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Words Works. A Speculative Anti-Disciplinary Design Book

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Designing means giving shape to what is yet to be born; it means always reaching for new standards of representation, balancing creativity and emotion. Words Works is the story of how ideas come to life, shaped by the hands of designers who turn universal concepts into physical and interactive experiences.

What is discovered at the end of the journey is the infinite variety of combinations and shapes that follow each other in space, inviting users to interact with them and reach greater awareness of their feelings, sensations and states of being.

WORDS WORKS

A SPECULATIVE ANTI-DISCIPLINARY DESIGN BOOK

Project realized during the Final Synthesis Design Studio C1, 2017-2018

Bachelor in Communication Design School of Design Politecnico di Milano

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WORQS

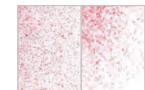
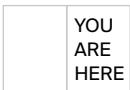
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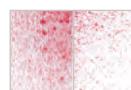
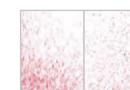
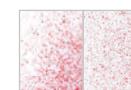
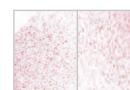
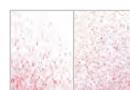
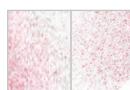
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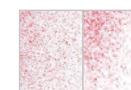
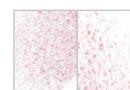
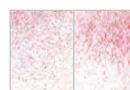
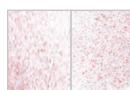
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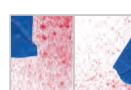
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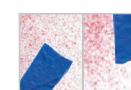
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Francesco E. Guida

ANTI-DISCIPLINARY WORKS, SPECULATIVE WORDS.

In this small publication, we present the results of a four months teaching and learning experience. Our journey started with the assignment to design a communicative experience related to a set of words about emotions or human conditions.

The sole objective stated beforehand was to design an event hosting a communicative machine, a device, or interactive experience – with matching visual identity – interpreting each word, thus leading the audience to a higher understanding of the word itself. The whole design process is based on the principle of learning by doing, which consists of tinkering, making mistakes and trying over and over again to get the best result as possible. This method induces the students to experiment visual expressions and user experiences between two and three

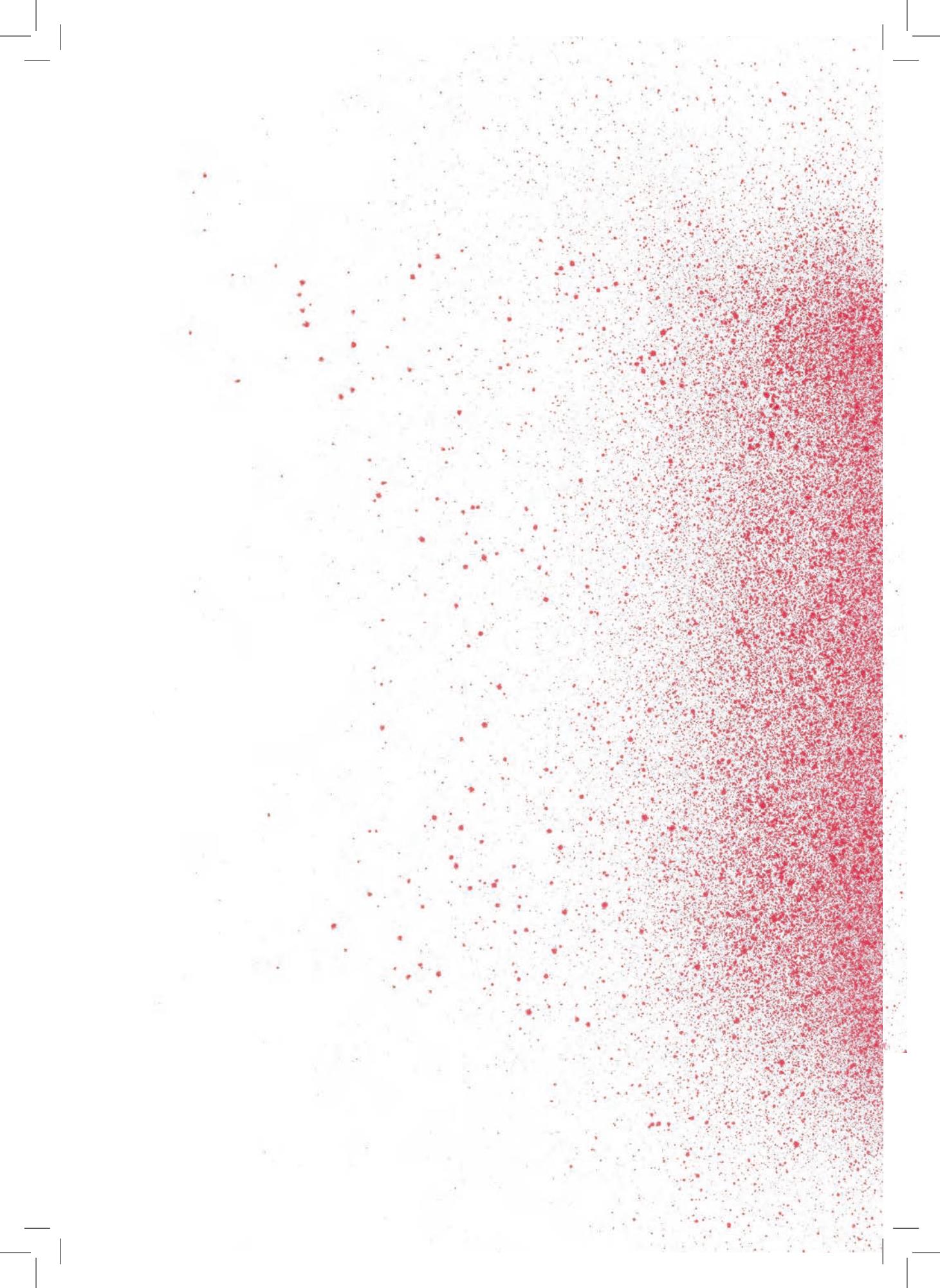
dimensions. It naturally follows that each design has to be discussed theoretically, and verified physically, by making prototypes.

That is because the field of Communication Design is an open context, with blurred boundaries. It is an anti-disciplinary discipline which emerged from the design of physical and immaterial visual artefact to converge into the design of systems (Ito, 2016). In addition, its scope is increasingly shifting from the centrality of the function to the centrality of the meaning (Antonelli, 2011). This change adds value to the introduction of speculative practice in an educational assignment. Communication Design is usually considered a problem-solving practice and teachers often rely on assigning exercises that simulate the professional context. Nevertheless, Communication Design is rarely self-centred: it's a language, a vessel which we can fill with whatever we like. Sometimes clients fill it, sometimes we fill it, but it always remains a vehicle of communication (Fuller, 2012). It is captivating to involve students in a process that moves from problem-solving to problem-finding, encouraging

them to develop concepts and scenarios without any pre-defined function. And then conceive, design and verify solutions. It is not necessarily a matter of skills and technicalities: it is a matter of intellectual knowledge. It is a matter of having the strongest motivation for learning uncertain things rather than just how to practice a profession.

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- Fuller, J. (2012). "Graphic design as a liberal art". Available from: <http://jarrettfuller.com/projects/liberalart> [Accessed 11th Feb. 2018].
- Ito, J. (2016). "Design and Science. Can design advance science, and can science advance design?". Journal of Design and Science. Available at <http://jods.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/designandscience> [Accessed 11th Feb. 2018].



VISUALS

IDENTITY
AS A SELF
STORYTELLING

1/4

*Thinking
is drawing
in your head.*

– Alan Fletcher

WORD

ALTRUISM



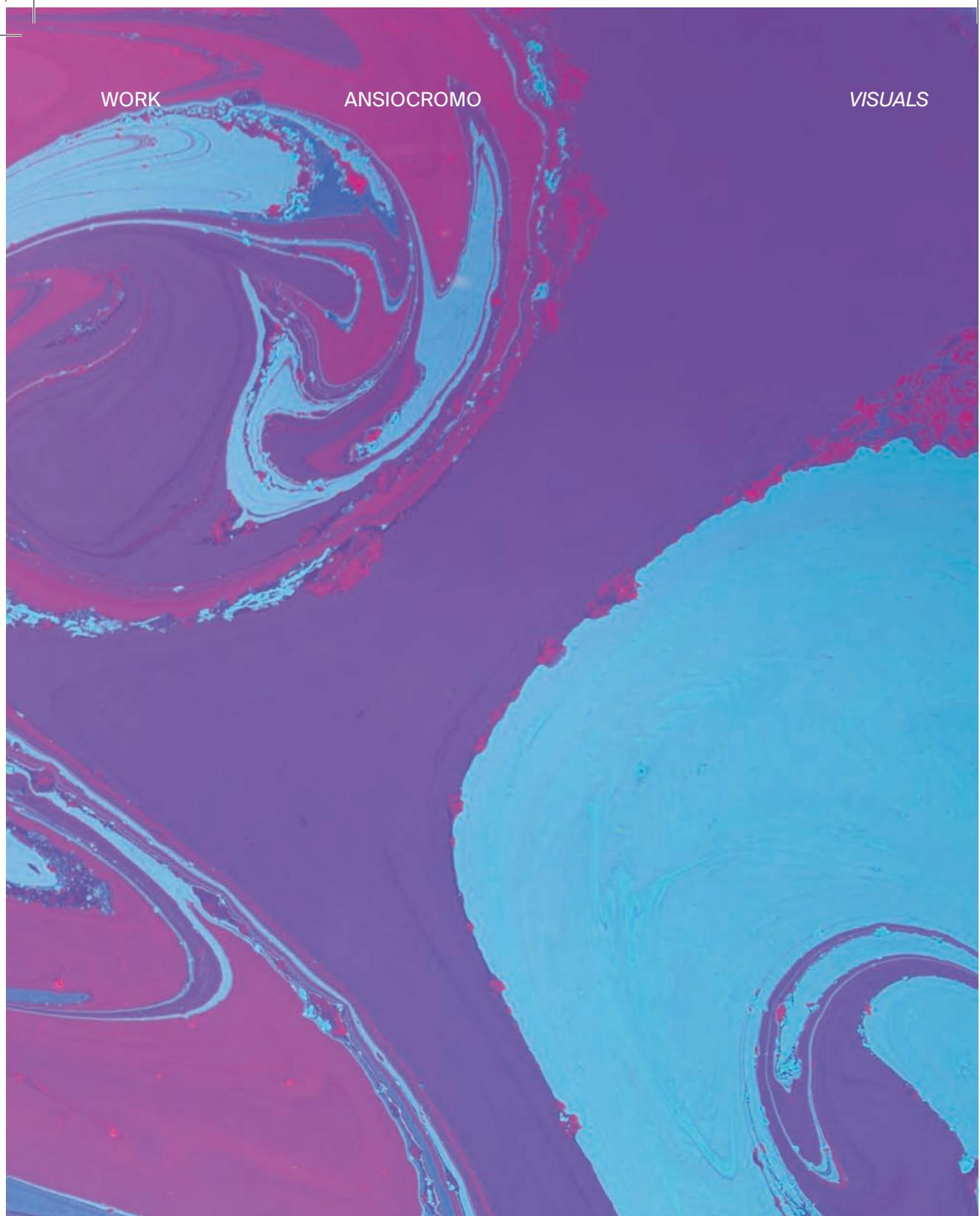


The artisan charm of printing meets the ironic and irreverent tone of Grift's graphic stamps; together they give life to a unique visual.



WORD

ANXIETY



A chromatic map based on a circular grid is the “clinical” report displaying the various levels of anxiety analyzed by Ansiocromo.

IN CASE OF
STRESSFUL BOSSES,
COFFEES THAT SUCK,
ANNOYING COLLEAGUES,
TERRIBLE MONDAYS,
BORING DOCUMENTS,
USELESS EXCEL TABS,
INFINITE BUSINESS
CALLS, PRINTERS THAT
WON'T WORK.

IN CASE OF ROUTINE.



An ironic language of emergency, emphasized by the colour red, invites the user to rely on Divago to fight the alienating routine.

WORD

DOUBT



WORK

OLLA

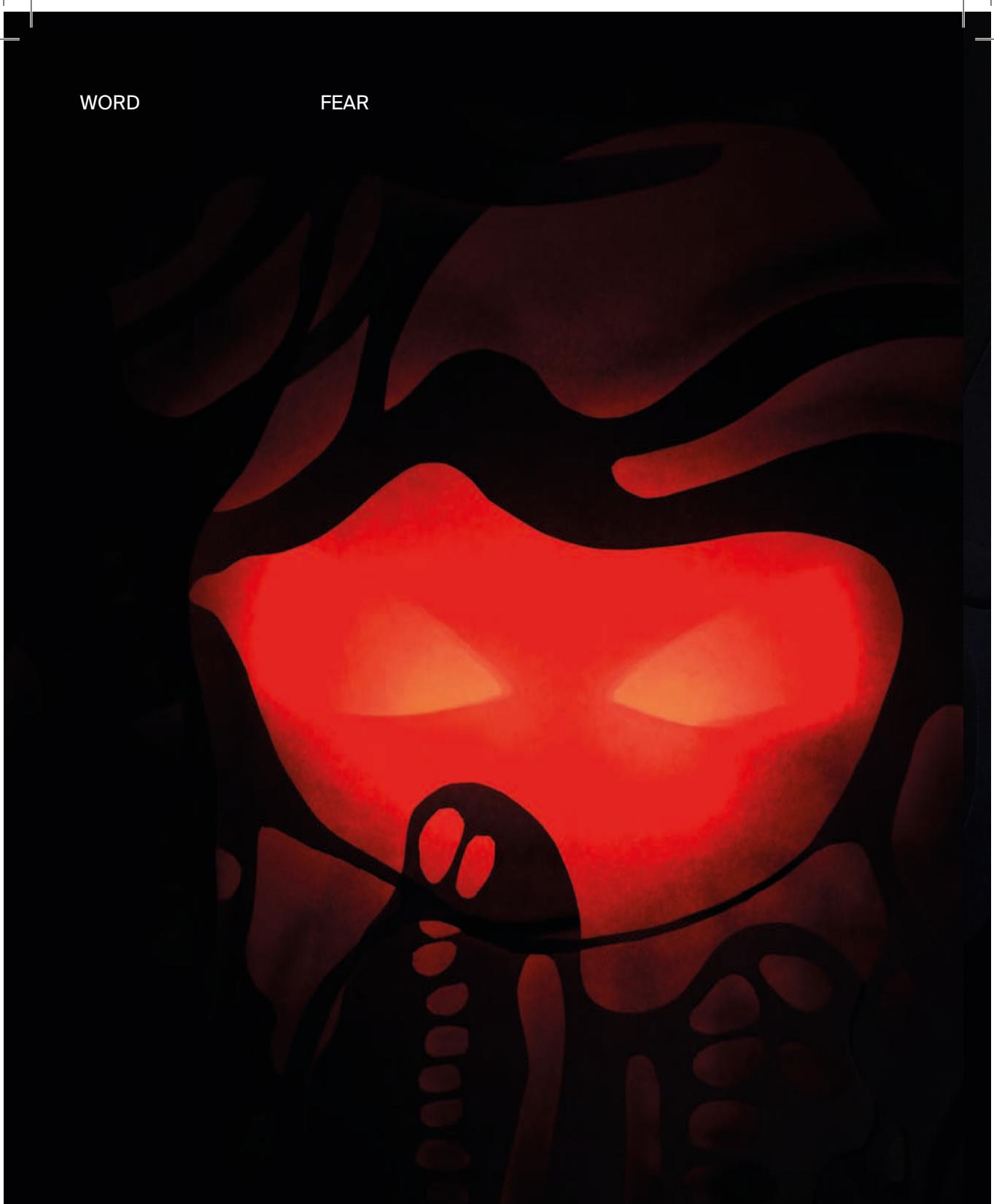
VISUALS



Suspended within transparent spheres, the emblems of certainty chosen by Olla crystallize into the popular beliefs of contemporary society.

WORD

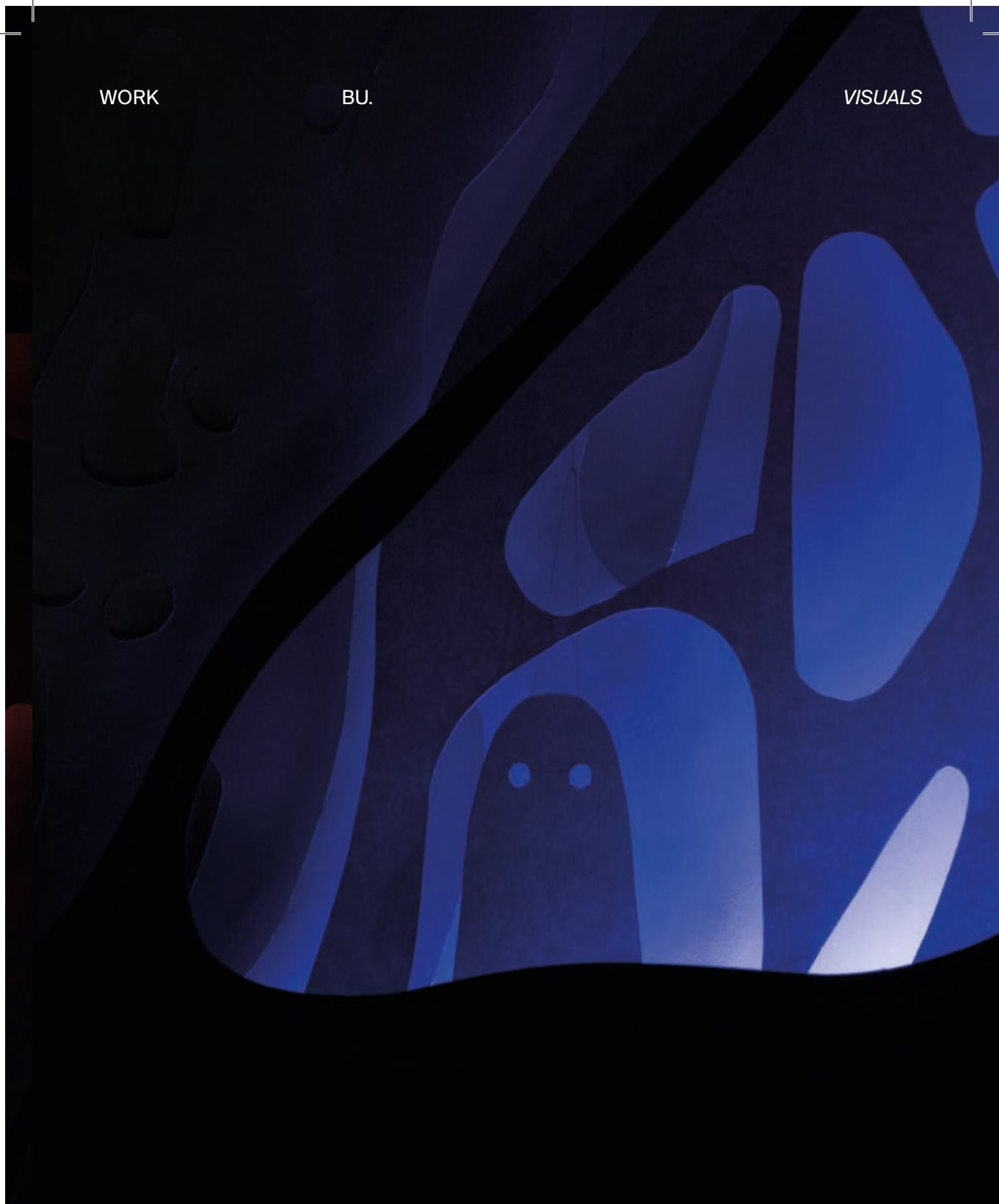
FEAR



WORK

BU.

