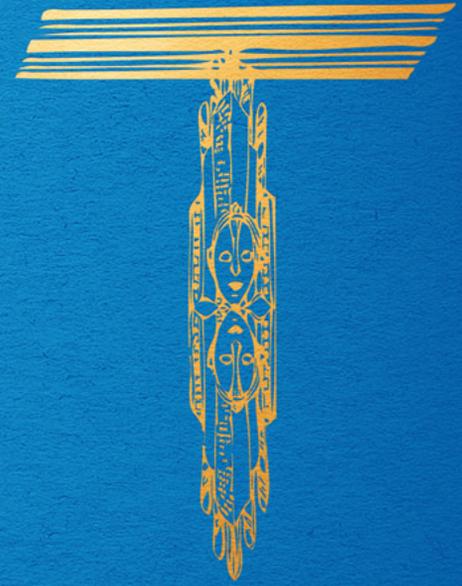


WAR



W.A.N.T.

*Weaponized Adorables Negotiation Tactics*

RACHEL LAW & MCKENZIE WARK

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# WEAPONIZED ADORABLES

*Sooooo cute! Adorbs! Perf! omg WANT!* Cute has exploded out of the factory pipeline, extruding strands of sheer likeability that cling on to the senses, like pulled taffy. It comes to you with pastel fur or rainbow glitter, smothering sticky sweetness with anime googly eyes, Lisa Frank colors, rounded Bézier edges, singing squeaky songs with chipmunk auto-tune and sparkle flavor gloss. Its all so adorable, a *confection*, assemblages and configurations hidden under layers and layers and layers of production, manufactured to garner and monetize attention.

It's cute. It's here. It's weaponized. These adorable effusions appear the furthest from anything militarized or violent. They look so benign, with their song and dance interactions, blinking lights and user-friending designs. *Touch me*, says the haptic interface smiling through its App-rounded eyes. *Play me*, says the swirling cream icon on the glassy screen. *Love me*, says them all. They look so familiar somehow, so human with their comfortable shapes, caring feedback loops and happy colors. They are an everyday domestic occurrence, as they sit by our bedsides or keep our pockets warm. They tap into cultural codes for all of those qualities and even – who knows? – more atavistic qualities of human sensation and affect. The soft and the childlike temper our affections with statistically probable frequency, regardless of what mix of

nature and nurture makes it so. The propensity to affect and in turn, feign affection, is exactly what is weaponized.

It's a curious word: weaponized. A word for our times. Once upon a time, there were weapons and non-weapons. There were swords and then there were ploughshares. One could be made into the other, but an object is not both at the same time. In these times, ordinary everyday things can be a ploughshare that is also at the same time a sword: a weaponized ploughshare or a weaponized plushie.

While there is probably enough ingredients for an incendiary device under your kitchen sink, the weaponized adorable is not about remixing household items into weapons. Rather, it's about everyday things being weapons precisely in their daily aspect, in the mindless use of things for frivolity, addiction or comfort. Warfare has invaded the home front and turned homeliness against us.

The weaponized adorable is a surface effect of a generalized conflict over what a body can do. *Who knows what a body can do?* Deleuze, after Spinoza, meant this as an open question about how we might live. Today it is more a question of statistical prediction: given these variables, a body will mostly do this, or that. Affordances calculated, agencies predicted, and so on. If the stimulus can be managed to produce the response, then how can power capitalize on it? What is weaponized can then be monetized.

There's no escaping. You are soaking in it. The adorables are coming for you. You will

be mugged in the bright alleys of your dreams by the teddy bear horde, smothered in a vat of kitten memes, pounded with chiptune hooks until your ears bleed raspberry slurpie. Like the humidity of summer, cute will cling to you as you step out on the sidewalk, skin sticky and hot with the pressure of adorables flooding your senses, electric jingles echoing across the floor like loud orange bouncing balls saturating in pink-magenta halos, while sunlight that smells like gasoline pours through windows, and black coffee mingles with monoxide – oily and slick and strangely seductive with babyspeak chatter like unicorns on amphetamines vomiting rainbows.

You can't fight them, short of leaving the grid. There's too much, too soon and the pipeline never stops. **These are the weaponized adorables, they cannot be negated, but they can be negotiated.** Once you understand something of the relentless power-pop trawling of the post-Internet world of which they are the sirens, then one can learn to negotiate. Turn the adorable mask to see the mask's mirror-side, its weaponized side: The ploughsword at work.

**And so: what you can deploy on your side is your own W.A.N.T, or Weaponized Adorables Negotiation Team.** Later in this little manual we will introduce you to them. They are like a set of masks of your own, each with their own super powers, with which to turn aside the masks of the weaponized adorables, to open some moments for counter-tactics. But first, it needs to do a little recon and find out what strange terrain we have to play with. We need to know a little bit about network time, about the mechtechtonics of its spaces, about the collisions by which space and time events are experienced, about the powers of memory and grafting, and finally about

the relation between data and its dada uncoding. Once we have a sense of the lay of the land, we can proceed to the negotiating tactics and team.

Where do weaponized adorables come from and what do they want? Counter their wants with your own! Or if not with your own, at least with wants that aren't wanted, or aren't expected. For half the battle is won when a want is adequately recognized. Learn the signs of a want, wear the right one: one can only fight wants with other wants.

Team up with a want that can help keep some uncoded distance between a 'you' that can still imagine itself as itself, and the 'them' that can still for a moment appear as separable from attention and yearning. By channeling our wants, we can negotiate the degree to which our selves are traded away and given over for the want to be satisfied. Remember, as Oscar Wilde says: the only thing of interest in polite society is the masks people wear.

**Let us talk no more of our desires; let's just do wants.** This is not therapy nor psychology. This is more like a game, or an art, or perhaps something that is both. A play that opens a little gap, that breaks open a tiny seam, in which some other world might flicker into existence, even only for a moment.



## TIME TIMES FOUR

*Time passes.* It passes in starts and stops – the sharp joy when you're with friends, accelerated pulse that thump like the bass of a dance floor: **this is just WAY OUT!** you scream loudly over music that drowns and overwhelms, a hand that holds your waist as you twirl lightly, dizzy with laughter and the hands of time jump and skip and leapfrog: 2 hours, 3 hours, 4! The Cinderella clock strikes once again, where did all that time go? Living is compressed into seconds before a final kiss and goodbye.

And then there's the long slow drag where you sit, listlessly at the desk staring blankly at a page, the 3,500 word essay you will yourself to write. *Just write damnit. Just write.* Time crawls in imperceptible steps, the sluggish slide punctuated by bathroom breaks and hunger calls; a stroll to the vending machine and back again. It drags on so slowly you think you must be dreaming, and you check your phone your computer clock and Google search it just to be very sure -- that yes, only an hour has passed and you have 3 more hours (3!) of work or at least the pretense of it, before you can go home.

There's a difference, Bergson thought, between two kinds of time: clock time and experiential time. Clock time is the time is measured, counted, meted out – the hour,

the minute, the second, millisecond, nanosecond, picosecond. This arbitrary division of time acts as a kind of standard unit, a way for humans to synchronize and participate across what would be generally chaotic: the opening hours of stock markets across different continents where the term “morning” varies, or in the development of light-sensitive photo negatives where each unit acts as a measurement for brightness/contrast in the final image and other such activities. This is industrial time, productive time: that conquered and sectioned and unitized – *chronos*.

Experienced time however, is measured by human perception. Deleuze: “Cinema always narrates what the image's movements and times make it narrate.” This creates a possibility of multiple timelines such as slow time: showing multiple angles and perspectives of the same incident, time has slowed to allow for this pluralism of multiple perceptions the way chronological time cannot. Or there's the opposite: accelerated time in the form of montage where a week, a month, a year (or several) can be compressed into nothing more than a string of sensations. On a more fundamental level, haven't we all felt the paradox of time? The weightlessness of being so concentrated in a task, experiencing a *flow* that passes so quickly it barely makes itself felt; that we have forgotten the units of *chronos* – only to look up (oh shit!) and fall in a thump as we scramble to make up for the 'lost' time.

What is fascinating about networked time is that it is not quite the same as either experiential or chronological time. It is a bit like experiential time. Take for instance, the Facebook Timeline, what is it except for moments captured, experiences statusized and commented and strung together in a string? Yet it is chronological in the

sense that it is ordered, but this order can be easily rearranged, curated or deleted to one's pleasure. Or Twitter, where each tweet is a delayed conversation of @tweeters and #hashtags, a message that hangs -- time-free but context peculiar, ready to be attached, that can be answered hours later and picked up again. Even stranger is the repetitive time of Tumblr, conversations replied to and reblogged -- your moments and conversations have now been consumed and internalized to become part of mine, a dialogue I have no participation in except in the repetition and perpetuation of that particular *now*. Networked time is like an experience of chronological time, or a chronologizing of experiential time. It's a time machine: how we prefer our timelines to be viewed by others and how we want our experiences to be arranged, displayed and curated, but pinned together by chronos.

Networked time follows a very particular form of myth: the mastery of experience. Our old gods were the sun, the seasons and we made our rhythms into theirs with our Stonehenge monuments and Mayan calendars that followed the growing and harvesting times. Agricultural time, nature rhythms. We overthrew that with a battle cry: '*God is dead!*' and destroyed the natural circadian rhythm with the birth of electric light, the power of man over nature. Always with technology, our greatest (and most human) weapon. Industrial time brought with it a more productive chronos. Time determined by the factory managers, industrialists and the landowners who need punch cards and then later trade accounts and telegraph systems that all demanded a standardized time. Perhaps it was the first time people realized that time could be a form of capital, to be seized and extracted and produced into forms -- after all, as the cliché goes: *time is money*.

And now we have a new possibility perhaps, a way to get out of the system of time-forged shackles; the networked time. Networked time is a more personal, affective experience, but of *chronological* time. It relies on how time is perceived, be it an individual or an object or actant. For instance, a movie perceives time on at least four temporal layers: the first is the medium, the productive duration of which the reel is mastered and made by. The second is the expository form, a cut-scene or montage accelerates time while a CG-motion effect (as seen in *The Matrix*) slows time into a standstill and the audience is able to move beyond natural/productive time into a time that can only be measured by perception. The third is the order of events portrayed in the exposition, once you piece together flashbacks and so forth. The final layer is the audience themselves: did they feel the movie was too long, too short, in need of an edit or a sequel? In other words, how did they consume the time?

