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Lines

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Lines

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by

Tina Korani

B.A., Art University of Tehran, 2013

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Thank you to my family and friends for your love and support leading up to and during the MFA process. You have always reminded me of my strength when I needed it most and given me yours when I trouble finding mine. To the LSU School of Art faculty - I have left every one of your classes inspired to become a better designer, thank you for your guidance, understanding and most of all, believing in me! To my committee members, Courtney Barr, Richard Doubleday, Derick Ostrenko, and Rod Parker– thank you for your thought-provoking, inspiring, and insightful feedback. I have the deepest appreciation for you all and am so happy I had the opportunity to get to know and learn from each of you.

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ABSTRACT

Sometimes one is unaware of one thing: a rule, a boundary, a difference — all of which we cannot see with our eyes, but learning certainly present. When one realizes the reality of it, decisions are made. Those decisions shape the world as we know it. “Lines” is an exploratory project that aims to increase one’s awareness and reveal that humans are whole beings that can surpass barriers that life places in front of them.

This thesis explores human connections and separations, using the concept of dots and lines, in ways both literally and metaphorical. Through visual investigations I will explain how these lines are developed and how the development of these lines affects our society.

I use fundamental visual elements such as dots and lines, to express an in-depth concept through a simple language. Through my exploration dots and lines are the basic foundation of our everyday life and environment – both literally and metaphorically.

In today’s society, we are all a part of a great struggle created by lines of separation. These lines include racism, sexism, gender roles, homophobia, religion, and so on – which are all widely known as concepts that cause a great and unfortunate divide between us and our own neighbors. However, not every line drawn has a negative effect and some actually work to bring groups of people together, such as our cultures.

It is very important to me that the viewer can be visually engaged in my work and has the opportunity to interact with it as well. My exploration is constructed from a wide framework of various media and formats such as video, a large-scale poster series, and book design to involve and create a rapport with my audience.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

People have always been segregated based on appearance, whether intentionally or subconsciously. This is where lines come into place. Lines can be used to represent groups, borders, segregations, exclusion, and so on. “*Lines*” is the continuation of my previous work “*A different point of hue*”, in which I was exploring how people’s personalities can be represented through a visual language. If each of these dots of colors represent a source of inspiration in our lives — a person or experience — then humanity is like a pointillism picture, made up of many different dots of colors.

For my thesis, I investigated through searching for my aesthetic and visual language how and why human beings are developing these lines around themselves and what are the consequences and results of these lines in our lives.

Because of the tremendous complexity of human nature, the reasons were numerous and the list endless. From this point, I started to think of human beings as a cloud of scattered dots, more or less connected or divided by lines. I explored the concept of lines, from the smallest and lightest lines to the thickest lines and giant walls. I understood the tremendous potential of using dots and lines to describe human relationships from an artistic point of view. I want to explore where we can find the “separating” lines in our lives and show to my audience how to go beyond them. These elements are used as a means of metaphor and the language of design to represent my own viewpoint on these ideas.

The first part of this thesis will focus on the concept of dots and lines, both literally and metaphorically. The second part will explain how these lines are developed and how developing

these lines lead to connections and separations in our society.

Then finally, in chapter 5, we will see the results of my investigation through a series of large-scale illustrations that demonstrate how deeply lines are affecting us — both in regard to connections and separations. My work also includes a short video mixing footage from the news and a performer drawing lines, and a book design about my concept that is directed toward children.

Chapter 2

OVERVIEW

When I first came to the US in San Francisco in 2013, I was amazed by the rich diversity of people living here — the American melting pot we studied in history class. Back in Iran, because of the limited number of tourists and immigrants we have, I have always felt I lived in a country that was rich in culture but quite uniform. During my first semester of master's studies in Academy of Art University, I took a course that was called *Making ideas visible* with Professor Scott Rankin. For our first project in this class he asked us to design a poster about tolerance from our point of view. The posters were later displayed in the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, California and became the starting point of a long personal reflection on diversity and tolerance. In my posters, I symbolized people as different plants that are growing together in a harmonic symbiosis despite their differences. For instance, Paul Stamets, a reputed mycologist, explained in a TED talk in 2011 how trees could communicate with each others using fungus, to share information and nutrients. This talk was one of the early sources of inspiration for my thesis topic, to understand living in harmony and tolerance in our human nature.

In Spring 2016, in my seminar class with Professor Richard Doubleday, in the *Catalog of Influences* project I was asked to create a book about my sources of inspirations as an artist. The brief was to describe, define and curate the objects, events, and idiosyncrasies that inspire me as a graphic designer. The purpose of this project is to begin to develop an awareness of past and present practice, to present complex information in a clear and legible way, to practice developing type and image systems, and to develop a visual and editorial narrative. During this project I realized that I mainly find my inspirations from three main

categories: the people I meet, the places I go, and the experiences I gain in my life. Each person I meet every day, the places I discover and travel to in my life, and each experience in my life could be a dot of color as if I'm a pointillism image. I'm made up of all these points of colors and I this pointillism picture gets more and more complete and defined, when I meet more people, travel more, and get new experiences.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, I first heard candidate Trump speak about building walls between Mexico and the USA, and this made me think about lines. We see a lot of lines in our society everyday. If, physically, human beings are dots, then borders are our lines. If humans are dots, religion is a line. If humans are dots, race is a line. A race line can separate white, black, Asian, and all colors. Gender is a physically dividing line that causes some to act in ways they feel they are supposed to rather than what they actually feel.

These lines might be seen as a tool to succeed in society by following social rules, but they can also be seen as limiting us and dividing us. As a woman, there is only a very tiny line called DNA that separates me from a man but this line is much thicker than it seems and can actually separate me from 3 billion human beings. The lines can become thicker and thicker to become a giant wall which we can't see until it is too late to overcome it.

My research is about why people tend to draw or accept lines around themselves or around others and how these lines can connect or divide people. More precisely, my primary goals for experimentation are: 1. To find out where we can find these lines of separation in our lives, and 2. To suggest my viewer a way to look beyond these lines using my graphic design skills.

