

GRAPHICS

AS THE GENESIS

RHYTHM AND RELEVANCE

OF THE CREATIVE

PROCESSES

2024—2025

KAMIŃSKI—PODKOŚCIELNY

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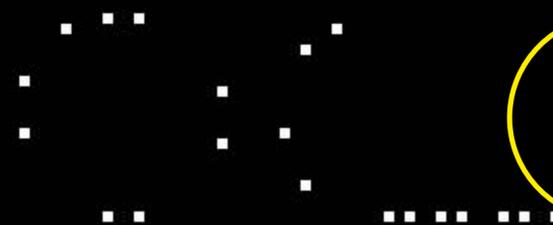


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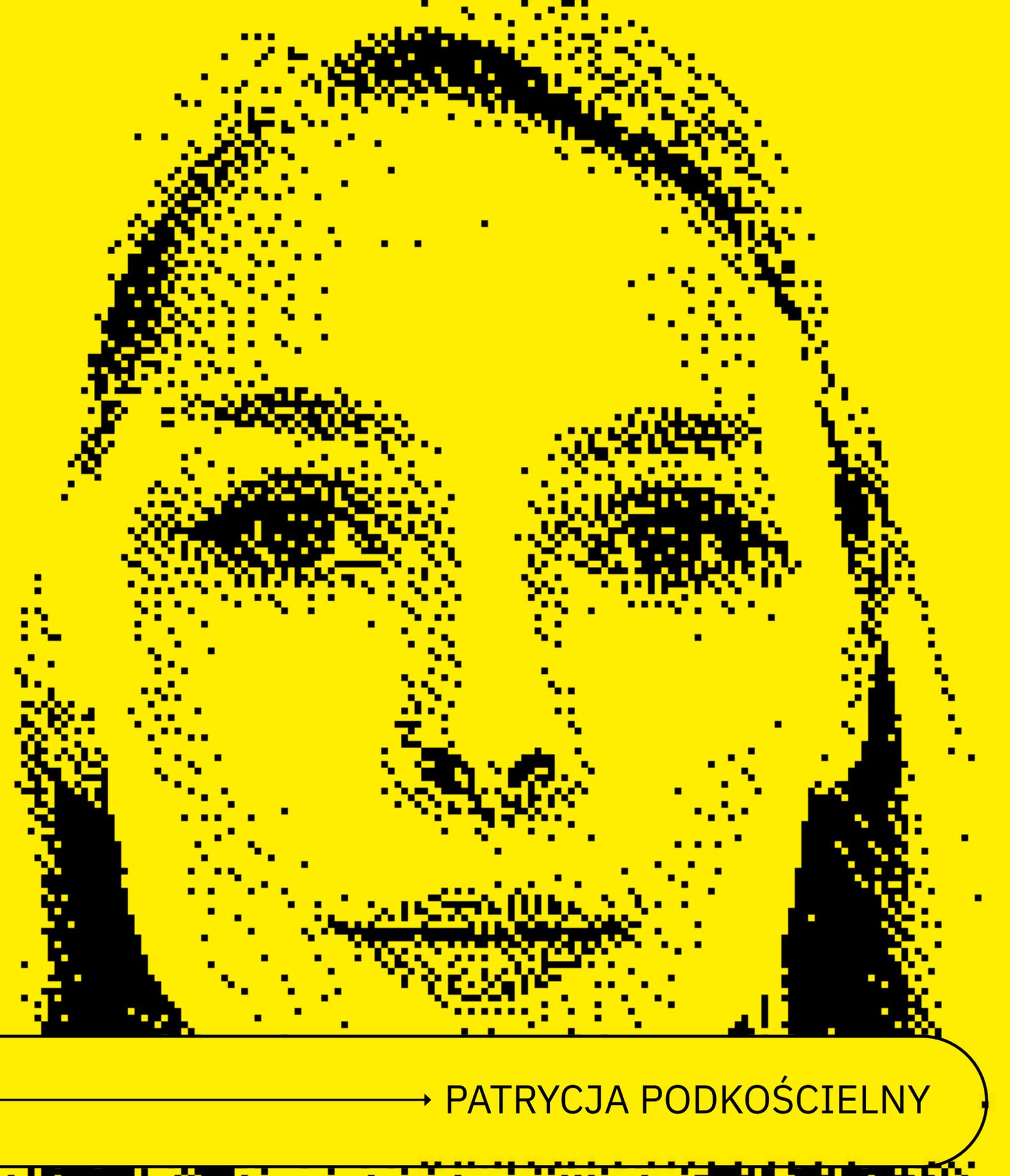
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ADAM KAMIŃSKI ← → PATRYCJA PODKOŚCIELNY

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INTRODUCTION

Adam Kamiński and Patrycja Podkościelny. We are creators – designers in the field of visual creation – and academic teachers with didactic experience built through our work at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk.

- ✕ This publication presents a double challenge for us. Firstly, as a synthetic overview of what we consider most important in creative and educational work.

Secondly, as a personal testimony regarding what the foundations of conscious graphic design were and should remain. We therefore refer to the values that shaped us and continue to shape us; that allow us to conduct a dialogue with subsequent generations of art and graphic design students.

× Our publication offers a different path in the culture of immediacy. Digital tools promise to shorten the journey from concept to realisation, often reducing design

to a set of technical skills. The detailed development of the solutions they offer can be very surprising, and the glitz of the apparent perfection of new instruments allows the user to feel rapid satisfaction.

✕ But this is a trap that can distract the user – that is, the creator – from the key aspects of his work and thus lead to a lack of significant depth in the areas of narrative, composition, and editing. Our publication is an invitation to slow down – to a process that requires re-

flection, patience, and a readiness to experiment. We wish to demonstrate the value of manual skills, where the work of the hands is inextricably linked to the work of the mind, and the change of working environment from analogue to digital, or vice versa, is a natural consequence of one's creative stance.

✕ We are deeply aware of the importance of recalling the axioms of creative work. Even if they are widely known, we ought to constantly subject them to pedagogical

and artistic reflection – because, as Peter Zumthor writes in *Thinking architecture*, “*personal experience is the only source of authentic knowledge*”.



Piotr Paluch

Champion

90 × 70 cm

acrylic on canvas

2025

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GENESIS

The Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk – a community building the foundations of creative development

*Or perhaps it is the other way around:
the people lend this room a specific mood?*

Peter Zumthor, *Thinking architecture*

Kamil Kocurek

Sandpit

75 × 125 cm

intaglio

2020



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This publication, despite being an expression of personal reflections, was not created in a vacuum. It is the result of many years of practice, the source of which is located in a specific place – the Faculty of Graphic Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. The Faculty of Graphic Arts, both in its current form and its historical dimension, is a team of professionals, artists, and didacticians. Each of them, through daily creative and pedagogical work, contributes unique value, building

the intellectual and artistic strength of this community.

× What is extremely important for our artistic credo, however, is the intermingling of ideas of people working in other units of the Academy as well: the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Intermedia, Interior Design, or Design. The Academy is a meeting place for creators – both in virtual form and in the real world – and the lecturers and students form a community that, by developing the routine of daily life, creates stable foundations

for creative development at every level and stage where the spark of curiosity, interest, engagement, and enthusiasm smoulders. That is why, in our opinion, the AFA is more than just a curated educational offer, refined curricula, and selected course topics. Its community encompasses much more than that.

✕ We all want our highest personal rights respected, including our name and surname. In a positive atmosphere where this need is met, we feel present and

not anonymous. And when our sense of identity is strengthened, supported by the natural interest of those around us, it heralds the arrival of the all-important and long-awaited *good time*.

✕ A naturally positive atmosphere is also a foundation for building dialogue. It creates the opportunity to spark students' interest and then engage them in interaction during creative work. Looking back, the awareness of the unique moments we had and continue to have

the privilege of experiencing as educators during meetings with people full of questions and expectations releases in us a profound understanding of our role as those who cannot waste the time that students have entrusted to us.

✕ Out of deep respect for the team that currently co-creates this place, we wish to list the teaching staff of the Faculty of Graphic Arts, not forgetting those who are no longer with us – our masters and friends, whose

wisdom supported us during our studies and later,
when we ourselves began work at the Faculty.

The Faculty of Graphic Arts of the Academy of Fine Arts
in Gdańsk consists of:

Akermann Janusz prof.

Bem-Borucka Anna prof.

Bogusławski Tomasz prof.

Górski Janusz prof.

Jackiewicz-Kaczmarek Alina prof.

Marszałek Waldemar prof.

Witkowski Sławomir prof.

Hanysz-Stefańska Magdalena dr hab., prof. ASP

Kamiński Adam dr hab., prof. ASP

Kręczkowska Grażyna dr hab., prof. ASP

Królak Agata dr hab., prof. ASP

Łukasik Katarzyna dr hab., prof. ASP

Muszalski Piotr dr hab., prof. ASP
Protasiuk Grzegorz dr hab., prof. ASP
Radecki Grzegorz dr hab., prof. ASP
Staniszewski Jacek dr hab., prof. ASP
Syrkowski Dariusz dr hab., prof. ASP
Świerżewski Adam dr hab., prof. ASP
Butowski Łukasz dr
Kata Eurydyka dr
Kocurek Kamil dr

Lewalski Karol dr

Majewska-Rosińska Edyta dr

Pawlikowska Ada dr

Prusinowska Aleksandra dr

Turło Robert dr

Wasik Anita dr

Włodarek Dominik dr

Czaplewska Joanna mgr

Fedusio Rafał mgr

Weronika Dziurdziejewicz mgr

Hardziej Patryk mgr

Gawron Anna mgr

Kowalewska-Chojnowska Edyta mgr

Mielnik Alina mgr

Okrutny Kamila mgr

Paluch Piotr mgr

Pękalski Adam mgr

Podkościelny Patrycja mgr

Przybysz Adam mgr
Savchenko Vasyl mgr
Świerczek Magdalena mgr
Tynna Eugenia mgr
Wernicka Emilia mgr
Wirtel Michał mgr
Zajac Jakub mgr
Zielińska Adrianna mgr
Żywicki Mateusz mgr

It is precisely in the studios run by this team, in direct dialogue between teacher-leader and student, that the boundaries of the medium are tested, and often original versions of technologies and unique teaching methodologies are created. This line of collaboration, formerly known as the master–student relationship, has developed since the founding of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk on the basis of the Sopot School, and has become fundamental to it. It is a creative stance

deeply rooted in respect for craftsmanship, but also in the courage to experiment. The foundations for dialogue and all subsequent teaching concepts were laid immediately after the dark period of World War II by pioneers from various artistic disciplines who actively participated in the reconstruction of the ruined Gdańsk. Their determination and understandable longing for a community of close people, whose focused thinking fostered freedom-oriented attitudes, undoubtedly gave

them strength and joy in all their creative endeavours.

× A full presentation of the achievements and philosophy of work of each of the creators associated with this place would require a multi-volume monograph of the milieu. We are all the more grateful to our Colleagues who shared their projects with us as examples of the diverse artistic techniques and technologies used over the years at the AFA in Gdańsk. We believe that their publications demonstrate the multitude of possibilities

and allow for a deeper illustration of the reflections that form the core of this study – an individual, humanistic, and slowed-down approach to the design process.



Sławomir Witkowski

Creation of Man

47 × 65.5 cm

colour stencil

1993

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Process and speed – why in a world of urgency is it sometimes worth to slow down and think?

We address this text to students and young designers, our partners in discussion. To ensure the appropriate dynamics of the message, we propose several original, effective solutions that we use in our own creative processes. Above all, however, we will focus on attempting to answer the question of why a humanistic approach to



Michał Wirtel

Vespers

110 × 140 cm

acrylic on canvas

2024

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design – based on reflection and awareness – has become of fundamental importance. We believe that such an approach allows one to enjoy not only the result but also the effort that leads to it.

- ✘ We are far from providing the “only correct” solutions. However, we believe that an attitude of openness to observation and – importantly – to make mistakes is justified, as it provides new, surprising conclusions and fuels the mechanism of creation. We want to draw

attention to the moment when creation becomes a GAME – a fascinating match between the old and the new; between the inexact and the precise.

The attitude that accompanies this can go far beyond artistic disciplines and actually support us in our everyday functioning.

× Over many decades, much has been written about graphic design and visual creation. There is a lot of wise content that could be discussed, but we do not want

to do that. We would like to adopt a different perspective – to share our ways of perceiving inspiration and explain what it means to us, as well as present our design process and current definition of design.

Current, because with the passage of time perspective evolves, becoming both sharper and duller at the same time. What once was ugly today may be beautiful.

