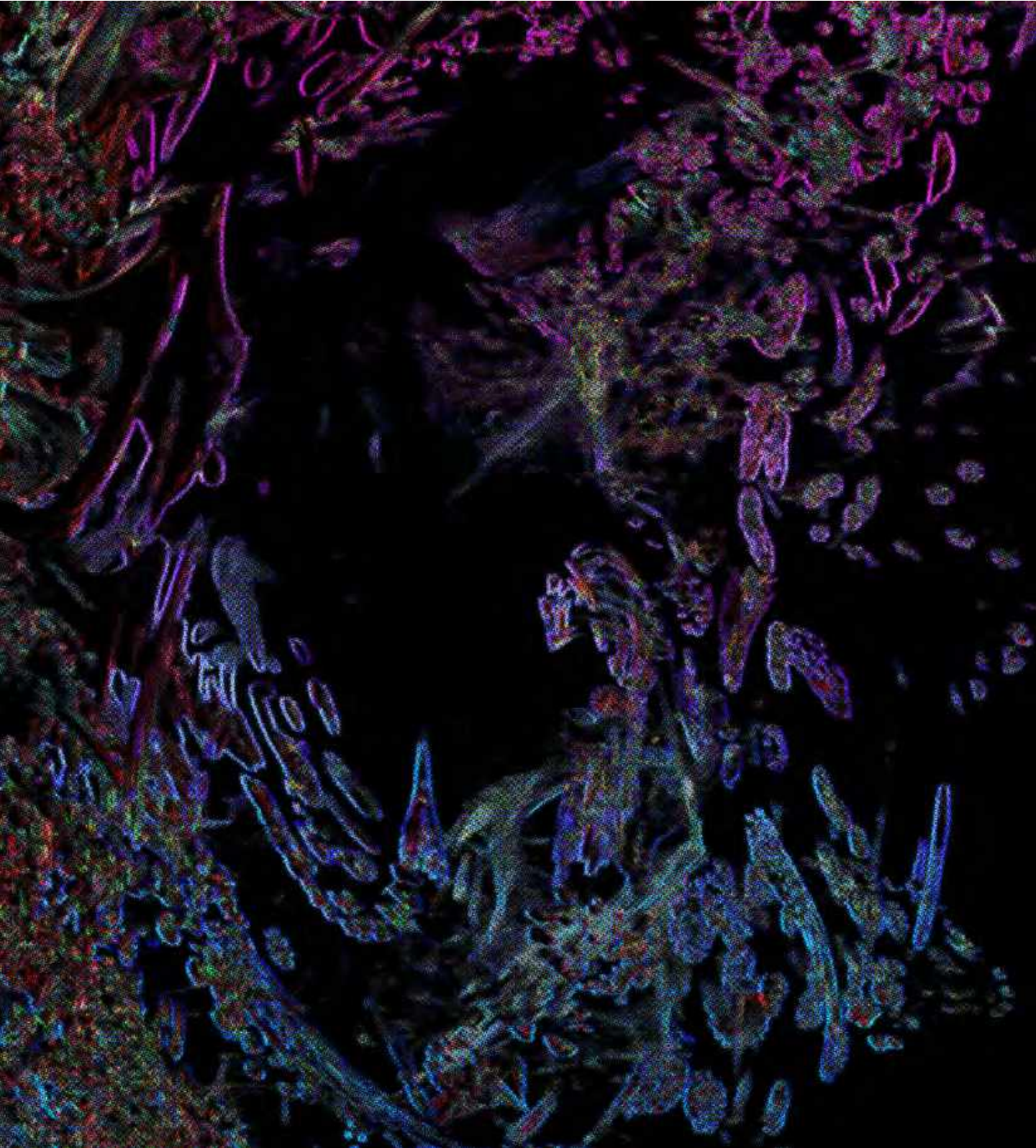


**Re:Ornament**  
Aleks Dawson





## God is in the details

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

***Previous pages:***

**Ludwig Mies van Der Rohe and Lilly Reich  
Barcelona Pavilion, 1928**

**Re:Ornament**

Aleks Dawson

# Abstract

*Re:Ornament* calls for a rethinking of ornament within the history and practice of design, urging a broad reconsideration of ornament's value and a complete reimagining of ornament's future potential. Charting the arc of ornament in the Western tradition, this thesis reexamines the impact of modernism's rejection of ornament—and, with it, its embedded culture, history, knowledge and craft.

Studying ornament's structure as a language, I make the case for ornament's inherent beauty and excess and speculate on how ornament could apply to thinking and making beyond design. Through graphic form, material exploration and pattern thinking, I negotiate these complexities with work that is intrinsically structural, deeply ornamental and often a hybrid of the material and the digital, the hand and the machine. As such, my work is not only a response to—or rebuttal of—modernism, but also a call to action and an invitation to remember, recalibrate and remake our perception and use of ornament today.

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# Introduction



Thomas Minton's Willow Plate  
Stoke-on-Trent, England, 1780'

I've always been attracted to ornament. One very early memory is that of the clanky century-old upright piano we had when I was a kid, complete with fake ivory veneer keys pock-marked with holes where my mum had allowed her cigarettes to burn through as she played. I adored this piano: not just for its Cajun honky-tonk sound but for the inlaid brass work it bore on its front. The brass inlay had fin de siècle, William Morris-esque flourishes, and while I knew it referenced nature, these were plants I had never seen—whimsical and strange, yet somehow deeply familiar. They were fascinating to me, and I loved to sit at that piano and touch that brass inlay, wondering how it got there and who had made it; wondering why every other piano I had seen was so plain in comparison; and always thinking we were lucky, in a way, to have such extravagance in our home. When we moved to Papua New Guinea, the piano couldn't come, and so one day two burly men dragged it out, its immense weight tearing off a section of our back deck in the process. As far as I remember, they were taking it not to play but to be scrapped for its brass. I was dismayed: how could something so old, so intrinsically ornate and so fundamentally beautiful be worth so little?

In Papua New Guinea I saw ornament and pattern I had never seen before. I marveled at everything from bilum bags to mud masks, head dresses, piercings, body painting and basket weaving; right through to the ritual scarification that even some in my school had on their bodies. These patterns were so totally foreign to me and yet somehow deeply familiar. Even as a kid, I remember thinking the crafts of Port Moresby's Koki markets were



Broadwood & Sons Piano  
London, 1890s



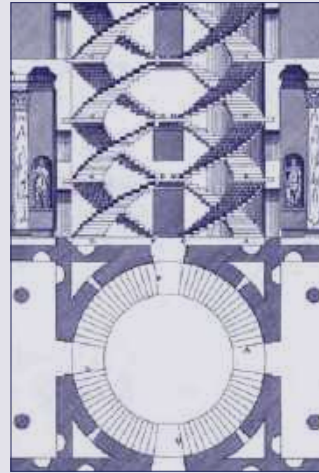
Traditional bilum bag made  
from woven plant fibers  
Papua New Guinea

so beautiful. To me they spoke of a time in Papua New Guinea before *First Contact*,<sup>2</sup> before white colonization. They spoke of a respect for materials and for the land from which they were taken. And most importantly, they spoke of a connection to history, to their individual family's stories, tribes and elders. This experience—coupled with my parents showing us Europe at a young age—had a significant bearing on my interest in ornament, pattern and design. Such widespread exposure to so much visual stuff—and from so many divergent places—greatly impacted my perception of the world and its seemingly universal love of the ornate.

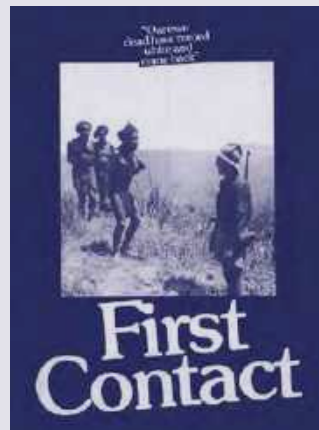
My exposure to other cultures didn't end there: in the years since, my immediate family has lived in the US, Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines; and my husband and I have also been lucky enough to travel a great deal. Wherever we go, I habitually seek out examples of local ornament, always looking at the “vernacular,” and always questioning what these visual languages mean, where they came from, and what their future is in the broader context of an increasingly homogenized global visual aesthetic. As I have grown, I have come to believe that ornament exists far beyond appliqué. Ornament is so much more than “just wallpaper,” which in my experience has been a consistent critique leveled at it by its detractors, including some here at RISD. I believe this antipathy toward ornament and pattern stems from the lasting influence of the likes of Owen Jones and Adolf Loos, who in his 1910 lecture *Ornament and Crime* equated ornament to the Papuan's savage “urge to draw on one's face and everything within reach.”

<sup>1</sup>This was our everyday dinnerware throughout my childhood. I vividly remember many a meal where I'd push my food around these plates in an effort to decipher the design's narrative. This Chinoiserie design was popularized (and widely-copied) thanks to advances in the production of decorative tableware, especially the use of printed glaze transfers. A collection of 19th century blue-and-white Staffordshire transferware was shown alongside English artist Paul Scott's work for the RISD Museum's *Raid the Icebox Now* exhibition, 2019-20.

<sup>2</sup>*First Contact* (1983) was a groundbreaking Australian documentary by Bob Connolly and his sociologist wife Robin Anderson,<sup>†</sup> which recounted the experience of gold prospectors venturing into the then-unexplored highlands of Papua New Guinea in the 1930s.



**Andrea Palladio's drawing of the double helix staircase at Château de Chambord—said to have been designed by Leonardo da Vinci—taken from Palladio's seminal *Four Books on Architecture***



**Promotional poster for the 1983 film *First Contact***

Modernists following Loos took his ideas further: from Le Corbusier arguing that a house should be a “machine for living” to Mies van der Rohe advocating “less is more.” The idea that ornament was somehow outmoded or simply not “modern” coincided with unparalleled industrialization and mechanization in our world. The same advances ensured the baroque tendencies of the Arts & Crafts movement, the Vienna Secessionists, the Wiener Werkstätte and Art Nouveau tossed aside in favor of total standardization. By definition, ornament was excess. The logical conclusion of such “progress” was mechanized warfare and industrialized genocide. But even in the postwar climate, ornament still had no place in supposedly-modern society or its Fordist<sup>3</sup> ways of thinking and making. If modernism stood for cleanliness, clarity and rationalism, ornament represented the antithesis. Ornament was materially and aesthetically demoted, and it has languished on the peripheries of our collective visual vocabulary ever since. And while ornament appears to have resurfaced in various kitsch and revivalist trends, it has not held the same aesthetic legitimacy it had prior to Modernism's damning indictment.

**A particularly ornate vessel I photographed in the Museo Nacional de Antropología's *Cultura del Norte* collection, Mexico City, 2015**



**When visiting my parents in Manila I've obsessed over the lettering on the backs of *Jeepneys*, the preferred local public transport**

<sup>3</sup>Fordism is “the eponymous manufacturing system designed to spew out standardized, low-cost goods and afford its workers decent enough wages to buy them.” Grazia, Victoria *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.



# Loos in the Coffee House



In his seminal 1910 lecture *Ornament and Crime*, the Austrian architect Adolf Loos argued that “in a highly productive nation, ornament is no longer a natural product of its culture and therefore represents a backwardness or even a degenerative tendency.” Loos went further, equating such backwardness with both criminal delinquency *and* what he perceived as the savagery of cultures, tribes and traditions he knew little about. His arguments have particular resonance for me as I spent the better part of my childhood in Papua New Guinea, a country where—as Loos phrased it—“what is natural for a Papuan is degenerate for modern man.” It bears remembering that Loos’s comments were aimed at—and a product of—the excesses of the Vienna Secession, a period emblematic of the peak of the Austro-Hungarian empire’s wealth and power. And herein lies Loos’s hypocrisy: in the coffee houses of early 20th century Vienna—a number of which Loos himself designed—it is not a stretch to imagine Loos was drinking coffee and eating *sachertorte* made with cocoa and sugar stolen from the very savages he decried.



Poster advertising Loos’s lecture *Ornament and Crime* Vienna, 1908



**Above: a young Papuan man wearing full ceremonial finery—an elaborate feather headdress and nose, neck and arm ornaments made from shell. The belt is European. Photo taken by Protestant missionary Harry Moore Dauncey in the Papuan Gulf fishing village of Delena, in what was then called British New Guinea, sometime between 1880 and 1913.<sup>1</sup>**

**Following pages: the interior of Adolf Loos's *Café Museum*, Vienna, 1889. Nicknamed “Café Nihilism,” Loos’s interior had a profound influence on the trajectory of contemporary interior design. Completed three years after his return from the United States, the café was Loos’s first significant application of his ideas against ornamentation.**

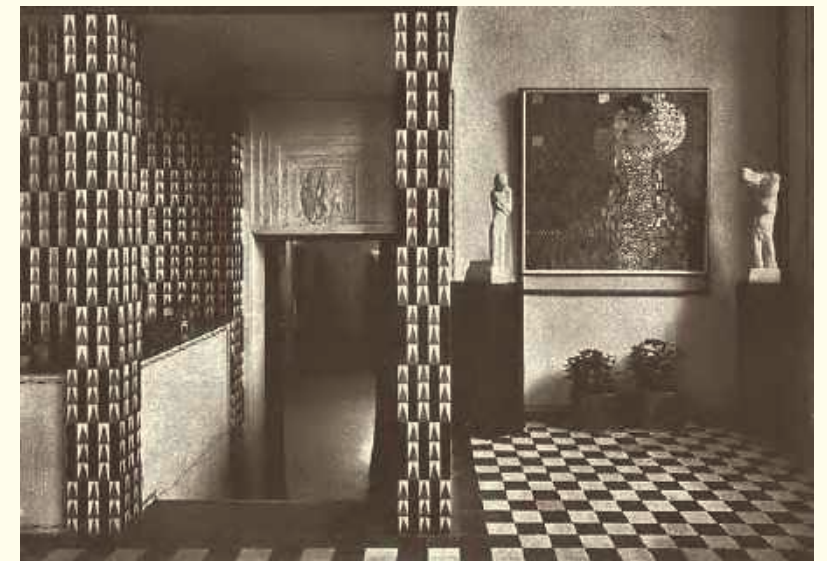
It was in this climate of fin de siècle decadence, fueled by blind imperialism, at the end of the Victorian era—and on the precipice of a new kind of industrialized warfare—that Loos suddenly decided ornament’s time was up. He was going to set the record straight: ornament was criminal, degenerate, inefficient and entirely devoid of function; and so he set about destroying it and establishing a new definition of modernity in its place.

A century later, one need only look at the achingly-empty White Cube<sup>3</sup> of ‘contemporary’ art to surmise the impact of Loos’s argument. But Loos was neither the first to bring moral, aesthetic or economic charges against ornament; nor was he even unique in Vienna at the time. In 1903 the Wiener Werkstätte vowed in their manifesto to “be decorative without compulsion” (of course they ended up being the exact opposite, to the point of bankruptcy), and encouraged their patrons to embrace geometric patterns over “unthinking imitation of old styles.” The initial implication from Hoffmann and Moser was that ornament suggested both obsolescence and a pathological lack of control.

But again, these ideas weren’t new. For millennia the Western tradition appears to have harbored a distinct distrust for the decorative, arguing almost obsessively



**Vienna’s Hotel Sacher first sold its namesake *Sachertorte* in 1832<sup>2</sup>**



**Josef Hoffmann’s interior for the Wiener Werkstätte exhibition in Krefeld, 1907—note Gustav Klimt’s *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer*, now at the Neue Galerie, New York<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>Plymouth Museums collection and the Royal Anthropological Institute, United Kingdom. Dauncey (1863-1928) was British Protestant missionary stationed at the village of Delena for over forty years. He wrote a book about his life and work, *Papuan Pictures*, which was illustrated with his own photographs and published in 1913.

<sup>2</sup>The Sachertorte was created by pastry chef Franz Sacher (1816-1907) for Prince Clemens Lothar Wensel Metternich (1773-1859), then Austrian Chancellor. On a trip to Vienna in July 2019, I dragged my husband to the Hotel Sacher to get a slice of their famous cake. To my astonishment, the queue for a table stretched around the block, so we opted for the nearby Café Landtmann (open since 1873) instead.

<sup>3</sup>O’Doherty, Brian. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. San Francisco & Santa Monica, CA: The Lapis Press, 1986.

<sup>4</sup>I grew up with Klimt drink coasters in our living room—my favorite was the portrait of Adele. For a truly extraordinary account of the history of “Austria’s Mona Lisa”, I highly recommend Anne-Marie O’Connor’s book *The Lady in Gold* (2012).



**Adolf Loos's Café Museum, Vienna, 1899; Loos also designed the furniture and light fixtures.**

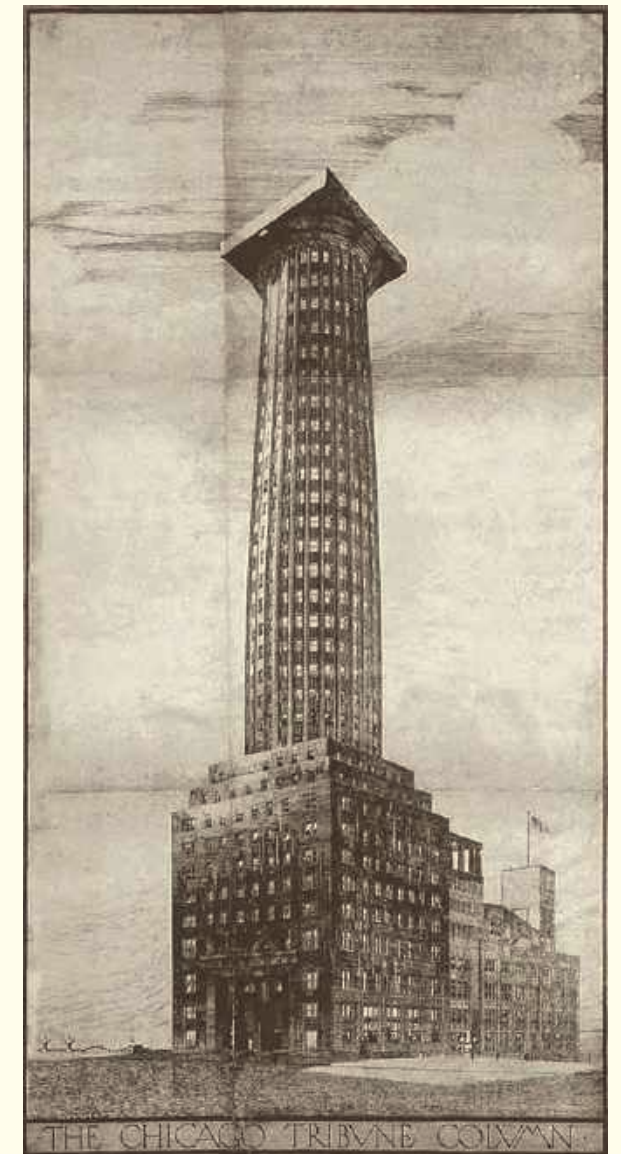
Image: Weizman, Ines. "The Aurality of Adolf Loos's Architecture." *Harvard Design Magazine*, 2014.



A central work of Viennese modernism, Loos's *Goldman & Salatsch Building* is considered one of his most accomplished built projects. Nicknamed "the house without eyebrows," it caused such a stir in Viennese society when it opened in 1910 that the client had Loos add window boxes to the façade after its completion.

My husband and I visited the "Looshaus" in July 2019. Today it is occupied by a bank which would not allow me to take photos of its lavish interior. The building sits on Michaelerplatz directly opposite the Hofburg, the imperial palace of the Habsburg dynasty and today the residence and offices of Austria's President. It is rumored that Emperor Franz Joseph (1830–1916) detested Loos's "hideous" work so much he ordered the palace windows shut so he wouldn't have to look at it.

Loos's rejected design for the Chicago Tribune Tower competition in 1922; Loos's Doric column became a touchstone for Postmodernist architects in the 1980s



over definitions of beauty and excess; and specifically as they relate to the idea of ornament.

Sometime between 30 and 15 BCE, Vitruvius argued for *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas*: strength, functionality and beauty (or, as I had learned in architecture school: firmness, commodity and delight). In his *De architectura libri decem* (*Ten Books on Architecture*), dedicated to Augustus Caesar, Vitruvius offered commentary on everything from Roman aqueducts to war machines. But perhaps his most lasting influence has been on the perception of beauty, arguing that true, timeless beauty in architecture and ornamentation could only be derived from the “truth of nature,” and specifically the proportions of the human body. Vitruvius cited ancient scholars who supposedly studied the bodies of innumerable “well-shaped men” (but notably, not women), finding that they all shared certain characteristic proportions. In physically positioning his man at the center of a circle and a square, Vitruvius argued proof of an inextricable link between nature and geometry, and placed his definition of beauty squarely between the two. Beauty,

in effect, was a perfect—masculine—proportion; and nature the apogee of ornament. It is also worth noting the sequence of these three intertwined ideals: though they were subsequently shuffled by Alberti, then Palladio and others, every definition always lists *venustas* last. In doing so, all versions of the Vitruvian

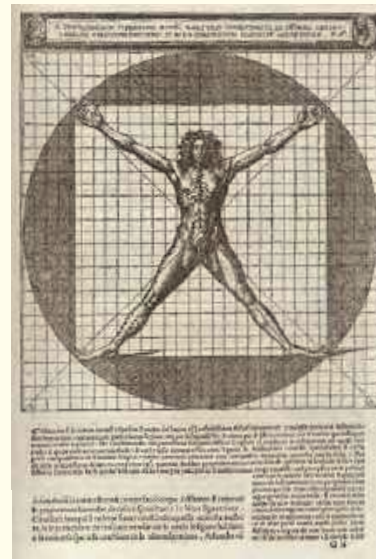


**Augustus in victory pose, possibly after the Battle of Actium; 1st Century, Vatican Museums**

<sup>1</sup> Pollio, Marcus Vitruvius. *De architectura libri decem*. Würzburg: Eucharius Silber, 1486. Morgan Library, New York (Purchased by John Pierpont Morgan, 1912).

<sup>2</sup> Alberti is perhaps the most important architect of the Early Renaissance, and was a favorite of mine throughout my architecture studies. I saw this church in Florence in 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Officina Profumo (*Perfume Workshop*)’s Santa Maria Novella fragrance uses the ancient cabbage rose, *rosa x centifolia*, mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad* (8th Century BCE) and cultivated in Florence by Dominican friars since 1221.



**Marcus Vitruvius Pollio’s man in *De architectura libri decem*, from Eucharius Silber’s 1486 edition<sup>1</sup>**



**Leon Battista Alberti’s Santa Maria Novella, Florence, 1458–70<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>3</sup>

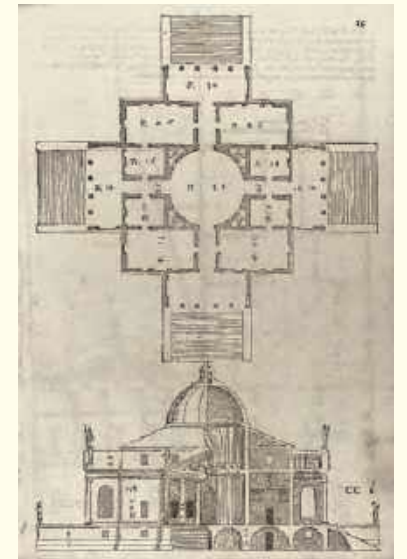
triad—at least for me—imply that strength and functionality are intrinsic to and logical prerequisites of beauty.

But how does this relate to Loos eating cake as he penned his polemic? I believe it is important to establish the tradition from which Loos and his arguments emerged. This tradition goes back way beyond Loos’s schooling, to the Greek and Roman ideals and aesthetics his period was so desperate to emulate. In Loos’s day, Vitruvius was still untouchable, but cracks were appearing in his centuries-old reputation. While Fibonacci, da Vinci and Pacioli had all bolstered Vitruvius’ case, theorists after the Renaissance began to question—if not recalibrate—his triad of strength, functionality and beauty. Étienne-Louis Boullée, for example, removed all ornament he deemed “unnecessary”—and instead abstracted classical geometries at massive proportions. For Boullée, scale became both function *and* ornament: big was beautiful. But others pressed a more pragmatic agenda: Jean-Louis Durand, for example, argued that function itself was beauty. John Ruskin then brought a new religious dimension to the conversation, again arguing for “truth to nature” but this time through a prism of devotional “sacrifice” and “obedience.” To me, Ruskin’s ideas hinge on prior aesthetic arguments within the Christian tradition—arguments that, in part, contributed to the Reformation. Protestantism held up excessive ornament as blasphemous, advocating for plainness in devotional aesthetics; Ruskin argued for the opposite.

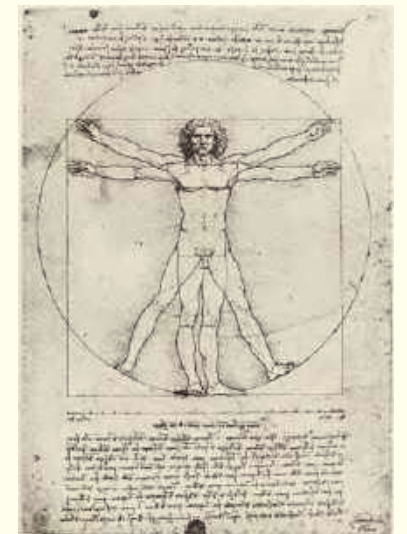


**Fibonacci’s *Liber Abaci* Biblioteca Nazionale Florence 1228**

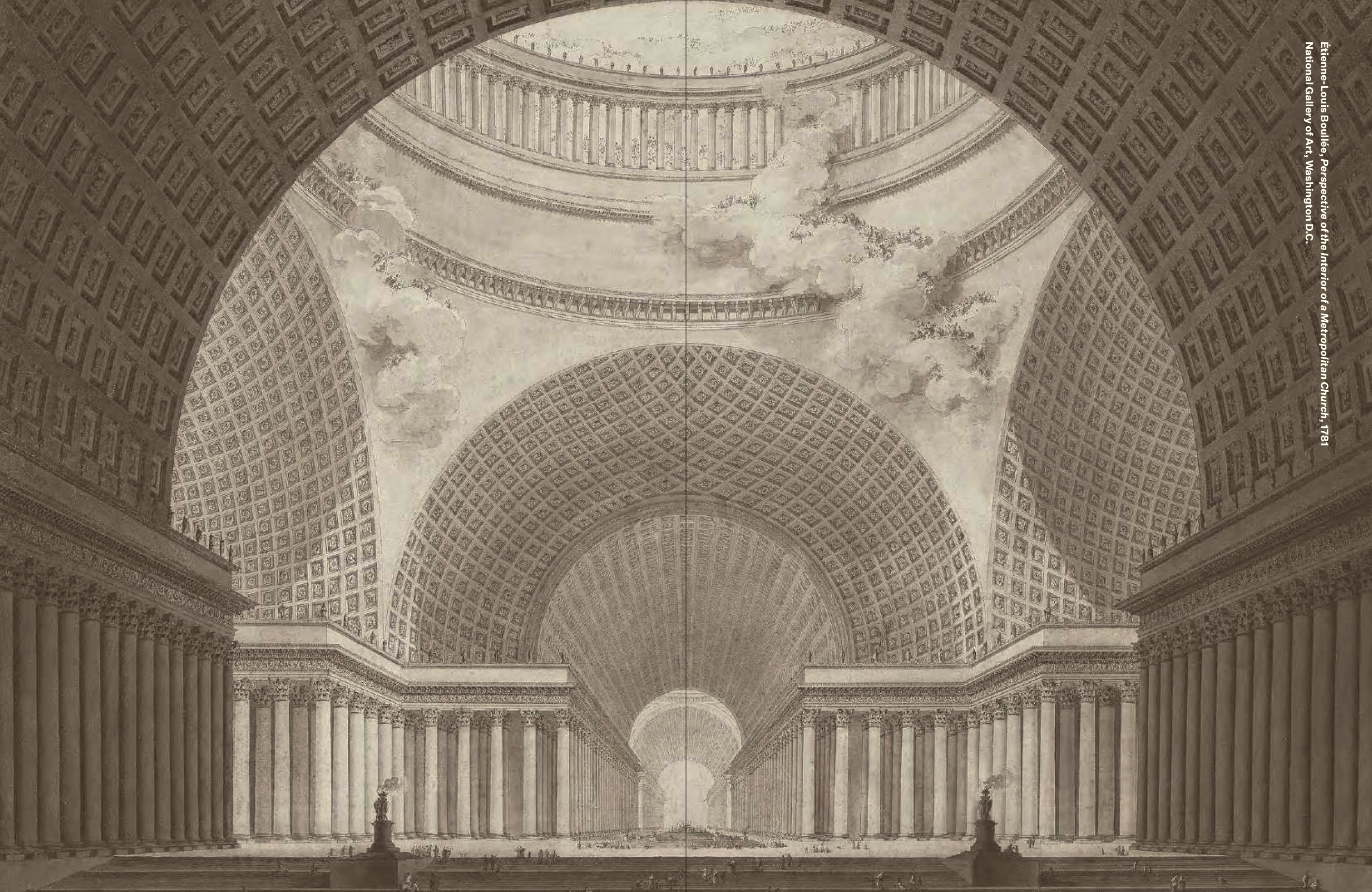
<sup>4</sup> Villa Almerico (1566–69), also known as Villa Rotonda, is perhaps one of the best-known (and copied) works of the Renaissance. It was built for the priest Paolo Almerico upon his retirement from the Vatican. Famous for crystallizing many classical ideals of geometry, symmetry and proportion, today the house is a UNESCO World Heritage site, sitting atop its hilltop surrounded by the farms and vineyards of Vicenza.



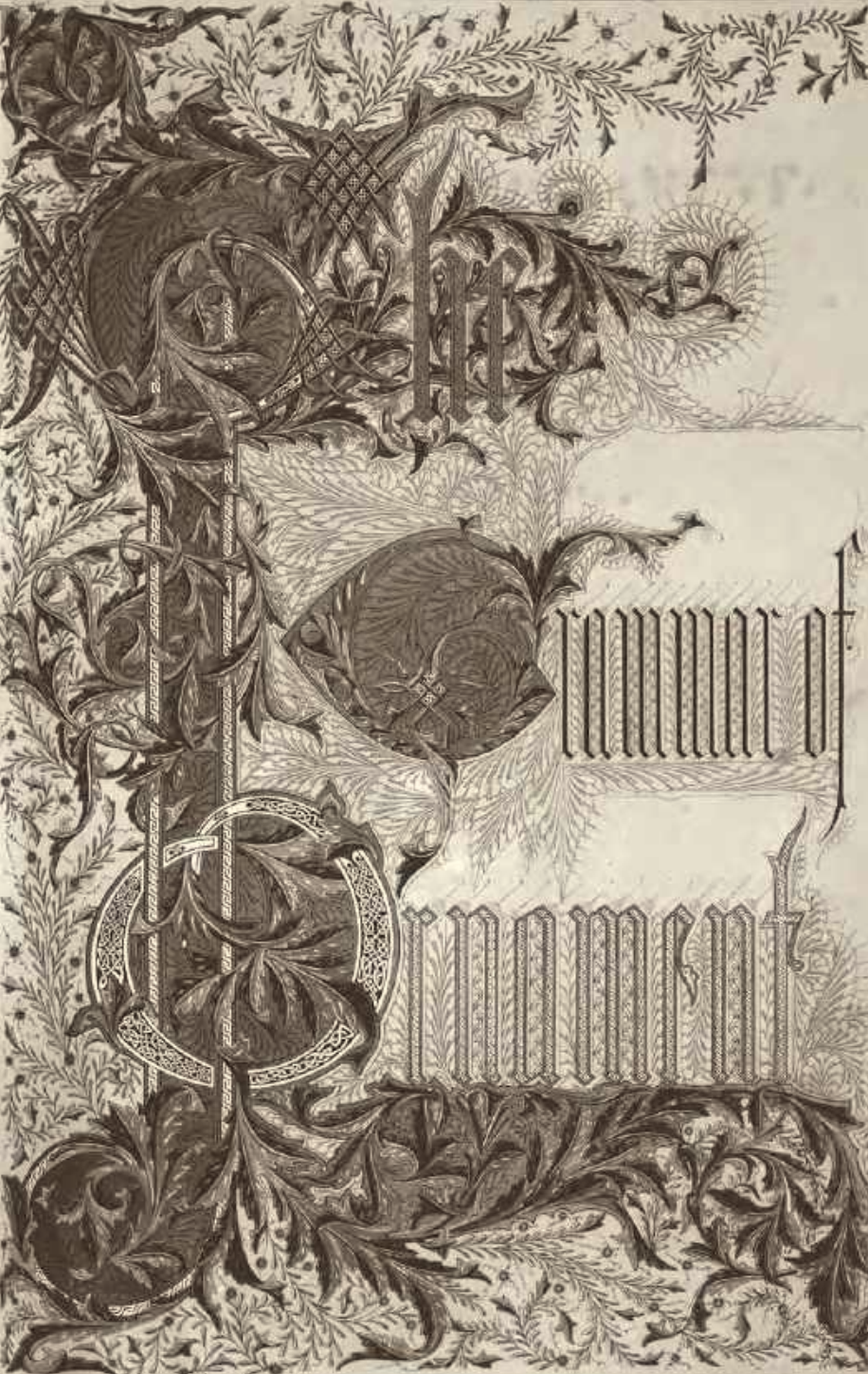
**Andrea Palladio’s Villa Almerico, from *Quattro libri dell’architettura*, Metropolitan Museum, 1570<sup>4</sup>**



**Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* Gallerie dell’Accademia, Venice 1490**



Étienne-Louis Boullée, *Perspective of the Interior of a Metropolitan Church*, 1781  
National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.



**Above: the title page in Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament*, London, 1856  
 Right: the first plate in Jones's *Grammar: Savage Tribes N°1***

<sup>1</sup>In 2018 I was privileged to hold an original edition of Jones's magnum opus in the Updike Special Collections of the Providence Public Library. I'd owned a Dorling Kindersley reprint of his work since I was a teenager, but seeing Jones's massive and luscious poly-chromolithographic plates in person had a profound impact on me and my work at RISD.



Meanwhile, Ruskin's contemporaries in England and Scotland were pushing for ever-more ornament. Owen Jones published his seminal *Grammar of Ornament* in 1856, and while racist in its delineation of "savage" ornament from "civilized," it was the most lavish and comprehensive survey on the subject to date. Spurred on by Jones' tome, Morris, Pugin and Mackintosh were then central to reviving the link between ornament and craft; arguing against mass production and for a return to traditional craftsmanship and its inherently romanticized idea of ornament. Morris' Arts & Crafts movement had an immense influence on the global decorative arts, spreading so far as the Mingei folk art movement in Japan and the Chicago School in the United States. And while the movement surely framed a great deal of Loos's early design education, its ideals were also personal: Loos was the son of a stonemason, and as such was acutely aware of the central role of the craftsman within the decorative arts.



**Above: William Morris's Leicester wallpaper, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1890; Below: the Lords Chamber at London's Palace of Westminster, rebuilt in the Gothic Revival by Augustus Pugin and Charles Barry, 1840-76**





Meiji Period leather fireman's coat, influenced by the Mingei folk art and British Arts & Crafts movements  
Late 19th century, Brooklyn Museum, New York<sup>1</sup>

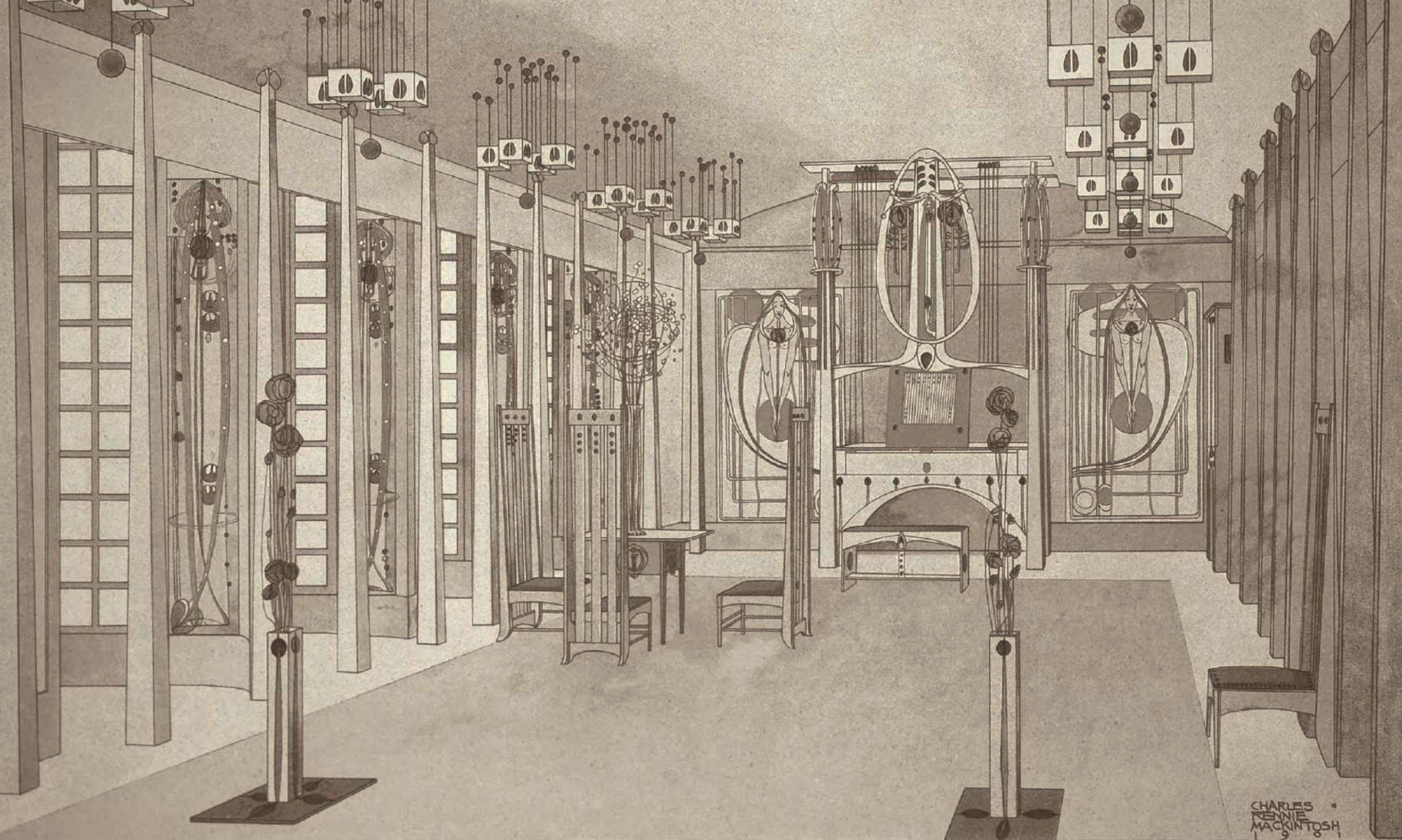
<sup>1</sup>Meiji Chocolate was my favorite Japanese graphic design find when I visited my sister, who was living in Miyazaki, in 2009. The company was founded in 1916 and named after the Emperor Meiji, who reigned from the isolationist Japan of 1868 until his death in 1912, by which time Japan was an industrialized nation state and emerging world power.



Side chair designed by the architect Edward Welby Pugin, son of Augustus Pugin, pioneer of the Arts & Crafts and architect of the Houses of Parliament shown on page prior; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1870







The music room of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's *House for an Art Lover*, 1901

A disqualified entry in a magazine competition, *House for an Art Lover* brought Mackintosh international fame. The house was eventually built within Glasgow's Bellahouston Park in 1989, sixty years after his death.



Loos took this awareness with him when he set off for the New World in his early twenties. From 1893–96 he saw Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis and Chicago—modern metropolises far removed from the Brno he grew up in. Loos also attended the Chicago World’s Fair, an experience I believe was integral to his later trajectory, both for its excessively-ornamented architecture and the radical technological advances housed within. *Everybody* was there: from Edison, Westinghouse and Tesla in technology; to Burnham, McKim, Olmstead and Sullivan in architecture. A brilliant spectacle of science, art and industry, the Fair epitomized the same dichotomy Loos would soon investigate in his work: an epic dual between the unadorned utility of the future and the gilded folly of the past. I believe *this* was the precise moment that



crystallized Loos’s position on ornament. Transfixed by Sullivan’s argument that “it could only benefit us if we were to abandon ornament,” Loos was convinced ornament was not only outmoded, it was *in the way*.

Loos returned to Vienna blinded by Burnham’s “White City,” with Louis Sullivan’s now-famous aphorism “form follows function” still ringing in his ears:

*“When, after an absence of three years I appeared in Vienna and saw my colleagues again, I had to rub my eyes: all the architects were dressed like ‘artists.’ Not like other people, but—from an American point of view—like buffoons.”*

<sup>1</sup> Somehow I knew about (and loved) this building as a kid back in Australia. While visiting Chicago in 2017, I was somewhat disappointed to find the discount retailer Target had taken over the flagship retail space. We went shopping nonetheless.

<sup>2</sup> In a bitter public feud, George Westinghouse outbid Thomas Edison for the contract to illuminate the World’s Fair using Nikola Tesla’s polyphase alternating current (AC) system over Edison’s cumbersome direct current (DC). Tesla’s invention lit up the fair with over 200,000 bulbs, dazzling crowds and effectively ending the infamous “War of the Currents”.



**Above & opposite:** Dankmar Adler & Louis Sullivan’s Carson Pirie Scott Co. Building, Chicago, 1899 <sup>1</sup>

**Left:** Sullivan’s Golden Door for the Fair’s Transport Building, 1893



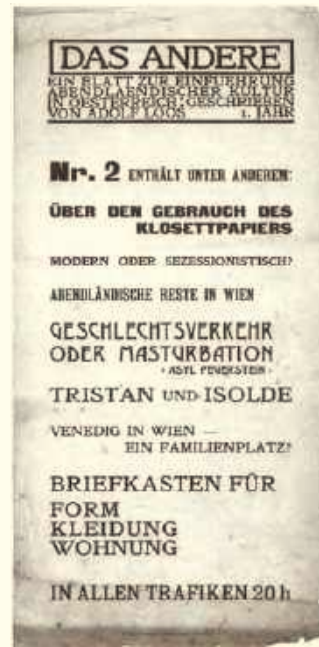
**Nikola Tesla illuminated the Fair, attending in 1893 to demonstrate his patents to awestruck crowds <sup>2</sup>**



The Grand Basin of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, popularly referred to as the Chicago World's Fair

Immediately upon his return, Loos set about making a career for himself both as an architect and as a writer of social commentary. In 1903 Loos would write, edit and publish *Das Andere: Ein Blatt zur Einführung abendländischer Kultur in Österreich* (*The Other: A Journal for the Introduction of Western Culture into Austria*). While only two issues were published, *Das Andere* was a radical and deliberately shocking publication in which literally nothing in contemporary Austrian life—from men’s fashion to masturbation—was off-limits. Loos used the journal as a platform, building his name and provoking his readers with searing rhetoric pitted primarily at the Viennese Jewish bourgeoisie. Through a contemporary lens, his ideology is laced with racism, sexism, homophobia and anti-Semitism, but always delivered under the guise of a thoroughly “modern” aesthetic criticism; and *always* with razor-sharp wit. As such, *Das Andere* proved extremely popular fodder for the *kaffeehaus* class, and made Loos’s name as much as any of his built work up to that point. But perhaps most significantly, *Das Andere* set the stage for Loos’s attack on ornament in 1908:

“Weep not! See, therein lies the greatness of our age; that it is incapable of producing new ornament. We have outgrown ornament; we have fought our way through to freedom from ornament. See, the time is nigh, fulfillment awaits us.”



Poster advertising the second issue of Loos’s *Das Andere* Vienna, 1903

It is here that we finally return to Loos in the coffee house. Centuries of race-, gender- and faith-loaded treatises against ornament coalesced and collided with a new industrialized reality, and Loos found himself in the center of it. The same industrial complex would soon send millions to war—and with the exact same arguments. In many ways, Loos’s *Ornament and Crime* not only catalogues this history of past slurs, but also predicts their logical conclusion: within decades of his diatribe the Nazis staged their *Degenerate Art* exhibition. A compendium of sorts to Loos’s polemic, *Entartete Kunst* was yet another attack on aesthetics as a basis for bigotry, and an ideological watershed in the lead up to the Holocaust.

Ultimately Loos didn’t live to see these events play out. He was convicted of pedophilia in 1928 and slid into dementia, dying in 1933 at the age of 62. The original court indictment against this “father” of modernism is truly disgusting—degenerate, even. And again, herein lies Loos’s hypocrisy: *he* was the criminal. *He* was the pervert. And rather than acknowledge this, he spent his life accusing others of his own innermost flaws. On his sexual abuse alone, it is easy to argue Loos should be purged from the canon. But like Richard Wagner, Eric Gill, Woody Allen and Michael Jackson (and so many others), the age-old ethical question remains: can we separate the artist from their work? It is an extremely difficult question—compounded today by cancel culture and digital impatience—but I believe to completely strike Loos from the record without acknowledging his context, nuance, complexity and contradiction



Catalogue for the Nazis’ *Degenerate Art* “exhibition” Munich, 1937



Its austere exterior and lavish—if controlled—interior made Loos’s *Villa Müller* an icon of modernist architecture, Prague, 1930



would be to repeat the very mistake he made in *Ornament and Crime*. Instead, we should actually *read* what he wrote and *look* at what he designed, all the while being mindful of the bigotry and abuse underpinning his lifelong ethos. In doing so we can learn how institutions and individuals do wrong, and recalibrate our collective understanding of their work, ideas and influence accordingly.

No, ornament is neither criminal nor degenerate. But Loos, in his haste—and spurred on by a complex millennia-old Western tradition—almost made it so.

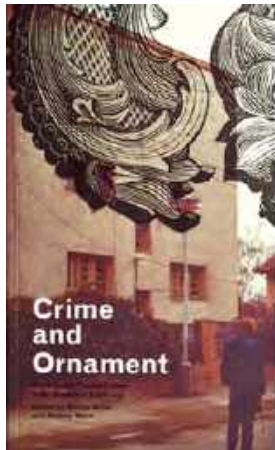
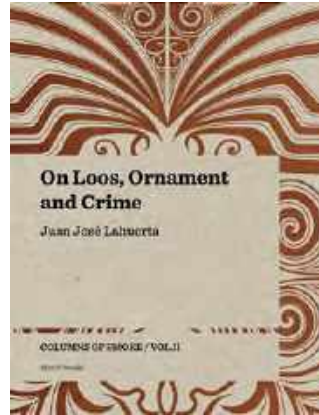


André Kertész's *After the Soirée* (with Piet Mondrian, Michel Seuphor, Ida Thai, Willi Baumeister and Adolf Loos, third from right), Paris, 1927

# Resetting Loos

In the Wintersession of 2020 I decided to set Loos's original 1910 text myself. I also read a number of works on Adolf Loos, finding that earlier texts were generally sympathetic to Loos's famous polemic—and mostly unaware of his other writing. I found that most contemporary histories seemed equally accepting of this seminal lecture, often unquestioningly so. This surprised me: how was it that such an influential piece of writing had gone mostly-unchecked for over a century? Surely any study of ornament today called for its reevaluation?

I was heartened to come across the writing of Beatriz Colomina<sup>1</sup> at Princeton, Denise Gonzales Crisp<sup>2</sup> at NC State and Juan José Lahuerta<sup>3</sup> at the Barcelona School of Architecture, who have all written far more critically on Loos and his impact on both ornament and notions of modernity in contemporary graphic design, art and architecture. I would encourage you to read these works and also to revisit Loos's original piece, and so I have included my own setting of it on the following pages. Please note the numerals denote the passage markings from Loos's original 1910 lecture, but the text is Shaun Whiteside's 2019 translation.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Colomina, Beatriz. "Sex, Lies and Decoration: Adolf Loos and Gustav Klimt." *Thresholds* 37 (2010). [https://doi.org/10.1162/thld\\_a\\_00197](https://doi.org/10.1162/thld_a_00197).

<sup>2</sup> Gonzales Crisp, Denise. "Toward a Definition of the Decorational," featured in Laurel, Brenda. *Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.

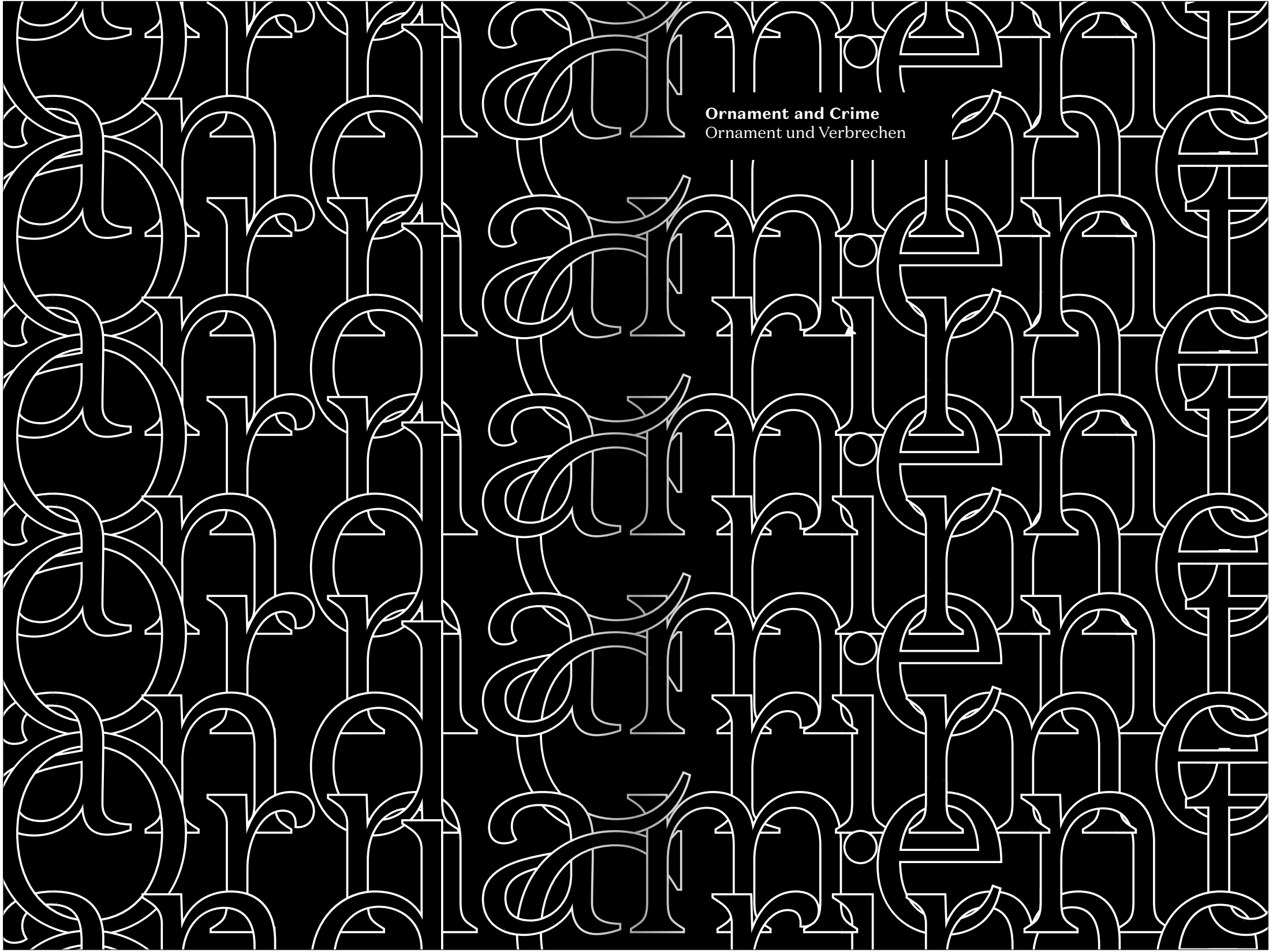
<sup>3</sup> Lahuerta, Juan José. *On Loos, Ornament and Crime*. Barcelona: Tenov, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Loos, Adolf. *Ornament and Crime: Thoughts on Design and Materials*. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. London: Penguin Random House, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Miller, Bernie, and Melony Ward. *Crime and Ornament: the Arts and Popular Culture in the Shadow of Adolf Loos*. Toronto: YYZ Books, 2002.

# Ornament and Crime

Adolf Loos



Ornament and Crime  
Ornament und Verbrechen

**VORTRAG**  
VERANSTALTET VOM AKAD.  
ARCHITEKTEN VEREIN.

**ADOLF LOOS:  
ORNAMENT  
UND  
VERBRECHEN.**

**FREITAG, DEN 21. FEBRUAR 1913,  
7/8 ABENDS IM FESTSAAL DES  
ÖSTERR. ING. U. ARCH. VEREINES,  
I. ESCHENBACHGASSE 9.  
KARTEN ZU 5. 4. 3. 2. 1 K  
BEI KEHLENDORFER**

**12. MÄRZ:  
MISS LEVETUS, ALTENGL. KATHEDRALEN.  
MITTE MÄRZ:  
DR. HABERFELD, ÜBER ADOLF LOOS.**

**Ornament and Crime**  
Ornament und Verbrechen

- 1 The human embryo goes through all the phases of animal life while still inside the womb. When man is born, his instincts are those of a new-born dog. His childhood runs through all the changes corresponding to the history of mankind. At the age of two he looks like a Papuan, at four like one of an ancient Germanic tribe, at six like Socrates, at eight like Voltaire. When he is eight years old, he becomes conscious of violet, the colour discovered by the eighteenth century, for until then violets were blue and purple-fish were red. The physicist today points out colours in the spectrum of the sun that have already been named, but whose comprehension has been reserved for future generations.
- 2 The child is amoral. So is the Papuan, to us. The Papuan kills his enemies and eats them. He is no criminal but if a modern man kills someone and eats him, he is a criminal or a degenerate.
- 3 The Papuan tattoos his skin, his boat, his rudder, his oars; in short, everything he can get his hands on. He is no criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty per cent of the prisoners are tattooed. Tattooed men who are not behind bars are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies in freedom, then he does so a few years before he would have committed murder.
- 4 The urge to decorate one's face and everything in reach is the origin of the graphic arts. It is the babbling of painting. All art is erotic.
- 5 The first ornament invented, the cross, was of erotic origin. The first work of art, the first artistic act, which the first artist scrawled on the wall to give his exuberance vent. A horizontal line: the woman. A vertical line: the man penetrating her. The man who created this felt the same creative urge as Beethoven, he was in the same state of exultation in which Beethoven created the Ninth.



6 But the man of our own times who covers the walls with erotic images from an inner compulsion is a criminal or a degenerate. Of course, this urge affects people with such symptoms of degeneracy most strongly in the lavatory. It is possible to estimate a country's culture by the amount of scrawling on lavatory walls. In children this is a natural phenomenon: their first artistic expression is scribbling erotic symbols on walls. But what is natural for a Papuan and a child, is degenerate for modern man. I have discovered the following truth and present it to the world: cultural evolution is equivalent to the removal of Ornament from articles in daily use. I thought I was giving the world a new source of pleasure with this; it did not thank me for it. People were sad and despondent. What oppressed them was the realization that no new ornament could be created. What every Negro can do, what all nations and ages have been able to do, why should that be denied to us, men of the nineteenth century? What humanity had achieved in earlier millennia without decoration has been carelessly tossed aside and consigned to destruction. We no longer possess carpenters' benches from the Carolingian period, but any trash that exhibited the merest trace of decoration was collected and cleaned up, and splendid palaces built to house it. People walked sadly around the showcases, ashamed of their own impotence. Shall every age have a style of its own and our age alone be denied one? By style they meant decoration. But I said: Don't weep! Don't you see that the greatness of our age lies in its inability to produce a new form of decoration? We have conquered ornament, we have won through to lack of ornamentation. Look, the time is nigh, fulfilment awaits us. Soon the streets of the town will glisten like white walls. Like Zion, the holy city, the metropolis of heaven. Then we shall have fulfillment.

7 But there are some pessimists who will not permit this. Humanity must be kept down in the slavery of decoration. People progressed far enough for ornament to give them pleasure no longer, indeed so far that a tattooed face no longer heightened their aesthetic sensibility, as it did with the Papuans, but diminished it. They were sophisticated enough to

feel pleasure at the sight of a smooth cigarette case while they passed over a decorated one, even at the same price. They were happy with their clothes and glad that they did not have to walk about in red velvet pants with gold' braid like monkeys at a fair. And I said: look, Goethe's death chamber is more magnificent than all the Renaissance grandeur and a smooth piece of furniture more beautiful than all the inlaid and carved museum pieces. Goethe's language is finer than all the florid similes of the Pegnitz Shepherds<sup>1</sup>.

8 The pessimist heard this with displeasure and the State, whose task it is to retard the cultural progress of the people, took up the fight for the development and revival of ornament. Woe to the State whose revolutions are made by Privy Councillors! A sideboard was soon on show in the Vienna Museum of Arts and Crafts called 'The Rich Haul of Fish', soon there were cupboards called 'The Enchanted Princess' or something similar, relating to the ornament that covered these unfortunate pieces. The Austrian government takes its task so seriously that it makes sure that puttees do not disappear from the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It forces every civilized twenty-year-old man to wear puttees instead of knitted hose for three years. For every government still labours under the supposition that a nation on a low standard is easier to govern.

9 All right, then, the plague of ornament is recognized by the State and subsidized by State funds. But I look on this as retrogression. I do not allow the objection that ornament heightens a cultivated man's joy in life; I do not allow the objection: 'but what if the ornament is beautiful...' As far as I am concerned, and this goes for all cultivated people, ornament does not give zest to life. If I want to eat some gingerbread, I choose a piece that is quite plain, and not in the shape of a heart or a baby or a horseman, and gilded all over. The man from the fifteenth century will not understand me. But all modern people will. The advocate of ornament believes that my urge for simplicity is equivalent to a mortification of the flesh. No, my dear art school professor, I'm not mortifying myself. I prefer it that way. The spectacular menus of past

<sup>1</sup> A society founded in 1644 devoted to ennobling the German language.

centuries, which all include decorations to make peacocks, pheasants and lobsters appear even tastier, produce the opposite effect on me. I walk though a culinary display with revulsion at the thought that I am supposed to eat these stuffed animal corpses. I eat roast beef.

10 The immense damage and devastation wrought on aesthetic development by the revival of decoration could easily be overcome, for no one, not even governments, can arrest the evolution of mankind. It can only be retarded. We can wait. But it is a crime against the national economy that human labour, money and material should thereby be ruined. This kind of damage cannot be put right by time.

11 The tempo of cultural progress suffers through stragglers. I may be living in 1908, yet my neighbour still lives in 1900 and that one over there in 1880. It is a misfortune for a country if the cultural development of its people is spread over such a long period. The peasant from Kals lives in the twelfth century. And in the jubilee procession there were contingents from national groups which would have been thought backward even in the period of the migrations of the tribes. Happy the country that has no such stragglers and marauders! Happy America! In our country there are old-fashioned people even in the cities, stragglers from the eighteenth century, who are shocked by a picture with violet shadows because they can't yet see violet. They prefer the pheasant on which the chef has had to work for days, and cigarette cases with Renaissance decoration please them better than smooth ones. And how is it in the country? clothes and furniture belong entirely to earlier centuries. The farmer is not a Christian, he is still a heathen.

12 Stragglers slow down the cultural progress of nations and humanity; for ornament is not only produced by criminals; it itself commits a crime, by damaging men's health, the national economy and cultural development. where two people live side by side with the same needs, the same demands on life and the same income, and yet belong to different cultures, the following process may be observed from the economic point of view: the man from the twentieth century becomes ever richer, the one from the eighteenth ever poorer. I am supposing that each lives

according to his inclinations. The twentieth century man can pay for his needs with much less capital and can therefore save. The vegetables he likes are simply boiled in water and then served with a little melted butter. The other man doesn't enjoy them until honey and nuts have been added and someone has been busy cooking them for hours. Decorated plates are very dear, while the plain white china that the modern man likes is cheap. One man accumulates savings, the other one debts. So it is with whole nations. Woe to the country that lags behind in cultural development! The English become richer and we poorer...

13 Even greater is the damage ornament inflicts on the workers. As ornament is no longer a natural product of our civilization, it accordingly represents backwardness or degeneration, and the labour of the man who makes it is not adequately remunerated.

14 Conditions in the woodcarving and turning trades, the criminally low prices paid to embroiderers and lacemakers, are well known. The producers of ornament must work twenty hours to earn the wages a modern worker gets in eight. Decoration adds to the price of an object as a rule, and yet it can happen that a decorated object, with the same outlay in materials and demonstrably three times as much work, is offered for sale at half the price of a plain object. The lack of ornament means shorter working hours and consequently higher wages. Chinese carvers work sixteen hours, American workers eight. If I pay as much for a smooth box as for a decorated one, the difference in labour time belongs to the worker. And if there were no ornament at all - a circumstance that will perhaps come true in a few millennia - a man would have to work only four hours instead of eight, for half the work done at present is still for ornamentation.

15 Ornament is wasted labour and hence wasted health. That's how it has always been. Today, however, it is also wasted material, and both together add up to wasted capital. As ornament is no longer organically linked with our culture, it is also no longer an expression of our culture. Ornament as created today has no connection with us, has no human connections at all, no connection with the world as it is constituted.

It cannot be developed. What has happened to the decorations of Otto Eckmann and those of Van de Velde? The artist always used to stand at the forefront of humanity, full of health and vigour. But the modern ornamentalist is a straggler, or a pathological case. He rejects even his own products within three years. To cultivated people they are unbearable immediately, others are aware of their unbearableness only after some years. Where are the works of Otto Eckmann today? Where will Olbrich's work be in ten years' time? Modern ornament has no forbears and no descendants, no past and no future. It is joyfully welcomed by uncultivated people, to whom the true greatness of our time is a closed book, and after a short period is rejected.

16 Mankind today is healthier than ever, only a few people are sick. But these few tyrannize over the worker who is so healthy that he cannot invent ornament. They force him to make the ornaments they have invented in the greatest variety of materials.

17 Changes in decoration account for the quick devaluation of the product of labour. The worker's time and the material used are capital items that are being wasted. I have coined an aphorism: The form of an object should last (i.e., should be bearable) as long as the object lasts physically. I shall try to clarify this: A suit will change in fashion more often than a valuable fur. A ball gown for a lady, only meant for one night, will change its form more speedily than a desk. But woe to the desk that has to be changed as quickly as a ball gown because its shape has become unbearable, for than the money spent on the desk will have been wasted.

18 This is well-known to the ornamentalists, and Austrian ornamentalists try to make the most of it. They say: 'A consumer who has his furniture for ten years and then can't stand it any more and has to re-furnish from scratch every ten years, is more popular with us than someone who only buys an item when the old one is worn out. Industry thrives on this. Millions are employed due to rapid changes.' This seems to be the secret of the Austrian national economy; how often when a fire breaks out one hears the words: 'Thank God, now there will be something for

people to do again.' I know a good remedy: burn down a town, burn down the country and everything will be swimming in wealth and well-being. Make furniture that you can use as firewood after three years and metal fittings that must be melted down after four years because even in the auction room you can't realize a tenth of the outlay in work and materials, and we shall become richer and richer.

19 The loss does not hit only the consumer, it hits the manufacturer above all. Today, ornament on items that need no ornament means wasted labour and spoiled materials. If all objects were aesthetically enduring for as long as they lasted physically, the consumer could afford to pay a price that would enable the worker to earn more money and work shorter hours. I don't mind spending four times as much for an article which I am certain I can make use of and use up completely as I would for one inferior in shape and material. I don't mind spending forty kronen for my boots although I could get boots for ten kronen in another shop. But in trades suffering under the tyranny of the ornamentalists, good or bad workmanship does not count. The work suffers because nobody wants to pay its true value.

20 And that is a good thing, because these decorated objects are only bearable in the cheapest form. I can get over a fire's havoc more easily if I hear that only worthless rubbish has been destroyed. I can enjoy the tripe in the Künstlerhaus because I know that it has been put up in a few days and will be torn down in a day. But throwing gold coins around instead of pebbles, lighting cigarettes with a banknote and pulverizing a pearl and then drinking it is unaesthetic. The most unaesthetic decorated objects are those made of the best materials with the greatest care, those that have demanded hours of work. I cannot deny having asked for high quality work above all-but not this kind.

21 Modern men who revere ornament as a sign of the artistic expression of earlier generations, will immediately recognize the painfully laboured and sickly ornament of today. No-one can create ornament now who lives on our level of culture. It is different for people and nations who have not yet attained this level.

22 I am preaching to the aristocrats; I mean, to the people in the forefront of humanity who still fully appreciate the needs and strivings of those beneath: them. They understand the native weaving ornaments into textiles to a certain rhythm, which can be seen only when torn apart, the Persian knotting his carpet, the Slovak peasant woman embroidering her lace, the old lady crocheting wonderful objects in beads and silk. The aristocrat lets them be, for he knows they work in moments of revelation. The revolutionary would go there and say 'This is all nonsense.' Just as he would pull the old woman away from the roadside shrine with the words: 'There is no God.' But among the aristocrats the atheist raises his hat on passing a church.

23 My shoes are covered over and over with decoration, the kind made up of pinking and perforations. Work done by the shoemaker but not paid for. I go to the shoemaker and say:

*"You want thirty kronen for a pair of shoes. I'll pay you forty."*

In this way I have raised the man to a level of happiness which he will repay me for by work and material of a quality absolutely out of proportion to the extra cost. He is happy. Good fortune rarely comes his way. Here is a man who understands him and appreciates his work and does not doubt his honesty. In his imagination he can already see the finished shoes before him. He knows where the best leather is to be had at present, he knows which of his workers he can entrust the shoes to. And the shoes will boast perforations and scallops, as many as can possibly be fitted on an elegant shoe. And then I add:

*"But there's one condition: the shoe must be quite plain."*

24 With that I've toppled him from the heights of contentment into Tartarus. He has less work, but I have robbed him of all his pleasure. I am preaching to the aristocrats. I tolerate ornaments on my own body if they afford my fellow-men pleasure. Then they are a pleasure to me, too. I put up with the ornaments of the natives, the Persians, the Slo-

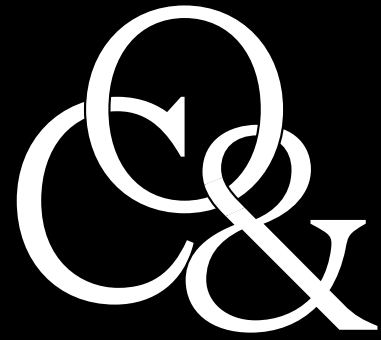
vak peasant woman and my shoemaker's ornaments, for these workers have no other means of reaching the heights of their existence. We have art, which has replaced ornament. We go to Beethoven or Tristan after the cares of the day. My shoemaker can't. I must not take away his joy as I have nothing to replace it with. But whoever goes to the Ninth Symphony and then sits down to design a wallpaper pattern is either a rogue or a degenerate.

25 Lack of ornament has pushed the other arts to unimagined heights. Beethoven's symphonies would never have been written by a man who was obliged to go about in silk, velvet and lace. Those who run around in velvet nowadays are not artists but buffoons or house painters. We have become more refined, more subtle. The herd must distinguish themselves by the use of various colors, modern man uses his clothes like a mask. His individuality is so strong that he does not need to express it any longer by his clothing.

26 Lack of ornament is a sign of spiritual strength. Modern man uses the ornaments of earlier and foreign cultures as he thinks fit. He concentrates his own powers of invention on other things.

**Adolf Loos**

*Akademischer Verband für Literatur und Musik  
Wein, 1910*



Adolf Loos in 1931; he died a convicted pedophile in 1933.



# Dodecahedron

Inspired by Joe Marianek and Dinah Fried's previous foldable New Year's greetings for their studio Small Stuff, I set about making one of my own for 2019. I fabricated these at RISD's Co-Works with lasercut golden Canson card stock. They are designed to mail flat, and recipients can then put them together with glue or tape. The greeting uses all twelve faces of the dodecahedron, with one side reserved for each glyph in "H-A-P-P-Y-2-O-1-9-!" and the top and bottom reserved for personalized messages to recipients. The design uses Nina Stössinger's font Sélavy, named after Marcel Duchamp's female alter ego and based on his 1934 *Green Box*—a font which she originally designed for Paul Soulellis's *Library of the Printed Web*. These three-dimensional holiday greetings were mailed to friends and family in Australia, the Philippines, the UK, France and across the US.



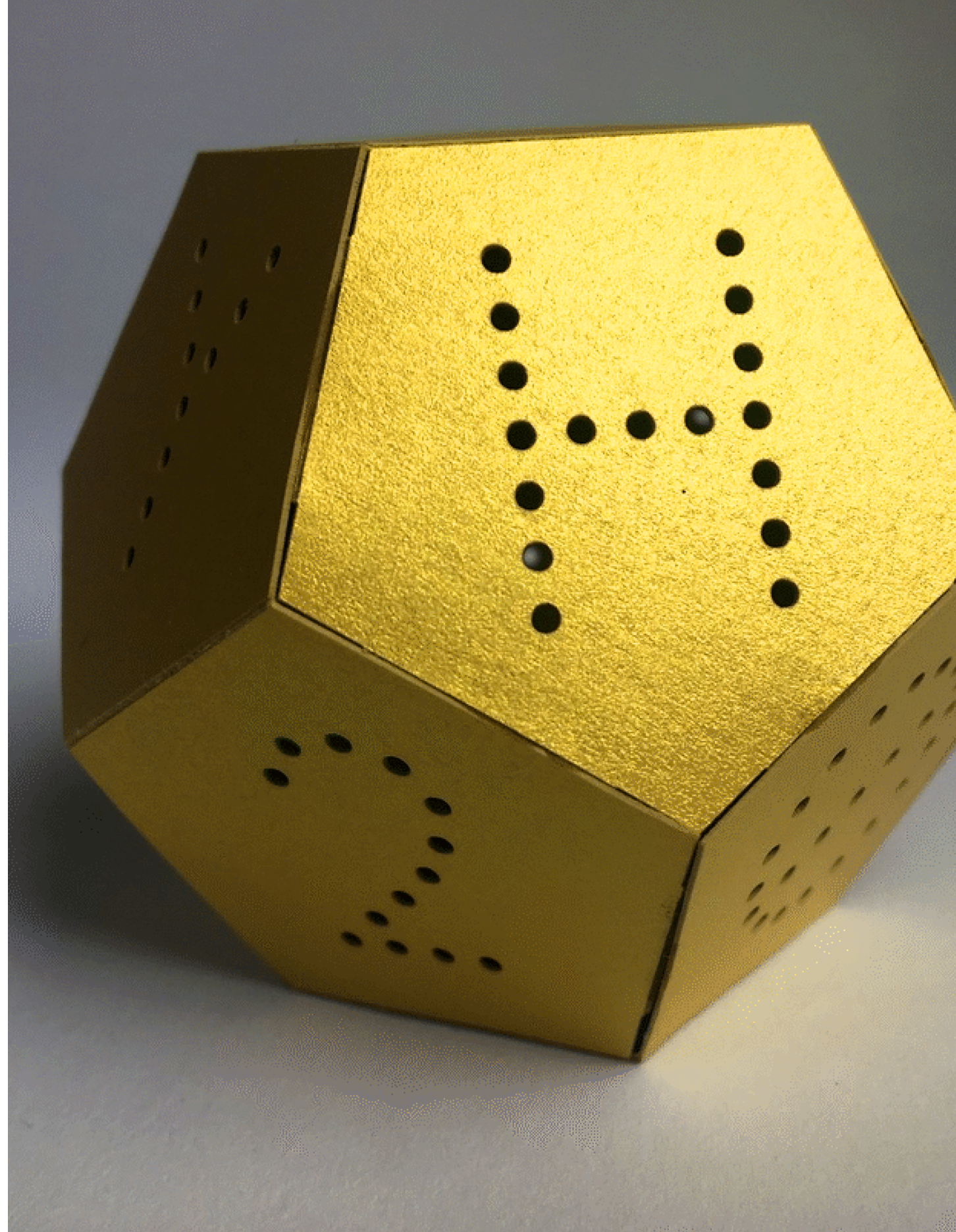
**Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)*, 1934**

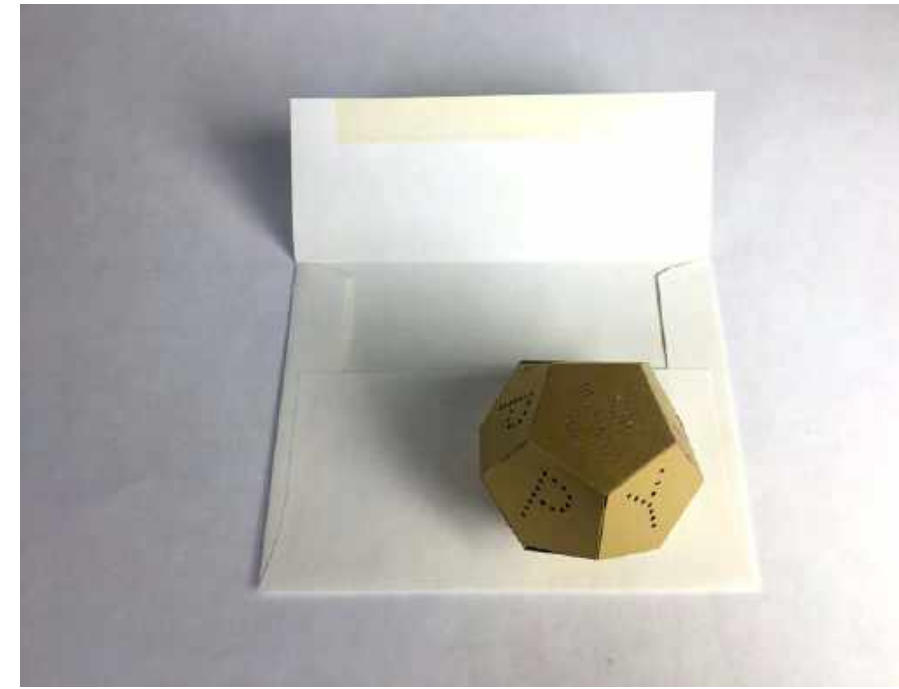


Joe Marianek and Dinah Fried's 2016 New Year cards were die cut hexadecahedrons.

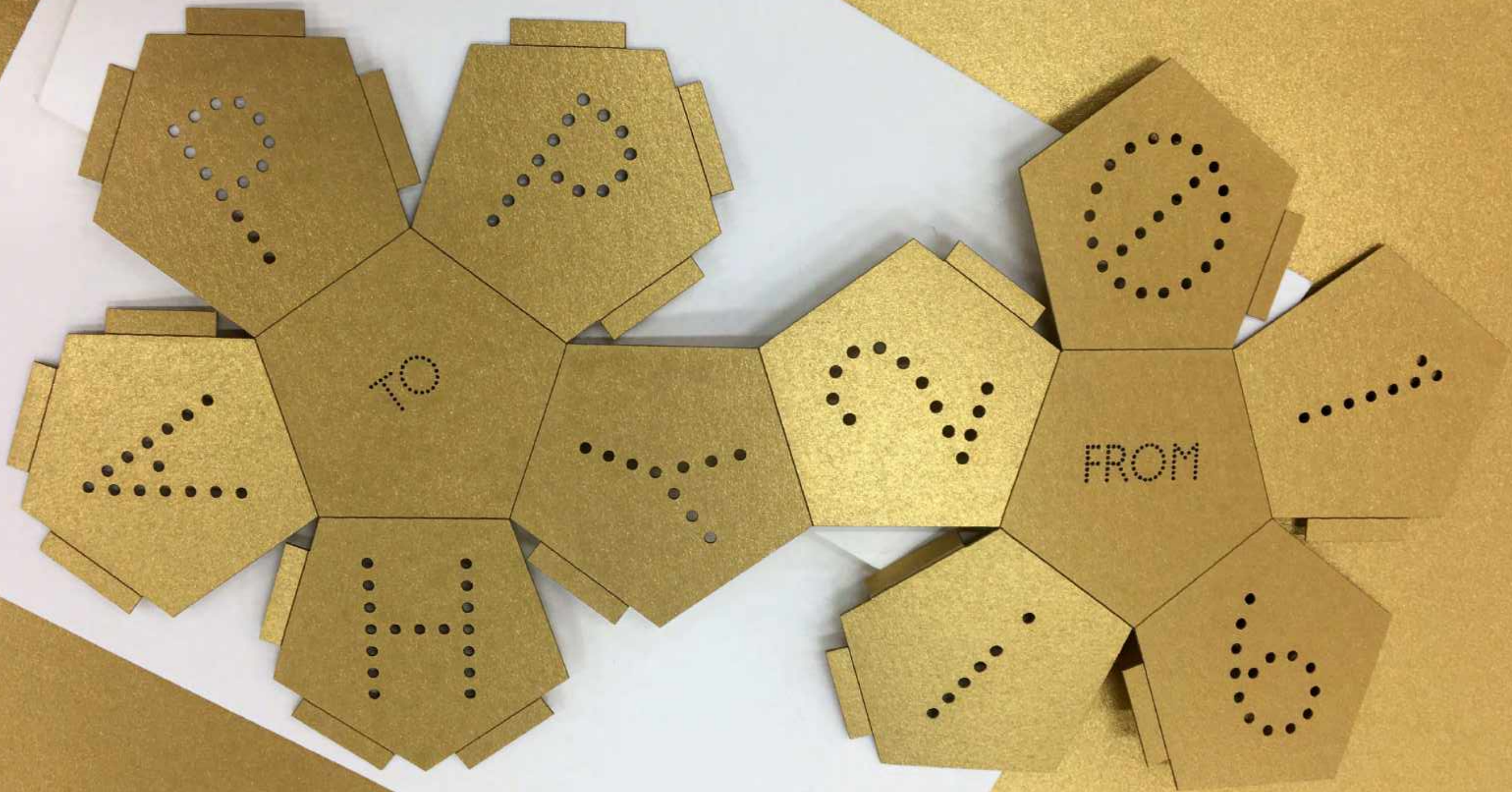


**Man Ray, *Marcel Duchamp as Mlle Rose Sélavy*, 1920**

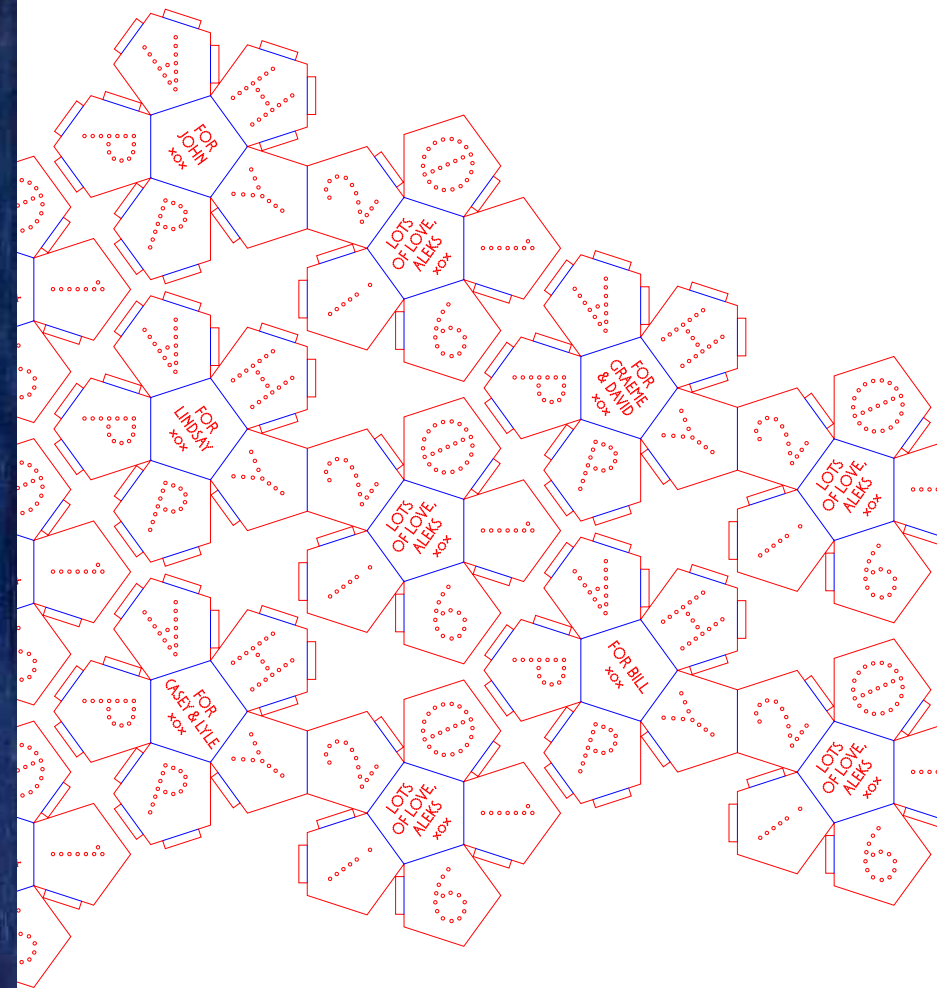




The dodecahedron folded to fit a 5.75 x 4.5 inch envelope.





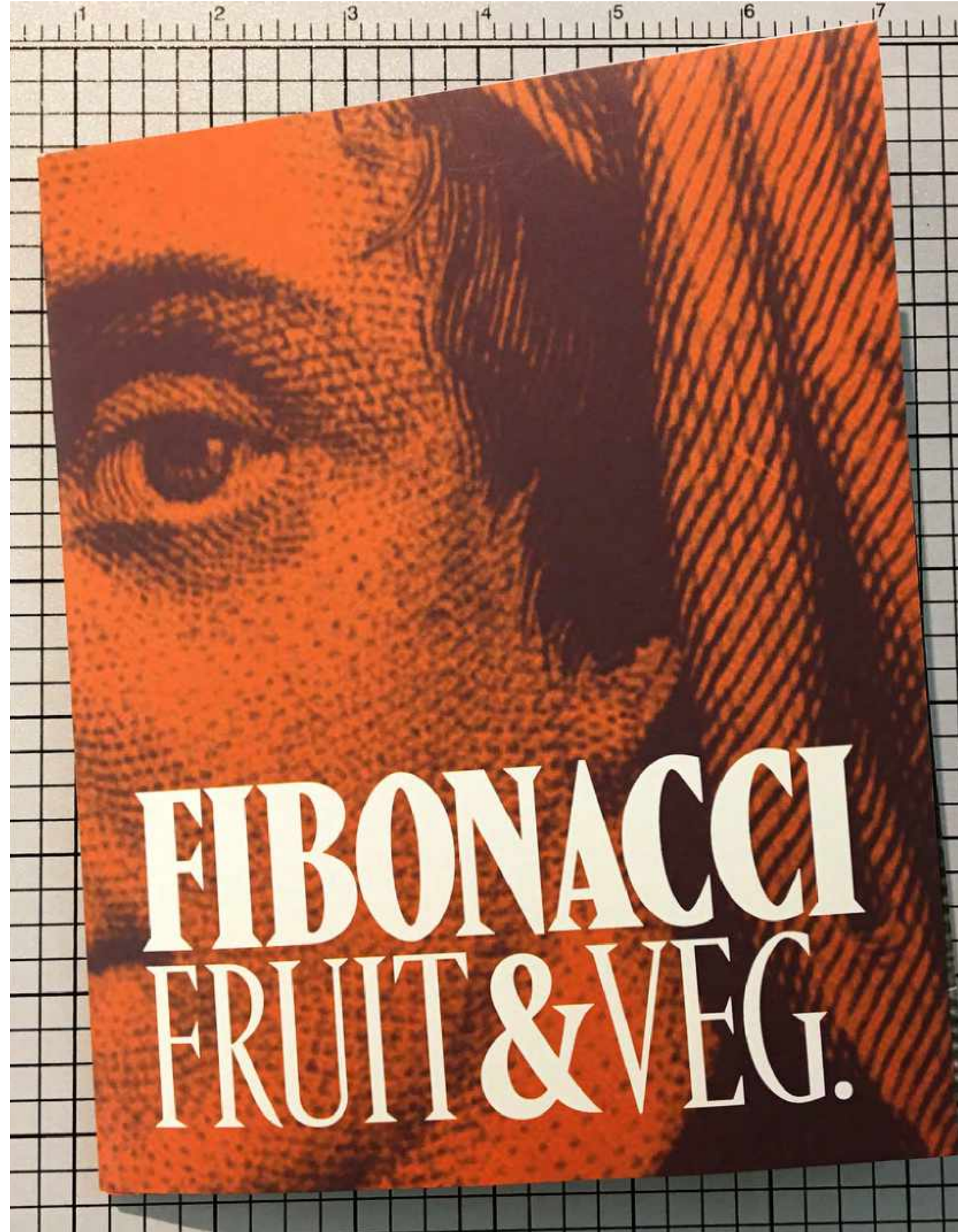
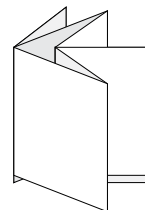
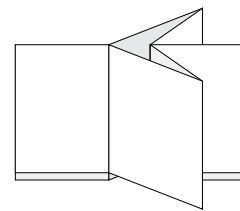
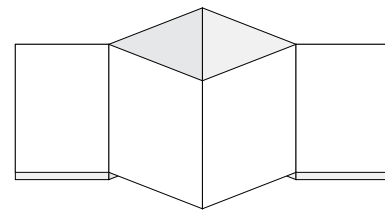
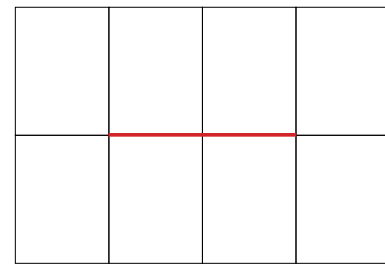


Portrait of Luca Pacioli, attributed to Jacopo de' Barbari; Capodimonte Museum, Naples, 1495–1500

# Fibonacci

## *Fruit & Veg*

This booklet-and-poster-in-one is inspired by fruit and vegetables that naturally display Fibonacci's famous sequence, presenting their beautiful forms alongside their respective nutritional properties in a series of tables generated using data from the United States Department of Agriculture. The poster's 15" x 24" dimensions are based on the Golden Section. The piece also employs the famous "RISD fold," in which a rectangular piece of paper is folded in half down the longer side, then folded again into quarters down the shorter side. The center line (shown on right in red) is then cut, and the poster is folded into a brochure of sorts. I chose the typeface Portrait Condensed by Berton Hasebe for Commercial Type for the titles as I felt it matched the engraving of Fibonacci featured.

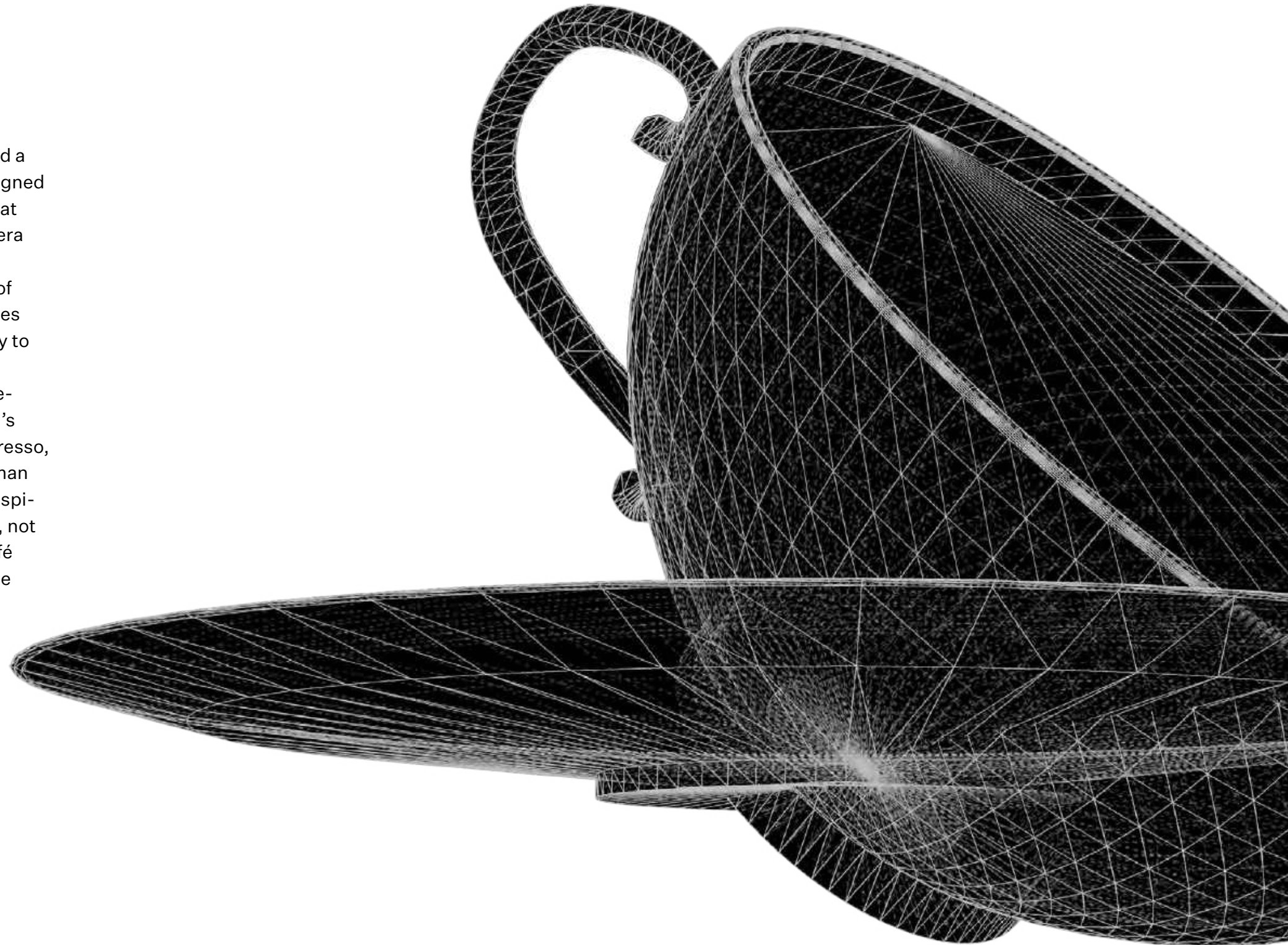


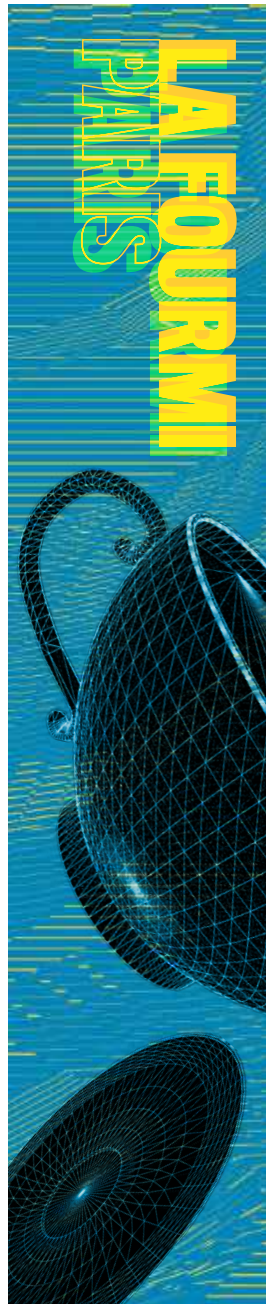
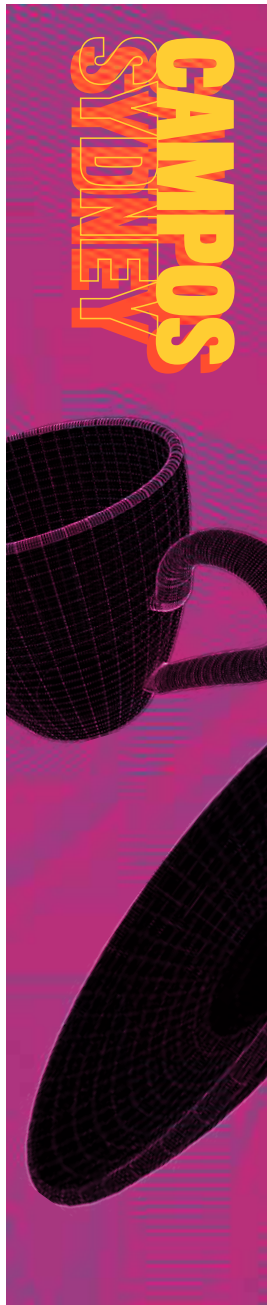


# Für Guten Kaffee

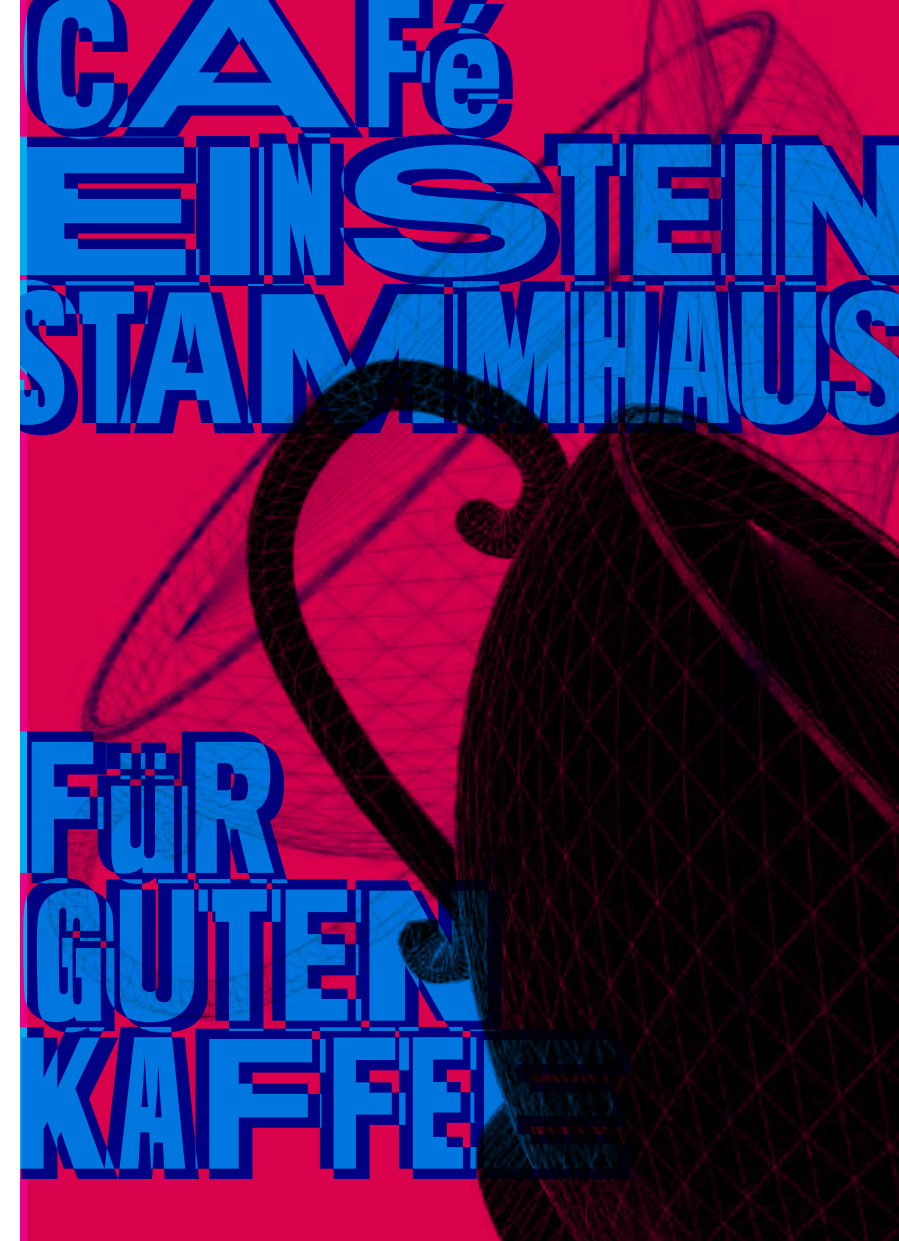
In 2019, Nancy Skolos's *Reframing the Poster* class asked students to design a series of posters that told a story or illustrated a subject through randomly-assigned objects. I was assigned a coffee cup, fortuitous in that I used to work as a barista at both at the Sydney Opera House restaurant and then at Clinton Street Bakery in New York. I initially thought about doing a series of banners for all my favorite cafés in the different places I've lived—from Campos Coffee in Newtown, Sydney to Baked and Wired in Georgetown, Washington D.C.

I began experimenting with 3D models of coffee-related objects to denote different places—America's cup of Joe versus Australia's demitasse cup for espresso, for example. In the end I returned to the famed German poster designer Lucian Bernhard (1883–1972) for inspiration and clarity. I resolved to make a single poster, not a series, looking at the history and materiality of Café Einstein Stammhaus in Berlin: absolutely my favorite café in the world—and the first and last place I have visited each time I've been in Berlin. I handmade the final poster by combining 3D modeling and thermal foiling. The end result felt appropriate to its time and place: handmade but digital and old but new—a gilded, digital ghost of a beautiful café with a storied but very sad history.





Lucian Bernhard, *Stiller*, 1908



Nancy Skolos, Olivia Orr and Jack Halten Fahnestock during one of our critiques.

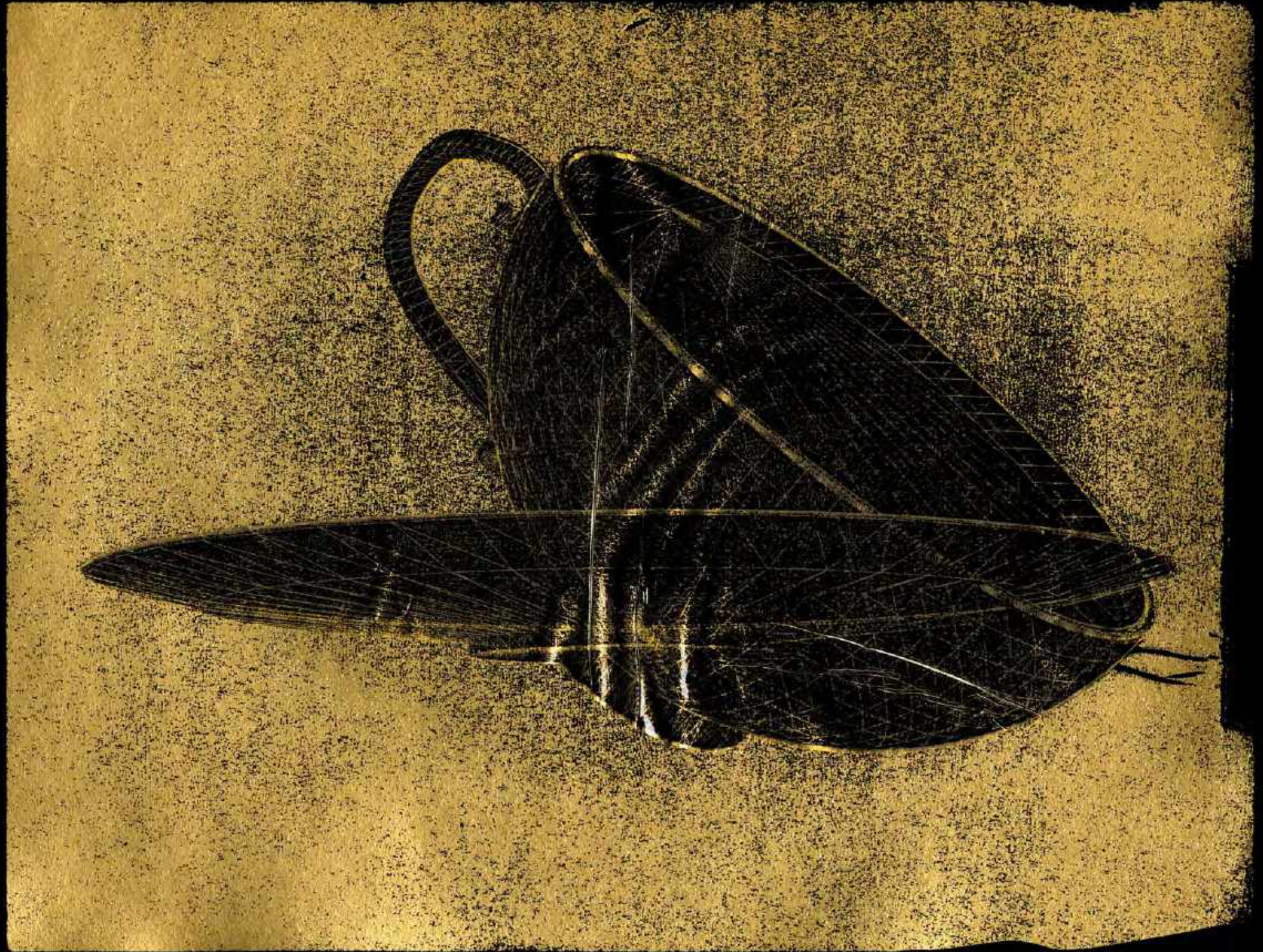


*Stolpersteine* at the front of Café Einstein Stammhaus on Kurfürstenstraße in Berlin. Literally "stumbling blocks," the plaques commemorate Georg and Lucia Blumenfeld—the owners of the house that is now Café Einstein—who were murdered in the Holocaust. Stolpersteine are one of my most vivid memories of being in Berlin; almost all are laid by the German artist Gunter Demnig.

*Left and top:* the interior of Café Einstein Stammhaus. After the Nazis stole the house from the Blumenfelds, Goebbels supposedly gave the house to his mistress Henny Porten, a then-famous movie actress. After Henny moved out, it was rumored to harbor an illegal SS-run casino. It is one of the few houses in the neighborhood to have survived the Allied bombing during the Second World War.

I made the final poster using a thermal foiling technique I learned on YouTube. One first prints their art in laser toner then adheres the thermal foil to the toner with heat from a laminator. The typeface used is Titling Gothic designed by David Berlow for Font Bureau.

CAFÉ  
EINSTEIN  
STAMMHAUS  
FÜR  
GUTEN  
KAFFEE

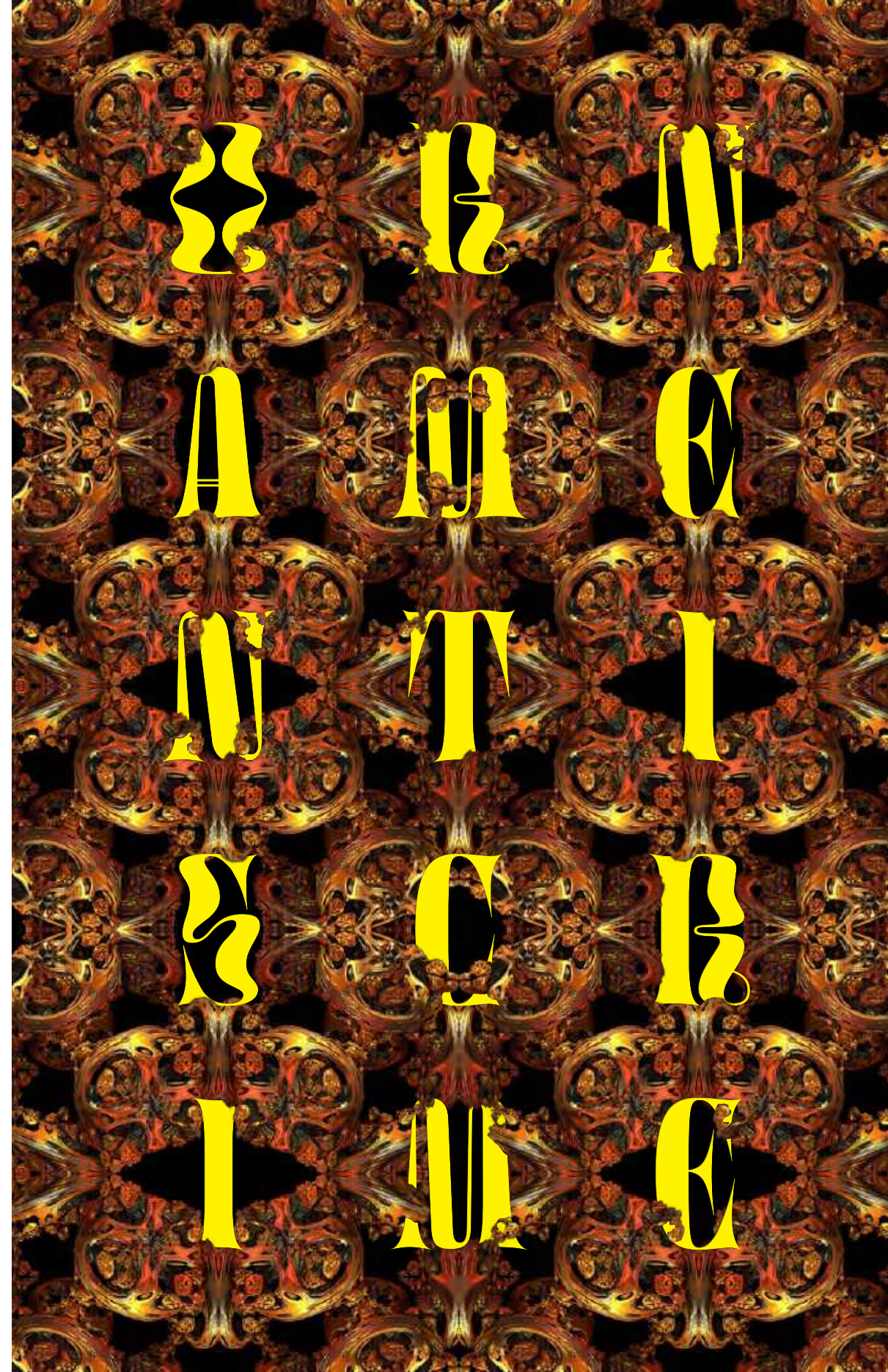


# Ornament *is* Crime

Measuring eight feet tall by five feet wide, this poster was inspired by my initial encounter with Loos's 1910 polemic. Borrowing from my then already-extensive three-dimensional Mandelbulb research, I composed the poster by tessellating a selectively-cropped rendering of one of these such Mandelbulbs. I then interwove a somewhat sarcastic play on Loos's title: *Ornament is Crime*. The typeface is Digestive designed by Jérémy Landes for Studio Triple. The poster was exhibited at the 2019 MFA Graphic Design Biennial, *On The Edge of Normal*.



The 2019 RISD MFA  
Graphic Design Biennial  
*On The Edge of Normal*  
at Sol Koffler Gallery





# Tabula Combinatoria

Inspired by Owen Jones's 1865 *The Grammar of Ornament*, this website explores the history, theory and underpinning geometry of ornament and pattern. In making it, I set out to provide a broad summary of the major contributors to the field, and hopefully encourage new and inventive ways of making and thinking about ornament.

Named after German polymath Athanasius Kircher's 1664 *Tabula Combinatoria*, this website serves as both catalogue and catalyst: archiving my research and graphic explorations while at the same time acting as an editable tool for future reference and making in my own practice.

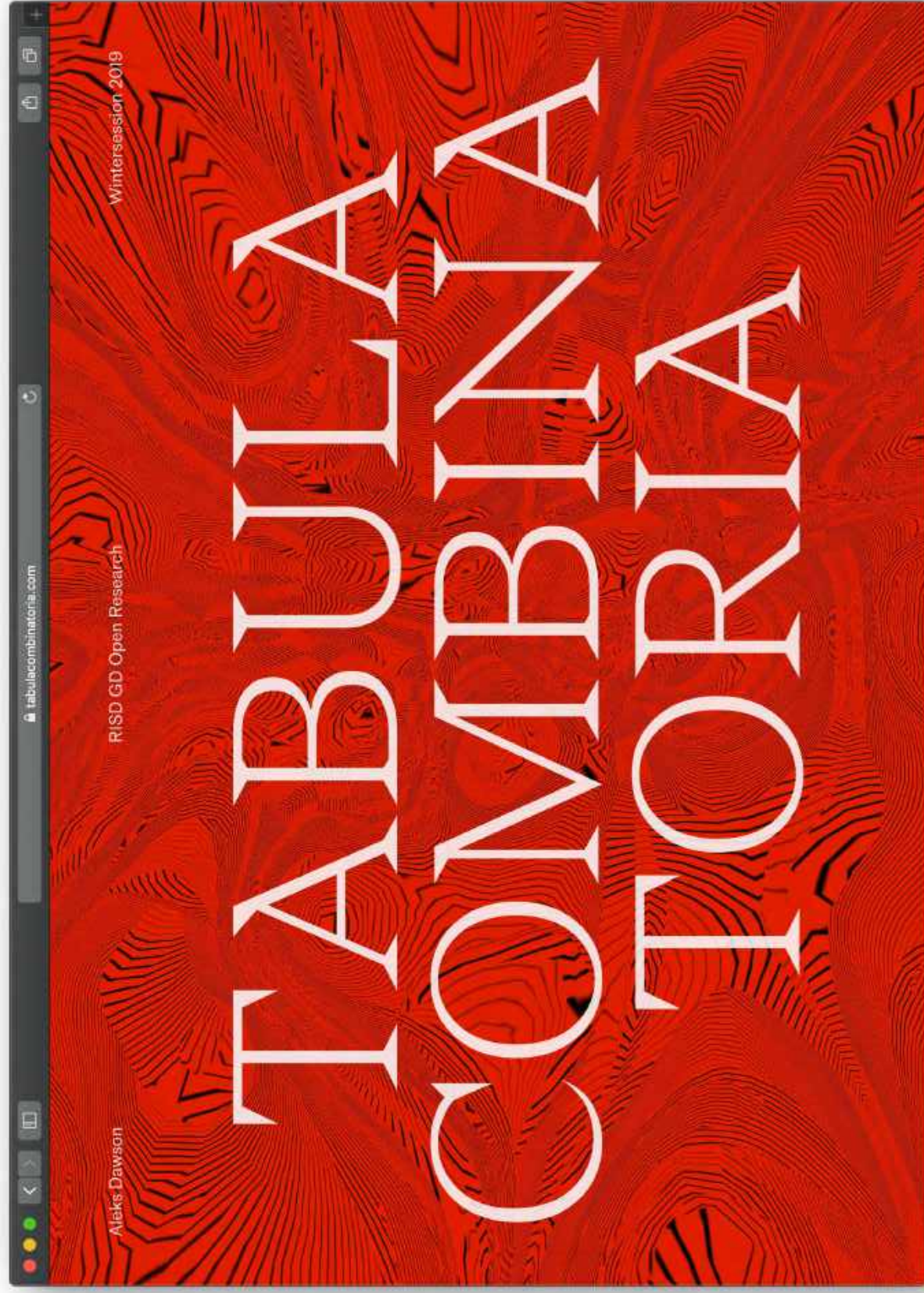
I must thank my instructor Ryan Waller for his guidance with this project, and RISD Graduate Architecture Program Director Carl Lostritto for his added insight—particularly his expertise in Python-driven computational drawing.

