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**The reproduction of a trace.
Technique, technology, creation**

description of the doctoral dissertation in the field of arts
in the discipline of fine arts and conservation of works of art

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I. The reproduction of a trace

The subject of my research is the creative character of reproductive graphic techniques. I search for artistic expression at the meeting point of the functional drawing system and the individual trace of graphic matter. The context of my activities is the relationship between the classical workshop of the engraver and contemporary technologies of imaging.

Formulating a visual statement, the contemporary artist moves between rough traces of manual imperfection, the cold perfection of digital media and the improvement of his artistic skills, which are sometimes marginalized for decorative purposes. Peter Paul Rubens described similar realities in his correspondence when he planned to reproduce his own works. For this purpose, he met with Hendrik Goltzius: "while he would have liked to have an expert imitate his model, it seemed the lesser evil to have the work done in his presence by a young man, rather than by a great artist according to [his] fancy."¹ The painter's concerns were not about the quality of the work, but about the creative potential that lay in the interpretation and processing of the image - the final effect could outshine the original.

Technique

The artist's workshop is a tool, standing between the idea and the message - it evolves along with the relationship of content and form. "Techniques, however ancient, do not age in themselves; only the interpretative means of linguistic articulation of the message age."² Traditional graphic traces have found their contemporary equivalents: point / pixel, line / vector, linear drawing / raster, vector drawing / 3D rendering; and depicting reality has brought new challenges. Thus, I treat contact with traditional graphic craft not only as a source of inspiration, but also as a disciplining factor of formal search.

Technology

The professionalization of reproduction printmaking has led to the combination of copperplate and etching techniques to speed up the matrix execution process. Technological progress influences the expression of works created in a given era. However, contemporary digitalization also affects the idea and thinking of printmaking. Computer art precursor Robert Mallery points to the unique role of the computer, which assists not only the artist's hand (the output medium) but also his mind, becoming "a cybernetic component of the work, or an autonomous system for generating art."³

Creation

In my work, however, I wish to address the subject of matter and the syntax of the image, so I ask the question: in the face of a culture of eye-scanning, is printmaking still a contemplative medium? I am searching for a method to reproduce archaic reproduction matter, a way to trace a generative drawing system, a metaphor contained in the technical aspect of creativity. I would like to illustrate my research with a series of prints and this theoretical study.

¹ P.P. Rubens, letter dated 23 January 1619 to Pieter van Veen, in: *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, M.R. Saunders (ed. and trans.), Harvard University Press 1955.

² T. Wiktor, *Grafika – Postgrafika – Transgrafika*, <https://www.bwaprzemysl.pl/?tadeusz-wiktor-grafika-postgrafika-transgrafika>, 01.04.2019.

³ R. Mallery, in: *Artist and Computer*, R. Leavitt (red.), Harmony Books, New York 1976, own translation.

The series of prints, open and autothematic, made with the use of traditional and experimental graphic techniques, covers both the journey - the process of perfecting the manual workshop and technological experiments, as well as the goal - the decision to present selected works whose expression meets the author's assumptions. I draw inspiration from my unwavering fascination with copperplate engravings of the old masters of Renaissance, Mannerism and Baroque. However, I reject the conventions of realism and historical narration in favour of a new iconology of geometrically abstracted textures. The subject of each work becomes the method by which it was created, and the visual strategy adopted serves to highlight it.

The theoretical background is a subjective, formal analysis of selected works of the classics of the printmaking craft - a deconstruction of drawing systems evolving along with the development of printmaking techniques. Virtuosity, escaping technological limitations, today acquires a symbolic and performative dimension, marking the direction of new artistic explorations.

At the same time I realize that the above assumptions, although they postulate an objective analysis of the subject matter, may involve some risk and distract me from my real goal - the realization of graphic works. I sometimes perceive art as a sport, but I am not a type of supporter. I envy my favorite athlete, not glorify him. It is a challenge when my idol is Albrecht Dürer, over my bed I would hang a poster with Hendrik Goltzius' hand, and in my notebook I would paste Czeslaw Slania stamps.

I once heard in the Copperplate Studio of my home university that it is impossible to match the skills of the old masters and that the last person to find his own, unique style of engraving was Jacek Gaj. I agree with this thesis, especially from the perspective of the years during which I returned to copperplate engravings with varying intensity. This does not mean, however, that this discipline should remain closed to me. Apart from its glorious history and tradition, it is still a formerly used, archaic printing technology. To understand its essence, one must navigate between tradition and practice. I move away from competing with the masters, believing that I can pay tribute to their art most perfectly by proposing a new value. I contest their achievements and look for new methods to tell the story of how I perceive their art. If I can leave an engraving mark on a sheet of metal, rub paint into it and then reproduce it on paper, it means that there are no technical barriers before me, only manual and creative ones.

Paradoxically, the painstaking training of skills becomes accessible and, in addition, extremely exciting. The real difficulty is the steps to be taken between perfecting the craft and realizing the work (assuming that the learning process itself, though conceptually attractive, is not presented as a final work).

What remains, then, is to accept craft as a factor that can initiate the creative process. Develop a concept that justifies the absurd, props up the shaky, and guides the journey into the unknown. To define a theme that expresses a motive that has no clear form - a specific mental state that accompanies an activity. I think with images, so I feel the need to express these impressions graphically. Working along these lines, perhaps I will also achieve a consistent visual style.

The foregoing description of the path of the graphic artist's development will never be linear because of the term "artist". The cognitive, or even philosophical character of the undertaken actions inclines us to remain in the sphere of reflections, to build intellectual constructions describing efforts that are relatively useful, but necessary for a creative individual. The craft comes to the rescue - real, hard, but raised to the rank of art. Contact with the brutal matter of printing brings one down to earth, lures with its intricate poetics, and motivates one to leave material traces of one's activity. The baker bakes bread, the tailor sews clothes, the printmaker creates prints - he invents, designs, experiments, tries, errs, but still "grinds"⁴ to produce a visual creation.

The title's notion of "reproduction of a trace" can thus be understood literally, in the context of a repetitive process leading to the production of a graphic work by an artist-craftsman. A further deconstruction of the title includes a focus on detail - understanding the trace as a source of graphic expression. The metaphorical meaning can be successfully applied to demography. The reproduction of a population occurs in a simple, narrowed or expanded manner - all of these states occur on the graph of my artistic fertility.

The proposed tripartition: technique, technology, creation; encompasses all planes of the doctoral project, but does not match the chronology of its realization. It is difficult to define the boundaries of mutually permeating and interacting fields.

Like Albrecht Dürer's iconic trinity of prints: "Knight, Death, and Devil," "St. Jerome in the Studio," and "Melancholia I"; the corresponding scholastic virtues: moral, theological, and mental; and finally, the qualities of the complete artist: "kunst, brauch, gewalt"⁵ - make up the creative organism, capable of inspired contemplation, or secular dilemmas in "the earthly realm of knowledge and art and in the realm of imagination."⁶

The chronological order of the text is thus identical with the stages of the creative process I carried out. The only way I can explore and document the influence of past printmaking techniques on today's artistic strategies is through observation of my own artistic practice.

II. The path

The journeyman's process of obtaining a degree is for me a motivation to systematize my activities and to organize my workshop, materially and ideologically. It also brings the temptation of realizing the opus magnum, which can be stiffening and narrows the scope of creative explorations. In time, however, artistic naivety gave place to artistic rationalization, optimization of the process leading to the creation of specific works. This project, therefore, consists of a selection of my current creative activities - the most representative for the moment, but above all exploring the means of expression I wish to use in the future.

⁴ *Grind* (English, col.) – when you work your a** off to get s*** done, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=grind>, 14.12.2021.

⁵ E. Panofsky, *Trzy ryciny Albrechta Dürera. „Rycerz, Śmierć i Diabeł”, „Św. Hieronim w pracowni”, „Melencolia I”*, in: *Studia z historii sztuki*, PIW, Warszawa 1971.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

Unfortunately, while others certify their competence in defined and related to real-life fields, an artist may, despite many years of experience, feel that he means nothing, because he is still searching. Melancholy - a trait of the greats whose "handicap manifests itself in some modest and beautiful way"⁷ - becomes a painful guarantor of creative development, at the same time dragging one into the abyss of uncertainty.

During a period of pandemic isolation, I was pulled from the bottom of the abyss by an encounter with a colleague. We exchanged remarks about daily hardships, only to move on to less practical issues related to tuning our emotions to the new reality. I complained about my profession, which in the face of a global pandemic has become even more ridiculous. Was I still allowed to pursue mastery in an exotic field? The next day I received a text message that read:

- masters

And below two short videos from YouTube: a documentation of a Guinness World Record attempt at cracking nuts with one's head on time, and a clip about a monk from Shaolin Monastery who ran a distance of 118 meters on planks laid on the surface of a lake. Then came the voice message:

...you know what, by the way, recently with friends [...] came the topic of such people who are, well... are masters in their own sport that they have invented for themselves. Here you have an example of a monk who since 2015... his meaning of life is to run on a track like this, where the boards are connected by a string. He runs on these boards and he runs further and further, he has no competitors and he realizes himself. There you smash 200 nuts in a minute and everybody is happy, so you kind of have to find your own meaning of life...

III. The concept

A creative artist, wishing to settle accounts with a chosen technique and aesthetics, must make an effort to deny their imposed properties. It is a pity to remain in the sphere of concepts, having at one's disposition such a huge range of resources, ready for reorganization and compilation. That is why I try not to search in the dark - it is a creative method that is incompatible with me. At first, relying on my workshop habits, I fell prey to the myths I had created around graphic art.

I tried above all to create an original work, fearing self-plagiarism and duplicity. These fears caused me to almost overlook consistency and its leitmotif in my own work, perhaps the beginning of my own style. I reserved manual, drawing activities for specific graphic compositions, subconsciously expecting myself to produce landscapes and generic scenes - instead of developing alternative ways of building images: modularly, structurally, geometrically, mathematically, but also emotionally and intuitively. So I tried once again to develop assumptions.

⁷ Arystoteles, *Zagadnienia przyrodnicze*, in: *Dzieła Wszystkie*, t. 4, Warsaw 1993.

The copperplate engraving technique remains the starting point of my work:

- It sets the historical, aesthetic, and craft context.
- It disciplines me (at the same time gives respite from the computer screen), forcing me to work manually.
- It allows me to observe measurable progress in the exercise of a particular skill.
- It has an original matter, impossible to reproduce, unattainable with other tools - although attempts to imitate it lead to interesting graphic effects.

I am looking for a theme that I will be able to interpret in the above technique - I am moving in the visual field, conceptual carving of metal plates is not my goal.

- The theme is supposed to emphasize the technique first of all.
- A theme is at the same time an escape from a theme.
- The theme is supposed to be universal, minimalist, coming from the areas of visual culture related to these concepts.
- A theme is supposed to enable repetition, training, self-correction, observation of progress.
- The theme should be an element of original compositions.
- The theme is supposed to relate to the aesthetics I prefer - between the mood of classical printmaking and the clarity of geometric abstraction.

The creative method I have chosen is to work with systems, modules, plans and combinations. I think it comes from my expectations from the painting:

- Deficiency - to express more.
- Greed - to see everything.
- Curiosity - to understand the structure.
- Control - to be in command of the process.
- Repetition - to multiply objects.
- Whim - test the possibilities.
- Constancy - record, freeze in time.

IV. Context

To show how art is made today, I would use the work of Ryoji Ikeda. To show how art will be made in the near future, I would use the TikTok app. To show how art is made, I would use the work of Albrecht Dürer.

These extreme examples, juxtaposed together, provoke axiological reflections on art. Ways of interpreting and valuing it include the opposing worlds of form and content, aesthetics and idea, missions and commissioning. Art perpetuates the history of people who have played the same roles for centuries - only the ways of documenting the performance have evolved. However, these ways conceal key details that accentuate the character of a given era. It is impossible to understand the desires and fears of modern man without experiencing the immersive storyline of "Grand Theft Auto 5" or "The Last of Us". To complain about the dehumanization of society will be those who have not experienced a sense of community in online games such as "Fortnite." The knowledge of identical stories from the classics of literature and cinema does not translate into a universal understanding of the functioning of

the modern world, consciousness presupposes a constant update of the "firmware" - machines know about it, so people should too.

So I think that there is a relation between the concepts of interpretation and change - art, while interpreting the world, simultaneously documents it. By taking on a particular form, art becomes a visible sign of recorded content - a picture of the world at a given stage of its development. The creativity of particular epochs includes notation of changes, resulting from artistic activities themselves (or later recognized as artistic, e.g. crafts), as well as economic, political, ecological changes, etc. Change is in the nature of the world, so also of art.

Every change that is associated with human activity is accompanied by utopian thinking - being emotional individuals, even calculated actions we want to perform perfectly, moreover pleasantly and profitably. This temptation is felt by both the stereotypical artist, waiting for inspiration, and the mathematician, looking for a notation of the equation consistent with his perception of beauty.

Such a tendency is demonstrated by the historical pursuit of realism: the cold mimesis on the one hand, the artistic expression and social impact of representations on the other. The unsurpassed expression of prehistoric wall paintings, the iconoclastic dispute, or humanoids, submerging the viewer in the "uncanny valley"⁸ - the perfection of the depiction of the human image remains the main motif of art.

A particularly interesting artistic arms race took place with the development of the engraving copperplate. The intention of most reproductive engravers was to make their workshop transparent, servile to the study of reality, or even to the painting matter of the source image. Goltzius, on the contrary, was a copperplate engraver who was not afraid to expose his own technique - a mannerist drawing system. He probably made the most perfect use of the line of variable width, and was also a pioneer of the "dotted lozenges"⁹ system, expanding the tonal scale of the engraving. A study of the artist's hand¹⁰, a self-portrait of special significance because Goltzius's right hand was deformed in a fire, may be evidence of his skill in making interpretations that could change reality.

The graphic technique, which evolved from goldsmith's niello decoration, imposed linear interpretations of tone, value, and texture. The history of the medium was thus defined by the evolution of drawing systems. The original crude outline solutions were enriched by embroidery and scoring by the Rhine Master E.S. - the first engraver to place his monogram on the matrix. The method was enriched by Martin Schongauer, but only Albrecht Dürer seemed to consciously use the difference between the drawing and graphic matter for impressionistic representations. A synthesis of these solutions can be seen in the works of Italian printmakers, e.g. Marcantonio Raimondi - his engraving is systematized, even modular, and thus more practical in reproductions. An attempt to face the painting matter can be found on the works of Giulio Campagnoli, one of the first copper engravers, who

⁸ The sudden discomfort caused by observing an object that functions similarly to a human being. An example is *Female Figure* by Jordan Wolfson, 2014.

⁹ *Dotted Lozenge: Goltzius*, <http://www.printsandprinciples.com/2012/11/goltzius-dotted-lozenge.html>, 14.06.2019.

¹⁰ H. Goltzius, *Goltzius' Right Hand*, 1588, ink drawing, 23 x 32,2 cm, Teylers Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands.

mastered the technique of varying the width of the lines used. It is also worth paying attention to works of a Dutchman, Cornelis Cort, who developed drawing without contours.

This selective record of the potential sources of Hendrik Goltzius's style reveals the utilitarian pursuit of a realistic representation of reality, particularly of the human body. The closest to the desired effect of anonymous pictorial syntax, however, were representatives of the Rubens school (the Bolswert brothers, Paulus Pontius), imitating the structure of their master's paintings, and Robert Nanteuil (France), almost photographically reproducing the organic structure of reality. Despite the dazzling effects of their work, being a contemporary art viewer who watches art mainly on displays, I myself more readily reach for reproductions of prints from an earlier period. Graphic files, digitally flat, non-haptic, but still clear and impressive, are a testimony to the changes that human virtuosity can bring about.

V. Inspiration

Immersed in the art of the old masters, I reached for modern inspiration relatively late. However, I feel a bond with the reductive modularity and geometric order of Armin Hofmann's designs, the structural influence of basic shapes in the works of François Morellet and Carlos Cruz-Diez, the optical and graphic expression of Bridget Riley's works, and the shaping of form by means of interference by Alberto Biasi. Nowadays, I appreciate the previously mentioned Ryoji Ikeda and the kind of graphic happening that distinguishes his installations. It is also important for me that he moves smoothly between creative disciplines and encourages reflection through the language of abstraction.

I also find support in the work of the American representative of conceptualism and minimalism - Solomon "Sol" LeWitt understood art primarily as a creative method, a system conducive to the creation of a work. When sitting over a metal plate (literally, that's why I omit the quotation marks) I feel that perhaps I am missing the world of intermedia, I return to his words:

"In conceptual art, the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual art form, it means that all plans and decisions are made in advance and execution is a perfunctory activity. The idea becomes the machine that creates the art."¹¹

Perhaps I should also point out established contemporary artists such as Olafur Eliasson, or Felipe Pantone. Both work based on an exploration of their own fields and aesthetics, and the quality of their work is proportional to their popularity. However, I am more willing to see myself in the mirror of engaged but anonymous artists that I find by chance and follow with interest. These are artists who are outside the mainstream of the art world, on the contrary, rather people who will never be noticed and appreciated. Their work is also very far from what one can objectively expect from contemporary engravers. They are an inspiration to me, which I use carefully - the line between their artistic work and personal drama can be blurred.

¹¹ S. LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, „Artforum Vol. 5”, nr 10, 1967, s. 79-83.

John P. Center; Chicago, USA - his works are copies of prints by Dürer and other classics, which he composes with typography. He touches upon political and social themes. He realizes print after print, but both cuts and prints very imprecisely, sacrificing the aesthetics of the print for its message and symbolism. In the comments he writes, I read that he suffers from Parkinson's disease¹².

Jacinto Costoso; Paris, France - I know the least about this artist, although he publishes the most. He prints countless copies of old prints, as well as random motifs, cut out in matrices with self-made CNC machines. Then he systematizes them in series on his website¹³, and later discusses them with himself on a forum he founded¹⁴. Since 2006, he has written 1,235 of the 1,369 posts published on the forum. His online monologue is as fascinating as the graphics he persistently creates, aesthetically unsuited to either the present or the past.

VI. Style

A wide range of different music accompanies me in the studio. I look for extreme, trance-like sounds, which I associate with the rhythm of the engraver's work. I don't need to calm down, the focus comes on its own when I lose myself in the repetitive process. Electronic music and black metal evoke the right mood in me. I'll skip over my favorite subgenres and artists, because that's not the point. Seemingly distant genres, whose fans are difficult to imagine at one concert, are an analogy of the style I'm looking for in my work.

I will cite an excerpt from an interview with Gylv Fenris Nagell, founder of the pioneering black metal band "Darkthrone", known as "Fenriz". The band is also the one that popularized a distinct, graphic style of album covers, using black-and-white, contrasted photographs of musicians with their faces painted in a "corpse paint" style in place of illustrations¹⁵.

Reporter: I heard that privately, which is really shocking for many Darkthrone fans, you listen to house and techno music. Is that true?

Fenriz: Oh sure. I was just listening to Monica Kruse's mix CD last night. We don't isolate ourselves in Oslo. We usually know about a whole lot of different styles of music.

[...]

R: I wanted to say that I hope you don't intend to release a house music album.

