



MEETING THE TEXT HALFWAY

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An exhibition submitted for examination

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Introduction

Meeting the Text Halfway is a protracted meditation on the relationship between bodies and texts. Its thesis is that both are merely thresholds for one another. Its antithesis is that both feel so separate and materially individuated. There is no synthesis, but rather the ongoing negotiation of their entanglement as sites for reading, reinscription, translation, and meaning-making, where meaning is the inevitable aftershock of encounter rather than the foundation.

Meeting the Text Halfway proposes that texts and bodies are for each other a form of real estate. Metaphors for each other as sites of inhabitation. Sometimes a sanctuary, sometimes a prison, where embodiment might be better thought of as a form of possession in the dual sense of possessing and being possessed.

Meeting the Text Halfway forms part of an ongoing inquiry into the ways that bodies and texts animate each other.

Threshold 1: Body & Bible

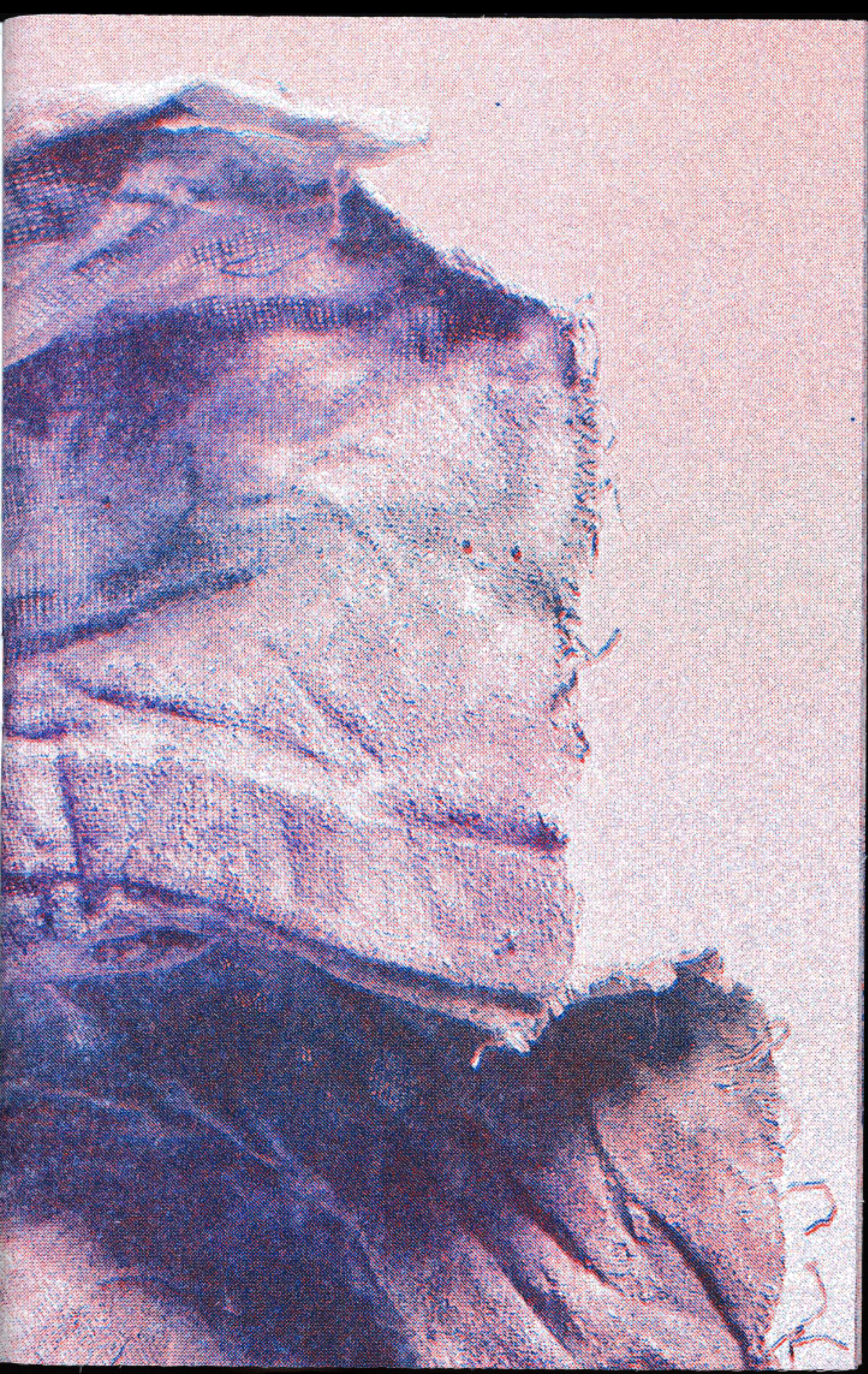
Meeting the Text Halfway is an inquiry born of my own experience of being in relation to a text. That text is the *Holy Bible*, which has become for me a metaphor and paradigm of textuality within Western philosophical frameworks.

It is a text which is not one, that is to say, it's an arrangement, or a history of arrangements, of disparate texts brought together politically, strategically, and polemically. The Bible is a bibliography, it's a library, it's an archive. The history of what has made it in and what has been excluded, and the consequences of those actions on real-life bodies and global possibilities, is part of what animates the stakes of this inquiry.