VISUALS



Red and blue: two different worlds or two sides of the same coin?
The macabre tones are softened and revealed through Bu's character.

WORD

INDIFFERENCE



WORK

WUNDER KAMERA

VISUALS



Much like in a museum, Wunder Kamera's archive system ranges from biology to art, from physics to technology.

WORD

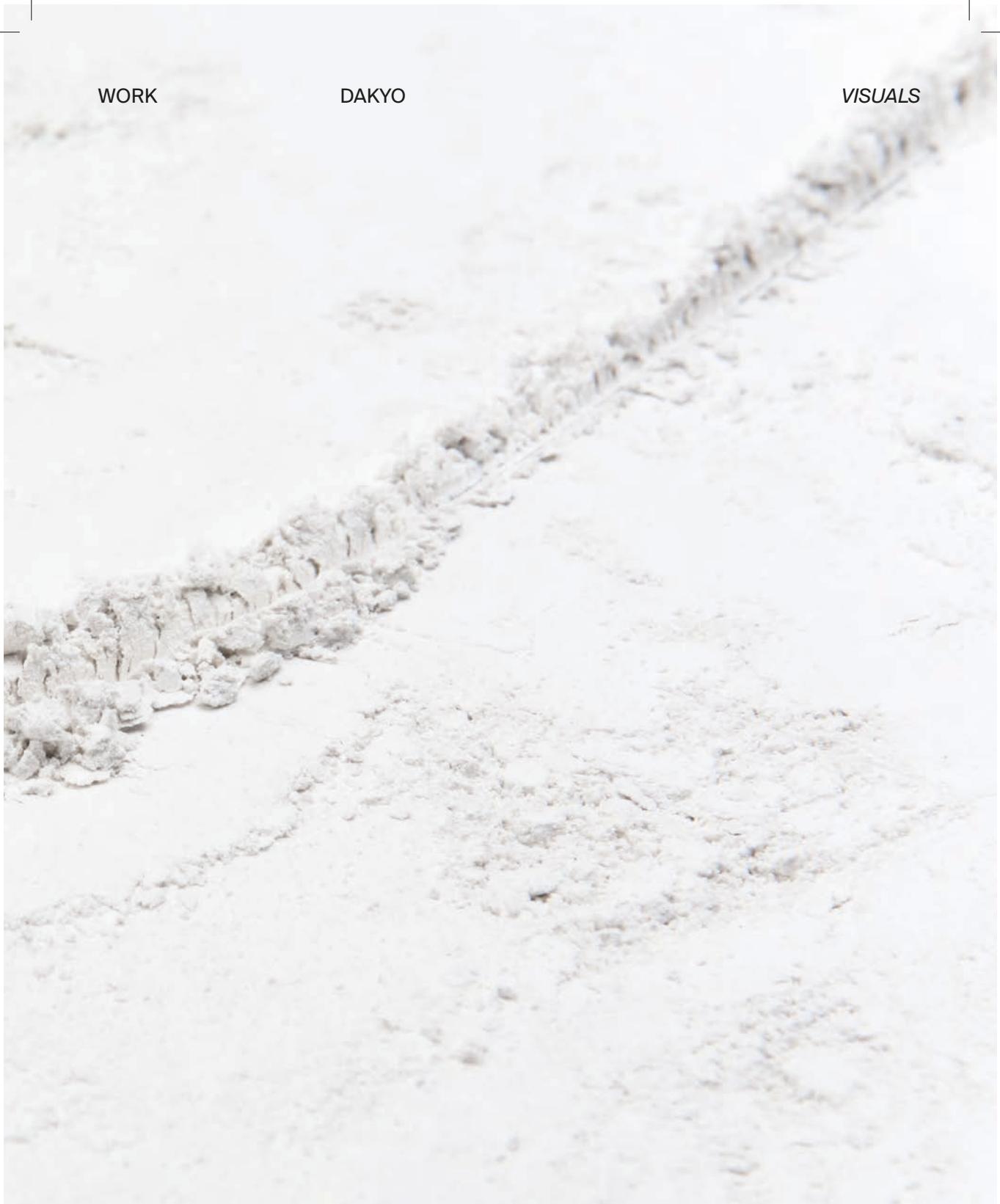
INTRASIGENCE



WORK

DAKYO

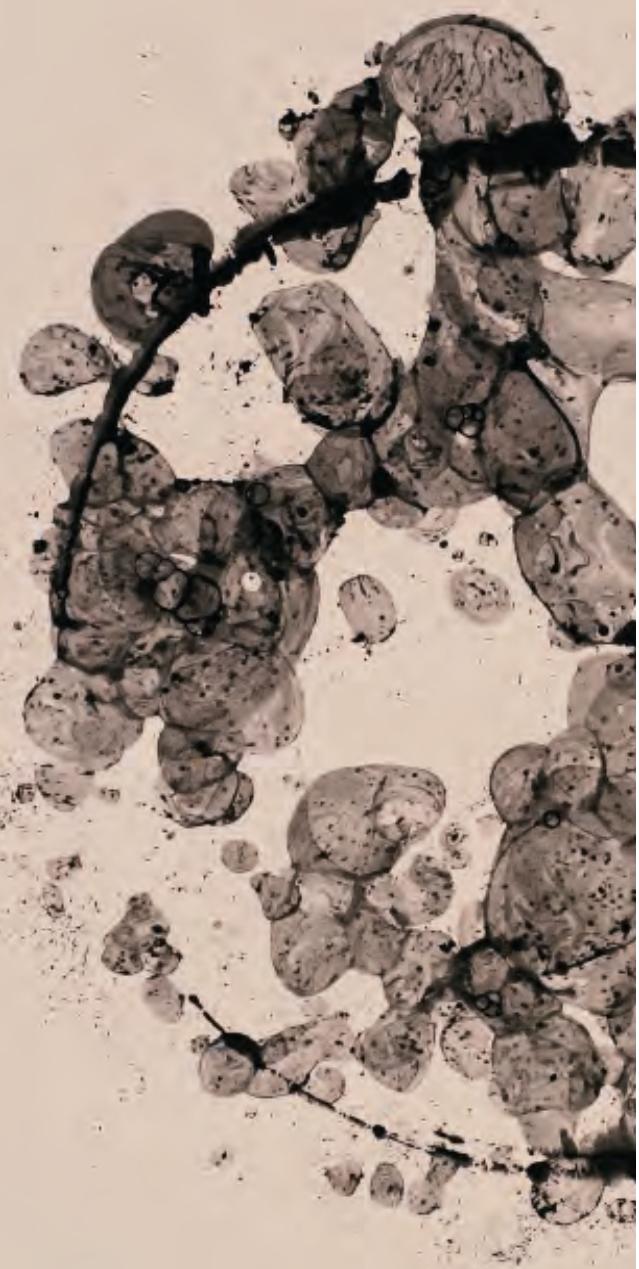
VISUALS



The traces of the fight against the intransigence of time take shape in Dakyo,
thanks to the materiality and permanence in the air typical of chalk dust.

WORD

PERFECTION





Circa's solution is black, thick and viscous; however it becomes light, impalpable and one-dimensional as soon as it meets the paper.

WORD

PITY

WORK

PITYBEAR

VISUALS



The Japanese illustrative style chosen for Pitybear creates a dreamy, light and innocent atmosphere, in line with the two characters' figures.

WORD

RESPECT

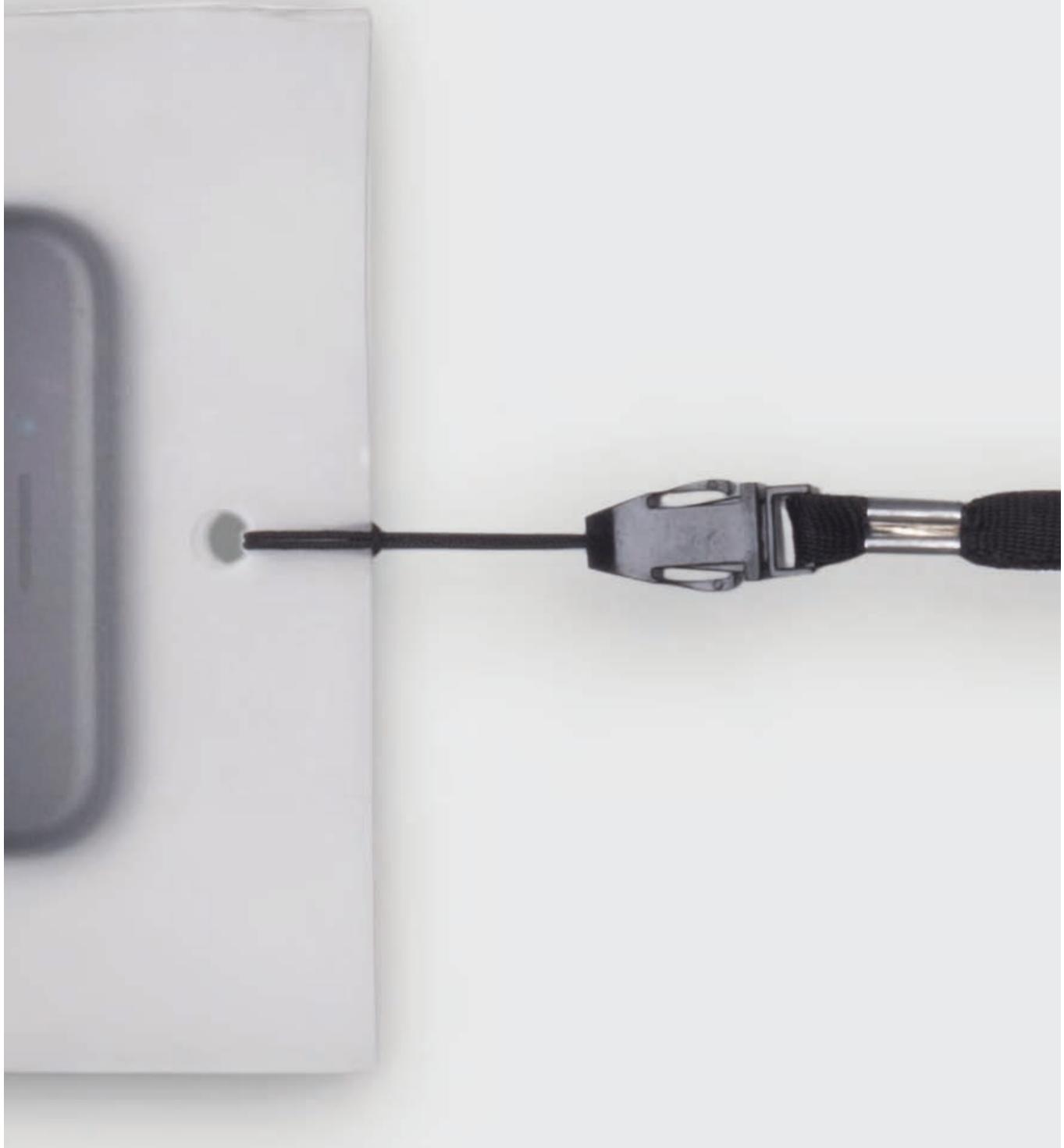
S Keep your phone inside the bag the more you can. If you can't bear it any longer, throw it into the nearest bin. You will find 3 of them throughout the exhibition.

respac

WORK

RESPACK

VISUALS



An opaque film placed over reality and an out-of-focus filter characterize the entire visual identity associated with Respack.

WORD

SELFISHNESS



ego

WORK

EGO

VISUALS



Yellow balloons on a black background: the tension and power of one's selfishness are conveyed through the occupation of the center of attention.

WORD

VACUITY

WORK

EL DORADO

VISUALS

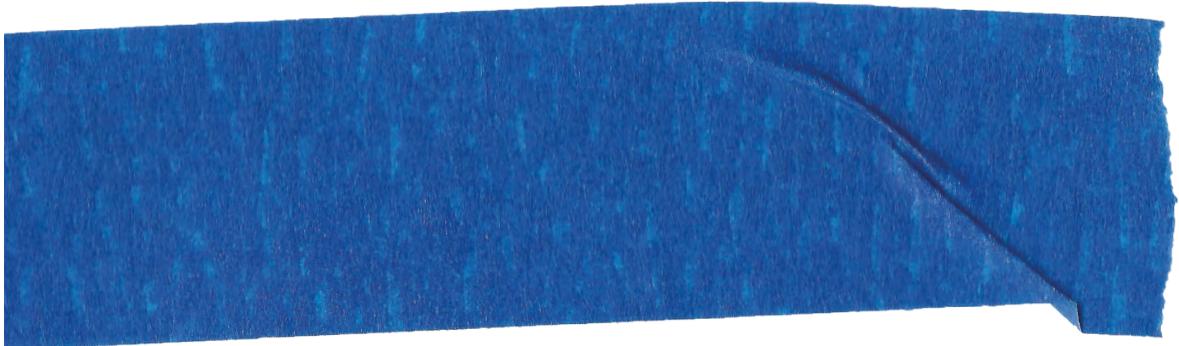


Initially hidden behind an eye-catching and ephemeral golden coating,
the inconsistency and senselessness of vacuity come to light.



CRAFTS

2/4



ANATOMY
OF A WORK



*Design is the
art of planning,
and it is the art
of making things
possible.*

– Paula Scher

WORD

ALTRUISM



WORK

GRIFT

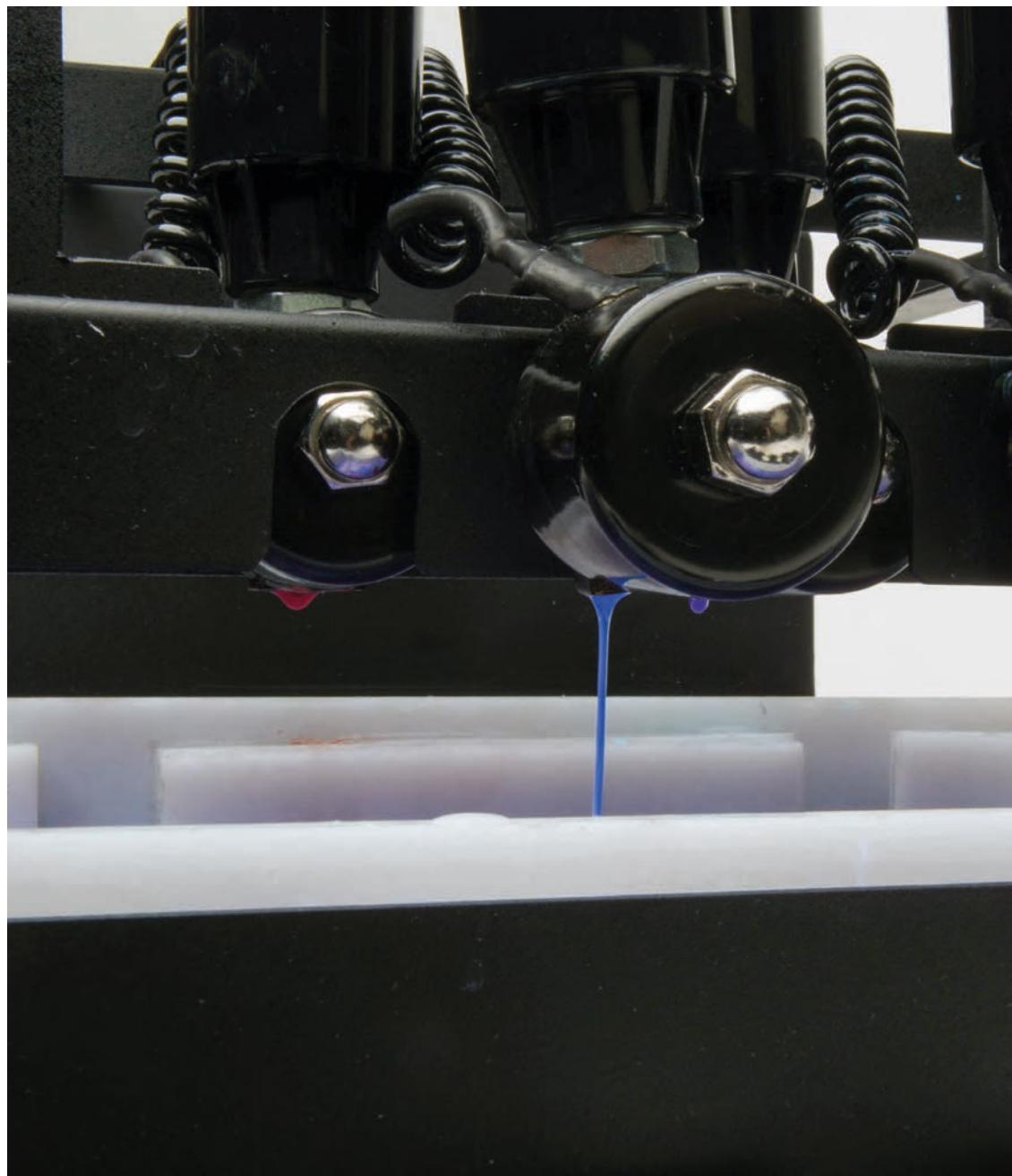
CRAFTS

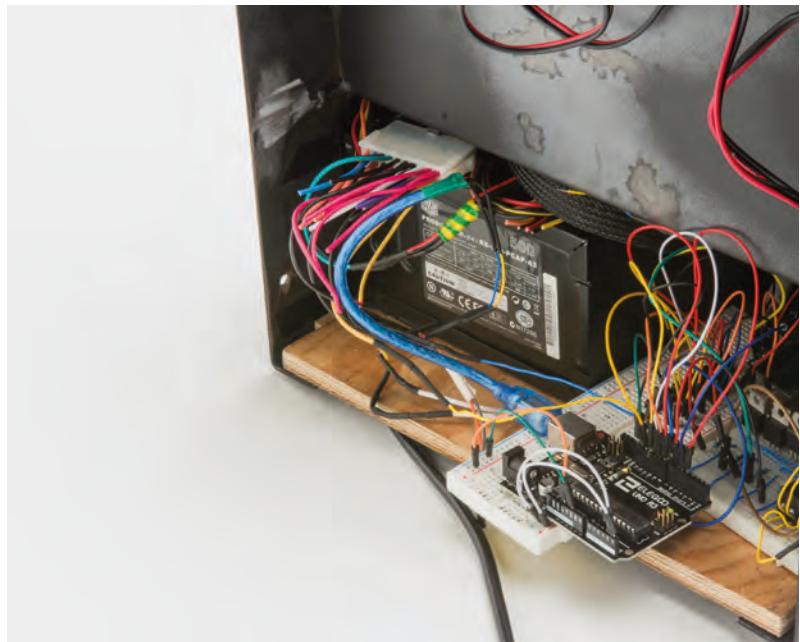


Grift's stamps are created from original handmade designs; to allow serial production the relative plexiglass molds were created and used to carry out the casting in silicon rubber, which gradually solidifies. At the core of the whole project is the engagement of the user in an interactive experience designed to be unforgettable.