× Of course, perspective can quickly change. It is enough to start a difficult market collaboration to

immediately want to escape from the creative process
– to achieve the intended goal and return as
quickly as possible to one's own land of gentleness and
safety, to one's own creative programme, where no one
makes judgements and demands, or confuses con-
cepts... And that is precisely why this publication
takes this form and not another. It is intended as a
visual piece designed to inspire work based on respect
for one's own predispositions, especially manual ones,

as the most authentic and creatively valuable. In the context of general technological availability, manual work is what interests us the most. It is to this difficult, dirty, but wonderful work, which is the essence of the aforementioned land of gentleness and a key element of the didactic approach at the Faculty of Graphic Arts of the AFA in Gdańsk, that we devote the most attention.

✘ Before we proceed further, we must address a certain paradox – for in this study we glorify all manual creative work, yet we make it available exclusively digitally. True! However, we have set the vector of our working focus towards collecting thoughts and conveying them in a form with the widest possible reach – without tangible, paper proof. We chose to do this because this publication is not supposed to become another beautiful object, but a catalyst for thought.

The digital form allows thought to reach the furthest, and the material testament of our philosophy remains available in many other artistic and design studies that we have had, and continue to have, the opportunity to realise.



Magdalena
Hanysz-Stefańska
Neighbors
65 × 95 cm
colour linocut,
lithography
2025

RHYTHM

Inspiration is work – conscious observation instead of a capricious muse

In popular belief, inspiration is a capricious, external impulse. We wait for it, and it either comes or it does not. This is, however, a paralysing, destructive perspective that can discourage action – after all, if “inspiration”



Dominik Włodarek

Staircase I

59 × 89 cm

etching, aquatint

2016

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has not come, I have nothing to work with... Another trap is the exposure to a vast number of images viewed in emitted light – usually that of a smartphone.

An overwhelming quantity of forms, colours, and concepts of movement wreaks mental havoc and actually distances us from the creative process. Many excellent realisations are overlooked; on the other hand, numerous solutions seem easily attainable. However, the apparent peace of mind this gives us vanishes when

even replicating these easy solutions turns out to be impossible for us to do.

✕ In reality, inspiration is an active intellectual process. It is the result of work, not its *conditio sine qua non* (Lat. necessary condition). It is the skill of appreciating the moment in which we feel good. That moment strengthens our sense of trust and safety; it begins to suggest words, images, colours, moods, and light, which make it possible for us to achieve a depth

of sensitivity in our works.

I expose rooms, materials, textures, paints, surfaces, forms to the light of the sun, I catch this light, reflect it, filter it, darken it, dilute it, so that a glow might flare up in the appropriate place. Light as an active substance – I am familiar with this. Yet when I really think about it, I understand almost nothing of it.

Peter Zumthor, *Thinking architecture*

The above quote perfectly illustrates our concept of inspiration. Admitting a lack of understanding of observed natural processes is a manifestation of a wonderfully mature creative stance. It reminds us of the deep, instinctive feelings we all carry within ourselves – with greater or lesser awareness.

✕ But inspiration is also the skill of conscious observation – of the typographic structure in an old print, the scale of diameters of ceramic vessels, the relation-

ship of colour patches in a painting, or architectural rhythm. It is the perception of connections where others see chaos, or see nothing at all. To be inspired means not to be afraid of oneself and one's own limitations, to get rid of the fear of a lack of technical skills, the acquisition of which is often solely a matter of time.

✕ The source of inspiration is curiosity. It requires stepping out of the zone of intellectual safety and one's own discipline. A designer-creator must from time to

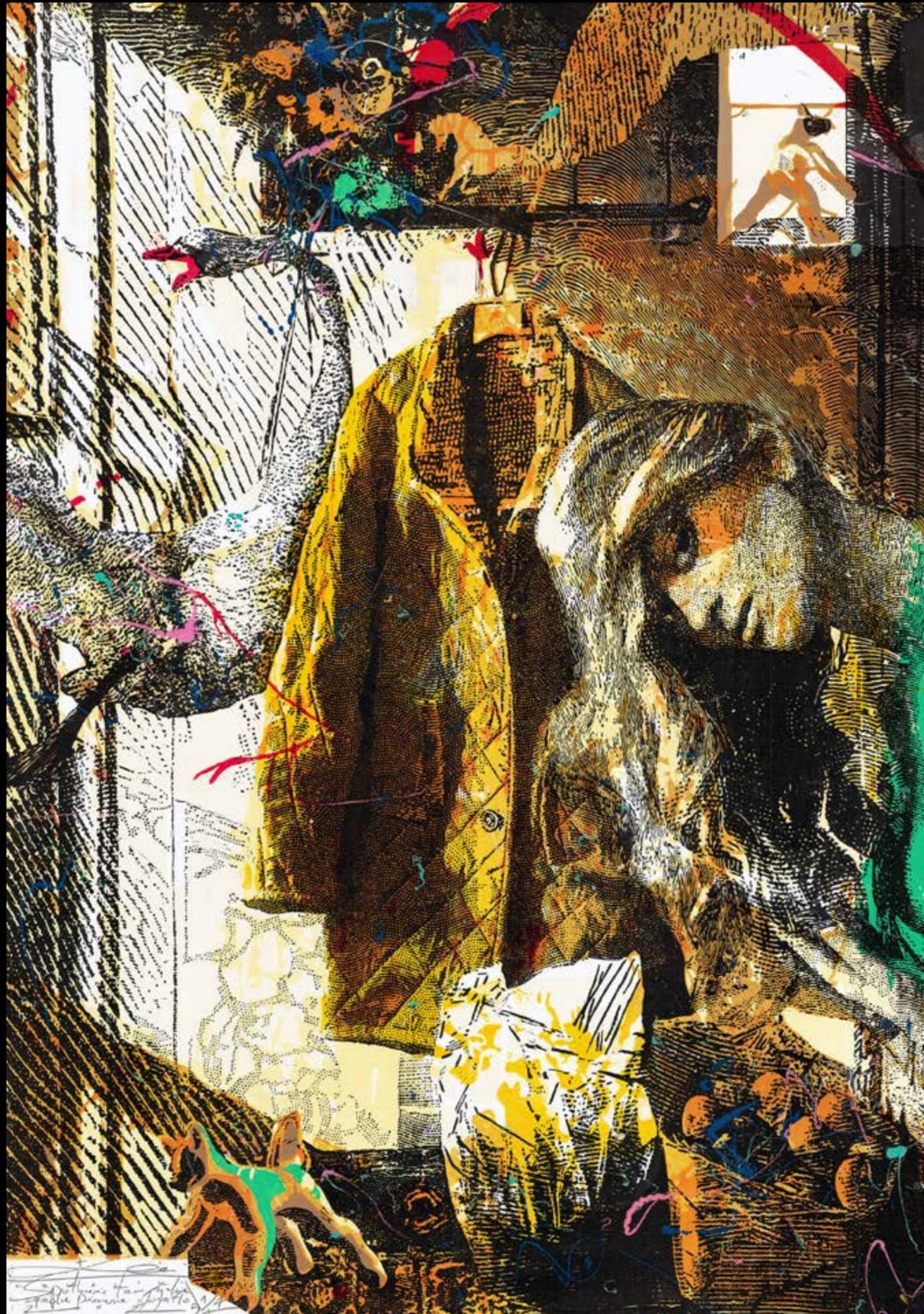
time become a historian, a sociologist, sometimes a craftsman with a hammer in hand; must gather sketches, notes, photographs, and other seemingly useless objects, acquired in an individually chosen manner. A creative stance implies questions, commands one to challenge and interpret – for every subject (microworld) requires us to immerse ourselves deeply within it in a search for our own personal message.

× Conceptual work often begins with the question:

“Do I like this?”, followed by: “What is my goal?” and “What is essential for its realisation?”. Inspiration allows us to find a visual language to tell a specific story – and the winners are often those who do not limit themselves exclusively to that style of creative expression which they already know.

The strength of a good design lies in us and in our ability to perceive the world with both emotion and reason.

Peter Zumthor, *Thinking architecture*



Karol Lewalski

Coat

85 × 120 cm

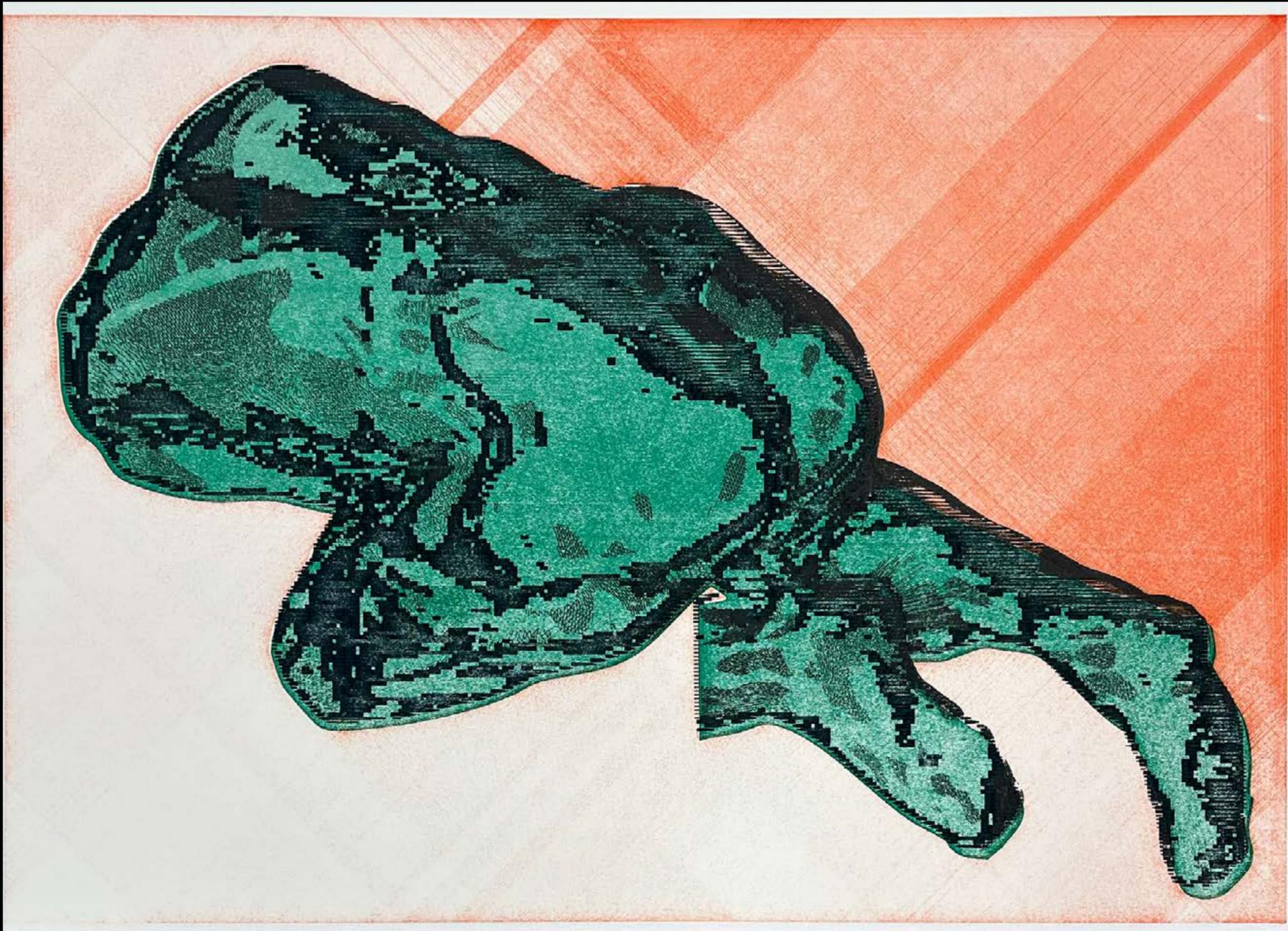
2025

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Humanistic design – awareness of context and responsible decisions

The main task of perception is to extract [from the surroundings] that which is essential, general, characteristic.
Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and visual perception*

What is design? It is an active observation that first triggers thought processes, and then operational activities



Magdalena Świerczek

Process

59,4 × 84,1 cm

CNC digital graphic, ink

2025

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that engage various means of artistic expression. Separating creative design (called graphic design) from art seems to us simply unnecessary. Design is sometimes wrongly perceived as an aestheticising activity, or making things look “pretty”. This is a fundamental misunderstanding, because design is concerned with utilitarian aspects, and must therefore be, first and foremost, rational and effective. Intuition and creative instincts may play a role in design, but it is, above all,

an intellectual discipline, which means that the process of conscious decision-making, the designer's every choice – from format, to typography and composition, to the choice of technique – is an act of responsibility.

It shapes the message, influences the recipient, and defines the relationship between content and form.

✕ In this process, however, it is difficult to precisely determine the extent to which designers are guided by an approach based on the metaphysics of art and adhere

to it. Art is a cosmos, and design makes up the constellations of stars in many galaxies.

