

Visual Diary 2

Adam Ellis

Researching 5 photobooks

Laia Abril – *On Abortion* (2018)

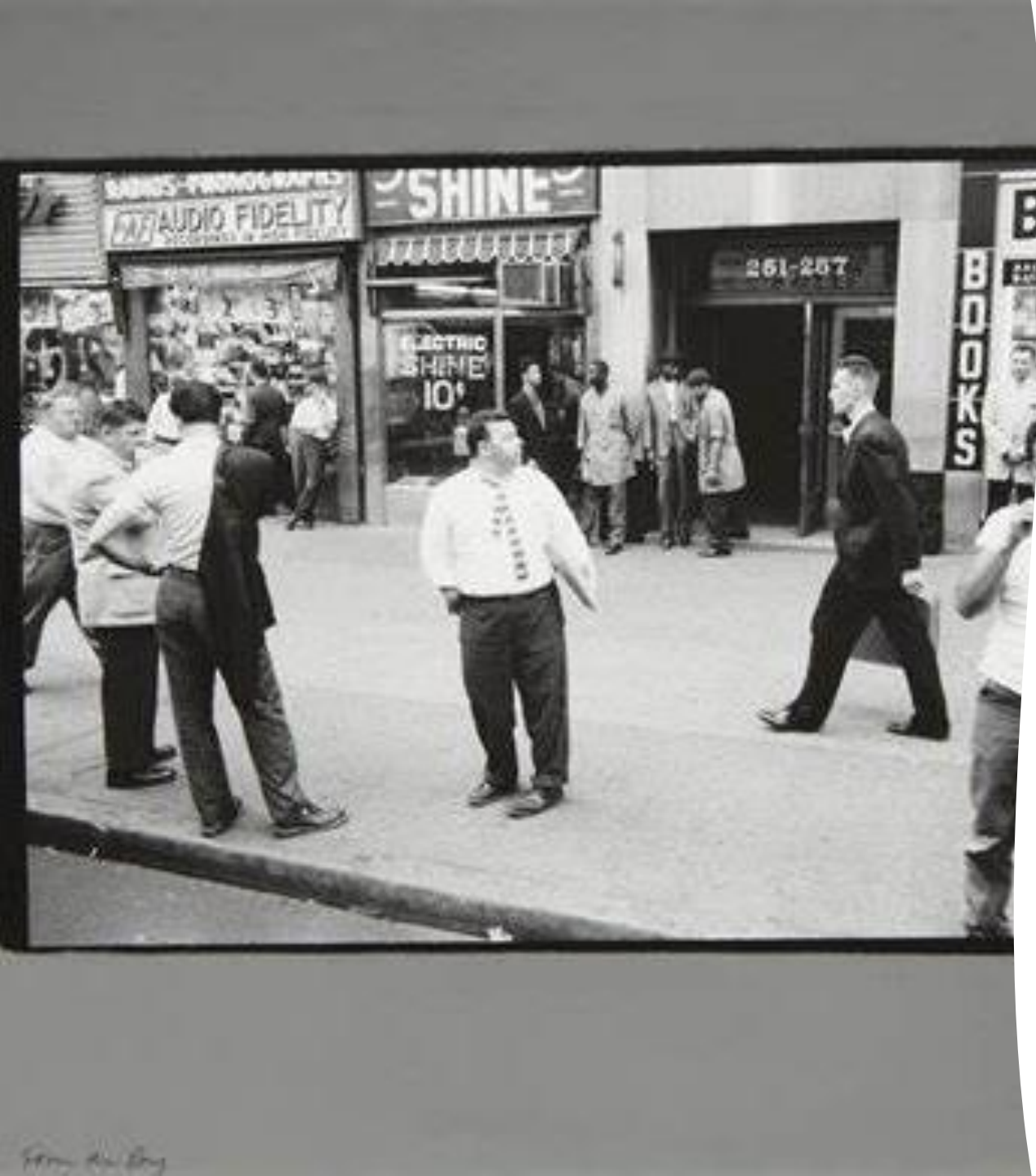
Laia Abril's *On Abortion* is part of her larger series called *A History of Misogyny*, and it takes on one of the most urgent global issues today: reproductive rights. The book explores the consequences of making abortion illegal or hard to access, and it's both heartbreaking and eye-opening.