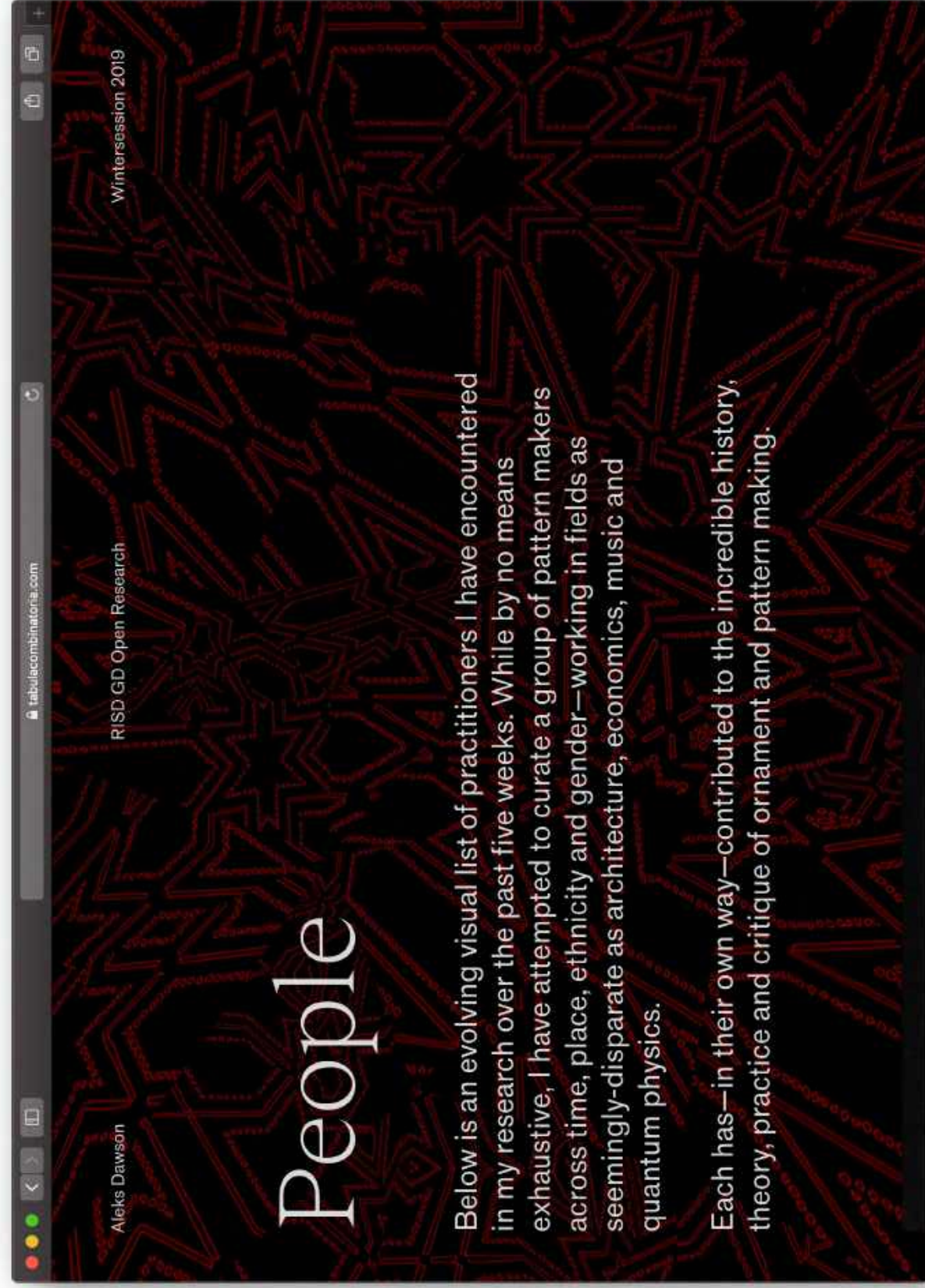
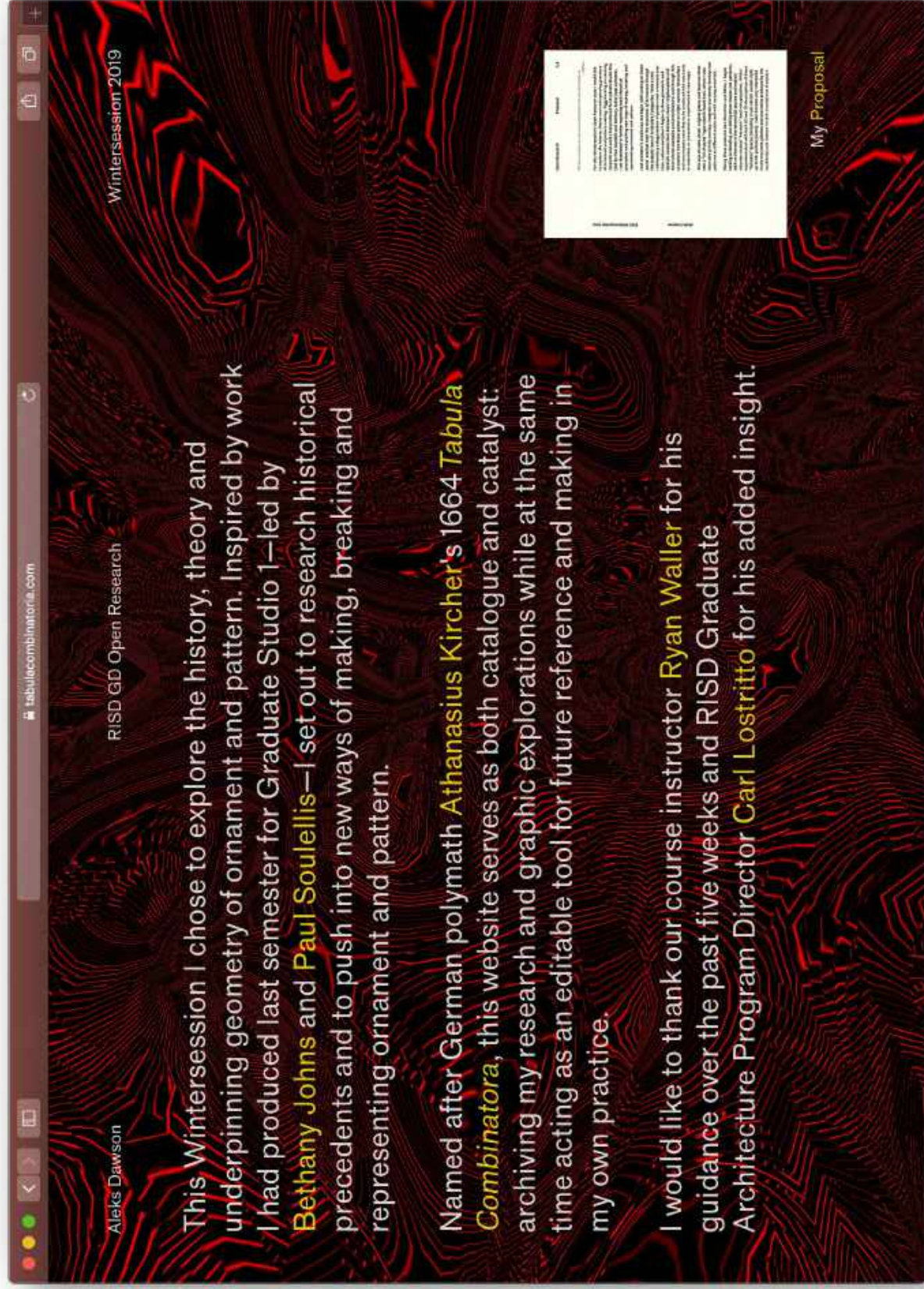


My proposal for the *Tabula Combinatoria* website was a critical step toward this thesis; the full PDF is available on the website.

Please visit the website: [tabulacombinatoria.com](http://tabulacombinatoria.com)

Loos in the Coffee House





Aleks Dawson

tabulacombinatoria.com

Wintersession 2019

# ORNAMENT UND VERBRECHEN.

FREITAG, DEN 21. FEBRUAR 1913, 1/8 ABENDS IM FESTSAAL DES ÖSTERR. ING. U. ARCH. VEREINES, LESCHENBAU GASSE 9, KARTEN ZU S. 4, 3, 2, 1 K BEI KEHLENDORFER

12. MÄRZ:  
MISS LEVETUS: ALTENGL. KATHEDRALEN.  
MITTE MÄRZ:  
DR. HABERFELD: ÜBER ADOLF LOOS

**Adolf Loos**  
Austrian-Czech, 1870-1933  
Architect, Theorist



Aleks Dawson

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**Bridget Riley**  
English, 1931-  
Artist



**Bruno Munari**  
Italian, 1907-1998  
Artist, Designer

Aleks Dawson

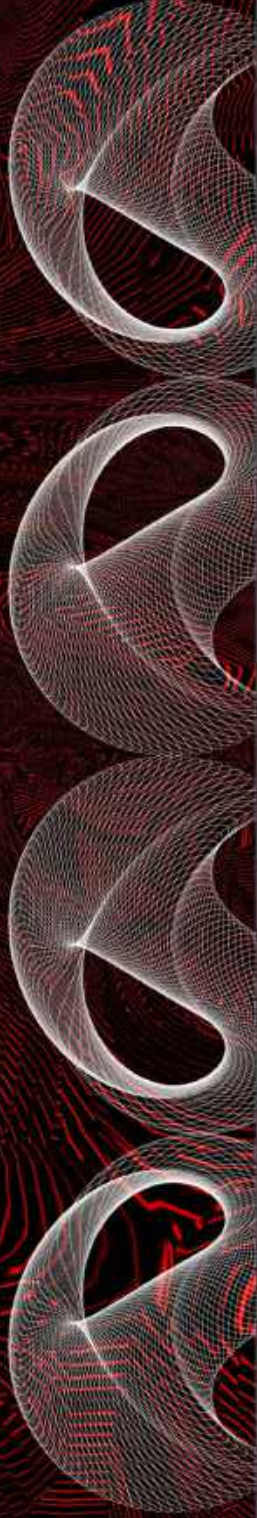
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# Process


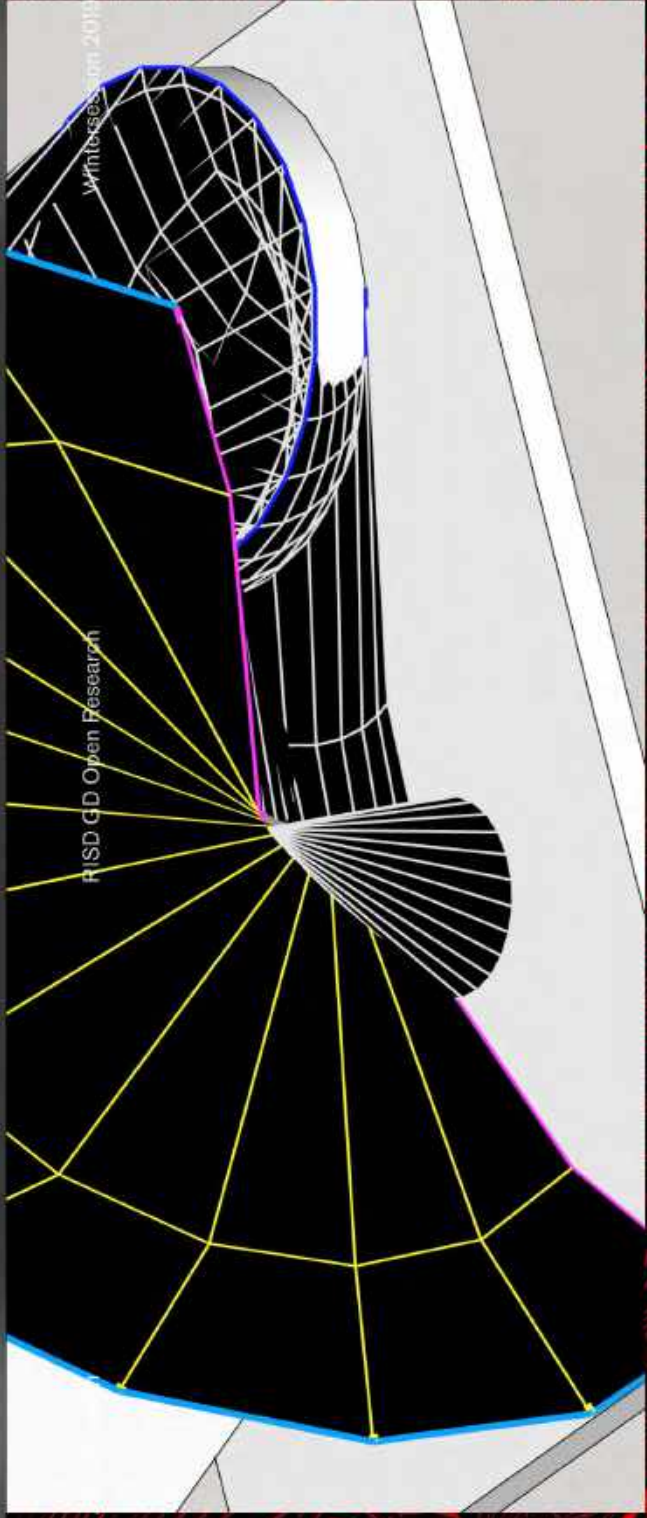
Things didn't entirely go as planned this Wintersession. My explorations splintered away from Carl's upcoming book, and after wasting at least a week trying to get my mind into Rhino I figured out ways to get some of the results I was looking for graphically without going the route of python, rhino or pen plotters. I started doing a lot of formal studies in sketchup, mapping, projecting and mutating patterns across forms.



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# What is Ornament?



Anthony Burrill at the Jerwood Arts Space in London, 2013; Burrill previously featured in *Graphic Design: Now in Production* at the Walker Arts Center in 2011

What is ornament? Is it, as Adolf Loos theorized,<sup>1</sup> the “urge to draw on one’s face and everything within reach”? Is it truly a “compulsion,” as the Wiener Werkstätte had implied? Is it “degenerate” or “criminal,” even? Or in the Aristotelean sense, is it vice, brutishness or moral weakness? Is ornament overpriced? Inefficient? Is ornament ugly? Grotesque? Is ornament feminine? Is it “dandy,” or even homosexual? Is ornament broken logic, mental illness—or madness? Is ornament power? Impotence? Witchcraft? Is ornament satanic? Divine?

At one time or another, ornament has been unduly regarded as all these things.<sup>2</sup> But perhaps never in its millennia-old existence has it been viewed—at least in the Western world—with such forthright dismissal and widespread disdain as it is today. Where does this come from? How did we get here? Why does it matter? And what’s next for this dying—dead?—art for which we have all but abandoned any considered understanding of, not to mention any genuine appreciation for? I don’t have all the answers, but I *can* show you what ornament means to me. Please, take my hand and allow me to show you:

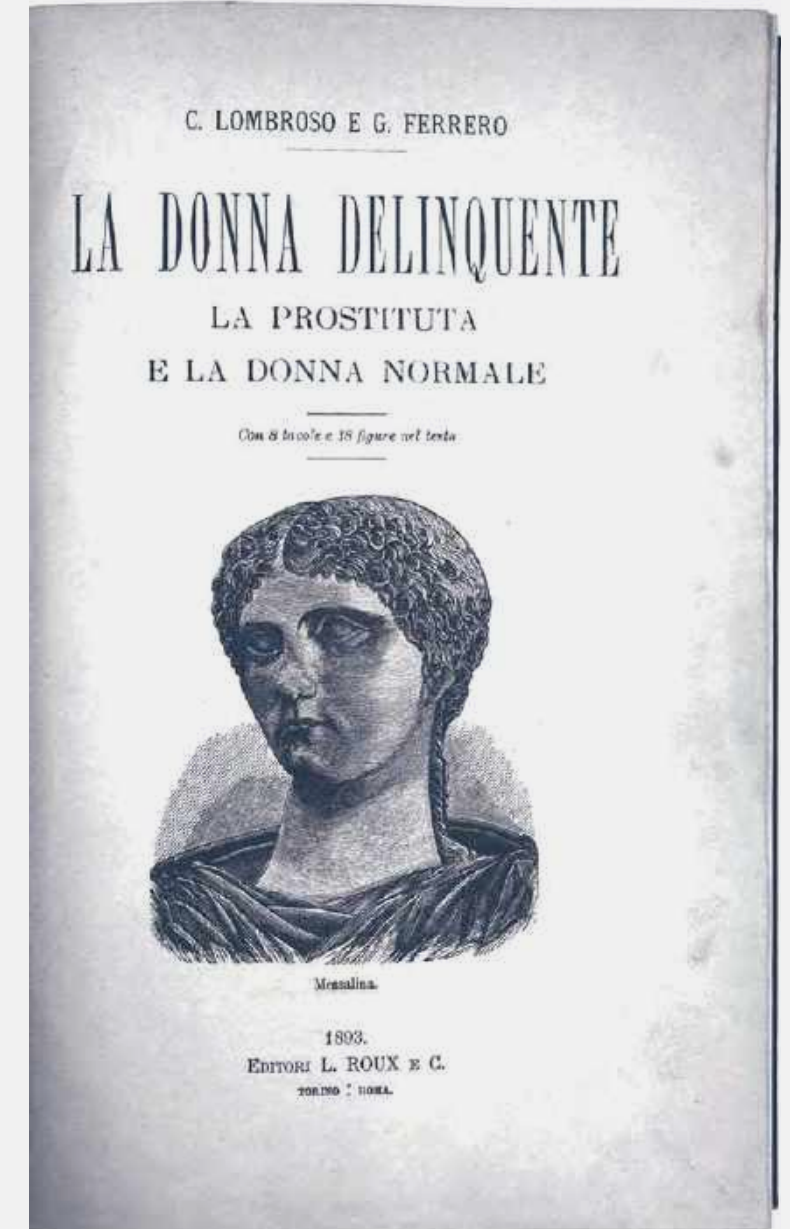
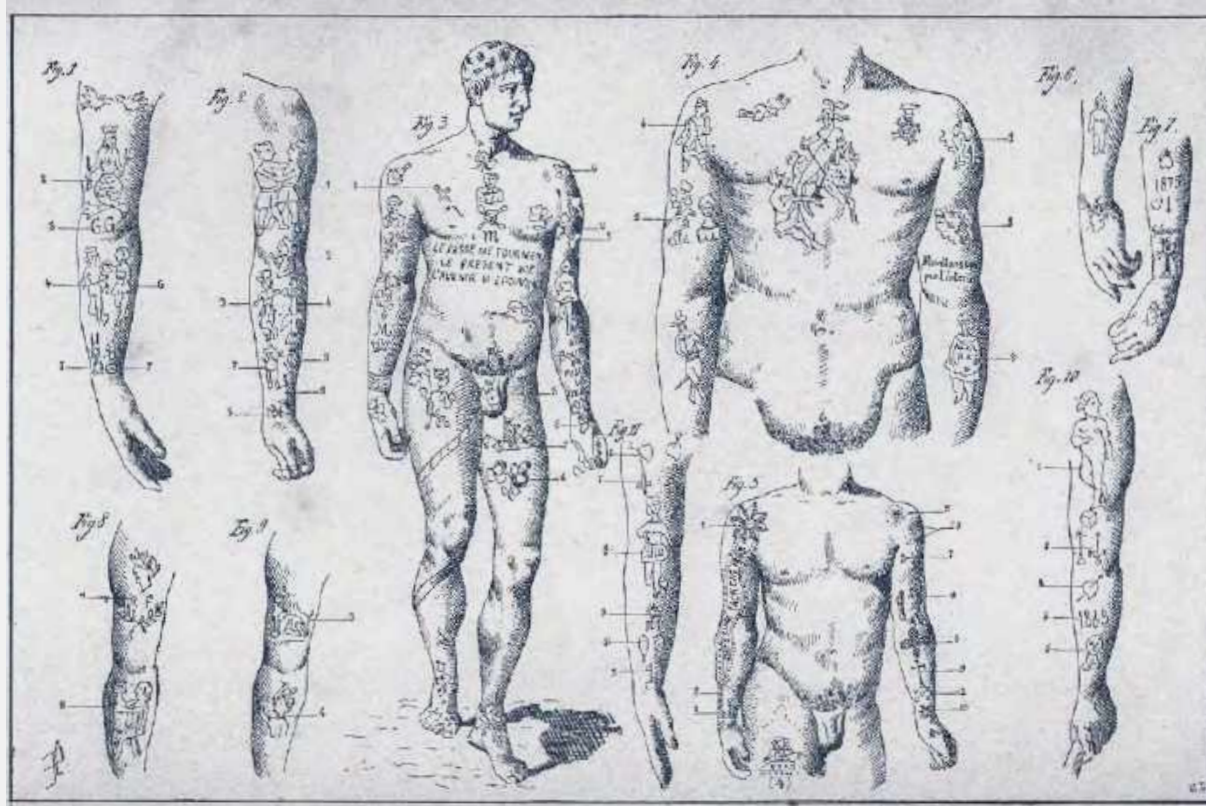


Poster advertising Loos’s second Berlin presentation of *Ornament and Crime*, 1910



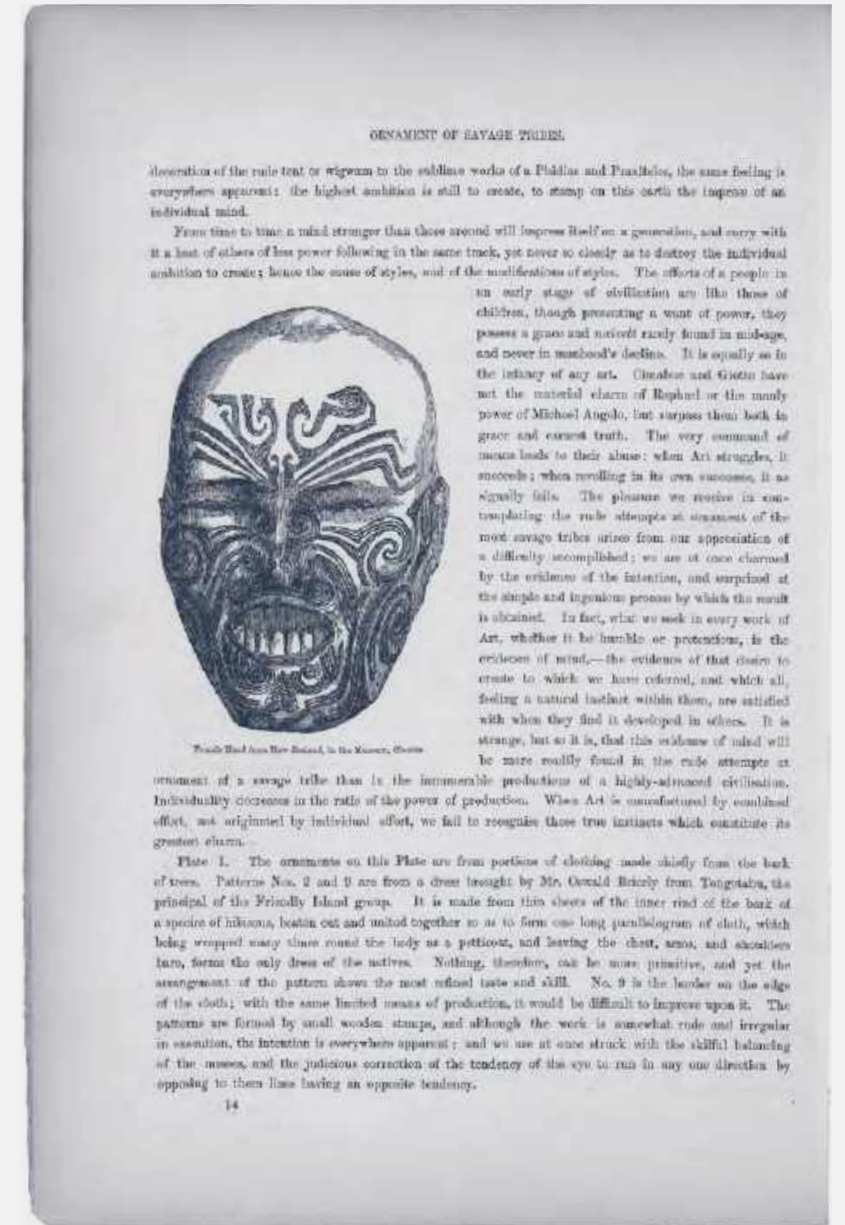
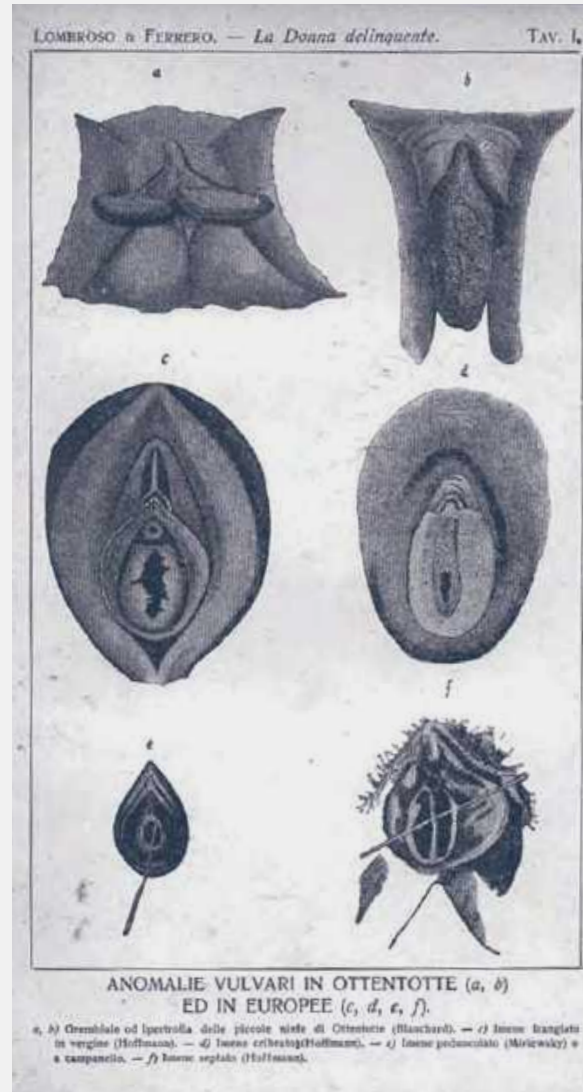
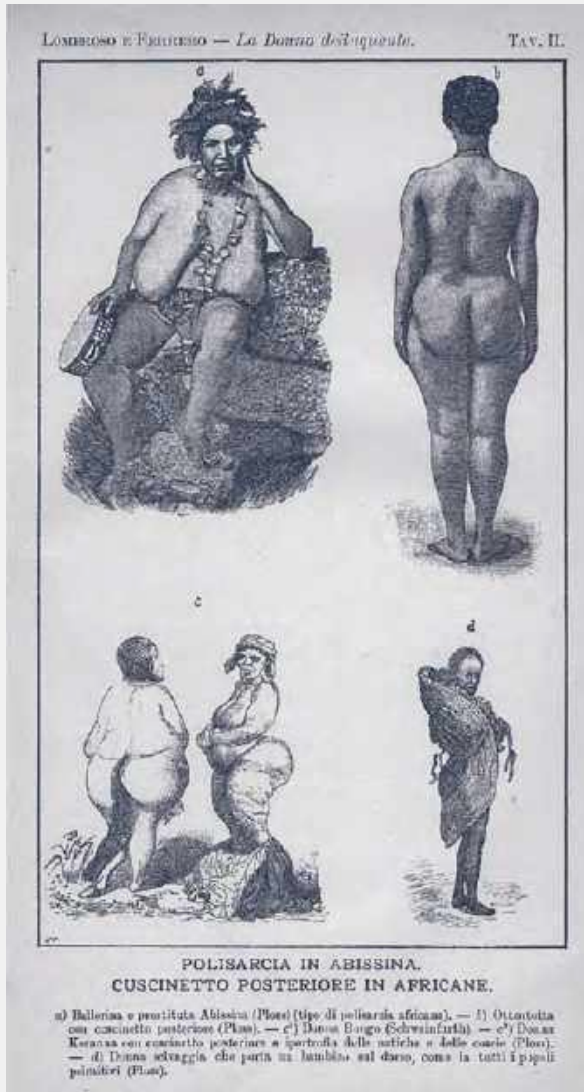
<sup>1</sup> Loos, Adolf. *Ornament and Crime: Thoughts on Design and Materials*. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. London: Penguin Random House, 2019.

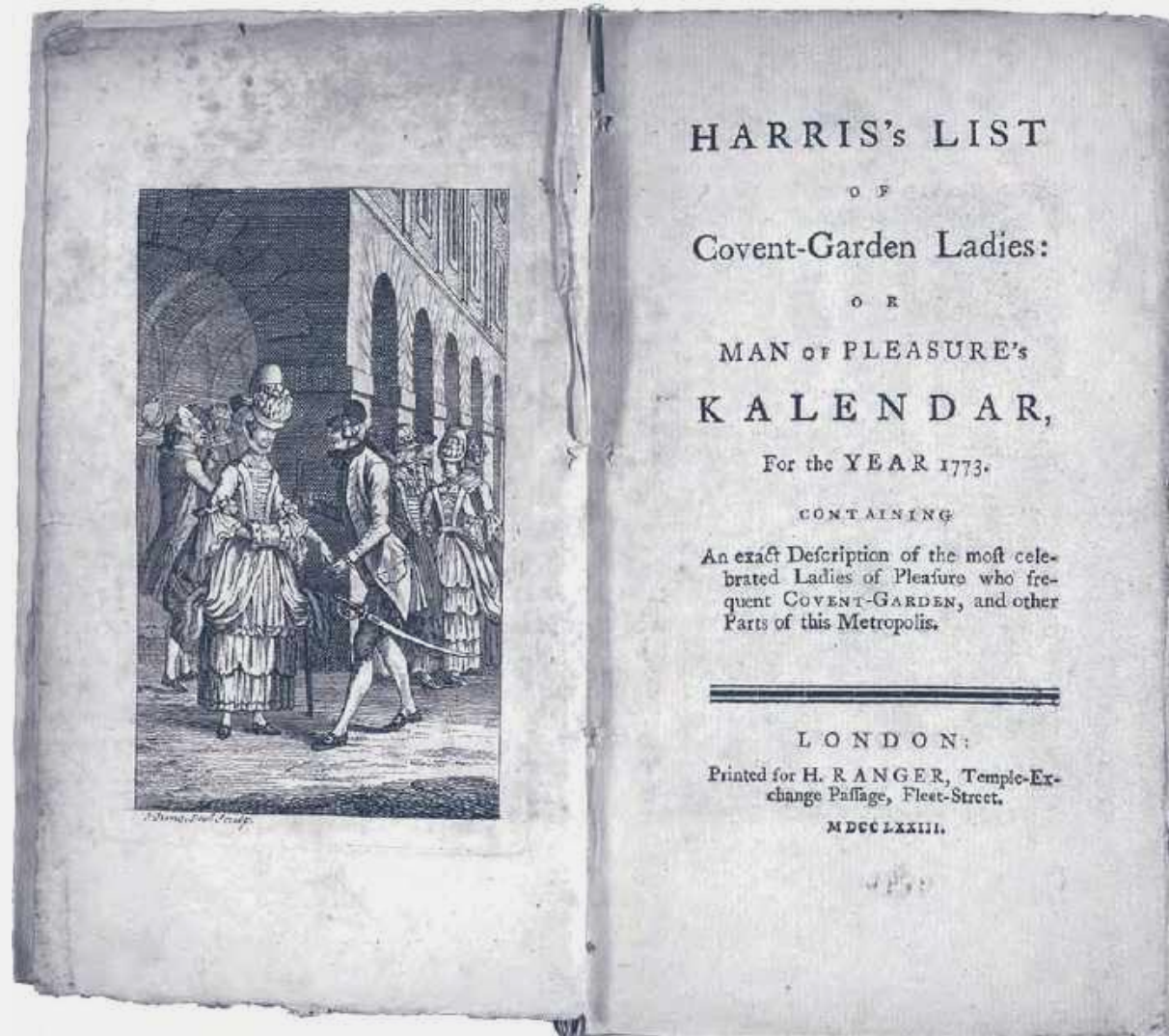
<sup>2</sup> On the following pages I provide examples of these specific instances.



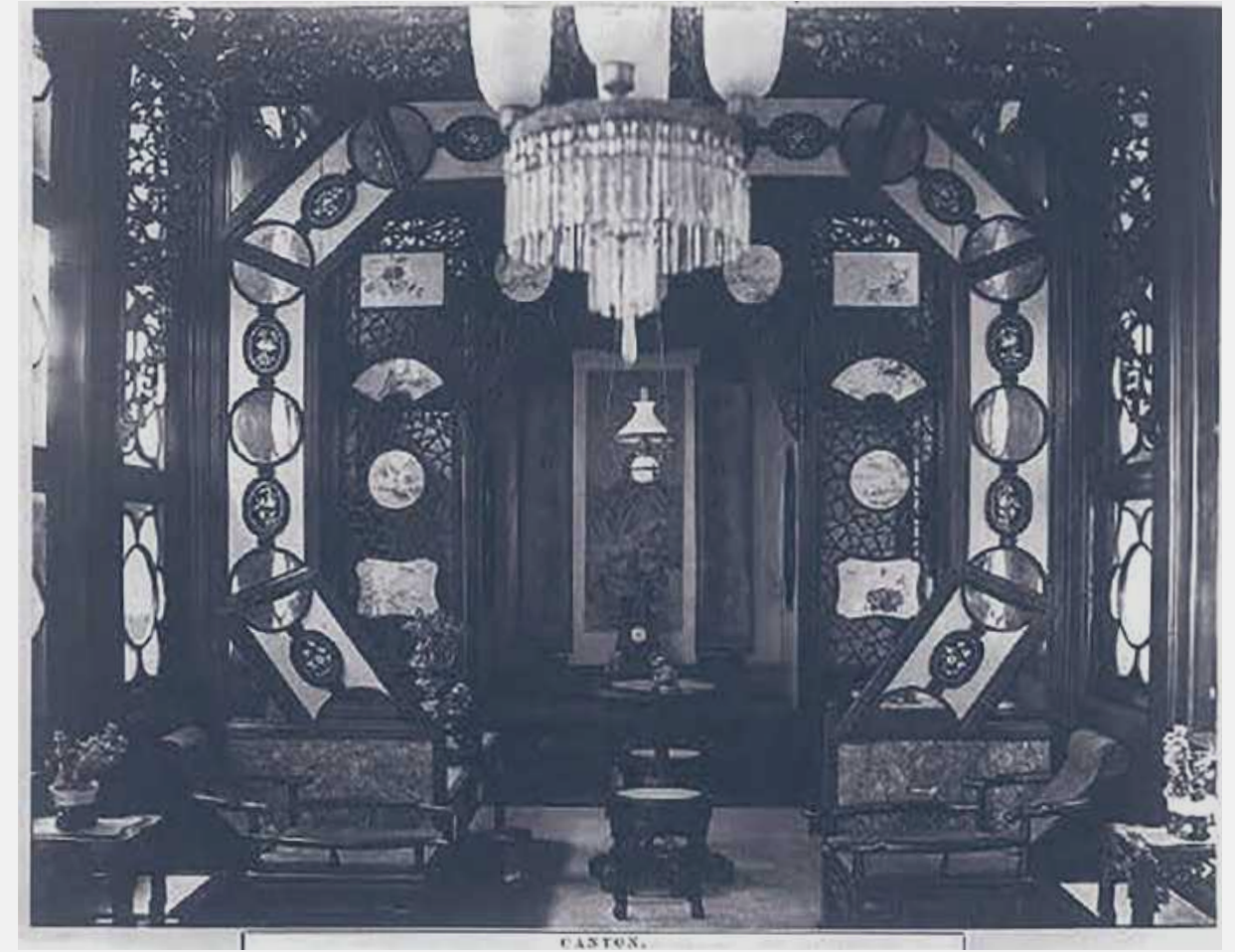
Lombroso, Cesare. *Tatouages de Criminels in L'uomo Delinquente in Rapporto Allantropologia, Alla Giurisprudenza Ed Alle Discipline Carcerarie*. Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1896.

Lombroso, Cesare. *La Donna Delinquente: La Prostituta e La Donna Normale*. Torino: Editori L. Roux, 1893. Lombroso was a preeminent Italian criminologist and physician who subscribed to the ideas of Social Darwinism and argued criminality was not so much a human characteristic as a series of physically-identifiable congenital disorders.





Perhaps the original Craigslist, *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (1757-1795) was an annual directory of prostitutes then working in Georgian London. A portable pocketbook, it was printed in Covent Garden with a circulation of over 8,000. From Cruickshank, Dan. *The Secret History of Georgian London*. London: Windmill, 2010.



Canton, China: *Salon of Pleasure, or Flower Boat*, magnificently fitted in marble--the small room at back is where the Chinese smoke opium--for a small sum, boats can be hired and are largely patronized by foreign pleasure seekers, 1880. Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006677890/>



## Inefficient Ornament



Pressed and cast silver bowl complete with holes,  
Anonymous, Austria, 1846 at the MAK Museum, Vienna.

## Opulent Ornament



Anonymous, *Portrait of Elizabeth I of England*; 1588. Known as the *Armada Portrait*, the painting allegorically depicts Elizabeth's defeat of the Spanish Armada in what was the largest engagement of the Anglo-Spanish War (1585-1604). Three versions of this painting exist, the most famous and visited is at Woburn Abbey within the National Portrait Gallery in London. Yass, Queen!

## Ugly Ornament



Adam van Vianen's *Memorial Guild Cup* was commissioned in 1614 by the Amsterdam goldsmith's guild to commemorate van Vianen's brother and collaborator Paulus van Vianen. This ewer or pitcher is an icon of the auricular ornamental style which the brothers developed based on the cartilage of the human ear, hence its name. Found in Northern Europe in the early 17th century, auricular metalwork straddled Mannerism and the Baroque. At the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

## Grotesque Ornament



The grotto at Martino Bassi's *Villa Visconti Borromeo Arese Litta*, Lainate, Italy, 1585. The etymology of "grotesque" is "grotto," the Italian for "cave." In French it also denoted the farcical or ridiculous. During the Baroque, the grotesque referred to a specific style of ornamentation characterized by intertwined, sinuous forms.

In contemporary English, the meaning has negative connotation: the grotesque is usually something disgusting or reviling. Of course there is the exception of typography, where the type classification Grotesque comes from the German "grotesk," a popular term for late 19th and early 20th century sans serif typefaces. There is a lot to unpack in the word—not least its association with the denigration of ornament—but it is well worth remembering that the grotesque was not always considered ugly but its opposite.

## VENUS IN EXILE

*Faerie Queene*. Sometimes a veil is removed to reveal a celestial purity that had previously been kept from profane eyes. Or sometimes, in diametrical opposition, a heroine such as Oscar Wilde's *Salome* sheds veil after veil in an accession of female power. Mary Wollstonecraft suggests the complexity of this motif in the following statement: "while [women] have been stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity, they have been decked with artificial graces that enable them to exercise a short-lived tyranny."<sup>24</sup> Throughout the discussion of women, it is unclear as to whether female virtue is a matter of covering or uncovering, and what covers or is uncovered in the process.

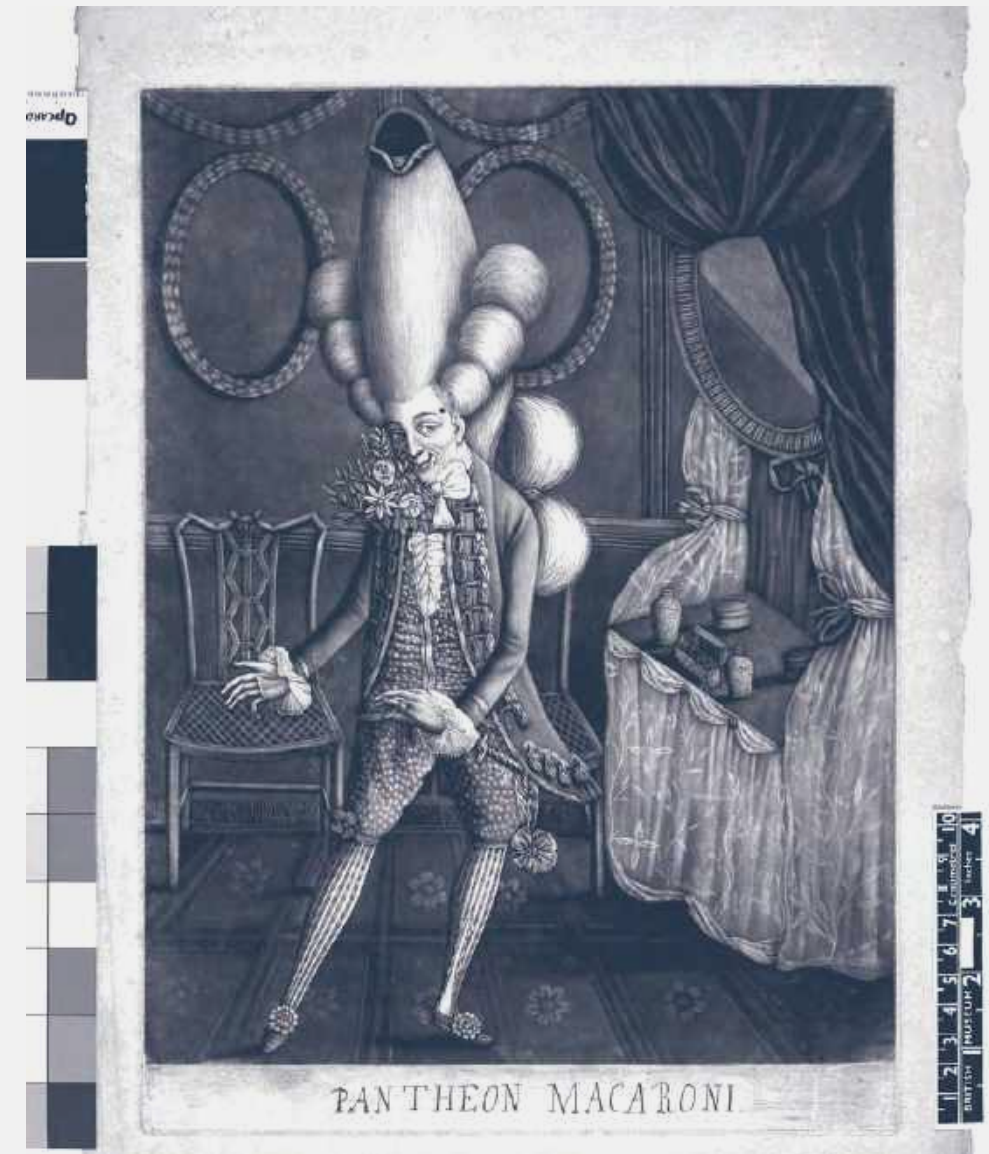
Whatever the meaning of stripping in a given romance—and there is a huge range of such meanings—it points to one of the most volatile issues associated with woman: the ethics of ornament. Women are stripped because women are ornamented. E. H. Gombrich describes the long association between ornament and women in aesthetic and moral thought in *The Sense of Order*, noting that neoclassicism perennially identifies "crowded ornament with feminine taste" and suppresses it in the name of decorum.<sup>25</sup> Kant was thus typical of his age in condemning ornament or "*parergon*" as an instance of charm: "if it is introduced like a gold frame merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm—it is then called *finery* and takes away from the genuine beauty."<sup>26</sup>

In her reformist zeal, Wollstonecraft expresses the typical association of ornament with feminine triviality and moral weakness: "Can that soul be stamped with the heavenly image, that is not perfected by the exercise of its own reason? Yet outwardly ornamented with elaborate care, and so adorned to delight man, 'that with honour he may love,' [a quotation from *Paradise Lost*] the soul of woman is not allowed to have this distinction."<sup>27</sup> Whenever a woman, ornamented or plain, is rendered in art, she threatens the purity of the judgment of taste, conjuring up charm, or in extreme form, prurient allure. These have no place in a "high" aesthetics, but belong to the bourgeois marketplace of culture. Artists themselves were only too aware of this fact. For example, the Victorian painter William Mulready wrote in his sketchbook: "female beauty and innocence will be much

- 16 -

Steiner, Wendy. *Venus in Exile: the Rejection of Beauty in 20th-Century Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002 and Gombrich, E. H. *The Sense of Order: a Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. New York: Phaidon, 1979. Many have written on the association between ornament and femininity, from English architect Sir Christopher Wren, upon visiting Versailles in 1665, to Roger Benjamin in *The Decorative Landscape, Fauvism, and the Arabesque of Observation* (1993) to David Halperin's work on "gay femininity" in *How to Be Gay* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2014).

The subject is far too dense to unpack in a footnote, and honestly I don't know enough to write on it with any authority, but suffice to say the Western tradition appears to have intertwined ornament and femininity as far back as the canon goes, and this relationship is *almost always* referred to in the pejorative.



Philip Dawe's 1773 *The Macaroni*, a real character at the late masquerade. From the British Museum, whose description reads: "A macaroni dressed in a grotesque exaggeration of the prevailing fashion. His hair is in a high pyramid with side curls, an enormous club hangs down his back. A small three-cornered hat is perched on the top of his hair. He wears a large nosegay. He stands in a mincing attitude by a toilet-table, draped with muslin on which are boxes and toilet jars, the latter inscribed "Essence" and "Rose". The wall is paneled and ornamented with moldings; the floor is carpeted and there are two cane-seated chairs of an unusual pattern."

The terms *Macaroni* and *Dandy* were early terms for homosexual men, used both in a derogatory sense and as code between gay men (take the work of Oscar Wilde, for example). In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a *Macaroni Club* referred to "a class of traveled young Englishmen who affected foreign ways" (Merriam-Webster). It's not difficult to read between the lines and surmise what these foreign ways must have been! I believe this perceived link between ornament and homosexuality has persisted through the centuries and still exists in fashion and the decorative arts today.

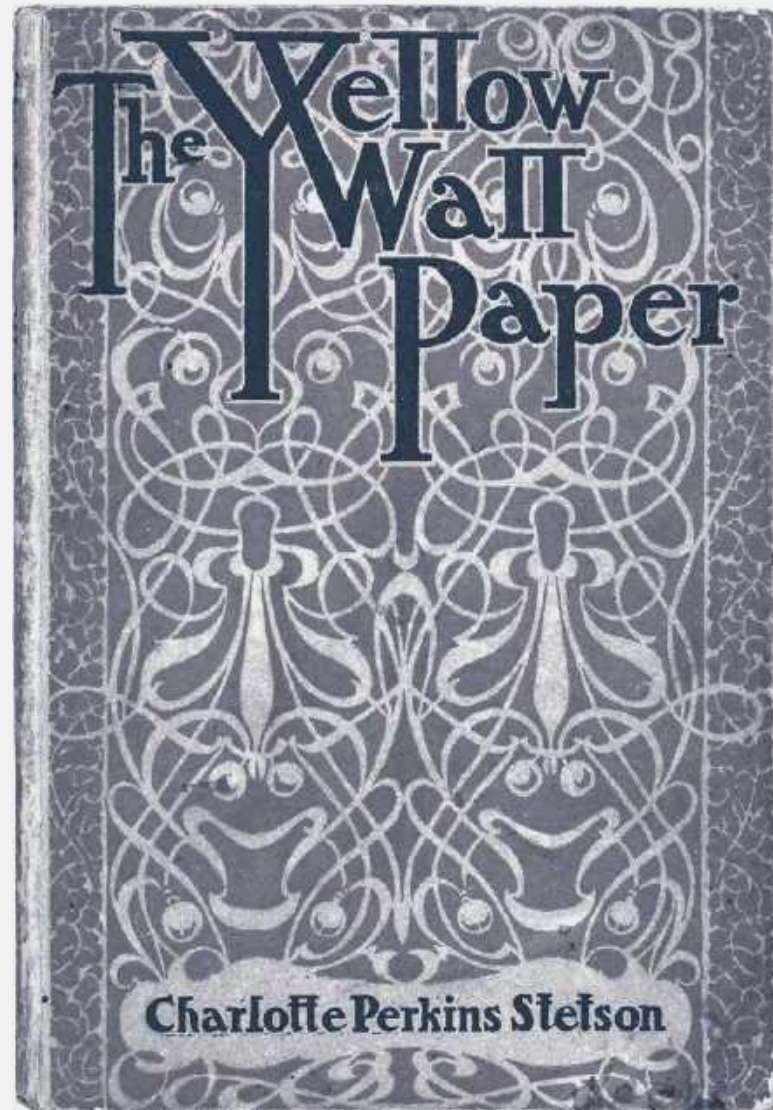


Alexis Peyrotte's 1745 *Winged Griffon on a Rocaille Bracket* at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York. Peyrotte worked mostly in the *Rocaille*, an ornamental style characterized by endless curves, counter curves and references to botany. The *Rocaille* marked the start of both the French Baroque and the Rococo, its logical extension. The word *baroque* came from the medieval Latin *baroco*, and was used by Renaissance philosophers and logicians to describe a type of broken logic. Eventually the definition widened to include anything that was absurdly complex.

The French philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) associated it with the "bizarre and uselessly complicated." Montaigne's contemporaries went further, associating the word "with magic, complexity, confusion and excess." (Robert Hudson Vincent, "Baroco: The Logic of English Baroque Poetics." *Modern Language Quarterly*, Volume 80, Issue 3 [September 2019]). Up until December 2019 I'd entitled this thesis *Hyperbaroque* in recognition of this etymology. I am fascinated by this linguistic link between ornament and excess, which I explore further at the website [www.hyperbaroque.com](http://www.hyperbaroque.com).

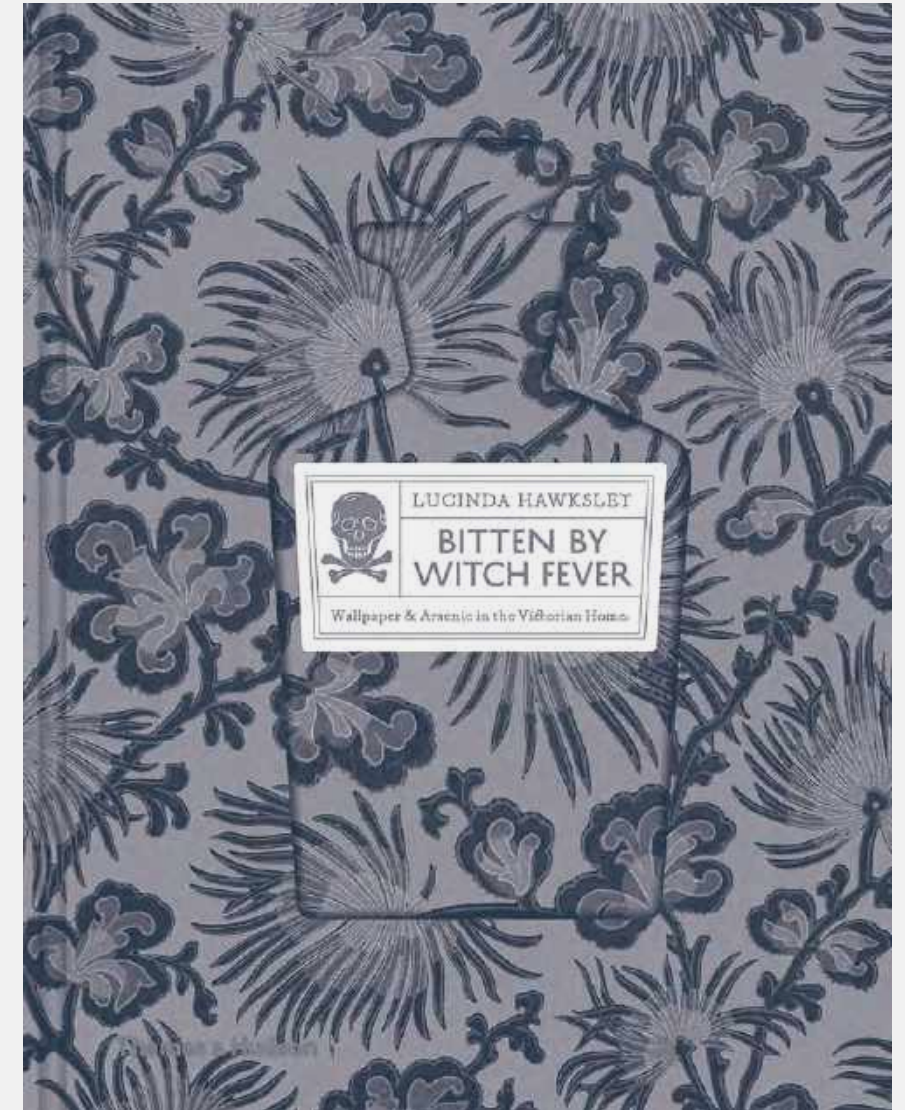


Anonymous, *Pendant in the Form of a Siren*, European, 1860. Baroque pearl with enameled gold, set with rubies. At The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Apart from the etymology outlined on the facing page, some also argue the word *baroque* came from the Portuguese *barroco*, for "misshapen pearl." An example from 1531 uses the term to describe pearls belonging to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, not to be confused with his descendant Charles VI, mentioned on page 113 (Meere, Michael. *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama*. Newark: University of Delaware, 2015).



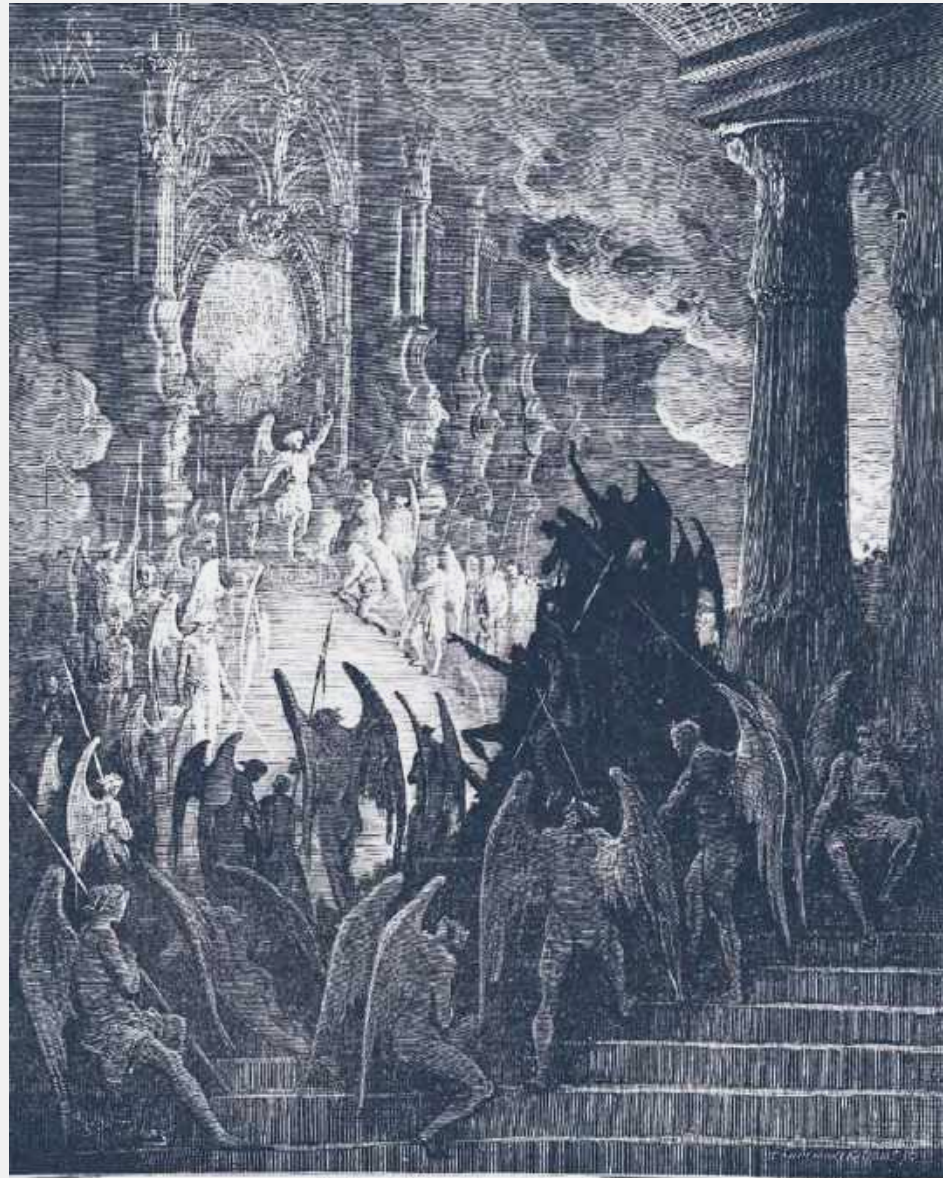
I first discovered Perkins Gilman's 1892 *The Yellow Wallpaper* as a teen. I adore this text, and have returned to it many times over many years. Also known by her first married name Stetson, Perkins Gilman's text is considered an important work of early American feminist literature. In semi-autobiographical fashion, Perkins Gilman's short story chronicles a woman's mental illness, confinement and eventual physical and psychological decline in a bedroom covered with eerie yellow wallpaper in which she sees another woman—or perhaps herself—entangled in its pattern.

Perkins Gilman wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper* after suffering severe postpartum depression, and the work is likely informed by that experience. But others have speculated that it might also be alluding to the then-common phenomenon of Victorian women being poisoned by arsenic-laden wallpapers in their homes (see opposite). Whatever the case, I had a moment of exhilarating kismet when I learned last year that Perkins Gilman enrolled at RISD in 1878 (!) and worked as a commercial artist (a precursor of the graphic designer) here in Providence after graduating. The irony of going mad over ornament and writing about someone who did the exact same thing—and also in Providence—is not lost on me.



Lucinda Hawksley's 2016 *Bitten by Witch Fever* was a total delicious revelation to me, so much so that I had the RISD Fleet Library's copy recalled *twice* while I greedily devoured it. Hawksley's book takes its name from William Morris's own words, which he used to dismiss claims that his arsenic-ridden wallpapers were poisoning women, driving them to madness and eventually killing them. Morris rebutted these claims by saying the women had been "bitten by witch fever."

The plot thickens: "in Germany in 1814, Wilhelm Sattler created an extremely toxic arsenic and verdigris compound pigment, *Schweinfurt green*--known also as *Paris*, *Vienna*, or *emerald green*--which became an instant favorite amongst designers and manufacturers thanks to its versatility in creating enduring yellows, vivid greens, and brilliant blues. Most insidiously, the arsenic-laced pigment made its way into intricately patterned, brightly colored wallpapers and from there into the Victorian home. As its use became widespread, commercial arsenic mines increased production to meet the near-insatiable demand. Not least of which was the UK's largest mining plant, DGC, whose owner was William Morris, originator of the British Arts and Crafts movement and arguably the finest wallpaper designer of his generation." Quoted from Rae, Haniya. "When Poison Was Everywhere." *The Atlantic*, October 11, 2016. Interestingly, Hawksley is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Victorian novelist Charles Dickens.



High on a throne of royal state, which far  
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind.

*Book II, Lines 1-2*

Gustave Doré's etching *Satan Takes His Throne in Hell* for the 1898 edition of John Milton's 17th century epic *Paradise Lost*. Image from the University of Colorado's Auraria Library.

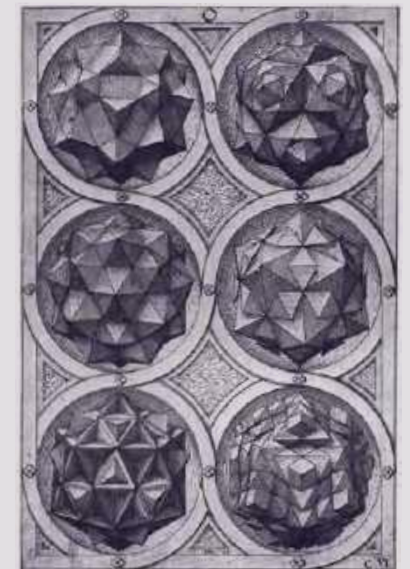


Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach's 1737 *Karlskirche* in Vienna was commissioned in 1713, one year after the last great plague epidemic, by Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI for his namesake patron saint Charles Borromeo, known as a healer of those suffering from the plague. My husband and I visited in 2019—it is a colossal orgy of Baroque and Rococo ornament, and a total sensory overload.

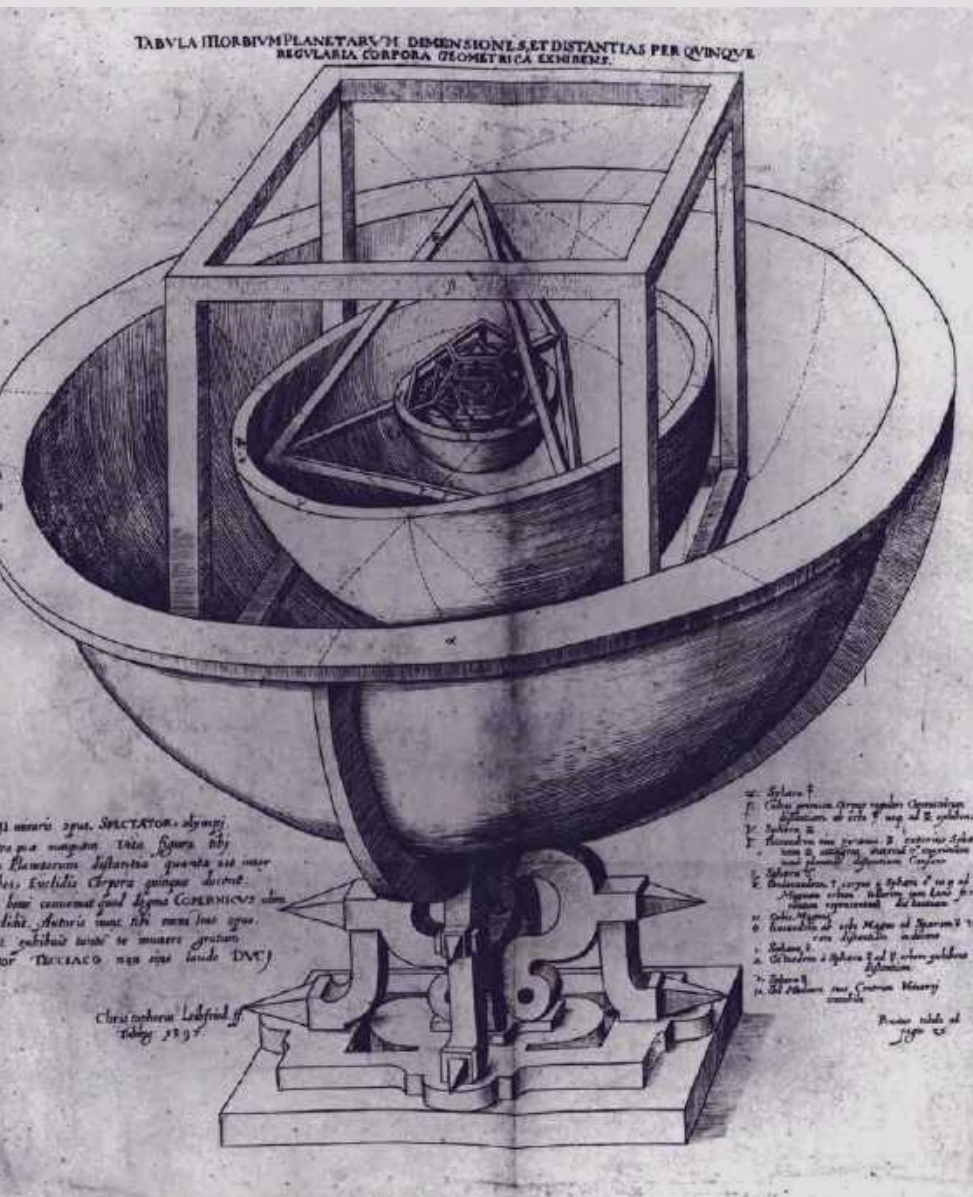
# Module, Proportion, Symmetry & Rhythm

All are but parts of one stupendous whole  
Alexander Pope<sup>1</sup>

In 1966 the Hungarian immigrant designer and educator György Kepes published *Module, Proportion, Symmetry, Rhythm*, a seminal collection of essays and studies on universal modularities, systems and structures that seem to govern everything from architecture, graphic design, art and music to mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry and computing. It is an ambitious book, with contributions from the likes of John Cage (a pioneer of musical indeterminacy and the avant-garde) and Rudolf Arnheim (a leader in perceptual psychology and Gestalt theory)—and follows Kepes's earlier *Language of Vision* (1944) which had a profound influence on early design education theory. I must thank my RISD classmate Nick Adam for putting me onto Kepes: his work has informed my research and making throughout my time at RISD, but especially in writing this thesis. Kepes taught me that ornament is a language—complete with its very own vocabulary, grammar and morphology. It is a system one can parse and understand—if one is willing to look.



Wenzel Jamnitzer's *Perspectiva Corporum Regularium*, 1568<sup>3</sup>



Kepler's platonic model of the solar system, 1597<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pope, Alexander. *An Essay on Man*. London: J. Wilford, 1735.

<sup>2</sup> Kepler, Johannes. *Mysterium Cosmographicum*. Grunnenbach, 1597.

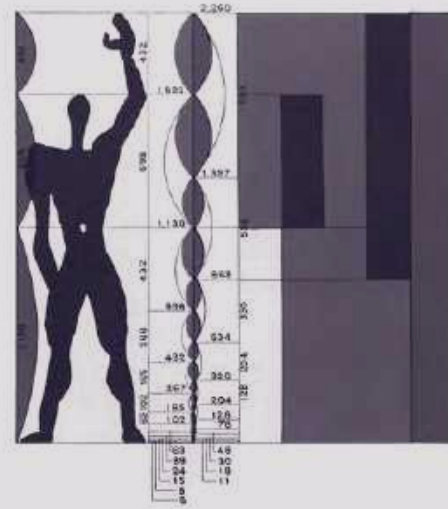
<sup>3</sup> Engraved by Jost Amman, *Perspective of the Regular Bodies* was made to promote the talents of Jamnitzer, a famed sixteenth-century goldsmith (image from the The Metropolitan Museum in New York). I have a number of hand-carved wooden polyhedral puzzles (see right) I bought as a teen in Bali, Indonesia. The Balinese have been carving polyhedra for centuries, based on designs originally brought from India.



Let's for a moment define what each of these terms are. First, *vocabulary* is defined as a body of words used in any given language. Originating in the 16th century to denote a list of words with explanations, the noun has come to mean a range of language specific to individual people, groups and things. At its core, ornament has its very own vocabulary of form, color and module that draws directly from nature and geometry, a hybrid of both the Earth as it is, and our world as we see it.

Second, *grammar* in spoken language is a set of rules that dictate the structure of vocabulary within that language. Ornament has its own grammar, again arising from nature and geometry, which includes structures of module and repetition, grids, planes and even physics—all the while being influenced by specific geographies, histories, cultures and materials. To borrow Jones's title, the *Grammar of Ornament* is a set of structural rules that govern how its vocabulary is pieced together to make the visual compositions we call ornament.

Finally, *morphology* in linguistics, as in other fields, is the study of the form of the thing. In language, this is the study of the form of words; their composition; their lineage or etymology; their geographical and social



**Le Corbusier's famous 1948 *Modulor* had a profound influence on modern architectural theory, and was employed on his *Unité d'habitation* below<sup>2</sup>**

convergence, or *sprachbund*; and their compounded meanings. From portmanteaus to double entendres, morphology in language is the study of *how the sausage is made*—including this very idiom. To me, there is such a thing as ornamental morphology, and it works exactly like the morphology of linguistics. When studying ornament—just as one might study language—we must ask *how does this fit with that? What does this do to that?* Together, *what do these things mean?* And perhaps most interestingly, *where on Earth did they come from?*

This question of ornament's morphology and provenance is the driving force behind much of my thesis research: in my experience, far too many people observe ornament with no more than a cursory glance. In doing so, they miss out on an abundance of history and knowledge that is imbued in this curly thing here, or that patterned thing there. Though ornament's use may have fallen into the purely decorative—especially in the Western tradition—it is essential to remember this *stuff means something!* Ornament carries with it our collective cultural histories, material knowledge and crafting expertise. Ornament truly is a language—albeit a dying one—and we must speak *with* it, and *listen* to what it says back.



**Victor Horta  
Hôtel Tassel, Brussels  
1892–1894**



**Me on the roof terrace of  
Le Corbusier's 1947 *Unité d'habitation*  
in Marseille,  
France, 2006<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Le Corbusier's *Modulor* system determined all aspects of his design for *Unité d'habitation*, from its plans, sections and elevations down to the articulation of its *brise soleil*; the proportions and patterning on the roof terrace; the *piloti* columns and the apartment interiors themselves. Corbusier's system was so successful that the building, originally intended for affordable housing, has become an extremely desirable address where apartments are handed down through families. It is also home to a number of design studios that presumably hope to imbibe its design aura. (Corbusier, *Le Modulor*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 2004).

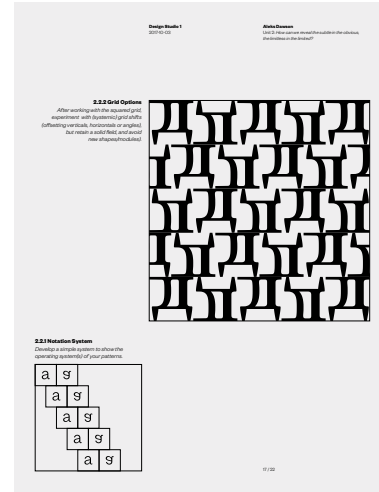
<sup>2</sup> There is one formative architectural "moment" I will take to my grave: my family was driving through Marseille in 2006. We had one day in the city, and I begged my parents to take my sister and I to Le Corbusier's famed housing project *Unité d'habitation*. They finally relented and we got there at dusk. The building is not a museum, rather a very-much-alive apartment complex, and so I pleaded with the security guard in my broken schoolboy French that I was an architecture student visiting all the way from Australia and he *had to* let me up to the rooftop—and he did! So we went up. In a sunset that I will never forget, I saw everything I knew only from books: the outdoor theatre, the amazing volumes of the squash court, the crèche, the outdoor cinema and the toddlers' wading pool. It felt like a dream.

This was the first time I understood how architecture—when everything converges in the right place, at the right time and in the right way—has the power to elevate the human spirit. Just like a piece of music or art or literature, in *that* one moment architecture had the visceral power to change me. I was reduced to tears. I've never felt that kind of love for a building since—except perhaps Utzon's Sydney Opera House where I worked for four years (see my conversation with Marian Bantjes)—and in that very moment I made a lifelong commitment to pursue design.

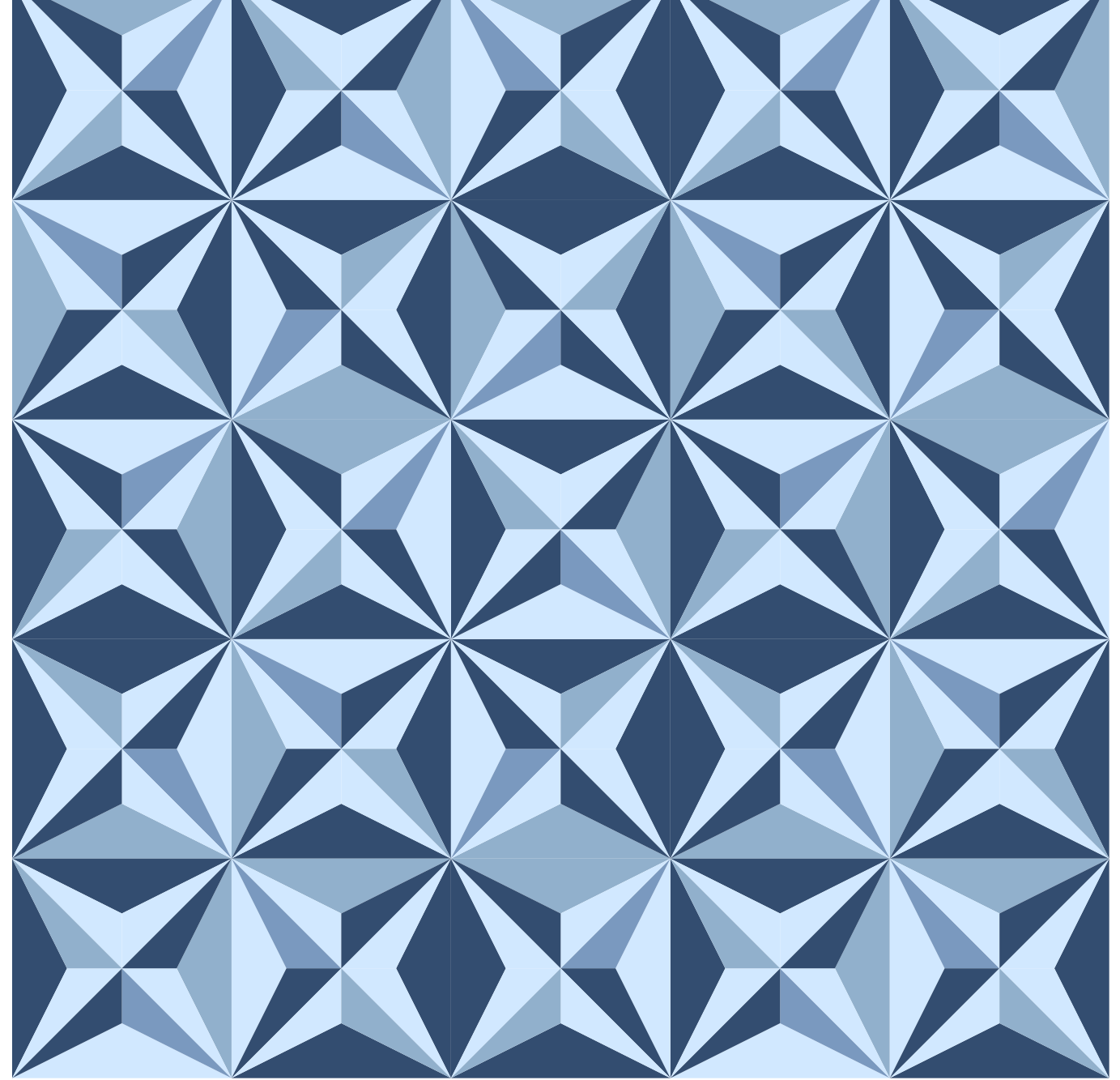


# Patterns

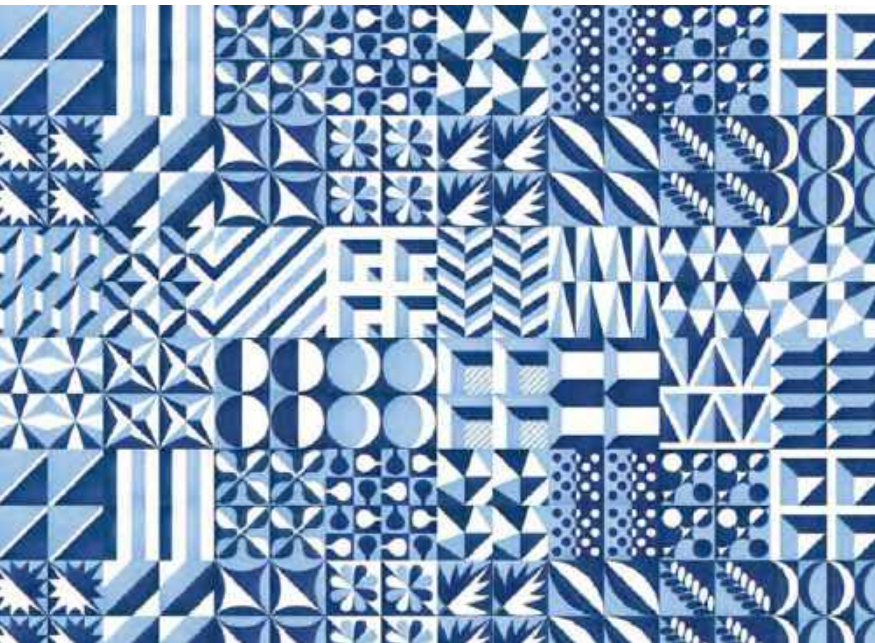
I have been making patterns since before I knew their name. For me, pattern making is deeply intuitive and often equally meditative. I believe one can understand most things by studying their patterns—be they visual, behavioral, social, ecological, or something else entirely. Inspired by the work of Gio Ponti, Pino Tovaglia, Francesco Saroglia and Franco Grignani, I began these patterns with the base module of a square, selectively cropping primarily Cyrillic typography, as I feel it is less legible to the Western eye. I then went further, playing with grid, hue and scale. With only a simple module it is possible to generate limitless combinations. It is this very *ad infinitum* quality that makes pattern so attractive to me, and why I continue to pursue them.



My documentation showing how I constructed these patterns.



I made this star-shaped pattern in tribute to Gio Ponti.



**Gio Ponti (1891–1979)**  
tiles for Hotel Parco dei Principi  
Sorrento, 1962

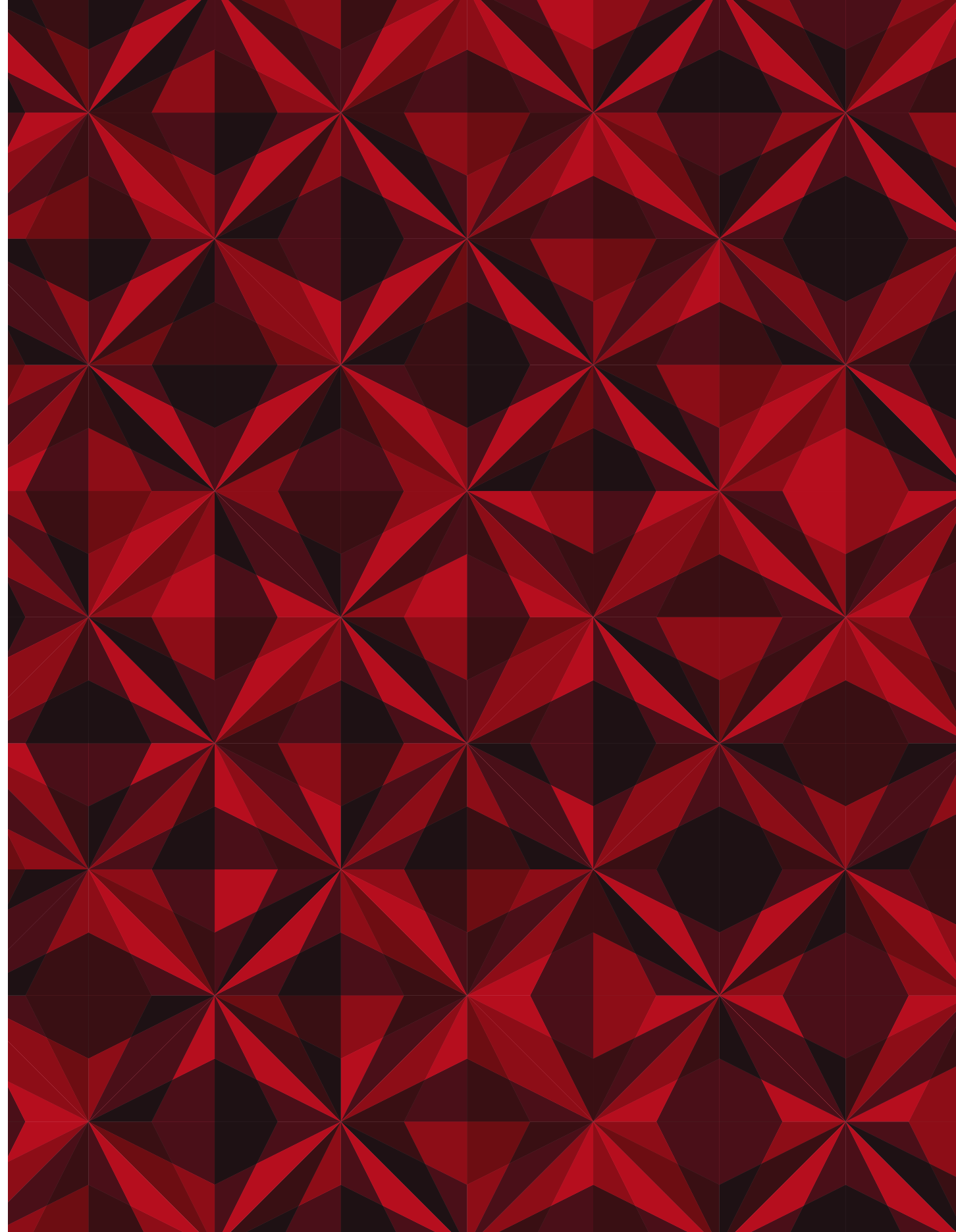
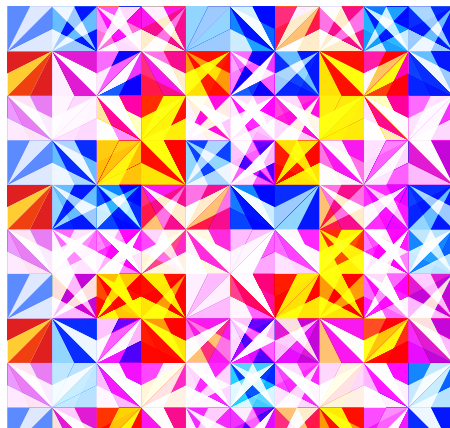
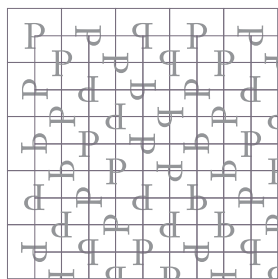


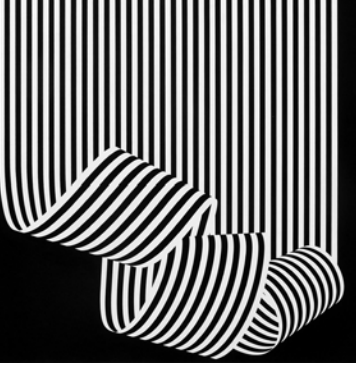
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**Gio Ponti's 699 Superleggera  
for Cassini, 1957**

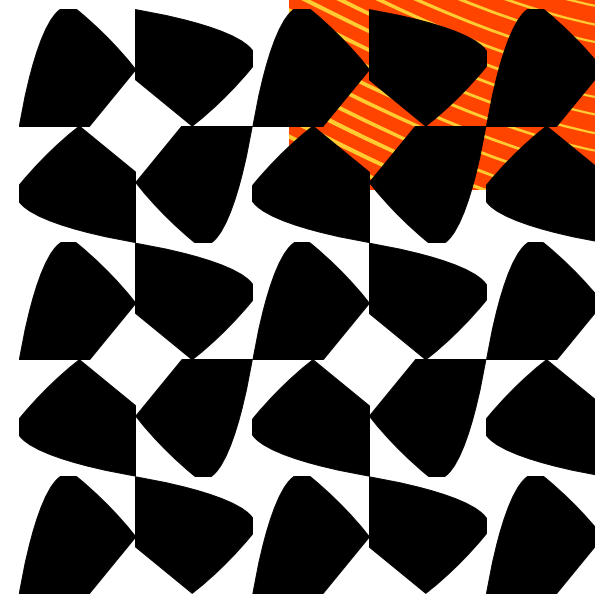
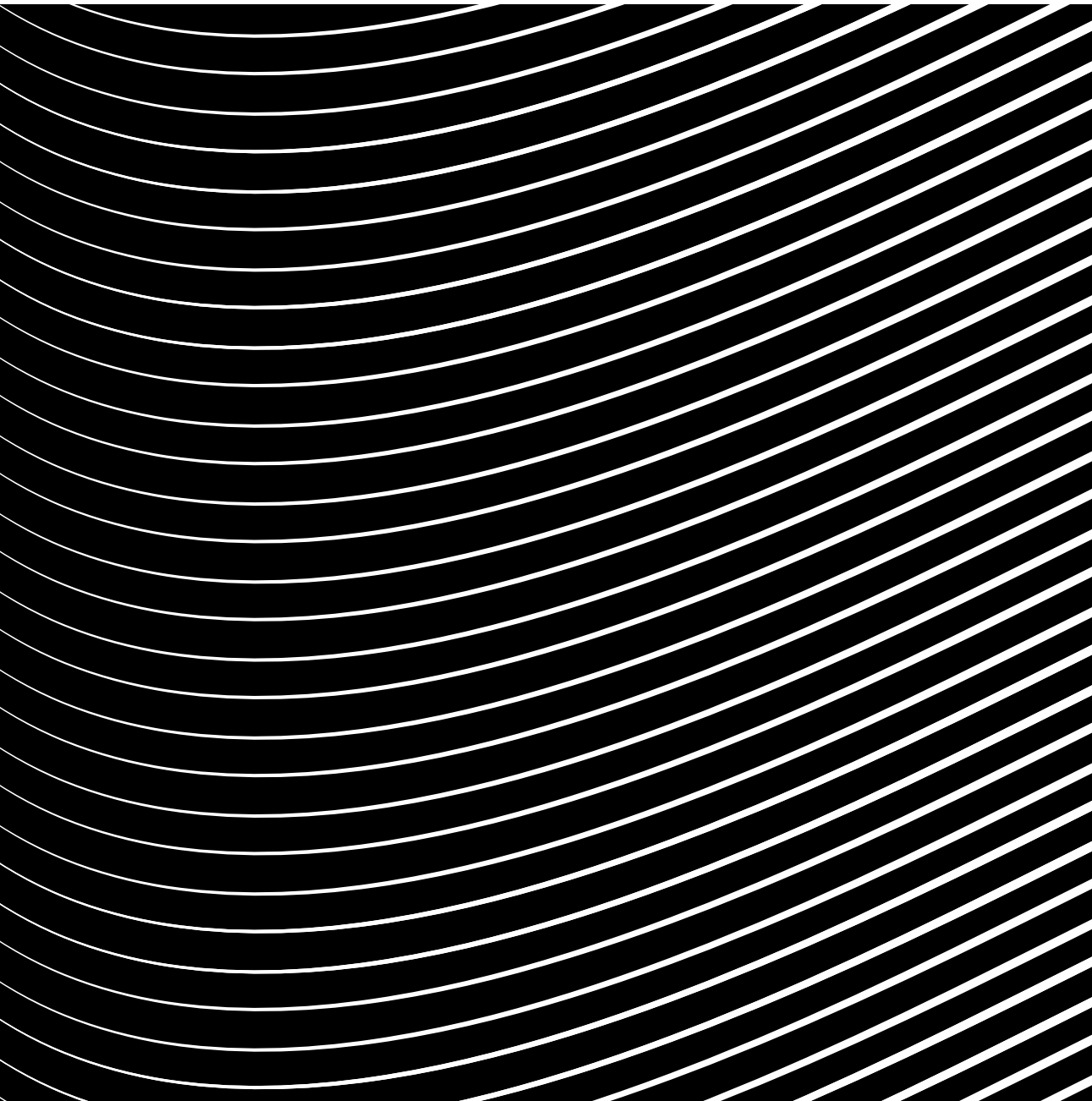
More Ponti inspiration, this time using  
overlaid grids and transparencies





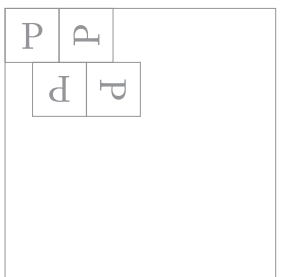
**Franco Grignani (1908–1999)**  
*Dissociazione dal bordo*  
acrylic on canvas, 1969

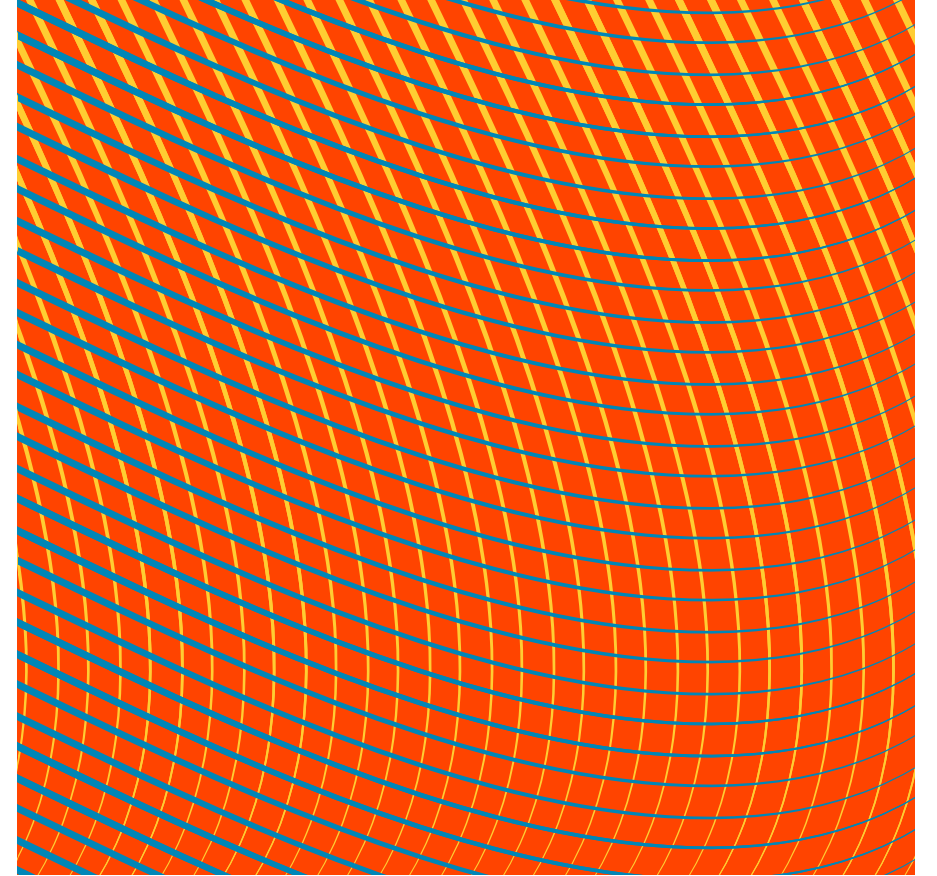
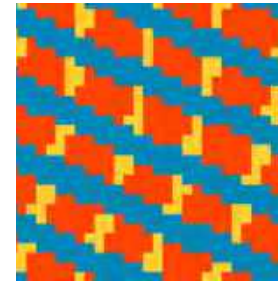
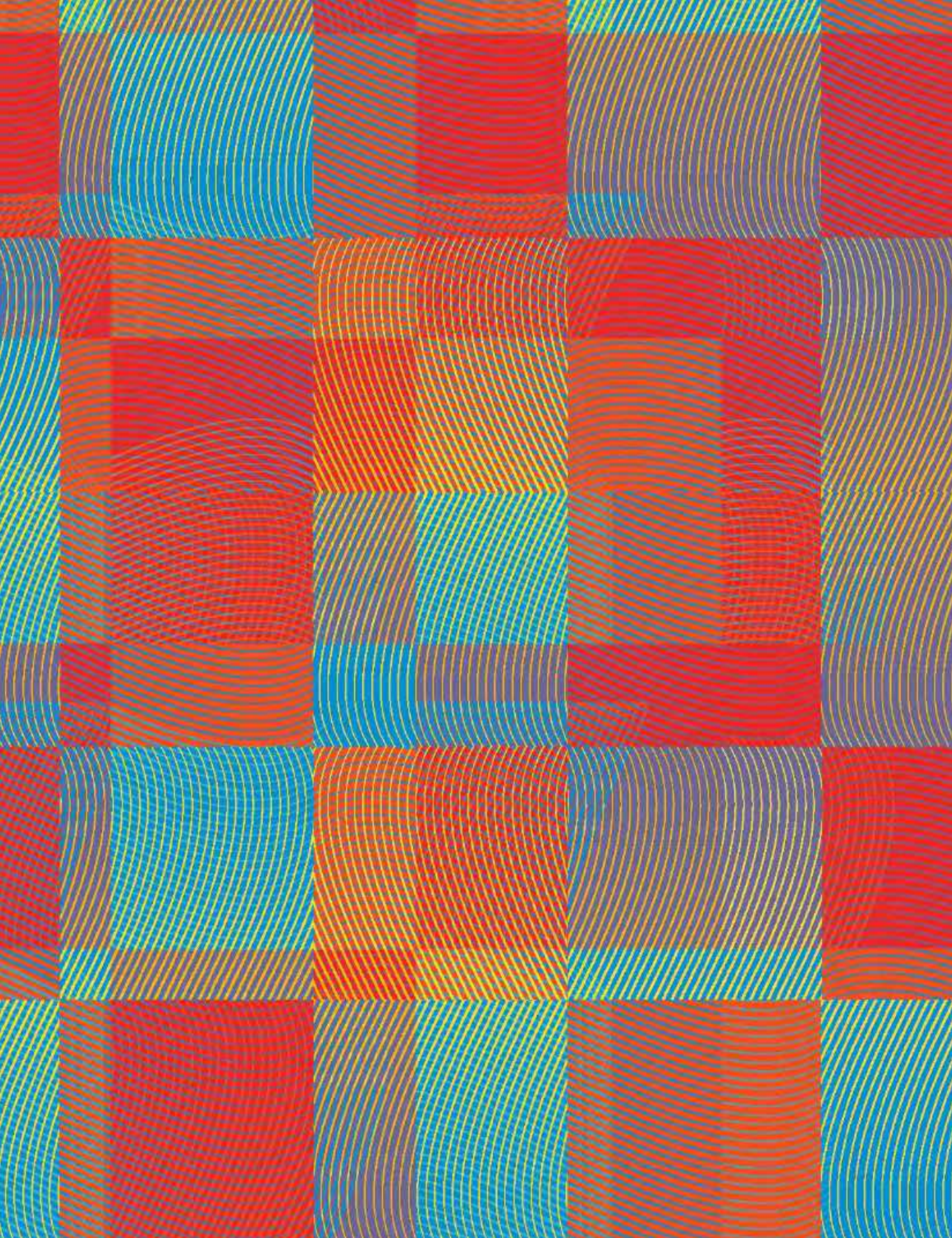
**Franco Grignani under the  
pseudonym Francesco Saroglia**  
*Woolmark Logo, 1964*



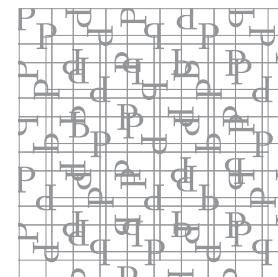
This one always looks to me like a horse's face and mane from side-on.

This form reminds me of Louise Olsen's resin ware. Olsen is the founder of Dinosaur Designs and the daughter of "Australia's Cy Twombly," renowned painter John Olsen.



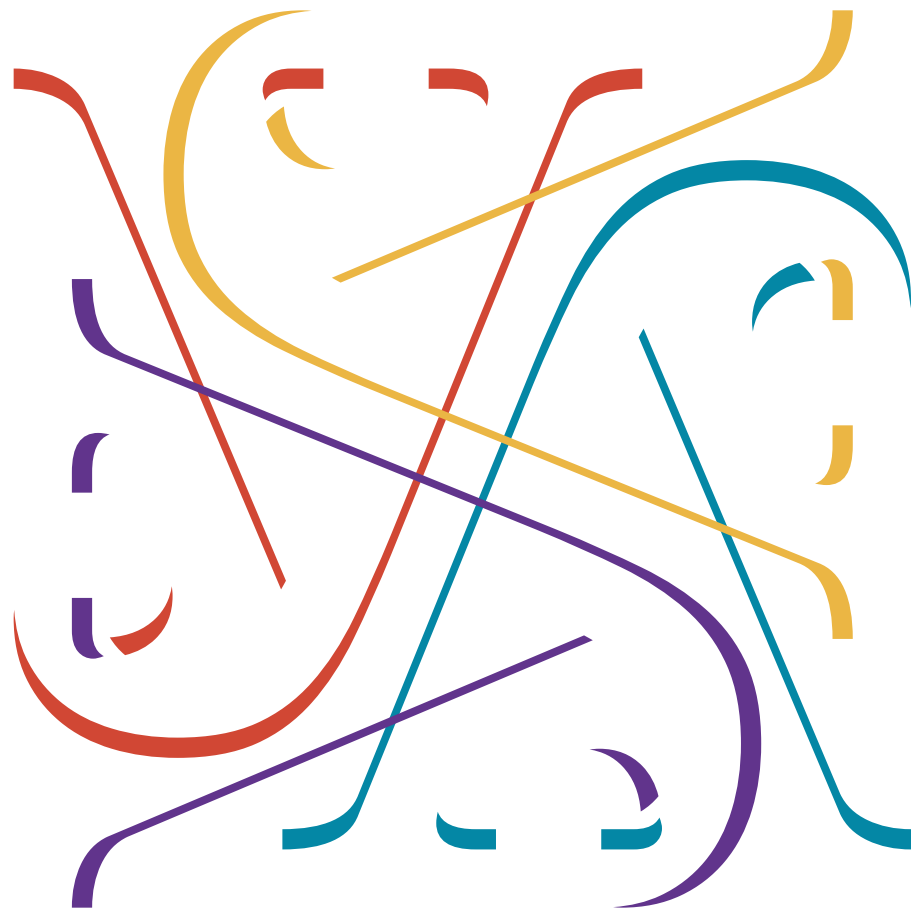


Reflecting and overlaying two different hues of the "eyelashes" makes the background look like a gradient-- it's not (see the bitmapped Nathalie du Pasquier-esque version on left). This *trompe l'oeil* is pure happy luck!

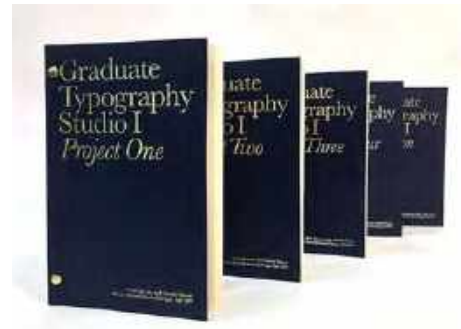


**Pino Tovaglia (1923–1977)**  
*Poster for Studio Nebiolo*  
Torino, 1960s

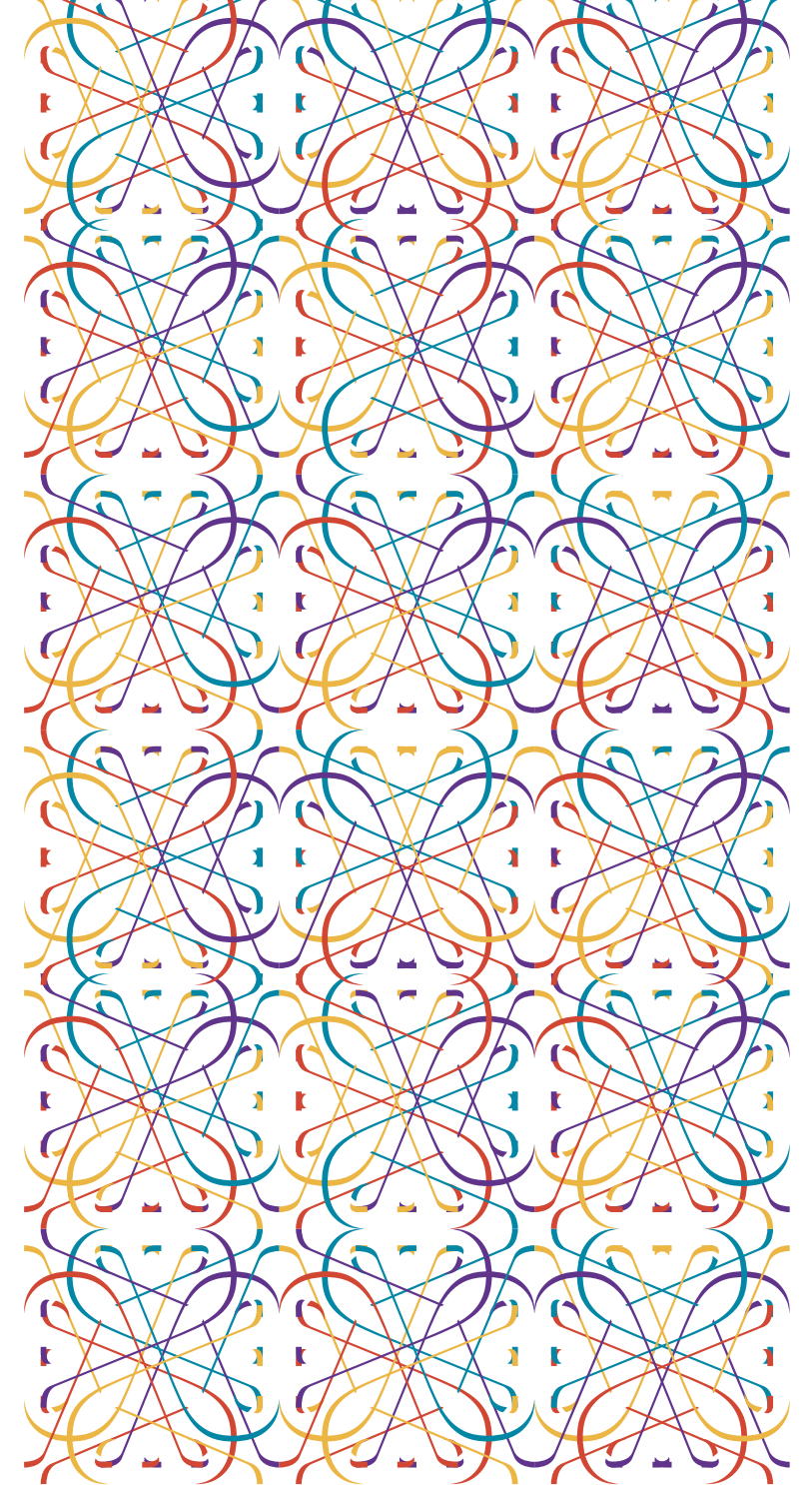




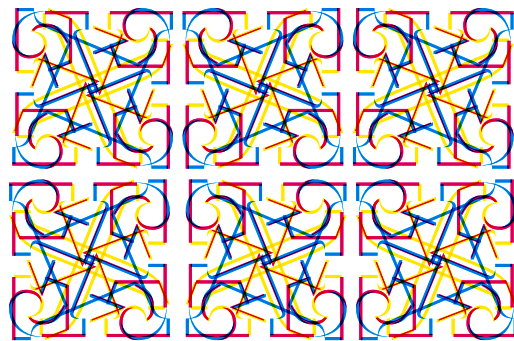
The basic module of my line translation exploration.



My final reflection for Aki's class.

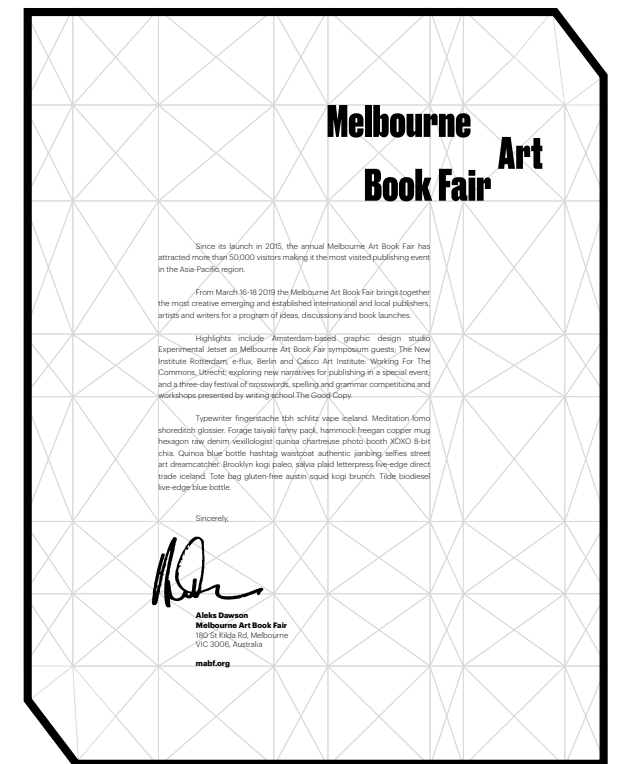
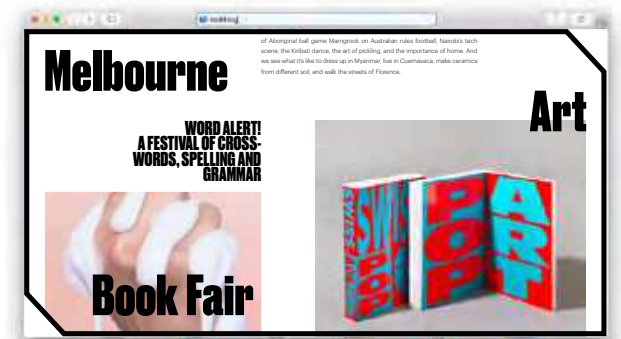


The reflected pattern has an almost Arabesque feeling to it.



These patterns emerged from line translation exercises in Typography 1 with Aki Nurosi in 2017. Examining figure-ground intersections, I played with the forms and counterforms of the Clarendon "Egyptian" (slab serif) typeface designed by Robert Besley in 1845.

# Melbourne Art Book Fair

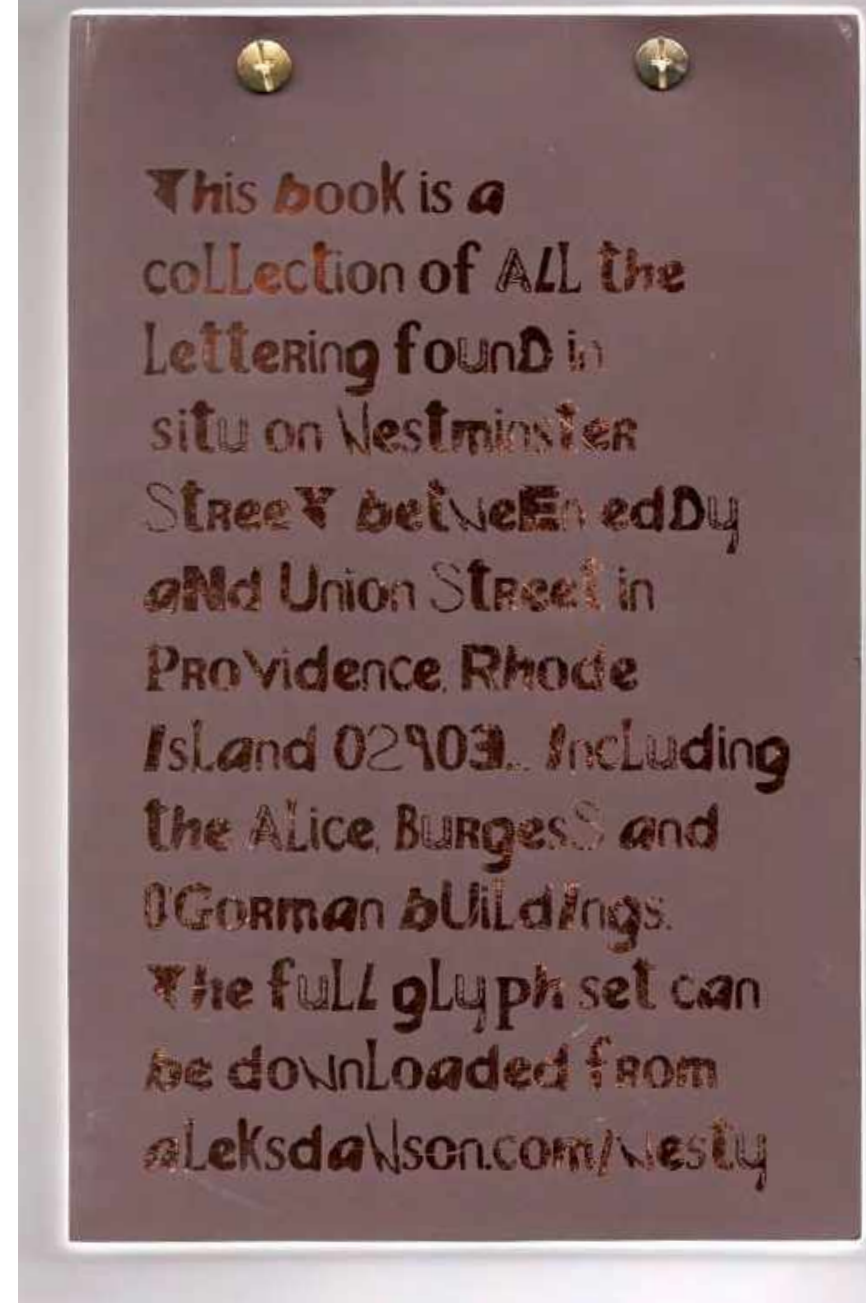


Speculative identity for the 2018 Melbourne Art Book Fair. The chamfered framing on the website and print collateral was derived from the pattern on the left.

# Found Type



Paul Elliman, *Bits*  
1991



This typeface was made in form class with Ryan Waller in 2018. It is an amalgam of Signage found on Westminster Street in Downtown Providence. The CAPS ARE FUN too, but there is something wrong with one of the glyph drawings where it produces the letter u underneath it. I enjoy its ornamental qualities and overall glitchiness and for a time considered setting more text in this book with it.

U  
U  
U

# Prescription Description

This project is an interactive flavor experiment which began with my thinking about how taste is informed by appearance. Driven by the idea of interrupting—or at least questioning—this usual experience of taste, I filled edible vegan gelatin capsules with bubblegum and pineapple essences and asked participants to record their expected flavors. The modular acrylic pieces were stacked to create volumes for housing the edible capsules, which could then be seen *through* the acrylic when viewed side-on. The work required a great deal of physical testing and subsequent fabrication. In total I made fourteen units for a total of 126 individual parts.

I made this piece at RISD's Co-Works with lasercut and laser-etched mirrored acrylic, acrylic spray paint, foodsafe gelatin capsules, edible pigmented cocoa butter and edible synthetic essences.



'Prescribing' my hesitant participants.







Olivia de Salve Villedieu interacting with the piece.

