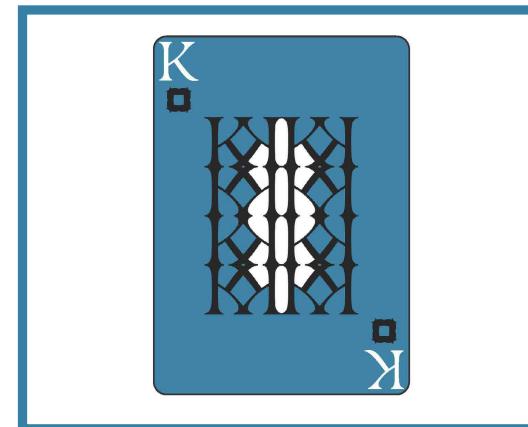
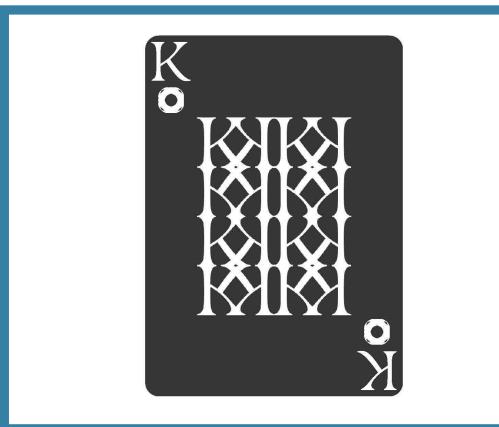
Some of my face cards with color added. The images for each of the four cards of each number are the same. The cards are distinguished by suits. Two are black, two have blue. The face cards continue on the next page.



FINAL

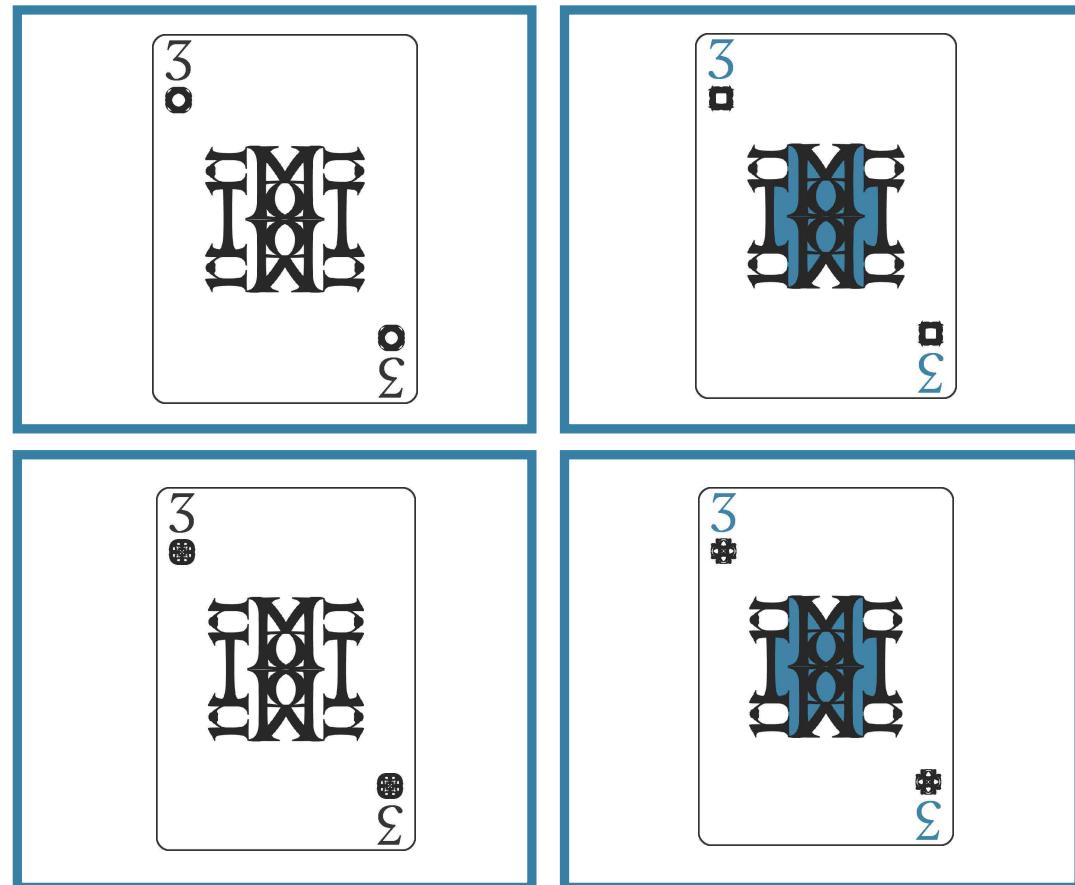
Face Cards: Color

Redesigns of the face cards. The original designs did not stand out enough.

