



narsdottir
Principles

INTRO

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RAGADEN

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Organizing Principles

FOREWORD

The long-term collaboration underlying Ragnarsdóttir's exhibition and this publication was made possible through O—Overgaden's *INTRO* program, generously supported by Aage and Johanne Louis-Hansen's Foundation. *INTRO* is a very special and well-resourced, one-year development program aimed at supporting young, newly graduated artists with an attachment to the Danish art scene. The program is tailored to the artistic practice in question and provides funding for travel and production as well as professional, strategic, and technical supervision from acclaimed Danish and international voices within the field of visual arts. The collaboration culminates in a large solo show at O—Overgaden accompanied by a publication in this series.

For more than 35 years, one of O—Overgaden's core priorities has been to help tomorrow's artists get ahead in the Danish art scene. The support from Aage and Johanne Louis-Hansen's Foundation to further develop this ambition is very unique and we wish to express deep gratitude for their engagement. Curator Miriam Bettin and artist Elif Saydam have contributed thoughtful texts to the publication and Sóley herself shares her personal secrets about amber—many thanks. A huge thank you goes to the core team at O—Overgaden too: curator Ida Schyum, Head of Press and Communications Line Brædder, our technical wizard Toke Martins, editor and translator Nanna Friis, and our all-round helpful intern Rikke Bank. A special thank you to Christina Wilson and Milena Bonifacini for their focused and caring mentoring, and to Anne Riber for being an instrumental part of the initiation of the *INTRO*-collaboration. But, first and foremost, a resounding thank you to Sóley Ragnarsdóttir for the extraordinary and trusting collaboration, for showing great courage, ambition, and will to open up her practice for the institution as well as the audience, and for delivering an exceptionally powerful exhibition—completely devoted to ornament.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn
Interim Director, O—OVERGADEN

Sóley Ragnarsdóttir
Organizing Principles
Exhibition period: 05.11.2021 – 31.12.2021

O—OVERGADEN
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It is a great pleasure to introduce this first publication about the young Danish-Icelandic artist Sóley Ragnarsdóttir. The publication coincides with the artist's extensive solo exhibition *Organizing Principles*, which unfolds across the entire first floor of O—Overgaden with an abundance of works, from abstract paintings in carved frames over eye-shaped mobiles, to patterned wallpaper and pointillist napkin paintings in which amber and seashells have been encapsulated. With a fine-tuned sense for the encounters of contrasting materials, the hypnotic effect of ornament's repetition, and the psychological as well as mythological significance of both color and symbols, Ragnarsdóttir creates an eclectic and seductive visual universe that overwhelms us with its immense degree of detail. To Ragnarsdóttir, art plays with notions of beauty, it converses with the concept of nature, and offers a scope for the world to be organized anew, based on its own principles.

WATER ON WATER, MOVEMENT OVER MOVEMENT, WAVES OVER WAVES, BREATHING FOLLOWING BREATHING, AFFIRMATION COMING OVER AFFIRMATION

Sóley Ragnarsdóttir's Forms of Existence

Miriam Bettin

"Let's think: the sea is terrifying; of course, when its whole mass stands up and creates havoc with its waves, we run for shelter. But she's more treacherous than that; she calms down, and her being then unfolds fully, and whoever looks then at her long enough is mesmerized, is out of his own being, transmuted [...] that person will rather drown in her than continue to face that attraction which keeps the universe being!"

Walking by the sea, blinking. They are looking at you, you are looking back. Eyes as a gateway to the soul are a recurring motif in Sóley Ragnarsdóttir's work. As large-format sculptures hanging from the ceiling in *The Sea as a Picture Fable* (2021) or as pictorial elements in her paintings, they function as a focal point. In her work, otherwise composed of pattern and rhythm—dots and dashes, checker, and flowers—the eyes activate the space and animate the surface while wavy brushstrokes resemble the structure of water or fur as in *Untitled* (2021). Yet the living beings remain incorporeal, dissolving as pattern and into other (both organic and synthetic) matter, among them amber, shells, resin, epoxy, pressed flowers, sunflower seeds, plastic stones, sparkles. The creaturely features are all the more emphasized with her paintings that stand on curved feet.

Following Donna Haraway's interspecies theory, Sóley Ragnarsdóttir outlines a proposition for a different way of being, one that is neither human nor animal, that is genderless, ageless, and bodiless. It can also be understood as a concept for an inhabitable world in times of crisis, when climate change and the pandemic bring forth inequalities all the more: distribution of resources, access to health care and education, drawing on (economic) reserves and a social net, the privilege of staying home, and having safe spaces. Judith Butler suggests the dismantling of rigid forms of individuality in order to "imagine the smaller part that human worlds must play on this earth whose regeneration we depend upon—and which, in turn, depends upon our smaller and more mindful role."²

Ragnarsdóttir's occupation with the (hyper-)decorative follows the tradition of the Arts and Crafts movement from the mid-19th century as well as the Pattern & Decoration movement of the mid-1970s—movements that were originally associated with female* labor. Embraced by queer and feminist identities for its "ornament's decorative excess"³ and belittled by patriarchy for its kitsch, primitivism, and "lack of conceptual depth,"⁴ the Pattern and Decoration movement's "surface over subject" principle was taken as a welcome opportunity by the sexist art world to degrade and sideline a movement in which women* played the dominant role.

To assume that the decorative cannot, by definition, be political or moral is misguided. Juliane Rebutisch concludes in her reflections on Jack Smith's camp aesthetic, a style and sensibility known for its opulence, as follows: "[...] the two spaces—aesthetic space and moral space—are closely intertwined, not only with respect to camp's contribution to a critical stance that reads history in nature, but also with respect to a critical melancholy that enables the experience of joy that comes with reading nature in history."⁵

Against Adolf Loos' infamously misogynist and colonialist stigma of "ornament as crime," and despite all their decorative effects, ornaments have always been symbolically relevant and crucial for the observing of and commenting on the world: "To this very day, they still serve artists as a tool to reflect on their own culture and criticize, for instance, political systems, the traditional roles imposed on women, social conventions and expectations."⁶ With the P&D movement's roots in Islamic art, the turn to the ornamental also meant a radical shift away from the formal rigor, and minimal and rationalist concepts of Western Modern art, toward reclaiming fantasy, color, diversity, variation of form, sensuality, seduction, and the affective—thus resulting in a broad accessibility, flat hierarchies, and democratization.

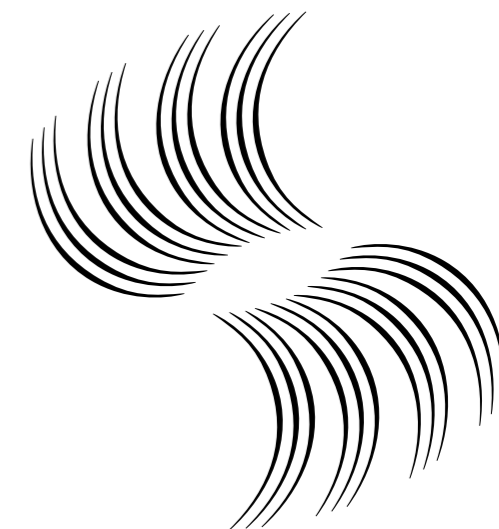
Tides, yes, breathing, love being a tide coming, and receding, a pendular insanity, as impatient in its regularity as this gaze on the inbuilt instability of liquid metals.⁷

Noteworthy is Ragnarsdóttir's use of material from industries and activities at the seaside (fishing, boating, surfing, amber hunting), which stems from her fascination with her direct surroundings. Studies of nature are predominant, and diverse knowledge production and local social habits, patterns, techniques are put into play, both from the Danish shore, where Sóley Ragnarsdóttir currently lives, and from Iceland, where she was born.

A starting point for Ragnarsdóttir's work with popular crafts, such as decoupage, lies in another biographical source: her mother's collection of napkins dating back to 1975, the same time at which the P&D movement emerged. The artist uses the napkins as a base layer, partially painting over them with evenly distributed acrylic dots, over-decorating them with all kinds of little treasures, and eventually presenting them on oversized metal napkin holders (*Napkins at the End of My World*, 2021). What is shown on a small scale with napkins (in its use of pattern and style), continues in the medium of wallpaper to infinity. Wallpaper is characterized by the repetition of a motif, which is constantly connected in harmonious transitions along the wall and must therefore be suitable for the so-called "rapport" on all four sides, with the potential of endless duplication and continuation.⁸ "It is no coincidence that the word 'pattern' also evokes the pattern-like and the exemplary, which [...] seems to contain a timeless concept of beauty. No matter how different flower patterns have been, it is always true that they never spread anything negative before our eyes, never withered, never sad, never death, but always the reverse side of it. Only affirmation of existence and joy of nature, constantly summer glow and bloom and splendor and especially the spread abundance."⁹

Ragnarsdóttir's wallpapers, produced in collaboration with artist Joon Yeon Park, are compositions of digitally traced brushstrokes and patterns of recurring joyful elements, such as roses, butterflies, dots, and eyes. They offer an anti-white cube, a more domestic space for her paintings to inhabit, and therefore to embrace and exaggerate the decorative moment to infinity.

Empty shells lie on the beach in hours always uncertain.¹⁰



¹Etel Adnan, *Night*, New York 2016, 25. The line quoted in the title is from the same source.

²Judith Butler, "Creating an Inhabitable World for Humans Means Dismantling Rigid Forms of Individuality," *Time*, 21 April 2021, time.com/5953396/judith-butler-safe-world-individuality

³Lynne Cooke, "Pattern Recognition," *Artforum*, October 2021, www.artforum.com/print/202108/lynne-cooke-on-the-pattern-and-decoration-movement-86705

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Juliane Rebutisch, *Camp Materialism*, Cologne/Berlin 2020, 18.

⁶ Ludwig Forum Aachen, press text for *Pattern and Decoration* exhibition, 21.09.2018 – 13.01.2019, ludwigforum.de/en/event/pattern-and-decoration (31.10.2021)

⁷ Adnan, *Night*, 25.

⁸ See Ernst Wolfgang Mick, „Zur Geschichte der Tapete“ in: *Deutsches Tapetenmuseum Kassel*, Kassel 1982, 9.

⁹ Ibid., 10. (translated by the author)

¹⁰ Adnan, *Night*, 9.

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LOVE IS A ROSE

Elif Saydam

Beyond being just a proto-polyamory anthem, it also contains some wise words about plucking things out of their breathing context. Gorgeous chiaroscuro still lifes pack our planet: a lobster (still red) sits next to a fresh cut flower (still vibrant), its claws poised (still alive) on a Turkish carpet erroneously placed atop a Dutch table. Souvenirs from tall ships and death mask renditions of Western flex are arranged with a trite gravity sparing them from the realm of the living. No shade here; pleasure principles are generous in allowing twisted plots to remain beloved. But we can all collectively shudder at someone special wanting these things, and someone special getting to paint them. Power imbalances famously allow no room for error.

Leaving the museum or the living room behind, imagine a sleight of hand, caused by any number of things. Perhaps a wet painting slips off the wall, say, and smears across a brand-new pair of trousers. The trousers provide a false sense of neutrality for moving through a very unneutral world, like a fictional anyone else. The painting never had a false sense of neutrality to begin with—the trousers are ruined; the painting is not. To make work while believing there is no such thing as a mistake is an ontology incorporating not just encounter and chance, but disaster as well. The cigarette holes repeatedly burnt into the polyester pajamas of the aforementioned grandfather always blossomed into floral embroideries by the hands of the women around him—a garden in the ashes. A detached and resigned narrator within me persists: *That happened to me, so that became this*, she shrugs. *I saw this there, so this became that*. Or simply: *Whoops*. Will she ever get a grip? No matter how I ply my endocrine system, she is waterproof, or at least resistant, and as undeflatable as a buoy on the salty sea.

