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Unseen

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MFA
in
Graphic
Design
2009

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
August 2009

Submitted to the faculty of the School of the Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree, Master of Fine Arts
in Design/Visual Communication.

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Abstract

Photography conveys informative data, aesthetic value, and a conceptual message very much like graphic design. In the hands of the photographer, the viewfinder of a camera becomes an editing tool. Editing by point of view, use of color and cropping determines a great deal about the communication made by imagery.

In my creative project, I will explore photography as a means to generate form, concept, and content. As a result of this exploration, I expect to find new ways of approaching graphic design problems.

My goal is to develop themes that combine aspects of photography and graphic design. Themes could derive from broad issues like social statements, cultural phenomena, or mechanical effects, through the use of the capabilities of the camera, timing, lighting, or framing. Methods of editing photography such as, cropping, retouching, and splitting provide opportunities to experiment with making messages that rely on images alone. Another level of experimentation will be using typography in response to images.

Problem Statement

Studying the camera as a technical tool can facilitate a variety of approaches to imagery. It also enriches my creative process. It raises and requires awareness of the moment, the immediate, and the intuitive. It is a tool to discover and record. It led me to think of what we ignore in everyday life: under the desk, inside our clothes, and the back of the chalkboard.

Photography is not always made through simple observation or inventing new things, but by finding a subject that already exists in the ordinary. Marcel Proust stated, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” Photography can appear as evidence of things we do not see or pay attention to.

Ansel Adams stated, “A photograph is usually looked at seldom looked onto.” Photography does not inform us of something we do not know but of things we did not think of. It deals not only with appearance, but also with the inside of appearance.

For instance, making images of what we see every day but through different eyes lets us see under the chair, the inside of clothes, and the backside of a television. We look at what it is, but we do not always recognize it. It is interesting formally and conceptually to make these objects strange.

Photography frames with an edge, which we cannot see through our eyes in nature. Using one lens instead of two eyes makes our view quite different. The difference between two eyes and one lens is that eyes view a three-dimensional world. The lens of the camera sees the flatness of imagery. In other words, it makes a new relationship with reality.

After exploring the possibilities for finding photographic imagery in the world, I am interested in creating my own three-dimensional objects to photograph. This way I can manipulate both camera and objects. This enriches my process two-fold, and I expect to find new ways of operating between the camera and the object.

I make evidence without knowing why sometimes.



March, 20, 2008 / Main St. / windy with sunshine / a heavy bag with wrong outfit.



The work of design, which expresses things that are
seen and felt,
is really what I want to do instinctively in my life.
In the sense that life is an endless journey and homework
on the way toward the truth,
Stewart Brand's words, "Stay hungry, Stay foolish" always
gives much courage and strength to my will
who is trying to approach nearer to the truth as much as
possible?
For me, design is life which encourages me
straightforward as a pure self.
Design is my life
to continue incessantly while I am alive.

From my childhood,
I learned a lot intuitively from the color and
shape of things at a glance,
which come naturally into my sight.

I felt the atmosphere they harbor
rather than from the letters and texts.
By this,
my way became clearer and concretized
from the time that I moved from Korea to the States
for my high school life.
As a student who was educated under the
abstract and heavy color saturation of Korea,
I could not forget the inspiration coming
from the American splendid full-colors
that I first encountered.
This stimulated my susceptibility to the level
of my heart beating and aroused overflowing
passion without grasping of the reasons.

However, the memories of sorts then continued
to lie and drift at the bottom of my heart even after
I returned to Korea to major in graphic design in
the University. The more I studied and learned
about design in the University in Korea, the more
I expected these unsettled concepts could be
clearer and be put in order.
Every bit of design work which is processed by deriving a rough
idea through a concept and enhancing it into a refined closing
is regarded to me like the process of infusing soul into an
inanimate object.

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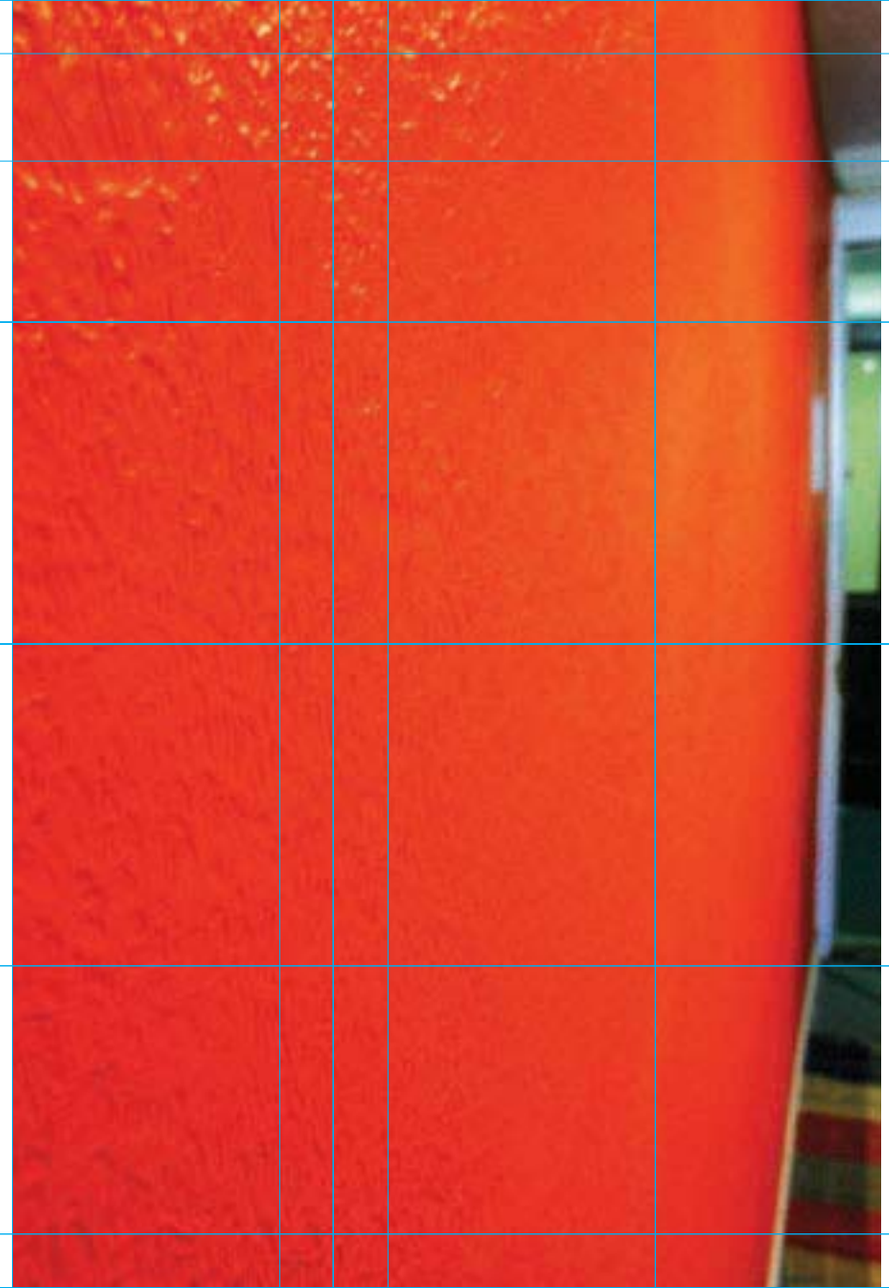


When I arrived in Richmond, the problems that I faced were difficult

because of difference of thought.

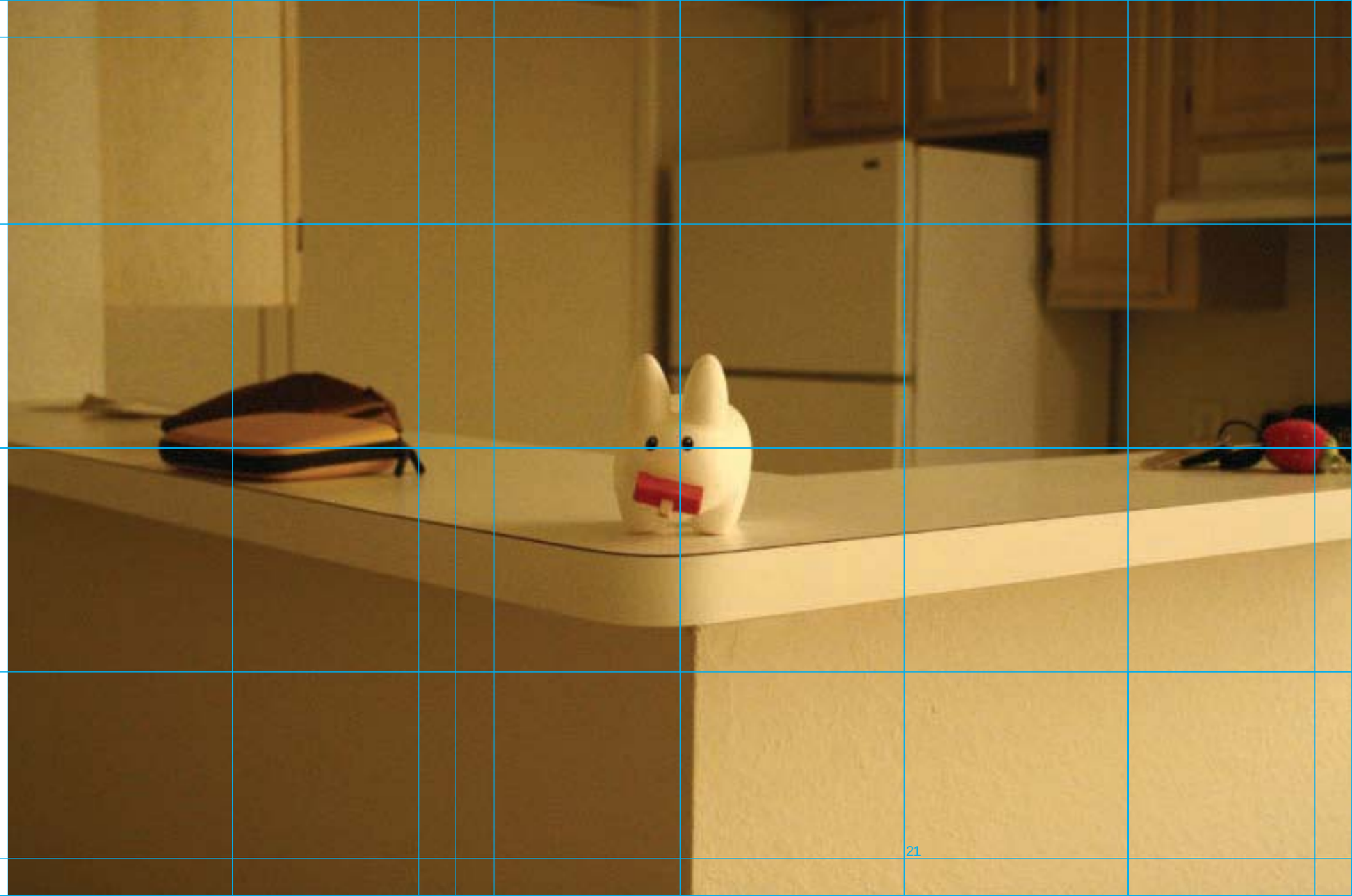
No matter how big a problem is, in a different country I was requested to think differently.

That was very interesting to me and I had to conceive of why.



