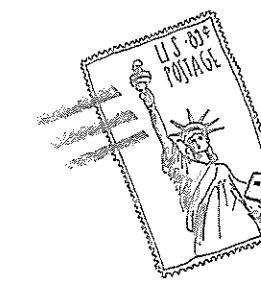
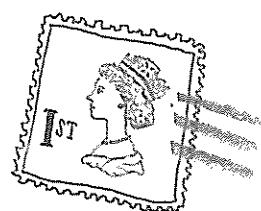


GIORGIA LUPI



Dear Data



STEFANIE POSAVEC

Princeton Architectural Press, New York

INTRODUCTION

EVER SINCE WE WERE YOUNG, WE HAVE BEEN fascinated with collecting and organizing information from the world around us.

Stefanie remembers going to baseball games with her father, helping him fill out baseball scorecards, slowly compressing inning after inning of the game into pencilled notations on two sides of paper, and feeling excited at being able to capture a moment in time into something that could be neatly tucked away and re-lived at another date.

Giorgia remembers how, as a child, she loved to collect and organize all kind of items into transparent folders that she would then tag with maniacal care. Coloured pieces of papers, little stones, pieces of textiles from her grandmother's tailor-shop, buttons, sales receipts and many more formed her collections, and she remembers the pleasure of categorizing her treasures according to their colours, sizes and dimensions and drawing tiny labels to specify how to read them.

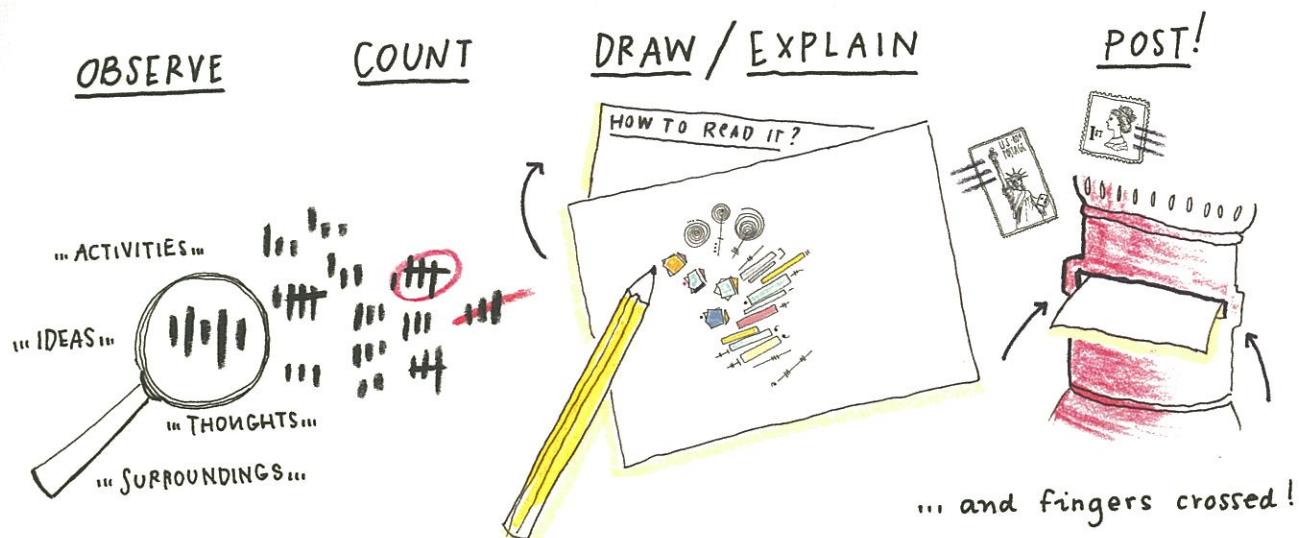
It was only later when we became adults that we realized we were collecting data, and that data was something that we could communicate with while working as information designers.

Unknowingly living almost parallel lives, when we bumped into each other at an arts festival we realized how similar they were. We were each living in a foreign country (Giorgia moved from Italy to New York, and Stefanie, who grew up in Denver, Colorado, now lives in London), we were the same age and were both only children. But, most importantly, we were visual designers who both loved drawing, and specifically drawing with data.

This book is the story of how we, Giorgia and Stefanie, became friends through revealing to each other the details of our daily lives. But we didn't do this by chatting in cafés and bars or on social media. Instead we started an old-fashioned correspondence with an unusual twist. Each week, for a year, we sent each other a postcard describing what had happened to the other during that week. But we didn't write what had happened – we drew it. And we didn't try to draw about everything that had happened to us: we selected a weekly theme.

Every Monday we chose a particular subject on which to collect data about ourselves for the whole week: how often we complained, or the times when we felt envious; when we came into physical contact and with whom; the sounds we heard around us. We then created a drawing representing this data

OUR NEW, SHARED ROUTINE FOR A YEAR



on a postcard-sized sheet of paper, and dropped the postcard into an English post box (Stefanie) or an American mail box (Giorgia).

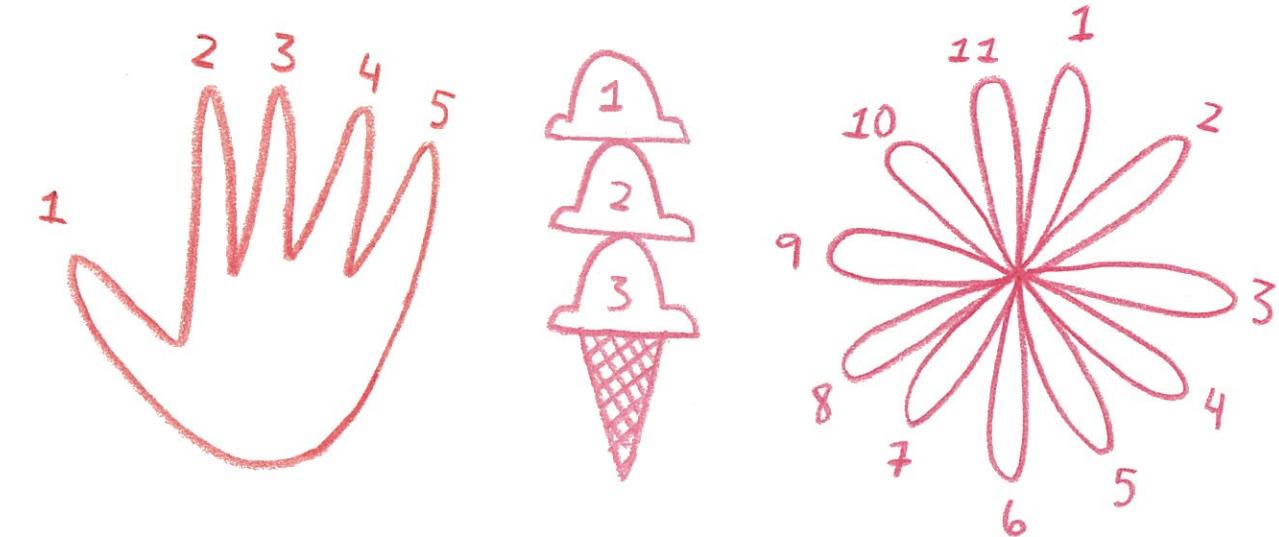
Over the fifty-two weeks, the collecting of data about our lives became a kind of ritual. We would spend the week noticing and noting down our activities or thoughts, before translating this information into a hand-drawn visualization. On the front of the postcard there would be a unique representation of our weekly data, and, on the other side (in addition to the necessary postage and address), we would squeeze in detailed keys to our drawings: the code to enable the recipient to decipher the picture, and to fantasize about what had happened to her new friend the week before.

We started *Dear Data* as a way to get to know each other through our data, the material that is most familiar to us: but we soon found we were also becoming more in-tune with ourselves as we captured the life unfolding around us and sketched the hidden patterns we discovered in the details. By noticing our behaviour, we were influencing our behaviour.

We believe data collected from life can be a snapshot of the world in the same way that a picture catches small moments in time. Data can describe the hidden patterns found in every aspect of our lives, from our digital existence to the natural world around us. Every plant, every person, every interaction we take part in can be mapped, counted, and measured, and these measurements are what we call data. And once you realize that data can be gathered from every single being and thing on the planet, and you know how to find these invisible numbers, you begin to see these numbers everywhere, in everything.

Besides *finding* data in the world around us, we are all *creating* data just by living: our purchases, our movements through the city, our explorations across the internet, all contribute to the “data trail” we leave in our wake as we move through life. This data is being collected, counted, and computed – both on a massive scale by companies and institutions seeking insights and answers – and on a smaller scale by individuals seeking to understand more about themselves, using data to “quantify” the self and become more efficient, optimised humans.

EVERYTHING CAN BE MAPPED, COUNTED, AND MEASURED



Because of this, we are said to be living in the age of “Big Data”, where algorithms and computation are seen as the new keys to universal questions, and where a myriad of applications can detect, aggregate, and visualize our data for us to help us become these efficient super-humans. We prefer to approach data in a slower, more analogue way. We’ve always conceived *Dear Data* as a “personal documentary” rather than a quantified-self project which is a subtle – but important – distinction. Instead of using data just to become more efficient, we argue we can use data to become more humane and to connect with ourselves and others at a deeper level.

We hope this book will inspire you in many ways: to draw (even if you don’t think of yourself as an artist), to slow down and appreciate the small details of your life, and to make connections with other people. You’ll find our fifty-two cards in this book, along with the thoughts we had while conceiving and crafting them. They have not been edited: they appear exactly as they did when originally received through the mail, highlighting a year of learning, doubts and indecision as well as love, affection and humour.

Bearing all the scuff-marks of their journey across the ocean, together they form a personal data-diary that first we shared with each other, and now we share with you.

We’ll also unfold what we’ve learned from this year of collecting our daily data, expanding upon how we gained meaning from what we collected and on our artistic process. Starting this year with nervousness and trepidation, we ended it feeling confident in capturing and drawing the moments of our lives: it doesn’t take much to get started.

We see data as a creative material like paint or paper, an outcome of a very new way of seeing and engaging with our world. We hope this book will inspire you to see your world through a new lens, where everything and anything can be a creative starting point for play and expression.

GIORGIA LUPI Stefanie Posavec

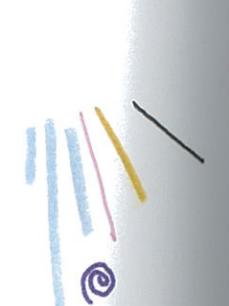
week fourteen
a week of

@

"SCHEDULES"

At week fourteen Giorgia and Stefanie decided to observe how they spent their time, focusing on their schedule and thus mapping their (productive!) activities, even though they interpreted the week's theme differently.

Giorgia collected every single work *task* she performed during the week: emails sent, video calls, meetings, problems she solved, talks delivered, projects reviewed, and so much more, to give Stefanie an idea of her days at work. While Stefanie tracked everything she *did* — for every waking hour.



"The positioning and rotation of the elements are an absolutely random and direct function of the aesthetic composition I want to create."

C AND TAKING SOME ARTISTIC FREEDOM FOR ONCE)



GIORGIA

DEAR DATA

WEEK 14: (ABSTRACT) PRODUCTIVITY!