- × Humanistic design of which we speak here means design that is aware of its context – cultural, social, and historical. Within this approach, a designer is not just a contractor, but above all, a person of intellect. This publication reminds us of the importance of critical thinking, the courage to make one's own decisions and taking full responsibility for them, and aims

to reinforce these values.

- ✕ That is precisely why we urge to redefine the concept of primitiveness and to return to first things, to foundations. We encourage slowing down, conscious perception, touch, and gathering of inspirations and experiences, to then intentionally trigger thought processes that lead to mature and responsible creative decisions.



Edyta Kowalewska-Chojnowska

Untitled from the series

How to Deal with Excess

132 × 155 cm

ink and acrylic on hand-sewn canvas

2022

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Workshop integration – how to combine material resistance with control

Words divide, images unite.

Otto Neurath

The debate regarding the use of “pencil, tablet, or other input device” is futile and presents us with a false choice. Today, true design proficiency lies in understand-



Aleksandra Prusinowska

Apple Tree

70 × 100 cm

colour linocut

2023

"jabłko"

6/19

Aleksandra Prusinowska 2023

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ding multiple worlds and in their skilful and conscious combination.

✕ The classical, analogue techniques – printmaking, drawing, calligraphy, working with matter – is an irreplaceable school of humility. It teaches us something the digital world has almost eliminated – material resistance and our body’s reaction to physical effort. This can be shocking! When you cut into linoleum, etch a metal plate in acid, or mix paint with a brush,

the matter resists your efforts. It confronts you with physicality, with coincidence, with mistakes that cannot be undone by pressing “ctrl+z”. This process forces us to think strategically, to plan, and to accept the results of our work such as they are. It teaches that limitation (a single colour, the specific nature of a chisel, etc.) can often be creativity’s greatest ally. Such work engages not only the intellect, but the entire body and all the senses.

- ✘ Importantly, every form of creative work requires effort. Regardless of whether we work in the real world or a digital environment, we must be able to execute tasks. When we trigger thought processes, our bodies consume a vast amount of energy. Cultivating vitality (sleep, diet, exercise) is not a peripheral topic, but a necessary condition for maintaining an effective creative process.
- ✘ Digital tools offer almost endless possibilities – preci-

sion, speed, iteration (repeatability), control, and global reach. Software is a powerful tool for organising complex structures, testing variants, and finalising a design. The problem arises when the tool begins to dictate the way we think. When design is limited to software proficiency, it loses its originality and human touch – the trace of imperfection that builds authenticity.

✕ This leads us to a key concept – mental design.

What is it? It is our working term for a state during

which physical activities – drawing or clicking – cease in favour of reasoning. Actions performed without deep reflection are most often futile – they consist in relying on algorithms and hoping that the program will “come up with something”. This means that we depend on software creators more than on ourselves.

✕ Design awareness, which we talked about in the previous chapter, is the building of cause-and-effect sequences – it is an intellectual process supported by

the right inspirations. Mental design is the skill of integrating observations and associations with the nature of the topic we are working on. It requires us to give ourselves time to abstract, to let thoughts and seemingly insignificant associations swirl around in our heads until they begin to form a play of words and phrases that guide our intellect toward coherent concepts. This approach completely changes the proportions in the creative process. Instead of passively testing what

happens when object A is subjected to effect B, we consciously gather data in the form of original reflections. This may take longer, but the overall project completion time does not change. We simply divide and utilise it differently.

✕ After this stage comes the execution phase. Our thoughts become sketches, they spark the creative process – building the relationships between image, letter, and other parameters, such as scale, colour, the role

of detail, and movement. This extension of the “mental” phase is, indeed, an economical approach. It leads to avoiding passive activities during which we simulate work rather than actually consciously perform it.

✕ In the further part of this study, we will show how our thoughts derived from the mental design stage allow us to understand composition, light, and the weight of the field of colour and to transfer them from analogue techniques to the screen and vice versa. How digital

precision can help in preparing matrices for traditional print, and how print can be utilised in the digital moving image – animation.



Vasyl Savchenko

Warriors

210 × 210 cm

charcoal on canvas

2025

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Mental design – triggering thought processes for mature creative decisions

It is impossible to unequivocally determine what deepens the understanding of activities performed during the design process. This takes time – a long perspective supported by observations, conversations, mistakes, repetitions... It is often precisely thanks to the distance we have gained that we simply know. Then,



Adam Pękalski
Circus 60 × 60 cm
ink on paper + Photoshop
(compilation of hand drawings)
2015

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a synchronisation of thought processes occurs.

The triggered cause-and-effect sequences and the aforementioned mental design finally give meaning to the tools.

They become effective because we do not use them solely because they are available.

✕ This changes everything. It leads to a state in which we somehow “chip off” the matter composed of thoughts, images, words, and scents from our realisation. This is

the very beginning – the seed of the concept of our style, a new dimension of creative depth and the satisfaction it gives us. We begin to understand that every technique is a separate visual language that imposes its own logic. What begins to interest us is the philosophy behind each activity that defines this logic.

× Simply recognising this logic frees us from doubts about whether we are doing the right thing, because every conscious creative decision is spot on. It signifi-

cantly and undeniably improves the quality of our projects. In that moment, limitations become the key to the final, complete visual piece.

× Our goal is not to hinder thoughts from wandering, to abstract and let this abstraction lead the logic in order to define the direction of creative activities. We try to make sure to remember this. The foundation is the concept and the sketch. This is the moment when thought fights for form. A hand-drawn sketch *alla prima*,

an ordinary scribble, is the most direct record of the thought process. This is the stage of questions, doubts, and initial decisions.

✕ Next, we seek the matrix and define our commitments. The design ceases to be fluid. Decisions become material. This work requires focus and foresight – often thinking in negative, planning layers, understanding how the tool will influence the final line. The manual process (whether it involves drawing, cutting, etching, or expo-

sing a work to light) is a constant dialogue with physics, chemistry, and chance. The effect of acid etching depends on temperature, the chisel can slip from its intended line. The designer-creator must react to these events in real time, sometimes relinquishing complete control in favour of the process.

✕ Now comes the moment of truth – printing. The first print is always a surprise, a “proof of concept”, the result of all the previous decisions and accidents.

It is a moment of verification that teaches critical evaluation of one's own work and leads to further stages, further decisions – matrix correction, colour changes, and finally (probably) acceptance of the result.

✕ This slowed-down, manual process is a model of conscious action – at the same time a choice and an act of resistance. A choice to adopt a humanistic approach, feel the effort and experience all components of the process. Resistance against the lack of depth,

the abandonment of reflection and the search for further interpretations to already seemingly solved design problems.

× We work both conventionally, using old manual (graphic) techniques, as well as experimentally, seeking new ways of expression. Our basis, however, is always a drawing. We define it as any manual act of placing even a single line on a surface – paper, board, wall, or tablet. Over the millennia, drawing has been defined

in various ways – for us, it is simply the foundation. It is a fundamental technique, present in all visual disciplines and – from our perspective – the most important in all of them. Drawing is the culmination of a creator’s intelligent approach, evidence of thought processes, and sometimes a simple gesture driven by intuition – a moment. It is the trace left by an arm holding a tool in its hand, because of a micro-explosion that occurred between the brain and the fingers – movement unle-

ashed beauty. The contour created by a tool or a finger dipped in paint – dynamic, aggressive, or precise, even anatomical.

✕ The primitive, magnificent power of the noble line is for us the basic criterion for assessing the quality of work, from the very first traces on the surface. And this is the paradox we face – that in the era of infinite digital possibilities, we feel peace only when the manual drawing “works”. And this is precisely what we call

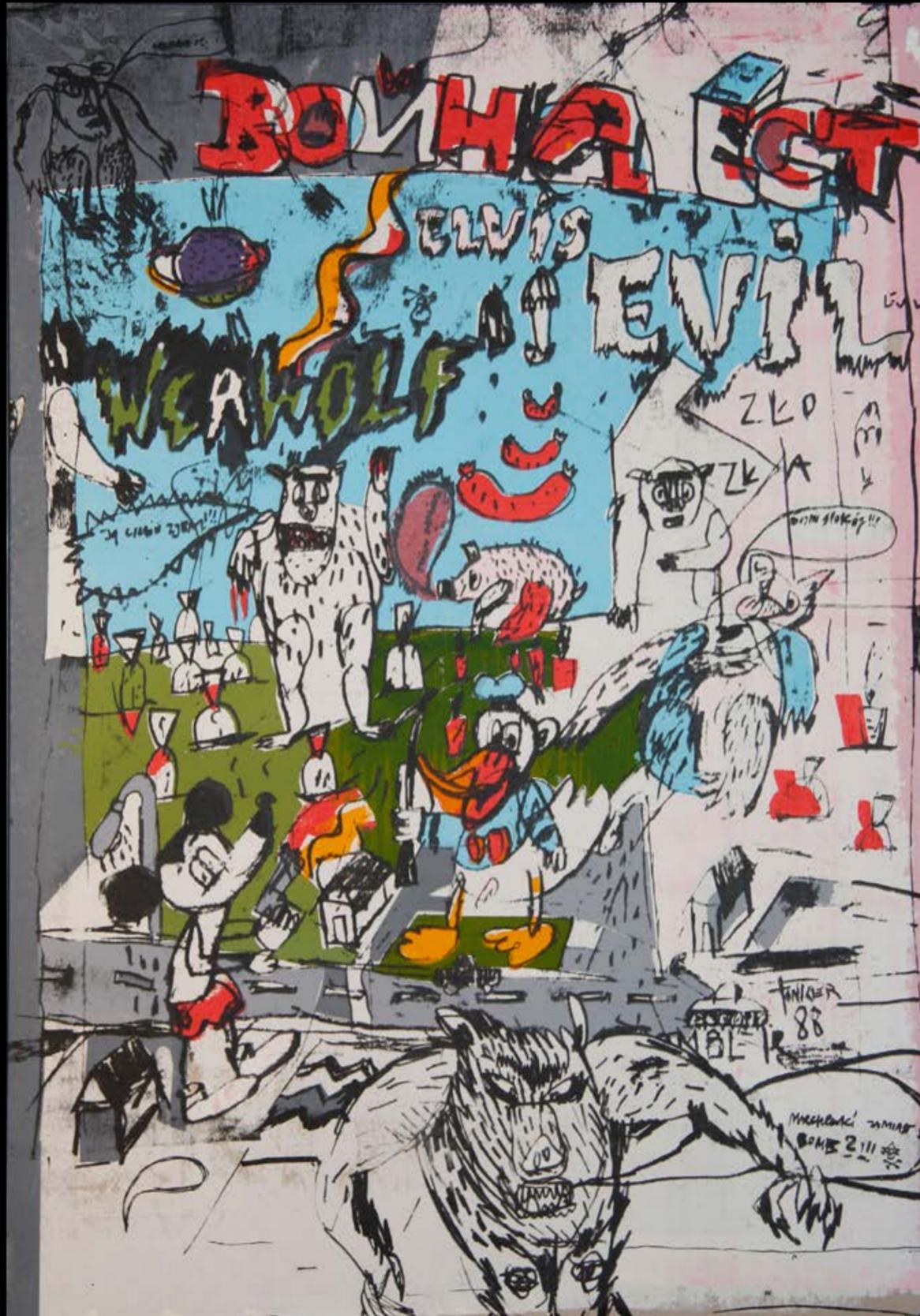
a humanistic approach.

- ✕ The conclusion of our actions – starting from these manual explorations – will be compositions in the field of graphic design processed using digital tools, which we will consciously load with components produced by our own hands. We, the authors – two creators, drafters, graphic artists – sit at our machines and start clicking to give meaning to algorithms and standard digital tools.
- ✕ To further explore the reflections presented in this sec-

tion of our publication, we would like to present the conclusions from our work “remixed” in the form of an original animation, intended as an example of a further stage of work and the development of the potential of previously identified creative decisions. We commissioned Aleksandra Godlewska, a graduate of the Faculty of Graphic Arts at the AFA in Gdańsk, to create this animation. She is a designer with extensive experience, recognised and honoured with numero-

us awards in the current art and design scene.
We present her work online – in a virtual version
of this study.

*The various faculties of the mind obey the same laws,
because the mind always functions as a whole.
All perceiving is also thinking, all reasoning is also
intuition, all observation is also invention.*
Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and visual perception*



Jakub Zając

Werwolf

100 × 70 cm

serigraphy

2011

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Lithography – a complex technique as a model of conscious action and humility

Identifying and developing manual creative techniques belonging to classical or experimental drawing is, compared to others, relatively easy. We believe that it is because drawing is an almost atavistic activity that forms the basis not only of the visual sphere but also of non-verbal communication.



Patrycja Podkościelny

Last one

76 × 56 cm

lithography

2025

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- ✘ From the day of birth, every person learns to recognise the mechanisms of how the world works and acquires the language skills to describe them. Words serve to verbalise our consciousness and observations. However, before we become proficient in using them, we express our will through touch – manual actions. These include all forms of drawing, or rather, leaving visual traces of our own creation. This is our ground zero.
- ✘ The gradation of difficulty is somewhat different when

we enter the professional fields of creative work.

