

OPEN UP

Sonder; n.

The realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own— populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk.

The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, 2013

Filling a Hole in the Language of Emotion

John Koenig created The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows to define neologisms for emotions that do not have descriptive terms. Through his research on etymologies, prefixes, suffixes, and word roots, the words he creates are often based on feelings of existentialism and aiming to 'fill a hole in the language of emotions' - emotions that we all feel as humans but don't know how to communicate because we don't have the words. The word sonder was coined by Koenig in 2013 when he realized that we all see ourselves as the main characters of our life stories when in reality each individual plays an important role.

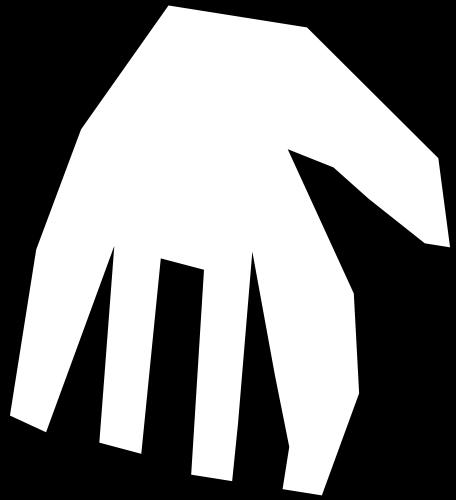
The word sonder is a linguistic bridge to express the unarticulated and unknown depths of human existence, the complex, and often invisible entanglement of connections, the temporality of relationships, and the transience of interactions. An awareness of sonder is an acknowledgment of our imaginative limitations and perceptions, that we are not fully aware of, and that there is a world of experience and life that lies beyond our reach in this present moment. This helps us move from a self-centered perspective into one that nurtures a greater degree of empathy and compassion towards others.

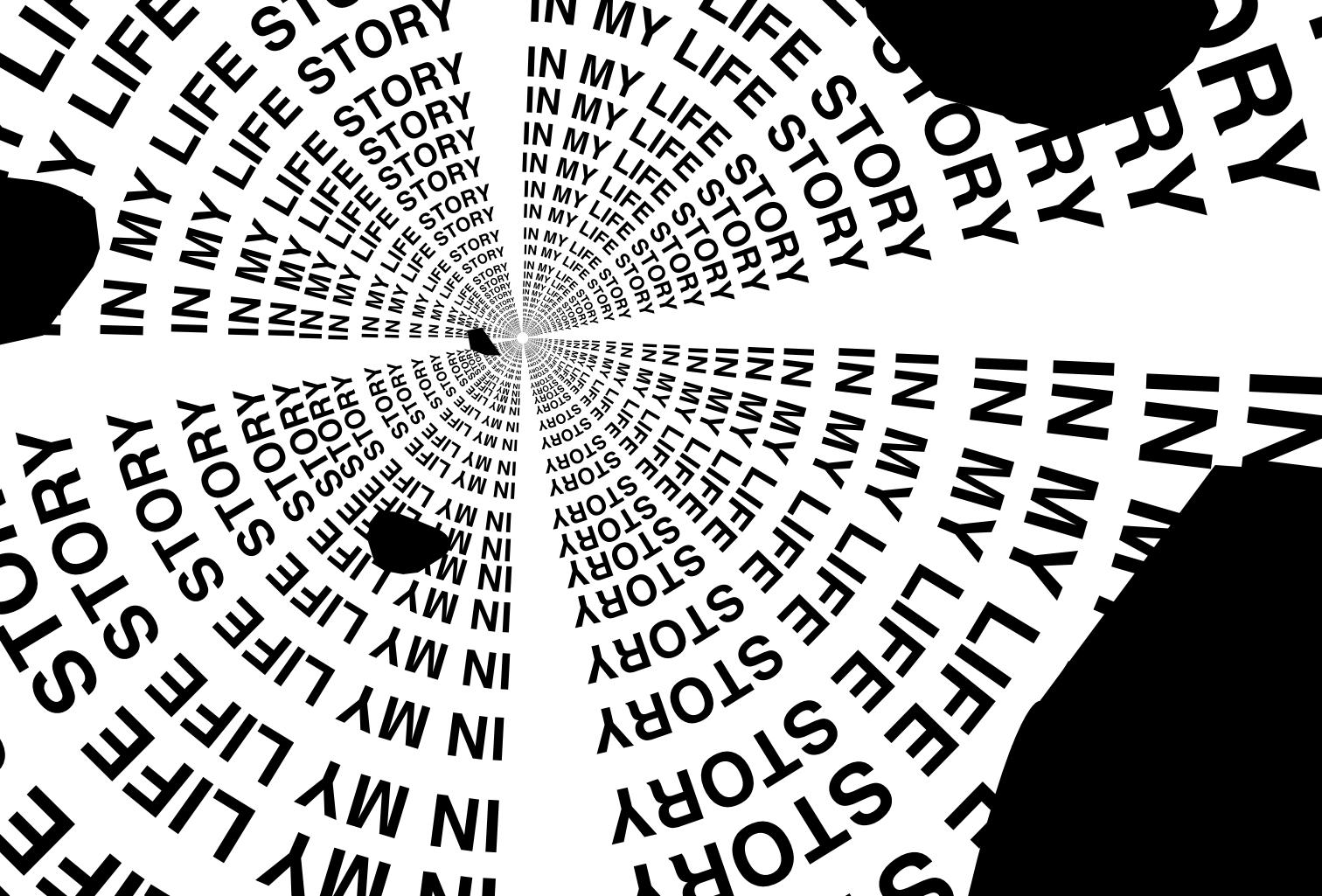
Sonder isn't merely the repackaging of empathy, however, it also tells the story of the disciplines we have never ventured into, the places we've never visited, and the cultures we've never experienced. Awareness of, and attention to, sonder allows for the development of moral imagination and infinite curiosity.