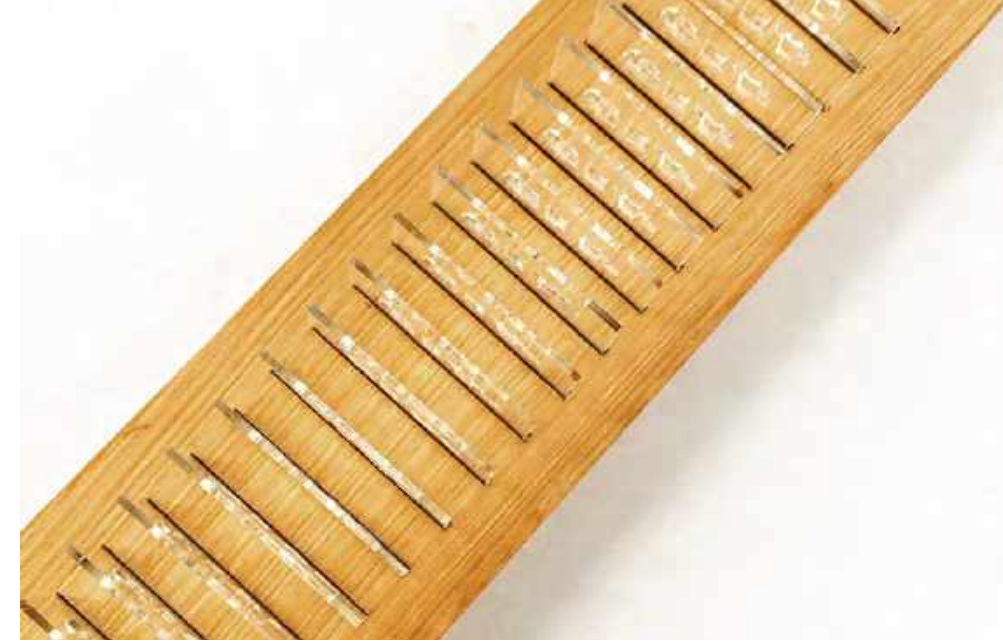
*Opposite page, my somewhat-surprised participants, from left to right: Amy Auman, me, Eury Kim, Nick Adam, Bethany Johns, Mostyn Griffith, Annaka Olsen, Jenn Livermore, E Roon Kang, Joel Kern, Olivia de Salve Villedieu, Joseph Allegro and Greta Skagerlind.*

# Give/Get

This piece was made for Paul Sahre's visiting designer workshop in 2018. Paul's prompt asked us to question the notion and act of "giving" and "getting." We looked both at the customs surrounding the act of giving, and socially acceptable ideas of receiving. Beginning with the act itself, we were tasked each giving something "of ourselves" that we would not "get" back. Paul's lecture was heavily focused on making with one's hands, and I knew from the outset that I, too, wanted to make with mine. After a few sketch concepts, I decided to fabricate a simple lasercut model in acrylic and wood showing the physical interpolation between the two words.



Paul Sahre reads to us from his 2017 'graphic memoir,' *Two-Dimensional Man*.



I fabricated this piece at RISD's Co-Works with lasercut acrylic and laminated plywood.



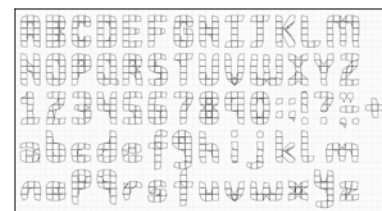
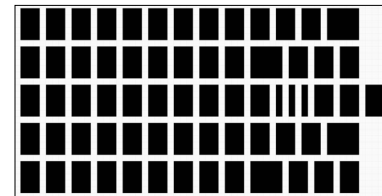
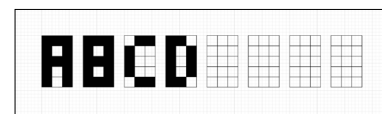
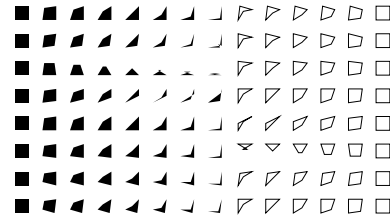
Lasercut paper sketch model.  
Left: the finished piece.



# Ginsberg Tablets

In Paul Soulellis's 2018 typography class we were tasked with making an alphabet based on component pieces (a stencil, a grid, a collection of objects, etc.) and then had to use this alphabet to create a typographic composition. I started with a modular shape inspired by the shape of a Jean Prouvé truss. I then built the alphabet out of these component parts and began laser-etching into cast plaster of Paris. It was during this material-testing phase that the face began to remind me of the hand lettering in the kids' television show *The Flintstones* (1960-1968), and so for a time I called it "Bedrock." After feedback from Paul and the group that this neither felt like Prouvé nor *The Flintstones*, I began looking at existing historical texts in stone, including the Rosetta Stone and cuneiform on Sumerian tablets. The material was calling for something of more historical import, and so I finally resolved to set Allen Ginsberg's 1955 epic poem *Howl*, one of my all-time favorite pieces of writing.

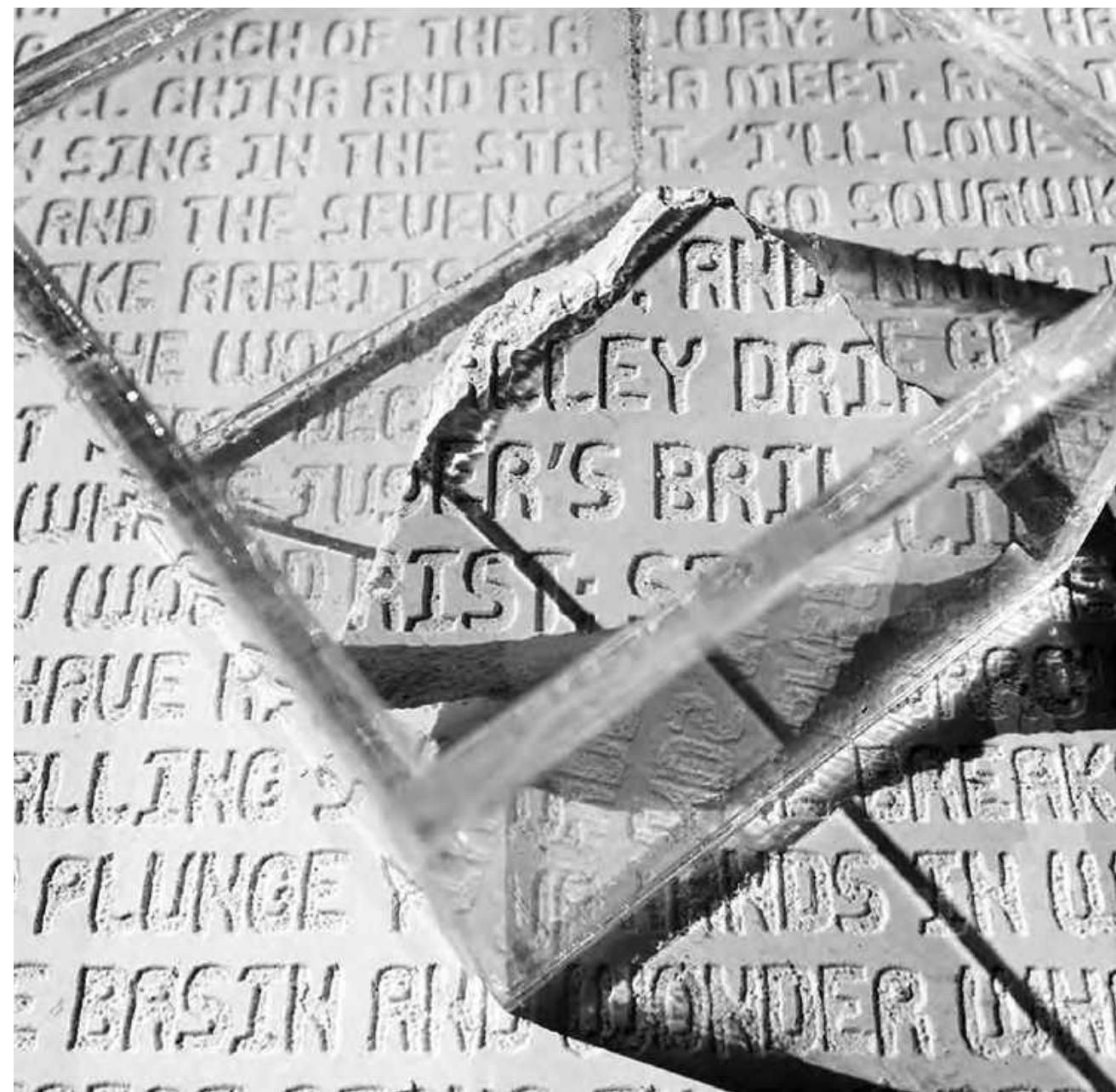
I made this piece at RISD's Co-Works by laser-etching cast plaster of Paris, which I both painted when dry and mixed with various pigments while still in liquid form. The process of laser-etching plaster is not dissimilar to carving, albeit with a much softer stone and a much faster tool. I also laser-cut clear acrylic presentation boxes to house fragments of these tablets, which were presented strewn across the floor and stacked in a haphazard manner reminiscent of Iranian-American artist Michael Rakowitz's 2016 installation of ornamental plaster casts at the Graham Foundation in Chicago (see opposite).

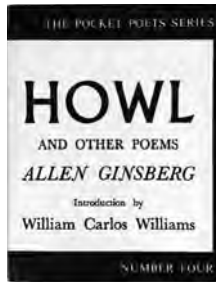


Michael Rakowitz, *The Flesh Is Yours The Bones Are Ours*, 2016

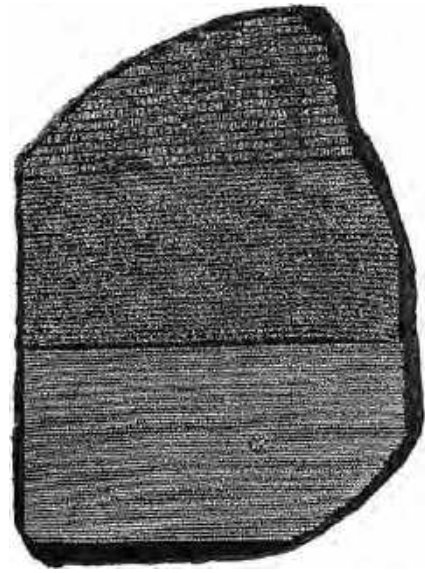


Above photo by Gabe Melcher (GD MFA 2016).





Ginsberg's Howl  
1955



Rosetta Stone  
196 BCE



Cuneiform receipt of wages  
562 BCE



My own Ginsberg Tablets in their custom presentation boxes.



# Beacon

This piece was born of an interest in activating a space to bring it significance through one simple yet effective gesture. I became obsessed researching old photos of historic downtown Providence (particularly Westminster Street, where I live) and the seemingly-endless amount of beautiful old illuminated signage that used to exist on the street and throughout the Downcity neighborhood. I ended up building a 'Beacon' that would not only mark these now-defunct areas of downtown, but also allude to their glimmering heyday. Fittingly, my beacon's life was fleeting: it fell from its podium in the wind, smashing on the river bank's stone, right outside the RISD Design Center, just minutes before I presented it. Such is life!



**Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**  
*Friedrichstraße Skyscraper*  
Berlin, 1921



**Ennead Architects**  
*Weill Cornell Medicine*  
*Greenberg Center*  
New York, 2007

In plan, my design for the beacon bears some resemblance to Mies van der Rohe's unbuilt *Friedrichstraße Skyscraper*, Berlin 1921. While unintentional, I was aware of this project at the time (it reminds me of the Weill Cornell Greenberg Center designed by my old boss Todd Schliemann at Ennead Architects in New York).





I made this at RISD's Co-Works using laser-cut mirrored acrylic. The interior wiring had to be connected prior to assembling the mirrored acrylic housing. I followed an over-under-through pattern in order to fit it into what proved a very tight space.

**Félix González-Torres**  
***Untitled (Go-Go), 1991***

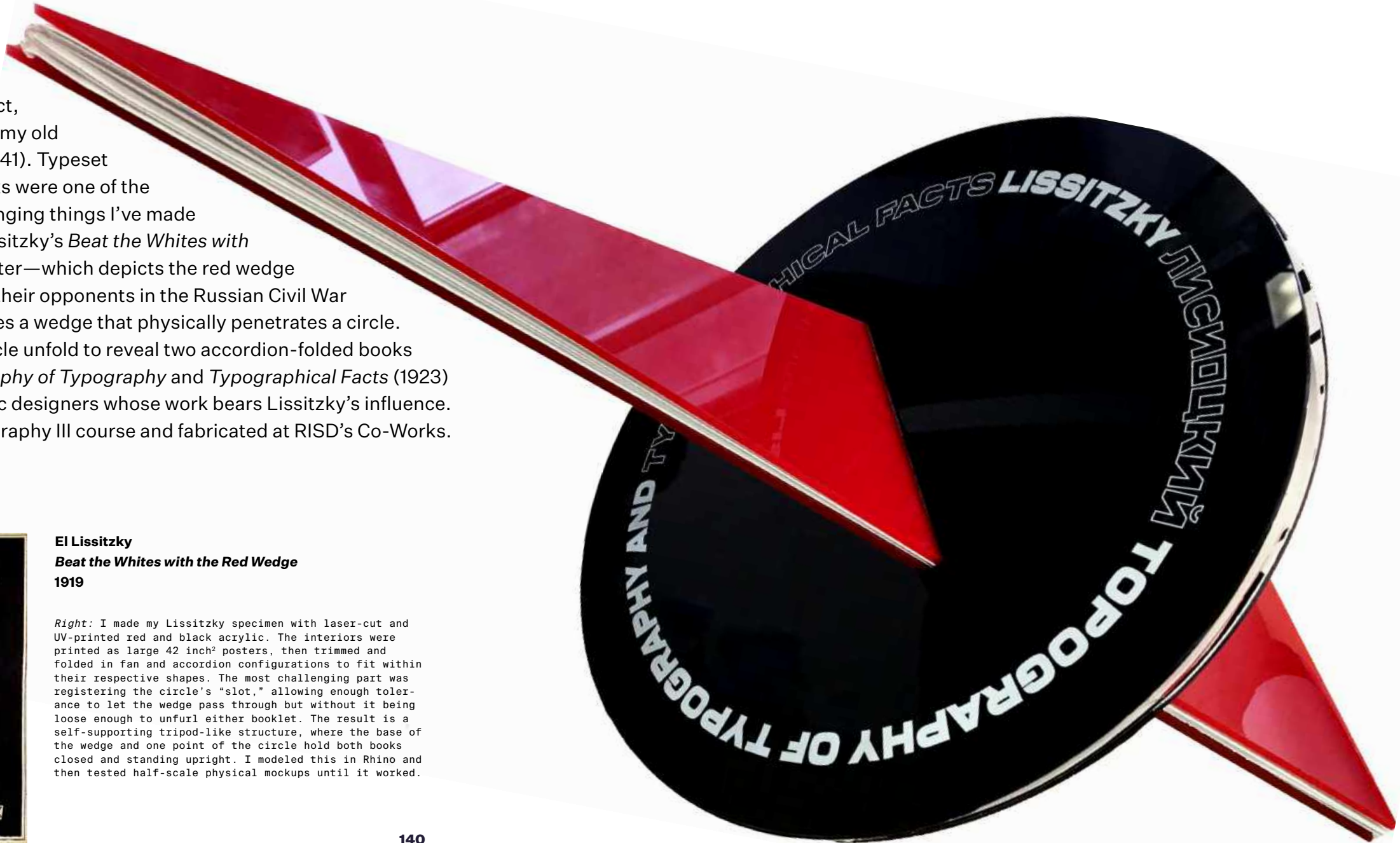


*Right:* The broken beacon in-situ after its unfortunate fall in the wind.  
*Below:* Assembling the light fixture required 48 incandescent light bulbs.



# For the Love of Lissitzky

I made this 3D typographic specimen book to honor the work of Russian Constructivist polymath artist, designer, photographer, architect, typographer, polemicist, activist—and my old Slavic comrade—El Lissitzky (1890–1941). Typeset in Russian and English, these two books were one of the most ambitious and technically-challenging things I’ve made during my time at RISD. Inspired by Lissitzky’s *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* (1919) propaganda poster—which depicts the red wedge of the Bolsheviks piercing the heart of their opponents in the Russian Civil War (1917–1923)—my specimen also features a wedge that physically penetrates a circle. When taken apart, both wedge and circle unfold to reveal two accordion-folded books containing Lissitzky’s seminal *Topography of Typography* and *Typographical Facts* (1923) with examples of contemporary graphic designers whose work bears Lissitzky’s influence. Made for Doug Scott’s Graduate Typography III course and fabricated at RISD’s Co-Works.

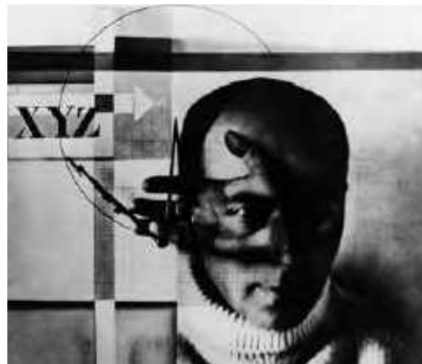


**El Lissitzky**  
***Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge***  
**1919**

*Right:* I made my Lissitzky specimen with laser-cut and UV-printed red and black acrylic. The interiors were printed as large 42 inch<sup>2</sup> posters, then trimmed and folded in fan and accordion configurations to fit within their respective shapes. The most challenging part was registering the circle’s “slot,” allowing enough tolerance to let the wedge pass through but without it being loose enough to unfurl either booklet. The result is a self-supporting tripod-like structure, where the base of the wedge and one point of the circle hold both books closed and standing upright. I modeled this in Rhino and then tested half-scale physical mockups until it worked.



Doug Scott unfolding the wedge at our final critique. The wedge intersperses Lissitzky's *Topography of Typography* (1923) with his famous 1924 *The Constructor* photomontage self-portrait (right), from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



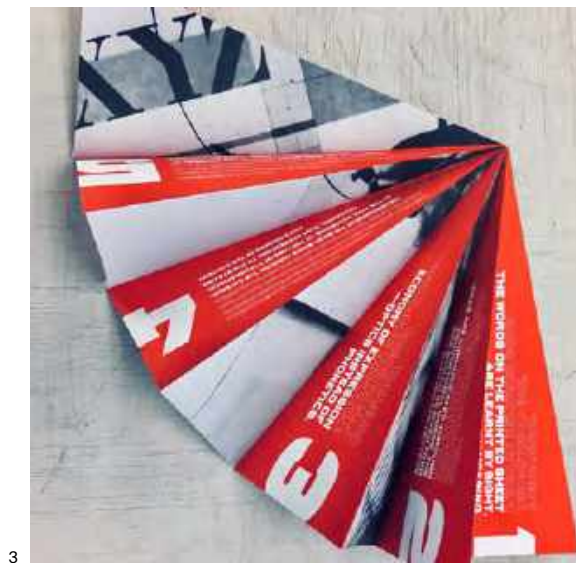
El Lissitzky  
*The Constructor*  
1924



1



2



3



4



5



6





Lissitzky's unbuilt *Wolkenbügel* or *Cloud Irons* (1924-1925) had a profound impact on modernist architecture. Arguing that horizontal human movement was natural—and vertical movement was *not*—the cantilevered structures were intended to mark the major intersections of the Boulevard Ring in Moscow.



Lissitzky was also an accomplished set designer. Here he is in 1929 working on staging for the Meyerhold Theatre in Moscow. Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940) was a Russian Soviet theatre director, actor and producer whose theories on biomechanics and symbolism made him a seminal force in modern theatre. Meyerhold was arrested, tortured and eventually murdered in Stalin's Great Purge of 1936-1938. Spared by the Politburo, Lissitzky and his wife Sophie collaborated on the Soviet pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. He died of tuberculosis in 1941.

**1** THE WORDS ON THE PRINTED SHEET ARE LEARNT BY SIGHT, NOT BY HEARING.  
СЛОВА НА ПЕЧАТНОМ ЛИСТЕ УЗНАЮТСЯ НА ВИД, А НЕ НА СЛУХ.

**2** IDEAS ARE COMMUNICATED THROUGH THE CONVENTIONAL WORDS, THE IDEA SHOULD BE GIVEN FORM THROUGH THE LETTERS.  
ИДЕИ ПЕРЕДАЮТСЯ С ПОМОЩЬЮ СЛОВА, ИДЕЯ ДОЛЖНА ПОЛУЧИТЬ ФОРМУ С ПОМОЩЬЮ БУКВ.

**3** ECONOMY OF EXPRESSION — OPTICS INSTEAD OF PHONETICS.  
ЭКОНОМИКА ВМЕСТО ФОНЕТИКИ.

**4** OF THE TYPE, ACCORDING TO THE MECHANICS, MUST CORRESPOND TO THE CONTENT.  
ТИПАЖИ И ШРИФТЫ, СООТВЕТСТВУЮЩИЕ МЕХАНИКЕ, ДОЛЖНЫ СООТВЕТСТВОВАТЬ СОДЕРЖАНИЮ.

**5** THE DESIGN OF THE BOOK-SPACE THROUGH THE MATERIAL OF THE ILLUSTRATIVE PROCESS BLOCKS, WHICH GIVE REALITY TO THE NEW OPTICS, THE SUPERNATURALISTIC REALITY OF THE PERFECTED EYE.  
ДИЗАЙН КНИЖНОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА ЧЕРЕЗ МАТЕРИАЛ ИЛЛУСТРАТИВНЫХ БЛОКОВ ПРОЦЕССА, КОТОРЫЕ ДАЮТ РЕАЛЬНОСТЬ НОВОЙ ОПТИКЕ, СВЕРХНАТУРАЛИСТИЧЕСКАЯ РЕАЛЬНОСТЬ СОВЕРШЕННОГО ГЛАЗА.

**6** THE NEW BOOK DEMANDS THE NEW WRITER, INKSTAND AND GOOSE-QUILL ARE DEAD.  
НОВАЯ КНИЖКА ТРЕБУЕТ НОВОГО ПИСАТЕЛЯ, ЧЕРНИЦА И ГУСЬИНО ПЕРЬЕ — МЕРТВЫ.

**7** THE CONTINUOUS PAGE-SEQUENCE — THE BIOSCOPE.  
НЕПРЕРЫВНАЯ ПОСЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬНОСТЬ СТРАНИЦ — БИОСКОП.

**8** THE PRINTED SHEET TRANSCENDS SPACE AND TIME, THE INFINITY OF THE BOOK, MUST BE TRANSCENDED.  
ПЕЧАТНЫЙ ЛИСТ ПРЕВЫШАЕТ ПРОСТРАНСТВО И ВРЕМЯ, БЕСКОНЕЧНОСТЬ КНИГИ ДОЛЖНА БЫТЬ ПРЕВЫШЕНА.

**9** THE CONTINUOUS PAGE-SEQUENCE — THE BIOSCOPE.  
НЕПРЕРЫВНАЯ ПОСЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬНОСТЬ СТРАНИЦ — БИОСКОП.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

In order to communicate your thoughts in writing you have only to form certain combinations from these symbols and string them together in an unbroken chain. but—NO.

YOU see here that the pattern of thought cannot be represented mechanically by making combinations of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Language is more than just an acoustic wave motion, and the mere means of thought transference. In the same way typography is more than just an optical wave motion for the same purpose. From the passive, non-articulated lettering pattern one goes over to the active, articulated pattern. The gesture of the living language is taken into account.

e.g.: the Hammarubi tablets and modern election literature.

YOU have divided up the day into twenty-four hours. There is not another hour for extravagant effusion of feelings. The pattern of speech becomes increasingly concise, the gesture sharply unprinted. It is just the same with typography.

e.g.: Prospectuses, advertising brochures, and modern needs.

YOU are accompanied from your first day onwards by printed paper digital screens, and your eye is superbly trained to find its way about in this specific field quickly, precisely, and without losing its way. You cast your glances into these forests of paper with the same confidence as the Australian throws his boomerang.

e.g.: the page of a large daily paper.

YOU ask for clear patterns for your eyes. These can only be pieced together from plain elements. The elements of the letters are:

the horizontal — | the diagonal / \ the perpendicular | ⊥ the curve C

These are the basic line-directions on the plain surface. Combinations occur in the horizontal and perpendicular directions. These two lines produce the right (unambiguous) angle. It can be placed in alignment with the edges of the surface, then it has a static effect (rest). It can be placed diagonally, then it has a dynamic effect (agitation). These are the axioms of typography.

e.g.: this page.

YOU are already overcoming the prejudice which regards only letterpress-printing (from type) as pure typography. Letterpress belongs to the past. The future belongs to photogravure printing and to all photochemical digital processes. In this way the former fresco-painting is cut off from the new typography.

e.g.: advertisement pillars and poster-wall.

YOU have observed that in an organic pattern all the facets exhibit the same structural unity. Modern typography is improving structural unity.

e.g.: The paper (art paper), the type (absence of flourishes), the ink (the new spectrum-clear products).

YOU can see how it is that where new areas are opened up to thought- and speech-patterns, there you find new typographical designs originating organically. These are modern advertising and modern poetry.

e.g.: Some pages of American and European magazines and technical periodicals. The international publications of the dada movement.

YOU should demand of the writer that he really presents what he writes; his ideas reach you through the eye and not through the ear. Therefore typographical form should do by means of optics what the voice and gesture of the writer does to convey his ideas.

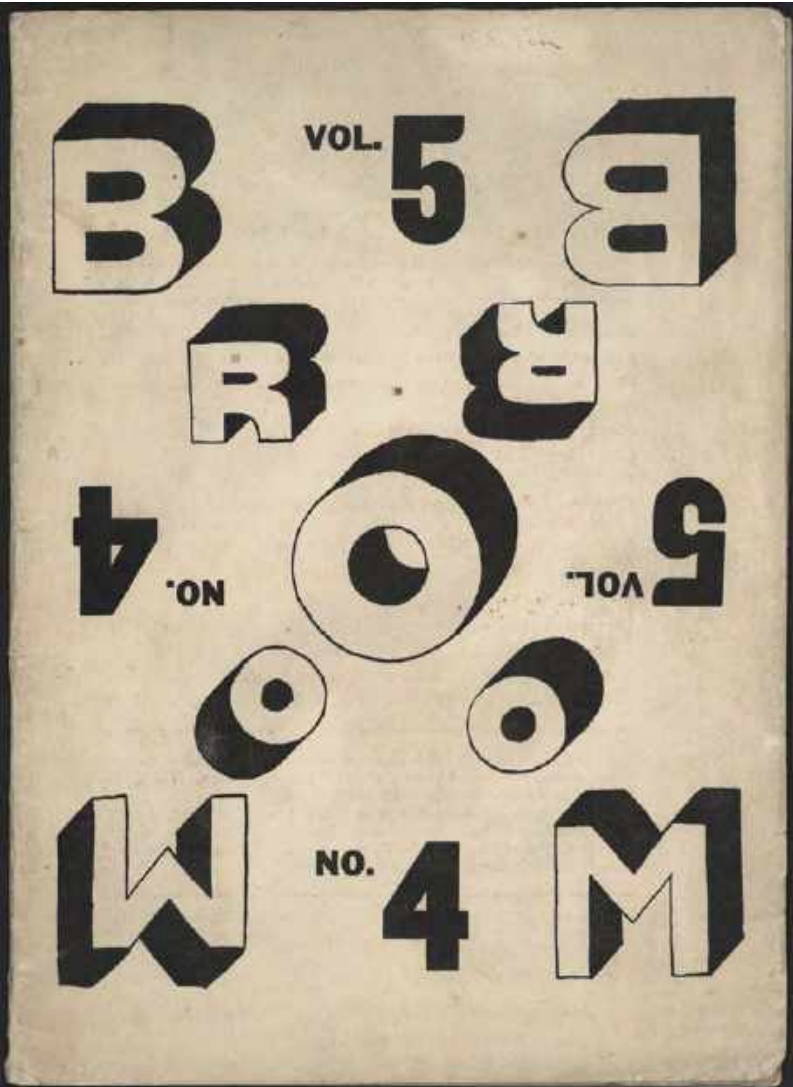
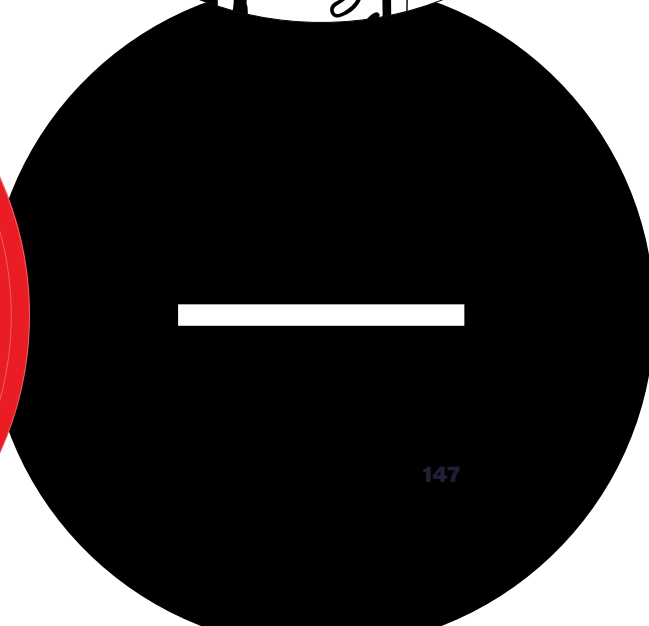
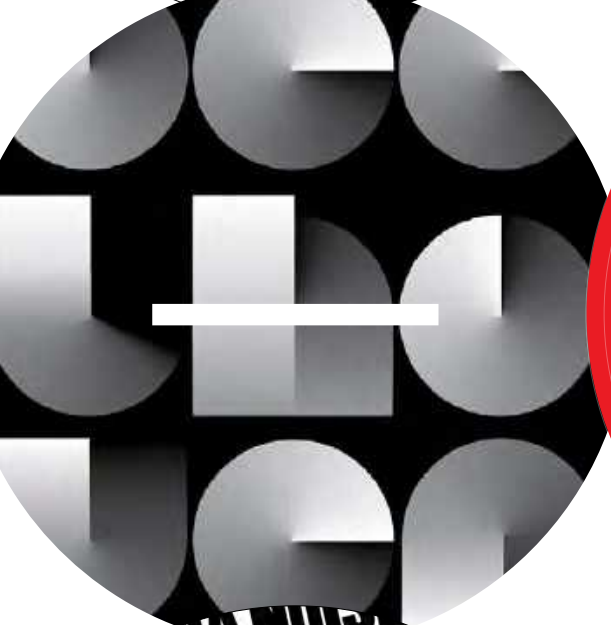
YOU should demand of the writer that he really presents what he writes; his ideas reach you through the eye and not through the ear. Therefore typographical form should do by means of optics what the voice and gesture of the writer does to convey his ideas.

e.g.: As you have more faith in your grandparents' generation, let us consider this small example by Master Francis Rebelais, abstracter of the quintessence.

O, it ... am the great tamer of the Cimbric  
 ...: heil through the air, because the dew annoyed him.  
 he appeared, went putting clods in the troughs.  
 I of fresh butter, which with great tubs;

Gargantua, Book 1, Chapter 2.

From Gutenberg-Festschrift, Mainz 1935.



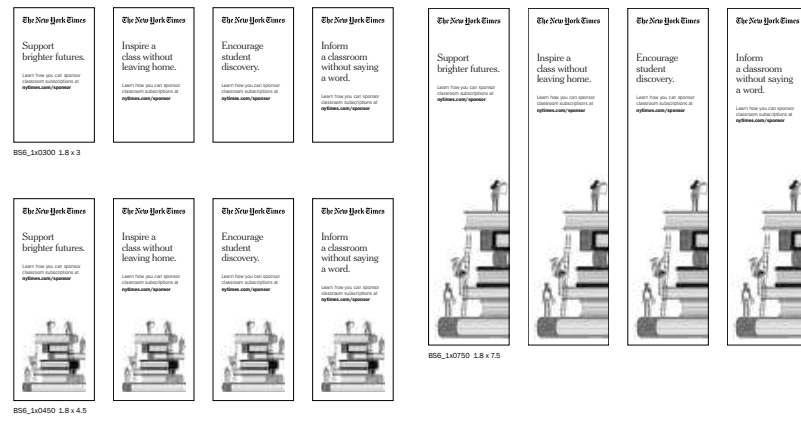
Lissitzky's cover for *Broom*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1923) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Broom: An International Magazine of the Arts* was published by Harold Loeb (1891-1974) and Alfred Kreymborg (1883-1966) from 1921 to 1924. First printed in Rome and then Berlin, Loeb—an American writer who worked with Ernest Hemingway and others—founded the magazine with the intention of bringing the European avant-garde to the United States.

Left: in the circular accordion book I featured designers whose work I feel has been influenced by Lissitzky, including Neville Brody, Jessica Svendsen, Paula Scher, Christian Schwartz, Peter Bil'ak and Paul Elliman.

# The New York Times

I was a design intern at *The New York Times* during the summer of 2018, working on advertising, marketing and internal communications for the Gray Lady.<sup>1</sup> I was responsible for a full-page print campaign with T|Store, teamed on projects including the educational filler ads, and worked on collateral for the NYT Travel Show 2019. A lot of my work involved designing with tight deadlines and even tighter restrictions of typeface, palette and size. For the educational filler ads, for example, I created a modular system to generate the same ad at hundreds of different sizes, accommodating the paper's need to essentially 'plug holes' in its daily print edition.

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times* was popularly nicknamed "the Gray Lady" as it was one of the last national newspapers to print in color. *The Times* first printed in color in 1993, on the June 6th cover of their *Book Review*, which at the time was art directed by Steven Heller. The paper's first color front page was then printed on October 16, 1997. I had the privilege of touring the paper's printing plant in Queens, NY during my internship. The plant was designed by Richard Olcott and Jim Polshak at my old firm, Ennead Architects, in 1997.



**The New York Times**

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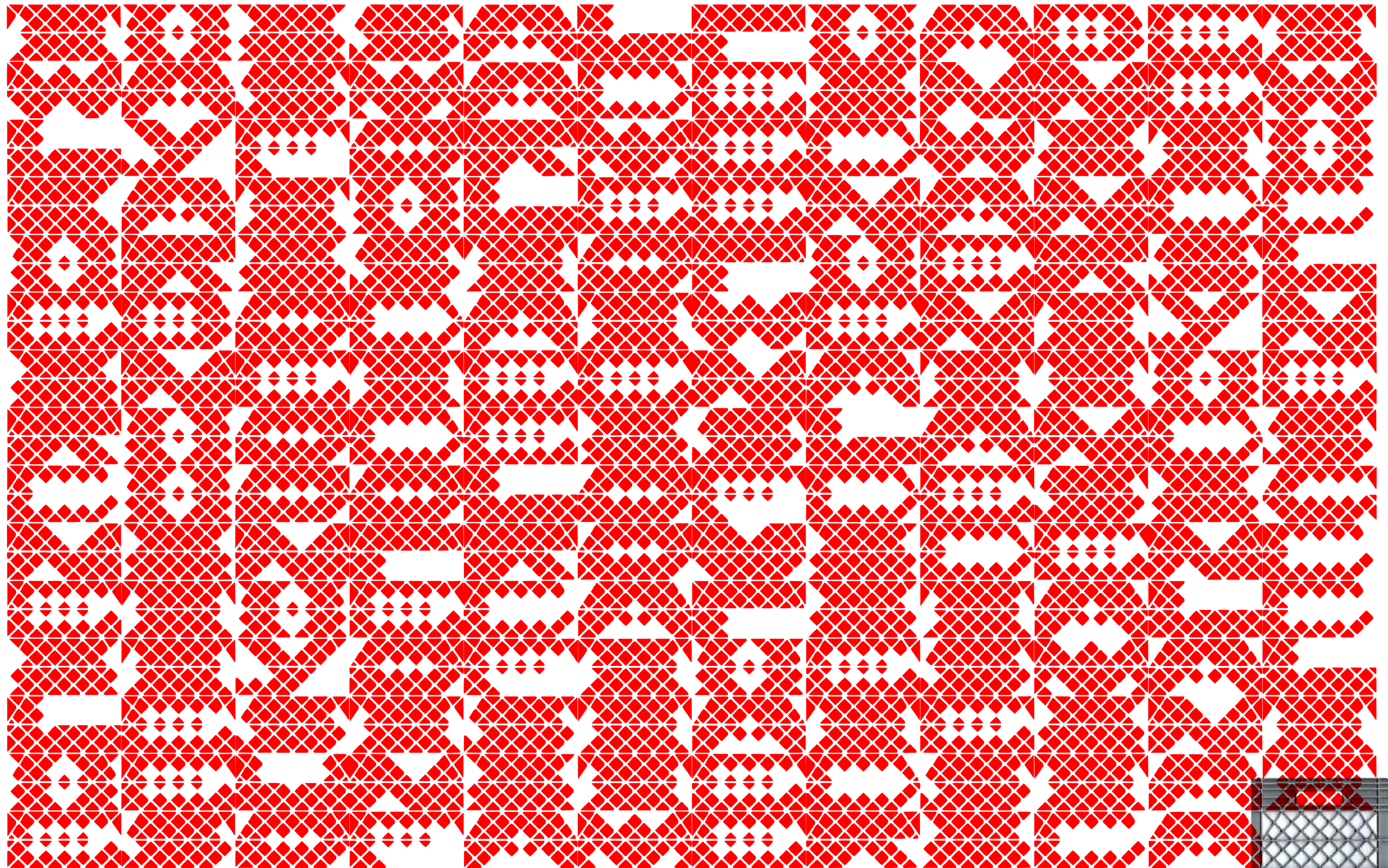


Full-page advertisement made for T|Store in *The New York Times*, July 25, 2018.



The newspaper would often run older suites of filler ads including this gem, left on my desk one morning.

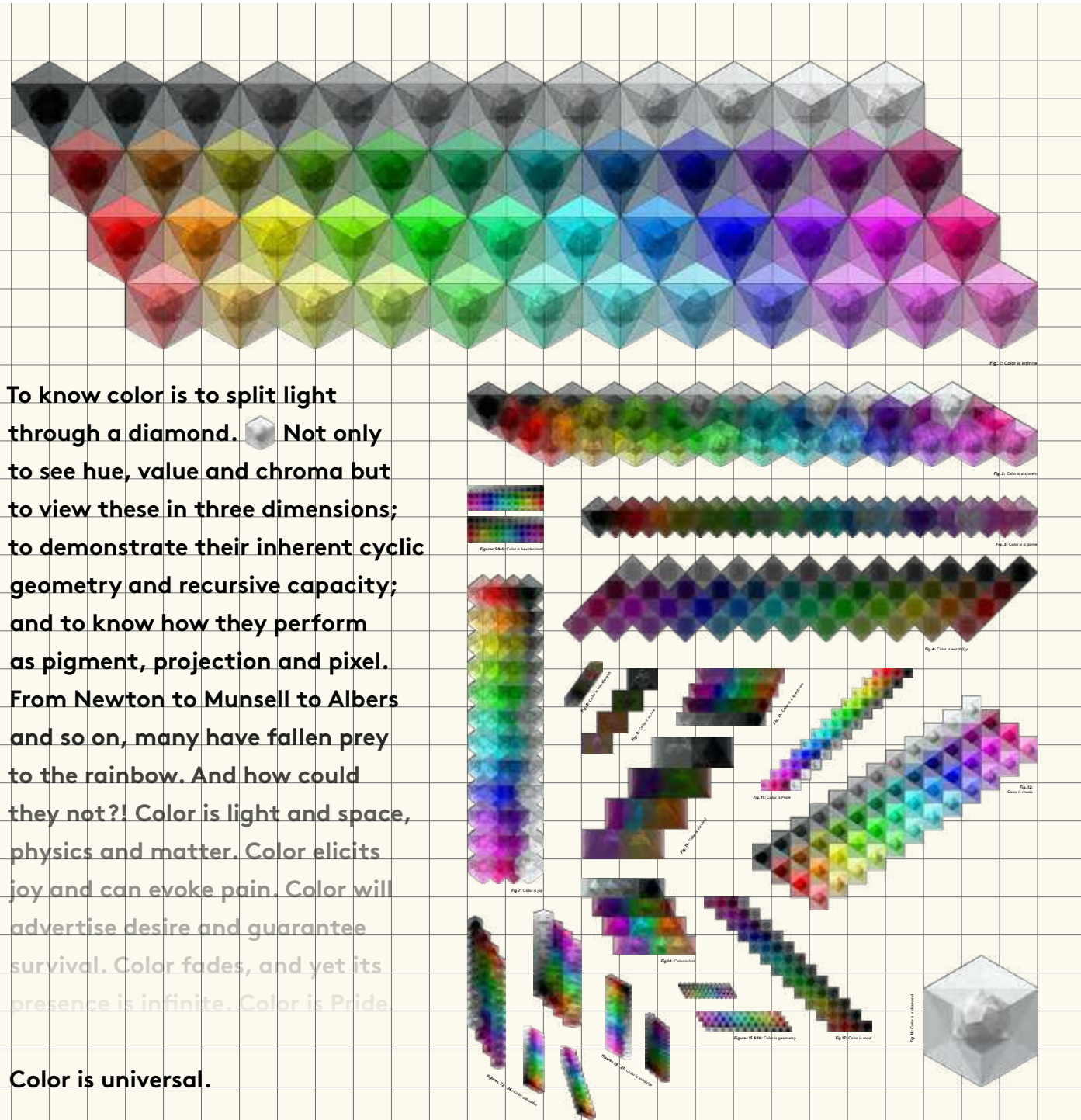




Milk Crate alphabet for *Newly Formed* with Kathleen and Christopher Sleboda, 2018.



# Chromatics



To know color is to split light through a diamond. Not only to see hue, value and chroma but to view these in three dimensions; to demonstrate their inherent cyclic geometry and recursive capacity; and to know how they perform as pigment, projection and pixel. From Newton to Munsell to Albers and so on, many have fallen prey to the rainbow. And how could they not?! Color is light and space, physics and matter. Color elicits joy and can evoke pain. Color will advertise desire and guarantee survival. Color fades, and yet its presence is infinite. Color is Pride.

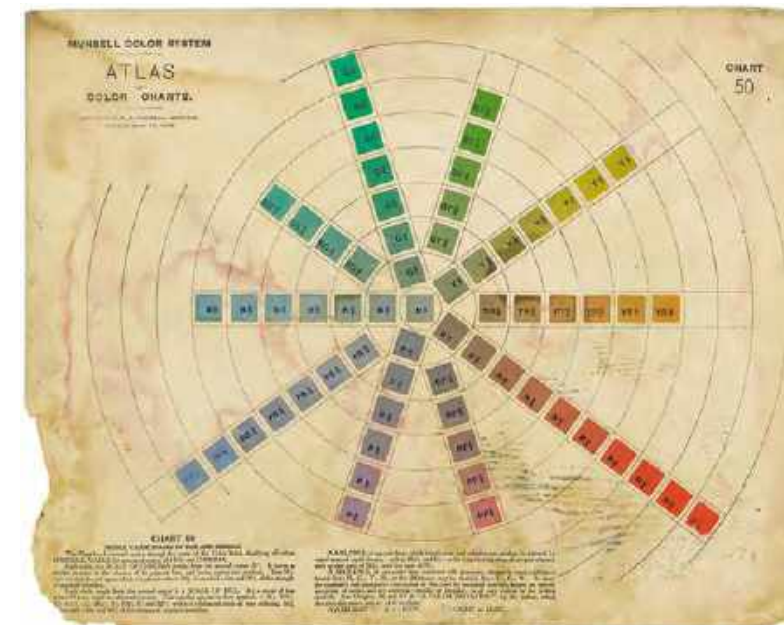
**Color is universal.**

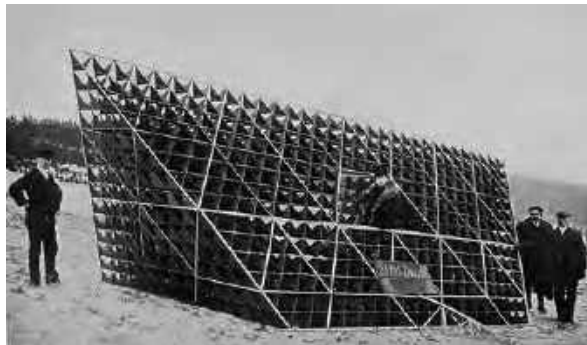
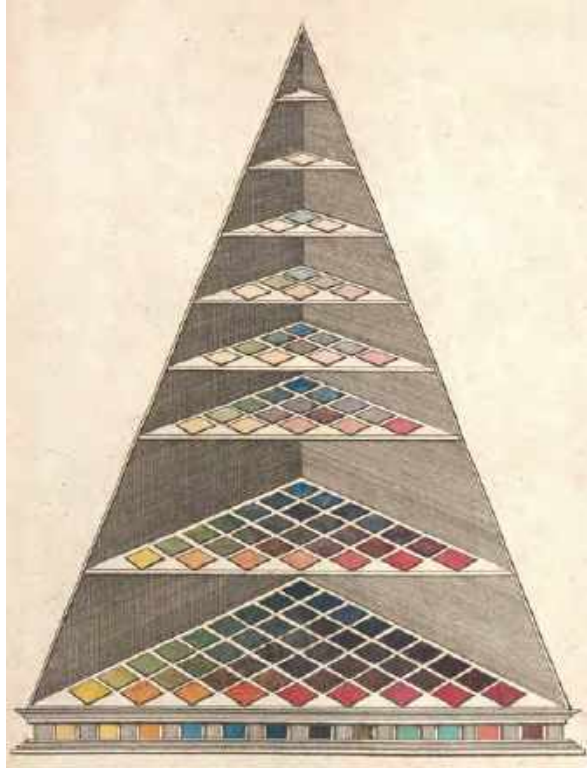
This work was inspired by American artist, educator and theorist Albert Munsell (1858–1918), inventor of the Munsell color system—one of the first methodologies for describing colors numerically *and* dimensionally. When I first encountered Munsell’s work I was stunned: I had never really thought about color spatially, with axes of chroma and value radiating outwards by hue. I was floored to conceive of color in three dimensions—and for the first time, color made complete sense. After researching the graphic design history of color theory, I set about making my own animated 3D study of color using a base module of nested platonic solids, which I then animated. On the following page is ‘film strip’ of these interpolations.

Watch the full video here: [https://youtu.be/pgJ\\_TswROtQ](https://youtu.be/pgJ_TswROtQ)



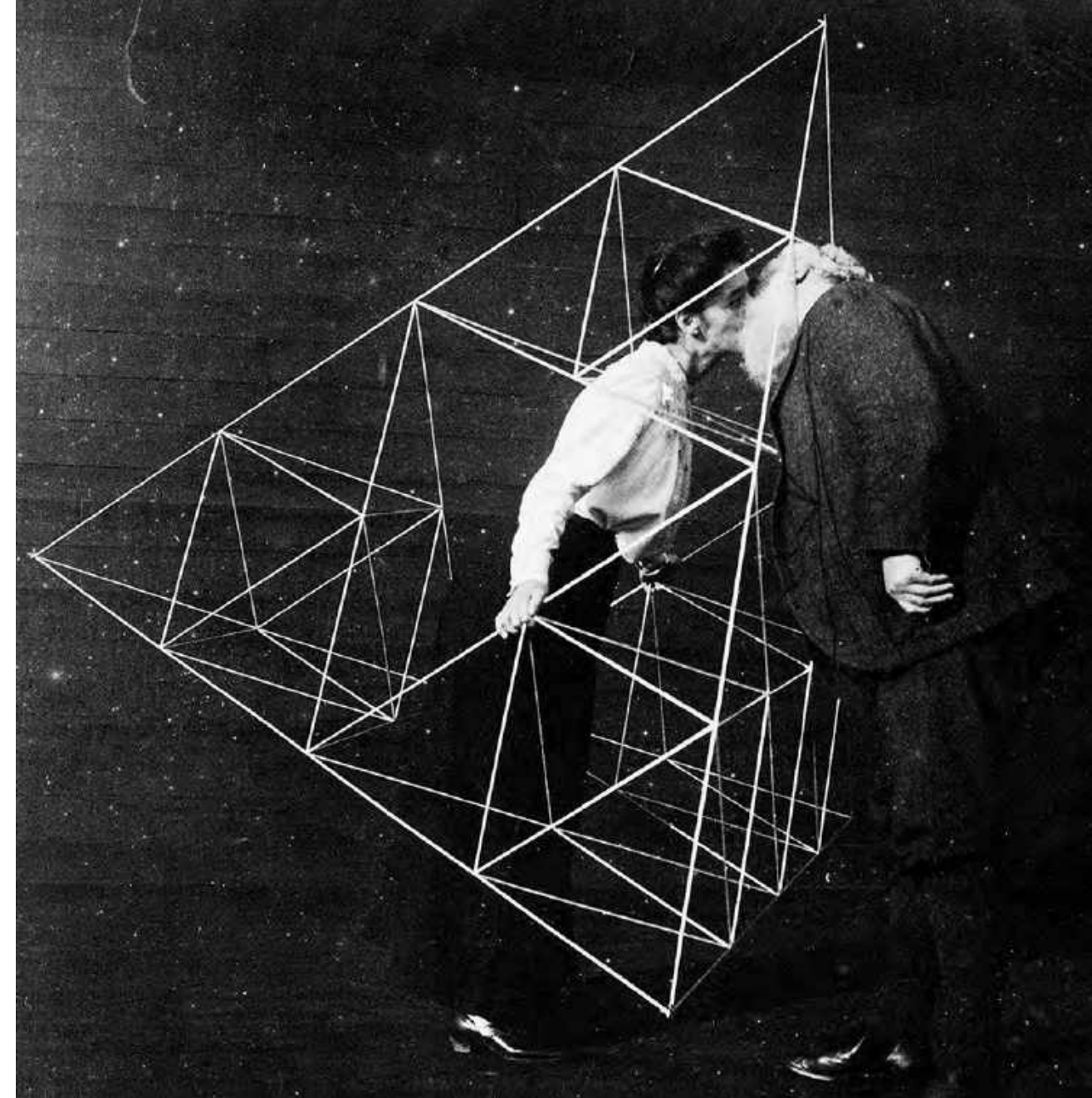
**Albert H. Munsell**  
**Above: A Color Notation, 1905**  
**Right: Atlas of Color, 1915**





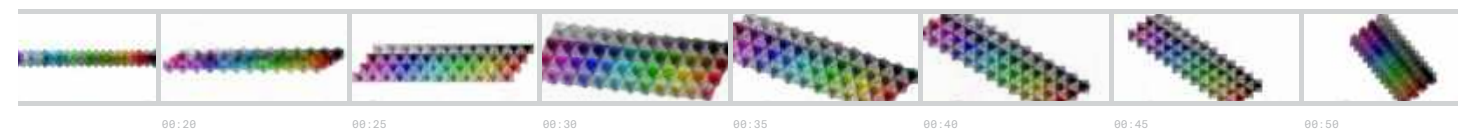
**Top:** Johann Heinrich Lambert, *Beschreibung einer Farbenpyramide* (Description of a Color Pyramid), 1772

**Bottom:** Alexander Graham Bell, *Siamese Twins* Large-scale tetrahedral flying kite, 1905



Alexander Graham Bell (inventor of the telephone) kisses his wife Mabel Gardiner Bell inside a frame for one of his tetrahedral kites, 1903. Image: Library of Congress.

From my 2019 animation *Chromatics*, watch at [https://youtu.be/pgJ\\_TswR0tQ](https://youtu.be/pgJ_TswR0tQ)



# It's So Hot

Inspired to make a work about climate change, I had originally intended this poster to graphically respond to changes in temperature with special thermochromic pigments. After a number of material experiments, the poster evolved into a call-and-response conversation about climate change using the text message interface as a modular, seemingly-endlessly-repeating unit.

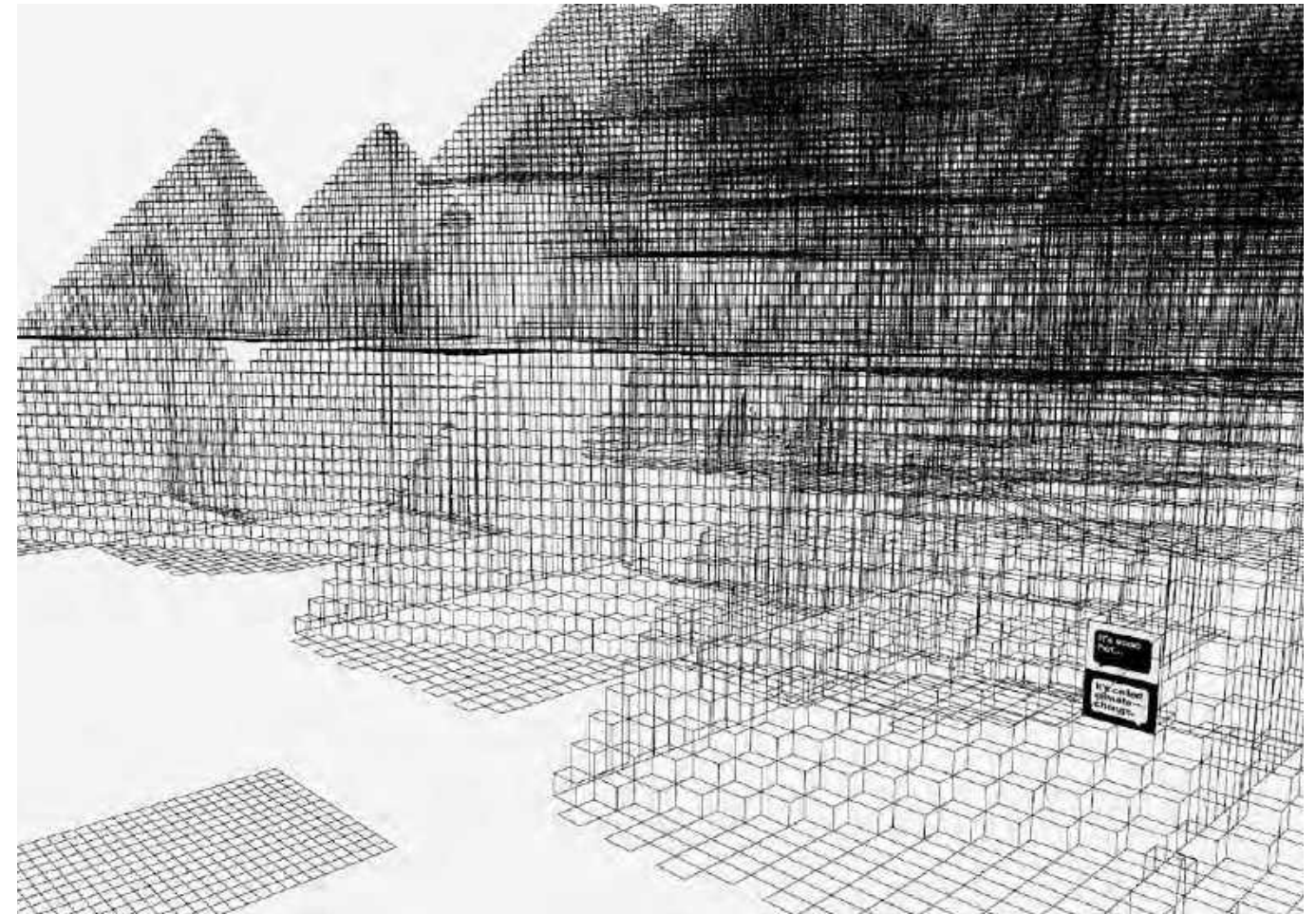


I mixed thermochromic pigments from Karlsson Robotics with a clear gel medium, then applied this mix to my design, which I had UV-printed on acrylic at RISD's Co-Works.



Weixi Zeng with an early draft.

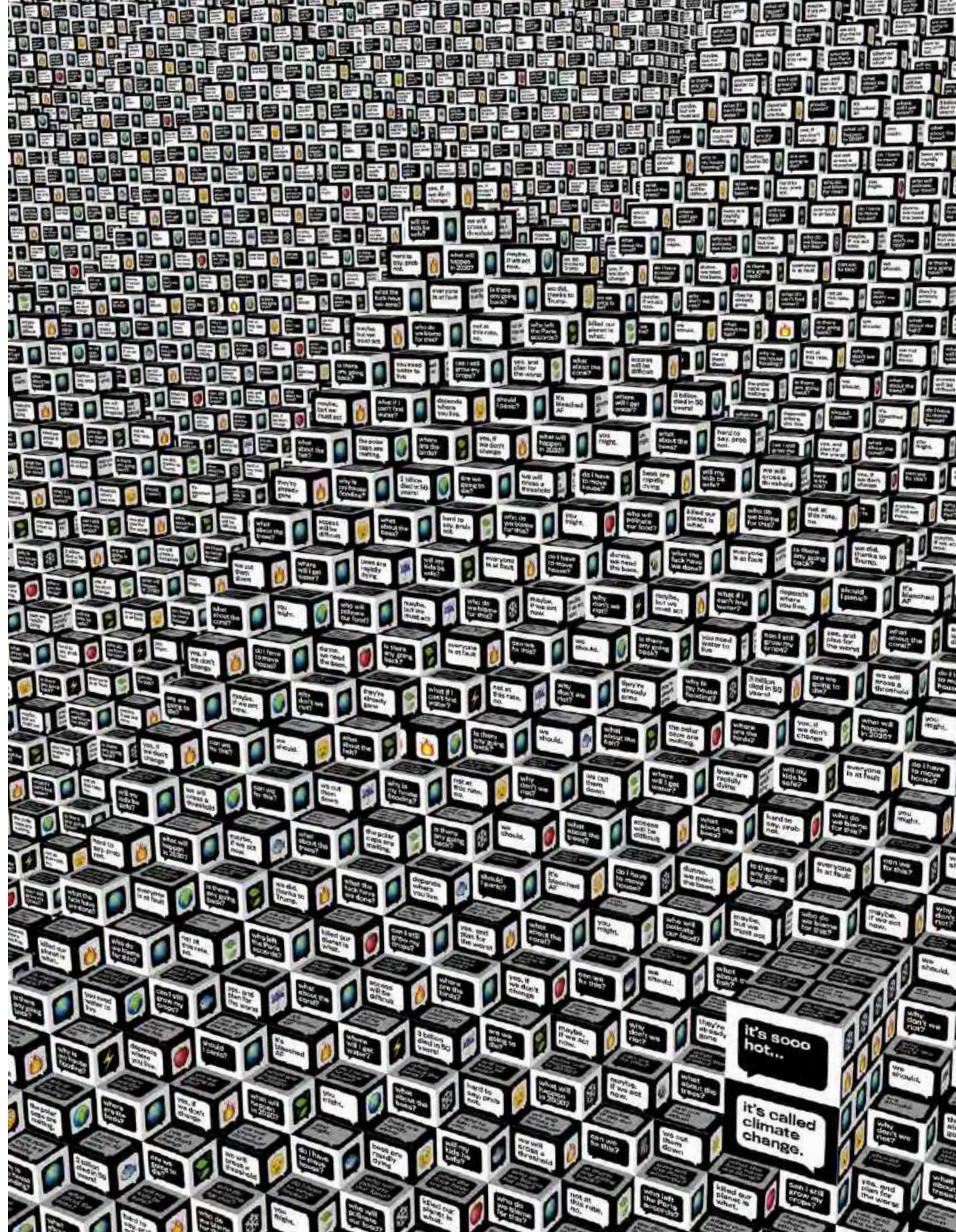
Left: Testing the thermochromic pigment with a hairdryer; see the video here: <https://rb.gy/jwt1h1>



Building out the modular 'landscape' in SketchUp.



Nancy Skolos looks at the final poster in the RISD Design Center Commons; Lai Xu and Weixi Zeng's posters are at left.





# This Poster Plays Music

Using a Virtual ANS app such as *Phonopaper*, one can play music embedded in this poster using their smart phone. The poster uses ANS synthesizer technology, originally a photoelectronic musical instrument and method of graphically recording sound on etched glass. Created by Russian engineer Yevgeny Murzin from 1937–1957, Murzin named his invention after beloved Russian pianist and composer Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin (1872–1915). This poster features many of my favorite artists including Piaf, Lennon, Whitney, Queen, Dvořák and Tchaikovsky. The yellow highlights denote popular refrains and particularly beautiful-looking sound waves.

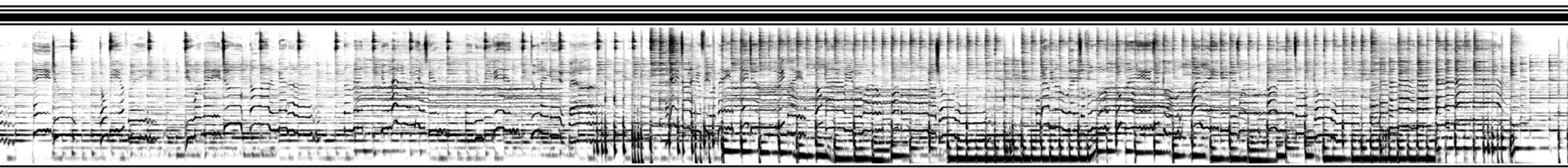
Nancy Skolos plays Beethoven's *Fifth* with her iPhone.



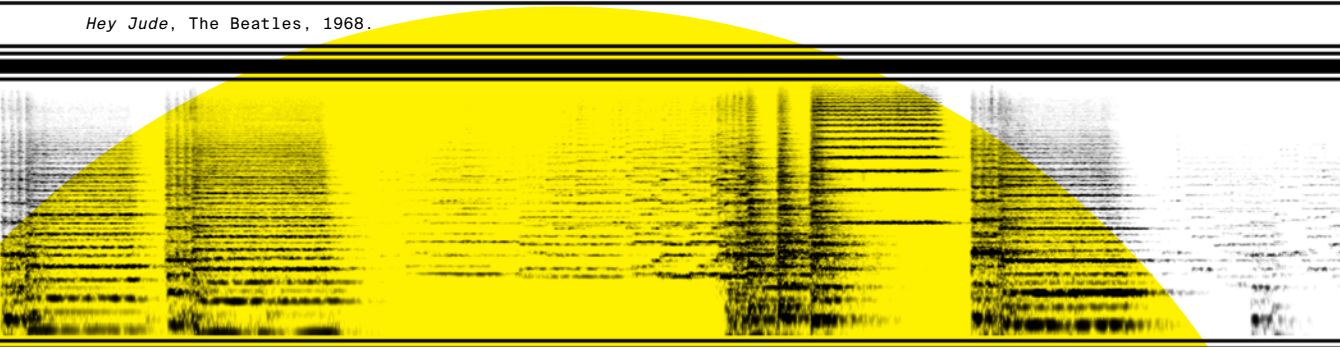
The poster in the RISD Design Center Commons. Tied beside it is a plexi "cart" which participants can use to place their phone and scroll up and down the music with ease.



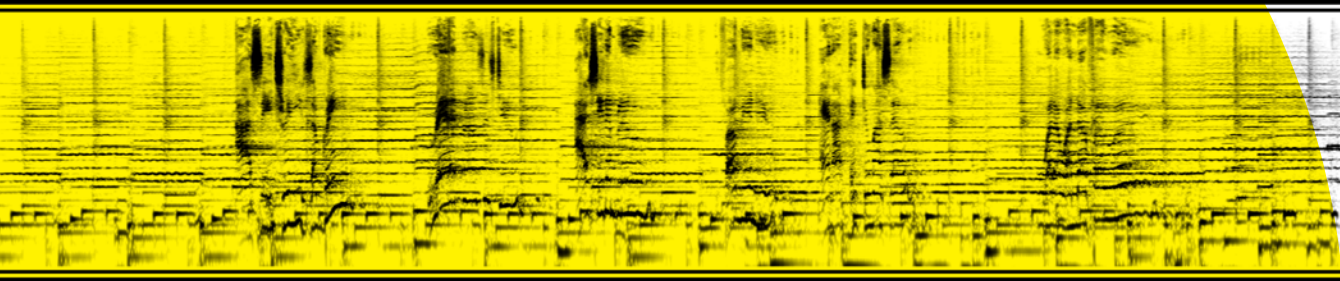
**Yevgeny Murzin**  
1914–1970



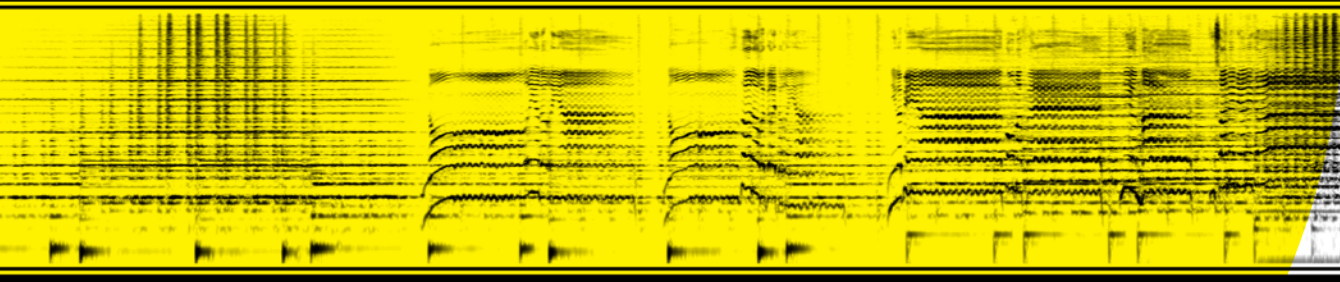
*Hey Jude*, The Beatles, 1968.



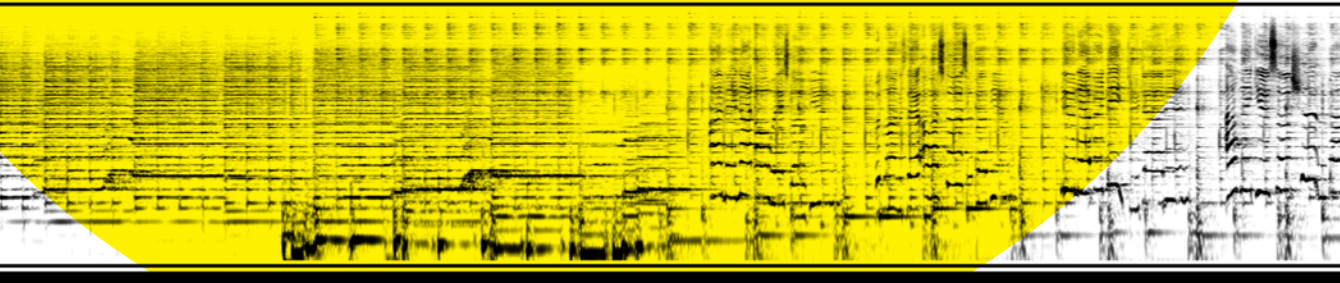
*Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67*, Ludwig van Beethoven, 1804-1808.



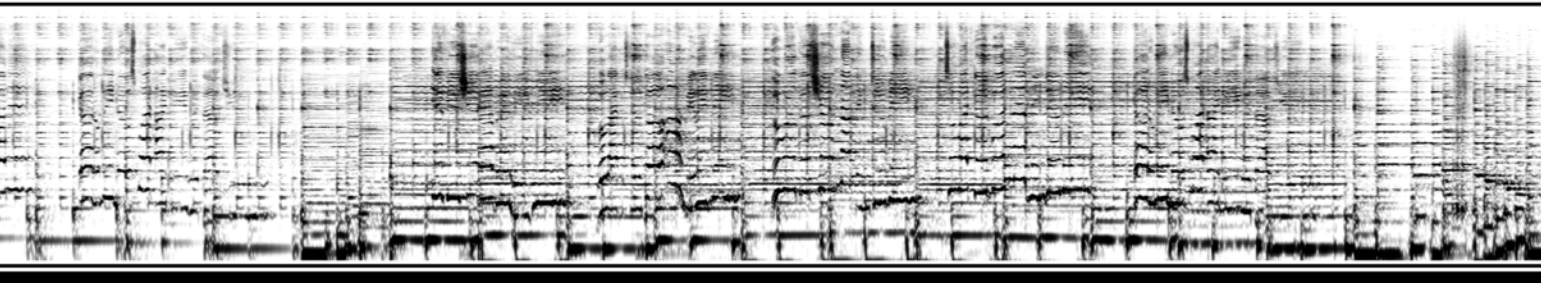
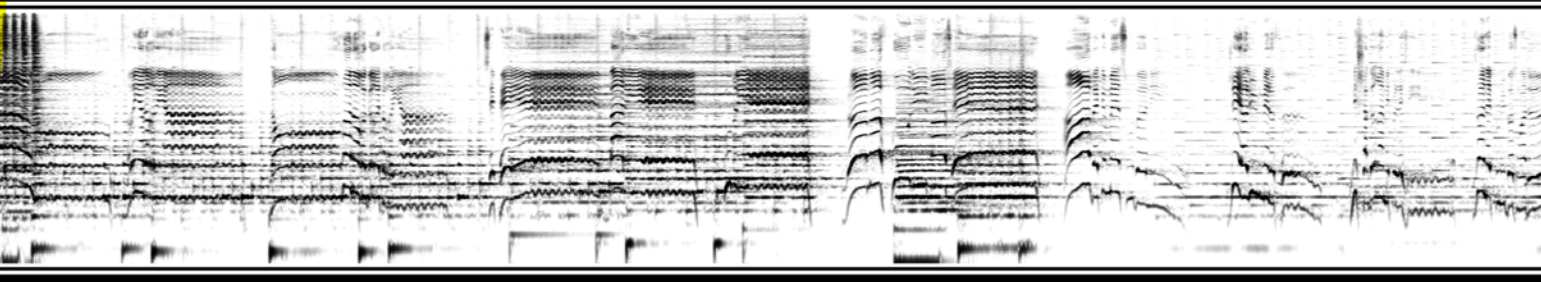
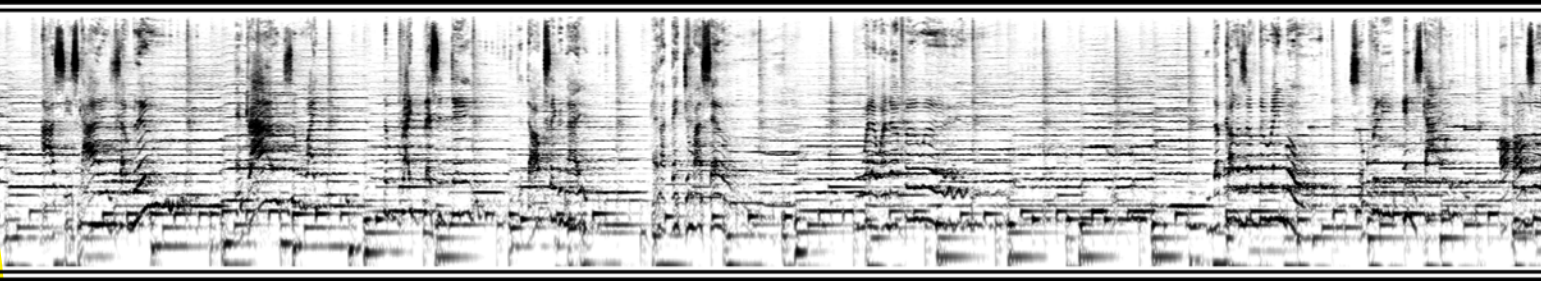
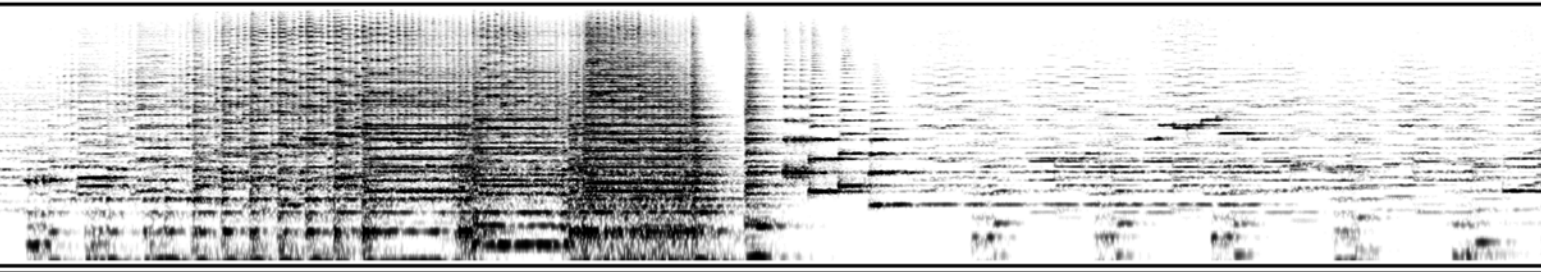
*What a Wonderful World*, Louis Armstrong, 1967.

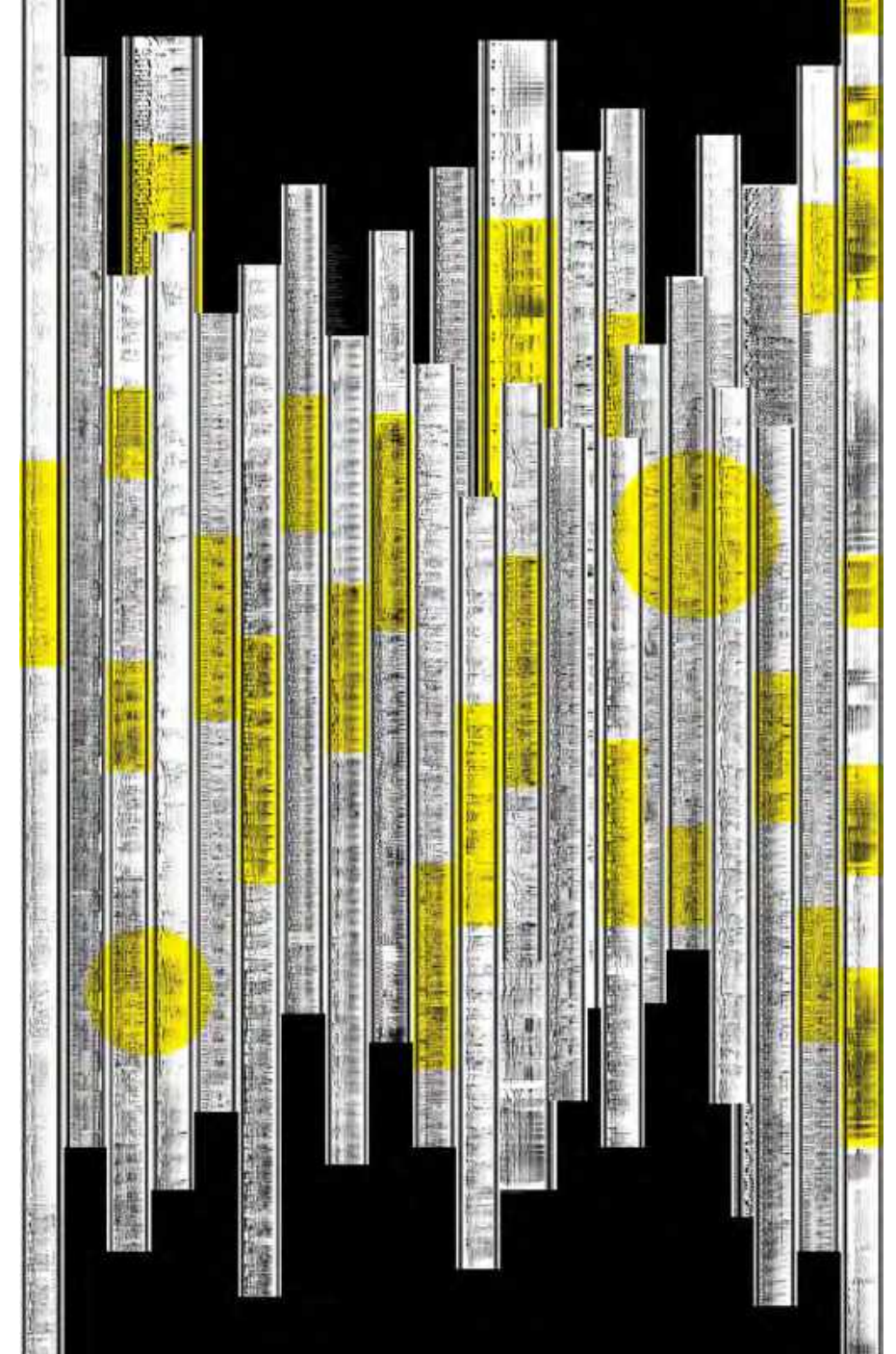
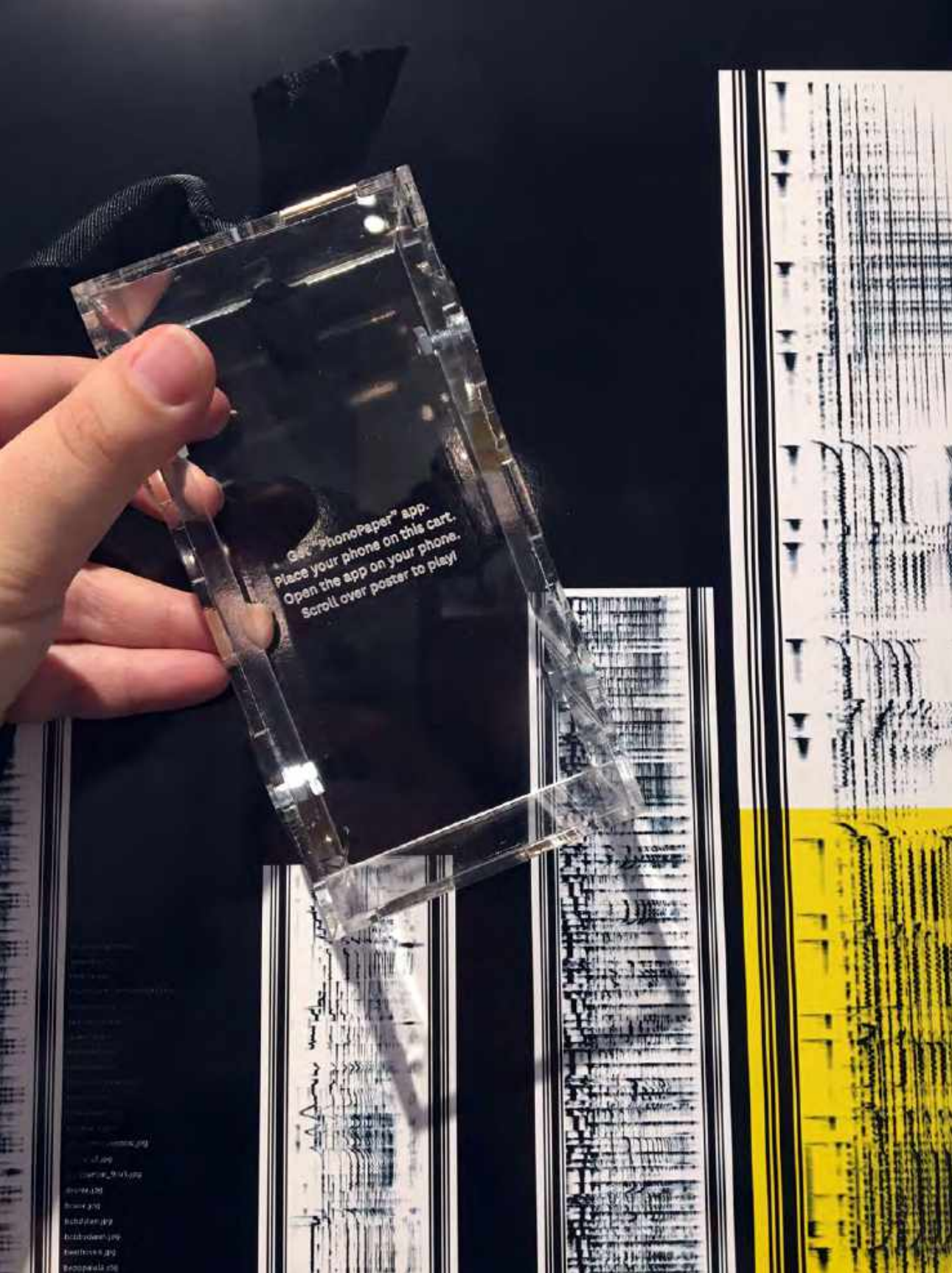


*Non, je ne regrette rien*, Édith Piaf, 1960.



*God Only Knows*, The Beach Boys, 1966.

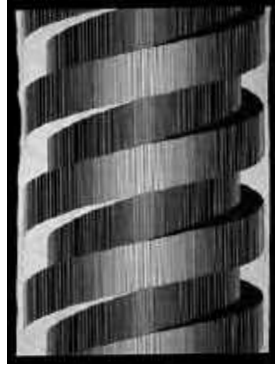




Above: The final poster. Left: lasercut acrylic cart with wheels for participants to easily play and scrub across the music using their phones; see <https://fb.gy/daqc12>.

# HyperMoiré

Inspired by RISD Architecture Grad Program Director Carl Lostritto's python-scripted pen plotter drawings, in Wintersession 2019 I experimented with lofting<sup>1</sup> and interpolating between two-dimensional shapes and mapping moiré patterns onto the three-dimensional results. This pushed the limits of my capability in 3D software—and while I never got to the level of Carl's computational drawings, his encouragement saw me experiment and generate hundreds of these studies.

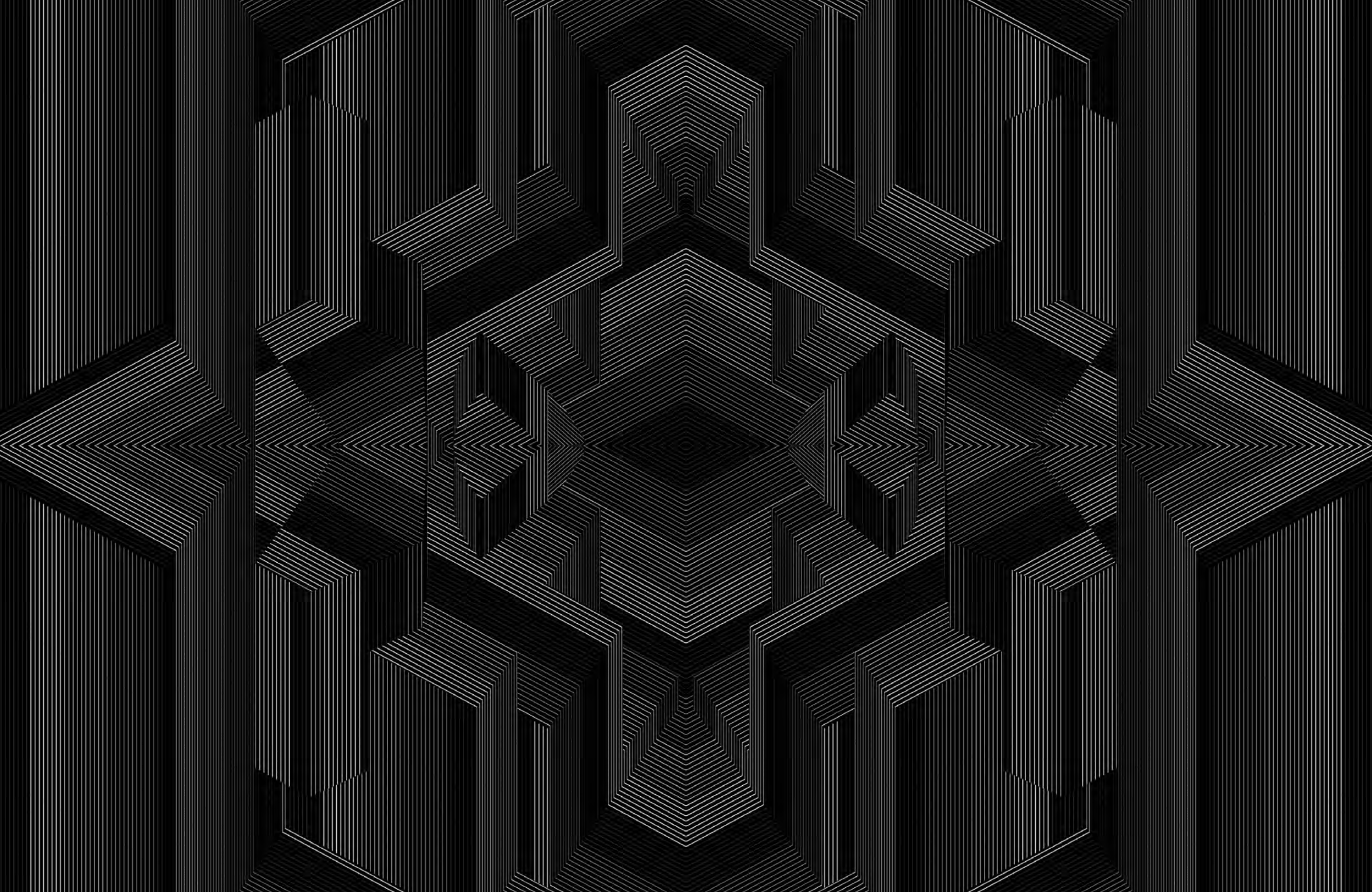


**Barbara Brown, textile  
for Heal & Son, 1969**

<sup>1</sup> In computer-aided design (CAD), lofting is a process where two shapes or curves on different planes connect through a series of cross-sections to form a new solid.

Graphics generated by texture-mapping moiré patterns to lofted shapes in Rhino.



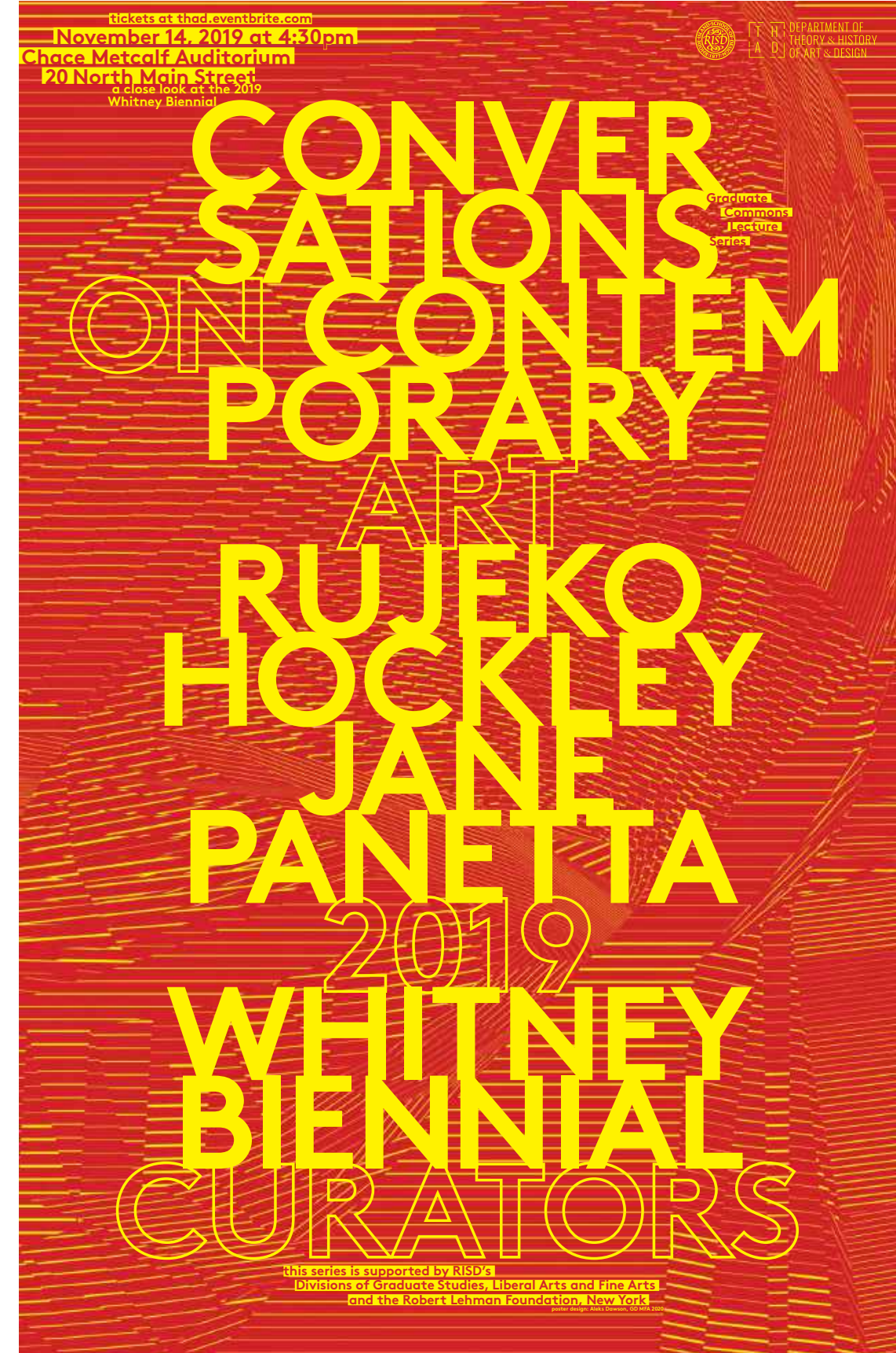


Special thanks to Nina Yuchi (GD BFA 2021) for helping me distribute the posters on campus.



I returned to these moiré studies when Leora Maltz-Leca asked me to make a poster for the *Conversations on Contemporary Art* series, to mark the visit of Whitney Biennial curators Rujeko Hockley and Jane Panetta.

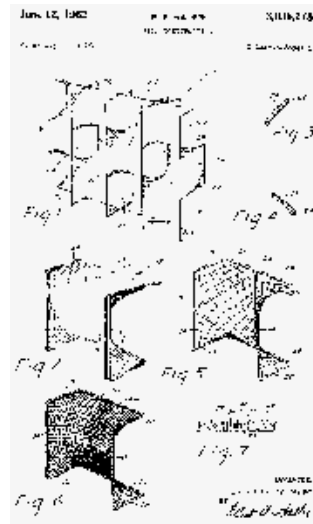
Left: Nicolai, Carsten. *Moiré Index*. Berlin: Gestalten, 2010.  
Below: 2019 Whitney Biennial curators Rujeko Hockley & Jane Panetta.



# Continua

The Austrian sculptor Erwin Franz Hauer (1926–2017) emigrated to the US from Vienna in 1955 on a Fulbright scholarship. After spending some time as a graduate assistant at RISD, in 1957 Hauer was invited by Josef Albers to join the faculty at Yale University's School of Art, where he taught until 1990. Hauer's numerous explorations of modular forms with infinite continuous surfaces—which he coined *continua*—had a profound impact on me when I first saw them in 2009. Inspired by Hauer's *Still Facing Infinity* (2017), a decade later I returned to study these designs and their underpinning geometric systems both in two and three dimensions.

Right: Erwin Hauer held a number of patents for his modular, continuous surfaces.  
Below: One of Hauer's *continua* installed at a private residence, São Paulo, 1961.



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Above: Continua based on Hauer's design, modeled in Rhino and then 3D-printed in ABS Plastic at RISD's Co-Works.  
Below: I saw the Erwin Hauer retrospective *Still Facing Infinity* at Yale's School of Architecture, November 2019.

Erwin Hauer  
*Still Facing Infinity*  
2019



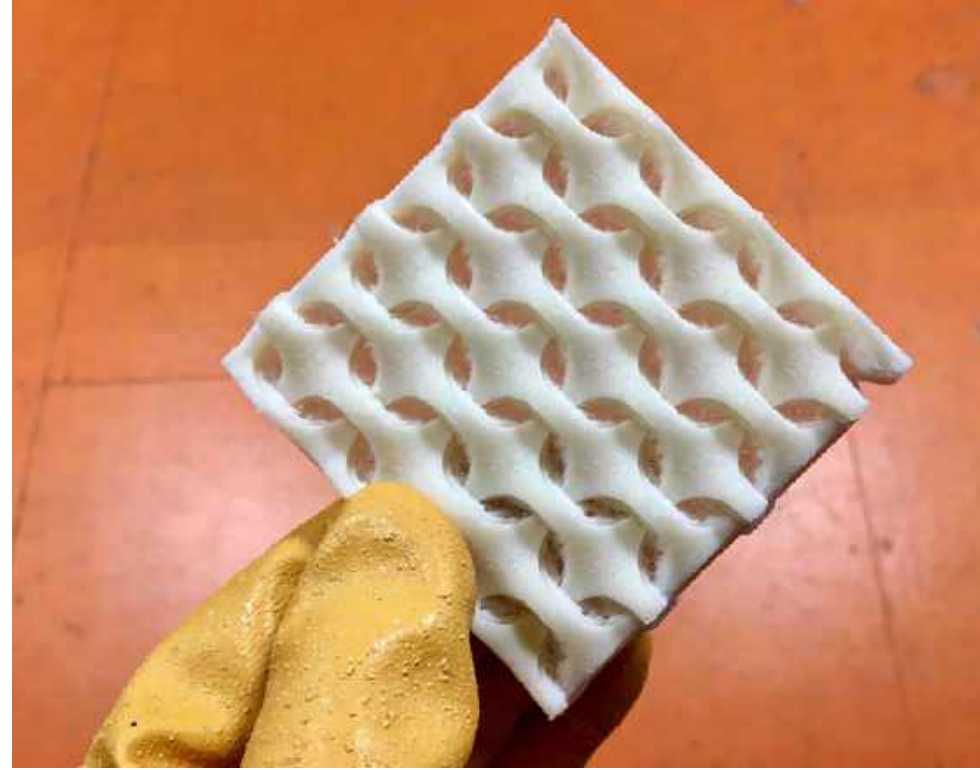
Module, Proportion, Symmetry & Rhythm



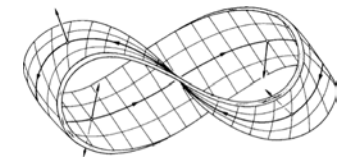
**Erwin Hauer**  
**Pfarre Liesing Church**  
**Vienna, 1954**

**Ennead Architects**  
**The Standard Hotel High Line**  
**New York, 2009**

*Below: my old boss Todd Schliemann at Ennead Architects worked with interior designers Roman and Williams to install a number of Hauer screens at the Standard.*

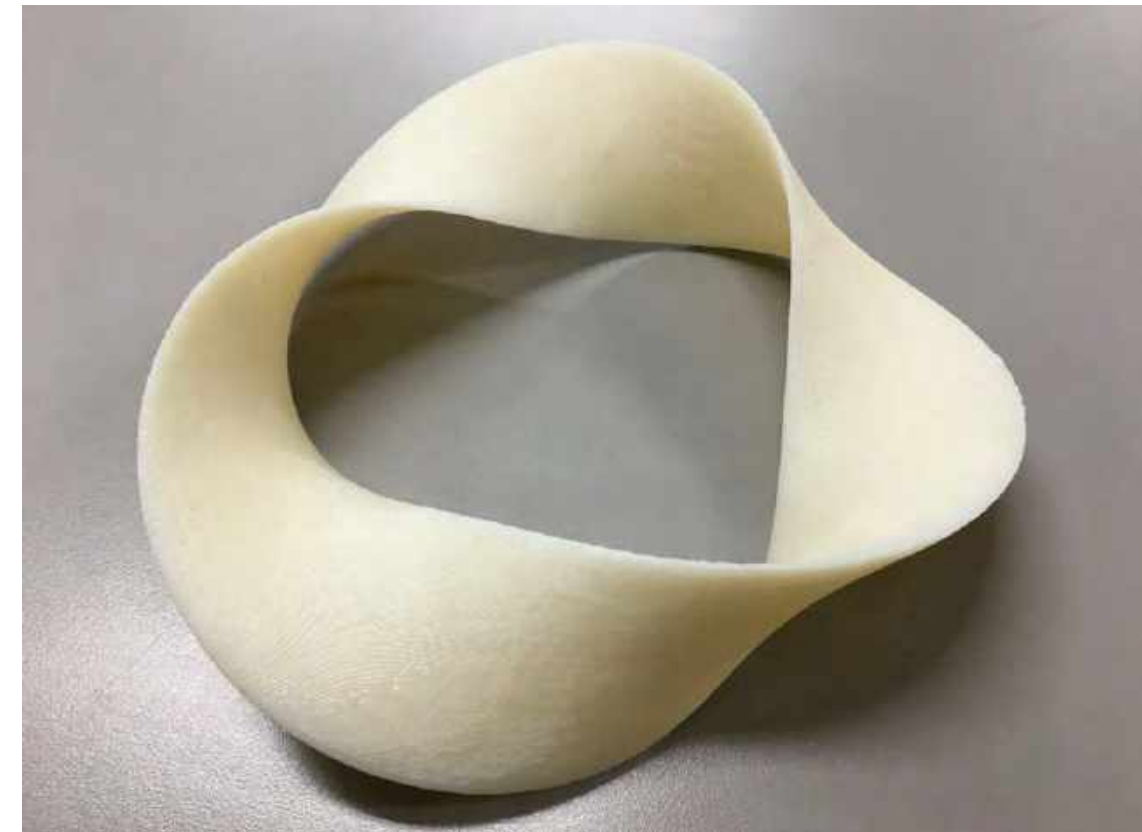
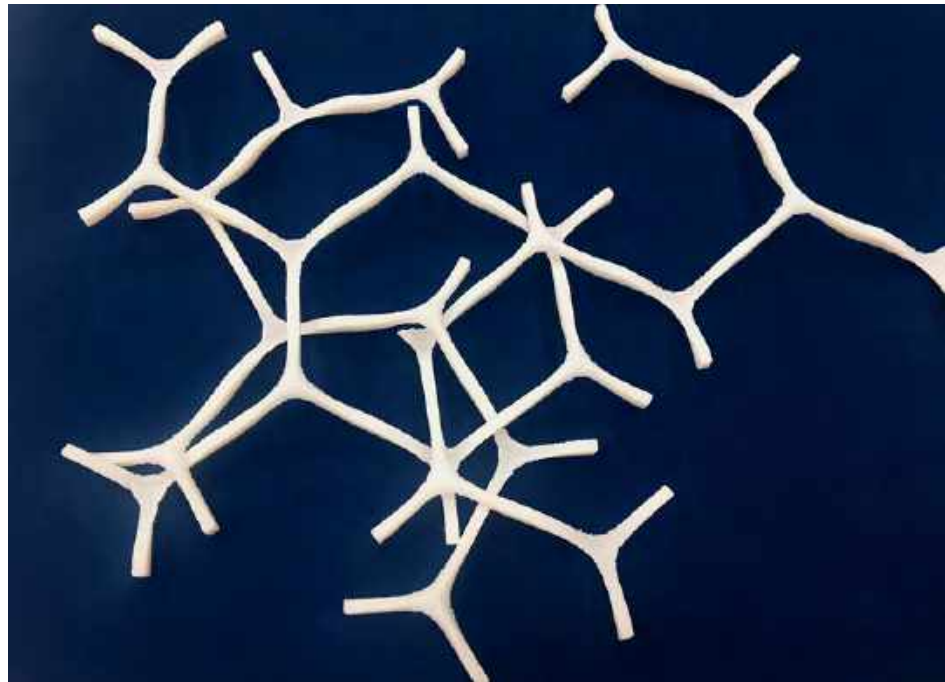


**August Ferdinand Möbius**  
**German (1790–1868)**

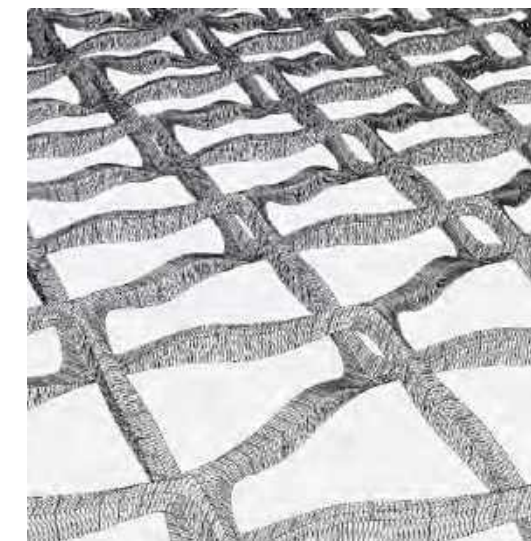
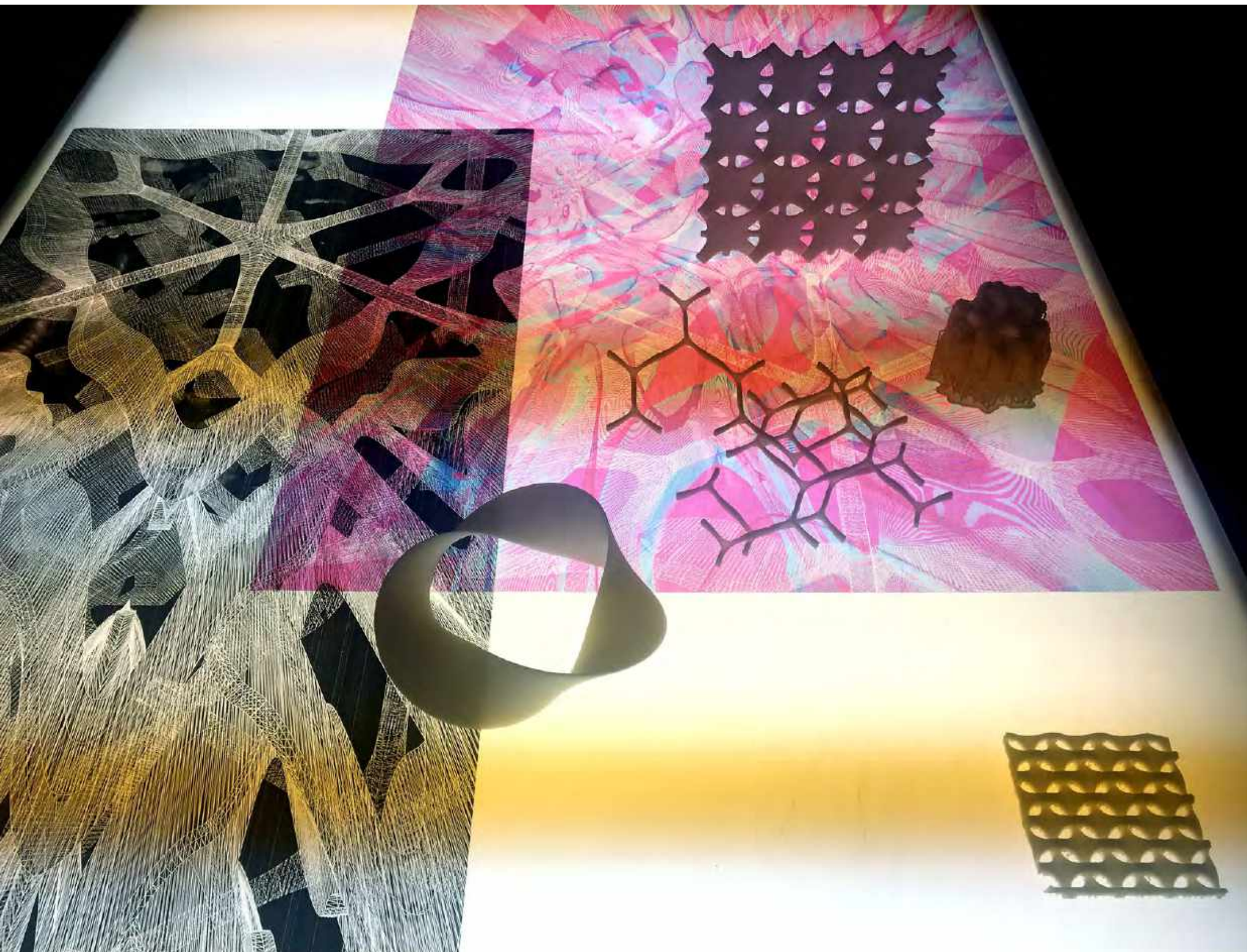


*Above: A smaller study based on another of Erwin Hauer's designs.  
Below: A triplex Möbius strip, about eight inches across. Both 3D-printed in ABS at RISD's Co-Works.*

Another small ABS 3D-printed study of interlocking continua, based on Hauer. For whatever reason our cat Marcus loved playing with this one.

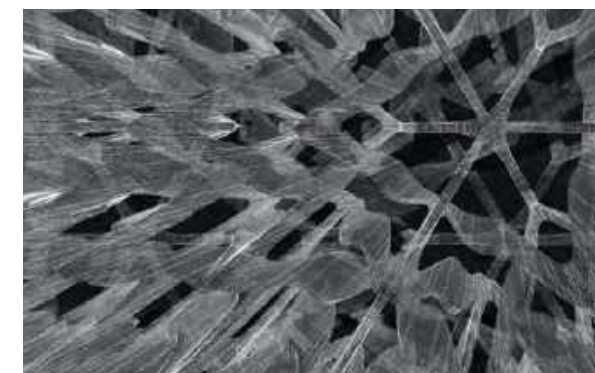






The 3D structure's wireframe was skewed and tiled for the below 2D renderings.

My first experiments showing models and renderings on acetate with a light box. I refined this way of presenting my two- and three-dimensional explorations for my mid-thesis critique in December of 2019 (see page 216).



# More is More

*If to the Infinite you want to stride,  
Just walk in the Finite to every side.*  
Johann Goethe<sup>1</sup>

In the year 2000, social psychologists Sheena Iyengar and Mark Lepper published a groundbreaking study on what they called “the paradox of choice.”<sup>2</sup> Iyengar and Lepper ran two experiments where they tried to sell jam to unwitting supermarket shoppers. In their first experiment they set up a tasting table featuring six varieties of jam; in the second experiment, twenty-four varieties. In both instances, shoppers were given a \$1 coupon off their purchase to try the jams. The results showed the table with four times the choice attracted more attention, but the table with fewer options resulted in ten times more purchases. Their conclusion was that consumers bought more when they had less to choose from; that *less was more*, and that *more* was in fact far *too much*.

While this study has little to do with ornament per se, it does in fact have a lot to do with the psychology behind it. It also corroborated similar aesthetic arguments the old, white, male “fathers” of modernism (from Loos to Mies and Corbusier to Moses) had been making for a century prior. These designers believed form followed function, and ornament—by definition—lacked it; ergo

<sup>1</sup> Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Gott, Gemüt Und Welt*. Weimar, 1815.

<sup>2</sup> Iyengar, Sheena, and Mark R. Lepper. “When Choice Is Demotivating: Can One Desire Too Much of a Good Thing?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 6 (2000). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.6.995>.

**The Alhambra**  
**Granada, Spain**  
**889–1526**



**Andreas Gursky**  
**99 Cent**  
**1999**

less ornament meant greater function and supposedly absolute truth to material, craft and zeitgeist. Less was more. This magazine-ready Miesian adage was, and still today is embraced as a maxim of the highest cultural cognizance. The marketing promise, thanks in part to the famous jam study, goes something like this:

*Hey, you! Average Westernized Consumer: graduate from the refuse of your middle class consumption/hoarding and de-clutter, simplify, sanitize, whitewash (in both ways) and modernize your life by minimizing it! If it doesn't "spark joy," toss it out!<sup>1</sup> If it's not the newest model, it's outmoded—if you disagree, planned obsolescence will guarantee it. You don't have time for all that stuff, remember?! If you like ornament, you're out of luck! Go on, get rid of those tchotchkes and get your polished concrete and exposed brick sh\*t together!*

Or perhaps the architect Robert Stern said it better, when he argued that “there was a time when we really believed we could save the Republic with a dishwasher—or that vacuuming would somehow transform all American life.”<sup>2</sup> However we phrase them, these minimalist ideals of simplification and ‘cleanliness’ are deeply embedded in our racial and consumer histories, and inextricably linked to the modernist disdain toward ornament. It is these same ideals and arguments that I have found myself at odds with both during my time at RISD and before it: I have always been a maximalist. Regarding ornament—and most other things—I am a living, breathing Depeche Mode song lyric: *I go out of my head, I just can't get enough*. Only recently have I come to realize this is not the weakness or ineptitude I have repeatedly been told, but rather one of my greatest assets.



**Marie Kondo now sells a line of housewares in conflict with her philosophies on owning less**



**Robert A. M. Stern holding a model of Johnson's AT&T Building, 2017**

<sup>1</sup> Kondo, Marie. *Spark Joy Every Day*. Random House, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Stern, Robert A.M. quoted in Burns, Ric. *New York: A Documentary Film*. PBS, 1999. I once met Bob Stern at an event in New York. I brought his 1,072-page *Paradise Planned: The Garden Suburb and the Modern City* (2013) and asked him to sign it. He looked at me and quipped: “did you actually read that thing?!” to which I responded “did you actually write it?!” He laughed, pulled a fountain pen from his breast pocket and signed it. A few years later I saw him outside Philip Johnson's AT&T building (a postmodernist masterpiece on Madison Avenue which, years prior, I had worked directly opposite). Bob was in a crowd protesting Snohetta's proposed gutting of the building. His placard read: “Hands Off My Johnson!” I love Bob.

This is not to say I am a lone decorative crusader in modernism's long war with ornament: in fact, *many* modernists have recognized the deep cultural value of ornament and vehemently advocated on its behalf. In 1972 Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown said that “when modern architects righteously abandoned ornament on buildings, they unconsciously designed buildings that were ornament.”<sup>3</sup> Venturi and Scott Brown went further, coining a counter to Mies' famous catchphrase: “less is a bore.”

And so we see time and again that there are indeed many sides to this argument of the excess in ornament. There are those who detest and willfully destroy it, those who defend it and those who I would argue don't understand it. In this latter group I would confidently lump most modernists, including the likes of Loos, Mies, Corbusier and even post-modernists such as Graves and Johnson. Their work is inherently ornamental, despite their claims to the opposite. Loos may have invented the stark façade, but he was lavishly excessive and ornamental in his *raumplan* interior treatments and materials. Rem Koolhaas may be the father of deconstructivism, but he too has moments of extreme ornament. Even Mies van der Rohe, the originator of “less is more” used ornament, whether he was aware of it or not.

I believe we are at yet another impasse when it comes to ornament and excess: we can either passively accept the narrative that ornament is over-the-top and in-the-way, or we can attempt to see it as part of a larger discussion on our aesthetic origins and potential futures. I for one will always choose more over less: more variety; more diversity; more empathy and more interdisciplinarity. Otherwise what's left but homogeneity and banality? Whenever I doubt myself, my inner maximalist reminds me it's in the name: more *is* more, and it always will be.