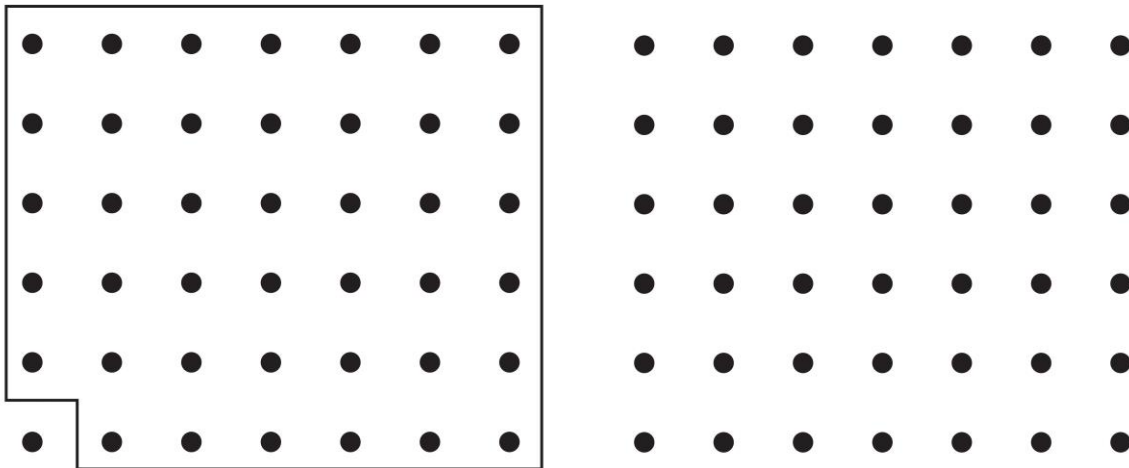
As a graphic designer, I want my viewer to appreciate the diversity of all these dots and to realize that they can connect to other much more than they actually are, and most importantly,

I want them to think about the lines they are projecting on themselves or on others. These lines can be unnoticeable sometimes but their effect is extremely visible. I want to suggest that my viewer look beyond these lines and try to explore the world outside of these boxes.

Chapter 3

INVESTIGATION AND METHODOLOGY

During my lectures in Digital Art class on the principles of graphic design, I begin with the most basic elements of design: dot, line, and plane. I talk about how graphic designers use these basic elements to communicate ideas. For example, depending on the position of a dot on a canvas we can communicate loneliness, escape, confidence, and so on, and when a line comes into a place how it can separate dots from each other. When I started to think about this simple concept, I found many connections with my thesis topic. I investigated what is a dot and a line - both literally and metaphorically.



DOTS

A dot is essentially any shape or marking of any size that has a recognizable center. Dots are often referred to as small round markings, but that is not always the case. A dot has focus and relative balance on a plane, and when combined with other dots, it can be turned into a line or any other shape. Dots are the most basic identifiable markings of anything and everything. People are like dots, scattered about all around you, and you never know just who you will be connected to next. One dot is meaningless. Two dots are random, but three dots make a pattern, a group. This group can be made from the same kind of dots, a very homogenous group not accepting other shapes or other sizes or it can be on the opposite a heterogeneous group made from smaller and bigger dots, each of them having a specific place in the group. It can also be a cohesive group with no space for newcomer dots or porous group with many empty spaces available for a new dot to come to form a new shape. There are an infinite number of possible combinations of dots.

LINES

A line is a series of dots connected side by side with a general direction that has movement. Unlike a dot, a line has a single dimension and has a beginning and an end (most of the time). A line can be as long as you want and can go in any direction. A line has more length than thickness, although the thickness can vary throughout the line. Dots can join each other to form a line, dividing or connecting other dots.

Lines can be straight or curved, finite or infinite, thin or thick, plain or dashed... dots indeed are always looking for similarities and differences with other dots to give labels to each other, to categorize their population and have a common direction, a common line of life. Like a dot, a unique line has no meaning because there is no dot to connect or divide and it would collapse by creating new labels for each dot to have at least two lines to choose between. Sometimes dots don't want to choose between a line or another but quickly they will find out that there are some lines around them that don't let them choose between other lines on the other sides.

Lines can also have a normal, playful, bouncy feeling as they can also carry dots on the way they chose. Lines could represent batons to be passed from one person to another, or even in gymnastics or aerobic performances, **a light rod to be thrown around and played with, giving them a livelier connotation than normal.**

DOTS AND LINES IN REAL LIFE: SEPARATIONS VS. CONNECTIONS

Dots and lines are the basic foundation of our everyday life and environment – both literally and metaphorically. In the literal sense, dots and lines are what make up the visual aspects of society and the world we live in. Every building, every tree, plant, street, object even our own human bodies is a unique combination of lines and dots. Each individual organism looks different due to its unique arrangement, resulting in each living being looking separate — ultimately setting us apart from each other, and creating the concept of individuality.

However, our physical appearances that are distinguished through dot and line are not the only way we establish a sense of individuality and division. In today's society, we are all a part of a great struggle created by lines of separation. Lines are more rigid and comparable to walls in real life. Borders divide people, whether literal as in living across the country from one another, or figurative, such as having different beliefs, ideologies, and opinions. These lines include race, sex, gender roles, homophobia, religion, and so on – which are all widely known as concepts that cause a great and unfortunate divide between us and our own neighbors. However, not every line drawn has a negative effect and some may actually work to bring groups of people together, such as our cultures. A line could also be a chain to unite people rather than a border to separate them. It could also be a pathway into new opportunities rather than a finish line where an idea stops. Dots can be in Venn Diagrams, dividing people into groups in that way.

“The real divisions occur when we use our mind to judge and criticize others. It is the proud judgements of the mind which create feelings of inferiority and superiority, and therefore, division. If we use the power of the heart, we gain a feeling of oneness. It is in the heart where we can bring to the fore the qualities of forgiveness and compassion.

When we look at the world with a forgiving and loving attitude, we do not create division.