HOW TO READ IT:

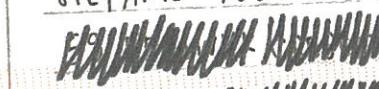
Every single element is a TASK I performed during the week. the position and rotation of the elements ARE ABSOLUTELY RANDOM and function of the aesthetic! 😊!

SYMBOLS = different tasks

- ✓ = line = Email sent (length = apx. email length)
- = skypcall done (dimension = apx. duration)
- △ = meetings! (dimens = duration)
- ▼ = solved a problem
- = planned something
- ↗ = delivered a talk
- ◎ = produced a document (→ ↗ → n. of edit sessions)
- ↓ = came up with ideas
- = reviewed a project
- ॥ = tweeted s.thing
- = saved ADOBE files
- X = bought something

SEND TO:

STEFANIE POSAVEC



LONDON ENGLAND

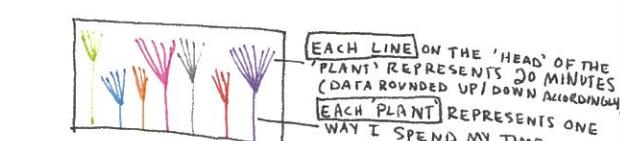
- UK -

ENGLAND

Giorgia has always been fascinated by abstract art, and she used it as her main reference: she mixed pens, pencils and markers and plain shapes with more unconventional ones, to compose a futuristic poster of her week of work tasks.

DEAR DATA - WEEK 14A WEEK OF SCHEDULES:
HOW I SPENT MY TIME

THE DATA: I TRACKED AS MUCH OF MY SCHEDULE AS I COULD, DOWN TO THE MINUTE. IT'S AS COMPLETE OF A PICTURE AS POSSIBLE (SOME HOURS ARE MISSING, WELL)

HOW TO READ IT:

EACH LINE ON THE 'HEAD' OF THE PLANT REPRESENTS 30 MINUTES (DATA ROUNDED UP/DOWN ACCORDINGLY)
EACH PLANT REPRESENTS ONE WAY I SPEND MY TIME.

WAYS I SPENT MY TIME (RECORDED IN HOURS+MINS.)

SLEEPING	50:31	PERSONAL MAINTENANCE (SHOWER, MAKEUP, CHANGE)	8:31
WORKING (projects, meetings)	27:03	INTERNET/EMAIL/WORK + PERSONAL	8:00
TRAVELLING TO GET SOMEWHERE (bus, train, walking)	16:12	CONSUMING TRAD. MEDIA (FILM, TV, PAPER)	7:00
SHOPPING (GROCERIES-CLOTHES)		SHOPPING (GROCERIES-CLOTHES)	5:37
CLEANING/TIDYING HOUSE		CLEANING/TIDYING HOUSE	3:47
ATTENDING LIVE PERFORMANCE		ATTENDING LIVE PERFORMANCE	1:49
DRINKING/EATING	13:21	SPENDING TIME WITH EXCLUSIVELY GIORGIA-SHARED	1:49
SOCIALLY		SOCIALLY	
PREPARING/EATING MEAL	12:51	PREPARING/EATING MEAL	1:49
TENDING TO FINANCES		TENDING TO FINANCES	0:52
SOMETHING GIORGIA-RELATED!		SOMETHING GIORGIA-RELATED!	0:47
		TRYING TO OFFER MY HUSBAND SOMETHING GIORGIA-RELATED!	0:47
		YOU WILL SEE SOON...	

BY AIR MAIL
par avion
Royal Mail®



TO:
GIORGIA LUPI

BROOKLYN, NY
USA

Stefanie sent Giorgia a present ("something Giorgia-related") for being so hospitable while she was visiting her in New York.

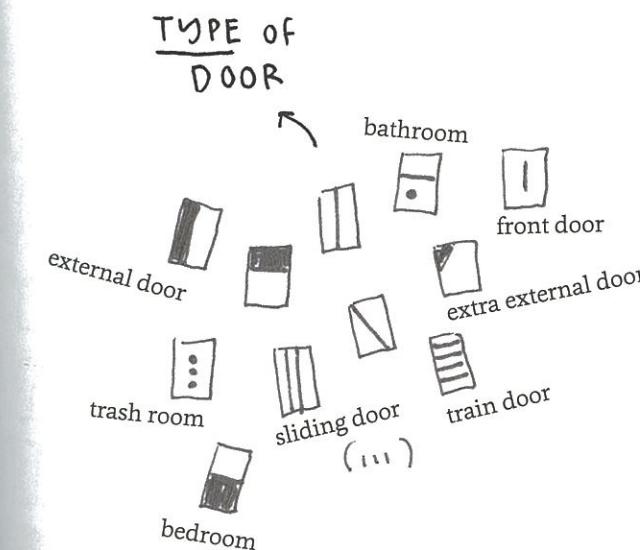
week twenty-four

a week of

DOORS

This week Giorgia and Stefanie were tracking the doors they passed through. As much as it sounds an unusual dataset, it was a pretext to show each other the pace of their days through their external and internal environments.

It is a reminder that you can still see the story of a life lived, even in the most uncommon types of data tracking, if you add the right details to your gathering.

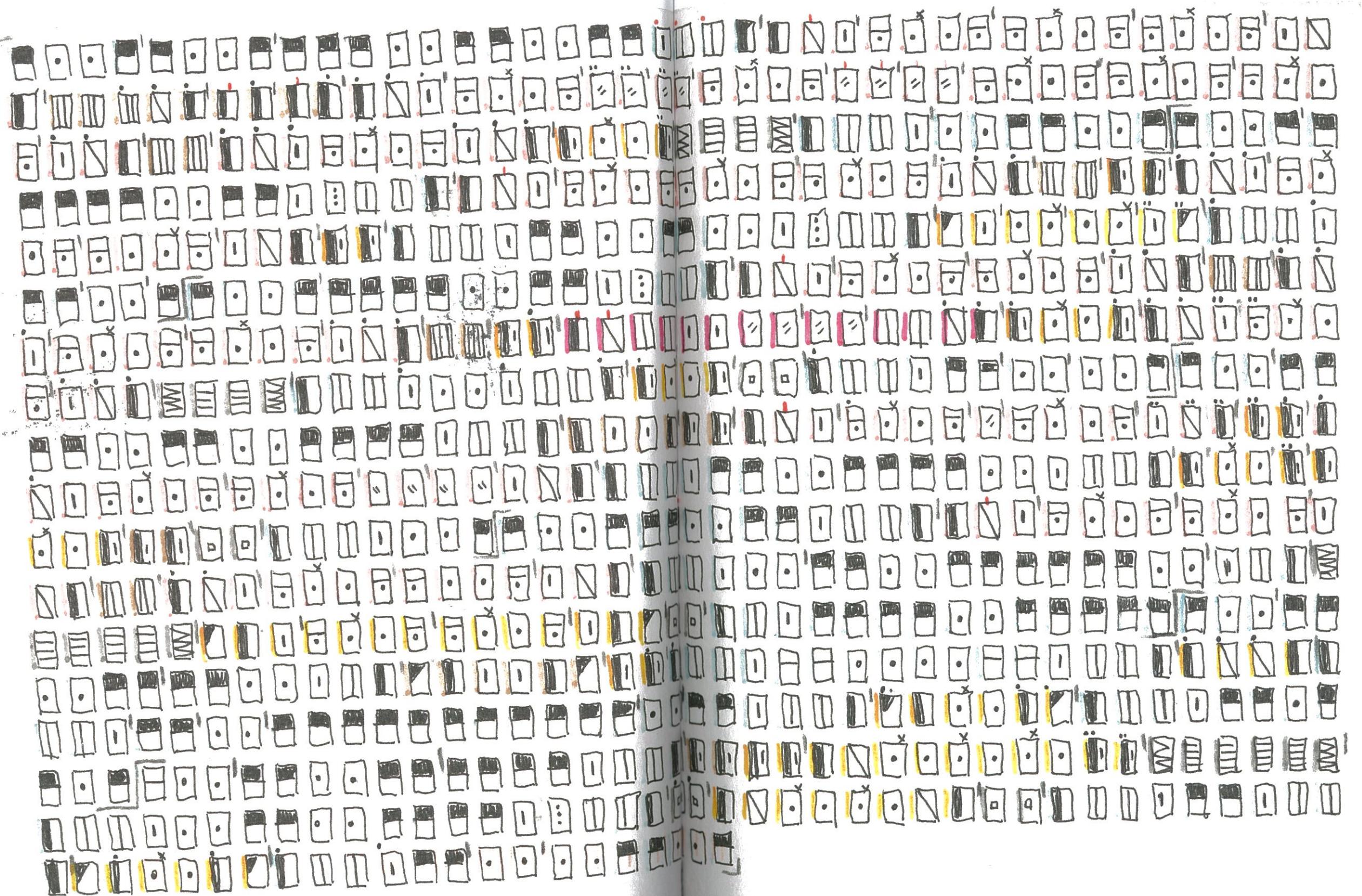


Why can't I help ooooooooverdetailling my
data collections???



MY USUAL
TRILLIONS
OF DETAILS

sooo heavy!
I locked it!
(111)
someone opened it for me
I was carrying my Dear Data postcard to post to Stefanie!





66 DEAR DATA WEEK 24: DOORS' PATTERNS

HOW TO READ IT:

Every little rectangle represents a door I opened and/or passed through, in chronological order, to enter a space. (P.S. closet doors and furniture doors are not included)

TIME OF DOOR:		ATTRIBUTES	
<u>MAIN LOCATION:</u>			
my Building		extra external door (it's cold here ha!)	so heavy!!
work (new inc.)		bathroom restroom door	
shop / store		boy friend opened it for me	
café / pub restaurant		somebody opened it for me	
client place		I locked it!	
transportation		I was carrying my pear Data postcard to post it to you ☺	
<u>TIME OF DOOR:</u>			
extra external door - entering the building		bathroom entry	
eventual mid door		the door between my bedroom and my living room	
main space access (e.g. my apt)		thrash Room!	
when external door coincides to main space entrance		glass door (e.g. meeting room)	
external sliding door		external sliding door	
elevator automatic doors		turnstiles	
train doors		cab doors	



SEND TO:
STEFANIE POSAVEC
LONDON [REDACTED]
- UK -
ENGLAND

After spending more than six hours drawing this hyper-detailed card, Giorgia texted Stefanie as she posted it:

"You need to know that if this one doesn't get to you I won't redraw it. You'll see what I mean."

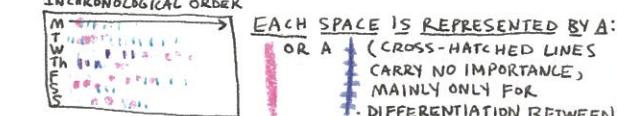


DEAR DATA - WEEK 24

A WEEK OF DOORS/SPACES

ABOUT THE DATA: I GATHERED DATA ON ALL OF THE SPACES I PASSED THROUGH IN THE WEEK, BOTH INTERNAL + EXTERNAL. A SPACE IS DEFINED BY WHETHER I HAD TO PASS THROUGH A DOOR OR NOT.

