



# NUYORICAN THOUGHTS

TRANSNATIONALISM IN  
PUERTO RICAN GRAPHIC DESIGN

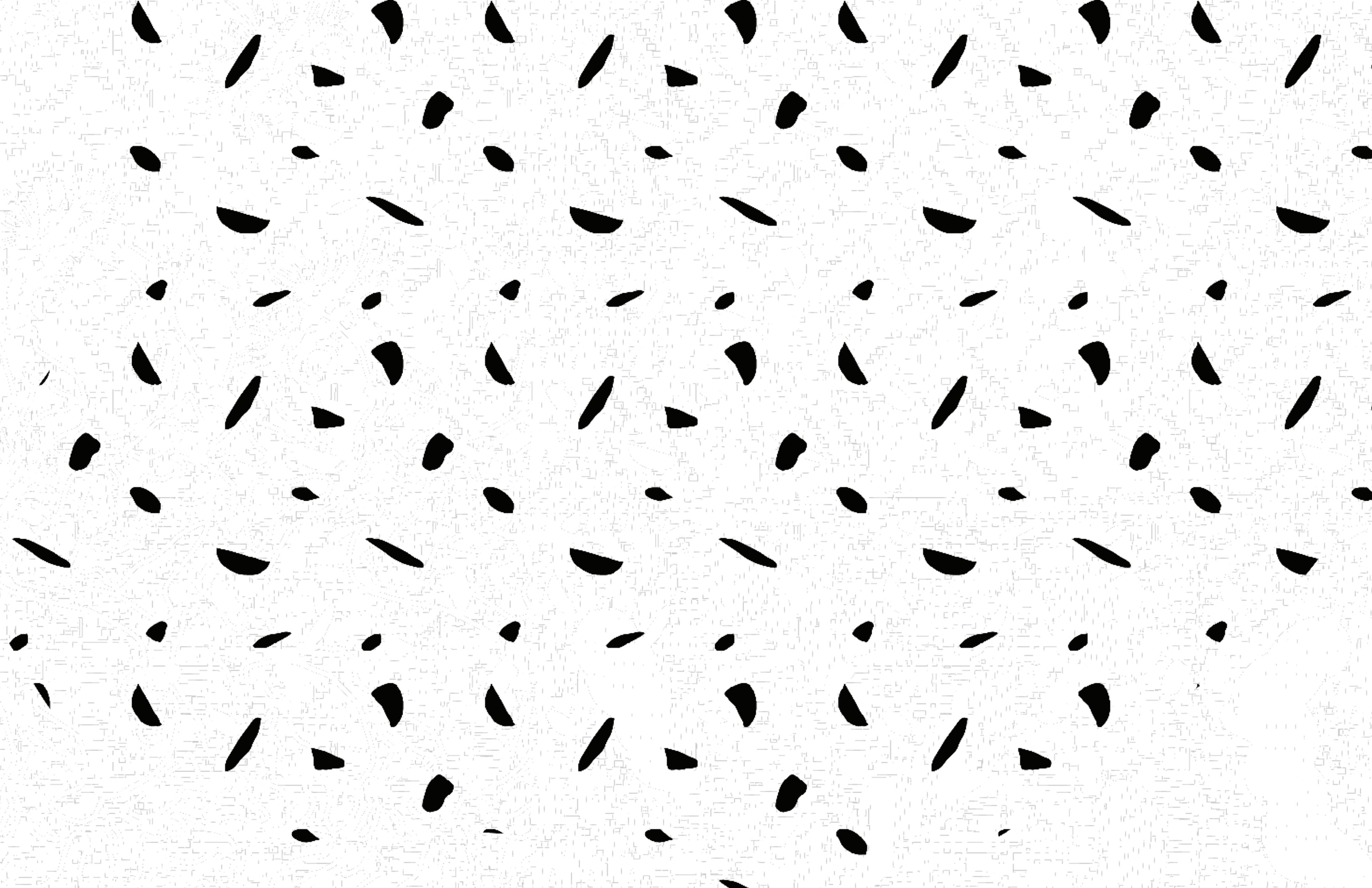
ANA MELENDEZ



# NUYORICAN THOUGHTS

Transnationalism in Puerto Rican  
Graphic Design

*Ana Melendez*



**NUYORICAN THOUGHTS**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in Graphic Design at the Vermont College of Fine Arts in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Ana Melendez

June 2023

Approved by Master's Examination Committee

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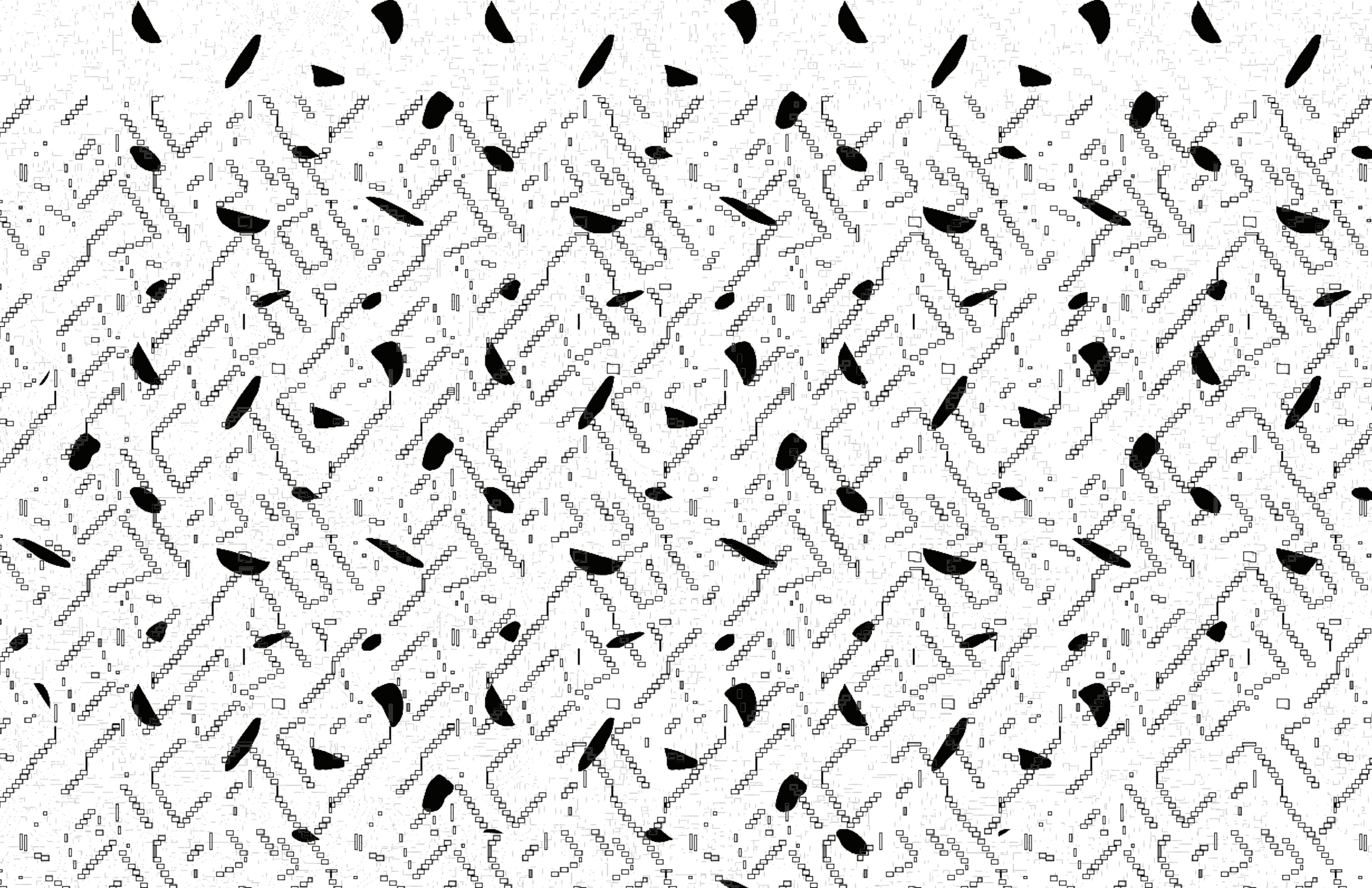
Dave Peacock

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Ian Lynam

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Tasheka Arceneaux-Sutton



## **Dedication**

*for my younger self*

*and anyone else feeling caught “in-between.”*

## **Acknowledgments**

*I would not have been able to complete this program without the support of my parents: for food, encouragement, and the ever coveted compliment. I’m proud of you. Thank you for being the safety net I am always trying to break away from.*

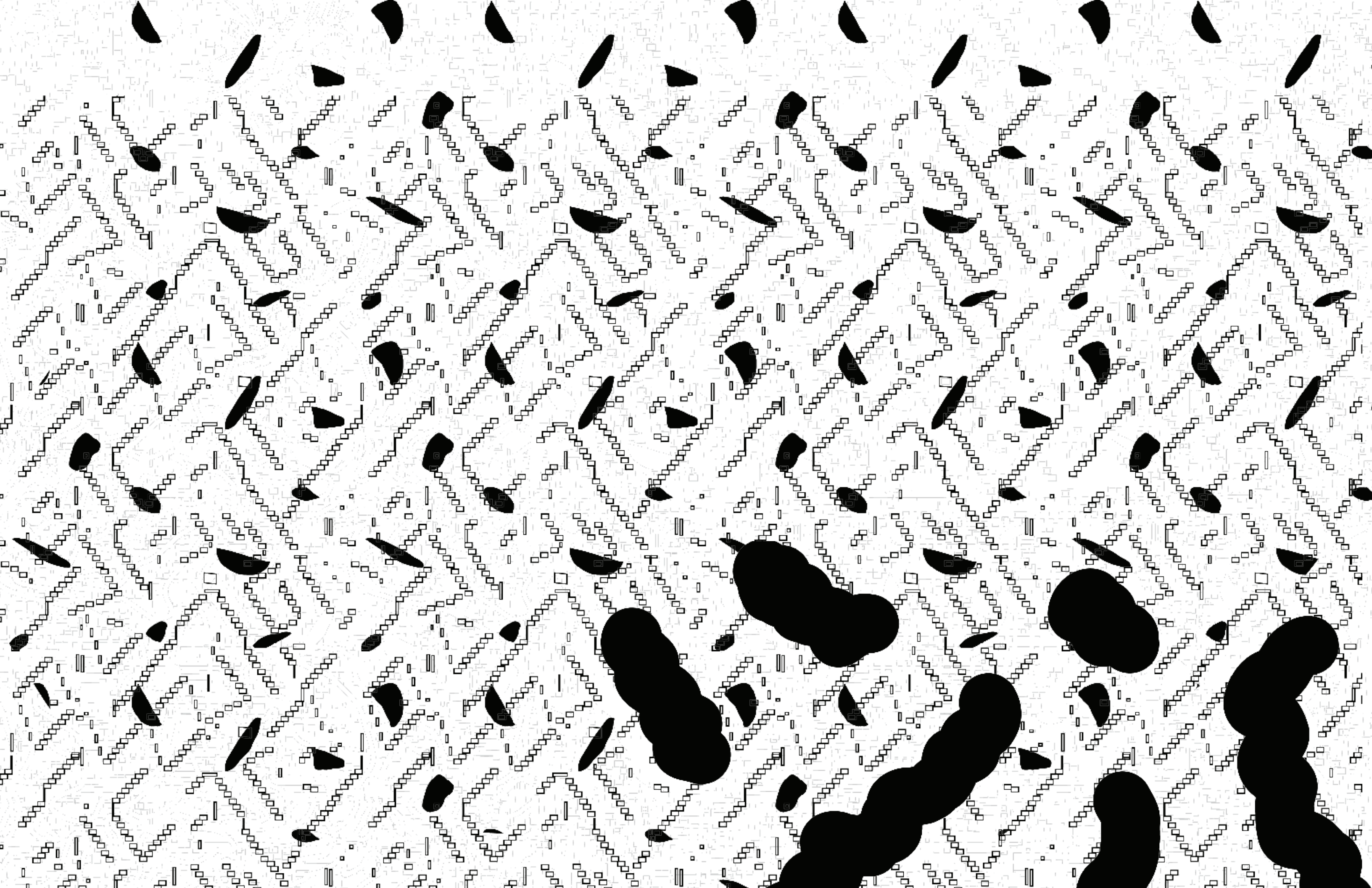
*My faith is what sustained me throughout grad school though it was one of the most difficult times of my life. I am thankful that this time taught me to be with Jesus and do everything I can to throw out religion.*

*Thank you to all of my advisors: Tasheka, Ian, Dave, Ziddi, Ramon, and Natalia. I so appreciate you helping me along my journey, consistently encouraging me to follow my instincts and develop a new kind of trust for myself.*

*Thank you to all the faculty who have put their time and effort into creating a wonderful environment to fall into, particularly the two weeks a year we are on campus. Your work matters and I am grateful for it.*

*Thank you to all of my editors and friends who helped me put this book together or listened to me talk about it: Jamie, Jason, Andrew, Mike, Michelle, Kojo, Katee, Julie, Iris, and Shane.*

*And thank you to my cohort of graduates: Annette, Cory, Jessica, Kyla, Ray, Rick, and Zach. I appreciate all of your different perspectives on design and am thankful I’ve gotten to know each of you and your unique offering to the design field and the world!*