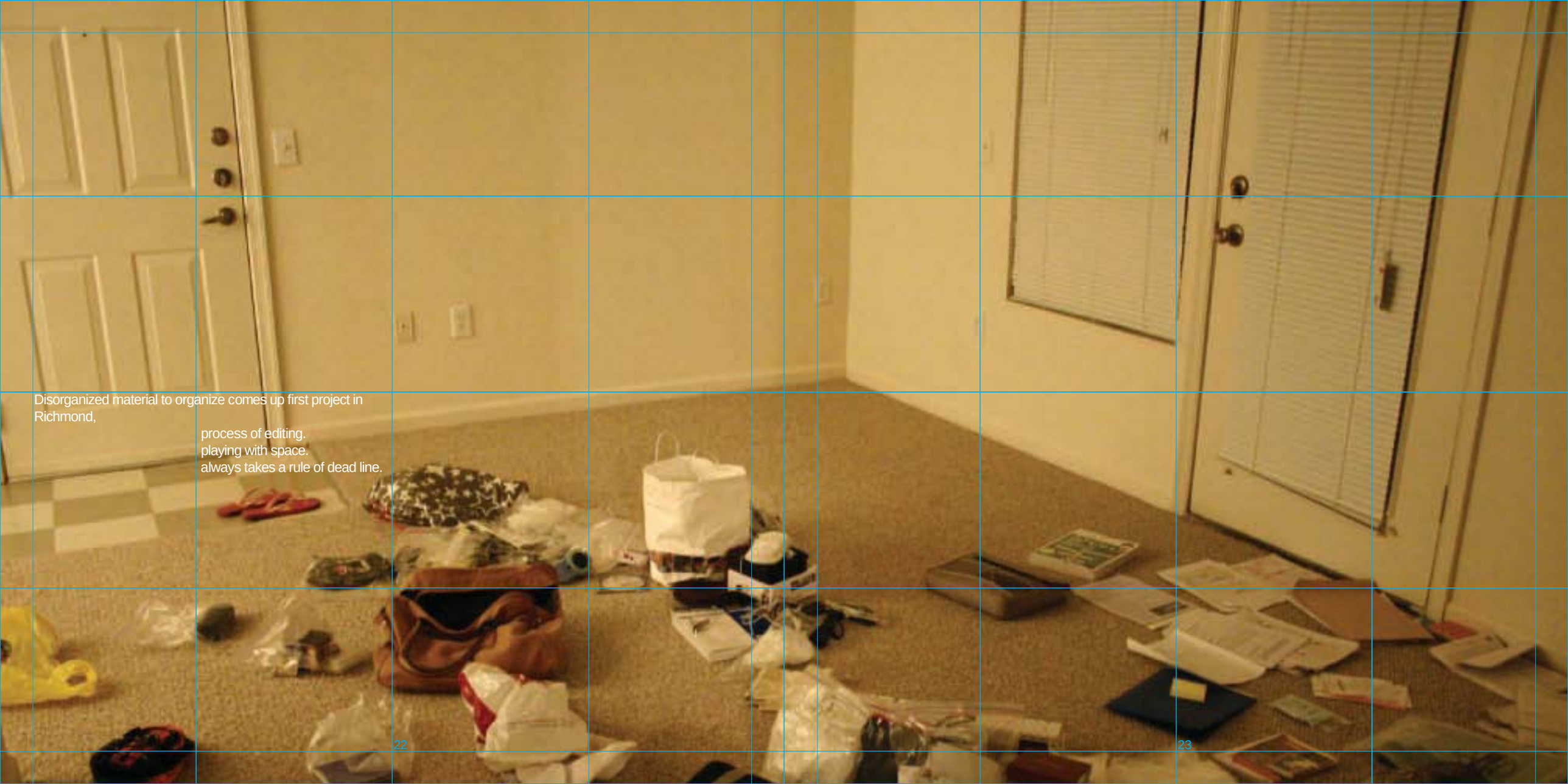
Difference of thought not only started but also became my turning point.

Moreover, it was a chance to rethink of my notion and philosophy of time, space, and life.



To be a totally new stranger
in new place was
to watch myself, my old habits and
question my unconscious responses

is working smart
more important than working hard?

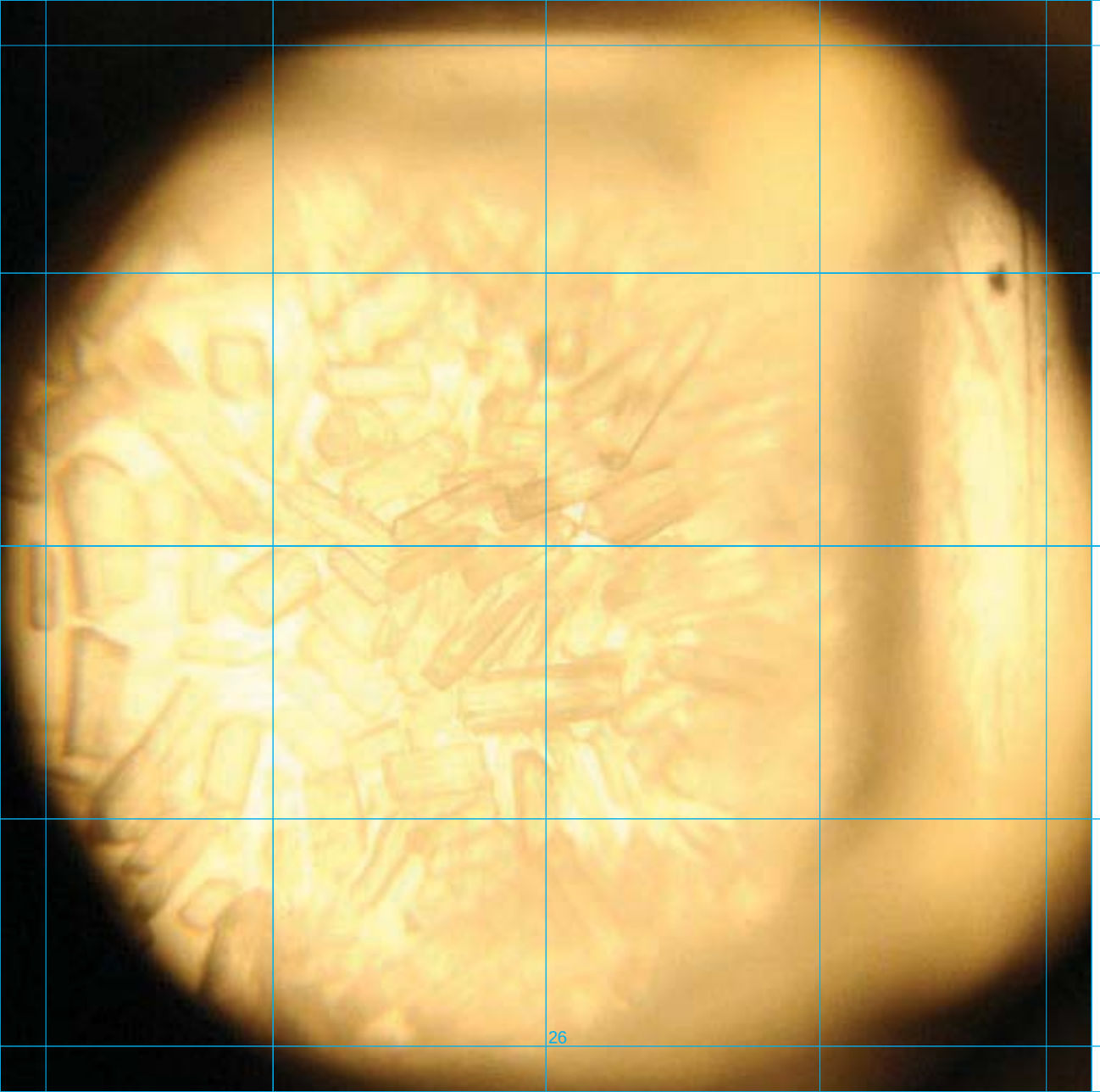


Disorganized material to organize comes up first project in Richmond,

process of editing.
playing with space.
always takes a rule of dead line.

When school started,
I was on the doorway to totally a new place
with strange new shoes.

My new journey was started all of a sudden.

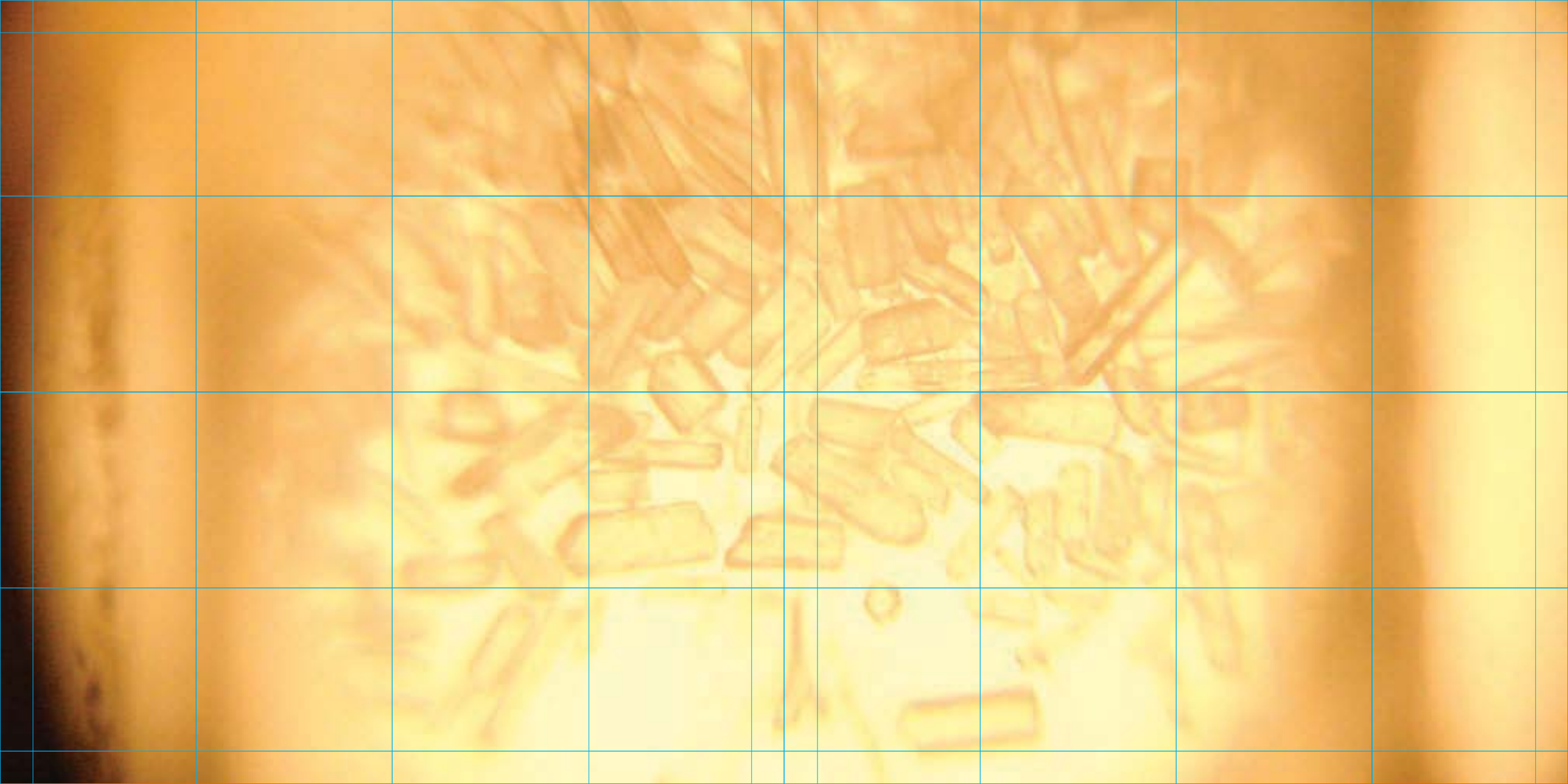


This process of thinking worked and influenced me in graduate school.
Sometimes or most times,
the way of education
in this design school was very different from my previous design school, actually,
to state it more clearly it had a very different picture.
It could be interpreted as a different system,
mind map, purpose, or way to communicate.

