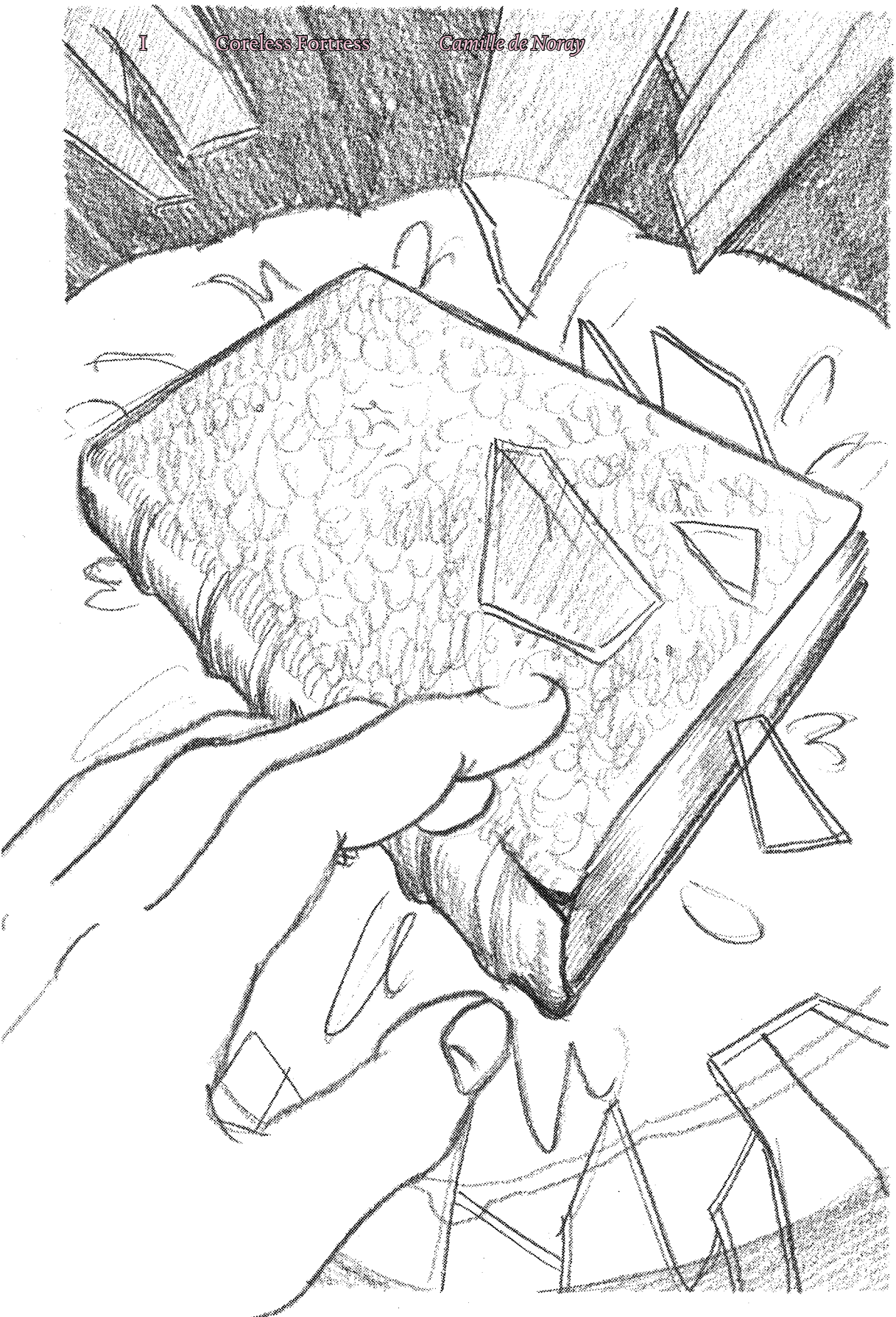
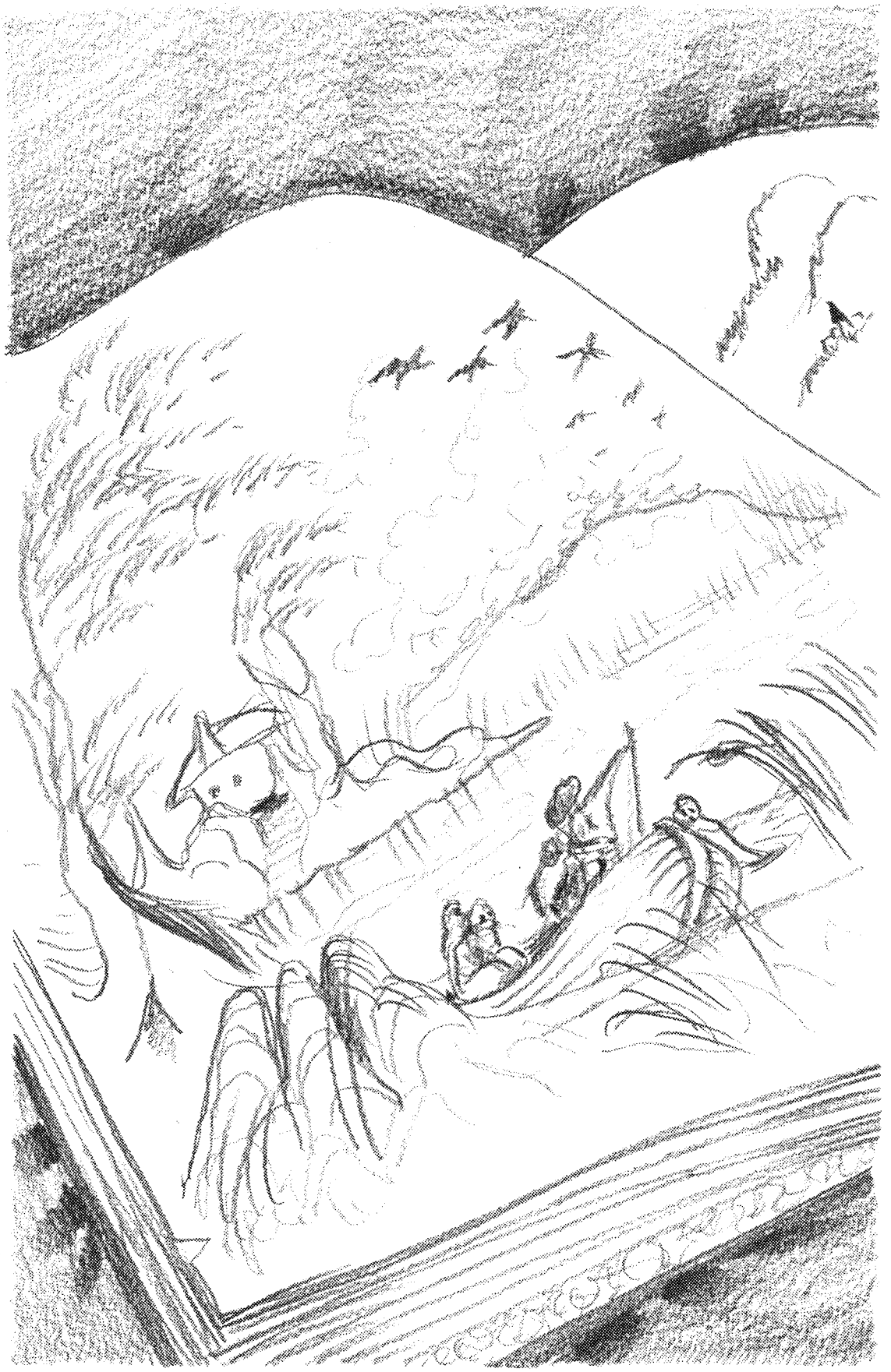
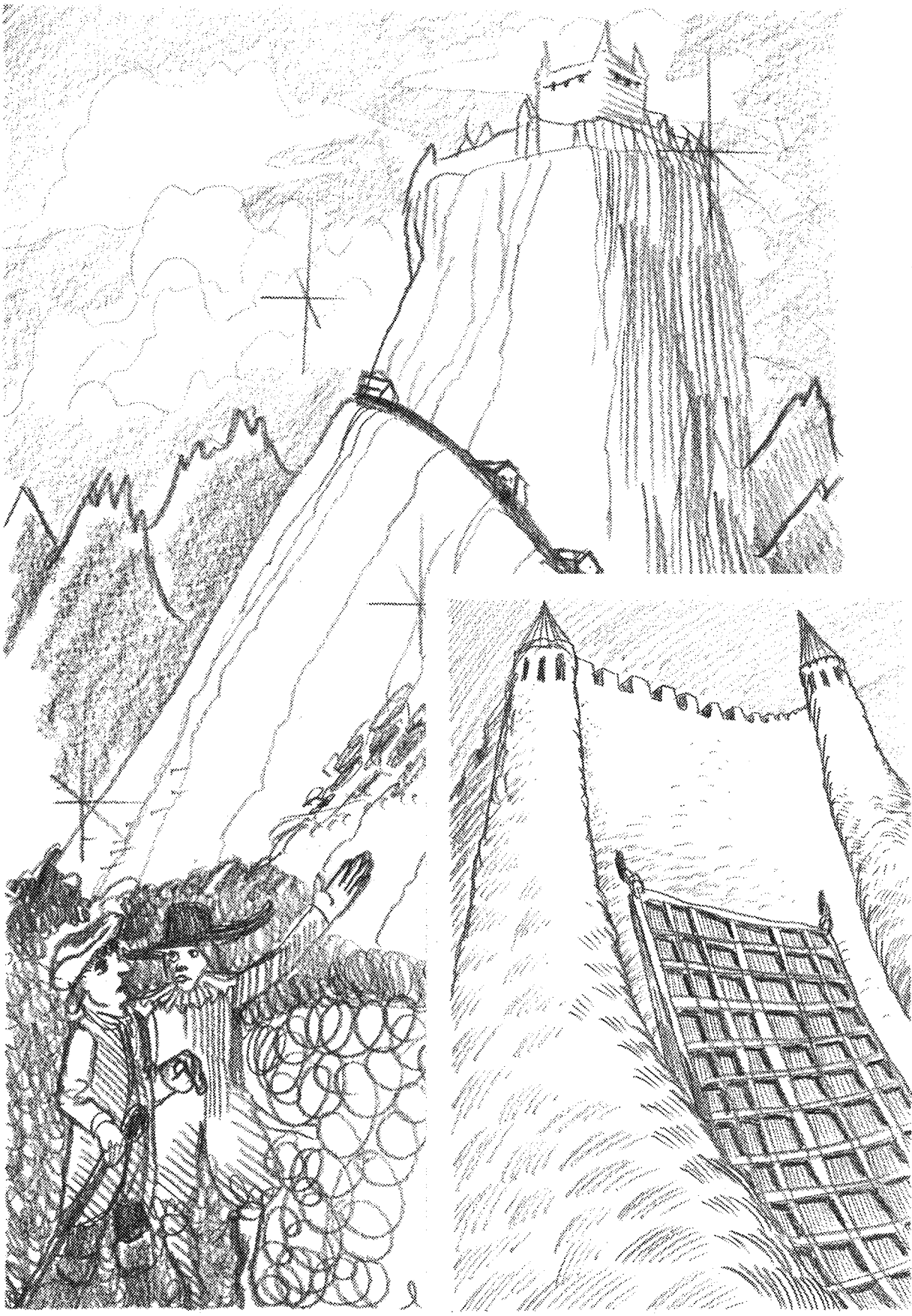
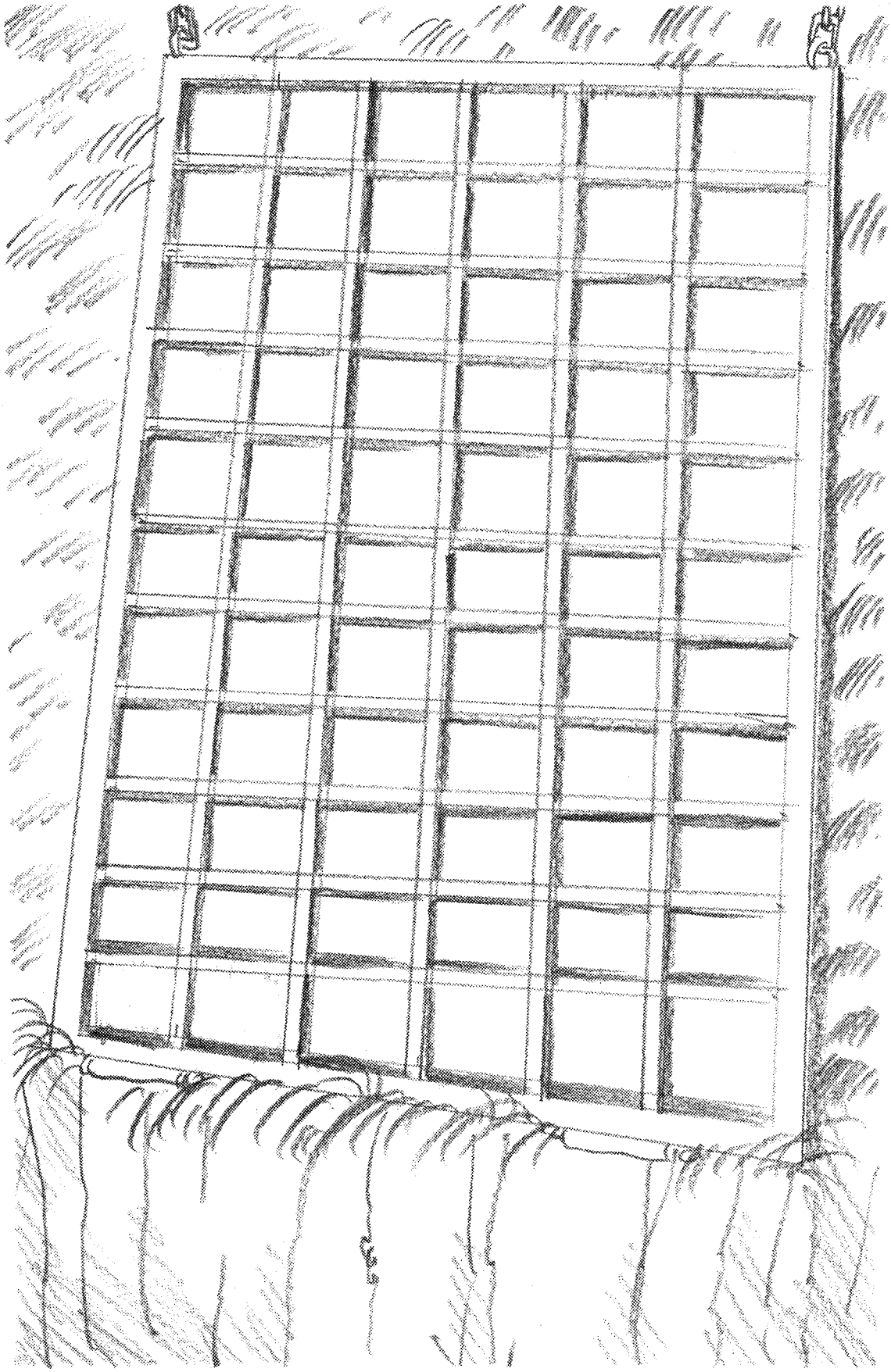
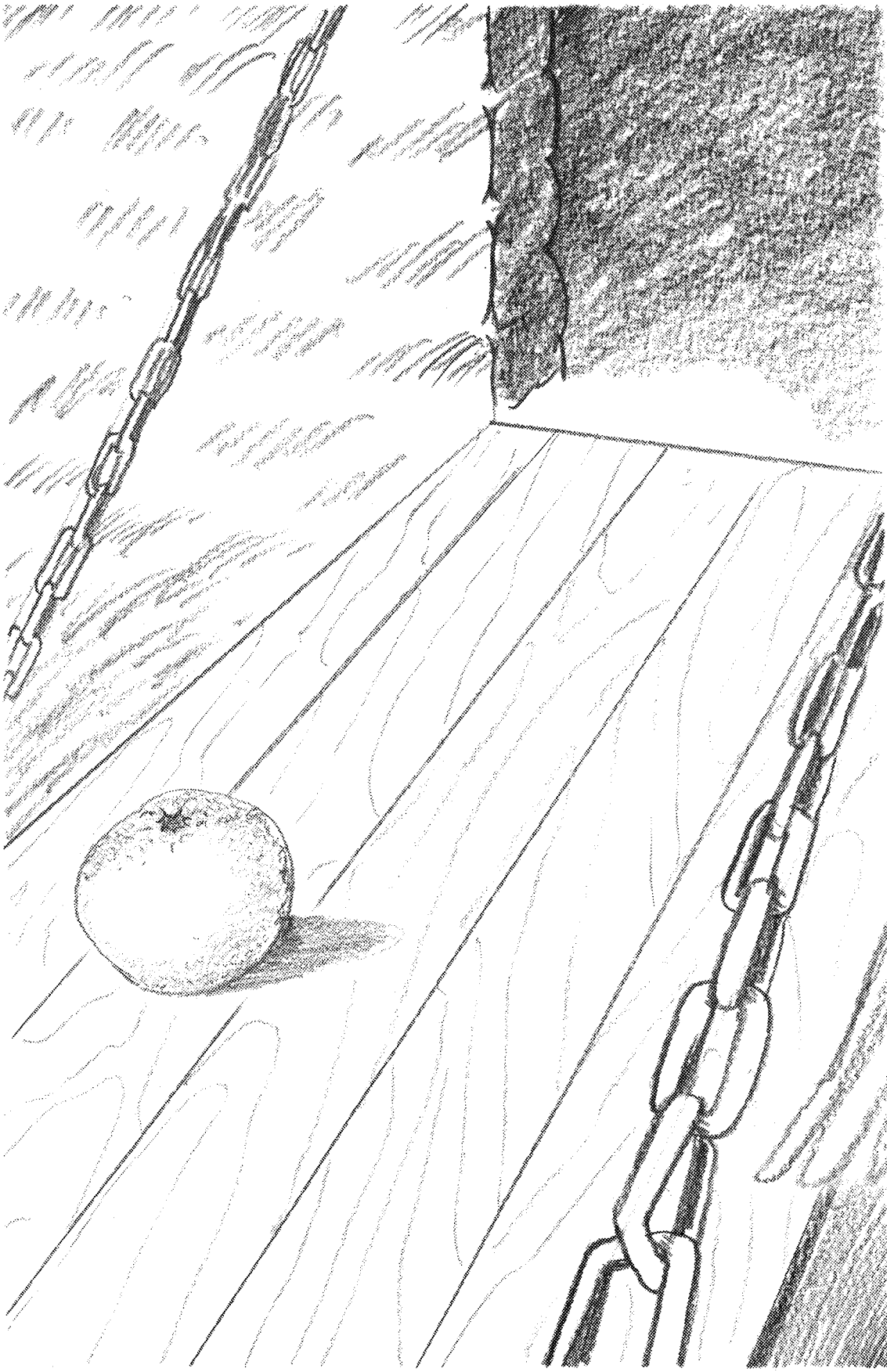