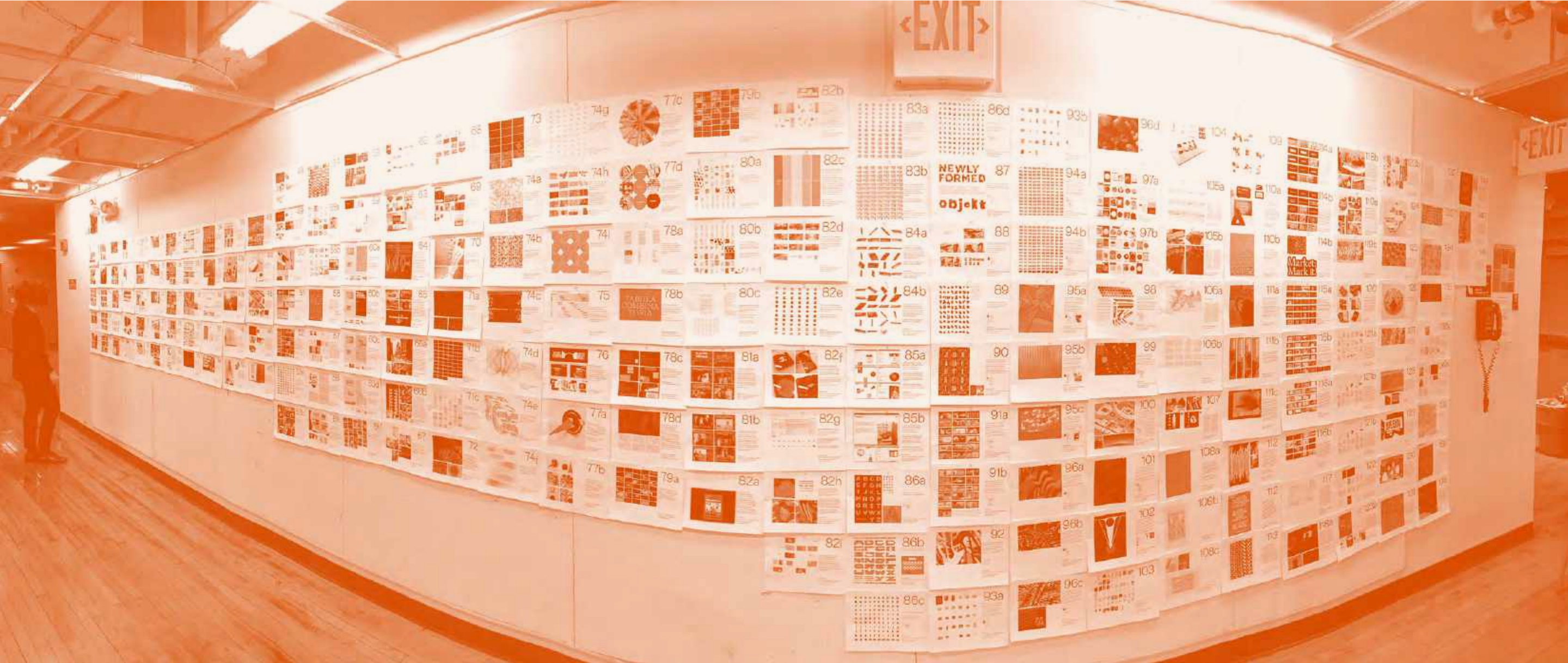


**Venturi and Scott Brown Learning from Las Vegas 1972**



**Rem Koolhaas / OMA Seattle Central Library 1999–2004**

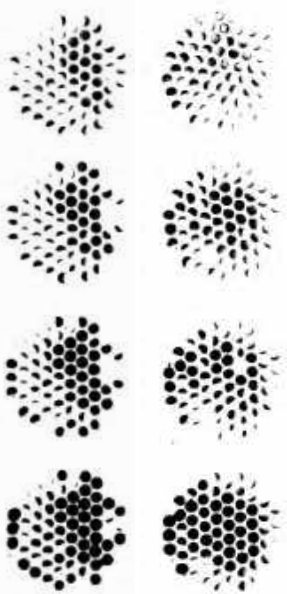
<sup>3</sup> Venturi, Robert, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972.



In preparation of this thesis, in January of 2020 I cataloged everything I've ever made at RISD—for a grand total of at least one hundred and forty separate projects and over forty thousand written words. More is more!

# Pencil Pointillism

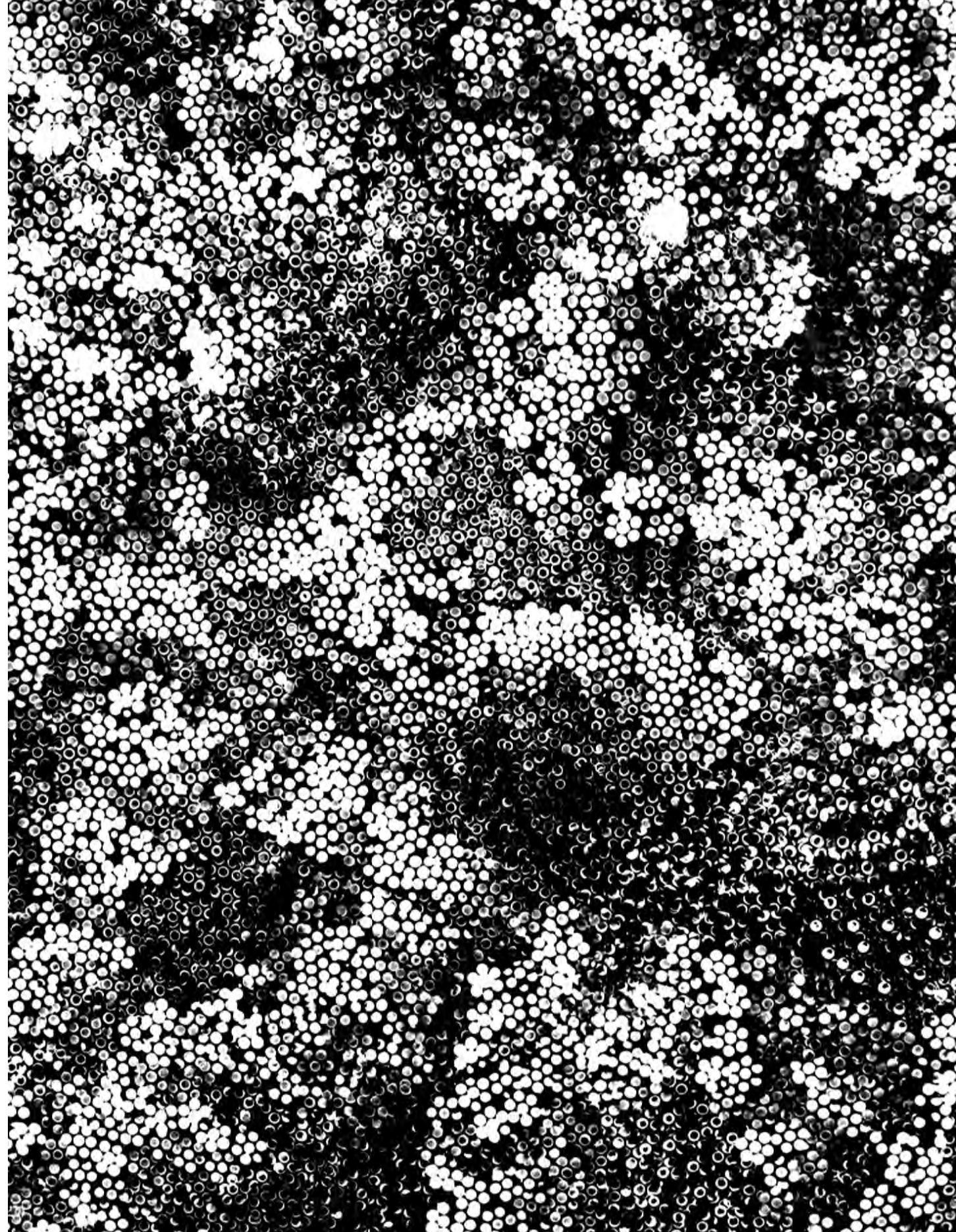
A brief in Ryan Waller's Graduate Form II class asked us to construct a mark-making tool from objects around us, and then asked us to use this new tool in a new way. I began by looking at how a pencil's hexagonal shape in section could tile and tessellate. I stacked and tiered pencils in this way to make the sculpture below. I originally intended to make marks using the graphite leads in this piece, but once the prompt pivoted and asked us to use the tool in an unconventional way, I began experimenting with dipping the rubberized ends of the pencils in ink and using it as a kind of stamp. I made two books that cataloged the hundreds of studies I made using this method, some of which I show on the following spread. View a video of the *Dots* set here: <https://bit.ly/2vrPUBQ>

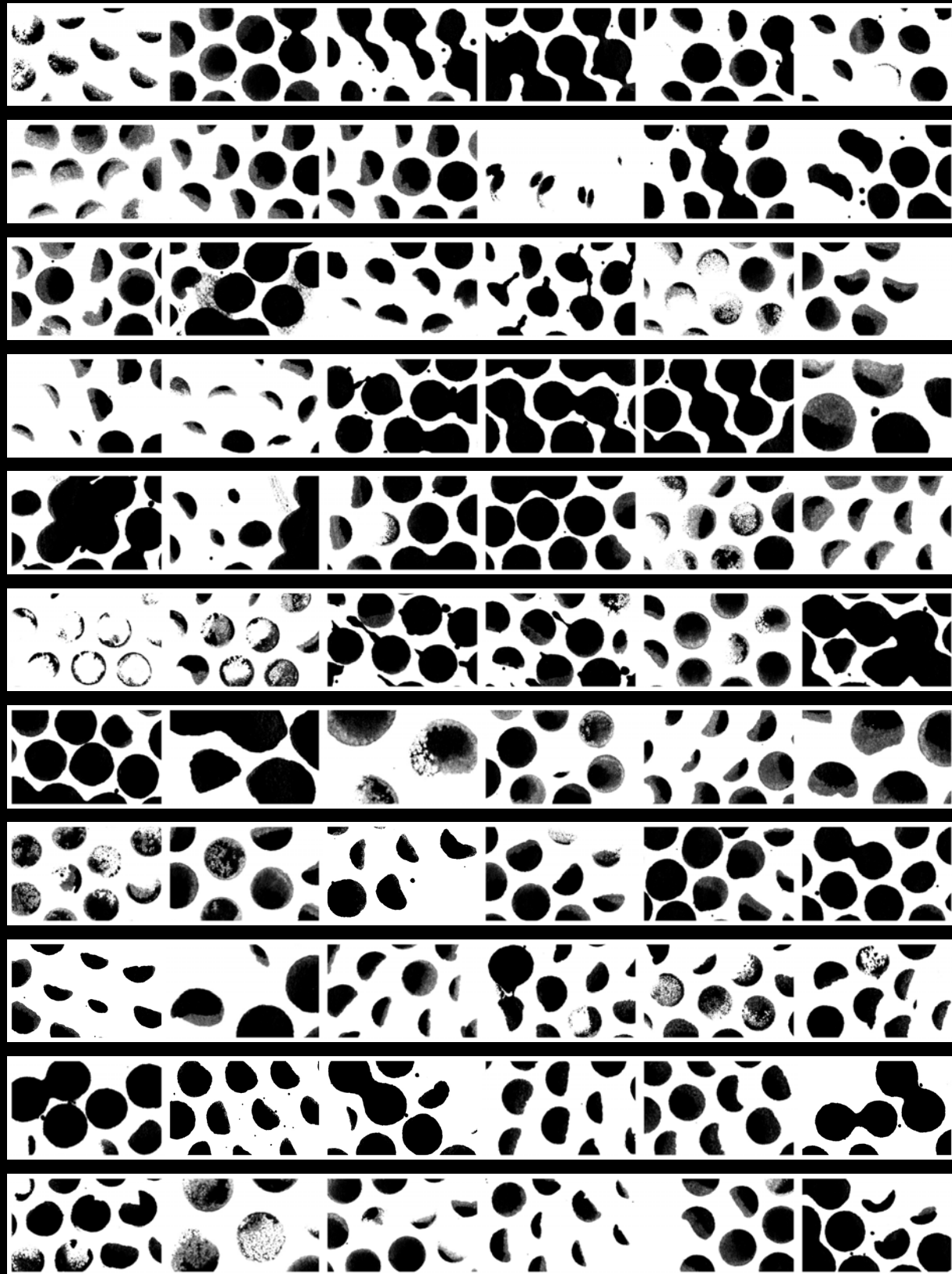


Marks made with the pencil ends dipped in India ink.

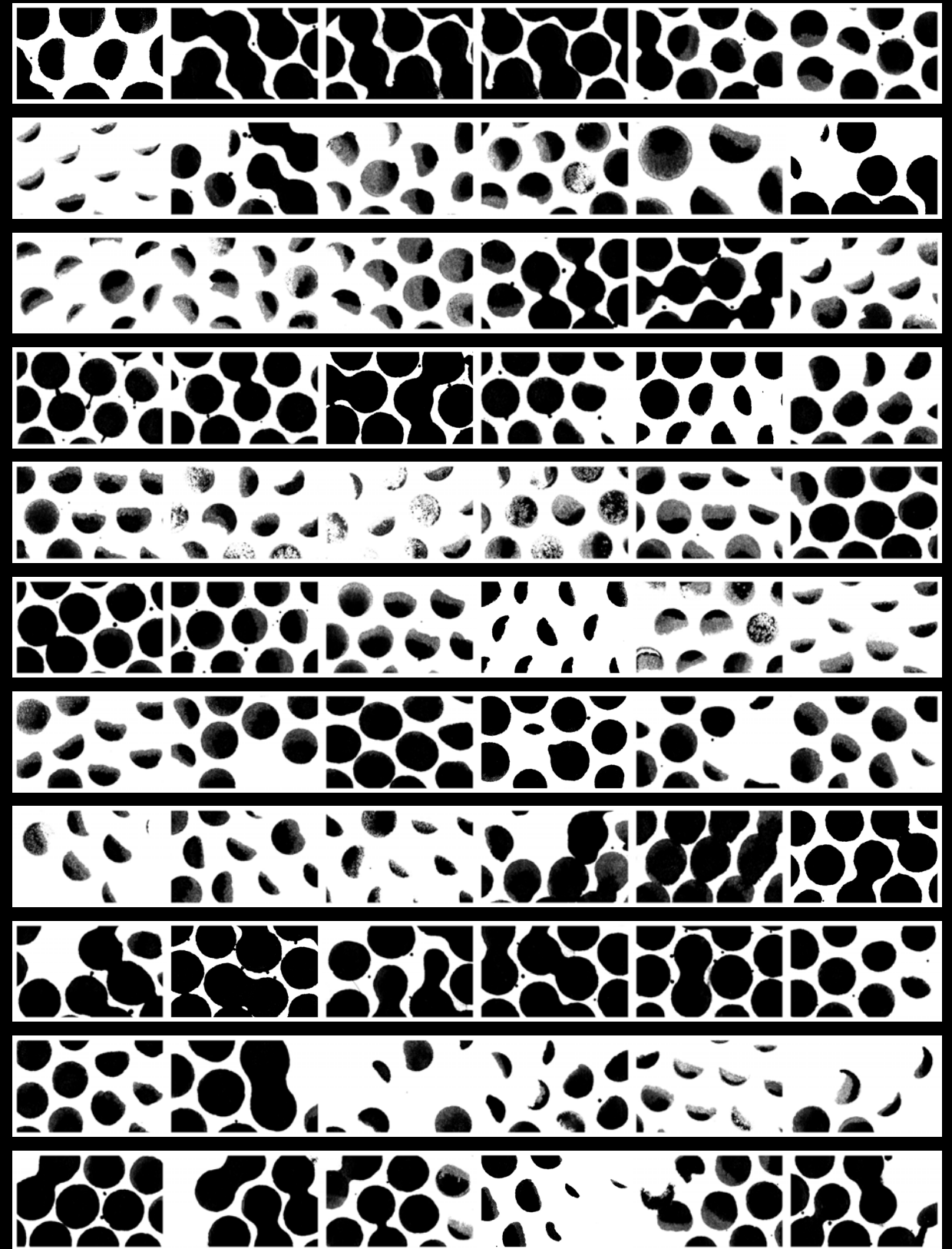


I made this piece with 138 standard HB pencils and glue.





I generated hundreds of ink stamps made using the rubberized end of the pencil sculpture.



You can view a video of these marks set to OK Go's *Obsession* (2014) at <https://bit.ly/2vrPUBQ>

# Cola Pens

I made the work on the right as part of a 2018 Visiting Designer workshop with Prem Krishnamurthy of Wkshps. Prem's *Work Free / Free Work* prompt asked us to treat the weekend like a mini residency, giving us the first day to do whatever we wanted. I took the bus to New Haven to see Yale's Graphic Design MFA show and attend a few final critiques. For the second day, Prem asked us to do "free work" for *Post-Play*, an installation his studio was collaborating with Leong Leong questioning the future of work and leisure in an increasingly-automated world. I produced the video to the right using calligraphic ruling pens made from Coke cans in Cyrus Highsmith's Type Design class. This clip and other student work from the workshop was shown at the New Museum in New York as part of Prem's final installation: <https://bit.ly/2IKnU1Q>



Calligraphic ruling pens made from Coke cans in Cyrus Highsmith's class.



Cyrus Highsmith explaining the formal quirks possible with the ruling pens.



# Pattern Box

In the Fall of 2018, Bethany Johns and Paul Soulellis took the Graduate Studio II class to the Providence Public Library's Updike Special Collections. We were shown dozens of rare books and manuscripts and essentially tasked with choosing one as the basis of our formal investigations for the remainder of the semester. I was immediately drawn to Owen Jones' 1856 *Grammar of Ornament*, a truly monumental work of publishing that achieved never-before-seen standards in chromolithographic color printing. I had seen reprints of the book before—I even own a Dorling Kindersley reproduction—but to see the colossal original folio edition in the flesh was nothing short of revelatory.

Over the proceeding weeks I continued to iterate work based on Jones' magnum opus, and twice made appointments with the Updike curators to see the book in person. I eventually produced the below set of sixty 17x14 inch lasercut patterns on bristol board based on Jones' original plates, with the size and heft to match that of his original edition. This work was the genesis of this thesis, and I must thank Bethany and Paul for introducing me to Jones and encouraging me to push further with this investigation and celebration of ornament.

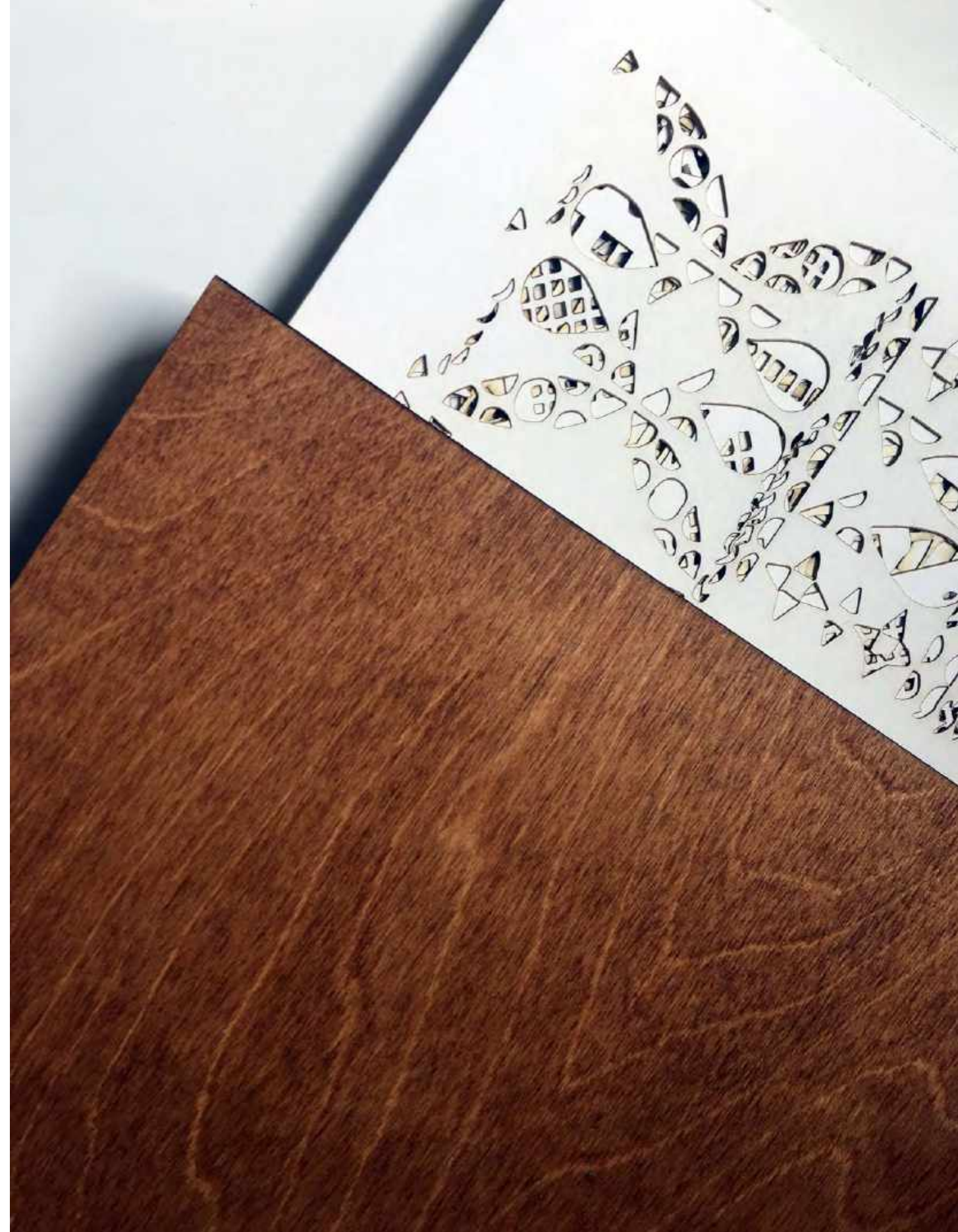


I made the 18x15" box with stained birch veneer ply at RISD's Co-Works.

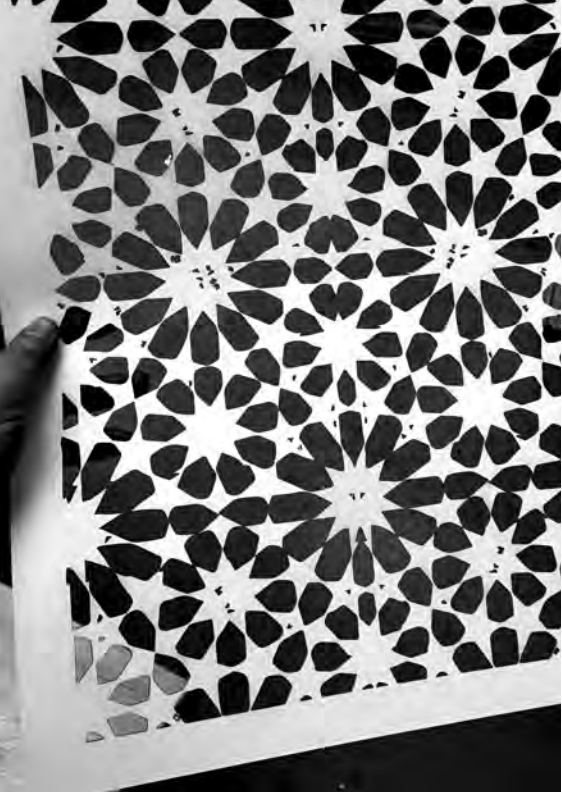


**Moresque N° 5, from Owen Jones' Grammar of Ornament (1856).**

Left: I lasercut sixty 17x14" bristol board sheets at RISD's Co-Works.

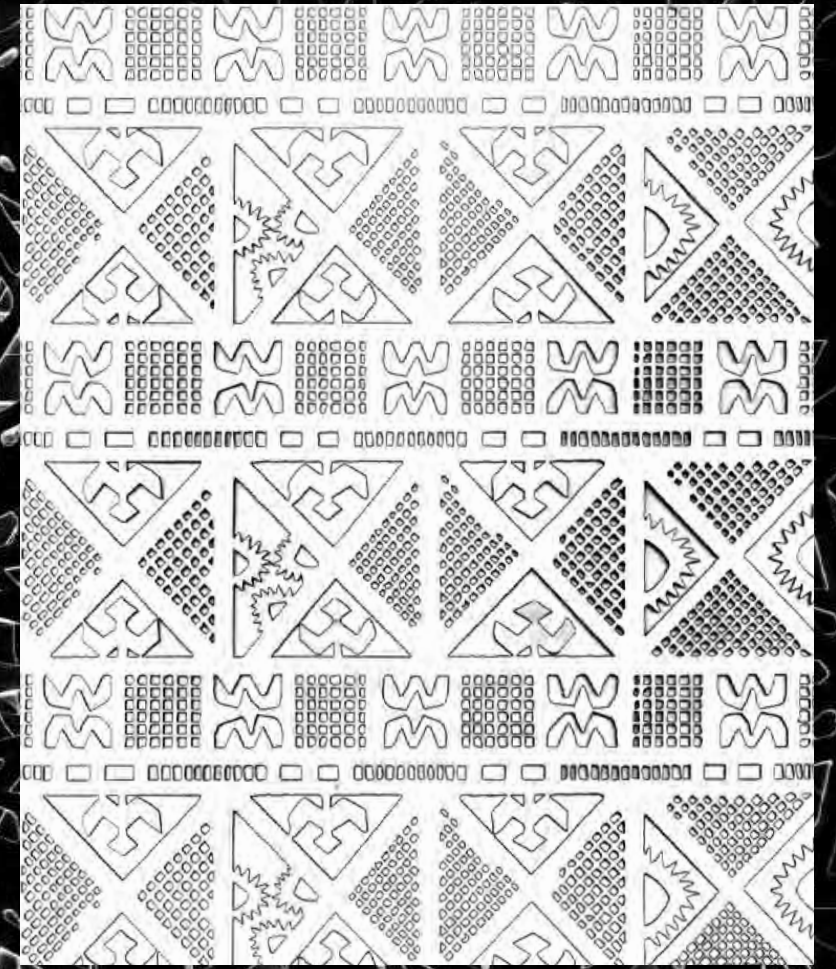
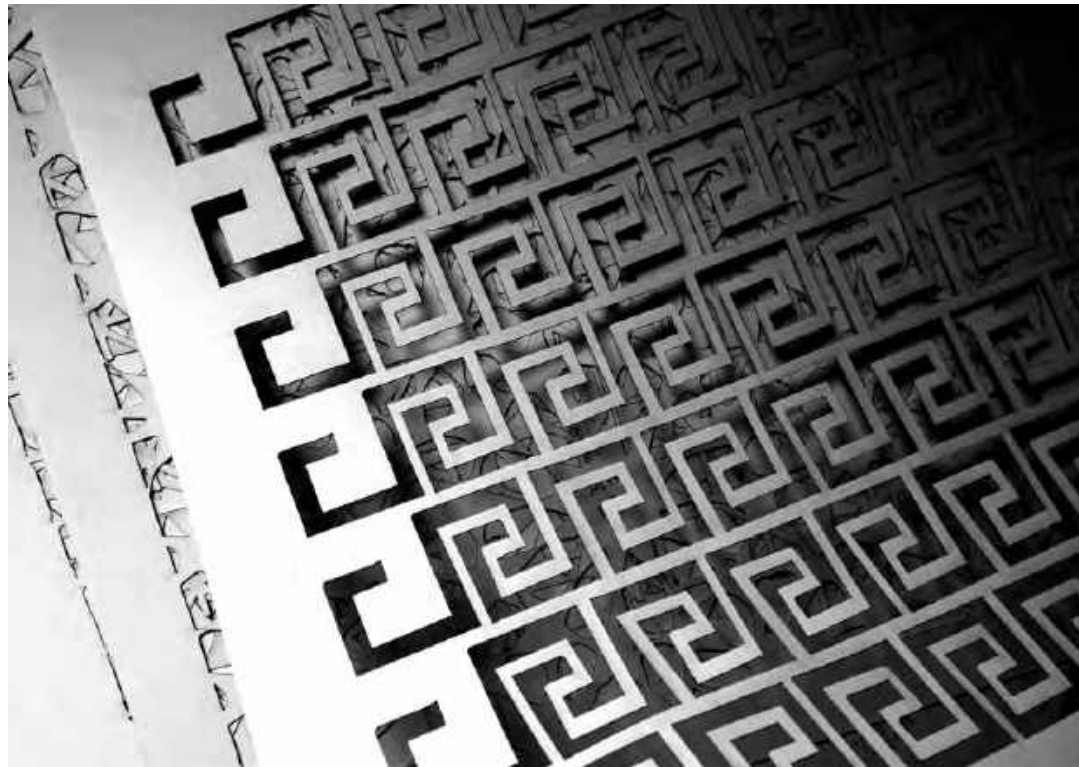


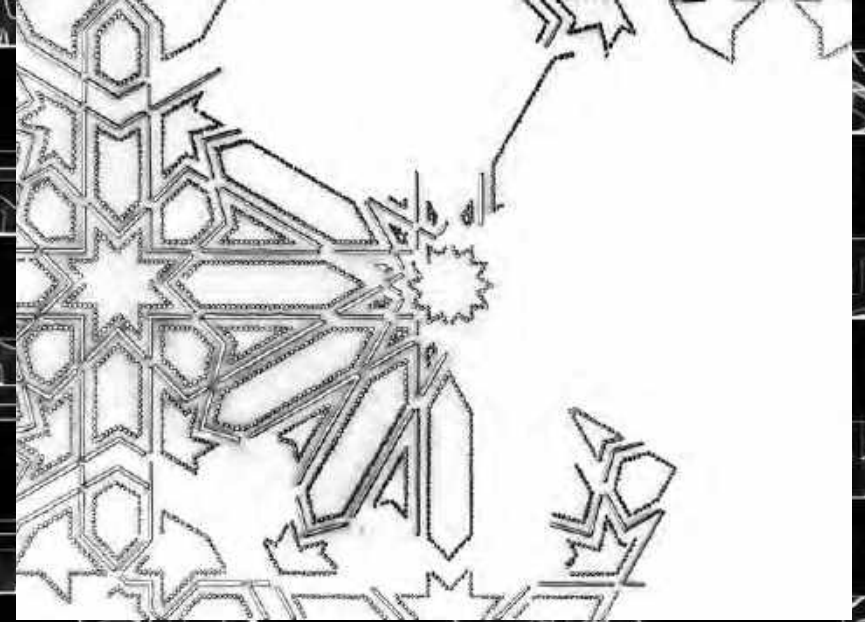
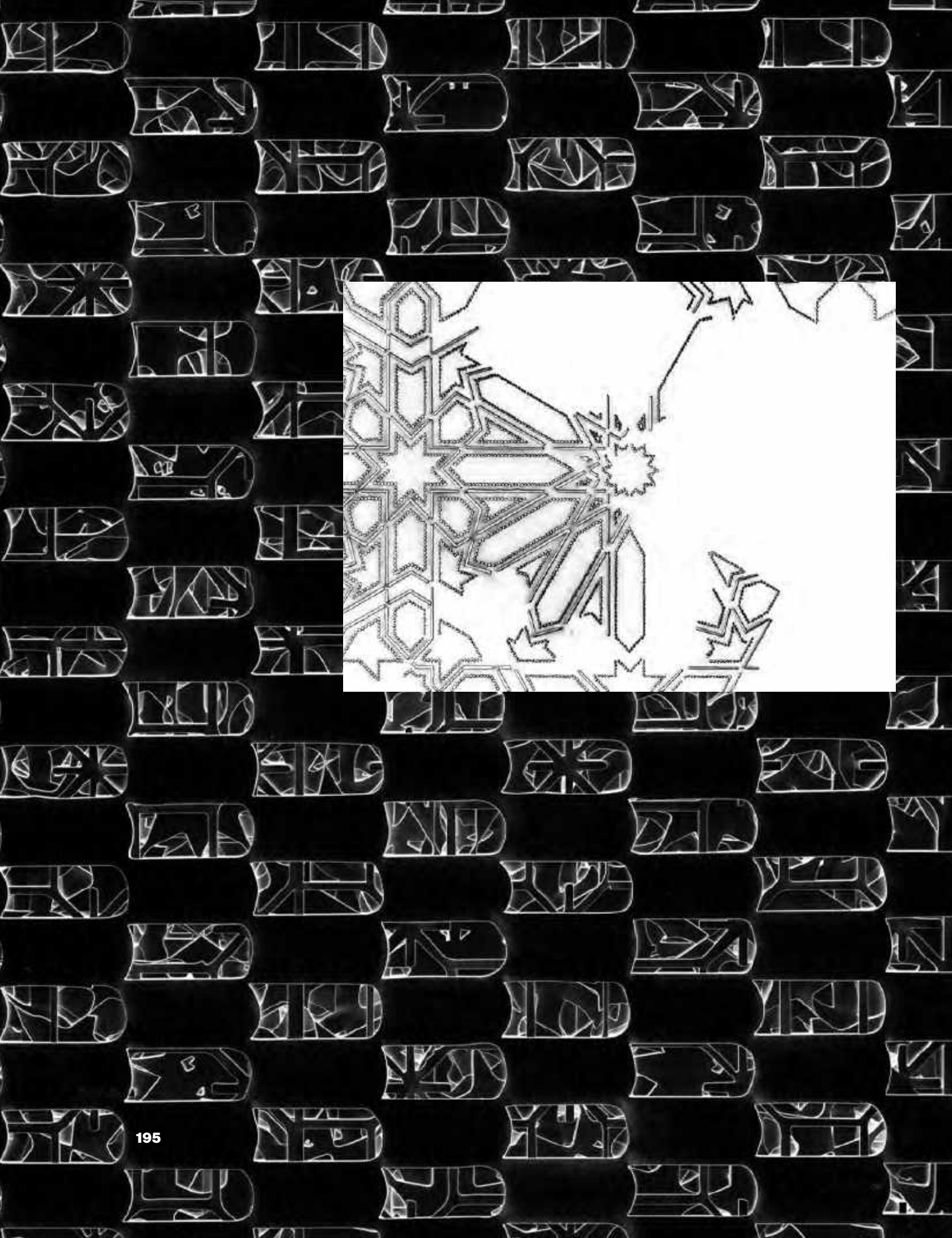
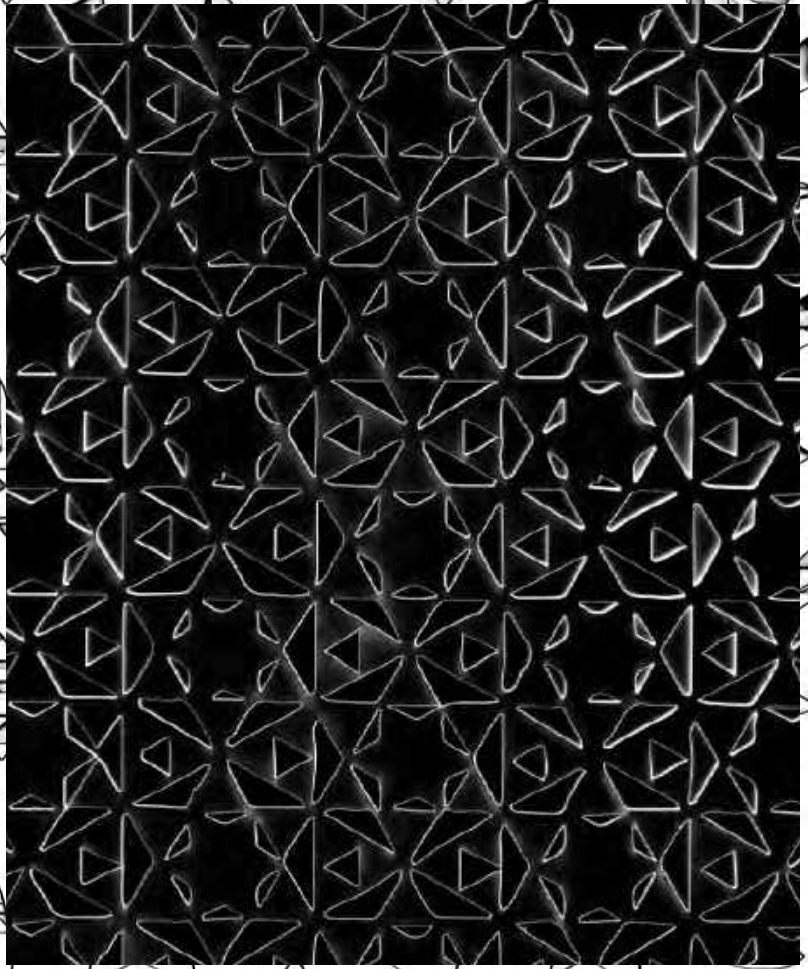
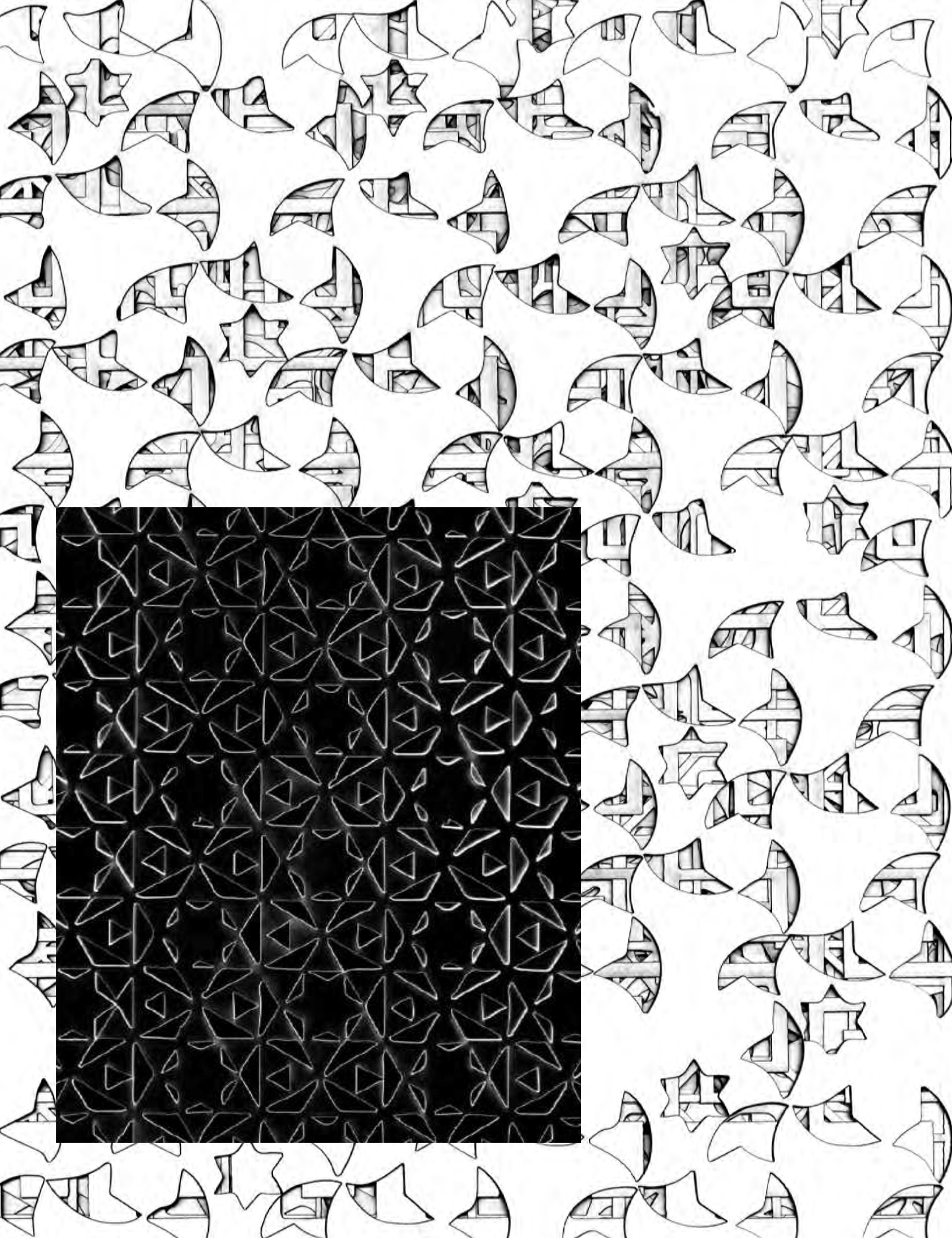


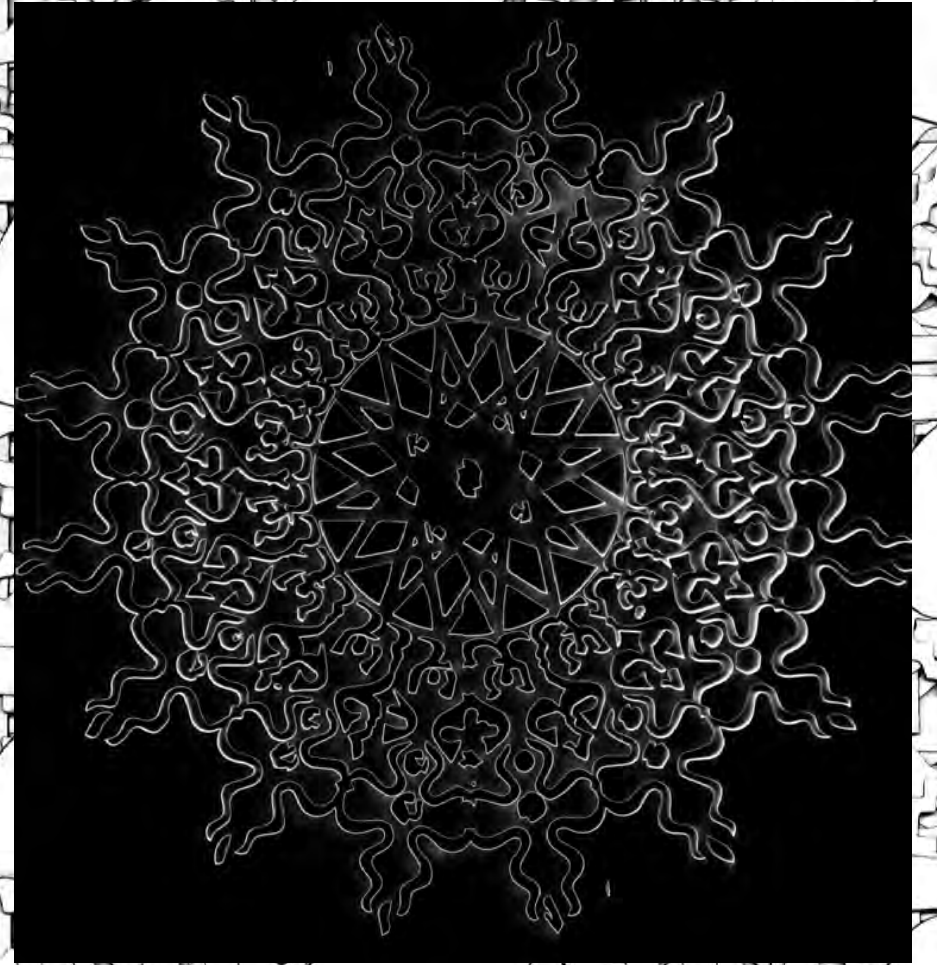
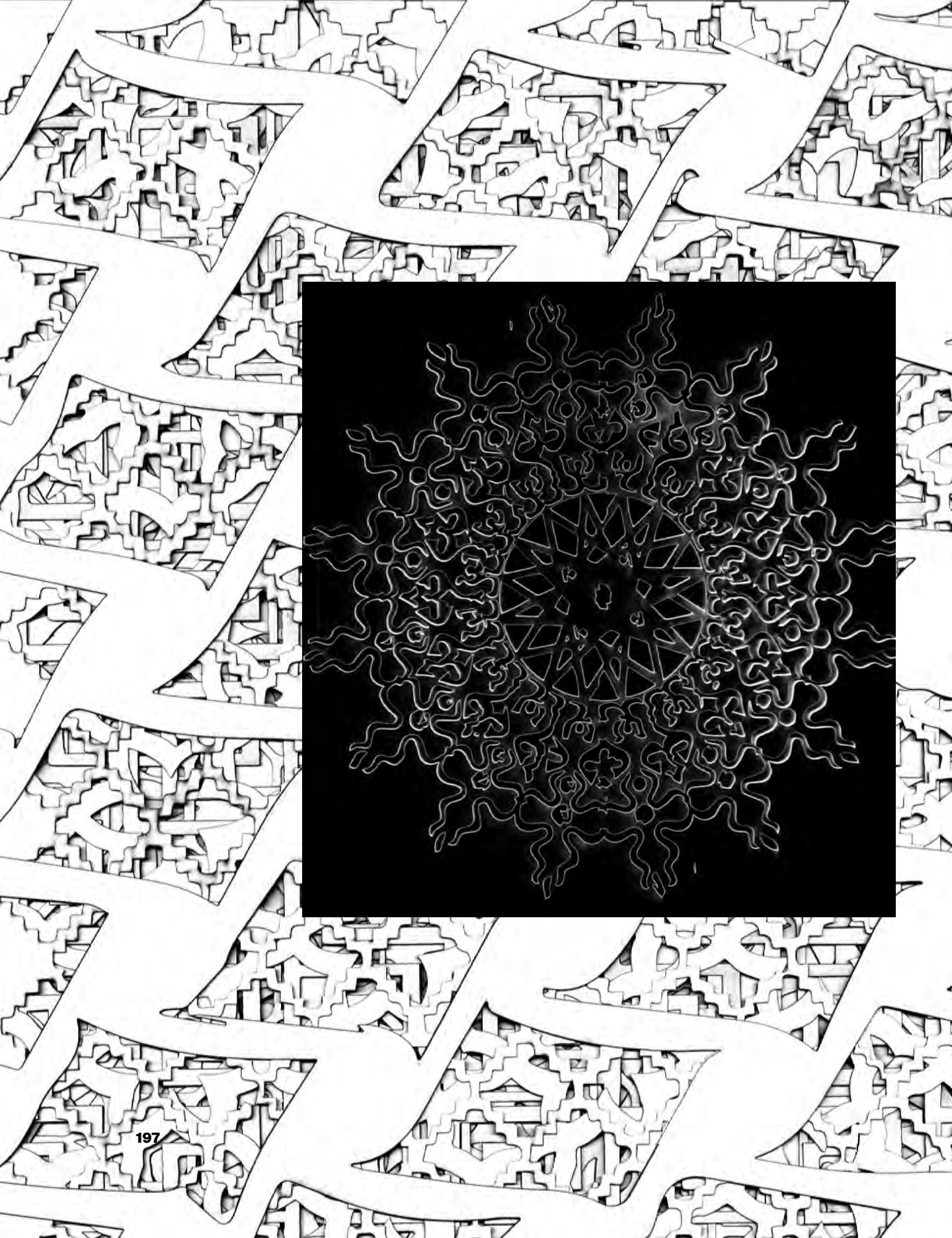
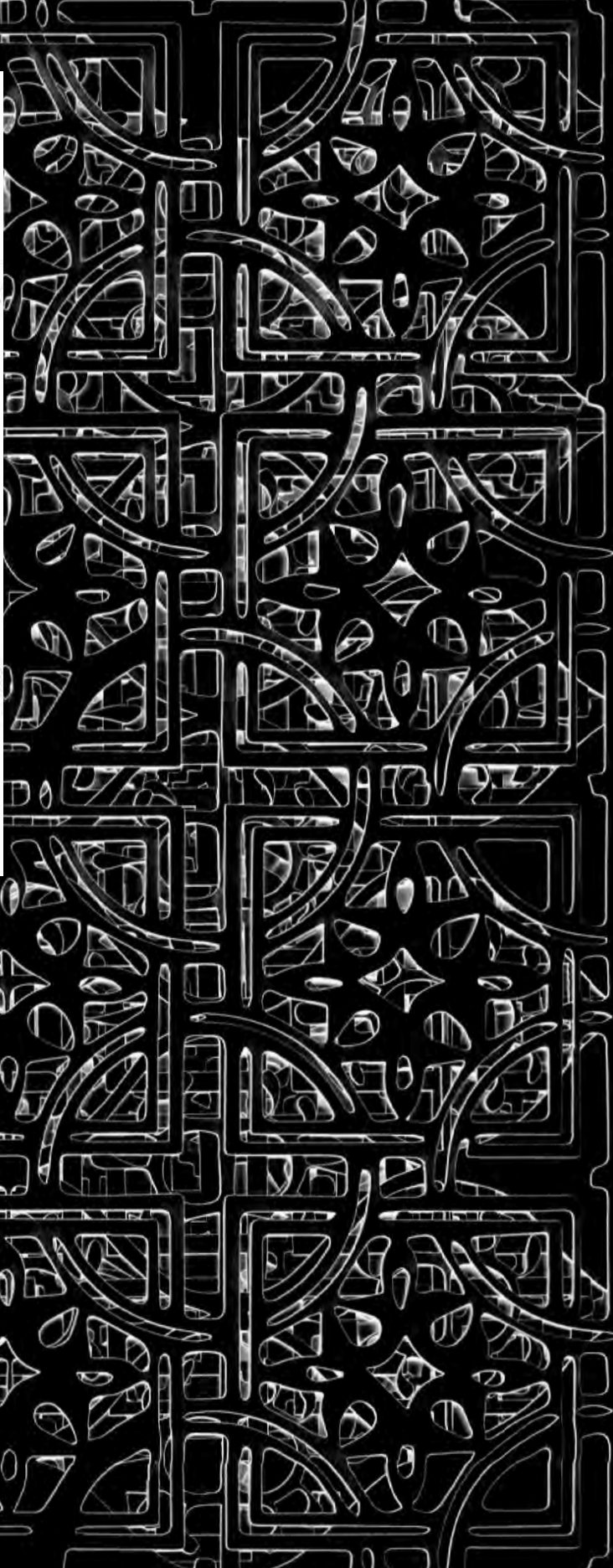
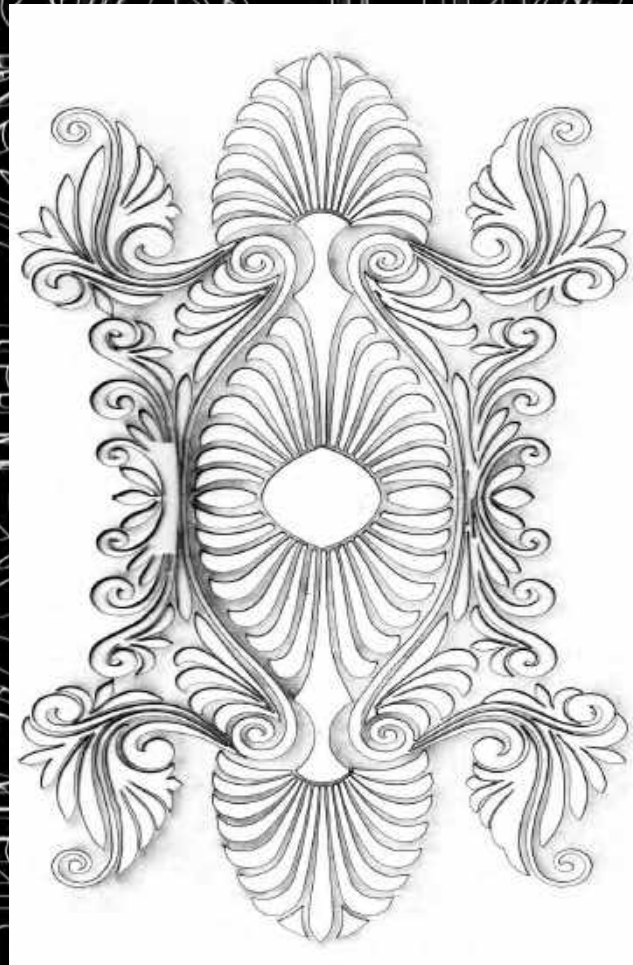


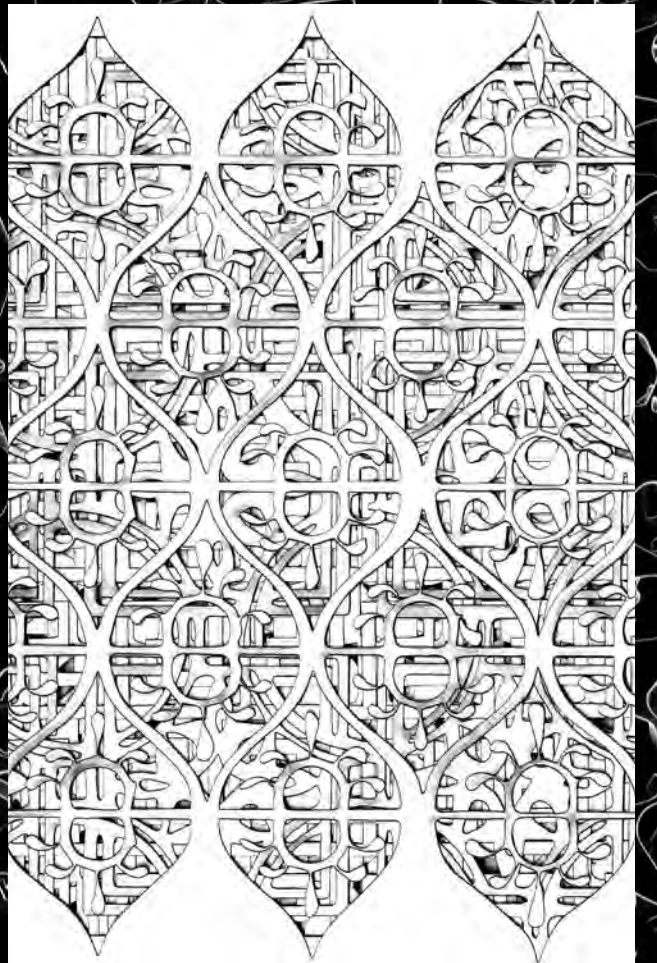
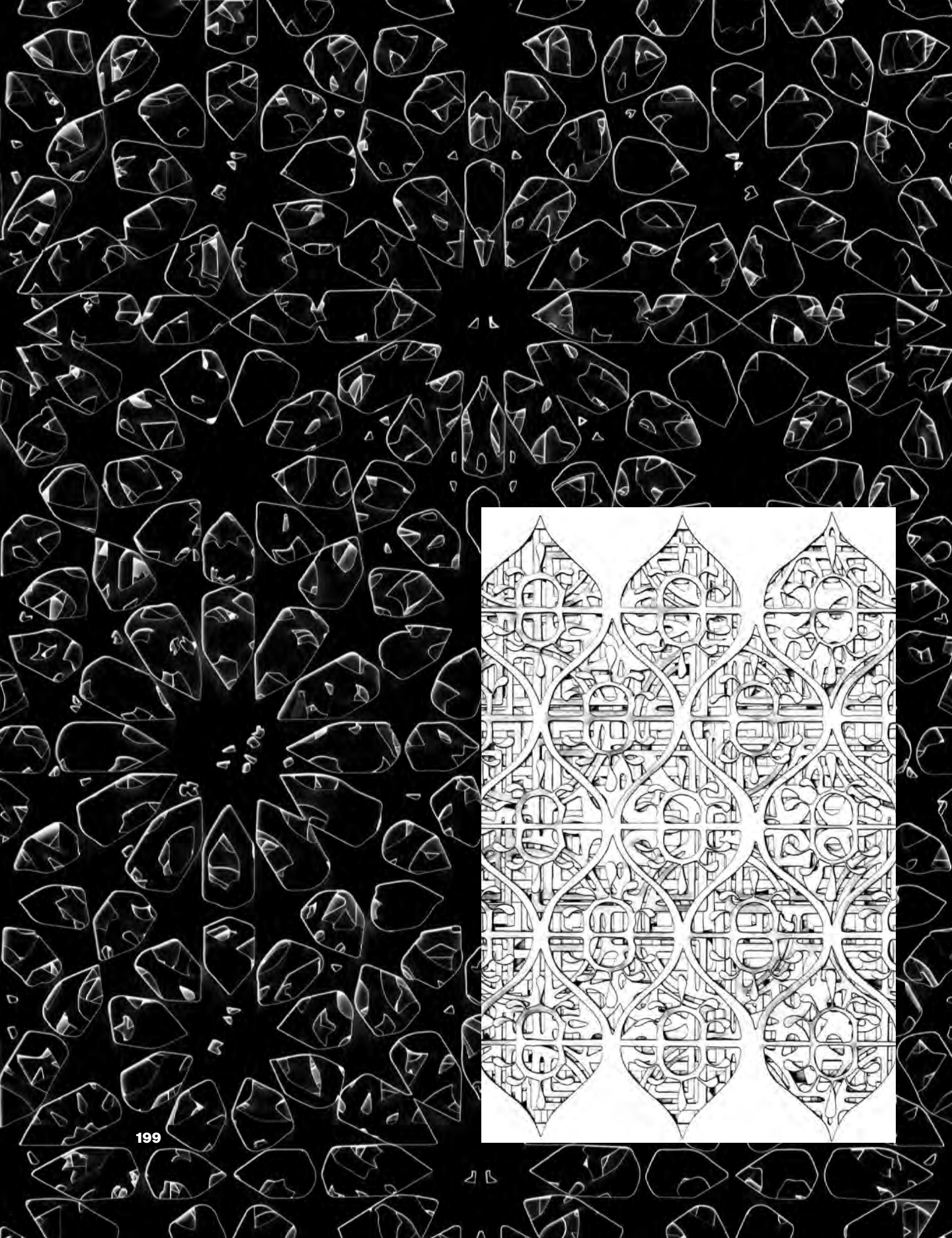
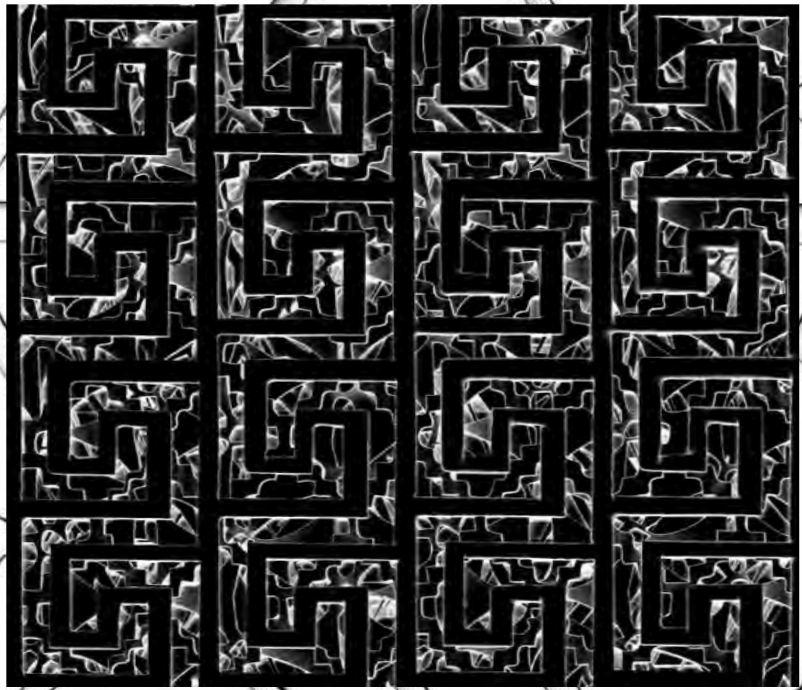
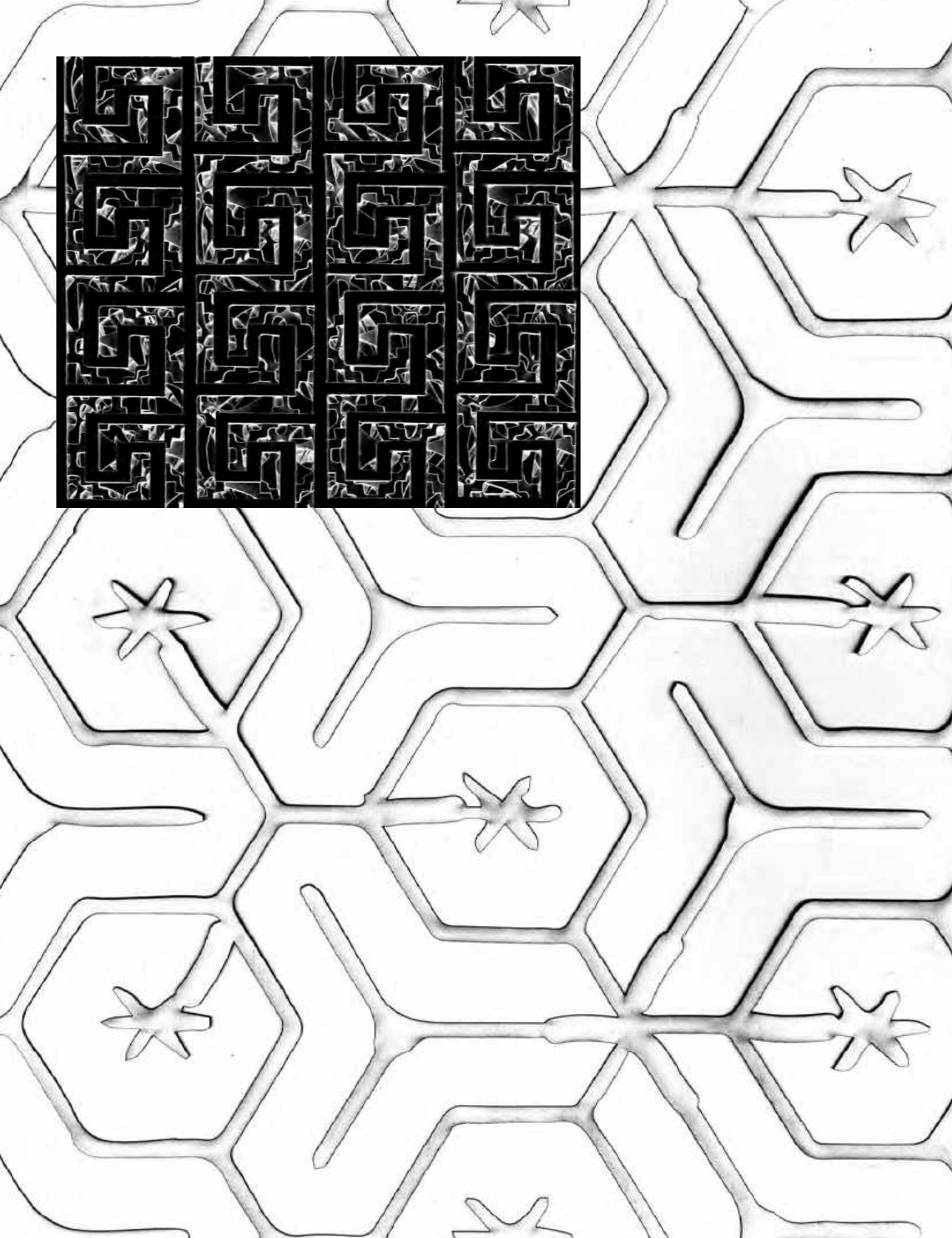
When one lasercuts paper it invariably burns. My initial tests required me to incrementally calibrate the laser cutter's strength, speed and PPI (pulses per inch) until I achieved a complete cut with minimal burn and scorch.

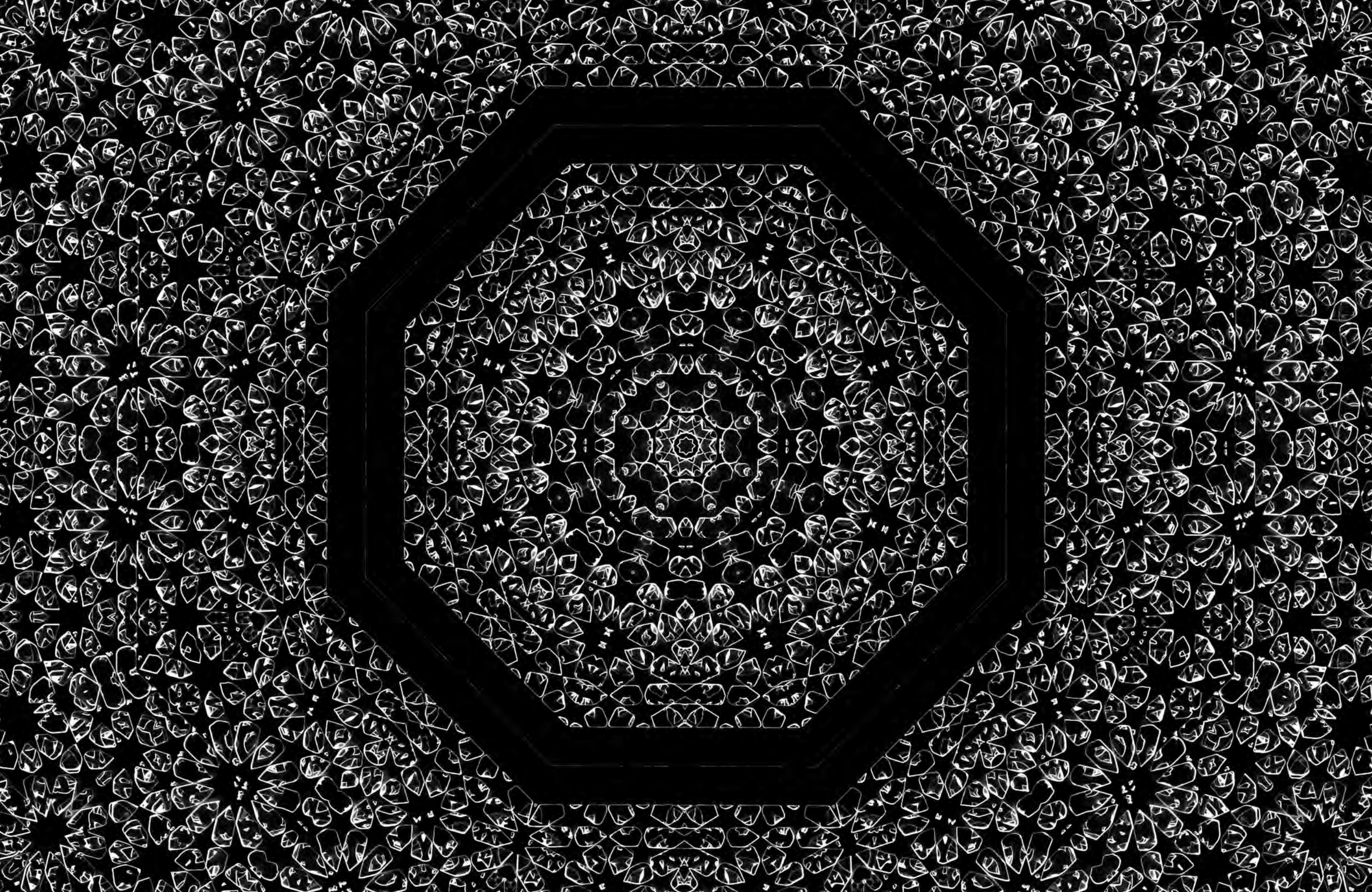
A typical Hellenistic pattern based on Owen Jones' original drawings.

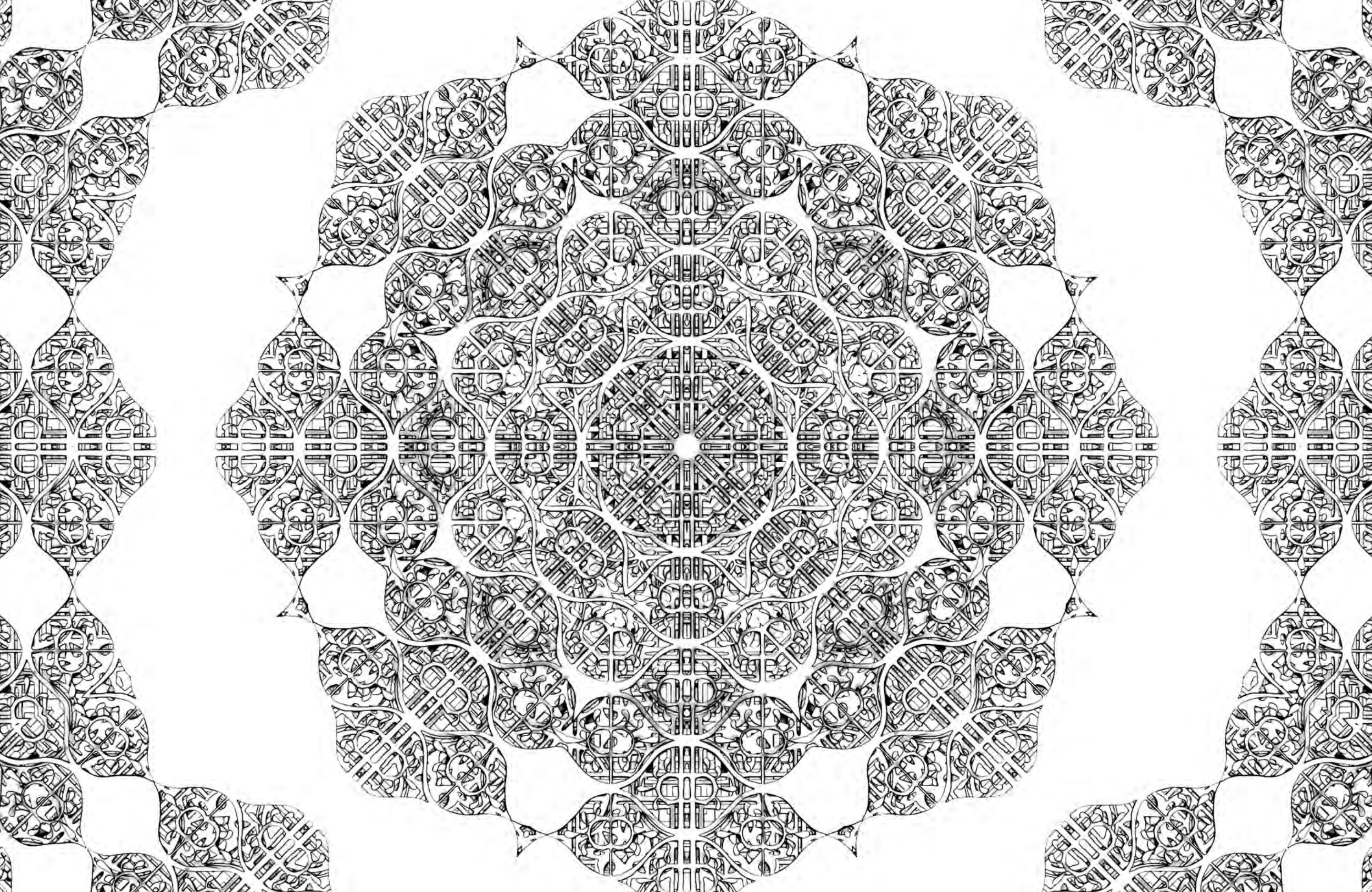


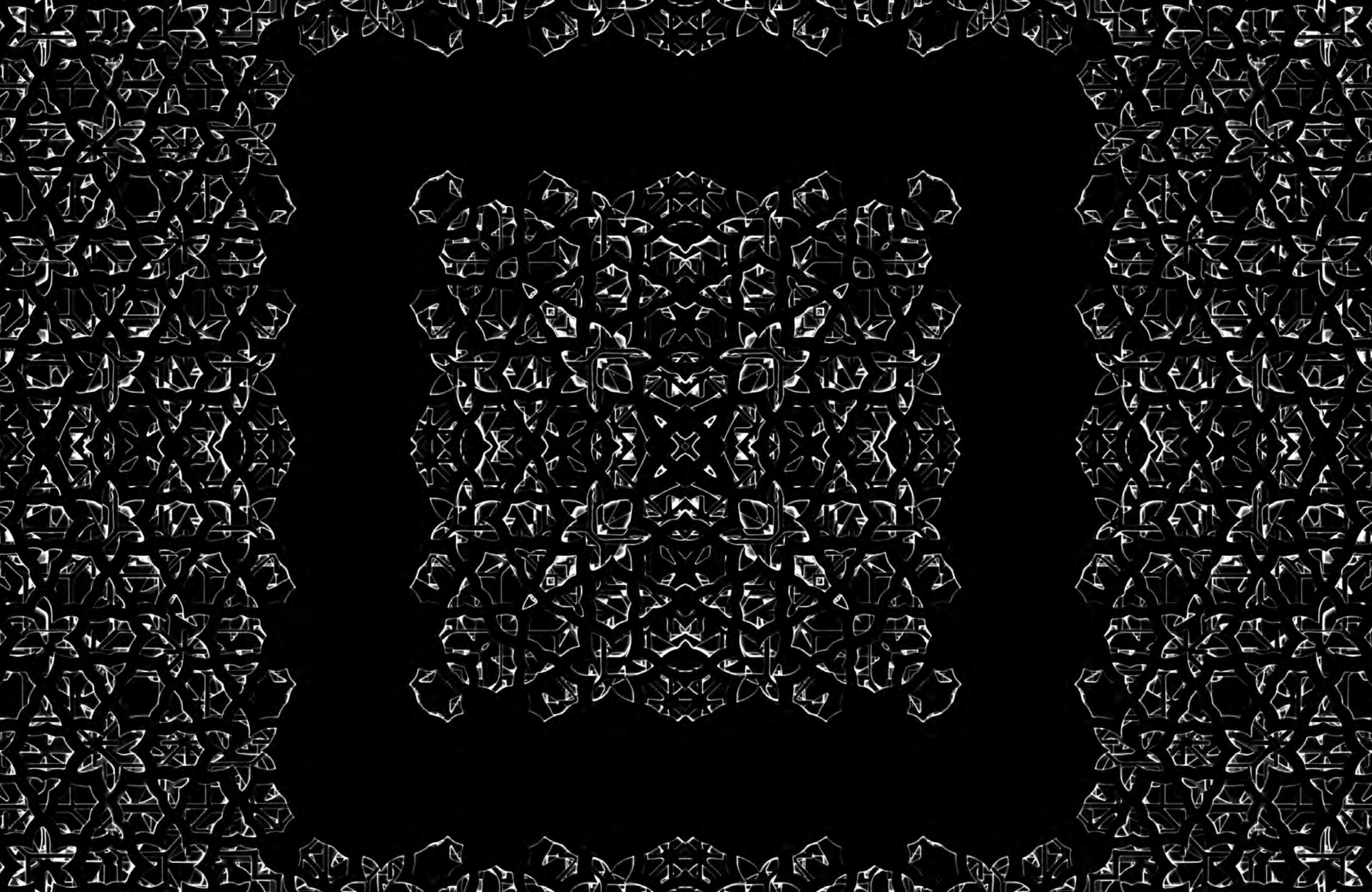




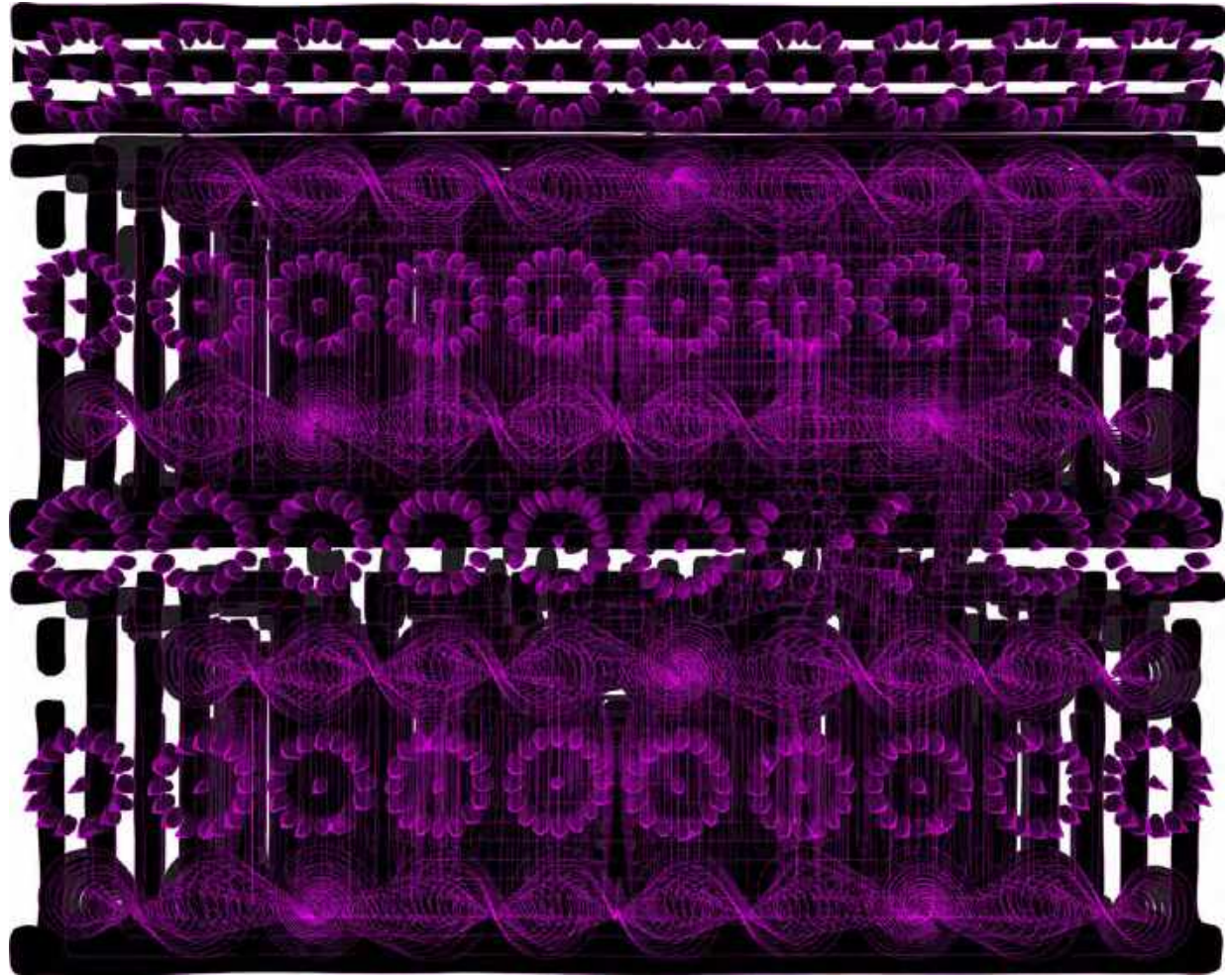




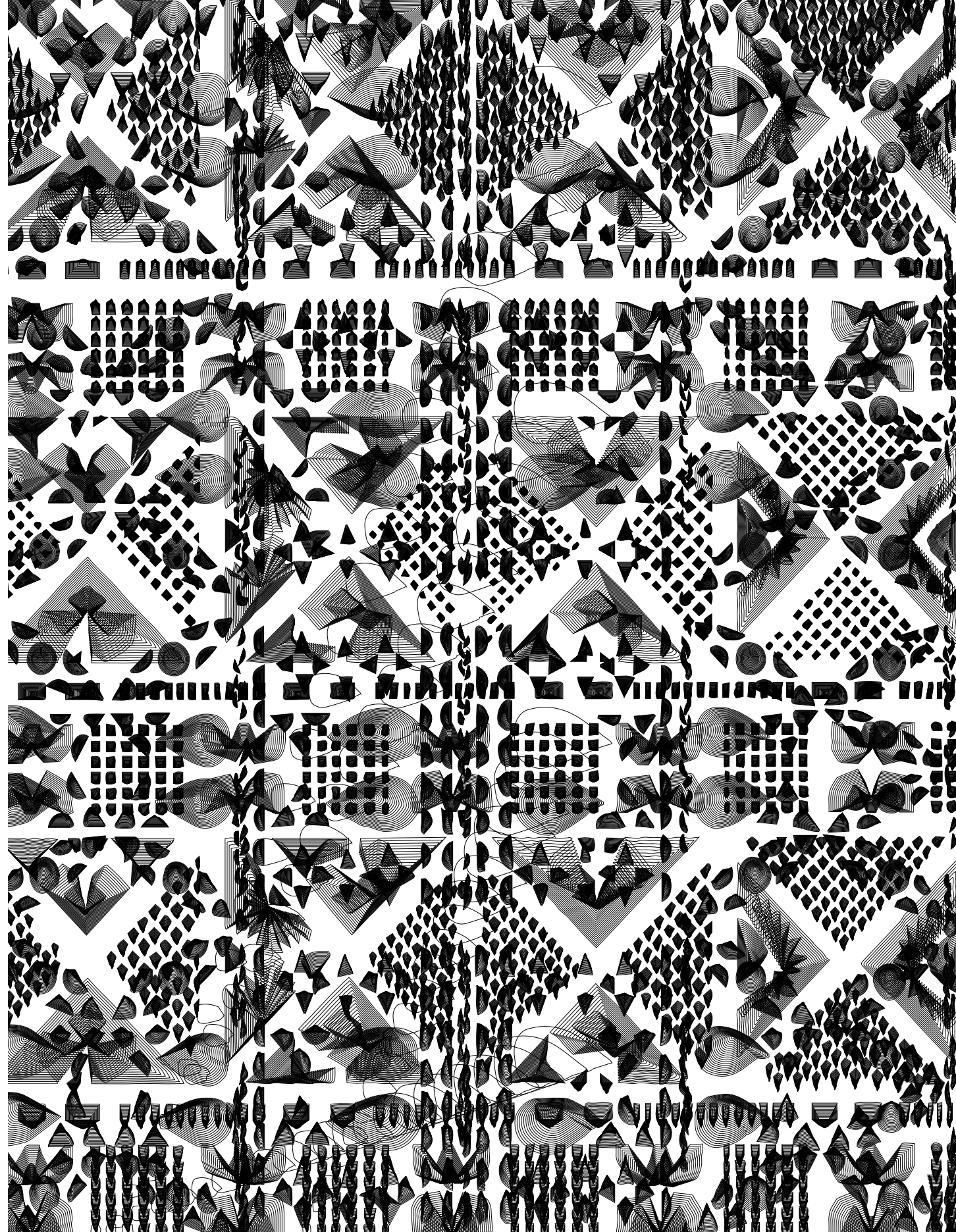
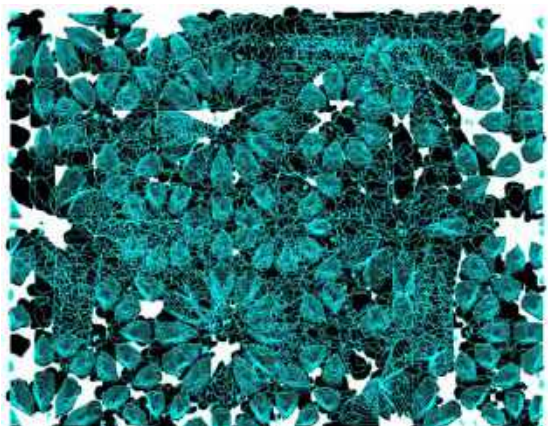




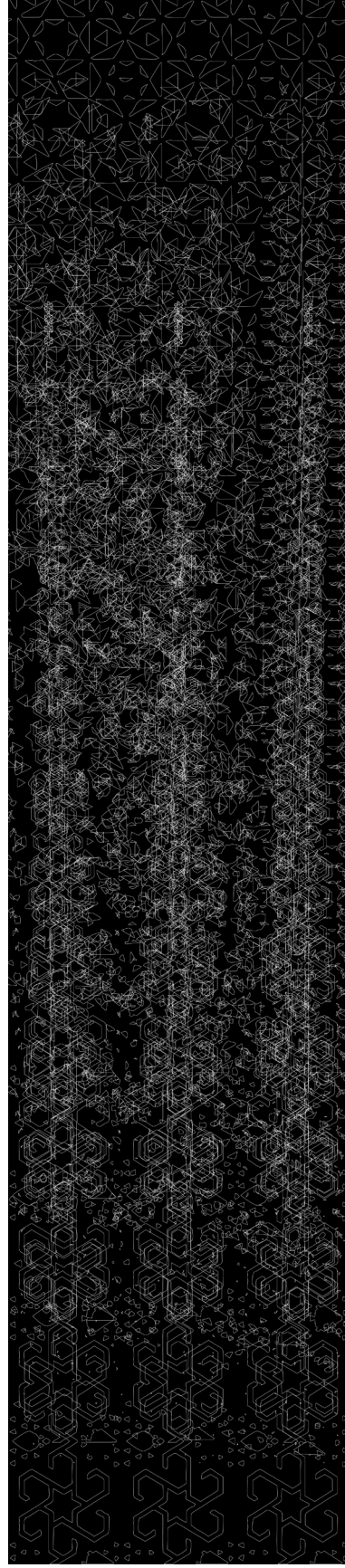
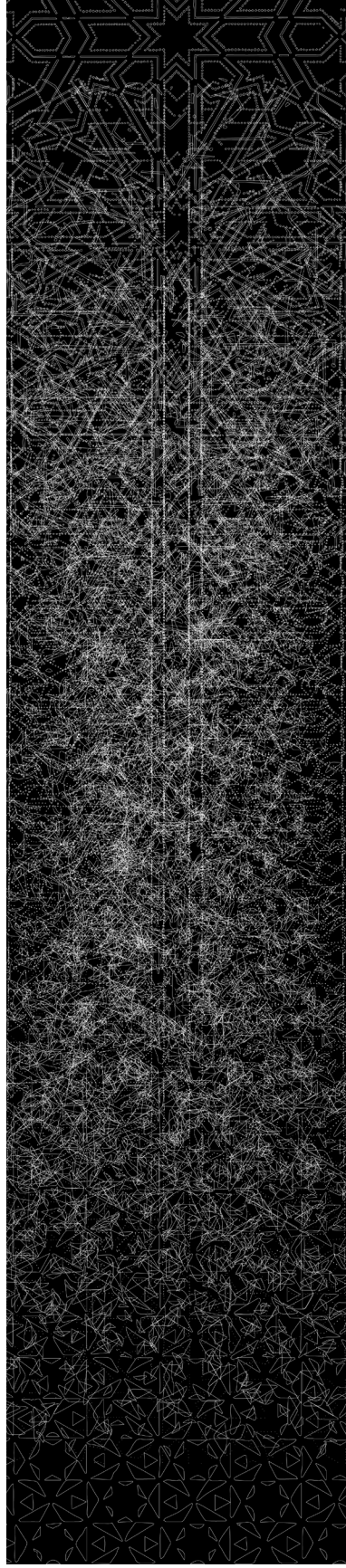
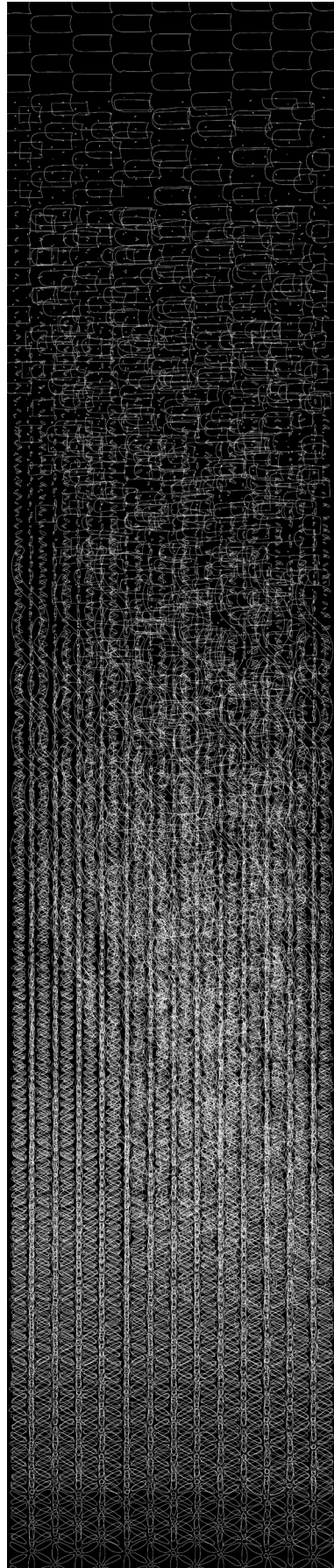
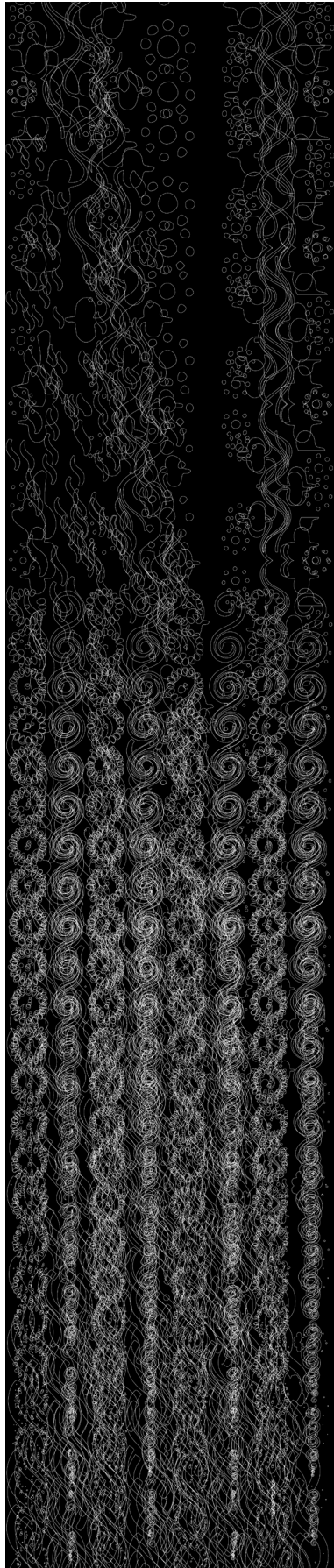
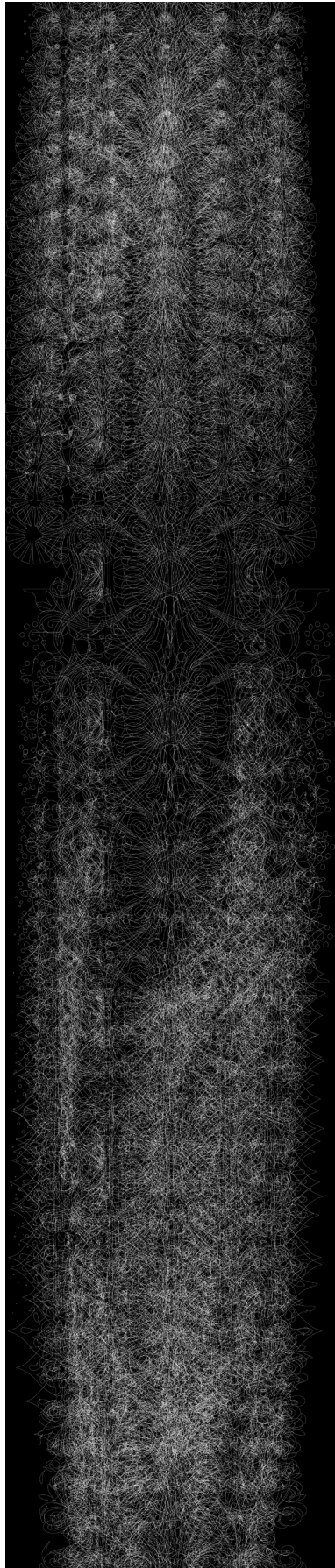
# Remixing Owen Jones

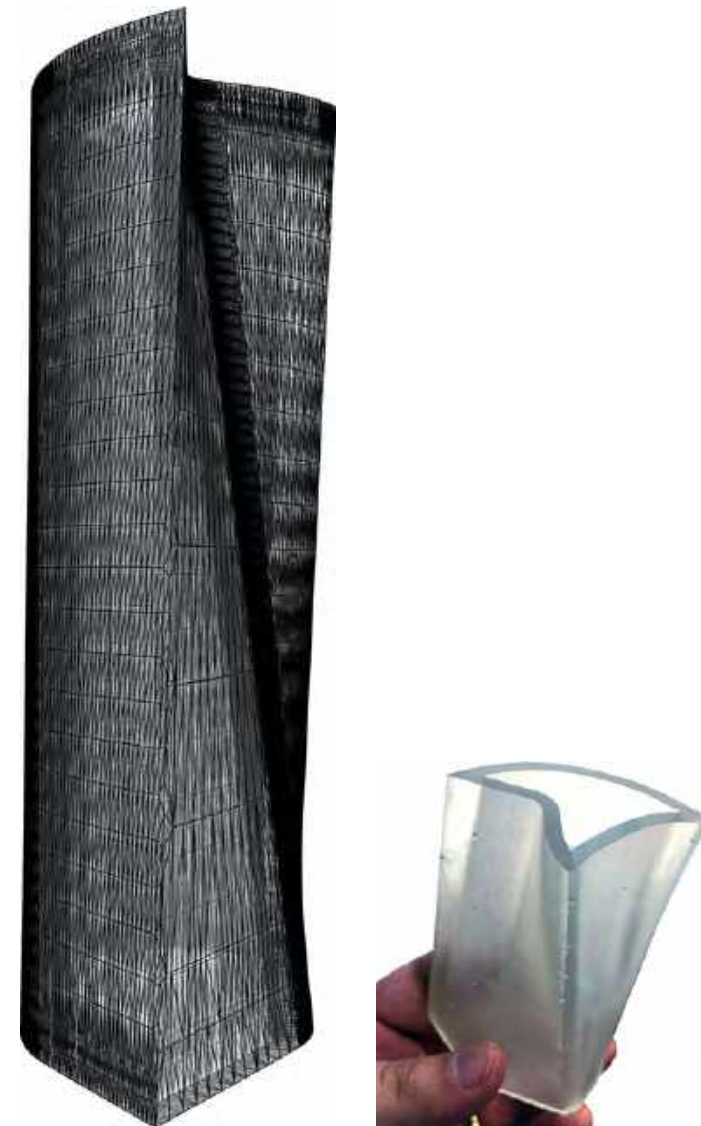
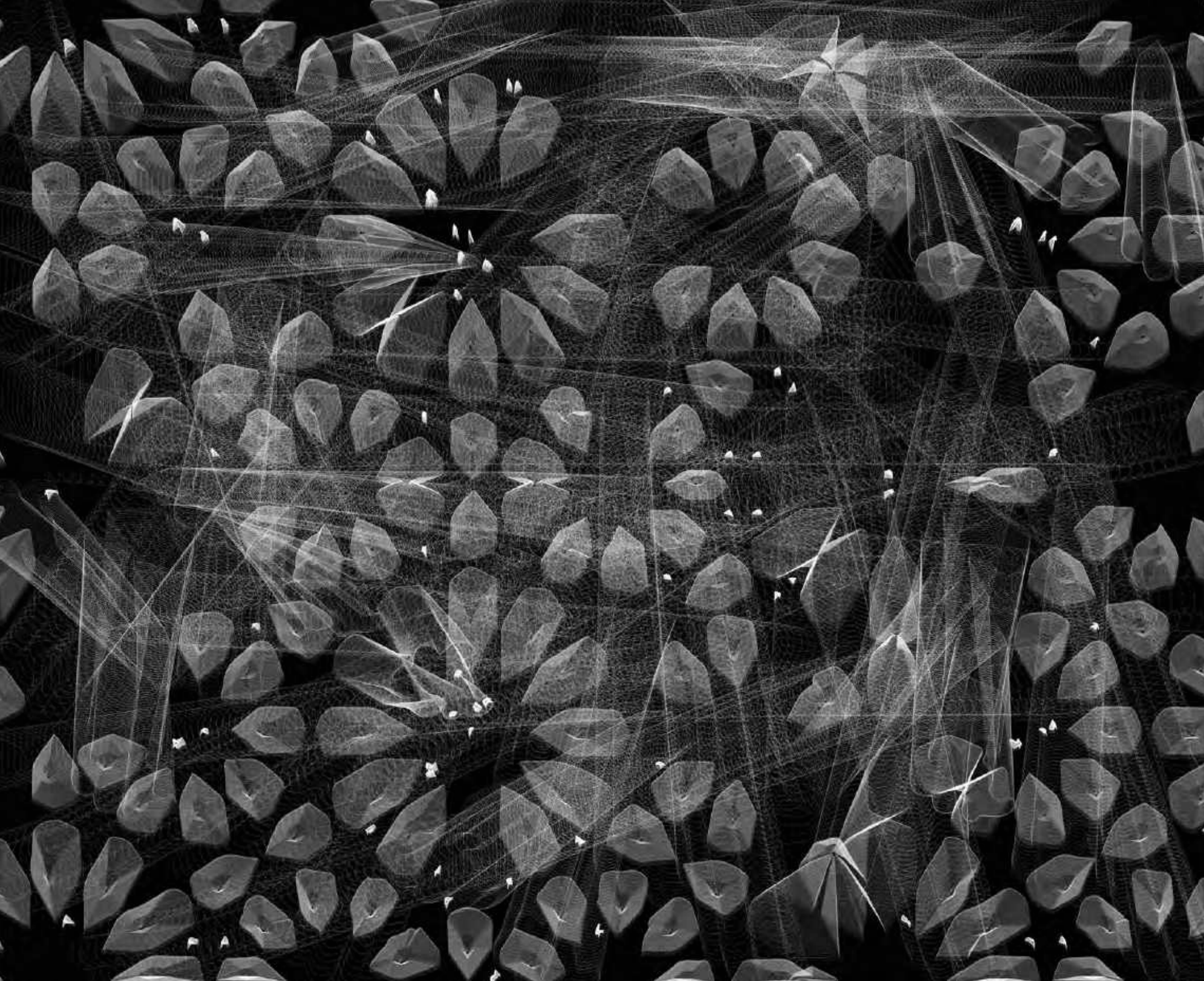


In this series I began to digitally manipulate patterns from my prior *Pattern Box* project, all of which I redrew from Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament*. I was most excited by the graphic and spatial opportunities that began to emerge as I interpolated and blended different ornamental shapes and styles from Jones' work.

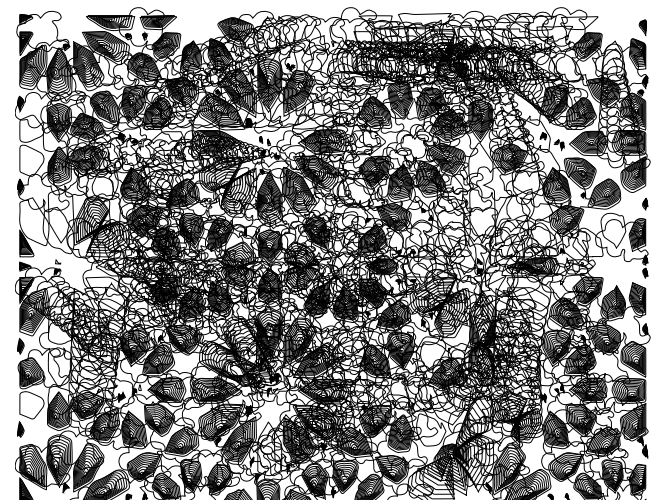






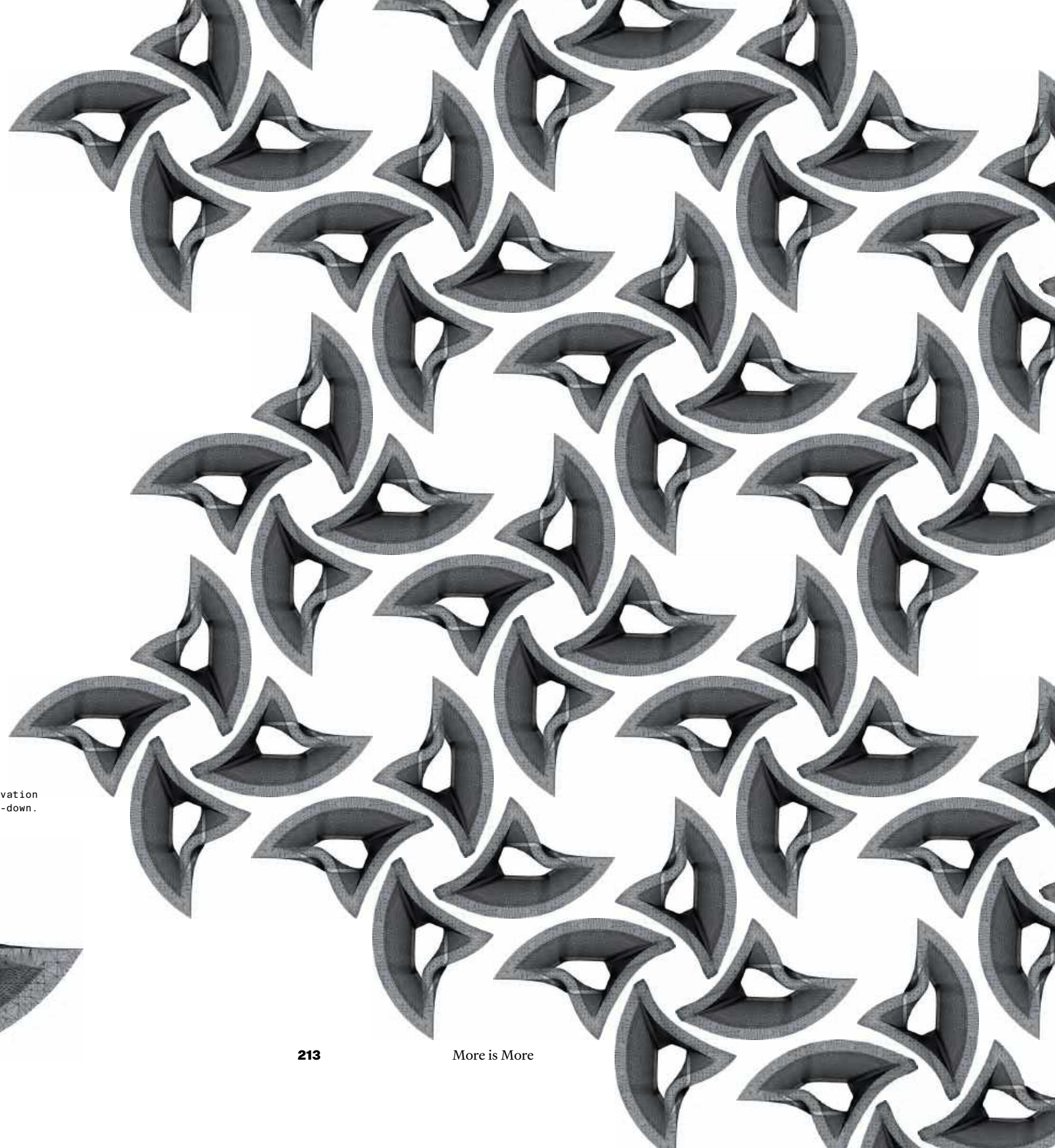
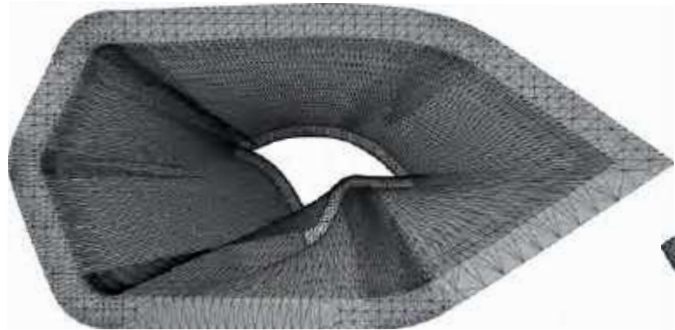


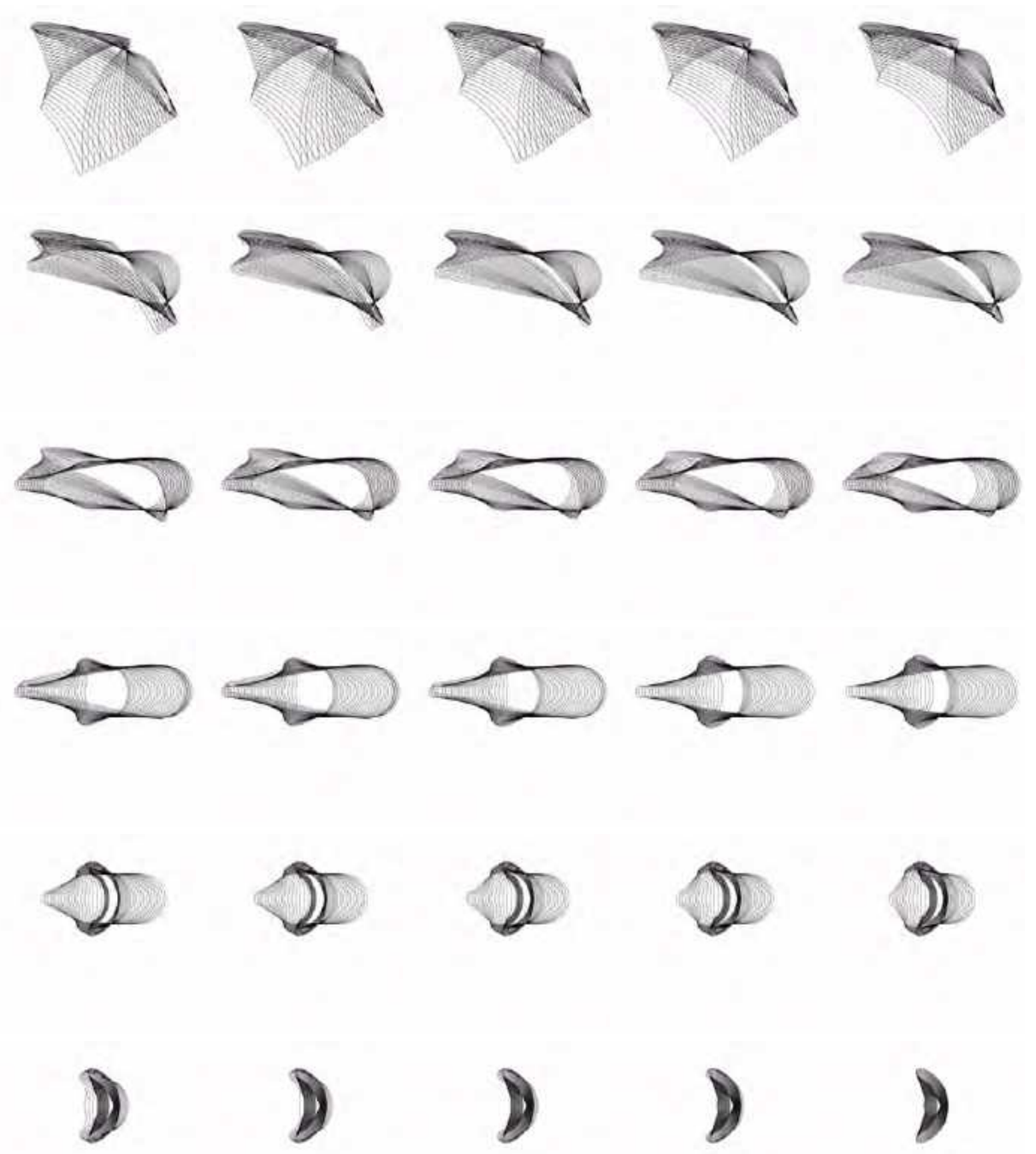
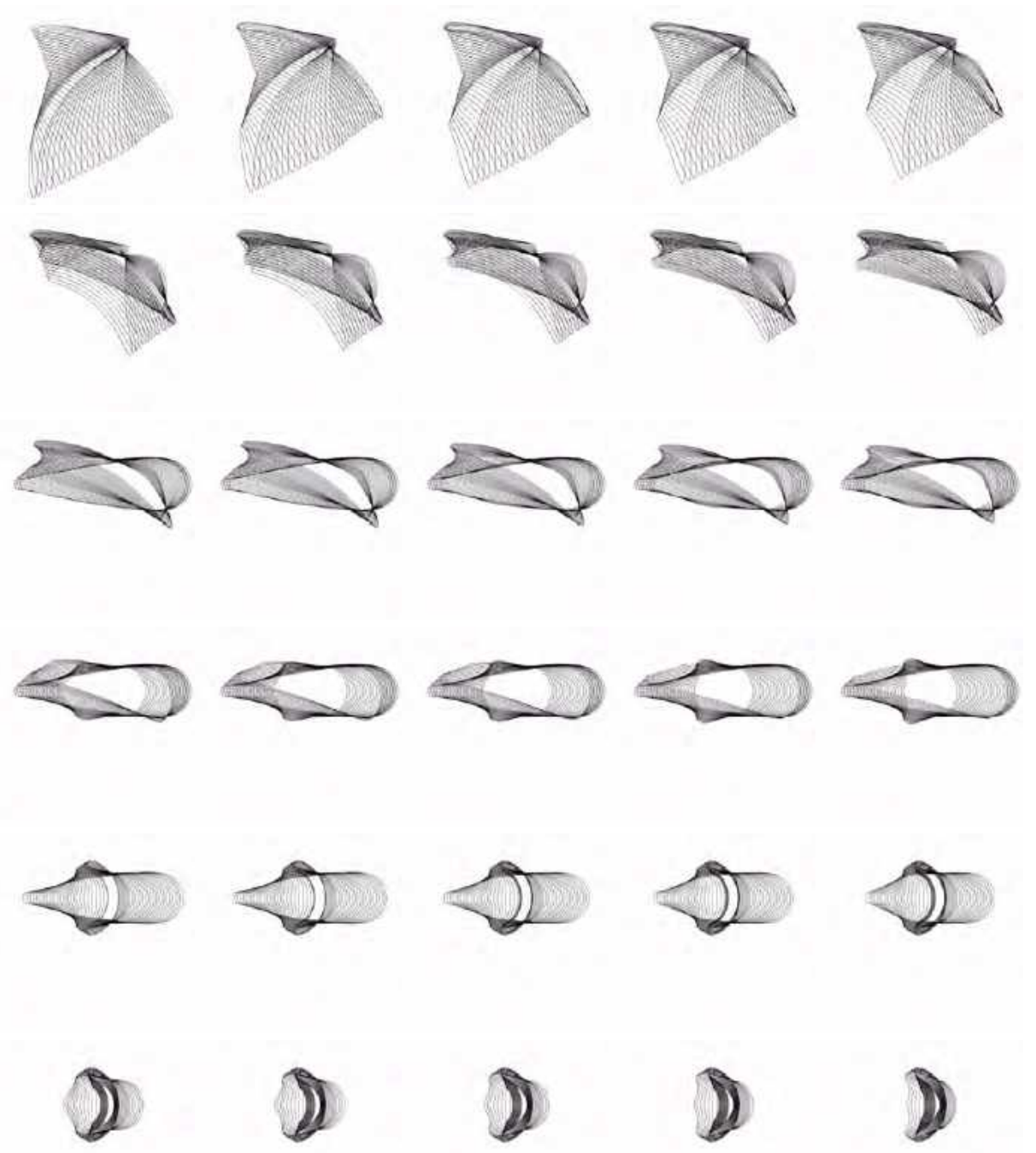
Using Rhino, I lofted two shapes Jones had referenced from the ancient Alhambra Palace in Granada, Andalusia, Spain. I then 3D-printed this piece in translucent acrylic resin; the end result strangely felt very much like bone and marrow.





The same lofted volume in elevation and looking bottom-up and top-down.