Unlike Evans or Frank, Abril mixes many different types of content: photographs, written testimonies, historical documents, infographics, and even objects. The layout is very clean and clinical, almost like a medical or legal file, which gives the book a serious, investigative feel.

What makes Abril's approach stand out is that she doesn't just show the women affected, she shows the systems that control them. One page might feature a portrait of someone who died from an unsafe abortion, while the next shows the tool that was used or a government form tied to her case. It's raw and real.

This isn't just a story, it's a statement. Abril uses the photobook to make an argument, calling attention to injustice and pushing the viewer to think critically. It's a clear example of how photobooks can be a powerful form of visual activism.





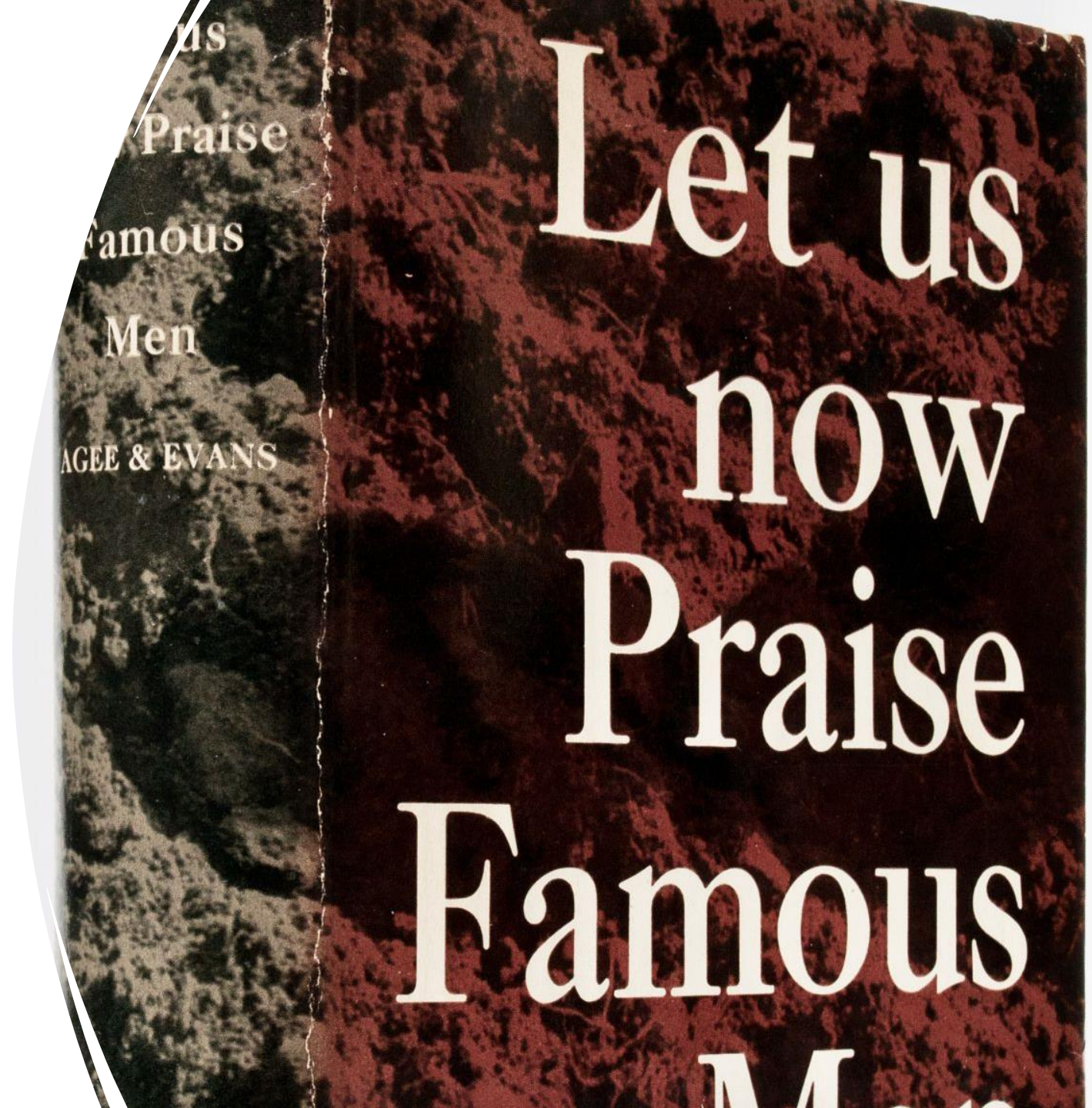
Robert Frank – *The Americans* (1958)

Published first in France, then in the U.S. with an intro by Jack Kerouac, Robert Frank's *The Americans* is a groundbreaking book that shows a very different side of 1950s America. Frank was an outsider a Swiss photographer and that perspective helped him see things most Americans might have missed or taken for granted.