On an individual level, networked time is a configuration of perceptions. A configuration is not an assemblage, nor is it an essence; time does not gather other things into itself -- instead, it wraps itself around the objects and interactions of others, and provides a seamless wrapper. It is the API of our programmed reality. It is through that wrapper that time creates a sense of *dimension*. We perceive the movement of the sun based on how warm it is outside, we perceive the freshness of fruit with the marks on skin, whether it has mold or the smell of rot. In other words, we perceive the dimension of time through the notations and traces that it has left behind. This form of trace or index is mediated through objects and experiences, and most of all our experience of it. In our material everyday, a second imposition of industrial time counters our perceived time, we have to go to work at 9pm; the school building closes

at 1.45am; train comes at 11.25am and so on.

Perhaps one of the reasons why digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other geo-location or geo-temporal-sync applications are so interested in creating the perfect user experience design and interface is **to impose their units of time on our personal perceptions**. If enough users adopted their platform's perception of time, then our entire experiences -- past memories, present living and future inclinations would be handed over to them in a platter. Our data, would rely on their classifications and system designs to organize the 'time' in which we perceived. We won't be able to get away from the Timeline structure because it becomes intrinsic to how we think of time: the movement, the experience and the sensation in ways it can be perceived. Timeline will control the four layers of time, making its machinima of our data detritus.

And this is dangerous – no software is without bias, even the most open of systems. These system bias are insidious, being non-human most people perceive them to be neutral or objective even as our perceptions are influenced by them. Influence can come in all sorts of ways: associating time as a linear structure (as seen in the various 'lines' used by most app developers); archiving data only from a certain period, or requiring a user to give up rights in exchange for access to this archive; censorship of time-sensitive or time-related news events... the list could go on. I believe most people instinctively resist this imposition, as seen from Facebook reluctantly giving their users back control over their Timeline functions. This is merely a compromise, and the Facebook will regroup until there are no detractors. So will other corporations

with their rival temporalities.

However, if we – the users, the players, hackers, the leechers and seeders and all of us, we can take a position on this. Instead of sitting around like ducks waiting to be shot during hunting season, we can choose to learn more about the technology, what it affords us and take control of it. Once again, we are given an opportunity to wrest control away from the gods. Not the gods of nature and agricultural time, but the gods of spectacle and value-extraction.

## MESHTECTONICS



This is what so strange about Sebald's writing: He writes no paragraphs, his words are like long ribbons – satin stripped silk, grosgrain and eyelet, they purl through the fingers and comb in the mind without hesitation, like the Everglades. These barely moving sentences are like barely moving rivers that spread into deltas so soft and elusive they barely seems to move. Your eyes falter: *read those lines again*. Ripples of nothing, you skim over the words until they blend together with the quiet airiness of a boat sailing over green.

What Sebald writes like is a network. It's a kind of network one might call a *meshtectonics* – *not islands or plateaus or anything that could be of-itself, but gradients of associations that fade into each other*, highlighted by violent intensity. Signals loll in, noise fades out. You are flying in this sea of data that is countless as stars, pixel-bright and brilliant like sands falling through your fingertips; dazzling arrays, lists illuminated as dust.

We cannot map data because we cannot map ourselves. To assume that we somehow can chart, can pinpoint and turn ourselves into dispassionate gods in the birds' eye view is a kind of Icarian fantasy, as Georges Bataille would call it. We are not Icarus

flying high, nor are we the cold lens of a surveillance camera, nor the diktat of an urban planner who can only see in lines, axis and geometry. No, we are both more and less than that. **We are not merely data-capture, nor data-made – we are our own networks, and in our coming together -- we create mesh-networks, a *meshtectonics*.**

Meshtectonics then, is a kind of apprehension within social-technical relations. Data is a material sensation. It is a living, breathing sensation because it is fundamentally built on perceptions. Let's play a game. Let's imagine, as the Samaritans did, that we are born not with but *as* the senses, 5 avenues for perceptions that can be mixed and mingled (taste for instance, is touch and smell, and together they produce a third sense: flavor.) That's 5 to the power of 5 (5P5) that an infant has. Add some years (*y*), and some experience (*n*) and somehow what we have is a person with exponential possibilities.... possibilities so great, so many that it is near infinite. We cannot even comprehend how many of these perceptions exist in us, so freely we give them up every day.

*“Ew the sidewalk is dirty”, “This tastes absolutely amazing”, “omg that guy is so cute”* and that is just one person! One out of the billions of people that exist on this earth, how magical the possibilities seem. Especially with digital technology, what used to be private can now be shared with each check-in, each status update, each tweet and image and email and text message and smiley emoticon that somehow carries the weight of our perception in a single submit. We share to the billion-sea of others, adding our own potentials into the shared consciousness.

*Tectonics* then, is a way to think of how we might convey a sense of these relations. Tectonics suggests a planetary scale, of largeness that is difficult to comprehend. We know the earth rotates on its axis each day, we know so from the change of day to night, but we don't feel the rumble under our feet nor the topsy-turvy of being tossed about like a beach ball. Much like the earth's rotation, we cannot feel the changes in the networks, as large and numerous as they are. Only hints of it, a ripple here; a fading there that clues us in that we are dealing with something far more layered and deeper than we are.

Tectonics also cautions us in the conclusions we are apt to get – correlations taken as truth, or visualizations that explain our perceptions but are essentially a type of cargo cult science: over-interpreting the symptoms for an absent cause. Each of us needs to be her, or his, (or its), Copernicus, who hypostasized the earth's orbit around the sun and was declared heretic for it. In the same way, we should always question any presentation of map or cartographic visualization, especially in something as large and difficult to scale as a network mesh-tectonic. Most of all, we can think of tectonics in several layers: one, that we are our own 'plateaus' or islands adrift; two, that our plateaus or nodes are situated on an even larger plate-tectonic that we can imagine; and finally: that tectonics are always moving. We are not points on a grid; the sun does not revolve around the earth.

Movement is important. Movement, as Deleuze once said in *Desert Islands* – is an act of creation. In the image he used: the island is created by two movements, the first movement was the dreaming of the island; the continental drifts and cleave; and the

second is the one that brings the humans on to the island itself; a secondary production that is associated with the former but distinctly separate. Each movement is on its own-ness, radical and absolute: *“Dreaming of islands—whether with joy or in fear, it doesn’t matter—is dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone—or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew.”*

We drift along the tides of the web; connecting and disconnecting seemingly at will, possibly at random, attracted and distracted by adorable sirens. In the world of networked time, there is no pace to be measured by, no guilt or anxiety caused by the industrial chronos which wants to yank our relations into yardsticks and measurable goods. The very mutability, on the surface, seems to be a kind of chaos, disorganized to extreme where an individual can create as many user accounts, identities, selves etc. as they want. The many ways can the network be played, is the same as how many ways a person can generate perceptions.

*Create an account:* RachelStudent as a profile for school -- documenting my projects, uploads code on github. *Create second user:* lolTrollU and use it to hack into the school IT by switching useragents and a VPN. Sometimes I am in both accounts at the same time, sometimes I switch between. Sometimes I update madly – a series of tweets and status updates fly on RachelStudent, and then it grows silent. Sometimes both are silent. Sometimes I create third accounts, and start flamewars with either – I want to know who my friends’ side with, whom they prefer and what they really think. Sometimes I am neither. I am ether. Am I displaying some kind of multiple

personality?

No, these identities – or profiles really, merely display an aspect; a kind of want manifested – a playground mask. Each user account has its own protocols, friends list, email address. They are both distinct and indistinct at the same time, a tenuous negotiation of wants. Perhaps networked time is best understood through the mediated trails they left behind.

This multiplicity manifests itself with every additional tab we open, every second chat window. We are not just connected, but interconnected and it is ‘inter-’ness; that restless movement, those hovering ghost-profiles, that lingering nameless wants, that aimless play -- that helps us ride the current of our everyday lives. We leave traces, not traces to a specific ‘identity’ but rather traces to the configurations or dimensions where we operate. These traces can come in many forms, be it the unseen HTTP header files that start our cookie sessions or they can be produced, ‘published’ objects like fanfic or mash-up music.

The aim of meshtectonics is not to provide a map, or an area of study as traditionally defined by academic process where one claims some mastery of a known domain. Instead, meshtectonics is a language that allows for people to engage with the current discourse – creating the symbols or alphabet in which the passing contours can be described, analyzed and discussed. It is a study of traces, of trails left behind. What we have is not a conclusion, for conclusions are non-dynamic. What we hope to provide instead is a kind of tool or team: things or selves via which a network can be

grappled with, contended with, maybe even critiqued. It asks some questions: Where does a network start and stop? How do we classify networks? *What happens when a kind of classification/network collides against another?*

## COLLISIONS

Imagine: a comet speeding across the galaxies of inter-networks, with a streaming tail of data as it crosses dimensional planes and pathways; gaining momentum with every scrap of data and byte of stardust as it burns and collides with smaller meteors and tiny asteroids, bumping orbits with moons and brutally smashing comets and finally burning out in a blaze of black ice – until all that is left is the traces of collisions: pockmarks on planets, gas trails, radiation gamma rays spanning, dirty ice across worlds. Even the most imperceptible movement looks like a star from the right angle, the right scale and enough zoom-and-crop.

Collisions are forms of detection. A collision is a meeting of forces, or ‘faces’ -- profiles, identities, materials, selves, actants, objects – anything that causes an impact, an event, to occur. These areas are subduction zones when networks braid or bruise, either in conflict or convergence. They leave traces which can later be analyzed and it is through these traces that the boundaries of the network are seen, felt and sensed. Networks cannot be mapped but they can be sensed through their events.

Networks are dynamic, scale-less, beyond visible dimension, they operate on the dimension(s) of *time(s)*, not the 2-D of textuality or even a 3-D modeling mesh.

We're part of these network particles; it is our profiles that race across these en-meshed networks. We cannot see the boundaries of where one network begins and another ends. Example: One day you receive an admissions offer to a college you've only seen through websites, pack your bags and move 9,000 miles across three continents. The apartment door from craigslist opens to you. Do you know that person? At which point, do the digital time(s) transcend into material space(s)? Or perhaps, was it always material? Are times, or the manifestation of times in the form of data, a kind of materiality then?