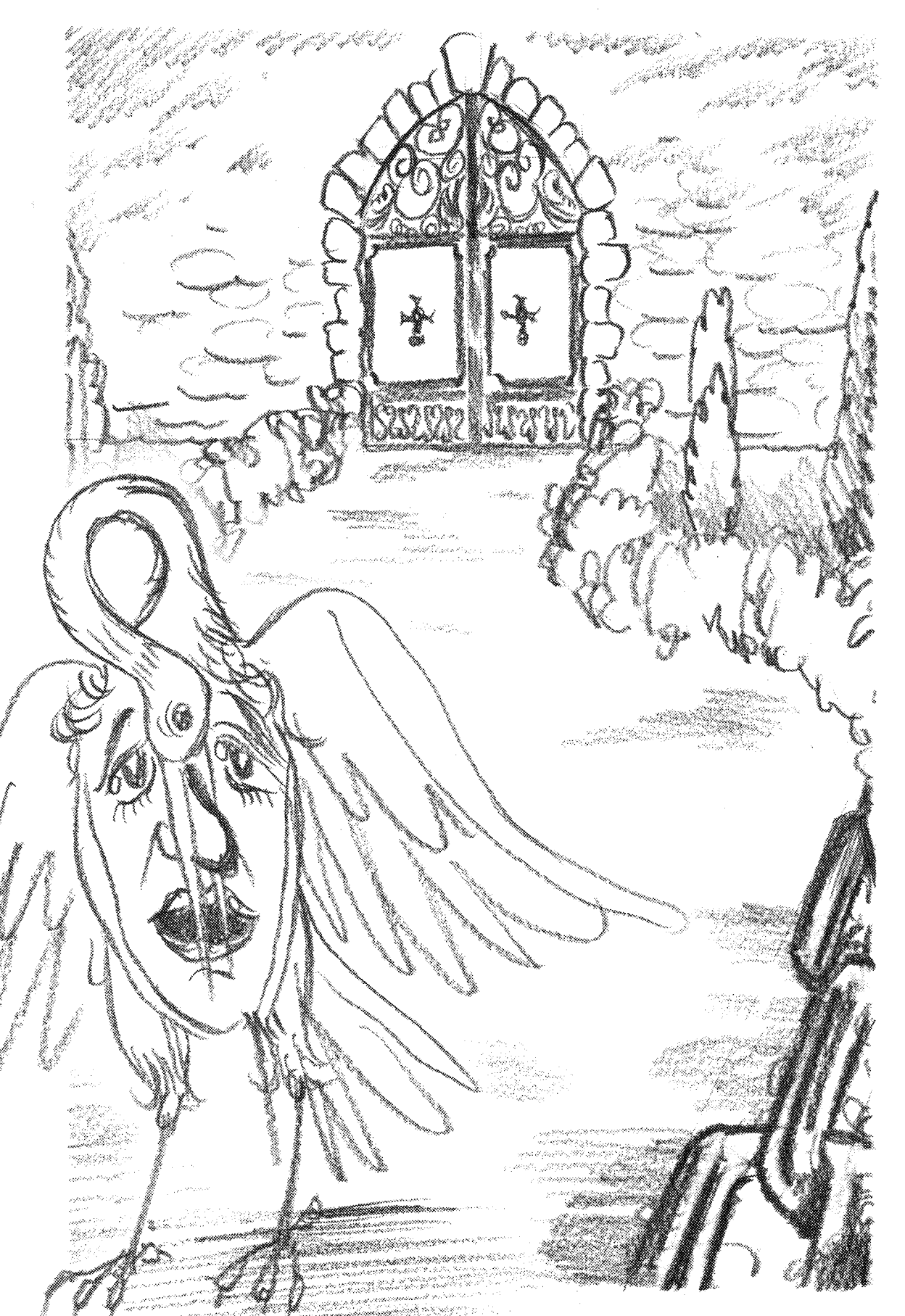


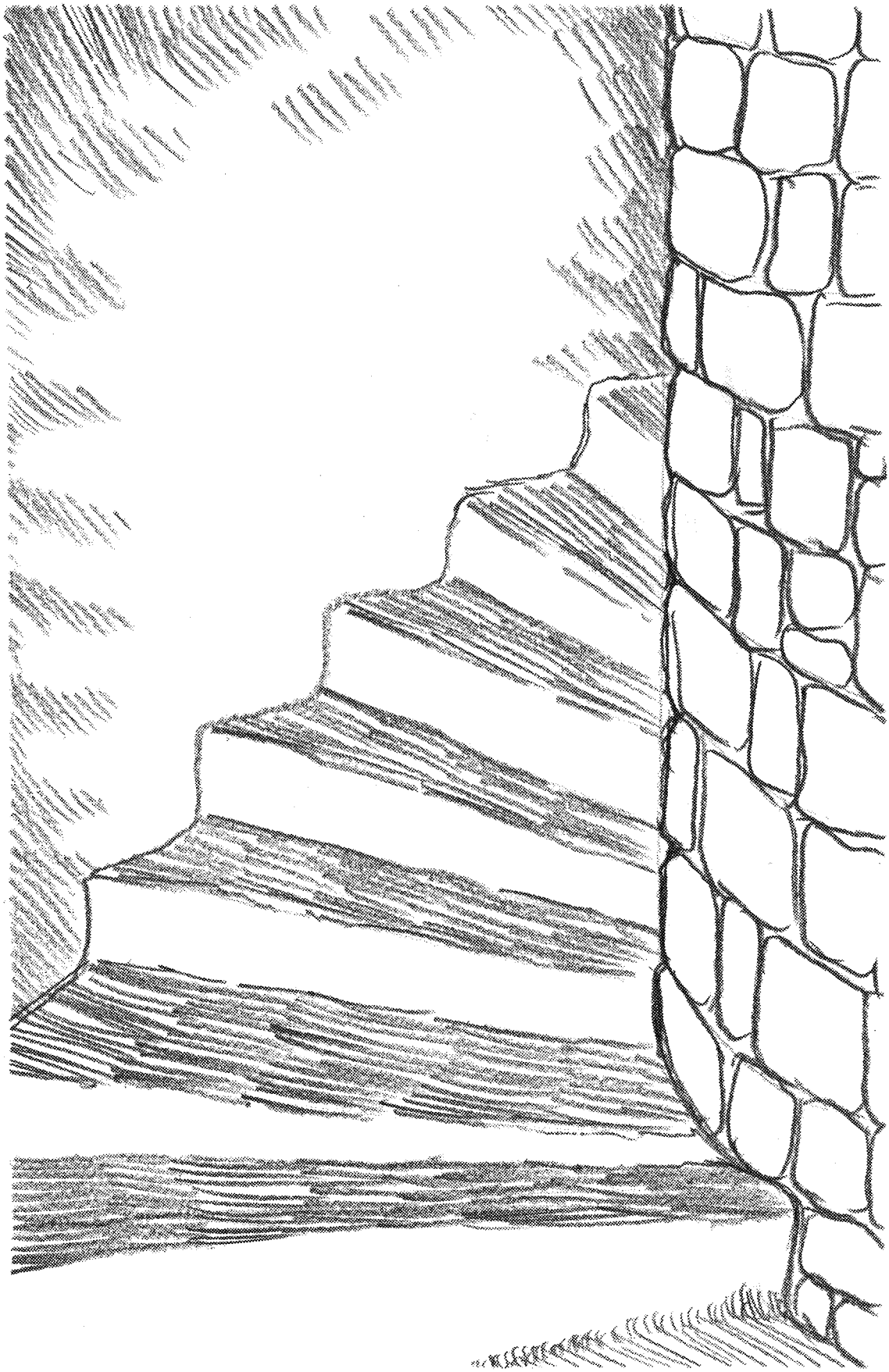

Securitas altera

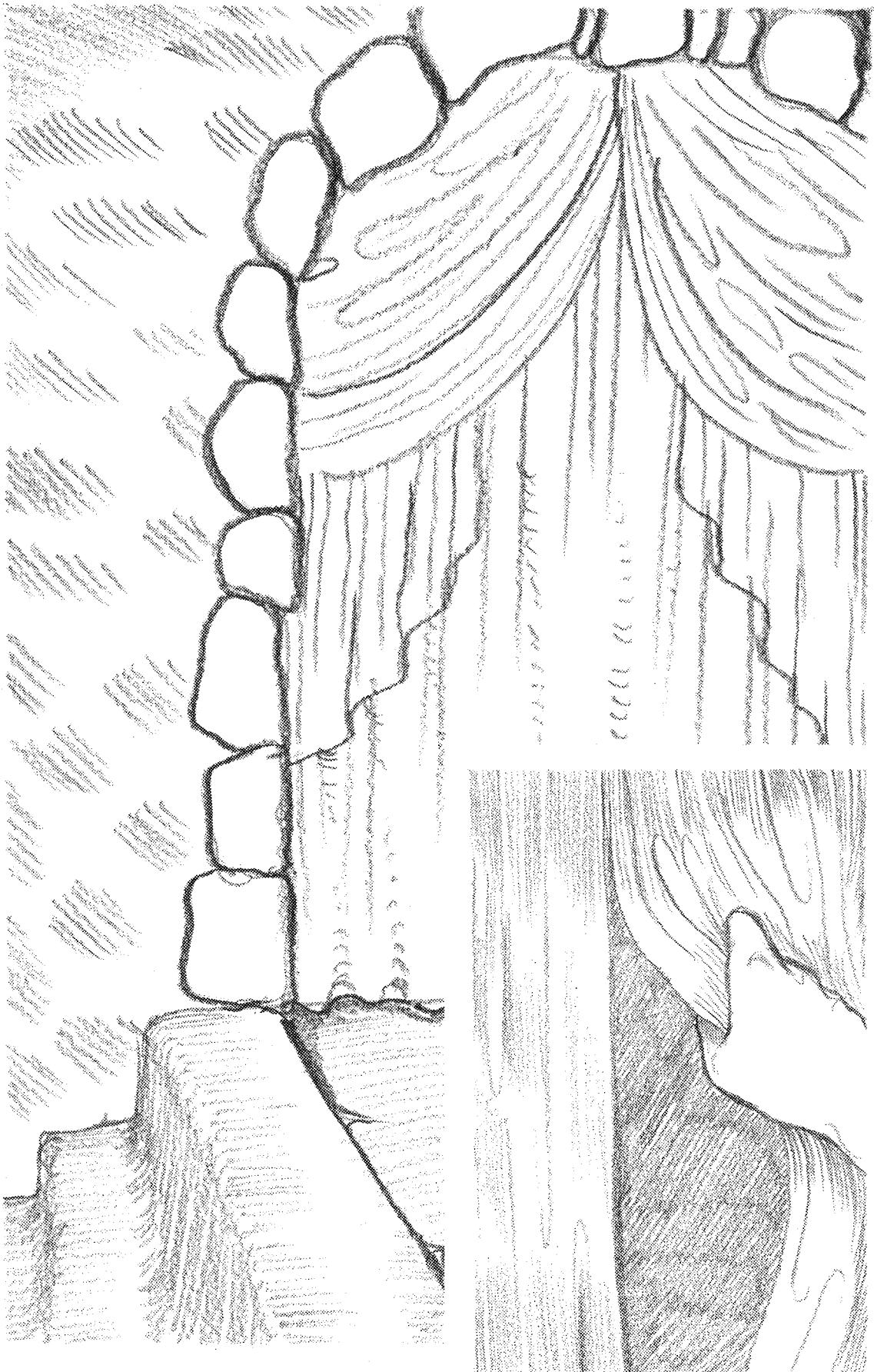


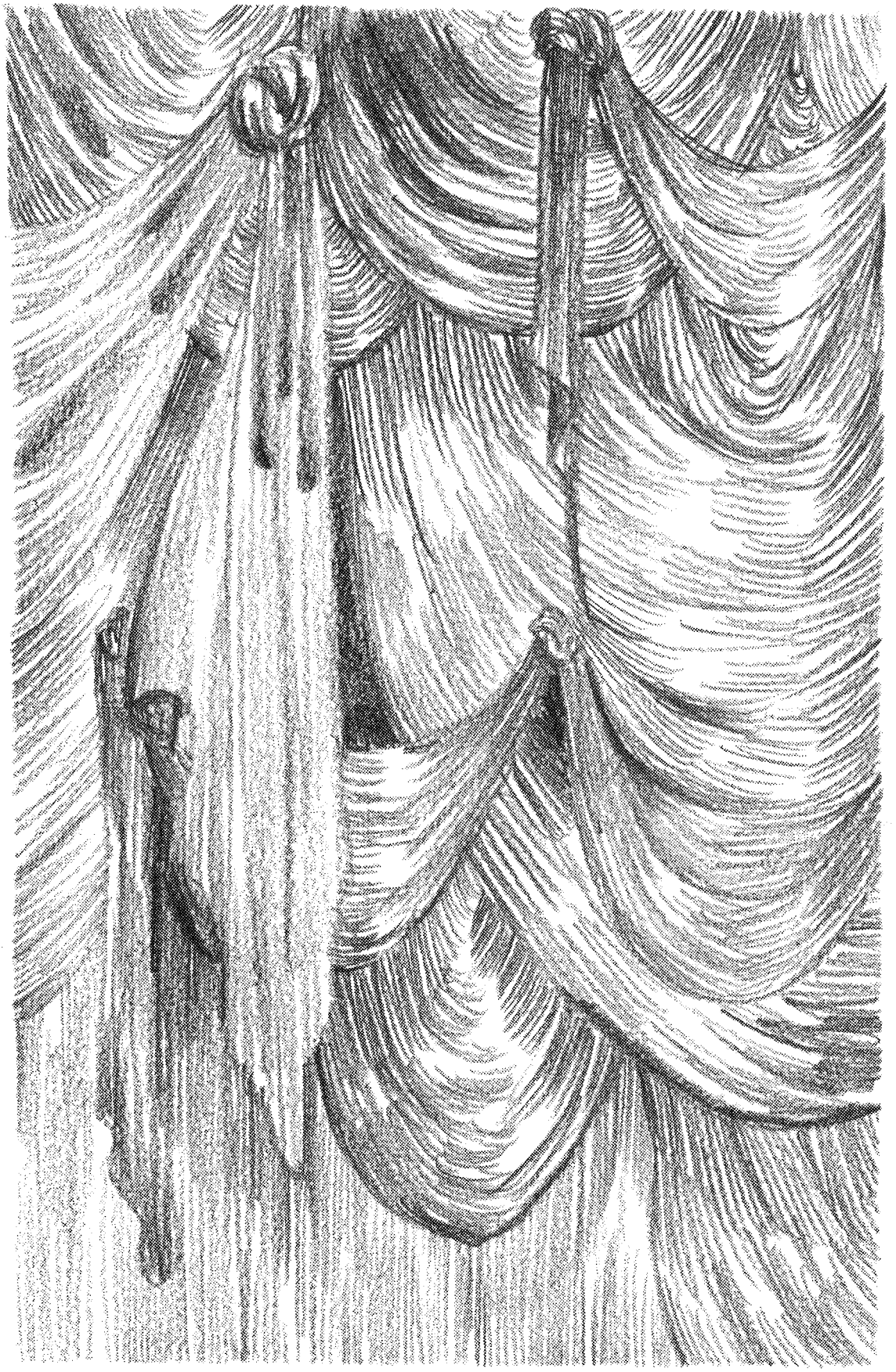


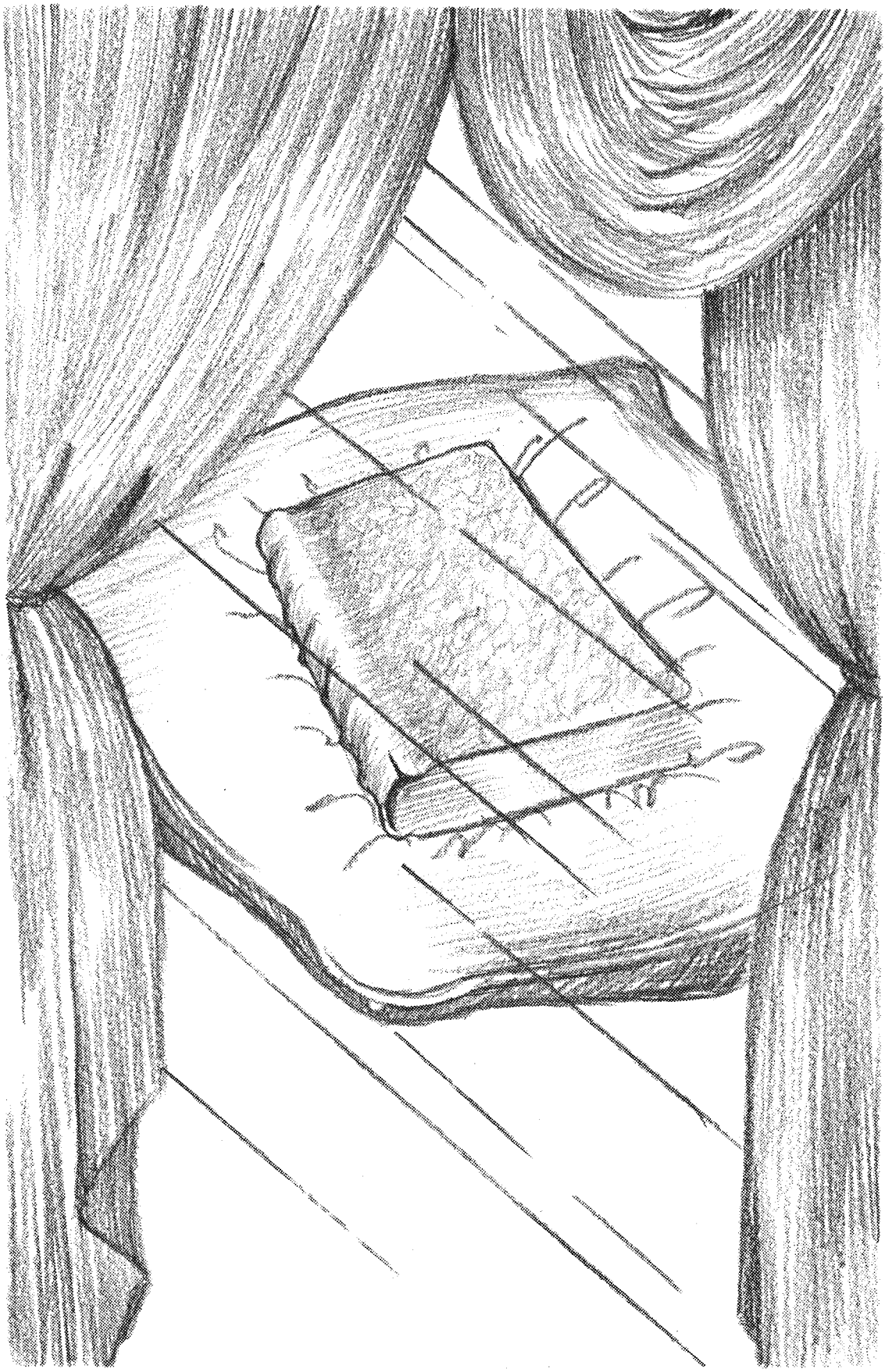


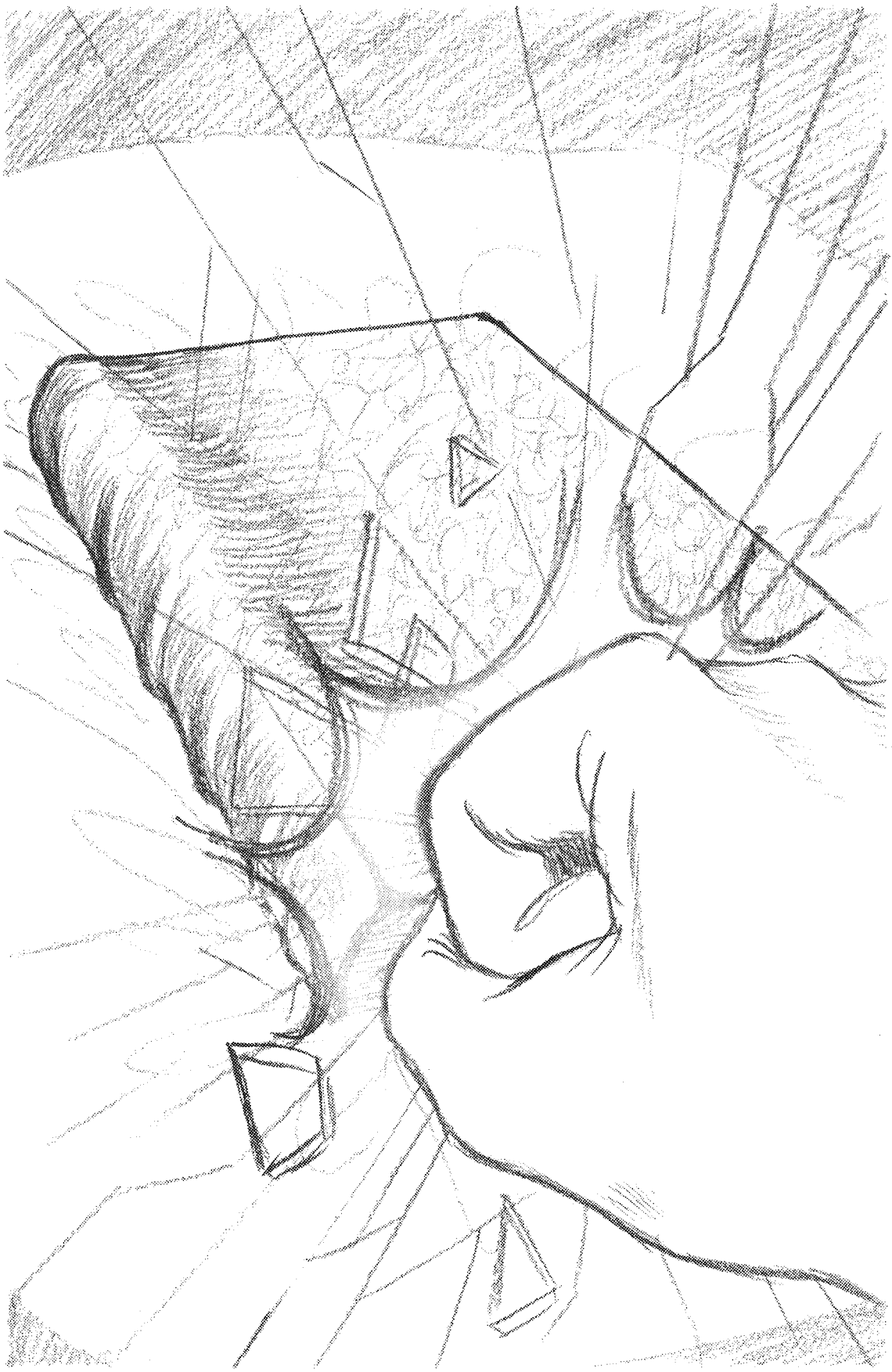


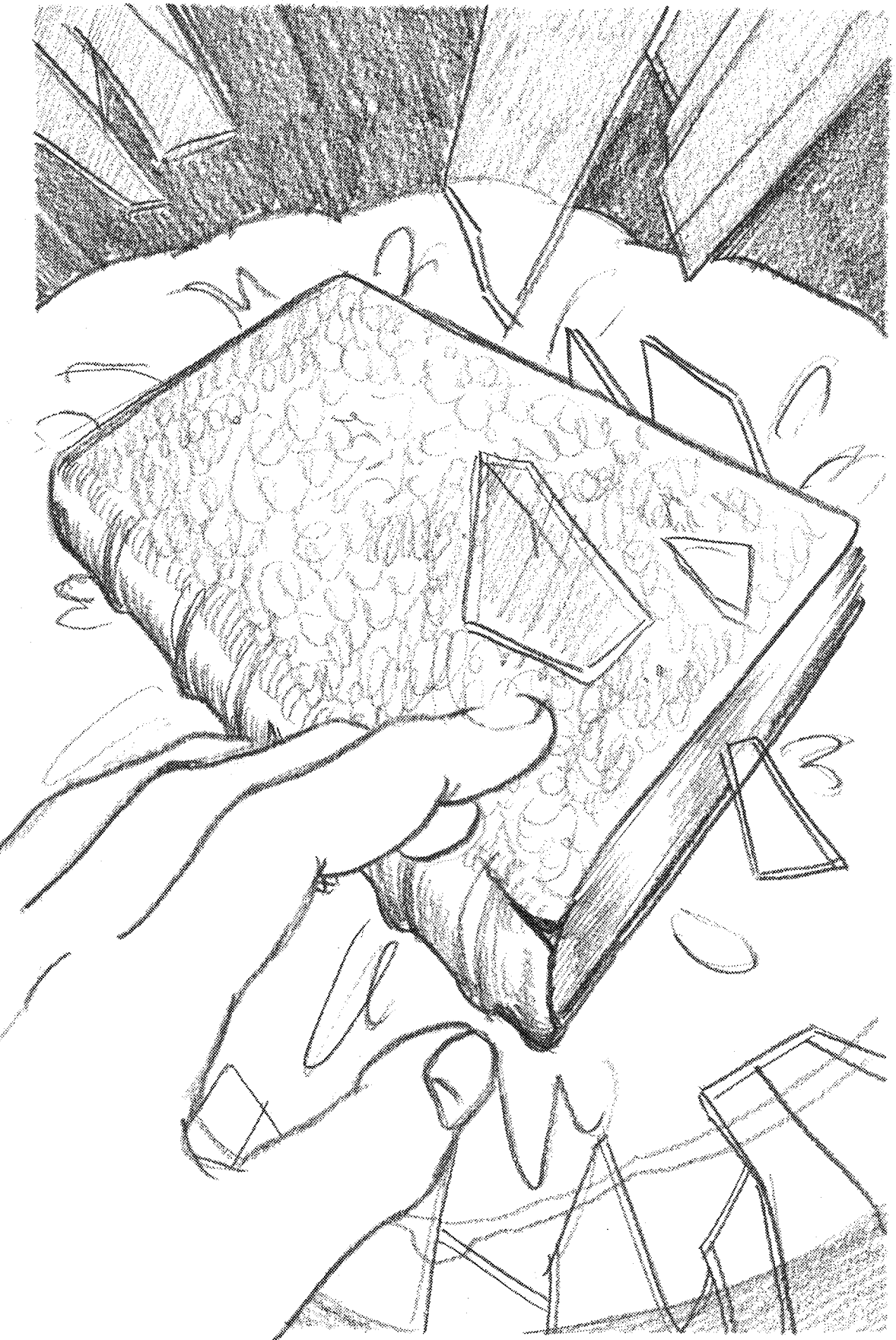




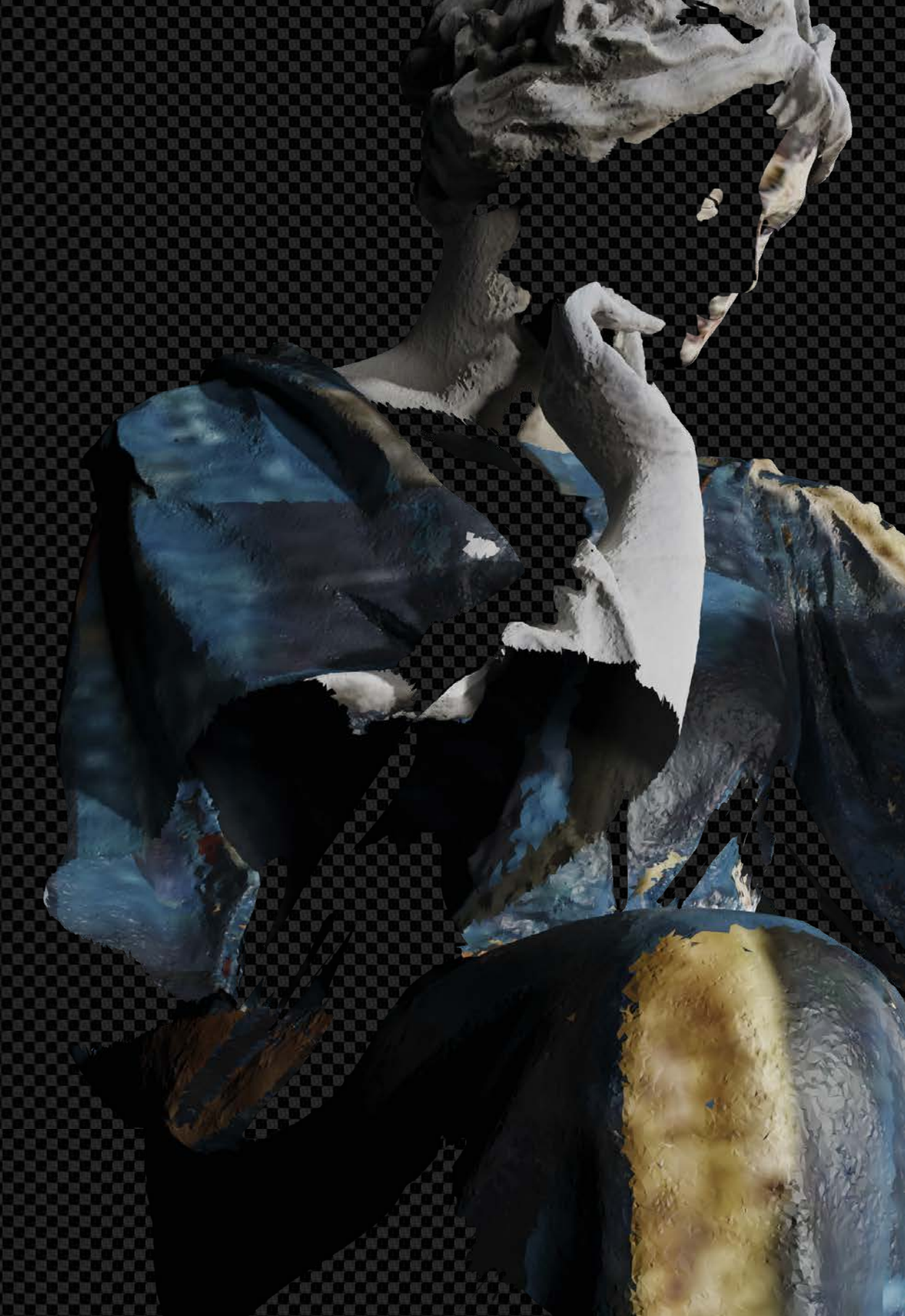


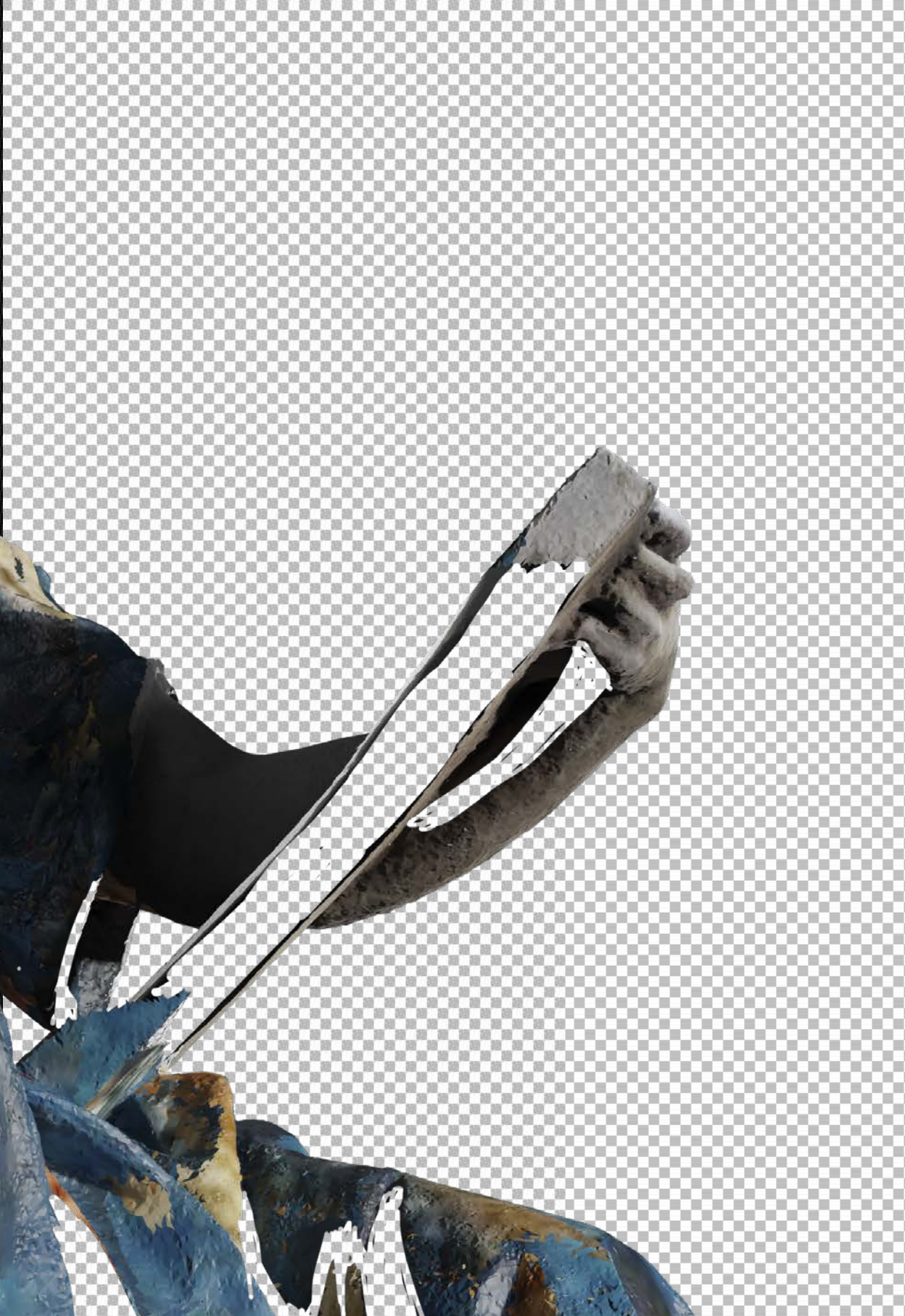




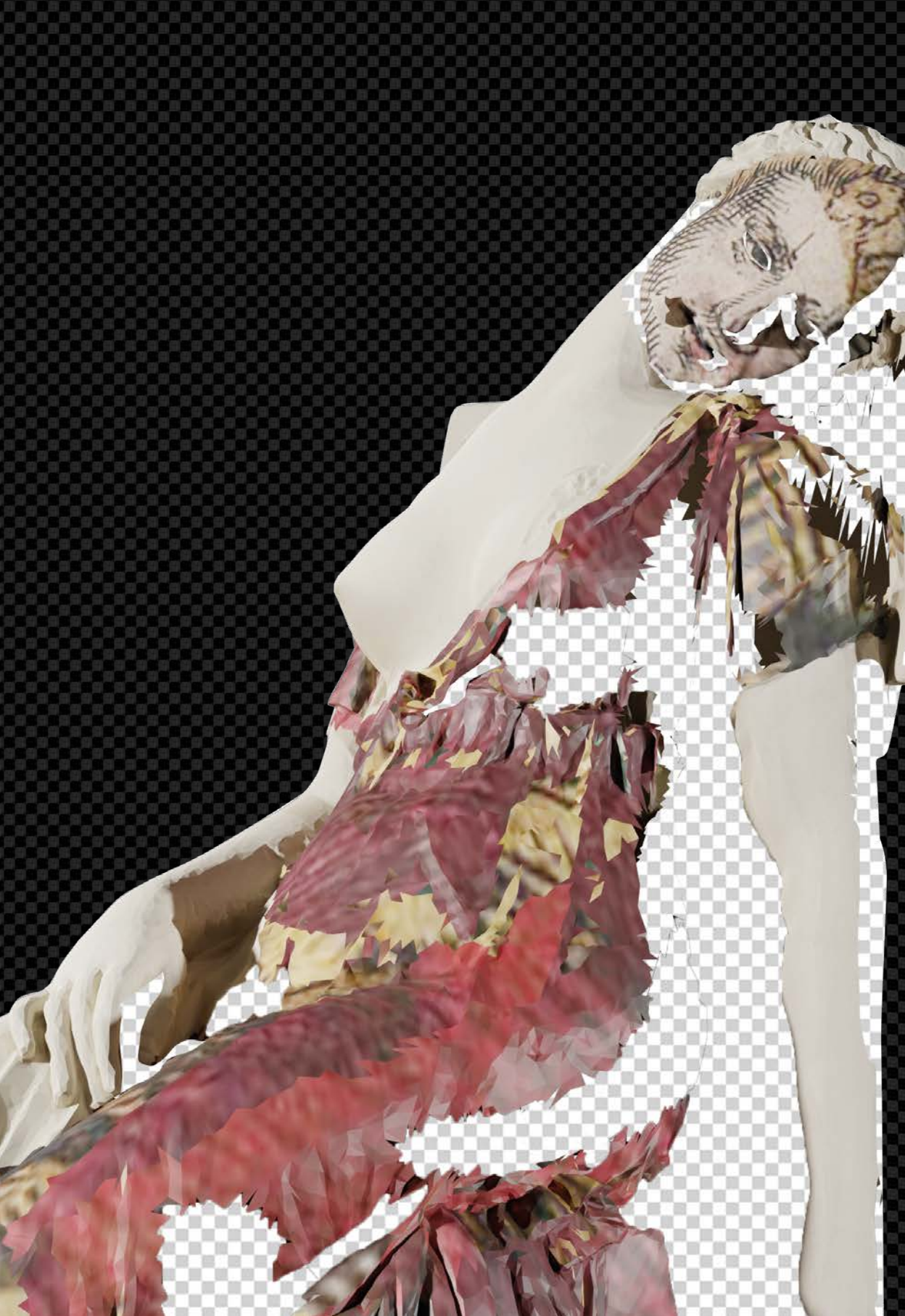


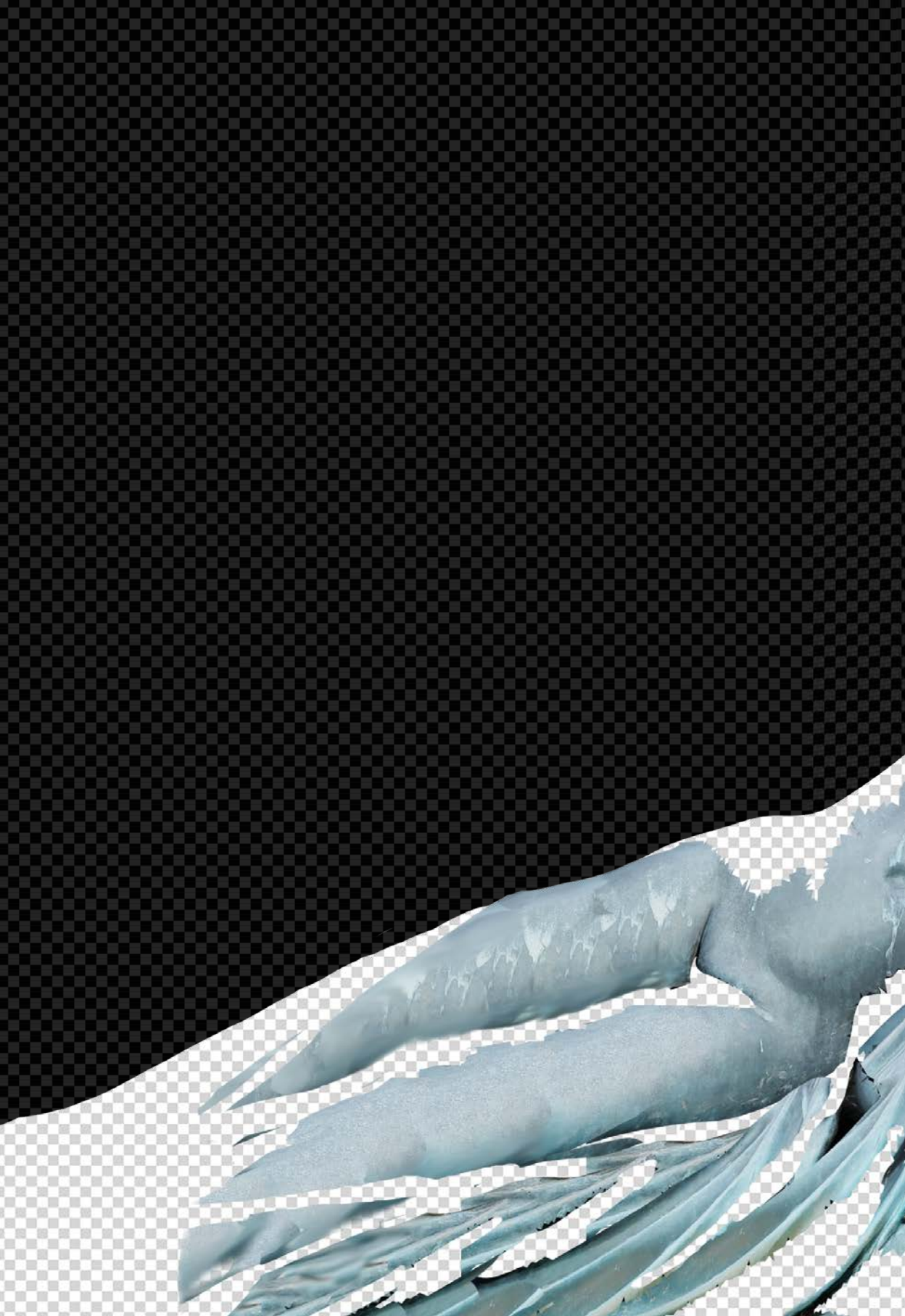
How much information is sufficient to gain insight into historical artefacts and their significance?

