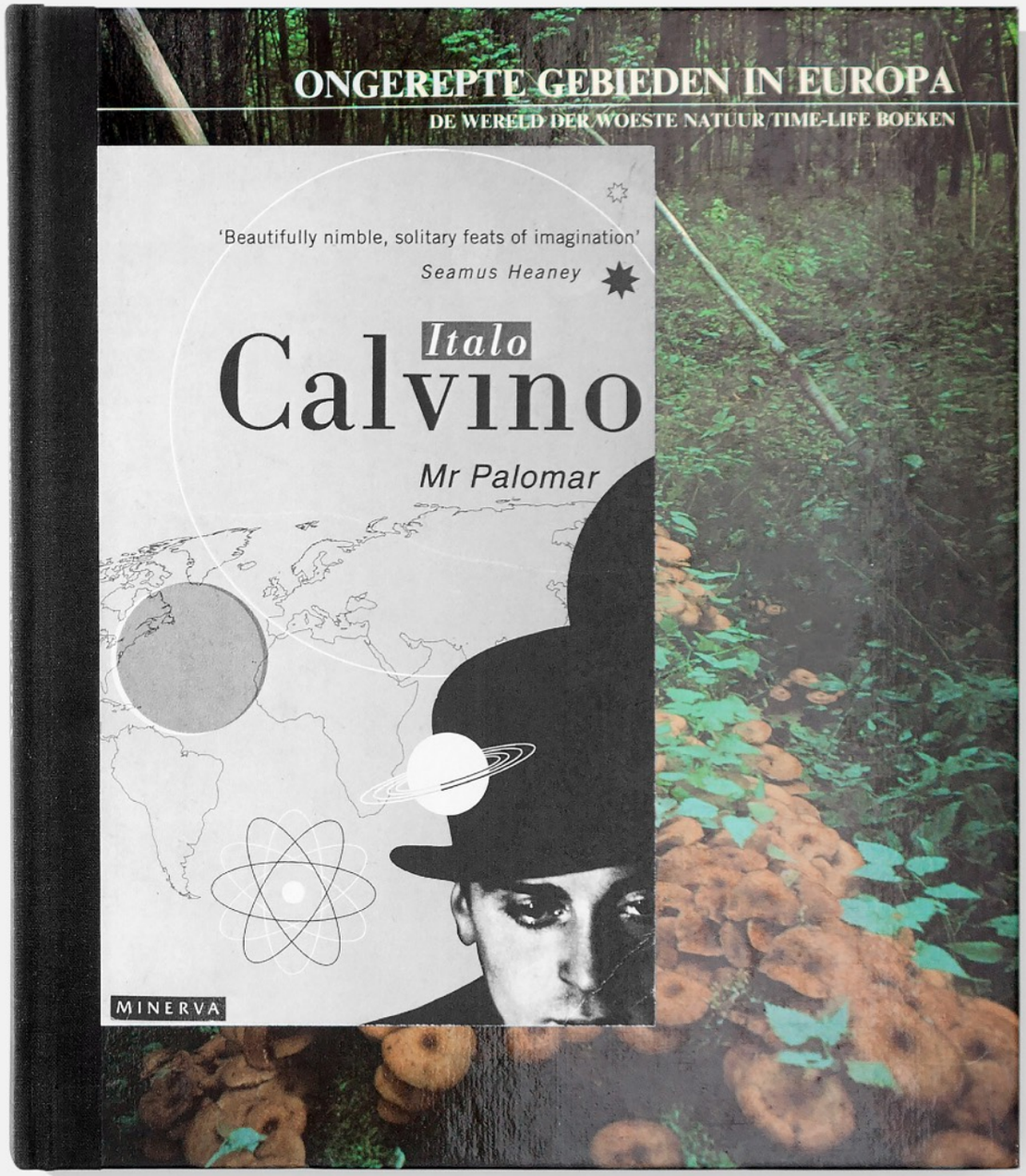
Mr. Palomar/Ongerepte Gebieden in Europa (2013)


ONGEREPTE GEBIEDEN IN EUROPA
DE WEREELD DER WOESTE NATUUR/TIME-LIFE BOEKEN
'Beautifully nimble, solitary feats of imagination'
Seamus Heaney
Italo
Calvino
Mr Palomar
MINERVA

Introduction

In my parent's home, running the length of one of the walls is a large 1980s IKEA entertainment unit by the name of "IVAR". Made from untreated pine, its pale skeletal-like frame displays an assortment of books, framed family photos and photo albums, VHS tapes, trophies and other objects hoarded onto over the years; my parents are sentimental people, reluctant to throw anything out. Some of the items on display have remained untouched for over twenty years, so the unit assumes the role of a vitrine in a museum. I had never found a good reason to rummage into this shelf for its books, many of which are autobiographies of Australian sportsmen and women, politicians and the like. I was never interested in Australiana, and retreat from nationalism in general.

There is a book however that is precious to me, the *Reader's Digest Great World Atlas* (1962) laying flat on the top shelf. This hefty sized atlas is protected by a cardboard casing and has a teal quarter cloth cover with a gold foil image of the Earth stamped onto it. Seeing this book brings back childhood memories where my brother's and I would claim shenanigans towards one of my father's outlandish generalised statements. To verify his claims (and ultimately prove us wrong) he would fetch "the atlas" as he would say, with an air of confidence that all the knowledge in the world could be found within this single book.

The book begins with the title *The Face of the World*, followed by pages and pages of illustrated maps outlining the countries on the globe geographically. Although the maps form the bulk of the book, I found myself drawn to chapters with images that underpin how the world works. Chapters such as *The Earth's Structure* would visualise the layers of the Earth's crust with a cross section, where the cut away surface appears like a sliced avocado with a large core at the center. The chapter *The Evolution of Man* has a complex diagram of a genetic tree explaining the changes that occurred from the *Oligocene* period to the modern day man. The scale of topics covered in the book tend zoom in and out frequently, moving from the size of countries to the size of planets and galaxies in chapters as vast as *Outer Space: The Boundless Sky*. Then there's the section on *The Earth's Treasures*, detailing the characteristics of gemstones and precious metals.

It was with a certain element of surprise when browsing through this book that I stumbled across *Mr. Palomar* on a lower shelf, a novel written by Italo Calvino. The front cover depicts a pensive looking character[1] surrounded by atoms, maps, and floating planets (symbols closely related to the atlas). I knew nothing of *Mr. Palomar*, but assumed it to be one of the author's later works; a reading of the colophon confirmed this, stating that the book was originally published in 1983. This being two years prior to the author's death after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage in his garden. Coincidently, or perhaps intentionally, the story ends with the chapter *Learning to Be Dead* with the death of Mr. Palomar the moment after deciding that, "he will set himself to describing every instant of his life, and until he has described them all he will no longer think of being dead". After reading the book and knowing its chronology in relation to Calvino's death, I couldn't help but see the work as a disguised biography. Following Calvino's death in 1985, Gore Vidal (a close friend of Calvino) wrote quite bluntly about the similarities he saw between Mr. Palomar and Calvino "I read the book. It is very short. A number of meditations on different subjects by one Mr. Palomar, who is Calvino himself."[2]

The daily meditations and contemplations form the story and life of Mr. Palomar, insofar as I can recollect, he barely says anything throughout the book except for what he thinks.Epiphanies are plentiful to him, whereby insights are brought about mostly through observations of his world (the book is divided into three levels of observation: visual, anthropological, and speculative). It seems Mr. Palomar is employed as a lens for Calvino to project his own reflections through, a human atlas or telescope[3] for describing the world. The descriptions are written with a level of self-awareness of the deficiencies within human understanding.

In one of my favorite chapters of the book *The Blackbird's Whistle*, Mr. Palomar is sitting in his garden listening to the sounds of nature that surround him. In particular he finds pleasure listening to the birds sing. He analyses the special quality of a blackbird's song and surmises "it is identical with a human whistle, the effort of someone not terribly skilled at whistling, but with a good reason for whistling". Whilst the chapter continues on to examine other differences and similarities between birds and people, I was struck by the opening paragraph that refers more to Mr. Palomar's notion of work. It begins by pointing out "Mr. Palomar is lucky in one respect: he spends the summer in a place where many birds sing. As he sits in his deck-chair and "works" (in fact, he is lucky also in another respect: he can say he is working in places and attitudes that would suggest complete repose; or rather, he suffers this handicap: he feels obliged to never stop working, even when lying under the trees on an August morning".

Many years before the chance discovery of the book, I began writing about my own experiences in terms of work and life as a way of reflecting on what might be forgotten and replaced by other daily experiences. I call these my *Mémoirs* (a tenative title). As I skim through the never ending text document I selected an excerpt that shares the thoughts of Mr. Palomar regarding life and work.

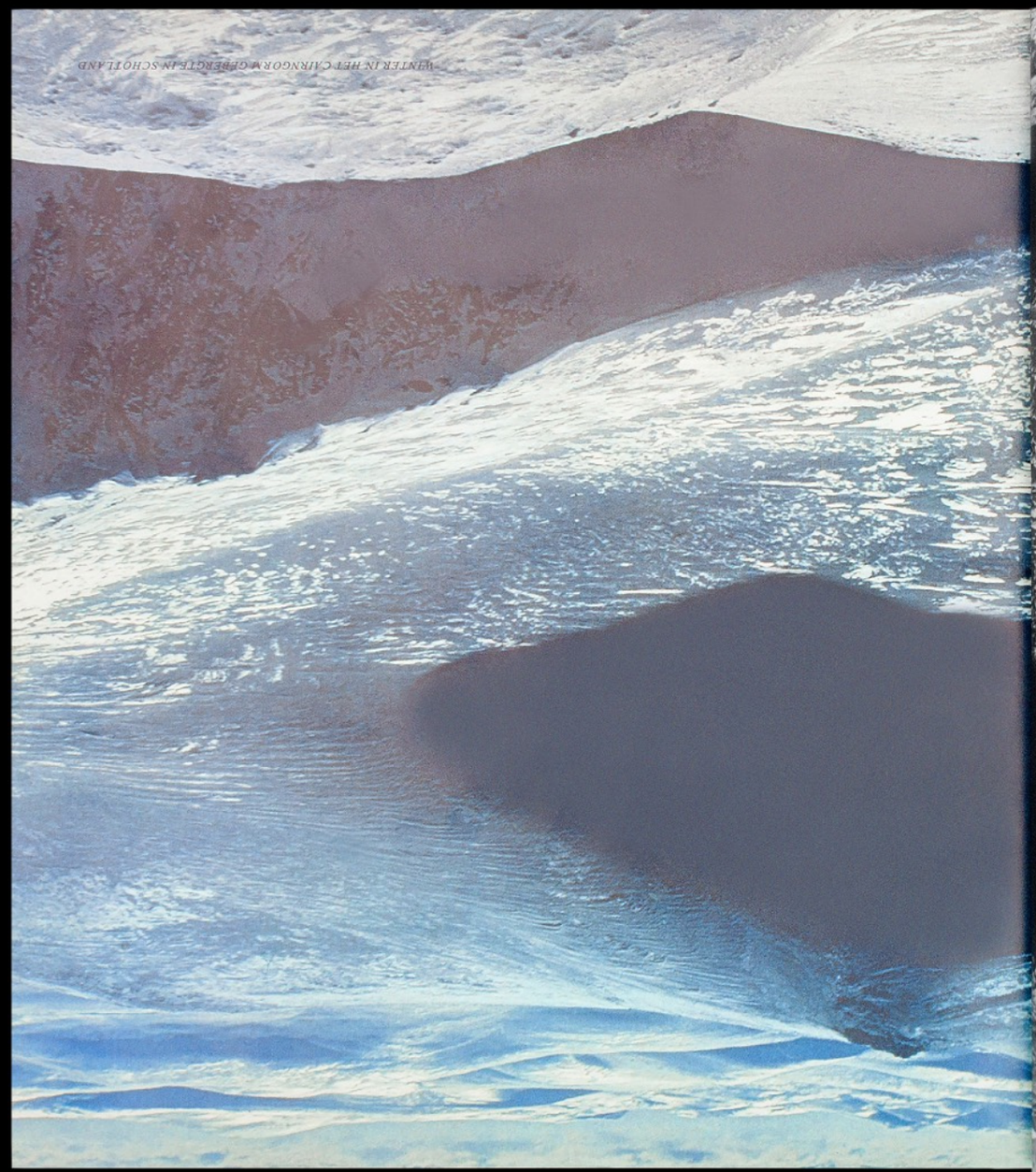
Friday 8 March 2013
Riding the Train to Work at 1:01am

When I was a child my father would leave me in the morning to my breakfast and upon walking out the door he would say he's going to work. This led me to believe that working was a physical state or place. That when my father went to work it would be rational to believe that everything that he did at work meant that he was working, that answering a telephone call was work, signing papers and stapling them was also work, crunching numbers was work. Then when he left work, everything he did outside of the space would actually form some kind of other life. But what if work were not a physical space but a mental space where people could go to and from work, then how would someone take note of what would happen? I refute the notion that my father was only at work when he left the house and entered the tax office, because I could recall him talking about his day outside of work, meaning that work still affected him outside of his office. if work affects me outside of a place where I work then it is a part of a psychology, an uncontrollable switch that turns on and off in my mind.

Similar to Mr. Palomar in his garden I feel both blessed and cursed for being curious to the nature of work. I often feel reluctant to let go to the experiences that happen when at work. I feel responsible to question what consitutes work, and wonder if the working process itself could also be considered *a work*. The mémoirs that I write on a daily basis go someways to exploring this difficult question, but it's a learning process. For the time being I take inspiration from Calvino's quiet protagonist by continuing to write myself into the script of work.

Mathew Kneebone
Arnhem, 3 May 2013

1. German actor, Franz Lederer, Berlin c.1929. Photograph by Lotte Jacobi
2. Gore Vidal, *On Italo Calvino* (The New York Review of Books, 1985)
3. *The Eye and the Planets*, p.34, in reference to the Palomar Observatory, San Diego California



WANTER IN HET CAIRNGORM GEBERGTE IN SCHOTLAND

ZONSOPGANG OVER DE PARASOLDENNEN IN DE COTO DOÑANA IN SPANJE

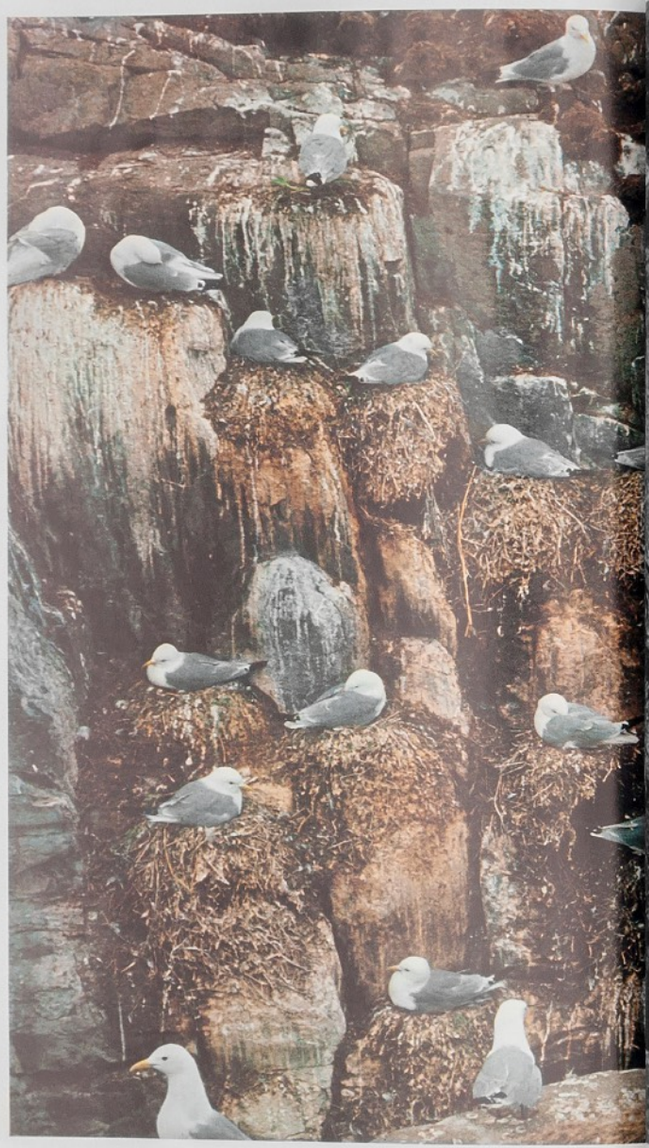
The sword of the sun

When the sun begins to go down, its reflection takes form on the sea: from the horizon all the way to the shore a dazzling patch extends composed of countless, swaying glints; between one glint and the next, the opaque blue of the sea makes a dark network. The white boats, seen against the light, turn black, lose substance and bulk, as if they were consumed by that splendid speckling.

This is the hour when Mr Palomar, belated by nature, takes his evening swim. He enters the sea, moves away from the shore, and the sun's reflection becomes a shining sword in the water stretching from the shore to him. Mr Palomar swims in that sword or, more precisely, that sword remains always before him; at every stroke of his, it retreats, and never allows him to overtake it. Wherever he stretches out his arms, the sea takes on its opaque evening color, which extends to the shore behind him.

As the sun sinks towards sunset, the incandescent-white reflection acquires gold and copper tones. And wherever Mr Palomar moves, he remains the vertex of that sharp, gilded triangle; the sword follows him, pointing him out like the hand of a watch whose pivot is the sun.

"This is a special homage the sun pays to me personally," Mr Palomar is tempted to think, or rather the egocentric, megalomaniac ego that dwells in him is tempted to think.



DRIETEENMEEUWEN EN AALSCHOLVERS (BOVEN RECHTS) NESTELEND OP ROTSPUNTEN

PALOMAR LOOKS AT THE SKY

Moon in the afternoon

Nobody looks at the moon in the afternoon, and this is the moment when it would most require our attention, since its existence is still in doubt. It is a whitish shadow that surfaces from the intense blue of the sky, charged with solar light; who can assure us that, once again, it will succeed in assuming a form and glow? It is so fragile and pale and slender; only on one side does it begin to assume a distinct outline like the arc of a sickle while the rest is all steeped in azure. It is like a transparent wafer, or a half-dissolved pastille; only here the white circle is not dissolving but condensing, collecting itself at the price of gray-bluish patches and shadows that might belong to the moon's geography or might be spillings of the sky that still soak the satellite, porous as a sponge.

In this phase the sky is still something very compact and concrete and you cannot be sure whether it is from its taut, uninterrupted surface that this round and whitish shape is being detached, its consistency only a bit more solid than the clouds', or whether it is a corrosion of the basic tissue, a rift in the dome, a crevice that opens on to the void behind. The uncertainty is heightened by the irregularity of the figure that on one side is taking shape (where the rays of the setting sun arrive) and on the other lingers in a kind of penumbra. And since the border between the two zones is not sharply defined, the effect is not that of a solid seen in perspective but

De eeuwige werking van erosie

Zowel aan de kust als diep in het land is het water onafgebroken bezig de vorm van Europa te wijzigen. De sterkste rotsen bezwijken tenslotte onder de voortdurende aanvallen van het water en overal op het vaste land kan men de nieuw ontstane vormen vinden die afwisselend massief, teer, sierlijk of spookachtig zijn.

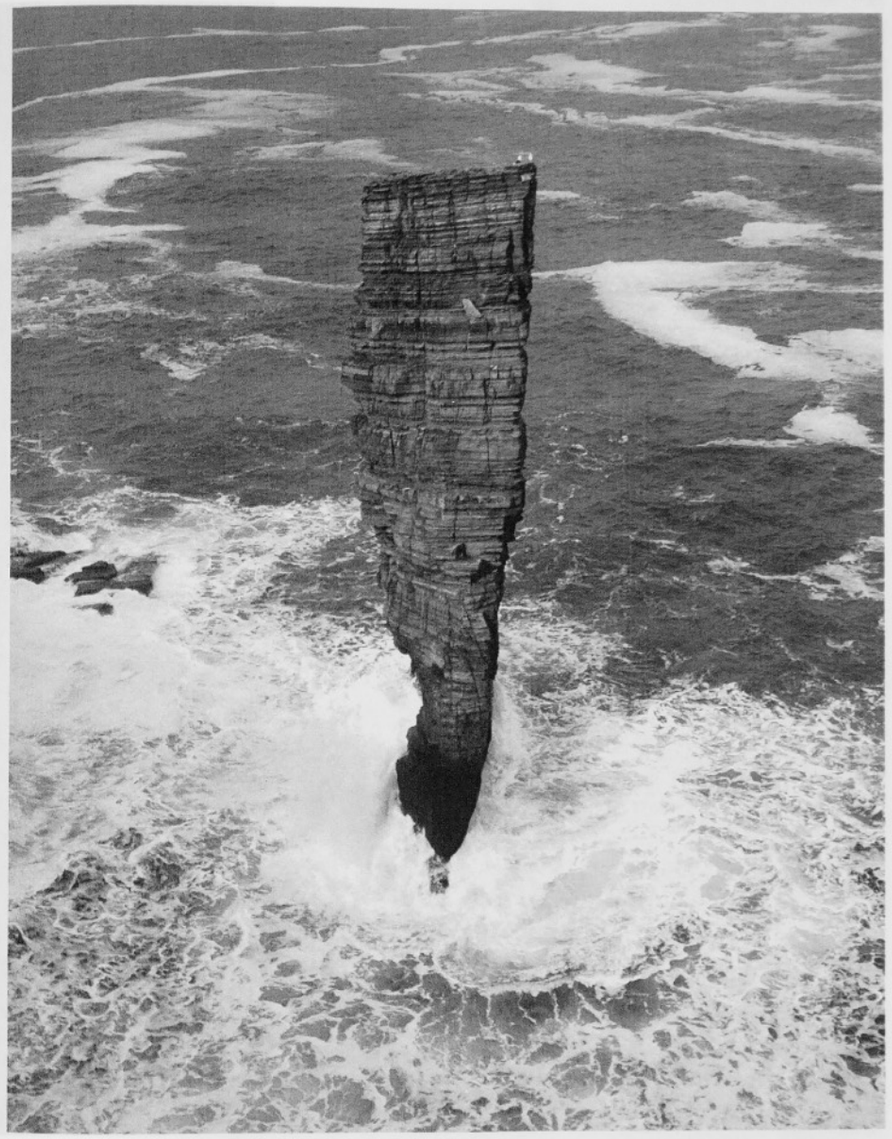
De eindeloze verscheidenheid aan vormen die water kan veroorzaken in geologische materialen is gedeeltelijk te danken aan de gedragingen van het water zelf – deinende zee, stromende rivieren, stortregens – en aan de kwaliteit van het materiaal waarop het water inwerkt. Zacht gesteente verweert natuurlijk anders dan een harde steensoort, maar kleur en structuur van de door erosie blootgekomen steenlagen vertellen ons het gehele verloop van hun geschiedenis.

Zelfs de meest geringe variaties in de structuur van het gesteente kunnen in de loop van duizenden jaren door de inwerking van water worden blootgelegd. Haardunne breuklijnen, een miniem verschil in de oplosbaarheid van het cement dat zandkorrels samenbindt, een gering verschil tussen het formaat zandkorrel in de ene zandsteenlaag en de andere, dat allemaal zal leiden tot volkomen verschillende resultaten.

Langs de kusten breken de golven onophoudelijk op hard en zacht gesteente. Veel van de rotsen in Europa zijn geslepen uit afzettingsgesteente dat miljoenen jaren geleden onder de zee werd gevormd. Terwijl de golven over die rotsen spoelen, worden zandkorrels die eens door een rivier naar de zee werden vervoerd, op de zeebodem werden afgezet, losgemaakt en dan door onderstromingen meegevoerd.

Dieper in het land zorgt het stromende regenwater dat zich verzamelt in rivieren die naar zee stromen, voor eindeloze veranderingen. Het voert deeltjes mee die vruchtbare valleien vormen of moerassige rivierdelta's. De rivieren voeren op hun tocht zand en stenen mee, slijpen beddingen in het land en diepe ravijnen in de rotsen. Hoe dramatisch de uitwerking van regenwater voor de vorm van Europa is, werd ruim vier eeuwen geleden door de Duitse natuurkundige Georgius Agricola vastgesteld: "Beekjes die eerst slechts de aarde aan de oppervlakte wegspoelen, snijden dieper in harde rotsen en kunnen op den duur grote rotsblokken verplaatsen... Hoe dieper het water zich een weg baant, hoe hoger de bergen aan weerskanten verrijzen.

Een groot deel van de neerslag sijpelt door de aardlaag heen en holt in de kalksteenlagen grotten en gangen uit waardoor onderaardse rivieren stromen. Het is juist daar, dat het water de meest bizarre en exotische vormen creëert.



North Haulton Castle bij de Orkney eilanden is een steile, door de golven uitgehouwen rots. Het is de laatste van een reeks verdwenen klippen van hard zandsteen. De bij stormweer met zand beladen golven doen nog steeds hun eroderende werk, zodat ook deze zuil tenslotte in zee zal tuimelen.

TIME LIFE BOEKEN

'Here, Calvino, probably Italy's leading novelist before he died, focuses a probing eye on one man's attempt to name the parts of his universe, almost as though Mr Palomar were trying to define and explain his own existence. Where the Palomar telescope points out into space, Mr Palomar points in: walking the beach, visiting the zoo, strolling in his garden. Each brief chapter reads like an exploded haiku, with Mr Palomar reading a universe into the proverbial grain of sand'

Time Out

'Calvino represents a highpoint of literary evolution; his skill is immense but retains a simian agility. As ever, his gaze is crystal-clear and his writing has the easy beauty of clarity. *Mr Palomar* is a work of cunning dialectics that goes beyond the delight in paradoxes for which Calvino is lazily praised'

New Statesman

'Like the nervous hero of *Mr Palomar* (superbly translated), Italo Calvino always had a telescope's eye for what can only be called the thingness of things. Stars and planets, birds, a loaded food counter, all take on an extra reality, as though observed for the first time in wonder by a man previously blind. Mr Calvino was a magician whose voice commanded us: listen, look, understand'

Sunday Telegraph

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Running Images (2013)

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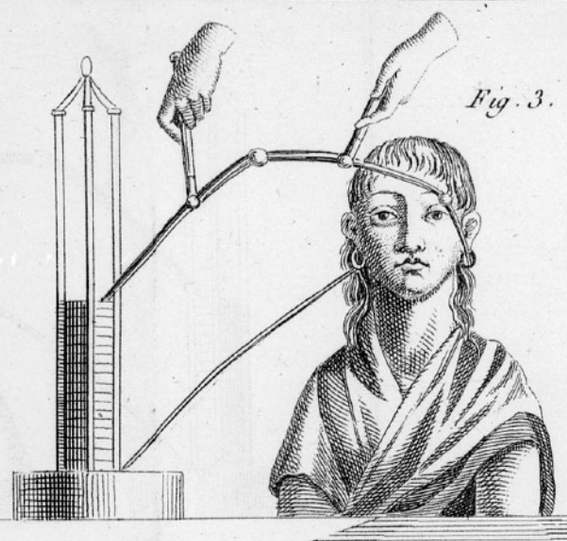
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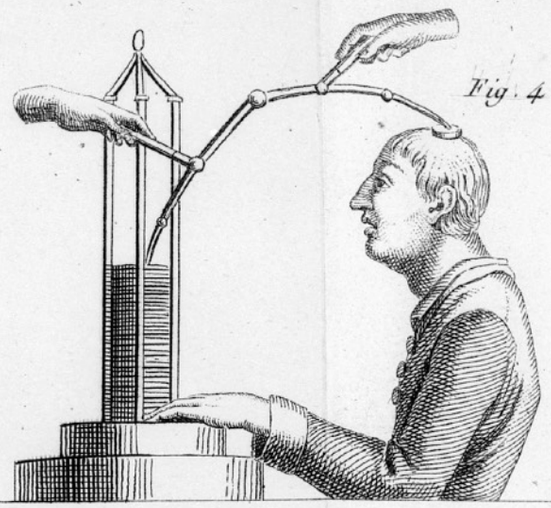
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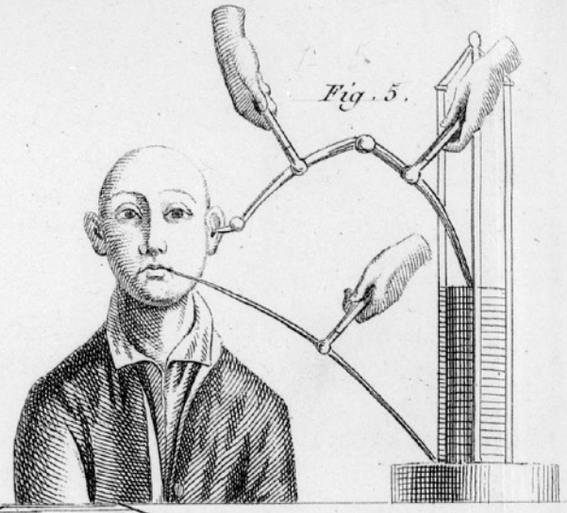
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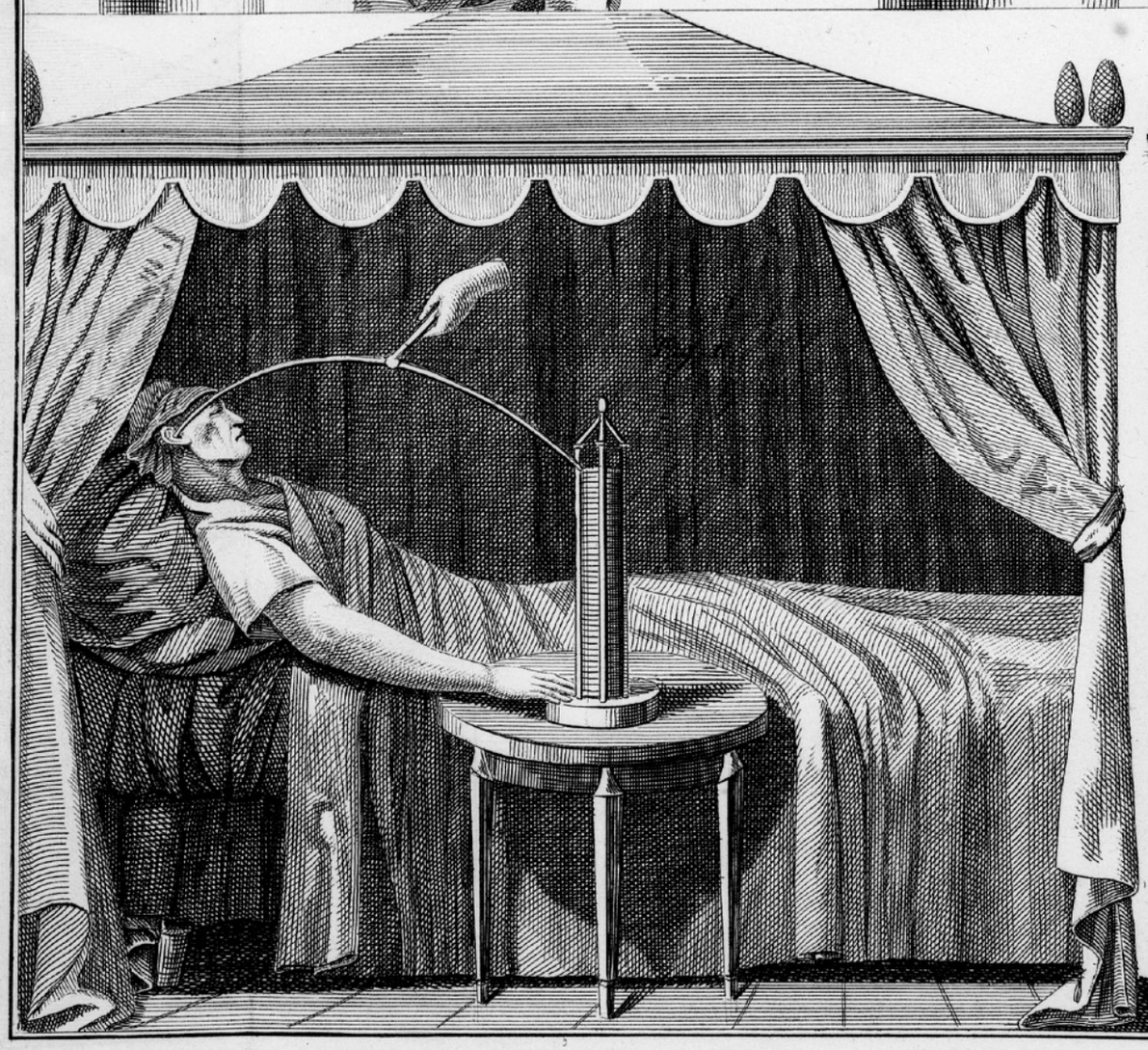