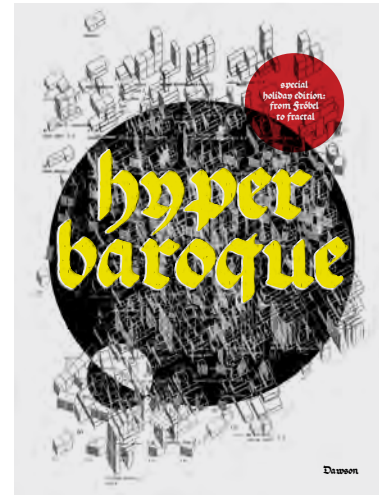
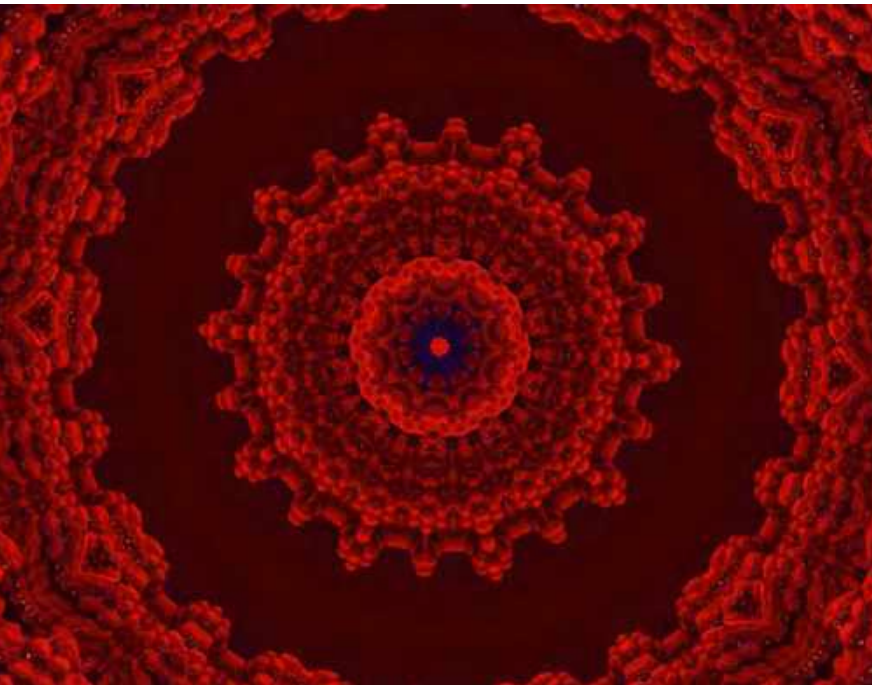




# Hyperbaroque

For my December 2019 mid-thesis review I built a 4×10 foot light table, coded an infinitely-mutating Mandelbulb mandala animation and staged an Ornamental Sermon, playing Serbian liturgical music and burning Orthodox incense as I presented my aggregate work on transparencies atop an illuminated light box. For me this project was both a celebration of the excess of ornament and a chance to both codify and synthesize a great deal of digital and fabricated three-dimensional exploratory work in a single multi-sensory experiential environment.

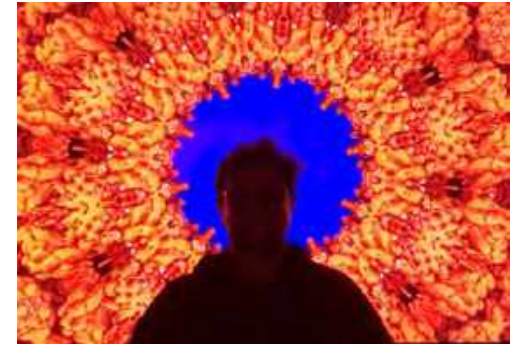
Watch the video here: <https://rb.gy/78zo2e>  
And view the website: [www.hyperbaroque.com](http://www.hyperbaroque.com)



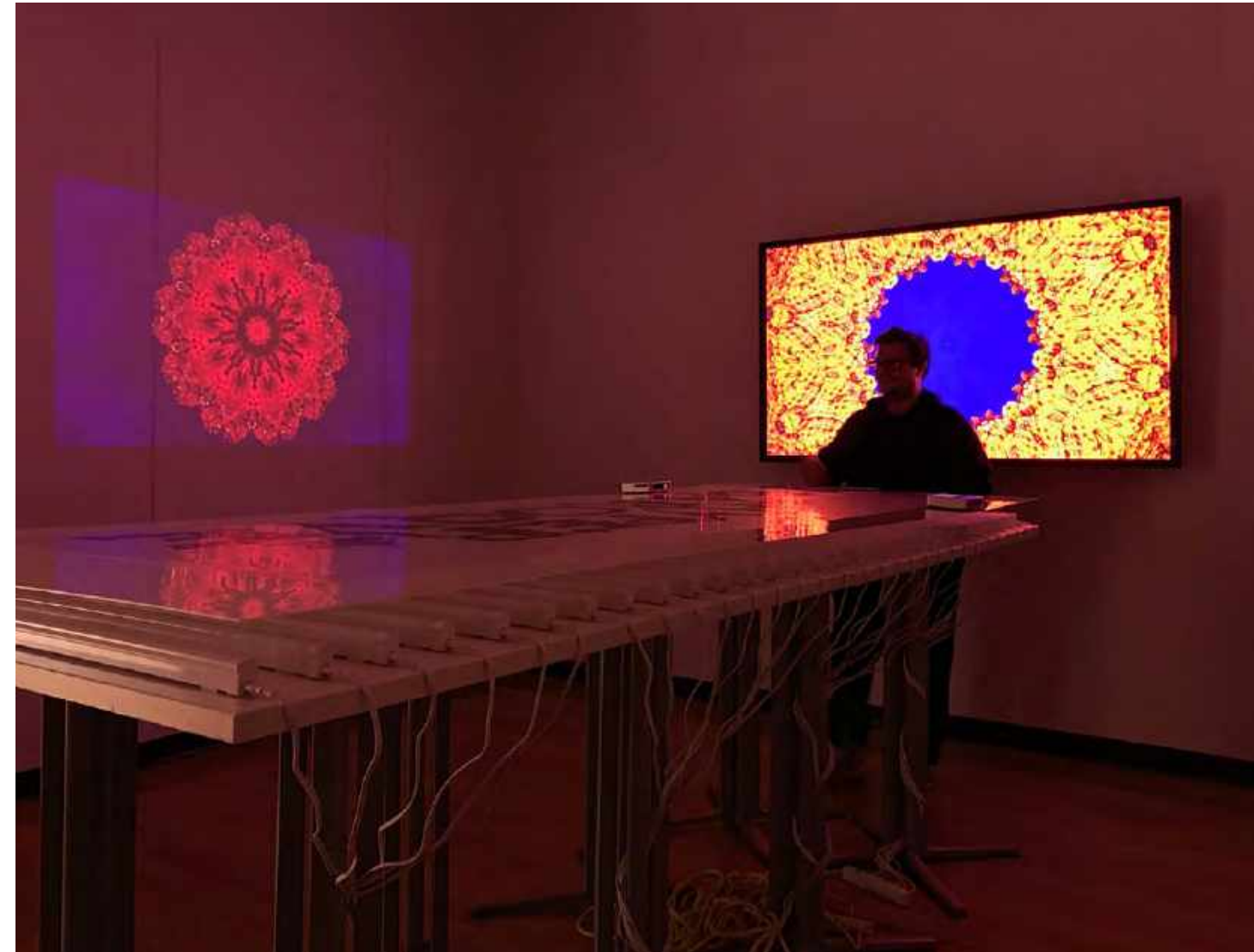
Above: the front cover of my final reflection document for this piece.

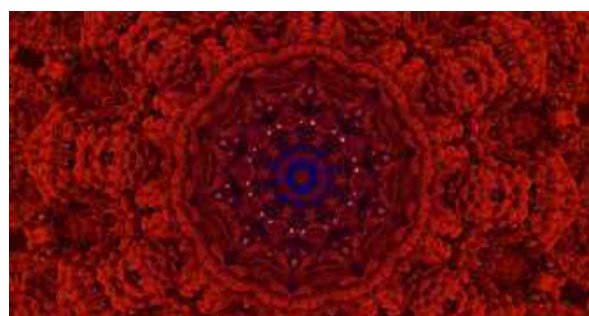
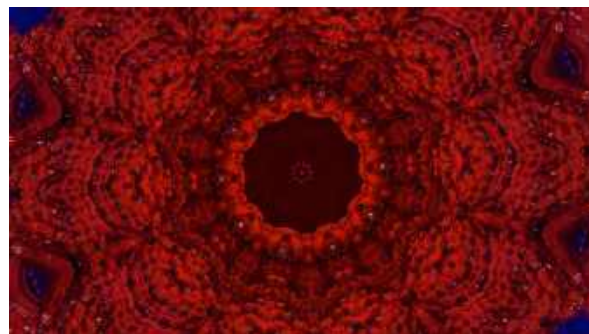
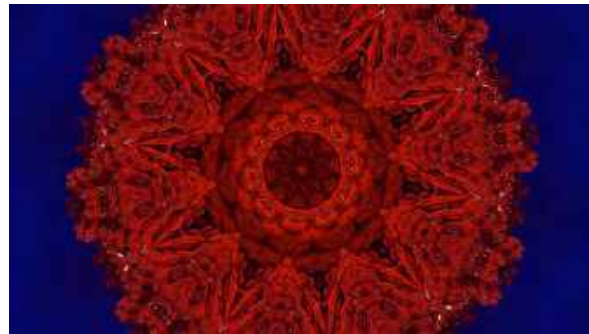
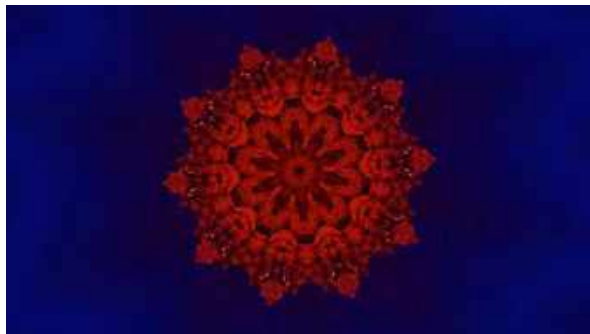
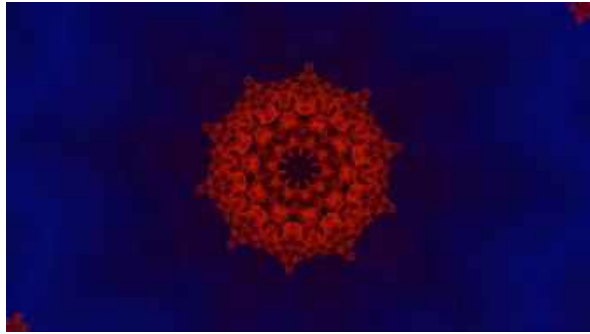
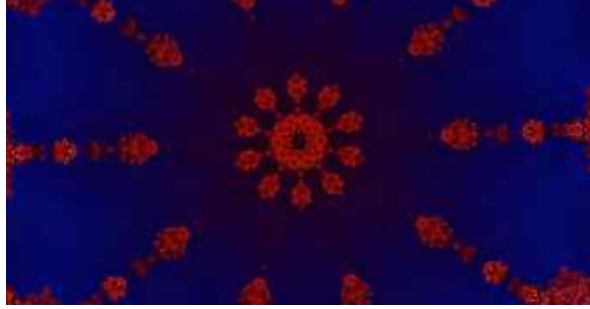
Left: a still from my *Hyperbaroque* presentation, which featured a kaleidoscoped mandelbulb animation set to Serbian liturgical music.

*FYI:* Mandelbulbs are 3D fractals that take their name from the Polish-French mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot (1924–2010), who coined the term *fractal* and whose eponymous Mandelbrot set revolutionized fractal geometry research.



Delusions of grandeur: here's a photo of me posing as an Orthodox Saint by Anastasiia Raina.





Stills from the Mandelbulb mandala animation.











MODULARITY

*in* CONGRUENCE

BEAUTY JOY

*a* SYMMETRY

*inter* MEDIATE

BAROQUE

GOMETRY

RECURSION

APOSEMATISM

*the* SUPPLEMENT

ORNAMENT

PATTERN

SHAPE  
GRAMMARS

CONTINUA

SPATIALITY



TILING MOIRÉ

*a*PERIODIC

*bi*AXIAL CRAFT

INTERSTITIAL

MANIFOLD

*ortho*  
*stereo* GRAPHIC

SYSTEMIC

*rhizo*MATIC

INFINITY

*field* THEORY

CARTESIAN

SYMPOIESIS

LANGUAGE

SYNTAX KIN

VOCABULARY

REPETITION



I couldn't have asked for a more positive response to my presentation!  
Photo: Sadia Quddus

What do you want to do? Keep going but also focus it. Get a psychological head start on the book (3 books). Embed the research. Want to come out with something to keep revisiting. Why do you keep returning to this? Something there that you haven't quite yet understood. When you were talking about Loos and mutation and ornamentation. A book about ornamentation that the essay about Baroque and how its tied to culture. The idea of the Baroque and what it stands for is about culture and everything that's deemed as "low culture" but is full of life. He's Latin American. Denise's essay on the decorative and ornamental cultures. Geoffrey Keedy and Denise's crits who are rehabilitating ornamentation and bring it back to a contemporary design practice = theorize that! Wonderful example of "search". At some point you need to reflect on and synthesize what you're learning and what you want us to get out of it = at some point you may have to cut your search short. Tell us what you've discovered and help us figure it out. Never going to get at the bottom of this. In this search, there's a lot of research into mathematical pattern, and artistic/cultural ornament; where's the overlap of those things, where's the criticality of those things? I.e. what's your POV of how those inform each other or don't, or how you enter into these things. You could put those really far away, or overlay them, find distance or closeness. How do you express the inherent overlapping and layering? You've done it literally through the acetate but can you push it/synthesize it/ etc. The embedded map within African fractals. The questions of direction and too muchness are the wrong questions. Pattern is universal = we've been trying to create universal languages, etc It exists everywhere and is embedded everywhere, with tons of research on the formal aspects of specific compositions. The criticality comes in in the sense that at what point does this become universal? And when is that universality something we are trying to suppress? Think about moments in history and how we engage with this then = overflow versus cleanup. Points of connection and universality; points of separation between nations and the reasons for this separation. Ornament as you've portrayed here is not to succumb to a confluency = there's no figuration; how do you gain access to a language that's beyond our figurality, this is a way of dazzling and perforating our attachment to the material world. Questioning



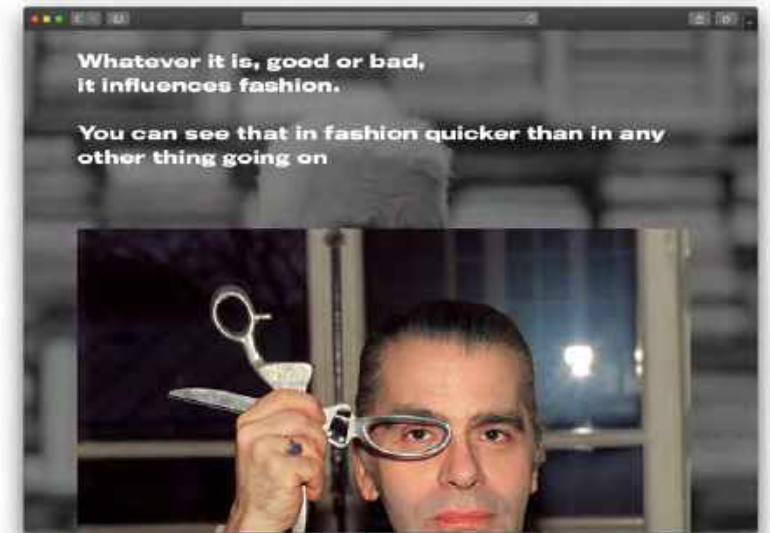
the idea of Baroque. This has a lot more meticulousness than the definition of the Baroque space which was deliberately meant to be mutational. This is more of sacred geometry, more ordered. BUT what happens when it's overlaid with the music? Hyper seems disembodied, but this is very embodied. Can baroque refer to a way of working and a practice for you? This is such a generative process, but there needs to be points where you reflect back to a system and how you contextualize it = you need to come up with a framework. The order versus the fluidity/organic pieces = a richness in that conversation. Can you make a distinction between the ordered geometry and the natural/organic forms to really probe what questions you're exploring. Returning to your more provocative moral critique (Modernist principles). What would it look like if complexity was seen as something beautiful and necessary and important rather than something to be cleaned up? It's not the work of savages = this has caused so much harm ecologically, socially, politically, etc. Returning to that moral dimension (our society thinks its making rational decisions but its actually making aesthetic decisions) could really help you frame this and create a focus and direction. Talk to Neil at the building beside the Nature Lab regarding the Loeb collection. Also a poetic connection, and a connection to music. Look at Islamic ornament. Find ways of applying this to different surfaces, concepts. Time to make editorial decisions and frame some of the issues; ways the Design is going back to how design used to be where people designed their own type, paper, etc etc. Abstracting and removing us from our nature = bring in lessons and forms from nature; return technology back to nature; nature IS technology. Beautiful moment of experimenting with this process of participatory and invitational presentation/lecture earlier. You're starting to gain a mastery = maintain this exuberance and immediacy. There's a part of you that's very much a director; that director part of you exists regardless of what you're doing; we're seeing a hint of your mastery of it. Curating this visual feast for us. You've brought people together in a circle where everyone is facing one another and is conversing with one another; democratic and beautiful process. Also a history lesson; you're filtering us through history; allows us to create something that will be; you're moving us through time and that's a beautiful experience.

# Karlisms

Karl Otto Lagerfeld (1933–2019) was a German fashion designer, artist, photographer and caricaturist who lived in Paris. He was best known as the creative director of the French fashion house Chanel, a position he held from 1983 until his death on the 19th of February 2019. Recognized for his signature white hair, black sunglasses, fingerless gloves and starched detachable collars, for me Karl represents the apex of 20th century fashion's achievement, the epitome of its excess and the marker of its decline. Sewn into his story are timeless themes of identity, mortality, self-determination and re-invention, truth, façade and legacy. Lagerfeld will also be remembered for his lavish eccentricities—including a contractual requirement to be served Diet Coke® in a crystal chalice—and perhaps most importantly, his often-controversial, but always-funny witticisms. As a tribute to Lagerfeld, I made this site on the day he died.



The text from my mum which inspired me to make something about Lagerfeld for this one-day design prompt.











# The Anecdotal Almanac

*The Anecdotal Almanac* brings together more than one thousand images I had posted to my blog in 2018 and provides the personal anecdotes and associations I have with each image. As I wrote in the book's introduction:

*The Pacific Barreleye fish looks through its brain to see more, and see better. This is how I live on the internet. Everything I find of value I reblog. Every other day I have to go back and look through my internet brain: [blog.aleksdawson.com](http://blog.aleksdawson.com)*

*This book serves as an archive of my archive, and an attempt to loosely recollect the stories—my stories—behind the images.*



The Pacific Barreleye looks through its brain to see more, and see better. This is how I live on the internet. Everything I find of value I reblog. Every other day I have to go back and look through my internet brain: [blog.aleksdawson.com](http://blog.aleksdawson.com)

This book serves as an archive of my archive, and an attempt to loosely recollect the stories -- my stories -- behind the images.

Please enjoy.



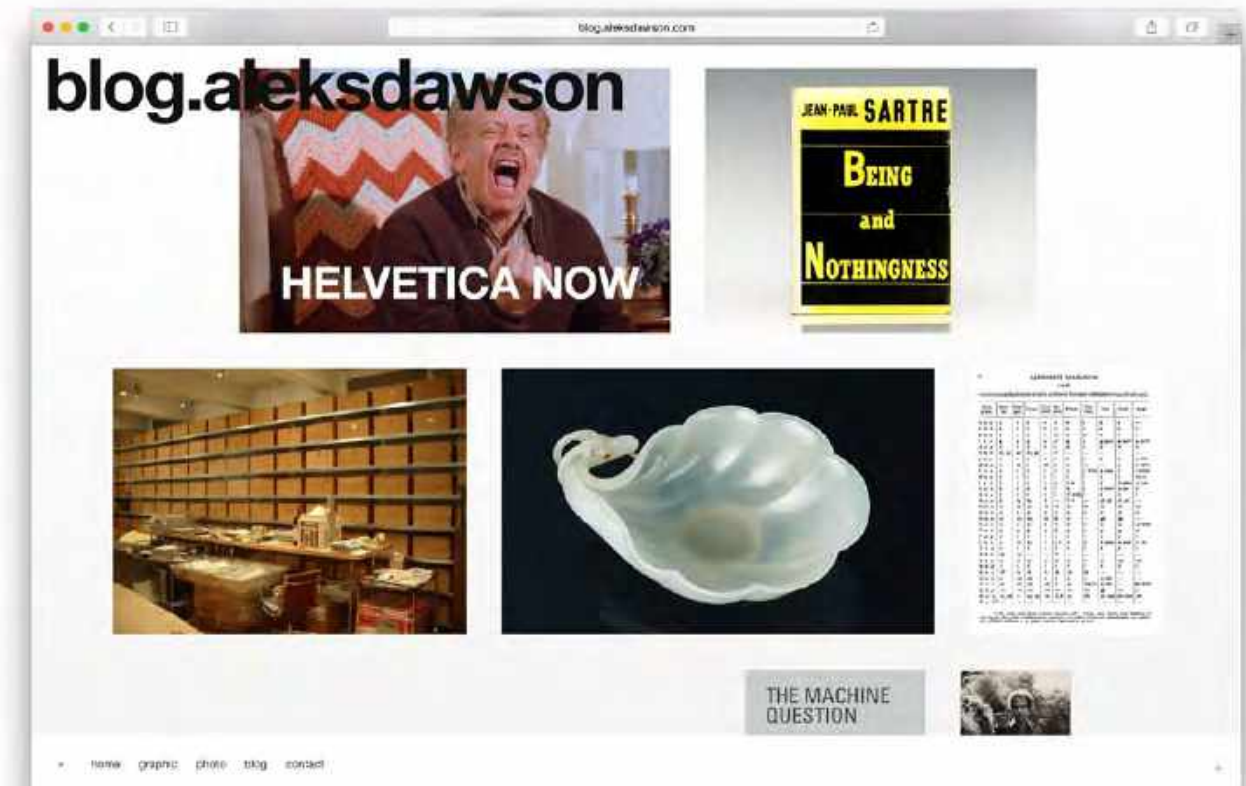
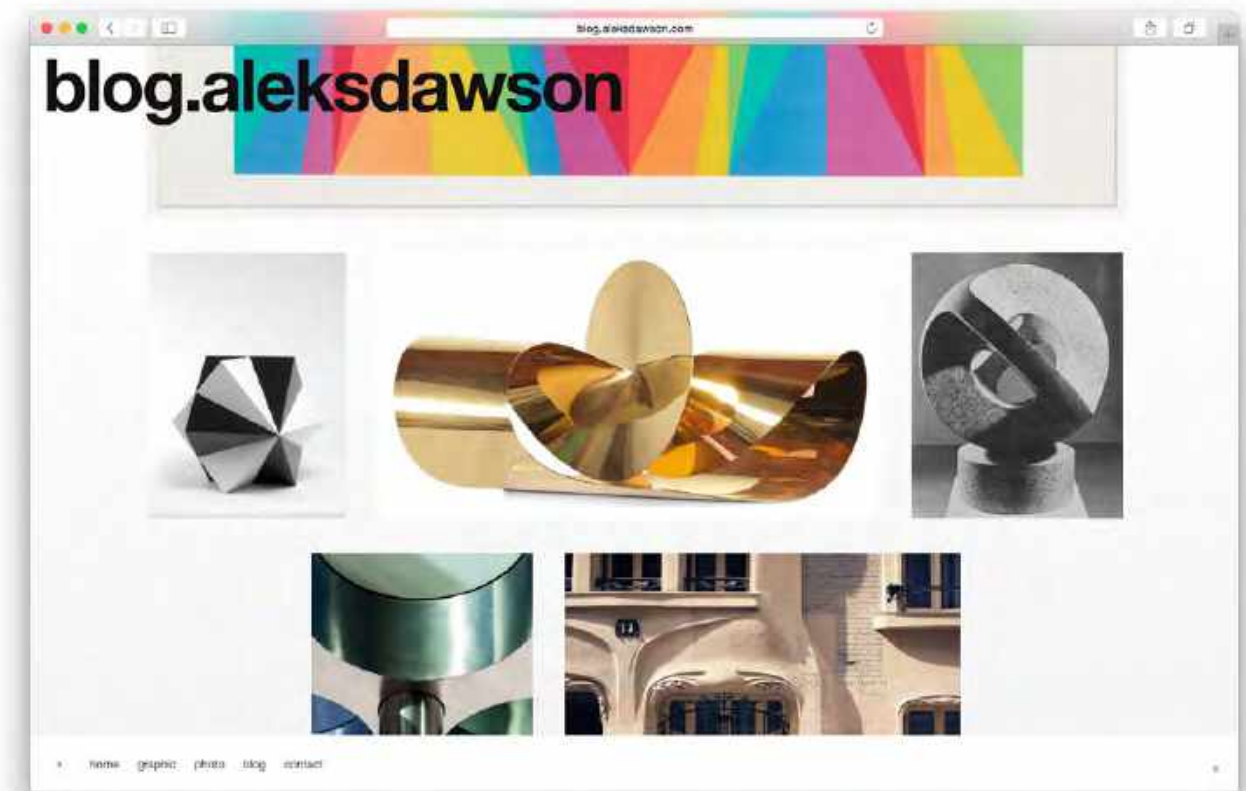




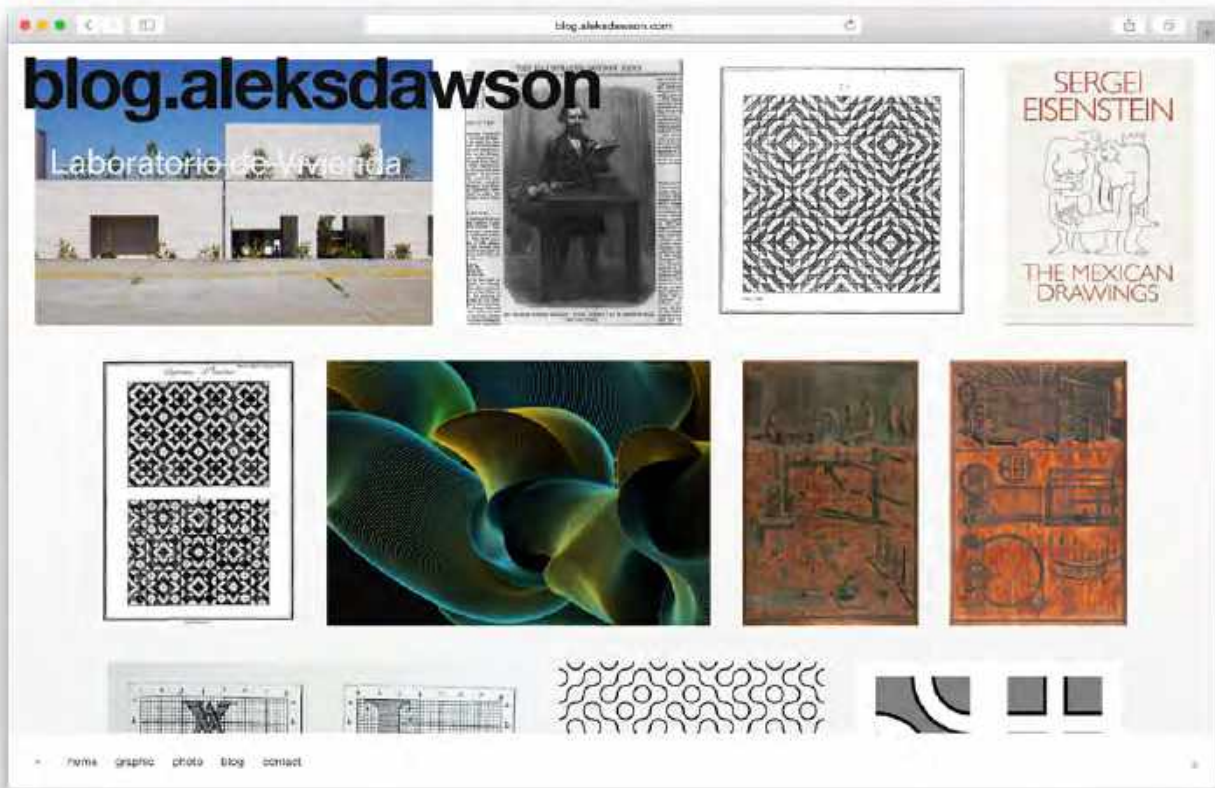
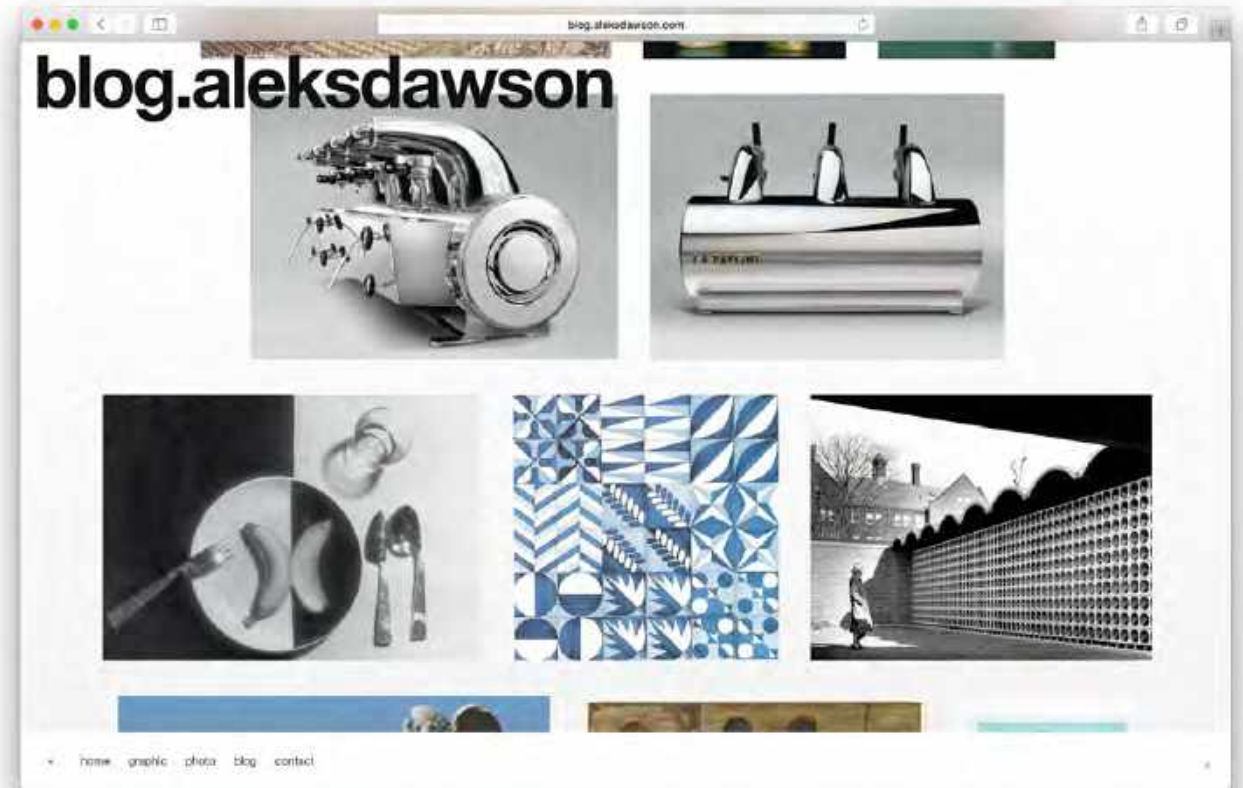
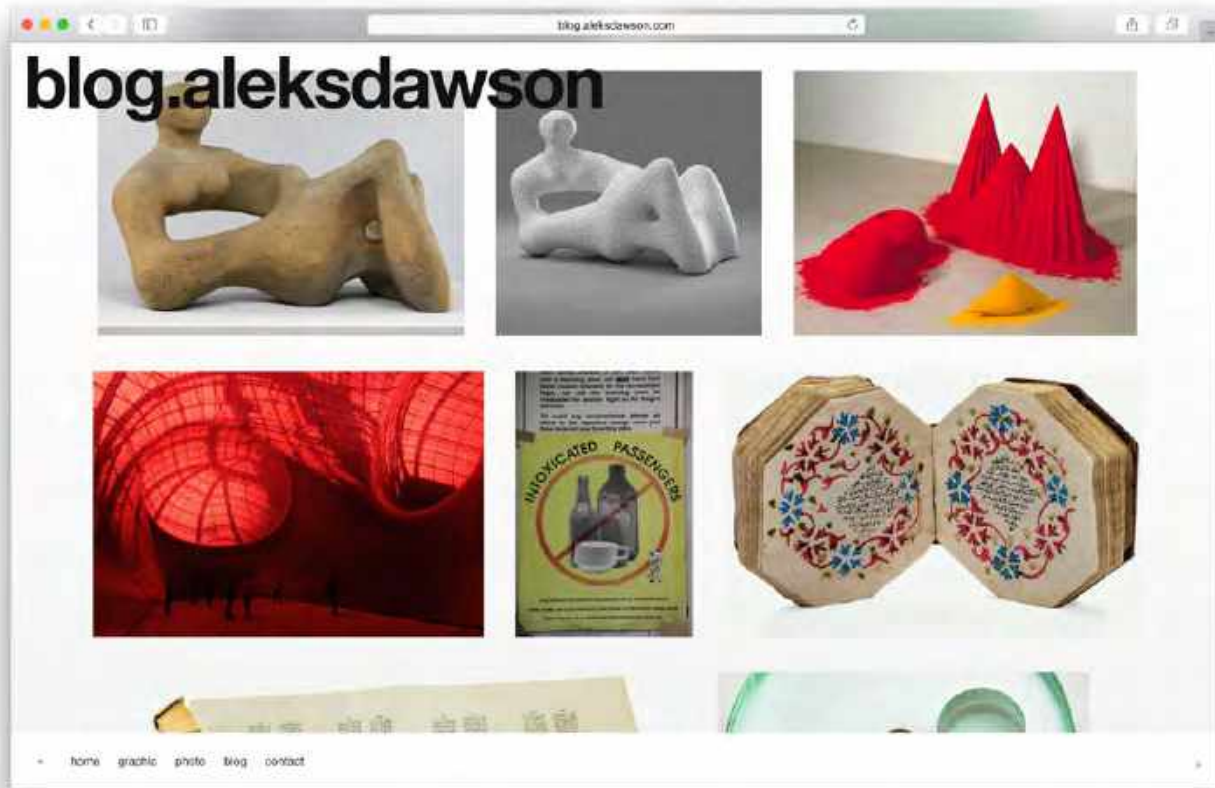
# Image Collection

For over a decade I have been obsessed with collecting images, so much so that my hard drives at one point sported over fifty thousand pictures. Since moving my collection online in 2016, I have posted more than ten thousand images of design, art, architecture, nature and current events to which I am drawn, and to which I often return for inspiration on form, composition, color, image and font. I also use my blog almost daily to ‘wash’ my eyes, loosen up my process and remind myself of the types, forms and quality of work and thinking which I like, and aspire to produce myself. I can browse for hours on end, poring over hundreds of images, posting anything I find of value. Every other day I have to go back and look through my image collection. In this way, my website is the truest record of my creative process.

During this thesis process I have posted anything of relevance to what I was thinking, writing, reading or making. Like Hansel and Gretel leaving crumbs to find their way home, I leave digital crumbs for myself. These collections allow me to organize and synthesize what amounts to far too much visual and written information on a daily basis—as such, they serve as both record and personal resource: after all, what’s past is prologue.



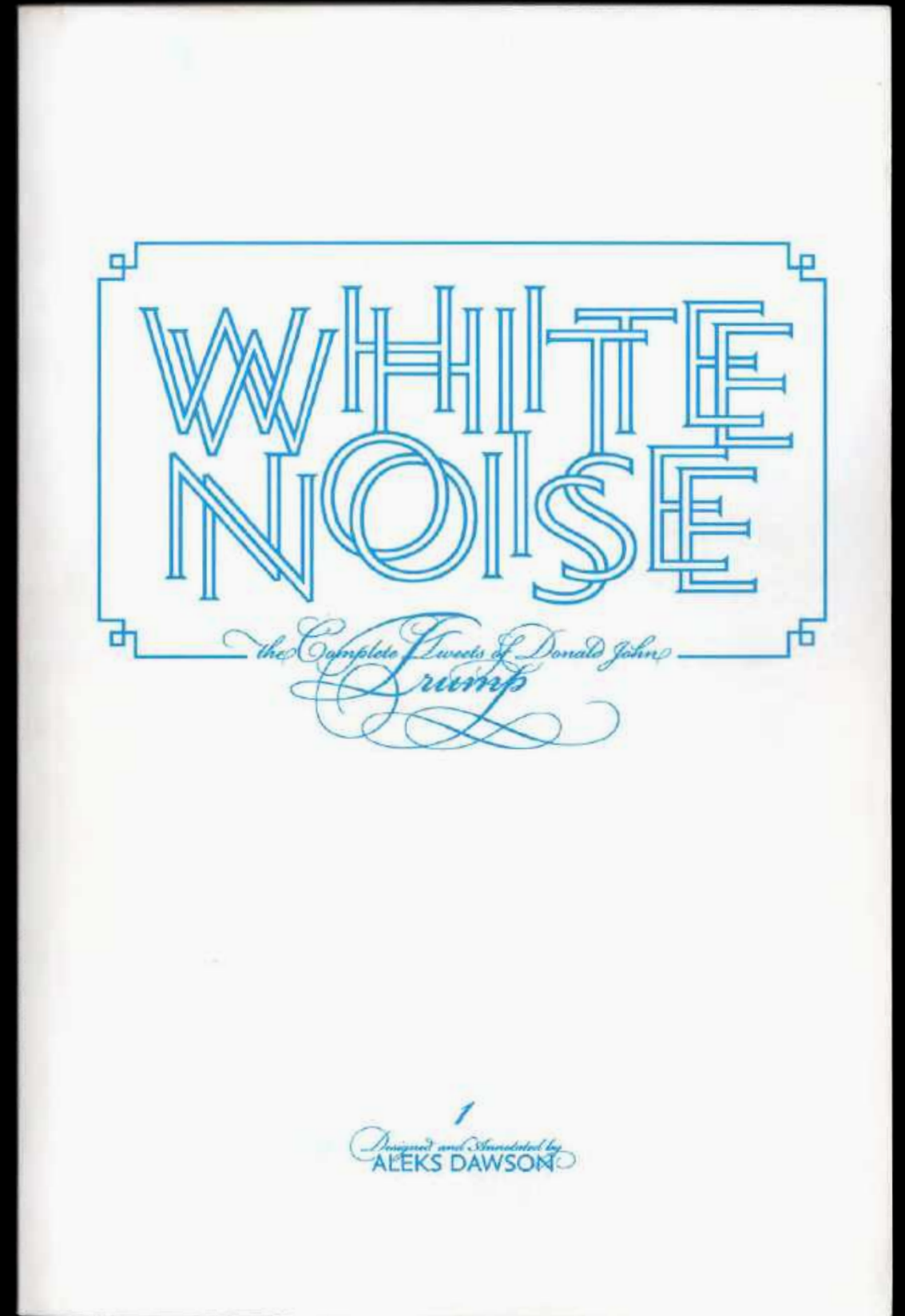




# White Noise

This two-volume, 1,200+ page work features the complete tweets of President Donald J. Trump, highlighting a selected 'Trumpian' vocabulary with tint denoting frequency of use. The darker the highlighted word, the more frequent its use. When printed in 2018, this work included all 33,127 tweets—over 800,000 words—since Trump joined Twitter on May 4, 2009. I feel the books are an accurate portrait of a person who believes in nothing but their own survival—at any cost.

*Made for Design Studio Two  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Two Thousand and Eighteen*



clip- [Twitter for iPhone]-#6572.Feb 7, 2016 11:29:09 AM-#Great to meet everyone while having breakfast @ChezVachon this morning! #FITN #VoteTrumpNH <https://t.co/25UwkinUOd> <https://t.co/bmZvSmWe7Y> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6573.Feb 7, 2016 09:54:35 AM-#ABCPolitics #GOPDebate #MakeAmericaGreatAgain #FITN <https://t.co/M6wrUGQox> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6574.Feb 7, 2016 08:46:44 AM-#I will be on Meet the Press with Chuck Todd on NBC this morning. Enjoy! <https://t.co/EIyyfFnPs> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6575.Feb 7, 2016 08:43:47 AM-#I am on @foxandfriends now! Tune in! [Twitter for iPhone]-#6576.Feb 7, 2016 08:19:33 AM-#I will be on State of the Union @CNN with @jaketapper at 9am. Enjoy! [Twitter for iPhone]-#6577.Feb 7, 2016 05:53:35 AM-#JoeNBC @jonkarl: "This has been a great debate for Donald Trump." [Twitter for Android]-#6578.Feb 7, 2016 05:52:45 AM-#JoeNBC: Trump just talked on MSNBC like a man who knows he had a very good night." [Twitter for Android]-#6579.Feb 7, 2016 05:51:04 AM-#piersmorgan: Trump won that debate. People can huff & puff all they like but he was the best candidate on the night. #GOPDebate [Twitter for Android]-#6580.Feb 7, 2016 05:50:05 AM-#piersmorgan: Jeb Bush was as ineffectual as ever. As always, @David\_Gergen calls it right. Trump held them off. #GOPDebate [Twitter for Android]-#6581.Feb 7, 2016 05:46:39 AM-#newtgingrich: Trump shows courage in defending eminent domain as a necessity for construction of infrastructure [Twitter for Android]-#6582.Feb 7, 2016 05:44:53 AM-#newtgingrich: Trump hits it out of the park in describing effective deal making [Twitter for Android]-#6583.Feb 7, 2016 05:37:08 AM-#JoeNBC: Trump, Kasich, Jeb and Christie all had good nights." [Twitter for Android]-#6584.Feb 7, 2016 05:35:28 AM-#JoeNBC: Latest UMass Tracking Poll. NH GOP Trump 35 (+1) Rubio 14 (-1) Cruz 13 (-1) Feb 10 (+2) Kasich 10 (+2) [Twitter for Android]-#6585.Feb 7, 2016 05:27:04 AM-#JoeNBC: Cokie Roberts says Donald Trump had a really good night." [Twitter for Android]-#6586.Feb 7, 2016 05:26:39 AM-#GOP\_Left\_Me @JoeNBC: Donald Trump won that debate hands down. Christie beat up Rubio [Twitter for Android]-#6587.Feb 7, 2016 05:24:33 AM-#MarkIalperin: My debate report card: Christie A-, Trump A-, Bush B+, Kasich B+, Cruz B, Carson C, Rubio D. Full report cards here. [Twitter for Android]-#6588.Feb 7, 2016 05:20:40 AM-#JoeNBC: Cruz really seems out of his element in New Hampshire. It is such a different battlefield than Iowa and the South." [Twitter for Android]-#6589.Feb 7, 2016 01:27:24 AM-#ABC:DonaldTrump: "The police in this country have done an unbelievable job of keeping law and order." #GOPDebate <https://t.co/t2ocHF16H3> [Twitter for Android]-#6590.Feb 7, 2016 01:26:17 AM-#ABCPolitics: @realDonaldTrump dominating @Google searches throughout #GPLFers. <https://t.co/IF35C2jcon> [Twitter for Android]-#6591.Feb 7, 2016 01:24:11 AM-#ABCPolitics: @realDonaldTrump led in @rtwitter conversation during the #GOPDebate. <https://t.co/ZuMwroT8dI> [Twitter for Android]-#6592.Feb 6, 2016 07:14:01 PM-#Come join us at the Verizon Wireless Center- Manchester, New Hampshire on 2/8! Register now: <https://t.co/xK5HYX226k> <https://t.co/zjRpnoV2lh> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6593.Feb 6, 2016 06:00:50 PM-#RT @EricTrump: Debate ready!!! @realDonaldTrump #MakeAmericaGreatAgain #TrumpTrain <https://t.co/qE6suiO315> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6594.Feb 6, 2016 04:40:04 PM-#I love New Hampshire - will be an exciting evening! [Twitter for Android]-#6595.Feb 6, 2016 03:04:09 PM-#realOllieTaylor: @paintedmy: IA caucus hasn't picked nominee in 16 years! Cruz dirty tricks stole it. Trump way ahead in primary states. [Twitter for Android]-#6596.Feb 6, 2016 02:41:46 PM-#paintedmyjeans: If I owned a big company that was failing, I'd hire Donald Trump to make it great again-Rubio/Cruz wouldnt be considered" [Twitter for Android]-#6597.Feb 6, 2016 02:10:45 PM-#big\_carsonrocks: AMERICA...Stop being duped...WAKE UP Cruz & Rubio establishment phonies. Donald Trump only truthful & not owned candidate" [Twitter for Android]-#6598.Feb 6, 2016 12:57:43 PM-#Enlighthent2881: @ukcatwoman52 @ericlin @AC360 How come Rubio&Cruz are going to turn America around but did nothing in the Senate for USA? [Twitter for Android]-#6599.Feb 6, 2016 12:57:49 PM-#Join me tomor-

row in Plymouth, New Hampshire! #FITN #NHPrimary <https://t.co/zQcD1mCwM> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6600.Feb 6, 2016 10:18:18 AM-#The New Hampshire drug epidemic must stop. If elected POTUS- I will create borders & the drugs will stop pouring in. <https://t.co/YdEnhqTbS> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6601.Feb 6, 2016 09:44:08 AM-#lisabrossman: @ukcatwoman52 @ericlin @AC360 He is for America! Security for America! Jobs for America! There is no other leader!" [Twitter for Android]-#6602.Feb 6, 2016 09:37:35 AM-#Wow, Jeb Bush, whose campaign is a total disaster, had to bring in mommy to take a slap at me. Not nice! [Twitter for Android]-#6603.Feb 5, 2016 11:03:54 PM-#billrey16929057: @seanhannity #Hannity @realDonaldTrump is the only hope to #MAKEAMERICAGREAT AGAIN" [Twitter for Android]-#6604.Feb 5, 2016 10:51:33 PM-#ukcatwoman52 @ericlin @AC360 all candidates liars. Trump is the only one that speak the truth people need to hear what Trump is saying." [Twitter for Android]-#6605.Feb 5, 2016 10:26:39 PM-#autumnandews08: @realDonaldTrump Trump Will WIN the Debate like he has WON ALL the others! He is heads above the rest! #VoteTrump! Thanks! [Twitter for Android]-#6606.Feb 5, 2016 10:26:13 PM-#ericlin: @AC360 Donald Trump: no raise in 8 years, home not worth what I paid for it, healthcare is a joke Obama is a liar. TRUMP 2016" [Twitter for Android]-#6607.Feb 5, 2016 10:20:34 PM-#Border agent: "We might as well abolish our immigration laws altogether." <https://t.co/LsrIXzCyjr> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6608.Feb 5, 2016 10:10:23 PM-#I said this was happening long ago- I will stop this immediately! <https://t.co/IWXGbBVvvt> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6609.Feb 5, 2016 09:51:26 PM-#It never ends! <https://t.co/vdErsf5H6> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6610.Feb 5, 2016 09:42:58 PM-#I told you so. Our country totally lost control of illegal immigration, even with criminals. <https://t.co/IzqZr6BgB> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6611.Feb 5, 2016 09:08:16 PM-#10,000 people in South Carolina, unbelievable evening! Will be in New Hampshire tomorrow- love it. <https://t.co/tF035Yju3> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6612.Feb 5, 2016 09:01:35 PM-#Really dumb @CherilJacobus. Begged my people for a job. Turned her down twice and she went hostile. Major loser. zero credibility! [Twitter for iPhone]-#6613.Feb 5, 2016 06:14:41 PM-#Dharmabum77: Donald Trump loves America! He loves Americans! He loves our Vets! #TrumpSupporters @realDonaldTrump <https://t.co/Ngc0HRLj2M> [Twitter for Android]-#6614.Feb 5, 2016 06:13:50 PM-#RT @seanhannity: Watch: Donald Trump OWNS A Heckler Who Said Illegal Immigrants Are The Backbone Of America <https://t.co/cRAOziP0pH> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6615.Feb 5, 2016 06:13:07 PM-#MaryAnn1942: @realDonaldTrump why vote for Trump? Unlike politicians all talk, Trump, AOs talk materializes! He will make America great again [Twitter for Android]-#6616.Feb 5, 2016 05:53:20 PM-#Join me at Clemson University on Wednesday, February 10th! #MakeAmericaGreatAgain <https://t.co/X6tp1bpIhI> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6617.Feb 5, 2016 04:12:15 PM-#Heading to South Carolina, really big crowd! Will be back in New Hampshire tomorrow. #MakeAmericaGreatAgain [Twitter for iPhone]-#6618.Feb 5, 2016 03:36:19 PM-#Such great support in New Hampshire. So many people are working so hard to #MakeAmericaGreatAgain! [Twitter Web Client]-#6619.Feb 5, 2016 03:29:19 PM-#I very much look forward to tomorrow, AOs debate in New Hampshire. Also many things to say, so much at stake. It will be an incredible evening! [Twitter Web Client]-#6620.Feb 5, 2016 12:46:58 PM-#Live Free or Die: A motto for the whole country to follow. #NewHampshire #FITN #VoteTrumpNH <https://t.co/W04ezOy28v> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6621.Feb 5, 2016 11:50:49 AM-#Big storm in New Hampshire. Moved my event to Monday. Will be there next four days. [Twitter Web Client]-#6622.Feb 5, 2016 11:32:50 AM-#Join us Monday, February 8th @ the Verizon Wireless Arena in Manchester, New Hampshire! #FITN #NHPolitics #Trump2016 <https://t.co/1Vlhj6O6Z> [Twitter for iPhone]-#6623.Feb 4, 2016 08:54:50 PM-#@rkswaney7: @CNN @realDonaldTrump I agree. Great businessman. I like your tone tonight! Keep it up & you'll have this Democrats vote." [Twitter for Android]-#6624.Feb 4, 2016 08:03:23 PM-#Watch @AC360 on NOW! @CNN [Twitter for Android]-#6625.Feb 4, 2016 05:28:58 PM-#I will be interviewed by Anderson Cooper at

economic impact in US... Let's tell this story! #pga14annual @pgaofamerica <http://t.co/6oDjx-rvRZn> [Twitter for Android] - 15521.Nov 21, 2014 09:49:34 PM - 28.6 M non-golfers were interested in golf in 2013. The highest interest being expressed by #Millennials 18 to 29 yrs old #pga [Twitter for Android] - 15522.Nov 21, 2014 09:48:45 PM - 7 @gsurrette: Listening to @realDonaldTrump present @pgaofamerica annual meeting. Great information great speaker #pga <http://t.co/gvNjdqRFX9> [Twitter for Android] - 15523.Nov 21, 2014 05:54:48 PM - 7 @ScottSummerHall @realDonaldTrump just stayed in Trump Chicago...by far the nicest hotel in Chicago. Absolutely amazing job! Great. thx. [Twitter Web Client] - 15524.Nov 21, 2014 05:12:09 PM - 4 Congratulations to Bill O'Brien on being named the Republican Speaker of the NH House. Well-earned & well-deserved. A great guy. [Twitter Web Client] - 15525.Nov 21, 2014 02:43:26 PM - 7 Be tough, be smart, be personable, but don't take things personally. That's good business. Au Ai Think Like a Champion [Twitter Web Client] - 15526.Nov 21, 2014 02:00:15 PM - 7 Trump Tower Punta del Este. A cylindrical tower redefines the essence of luxury. On the sands of Playa Brava <http://t.co/R3VilG2AVh> [Twitter Web Client] - 15527.Nov 21, 2014 01:47:18 PM - 7 Intellectuals solve problems, geniuses prevent them. Au Ai Albert Einstein [Twitter Web Client] - 15528.Nov 21, 2014 01:09:38 PM - 7 Via @SunTimes A @CSTearloften by @FSPIELMAN: Au Council sign rules mean Trump name will loom large on river. Au <http://t.co/deOC00h5U1> [Twitter Web Client] - 15529.Nov 21, 2014 11:20:59 AM - 7 Entrepreneurs: Keep your momentum. Without momentum, a lot of great ideas go nowhere. [Twitter Web Client] - 15530.Nov 21, 2014 11:17:49 AM - 7 Entrepreneurs: Problems are a mind exercise. Enjoy the challenge. [Twitter Web Client] - 15531.Nov 21, 2014 11:15:51 AM - 7 If you really want to succeed, you'll have to go for it every day. The big time isn't for slackers. Keep up your stamina and remain curious. [Twitter Web Client] - 15532.Nov 21, 2014 10:14:47 AM - 7 They're going to riot in Ferguson no matter what. [Twitter Web Client] - 15533.Nov 20, 2014 04:52:05 PM - 7 You don't necessarily need the best location. What you need is the best deal. - The Art of the Deal [Twitter Web Client] - 15534.Nov 20, 2014 04:28:06 PM - 7 With multiple space options, @TrumpChicago is the ideal venue to hold your dream wedding. <http://t.co/awVySscDfr> [Twitter Web Client] - 15535.Nov 20, 2014 04:02:47 PM - 7 Awarded 5 stars from @ForbesInspector, @TrumpTO offers 261 rooms & 115 suites in the center of downtown Toronto <http://t.co/SyCxjRp5aO> [Twitter Web Client] - 15536.Nov 20, 2014 03:46:21 PM - 7 If we do not protect the rule of law then we can expect even more illegals to cross the border. Obama's executive amnesty is dangerous. [Twitter Web Client] - 15537.Nov 20, 2014 03:29:55 PM - 7 Iraq should be paying us while we fight ISIS. Give the money to the families of our brave soldiers. [Twitter Web Client] - 15538.Nov 20, 2014 03:16:47 PM - 7 @BlairKamin Sorry sucker, as usual you lose again. You couldn't work for me for 10 seconds. Bad critic - great sign. <http://t.co/3uSYL9qR5U> [Twitter Web Client] - 15539.Nov 20, 2014 02:16:41 PM - 7 New York City's iconic architectural masterpiece @TrumpTowerNY houses prime commercial, residential & retail space <http://t.co/eD-K291RdmF> [Twitter Web Client] - 15540.Nov 20, 2014 01:55:07 PM - 7 I enjoyed meeting with @MattBlunt @TrumpTowerNY to discuss why our government must address currency manipulation. Many US jobs are at stake. [Twitter Web Client] - 15541.Nov 20, 2014 12:11:06 PM - 7 Au Success in golf depends less on strength of body than upon strength of mind and character. Au - Arnold Palmer [Twitter Web Client] - 15542.Nov 20, 2014 10:20:46 AM - 7 The Trumping of Turnberry" via s Magazine @TrumpTurnberry <http://t.co/4k5uB6gyn2> [Twitter Web Client] - 15543.Nov 20, 2014 09:36:28 AM - 7 Repubs must not allow Pres Obama to subvert the Constitution of the US for his own benefit & because he is unable to negotiate w/ Congress. [Twitter Web Client] - 15544.Nov 20, 2014 07:52:48 AM - 7 I am no fan of Bill Cosby but never-the-less some free advice- If you are innocent, do not remain silent. You look guilty as hell. [Twitter for Android] - 15545.Nov 19, 2014 05:24:43 PM - 7 Sneak peek of Trump's trio of spectacular new seaside holes on the famed Ailsa course @

TrumpTurnberry <http://t.co/zaq31Ckd5f> [Twitter Web Client] - 15546.Nov 19, 2014 04:22:15 PM - 7 @lakemurray\_32 @realDonaldTrump the haters are just jealous of your unbelievable success #Trump2016 Thank you. [Twitter Web Client] - 15547.Nov 19, 2014 04:17:46 PM - 7 If you don't publicize your successes, your competitors will be sure to belittle them. Get the word out! [Twitter Web Client] - 15548.Nov 19, 2014 03:16:51 PM - 7 WATCH Ai WH official says that ObamaCare/RomneyCare architect Gruber was an important figure in crafting the law <http://t.co/L9679gtq82> [Twitter Web Client] - 15549.Nov 19, 2014 03:14:34 PM - 7 Au If you like your plan you keep it. Au = Au Gruber is just some adviser. Au Two of Obama's greatest lies told to the American public. [Twitter Web Client] - 15550.Nov 19, 2014 02:54:01 PM - 7 Open for the 2014 season, Mar-a-Lago Club is an architectural masterpiece offering the finest amenities in the world <http://t.co/Oa3E1MG-Pq> [Twitter Web Client] - 15551.Nov 19, 2014 02:50:16 PM - 7 Au Get in. Get it done. Get it done right. Get out. Au Ai Fred C. Trump (My father) [Twitter Web Client] - 15552.Nov 19, 2014 02:35:18 PM - 7 Via @TV3Xpose: Au @vankaTrump: Think pink in the boardroom. Au <http://t.co/S9KxxEo6ae> [Twitter Web Client] - 15553.Nov 19, 2014 11:10:08 AM - 7 For those that constantly say that global warming is now climate change, Au they changed the name. The name global warming wasn't working. [Twitter Web Client] - 15554.Nov 19, 2014 09:36:56 AM - 7 Power Lunching next to the #BlueMonster: <http://t.co/11QJSmAcki> via @UrbanDaddy cc @TrumpDoral [Twitter Web Client] - 15555.Nov 19, 2014 09:17:09 AM - 7 @BlakeHoagland What is the best advice you could give to a young entrepreneur: Mr. Trump? You have to be passionate about your work. [Twitter Web Client] - 15556.Nov 19, 2014 08:29:47 AM - 7 @RafaelMerrydel: @realDonaldTrump can Obama salvage his presidency by going to Ferguson and bringing peace? No! [Twitter for Android] - 15557.Nov 19, 2014 08:29:12 AM - 7 @nikkio: Donald Trump @greta Donald Trump helped out more than Obama did with #AndrewTahmoorissi - The 25K check was a wonderful gesture. [Twitter for Android] - 15558.Nov 19, 2014 08:28:03 AM - 7 @TheRealMasonS: Protect Ya Neck. Wear @realDonaldTrump ties. <http://t.co/8QgA00CEg> [Twitter for Android] - 15559.Nov 19, 2014 08:26:19 AM - 7 @ettuandyou: @realDonaldTrump I've got to tell you, I love love LOVE the Trump in Toronto. [Twitter for Android] - 15560.Nov 18, 2014 08:38:41 PM - 7 @greta: Donald Trump sent me check for \$25k payable to #Tahmoorissi - I forwarded check: THANK U DONALD TRUMP! very kind <http://t.co/vvGelWyc5w> [Twitter for Android] - 15561.Nov 18, 2014 08:05:09 PM - 7 @sggfkfn: Donald Trump when will you next appear on television? I am very interested in your opinion of the current NYC real-estate market. [Twitter for Android] - 15562.Nov 18, 2014 08:04:26 PM - 7 @Daniell10YNWA: @realDonaldTrump you're the man Mr. Trump. [Twitter for Android] - 15563.Nov 18, 2014 08:03:27 PM - 7 @job51: @realDonaldTrump Trump is so important, that every time he's makes a decision, it's good for the economy. [Twitter for Android] - 15564.Nov 18, 2014 07:59:19 PM - 7 There are many Jonathan Gruber types selling the global warming "stuff" - and they really do believe the American public is stupid. [Twitter for Android] - 15565.Nov 18, 2014 04:55:20 PM - 7 Entrepreneurs: always remember that deals are fluid. Terms are always negotiable and time can be the best option for success. [Twitter Web Client] - 15566.Nov 18, 2014 04:46:55 PM - 7 The #WomenWhoWork campaign from @vankaTrump <http://t.co/vsAAiCXHle> Ai [Twitter Web Client] - 15567.Nov 18, 2014 04:01:24 PM - 7 Au The true competitors are the ones who always play to win. Au Ai Tom Brady @Patriots [Twitter Web Client] - 15568.Nov 18, 2014 03:44:14 PM - 7 ObamaCare will continue to stop entrepreneurship, slow growth and halt research & development. Defund, Repeal & Replace! [Twitter Web Client] - 15569.Nov 18, 2014 03:23:59 PM - 7 Au Remember that some things are worth waiting for. Plans can change, sometimes for good reason. Au Ai Trump Never Give Up [Twitter Web Client] - 15570.Nov 18, 2014 03:08:15 PM - 7 Watch Ai Obama in 2006: Au, Aove stolen ideas from Jonathan Gruber. Au <http://t.co/Obly0a2OSy> And now Obama claims he is just some adviser. [Twitter Web Client] - 15571.Nov 18,

PM-#CelebrityApprentice Listening to the advice from @johnrich and @marleematin is another insight into the Final 4. #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51364.May 6, 2012 09:42:22 PM-#sweepstweet @5nVMusic I very much rely on my own. Aotake. A6 of the situation and people involved. My instincts (cont) http://t.co/KjrV13IV-#Twitter Web Client-#51365.May 6, 2012 09:38:02 PM-#Sweepstweet @clayalken might get some use out of the Chi Touch digital hairdryer. Not the same for @arsenioofficial-#Twitter Web Client-#51366.May 6, 2012 09:35:54 PM-Remember the huge amount of money raised by JohnRich and company. A# #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51367.May 6, 2012 09:35:31 PM-#I have a feeling the emphasis by @johnrich and @marleematin will be on the charities and the money raised. (cont) http://t.co/L7NuAMWV-#Twitter Web Client-#51368.May 6, 2012 09:33:29 PM-#CelebrityApprentice It. A6s good to have Jack back too with @marleematin. He. A6s become a star. #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51369.May 6, 2012 09:26:40 PM-#sweepstweet @johnrich and @marleematin were on #CelebrityApprentice. Aand they. A6re back!-#Twitter Web Client-#51370.May 6, 2012 09:13:01 PM-#sweepstweet Teresa seems to underestimate the power of observance. Athat of the client as well as her team- but she. A6s a wonderful person-#Twitter Web Client-#51371.May 6, 2012 09:19:16 PM-#CelebrityApprentice Boardrooms. Acan anything be more intense? #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51372.May 6, 2012 09:11:59 PM-#sweepstweet @teresa\_giudice definitely fell under @lisalampanelli's negotiation skills. Aand @lisalampanelli wins \$100,000 for her charity and that. A6s a nice gift.-#Twitter Web Client-#51374.May 6, 2012 09:04:04 PM-#sweepstweet @DonaldJTrumpjr and @EricTrump have the eyes and ears for total surveillance- I wonder where they got that from?-#Twitter Web Client-#51375.May 6, 2012 09:00:44 PM-#CelebrityApprentice @arsenioofficial. Atrying to be invisible. A6? No way that. A6s going to happen. #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51376.May 6, 2012 08:53:06 PM-#Product placement is a definite proposition. #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51377.May 6, 2012 08:51:50 PM-How will the clients react? They. A6ve got both Elle Magazine and Chi to please. #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51378.May 6, 2012 08:50:53 PM-#Aubrey has a lot of self confidence. Abut will it be warranted? #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51379.May 6, 2012 08:49:07 PM-#A6 not sure about @teresa\_giudice as Project Manager. @lisalampanelli can be formidable. Alet. A6s see what happens #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51380.May 6, 2012 08:47:00 PM-#Good move by Aubrey to be the red-headed model they didn. A6t have. #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51381.May 6, 2012 08:25:55 PM-#It. A6s clear to me that @teresa\_giudice needs some lessons in negotiation #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51382.May 6, 2012 08:18:26 PM-#Could be a fight over red-heads with @lisalampanelli. Aand it could be good. #sweepstweet-#Twitter Web Client-#51383.May 6, 2012 07:39:47 PM-#I will be live tweeting during tonight's #CelebrityApprentice 9 PM ET @NBC-#Twitter Web Client-#51384.May 4, 2012 05:59:25 PM-#This Sunday's @CelebApprentice will shock you. #Development...Be sure to tune in on @NBC this Sunday at 9PM EST!-#Twitter Web Client-#51385.May 4, 2012 05:13:47 PM-#In the 1920s people were worried about global cooling-it never happened. Now it's global warming. Give me a break-#Twitter Web Client-#51386.May 4, 2012 05:12:10 PM-#According to @BarackObama the Va on Iraq is over http://t.co/7SRYZnQ1 but global warming is a national (cont) http://t.co/4VWVW1-#Twitter Web Client-#51387.May 4, 2012 05:04:16 PM-#With today's struggling job numbers, it is clear that there is one choice this November. @MittRomney can turn the economy around.-#Twitter Web Client-#51388.May 4, 2012 02:58:21 PM-#Welcome to the @BarackObama recovery-the labor force participation rate is at a NEW 30 year low of 64.1% http://t.co/7SRYZnQ1-#Twitter Web Client-#51389.May 4, 2012 02:55:43 PM-#The unemployment numbers are terrible. 522,000 more people are out of the labor force. 88,419,000. http://t.co/7SRYZnQ1-#Twitter Web Client-#51390.May 4, 2012 02:44:00

PM-#Mariano Rivera, Yankee pitcher, is the greatest ever. Get well fast.-#Twitter Web Client-#51391.May 4, 2012 02:41:52 PM-#Derek Jeter is playing phenomenal baseball. He is a soul winner-and also a great guy. @DerekJeter-#Twitter Web Client-#51392.May 4, 2012 11:24:41 AM-#I'll be on @foxandfriends on Monday at 7:30 AM...-#Twitter Web Client-#51393.May 4, 2012 11:21:46 AM-#Photo from yesterday's USGA announcement that Pump National Golf Club Bedminster will host the 2017 U.S. Women's Open- http://t.co/0YLpnNvy-#Twitter Web Client-#51394.May 3, 2012 02:28:07 PM-#Fracking will lead to American energy independence. With price of natural gas continuing to drop, we can be at a tremendous advantage.-#Twitter Web Client-#51395.May 3, 2012 02:06:07 PM-#Congratulations to the @athenrangers on taking a 2-1 lead over the @washcaps. Great game last night!-#Twitter Web Client-#51396.May 3, 2012 01:41:54 PM-#We will never cut spending until we actually work off of a budget. The Democrats haven't passed one in over 3 years. What a joke.-#Twitter Web Client-#51397.May 3, 2012 01:25:27 PM-#Now @BarackObama is praising China's "cooperation" in negotiations over Chen Guangcheng http://t.co/1B-vueX This is a sad episode for us.-#Twitter Web Client-#51398.May 3, 2012 11:09:59 AM-#The rolling average of jobless claims is the highest in 5 months http://t.co/5RjNvxO-#ObamaCare continues to slow growth and cost jobs.-#Twitter Web Client-#51399.May 3, 2012 08:58:45 AM-#The economy will come back, but it will not be the same economy. The old economy of the Industrial Age is (cont) http://t.co/8Fv3cT2-#Twitter Web Client-#51400.May 2, 2012 02:35:55 PM-#WRONG: @BarackObama capitulated to China by releasing Chen Guangcheng out of the US Embassy http://t.co/UJH2fKV0 China really has our number.-#Twitter Web Client-#51401.May 2, 2012 02:26:37 PM-#Snowboarder/Skateboarder @ShawnWhite stopped by to visit this week... http://t.co/1dxKq2ke-#Twitter Web Client-#51402.May 2, 2012 02:24:10 PM-#When will @BarackObama release his college and law school transcripts? http://t.co/Mzg1l6qo-#Twitter Web Client-#51403.May 2, 2012 01:06:37 PM-#My friend Ronald Kessler explains in @washingtonpost that Secret Service problems are much bigger than prostitutes http://t.co/unLXXPm-#Twitter Web Client-#51404.May 2, 2012 01:26:49 PM-#Orders for U.S. factory goods in March record biggest decline in 3 years http://t.co/YC2mTRE China is eroding the US manufacturing sector.-#Twitter Web Client-#51405.May 2, 2012 12:50:54 PM-#The new Dark Knight Rises trailer is great http://t.co/C1ZY0tP2 The movie filmed scenes in Trump Tower last October.-#Twitter Web Client-#51406.May 2, 2012 11:54:21 AM-#Editorial by @DonaldJTrumpjr in the "Daily Caller: "Defending Innovation in America" http://t.co/kaaAm05-#Twitter Web Client-#51407.May 2, 2012 11:27:13 AM-#My interview with @NYDNGatecrasher discussing @BarackObama's #WHCD and my endorsement of @MittRomney http://t.co/1603n4b-#Twitter Web Client-#51408.May 2, 2012 09:43:59 AM-#China's leadership is sneaky and underhanded, they significantly underreport their actual defense budget and more http://t.co/XyzZFCP0-#Twitter Web Client-#51409.May 2, 2012 09:11:58 AM-#Here's the deal: when your secretary of defense tells you that your proposed cuts will erode American military (cont) http://t.co/SngUDVmG-#Twitter Web Client-#51410.May 1, 2012 11:00:02 PM-#America's debt crisis is our country's greatest challenge. Spending must be reduced for our long term fiscal future.-#Twitter Web Client-#51411.May 1, 2012 01:53:59 PM-#A6 move-@BarackObama released \$147M in aid to the Palestinians http://t.co/ZG-W8KQ That money is going to Hamas.-#Twitter Web Client-#51412.May 1, 2012 01:27:12 PM-#The EPA official who wants to crucify gas companies resigned http://t.co/7V5KIEte-#Obama but his attitude is endemic in the EPA-#Twitter Web Client-#51413.May 1, 2012 11:01:20 PM-#@rupertmurdoch is a superb businessman and a world class CEO. He has built a tremendous empire and is certainly "fit" to run his corporation.-#Twitter Web Client-#51414.May 1, 2012 12:37:09 PM-#My @SquawkCNBC interview discussing @BarackObama's #WHCD, my Scotland property & @BarackObama using Bin Laden's death http://t.co/17XXU9E-#Twitter Web Client-#51415.May 1, 2012 12:19:08 PM-#My @foxandfriends in-









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# Quarantine Routine

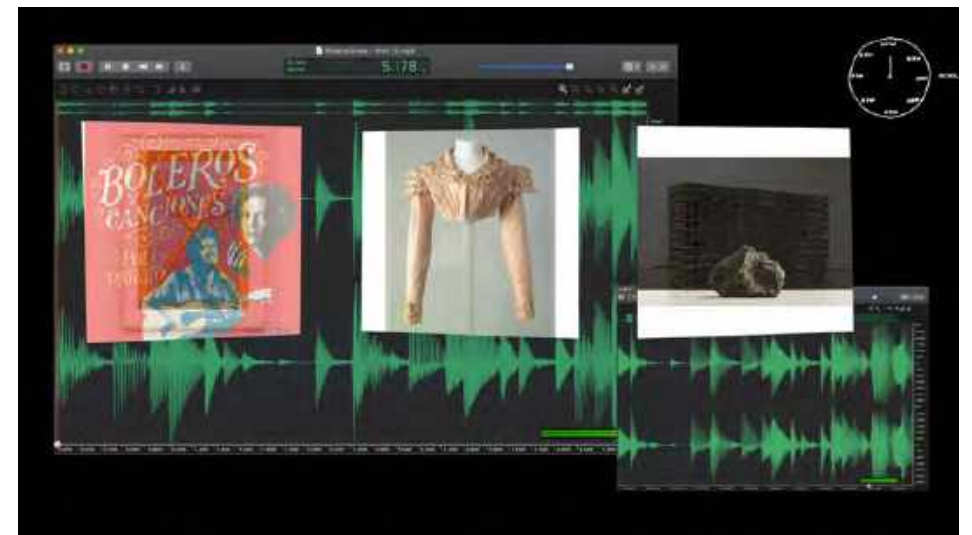
Made during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Quarantine Routine* questions the nature of my relationship to labor as a student and designer in a post-pandemic reality. The piece catalogues both my visual thesis research and my daily routine in the era of social distancing. The soundscape features a ticking clock stuck in the 'now' synced to a version of Rihanna and Drake's song *Work* (2016), which I distorted using Audacity.

Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/vAGvbfKE3i0>

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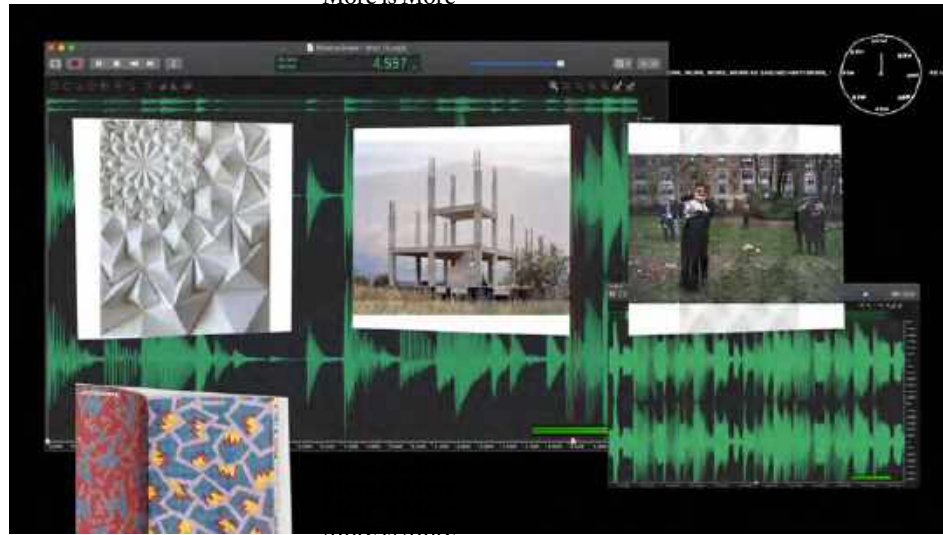


**Jasmine Weber's *Raphael for Hyperallergic*, 2020**

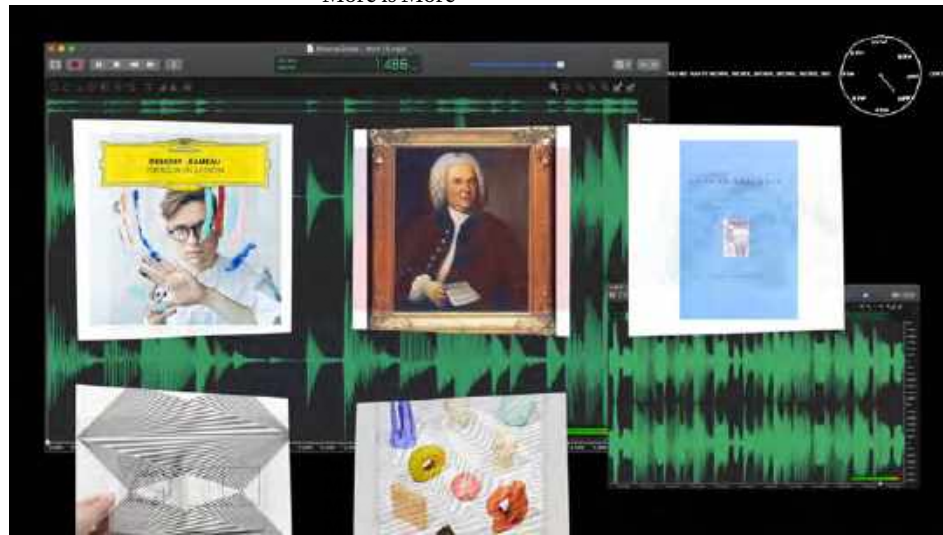


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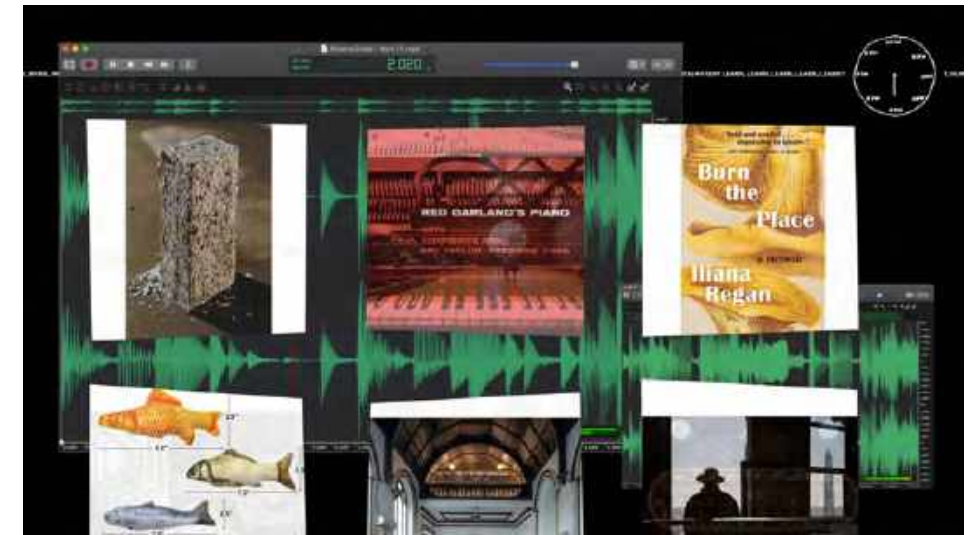
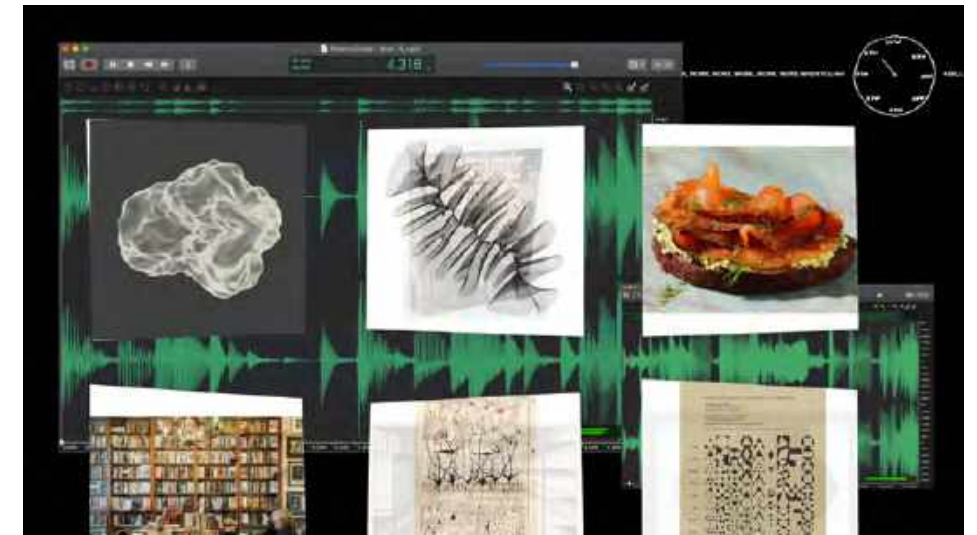
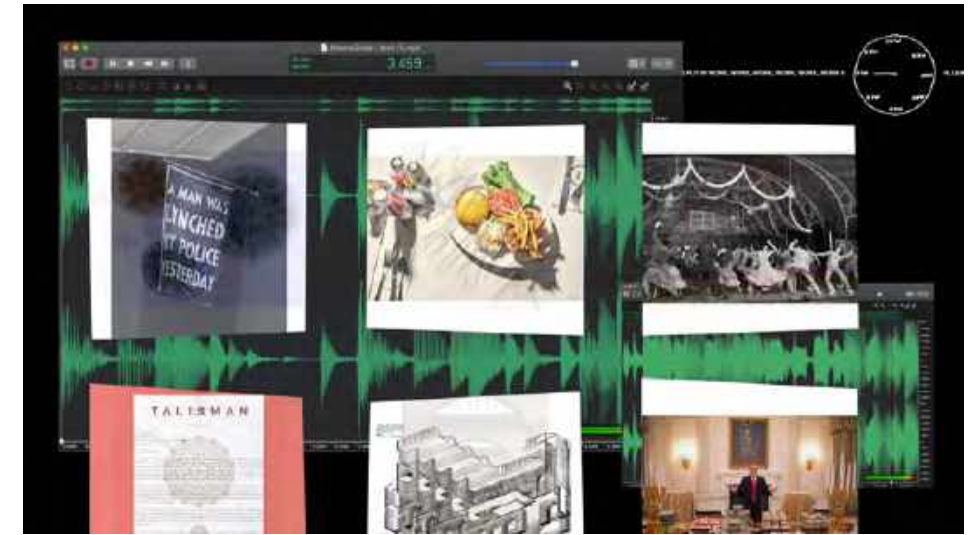
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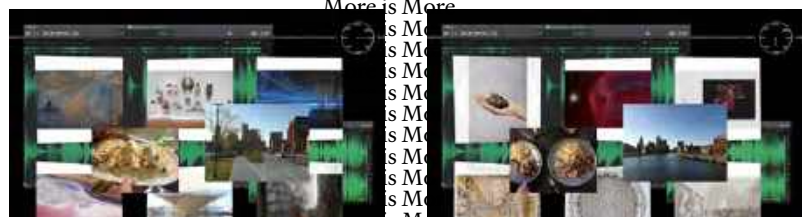
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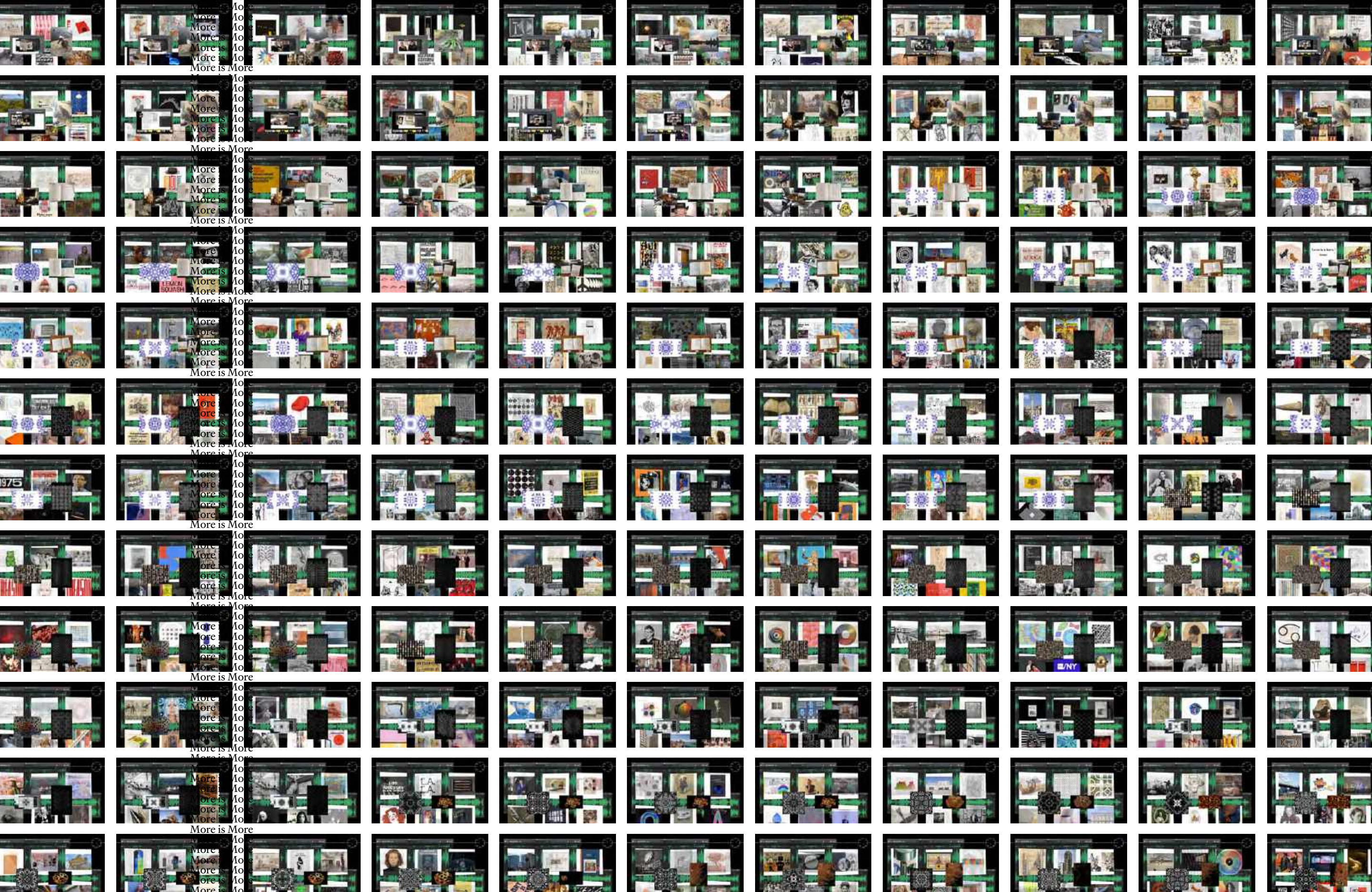
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# F\*ck the NRA

I made these print-at-home posters for the 2018 March For Our Lives, a national student demonstration calling for federal legislation to prevent gun violence. It is estimated over 1.2 million people across America demonstrated following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. To help support their efforts, I made a PDF of one hundred different slogans anyone could download from my website or social media and print on a standard home inkjet. My posters showed up at rallies in Providence, New York, Washington D.C., Seattle, San Francisco and Sydney.

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Left: protesters at the rally in Washington, D.C.

Right: 2011 RISD GD MFA Ben Shaykin sent me this photo of his son Elliott at the March for Our Lives rally in San Francisco.

Rallies took place nationwide on March 24, 2018.



SAVE LIVES  
CONTROL GUNS

STOP MURDER  
IN SCHOOLS

VOTE FOR  
OUR LIVES

MARTIN  
DUQUE ANGUIANO  
14 YEARS OLD

THIS SH\*T  
IS BANANAS

HELENA RAMSEY  
17 YEARS OLD

DEMAND  
A PLAN

SILENCE IS  
VIOLENCE

OUR BLOOD  
YOUR HANDS

WE CALL B.S.

NICHOLAS  
DWORET  
17 YEARS OLD

MORE LAWS  
LESS GUNS

PETER WANG  
15 YEARS OLD

END GUN  
VIOLENCE

JOAQUIN OLIVER  
17 YEARS OLD

MAKE THE NRA  
YOUR TARGET

GUN VIOLENCE  
IS TERRORISM

HEY  
THE NRA  
HAS GOT  
TO GO

END MASS  
SHOOTINGS

NEVER FORGET  
SAN BERNARDINO

1791 LAW  
2018 GUNS

ALEX SCHACHTER  
14 YEARS OLD

DEAD KID  
WALKING

CARA LOUGHRAN  
14 YEARS OLD

AARON FEIS  
37 YEARS OLD

CONGRESS:  
STOP KILLING  
CHILDREN

NO MORE SILENCE  
END THE VIOLENCE

CONGRESS:  
ACT ON GUNS

NEVER FORGET  
FORT HOOD

NOT ONE  
MORE

CARMEN  
SCHENTRUP  
15 YEARS OLD

VOTE FOR LIFE  
NOT FOR GUNS

ENOUGH

I MARCH FOR  
ALL CHILDREN

F\*CK THE NRA

NEVER FORGET  
PARKLAND

CONGRESS:  
DO YOUR JOB

NEVER FORGET  
SUTHERLAND

TOO YOUNG  
TO DIE

LUKE HOYER  
15 YEARS OLD

I MARCH FOR  
PARKLAND

GUNS KILL  
PEOPLE

ALYSSA  
ALHADEFF  
14 YEARS OLD

END THE NRA

NEVER FORGET  
AURORA

ARMS ARE  
FOR HUGGING

NEVER FORGET  
ORLANDO

HOW MANY  
MORE?

BAN ASSAULT  
WEAPONS

SHOULD  
BE WRITING  
MY ESSAY  
NOT  
MY WILL

DON'T  
SHOOT

SCOTT BEIGEL  
35 YEARS OLD

WE SPEAK  
FOR THE DEAD

NEVER FORGET  
LAS VEGAS

PROTECT KIDS  
NOT FIREARMS

NEVER FORGET  
VIRGINIA TECH

MARCHING  
FOR MY LIFE

WRITE LAWS  
NOT OBITUARIES

NO GUNS  
NO FEAR

AN ASSAULT  
ON OUR FUTURE

MEADOW  
POLLACK  
18 YEARS OLD

HOW MANY  
MORE LIVES?

NEVER FORGET  
SANDY HOOK

PROTECT KIDS  
NOT GUNS

MAKE AMERICA  
SAFE AGAIN

SAVE KIDS  
NOT GUNS

BAN GUNS

STOP IT

1700s LAWS  
2018 WEAPONS

JAIME  
GUTTENBERG  
14 YEARS OLD

ENOUGH IS  
ENOUGH

NEVER FORGET  
COLUMBINE

JAIME  
GUTTENBERG  
14 YEARS OLD

WE ARE  
DYING

NO GUNS  
IN SCHOOLS

WE DON'T  
WANT TO DIE

I WANT  
TO LIVE

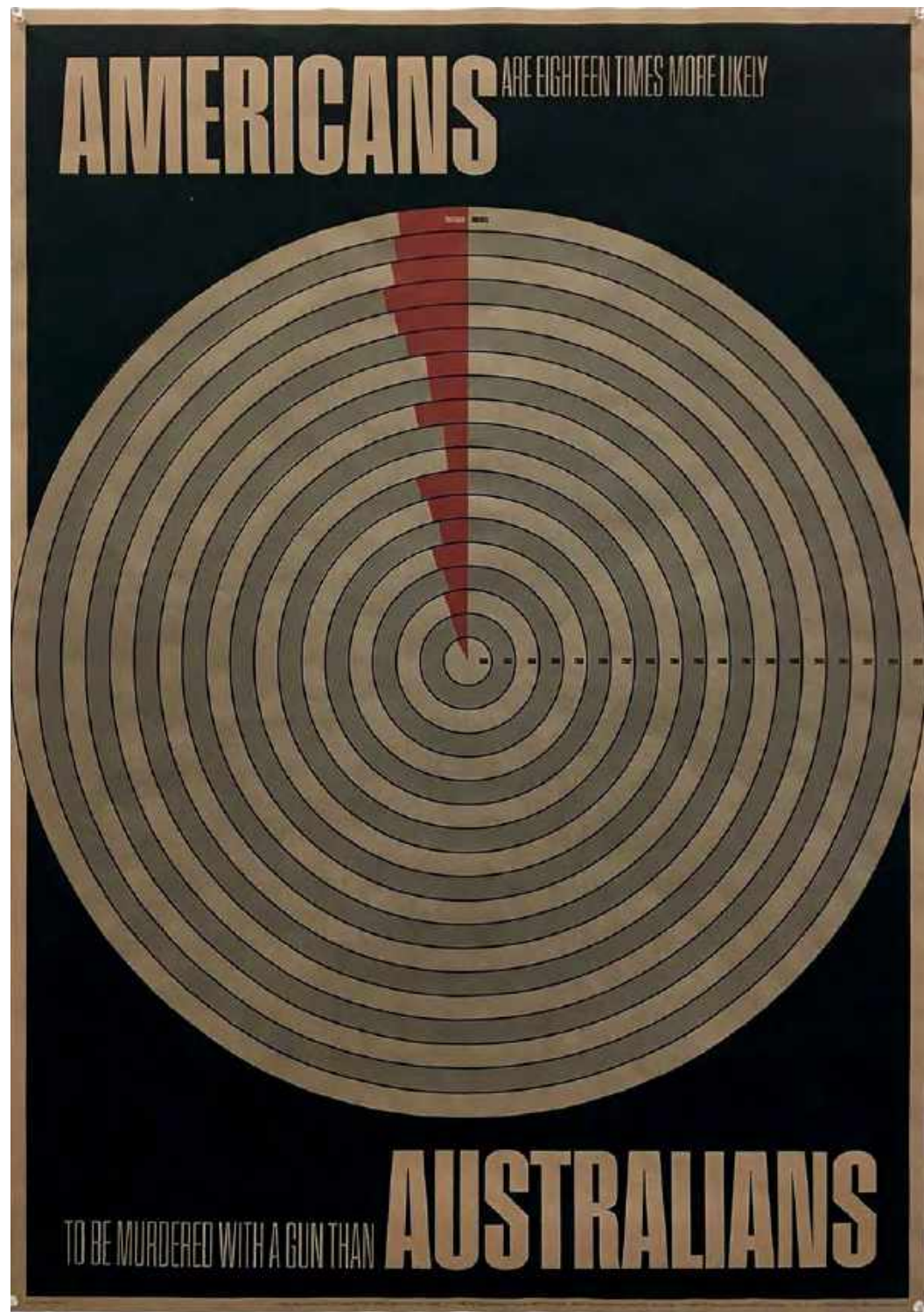
I STAND WITH  
PARKLAND

CHRISTOPHER  
HIXON  
49 YEARS OLD

DON'T SHOOT







Infographic poster showing the relative proportion of Australian versus American gun homicides over the past twenty years.

TREVOR ASHLEY, CATHERINE ALCORN AND GEORGE YOUAKIM IN ASSOCIATION WITH ACON AND THE CITY OF SYDNEY PRESENT

# FROM SYDNEY WITH LOVE

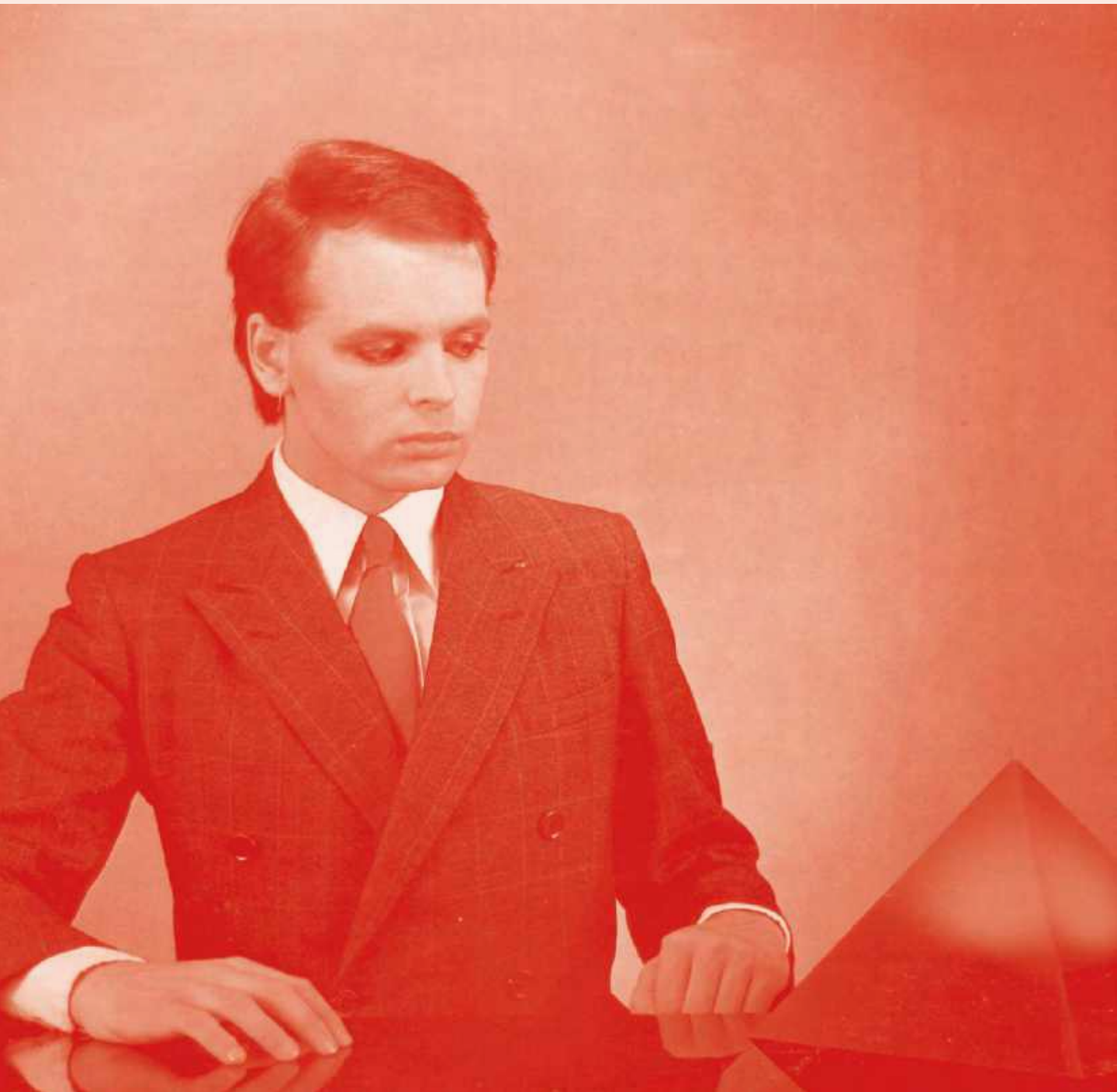
## A CONCERT FOR ORLANDO

MAGDA SZUBANSKI • JOEL CREASEY • TODD MCKENNEY  
IOTA • SIMON BURKE • VIRGINIA GAY • PAUL CAPSIS  
BOB DOWNE • MATTHEW MITCHAM • BECCY COLE AND LIBBY O'DONOVAN  
EMMA MATTHEWS • MICHAEL CORMICK • SHAUNA JENSEN • TREVOR ASHLEY  
CATHERINE ALCORN • MICHAEL GRIFFITHS • TOM SHARAH • AND WITH SPECIAL GUESTS  
**BROADWAY STAR SHOSHANA BEAN  
& THE LEGENDARY MARCIA HINES**

8PM MONDAY JULY 11<sup>TH</sup> AT SYDNEY TOWN HALL • [TICKETMASTER.COM.AU](http://TICKETMASTER.COM.AU) **acon** + **CITY OF SYDNEY**

I volunteered to design the poster and marketing collateral for a benefit honoring the victims of the 2016 Orlando Pulse Nightclub shooting, one of the worst LGBTQ hate crimes in American history. Held at Sydney's Town Hall, the concert featured a lineup of Australia's leading entertainers—including my friend Trevor Ashley, who organized the event. Produced by the City of Sydney, the concert raised over \$50,000 for victims' families.

# The Pleasure Principle



*Pleasure is continually disappointed, reduced, deflated, in favor of strong, noble values: Truth, Death, Progress, Struggle, Joy, etc. Its victorious rival is Desire: we are always being told about Desire, never about Pleasure.*

—Roland Barthes<sup>1</sup>

In his 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Sigmund Freud argued that the mind instinctively seeks pleasure and avoids pain. Freud called this instinct the *pleasure principle*, placing it at the center of the *id*, an unconscious and compulsive part of the human psyche that seeks instant gratification of basic needs. A year later, Adolf Loos returned from the US to a Vienna still abuzz with Freud's new theory—and set about writing his own:

*All art is erotic. The first ornament that was born, the cross, was erotic in origin. A horizontal dash: the prone woman. A vertical dash: the man penetrating her. The man who smeared it on the wall felt the same urge as Beethoven, he was in the same ecstasy in which Beethoven created the Ninth Symphony. But the man of today who, in response to an inner urge, smears the wall with erotic symbols is a criminal or a degenerate.<sup>2</sup>*

Suddenly pleasure was a primitive compulsion and, by extension, so too was ornament. A century later I find myself debating those who still subscribe to the vestiges of this racist and sexist nonsense. The fact that ornament is inherently pleasurable doesn't make it any less of an art, or any less worthy of pursuit. And just because ornament comes naturally to me doesn't mean it's pathological. Yes, ornament pleases me—but it also carries my history, my identity, my interests, my hopes and my dreams.

<sup>1</sup> Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure of the Text*. Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Noonday Press, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Loos, Adolf. *Ornament and Crime*. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. London: Penguin Random House, 2019.



**Andres Serrano**  
*Piss Christ*  
1987

**Opposite:**  
**Gary Numan**  
*The Pleasure Principle*  
1979

# Food & Design

In the Wintersession of 2018, I took a Food & Design course led by RISD Industrial Design MFA graduates Maggie Coblentz and Biniam Kebede. Maggie and Bini partnered with chef Cooper-Morgan Bryant, a recent graduate from Johnson & Wales University's nationally-renowned culinary arts program—and alumnus of two 3-Michelin-Star restaurants (Noma in Copenhagen, and Maaemo in Oslo). The course focused on the history of food design and its potential futures, and gave us access to Johnson Wales' state-of-the-art Cuisinart Center for Culinary Excellence in Cranston, Rhode Island.

Having worked in food service for a over a decade, I took this course very seriously, and set about learning and making all I could while I had the opportunity. This included everything from teaching myself how to temper couverture chocolate and pigmented cocoa butters, to working with Formlabs 3D printers to create food-safe molds, making sushi with a laser cutter, working on food styling, photography and so on. This was hands down the most *pleasurable* class I took at RISD, and saw me make both ornamental and multidisciplinary work that continues to inspire me and my thesis today.

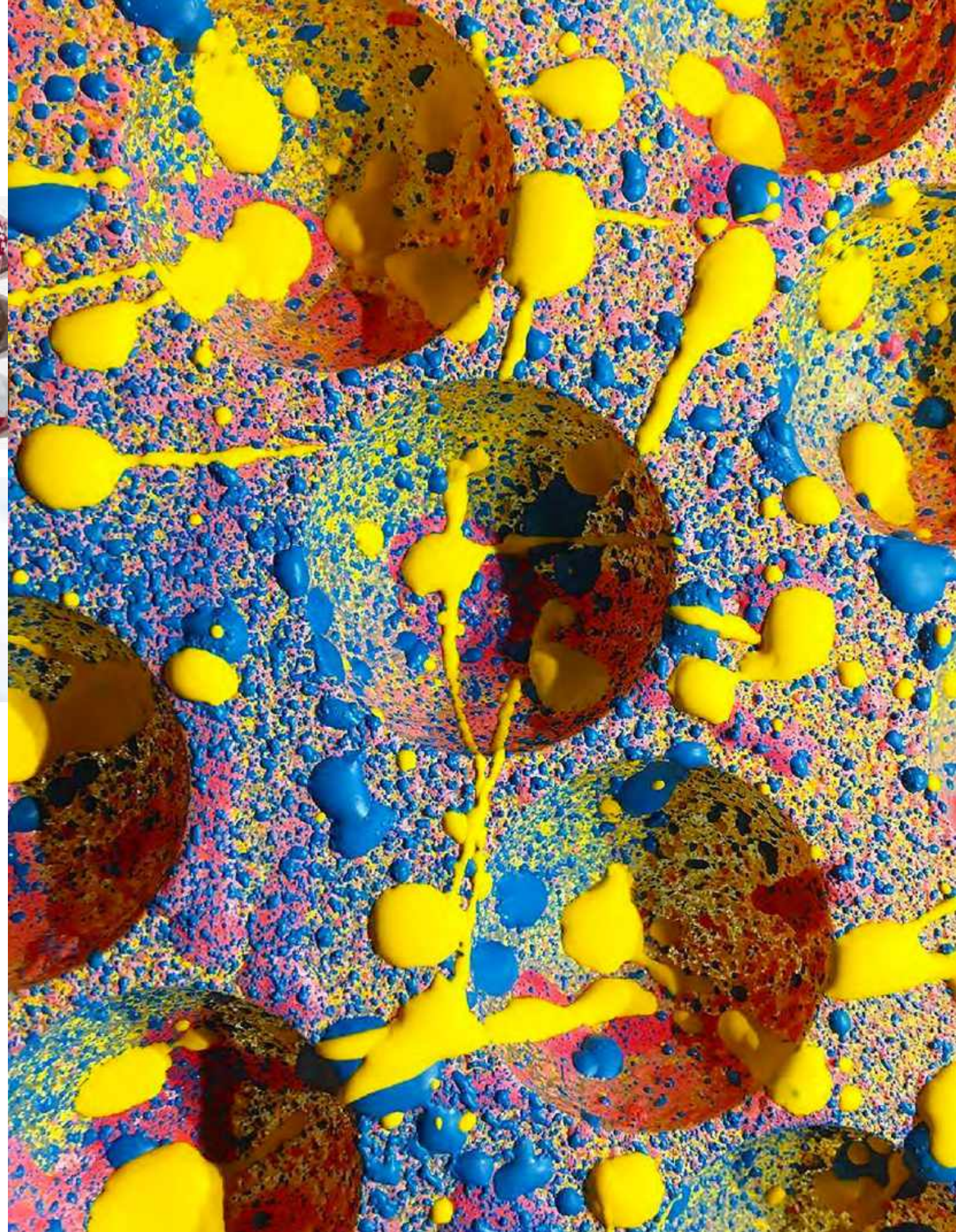


**Above: Brandon Olsen's CXBO in Toronto;**  
**Below: Susanna Yoon's Stick With Me Sweets in New York. Yoon was previously the pastry chef at Thomas Keller's Per Se.**



*Left:* my edible 'prescription' peanut butter and jelly vegan capsules were surprisingly tasty, and so popular I might just patent them! The capsules were made with hydroxypropyl methylcellulose derived from wood trees.

*Right:* a zoomed-in view into a polycarbonate chocolate mold I painted with tempered pigmented cocoa butter. Chocolate is then poured into the molds to create the shell, then cooled and filled with a ganache of one's choosing; cooled again; and finally 'capped' with more liquid chocolate. Once de-molded, the reverse of the colored cocoa butter painted on the mold is visible on the bonbon's round, shiny surface. The entire process takes two days if you want to achieve correct crystallization of the tempered chocolate—with the smoothest, shiniest, thinnest and crispiest shell possible.





Above: the finished couverture Belgian chocolate bonbons with colored cocoa butter, once released from the polycarbonate mold shown on the previous page.

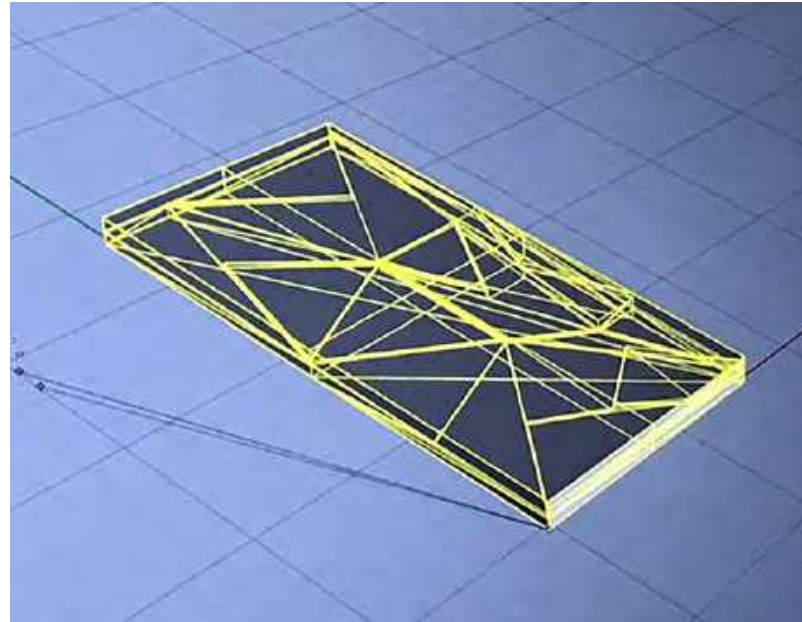
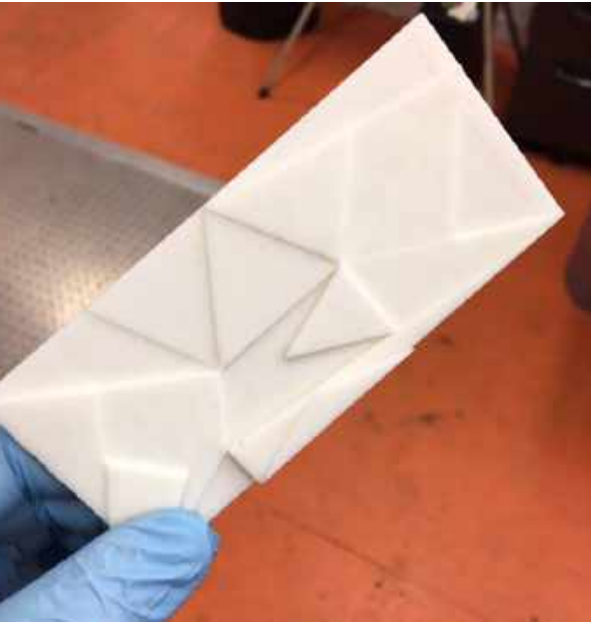
Left: I was inspired by Danish-Macedonian chef René Redzepi to make *Three Local Root Soup Shooters*, using ingredients from a local Rhode Island CSA farm share.

My husband and I were fortunate enough to eat at Redzepi's famous Copenhagen restaurant Noma in 2014, while it was ranked #1 by *The World's Best Restaurants*. After amuse bouche, the first of twenty-odd dégustation courses he served us was his signature *Scandinavian Margarita* (see my photo below), a vegetable cocktail served in locally-foraged beet, with a celeriac stalk drinking straw. Delicious!