In what was once the working-class living room of my grandparents' house, a brutal brown sewage pipe cut across the wall from the toilet up above. At age sixteen, my Aunt Fulya painted it into the thick trunk of an enormous cherry tree, pink flowers cancerously blooming along the walls and around the corner. Still, there was no denying that shit was literally moving through the room. But denial was never the intention. And acceptance certainly wasn't an option either. Embellishment is not a willing co-operation with material conditions, but a provisional forgiveness of them.

At the beginning of one of his better ballads, Neil Young croons this warning:

"Love is a rose / but you better not pick it / it only grows when it's on the vine / a handful of thorns and you'll know you've missed it / you lose your love when you say the word 'mine'."

And so to gather the strength needed to absorb misfortune, she bobs down the street for fuel. My favorite döner stand is my favorite not for the quality of its kebab, but for the details behind the counter. Like in any home, even the most disheveled, there is a customized logic to it, be it a strict mindfulness or chaotic suspension of the following: a place for everything, and everything in its place. The two older men inside this kiosk run a tight ship and the kitchen is organized with the severity of a workshop. But like in every Werkstatt I've ever worked in, there is a space carved out for decoration or, to be more precise, personalization. Next to the window hangs a generic promotional calendar, suspended next to a well-oiled vintage clock, adorned with a bouquet of ceramic garlic bulbs. At the base of each bulb is a single watchful glass eye. Something about this sparks joy. Unlike most contemporary examples of customization, it isn't merely a symptom of the plague of individuation and the marketability of infinite choice, of fidget spinners or Insta ads or investment accounts curated just for you.

A bowerbird painstakingly collects little bits of blue plastic to get laid, and we all have our eyes out for the things that feel so right—or very wrong—to us, the things we can take home to decorate our dancefloors in the dirt pit. Mimicry is one of the most breathtaking features of biology. And so we gather napkins, or stamps, or stickers, or thimbles, we crush butterflies between books, we nurture aquariums, or begonias, or baseball cards, or little things that look like other little things... Whatever it may be, every good collection requires an audience, or at least nerdy comrades, to verify its existence. Accumulating and sharing what we are specifically attentive to as subjects is a pointing-to, a relating, a key to survival. Like so many other things, it's a matter of endurance. Deciding how much to cull from a reference and how much to leave behind requires a carefully poised sensitivity towards refinement or tastelessness (pick your poison), but the artist knows the open secret best: her collection will survive only if she is aware of its limits and inadequacies in creating a convincing picture. She must keep an eye on that.

Optimistically, a single eye signifies safety and protection. On a bad day it suggests another thing entirely: a panopticon, a cyclops, a vague malicious intent. The English naming of a *nazar boncuk*, or "evil" eye talisman, is a misnomer but not completely unfounded. It implies something to be protected from. Envy circulates as a wandering vapor, gathering heat until it combusts like oil rags in the middle of the night. A pair of eyes becomes a different kind of threat in the form of a body, be it an attentive lover, a detached observer, or both. Manga irises glitter with little white specks of foreshadowing. An endless procession of cowboy tears catch the light with their rhinestones. During my most recent flop era—in true Gen X style—I got lost in the candle series of Gerhard Richter: there's no end to what a bit of white light in a painting can do.

As I write for Sóley, my apartment is overrun with overwintering ladybugs, who make a break inside every time I crack the windows open in a stubborn attempt to deny fall. At this point, I could call it a collection. In her application for a Guggenheim fellowship in 1976, Ree Morton famously wrote: "My career probably began at the age of three, when I took up watching ant hills and protecting ladybugs. This caused a long interruption in my artistic progress, because my family read it as an interest in science and directed me to nursing." Misrecognition strikes again. I, however, in being deemed host by an adorable invasive species, feel entirely recognized. They pepper my ceiling beautifully.

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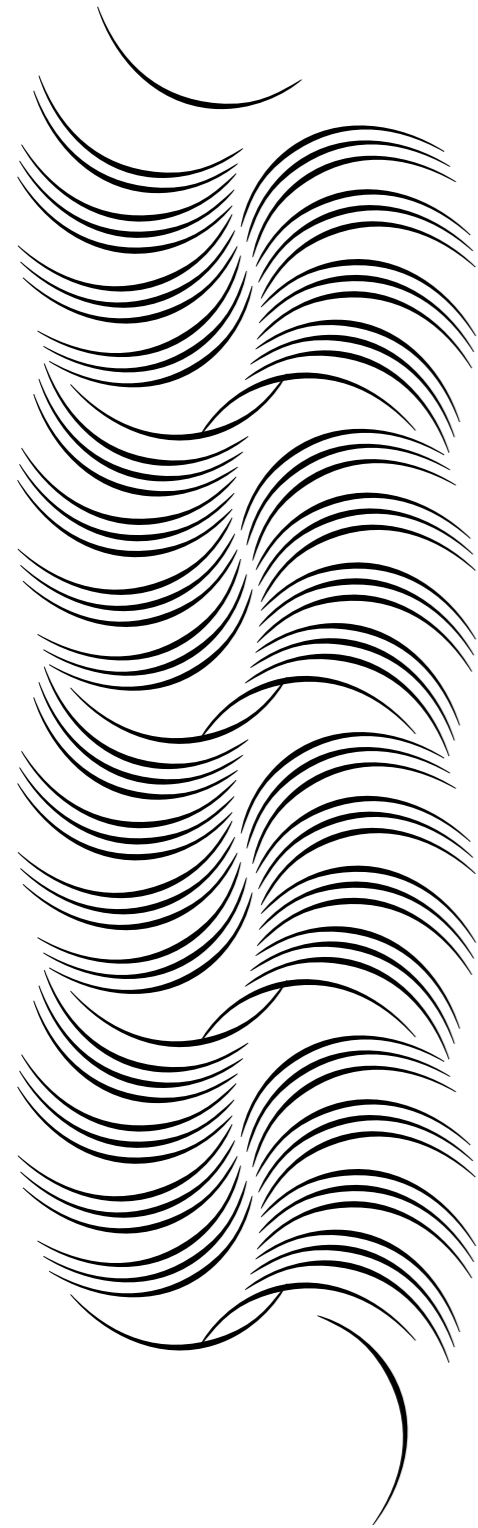
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AMBER SECRETS

Sóley Ragnarsdóttir



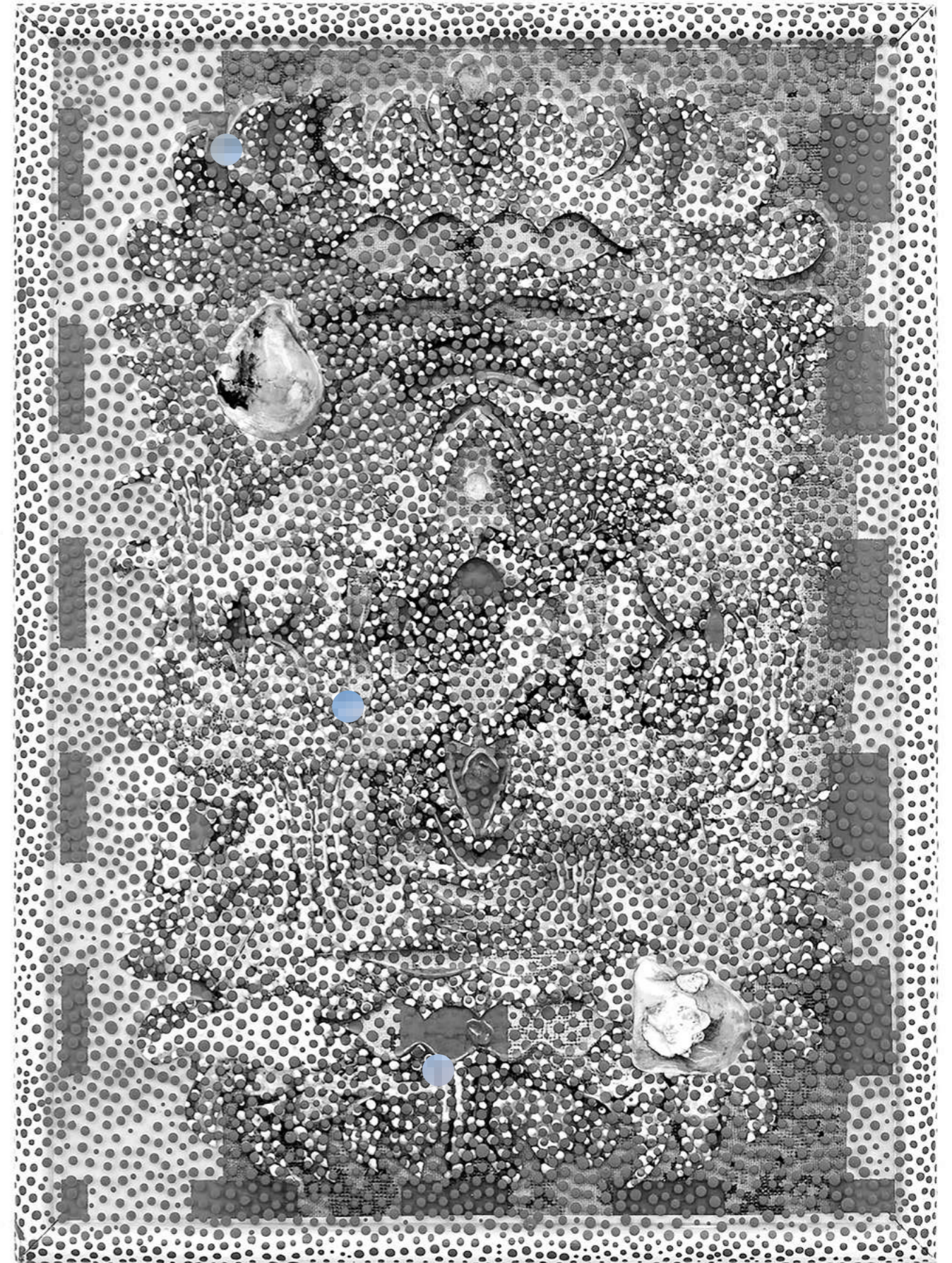
Eyes are directed by neon purple light, waves sharpen the pier, and I'm ready, outside in a hurry. Thick, fresh ocean air. My body encapsulated in the Vorupør suit; it camouflages me as a local. I don't own the waterproof attire, neither do I have a real *kese* (oversized sieve-like tool for amber hunting). It's obvious that I am an amber leech.

