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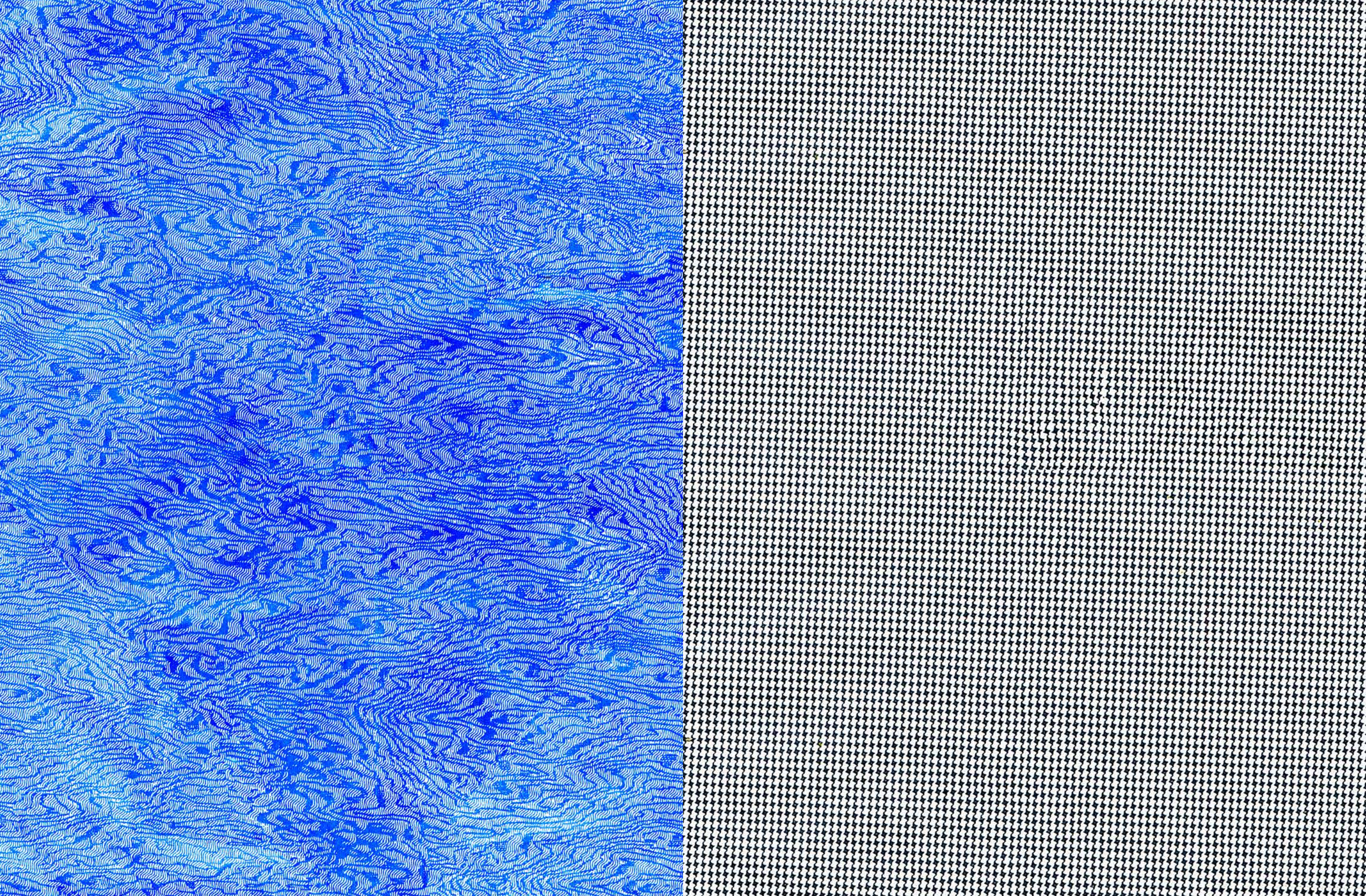
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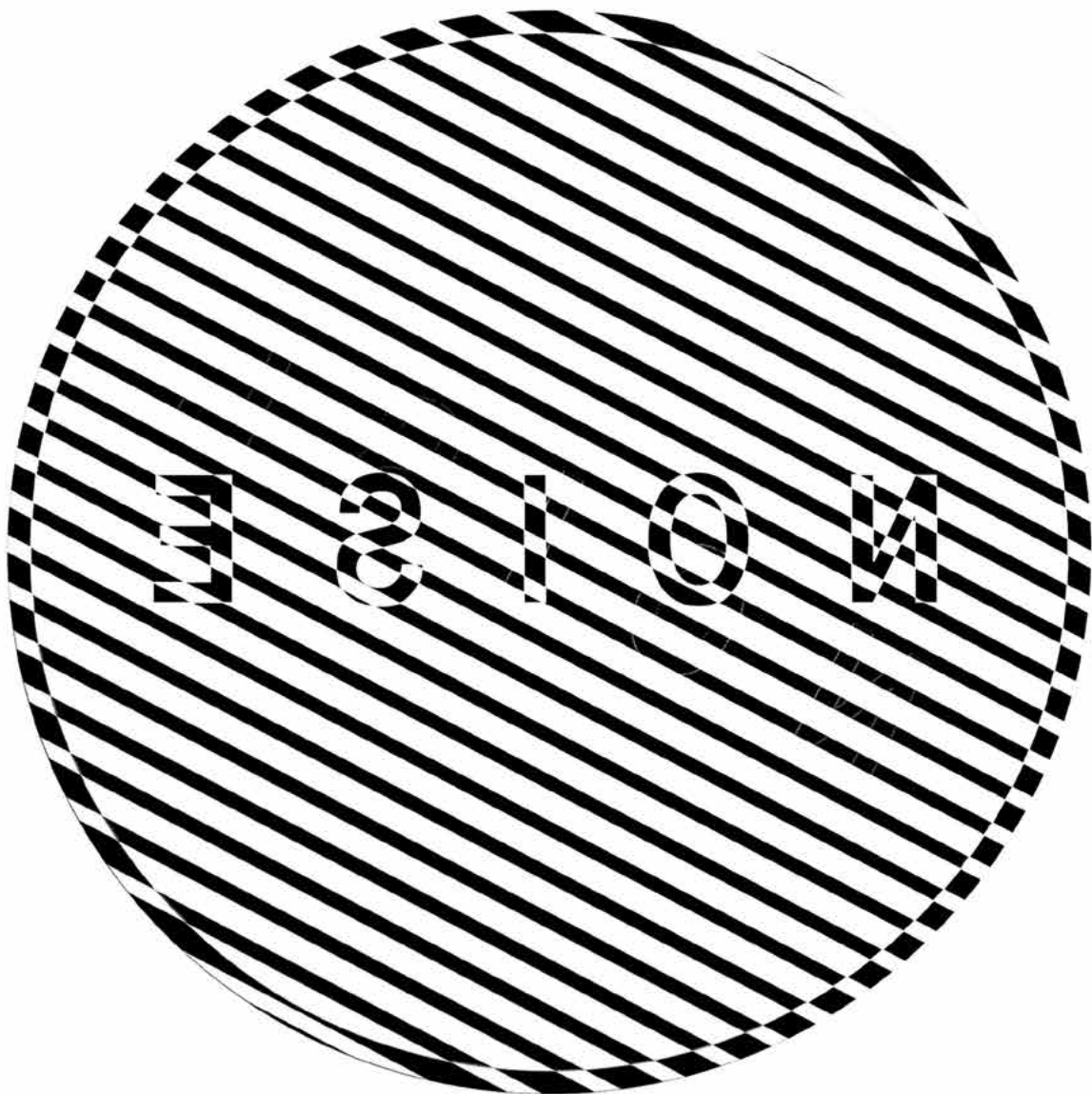