F: No. That's the prob... That's what it's all about, you know. We listen to so much different music at Darkthrone, but we'll never let it get into the Darkthrone concept. It's not Darkthrone. We don't have to be influenced by it, but we can listen to it. Other people will hear two electronica albums and suddenly react in a way: "Oooh, maybe we can add that to metal. Maybe that'll be cool!" Hey, it's not Darkthrone. But I know a whole lot of people who do that¹⁶.

¹² Y.B.A. Center, <https://www.instagram.com/yochananengraver/>, 26.01.2022.

¹³ J. Costoso, <https://www.costoso.net/>, 26.01.2022.

¹⁴ Costoso forums, <https://www.costoso.net/forum/>, 26.01.2022.

¹⁵ *Until the Light Takes Us*, dir. A. Aites, A. Ewell, 2008, 14:52-15:28.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 1:01:11-1:03:10

I don't try to work between media at all cost, I choose the method according to the expected reception of the work. When I create installations that are supposed to present a certain concept, I reach for experimental methods of work, but I don't think about whether the work will be in line with the trends of generative or digital art, whether it is based on op art or minimalist strategies, and whether it still remains a print. I don't create to qualify myself in a particular field, I use fields as means of expression. I stand on the other side of digital art - I materialize images inspired by digital aesthetics to maximize the experience of viewing graphic art.

Working in classical techniques, on the contrary, I have come to the conclusion that I do not need to complicate/improve the technological process (e.g. mechanical engraving, use of CNC equipment, transfers) to make my prints contemporary. "Is there a higher goal for a speaker and writer than to speak and write like Cicero (like the ancients - author's note)? [...] Cicero's greatness was in the fact that he was in tune with his era. And since the present times are different from the ancient ones, so the most Ciceronian is the one who is - far from Cicero"¹⁷.

So it is enough that I create contemporaneously. Originally, I saw great potential in automating the engraving process, and related experiments were to form the basis of my project. I contemplated competing with the machine, comparing its results with my own; seeing if human expression would win out over mechanical precision. But why? Proving the superiority of man over machine is tempting, but I don't know if the robot will be particularly concerned about my triumph. This trope, I assume, would lead me into the trend of "plotter drawings"¹⁸ which is a popular creative trend. Aesthetically and conceptually similar to my work, but nevertheless remaining its antithesis. A medium that ceases to offer resistance, physical or ideological? "Hey" it's not printmaking.

For the casual recipient, my works are disturbingly detailed; for the trained eye of a printmaker, I represent at least a "punk" approach to workshop precision. Thanks to that they remain compositionally cool but structurally hot. Just like in Dürer's art - on the one hand stiffness of saints' images illustrating the research on geometrical dependencies of human proportions, and on the other hand vivid, naturalistic sketches¹⁹. I myself more readily analyze those stiffened silhouettes, which are a testimony of the artist's struggle with the theory he developed, the need to find a clear formula for his own expression. Similar feelings accompanied me when I found out about the martyrological subject matter of Ryszard Otręba's graphics - the power of abstraction lies in its ability to express the inexpressible.

My visual style is certainly also influenced by a practical factor, related to the situation in which I myself contemplate graphic works. As I mentioned earlier, I came to know the works of the masters mostly in the form of digital reproductions. "Engravings are printed on pliant paper from Fabriano, Nuremberg, and other important late-medieval mill towns, where laws prevented the disposal of white rags in any other way than by giving them to paper makers to make the whitest paper for aristocratic letters and, secondly, for printing. Even so, the

¹⁷ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Estetyka Durera i teoria sztuki w Europie Środkowej*, w: *Historia Estetyki*, t. 3, PWN, Warszawa 2020, s. 337-338.

¹⁸ *Generative Hut – the home of generative art*, <https://www.generativehut.com>, 26.01.2022.

¹⁹ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Estetyka Durera i teoria sztuki w Europie Środkowej*, w: *Historia Estetyki*, t. 3, PWN, Warszawa 2020, s. 329-330.

earliest Italian engravings seem to us to read primarily on one register, the paper color not contrasting enough with the darkness of the most thickly massed lines to allow modern viewers what we think of as the luxury of a quick visual scan— something for which these prints were never intended."²⁰ So this is another field in which digital aesthetics have influenced my work - on display, the prints lose their haptics but are freed from scale. This frees me from universal patterns regarding the density of lines laid down to guarantee a consistent surface of objects. I do not copy or scale fragments of the masters' works. I do not show details enlarged, I design new forms and surfaces where the interval of linear patterns is between exposing themselves and maintaining structural integrity.

VII. The motif

If Gross precisely catalogued the engraver's alphabet, William M. Ivins, Jr., founding curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, pointed the way to understanding these interrelated systems and patterns, or what we might call the engraver's vocabulary and grammar. In his 1953 study *Prints and Visual Communication*, Ivins compared visual information to language to develop a theory of pictorial syntax. Even as he argued for the necessity of the syntactical regularity of prints, he was antagonistic toward the increasing standardization of the language of engraving, coining the phrase "tyranny of the rule" to denounce the work of most engravers practicing after 1515. For Ivins, engraving's specialized syntax was an impediment to creativity that led to shallow virtuosity. Engraving and its stylized net of descriptive marks were rendered irrelevant by subsequent developments in printmaking such as etching and lithography, and obsolescence was ensured with the invention of photography, a medium Ivins celebrated as "pictorial statement without syntax." Today, well past the era of Ivins's triumphant modernism, close examination of a range of engravings from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries confirms his concept of pictorial syntax but overturns his reading of engraving as unyielding or rote²¹.

These are the experiences I use when looking for a motif for my work in the post-graphic, post-photographic, perhaps already post-digital era. I want to speak first and foremost about the graphic technique itself, which is an abstract human activity - so it is easier for me to use the language of abstraction rather than realistic iconography. I am looking for the notation of impressions that accompany the contemplation/creation of graphic art. The parallel notation of the author's emotions becomes subservient to the execution process - I cannot allow myself the passion that is easily expressed by painting or drawing expression. Regardless of my mood, I make uniform, repetitive, monotonous, precise movements.

Therefore, I do not describe the motif as much as I emphasize the technique. I achieve a graphic effect based on the experience of other media, without necessarily applying it. Every motif is classified and time bound, so I oppose the universal iconography of basic shapes

²⁰ E. Peters, E. Lincoln, A.S. Raftery, *The Brilliant Line*, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence 2009, s. 107.

²¹ Tamže, s. 126; na podstawie: W.M. Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969.

with classical iconography based on realistic representations and attributes. However, I try to look at the minimalistic strategy objectively. Am I still not ready to confront naturalistic drawing with the matter of copperplate engraving? If the knowledge of art comes from the study of nature²², is it worth running away from mimesis?

I still do not know the answers to these questions, but the motifs I take up are not accidental or chosen on impulse - they are the result of conceptual deduction. I am not interested in roads that do not lead to the goal. Probably you can create without knowledge, but I think that such an attitude makes it difficult to reach a conscious recipient, and is it worth to be accessible to everyone?

If I can define precisely what image I want to see, then I intend to bring it to life. An undefinable, intuitive, spontaneous, mystical search does not give me satisfaction. Furthermore, based on the structural analysis of figurative motifs undertaken by engravers, I am convinced that abstraction can be cut just as well - this is evidenced, among other things, by the origin of the copperplate engraving technique, related to the craft of ornamentation. While some artists are looking for an original motif, others are trying to embrace a universal theme - not to appropriate, but to have the courage to make an original contribution to the language of geometric abstraction.

In addition to the visual language, I think that my work can also be qualified by conceptual terms that are contemporary from the perspective of technology²³.

- Digital art - because it is created with the help of computer in the preparatory stage and in the support of realization. Following Robert Mallery - the computer is the main cybernetic component of the work²⁴.
- Generative art - which is not necessarily digital, such as the aforementioned generative art systems formulated by Sol Lewitt, or the aleatoric art of Ryszard Winiarski.
- Media/technology art - its first wave usually tells about technology itself, afterwards it creates new stories using it. So I consider my own installation work to be technology-based, but my workshop work to be autothematic. Enthusiastic "first wave" is not only negative repetitiveness but also avant-garde innovation.

²² A. Dürer, *Ästhetischer Excurs*, wyd. Heidrich, 1528, s. 277; cyt. za: *Historia estetyki*, t. 3, PWN, Warszawa 2020, s. 339.

²³ *Jak tworzyć sztukę w dobie nowych mediów? Rozmowa z Krzysztofem Golińskim*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RU39RF4o5W8>, 16.12.2021.

²⁴ R. Mallery, in: *Artist and Computer*, R. Leavitt (ed.), Harmony Books, New York 1976, own trans.

VIII. Geometry

"But he who proves his view by means of geometry, and demonstrates the fundamental truth - he is the one the whole world should believe."²⁵

Dürer's words paradoxically pay tribute to the naivety of artists who chase scientific facts instead of cherishing their creative autonomy. The artist and the scientist coexist, but in a parallel dialogue. The artist asks more and more questions without waiting for answers. The scientist seeks to provide answers to questions already raised before new ones arise. The actions of the artist-researcher and the scientist, however, are invariably confronted by the viewer: "The construction of scientific facts is a process of producing texts whose fate (status, value, utility, factuality) depends on subsequent interpretation."²⁶

So I intend to enjoy the privileges of the artist - the research, the systems, the references to geometry, mathematics, programming, symbolism, art history, serve only to guide the thinking process. I am not obligated to be consistent, rational, or even true to my assumptions. By contradicting myself, I might break the boundaries of my own creative expression.

Perhaps I would find the desired image by multiplying my compositions infinitely. This, however, is the same trap as the first contact with graphic software, which usually consists in a chaotic testing of all available functions, tools and effects. For the palette of graphic solutions is large and tempting, and even the meticulous Dürer succumbed to it. Erwin Panofsky criticizes unnecessary, supposedly demonstrative, multiplication of iconological motifs in the Masterpiece copper engraving "Knight, Death and the Devil"²⁷.

The philosophical nature of the foregoing considerations frightens me - wishing to return to the language of praxis, I have formulated a pseudo-theory for the sake of further work.

- Line - trace - means of expression.
- Drawing - contour - content carrier.
- Space - chiaroscuro - a feature of matter.
- Matter - more than emptiness - the border of abstraction.
- Multiplication of lines - notation of matter.
- Differentiation of line set - properties of matter:
 - width, fading
 - direction, curve, corner
 - density, interval
 - continuous/interrupted line
 - regular/irregular line
- Universal properties of intersecting lines:
 - The smoothest tonal transition occurs when arcs are multiplied.

²⁵ A. Dürer, *Ästhetischer Excurs*, Heidrich, 1528, s. 270; cited: *Historia estetyki*, t. 3, PWN, Warszawa 2020, s. 339.

²⁶ B. Latour, S. Woolgar, *Życie laboratoryjne. Konstruowanie faktów naukowych*, Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Warszawa 2020.

²⁷ E. Panofsky, *Trzy ryciny Albrechta Dürera. „Rycerz, Śmierć i Diabeł”, „Św. Hieronim w pracowni”, „Melencolia I”*, in: *Studia z historii sztuki*, PIW, Warszawa 1971.

- Opposing arcs form a homogeneous grid.
- Arcs with similar curvature create a non-uniform structure, moiré.
- The smoothest arc is the diagonal of a rectangle, based on a circle:
 - results from the proportions of the golden division;
 - but the format following the golden division is paradoxically impractical in composition, material and display;
 - but an arc running diagonally across the sheet in series A makes it possible to fit 3 such formats into the diameter of a circle.
Geometrically it means nothing, practically - it facilitates the use of the circle motif in future compositions, operating symmetrical curves and creating modular compositions in a standardized format.

Creating modules, founded on basic shapes, in the form of graphic matrices, and then intersecting them (in mirror image, or each other), theoretically covers all the possible ways of spatial hatching of the figure.

The abstract composition is thus iconographically complete. Assuming that the arcs were most often used to describe "mobile" figures (figure, clothing, object, etc.) and straight lines for "immobile" subjects (architecture, sky, etc.), the plane becomes the protagonist, and the module borders become the environment.

Graphic possibilities:

- Autonomous, clear images.
- Infinite number of single images, which are combinations of modules - rather within two layers, but with different offset, different reflection.
- Differentiating matrices within a given vector - interval, thickness, styling. Changing one property by a tiny amount leads to a completely different plane, a different manual challenge, and the ability to develop more new matrices endlessly.
- Graphic "recycling" - possibility of multiple and diverse use of matrices, transferring responsibility for the final effect to the printing process.
- Composing modular images at any scale.

Regular interferences generate moiré patterns, with which my prints are identified. However, it has never been an important formal aspect for me. In my first graphic realizations I noticed that it was a striking motif, so I naturally based my subsequent compositions on it.

Nevertheless, I primarily looked for the matter of a regular grid rather than accenting shapes. Now, I would like to reduce the effect of moiré to a subordinate role: a curiosity, an accent, a detail, and put the main emphasis on the impact of a plane filled with a homogeneous linear structure.

I also added full circles to the set of matrices. The first one, filled with lines described on a circle, is the author's interpretation of a sphere. The others were inspired by motifs I had envisioned. The most frequently used in copperplate are concentric circles, the intersecting lines used by Sol Lewitt, and the Mellan spiral. The chiaroscuro sphere that enlivens this consistent set is the boundary of realistic drawing that I allow in my system.

It is another attempt to settle accounts with my own iconography and aesthetics. For the motif of the sphere, like a ball and chain, has accompanied me for a long time, first made

public in 2017, in the series "Interpretations of the Sphere", which is an appendix to the series "Luminance". It is a counterbalance to the multiplied patterns, planes and divisions - perfect, symmetrical, naturally effective and attracting the attention of the viewer, not tolerating randomness. Graphic artists of all generations have tried to deal with this motif, with a varied success. In the history of graphic art, once dominated by concentric circles and nowadays by angular polygons, I have not encountered a drawing system that would satisfy me and allow for the simultaneous crossing of layers of lines, the neutrality of their grid and the smooth description of depth. Ironically, the closest to the above are the depictions of horse rumps in Goltzius' prints²⁸.

For me, the sphere is like a polyhedron, an inexhaustible source of geometric representations through the ages. From Neolithic, grooved stones, through bronze dodecahedrons made in ancient Rome, to the schemes of the Italian Renaissance developed by Paolo Ucello, Piero della Francesca, Leonardo da Vinci, Luca Pacioli, Daniele Barbaro, and Fra Giovanni in their marquetry. In the German Renaissance, it appears in Dürer's "Melancholia I", is described by Johannes Kepler and known from illustrations by Wentzel Jamnitzer²⁹. The polyhedron motif was used by Escher and Olafur Eliasson in modern times.

It turned out that the solution to the obsessive riddle, corresponding to my expectations, I found inside my geometrical assumptions. Instead of using concentric circles or spirals, which seemed to be the only logical solution, I use a curve based on two symmetrically connected halves of a circle. Multiplied lines thicken towards opposite edges. This way, by crossing the modules and rotating one of them by 90 degrees, the grid in the most "bulged" part of the sphere is sparse, and dense in the "farthest" places. To achieve the illusion of fallen and reflected light, it is necessary to consistently vary the thickness of the lines.

The format of the prints is related to the limit of my own skills that I am exploring. Since I am only touching realism, success is not dependent on the accurate transfer of the motif but on breaking down the process into stages and finding the right technical method. The range of the grayscale depends only on how far I can smoothly thicken the cut lines. At this stage and on the basis of current attempts I have concluded that my copperplate engraving skills allow me to smoothly thicken a line of about 10 cm. That is why the matrices of the "Impressions" series are similar to the A7 format. In the matrices of the "Spheres" series the line narrows to a blister of the highest light and fades out, representing reflected light - so I could afford to make a sphere of about 20 cm in diameter.

IX. Craft

My thoughts are inevitably accompanied by reflections on the boundaries of craft and art. I think that the perception of these fields is mainly influenced by the context of time, especially today. There used to be clear criteria that a master in a given craft should meet. Let me simplify: until postmodernism, art was more measurable. The former artist/artisan certainly

²⁸ E.g. copperplate engravings by Goltzius, belonging to the cycle „Equile Ioannis Austriaci“, ca. 1579: „Tuscus“, „Calaber“, „Equus liber et incompositus“. Collected by Stradanus, the series of 43 prints was begun by Hieronymus Wierix, and the title page was done by Adriaen Collaert.

²⁹ G.W. Hart, *Polyhedra and Art*, <https://www.georgehart.com/virtual-polyhedra/art.html>, 16.12.2021.

struggled with similar internal dilemmas, even if he did not yet know how to name them, but he was also more firmly rooted in a given aesthetics and tradition. Breaking conventions exposed him to misunderstanding and ridicule, and his visionary work was appreciated rather posthumously (e.g. Claude Mellan's transgressive style). Today it is the other way round: artistry is above all about dilemmas, and unreflective, unconscious creation is subject to criticism (let's hope so!).

Nevertheless, I would like to propose a universal thesis: craft becomes art when it crosses the boundaries of one's own knowledge and skills.

Regardless of the creative field, there must be a moment when the author begins to reproduce himself. Then, not always consciously, he makes a choice: whether to multiply the works that he feels are good, or to take a risk and see what is hidden next.

An instrumental musician, having mastered a given piece: will he deprive himself of the opportunity to add a piece of himself to it? Will he make an attempt at interpretation, improvisation? And Czesław Ślania: "Bitwa pod Grunwaldem" has he interpreted or reproduced? Perhaps this is an inappropriate question with regard to the early stage of his work, but later, in a private, uncirculated series of postage stamps, "World's Heavyweight Boxing Champions," did he not master to perfection the spatial drawing of a boxing glove after just a few first attempts? Why was another dozen created?³⁰ Maybe he was preoccupied with the contrast between the matter of the glove and the face of the boxer, but was the study of the fine formal aspect so important for his subsequent, commercial realizations?

The works of great portraitists are said to be "alive" - an analysis of their technique reveals expressive strokes of the brush, chisel, and burin in a flawless, mimetic texture that elude a given school, style, or rational optics. I think it is the testimony of the creative temptation, the moment of direct sensory connection with the work, a state reserved for the master of a given craft. Realism is an example readable for our cultural circle, but in the common art that accompanies man in everyday life, related to other areas, one can find more of them: from broken Japanese ceramics, repaired with gold, to fusion cuisine.

It's also a cruel but effective didactic method - getting the student to explore a given topic so that by depleting the possibilities (and being exhausted by the possibilities) they move on to innovative solutions, thereby broadening their perspective and skills.

Finally, I will stand up for the craftsmen - the juxtaposition of craftsman and artist seems unfair to both. First, I am convinced that every artisan hears the artistic whispers because their everyday life is a creative process. Secondly, if he consciously rejects experimentation and continues to work in harmony with himself, does he not evoke envy from the tangled artist?

³⁰ A. Sandström (red.), *Czesław Ślania. Antologia jubileuszowa*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Sztuk Pięknych im. Jana Matejki w Krakowie, Sztokholm – Kraków 2021.