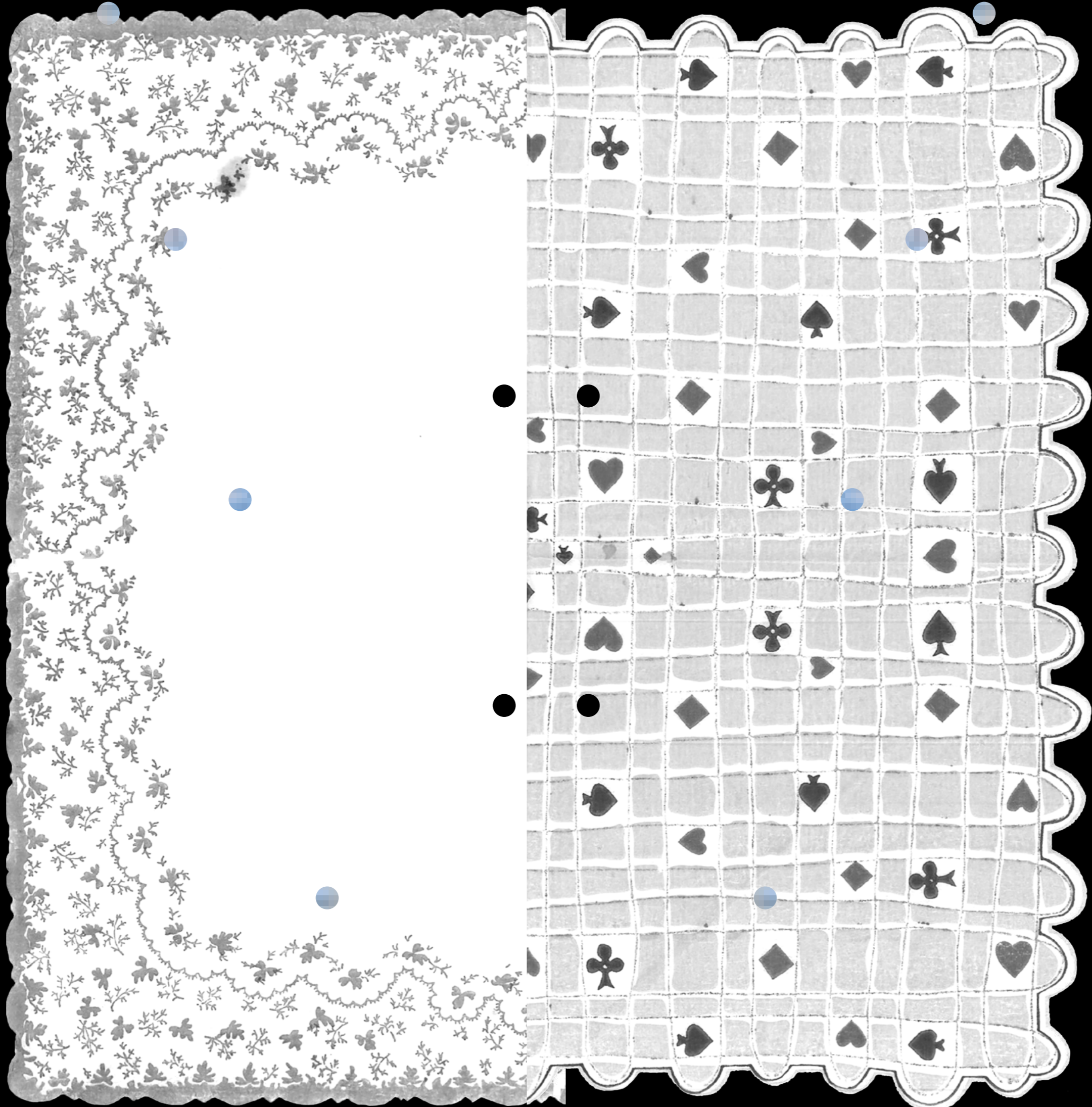
I'm not the one who harvests the largest pieces—they were snatched long ago. I'm fine with that. Kneeling in the sand, I flip through fish ingestions mixed with rocks and seaweed and shells. I'm wet underneath my suit. Salt is sticky.

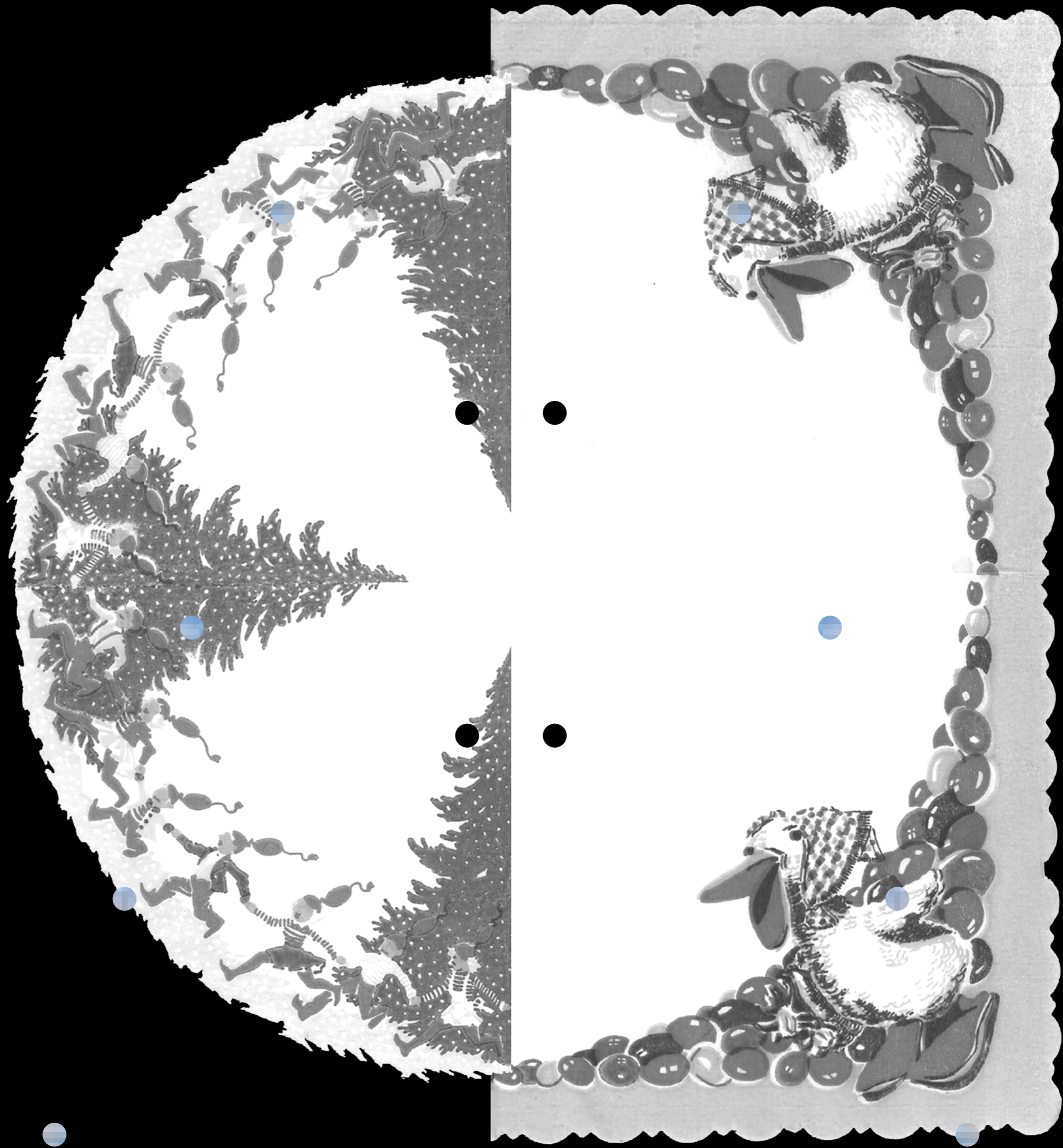
In my area, from Agger to Hanstholm, there are a number of amber hunters and enthusiasts. There are amber safaris for tourists, amber shops both buying and selling, and locals who fabricate their own amber decorations. Apart from being in use as early as the Stone Age, amber has also functioned as a kind of currency. In Ancient Greece myths existed about the healing powers of amber; among other things, it was said to cure rheumatism and eye diseases. Pieces of amber are time capsules, 50 million years old, loosened from the seabed during storms and showered to the coasts in heaps of all kinds of seaweed, dead fish, and plastic. Gulls and humans crowd around the masses; it's all about getting there first. Amber networks and phone chains are activated after the storms, and groups of people go hunting in their wetsuits and with their specialist tools. It's a mixed crowd of old fishermen and amber-loving people, primarily male, standing side-by-side in the waves, dragging the seaweed from the ocean up onto the beach. As they catch the amber they put it in their mouths as a test and, in rural manner, they never pull a face. You don't brag.