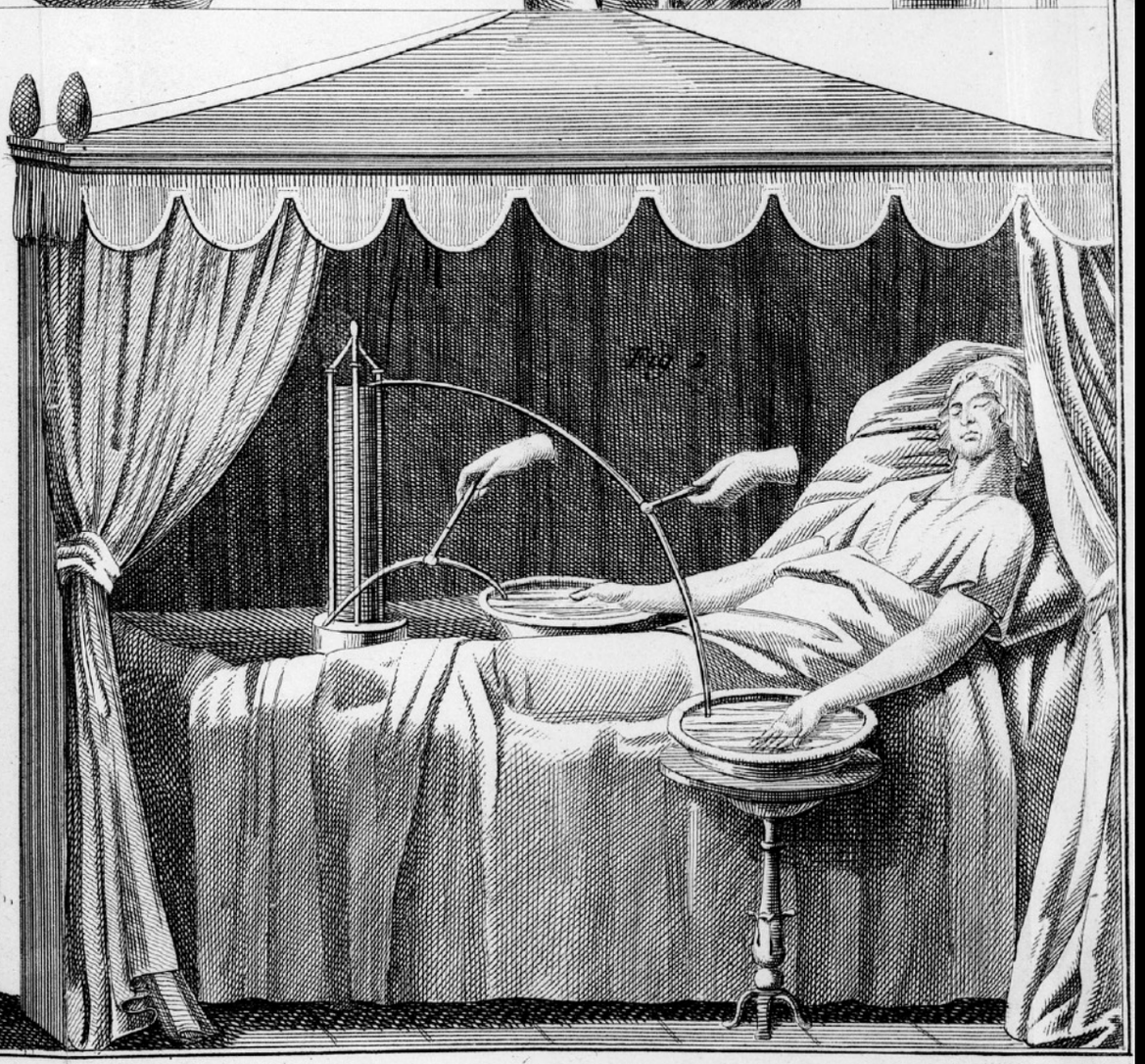

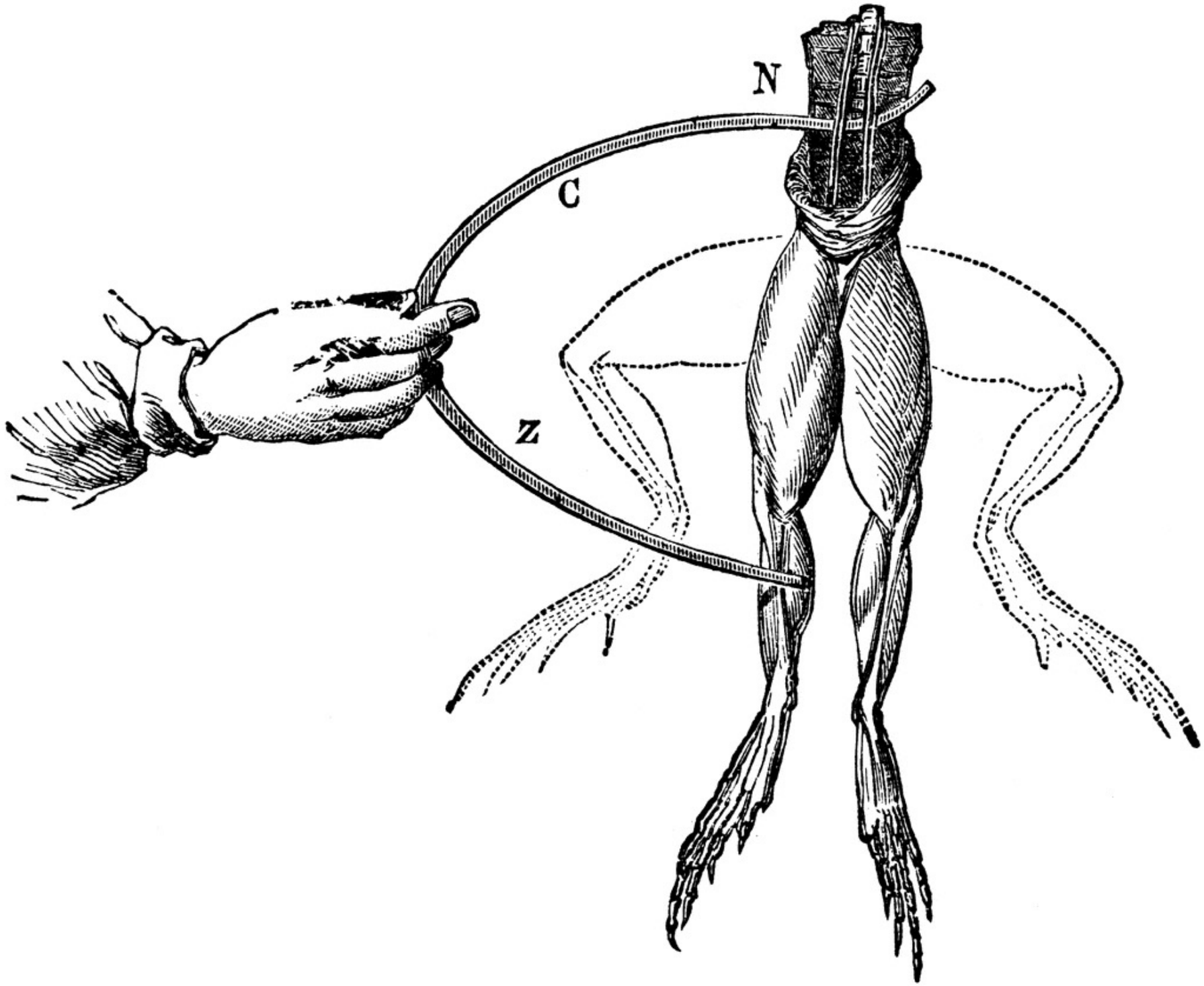
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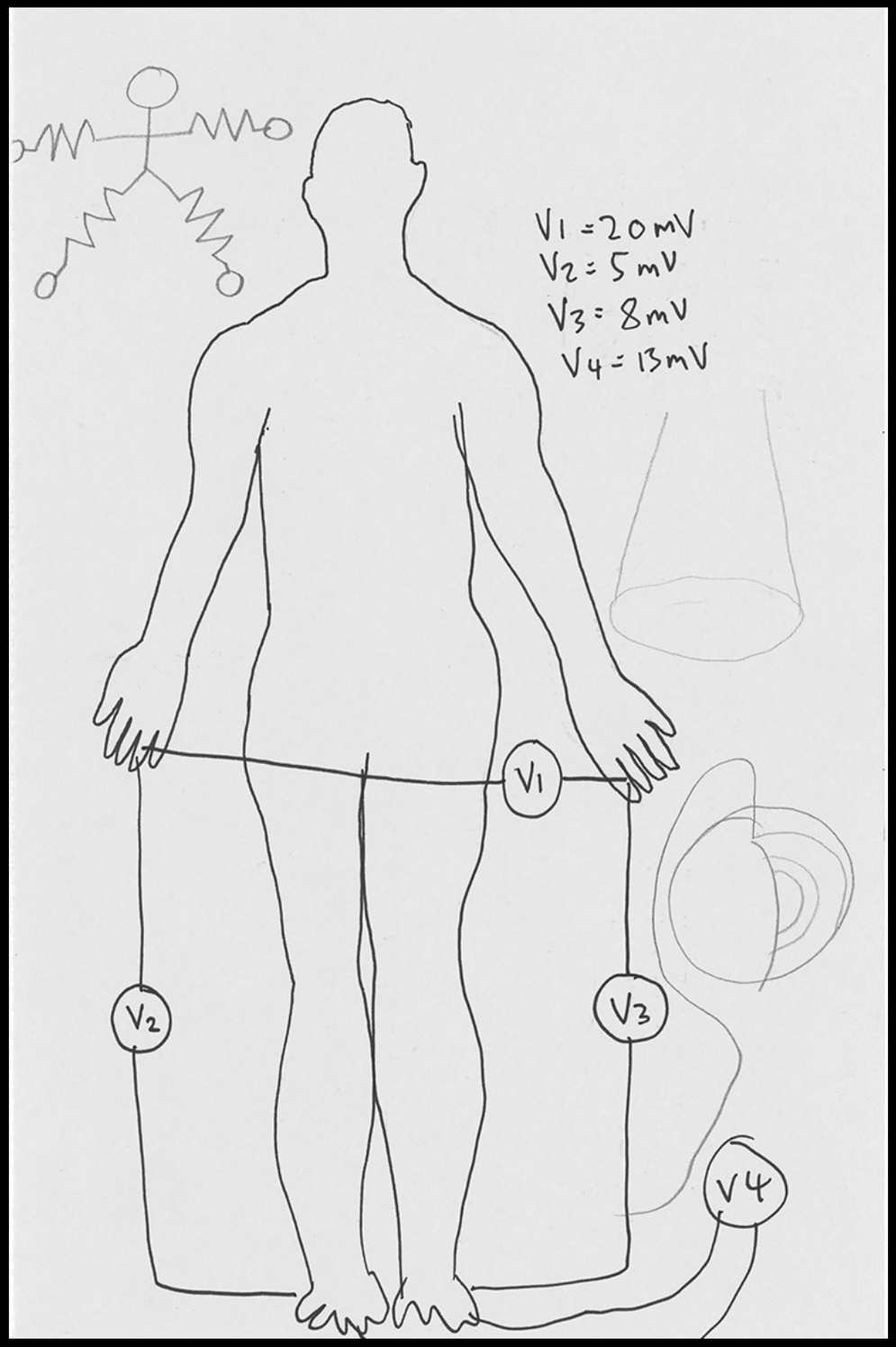
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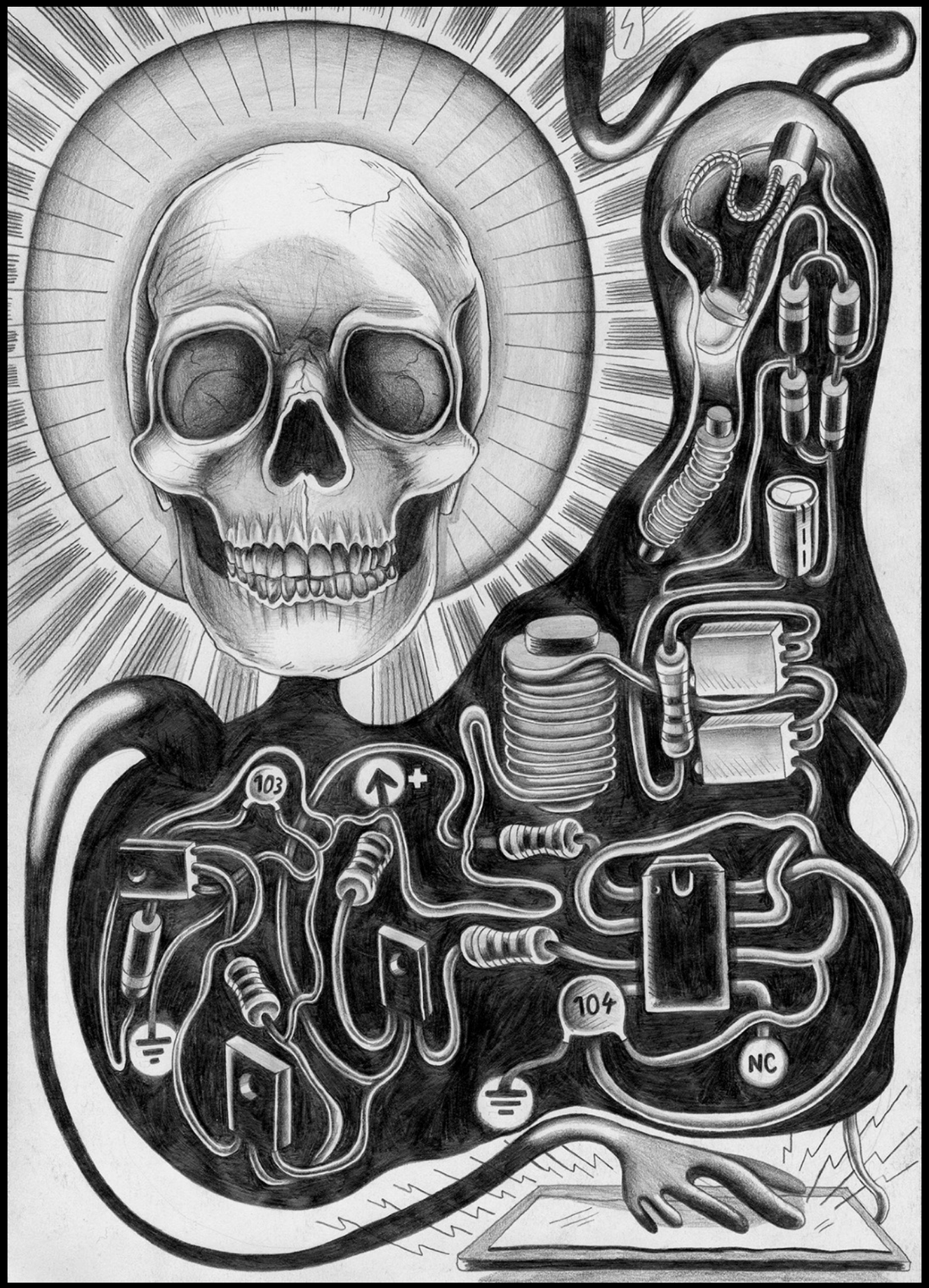
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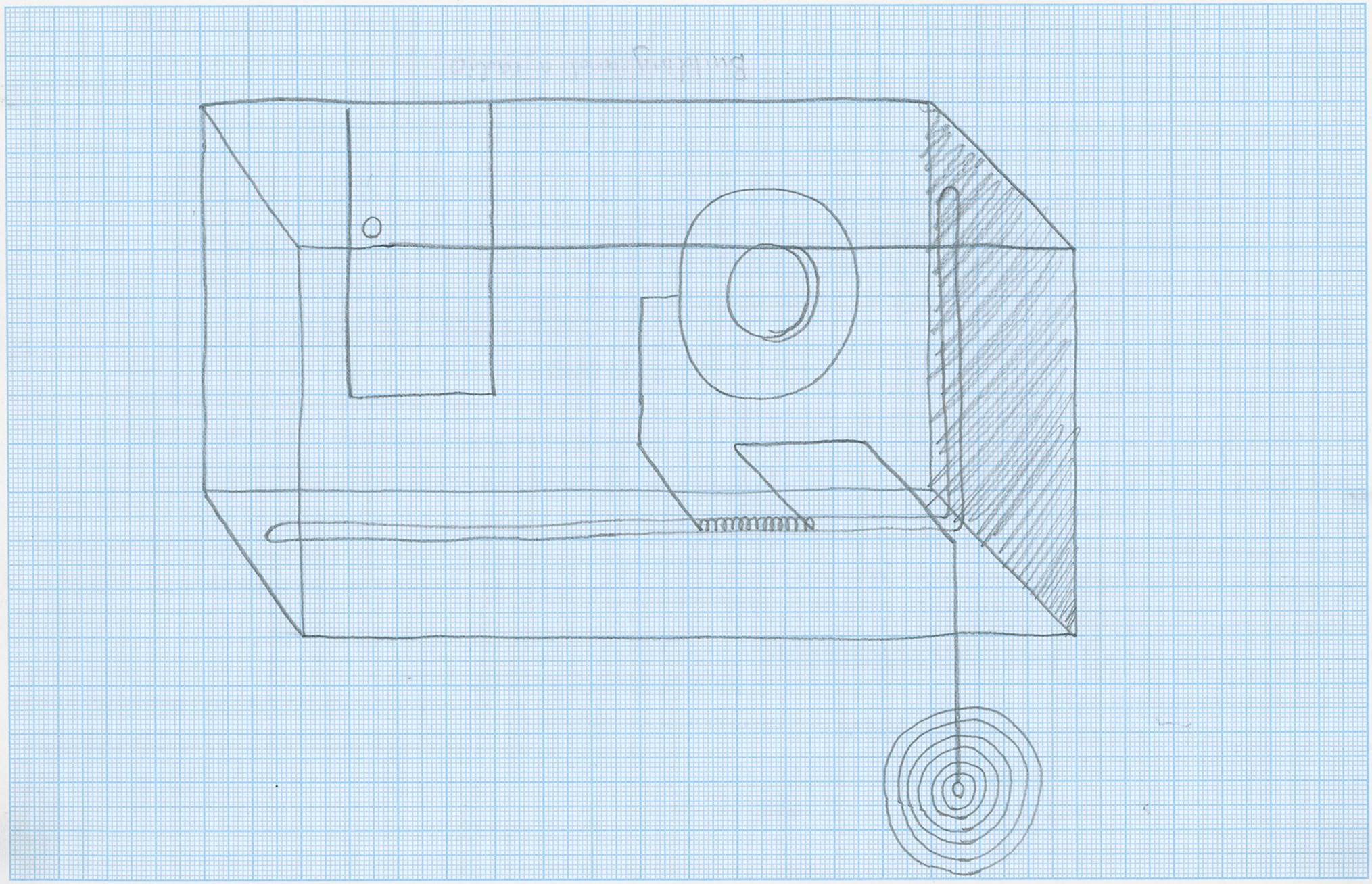

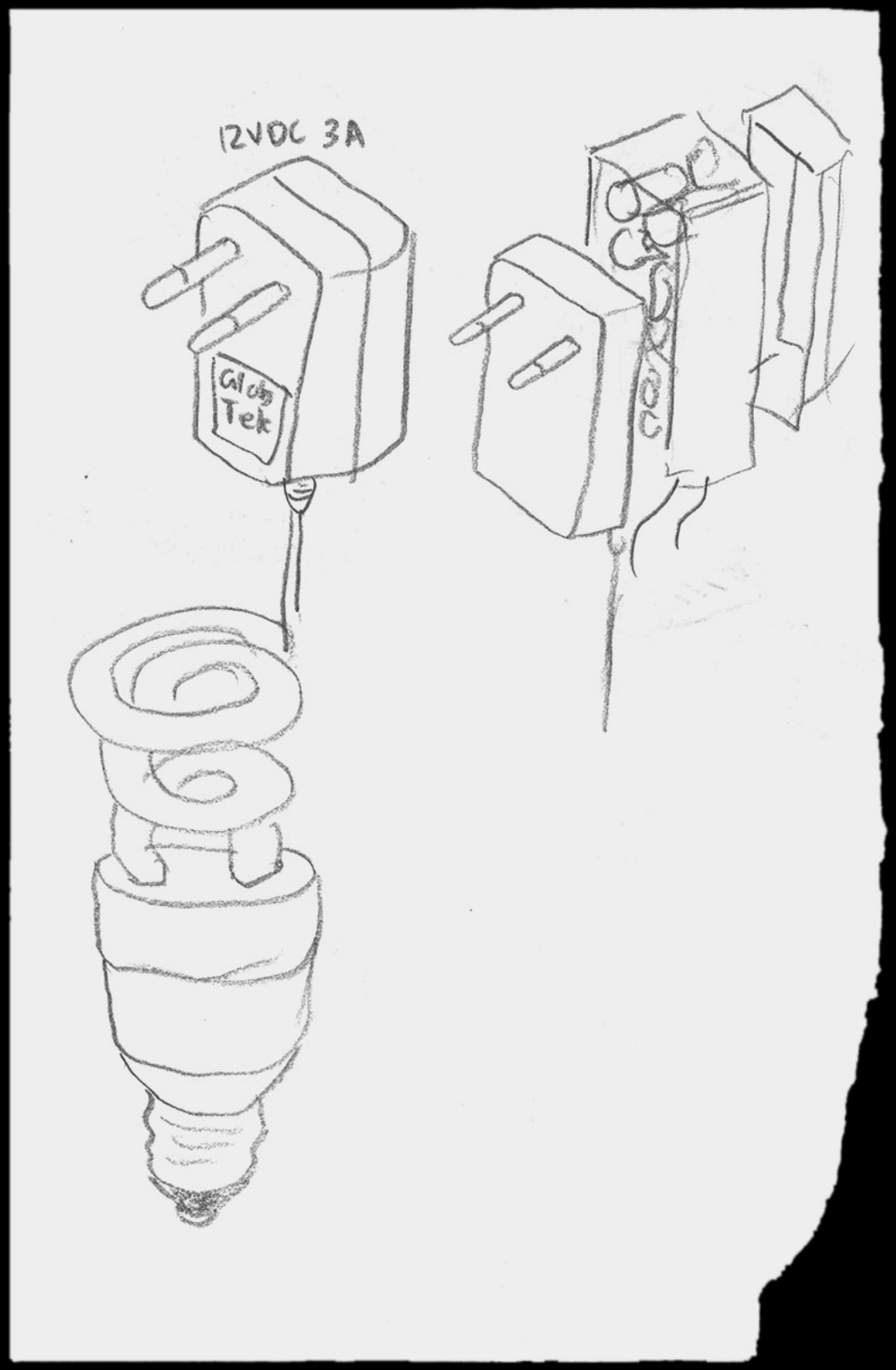
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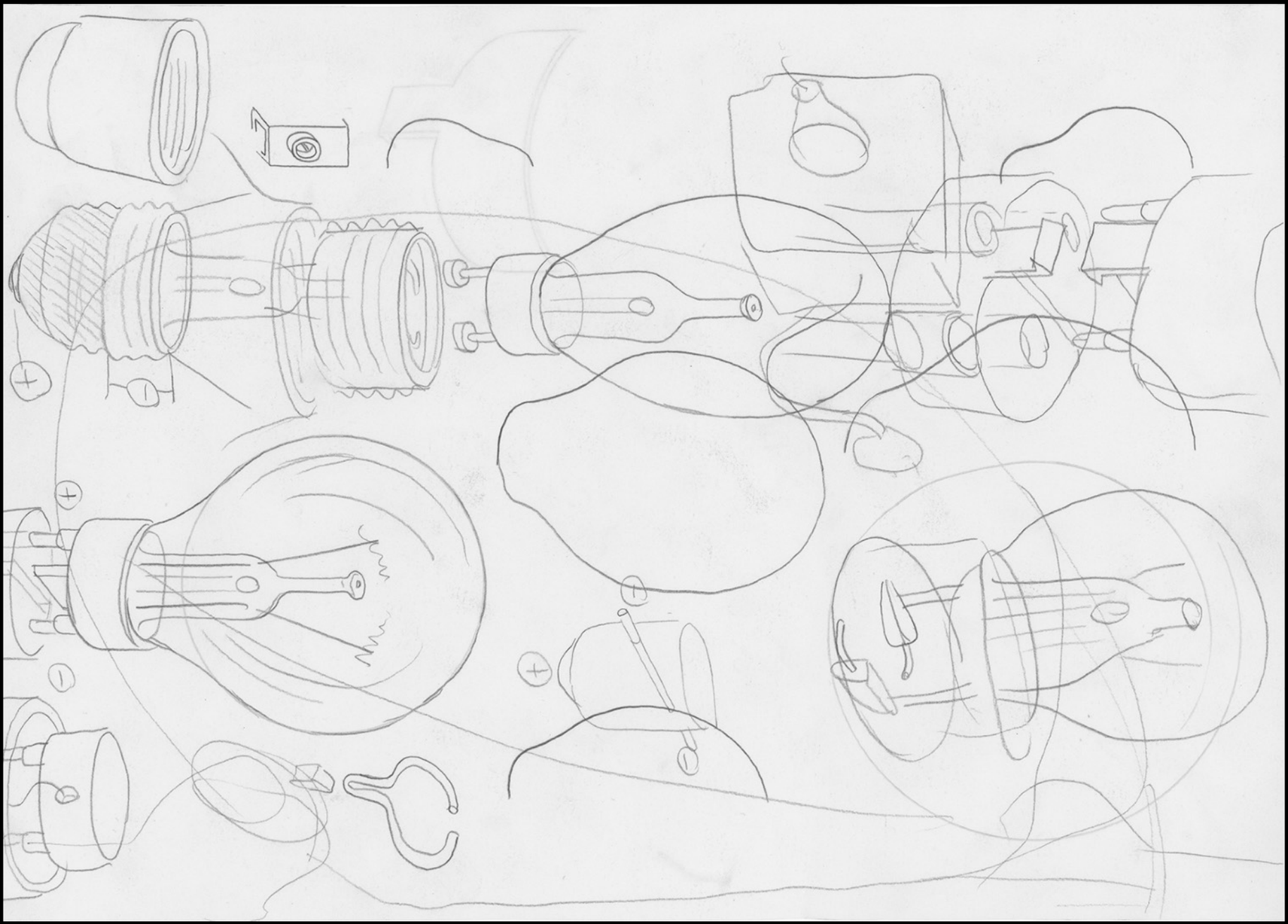

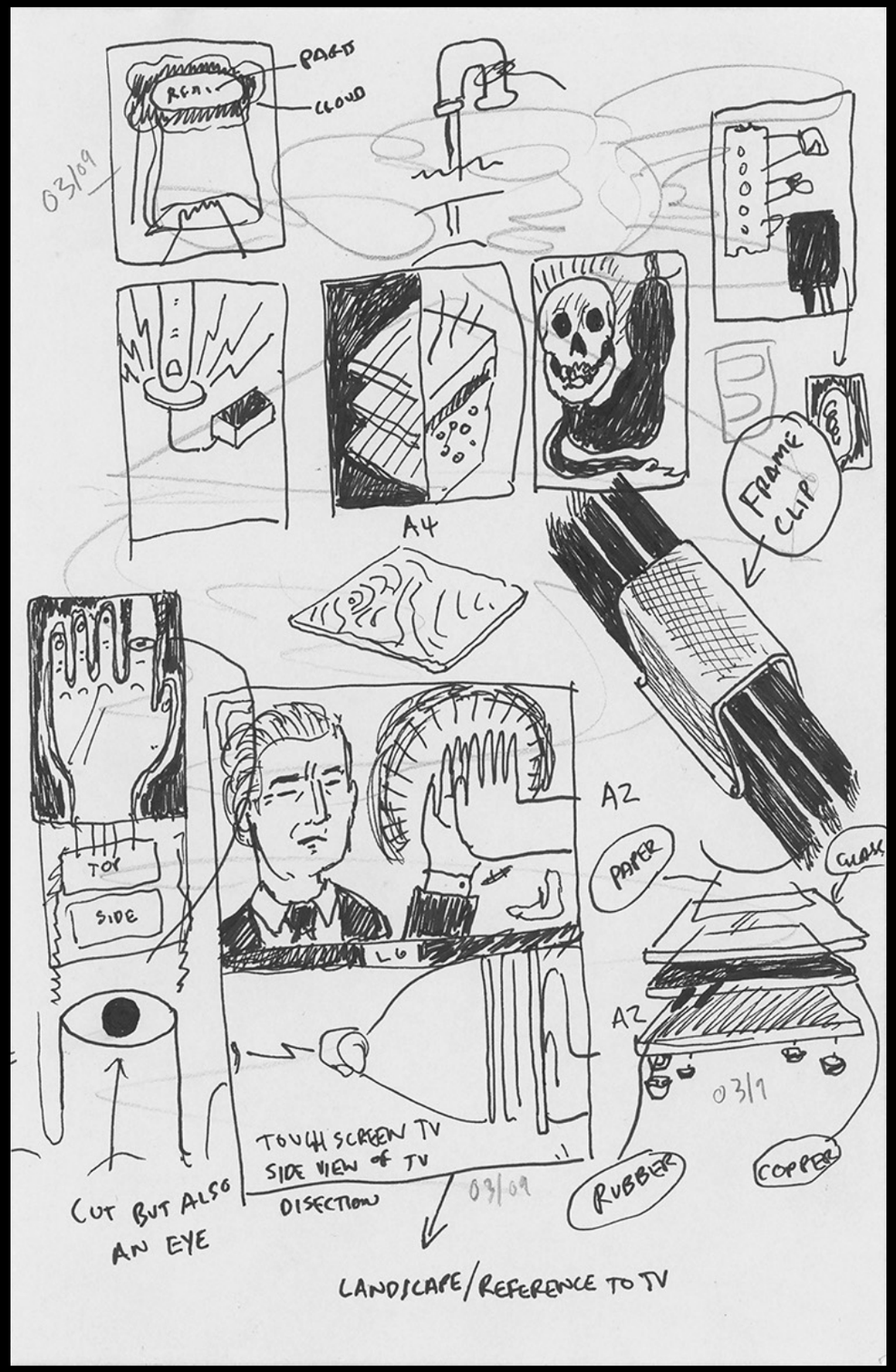
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LANDSCAPE/REFERENCE TO TV