X. Practice

"One must keep drawing and drawing. And when one cannot draw with a pencil, one must draw in thought." - Balthus

Thoughts, as I keep emphasizing, are not enough for me - I want to see specific images and I look for the easiest way to materialize them, even if it involves years of preparation. The inexperienced amateur does a lot of unnecessary work: he collects impractical tools, he identifies work with a certain mood and attitude, he organizes his studio rather than his work. Craft rituals carry the risk of drifting on a sea of unproductivity. The decision to self-educate in the copperplate engraving technique is a journey as romantic as it is frustrating. Relying on sources, advices and speculations, I move forward but often lack a point of reference. Hence, I fall prey to many pitfalls.

The process of creating a print allows me to experience unique, "magical" moments. On the other hand, because technical regulations are based on unquestionable imperatives, it is easy to lose distance from age-old technology, succumb to its alchemical properties, and succumb to the constraints that stiffen the effects of work. This, however, is a price worth paying for experiencing higher emotions.

The process of self-education is difficult because I rely on unstructured inputs, heard in the university studio, found in theoretical studies, or on the Internet. My theoretical knowledge is a network of short clues, notes in my memory, which I recall depending on the technical situation I encounter. I remember them by pictorial associations and metaphors, and I consider them learned when I refer to them automatically. I only suspect that my burin is sharp when the copper shavings are reflected in its polished tip - instead of the common test of hooking the tip of the tool into the nail plate. My grip is right when I don't have to use force to cut a line - if I feel tension in my hand, I can suspect I'm about to make a mistake. And many other rules that I won't bring up out of respect for an age-old discipline. I don't feel competent to write down my observations in the form of recommendations, being an amateur. A reliable source of information is the classic manuals:

- Robert Nanteuil, "Reflections or Maxims on Painting and Engraving," c. 1660;
- Abraham Bosse, "On the Manner of Etching with Acid and with a Burin, and of Dark-Manner Engraving," 1645;
- Domenico Tempesti, "I discorsi sopra l'intaglio," 1677-1680.

While acquiring manual skills, I used the classical training method based on a progression of efforts and a programmed training plan. When I didn't see progress on the copper plate for a long time, I reached for alternative surfaces, such as Plexiglas (brittle and unstable), PVC (foamed sheets - too soft for printing), and finally PET (polyethylene terephthalate, a resilient material, just like copper "grabs" the burin and allows you to cut lines smoothly). It turned out that I can cut smoothly and precisely in synthetic materials, but the graphic expression of the test matrices is far from my expectations. Nevertheless, the time spent solely practicing allowed me to smoothly return to working in copper with a much higher level of precision.

The symbolism of the synthetic material is interesting: it turned out that during the pandemic PET became hard to get and expensive - it is used to make protective screens and visors. The more interesting was its use in the artistic process, taking place in isolation. In addition,

the substrate completely changes the mood of the work - the mirror of the smooth, synthetic material is hermetic, futuristic, working in the cool technomaterial is completely different than in the cozy, warm copper. The contrast between the traditional tools and dirty cutting pad and the foil-protected plastic; the translucent springs of cut lines landing between tiny copper shavings - a bizarre dissonance.

XI. Temporary impressions

2020

A modular graphic installation and a series of 81 photographs documenting its configurations

Materials and media:

- installation - duct tape, fiberglass mesh, tripods, studio lights;
- Documentation - digital photography, photographs in square aspect ratio

The dimensions of the installation depend on the configuration of the elements:

- 8 modules of 280 × 200 cm each, 5 modules of 280 × 280 cm each
- tripods with dimensions of ~280 × 50 × 50 cm each, studio lighting with dimensions of ~200 × 50 × 50 cm

The exemplary installation presenting a spherical form has dimensions of ~280 × 320 × 80 cm

Method of exposition - physical presentation of the installation in a selected set, expanded with full photographic documentation on a digital display

The “Temporary impressions” are shapes and planes described with lines, inspired by fragments of works by the classical engravers and their drawing systems. The form of this installation is a result of the creative process under pandemic conditions.

Isolation had a paralyzing effect on me, and the comfort of working in concentration and solitude lost its charm of an escape from reality. Therefore, I surrendered my environment to the project, allowing the large-scale graphic installation to dominate my living space and reevaluate my daily routine.

The materials used (duct tape, fiberglass net, tripods, studio lights) are a physical metaphor for the basic printmaking means of expression: trace, light, shadow, composition. Juxtaposed together, they act as matrices – the impressions temporarily gain depth, revealing new patterns and meanings.

Systematic documentation of work results in the form of Instagram posts measures the passing time, substitutes socialization in the company of art, and paradoxically brings the work back to the format of a graphical miniature – the project's starting point.

XII. Impressions

2021

Collection of prints: an open series, based on combinations of 10,5 x 7,5 cm and 10,5 x 10,5 cm copperplate engravings. At the moment the cycle consists of 12 matrices and 75 different prints.

Individual compositions reproduce the set-ups of the installation "Temporary impressions", which took on the role of a large format, spatial sketchbook.

Reversing the process and starting the formal search with the large-format installation has allowed for a miniature synthesis of its monumental expression.

XIII. Centrum

2021

Modular installation in the form of LED neon, commissioned by the event space "Centrum", operating in the summer on the terraces of the Spodek in Katowice.

Two analogous modules represent a sphere, the surface of which is covered with 40 meters of orange LED tape, manually fixed to the transparent plexiglass by 300 zip ties.

The modules allow setting them in various configurations, interpreting the internal structure of the sphere. The neon highlighted key locations of the event space, appearing on stage during concerts, illuminating the glass interior of the Spodek, or directing event attendees to the bar.

I decided to include this work in the described set not only because of its geometric iconography. I believe that it introduces an important, from the point of view of graphic craft, context of commissioned work. Paradoxically, nowadays I am more likely to receive a commission for an intermedia installation than for an occasional print.

The creation of the work with an intention to exhibit it in a space other than a gallery allowed me to reach a larger and more diverse group of viewers: passers-by, people using catering facilities, concert goers. The popularity of the venue, located in the vicinity of the Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra (NOSPR), resulted in the fact that during one of the concerts Catchup's performance in front of the neon was seen by over two thousand people. Below an exchange of messages with the organizer of "Centrum", Oskar Olszewski:

Q: Everything went well?

A: It was great

only [...]

because there were a couple of hundred people at Catchup, plus another couple of our regular guests

and in the middle of our concert the concert under nospr ended

and 2k people came :D

P: Wooo

XIV. Spheres

2021

Collection of prints: series of copperplate engravings, based on four 22 x 22 cm matrices. The individual compositions are devoted to the chiaroscuro description of a sphere, using varying structures and line intensities.

Although my priority was to develop a coherent, LeWitt-like system for generating art, and to focus on the conceptual and performative aspects of the project, I succumbed to the temptation of making a set of prints, intended primarily to test my workshop and drawing skills. While revealing artistic vanity and weakness, and opening the door to the critique of aestheticizing action, I also remain true to my underlying discipline. My project cannot be reduced to text, reflection, and execution of practice matrices, as strictly intellectual validation is reserved for other art disciplines. The fact that I make up the rules of my artistic game myself does not mean that I cannot lose in this game - I am only human, it is much harder for me to reject a flawed metal plate than a missed theory.

XV. Identity

Referring to my own reflections on the relativity of artistic actions in a scientific context, I do not intend to formulate definite conclusions. What I see as the mark of a scientific approach is, above all, a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter. I conducted my research in extreme and contrasting fields: between conception/conceptualism and practice/pragmatism; visual and spectacular, ritual-performative and craft-creative activity; design logic of assumptions and artistic multiplicity of interpretations.

I took a journey not only in the footsteps of my past masters and contemporary allies, but more importantly into my own creative identity. Just as the blending of pop cultural motifs has replaced subculturalism, the contemporary artist is returning to the Renaissance ideal of having multiple competencies. A transitional period in which he will feel not fully committed to the fields he touches, passes by in favor of comprehensive proficiency. Indeed, specialized skills gradually become civilizational skills, such as computer usage and later graphic design (now everyone designs their social media or digital documents). Soon programming will also become a common skill.

As of today, put up against a wall, to a printmaker I would say I am an artist, and to an artist I would say I am a printmaker. This provocative thesis stems both from my disagreement with the promotion of declarative, limiting attitudes, particularly in an academic context, and from the fact that I treat matters of art with the seriousness they deserve. I have always objected when I heard "playing with form" in academic rhetoric - those for whom it is just a game should go back to the sandpit. I see no reason to diminish art in relation to other scientific fields - every discipline based on human creativity is equivalent. Finding value in seemingly impractical activities is valuable evidence of the infinite potential of human capabilities. Even if that is the only role of art.

This is why I value the complexity of the project described. My assumed commitment to the classical workshop was confronted with reality and gave way to circumstantial

experimentation, eventually returning to the underlying technique in its purest form. Similarly, my attitude towards concepts and process, which in themselves have research potential but are incomplete for me without solid executions. This belief arises, among other things, from the state of contemporary printmaking, dialoguing with the viewer's understanding. Archaic printmaking technologies are experiencing a kind of revival thanks to social media, popularizing viral videos that show a "oddly satisfying"³¹ process. Mostly, these are cursory efforts, presenting printmaking as a decorative hobby, in the vein of Bob Ross³² shows. If, in media coverage, graphic design becomes merely an interesting process, how will "graphic thinking"³³ be popularized, and will it still be needed?

Hence my decision to hide the manual process behind making prints in the copperplate engraving technique. I did not film or photograph the process of cutting with a burin; I kept the attractive image of a thick layer of copper shavings protruding from the mirror of the metal plate I was working on exclusively for myself. Even the matrices I am not keen to show - their attractiveness competes with the matted print, and I want the story of the creative method as seen from my perspective to speak, not the method itself. Perhaps my own work will occupy me so much that I will never feel the need to unveil my workshop.

The expression of my compositions can be described by a three-dimensional coordinate system. Format and precision are opposing properties, and line density and the illusion of space work synergistically, although it is possible to shift the emphasis toward one of these parameters. All coordinates contribute to the expression of a given print - they describe its features, not its quality. Copperplate miniatures will come at the expense of format, non-standard materials allow smooth movement between axes, and large-format experiments can have a powerful effect without great precision, enhancing overwhelming density or monumental spatiality. The formula for an ideal graphic would be a circle, described by the distant coordinates of all four axes - let's hope I never find it!

³¹ E.A. Gordon, *The Weirdly Therapeutic World of "Oddly Satisfying" Videos*, <https://www.popdust.com/the-weird-world-of-oddly-satisfying-videos-2649018972.html>, 27.01.2022.

³² D. Smith, *'It was shocking': how did a Bob Ross documentary become so contentious?*, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/aug/31/bob-ross-documentary-netflix-joshua-rofe>, 27.01.2022.

³³ D. Folga-Januszewska, *Widzenie graficzne*, in: *10. Triennale Grafiki Polskiej* (exhibition catalogue), Katowice 2018, s. 11–12.

XVI. Future

In place of a summary, I have decided to identify themes that, for various reasons, were not developed during the project. Some plans I will follow immediately, others I may lose interest in soon in favor of new ideas. Each, however, is important and worth detailing.

Despite my commitment to abstract synthesis, I am constantly tempted to return to the language of realism. I think I am only restrained by my aversion towards identifying with a particular symbology and set of associations, although I realize that these factors can be as obliging as they are stimulating. I have settled on a hyper-realistic representation of a sphere in the "Spheres" series, but I don't know how much longer I will be able to resist the natural human need to imitate.

In my search for an alternative method of representation, I also made no attempt to reproduce random, figurative motifs manually, generated by a computer. A form stripped of its associations does not exist, as evidenced by digital experiments - Google's DeepDream neural network subjected to hallucinations dominated by images of dogs³⁴, or conversely, a random algorithm written with the assumption that the generated images would include animal figures³⁵.

I also decided not to continue experimenting with machine engraving of matrices using CNC equipment. This direction is not for me: to multiply anonymous compositions, to reduce the process to a technological curiosity, such as the actions documented by the ROBO HOBO³⁶ channel. This direction of development was adopted by my PhD thesis supervisor, Professor Krzysztof Tomalski, who in his award-winning series "Genesis for Astrophysicists"³⁷ proves that the artistic expression of mechanical, intaglio structures can only be fully expressed if supported by manual intervention.

I have not planned any monetization strategy for my art, which I find troublesome to catalog, number and organize according to the tradition of edition signing. The structure of the graphic series I make seems to fit more into the trend of art created for NFT tokens³⁸ and the enduring popularity of blockchain-based currencies³⁹. The creative strategy, based on the image execution based on a set of matrices, is identical to, for example, the CryptoPunks⁴⁰ project, one of the first collections of art based on NFT tokens. The value of the most expensive image from this series is currently over \$11 million.

³⁴ J. Brownlee, *Why Google's Deep Dream A.I. hallucinates in dog faces*, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3048941/why-googles-deep-dream-ai-hallucinates-in-dog-faces>, 27.01.2022; M. Connor, *Why is Deep Dream turning the world into a doggy monster hellscape?*, <https://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/jul/10/deep-dream-doggy-monster/>, 27.01.2022.

³⁵ M. Trott, *How Many Animals and Arp-imals Can One Find in a Random 3D Image?*, <https://blog.wolfram.com/2017/02/23/how-many-animals-and-arp-imals-can-one-find-in-a-random-3d-image/>, 27.01.2022.

³⁶ *ROBO HOBO: machines for Artists*, <https://www.youtube.com/c/express375/videos>, 27.01.2022.

³⁷ K. Tomalski, *Genesis dla astrofizyków*, series of prints, 2018–2019, <https://www.krzysztoftomalski.com/big-bang-genesis>, 27.01.2022.

³⁸ R. Sharma, *Non-Fungible Token (NFT) Definition*, <https://www.investopedia.com/non-fungible-tokens-nft-5115211>, 27.01.2022.

³⁹ A. Hayes, *Blockchain explained*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/blockchain.asp>, 27.01.2022.

⁴⁰ Larva Labs, *CryptoPunks*, <https://www.larvalabs.com/cryptopunks>, 27.01.2022.

In describing my creative method, I came close to defining the field of art that I practice. However, I have not placed it in the perspective of the surrounding: opposing or parallel fields, in order not to narrow the scope of interpretation of my works. I leave it up to the viewer to decide: whether he or she will content themselves with observing the formal aspects in a historical context, or whether they will also notice the message - not ideologically involved, but ideologically committed. I invite both of them to an open dialogue, because while contesting both the craft rules of classical graphic art and the visual language of metaphorical graphics, I avoid irony and cynicism. These traits, useful in everyday struggle with reality and present in the world of art describing this reality, more often reveal helplessness than intellect.

Finally, I still haven't developed a systematic work ethic, even though the time-consuming project required regularity, focus and self-discipline at every stage. I was disappointed with my attitude until I looked at my art from a broader perspective. Art making touches different aspects than other areas of life that I manage to keep in check. It is selfless⁴¹, therefore it does not yield to self-interested motivation. Inspiration exists, it can be found between passion and obsession, and I see working under its influence as deeply humanistic.

⁴¹ T. Bocheński, *Czysta Forma po gigantycznej awarii*, „Przestrzenie teatru”, nr 11/2019, <https://teatr-pismo.pl/7440-czysta-forma-po-gigantycznej-awarii/>, 27.01.2022.

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- B. *How many animals can you find in a random 3D image?* <https://blog.wolfram.com/2017/02/23/how-many-animals-and-arp-imals-can-one-find-in-a-random-3d-image/>.
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XIX. ILLUSTRATIONS

A



THE REPRODUCTION OF A TRACE

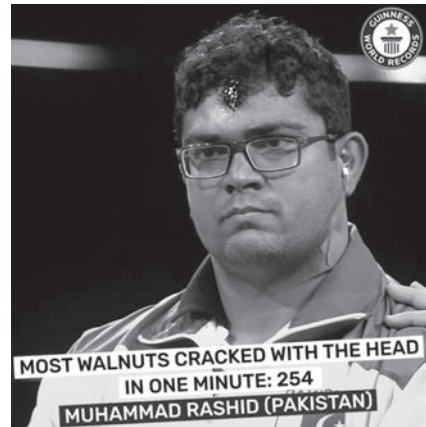


*Hic Domino fidus Nicodemus, et almus Ioseph
 Componunt munda sindone membra Dei
 Unquentisq; novo tumulo decorata reclinant
 Heu, matri prebit pectora mæsta dolor*

C



D



E





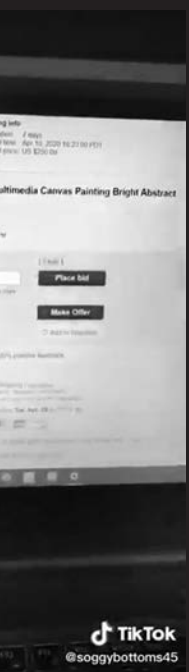
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TikTok @soggybottoms45



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TikTok @soggybottoms45

I swear it gets better pls wait to the end



TikTok @soggybottoms45

I swear it gets better pls wait to the end



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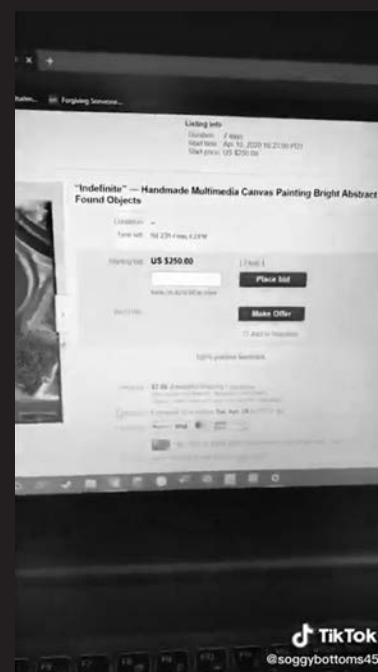
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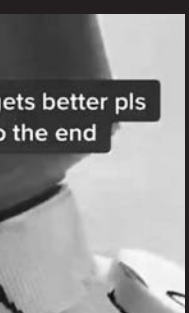


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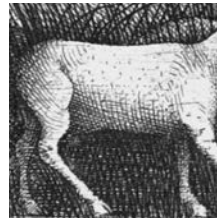
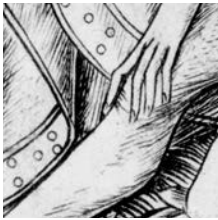
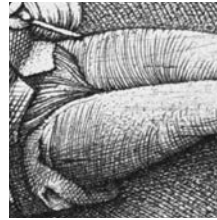
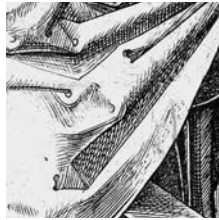
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I swear it gets better pls wait to the end





Master E.S.
Samson and Delila

xv w.