Living in the heart, we seek to be aware of an underlying unity and oneness. – Sri

Chinmoy”¹

Life is like a line, connected between a series of dots, making up interesting shapes. It’s easy to focus on all of the lines that separate people from each other, but, by simply shifting our lens, we can see meaningful connections that tie us together. We always see maps of the earth with lines. Lines of separation. But the reality is that there are no lines of separation on the earth — only the ones we draw. Don Leslie Lind, who was a NASA scientist and astronaut who took part of the Space Lab 3 Mission on the space shuttle Challenger, was once reported to say that the most beautiful thing and amazing experience he had in space is that there were no lines on the earth but just a very soft transition from space to earth.

¹ Chinmoy, S. (1988). *Beyond within: a philosophy for the inner life*. Jamaica, N. Y.: Agni Press.

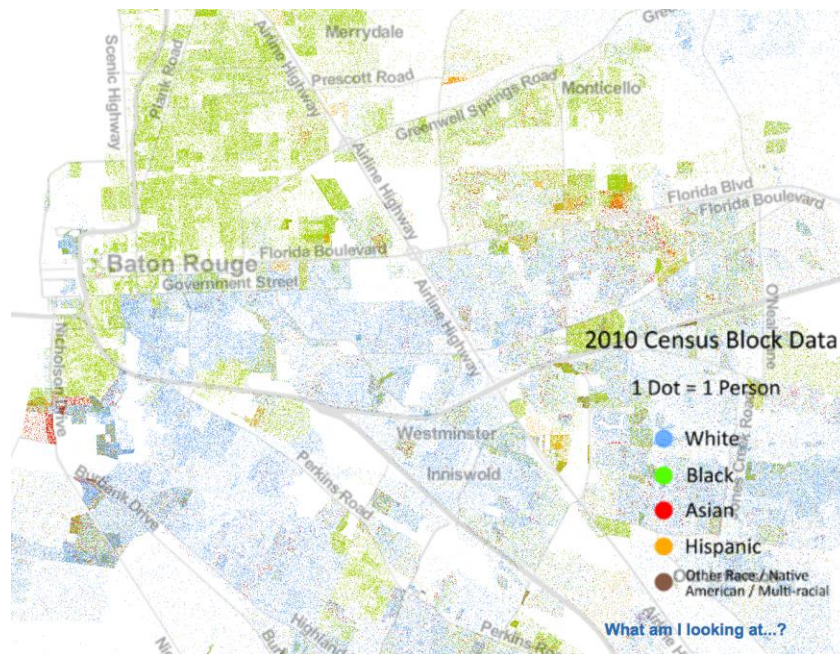
Chapter 4

PROCESS

When researching about what divides people, there are three main causes that appear most often: religion, race, and social category. I considered that these three elements are either dividing people (religious conflict, gentrification in some cities, racial segregation) or sometimes connecting them too (Respecting other ceremonies, charities, curiosity about other cultures).

In addition to my extensive research on human connection and separation, I have conducted research on this subject in Baton Rouge. During my research I came across a map on the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service website², created by Dustin Cable in July 2013. This "1 dot = 1 person" map **confirms my suspicions** that dots can gather together and form a thick line between each other.

THE RACIAL DOT MAP



“This racial dot map is an American snapshot; it provides an accessible visualization of geographic distribution, population density, and racial diversity of the American people in every

² Cable, D. (2013). The Racial Dot Map. Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia.

neighborhood in the entire country. The map displays 308,745,538 dots, one for each person residing in the United States at the location they were counted during the 2010 Census. Each dot is color-coded by the individual's race and ethnicity. The map is presented in both black and white and full color versions. In the color version, each dot is color-coded by race."

One can argue that labeling and categorizing people might be useful in some circumstances, it can also lead to discrimination, isolation, and limiting the progress of mankind. Therefore I consider in this thesis that even if categories are made for humans, humans are not made for categories.

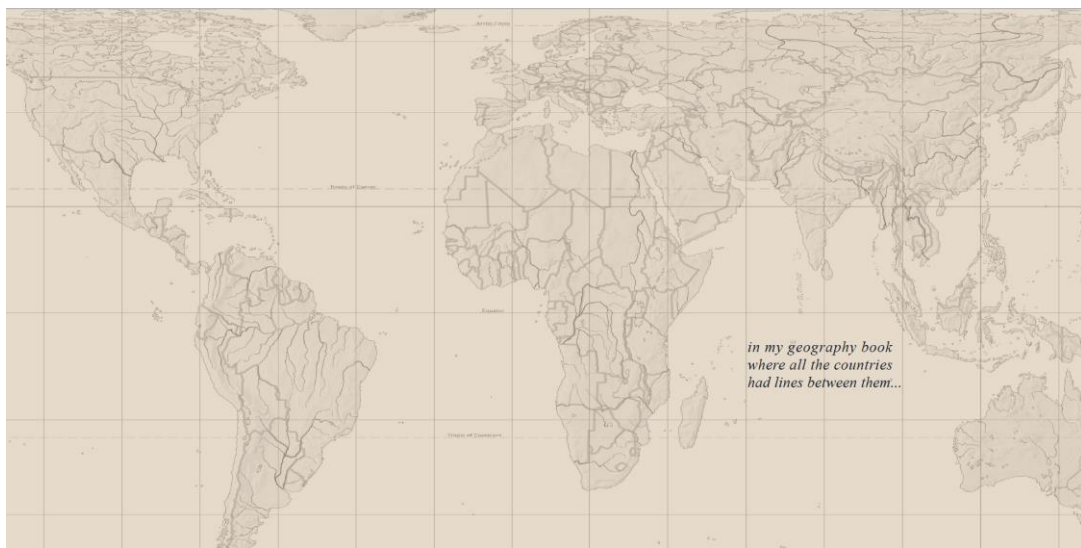
When looking at all the reasons people have to label each other and divide each other, when looking at this endless list of causes and effects, I started to think about humans as dots, all different kind of dots but still from the same kind. These dots became the red wire of my thesis. Dots are indeed very different to each other according to their behavior: it can be an isolated dot, or a symmetric group of similar dots or on the opposite very heterogeneous groups of dots forming together a new shape. Dots of the same size can also align together to create a line and prevent other dots from joining them or creating a guideline to influence them. There is a tremendous potential in using dots and lines for this topic.