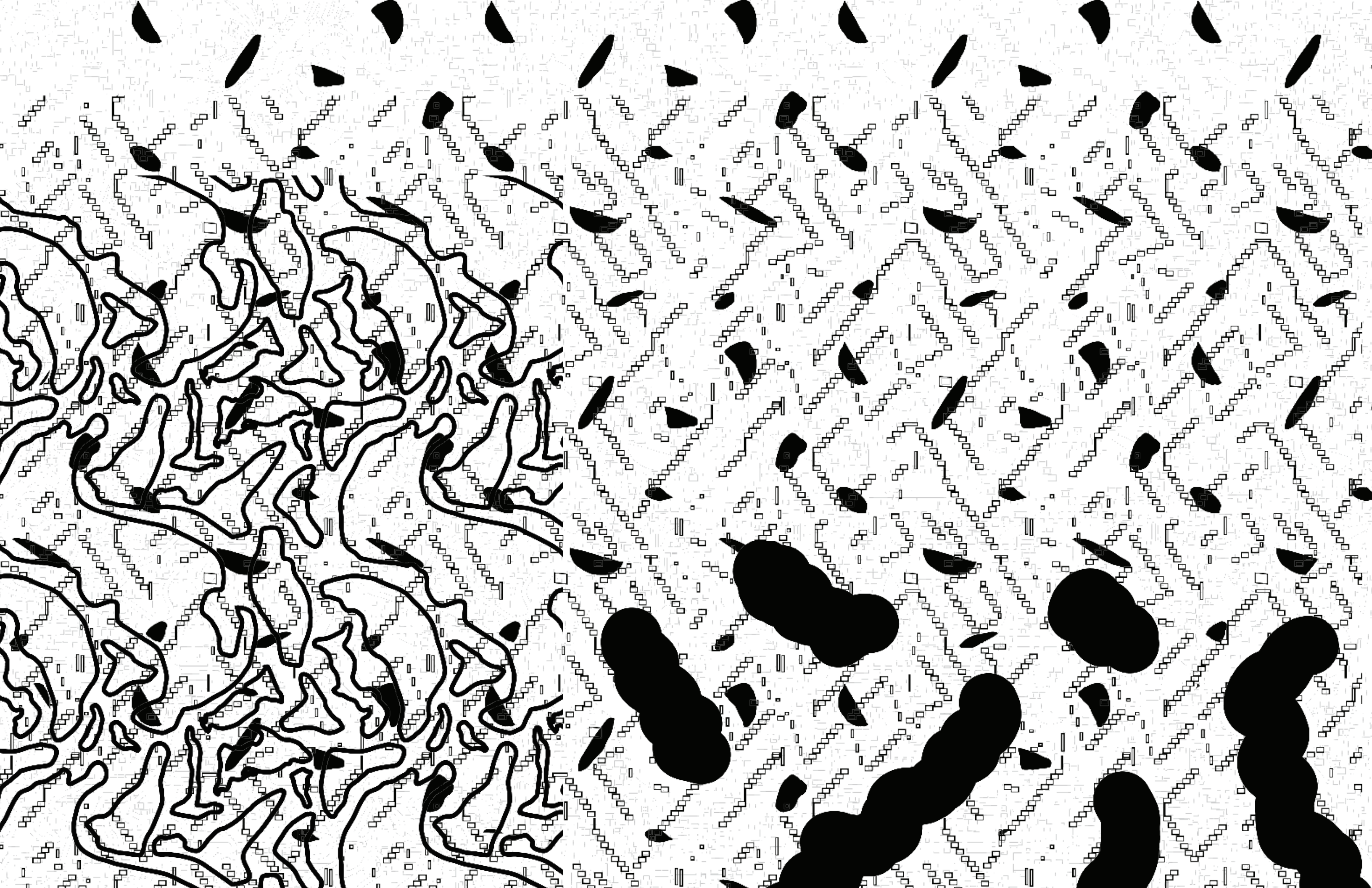




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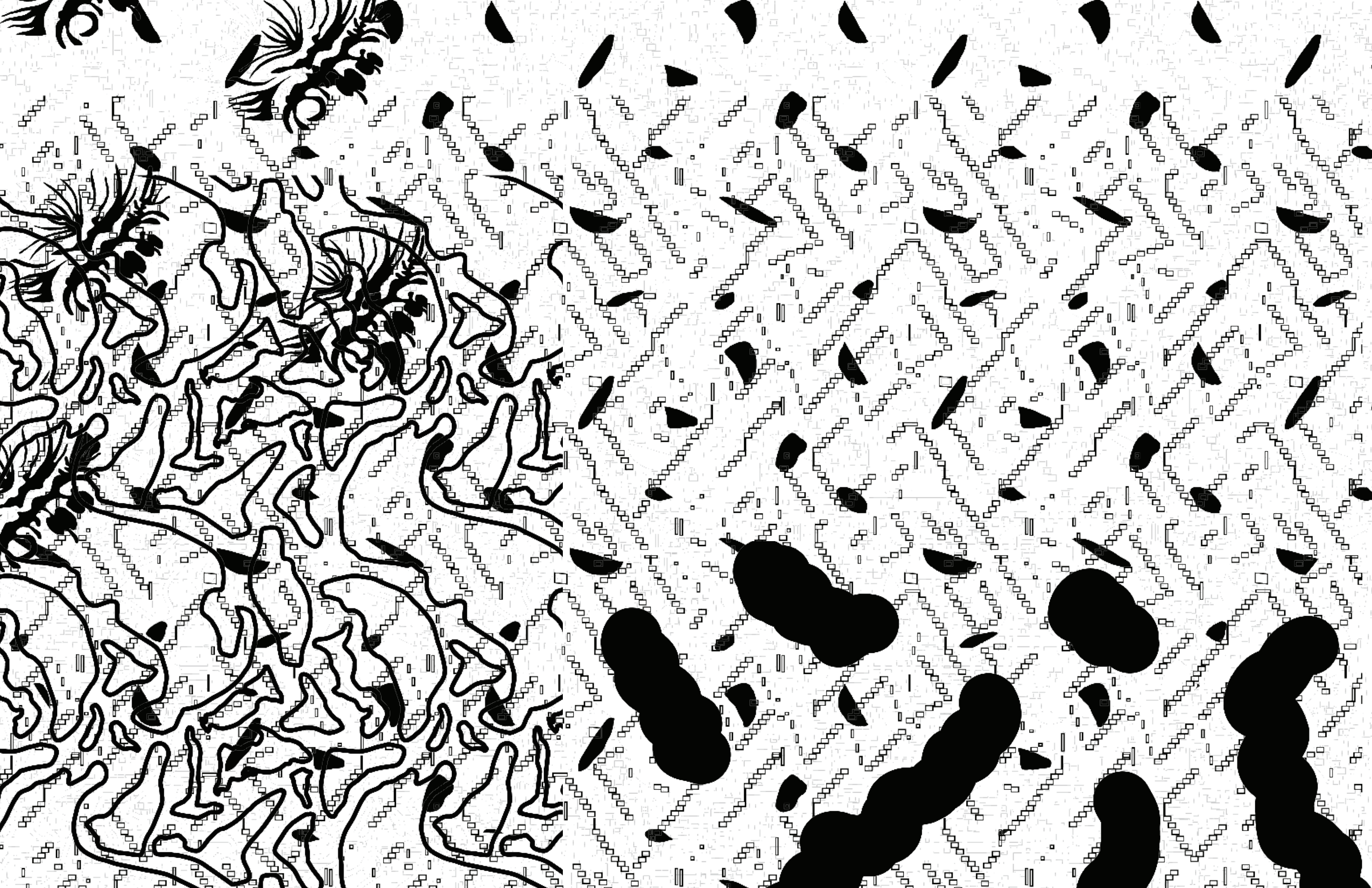




### About the Patterns

*In the first pages of my thesis you've seen a pattern coming together as you continued through the introductory pages. While the patterns you'll see in the rest of my thesis won't be that deconstructed, you'll see that they are often layered with text and other patterns. All of this layering reflects the thoughts, ideas, and observations I was having simultaneously prior to and while writing my thesis.*

*These patterns are my best attempt at visualizing my thoughts in conjunction with the written word. Each pattern will have an explanation close by along with images of where inspiration for the pattern came from to give more context to the reader. I hope you enjoy.*





## Abstract

I wanted to research Puerto Rican graphic design/ers because of a personal desire to find resonance with part of my heritage and values in the field of graphic design. In this thesis, I take the time to share how I see design, justice and advocacy, and identity development through the concept of transnationalism interwoven in Nuyorican graphic design.

I was able to visit Hunter College's Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Taller Boricua, and El Museo del Barrio to investigate the history of the Nuyorican Movement as well as see works made by Nuyorican artists and designers.

This process has helped me learn more about my family's history, grow in my own ethnic identity development, and contribute to the expanding canon of graphic design.

## Introduction

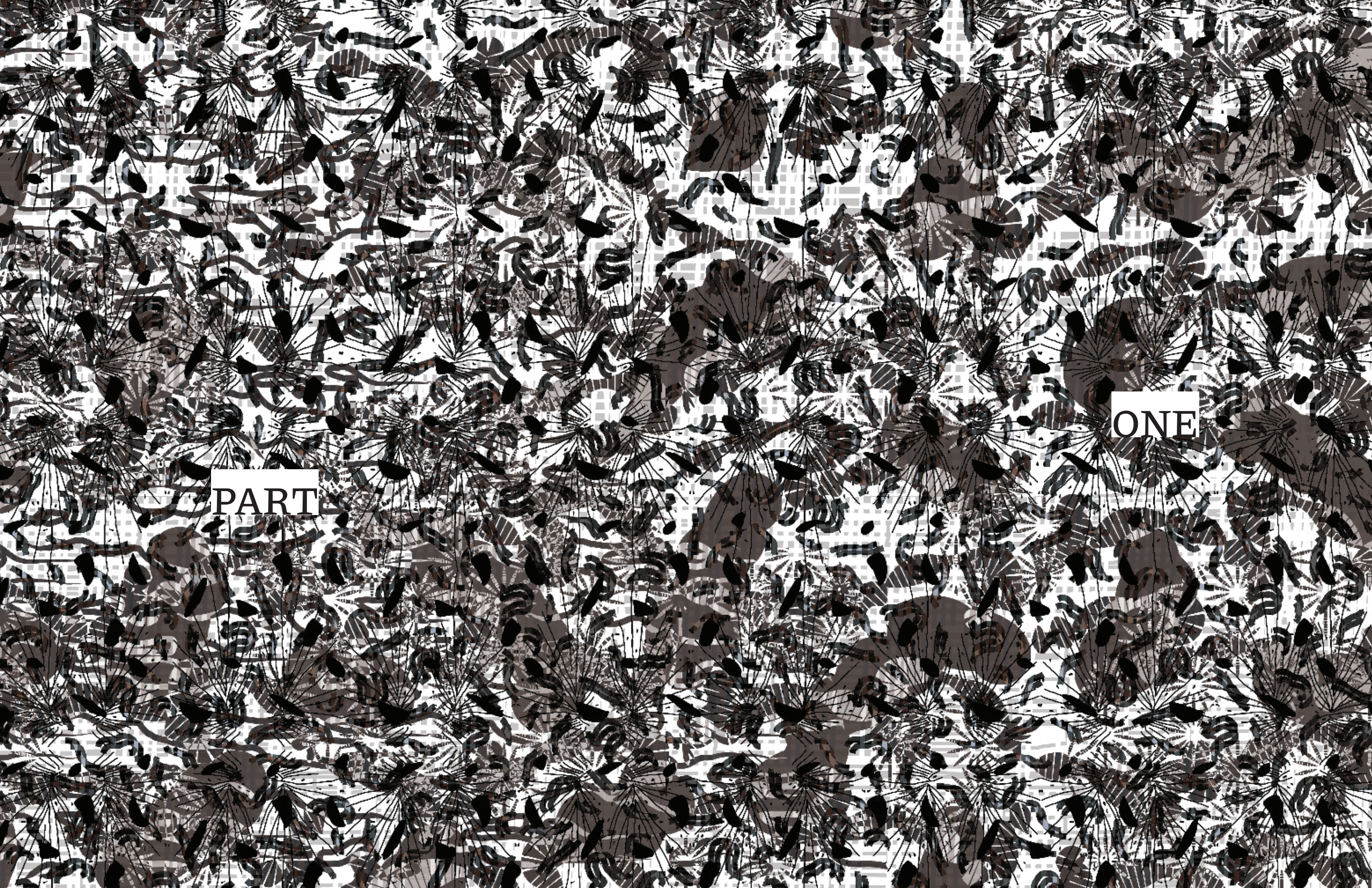
In later pages of this thesis, you'll see me talk about my desire to know who I am as the desire to be reflected in the people around me. That's something I've always wanted: to know that I'm not alone, that there are other people in the world like me. Finding others I identify with helps me to make sense of myself. It's like connecting with someone who has the same thought as you when you believed you were the only person who'd thought it.

As I've gone through VCFA's program, I've been exposed to many wonderful, talented designers. Yet in Nuyorican graphic design, I've found a unique resonance and reflection I haven't found elsewhere. Sometimes we just have to seek the things that are unique as we are.

As the canon of graphic design expands, more research is conducted, and unknown designers and movements are shared, I hope that more people find the resonance and reflection that I have.

**Nuyorican**

A person of Puerto Rican person who lives in New York City.



PART

ONE

This pattern was inspired by my hometown, Paterson, New Jersey.

Investigating Paterson's vernacular was one of the first projects I really sunk my teeth into at VCA.

The pattern was made from tracing the gap between the slats in Image 1 and the gate to the store in Image 2.

After playing with these lines for a bit, I decided I liked the complexity and ambiguity of the intersecting lines.

I think they retain the grated, barrier quality of the gate in Image 2 which is a common sight in Paterson.

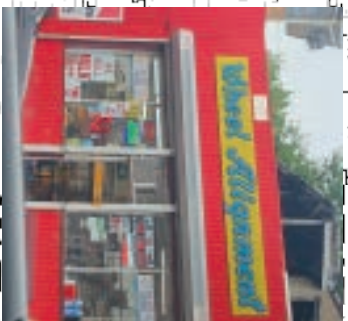
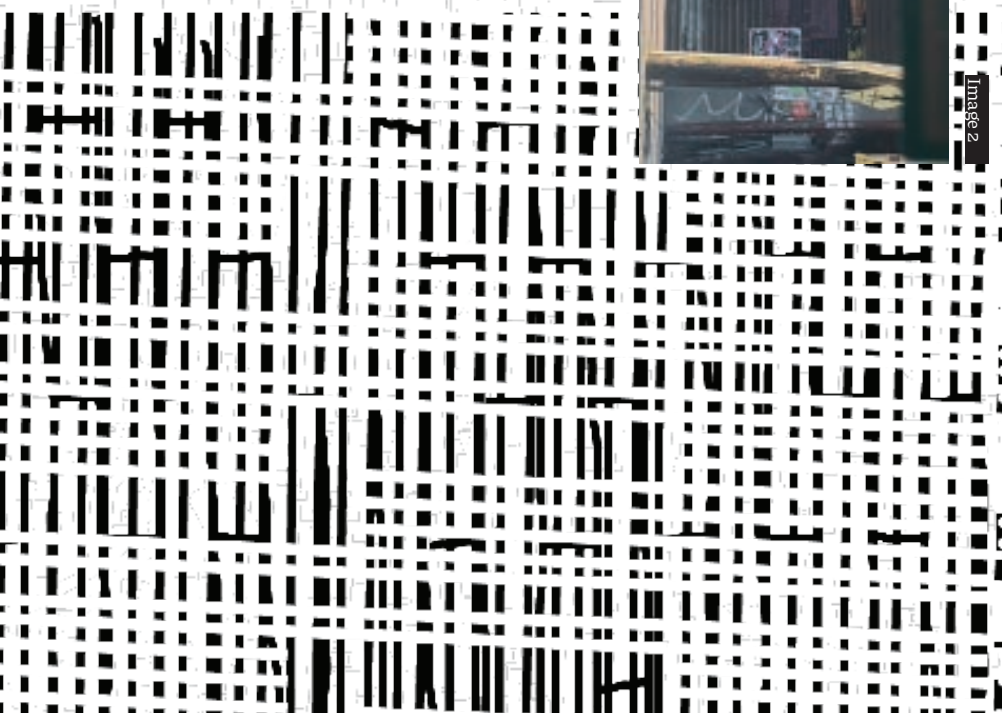


Image 1



Image 2



The first time I remember not wanting anyone to know where I was from, I was in middle school. While I had been at the same private, upper-middle-class school for a year, I had just moved to the middle school building, which was surrounded by bigger houses than I'd ever been around, let alone been inside consistently.

I remember riding the bus to this new building, watching all the houses go by, and thinking, "What am I doing here? What is this place?" I didn't think I belonged there. Now I understand it was then that I began feeling the need to blend in. It didn't help when, in later years, my school would organize service projects to my hometown because that's where people in need were.