HOW TO READ IT: IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

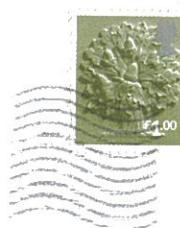


THE TYPES OF SPACES I PASSED THROUGH INCLUDE:

<u>IN THE HOME/PERSONAL SPACE:</u>	DOLPHIN	DOCTOR'S OFFICE	SHOP
BEDROOM		WAITING ROOM	BRIXTON MET. BLDG.
SPARE BEDROOM (1 of 2)			PUB/RESTAURANT/CAFE/BAR
GROUNDFLOOR (OPEN PLAN; INCLS. KITCHEN + LOUNGE)			UNIV. BLDG. FRIEND'S HOUSE:
TOILET			CLASSROOM
BATHROOM			MAIN HOUSE
<u>STUDIO:</u>	STUDIO BLDG.	TEARDOM	KITCHEN
STUDIO SPACE			LOUNGE
<u>OUTSIDE:</u>	IN THE STREET		CULTURAL CENTRE:

FROM:
S. POSAVEC
[REDACTED]
LONDON
UK 540 - 2015

To: Royal Mail
London
UK Centre
06-05-2015
33812021

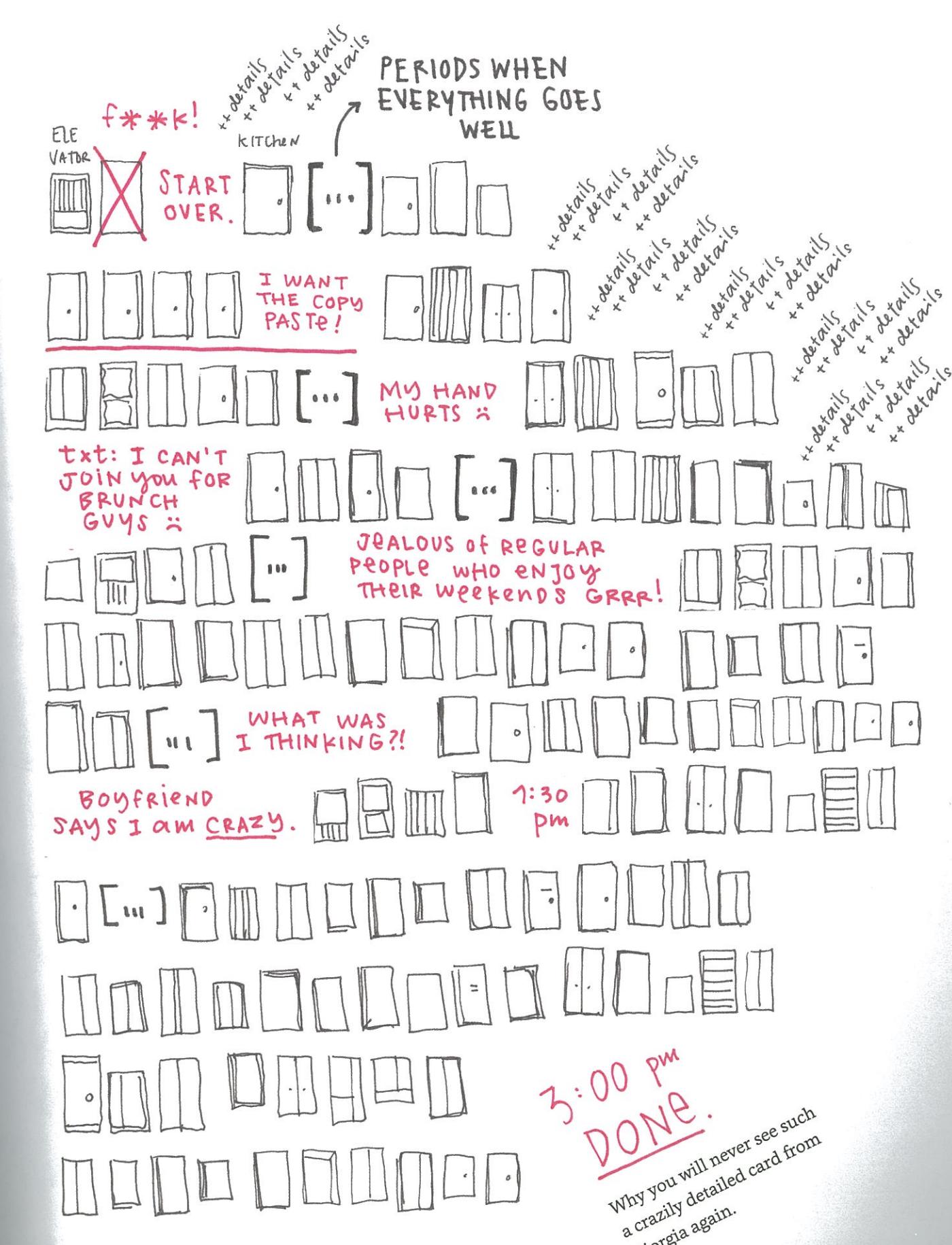


GIORGIA LUPI
BROOKLYN, NY
USA

BY AIR MAIL
par avion

Royal Mail®

Unfortunately, while Giorgia's postcard arrived, Stefanie's postcard didn't, so she had to draw hers again (luckily it wasn't as detailed, but it was still supremely annoying).



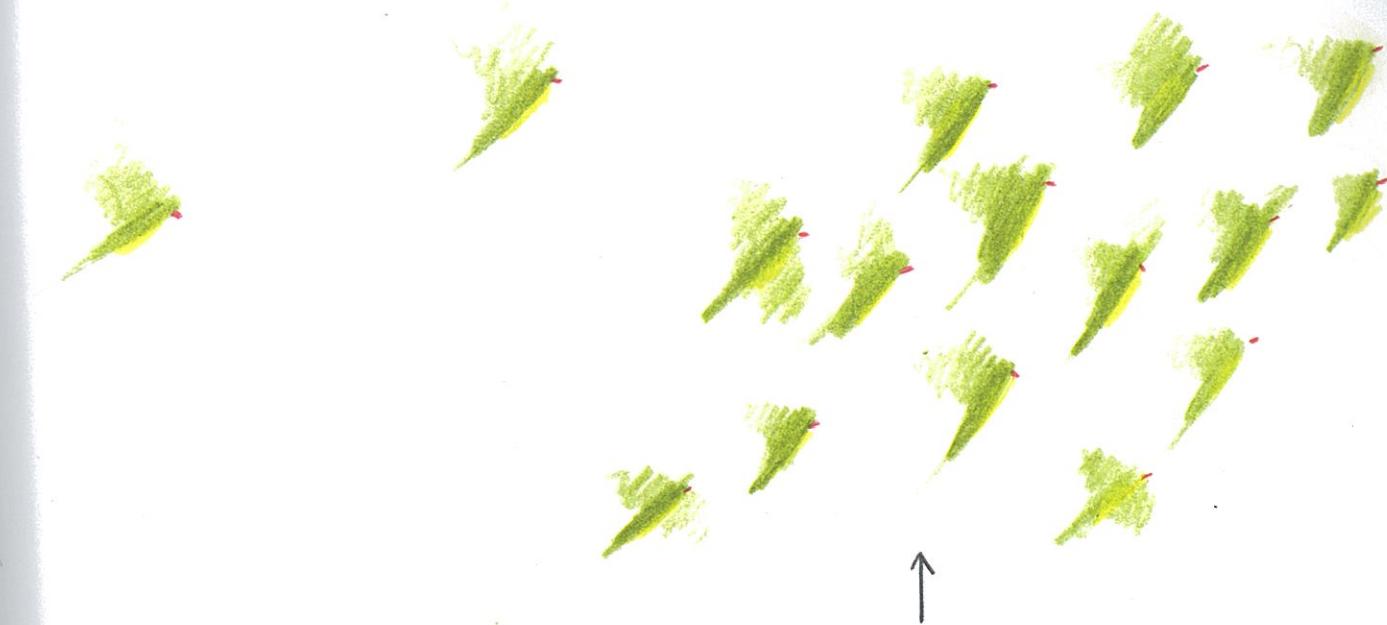
WEEK THIRTY-FOUR

A WEEK OF

Urban wildlife

Stefanie eagerly anticipated this week of data-gathering, as she was looking forward to gathering data on all of the cats she regularly petted and said hello to on her London housing estate, while Giorgia's favourite friends were all the dogs she saw on the streets of New York.

As the week commenced both Giorgia and Stefanie kept their eagle eyes on all the animals (and with any luck, eagles) they spotted in their urban environments.

