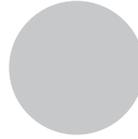


**Aspects of the relationship between
Logos and the work of art through the
case of four Greek visual artists**



Text by Klea Charitou

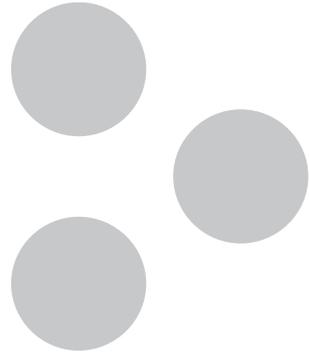
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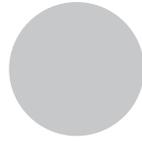
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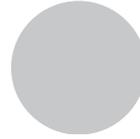
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Aspects of the relationship between
Logos and the work of art through the
case of four Greek visual artists





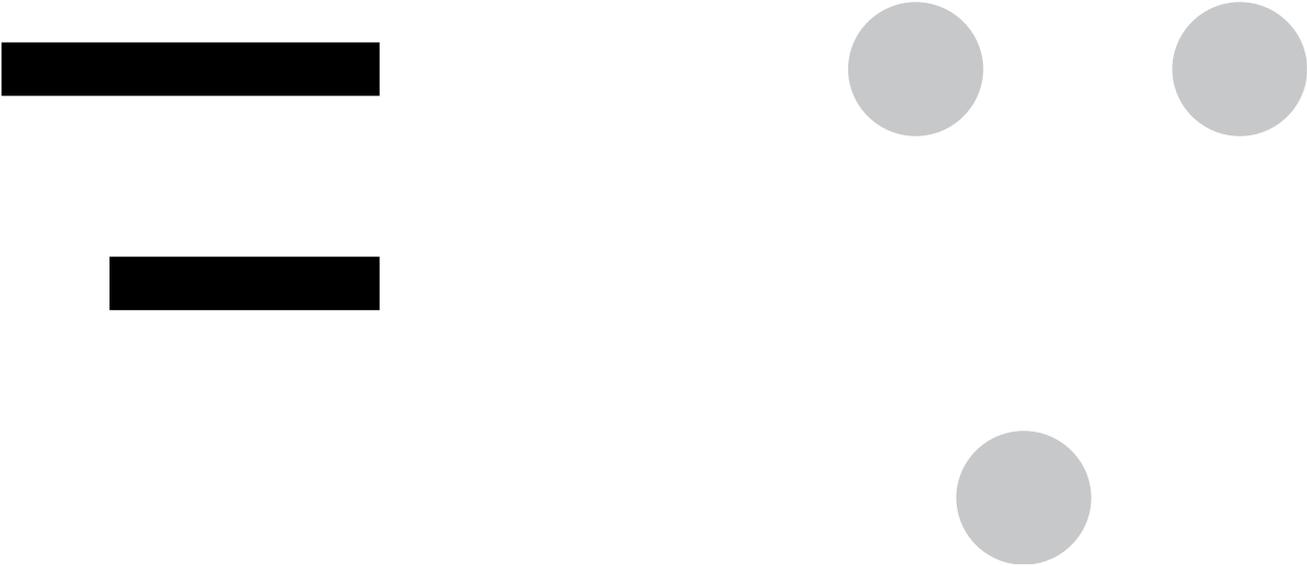
The present text will attempt to shed light on certain issues of art theory and history, in particular on the relationship between *Logos* and the work of art – one of the issues that have been central to my doctoral dissertation.^[1]

The relationship between text and image has a long tradition that manifested itself through different examples in art history and diverse cultures, from ancient Greece and Rome to contemporary digital art in the internet age. Respectively, over the last centuries, the boundaries and the interaction between verbal and textual representation has also been of interest not only in art history and theory, but also in the fields of archaeology, linguistics, and philosophy. My first main objective was to determine the research field, *i.e.* how I would define *logos* in the context of this specific study, and then to select the time frame, the artists, and the appropriate methodological tools to analyze their work.



I decided to begin by looking up the lexical entry for the term *Logos*; its most widespread definitions relate to speech and language. Thus, on the one hand, *logos* is understood as “ratio” or “reason,” which describes the human ability to talk and articulate one’s thought, and on the other hand, as a (symbolic) system of expression and communication between people. At the same time, *logos* is connected to the ability of the human to act as a rational being, an attribute that has been explored by philosophers, scientists, and particularly mathematicians – in the relationship of analogy between two sizes or quantities – as well as theologians, who linked *logos* to religious practices and sermons. In humanities and social sciences, *logos* (discourse) has been used interchangeably with “language in use,” addressing the sum of representational modes, codes, conventions, and mannerisms derived from specific cultural and historical contexts. In other words, this is the critical approach that contributes to social knowledge and investigates the power structures that emerge from the use of specific types or forms of *logos*.

Homer initially used the verb *légō* as an equivalent to “gather” or “collect,” but also to “enumerate” or “count,” while there is also a connection with the field of mathematics, as a term meaning “something chosen to be calculated,” linking “logos” to metrical analogy. This also led to its meaning as “narrative and story” – a set of events that have been gathered and are worthy of being enumerated, told, and narrated. Therefore the term *Logos* is not limited nor does it refer exclusively to words, but also takes on an evaluative function for the content and meaning of what is expressed. In the early rhapsodic tradition, “logos and myth” were presented as synonymous words, an element that influenced my methodological approach and determined the direction of my research.



Parallel to the above, studying the ways in which the relationship between the image and the word is crystallized in contemporary art, I was inevitably drawn to the conceptual movement. This was the predominant artistic tendency in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which, by openly criticizing Clement Greenberg's modernist formalism, incorporated language as a part of the visual work in its own right. Conceptual art gave prominence to idea and its key constituent was the organized structure of concepts. In this way, it found its parallel, if not its identity, in the systems of linguistic signs, developing a kinship with literature and philosophy.



Interested more in concept and process than in the final artistic product, the artists simultaneously employed a systematic-mathematical approach.^[2] This tendency emerged parallel to – and is often considered inextricable from – conceptual art and the linguistic turn, whereas it was reinforced by the dominant interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenal world. Emphasis was given to model systems of logic, mathematics, and spatio-temporal relationships, as well as the common trajectory of science, art, and the humanities. In their attempt to devise a canon that would help express the concealed order of things that resides in a seemingly disordered universe, these artists developed their practice drawing on systems theory, coding, elementary units, and their reiterations. Consequently, traced back not only to the syntactic arrangement of language, but also to geometry and mathematical typology, the artwork's main structural elements are “closer to a pre-aesthetic, rationalist metaphysics of the beautiful as an order of perfection.”^[3] So they introduced the concepts of method and seriality, both for the production of their works and for redefining the nature of visual representation.



Nevertheless, given the difficulty of clarifying the term and the distinctive qualities of the works that fall under the umbrella of conceptual art, the question of “what is conceptual art” – and particularly in countries outside the dominant Anglo-Saxon canon, including Greece – presents itself as multilayered and complex as the attempt to define the concept of *Logos*. The question that arises next, is whether one can talk about conceptual art in Greece. In this country the movement of abstraction might have been powerful, yet novel experimental endeavors and artistic inquiries emerged and managed to gain ground in the post-dictatorial landscape of the 1970s.



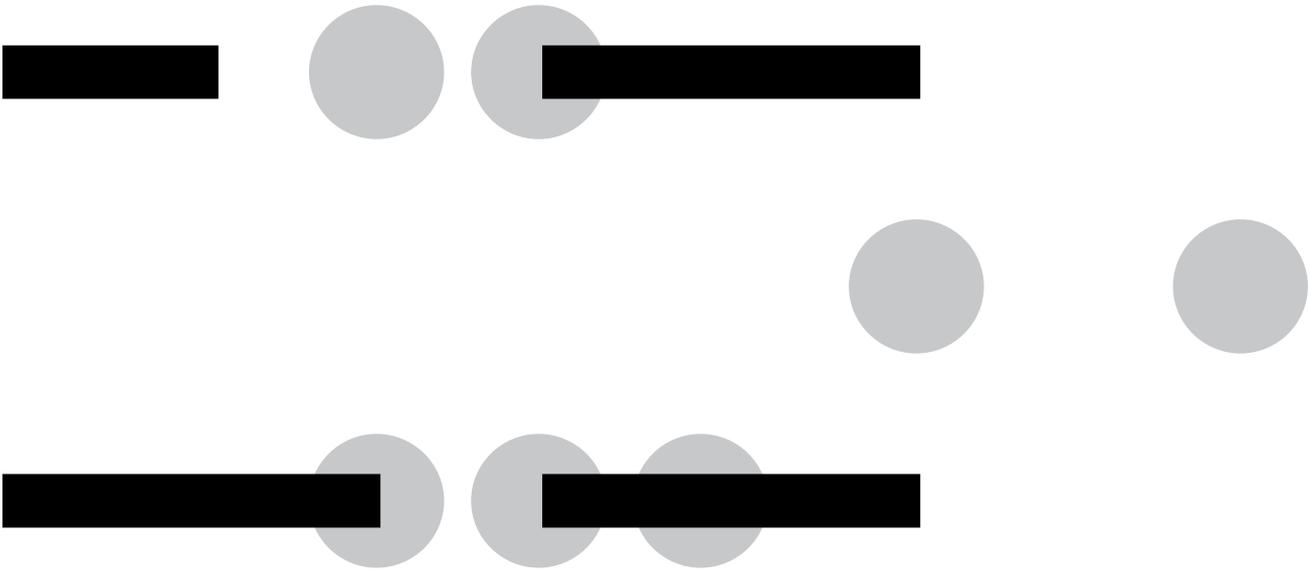
Art critic Eleni Vakalo was one of those voices that tried to interpret the advent of the “new.” Aspiring to portray the range of artistic proposals that were developed in Greece during the *Metapolitefsi* ^[4], she used formalist abstraction as a benchmark to divide time in a before- and after-sense – although for the international art scene this particular movement was rendered obsolete already from the 1960s. This explains the presence of the term “post-abstraction” in her mapping and analysis. More specifically, she points our attention to the shift that occurred from the image as an aesthetic result to the image as a medium, in other words, the shift from the visual object to the action and to the artwork’s semantic, rather than aesthetic value.^[5] Assessing that this basic pursuit of the pioneers of abstraction paved the way for a series of unconventional practices in the artistic field of her time, she observed that “art not only contains, conveys, or relays, but also shapes concepts, exactly like language does.” ^[6]



The spectrum of dialogue did not include the articulation of a new critical vocabulary that would describe this novel artistic reality – besides criticism and theory often follow practice, as their response is more time-demanding. Nonetheless, gradual changes were happening not only to the artwork's form, shape, material, and medium, but also to the role of the artist and the viewer, who was until that time a passive receiver. So even though it is impossible to substantiate such an organized movement, in the sense that it lacks specific representatives or clear time frames, one can detect the presence of “conceptually-oriented” works in Greece as early as the late 1960s.

Therefore, by initially approaching the different historical, semantic, philosophical, and scientific origins of the term *Logos*, I chose to study four different manifestations of the term concerning visual representation and specifically within the context of conceptual art:

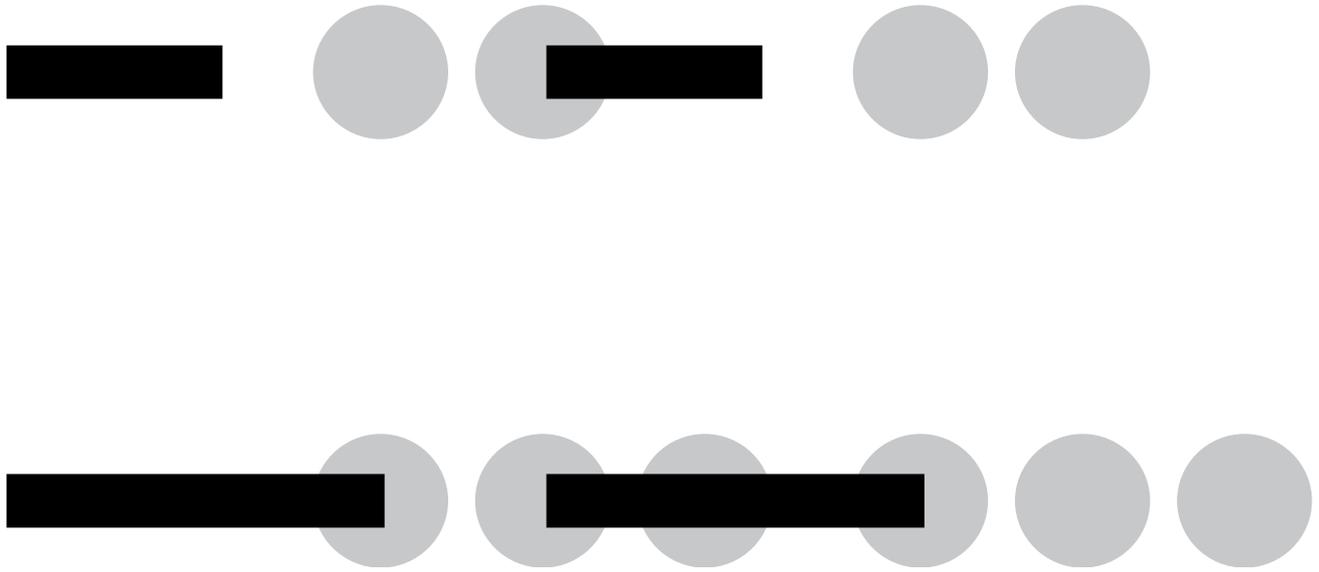
As **language** and **writing** that starts from the context of conceptual art and presents artistic practices where a part of or all artistic expression is replaced by texts or other linguistic elements and codes. The prevalent characteristic of these works is the presence of writing as autonomous content with its own connotations.



As **idea and reasoned argument**, meaning the direct consequence of an inductive, rational process that has its roots in the traditions of ancient Greek philosophy and the later analytical philosophy. The work of art, ceasing to evoke exclusively the senses, is presented as a conception that takes place in the mind of the artist, with the latter acting as a creator of meaning, resembling an author. Concurrently, it now requires the viewer's immediate mental response, as its function and signification relies upon their participation.

As **mathematical metalanguage**, which has evolved to connect with the theories of systems and information, as well as the new discipline of cybernetics. In the 1970s, these theories and the computers' recent technological achievements had already begun to hijack the interest of artists who decided to implement them into visual compositions.

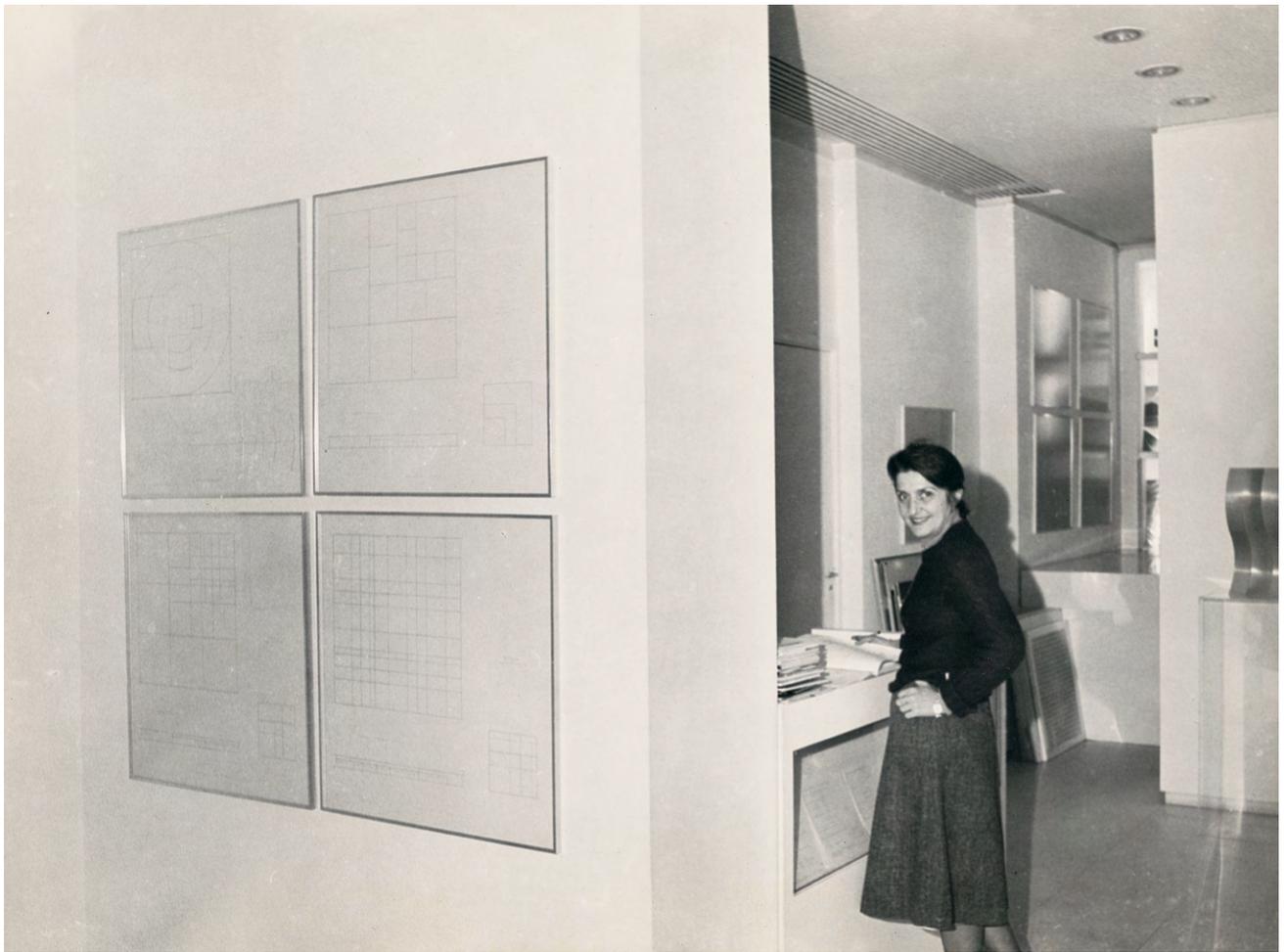
As **myth**, which, in terms of methodological functionality, was used to express a way of thinking and of assorting reality. In other words, from a structuralist perspective, far from being treated as an irrational element, it was considered as that paradigmatic language and unified system of signification that is instead governed by rules and structured on a series of systems and codes. Whether in its written or spoken version, it is always articulated for a purpose and can thus comprise a useful tool for drawing conclusions and understanding dominant patterns, while reflecting different social conventions and moral typologies.



By first compiling a broad list of works by Greek artists, in which the aforementioned different manifestations of *Logos* were evident, I ended up presenting a case study focusing on the work of four artists: **Constantin Xenakis, Nausika Pastra, Pantelis Xagoraris, and Bia Davou** (pic. 1–4). The selection was based both on the overt presence of *Logos* as an integral part of their visual work, and alongside as critical discourse and meta-language, meaning as reflection and writing of theoretical texts that they themselves produced.