To be fair, there are people in need in my hometown. About a quarter of the residents are in poverty. We also have a failing public school system (which is why my parents sent me elsewhere). But my town is economically diverse. Yes, there are people in need, but there are also some families, like mine, that manage to send their children to private schools. What I now realized bothered me was that those service projects were the only way my school interacted with my hometown. It felt so uncomfortable to be from my hometown, go to a school outside of it, then come back to help it with people who didn't know anything about it. It felt patronizing.



The Nuyorican movement is a small, mostly unknown literary, artistic, and design movement. Scholarship written on the movement chronicles it as taking place primarily in the 1970s in the El Barrio, East Harlem, and Loisaida communities of New York City, though the exact dates are a little fuzzy. For the purposes of this thesis, we'll use the dates provided by art historian, independent curator, and scholar of the Nuyorican movement, Yasmin Ramirez: 1964 to 1984.

Occurring toward the end of the United States' first civil rights movement, the Nuyorican movement gave voice to the struggles of Puerto Rican people in New York City. The movement provided them with a way to cry out about injustice while simultaneously asserting their dignity.

The founders of the movement knew how difficult it was to break into mainstream art and design institutions. They knew that the work created in their communities would largely not be seen as appropriate for those institutions. So, they decided to create their own avenues to be seen. If the larger art world would not give them a seat at the table, they would going to make their own.

And make their own they did. Community-led spaces like the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Taller Boricua, El Museo del Barrio, and others established and provided creative spaces for the community.

In particular, Taller Boricua's print shop took inspiration from an important institution in Puerto Rico's design history: the Division of Community Education/División de Educación de la Comunidad (DIVEDCO) and contributed to Puerto Rico's bright history of poster-making, specifically silk-screen or serigraph printing.

The Smithsonian National Museum of American History details the purpose of DIVEDCO:

*"The Puerto Rican Division of Community Education [DIVEDCO] provided resources primarily for the island's poor and rural residents. Created in 1949, it employed community leaders, artists, and writers to develop programs and cultural works that addressed many of the issues and concerns of the Puerto Rican community."<sup>1</sup>*

In a short film written and directed by Taller Boricua's Executive Director Marcos Dimas, Taller Boricua's connection to DIVEDCO was described this way:

*"Poster art maintained a strong stance in popularity in Puerto Rico from the period of the 1940s through the 1960s. By incorporating their talent to the service of social and educational advancement, artists fulfilled a creative and collective nationalistic need.*

*Poster art, graphic work, and silkscreen printmaking was used to announce festivals, plays, films, exhibitions. Working for the Division of Community Education, island artists also used the mediums for fine art work and for the service of political advocacy. Following in that tradition, from its inception, Taller Boricua has maintained a graphic printmaking workshop.*

**Taller Boricua | Art for All**  
(short film) can be found on Youtube by searching the title.

This pattern is traced from Image 3, a flier for a play that would appear at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

The Nuyorican Poets Cafe held open mic nights, plays, and other community events for the Puerto Rican community in New York City and anyone else who wanted to attend.

Image 3



**Founders of Taller Boricua:**

Marcos Dimas  
Adrian Garcia  
Manuel Otero  
Armando Soto  
Martin Rubio



Image 5  
Marcos Dimas



Image 6  
Marcos Dimas, Jorge Soto Sanchez, and others

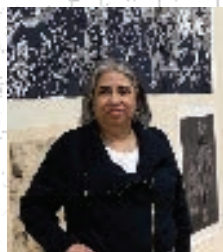


Image 7  
Nitza Tufiño (center)

**Founder of El Museo del Barrio:**

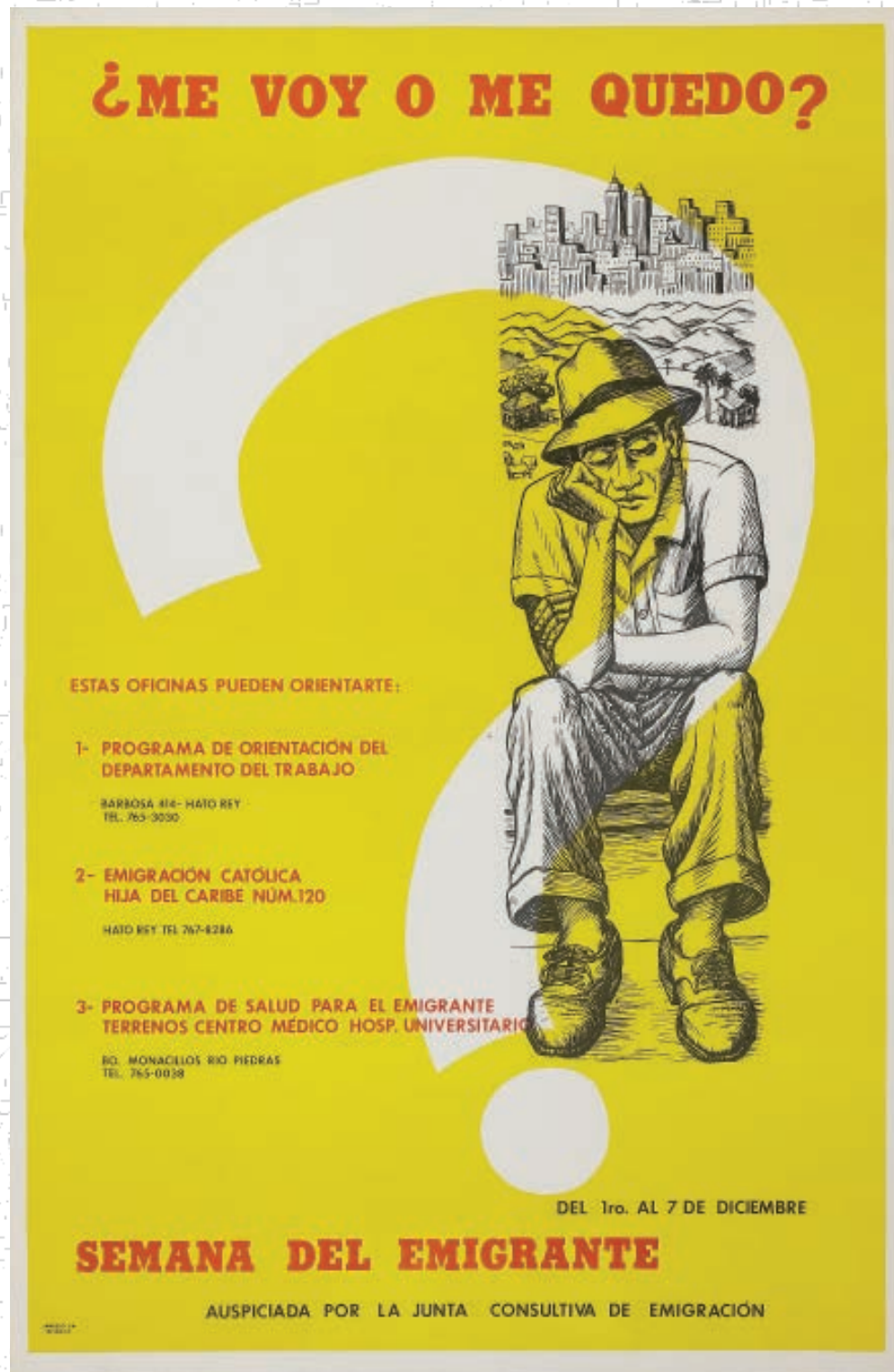
Raphael Montañez Otero



Image 8

Image 4

The poster above was to Puerto Rican people considering moving to the mainland. The largest titles on the poster translate to "Do I stay or do I go" (Me voy o me quedo) and "The week of the Immigrant" (Semana del Emigrante).



El Taller's political, cultural agenda was to realize itself primarily through its silk-screen and photography workshops, producing silkscreen posters and photographs for such political groups as El Comité and The Young Lords. The photographs were documents, political messages, and images speaking of power to the people. The silkscreen works were animated and energized in the expressionist tradition of the graphic art produced by the Mexican artists serving the Mexican revolution.

In 1969 Taller Boricua joined the struggle of the underclass. The outcry was, "Enough injustice!", "Enough abuse!", "Viva Puerto Rico Libre!", "Viva la Comunidad Libre!", "Power to the People!"<sup>2</sup>

**Founders of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe:**

Miguel Algarin  
Richard August  
Shorty Bon Bon  
Jorge Brandon  
Diane Burns  
Americo Casiano  
Lucky Cienfuegos  
Sandra María Esteves  
Eddie Figueroa  
Meredith Genin (aka Belle Starr)  
Lois Elaine Griffith  
Tato Laviera  
Miguel Loperena  
Jesus Papoleto Melendez  
Jose Parreño  
Rev. Pedro Pietri  
Miguel Piñero  
Bimbo Rivas  
Raul Santiago Sebazzo  
Ntozake Shange



Image 9  
Miguel Algarin



Image 10  
Sandra María Esteves

Image 12



This is an image from the collection created by Jack Delano for the FSA (Farm Security Administration).

The inspiration for this pattern comes from the roof of the structure behind the couple pictured.

In New York City, the **Young Lords** acted as an activist organization that brought attention to civil rights issues affecting Puerto Ricans in NYC.

**El Comite-MINP** (Movimiento de Izquierda Nacional Puertorriqueño) was a socialist movement amongst working-class Puerto Rican people in New York City seeking to better their living conditions.

**Nuyorican**  
(new-yo-ree-can)

**Neo-Rican**  
(knee-o-ree-can)

**Neoyorquino/a**  
(knee-o-your-keen-o/ah)

**CENTRO**, The Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, is the largest university-based research institute, library, and archive dedicated to the Puerto Rican experience in the U.S.

**Yasmin Ramirez** is an art worker, curator, and writer based in New York City. She holds a Ph.D. in Art History from the City University of New York's Graduate Center.

**Nancy Mercado** is a poet, editor, educator and recipient of the American Book Award for Lifetime Achievement. She holds a Ph.D. from Binghamton University, SUNY and is currently teaches as an Associate Professor in New York City.

But before we dive into Taller Boricua and the struggles of the underclass, I think it's important to understand what brought Puerto Rican people to New York City in the first place.

The Nuyorican Movement took form around the same time that the word Nuyorican was created. Nuyorican was to describe Puerto Rican people who lived in New York City. It's a portmanteau of the terms New York and Puerto Rican. Other forms of this include Neorican and Neoyorquino/Neoyorquina.

The connotation of Nuyorican at its inception was not positive, which author and poet Nancy Mercado explains in her piece "On Being Nuyorican" that she wrote for Hunter College's CENTRO (Center for Puerto Rican Studies):

*"Initially, the term Nuyorican, came about as an insult on mainland Puerto Ricans by island Puerto Ricans. It was meant to offend—which it did, for a while, at least."<sup>3</sup>*

Yasmin Ramirez also chronicles the term and its derivatives in her dissertation, "Nuyorican Vanguard, Political Actions, Poetic Visions: A History of Puerto Rican Artists in New York, 1964-1984." She adds context to Mercado's explanation:

*"Puerto Ricans who mixed English and Spanish were called Neo-Ricans, a derisive term meaning that the so-called subject has a rudimentary or neophyte comprehension of the Puerto Rican language and customs and is, therefore, not genuinely Puerto Rican."<sup>4</sup>*

A number of people on the island saw moving to the mainland as a kind of selling out, as if the individuals moving to the mainland were siding with the oppressor (the United States) instead of their own people. To some, staying on the island meant trying to resist the influence of the United States.

However, I think this was a harsh position to take considering the conditions under which people were leaving the island. Economic life on the island had begun to falter during the Great Depression. Puerto Rico's economy pre-1940s was primarily plantation based. The primary employment opportunities came from coffee, tobacco, and sugarcane farming, but there weren't enough jobs to sustain everyone there. Hit hard by the Great Depression the Puerto Rico saw high rates of unemployment and a lower ability to sell the foodstuffs and products that plantation owners sold previously.<sup>5</sup>



Image 11

I chose to use my hair as the inspiration for the pattern representing of this part of my story.

I've noticed that my hair is the thing that people comment on most when it comes to their rationale behind why they think I am a certain race or ethnicity.

Depending on whether I've decided to straighten my hair or styled my natural texture, I can predict fairly accurately how I will be perceived.

I returned to my hometown for high school and my situation became even more complicated.

Once again I was around people who were from the same place I was, but since I'd spent the past four years learning and adapting to a completely different environment, I felt lost. I felt like an outsider. What's struck me as I've gotten older is the fact that this transition is one I've gone through multiple times in my life: first during middle and high school, then during my college and professional life.

After high school, I attended a private Christian college, where I was again surrounded by many upper-class and upper-middle-class students in a predominantly white community, but after graduating I returned to my hometown for work. This cycle keeps repeating itself, though I'm not sure why or how.

It does seem to mirror the duality that is present in my life. Over the years, I've realized I am mildly obsessed with duality. My upbringing and now adulthood cycling between economic statuses has created a duality in me. My ethnicity, being half Mexican and half Puerto Rican, is a duality I was born with. What's also layered about my ethnic identity is that I look ethnically ambiguous as I've been mistaken for half Black and half white, Italian, and half white and half Puerto Rican, and told I could pass for Lebanese. Nobody guesses Mexican. People's perceptions of me vary widely.



**Top to down:** my grandmother outside the factory she used to work in, at the airport the day she left Puerto Rico, and at the beach with a friend from high school.

I created this pattern from the palm leaves in the bottom picture, lines of my grandmother's dress in the middle, and lines of the car she sits on at the top. I like the way the lines meander together so you can't tell what line is from which picture.

I would not be here, in New Jersey, without my grandmother. I count her as the reason because, although her husband was the one who moved to the United States first, she was the one who took care of the family.

My grandmother, Maria Teresa Santiago, met Modesto Melendez in 1954 while he was visiting his mother in Puerto Rico. They soon got married and, when he went back to the States, he sent for her to come live with him a few weeks later.

They moved into a hotel in Hackensack, New Jersey, where he was already living, and then to an apartment in the same town a little while later. Modesto had moved to the States sometime prior with a couple of his brothers in search of the American Dream: a better life.

My grandmother's first job was putting together pens in a factory. She quickly got bored with that and moved on to a job making envelopes for a company called Tension Envelopes. Then she became a piecework seamstress. She had my father, Mike, just before starting as a seamstress.

I didn't hear much about these jobs as I was growing up. The job I always heard people talk about was her job as a court bailiff. It wasn't anything she'd planned on; the factory where she had been working at as a seamstress was moving, and as she was looking for new work. Her first job at the courthouse in Hackensack was as a translator. When I was talking with my

grandmother about this, I laughed when she said that, at the time, she didn't speak enough English for the job. Apparently the prosecutor that hired her said that it was fine, that they'd help each other out, filling in each other's blanks. So, she was hired.

Over the course of working at the courthouse, my grandmother made friends with some of the female sheriff officers. That's how she got to become a bailiff in the district court. The courtroom she worked in heard Special Civil Cases (traffic claims, small claims, landowner and tenant cases, and small charges for bail hearings). She continued to interpret there as well. She didn't need the prosecutor to help her out anymore.