Professional – in both the academic and commercial sense – meaning those where the final result must gain double accepted – meet not only our standards as the authors, but also the expectations of the recipients.

× On a professional path, all manual graphic techniques undoubtedly present higher technical difficulties. They require specific knowledge in the field of theory and practice of handling the necessary tools.

Developing competences in the use of classical graphic design skills towards artistic creation is a long-term process. It takes years and – once again – a well-understood “slow-down” to achieve mastery in combining thought, chemistry, and the mechanics of presses.

- × However, great visual effects are achievable right from the first steps we take on this path.
- × Examples of works by our Colleagues from the Faculty of Graphic Arts of the AFA in Gdańsk, which

we publish here, illustrate the possibilities offered by drawing, linocut, lithography, etching and combined techniques. Although it is a fact that each of those people has achieved mastery in using “their” technique (or, indeed, technology), the effects of the work of students attending classes and completing course assignments also very often delight with their nobility.

To illustrate this difference – this leap from spontaneous, atavistic activity such as drawing, to a specific,

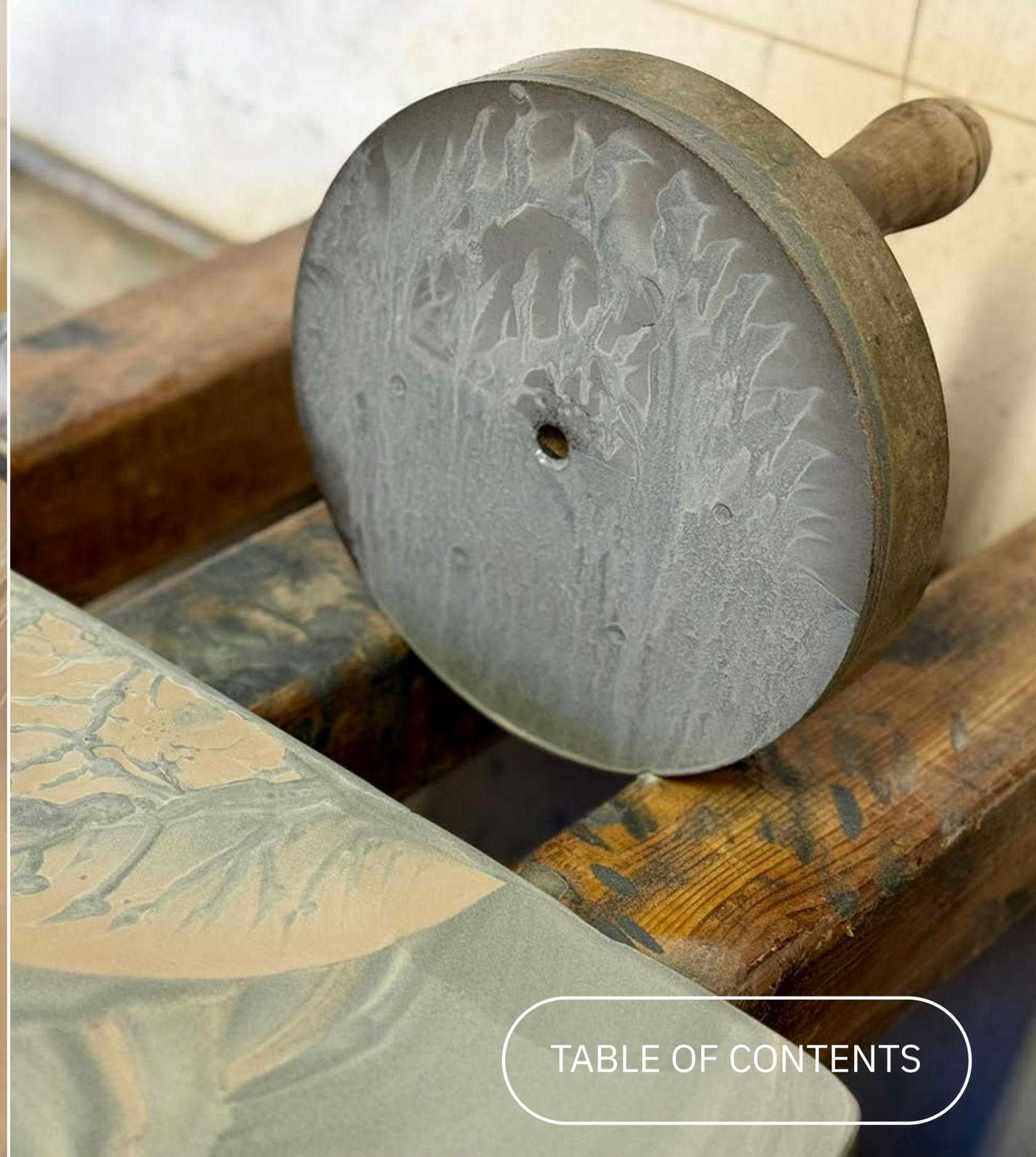
complex graphic technique – we recall below, step by step, the stages of work in the technique of lithography. This seventeenth-century complex method invariably teaches humility and guarantees magnificent results, provided we properly respect all its nuances.

The lithographic process

Lithography is a planographic printing technique based on the fundamental principle of the mutual repulsion of water and grease. This process constitutes a dialogue between the precise drawing and the chemical nature of the matrix.

× 1. Stone preparation (graining)

The process begins with the preparation of the matrix – the lithographic stone (limestone). Its surface must be perfectly ground – a process we call graining – using sand or carborundum. The aim is to obtain a perfectly even, clean, and slightly porous plane, ready to accept the drawing.



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× 2. Drawing

The artist applies the concept directly onto the prepared stone using specialised, greasy materials: lithographic crayons (of varying degrees of hardness), lithographic tusche, or asphaltum. Every line and mark is a direct record of a creative decision that will chemically bind with the calcareous substrate.

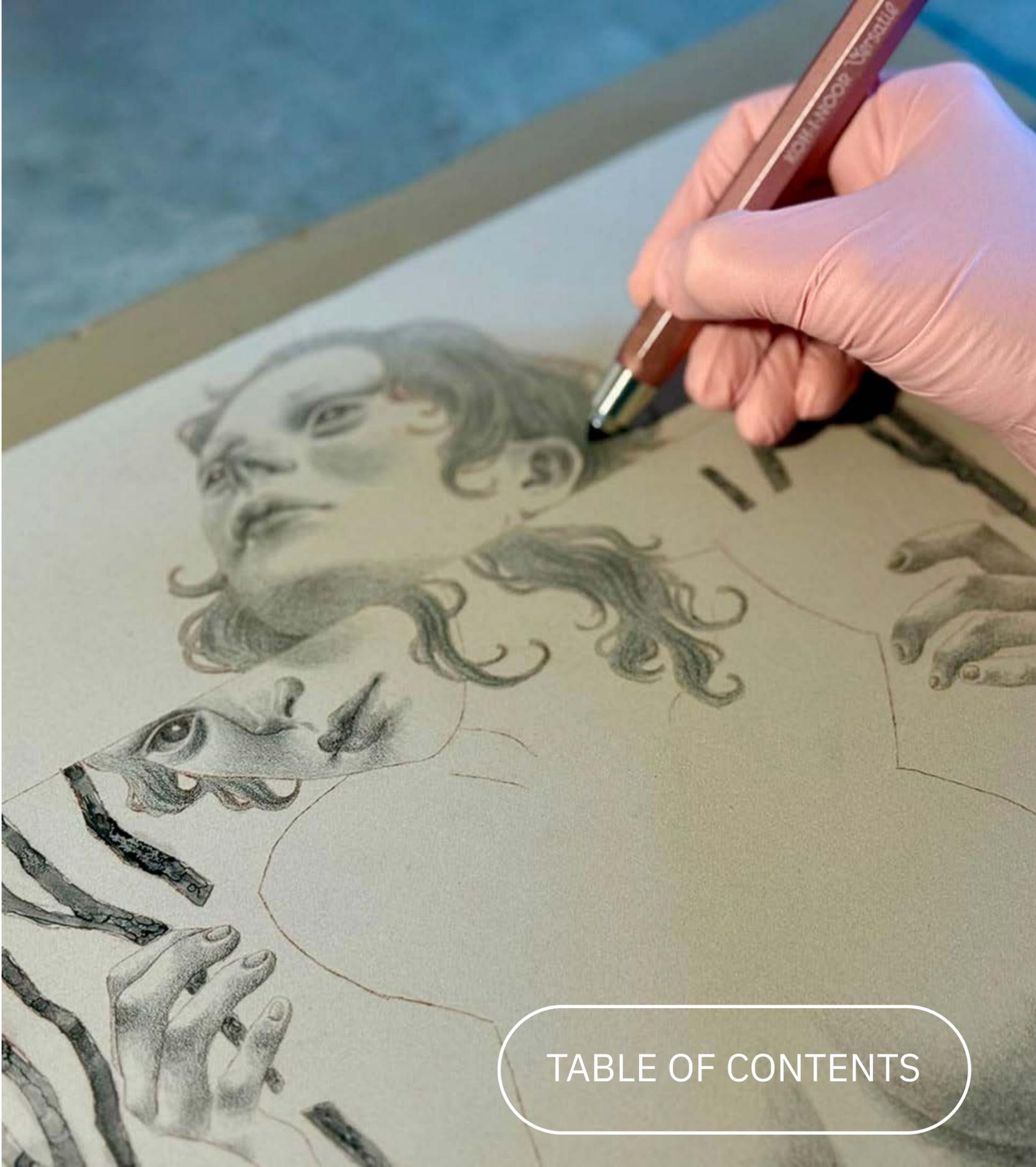


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× 3. Chemical preparation (etching)

Etching is a key, multi-stage chemical process.

The drawing is first covered with rosin and talc, and then with a solution of gum arabic containing a precisely measured amount of nitric acid. The excess gum is rubbed dry using gauze. The preparation serves a dual purpose:

- fixing: permanently binding the grease contained in the drawing with the limestone (chemical reaction),

- sensitising: rendering the non-image sections of the stone strongly hydrophilic, i.e., water-absorbing.



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× 4. Washing out the drawing

After the preparation has dried, the original, visible drawing (crayon, tusche) is washed off the surface of the stone using a solvent (e.g., turpentine, kerosene, or extraction naphtha). Only a faintly visible “ghost” remains on the stone – this is the layer of lime soap (calcium oleomanganate), which possesses hydrophobic properties. Once the solvent evaporates, a thin, even layer of asphaltum is rubbed into the

surface to stabilise the greasing of the stone
and impregnate the drawing.

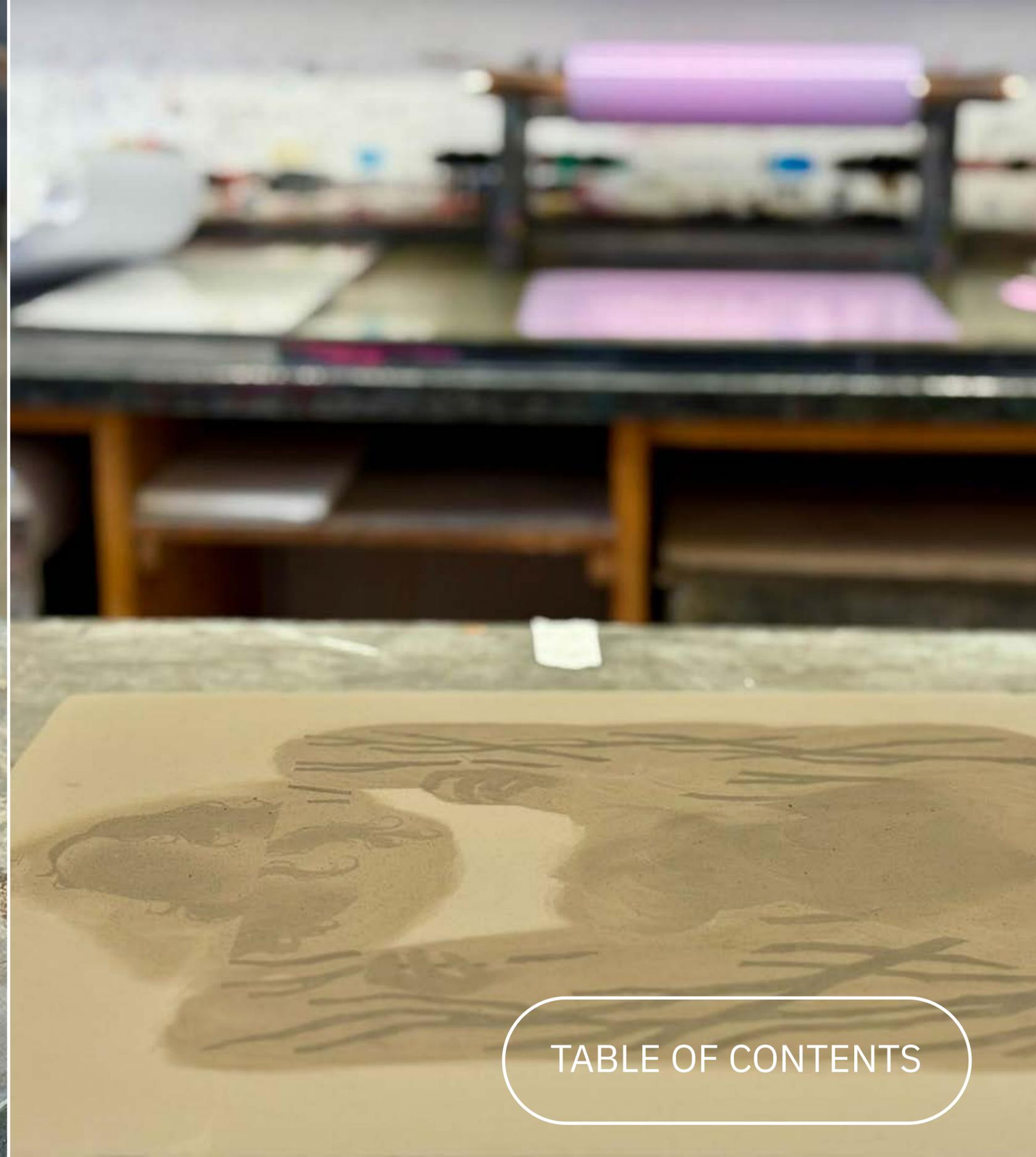


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× 5. Dampening and reinforcing (the principle of lithography)