Wildly spinning vectors, we cannot go beyond ourselves. Our subjectivities, perspectives that's what forms our profiles. We use the term profiles in plural because that's what it is. Unitary truth died when Nietzsche declared God dead. Meaning is not in the hands of fate but is grappled and contended with like rocks held tightly in your fists until the edges cut against the palm. Blood welling up soaking red soaking wet and then you pile them up. Little rock mounds held together with rock and blood and balance and tide and the frustration that this is not that at all.

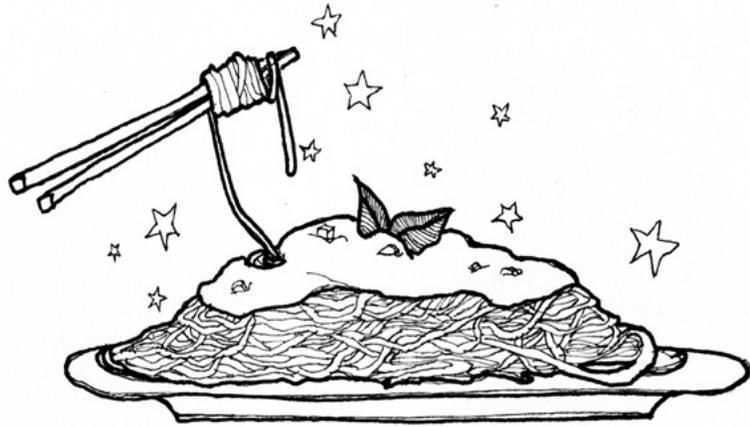
*The only claims we can make, is by analyzing the traces formed when profiles collide.*

We are merely vector particles operating in a relational pull. There's the initial force F which affects X (nearest) and it could be that we're situated 2 levels away from X (i.e. F-3 levels) or we could be feeling the initial force directly or we could be nth levels away... Traditionally, a vector is defined as force with direction. The key word here is direction, and direction primarily in a spatial way.

Example: distance is to direction, or speed is to velocity. While it can be temporal, the primary mode of a vector is spatial because force always needs direction, but it doesn't always require time. Vectors happening on a network though, operate on a networked time where time is the driving force -- it neatly flips this physical equation: there is no secondary force, time is the force pushing vector direction.

Traditionally,  $velocity = force \times time$ . Instead we propose that velocity itself is the direction of networked time, or the angle of which networked time is perceived. There is no secondary force (F) meted out by distance. Distance is folded, infinitesimal, accelerated and non-physical in a digital space. Time becomes the propulsion force. Vectors in networks describe the movement of data and data-types towards a consensual direction i.e. when all the data move towards a point, *it becomes a kind of pattern recognition towards a realized image.*

## MEMORY READYMADES



When I was a child, Saturdays were spaghetti days. It came in two separate pots – one full of noodles, fresh and hot and sticky with no oil or sauce; and the other a huge saucepan full of gravy: minced beef and tinned sausages and broccoli and carrots and corn and tomato sauce from a jar with garlic and soy sauce and onions. You'll get a plate, and pile it as high as you want before drowning it all in gravy so thick you could stand spoons in it. After bathing your pasta, take a slice of cheese – Kraft singles, wrapped in their plastic foil; then microwave the whole lot until the cheese bubbles slightly. Processed cheese has a strange texture when microwaved, it becomes bubbly at the bottom and crispy on the top. Sitting in front of the telly with siblings, you would shove the whole lot in your mouth, breathe deeply and feel a sense of 'home'.

**The truth is, none of this is authentic.** This is monsoon season in Singapore, not the summers of Italy. My pasta comes bathed in soy sauce and tinned sausages and processed cheese, some weird amalgamation of what 'western food' & 'Italy' is perceived to be. And yet, I can recall clearly the most wonderful of tomatoes, the brilliant rolling greens that dipped into verdant valleys, the smiling adorable people of Tuscany and how the colours of the Italian flag corresponded to their national ingredients of

red tomatoes, green basil and white cheese. I know this without learning it, a memory implanted through osmosis. Even now, in New York I still occasionally cook spaghetti and think of 'home.' It's not just my own childhood I'm thinking of, but the dream produced with images of all dew dipped and golden farmhouses; the Goodfellas movies with their convoluted la mafia mama mia! The advertisements promising the real taste of home in a can, images of slow stirring pots and wafts of delicious scents, the fireplace, the hearth and now you've finally come back....

It's a false familiarity of taste, to luxuriate in a longing for a home that isn't quite at home. You tap into a cultural memory node that is not produced by any traditional 'heritage' but one borrowed by being a database consumer. Not merely the consumption of media, through TV and advertising and internet and flipping by holiday brochures, but a consumption of a part to a greater database; that somehow by consuming an a derivative of the cultural database (regardless of how authentic it is). You have an affective experience that is purely authentic. It is quite possible to feel nostalgia not only for a past that never existed, but even for a *consumerism* that never existed.

We call these particular weaponized adorables, *memory readymades*. They are 'keys' to a cultural database, toys and games that act as small narratives. They are an entry point to the protocols of culture, which in turn tap into a form of bio-mythic consciousness: rituals of blood and dopamine, practices that tie the material affordance (alcohol, for example) and social relation (drinking) so old and intrinsic that we can only grope blindly for images and text that tap into this kernel of primal unknown.

Wandering around Greenwich Village, you access a different macro-level experience similar to the taste of spaghetti, but different in scale: a memory readymade in the form of architecture and urban planning. It's possible that Chelsea looks like Canary Wharf because it was made to be so; an analog memory readymade for early settlers. A prototype memory. Less important is how it looks (although that plays a part), but the user experience of wandering through it. And here you have duplicates of duplicates, with a Victoria St in Melbourne and Sydney and Singapore and Hong Kong, simulacrum of simulacrum, an uneasy interface to a post-colonial database? A forgotten relic? I wonder, if perhaps we are unconsciously accessing some myth with every road we cross, some ritual every sidewalk we walk blindly on everyday.

A memory readymade is a manifestation of an intangible experience, like buying figurines from the new *Call of Duty* game. Owning the toy is not the same as the actual experience. It is a souvenir of a remembered experience palimpsest, where memory is an imaginative tool for creating *fictotoys* where we star as lead characters. What is being collected is the memory readymade; a single part to a greater system, an entry point to a cultural database – in this case, the universe of *Call of Duty*. This mode of behavior is similar to what Hiroki Azumua calls *database consumption*, where the protocol of the database is more important than author authenticity. Creating fan-made stories out of the toys purchased, rewriting an alternate universe of the *Call of Duty* game, remixes and mash-ups... these fan productions would be considered equally authentic so long as they abide by the protocol of the database. These protocols act as a kind of check, or test for whether the artifact deserves to be an object at all. *Consider it as a Voight-Kampff test for objects*, except that it is neither

testing for the use-value (needs) nor exchange-value (quantitative equivalence) or even sign value (connotation) but rather an object as a self-contained process that only exists as an element, or function of the database. In other words, it is a *programmable object*.

When constructing a programmable object, define the parameters as: Object (parameter) {axiom} where the axiom is the “rule” of object or ‘function’, where it can be recalled and remade as Object 1 = new Object (name) where the object becomes replicated as a process to carry a “message.” This message gets transmitted through networks, becoming relays. It recalls McLuhan’s idea of ‘the medium is the message’. Only in this case, the message itself is the medium. In Actor Network Theory this can be considered as a *transmission* or actant. Or maybe just ants: an experience of the world as a ball of crawling ants, surviving by clinging together in the flood waters of digital time.

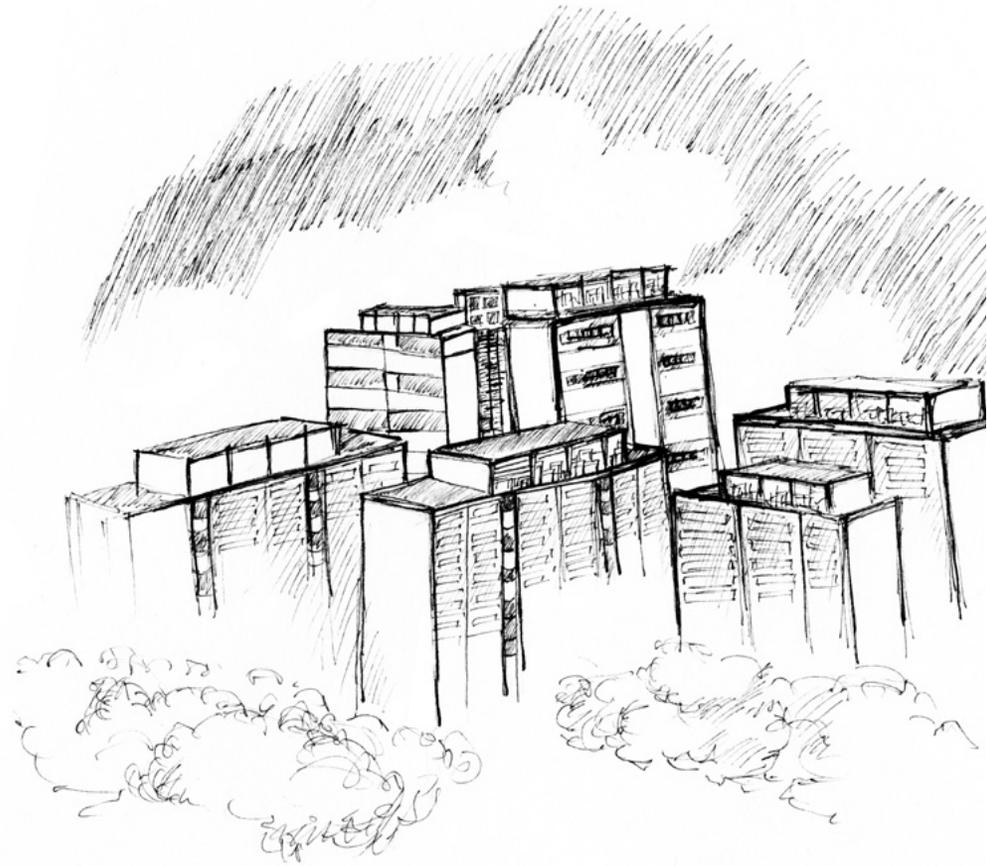
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi once said that the lack of objects lead to ‘schizophrenia’ or the disturbance of self, as objects were a way of grounding reality to navigate pathways. What is key about a programmable object is that it is both a point of collision that helps in the perception of space, as well as a constant process that is always contingent. Programmable objects are context-specific propositions. These objects are unique in that the forms they exist in can only be managed as intangible forms of syntax, nested protocols that manipulate their meta-reality. Memory readymades as hardware/collectibles still exist today, except that such forms are slowly going towards extinction as we move towards so-called ‘cloud’ computing.