A very social person, she kept a good rapport with all of the judges she worked with, one of them even going as far as to take her oldest son, my father, Mike, on a tour of colleges in the area when it came time for him to apply. After almost 30 years, she retired with a full pension and traveled the world. That's what I remember about her from my early years: she was always going somewhere on a trip. Turkey, Greece, Australia.<sup>11</sup> I quietly told myself I wanted to do the same someday.

Jack and Irene Delano, beloved photographers and designers on the island who immigrated to Puerto Rico from Ukraine and the United States respectively, documented this struggle from 1935 to 1944. At the behest of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), both traveled throughout Puerto Rico photographing and documenting the hardship that farmers and those unemployed faced.<sup>6</sup>

In an effort to turn the economic tides, a program named Operation Bootstrap was instituted by Puerto Rican Governor Luis Muñoz Marín. Operation Bootstrap, an economic development and modernization program, incentivized the development of industrial factories in Puerto Rico, which closely bonded Puerto Rico's and the United States' economies in the 1940s.<sup>7</sup> As a result, Puerto Rico transitioned from its plantation economy, to an import-export, industrial economy.<sup>8</sup> Tax exemptions were also provided to US companies, which quickly began to set up factories in Puerto Rico, further changing the physical and metaphorical landscape of the island.<sup>9</sup>

If industry and factory work was coming to the island, then surely people on the island could go to where industry and factories already were in order to meet economic opportunity where it was. In this postwar era, some Puerto Ricans thought to take advantage of their American citizenship and see how they could change their circumstances by going to the mainland for work.

As a result of this economic shift, from the late 1940s to 1970, a mass internal immigration took place from Puerto Rico to the mainland. The Library of Congress documents this movement in its presentation, "Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History":

*"After the end of the Second World War, however, Puerto Rican migration increased dramatically. In 1945, there had been 13,000 Puerto Ricans in New York City; in 1946 there were more than 50,000. Over the next decade, more than 25,000 Puerto Ricans would come to the continental U.S. each year, peaking in 1953, when more than 69,000 came. By 1955, nearly 700,000 Puerto Ricans had arrived. By the mid-1960s, more than a million had."*

*There were a number of reasons for this sudden influx. The continuing depression in Puerto Rico made many Puerto Ricans eager for a fresh start, and U.S. factory owners and employment agencies had begun recruiting heavily on the island. In addition, the postwar years saw the return home of thousands of Puerto Rican war veterans, whose service in the U.S. military had shown them the world. But perhaps the most significant cause was the sudden availability of affordable air travel. After centuries of immigration by boat, the Puerto Rican migration became the first great airborne migration in U.S. history."<sup>10</sup>*

The combination of economic struggle and affordable airfare to the mainland made conditions ripe for this mass migration.<sup>12</sup> But it also left Puerto Rican people who moved to the mainland in some unpredictable, unsafe circumstances.

They were seen as a new, cheap workforce eager for opportunity and regular predatory practices were used to bring them to the



From 1927–1955 Jack and Irene Delano (and Edwin and Louise Rosskam) worked for the FSA and the Office of War Information (OWI) depicting the Great Depression in the U.S.



Luis Muñoz Marín was the first elected governor of Puerto Rico. He was integral to transitioning Puerto Rico to a commonwealth territory of the United States

Boricua

I chose the above images as inspiration for this pattern because they represent the different spaces I've inhabited in my life: my high school and my alma mater.



Images 18-19

The speckles of this pattern come from my sweater in the lower picture and the lines are taken from my dress.

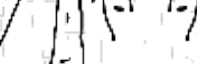


Image 20

Image 21

Image 22

Image 23

Image 24

Image 25

Image 26

Image 27

Image 28

Image 29

Image 30

Image 31

Image 32

Image 33

Image 34

Image 35

Image 36

Image 37

Image 38

Image 39

Image 40

Image 41

Image 42

Image 43

Image 44

Image 45

mainland,<sup>13</sup> including false promises and inhumane working conditions.<sup>14</sup> A parallel can be made to how Mexican migrant workers are treated in contemporary America.

It is under these circumstances that Puerto Ricans who emigrated to the mainland created diasporic culture. Though Puerto Rico is technically part of the United States, on the island there is still the question of whether first-, second-, or later-generation immigrants to the mainland will be seen as "authentically" Puerto Rican or not. During the time of Taller Boricua, the creation of the term Nuyorican showed discord on this topic.

Images 21



Photograph of sugar cane workers by Jack Delano for the FSA.



This image advertises a play that was to open at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe titled "Meeting Lillie."

I found the negative white spaces created by the photocopy of the woman's face intriguing and decided to use them to create this pattern.

However, I agree with the leaders of the Nuyorican movement who believed the Nuyorican or Puerto Rican identity couldn't be "taken away" by not speaking Spanish or living on the island. It was the spirit within someone that connected them to the Nuyorican and Puerto Rican spirit. Ramirez alludes to this:

*"Unapologetic about mixing Spanish and English in their verses the Nuyorican poets embraced their bi-cultural/bilingual heritage while maintaining a critical posture toward the social conditions that brought their bilingual expressions into being... As the content of the literature indicates, using English is a sign of being here, not necessarily of liking it here or of belonging."<sup>15</sup>*

Jorge Soto Sánchez, an integral person to the Nuyorican movement, was careful to remember this in how he thought about the movement as well. "He was skeptical of the profusion of alias identities that the Nuyorican poets had invented or inspired in the 1970s. What purpose did these labels serve? In whose name were they being coined?"<sup>16</sup>

A term that encapsulates what Soto Sánchez and Nuyorican poets were getting at is *transnationalism*. I came across this term in a journal article titled "Aesthetics of exile: The construction of the Nuyorican identity in the art of El Taller Boricua" by Taína B. Caragol-Barreto. During my research, I visited CENTRO at Hunter College a few times. This article, and nearly all of the documents I quote in this thesis, are from my time there. CENTRO keeps an extensive amount of

Image 22



Jorge Soto Sánchez (1947–1987) was an artist, designer, and educator as well as a well respected member of Taller Boricua.

**Transnationalism** is the broad concept and area of study concerning people who migrate to different parts of the world and continue to retain the identity markers from their place of origin while developing an identity in their new context.

I used to think (and occasionally still do) that other people's perceptions of me reflected on me in some way. Somehow they meant something for me. What I had no idea, but I often felt as if I were missing a joke I was supposed to be in on, or not measuring up to some invisible standard other people thought I should meet.

I used to struggle more with how to move through spaces because I didn't know, or was keenly aware of how people perceived me, and thought I either had to play into that or play out of that. I was — and still am, to some extent — looking for where I will see myself reflected in the experiences of others in the world.

Author's Story

documentation on the history of Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican people, particularly those who live in New York City and the nearby areas.

As the title says, Caragol-Barreto's article compares aspects of Nuyorican identity with art from some of the artists at Taller Boricua. While I was reading, the following paragraph stuck out to me:

*"The international mobility of people in constant transit from their home countries to the world economic centers and "cosmo-polis" (to borrow Walter Minolo's term) has rendered territorially bounded definitions of national identity less significant. National identity is just one among a variety new identities that are constituted by multiple cultural exchanges that inevitably take place in a hybrid context constantly in the making. The opposition between globalization, with its homogenizing effects on the cultural landscape, and transnationalism, an idealistic project of harmonious multicultural global conviviality, are new elements taken into account by Puerto Rican artists on the Island and the mainland who deal with the subject of identity. Ironically this contradiction between globalization and transnationalism has rendered identity a more elusive concept, and at the same time made it an ever more interesting and much needed one for believers of multiculturalism."*<sup>17</sup>

I know, it's a challenging read. Caragol-Barreto actually summarizes her ideas above in a more straightforward way just before this long chunk. She wrote that the artists "mended their fragmented history, reconstituting the broken pieces of the culture left behind and integrating them into the present of the diasporic experience."<sup>18</sup>

What does that mean for Nuyorican graphic design? It means that Nuyorican graphic design visualizes Puerto Rican transnationalism.

Amidst this struggle to define Puerto Rican identity, the term *Nuyorican* continued to grow in popularity and usage. It began to transform from a term of derision to one of pride, carving out an identity that, while fully connected to being Puerto Rican, added the unique aspects of being a Puerto Rican in New York City.

Image 23



I am pictured above with my friend Iris who I met and became close with in the midst of the rocky church situation I reference here.

His has had great impact on my life so I chose this photo of us at her birthday party as inspiration for this pattern.

I became painfully aware of this desire to see myself reflected in the world around me three years ago. I was in the midst of a rocky church situation, in which I was advocating for justice in our community. I was tired of the underlying assumptions and biased beliefs I could pick up on through the language used and, more obviously, through actions. I was tired of being in a place, where the people would not confront themselves or the history of our country in a substantial way. I was tired of their lack of self-examination holding me back.

The experiences I've had throughout my life gave me a unique perspective on our situation but the pastors with whom I shared these experiences didn't validate them, particularly those outside of their purview. I was met with disbelief. Not disbelief in the sense of shock or surprise, but disbelief in the sense that they couldn't fathom or understand my life experience and therefore couldn't believe it as authentic or true.

The effect this had on me was that it, in some ways, alienated me from myself. When I shared myself and my experiences and they could not be validated, were not reflected by the individuals around me, I couldn't recognize myself in anyone — and therefore couldn't recognize myself at all.

I think this in-between, outsider, liminal space that I was in would be familiar to those who consider themselves Nuyorican. Being caught between two worlds is an asset, but also difficult. The Nuyorican Movement, particularly Nuyorican graphic design, and I share a similar liminal space. We are concerned with design, justice and advocacy, and identity development. Our common ground, coupled with the movement's offering of a mirror by which to see myself represented as a Puerto Rican person who grew up on the mainland, is why I haven't been able to get this movement out of my head for the past two years.

**Liminal**  
occupying a position  
at, or on both sides of, a  
boundary or threshold

**PART**

**TWO**

*I took inspiration for this pattern from my family. I am pictured here with my brother, and two of my cousins.*

*These cousins are on my mom's side of the family which I received my Mexican heritage from.*

*Nitza Tujino is also half Mexican and half Puerto Rican, her mother is Mexican and father is Puerto Rican, the same as my parents.*



Image 24

*I went to the city on a Saturday to see what would happen. I had been trying to connect with someone at El Museo del Barrio and El Taller Boricua but couldn't get anyone on the phone. So, I decided to go in person. I thought, "Maybe I'll meet someone there and something will happen. Maybe I won't, but at least I'll get to visit. I can't write my whole thesis on something that's so close and not say I went at least once."*

*My first stop was El Museo because I had to reserve a timed ticket. I received my pin to identify me as a guest, and after I walked through the exhibit, I asked the two guys at the front desk if there any curators were around. One of them went away, came back, and told me that none of them were there — understandable for a Saturday. I wasn't expecting much, but I wanted to make my presence known. He told me that I should try calling. The curators are very, very busy, and it might take a while to get through. I thanked him for his help, then left.*

*That was all right. Nothing more than I expected, and I got to take in a great exhibit. So off I went to Taller Boricua. As it was only a few blocks away, I walked. It was rainy and a little*

*bit gloomy, but I felt peaceful and happy, quiet and hopeful. When I walked into El Taller, I was surprised. I don't know what I was expecting it to look or sound like, but I hadn't imagined it would look like a school...or like an apartment complex...or something in the middle. Kids were pouring out of it, seemingly just coming out of a class. I went in and got directions at the front desk, signed in, and went to the gallery space.*

*There was a man at a desk minding the exhibition space of print-made works from Cuban artists, interestingly. El Museo's exhibition also featured a Cuban artist. I meandered around. Printmaking has always been one of my favorite mediums of art. The colors were so vibrant, the work amazing; the exhibit showcased a variety of serigraph, wood-cut, and linocut pieces.*

*After I walked through the galleries, I made it back to the place where I met the man minding the gallery space. I asked him if he knew whether I could speak to a curator regarding the show. He looked a little confused, and I explained that I was a grad student and wanted to learn more about the show and El Taller itself. He told me that Nitza Tujino, one of the curators, wasn't there that day, but if I wrote down my name, email address, and phone number, she would get back to me. He would make sure that she got my info. So I did. I scrounged in my bag, ripped out a little piece of notebook paper and wrote my name, email address, and phone number on it. Then he told me to also write my info down in the guest book in the gallery space just off to the side of him. So I walked over and did that too.*

*I walked out the way I came in and didn't even make it half a block away when I got a call from a number I didn't know. I normally don't answer those, but I decided to do it in case it was something important. I had a feeling it could be the guy from the gallery. I answered and it was! He said, "Hey, you just left, but Nitza just walked in. Do you want to come back and talk with her in her office? It's on the second floor." I said, "Oh, great! Yeah, I'll come right back. I'm not far."*

*I couldn't believe it. I'm would get to speak to Nitza Tujino, daughter of Rafael Tujino, an important artist in the life of Taller Boricua.*

*So I re-entered El Taller. My friend, the gallery minder, told me what floor and office number to look for. I found it and met someone along the way who was also going to the same office space. She was a friend of Nitza's and let me in.*

*Nitza was in the middle of a phone call, so I waited. Once the call was over and Nitza had greeted her friend, she started clearing a place for me to sit down so we could talk.*

*She told me a little bit about Taller Boricua: The print shop is still functioning, and the staff teach classes. Taller Boricua is involved with other talleres, or workshops, across the country and is part of an organization that affiliates them. She showed me some wonderful prints from an exhibition that happened not long before. She was so welcoming and kind and invited me to come back to speak with some of the printmakers.*

*After about 45 minutes, it seemed like we'd gotten to the end of our time together. Nitza had to go help someone, and I wanted to be respectful of her time. She resides in New Jersey and had just arrived in East Harlem around 2 p.m. I am familiar with that trek, and I was not on the itinerary for the day! She gave me her card with her contact information, then a hug and a kiss on the cheek, and I left.*

*I felt elated. I'd put myself out on a limb, and it paid off. Intuition had delivered a wonderful experience.*

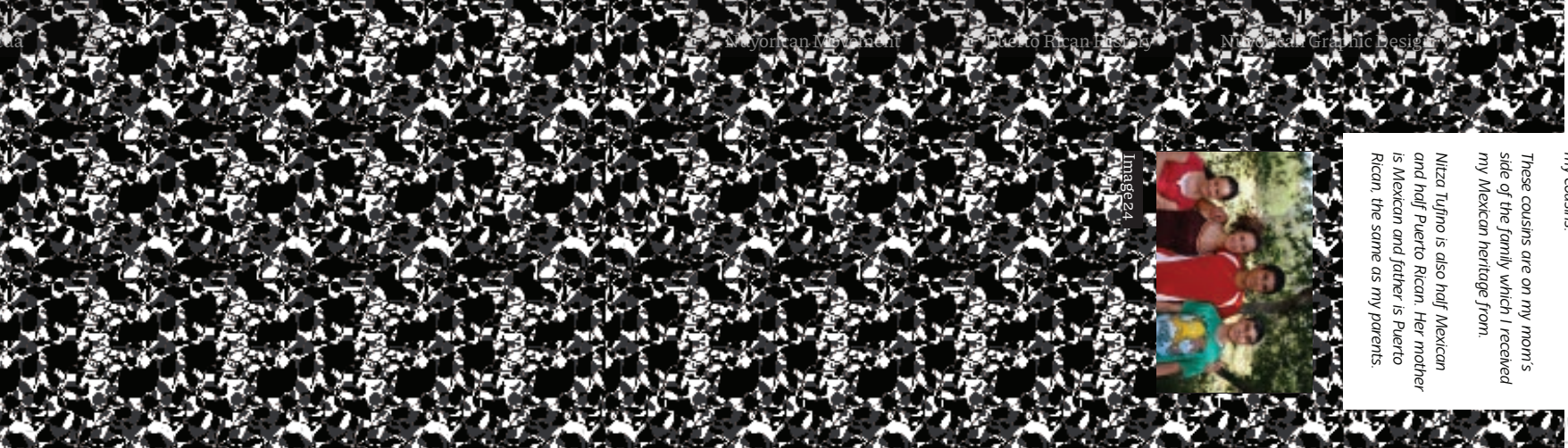


Image 25



**Rafael Tujino** (1922–2008) was an influential Puerto Rican painter and printmaker and father to Nitza Tujino.





Image 26  
Marcos Dimas / Taller  
Boricua's Logo

Inspiration for this pattern came from the two posters on the right created by Jorge Soto Sánchez and Fernando Salicrú.

