

B E A M S O N E



SOUL

a digital zine on
creative struggle.

beam(s) [beem]:

- rigid member subject to bending stresses.
- line of light that shines from a bright object.

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KYLE McDougall

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CONTEMPORARY
LANDSCAPE
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For about 10 years, I focused purely on this very traditional landscape kind of photography — that was what I was known as, and what I knew myself as. But my interest in that kind of photography started diminishing, and there's probably a full year where I wasn't quite passionate about creating and shooting stuff.

So there came a point in 2017 where I went on a trip, by myself, and shot some pictures in the east coast of Canada, and I just totally bailed, basically bailed on the shoot — and that's when I decided, okay, I'm going to take a turn. I'm going to change things.

And that kind of coincided with a big trip that me and my wife were planning, where we sold our house, and bought a truck and trailer, and went traveling throughout America for about 10 months.

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I had travelled to some of these areas in the past, for some of the work that I was doing. But now, as we went across North America, travelling across these areas for such a lengthy amount of time, and just seeing these things repeated, you know, like, abandoned spaces, very similar to one another — I was very shocked by what I was seeing.

When you think of America, the picture that is usually painted of America, you think of the big cities, Los Angeles and what-not, and there's just so many wide open, empty spaces — that have, you know, these little towns kind of dotted all over, in the middle of these giant landscapes.

Everywhere I went, it kind of reminded me of how fast time moves.

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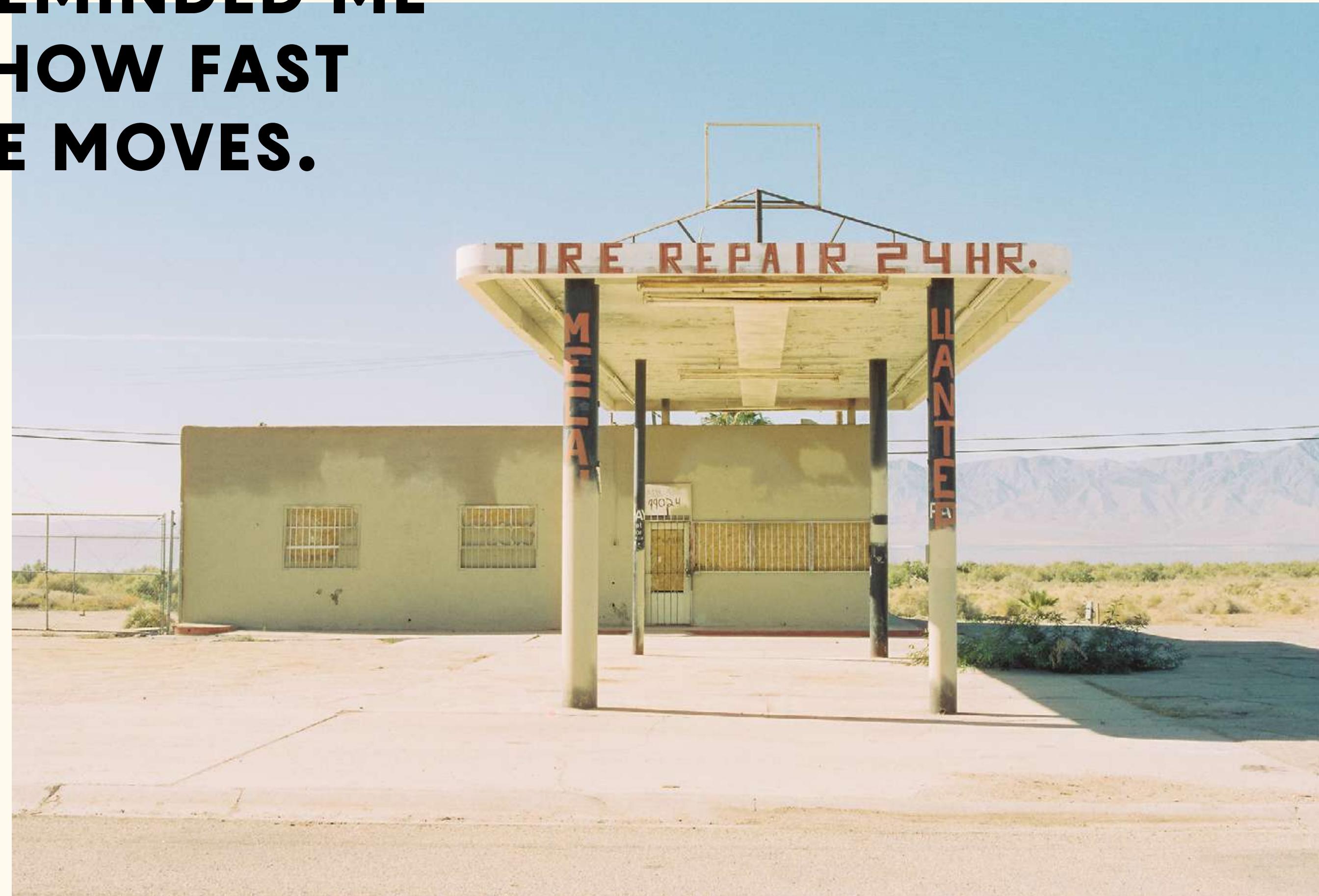
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**EVERYWHERE I WENT,
IT REMINDED ME
OF HOW FAST
TIME MOVES.**

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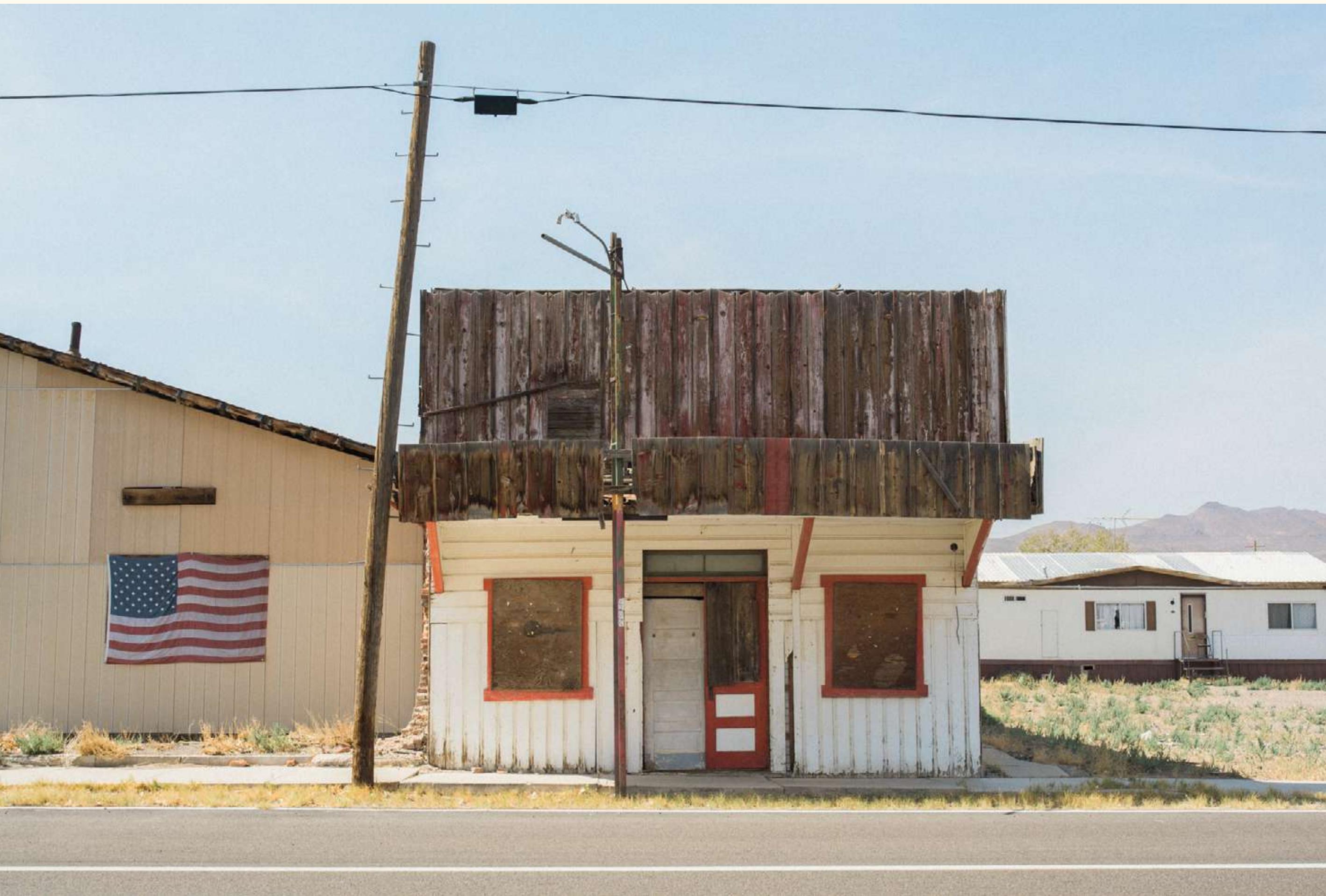
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The more we visited different places, and the more we learnt the story behind them, I started to understand a little better why a lot of these places are the way they are nowadays.

Sometimes it was as simple as, there was a town, and the main road that goes through it used to be the main highway, but now an interstate was built, you know, a mile away, and diverted traffic completely, and that alone was enough to kill these towns.

You know, it's easy to look at these specific buildings, or these places that I photograph, and kind of, see them as nothing more than a crumbling façade, but 30-40 years ago, these places were businesses owned by someone, or some other thing, that people were excited about, that people put their time and energy into.

And now they're sitting there, silently.



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You know, people can romanticize the past, and how things worked, and romanticize that mindset. But in reality, things are always changing.

And, you know, things grow, things die and whatnot, and photography, for example, has become way more accessible, way more talked about, people can get their work out there way easier.

Now there's a lot of competition out there, because there's a ton of people out there doing it, and so, from a creative standpoint, you know, comparing yourself with others, it's something that's incredibly hard not to do. For everyone.

You're surrounded by all this amazing work, and all this amazing people, but you don't know the whole story, you only know what you see and the narrative that you have in your own head.

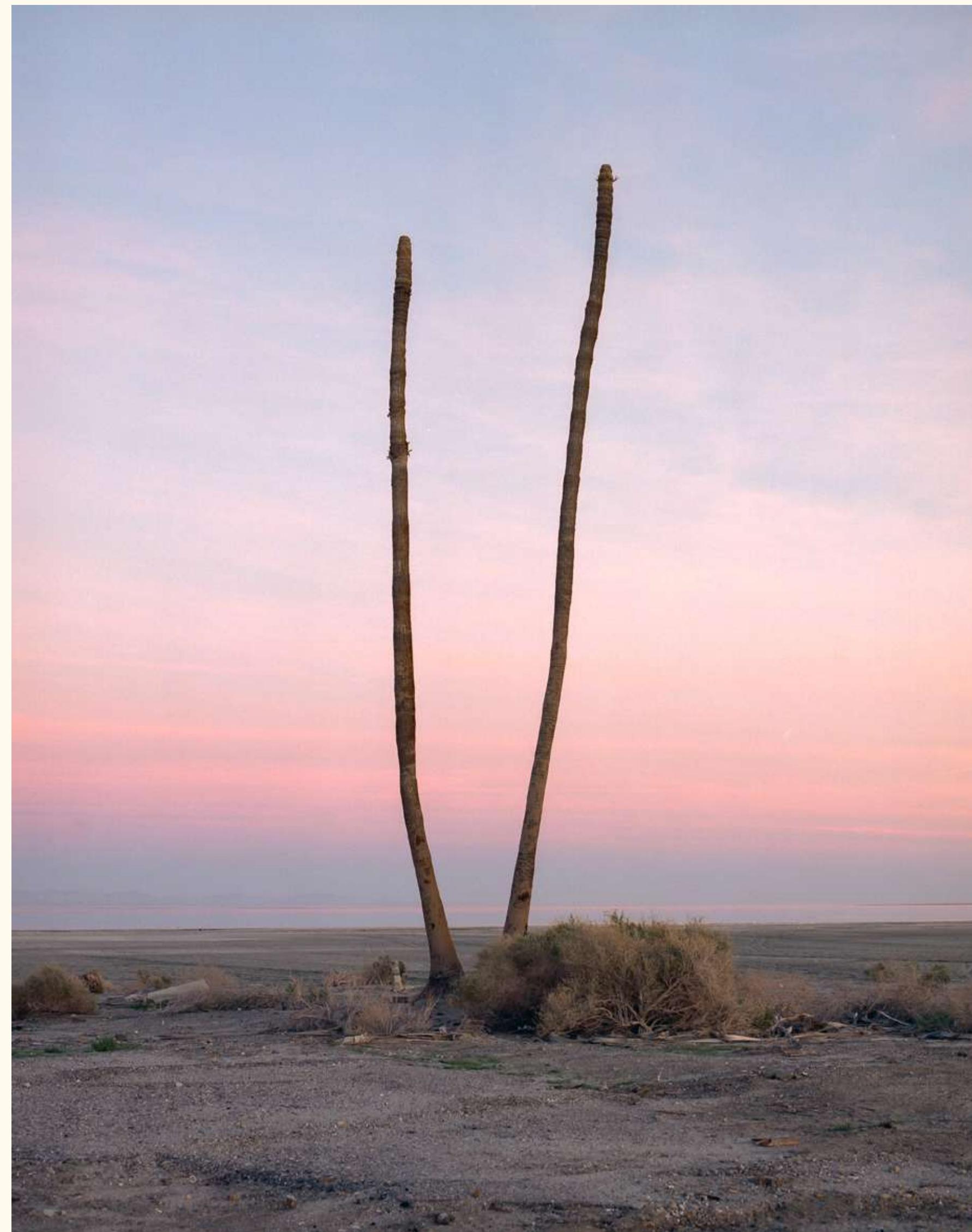
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No one is operating without a bunch of bullshit. I think that the biggest thing is understanding that like, this is how it is.

There's always going to be points where I burn out, there's always going to be points where I'm creating stuff and I'm not happy with it, there's always going to be points where I'm not driven or motivated to go create, or question my abilities, or all these things.

I wish I could go out every single time and create work and be super pumped on it, but I think that it's just not, it's not how it goes. No matter how much experience you have, how good your gear is, how long you've been doing it.



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Part of the process isn't just your technical ability and your experience, part of it is like, the mental game, you know?

Now that I've been doing this for a long period of time, I know that that's just how it is. And it doesn't go away. The biggest thing is just to keep creating, right? It's like, don't stop.

If you stop creating, and you stop making stuff, you're never going to get past that point.

**NO ONE IS OPERATING
WITHOUT
A BUNCH
OF BULLSHIT.**

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As a photographer, as anybody who is working with a creative endeavour, I think it's not just about the image, it's about everything, right? Creativity is a whole, you know? It's not just subject matter.

There's something about using a camera that's like 60 years old, you know, that has a lens that maybe doesn't have the newest, greatest technology on it, or detail. There's just this charm to the equipment that I really enjoy. And I'd like to help anyone that's interested in it, to learn as much as they can.

I really enjoy the process of working with film, just kind of slowing down, and thinking about what you're shooting, and being a little bit more deliberate, because you only have a certain amount of shots, like, it's costing you money, real money. And then, it also just has a... charm to it, I find, working analogically, compared to digital. It's almost as if the images have a little more life or character to them.

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I think that a lot of people forget that everyone just enjoys and is interested in different things, and a lot of times in creative worlds like photography, people can really get honed in this way in which you think, and then criticize those that think differently, and that's just insane.

I think everyone should use what they enjoy the most, and that's a big thing with photography that I try to talk about a lot. I don't use analog because it's better — for one, it's way more expensive, compared to digital, and there's a learning curve, where a lot of your work might not turn out, because you're making mistakes.

I would never go to someone and say, why are you using digital? You need film. Right? Digital is shit, or whatever. That's just stupid.

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When I made that shift over creating this type of work, I thought people would hate it. I was so used to creating in a different way!

And funny enough, since I followed this kind of path that revealed this new interest, I've seen the biggest growth in interest in my work since I started in photography. So you know, something that I felt that people were gonna hate, they ended up really enjoying it.

And I'm sure there are multiple things factoring that, but I do think that a big part of is just, me as an artist really just pushing the kind of work that just interests me, and doing things in a unique way. I think that would be the biggest piece of advice, is just, you know, follow what truly interests you. As hard as that can be at times,

I think that's the most important thing a photographer can do, regardless of how you think it's going to be received, and whatever you think people's opinion is going to be.



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**FOLLOW WHAT
TRULY INTERESTS YOU.
AS HARD AS
THAT CAN BE.**



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WEBSITE:

KYLEMCDOUGALLPHOTO.COM

INSTAGRAM:

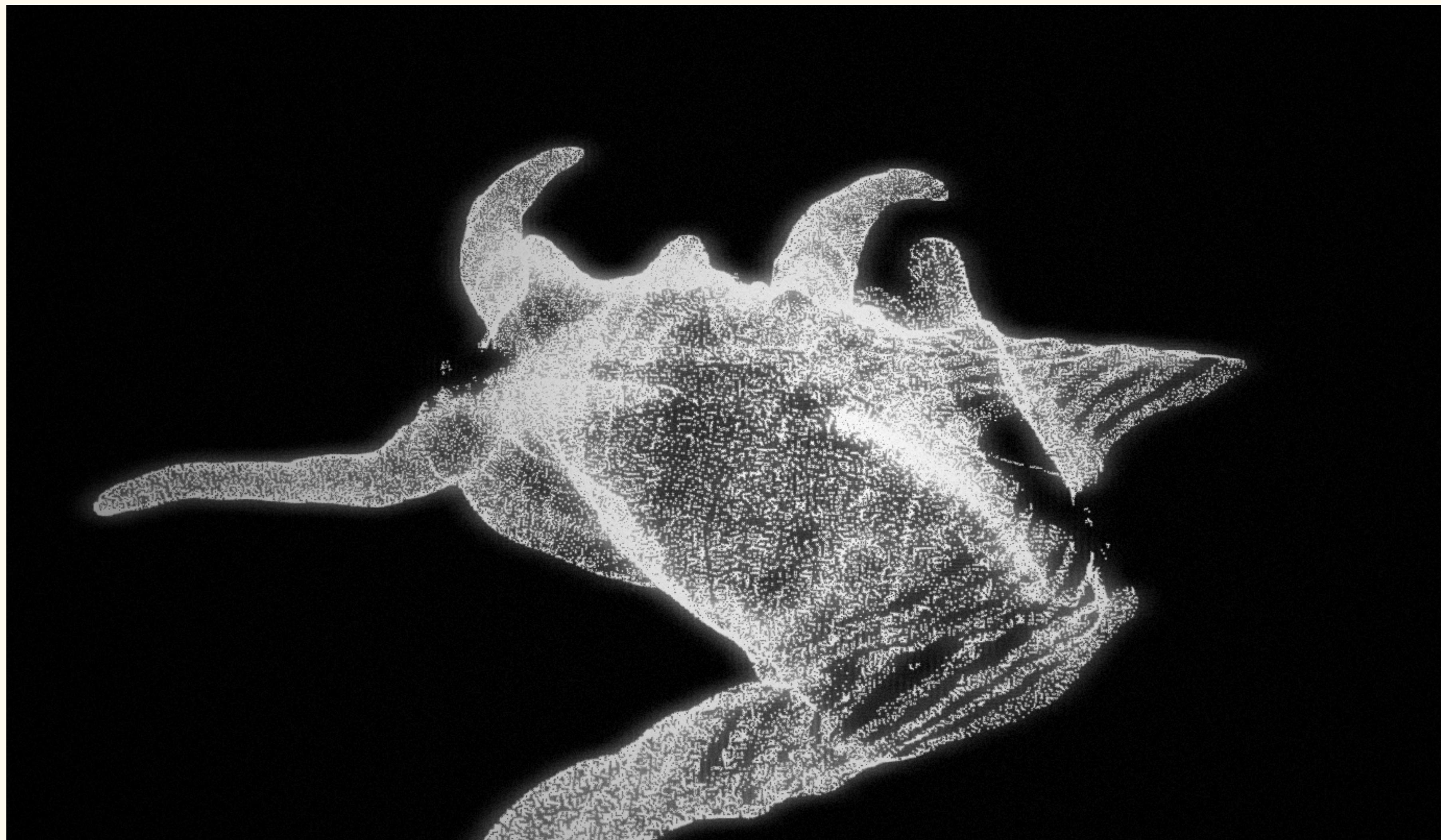
@KYLE_MCDOUGALL

YOUTUBE:

/KYLEMCDOUGALL

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**R O U H U N F A N
F L O W E N**

**N O M A D M A K E R
& D E V E L O P E R**

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Professionally, I guess I could call myself a kind of user interface developer. That's how I sell myself to companies. That's what I understand.