WORD

ANXIETY

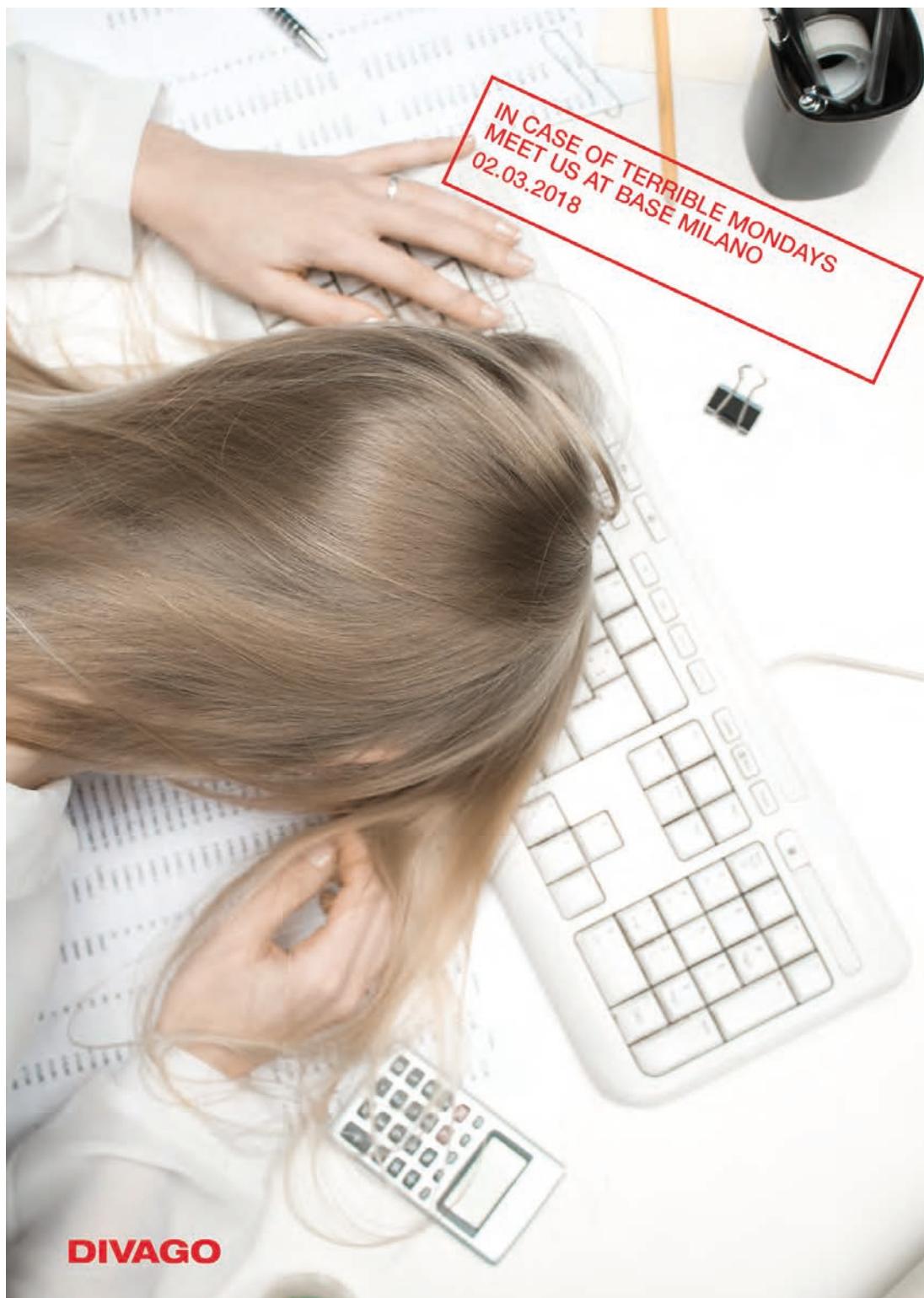




In the design of a complex communicative device, the technical and mechanical components are essential for the correct functioning of the whole experience. The ansiocromo device, inspired by scientific and medical machinery, is based on a system of solenoid valves controlled by an Arduino, each of them powered by a different electric circuit.

WORD

DISTRACTION



DIVAGO

WORK

DIVAGO

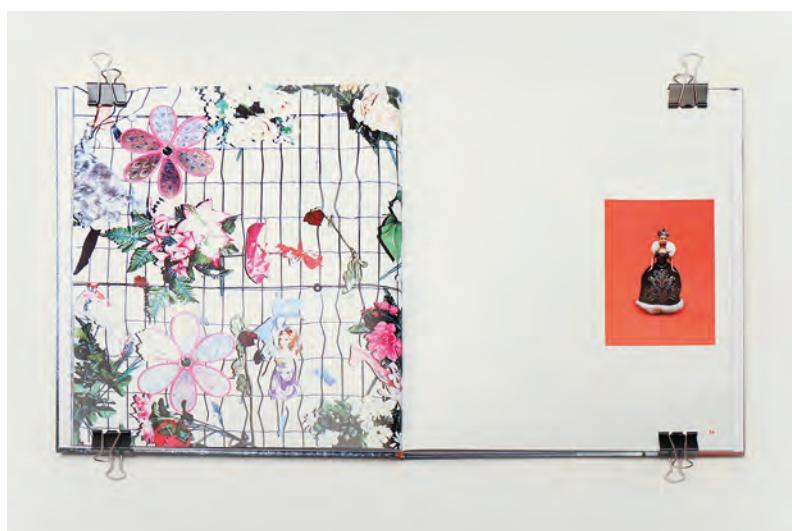
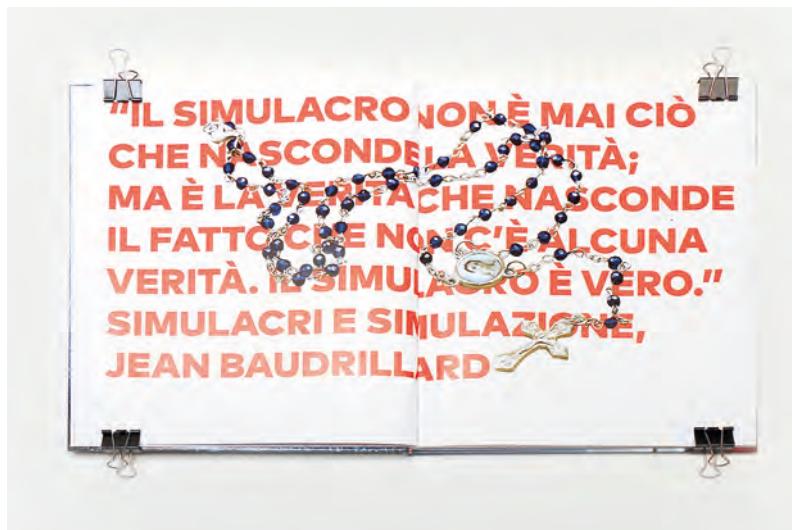
CRAFTS



Within a complex project even the design of a believable scenography plays a fundamental role in visual communication. For Divago, the chosen set consists of an office desk, on which we find some anonymous and stereotypical objects commonly used at work; the space, however, becomes the playground for an ironic promotional campaign against the daily routine.

WORD

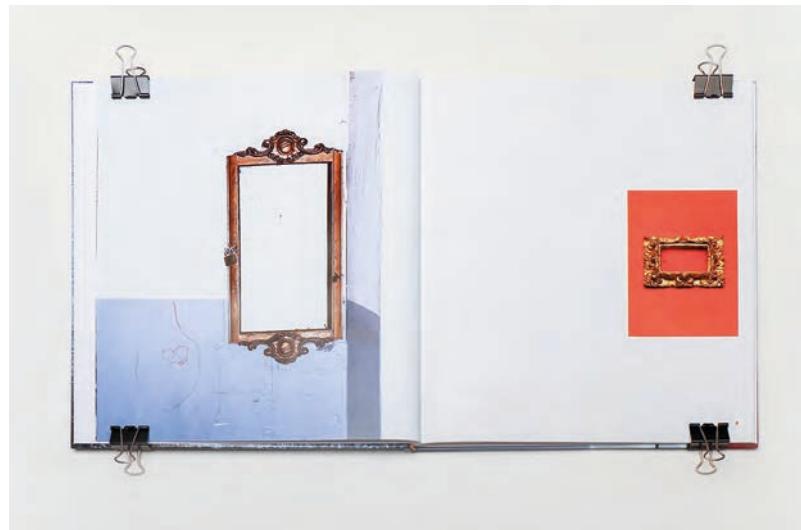
DOUBT



WORK

OLLA

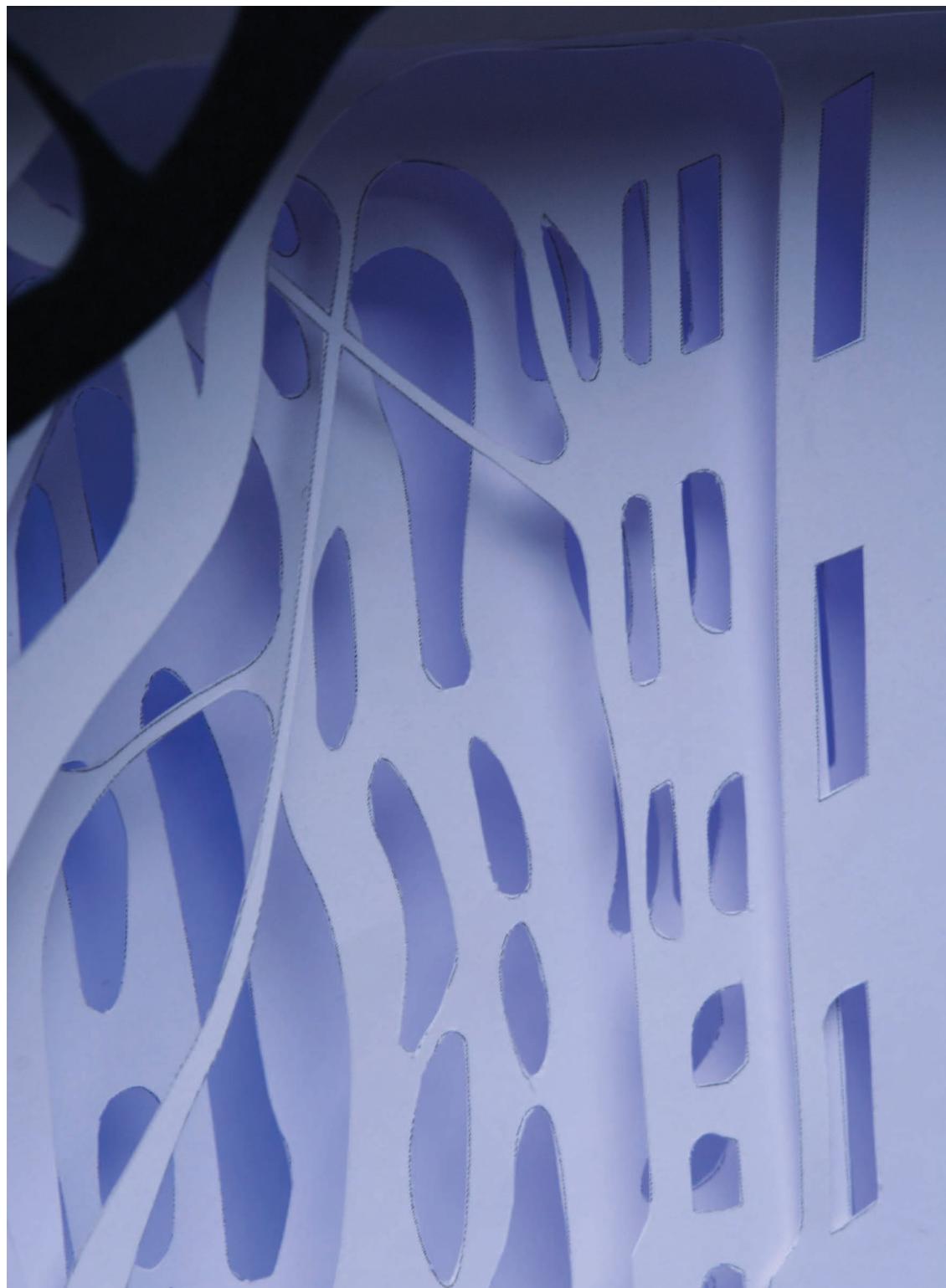
CRAFTS



The narrative component is the core of a design project. Olla makes of documentary research and, even more, of photographic reportage the tools for developing a critical outlook on contemporary society. The summary of this journey is found in a catalog composed of a series of photographic associations, which represent the pieces of a more complex story.

WORD

FEAR





Designing an installation means, first and foremost, researching which elements can make the user experience as engaging as possible. Bu.'s lightboxes were realized through the overlapping of seven different paper levels, illuminated by a light source behind them that gives depth to the whole. The illustrations, conceived and traced digitally, were then carved by hand.





The editorial project aims to be the tangible declaration of an intention and the instrument through which a message can be conveyed. The Wunder Kamera catalog is conceived as the collection and inventory of the images the user can choose from while composing his photography. The stitched binding, with a great detail in the finishes and a 180 ° opening, allows an easy consultation.

WORD

INTRASIGENCE

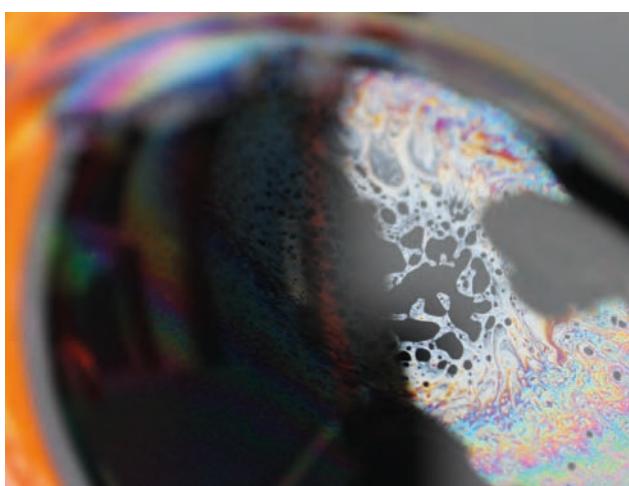
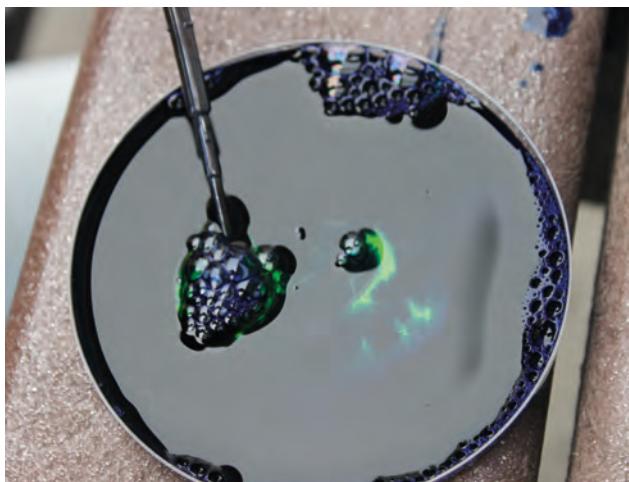


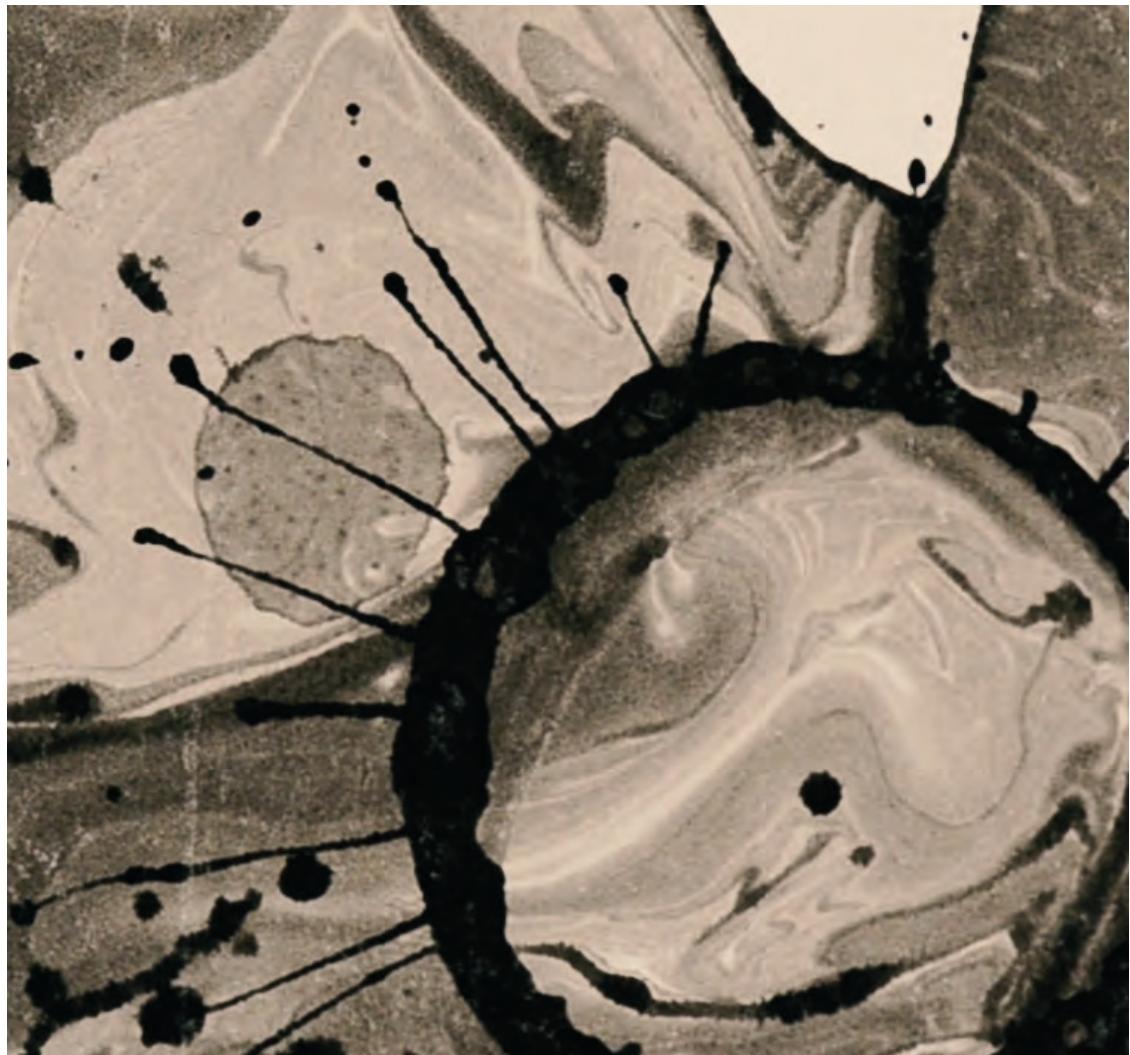


Among the various design components that contribute to the creation of the specific mood and visual identity of the project, a key role is played by the material and its peculiar features. In Dakyo the physical properties of chalk dust allow the hand to trace a groove during the rotation. The groove, combined with the dust and the color white, is the core element of Dakyo's "zen aura".