Meeting the Text Halfway takes the Bible as a model of textuality. It is a book that is not one, but a collection of disparate texts in which authorship is always an open question. It's a text that has no origin and is always in translation.

My life has been its threshold and its real estate. I have not lived a day on earth outside of some fundamental relationship to it. In fact, I have lived almost exactly half of my life within a certain notion of fidelity to the text, and another half in a certain relation of infidelity.

"I once thought blasphemy a high form of devotion."



Threshold 2: Wax & Text

All the works comprising the exhibition components of *Meeting the Text Halfway* incorporate wax as a key material.

Wax is such an evocative material, matte or sheen. Solid, liquid, gas. Wax is precarious, but also stabilising. It protects, but is also vulnerable to the atmosphere it finds itself in. It is mutable, flexible, extraordinarily absorbent at the right temperature, and when hardened, completely hydrophobic.

It is also proximate to skin and flesh, and it has within it some fascinating quality that evokes desire. When encountering wax, one is immediately drawn to touching it.

Wax text then becomes a metaphor for how bodies and bodies of texts meet each other halfway, how they become embodied through each other, how they possess each other, and how they hold together with a certain fragility, with a certain mutability, flexibility, and propensity for change and transformation.

Wax text performs precarity, in which meaning is only as stable as its atmospheres.

Much of the wax in *Meeting the Text Halfway* has come from other works, other installations, other formations, other texts. Here it finds a new articulation, a new temporality, a new precarity.

Threshold 3: Monochrome and Colour

Thresholds are also about how orientation changes one's experience.

To enter *Meeting the Text Halfway* is to encounter monochromatic surfaces of graphite and silver. The experience is mineral—graphite, titanium oxide—and digital projection recreates the silver screen. Graphite surfaces imply a form of animated drawing.

To pass through the centre of the exhibition and to pivot reveals a field entirely of colour. One has crossed a threshold, but that threshold is thick; it's not a thin dividing line, but a matter of orientation and perspective.

Within the real estate of the text, I name this phenomenon two sides of the same (in)side.



Threshold 4: Tongues & Windows

Once you see the form, you cannot unsee it.

If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then the tongue is the window to language. We can imagine ourselves prelingual, but we cannot imagine ourselves prelingua—without a tongue.

The tongue, much like a window, is a threshold, a space for both taste and articulation. The lingua licks language as enfleshed text.

Meeting the Text Halfway inscribes the text on its arched tongue forms. Glossolalic tongues fill the atmosphere, speaking in tongues that are not their own. A thousand tongues also sing in ten-part harmonies the rhetorical questions of an ancient God.

"What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the earth."

Eternally interned texts turn tricks on treacled tongues of fire, tonguing flesh-tongues with flaming licks.

Threshold 5: Light & Surface

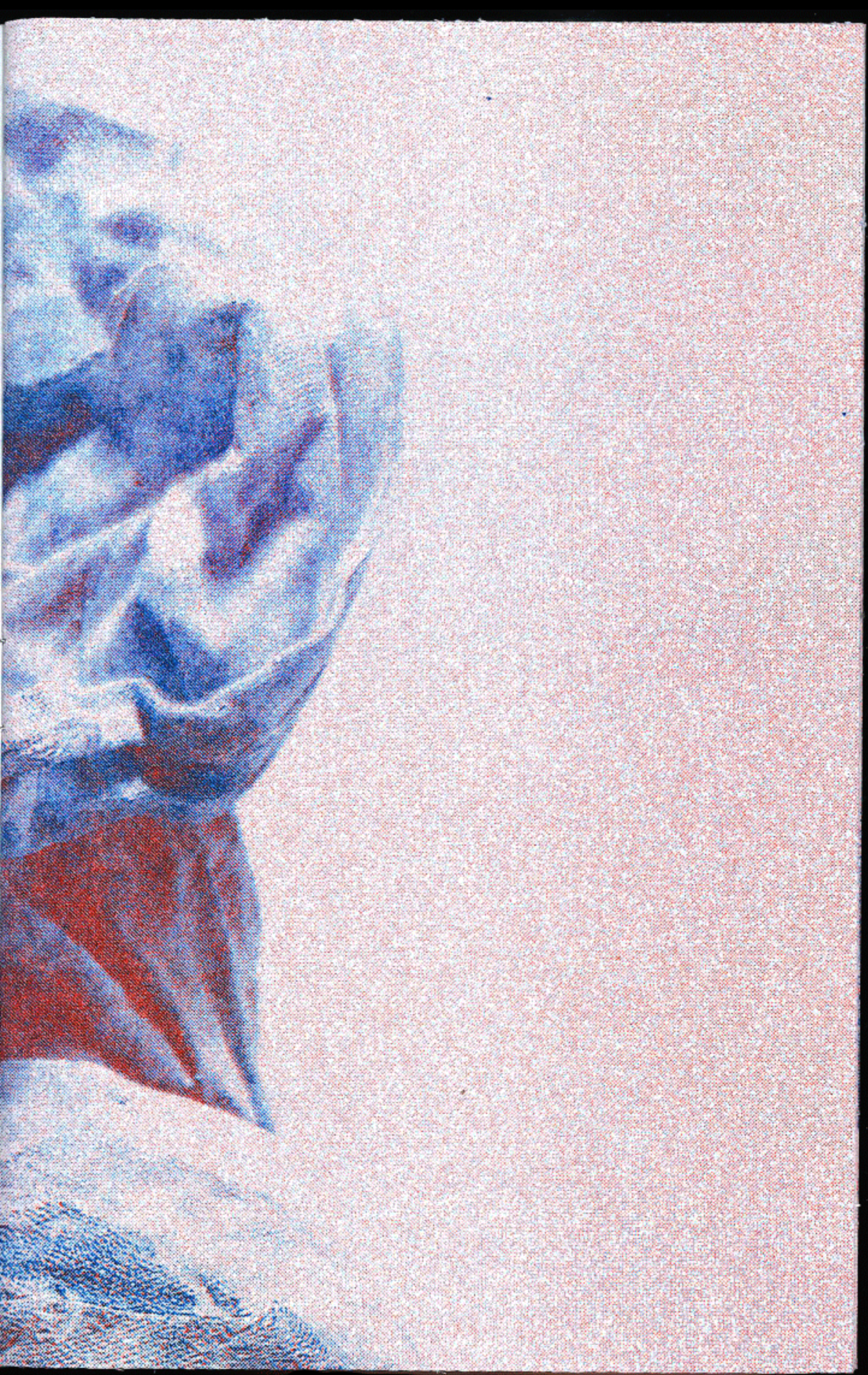
In the beginning, the world was without form and void, and darkness hovered over the surface of the deep, and they said, "Let there be light." And it is through light that all of the glamorous possibilities of surfaces are revealed, surfaces that are themselves between spaces, thresholds.