I've been doing front end development for like 8, 9, 10 years, I can't even remember; but at some point, my passion kind of ran dry. I was working for five years in this Dutch design studio, and after that, I had a burnout.



I just, I started questioning everything. Everything that I did, everything in life. I was like, why am I doing this, why am I working here? I had all of these things — I had a girlfriend, and a house, but I wasn't really happy. It was like, I had the whole package that society wants you to have, but I wasn't happy.



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So I decided to just take the plunge: I rented my house, and I started traveling, for a year. And while I was traveling, I started to meet these people in Bali, that were traveling and working at the same time.

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I learned that you could get a job and work remotely; but I wanted to be a freelancer. So I started out by working as a freelancer back in Holland, after getting back, and basically, the work paid me so well, that I could work three to four months there, and then just fly off and spend the rest of the year in Asia.

I realized that basically, to gain time, I had to work less. That was my magic formula (laughs). So, I realized that, over here, these countries were so cheap, that it meant I didn't have to work so much, which meant more free time. And that's how I did it, for a couple of years.

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At some point, however, I realized that what I was doing wasn't really remote working, you know? I had to come back home, eventually, to earn some real money. So I realized that, what I really wanted was to find clients that'd allow me to stay in Asia, full time.

And most businesses have problems with that, because it's like, well, we never met, so how could I trust you? I guess we're still humans, and everyone still wants to see who these other humans are, before they do business with them.

Right now, I have a list of these clients, but that took a while. The few clients that I do have, which are all mostly small businesses, we met through a friend or some old colleague, or they know my reputation, so I had a jumpstart in getting them to trust me.

Having a network is really important, to promote you, and to ease the process of getting clients; which is, by far, the most important part.

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**I had the
whole
package
that society
wants you
to have,
but I
wasn't
happy.**

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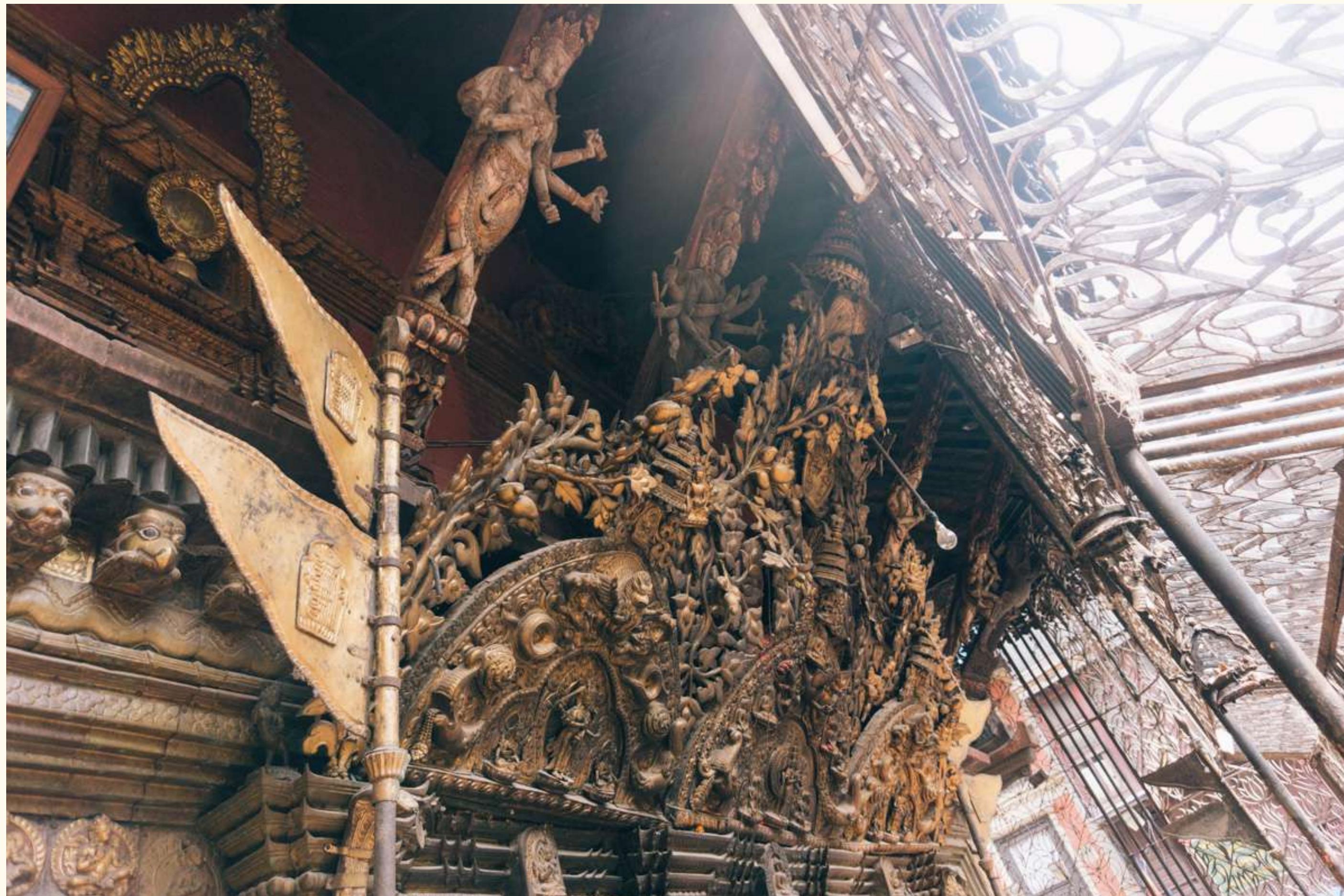


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Travelling constantly also means that it's hard to make friends. Having a relationship is also really hard, of course. Last year, I contracted an infection in the bowels — there are a lot of countries that have big problems with hygiene. Those are only some of the challenges of travelling full time.

And for the benefits: adventure is one, of course. Every day is different, every country is different, everywhere you go is different, you meet a lot of different people. Right now, I have a girlfriend: we've been together for two years, and we've been travelling nonstop together. And we've faced a lot of challenges; but, in the end, that's what's brought us close together.

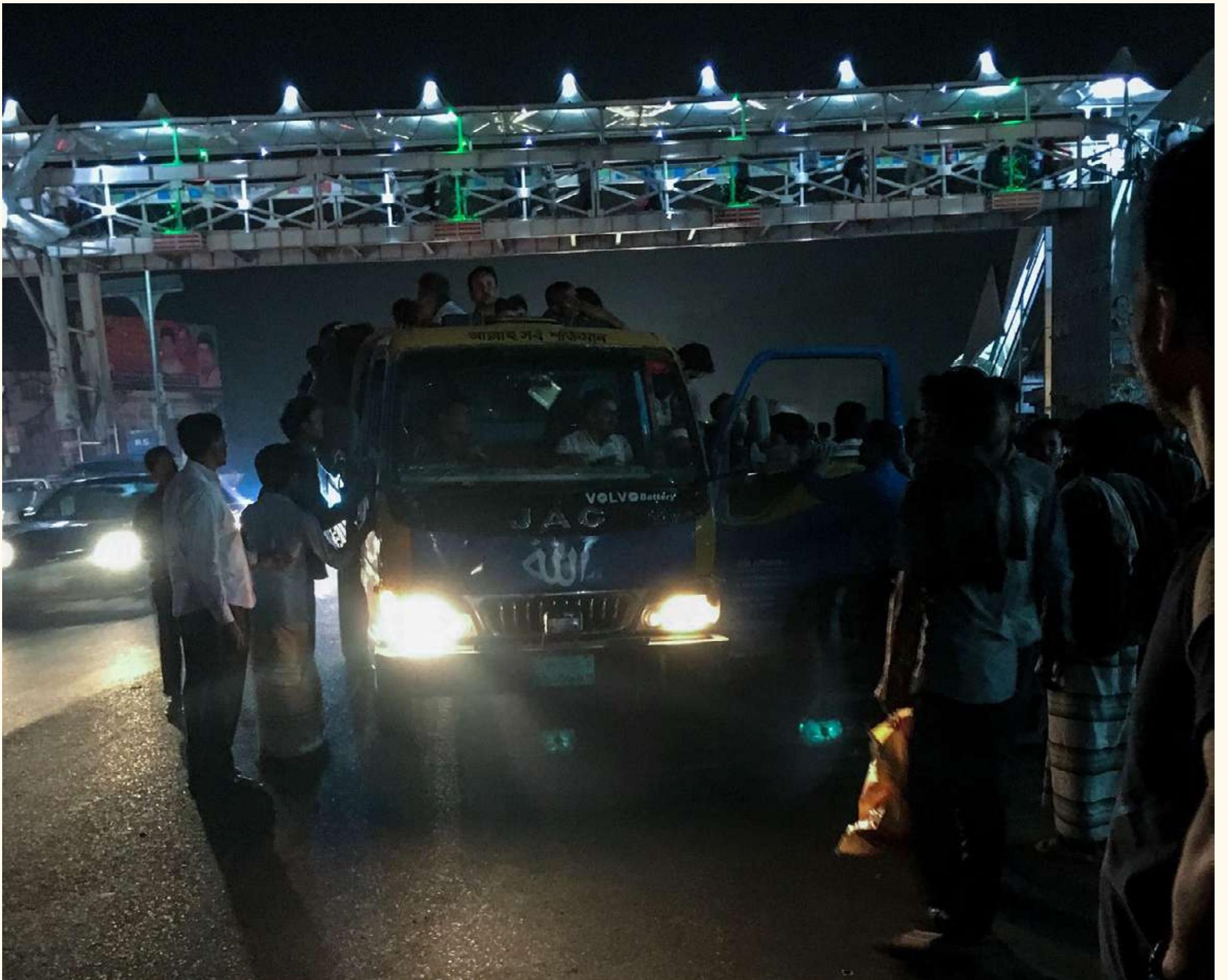


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When I started travelling, I also started a blog. I was already writing before that, but always privately, just for myself. Just, all of these questions that I had in my head, like, why is this like so? Why is that so? It was more of a personal development thing.

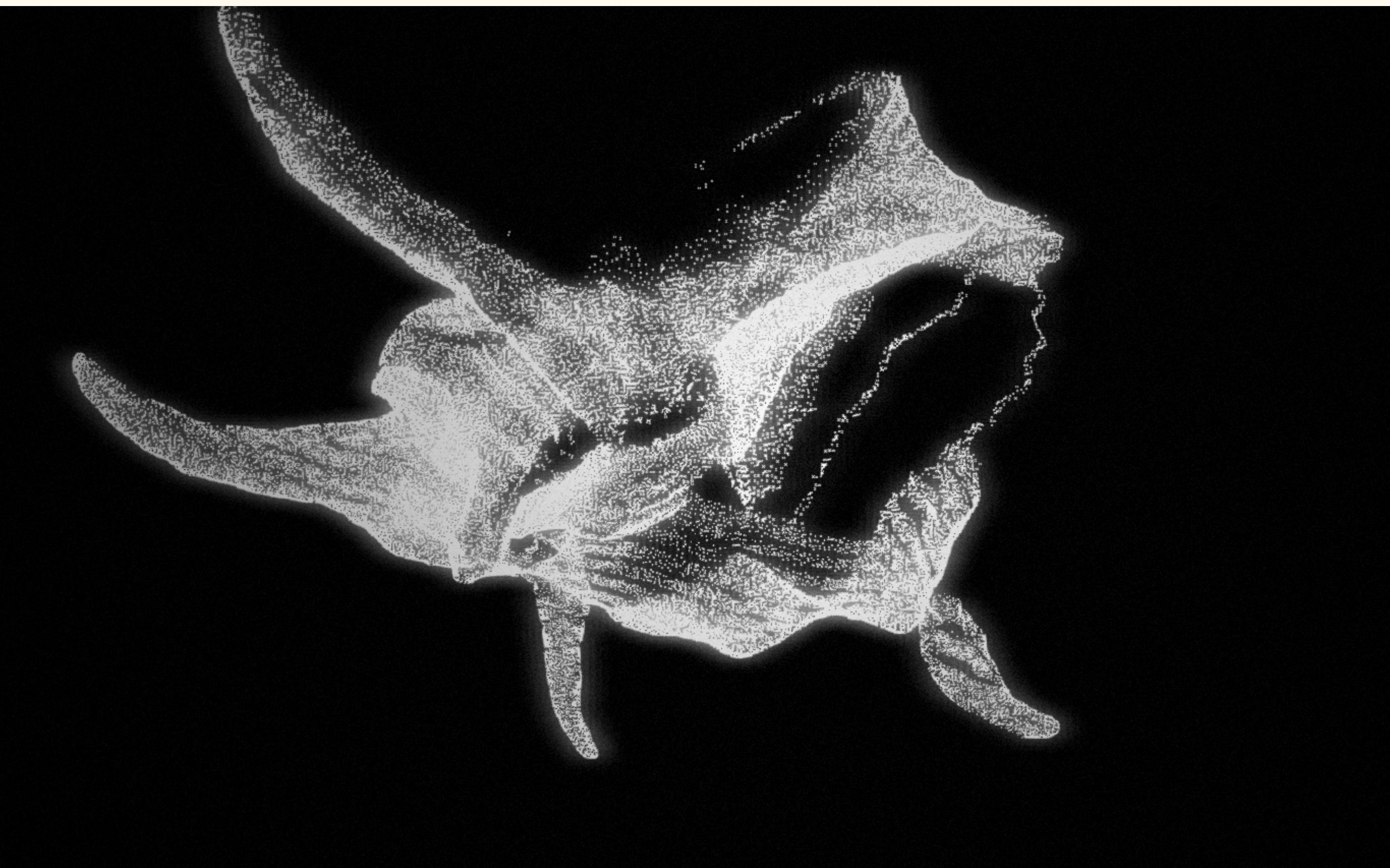
I also did a workshop in Germany, something with creative coding, I think, and that just sparked a new interest in that, so I just started creating these little sketches — I always loved techno, you know, techno music, I used to go to clubs and stuff. So I said, hey, I could combine this, you know? And just, I tried to experiment a little, and I said, yeah, I'd like to make this professionally.

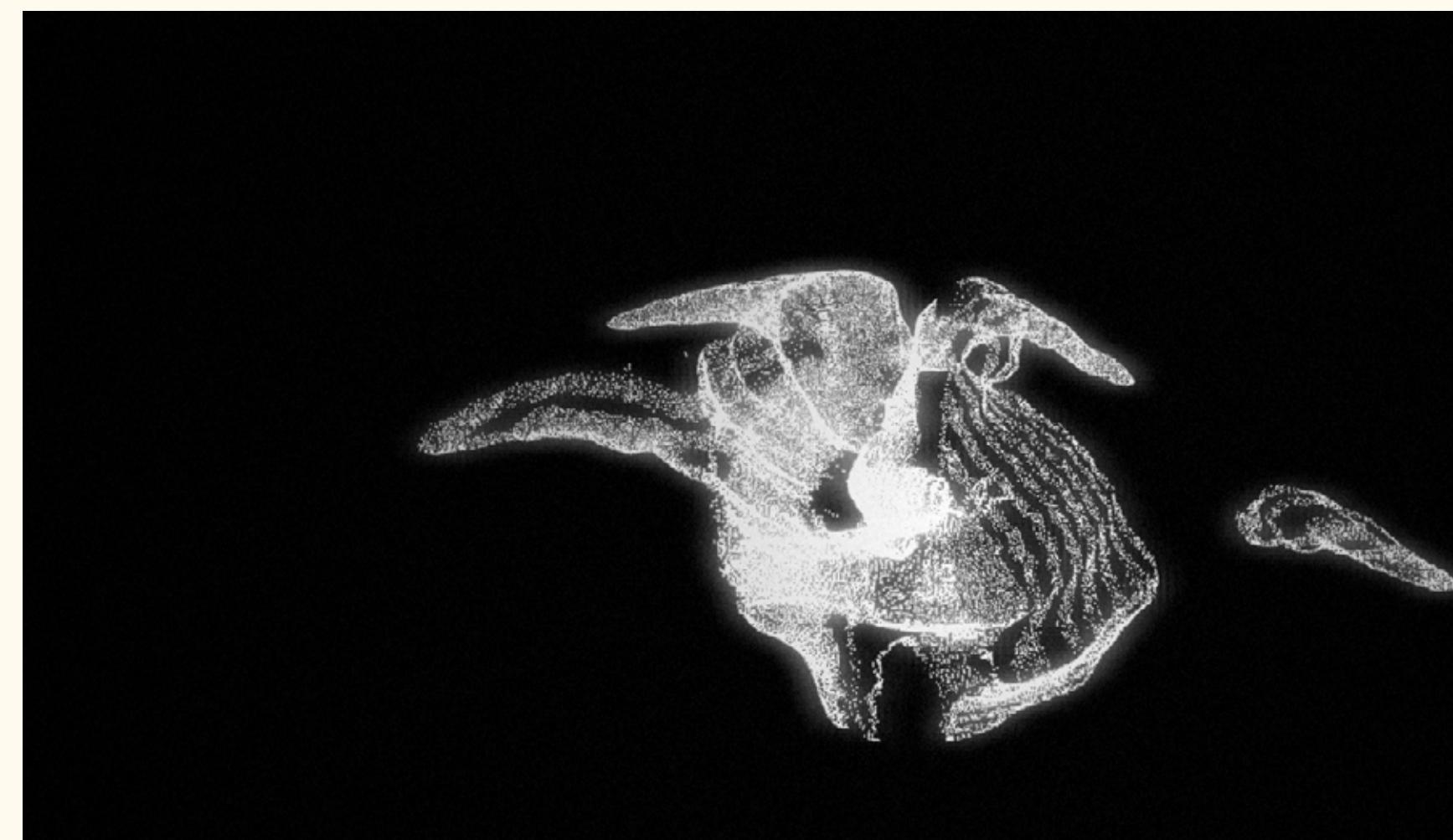
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Because everybody has this thing — you know, who wouldn't want their hobbies to become their job? But the problem is that I was not earning any money with it. Or I couldn't find any clients with it. So I scraped it.