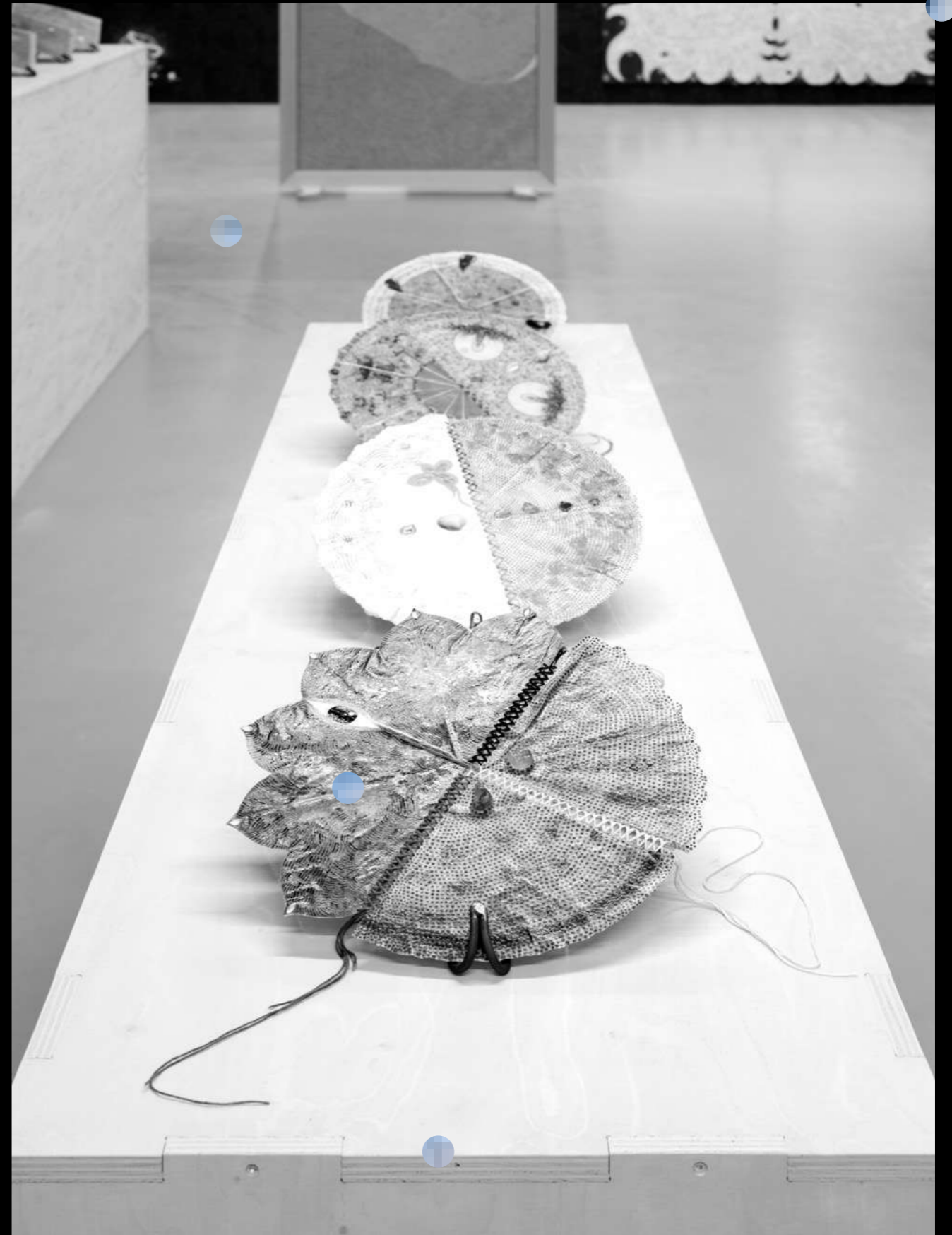
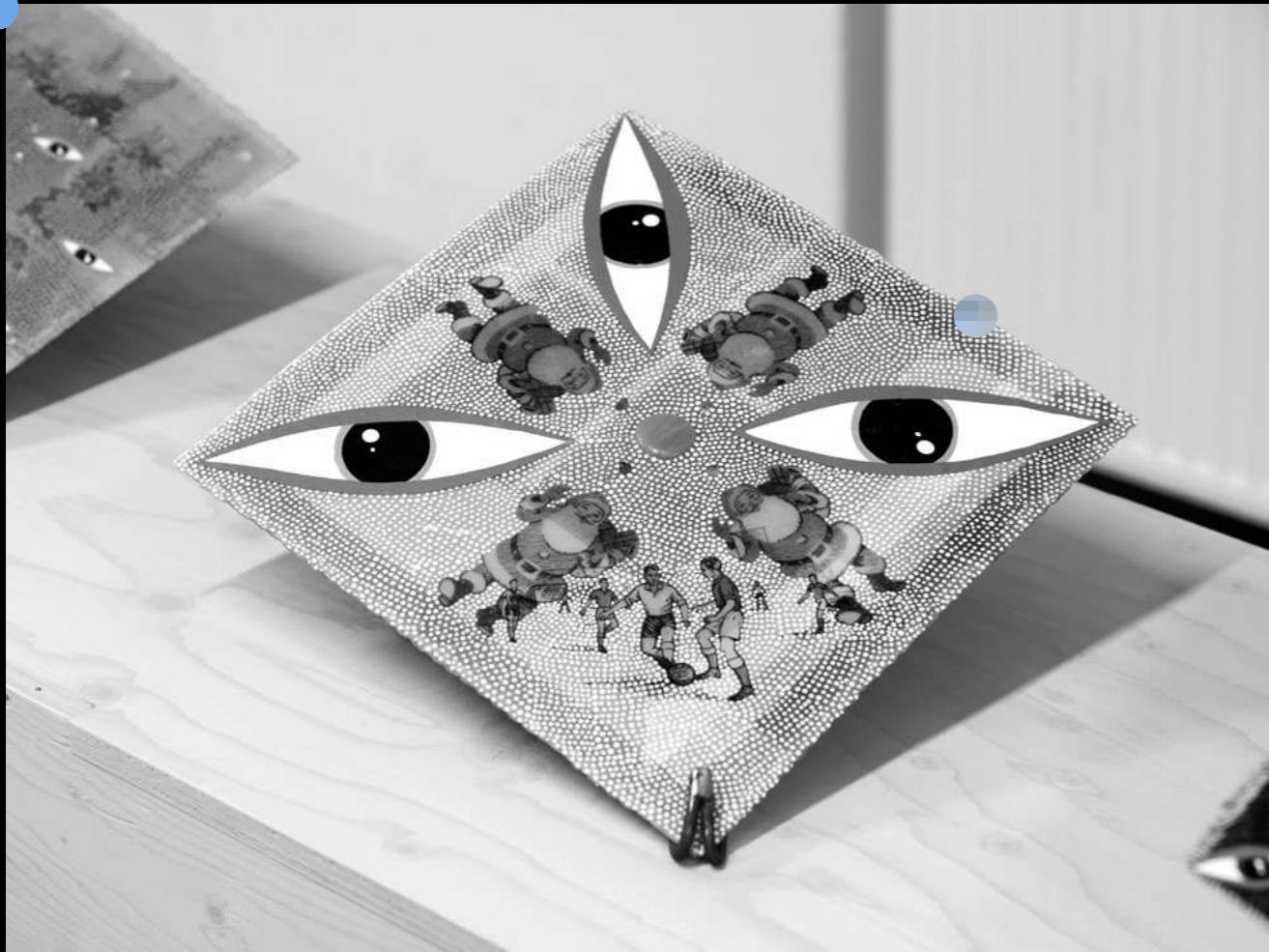
And then there is me, the newcomer. On a very good amber day, I'm able to harvest tiny pieces. It's easiest to see the lemon-yellow clots when the sun is out, but at night the hunt continues. Columns of neon light dance over Vorupør beach, in "the hole" where most amber is to be found. UV torches make the amber gleam with a yellow glow and the chances of a catch are notably increased. In the dark, it is about digging out those black and dark brown pieces that in daylight look like rocks. It can be a beginner's mistake to confuse amber with a crab claw, a swim bladder, or other organic remains. A useful rule: amber shines back.

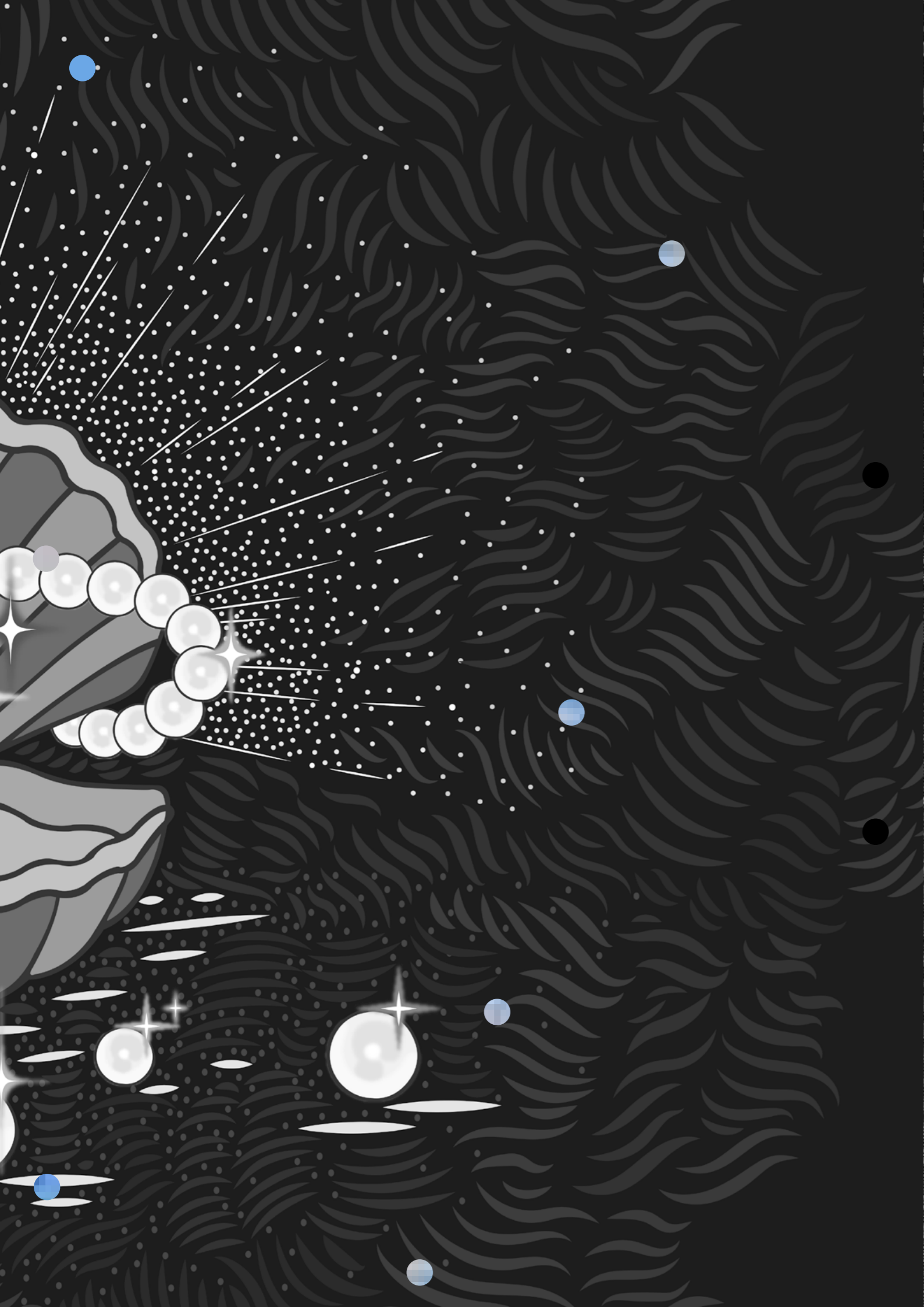
I have tried, in vain, to infiltrate amber networks on social media. I've been making phone calls, sending multiple emails, and not much has come of it. Amber has a secrecy in common with mushroom foraging: once you know the good places, you're not telling anyone. You don't make it to the phone list, don't receive the texts, unless you're part of the club. So bring your own culinary sieve and use it as your tool. And remember: when hunting, cheating is allowed.