Like the myriad refractive possibilities of the minerality of graphite, and also the liquid gloss or sheen of wax. Or the ambience of track gallery lighting with its sulfur yellow, or daylight mimicry, which competes with the laser-lamp precision of the projector, pushing competing surface phenomena through one another.

Light asks the question, "Where is the work? Is it on this surface? Is it beneath this surface? Is it behind you in a machine, throwing the memory of itself forward?"

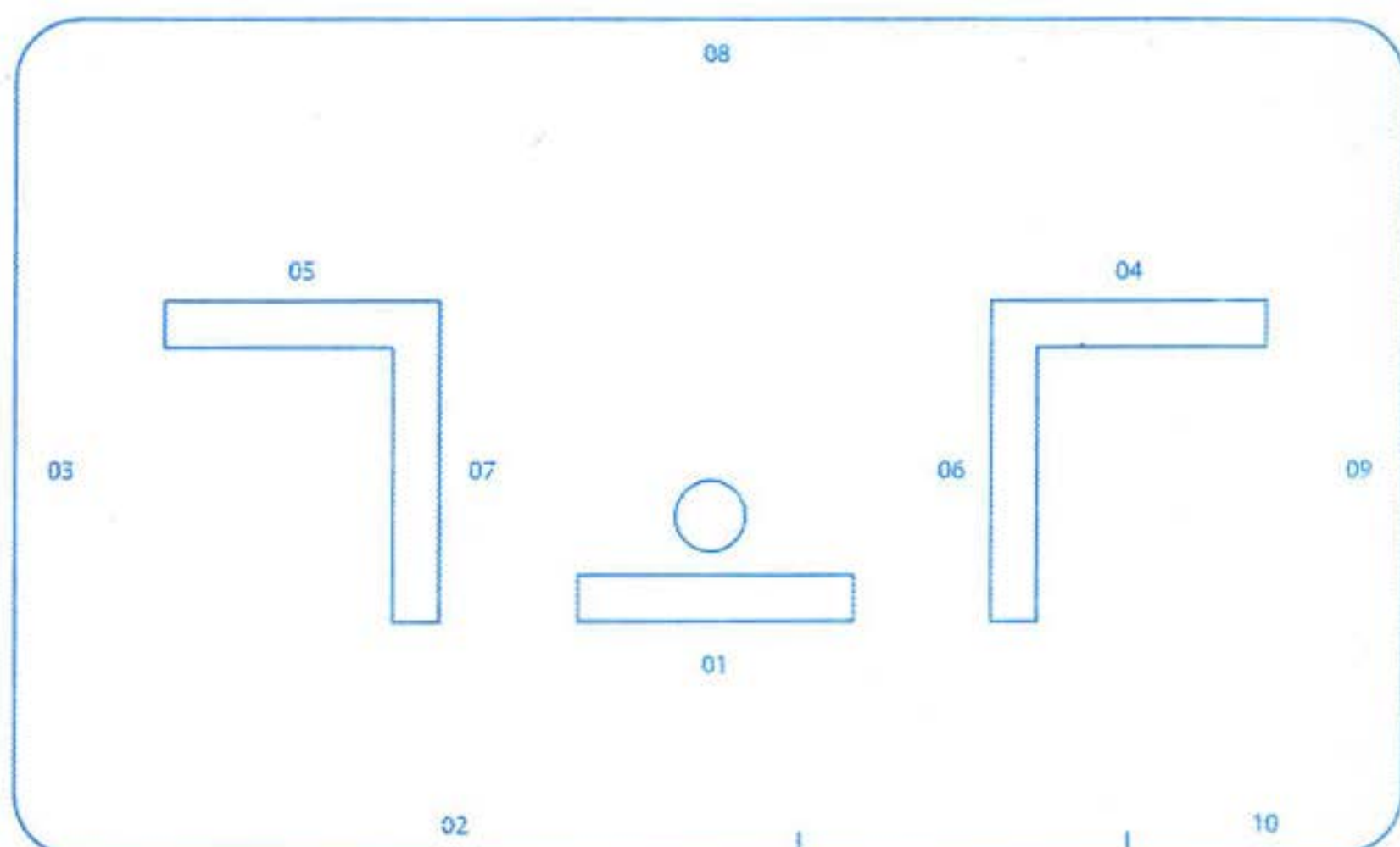
Light says, "If you turn me off, to where do the surfaces of the work retreat?"