Martin Schongauer
The Resurrection

ok. 1480

Albrecht Dürer
Melencolia I

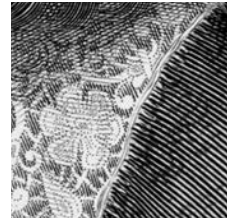
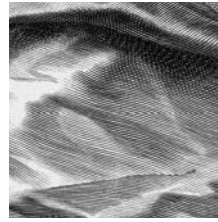
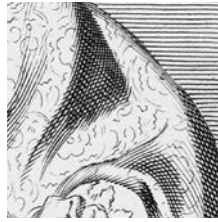
1514

Giulio Campagnola
*The Old Shepherd Lying
in a Landscape...*

ok. 1500–1515

Marcantonio Raimondi
*Joseph Fleeing from
Potiphar's Wife*

ok. 1515–25



Cornelis Cort
The Drunkenness of Noah

1560

Hendrik Goltzius
Labour and Industry

ok. 1480

Claude Mellan
*Delilah Cutting
Samson's Hair*

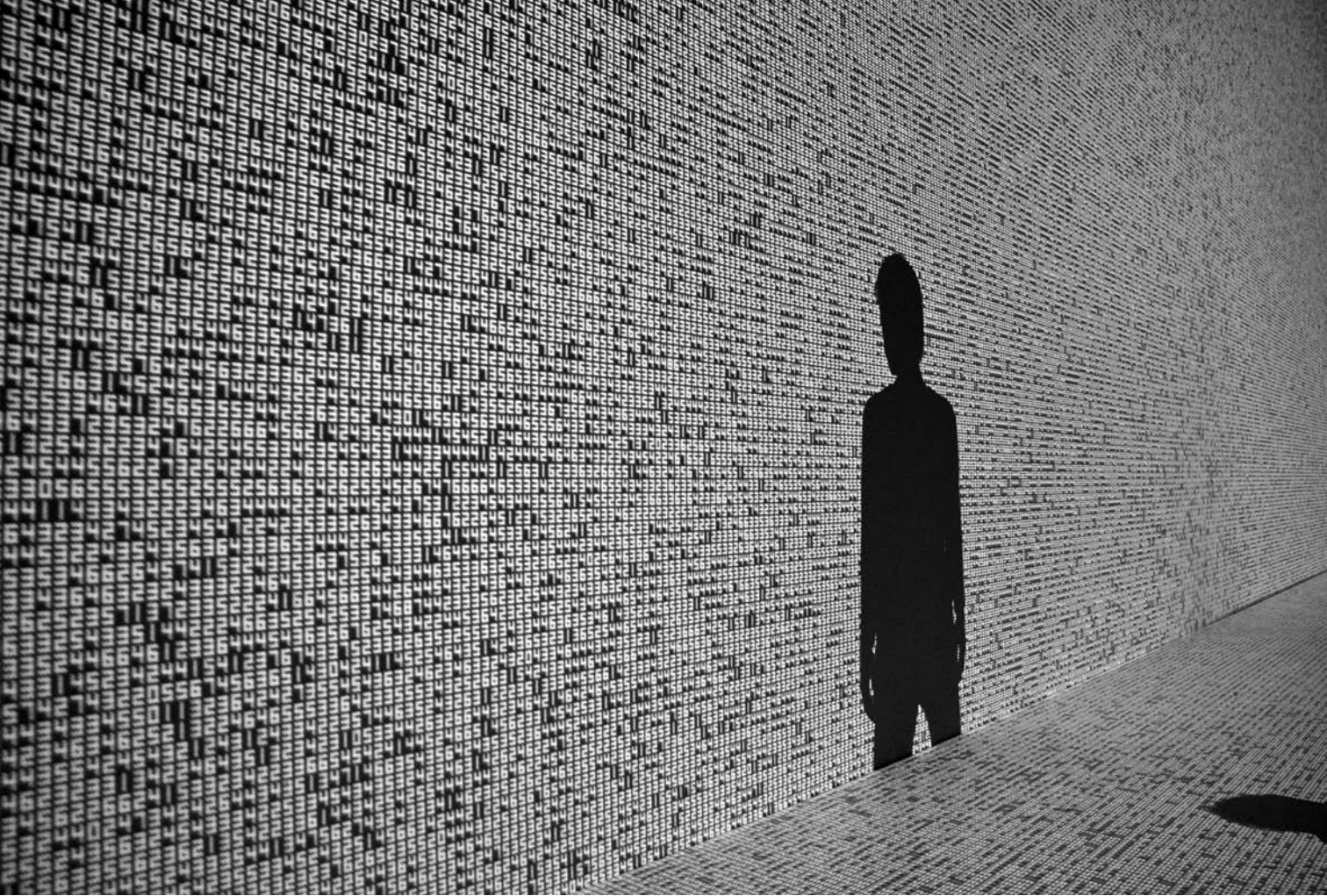
ok. 1600

Paulus Pontius
Daniel Mytens

ok. 1640

Robert Nanteuil
*Stephanus Jehandot
de Bartillat Regi*

1666



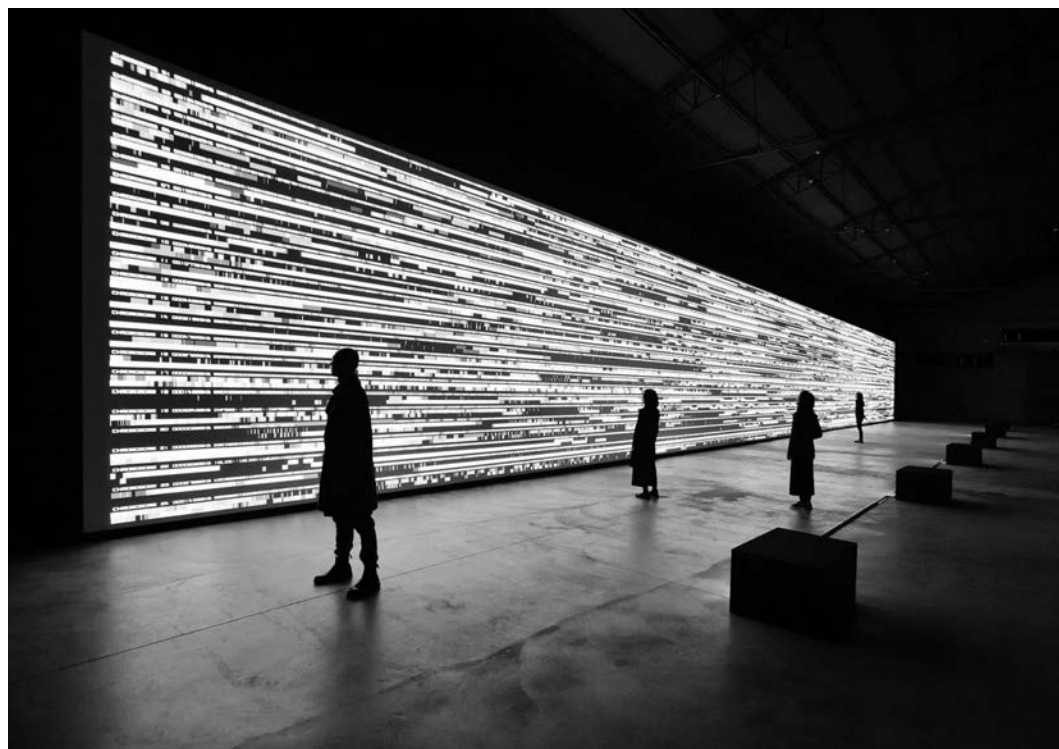
H ↑

I ↓

THE REPRODUCTION...

V. INSPIRATION

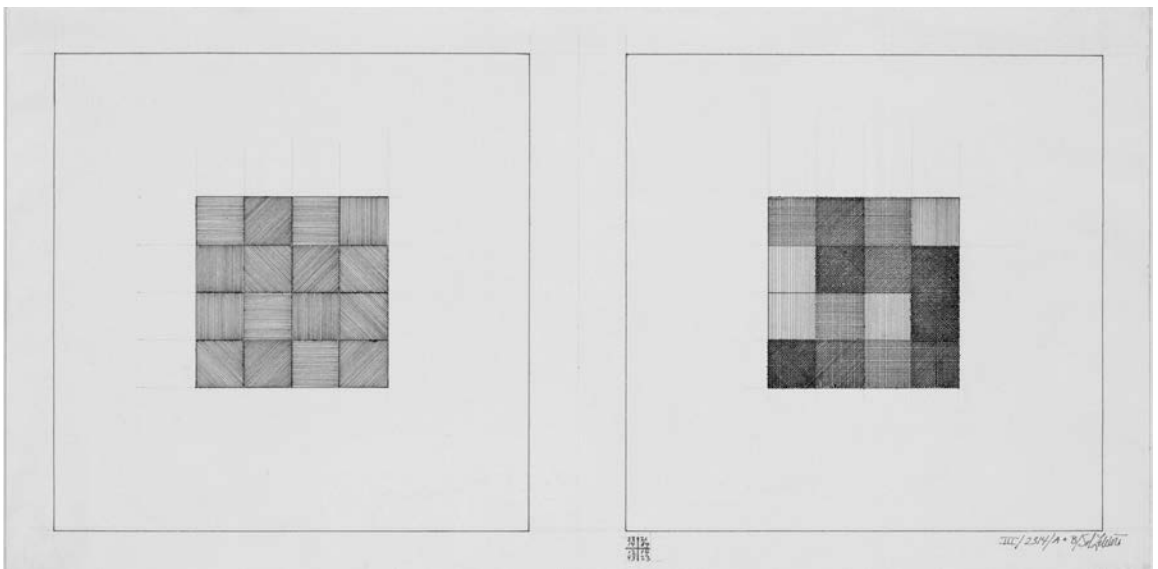
66



J

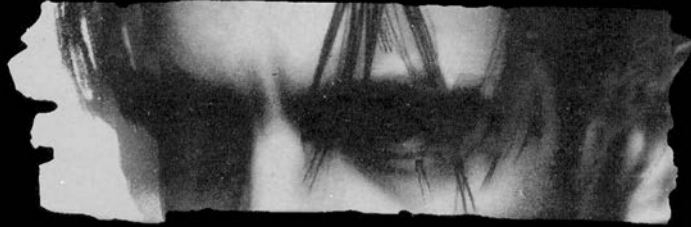


K



L

Laurent Garnier



30

THE REPRODUCTION OF A TRACE

M

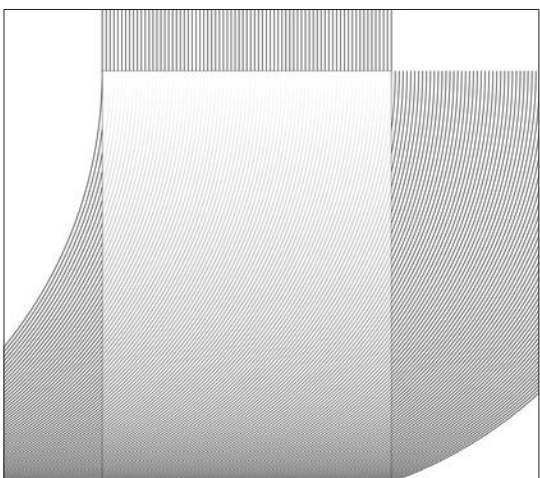
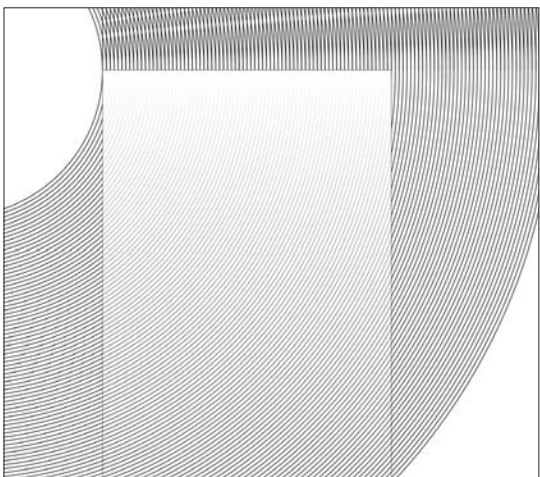
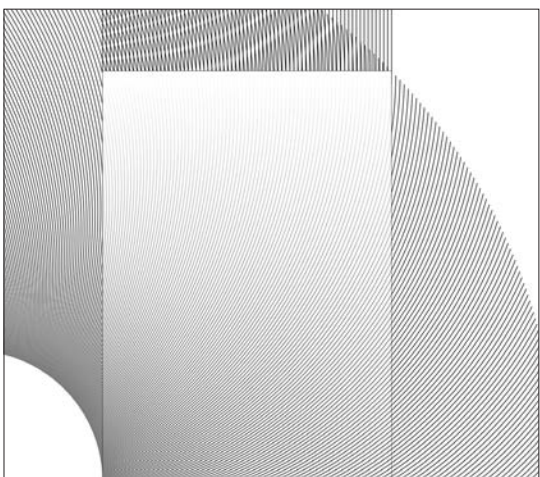




*Tuscus acer medijs cum sese vallibus effert,
Effert arbutum caput, auribus emicat, armo*

*Densa juba in dextro semper iactata recūbit,
Concutiens solido passim frondentia cornu.*

N



P



THE REPRODUCTION OF A TRACE



Född 1881 i Kanada.
Längd 171 cm. Vikt 81,7 kg.
Slog Marvin Hart P. 20 r.



Född 1878 i USA.
Längd 188 cm. Vikt 89 kg.
Slog T. Burns KO 14 r.



Född 1881 i USA.
Längd 199 cm. Vikt 104,4 kg.
Slog J. Johnson KO 26 r.



Född 1895 i USA.
Längd 187 cm. Vikt 84,9 kg.
Slog J. Willard KO 3 r.



Född 1909 i USA.
Längd 189,5 cm Vikt 94,9 kg.
Slog P. Carriera KO 11 r.



Född 1905 i USA.
Längd 190,5 cm Vikt 88 kg.
Slog M. Baer Poäng 15 r.



Född 1914 i USA.
Längd 188 cm Vikt 89,6 kg.
Slog J. Braddock KO 8 r.



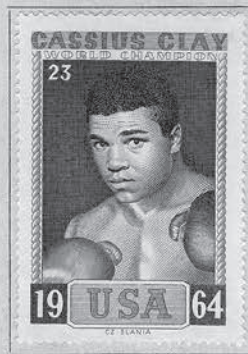
Född 1921 i USA.
Längd 183 cm Vikt 83,6 kg.
Slog J. Walcott Poäng 15 r.



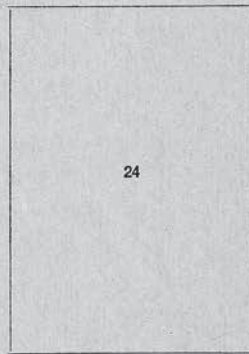
Född 1935 i USA.
Längd 183 cm Vikt 87,1 kg.
Slog I. Johansson KO 5 r.

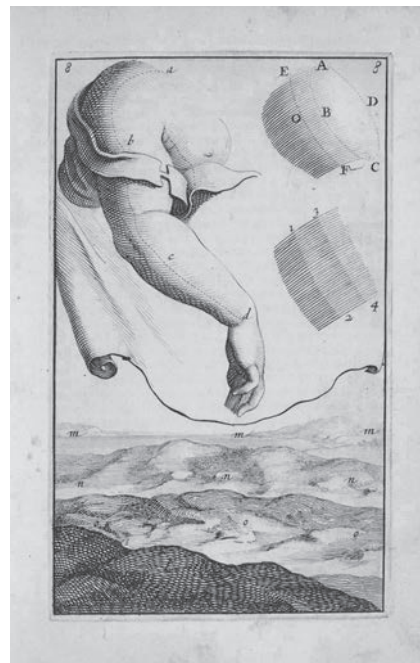
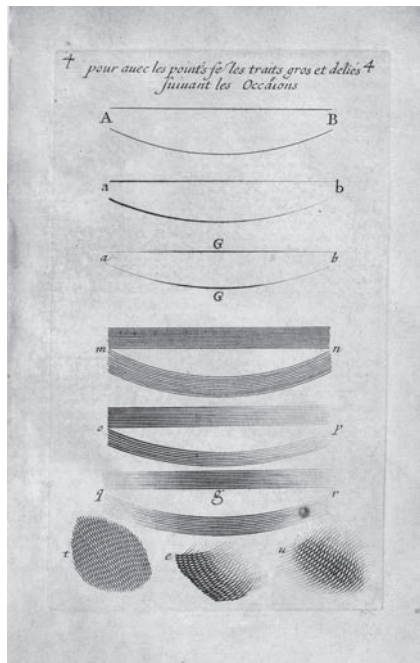
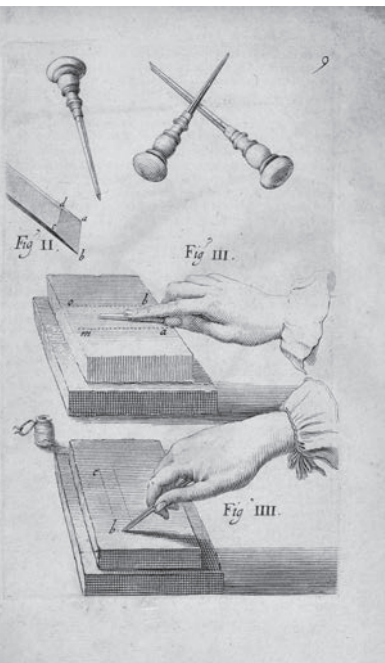


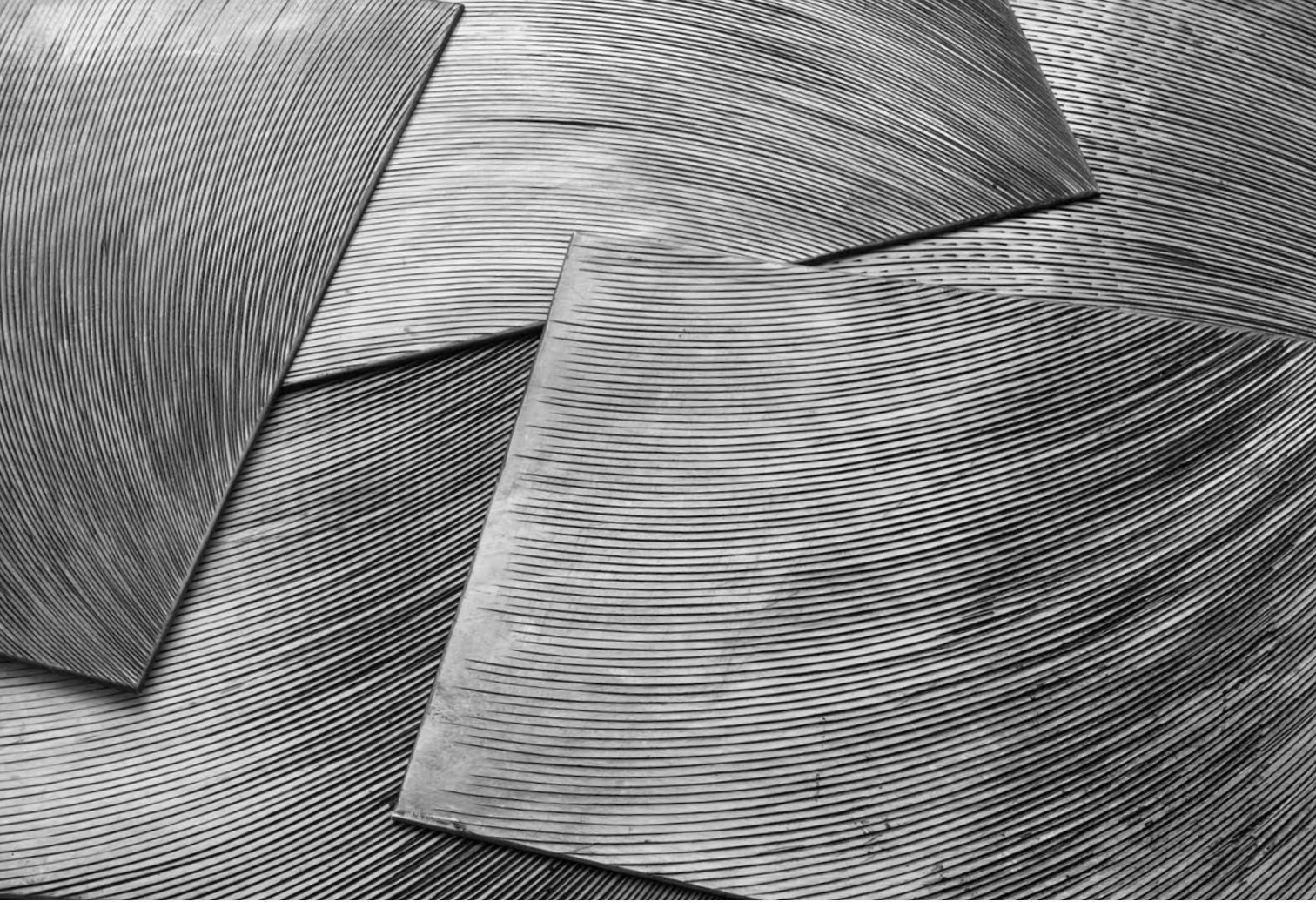
Född 1934 i USA.
Längd 185 cm Vikt 97,2 kg.
Slog F. Patterson KO 1 r.