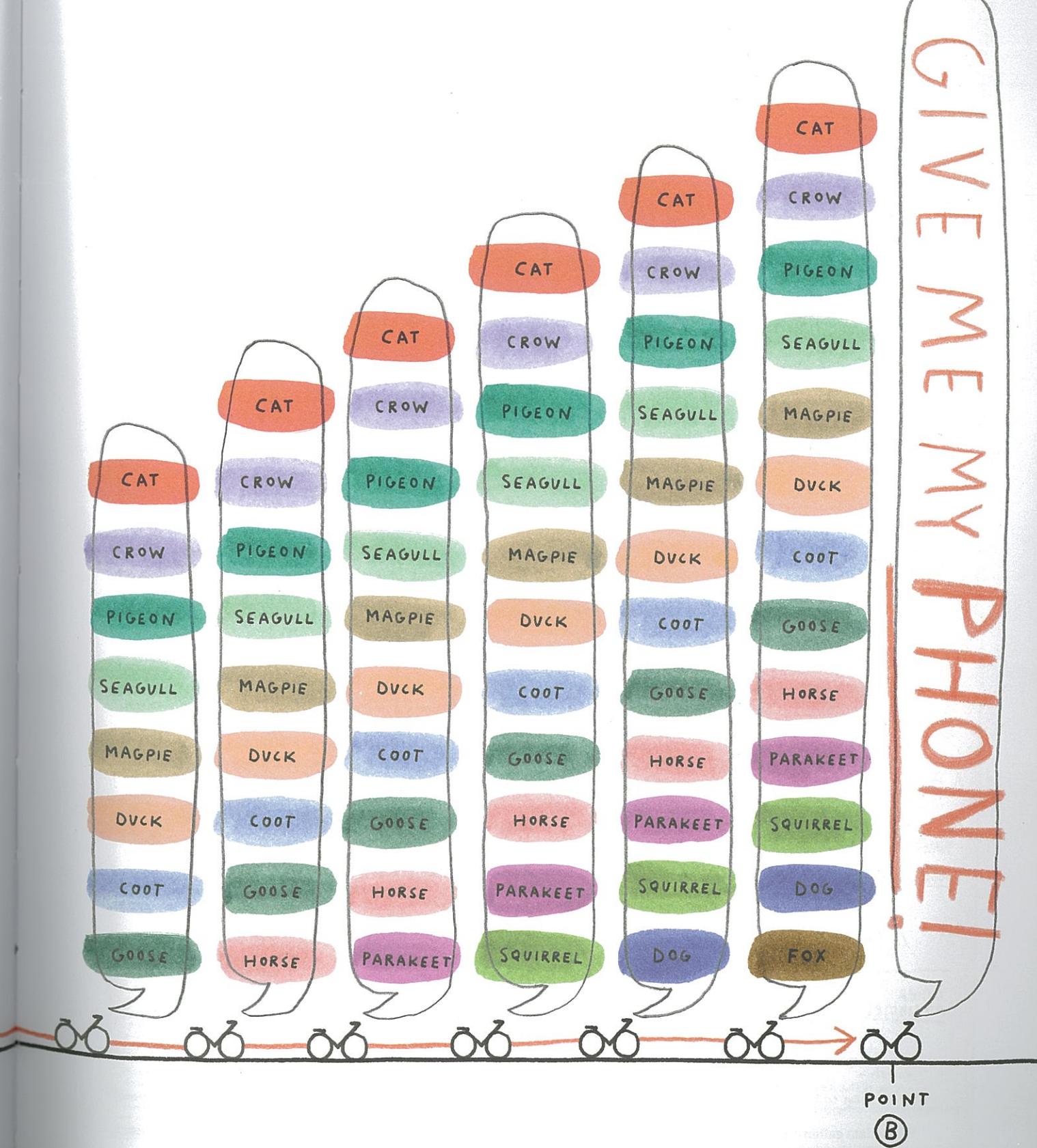
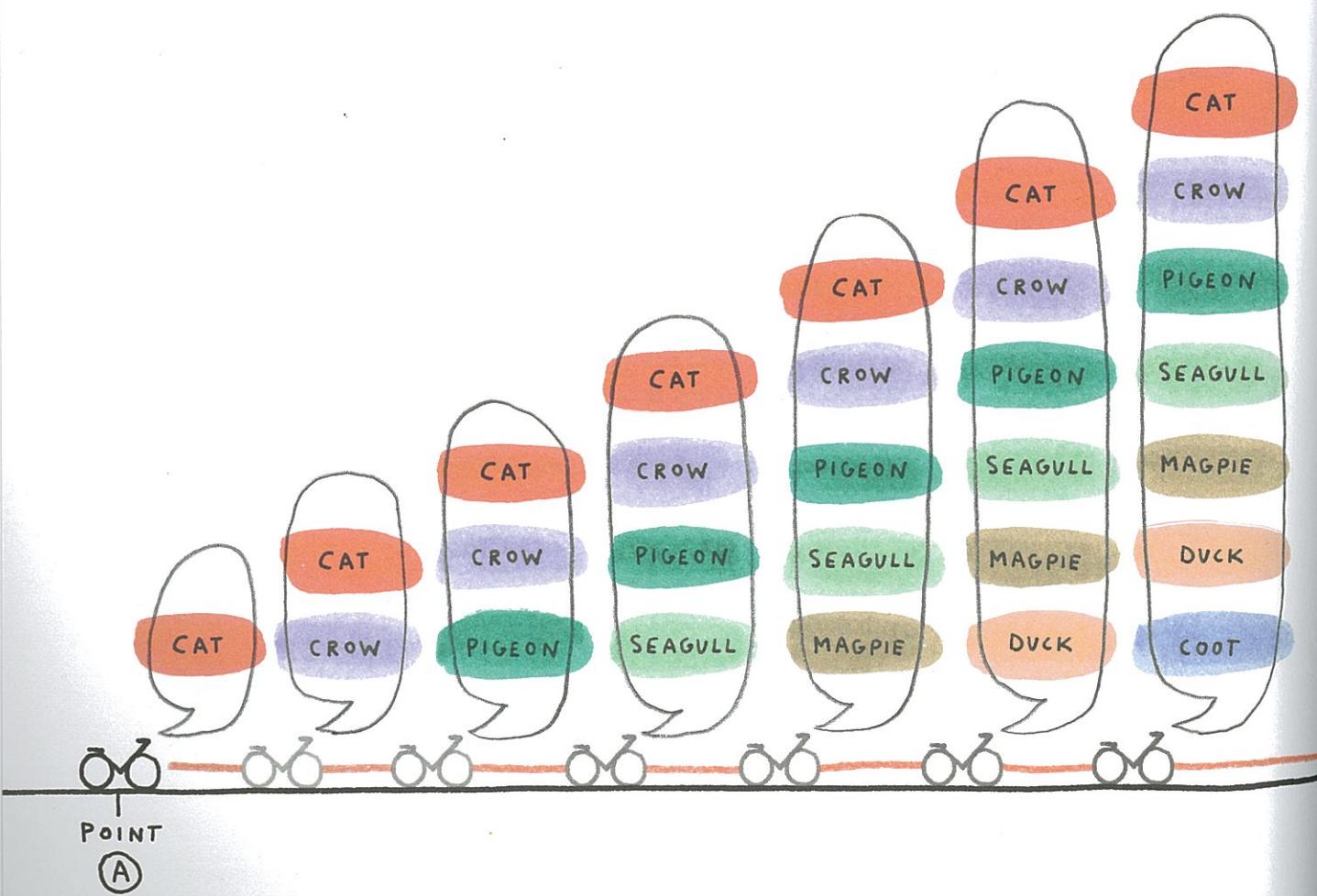


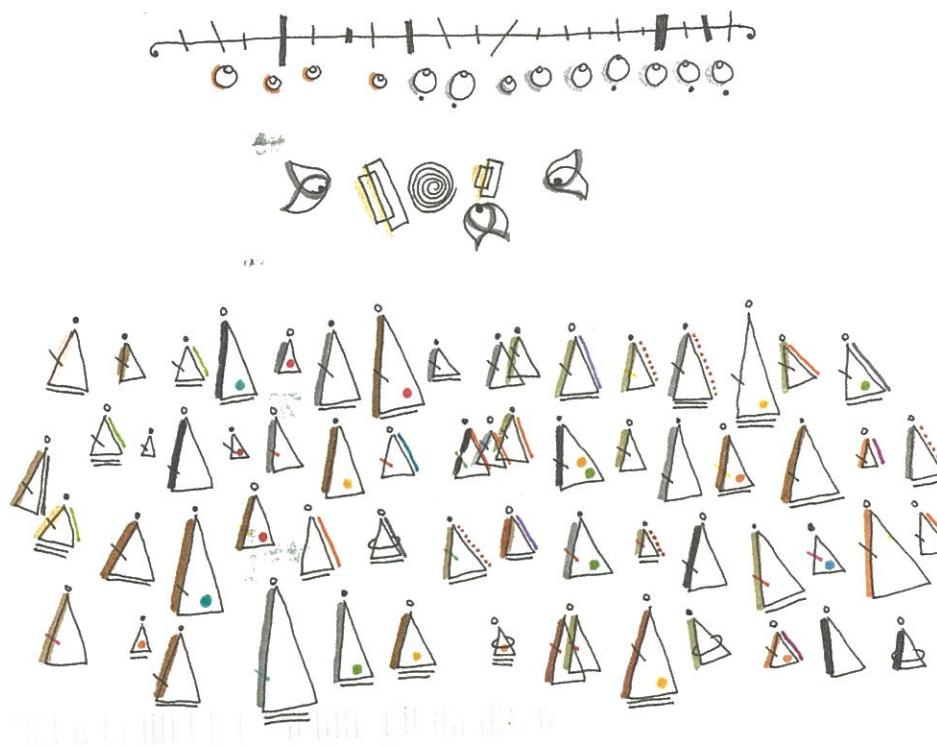
A blurred flock of
SOUTH LONDON PARAKEETS*
as they fly from treetop
to treetop in Stefanie's
local park

STEFANIE'S STRATEGY TO REMEMBER

ANIMALS WHILE CYCLING

(whispered over and over to herself)

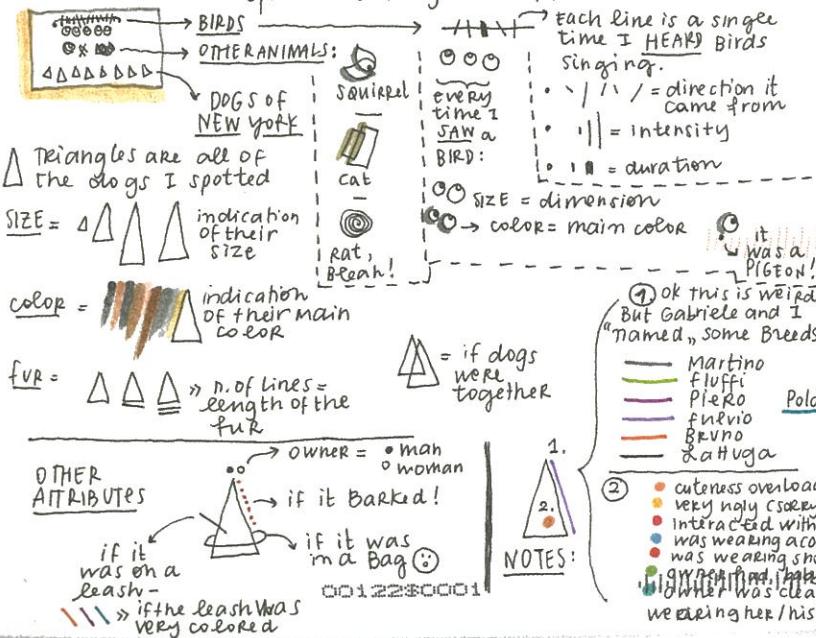




66 DEAR DATA

WEEK 34: URBAN ANIMALS!

HOW TO READ IT: Every symbol/element on the postcard is an animal I spotted during the week.



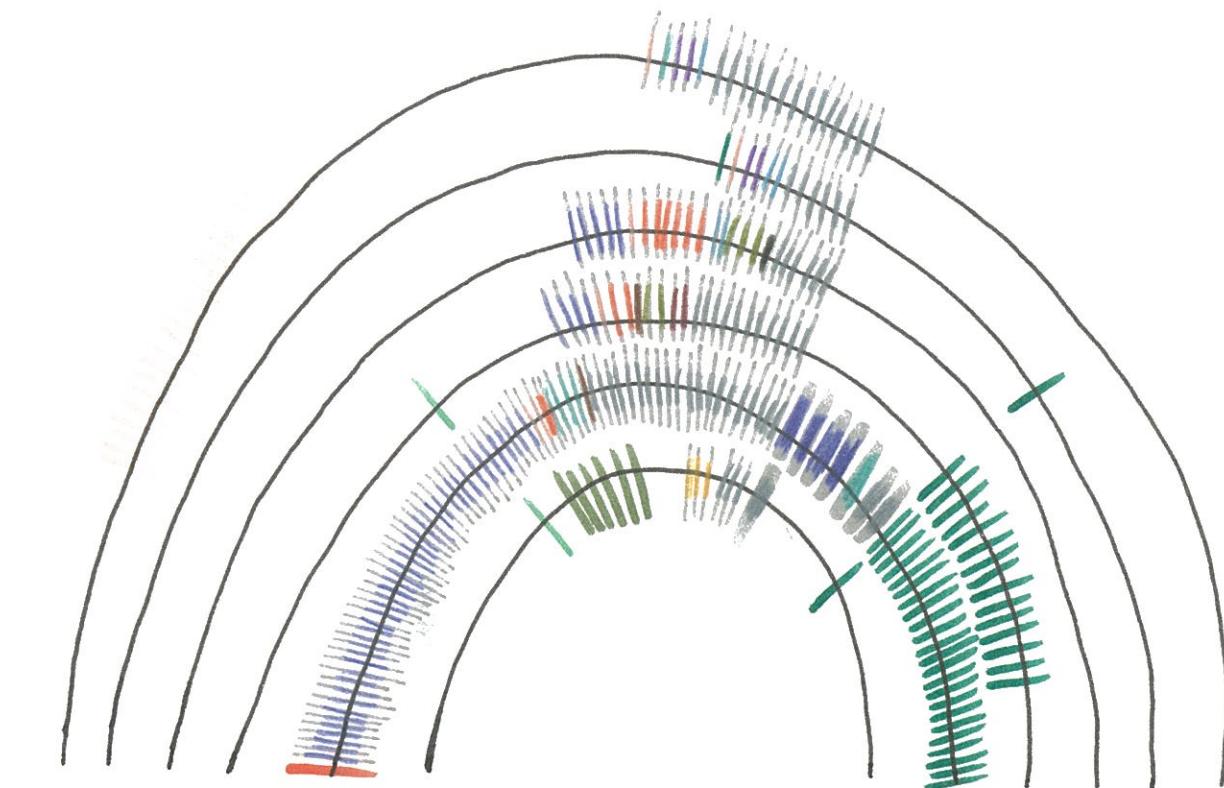
NEW YORK NY
05 MAY 2015 PM



SEND TO:

LONDON
- UK -
ENGLAND

When data gathering becomes a collective performance: Giorgia's boyfriend after a walk together: "So, how many dogs have you spotted? I had eight!" He was counting as well without telling her!