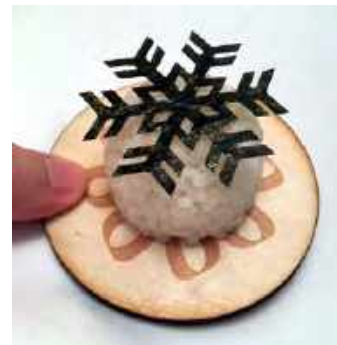
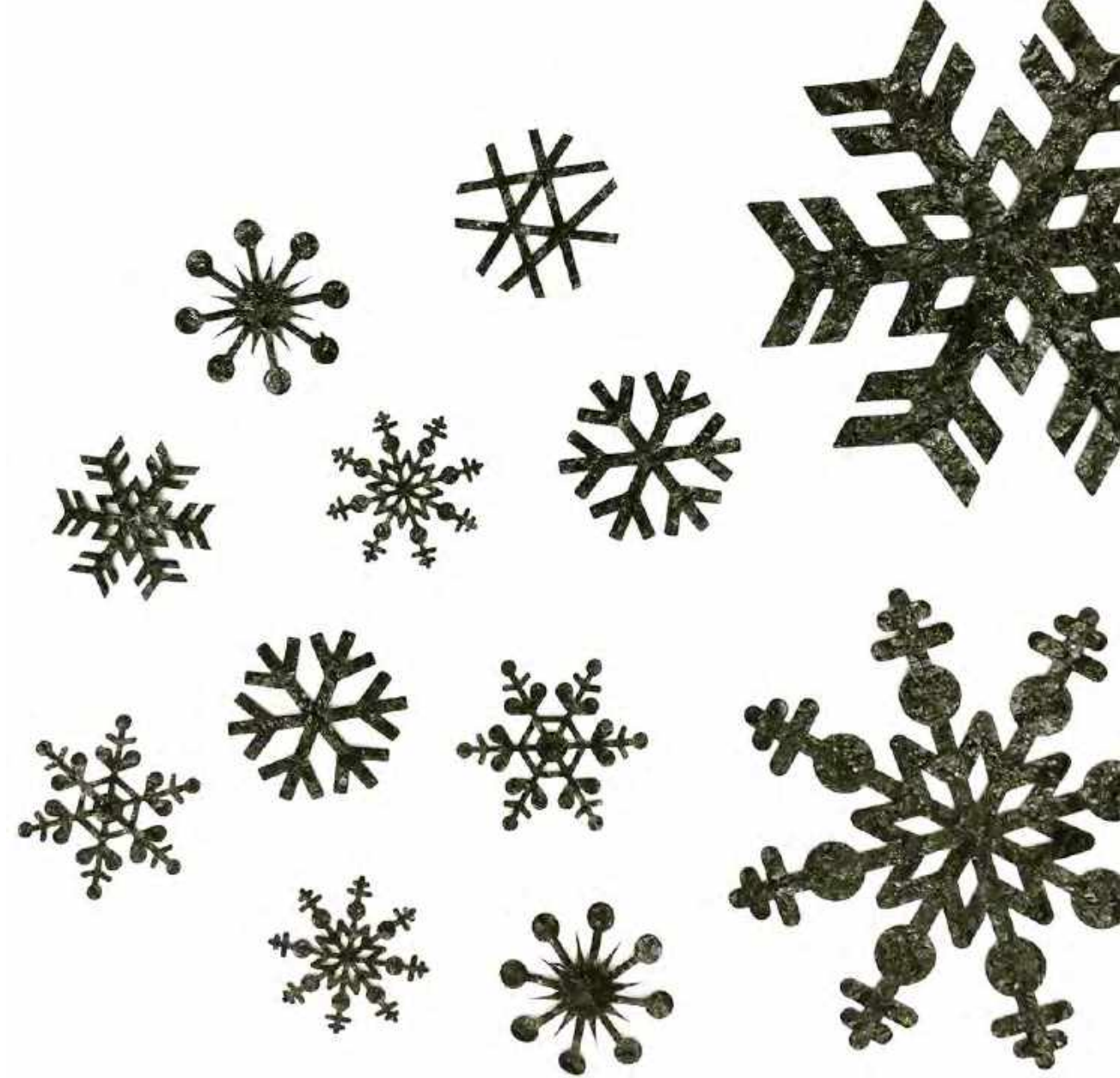


The Pleasure Principle

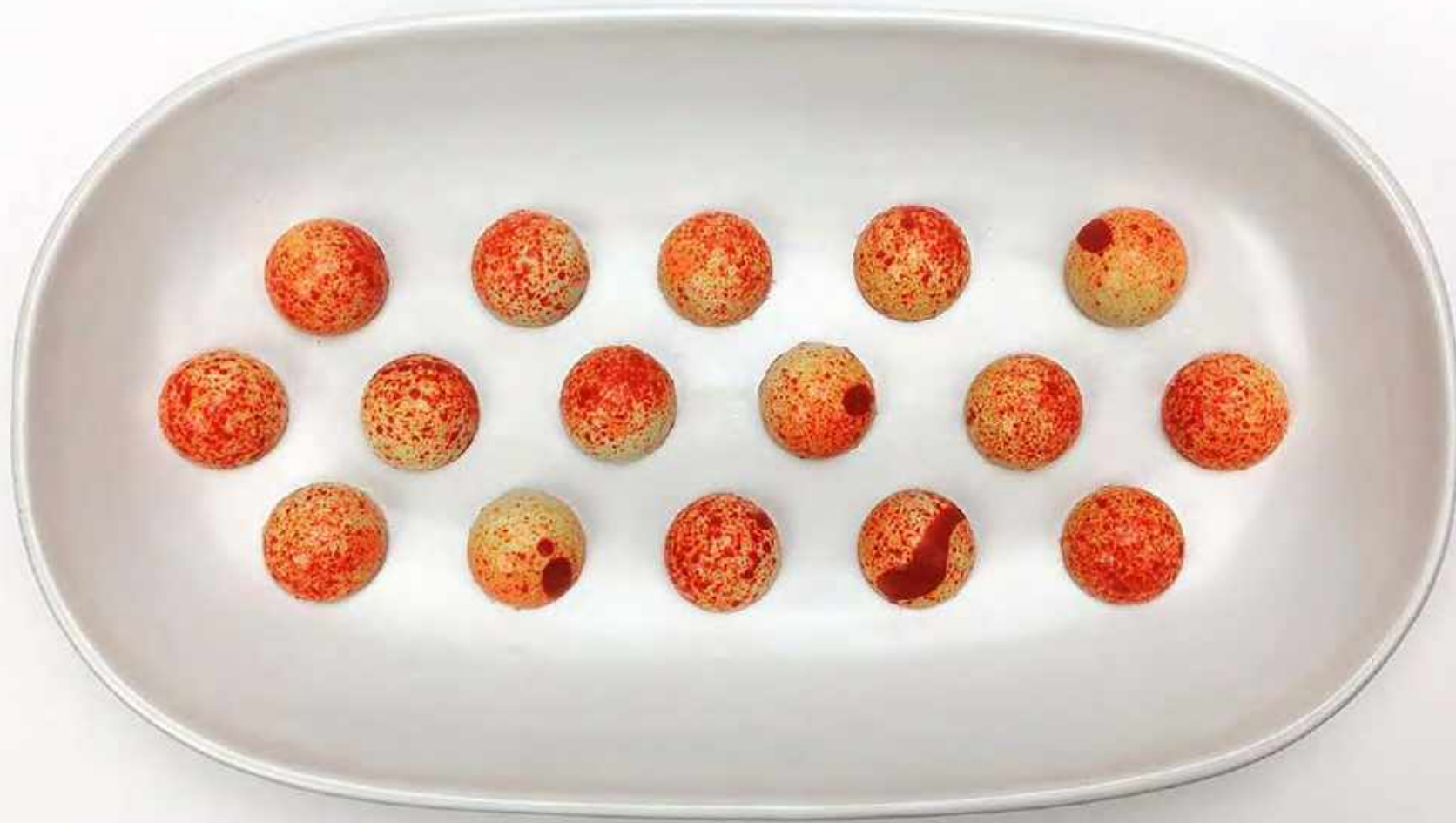




Using Rhino to model a chocolate bar, I 3D-printed this model with Formlabs food-safe resin. I then cast the model in food-safe silicone to produce a chocolate mold, which I used to cast the chocolate bars pictured. The entire process took several days before I produced what I thought ran rings around the humble Hershey's bar.



I lasercut nori seaweed to serve as 'snowflake' hats for these edible *Sushi Snowballs*. The RISD Co-Works laser cutters lent the nori a deliciously-umami toasted flavor which proved very popular with my classmates.



These white chocolate chili-cherry bonbons were the most popular chocolates I produced over Wintersession. I made them with Callebaut Belgian couverture white chocolate callets, *Amarena Fabbri* Italian sour cherries (pictured) and Mexican cayenne peppers. Tempering white chocolate requires a different technique to regular chocolate as it doesn't contain cocoa—but rather only cocoa butter, milk solids and sugar. As a result, white chocolate polymorphs with different crystalline forms at a different melting point. Which is all to say it's fairly scientific and one needs the proper tools including an infrared thermometer and a real tempering marble in order to get it right.





Semisweet bonbons with a ganache made of Manuka honey from New Zealand and Redgum-smoked salt my sister sent from Pialligo, in my hometown of Canberra, Australia.



Above: couverture chocolate requires precise tempering at between 88-90°F. If the chocolate is too hot or too cold you will not achieve the desired sheen and snap one expects from quality chocolate.

Left: our cat Marcus inspects my white chocolate bonbons painted with green cocoa butter watermelon 'skins' which I filled with a pink watermelon-flavored white chocolate ganache. Delicious!



Above: red-marbled semisweet bonbons with a wild raspberry ganache.

Left: 'peppermint patty' bonbons made with 54.5% cocoa Callebaut semisweet couverture chocolate and naturally-infused mint white chocolate ganache.



# Love *Will* Save Us

This series of four lenticular flags began with research into the long history of the Serbian symbol *Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava* (Only Unity Saves the Serbs), after I spotted it carved into my barber's antique mirror. While the phrase originated in the 14th century, the symbol itself dates from 5700 BCE, and still adorns Serbia's coat of arms and flag—yet it is loaded with double meaning. In the 1990s, pro-Milošević groups co-opted it as a symbol of their nationalist goals of ethnic cleansing—which ultimately led to the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's first instance of genocide since the Holocaust. Today, for many including my mother, the symbol is tantamount to a Swastika. Designed for the four unused flagpoles that sit outside the RISD Design Center, I hope to print these flags on lenticular fabric so that their double meaning flutters in the wind, serving as both memorial and prayer.



Lenticular polyester fabric can refract multiple different colors or images when moved.





Muslim refugees fleeing Srebrenica to neighboring Potocari in July of 1995, shortly before Serbs killed more than 8,372 Bosniaks from the town. Dutch UN Peacekeepers who were there at the time looked on and purportedly allowed it to happen so that President Clinton could then force NATO's hand into bombing Bosnia and Herzegovina. NATO then bombed Serbia for seventy-eight days in 1999.



Above: the Serbian symbol *Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava* is constructed of four Cyrillic 'S' letters. While the saying is Byzantine, it borrows its symbol from the neolithic Vinča people of 5700-4500 BCE.

Right: the Srebrenica memorial in 2019.



I made this poster after Alfredo Jaar to mark the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide.



Alfredo Jaar  
*Rwanda, Rwanda*  
1994

# THEISM

The series was displayed at [flags.risd.gd](http://flags.risd.gd), a collaborative website designed by 2018 GD BFA Mostyn Griffith.



# Reading Reading

*Reading Reading* catalogues the history of reading at the human scale, from cuneiform tablets to Egyptian papyrus; the scroll; the codex; the newspaper; the personal computer; the smartphone and back to the (this-time-digital) tablet. Inspired by Marcel Duchamp's *boîtes-en-valises* (1935–1941), George Maciunas' *Fluxkit* (1965) and Amaranth Borsuk's *The Book* (2018), I was interested in fabricating a simple, portable, tactile and didactic piece that conveyed the intimate experience of reading at a fundamentally human scale.

I fabricated this piece at RISD's Co-Works, using the laser cutter to cut the box and etch the clay tablet; the UV printer to print on the codex, the newspaper and the papyrus; and the vinyl cutter for the display text. I used my own thermal gold foiler for the ornamental scroll.





Marcel Duchamp  
*Boîte-en-valise*  
1935–1941





George Maciunas  
**Fluxkit (Fluxus Edition)**  
 1965

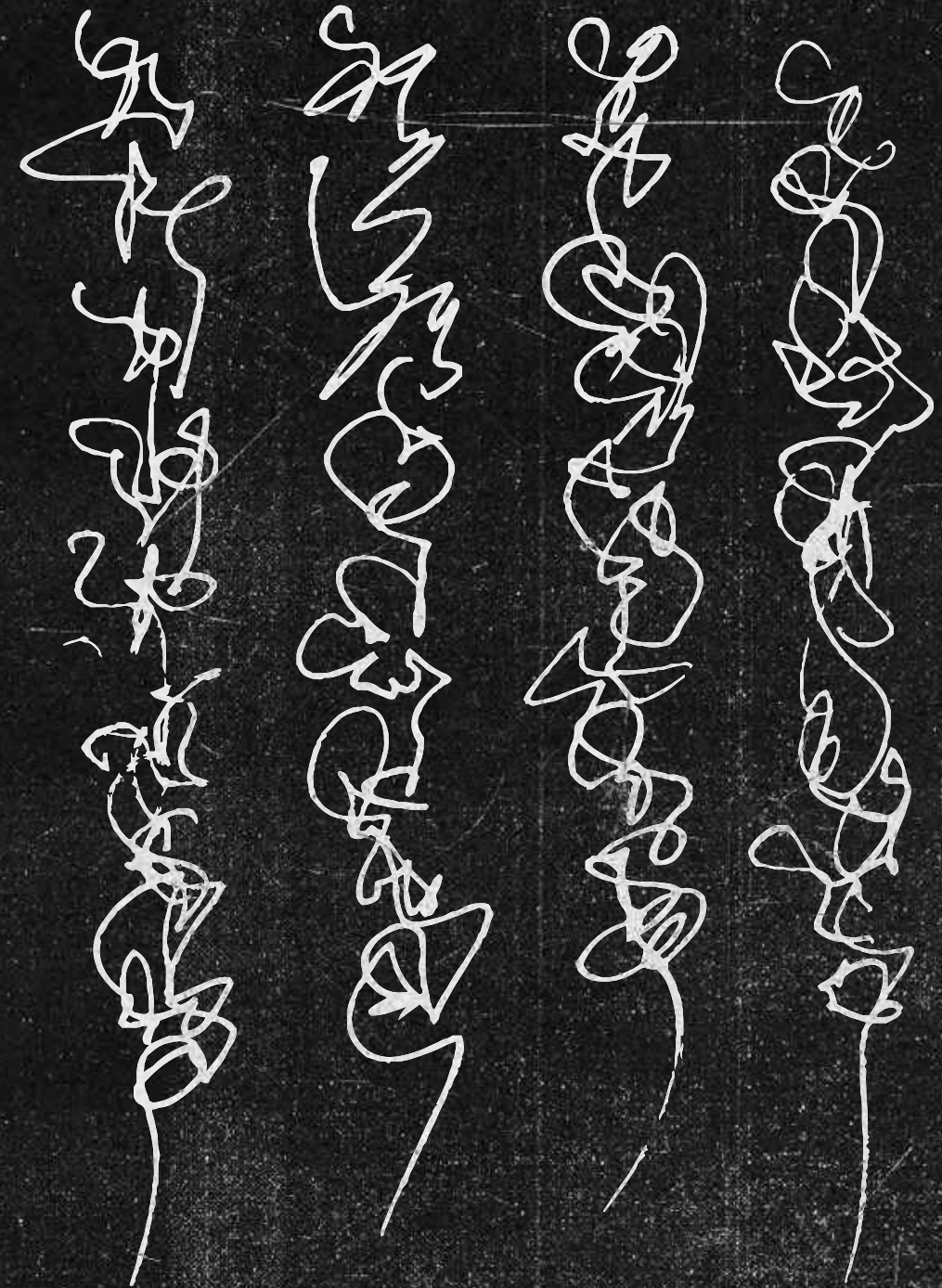
# Asemic Writing

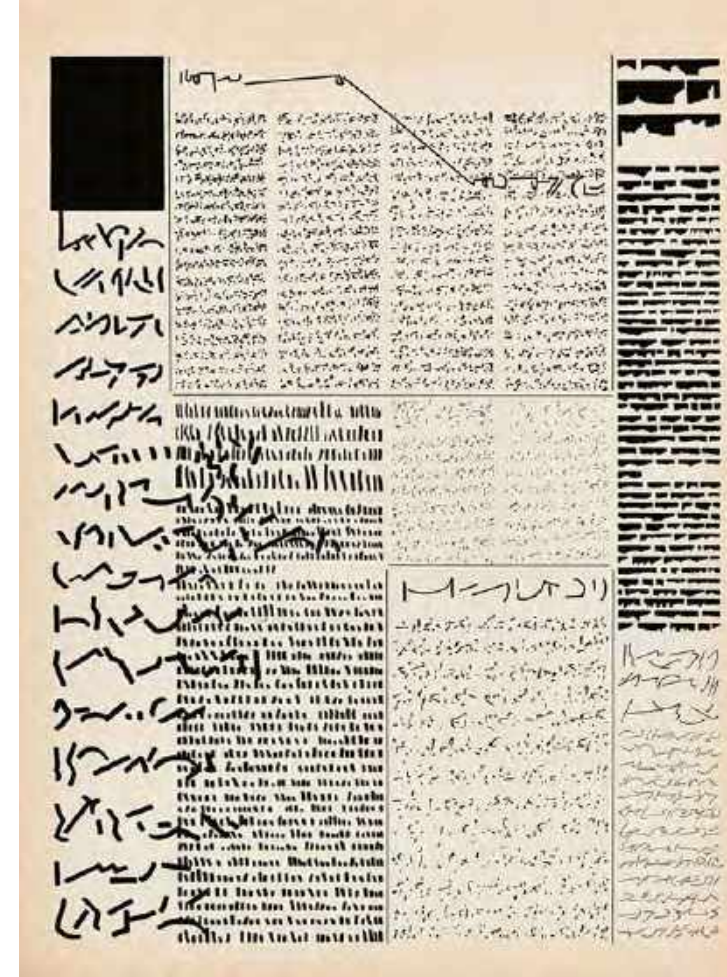
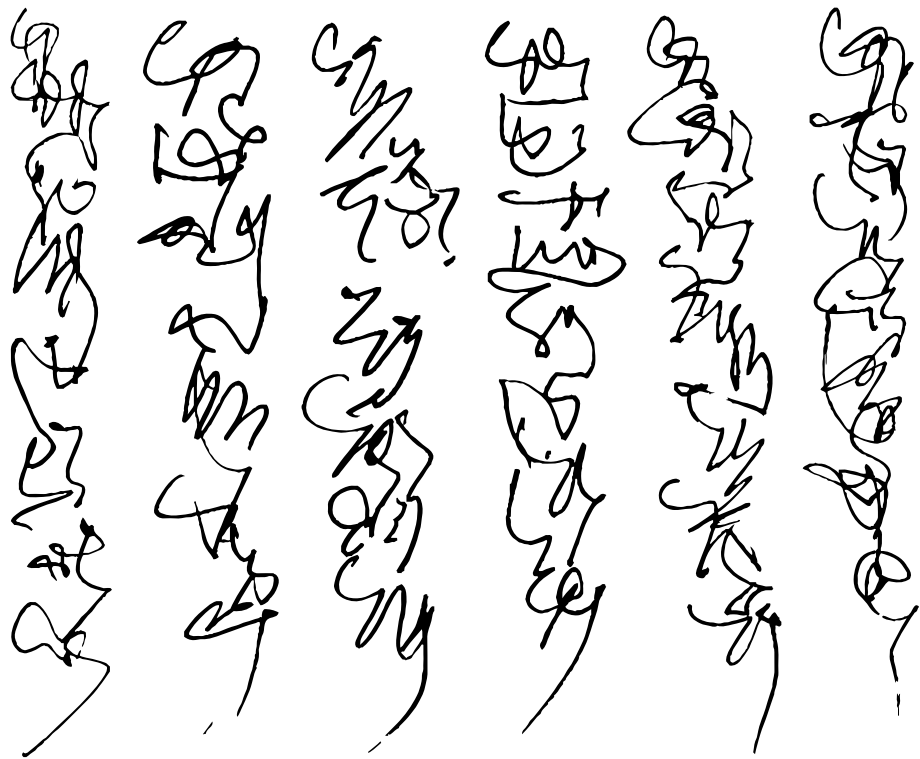
Asemic writing is a form of wordless writing without semantics (from the Greek, *asemos*, for 'without sign'), open to interpretation but rooted in millennia of visual literacy. Perhaps jealous of my inability to read Serbian Cyrillic, as a child I invented a script I entitled *Er Duplus* (Double Earth) with which I would fill notebooks full of nonsense. Likely also inspired by studying Chinese throughout high school, I still find something deeply meditative about the physical act of asemic writing.

My interest has expanded to include the work of Mirtha Dermisache (1940–2012), Xu Bing (1955–) and José Parlá (1973–). Parlá was commissioned to make *Amistad América* (2018), a monumental abstract calligraphic mural for a building that Ennead Architects designed for UT Austin, on which I'd worked prior to coming to RISD. These and other artists continue to inspire me to interrogate the nature of language and question how designers communicate without words.



**Xu Bing**  
*Book from the Sky*  
1987–1991



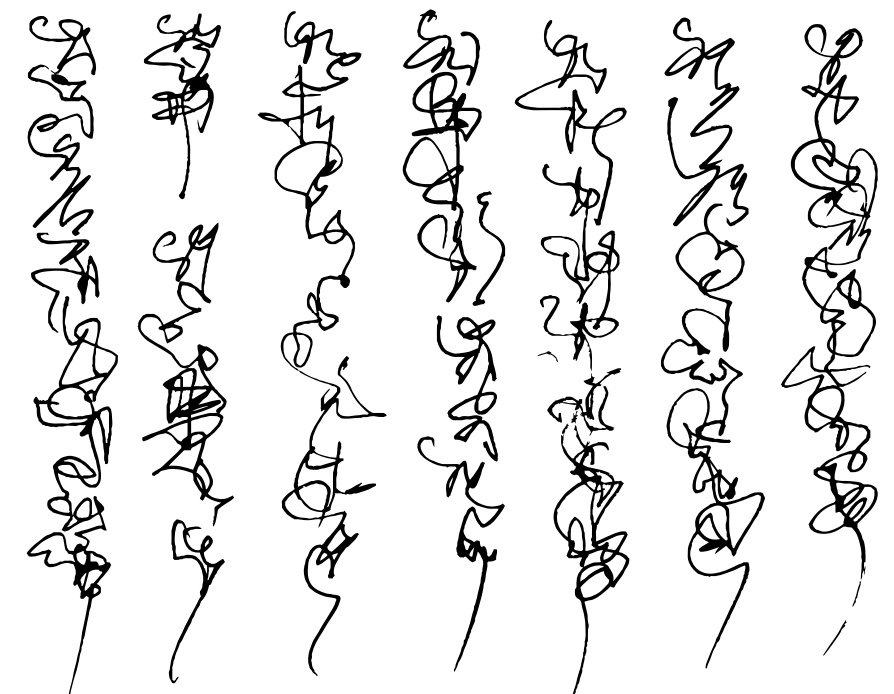


**Mirtha Dermisache**  
**Diario 1 Año 1 (Newspaper 1 Year 1)**  
 1972



**José Parlá**  
**Amistad América**  
 2018

at Ennead Architects'  
**Robert B. Rowling Hall**  
 UT Austin, Texas



In 2014 UT Austin selected Ennead Architects to design their new graduate school of business. As Ennead's in-house graphic designer, I designed an app for iPad to support the school's fundraising and development efforts. Adobe called the app "a leading example of how firms in the architecture, engineering and construction industry can transform their client communications"; see <http://www.ennead.com/work/rowling-hall>.







Old Bridge in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Кратак опис

Стари мост - бивазио, "Стари мост" је обновио османски мост из 16. века у граду Мостару у Босни и Херцеговини који прелази реку Нерету и повезује два дијела града. Стари мост стари је 427 година, све док га 1993. године нису уништили хрватске војне снаге током хрватско-босњачког рата. Затим је покретан пројекат за реконструкцију обновио мост отворен је 2004. године.

Једна од најрепрезентативнијих знаменитости у земљи, сматра се примјером балканске исламске архитектуре. По завршетку је био највиши луки на свијету и брзо постао чудо у свом времену.

Brief Description

Stari Most—literally “Old Bridge”—is a rebuilt 16th-century Ottoman bridge in the city of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina that spans the river Neretva and connects the two parts of the city. The Old Bridge stood for 427 years, until it was destroyed on 1993 by Croat military forces during the Croat-Bosniak War. Subsequently, a project was set in motion to reconstruct it; the rebuilt bridge opened in 2004.

One of the country’s most recognizable landmarks, it is considered an exemplary piece of Balkan Islamic architecture. Upon its completion it was the widest man-made arch in the world and quickly became a wonder in its own time.



A view of the Old Bridge in Mostar

УНЕСЦО цитат светске баштине

Историјски град Мостар, који се протеже дубоким долином ријеке Нерете, развијен је у 15. и 16. вијеку као османски гранични град и током аустро-угарског периода у 19. и 20. вијеку. Мостар је одавно познат по својим старим турским кућама и Старом мосту, Старом Мосту, након чега се зове.

Међутим, у сукобу из деценијских година, већина историјског града и Старог моста, дизајнираног од стране ренесансног архитекте Синана, уништена је. Стари мост је недавно обновио, а многи објекти у Старом граду су обновили или обновили уз допринос међународног научног одбора који је основао УНЕСЦО. Погрешје Старог моста, са својим османским, источним османским, медитеранским и западноевропским архитектонским карактеристикама, представља

UNESCO World Heritage Citation

The historic town of Mostar, spanning a deep valley of the Neretva River, developed in the 15th and 16th centuries as an Ottoman frontier town and during the Austro-Hungarian period in the 19th and 20th centuries. Mostar has long been known for its old Turkish houses and Old Bridge, Stari Most, after which it is named.

In the 1990s conflict, however, most of the historic town and the Old Bridge, designed by the renowned architect Sinan, was destroyed. The Old Bridge was recently rebuilt and many of the edifices in the Old Town have been restored or rebuilt with the contribution of an international scientific committee established by UNESCO. The Old Bridge area, with its pre-Ottoman, eastern Ottoman, Mediterranean and western European architectural features, is an outstanding example



A view of the Old Bridge in Mostar

издржан примјер мултикултуралне урбане масе. Реконструисани Стари мост и Стари град Мостар симбол су помирења, међународне сарадње и коegzистенције различитих културних, етничких и верских заједница.

Са "ренесансом" Старог моста и његовог окружења, симболичка моћ и значење Града Мостара, као и његовог и универзалног симбола коegzистенције заједница из различитих културних, етничких и верских средина, је ојачана и ојачана, наглашавајући неограничене изворе људске солидарности за мир и љубав сардњу у сучасному са огромним катастрофама.

of a multicultural urban settlement. The reconstructed Old Bridge and Old City of Mostar is a symbol of reconciliation, international cooperation and of the coexistence of diverse cultural, ethnic and religious community groups.

With the "renaissance" of the Old Bridge and its surroundings, the symbolic power and meaning of the City of Mostar - as an exceptional and universal symbol of coexistence of communities from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds - has been reinforced and strengthened, underlining the unlimited efforts of human solidarity for peace and powerful cooperation in the face of overwhelming catastrophes.



Old Bridge in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

О Стари Мост

Насеље основано као урбана структура у 15. веку на прелазу ријеке и копненог пута, првобитно се налазило у долини ријеке Нерете, између Хумског и подножја планине Велас. Ово релативно малу насељу чинило је двије куле овог моста, које су датиране из 1459. године, као што су писани историјски извори. Садашње име, Мостар, споменуто је први пут 1474. године и изведено од "мостари", чувања моста. Историјски град Мостар развијен је у 15. и 16. вијеку као османски гранични град и током кратког аустроугарског периода у 19. и 20. вијеку. Мостар је дуго познат по својим старим турским кућама и Старом мосту—Стари мост, њимедредом технолошким достигнућу мостостројња.

About Stari Most

A settlement established as an urban structure in the 15th century on the crossing of a river and a land road was originally located in a valley of the Neretva River, between Hum Hill and the foot of the Velat Mountain. This relatively small settlement had two towers around the bridge, which dated 1459, as noted by written historical sources. The current name, Mostar, was mentioned for the first time in 1474 and derived from "mostari", the bridge keepers. The historic town of Mostar developed in the 15th and 16th centuries as an Ottoman frontier town and during the short Austro-Hungarian period in the 19th and 20th centuries. Mostar has long been known for its old Turkish houses and the Old Bridge—Stari most, an extraordinary technological achievement of bridge construction.



Old Bridge in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Кратка историја

- 1959 УНЕСЦО покренуо међународну кампању и приредио 80 милиона долара како би спасио храмове Абу Самбела у долини Нила. Припремају се закони Конвенције о заштити културног наслеђа.
- 1962 УНЕСЦО представља своју Препоруку о очувању дјелова и карактера вриједна и локација. Ова препорука обухвата очување и реконструкцију јединственог природног, урбаног и урбаног облика и локација, било природних или урбаних, који имају културно или естетско значење; или облику природног окружења.
- 1965 Бела кућа Конференцију у Вашингтону, Д.Ц., позвала је на "Трету оф Ворлд Херитџ" да заштити "природне и сценске области и локације".
- 1966 УНЕСЦО покренуо међународну кампању за спасивање Восточне долине катастрофалног поплава које су ударили град.

A Brief History

- 1959 UNESCO launches an international campaign and collects US\$80 million to save the Abu Simbel temples in the Nile valley. A draft of the convention on the protection of cultural heritage is prepared.
- 1962 UNESCO presents its Recommendation on the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites. This recommendation covers the preservation and the restoration of the aspect of natural, rural and urban landscapes and sites, whether natural or man-made, which have a cultural or aesthetic interest or form typical natural surroundings.
- 1965 A White House Conference in Washington, D.C., in 1965 called for a "World Heritage Trust" to protect "natural and scenic areas and historic sites".
- 1966 UNESCO spearheads an international campaign to save Venice after disastrous floods threatened the city.



### History



Photo: Albert Kahn, 1913

Stari Most (literally "Old Bridge") is a rebuilt 16th-century Ottoman bridge in the city of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina that crosses the river Neretva and connects the two parts of the city. The Old Bridge stood for 427 years, until it was destroyed in 1993 by Croat military forces during the Croat-Bosniak War. Subsequently, a project was set in motion to reconstruct it; the rebuilt bridge opened in 2004.

## THE MAIL

### DEATH AND THE MIND

Rachel Aviv beautifully illuminates the story of Jahi McMath, a child who was declared brain-dead four years ago, in Oakland, and the family members who disagree with her diagnosis ("The Death Debate," February 5th). They deserve Aviv's advocacy. However, Aviv also seems to create villains in her telling. Her writing subtly but powerfully forms a picture of an uncaring hospital and incompetent, indifferent, and possibly racist health-care providers. I know the hospital and the people whom Aviv describes; I completed some of my medical training there about a decade ago, though I have never reviewed any medical records associated with the McMath case, nor have I directly spoken about the case with any of the providers involved. For more than a hundred years, the Children's Hospital has delivered compassionate care to the children of Oakland, despite ever-shrinking funding. Aviv gives full voice to the fear, distrust, and helplessness that the family has felt—a voice that likely resonates with many readers. But she gives no such space to the feelings of the others caught up in this difficult situation. Tragedy does not require villainy.

*Peter Oishi, M.D.  
Medical Director, PICU  
University of California San Francisco  
Benioff Children's Hospital  
Oakland, Calif.*

As I approach the end of my ninetieth year on this earth, I have been thinking about death more frequently. I am in no hurry to move on to "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns," as Hamlet says. But I had decided, and written in my will, that, if my mind goes before my body, then my body should be allowed to die. I will not be in it. Then came Aviv's poignant exposition on what constitutes death, and I'm left wondering what criteria my family should use, when the time comes, to determine whether my mind is gone. If all I can do is wiggle a

finger in response to a prompt, I think that they should pull the plug. And yet it's one thing to make such a call for me, near the end of my natural life span; it's entirely another for Jahi, who, even now, is only seventeen. As Aviv makes abundantly clear, there is a whole spectrum of measurements and behaviors of the brain that cannot be codified into exact legal bases for action. Ultimately, in my case, the decision will fall to my wife; for Jahi, the decision will be her loving mother's. It may not be entirely rational, but it doesn't need to be.  
*Robert M. Fitch  
El Prado, N.M.*

As a nurse in a pediatric intensive-care unit, I face morally distressing situations on an unfortunately frequent basis. Brain death is one of the most difficult concepts that families and health-care providers deal with in medicine, suspending everyone involved in an agonizing purgatory. However, as medical management and technology improve, we must continue to consider the ethics of certain decisions, including those made by parents and by physicians. Many of my colleagues regularly discuss whether the fact that we can do something necessarily means that we always should do it, and the complexity of this issue contributes to the high burnout and turnover rates of PICU nurses. On a daily basis, I ask myself these questions: What is life? What does it mean to truly be alive? What does it mean to live as a child? I am not talking about arterial flow or atrophy of a brain stem, but about the experience of being a child. I don't know the answers, but I have seen that, in situations like Jahi's, the child can sometimes get lost amid disagreeing adults.  
*Rayna Eisenhut Coccari  
Seattle, Wash.*

*Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.*

UNESCO World Heritage Site  
Stari Most, Bosnia and Herzegovina



STARI MOST

Exhibition of Photographs and Artefacts



from this week.

performance at  
Balter is a forty-  
an-American  
ity and vitality  
course in the  
N" is an ambiv-  
goat god, de-  
or creation and  
only plays but  
work feels like  
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an a virtuoso  
ection in which  
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other hand held

is overseeing summer music programs at the Banff Centre, in Alberta, Canada; she also joined the music faculty at Harvard last fall. Within a week of taking up her Harvard post, she was arrested during a street protest in support of the DACA program.

In 2013, Chase launched a project called "Density 2036," named for Edgard's work "Density 86," the centennial commission and new flute scores. The catalogue is a

instruments. They also hum or whistle given tones. At one point, according to Balter's score, they are invited to "improvise in hyper-active and extremely loud fashion." (An instructional session gives guidance beforehand.) Jennifer Judge, a musicologist who has been following the development of the project, writes, "The genesis of 'PAN' amounts to the creation not just of a work of art, but of a community." Having participated in a performance of a portion of the piece, I can attest that the experience is peculiarly exhilarating. The cult of the godlike art-

ony—art  
*Alex Ross*

to get folks dancing. Renee, Deborah, and Marie formed ESG with Tito Libran in the nineteen-seventies. The name for "emerald, sapphire, and gold": Renee's birthstone is emerald; Renee's, sapphire, and gold was their goal. Almost immediately, the sisters hit upon an original form of live dance music that combined funk, hip-hop, punk, and Latin. Renee, the group's vocalist and lead singer, cites James Brown as their influence. "When James Brown took the stage, he cut all the horns," she said in a 2015 interview. "It was just the bass and the drums, and letting

decades chasing royalties for hit records that featured its material, and the experience left the members understandably sour on the hip-hop movement, despite their formative influence on it. As with many seminal art bands of the eighties, major crossover fame and earnings escaped ESG, even after subsequent releases. But compilations and reissues have kept the music alive, and Valerie and Renee's daughters have joined the family business, playing alongside their mothers in recent years. ESG performs a rare set at Bowery Electric on March 8, celebrating forty years of otherworldly sounds.  
*—Matthew Trammell*

Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design

October 1 – December 31, 2018  
risdmuseum.org



STARI MOST

Stari Most (literally "Old Bridge") is a rebuilt 16th-century Ottoman bridge in the city of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina that crosses the river Neretva and connects the two parts of the city. The Old Bridge stood for 427 years, until it was destroyed in 1993 by Croat military forces during the Croat-Bosniak War. Subsequently, a project was set in motion to reconstruct it; the rebuilt bridge opened in 2004.

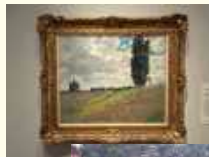
One of the country's most recognizable landmarks, it is considered an exemplary piece of Balkan Islamic architecture. It was designed by Mimar Hayruddin, a student and apprentice of the famous architect Mimar Sinan who built many of the key Sultan's buildings in Istanbul and the empire.

The original bridge was commissioned by Suleiman the Magnificent to replace an older wooden suspension bridge of

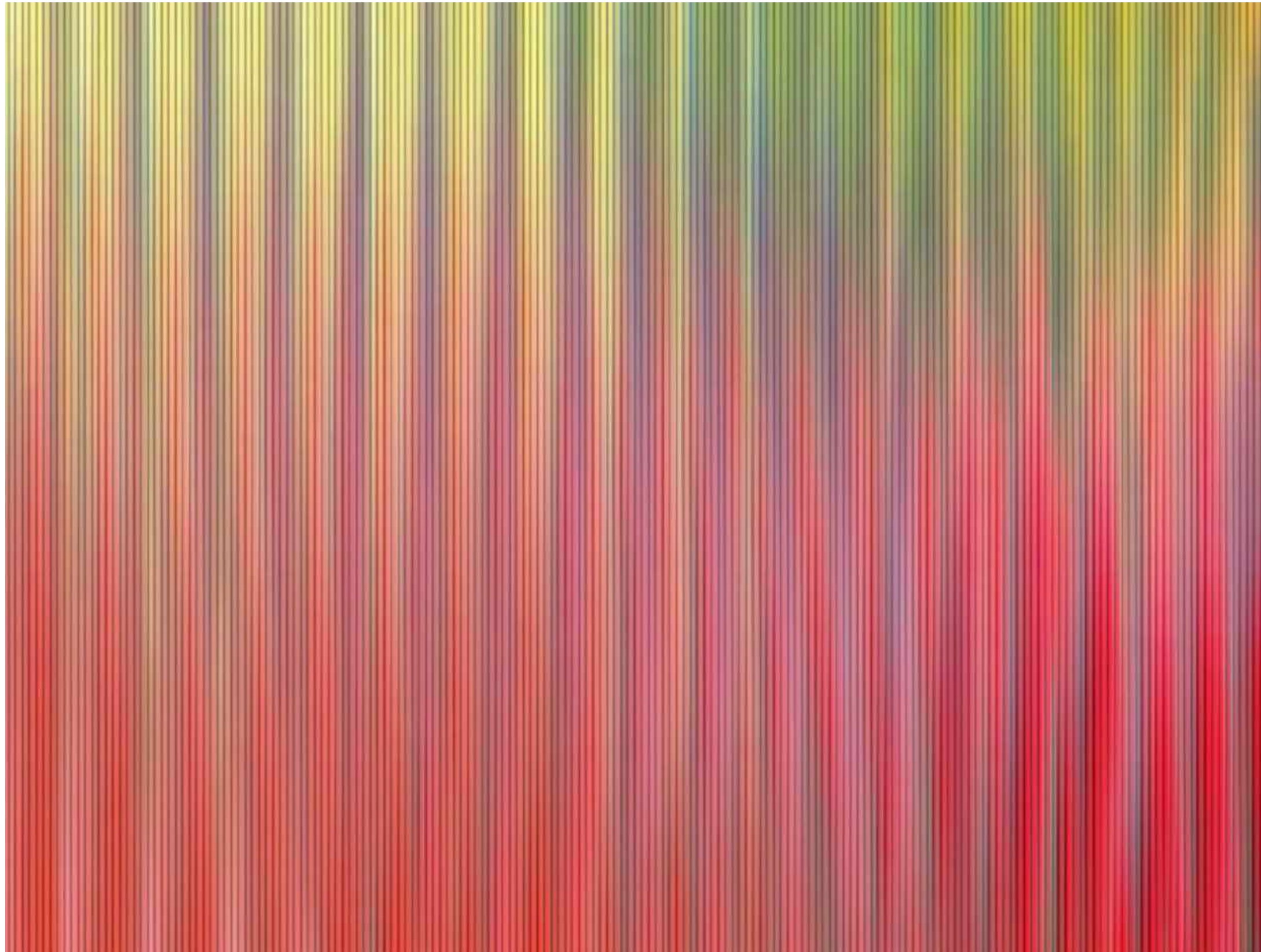
# Monet *Poppies*

Based on Claude Monet's *A Walk in the Meadows at Argenteuil* (1873) at the RISD Museum, this poster examines how the figurative can be abstracted without sacrificing its essential quality. The painting is one of my favorite works at the museum, not least for its adorable cameo of Monet's son picking poppies.

Monet



Figurative  
→ Abstract



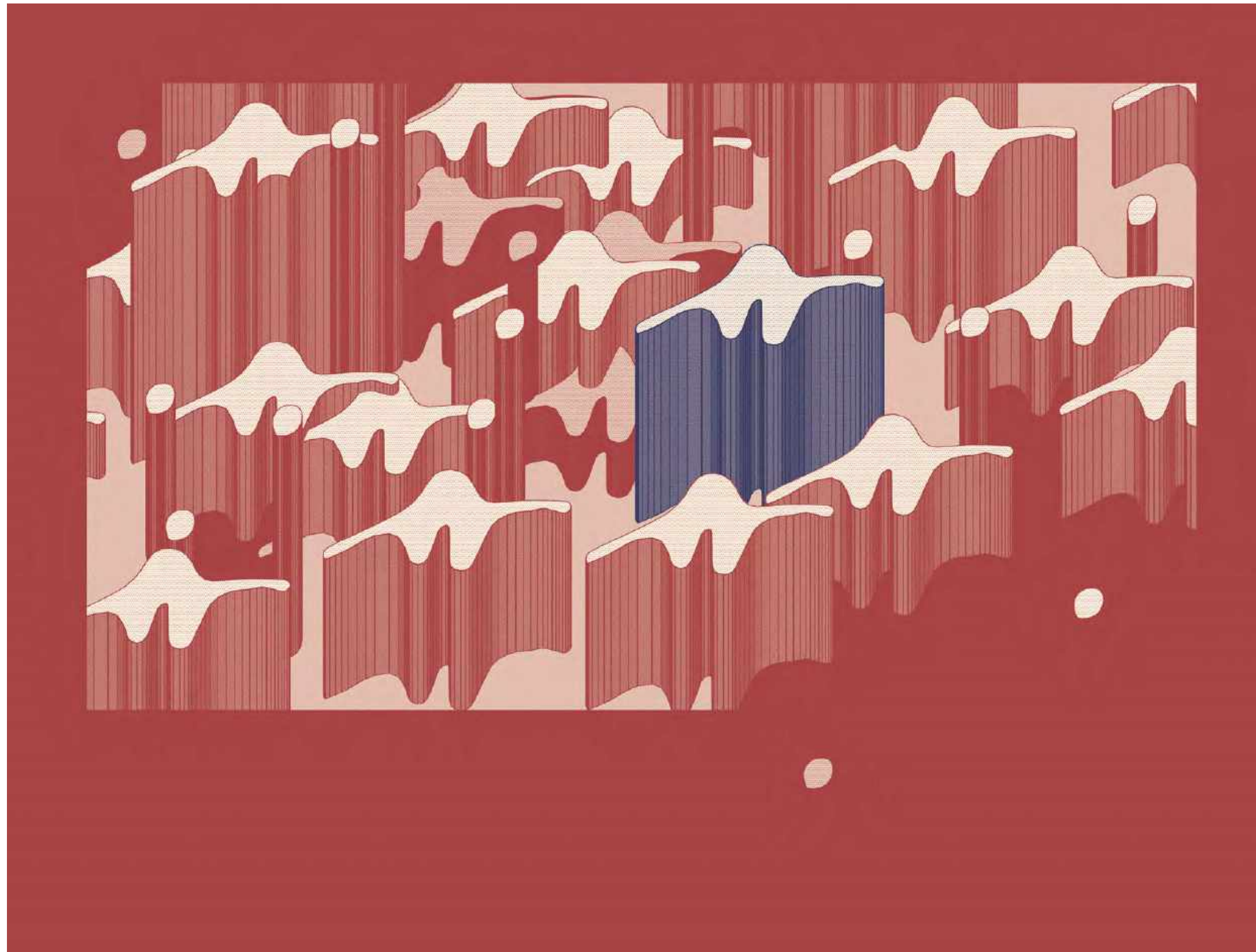
# Jean Arp *Netsuke*

Based on Jean Arp's *Configuration* (1926) at the RISD Museum, this poster examines how the abstract can be made dimensional. In extruding Arp's forms in orthographic projection, I was reminded of British ceramicist Edmund de Waal's memoir *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* (2010), which chronicles his family's collection of 264 Japanese *netsuke* ornaments which were saved from the Nazis owing to their miniature size. This abstract connection prompted me to work with a textured palette reminiscent of Japanese Edo woodblock prints.

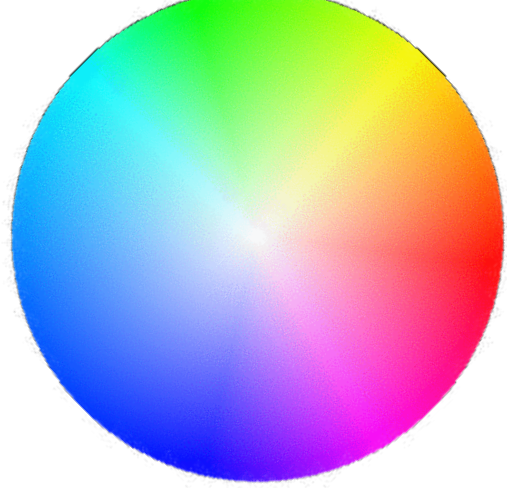
Jean Arp



Abstract →  
Dimensional

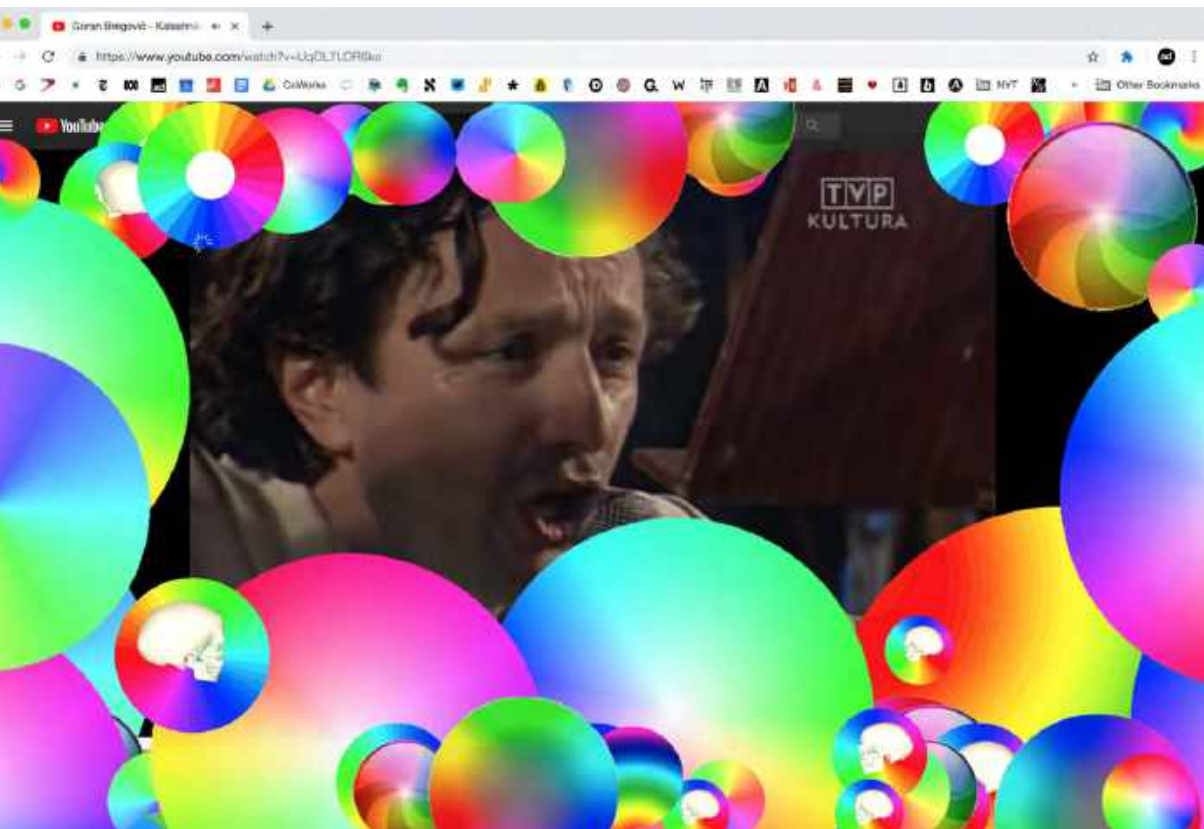
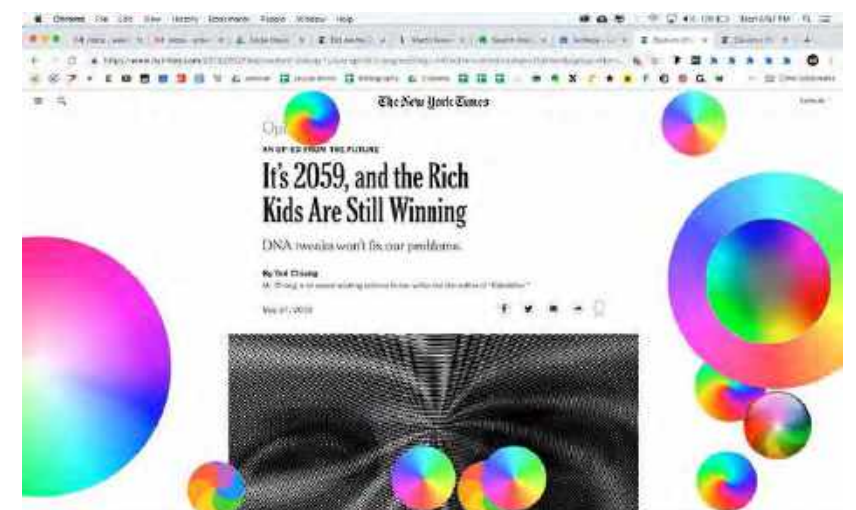
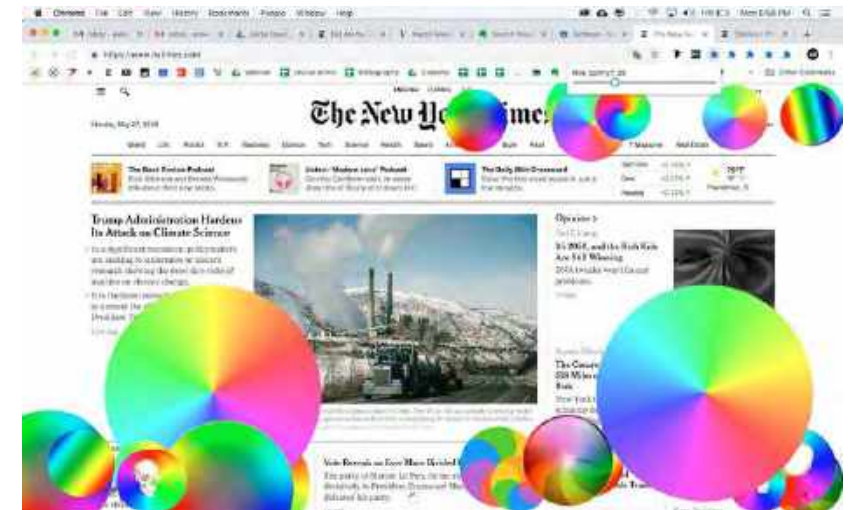


# Spinnny Chrome Plugin



*Spinnny* is a Google Chrome plugin which allows users to add up to one hundred draggable spinning GIFs to their everyday web browsing. I coded this ornamental plugin with JavaScript for pure aesthetic pleasure; and to give users some fun and interactive autonomy in the banality of the internet experience. If desired, one can open the source file and swap out the spinning GIFs for a custom collection of their own choosing.

Download the plugin here: <https://bit.ly/2uSicFp>

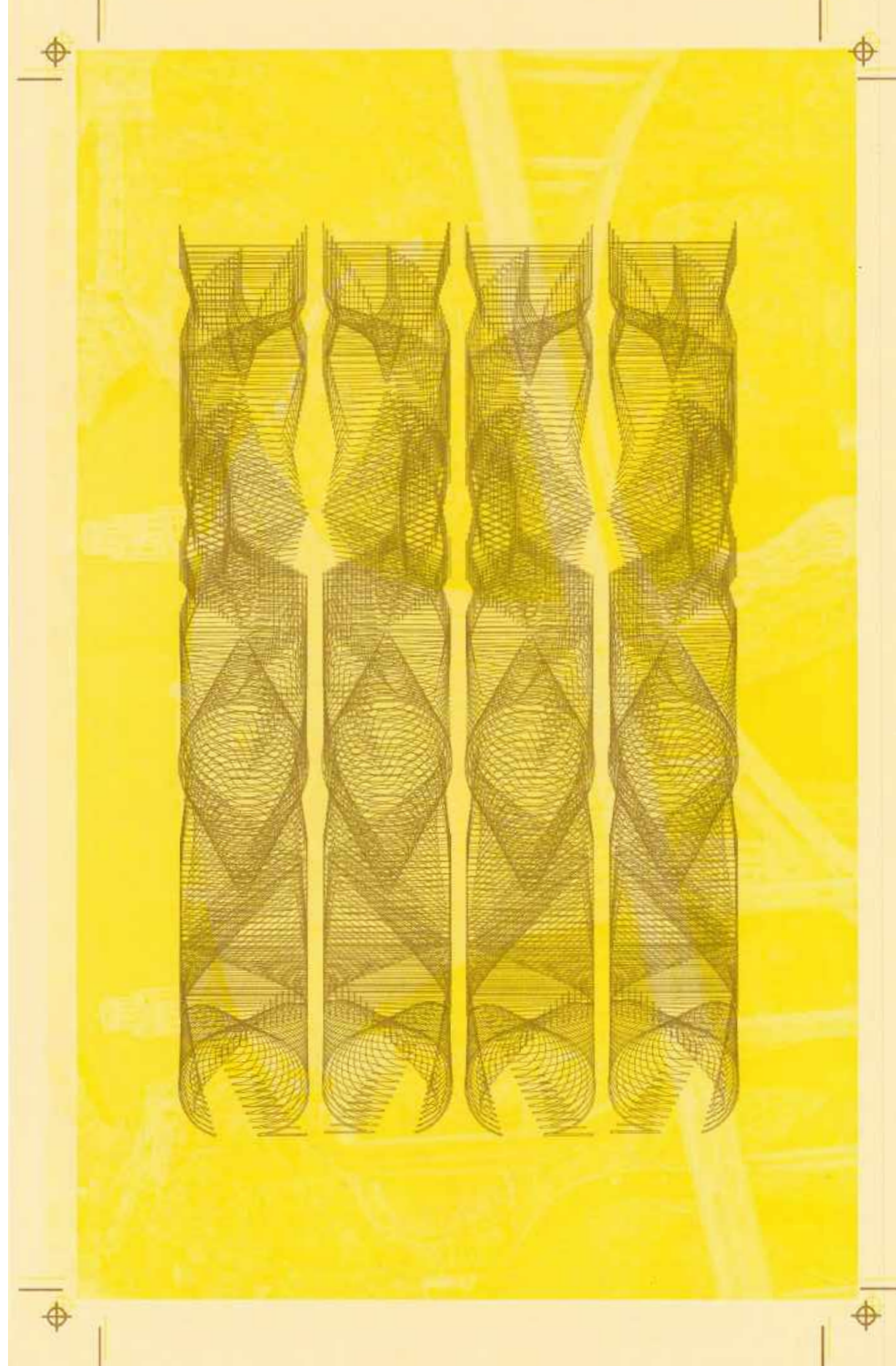
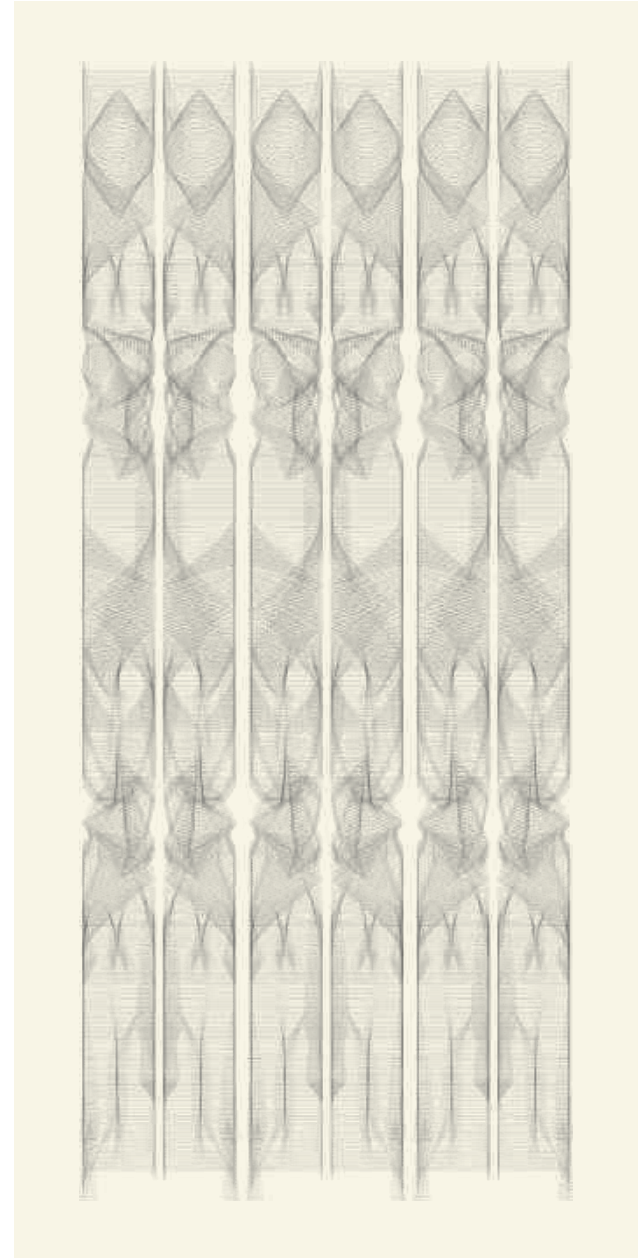


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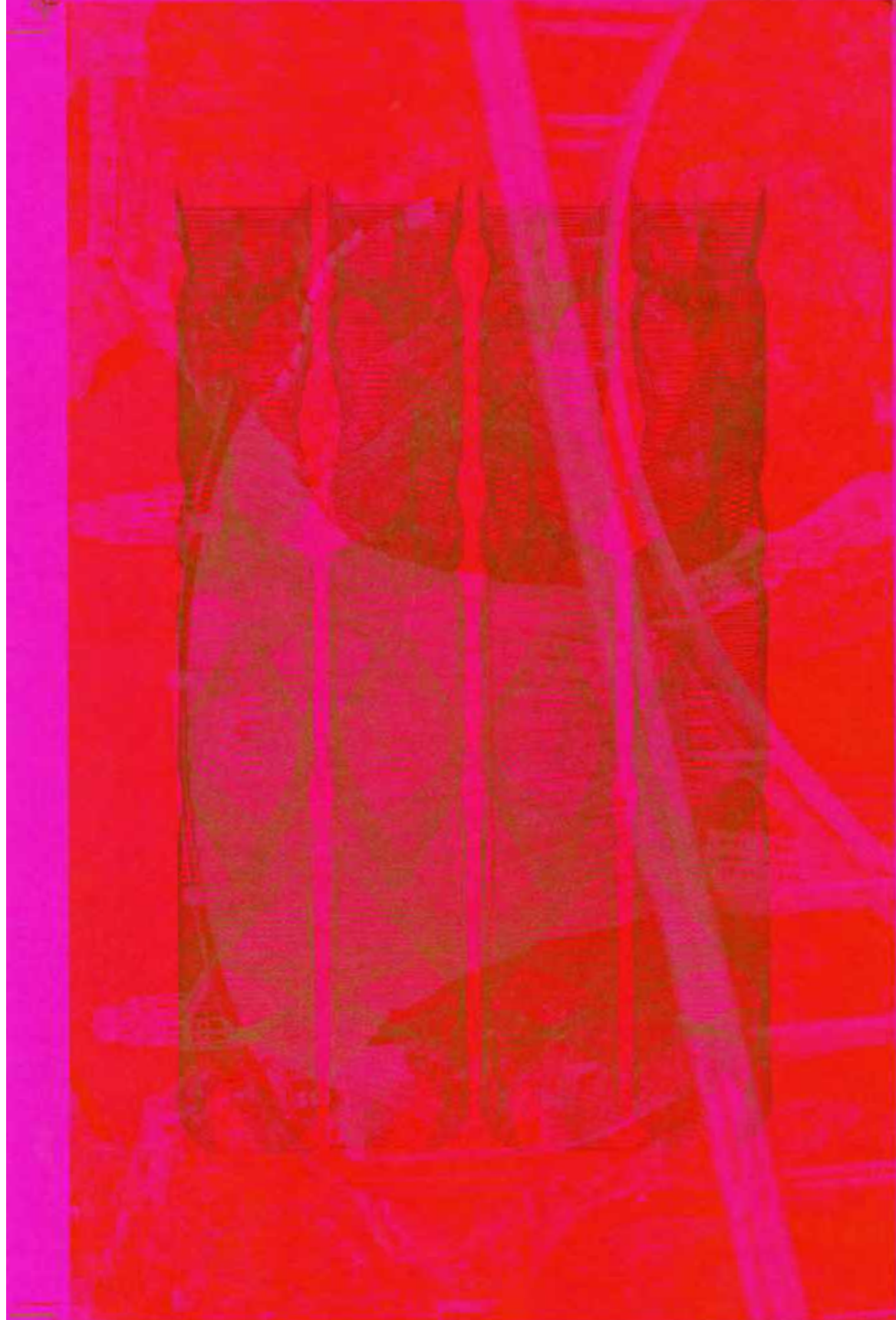


# Platonic Risography

This Risograph series explores the digital interpolation of the word *Platonic* and U2's lyrics for "Love Is All We Have Left." Looking at the phenomenon of cable news chyrons, I was interested in examining the ornamental and spatial properties inherent in letterforms, embedding them with ambiguous and antithetical narratives of love, apathy and hope. I must thank Elaine Lopez (GD MFA 2019) for kindly teaching me to use the Riso *after* she graduated.

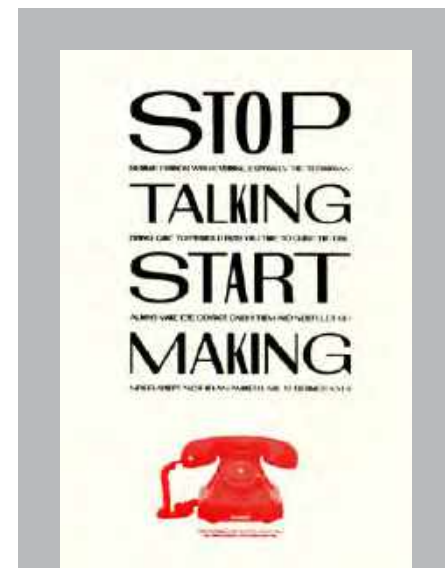






# Stop Talking

I was so inspired by French director, experiential designer and activist Dr. Nelly Ben Hayoun that I screen-printed this poster to mark her visit to RISD GD in 2018. I first encountered Nelly a year prior at Beatrice Galilee's 2017 symposium, *In Our Time: A Year of Architecture in a Day*, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Nelly spoke alongside designers Diller Scofidio + Renfro, OMA and Yves Béhar, giving such a standout presentation that my cheeks hurt from smiling so much. In short, I was completely blown away—so I was understandably excited to have her visit. Typeset in Francis Gradient designed by Nikola Djurek in 2016, the poster's text is taken from Nelly's lecture to RISD GD, in which she offered the sage advice to stop talking and *start making*; to become friends with everyone—*especially* the technicians; to bring cake to pitches; to *always* make eye contact; and perhaps most importantly, to never accept 'no' for an answer, and ask until it becomes a 'yes.'



# Srećan Rođendan

I made this letterpress through a process of exposing photopolymer, a light-sensitive resin polymer that hardens when exposed to ultraviolet light. Once exposed, the polymer is washed to remove any excess, leaving one with a stamp that can be used on the letterpress much like wood or metal type. While the process is very laborious and somewhat antiquated (in the most enjoyable way), it was also necessary to give me access to a Cyrillic alphabet not available in RISD's type collection.

I used this to print a split-fountain (dual-ink) letterpress card for my mother's 60th birthday. Set in Woodkit Print designed by Ondrej Jób in 2014, the text reads *Srećan Rođendan Mama*, simply *Happy Birthday Mum*.



# C'est dur d'être bébé

I made this wrapping paper for a Secret Santa gift to my classmate Emily Guez (GD MFA 2020). My gift was a book of Ed Ruscha paintings because I love his writing and how he incorporates language in his work in a way that, in my opinion, is on par with Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger. Set in HWT Artz<sup>1</sup> designed by Erik Spiekermann<sup>2</sup> in 2013, the wrapping paper tessellates the lyrics from the 1992 French pop song “Dur dur d'être bébé!” [“It's Hard to be a Baby!”] by child star Jordy. I knew that *only* Emily would remember the song and find it funny—and luckily she did! I also vividly remember Emily telling me I should “just make your thesis about ornament” and at the time thinking it was a weird suggestion. Two years later, it turns out Emily was right!

<sup>1</sup> HWT stands for Hamilton Wood Type, a type foundry and printing museum in Two Rivers, Wisconsin. My husband is from Wisconsin and despite us having traveled there four times in the past nine years, we have yet to visit HWT.

<sup>2</sup> I was fortunate enough to meet Erik Spiekermann in New York in 2014. I had him sign his monograph *Hello I am Erik* (Gestalten, 2014) to me thus: “Don't eat crap because it's on the corner,” after his interview in Gary Hustwit's 2007 documentary *Helvetica*, where Spiekermann says: “Most people who use Helvetica use it because it's ubiquitous. It's like going to McDonald's instead of thinking about food. Because it's there, it's on every street corner, so let's eat crap because it's on the corner.” I love Erik.



**Jordy Claude Daniel Lemoine**  
*Dur dur d'être bébé!*  
1992



# Jeepney for Clara

I designed this series of posters to mark the visit of Clara Balaguer, a Filipino self-described cultural worker whose design advocates for decolonization, collectivized authorship and vernacular material culture. Balaguer founded The Office of Culture and Design in Manila in 2010 and in 2013, with Kristian Henson, co-founded their publishing 'hauz' Hardworking Goodlooking. Balaguer has been exhibited internationally, and has lectured at the Walker Art Center, Harvard GSD and Strelka Moscow.

To mark Clara's RISD visit, I wanted to make a poster that evokes the hand lettering on the sides of the ubiquitous *jeepney* public buses in Manila; a vivid memory I have from visiting my parents, who have lived there since 2016. I set the poster in Quiapo, a script by Filipino designer Aaron Amar. Unfortunately Clara was unable to come to RISD owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Hand lettering on the side of a jeepney in Manila



Additional variant posters I made for Clara's talk. The background is one of my three-dimensional fractal Mandelbulbs. This one looks like pulled taffy, but also has quite a painterly textural quality which I felt matched my typeface choice.

CLARA  
BALAGUER  
RISD GD  
VISITING  
DESIGNER  
APRIL 30  
COMMONS  
6:30PM

# Beyond Biomimicry

*It matters what matters we use to think other matters with;  
it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with;  
it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts,  
what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties.  
It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.  
Donna Haraway<sup>1</sup>*

For most of our nine years together, my husband has affectionately called me a decorator crab. Decorator crabs adorn their exoskeletons with materials from their environment to hide from, or ward off predators. The phenomenon is known as aposematism, coming from the Greek *apo*, away and *sema*, sign. In this way, the decorator crab's decorating is equal parts collection, preservation, defense and ornament. I would also argue it is design, just like mine. Decorator crabs are excellent designers: in the wild and in captivity—consciously or otherwise—they exhibit a facility with form, color, scale, module, repetition and what I see as a flair for, or even liking of ornament. I believe my work at RISD shares many of the same traits as the decorator crab: I collect and ornament as much for pleasure as for preservation—and increasingly through computation, I am able to make new ornament, new patterns, new collections and perhaps even new aesthetics. And while the notion of ornament might be a human idea, self-adornment is a truly trans-species phenomenon: from crabs to birds to insects, from sea to land to sky, our animal kingdom has worlds and rituals of ornament we know little about.



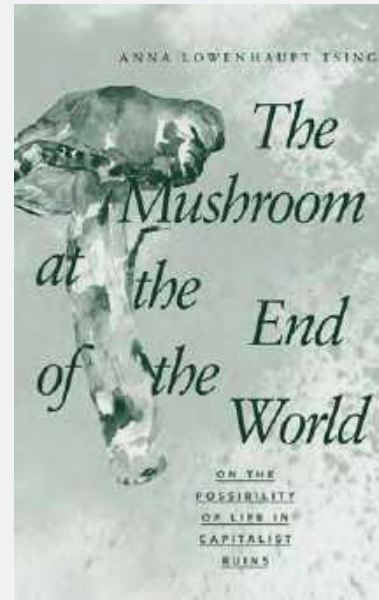
**Decorator crabs at sea and in captivity, using urchin and pompoms respectively**

**Opposite:**  
from Fabrizio Terranova's  
*Donna Haraway: Story Telling for Earthly Survival*, 2019

<sup>1</sup> Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

So where to from here? Many have written on various posthuman, transhuman and hyperhuman conditions that, at a very simplified level speculate on the future(s) of humanity. But what if these speculations are not limited to the romanticism of hybridization or material transcendence? What would it look like to go beyond the cyborg musings of science fiction and into posthuman anti-humanism? What if we abandoned our bodies, or consciously pushed our species to its own extinction? What if we are already in these processes, and by our own volition? What if our hopes for survival lie not inward and with the self—or X-ward in the cloud—but X, Y and Z-ward into space and beyond time? What if our future(s) lie in rejecting there is even such a thing as our past—in which case, what if the future rejects itself?

We are destroying our Earth, we are killing its life and in doing so, we are well on our way to eliminating each other. But perhaps this final point is neither good nor bad. Perhaps extinction is amoral, and through it we can learn to make a life without living; a living without life.



**Anna Tsing's 2015 *Mushroom* examines convoluted commodity chains and their potential for trans-species collaboration**



Perhaps there is a place for us without us *in* it; a place of emergence, abundant with thought, emotion and memory but potentially quite devoid of bones and flesh. Perhaps there is a somewhere over that rainbow, where we will embrace each other without bodies, life or death; without earth or food or struggle or disease; with just soul and conscience, empathy and love. I believe there is such a place, and I think we might already be in it. These days I send my love to family by pressing non-existent buttons on screens connected to a network that delivers it across our planet instantaneously. I deliver this thesis via camera, microphone and screen to a school closed by pandemic. We are already living a fantastic future, where ornamental thinking and making bridges ever-new divides between soul and body; feast and famine; love and hate. Using ornament, I believe we can and will push this thinking even farther, to new metaphysical trans-species and interplanetary frontiers.

**Alchemic embodiments: a (re)constructive dance by Iris van Herpen, David Altmejd and Tim Walker, 2018**



**Neri Oxman and W. Craig Carter *Imaginary Beings (Medusa 2)* 2012**



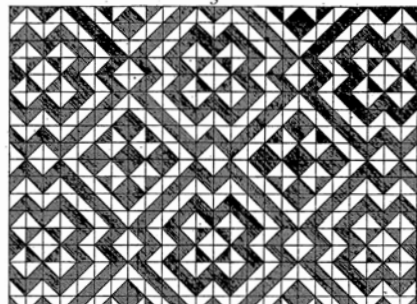
**Alessandro Michele for Gucci Fall Winter 2018/2019**

# Electric Ornament

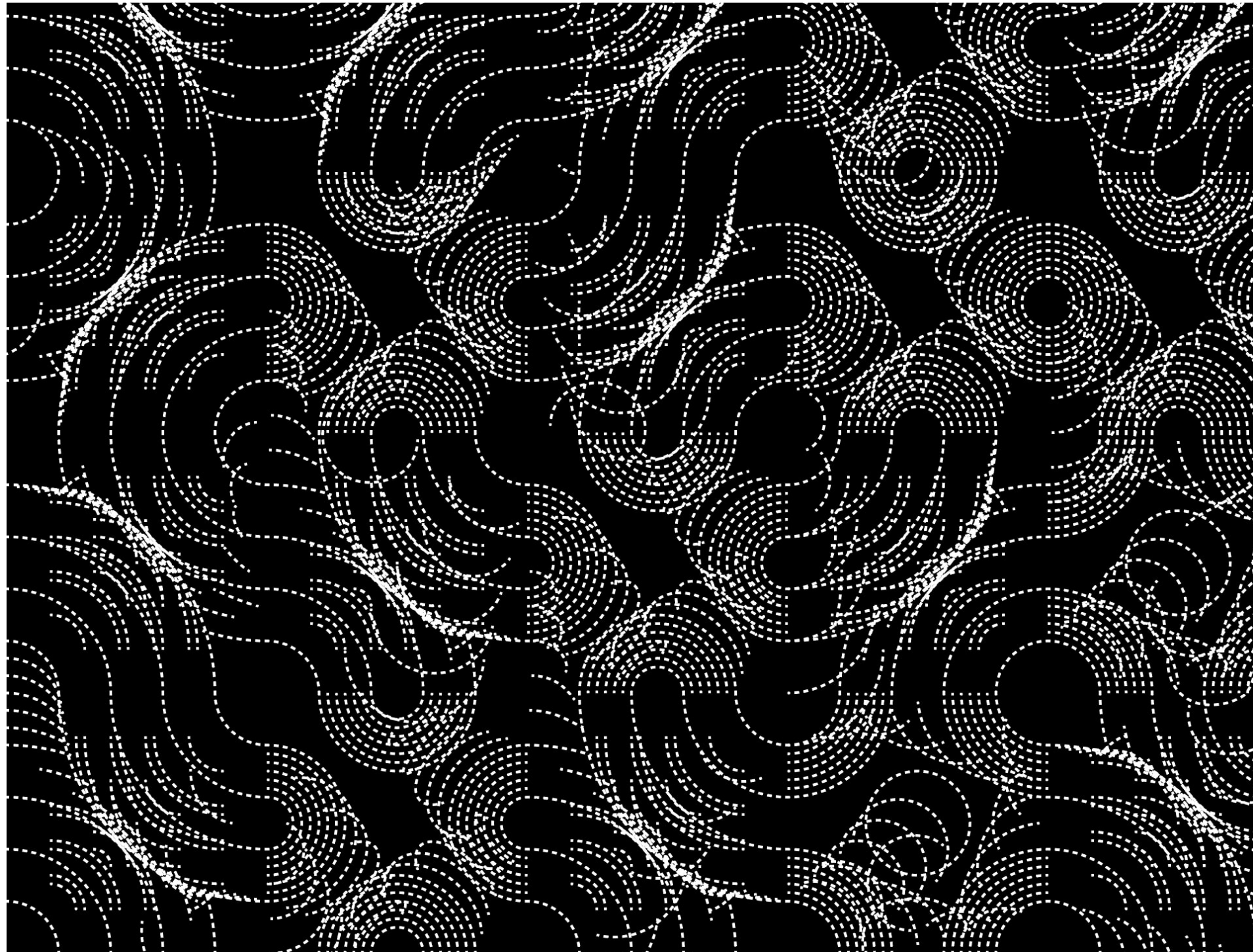
These drawings are the result of my experiments with Python in DrawBot and Rhino; with Ruby in SketchUp; and with JavaScript and HTML in Google Chrome. If this verbal garble sounds like a post-apocalyptic menagerie to you, please, don't fret: it's nonsensical to me, too. Suffice to say these drawings were made with modified open source code in different programs and with various post-production manipulations in Adobe Suite.

They began with my interest in French Dominican priest Sébastien Truchet (1657–1721), who lived under the reign of Louis XIV—yes, Louis *Quatorze*, the Sun King. Truchet was a true polymath, working in mathematics, hydraulics, horology, graphic design and typography. He is perhaps best known for his *Romain du Roi* (1692), a landmark typeface of the Enlightenment and early influence of Times New Roman. Truchet's contribution to typography also includes an early system of bitmapping, which I guess qualifies him as the grandfather of rasterized graphics—if we count Michael Noll at Bell Labs as the father. But perhaps most importantly, Truchet pioneered a system of tiling based on tile patterns he observed on French canals, many of which he engineered. The following drawings are my exploration of—and homage to—Truchet's brilliant tiles.

*Sixième Planché*



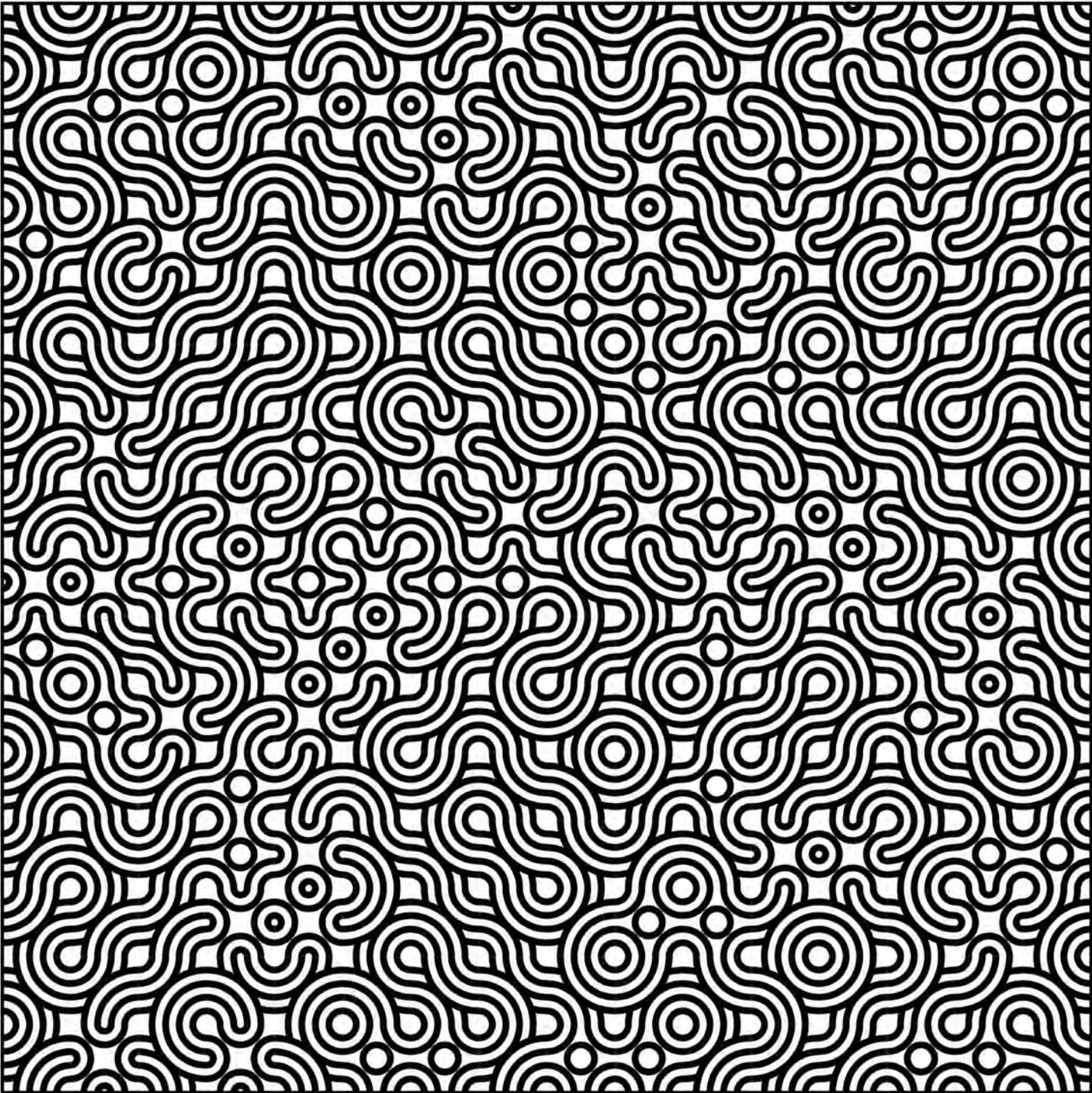
**Sébastien Truchet**  
*Mémoires de l'Académie  
Royale des Sciences*  
1704





truchet.py

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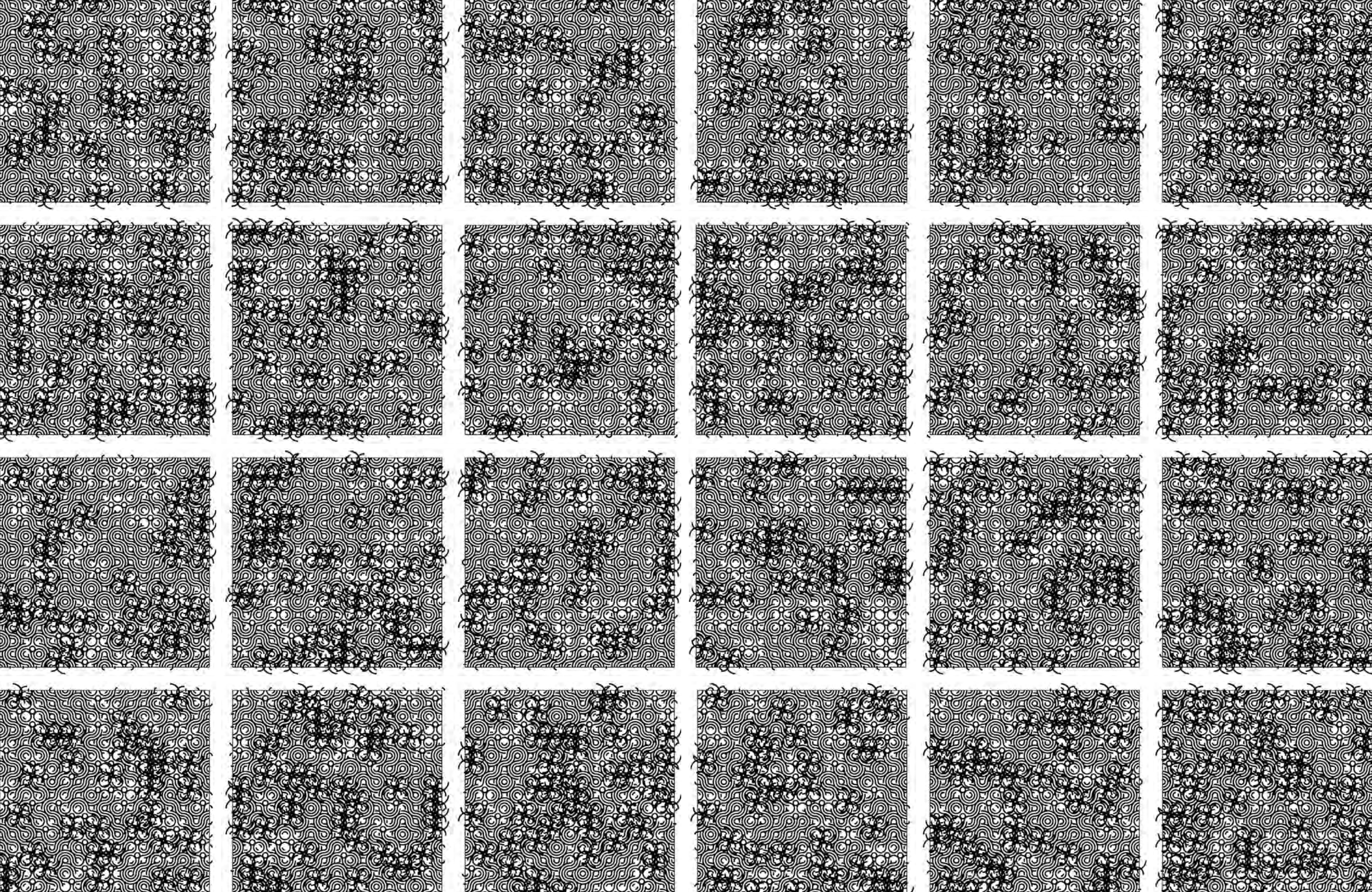


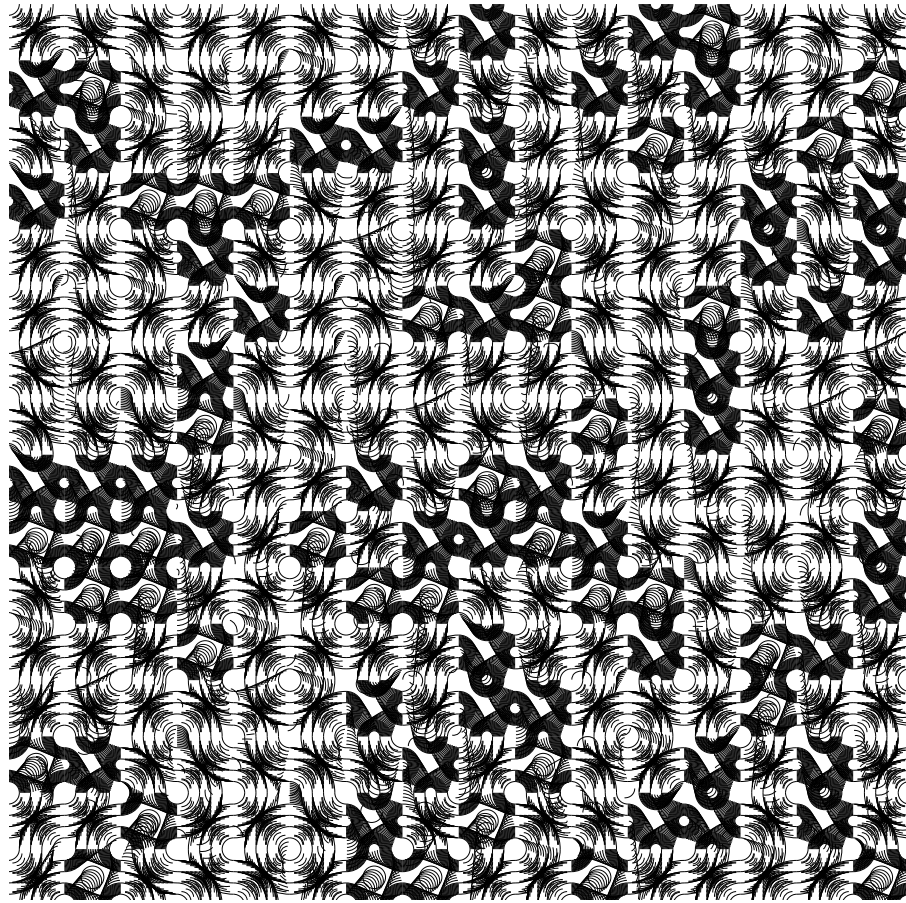
```

1 def drawArc(center, radius, startAngle, endAngle):
2     bez = BezierPath()
3     bez.arc(center, radius, startAngle, endAngle, False)
4     drawPath(bez)
5
6 def tile1(x, y, q=0):
7     with savedState():
8         translate(x, y)
9         rotate(q * 90, center=(0.5, 0.5))
10        for r in [0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8]:
11            drawArc((0, 0), r, 0, 90)
12            if r == 0.8:
13                drawArc((1, 1), r, 180, 198)
14                drawArc((1, 1), r, 252, 270)
15            else:
16                drawArc((1, 1), r, 180, 270)
17
18 def tile2(x, y):
19     tile1(x, y, 1)
20
21 def tile3(x, y):
22     tile1(x, y, 2)
23
24 def tile4(x, y):
25     tile1(x, y, 3)
26
27 def tile5(x, y):
28     with savedState():
29         translate(x, y)
30         for i in range(4):
31             drawArc((0, 0.5), 0.1, 270, 90)
32             drawArc((0, 0.5), 0.3, 270, 90)
33             rotate(90, center=(0.5, 0.5))
34
35 def tile6(x, y):
36     with savedState():
37         translate(x, y)
38         oval(0.3, 0.3, 0.4, 0.4)
39         for i in range(4):
40             drawArc((0, 0), 0.2, 0, 90)
41             drawArc((0, 0), 0.4, 0, 90)
42             rotate(90, center=(0.5, 0.5))
43
44 allTiles = [tile1, tile2, tile3, tile4, tile5, tile6]
45
46 numTiles = 16
47
48 fill(1)
49 rect(0, 0, 1000, 1000)
50
51 scale(1000 / numTiles)
52 scale(0.9, center=(numTiles/2, numTiles/2))
53
54 fill(None)
55 stroke(0)
56 strokeWidth(0.05)
57 rect(0, 0, numTiles, numTiles)
58
59 strokeWidth(0.1)
60 for i in range(numTiles):
61     for j in range(numTiles):
62         tile = choice(allTiles)
63         tile(i, j)

```



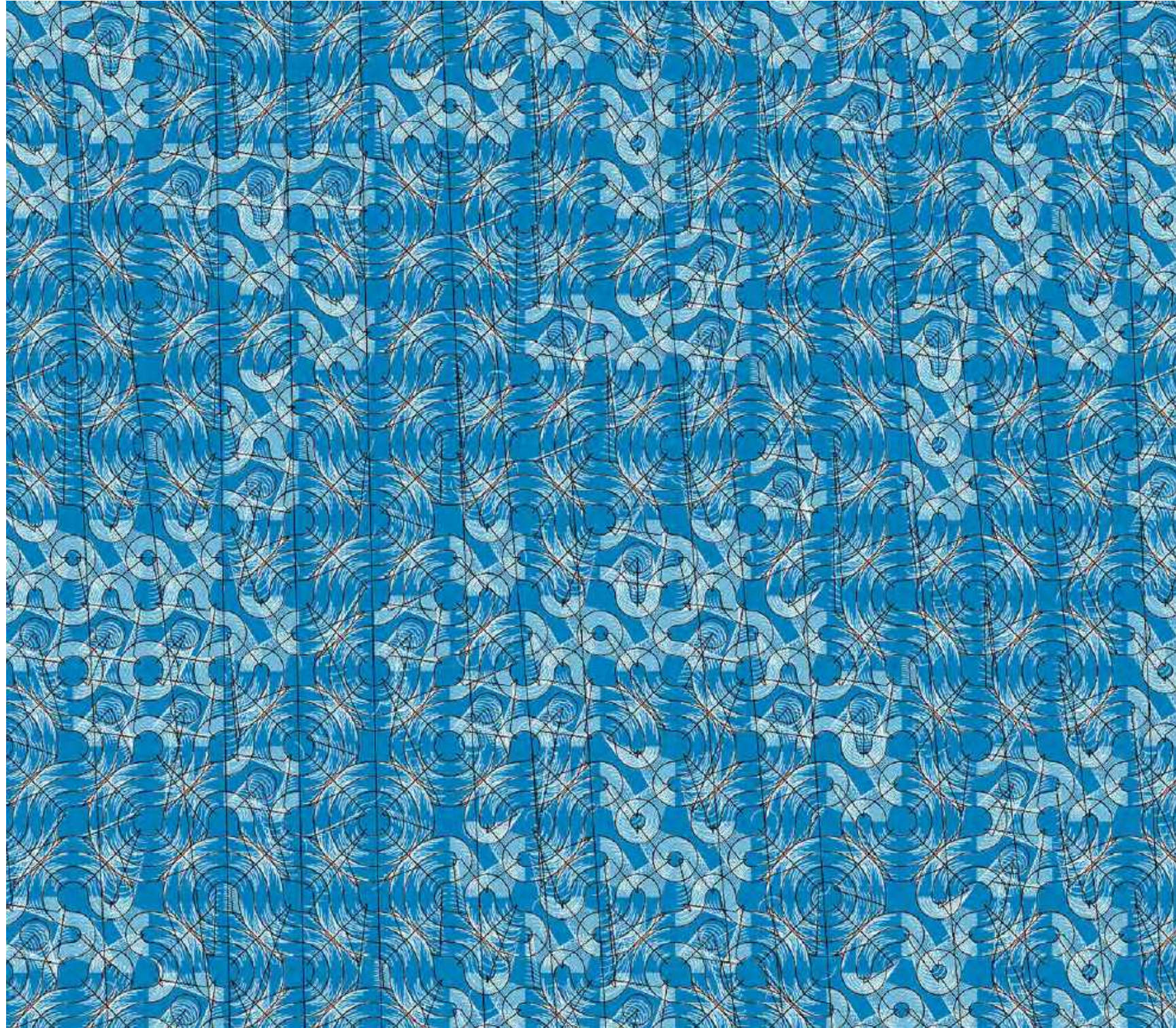


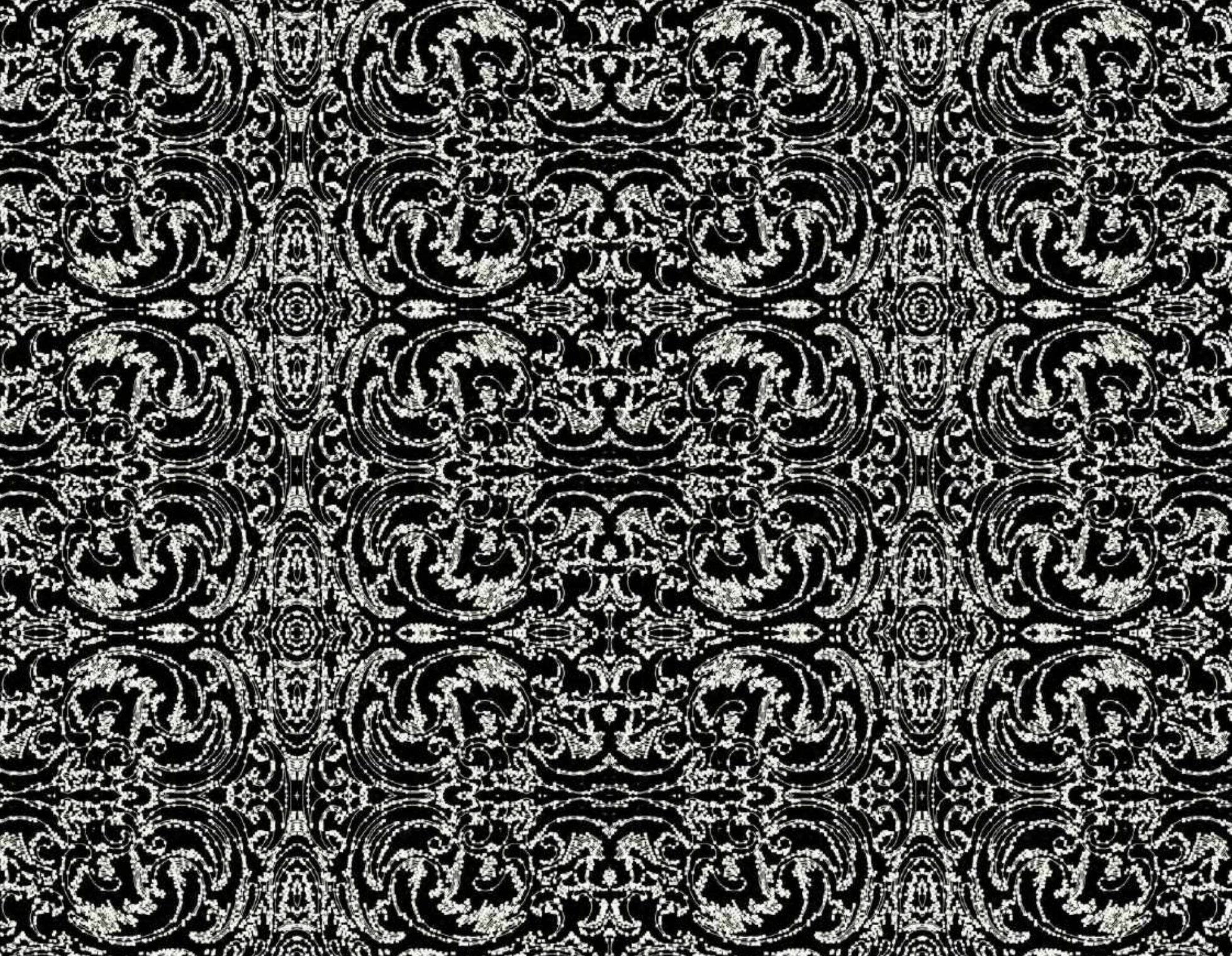


Blended and filled vectors generated first in DrawBot then manipulated in Illustrator.

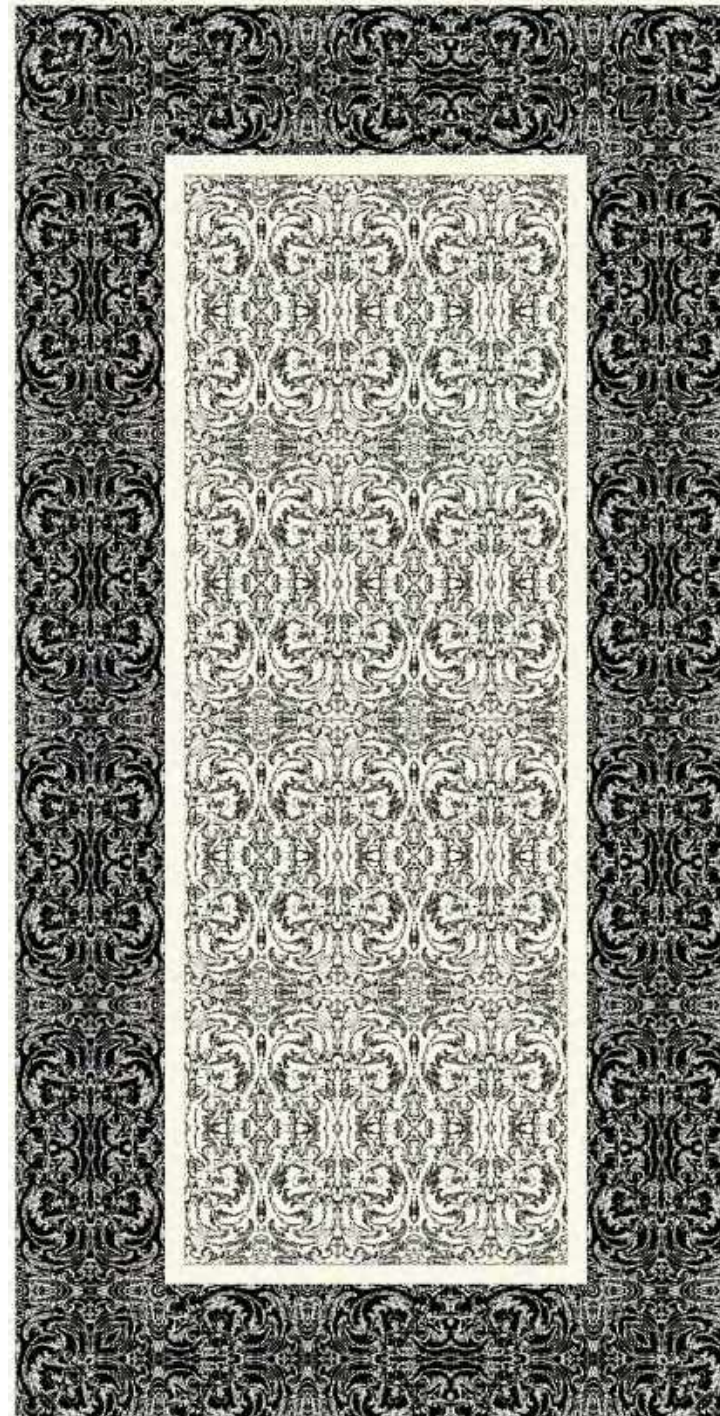


Further experiments with blended Python Truchet tiling.





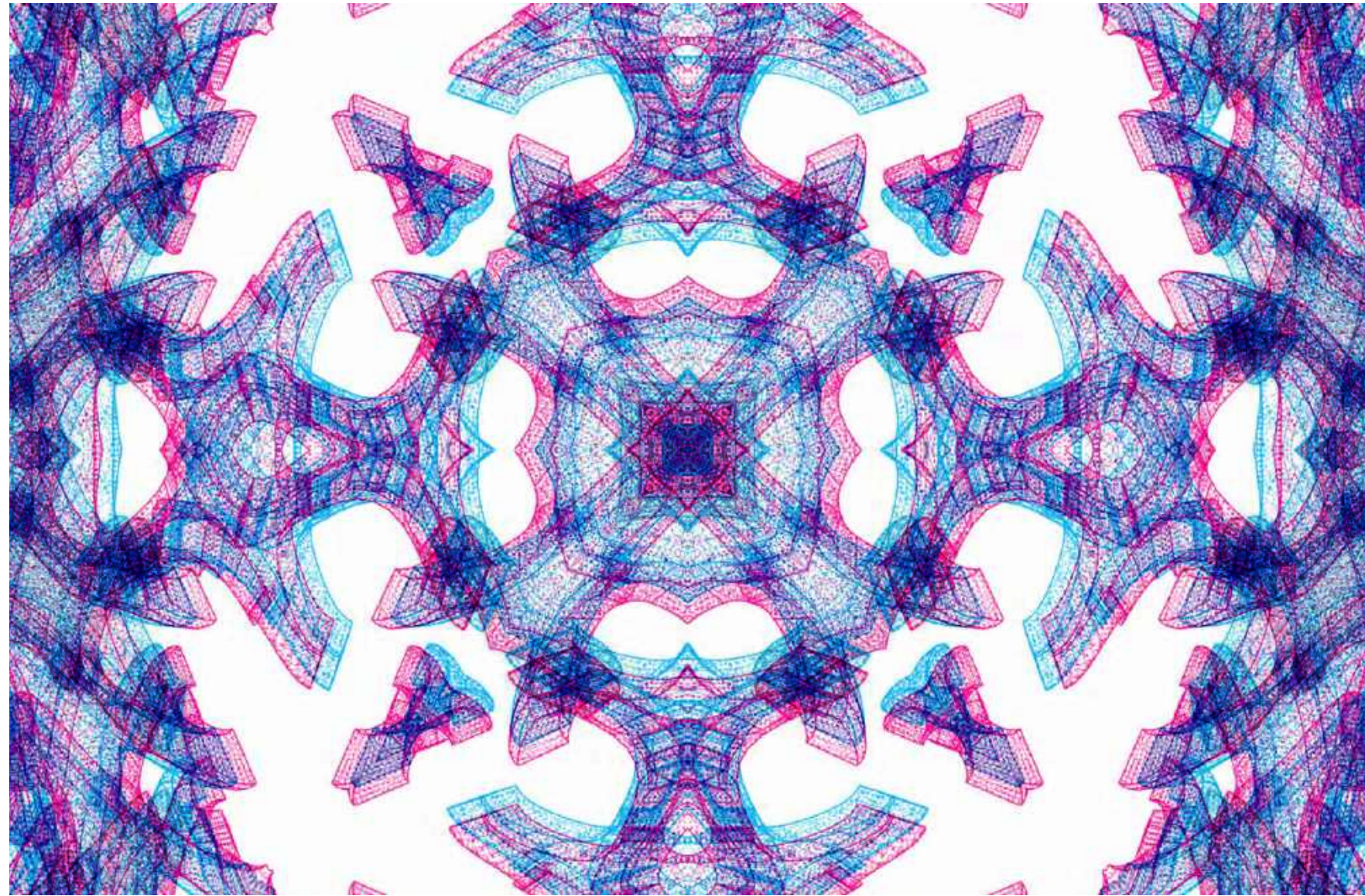
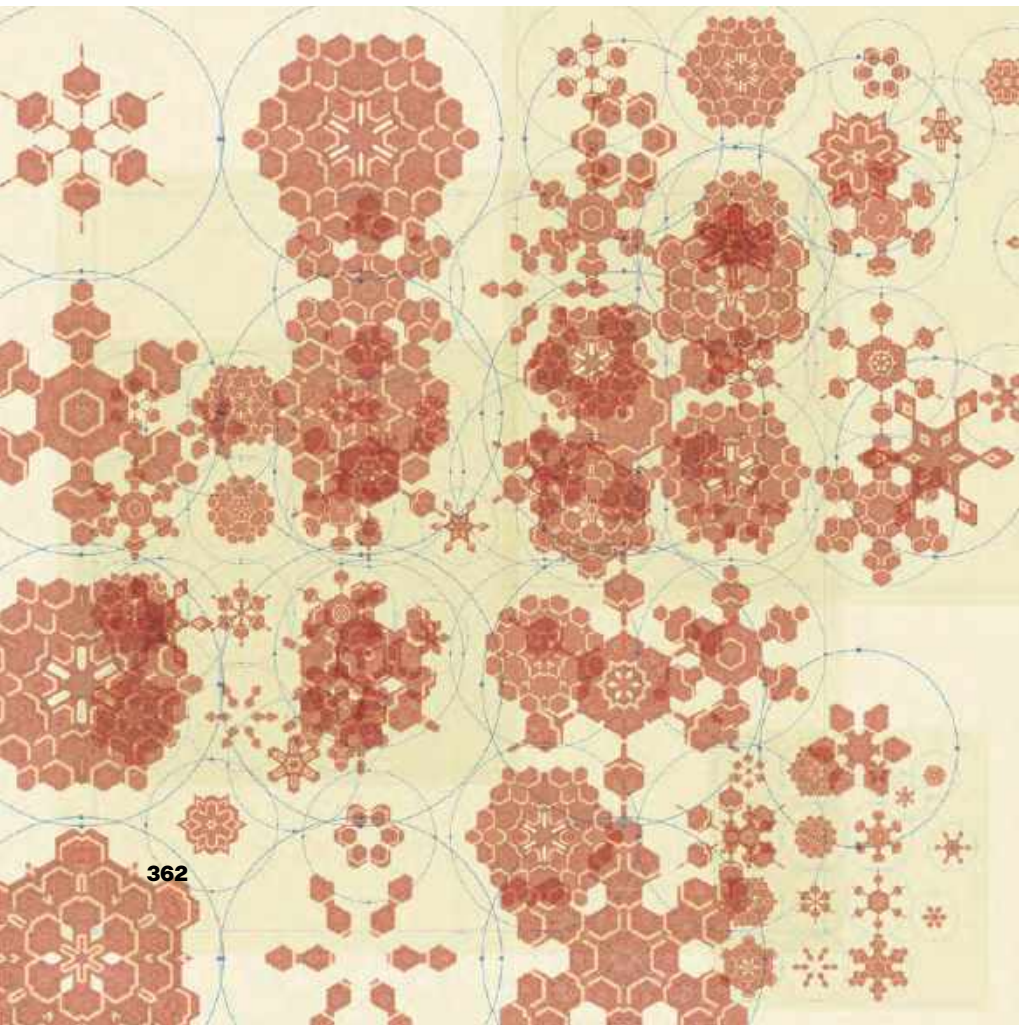
Warped and tiled Truchet vectors with exposed anchor points.



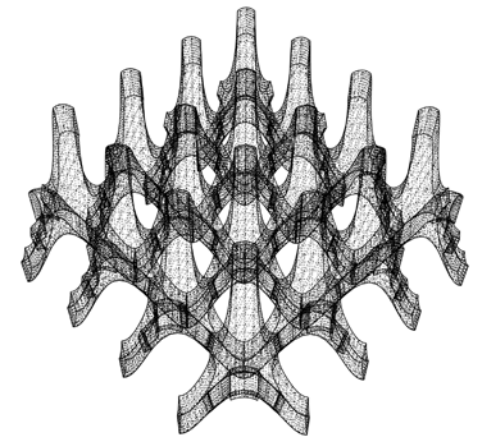


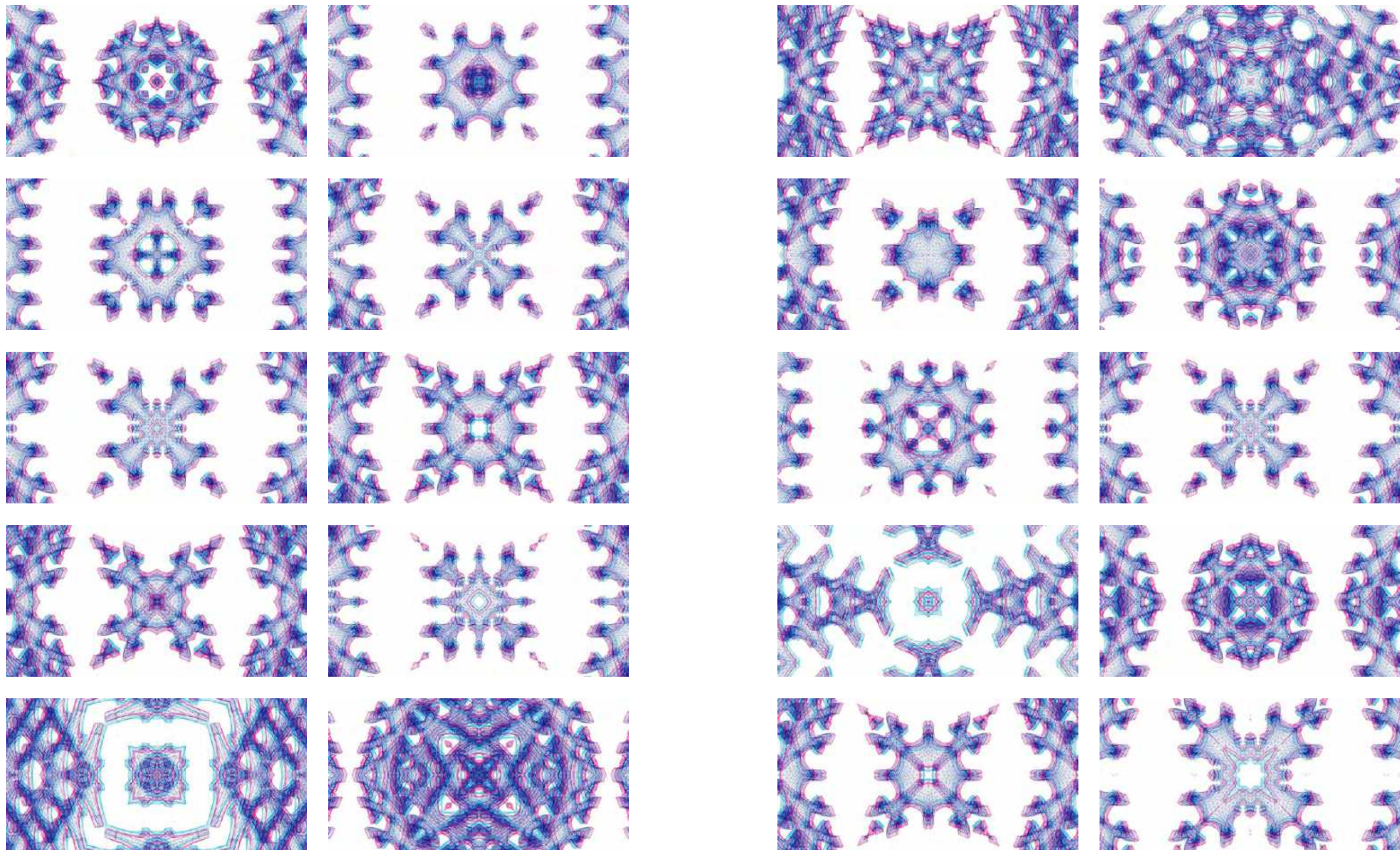
Owen Jones, *Turkish N° 3*  
from *The Grammar of Ornament*  
1856

Randomized 'snowflakes' tessellating the above Turkish motif drawn by Owen Jones.