They are part of a series titled *Proletarian Portfolio*, created for Hunter College.

Image 31 depicts Santiago Andrades and Image 32 depicts Juan Vilar, radical Puerto Rican labor leaders.



There is little scholarship surrounding the Nuyorican movement. Most of what is written focuses on the movement as a literary movement and an art movement, each of which capture different aspects of the Nuyorican movement — but not as a design movement. Puerto Rico has a rich design heritage, and it was brought to New York City by the Puerto Rican diaspora. Nuyorican graphic design taking inspiration from DIVEDCO speaks to the presence of Puerto Rico's design history and heritage in the Nuyorican movement.

What I particularly enjoy about Nuyorican graphic design is that it reaches back further into history than DIVEDCO in order to reclaim and give validation and honor to the design aspects of Puerto Rico that were contributed by Taino and African cultures. In her dissertation, Yasmin Ramirez quotes artist Marcos Dimas: "As a gesture of solidarity and union, we adapted and personalized Taino images, which became our insignias that symbolically linked us with our ancestral root culture."<sup>19</sup>

Ramirez goes on to share how Dimas incorporated Taino and African imagery into his personal logo:

*Marcos Dimas's personal insignia exemplifies the Afro-Taino aesthetic that defined the workshop's (Taller Boricua) ethos. The logo depicts a seated tiny anthropomorphic figure holding a triangular Taino artifact known as a cemi (Image 30). The creature bears some resemblance to the Puerto Rican form called the coqui and sprouts a large leafed plant from its head. The plant leaves are stamped with Taino symbols and Puerto Rican icons, such as the nationalist flag of Lares, and Afro-Caribbean musical instruments like the pandereta drum and maracas (Illustration 54). Dimas's insignia became the Taller Boricua logo in the mid-1970s and appears on all of the workshop's paraphernalia, e.g., letterhead, posters, and invitations."<sup>20</sup>*

Puerto Ricans in New York City used Nuyorican graphic design to assert, according to Yasmin Ramirez's dissertation, "that though they were raised in New York and spoke English, their hearts and hands were guided by a Puerto Rican consciousness..."<sup>21</sup>

The Creators of the Nuyorican movement asserted this consciousness when they reclaimed the word *Nuyorican* and explaining the term *Nuyorican* provides a window into the context to the environment that Nuyorican graphic design is birthed in. Nuyorican graphic design reflected that Puerto Rican people living in New York City and the surrounding areas were largely unaccepted wherever they were: rejected in Puerto Rico and fighting for dignity on the mainland while working to create a better life for themselves.

There is some similarity in the struggles faced by African and Taino people and Nuyorican individuals: the oppression, the unacceptance, the battle for dignity. Nuyoricans can see that this is the great struggle their people have consistently faced, and it hasn't changed just because they live in a different place. Those who chose to make art or design their career path knew that fact and that their aesthetic, for the most part, would not be validated by established institutions.

As usual, they were excluded, relegated to being outsiders. How were they to make a career out of this profession when the field would not see them as valuable contributors?

But this would not stand. Art and design leaders within the community chose to respond by creating their own metaphorical tables at which they could share their work and ideas. While several places were created to meet the need for a community among outsiders, one place in particular stood out to me for being home to Nuyorican graphic design: Taller Boricua.

**Taller Boricua**  
(ty-err bo-ree-qua)

**Boriken**  
(bo-ree-ken)

**Borinquen**  
(bo-reen-ken)

This pattern was created from the counterforms of the handmade type on this poster.

Many posters made by Taller Boricua were created by hand, including the type, which resulted in one of a kind type treatments for each poster.

Image 29



To understand the identity that Nuyorican graphic design was aiming to create, we first need to talk about the name Taller Boricua. When translated to English, Taller Boricua becomes “The Puerto Rican Workshop.” But isn’t *Puerto Rico* Spanish? How can a Spanish word (Boricua) be translated into another Spanish word (Puerto Rico) that’s also considered to be a translation to English? Just writing that confused me.

The answer is yes, Puerto Rico is a Spanish word, and it’s also an English one because it’s the name of a place (just like *San Antonio* and *Los Angeles* are Spanish words, but also how those cities are known to the English-speaking world). Technically, if we weren’t referring to the island of Puerto Rico, *puerto rico* translates to “rich port” in English.

Puerto Rico was not the name of the island prior to its colonization in 1493, though.<sup>22</sup> The island went through a couple name changes between 1493 and 1521.

Originally, the island was called Boriken (or Borinquen, *boricua* being the name of a person from Boriken) by the indigenous people living on the island: the Taíno. Boriken means “the great land of the valiant and noble Lord” or “land of the great lords”.<sup>23</sup> Boriken was then renamed San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist) by Columbus in 1493, then finally changed to its current name, Puerto Rico, in 1521.<sup>24</sup>

The founders of Taller Boricua could have easily called it Taller Puertorriqueno or Taller Puerto Rico or any other of a number of names that referred to Puerto Rico as Puerto Rico. But they didn't. While using taller, a fairly common Spanish word, was no big deal, choosing the word Boricua held deep significance.

Boricua, the name of the island that the indigenous Taíno people gave to it. Boricua, the name of the island before Spanish or American influence. Boricua, a group of people who were enslaved and taken advantage of and shared that struggle with the African people brought to the island. This is who and what Taller Boricua chose to identify with, represent, and to serve: the outsider, the oppressed.

Mercado writes to the same effect, saying, "In actuality, being Nuyorican was a way of survival on the mainland. It was an elected identity, a way of self-determination and empowerment."<sup>25</sup> She also goes on to write that "... like African Americans who transformed the insult 'Black,' into a description of beauty and power, so did Puerto Ricans from the mainland transform the insult: 'Nuyorican.'<sup>26</sup>

The term was transformed and embraced, particularly by the poets leading the movement at the time, Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero. Ramirez shares Algarín's views on the term Nuyorican:

*"In 'Nuyorican Language,' Algarín defines the term Nuyorican in several ways: it is an "alternative" name for New York Puerto Ricans, the name of the language that Nuyoricans speak, and the name of the school of bilingual poetry that Algarín and the poets in the anthology represent."<sup>27</sup>*

Ramirez further describes the birth of the term:

*"The self-proclaimed Nuyorican poets were the first organized group of mainland-born writers to challenge language-based constructions of Puerto Rican identity that excluded English-dominant Puerto Ricans from being considered members of the patria (the motherland). Poets Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero coined the term Nuyorican in the early 1970s after returning from a visit to Puerto Rico. According to Algarín, he and Piñero overheard someone refer to them as Neo-Ricans, and they decided to invent a new name for themselves drawn from the slurs and slang terms that New York born Puerto Ricans were subject to."<sup>28</sup>*

The bilingualism of the movement is constantly present in Nuyorican graphic design. The posters I investigated at El Museo del Barrio were in English, Spanish, or both. There was no either-or. Each language was welcomed and present.

Bilingualism is an integral part of the movement because, as Ramirez points out, this was the first movement that "challenged language-based constructions of Puerto Rican identity."<sup>29</sup> and it points again to what Mercado shares about the Nuyorican identity being a survival mechanism for Puerto Rican people living on the mainland.<sup>30</sup> If both languages were accepted in this community, then people could be welcomed and find a place of belonging instead of

## PUERTO RICO

we export highways

between  
phantom dreams and  
spiritual dimensions;

between  
puddles of western culture  
and oceans of palm trees  
drowning in Spanish Metaphors;

between  
here and there:

between  
the hills & walled icy cities  
from echoes to screams  
that grow beyond  
the windbeat of the sea,  
beyond the poisonous gardens  
now swelling in our brains:

hot & cold. here and there.

you and i are Double Goers  
in a highway, facing each other  
and find only a sign post

that reads from  
Top  
T o  
Bot  
Tom

WE ARE THE STEP CHILDREN  
Of Landscapes  
Almost A Century  
Old, Conductors  
Of The Mind  
TRYING TO STAY SOMEWHERE

yet another place where they were outcasts. The transnational identity of Nuyorican people now included people who spoke Spanish, English, or a mixture of both.

Born out of this new transnational identity, which is a staple of Nuyorican graphic design, was bend toward the outsider, toward seeking justice for them. Valuing the outsider is an integral part of the work because it is almost always the motivation behind the work: present the struggle, the pain, and advocate for something better for the outsider.

The name Taller Boricua was chosen to represent who and what the founders wanted it to be. The purpose of this place was to be an environment that fostered people who were and are creative, strong, and who contend with oppression. Taller Boricua would be a place where the people of East Harlem and the Puerto Rican community in New York City could see themselves represented in the work that they looked at — a place that would pay special attention to and give opportunities to their community.

To give a proper introduction to Taller Boricua, I thought I'd allow it to introduce itself in its own words. The website shares Taller Boricua's history:

*Taller Boricua was founded in 1969 by artists Marcos Dimas, Adrian Garcia, Manuel Otero, Armando Soto, and Martin Rubio. In 1970 it was incorporated as the Puerto Rican Workshop Inc. — a 501(c) non-profit arts organization.*

*The Puerto Rican Workshop has been instrumental with East Harlem's "El Barrio" community's cultural and long-standing social well-being.*

*Taller Boricua's mission statement describes its purpose "to establish a cultural and educational center for the Puerto Rican community in New York City and enhance the "aesthetic, cultural, historical, political, and economic experience of Puerto Ricans in New York." Taller Boricua began as an artist collective to disseminate art throughout traditionally underserved communities; the group held guerilla outdoor exhibits and curated exhibitions and cultural events involving music, poetry, and the visual arts around New York City. As an early collaborator within the Nuyorican poetry and art movement, Taller Boricua continues to be a catalyst for traditional and new perspectives and an experimental multicultural forum for the evolutionary arts.*

*Now 51 years later, Taller Boricua continues drawing attention and relevancy to artists who are unrepresented and marginalized by the dominant cultural gatekeepers of our times.*

*Its historic, artistic engagement with the Young Lords Party, which once were headquartered neighbors on the same city block, infused the inspiration that gave rise to the socially political, cultural, and poetic Nuyorican movement.<sup>31</sup>*

With this intention, Taller Boricua became a foundational institution for the creation and life of the Nuyorican Movement and Nuyorican graphic design. It was a one-stop-shop for all things Nuyorican art and design in the 1970s.

## B O R I C U A

Boricua: you  
were born  
some-  
where

b e t w e e n

americanairlines  
near sanjuan  
& kennedyairport  
nearTheBronx  
: : : : : : : : : : :

& i have seen  
your grim face  
listening to bleeding  
in the distance  
as your mind walks  
B A C K W A R D S  
B A C K W A R D S  
B A C K w a r d s  
b a c k w a r d s  
: : : : : : : : : : :

b a c k w a r d s  
& sees lincoln hospital  
having a field day  
with your mother  
because she had  
labor pains with  
a Spanish Accent

r e m e m b e r?  
: : : : : : : : : : :

Image 31

Poem by Jose-Angel Figueroa, a Nuyorican poet, essayist, and educator

Ramirez explains the ethos of Taller Boricua in her 2005 dissertation, expounding on the founders' artistic beliefs:

*"They [the founders of Taller Boricua] shared common beliefs concerning the social purposes of art and the importance of developing a recognizable Puerto Rican aesthetic. The young artists were dedicated to developing a visual language that reflected the heritages of Puerto Rico's oppressed peoples, the indigenous Tainos who once called the island Borinquen and the enslaved Africans... We wanted to forge a symbolic link with our ancestral culture by adopting personalized Taíno symbols, gestures of unity and solidarity."<sup>32</sup>*

The word *Boricua* had been reclaimed and repurposed for this movement. Besides the social implications, it also stood for the kind of visual language the founders envisioned, one that would center the images and aesthetic of the oppressed people on the islands (Puerto Rico and New York City) as well as the blended identity they were creating for themselves on the island of Manhattan. This idea of creating work centered around oppressed peoples and the development of a new identity permeates all facets of Nuyorican graphic design.

Before we move on, I have one somewhat tangential note regarding Taller Boricua's statement referencing artists only, rather than artists and designers:

In Puerto Rico and among the Nuyorican artistic community at the time, the delineation between artist and designer had not come yet. It is unclear even today whether or not Taller Boricua makes such a distinction, though today artists and designers differentiate themselves in Puerto Rico. In the 1970s, artists and designers were often interchangeable and employed to accomplish similar work at Taller Boricua.

Graphic artists specialized in graphic work, but as you'll see, many of the posters and images are handmade and could be considered works of art. However, their composition, hand lettering, and typographic treatments bring them into the graphic design realm. The works you will see are, in my eyes, examples of graphic design because, although the makers may be seen as artists, the intent behind their creations was in service to a cause, meant to communicate that cause's message to a large, public audience.

As I mentioned earlier, Taller Boricua was inspired by DIVEDCO (one valuable distinction to recognize, however, is that DIVEDCO was state sponsored while Taller Boricua was not). Ramirez discusses their connection in her dissertation: "Taller Boricua operated much like DIVEDCO in Puerto Rico. The artists created posters for community events and political rallies and held free printmaking workshops and art classes for the public."<sup>33</sup> Though both DIVEDCO and Taller Boricua provided art and design services to their respective communities, Taller Boricua's process was more grassroots because it was not connected to the state.