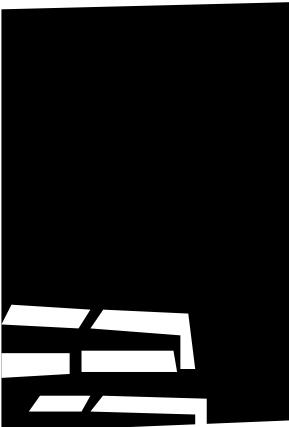
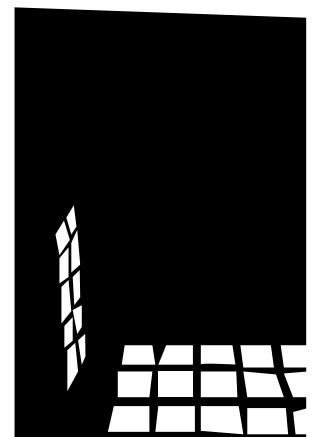
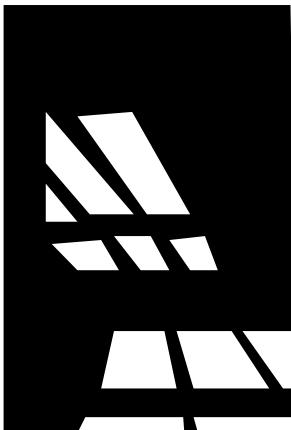
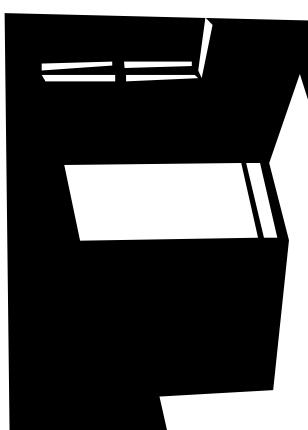
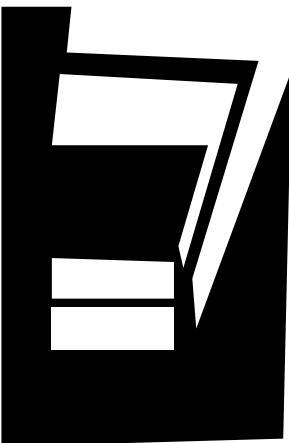
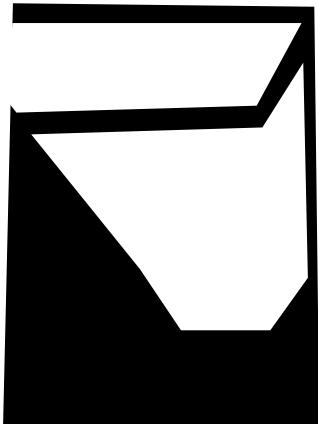
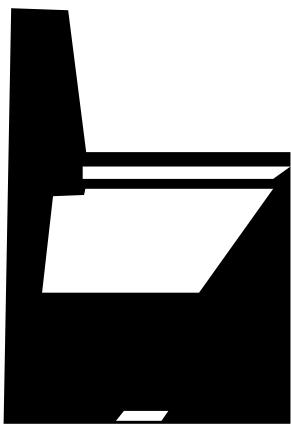
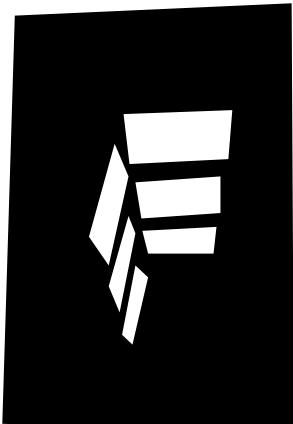
This book is a visual and conceptual representation of sonder. It aims to recreate this emotion through the means of poetic and visual imagery. Sonder occurs as perspectives change. Turn the pages to find two contrasting perspectives that facilitate the possibility of sonder happening. Reading the book forwards, the viewer will experience an egocentric perspective. This seems to be the standard way that we normally perceive the world. We depend on our ego's many positive attributes, including its self-analysis and logical reasoning to help channel the passionate instincts of our identity along socially appropriate lines. In terms of sonder, the ego is what allows us to believe that we are the main characters of our life stories.

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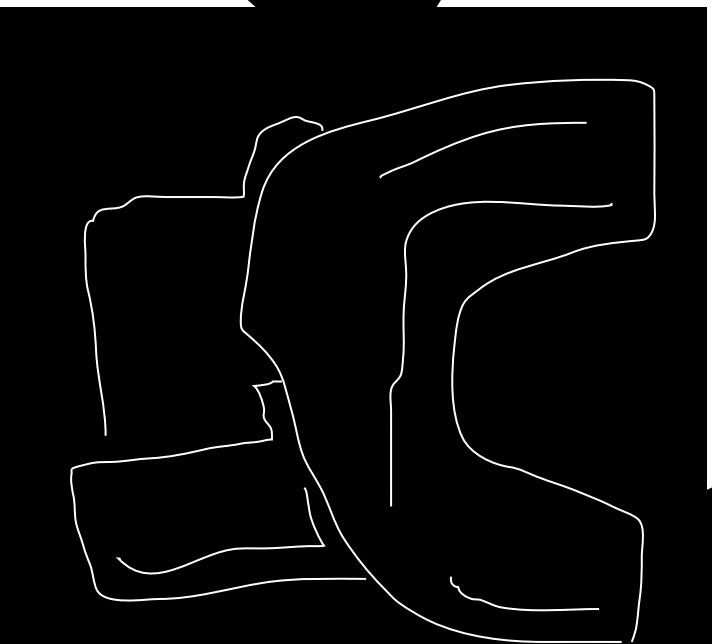
Turn the volume upside down and read it from back to front to be introduced to the allocentric perspective. This version of the story moves our focus away from ourselves and towards that which surrounds us and is available to the senses everywhere, with practice. Again, in terms of sonder, a movement away from the ego is an essential step illustrated in this publication. Sonder requires a paradigm step away from dualism. It allows one to be present and hold seemingly incompatible ideas, relationships, and experiences in a unified container. Very few things are absolutely black and white, or right and wrong. An awareness of sonder facilitates a calm and curious approach to life and relations that makes the world a more interesting and engaging place to live.