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# THINGS THAT AREN'T

*essays and images from the first year of NOISE*

Written, edited, and designed by Raphael Cornford with Bill Bass.

This is impression \_\_\_\_/100.

Bill Bass:

Raphael Cornford:

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*A BRIEF INTRODUCTION*

Hi there. If we’ve never met before, my name’s Raph. This is a book I made with my friend Bill and some of our other amazing friends. It’s got pictures of art people did in our places where we had asked them to put art. Also, it’s got words people wrote that Bill and I like very much. And we reprinted some art from files, too.

If we’ve met before, ;)

If you end up liking this book, or disliking it, or finding some other reason you want to contact us, we encourage that! We’re going to make more of these books and keep doing shows; voyage with us, friend.

[contactnoiseproject@gmail.com](mailto:contactnoiseproject@gmail.com)

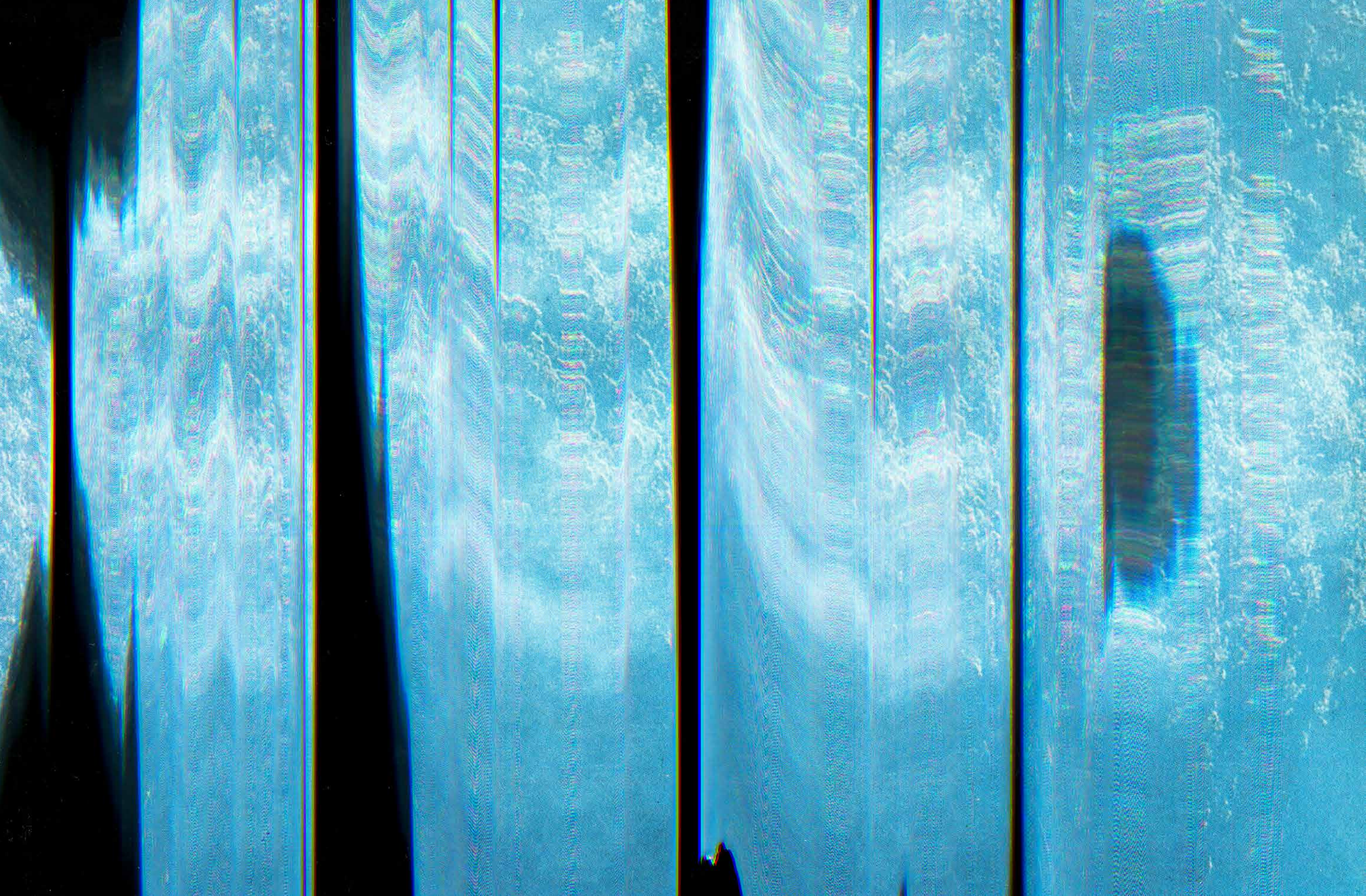
As beautifully expressed in Andrew Wang’s essay, we’re “committed to visual culture that demands double takes.” We think the participating authors’ work expresses the same ethos. Each author brings a critical sensibility that augments and amplifies our ideas; we’re stoked. So, please enjoy the writing. And utilize it: see with it, love with it, weaponize it, build it into strange, contradictory things we could never have conceived of without you.

<http://noise.center>

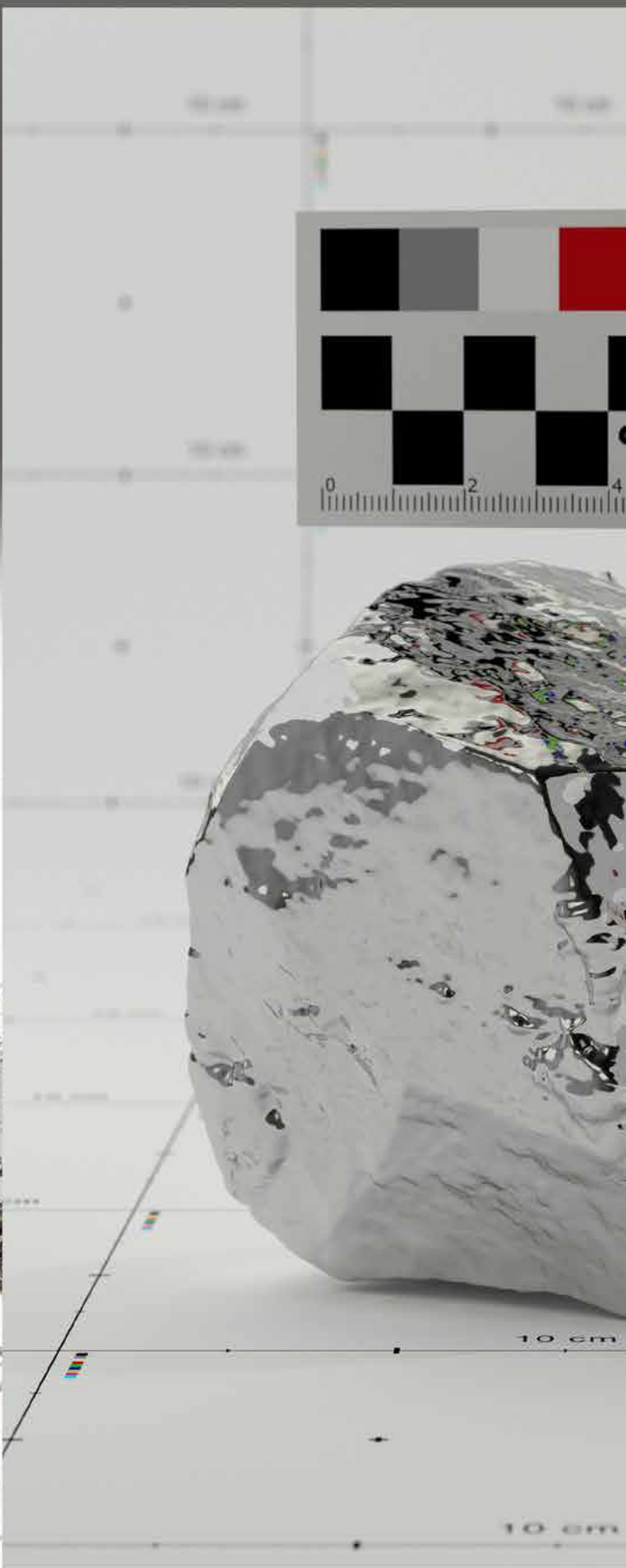
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# THINGS MADE POSSIBLE BY THINGS THAT AREN'T