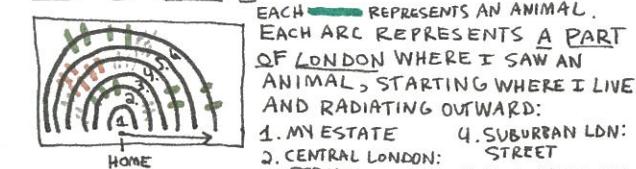


DEAR DATA - WEEK 34

A WEEK OF URBAN WILDLIFE

ABOUT THE DATA: I TRACKED EVERY TIME I NOTICED AN ANIMAL IN MY VICINITY. 'NOTICE' BEING THE OPERATIVE WORD HERE... SOMETIMES I WAS CYCLING OR DAYDREAMING AND FORGOT TO KEEP WATCH FOR WILDLIFE. NOTE: URBAN WILDLIFE INCLUDES ALL ANIMALS, WILD OR DOMESTICATED (HEY, IN A CITY I TAKE WHAT I CAN GET).

HOW TO READ IT:



ANIMALS SPOTTED:

BIRDS	SINGLE FLOCK OF BIRDS UNIDENTIFIED MAGPIE PIGEON WOOD PIGEON COOT (I SAW THESE) PARAKEET!! (FERAL PET PARAKEETS RELEASED + POPULATING S. LDN'S) HEN! (WE HAVE A HEN COOP ON OUR ESTATE) SEAGULL GOOSE BLACKBIRD DUCK CROW KESTREL (A BIRD OF PREY!)
DOGS	SQUIRREL C INCLUDING THE ONE I HEARD UP IN OUR ROOF! HORSE CATS OF THE ESTATE FOX (MY HUSBAND SAW THIS BUT SINCE I WAS WITH HIM I'M TAKING IT.)

FROM:
SPOSavec
London
UK
Association



TO: GIORGIA LUPI

BROOKLYN, NY
USA

BY AIR MAIL
par avion

Royal Mail®

This postcard was drawn as rings radiating out from Stefanie's home to highlight how the variety of animals changed as she travelled further away from London's centre.

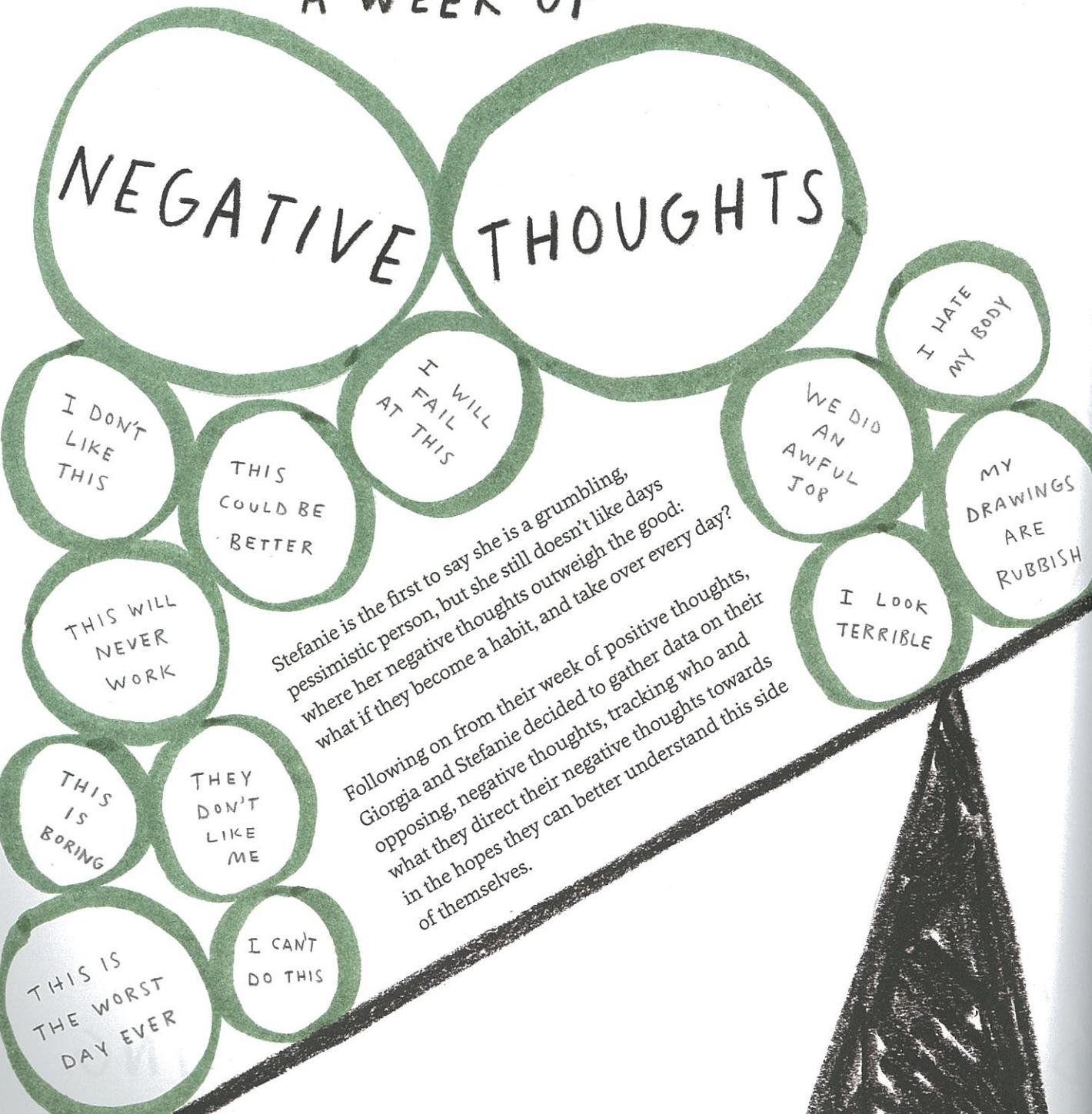
GIORGIA
wANTS TO
SEE A RAT



The only, unique, sole, unrepeated, once-in-a-life-time moment when you're happy to see a rat in New York.

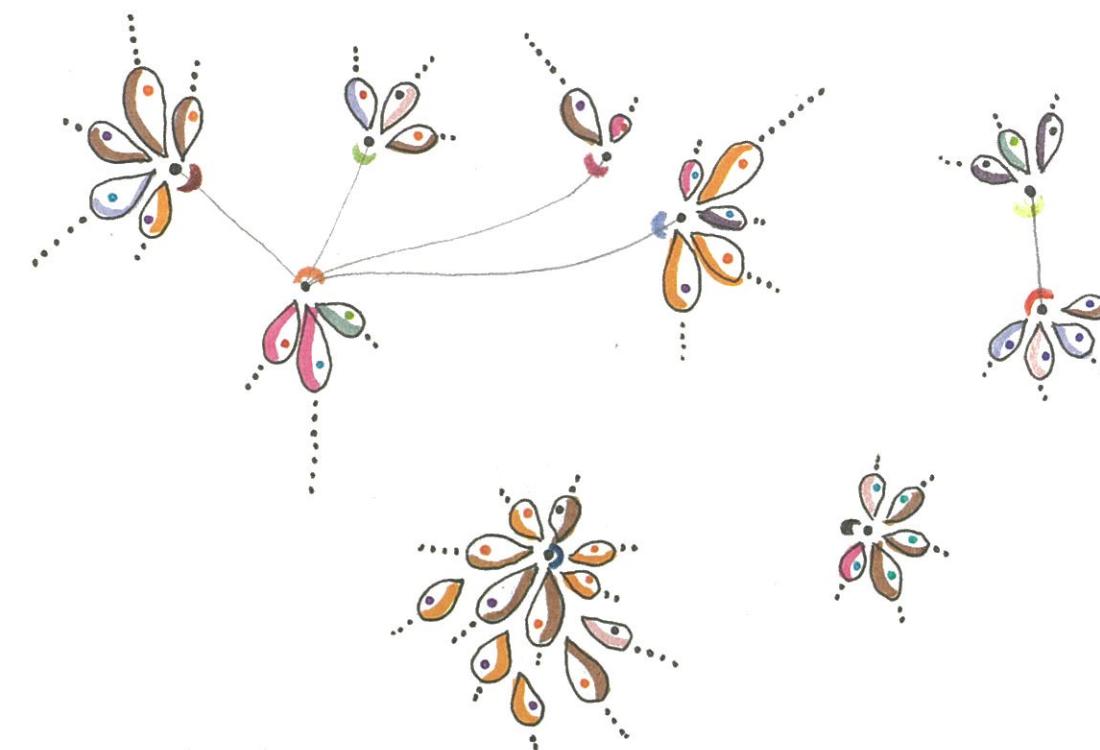
WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT

A WEEK OF



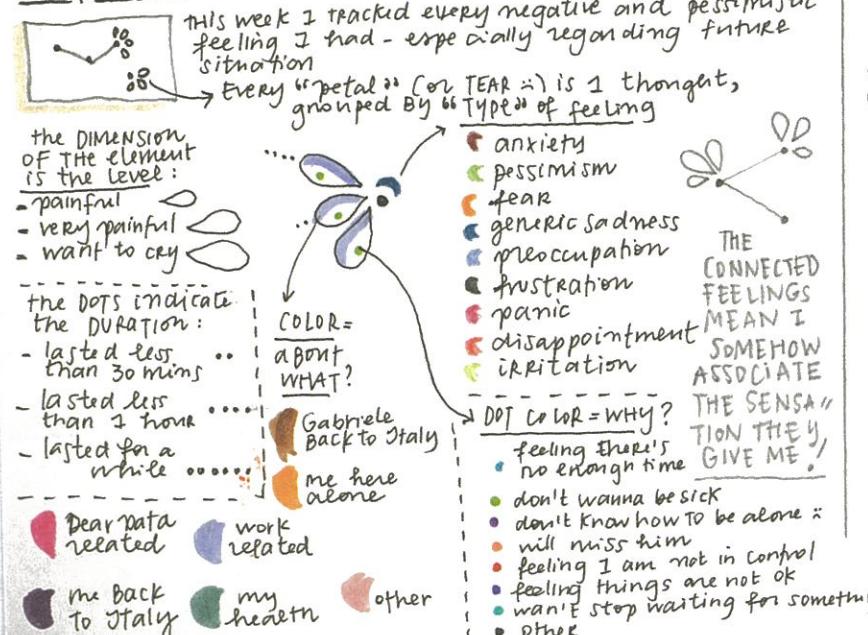
Stefanie is the first to say she is a grumbling, pessimistic person, but she still doesn't like days where her negative thoughts outweigh the good: what if they become a habit, and take over every day?