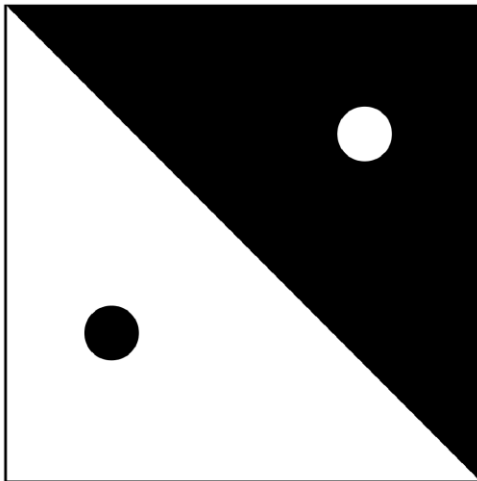
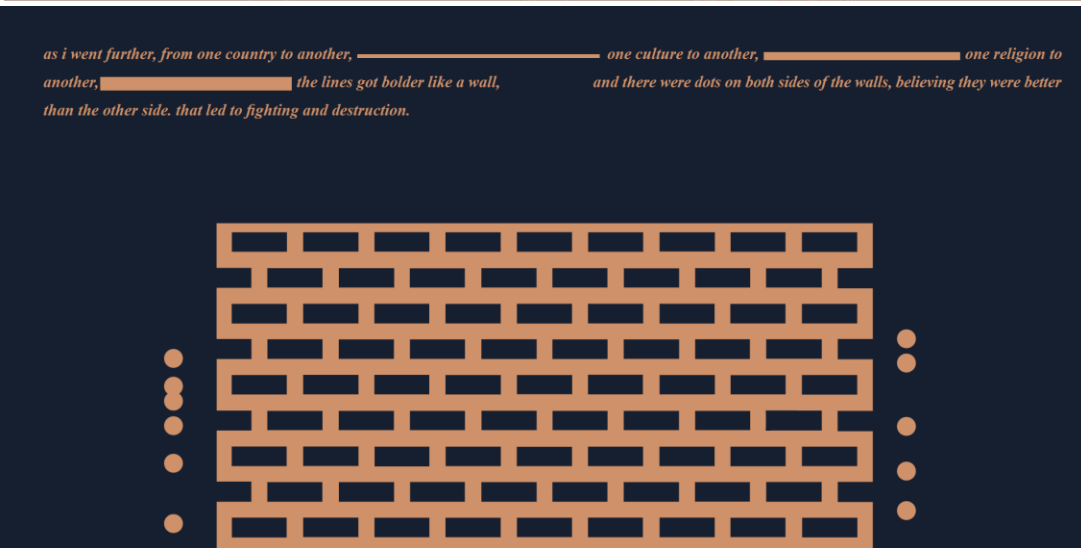
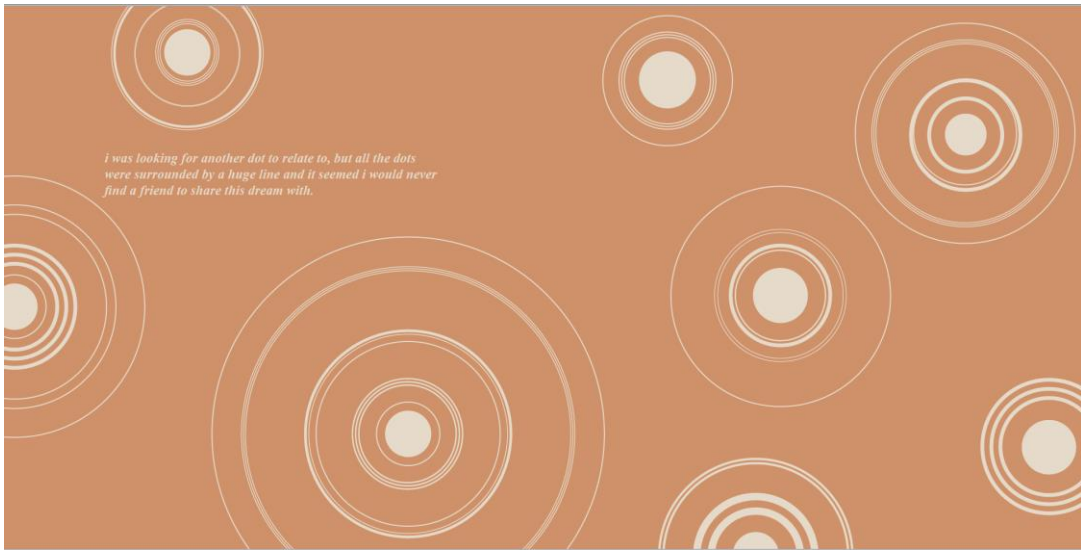
To communicate my ideas to my audience, I started with a series of 20 abstract illustrations, one of my favorite mediums. These illustrations are showing the viewer lines we have in our life such as race, gender, and nationality and suggest them to think about their place in our lives. Then I decided to make this artwork more accessible to kids and teenagers and also more interactive by creating a book named "Lines". I wanted to use this medium to tell them my story about dots and lines and I narrated the story of a dot who is looking to be part of a group but can't make his mind on which group to choose. Kids can easily relate this story to their