At this point, I would like to refer to four examples of their works, which I consider highly indicative of the shift from early expressionist origins and aesthetic expressions to analytical writing. Quoting Vakalo, I would like to examine how artists “study the features, the forces, and the laws of the forms, as they would have while trying to discern the components and the function of language’s production and productivity.”^[7]



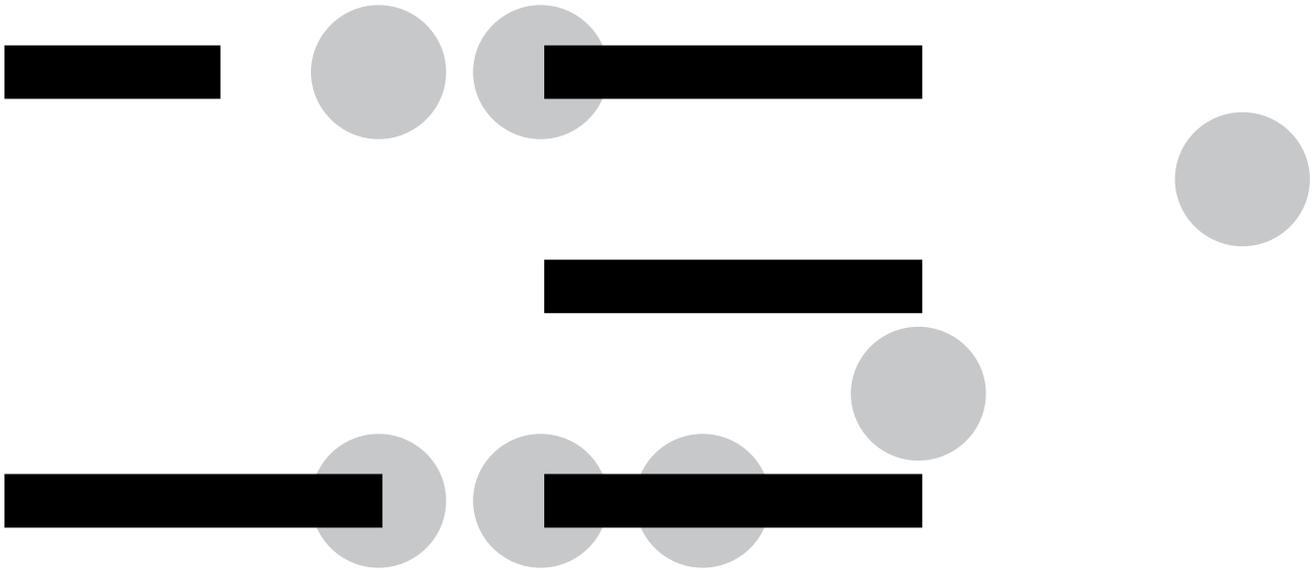




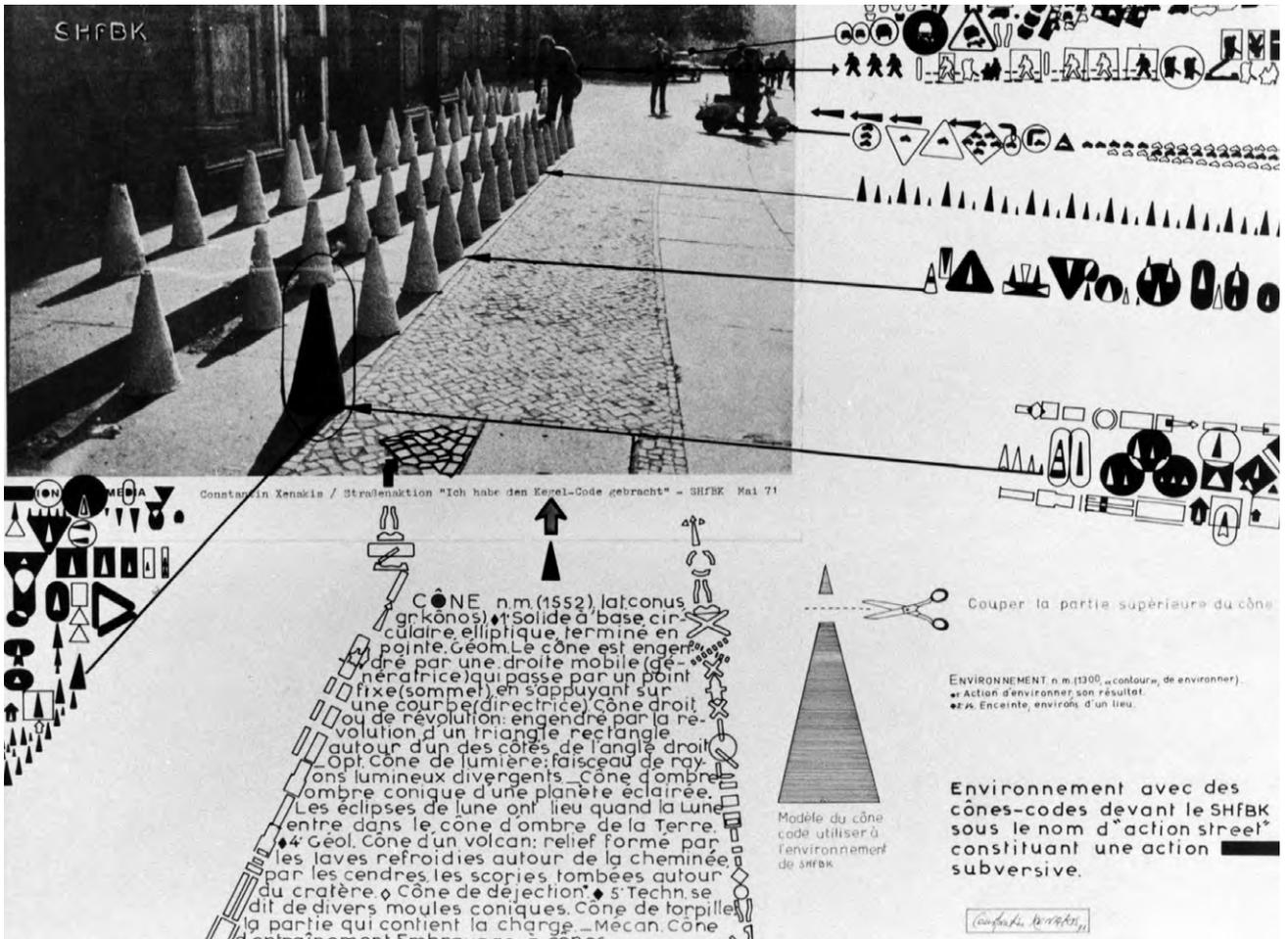
➤ . Pantelis Xagoraris in his office at the National Technical University of Athens (between 1987-1990). Art Archive – National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST), negatives, slides, and contact, Inv. No. 3415, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2001).

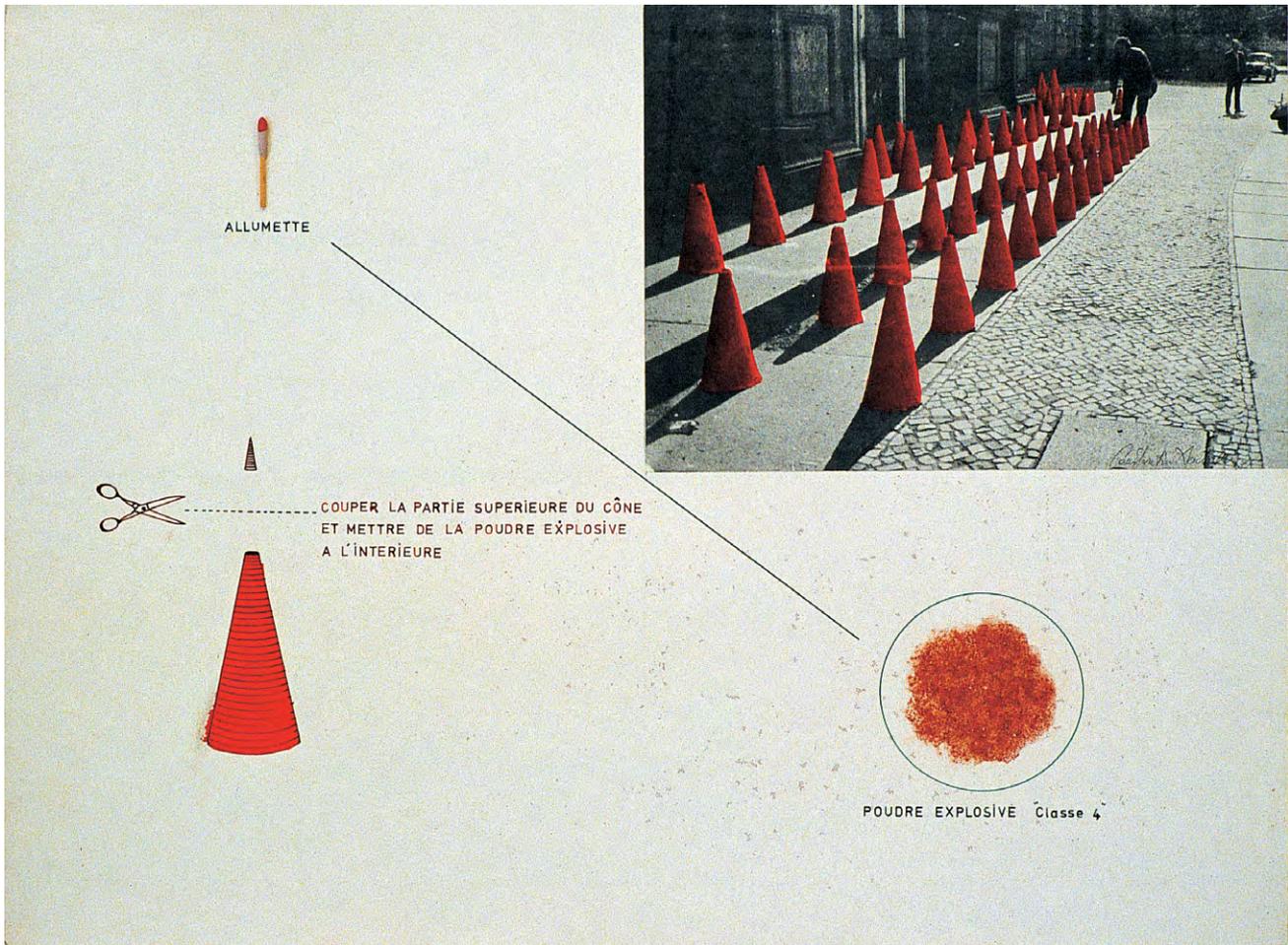


4. Bia Davou at her solo exhibition *Serial Structures 3 – Pillars and Clouds* at Desmos Art Gallery (1983) (photograph from the environment of the installation *Sails* [1981–1982]). Art Archive – National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST), negatives, slides, and contact, Inv. No. 3422, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2001).



The first such example is the work *Strassenaktion Berlin* (1971) by Constantin Xenakis (pic. 5), in which the artist delivered a two-dimensional representation of the *drasis*, i.e. the public intervention he staged on the streets surrounding Berlin's University of the Arts that same year (pic. 6). During the event, he placed eighty signal cones emanating black smoke in different spots, while blocking the University's main entrance (pic. 7). Through the structural entity of the cone, which dictated a new spatial arrangement and a new trajectory for the passersby, he attempted to voice a biting remark about the spaces and the way knowledge is produced and diffused. His desire to break his work free from the conventional exhibition spaces, and therefore confront the established system of visual arts education and the sociopolitical status quo, was more than evident. In his own words: "The containment of art within the boundaries of the museums and the ateliers is inevitably leading to intellectual stagnation... [whereas] finding an artistic 'language' to discuss political issues of a given era falls into every artist's duties." ^[8]









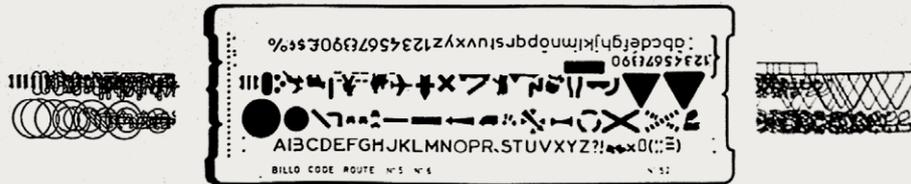
However, the artist also wished to experiment with the traditional ways of visual art representation. Next to the photographic portrayal of the event, which holds a central place in this work, Xenakis cited the definition of the word “cone,” as registered in the French dictionary *Le Petit Robert*. The word’s various meanings make a case that this geometrical feature, thanks to its innate simplicity, can be endowed with different levels of use and can easily be placed into multiple linguistic and non-linguistic contexts. The artist went from theory to practice by making gouache paintings of structural sketches, and inserting stereotypical shapes and forms produced by stencils, which became a trademark feature of his works in the decades to come (pic. 8). The cone, converted into traffic signs and ideograms, seemed to lay out the rules of a speculative game, while pictured as the bedrock of a new visual language. The aggressivity and the sarcastic tone of the event were merged with the notion of the game, leading the viewer to a state of contemplation, doubt, concern, and even amusement.

The artwork emulated an alphabet consisting of modern hieroglyphics, illustrated and reproduced by Xenakis in series and sequences that followed a specific rhythm (pic. 9). His intention was to communicate his thoughts, and also to bring forth the problem of the language’s function. The latter, serving not only as a mere mirror of the natural world, contributes to the formation of reality and its boundaries. The artist, after having created a personal semantic code, was finally able to study the procedure through which people elaborate and process the information received, craft and convey meanings, but also comprehend and shape their own experiences.

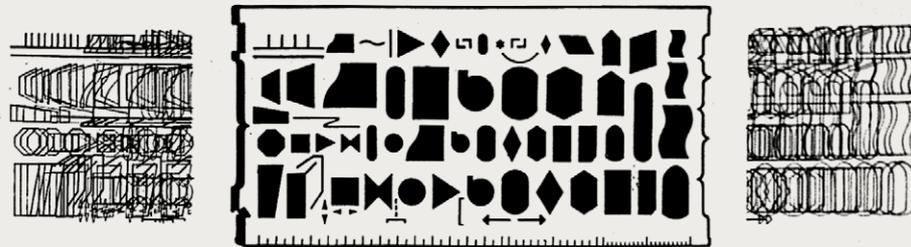


CÔNE nm.
 (1552, lat. *conus*,
 gr. *kônos*), 1°solide à ba-
 se circulaire, elliptique, ter-
 miné en pointe. Géom. Le cô-
 ne est engendré par une droi-
 te mobile (génératrice) qui pas-
 se par un point fixe (sommets),
 en s'appuyant sur une courbe
 (directrice). Cône droit ou de
 révolution: engendré par la
 révolution d'un triangle
 rectangle autour d'un
 des côtés de l'angle
 droit. — Extrait du *pi*
 Robert. *e.a.*

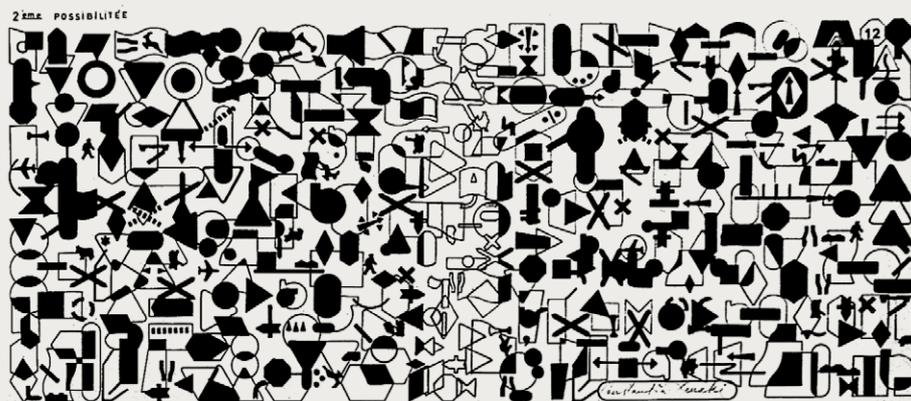
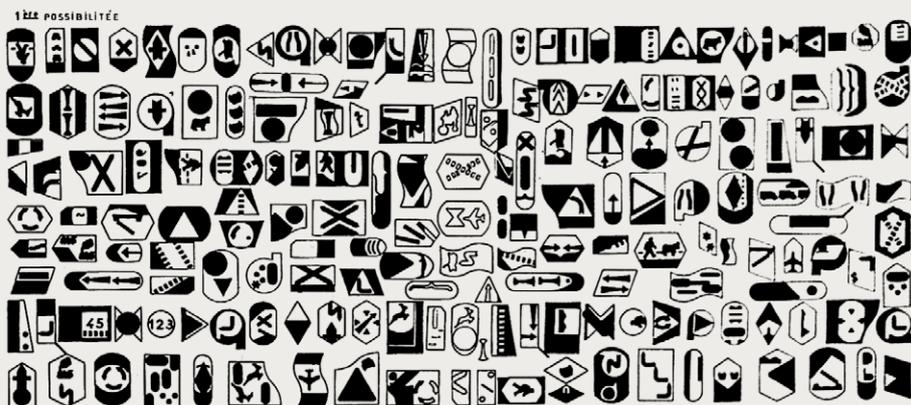
CODE nm.
 (1220), lat. *jurco* -
 dex «planchette recu-
 el», 1°Recueil de lois. Le
 code de Justinien, et absolt.
 Le Code. — Ensemble des lois
 et dispositions légales rela-
 tives à une matière spécia-
 le. Livre, article d'un code. CO-
 DE CIVIL ou Code Napoléon
 (1800-1904). «En composant
 la Charteuse, pour prendre
 le ton, je lisais chaque
 matin deux ou trois
 pages du Code ci-
 vil» (Stendhal).
 Extrait du *pi* Robert.
Constantin Xenakis

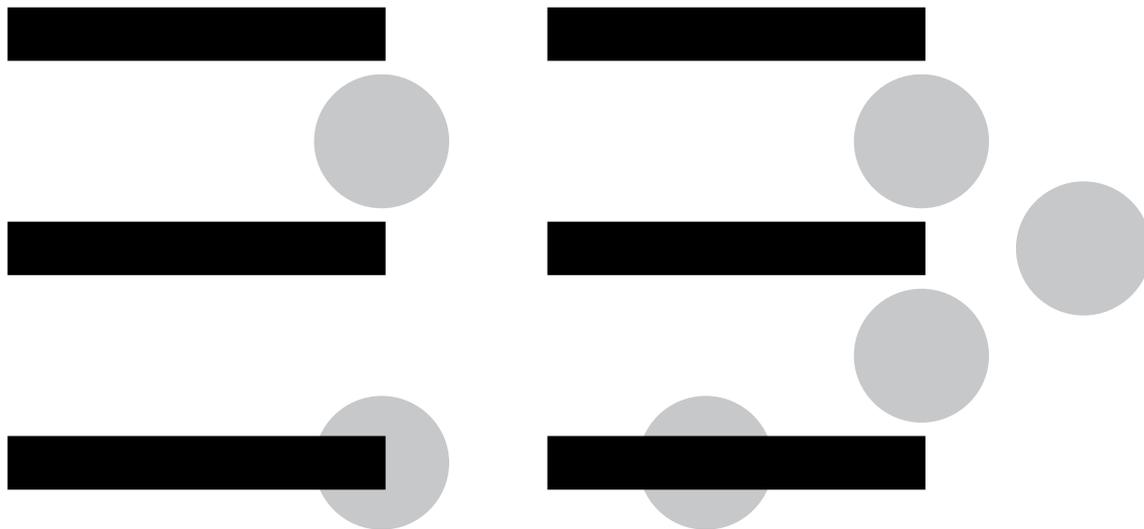


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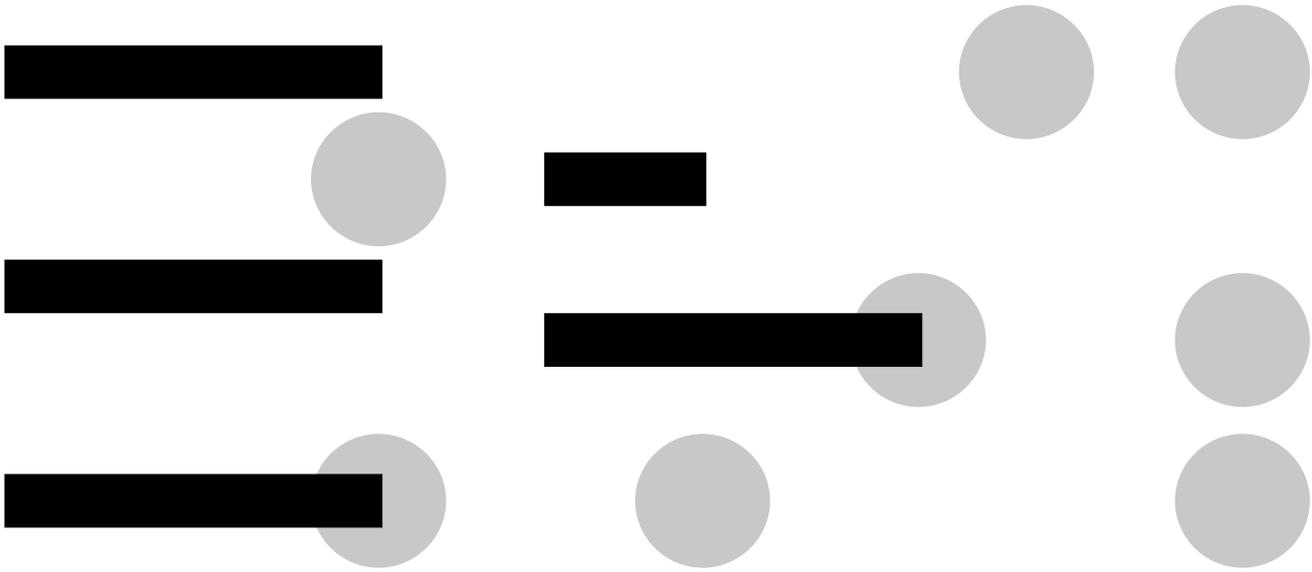


