

ANNOUNCEMENT CARD

A House Divided: Photography and the Civil War

This announcement was designed for an exhibition comprised of over 80 rare original photographic prints and cased images documenting numerous important aspects of the Civil War, seen through the lens of the most gifted artist-photographers of 19th century America. The die-cut structure of the invitation physically reflects the divisions of the Civil War and the typography and the artwork are authentic to the era.

INSPIRATION:

Print shops of the mid-1800s acted as extensions of the town square; printing and distributing news, business opportunities, and entertainment notices.

My inspiration for the announcement card was taken from the printed broadsides of the era announcing such disparate things as; the theatrical performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre (best known as the play that U.S. president Abraham Lincoln was attending in Washington, D.C. when he was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth), notices posted for runaway slaves, and enrollment posters for both the Union and Confederate armies.

TYPOGRAPHY:

The dozen or so typefaces used in the invitation are from a collection of typefaces, borders, and ornaments from the Civil War era that have been digitized — but that have retained the unusual (to our modern eyes) letter-spacing of leaded metal type. Where necessary for legibility (for instance, the too large a space after a capital “W”), I’ve adjusted the kerning. For flavor and authenticity in our announcement, I’ve taken pains to keep the spacing that a job printer of the 1850s would have created in his metal tray.

STRUCTURE:

It was important that one full side of the invitation could be used as a poster -- and that the broadside reflected the print aesthetics of the Civil War era.

The exhibition runs from March to May and has multiple events occurring throughout the engagement; an opening reception, a lecture, and a gallery talk. I needed space to highlight the individual events as well to showcase a few of the images in the show; a zine format would be able to organize this amount of information and create a booklet keepsake. The split down the center of the zine format turns from a liability to an asset as it reflects the exhibition name “A House Divided” — include two opposing manicules along the fold and you have a visual and *literal* representation of the Civil War dividing the nation.