Light, like sound, hovers as the atmosphere of the air within which everything either melts or solidifies—light speaks in materially-discursive tongues.



Works

1. *Constitution*, 2026. Graphite, cartridge paper, bees wax, carnauba wax, titanium oxide, casein, lime, marine ply.
2. *I AM A TEXT*, 2024. Risograph print, velum paper, bees wax, carnauba wax.
3. *Am I my brother's Keeper?* 2022. Graphite, bees wax, carnauba wax, marine ply, pine, brackets, digital video, sound.
4. *Re/membering Babel #1*, 2026. Risograph print, cartridge paper, bees wax, carnauba wax, rice bran wax, titanium oxide, casein, lime, marine ply, magnets.
5. *Re/membering Babel #2*, 2026. Risograph print, cartridge paper, bees wax, carnauba wax, rice bran wax, titanium oxide, casein, lime, marine ply, magnets.
6. *Ecce Homo (behold the homo)*, 2025. Digital video.
7. *Re/membering Babel #3*, 2026. Risograph print, cartridge paper, bees wax, carnauba wax, rice bran wax, titanium oxide, casein, lime, marine ply, magnets.
8. *Re/membering Babel #4*, 2026. Risograph print, cartridge paper, bees wax, carnauba wax, rice bran wax, titanium oxide, casein, lime, marine ply, magnets.
9. *We can all speak in tongues*, 2026. Graphite, bees wax, carnauba wax, marine ply, digital video, sound.
10. *Return*, 2025. Graphite, lithography ink, bees wax, carnauba wax, marine ply.





Constitution (2026)

Graphite, cartridge paper, bees wax, carnauba wax, titanium oxide, casein, lime, marine ply.

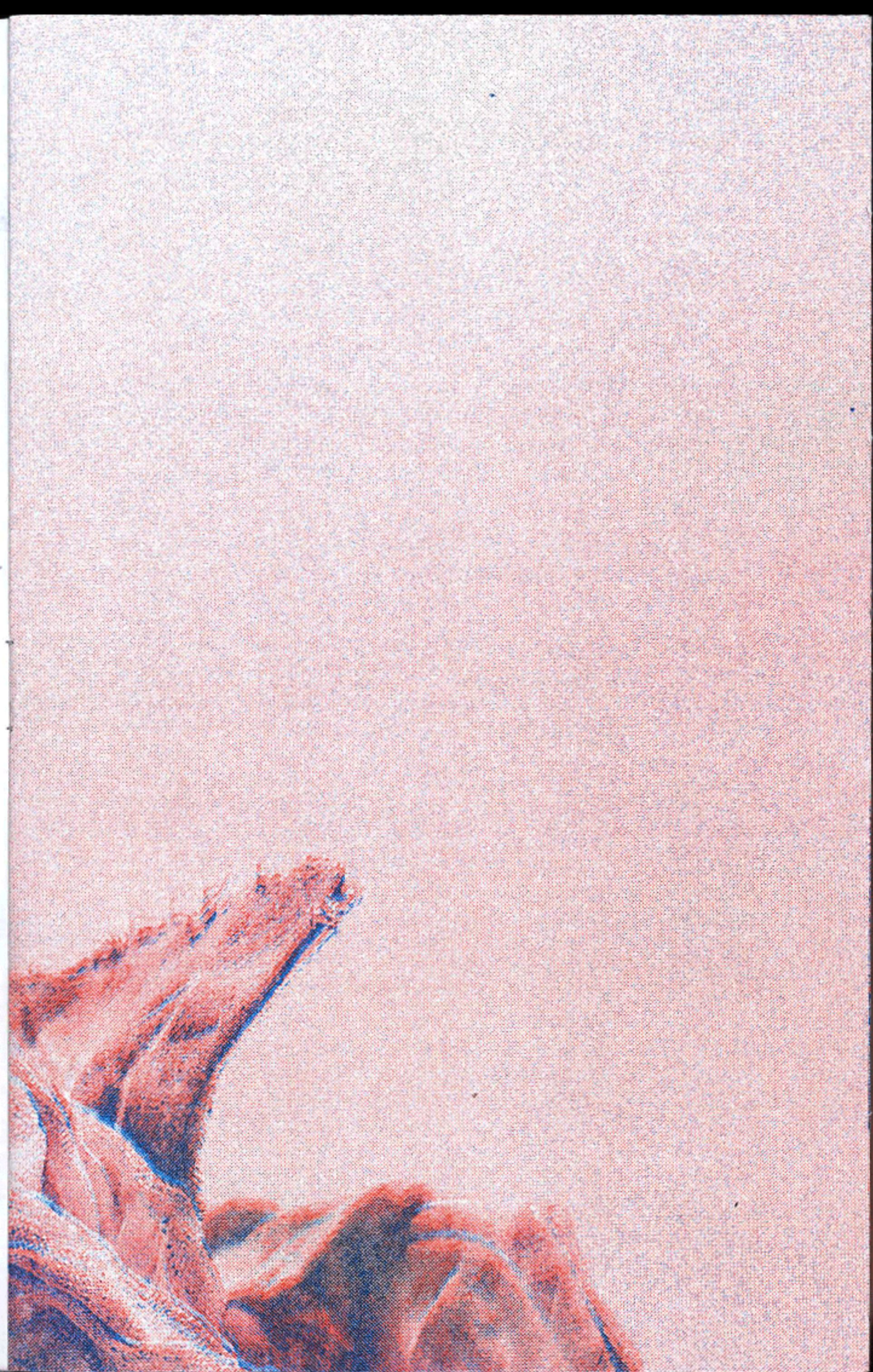
Outside of the Bible, a constitution is about as close as you can get to understanding the relationship between bodies and texts. A constitution is a text that consolidates a social body, prescribes its limits and affordances, its inclusions and its exclusions, becomes a national body, a digestive system, and a cultural paradigm.