I think language is a contribution to mind structure.
How structures were constructed by language
was found in class by classmates and me.

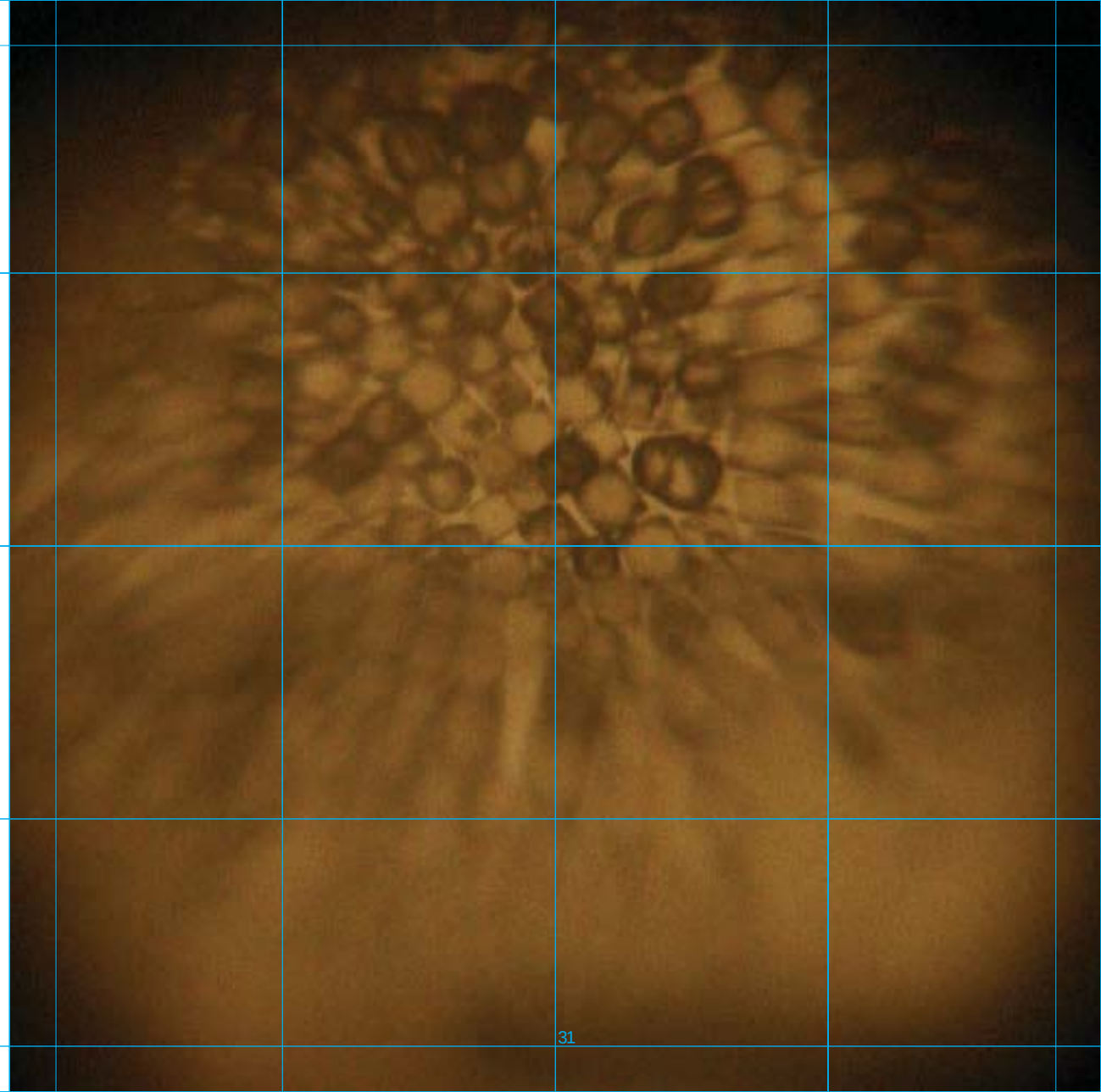
To know more of how
it is constructed I needed more to listen, read, and observe.

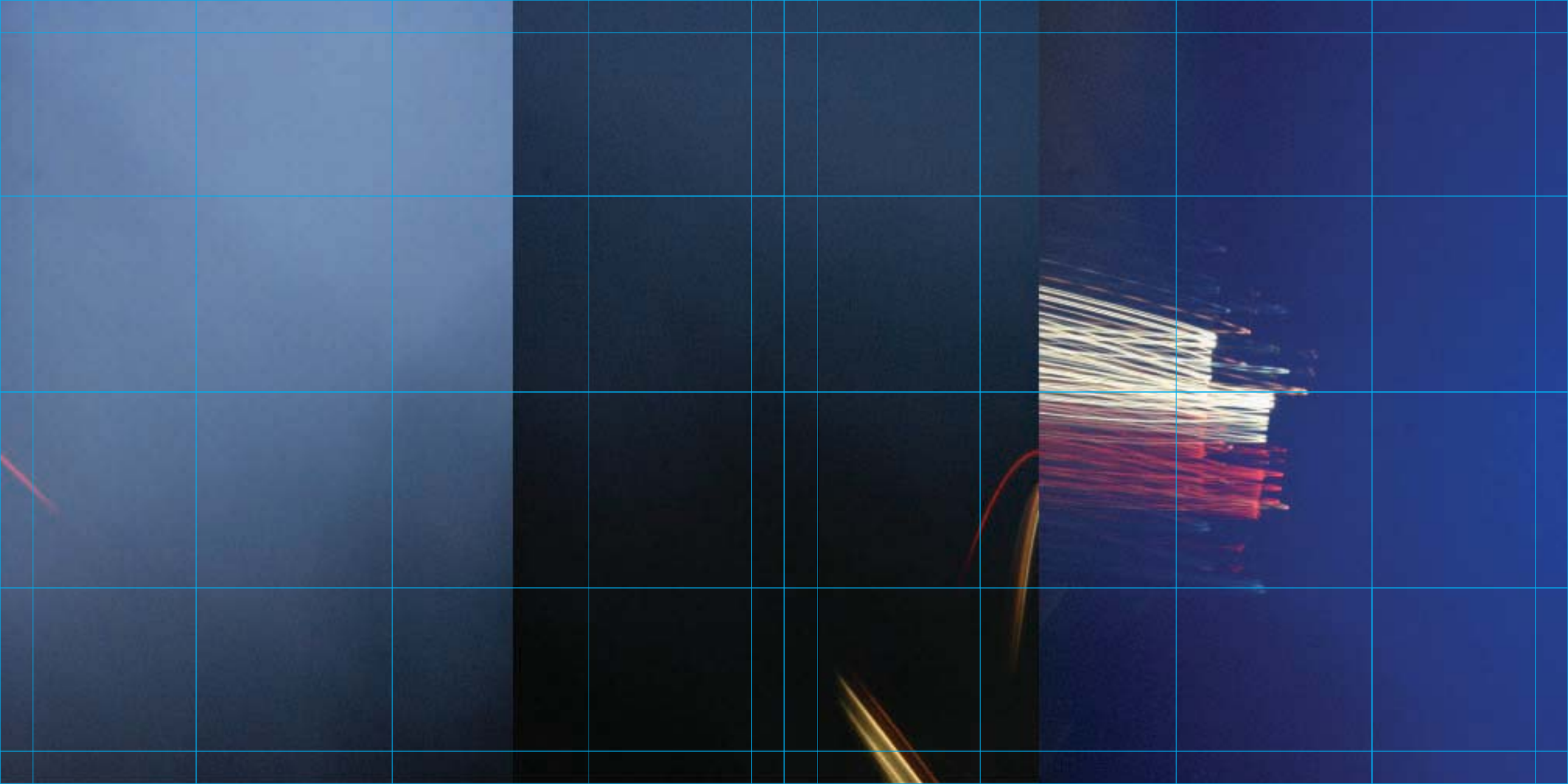
In graphic design,
the meaning of language involves visual communication
and typography .
Observing how it works was very interesting to study.

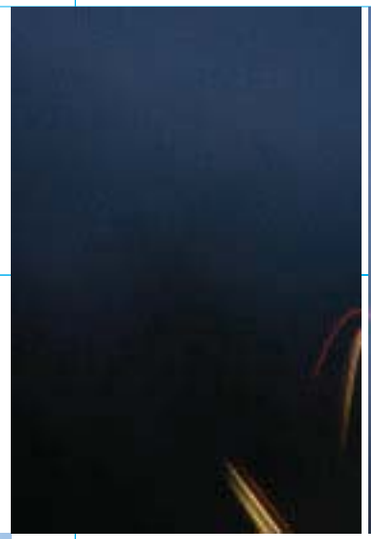


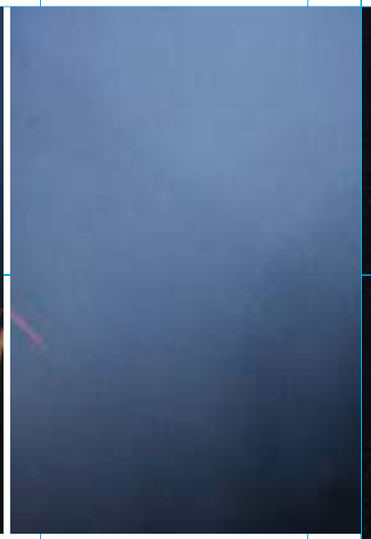
I felt like my turning point delivered me to new and first basic point.
it gave me a chance to think of myself and the way I think.
I was going like a train deeper and deeper, it made me meet my nationality, my own stereotype from my background culture.
But at the end, what I think was influenced by my background without my concern. Before saying it is right or wrong,
it was not even my idea or opinion.

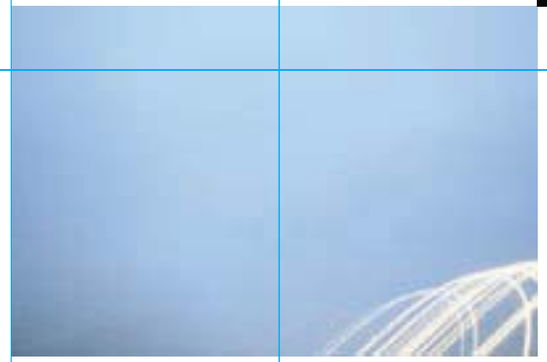
This turning point made me aware of my design work pursuing mostly visual attraction. Of course aesthetic beauty
can be one part of visual work.
I realized what I needed to solve and spend time in creating design work is beyond just the aesthetic.
After this I felt like my unnecessary and decorative elements started to be less important.