*Jason Wonnell*

The communication chain assumes a Source that, through a Transmitter, emits a Signal via a Channel. At the end of the Channel the Signal, through a Receiver, is transformed into a Message for the Addressee. Since the Signal, while traveling through the Channel, can be disturbed by Noise, one must make the Message redundant, so that the information is transmitted clearly. But the other fundamental requirement of this chain is a Code, shared by the Source and the Addressee. A Code is an established system of probabilities, and only on the basis of the Code can we decide whether the elements of the message are intentional (desired by the Source) or the result of Noise.

**Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare,** Umberto Eco -1983.

Within the model of communication quoted above, artists and authors can be assumed to be the source, at least in the traditional sense. In that position we possess a certain amount of control, or influence over the signal, the message and the code in which it is arranged. In that traditional sense of visual arts, the role of the signal can be applied to a painting or sculpture. The channel may be the gallery, or a review in a newspaper or on a website. Even in the case of purely aesthetic abstract and minimalist works there remains a certain amount of aesthetic code employed, both by the source and by the addressee, regardless of whether the codes at each end agree. But as Eco goes on to discuss, while the ubiquitous bombardment of media increases with growing numbers of sources and messages, what is received by the addressee is not individual messages but a, “global ideological lesson, a call to narcotic passiveness”, described by some as the triumph of mass media over individual human freedom. But in this apoca-

lyptic view what are not recognized are the individualized codes through which the addressees decipher the messages.

Eco believes that we are engaged in the birth of a new human freedom in what he describes as “The death of the Gutenbergian human.” This is a new phase in communication where individuals are accustomed to a new way of deciphering media and its messages, wherein the social, economic, and psychological situations of the individual addressees mold and influence the codes by which the addressee deciphers the message. Through the conscious acknowledgement that as media becomes more centrally controlled and the differences in the many messages have become subsumed and leveled out through saturation, it becomes clear that the pertinent lessons to be found in media are no longer in the messages but in the unique codes through which they are deciphered by the addressee. In this new world not only is the media not the message, but the message is not the message.

This shift in how media is consumed may begin to explain the rise in artists who no longer seek to convey a singular message in their work, at least not through the traditional channels. Michael Pinsky’s work, *I’m Laughing at the Clouds* consists of an array of nine lampposts erected on the campus of Anglia Ruskin University. The posts are sensitive to touch and record the frequency of a person’s pulse. This data is expressed through the lights at the top of each post as well as samples of sung heartbeats of children from a nearby nursery school. In this case the artists gives up the role of the source, providing only the channel and the origin code and thereby creating a situation where the viewer/participant takes on the role of both the addressee and the source of the message. This type of work seems to recognize that the message is not the message and that the noise created by such a feedback loop carries it’s own meaning that deserves our attention.

With these ideas in place I feel I can more easily discuss the matter at hand; **things that aren’t.** Messages that aren’t the message, transmitters that don’t transmit, receivers that do not receive, signals carrying codes without a message, or a message without a code, and any other combinations that break from the traditional structure of media and communication provide a new way to engage with the system outside the collective message and acknowledge the unique ex-



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periences of the individual in the role of the addressee. These works of **things that aren't** engage with what Barthes described as the third meaning, they “outplay meaning” and “compel an interrogative meaning.”

But the realm of **things that aren't** is much broader than these terms. The task of defining what **is not** is intrinsically tied to defining what can be. In *Understanding Poststructuralism*, James Williams describes the structuralist method of categorization in terms of a core that acts as the center of what is, informing the limits of what **can be**. Williams argues that within this model the core can only be defined by its limits, like a territory is defined and proven by its borders. This circular relativity can create a false core that acts to suppress differences and fails to allow for “pure differences” that coexist without being in opposition of one another. If we refuse any model of classification that relies on opposition and exclusion we arrive at a conclusion that every **thing is**, and it can only be through the construct of language that **things aren't**.

Returning to Eco's model of media communication, freed from the structure of core versus limit, we can appreciate the differences in codes the addressee uses to decipher messages as pure differences that are not in opposition to one another. We can accept that a shared code between the source and the addressee is not required for a communication to hold value. Categorizing things that aren't is not a practice in exclusion, but rather inclusion, the inclusion of possibility, of potential, and of conversations otherwise shut down by all the things that are.