The stone is dampened with water using a sponge. Water adheres exclusively to the empty, non-greasy areas, which have become hydrophilic due to the preparation. Next, using a leather or rubber roller, greasy ink is applied. It adheres only to the greasy parts of the drawing (the “ghost”), while being repelled by the damp areas of the stone. To stabilise the etched

drawing, reinforcing ink is applied to the dampened stone. After drying, the drawing is covered a second time with rosin and talc, and the etching process is performed again. Before the actual printing, the drawing is washed out with solvent once more, asphaltum is rubbed in, the stone is dampened with water, and ink – this time printing ink – is applied using a roller.

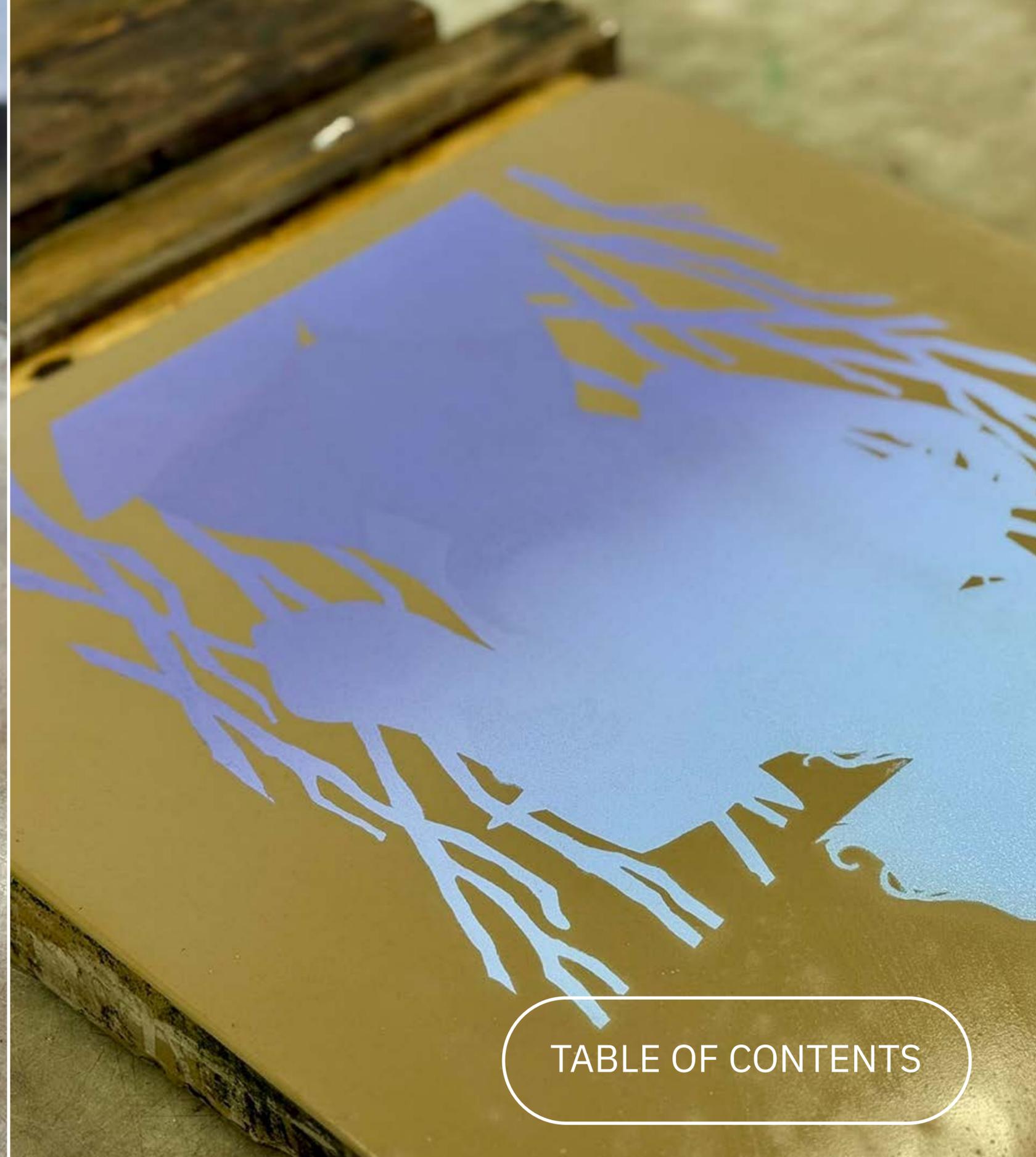


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× 6. Printing

A sheet of paper is placed onto the prepared matrix covered with ink. The whole assembly (stone, paper, packing, tympan) is passed through a specialised lithographic press. Unlike other graphic techniques, this press utilises strong sliding pressure (friction via a so-called scraper bar), which precisely transfers the ink from the stone onto the paper.



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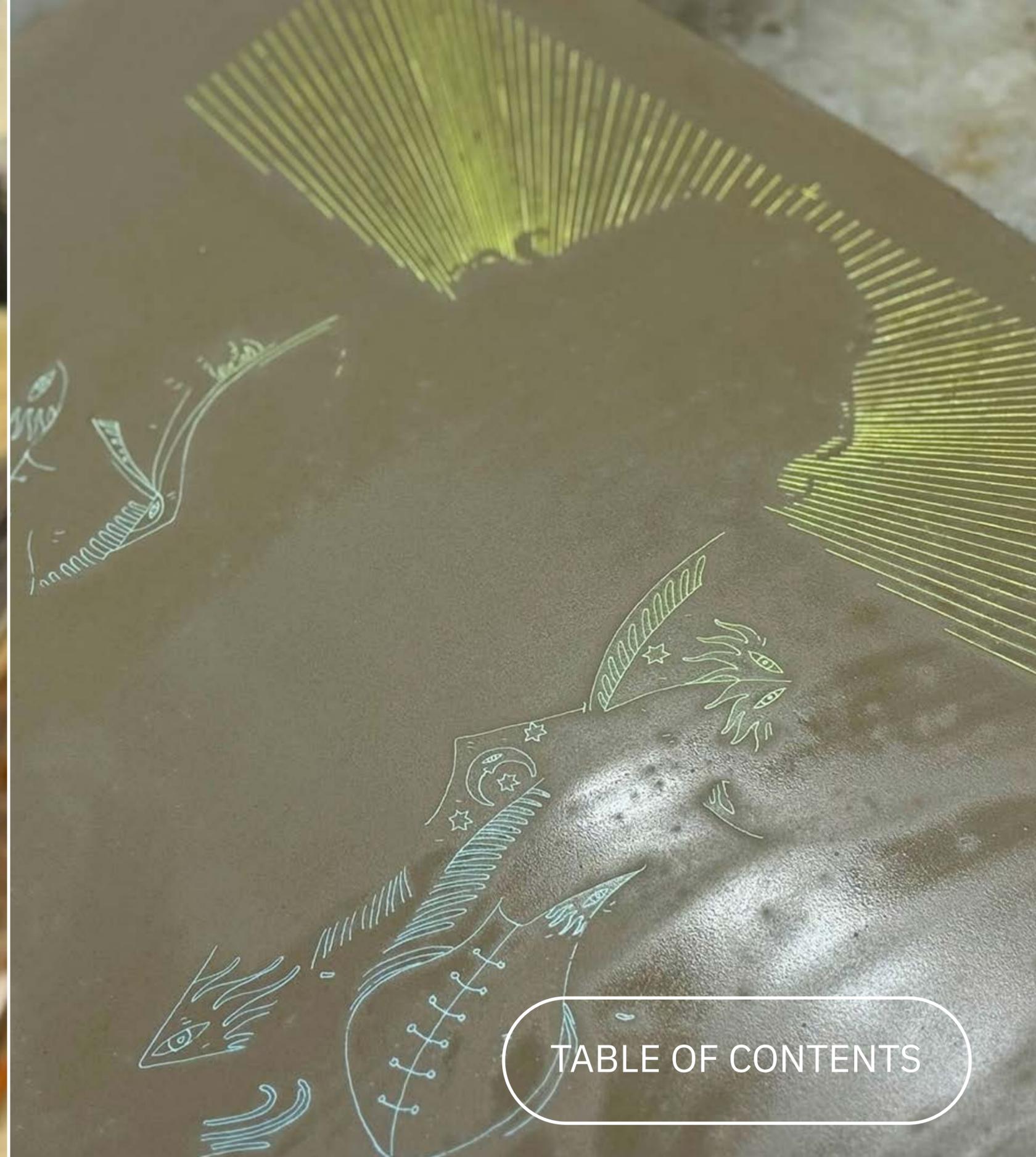


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× 7. The print

The final step is the careful removal of the finished print from the stone. The cycle of dampening, inking, and printing is repeated many times, allowing for the production of the full edition.

It must be emphasised that the final effect – the print itself – in the case of Patrycja’s artistic and design activity, is often the beginning of the next stage.

It becomes a unique starting material for further works, incorporated into the process of illustrating books or other complex design forms.