Nietzsche once provocatively suggested that the German spirit suffered from a kind of chronic indigestion. Culture, it seems, may be as much a digestive phenomenon as an intellectual one.

This work itself is the digestion of a poem. The text itself is entirely absent, only formed through the gaps in an image that itself is a fragment, a waxed rag that loitered in the studio, begging to be drawn. The paper was itself a discard, intended only as a stencil, before becoming many hours of obsessive drawing with a mechanical pencil.

The work itself suffered its own constitution, its own material limitations, that had to be digested within the studio. Wax and paper love cleaving together, but often in doing so, the wax removes the light from the paper, making it seem as though it were wet. It dampens, it softens the vibrancy, it steals its light.

Titanium oxide in this work is both a mineral surface and bonding mortar, allowing light, paper and wax to digest each other without being consumed.



I Am a Text (2024)

Risograph print, velum paper, bees wax, carnauba wax.

I Am a Text is a translation from another work, a performative video piece in which a text emerged as a performative meditation, a meditation that *Meeting the Text Halfway* largely continues.

The transcription of this video piece is reinscribed in risographic prints, themselves layered material processes where colour and form accumulate through multiple layers and colour fields.

Each of the letters is delicately hand-painted in wax. The process was precarious. If the wax is too hot, it bleeds into the fibres of the paper without any control or precision. If the wax is too cold or the paper too cool, the wax congeals and accumulates in ways that don't feel integrated.

You might miss this, but when the light of the room shines at forty-five-degree angles, you might catch a glimpse of the way in which the wax licks the text, makes it fleshy, a kind of leathery surface.

Where is the line where the body ends and the text begins? Where is the axis where the paper shuts, and the flesh pops in? What is this arbitrary demarcation of my skin? I'm a text baby, a texty kind of flesh.

Although these lines emerge in the excitement of a filmed performance, almost thrown at the audience like rags used to wipe my tongue, they have become the foundation of a line of inquiry which continues to possess my thinking, body, and work.