SYMBOLES POUR ORGANIGRAMMES

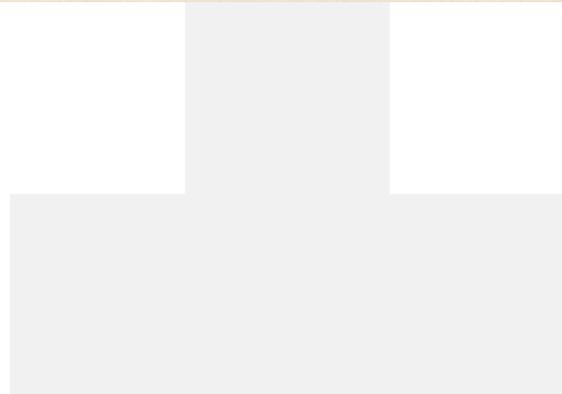
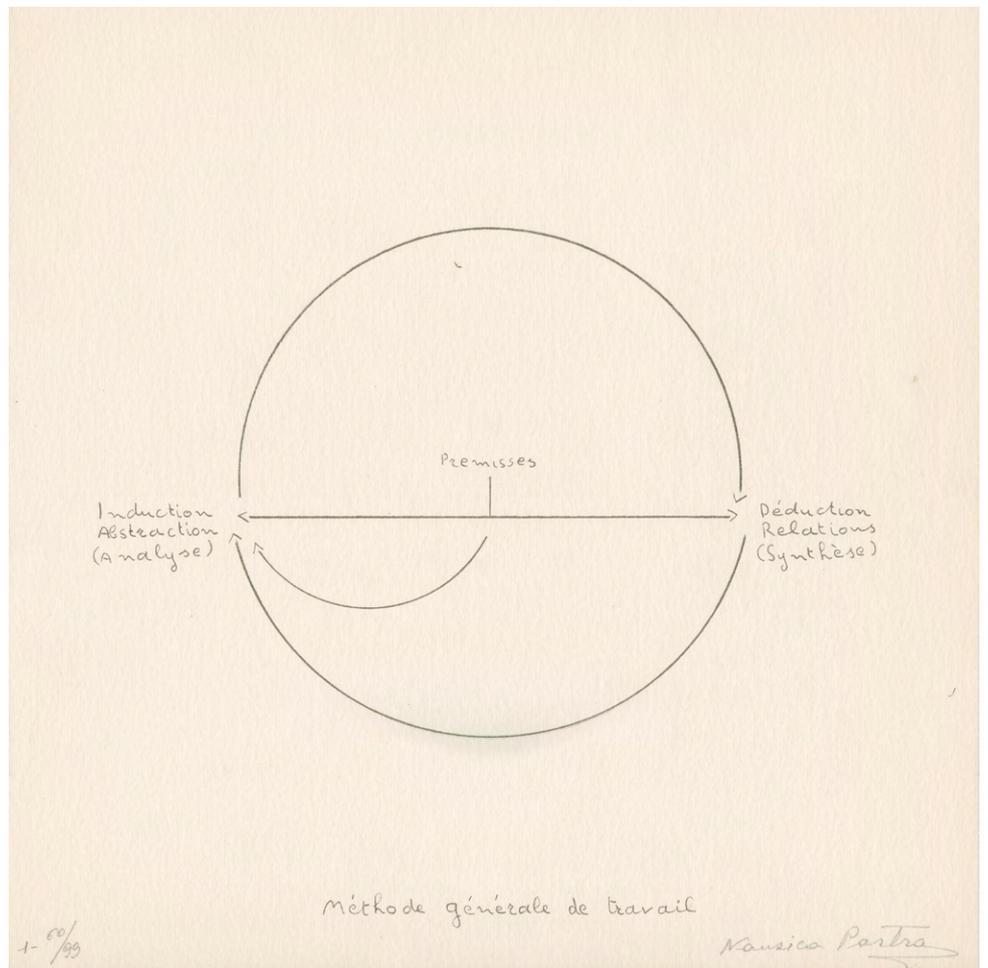




The conceptual correlations triggered by the object of theoretical analysis, which can be identified with the artistic process adopted, took center stage in Nausika Pastra's work as well. Ever since the late 60s, she had already explicitly expressed her need to steer her work towards the objective and austere language of geometry and the creation of an orthological system of correlations based on logical analysis and a repetitive structural method. The presence of *Logos* in her work, defined as an analytical way of thinking, but also as a metalanguage taking the form of *mathematical reasoning*, was dominant, as displayed in the series *Analogiques 1* (1968–1976), showcased for the first time at Galerie Denise René Rive Gauche, in 1976.

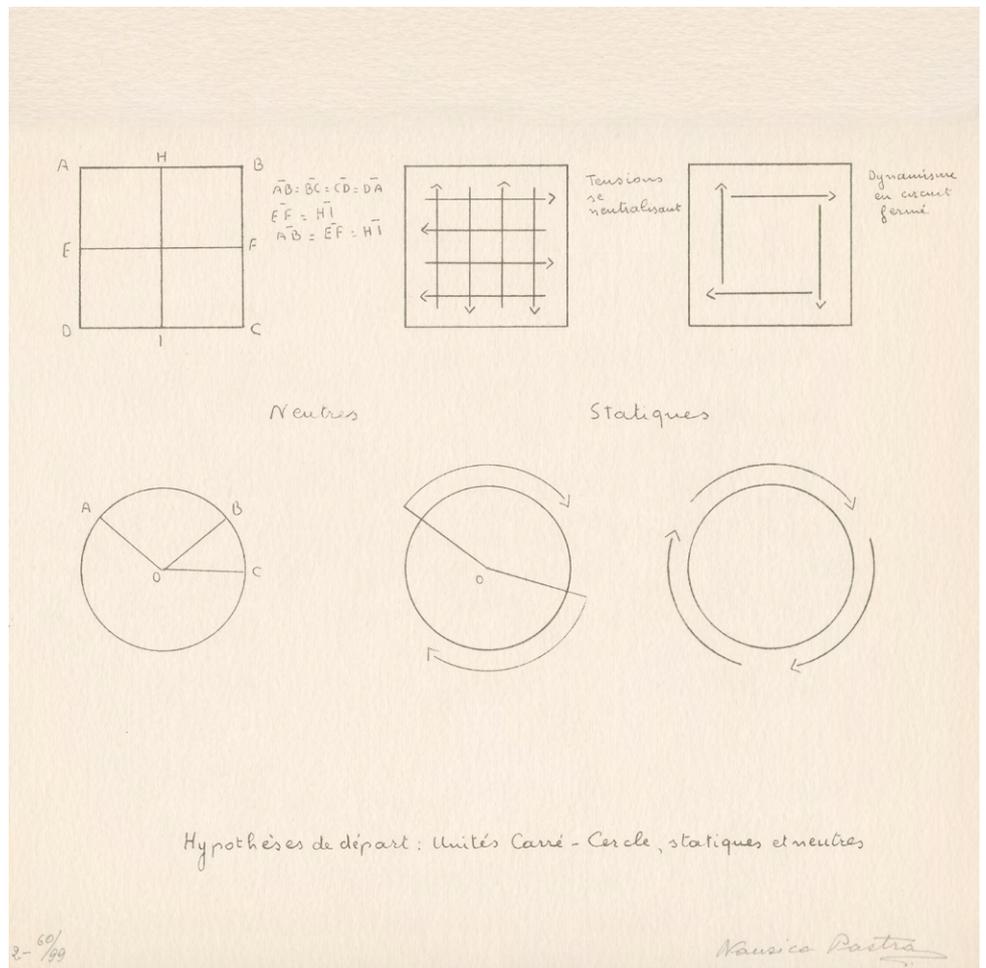


Looking into the drawings of the series, one can't help but notice that they comprise hand-written notes, comments and annotations, shapes, ratios and measurements, charts and grids. In other words, elements that might fail to reflect any artistic mastery, yet did serve as the means that enabled her to translate abstract notions into concrete forms and to deliver a clear, precise description of her own work's shaping process. The first drawing of the series, titled *General Working Method* (pic. 10), is demonstrative of this effort. Through a bald shape, there's an attempt to lay out as a design and to verbally explain the artist's rationale, starting from a fundamental axiomatic hypothesis that unfolds in two directions. Firstly, the one of *induction*, which can be defined as an analysis of its primordial elements. Secondly, the one of *deduction*, taking the form of correlation and synthesis. These two axes that provide the pillars of her work as an artist, are portrayed as interdependent, forming a circular system of interchange. This way, the artist essentially touched upon a primordial binary in the history of philosophy: the distinction between *deductive* (or generative) reasoning, which starts from a general standpoint and, drawing upon axiomatic statements, culminates in the formulation of a specific/narrow thesis; and *inductive* reasoning, where – on the contrary – meaning is produced through individual standpoints that presumably reach a general position.

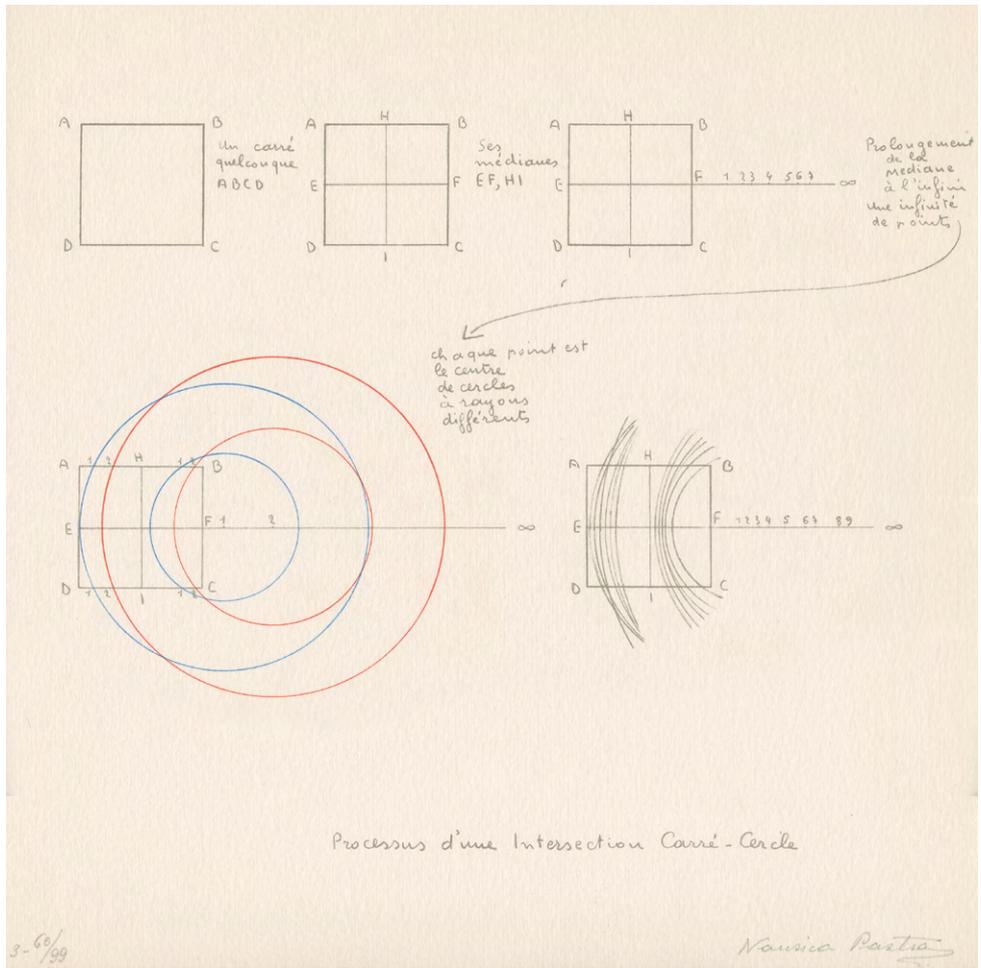




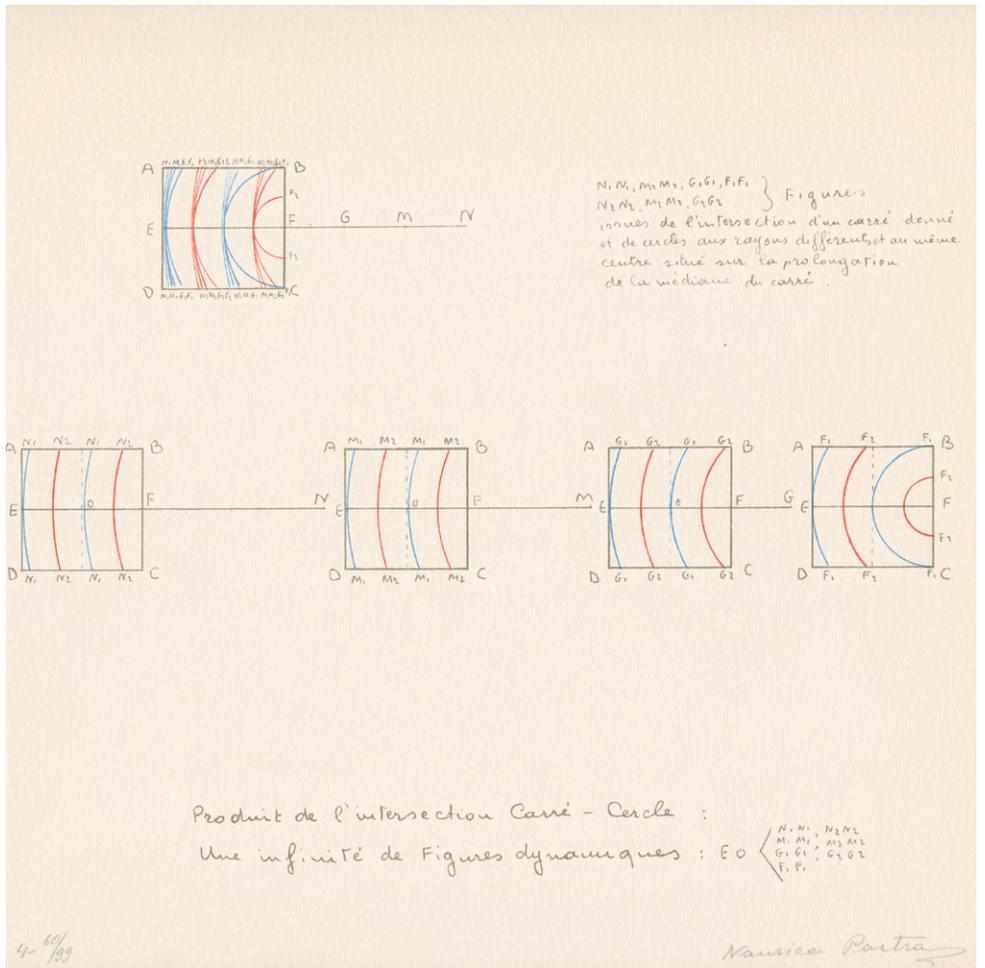
In the following drawings of the series, Pastra insisted on studying the system's structural elements, which were no other than the primary and ideal geometric shapes of the circle and the square (pic. 11). The combination of the two gave birth to successive symmetrical intersections (pic. 12), out of which sprang out an infinite number of dynamic forms (pic. 13). The methodology she established was based on the notion of seriality and aimed at producing new structural entities, which she would later include in her work. The outcome was no other than "Synectron: structure dynamique déterminante et représentative des propositions admises comme vraies au départ du raisonnement [A decisively dynamic structure, representative of the premise marked as true in the beginning of the reasoning]" (pic. 14).^[9] Indeed, similar to the way both the circle and the square served as speech sounds in Pastra's language, *Synectron* served as the word-signifier, the material form that consolidated and signaled the idea of the method (pic. 15). Moreover, without ever getting entangled in a self-referential system of infinite repetitions, she proceeded in creating, through the combination of *Synectron* – Square – Circle, the work *Synthesis No1 Asymmetrical*. She referred to this as a "situation-threshold," projecting it into the three-dimensional world in the form of a sculpture (pic. 16–17).



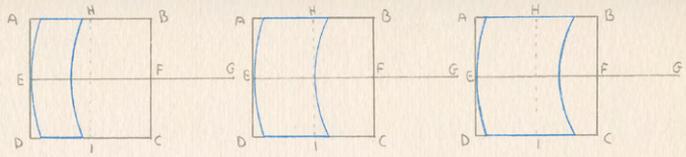
11. Nausika Pastra, *Initial Hypotheses: The Units Square - Circle, Static and Neutral*, from the series *Analogiques 1* (1968–1976), drawing, 23.9 x 24 cm., as published in the catalog of the exhibition *Analogiques* in Galerie Denise René, Paris (1976). Artist's archive.



12 . Nausika Pastra, Process of the Intersection between Square - Circle, from the series Analogiques 1 (1968-1976), drawing, 23.9 x 24 cm., as published in the catalog of the exhibition Analogiques in Galerie Denise René, Paris (1976). Artist's archive.

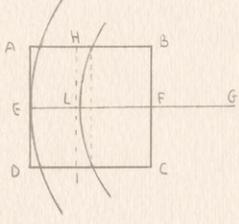


La Hauteur HI de toutes les Figures, inscrites dans le même carré, et aux côtés du carré égaux au côté du carré $HI = AB$ c'est la largeur EL qui est variable et caractérise leur différence.