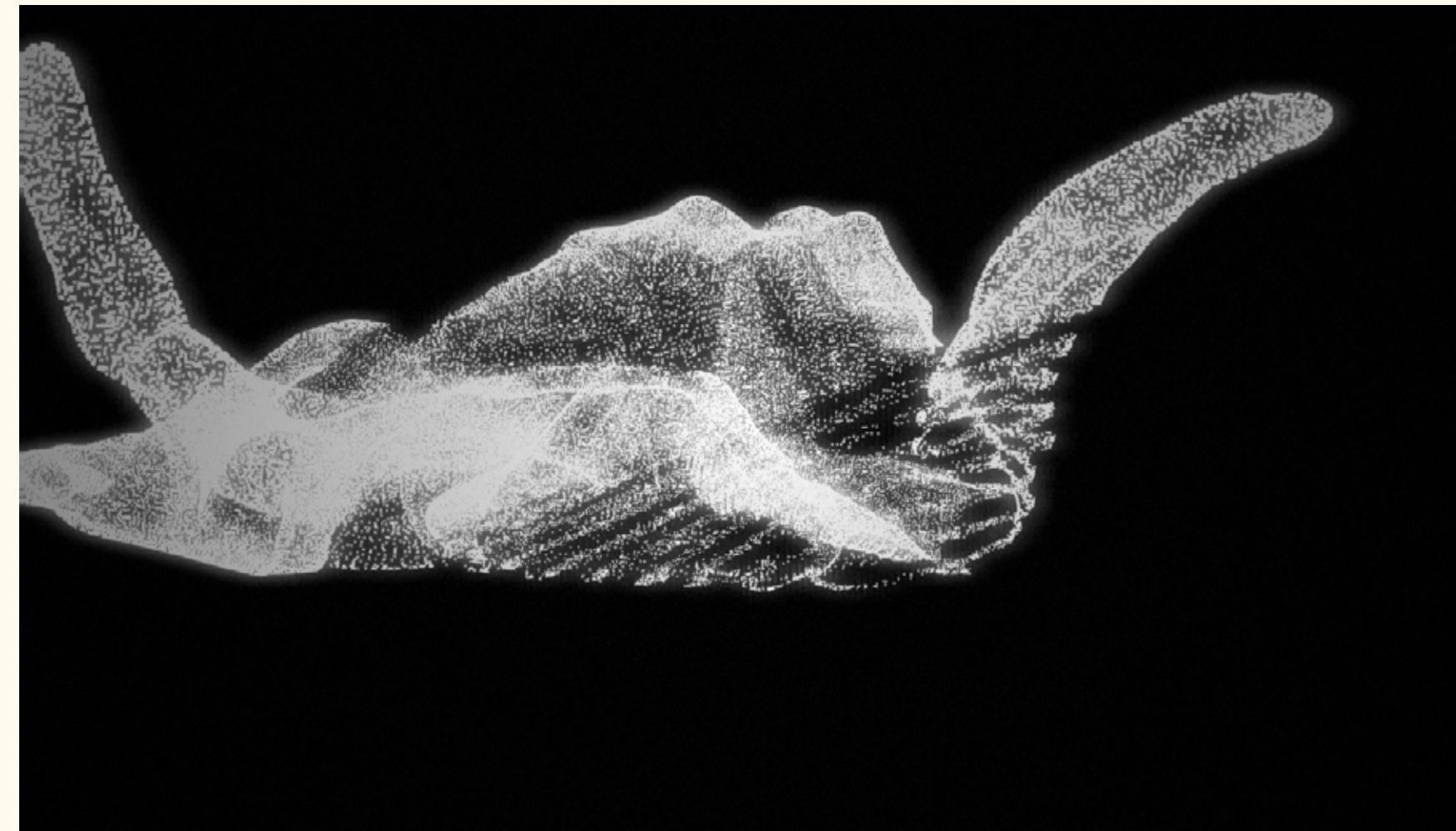
But I had to try.

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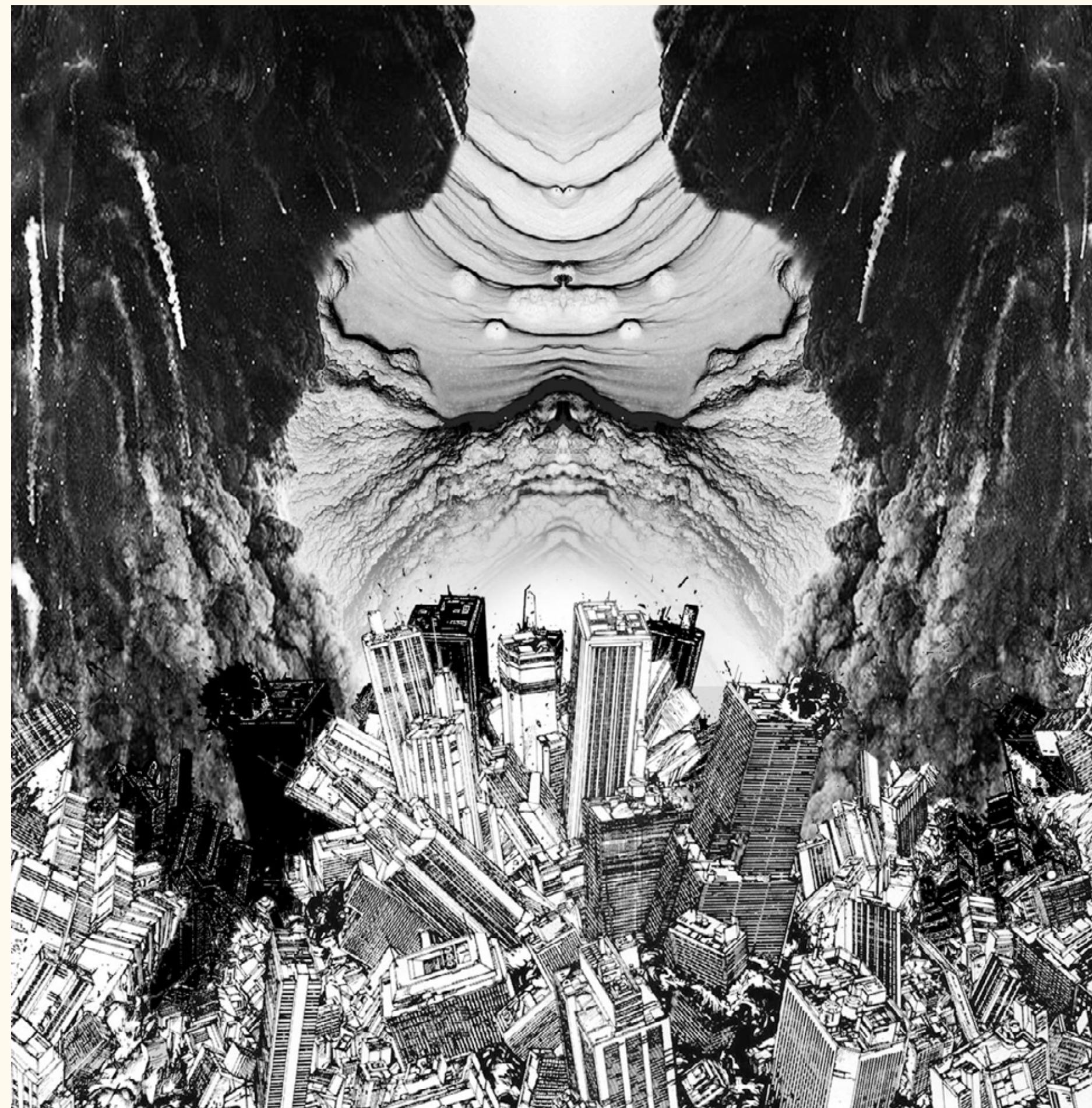




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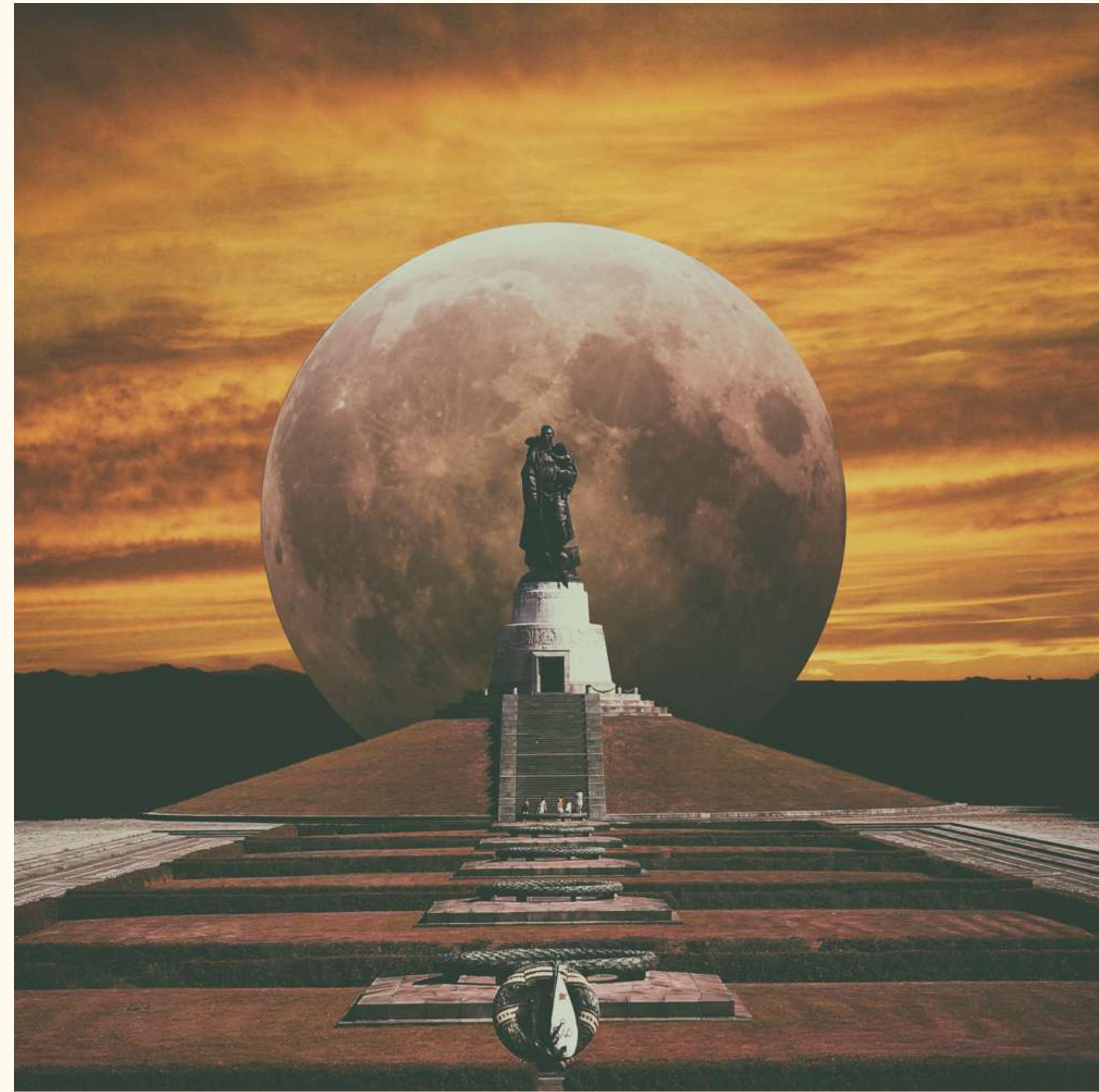
Personally, I really just love to learn. I don't know, I get so addicted to learning stuff, especially on the internet. I just can't stop learning, but I think that I should practice it more, instead of just absorbing and absorbing every day.

My girlfriend realized that I had this problem, and she was like, you always said that you'd love to write a book, right? So I'm going to give you this challenge: you'll have to write a book in a month — and if you don't do it, you'll have to pay me a thousand dollars.

When you're trying to do something new, it's like going into a new country: your brain is just trying to resist. You feel this fear, this anxiety, all of these reactions, that make you feel uncomfortable.

And trying to master that — that's the key to learning new things. You have to get comfortable with that.

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**when you try
something new,
your brain resists.**

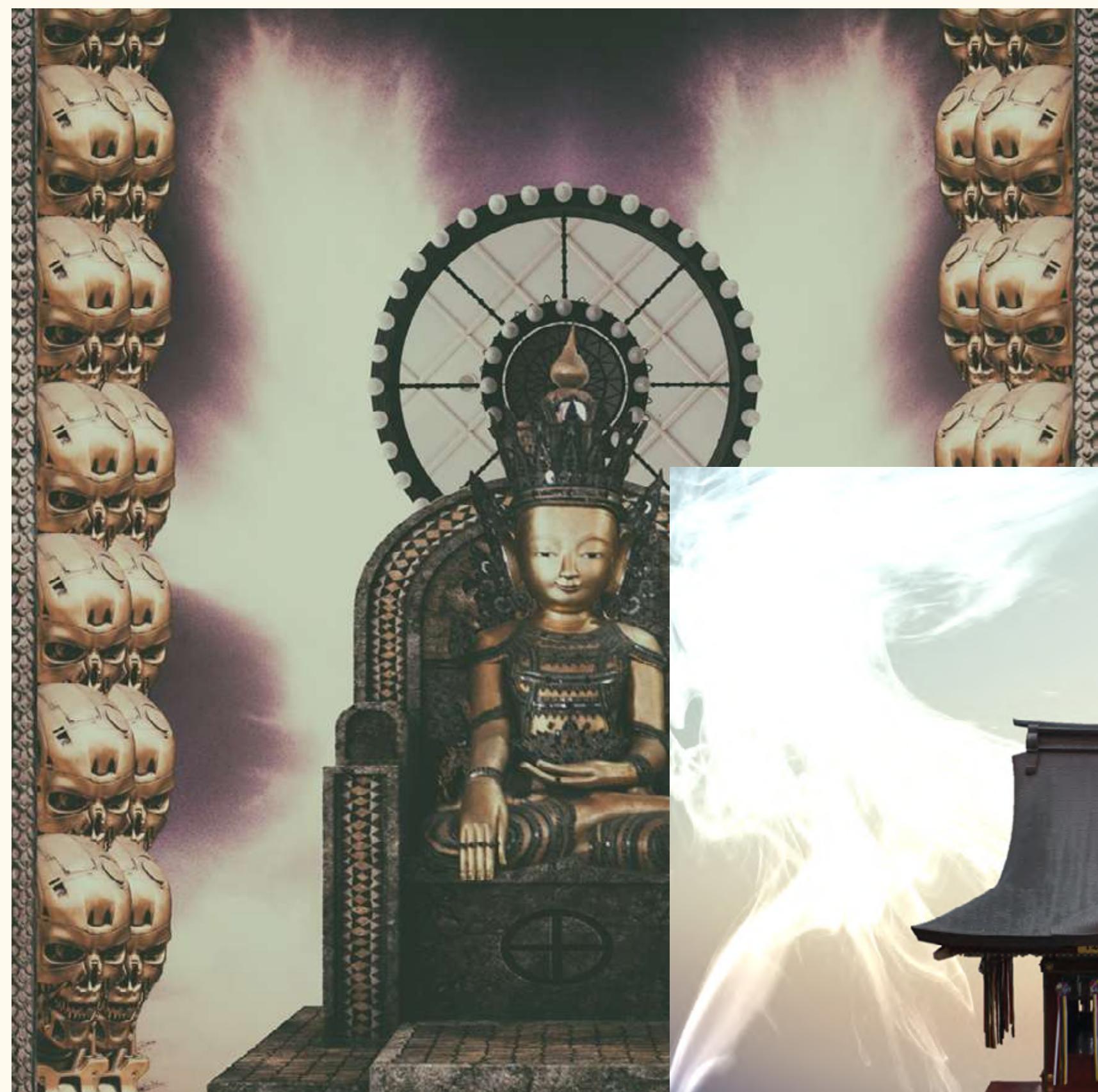
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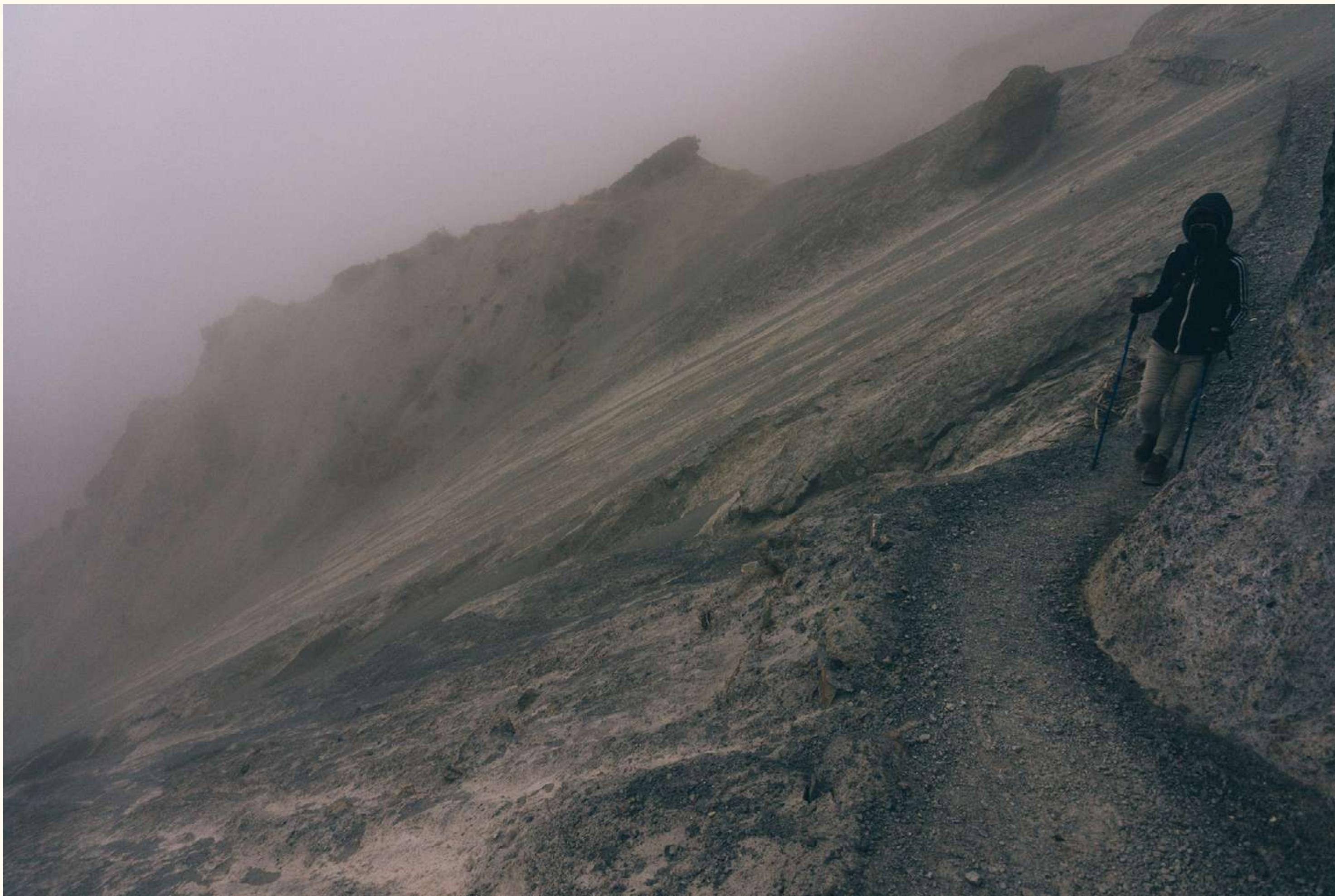
**mastering that
is the key
to learning.**

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We grow up in “the system”, you know, society, and all of their mechanisms are put in place to help everyone, and to protect us from danger, so, nothing bad about that — but like, if you grow up in a first world country, things are just comfortable and easy. They always are.

I think, there’s a key ingredient where, you have to find discomfort yourself, you have to face discomfort and face challenges in order to be, you know, to find some fulfillment.

Everything is just up there, you know, in the mind, and it’s not really a matter of, like, reality. Let go of these ideas that you’ve been brought up with, because there’s a lot more than that out there. There’s a whole world out there. You just have to step in it.

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**There's a
whole world
out there.**

**You just have to
step in it.**

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KIERAN RHYSBURR



FREELANCE DESIGNER
ART DIRECTOR

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I'm essentially bored.

I'm a really bored person. I just spend my time trying to, how to say it —kill the time? And to do that, I actually like to create things visually, I like to design things, that's the thing that keeps me away from boredom, that's what drives me.



100

2:25 AM

Cyril U.

Party At Antoine D.

«I hope our kids will do better than us»



101

102

8:50 AM

N/A

Party At Antoine D.

This is the aftermath. I took whatever I could take back from our friendly encounter, and scanned what is now only the remains of our reunion. This picture stand as a friendly reminder nothing will ever last, most of immediate pleasure comes from self destruction.