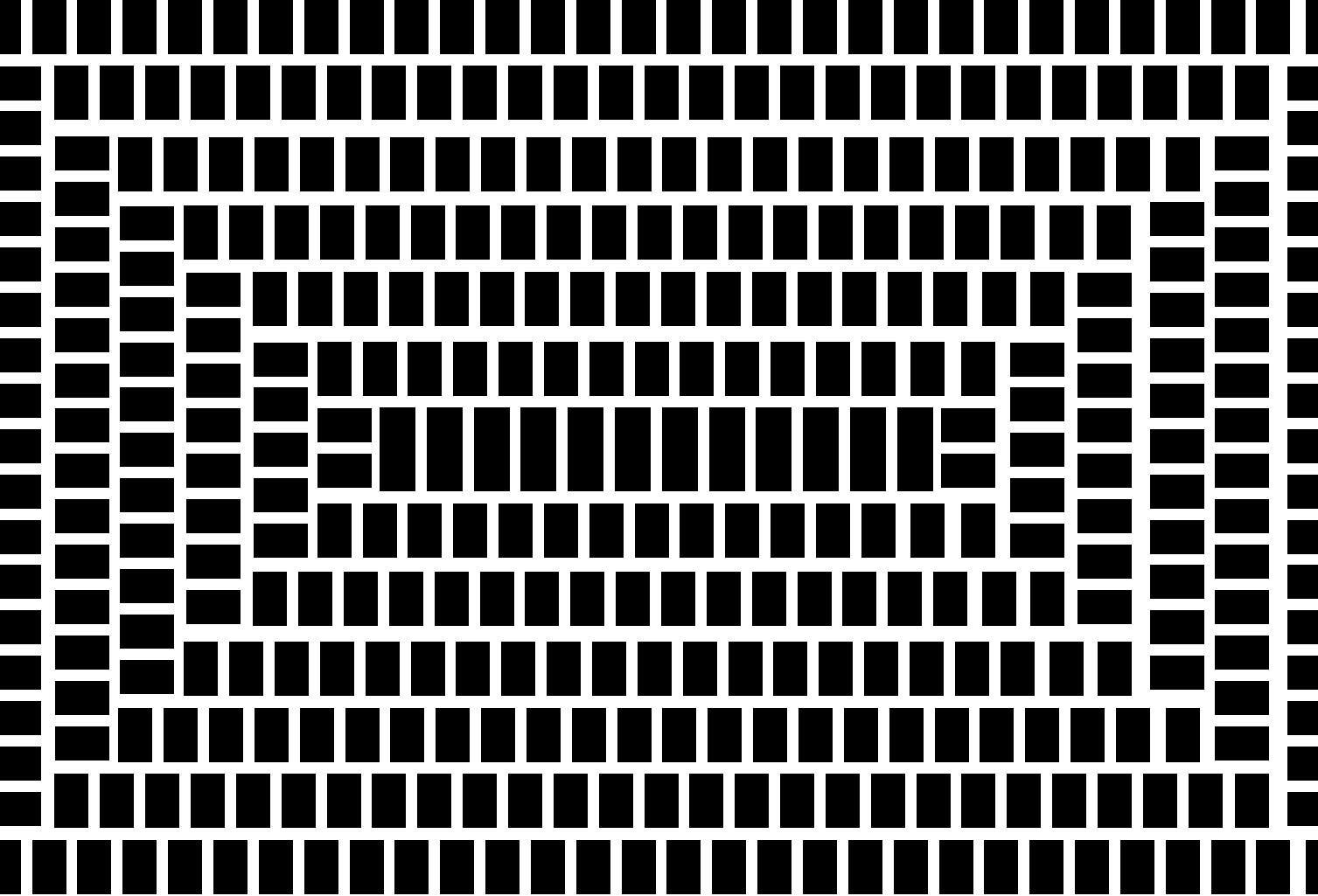


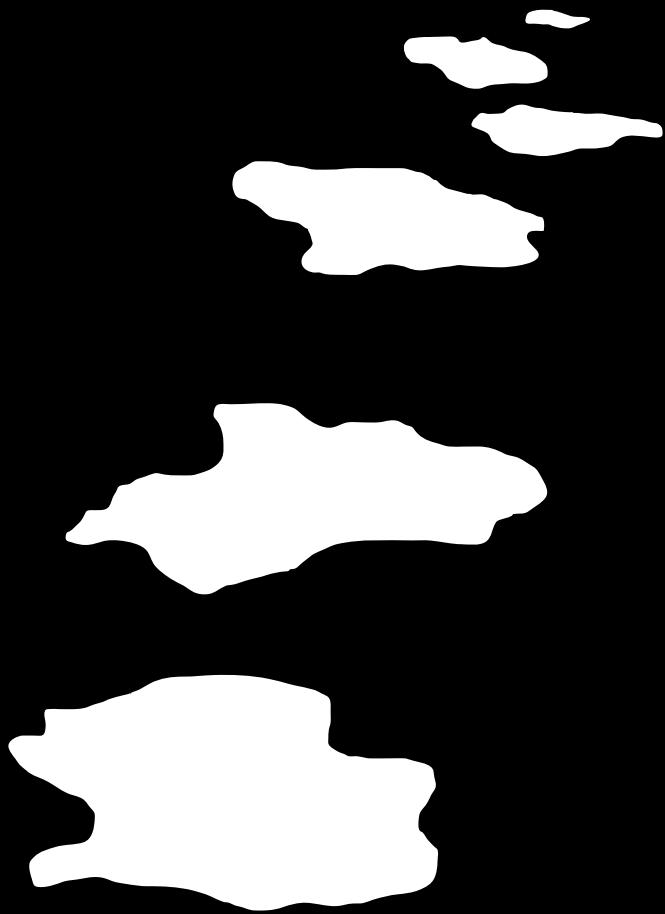
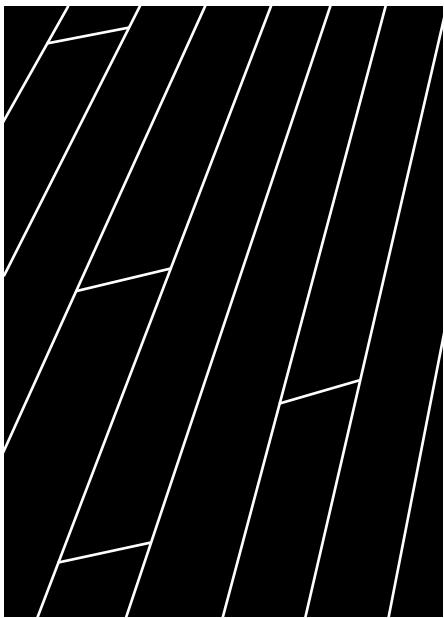




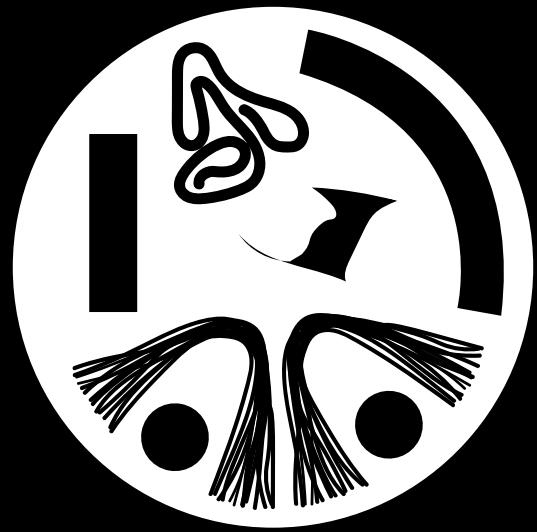
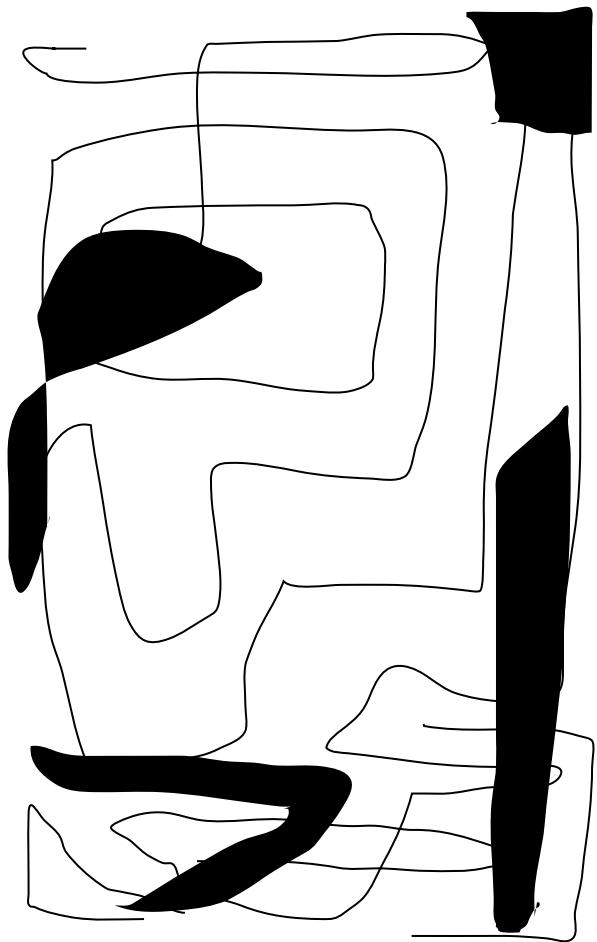