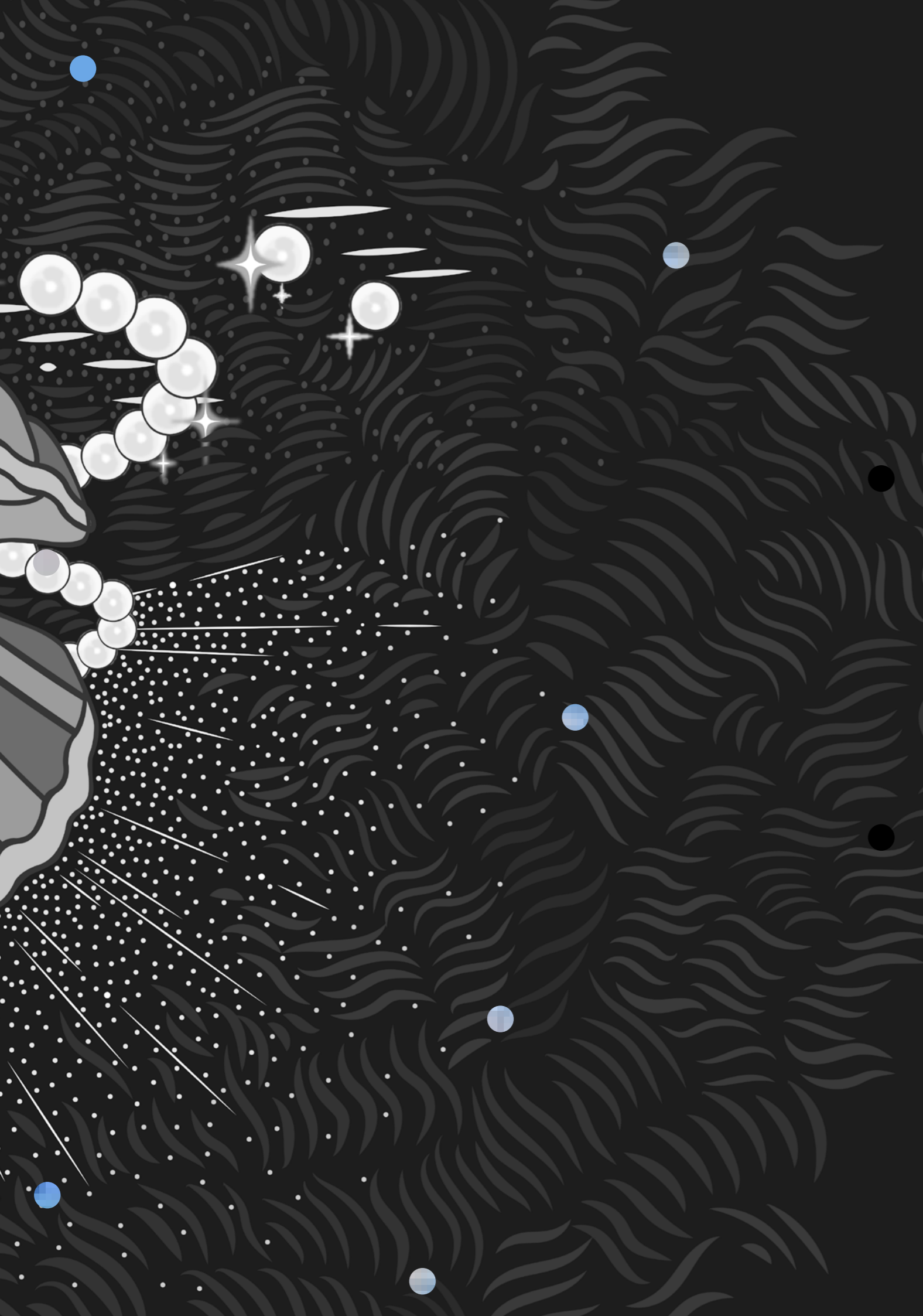




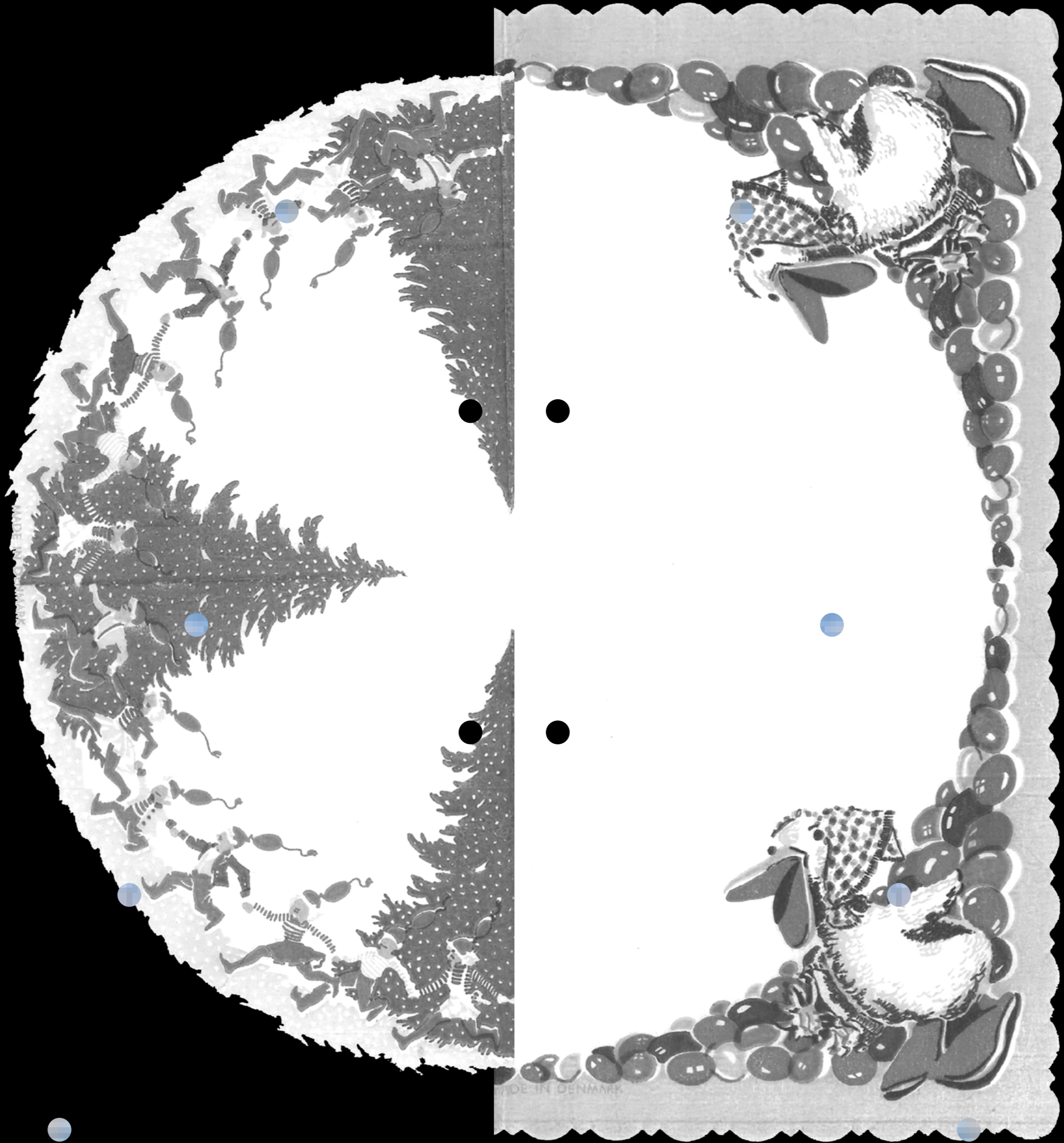






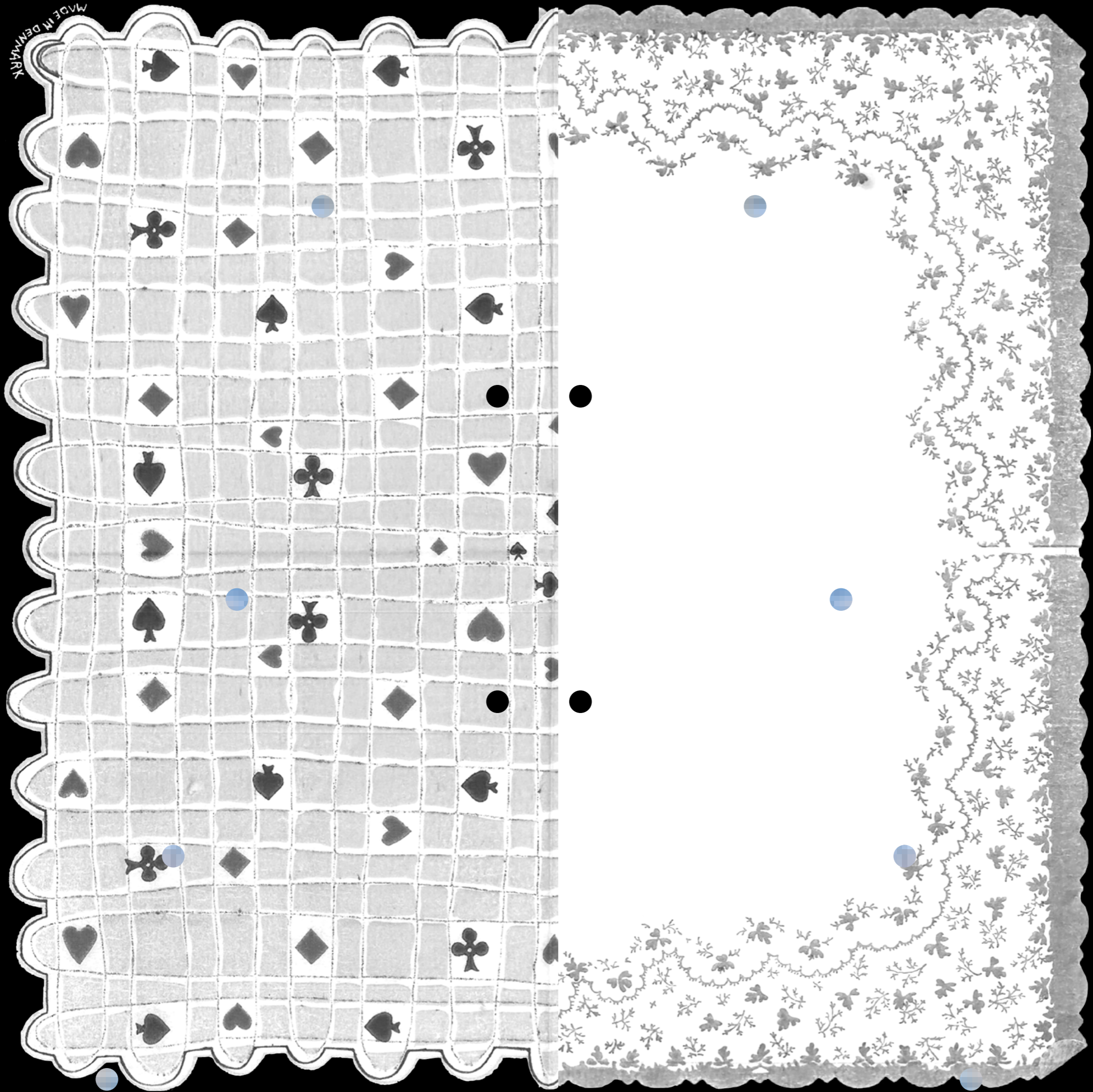






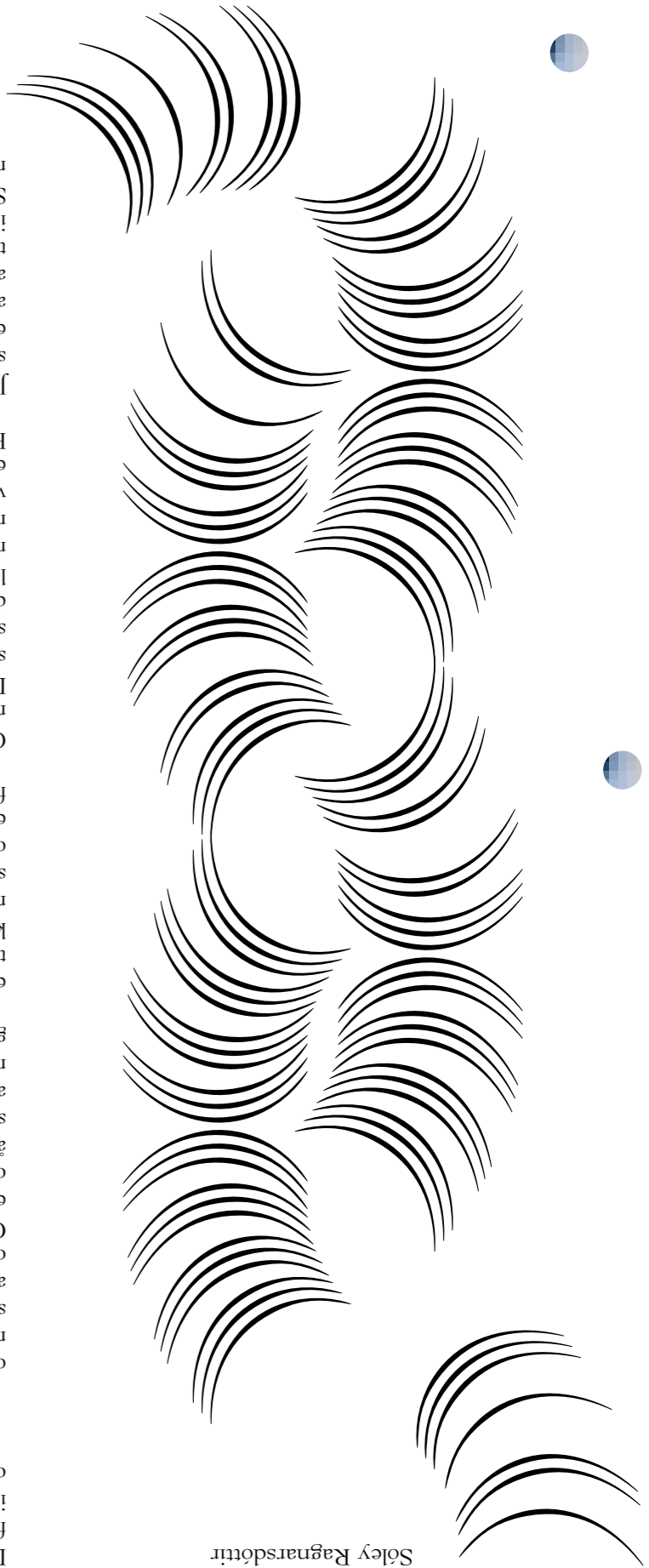
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RAVHEMME- LIGHEDER

Søley Ragnarsdóttir



Øjnene ledes af neonlilla lys, havet sliber mod molen, og jeg er klar, ude i en fart. Tyk, frisk havluft. Jeg leder i ravjægerens efterladte bunker. Min krop indkapslet i Vorupør-habit, den kamouflerer mig som lokal. Jeg har ingen regndragt, ej heller nogen rigtig kесе. Det ses tydeligt, at jeg er en ravlig.