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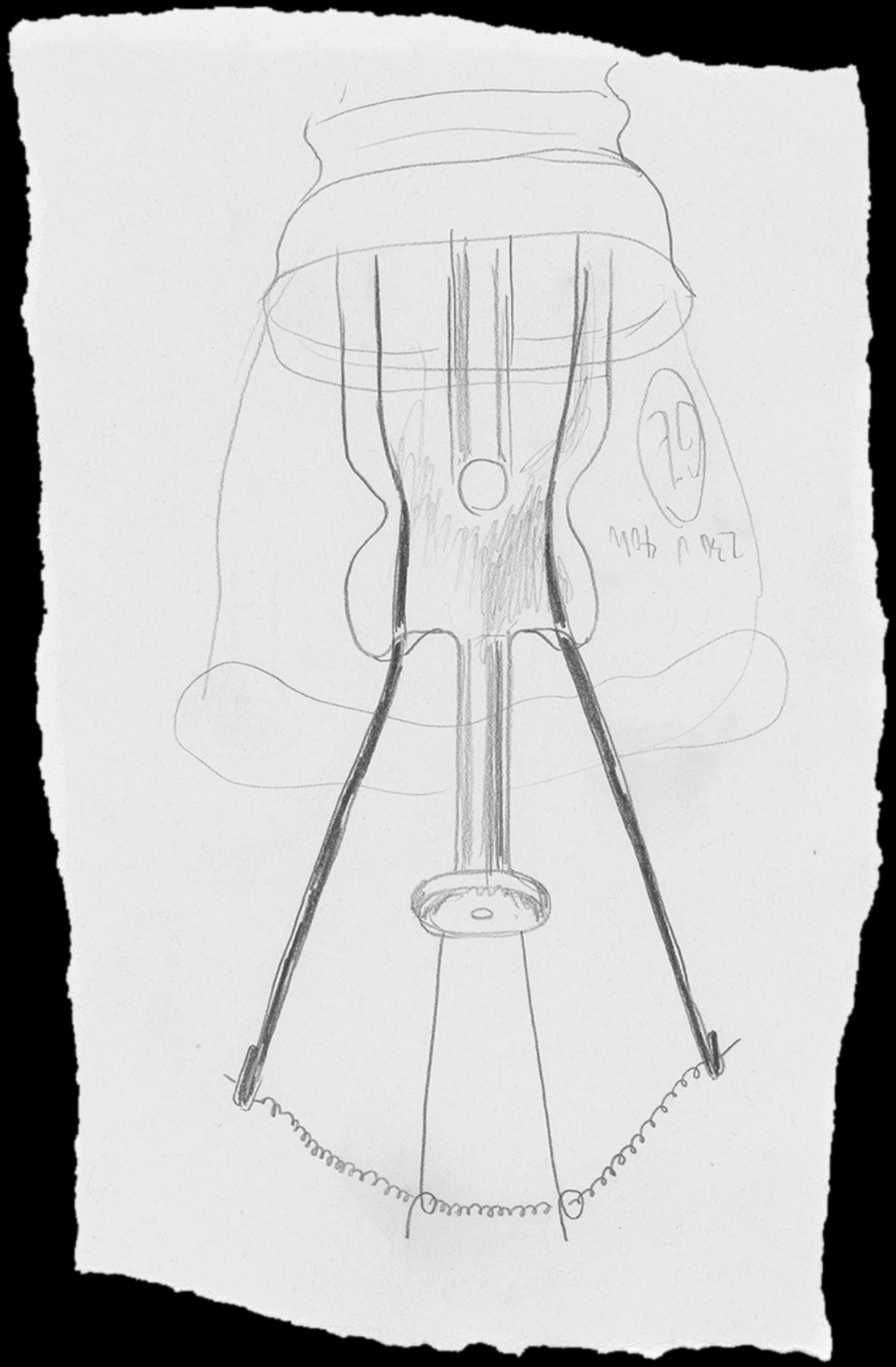

Dr. Gaislain sections

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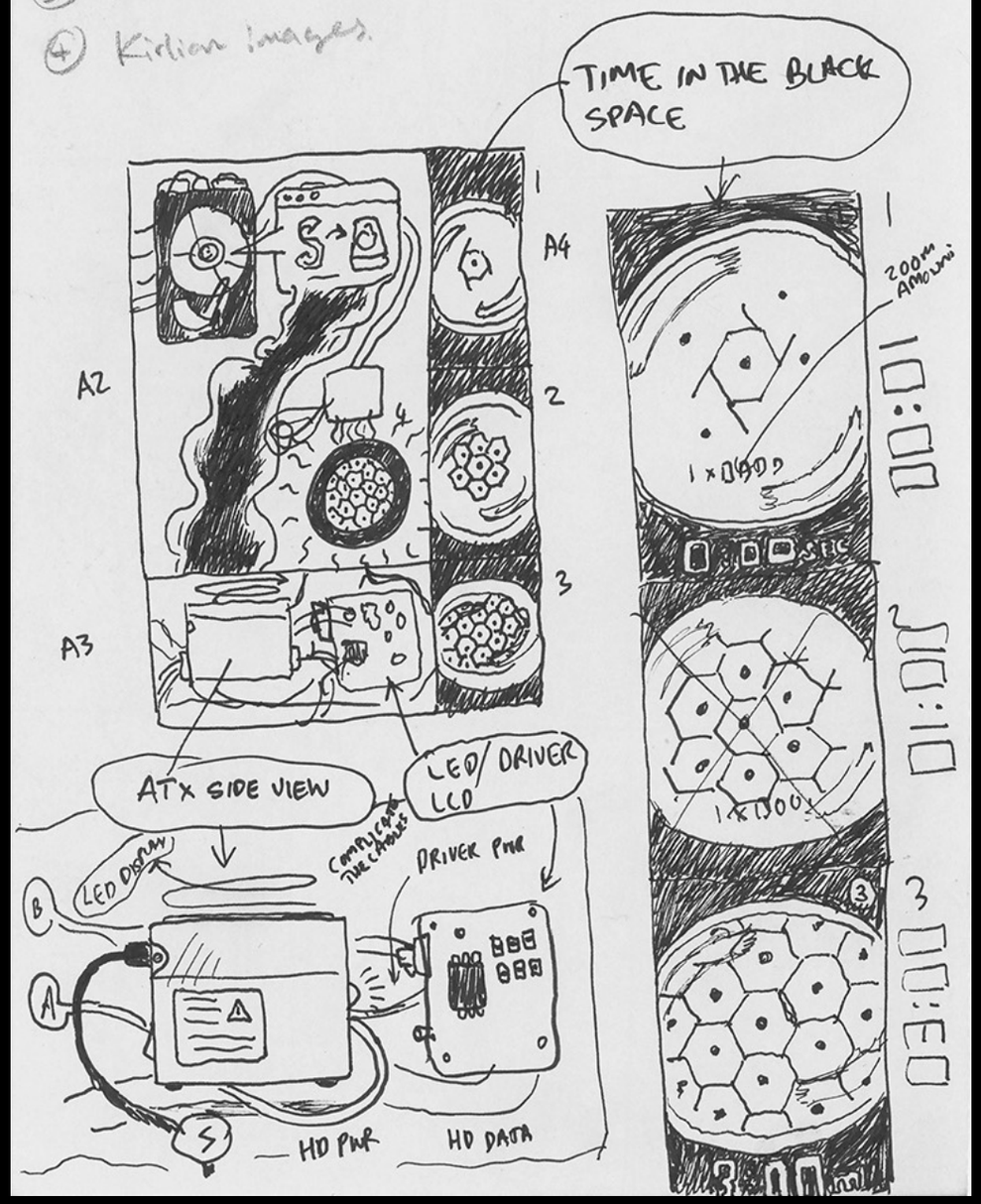
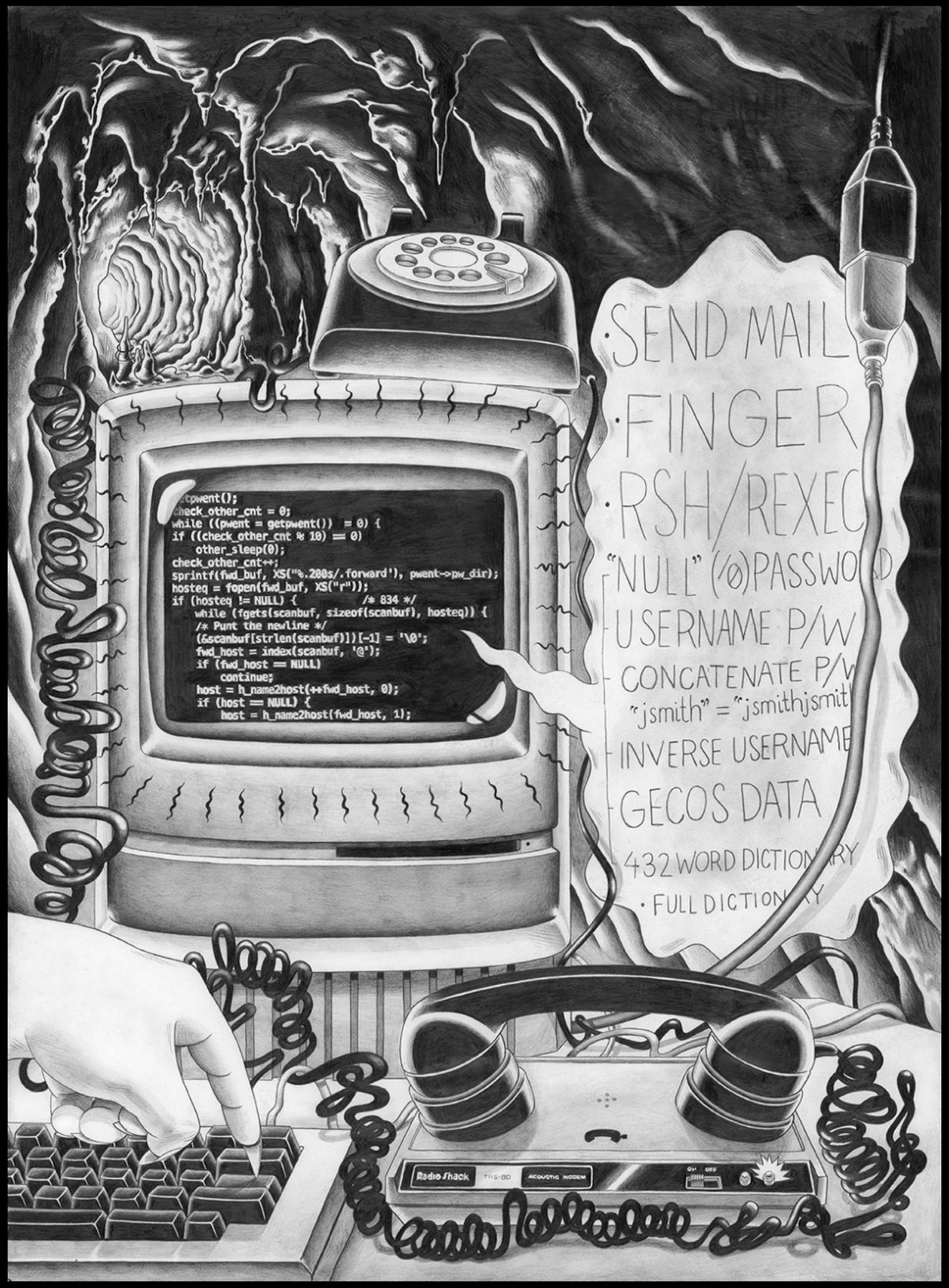
   - Eye
   - Compass
   - Squid

   Types of magnetic sensors
2. Viruses
3. Techbane
4. Kirlian images.




getpwent();
check_other_cnt = 0;
while ((pwent = getpwent()) != 0) {
if ((check_other_cnt % 10) == 0)
other_sleep(0);
check_other_cnt++;
sprintf(fwd_buf, XS("%.200s/.forward"), pwent->pw_dir);
hosteq = fopen(fwd_buf, XS("r"));
if (hosteq != NULL) { /* 834 */
while (fgets(scanbuf, sizeof(scanbuf), hosteq)) {
/* Punt the newline */
(&scanbuf[strlen(scanbuf)])[-1] = '\0';
fwd_host = index(scanbuf, '@');
if (fwd_host == NULL)
continue;
host = h_name2host(++fwd_host, 0);
if (host == NULL) {
host = h_name2host(fwd_host, 1);
·SEND MAIL
·FINGER
·RSH/REXEC
"NULL" (0) PASSWORD
USERNAME P/W
CONCATENATE P/W
"jsmith" = "jsmithjsmith"
INVERSE USERNAME
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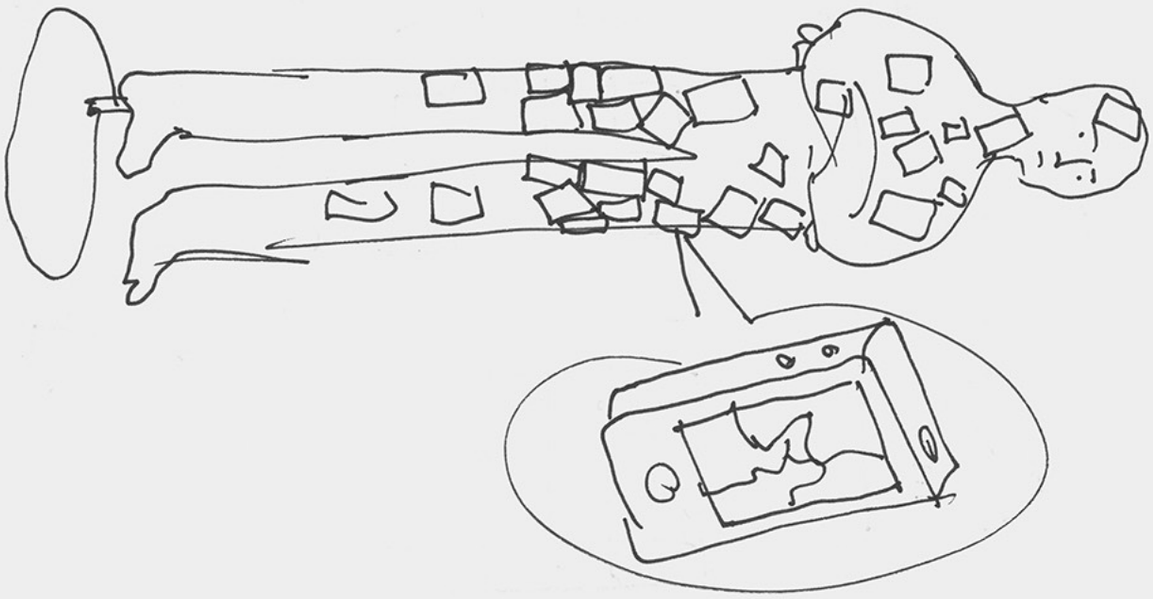

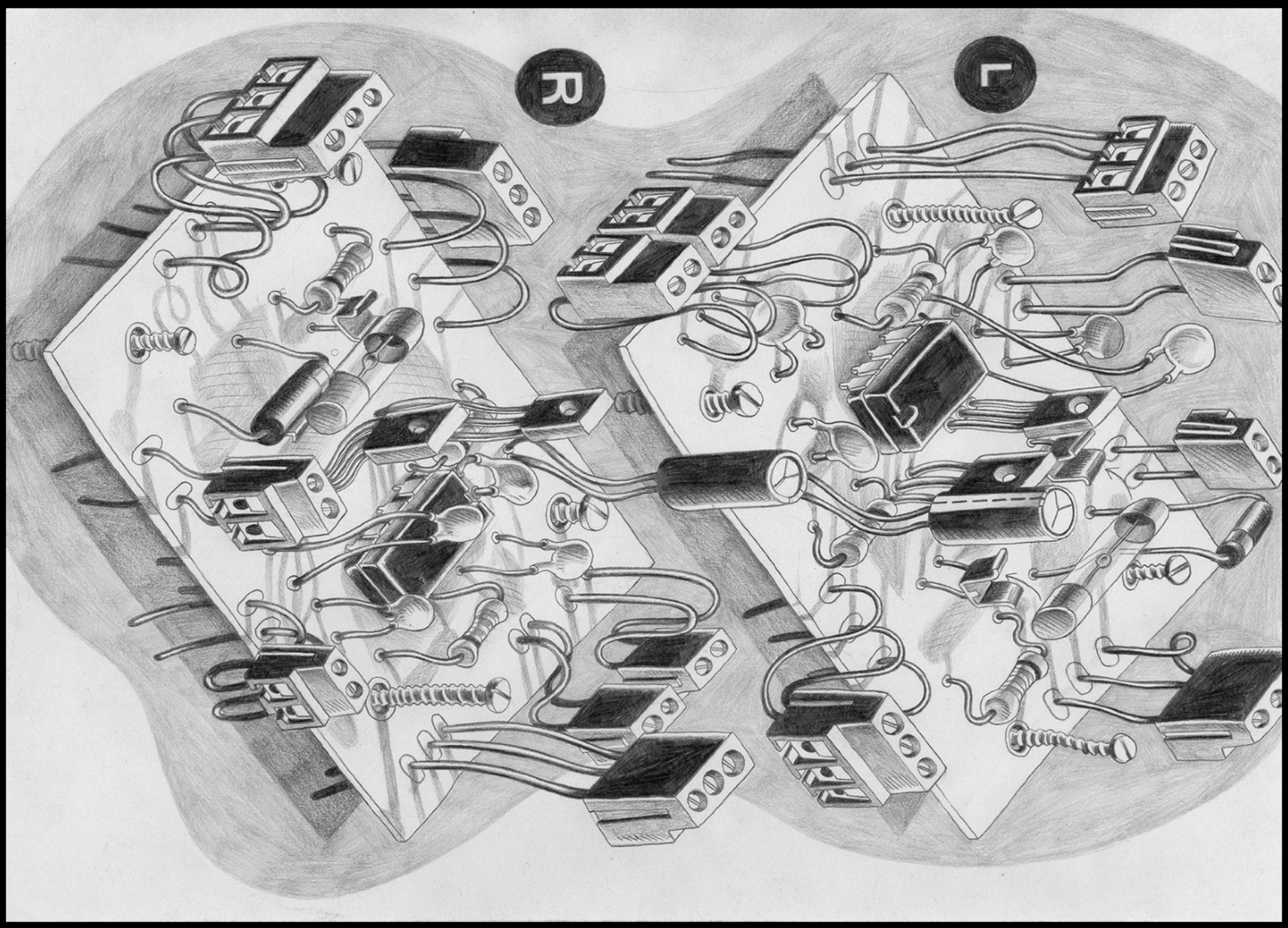
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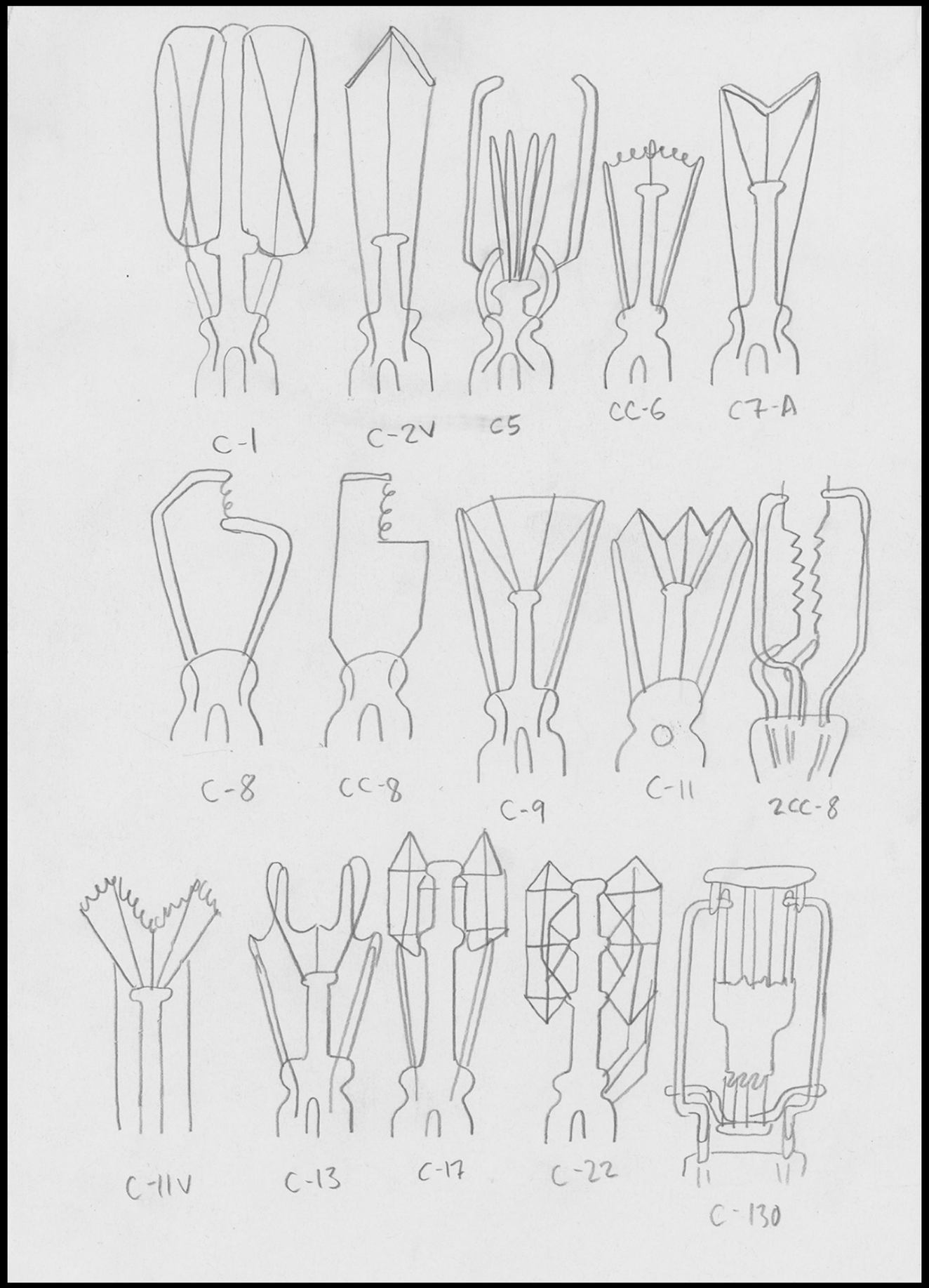
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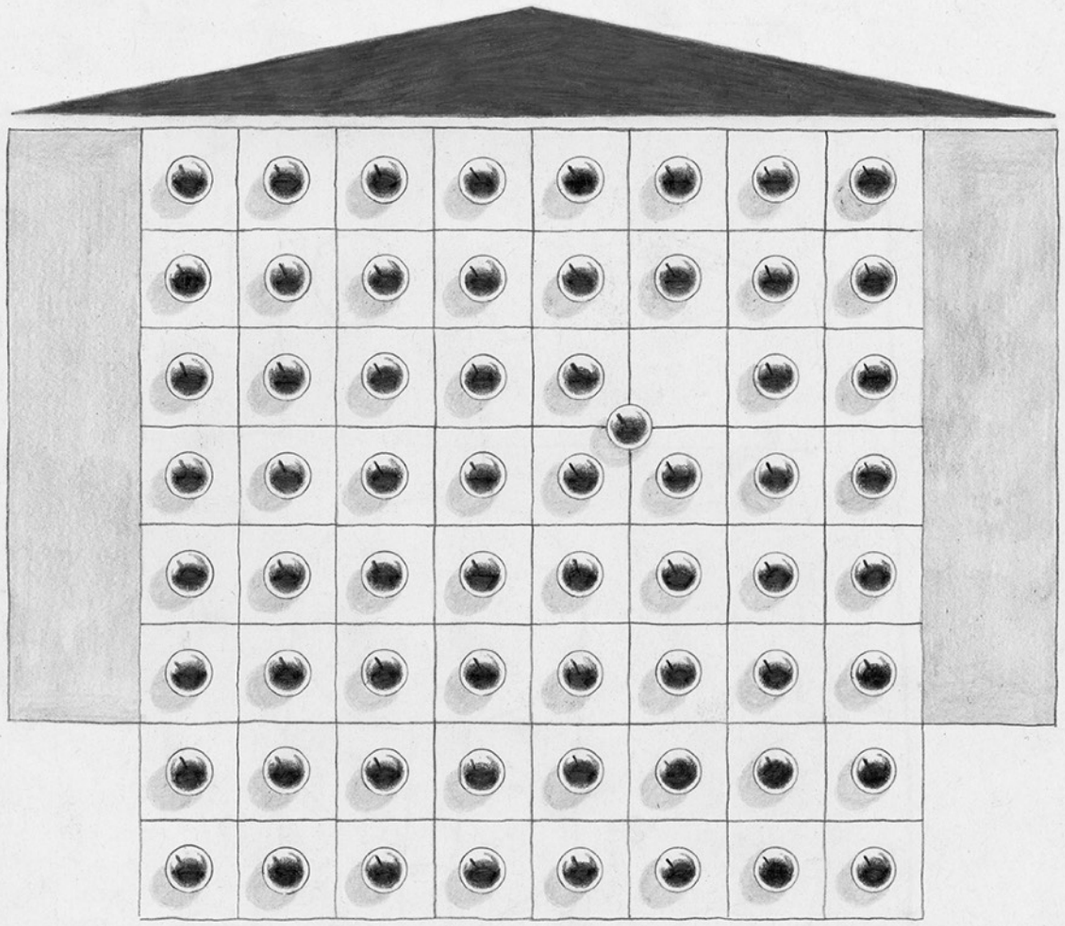