All devices are now ‘computers’ only different aspects expressed by design i.e. mobile phones are computers, cameras are computers, even cars have computers in them now and so forth. In ’95, the ‘computer’ was greater than the sum of its parts (fan + RAM + processor + inputs for dial etc.) and even then ‘collection’ was a souvenir of the network i.e. phone records, early *Word Perfect* art (printed through typewriters); as we move from letters & letter worship into numbers and binary and then into symbols & images – what happens? How will we collect traces now? How will the memory readymades be made tangible? Perhaps this is the internet of things that people keep talking about. As always, we will always want souvenirs of our travels

In the case of digital information, social relations are abstracted from the devices they exist in. What we’re archiving/collecting are the “things” of it -- traces in the form of memory readymades. The experience of *use* is what we collect because it’s impossible to store the ‘experience’ i.e. the login screen, the click through of browser and internet archaeology is way of reconstructing lost design, or ‘interface’. Having a receipt or screencap or print out is not enough, we need to recreate -- or maybe *create* -- the ‘same’ experience, the same interface.

This archiving goes beyond just collecting media traces or souvenirs, they are trying to create or create progressions of experience – in other words, the collection of ‘interfaces’. An interface is the presentation of one object to another, where the faces of each create friction, or merge to become a third other. It is through these interfaces that we can perceive network collisions, and formulate new perceptions in cultural production.

For example in an Althusserian base/superstructure, or stack/reading protocol, one might consider 'interface' to be the in-between of 'raw material' and 'economy'. Perhaps you could even argue that what is being produced is the manufacturing of 'interfaces.' Depending on which level of interface you operate on, you have access to different levels of a cultural stack. Hacking, in the truest sense would be being able to migrate from level-stack to level-stack; or sitting in-between stack, thus producing a new level of stack/interface that didn't originally exist, allowing for the production of new abstractions.



## P3P GRAFTING

Sometime during the William Gibson talk, and being in New York Public Library, I came to a realization. I had been fighting all this time, struggling with the language of stacks and databases, of layers and heaps and words that try as I might -- never fit. Then Gibson said something about being shown around the Library with the head curator, and then a joke about how it stretched 22ft deep underground. Then somehow, between that and the struggle with words, in that infinitesimal gap (maybe, the same god that exists between characters of an alphabet) – I realized what I was seeing: *it was the image of public housing.*

Singapore is a country of high-density and land scarcity – every mouthful of dirt was worth its weight in gold. We reclaimed as much from the sea as we could, until neighboring countries complained about sovereign rights. The edges of Singapore look strangely geometrical. Its a diamond forged with steel pilings and poured sand. When we couldn't reclaim any longer, we built to the skies. Thirty stories was normal in '95; seventy is the new average. When we finally hit an architectural limit, we dug to the ground -- all the latest shopping malls are 3, 4, 5 levels deep. Our subway runs below layers of granite hewn and smithed with the latest in technology, imported labor and raw dynamite. If we could cross-section Singapore, it would look like a tiny glittering

garden

garden of Babylon sitting on a wedge of Swiss cheese full of holes.

Public housing is the Singapore stack. It is also that country's greatest export (along with transport, water and tunneling technologies. We have turned out survival needs into businesses). Stacks of pre-fab containers each holding a complete *Minecraft*-esque home, shoved into a skeletal structure of steel and concrete built in less than a year. It is this image, the termite shell of a HDB (housing development building), with its optimized space and efficient build that seems the perfect analogue of a 'database.'

We commonly think of databases in terms of technical schemas -- stacks and heaps, the methods of which a computer uses to access memory. A heap is a dynamic memory collection, with no ordered list. A stack is a predetermined allocation of space, written before the function existed. We tend to use these models for databases, but they don't usually account for the variance in data, or the non-classifiable data aspects and the movement or transformation of one dataset into another. For instance, when you send a file to your friend; the database records the transaction but not the duplication where the resource has essentially doubled on itself. A meshtectonic database is really more like public housing where the data flows in different data stratas.

You live in 2F on the 10th floor. Next door in 2G, there's squabbling again with pots banging and a door being slammed, your kitchen wall vibrates in sympathy. Above you there's someone who watches TV every evening at 5.30pm, the familiar jingle of a soap opera being played, maudlin and syrupy and the scent of something delicious being fried hits you. Hungry. Garlic and chili and soy. Better open the window before

it

it stinks the house. You open the window, leaning out. Downstairs there's a kid doing piano practice. Over and over again with those the scales. Boredom and indifferent tenacity in equal parts.

Someone's knocking on your door. It's the postman with a parcel waiting to be signed. You take it in, opening the card: "*Happy Birthday, Love from New York.*" It's 2 weeks late, but who cares? You take a pic with your mobile smartphone, smiling as you tag the sender and upload to Facebook. One minute upload on 3G. Standing at the doorway of your apartment, distantly you hear the sound of children being chased home drifting from the shared playground in the void deck below....

The reason why database is public housing, and not private mansions or gated communities, is because networks are fundamentally a kind of infinite commons. It houses all our knowledge, and catalogs all our unruly human behavior. Like the apartments of Singapore, we share an uneasy coexistence with others; we hear them, feel them, perceive them even as you sit (and they too) in separate domains. The various strata these buildings operate on, and how they are accessed, is through modulations of time which are porous and affect each other like osmosis. One cannot perceive without being affected by the other; networks tremble in response.

The difference between a physical public housing and the digital housing is that these digital commons are *almost* infinite. What is data but a string? Computational processes take billions of kilowatt power (as seen in *Bitcoin* mining) but the duplication of data takes very little effort, if at all. It is true that we require massive servers to store

these data objects, however part of the problem is also the overselling and massive resource misallocation by telco companies. But basically what data is, or at least ought to be, is the public housing stack in all its dada glory.

*This mode of production might be called P3P, or grafting.* Grafting was invented in China, circa 2000 BC. Take tissues from one plant, strap them on to another. Their vascular systems comingle. New fruit on the old roots. You can even grow potato and tomato on the same plant, or different kinds of apple on the same tree. Many food plants are now grafts of grafts of grafts, the asexual production and reproduction of edible data.

P2P, or peer-to-peer, assumes senders and receivers, a three-dimensional model of actors in space and time with all our existing gifts and inherited sociality, remnants of physical transactions. P3P warps and morphs the Euclidean space of P2P into weird topological spaces and times, where all that can be detected are random collisions of particles, producing, consuming, or both, or neither, or changing from producing to consuming as states that flicker, or vary according to perspective. This is how stuff gets extruded out into the world now, as P3P, or grafts upon grafts, neither gift nor commodity.

If you consider images, videos, text to be just data in binary, and data as a duplicitous, dada, ever-graftable good, then it's technically non-scarce. Because it doesn't suffer from scarcity, you could keep creating identical goods from it with no difference from the "authentic" or "original," since it's exactly the same thing, but made in different

times. In a sense it is the ultimate good in patterns of difference and repetition, where each unit is a near identical graft, except for the timestamp, and each repetition produces an affect that carries on to the next one.

There is no ultimate authenticity or Benjamin-esque aura to be created, but rather a process of individuation towards the virtuality of an *object*. The object(s) are then an aspect of a program, a black box where all clones are players. Each time we create a duplicate, we close off one possibility within the plane of all the objects that could have been created. This plane has more possibilities than can be imagined by one player, and yet it is not infinite as it is always contained within the materiality of the object's code and program.

When you copy a file over for backup, you're not thinking: "this is a fake/imitation file." You're thinking: "I am trying to preserve the original in case of crash." In effect, the copy file has become the original. Or original in second state. Whatever scarcity of information exists, whether through platform/cloud-control or channels of distribution is purely an illusion, or an effect of weaponization and monetization.

This applies particularly to how files are being shared on *BitTorrent*. There is no real sense of 'gifting', since there are no particular sacrifices to be made nor any social or personal obligation. What one sees is merely the multitude of seeders and leechers. For instance I am 'leeching' or downloading a movie in parts, by 'seeders' those who have already completed downloading the file and are sharing it. When your download is complete and you are asleep, your status automatically changes from

a 'leecher' to a 'seeder' and your entire bandwidth is sucked up overnight – thieved by other leechers. If you were waiting for it to be complete however, you could close the file and status the moment it was complete and not participate in the re-seeding or re-sharing of the file at all. You could be a thief to others, and in doing so – it is a non-consensual gift, or rather a graft.

It is through grafting then, that the public housing of the internets are built. Public housing or buildings in general are a kind of micro-database – time strata layered over each other, where each duplicitous event is a tesseract of sorts; our networks fluctuating and colliding. A fold in a time. Corners of networks brushing up against each other. When we move across them, or navigate cities, it's a kind of *data-dérive*.

It's a post-situationist type of *dérive*, because it is a *dérive* that is neither dandy nor aimless but driven by want. The want is rarely known, or even consciously acknowledged, but it creates a restless velocity. It is a movement that generates profiles or perceptions with which we can navigate these strata. 'Which buildings to enter?' is similar to 'Which microdatabase to access?' Through memory readymades, we have keys, passports, driving licenses – documentation. It is our profiles, these personalized configurations of want, that fuel our velocities, to become the vectors shooting across the digital cities, seeking to be realized.

A profile is a transport, an ant-ball, for the wants to negotiate and travel, the lens for exploring, a documentation index of closely curated referrals. Each index corresponds specifically to an unrecognized want, and it is through these indexes that

a specific protocol for entering a database is established. An index is a fashioning of aesthetics. It is a *style*.

How to spawn hipsters: They are a curious subculture – they are mainstream in that their posturing is purchasable, and yet to claim to be one nullifies one's existence and identity as one. The raw materials for spawning them: Instagram images of cross-filtered cyan and yellow highlights, blue shadows, overlay and multiple filters with neutral setting turned up for the white blowouts/overexposure toy camera lens, overexposed and cropped to squares. Clothing ranging from the cool slickness of Black Milk and Jeffery Campbell to the adorable pseudo vintage-lite of Anthropologie and Modcloth; Bodies contorted and modelled to pose, shoulders hunched, legs asymmetrical, awkwardly leaning and a half-sulk half-smile sideglance into a camera. A carefully constructed photograph made to look like a briefly captured snapshot of a moment.