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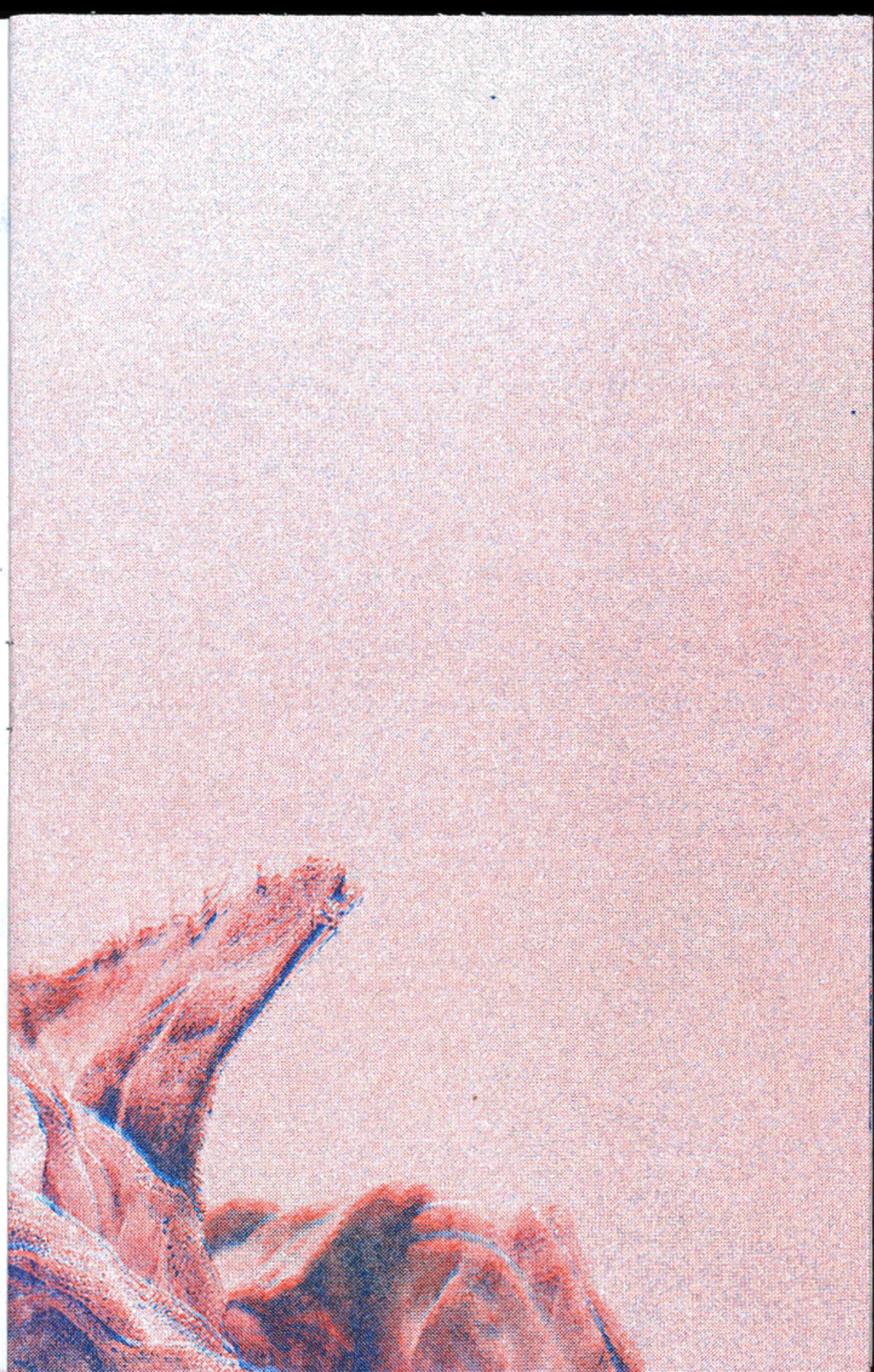
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Am I My Brother's Keeper? (2022)

Graphite, bees wax, carnauba wax, marine ply, pine, brackets, digital video, sound.

The idiom "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" comes from the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis: a story of two brothers, and the murder of Abel by Cain, in his envy and anger of his deity's recognition of Abel's sacrifice. There is only enough blessing for one, and not two.

If a constitution calls for the formation of a social body knitted through the warp and weft of a constitutional text, what of this story of Cain and Abel persists in the foundation of our own national story? Of a land jealously appropriated and an earth that cries out for our brother's blood?

The work contains its own violent act, depicting a Bible which, once opened, reveals that every page from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation has been torn out of it.

What hast thou done? And by whose hand?

The silvery projection holds this book up as a mirror. Where are these pages? They are in my body, and I could argue that they are in our national body too. There is no escaping this text in the West. It needs to be digested.

Come eat it with me.

Re/membering Babel (2026)

Risograph print, cartridge paper, bees wax, carnauba wax, rice bran wax, titanium oxide, casein, lime, marine ply, magnets.

In the centre of the room stand these four panelled installations—the tongues of Babel, the windows of the tower. In terms of process, they are also inversions of the drawing at the beginning of the exhibition, *Constitution*.

The studio wax rag reemerges in these panels not as an intestinal form, but as a reified relic or divine textile, floating against gravity in the heavens. The humble textile is translated once again—like the materiality of Babel itself—brick for stone, bitumen for mortar.



We Can All Speak in Tongues (2026)

Graphite, bees wax, carnauba wax, marine ply, digital video, sound.

Sha la bunda-la kasi.

Chala bunda labunda la Bundala si.

I had begged for it, once I saw it and understood it, begged for it to come. Standing there on lilac and rose-coloured carpets among the Christmas-beetles, themselves attracted to the light, desperate for the promise of its touch. They made me nauseous; those beetles, often appearing with crunchy exoskeletons ruptured, their own creamy white interiors oozing beneath the feet of ecstatic believers, blissfully oblivious, their faces turned toward heaven—I begged for it to come. Fire on my head like holy water. Second baptism. Final proof of membership to the Pentecostal Assemblies of God.

Sha la bunda-la kasi.

The first tentative sounds nervously falling from my mouth. I wanted, so desperately, for them to form. Like forcing wet sand into a pile, I had to push them from a place just behind my forehead down to my throat. Was I pretending, making it all up? Is a miracle always this awkward to produce? Besides, people are watching; someone has their hand on my head, encouraging me to speak, to begin. If it happens, I'll be the youngest yet.