The book is made up of 83 photos, arranged to feel like a road trip across the country. As you go through it, you move from big cities to small towns, seeing people from different races, classes, and backgrounds. Frank's style is very different from Evans's his photos are often blurry, oddly cropped, or taken at strange angles. But that's the point. He wanted to capture the feeling of life, the uncertainty, the loneliness, the contradictions of the American experience.

A single image might say a lot: an American flag might stand for freedom or something darker. A diner might look like a happy place or a lonely one. The ambiguity is part of what makes the book so powerful. Frank's way of sequencing the images feels more like poetry than journalism, and it changed the way people thought about photobooks mfrom factual documentation to personal, emotional storytelling.

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- Walker Evans – Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1941)
 - This photobook came out of the Great Depression. Evans had been hired by *Fortune* magazine in 1936 to document the lives of poor tenant farmers in the American South, but the story was never published there. Instead, Evans teamed up with writer James Agee to create a book that combined photos and writing in a unique, powerful way.
 - Evans's images are quiet and formal, with a documentary style. He used a large-format camera and natural light, capturing people in their homes, often with a kind of stillness that feels respectful and honest. The photos come before the text in the book, which forces the viewer to first sit with the faces, places, and lives of the people without any explanation or context.



.diane arbus.

An Aperture Monograph



.diane arbus.

This influential photobook collects 80 of Diane Arbus's black and white portraits, offering a raw and empathetic look at people living on society's margins. Arbus was known for photographing subjects often overlooked or misunderstood—such as dwarfs, transgender people, circus performers, and mentally ill individuals—with directness and intimacy. Her work challenged ideas of beauty, normalcy, and identity, revealing both the vulnerability and strength of her subjects. The book, released posthumously, became a cornerstone of photographic portraiture and helped establish Arbus's legacy as a pioneer of psychological realism in photography.

Exiles presents a deeply personal visual journey through the lives of displaced individuals and communities across Europe. After fleeing Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia, Koudelka spent years wandering the continent, photographing strangers and landscapes that reflect themes of exile, solitude, and disconnection. His high-contrast black and white images—often stark, wide, and contemplative—do not identify specific places or people, reinforcing the universality of estrangement. The book is considered a profound meditation on the emotional and spiritual experience of being unmoored, and it solidified Koudelka's reputation as one of the great humanist photographers.



Dummy Book 1

I first had to remaster skills with InDesign which didn't take that long as already being familiar with it from last year. I decided to use images from my personal project The Robber. I placed them in no apparent order and then printed them out on card. For the stitching I punctured holes in the seam and then followed the thread and needle through each one and then tied the end.