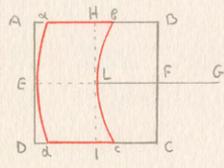
Relations

$GE = r_1$ (rayon)
 $GL = r_2$
 $EL = GE - GL$
 $EL = r_1 - r_2$



Une constante (donnée): Hauteur HI
 Une variable : Largeur EL
 EL déterminé par r_1 et r_2
 La Relation de EL à HI détermine la Figure issue d'une intersection Carré - Cercle

Synecton ($\times \theta cd$): Rapport déterminant $EL = \frac{HI}{2}$



Motivations

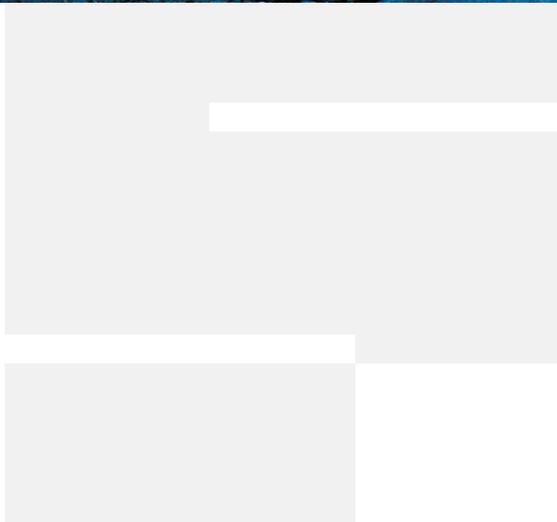
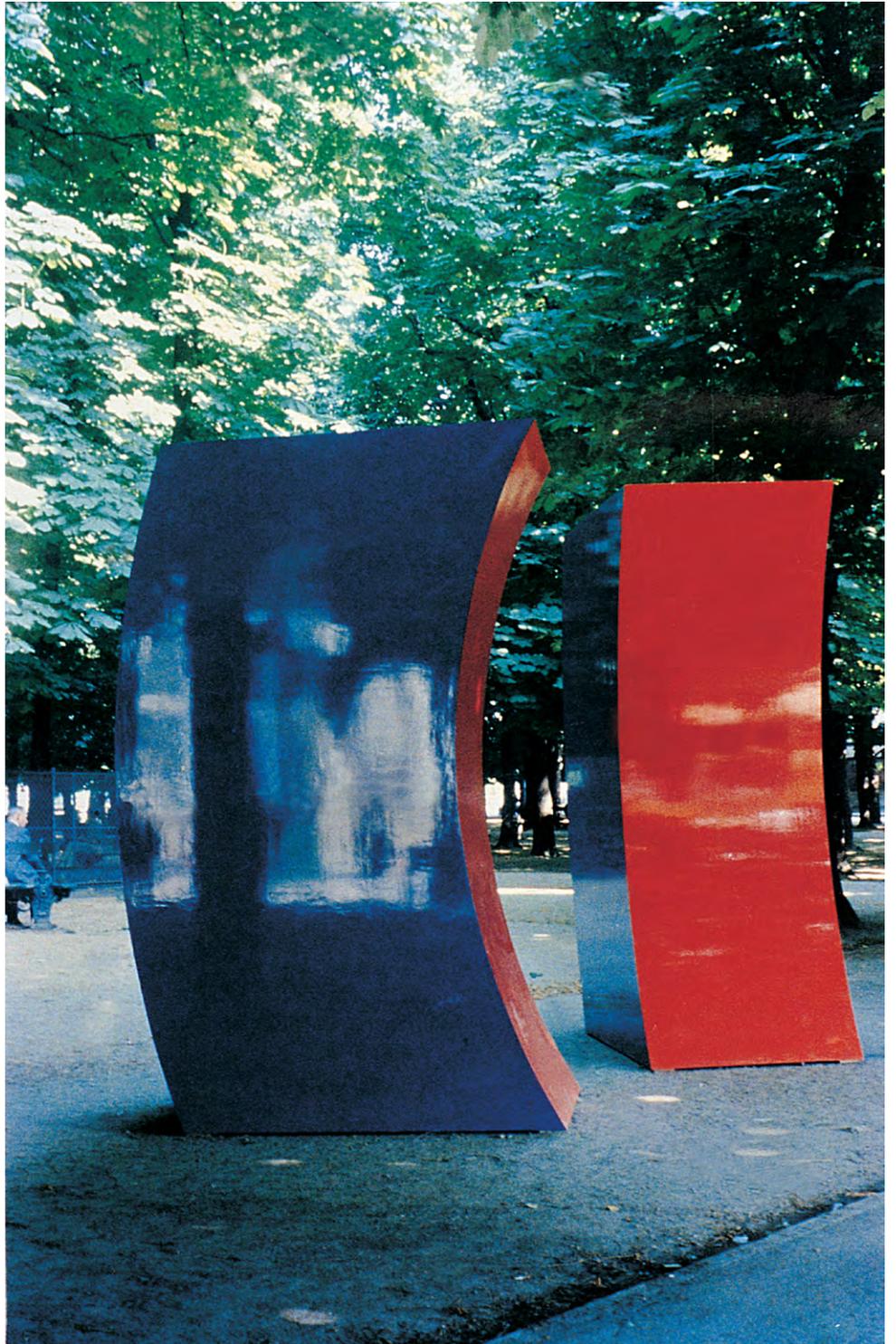
Synecton	Carré	Cercles
$EL = \frac{HI}{2}$	$EF = HI$	$r_1 = GL + EL = HI + \frac{HI}{2}$
	$EL = \frac{HI}{2}$	$r_2 = GL = HI$
		$r_1 - r_2 = \frac{HI}{2}$

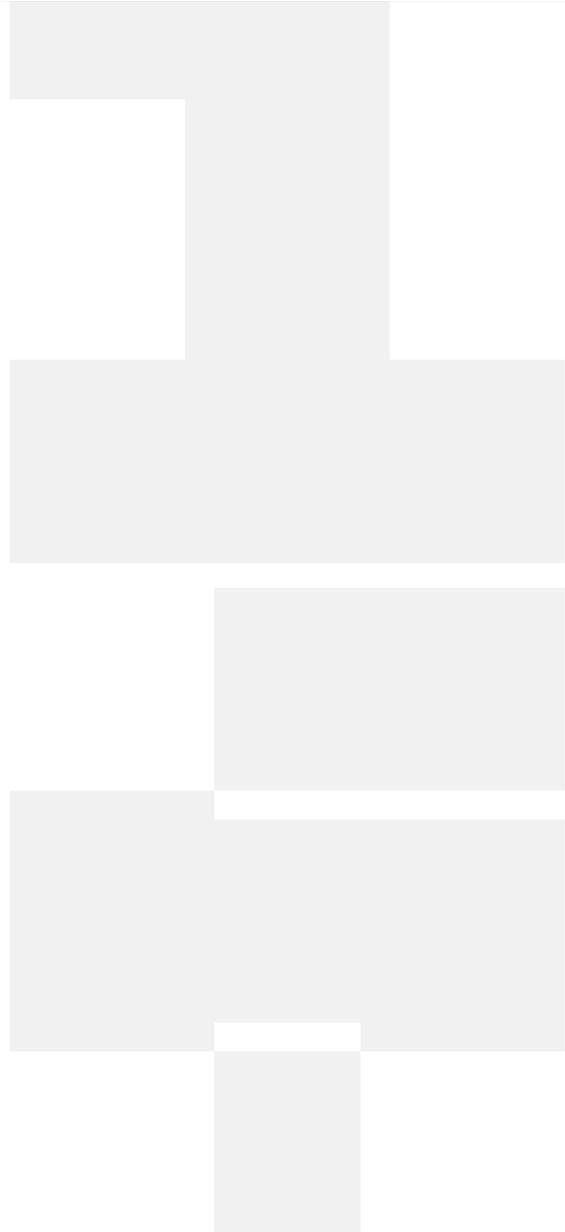
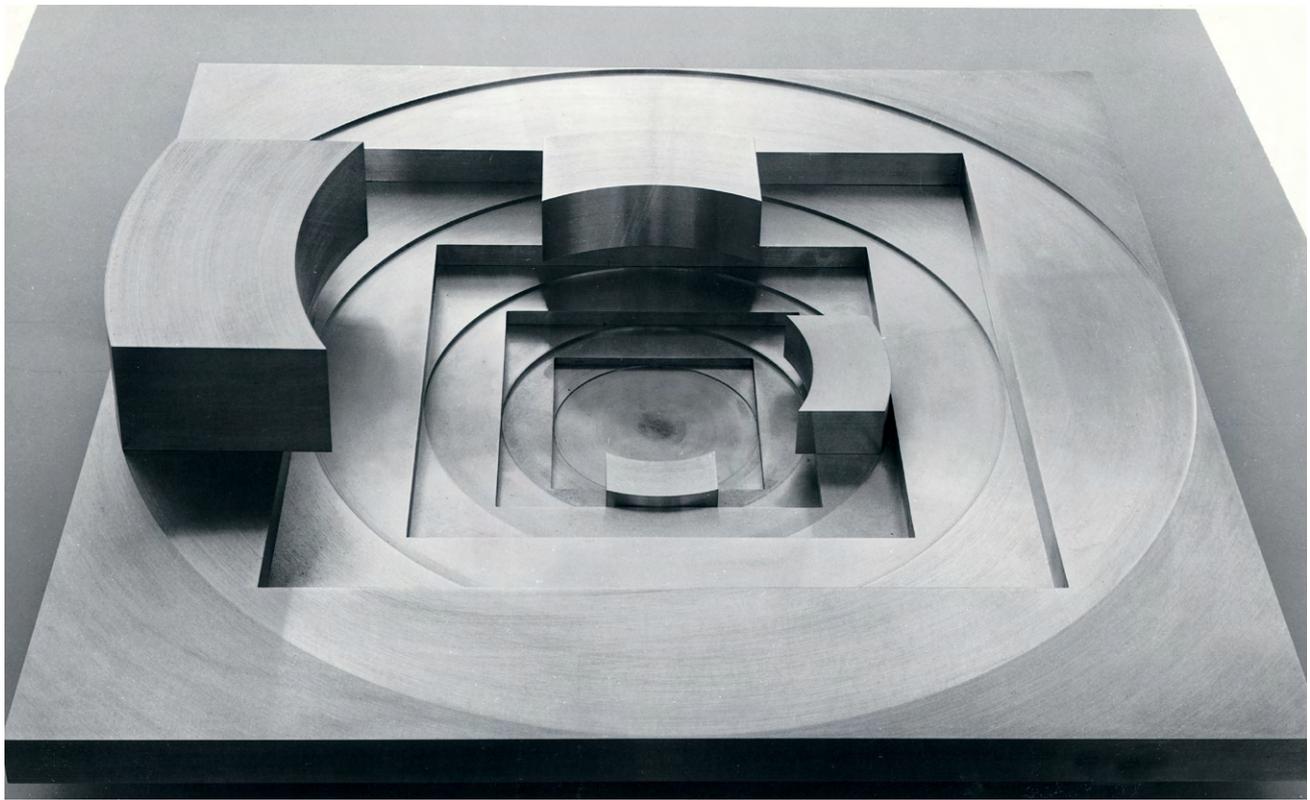
Système de Relations définissant les figures issues de l'intersection Carré - Cercle

8-60/199

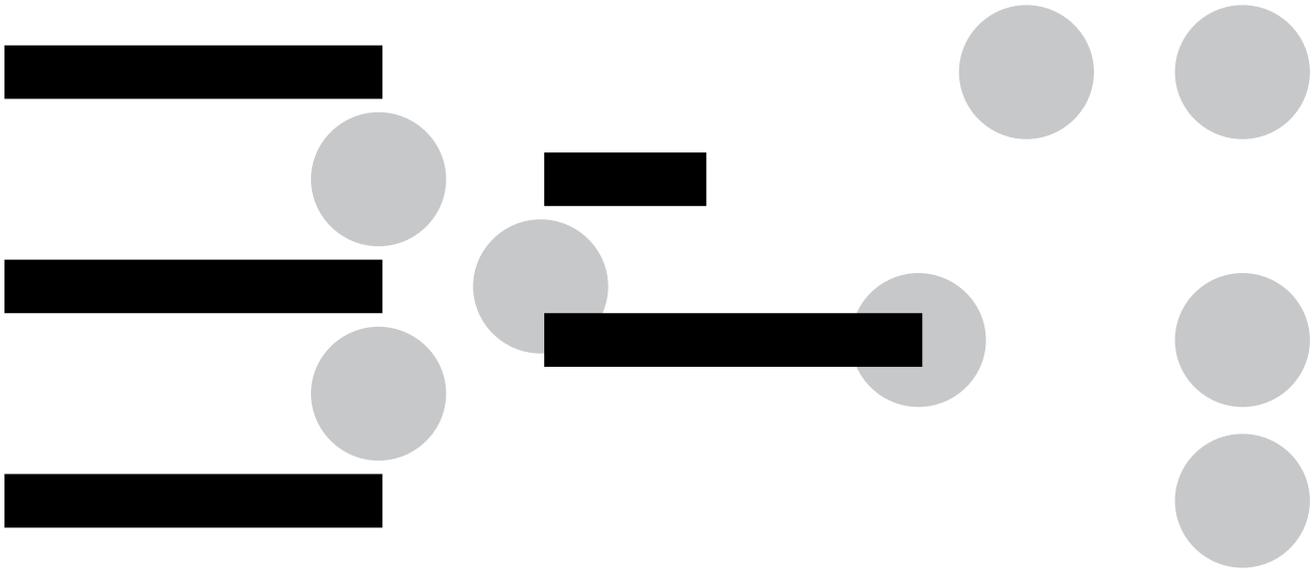
Nausika Pastra

14. Nausika Pastra, System of Relations Defining the Figures Generated by the Intersection between Square - Circle, from the series Analogiques 1 (1968-1976), drawing, 23.9 x 24 cm., as published in the catalog of the exhibition Analogiques in Galerie Denise René, Paris (1976). Artist's archive.

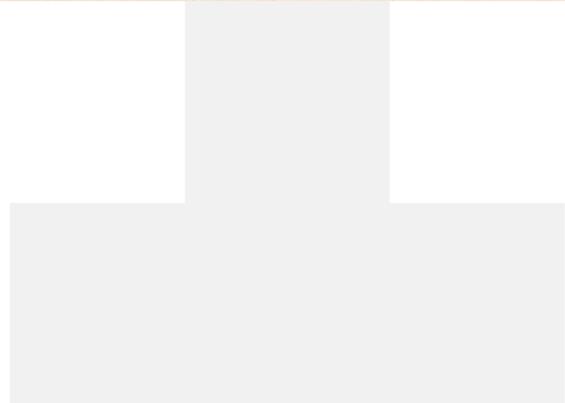
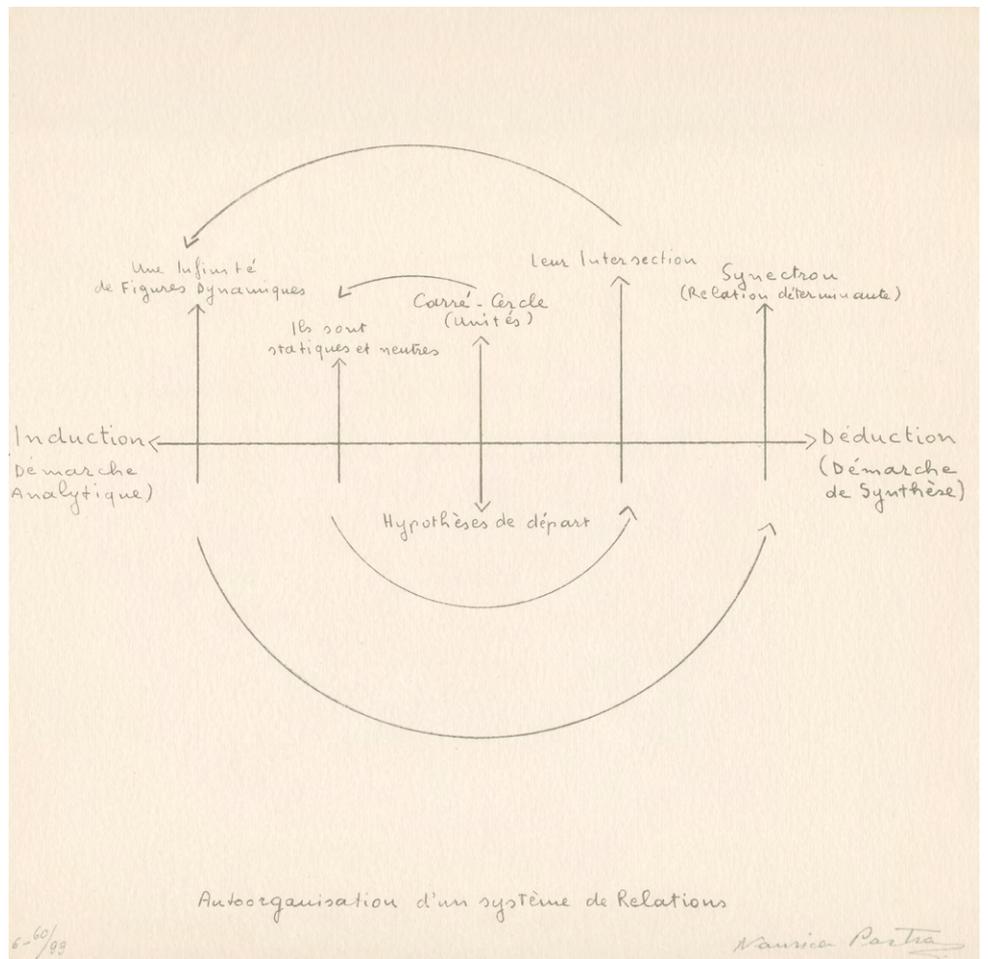




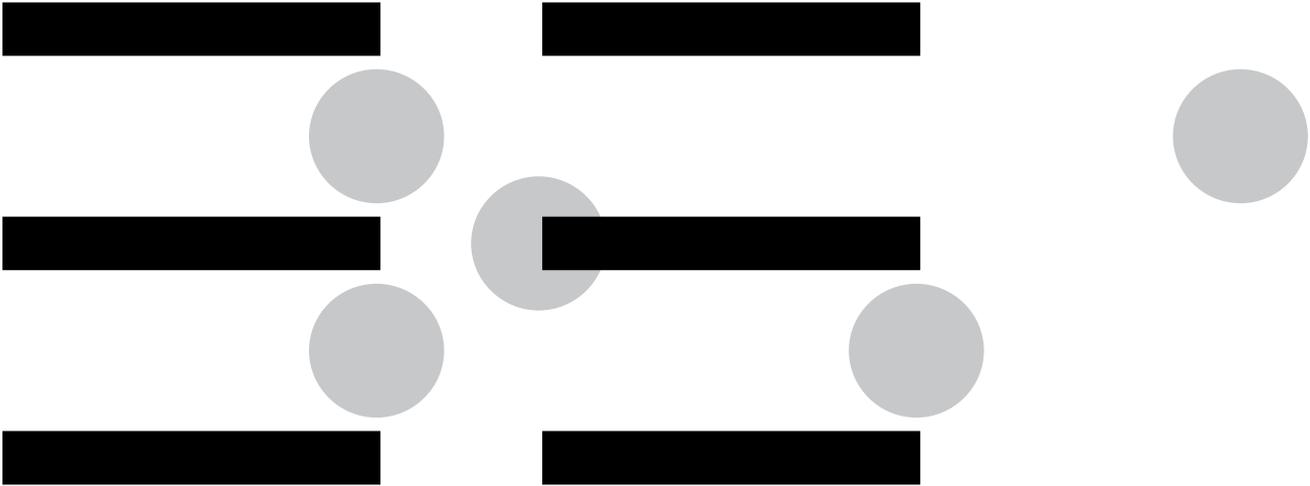




Being in no position to analyze all the later steps pertaining to the successive evolution stages of a system that was still under construction at the time, it is worth noting that all drawings of Pastra's *Analogiques* series are characterized by analytical austerity and systematic design, emphasizing the idea and process prior to materialization. Pastra created a pattern of reasonings that compacted an implicit philosophical approach. In her own words: "This work could be viewed as the definition of the conditions and the ways of a behavior of thought, while the method could be seen as the object of artistic work" (pic. 18).^[10]