WORD

PERFECTION

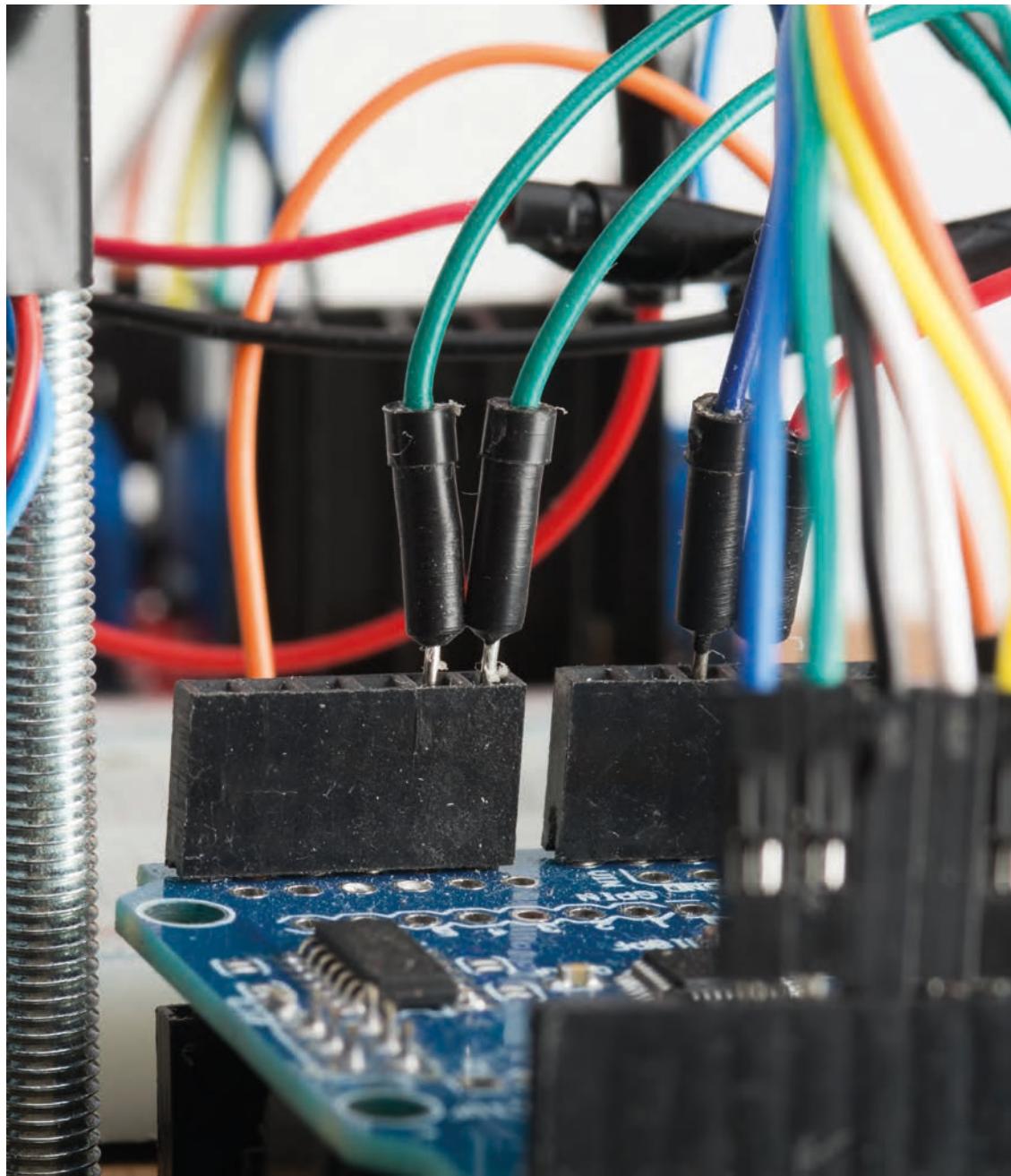




Experimentation is fundamental in order to achieve a result: it allows to create new paths, exclude others and finally find the one to follow. Circa's dense solution is mainly composed of water and black paint, with a small addition of soap.

WORD

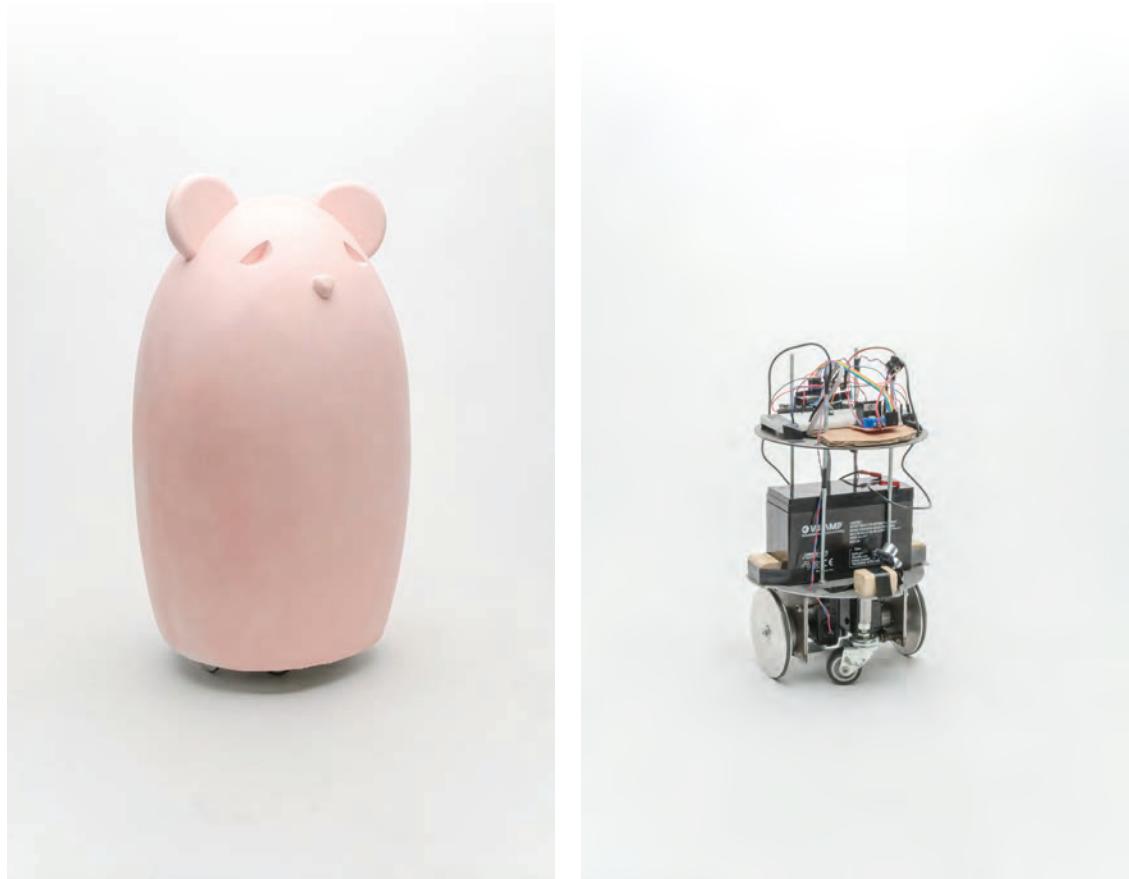
PITY



WORK

PITYBEAR

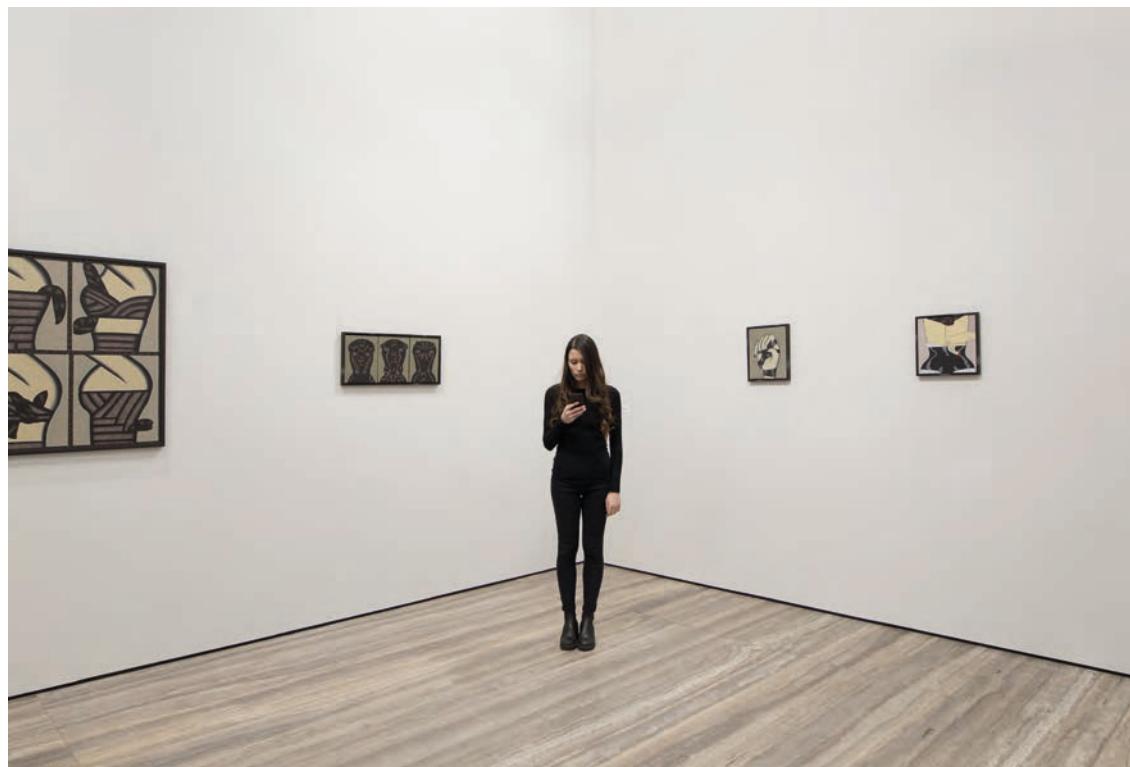
CRAFTS

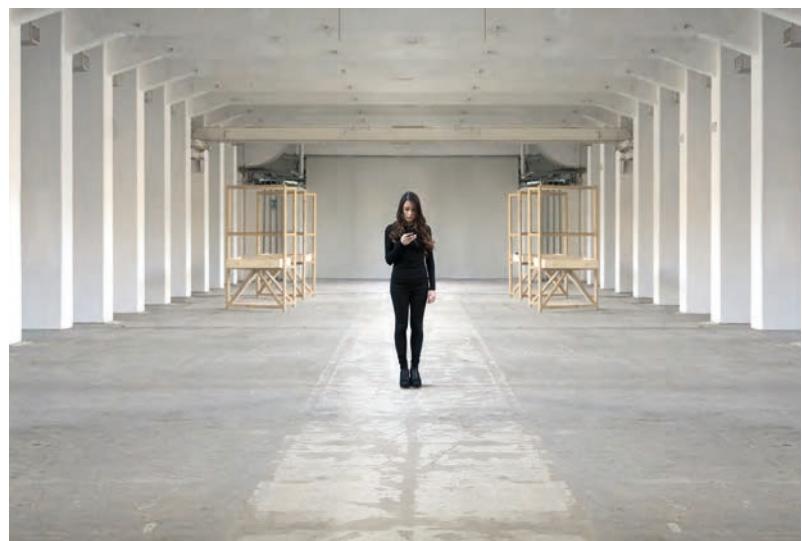


Interaction design is the discipline concerning the design of the interaction between human beings and mechanical and IT systems. Programmed through the use of Arduino Uno, the Pitybear robotic teddy bear is powered by a 12 volt battery; it is also equipped with three proximity sensors that allow it to change its route in order to avoid all possible obstacles.

WORD

RESPECT





Within a communicative artifact, the visual dimension goes beyond the verbal one, making the design project an organic, metalinguistic structure, bearer of deeper meanings. Respack bases its visual essence on the photographic component: it is through photography that a sense of estrangement and apathetic isolation is conveyed.

WORD

SELFISHNESS



WORK

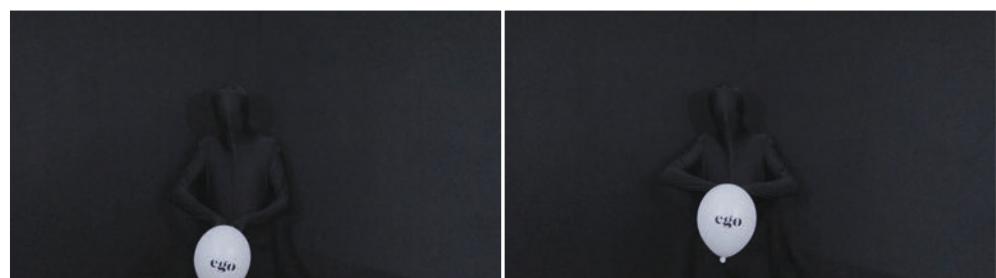
EGO

CRAFTS



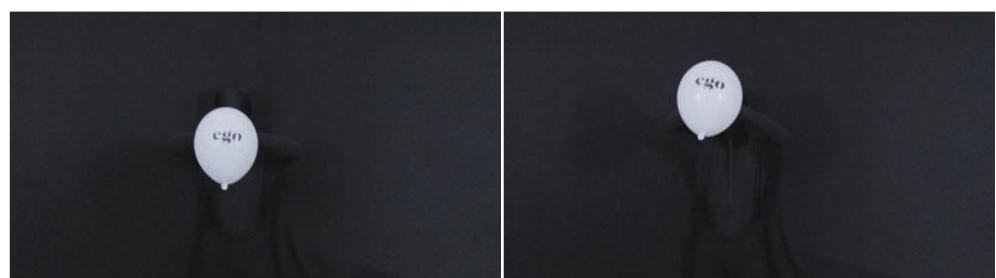
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00:02

00:03



00:04

00:05

Behind a teaser like Ego's, unusual and original ideas are hidden, proving that even a simple balloon moving in front of a camera requires planning and resourcefulness. The person dressed in black has been darkened in post-production and the balloon made of the desired yellow.