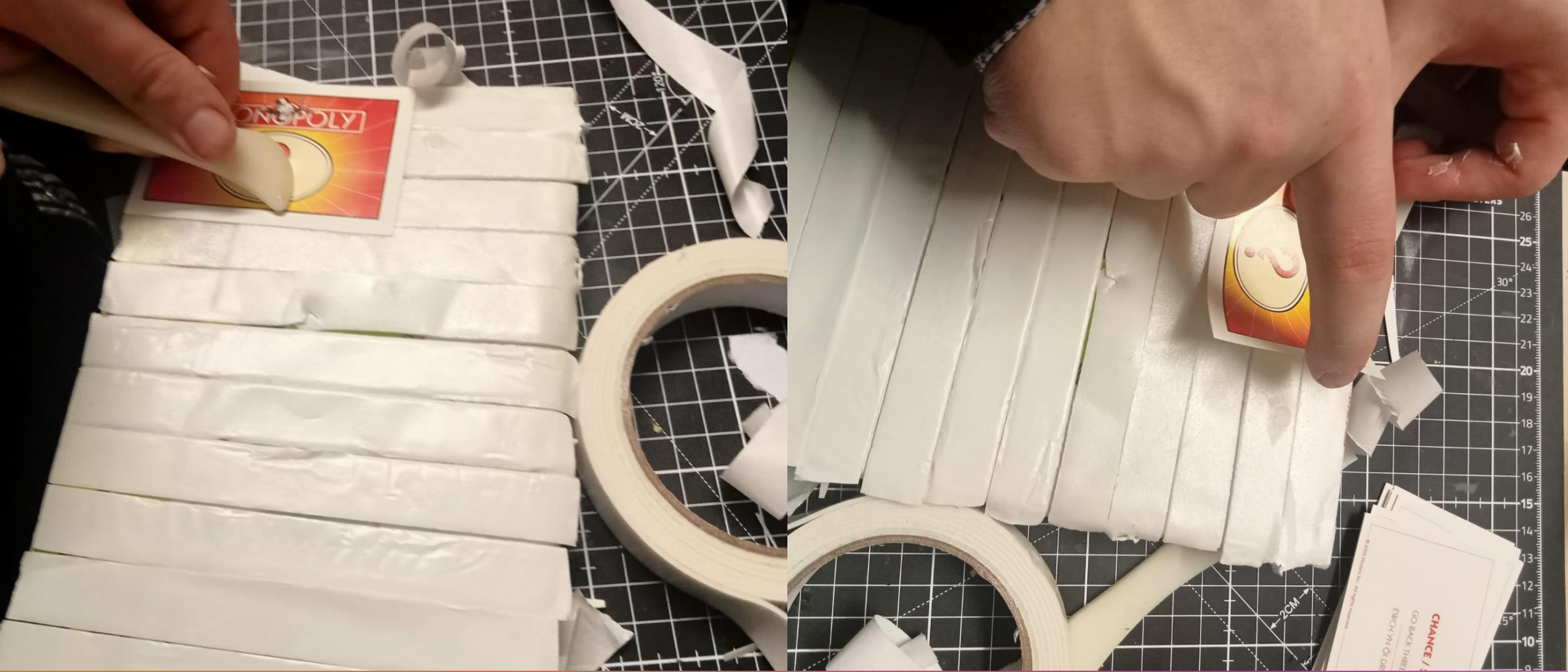


Dummy Book 2

I wanted this one to be more impressive and different than the last, I started by raiding the local charity shops for a monopoly board. Since I decided to continue the Robbers saga and he is based on the monopoly man It only seems fitting to include it. I began by cutting down an old board game to size.