Sha la bunda-la kasi.

Chala bunda labunda la Bundala si.

"Repeat it, that's it, *Hallelujah!*" "Loose his tongue, *Lord Jesus!*" Then the feeling came, like a mighty rushing wind (Acts 2:2, The Holy Bible, 1989). Euphoric and smooth as I had hoped.

Electric. I'm in.



Ecce Homo (behold the homo) (2025)

Digital video.

The idiom "the writing is on the wall" comes from the Book of Daniel and the story of Belshazzar's feast. A mysterious hand appears and inscribes a message whose meaning the king cannot understand. The writing is visible before it is legible. Its significance arrives only later. The significance is that the King's days are numbered, his time is up.

Ecce Homo is likewise concerned with the strange relationship between writing, surfaces, and revelation—judgement as a form of retrospective meaning.

The work is an autobiographical poem exploring forms of intertextuality. It draws upon two inventions of Johannes Gutenberg: the movable-type press and the mirrored pilgrim badges he produced for visitors to the relics of Aachen Cathedral.

Across the exhibition, wax remains materially present; melting remains a contingent possibility. Here, the wax itself is absent, but the trace of its melting is performed. Letters emerge only to dissolve. Writing appears as an event rather than an object, a writing whose own days are numbered—a writing whose own writing is on the wall.



Return (2025)

Graphite, lithography ink, bees wax, carnauba wax, marine ply.

Return emerges through a process of accumulation and excavation.

Layers of wax, graphite, and ink are built upon the surface until the text becomes obscured beneath its own material history. The work is then cut back into, excavated rather than inscribed. Legibility appears not through addition but through removal.

The text is revealed through the traces of the process itself. Cuts pass unevenly through the accumulated surface—excavation as reinscription, construction and ruin.

Legibility appears not through addition but through removal.



Rags & Reliquaries

Maybe language is a tower after all the scattered fragments return?

Materially, this publication is made from the same risographic prints that comprise the *Re/membering Babel* panels at the centre of the exhibition. Those panels themselves are translations of a wax-soaked studio rag, which first appeared in *Constitution*, where it emerged as an intestinal form. In the Babel panels, it returns as textile, cloud, relic, and drapery. Each iteration is a translation of the last.

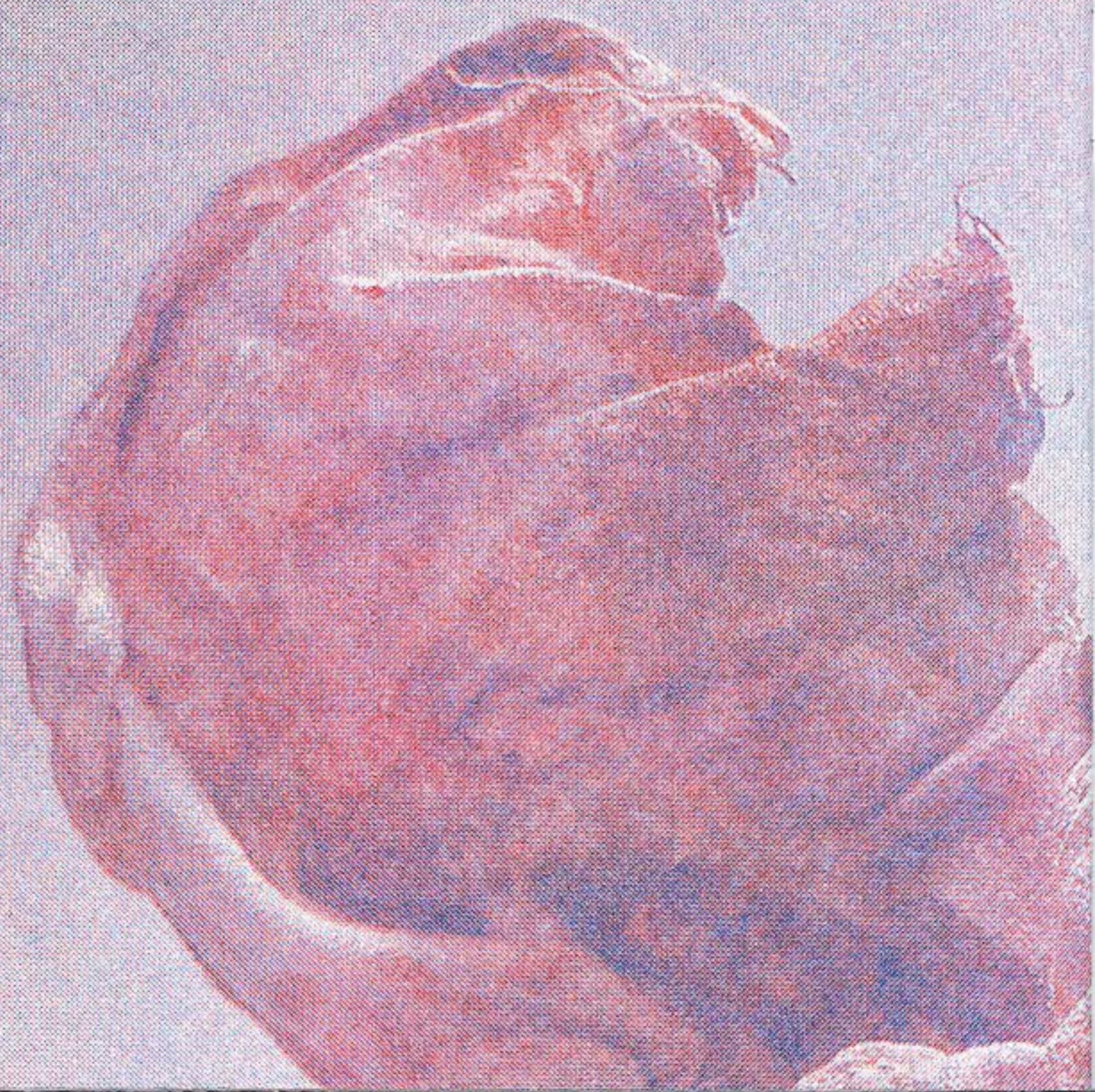
The word translate, from the Latin *translatio*—to carry over—has long been associated with both texts and bodies. The bones of martyrs and saints were exhumed and translated throughout Europe from the early Middle Ages onward for prestige, pilgrimage, and the consecration of new churches.