As the Bible says so:
“Earth to earth, ashes
to ashes, dust to dust”
[Book of Common Prayer]



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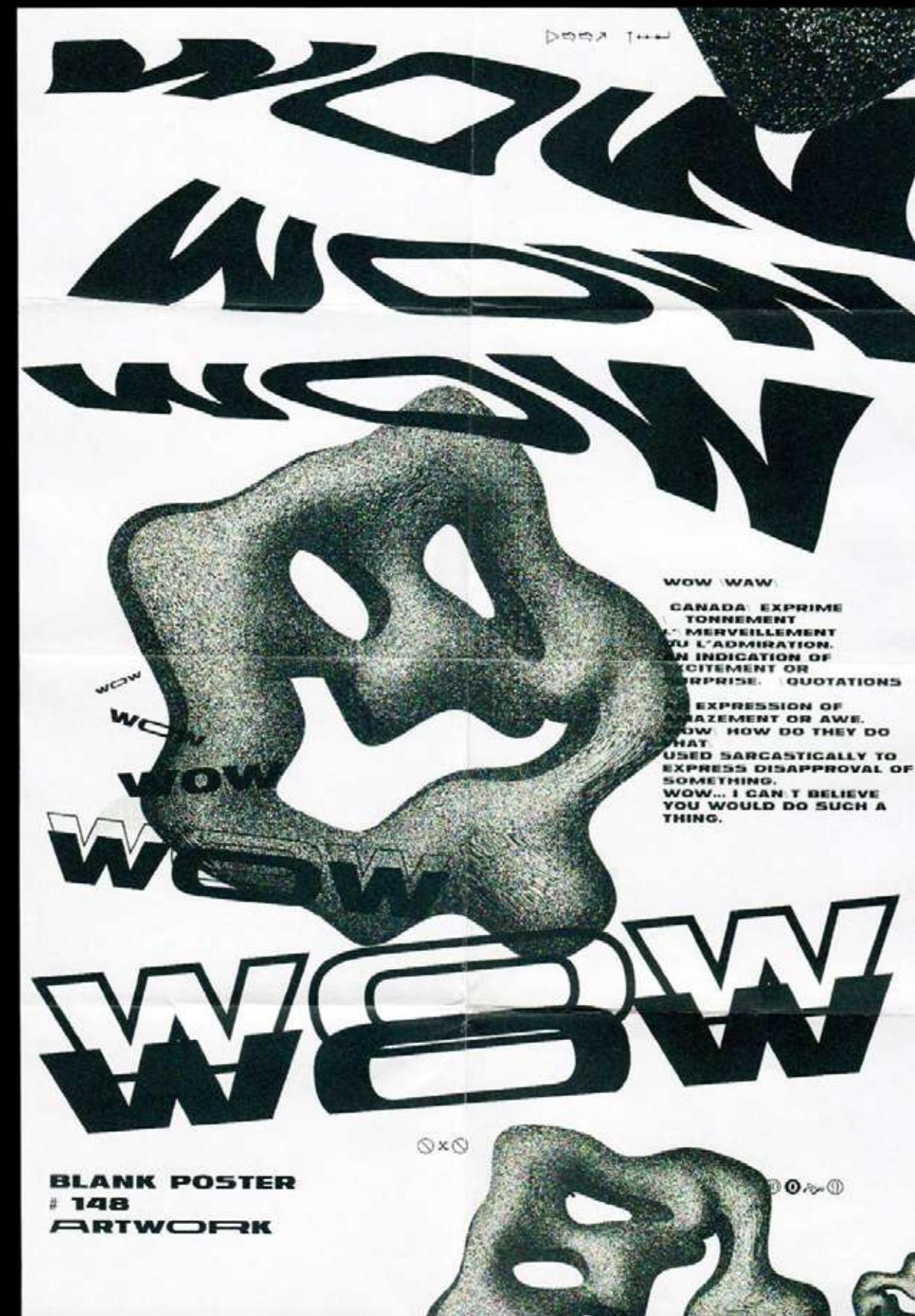
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In design school, I was in a very strict kind of school, so we weren't really free to express ourselves. And we were pretty much told to avoid everything that was being done, outside of school, especially with this post-internet stuff that was going around. And at some point I got enough of it.

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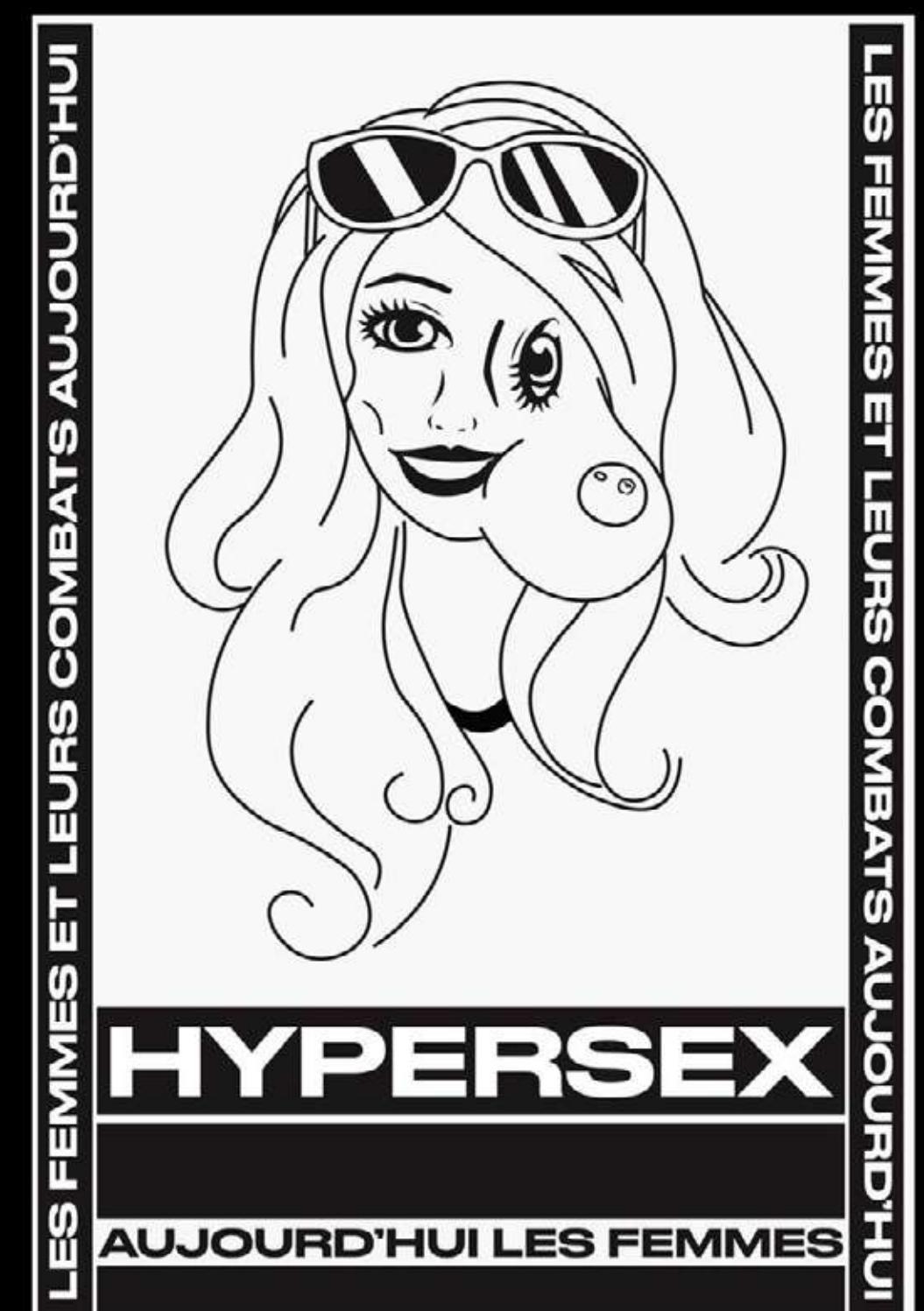
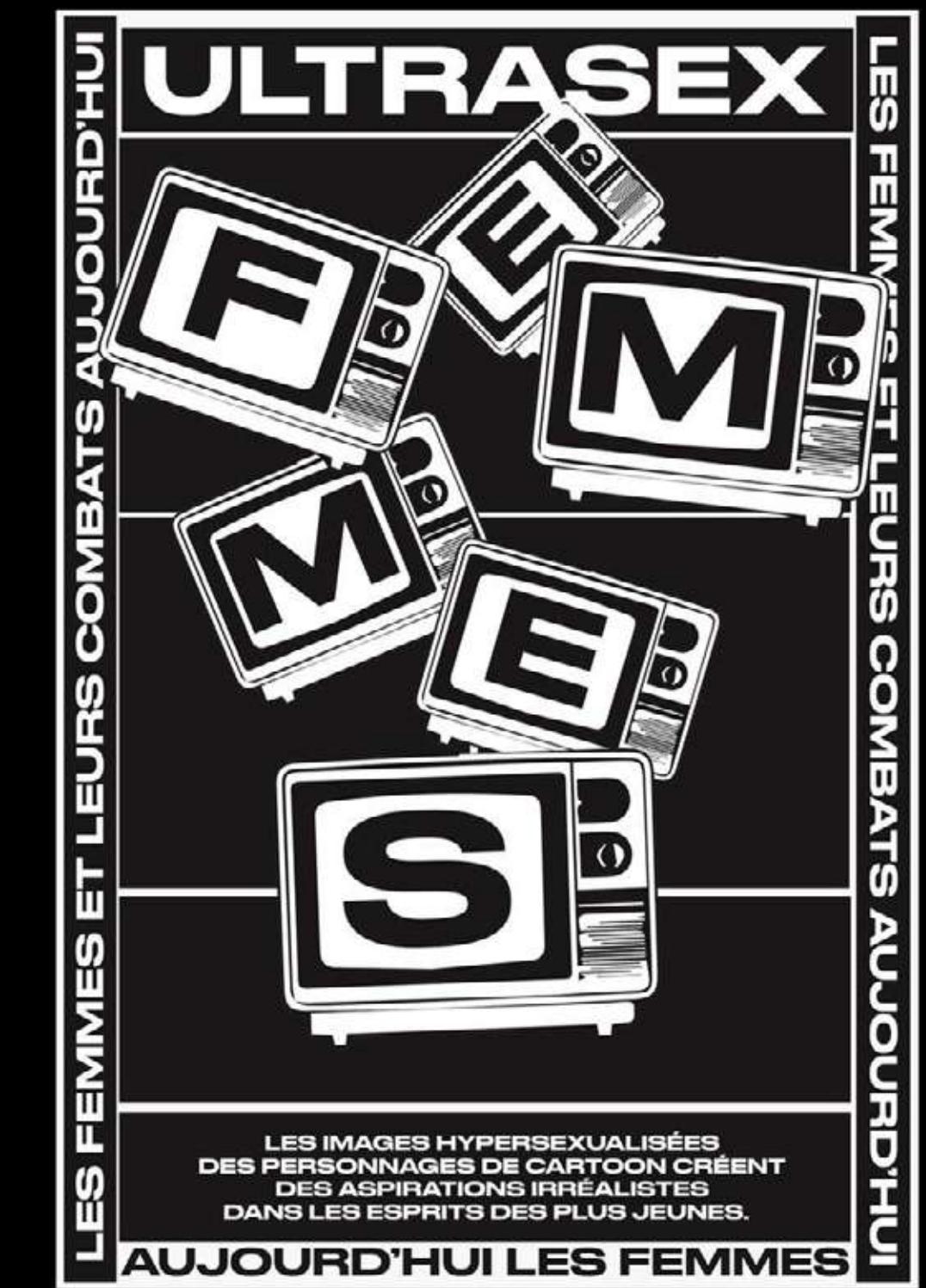
So I said: hey, I'm not going to spend the rest of my time in school doing what my teachers want me to do. I want to explore, and I want to understand why people like all these new trends; and the best way to do that is to examine it. And that's what I did: I followed a couple of people, and I thought, I just asked myself, why is it trending, why is it good?



It didn't respect any kind of rule, it didn't follow any of the rules that we were told to follow, so, I was interested in understanding why, and how they got popular. And that made me get used with this style, that's so in vogue with Instagram these days — and slowly, I just started working in that way, and just turned that aesthetic into my own, I guess.

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I WANT TO
EXPLORE.

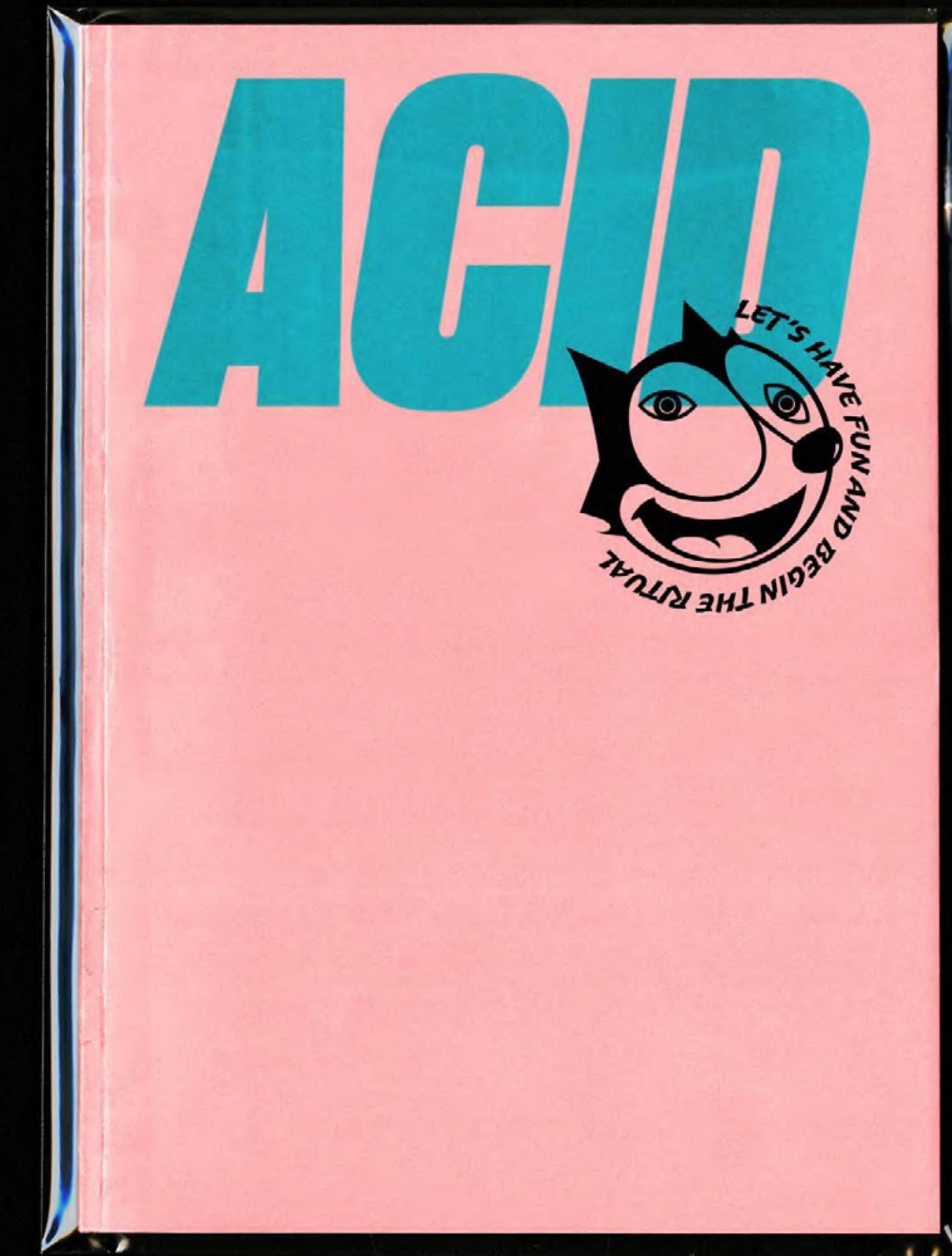
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I WANT TO
UNDERSTAND.

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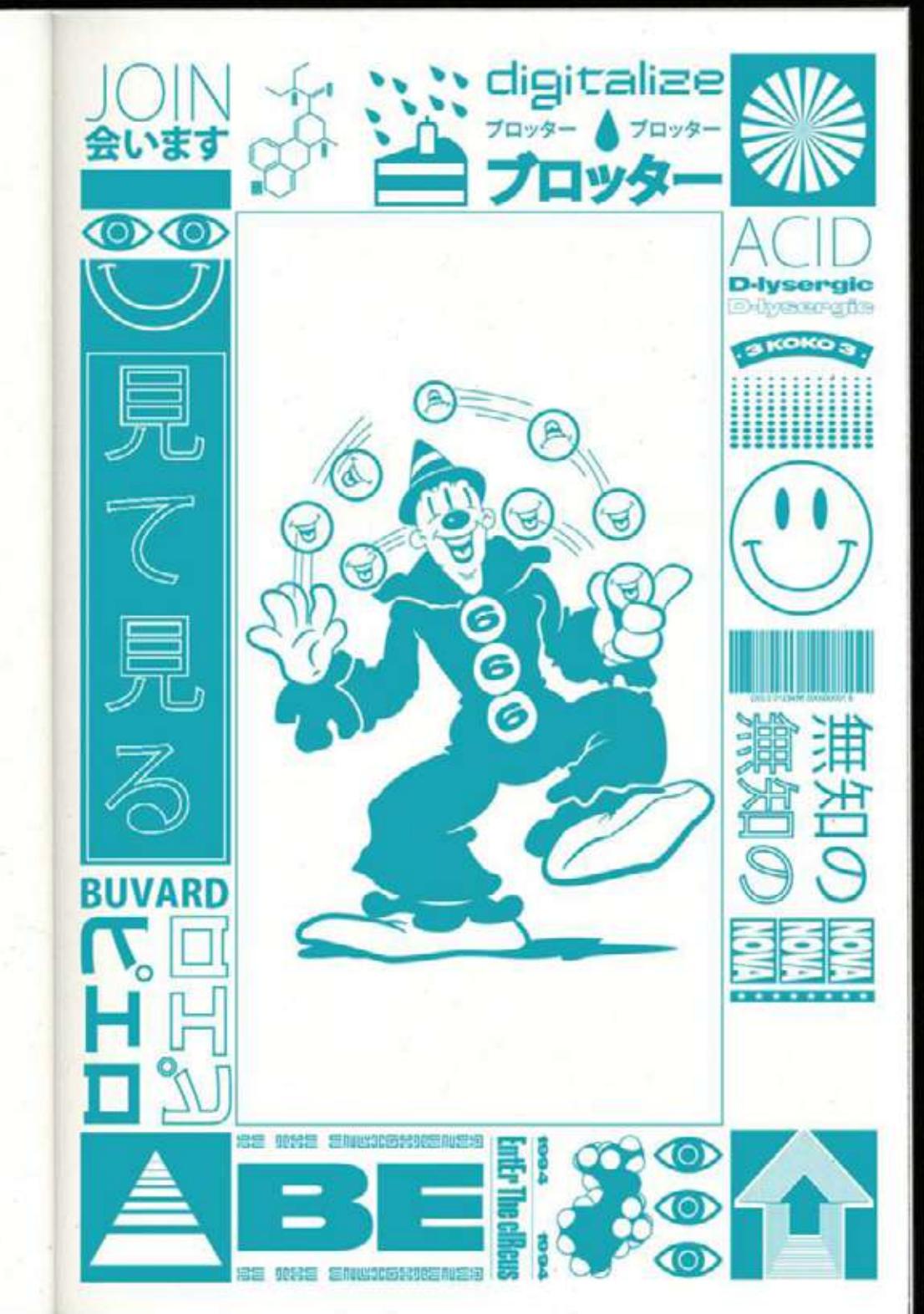
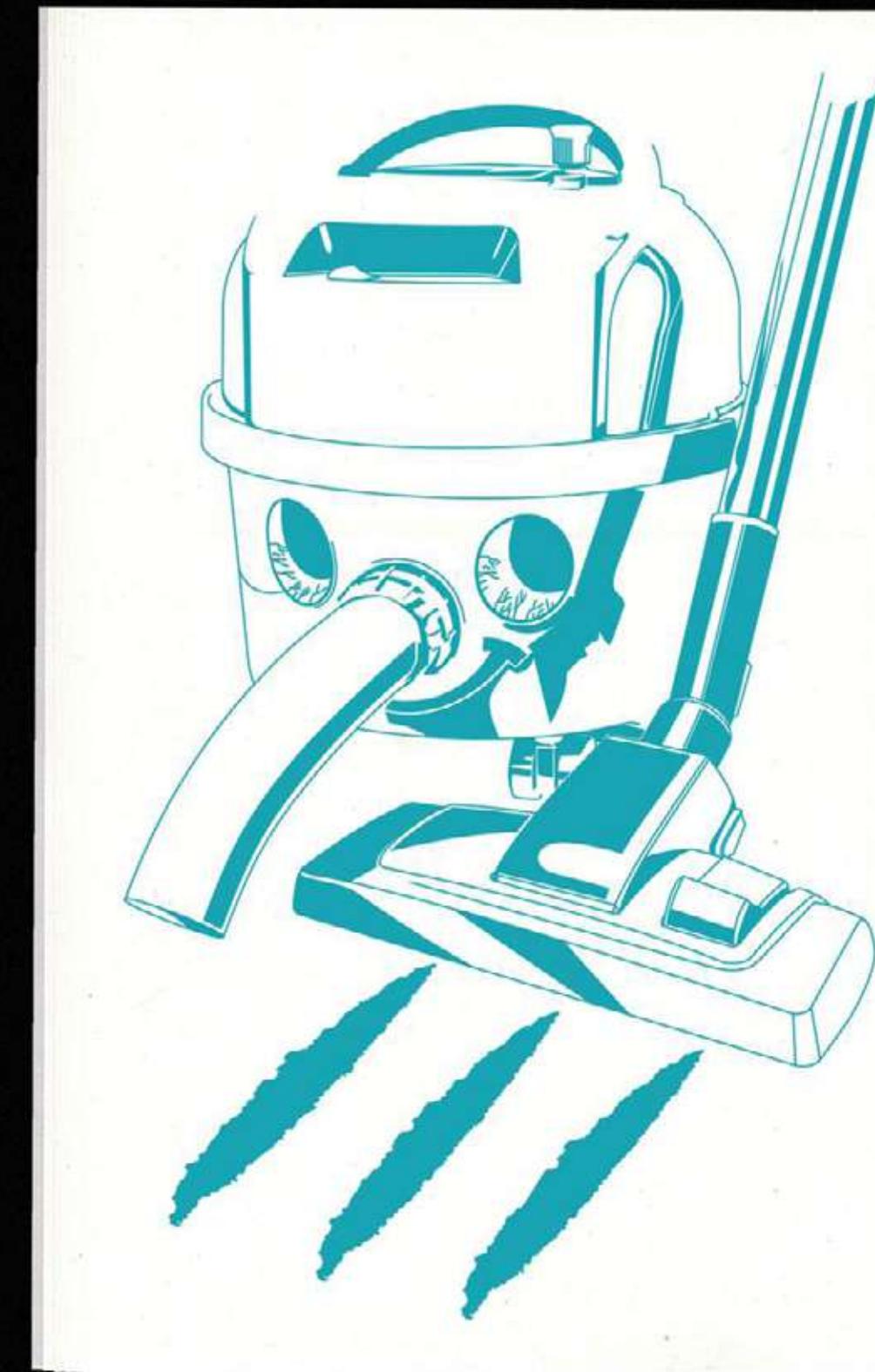