What we're seeing is the beginnings of visual currency, a kind of data-based tribalism that runs on visual identification because it's not just a consumer lifestyle, but also the active participation in on certain kinds of online platforms. In a way, they 'only' become hipsters at the moment of posting on the correct platform. It's the event that counts, and it's through the spreading of visual currency that their presence is validation. Before posting and after posting, they are not. It's only in the moment that is captured. So in a way, **the importance of fashion is not only as clothing or identification or expression — it's the physical manifestation of meme**. If we were to visualise this, it would be a vector of aesthetics cutting swathes through particles of

Instagram, Tumblr, Facebook and Lookbook with all infected particles bouncing off and reverberating/vibrating across.



## DADA AND DATA

One of the oldest databases in the world, comes in the form of money. Not the money as in a bank, but rather money itself – the fluid currency. Money was seen as the form of human potential, stemming from the words *moneta* (Latin, pre-roman) & *memoserie* (Greek). It was essential to civilization as a divine protection/form of ward from the gods. The principle function of money was both as a gateway to possibilities, the bridging personal circumstances in society, a way to climb beyond one's birth and class. To have money is to be included into society in the most universal aspects and the use of it (as a finite resource) was to use up a 'bank' or reservoir of potentials. Money was among other things an artefact of remembering, a *storage*.

**Data doesn't exist.** Maybe not that it doesn't exist, but rather that the only way that data can exist is as a form of storage. Without an identifiable storage, data is useless, meaningless – *dada* rather than *data* – a kind of amorphous entity which people refer to every day but isn't actually used. You can't use data that isn't stored.

*W.A.N.T defines a database as a storage of elements, or a system of storage where the protocols that define the storage is more important than the content of storage itself. It is the arrangement or curation of itemizing, the classification, rankings and priorities*

developed

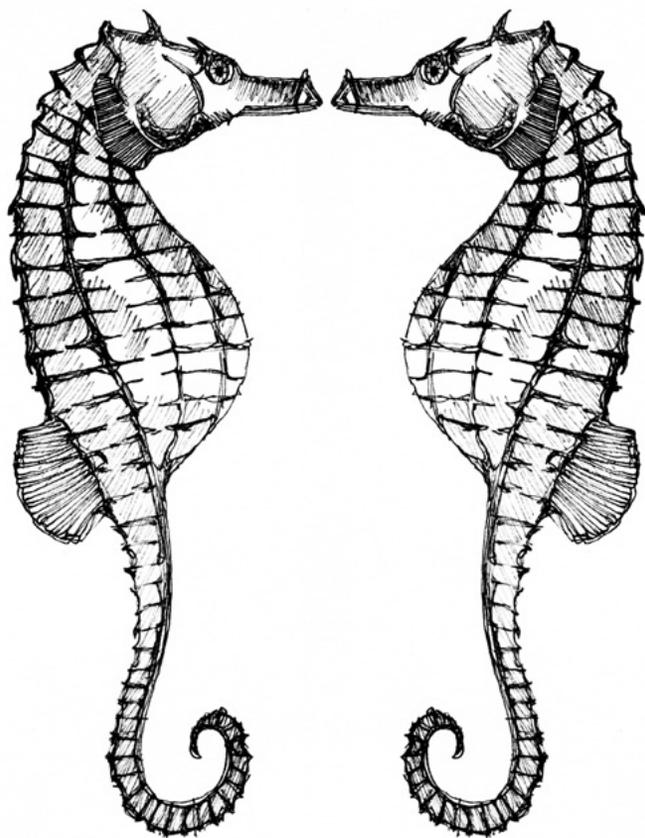
developed over time.

A database is a kind of infinite, repeating cultural commons, a leitmotif. Maybe entire societies are really the same kind of database structure, except produced by very powerful aliens or superstructures made up of corporations and their agendas, where companies now have the same rights as individual humans only so much greater and more powerful as a collective – this being is akin to Nietzsche's idea of an *Übermensch* or Aristotle's *Megalopsycho* where the supremacy of achievement, the beyond-humanness and mastery creates an inhuman being. In the case of corporations or company boards/hierarchies, the database being generated is the protocols of capitalist machinima, or the spectacle of the greed machine. Small/medium enterprises, multi-national corporations, private shell companies, consumer products, retail therapy, goods & services and other such pursuits are then memory readymades or access points in which both labor and play contribute towards the capitalist database.

In a grander or more evolved state, such a generated system can be considered as 'alive' (Agamben) as the perpetuation and reproduction of itself is no longer reliant on a single class of agents. It has the power to convert other actants and consume them in onto itself, where transformation occurs as an exploit (in a narrative loop of capitalist regeneration) or naturally occurring repair (improvements or technological progress).

These strata occur on the chronos time, or industrial time, of which we are conscious. Hidden beneath are other layers. In the strata of folk-biological data, what Henri

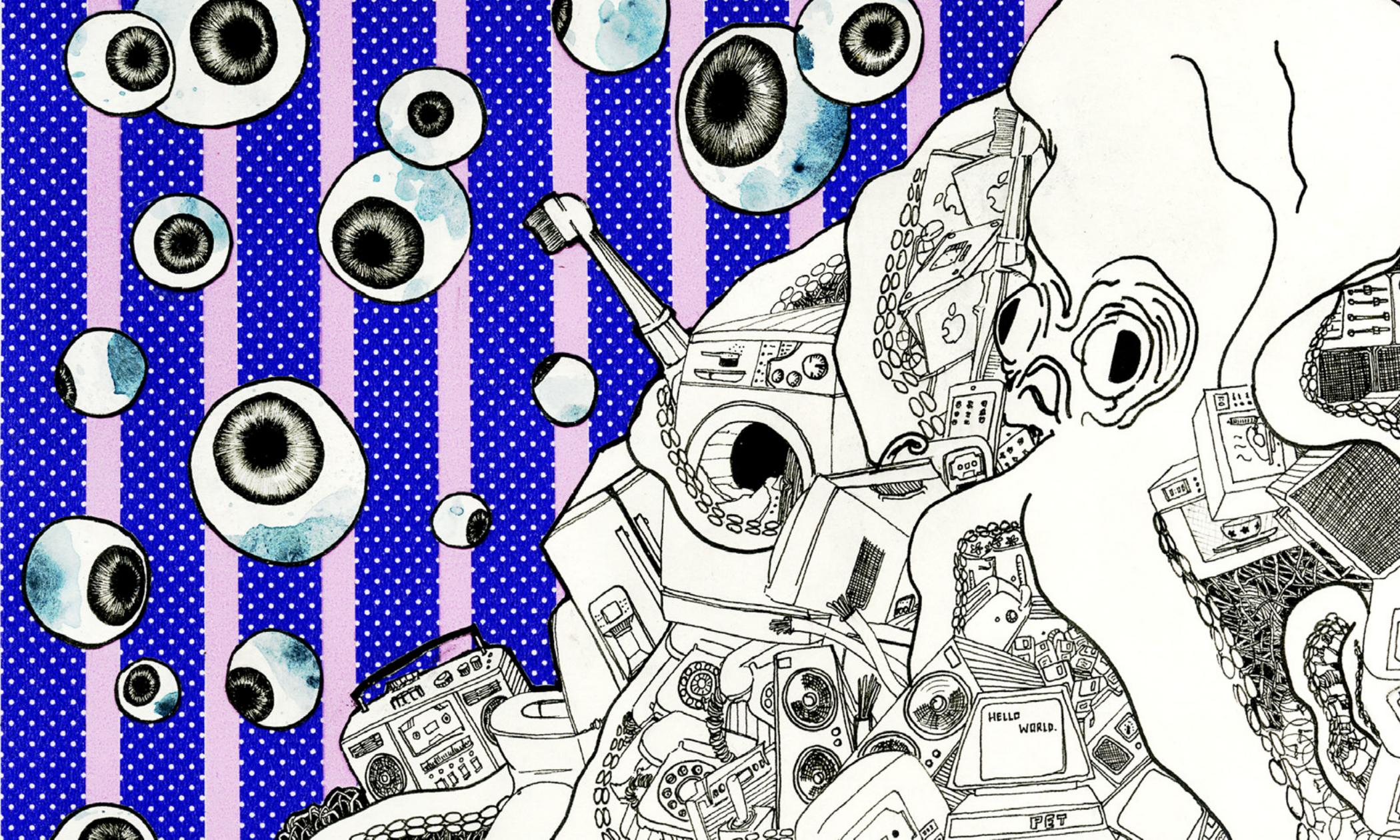
Lefebvre called symbolic strata of the total semantic field, we tap into a mythological or primal narrative tempo, the mythic image/function that is so unknowable, that could be instinctive and not-premeditated. Adorables weaponize and monetize this folk-biological strata. Through trial and error, they hook onto primal, primate times. The counter strategy is to engage our unknowable primate species being in the act, or the art, of playing into other tempos, other strata.



## THE TWELVE FACES

It is through interfaces, or dimensionality, that the database is masked and wrapped into consumable objects. In order to create a gap or break in the taffy-pull of weaponized adorables, sticking to your inner skin and peeling you from the inside out toward them, use these twelve masks as relays or mediating nodes.