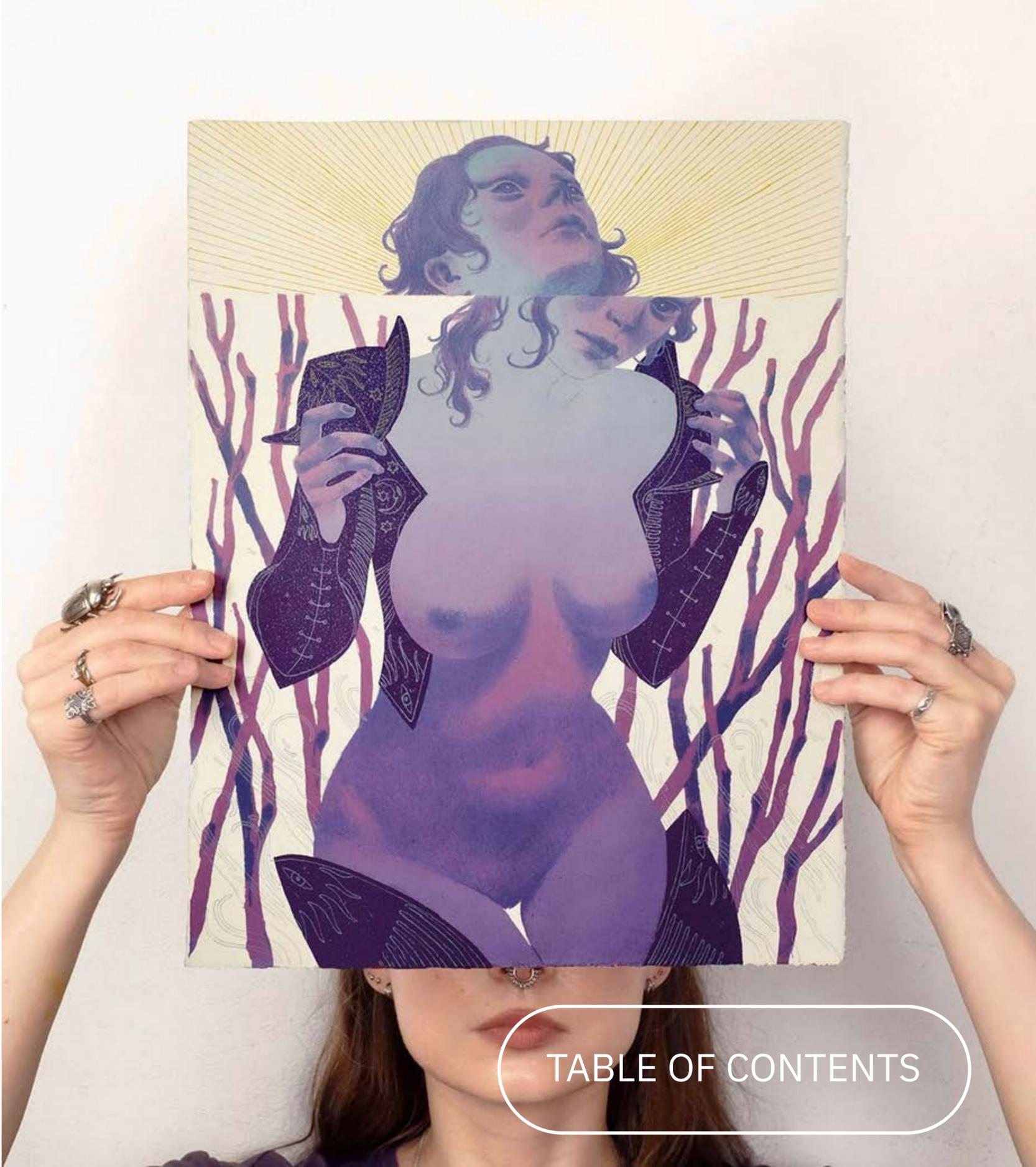


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RELEVANCE

Report from the studio – from the chaos of thoughts to the finished composition

In this part of this publication, we will present two concepts of graphic creation – case studies in which we will present the complete range of our individual creative processes, showing how we work in both manual



Katarzyna Łukasik

Excess

200 × 210 cm

serigraphy

2024

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and digital environments. To be able to design consciously – that is, to assess relationships, check assumptions, make decisions, and discard the superfluous – one must act both methodically and intuitively. That is why, in a reportage style, we will show and discuss every step of the design process.

✕ To present this process unfiltered and from behind the scenes, we used transcripts of the recordings of our own statements, intentionally leaving them unedited.

In this way, we will expose the raw thought and cite exactly those terms that accompanied us during work – with all their chaos and hesitations.

✕ Each of us will also develop our own composition – it will be a work “for a reason” or “for no reason”, yet we want it to be important to us regardless of that.

This is how it always is. We take our works, like everything that concerns us, personally. They are important from the very moment the first fragments of thought

begin to circulate in our mind. And when, in the creative process, we feel them starting to absorb us – when they bring us joy and satisfaction – they become the most important.

✕ The moment in which we start to identify with the effects of our hands' work is a metaphysical experience. Mind and body equally register a change; something akin to a surge of energy. We feel a sense of agency. We feel the path traversed and the experiences gained,

about which we are suddenly able to speak. We can look at the effects of our work and assemble words to eloquently describe the process and its consequences. These moments strengthen our credibility and make us authentic – primarily with ourselves.

✕ We must highlight that in the accounts presented below, we do not discuss digital tools. That is not our role. Every application offers the possibility to work out one's own style regarding its usage – that is your path.

Instead, we focus more on indicating which relationships between the elements of our graphic concepts become important parameters for developing the composition. How form, colour, the role of detail, and scale contribute to more conscious style of composing with type and – what is equally important – vice versa. We want to show that everything is important and everything stems from something.

Adam – on my style

In this section, we present our approach to design and visual creation – in a manner that we, as authors, deem satisfying. We established little. A brief conversation and a single nod: *very well, let the square play the leading role here.*



Each of us began work in our own style, within our own understanding of this guideline. I started with drawing. Deliberately seeking a form that would inspire me, feeling subconsciously that I wanted to employ typography. This is an area of my interest – the subject of my doctoral dissertation was intuition in the design of the letterform. And this intuition comes to the fore every time I "click" my impressions. The letter leads me – I suppose I can put it that way.

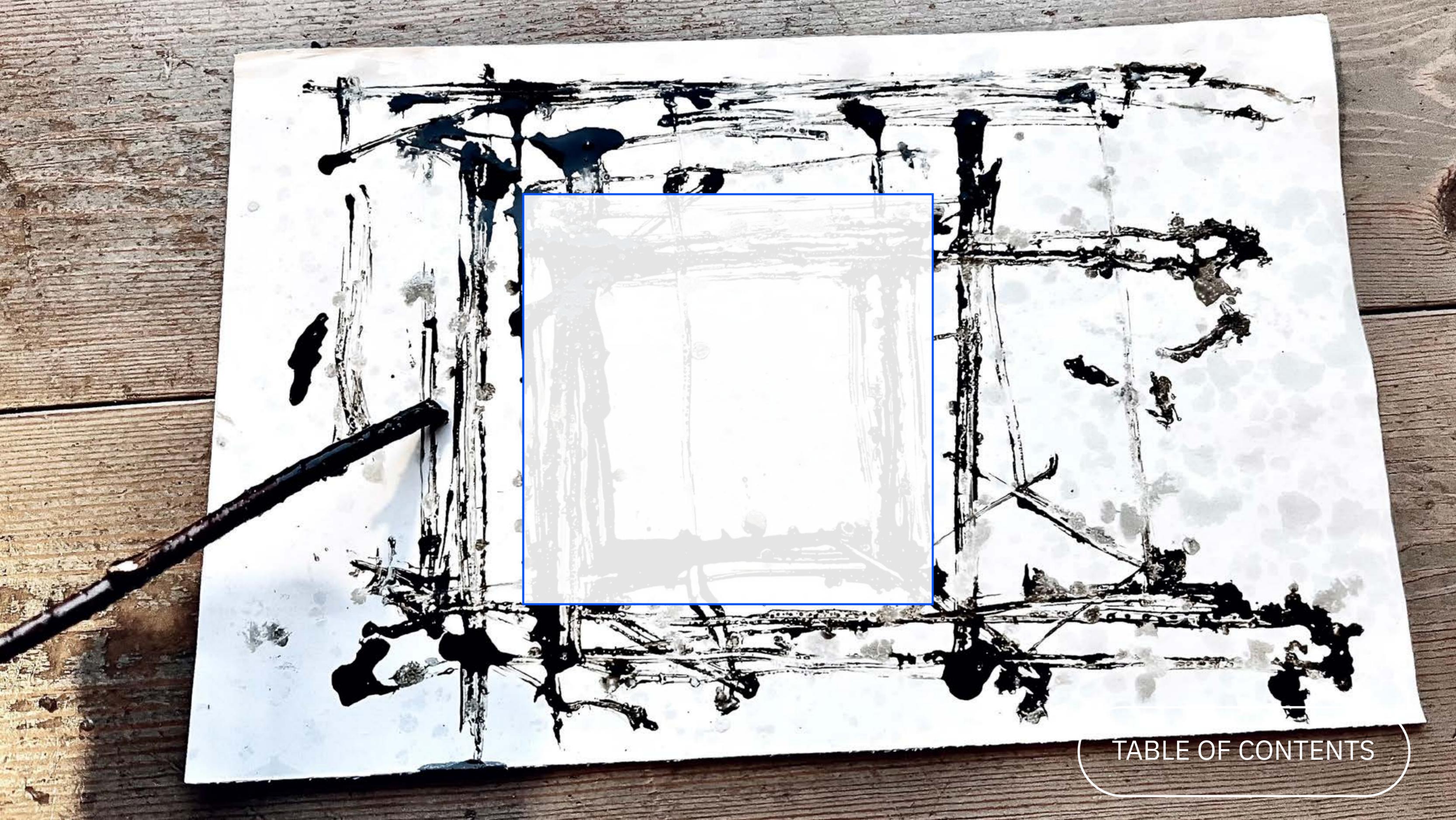
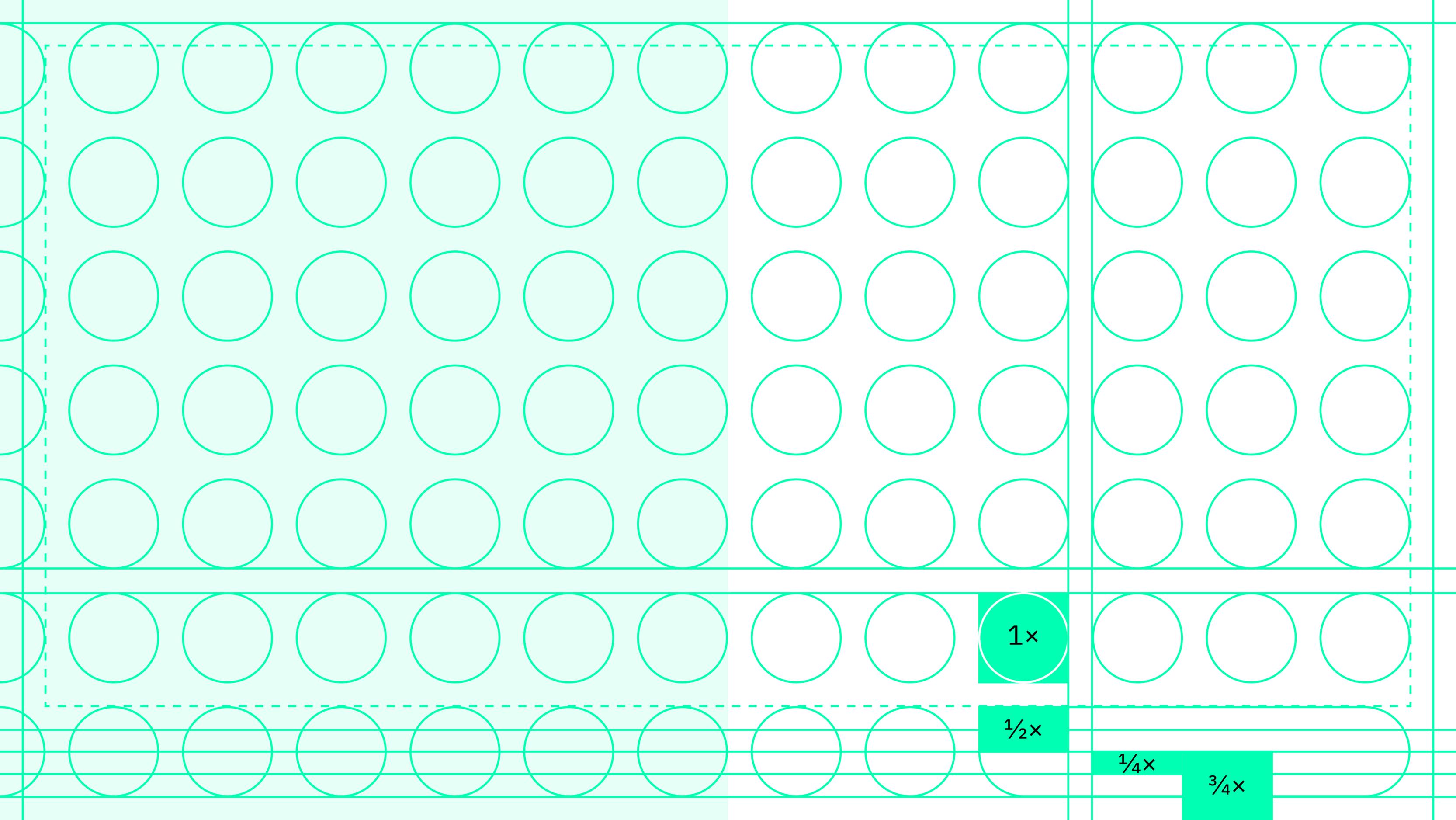


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I build the entirety upon a grid. This initial grid is the foundation of the publication's composition. The square appears, and I define the methodology for seeking reference points. Color? Initially irrelevant, serving only to distinguish elements. The grid is of key significance to me because, driven by both intuition and creative necessity, I usually design strictly. I strive for precision, yet I am interested in the interpenetration of lines, shapes, and colors – the transition of forms one into

another. I am interested in the interpretation of space, rhythm, and balance, which I sense more with my "gut" than with a ruler.