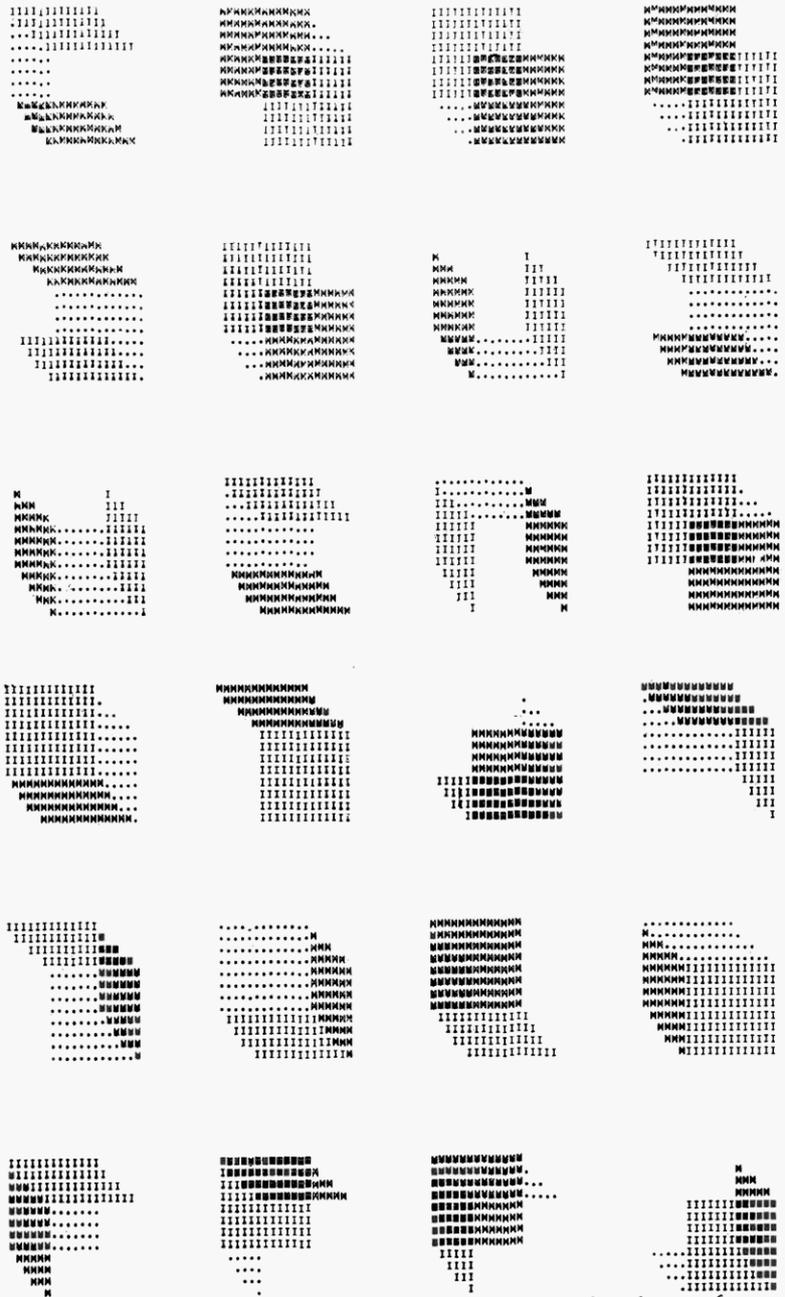


1*. Nausika Pastra, *Auto-Organization of a System of Relations*, from the series *Analogiques 1* (1968–1976), drawing, 23.9 x 24 cm., as published in the catalog of the exhibition *Analogiques* in Galerie Denise René, Paris (1976). Artist's archive.



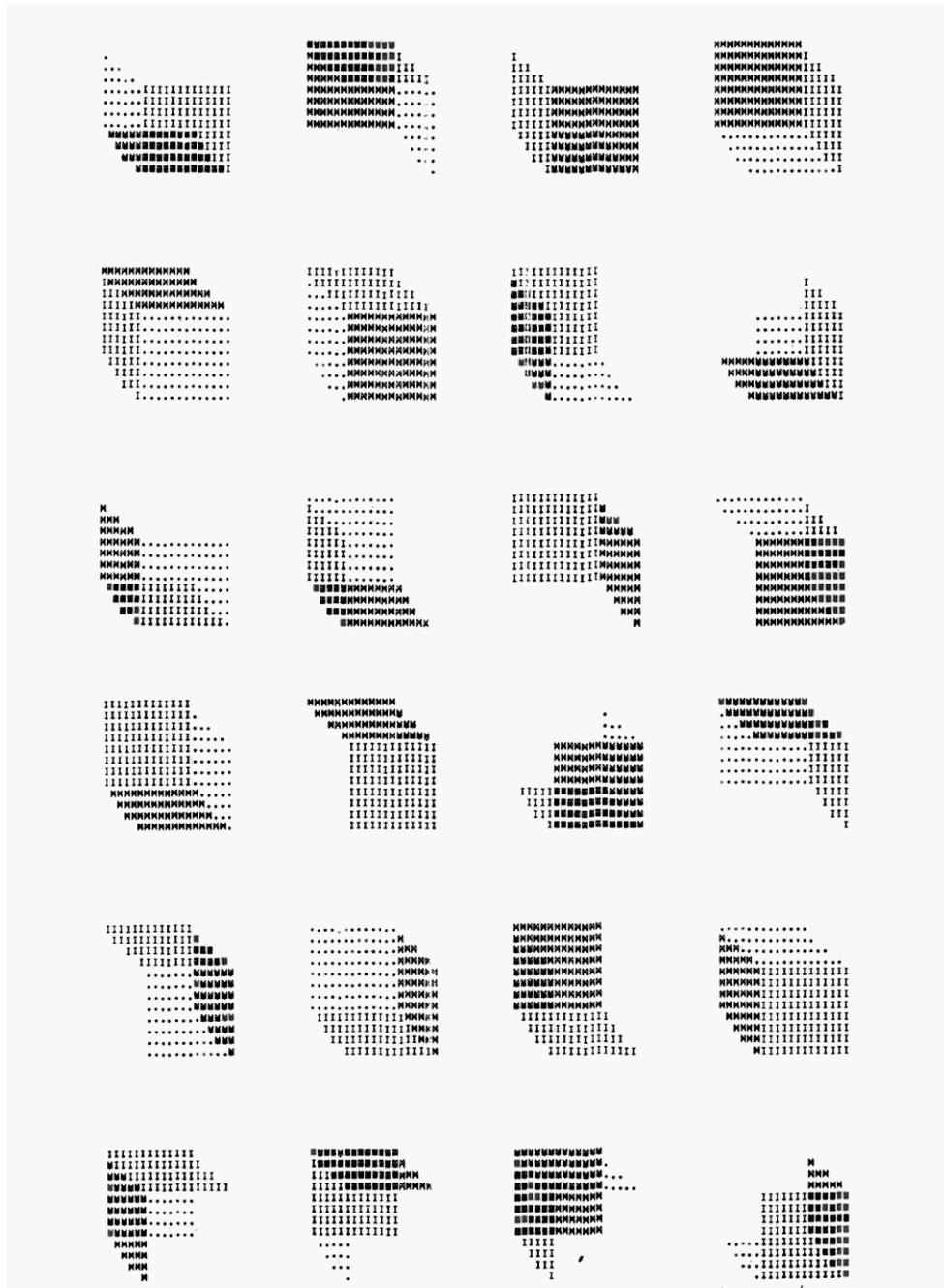
Pantelis Xagoraris shared the conviction that mathematics, as a language equivalent to the natural ones, has the power to codify ideas and devise applications in art, contributing to communication. Making use of his twofold identity as both an artist and a scientist, he used logical reasoning, mathematical notions and geometrical structures (primarily those drawn from advanced geometry-topology, systems theory, thermodynamics, and probability theory) to back not only his theoretical quests, but also his work as an artist.

Specifically, from the early 1970s onwards, the artist was initiated into the world of computers. Xagoraris reckoned that both the possibilities and the setbacks arising from using this “tool” were considerable, constituting an unexplored area of study in Greece. As to his own work, after having realized that computers can function as the medium to comprehend structured order, and therefore give prominence to aesthetic value, he decided to include them in his 1971 work *Symmetries of the Cube* (pic. 19–21).



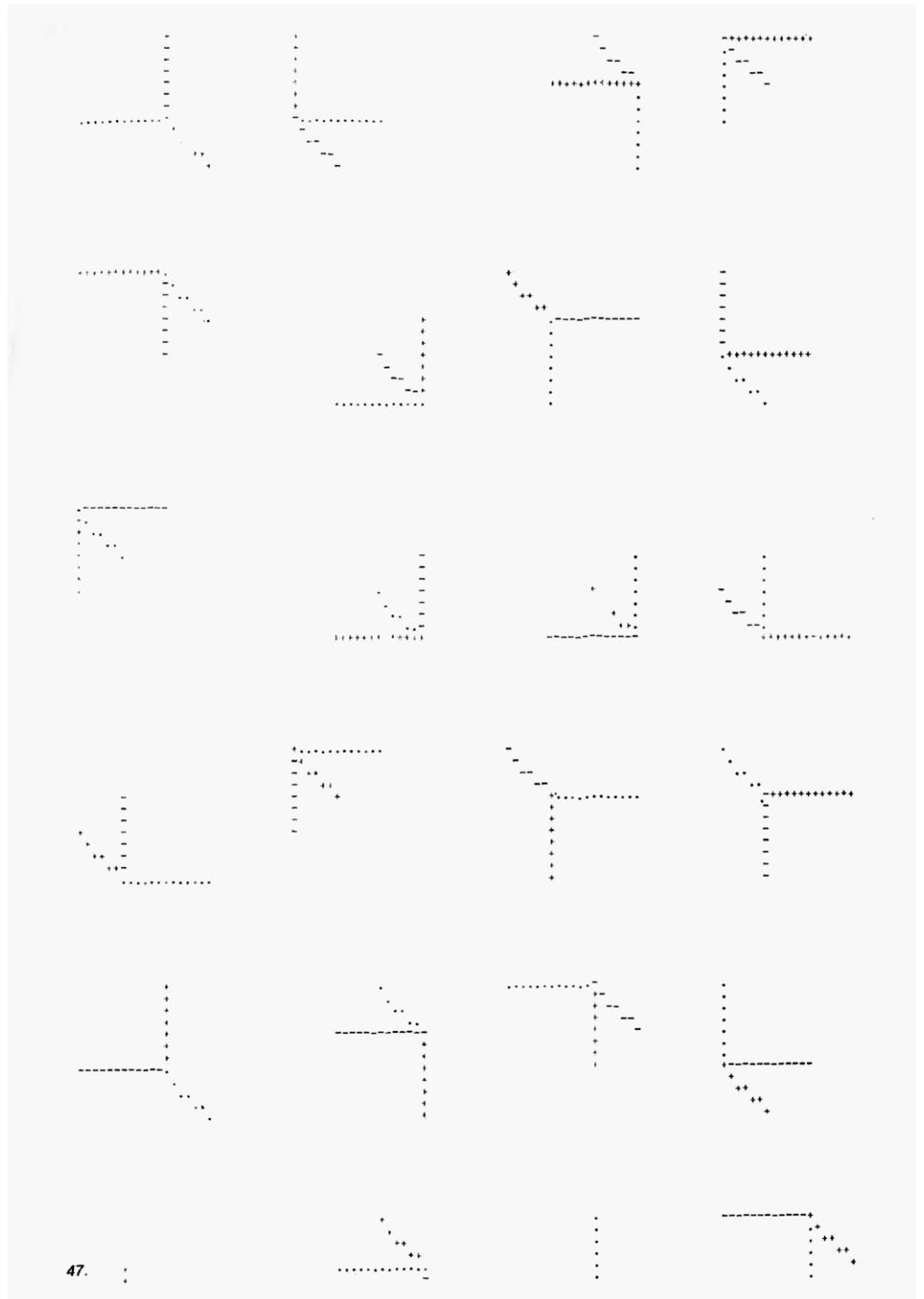
45. Από τις συμμετρίες του κύβου, 1, (1971).

Handwritten signature of Pantelis Xagoraris.

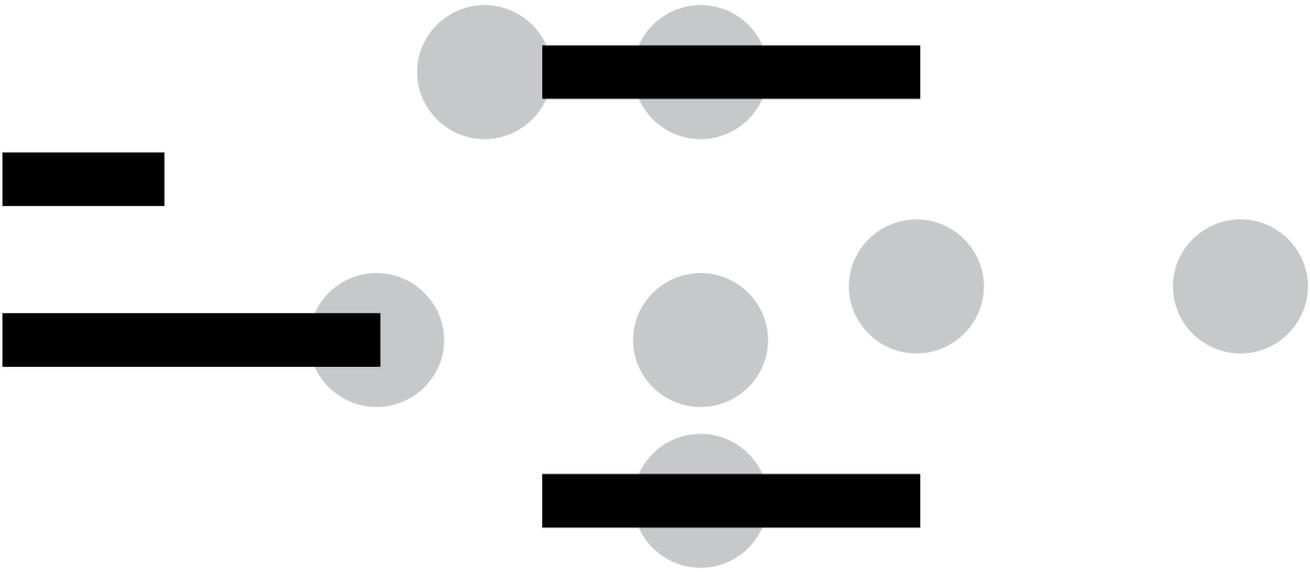


46. Από τις συμμετρίες του κύβου, 2, (1971).

Pantelis Xagoraris

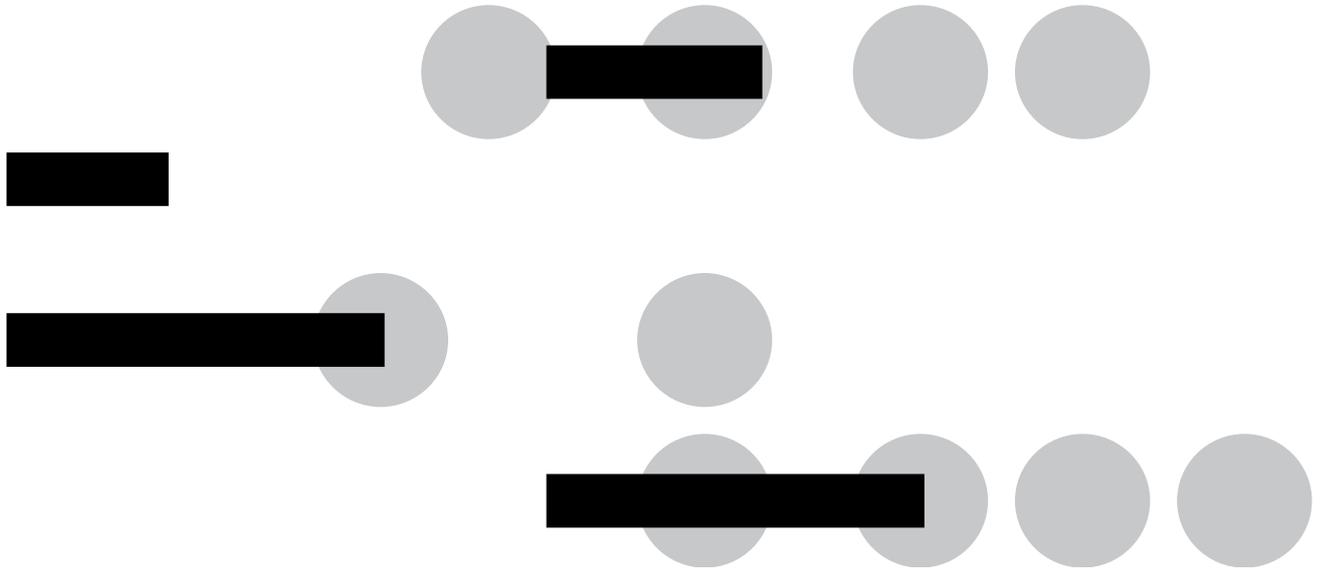


21. Pantelis Xagoraris, *Symmetries of the Cube* (1971), drawing generated by UNIVAC 1107, execution time: 24.09 seconds (artwork developed with the A. Parkin program at the Doxiadis Associates Computer Center [DACC]). Photograph from the artist's doctoral dissertation, titled *Geometrical Transformations and Form* (unpublished), National Technical University of Athens (1981).