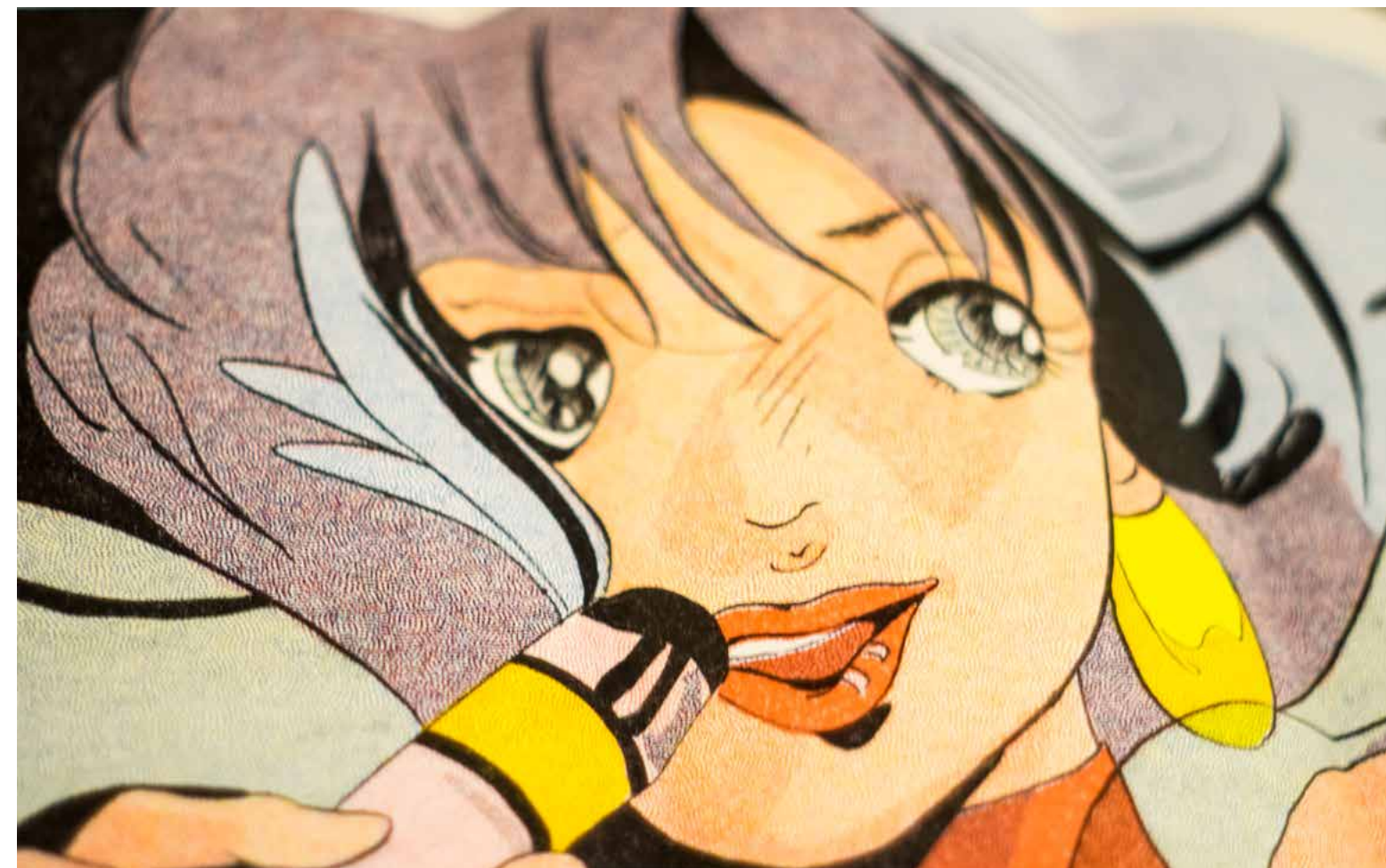
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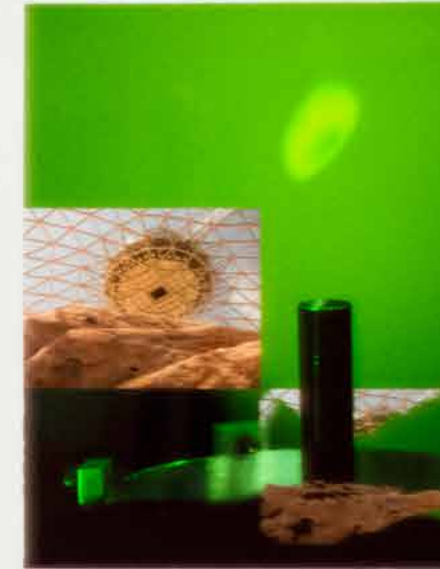
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