Its hard to know which one of the team to choose when, and even if we really choose anything anyway. Maybe 'choice' is the most delusional idea in the era of the weaponized adorables. All we have are collisions, random but statistically predictable grazes with the database. So maybe just play with these. Put them on, take them off. Or create an Oulipean system which generates the choice by some system of rules. Make a spinner or some dice or a card deck. However you do it, here they are:



## 1. THE SPECTATOR

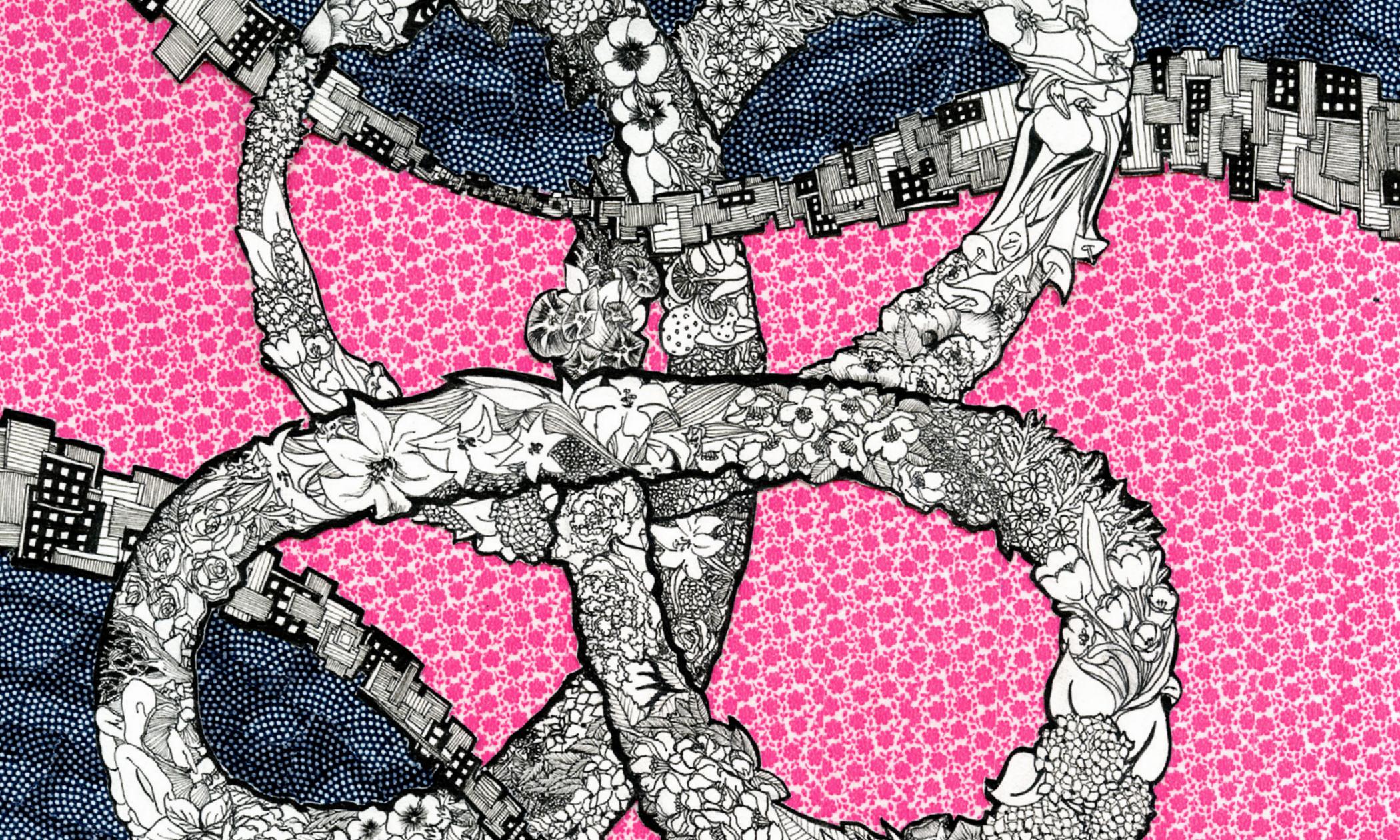
THE SPECTATOR, OR EATER OF SCREENS: is the media glutton who feeds on every bandwidth and channel. It is indiscriminate about the consumption only that it is constantly swimming in the flotsam of technologies and endless spectacle; saving and hoarding images like a miser atop a pile of visual gold. A giant sea octopus, with bulging eyes glistening with the sheen of too many screens. Mucus secretions reflecting a dazzling array of colours -- pixel perfect rainbow-falls. It moves through the murky undersea of deep web, arms outstretch and ready with the right-click save button, listening to the mysterious channels of shortwave and narrow bandwidth in flavours only it can hear.



## 2. THE INDEX KEEPER

THE INDEX KEEPER, OR WATCHER OF GATES: The judge of all protocols. it is infinite in striving for the perfect database, judging and classifying whether the elements should or should not be included. Like Anubis judging the worthiness of hearts in the underworld, the index keeper judges the cultural and social elements. Of whether it fits within an aesthetic or not; of whether it is a rule or a guideline; a work of fandom or authorial canon...etc. It holds ranks and hierarchies most dear, with the ability to split binary zeros so to speak. An ouroboros, it is a symbol for the eternal quest for division and subtractive perfection, to the point that it will only eat itself in process. Peculiarly, it is also a sport in academia where the more trivial the power it wields, the more one is willing to fight for whatever remains. The rite of puberty and adolescence lends itself to index-keeping as well, as teenagers learn to navigate the cliques of high school and positioning of social hierarchies. If manifest as a thing, it would be a Voight-Kampff machine: are you, or are you *not*?





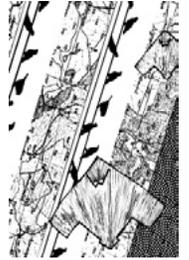
### 3. THE EYE THIEF

THE EYE THIEF, OR THE JEUNE-FILLE: flesh made digital. she is not a she, but rather an ungendered signal of a way to look at her. You learn to recognise her, just like the way you learn to watch a film or read a book. It steals your attention, this eye thief who dances at the palm of your hand between the thumb and index finger and looks at you when you snap your next selfie and upload it to instagram. It is the external skin of you, the beautiful and non-time version of yourself. It is a kind of digital preservation aspected and viewed and validated through the eyes of many, including yourself. You look back at that photo and sigh: "I was there, I was wearing this, I am that." What is identity except through the lens of when aesthetic meets human flesh, then posted for the masses to steal their eyes?

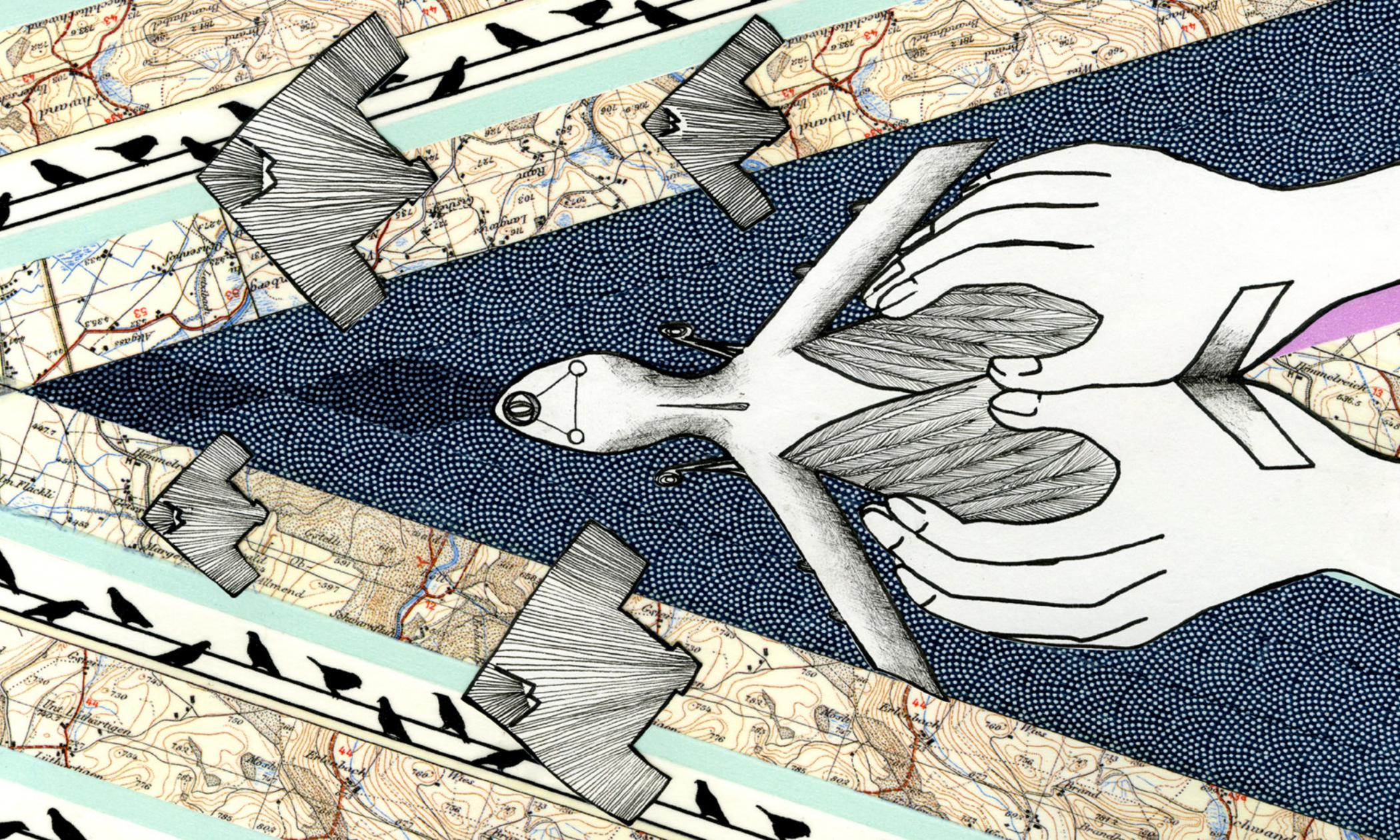


### 4. THE GREP HUNTER

THE GREP HUNTER: to grep, is to search Globally for a Regular Expression and Print it. The grep hunter is the searcher who hunts for the joy of searching and the search itself. the joy is in seeking and they exist in huddling communities around Reddit, 4chan and Something Awful. Birds released from the hand, their migratory patterns are like drones they swarming eagerly over every strand of information. Every scrap of news and police scanners plugged in, predators with their all surveying glance and need to know as they dox and hunt with the pretence of vigilante justice masking the love of search.







## 5. THE DEMONLOVER

THE DEMONLOVER: a demon is a creature with no flesh, and only the want of possession. A spirit that wanders looking for bodies to take over, a lover of tangibles, artefacts and objects. to possess, to make tangible and take a form and create a body wholly unto itself. Normally thought of as a force of evil, it is in fact neutral. At its best, it manifests itself as a concern for others i.e. I screen my sister's boyfriends because she is my younger sister. At the worst it is a form of possessive inflexibility. We are most familiar with this want, since it makes us buy and consume things.



## 6. THE LACKADAISY

THE LACKADAISY: is the restless carousel filled with sanguine cats. It besieges us, a procrastination that is too energetic to be totally idle, but too aimless to be productive. It is a formless confusion, where nothing is interesting and we want to be entertained. Entertained how? The lackadaisy doesn't know, only that it's bored. There is a sense of fussiness, an exactitude of want that nothing else can fulfil it: I only want a particular type of 75% dark chocolate marzipan. It is a want as mysterious and simple as a cat lying in a spot of sun, but this spot, not another one.