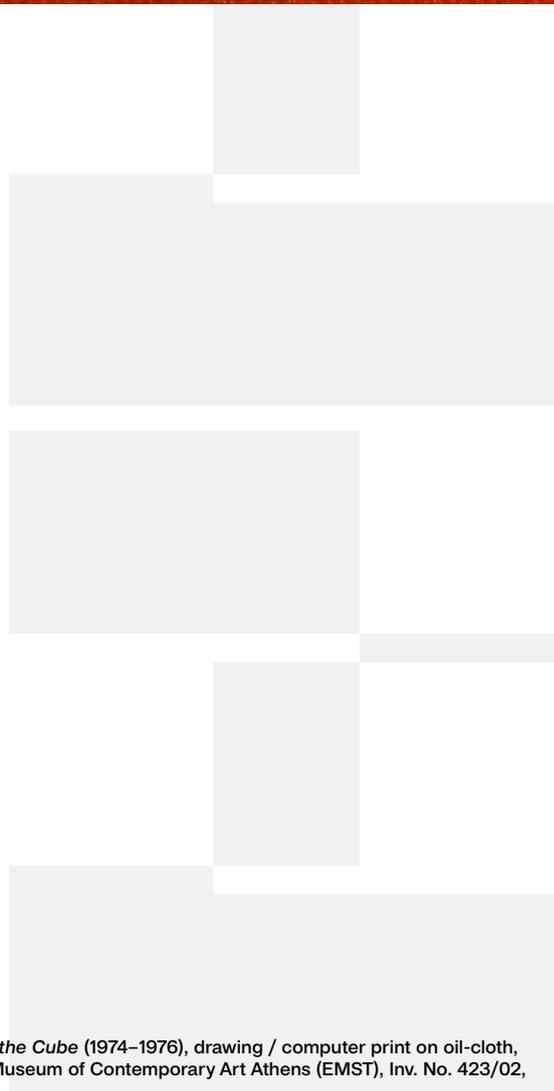
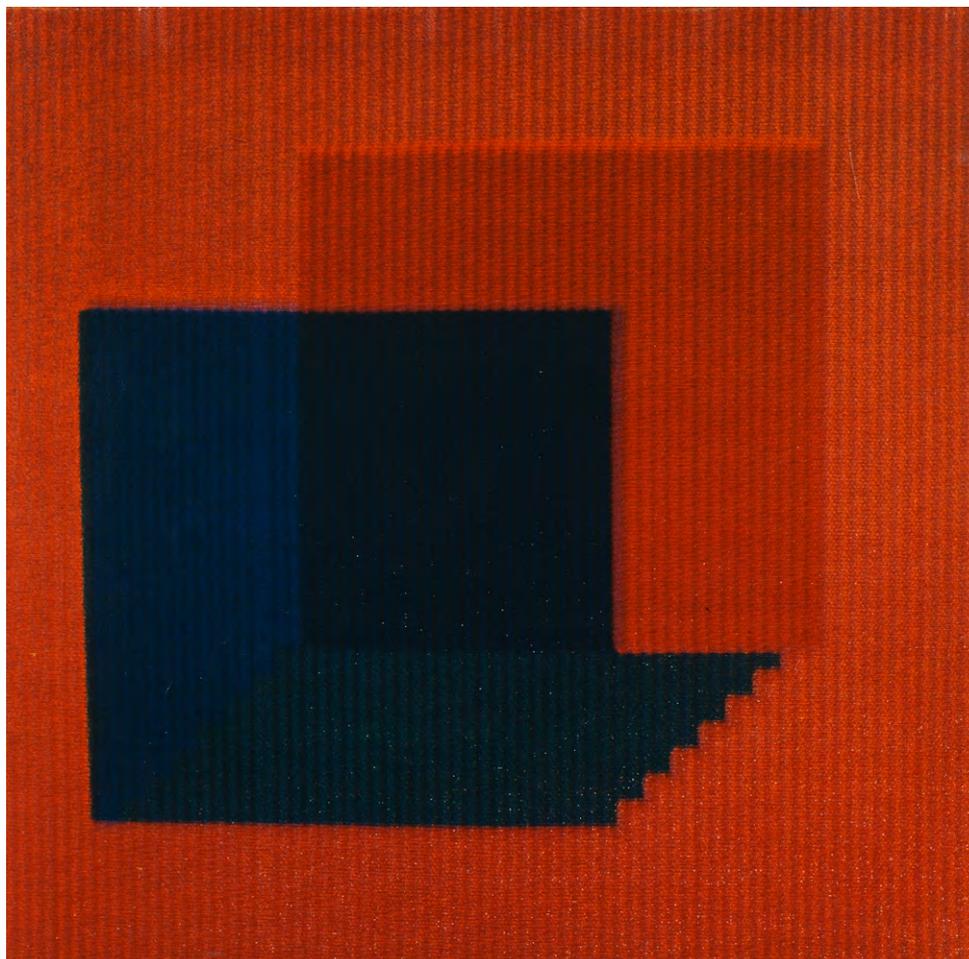
This work presented the first example of such an artistic approach in Greece; the drawings-results that occurred were included in the groundbreaking exhibition *The Art of the Computers* (1971, Athens Technological Institute)^[11]. The artist completed these designs after gaining access to the Doxiadis Associates Computers Center (DACC) and the UNIVAC 1107 computer hosted in its premises. Teaming up with A. Parkin, Xagoraris created an algorithmic program written in COBOL programming language, so that all cubic symmetries could be designed in the three-dimensional space in a runtime of 24.09 seconds. The artist focused exclusively on the 24 symmetries that support spatial orientation, defined by proper rotations around particular axes.

As, the artist explained in one of his writings^[12], the new horizons opened through the use of the computer revolved around two different axes. Firstly, algorithmically wise, the computer offers the possibility to process and distort the harmony and the symmetry of several complex geometrical shapes on the basis of a canon/algorithm. Therefore, the fact that he took as a starting point a sense of “normality,” only to apply an algorithm – *i.e.* a logical pattern of change – and came up with ostensibly non-symmetrical shapes, made an indelible impression on him.

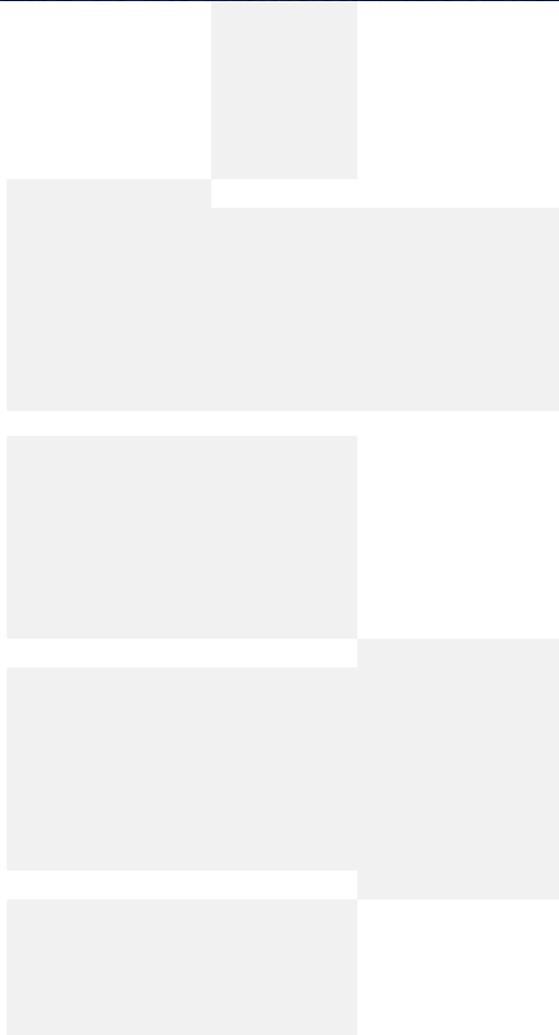
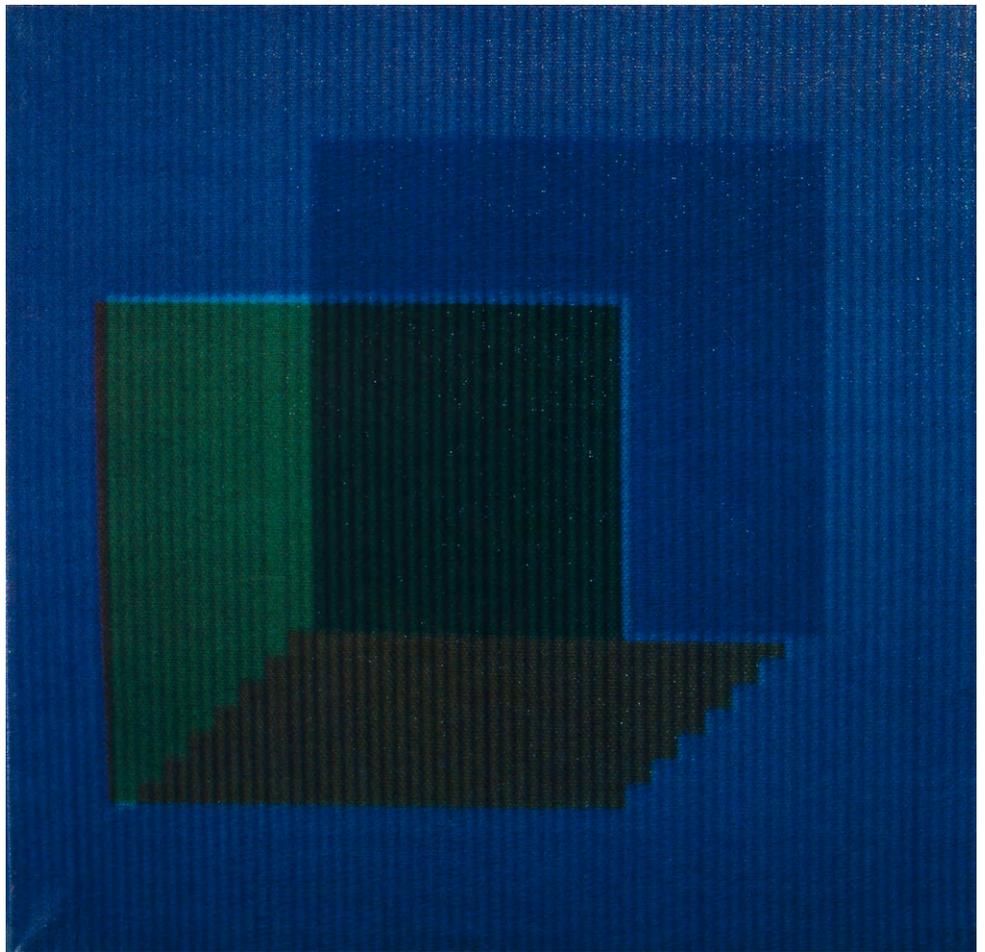


Secondly, seeing it reflectively, random elements could arise during the creation process and beyond the artist's intentions, as the work was processed through a program that generated different snapshots of this initial design. Each image had a unique instance of appearance – the probability distribution for a random variable, to use the terminology of probability theory. Actually, a few years later (1974), during his fellowship at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies, Xagoraris succeeded in adding the element of color in the drawing stage of his previous experimentations on the *Symmetries of the Cube*, thus reaching new expressive heights as an artist (pic. 22–24).

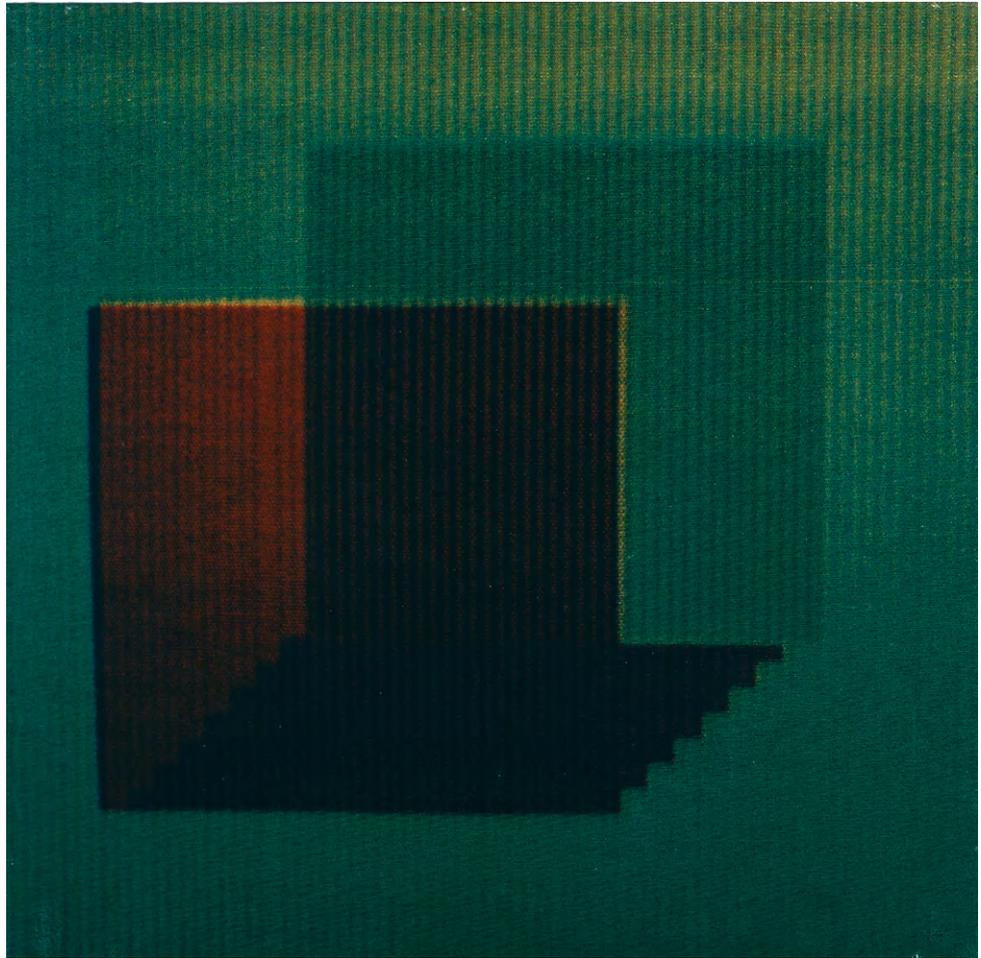
Through this work, the artist assumed that the rules that defined *kallos* (our predominant perception of beauty), built upon the concepts of symmetry and harmony, and considered a measure of beauty over the centuries, no longer sufficed for the understanding and creation of contemporary artworks. Therefore, he sought to establish the rules and canons that would maintain order and visual arrangement, assessing the possibility to make them objective. In his research, he started using new data related to the study of order and disorder, drawing on the fields of cybernetics, systems theory, and probability theory (pic. 25). He strongly advocated the necessity for the introduction of a new language, a scientific Logos structured upon novel mathematical rules for measuring aesthetic values. In fact, he once mentioned that “[his] work is characterized by the attempt to create a system, an intellectual discipline, which is theoretically grounded on the introduction of logical associations and mathematical concepts and structures in the arrangement of the artwork.”^[13]



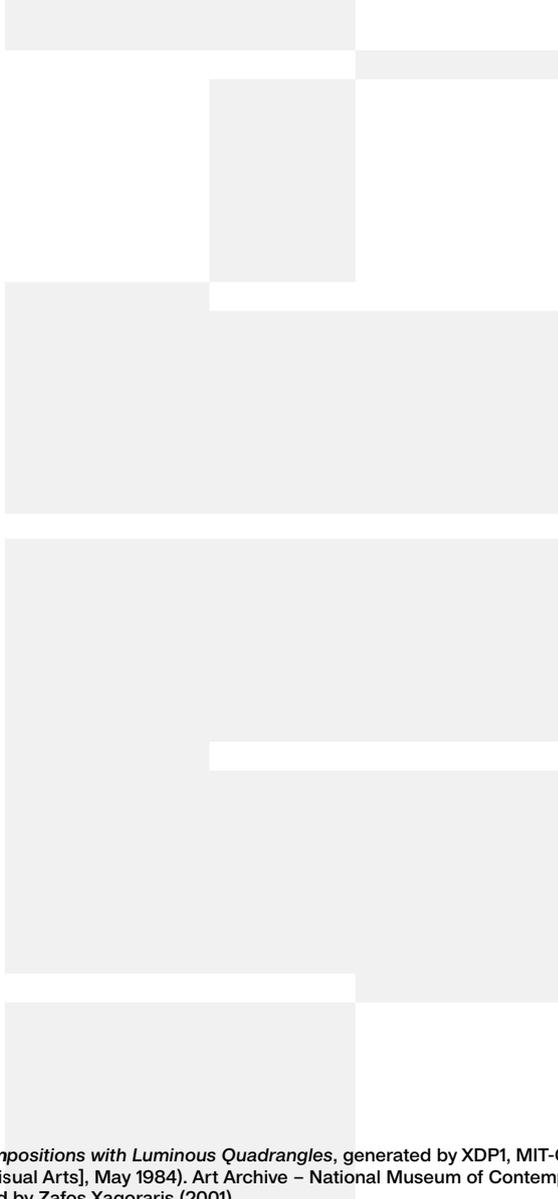
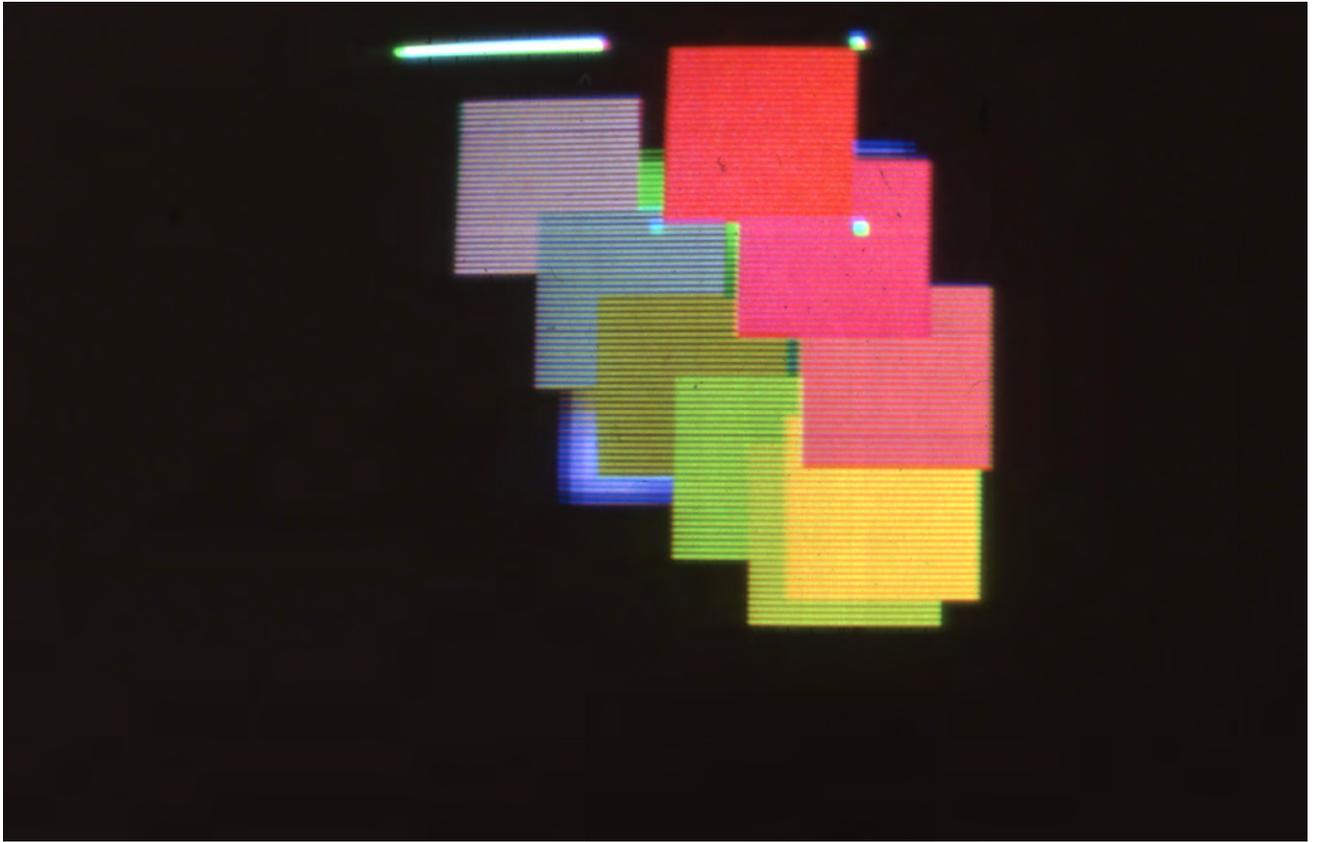
22 . Pantelis Xagoraris, *Symmetries of the Cube* (1974–1976), drawing / computer print on oil-cloth, 59 x 59 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), Inv. No. 423/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2002).