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I actually discovered Instagram quite recently, only like, two years ago; and I realized that, one, you could get clients on Instagram, and two, not many people go into your website nowadays. So I just wanted to focus more on Instagram than actual projects for clients.

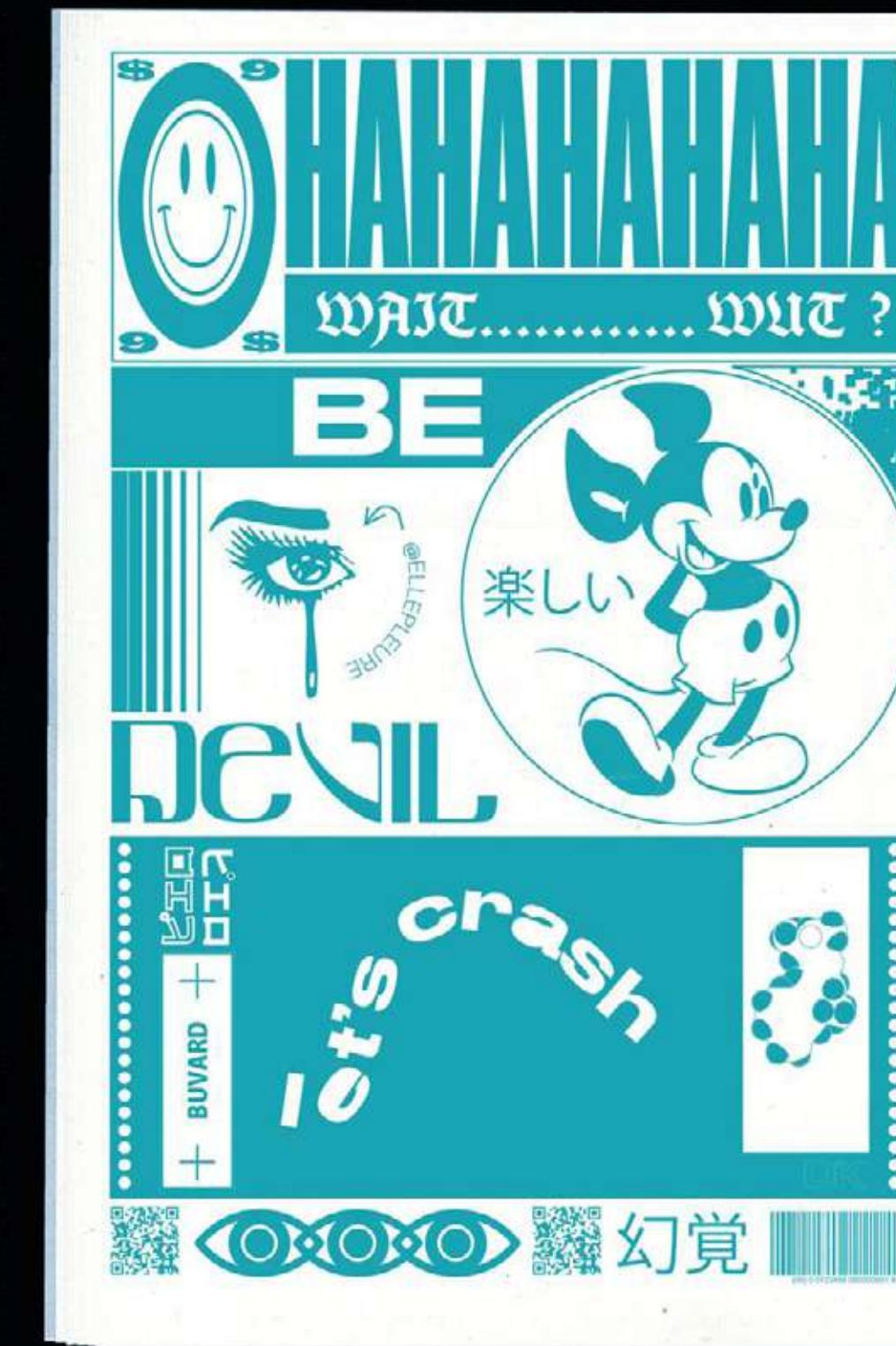
If you go to my Behance profile, or my website, all these projects featured there, I spent weeks and months, collaborating with other people, trying to build them. But on Instagram, I'll post really often, but I'll post just experiments. These vary a lot, they depend on impulses, they're just, like — I'll think of something, and I'll do it.

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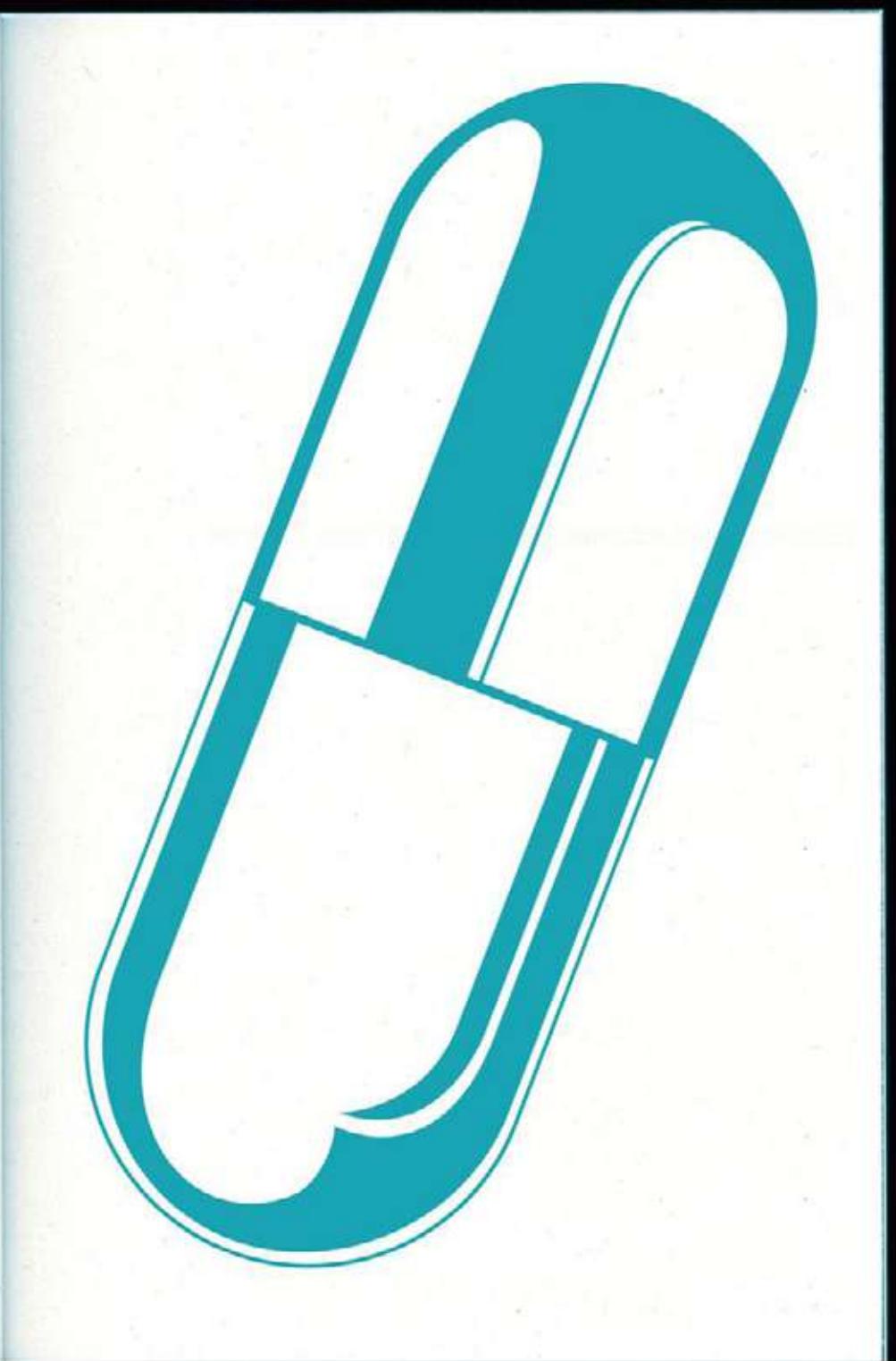


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If I do something for myself, I don't know initially if it's going to be a poster, I don't know if it's going to be a cover, you know, I just picture something, like just a logo, or a feeling, or something, and then I think, that could fit on this or that medium, on some prints, on a poster. And the more I work on it, the clearer the idea gets.

It's kind of the opposite than when I'm working with a client, because the client usually knows exactly what the medium is, but on personal projects, I could start making a logo, and it'd end up being a whole packaging project, you know.

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So, it just - I just let myself go, and then, just follow where the process leads me.



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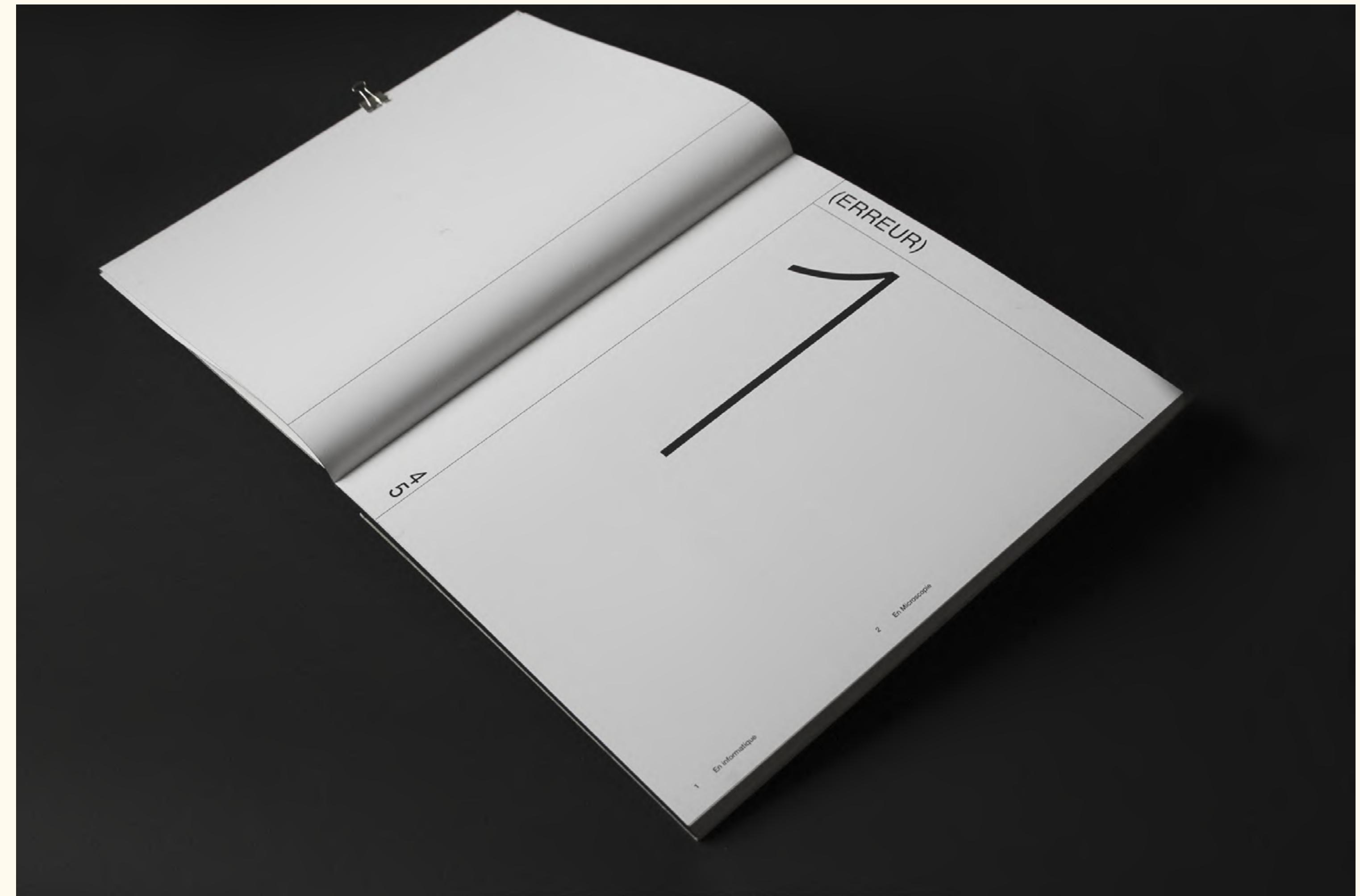
The first thing I always do is, I talk as much as possible with my client. Because you can spend a week working in something, only to show them, and they're like: ah no, that's not exactly what I wanted. And I'm like, well, if we had talked about it a little bit more, in the beginning, maybe that wouldn't have happened.

Because the thing is, even designers themselves may not have an idea of what to make! It may change in the process, something may come up.

Personally, I never think that my work is ever done; of course, there is a deadline that we have to respect, but I could spend a whole year on one poster. Maybe that's insane (laughs).

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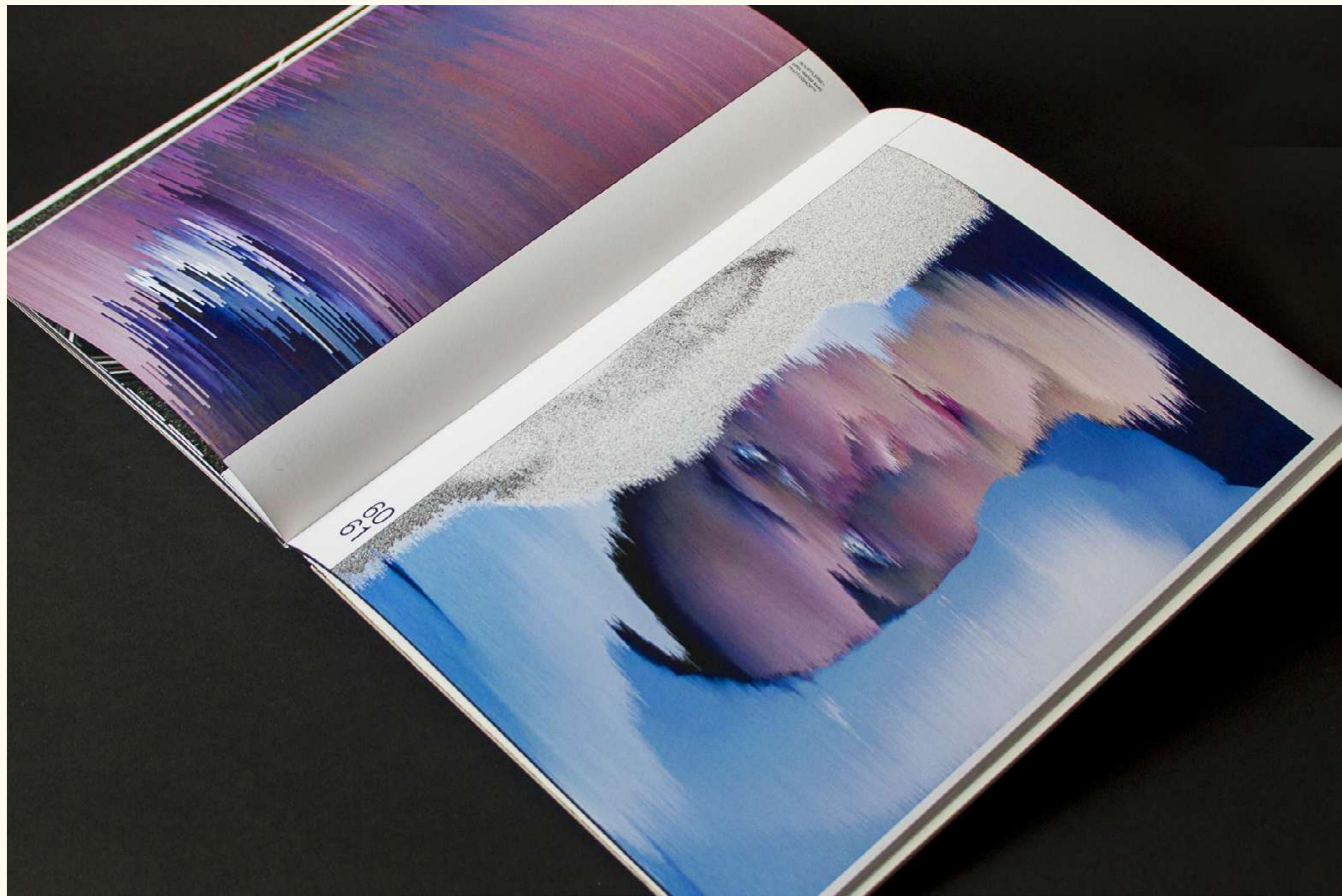
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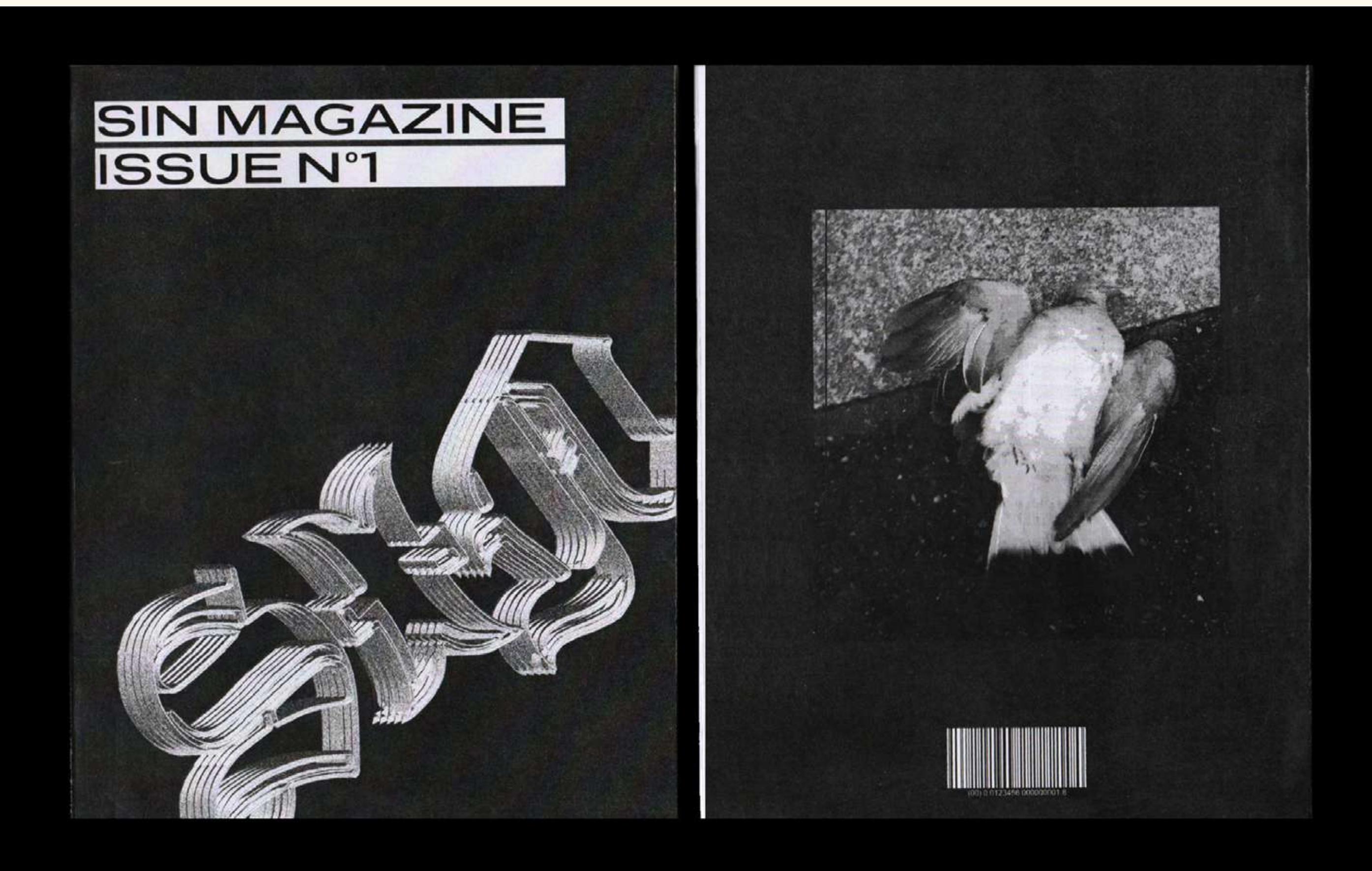
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I think the hardest thing when you do a project is not to answer the question that the client or the project poses — the hardest thing is actually to give it a soul.