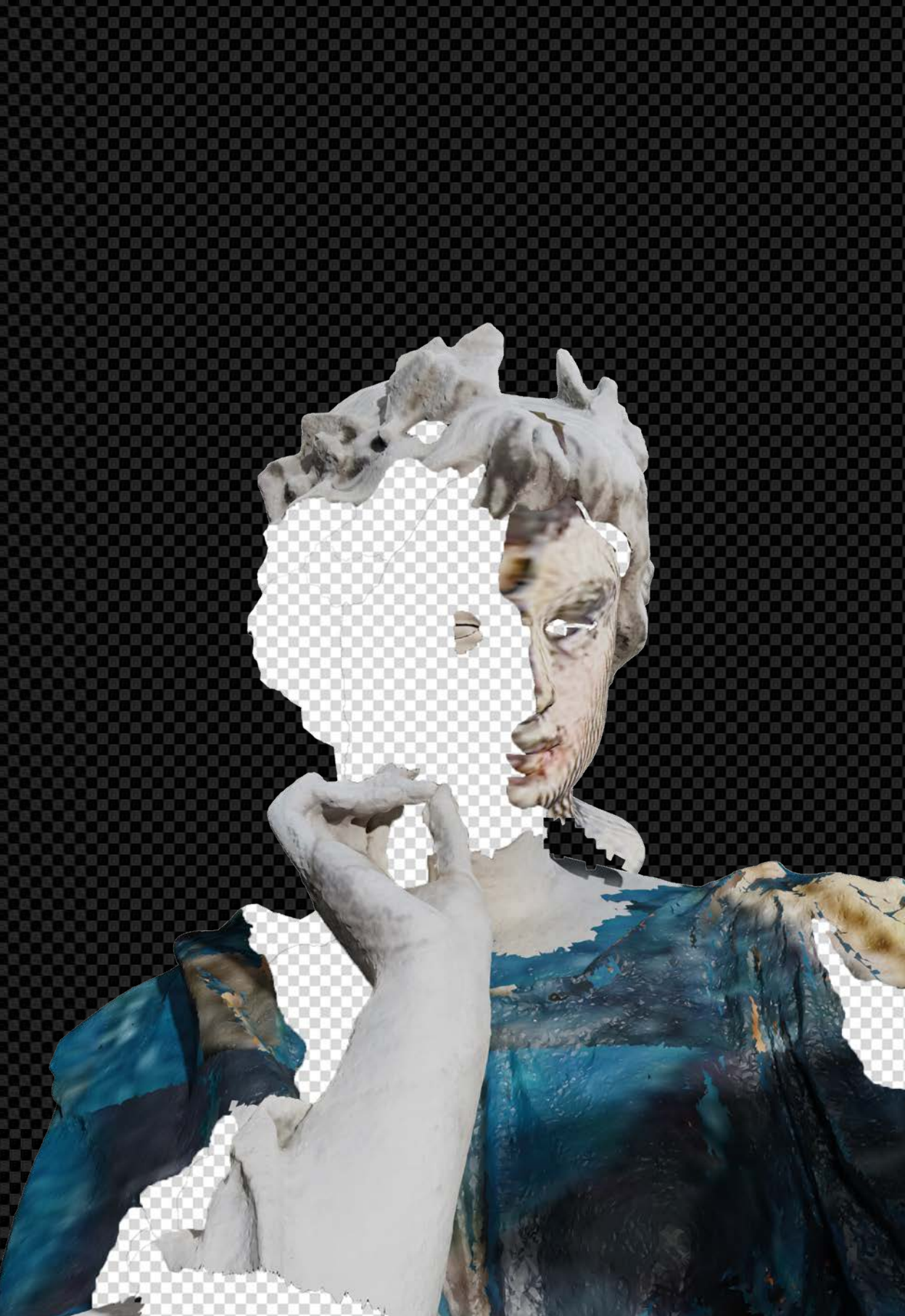


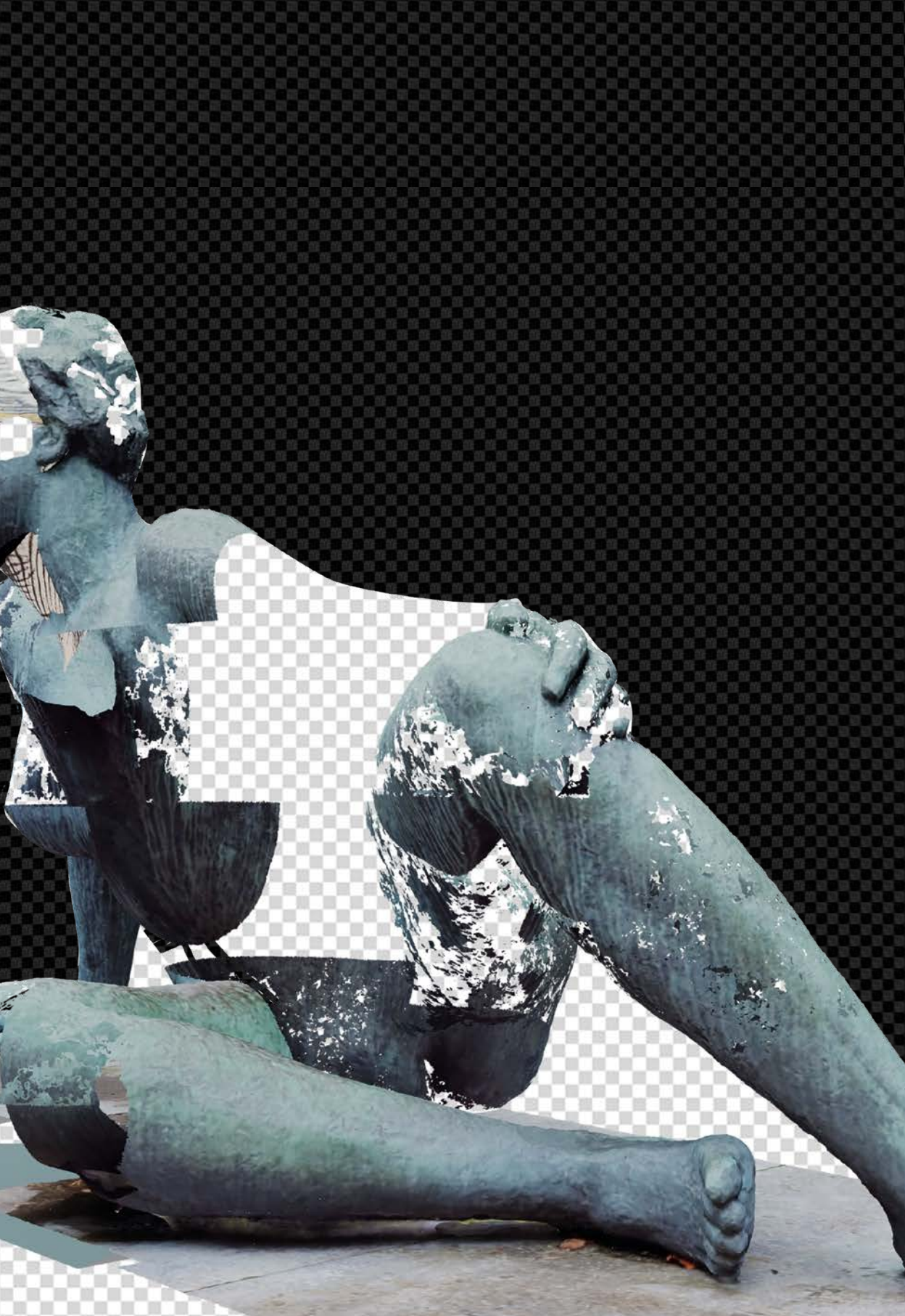


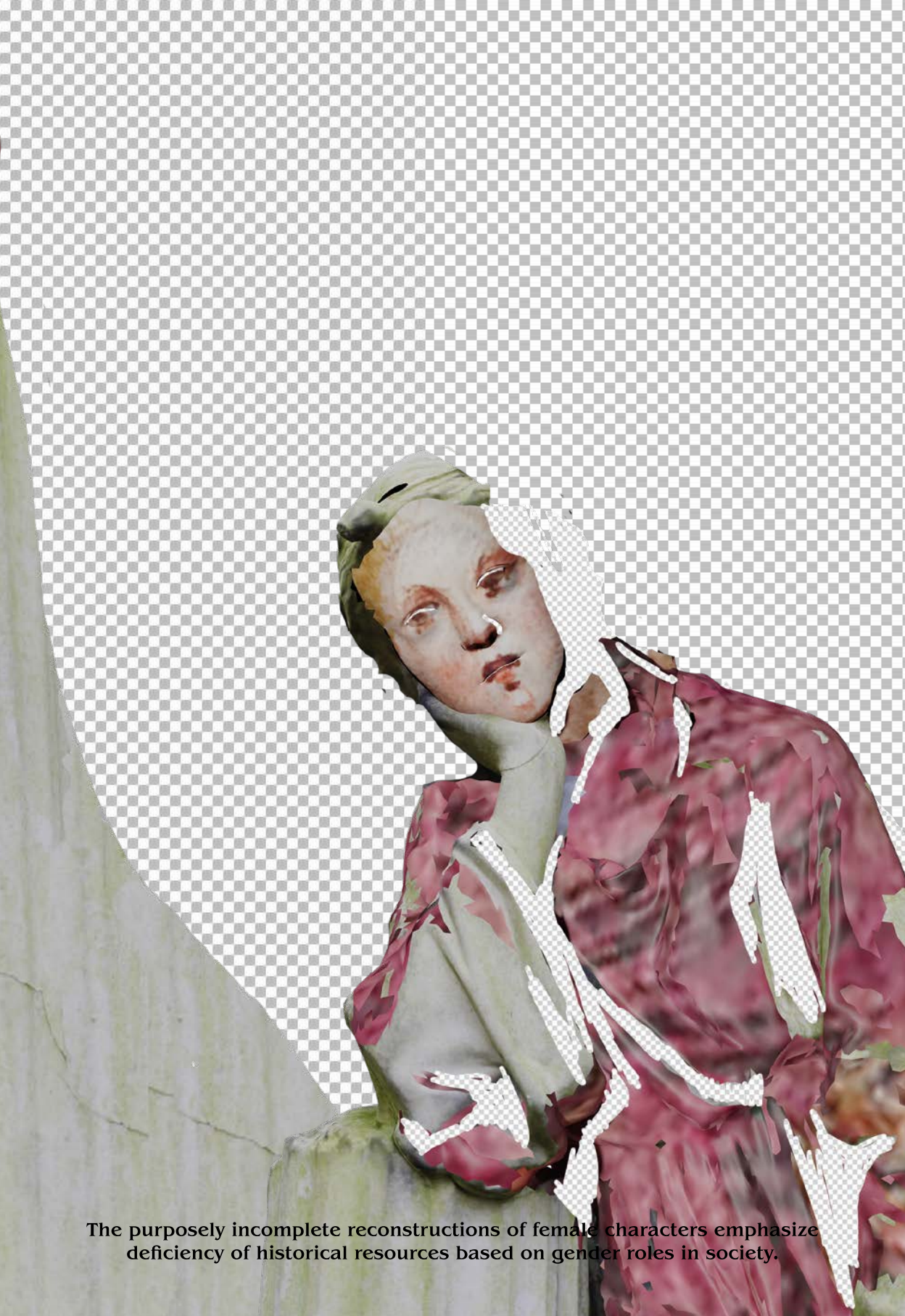
The anonymity of represented people is expressed through depictions of females whose names are not mentioned.









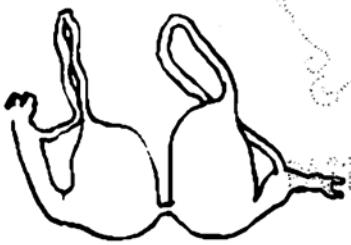


The purposely incomplete reconstructions of female characters emphasize deficiency of historical resources based on gender roles in society.

BURCHARD GROSSMANN'S
ALBA AMICORUM

(from Weimar, Thuringia)
1603 - OCt - 03

AN ONLY CHILD OF A HIGH-BORN MAN, HOLDING A COURT POSITION.



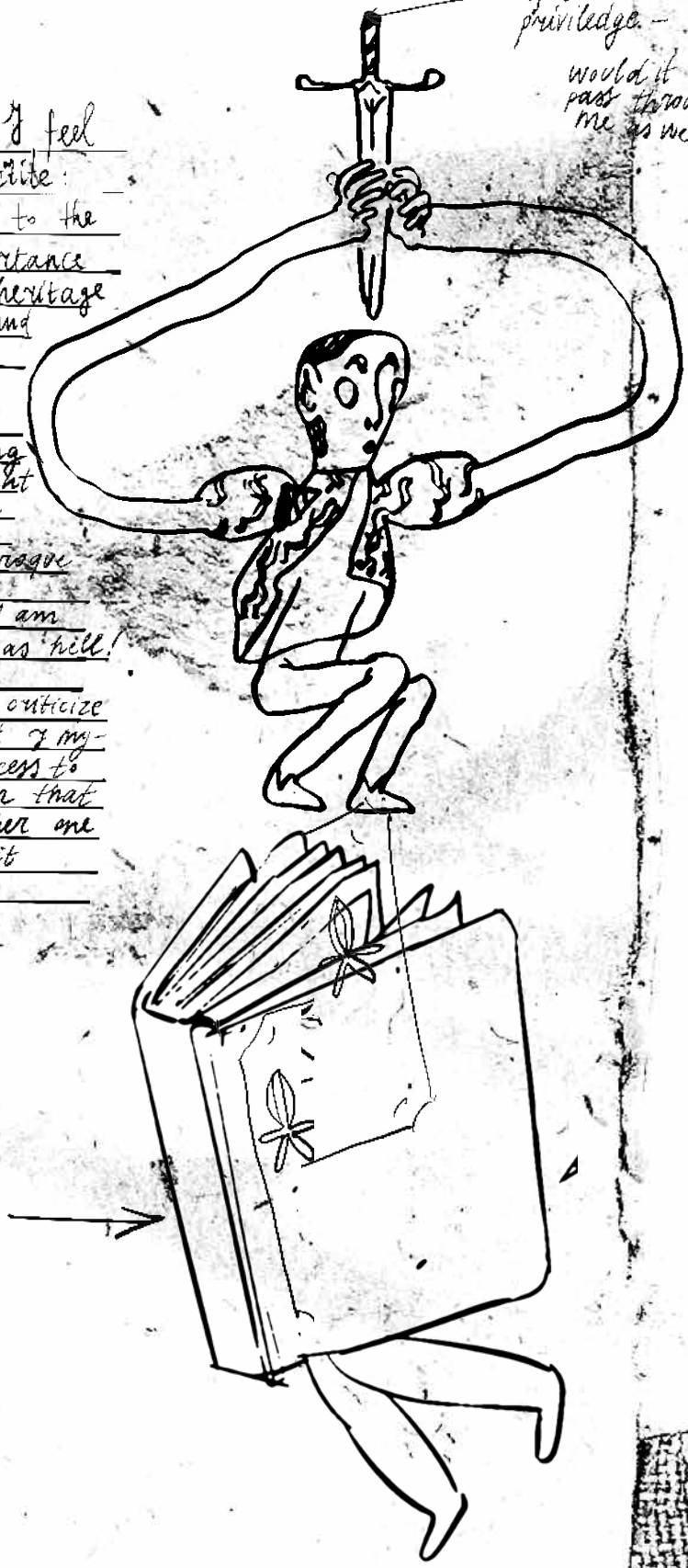
1896 Album entered an impressive collection of Royal Library of The Hague

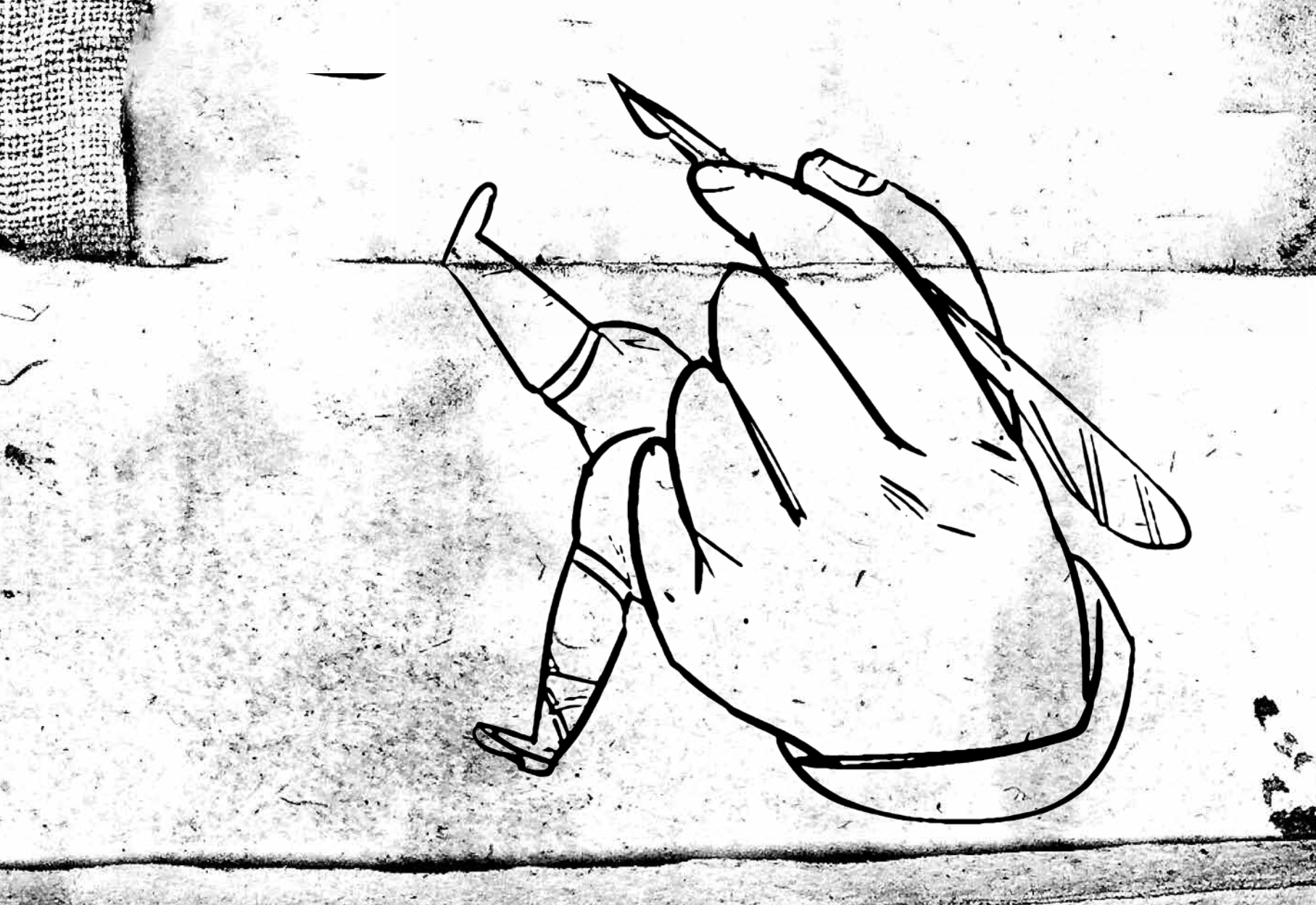
IDLE LIFE

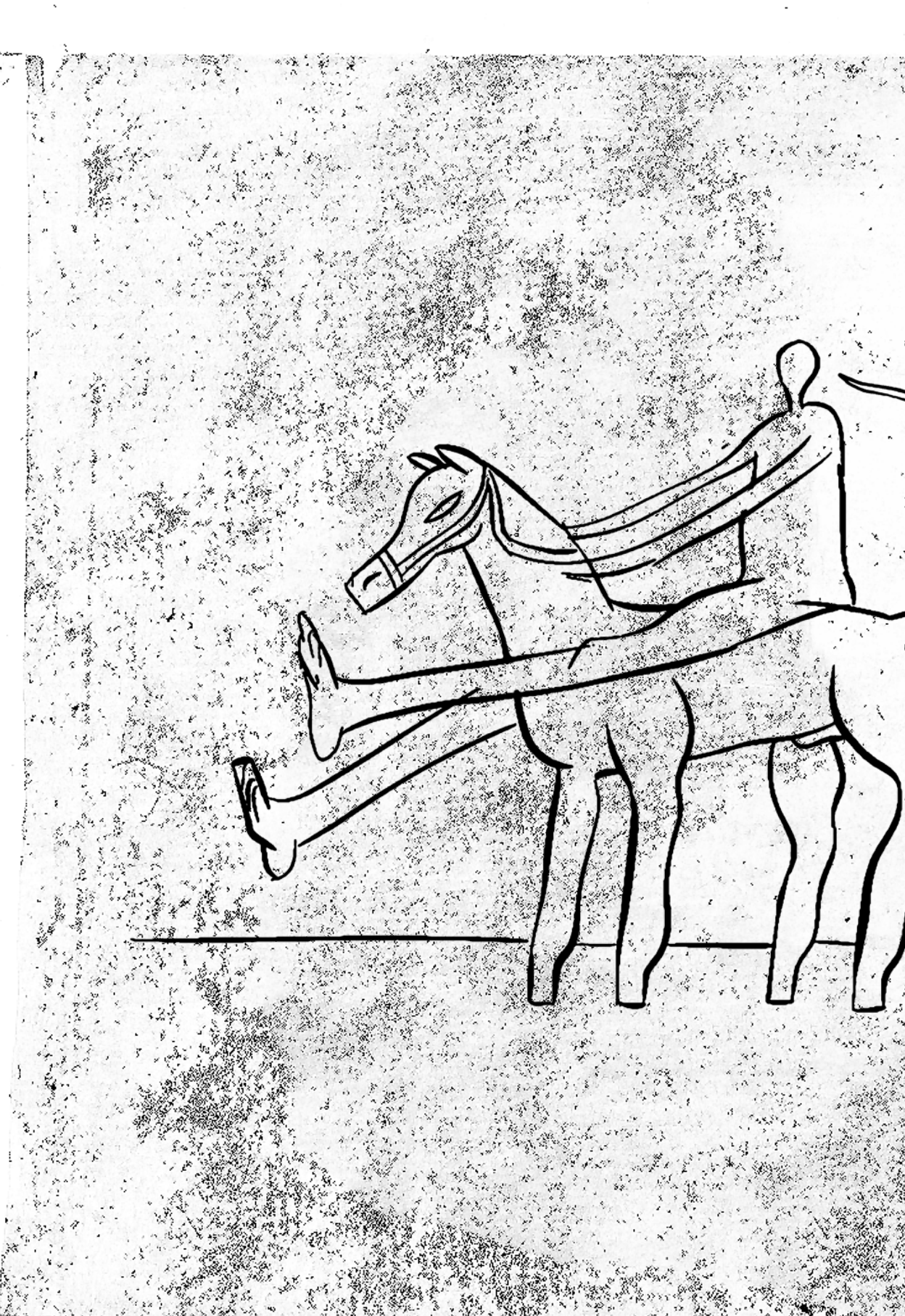
At this point I feel like a hypocite: not relating to the idea of importance of cultural heritage left by the and priviledged.

While at the same time being an art-student indulging in making these exhausting baroque drawings.
In fact - I am priveledged as hell!

Wanting to criticize something that I myself have access to doesn't mean that I am another one who abuse it



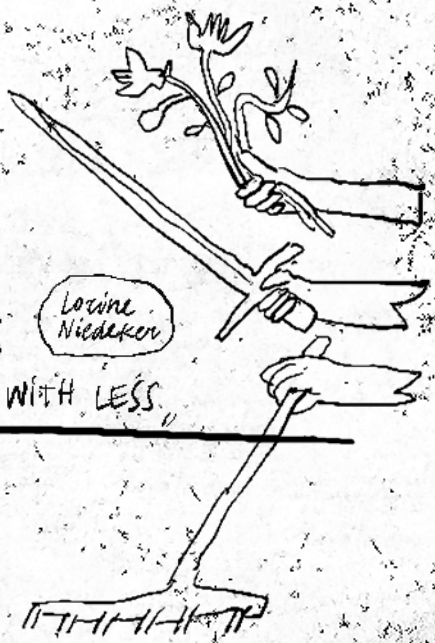




LET'S GO TAKE THAT LAND

I don't come from a family or a nation that colonized. But the past I know is a story – could be all fictional. I don't know if it is all about opportunities that come your way.

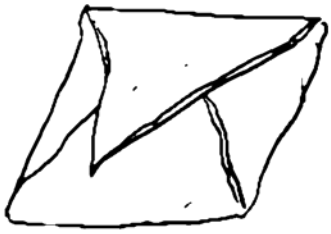
What would I've done if I had a chance to exploit smaller people and multiply the riches I had..!

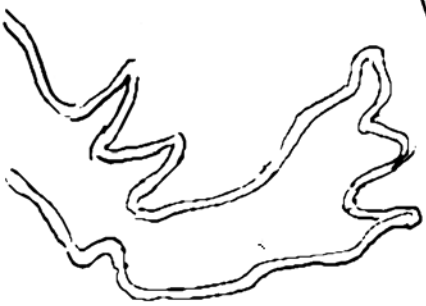


„I WAS FREE WITH LESS"

Lovine Niedeker

Some messages of people who barely remain alive are coming through





IRREVOCABLE PAST → PAST injustices are still injustices.