Following on from their week of positive thoughts, Giorgia and Stefanie decided to gather data on their opposing, negative thoughts, tracking who and what they direct their negative thoughts towards in the hopes they can better understand this side of themselves.



66 Dear Data WEEK 38 negative thoughts :

HOW TO READ IT?

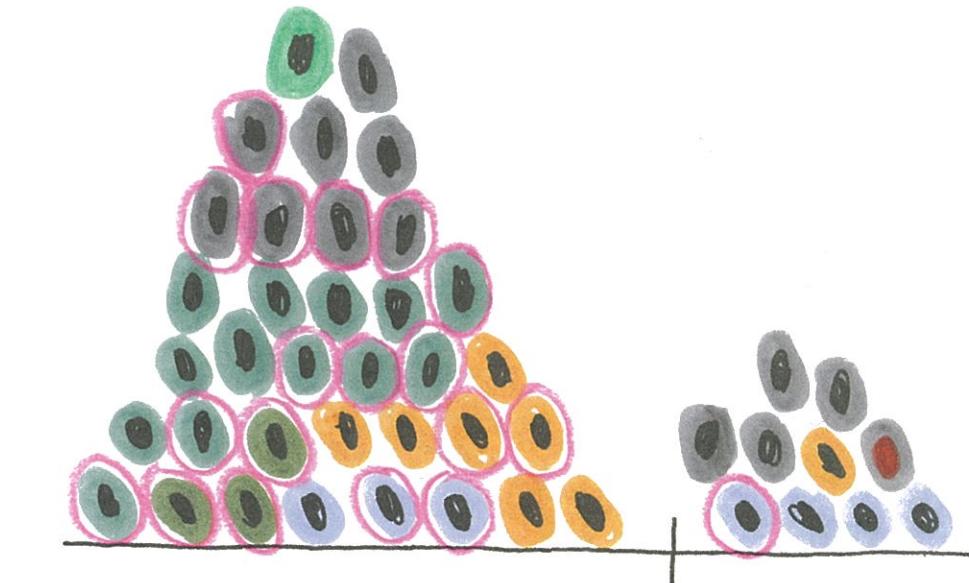


FROM:
GIORGIA LUPI
BROOKLYN
- NY -

NO STAMP!

SEND TO:
STEFANIE POSAVEC
LONDON
- UK -
ENGLAND

While trying to classify her negative feelings as they showed up, Giorgia found it incredibly hard to grasp them and discern the very reason she was feeling blue. This was the most insightful revelation of the week.

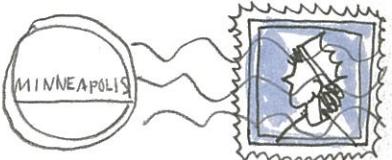
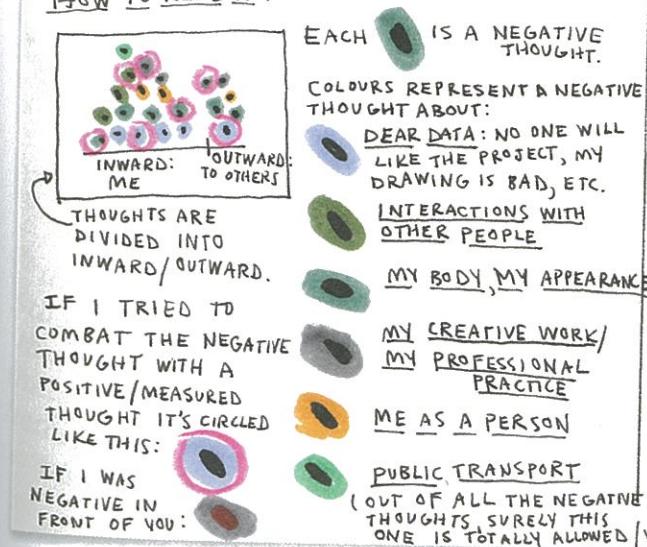


DEAR DATA - WEEK 38

A WEEK OF NEGATIVE THOUGHTS / PESSIMISM

ABOUT THE DATA: I TRACKED EVERY TIME I FELT NEGATIVE. TO COMBAT THE NEGATIVE FEELINGS I ALSO TRIED TO MAKE NOTE OF A MORE POSITIVE, MEASURED VIEW OF THE SITUATION THOUGH THIS WASN'T ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL.

HOW TO READ IT:



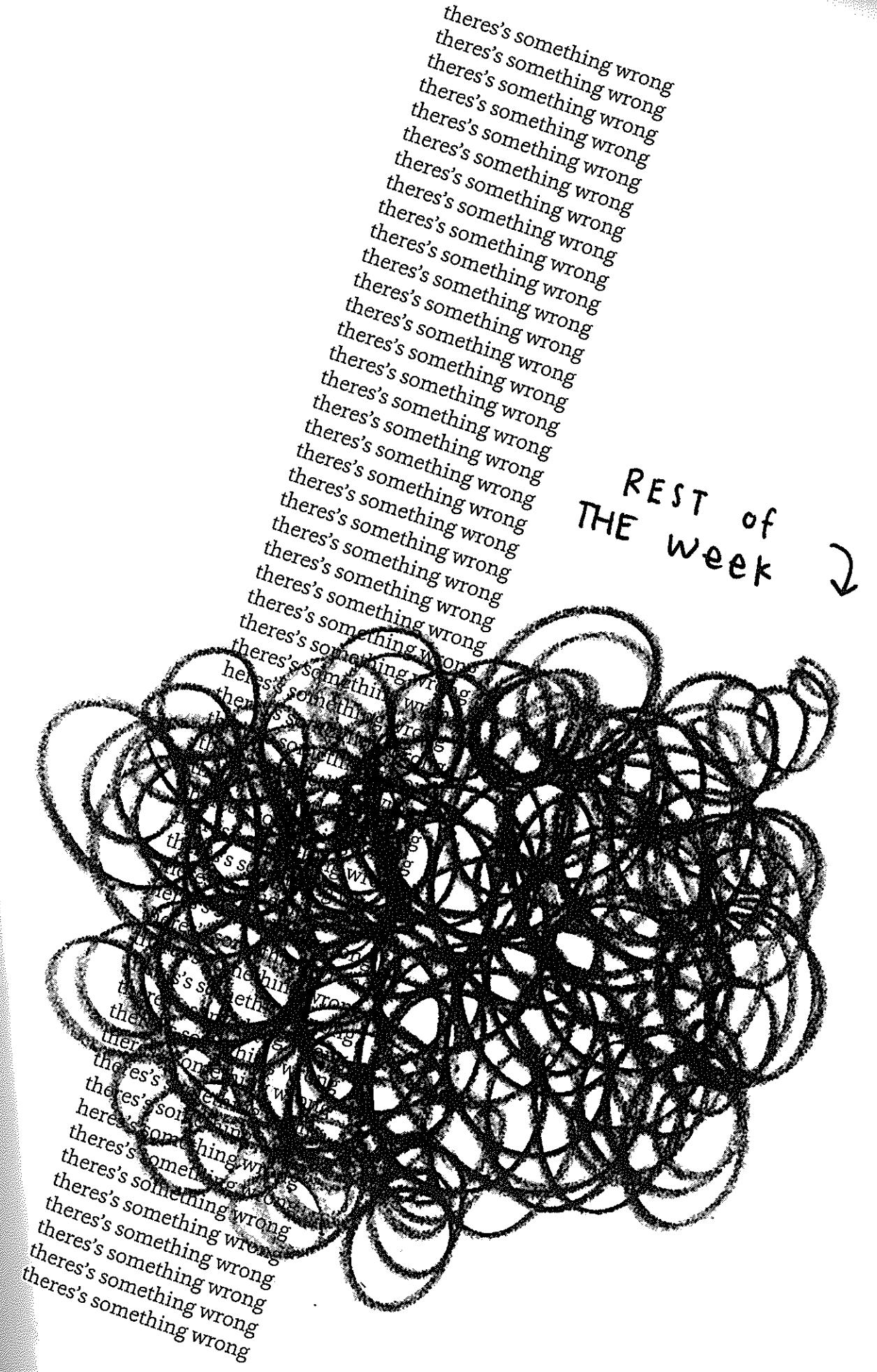
TO:
GIORGIA LUPI
BROOKLYN, NY
USA

SPECIAL IN-PERSON
DELIVERY!!!!

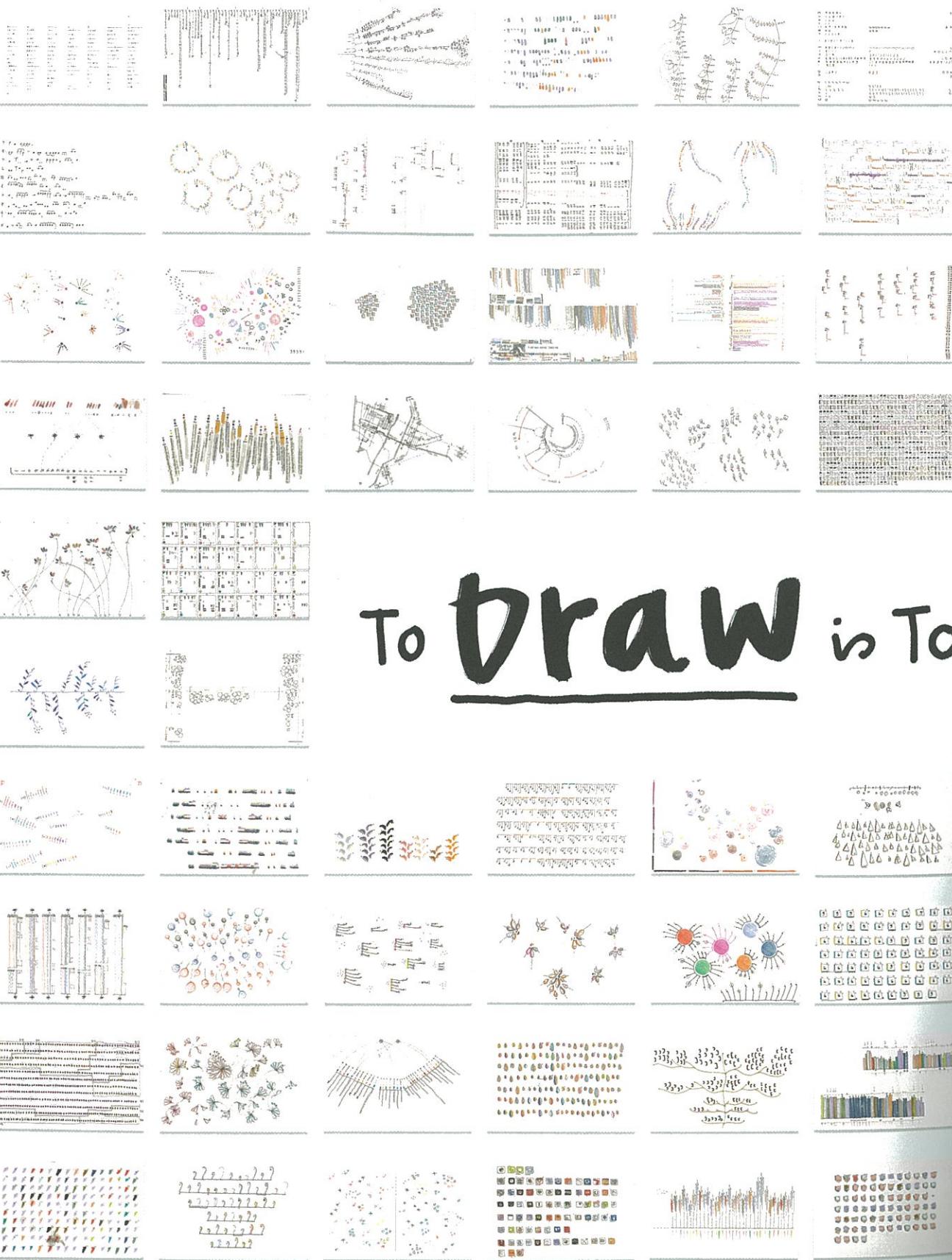
Stefanie created her drawing as a scale, to show whether her negative thoughts were weighed mainly towards herself, or towards others.