$1\times$

$\frac{1}{2}\times$

$\frac{1}{4}\times$

$\frac{3}{4}\times$



E

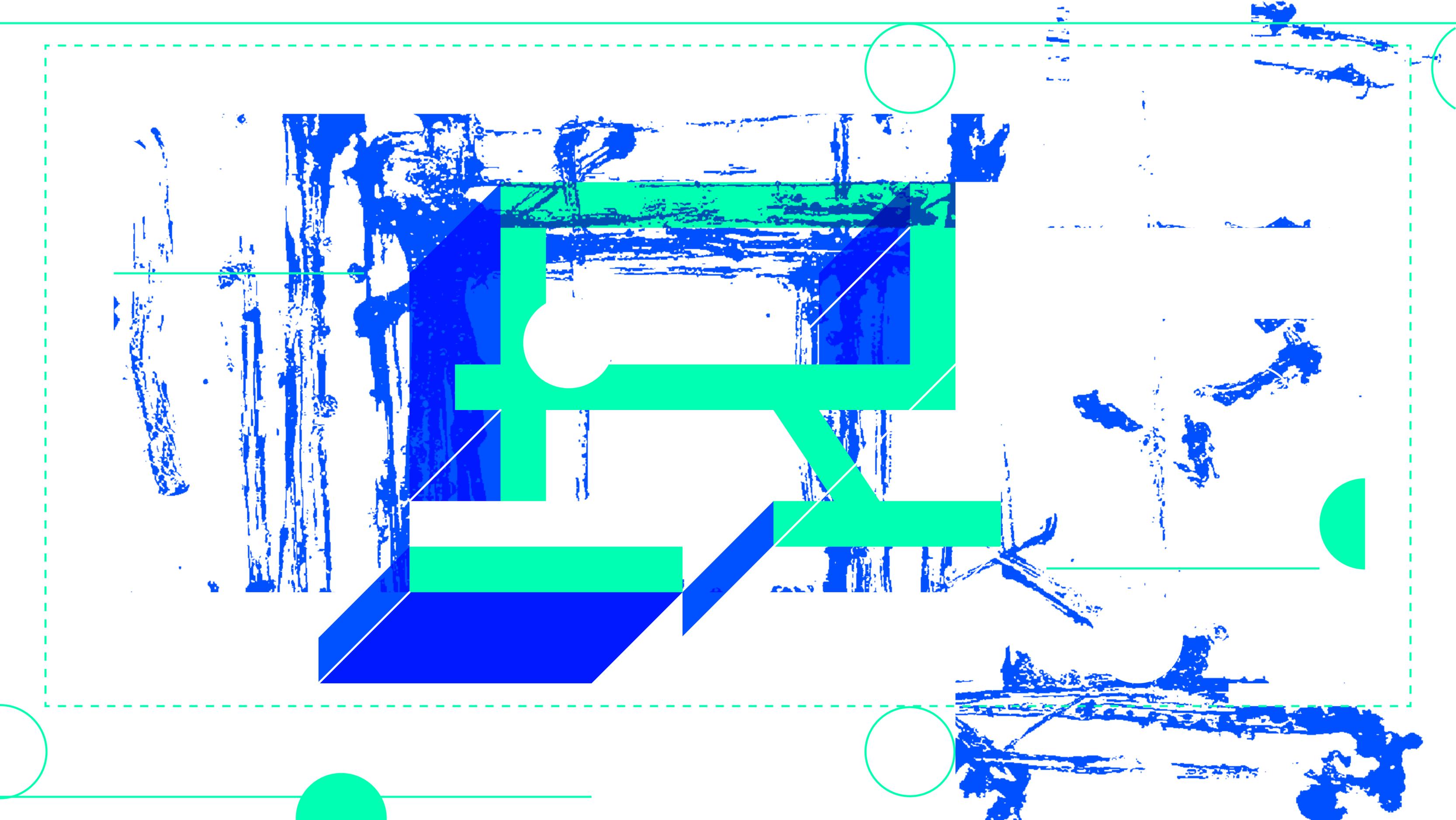
1x

1/2x

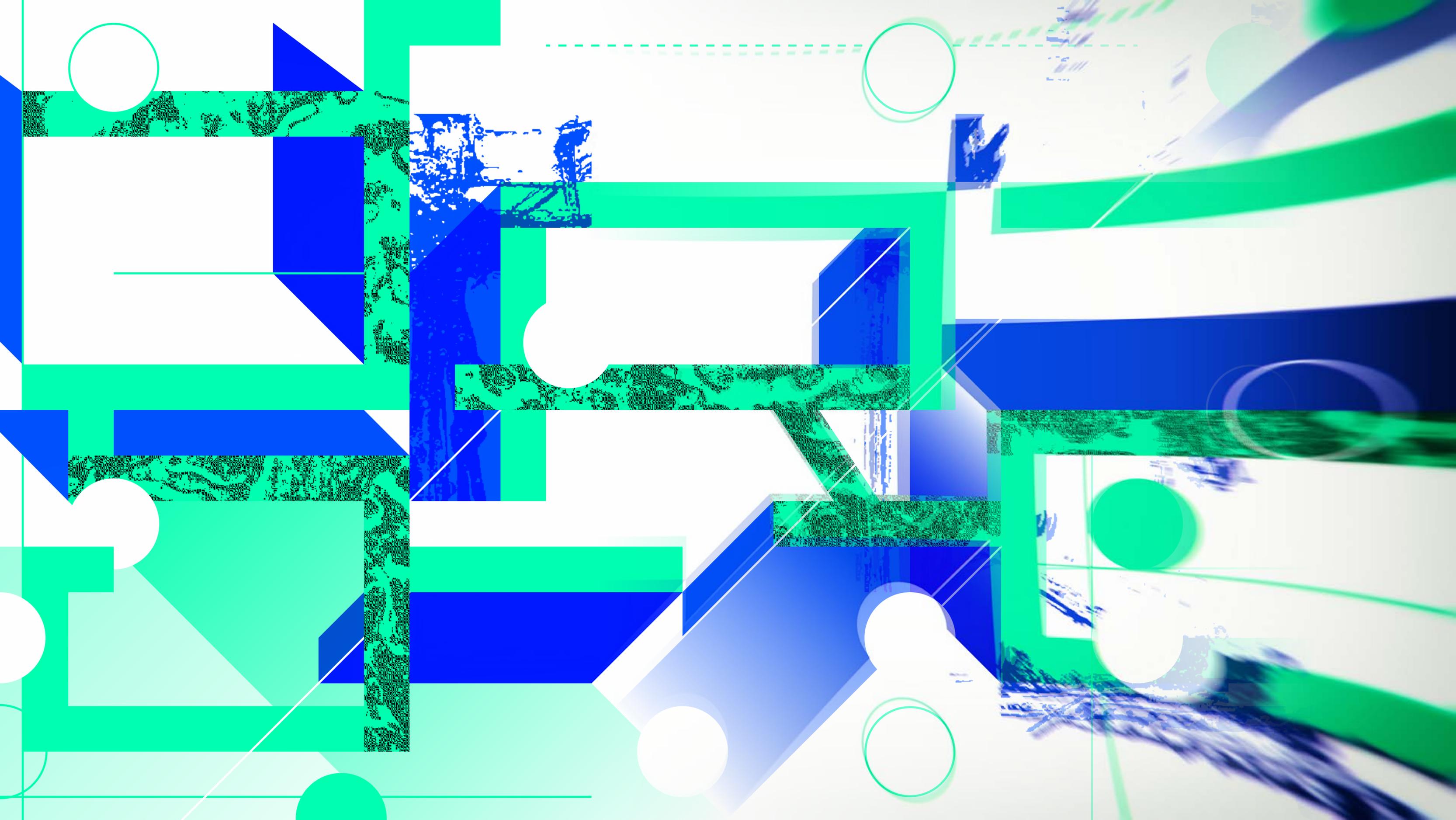
1/4x

3/4x

The letter here is an interpretation of the square. It is a sign that morphs and shifts in search of balance. Although I begin with a drawing, the finale takes place in a digital environment. I design primarily in InDesign, yet I do not treat it as a DTP tool, but as a precise drafting table. It is an environment that restricts me on one hand, but on the other – through that very restriction – inspires me, forcing me to use my head and intuition.

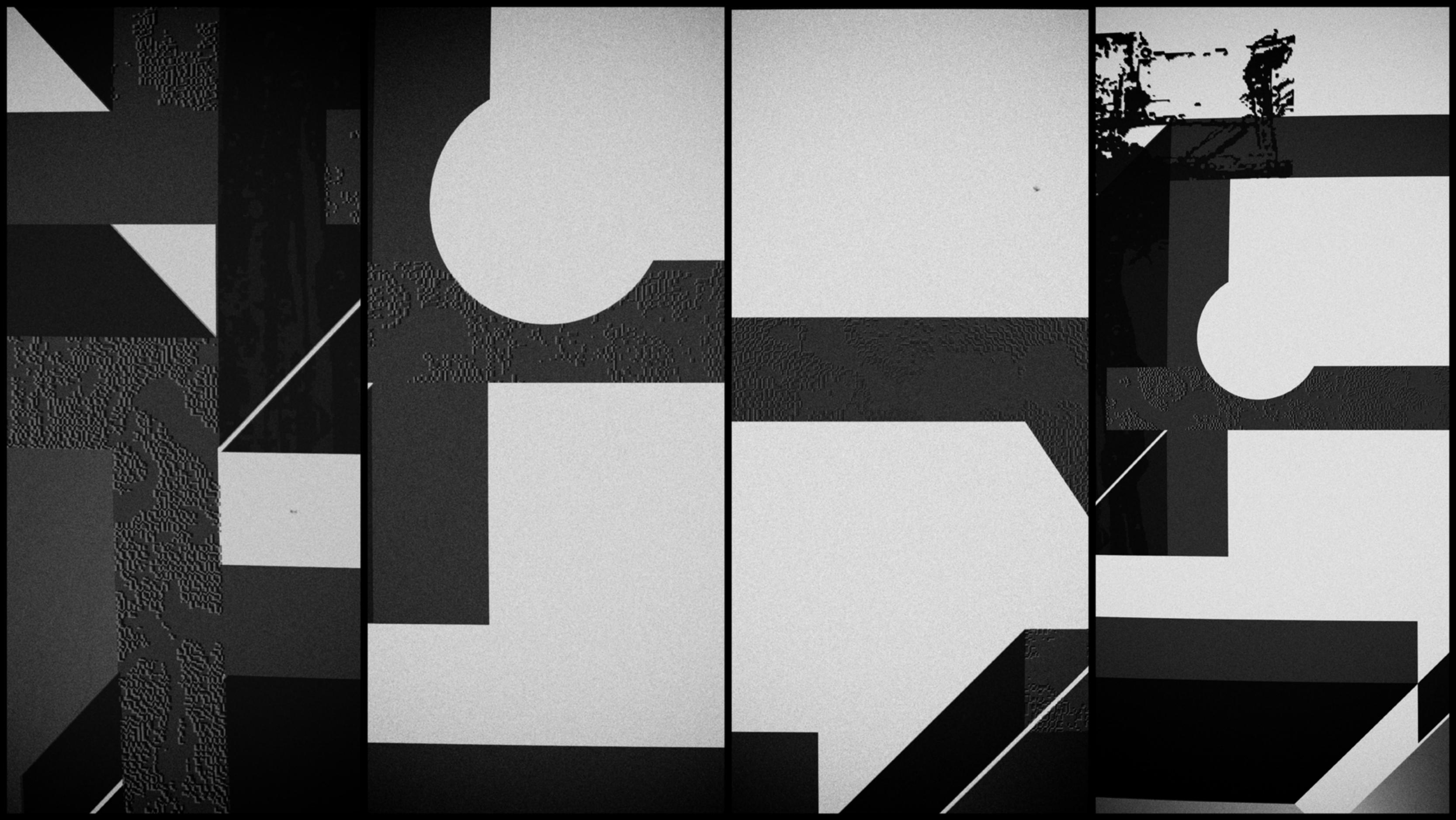


This project is meant to please the eye. It is to provide aesthetic pleasure. I want to "hang it on the wall" – for me, this is proof of satisfaction and identification with the work. Drafting elements of the alphabet is always a pleasure. However, this is far from a font; these are graphemes. They arise reflexively, allowing for the construction of a rhythmic graphic structure using limited means. Let us seek our own interesting solutions and be consistent in doing so.



Let us analyze our actions, draw conclusions, add or subtract. My work is, in essence, subtraction from a much larger set. The final conclusion is a choice I call "authorial balance" – the moment I know the work is finished. Subsequently, there appears visualization, analog interpretation, or even improvisation based on the created design. This is the pure pleasure of generating "afterimages" and the joy that the acquired visual capital can be declined through graphic cases.

It becomes a "self-playing mechanism". No matter how I crop it, frame it, or even "spoil" it – it remains interesting to me.