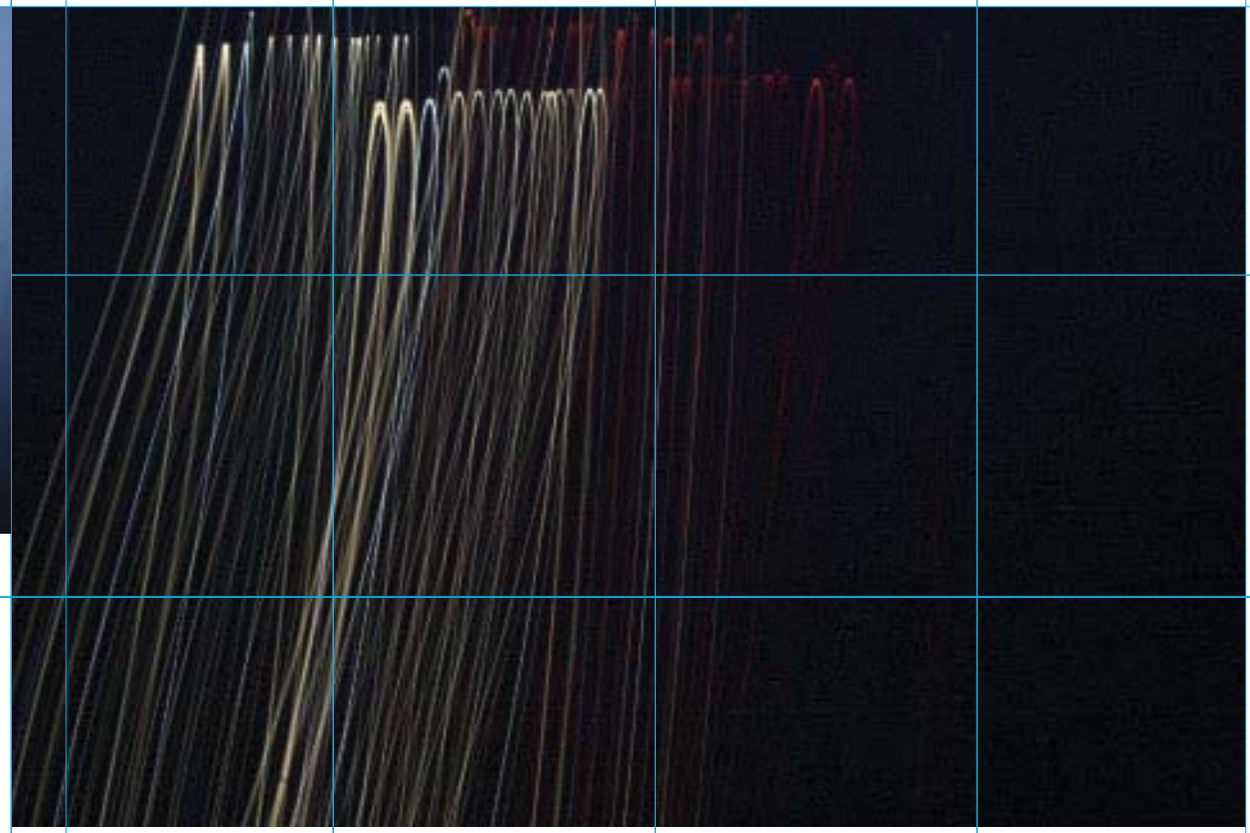








When the light moves, the moment is caught.











Sequence of event,
there is an unexpected hidden part of truth.

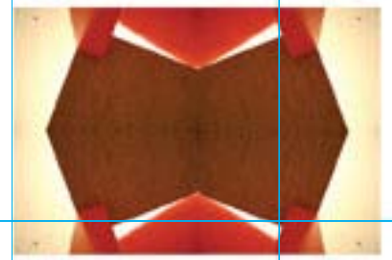


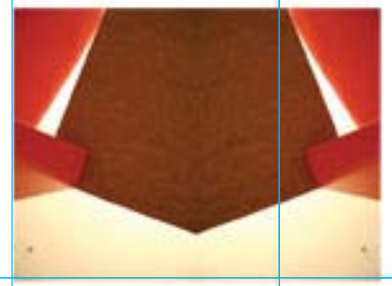


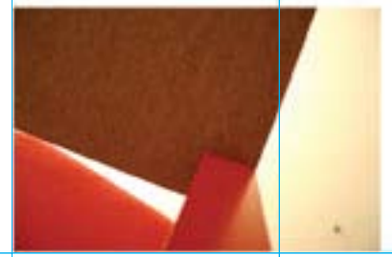

Collecting undersides of chairs was puzzle like.



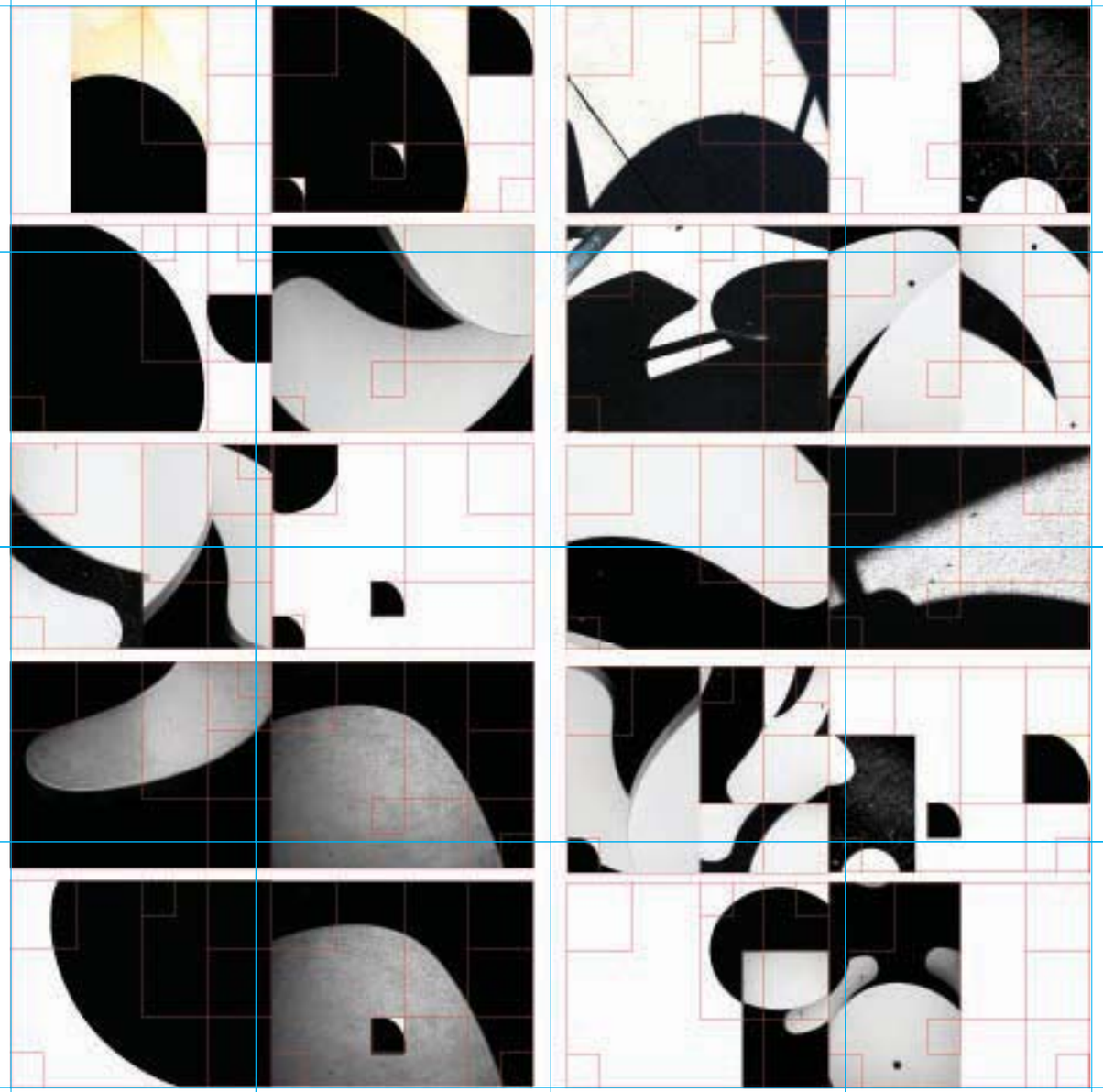


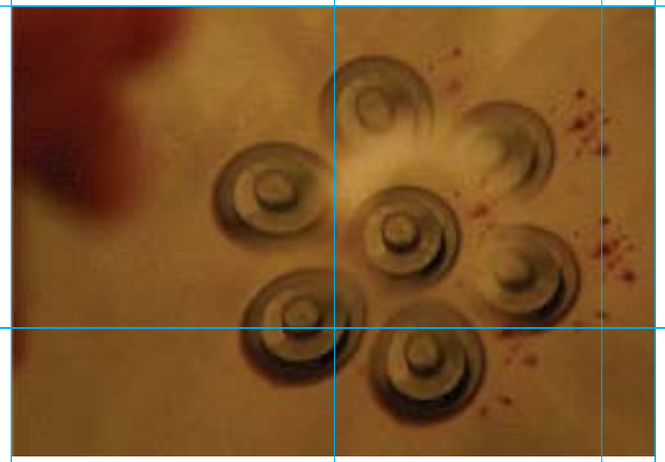






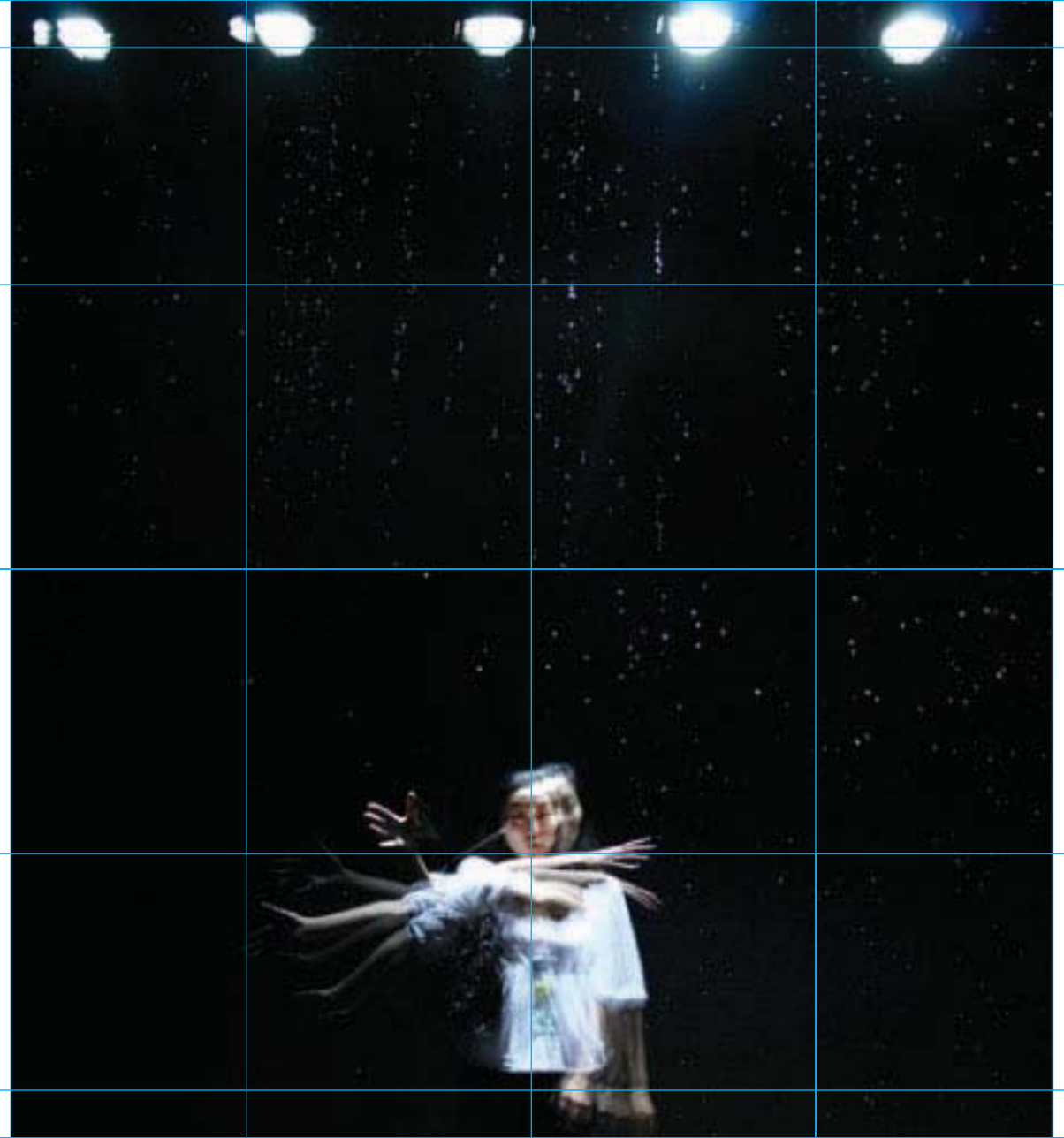
Undersides of chairs moves as pattern and led me to totally different space.