TO STUDY HOW past and present are entwined through genealogical implications

Mariane Hirsch - POST MEMORY

The fact itself that art and culture can be made into an object of status — maybe it is adding up to

THE EXISTANCE OF DOMINANT CULTURES

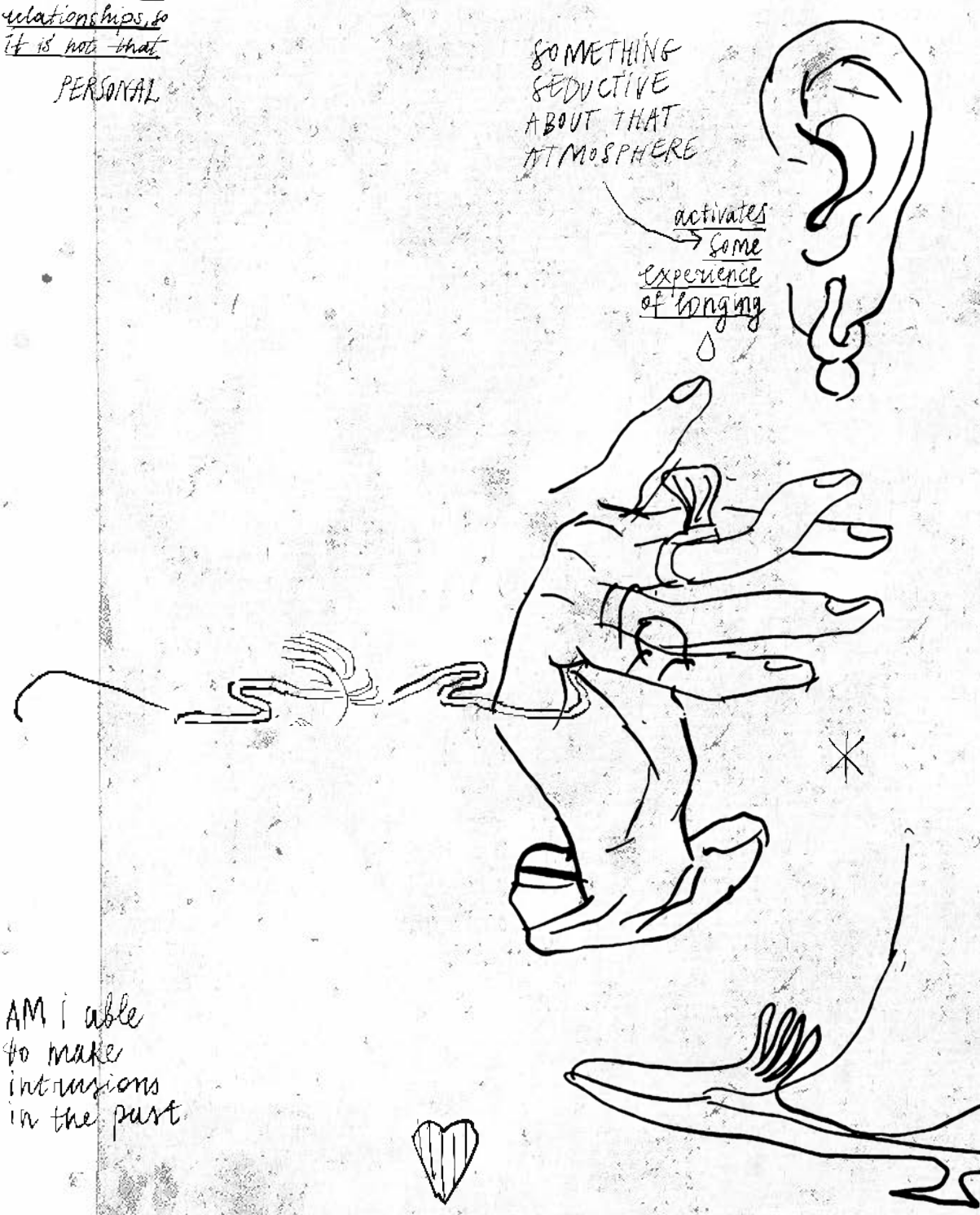
PUNCTURING ALONG THE PROBLEMS


WHO'S ACTUALLY A BENEFICIARY OF THIS
IMAGES AS A GENTEEL WAY TO PASS TIME
CREATING

ALBA is
institutionalised
relationships, so
it is not that
PERSONAL

SOMETHING
SEDUCTIVE
ABOUT THAT
ATMOSPHERE

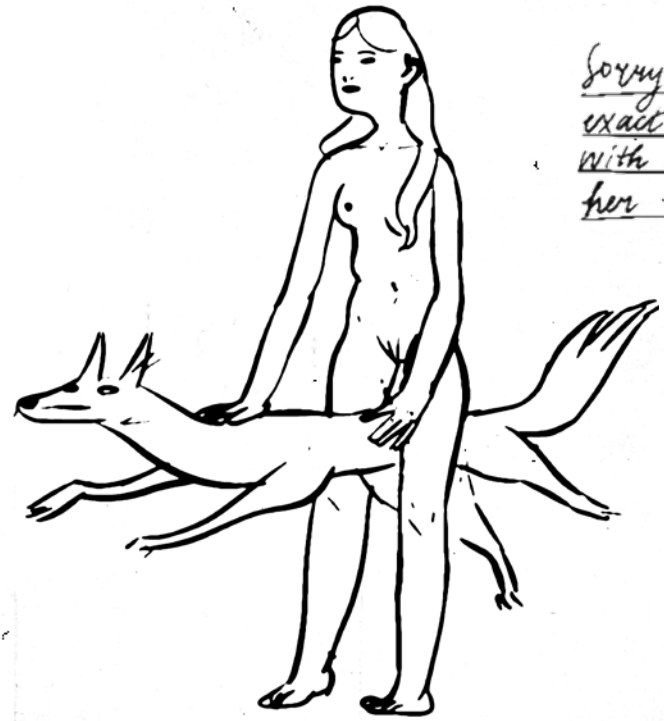
activates
some
experience
of longing



AM i able
to make
intrusions
in the past


A VISUAL CAPTURE OF EXPERIENCE
ARE WE indoctrinated to admire alba amicorum?


SELF
IMPORTANCE



Sorry, but what exactly the lady with a fox between her legs mean?

Apart from just being occasionally funny – it's mostly clumsy and uneffective content which I still enjoy greatly appropriating.

Sea shell is beautiful too – it can serve as some material for a campy arts & crafts thing.

Am I historiographically nihilist to say

I DON'T BELIEVE IN NOBILITY OF THESE PEOPE

Royal and nolle man had hired historians who wrote about war efforts and marriages

To imagine the payed positions as such — easy to loose interest in the history itself.

But! understanding how was it written what relations looked like and make theories about it is still cool.

implications and consequences of aristocracy

ARISTOTLE.

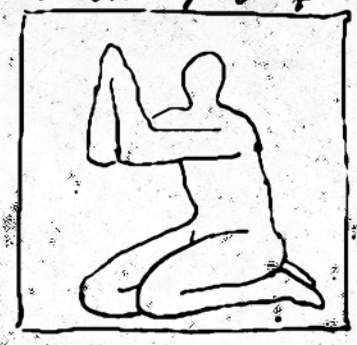
gr. ARISTO - BEST

THE RICH

THE WELL BORN

(g) nobilis (old French) noted, high BORN

a thought of



the abstract entities of the simple folk

I TOO TAKE A LOT OF THINGS FOR GRANTED

I DON'T REJECT THE WORK OTHERS HAVE DONE, I AM JUST SCEPTICAL

PUNCTURE

a cause of sudden collapse of mood or feeling.

Mme Quinquenat
Chez
Mme Gon

Water damage.jpg


uere

Lisette Alberti, Shouyi He and Eszter Nagy

The Alba as Cartographic Tool

We understand the world through our lived experience and embodied knowledge, but we also navigate it through a two-dimensional human-made invention: the map. However useful and necessary a map might be, it distorts and reduces. Inherently, maps are subjective and inaccurate. The map is a visual text, guided by power and control, and can be viewed as a tool for colonialism and the imperialist project.[1] As an object, the map is integral to shaping politics, culture, economics, and ideologies, with the ability to segment off groups, resources, and knowledge for the benefit of those in power. The collection of alba amicorum at the KB, National Library of the Netherlands, can be considered as a collection of maps. These maps are both societal and geographical, and, just as their more traditional and geographically focussed counterparts, reductive and constructed. The alba as a map can be seen as an imperial construction, emphasising the hegemonic, and socially and financially privileged.

Given that these alba depict society, how can we expose the limitations of the maps they create? Is it even possible to create a more complete one using the alba as organising structure?

While maps are necessary, practical, and tactile tools for navigation, we mainly consider the map in terms of what it creates and how else it functions, as well as the role of the cartographer. As Dodge and Kitchin have pointed out: 'Defining a map is dependent on where and when it was engage[d] with, as what a map is and the work that it does in the world has changed over time.' [2]

How then are we, in this time and place, able to read the alba – the collection and single objects – as maps? Multiple alba contain elaborate descriptions, directly through entries or indirectly by changing location added to alba entries. The entries thus create a tapestry of locations, and people, in time. While a sole album generates a map based upon the routes and geographical movements of its owner, a collection together creates not only a map of geographies, but an overlaying social map of those who encountered each other. The subjective nature of the alba must be emphasised, as:

> Ultimately, the map presents us with the reality we *know* as differentiated from the reality we *see* and *hear* and *feel*. The map doesn't let us *see* anything. But it does let us know what others have seen or figured out or dreamed up, others often living but as often dead, the things they learned piled up in layer on top of layer so that to study even the simplest-looking image is to peer back through the ages of cultural acquisition.[3]

This cultural acquisition, however, is incomplete when limited to those privileged enough to travel with an album in hand.

It is necessary then to elucidate how particular territories are made into flat information carriers also known as maps. Ursula Franklin describes the role of a cartographic approach: 'Maps represent purposeful endeavours: they are meant to be "useful", to assist traveller and bridge the gap between the known and the as yet unknown; they are testaments of collective knowledge and insight.'[4] Maps are largely a creative practice, with an operational gap at each step of cartography that gives the subject the opportunity to manipulate the particular scope of presentation of information.

The steps of rationalising a given territory cannot be carried out without the following: selection, measurement, and simplification, each of which participates in the distortion and reproduction of information. The most important aspect of planning a map is selecting territory: delineating delicate boundaries involving borders between continents, countries, groups, all full of uncertainty; where there are borders there are multiple agents. In most cases, one party has greater initiative in drawing the map, which means that there is a subjective aspect to the map at the outset. The subjectivity of the mappable object is transformed by the measurement: the geographic territory is transformed into precise data and can be subjectively manipulated in the process of definition. Simplification and reduction are key steps in cartography. All information about a given geographical area cannot be presented on a limited map, making objective judgments through maps impossible.

For this reason, cartographic uncertainty gives space for cultural, political, and social manipulation by cartographers. Even the mapping of a territory by the same operator has different representations to the audience at the same time: for example, in Crimea, the border between Ukraine and Russia is marked differently depending on where you access Google Maps. If you visit from a Western country, the border will be marked as disputed, while if you visit from Russia, Crimea appears to be under full Russian control.

Given the political and social construction of maps, how does an album become a highly edited social map, showing a limited and exclusive social circle?

The exclusivity of the alba is defined by its class symbols, and its exclusivity consists of its owner's choice of terrain: a group of people and their status. The social status of the owner and contributors determine the accessibility of a particular group – professors, priests, nobles, celebrities – to the alba. This step already defines the alba's exclusivity. The contributors need to measure the attributes of the owner and express them in textual and pictorial data so that the owner can attract potential sponsors and protectors. For this purpose, all information about the owner is not fully accounted for, but only attributes that are beneficial to the owner are selected for simplified representation.

These approaches provided space for the owner to manipulate information: who can contribute to the owner's album, how the qualities of the owner can be interpreted in words and pictures, and what information can be interpreted. By adjusting the geography and sociality of these factors in individual album creations and collective alba contributions, the ultimate output of an album constructs a collective network of privilege which is also an overlaying social map, reinforcing the already existing and potential social privilege and status of the owners and the class they embrace. What these factors exclude is the construction of and access to culture by groups other than alba owners through the practice of keeping these books. Such a class-building activity made it impossible for the historical presence of people in relatively weak positions to be encompassed by the highly edited social map of alba amicorum. Even though some of the people not represented in the alba can be found elsewhere, on guild lists, for example, the maps created by the alba are limited and exclusionary.

It is noteworthy that alba culture as a symbol of collective privilege, both then and now, is reduced by its owners and owning institutions to a personal pursuit of friendship and refined pleasure, and this conscious reduction from the collective to the individual makes the construction of imperial privilege in which alba are implicated even more hidden, and thereby harder for people to perceive the political implications. The more subtly the map reduces the territory to the navigation of one's daily life, the more difficult it is to perceive the unnatural and political aspects of the map. In this way, the alba unashamedly became a tool for maintaining and reinforcing privilege. While as noted above the alba create a connected system of locations and people, looking at them as maps, one should keep in mind that they reproduce the reflections of the privileged.

The alba were kept and used by the upper middle class and the lower ranks of the upper class. They do not simply create a map of geographies but a social

map of those who not only encountered each other, but had the chance to get an imprint prepared for the occasion. Defining and perceiving the alba, both the entire collection and a single album, as a map highlights its subjective and individualistic attributions.

The idea that alba create maps of social hierarchies is strongly affected by how they are managed and portrayed in their current circumstances. Maps are not purely about understanding what information is being mapped through them, but about being aware of who constructed them and how this not only reflects a world, but actively creates one. They should not be dissociated from their context of production and use. The framework and trajectory of the albums are crucial, as post-representation of maps influences them as does their conservation. By simultaneously analysing the maps, their context of production, and their us we create a structure where the maps, whether tools for navigation or cultural acquisition, become more complete.

Focussing on mapping as a process instead of on the map as an object offers a different perspective. Shifting the focus from visual representation to handling maps as imprints of social, political, and cultural constructions, questions belief in the absolute truthfulness of information being mapped. Treating mapping as a social process not only points out the influence of imperial construction but also makes it possible to extend the maps with the historically forgotten, those who didn't have the means, time, or status to carry an album and move in the circles of those who did. Consequently, reflecting on the process as the question of study and not only researching the object creates a setting that offers space to consider the ones who remained left out and segmented off.

The recognition of mapping as a concept of power is necessary to understand the dynamics behind mapping as a tool of control. Next to the maps as practical tools, is their function as creative practice with built-in gaps that allow the creator to manipulate the presentation of information. Hence Google can interfere with borders without having any legal reasons to do so, giving the chance for those with the tools to manipulate truth. Depending on if you are the mapper or the one being mapped, the act of mapping can used to empower or control. To be mapped is not neutral, nor entirely good or bad. Being mapped implies being represented. To speak the language of those who have the power to map and thereby being mapped, is to gain access to the social power of the cartographer. However, when the mapping of yourself is done for you by others, cartography can become another tool of oppression in the hegemon's toolbox. The way the owners of alba, considering what is most beneficial for themselves, decided not to select all contributors to the alba coincides with the practice that historically maps were used to assert their territorial rights and gain power over resources.

To conclude, we suggest considering the idea of the album amicorum as a map that hides social relations and shapes consequent ideological realities. By proposing the recognition of alba as a distortion of reality we argue that they create and sustain continuous social maps that preserve an incomplete reality. Despite the fact that the maps that alba create are crucial in shaping politics, culture, and economics, they hold the power in their ability to exclude. In order to define a map, we have to accept that alba are constructs, both reflecting and shaping reality. Reflecting on cartography as mechanism for authority and privilege, and understanding the alba as a distorting social and political process, shows us what is actually behind the archived covers of alba.

1 Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin, 'Rethinking Maps', *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 3 (June 2007):332.
2 *Ibid.*, 333.
3 Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (London: Guilford Press, 1992), 16.
4 Ursula Franklin, 'Prelude', *The Ursula Franklin Reader: Pacifism as a Map. Between the Lines* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), no page.

Leonie Gores, Alicja Konkol,
Camille de Noray and Julija Panova

Breaking the Glass

> 'Ordinarily, they [major luxury brands] pay to display their visibility, so that their initials, their names, their illuminations burst out in gold letters. They [...] display their ornaments, display to bewitch the passer-by, to bewitch him with their splendours... Today they have paid for screws and plywood boards to hide.'[1]

This is what Nicolas Flesh started his poetical performance with, in response to the 2018 yellow vests protests in Paris, when many luxury shop windows were smashed in Paris's wealthiest neighbourhoods. Flesch defended the acts and showed how the destruction brought a different use for those spaces. Luxury stores, forced to protect their vitrines with wooden panels, signalled an appropriate way to deal with the patrimony of opulence: the wood became a free surface for expression reappropriated by advertisers, activists, and artists – a space for democratic conversation in public space to comment on opulence in the same space of its display.

The Paradoxical Function of the Vitrine

The vitrine is a curious invention with a paradoxical function: presenting what is desirable, but also clearly stating its distance from a viewer; a barrier that attracts yet establishes inaccessibility; a see-through wall that is designed to highlight, to charm, and exclude. First, let us look back at the history and significance of the "glass box". Before the eighteenth century, only the members of clergy and aristocracy could afford this costly and precious material used in, for instance, stained glass elements that often functioned as spectacular devices during official gatherings. They were objects of ostentatious luxury that affirmed the status of their users. Glass was taken up in commercial technology at the end of that same century in Europe when its value decreased. It became prevalent in displaying luxury commodities and the *vitrine* was invented[2]. From then on, a broad audience could see what was beyond their financial and social reach. The vitrine is contradictory – it is a frame in which content is both highlighted and distanced from the viewer. 'See how beautiful it is but don't touch it and preferably keep your distance!' By the end of the century in Europe, the vitrine worked as a

device to arouse curiosity, show luxury, and so-called exotic products from the colonised world.

The National Library Asking Us to Break the Glass

In the context of a collaboration between the National Library and the Master Non-Linear Narrative of the Royal Academy of Art, each of us students were asked to propose a project about the collection of alba amicorum preserved in the special archives of the library. We were invited to recontextualise its contents and publish our findings in a book format. Initially, alba amicorum were presented to us as the books constituting the friendships of 'intellectual, educated men, meeting each other during their travels and studies'.[3] 'Show me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are' – was a famous idea at that time, which first appeared in the influential Spanish novel *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, published in two parts in 1605 and 1615. In line with Cervantes's thoughts we could say that the use of the alba as documents of social relations, actually formalises them. The alba has become a matrix of formal relationships that exists to create an officially recognisable status. The books are not about the social relations themselves, but about a virtual self-image that's created through collecting significant people's autographs. An album is a device for social climbers. The selection of people who are allowed to inscribe and who are left out is based on how celebrated, noble, and renowned the person is – there is a peculiar form of social economy at play – a game of status.

What is the purpose of keeping an album amicorum by a seventeenth-century Dutch man? It can be argued that his intention is to collect an evidence of his experiences and safeguard proof of his accomplishments. What kind of accomplishments, what kind of proof? What are the relationships between the accomplishment and the proof? Maybe it is one and the same: his accomplishment is to have crossed paths with people interesting enough to increase the value of his album by adding their inscription. Then the album is nothing else than a tool for self-promotion, a vitrine for the resplendence of the owner's network and worthy life. Formally, this evidence derives from the exuberance of his experience, or maybe the exuberance of his experience depends on the exuberance of the evidence. The value attributed to the experience depends on how the evidence of the experience is presented. But establishing shiny and lavish vitrines comes at a high cost, and the alba are no exception. The richer, more influential the contribution, the more elaborate and shiny the participation (with more skilful artists paid to create a drawing, more time spend on the artwork by the artist, more expensive material used, materials that will shine longer, etc.). An album owner who convinced more people with money to contribute to his album, will have a more convincing album, a more attractive vitrine, and brings more "clients" (rich participants) to add more valuable participations, and so on.

Moreover, alba function as a speculative economy: the more interesting your contributors, the more your patrimony grows, and the more big clients you are going to attract. Each participation is like a new commodity in the store. And what is the counterpart for the client? Well, if the client is wealthy, most probably he also has an album. Then the inscriptions are exchanged, and suddenly, two owners of alba who meet create value.

This is the "show-off" character of the vitrine. However, the vitrine is also a tool of protection, distancing. Only a worthy contributor can access the privilege of inscribing an album. If you don't show your filled wallet, or your prominent ancestry, you can stay in front of the glass, only enjoy the gift of being able to observe the beautiful content of the showcase. Same thing applies to the alba: if your social status did not compel enough distinguished contributors, if you have no impressive economic or social power, nobody will invite you to participate, and you simply won't be able to afford a lavish inscription – ultimately ending up outside the alba economy. Maybe some big fish in the alba economy will at some point show you their album. Or maybe your great-grand-children will be shown an album from a collection in a museum, most likely behind a vitrine.

All irony aside, the National Library agrees with us: these alba shouldn't be vitrines anymore. The aim of the collaboration between Non-Linear-Narrative students and the library was, in fact, to break the glass. The library is also a vitrine – a prestigious institution that invited us to visit the special manuscripts section divided from the rest of the library by a see-through glass box with carefully controlled access. From the first step we were immersed in the atmosphere of exclusive, very fragile, very precious objects. Sliding glass doors opened welcomingly after sensing the curator's ID card's chip. Stacks of boxes marked with 'fragile' stickers, presumably, containing all kinds of precious items greeted us at the entrance.

Visiting the library to see this unquestionably impressive alba amicorum collection has made it obvious – the task of owning and making good use of it is a challenge. We see, that as a premise that drives the collaborative project between the library and Royal Academy of Arts. These magnificent manuscripts, carefully archived, are in dire need of being opened up, made alive for a contemporary conversation – the glass needs to fall, of course in a metaphorical sense.

We were asked to invent a way to look at the alba collection. Yet the impossibility of actually breaking through the glass to work with the material directly without the distance that its status creates made this difficult. Working on the publication is akin to tasting jam through the jar. Hence, we engaged and problematised, seemingly, the main quality of the album amicorum – its inaccessibility.

We could imagine that with better communication and more horizontal interaction, there could be a transformation happening. In the process an obvious question arose: were we invited to interact with the content or to merely carry out a gesture? Is our role limited by virtue signalling? Maybe just coming across each other, students and librarians in one room for a brief moment, is enough to create a semblance of collaboration?

The Potential Hammer: The Courtesan

Through attempting to inspect the content of the alba, reach the core and substance of these artefacts, we found some points of interest. Visually rich and captivating material will always convey motifs that tickle the imagination of an art student. The people who are inscribing the books are homogeneous – all high-born, all wealthy, educated, until a certain period – mainly male. One figure that stood out was a Venetian courtesan. She captivated attention; it was alluring to understand how someone like her got into these books. What kind of virtue did she represent for these noblemen? Why was she included? Bringing some disruption into a pattern she became the page or person we wanted to hang out with. She could become the symbolic hammer that disrupts neat representational network of males. But this newfound hammer is also left behind the glass. Nevertheless, she is also just a vague and shallow representation of actual people at that time – the sex workers.

Consequently, we learned that this exact courtesan is also a representation of superiority. The characteristics of her image establish her belonging to elite workers that were higher in status with regard to street-based workers. This created something akin to previously reviewed social economies. Elizabeth S. Cohen underlines these barriers existing in the sex-work environment, saying: 'This arrangement of categories and attitudes leaves observers more complacent because it permits them to overlook the fundamental predicament of doubleness common to all prostitutes, high and low.'[4] So, instead of finding a figure that would hover above the class category, subverting it, the prostitute in the album reduces a person to a symbol that can easily fit in with all other attributes of flattery to the status and wealth of the album's owner. It is not possible to know much about the life of this courtesan, even if it tickles our imagination. This image constitutes a lost opportunity to counter the pattern of those who usually fill the pages of the alba collection.

Dancing Around the Vitrine

Finally, the hammer we hoped to find with the courtesan was another romantic illusion that did not penetrate the glass, but was carefully slipped into the vitrine, as one of the precious contents. Nothing to grasp apart from this most palpable quality of the alba amicorum – their inaccessibility. We decided to take

it as a call to have fun, to play, treat alba as pure material. Use them as means for experimentation. If we cannot break the vitrine, we can still paint over it. Let's tell the story of the vitrine that was meticulously composed to be everlasting, resistant to all the attempts to find something other than items of status. It is still possible to play with pillows, to show the endless superficial layers we would want to overcome to access the substance of the alba. Without ever reaching an answer, we imagine the language of the alba appearing in metaphors that are relevant. Let us create fictions. If the vitrine is not breakable, let us just face the fact it is not, and dance around!

1 Nicolas Flesch, *Plein Coeur. Gilets Jaunes Acte IV* (Paris: Les mains dans le dos, 2019), 11–12.
2 Jeanne Guien, Le consumérisme à travers ses objets (Paris: Éditions Divergences, 2021), 54–58
3 See https://collecties.kb.nl/deze-pagina-niet-beschikbaar.
4 See Elizabeth S. Cohen, '"Courtesans" and "Whores": Words and Behavior in Roman Streets', *Women's Studies* 19, no. 2 (August 1991):201–08.

Lode Dijkers, Daniel Gremme
and Karolina Uskakovych

Behind the Charms

Alba amicorum appeared in Germany in the sixteenth century and gained popularity among Dutch students shortly after.[1] They passed around these albums to receive signatures of fellow students, professors, or people they met on trips. Typically, at the album owner's invitation, a contributor would leave a small handwritten text, their signature, the date, and the place in which they met. Often, some art would be added as well, usually in the form of a coat of arms or a portrait.[2]

These books are each a unique collection of poems, images, and beautiful calligraphy. Dedications were followed by bits of wisdom, contributions by artists were welcome, and their text was often presented to the reader elegantly through typographical ornamentation. Thus, the alba were a reflection of the owner's cultural experience and his intellectual and social wealth. However, these visual attributions can be read as representations of inequality in the Netherlands, further dividing the people who were able to have such an item and those who could not. We argue that the inherent structure of privilege is expressed and reproduced through a superfluous visual culture that emerges out of unequal education as well as access to knowledge, tools and time. By superfluous we mean a prodigal use of visual elements that far exceed what's necessary, and rather used as tools for extreme ornamentation as was characteristic in the baroque period. What do the superfluous aesthetics in these books show and hide about the power relations in the Netherlands when the alba amicorum were popular and also now? This essay is an attempt to erase the conventional image of the alba collection by drawing attention to the structures that cultivated the artistic contributions.

The alba were symbols of status and represented the education and social circle of their respective owners. Hans-Rudolf Velten writes: 'Through visual perception, for instance, it was possible to the social hierarchy, religious veneration, friendship and enmity, domination, violence, law and much more could be communicated.'[3] This book serves as a mirror in two ways, firstly the contributors see a likeness of their own bubble, and secondly the remains of these elitist bubbles the book warps the perspective we have of this time. Kristin Ross writes: "The world is divided between those who can and those who cannot afford the luxury of playing with words or images."[4] Even though art was quite accessible

in the early modern period, only certain citizens belonged to the group of alba owners, where they could make a cultural footprint.

In the Netherlands, most people received a basic education until the age of 11. As a result almost 60 per cent of women, as well as 80 per cent of men could read and write Dutch. Greek and Latin, the languages of higher learning, however, were only taught to the elite, and were indicative of privileged origin. Over time, such schooling became more accessible, not only to enlighten citizens. Education is and was never emancipated, but institutionalised and only reproduces its own system. Before the nineteenth century it was controlled by the church and concentrated on religious education. Afterwards it reinforced specialisation in subject areas thus further dividing the gulf between the intellectually educated and the uneducated as Kristin Ross notes in Communal Luxury.[5] Artistic education is nowadays more accessible to the privileged, as they do not necessarily have to support their families on a fixed income, for example. Accordingly, modern art universities are the cadre of the privileged, whose scholars produce the works living rooms of the present, affirming the cultural literacy of their owners.

Written material can be read, appreciated, preserved, and exhibited – oral traditions, on the other hand, only to a limited extent. 'The Middle Ages was a culture of visibility, of mutual visual perception. In principle, this finding refers to all social classes, but the nobility and clergy received more attention due to the higher presence of sources.'[6] When it comes to sheer visibility, size matters and the use of space is a demonstration of presence and self-confidence. The page serves as a stage, the pen as an actor, running from left to right to front to back. Imagining this scene shows that this form of beauty does not apply to beauty as a form of honesty and modesty. It is just about presence. Since learning how to handle a pen is the outcome of a stupidly laborious grind of repetitions, it can be seen as a power that conveys through what is not seen very much. The correct name of continually consistent type systems is typeface. In our case calligraphy can be seen as a type-mask instead. It conceals the sweat, tears, and previously drawn, imperfect lines of the author. Their amount defines the level of perfection that produces the stunning presence at which the beholder marvels. Moreover, it is interchangeable and brings up an aspect of a personality that becomes questionable, especially if the 'hand' is adopted by others.

The artful exploration of letterforms, composition of the surface, inimitable perfection of the typographic craftsmanship from today's perspective impresses us and are reasons why these books are preserved in national archives and thus continue to reproduce a system that elevates particular aesthetics above others. Mastering the pen takes time. It is a craft many had to master to receive prestigious jobs as clerks, lawyers, and politicians. Being able to spend the whole day

writing is equivalent to subjugation as while one is swinging the nib, others do care work, are busy raising children, or are simply engage in other jobs, maybe even as servants. Exploitation of subdued third parties enables individuals to devote themselves to peculiar interests, even if it is work. Meaningless luxury always walks chain in chain with some kind of slavery, it is in fact conditioned by it.[7]

In upper-class circles, subjects of interest are usually art and culture, within which is calligraphy. This also applies today even more since the days of conspicuous consumption are a thing of the past, today's status is examined by knowledge. The more extravagant (the ornamentation), the more constricted the oppressed. Time as the substantial weight in this comparison cannot be purchased, it must be extracted. A basic principle of capitalism is the transfer of value from worker to employer.

Owners of alba and the authors of the contributions within often descended from higher middle and lower upper-class circles. They were actively involved or passively benefitted as sons or daughters from existing relationships of domination in the sixteenth century, such as colonialism, and merchant capitalism. Due to capitalism's inherent dynamic of reproducing power relations, this also counts for later periods. In 1602 one of the first multinational commercial enterprises, the Dutch East India Company, emerged. It was also one of the first enterprises to use a trademark as a credential for their power and claim to ownership. How beneficial relations work out in real life can be examined in the example of Rembrandt's favourite scholar, Gerbrand van den Eeckhout. His father, a goldsmith, married the daughter of the Director of the Delft chamber of the Dutch East India Company and through this levelled up his family's social status and horizon of financial possibilities. Without this backbone it certainly would have been harder to follow an art career for Van den Eeckout.[8] Most of the students familiar with alba amicorum had a noble pedigree and formed an elitist 'milieu' of 'intellectuals'. Universities welcomed noble students to amplify the prestige of their institutions.[9] They had significant cultural and financial support, and as such, were able to hire an artist to draw into their alba amicorum.