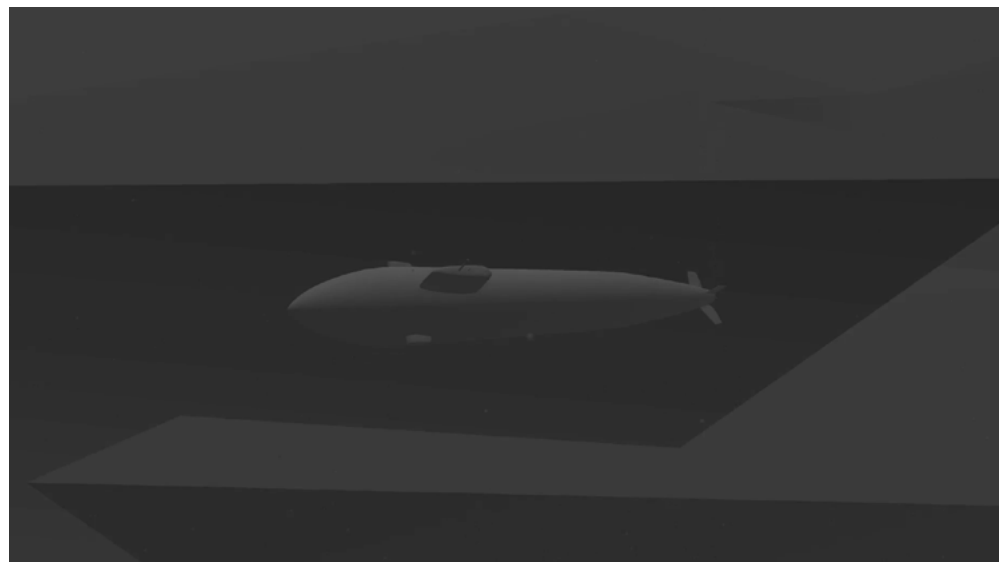
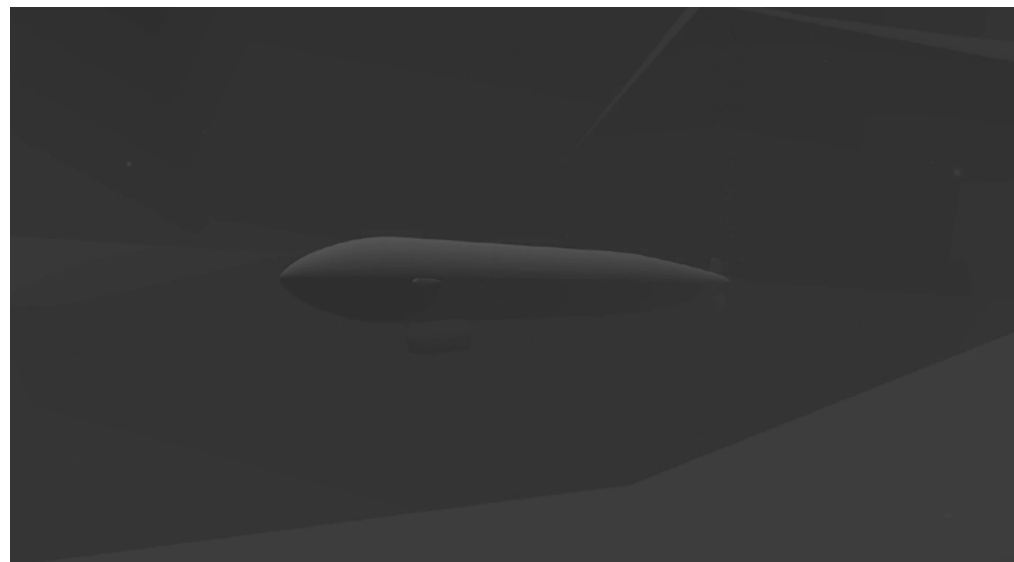
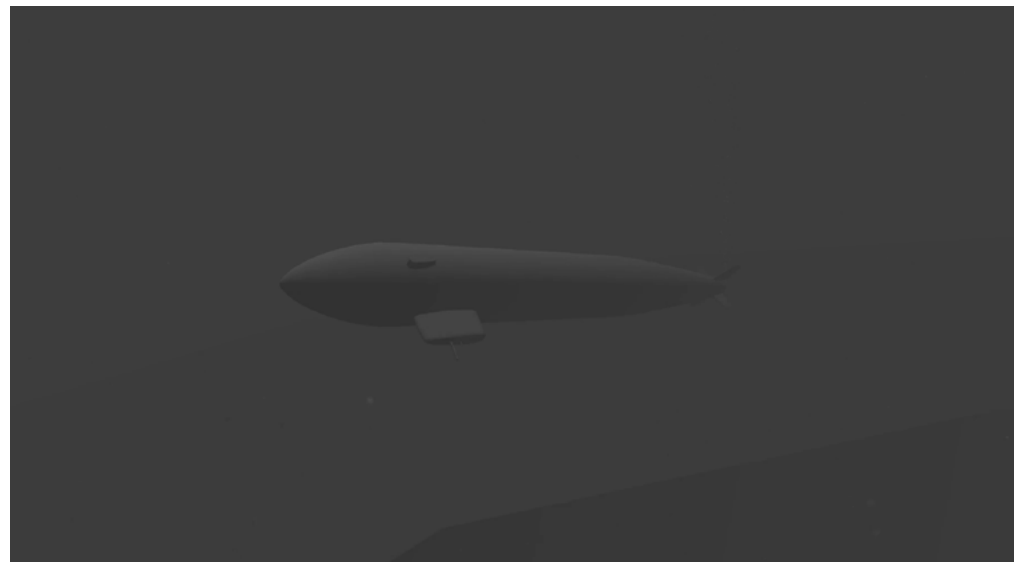
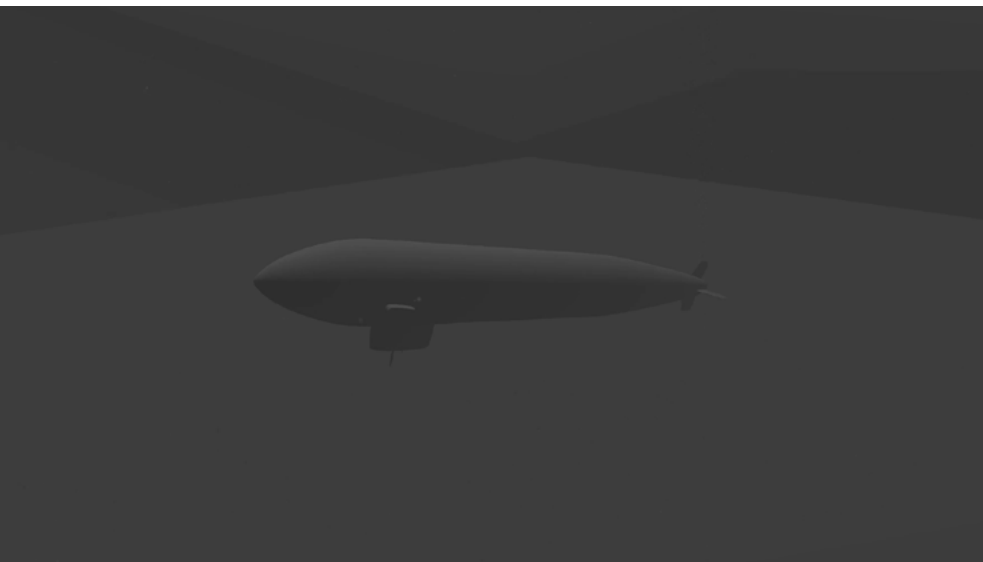