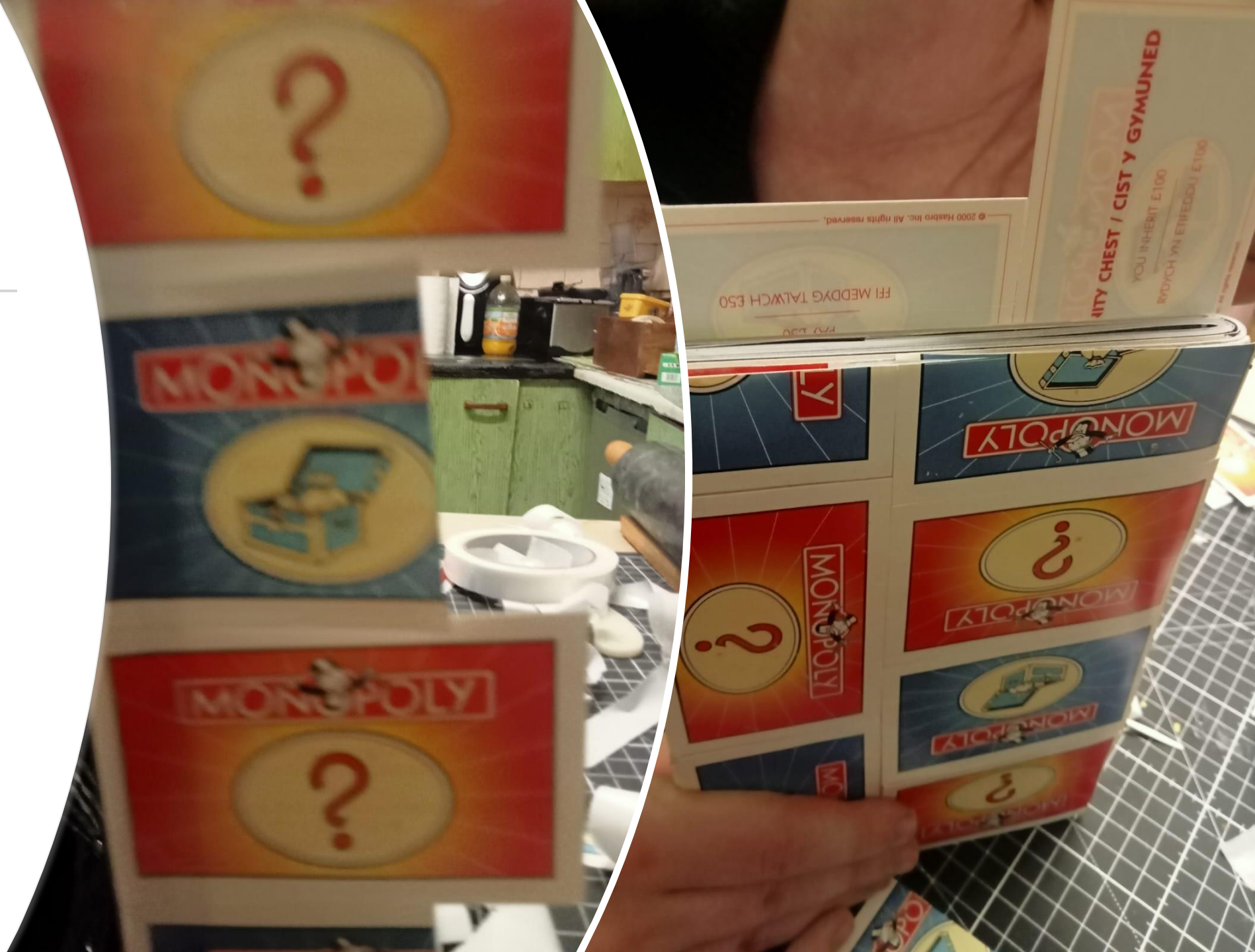
- Then I went into InDesign and rearranged the images in chronological order according to the plot of the Robber, while thinking of this I have decided to create a time line. Next I cover the cut down board and covered it in lines of double sided tape.





I then proceeded to take the monopoly board playing cards and covered the cover with them. This made an interesting effect as the colour of the cover clashes with the moody black and white images.

After cutting of the excess card I then taped masking tape on the spine to to secure the book



Dummy Book 2 Review.

While I'm pleased with the overall design it came together visually just as I had envisioned the final result didn't quite achieve the emotional or aesthetic effect I was aiming for. One of the more noticeable shortcomings is the stiffness of the spine and pagination, which makes the book difficult to handle and disrupts the flow of the reading experience. These physical limitations detract from the tactile and immersive quality I hoped to convey. As a result, it's back to the drawing board. I'll continue refining the concept through further experimentation, adjusting materials, layout, and binding techniques until the piece resonates more fully with the intent behind it.

Dummy Book 3

With this book I decided to go in a whole different direction, this book as a whole should be more of a found item rather than something you buy on a shelf. This to me now should be a personal log to the Robbers journey. I also wanted to add the effect of its been lost and almost destroyed. So I decided to order new paper texture, water colour paper. As this looks old and rugged. When I printed onto this paper I did have an issue, the uni printer wouldn't accept the paper. So this was a home job. So continued to print it out and bind it.

I decided to age the book but not forcefully, I dug a hole in the garden and buried it.





The creating a mix of liquid wash paint and polish remover, I poured over the buried book and lit the polish igniting the earth and book beneath.



I then continued to wait
48 hours and after much
rain and frost I dug it up.
And It looked amazing.



Dummy Book 3 Review

This book surpassed the last one by a landslide. It carries a richness and depth that the previous version simply lacked both visually and experientially. From the charred edges of the burnt pages to the subtle damp stains and that unmistakable, evocative smell of aged paper, every element contributes to a sense of atmosphere and narrative. It feels alive, as though it holds a history of its own. This iteration captured something truly special, and it's going to be a hard one to top.

The Final Book

For the final book I know I wanted it to be similar to the last but different, so I recreated all my steps up until the point of the cover.

I began by cutting a strip of red leather and fitted and glued the precut board into place it was important to leave a gap between the boards as that is wear the spine of the book would be.



Next I cut wear the folds would be



And then proceeded to weigh it down



The folds didn't turn out to bad as the paper will be stuck over them to hide any ugliness.