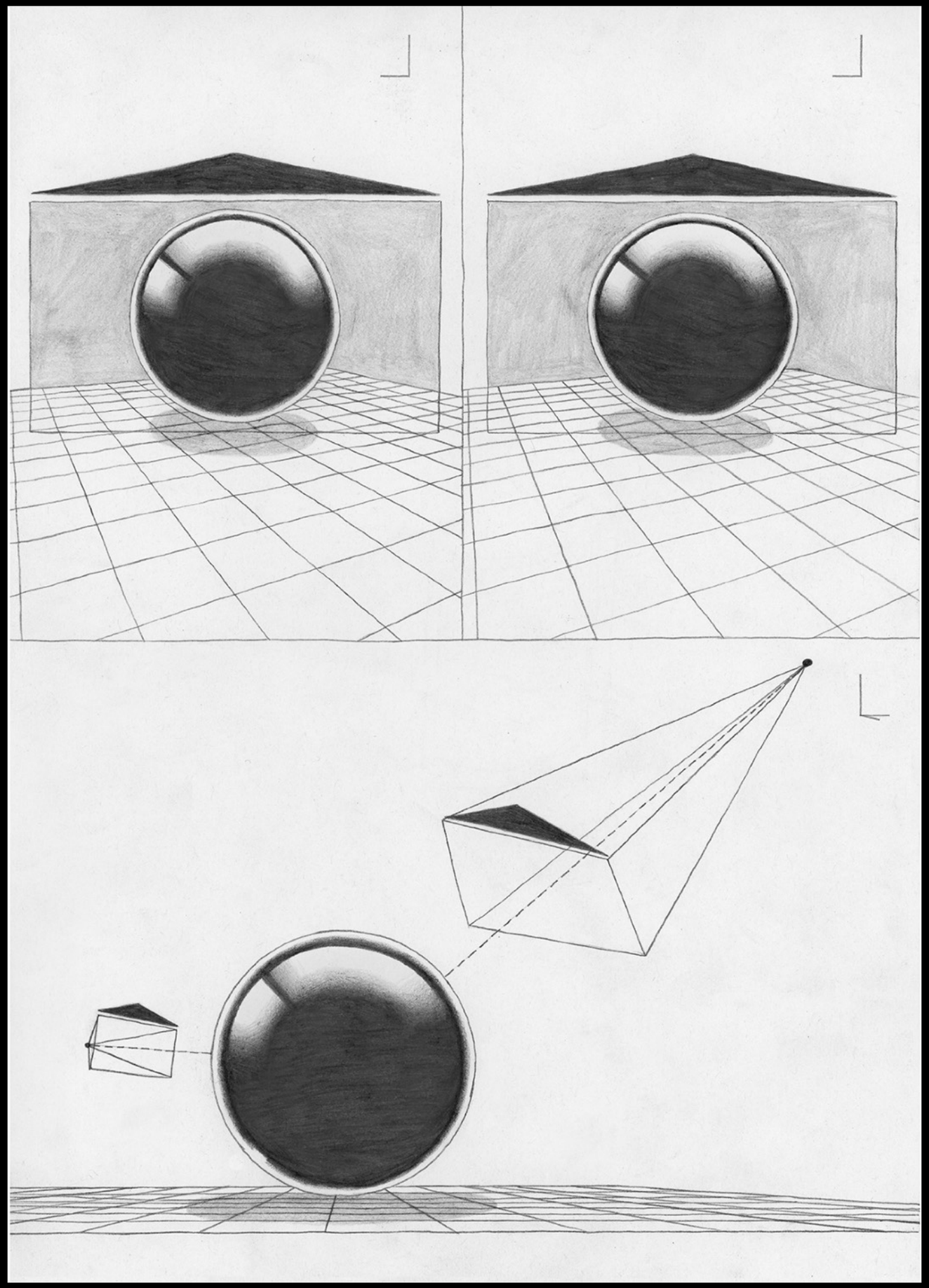

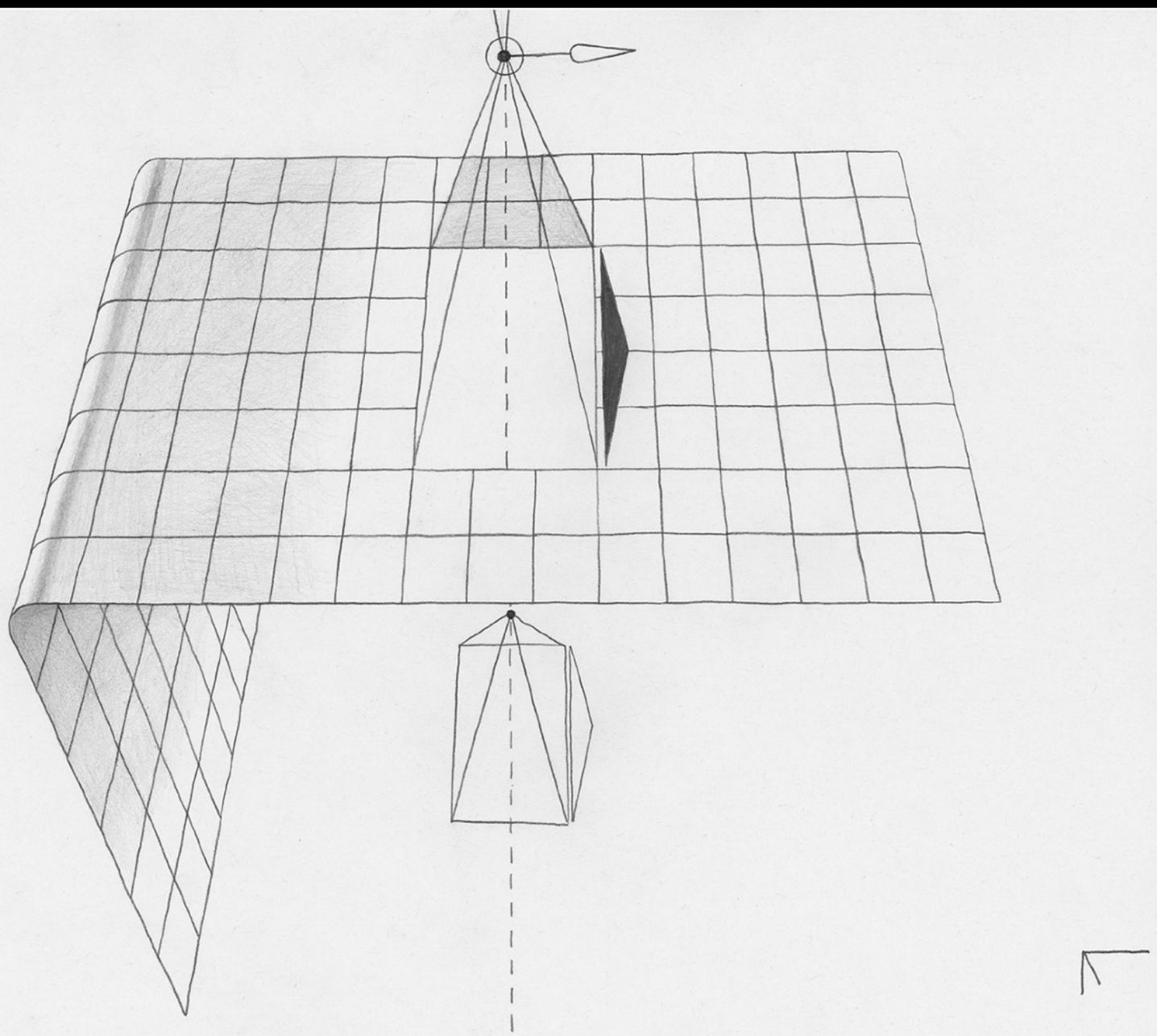

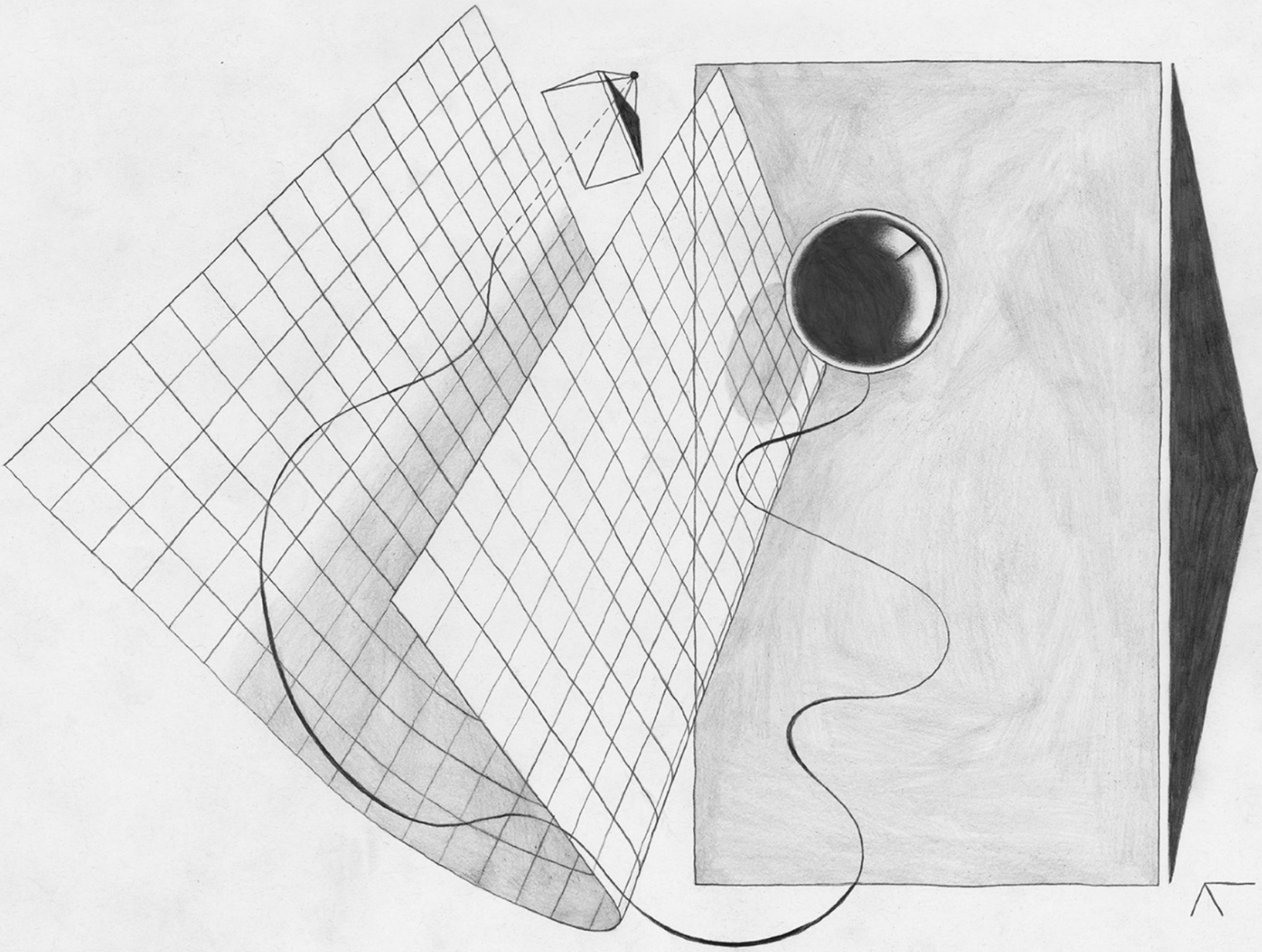

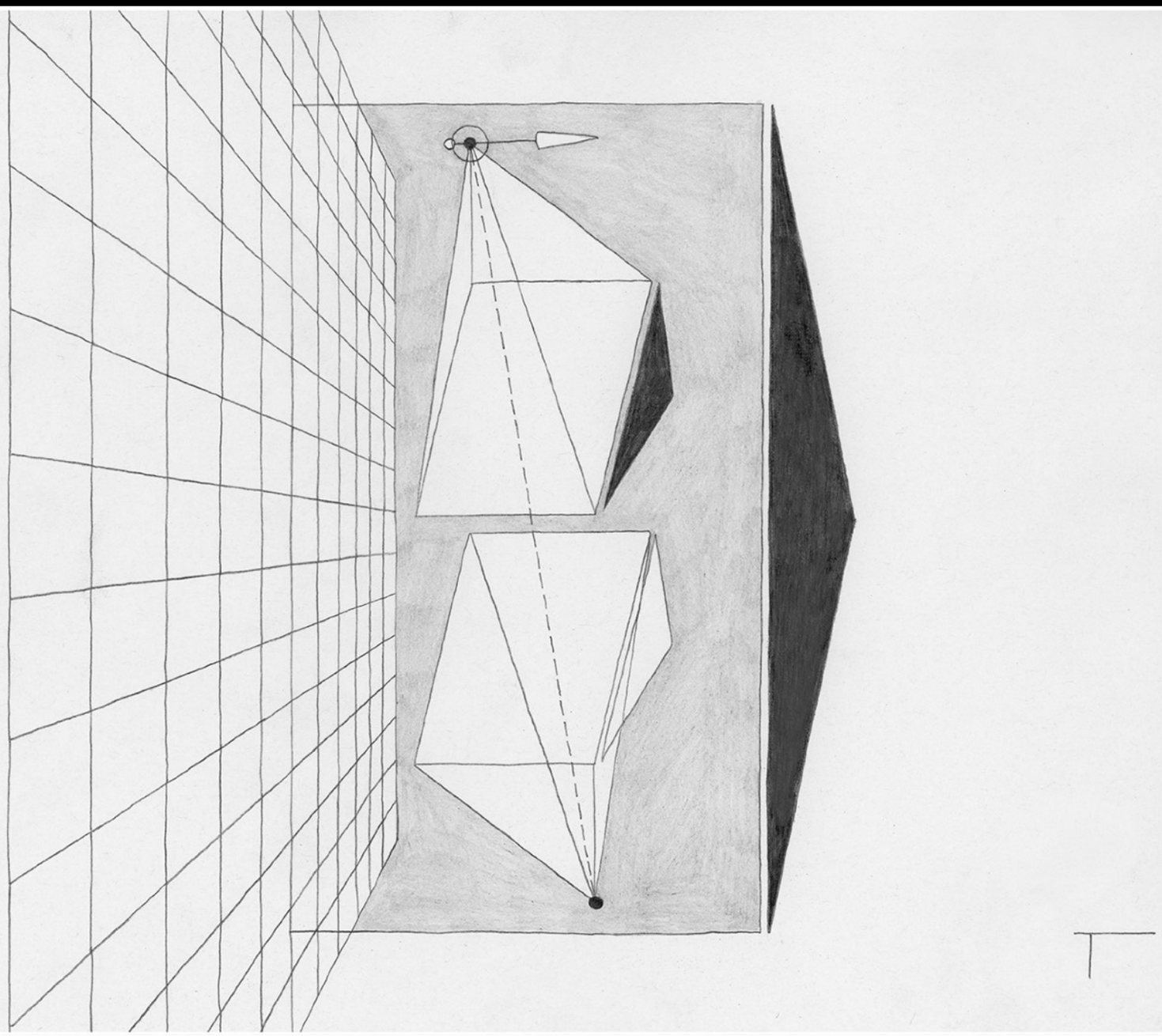

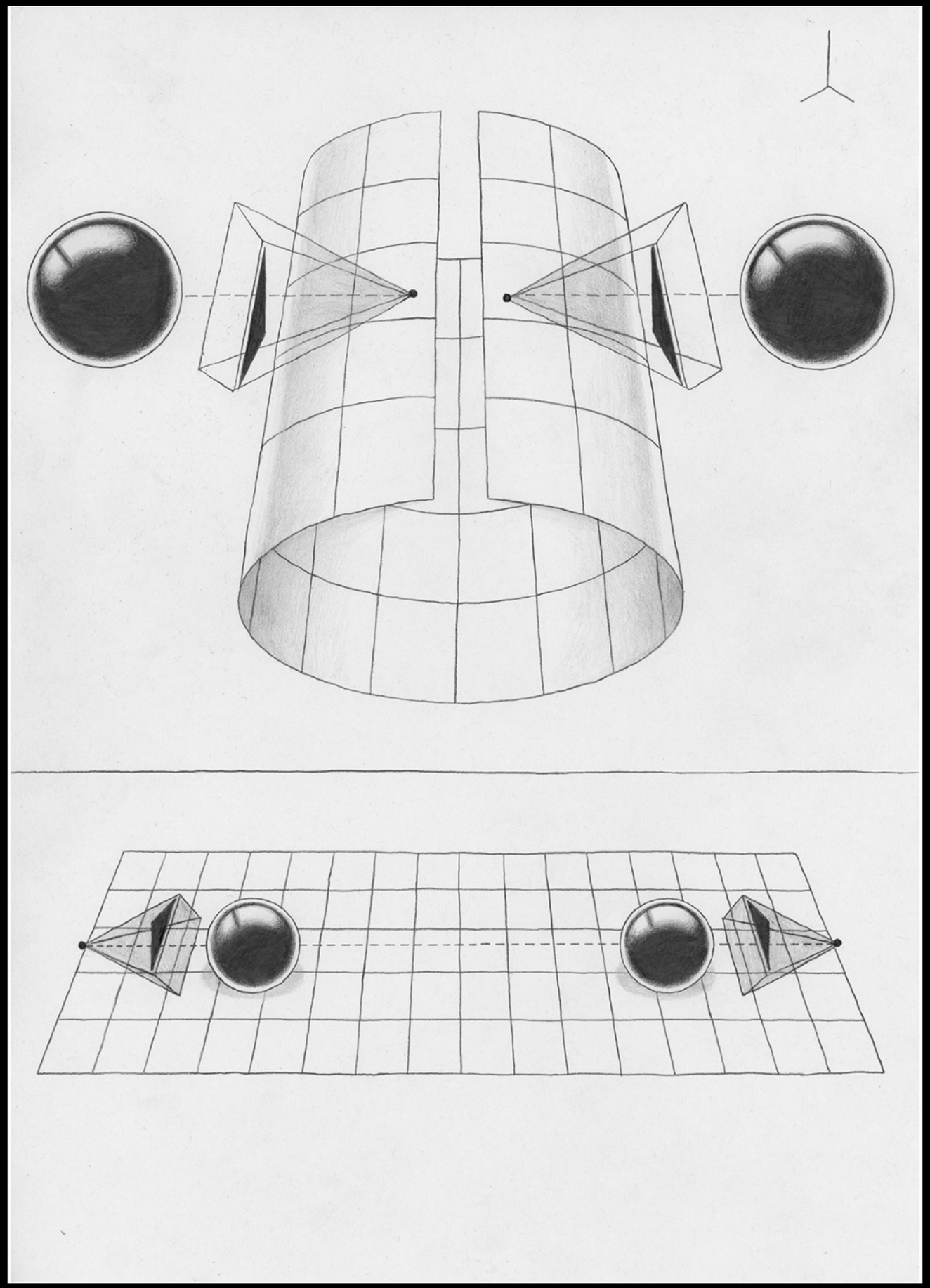

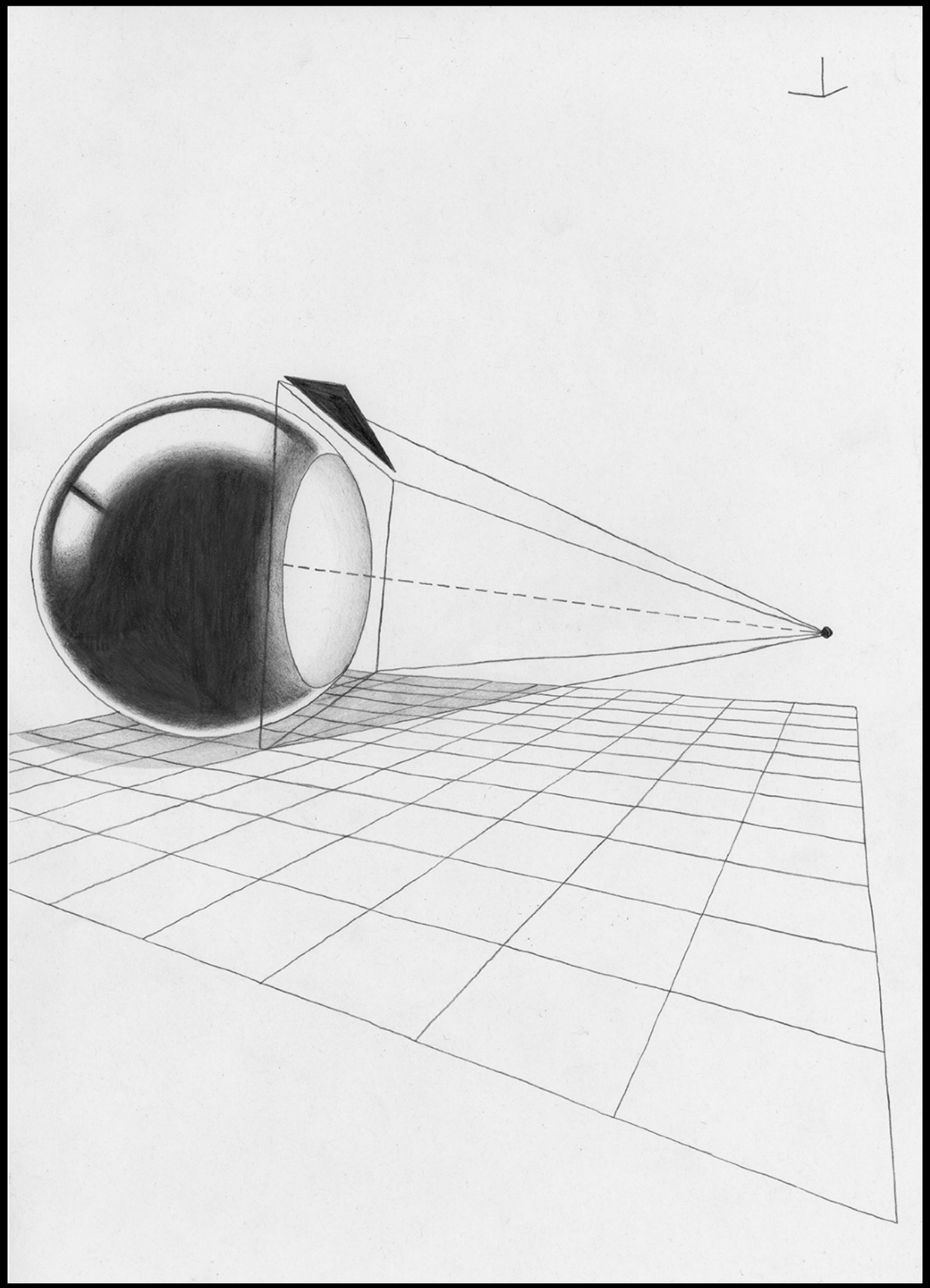

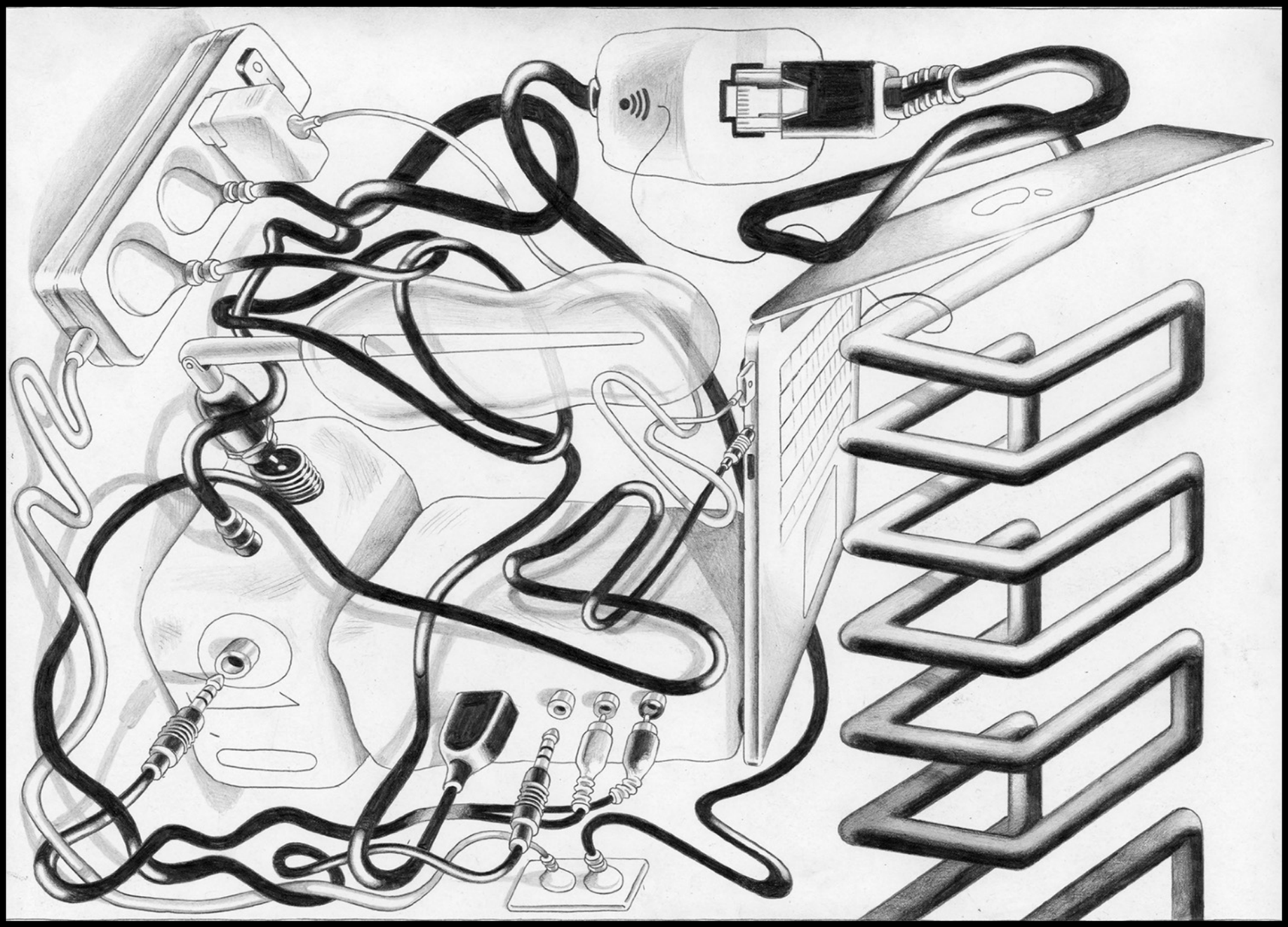

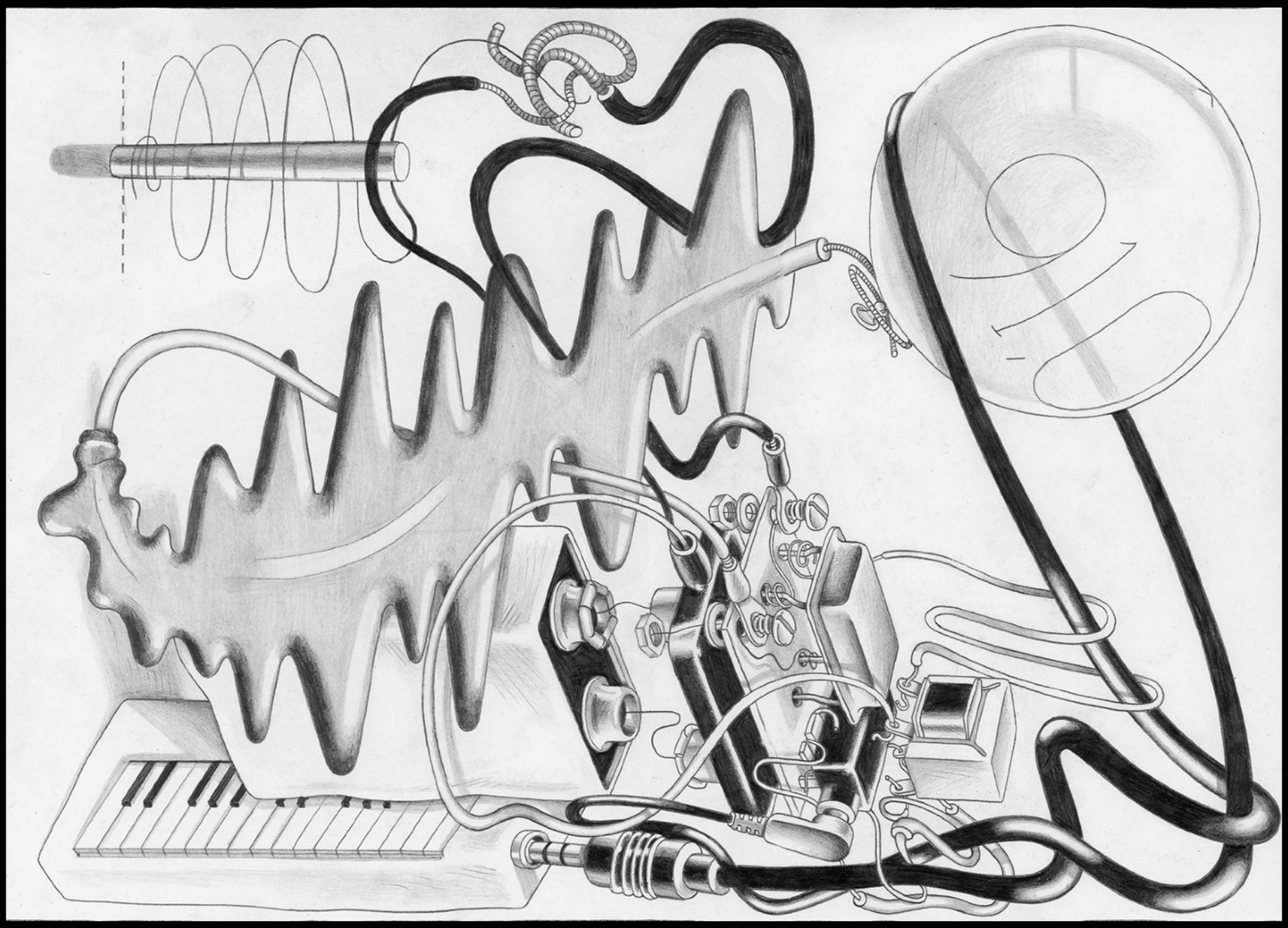

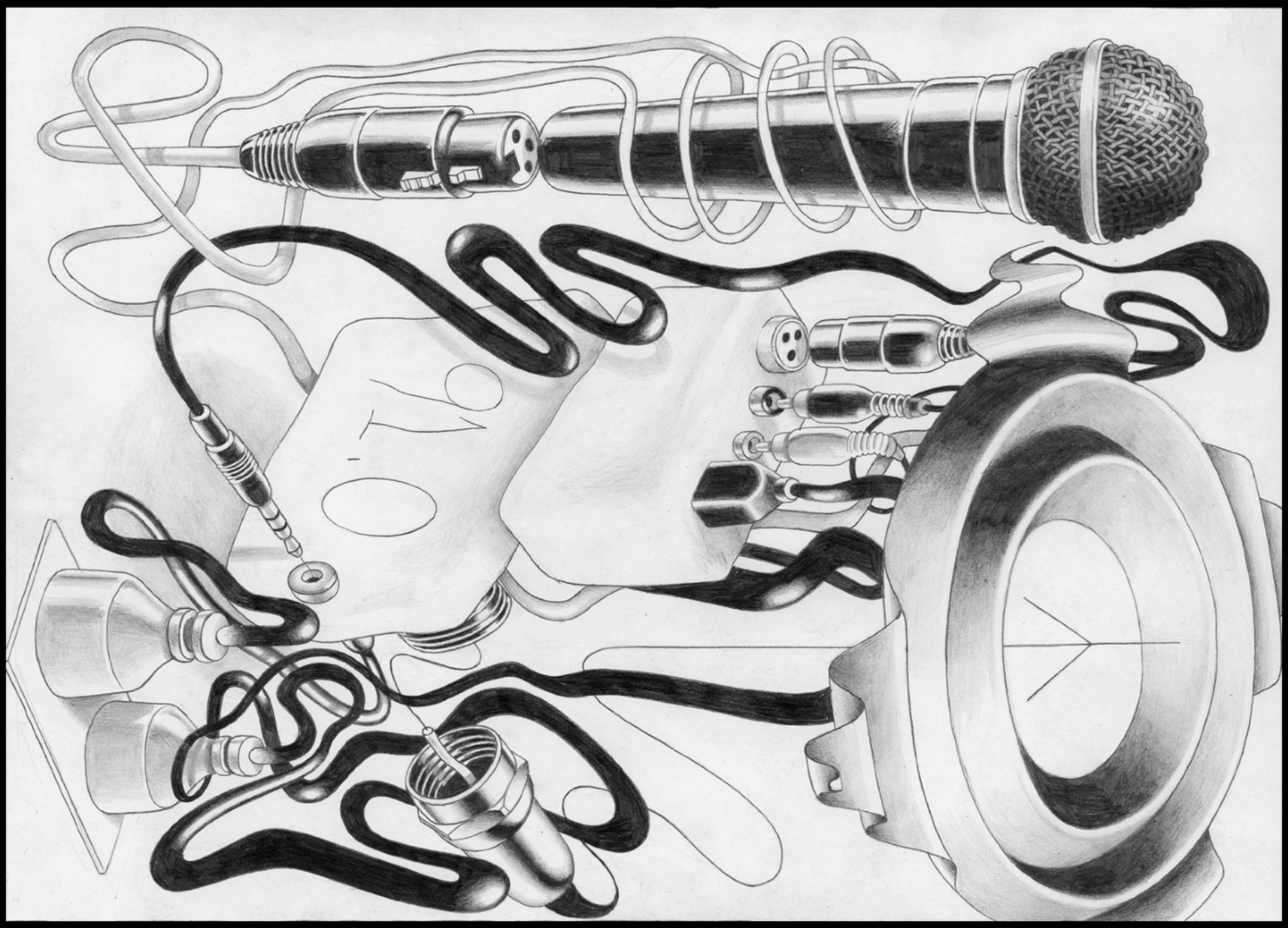

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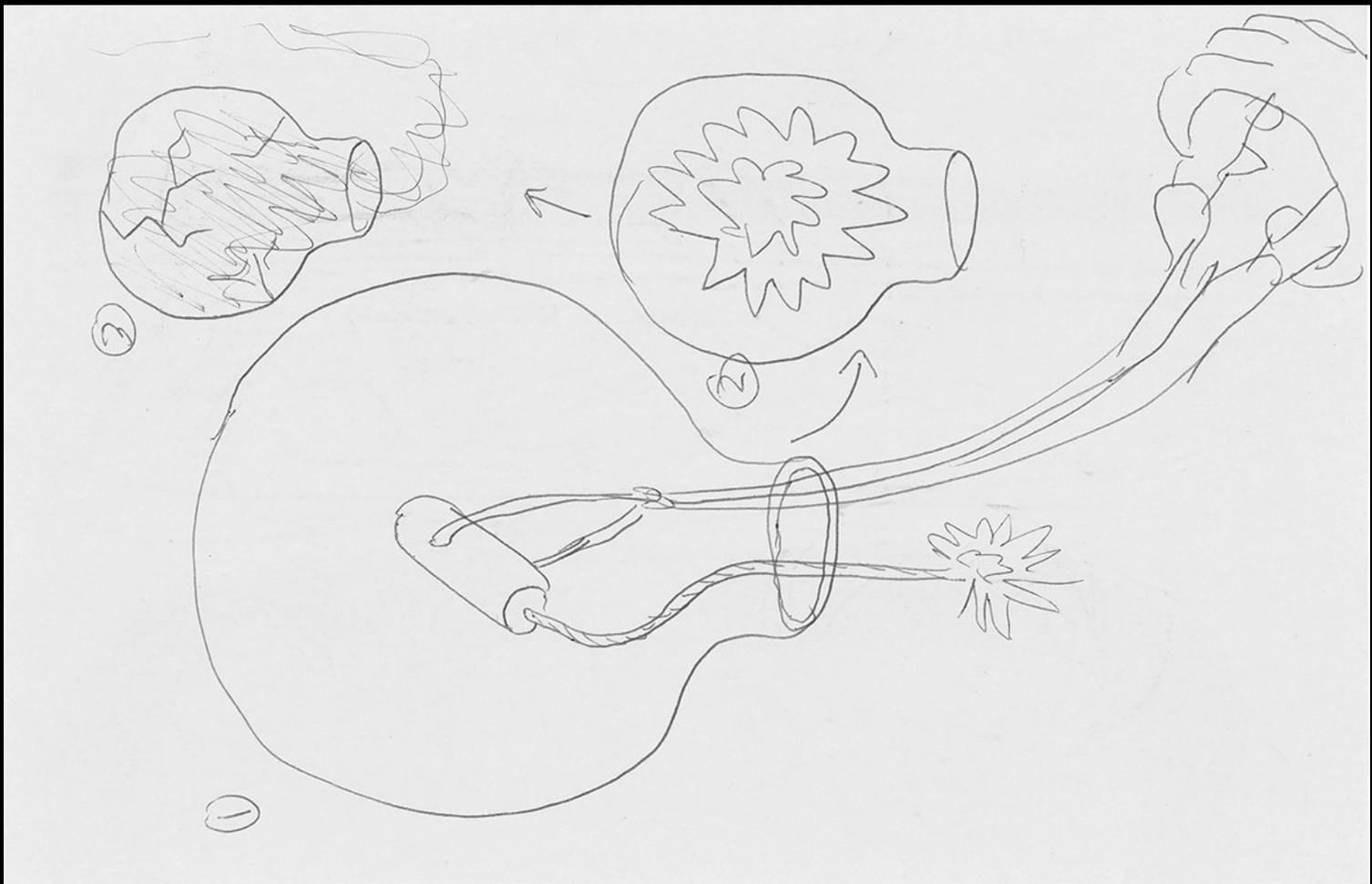