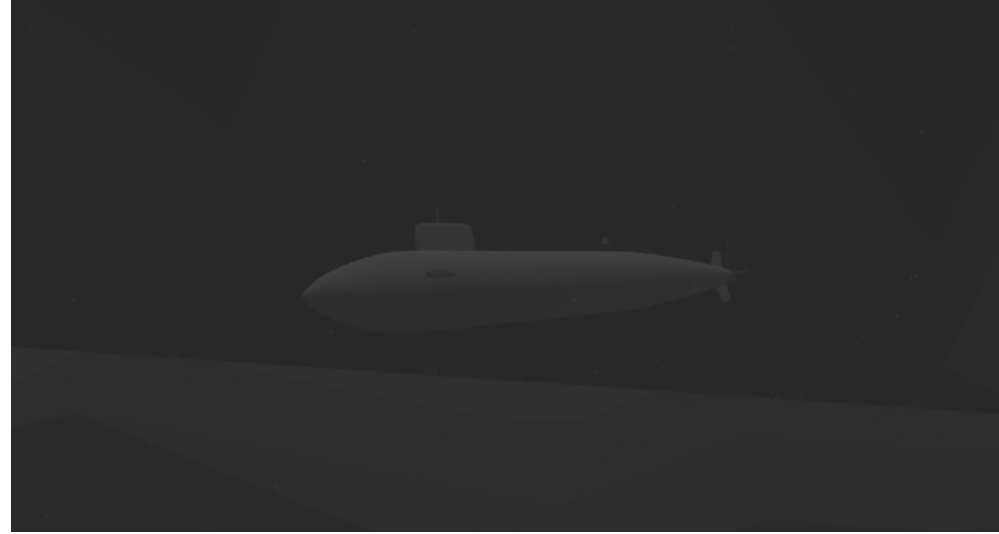
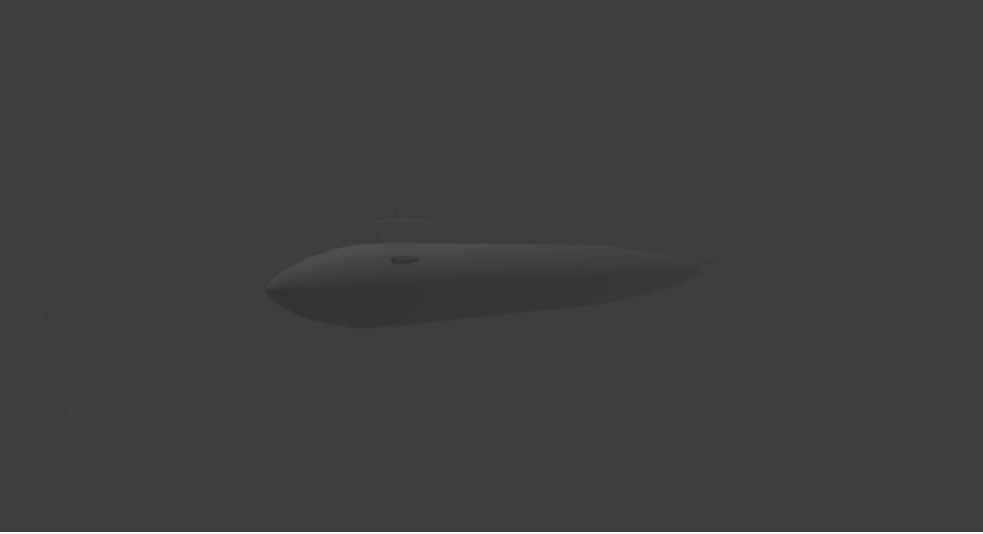
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# Glitches in the Machine: Jeron Braxton's *Glucose* at NOISE