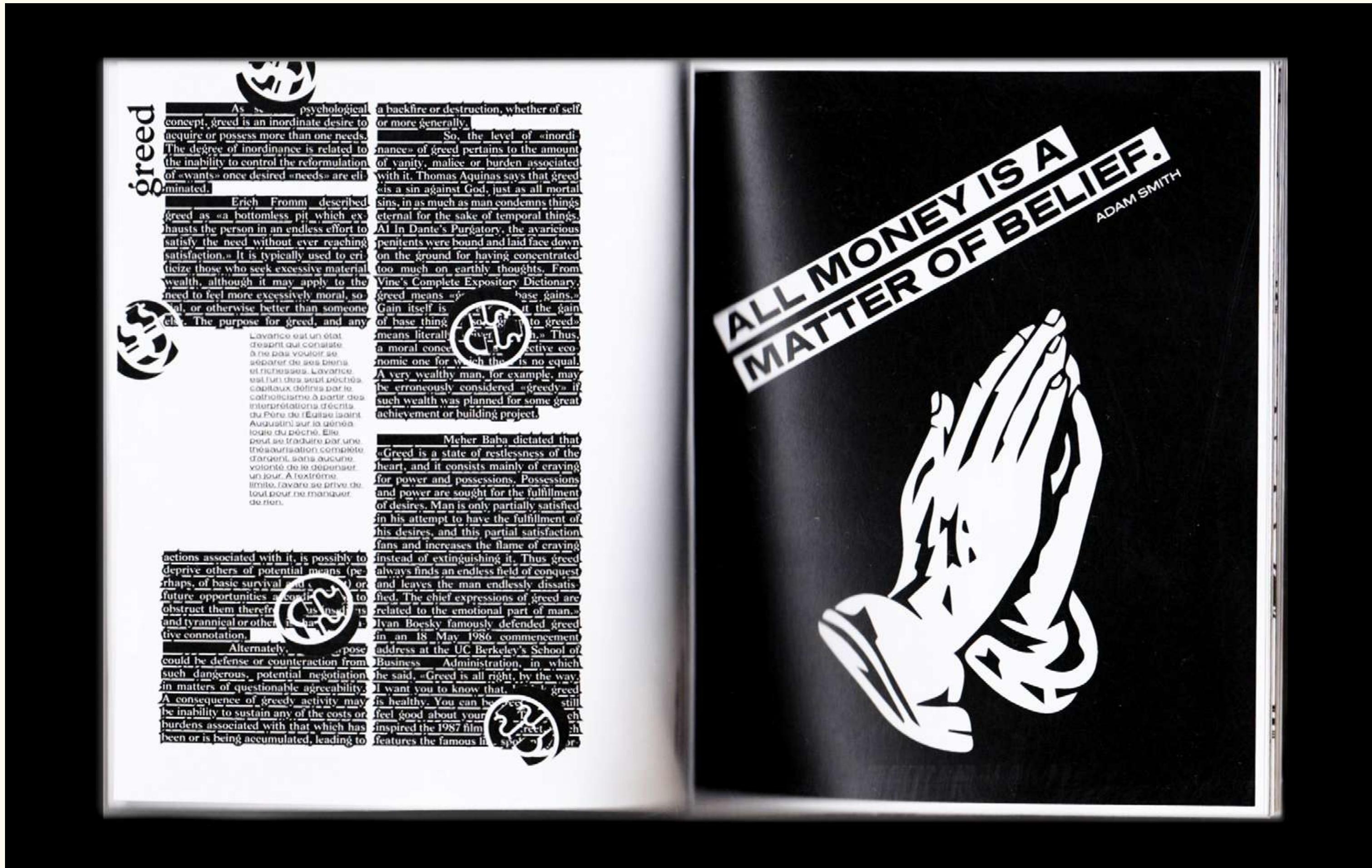
The most frustrating thing is when you do something, and then people go like, I don't get it. Or like, it's nice, but what's the point of it? That's just the worst. The best way to avoid those mistakes is to probably show your work to people that have no clue of what design is, and most of my friends don't do design: one of my best friends is a mechanic, you know, he doesn't know a thing about fonts, code, all of that. But that's not his job!

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So in some way, he's the perfect critic. Because he's going to give you his raw impression on it, and that's kind of what we want. If you only work with designers, they might praise your style well over what the essence of the project might actually accomplish. So, I think that, to avoid that, you should show your projects to people outside of design. Show them to people that have no idea of what design actually is, and you'll get a real idea of what you've done.

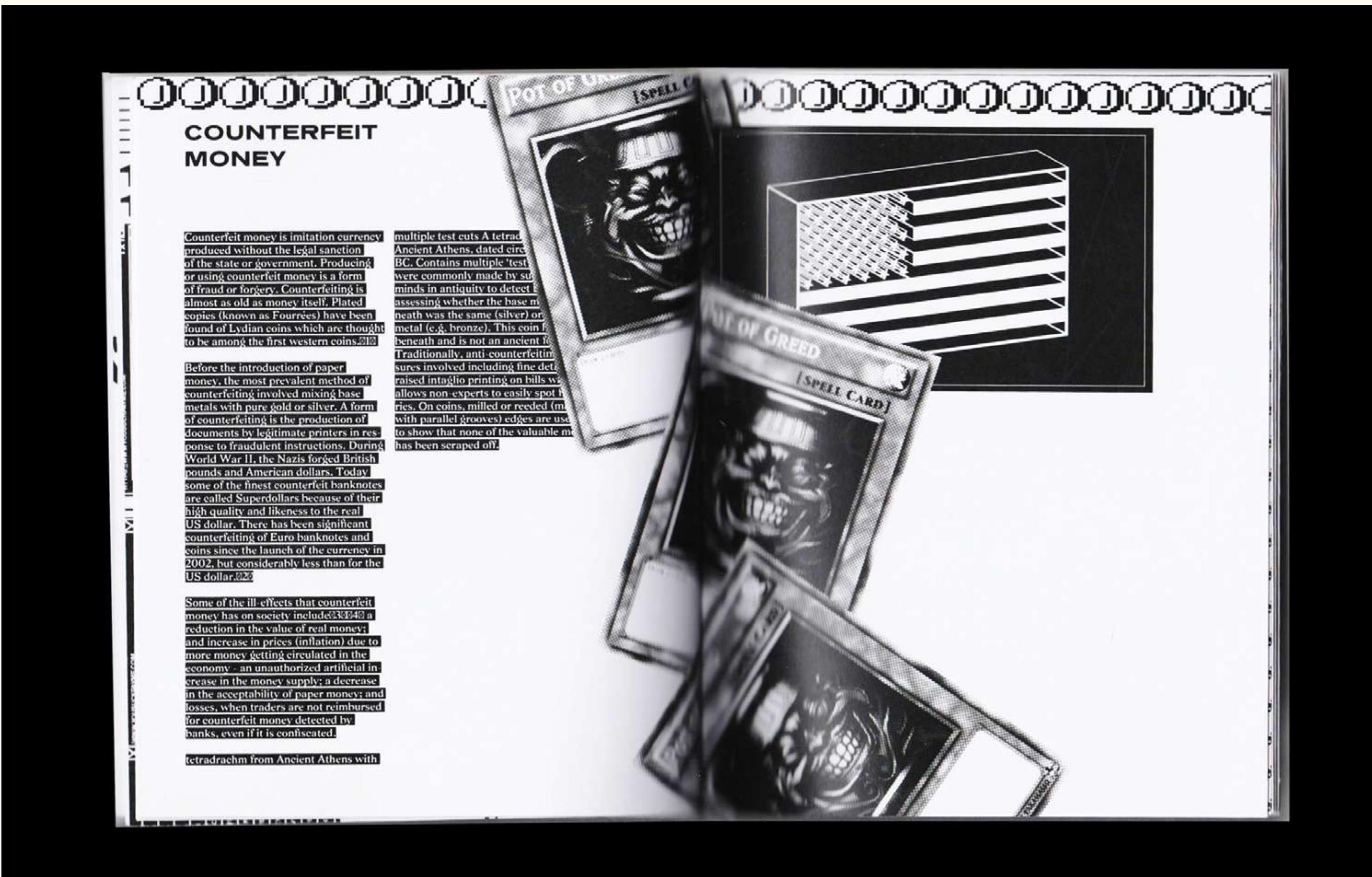


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I NEVER THINK A PROJECT IS EVER DONE.

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Eventually, I'd like to leave Paris, and do some freelance work, because my real goal is to open my own freelance agency, my own thing. I would love to be a freelance, to travel as much as I can, meet as many people as I can, because that's what makes a job really interesting. So my end goal would be to make a name.

But I need more experience. I started working for an agency this year, right after finishing school, and I don't know, I think I kind of freaked out, I kind of panicked when I realized that my portfolio was so, there was no unity in it, it was completely all over the place.

Trying to get a style is so hard, it's so hard, because, I don't have one, I don't have a single thing in my work that I could say like, okay, this is me, this is what I am, and there are many people in Instagram who actually have their own, and you would recognize their work just from miles away, and that's a problem that I usually have.

I'd like to experiment with every single style there is, and I know this could be a problem. But right now, I'm just trying as many things as possible.

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Just do your thing, and spread it out. Post everything, experiment — of course, with the right visual knowledge, and using Behance and Instagram and all of that, but create your own thing. The projects that had the most success for me, were the ones that didn't follow trends, or did something really different from the norm.

Experiment. Every day, on a daily basis. Not only with computers: just draw, paint, take pictures, do whatever, but on a daily basis, you have to create something. That's what I tell myself, you have to have something new on a daily basis — otherwise, you just don't do anything.

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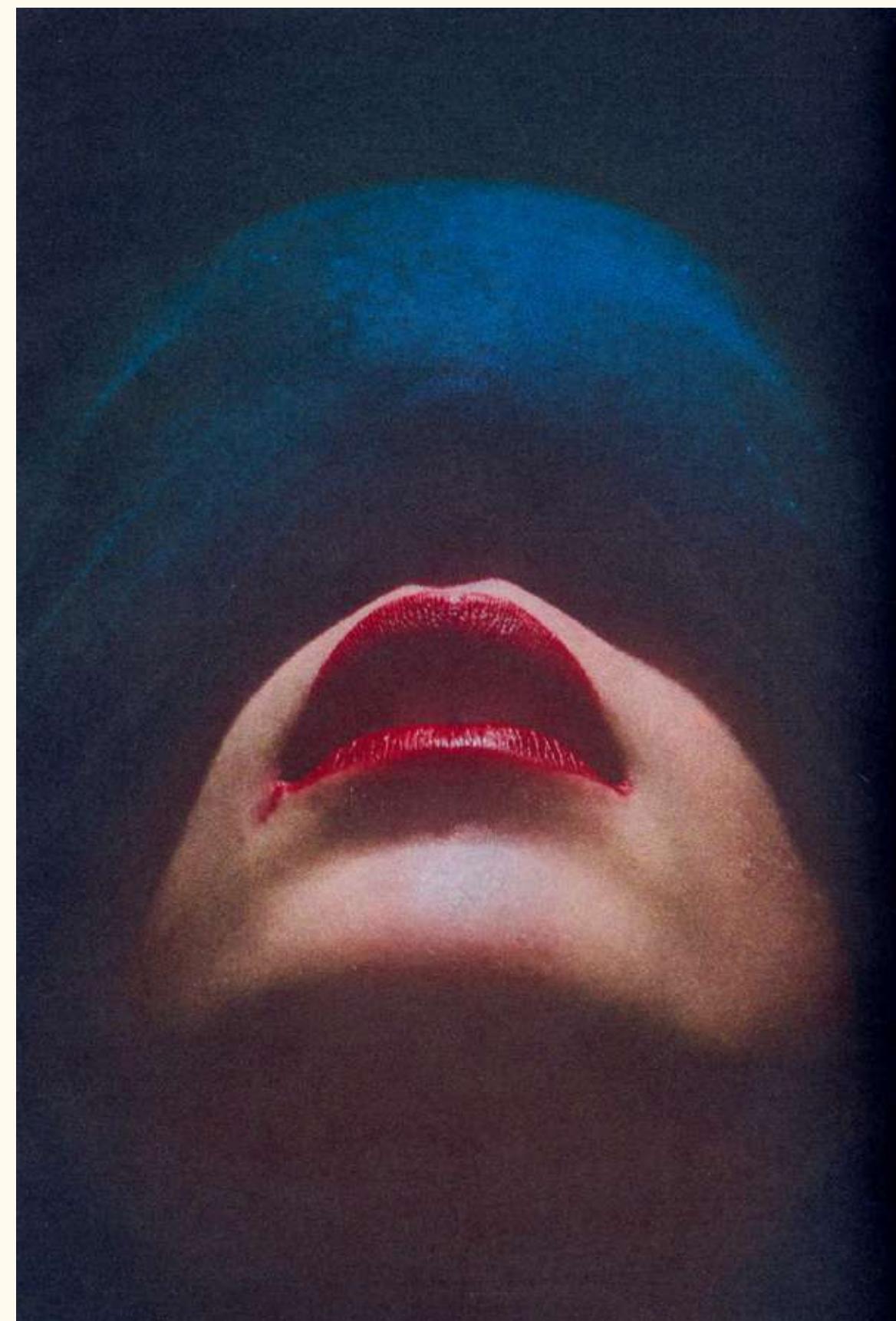
**EXPERIMENT.
CREATE.**

EVERY DAY.



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WEBSITE:

KIERANBURR.NET

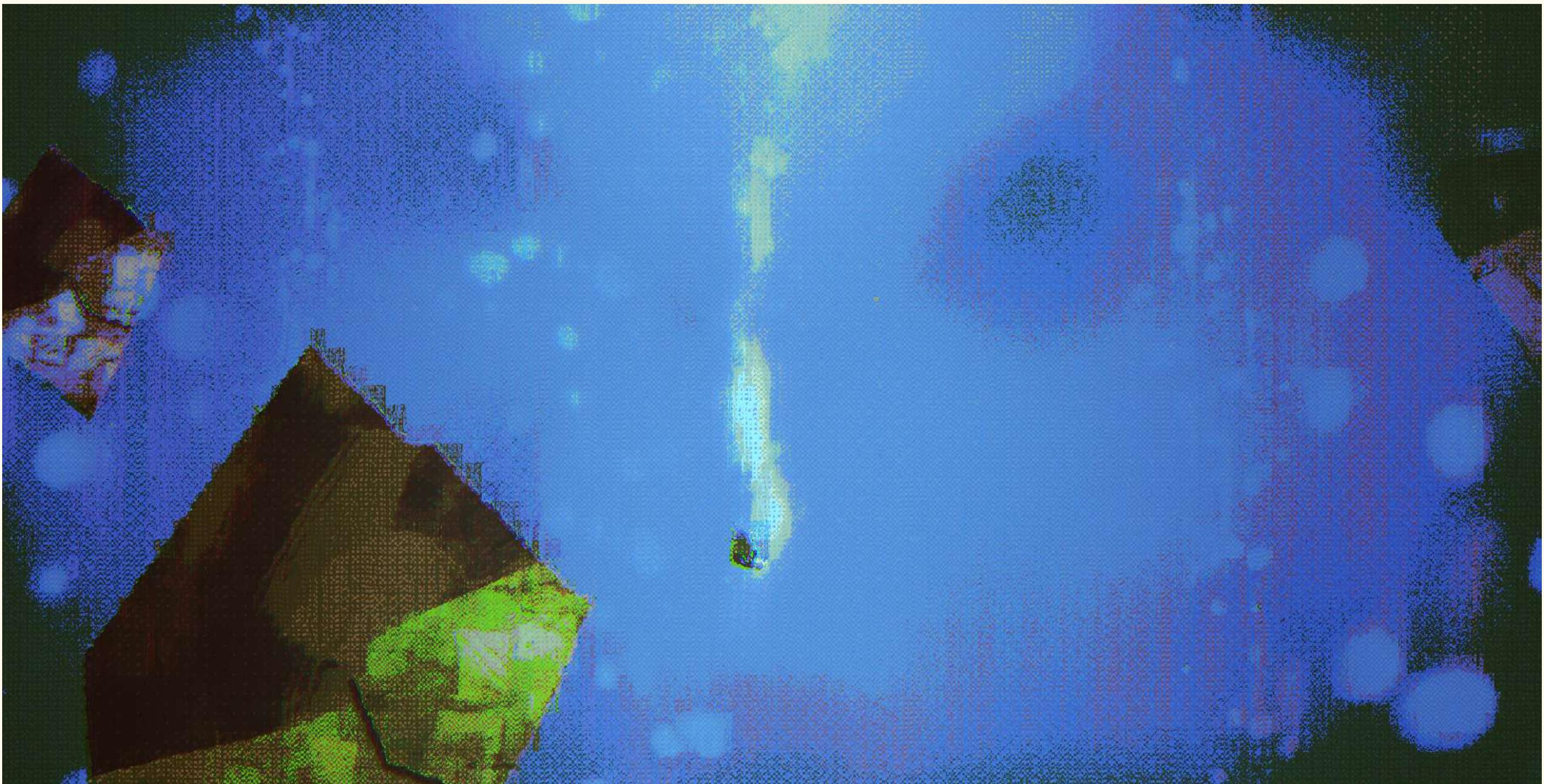
INSTAGRAM:

@KIERAN_BURR

BEHANCE:

/KIERAN_RB

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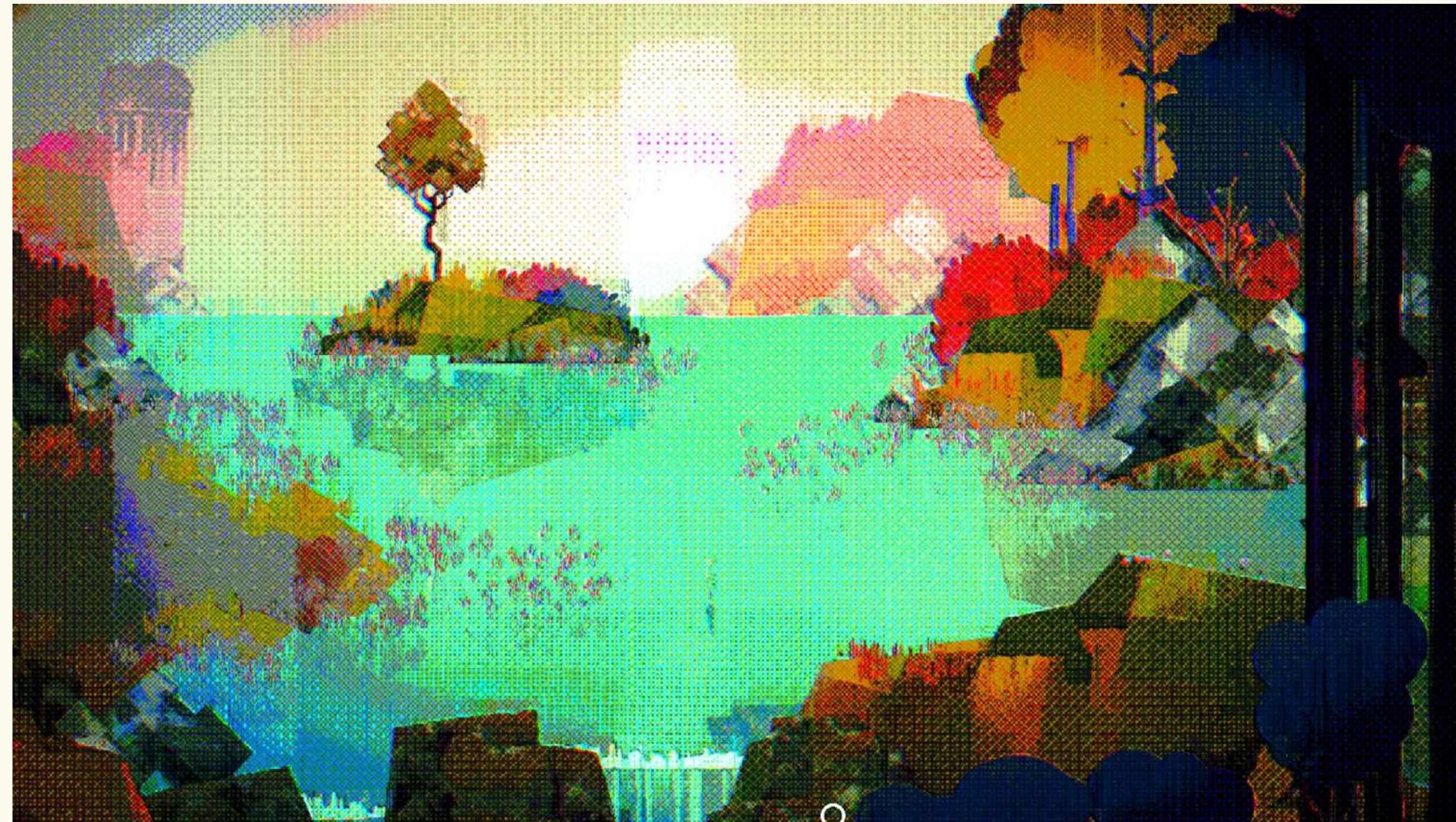
BEN KERSLAKE &
JERRY VERHOEVEN

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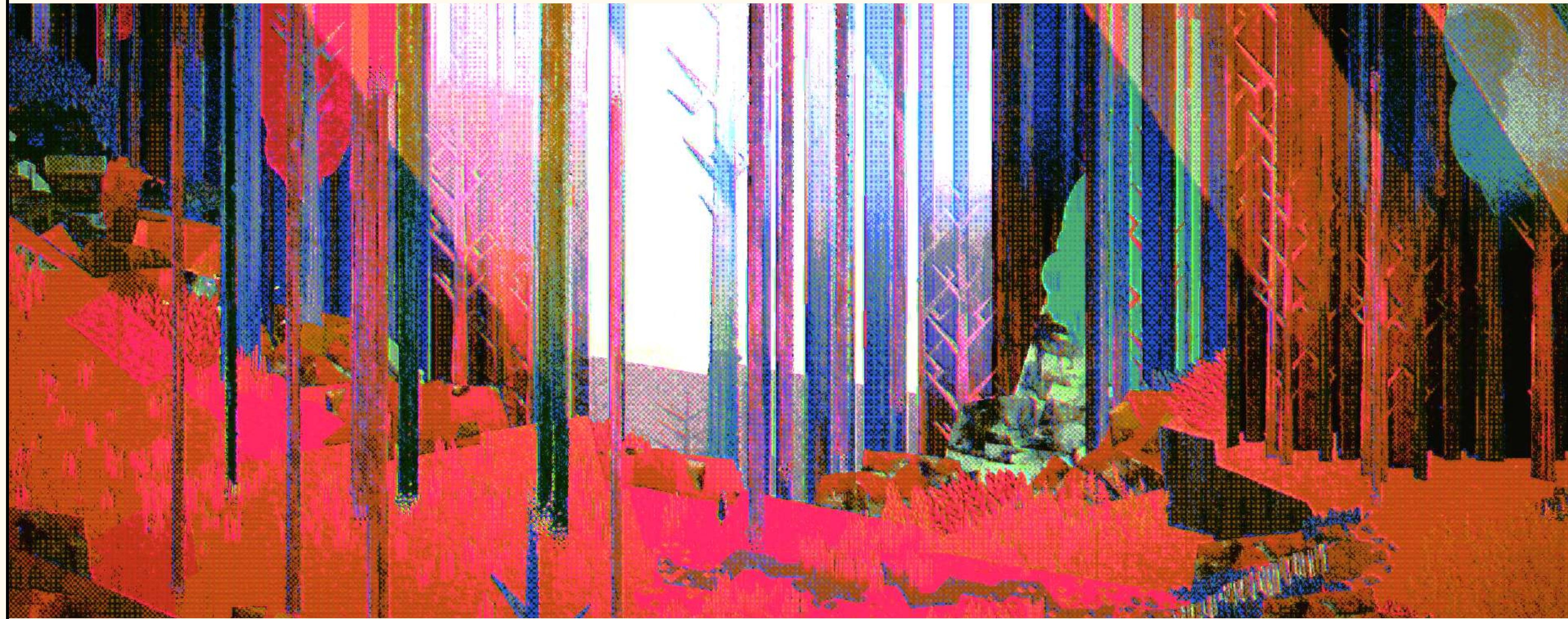
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GAME DESIGNERS
TOTEM TELLER

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b: My role, technically, is that of creative director: so in practice, that means, you know, art, assets, and so on. Jerry, on his end, is all about code and tools. And as for design, and level design, that's something that we share. So it's like, you know, I think we have a good overlap between us, we kind of cover the whole ladder.

j: I just realized that we kind of made a one-eighty in our trajectories.

b: I never thought of that (laughs) but it's true. I initially went into tech back in the e-commerce bubble, before I went back to art school. It was only later on, that I had the opportunity to jump into games.

j: You'll get used to this kind of very normal dynamic where Ben is doing all the talking and I just wait until I jump in to say something (laughs)

b: Yeah yeah, that's what Jerry non-official role is. It's, like, to correct me when I'm wrong (laughs).

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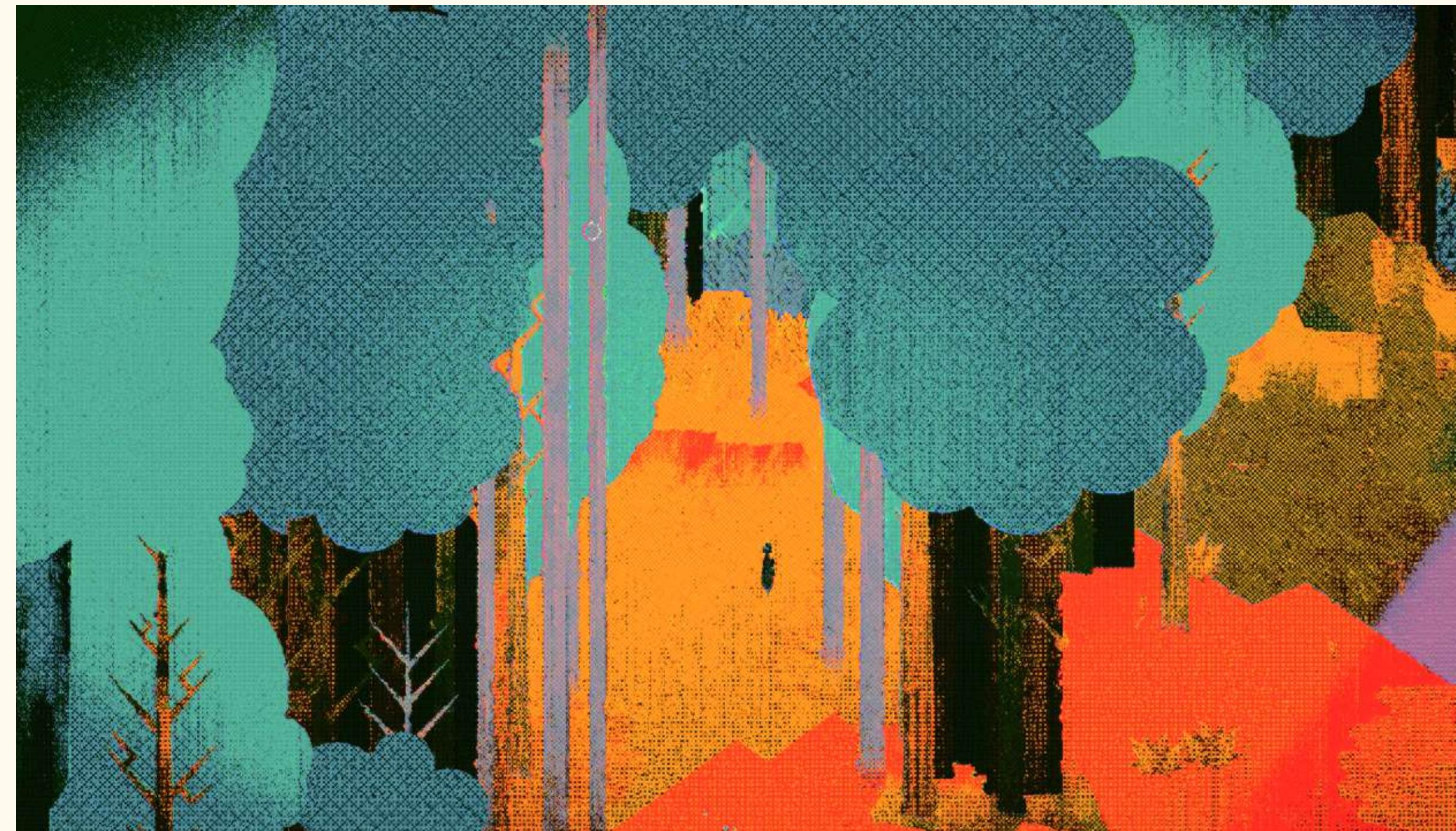
b: We both got started working in games through the studio of Spicy Horse, a studio run by American McGee. We met each other there, and we worked pretty closely, especially towards the end of the project.

And then, we jumped together into a couple projects, that we'd probably better forget, after that — some kind of mobile stuff, that was very much in vogue around 2011, you know, those were some demoralizing times (laughs).

But at the same time, I think they kind of awaken this fire in us to say — is there another way? And we started working together, applying to game jams, all of that.

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Over those times, we found that we had a very compatible creative dialogue and also kind of overlapping skills. That's the reason why, I think, we're very comfortable creating together now, because we had that foundation of what we did before.



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Being able to work with someone in many different settings before you try something like this, that kind of removes a lot of that risk in terms of friction between creatives, which happens in a lot of projects.

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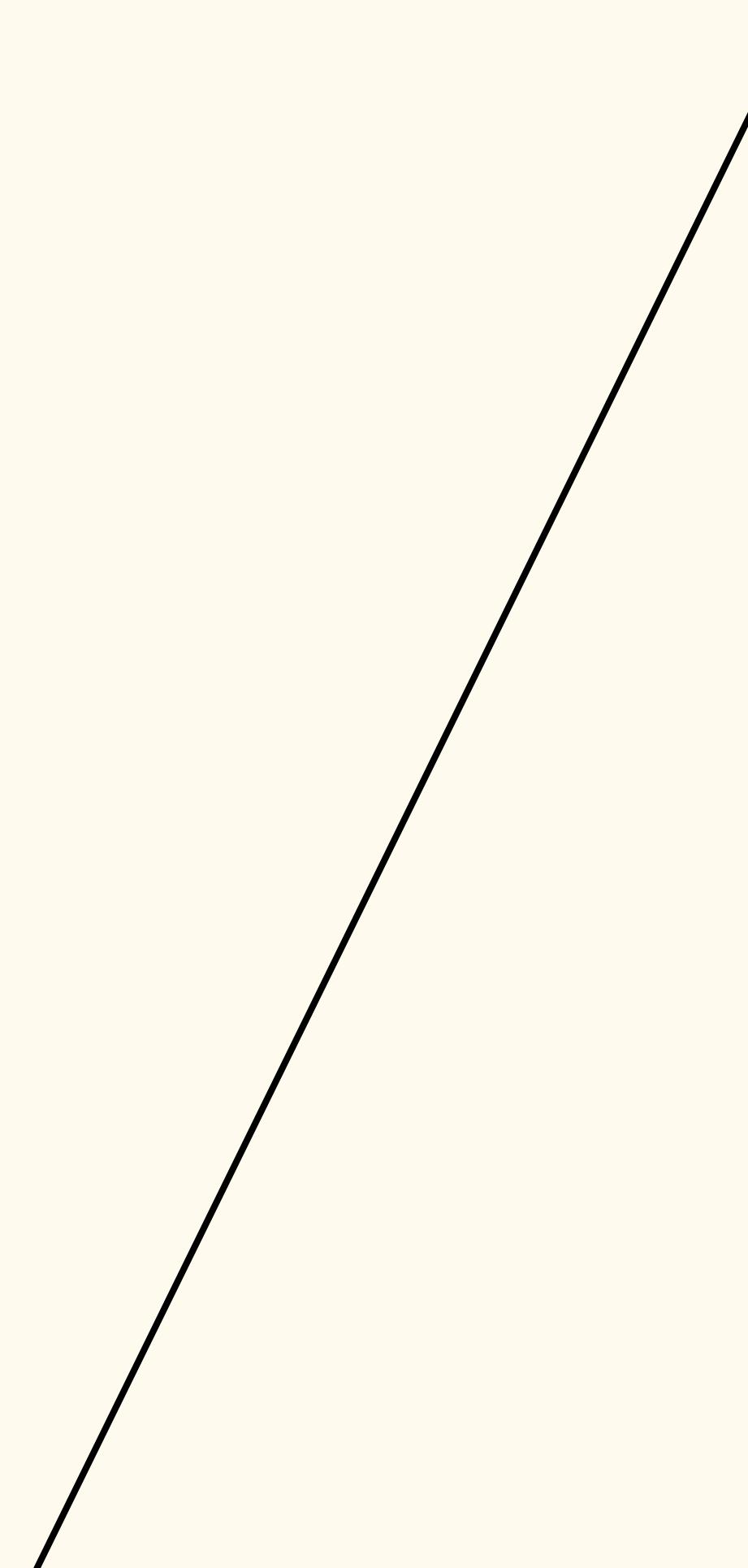


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j: I've tried making games by myself, and I've done games by myself, but you know, it's evident they're made by a programmer. There's a lot of logic, there's a lot of rule-based design going on, there's not a lot of visual design, not a lot of intricate graphics, which I don't have the ability to create.

Ben brings something truly different into it, a kind of larger and more purposeful design philosophy.

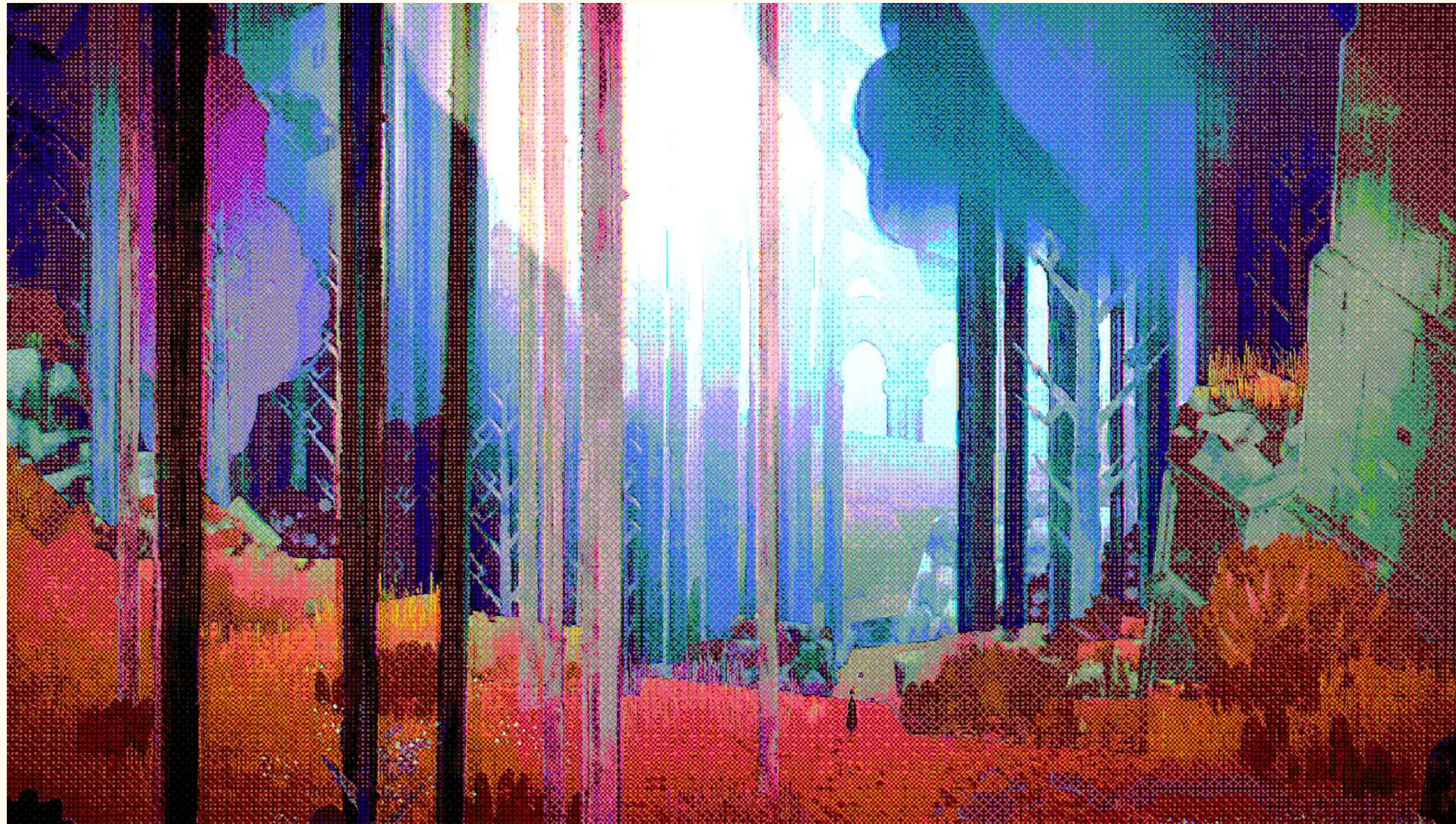
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b: Usually, in games, when you're producing art, it's a very externalized process to implementing them; but for us, it's become that window of, trying to get it to implement it directly into the engine. That's a big pillar of the game, it's the digital creation process. We're trying to be more holistic, to make the engine into our canvas.