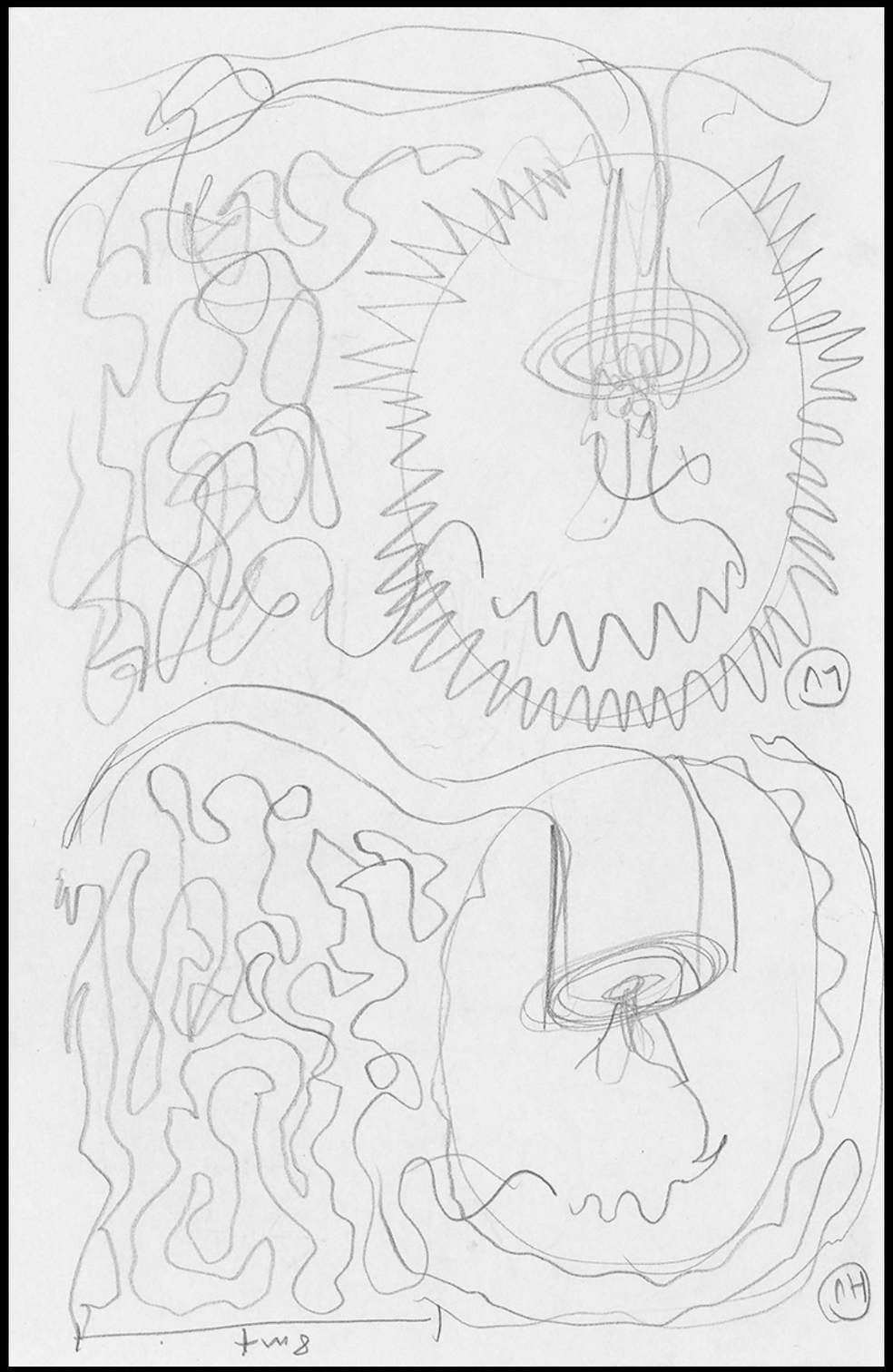
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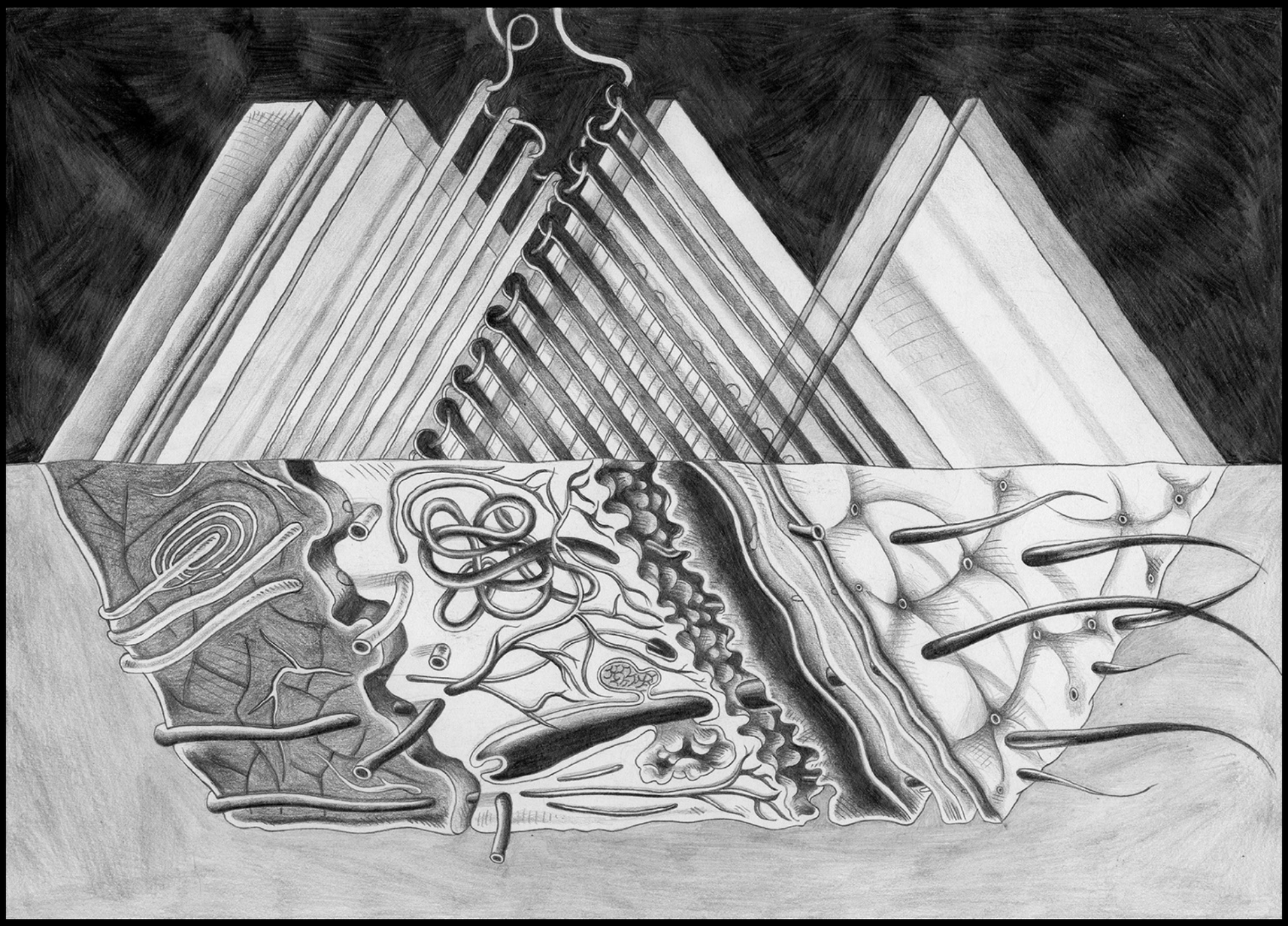

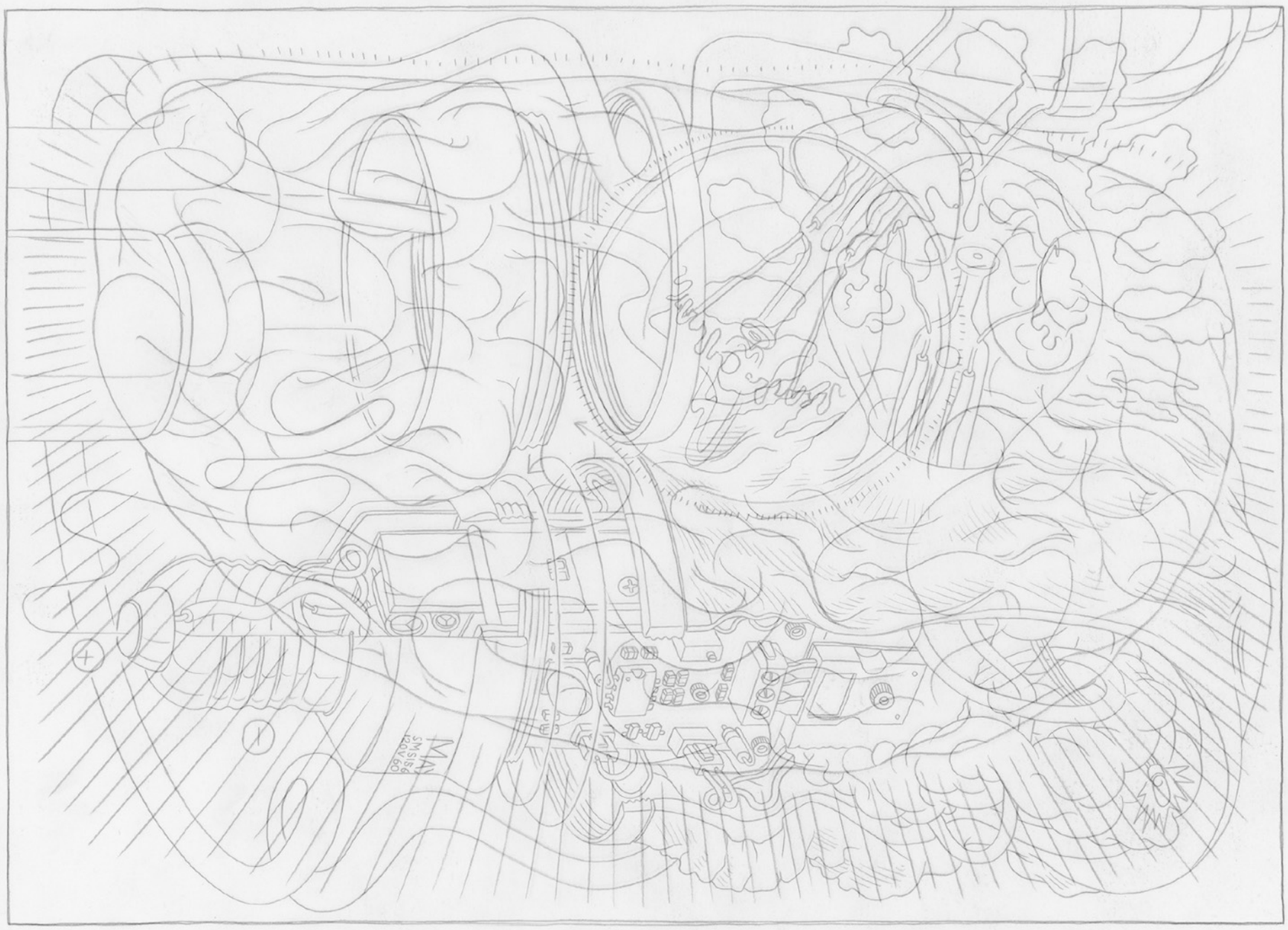

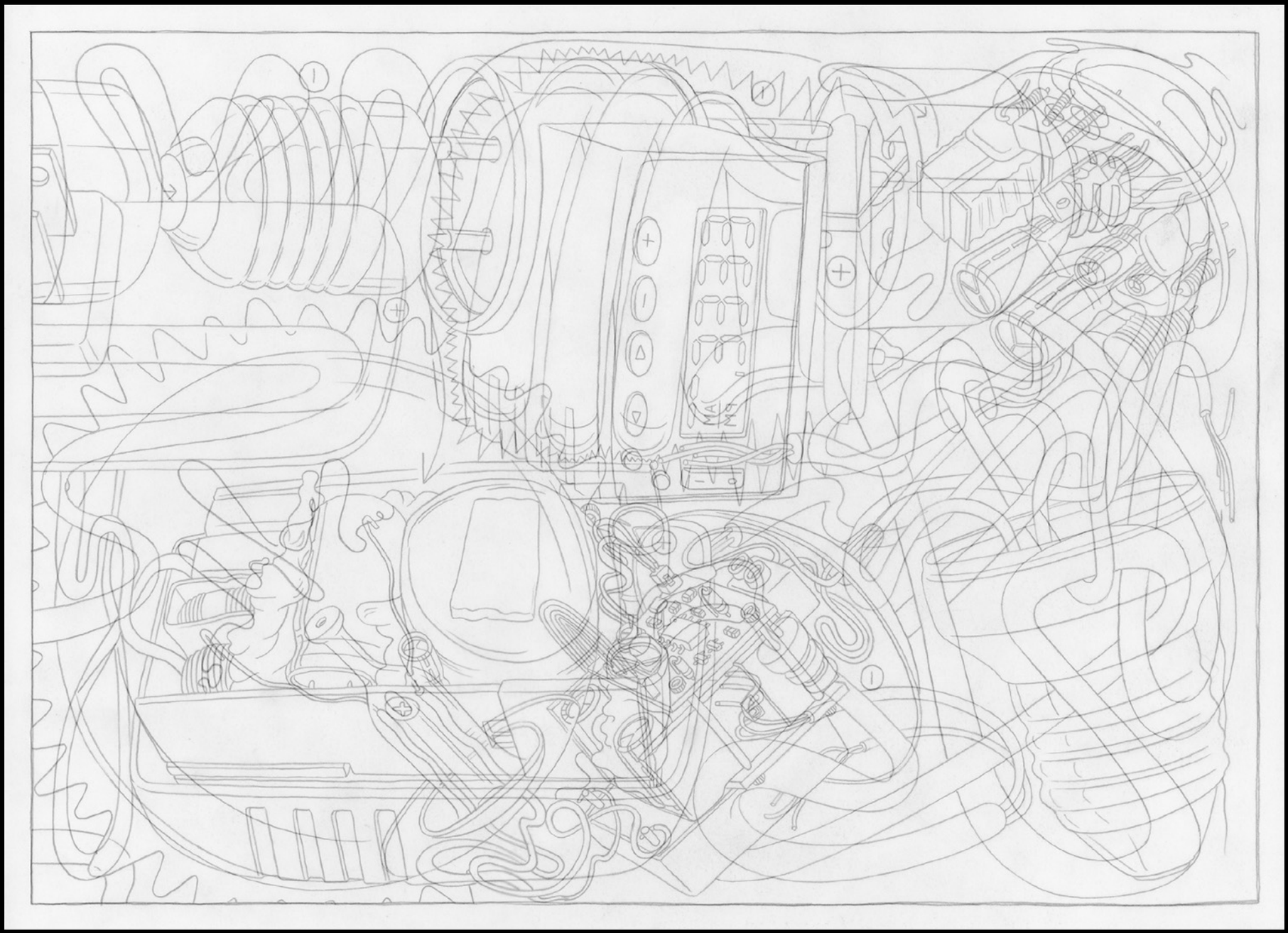

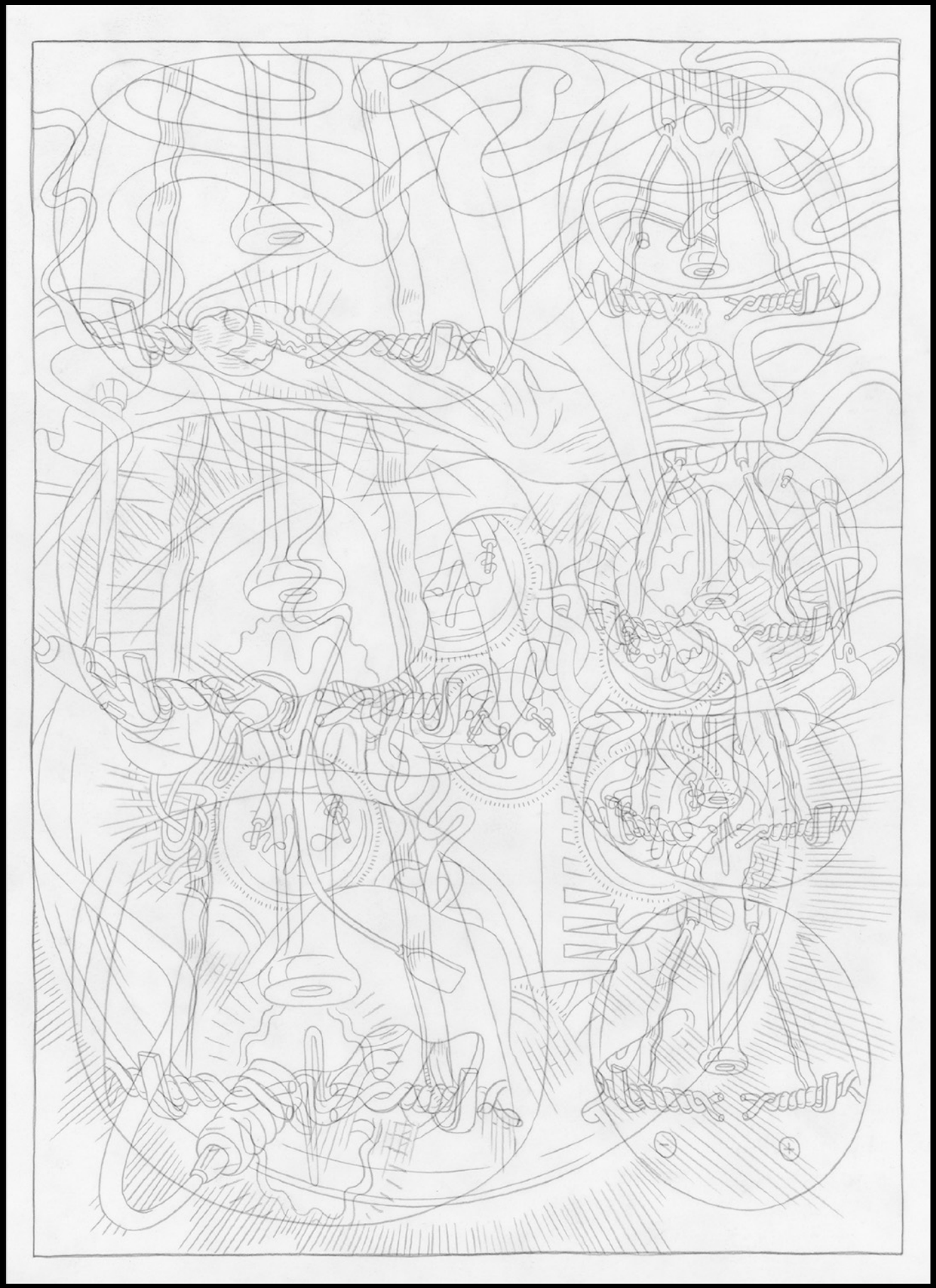

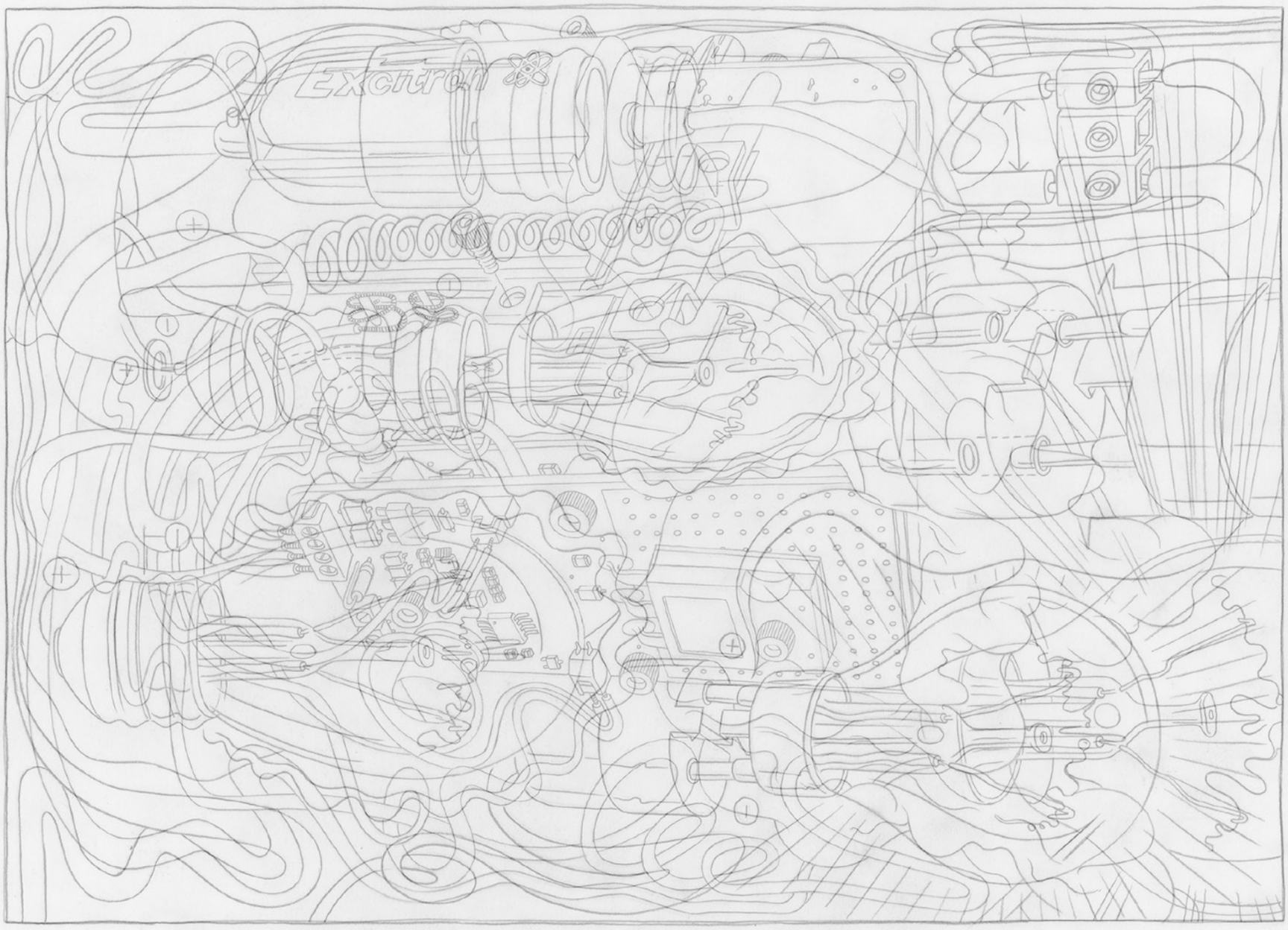
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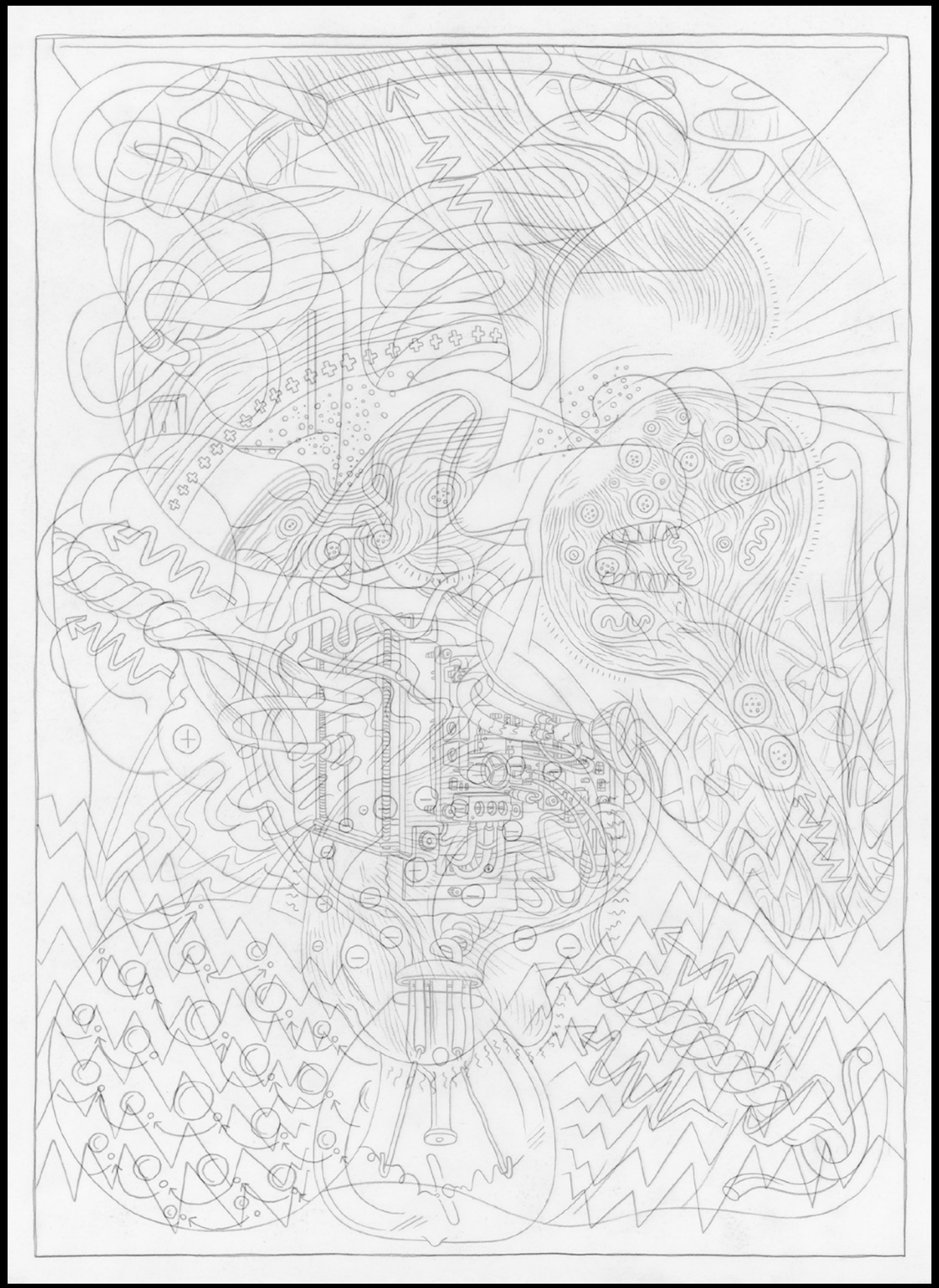
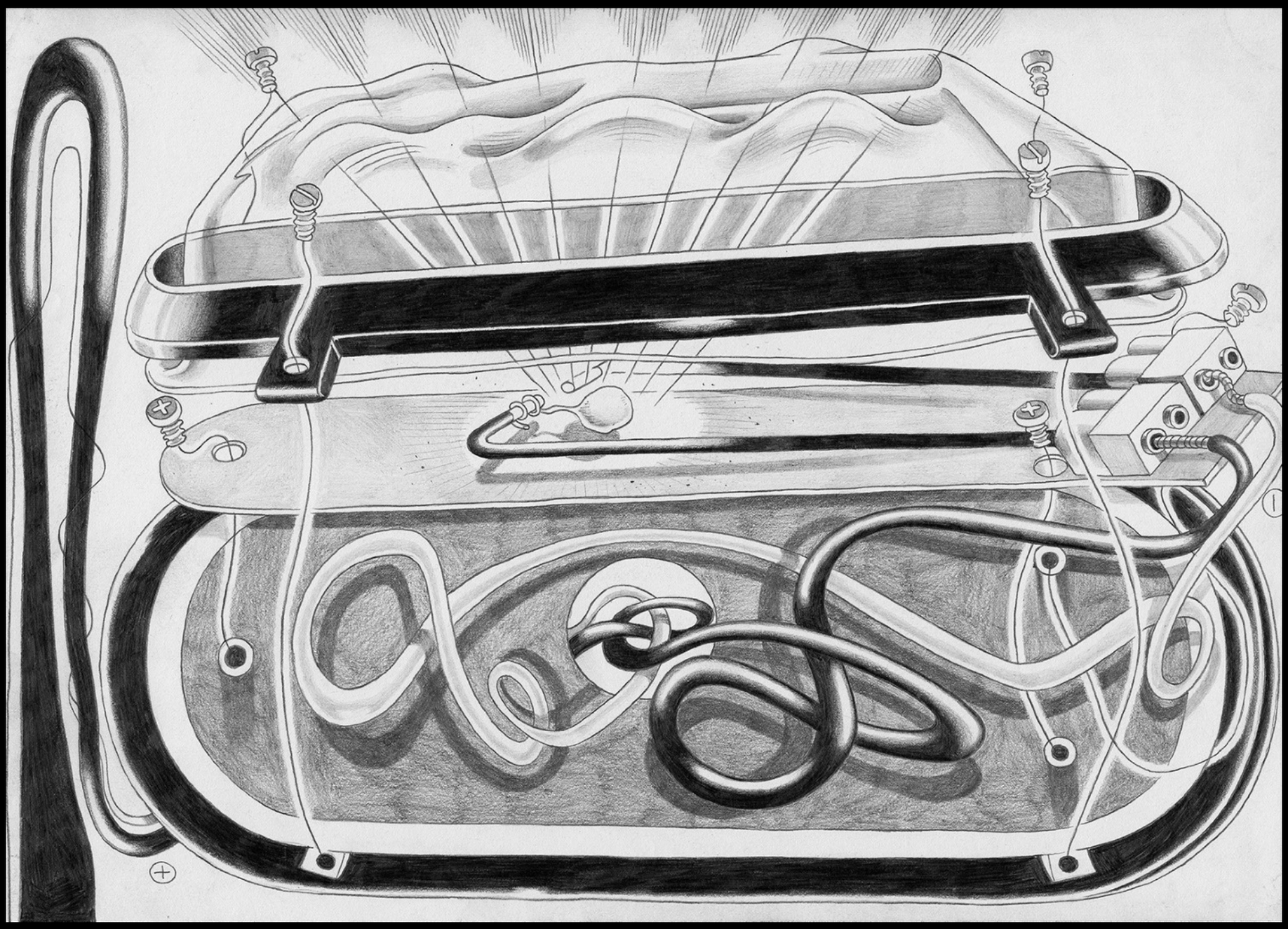
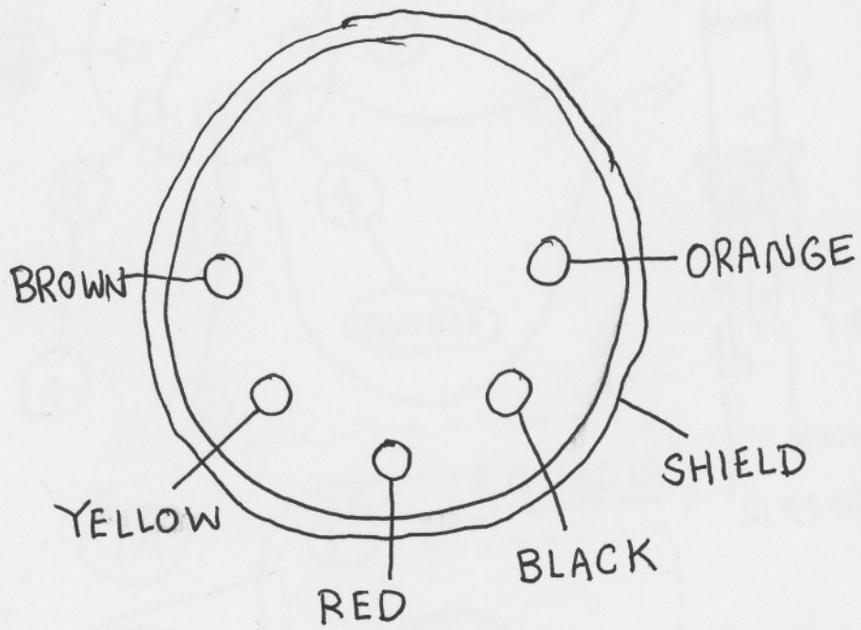
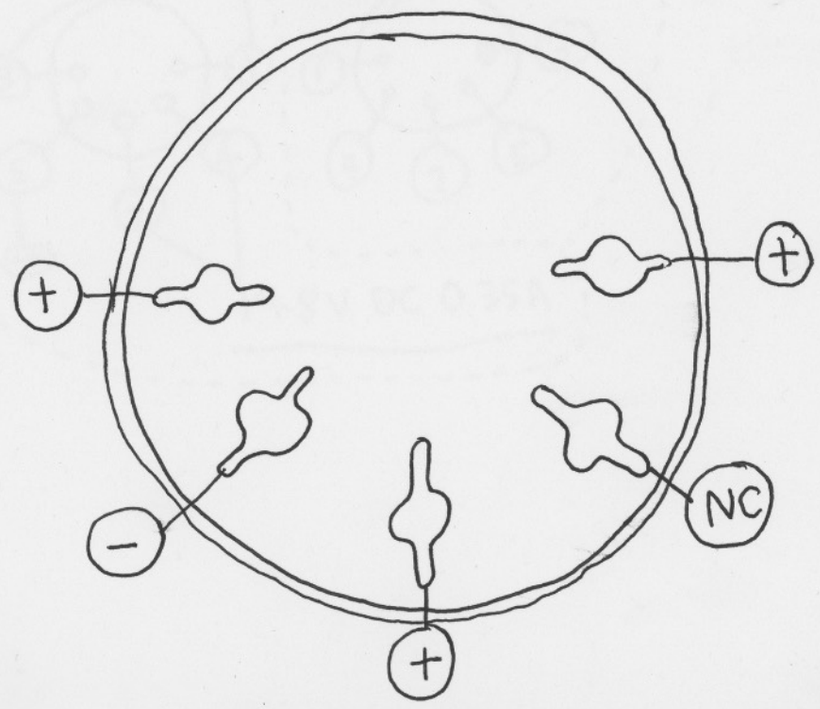