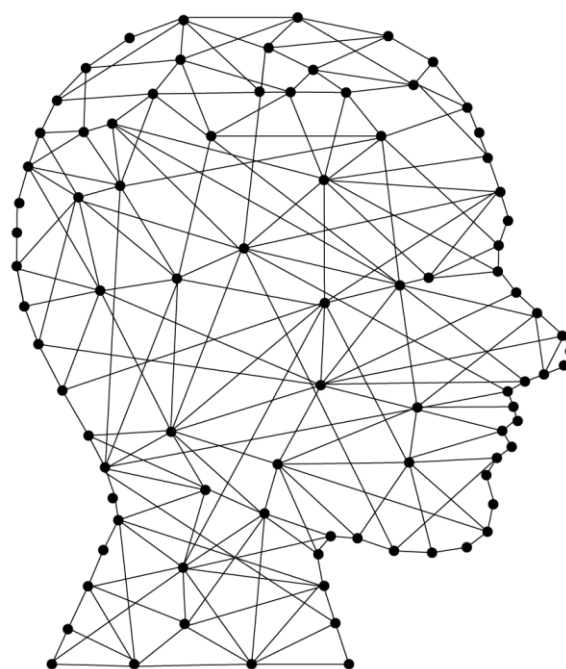
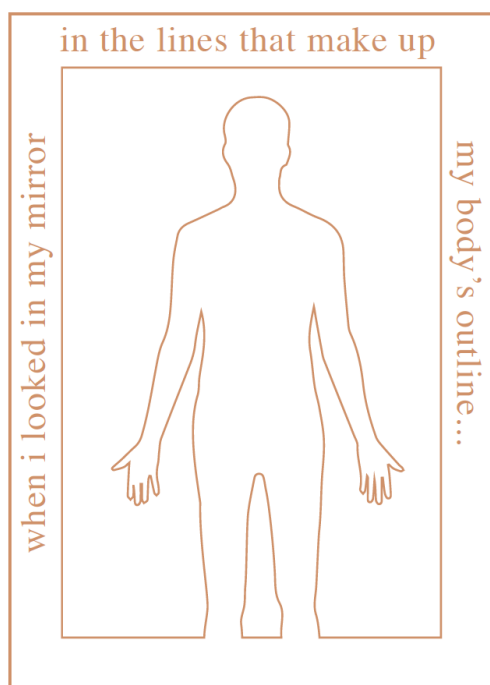
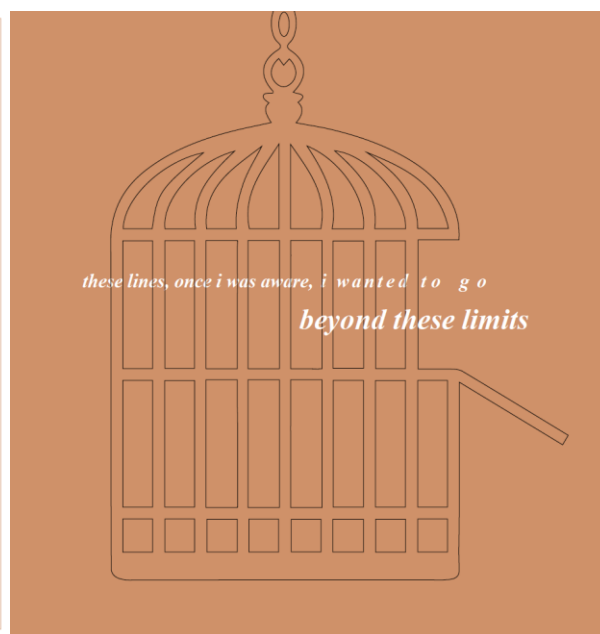
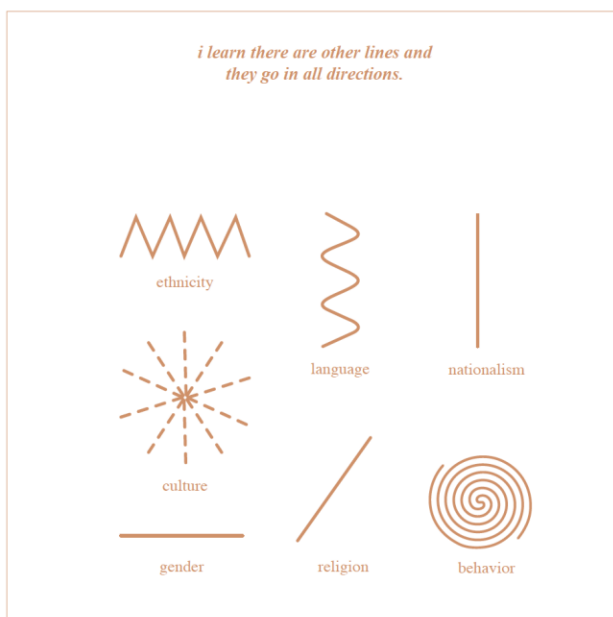
personal experience and identify themselves to the dot. Finally, I decided to use a more interactive medium to spread this reflection. I created a short video using an actress instead of illustrated characters so my audience can identify and connect easily to my work. This video highlights events we could have all experienced in our life such as racism, sexism, etc... It also shows how we, humans, can put ourselves in a box by drawing lines around ourselves.

I utilized a black and white palette to help the viewer focus on the lines.