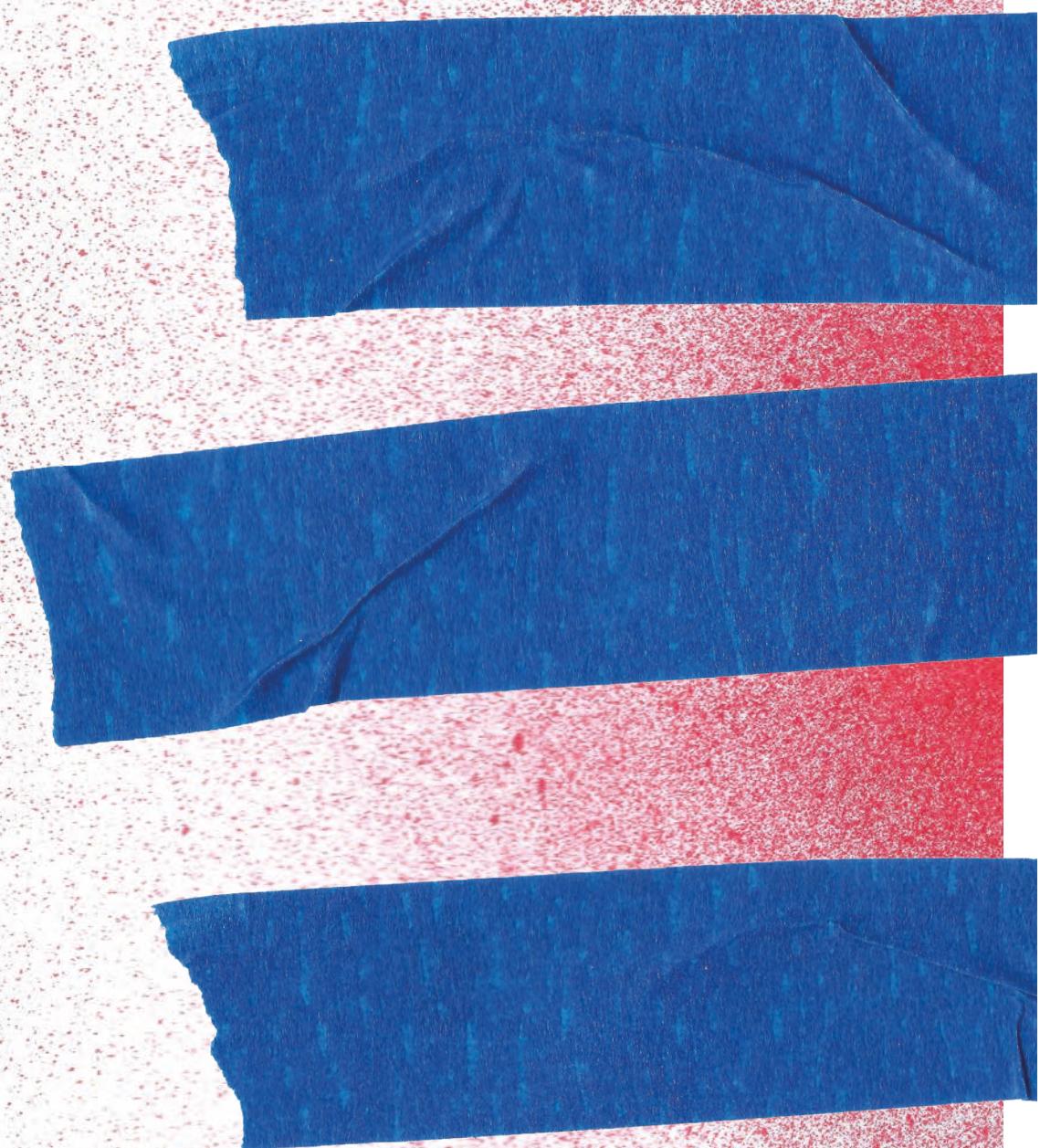
WORD

VACUITY



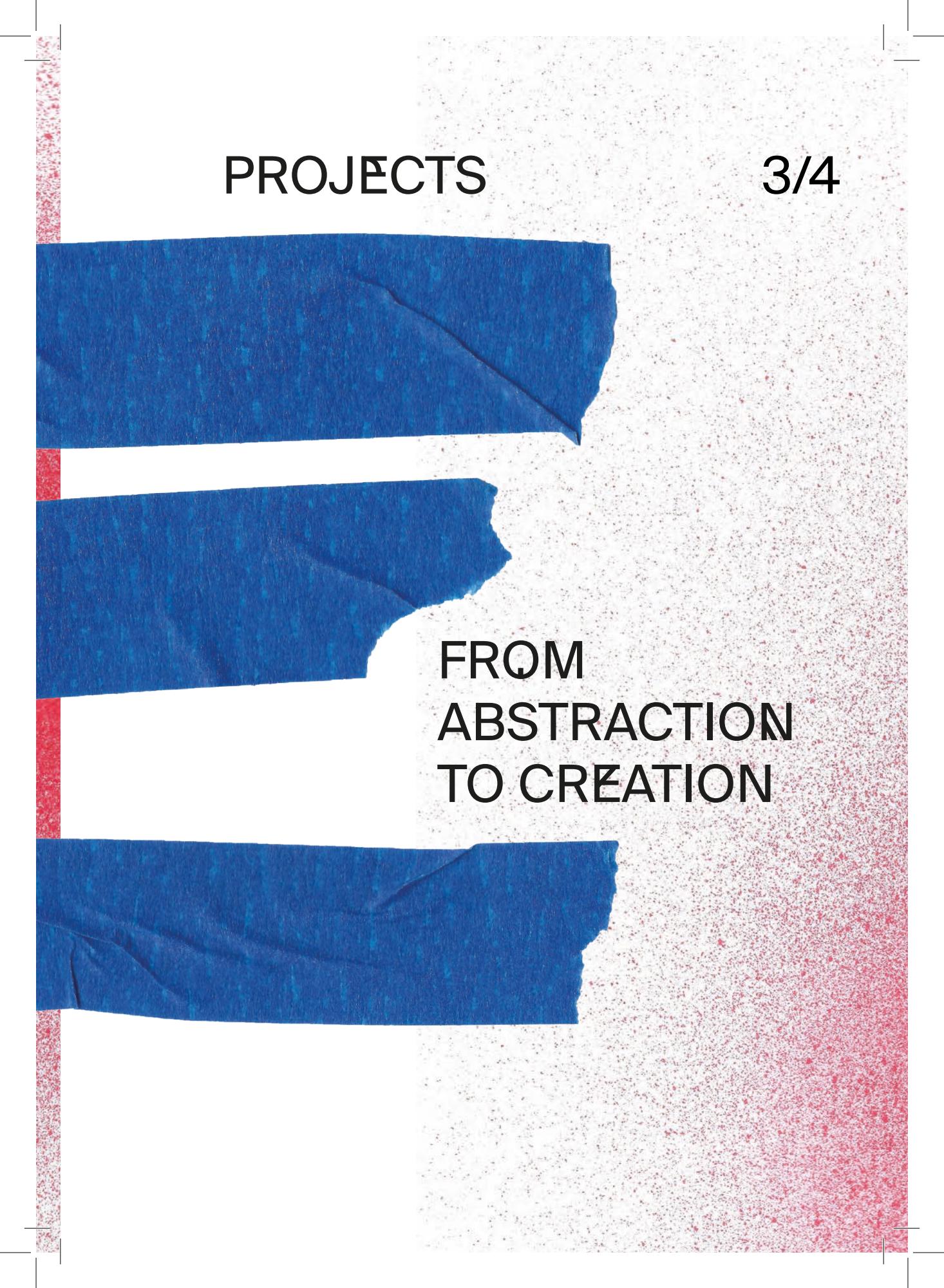


The material component within a design project allows to emphasize the multi-sensorial and experiential nature of a given artifact. The golden dust that covers the Void Lottery walls, typical of scratchers, was created by combining silver acrylic paint with liquid soap and by covering it all with golden spray paint.



PROJECTS

3/4



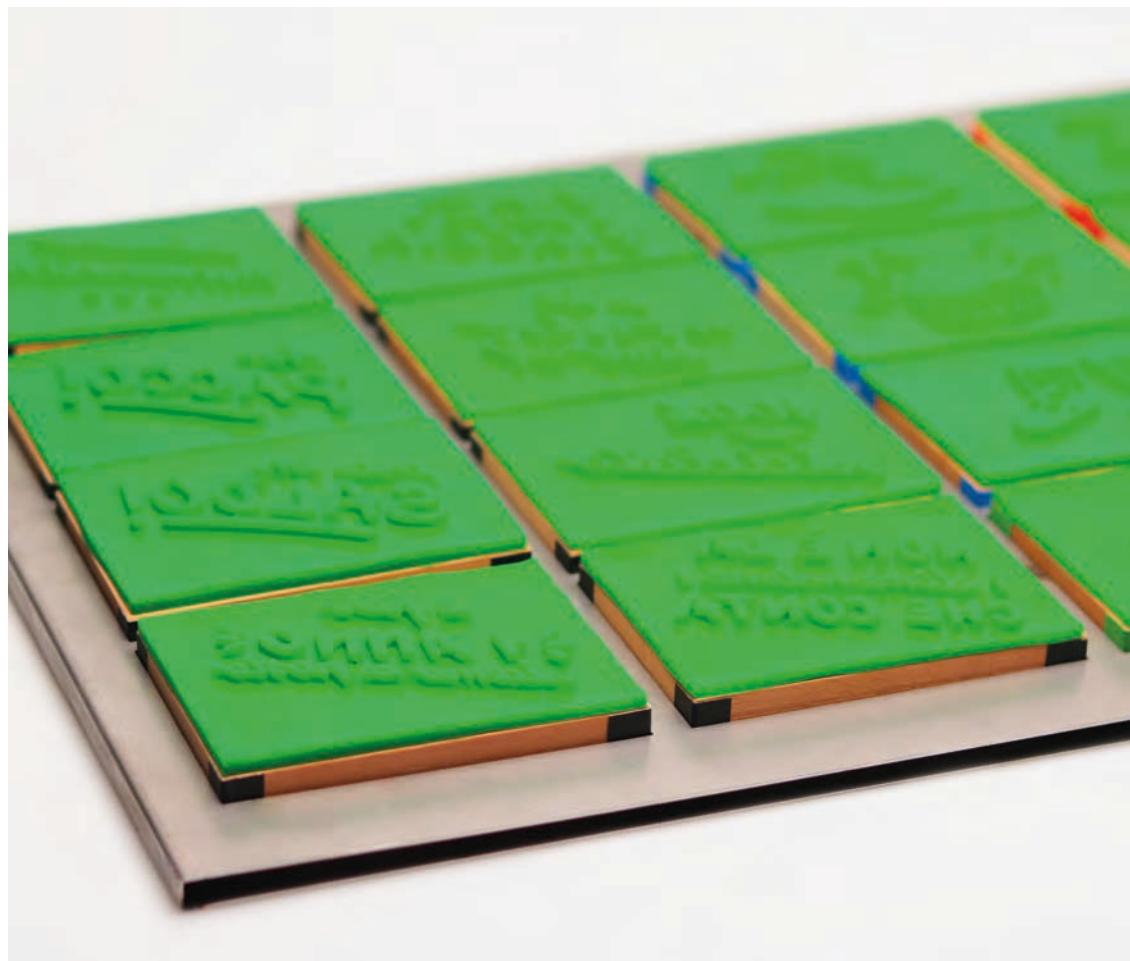
FROM
ABSTRACTION
TO CREATION

*We take invisible
ideas and make
them tangible.
That's our job.*

– Debbie Millman

WORD

ALTRUISM



By definition, altruism means "disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others". However, more often than not, in today's society the dedication to one's neighbor has become a burden and a duty, if not even a grotesque mask of fake goodism.

Very often, even the ultimate selfless gesture - the one of the gift - becomes a conformist practice rather than an act of genuine generosity. It is exactly from the symbol of the gift that Grift is born; the naming, word pun between "grift" and "gift", highlights how the concept draws inspiration from those situations in which people don't put their heart into gift-giving. Hence the idea of creating a handcrafted and customizable wrapping paper, which allows people to honestly express their feelings about making gifts. The whole identity is therefore characterized by an artisanal stamp and a distinctly ironic tone.

During the "Make a Grift" experience, the user first creates the matrix that will be printed on his wrapping paper; in order to do this, he can choose from a set of textual and graphic stamps and arrange them at his liking. The crucial phase takes place in front of the printing machine: the matrix and the paper sheet are positioned, the stamps are inked and the press is activated (an operation that must be repeated until the whole sheet is printed). Finally, once the ink has completely dried, the paper is rolled up and ready to pack a grift.

WORD

ANXIETY



Anxiety is a subjective condition that can vary from individual to individual by type, seriousness and symptoms. It can be seen as a “state of being” which is able to distort one’s perception of reality and the perceived control over it.

“Ansiocromo” draws its essence from this concept of alteration of reality, setting as its main goal the graphic representation of this distortion. It is, in fact, a device able to visually render the most common forms of anxiety that people experience: health-related anxiety, work anxiety, social anxiety or individual anxiety. The agitation and instability associated with this concept - graphically evoked by a wavy and rippled surface - represent the leitmotiv of the entire visual identity.

Inside the installation space, the user finds himself having to undergo a real exam, whose final report visually shows what types of anxiety relate to him. To start, in fact, an anxiety-related questionnaire is submitted to the user; afterwards, an operator inserts the recorded values into the ansiochrome, which translates the different types of anxiety into colors and mixes them together. Finally, another operator imprints the result on paper and delivers the final output to the user.

WORD

DISTRACTION



Distraction, usually interpreted in a negative way, can actually turn out to be a real creative revolution, a weapon against the tyranny of concentration.

Divago is a brand of objects designed to distract during the monotony of daily routine; therefore, the aim is to encourage people to give in to distraction, as a relieving and liberating transgression. The purpose of Divago's product line is to offer immediate relief from everyday stress, like real emergency systems; this is why the whole brand's visual identity is strongly inspired by the world of alarms and fire systems. Reliability, rapidity and simplicity are the qualities and values at the core of the brand, whose philosophy is summarized in the claim "In case of routine".

The installation linked to the Divago experience consists in an exhibition that showcases the brand in its totality: the focus is, of course, the display of the objects of distraction (Doppioclic, Mosca, Pioggiatore and Millebolle) with the relative packaging. It is also possible to recall the entire history of the brand and to enjoy a lightly ironic illustration of the typical daily routine, described through a series of posters and leaflets.

WORD

DOUBT



Doubt is a powerful tool that allows people to achieve personal growth and critical spirit to face life's experiences. It can be defined as the antithesis of certainty, which, if extremeized to blindness, stands as an obstacle between the individual and true knowledge.

Olla is an attitude, a critical approach to contemporary reality: in a world of certainties, the brand invites people to actively seek doubt as a tool for reflection and growth. The meaning behind the whole brand is summarized in the slogan "Question the claim"; the whole concept is strengthened by the choice of photography to report the contradictions that lie in the system of apparent truths of today's society.

The installation consists of four different moments. At the entrance the user is given a token; he then enters the space and interacts with large transparent spheres, which he is invited to touch and move over to make his way through the installation: they contain a series of objects associated with popular beliefs and certainties. The user thus reaches the back wall of the installation where he finds a "doubt dispenser"; by inserting the token he receives a small sphere containing a query that calls into question his beliefs. Finally, at the exit, he can collect different gadgets and flip through the exhibition catalog, containing the photographic reportage on which the identity of Olla is based.

WORD

FEAR



By fear we mean an unpleasant emotion of strong concern, distress or even terror caused by the presence - or the threat - of either real or imaginary dangers.

This was the starting point for the creation of Bu; the whole concept is based on the progressive transition from a state of increasing fear to one final stage of unveiling that drastically pulverizes the built up distress. Following the same logic the communication, structured on two different levels, instills a feeling of fear and dread in the phase preceding the experience, revealing only at the very end the architect of such turmoil: a funny and harmless character named Bu. The installation revolves around the display of five sequential 3D-illustrations which, realized by overlapping several layers of paper in backlit-boxes, visually tell a story.

The protagonist is a common man who, on his way home, witnesses the environment grow more and more disturbing, increasingly fomenting his fear. To intensify the engagement, the fourth scene is directly experienced by the user who, entering a black box hanging from the ceiling, is surrounded by a dark presence evoked through lights and sounds. The climax ends with the sudden unveiling of Bu: the reassuring character's aim is to drastically scale down the user's everyday fears.

WORD

INDIFFERENCE



The concept of Indifference has many different meanings, among which - especially relevant within the image-saturated society we live in - that of carefreeness and total lack of interest in what happens every day before our eyes.

Wunder Kamera, word pun on Wunderkammer ("room of wonders") and a photographic camera, is a device capable of producing images that need great care; it is designed as a photoimpression machine, except for the fact that it's not possible to develop the photographs. The inspiration for the entire visual identity, with its strong "archive" flavour, was taken from the wunderkammer, the historic 16th-century-ancestors of modern museums. The physical device consists of two parts: a lightbox, which serves as light source for the photographic impression, and a main body in which a series of tracing papers - chosen from a collection of sixty - is placed. Each tracing paper carries a different print belonging to one of the four iconographic categories available: biology, physics, art and technology.

The final composition is the result of an act of extreme care, through which the user can create his own photograph. Finally, the image has to be carefully preserved in a folder - physically and metaphorically protected from any threat of indifference - so that the light does not make the impression vanish.

WORD

INTRASIGENCE



Intransigence is inflexibility and immobility. It represents a form of rigidity that does not compromise nor change.

Hence the experience of Dakyo (Japanese for "intransigence"). The project is inspired by the inflexibility of time, whose eternal flow cannot be altered. However, it inevitably leaves a mark, whose visual and graphic trace - besides constituting the identity of the installation itself - also represents the core of its functioning. The inspiration at the heart of the communicative device is the analogical clock: the idea is to put the users under the illusion that they can actually stop the flow of time by blocking one hand. In reality, once the hand is released, it immediately goes back to indicating the current time, proceeding with its relentless motion. At the end of the hand a perpendicular tip allows to leave a groove in the chalk-dust base. At each user's interaction, the telescopic hand extends, tracing a short radial groove at first, followed by another circumference, or arc of circumference, of increasingly greater radius.

The lengthening of the hand initially puts the user under the deluded impression that he has in fact modified the events, by managing to stop the time. However, the swift repositioning of the hand on the current hour immediately makes him understand how time is the sovereign and the person before it is powerless.

WORD

PERFECTION



Perfection is a Utopian ideal, that can only exist theoretically. In fact, as soon as someone tries to actualize it, it vanishes, becoming imperfect. In the concept of perfection, therefore, lie both its own negation and overcoming.

"Circa" (symbol of perfection and at the same time Italian for "something that is almost") draws its inspiration from the relative mathematical symbol and the composition of soap bubbles; bubbles are spheres based on a network of fractal structures, but they are also as ephemeral as the concept of perfection itself. They introduce the tale of a dichotomy, of an eternal tension between opposites: theory and practice, perfection and imperfection, micro and macro. The impression left by the burst of a bubble is also the graphic sign on which the identity of Circa is built.

The experience offered takes place in a mystical atmosphere and it consists of two phases: in the first one - once activated a machine that produces conglomerates of black bubbles - the user is invited to impress these structures on a sheet and to later analyze them with a magnifying glass. The second phase, instead, consists in the observation - almost reverential - of a more majestic version of the same machine as before, placed monumentally - like an altar - at the end of the installation space, to which only personnel can access.

WORD

PITY



Pity is sharing - with no following active reaction - the pain of others. It is through pity that one can identify with another person and share his feelings.

Hence Pitybear, an experience that has its roots in the concepts of empathy, identification and projection of oneself on the neighbor. These values are also present in the creation of the two main characters of the story: a toy bear and a little girl. However, the impossibility of interaction with the protagonists soon becomes clear to the visitors, who will only be able to pity them. The style that frames the entire Pitybear experience is strongly inspired by the manga world, from which the whole narrative draws its features.

The physical experience consists in showcasing, in opposition, both present and past events that involve the two characters; on one wall are projected, in the form of animations, their happy memories together, while the opposite wall only shows the little girl, relentlessly looking for her friend, in vain. The bear, physically present in the installation as a robot, moves autonomously among the visitors; however, they can not help but witness the mutual search of the two friends without being able to help them.

WORD

RESPECT



Respect means to acknowledge and pay attention. Respect means having consideration and being aware while interacting with someone or something.

Rspack is a change of focus, an opaque film. The brand builds its concept from the idea that apathetic and silent isolation turns reality into a trivial background and people into blurred images. It promotes a symbolic censorship, which simultaneously gives way to a rediscovery, as expressed by the claim itself: "Discover what you missed".

The experience proposed by the brand starts between two opaque walls at the entrance of the exhibition space. These walls - hiding while also revealing - introduce a challenge: the visitor, by choosing to enter the exhibition, agrees to place his mobile phone inside an opaque satin envelope, which makes the screen of the device blurred and unreachable, yet doesn't completely cancel the temptation of using it. Immediately after, he is asked to thermally - and irreversibly - weld the envelope; in conclusion, the visitor receives a paper visual essay which invites him, through a photographic series, to look around and re-acknowledge reality ("Focus on reality"). If, during the visit, the user finds the challenge too demanding, he is given the opportunity to tear apart his envelope and throw it in one of the bins scattered in the building.