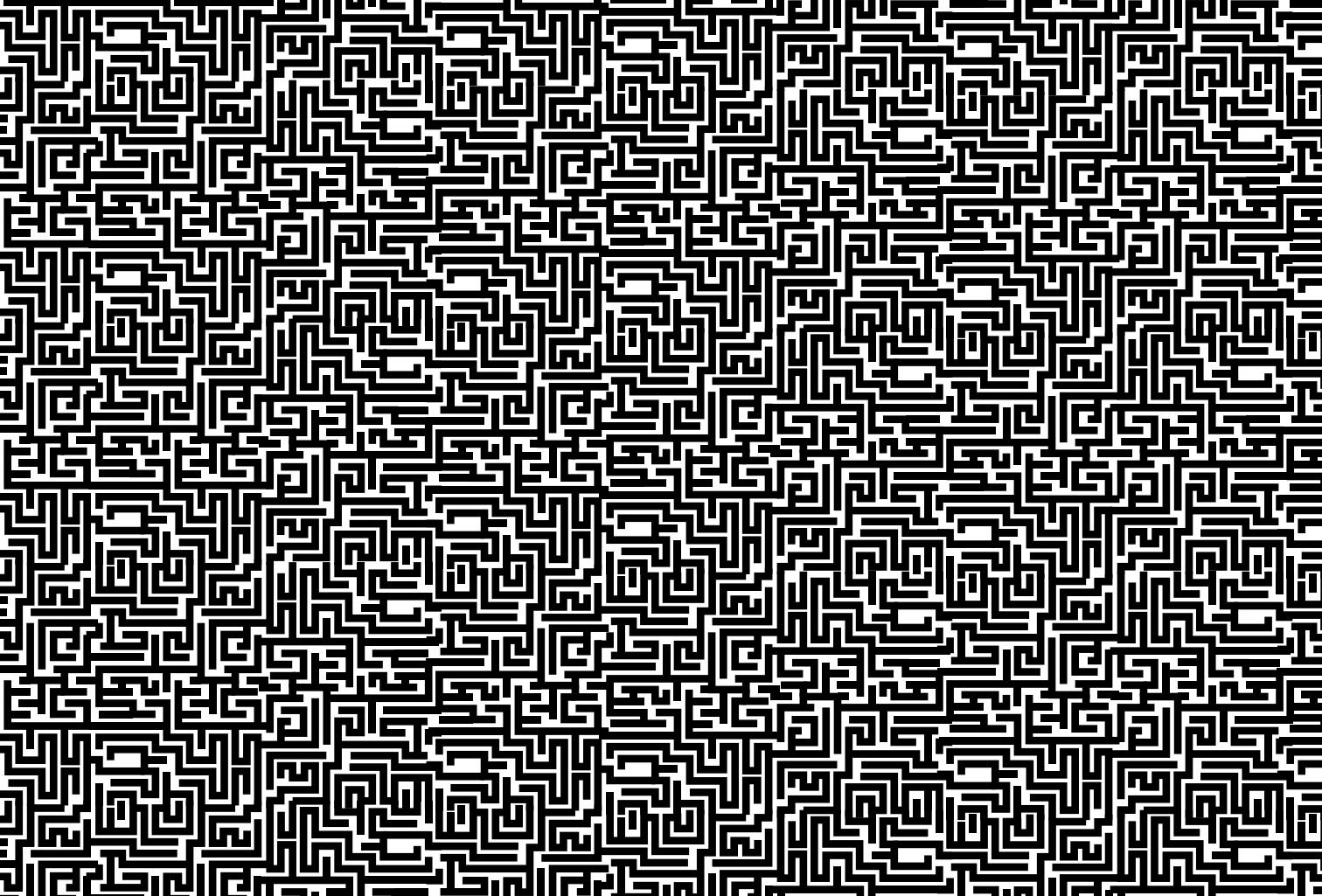


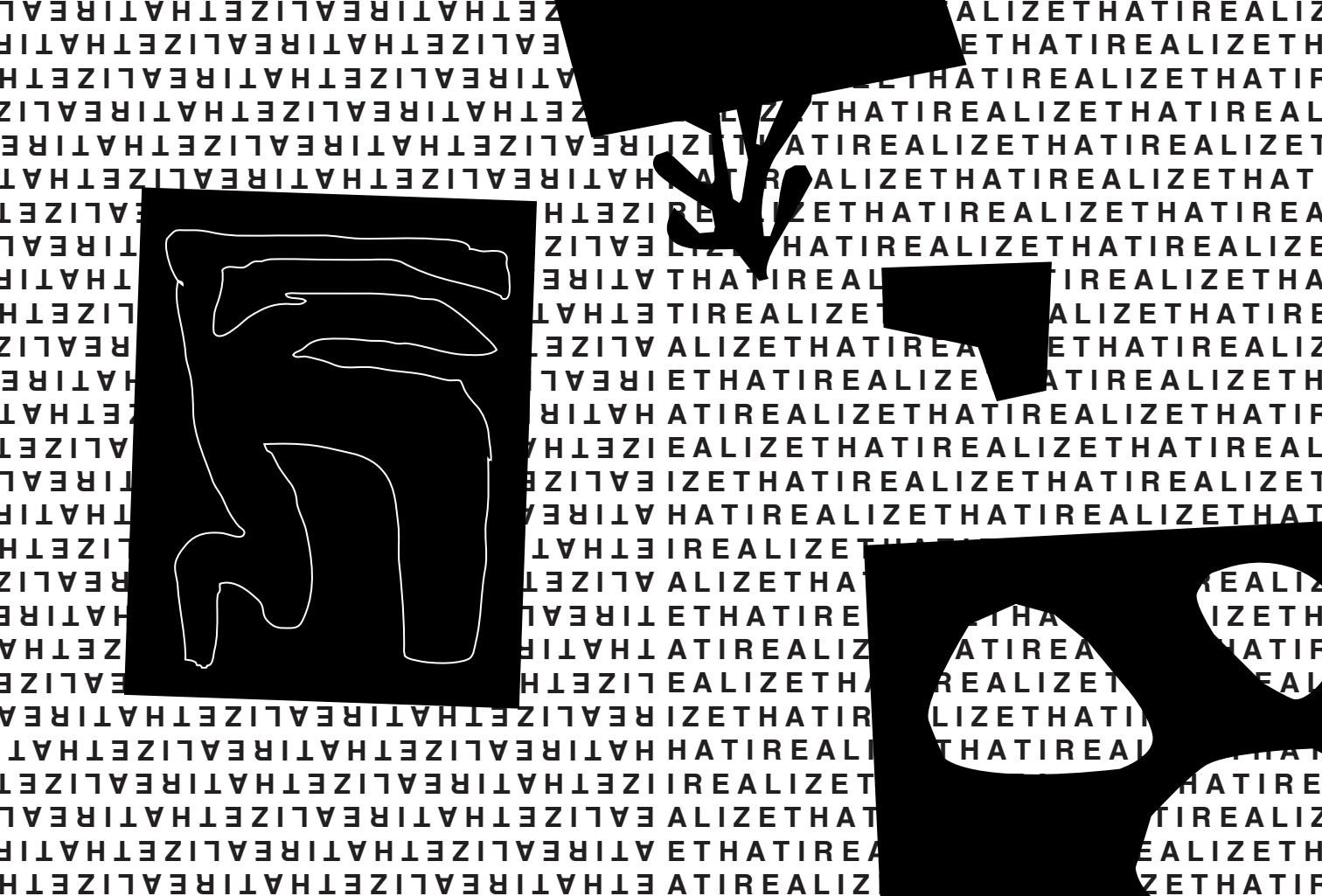


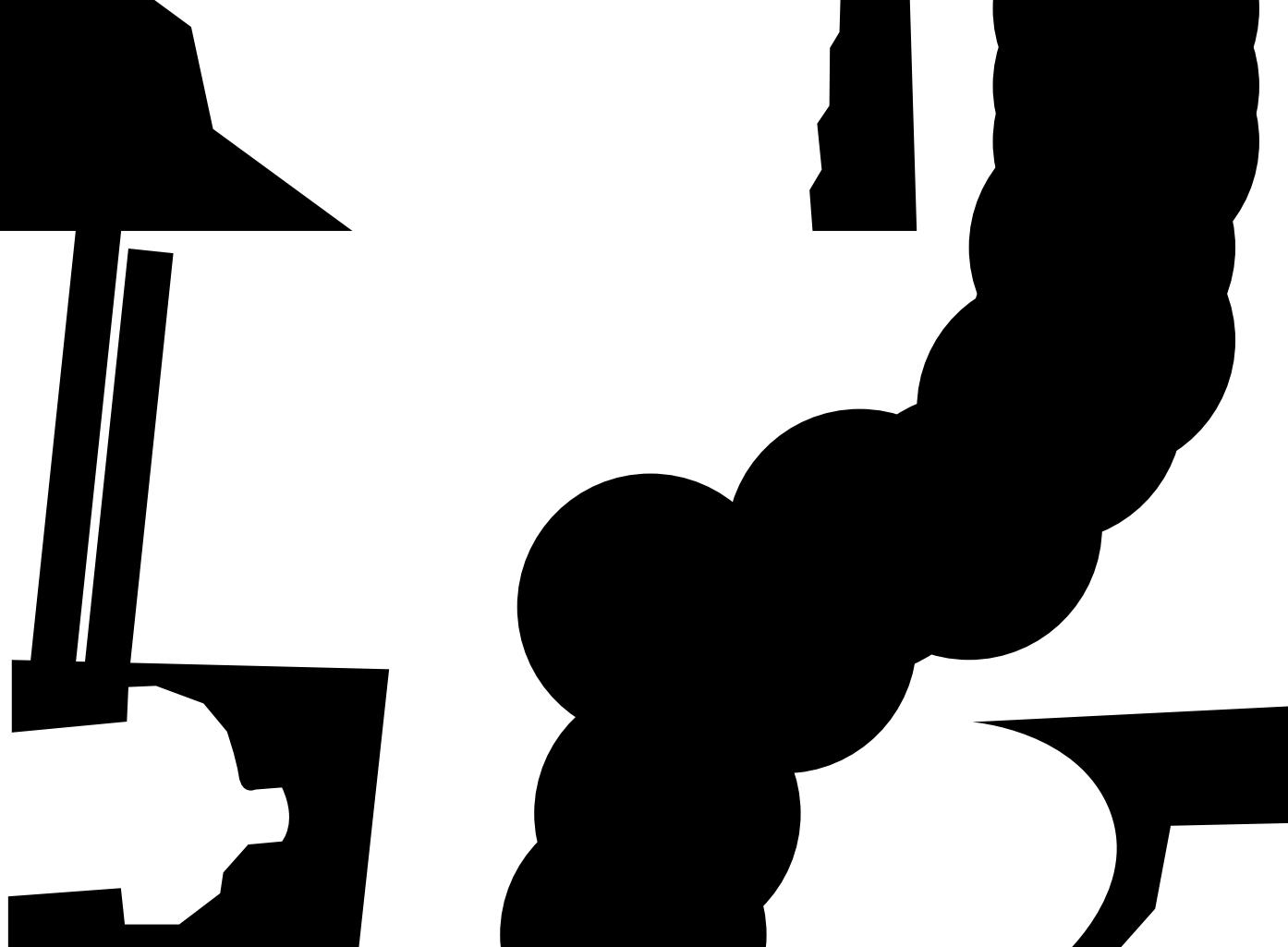