Patrycja – on my style

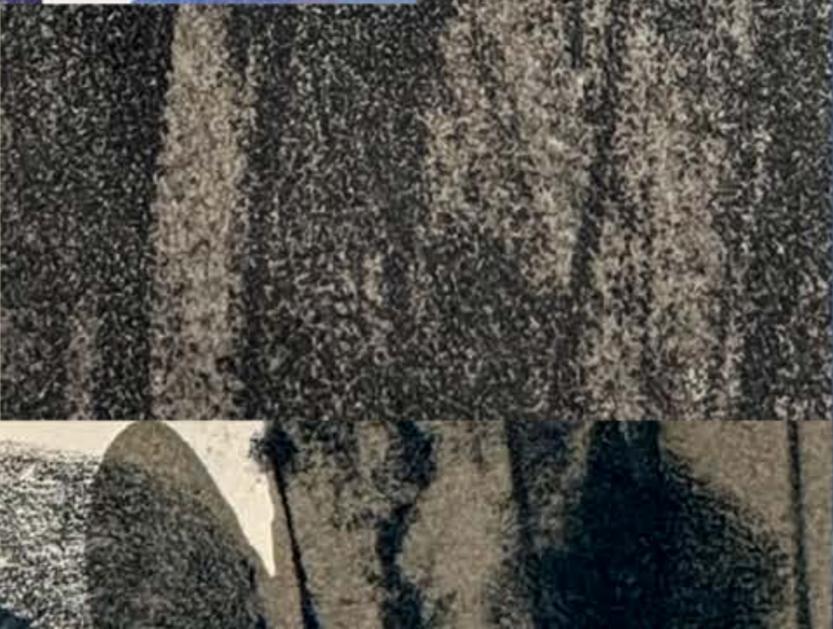
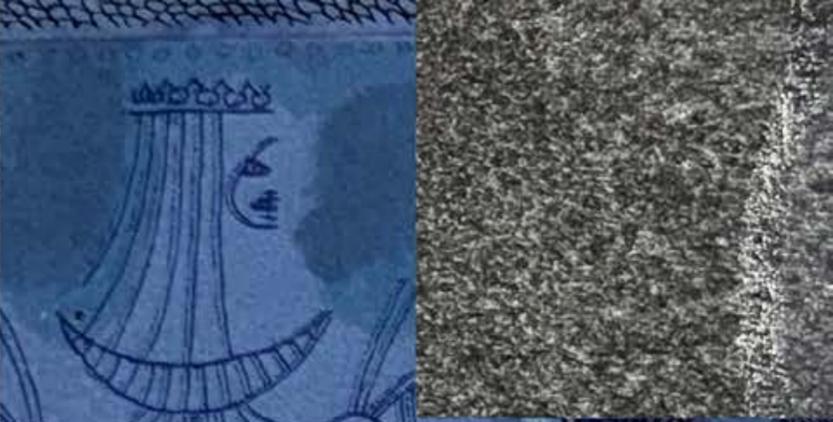
I decided to use lithographic trial proofs as the point of departure for my project—elements that typically remain unseen by anyone other than the artist. Sometimes the ink lacks the expected opacity, temperature, or even placement. Yet, in their imperfection intertwined with chance, they emanate an intriguing quality.

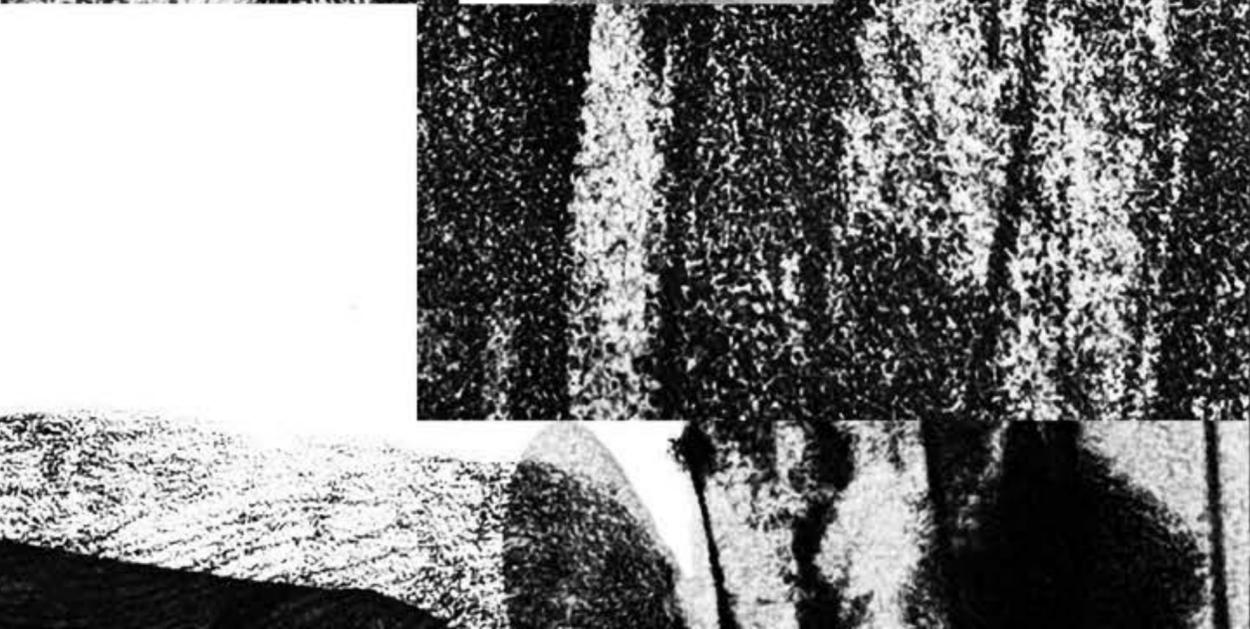
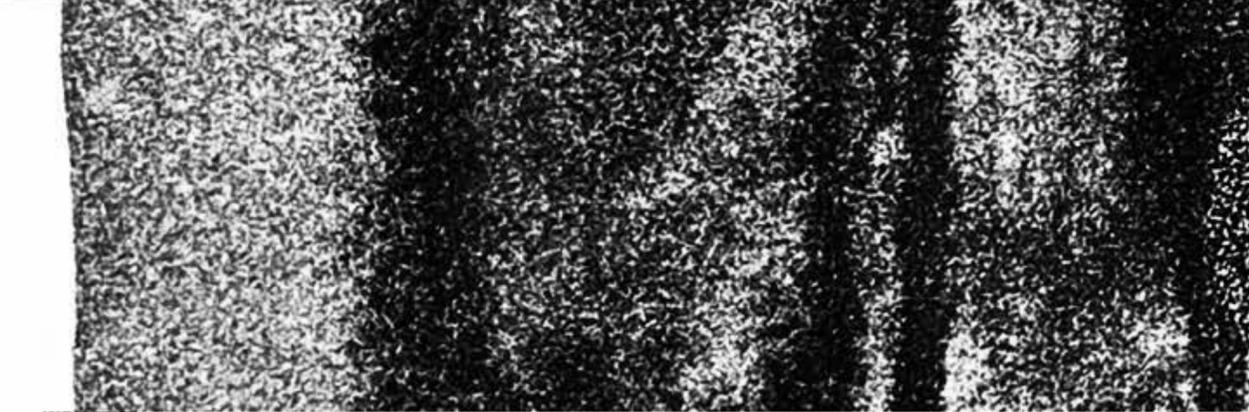
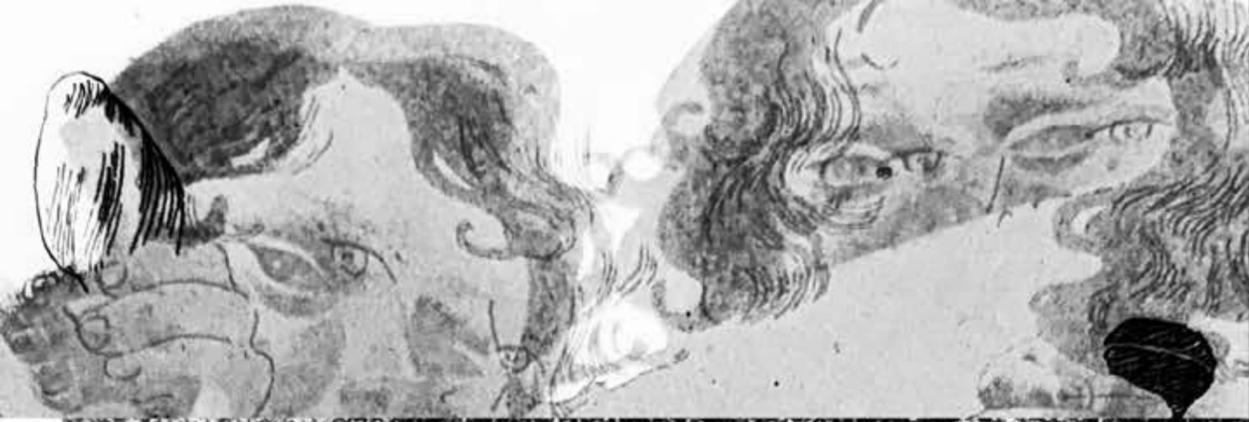


I began arranging photographed fragments of trial prints intuitively, guided by an internal sense of aesthetics, until I was satisfied with the optical weight that emerged in the work. This project became a visual play for me, a kind of respite from commercial projects.

I began arranging photographed fragments of trial prints intuitively, guided by an internal sense of aesthetics, until I was satisfied with the optical weight that emerged in the work. This project became a visual play for me, a kind of respite from commercial projects.

I removed colors from the project to unify it and prepare it for subsequent creative stages.





I converted the work into a low-resolution bitmap. Interestingly, this form is not so far removed from the nature of lithography. Through the delicate grain of the lithographic stone, we also obtain a kind of raster, only of microscopic size. Through this process, I wanted to strip away details to look at the project from a completely different perspective.



I transferred the work from the computer to the analog world by printing it on a standard pigment printer and began to deconstruct it by flooding the paper with water and hand sanitizer. Interestingly, at this moment, color returned by sheer chance. The graphic began to transform through movements not entirely under control (as often happens in printmaking).



However, what became most interesting to me was the work that formed on the reverse side of the page, in mirror image. A completely accidental composition devoid of excessive detail. The work returned to the digital environment by scanning the print.



I converted the graphic into a bitmap again, after which I applied specific colors and small details.

This process could truly go on endlessly, but I will put a full stop here. I think that in current times, we simply forget to play with projects.

Chased by deadlines, we stop enjoying creative work. Now that anyone can generate images using artificial intelligence, it would be fitting to return to our analog

roots, where the opportunity for the occurrence of a (partially controlled) error gives our works an inimitable individuality.



CONCLUSIONS

“Humanistic approach” in visual creation is a term that, for us, is a magical formula, a motto that slows us down. We combine it with a well-understood detachment from oneself, from work, and from the world, in order to catch a breath and return to the “here and now”.

× We write in the first person plural because, although we are certainly not devoid of individual perception rich in

nuance, fundamentally, we agree with each other.

We decided on this collaboration for several reasons, the primary one being that – as we noted in the introduction – we are both graphic designers with experience in not only creative, but academic work as well.

✕ Speaking of slow, conscious design and the significant role of manual techniques, we want to draw your attention to something that we believe is no longer just a possibility, but is becoming a necessity.

- × Being aware of the emergence of a clear line of polarisation between what is human (with all its wonderful “imperfections”) and the world’s new, hyper-precise operating system based on artificial intelligence technology, we would like the need to observe proportions to resound from our study.
- × Of course, we are speaking here about visual creation – graphic art and design – but we feel this need for physical, authentic presence in many areas.

A thread that we have not yet developed broadly is time – the overarching parameter that controls our work.

Commercial work, however defined (design oriented towards cooperation in professional fields), makes it impossible to not take time into consideration. Its availability or – more frequently – its lack makes evident the multithreaded nature of issues related to design processes.

× The scope of mental design, which we discussed in

relation to work in a manual or digital environment, is brutally dependent on the calendar and the plans of our clients. In reference to teaching work, the determinant of our professional stance is, in turn, the academic calendar. It defines the intervals between meetings with students within a specific teaching load. This same calendar also designates (or takes away) time for deepening our creative work when we undertake various extramural projects.

- × We call this the dualism of planning. Primary planning is the allocation of time for life and work. Secondary planning concerns the realisation of specific design challenges in the remaining time. This is, of course, a highly simplified vision, which makes it easy to verge on the banal; and – yes, of course – perception of the role of time is an extremely individual matter.
- × The same goes for the concept that is the heart of this publication.

- ✕ The creative stance described here, which we call “humanistic”, is also an individual choice. It should not be treated as a universal method, a golden rule for every designer. We are fully aware that the essence of creation is precisely the individual approach based on what works for a given creator.
- ✕ Nevertheless, we wanted to share with you what we have discovered. Such a “slowed-down” approach simply works in our case. We both see in it many values

which directly translate into our realisations and into satisfaction we derive from work.

- × We also decided to co-write this study because another crucial parameter that stimulates the work of a graphic designer is teamwork, with all its pros and cons. We would like to devote more attention to these and other phenomena influencing the contemporary designer's attitude in the labour market – in a future publication.

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