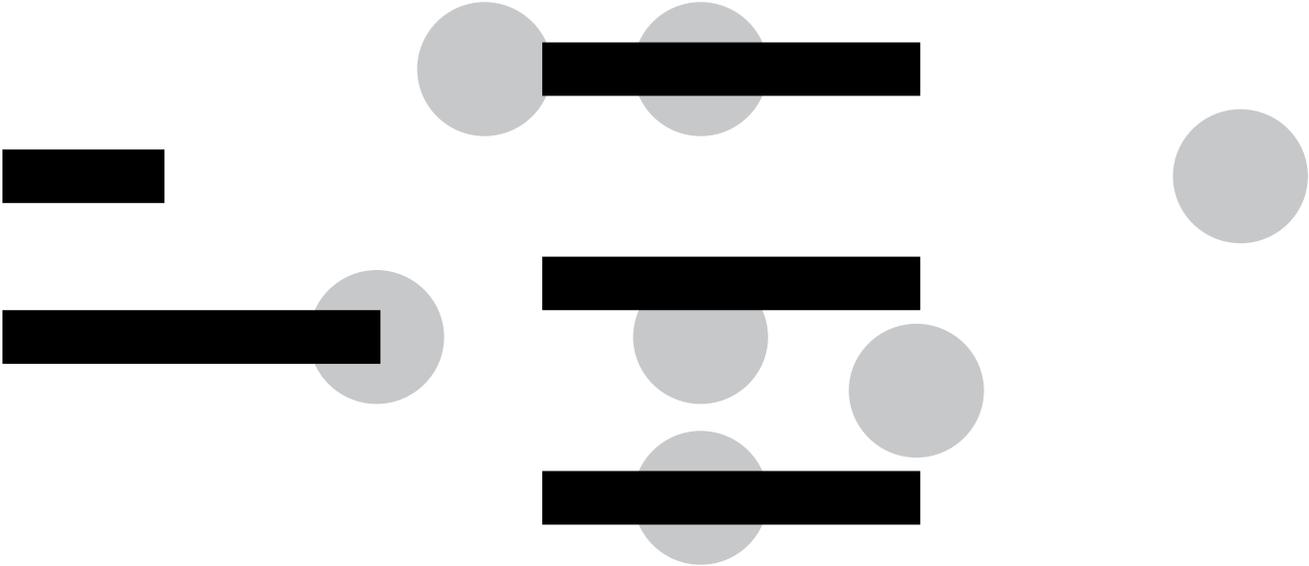


23. Pantelis Xagoraris, *Symmetries of the Cube* (1974–1976), drawing / computer print on oil-cloth, 59 x 59 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), Inv. No. 424/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2002).



24. Pantelis Xagoraris, *Symmetries of the Cube* (1974–1976), drawing / computer print on oil-cloth, 59 x 59 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), Inv. No. 425/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2002).

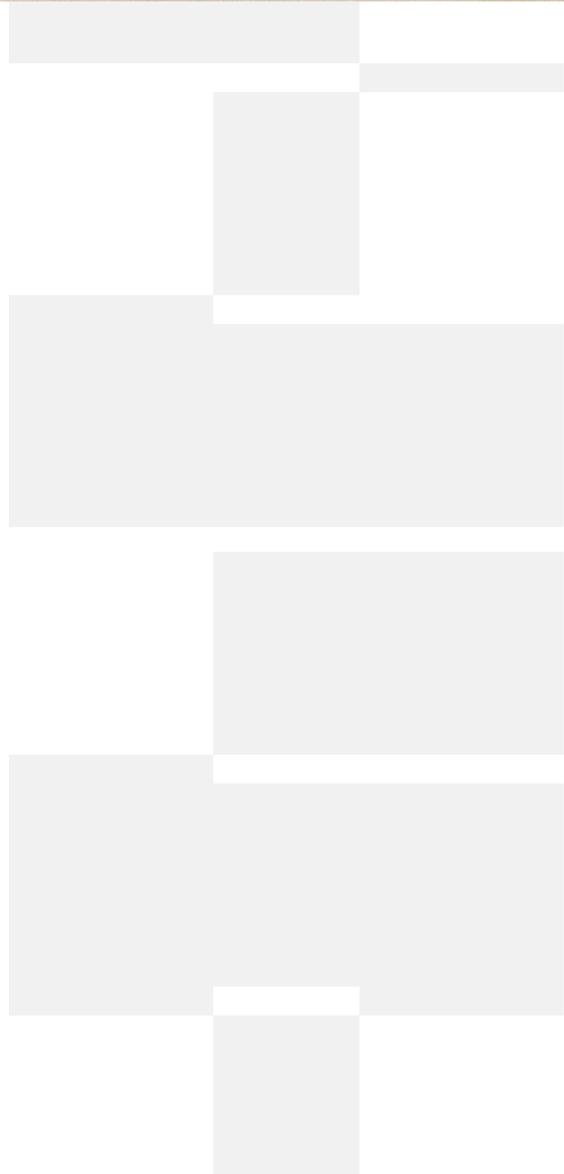
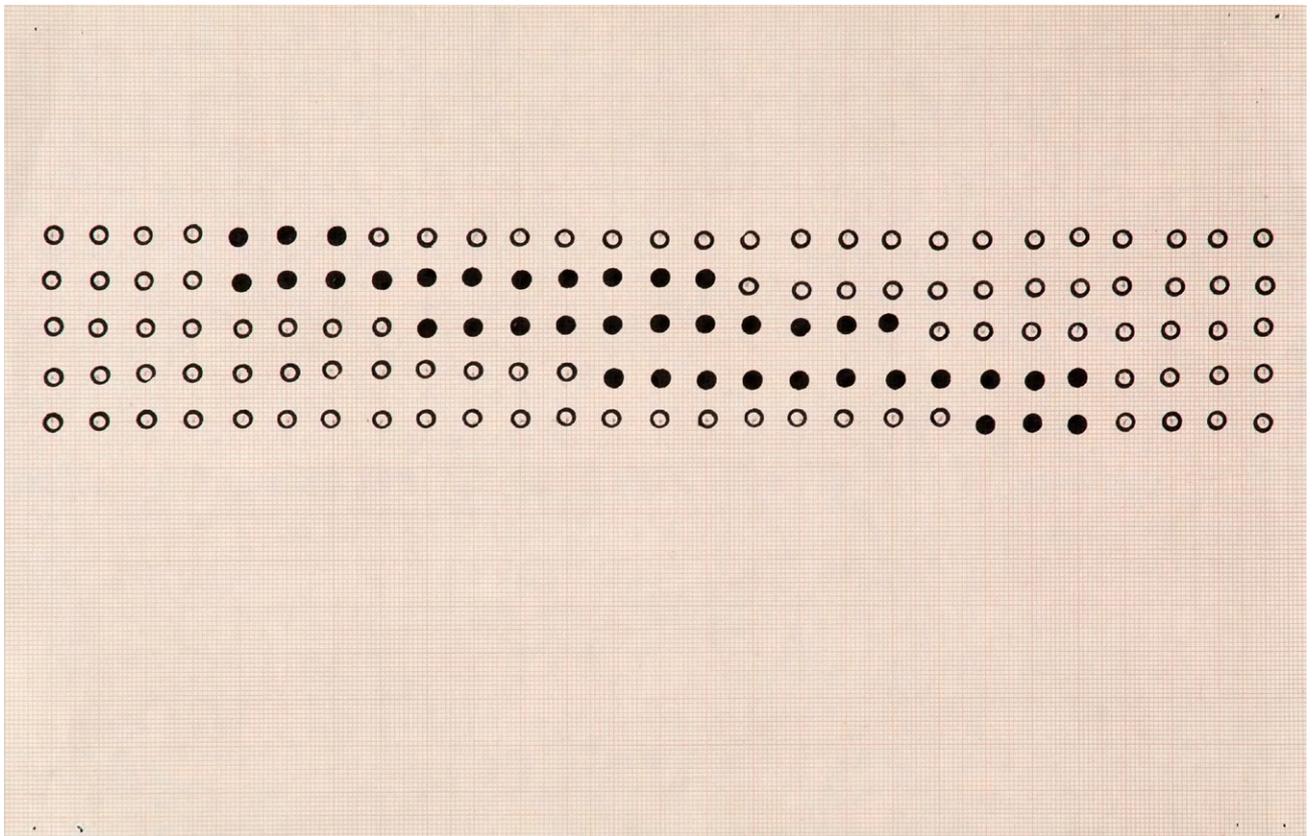


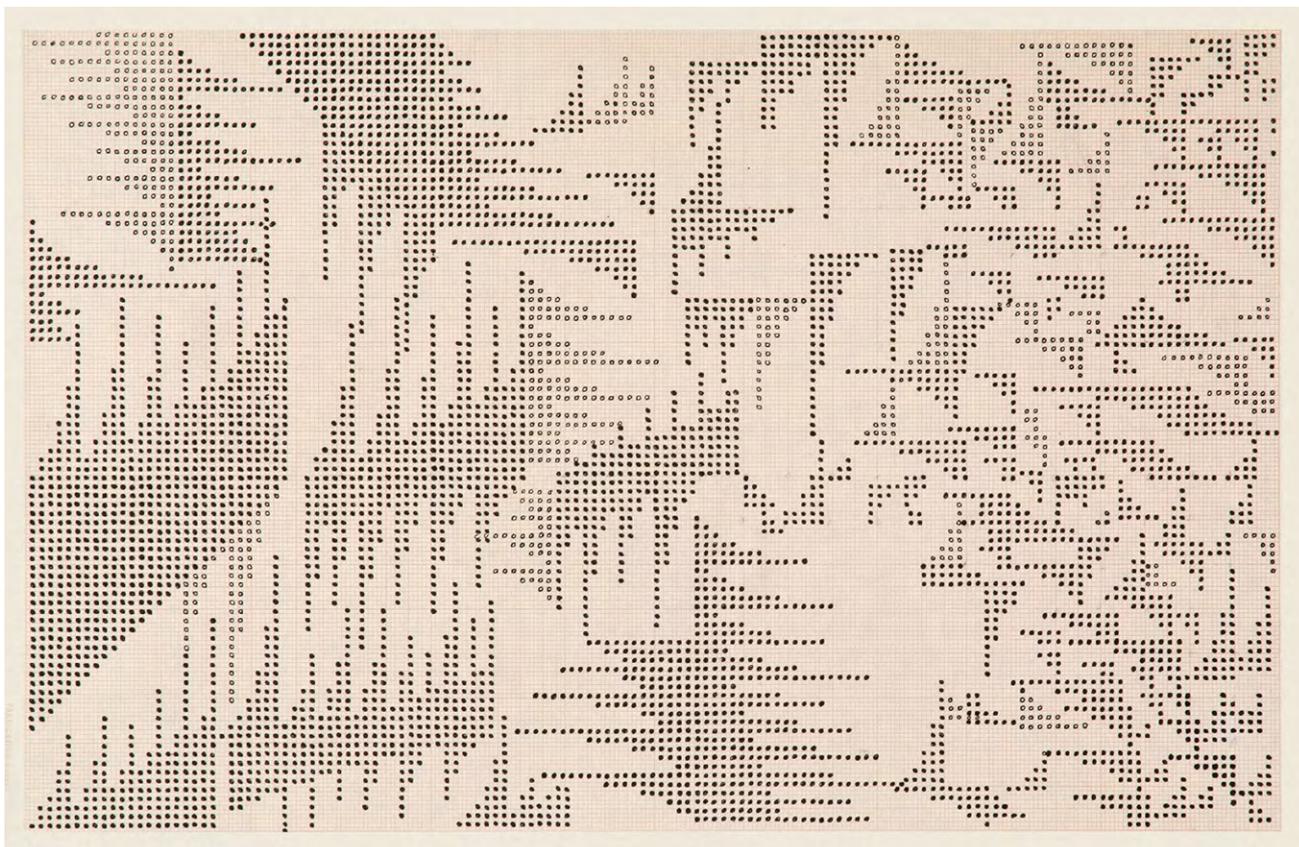


Bia Davou was yet another artist who shared the same wish to articulate her personal visual *Logos*; she pursued a language devoid of the limitations imposed by standardized forms of message exchange and characterized by simplicity and an organized structure that would leave no room for misinterpretation. Lacking a background in hard sciences, but following the same research path with her life partner Pantelis Xagoraris, she decided to tackle the fields of computer technology and information, probabilities, and systems theories.

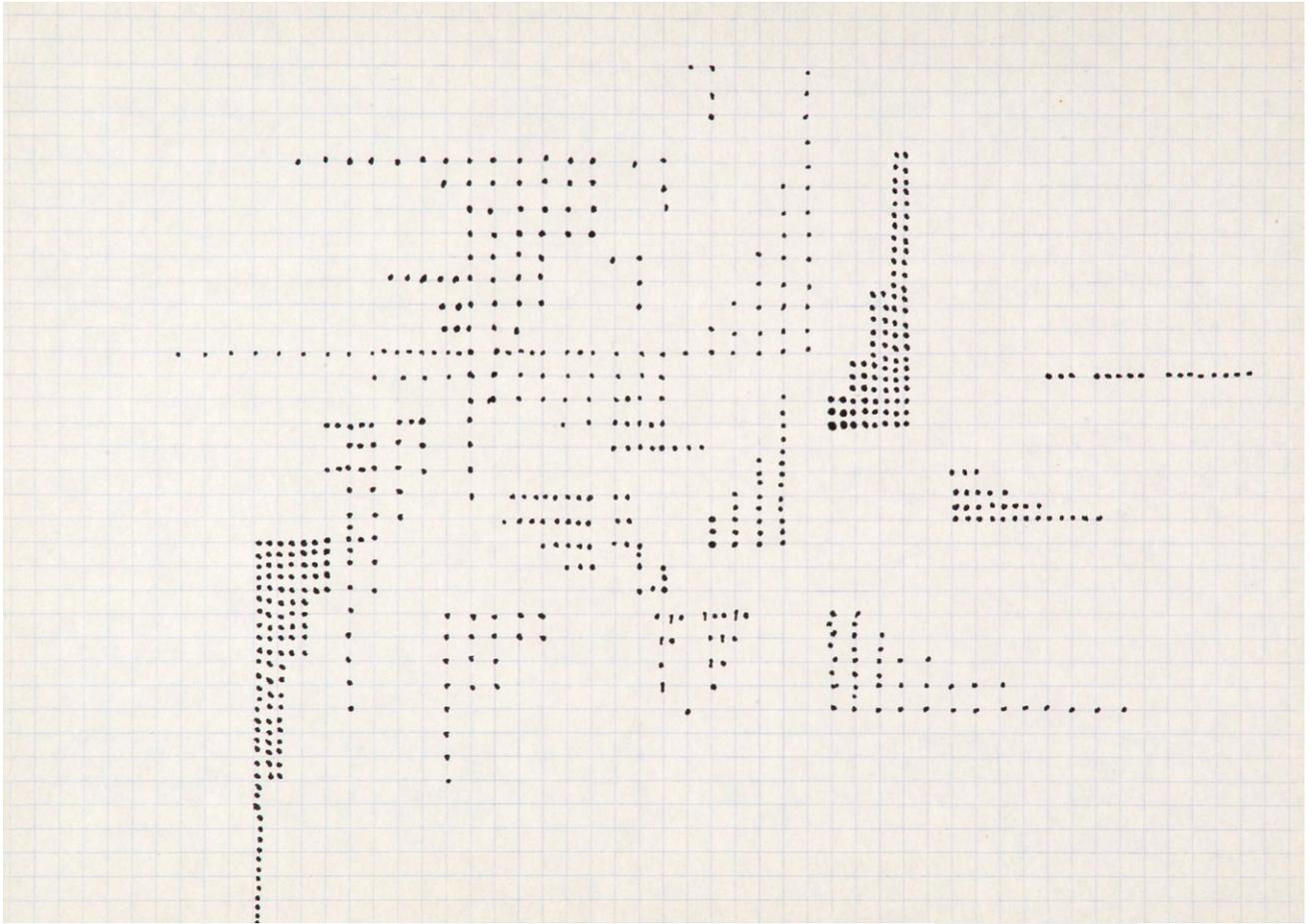
This newly acquired knowledge was crystallized in her 1978 work *Serial Structures 1* (pic. 26), which depicted a binary semantic numbering system based on two digits (0 and 1) and the Fibonacci sequence. The concepts of process, repetition, sequence, and seriality were found at the forefront of her research; at the same time, the articulation of her individual meta-language deployed algorithms and graphic representations of codes, as they appear through the binary language of computing devices (pic. 27–28). As her interests shifted from the visual imprint to the production process of an artwork *per se*, in many respects she served a purely conceptual register of art (pic. 29).

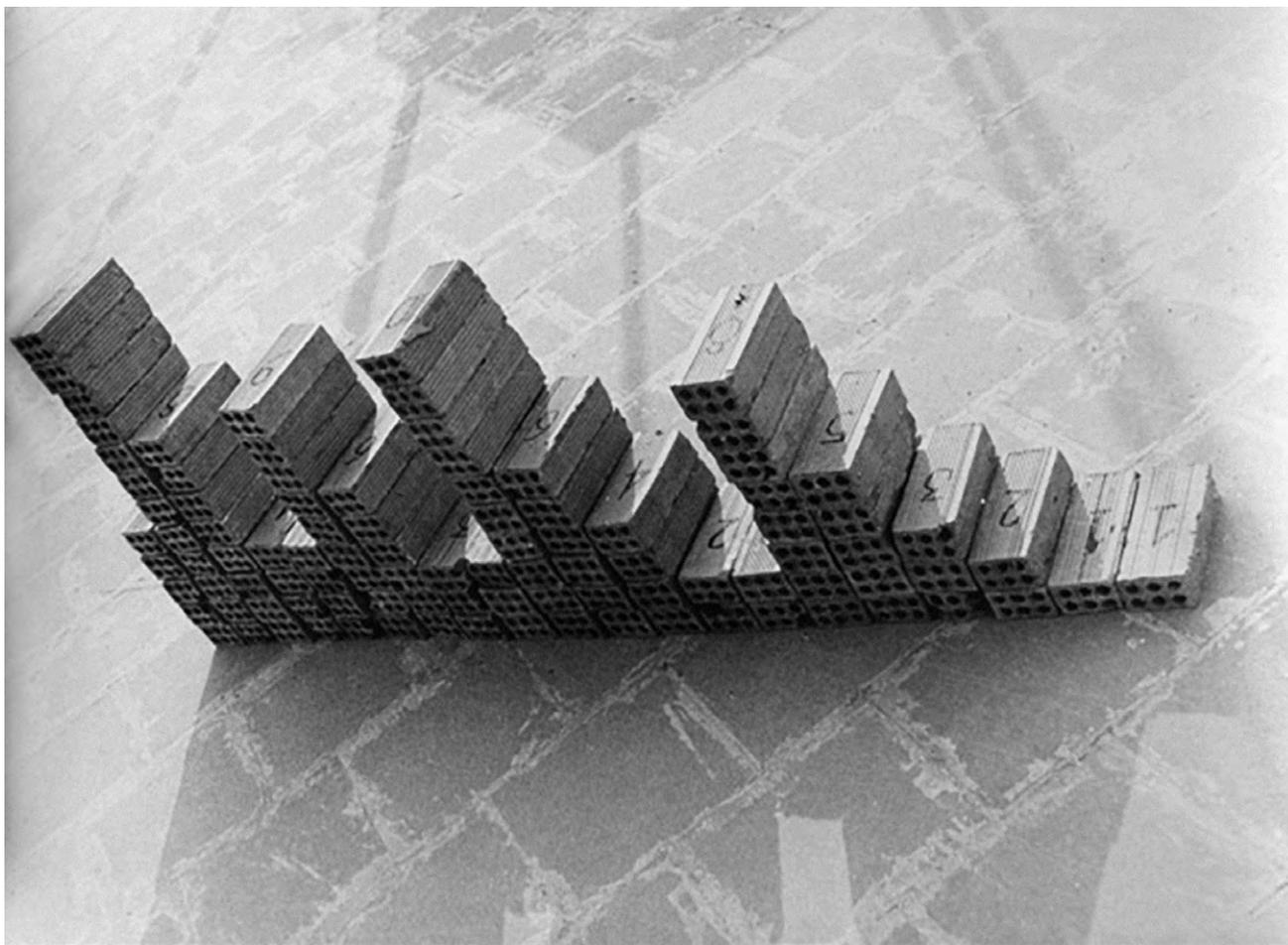
Davou was primarily interested in features such as the simplicity, scalability, clarity, and speed of the system. Those were the elements that assisted her to grasp the meaning of writing in itself, to specify the quality of the artistic message she conveyed, and to communicate her views on the dual nature of the world to the viewer. However, the artist felt that, although the binary logic of machines had arguably secured phenomenal progress in many different aspects of human existence, technological advancement could not be regarded as a remedy.