WORD

SELFISHNESS



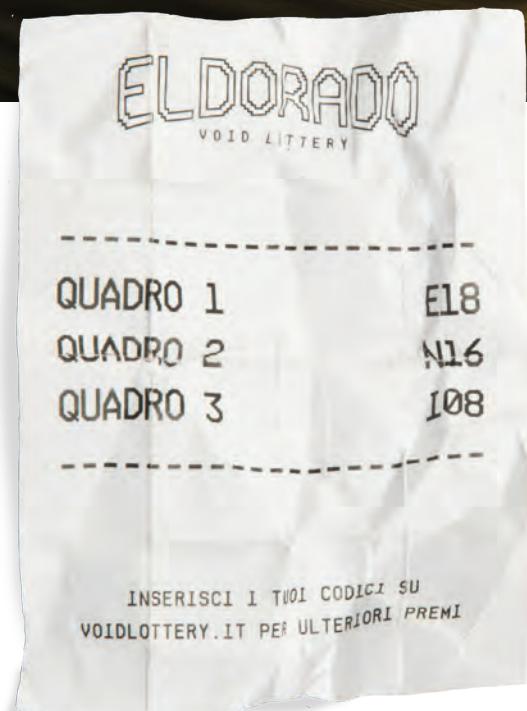
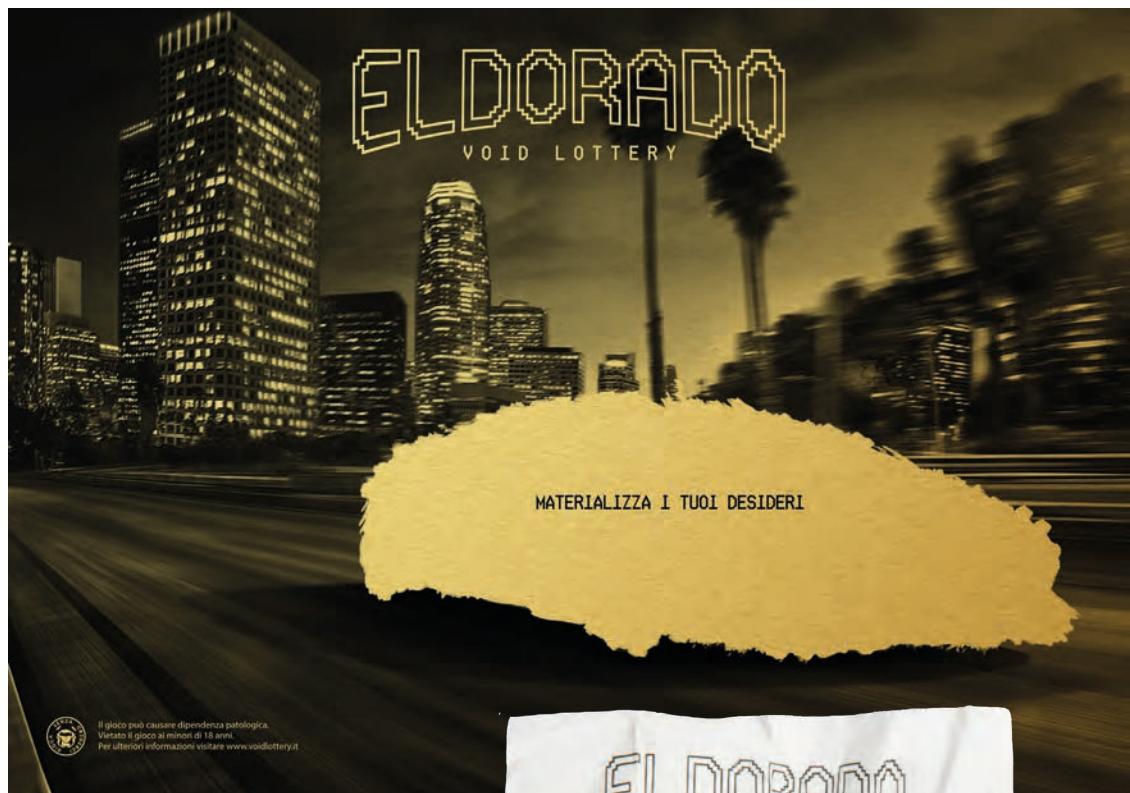
Selfishness means putting always oneself before others and believing to be the only one to exist. This attitude belongs, to varying degrees, to each and all of us, being a natural instinct that allows human beings to conquer their own place in the world.

Ego is born from the interpretation of egoism as an expansion of one's self, which aims to occupy as much space as possible, reducing that of others. The imagery draws inspiration from the expression "Inflate your ego", which is associated with the action of breathing; hence the emblem object of the whole experience: the inflatable balloon. The different sizes of the balloons symbolize the varying presence of egoism in each individual.

The "Ego Fatti Largo" experience is divided into three different phases: at first the user is invited to make his way through a forest of inflated yellow balloons, thus imposing his own ego. In a second moment he enters the Ego machine and steps onto a platform, activating a mechanism that allows the inflating of a huge balloon behind him. This represents an enormous ego that keeps on expanding, compressing the user's personal space until he is literally pushed off the platform. Finally, the user can in turn inflate his own ego-balloon, and carry it around through the rest of the exhibition.

WORD

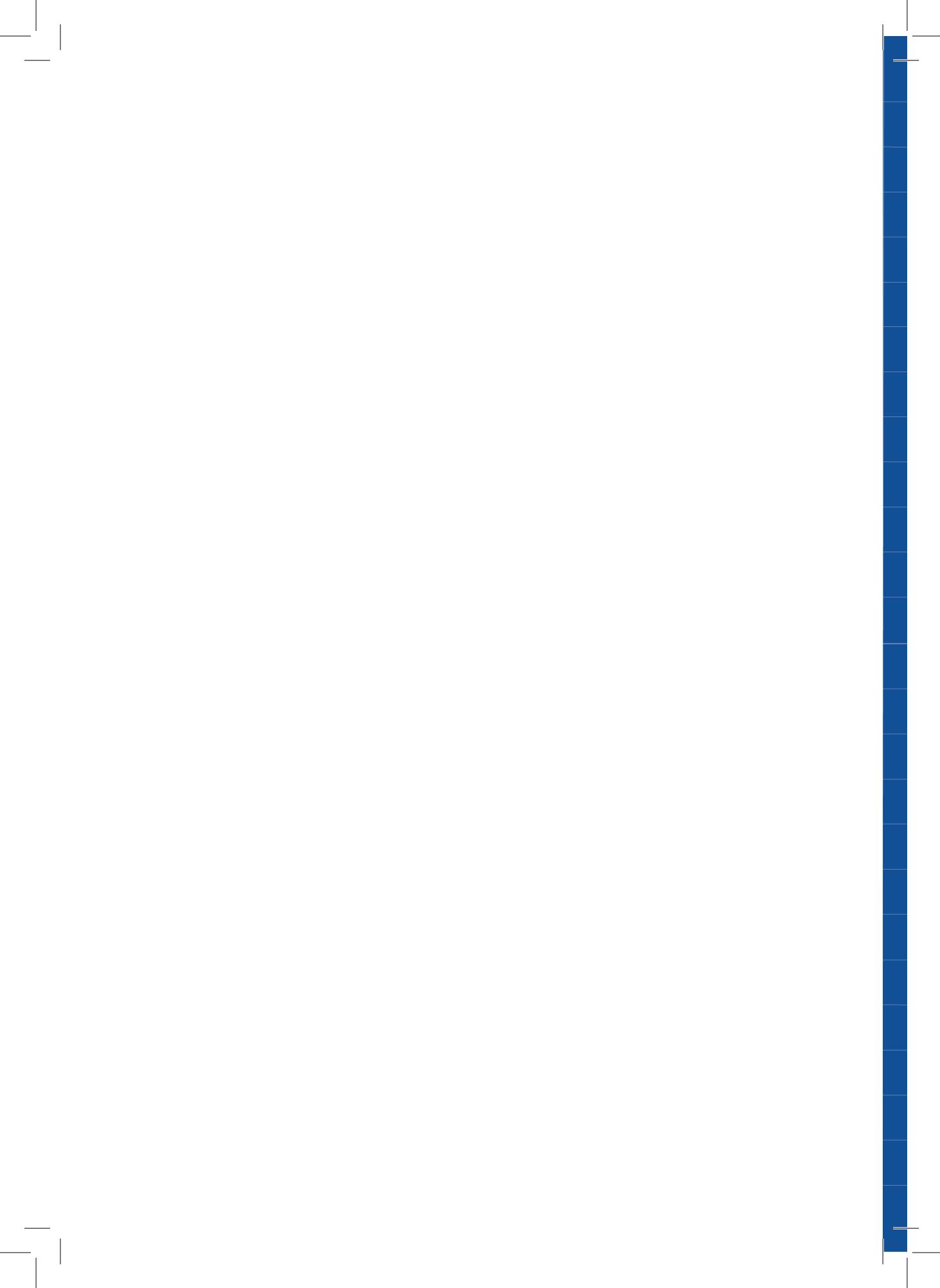
VACUITY



Vacuity is by definition the condition of what is empty. Emptiness is absence and subtraction, interpreted also as a lack of sense and meaning. Vacuity is therefore the uneasy sensation that permeates existence when a meaning for things or actions cannot be found.

El Dorado bases its roots on the mechanism of disillusioned expectations and on the unbearable void left by the shatter of one's hope. The symbol associated with this concept is gambling, with its world built on appearance and illusion, deprived - in this case - of his only meaning: the reward system. This is how the ethereal experience of Void Lottery is born, promoted through a communication that generates expectations more on an existential dimension rather than on a merely monetary one. The installation consists of a white, aseptic room, whose walls are covered in grids of numbered, gold squares: each visitor, with a token given at the entrance, has the possibility to scratch the grid slots assigned to him.

During the day the wall becomes bare, revealing nothing but a white surface - symbol of meaninglessness - and the ground ends up covered in gold shavings - symbol of the energy wasted in useless expectations. The only reward given to the user is a series of brief aphorisms regarding disappointment and illusion, hidden under some of the gold slots.



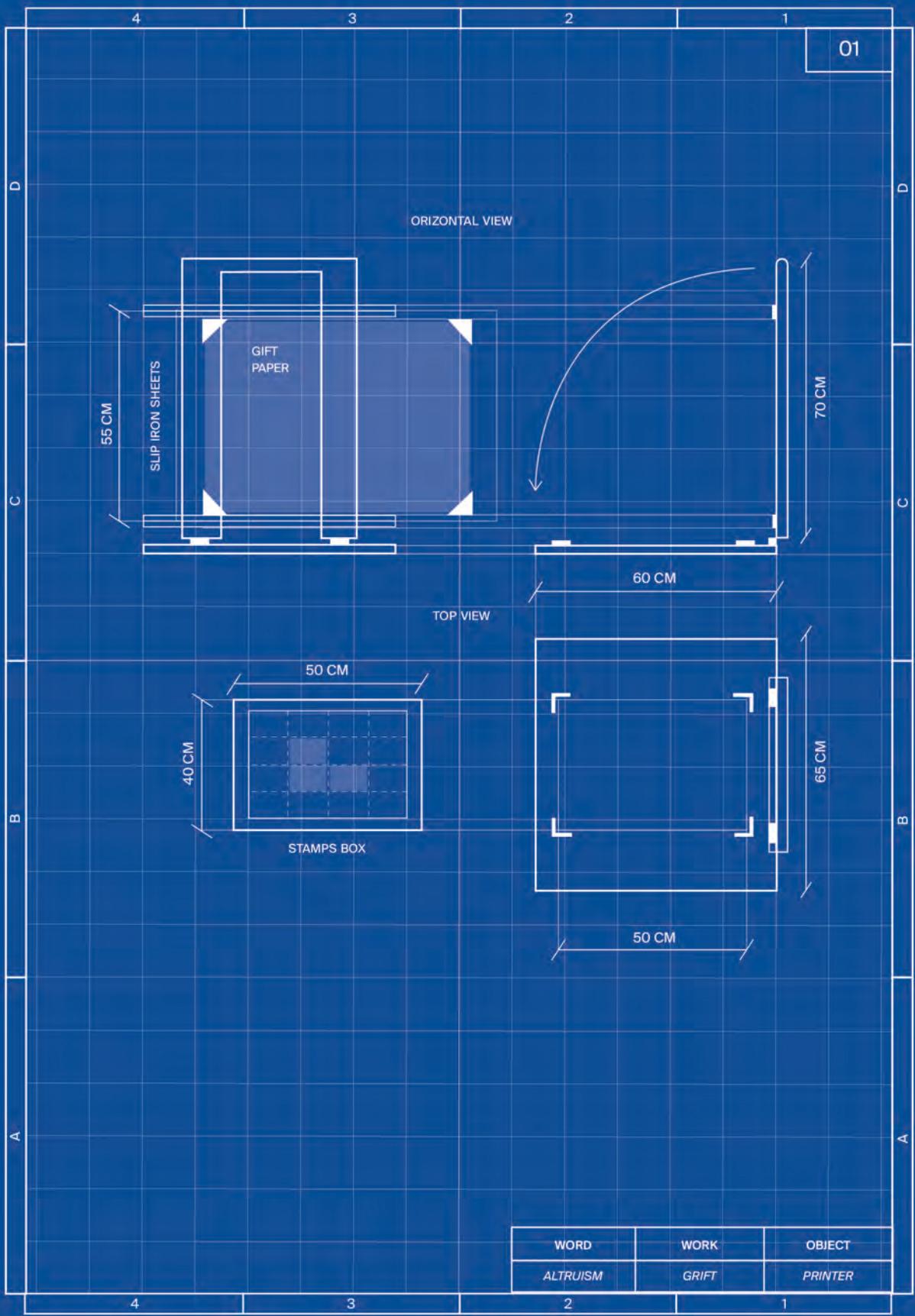
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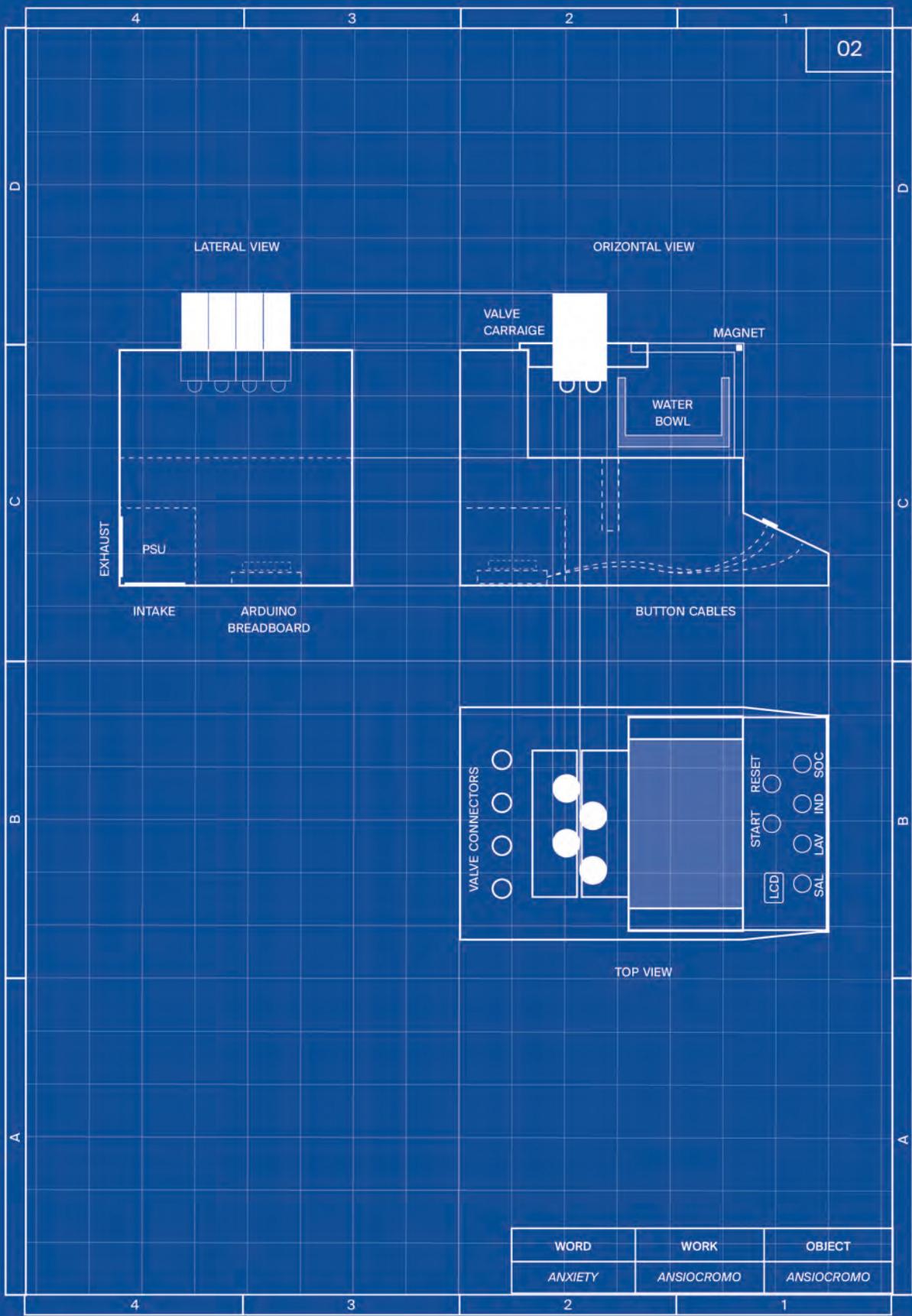
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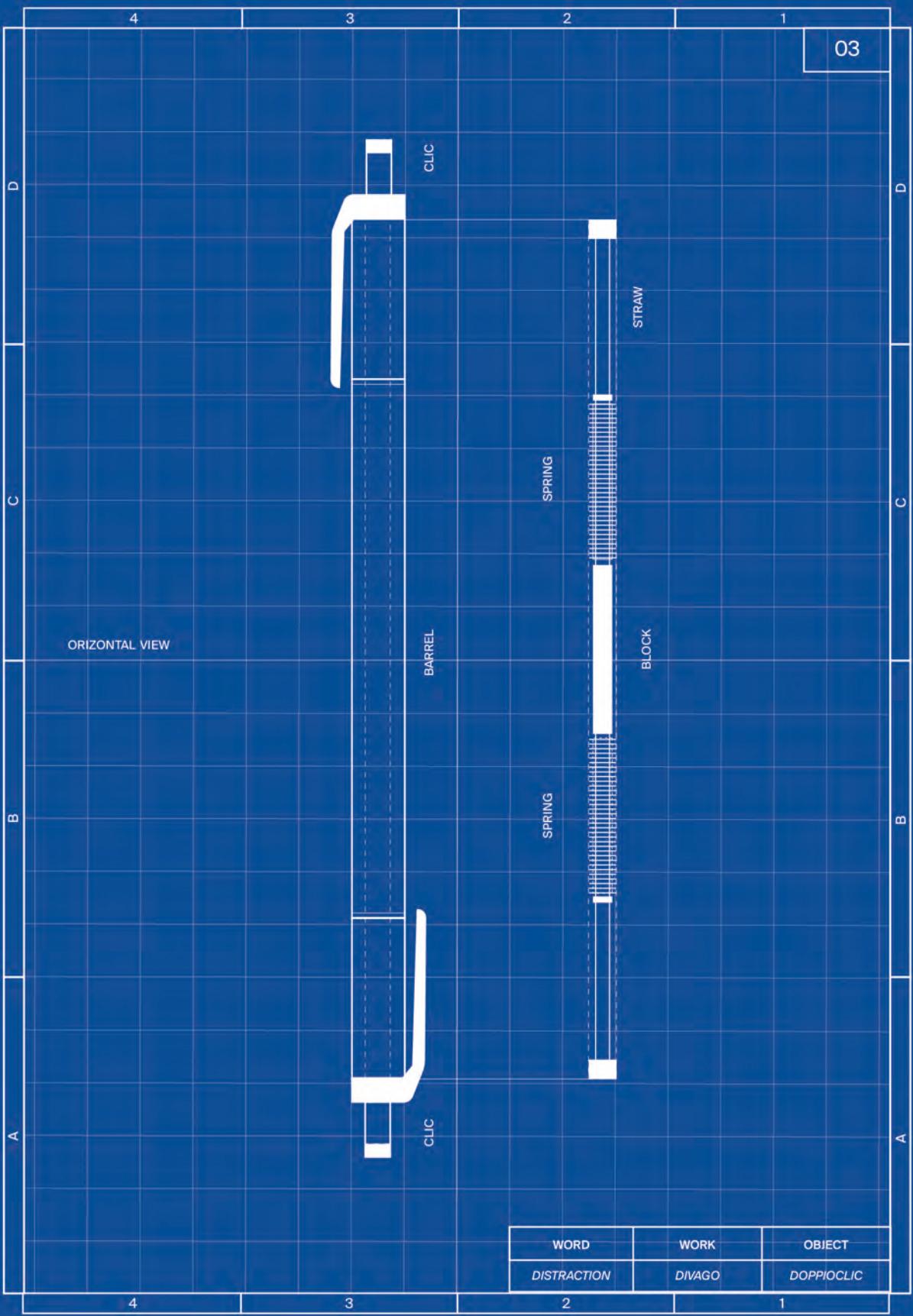
GEARS OF
IMAGINATION