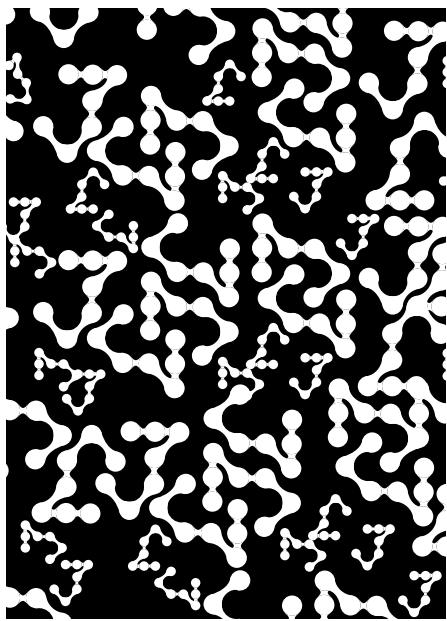
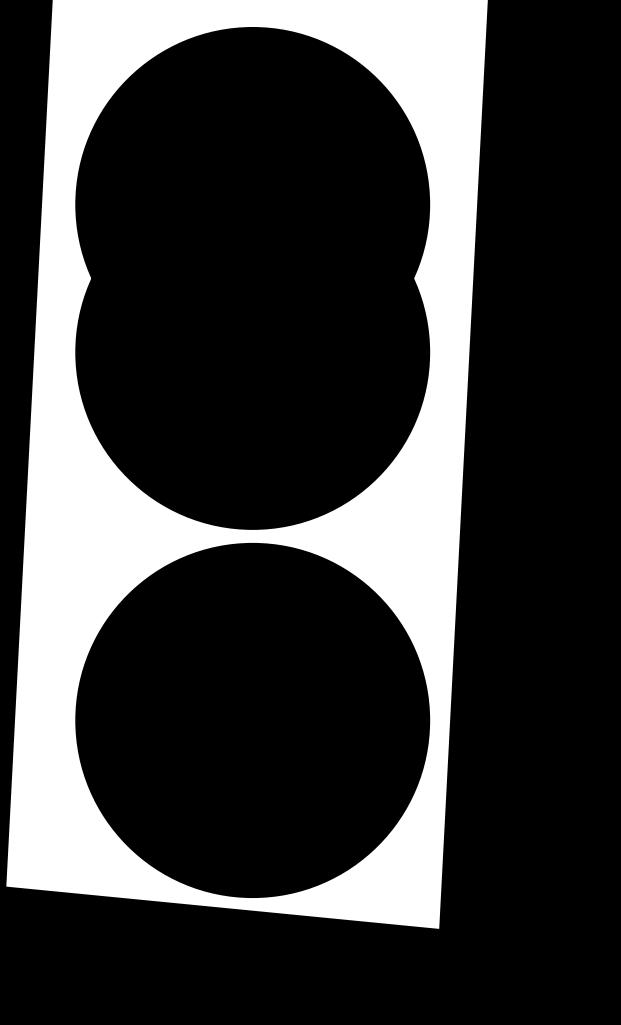