Född 1942 i USA.
Längd 190 cm Vikt 95,6 kg.
Slog Sonny Liston KO 7 r.







TEMPORARY IMPRESSIONS

modular graphic installation, 2020

(p. 78–83)

IMPRESSIONS

series of copperplate engravings, 2021

(p. 84–89)

CENTRUM

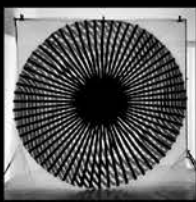
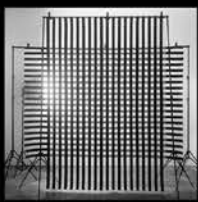
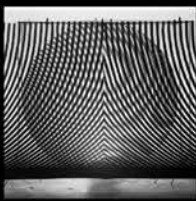
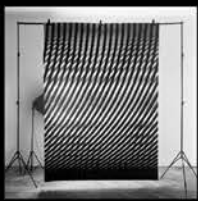
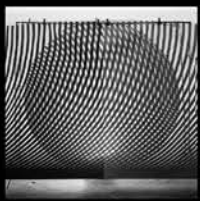
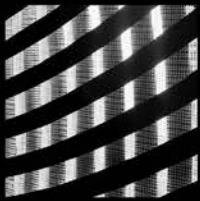
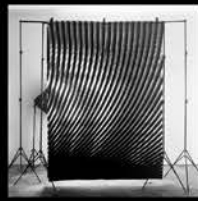
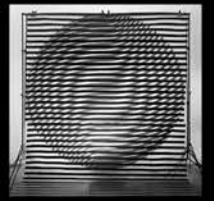
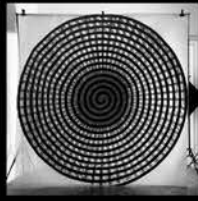
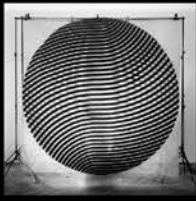
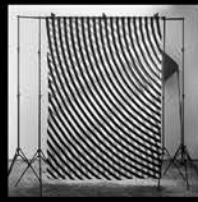
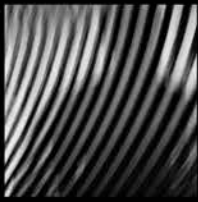
modular light installation, 2021

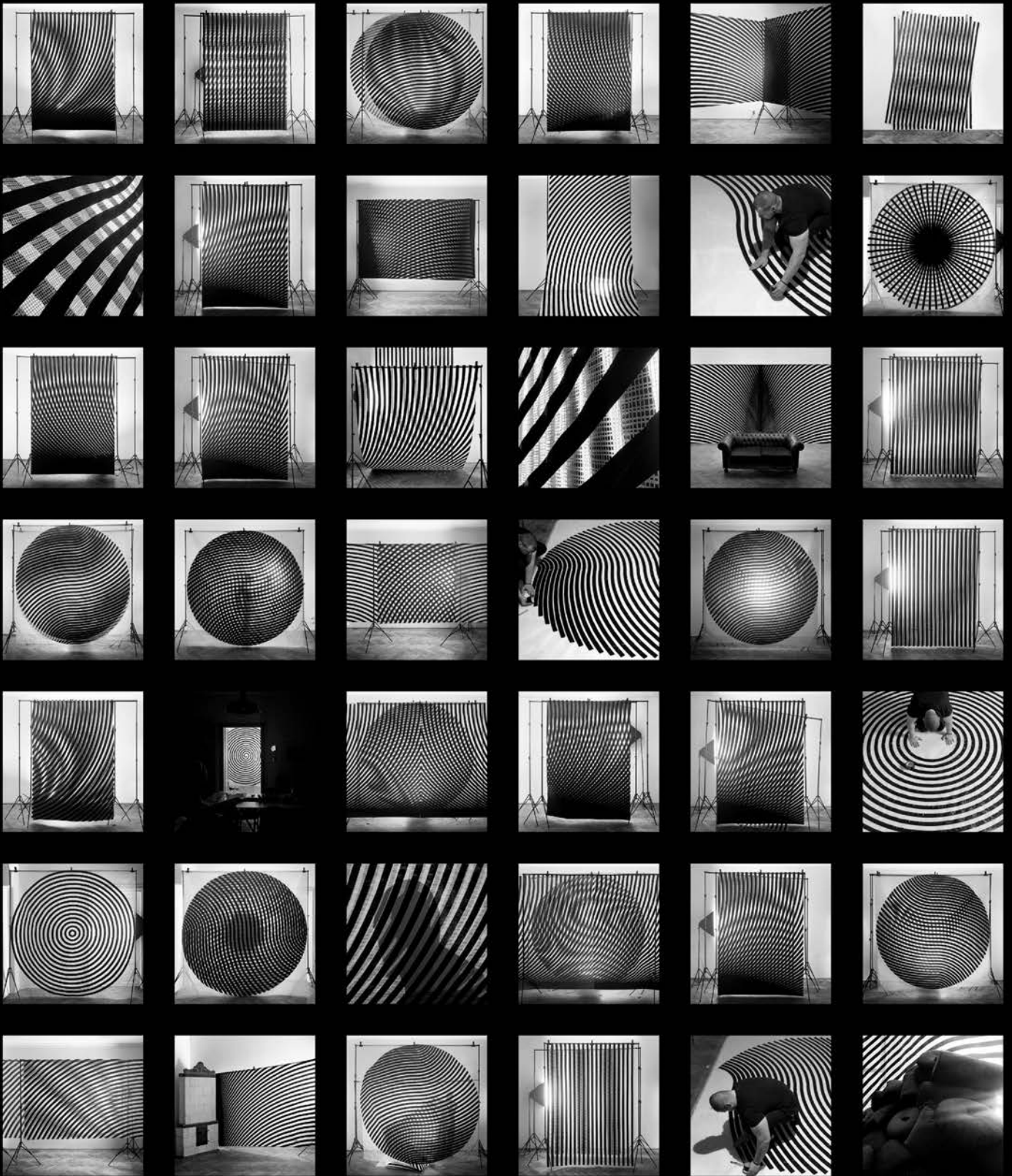
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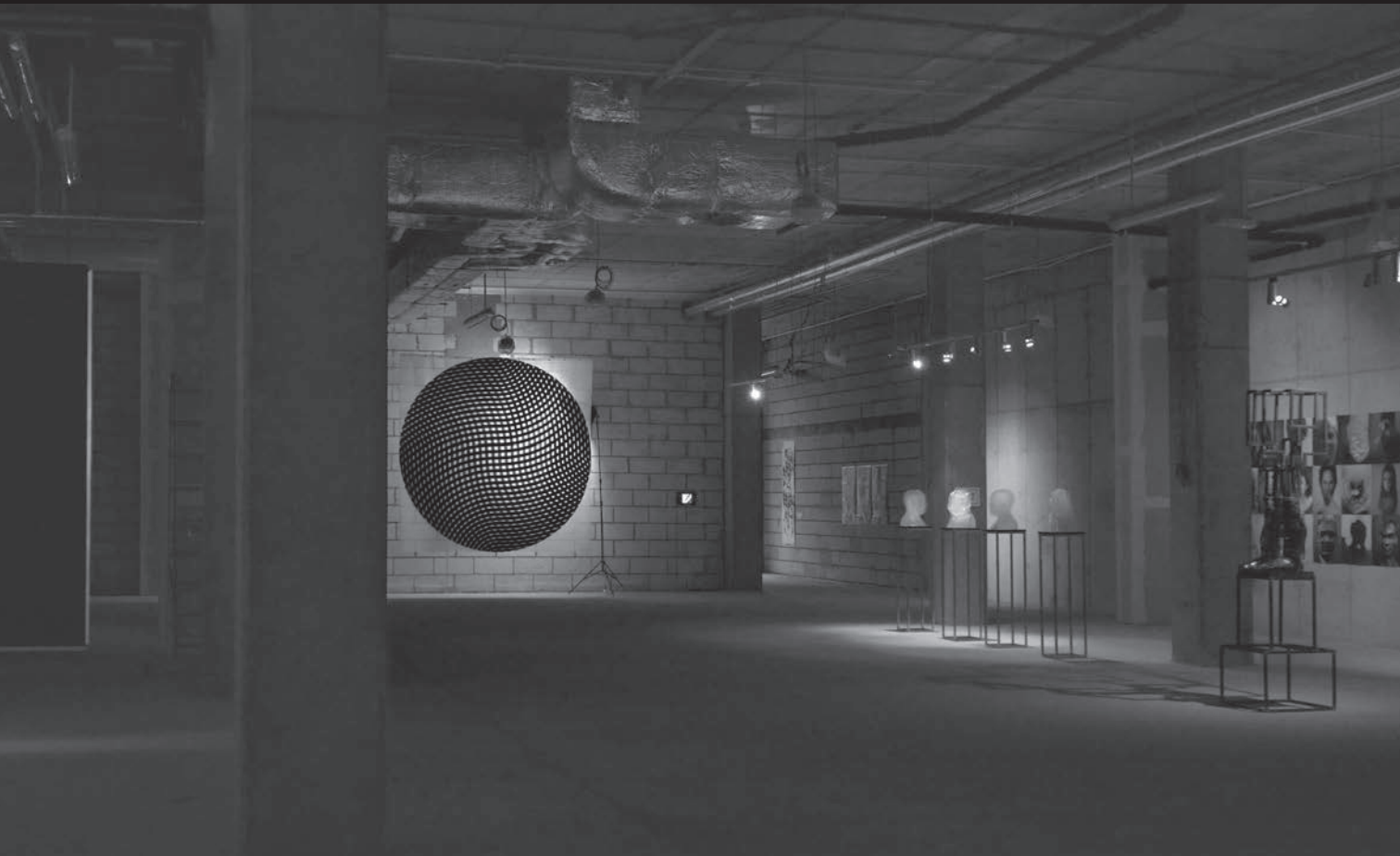
SPHERES

series of copperplate engravings, 2021

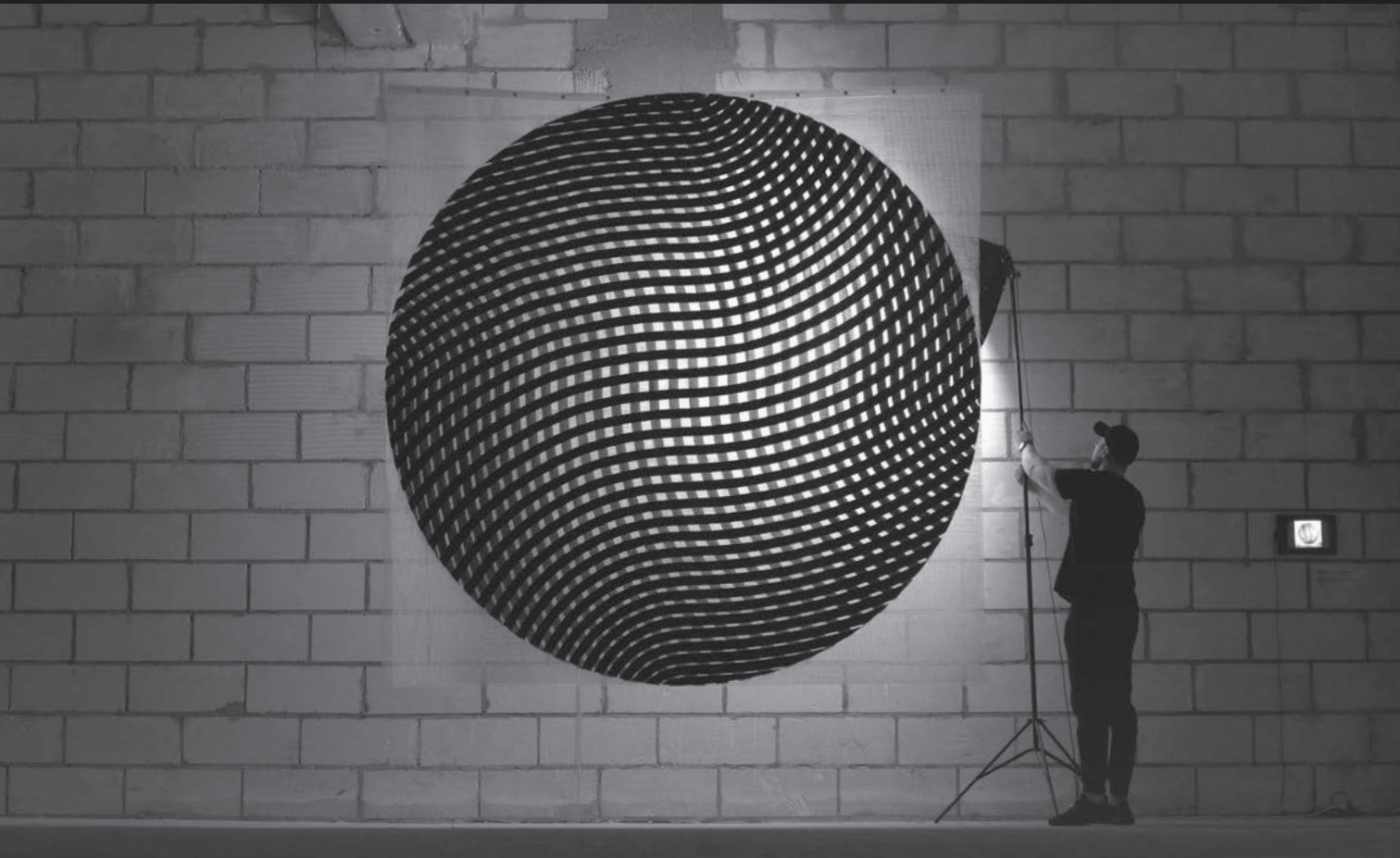
(p. 96–101)