According to legend, upon the completion of Aachen Cathedral, Charlemagne received a treasure of relics from Jerusalem, a gift for the consecration of his church in 799. Among the treasures were a set of holy textiles: The loincloth of Christ, the swaddling cloth of the Christchild—made from Joseph's stockings, the Virgin Mary's Christmas dress, and the sack that carried the severed head of John the Baptist. These relics made Aachen Cathedral a pilgrimage destination, where the faithful might touch the precious textiles to receive their blessings.

In an age when European pilgrims and exiles travelled far and wide seeking blessings and powers from reliquaries and their holy fragments, pilgrim badges were both popular and revered objects to bring home as mementoes. They were affordable and highly collectable tokens, proudly worn by pilgrims, and attached to hats and clocks in order to identify and safeguard their journeys.

The popularity of pilgrimages to Aachen in order to encounter the fragile relics, touched by countless pilgrims' hands, placed the object at considerable risk. They were eventually moved to custom-built towers for viewing through windows from below. Accessible to the public once every seven years and no longer touched by human hands. This presented new challenges and opportunities for devotion. With the relics at a distance, new forms of proximity, capture, and translation were required.

The production of mirrored pilgrim badges introduced a new technology for mediating proximity to and contact with relics.



They allowed the bearer to capture the transmitted light reflected in convex, polished metal discs embedded in tin badge mounts. Wrapping the badge in cloth or leather meant pilgrims could translate (carry over) the charge of the relics back to their farms and homes, where the divine energies might heal the sick, bless their work and bring good fortune.

Johannes Gutenberg clearly understood the power of translation. Before the world-changing success of the Gutenberg printing press, he embarked on a business venture producing his own mirrored badges for pilgrims visiting the relics of the Aachen Cathedral. The business failed, but the technology it developed was reinvested in the invention of the movable-type letterpress.

Less attention is given to what, in the mirrored pilgrim badges, is mirrored in the technology of the press itself. A technology whose first task is the translation and mass production of the Gutenberg 42-line Bible. Conceptually, the two enterprises are iterations on processes of transmission, transfer and translation—the work of faith in the age of mechanical reproduction.

In the etymological sense of translation—as carrying over the corpse/corpus—there is a delicate throughline of divine energy that flows from the bodies of the saints to their vestments, to their mirrored reflections in Pilgrim badges carried to the homes of their pilgrims. Gutenberg's movable type press likewise translates the Vulgate from manuscript to template to manifold pages—pressed, bound and disseminated. The force of translation in both is the movement and distribution of holy light—illumination as commodity.

In *The Task of the Translator*, Walter Benjamin proposes that translation does not arise from the life of a work, but from its afterlife. A translation is not a copy of an original; it is a continuation of the work under different conditions, a repetition with a difference through which new meanings emerge. The translation survives because the original survives, but it survives differently.

Relics operate in a similar way. Their significance is not secured by origin alone, but by the successive acts of carrying, viewing, touching, retelling, reproducing, and believing through which they continue to acquire meaning. Be it the text, body, or event, translation is the mechanism through which a new reading becomes available as a form of afterlife.

What if the relic is not an object from the past encountered in the present, but rather what the past leaves behind in and as the



present itself? In each fragmentary encounter, a fresh translation—the past repeats its retreat, evacuating itself to the vacillations of meaning making—always a determination in the last instance.

And we, ourselves fragments amongst scattered remains, build towers to the heavens, to make names for ourselves. Names that we can never fully inhabit, names others cannot read in their mother tongue, names lost in translation. Our tongues themselves are the relics of language, of words that have evacuated the present, leaving nothing but traces on our etymological taste-buds.

Maybe language is a tower after all—the scattered fragments return.



This publication is one
fragment among many.

For documentation, recordings,
and further afterlives of
Meeting the Text Halfway,
scan the QR code below.