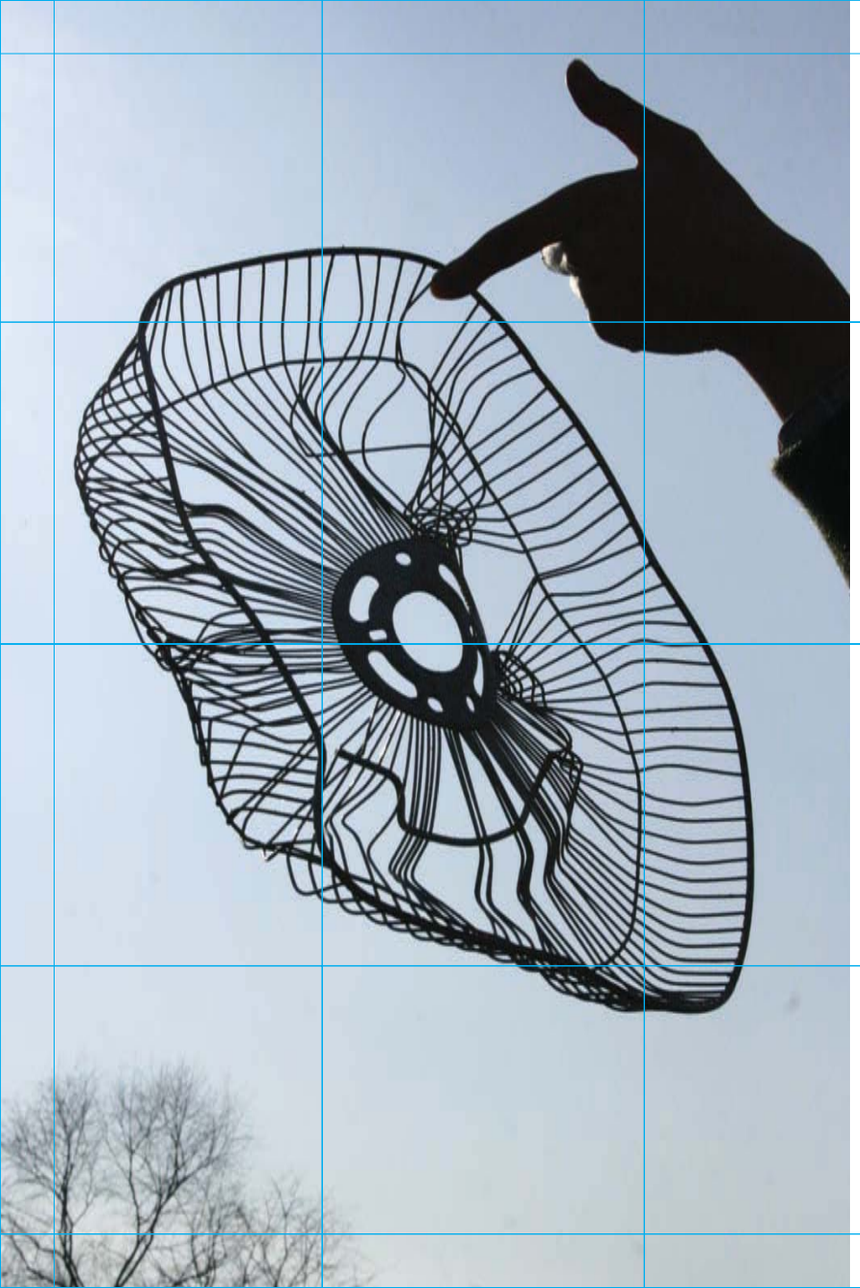
Whole notion of ugliness struggles with how it shows.

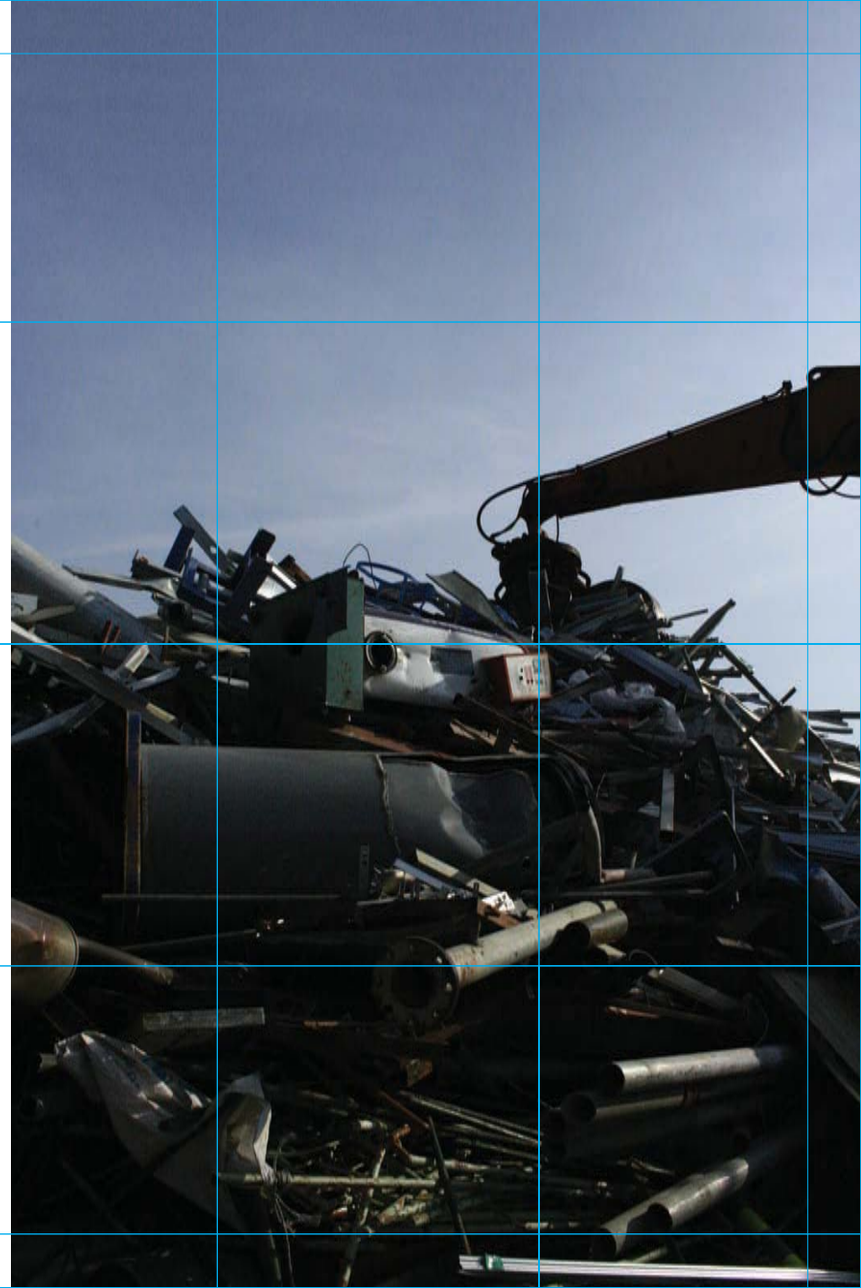


We see in the limit of what light shows.

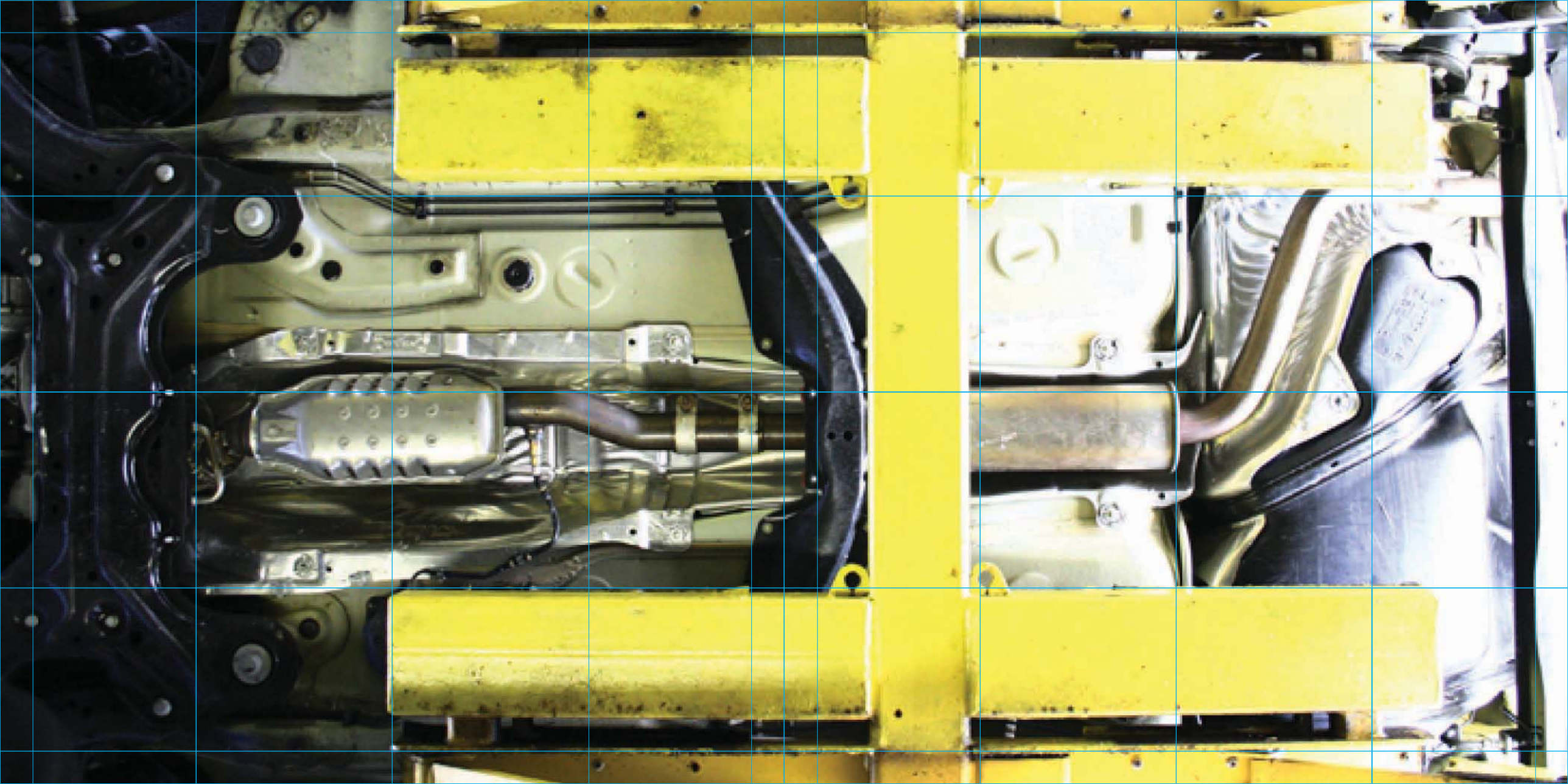
Junkyard invited me to distorted place. Stinky smell can coexistence with beauty.