## 7. THE CHIMERA

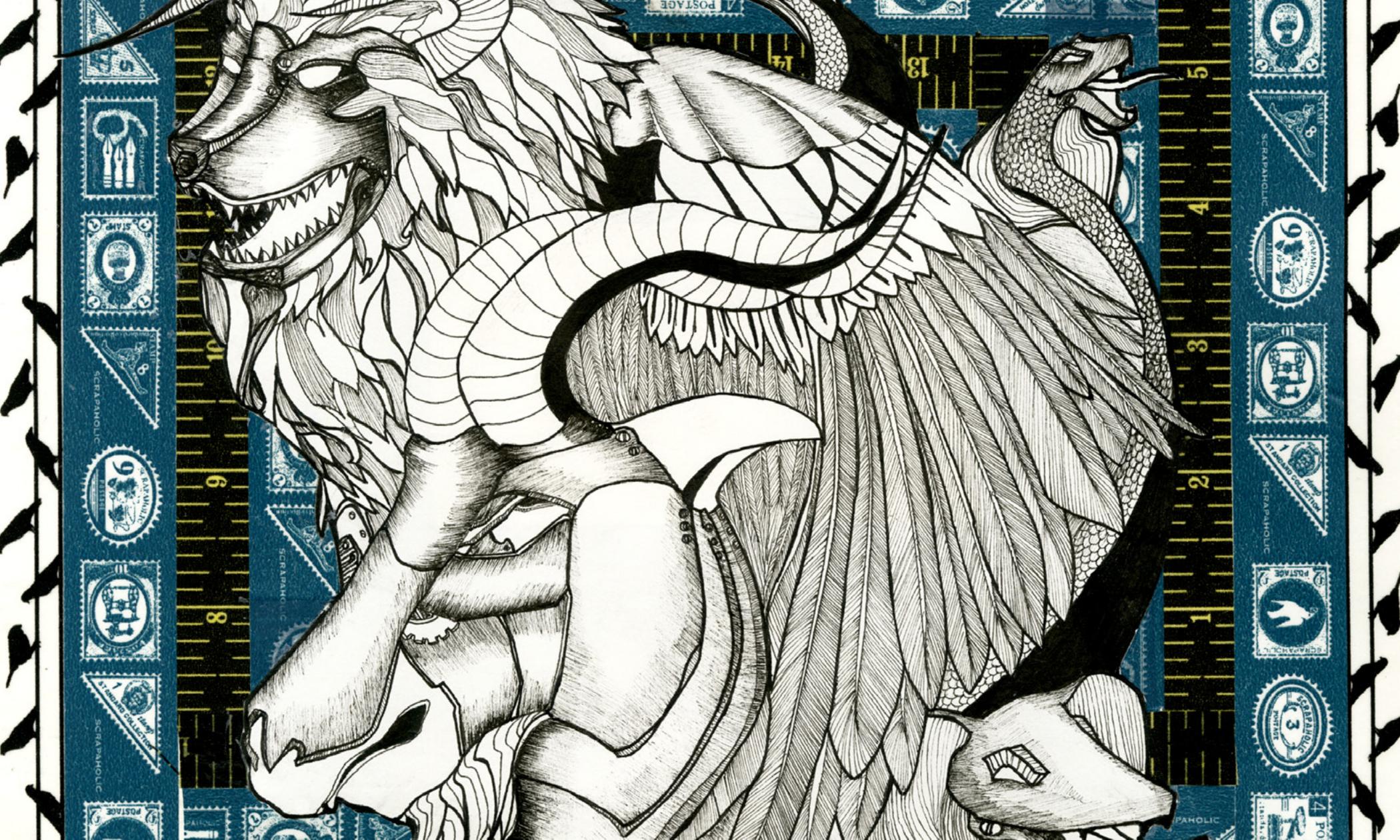
THE CHIMERA, aka. special snowflake syndrome: this is a rare want, and not well-regarded. It is the want to be othered. It is the inner acknowledgement from within self that every person is a monad. It is an awareness of how to be alone, the enjoyment of solitude and the want to be the outlier in a community. A recognition of differences, the chimera understands that it is part goat and part lion and all parts of other things, in which it shares kinship, but the amalgamation and configuration creates an entirely new one.

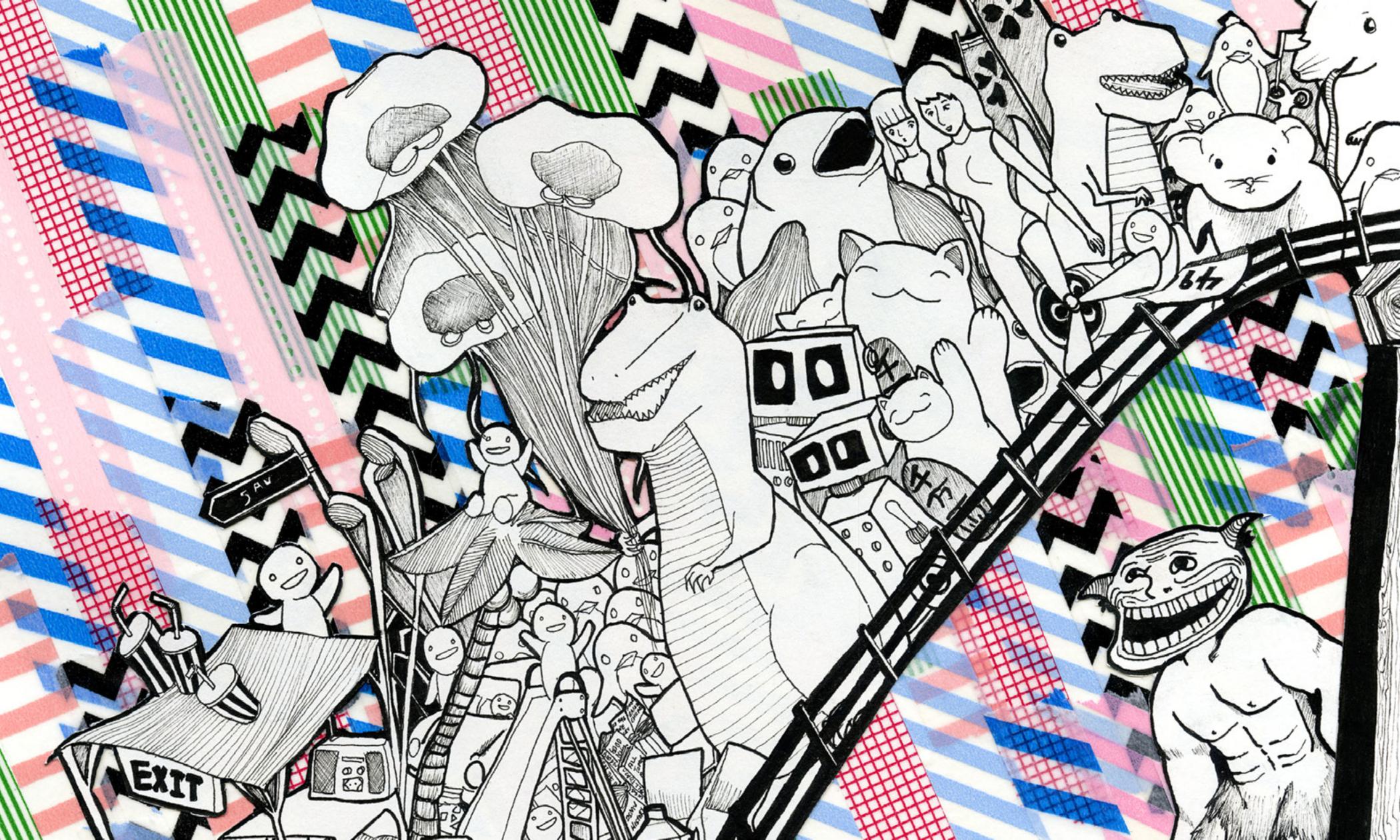


## 8. PLAY-IN-ITSELF

PLAY-IN-ITSELF: the greatest game on earth is how to live. The browser parade marches on over a bridge floating over brilliant space, indistinguishable sounds that could be laughter or worse, bubbling like the tinfoil beat of an aluminium warspace hammer clockscrew mice flying flags of pearlescent jellyfish and underneath lies the deep dark Cheshire smile of the troll that lives inside us all. It speaks in jabberwocky.