BROWN
ORANGE
SHIELD
YELLOW
RED
BLACK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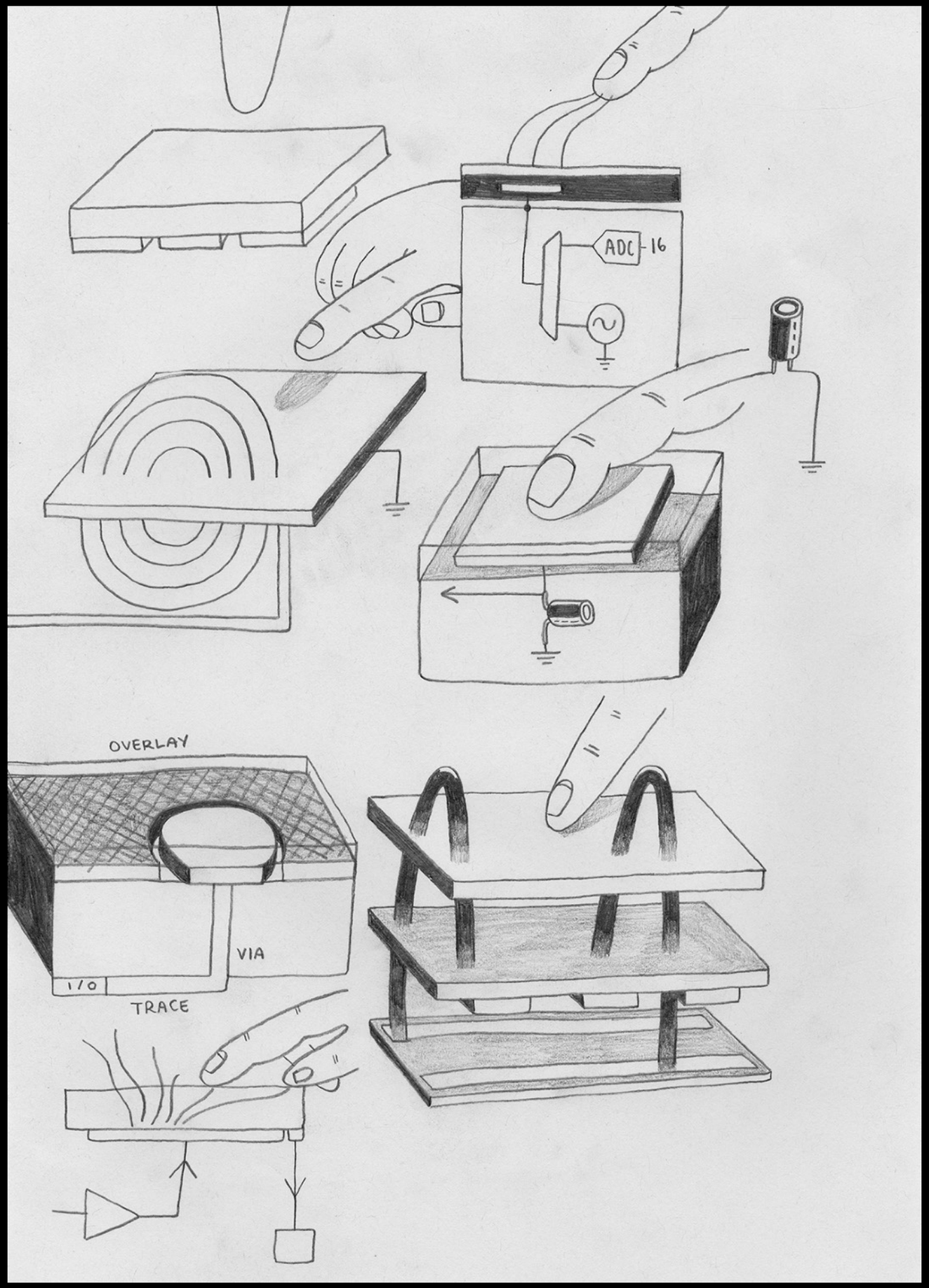
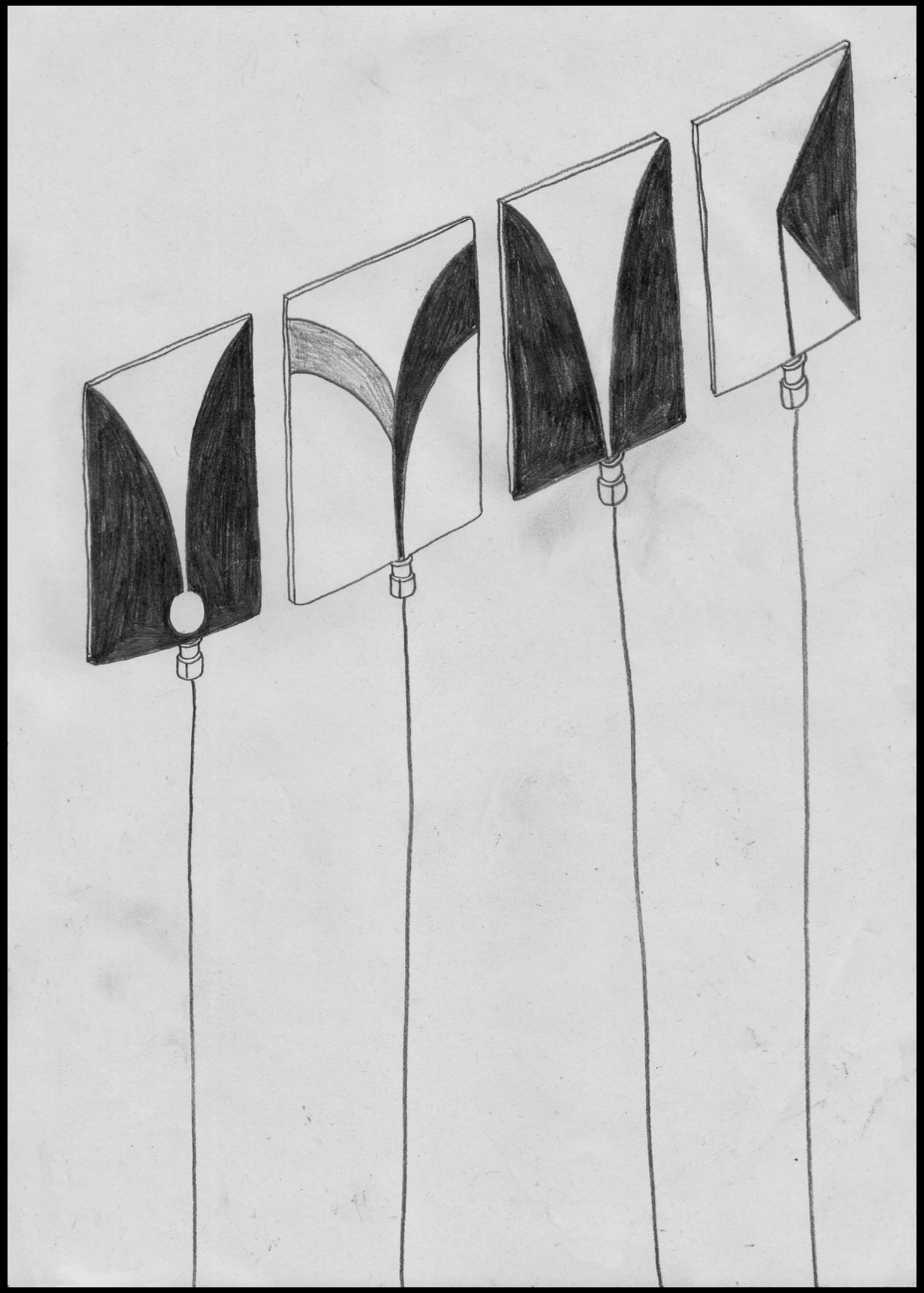
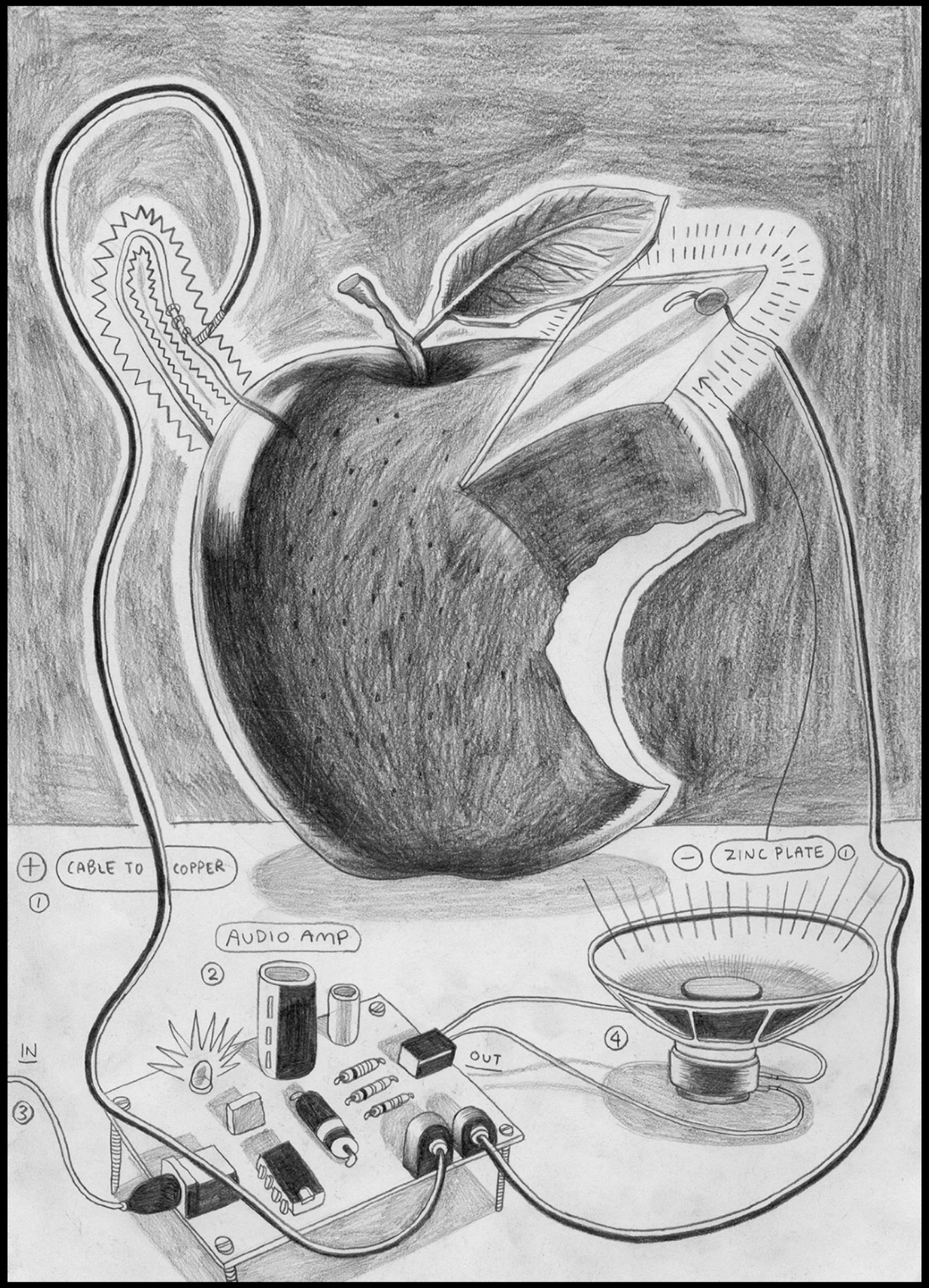

ADC
16
OVERLAY
VIA
I/O
TRACE




+
CABLE TO COPPER
1
AUDIO AMP
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3
OUT
4
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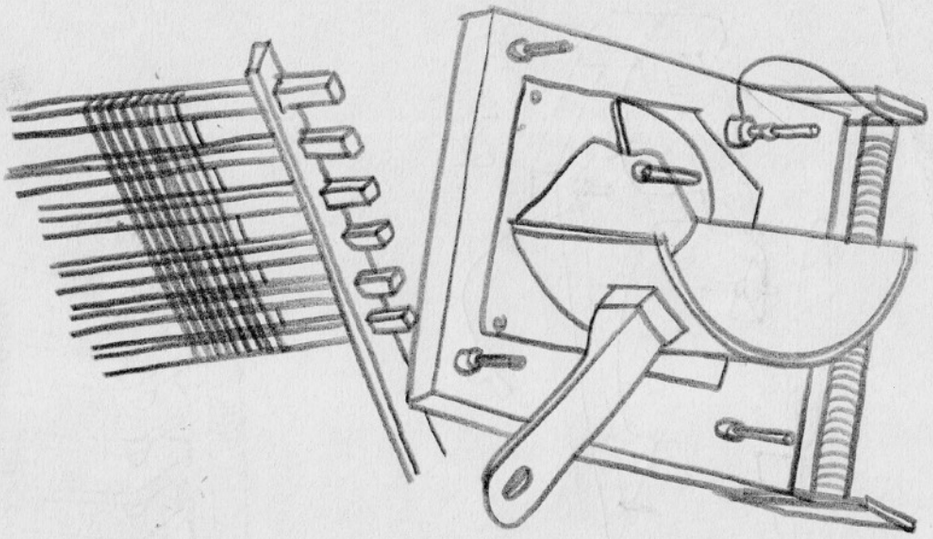
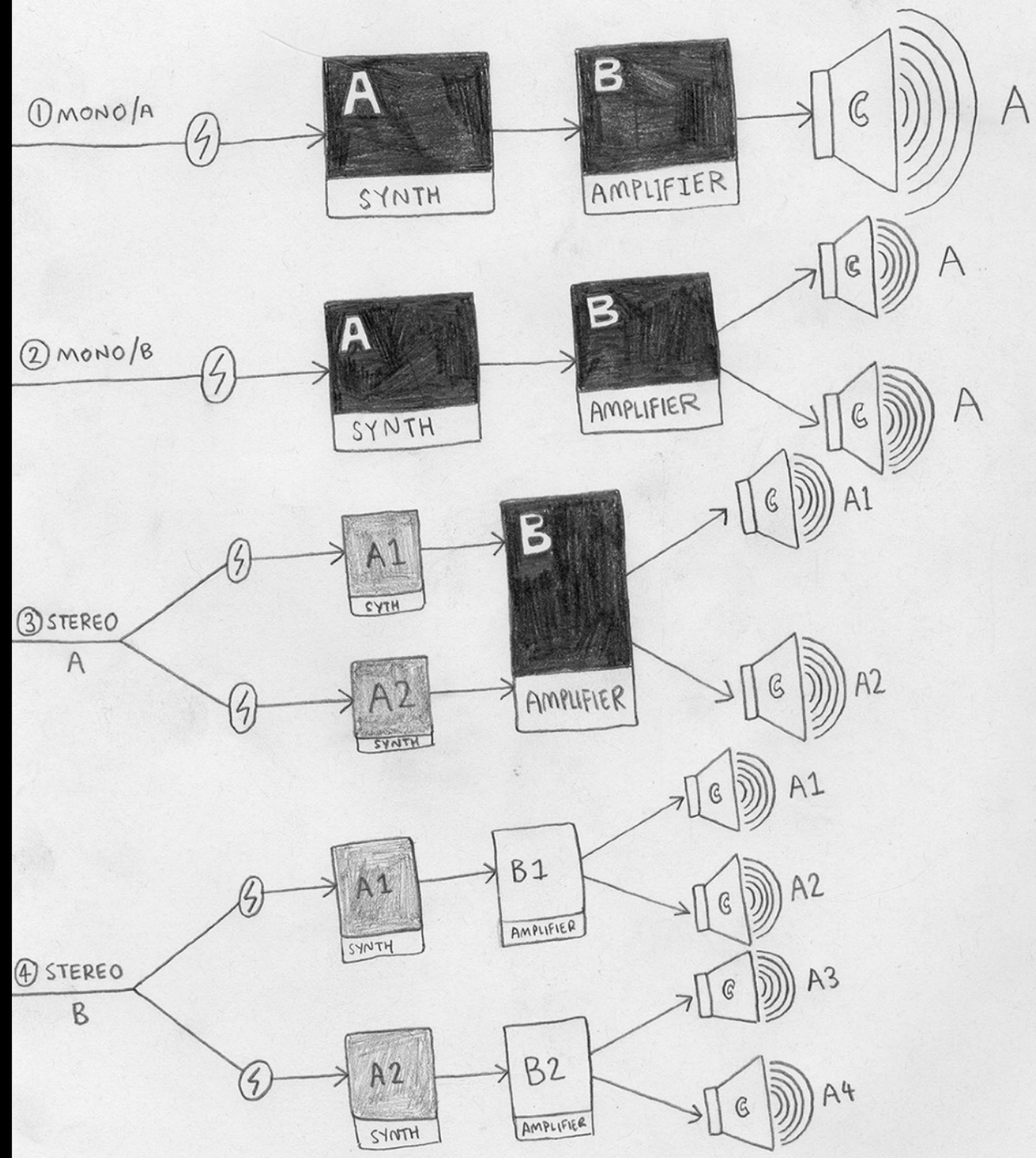
ZINC PLATE
1