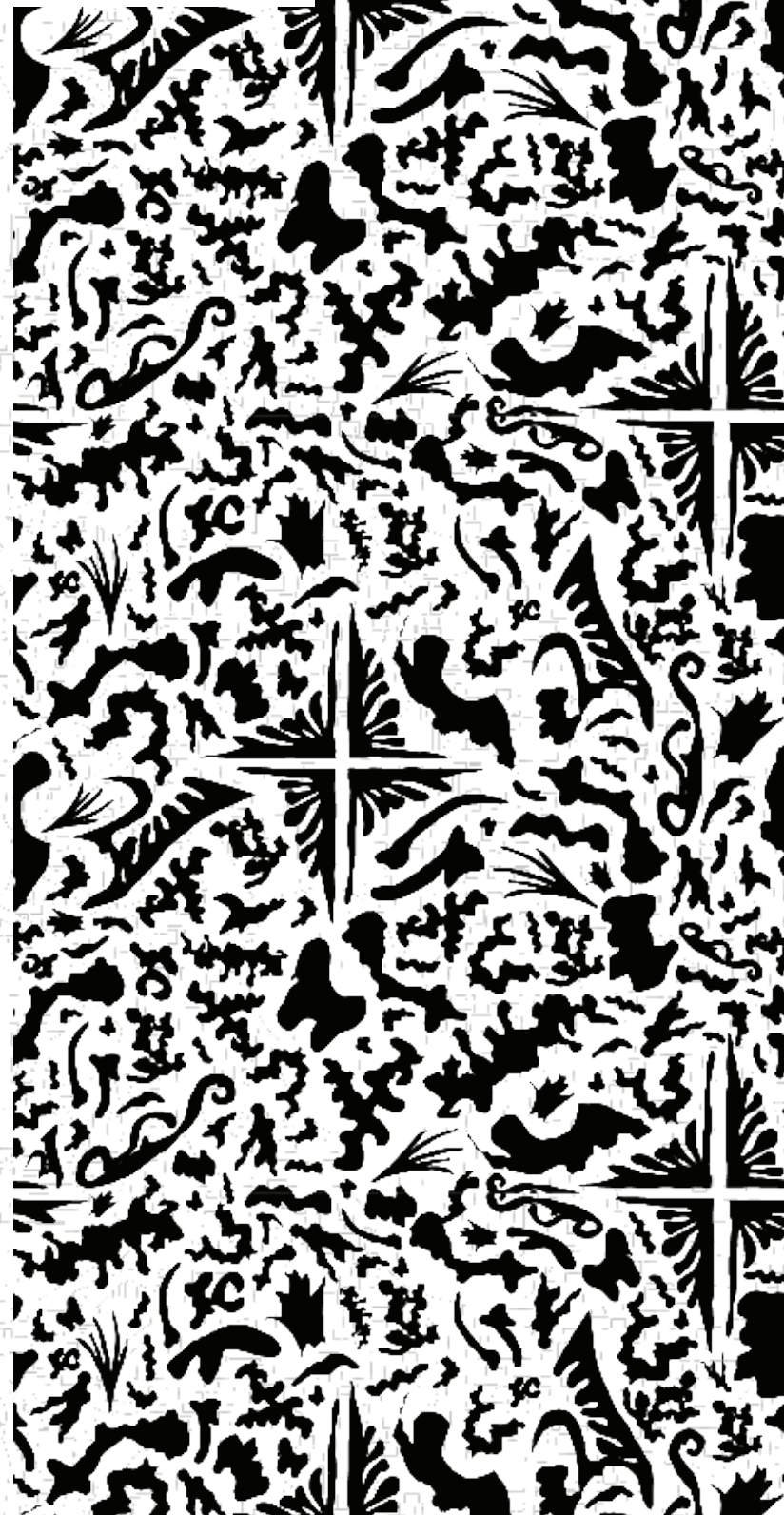


Images 32-35

Posters created by DIVEDCO found at the Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives (SOVA).

"One typical day a member of the Puerto Rican Independence Party or other political group would come by [Taller Boricua] and salute us with a 'como está compañero' [how are you, brother?] and say 'By the way we need a poster for a march.'"<sup>34</sup>

Taller Boricua had set its intention of contending with oppression, and its posters, like the ones the Puerto Rican Independence Party asked for, were essential contributions to the community's advocacy and justice work. After all, the struggles that Puerto Rican people faced when they arrived in New York City not trivial.



Puerto Ricans who moved from the island to the mainland had to hit the ground running. Navigating delinquent landlords, redlining, racism, improper pay, deceitful hiring practices and jobs, and arriving under-prepared for winter made "making it" in the United States a multi-fold challenge. DIVEDCO even created a publication addressing these issues in 1954 called *Libros Para El Pueblo* (Books for the People).

One in particular, titled *Emigración*, almost 100 pages, was the most read of all of the *Libros* publications; it addressed cultural differences, racial prejudice, job opportunities, and the cold northern climate.<sup>35</sup>

Many members of the Nuyorican movement were second-generation immigrants who watched as their parents and elders went through these struggles, and then observed how the same issues appeared in their own coming-of-age journeys. That experience is partly what catalyzed them to create and participate in protesting the injustices against them.



Image 36  
Cover of DIVEDCO's  
*Libros Para El Pueblo*  
*Emigración* issue.

# UNION ESTUDIANTIL PEDRO ALBIZU CAMPOS AT QUEENS COLLEGE CONFERENCE

## “LA MUJER PUERTO RRIQUEÑA



FRI. MARCH 16. 4-7:30 PM  
SAT 17 11-8 PM  
SUN 18 11-8 PM

### SPEAKERS

MARGARITA ALARCON  
ANNA ZENTELLA  
ROBERTA SALPEY  
CARMEN RIVERA  
DE ALVARADO + OTHERS

### Workshops

POETRY  
FILMS

DAYCARE - FOOD AVAILABLE

The unity Nuyorican graphic design was trying to create between African, Taino, Puerto Rican, and Nuyorican people over their similar struggles was meant to be visualized using Afro-Taino imagery. The use of this imagery reflects not only the hundreds of years each group has had to contend with oppression but also the message that the fight has not been abandoned.

To help the reader see what I am talking about, I will share Nuyorican graphic design through a selection of posters that were displayed at El Museo del Barrio's exhibition "Taller Boricua: A Political Printshop in New York" from September 12, 2020 to January 17, 2021. This exhibition presented some of the few remaining works from Taller Boricua's days as an activist, poster-making print shop and offered a lens through which to view Nuyorican graphic design.

The first poster I'd like to reference is *La Mujer Puertorriqueña* Unión Estudiantil Pedro Albizu Campos at Queens College Conference (The Puerto Rican Woman Pedro Albizu Campos Student Union at the Queens College Conference) (Image 41), a serigraph by Marcos Dimas. The poster is an advertisement for an event at a Queens College conference given by speakers listed on the poster as Margarita Alarcon, Anna Zentella, Roberta Salpey, and Carmen Rivera de Alvarado (and others as indicated on the poster). The title of the poster is in Spanish while the dates for the speakers are in English. The title of the organization hosting the event is in Spanish while the title of the college and conference are in English. This poster is evidence of two aspects of Nuyorican graphic design: first, bilingualism, which is a part of the transnational identity the movement created; and second leveraging community engagement to get the word out about the women speaking so that they could have a platform (or space) to be seen and heard. The poster advertises some topics the speakers will address, including "workshops, poetry, films."

Jorge Soto Sánchez and Fernando Salicrup worked together to create a serigraph for Teatro Jurutungo's play *Nueva Canción* (Image 42). The poster depicts multiple people: one playing an instrument that looks like a conga or bongo drum, one wearing a hat, and the other seemingly gazing into the soul of the viewer. There is what looks to be a cuatro (a violin shaped guitar popular in Puerto Rico) in the image as well, indicating that music is an important part of the play. A white bird flies above all three people. This poster is bright and colorful, with reds and yellows jumping out from the page.

The inclusion of the conga or bongo drums along with the guitar or bass leads me to believe that salsa or Latin jazz music are part of this play, and it represents the Afro-Taino aesthetic Taller Boricua was known for. Conga and bongo drums originated on the continent of Africa and were adopted by many Caribbean cultures as the Atlantic slave trade brought African people to the Caribbean. This poster for the play highlights the African contribution to Puerto Rican culture via its imagery.



Image 38



Image 39





Image 40

Another poster that embodies Nuyorican graphic design is Adrian García's *Exposición Taller Boricua* poster. The title is in Spanish and English (Exposición/Exhibit)(Image 43), the place is in Spanish (Taller Boricua), and the address is in English (2156 2nd Ave. Bt. 110+111 St.).

Words probably won't be the first thing that will stick out to the viewer when they look upon the poster, though. The Taíno symbol for the sun is the largest image on the poster. Within the words *Taller Boricua*, viewers can see more symbols that are either Taíno or inspired by Taíno symbols. For example, in the first *L* of *Taller* viewers can see the Taíno symbol for the coqui, a frog native to Puerto Rico.

Again, this poster incorporates both Spanish and English languages, evidence of the Puerto Rican transnational identity. It also exclusively uses Taíno imagery, which not only represents the centering of and solidarity with oppressed people but also "symbolically link[s] Nuyorican Graphic Design with it's ancestral root culture."<sup>36</sup>

The last work I'd like to highlight in my selection was made by Manuel Otero for a series created by Taller Boricua in collaboration with CENTRO. The series, titled *Proletarian Portfolio*, "is a series of ten serigraph portraits of early-twentieth-century radical Puerto Rican labor leaders."<sup>35</sup> Titled *Juana Colón* (Image 44), the poster depicts the Afro-Puerto Rican woman standing confidently in the middle of the page with various people around her: to her left, protesters with swords and a flag reading "Proletarios del mundo Unios" (Working class people of the world, Unite); to her right, police with clubs, and behind them what appears to be a rich man watching the struggle passively.

Juana Colón advocated for people like herself who were in poverty in the Comerío area of Puerto Rico.<sup>37</sup> Including Juana in this group of important labor leaders speaks to Taller Boricua's and Nuyorican graphic design's admiration and appreciation of the contributions of Afro-Puerto Rican women who contended with oppression; it ensures that others see Juana as a source of inspiration in their own fight against oppression.

While not all the posters I've selected from El Museo's exhibition contain every element of Nuyorican graphic design, all contain at least one and often two or more and are representative of the values that Taller Boricua and Nuyorican graphic design held.



*This final pattern is a compilation of other patterns, representative of how I've brought these ideas and experiences together in my life.*

*Prior to learning about Nuyorican graphic design, I hadn't come across many if any, art and design movements that I related to so deeply. By researching and looking at Nuyorican work, I could see an embodied version of my heritage and values.*

*In this small, mostly undocumented, beautiful, unique movement, I have found a piece of what I wrote about earlier: a reflection of myself in the experience of others.*

*It's a beautiful and encouraging thing to believe that there is space for you where someone similar to you is already there. It helps me feel safe.*

*One of the things I most appreciate about Taller Boricua is that the members and founders were unapologetically and authentically themselves. I aspire to be that just as I aspire to travel the world the way my grandmother did.*

*This spirit of reclamation and honesty, what feels like confidence, is what I think inspired the designers and artists of the movement to take the word Nuyorican and re-purpose it for their own use, to centralize Taino and African imagery in their work while using Spanish and English languages in order to show their solidarity with oppressed people and visualize their transnational identity.*

*What did all of this do? It opened doors. The cultural spaces that were created (Taller Boricua, El Museo del Barrio, the Nuyorican Poets Café and more) all provided inspiration to the next generation to continue aspiring and contending. I've realized my duality can do the same. What I once thought was a disadvantage I can now use for the advantage of myself and others. I now understand that my identity is a privilege I have been given to steward.*



**NOTES & BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## ENDNOTES

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## COLOPHON

### Author & Designer

This book was written and designed by Ana Meléndez in New Jersey. As a thesis for the Masters of Fine Arts in Graphic Design at the Vermont College of Fine Arts in 2023.

### Typography

#### Piazzolla

The main typeface used for this thesis is Piazzolla. Piazzolla was designed by Juan Pablo del Peral for Huerta Tipográfica and was released in 2020. Huerta Tipográfica was founded in 2009 and is located in Argentina.

#### Latinaires

The first of two supplementary typefaces used in this thesis is Latinaires. Latinaires was designed by Alejandro Paul for Sudtipos. Sudtipos was founded in 2002 and is located in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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The second supplementary typeface for this thesis is Mariné. Mariné was designed by Martín Sommaruga for TipoType. TipoType was founded in 2006 and is located in Uruguay.