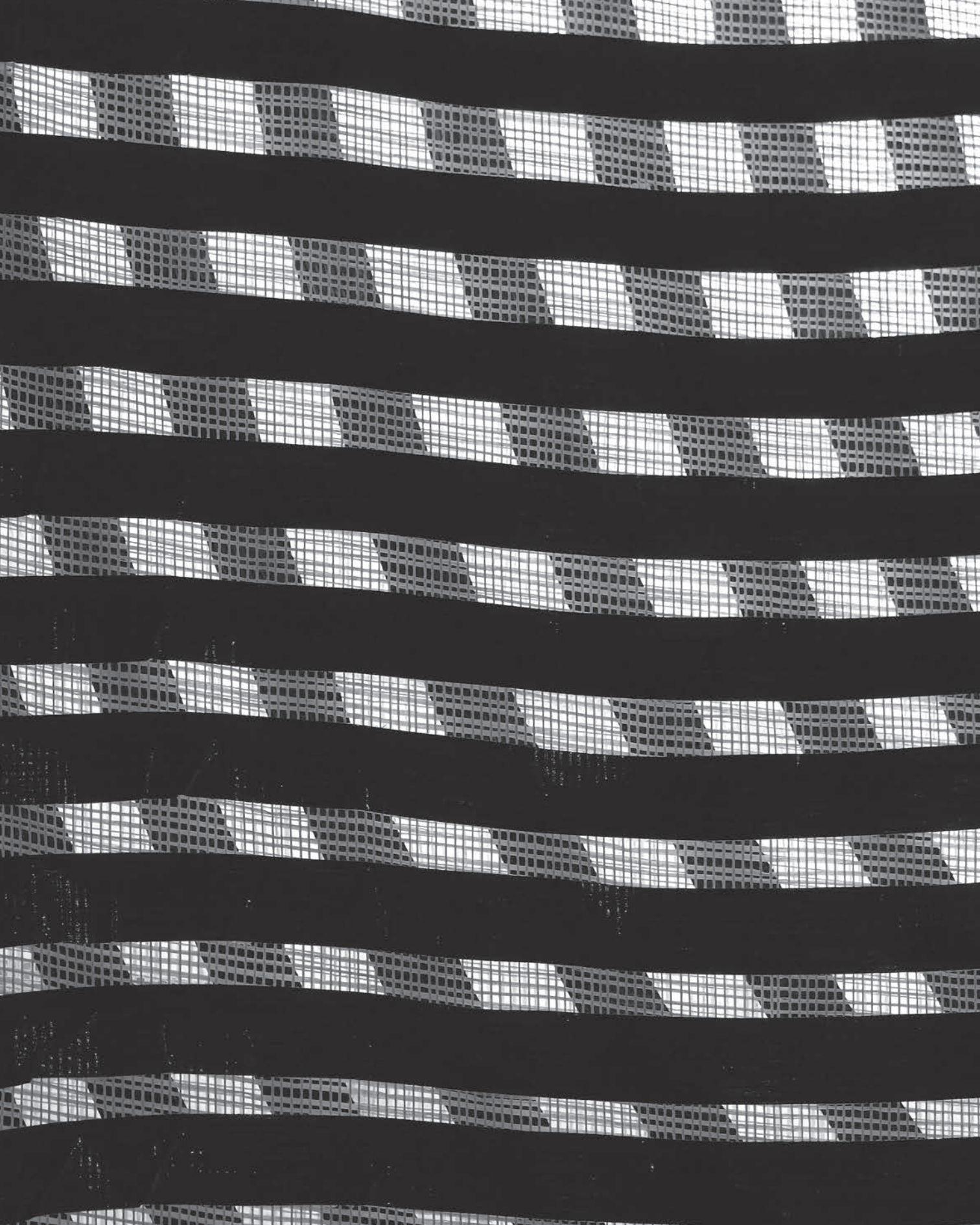


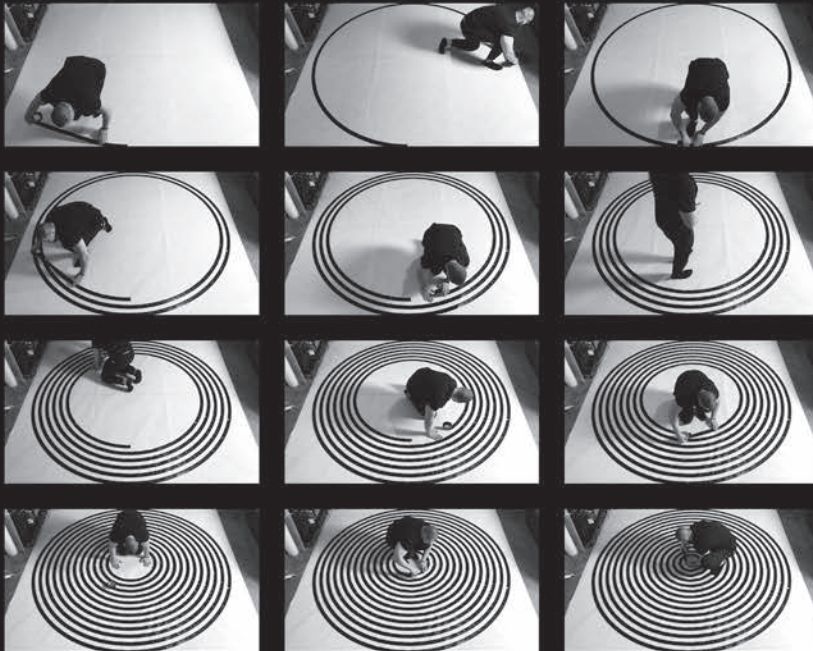
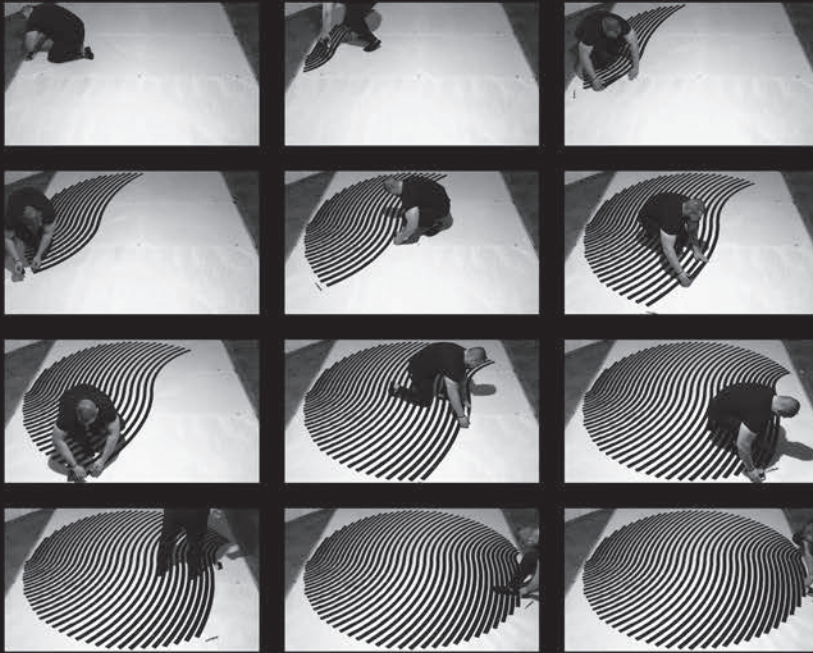


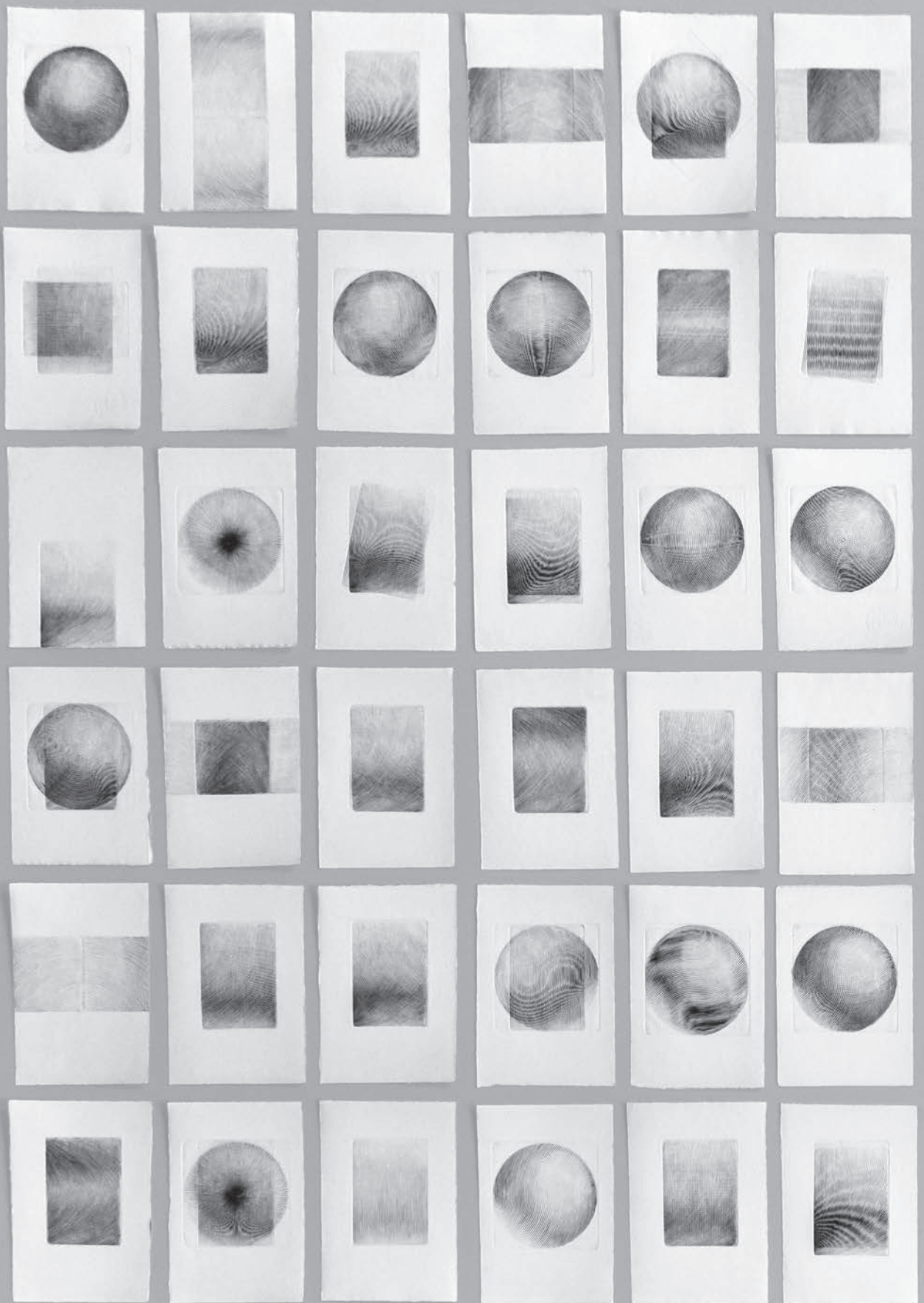


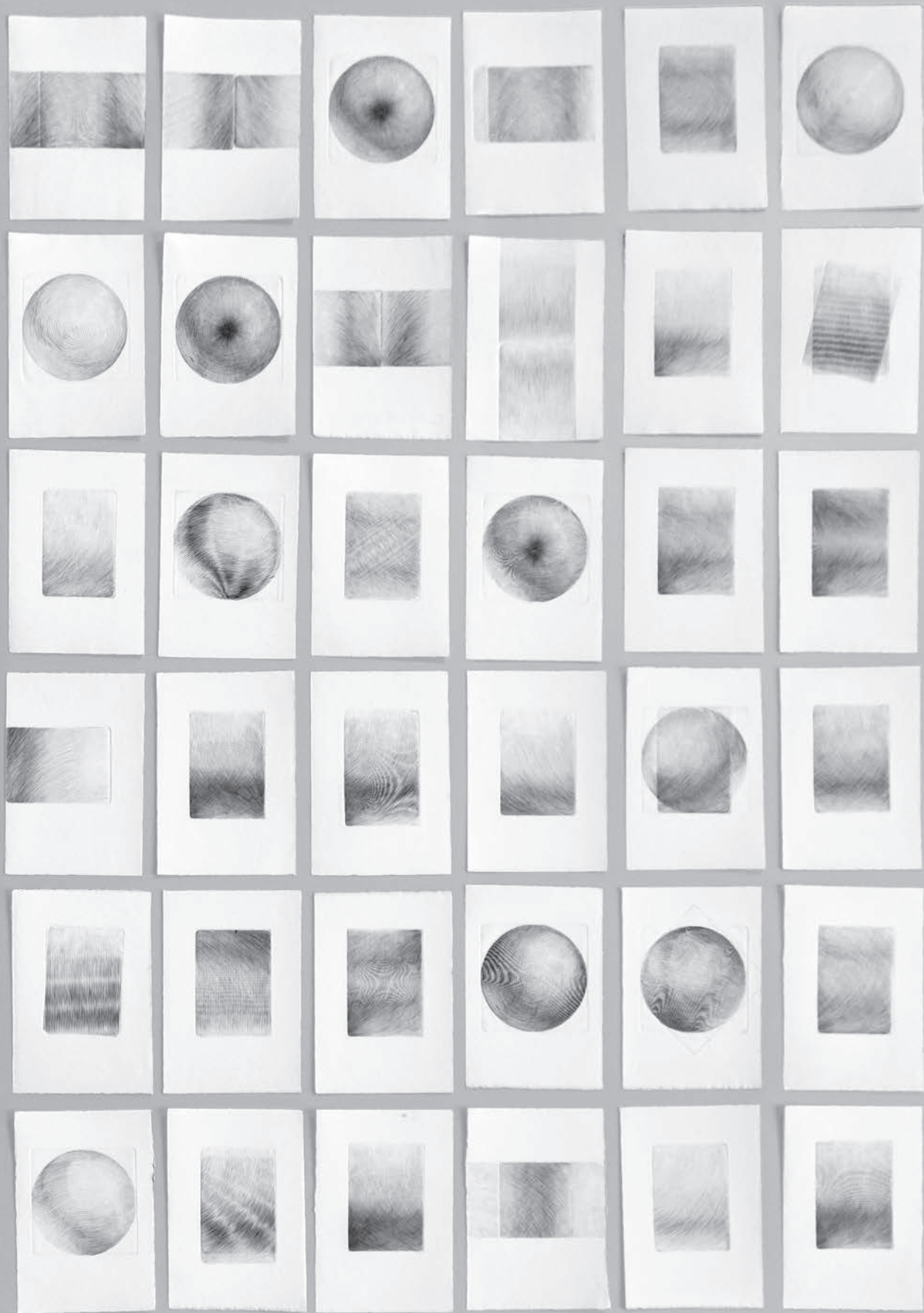
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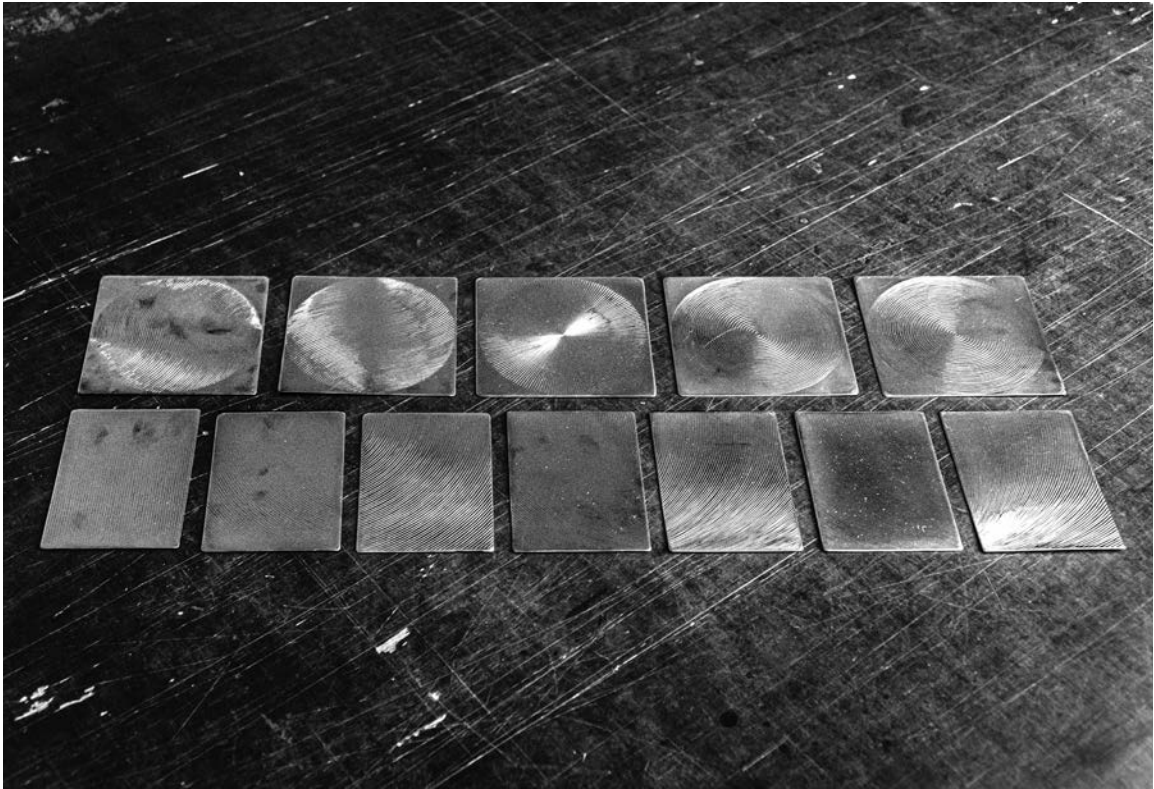