But what were the people like that carried these books? When the alba were passed around, the contributors did not only inscribe their names, signatures, or got family crests within them. Occasionally, album contributions also depict the person behind the name and crest with a portrait. But these portraits are far from honest representations – they are highly stylised. Here we'll be looking at one portrait in particular found in the album amicorum of Jacob van Bronckhorst van Batenburg [Fig. 1, p.78].

In his essay 'Portraiture in Renaissance and Baroque Europe' Jean Sorabella writes: 'One of the hallmarks of European portraiture is a sense of reality, an apparent

intention to depict the unique appearance of a particular person. Each portrait is thus meant to express individual identity, but as Erwin Panofsky recognized, it also "seeks to bring out whatever the sitter has in common with the rest of humanity."[10] By inspecting the different elements that make up the portrait we can assess what the originator intended to share about himself.

The portrait in the album amicorum of Jacob van Bronckhorst van Batenburg is a format-filling image of a white young man posing before a green background. Something which is immediately noticeable is the strict formality of the portrait. The man barely shows any facial expressions. This is quite typical of portraits from the fifteenth century. He stands in a proud but stiff pose with one hand on his side and one hand on his sword. Here the sword is a symbol for themes like bravery, protection, and honour. His clothing shows affluence; he is wearing a white ornamental shirt and black jacket. He also wears a millstone collar around his neck. These collars, also called ruffs, were a typical expensive fashion item used to emphasise a high social status.[11] His facial expression, his posture, and his clothing all point us to think of him as a man of wealth and importance. What makes this portrait particularly interesting for this case study though, is that the foundation of the drawing is a copy. This occurred with some frequency in the alba amicorum, particularly in alba from students in the city of Douai in France between 1570 and 1585. Virtually the same portrait is found in quite a few different alba with only some details edited. See Fig.1 to Fig.4.
This hints at an alternative motive for contributing a portrait to an album. It is

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig.1 *Album amicorum of Jacob II van Bronckhorst van Batenburg* (1553-1582), Portrait of Jacob van Bronckhorst, fol. 1r. , (KB KW 135 K 26)
Fig. 2 *Album amicorum van Karel of Arnhem (1551-1621),* Portrait of Karel van Arnhem, fol. 2r (KB KW 79 J 75)
Fig. 3 *Album Amicorum of Paul van Dale*, University of Oxford, Digital Bodleian, https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/ec8bb2a3-20da-4a74-8967-5c23a2395c39/surfaces/a010333b-ffa8-48b4-8584-a0b81c106446/.
Fig. 4 *Album amicorum of Poppius van Feytsma,* Portait of Ruurt van Walta, fol. 5r (KB KW 79 J 20)

hard to imagine these portraits were made to express individual identity or serve as an honest remembrance of a friend. There is very little honest humanity reflected in the images. What seems more likely to us is that having an artist draw a portrait into an album was a flex of wealth and status. We suggest that perhaps these portraits were not made to leave a memory of the person behind, but rather to boast of one's affluence and social connections to the outside. It was not important that little of the contributor was drawn into the album – they could even be near unoriginal images as demonstrated by the replicated portraits. Yes, their faces differentiate them, but that is the bare minimum a portrait should offer. What was perhaps more important to them was that the contributors were viewed as well-connected and wealthy men who knew the right people and had enough capital to furnish an album with their portrait.

Alba amicorum even served as letters of recommendation for students switching universities.[12] As such, they were more than just informal records of friendships and acquaintances but also served as official credentials. As David Graeber writes, 'ability is discounted without credentials, but the ability to purchase credentials rests, more often than not, on family wealth.'[13] This is abundantly clear in relation to the production, and use, of alba amicorum by noble students.

Therefore, if a student had a family crest, they were more likely to be a desirable candidate in the educational system. A family crest symbolised students were from a 'noble family institution', and that they were a representative of such nobility. Family crests transformed from the distinct image on the armour of knights protecting their bodies within a genealogical system among royalty, and became a symbolic shield against the status anxiety of the upper classes in Western Europe.[14]

Credentialism is a concept that refers to the obsessive reliance on the formal credentials that are conferred by institutions and define the qualification of the individual. Graeber notes that 'official credentials are seen as a kind of material fetish – magical objects conveying power, entirely apart from the real knowledge, experience, or training they're supposed to represent.'[15]

Much like the old educational system, which was dominated by noble classes who would confer credentials upon each other, the contemporary higher education system filters out people who cannot afford to pursue it. Whereas the attendance of noble students used to confer prestige upon an institution, today we see universities ruled by their finances. In the twenty-first century, the neoliberalisation and marketisation of higher education has resulted in ballooning tuition fees at universities across the world. Large family donations, moreover, can be used to buy places on courses in many institutions, particularly in the United States.[16]

As a result, large swathes of the population – predominantly young people from socially and economically marginalised backgrounds – are being left behind and excluded from the educational system, which in turn makes it extremely challenging for them to enter certain parts of the labour market that require official qualifications and credentials. To get into university, an applicant must not just have officially confirmed financial recourse, but also be good at operating the hypocritical bureaucratic machine.

Whether it be through the use of alba amicorum, or the modern prestige of wealth, credentials continue to be bought and paid for, and work to exclude the most disadvantaged members of society. The power of the alba amicorum is expressed above all in who is *not* seen. In conversations with curators of the collections, the beauty of the alba amicorum is repeatedly emphasised. It is a "beauty" of artistic exploration that is grounded in exploitation and time extraction of third parties, reproducing its own system as an object of status for the respective owner.

Whoever views the books obscures all who are not present in it, hidden behind layers of beautiful imagery. It separates those who, through their innate social position, are given the opportunity to devote their time or resources to the arts from those who have to do manual labour. It is important for us to acknowledge that we, students of the Royal Academy of Arts, have an opportunity to engage with alba amicorum only through the educational system, closing the historical loop of these unequal structures.

1 See https://www.kb.nl/onderzoeken-vinden/bijzondere-collecties/alba-amicorum.
2 June Schlueter, 'An Illustration of Traveling Players in Franz Hartmann's Early Modern "Album amicorum"', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 21 (2008):191–200.
3 Hans Rudolf Velten, ‚4.2 Visualität in der höfischen Literatur und Kultur des Mittelalters', in *Handbuch Literatur & Visuelle Kultur*, ed. Claudia Benthien and Brigitte Weingart (Berlin, Munich, and Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 1.
4 Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London: Verso, 2015), 50.
5 *Ibid.*, 49.
6 Velten, ‚Visualität in der höfischen Literatur und Kultur des Mittelalters', 1.
7 Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 64.
8 Walter A. Liedtke (ed.), Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. I and II (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 185.
9 See Kathryn Will, 'When is a Panther not a Panther? Representing Animals in Early Modern English Heraldry', *Early Modern Culture* 11 (July 2016).
10 Jean Sorabella, 'Portraiture in Renaissance and Baroque Europe', *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, Metropolitan Museum website, August 2007, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/port/hd_port.htm.
11 See http://www.thefashionhistorian.com/2011/11/ruffs.html.
12 James Milton Kooistra, 'From Humanism to the Reformation: Letters of Recommendation in Early Modern Germany (1490–1560)', PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2008, 12–46.
13 David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules* (Brooklyn, NY: Meville House, 2016), 21–24.
14 See Will, 'When is a Panther not a Panther?' and Conrad Gietman, 'Dutch Gentleman Genealogists and the End of the Old Order (1900–1945)', *Virtus* 26 (2019): 172.
15 Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*, 21–24.
16 Ibid.

Leiden	01-01-1645
Amsterdam	01-08-1645
Utrecht	01-09-1645
Den Haag	29-11-1645
Sloten	14-11-1654
Groningen	17-03-1659
Haarlem	03-05-1661
Leeuwarden	26-05-1664
Oudewater	29-03-1667
Dordrecht	18-10-1674

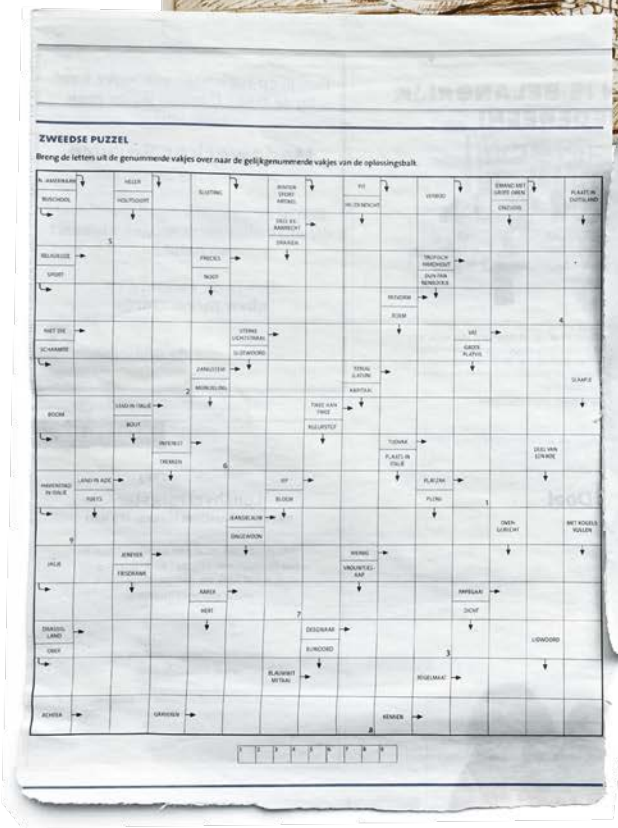
Den Haag	15-05-2022 08.40
Leiden	15-05-2022 10.03
Haarlem	15-05-2022 10.23
Amsterdam	15-05-2022 11.17
Leeuwarden	15-05-2022 14.14
Groningen	15-05-2022 15.51
Utrecht	15-05-2022 19.45
Woerden	15-05-2022 20.40
Dordrecht	15-05-2022 22.02

Page 65
01-01-1650
Pieter Teunisz Hoff

08.40
Barbershop
Emmastraat 25
2595 EG Den Haag

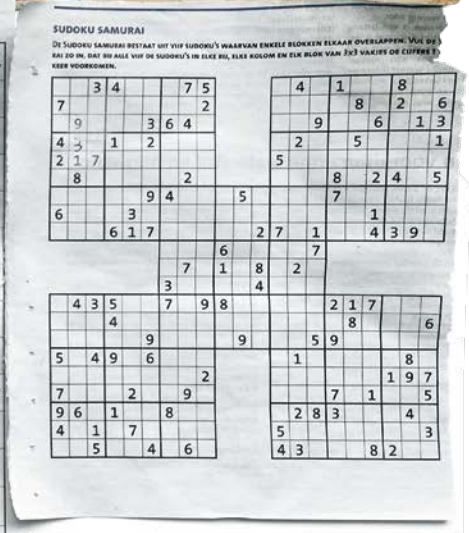
ANALYSE Expansieplannen olie- en gasproducenten kunnen leiden tot desastreuze CO_2-uitstoot

'Koolstofbommen' op komst



ZWEEDSE PUZZEL

Breng de letters uit de genummerde vakjes over naar de gelijkgenummerde vakjes van de oplossingsbalk.

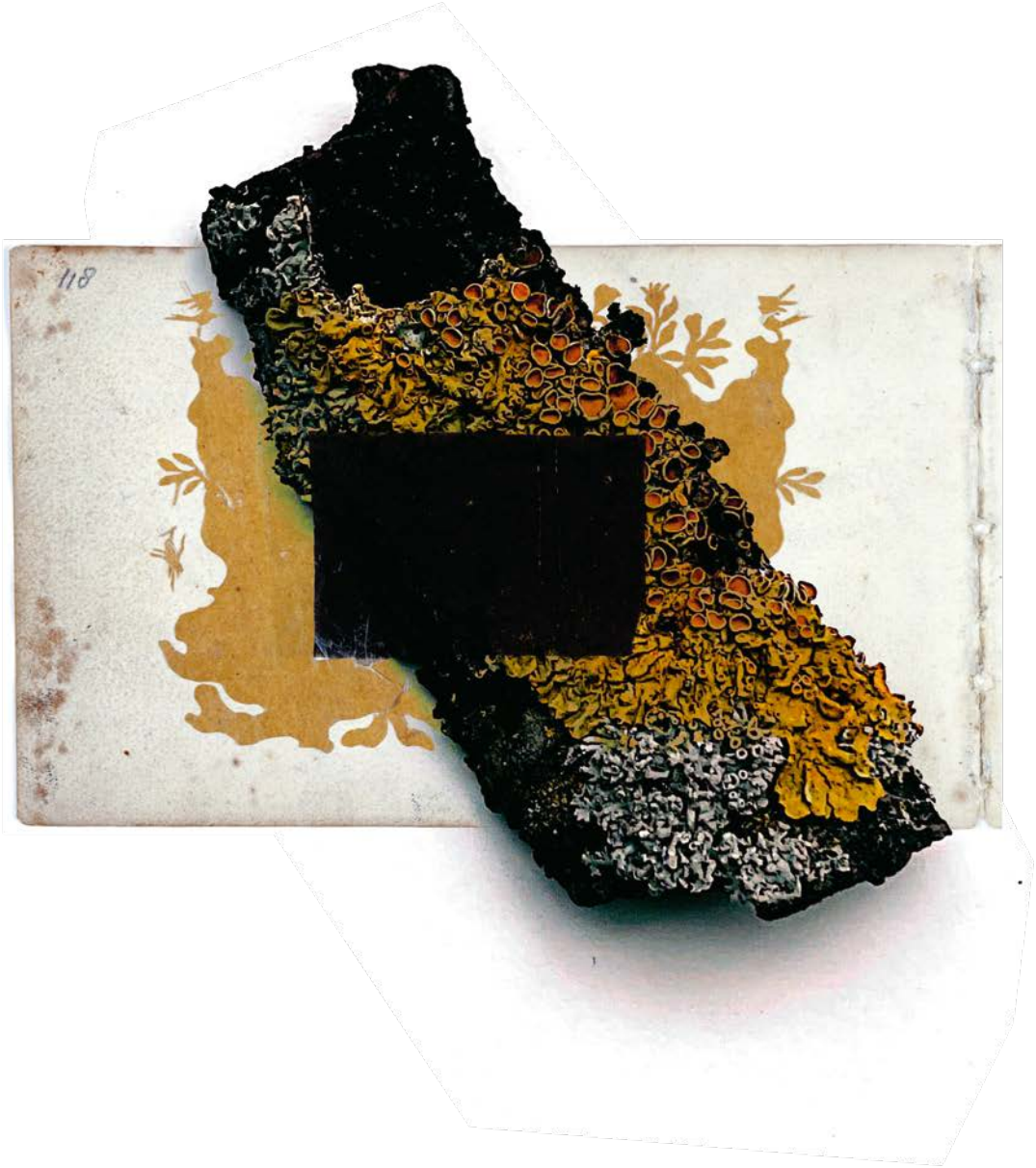


SUDOKU SAMURAI

De Sudoku samurai bestaat uit vijf sudoku's waarvan enkele blokken elkaar overlappen. Vul de s rai zo in, dat bij alle vijf de sudoku's in elke rij, elke kolom en elk blok van 3x3 vakjes de cijfers 1 keer voorkomen.

Page 249
28-07-1661
Jan de Bray

10.03 - 10.23
Pavement
Steenstraat 22
2312 BW Leiden



Page 118
known date
wn contributor

10.23 - 10.47
Canal
Kloppersingel 51
2021 CR Haarlem

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Rekeningafschrift

Mevrouw J.E. Lok-van den Berg en/of
erven van de heer P. Lok
Vijverhof 49
2421 VZ NIEUWKOOP

Soort rekening (in EUR)	BIC
EFFECTEN REKENING	ABNANL2A

Rekeningnummer	IBAN	Datum afschrift	Aantal bladen	Blad	Volgnr
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Vorig saldo	Nieuw saldo	Totaal afgeschreven	Totaal bijgeschreven
50.070,88 +/CREDIT	50.259,20 +/CREDIT	58,18	246,50

Boekdatum (Rentedatum)	Omschrijving	Bedrag af (debet)	Bedrag bij (credit)
28-04 (28-04)	ABNAMRO BELEGGEN Servicekosten 58,18 zie nota beleggen voor details	58,18	
28-04 (28-04)	Dividend FORFARMERS 28.04.22 OVER ST 1000 BET.MET EUR 0,19 BELASTING 28,50 D		161,50
28-04 (28-04)	Dividend FORFARMERS 28.04.22 OVER ST 1000 BET.MET EUR 0,10 BELASTING 15,00 D		85,00

ABN AMRO Bank N.V.
K.v.K. nr. 34334259
BTW nr. NL820546560B01

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Page 299
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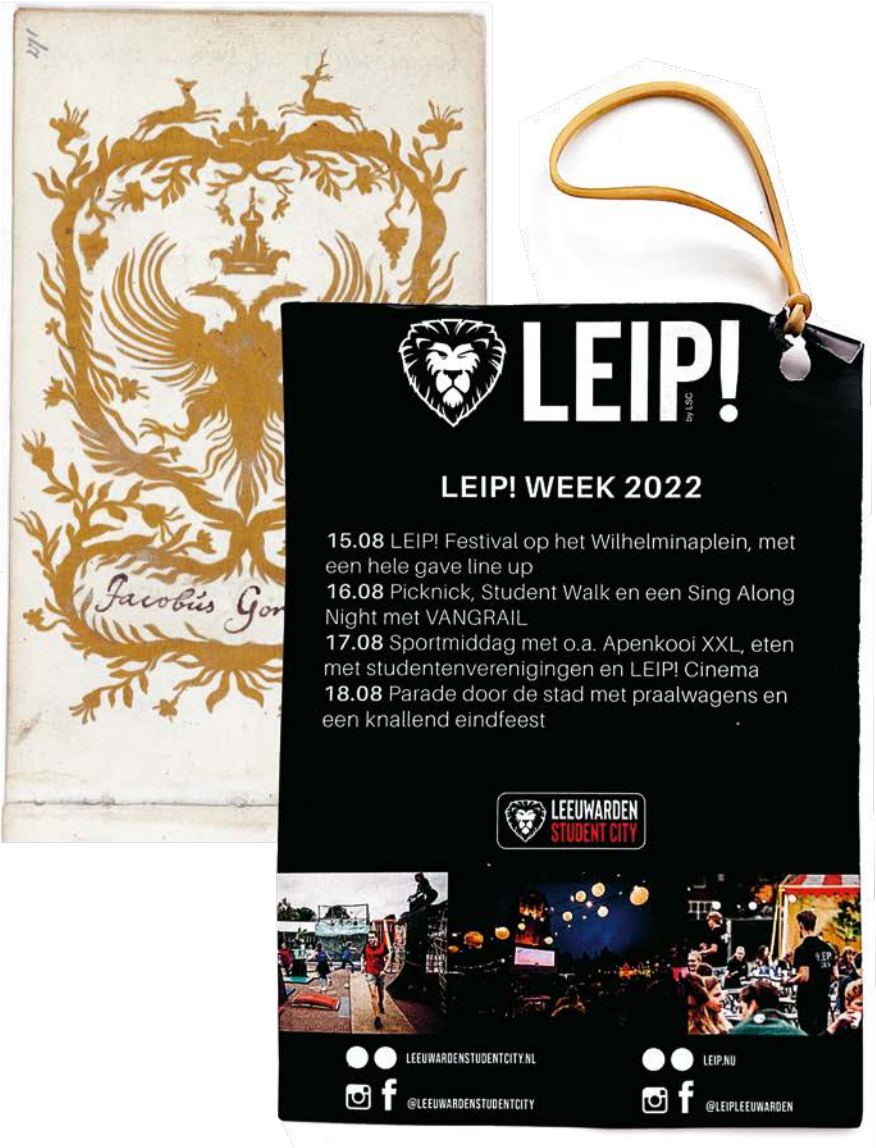
C. de Rooy

11.17 - 12.12
Recidence
Eerste Jan van der Heijdenstraat 108
1072 BV Amsterdam



Page 118
01-01-1660
Jacob Gorter

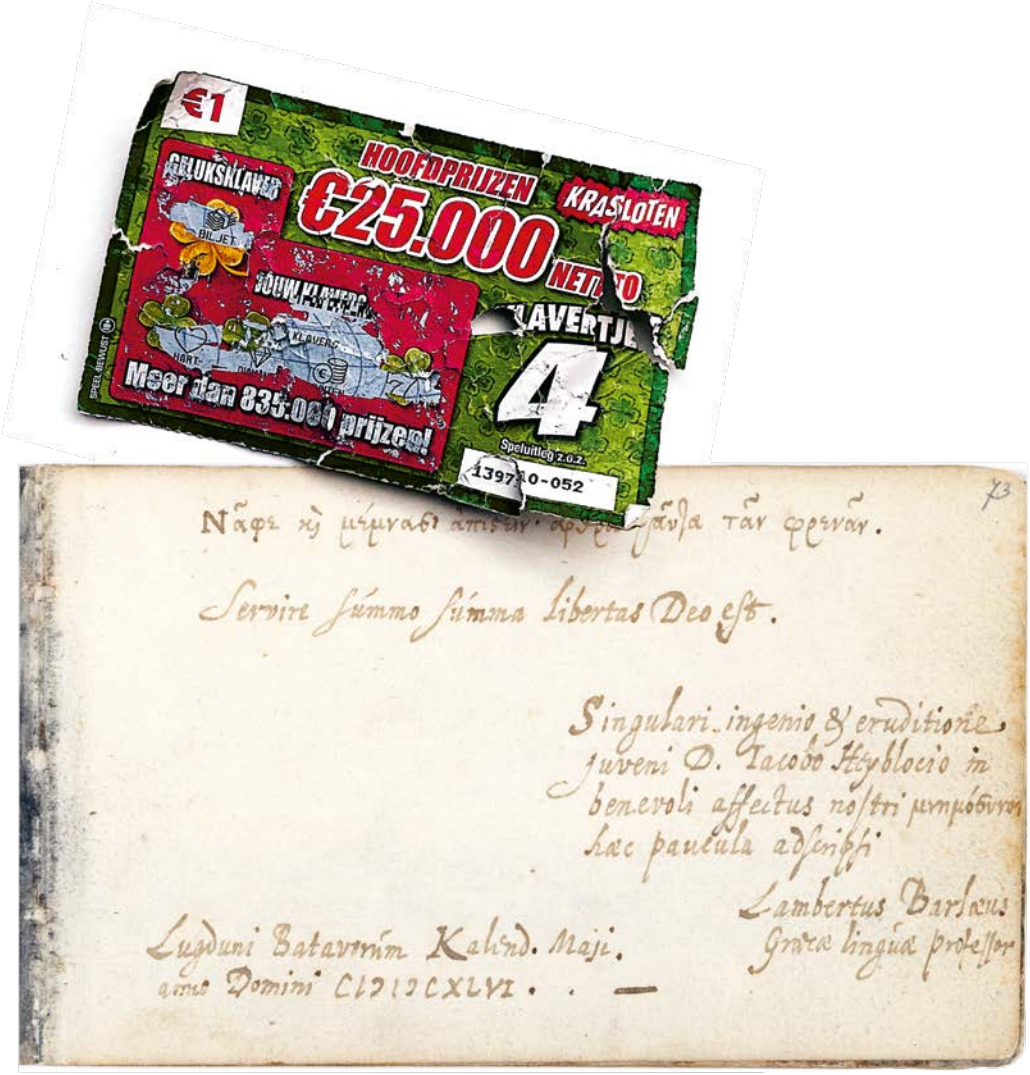
14.14 - 15.17
Station
Willemskade 55
8911 BA Leeuwarden

Page 237
29-11-1645
Jacob Cats

15.51 - 16.54
Amusement Park
Grote Markt 1
9712 HN Groningen

Page 172
Unknown date
Unknown contributor

15.51 - 16.54
Bar
Gelkingestraat 40
9711 ND Groningen



Page 73
01-05-1646
Lambertus Barlaeus

19.45 - 20.24
Corner
Lauwersteeg 2
3511 JM Utrecht

Page 157
01-01-1653
Jan Gerritsz. van Bronchorst

20.40 - 21.04
Pavement
Park Oudeland 74
3443 AL Woerden

Page 197
Unknown date
Unknown contributor

22.02 - 22.37
Natual Park
3311 DA Dordrecht

Page 121
01-01-1653
Jan Gerritsz. van Bronchorst

00.25
Central Station
Kon. Julianaplein 10
2595 AA Den Haag

00.40
Home

A letter in my mailbox waiting for someone who will never show up

Only imagine tha
held for us like it
them. A soft pi
sure our back is
our spine doesn't
would it be to hav
To be able to la
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ecious as we are.


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The collection of alba are kept in the archives of the Royal Library. As time goes on, the archive naturalizes. Nuance disappears, narrative constructions cease to be questioned. The archive reflects reality. The archive becomes a relic of realities that are long passed, instead of a certain, specific, limited representation. The archive is naturalized constructed memory.

A portable object of social status.

How natural are narratives that are protected and conserved when silver- and paperfish, embodied agents of gentle deterioration and ecological forgetfulness in their quest to survive are so deliberately removed from the collection of alba?

Naturalizing the narratives of the alba by strenuous preservation in the name of national history, knowledge gathering and studying some of those who came before makes me wonder:

Why do we have to remember?

why are we not allowed to forget the narratives of the privileged?

Why

can we

not forget ?

like we've forgotten everyone else

By keeping actual natural processes out,

the narratives of the alba are

slowly yet actively constructed and

serve a colonial, imperial – unnatural –
reality.

a total transformation is needed.

Silverfish are the embodiment of natural cycles of preservation and remembrance. They are nature's agents for keeping memory moving.

Craving equilibrium.

Removing.

“The linguistic loop:

It’s clear a total transformation is needed. The question that burns is how, but maybe the how brings us back to the fact of the matter. It’s clear a total transformation is needed. Okay, when? But time has neve been a good indicator of anything; loot at how probability seems to wax and wane depending on the century. Across societies, across time, one thing has remained clear – a total transformation is needed. Indeed. Does this mean a return to atavistic society? We’re getting ahead of ourselves – back to the point: transformation is needed. But what are the practicalities, will it happen on a Wednesday? Will it be continuous? Will we need to rewrite the master script before we can set it in motion? Here, some start to weary and resign themselves to an alienated life. We plead with them, A TOTAL TRANSFORMATION IS NEEDED!

….

And it can go on and on like this for many years.”

Olufemi, Experiments in Imagining Otherwise (2021), 56.

atavistic . adjective

happening because of a very old habit from a long time ago in human history, not because of a conscious decision or because it is necessary now:

. an atavistic fear of the dark

Silverfish evolved around 400 million years ago.

Silverfish are one of two oldest primitive insects.

Silverfish are able to live for over a year without eating.

Silverfish don't have an agenda beyond their survival.

Are silverfish atavistic or counter-atavistic?

Denaturalizing

Constructed

Removal

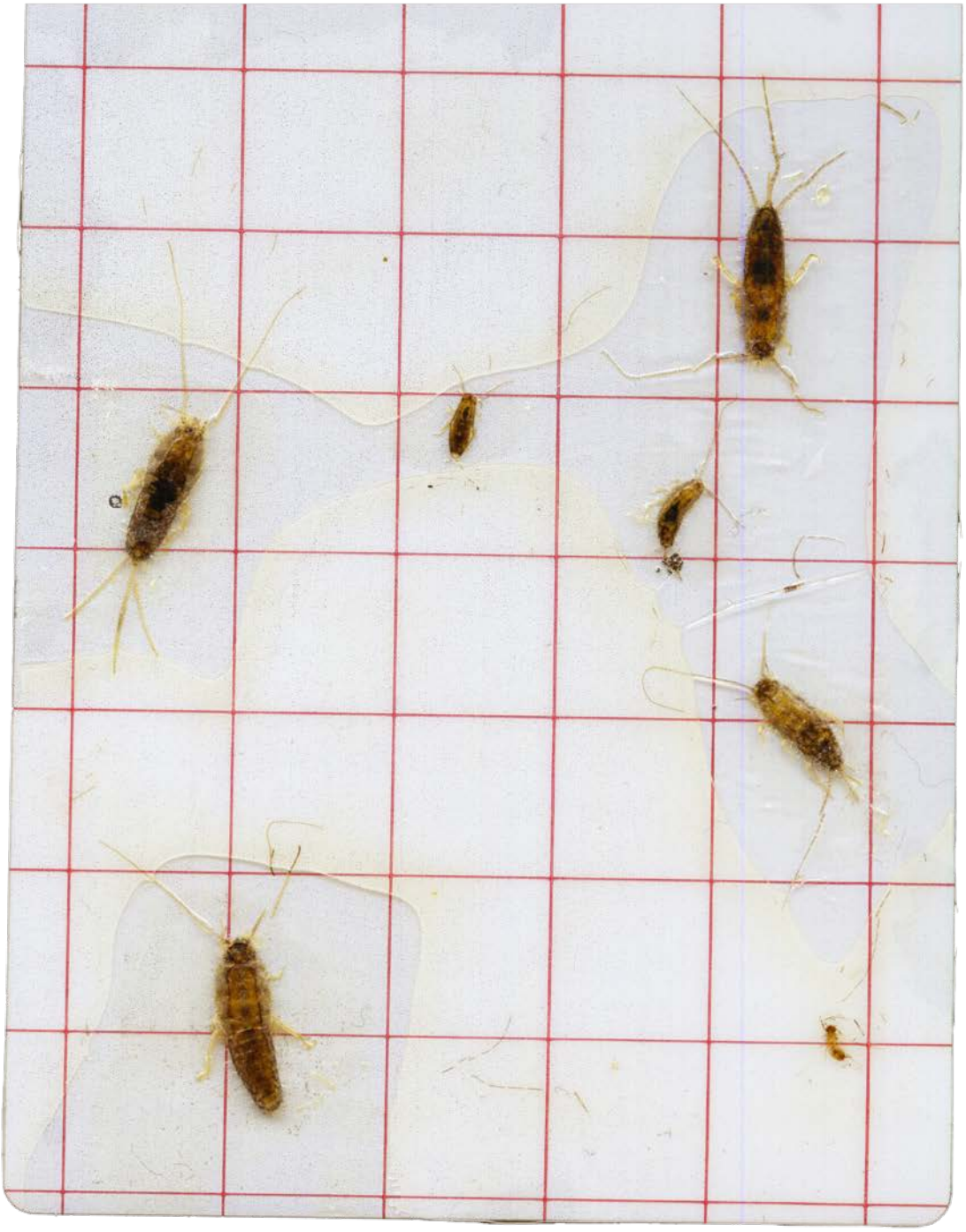
Natural

Normal

Decolonial

Naturalizing

Colonial



Deconstruct our memory. Let the collection of alba be deconstructed, deteriorate, be eaten by the nature's agents. Naturalize our archives by letting silverfish in. Don't trap them by glue tramps, but welcome them with open arms. Let them feast on the colonial, imperial, unnatural, narratives we have constructed.