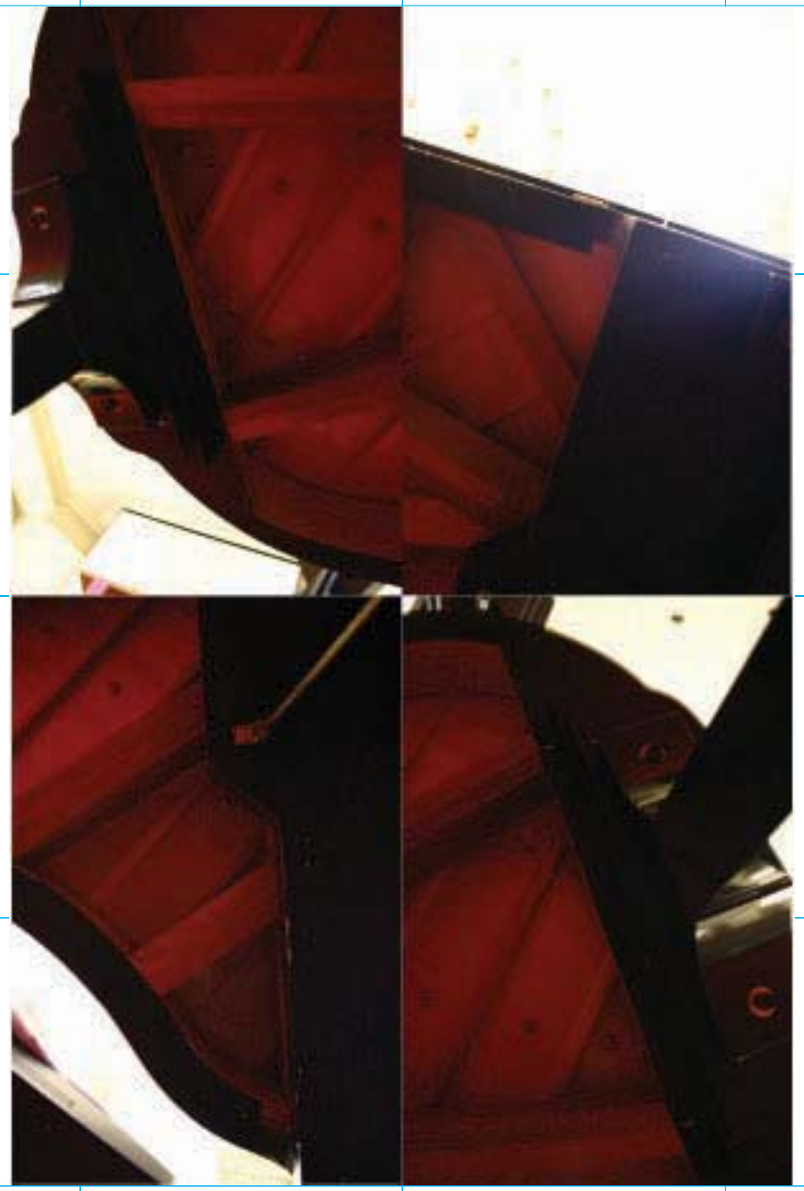






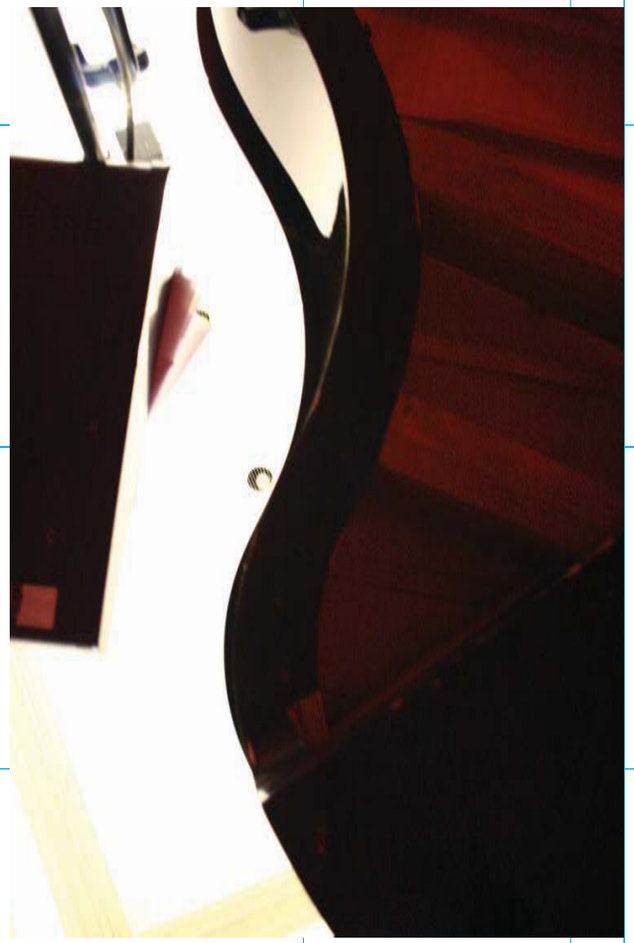




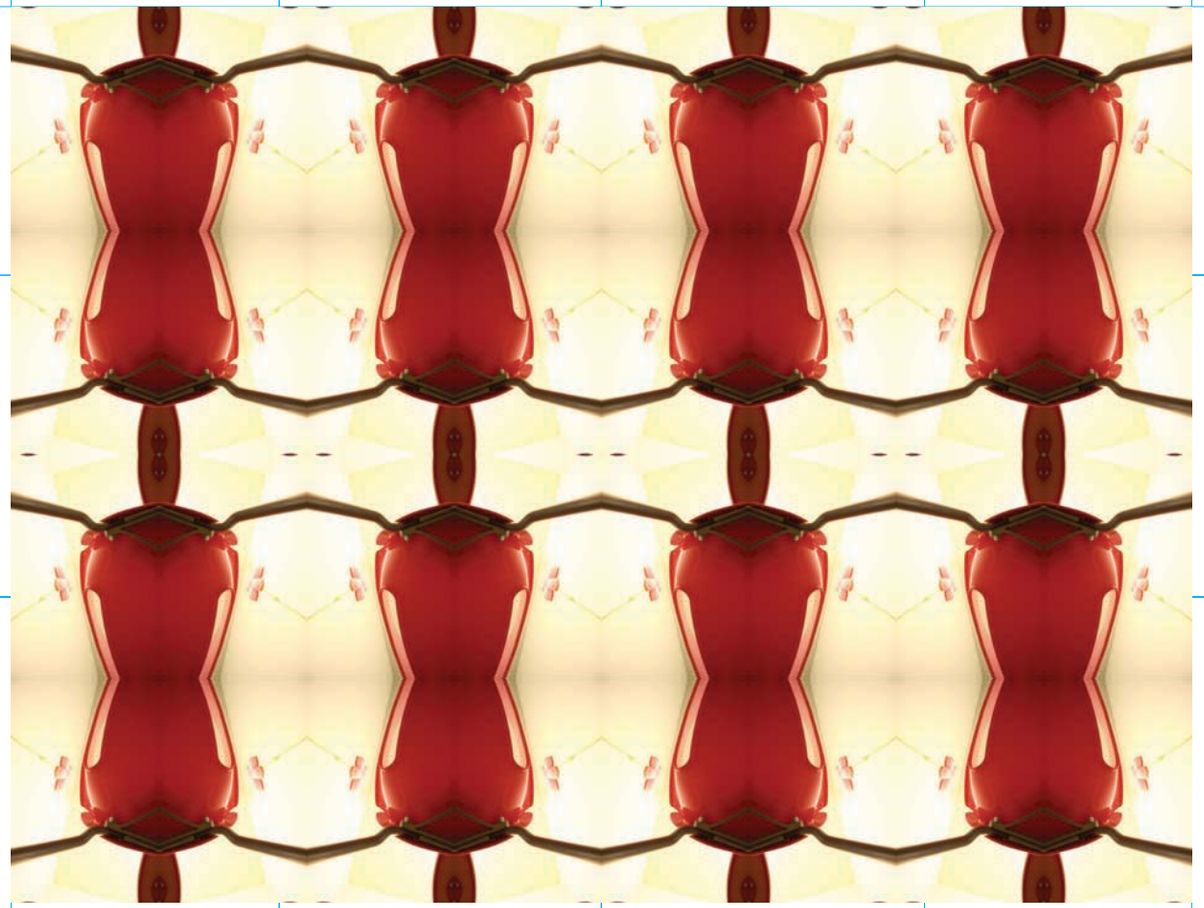


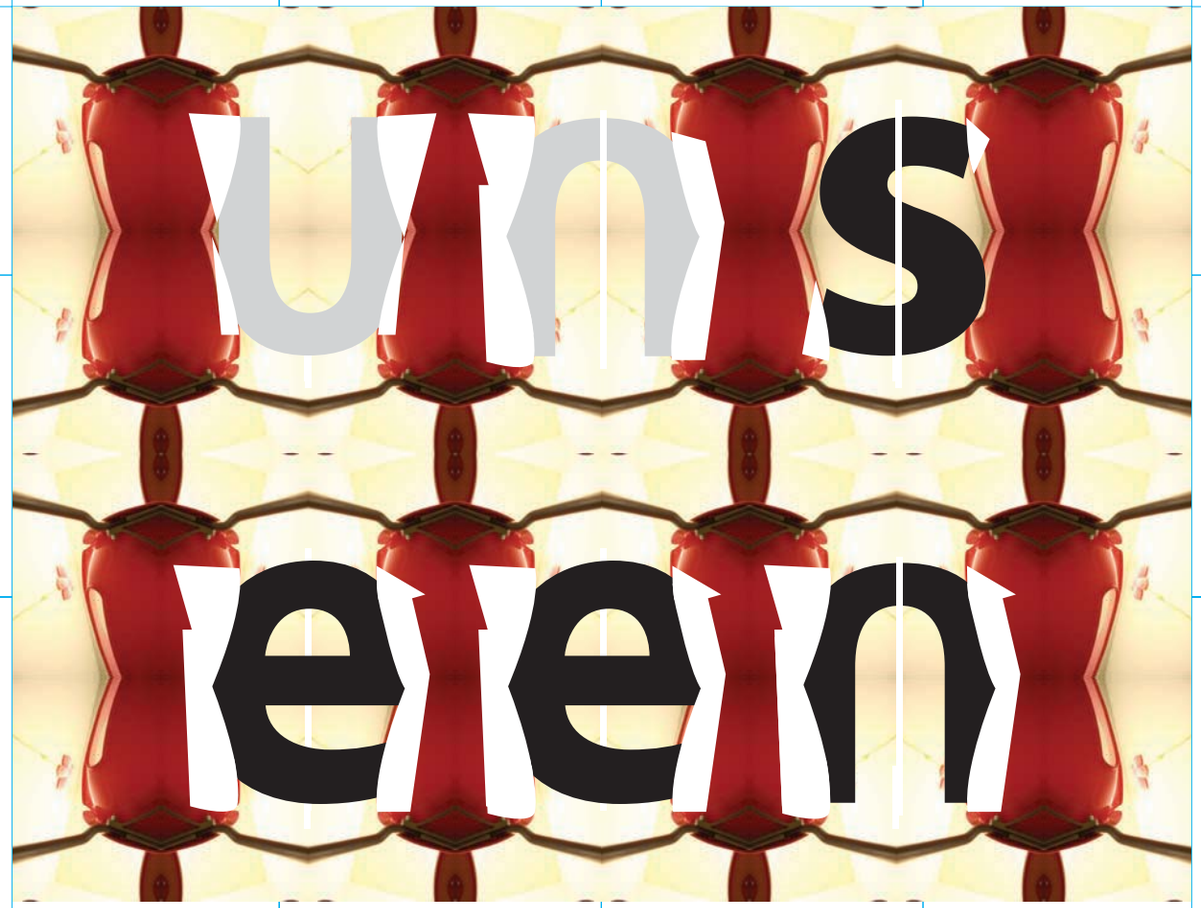
Underside of piano was very beautiful red. It brought me to old smell of wood, to some other past.