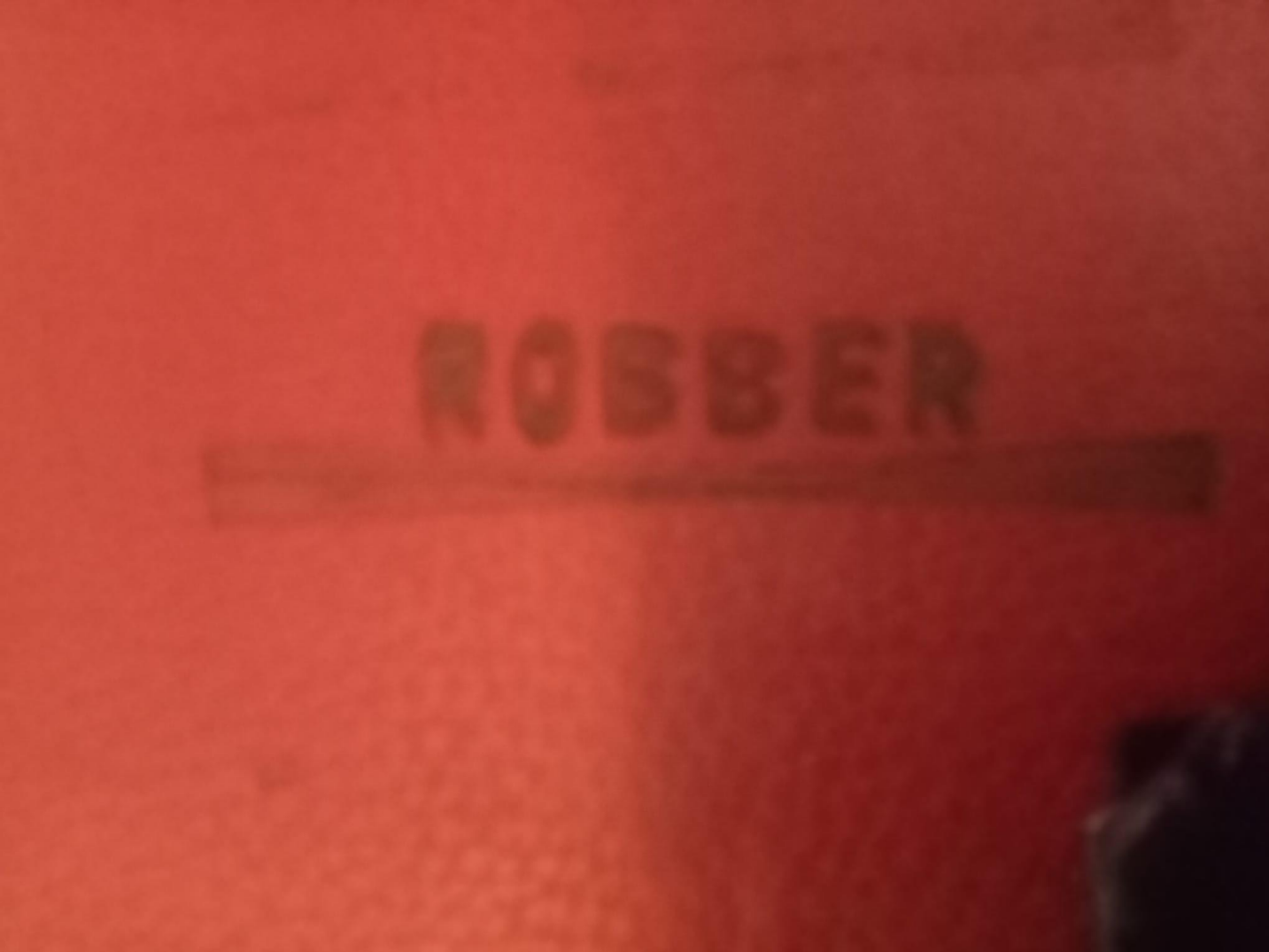


Next I used older scrap paper and glued it on to secure the cover. I also dried it with a hair dryer.





I am personally pleased on how this turned out, as it looks like a diary styled cover.



I decided as a cover name. Not to write or paint etc. But to brand it with a branding iron. I am really happy how this turned out as it really added a cool effect.



Lastly, I added a finishing touch that being a clasp and padlock as my thinking was if this robber had all his darkest secrets in a book he would definitely keep it under lock and key.