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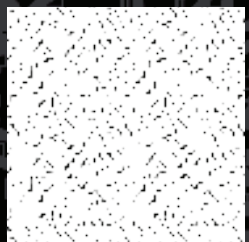
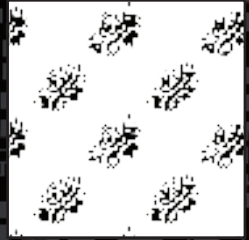
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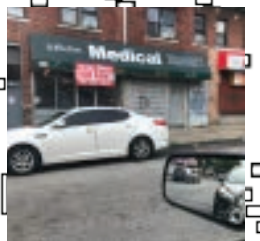
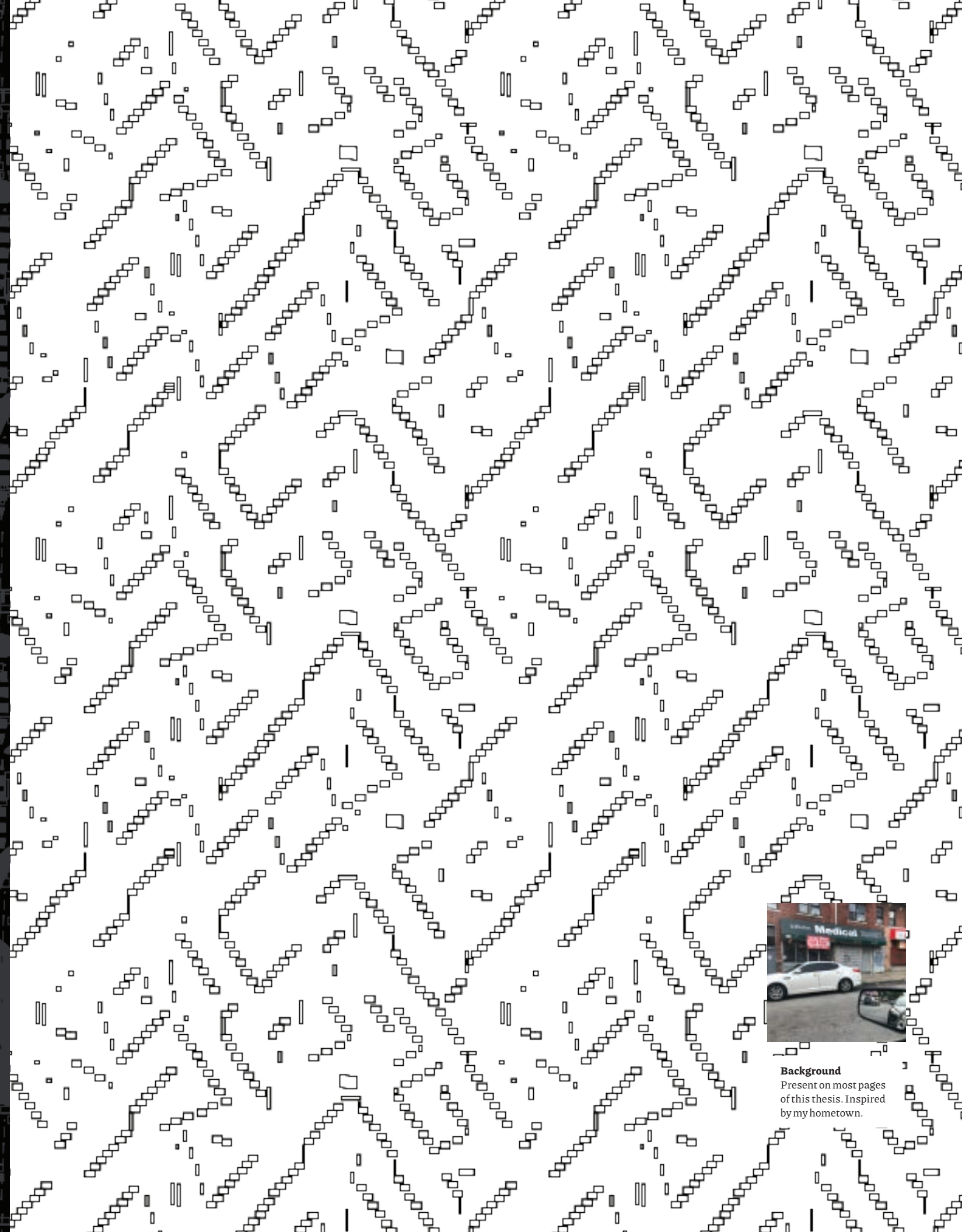
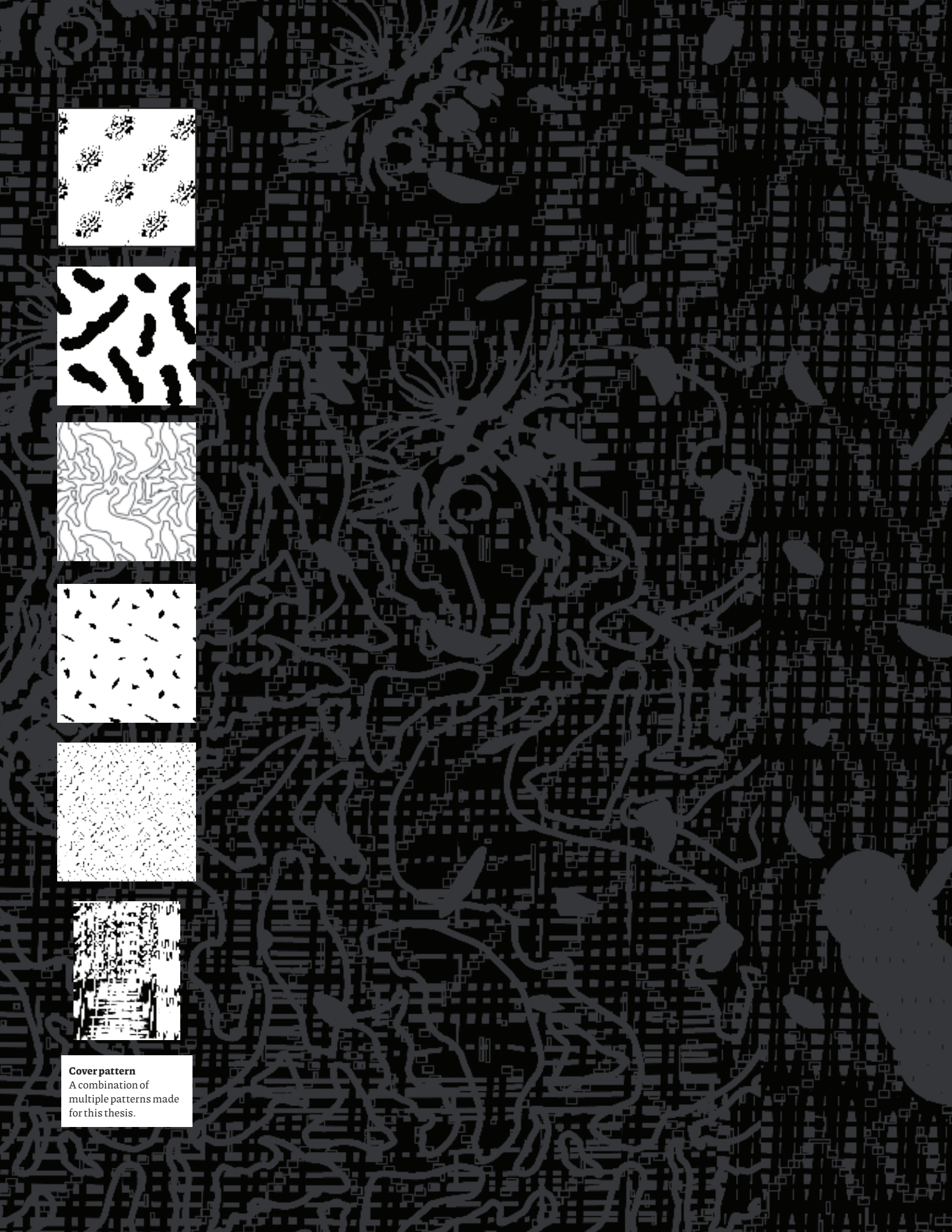
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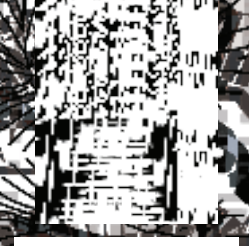
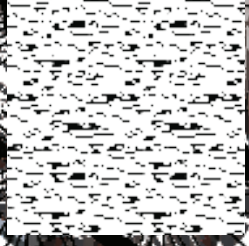
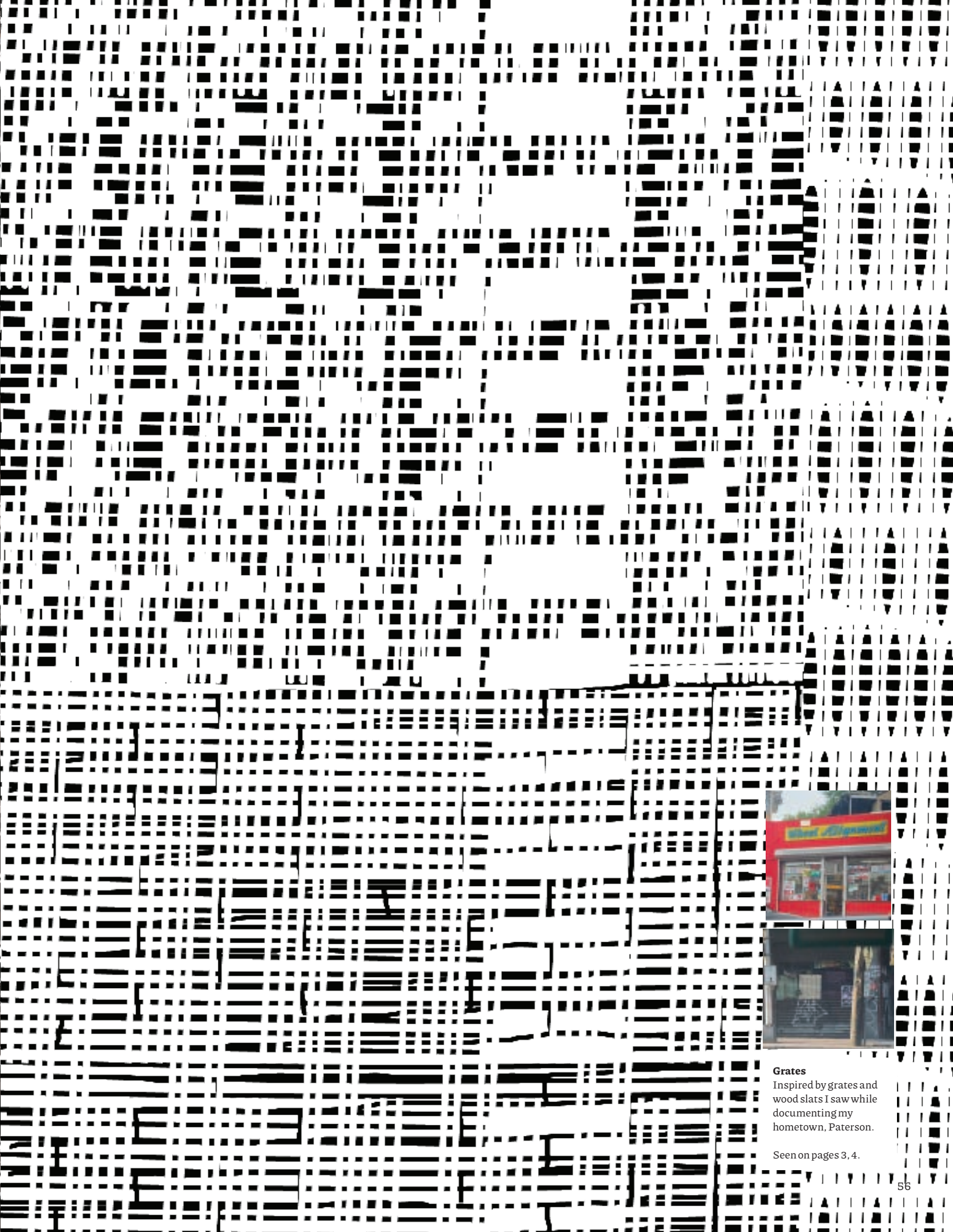
## **PATTERN INDEX**



**Cover pattern**  
A combination of multiple patterns made for this thesis.



**Background**  
Present on most pages of this thesis. Inspired by my hometown.



**Part 1 Title Page Pattern**  
Combination of multiple patterns, most within the section of the thesis.

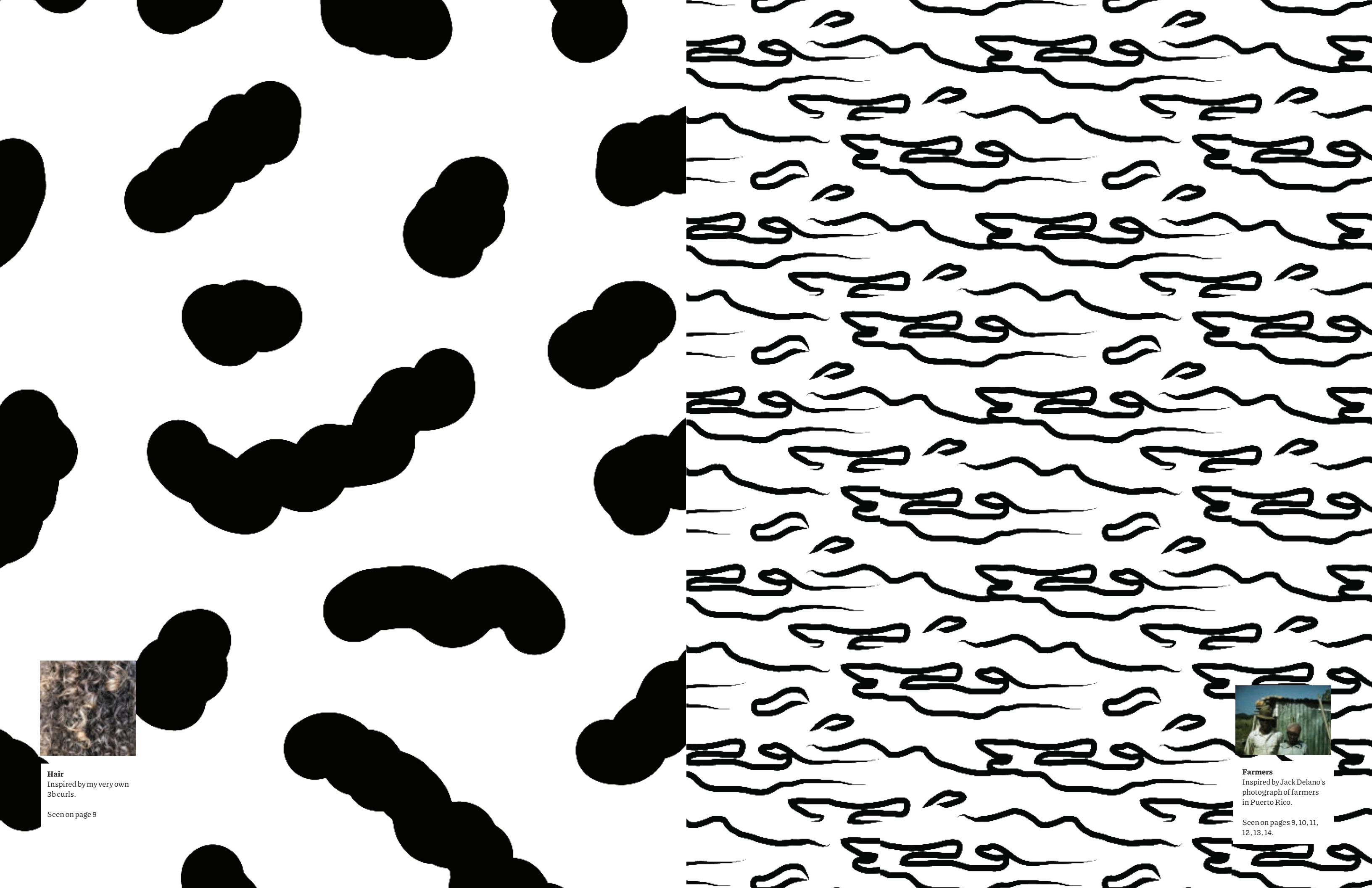
Seen on pages 1, 2, 45, 46, 51, 52.



**Grates**  
Inspired by grates and wood slats I saw while documenting my hometown, Paterson.

Seen on pages 3, 4.