Let them deconstruct.


Nimbus

What deserves to be preserved?

Why something is trash and the other is treasure and kept safely?

"Before 1500, dinner guests could measure their importance
in the regard of their hosts by the number of oranges that came to the table"[1]

How did oranges stop representing wealth and status?


Valencia
MANDY
PONCHE
ULTRA VIOLETTE
Placencia
Gloriosa
MAMBA
POTIUM


Frutas Real
Salud
Valentia
Best Selected Egyptian
Guatemala
Naranjas del Tesorillo
TESORILLO
Almudena
Gloriosa
Torres
PONCHE
ULTRA VIOLETTE
Placencia
Tabolet
Esteng Hnos.
BRIO
POLIUM

"The presence of oranges solidified the status of the sovereign, as one who could command vast resources and force the surrounding lands to bend to his will"[2]

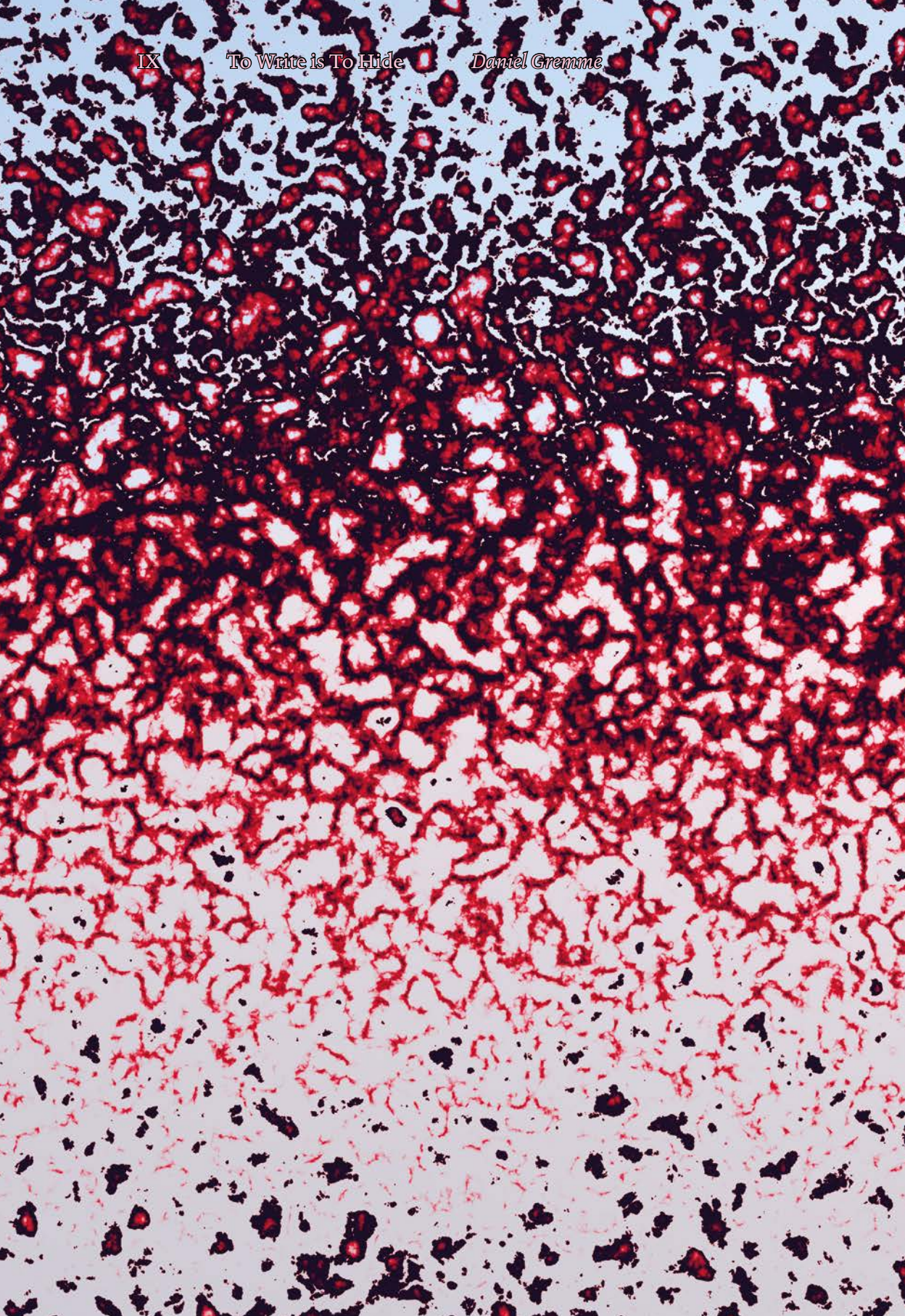
Do both the alba and citrus embody an imperial construction, emphasizing the socially and financially privileged?

How to archive and handle documents that we treat without any care?

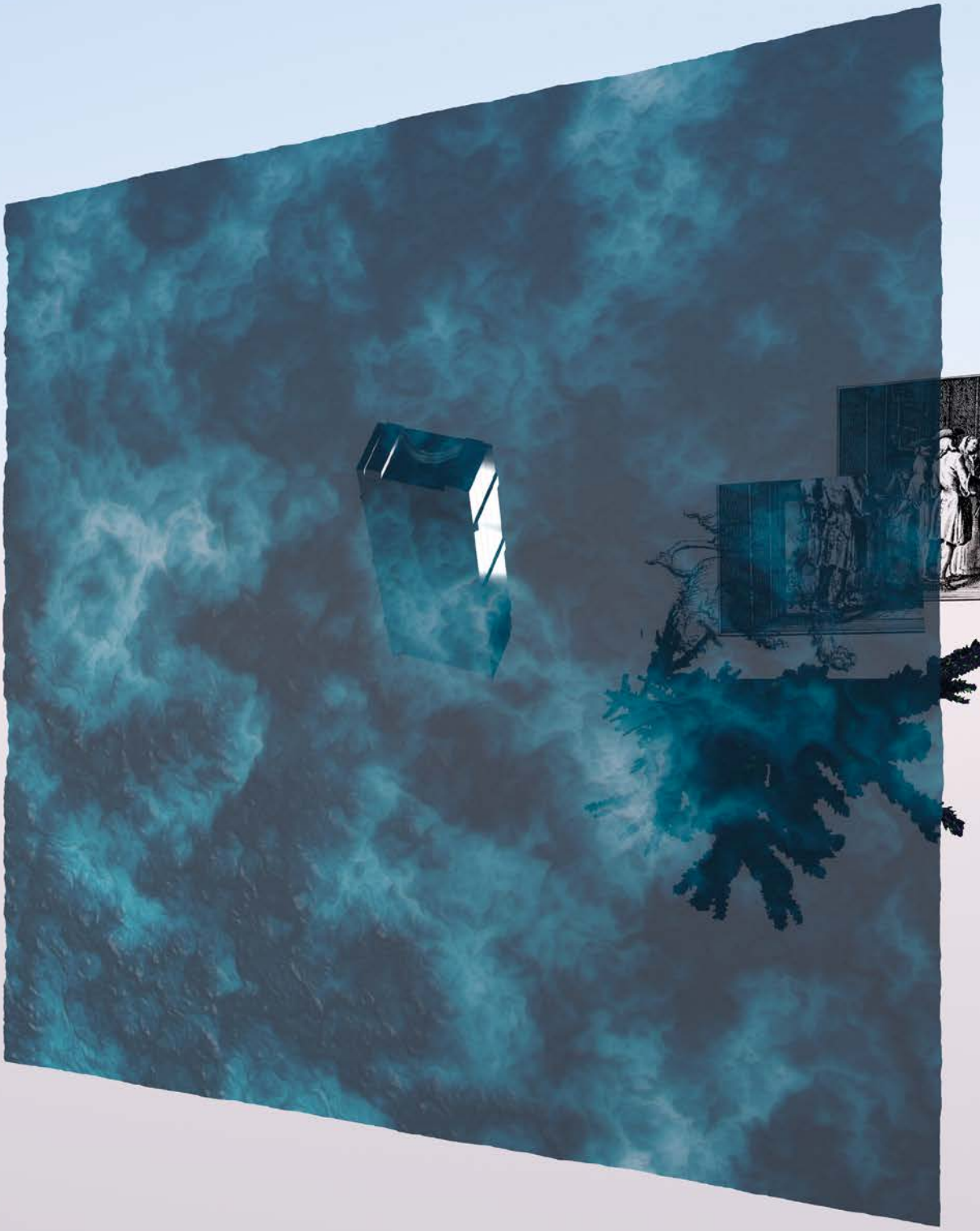

Solita

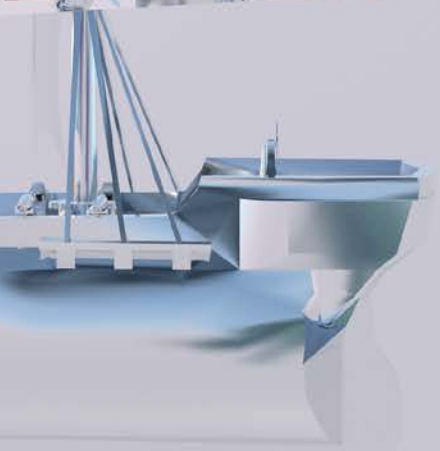
How to recognize objects that are not being guarded behind closed doors yet still carry unseen values?

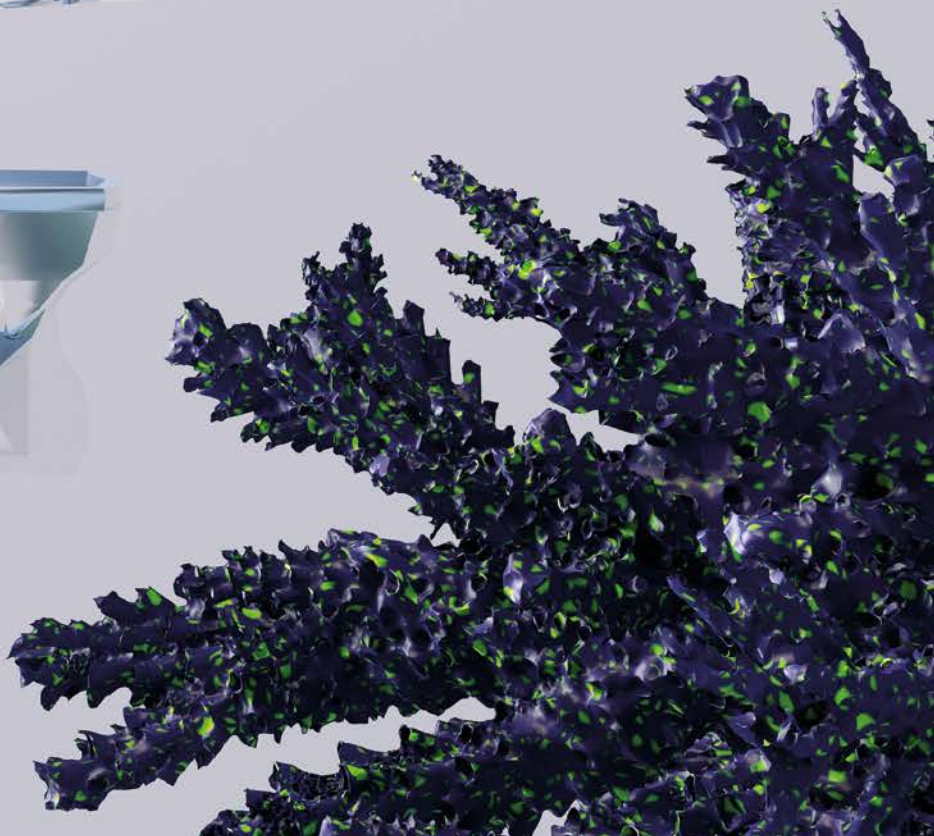
[01] Aho, Robert. (2010). An abridged history of the orange. San Jose, Calif.: San Jose State University. 81.
[02] McPhee, John. (2016). Oranges. London: Daunt Books. 66.