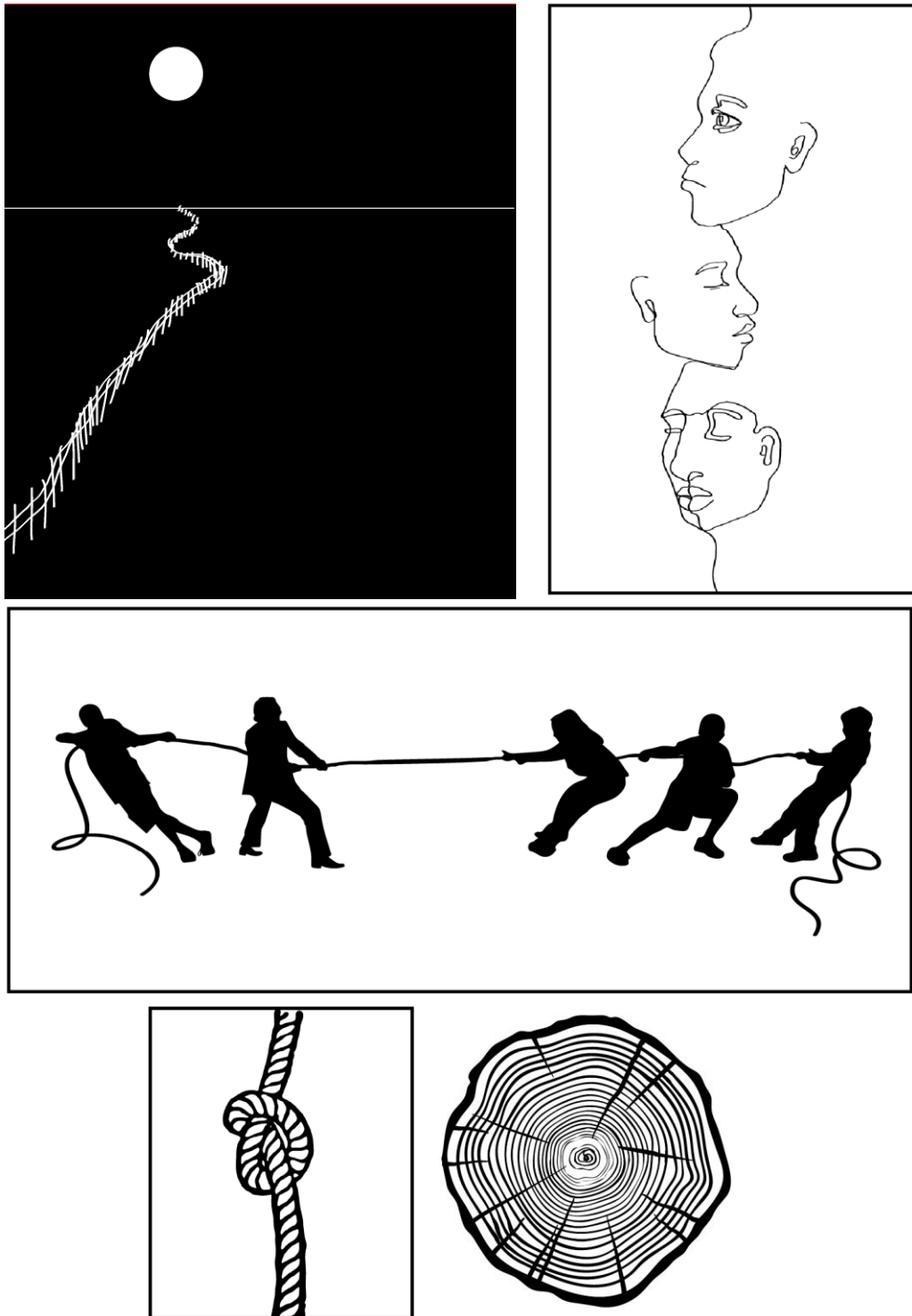
Lines Book Process

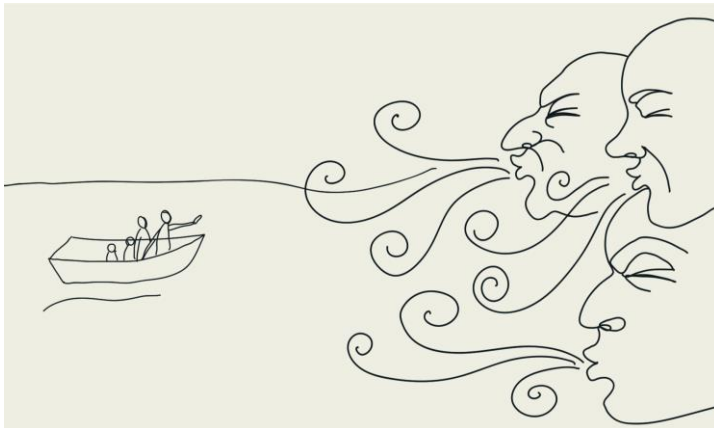






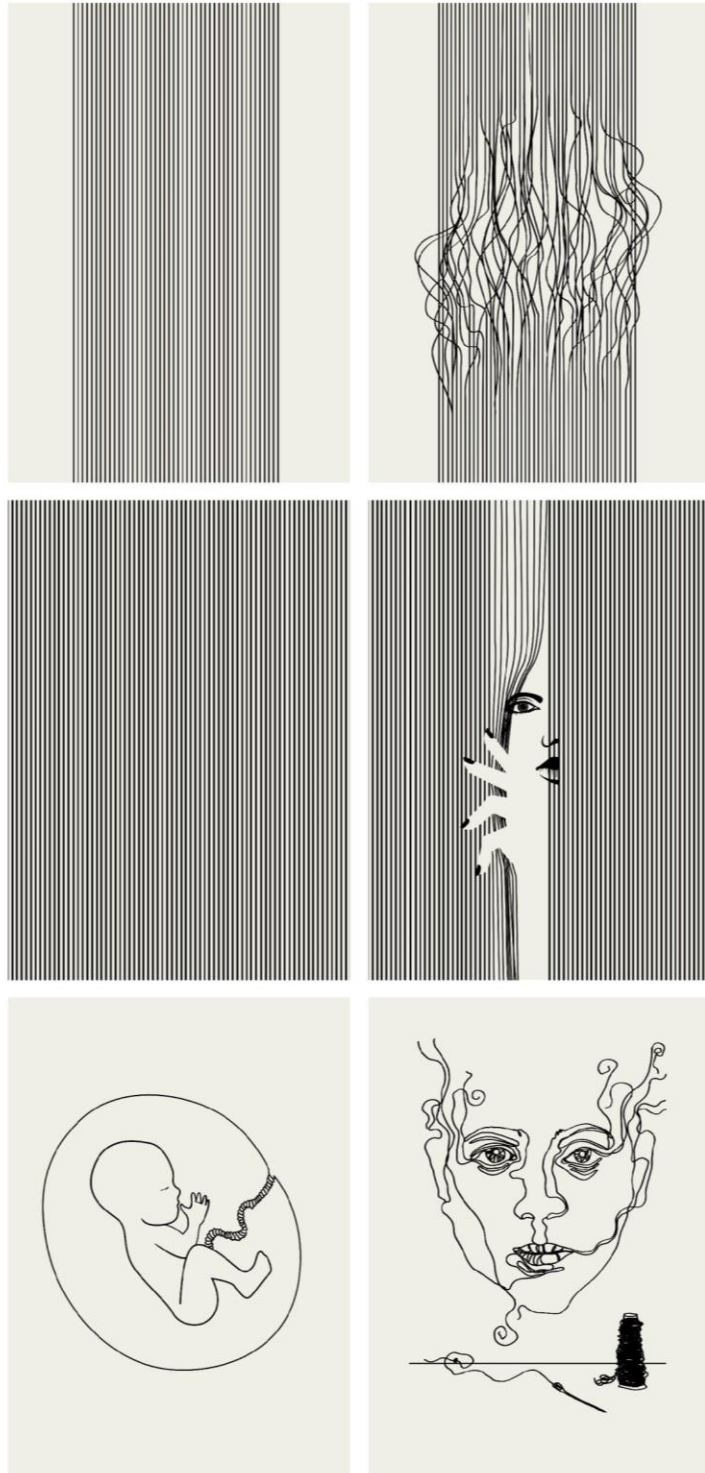
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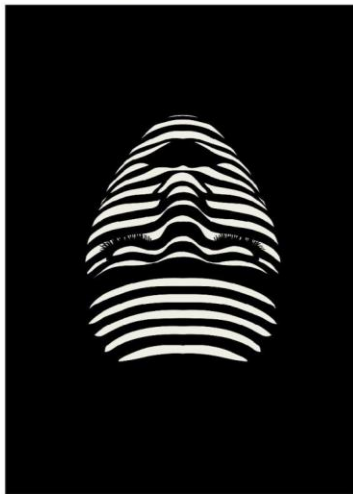
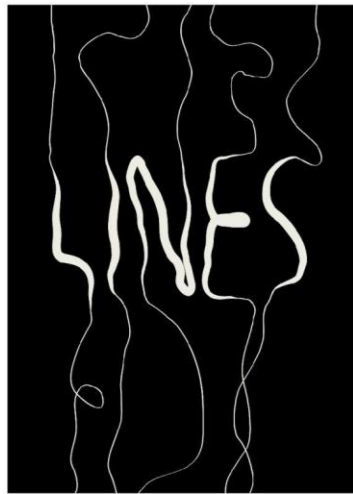