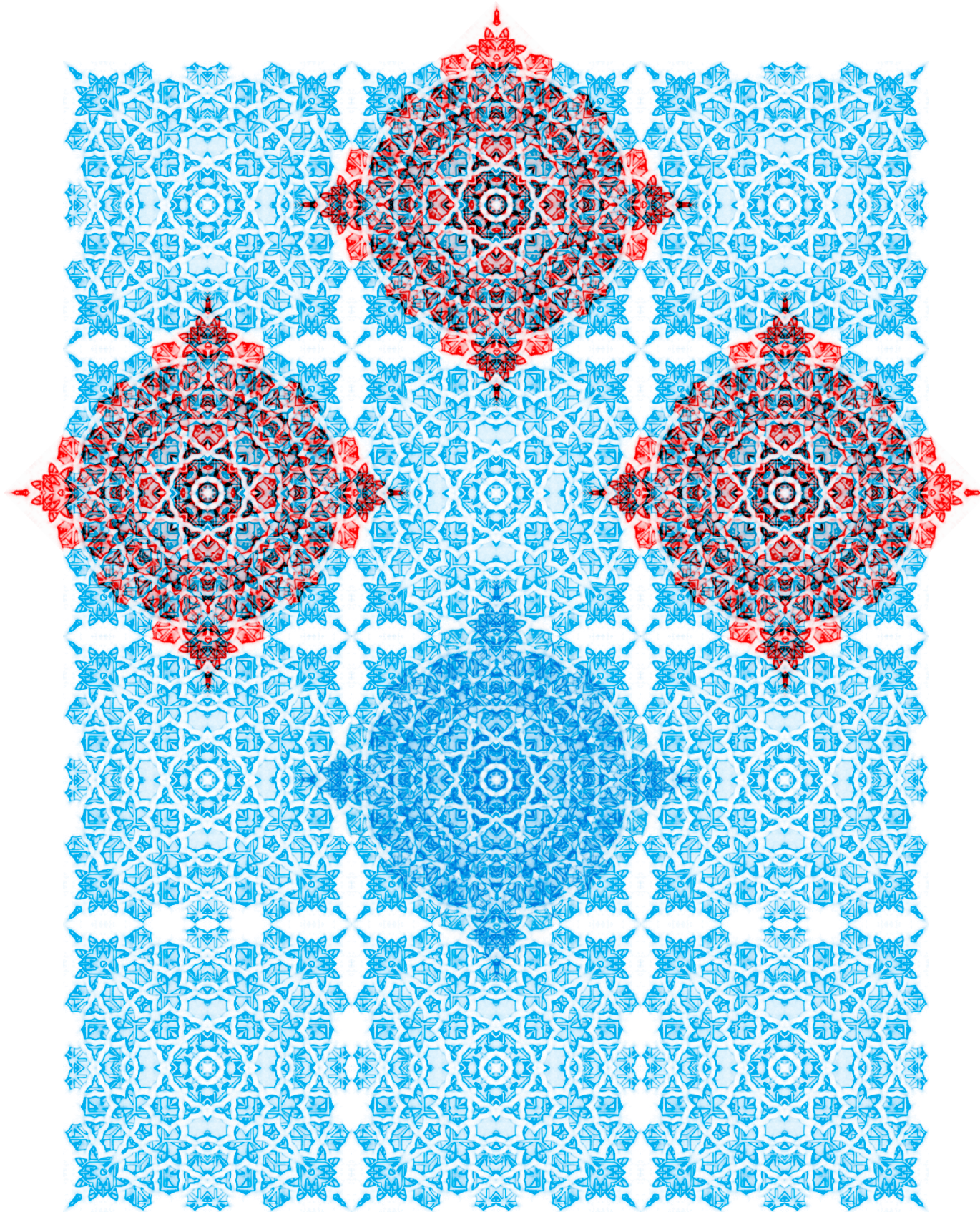
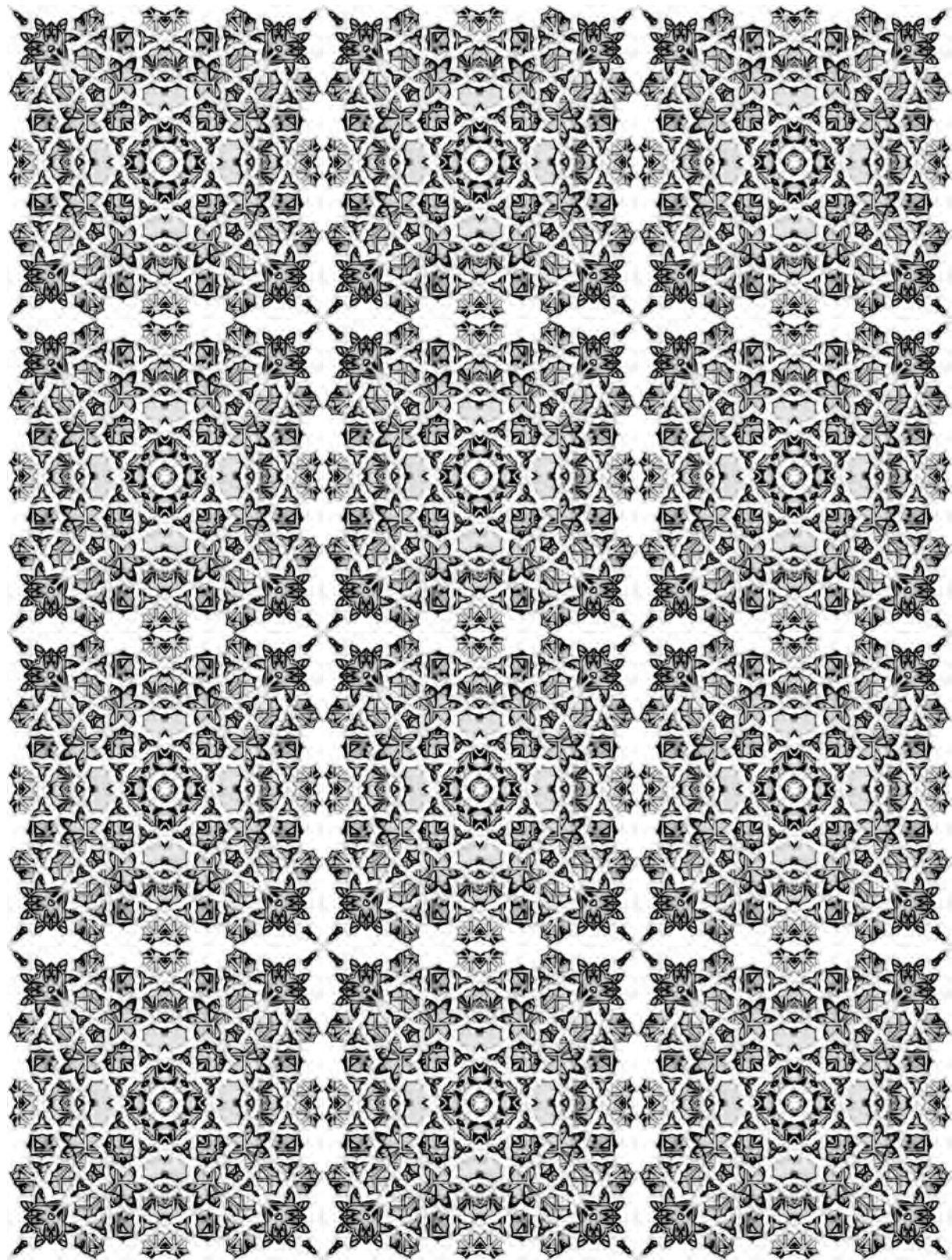


Randomized, kaleidoscoped stereoscopic patterns based on a skewed projection of an Erwin Hauer *continua* (below).



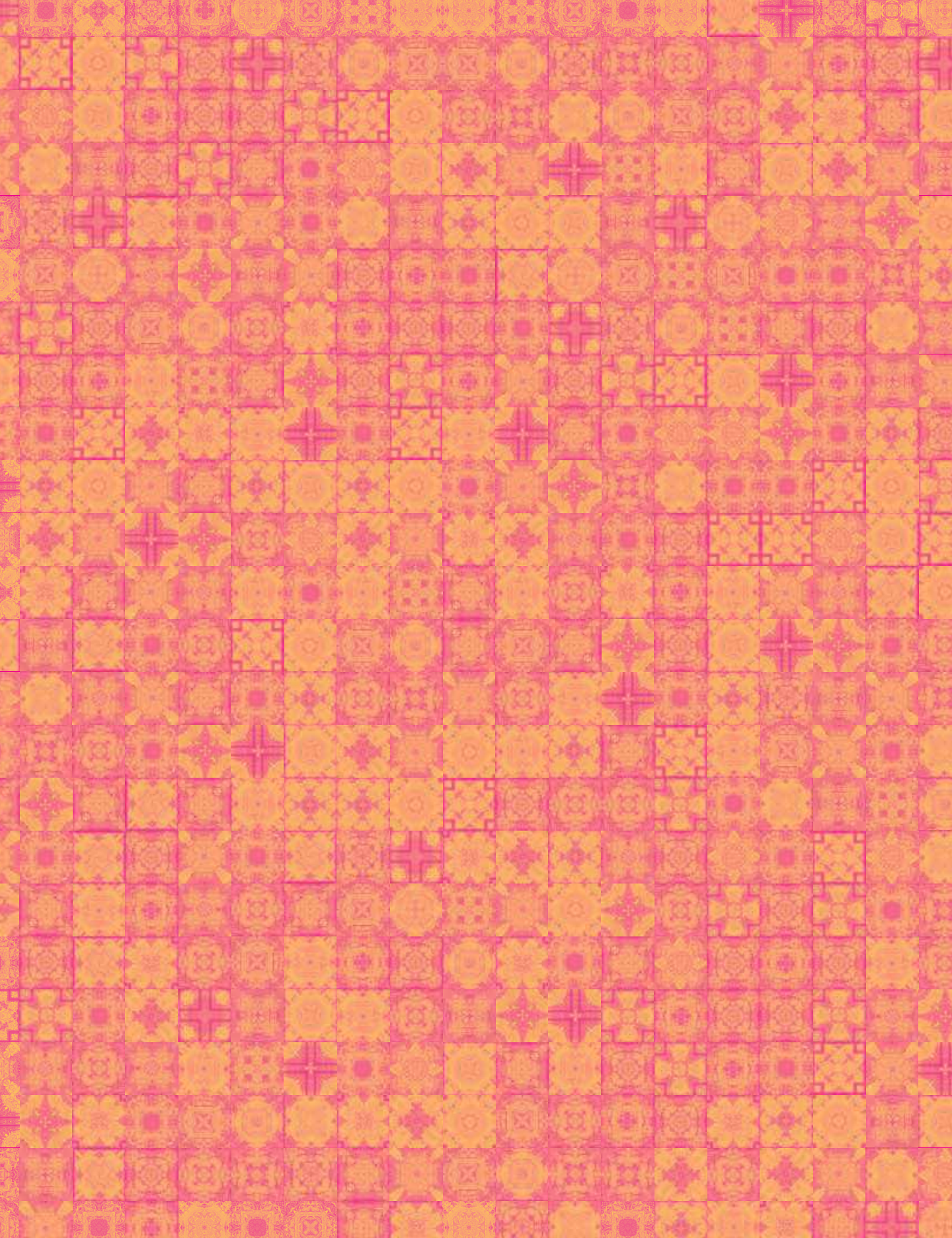


Randomized, kaleidoscoped stereoscopic patterns based on a skewed projection of an Erwin Hauer *continua*.

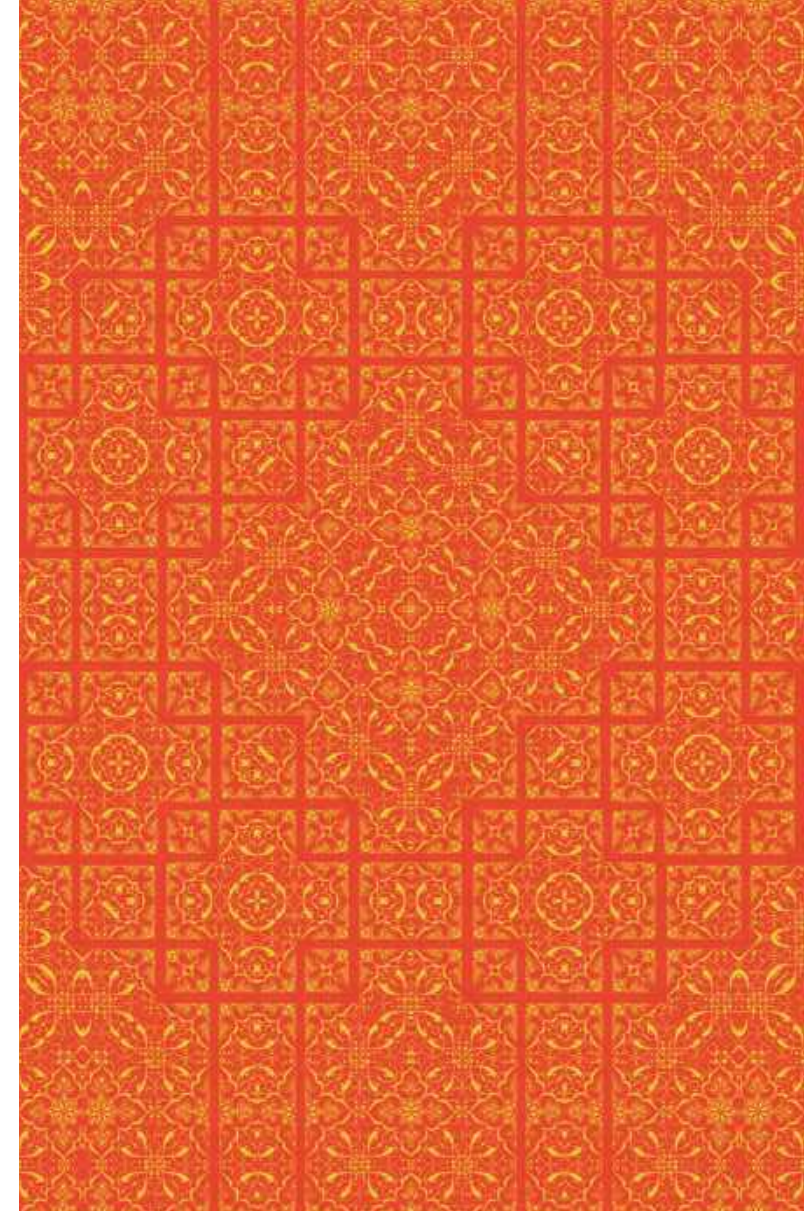


Kaleidoscoped stereoscopic patterns using scanned, stacked lasercuts of Jones' *Grammar of Ornament* patterns.

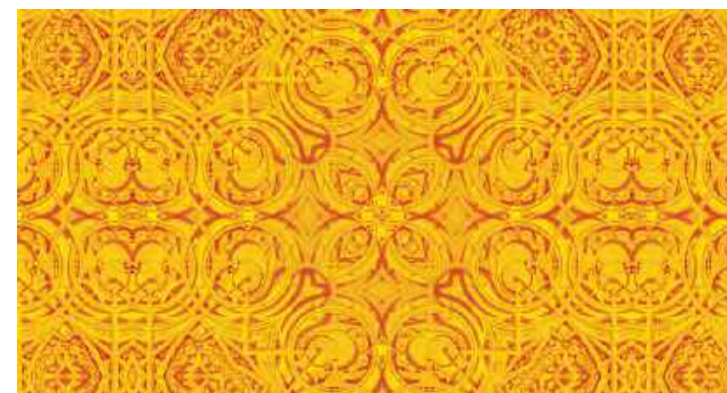


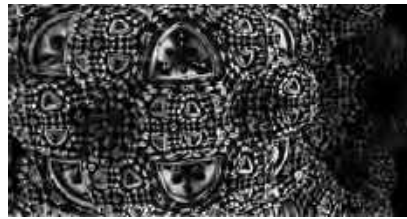
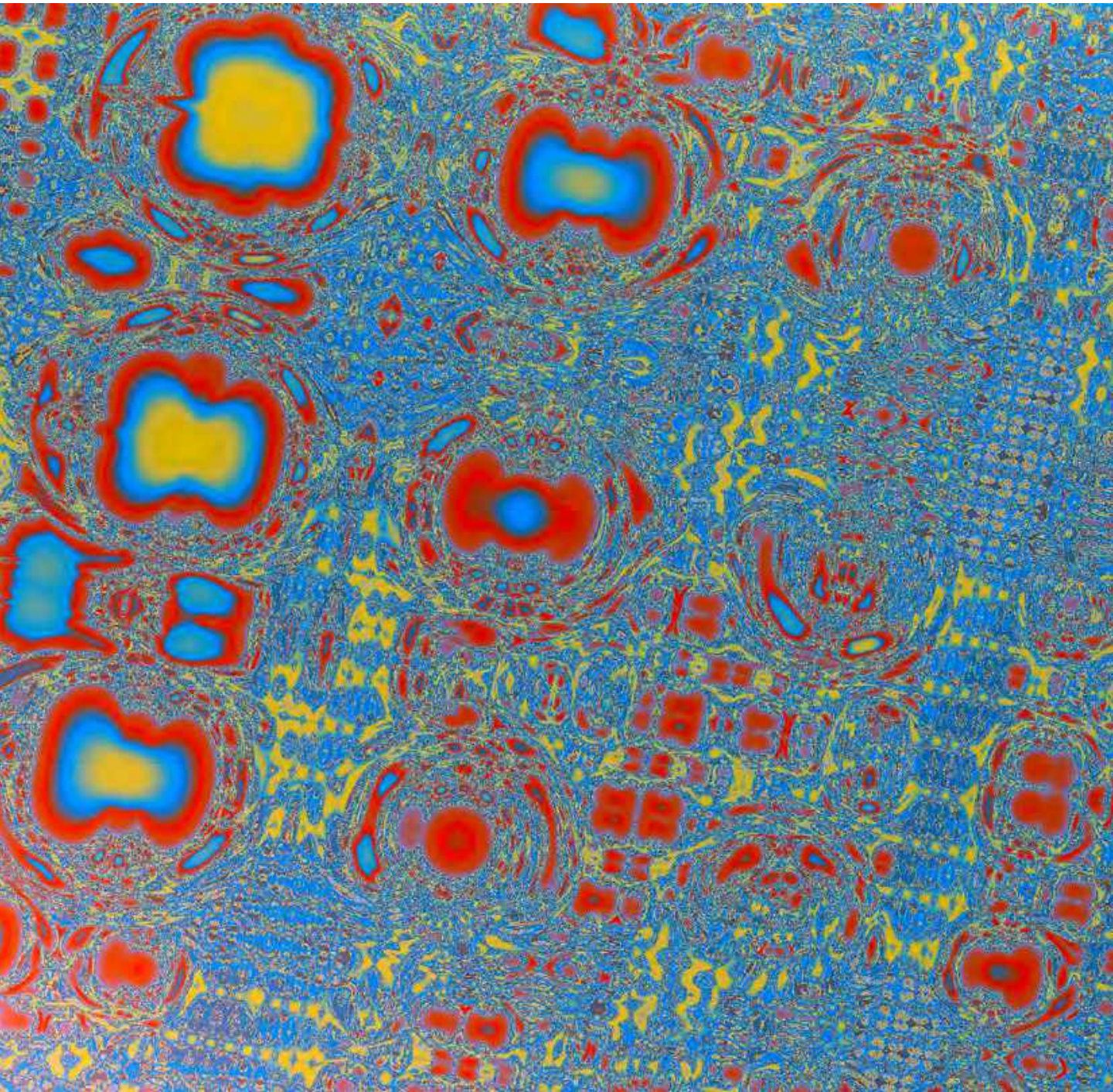


**Owen Jones**  
**Alhambra arabesque**  
**1860s**

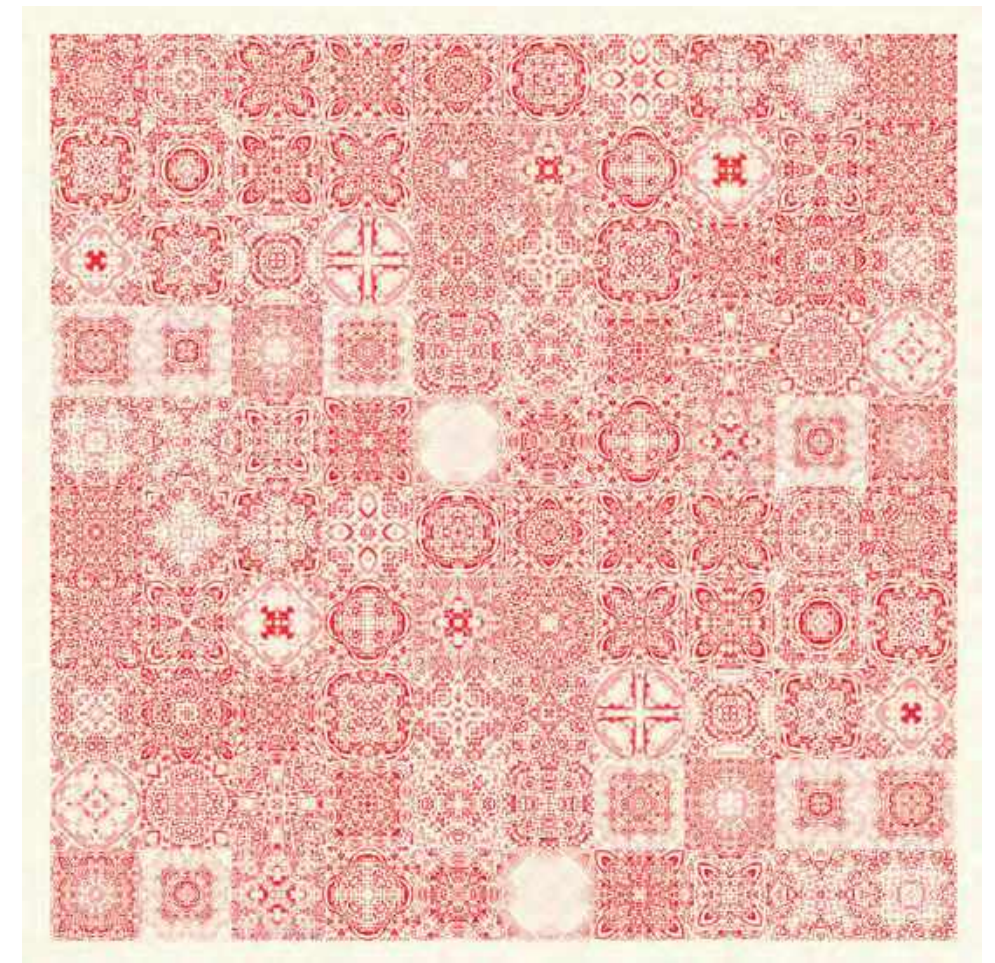


*Above:* Kaleidoscoped study of a Jones arabesque study pictured left.  
*Below:* Kaleidoscoped duotone Rhino 3D model based on Louis Sullivan.  
*Opposite:* Randomized tiles generated from Jones's *Grammar*.

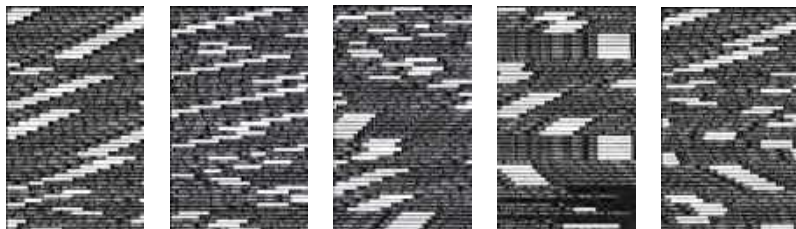


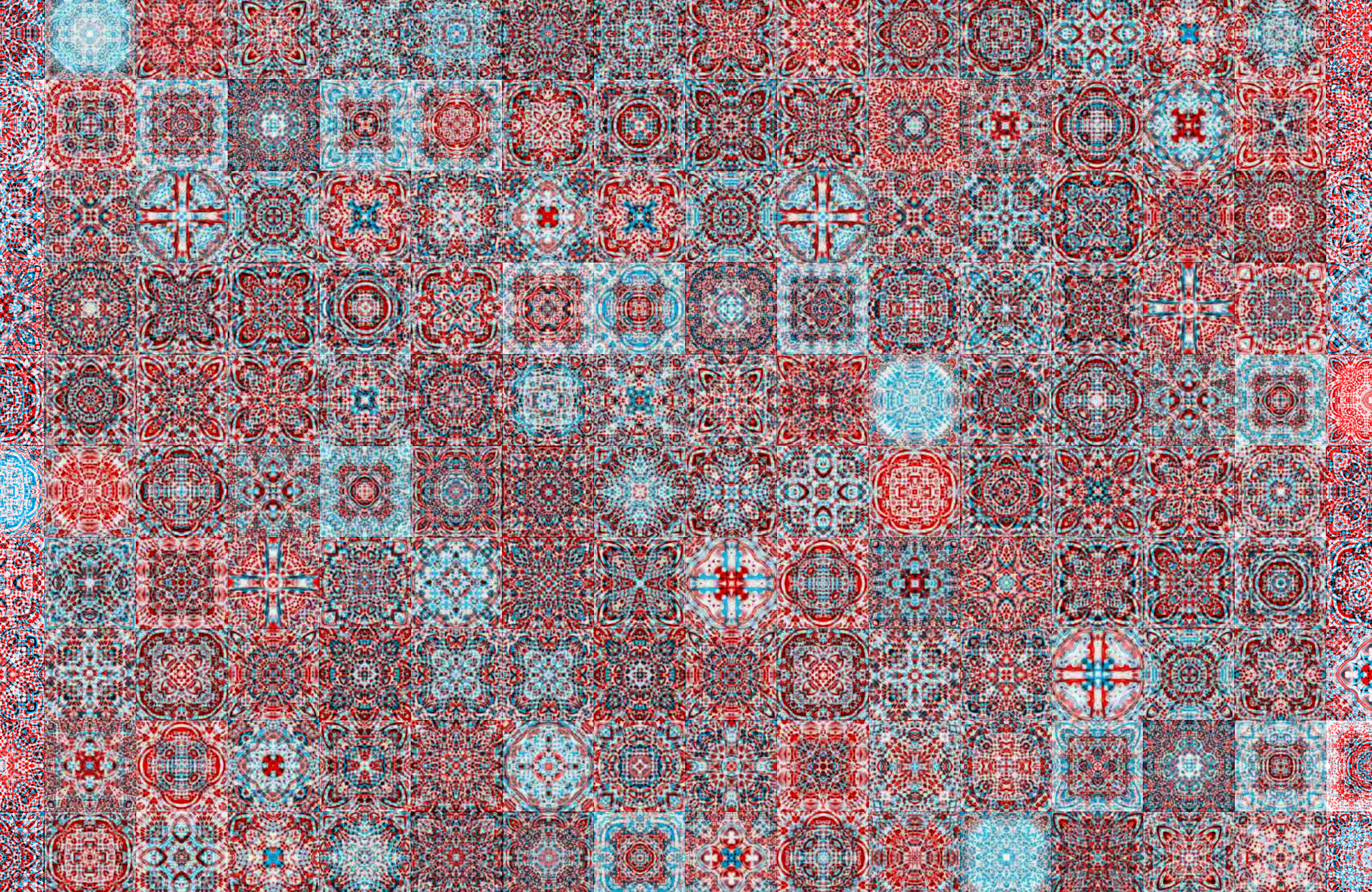


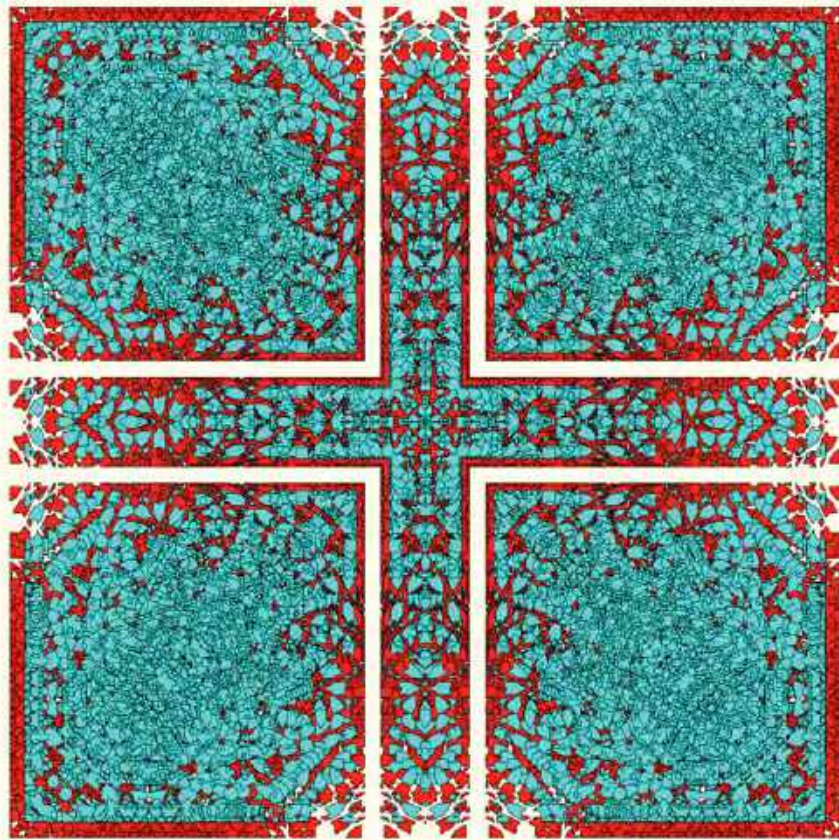
Above: a rendering of one of my mutated Mandelbulbs.  
Below: randomized tiled made by reflecting selective crops of said Mandelbulb.



Above: UV mapping of a randomized, distorted, kaleidoscoped Mandelbulb.  
Below: patterns created in plain text while parsing JavaScript.





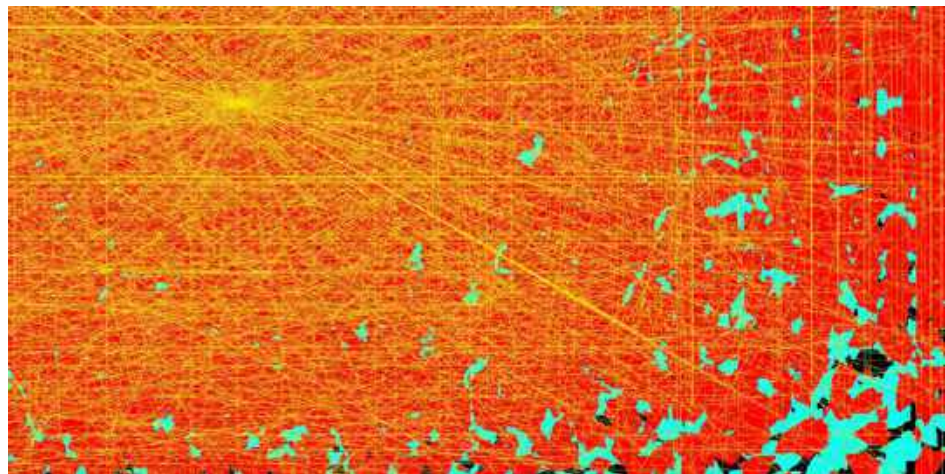
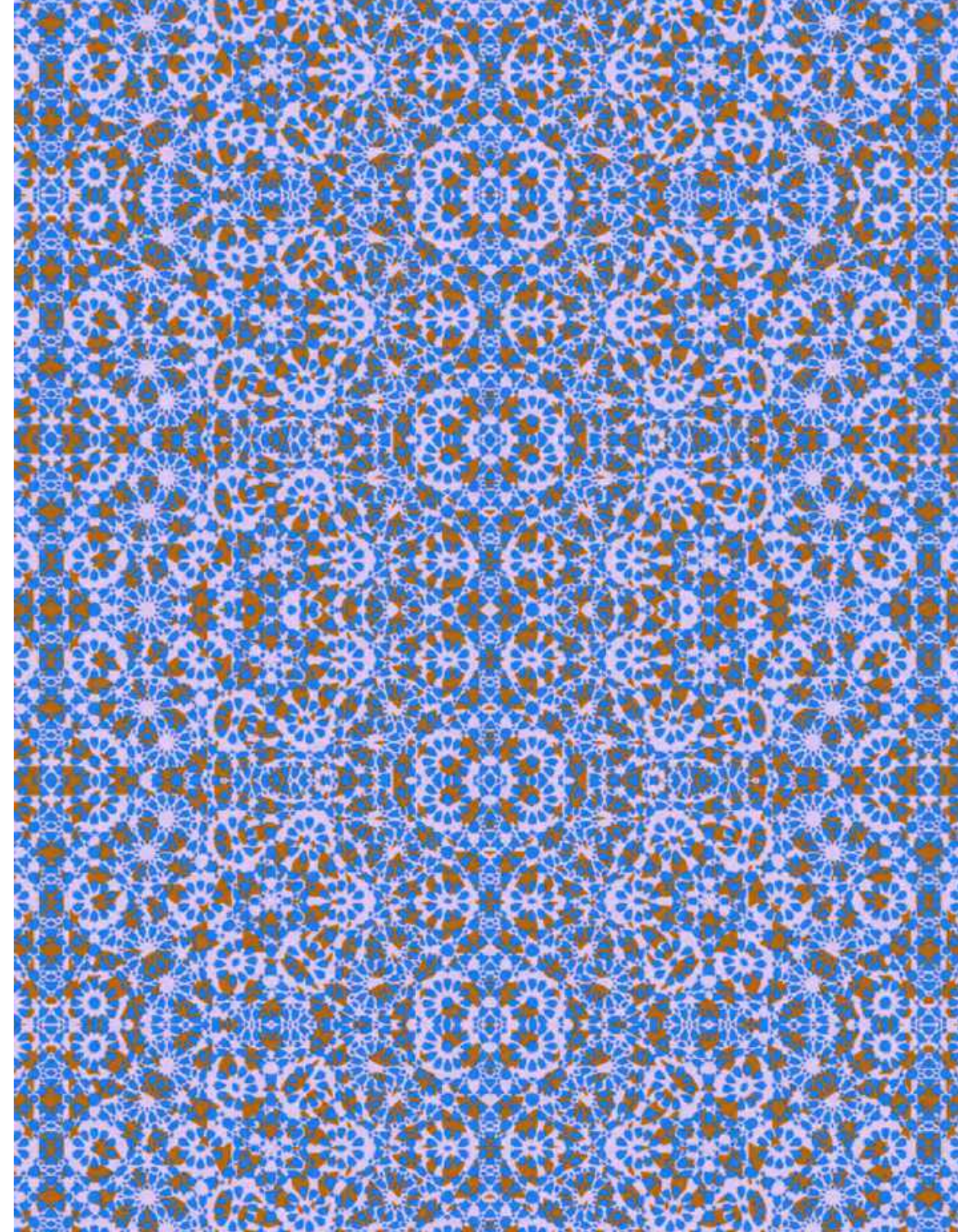


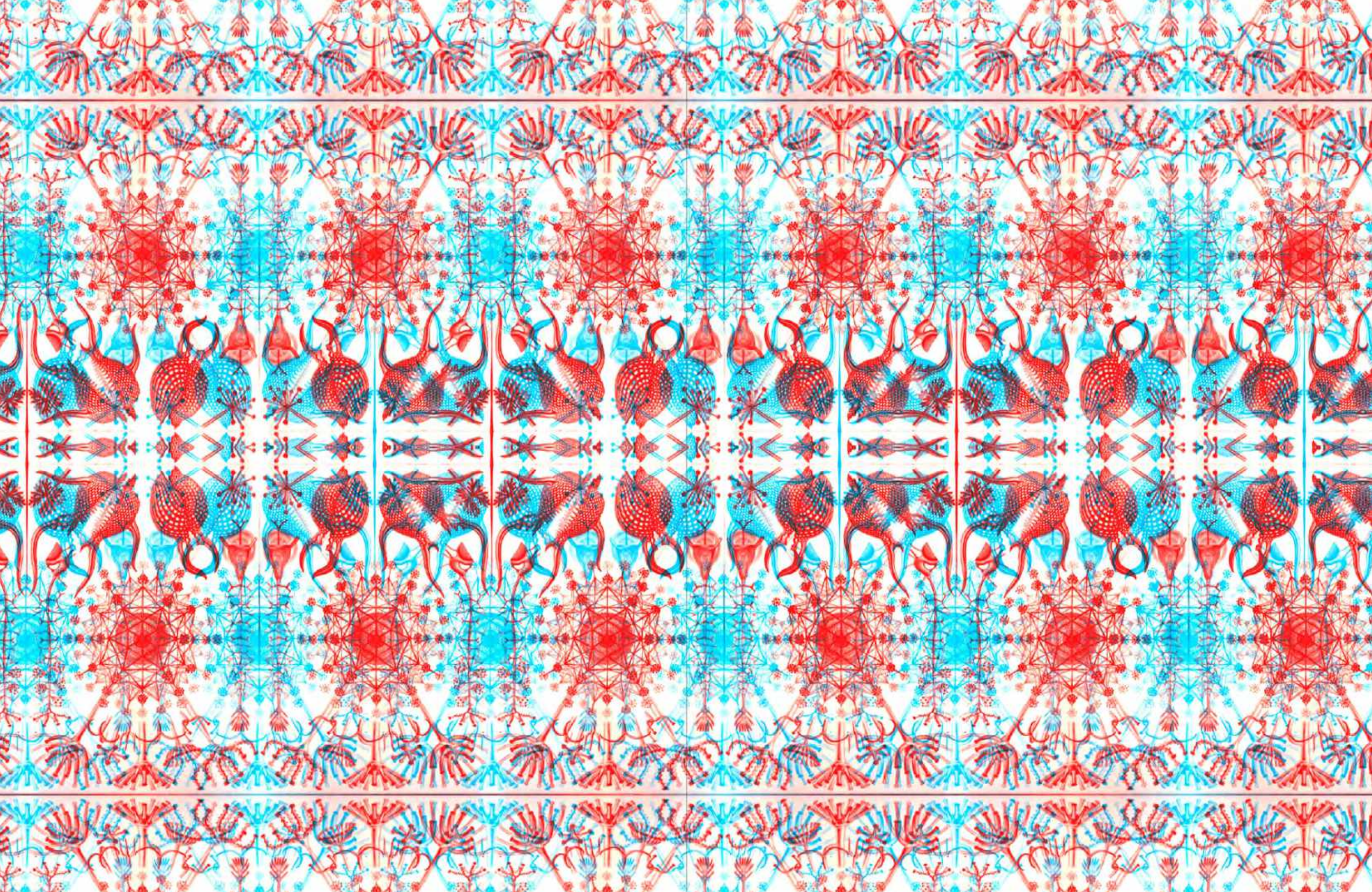
Above: a Maltese cross of sorts, generated with a scrambled Owen Jones motif and selective reflection in Illustrator. This looks to me like a crustacean's exoskeleton, hence the palette choice of a lobster in Mediterranean waters.

Opposite: the same motif with randomized tiling and reflection. I'd like to think if Maharam ever wanted to hire me, I'd make them something like this.

Following pages: stereoscopic motif based on Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919).

Below: an extrapolation of the same Jones *Grammar of Ornament* motif.





# Back to Nature

In closing, the following works are called Mandelbulbs, named after the Polish-French-American polymath Benoît Mandelbrot (1924–2010)—for whom Robert Brooks and J. Peter Matelski also named the Mandelbrot set in the 1970s. Put simply, Mandelbulbs are three-dimensional fractals, first described by Paul Nylander and Daniel White in 2009 (see equation below). For the past two years I’ve been mutating open-source Mandelbulb code by adjusting various parameters to produce different outputs. What I’ve discovered is an inexhaustible font of ornamental opportunity embedded within these three-dimensional infinities. In mutating, zooming, panning, cropping, reflecting, layering, skewing, rendering and animating, I have lost myself within these recursive worlds for days and weeks at a time.

Ornament begets *more* ornament, just as infinity folds, splits and doubles from the cell to the cosmos. This is a dangerous thing for a decorator such as myself, in that I imagine it is much like traveling our universe at warp speed: everything *is* everything, and I can’t get enough of it. In my quest for ever more, I have found something quite strange and profound about these Mandelbulbs: they contain the code of nature—the very patterns and geometries of our universe. Primordial and auto-generative, they exhibit what Mandelbrot called the “uncontrolled element in life”—the achingly-beautiful “roughness and self-symmetry of nature.”

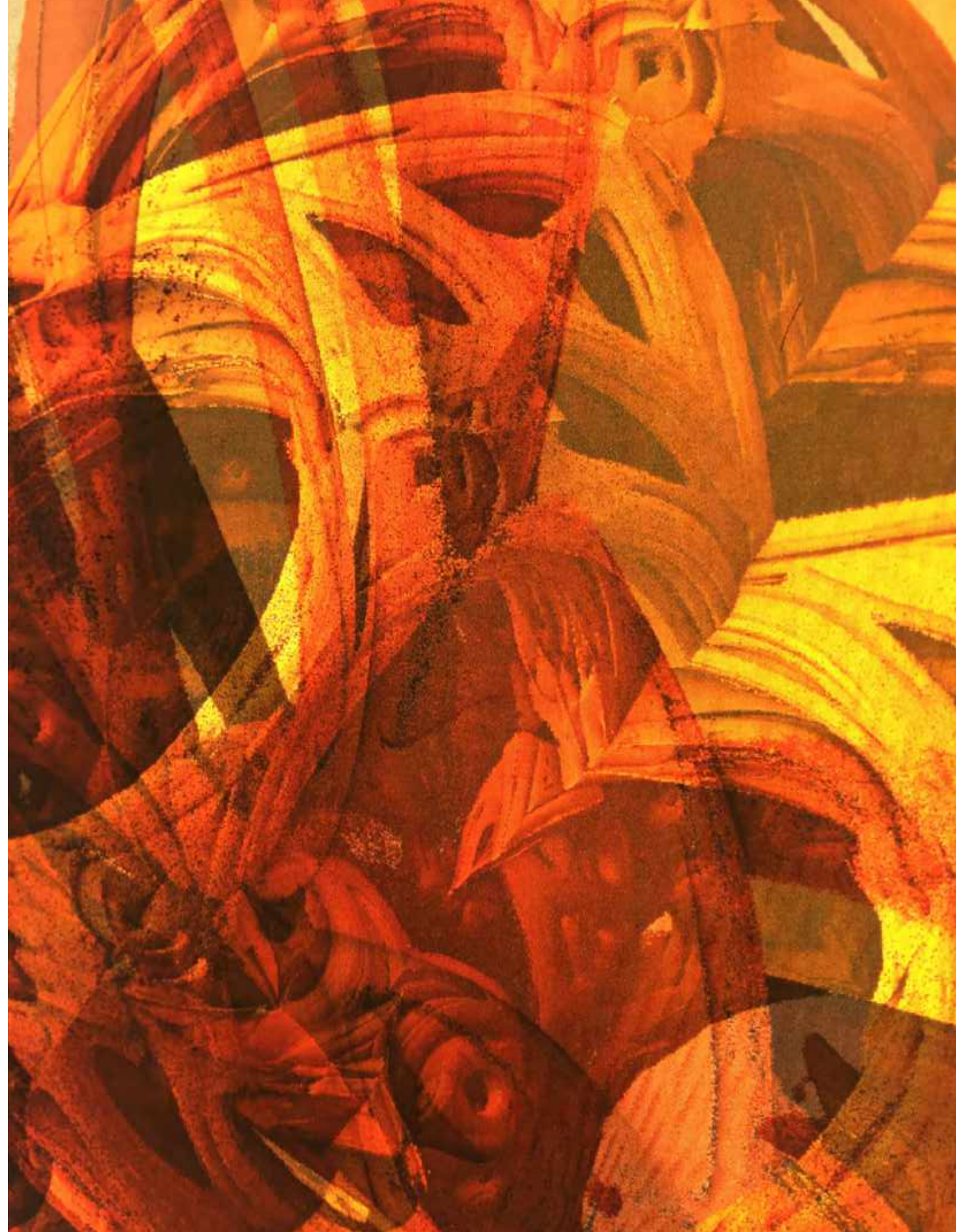
$$\langle x, y, z \rangle^3 = \left\langle \frac{(3z^2 - x^2 - y^2)x(x^2 - 3y^2)}{x^2 + y^2}, \frac{(3z^2 - x^2 - y^2)y(3x^2 - y^2)}{x^2 + y^2}, z(z^2 - 3x^2 - 3y^2) \right\rangle$$

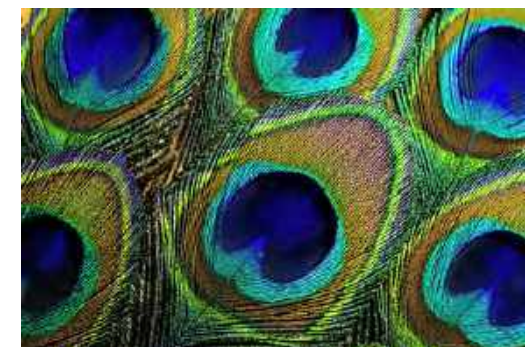
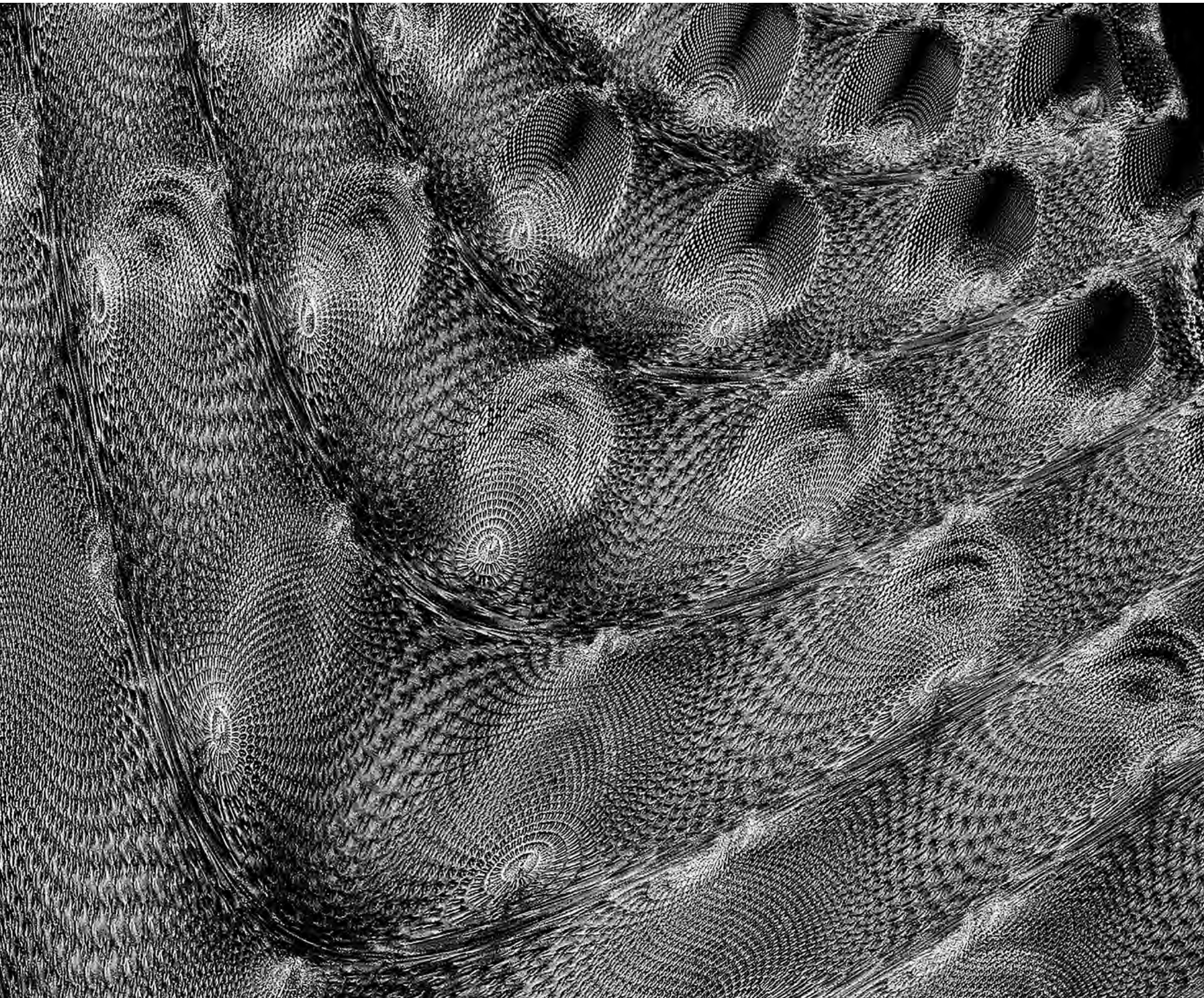


**Benoît Mandelbrot**  
1924–2010

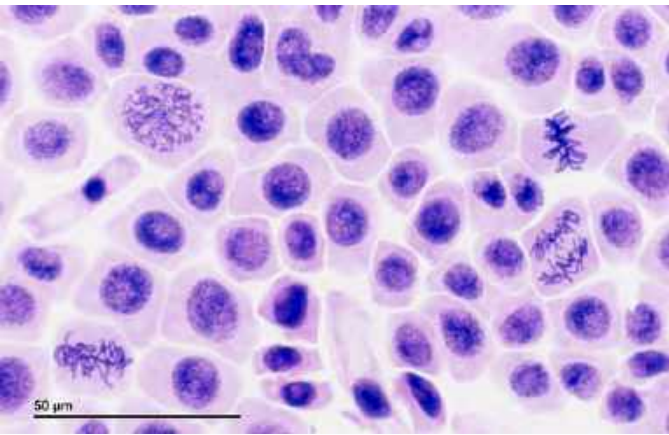


**Ondřej Karlík**  
**Zenzizenzizencic Mandelbulb**  
2011

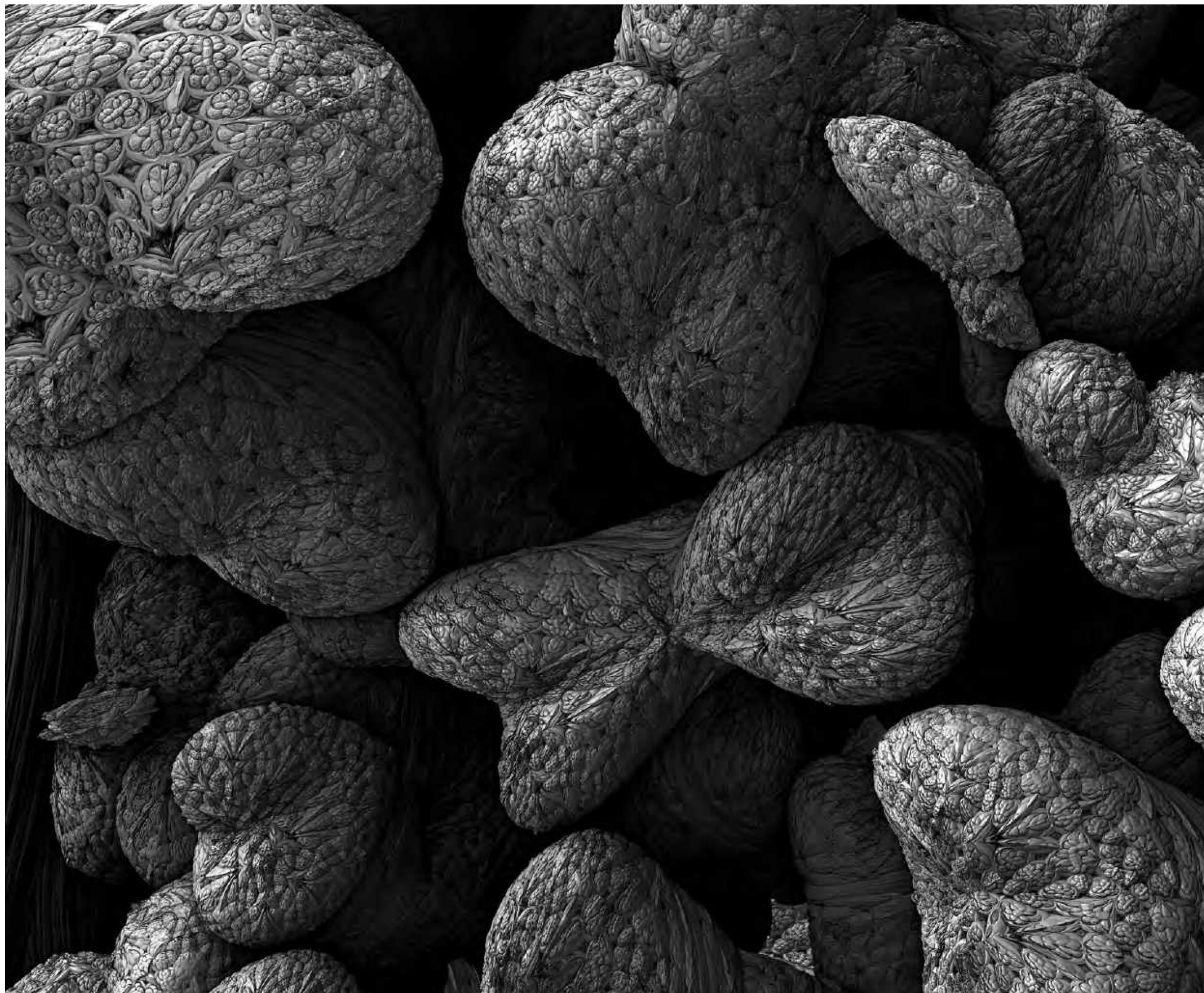




To me this Mandelbulb is reminiscent of both the romanesco broccoli and the feathers in a peacock's train. I used the Mandelbulb in wrapping paper for a gift to my friend Brynn Trusewicz, lab manager at RISD's Co-Works. Brynn has an MFA in Industrial Design from RISD, and BAs in Sculpture, Mathematics and Computer Science from SUNY Purchase—so I had to make something fractal for them!

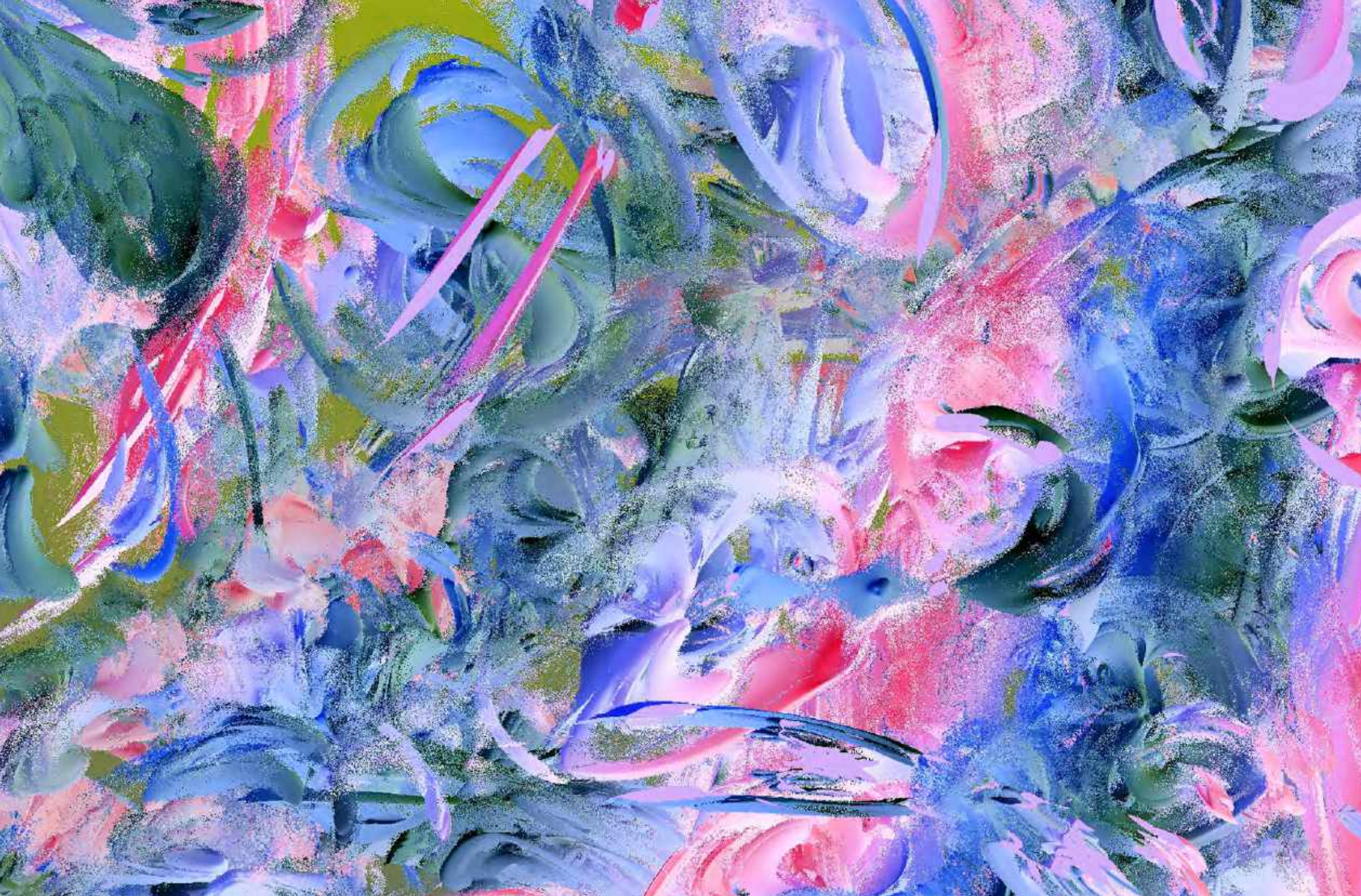


Mitosis is cell division typical of regular tissue growth, where replicated chromosomes split into two new nuclei forming two genetically-identical daughter cells. The separation happens in the telophase, the fifth and final stage of mitosis. This Mandelbulb displays form that, to me, appear to be arrested in this telophase, where every fractal point is splitting with its identical sister. It's a happy accident that they also look like the most minutely-detailed filigree love hearts.





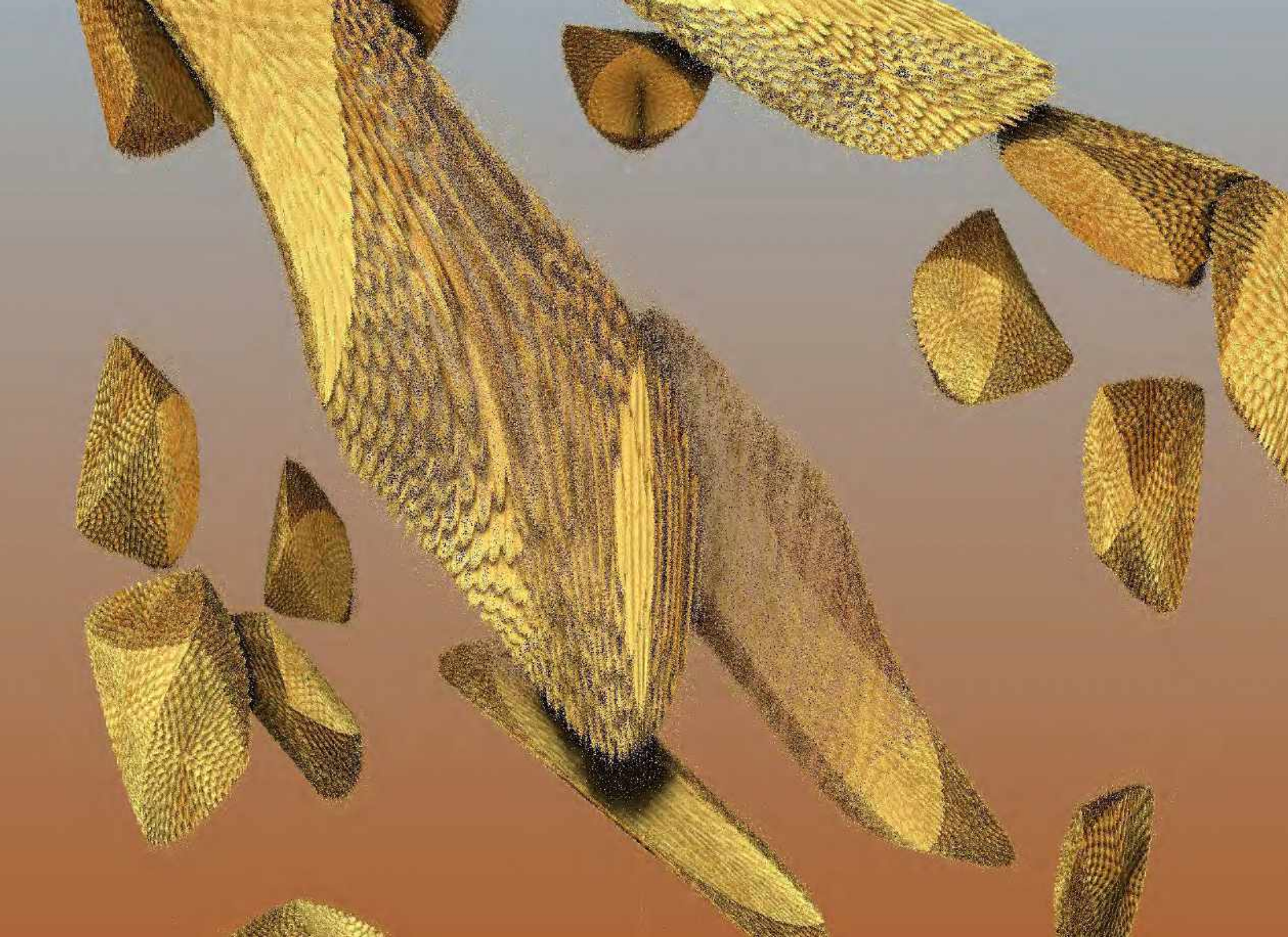




**Jean-Honoré Fragonard**  
***The Happy Accidents of the Swing***  
1767



This is a highly-stylized, almost-painterly mutated Mandelbulb. It marked the realization in my process that I could deliberately orchestrate formal compositions with the code I was manipulating. Both the forms and palette are inspired by the confections of the Rococo, of which the painting at right is a prime example.



This form instantly reminds me of wings, replete with plumes of *remiges*, feathers typical of birds of flight. It also resembles the *Winged Nike*--also known as the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*--which I first saw at the Louvre when I was maybe five or six years old.



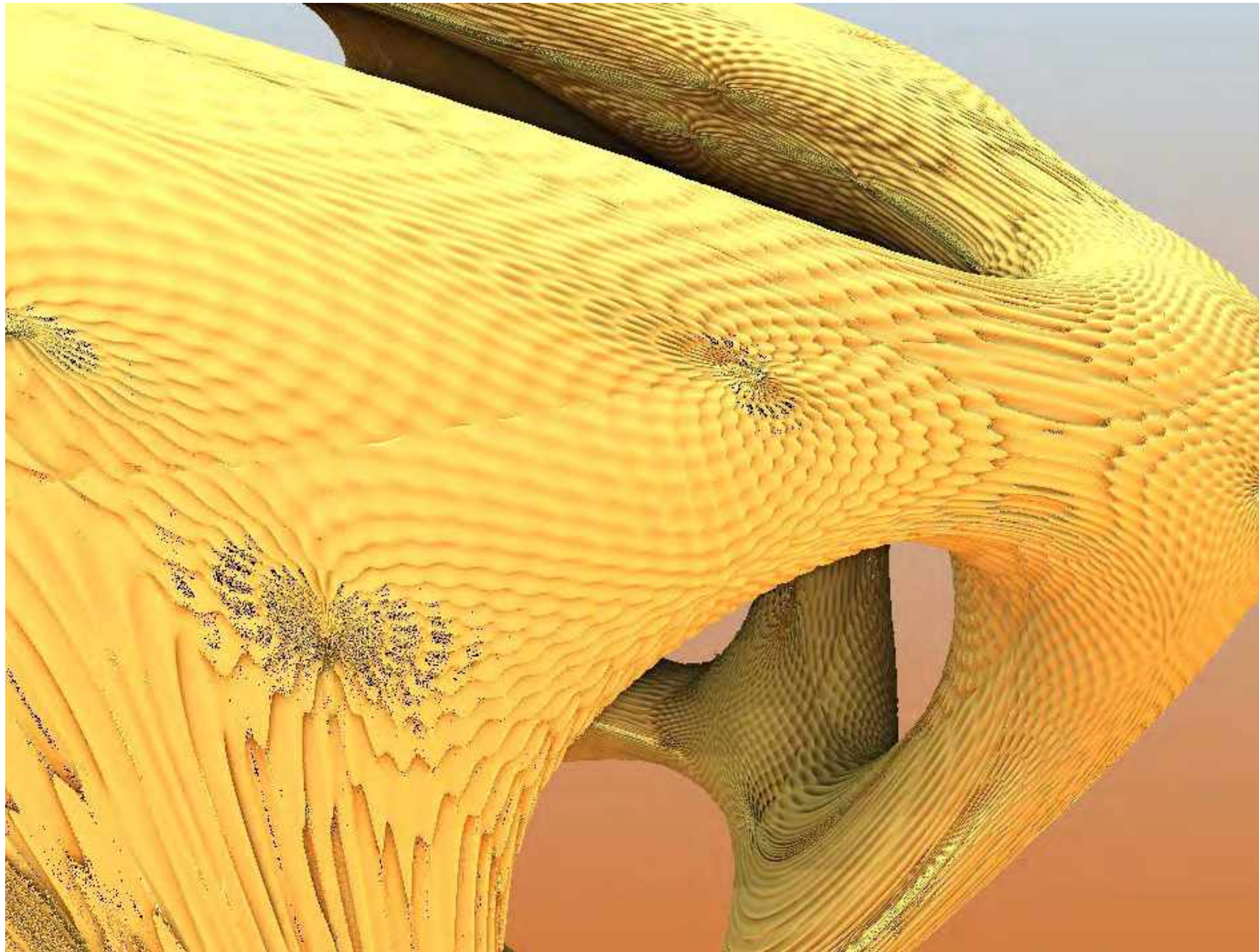
***Winged Victory of Samothrace***  
Louvre Museum, Paris  
2nd century BCE



**Henry Moore**  
***Recumbent Figure*, 1938**  
***Oval with Points*, 1969**  
***Hill Arches*, 1973**

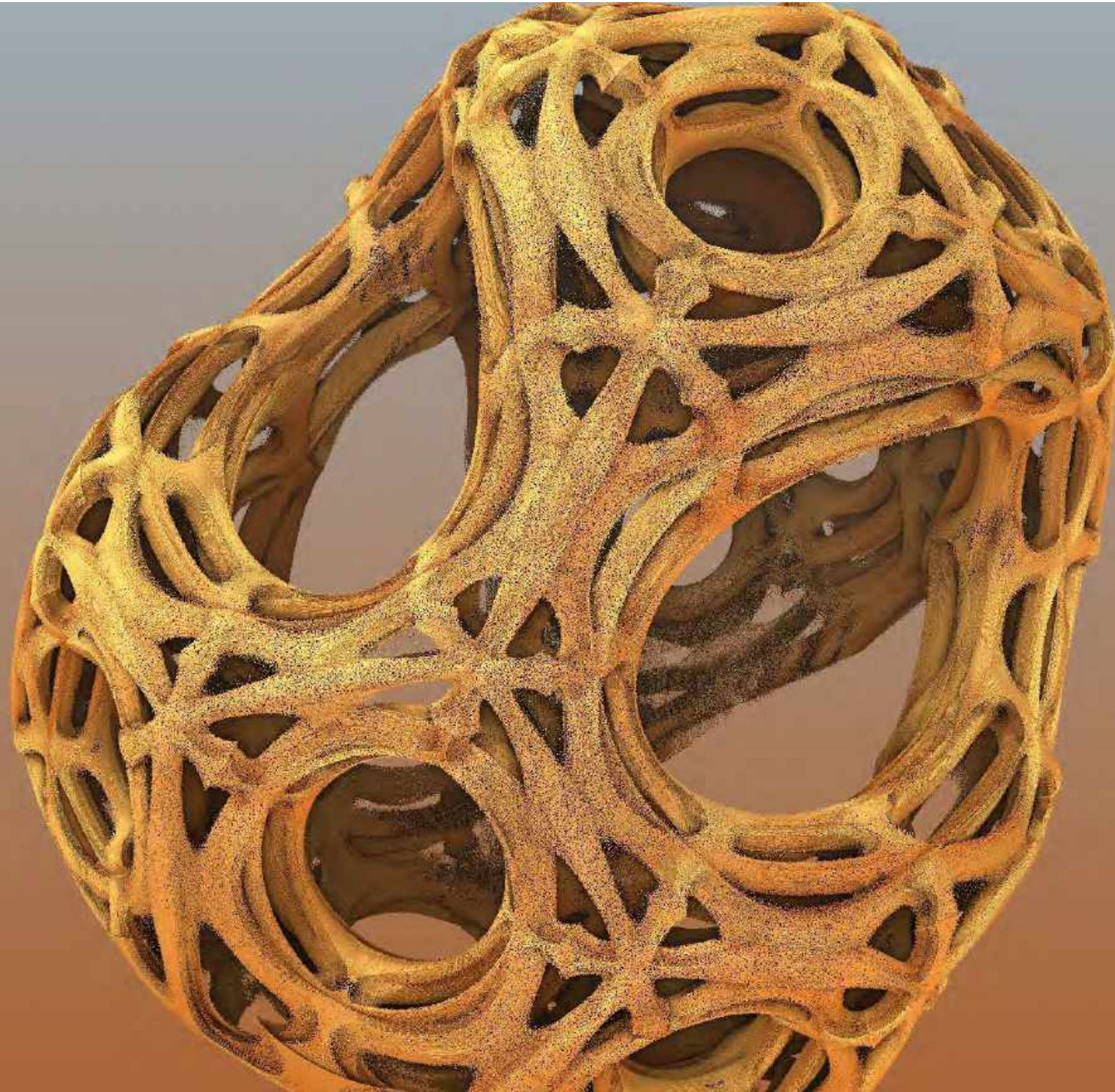


I was especially excited when I began to tease out these Moore-like forms in this, a mutation of the mandelbulb on the prior spread. Henry Moore (1898-1986) was one of the first sculptors I knew of, as the Australian National Gallery--in my hometown of Canberra--has a large work of his installed in their sculpture garden. We used to play in this garden as kids, on family walks around the nearby Lake Burley Griffin. Coincidentally, my sister now works at the very same gallery!

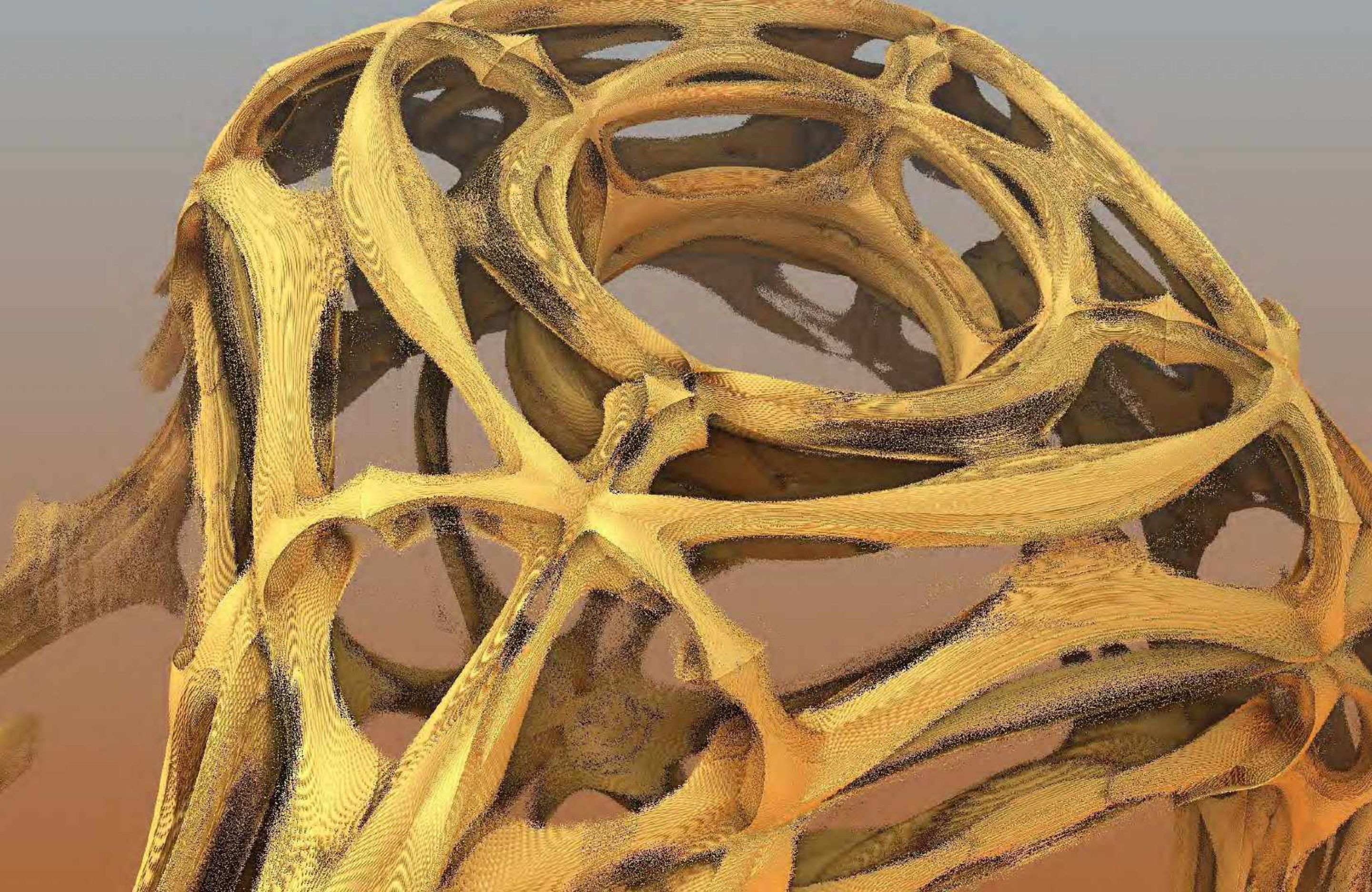


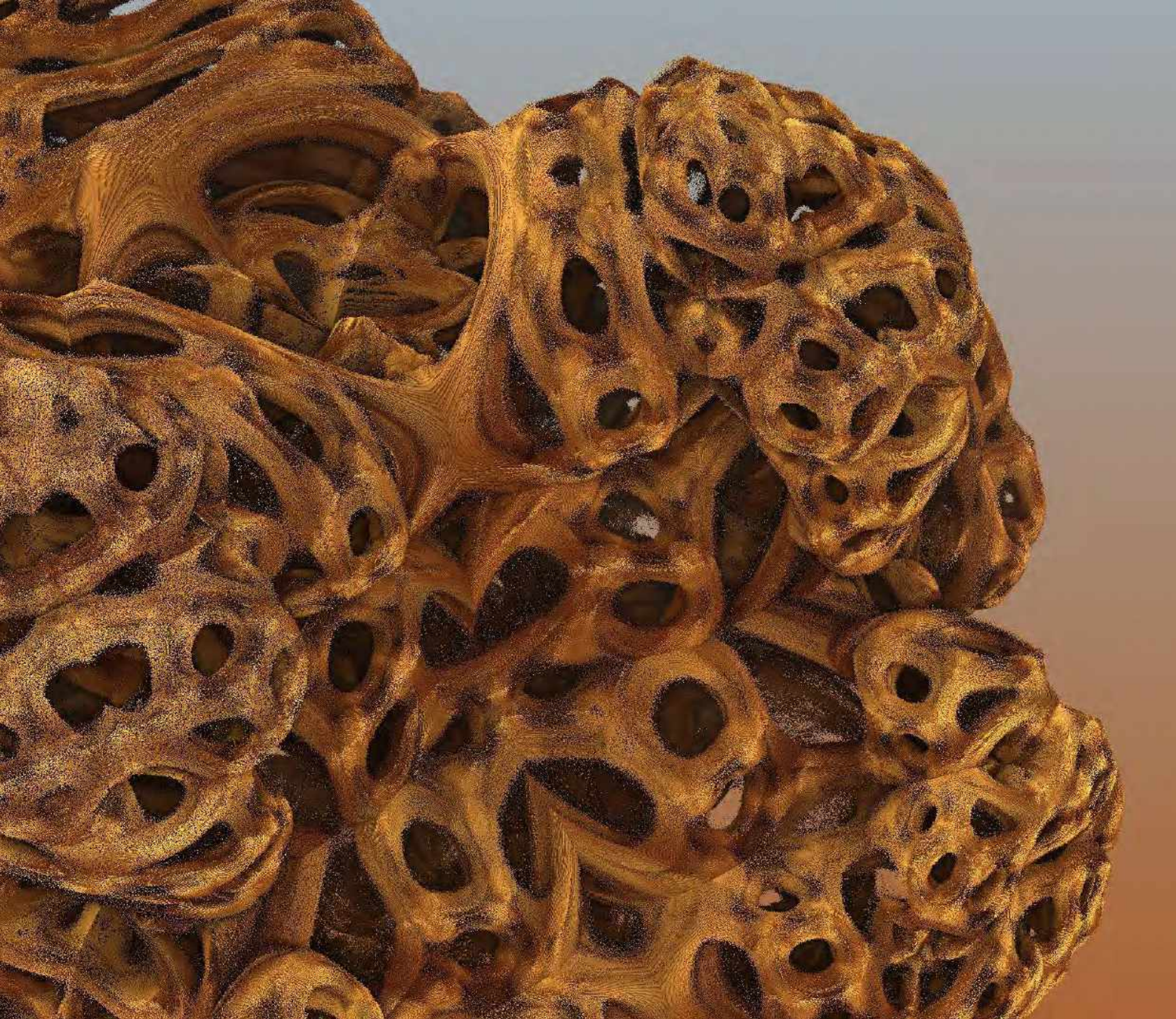


I have long been obsessed with the stone tracery typical of Gothic architecture. My alma mater, the University of Sydney, has many Gothic revival buildings cut in local Hawkesbury sandstone, which during British colonial times was commonly known as "Yellow Gold." As a young, impressionable architecture student, I was endlessly infatuated with the sinuous—and at times grotesque—appearance of these forms, especially in stained glass and fan vaults like these pictured.



**Thomas de Cantebrugge**  
**Gloucester Cathedral Cloisters**  
**1351–1377**





This iteration elicits the psychological phenomena known as pareidolia, which includes the tendency to see faces in inanimate objects or unrelated stimuli. Pareidolia is not a uniquely human experience: rhesus macaque monkeys see faces in things also. This Mandelbulb reminded me so much of ancient Greek satyr masks and Munch's famous *Scream*.



**Satyr mask at the Stoà of Attalos**  
Athens, Greece  
400 BCE



**Edvard Munch**  
*The Scream*  
1893



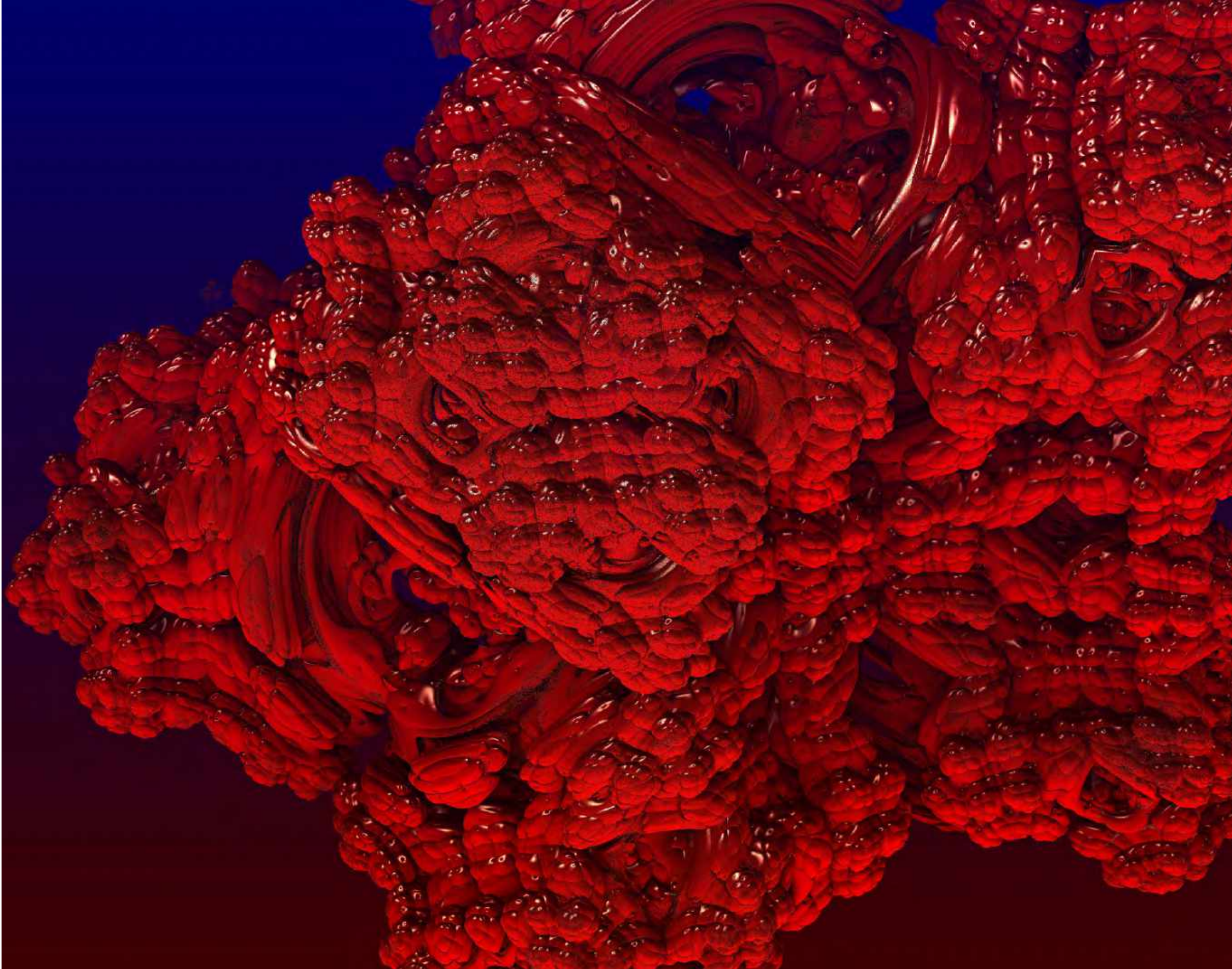


**Pan Chang knot**  
**Tang Dynasty**  
**618–907 CE**

The Pan Chang knot is one of the eight symbols of Buddhism, communicating the Buddhist belief in life as a cycle with no beginning and no end.

Chinese knotting began in the Tang and Song dynasties, but was popularized and eventually spread to Japan and Korea during the Ming dynasty. Today this knot is commonly known as a mystic knot, and is believed to impart good fortune.

I first encountered these knots as an Aussie high school student studying Mandarin. My husband and I have since been to China many times (visiting Beijing and Shanghai twice each, as well as Suzhou, Xi'an and Guangzhou) and have seen these knots for sale in most souvenir markets and hung in stores and restaurants.







### **Pangolin**

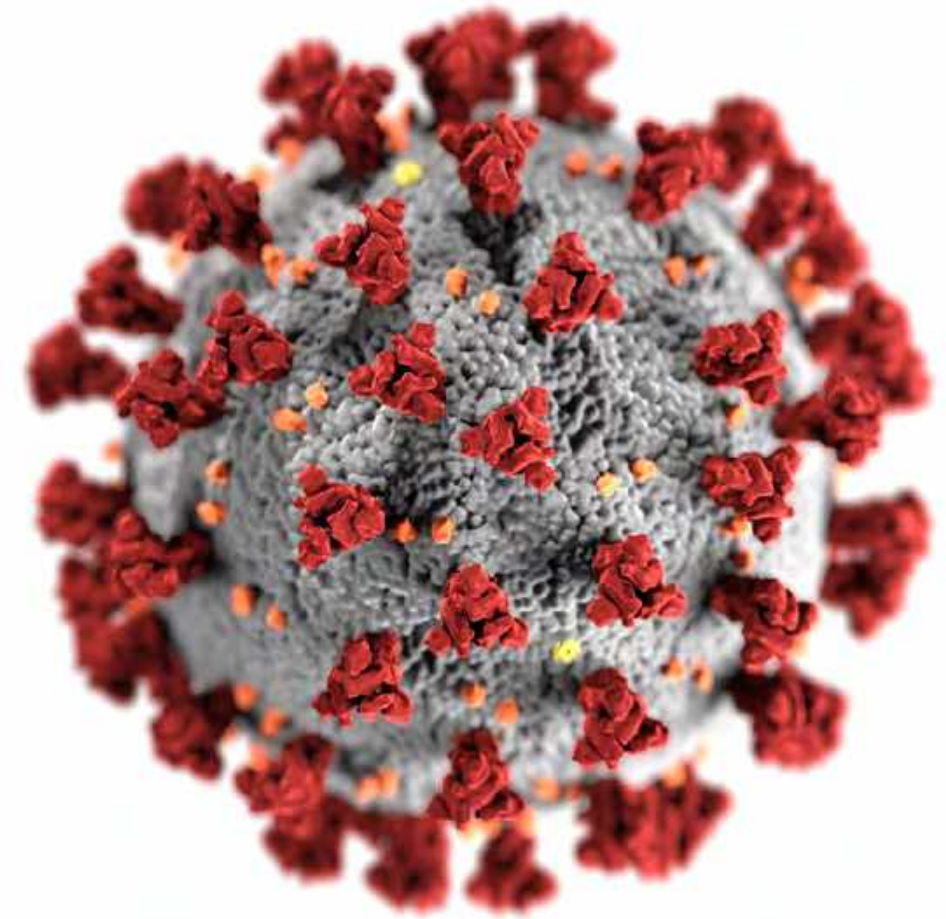
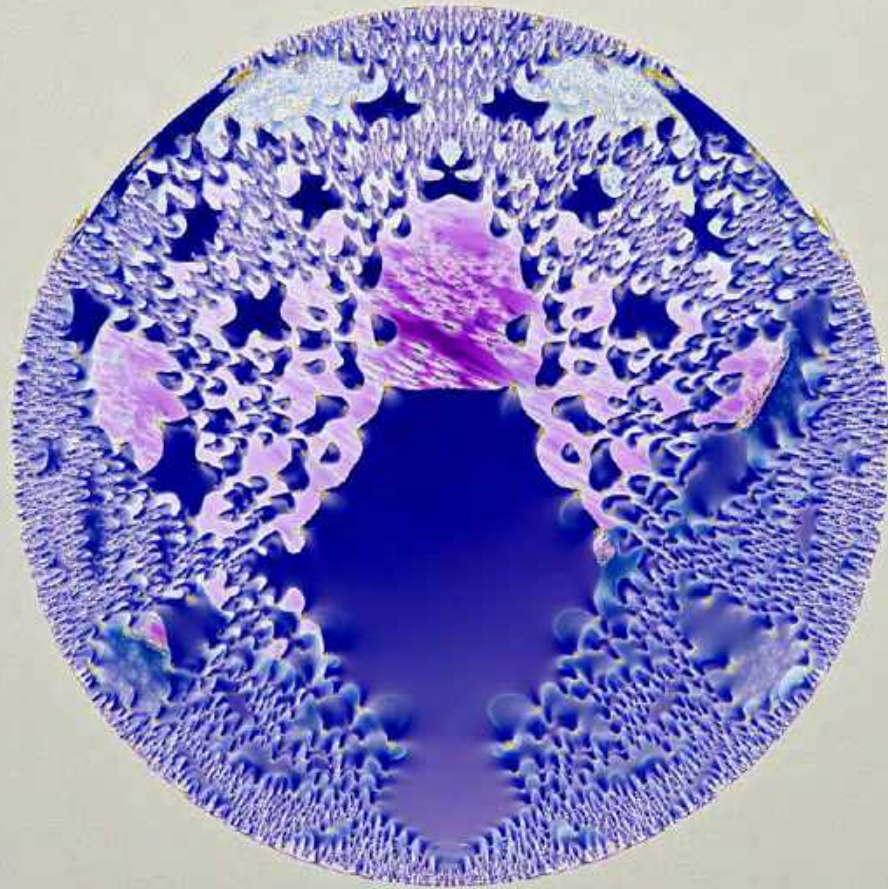
***Manis, Phataginus and Smutsia***

**Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa**

The pangolin gets its name from the Malay word *pengguling*, meaning “one who rolls up,” after its defensive response to predators. They are widely trafficked in Asia for their keratin-rich scales, which are both a staple ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine and also a delicacy in Chinese and Vietnamese cuisine. At the time of writing, the humble pangolin is a suspected—but unproven—intermediate host of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (COVID-19).



The CDC's model of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus morphology, viewed with an electron microscope.



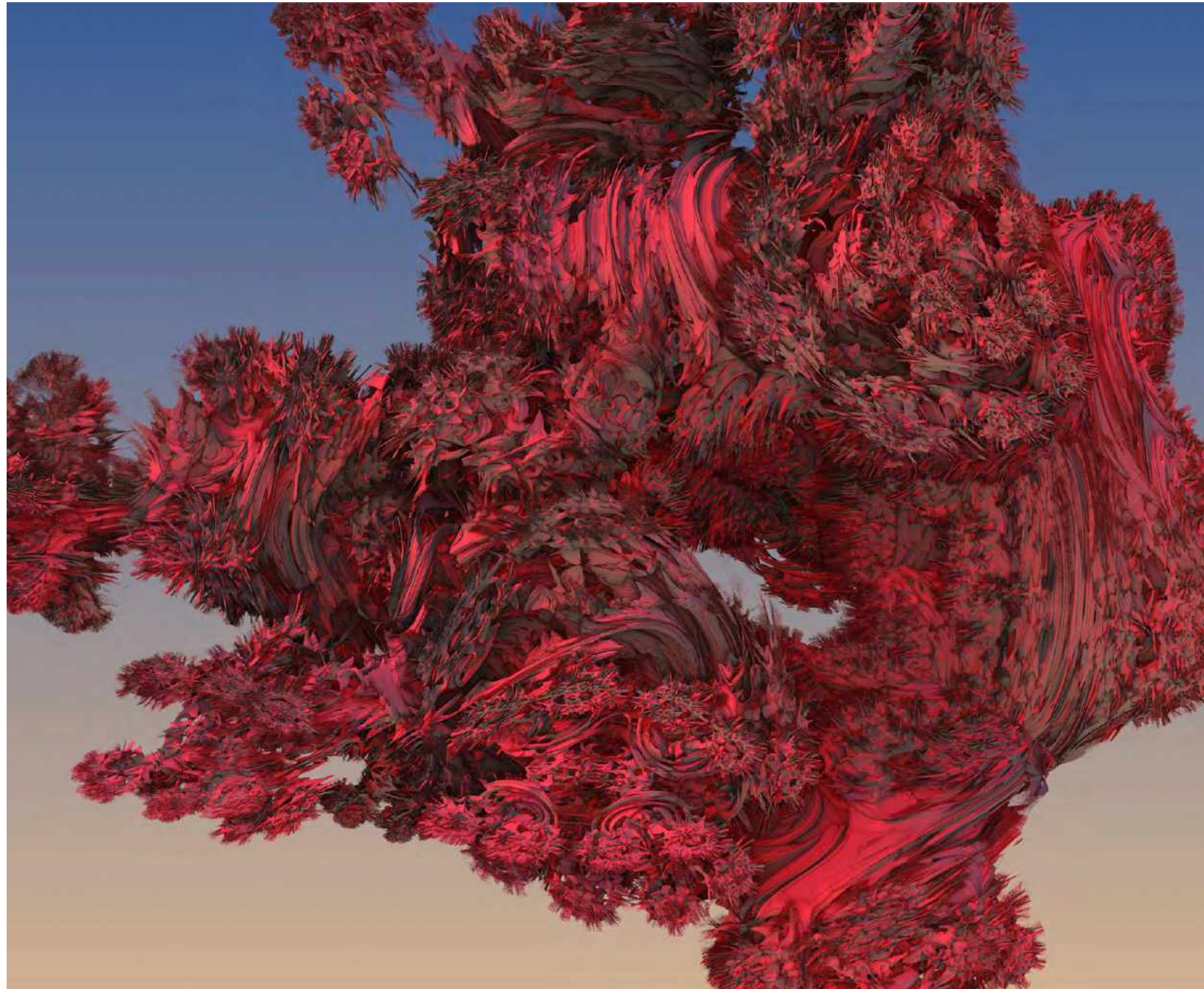


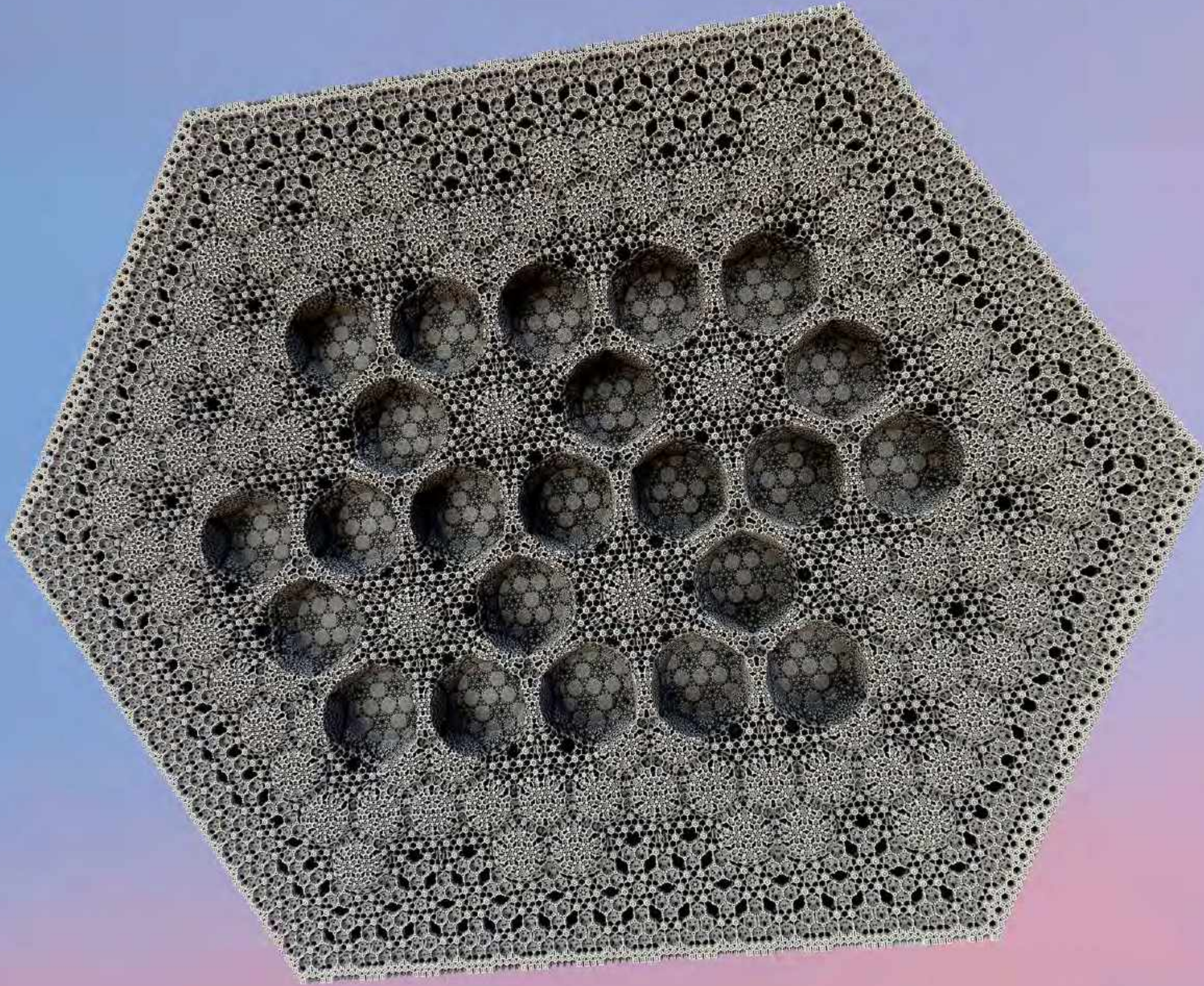
**Christopher Swan**  
***Sand Patterns on Northton Beach***  
**2014**



***Silybum marianum* or Milk Thistle**  
**Europe and Asia**

Further exploring parametric mutation, this Mandelbulb reminds me of thistle, an invasive species in Australia, and the bane of existence for most Aussie farmers including my uncle. The national flower of Scotland, thistles were brought to Australia in the 1800s as an ornamental plant (ha!). Today they are extremely noxious weeds that ravage pastures and injure livestock across the continent.



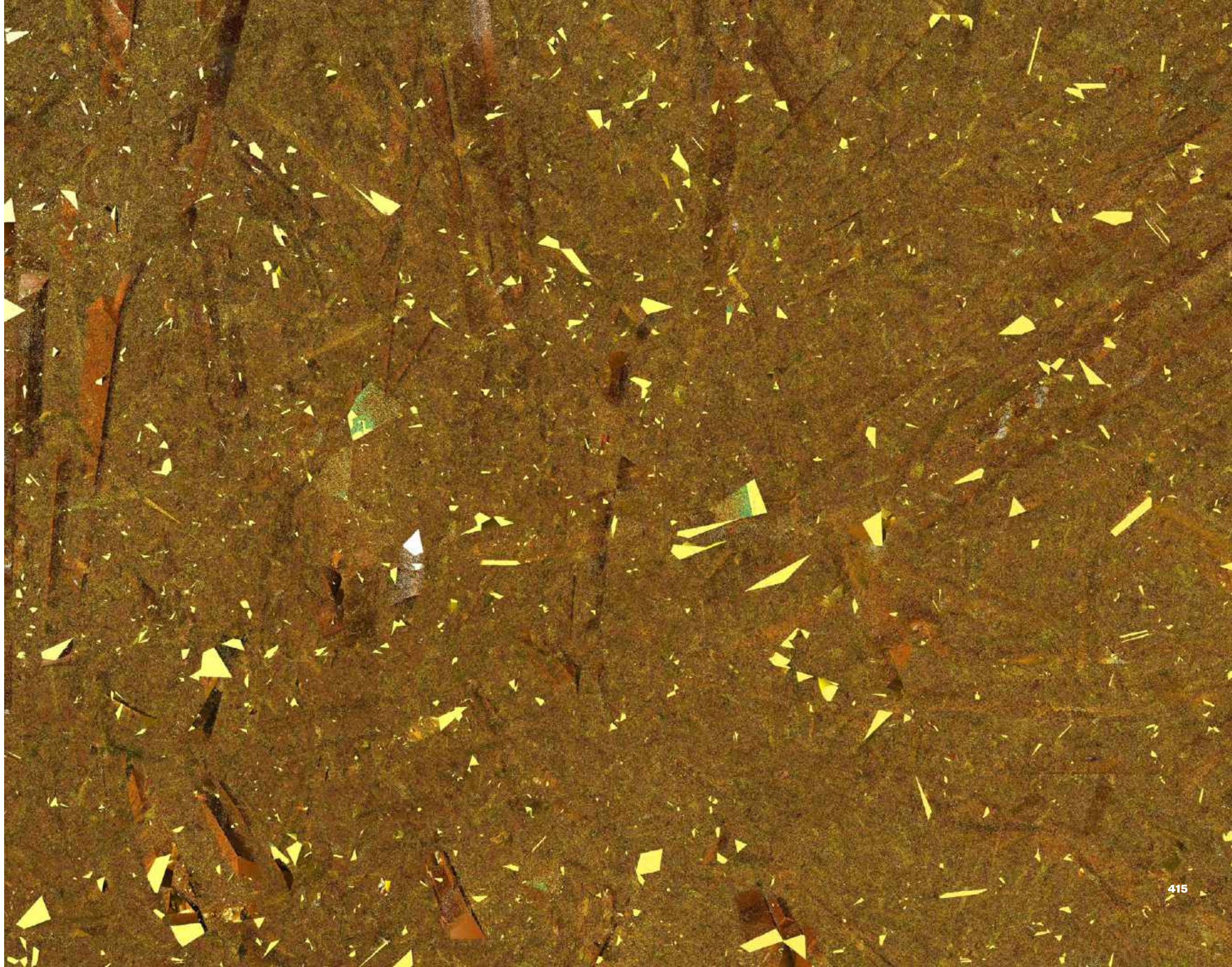


**Entrance portal of Shah Mosque  
Isfahan, Iran  
1611-1629**

I rendered this hexagonal Mandelbulb using existing open-source parameters. I was inspired by the ornamental vaulted *Muqarnas* (Arabic), or *Ahoopāy* (Farsi) typical of Islamic architecture in Iran, Morocco and Turkey. Early western architectural histories often refer to such structures as "honeycomb vaults." The designer Luke Bulman once told me this could trigger trypophobia, a fear of small holes, bumps and other patterns, especially on one's own skin.



Pyrite aka 'Fool's Gold'  
Iron Sulfide,  $\text{FeS}_2$







**Constantin Brâncuși**

*Sleeping Muse*

1910



**Umberto Boccioni**

*Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*

1913







**Romaldo Giurgola**  
**Australian Parliament House, 1981–1988**

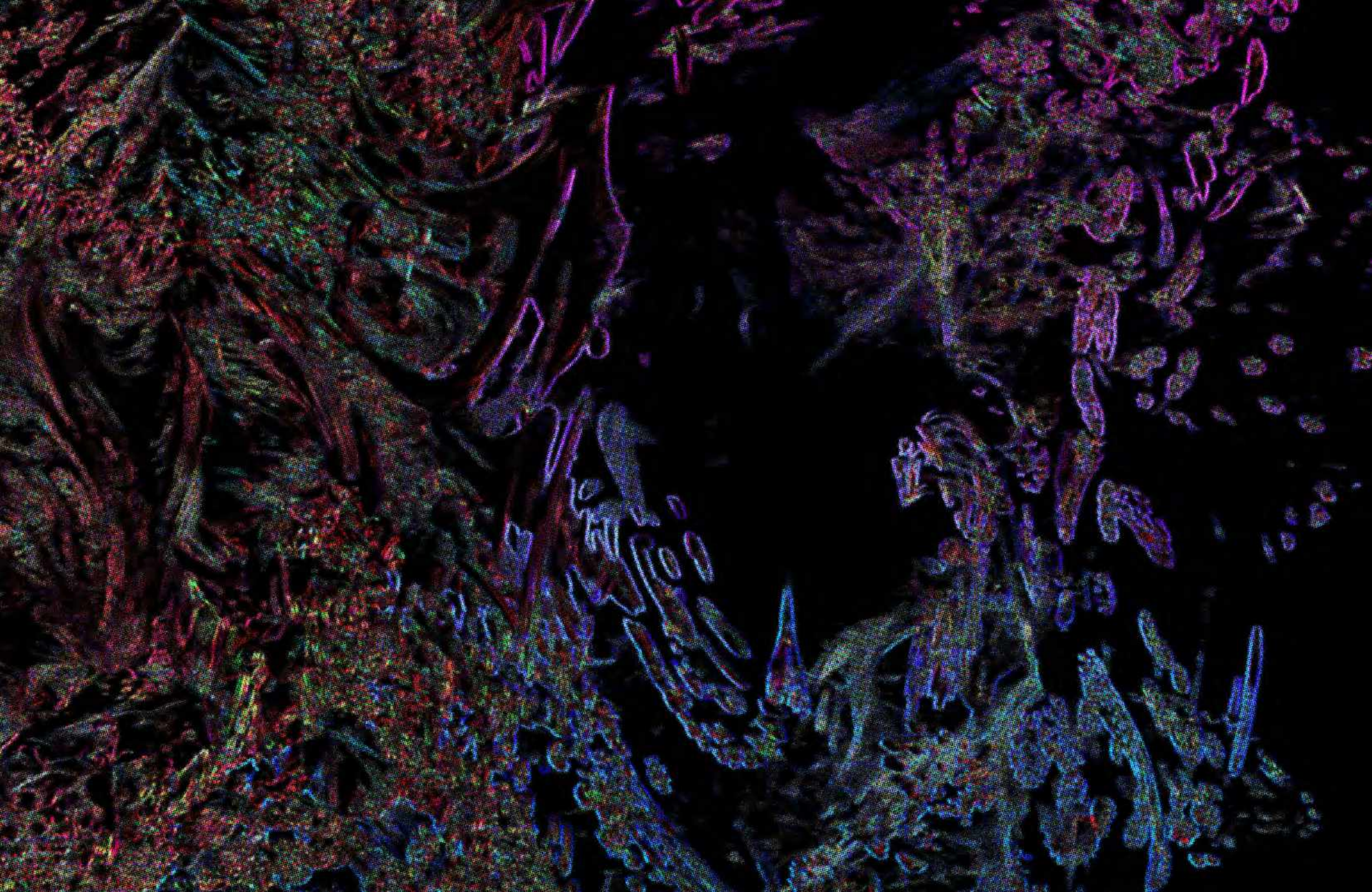
**Arthur Boyd**  
**Untitled (Shoalhaven Landscape), 1984**

This Mandelbulb reminds me of the monumental tapestry in the Great Hall of Australia's Parliament House, which took fourteen full-time weavers two years to complete. It is based on the above oil painting by the prominent Australian artist Arthur Boyd (1920–1999). During the tapestry's weaving in 1986, Halley's Comet was visible in the Australian sky. The comet had also been seen by the weavers of the Bayeux Tapestry in 1066—just before the Norman Invasion—who wove it into their epic work. In recognition of such serendipity, the Aussie weavers sought permission from Boyd to also include the comet in *their* tapestry, which he granted. As a kid I must have gone to a dozen tours of Parliament House where we were told this story and tasked with spotting Halley's Comet.

I was privileged to meet Aldo Giurgola (1920–2016) at my first ever design job, interning at GMB Architects in Canberra. Aldo had been chair of Architecture at Columbia University prior to winning the commission for Australia's New Parliament House in 1981. He was retired when I met him, but would still visit the office every other week to chat, look at the work that was going on and steal any of the new magazines (he loved *Domus*).

I have a very fond memory of Aldo sitting with me to help choose Brintons carpet swatches for carpet patterns I was working on for the Hong Kong legislative council. He was a typically gregarious Italian: funny, generous, warm and whip smart—and I adored him. Coincidentally, I later learned Aldo had taught some of my colleagues at Ennead Architects in New York when he was still chair at Columbia. Aldo died in 2016 in Canberra, aged 95.





# Conversation

## Marian Bantjes

Marian Bantjes is a Canadian designer, typographer, illustrator and writer who began her multifaceted career as a book typesetter in the early 1980s. After ten years at Digitopolis, the Vancouver design studio she co-founded in 1994, Bantjes set out on her own, gaining international acclaim both for her writing and her incredibly detailed typographic, illustrative and ornate personal style.

In 2010 Bantjes published *I Wonder*, which Steven Heller at *The New York Times Magazine* called “a wondrous display of virtuosic craft” and “an exquisite testament to graphic ornamentation.” Bantjes followed this up with *Pretty Pictures* in 2013, an extensive monograph of her work, which *BookForum* included on their list of the twenty best art books of the past twenty years.

Bantjes has lectured and exhibited internationally—and her work has been featured in publications including *Communication Arts*, *Creative Review*, *Eye*, *Print*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *Wallpaper*. She is a member of the Alliance Graphique Internationale and several of her works are part of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum’s permanent collection.

I was fortunate to speak with Marian Bantjes about her work and experience in March of 2020.

*(after pleasantries)*

**Aleks Dawson**

**I have a lot of things to talk to you about and ask you! I emailed you a couple things prior, which are more stream-of-consciousness ideas and prompts that I’ve been thinking about these last few days. But I also have a more rigorous set of questions.**

Marian Bantjes

Okay, either sounds fine.

**But I don’t want to turn this into a conversation about myself—which I know I have a tendency to do. So I would prefer if I could just have you speak about things as they come up. Basically my thesis is starting to take shape as a kind of look at, first of all, the hypocrisy of the Western tradition of ornament; and then looking at systems and structures and how they feed into an idea of complexity, abundance and understanding of the world; and then going into beauty, and an argument for pleasure, joy, honor—as you put it—and love. And to be honest, everything is kind of in flux right now because we’ve been booted from our studios and the past week has been a crazy rush to try and set up elsewhere. It’s been a little weird. So I really envy you at your Bowen Island retreat.**

Well, we’re still facing all the same measures and everybody else is. It’s just that for me, it’s pretty much business as usual cause I spend so much time working from home. So it’s not really much difference for me personally. But the island itself you know, we don’t have any cases here, but they’re nearby.

**Well let’s knock on wood that you can contain it over there on Bowen Island also.**



**Leaving our grad studio in haste, March 17, 2020**



**Left: view across Horseshoe Bay toward the North Shore Mountains**

**Below: aerial view of Bowen Island showing the Union Steamship Co., 1927, City of Vancouver Archives**



Yeah, well—we’re still part of Vancouver, people still commute to Vancouver. So we’re a little bit behind everybody else but the school is closed and all that.

**I thought it was funny to read that they refer to where you live as “the Typographic Archipelago.”**

**Do you have contact with these other typographers?**

Oh yes. Well, I’m friends with Ross Mills and Shelley Gruendler. Ross is on Galiano and his ex-girlfriend Shelley used to be there as well. And then I’m also friends with John Hudson who’s on Gabriola. But I usually only see John if I run into him at a conference. And then there’s Robert Bringhurst on Quadra, who I’m not friends with. I know him. We used to be friendly way back in the mists of time, but now he’s my mortal enemy.



**Ross Mills’s Huronia is the official Inuktitut typeface of the Nunavut government, Pigiarniq**

I wrote in my notes here that he is quite a formidable character, and that I’d be petrified to live near him.

Terrifying in a way, but he is also easy to make fun of.

**Ha! So I didn’t want *that* to be the opening—I didn’t have any planned opening, but Bringhurst aside, and your situation with COVID-19 and the triad of islands aside, I think I’m going to be putting a little foreword for you before I put this interview in. And I haven’t decided whether I’m going to include this whole thing in one go, or intersperse chunks throughout the spreads as little anecdotes and things like that. I’m leaning towards the latter because I think that I’m definitely that way, and the more I look at and read you, the more I’m realizing you’re quite tangential as well.**

Well I’ve never had some of these questions before. I didn’t read all of them, I was still working on the list.

**Don’t worry about finishing it. Some of them are not questions at all.**

But some are really interesting questions I’ve never thought about before.

**Oh, well that’s good! So I thought maybe I will preface this interview with the stock-standard website biography, but I’d love if you could paint for me and the people reading this book a kind of trajectory. So you were in typesetting for how many years?**

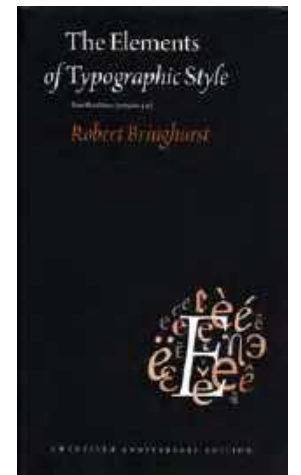
Well, ten. So I started out in... I don’t remember! I think it was nineteen-eighty-... let me think...

**You were born in ‘63, right?**

I was born in ‘63, so it was more like 1982, I think. Yeah. I think I was nineteen—eighteen or nineteen.



**Student work from Shelley Gruendler’s annual Type Camp**



**Robert Bringhurst’s seminal *The Elements of Typographic Style*, 1994**

And I just fell into this job in typesetting. I had no interest in it. I mean, it wasn't even typesetting, it was just a job filing magazines. And then at the time that I was working there, they originally had a compugraphic machine, and it had a typesetter. So I don't go back to the lead type days, but I was at the very, very early days of computer typesetting. So this was a machine that looked like a gigantic box in which the typesetter could see one line of type at a time, these little green letters going across this little slot. It was quite weird.

**So, was it a phototype machine, or...?**

Yes. But I don't think we had... did we have our own phototypesetters at that time? I think we did. I can't remember exactly what happened. We must have had our own typesetting. So shortly after I arrived, because they would need an extra pair of hands, they got me to do paste-up, so I did, and I worked from there, using a waxer with paste-up. And then we got our first PCs. Our first computer was a PCXT. So I started being trained in typesetting on these PCs, and this was still not a What You See is What You Get program, but you could see more than one line of type. So we had the glowing amber letters on a black background. Amber or green. Then we did have our own typesetting machines, Linotronics. Would you like to know how they worked?