① MONO/A
A
SYNTH
B
AMPLIFIER
A
② MONO/B
A
SYNTH
B
AMPLIFIER
A
A
③ STEREO
A
A1
SYTH
A2
SYNTH
B
AMPLIFIER
A1
A2
④ STEREO
B
A1
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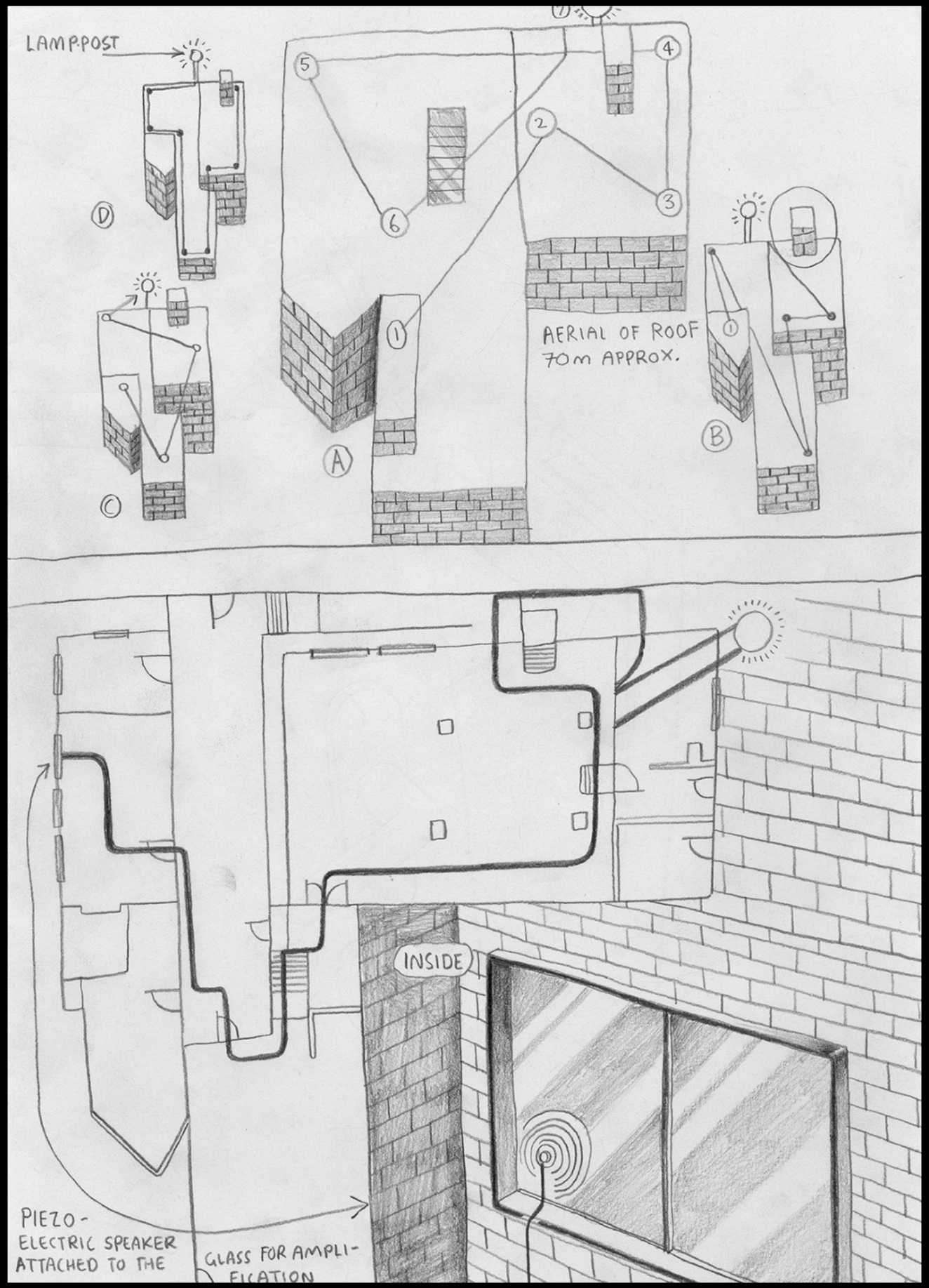
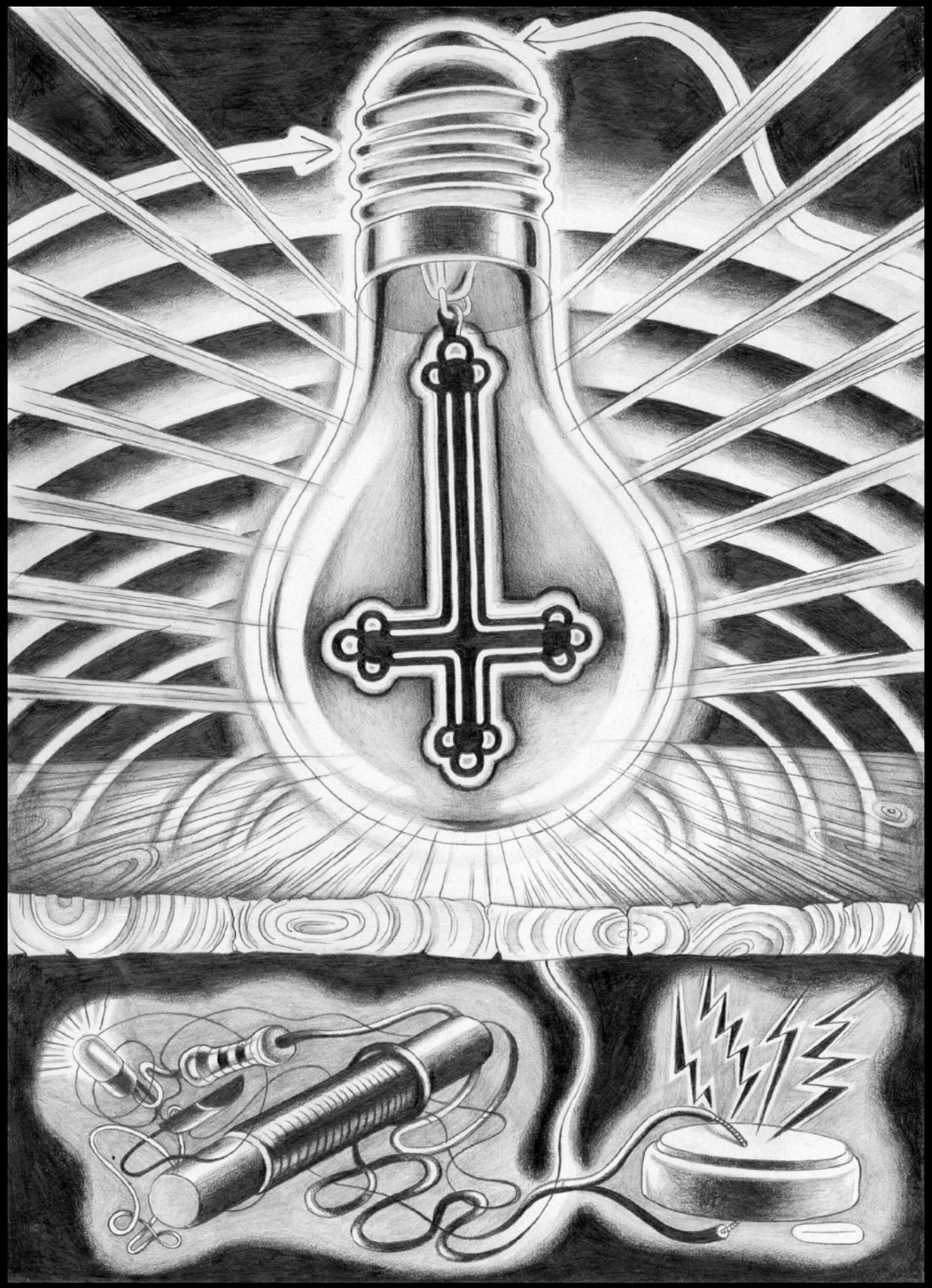
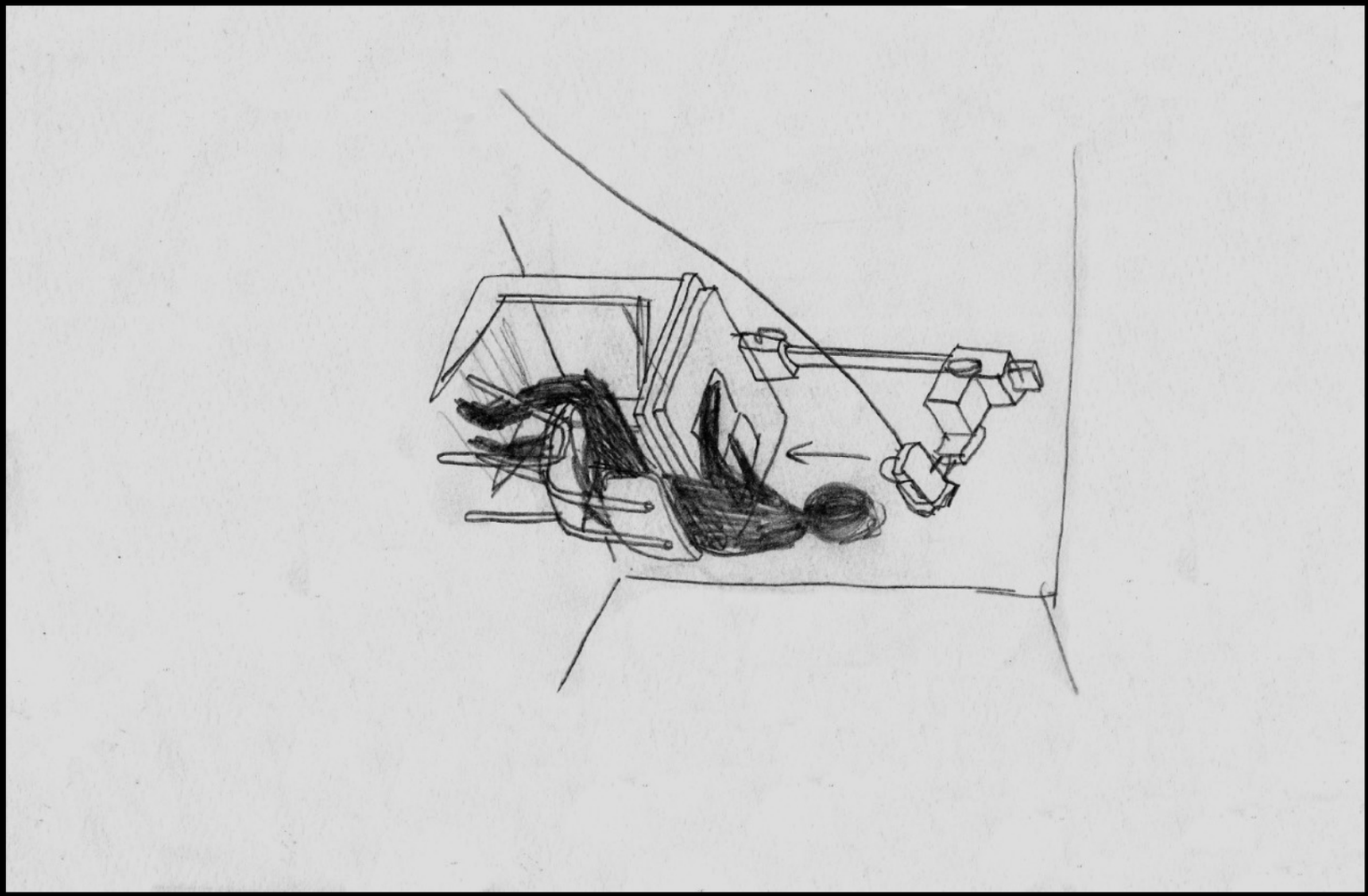
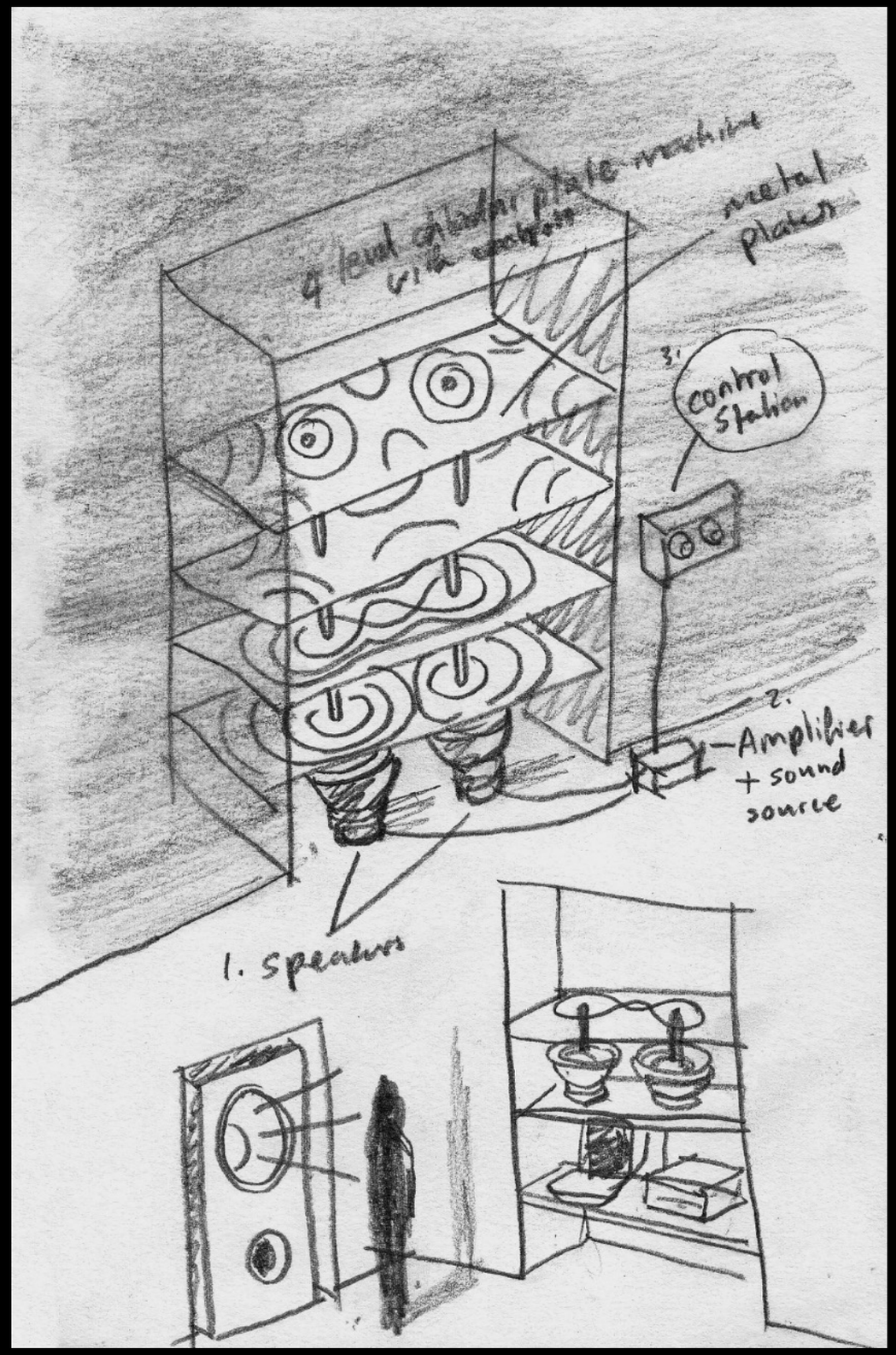
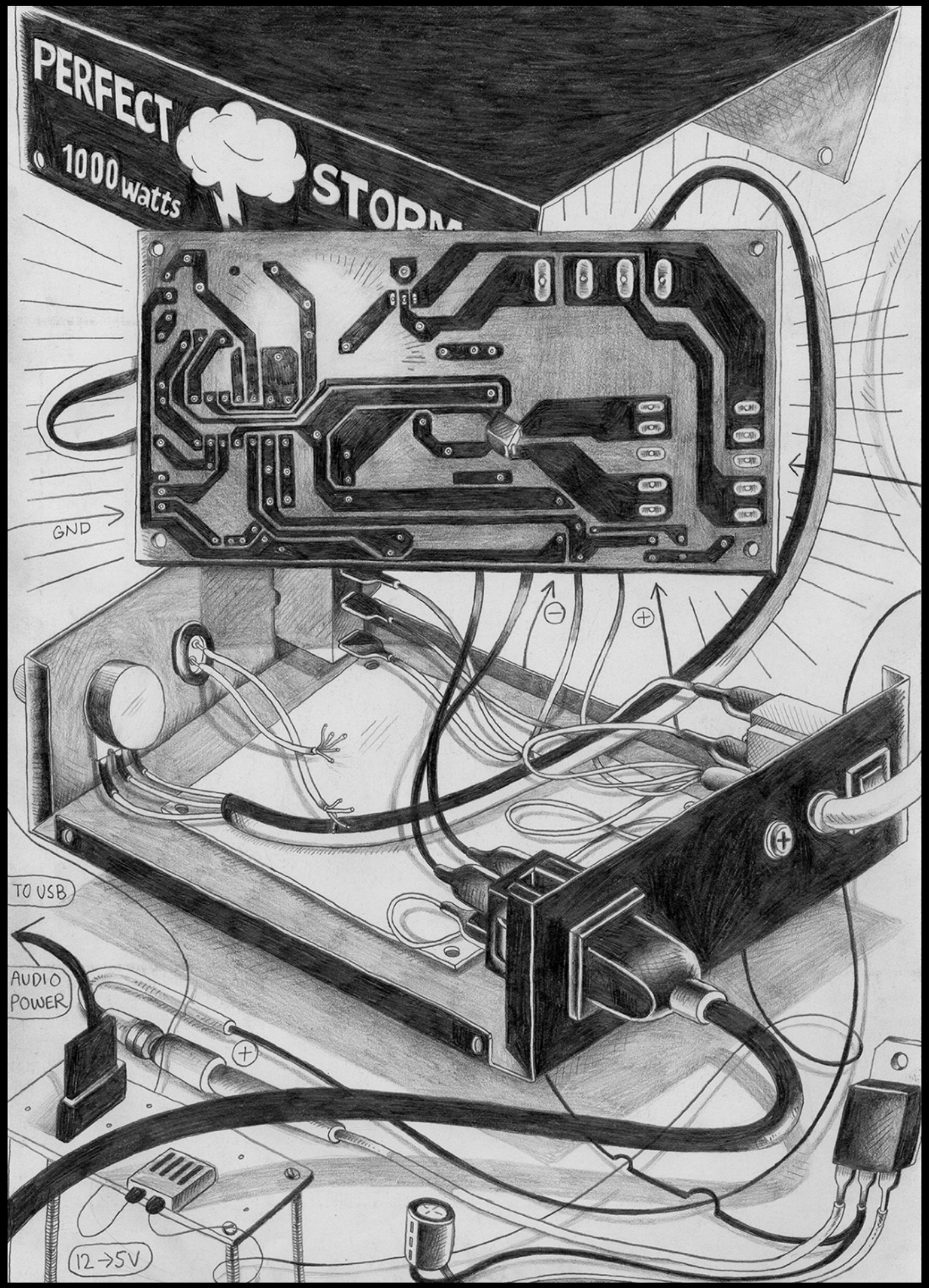
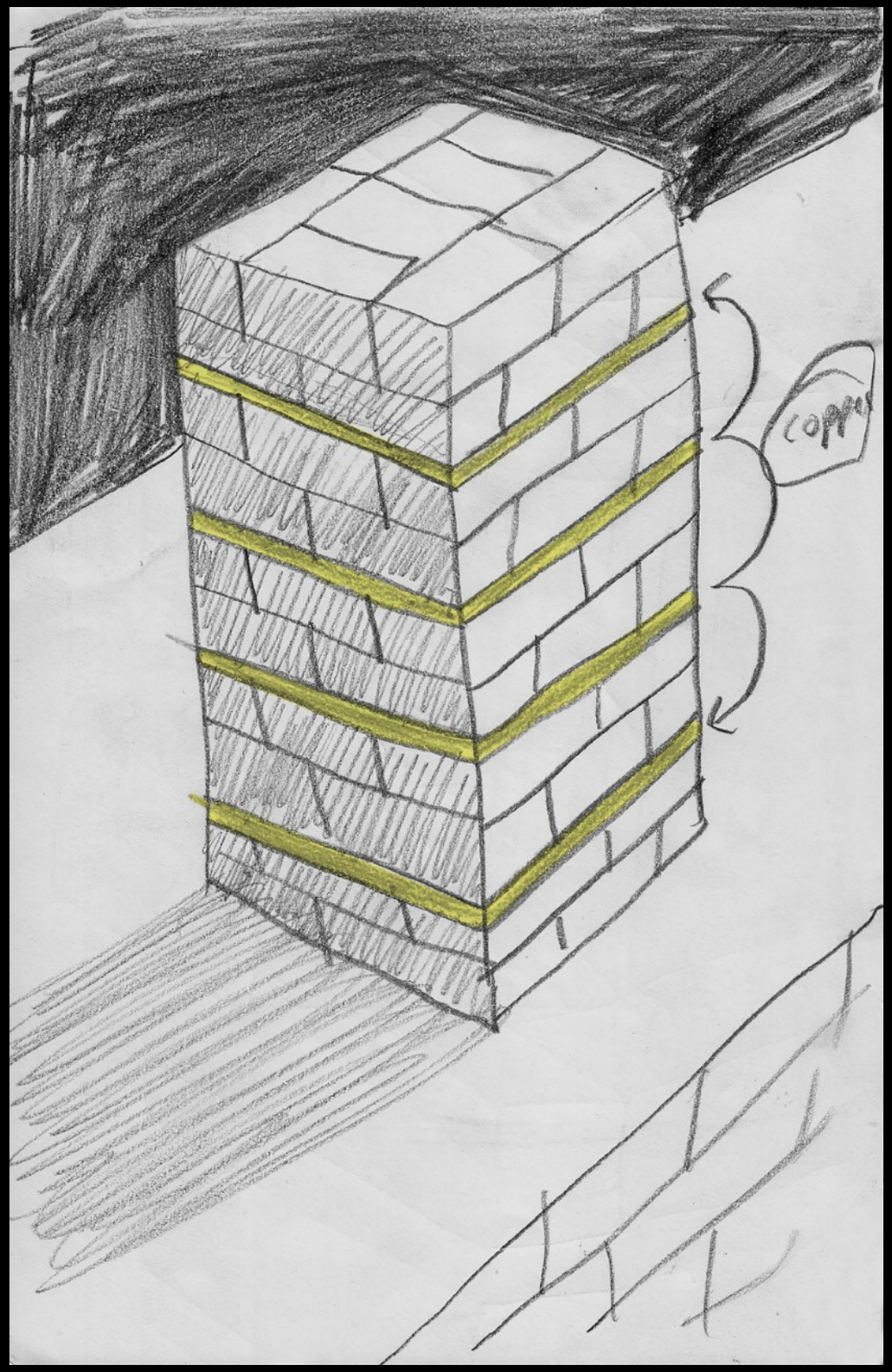

LAMP POST
D
C
A
B
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
AERIAL OF ROOF
70m APPROX.
INSIDE
PIEZO-
ELECTRIC SPEAKER
ATTACHED TO THE
GLASS FOR AMPLI-

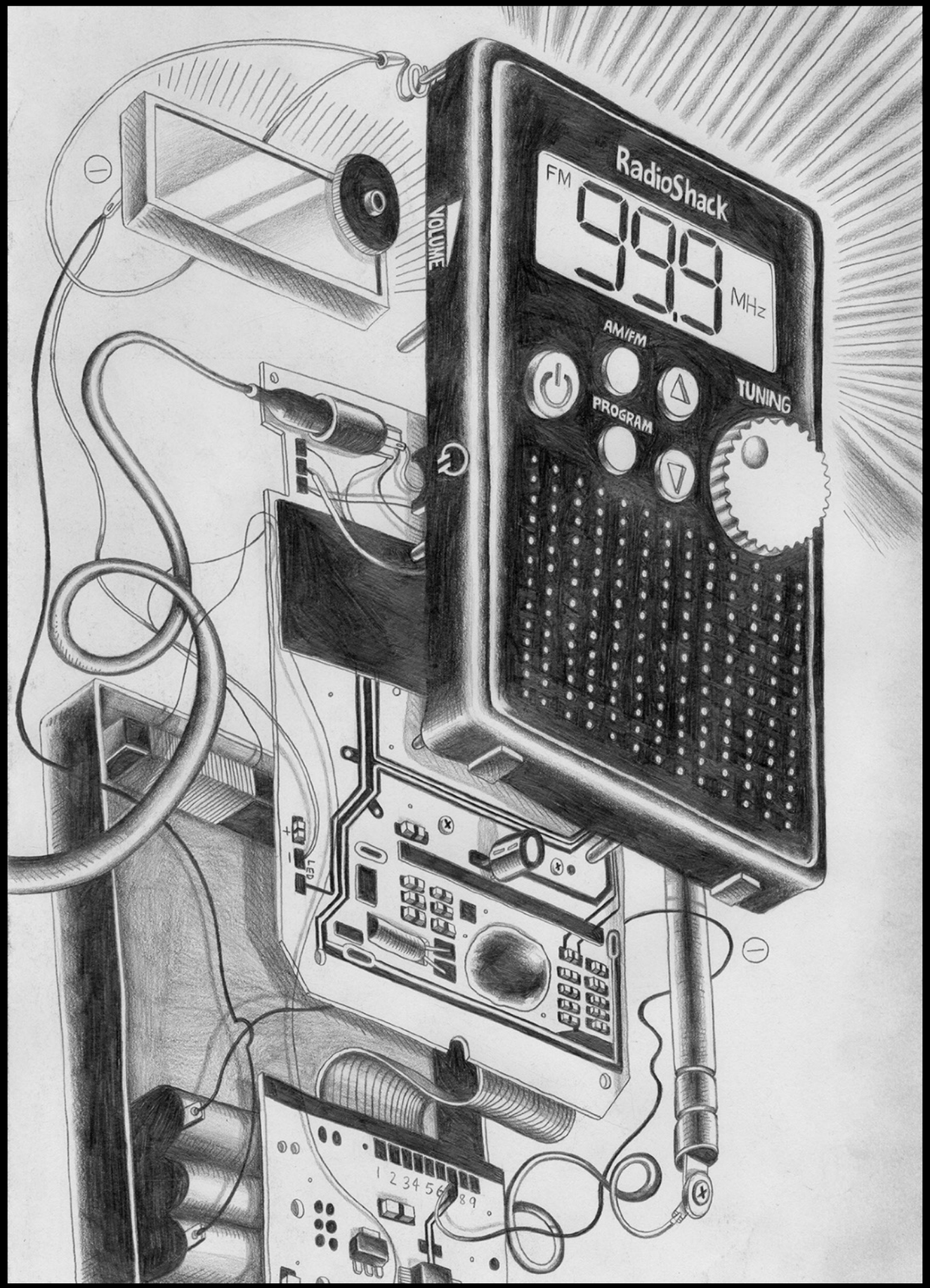


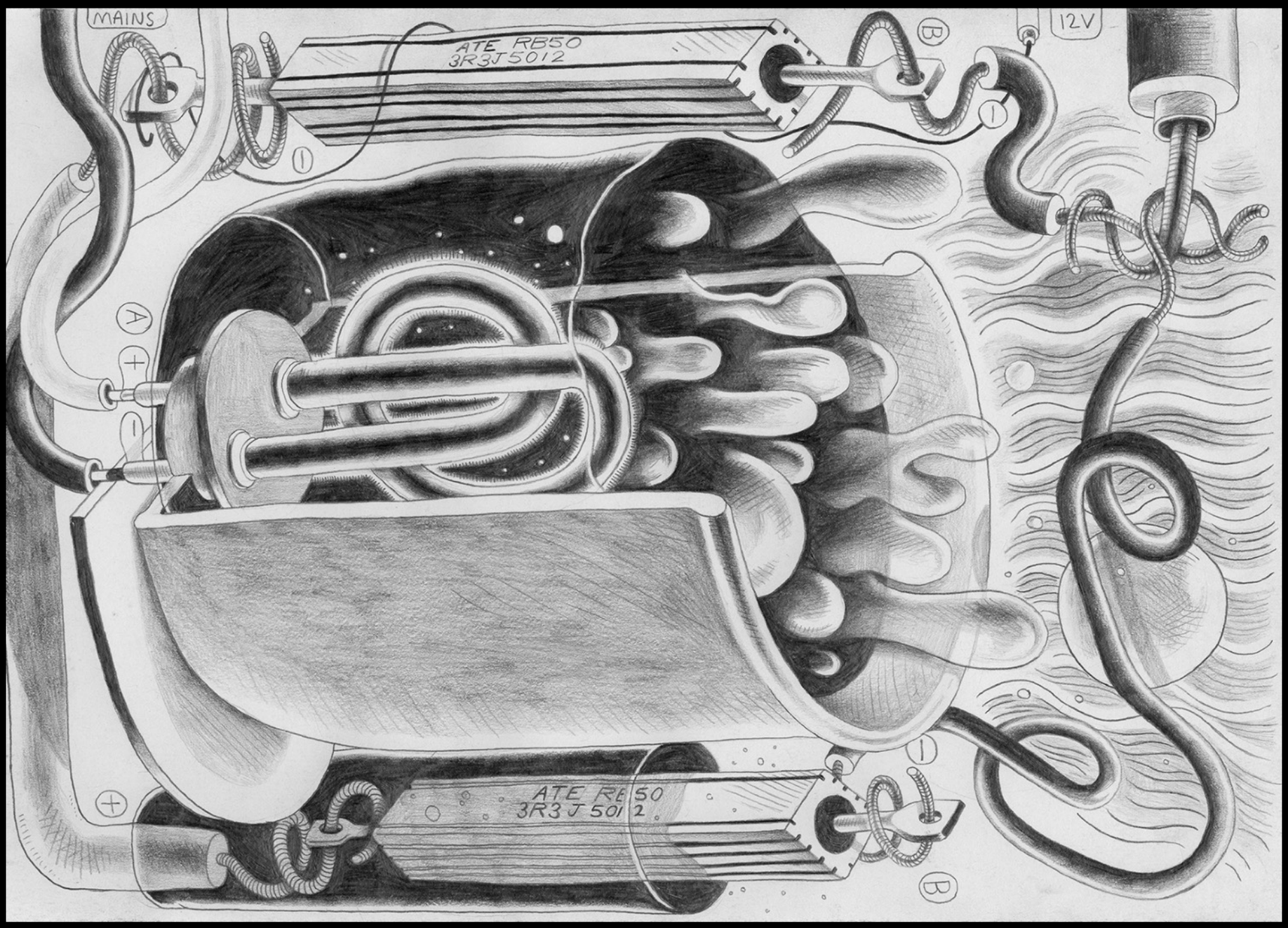



metal plates
3. control station
2. Amplifier + sound source
1. speakers


PERFECT
1000 watts
STORM
GND
TO USB
AUDIO POWER
12→5V


copper


RadioShack
FM
99.9
MHz
AM/FM
PROGRAM
TUNING
VOLUME
LED
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9


MAINS
ATE RB50
3R3J5012
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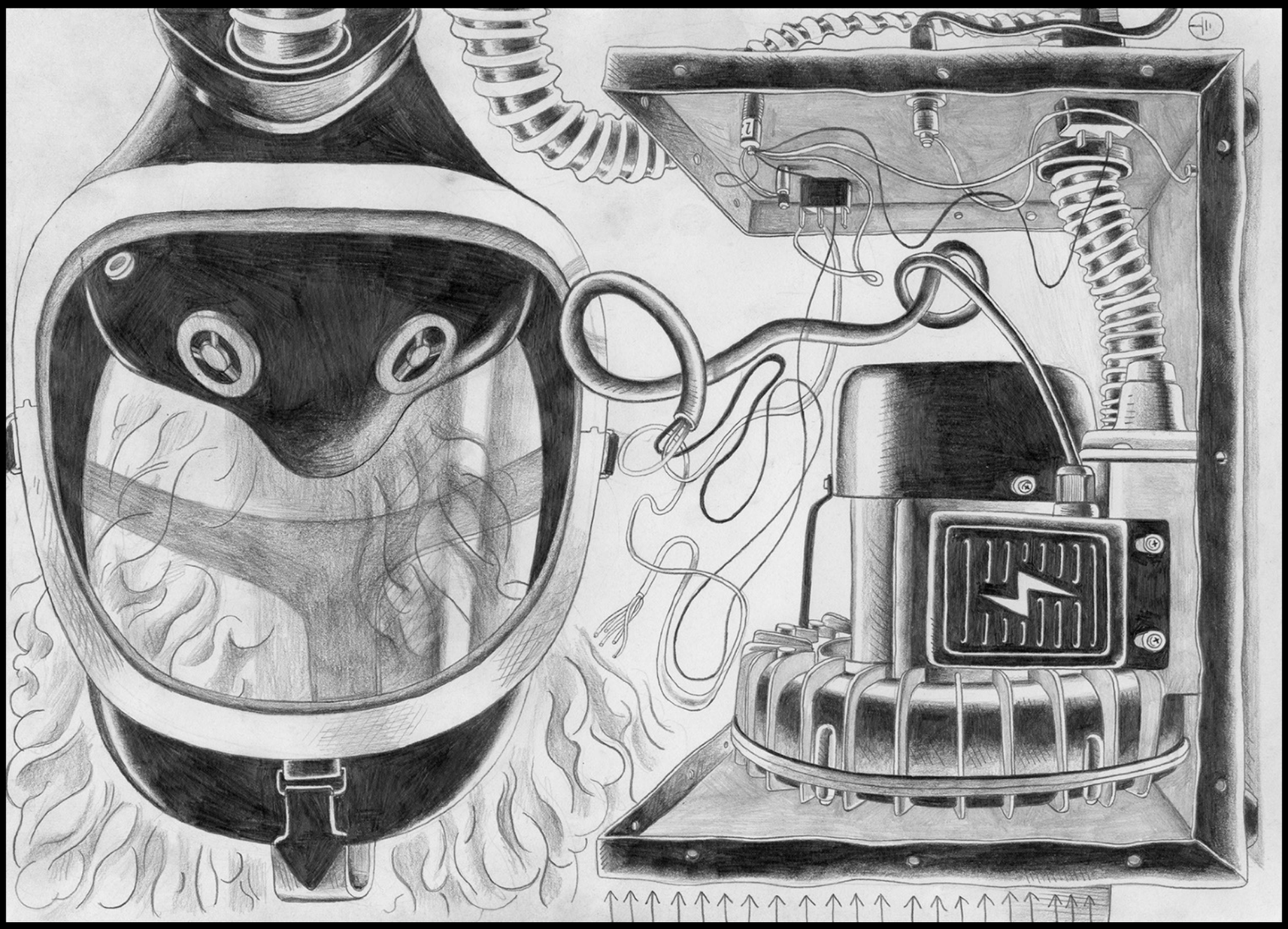
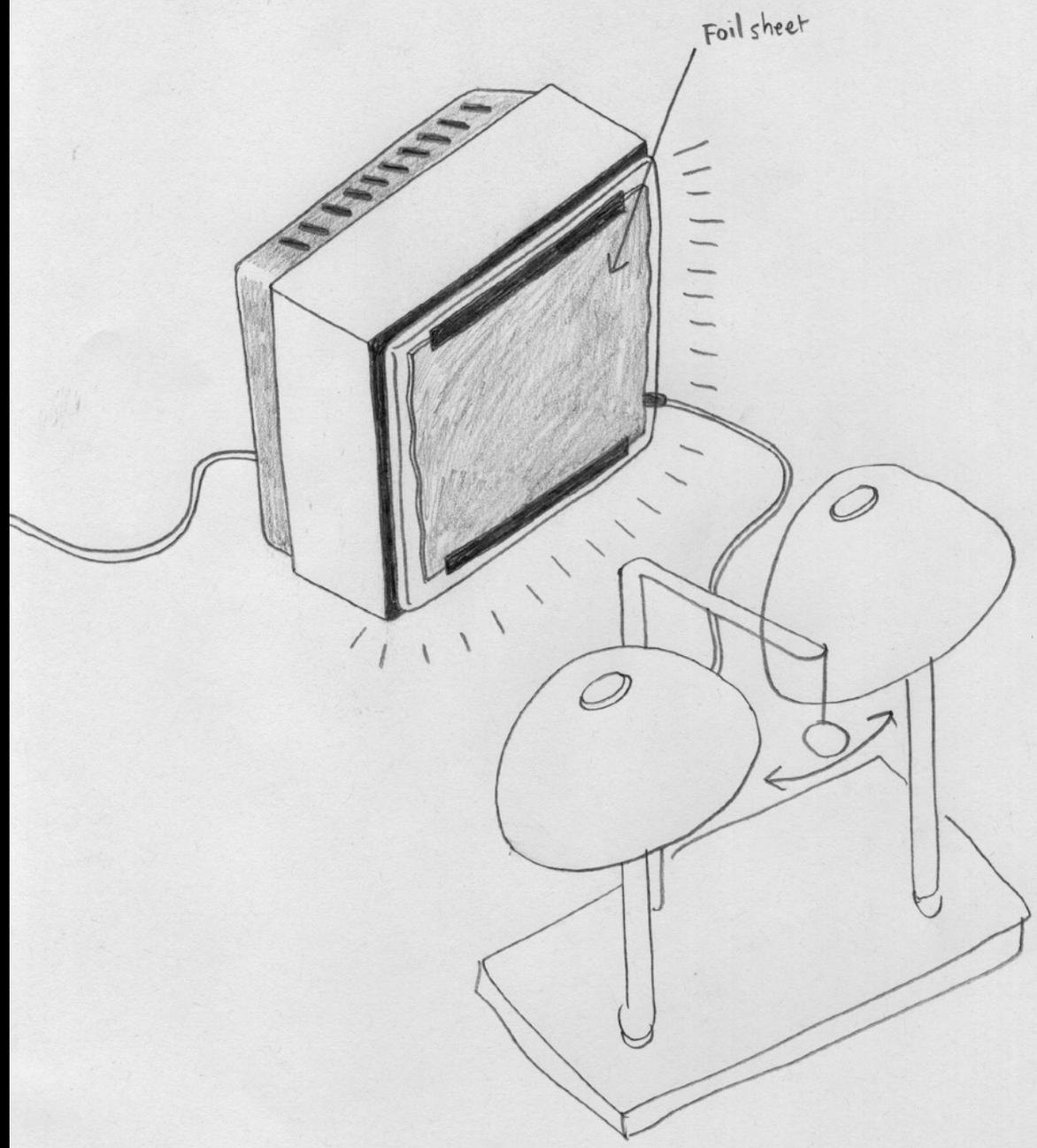
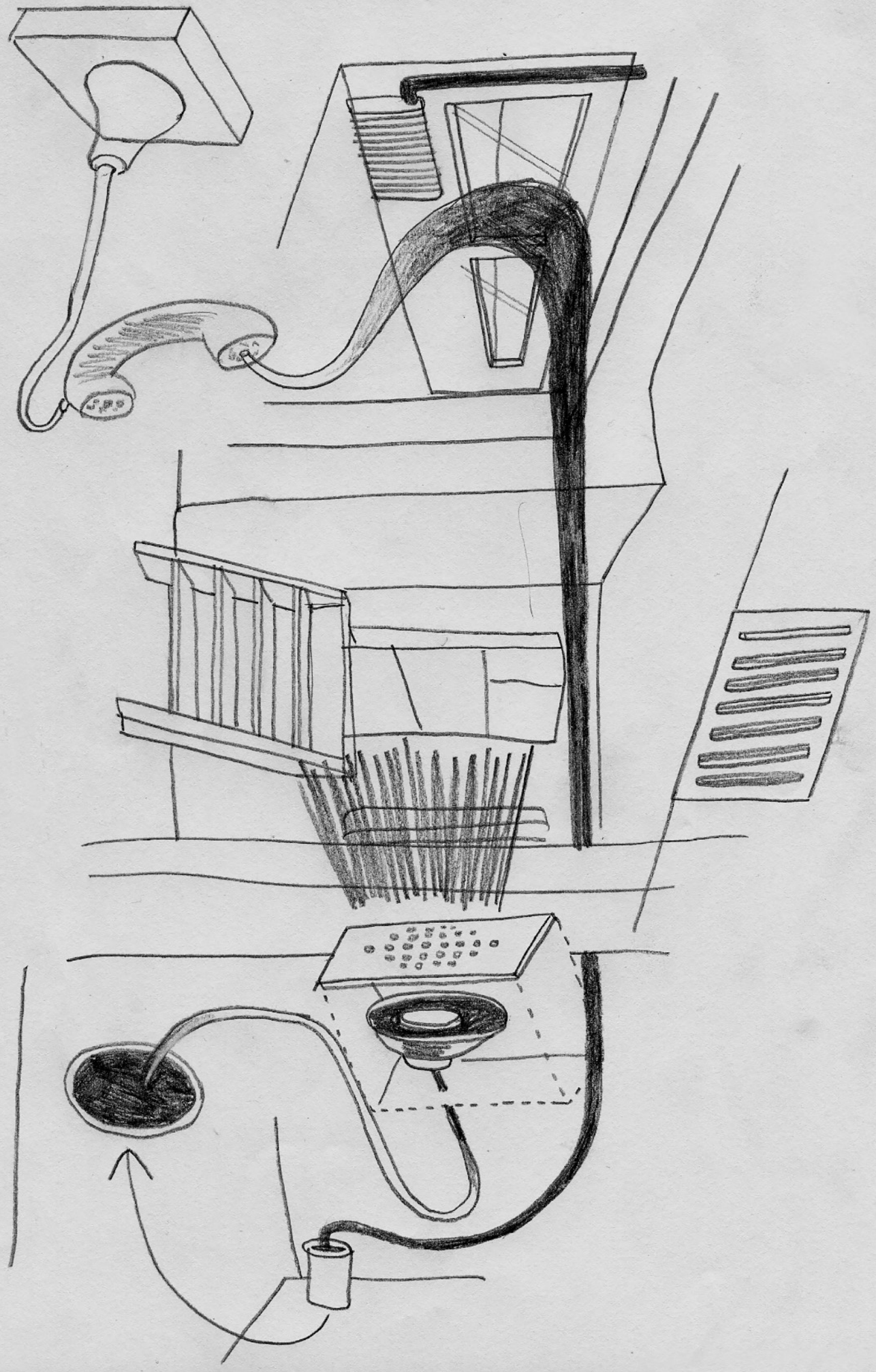
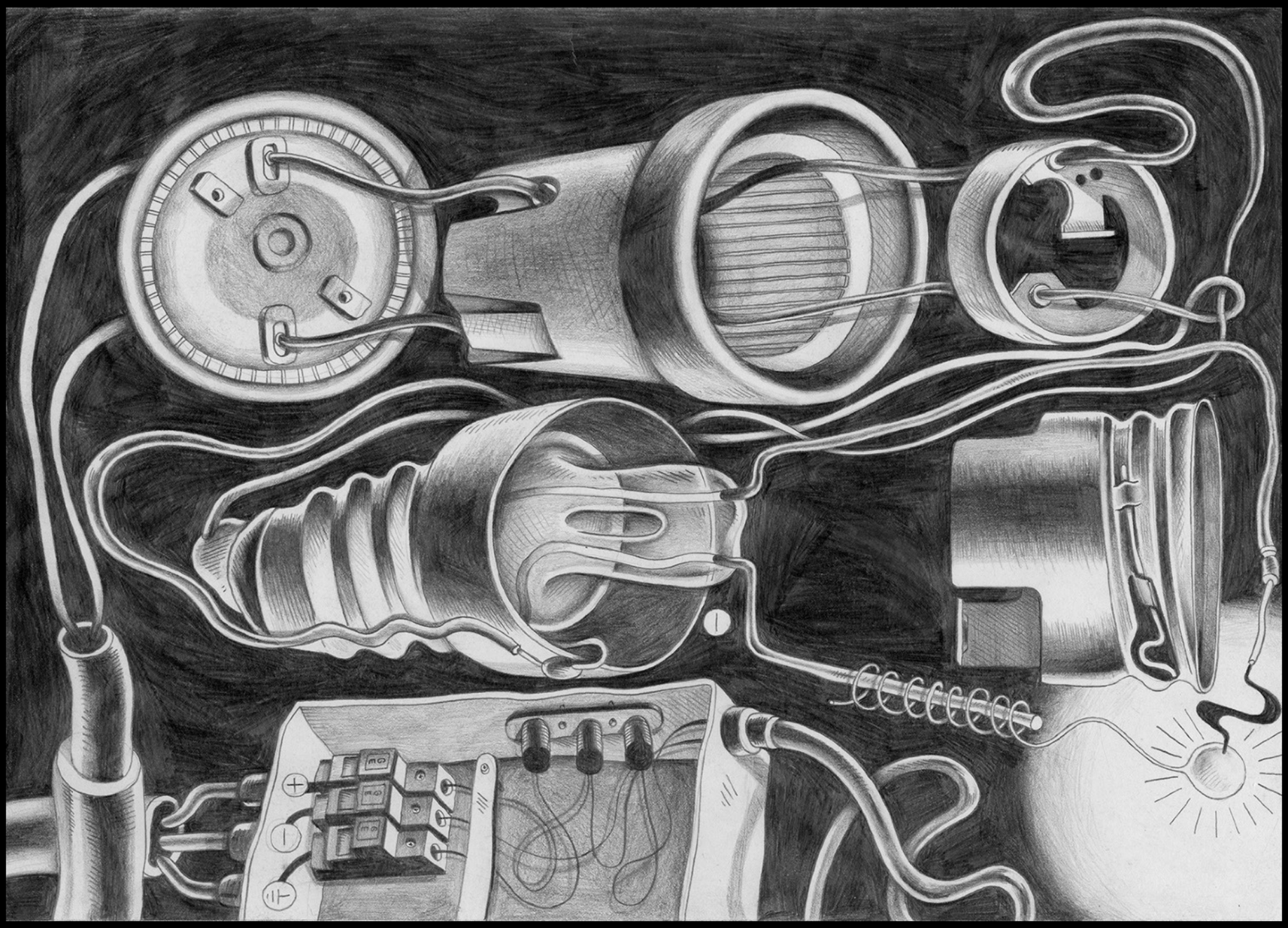
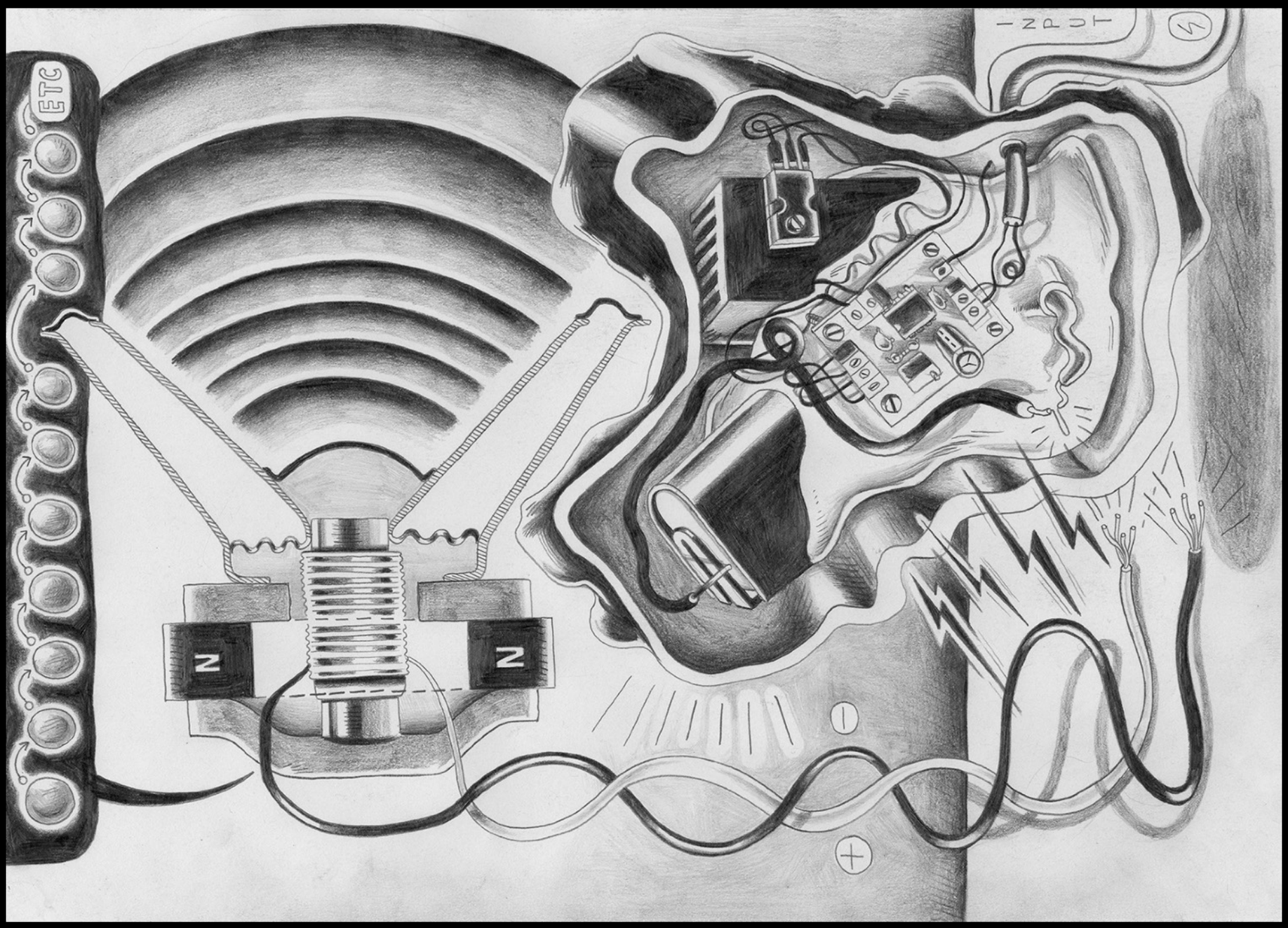