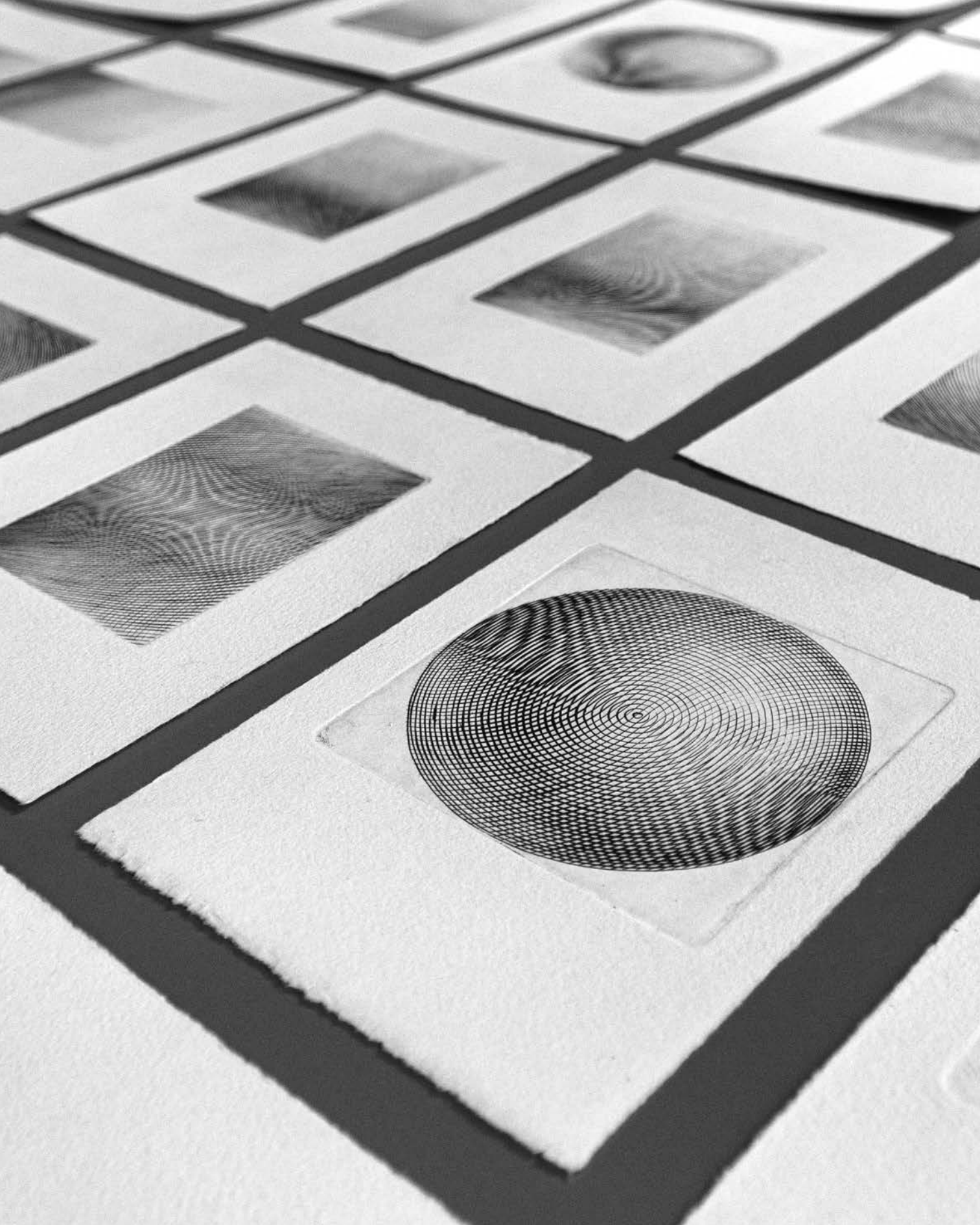








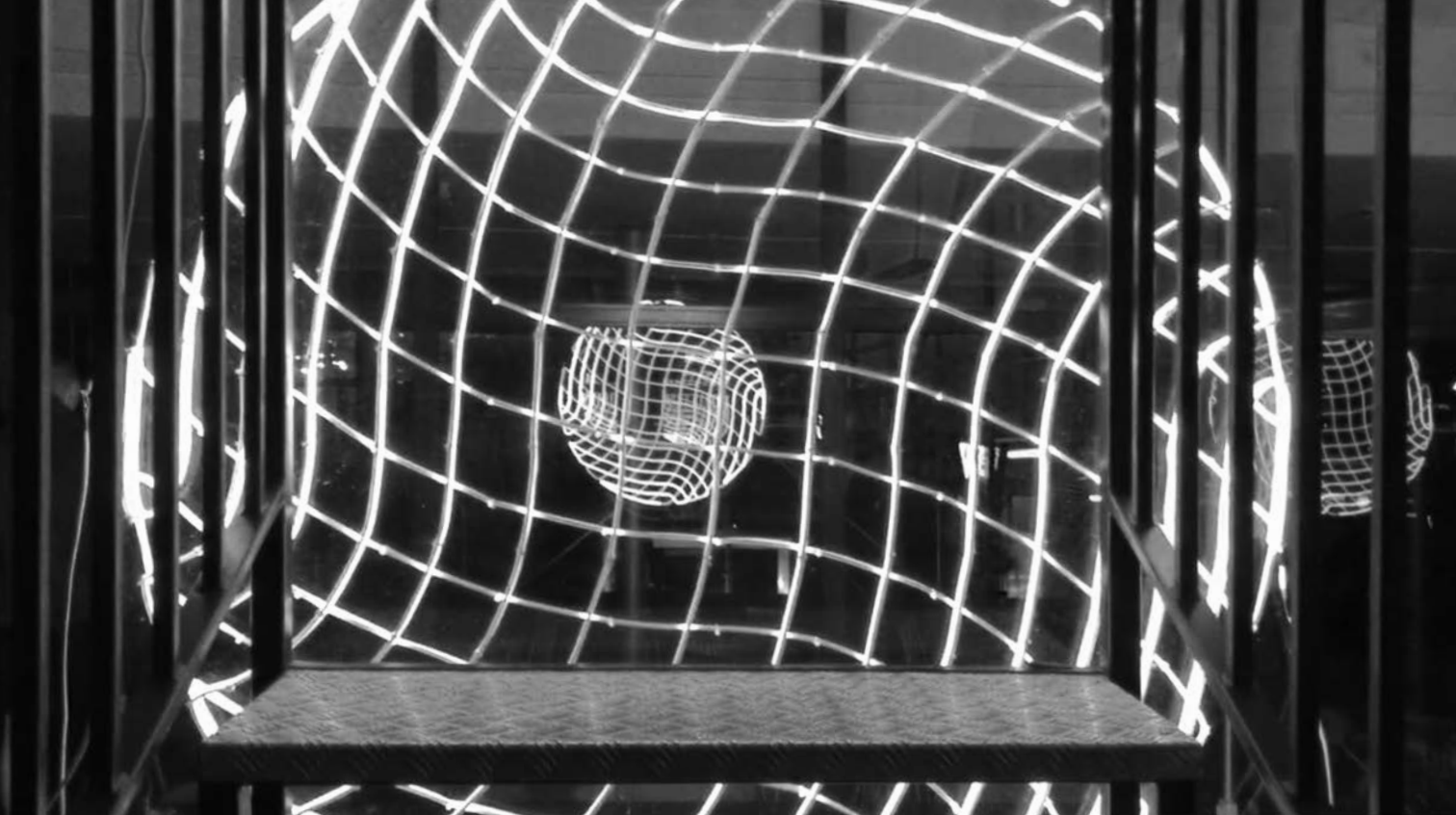




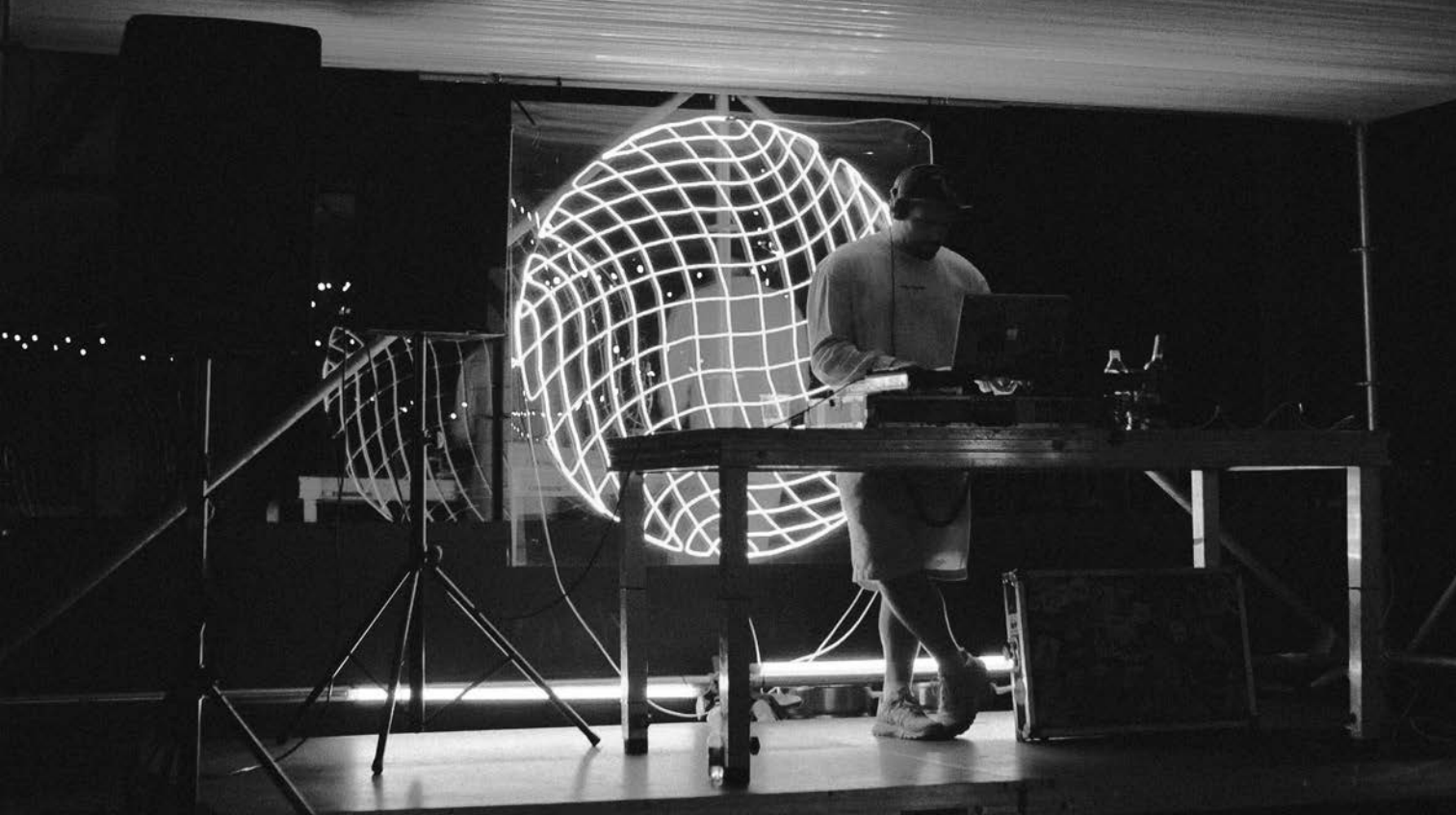




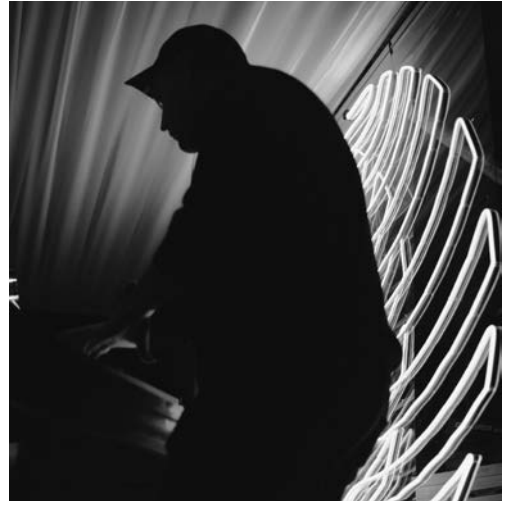


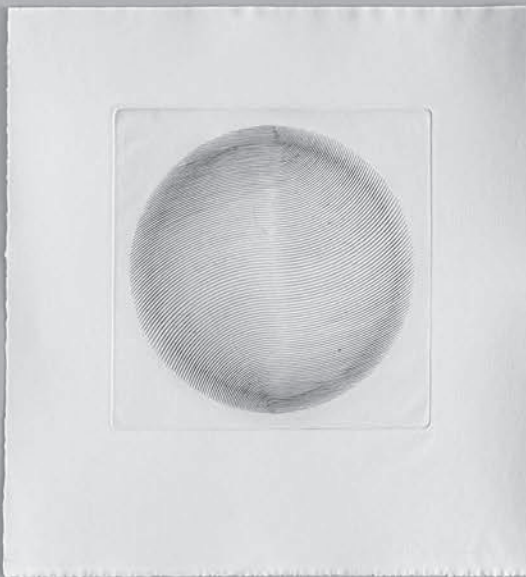
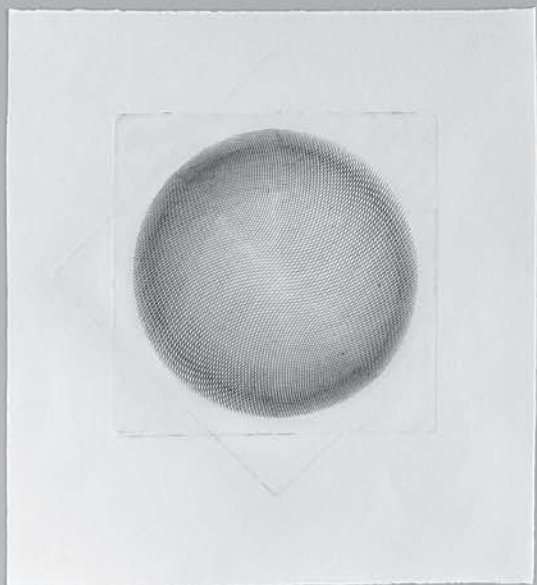
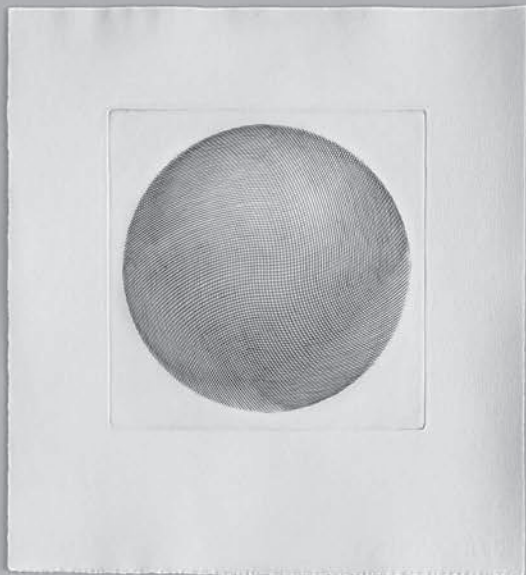
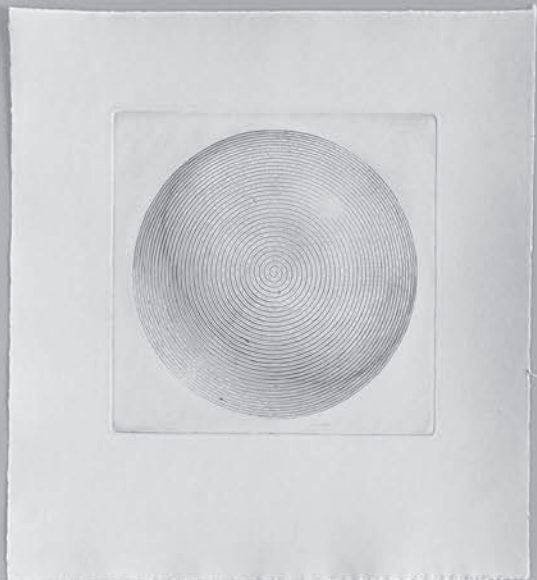
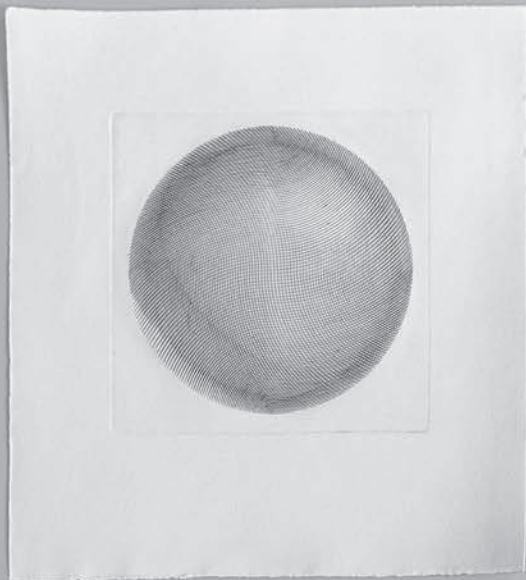
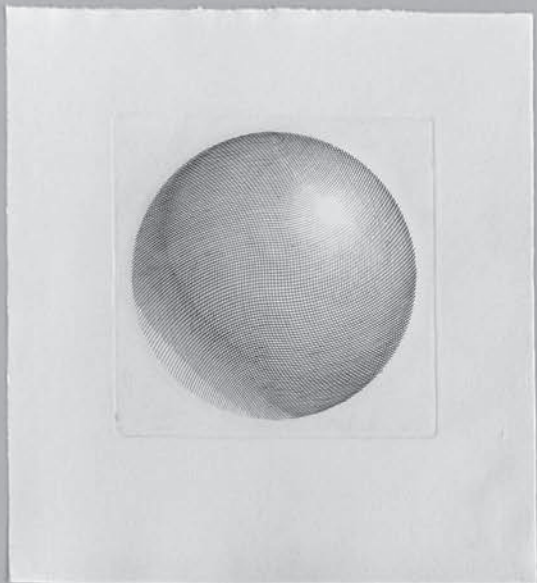


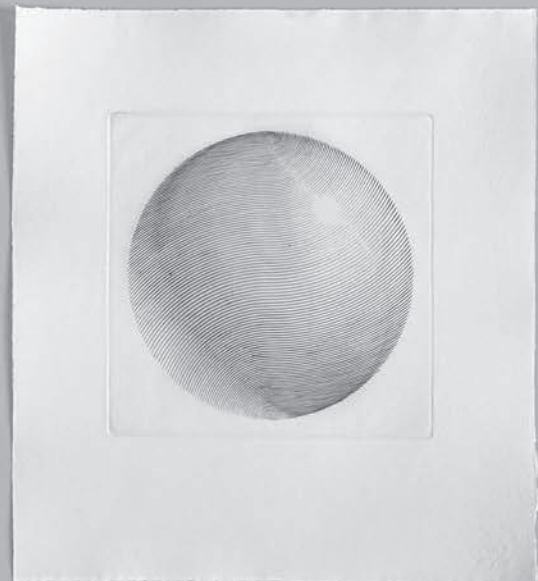
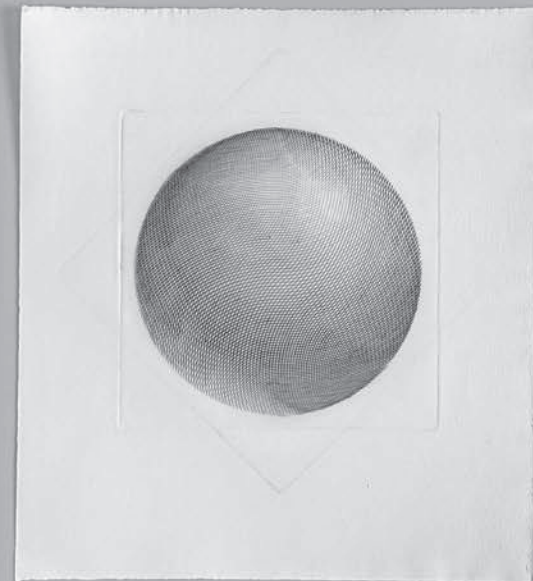
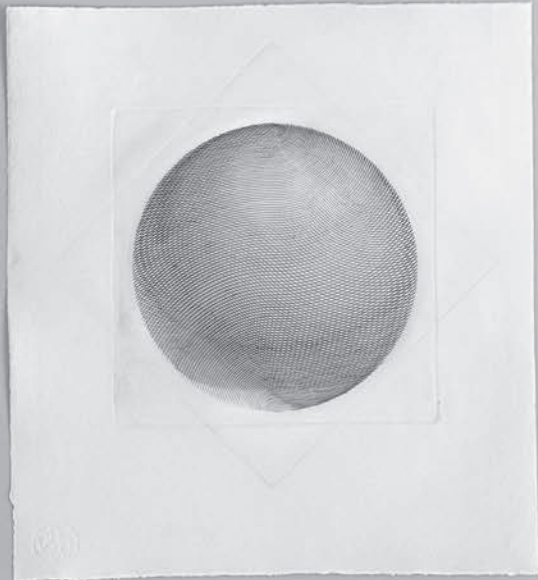
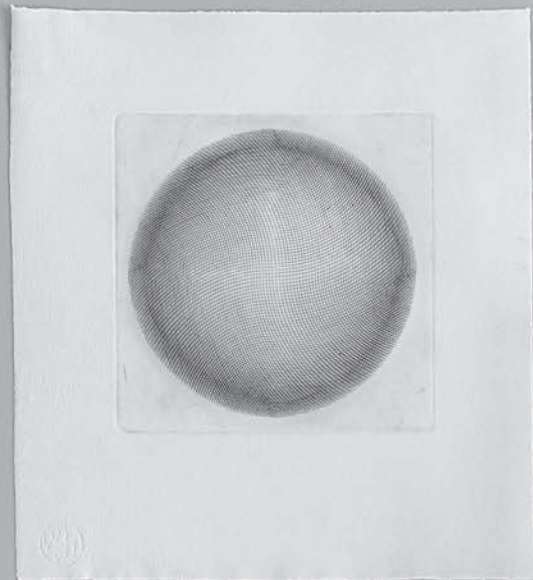
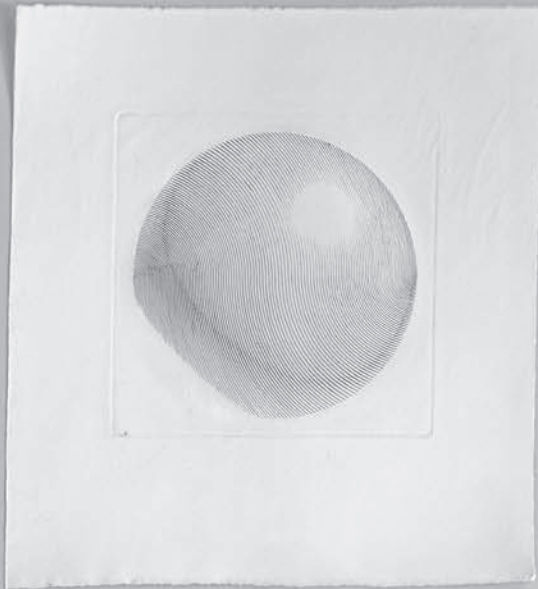
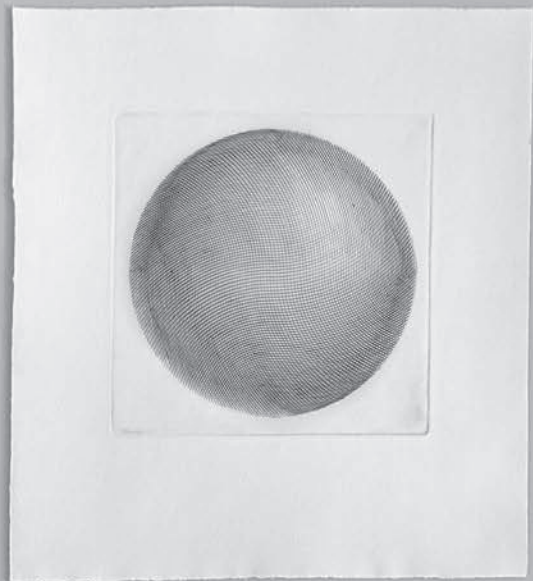