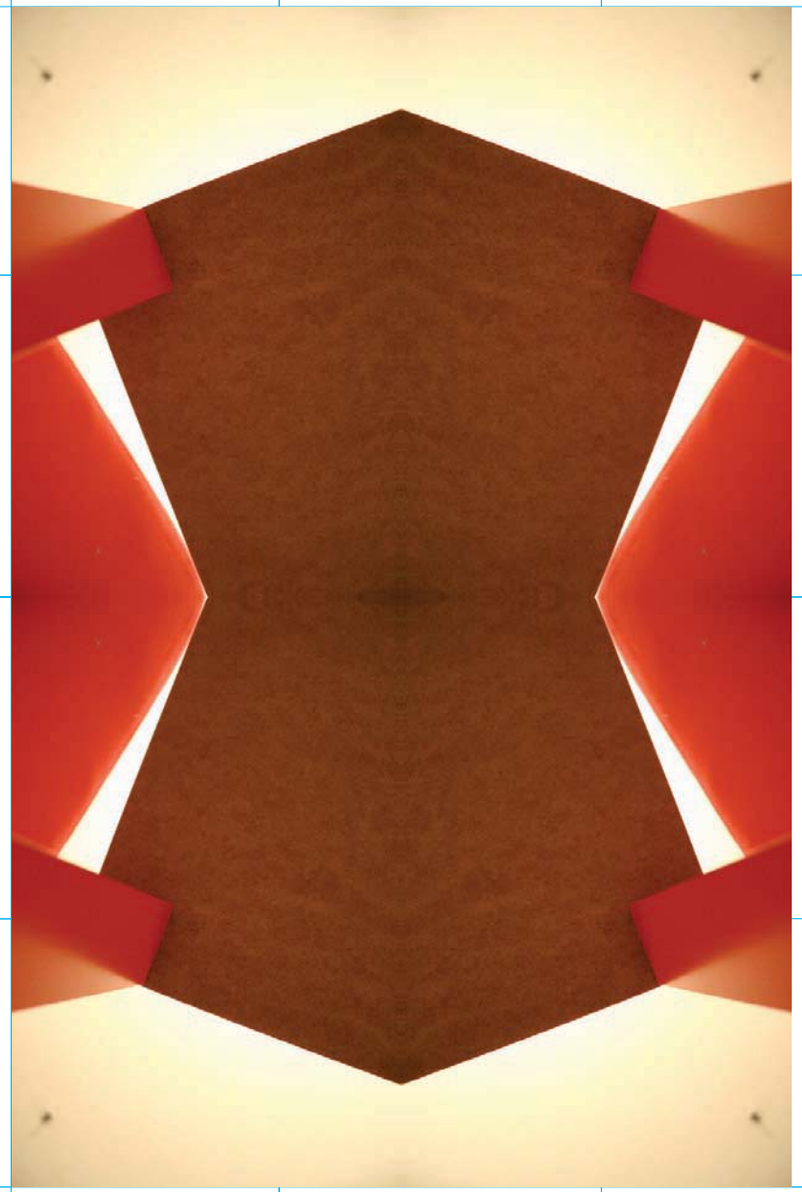


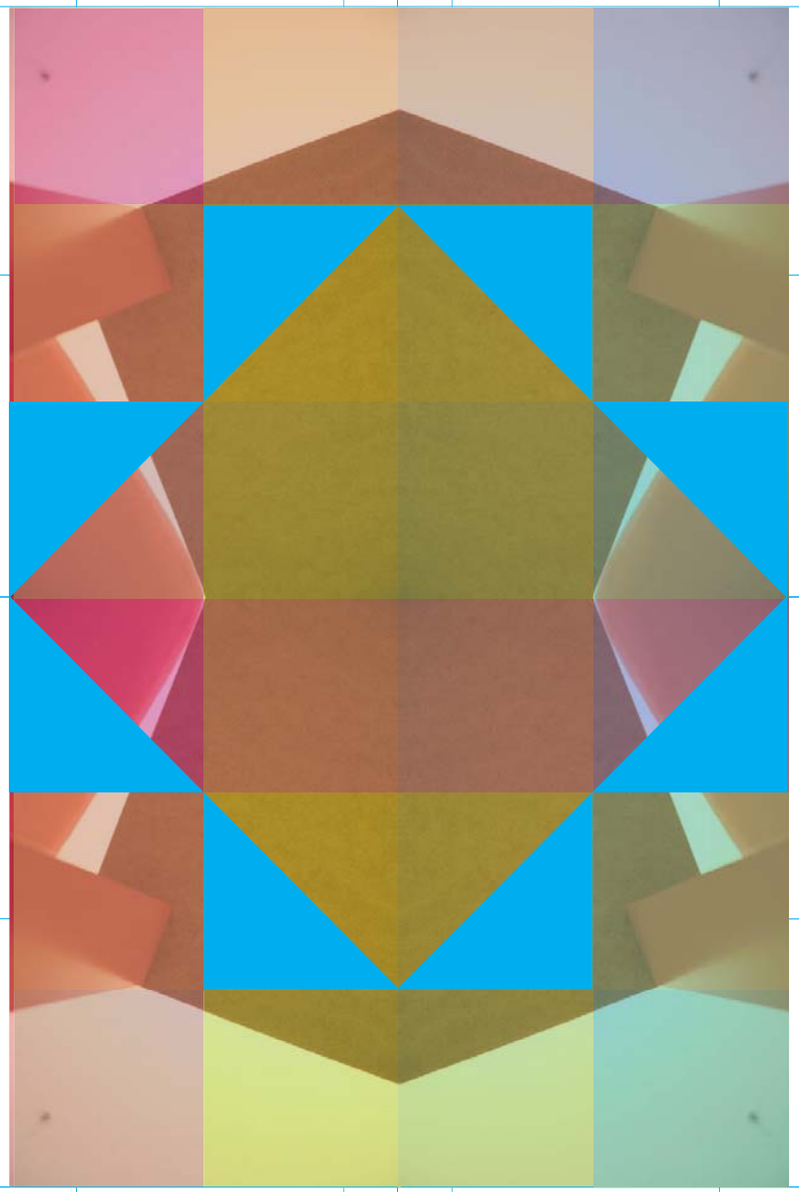


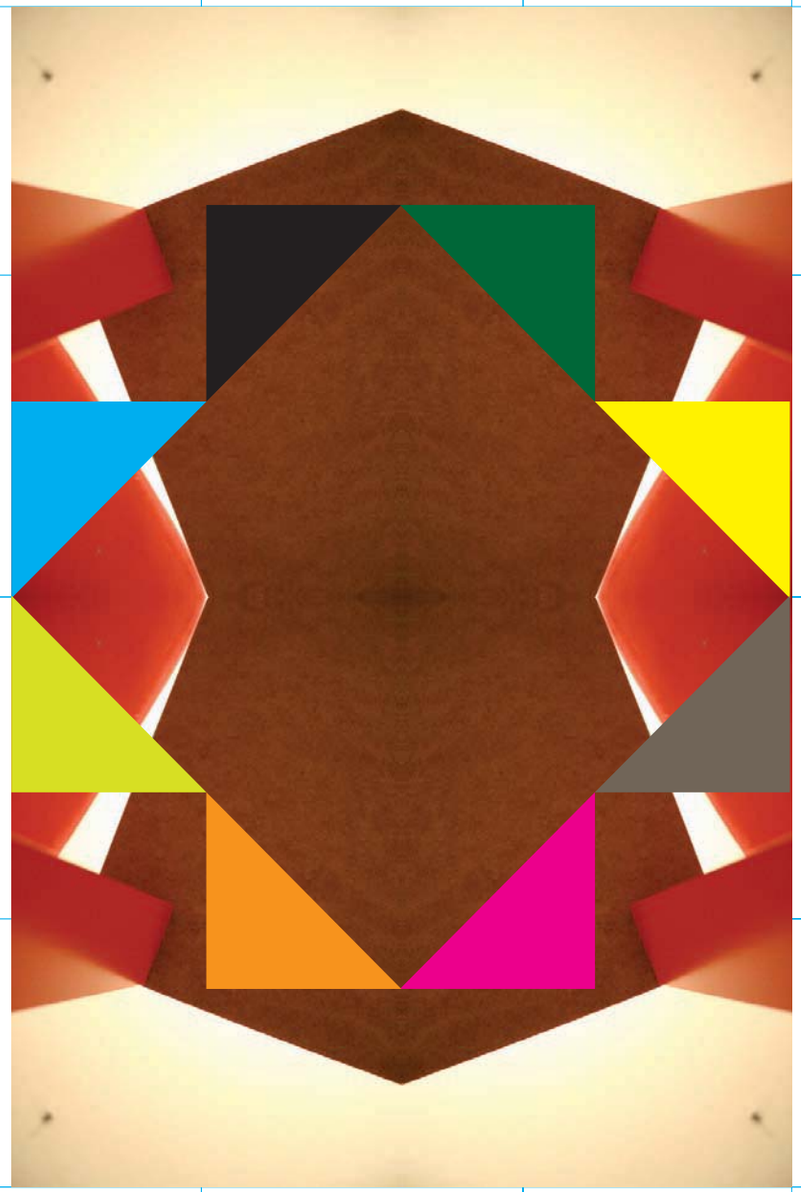


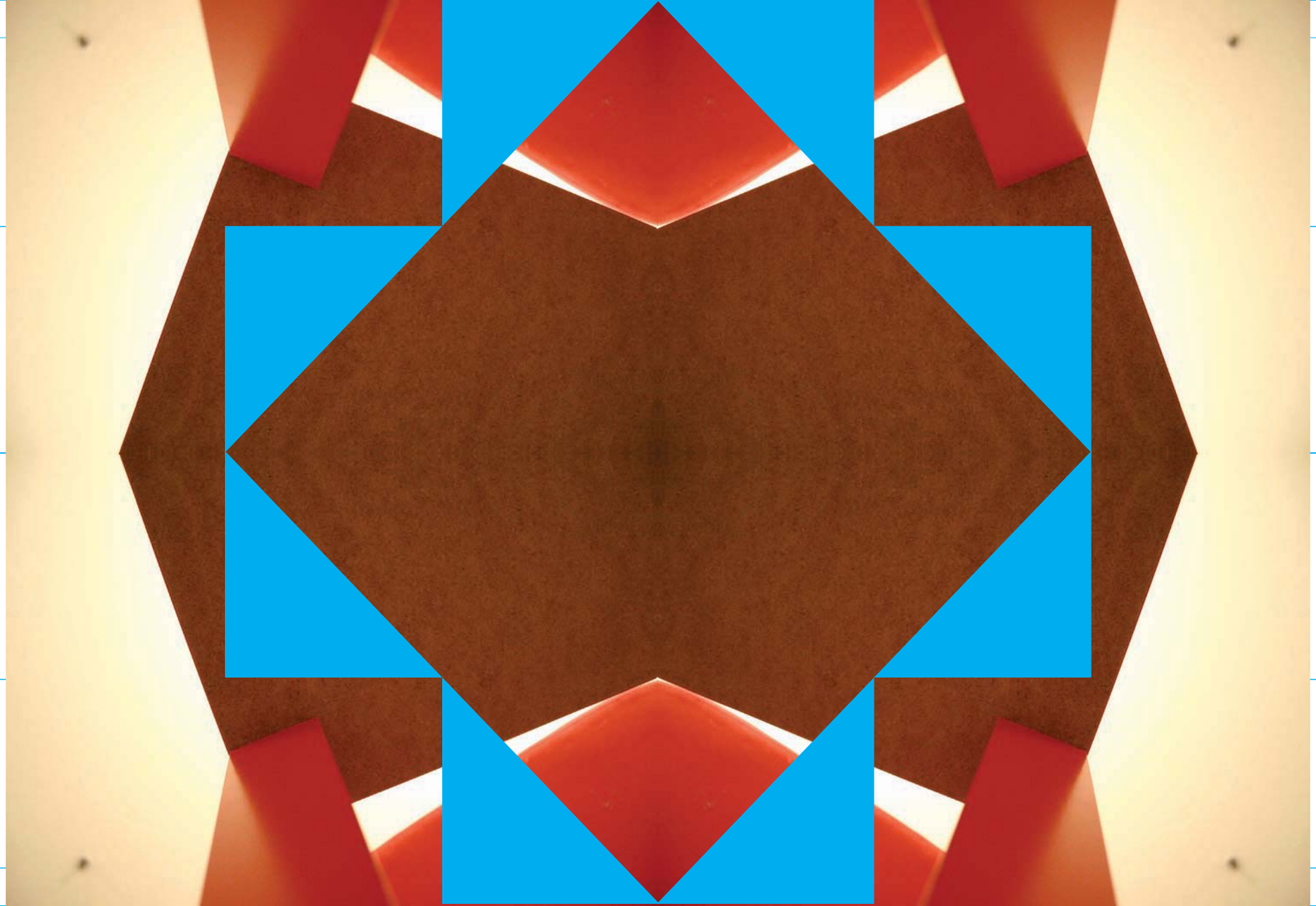



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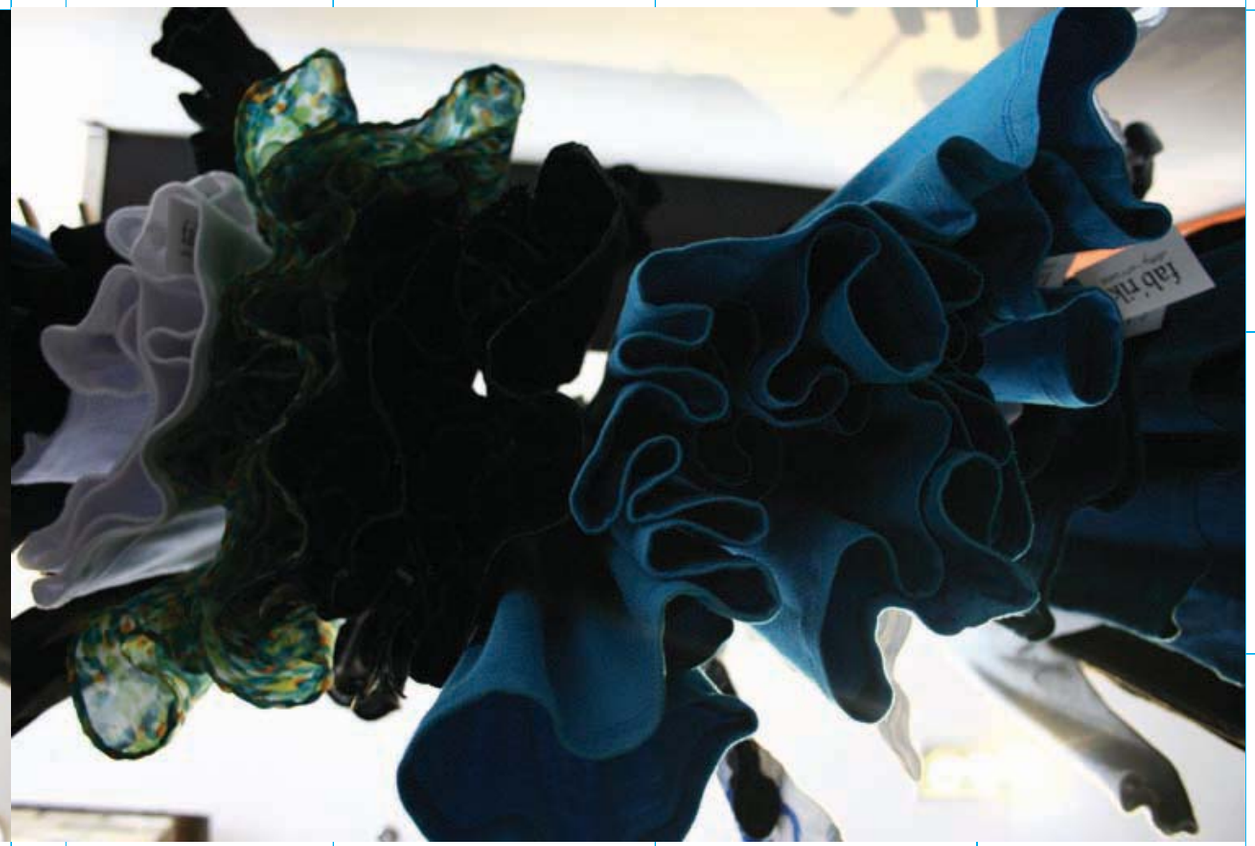




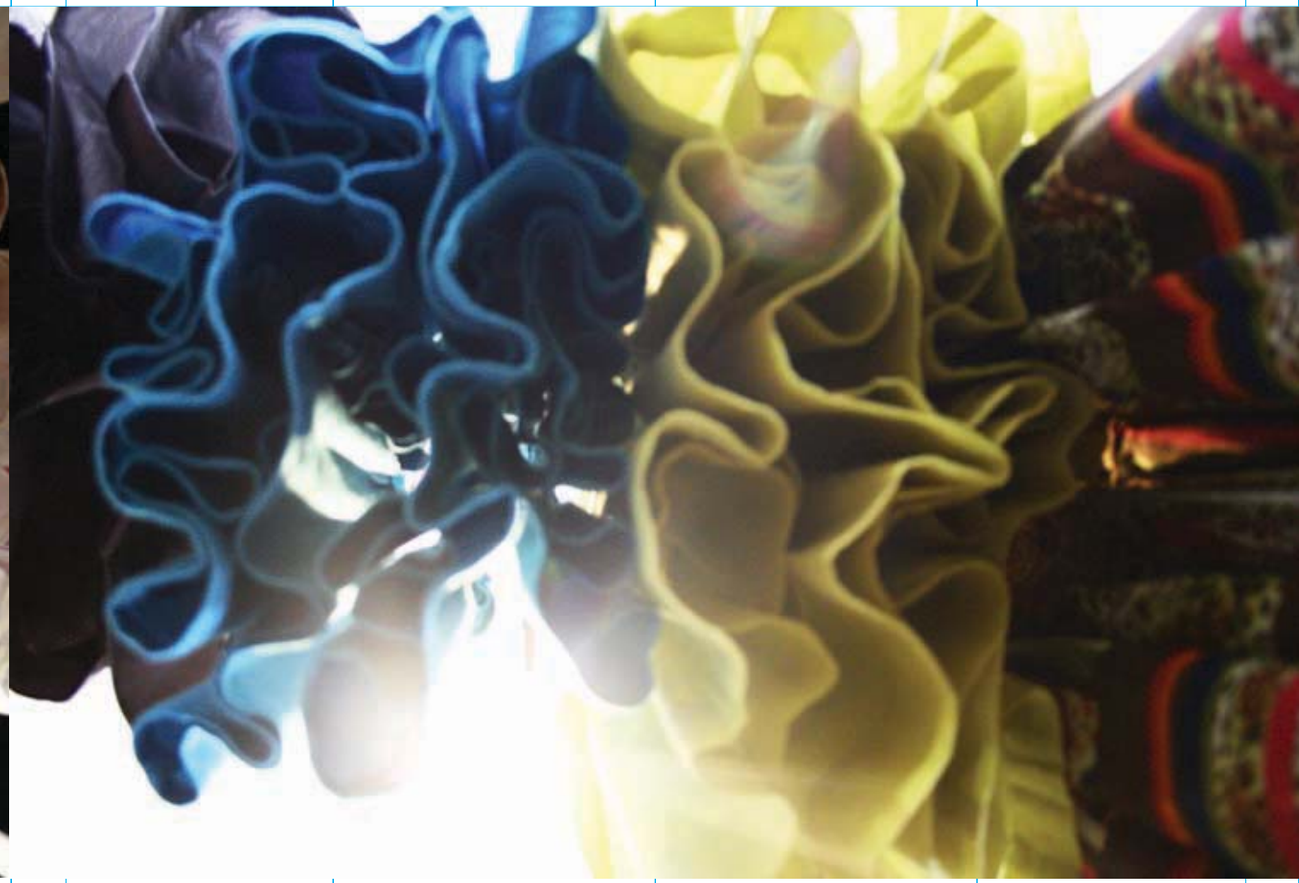



fab'rik










fabrik
fabrik







Marcel Proust stated, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

Whether it is an art which includes and sublimates a great ideology
or whether it is a commercial design which reveals
an obvious purpose,
I don’t think that is so important.

What is most important, I believe,
is a process which draws my messages out from my heart
and delivers and expresses them exactly, to other people.

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