↑ GIORGIA'S
CLEARLY IDENTIFIABLE
TYPES of NEGATIVE
FEELINGS

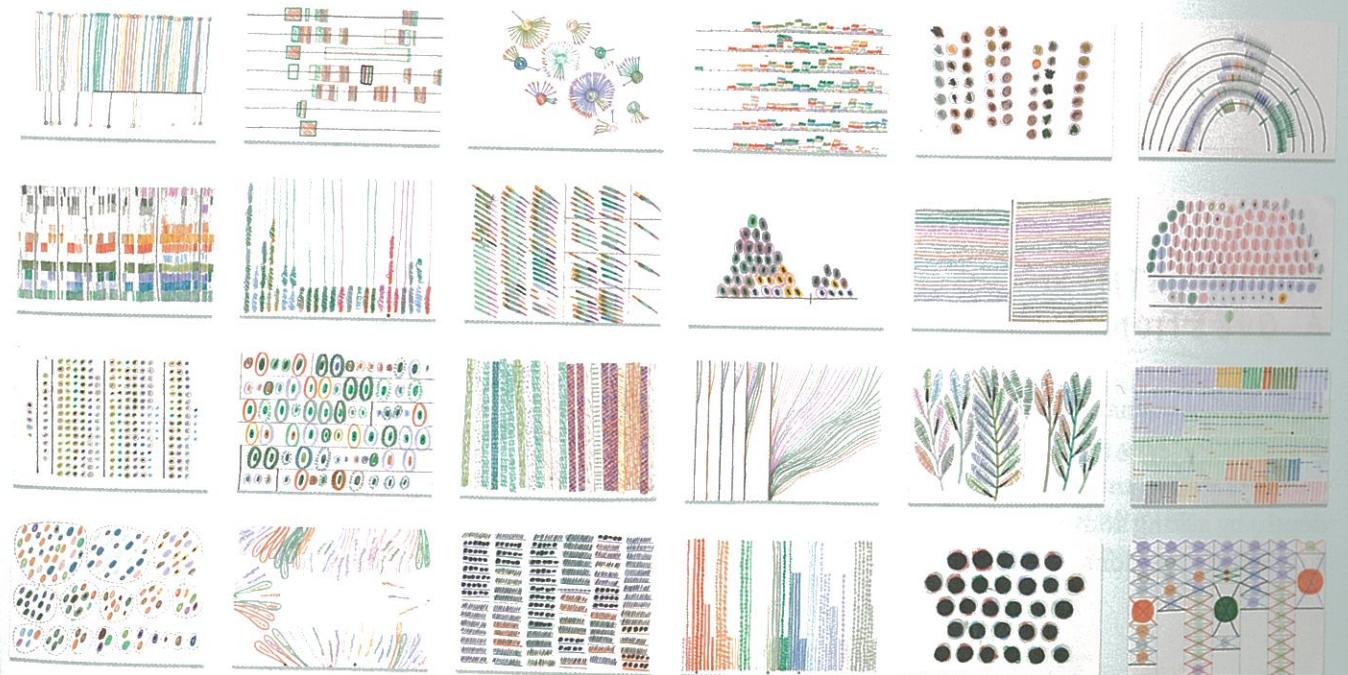
anxiety,
fear,
preoccupation,
frustration,
disappointment,
panic,
generic sadness,
pessimism.



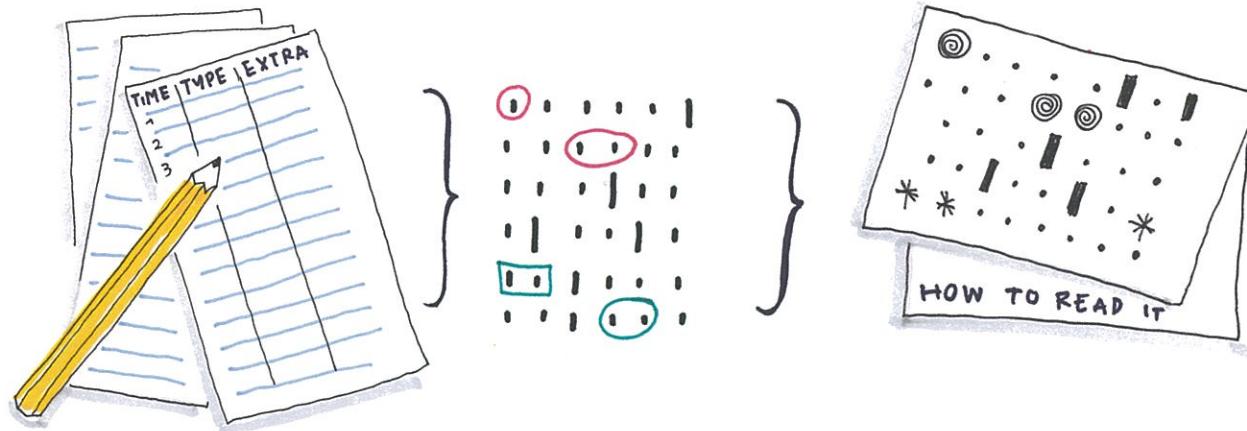
To draw is To



REMEMBER.

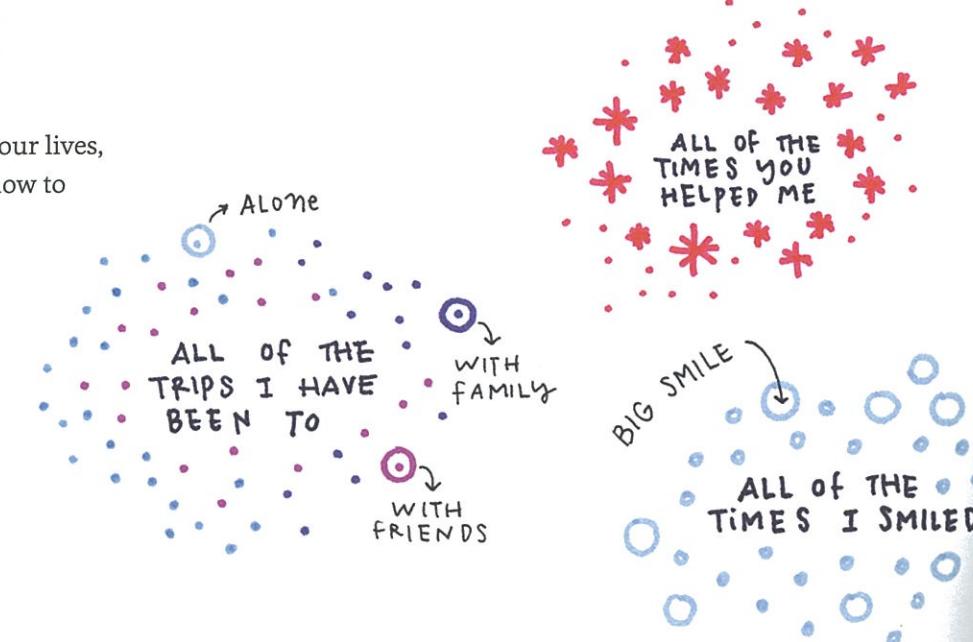


IT'S NOT THAT HARD!



SEE THE WORLD AS A DATA COLLECTOR

Data permeates our days and our lives, it's just a matter of learning how to recognize it.



BEGIN WITH A QUESTION

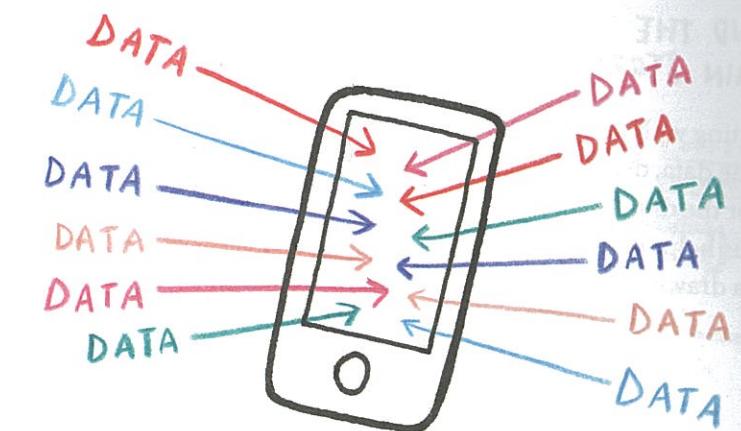
Begin with a primary question: what do you want to know and explore? Then enrich the data (and give the drawings depth) by asking additional smaller, contextual questions.

ALL OF THE TIMES I COMPLAIN:	
①	WHAT IS MY COMPLAINT ABOUT? > MAIN QUESTION
++	IS IT REALLY NECESSARY?
++	WHO DO I COMPLAIN TO?
++	WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT ME?
++	(...)

② ADDING FURTHER DETAILS AND CONTEXT.