Det er ikke mig, som fanger de store stykker. De er for længst snuppet - det har jeg det fint med. På knæ i sandet vender jeg fiskeindvold med småsten, tang og skaller. Jeg er våd under min habit: salt klister.

● På egenen hvor jeg bor, fra Agger til

Hanstholm, findes mange ravjægere

og -entusiastere. Der er ravsafarter for turister,

ravbutikker, der køber og sælger, og der er lokale, som

selv fabrikere (pynte)genstande. Rav har foruden

at være blevet brugt allerede i den tidlige stenalder

også fungeret som bytte for penge, og i det gamle

Grækenland fandtes der myter om ravets helbredende

egenskaber; det kunne for eksempel kurerer gigt

og helbrede øjensygdomme. Rav er 50 millioner

år gamle tidskapsler, som under store storme løsner

sig fra havbunden, og skyllet mod kysterne i dynger

af al slags tang, døde fisk, plastik. Her flokkes

måger og mennesker om de opskyllede masser, det

gælder om at komme først. Der er ravnerværk og

● -telefonkæder, som aktiveres

efter overstået uvæjr, grupper, der

tager ud sammen i regndragter og med

kесer. Det er en blandet flok af gamle fiskere og

ravbegejstrede personer, primært mænd, der står

side om side i bølgerne og hiver tangen op af vandet,

op på stranden. Så fylder de munden med ravet,

efterhånden som de fanger det, og på nordfysk manier

fortækker de ikke en mine. Man blæser sig ikke.

● Og så er der mig, tilflytteren. På en rigtig god

ravdag kan jeg plukke og plukke små fine stykker.

Det er nemmest at se de citrongule klumper, når

solen skinner, men om aftenen fortsætter jagten. På

strandene i Vorupør, i "hullet" hvor ravet er mest,

danser søjler af neonlys. UV-lygter får ravet til at

lave gule genskær og chance for fangst øges

markant. I mørket gælder det om at finde de sorte og

mørkebrune stykker, der i dagslys ligner sten. Det kan

være en begyndertfej! at forvokse rav med en krabbe,lo,

en svømmeblæse eller andre organiske efterladenskaber.

● En god huskeregel er: rav lyser tilbage.

Jeg har forsværes forsøgt at inffirere ravnerværk på

sociale medier. Jeg har ringet rundt, sendt flere

● e-mails. Ikke meget er der kommet ud

af det. Rav har det til fælles med svampe,

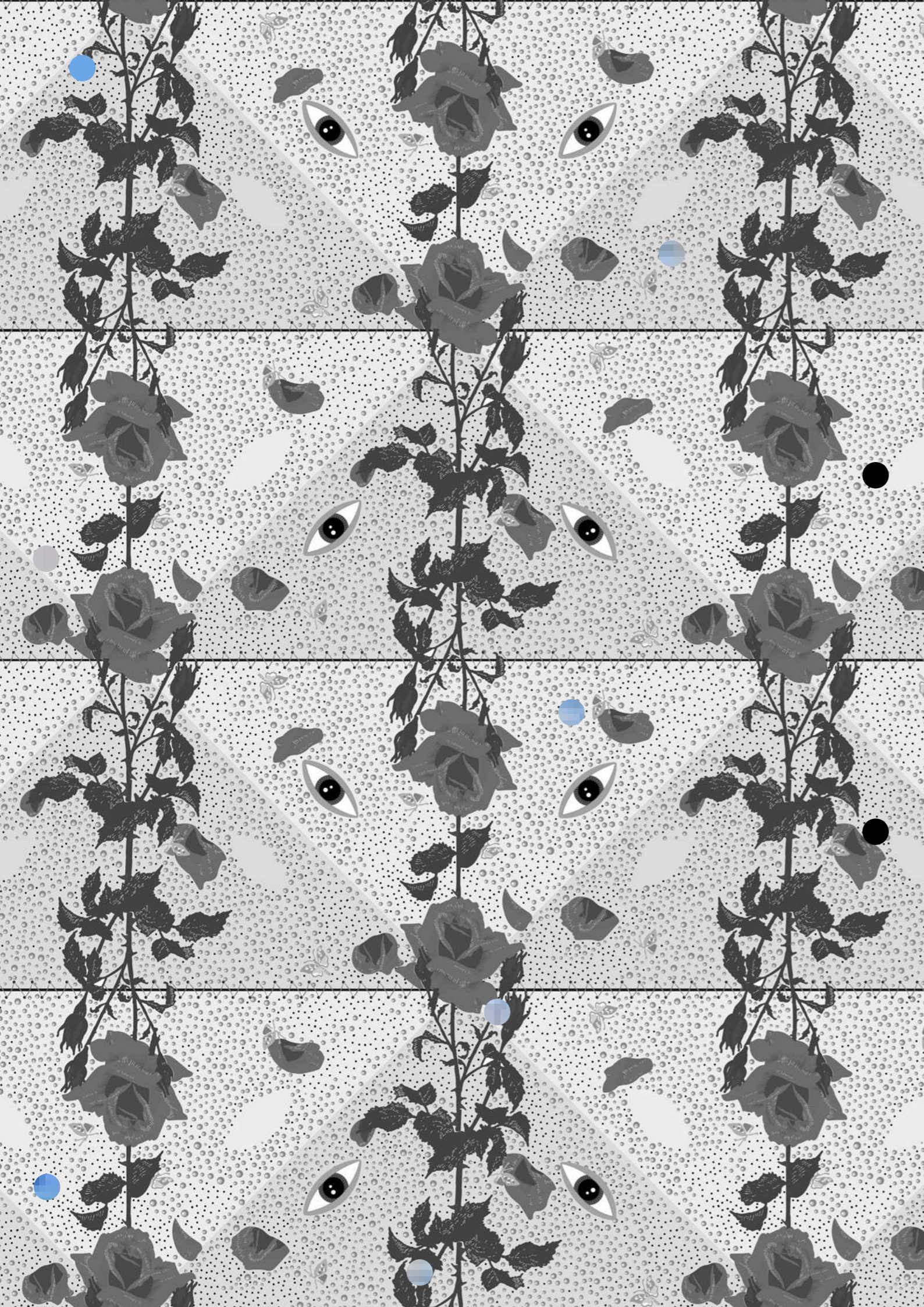
at hvis du kender stederne, siger du det ikke

til nogen. Du kommer ikke på telefonlisten, modtager

ikke sms'en, medmindre du er en del af klubben.

● Så tag din si med og brug den som kесе. Og husk:

når der kесes, må der snyltes.





"Love is a rose / but you better not pick it / it only grows when it's on the vine / a handful of thorns and you'll know you've missed it / you lose your love when you say the word 'mine'..."

I det der engang var arbejderklassens i mine bedsteordredes hjem, skat et brutalt, brunt kloakrør sig ned over væggen fra toiletet ovenpå. Min tante Fulya malede røret, da hun var 16 år, gjorde det til en tyk stamme under et enormt kirssebærtræs, hvis lysrøde blomster smitsomt bredte sig udover væggene og rundt om hjørnet. Ikke desto mindre bevægede lort sig unægtelig gennem rummet, bogstavelig talt. Men fornægtelse var aldrig intentionen og accept var bestemt heller ikke en mulighed. Udsmykning er ikke et villigt samarbejde med materielle omstændigheder - det er et en provisorisk tilgivelse af dem.



Elif Saydam

IS
A
LOVE
ROSE



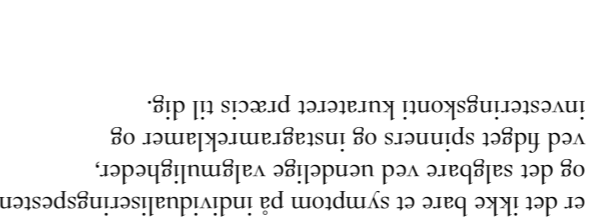
Udover at være en slags polyamorøsitetens slagsang er det også nogle vise ord om at plukke ting fra deres livsgrundlag. Vores planer er oversat med vidunderlige chitarscuro-stillebenere; en hummer (stadig rød) ligger ved siden af en netop afklippet blomst (stadig sprudlende), den har åbne kløer (stadig levende), og behnder sig på et tyrkisk tæppe, der er helt fejllacceret ovenpå et hollandsk bord. Souvenir's fra høje skibe, dødsmaस्कudgaver af vestlig magt, de er arrangeret med en banal tyngde, der skærer dem for de levendes rige. Ingen skam her: nydelsesprincippet er generøse i deres måde at lade syrede sammenhænge forblive elskede. Men vi kan alle kollektivt gyse over, at nogen vil have disse ting, at nogen vil male dem. Magtubalancerer tillader ingen fejltin.

Hvis man lægger muscet eller stuen bag sig og i stedet forestiller sig et bedrag, der kan være forårsaget af hvad som helst: Måske glider et vådt maleri ned fra væggen og bliver smurt ud over et par splinternye bukser. Bukserne skaber en falsk fornemmelse af neutralitet i deres bevægelse gennem en meget ikke-neutral verden, som en fiktiv fremmed. Maleriet besad aldrig denne falske neutralitet til at begynde med; bukserne er ødelagt, det er maleriet ikke. At lave noget arbejde og samtidig være overbevist om at fejl ikke findes er en ontologi, der ikke kun omfatter mødet og tilfældet, men også katastrofen. Cigaretthullerne i forævnede bestefars polyesterpyjamas blev altid til blomstermønstre i hænderne på kvinderne omkring ham, en askehave. Min indre uenagtede og opgivende fortæller er vedholdende: Dette skete for mig, så dette blev til det her. Eller simpelt hen: Ups. Kommer hun nogensinde til at tage sig sammen? Uanset hvordan jeg arbejder med endokrine system, er hun vandfåst - eller i hvert fald modstandsdygtig - og ligeså umulig at punktere som en bøjle i saltvand.

For at samle styrke til at absorbere sin modgang, vugger hun ned gennem gaden efter brændstof. Mit yndlings-kebabssted er mit yndlings, ikke på grund af kebabbavalticen, men på grund af detaljerne bag disken. Som i ethvert hjem, også de mest uordenlige, er der en skrædderstyret logik ved disse detaljer, det kan være en striks mindfulness eller en kaotisk suspendering af følgende: en særlig plads til aften, og aften på sin særlige plads. Stedets to ældre ejere kører en stram forretnings, og køkkener er organiseret med et værktøjsalvor. Men som i ethvert værktøjsalvor nogenstede har arbejdet i, er der små rum udskåret til dekoration eller, for at være mere præcis, personalisering. Ved siden af vinduet hænger en generisk velolieret vinage-ur pyntet med buketter af keramiske hvildøg. I bunden af hvert løg sidder et enkelt vagent glasøj. Noget ved det her gør mig glad. I modætning til de fleste eksempler på samtidspynt, er det ikke bare et symptom på individualiseringspessten og det salgbare ved uendelige valgmuligheder, ved fidget spinners og instagraramreklamer og investeringskonti kurateret præcis til dig.