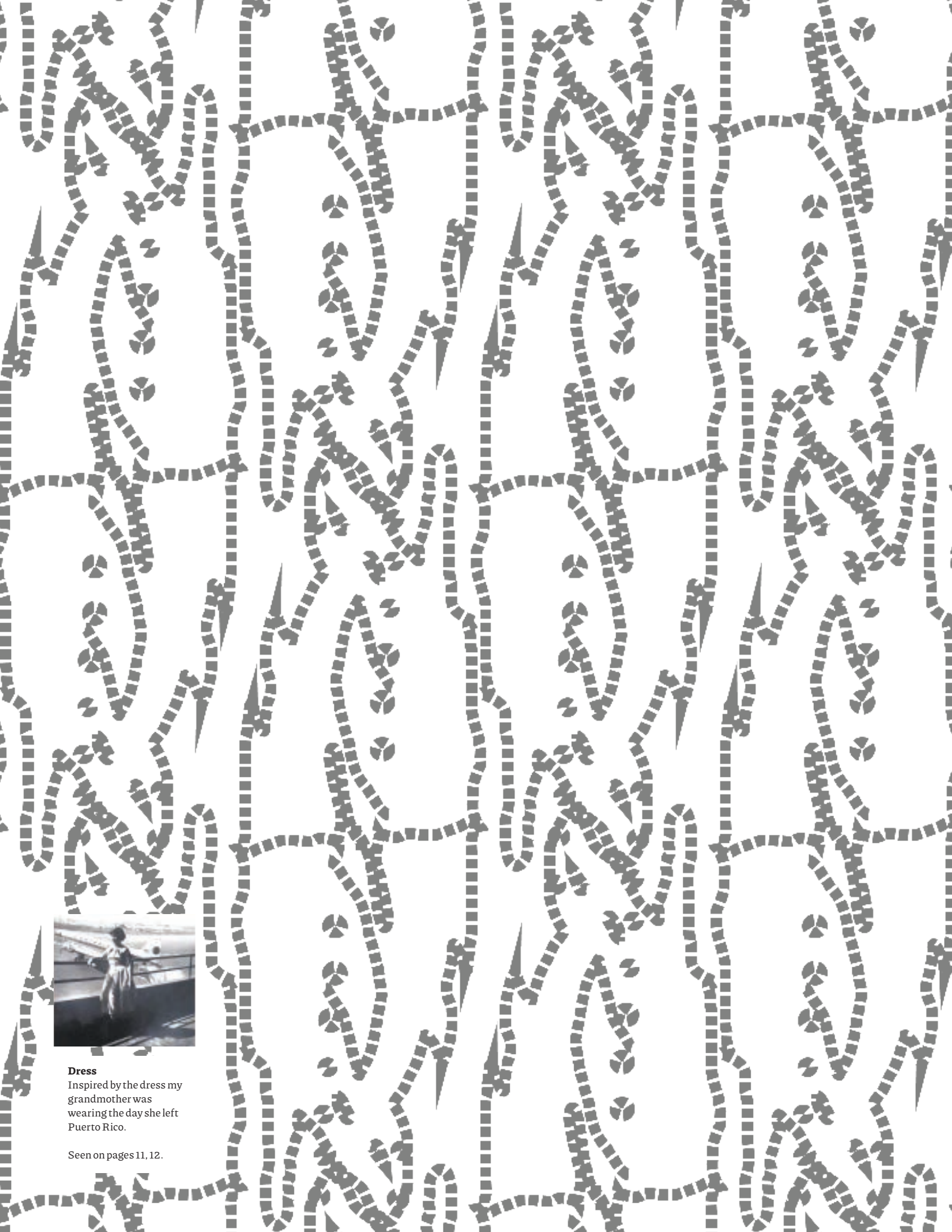
**Hair**  
Inspired by my very own  
3b curls.

Seen on page 9



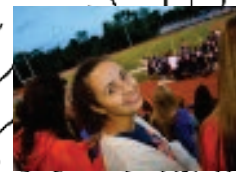
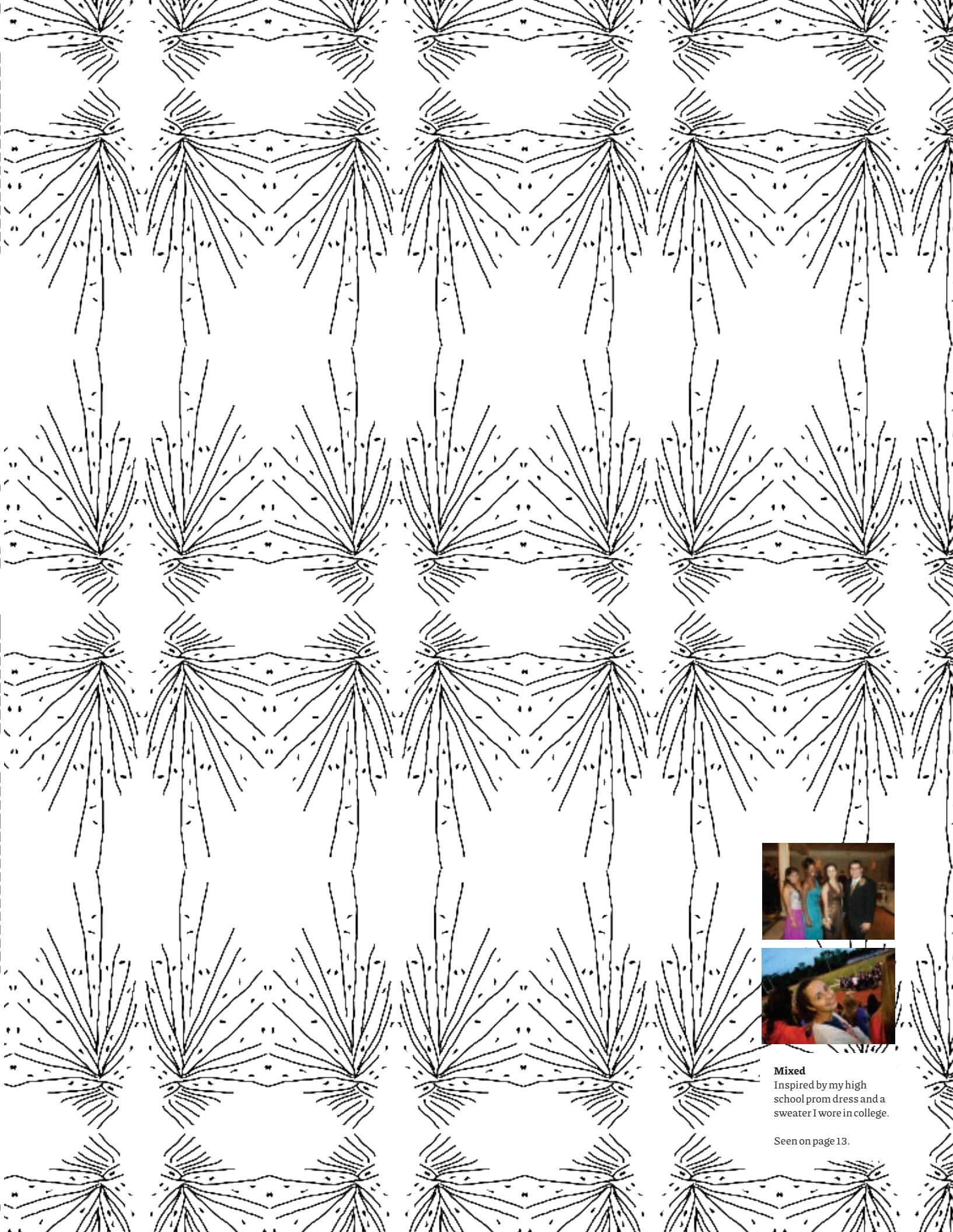
**Farmers**  
Inspired by Jack Delano's  
photograph of farmers  
in Puerto Rico.

Seen on pages 9, 10, 11,  
12, 13, 14.



**Dress**  
Inspired by the dress my grandmother was wearing the day she left Puerto Rico.

Seen on pages 11, 12.



**Mixed**  
Inspired by my high school prom dress and a sweater I wore in college.

Seen on page 13.



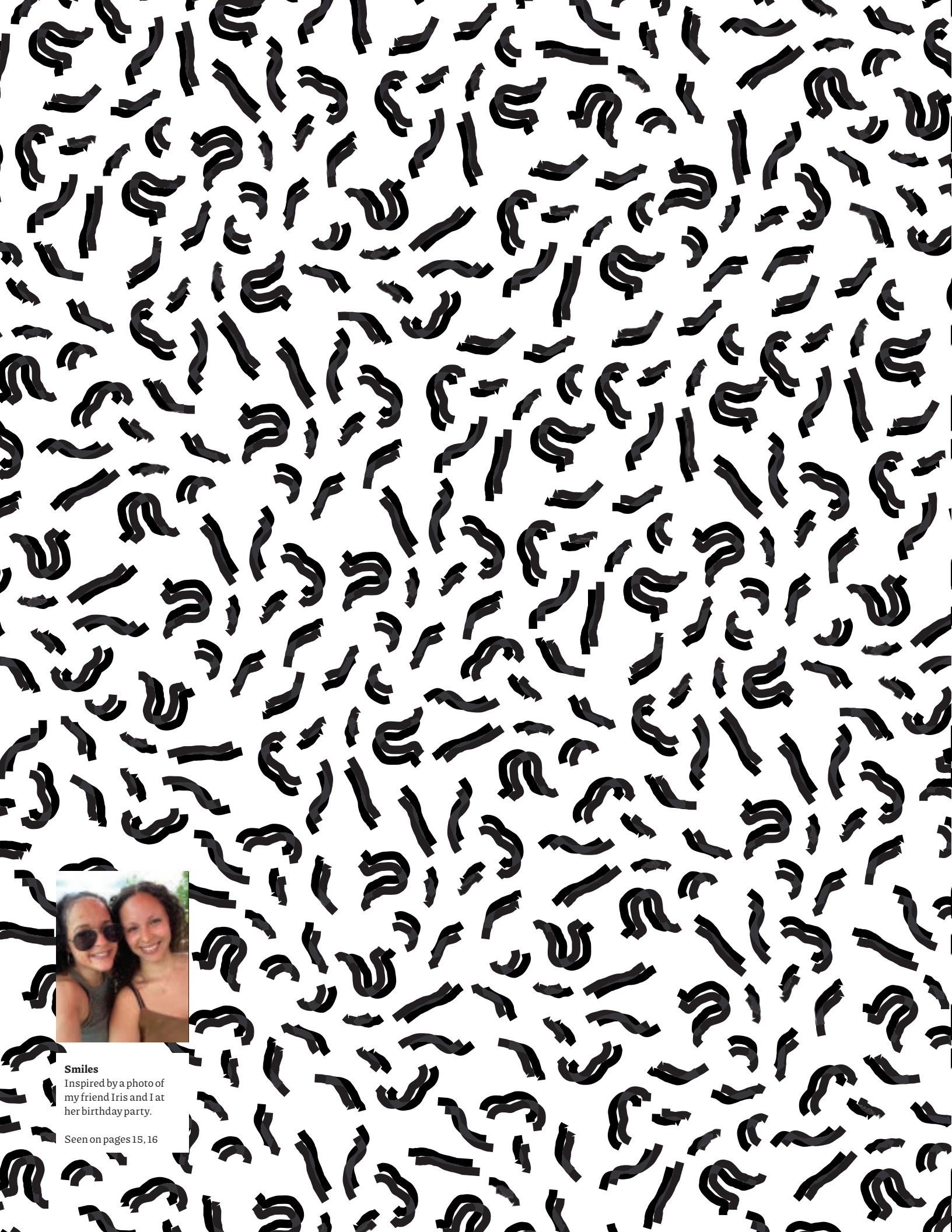
**Lillie**  
Inspired by the above flyer, specifically the blown out portions of the subject's face.

Seen on pages 13, 14, 15, 16.



**Part 2 Title Page Pattern**  
Combination of multiple patterns, most within the section of the thesis.

Seen on pages 17, 18, 47, 49.



**Smiles**

Inspired by a photo of my friend Iris and I at her birthday party.

Seen on pages 15, 16



La Mujer  
Inspired by the above flyer for a conference at Queens College in NYC.

Seen on pages 27, 29, 31, 33, 34.



**Family**

Inspired by a photo of me with my brother and two cousins while on vacation.

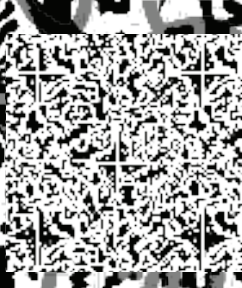
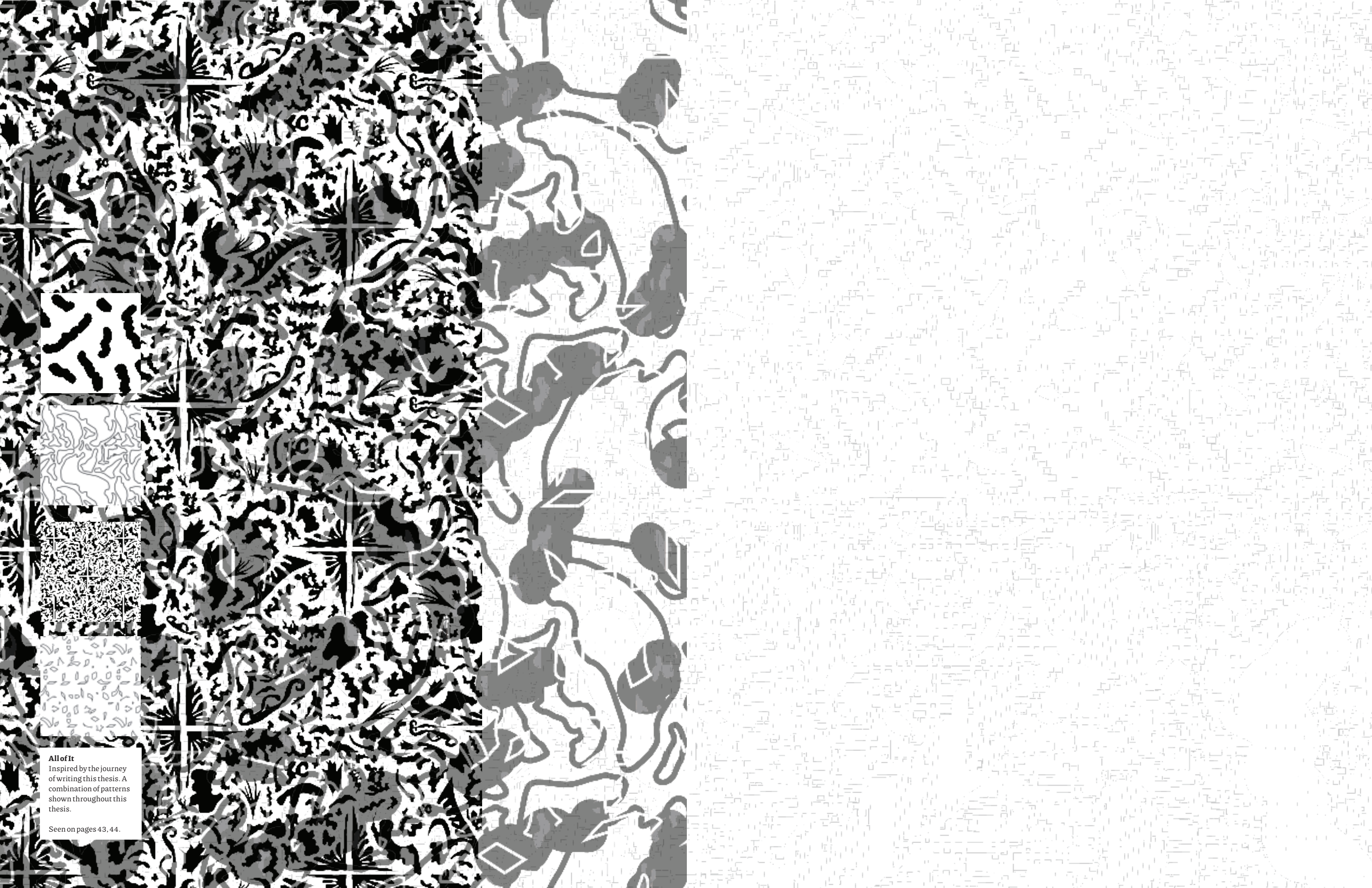
Seen on pages 21, 22.



**Labor Leaders**

Inspired by the above posters of Santiago Andrades and Juan Vilar, two radical labor leaders in Puerto Rico.

Seen on pages 23, 24, 27, 28, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.



**All of it**

Inspired by the journey of writing this thesis. A combination of patterns shown throughout this thesis.

Seen on pages 43, 44.



## APPENDIX

Other patterns made relating to Nuyorican  
Thoughts not included in this thesis