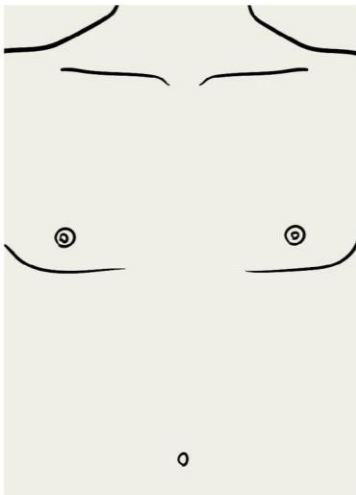
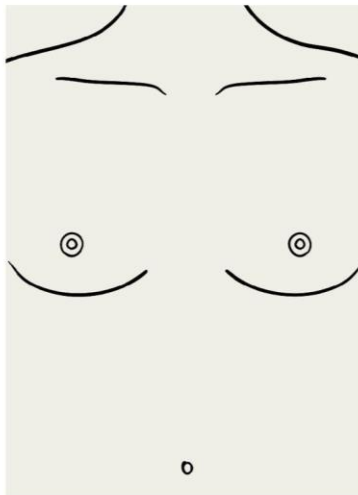
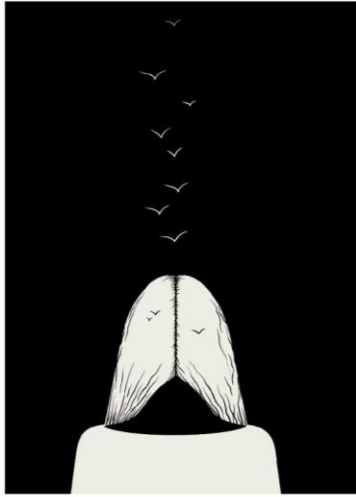


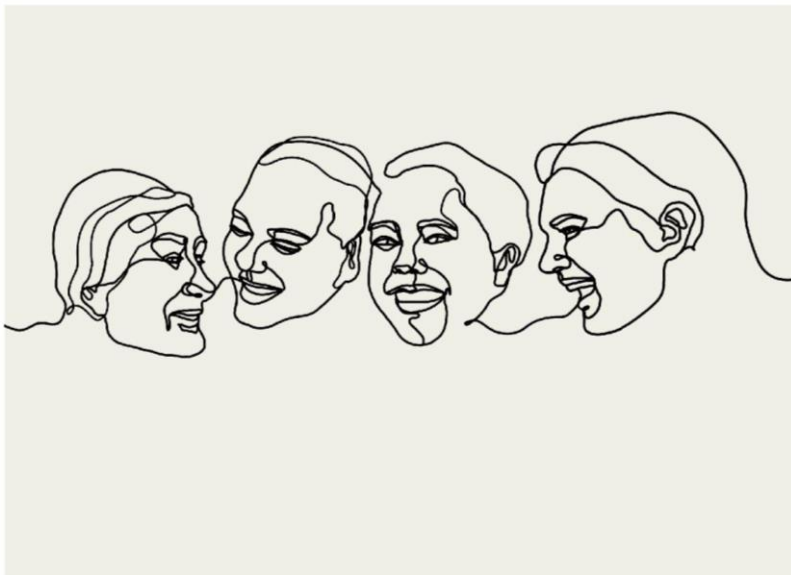
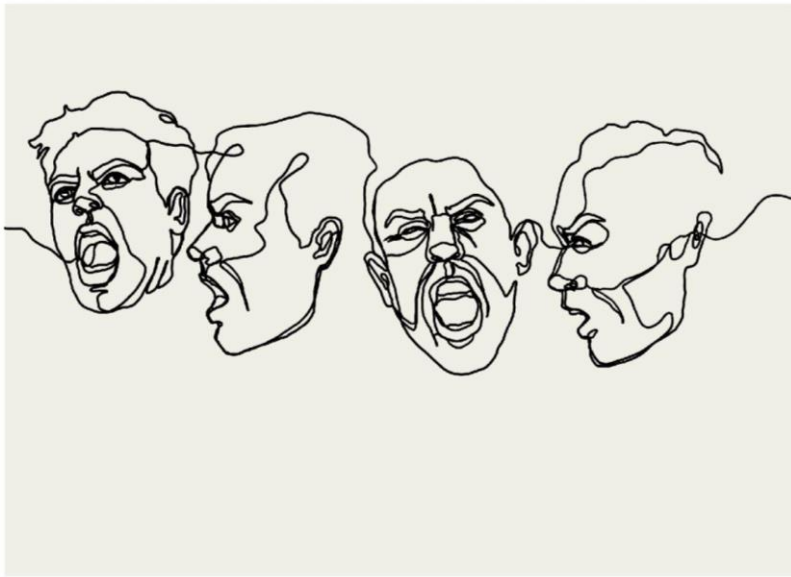
Chapter 5