Søley Ragnarsdóttir vil særligt takke:
Emil Koch, Ragnar Stefansson,
Niels Schmidt, Kern Hou,

For at samle styrke til at absorbere sin modgang, vugger hun ned gennem gaden efter brændstof. Mit yndlings-kebabssted er mit yndlings, ikke på grund af kebabbavalticen, men på grund af detaljerne bag disken. Som i ethvert hjem, også de mest uordenlige, er der en skrædderstyret logik ved disse detaljer, det kan være en striks mindfulness eller en kaotisk suspendering af følgende: en særlig plads til aften, og aften på sin særlige plads. Stedets to ældre ejere kører en stram forretnings, og køkkener er organiseret med et værktøjsalvor. Men som i ethvert værktøjsalvor nogenstede har arbejdet i, er der små rum udskåret til dekoration eller, for at være mere præcis, personalisering. Ved siden af vinduet hænger en generisk velolieret vinage-ur pyntet med buketter af keramiske hvildøg. I bunden af hvert løg sidder et enkelt vagent glasøj. Noget ved det her gør mig glad. I modætning til de fleste eksempler på samtidspynt, er det ikke bare et symptom på individualiseringspessten og det salgbare ved uendelige valgmuligheder, ved fidget spinners og instagraramreklamer og investeringskonti kurateret præcis til dig.



Udstillingen er støttet af: Statens Kunstofond
Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond
15. Juni Fonden

Beckett-Fonden
Knud Højgaards Fond
Rådet for Visuel Kunst

Alexander Bengtson, Joon Yeon Park,
Milena Bonifacini, Elif Saydam,
Miriam Bettin.

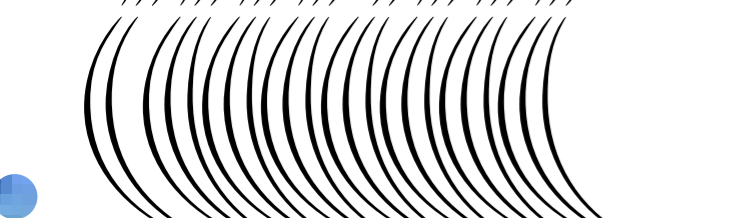
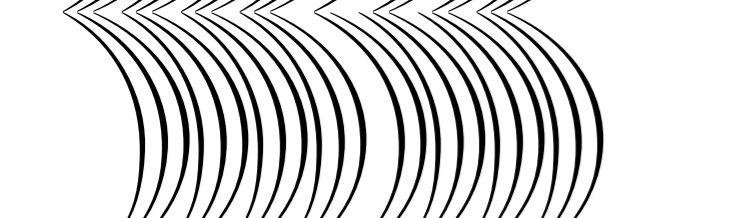
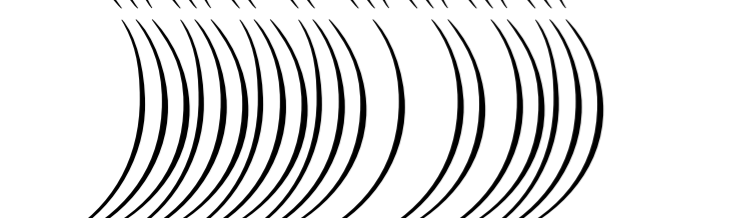
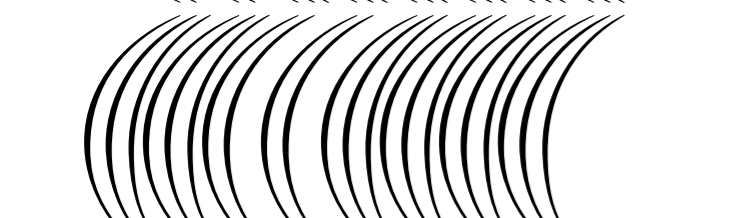
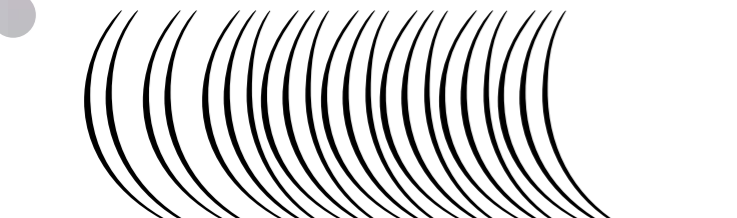
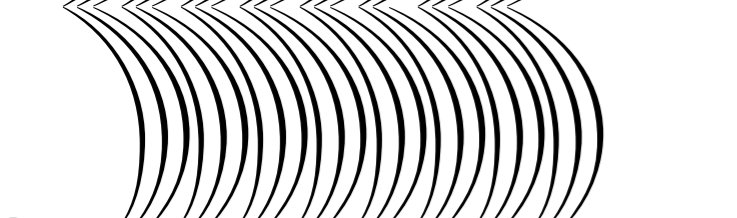
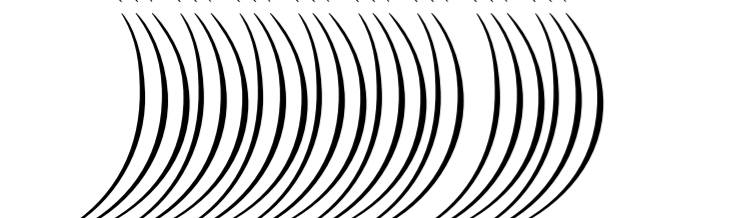
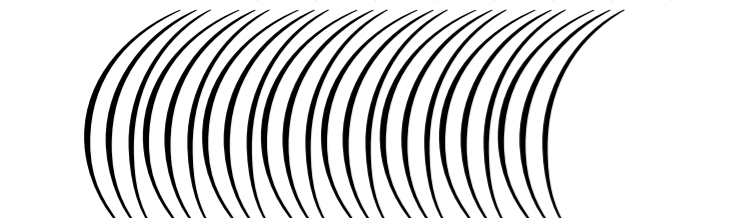
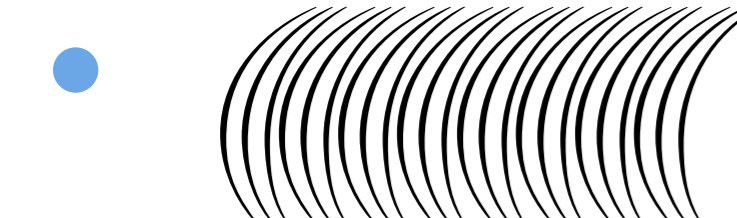
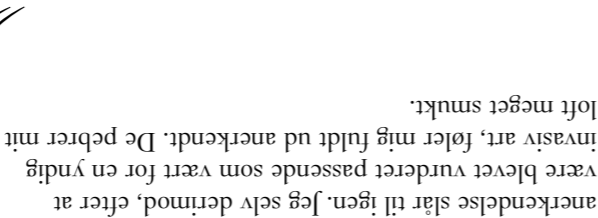
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En løvhyttetugl samler omhyggeligt små stykker blå plastic for at få sex, og vi holder alle sammen øje med ting, der føles helt rigtige - eller virkelig forkerte - for os, de ting vi kan tage med os hjem for at pynte dansesgulvene i vores huller. Efterligning er en af biologiens mest utrolige egenskaber. Og så samler vi på servietter eller frimærker eller klistermærker eller fingerbøl, vi knaser sommerfugle mellem bogsider, vi plejer akvarier eller begonier eller basbalkort eller små ting, der ligner andre små ting. Ligeegyldig hvad den består af, kræver enhver god samling et publikum eller i det mindste nogle nørdede kammerater, der kan bekræfte dens eksistens.

At ophobe og dele det, vi som subjekter er særlig opmærksomme på, er en udpegning, en måde at relatere til, en nøgle til overlevelse. Ligesom så meget andet, er det et spørgsmål om udholdenhed. At beslutte sig for, hvor meget man skal frasortere, og hvor meget man skal efterlade, kræver en grundigt skærpet sensitivitet overfor raffineret eller smagløshed (vælg dit giftestof). Men kunstneren kender den åbne hemmelighed bedst: Hendes samling vil kun overleve, hvis hun er klar over dens begrænsninger og utilstrækkeligheder i forhold til at skabe et overbevisende billede. Hun må holde øje med dette.

Optimistisk set er et enkelt øje ensbetydende med sikkerhed og beskyttelse. På en dårlig dag anvender det noget helt andet: et ondsindet hensigt. Den engelske betegnelse for en *nazar boncuk* (en 'ondøjet' talisman) er misvisende, men ikke fuldstændig uberejtiget. Den insinuerer, at der er noget, man skal beskyttes imod. Misundelse cirkulerer som en olieklud midt om natten. To øjne bliver en anden slags trussel, når de tager form af en krop - det kan være en opmærksom elsker, en fremmedgjort tagtager eller begge dele. Manga-trisser glitter med små hvide stænk af advarsel. Et endeløst optog af cowboytænder fanger lyset med deres rhinesten. Midt i min seneste flop-periode - i ægte Generation X-stil - fortabte jeg mig i Gerhard Richters scartinytmalerier: Der er ingen grænser for, hvad lidt hvidt lys i et maleri kan gøre.

Mens jeg skriver til Søley, er min lejlighed blevet indtaget af overvintrende mariehøns, der farer indenfor, hver gang jeg åbner vinduerne i mit stædige forsøg på at benægte efteråret. På nuværende tidspunkt ville jeg kunne kalde det en samling. I sin ansøgning til et Guggenheim-stipendium i 1976, skrev Rec Morton så glimrende: "Min karriere begynder formentlig, da jeg var tre år og gik i gang med at kigge på myretuer og beskytte mariehøns. Dette forårsagede en langvarig afbrydelse af mine kunstneriske fremskridt, eftersom min familie opfattede det som en interesse for naturvidenskabelig ledelse mig i retning af sygepleje". Mistorstær anerkendelse slår til igen. Jeg selv derimod, efter at være blevet vurderet passende som vært for en yndig inaktiv art, følger mig fuldt ud anerkendt. De pebter mit loft meget smukt.



WATER ON WATER, MOVEMENT, OVER WAVES, BREATHING, FOLLOWING, BREATHING, AFFIRMATION, OVER COMING AFFIRMATION, OVER AFFIRMATION

"Let's think: the sea is terrifying: of course, when its whole mass stands up and creates havoc with its waves, we run for shelter. But she's more treacherous than that; she calms down, and her being then unfolds fully, and whoever looks then at her long enough is mesmerized, is out of his own being, transfixed [...] that person will rather drown in her than continue to face that attraction which keeps the universe being."