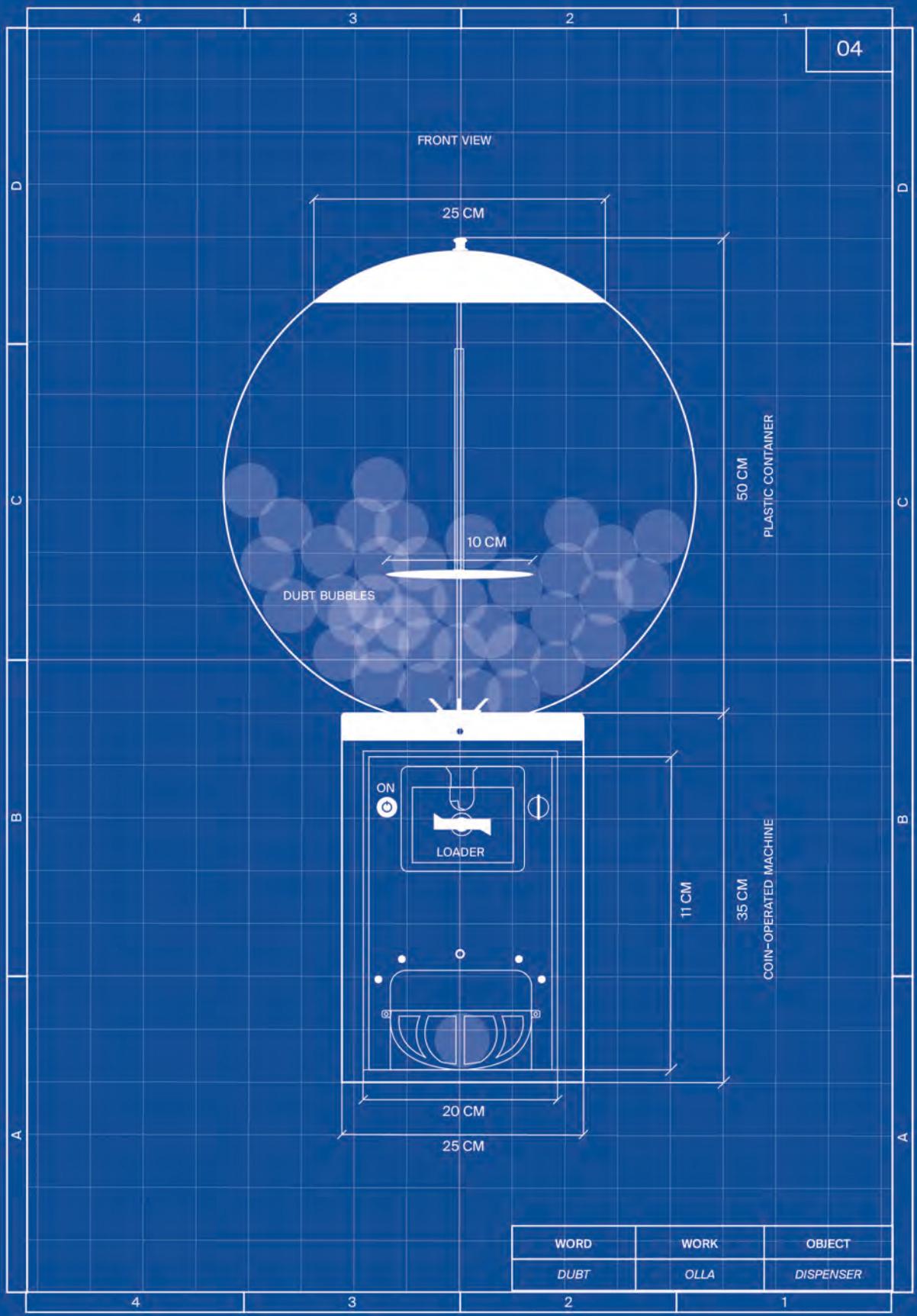
*Design is not just
what it looks like
and feels like.
Design is how
it works.*