Foil sheet



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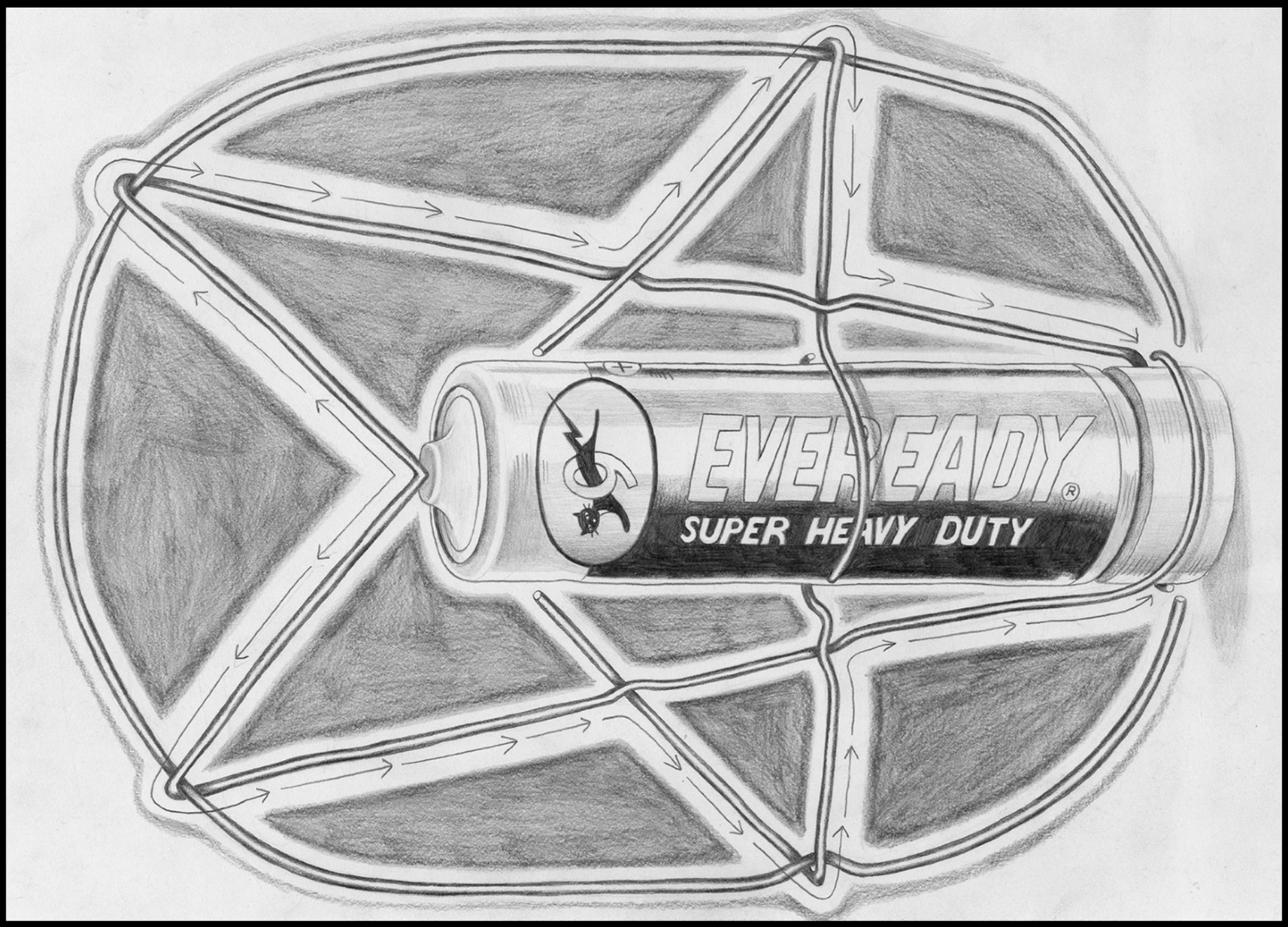
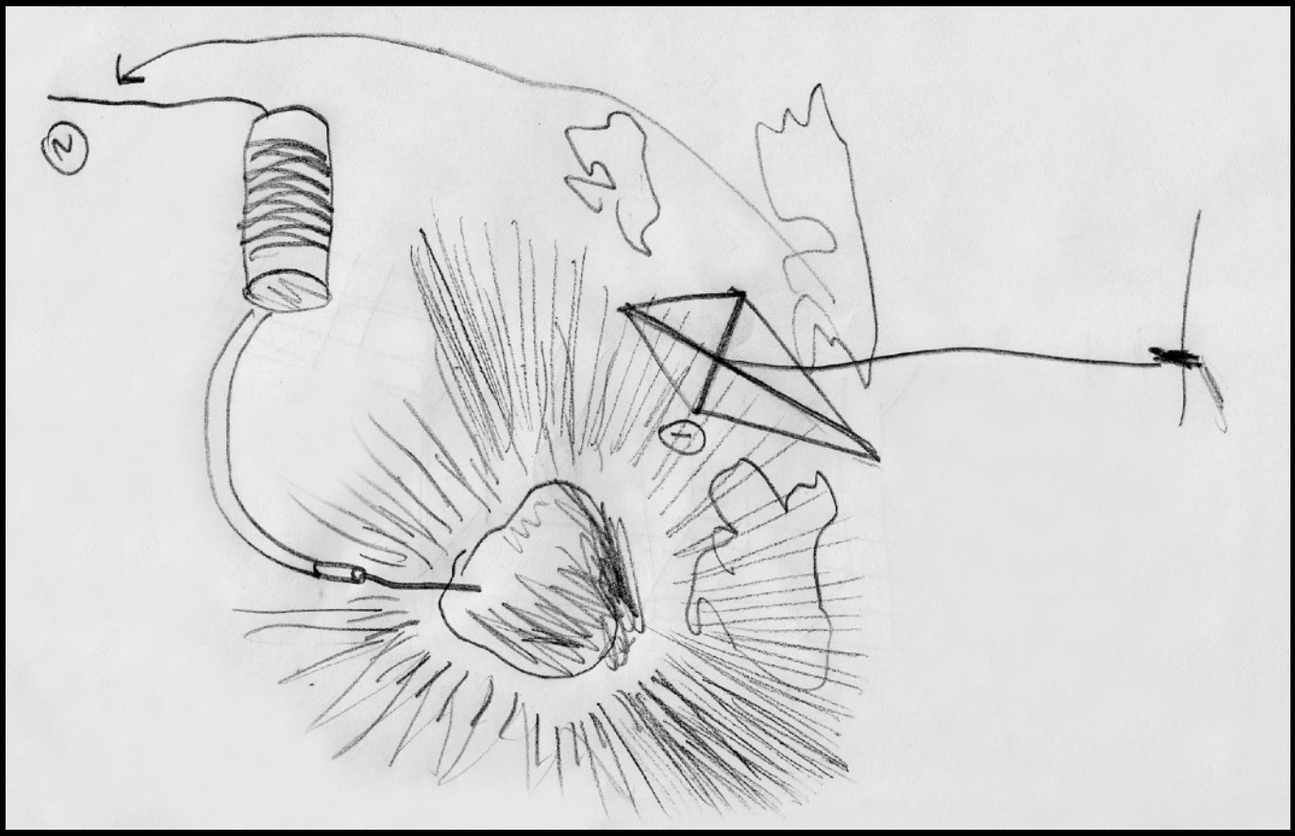

EVEREADY®
SUPER HEAVY DUTY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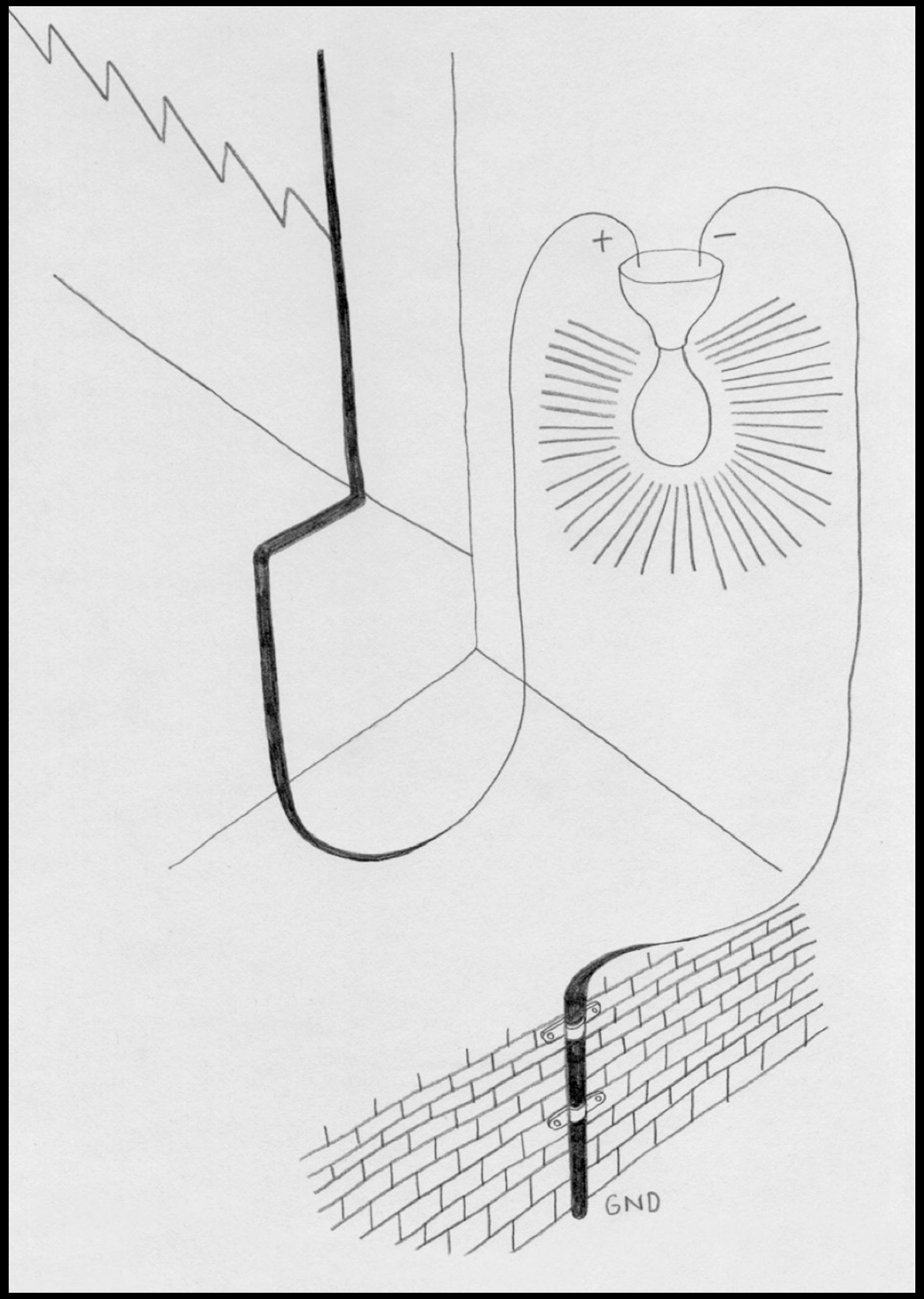
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GND

#EB4747 (2014)

Click link to essay

Kosciuszko Lookout (2014 –)

-----Original Message-----
From: Mathew Kneebone [mailto:studio@mathewkneebone.com]
Sent: Thursday, 31 July 2014 9:44 AM
To: roger.bell@environment.nsw.gov.au
Subject: Mt. Kosciuszko: metal walkway for lightning related project.

Dear Roger,

My name is Mathew Kneebone and I'm an Australian artist currently living in the Netherlands. A theme in my research which informs my art practice is the history of electrostatic science and its relation to electronics. This includes meteorological phenomena such as atmospheric electricity and the global electrical circuit. This interest is born from my personal experience with lightning. My account of it will be published next month in Bulletins of The Serving Library, below is is an excerpt from the introduction…

Every summer at the end of the Christmas holiday, my family and I would embark on a long hike with the goal of reaching the top of Mt. Kosciuszko, the tallest mountain in Australia. Even in ideal conditions, we inevitably failed to summit—the walk is quite far—but in 1990, despite our less than perfect track record and an ominous weather report, we determined to attempt the journey once again. The icy hail blowing like frozen peas against our faces seemed like a fair warning, yet we pressed onward, up the slope along a rusty, metal-treaded path. When my father finally signaled for us to retreat, I was walking a few paces behind him and my brothers, along with my mother and my two sisters. I ran to catch up, turning my head back towards my sisters and mother just in time to see them silhouetted by a violent flash of light.

…One thing that isn't mentioned in the essay is that the metal walkway, which sort of meandered circuitously across the mountain face, served as a PCB trace or wire, conducting electricity for a distance before traveling through our bodies. My sister Therese was struck directly but was lucky that a nearby group of hikers were able to resuscitate her.

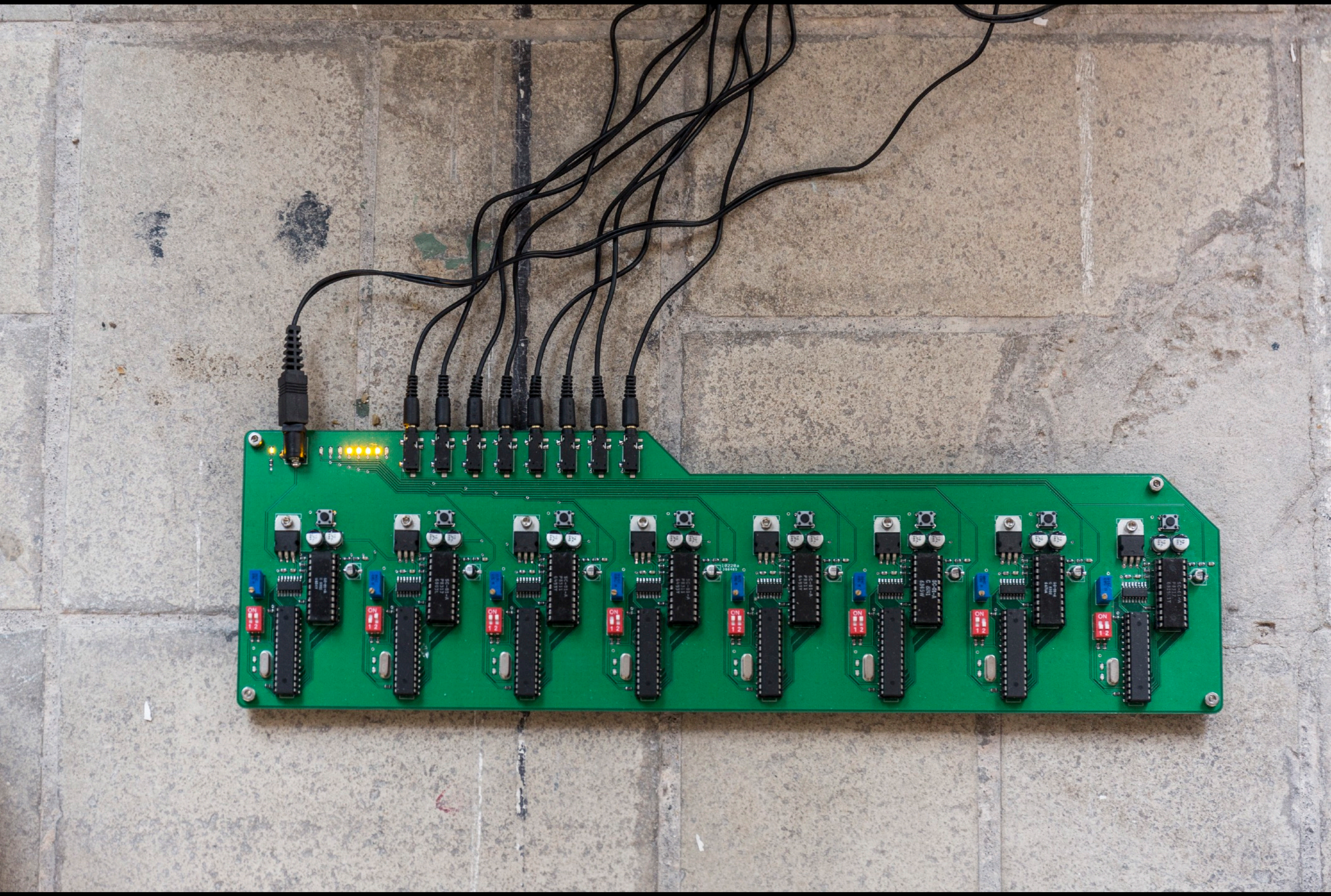
I'm writing to you because I'm preparing an exhibition about lightning early next year and the metal pathway is a catalyst to the story that I'll be presenting. I would like to acquire the length of walkway where the strike took place. From memory it occurred very close to the Kosciuszko Lookout wayfinding sign, and from what I've seen online the walkway is still installed there; I've attached an image for reference. Although a seemingly benign object—somewhat ubiquitous and infrastructural in appearance—it's design and placement is implict in the strike and is therefore charged with the energy from that event. My intention is to retrofit that section of the Kosciuszko walkway into another walkway or staircase. A sort of banal reminder to unforseeable end-user experiences. I would be happy to replace the section of walkway with something else to serve the same purpose.

Of course I'd also be happy to pay for the cost of de-installation, replacement material, and shipping.

Sincerely,
Mathew Kneebone

Detroit As Refrain (2014 –)
with Paul Elliman

Click for Mr. Wizard Votrax demo video

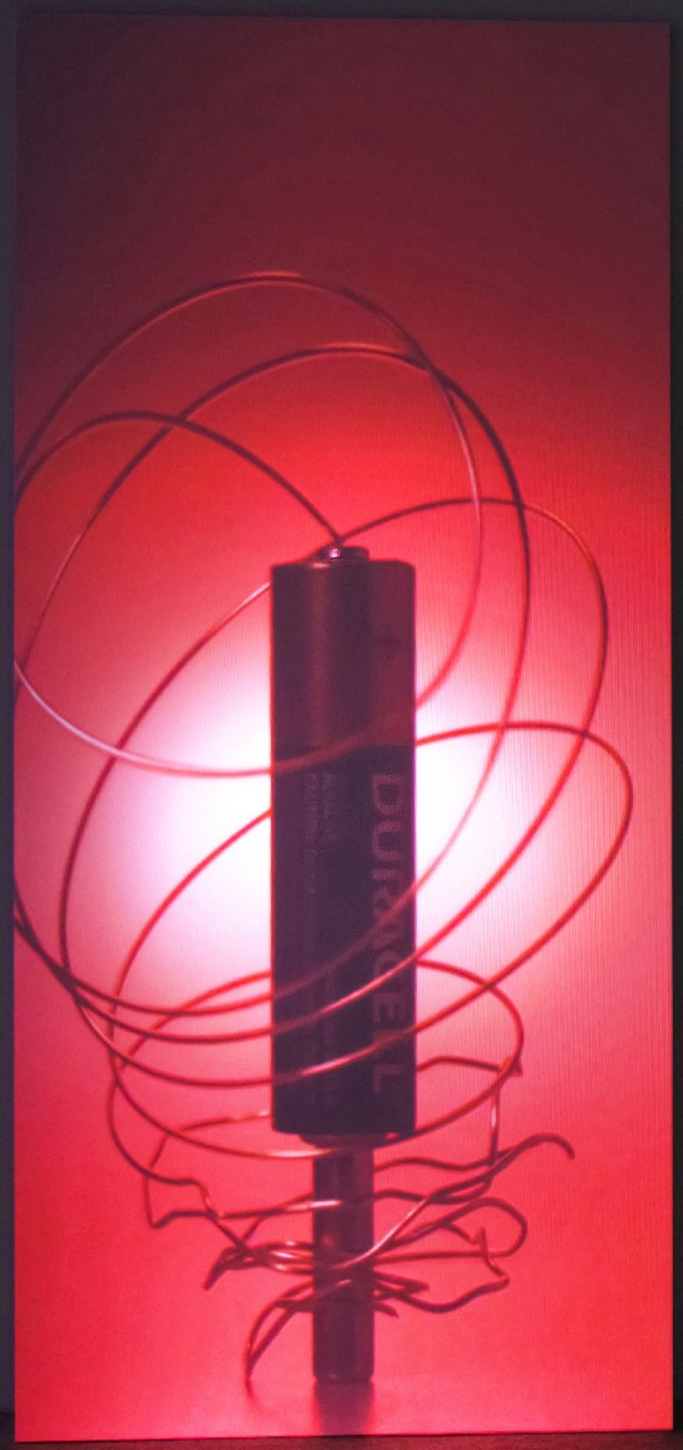


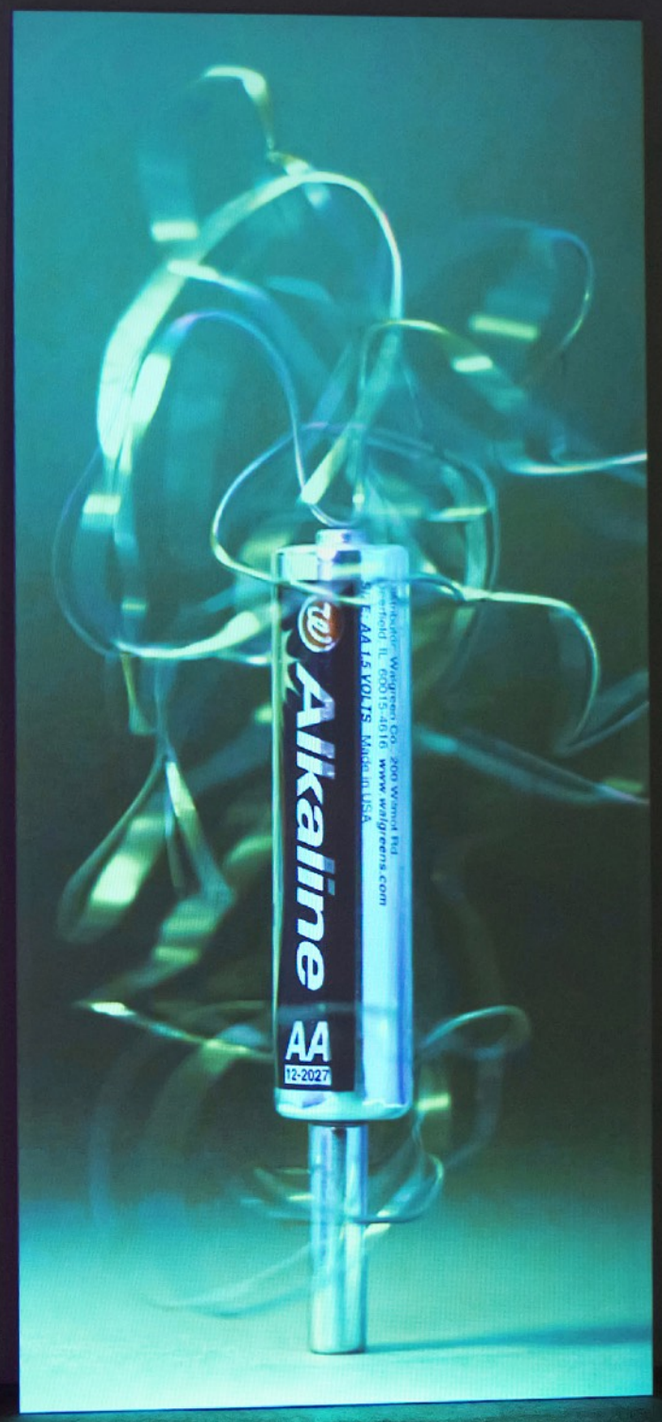
Click for ‘Detroit as Refrain’ audio sample

Techbane Monologue #1 (2018)
Click for audio sample

Personal Magnetism (2018 –)


AA
Energizer


DURACELL


Alkaline
AA
12-2027
Walgreens Co. 200 Wilmot Rd
Deerfield, IL 60015-4616 www.walgreens.com
AA 1.5 VOLTS Made in USA

A Small Black Cloud Looking Substance (2018 –)