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EXIT

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## 9. THE SPAWNER OF WORLDS

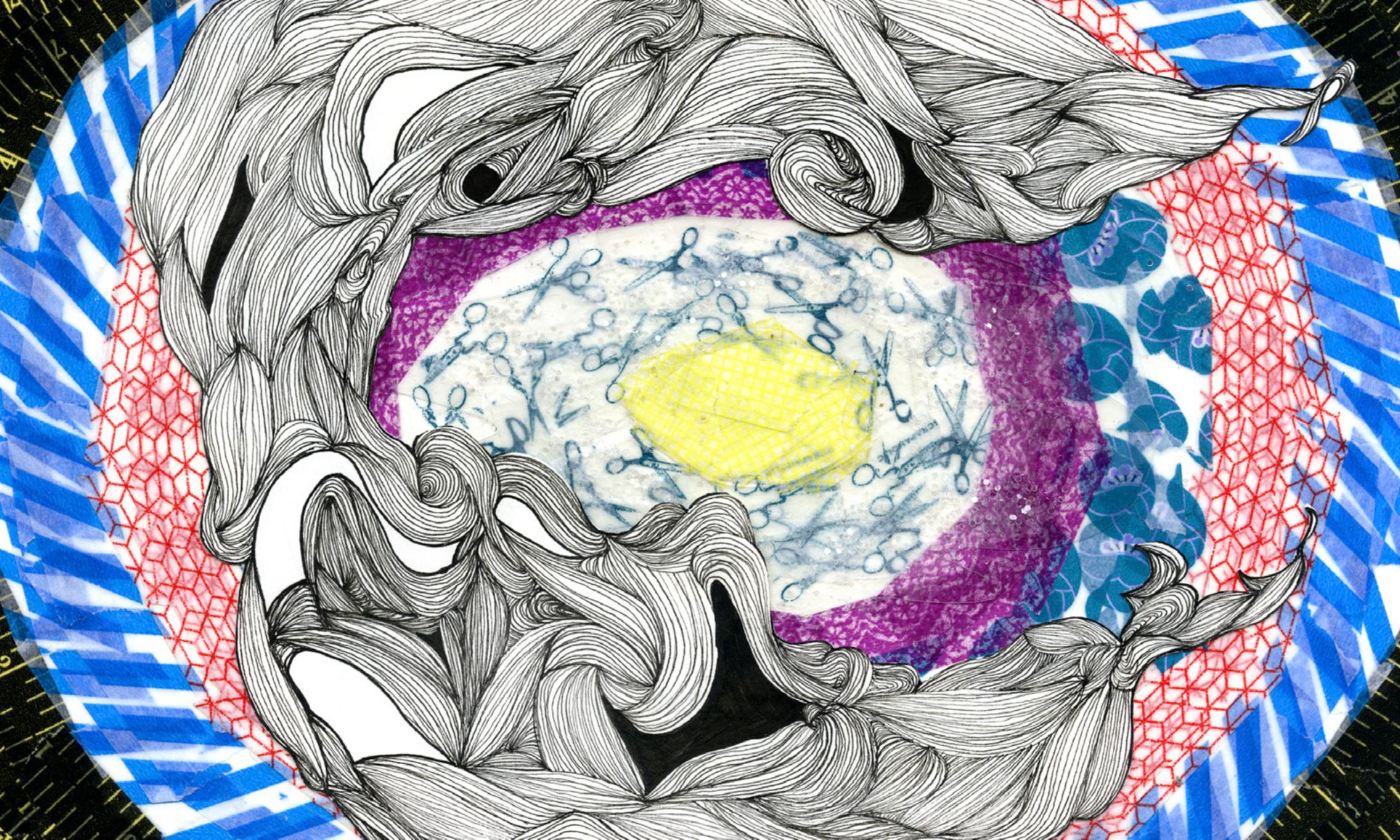
THE SPAWNER OF WORLDS: When you break an egg into a bowl and realize you can microwave an omelette without any cleanup. IT'S LIKE MAKING A GALAXY!!!!  
Unrealised potential! Full of glittery star-shit goodness sprinkled like peterpan fairy dust that drives every mash-up, remix, home webcam movie, new blog, website....  
Like a snail, humans as a species like to leave a trail of shit behind wherever we go (only that ours is glittery with pixel dust and definitely non-biodegradable).



## 10. THE NULLIFIER

THE NULLIFIER: THE LAKE OF FIRE THAT BURNS DESTRUCTIVELY. Swinging the axe with joy! On a good day it cleanses all impurities, removing the carapace, the detritus, the stink of illusions until what you have is a wobbly molten flexibility as delicate as a new-born butterfly. On a bad day you jump into the lake of fire, hundred-headless. The world is going to end anyway you might as well enjoy the burn.







## 11. IMMANENCE

IMMANENCE: IS A TESSERACT, OR THE FOLD. ADVANCED LEVEL ONLY.



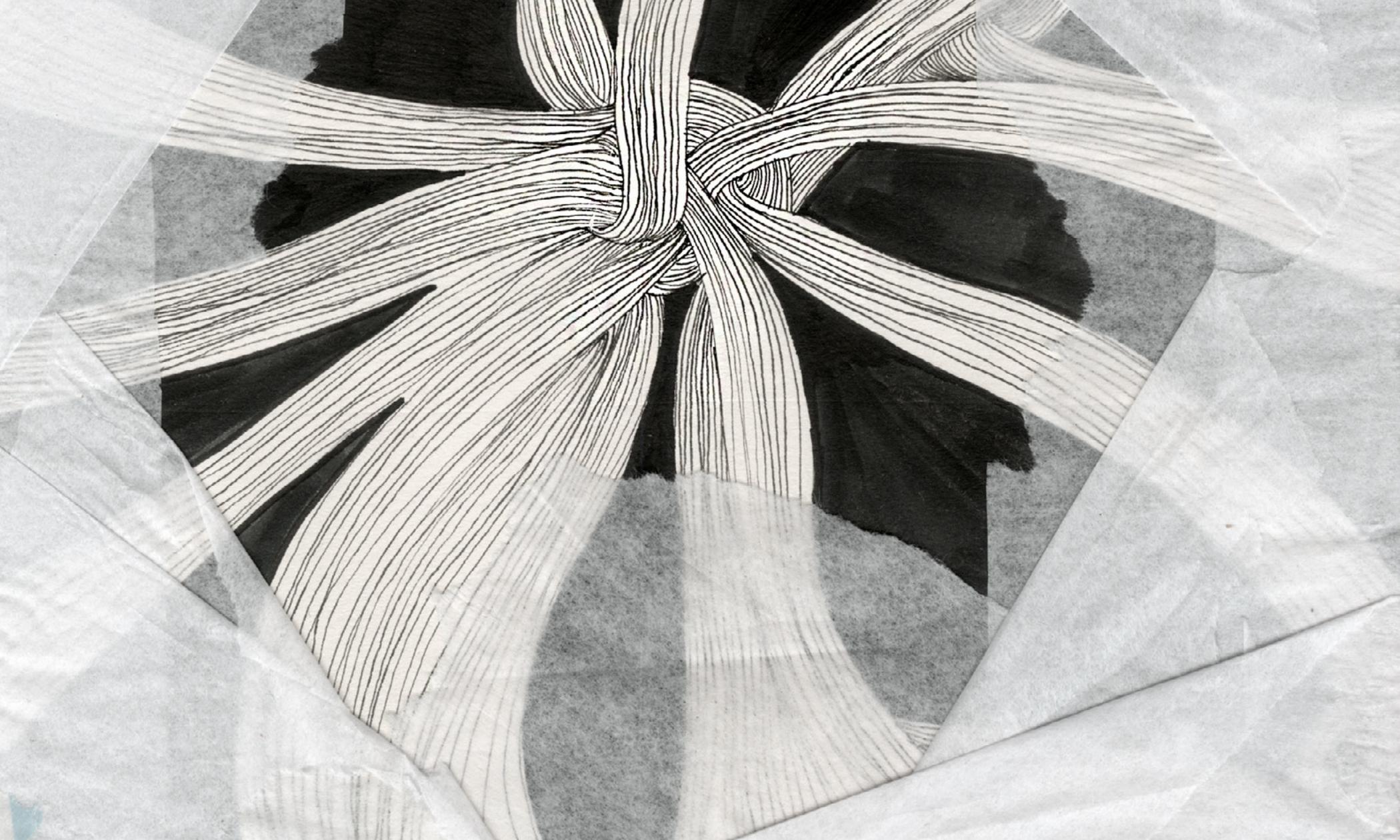
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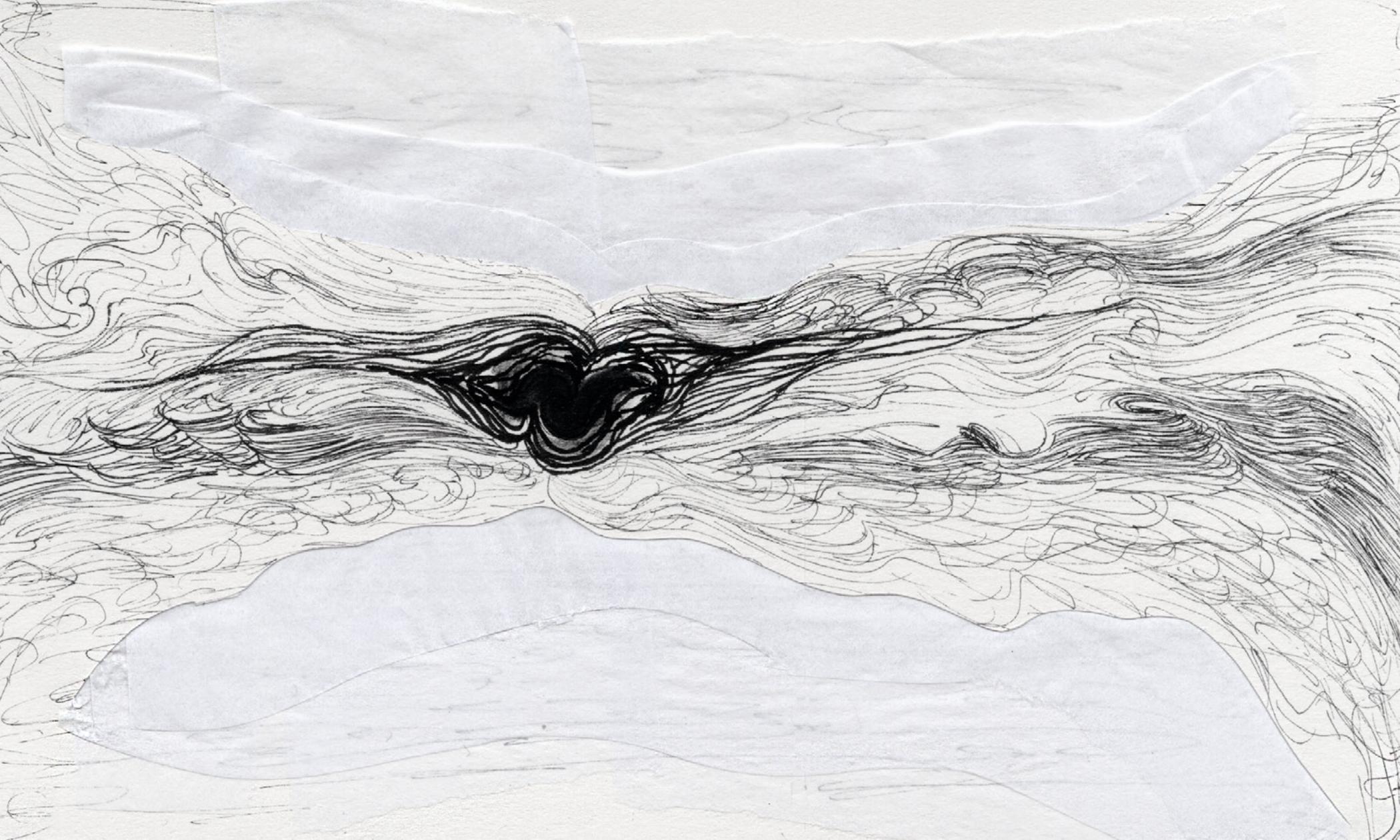
## 12. TRANSCENDENCE

TRANSCENDENCE: SO IT OPENS, INTO THE GREAT (BE) YONDER. UNMARKED SPACES. GETTING OFF THE MAPS. ADVANCED LEVEL ONLY.



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