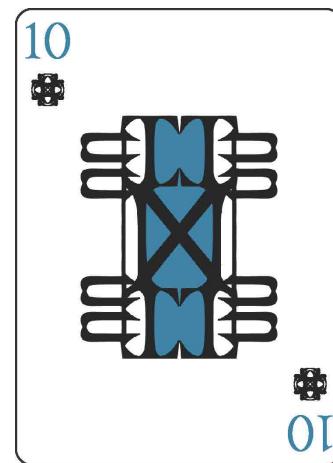
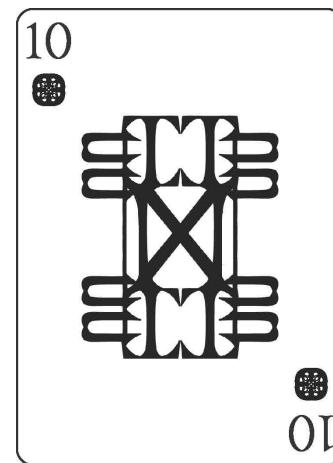
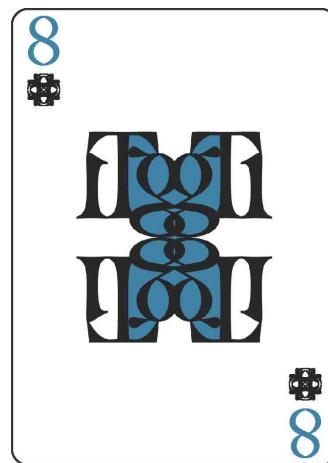
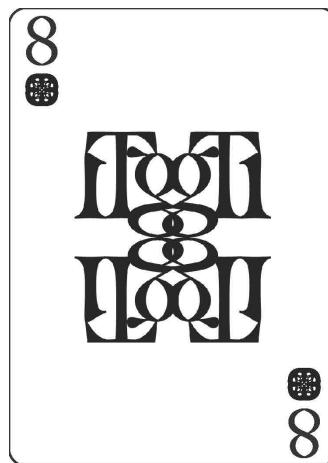
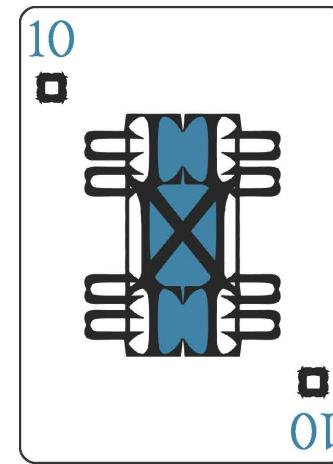
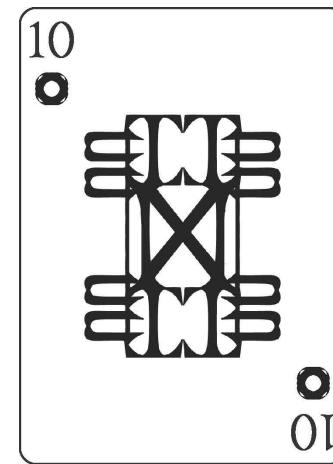
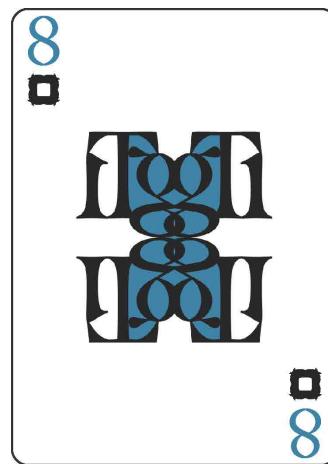
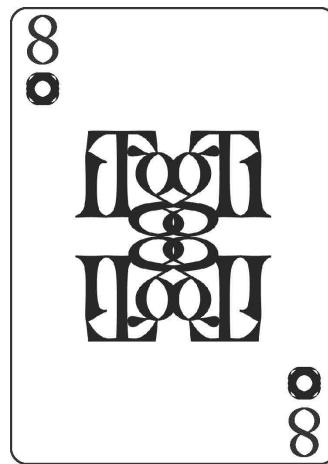


Number Cards: Color

Some of my number cards with color added. The images for each of the four cards of each number are the same. The cards are distinguished by suits. Two are black, two have blue. The number cards continue on the next page.



Number Cards: Color (Continued)



Card Box

The box uses the same shade of blue as the cards themselves. It includes the design from the back of the cards, a standard design element in card boxes.