Miriam Bettin

Om Soley Ragnarsdóttir's værensformer

Gar langs havet, blinker. De kigger på dig, du kigger tilbage. Øjne som en passage ind til sjælen er et tilbagevendende motiv i Soley Ragnarsdóttirs arbejde. Som store skulpturer, der hænger fra loftet i *Hævet som billedsjabel* (2021) eller som figurer i hendes malerier, bliver de et konstant fokuspunkt. I de værker der ellers er udgjort af mønstre og rytme – prikker og streger, tern og blomster – aktiverer øjnene rummet og animerer overfladen, mens bølgende penselsrøg giver associationer til vand eller pels som i *Uden tæl* (2021). Alligevel forbliver billedernes væsener uligemlige, de opløser sig i mønstre og bliver til andre slags stof (både organisk og syntetisk): rav, skaller, harpiks, epoxy. De tørrede blomster, solsikkefrø, plastiksten, perler. De væsensagtige træk understrøges så meget desto mere med malerternes installation på buede fødder. I forængelse af Donna Haraways teori om mellemartslighed, skitserer Soley Ragnarsdóttir en alternativ måde at eksistere på, en der hverken er menneskelig eller animalsk, men kønsløs, tidløs, kropsløs. Samtidig kan dette alternativ opfattes som skabelon til en bebodt verden i krisetider, hvor klimaforandringer og en pandemi synliggør uligheder langt tydeligere: ressourcerfordeling, adgang til sundhedsvæsen og uddannelse, behovet for (økonomiske) reserver og et socialt netværk, privilegier at blive hjemme og have adgang til safe spaces. Judith Butler foreslår at afvikle rigide former for individualitet for at kunne "nærme sig den mindre rolle menneskets verden må spille på denne jord, hvis regnering vi er afhængige af – og som til gengæld er afhængige af vores mindre dominerende, mere bevidste ageren".²

Ragnarsdóttirs betagelse af det (hyper)dekorative trækker tråde til såvel Arts & Crafts-bevægelsen i midten af det 19. århundrede som den såkaldte Patern & Decoration-bevægelse i midten af 1970'erne – begge er det bevægelses, der traditionelt forbindes med kvindeligt* arbejde. Patern & Decoration-bevægelsens vilje til overflade frem for tematik blev omfavnet af queer-personer og feminister for dens "dekorativ ornamenterede overflod", nedgjort af patriarkatet for dens kitsch, primitivism og "mangel på konceptuel dybde"³, og der skabtes således en oplagt mulighed for at en sexsistisk kunstverden kunne degraderer og ignorerer praksisser, hvor kvinder* spillede en dominerende rolle.

At antage at det dekorative per definition eller moralsk ikke kan være politisk er misforstået. I sine over Jack Smiths camp-æstetik beskriver Juliane Rebenitsch, hvordan: "[...] det æstetiske rum og det moralske rum er tæt forbundne, ikke kun hvad angår camps bidrag til kritiske standpunkter, som knytter historie sammen med natur, men også i forhold til en kritisk melankoli, der muliggør en glæde i netop oplevelsen af at kunne spore naturen i historien".⁴

Redaktør: Nanna Friis

Øversættelse: Nanna Friis

Billeder: Anders Sune Berg,
Soley Ragnarsdóttir

Trykt i 200 eksemplarer

Korrektur: Susannah Worth

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn

Tekst: Miriam Bettin, Elif Saydam,
Soley Ragnarsdóttir,
Aukje Lepoutre Ravn

Til trods for Adolf Loos' berygtede misogyne og kolonialistiske stigmatisering af ornament som forbydelse, og uanset deres dekorative effekt, har ornamentet altid haft symbolsk relevans og været afgørende for aflæsninger af og kommentarer til verden: "Den dag i dag fungerer de stadig som et værktøj for kunstnere til at reflektere over egne kulturer og eksperimentel kritiseret politiske systemer, traditionelle konventioner, sociale konventioner og forventninger".⁵ R&D-bevægelsens rødder i islamsk kunst betød også, at dens ornamenterale tilbøjeligheder skabte radikale skift fra en formel stringens i den vestlige modernismes minimalistiske, rationelle koncepter til fordel for genanvendelser af fantasi, farve, diversitet, sensualitet, forførelse og forvaramationer – og dette resulterede i en bredere tilgængelighed, flade hierarkier og demokrativering. *Tides, yes, breathing, love bring a tide coming, and receding; a pendular insanity, as impatient in its regularity as this gaze on the inbuilt instability of liquid metals?*⁶ Det er værd, at bemærke Ragnarsdóttirs brug af forskellige former for maritimt materiale, ting der skabes og praktiseres omkring havet (fiskeri, sejlad, surfting, rævjagt), og som udspiringer af hendes fascination for sine nærmeste omgivelser. Naturstudier dominerer til værkerne og en alsidig tilgang til vidensproduktion og lokale, sociale vaner, mønstre og teknikker sættes i spil: fra den danske kyst hvor Soley Ragnarsdóttir bor og fra Island, hvor hun er født. Et udgangspunkt for Ragnarsdóttirs arbejde med decoupage har også biografiske rødder: hendes mors serviceasmling, der går helt tilbage til 1975 – samtidig med fremkomsten af R&D-bevægelsens. Kunsten med brugt serviceiterte som en slags base, maler dem delvist over med akrylprikker, overpynter dem med alle mulige former for små fundne skarpe for til sidst at præsentere dem på forstørrede servicestativer af metal i *Napkins At The End Of My World* (2021). Hvad serviceiterte illustrerer i lille skala med deres mønstre og stiliseringer, fortsætter i form af tapeter ud i uendeligheden. I tapeterne gentages det samme mønster, konstant forbundet i harmoniske overgange langs væggene, og tapetet skal derfor passe sammen på alle ledet og kanter, så det har potentiale til endeløs duplikering og fortsættelse.⁸ "Det er ikke tilfældigt, at ordet mønster har associationer til 'mønstret' som generel betegnelse for det gode eksempel, hvilket [...] lader til at indbefatte en tidløs opfattelse af skønhed. Uanset hvor forskellige blomstermønstre har set ud, er det altid sandt, at de aldrig præsenterer vores blikke for noget negativt, aldrig noget visner, aldrig noget sørgmodigt, aldrig død, men derimod altid det modsatte: kun konstant sommerglød, en blomstring og pragt og i særdeleshed en udbredt overdådighed"⁹.

Ragnarsdóttirs tapeter, skabt i samarbejde med kunstneren Joon Yeon Park er kompositioner af digitalt afhæstede penselsrøg og mønstre, gentagelser af disse lykkekæmte motiver som roser, sommerfugle, prikker, øjne. De tilbyder en antitese til white cube-rummet, et mere hjemligt rum for hendes malerier at bo i og på den måde en mulighed for at fane og overdrive det dekorative øjeblik i en uendelighed. *Empty shells lie on the beach in hours always uncertain.*¹⁰

¹Erel Adnan, *Night*, New York 2016, 25. Tritelcitatet stammer fra samme kilde.

²Judith Butler, "Creating an Inhabitable World for Humans Means Dismantling Rigid Forms of Individuality," *Time*, 21 April 2021, [time.com/5953396/judith-butler-safe-world-individuality](https://www.time.com/5953396/judith-butler-safe-world-individuality)

³Lynne Cooke, "Patern Recognition," *Artforum*, October 2021, www.artforum.com/print/202108/lynne-cooke-on-the-pattern-and-decoration-movement-86705

⁴Ibid.

⁵Juliane Rebenitsch, *Camp Materialism*, Cologne/Berlin 2020, 18.

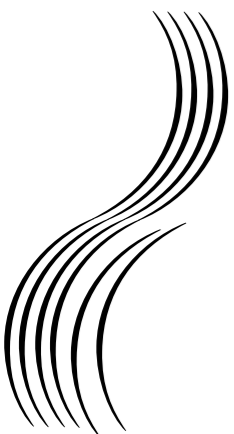
⁶Ludwig Forum Aachen, press text for *Pattern and Decoration*, 21.09.2018 – 13.01.2019, [ludwigforum.de/en/event/pattern-and-decoration](https://www.ludwigforum.de/en/event/pattern-and-decoration) (31.10.2021)

⁷Erel Adnan, *Night*, New York 2016, 25.

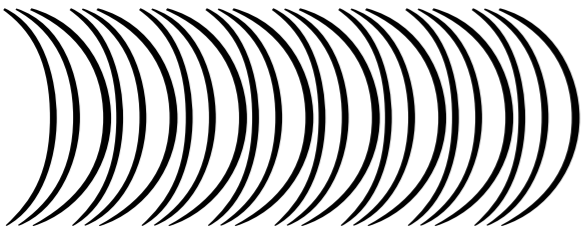
⁸Se Ernst Wolfgang Mick, "Zur Geschichte der Tapete" i *Deutsches Tapetenmuseum Kassel*, Kassel 1982, 9.

⁹Ibid., 10. (oversat af forfatteren)

¹⁰Adnan, *Night*, 9.



Organizing Principles

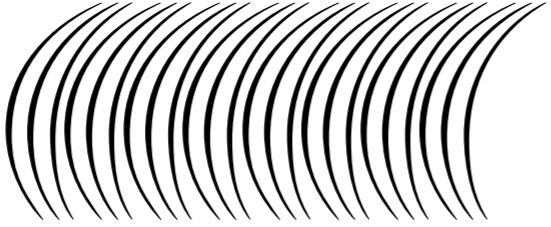


De langvarige samarbejder, som ligger til grund for Ragnarsdottirs udstilling og denne publikation, er mulliggjort af O—Overgaden's *INTRO*-program, der er generøst støttet af Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond. *INTRO* er et helt særligt og ressourcestærkt etårigt udviklingsforløb, hvis ambition er at støtte nyuddannede, unge billedkunstnere med tilknytning til Danmark. Programmet, der fra gang til gang skræddersys til det enkelte kunstnerskab, indeholder både støtte til rejse og produktion samt kunstfaglig, strategisk og teknisk rådgivning fra førend danske og internationale stemmer på kunstfelter. Samarbejdet kulminerer i en stor soloudstilling på O—Overgaden og en udgivelse i denne publikationsrække.

I over 35 år har O—Overgaden som institution haft fokus på at løfte morgendagens kunstnere frem i det danske kunstliv. Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fondens støtte til at videreudvikle dette arbejde er helt unik og vi skylder dem en stor og hjertelig tak for deres engagement. Kurator Miriam Bertin og billedkunstner Elif Saydam har bidraget med fine tekster til publikationen, og Soley selv deler sine personlige hemmeligheder om rav; mange tak for det. En stor tak skal lyde til O—Overgadens kerneeam, der har arbejdet tæt med Soley gennem hele forløbet: kurator Ida Schyum, presse- og kommunikationsansvarlig Line Brædder, vores tekniske troldmester Toke Martins, redaktør og oversætter Nanna Friis og vores blæksprutepraktikant Rikke Bank. En særlig tak til Christina Wilson og Milena Bonifacini for deres skarpe og omsorgsfulde mentoring og til Anne Ribber for at have været en instrumentel del af *INTRO*-samarbejdets opstart. Frem for alt vil O—Overgaden gerne udtrykke en helt særlig tak til Soley Ragnarsdottir for det utrolig fine og tidsfulde samarbejde, for at vise stort mod, ambition og vilje til at åbne sit kunstnerskab op for både institution og publikum og for at levere en mageløs kraftpræstation af en udstilling – helt og aldeles i ornamenterikkens tegn.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn,
konstitueret leder, O—OVERGADEN

FORORD



Det er en stor glæde at kunne introducere denne første publikation om den unge dansk-islandske kunstner Soley Ragnarsdottir. Publikationen udkommer i forbindelse med kunstnerens store soloudstilling *Organizing Principles*, der indtager hele O—Overgadens første sal med et væld af værker - fra abstrakte malerier i udsåkrne rammer over øjensformede mobilier til mønstrede tapeter og pointillistiske bemalede servicemalerier, hvori rav og muslingeskaller er indkapslet. Med en finfølelse fornemmelse for kontrasterende materialers møder, den ornamenterede repetitionens hypnotiske effekt og brugen af farver og symbolers psykologiske og mytologiske betydninger, skaber Ragnarsdottir et eklektisk og forførende visuelt univers, der bjergtager os med sin svimlende detaljeringsgrad. For Ragnarsdottir er kunsten en leg med ideen om skønhed, en dialog med naturen som koncept og et sted, hvor verden kan organiseres på ny efter egne principper.

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Organizing Principles
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Soley Rag *Organizing*