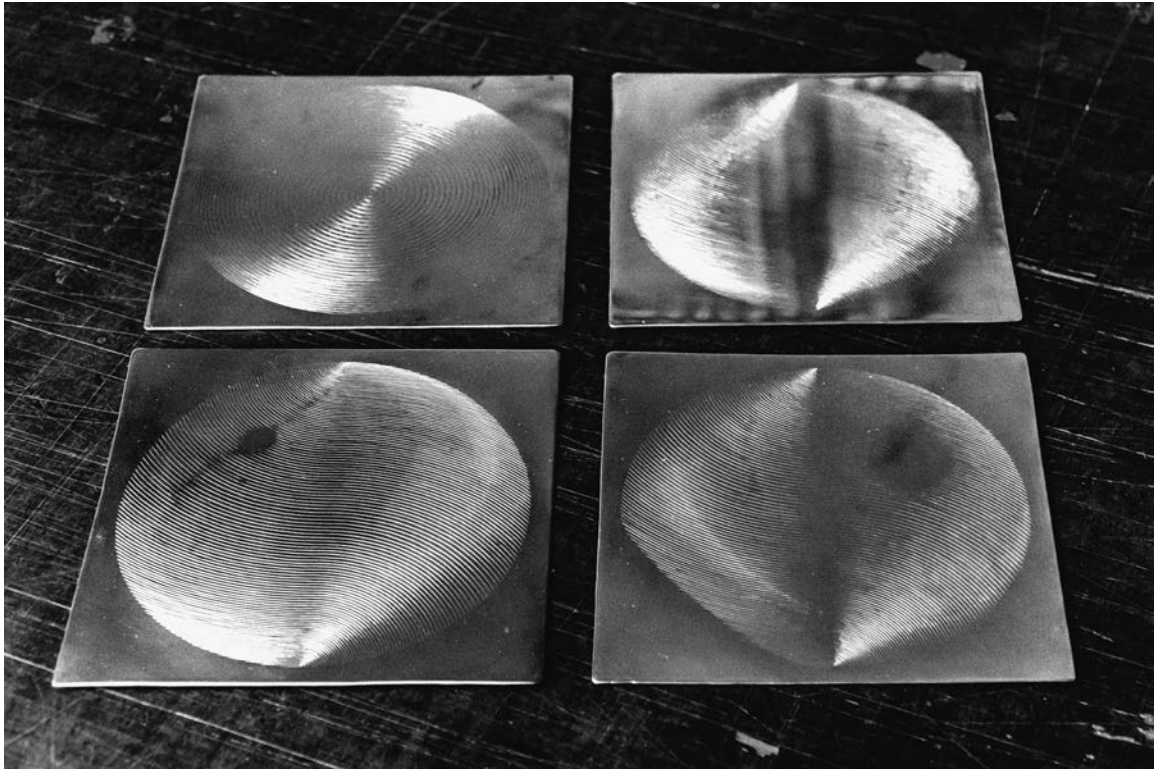


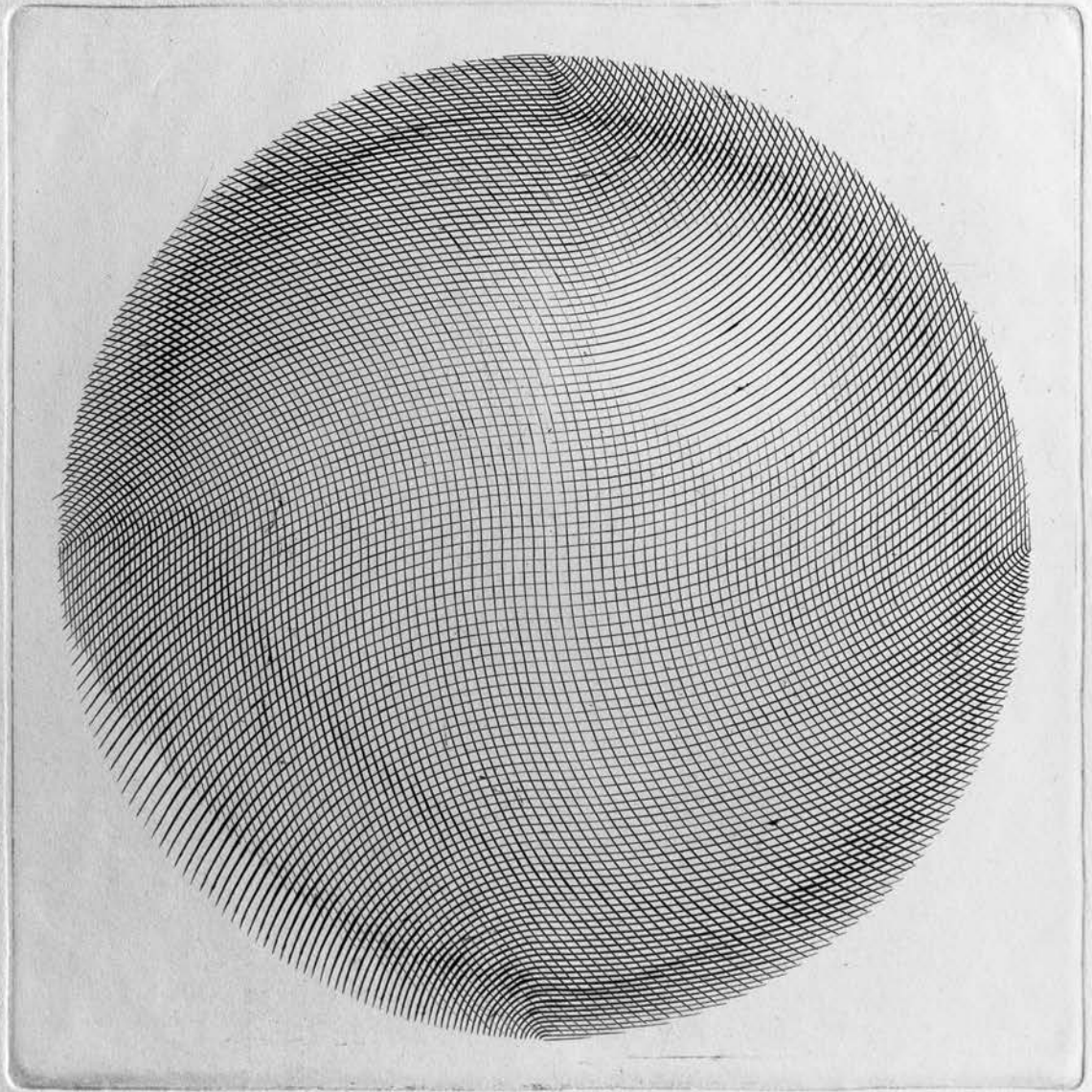


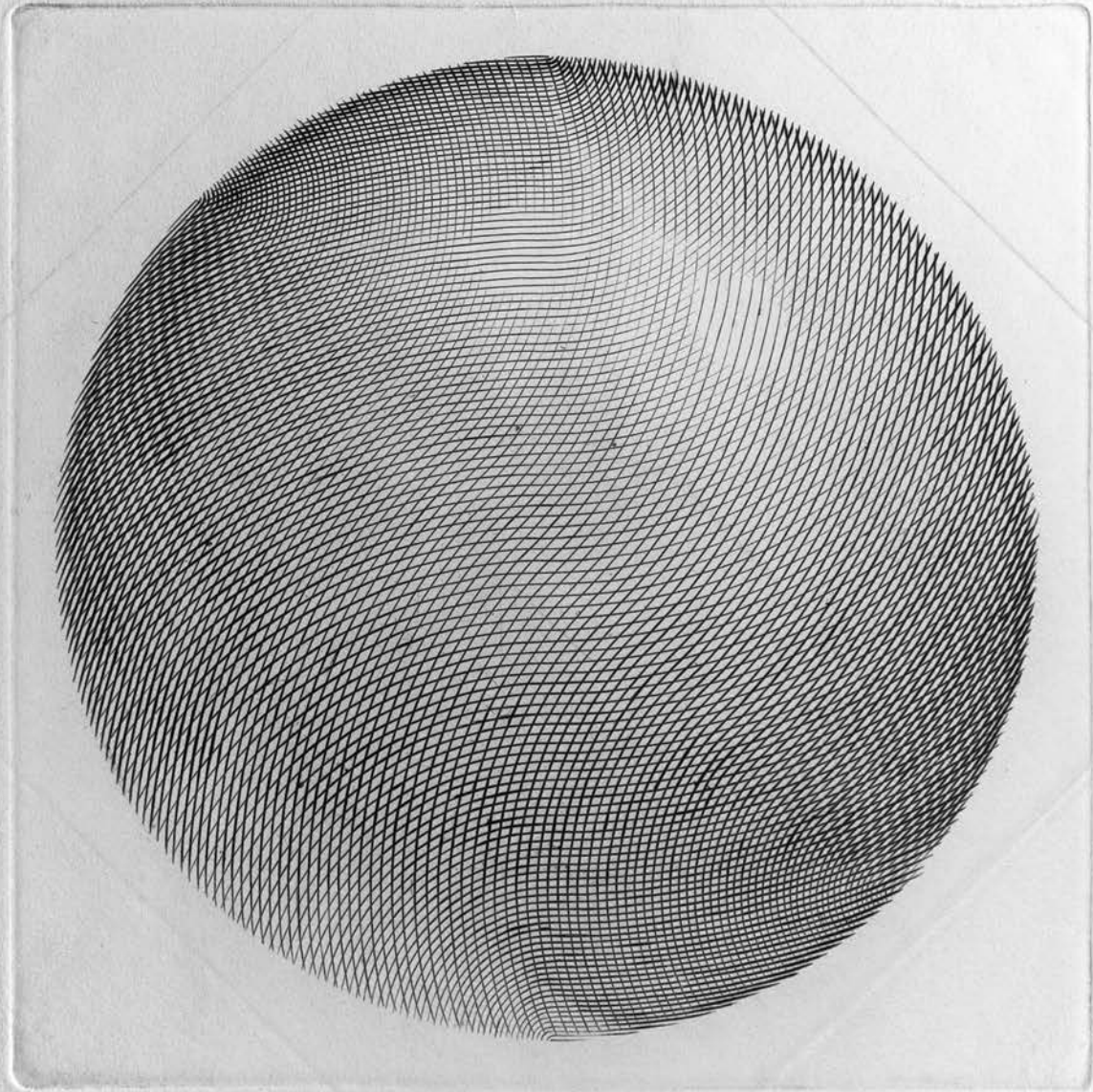


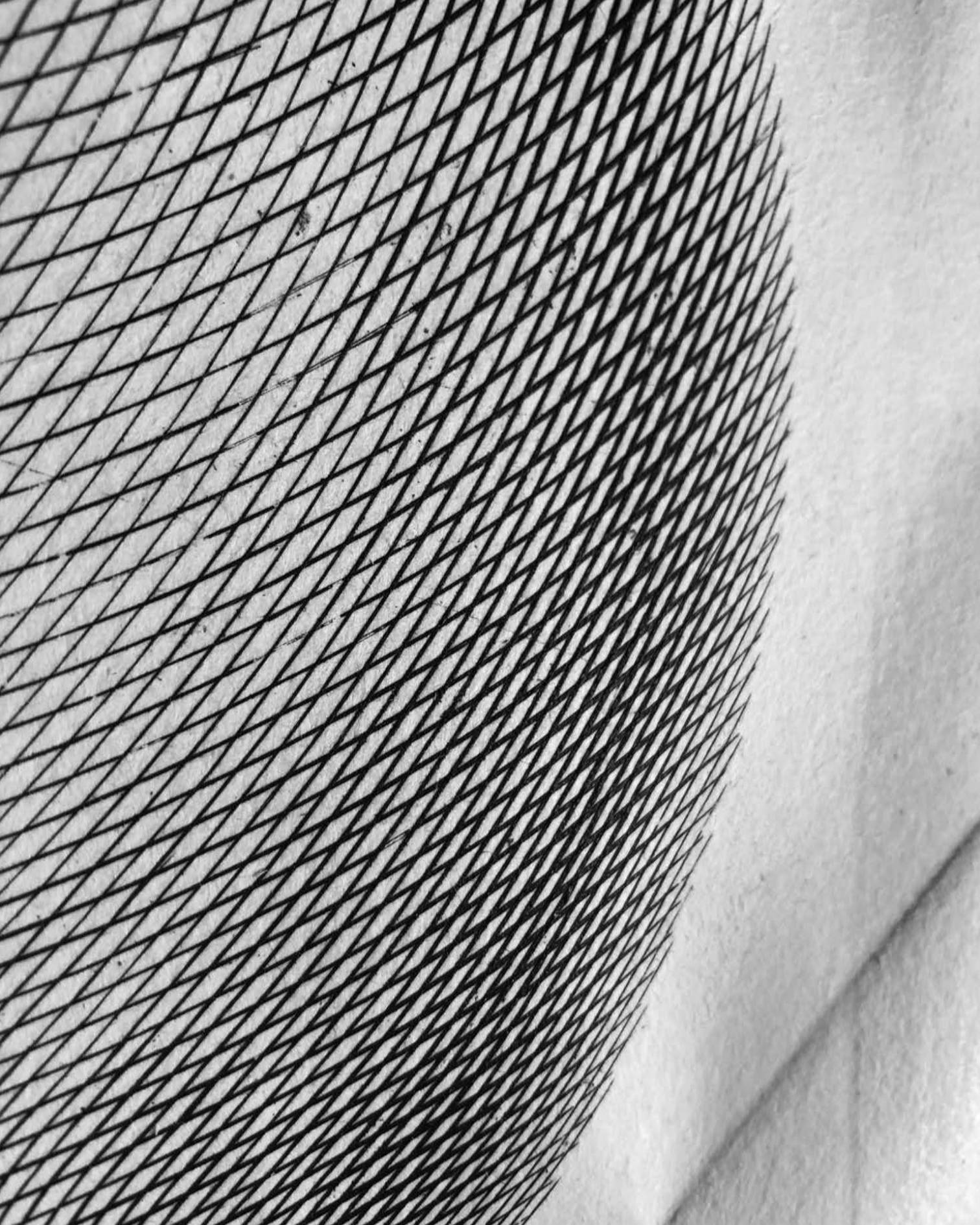




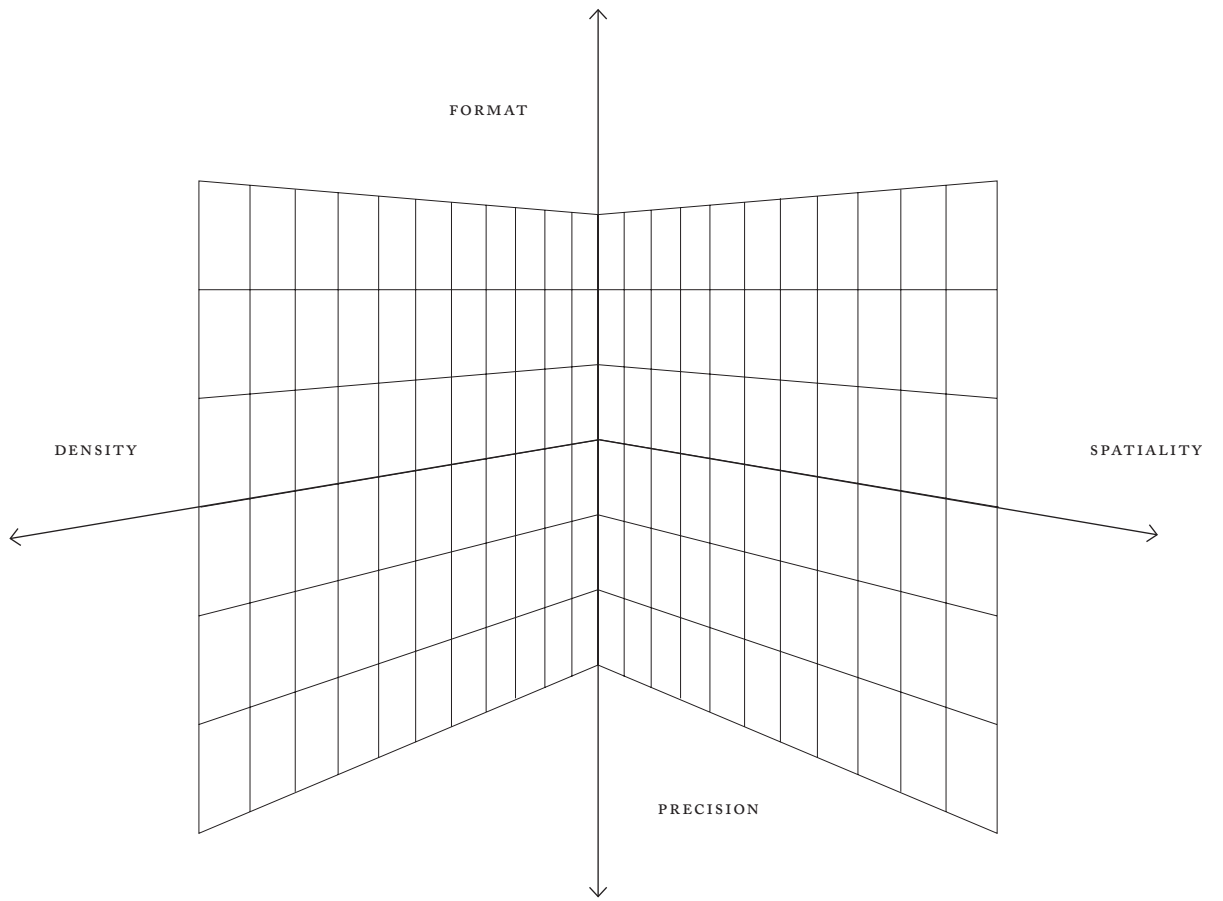






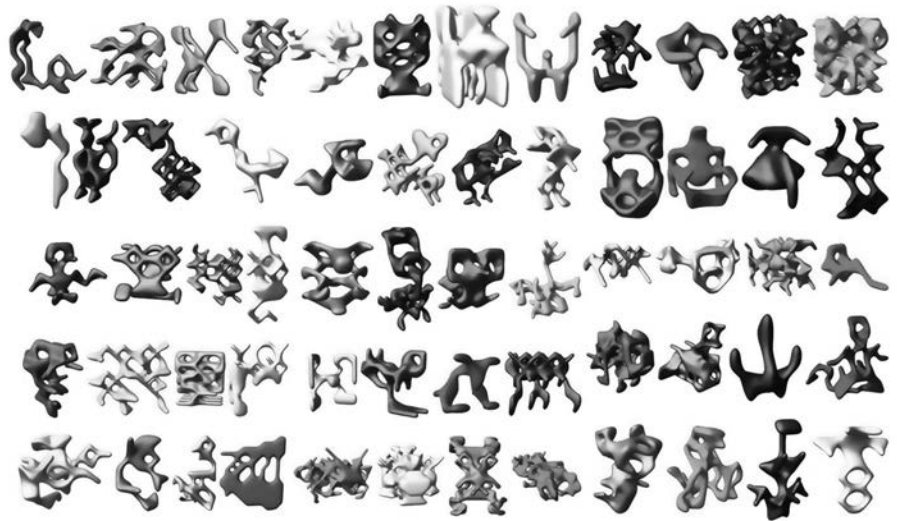








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