Jerry enables that. I'm lucky enough to have found a partnership that allows me to ask him for tools to be built around my way of working, tools that understand my processes, so I can just flow within them.

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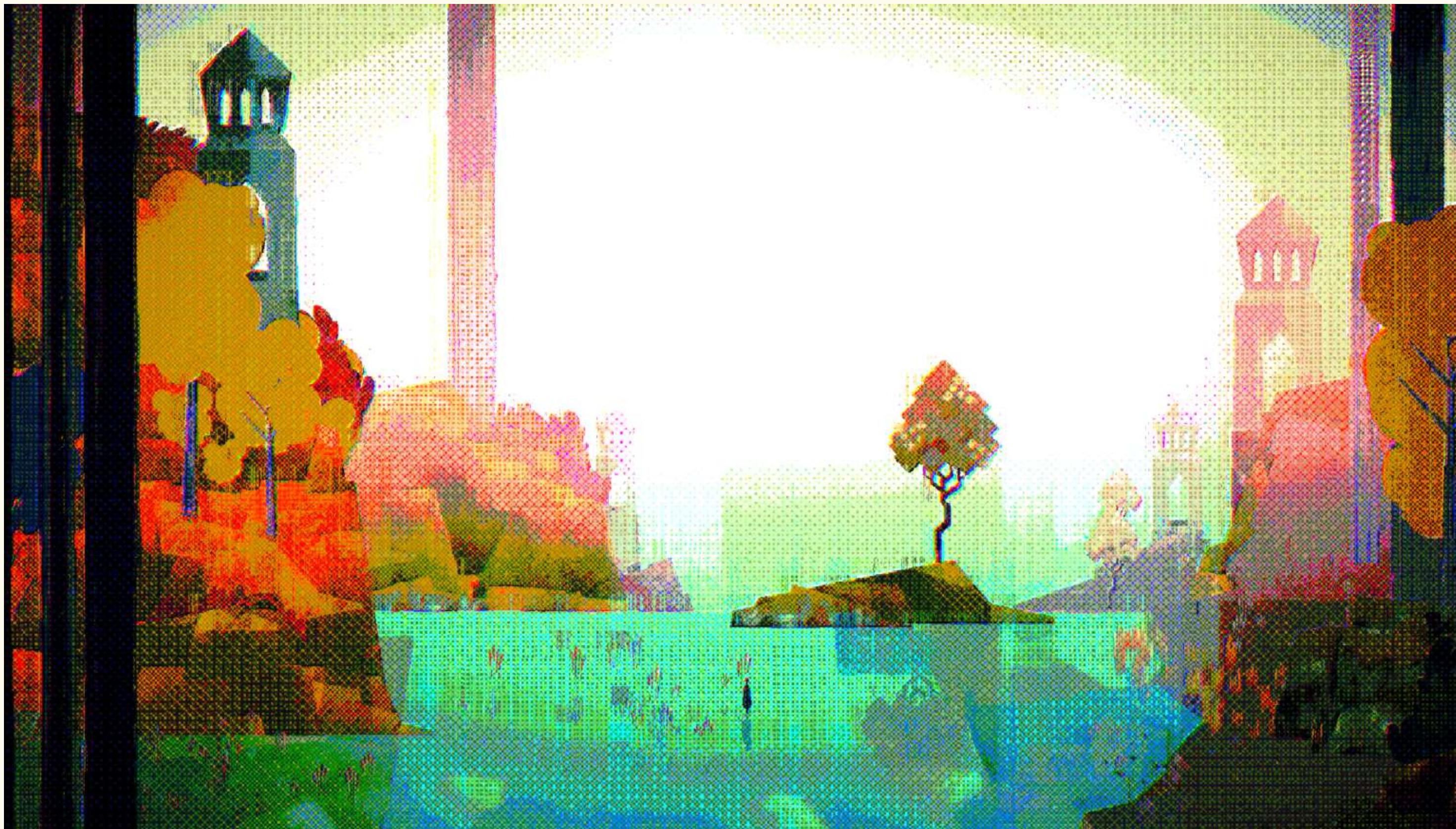
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**WE'RE TRYING TO TURN
THE ENGINE
INTO OUR CANVAS.**

b: From the beginning, we sort of inverted the process that you've probably seen in many studio developments: where, you'll see this, they speak about "not really discovering the core of the gameplay" or whatever until very late in the development cycle, and then going all out on that towards the finish line.

We decided to be led by the idea, first and foremost. Whatever you believe in should lead the work forward. If you let the experience lead, and then find opportunities to introduce mechanics that support that experience, when the time comes and money is on the clock, you will have a base that you can be comfortable working with.

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j: That doesn't mean that our game developed overnight. I think it was at least a year until we had something sort of resembling our initial idea, and over two years to get it to look like it does now, where we're happy with the final look.

So it's really a lot of back and forth, it really is a team effort, bit by bit, building it up, tearing things down and re-evaluating them, trying to kind of, get close to the real thing.

j: It's very easy to give in to your first impulse, you know, I have this problem, the solution is very obvious, we'll look at another game, or you know. Every other game is like this, so we'll make it like this. Or like, movies do this, we'll do this.

I think you need the courage to wait for an answer, and not just jump into the first thing that seems like what you want. It takes some courage and takes some patience to approach making a game this way.

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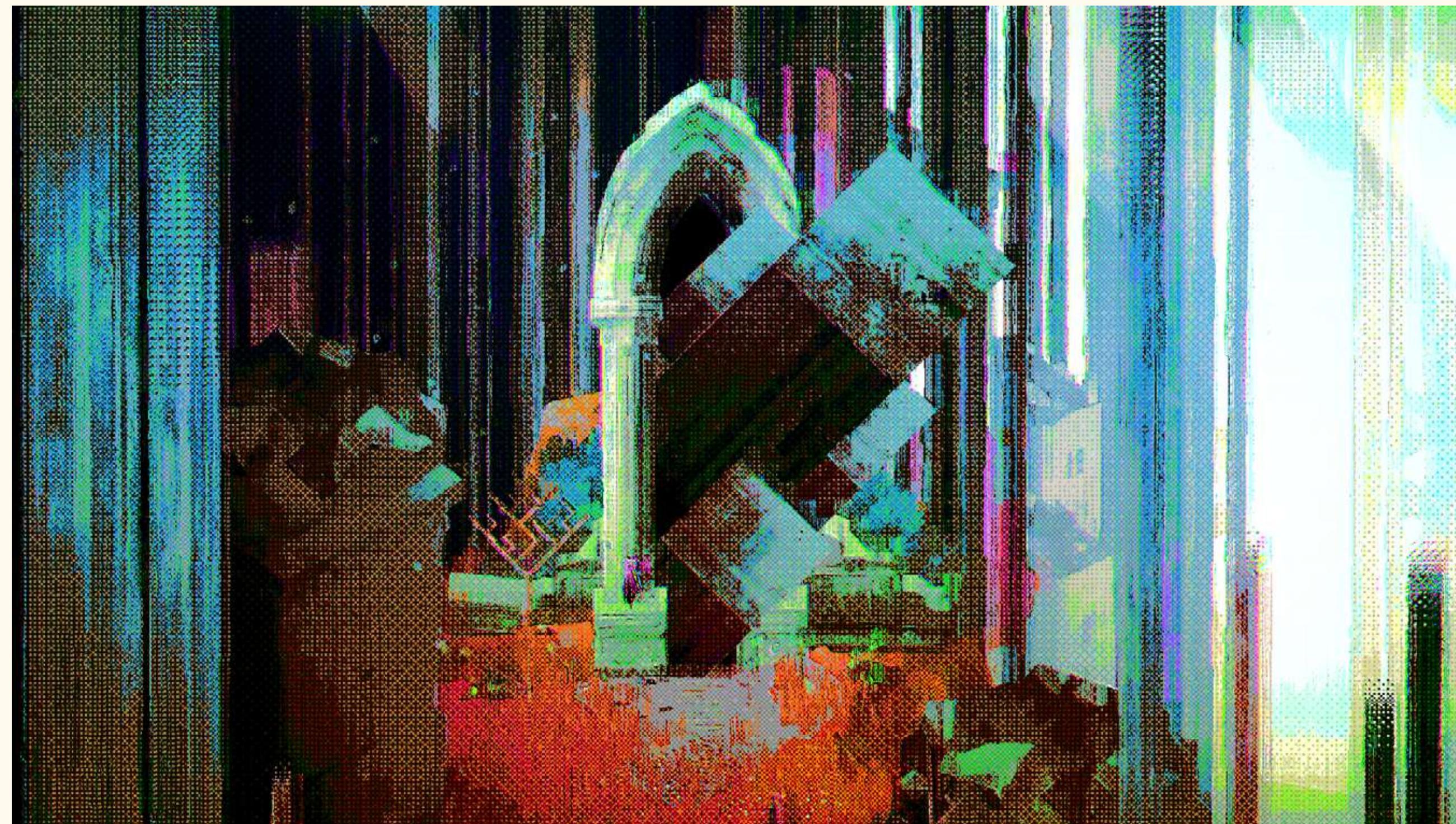
**YOU NEED TO HAVE
THE COURAGE
TO WAIT**

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FOR AN ANSWER.



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b: Central to the game is that its world is made from stories that are being lost or forgotten. Or that, in their retelling, had some of their elements edited out, or erased. So that kind of implies that the world is not really whole, or has some missing pieces that, whether you'd interpret that digitally, would remind you of data corruption and loss.

So, if the world is missing these bits, glitches are just a natural fit, in terms of removing information. We tried to find something familiar, something that Jerry could emulate, and we found the idea of lossy compressions, and how information is transmitted digitally.

In the process of, you know, working on these bits to reduce bandwidth use or file size, you're effectively changing the nature of it. And this is very similar, to us, to the nature of storytelling: you know, different storytellers may change their stories, depending on the goals of each unique transmission, or who they're telling these stories to.

OUR GOAL IS TO BECOME

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b: Our goal is simply to become one more point of incremental growth on that scale of finding what storytelling means for games. We wanted to find an answer to that question of: what is specific to videogames when it comes to delivering a story?

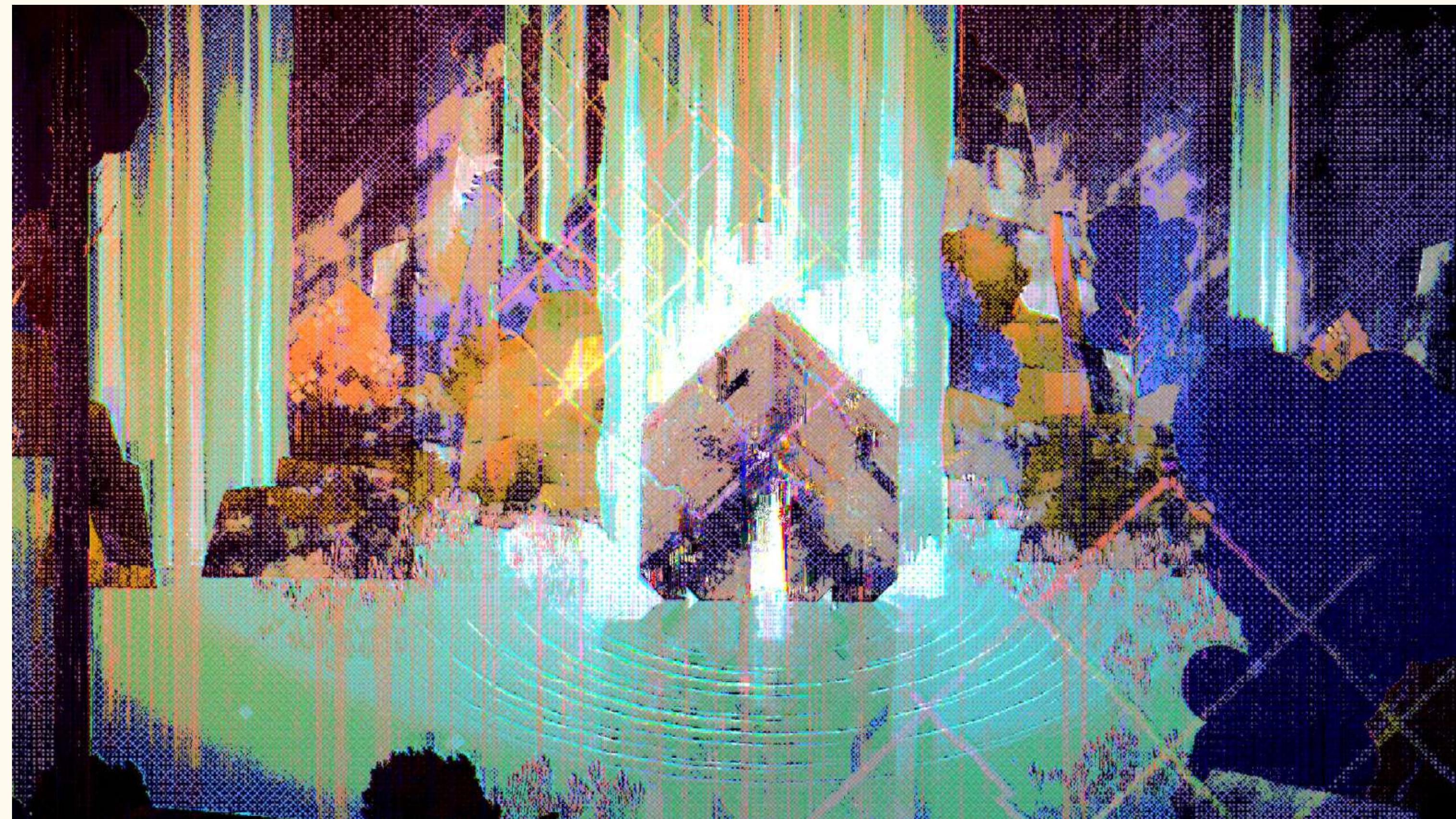
There's a lot of stuff being released on the indie fringes that's exploring this territory, so, it's just like, you can feel it being pushed forward, there's something to be discovered here, and we haven't reached that yet, and we want to take another step in our path in our own way, that's all.

I feel like we're all looking for something that's under a tent, somewhere, and I'd love us to be the ones that lift that tent, even if it takes us ten years to get there.

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A POINT OF GROWTH.

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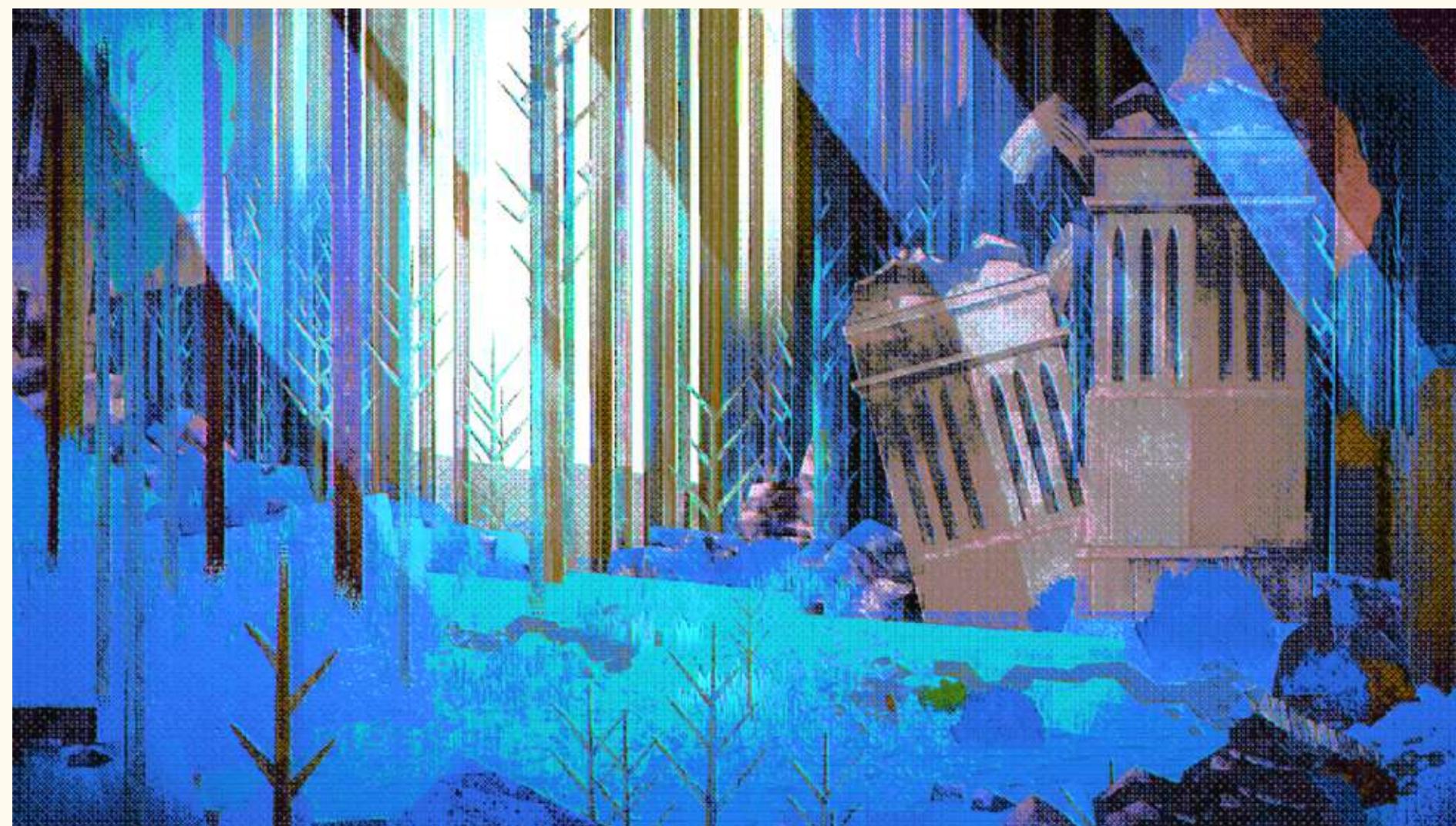


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j: We did six, seven years in the industry before fully committing to a game project. Often, when you see indie developers running with success, it's because they've worked before on big titles that you've probably played, but you didn't know those names were there.

Success builds over time. Some patience is required, and how you get to that point is different for everyone. Maybe you make your first game, and it becomes a huge thing. Maybe it takes you longer, maybe you're doing Owlboy, and it takes you ten years to finish it. But those are ten years of experience.



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b: It took us time to build the game into what we wanted. It took time to deal with the interferences that life threw at us. It took time to build a relationship and find what we really wanted to make. And for me, it took a moment of possibility to start this — I couldn't start this now.

No game is worth sacrificing your relationships, stability, or your worth. Evaluate what your worth is. People start their negotiations without knowing their worth, and it puts you in this position where you don't realize that, it's okay to demand. You should be able to pay yourself — you're doing work.

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**MAYBE IT TAKES YOU
TEN YEARS
TO GET THERE.**

**BUT THOSE ARE
TEN YEARS
OF EXPERIENCE.**

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BEAMS ONE END

SEE YOU ON THE NEXT

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