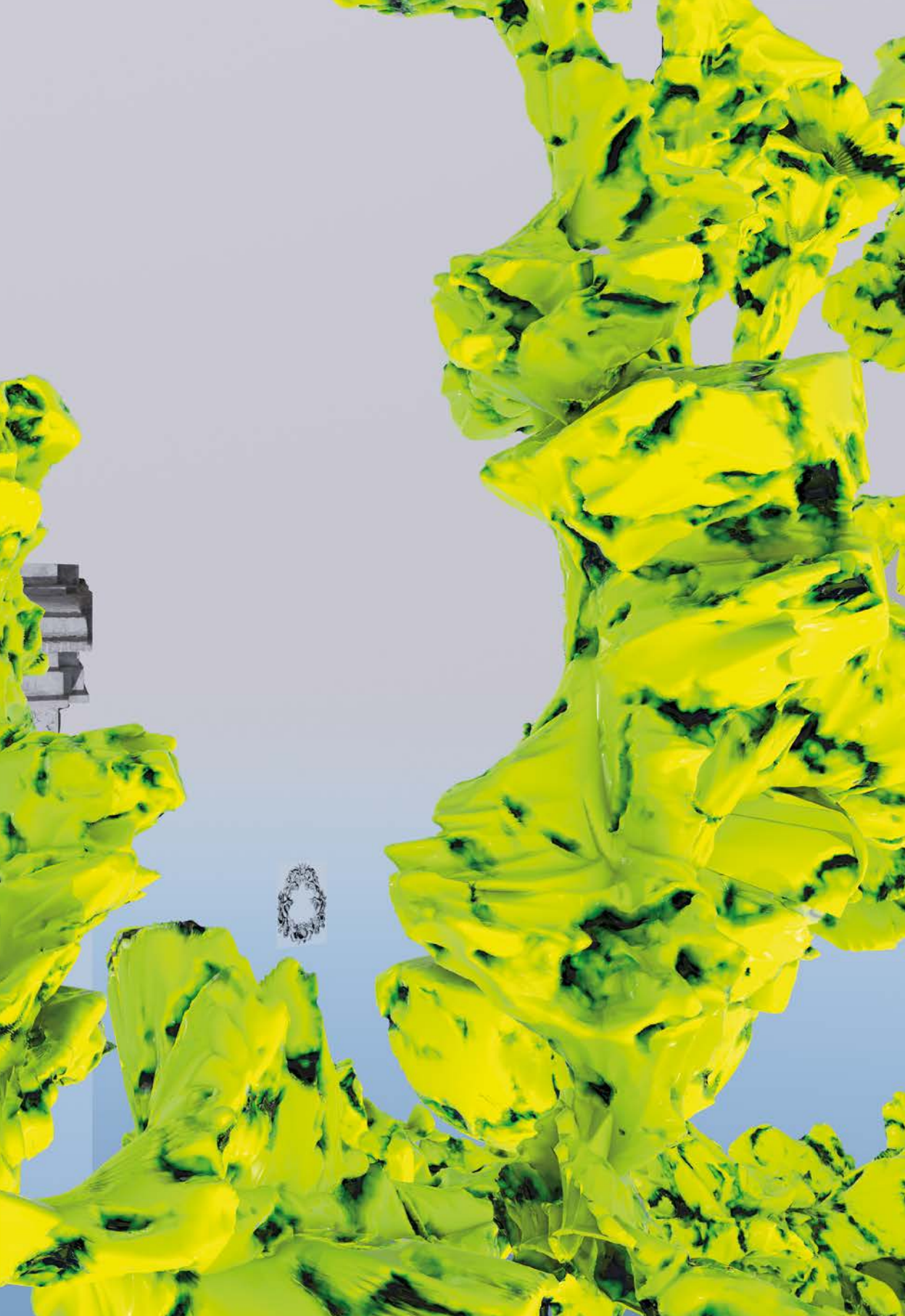


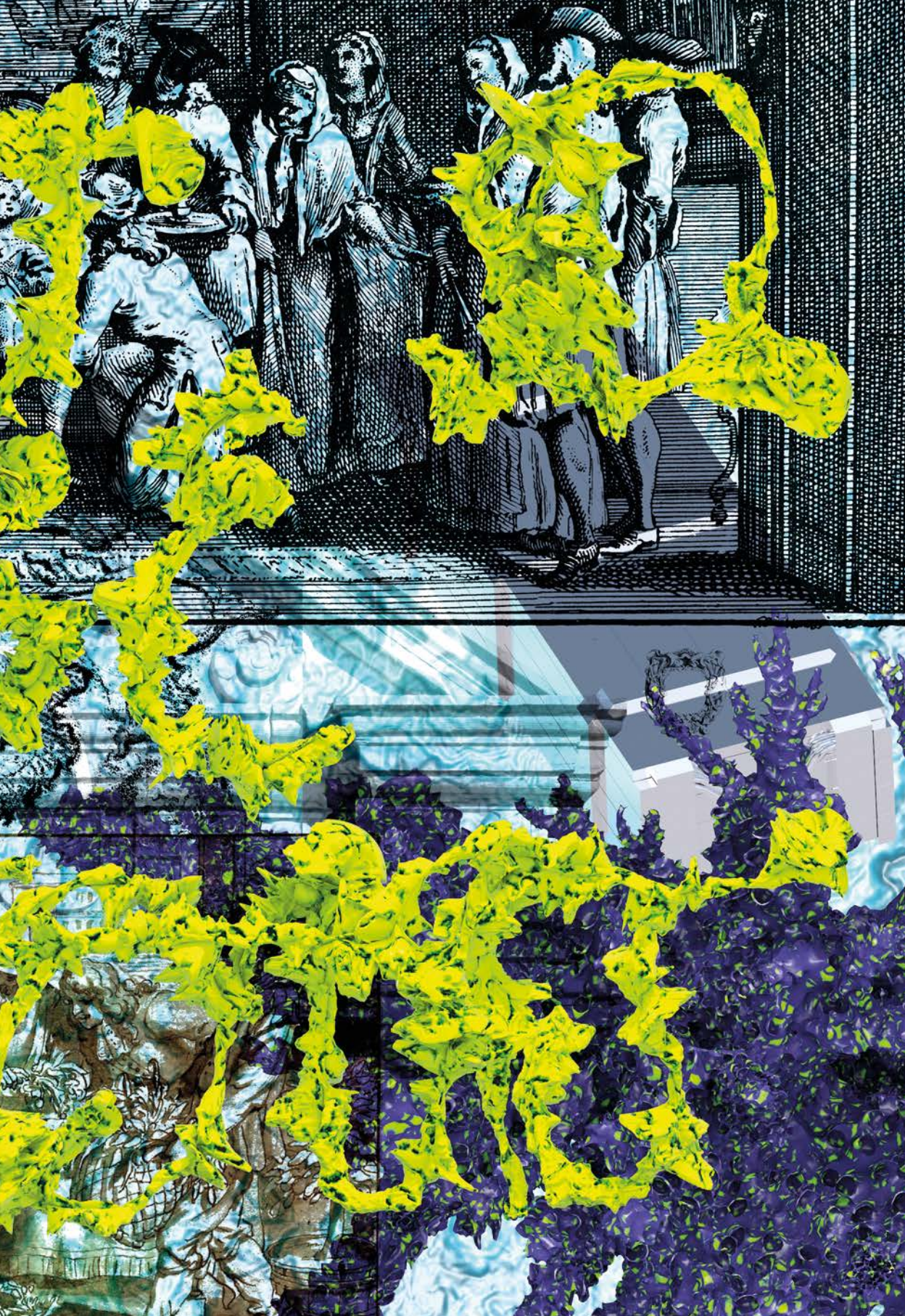
Gerbrand van den Eeckbout

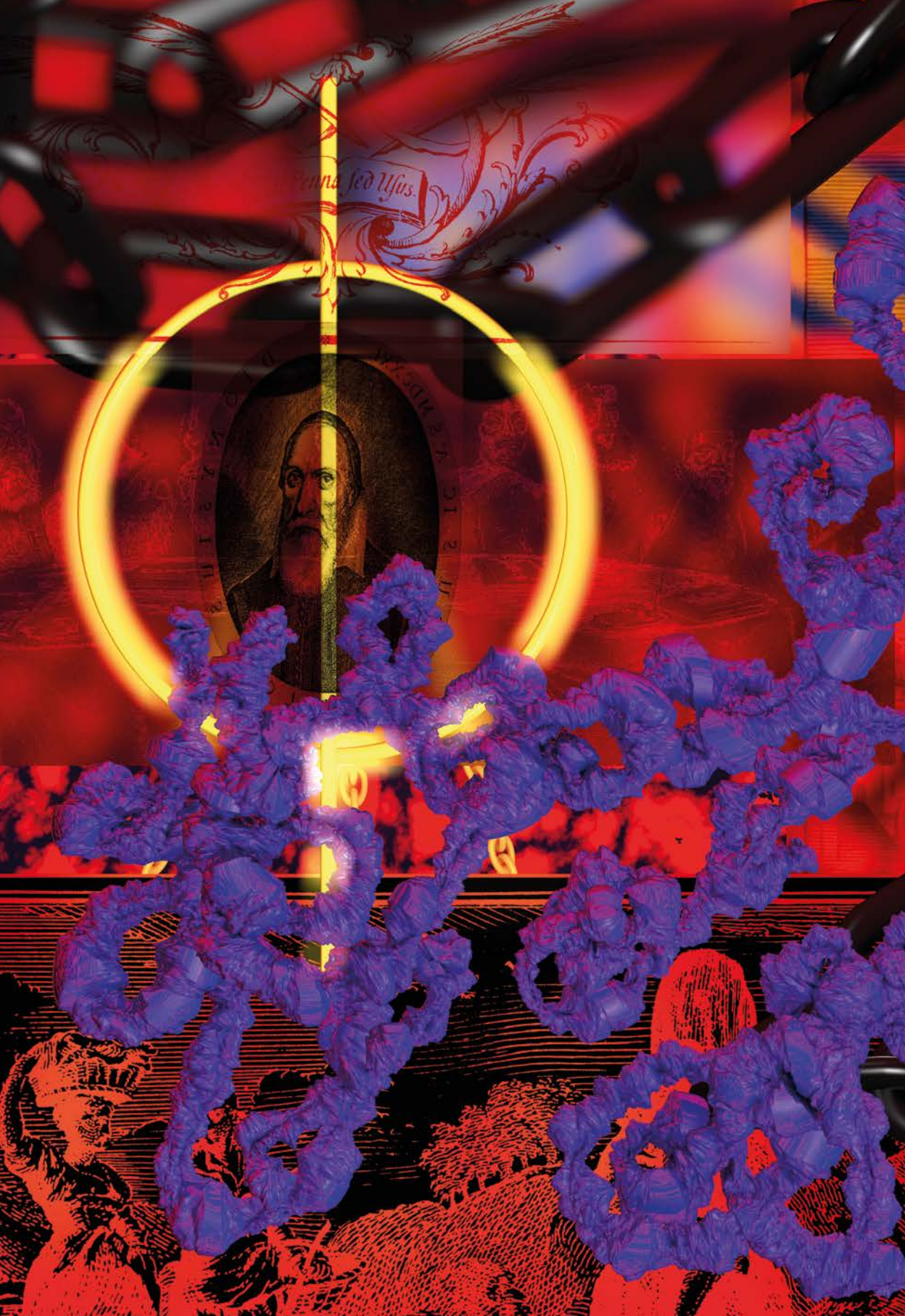


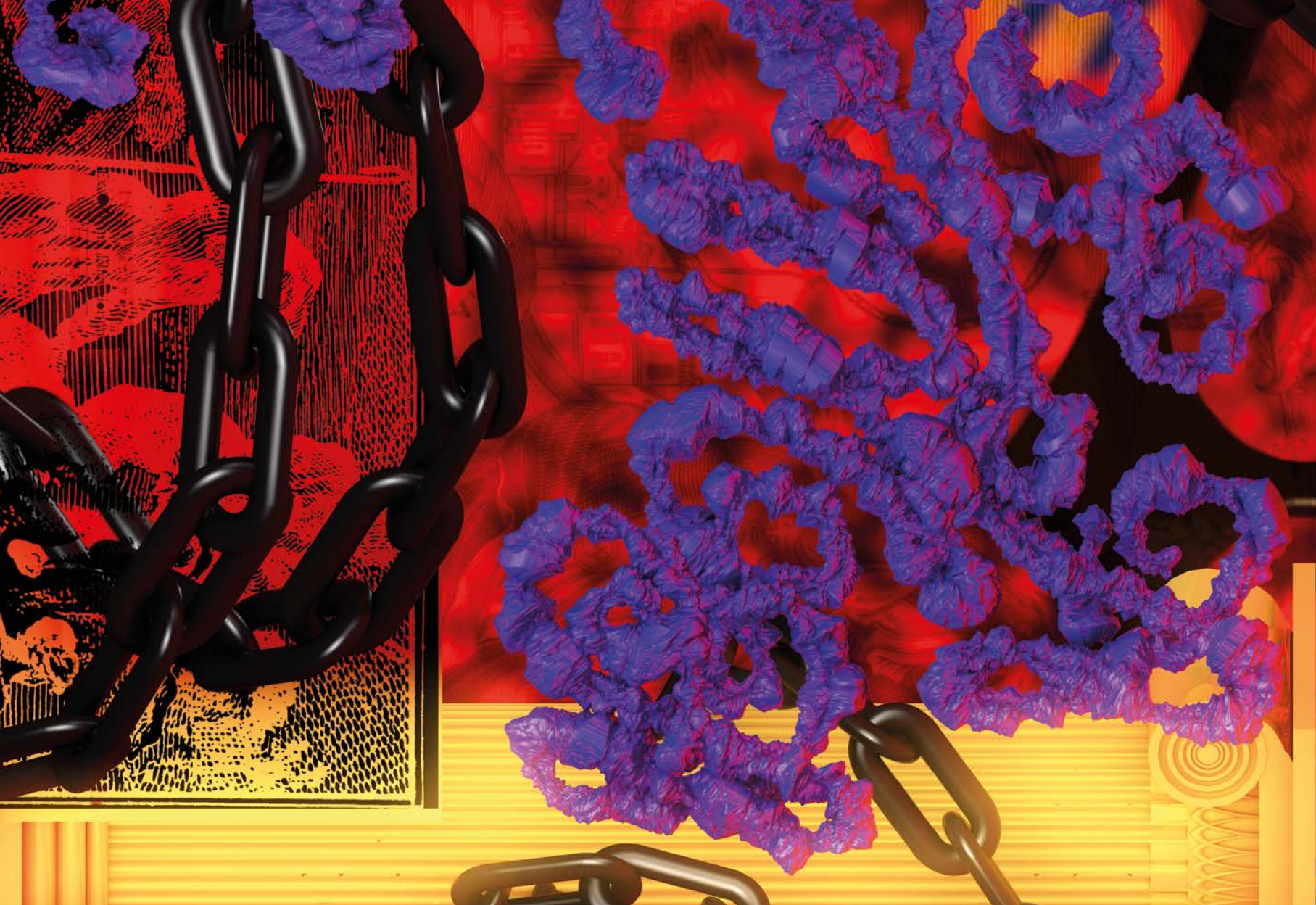


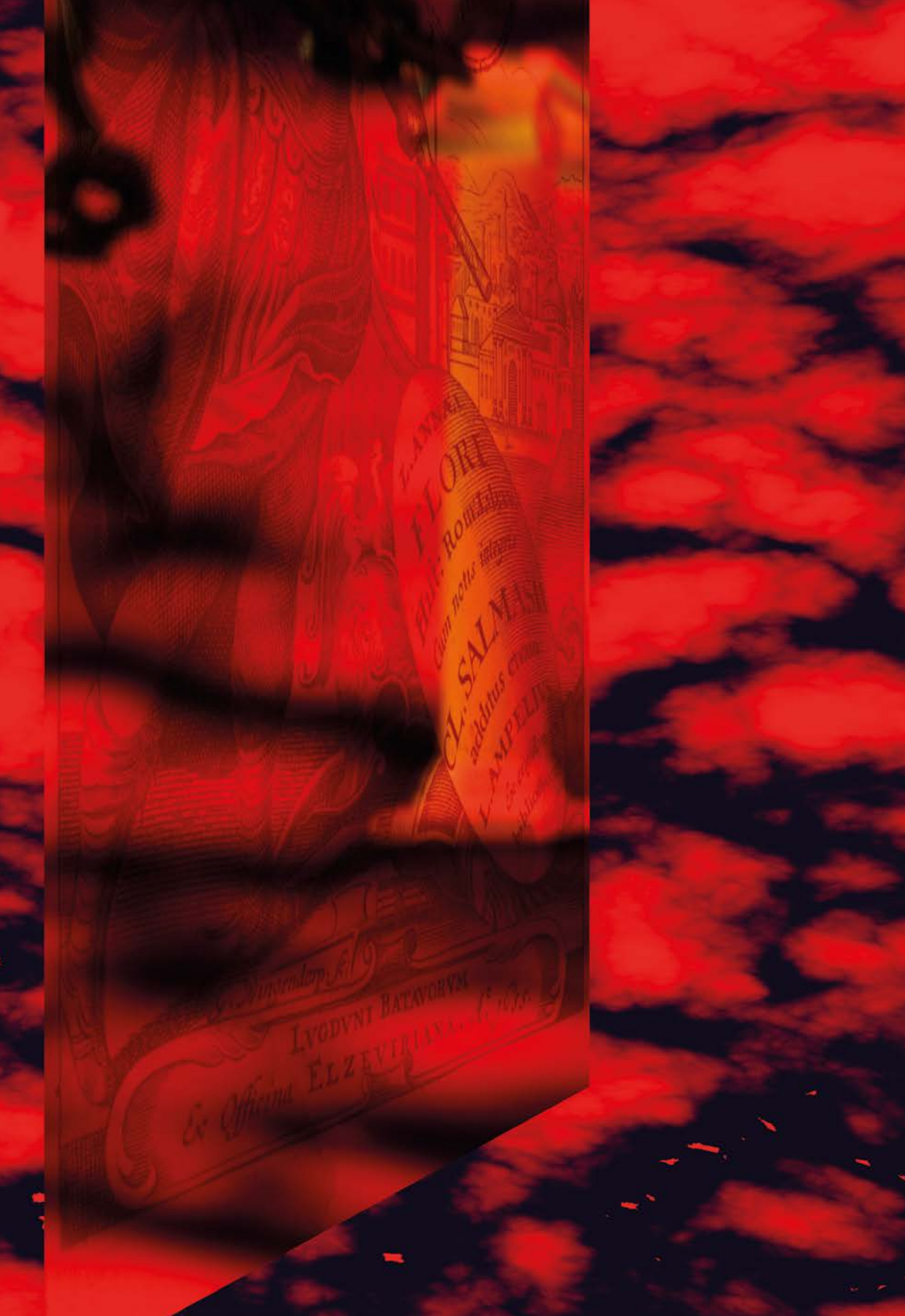








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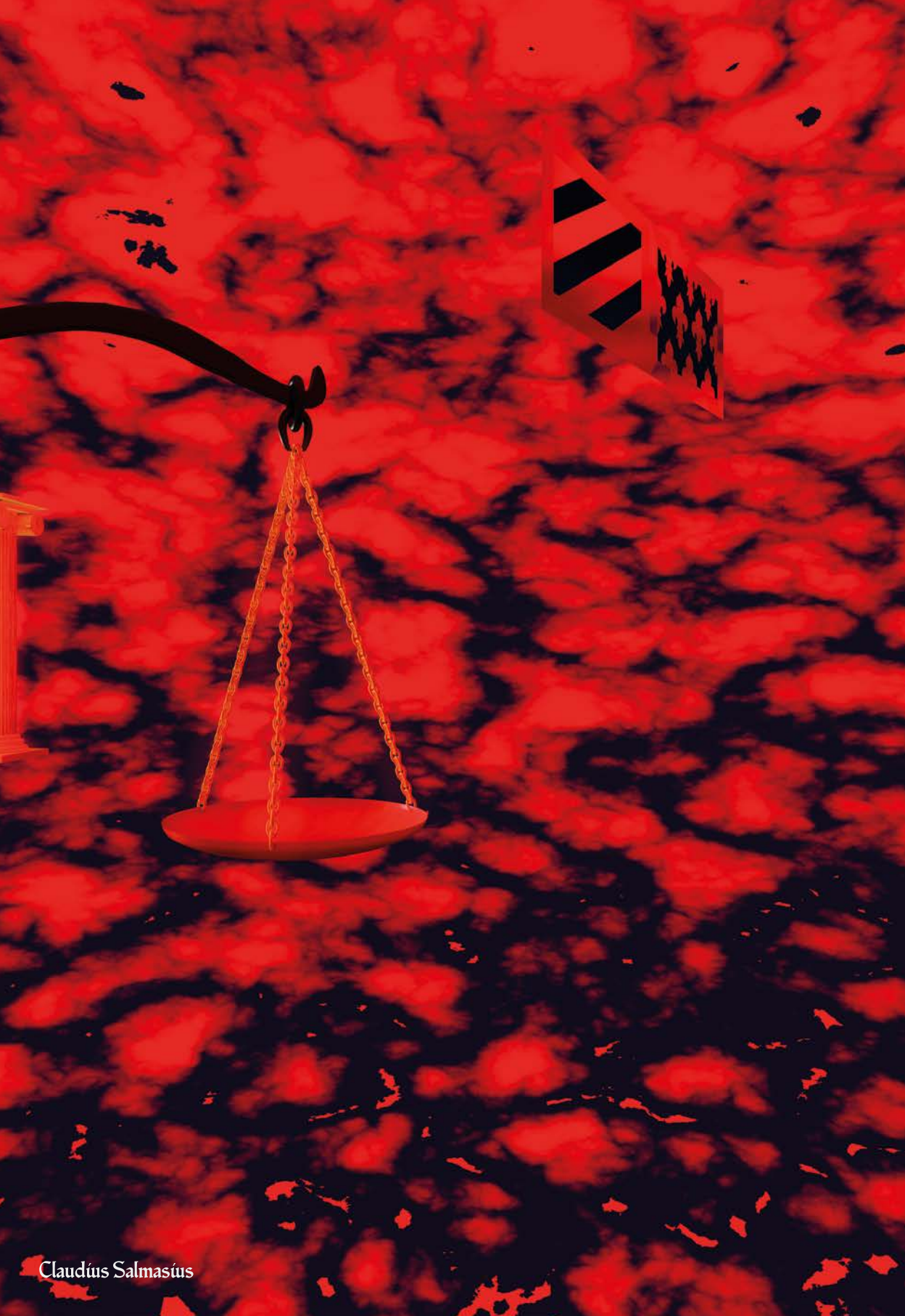
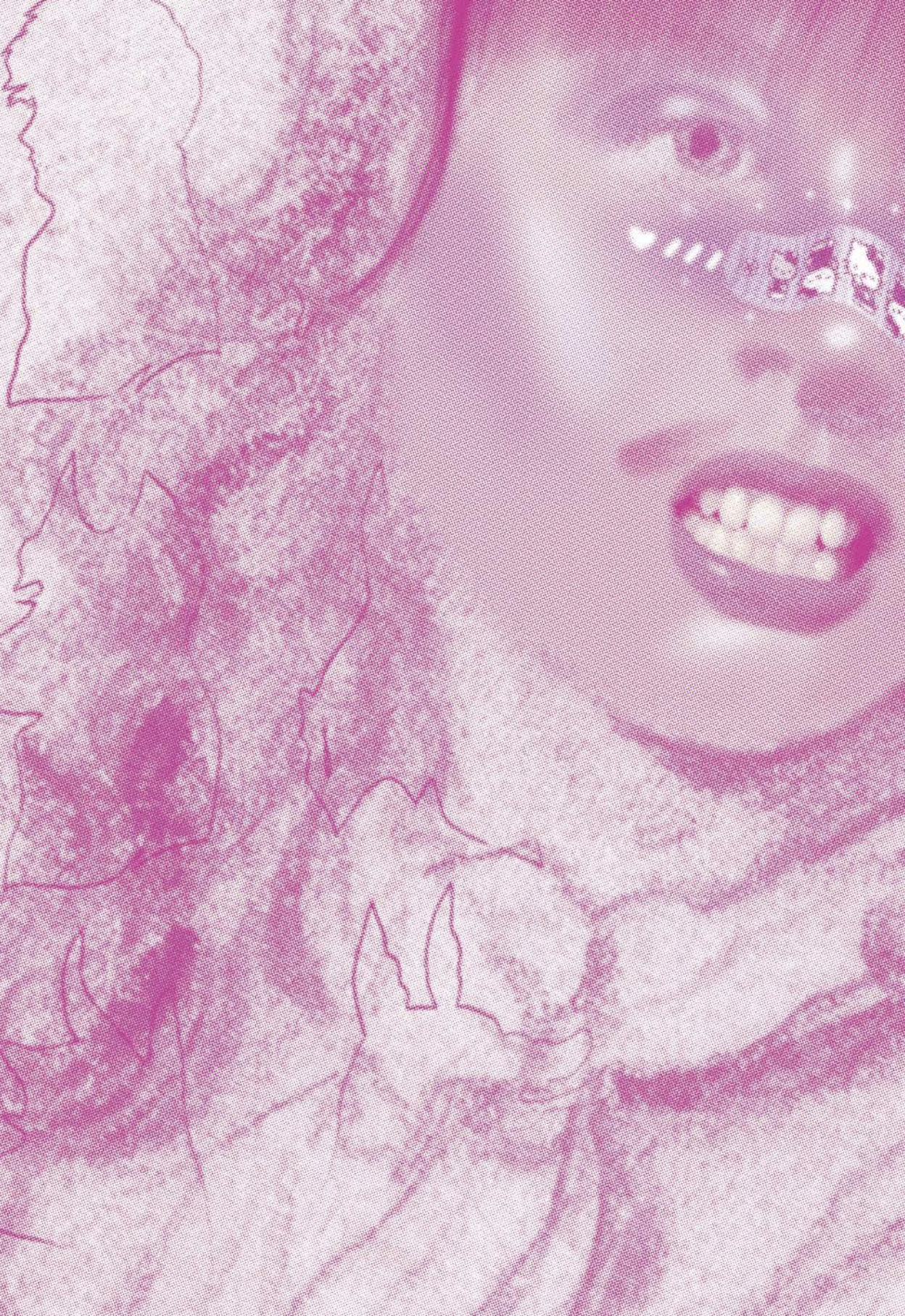


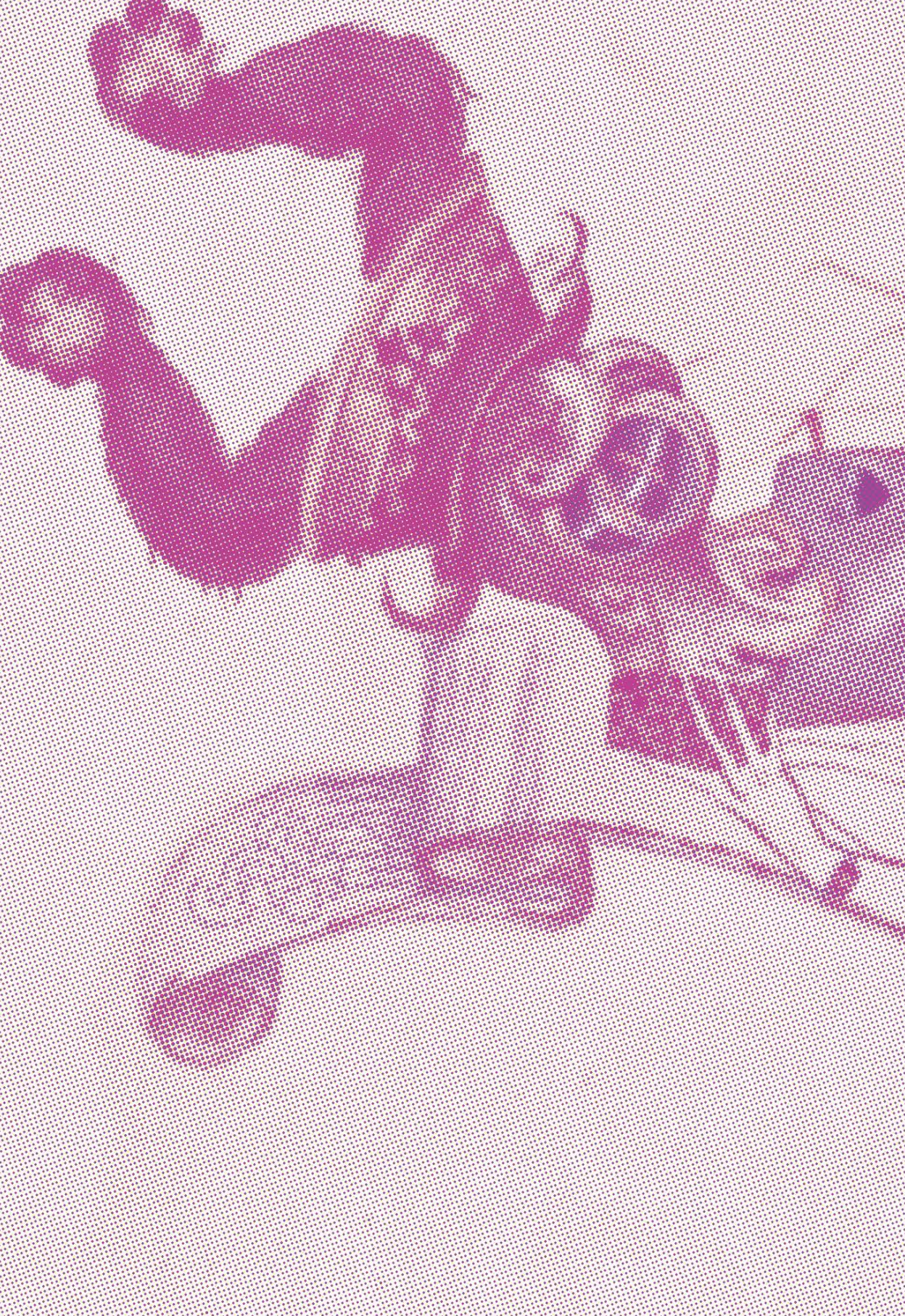
Claudíus Salmasíus

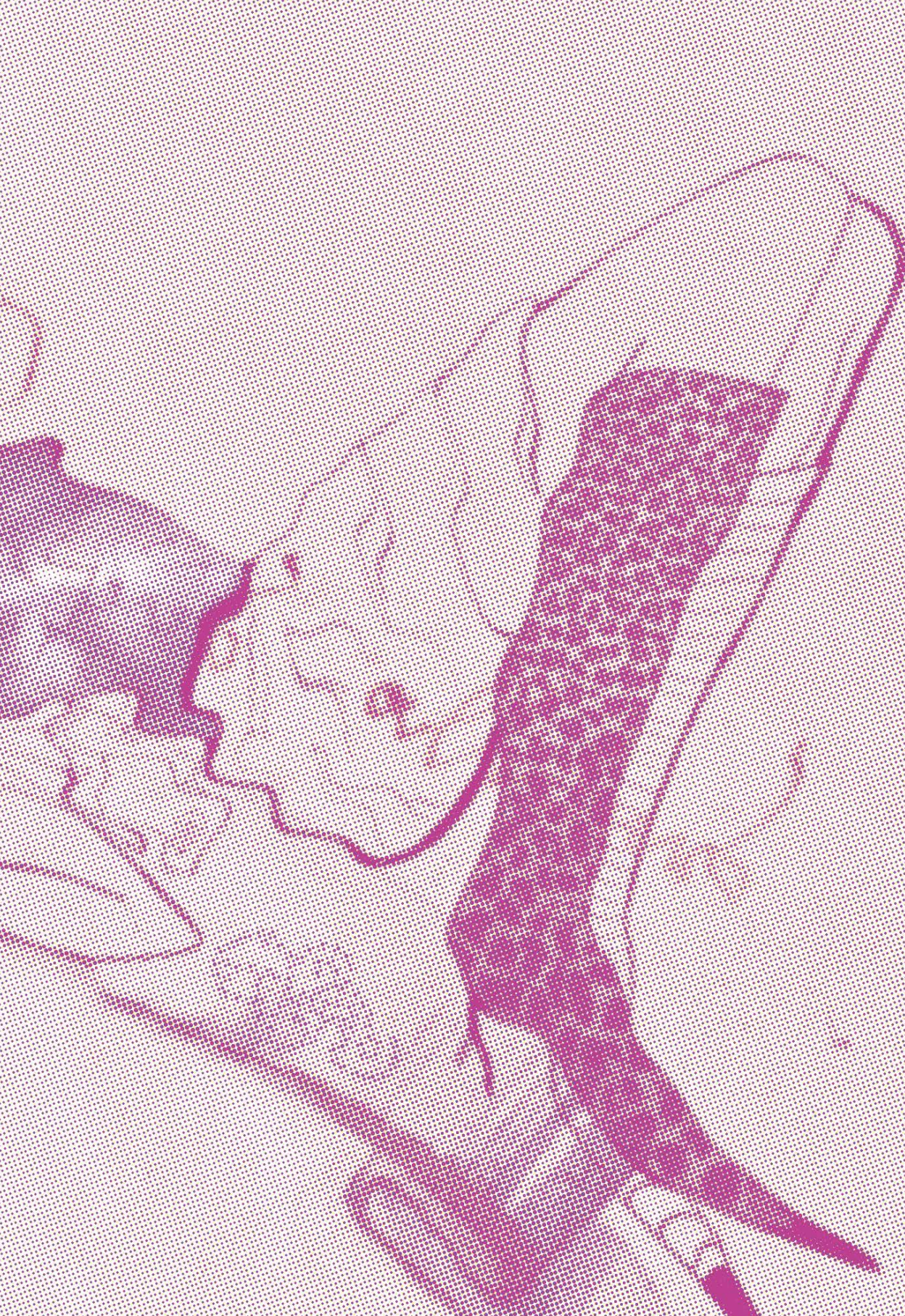

UNCOATED
UNARMED




Dump Him
PLEASANT BYE

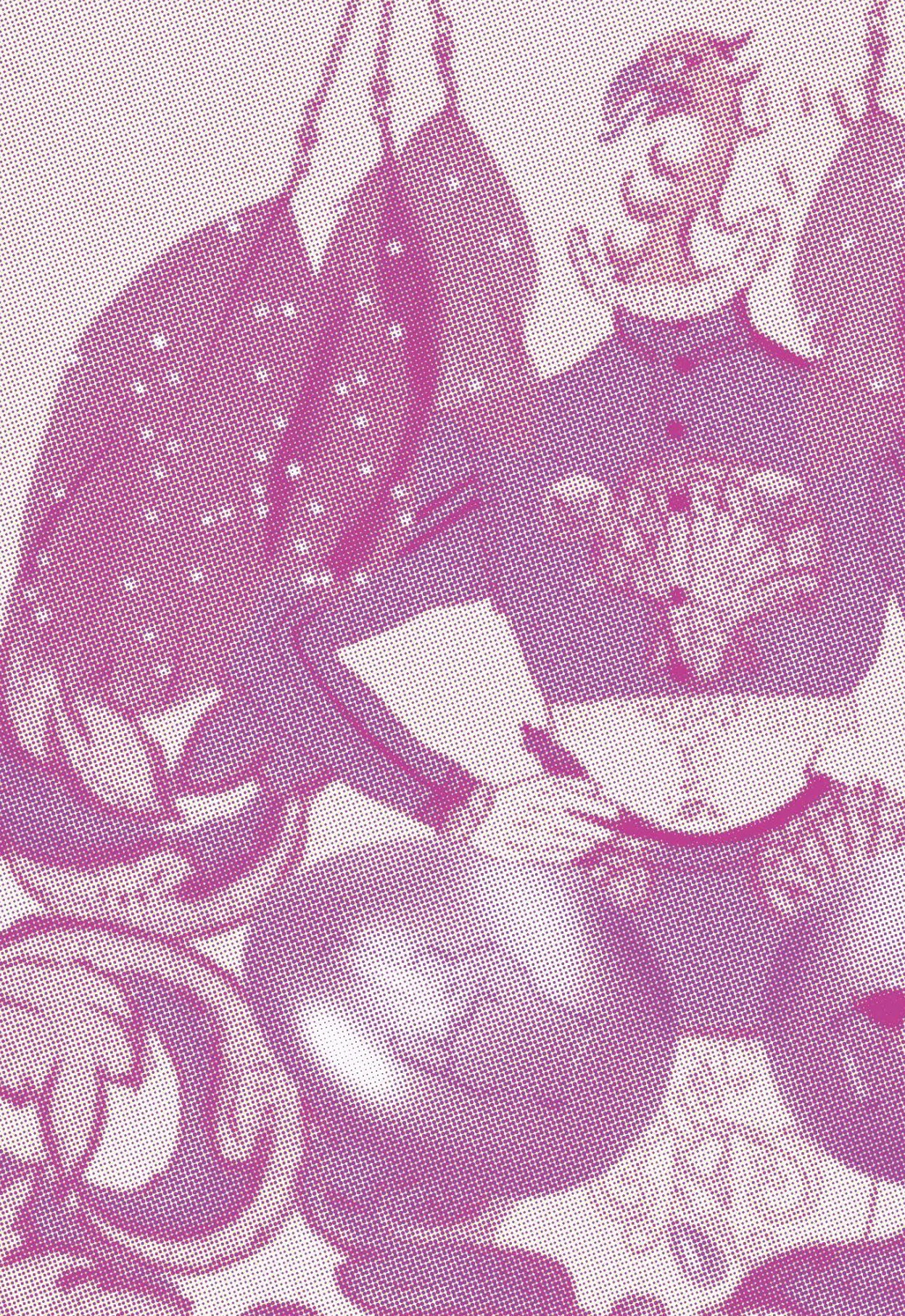

tc nobili

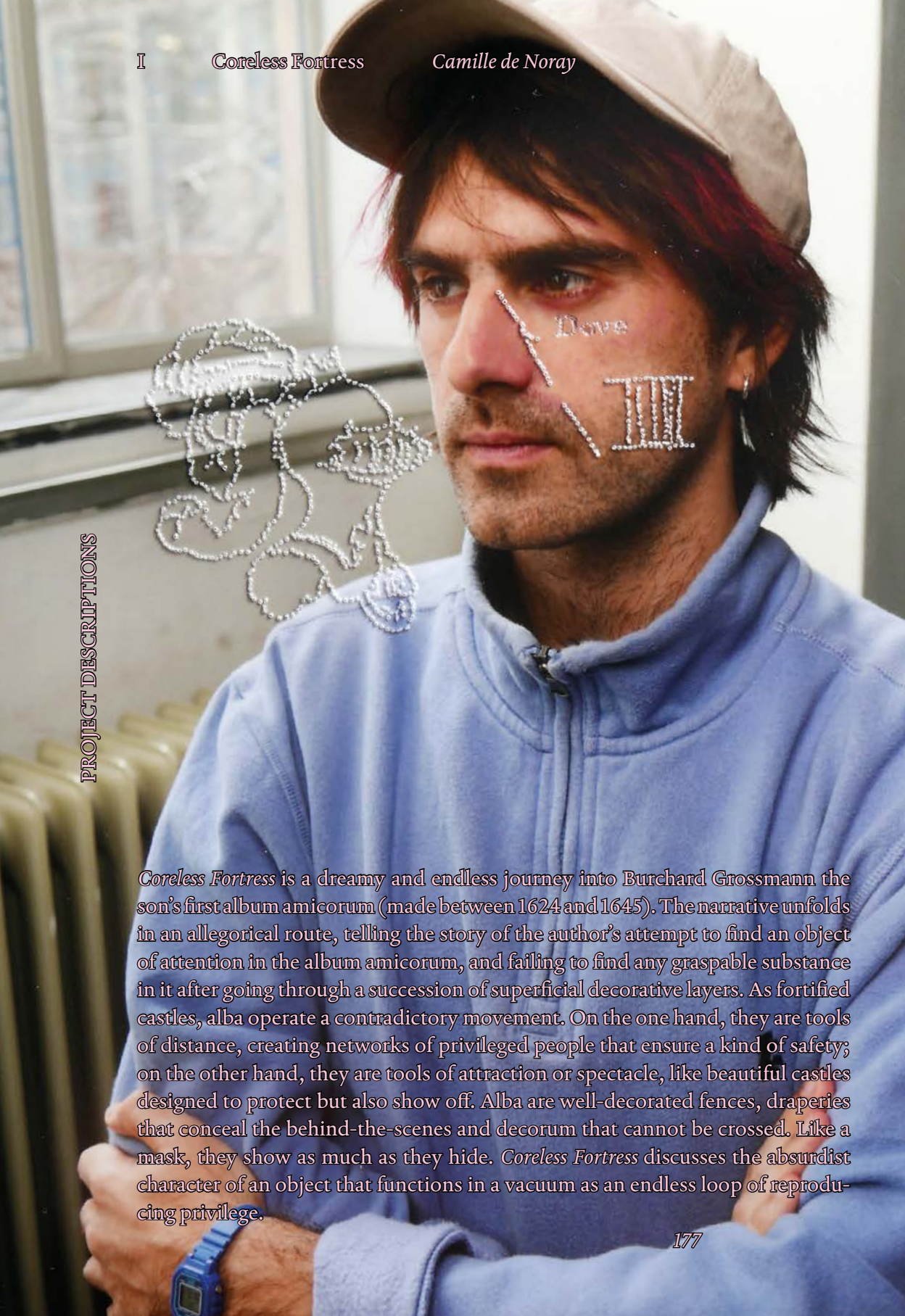





in eo quod sit indica
tired


NUD





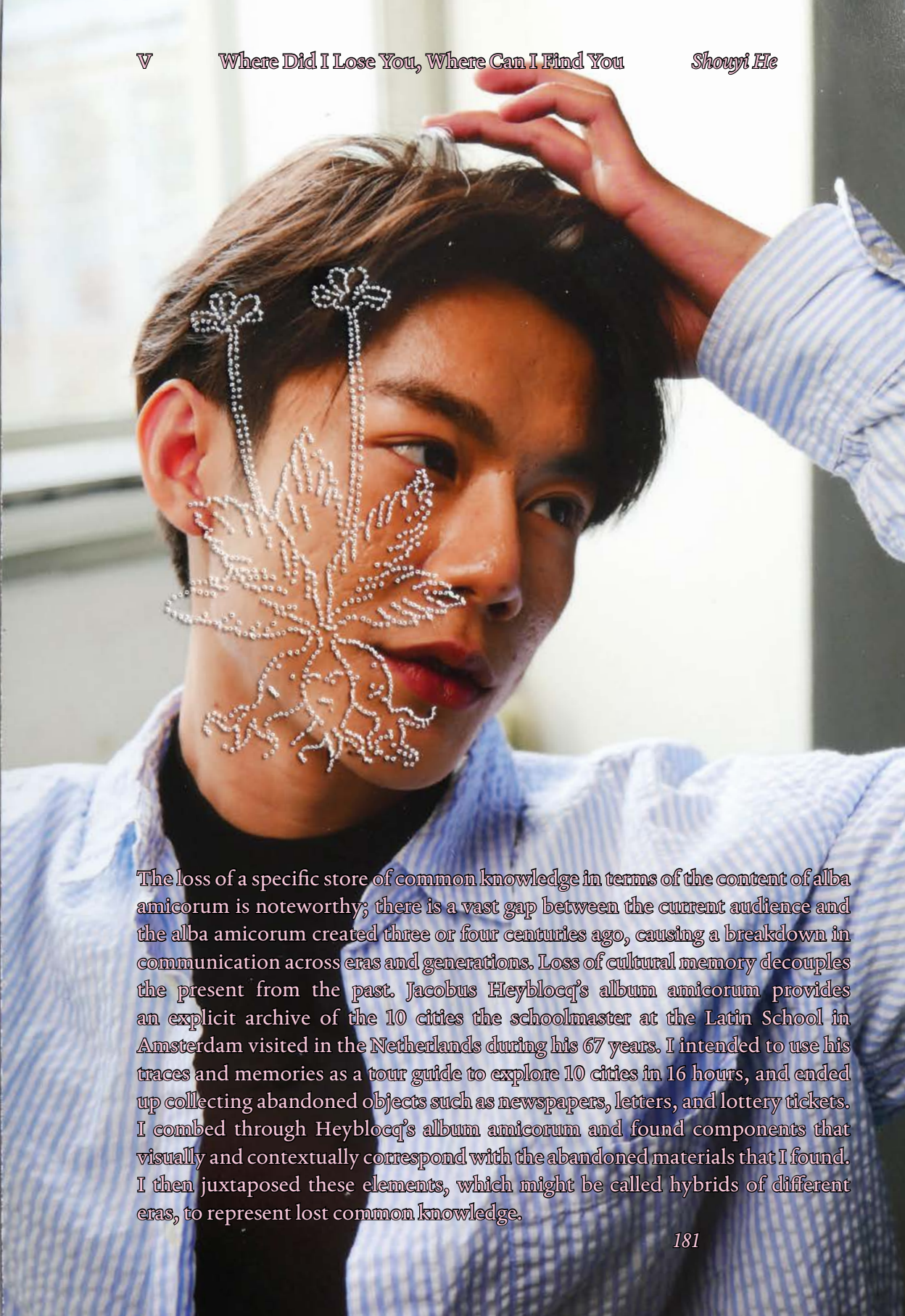
PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Coreless Fortress is a dreamy and endless journey into Burchard Grossmann the son's first album amicorum (made between 1624 and 1645). The narrative unfolds in an allegorical route, telling the story of the author's attempt to find an object of attention in the album amicorum, and failing to find any graspable substance in it after going through a succession of superficial decorative layers. As fortified castles, alba operate a contradictory movement. On the one hand, they are tools of distance, creating networks of privileged people that ensure a kind of safety; on the other hand, they are tools of attraction or spectacle, like beautiful castles designed to protect but also show off. Alba are well-decorated fences, draperies that conceal the behind-the-scenes and decorum that cannot be crossed. Like a mask, they show as much as they hide. *Coreless Fortress* discusses the absurdist character of an object that functions in a vacuum as an endless loop of reproducing privilege.