FINAL EXHIBITION

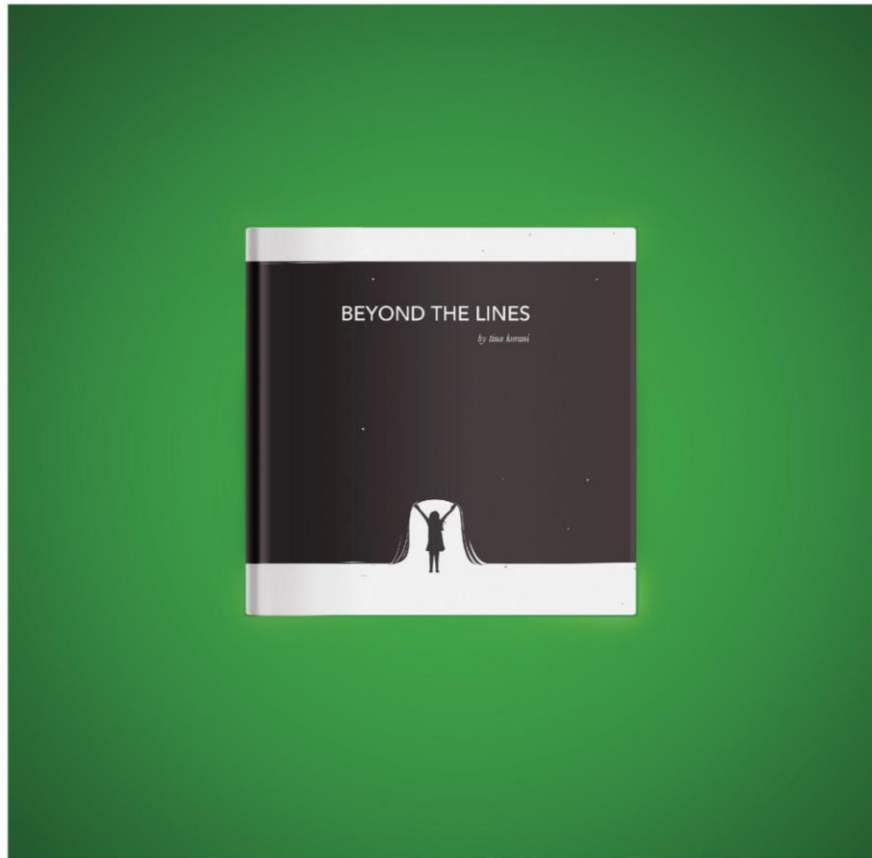








Poster Series about Lines



Beyond The Lines Book



Lines Video

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Lines can portray separations or connections. They may seem to represent groups of friends or family. In a family tree, lines portray the relationships between people, while lines can seem to bring individuals together. They can also portray boundaries. These boundaries may represent religious or cultural differences or perhaps differences in our perspectives.

Lines are everywhere in our lives. Some are long established, others we create by the way we live. Some lines protect us; some limit us, and some we allow to stop our development. Lines are more rigid and comparable to walls in real life. Borders that divide people, whether literal as in living across the country from one another, or figurative, such as having different beliefs, ideologies, and opinions.

Love is a line that encompasses people to bring them together and hate does the opposite. If humans are dots, religion is a line. If humans are dots, race is a line but not always a hateful one. A race line can separate white, black, Asian and all colors in texture and a lot of times, a race line turns into a hate line to put the dots against each other. But sometimes a race line acts as a culture identifier and allows dots to identify with other dots and to bring new points of view to other dots. Gender is a physically dividing line that causes some to act in ways they feel they are supposed to rather than what they actually feel. But ultimately, there is one line that connects us all, the indescribable human-experience line that encompasses all emotions and experiences every human does have. This line creates the plane of the human race.

Before I started this project I always considered lines between cultures, languages, traditions, and religions very limiting and hateful, while during this project I noticed a line could be a chain to unite people rather than a border to separate them. It could also be a pathway into

new opportunities rather than a finish line where an idea stops. We need diversity in interests, beliefs, and practices to strengthen the ecosphere to kindness in which we all belong.

This reflection about lines gave me a lot of inspiration for future projects. I want to further explore the lines we can find in exhibitions of visual Art. From the lines formed by the ropes to keep the public far from the artworks to the concept itself of a visual art that creates an invisible but real barrier to visually impaired people, I aim, as an artist, to work on these lines and make them more flexible, softer and more generous to my audience. **Multisensory art is one tool I want to further explore to reach this goal. Bring it at the process as well**

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VITA

Tina Korani, born in Tehran, Iran, is a multidisciplinary designer specializing in user interface design, user experience, and graphic design. She earned her Bachelor of Art from the University of Tehran in graphic design. In 2014, she came to the United States to pursue her graduate studies in MFA Studio Arts, concentration in graphic design at Louisiana State University. Her goal is to create experiences that inspire and engage without excluding any group of people. Therefore, she is committed to providing memorable designs that communicate in an accessible way. Her contact information and further works can be found at tinakorani.com.