**Yes! I would love to because I've never heard of this machine before.**

Oh! Okay. Yeah, this is a sort of skipped-over part of typographic history. It's a little bit difficult to find out information about these things. But anyway, they had



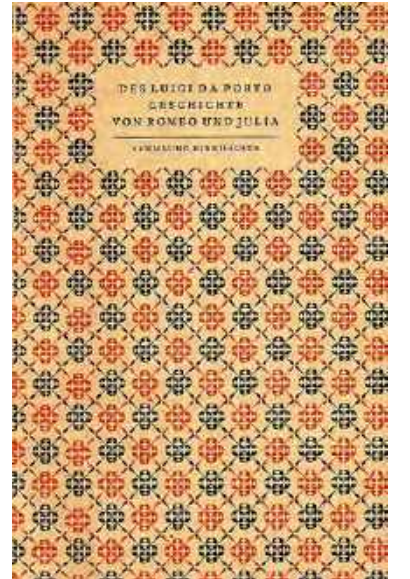
**Compugraphic 7200 typesetter, late 1960–1970s**



**In 1984 Linotype introduced the Linotronic 300, the first 2400 dpi imagesetter with a PostScript raster image processor**

fonts which were in a strip of film, like a strip of black film. If you can imagine it, it was maybe about two-and-a-half feet tall and about, I don't know, four inches wide, and they would have all the letters of the alphabet, and the numbers and everything were in a negative. So the numbers, you could see through them: they were clear, and the rest of it was black. And that thing would wrap around a drum, so you'd have one strip of film for Roman of whichever fonts you were using—one strip for Italic, one for small caps et cetera. And so I think we had a limit of six fonts that we could use.

So you would physically put these strips of film on these drums, and then the computer would send the information down to the drum. The computer would then tell the machines how to turn, which drum to which position for, say, a letter “A,” and it would shine the light through that onto a piece of photographic film and make the a in the right size. And then it would tell it to turn to the next letter and that would, you know, shift over and shine the light through again for the next letter, “L,” or whatever. And it would project that image in the right font. Say it was Sabon, providing that's what you had on the drum, and it would do that really, really, *really* fast. Over and over and over again, like: *clack-clack-clack-clack-clack*. And so these drums were turning really fast while focusing and also switching drums. If you switched fonts, then you would get a different sound, something like: *zhg-zhg-zhg-zhg-zhg*. And that would be developed onto a big roll of photographic paper that was about 12 inches wide. And that would come out, then



**Tschichold's Romeo and Juliet cover for Sammlung Birkhäuser, 1944; markups on a drawing for his font Sabon, 1965<sup>1</sup>**

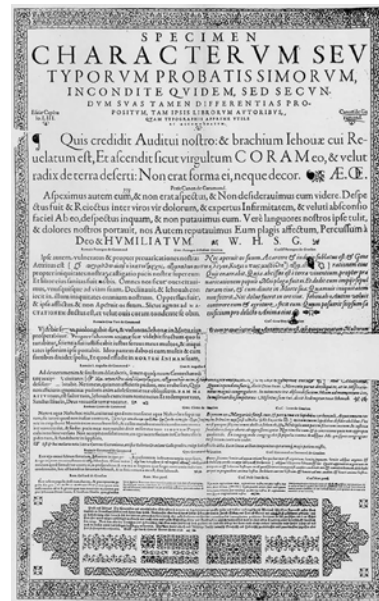
<sup>1</sup> I found both images in a book Doug Scott gave me: McLean, Ruari. *Jan Tschichold: Typographer*. Boston: Godine, 1990. Thanks Doug!



it would go into a light-safe box. And then when it was done, we would go in and we would cut the paper, take that box that had the exposed papers inside. Put it into a developer machine. And so we'd kind of like, feed the first part of the paper into the developer machine, and then that would go through the rollers and it would go through just like a photographic thing. It would go through the emulsions, the three different emulsions. And rinse. It'd come out the other side and you'd have this loooooong strip with type on it, and then we would take that and manually figure out where the page breaks would be, mark them up, and then paste them up onto boards with crop marks and stuff like that.

**Wow! That sounds like such a laborious process.**

It didn't seem laborious, it seemed miraculous, you know? But it was! If you had the wrong strip of film on the wrong drum it would come out... like, say for instance, it was supposed to be Garamond and Garamond Italic, and Bold or something like that. And you put on the fonts for Sabon instead of Garamond, well they would all come out Sabon but then the letter spacing would all be fucked up because it's got different widths and stuff like that. The Old Style numbers and small caps were on a different drum, and we were on a different set of film... But all the numbers came out as something else. From there, then we got better Linotronics machines that were a little bit more flexible, and then they have different kinds of film. And instead of the big long strips and only one per drum, we had little rectangular negatives that were about four inches wide by two and a half inches high. And those



**Original Garamond in the 1592 Egenolff–Berner specimen sheet,<sup>1</sup> found by Beatrice Warde while at Monotype in the 1930s<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>The "Berner specimen" was printed in 1592 by Conrad Berner, son-in-law of Christian Egenolff, a prominent printer in Frankfurt-am-Main. This is where the 'EB' in *EB Garamond* comes from.

<sup>2</sup>Beatrice Warde (1900–1969) was an American designer and typography pioneer. Starting at American Type Foundry, she then led marketing for the British Monotype Corporation. There she championed the use of historic typefaces and had an indelible impact on the tastes of her contemporaries. She is one of my heroes, and all-too-often forgotten.

would go the on one drum so we could have four fonts. Other than that, it was the same process.

**But was it still a Linotronics machine?**

Yes it was still a Linotronics machine. You know, I remember it was really good to see this miraculous thing, this amazing piece of machinery. And it was! And how fast it moved and how quickly it could expose film letter-by-letter. But I do remember my boss telling me it wasn't state-of-the-art, it was all second-hand.

**And who you were working for, what were they primarily producing?**

It was a book typesetting company. So we typeset books. It was also a publishing company, so we did some of their own books, but mostly the bread-and-butter work was doing typesetting for other publishers. And, so we did work for companies all over North America. Novels, fiction, poetry, all sorts of stuff. And then we would do the proofreading and the whole thing, such that we were full-service.

**Did you find yourself reading any of the stuff you were setting?**

Yeah. See, I wasn't the typist. We had typists who would type all the text in from manuscripts, and then I would do the formatting on the computer, with all the little codes to make everything the right size, the right spacing and all that. And then when it came out, that's when we would proofread it. And so while proofreading, yes, I would often sort of get caught up with whatever was happening and end up reading it. And in fact, for many years we did a journal called the *Canadian Human*



**Above: Linotronics 560 film output  
Below: Restraint font by Marian Bantjes and Ross Mills, 2004**



Rights Association and I think it came out every month. And it was all the court transcripts of all the legal cases from human rights cases around Canada. And they were fascinating! And so you'd be trying to proofread this, and then you'd be like: wait, he did WHAAAT?! Some boss who has been harassing female employees or, you know, all sorts of outrageous things. All those human rights things. And it was really hard to read those and end up not getting caught up in them.

**That also made me think of your pulp fiction Valentine's cards. Were you doing that as well? You weren't setting pulp fiction at the time, were you?**

No. Are you thinking of the *Harlequin Romance* novels? No, we never did those kinds of things.

**So you were there through the eighties and then you went and started Digitopolis?**

So by the time I'd left, I'd actually moved back to Saskatchewan for a couple of years. I was working a long distance for the company, which was called TypeWorks. And by that time we started using PageMaker and Ventura Publisher, which were the first WYSIWYG programs. And I had my own computer. So I was using those programs. Then eventually Quark came out, so I had copies of fonts from my employer, and by this time we had digital fonts. But we still had the Linotronics.

**And how were you doing the work? Were you sending floppy disks back and things like that?**

Yeah, well, I was really one of the first telecommuters! I was living in Saskatchewan, and they would send out a manuscript and a floppy disk by courier, I would get that



**The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the most visible and recognized part of Canada's Constitution, and was signed into law by Pierre Trudeau<sup>1</sup> in 1982**

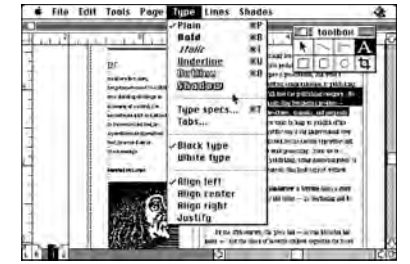


**Marian Bantjes's 2018 Valentine's cards, using *Harlequin Romance* novel covers from the 1970s**

and I would typeset the stuff, or, you know, they sent down a courier. The floppy disk would contain the raw type as typed in by a typist, and then I would format that and send it back to them by modem. So, originally a 400 Baud modem. We then had an 800, then 1,600. And then I think 3,400, and that was when it was like, sooooo fast!

**\*Laughing\*. Yeah we have a 3,400 Baud pen plotter at the place that I work, and I never knew even knew what a Baud was until I looked it up.**

Right, right! So, yeah, I sent that back by modem, which would take... I think you sent it overnight it would take a few hours. And then they would send me corrections by fax. And then I did the corrections, and then send it back again by modem. And that's the way it was done! And I did that for about three years, and then I moved back to Vancouver and by this time I had a bought my own computers so that I could work at home. And I went back to Vancouver and I got into an argument with my boss about wages and fonts and whether or not I was allowed to still work from home, and what software I was allowed to have on my system. He was quite shady and I think that either he learned that allowing other people to have fonts, like basically to share fonts, it was illegal, or he used the fact that it was illegal to get rid of me cause I was complaining about my wage, or I'm not really sure. But he ended up firing me, and then we ended up in a lawsuit about that, which lasted three years. When he fired me, I didn't really know what to do. I mean, I applied for various jobs. I had very rarefied experience sets, you know, I knew a lot about type. I had started doing some



**Aldus PageMaker 1.0 was released for Macintosh in 1985; followed by Ventura Publisher 1.1 in 1986**



**In 1985, a 1200-Baud Radio Shack modem sold for \$399—that's \$957 adjusted for inflation**

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Trudeau was the father of current Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The former had a brief romance with Barbara Streisand in 1970.

design by this time, like book designs and stuff, which were... well, one of them actually won an award. But I never worked with color, I never worked with imagery and I had never been to a printer's shop. Honestly I didn't know what happened after stuff we did left the building.

**And vis-a-vis that relationship, I just wanted to interrupt cause we, I have a common story with that as well. I interned in New York for a large multinational skincare company who I will not name. And I was doing packaging, website stuff. I was doing store design because my background is in architecture. And I was there maybe six months working for free. They sent me back home to Australia to get a visa on the idea that they would pay me when I returned. So I went and I did that on their word, and then it just continued that way. So I ended up walking out on Christmas, and then that was a legal thing, which precipitated for the next couple of years as well. But it was basically, like, I don't want to say I can relate, but I think I can: it was very displacing for me. Both professionally, but also emotionally and creatively. I just, I didn't know what to do next for a while.**

Yeah, no, it was strange for me too. I mean the case against my former employer. He'd also been a friend, I'd worked for him for 10 years, and you know, the whole company was like a family, and it was really traumatic, and was just this huge fight. People took sides. And it sort of haunts me to this day actually, which all, which I'll get into a little bit, but later on if we talk about my ex-business partner. So, my ex-business partner also



**I screenprinted this felt invite for the opening of Aēsop University Place; with felt interiors inspired by the Beuys piece at Dia:Beacon**



**Joseph Beuys, *Brasilienfond*, 1979  
Dia Art Foundation**

had worked there at the same place, she has worked on the publishing side as an editor. She had left and was working in marketing person for an architectural firm.

**And this was the person that you partnered with at Digitopolis later on?**

Yeah, so we decided to—well, she basically offered: “why don't we form a company together?” And I always sort of felt like she saved me somehow. So I was very grateful to her for, you know, for making this suggestion because I had no work and she had work, and so we started up our own company and started with her company as our first client, and then sort of rapidly got other clients. I was working with images in color for the first time. So I had a super-steep learning curve, working with printers and learning how to do duotones, but doing it all on the fly and at the expense of our clients at times. The first year was super rough. I mean, we were doing some great work—the work itself was really good, but we had a lot of technical problems. And then also we were working on PCs because we'd both come from TypeWorks, which was all PCs, and the rest of the design world was all Macs, and with a huge, huge prejudice towards PCs. So anytime anything went wrong, or you know, our computer equipment was to blame. Although we were using Quark, Photoshop and Illustrator software.

It was a nightmarish first year, but it worked out, and so we did really well, actually. But after about six years, I would say, Sue and I started to have—actually almost from the beginning—some problems with each other. But after six years it got really bad. By this time I was



**QuarkXPress 1.1 was released for the Macintosh in 1987. The pioneering page layout software enjoyed 95% market share until the advent of Adobe InDesign<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Quark's founder Tim Gill is the largest individual donor to the LGBTQ+ rights movement in U.S. history, having personally committed more than \$430 million since the early 1990s.

Kroll, Andy. “Meet the Megadonor Behind the LGBTQ Rights Movement.” *Rolling Stone Magazine*, June 23, 2017.

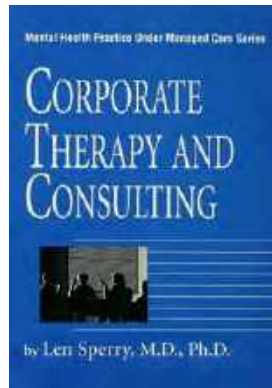
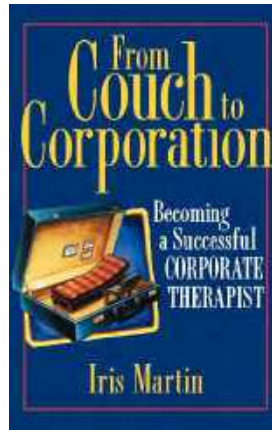
heading up the creative side, so I had some designers working with me and under me, and she was doing the account management side and the business side. And we just grew further and further apart, and we had a corporate therapist. And every week we'd get together with our corporate therapist and sort of talk about how the business was going.

**The two of you would go to this therapist?!**

Yeah, he would come to us, and we would have our therapy session. It was actually a pretty brilliant idea.

**I've actually never heard of a corporate therapist before! Like, I know about mediation and stuff like that in HR, but this is interesting.**

I mean, it was a good idea! And yeah, it would be just like therapy. You know, he'd come in and we'd sit on the couch and we'd talk about things that had happened that week, or things that we were feeling about our employees or about the work or about each other. And he'd sort of get us to agree on things or whatever. I remember there were two things that she said over a year or so. This was maybe more like around the eighth or ninth year, but I remember her one time saying "I don't give a shit about design." You know, "I could be selling soap for all I care." And I was like, "Holy shit." The other thing that she said one time was, "I just want a production company. I don't want to deal with Marian complaining about the colors and whether things should be this way or that way. I just want to do what the client wants, and be done with it." At that point I really knew that we were just at completely different places. That's when she started to really undermine things that we would do.



**Corporate therapy gained popularity in the mid-to-late 1990s<sup>1</sup>**

I remember we were all lined up to work with one of the best printers in the city. And then she switched them on us to this cheapo printer, and, god, I was livid. And so, I was desperate to get out and one day she offered to buy me out. I thought about it for a day or so and took the offer, and was overjoyed. I thought she was insane. I accepted really fast because I thought she was going to realize how insane she was. So then I went on contract with her for a year and just worked as a designer there for a year. And finally I was out. The day I left, my senior designer left with me. And our junior designer left a month later. She managed to carry on for a while, but eventually she went in partnership with some guy who ran the company into the ground. So that's what happened. But, my relationship with Sue was a really close relationship. It was like a marriage. And you know, our employees were like our kids.

**So how many did you have at your peak?**

I think at our peak we had twelve. We had a web division and we had, I think, four designers, and we had hired a CEO at one point to help us with things, and she ended up being more fucked up than we were. And I had to fire her! Anytime we had to fire somebody, I was the one who ended up doing it. And it was horrible. But I still have nightmares about Sue, my ex-business partner. I have nightmares about her to this day; I've had nightmares about her for nearly 20 years now. And the nightmares are always that I'm working for her and I have no control. I mean that's basically what it's about: it's about having control. And I also have nightmares about my former boss, in exactly the same way.



**Digitopolis' web presence circa 2003; company business cards designed by Marian Bantjes**

<sup>1</sup> Martin, Iris. *From Couch to Corporation: Becoming a Successful Corporate Therapist*. New York: Wiley, 1996; and Sperry, Len. *Corporate Therapy and Consulting*. Boca Raton: Routledge, 1996.

That's intense. I mean, it's understandable, at least for me. I had a similar kind of, almost Stockholm-syndrome-esque relationship with an abusive French chef who I used to work for at the Sydney Opera House a million years ago. So, I started working in a kitchen when I was like 13 because my aunts owned a restaurant and some sandwich shops, and produced out of a commercial kitchen. So I would be breaking down torso-sized blocks of cheese with a heated piano wire, chopping vats of onions with goggles and things like that. But, I eventually ended up working at this high-end restaurant within the Sydney Opera House, while I was an architecture student. So it was perfect for me, I thought it was amazing: the place and the building and everything. But then the guy I was working for was pathological... he would push you and burn you and yell at you. And, like you, to this day I still have flashbacks of things he would say to me, like, "ouvre tes yeux!" which is "open your eyes," or "bouge ton cul, eh!" ["move your ass."] Instances like this that you look back on and think: "God, this person: they're still a monkey on my back, all these years later!"

I bet there's a really good book in here somewhere, because I think that happens to so many people. But when it comes to therapy, you know, it's always about your parents, your family, and your friendships and romantic relationships,



Me posing with an (empty) Jeroboam of Veuve Clicquot



Bennelong restaurant within the Sydney Opera House. I worked here for four years while studying architecture. The experience had a profound impact on me. A highlight was meeting the family of late Danish architect Jørn Utzon, designer of the UNESCO World Heritage building.

right? But I think lots of people get really scarred by business relationships; and you know, nobody ever talks about that. Like even Sue and I, when we were running Digitopolis, we were determined not to do it the way that our former boss Vic had done it. He really influenced the way we ran things, just by us being like, "we don't want to be like Vic." And yet both relationships ended up being so scarring and traumatizing for me. It was actually nine years as a business partner with her and then one more year as freelancer. So it was ten years at TypeWorks, and ten years at Digitopolis. I also fell out of love with graphic design. So by the end of the ten years at Digitopolis, I just fucking hated graphic design and I wanted to get out. I wanted to work more like an illustrator, and I was still doing contract work at Digitopolis. That's when I fell into *Speak Up*. Do you know that story?

Well, peripherally. I was born in '88 so I was on the edge of that stuff when it started to happen, and I didn't really look at graphic design stuff until my late teens and I didn't really know what it was or what, you know, that there was a job in it, but I had this set idea that I would go into architecture, so it was all on the side. But I have a really weird feeling that at some point I was reading stuff on *Speak Up*. But I can't say for sure. So you started to get a bit of a voice on that and then attracted attention from Rick Valicenti?

Yeah—it was a huge step. I actually don't think I'd be where I am today without *Speak Up*. The Canadian design scene is very insular, very small and very small-minded. I was maybe a little known in Vancouver, but not really well-known. I think maybe people had seen



I posed nude for Spencer Tunick's *Sydney 1 (Opera House)*, 2010



*Speak Up* (2002–'09) was one of the first online forums for graphic design criticism and discourse

my work, but we have very little name recognition. There was maybe one designer in Vancouver who had Vancouver name recognition. I was basically nobody, and I started writing on *Speak Up* because it was a really lovely place. It was really a lot like a cafe where the designers would sort of come every day and sit around and talk about design, and argue about design. We became virtual friends with each other. And we were very free and loose in our conversation, it was very casual. We'd call each other names and if we thought somebody was wrong, we thought nothing of really pouncing on them and beating them into the ground. But it was all done in a very friendly way.

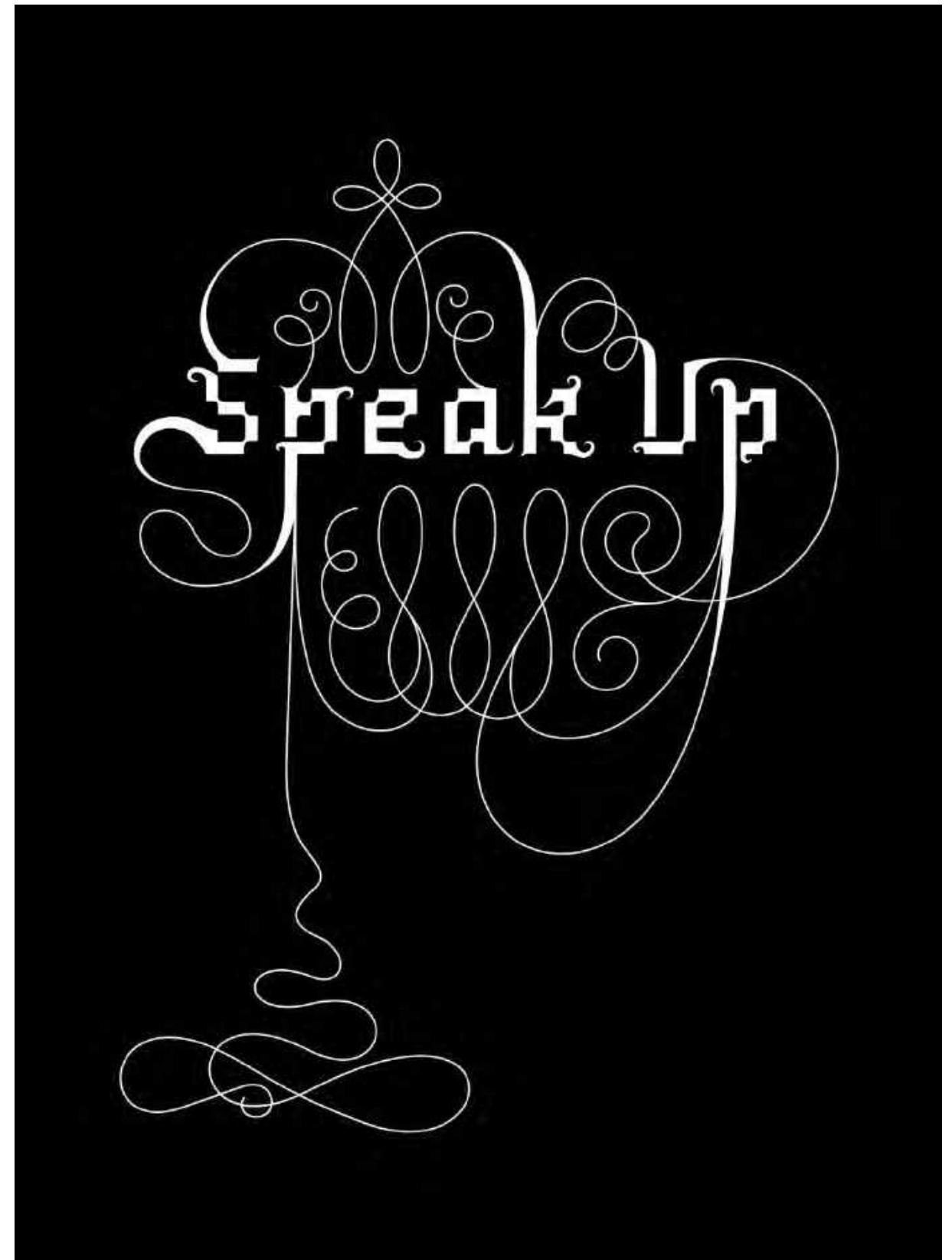
**“I hated graphic design and I wanted to get out”**

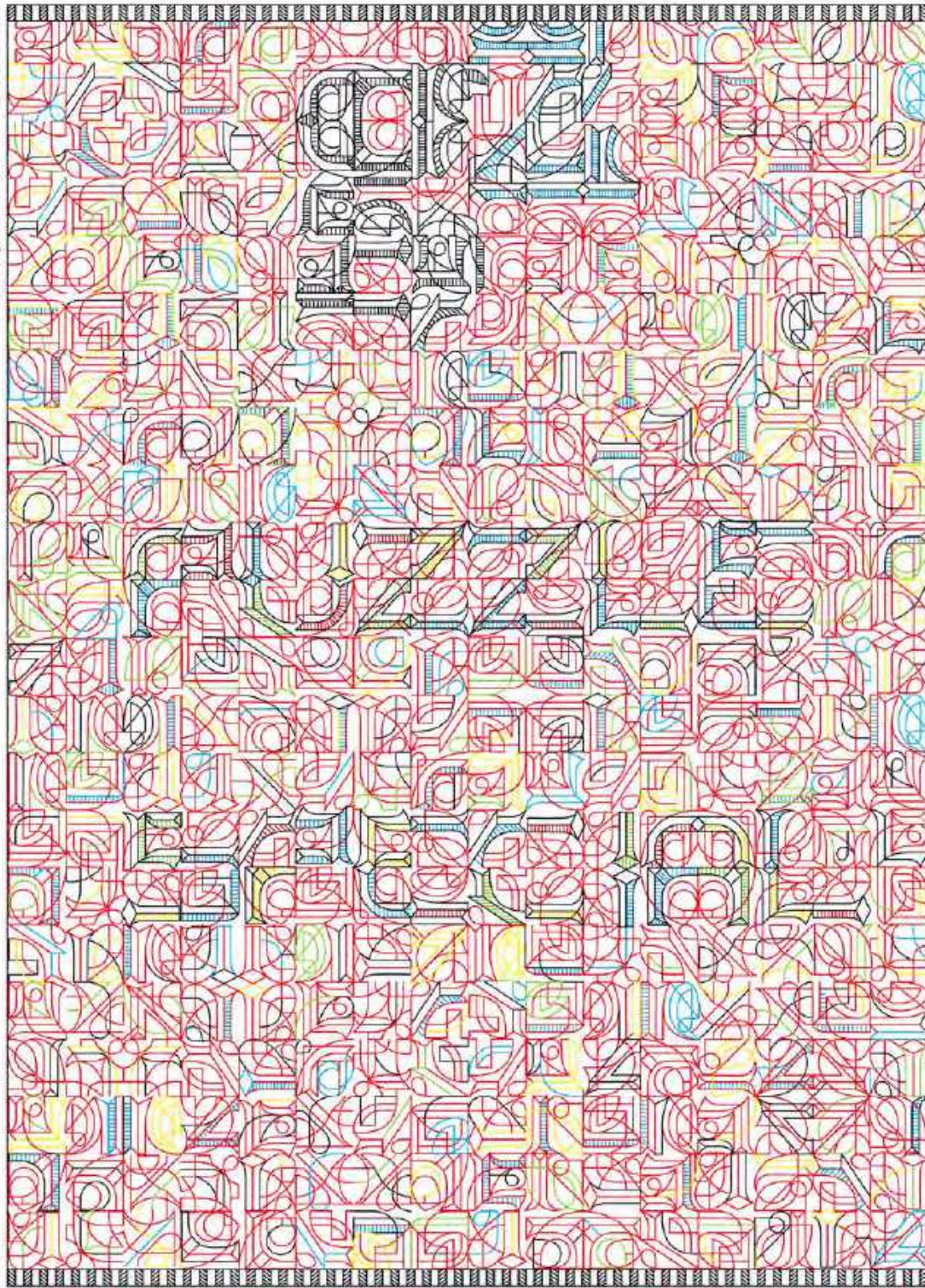
**I was going back and looking at those articles, I love Debbie Millman’s anecdotes from back then; especially her recalling finding you and realizing, oh, this person’s ready to spar, but in the best of ways.**

Yeah. So it was like that, and I started just by writing in the comments. I started writing more and more and more. I thought it was just a waste of time. I thought I was just writing on this blog, but I enjoyed it. And then Armin Vit invited me to become an author. Well, this happened the AIGA conference, which had always been held in America. In 2003 or 2004, I can’t remember which, they, decided to hold it in Vancouver. Which was the first time they’d ever gone outside of the US to hold an AIGA conference. And so I attended that. That was the first conference I ever went to my life, which I found amazing. I mean, it just blew my mind. I became a conference junkie after that. And that’s where Armin



**AIGA’s 2003 national conference featured the likes of Bruce Mau, Steven Heller, Jessica Helfand, Katherine McCoy, Tobias Frere-Jones and Jonathan Hoefler.**





Killer sudoku, whodunnit?, giant crossword ... plus Christmas TV and radio guide

organized a *Speak Up*, sort of rendezvous. So we all got together and many of us who had never seen each other before, met in real life for the first time. That was when I met Debbie for the first time, and Armin, and all of them. Then Armin asked me to be a *Speak Up* author, so that was exciting. So then I started writing various posts—which I really loved. And my posts were always a little bit off-center. I mean, the book *I Wonder* contains some of those. Everyone else was more serious, but mine were whimsical and imaginative and a little bit weird. And it was just super, fun! And then of course, as you know, Rick Valicenti noticed. And that was when I won the t-shirt contest. And by this time in my design career, I was so beyond submitting to a t-shirt contest. I was so snobby about it, like “ugh, a t-shirt contest, really?!” But because it was my community and, you know, I thought, “ah, what the hell! It is my friends’ website, I’ll do something for the t-shirt contest.” Well let me tell you: that fucking tee shirt *really* launched my career.

**“That fucking tee-shirt really launched my career”**

**Stefan Sagmeister hired you for something based on that, and there are a number of things in your book that made me think “Oh, that’s Marian’s *Speak Up* tee shirt that has been reconfigured in some way.”**

Yeah! It was completely, totally crazy.

**That’s great though! I mean, it’s kind of perfect—especially for you—that that’s the kind of thing that happened for you.**

Yeah, it was very strange, but it was also great. And once I started getting hired for stuff, my first job was for *Details* magazine. And then it just started happening,



**Stefan Sagmeister hired Bantjes to ornament Douglas Gordon’s *Vanity of Allegory* for the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin**

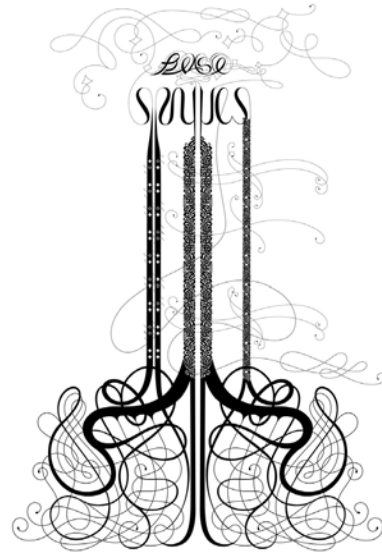
the work just started coming. It was amazing, truly amazing. And for a while there—like for, I don't know, maybe four years there—I was one of the very, very few people working in an ornamental style. Certainly the only person working in *my* particular ornamental style. And people were just blown away by it. Like they hadn't seen anything like it before, and certainly not digitally.

**Why do you think that is though? Why do you think people were so blown away by it? Was it just the fact that we hadn't had it for some time?**

Yeah, cause we just didn't have it for so long. And also because I do think that there is some kind of innate response to the beauty of that kind of work. I've said this before many times, but, I was really amazed by the people who would send me letters or whatever, and tell me how much they loved my work. People who were modernists, people who I thought would hate my work, but would tell me how much they loved my work. And I thought, you know, this is really weird. Like, there's got to be something that people are responding to on a gut level about this kind of work. Because intellectually, they shouldn't like it. So there's something there, but I've never resolved exactly what that is. But people did respond to it; and they just loved it. And so because I was one of the only people doing it, it was great because for a number of years I was just not questioned in the work. So, you know, they'd want me to do some type treatment or something. And I sent something back and they would just be like, "Wow, this is great, thank you very much!" And even when I started getting more experimental, it was like, "wowwww!" But then I noticed



**Birds, 2009: fabric and wallpaper designs for Maharam**



**Bantjes's Please Say Yes, 2003**

that as more people started doing it, and then people became more familiar with that kind of work and there were more people that they could go to for that kind of work—although I never did think, to be honest, just between you and me, I never did think anybody was as good as I was. I just thought that my work was more imaginative, and sort of pushed things further. Things really got kind of like sucked more back into a traditional kind of swirly stuff, whereas mine was always more of a hybrid between modern and new and old and machine and not machine.

**I think that's probably when I started seeing stuff and probably I did see some of your stuff, but most likely I saw the trickle-down effect of your stuff when I was a younger kid in my teens and I was like, okay, this is what graphic design is. This is the kind of thing that one makes. But I don't know if I liked it or if I thought it was too much of the same at the time, but I do remember, I think I got some illustration book. It was some annual or something, and the criticism of my friends was that it was too decorative and I was like, "yes, but that's the whole point." That's what I'm excited about!**

Exactly!

**Anyway, it is very weird. I feel I've had a similar experience of not really knowing why some people respond. Or, being surprised by the types of people who do respond—especially now, when I'm really kind of just pedal-to-the-metal going for it. People like, you know, someone who trained under Armin Hofmann and Albers at Yale, who is telling me that I'm on this sacred path of ornament now. And I think, "but that**



**Michael Bierut commissioned Bantjes for a Yale Architecture lecture series poster, 2006**



contravenes everything to do with your ‘modernist’ training!” Like, what is that!? And I don’t know either.

Yeah. It’s interesting, and I’m sure that somebody could do some in-depth psychological study, but I don’t think it’s going to be me. But I think the thing that disappointed me most was that I, and a few other people started this thing. I had always thought that there was a long way to go in terms of, I, you know... I eventually started, well, maybe even from the beginning, really had an interest in melding modernism with the ornament, creating new ornament and also trying to uncover a language of ornament, or create a new language of ornament. But I wasn’t really approaching this from any kind of rigorous, academic or researched way. I was just sort of doing it intuitively, but being quite determined that I wanted it all to progress. And my worry was that it would become a fad and fade away. And that’s exactly what happened. And so I think a lot of people started doing this and they just weren’t doing it well, or imaginatively, you know, and they were being more retro. Well, it sort of went in two directions: there was like the mining the past kinds of stuff, like recreating things from the past; but then there was also a huge element of kitsch that came into it. And so it kind of ended up merging with unicorns and rainbows, fairies and that kind of stuff. Do you know what I mean? All these swirls and curlicues,<sup>2</sup> and it became sort of disgustingly—you know, sort of girly-romantic. And that was the total opposite way I had wanted the movement to go, you know? And a lot of people used to hire me because I could do this stuff, but make it more so-called “masculine.” And that was



Hofmann’s seminal 1965 *Graphic Design Manual* is, in retrospect, surprisingly ornamental<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hofmann, Armin. *Graphic Design Manual: Principles and Practice*. Teufen, Switzerland: Niggli, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> A curlicue is a decorative curl or twist typically found in calligraphy, but also a recurring motif in architecture and scrollwork.

another interesting take to me versus, where somehow masculine is seen as modern; or modern is perceived as masculine, and ornament is seen as feminine.

So I have two very specific questions about that: Where do you think this kind of association of the decorative with the feminine comes from? I’ve been reading some of Christopher Wren who makes this allusion to women “making fashion” and “meddling with politics.” You also have a similar quote in your book. But basically this idea that women are the ones who are messing with the purity and eternity of “true” architecture. And then I see this idea kind of picked up again by Loos. And he was writing a lot of weird, crazy stuff before *Ornament and Crime*.

Yeah, Loos was a total lunatic, he really should be purged from the canon.

Well, on top that do you know he was—well, he was tried because he was taking home really young kids to his studio.

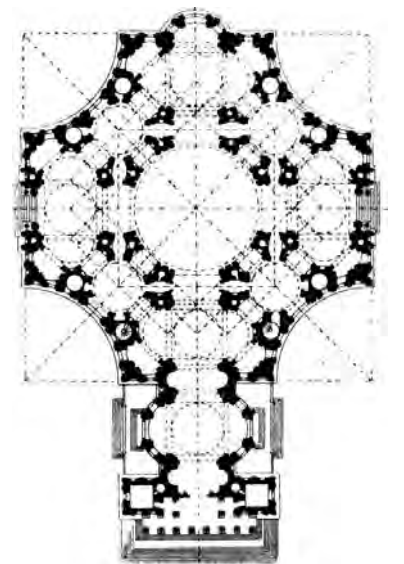
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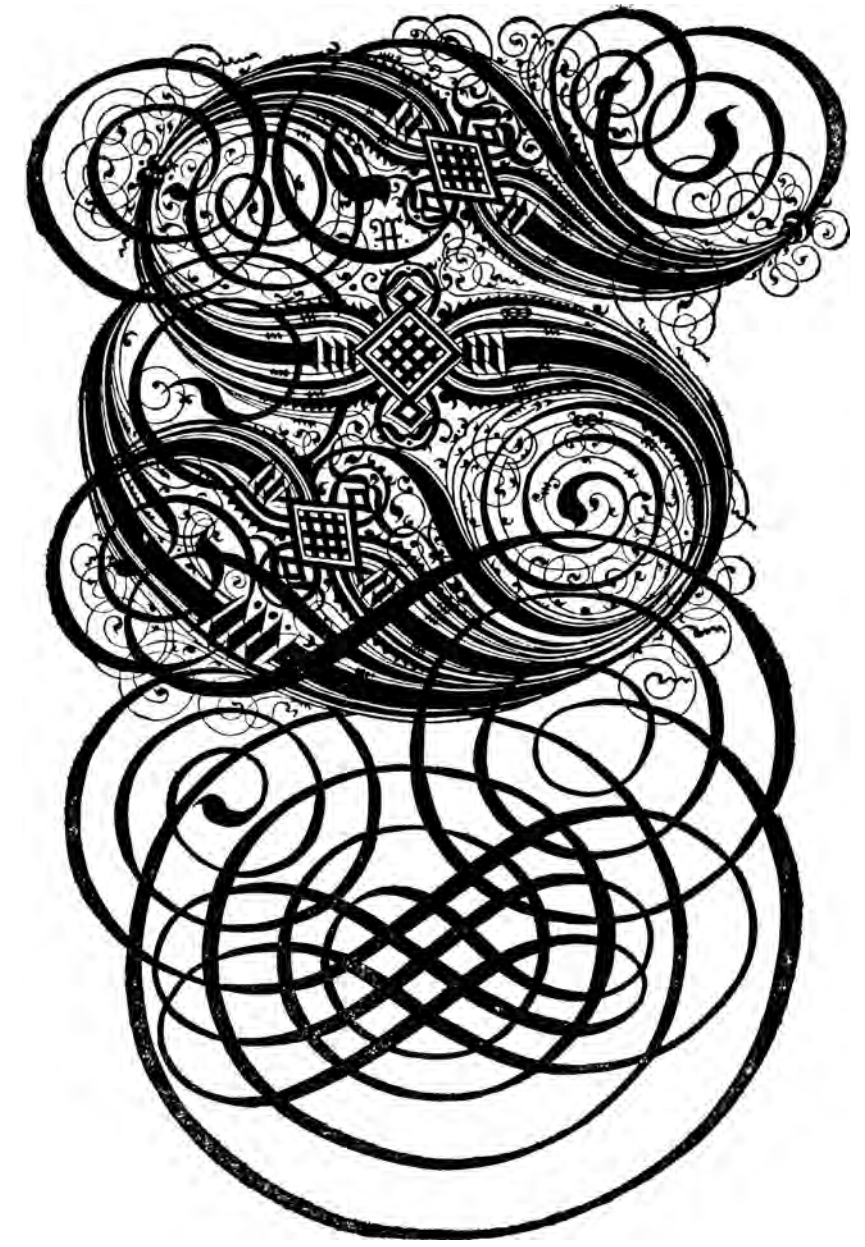
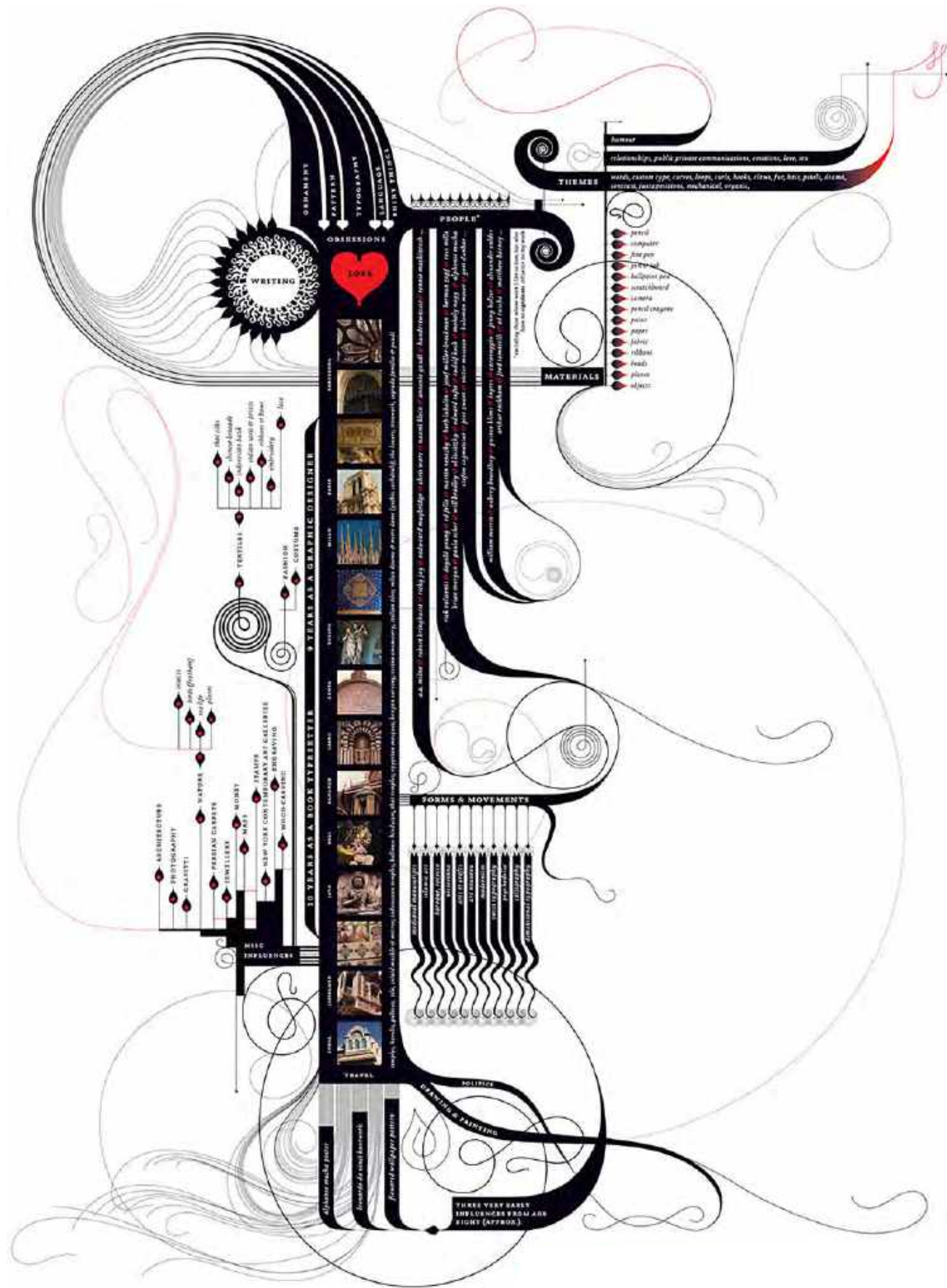
Sadly yes. And it just makes me think, if you’re doing *that* in the 1920s and the police are involved, you know something is going on.

Oh god, that’s bad!

Yeah, *more* than bad. So I mean, on *that* alone, I would be inclined to purge him. But then on the other weird shit, like his writing about this in-vogue fetish of the “child-woman,” which was intertwined with all this Freudian stuff that was going around Vienna as well. But, basically, Loos was a tabloid provocateur, and he loved to write on these borderline-taboo subjects.

Christopher Wren’s astonishingly ornamental original plan for St Paul’s Cathedral, London, 1673





Above: Paulus Franck's 1601 *Schatzkammer Allerhand Versalien Lateinisch vnd Teutsch (Treasury of Latin and German Uppercase Letters)*;  
 Left: Marian Bantjes's map of *Influences and Artistic Vocabulary*, 2006

He also talked about this idea of a young woman who essentially couldn't get enough ornament, couldn't get enough jewelry, and so on. And he tried to tie it to their apparent lack of self-control, or their innate wickedness as women and all that. And I feel these ideas have trickled all the way down to home and fashion today: in this idea that women are decorative and over-the-top and innately superfluous, that women decorate homes, themselves, et cetera. And if men are decorating or designing—especially in fashion—it was often associated with their being gay, and therefore not as masculine as their heteronormative colleagues. And so there's this whole can of worms, at least for me, because I think it's so ironic that in the natural world it's usually the antithesis. It's usually the *males* of a species that dress up, ornament or decorate.<sup>1</sup>

Exactly.

And then I really loved this quote, and I don't remember who wrote it, but someone said, "men carry the looks, but women carry the species." Do you think it might be some really fucked up psychology where men feel the need to denigrate women because we know we can't survive without them? And so we're just going to cut women down in every way possible, including through ornament?

Well, I don't know. It's interesting you mentioning Loos again, because, you've obviously read more Loos than I have, and I don't think I was aware of him making this relationship between women and ornament. And I'm wondering if he might be the fault for the whole thing, because, you know, prior to the modernist movement,



In 1903 Adolf Loos edited the journal *The Other*, in which he expressed his provocative theories on contemporary architecture, fashion, and design



Like many species of birds, male peacocks are far more decorative and colorful compared with their female peahen counterparts

<sup>1</sup>Heinsohn, Robert. "Why Are Male Birds More Colorful than Female Birds?" *Scientific American*, September, 2005.

<sup>3</sup>The account is detailed in Lahuerta Juan José. *On Loos, Ornament and Crime*. Barcelona: Tenov Books, 2015.

you know, buildings were ornamented, they were almost all designed by men. And men's clothing, up until, well, I'm not quite sure when they stopped wearing ornament, but you know, it wasn't that long ago that they wore everything from beautifully-embroidered vests to highly-decorative cravats and so on...

Yeah. So, specifically, and this is a hilarious anecdote: someone who was a very close collaborator and friend of Loos at the time had a huge falling out with him. So, once Loos got onto this whole thing about ornament being criminal, he completely disassociated and stopped talking to this friend, because this friend of his still wore shirts with pearl buttons instead of regular buttons, and Loos couldn't reconcile his friendship and his own position against ornament.<sup>3</sup>

That's actually a really interesting area of research because I don't think it's something primal as men not being able to create humans, or being able to give birth. And I would go way, way far back. And when you look at tribal peoples of all types, you know, they all, they all decorate. They decorate their bodies and they decorate their homes. So I think this is something very Western and very contemporary. But the other thing, and I did talk about this in *I Wonder*, the other thing also is Protestantism. I do have that whole chapter on the ways in which, over the centuries, ornament has been considered distrustful. Disguising truth.

**Yes, I have it my notes: you said with Protestantism the discourse around ornament became a moral one. What was once elevated was then viewed with suspicion and resentment toward the expense of wasteful**

<sup>1</sup>Frederik the Great actually named his palace "Sans, Souci." So why the comma, and why the full stop? The obscure riddle has plagued scholars for centuries. Frederik loved playing word games, and so one theory suggests it was his Rococo way of having fun. The French word for comma, *virgule*, comes from the Latin *virgula*, meaning 'little rod' or 'little stick'. And of course, 'little rod' can have sexual connotation. So, "Sans Virgule" has a naughty twist to it. *Souci* then means worry. But the French for full stop, *point*, is also a formal French literary way of suggesting a negative. So instead of saying *ne pas*, one says *ne point*. Frederik is also thought to have been gay. He had no children, his marriage was sexless, and there is a rumor that when he was young, he contracted a sexual disease from a male lover, after which his little rod never worked again. So what Frederik seems to be saying is, *Sans virgule, Souci point*: "without a little rod, worry stops." Only the Rococo could have come up with that.



The Rococo orgy that is Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam, built in 1745; my husband and I visited in 2013<sup>2</sup>

indulgences.<sup>1</sup> Arguing the Protestants got this idea in their heads and ornament suddenly became a moral issue.

Yes. But they weren't the first to do it, but they certainly took that on in a big way within the Christian Church. So that was one of their criticisms of Catholicism, was it was that there was so much ornament and pomp and circumstance and that was seen as wasteful. Whereas the hard-core Protestants—those very sort of dour sackcloth Lutheran-types, those Germanic northern Protestants—they were *completely* unornamented.

**But you do think this was underpinned by fear? My feeling is that, at some point, the image making and the image makers became so seriously good that they began to compete with the actual enterprise they were working for. So, in effect they were becoming more exciting than God and religion in what they were making. I mean, I feel like the Church eventually said “shit, we have to control them because they're starting to take over the entire show.”**

Yeah, I think that whole competition with God is a big thing in the Christian tradition.

**Yes, but also in Islam as well.**

But that's the interesting thing—I mean, with Islam. They have it in a very sort of overt way, like in some sects of Islam, you're not supposed to represent any amount of nature. It's all sort of mathematical ornamentation, you know, with the patterns and the architecture and so on. But they still create incredibly beautiful ornament.



**Pieter Jansz, *Interior of Saint Bavo, Haarlem, 1669*<sup>2</sup>: clear glass, a prominent pulpit and an empty nave marked the first “Reformed” interiors of Protestantism<sup>3</sup>**



**Martin Luther. *Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate, Wittenberg: Melchoir Lotter, 1520* (Library of Congress)**

<sup>1</sup> For medieval Christians, indulgences were a way to reduce the amount of punishment one had to undergo for sin. The unrestricted sale of often elaborately-decorated indulgences was a widespread abuse during the Middle Ages.

<sup>2</sup> Jansz, Pieter. *Interior of Saint Bavo, Haarlem*. 1631. Oil on panel. 32 x 43 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Accessed April 28, 2020. <https://bit.ly/2Ydg33i>.

<sup>3</sup> Garvan, Anthony. “The Protestant Plain Style before 1630.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (1950). <https://doi.org/10.2307/987455>.

And then with others, it's just that you're not supposed to depict—you're certainly not supposed to depict humans, you can depict animals, and with all of them you're not supposed to depict Mohammed, or God probably. But despite having those restrictions, they don't have a restriction on ornament *per se*. Like they've got the “you could depict this, but not that” thing, but they've never gone down the path of stripping of ornament. And they manage to do the most mind blowing calligraphic ornamental things that praise God and depict the word Allah in these incredible abstract ways. And it's absolutely fantastic what they do with that stuff. It's interesting that they had these “thou shalt not depict this” restrictions and were able to turn them into something even more amazing.

**Yeah, exactly. So I really love that, in your book. I think it's from the first chapter of *I Wonder* where I'm pulling a Martin Lynn quote that you had: he referred to it as this “unending melody of divine mathematics” and this almost superabundance of the sacred, but there's an interesting undertone to that as well. And this is something I just know anecdotally, I don't know if it's 100% correct, but someone once told me when you're doing weaving in Islamic art, you have to deliberately make a mistake in the weaving. So if you're**



**Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan is an icon of Iranian architecture, built between 1602–1619 during the Safavid dynasty**



**Thuluth script on the mausoleum of Touman Aka in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 1404–1405**

doing a rug or something like that. You, you have to exhibit your prowess and your skills, but at one point you have to do a very kind of ritualized mistake basically in honor of God. You have to say that I cannot match the perfection of God and I'm not going to try.

Yeah I've heard that too, that's very interesting.

So going back, because I think there was something there that we missed, or we went off on another bird walk, as my husband would say. This kind of conversation, he calls it bird walking: you know how they go like three steps one way and then two steps the other, yeah, I mean, I'm very much that way. I will have a hundred little bits of stories for everything. But the thing that I thought was interesting was this enmeshing of sexism with racism. So yeah, let's talk about this sexist agenda and how it interweaves with the racist one. So, from Owen Jones writing on savage tribes and almost apologizing for their apparent ignorance and lack of ability to control themselves vis-a-vis ornament to Loos and onwards. I think there's a definite underpinning racist tone to all of this, and I think it's just a xenophobic streak and a way to dismiss a people through their making. And for me, it really hurts me because I grew up with those images in Papa New Guinea. I saw those people making those things and carrying those visual traditions, which were so developed and *anything but* savage. And oftentimes more important than any kind of verbal or written history. It was a kind of visual and ornamental history that these people had, on their bodies even. So seeing that stuff when I first came across Jones—and we have a copy of



Marian Bantjes's *I Wonder*, 2010



Plate 1: *Savage Tribes* from Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament*

the original in the Updike collection at our Providence Public Library.

An original of what?

Of his *Grammar of Ornament*. It is so beautiful! But you know, you can barely breathe on it and someone is there with gloves helping you the whole time.

Oh, lucky you!

Yeah, it's really nice. So, we had an assignment here at school where they sent us to the library and they put out a bunch of stuff, and this was all from the Updike special collections they have, and they said, "pick something, it's basically going to be the basis for the rest of your semester." And you know, I went through some other things, thinking "Oh, you know, I could do this book on magic, or I could do this book on heraldry, or this one on whaling and scrimshaw, or this thing on flags in nautical culture." But I kept going back to Jones, thinking, "I can't *not* do this thing." The book is so beautiful that I've gone to look at it I think at least three separate times.

But all those other things sound so interesting, too!

I know! But all for another life and another time.

But anyway, going back to Jones' whole segmenting of quote unquote "savage" tribes, which he begins his book with. And that to me seems like he's trying to get that world out of the way before he can deal with quote unquote "civilization" and the Greeks and the Egyptians and the Romans, and from then on, and it's just, it's so weird. And so sad. And I wrote to this to you in my questions: why are we so gross about this? I really feel so much of our active disdain or passive



Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* was first published in 1865



Scrimshaw was a popular hobby among idle whalers, often at sea for months or years at a time<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In March 2020, right before COVID-19 quarantine, my husband and I made a trip to the Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut. The museum boasts one of the best scrimshaw collections in the world, of which this piece is part. It depicts one of the one of the most famous engagements in American naval history, when the USS Constitution met and defeated the British HMS Guerriere during the War of 1812.

dismissiveness towards ornament is rooted in these racist and sexist discourses. And I guess I'm asking why? And I suppose the question is: how can we change that?

Oh boy, well, that's a big question. I mean, the why has got to be just a really old question, like going back to Western so-called civilization, and the church and everything... it's all interspersed with that stuff.

But I think it has its roots even earlier than Loos, or Jones. So you have a quote in your book from J.C. Gottsched calling Rococo a "corrupt taste" and a "French whim." But then even before that we had Baroque. So, the etymology of Baroque is from the Portuguese for "misshapen pearl."

Oh really?

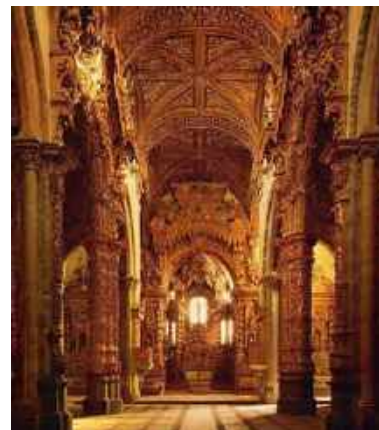
Yeah, and up until December I thought my thesis might be called *Hyperbaroque*. Anyway, so it comes from "misshapen pearl," but the Latin *baroco*, was used in a pejorative sense to essentially critique arguments that were seen as uselessly complicated, or having a kind of broken logic. And in a way I love this, because this is exactly what Baroque is to me, it is this kind of pure broken logic where systems and patterns and structures are learned and then mastered, and then tossed to the wind. It's this action, this proclivity to borrow and "leap with abandon," which you write, that I'm really most interested in. This possibility beyond the current usage or I guess employment of ornament today. And I was reading it again yesterday and laughing about your writing "in each draft, slowly releasing oneself from beneath the rubble of all you

<sup>1</sup>The English word *baroque* comes directly from the French. While some scholars state that the word was adapted from the Portuguese term *barroco*, a flawed pearl, and that from the Latin *verruca* for wart. Other sources suggest that the medieval Latin term *baroco*—denoting a convoluted kind of logic—is a more likely source. Whatever the case, I adore the word, its possible origins and the incredible output of the Baroque period in art, music and architecture.

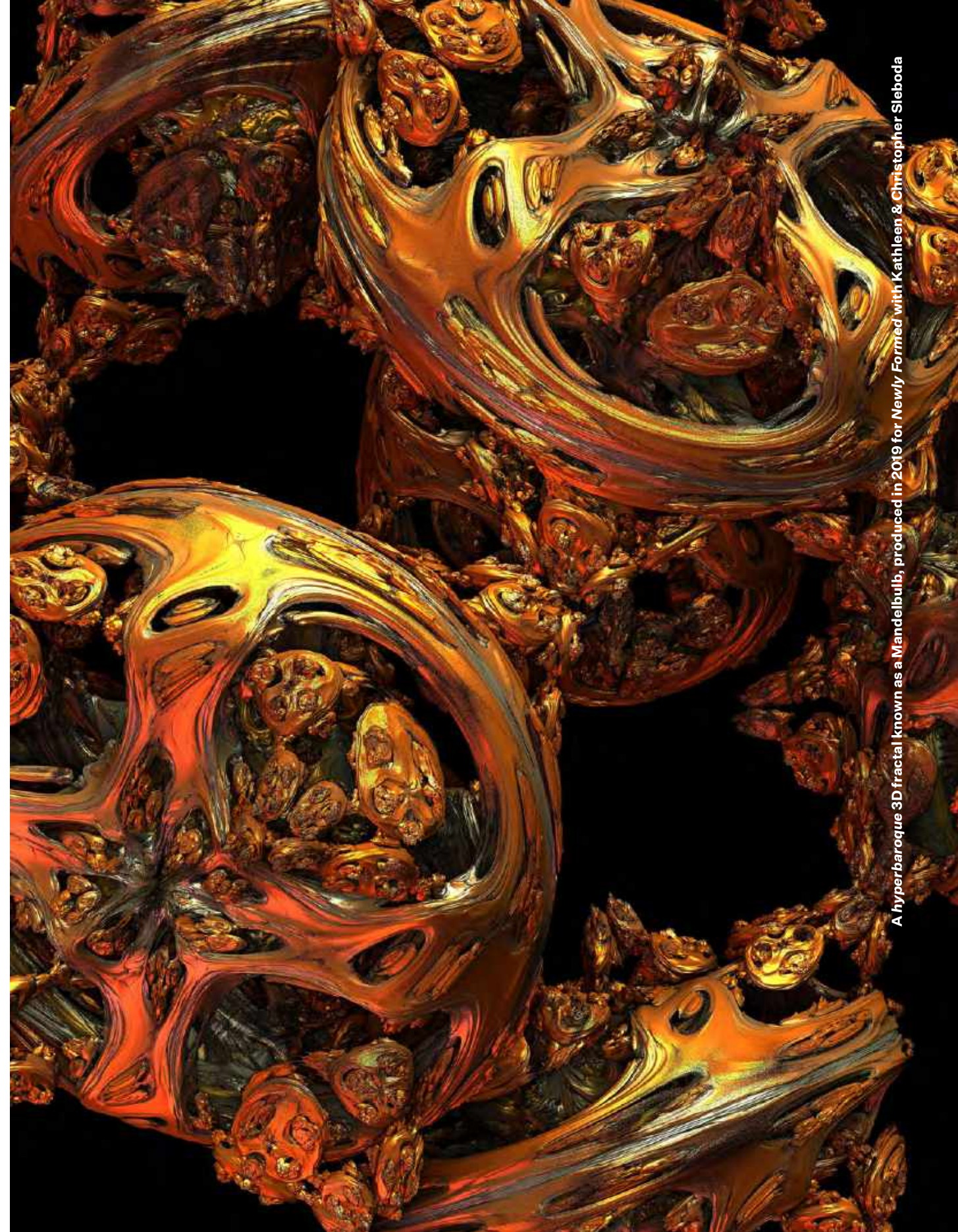


**Hector Guimard**  
Gold, agate and pearl brooch  
1909

The term *Baroque* comes from the Portuguese for *misshapen pearl*<sup>1</sup>



**Igreja de São Francisco in Porto was begun as a Gothic building in the 14th century; but in the 18th its interior was embellished with gilded Baroque timber work**



A hyperbaroque 3D fractal known as a Mandelbulb, produced in 2019 for Newly Formed with Kathleen & Christopher Sleboda

had learned.” And I wanted to ask, what do you do with all these boulders of research you’ve left behind in the process? Because basically my whole thesis has been an endless Russian doll where I just keep finding more things that I have to know more about.

\*Laughing\* I think you have to end up just leaving them. You know, I had these kind of bouldery things, and it was very, very hard to leave them because they were so interesting. But at one point I basically had to say: okay, well what am I writing here? Am I writing an all-encompassing book for all this stuff? In the case of writing *I Wonder*, I wasn’t. And so I eventually just had to really focus on what my big point was, and leave all those other things aside. But then, that’s *I Wonder*. It is a collection of essays and stuff like that. And I see no reason why you couldn’t have asides.

And when you’re writing a book, I actually think the less linear your narrative is, or rather the more asides and footnotes and all the extra bits that you have, the more you have to work with in terms of design. So when you are writing something, and it’s just one long cohesive stream of text, well that’s kind of all you’ve got. And then maybe you might have some sections, and then you get some subheads and then you get to deal with that. But that’s coming from a book designer—or a book typesetter who has typeset many books that are just one long stream of text. When you do get something complicated that has footnotes and side notes and asides and comments and so on, then text becomes very interesting from a visual perspective, and in terms of the possibilities of how you can treat that. You can have all



Russian Matryoshki in the Gzhel style of white and blue, similar to a set my husband and I bought visiting Moscow in 2015<sup>1</sup>



Bantjes’s *Before My Memory Goes* poster for the Alliance Graphique Internationale, 2007

<sup>1</sup>The name *Matryoshka* is the diminutive of the Russian girl’s name *Matryona*—literally *little matron*. Growing up we had these dolls, but we called them *Babushkas* (like the Kate Bush song), similar to the Serbian *Baba* for grandma.

<sup>2</sup>The basalt rock stacks on Reynisfjara hold a special place in Icelandic folklore: according to legend, they are the petrified remains of three trolls who were frozen in the dawn sunlight as they made their way to shore.

sorts of other stuff, which can be really fun to work with. So, I would say, don’t necessarily throw them away. You might be able to do something interesting.

Oh yeah. Don’t worry. I’m not throwing them away. I have two things to say about that. So I collect. And we can talk about collections too. I have a dirt collection as well. Surprise.

Oh, do you?!

We have black sand here in our little apartment in Providence from the beach in Iceland. And I have red earth from the center of Australia. I think it started with my mum because one day she called my sister and I into the bedroom. She said, “kids, come, don’t tell Scott”—this is my dad—and we’re like, “what!?” So she opens her closet (she’s like Imelda Marcos with all this stuff in there; and funnily enough, they live in the Philippines right now). Anyway, I’m maybe ten years old at this time, and she digs in the back of the closet, she pulls out this towel, she unwraps the towel and in the towel there’s this small crumbling rock, and she’s presenting it as though it’s the most important thing in the world. So we ask, “Mum, what is that?” And she says “do not tell your father, but it’s a piece of the Colosseum!” And we’re like, “what?!



I took this photo at the Reynisfjara black sand beach in Iceland, 2018<sup>2</sup>

Mum! You can be arrested in Italy for that these days!” So yeah, I don’t know what it is but there’s something about the provenance of objects and their imbued history that I’ve always been attracted to. I think she got that piece of rock on a trip when we were little kids. So,

she's Serbian and my dad is Australian. And they went to Italy and left us in Belgrade with our grandparents. And I learned to walk there while they were away. But anyway, collections. And there was something else?

Side notes.

Yes, thank you. So the second thing. As you can tell I'm so tangential that everything has a kind of story for me. I made a book in my first year here based upon my image collection. So I just have a Tumblr hooked up to my website where I post with this plugin every image that means something to me, or stuff that I'm looking at when I'm researching, or other people's work that I want to remember. And I started this a long time ago, and I think I have maybe 20,000 images and I bet I could tell you something about probably eighty percent of them. So I made a book of these that I called *The Anecdotal Almanac* and it was so funny reading your advice in your monograph *Pretty Pictures*, which said "never call something the first in a series." And by calling my book an almanac, I immediately had to make another one the next year—which I never did.

But the book was just a collection of these images, one per page, with the story behind it. So I met a lot of resistance at my school for a long time for doing stuff like that. And it's kind of weird that at the end of three years the general reaction has turned to praise, like: "this is your thing. This is what you should be doing." So I'm so glad that you're talking about all



Me in Rome, 2006 (note the ornamental tee shirt)



Bantjes's monograph *Pretty Pictures* (2013) is an incredibly comprehensive overview of her work from 2003–2012

the marginalia and the opportunities for design through that. Especially because I'm not a linear writer, and when I sit down to do something like that, I just can't get it done. But if you want me to tell you an interesting story about... I don't know... witchcraft and the Gutenberg, for example. I don't know if you know this one? So Gutenberg sent people out to Paris and they were arrested for witchcraft because they had such perfect replicas of books that they claimed were hand-written. And then they had to basically give up the secret of the trade and say, "actually, we're working for this guy who invented this machine based on a grape press that can do these books and he's not a witch, and don't arrest us and don't burn us at the stake." And the minute that happened, that's when the French nobility and the Church came in and said "we'll take that technology, thank you very much." Basically these guys were shopping Gutenbergs in France and they got caught.<sup>1</sup>

That's an amazing story!

Yeah! Anyway, so... anecdotal stories. I have a lot. I don't have linear stories, and the minute I sit down to try and write one, I start to freak out. So that's good advice. And then the second thing was I had a meeting or chat with one of my advisors recently, and it was hilarious because I have a very classically-trained advisor who is basically helping me with the spreads and the type and the grid and all of that But then I have another advisor, who is a super radical, and she said

<sup>1</sup> After several of Gutenberg's bibles were sold to King Louis XI of France, it was decided that Johann Fust was performing witchcraft. Letters in these bibles, presented to the King as hand-copied manuscripts, were oddly identical. Fust had sold 50 bibles in Paris, impossible considering the time it took to transcribe by hand. Parisians figured that the devil had something to do with the making of all these copies, and Fust was thrown into jail on charges of black magic. He was eventually released after proving his business was enabled by Gutenberg's press.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.



My *Anecdotal Almanac*, made during Wintersession 2017



Often mistaken as a portrait of Doctor Faustus, this is actually Johann Fust, a prominent early German printer, with his bible



to me that she could “read the sadness” in my grid. And we were talking about this Iranian-American chef Samin Nosrat and her book *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*—and making the analogy that my page is like a recipe, and I need to give that relish and that joy and that surprise in the page in these different ways: textural, and flavor-wise and all of that. So hearing it from you is really reassuring to know that **A. It’s not wrong to do that, and B. you can presumably do well *actually* doing that!**

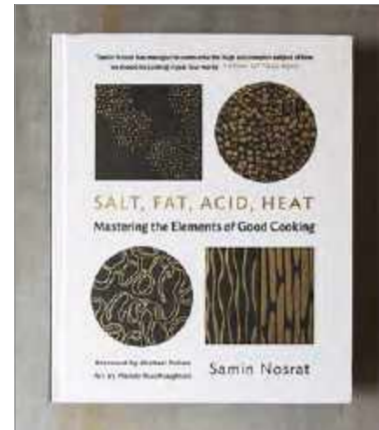
Yeah, well, you know, that my monograph *Pretty Pictures* was done that way. So that has some internal structure, but basically each spread is designed like a poster, to have a balance or sort of conversation across the page in terms of the elements that are there. But there’s no strict grid. So, yeah, I think that it’s good to find some kind of balance between a grid and chaos. Chaos can be really ugly, and that’s the thing about Ornament: it can be chaotic, but it still has a structure. Do you know what I mean?

**Absolutely. So I’m curious about structure relative to flair or virtuosity in your work. I think you’re right about this transcendent place of mastering a craft to a point of almost earning the license to contravene it. And that goes back to this idea of needing to know the rules before you break them. But do you think your relationship to virtuosity or improvisation—or kind of “controlled chaos” has roots in your early experience working as a typesetter?**

Yeah, completely, one hundred percent.

**Was it a conscious thing though?**

You know, sometimes it is and sometimes it isn’t.



**Nosrat’s James Beard Award-winning *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*, 2017**



**Balancing structure and chaos: Bantjes’s *So*, an illustration for *The New York Times*, 2010**

I’m proud of my skill with typography; I’m proud of my ability to do it absolutely right. But sometimes it gets in the way in terms of wanting to be more free and not being able to. I remember back when David Carson was all the rage. By which time I had started my design studio Digitopolis. And I remember trying to do work like that, but I couldn’t do it. I just didn’t have whatever freedom it takes to do that. And interestingly I’ve struggled with this in my artwork as well.

So I’m doing quite a bit of painting now, and I have a tendency to get very tight and controlled with details. And then I try to struggle against that and try to make something that’s very big and loose and sort of out of control for me. I have a really, *really* hard time doing it, and when I do do it, it’s really fun and I *really* like it. But the more I work the more I find myself getting back down into little tiny details. And then I think, “no! I must rebel again!” Yeah, so it can work for you and it can work against you as well.

**That’s funny that you mentioned David Carson because I was thinking about him relative to this idea of serendipity and chance and fate. And in my notes I wrote that you strike me as someone who must believe in some of that stuff, from ornithomancy to seance and things in between. Are you someone who entertains serendipity? Or do you have weird quirks that you work with? I have this secret set of numbers that I use in everything from my grids to trim sizes, opacities, CMYK values and almost everything—all based on names, places, birthdays, anniversaries et cetera.**

Do you really?! That’s wonderful!



**Carson infamously set a 1992 issue of *Ray Gun* in Zapf Dingbats**



**A recent work of Bantjes’s, 2019**

Yeah. Truly. And it's so funny cause I only revealed this to someone recently who asked me "is that an em space on your exdent?" And I had to tell them, "no, it's actually a number that I cannot tell you."

\*Laughing\* Oh I think that's wonderful. But I don't think I have anything like that.

You don't? But you have a whole section of secrets in *I Wonder*. I've looked at those pages for weeks and I still don't know half of what they say. I also really loved that you mentioned da Vinci's mirror script, cause that was a big thing for me as a little kid because we visited Amboise, where da Vinci died. But to me your stuff looks like Carson's on acid. And you say as though you couldn't reach Carson, but I think you surpassed him!

I mean there is a direct relationship between the piece that's done as a cipher and the piece that Carson did set in dingbats. In that they're both ciphers, that is, there is a character that is replacement for each letter. So in Carson's case, in a similar way, going back to that phototypesetting, you know, if you put the wrong font in the wrong drum, it all comes out wrong. But in his case, that wrong font was Dingbats, so he just replaced them.

And so I wrote text and replaced it with a cipher that I had designed and built myself into a font. So that's the relationship in that sense. But, Carson's was not designed, whereas mine was designed specifically to be confusing. It would be easier to decipher Carson's than it would be to decipher mine. Partly, of course, because with Carson's there are keys out there. You can go look



Roman augurs were priests who practiced ornithomancy, observing and interpreting bird omens



da Vinci's *Codex Forster II* at the Victoria & Albert Museum, late 15<sup>th</sup>–early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Italy<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Codex Forster II combines two notebooks bound together. Both were compiled in Milan, while da Vinci was working for Ludovico Sforza (1452–1508), the Duke of Milan. The first notebook contains notes and diagrams on the theory of proportions, but also miscellaneous sketches about weaving, architecture and some figurative drawings. The second notebook includes notes on weights and balances, as well as sketches on perpetual motion, drawings of helmets and a recipe for making paints. From Cremante, Simona; Pedretti, Carlo. *Leonardo Da Vinci: the Complete Works*. Cologne: Taschen, 2006.

up what each cipher is. Whereas with mine, there is no key—I'm the only one with the key.

With that, there's also a difference in the intent. I don't know if I remember this correctly, but I feel like in Gary Hustwit's movie, Carson talked about how he decided that the text that he had to set wasn't worth reading, so he made it unreadable. Whereas for you, I suspect that whatever yours is, it is probably quite personal and you're going to keep it that way.

Yeah. That's true. Mine's a secret, but Carson decided his was garbage.

Has anyone cracked it?

Yeah, so I think two people have. Maybe it's not as interesting as I thought it was. Anyway. Can I—I just want return to something before I forget. I don't suppose you've seen the TV show *Noughts + Crosses*? It's a new TV show. I use a VPN to access the BBC and I saw it on the BBC just like a couple of weeks ago. And it's not a fantastic show, but it's interesting. The premise is that 700 years ago, Africa invaded Europe most of Europe is under African rule. And that, uh, Africans are first class citizens, and white people are second class citizens. So it has a sort of not-very-interesting reverse racism, but what is interesting is how they've depicted the aesthetics of the world. It's all very African. Everyone wears like these shirts that are modern, but they have these African pattern kinds of influence. And all the dignitaries, you



Carson's dingbats in *Ray Gun*, 1992



Bantjes's ciphers in *I Wonder*, 2010

know, instead of wearing caps with ribbons and sashes and things like that, or crowns, or military regalia stuff, they wear these really elaborate African-style outfits—and all the buildings have African ornamentation.

Interesting, I will have to look at it. And that's so funny because it ties in with something else I saw recently. So when Disney launched DisneyPlus I spent my week-long free trial watching all their documentaries about Disney, and there was a good one talking about the aesthetics of *Black Panther* and how they were essentially trying to—I think in a similar vein—imagine a global aesthetic where African culture, identity and iconography kind of came to the fore and that was what was promulgated all over. It was really interesting because, a lot of it is speculative and it tied

into so many other things I'm reading. Do you happen to know the British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare?<sup>3</sup>

No, I don't think so.

Okay. He does quite weird, mostly installation pieces using a lot of quote unquote "African ornament." But he's talking about how that ornament has this embedded history of colonialism. So something that I didn't realize, but I guess it makes sense, is that a whole lot of the dress that people still have today in Nigeria and elsewhere has been informed by processes that were brought and imposed upon them by the British and the French and the Portuguese and the Spanish and so on. So a lot of these patterns literally come from Batik printing in



The 2020 BBC series *Noughts + Crosses* imagines a Britain under African rule, where the 'colorless' underclass were once slaves<sup>1</sup>



Above: Ruth E. Carter's Afrofuturist 3D-printed costumes for *Black Panther* (2018) earned her the Academy Award in 2019;<sup>2</sup> Below: Beyoncé, *Homecoming*, 2019



<sup>1</sup> The BBC series *Noughts + Crosses* is based on the young adult novels by British author Malorie Blackman. *Noughts + Crosses*. London: Penguin Books, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Ryzik, Melena. "The Afrofuturistic Designs of 'Black Panther'" *The New York Times*, February 23, 2018. <https://nyti.ms/3bNRGNJ1>.

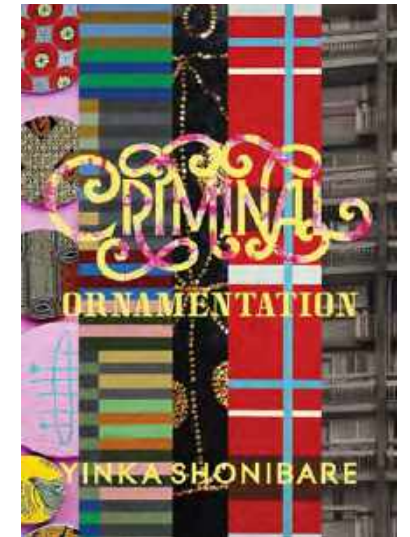
<sup>3</sup> Sontag, Debra. "Headless Bodies From a Bottomless Imagination" *The New York Times*, June 17, 2009. <https://nyti.ms/2W9awIv>.

Indonesia, which is the result of the Dutch East India company bringing this way of patterning and printing on material to Africans who then adopted it as their own—and now kind of identify that as an original aesthetic for them. So he's basically saying, listen, you're speaking in a language which isn't even yours. Anyway, yes, I will take a look at *Noughts + Crosses*.

Yeah, so I haven't seen *Black Panther*. So maybe they stole their idea for the aesthetic from *Black Panther*.

Well they might have, yeah. So we've kind of covered a lot.... we talked about Digitopolis and then you and Sue eventually parting ways, but we didn't really talk about you and your house on Bowen Island and deciding on this move that you made.

Oh, that's easy, that was just financial. The real estate in Vancouver is super expensive. And when I had my company Digitopolis, I made quite a bit of money, not tons of money, but for me it was quite a bit. So I managed to save up some money and got to a point where started thinking about buying a place. And in Vancouver at the time I was looking at borrowing around \$200,000. And for that I could buy a five- or six-hundred square foot apartment on the fourth floor overlooking a parking lot or something like that. And my then-boyfriend had a friend who lived over here on Bowen Island, so we'd been over here to visit a couple of times. And then at one point I thought, well, what about Bowen Island? I wonder what it would cost to buy something over there. And I discovered that for the same amount of money, I could get an actual house on an actual piece of land. So it took me six months to find this place, but it just made a more sense.



Yinka Shonibare CBE's *Criminal Ornamentation*, 2018<sup>4</sup> and *How to Blow Up Two Heads at Once (Ladies)* at the Davis Museum, Wellesley College, 2006<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Barnett, Pennina; Kuo, Michelle; Shonibare, Yinka et al. *Criminal Ornamentation*. Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Yinka Shonibare CBE's oeuvre of ethnically-ambiguous mannequins dressed in Victorian clothes—made from African fabrics, which use Indonesian Batik printing techniques brought to Africa by the Dutch East India company—has captured the imagination of the contemporary art scene, not in the least because this volatile combination throws doubt onto what one sees as "African," "Victorian," "Postcolonial" or "Contemporary"; see Drace, Madeline. *Costuming The (Post)Colonial: How To Blow Up Two Heads At Once (Ladies) and The Contemporary Atelier of Yinka Shonibare MBE* [MFA thesis]. Wellesly College, 2018.

I mean, I was still looking at the cheapest stuff on the market at the time. And I broke a whole bunch of rules that I wanted in terms of the house: the main one being that I wanted one that I didn't need to fix up. And I ended up getting one that we gutted, it needed 100% fixing up. And the only really interesting thing is that I bought a house that was built in the style of a Swiss chalet, which was the last thing with my aesthetic that I would want. It was so not me. But that was what was available, that was what I could afford. And the land was right, and the house was really well built—I could tell that. And that was really important. And I found that when we started renovating it, and as we started decorating it, I found that the house influenced me. I had gone in intending to put my own imprint on the house; and the house ended up changing my ideas about what it should be like. And it ended up influencing me, so it became much more of a kind of rustic thing, and it sort of took over part of my aesthetic. That was really interesting.

**And did that happen while you were renovating the house, or after you'd moved in?**

Well, sort of both before and after. But certainly the more time I spent with the house, and living *in* the house, the more rustic I allowed it to be.

**Do you think that relationship was paralleled in what you were making? I mean, do you think that your work was informed by the house?**

In terms of design? No, not at all. I now wish my house was more modern—but anyway, it is what it is.

**Would you change it again?**

If I had the money, yeah.



**Marian Bantjes pictured on Bowen Island, 2016**



**Bantjes's home and studio on Bowen Island**

**So you have a bit of a reputation of being a bit reclusive and that you're so remote and removed on your island. But it's really just a ferry ride from Vancouver, correct?**

Yeah, no, I'm not that removed. It's a 20 minute ferry ride from Vancouver, and Vancouver is easily accessible. I used to go into town about once a week, but now much less as I just don't really need to. So I'm physically remote, but it certainly wasn't a conscious effort to become more remote: it was purely financial. But in terms of my remoteness in terms of what I have on the web, "pretend I'm dead" and all that other, that is really in response to that, at the height of my fame, and always at the beginning of every school year, getting what used to be many, *many*, and now it's a few, contacts from students who have been assigned to do a project on somebody. And they have either been assigned me or they have chosen me, and they write and ask me all sorts of stupid questions. They ask me, you know, what might be good questions, but questions that I have answered many times before. And I just got sick of it. At the beginning I used to reply, and sometimes I would reply at length, and go on and on and not even get a thank you.

**Really?! Not even a thank you?**

Yeah. Just nothing—*nothing*—in response. But I also felt like I was doing their fucking homework for them. So I thought, well, this wouldn't happen if I was Paul Rand; or if I were dead. You have to go and look at books—you know, you've got to do your own goddamn research. So if you're doing a project on somebody, do the research! Don't contact them and ask them a bunch of stupid questions! Eventually I got to just cutting and



**Bantjes's note to students on her website—the best (and funniest) advice I have ever ignored**

pasting my answers. It was just total bullshit. But yes, it's very flattering and very nice that people wanted to do a project on me. I mean, it's an amazing place to be in a career that you're that well-known and people are interested in you. And maybe I should be more gracious, but everybody I know who is famous in this field has the same problems, that eventually it just gets too much. And often it's not the student's fault; it's obviously the fucking teacher's fault for saying "do an interview with Michael Bierut." It's like, for God's sake! You know, no one's going to learn anything that way. So that was really just me putting my foot down and saying "enough, do your god damn work." And I really do get asked the same questions over and over again. But occasionally I do get contacted by somebody such as yourself, who has obviously done some research, has an interesting point of view or something interesting to ask. And you know, sometimes I'm gonna say, "Oh, this is somebody that I would be interested in talking to." Then I'll respond. Then there are some that I'm afraid are just very, very, very bad—and I just don't respond.

**My question was also about just you being on an island, with your dog, working. So I've had discussions with lots of people about this, and I'm definitely of the singular-practice type mind. I don't really see myself working for someone, or in a partnership capacity. I just can't fathom it. We had Paul Sahre come over a couple of years ago and he did this whole thing on working together versus alone—I think the analogy he used was ants. How ants congregate and are not in it for themselves, but they work and live and die for the**



**Paul Rand et al, *Conversations with Students*, 2008<sup>1</sup>**



**Bantjes discussing *Pretty Pictures* with Michael Bierut at the Strand Book Store, New York, 2013<sup>2</sup>**

**collective. And he said he wasn't an ant, but that he was "lone-wolfing it." And he'd never take work with other people he didn't want to take work with. And he would never work for assholes.**

Well unfortunately you don't usually know they're an asshole when you start working for them! Or usually it's at the very end, when they don't pay you.

**That's true! So anyway, Paul was basically talking about working alone. And you know he doesn't even work with his wife, Emily Oberman! And so we were talking about it and he's was like, "listen, like it's hard, but you know, you get to that point where you just make a decision to work alone and then you do it. And then it either works for you or it doesn't, but you kind of have to commit." So the reason I raise it is because you've talked about Bowen Island having different pace and a different mentality to the city. And it sounded similar. And the question I had was, how do you do this? Where does the reserve, courage or the wherewithal come to just say "That's it! I'm done. I'm not doing this anymore. I'm going to do my own thing. Now here I go and do it"?**

Well, for me, it came from desperation. I was so unhappy with Digitopolis and with my business partner. I told you I fell in love with design. I fucking hated design. I hated working with clients. And that's a big part of the switch that I made is that my clients now are usually designers and art directors. Occasionally I do something for what I call an end user client. But most of the time I'm working for people within the industry, so we speak the same language. You know, we've had the



**Paul Sahre was a visiting designer to RISD Graphic Design in 2018<sup>3</sup>**

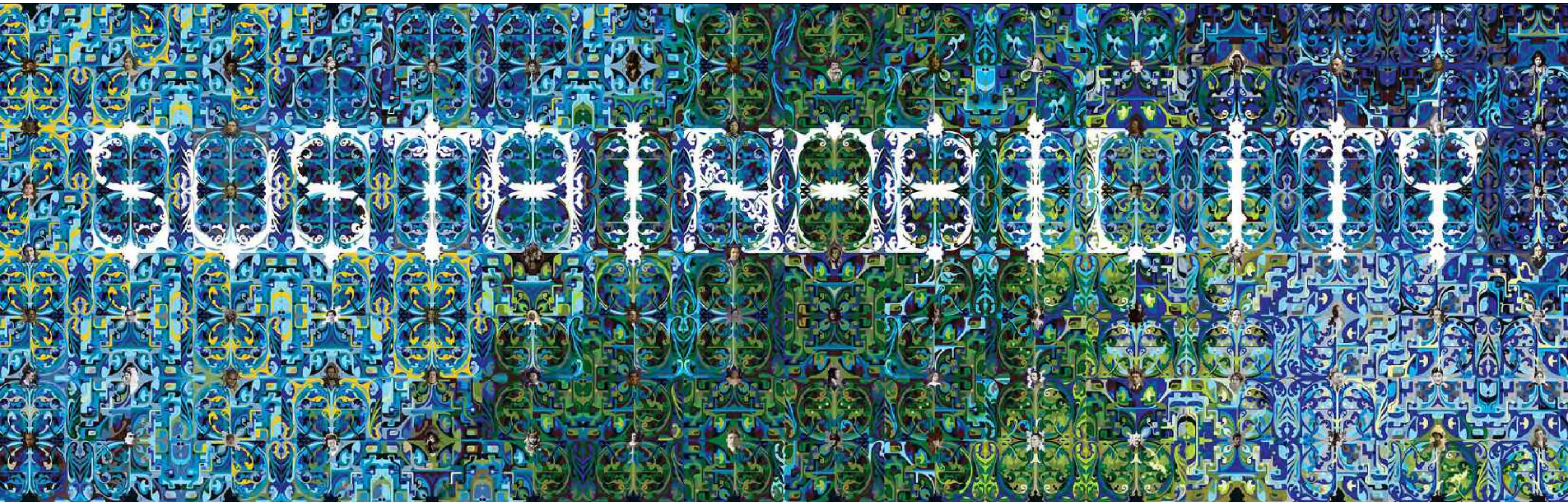


**Erik Spiekermann, *Don't work for assholes, don't work with assholes* (2020), set in Fanfare, designed in 1927 by Louis Oppenheim**

<sup>1</sup> Rand, Paul; Weingart, Wolfgang et al. *Paul Rand: Conversations with Students*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> "Marian Bantjes in Conversation with Michael Bierut" YouTube video, 42:04, "Strand Book Store" November 22, 2013, <https://youtu.be/MNhBt3oD--c>.

<sup>3</sup> Sahre, Paul. *Two-Dimensional Man: a Graphic Memoir*. New York: Abrams Press, 2017.

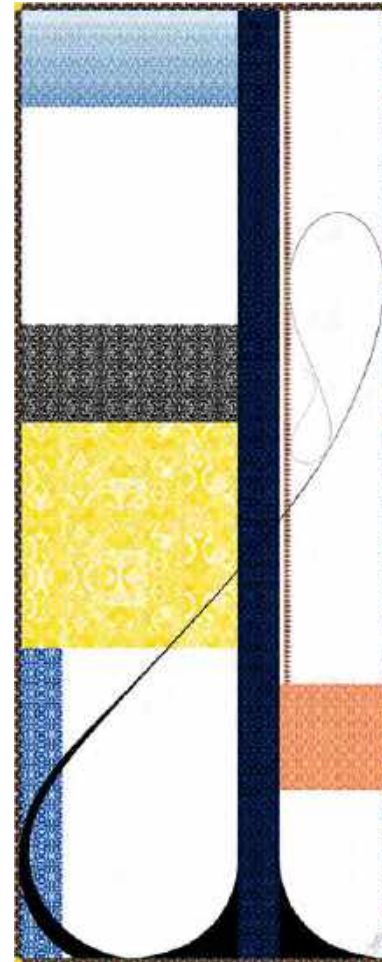


In 2007, Jessica Helfand and William Drenttel hired Bantjes to design a poster for the Finnish paper company Stora Enso; the result was a complex system of two variable repeating patterns interspersed with archival photos from the Library of Congress.

same problems. Sometimes if the client is cantankerous we can both bitch about the client, you know, that kind of thing.

So it was, it was working with the clients. I just couldn't stand it, and I was miserable. I was completely miserable. And I also had something I wanted to do. I had started developing this kind of ornamental stuff within Digitopolis. So some of our own promotional material was very much in that vein. And we would get really, *really* good responses for it, but nobody wanted it. So that was another thing my business partner said to me: she said that, you know, "this stuff is all very well, but nobody wants it." And I was convinced she was wrong and I just really wanted to work with someone who would appreciate me and appreciate the work that I did. I mean, she did in terms of the fact that it paid lots of bills! She called me the cash cow. But in terms of wanting to further the design, she had no interest. So I was just fucking miserable. And I also had a midlife crisis, and I thought, when I'm on my deathbed, will I be happy with what I've accomplished? You know, if this is it, if I died tomorrow, would I be happy with what I accomplished? And the answer was no. So I just thought, I've got to get out. I've got to at least try to do this thing that I want to do.

And it's purely through luck. Well, luck and some talent, okay? But those Speak Up t-shirts, and being in the right place at the right time with the right people... there's no formula for that. People often ask me like, "how do you do it? Tell us what the formula is!" And there honestly is no formula. I just happened to start writing—and I'm a good writer—on this blog that was the first



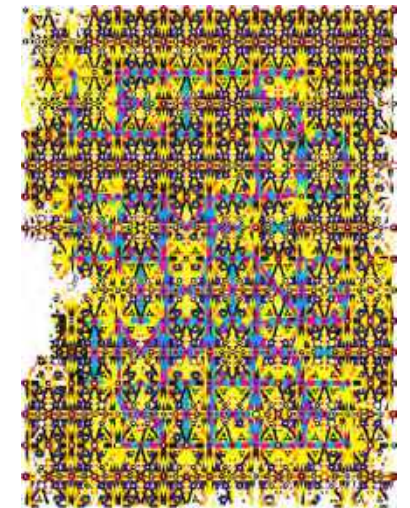
**Bantjes's poster for the 2008 Pop!Tech conference in Maine, described in her monograph as "Mondrian goes to Tehran"**

design blog that everybody in the North American industry was reading and participating in. And through that I met Rick Valicenti and Michael Bierut and Paula Scher and all of these people, and that is luck, 100%! I could just as easily have failed, and had to go back, and I might be some person working in somebody else's design studio. And I do think that there's a lot of people, but when you think of musicians or anybody in the arts there are millions of people who are doing really great work and they don't get recognized for it. Many, many times I've seen people's work who are unknown, and I think, like, "why me and not them?" Like, why isn't this person famous? And there's no real answer to that. So I do think that it's a gamble, but you know, obviously there is talent and skill involved. Paul Sahre is an incredible designer. And also I think that if you are an incredible designer—that if you're an individualistic designer the way that Paul is—pretty much the only way you're going to get to do that kind of design is by working for yourself. Because if you're in somebody else's design firm, there's not only going to be the clients saying "oh no, that's too weird," but you're also going to have your boss saying "oh no, that's too weird. The client is never going to want that." Do you know what I mean?

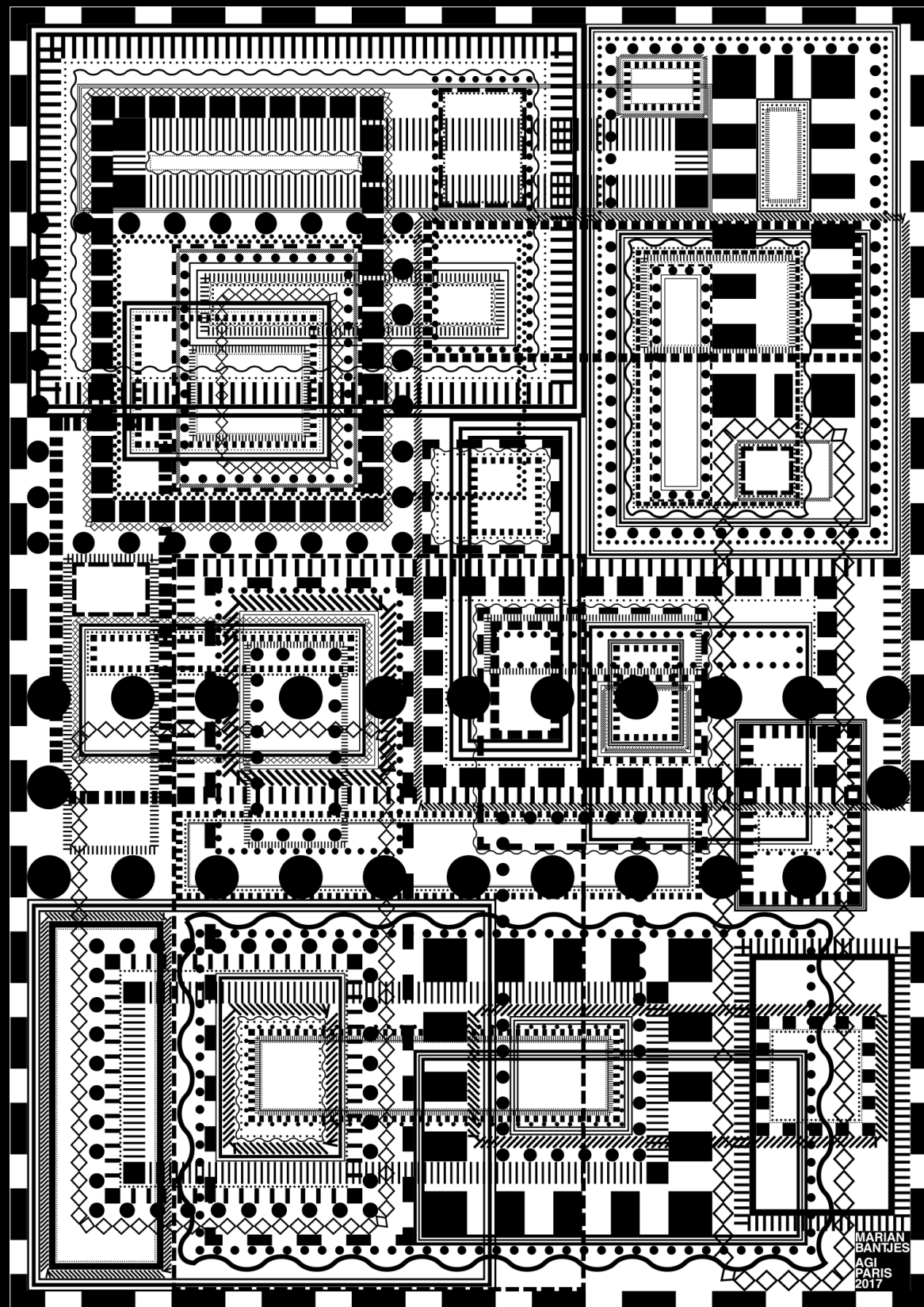
**Yeah, and I loved that interview you gave in what looked like a furniture store window, you were asked that throwaway "what advice do you have for students?" And you immediately quipped "don't get married, don't get a mortgage, don't have kids." It was just hilarious. It also reminded me. I saw Paula Scher when she was launching her monograph with Adrian**



**Bantjes's poster for The National used glow-in-the-dark inks, which allowed for multiple reads in different light settings, 2010**



**Bantjes's *Something Impossible* for Tanner Woodford at the Design Museum of Chicago, 2014**



Bantjes's Borders poster for Alliance Graphique Internationale, 2017

Shaughnessy, and it was at the New School in New York and some very demure student stood up and said “now that you’ve, like, done all the stuff that you’ve done, and now that your husband Seymour [Chwast]<sup>1</sup> is kind of old, so what do you have to look forward to?”

Oh my god!

Yeah, I know, right?! And Paula grabbed the mic and—without skipping a beat—boomed “disease and death.” And just eviscerated this kid. Then she went on: “well, what do you want me to say!? I’ve had some success with it. I enjoy it. I’m going to keep doing it as long as I’m able to keep doing it.” Which I adored. But anyway, let me find my question for the Valentine’s stuff because I actually had a cogent thought about it. So, yes. Here it is. I’ve done stuff like this too, like your Valentine’s-type thing. I’ve sent valentines, I’ve sent Halloween stuff, New Years’ things. And do you think it is rooted in this idea around honor? Or love? Or also loss? Or all of those things?

Well the valentines in particular were centered around the idea of love. And the first one said “everything I do, I do for love.”

You’ve said you had this epiphany, you were flying over New York, looking down at the lights and you thought this?

Yes, that’s right. And so, yeah, it was an epiphany. And that marked a huge difference in the way I worked. At Digitopolis we billed by the hour. And so the more time you spend on something, the more it was costing. And you’d get all stressed out because you’d have an idea, but then it’s like “oh yeah, but that’s going to take



Paula Scher: Works, 2017<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Seymour Chwast is one of my graphic design heroes, famous for founding Push Pin Studios with Milton Glaser, Edward Sorel and Reynold Ruffins. Incidentally Seymour married another hero of mine, Paula Scher; twice!

<sup>2</sup> Scher, Paula, Tony Brook, and Adrian Shaughnessy. *Paula Scher: Works*. London, UK: Unit Editions, 2017.



too long to do within this budget” or whatever. And so when I started working for myself, I started to bill by the project, and however long it takes, it takes. And I’m doing it because I enjoy doing it. That’s the idea. And that’s also partly what I was saying about the first couple of years. I had almost unanimous acceptance of my work because people weren’t used to it and they sort of almost didn’t know how I did it. And so I had a very, very happy time there where I could just work away on something, and love doing it, and get paid and everybody was happy. But then after that, when that work became more knocked-off and popular and so on and so forth, people really began to push back on me. And it started to become more like the old stuff where I was getting people not appreciating it and people changing it and people questioning it or whatever. And I stopped having that sort of pure, kind of love relationship because it got kind of polluted by commerce again.

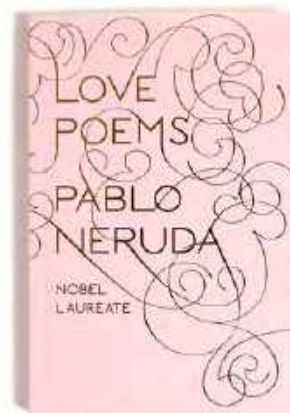
**I love what you called it in *I Wonder*, that “digital slap in the face of commercialism.” So are you doing something else like that now, even if it’s working on something just for yourself?**

Yeah, like I said I’m painting. That’s what I’m doing now. But I’m also broke, you know. I haven’t had much work lately, so I do have a little problem with my career in that I have to figure out how to get work back so I can stay alive, because the painting is just for just for me.

**I’m sorry to hear that. Especially because when I was listing to my advisers all the people that I’d like to talk to, you were the one I really wanted to talk to.**



**Above: Bantjes's 2011 Valentine's hearts; Below: Bantjes's cover for New Directions' 2008 edition of Neruda's love poems—we gave everyone at our wedding a copy**



**But I assumed you probably wouldn't be able to. And one person's response was, "Marian's been done already, they're trodden ground." And I just was so incensed by that. Because you've had so much impact on the discourse since, and you are literally the queen of ornament, and so fundamentally relevant to the very core of my thesis. So, it's a bummer to hear that you're not getting so much work anymore.**

You know, I find it a bummer also. It's a very strange thing. The thing is that I had a choice, many years ago, whether I was going to do more and more and more work in the same vein, like Si Scott. So, the same stuff over and over and over and over again. But I knew I wouldn't be happy doing that. So I had a choice between becoming the girl who does the swirly stuff, or just doing what I like. And perhaps arrogantly, I decided to do what I like and continue changing. And I sort of arrogantly assumed that people would come along with me. And they didn't. So that's sort of how I got myself into this odd predicament. But it's still preferable to having become a machine of the same stuff. That would also have gone out of fashion and put me in the same situation I am in now. But I do have so many more directions that I would have liked to have taken the work, and shown people that it could be done. But that hasn't been able to be materialized cause I just don't have the clients. But that's the other thing, you know. You become successful and you think you're going to be successful forever. But as most actors can tell you, it's not true. Paula says she's been on top three times, so there's that to think about.



**"Letterspace" K split-fountain screenprint for Lucy Biggs' Letterspace; using cedar foliage from Bantjes's yard, 2018**

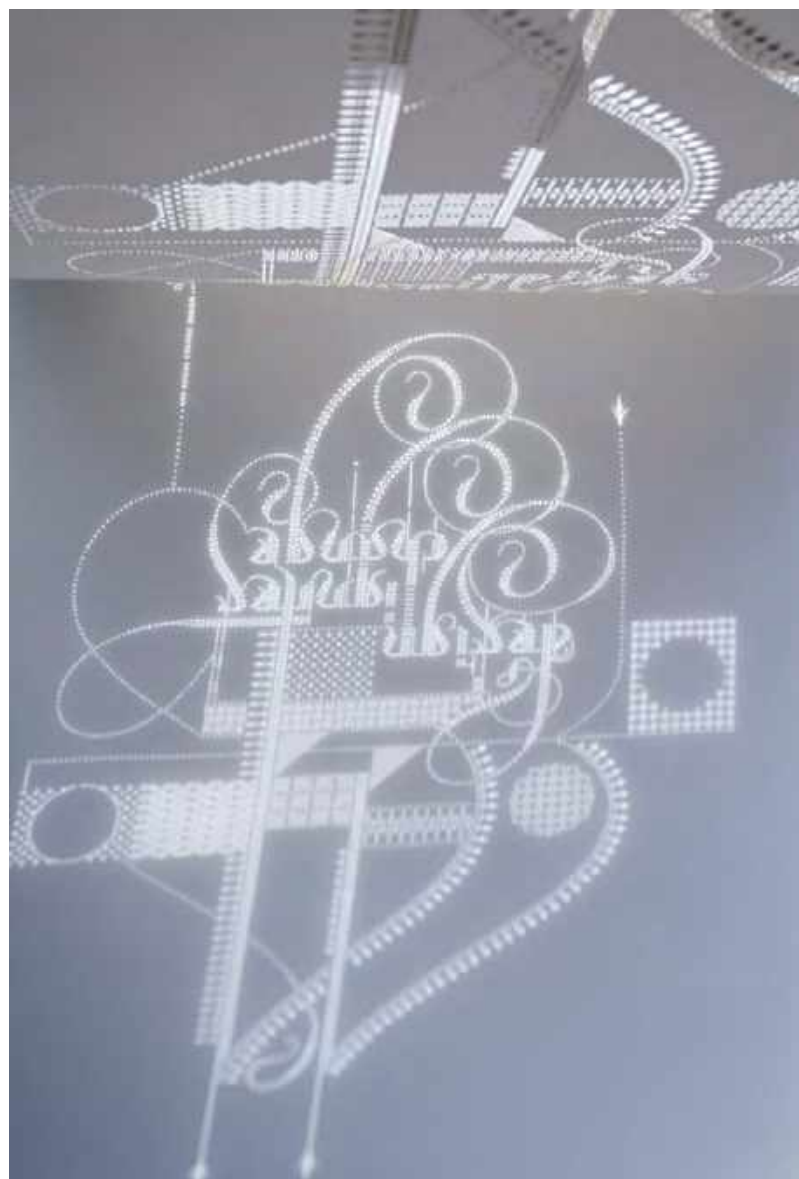
Yeah. Well I do hope things change. But I don't want to take more of your time, so we should wrap up. Thank you so much Marian, it's been great speaking with you.

Oh good! Okay, well, say hello to the people I know at RISD, and I hope I see them again. And good luck!

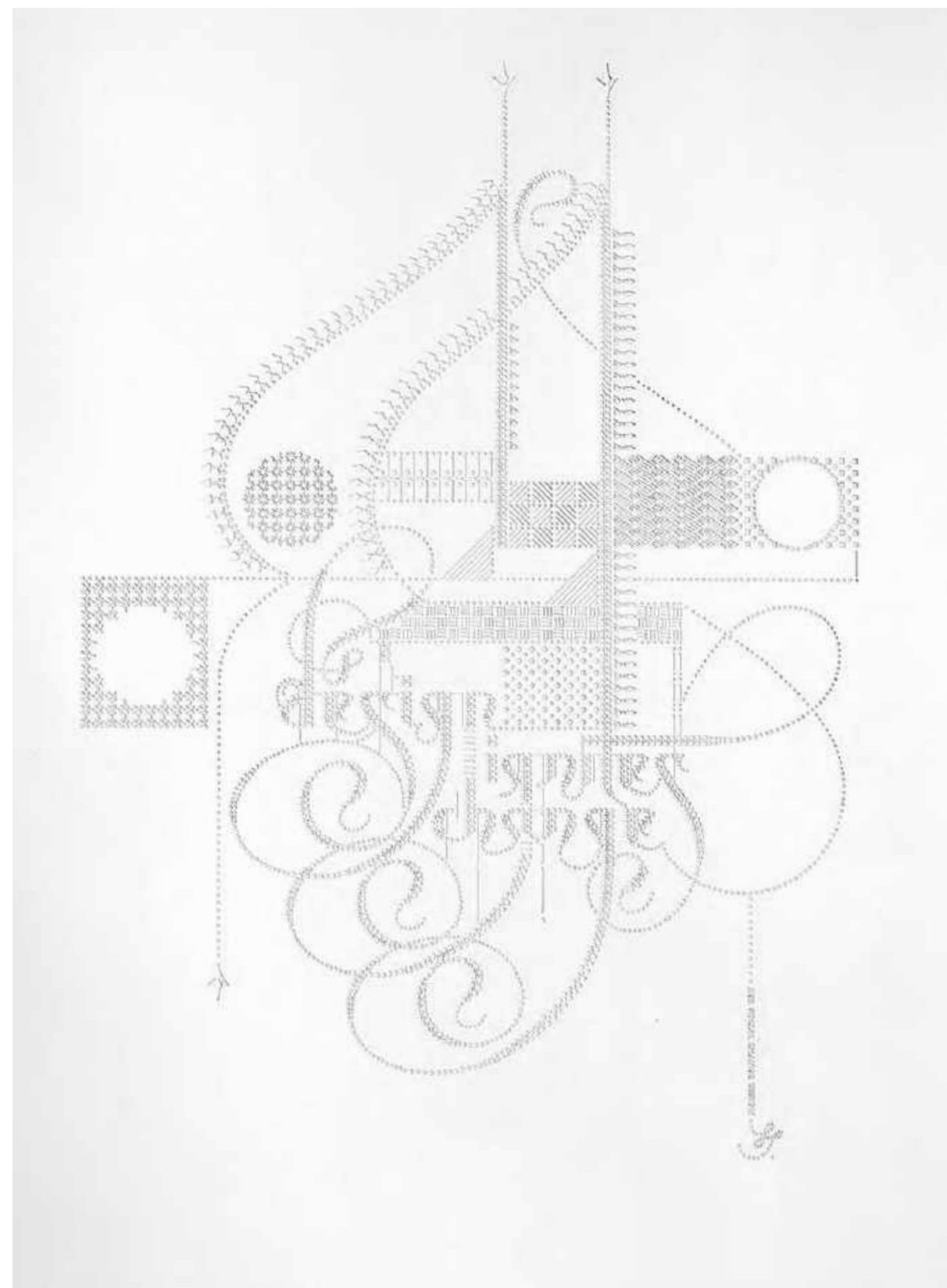
**Thank you so much, Marian. And at the end of this I will send you a book. So, thank you again.**

Alrighty. Talk soon. Buhbye!

**Bye!**



**Bantjes's 2008 laser cut**  
*Design Ignites Change*



# How can we dance when our Earth is turning?

# How do we sleep while our beds are burning?



**Bushfires at Malua Bay,  
NSW South Coast, Australia,  
January 2020. Photo: Alex  
Coppel / *The Herald Sun*.  
Used with permission.**

I spent almost every summer at this beach as a kid. This photo was taken shortly after Australia marked its hottest day on record, and at the peak of its worst fire season in history. In total, 46 million acres burned: the equivalent of Rhode Island, Delaware, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Hawaii and Maryland combined. In many cases, fires burned right up to the beach, forcing the Australian Navy to evacuate thousands of people stranded on the sand.

All told, dozens lost their lives, almost ten thousand buildings were destroyed and researchers estimate over a billion animals were killed—many of them endangered species. From my desk in Providence, I could do little else but look on in despair as my country burned. It was during this time that I began writing this thesis, and it is now in the midst of COVID-19 that I finish it. In both crises it's been difficult to make—much less justify my making—while the world appears to teeter. Countless days I've sat to write this, only to lose myself in the

# The time has come to say fair's fair.

# To pay the rent— to pay our share.<sup>1</sup>

horrors of the day, or the injustices of the present. Many times I've lost my bearings, and more than once I've lost my temper. How do we continue with the pantomime of the everyday when everything else is turning to shit?

All I know is we cannot go on without acknowledging the central and devastating role we are playing both in our own health and that of the planet—and I sincerely hope you are reading this in happier, healthier times.



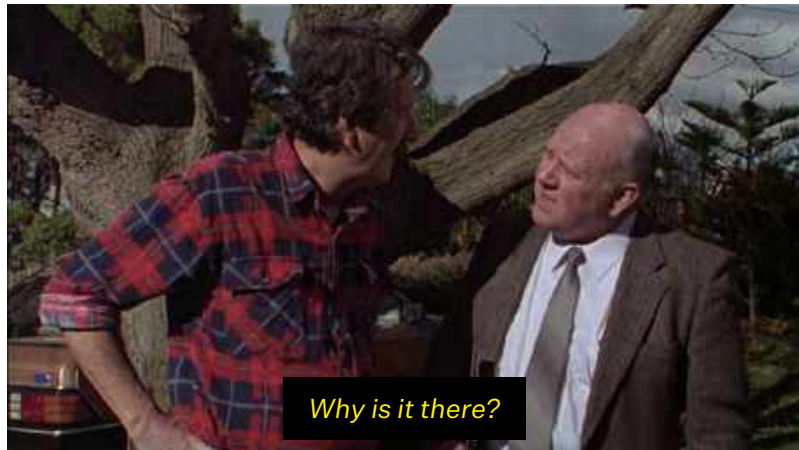
<sup>1</sup>This text appeared in the pandemic *SOS Edition* of v.1, RISD's student-run publication, May 2020.

<sup>1</sup>Midnight Oil, *Beds Are Burning*, from their 1987 album *Diesel and Dust*. Music and lyrics by Rob Hirst, Jim Moginie and Peter Garrett. Originally a protest for Aboriginal Native Title (land rights), today this song is an iconic Australian classic. Midnight Oil's lead singer Peter Garrett went on to serve in Australian Parliament as Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts from 2007–2010.

**Simon Adamczyk rescuing  
a burned koala on Kangaroo  
Island, southwest of Adelaide.  
Image: David Mariuz / AAP.**







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## The Class of 2020

Seyong Ahn  
Lizzie Baur  
Mukul Chakravarthi  
Hilary duPont  
Carl-Gustaf Ewerbring  
Fabian Fohrer  
Elena Foraker  
Emily Guez  
Yoonsu Kim  
Sophie Lolo  
Vaishnavi Mahendran  
Bobby Joe Smith III  
Caroline Robinson Smith  
Weixi Zeng

## and

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Gabriel Abascal  
Will Abrams  
Nick Adam  
Merrick Adams  
Paul Aferiat  
Meriem Aiouna  
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# Signatures

A thesis by Aleks Dawson presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Graphic Design at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, 2020.

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