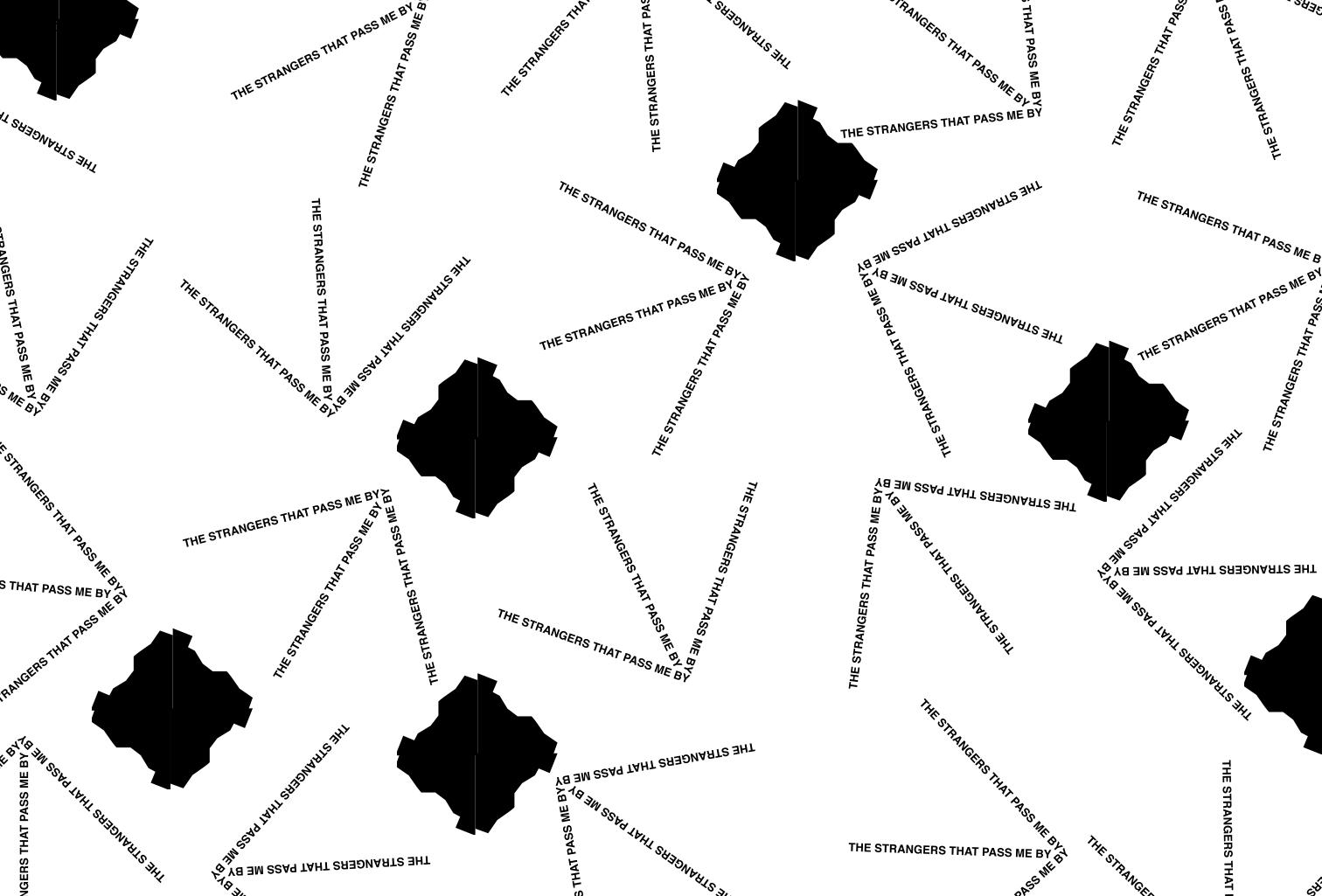




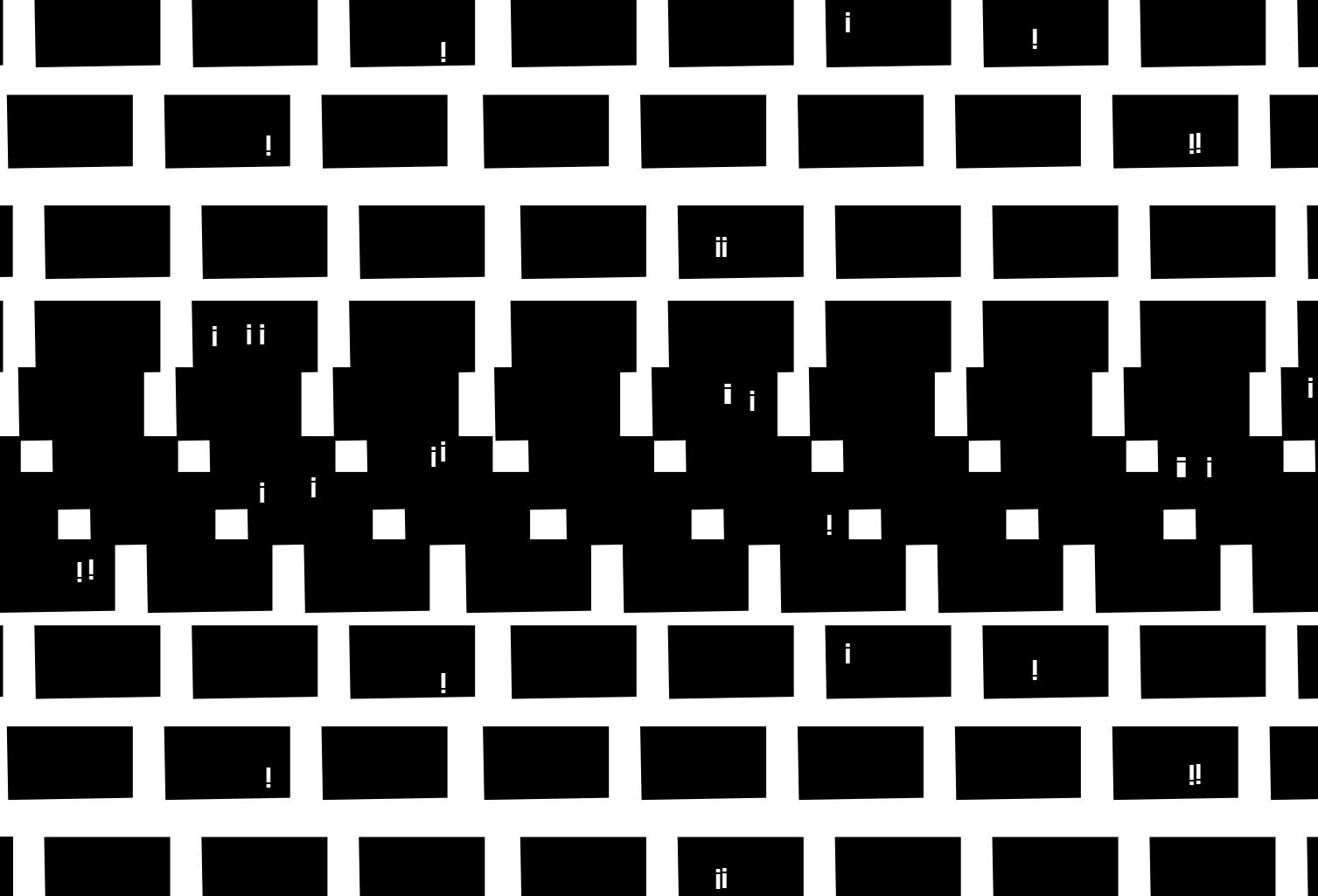
I CAN NEVER KNOW THEM ALL





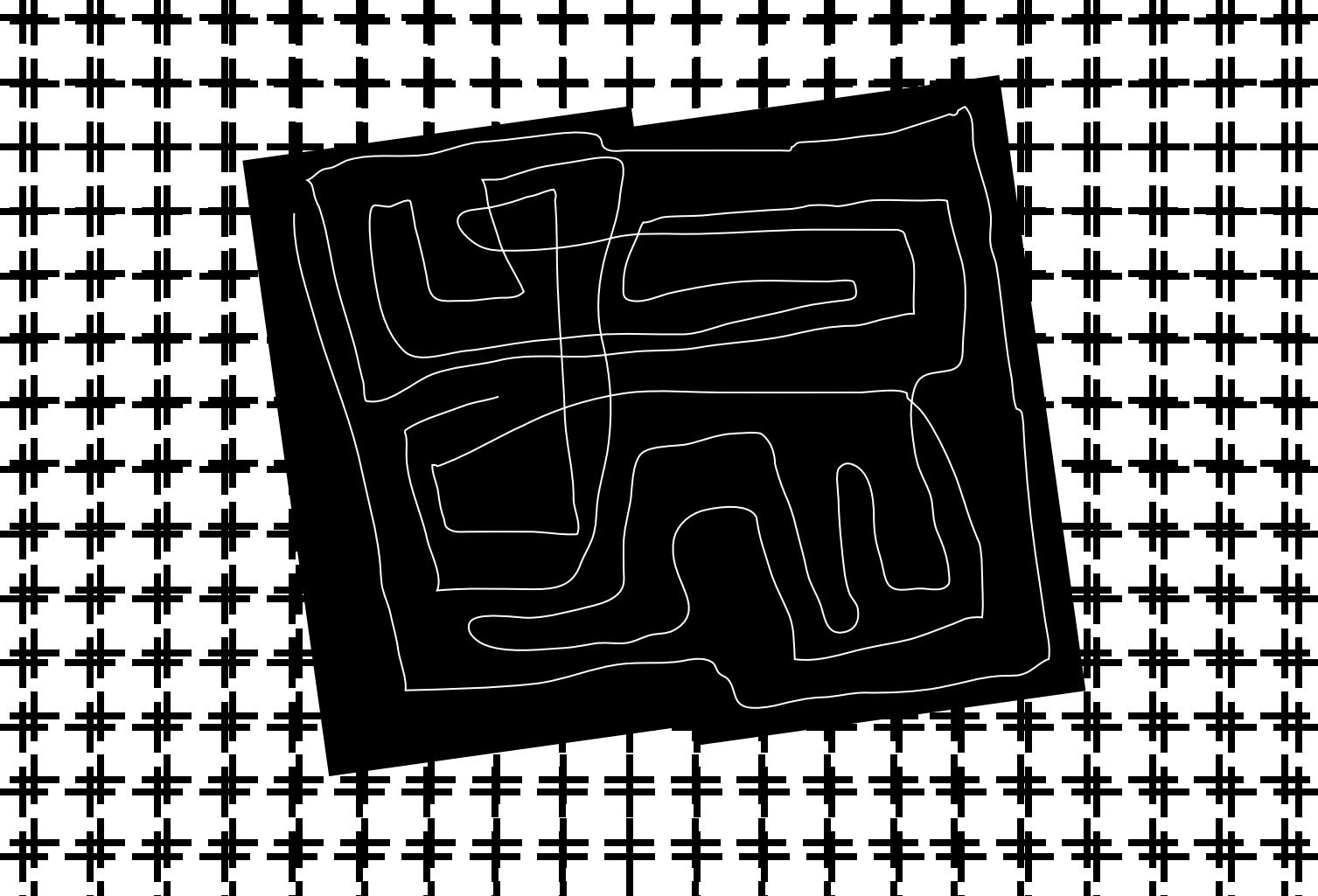


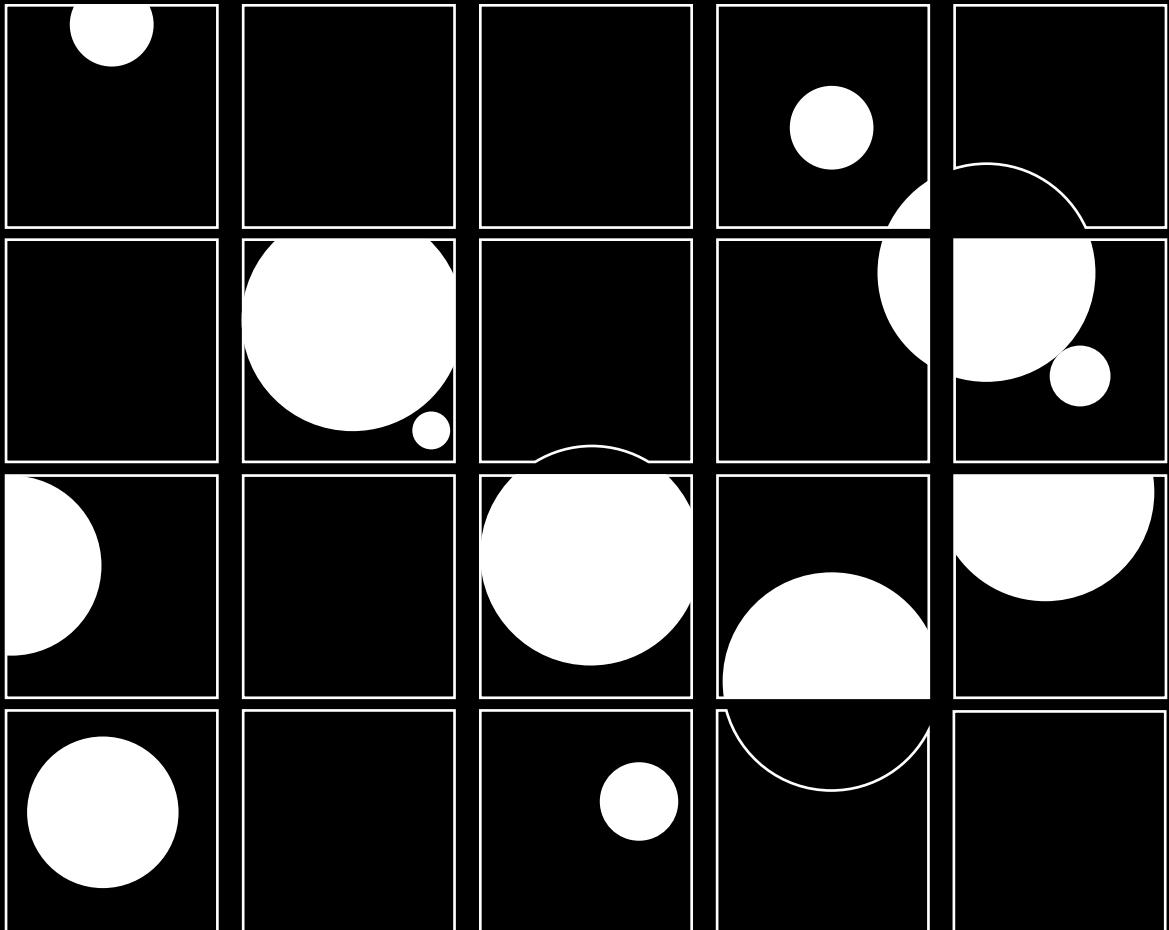
THE STRANGERS THAT PASS ME BY

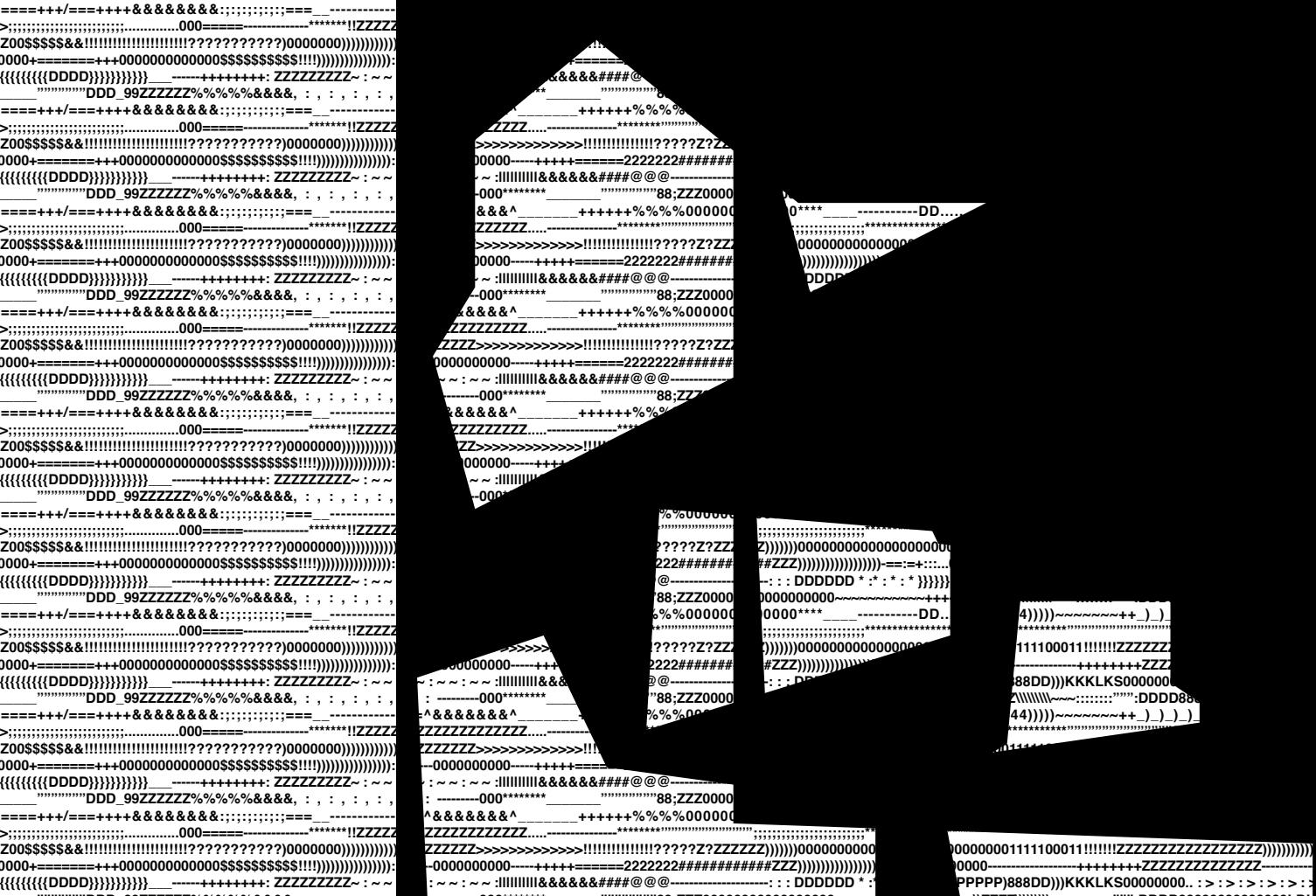


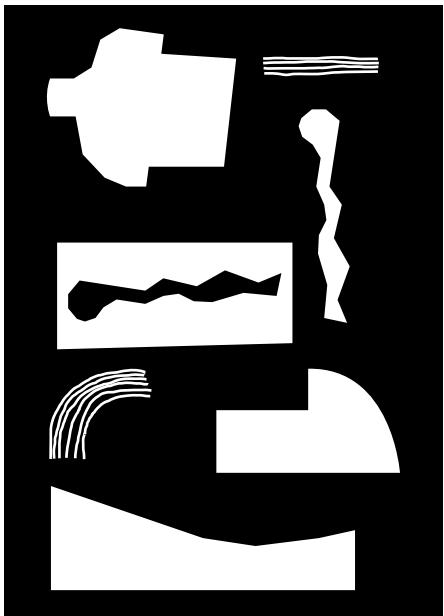
I CANNOT
SAY
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ABOUT THOUGHT

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experience
while I am
wondering

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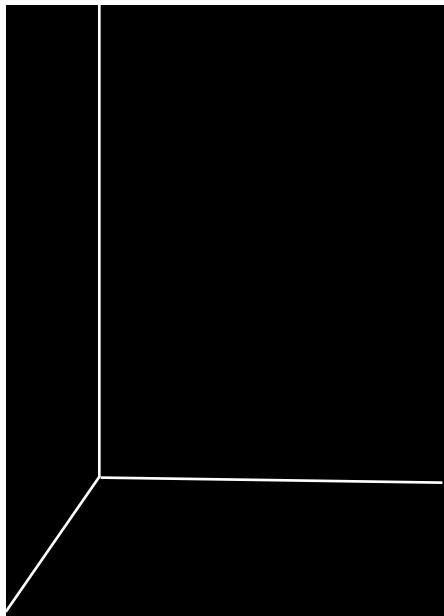
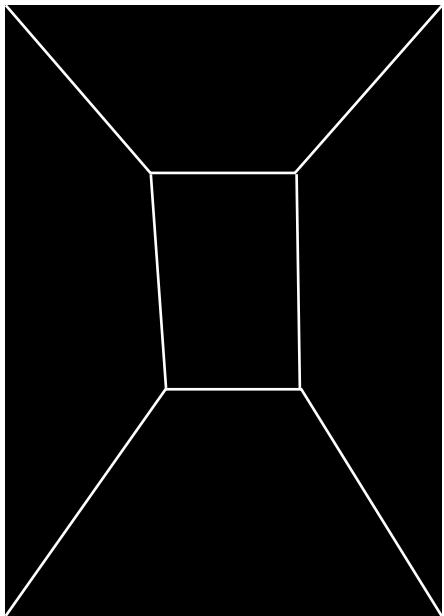
experience

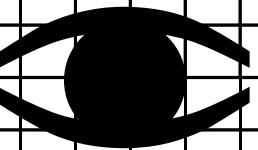