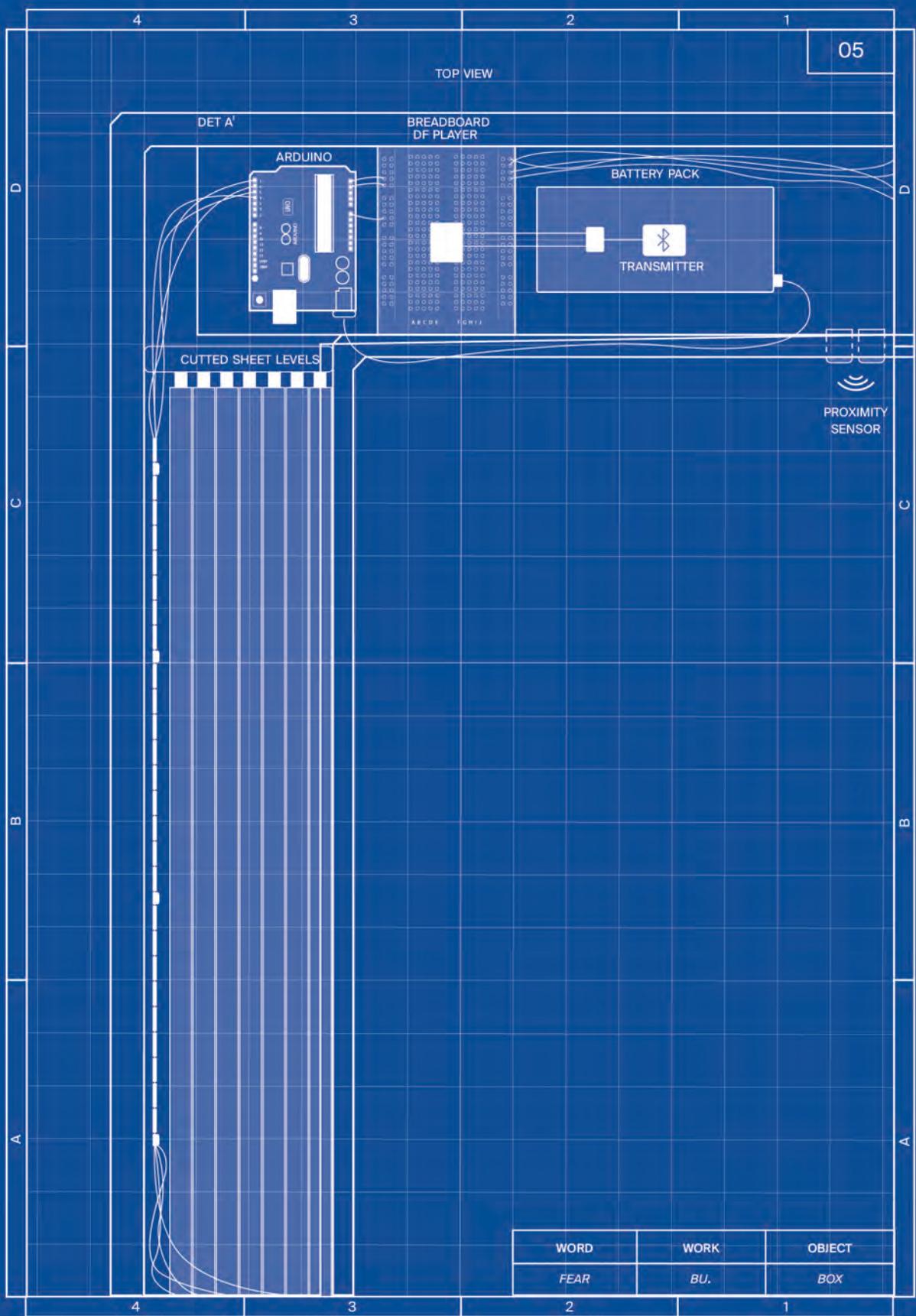
– Steve Jobs

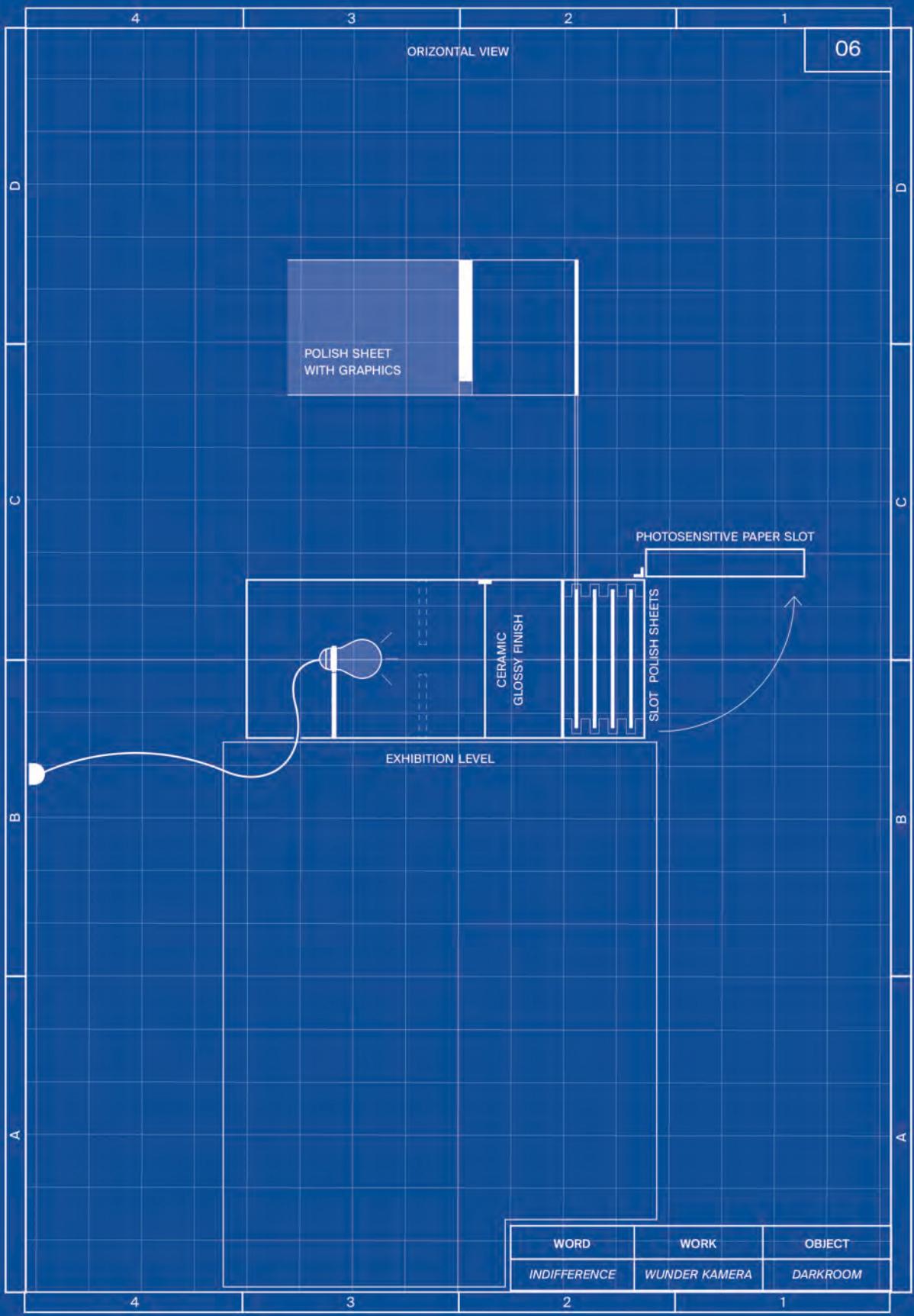


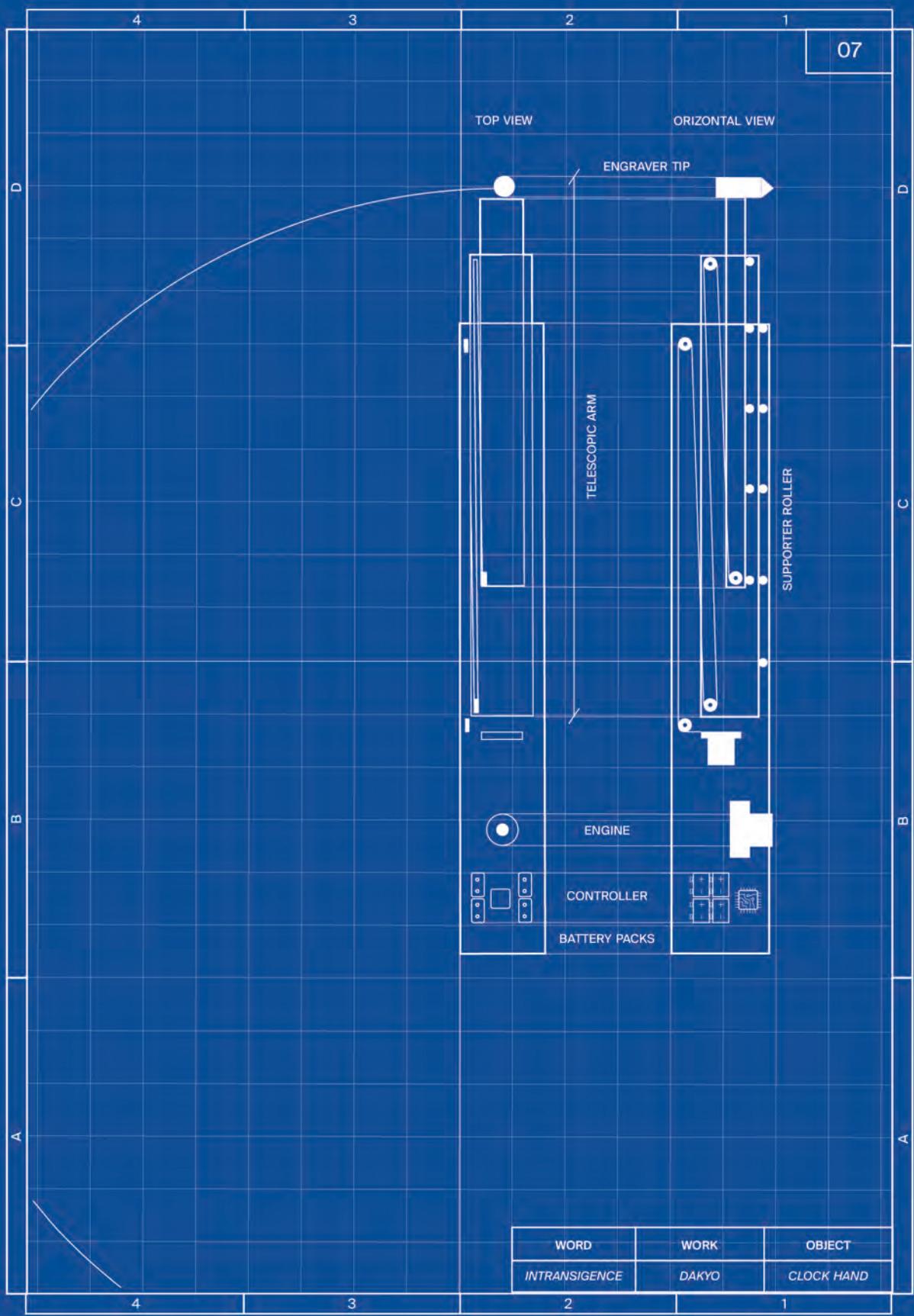


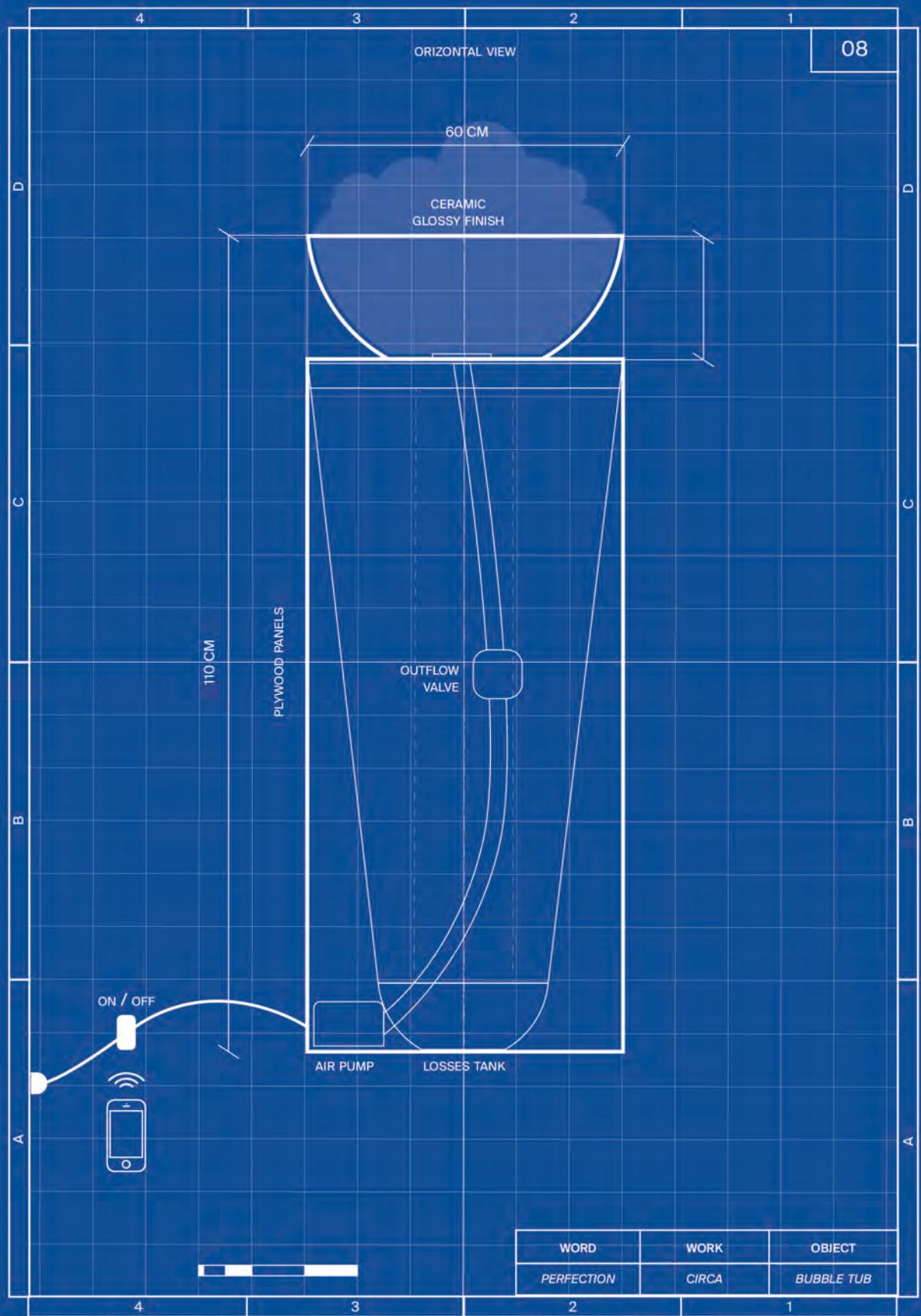


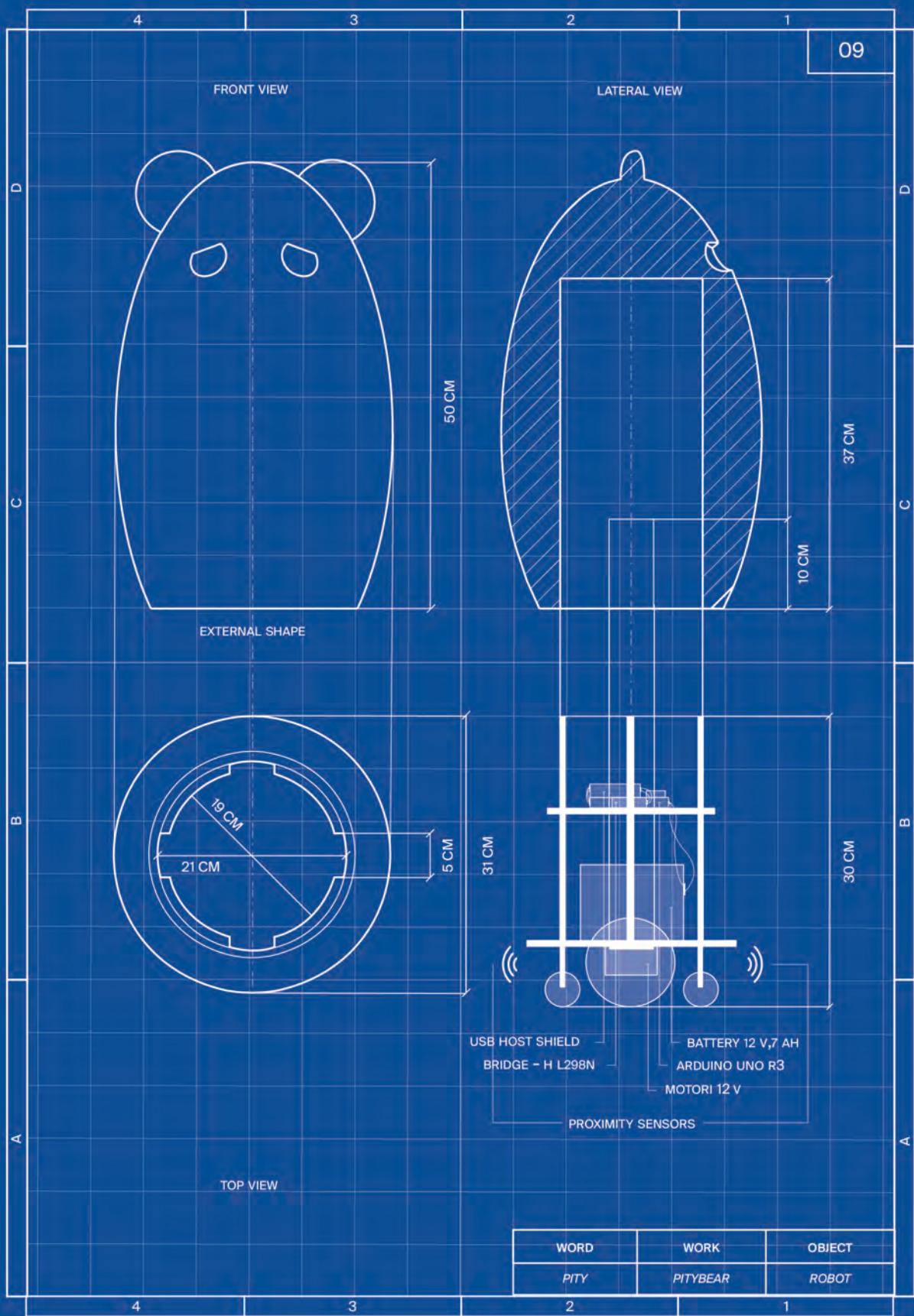


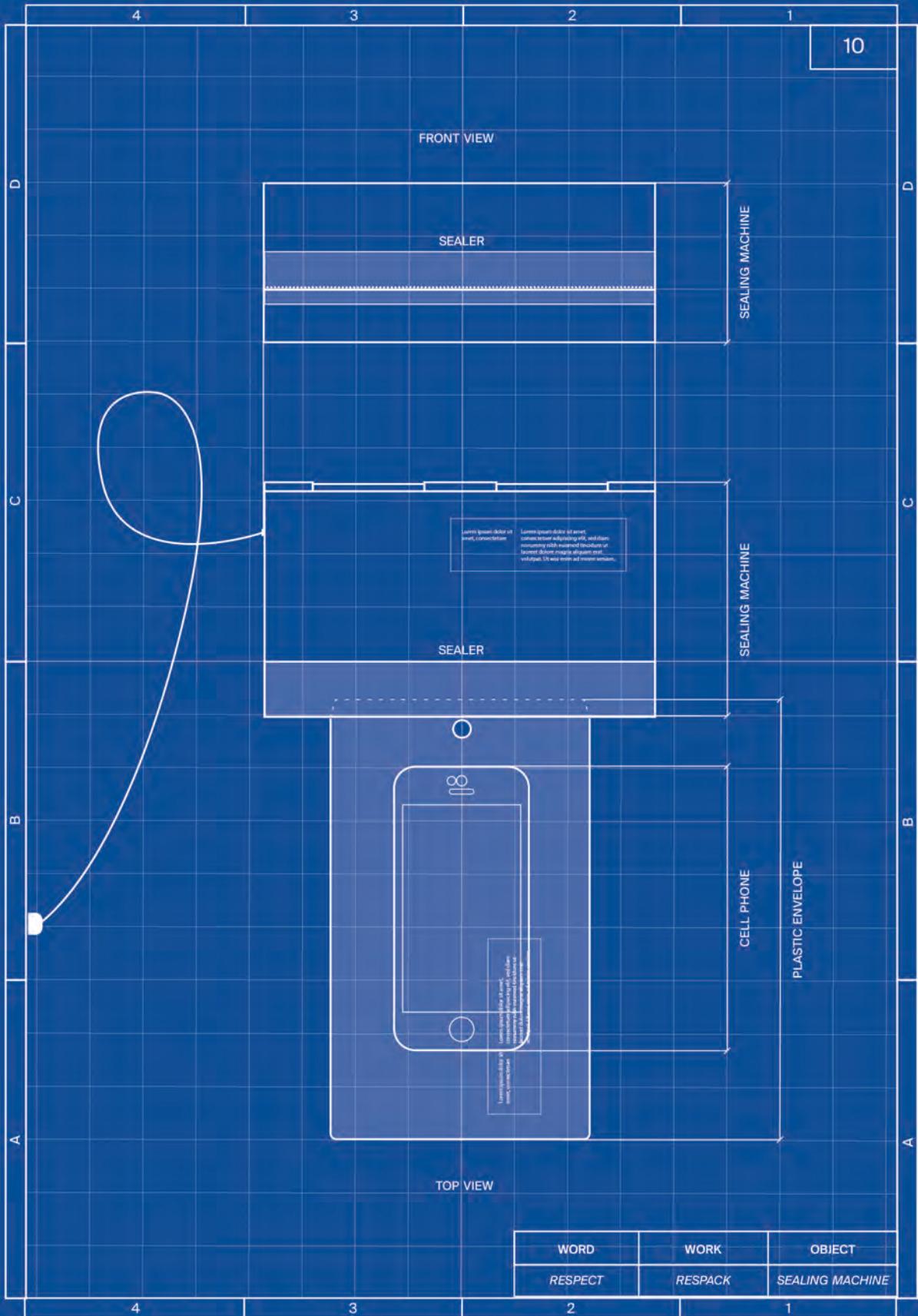


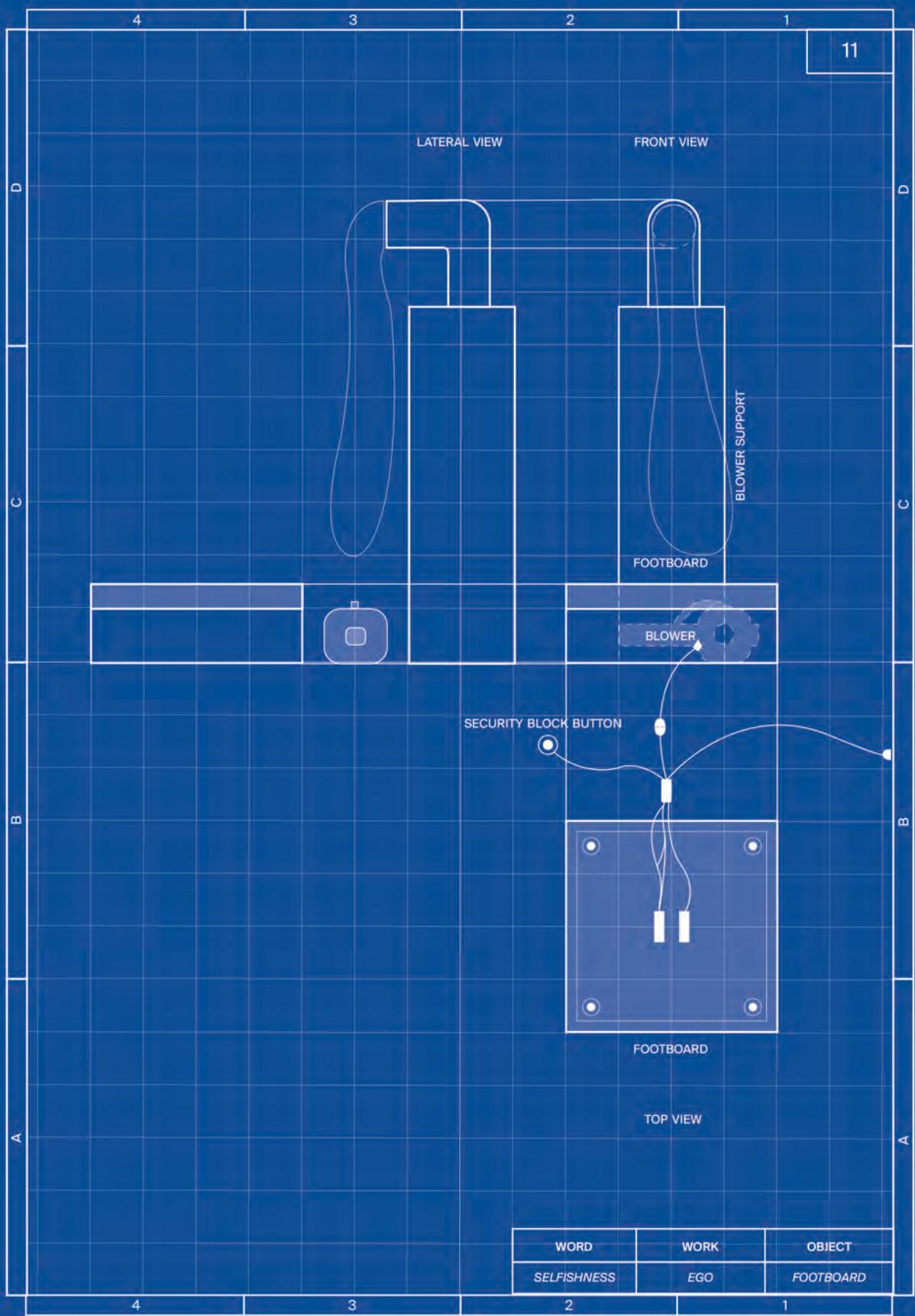


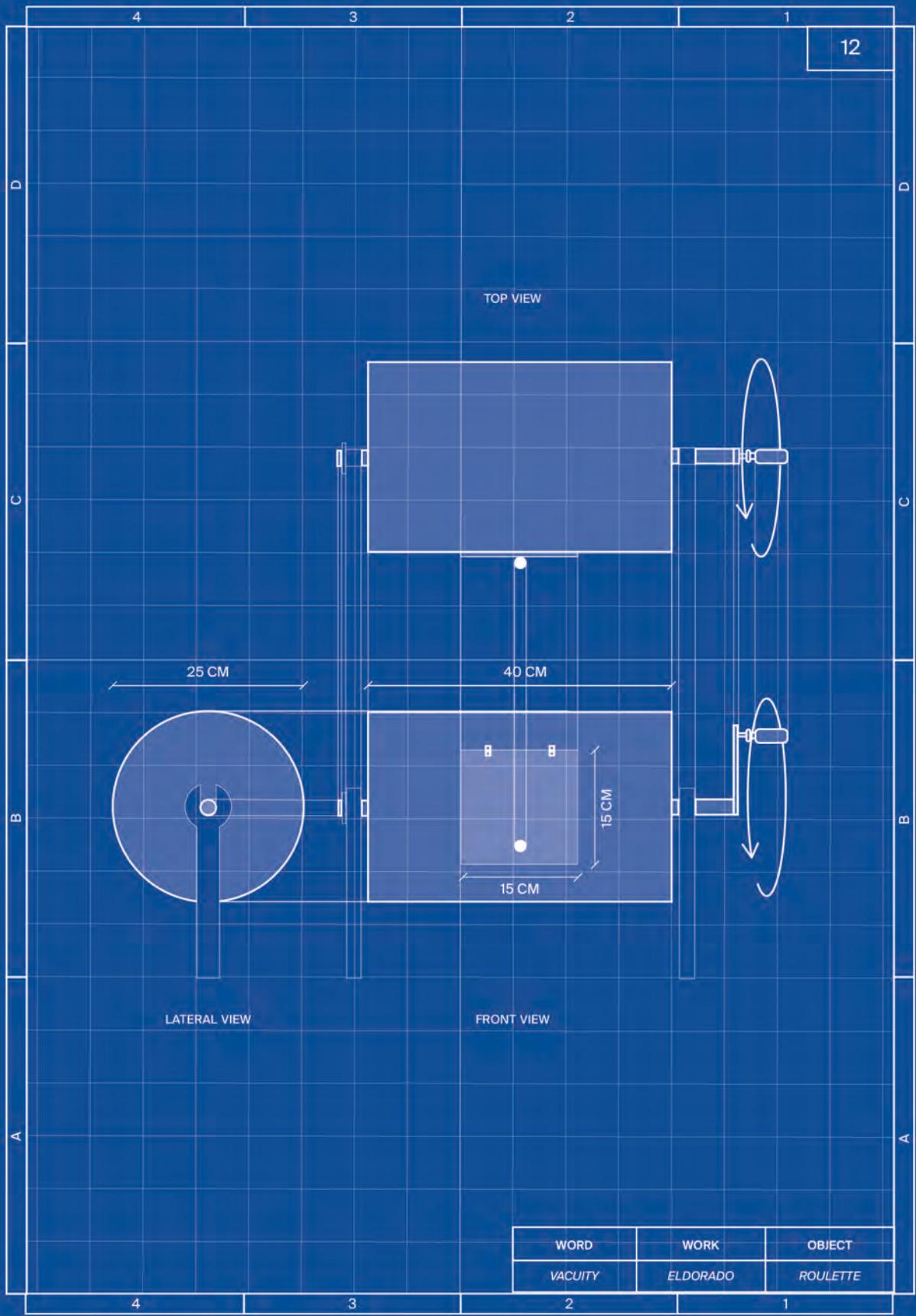




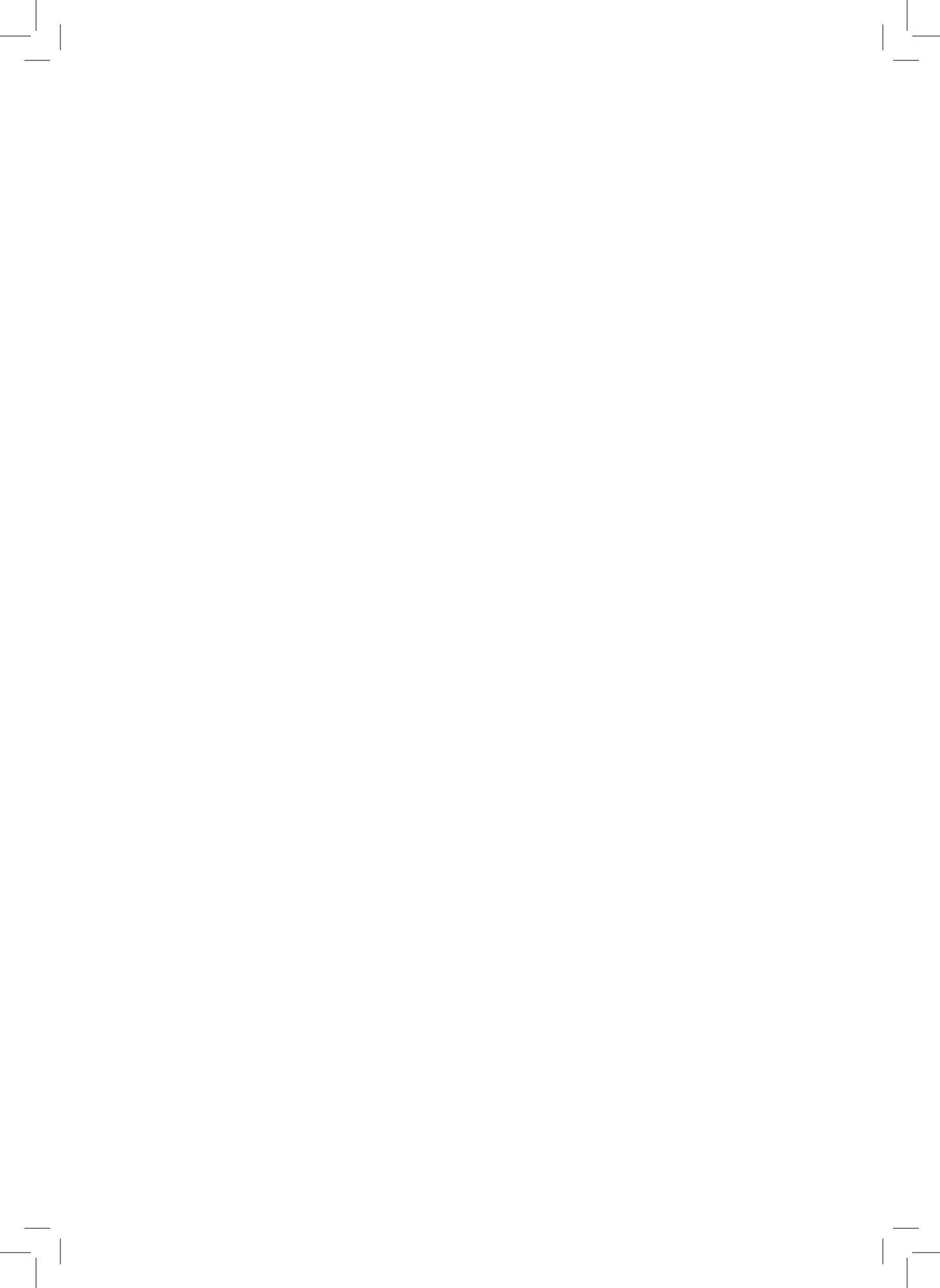












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