Andrew Wang | aandrewwangg@gmail.com

Encountering Jeron Braxton's work for the first time was like being enveloped in waves of nostalgia. His work is playful, recalling the likes of Takashi Murakami and KAWS. It's no surprise that his work conjures memories of amassing a sizable collection of toys and hours spent playing videogames. Braxton's logo—consisting of his initials meeting at an angle to create two planes of a cube—happens to be styled after PlayStation's own logo from the mid-1990s. His Lego-like 3D printed sculptures come straight from his cartoonish video works, like characters yanked straight from their digital fictions, still retaining their blocky pixel-structure. Installed singularly on small shelves at NOISE, they resembled limited edition action figures. Far from the mass-produced novelties lining the shelves of Toys“R”Us, they were more like the quirky rarities locked up in glass cases that you might stumble upon at lesser-known independent comic shops. To the average millennial they resemble vaguely familiar animated characters from Saturday morning cartoons, characters we can't quite place.

Just beyond the couple sculptures on display and nestled in the far corner of Braxton's NOISE exhibition in the spring of 2017 was a screening of *Glucose*.<sup>1</sup> The audiovisual work has also been screened at SXSW 2017, as well as featured on Booooooom TV and Cartoon Brew's websites. I was fortunate enough to have viewed the large projected installation of *Glucose* privately at NOISE, affording me the opportunity to sit in awe without interruption for the entire 13 and a half minutes of its runtime (I was out of town for the opening reception but I imagine it was bustling with conversation, as most NOISE shows tend to be). *Glucose*, in Braxton's words, is “a journey through the dream of a video

1 [https://youtu.be/deAN\\_pdfrbw](https://youtu.be/deAN_pdfrbw)







game character who has been K.O.'d during a match.” Viewers become voyeur-participants to this character’s adventure into the afterlife, drifting through techno-psychedelic spaces à la Gaspard Noé’s *Enter the Void*. *Glucose* opens with a sampled riff of the musical sequence on Playstation’s boot screen—a sound that will forever provoke flashbacks of the original *Crash Bandicoot* and the fighting game classic *Tekken 3*. The following sequence is a barrage of cel-shaded figures, including a grinning three-eyed cat and a shattered computer monitor, providing a glimpse of the kaleidoscopic pastiche to come. The audience is then transported to a classic character selection screen. We see a sampling of eight “fighters” to choose from, with a floating compilation of *Katamari*-like “stuff” in the shape of Africa hovering just above the character icons (fig. 1). The “player” selects the man with the boxing gloves and close-cropped fade—our protagonist—who squares away with a squinty-eyed anthropomorphic cheetah in a boxing ring, refereed by bug-eyed crocodiles. In seconds, the cheetah throws a deadly kick to our protagonist’s face, and the match comes to an end. He then emerges from his virtual grave, conjured through an altar/home entertainment system by a young woman clad in giant sunglasses (fig. 2).

The remaining 11 or so minutes of the video is akin to a stream of consciousness, like rapidly scrolling through a Tumblr feed, guided by electronic music (also produced by Braxton himself) that transitions from acid house-inspired drum and bass to more mellowed vaporwave. The beautifully saturated visuals work in conjunction with the audio tracks, with abrupt cuts between jittery collages and melancholic abstractions, recalling musical producer Squarepusher’s otherworldly interactive 360 video for “Stor Eiglass” (2015).<sup>2</sup> These cuts are punctuated with narratives of loss and memory, both personal and generational. *Glucose* provides a profusion of 1990s American youth staples—a loosely cultivated millennial iconography—blended with signifiers of Black experiences and Black visual culture. Navigating the technoscape of Mario mushrooms, Sailor Moon garb, and Tamagotchi-like devices of *Glucose* are predominantly Black figures. These figures may appear to be incongruent with our own memories of late 20th-century animation, in which Black characters are largely underrepresented, yet they are right at home in the *Glucose* universe. At first the figures seem to invade these nostalgic videogame spaces, especially with their glitchy movements, but the world itself also contorts and convulses in tandem to the erratic soundtrack. The characters are paradoxically both indigenous and foreign.

2 [https://youtu.be/6Olt-ZtV\\_CE](https://youtu.be/6Olt-ZtV_CE)



Figure 1 (above), figure 2 (below).



wang - glitches in the machine: jeron braxton's glucose at NOISE