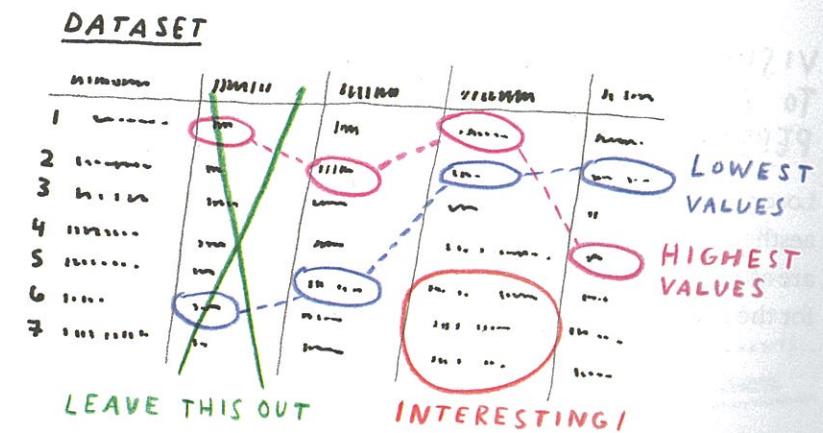
GATHER THE DATA

Thank goodness for modern technology: input manually-gathered data into note-taking or data-gathering apps on your phone, all the while being immediate, truthful, and consistent with your data-gathering.



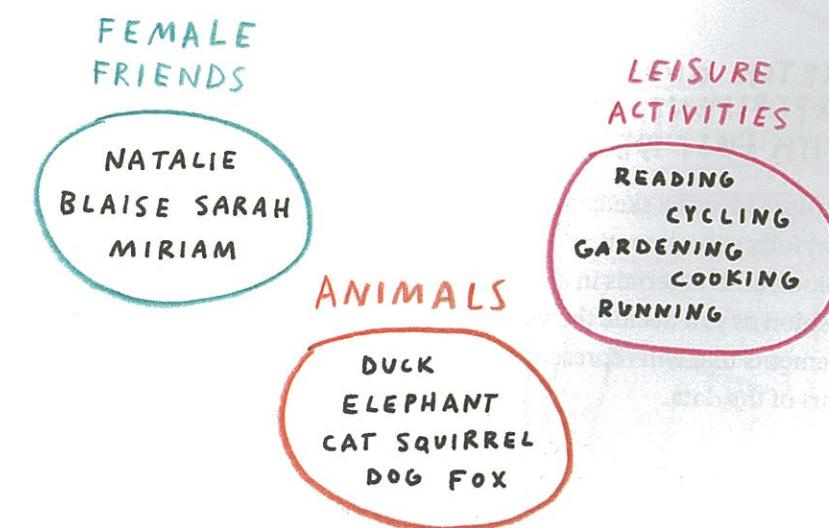
SPEND TIME WITH DATA

Before starting to visualize, always analyze and spend time with your data, searching for patterns and trying to understand it at a deeper level.



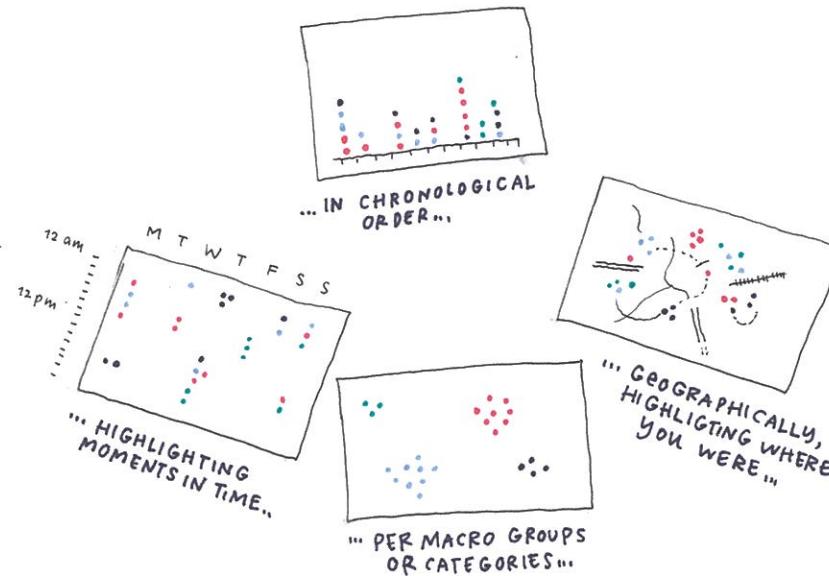
ORGANIZE AND CATEGORIZE

Often it's good to simplify the data by grouping it into larger categories based on what will best communicate the story.



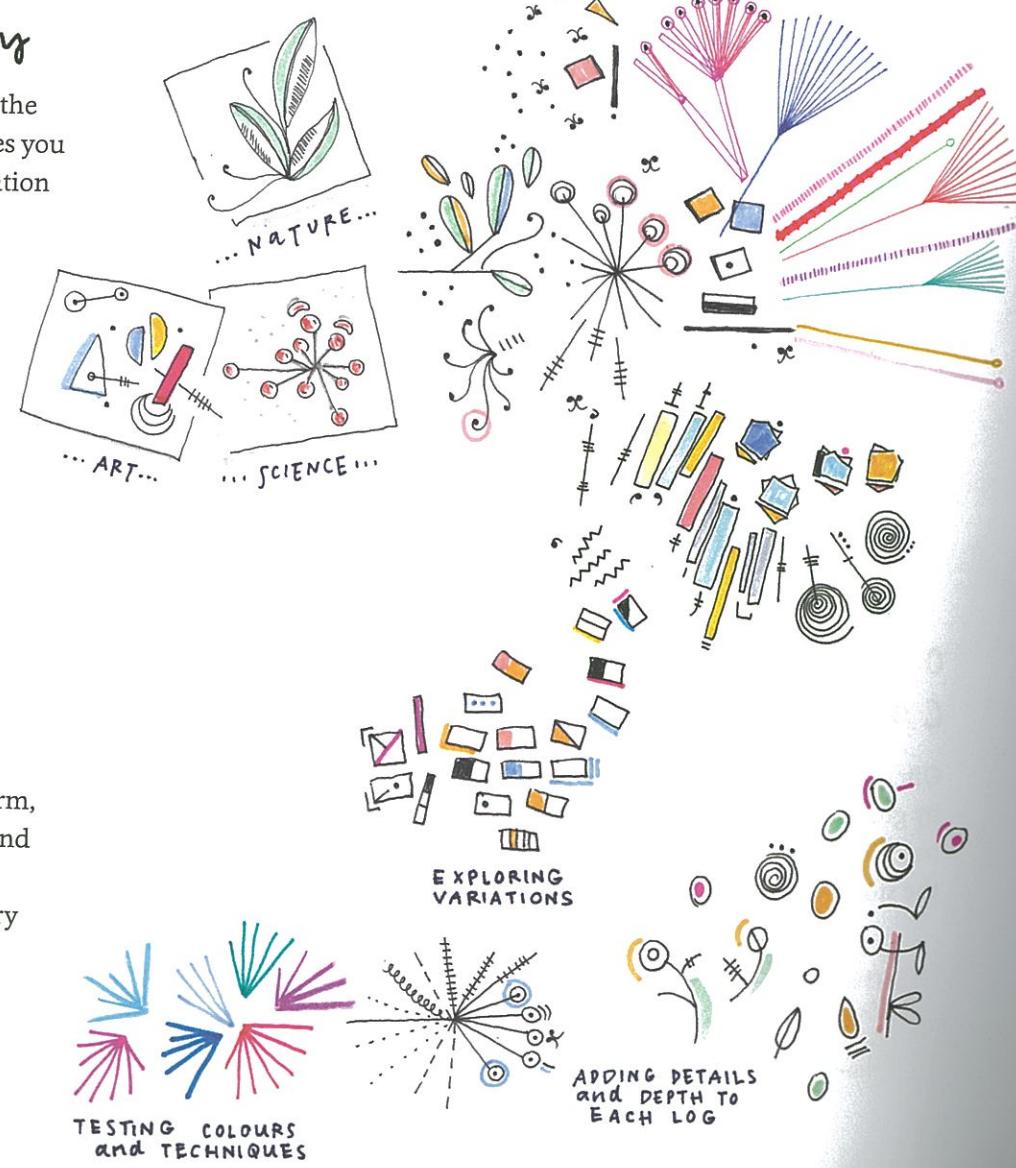
FIND THE MAIN STORY

Starting with the patterns discovered in the data, decide what the main story is for the drawing. Finding the data's focus helps decide the layout of a data drawing.



VISUAL INSPIRATION TO BUILD YOUR PERSONAL VOCABULARY

Lose yourself in images, using the aesthetic qualities of the features you are attracted to as visual inspiration for the drawing.

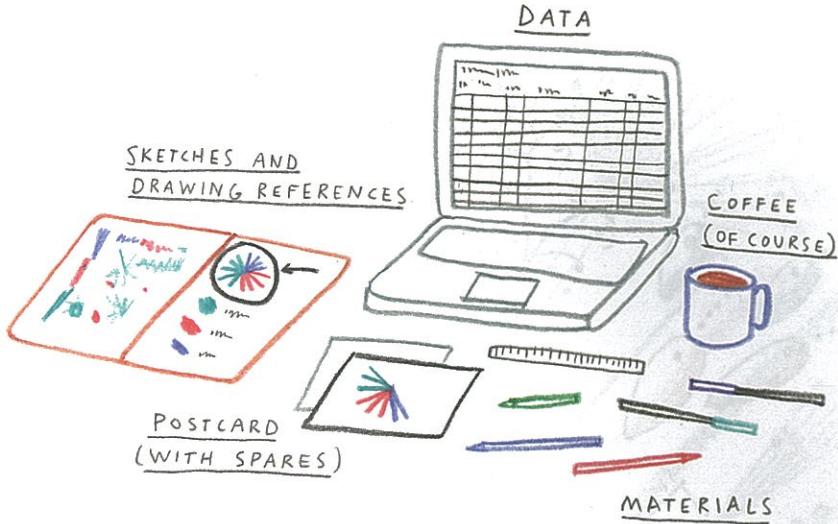


SKETCH AND EXPERIMENT WITH FIRST IDEAS

Explore ideas by sketching and playfully experimenting with form, colour, and materials in a freehand fashion as you decide the visual elements that will represent every part of the data.

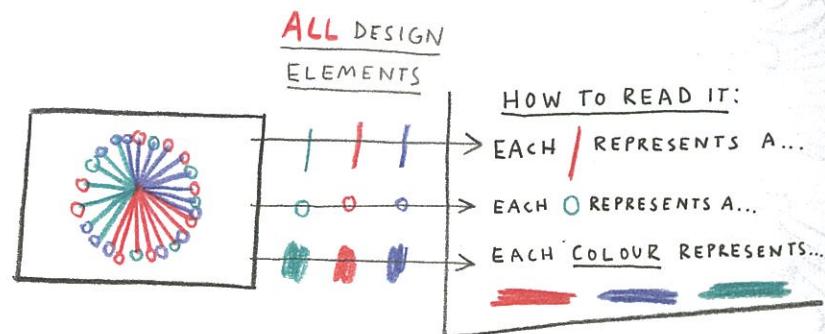
DRAW THE FINAL PICTURE

After sketching and testing ideas for a data-drawing, you'll find an approach that works. Then create your drawing, ensuring it includes all the tiny details, trying to make it as beautiful (and as understandable) as you can.



DRAW THE LEGEND

Creating a legend starts with a question: "What does someone need to read my data-drawing?" In the legend, every design element that represents data is listed so the recipient understands what everything means.



AND FINALLY,
SEND IT ON
ITS WAY!