There is a saying that truth never stands in a way of a good story. However, how much information is needed to get an insight into the past? *The name is not mentioned* aims to highlight the qualities of incompleteness prevalent within the alba amicorum collection, especially relating to the scarcity of information about the represented people – predominantly women. Principally because the books were made by men for men, while identities of the majority of females remained anonymous. With advanced reconstruction techniques, we have become accustomed to realistic and complete representations of historic artefacts. Perhaps it should be argued that, often, these reconstructions are based upon assumptions, ultimately filling in the gaps of missing information – just as happens with our understanding about the alba collection. The series of images was created by mapping two-dimensional images onto three-dimensional renders, celebrating those missing parts as holding creative potential. The visuals create a dialogue between not only their incompleteness but also the narrative content of cultural artefacts – in this case the alba amicorum – to allow for critical reflection on the deficiencies of historical resources.

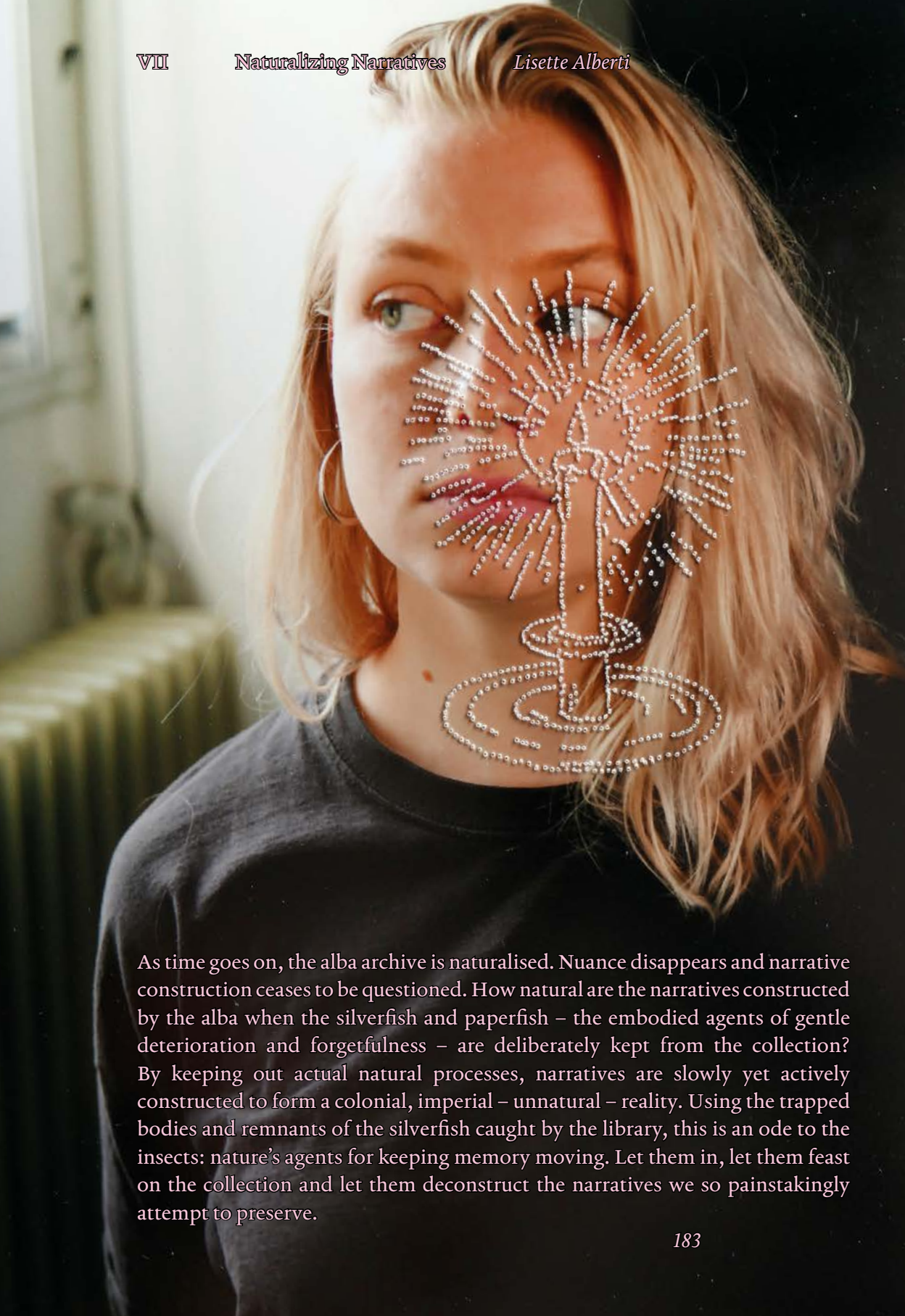
I look at alba amicorum through what's missing. Keeping an album or inscribing something within one requires privilege. Indulging in these gentile time-passing activities was at the time inaccessible to most. This is the punctum that undoes excessive praise or romanticisation of these books. Yet something about them evokes longing. In this contribution, not knowing exactly what the album is drives the research process. Drawing from memory and recalling the heavily decorated pages brings some error to my notes and images. This strategy in development due to imperfection results in images that are more owned, more personal. Boycotting celebrating people who kept and wrote in alba amicorum for their exceptional achievement in the cultural field and its opulence has merit. I invite you to look at them through embracing the idiosyncrasy of a personal narrative.

The alba amicorum collection at KB, the National Library of the Netherlands is fragile. All its contents are on physical materials exposed to natural forces, innately decomposing over the grand spans of time during which they are kept. In part to document the alba, the library is digitalising their collection. Replacing physical records with computerised systems is formally called *dematerialising*, implying a common idea that the digital is unlike the material. Yet, our digital data is as much in danger of rotting away as our material data. Bit rot and software rot are two processes that demonstrate the frail nature of our digital worlds. *All Rots Bit by Bit* explores the similar processes of decay of physical and digital data. Macro photography of damaged pages from the alba amicorum collection are rendered into an increasingly decaying digital landscape, bringing both worlds of decomposition together. The artist's contribution ends with a corrupted image of an album found on the library's own website, demonstrating their digital collection is already rotting.

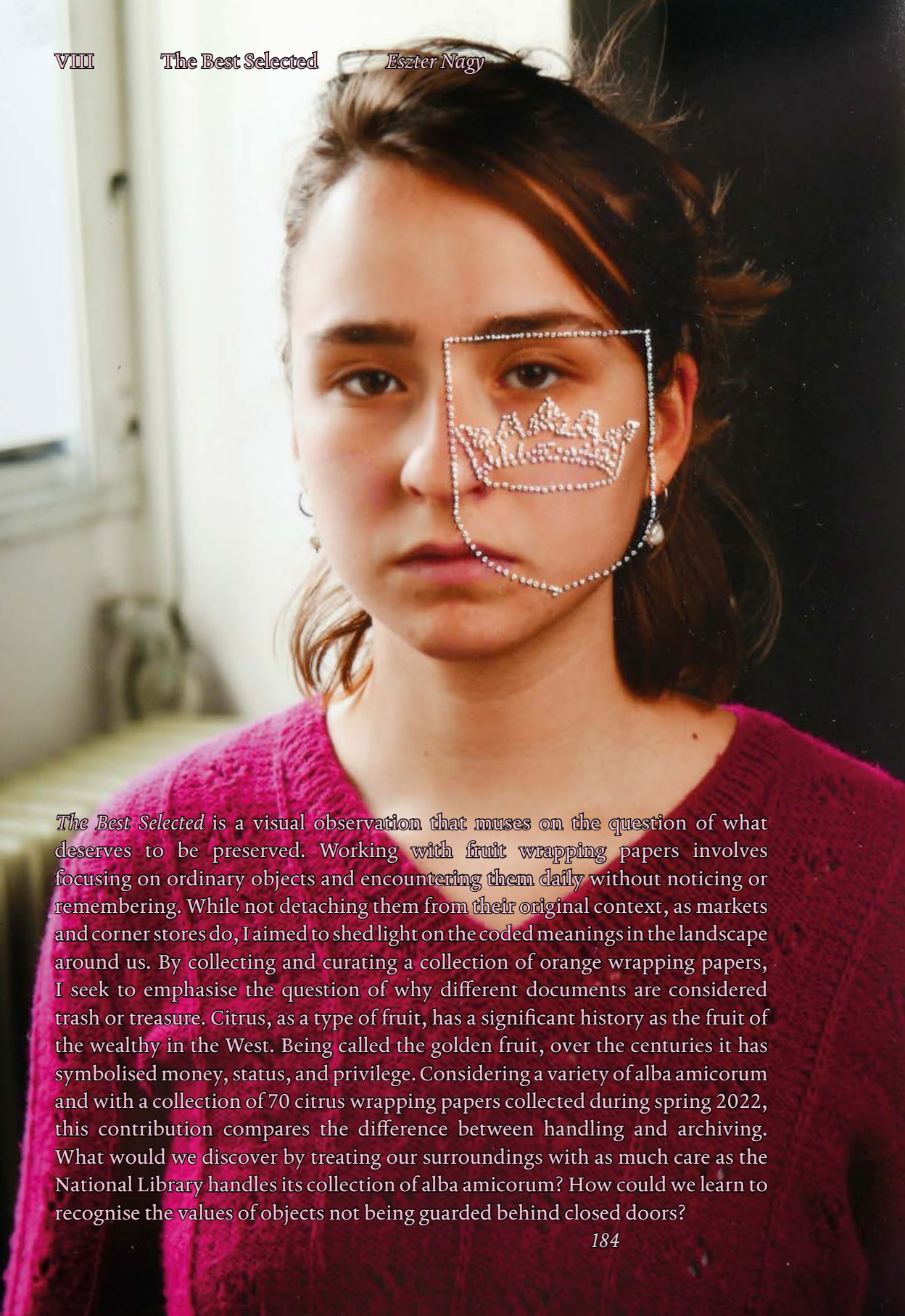


The loss of a specific store of common knowledge in terms of the content of alba amicorum is noteworthy; there is a vast gap between the current audience and the alba amicorum created three or four centuries ago, causing a breakdown in communication across eras and generations. Loss of cultural memory decouples the present from the past. Jacobus Heyblocq's album amicorum provides an explicit archive of the 10 cities the schoolmaster at the Latin School in Amsterdam visited in the Netherlands during his 67 years. I intended to use his traces and memories as a tour guide to explore 10 cities in 16 hours, and ended up collecting abandoned objects such as newspapers, letters, and lottery tickets. I combed through Heyblocq's album amicorum and found components that visually and contextually correspond with the abandoned materials that I found. I then juxtaposed these elements, which might be called hybrids of different eras, to represent lost common knowledge.

The visual essay *Alba Amiwhora* responds to the depiction of the Venetian Courtesane in alba amicorum. She stands out amongst the upper-class white men whose books have been carefully preserved. Sex workers are often not represented or misrepresented. Historically they are seen in a gloomy light and are not welcome in institutionalised spaces. Whores are spoken about, not with. In this visual essay, the opportunity is taken to let Kami Million a sex worker take space in this well-printed publication. She takes place on a special library pillow magnifying her preciousness. "I want to honour the whores, thanking them all in the past, present, and future for the amazing work they do. Showing up in an academic space like this is part of our fight for destigmatisation. Stigma is the beast that kills us. Holding space for us to exist is the bare minimum we need."

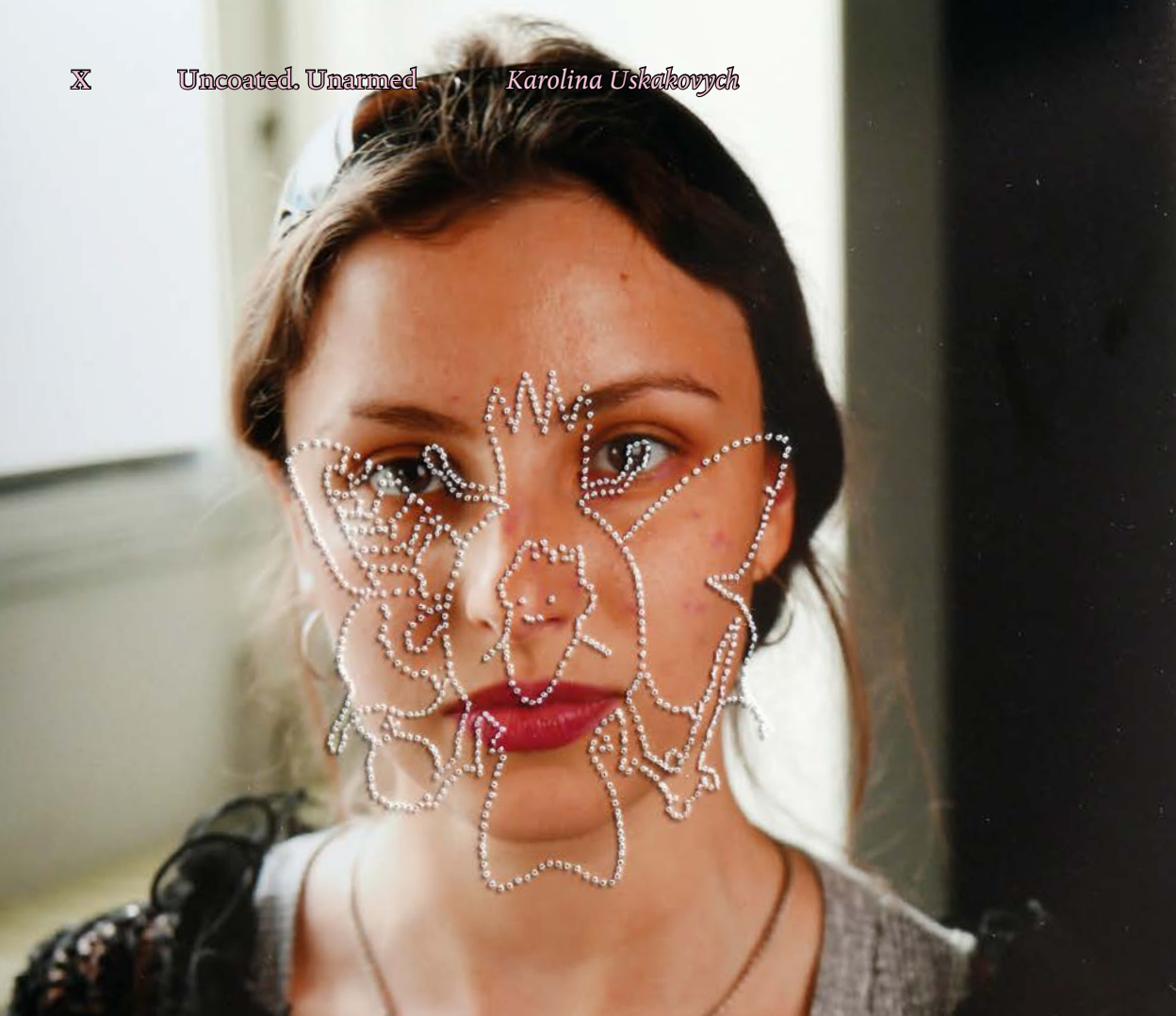


As time goes on, the alba archive is naturalised. Nuance disappears and narrative construction ceases to be questioned. How natural are the narratives constructed by the alba when the silverfish and paperfish – the embodied agents of gentle deterioration and forgetfulness – are deliberately kept from the collection? By keeping out actual natural processes, narratives are slowly yet actively constructed to form a colonial, imperial – unnatural – reality. Using the trapped bodies and remnants of the silverfish caught by the library, this is an ode to the insects: nature's agents for keeping memory moving. Let them in, let them feast on the collection and let them deconstruct the narratives we so painstakingly attempt to preserve.



The Best Selected is a visual observation that muses on the question of what deserves to be preserved. Working with fruit wrapping papers involves focusing on ordinary objects and encountering them daily without noticing or remembering. While not detaching them from their original context, as markets and corner stores do, I aimed to shed light on the coded meanings in the landscape around us. By collecting and curating a collection of orange wrapping papers, I seek to emphasise the question of why different documents are considered trash or treasure. Citrus, as a type of fruit, has a significant history as the fruit of the wealthy in the West. Being called the golden fruit, over the centuries it has symbolised money, status, and privilege. Considering a variety of alba amicorum and with a collection of 70 citrus wrapping papers collected during spring 2022, this contribution compares the difference between handling and archiving. What would we discover by treating our surroundings with as much care as the National Library handles its collection of alba amicorum? How could we learn to recognise the values of objects not being guarded behind closed doors?

In the fifteenth century the ability to write beautifully in Latin or Greek showed one's access to education, power, and time. The tool of the elite intellectually and visually separated them from lower social circles. Aesthetics always reveal distinctions, and these two languages displayed ease, wealth, and cultural literacy through calligraphic excellence. Excessive visuality makes us collect alba amicorum, lures the beholder to marvel, and softens the critical gaze that might otherwise perceive the non-existence of other artefacts from lower classes. I researched the privileged origins of Gerbrand van den Eeckhout and Claudius Salmasius, linked symbolic items of their background in a three-dimensional visually navigable space, and placed their names, translated from the handwritten to digital bones, in the front. I literally illuminate what is often hidden by calligraphic perfection placing nepotism, slavery, and capitalist power structures in the bright light.



This series of collages emerged from a research project that explores the use of animal imagery in family crests in alba amicorum. Alienated beast-like creatures became totems, gaining new meanings according to what the heraldry bearers thought they could represent. On coats of arms, fish signified a true, generous mind; eagles represented a person of noble nature; male animals were considered superior to females. Fast forward to the contemporary period: do we not also ascribe to animals our own meanings when using them as avatars in the Metaverse, or when sending cute animal stickers out to group chats when asking for a favour? Could this be considered a form of contemporary totemism? *Uncoated. Unarmed* is a bold and ironic exploration of Them and Us in relation to animal totems of the past and present. Rich, privileged album amicorum owners are portrayed in vivid therianthropic dreamlike settings. Naked and unarmed, they intertwine with their totems in a nonsensical satirical composition that incorporates modern-day totemic imagery. The project provokes us to think about how animal imagery has and continues to be in service of human cultures, class identities, and communication.

Rianne Koning, Project Manager Public Programming, KB, National Library of the Netherlands

Built With Words. Shaped by People.

How it began

We were founded in 1798, when the collection of books and manuscripts of Stadtholder William V, who had fled to England, was given a place at the Binnenhof in the Hague. Since then, our collection has grown spectacularly. According to the first catalogue from 1800, the collection then numbered 5,500 books and periodicals. During the reign of King Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, the library was designated Koninklijke (Royal) and became the Koninklijke Bibliotheek of the Netherlands. This is still reflected in its name: KB, National Library. The collection grew quickly and we had to move. The KB was housed in the Mauritshuis but this quickly also proved too small. King William I decided to move the library to the building at Lange Voorhout 34, where the KB was located from 1821 to 1982. In 1982 the KB moved to the current building next to central station, which was designed by the OD205 agency under the direction of architect Arie Hagoort.

A place where every word counts

Over the course of 200 years, the KB has grown into a nationally and internationally renowned scientific institution with almost 500 employees. When it was founded it was already the intention to collect the national heritage in print form. This took place quite randomly until 1974, but since then the KB has collected one copy of every publication (book, magazine, and newspaper) issued in the Netherlands. Together they form the Netherlands collection with 'everything from or about the Netherlands'. Since the 1990s, the KB has also been collecting digital Dutch publications and we now even store websites. Everything can be viewed in the KB, also online as much as possible, and is properly stored by our specialists.

Promotion of reading, digital inclusion, and lifelong development

Since 2015, the KB has also played an important coordinating role in the network of public libraries. We are central to the network of (public) libraries in the Netherlands and we're building the national digital library. Together with public libraries, we are committed to promoting reading, digital inclusion, and lifelong development.

Linda van Deursen, tutor Image Language;
Mijke van der Drift, tutor Media Theory Lab;
and Niels Schrader, Head of Programme at
Non Linear Narrative

Books Make Friends

The master Non Linear Narrative at the Royal Academy of Art takes the entanglement of relations in the global information society as a starting point, in order to examine sociopolitical issues in collaboration with external partners. From February to July 2022, students in the programme collaborated with the KB, National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague to scrutinise the book as a publishing platform and create new, compelling narratives that link the alba amicorum to immediate issues affecting us today.

Books Make Friends offered students direct access to the library's comprehensive catalogue of alba amicorum (friendship books) in order to look at these historical documents through a more contemporary lens. In the course of their research, students questioned contemporary issues like privilege, gender discrimination, colonialism and institutional archiving practices, but also recognised the craft of artisan bookmaking and the institution's openness to change. By mapping issues of urgency and showcasing them in the form of a book students revitalise the publishing format used by their ancestors. What lies in front of you should be seen as a two-dimensional exhibition space into which students were invited to contribute both a written reflection and an artistic response.

Mapping, as a process of finding connections between facts, images, and transcripts towards building a coherent narrative, helps students piece together story fragments across time and space. As a research method, mapping is applicable to physical and social geography, changes that have occurred over time, personal and collective experiences, and individuals perspectives on one's environment. The goal is not to prove what we already know, but rather reveal hidden patterns or untold stories, that assist us in relating to the past.

To guarantee the accuracy and completeness of academic knowledge and technical skills, external expertise was brought to the project. Guests included Rob Erdmann, senior scientist at the Rijksmuseum; Sophie Reinders, research fellow at Radboud University; Risk Hazekamp, bio-based photographer; Dick van Dijk, creative director at Waag; Sofie Jacobs, paper consultant at Papyrus; and Patrick Bakermans, bookbinder at Boekbinderij Brepols.

Jeroen Vandommele, curator of the post-medieval and modern manuscripts, KB, National Library of The Netherlands

Tokens of Friendship

In 1661, Rembrandt van Rijn drew a small black-and-white pen sketch of the presentation of Christ at the Temple on a page in the album amicorum of Jacob Heyblocq, a schoolmaster of the Amsterdam Latin School. Although it is not known how the painter knew Heyblocq, we can imagine that Rembrandt must have been honoured to be asked to contribute to this album of 'brilliant inscriptions' by the greatest minds of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Heyblocq began collecting contributions in 1645, and the album was already well-known by the time that Rembrandt was asked to contribute, with pages by many famous artists and writers such as Jacob Cats, Joost van den Vondel, and Govert Flinck. Rembrandt, recovering from bankruptcy a year earlier, took the opportunity to show he still had the artistry to secure his place in this album of Amsterdam's cultural elite.

The album amicorum, or 'list of friends', originated in Germany in the 1540s, when students began to collect their lecturers' autographs, as well as those of fellow students. Most of the accompanying inscriptions were short, with only a name, date, learned quote and formal dedication of friendship. The album amicorum documented students' relations during their formative years: professors, tutors, fellow students, compatriots, people they met on their travels, but also their relatives and friends, in short, their professional and social network. In the 1550s, the custom was adopted by Dutch students who had visited Germany during their studies abroad. It immediately became popular. Not just with students. Noble women, scholars, politicians, poets and artists also kept these 'lists of friends'. By 1590, keeping an album amicorum was a popular past time for the Dutch upper middle class. It had evolved into something more than just a collection of written declarations of friendship. Illustrated contributions such as painted coats of arms, portraits, costume drawings, allegorical scenes, emblems, etc., would regularly adorn the pages of an album. These images would draw attention to the contribution and highlighted the special relationship between the album owner and the contributor.

Keeping an album amicorum remained popular in the Netherlands for the next three hundred years. It was a genre that adapted itself easily to the culture of its time. In the eighteenth century, it was, for instance, almost exclusively practised by students, with learned inscriptions combined with sentimental poetry

being the most used form of expression. By the nineteenth century, having an album amicorum was widespread among the Dutch bourgeoisie, especially young women who used it to break the ice at social gatherings. By asking people to sign her album, by now an ornate little box in the shape of a loose-leaf book, these women could quickly become acquainted with someone and strengthen their social network. Moreover, through her own contributions to other women's alba amicorum, she could show off her skill in the decorative arts, such as drawing, paper cutting, plaiting or embroidery. Most alba of the nineteenth century contain such colourful illustrative materials, as well as a fair share of Dutch poetry.

In the twentieth century, the album amicorum changed again. It was rebranded as a 'poesiealbum' or poetry book, filled with mass-produced cut-out images and simple nursery rhymes. Although many contributions still expressed the idea of everlasting friendship, it became a popular past time for teenagers starting secondary education. The album became a way to socialise with new classmates and exchange mementoes of friendship. The background of the owners and users might have changed, and its appearance and contributions, but the idea of a booklet that collected friends (and acquaintances) you met during your life, always remains popular, nowadays even in digital form.

The KB, National Library of the Netherlands, has the largest collection of alba amicorum in the Netherlands, with more than eight hundred 'lists of friends', ranging from 1556 until 1946. The collection has been fully digitised and is searchable through the catalogue. Until the nineteenth century, alba were mostly owned by well to do individuals of the upper middle and lower upper class, although rarely by the extremely wealthy, as the books were chiefly used to establish and remember social connections by people who were socially mobile. Although every album owner had a different, 'personal' way of selecting who might contribute to their album, most tended to be exclusive, selecting their immediate peers and people of high status, such as illustrious statesmen and artists, as well as eminent writers, scholars, and members of the nobility. There seems to have been an understanding between album owners and contributors that within the material pages of the album, they formed a select (albeit imagined) community of likeminded individuals. From the nineteenth century onwards, alba amicorum became more widespread throughout society. As such, the genre reoriented itself to cater to this broader audience. Mass production made the booklets cheaper and more easily available. Contributions also tended to concentrate more on the personal sphere. The alba amicorum collection of the KB tells us something about friendship in different time periods and shows us the way men and women in the past built, maintained and remembered their cultural, social, and professional networks. As such, it brings their (interconnected) lives closer to our time.

Image: Presentation of Christ in the temple. Drawing.
Contribution of Rembrandt van Rijn for the album
amicorum of Jacob Heyblocq, 1661.
@KB KW 131 H 26, fol. 61

KB, the National Library of the Netherlands
www.kb.nl

In its repositories, visitors can find everything published in and about the Netherlands: from mediaeval manuscripts to the first Donald Duck, from the very first printings to the latest book by Saskia Noort. KB preserves over seven million publications which allows public knowledge to be passed on from one generation to the next.

The KB collects not only paper but also bytes. Its web collection comprises more than sixteen thousand websites. Every year, 4.5 million Dutch people use these digital services. Examples include the national online library, with tens of thousands of e-books and audiobooks, and Delpher, with tens of millions of digitised newspaper pages. Together with its partners, the KB develops programmes on reading and digital skills.

Open Digital Libraries (ODL)
www.open-digital-libraries.eu

As national libraries, our work is fuelled by the power of the written word. The written word preserves culture, stories, essays, and ideas, both printed and digital. When people come into contact with words, whether through reading, studying, or conducting research, it has an impact on their lives. To create an open atmosphere for library users, European libraries need to rethink their position in the digital age, and experiment creatively with opportunities of new technologies. The purpose of the Open Digital Libraries project is to bring together three national libraries in Europe to build capacity for using digital library collections creatively.

The National Libraries of Austria, Estonia, and the Netherlands, are all part of multiple European networks and found each other in their shared interest to see the digital age as an opportunity to open up their institutions to creative makers / artists. The status quo of libraries is that people no longer are obliged to visit the locations to consult a great part of the collections. This makes it even more important that the libraries also digitally celebrate and enhance the value of the written word, its importance for knowledge and its creative potential.

With this project the partners will develop examples of artistic and creative usage of digitised collection. By using new technologies we test new artistic and creative methods to engage current and new users to digital library collections. We develop skills and knowledge within the European library sector to promote access and creative usage of digital library collections. And we enhance visibility and findability in search of contemporary relevance.

How Would You Like to Get Lampooned, My Lord? is the result of an educational research collaboration between the Master Non Linear Narrative at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, and the KB, National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague, lasting from February to July 2022.

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KB national library of the netherlands

open digital libraries

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How Would You Like to Get Lampooned, My Lord?

A *lampoon* is a text, a drawing, or another form of visual critique using ridicule or irony (synonyms: parody, satire, spoof). Master students from the Non Linear Narrative programme at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK), The Hague, looked into the National Library's comprehensive catalogue of alba amicorum (friendship books) to re-contextualise its contents. *How Would You Like to Get Lampooned, My Lord?* is a collection of ten experimental projects that follow personal paths of inquiry into how a new generation of designers relate to the past.

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