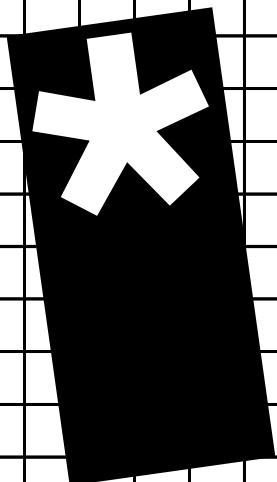
experience
while I am
wondering

experience
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wondering

I
experience
while I am
wondering

wondering
experience
while I am
wondering





I am complete but
not finished, I am
one with myself
but my story
is not over.

Please turn this
book around
to gain a new
perspective.

Acknowledgements

Artists, writers, photographers, and practitioners whose work is evidence of profound concepts applied to creative projects, have all inspired this project. They have played an integral role in developing the idea of portraying emotion through the means of a book. I am thankful to these creatives who have paved the way and opened new doors for aspiring designers such as myself. Furthermore, I would like to thank those closest to me, who have listened to my thoughts and provided the feedback needed in order to push my creative limits further from what I thought I was capable of. Amidst a global pandemic, I am thankful to my lecturers who have facilitated the best possible education despite the chaos of the situation they were put in. I hope that this book nurtures a greater degree of empathy and compassion, facilitates a greater sense of connection to all people, and cultivates new conceptual frameworks for the richness of life to be communicated.