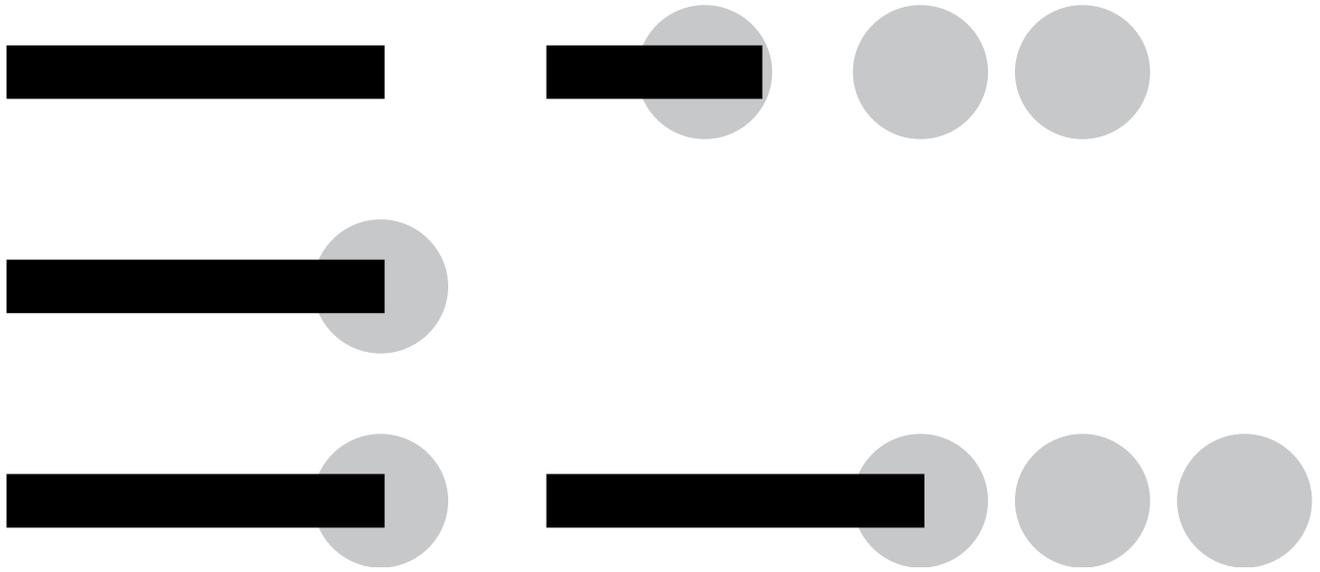




27. Bia Davou, *Serial Structures* (1978), drawing, ink on graph paper, 19.8 x 29.7 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), Inv. No. 301/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2002).



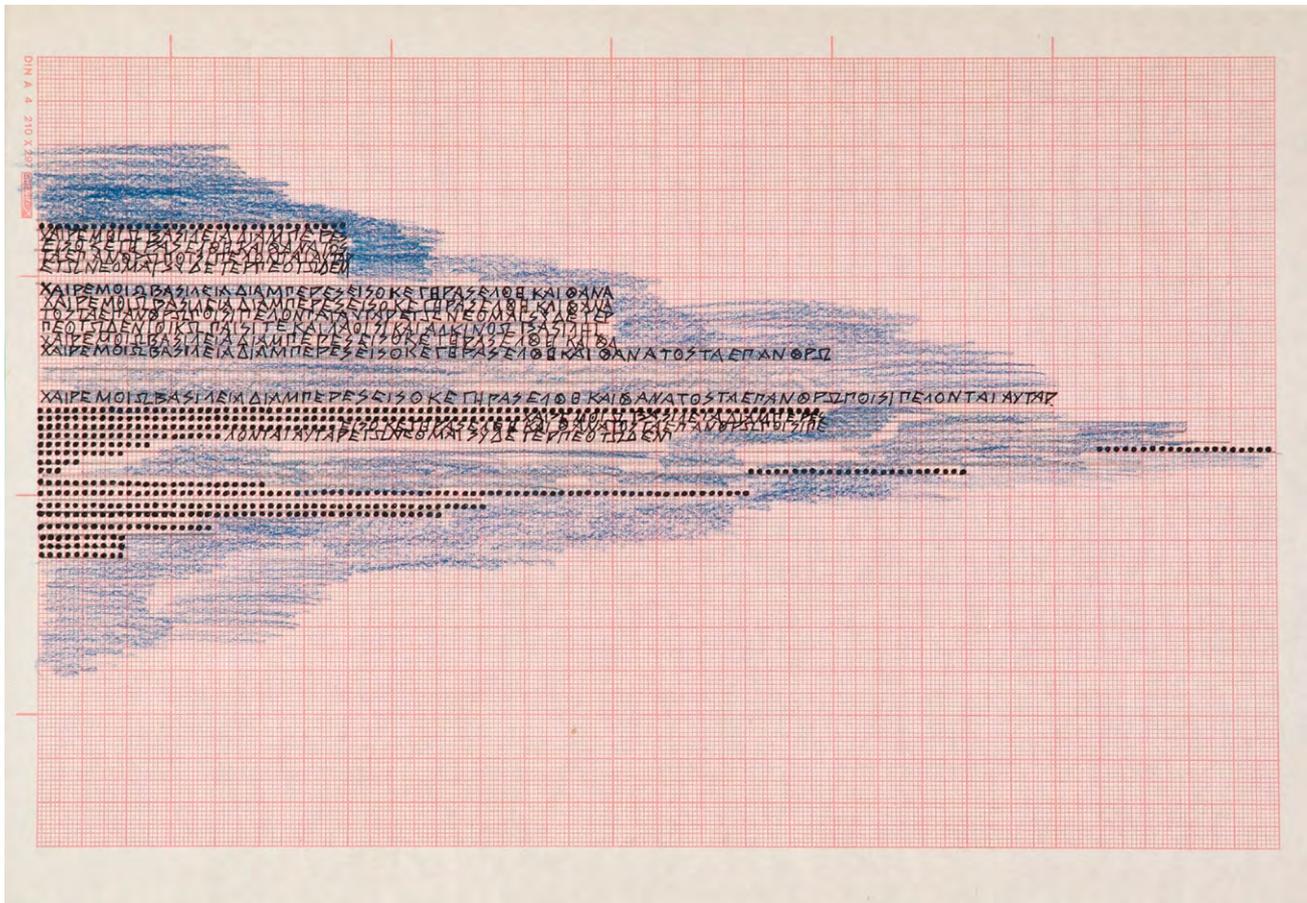




Davou herself supported the profoundly social imperative of art, the emancipation from mechanical repetition and an encoded way of living, and the dialogue with the history of civilization. Avoiding self-entrapment in the confinements of her own intellectual construction, she opted for challenging definiteness in the language of science, allowing for intuition, the unconscious yet shared experience of Myth, and the manual labor of weaving.



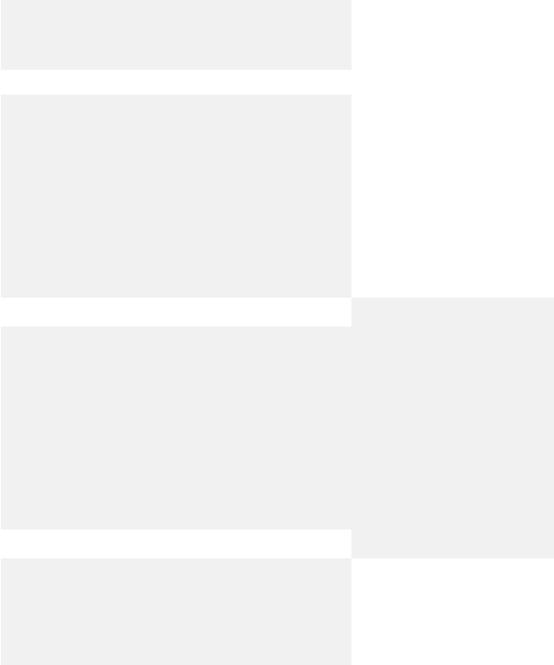
The artist had already grasped the timeless nature of working with text(iles) after her 1978 exhibition at Desmos Art Gallery, where she attached one of her *Serial Structures* on burlap using red thread. At the same time, through a close reading of Homeric verses, she tried to draw a connection with the poetic word. Coming to realize that art, should it wish to converse with the audience, needs to develop freely and transcend the rules, Davou decided to trust weaving – the practice that epitomizes the fabrication of the myth. Hence in her next series of works titled *Serial Structures 2* (1981) (pic. 30–31), she transcribed passages of the *Odyssey* in arithmetic progressions based on the Fibonacci sequence and sewed them on fabric – just like a modern Penelope. The resulting triangular shape inspired her to conceive installations with *Sails* in space and to initiate a journey of self-awareness, navigating the infinite of time and the depths of the myth and the human soul (pic. 32–33). Simultaneously, the manual weaving process connected her with a plurality of women working in the arts or appearing in mythology; those women approached this archetypal medium of production as a means to purify the mind or express their artistic and existential identity.



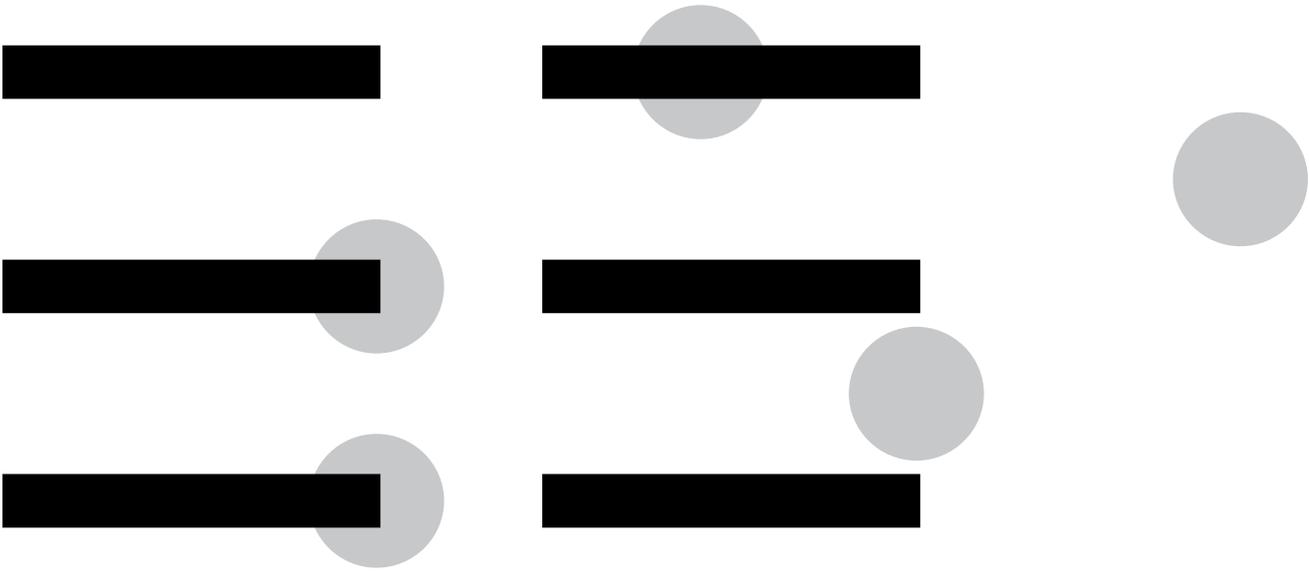
52 . Bia Davou, *Serial Structures 2 – Odyssey* (1978–1981), drawing, ink, pencil, and colored pencil on graph paper, 21 x 29.7 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), Inv. No. 333/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2002).



52. Bia Davou, *Sails* (1981–1982), installation with embroidered fabric, variable dimensions. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), Inv. No. 260/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2002). View from the documenta14 exhibition *ANTIDORON: The EMST Collection*, at Museum Fridericianum, Kassel. Photograph by Klea Charitou.

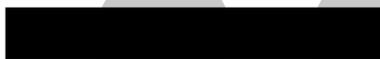


33 . Bia Davou, *Sails* [detail] (1981–1982), installation with embroidered fabric, variable dimensions. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), Inv. No. 260/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris (2002). View from the documenta14 exhibition *ANTIDORON: The EMST Collection*, at Museum Fridericianum, Kassel. Photograph by Klea Charitou.

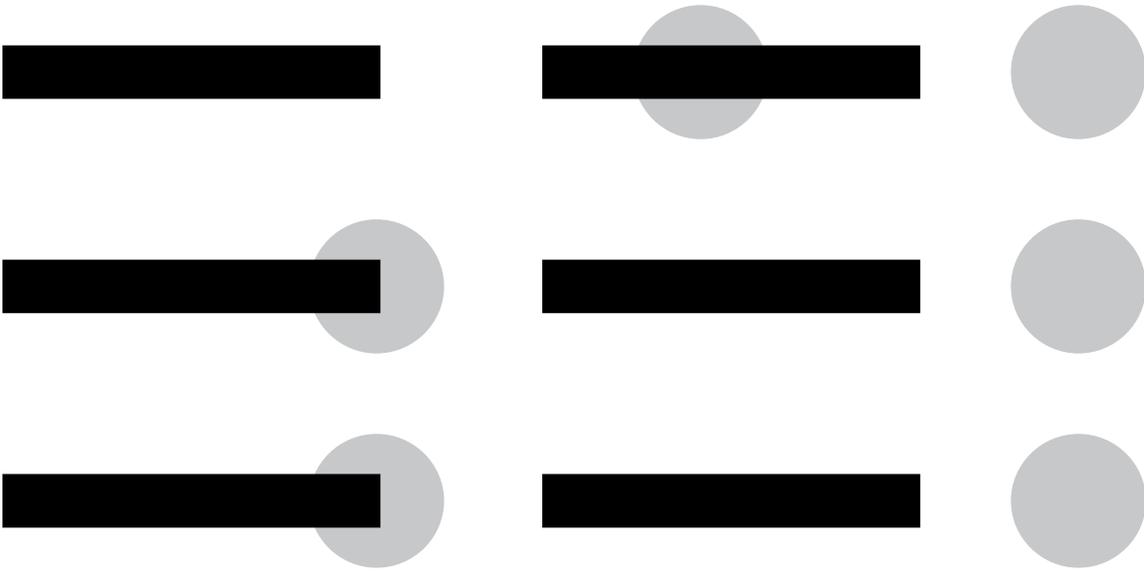


In an attempt to summarize the analysis above, we can clearly conclude that all four artists, starting from a common point of departure – that of abstract art – incorporated *Logos* in its multifaceted expressions and adopted a series of practices that prioritized the following characteristics:

a. The subversion of art's dependency on reality and, gradually, on the object of representation. b. The prominence of the semantic background of the artwork, rendering it a communication symbol, and therefore a language in its own right. c. The creation of systems and repetitive serial structures that were formed according to mathematical or spatio-temporal relations, with an emphasis on the process and the idea rather than the objecthood itself. d. The integration of conceptual art practices that critically served their personal ideological and artistic standpoints. In other words, without lining up with their Anglo-Saxon peers, these representatives of the movement in Greece refused to endorse the self-referentiality of the first generation of conceptual artists. They did not fall into tautology, nor did they ever reach a hollow form of art. e. The active involvement of the viewers as partakers and participants in the art that is (directly or indirectly) addressed to them, inviting them to communicate and (physically or intellectually) engage in a relationship of interaction and correlation. f. Lastly, the restoration of Myth which reveals its scope through its symbolic transcription, offering a self-contained, organized system of classification and attribution of meaning. Thus, guided by Myth, these artists structured the way in which reality would be perceived, using the outcome as a tool to approach and understand the world, while expressing their metaphysical anxieties.



- [1] The thesis was defended at the Department of Art Theory and History of the Athens School of Fine Arts in April 2021, under the title *The Relationship Between Logos and Artwork in Greece from 1970 to the Present*.
- [2] Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art: Themes and Movements*, London: Phaidon, 2002, p. 14–15.
- [3] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- [4] The term *Metapolitefsi* describes the “regime change” marking the transition period after the fall of Yorgos Papadopoulos’s military junta in 1974.
- [5] Eleni Vakalo, *I fysiognomia tis metapolemikis tehnis stin Ellada, tom. 4, Meta tin Afairesi* [The Physiognomy of Post-War Art in Greece, Vol. 4, After Abstraction], Athens: Kedros 1985, p. 11–12.
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- [8] Nikiforos Grammatikos, “Xenakis: I elliniki parousia stin kinitiki techni [Xenakis: The Greek Presence in Kinetic Art],” *Epikaira*, V. 138, 26.03–01.04.1971, p. 24–26.
- [9] Nausica Pastra, *Analogiques*, Exhibition Catalogue, Paris: Éditions Denise René, 1976.
- [10] *Ibid.*
- [11] As part of IMPULSE: Computer-kunst, the exhibition was curated by Käthe Clarissa Schröder and originally presented in Kunstverein München in 1970 and traveled in 25 cities around Europe and Asia between 1970–1973. In Greece, the exhibition was organized in a collaboration between Goethe-Institut and the Athens Technological Organisation of Doxiadis Associates (DAC).
- [12] Letter of the artist to Tony Spiteris (Athens, 10 November 1971), retrieved from the archive of the Teloglion Fine Arts Foundation of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- [13] Pantelis Xagoraris, “Techni, fysi kai nea geometria – Seminario technis sto Kentro Syghronis Tehnis tis Varsovias [Art, Nature, and New Geometry – Art Seminar at the Center of Contemporary Art in Warsaw],” *Chronica aesthithikis* [Aesthetic Chronicles], V. 31–32, Athens: The Panayotis & Effie Michelis Foundation Publications, 1992–1993, p. 29.







Klea Charitou is an art historian and curator based between Athens and London. After graduating with a BA in Greek Literature from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, she obtained a Master's degree in History of Art (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece), and a second Master's in Curating (Université Rennes 2 – Haute Bretagne, France). She recently completed her Ph.D. at the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA), titled *The Relationship between Logos and Art in the Greek Art of the 1970s*. For more than a decade, she has been working as a freelance curator and collaborating with various Greek and European institutions. Through her curatorial practice, she has supported different organizations, including documenta14, nurturing more than twenty artistic projects of global resonance. Other curatorial highlights include: *This Is Not My Beautiful House and POLITICAL SPEECHES* at Kunsthalle Athena, Greece; *Cady Noland Unauthorized* at Université de Rennes 2 and FRAC Bretagne, France; and *PAWNSHOP, an e-flux project*, 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Greece. Her art-historical and theoretical background enables her to conduct profound research on the work of a number of artists, with whom she works closely to develop and implement different exhibition schemes. At the same time, she has been diligently involved in creating and organizing artists' archives and catalogue raisonnés. Over the years, she has worked as an editor and writer for exhibition catalogues and art magazines, such as *Artforum International* and *South as a State of Mind*. She has attended residencies and was a curatorial fellow in different programs around Europe. In 2019, she co-founded miss dialectic, an art operator in Athens, which aims to foster artistic and curatorial research with a strong focus on education and interdisciplinary collaborations. She currently works as a curator and art advisor for Balkan...Projects organisation, and teaches History and Theory of Contemporary Art at ASFA (academic year 2021–2022).

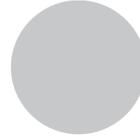


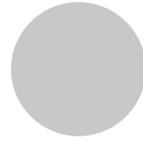
Enterprise Projects is an Athens-based project, run by curator Danai Giannoglou and artist Vasilis Papageorgiou. This venture aims at experimenting and conversing: experimenting with the curatorial proposal, artistic creation, self-organized function; and conversing with the local artistic scene, the Athenian audience and the very place that houses the project. As a structure, Enterprise Projects has been functioning independently and periodically since September 2015 in Ampelokipoi, Athens.

In 2018, Enterprise Projects founded *EP Journal*, a publishing initiative in the form of an online publication of newly commissioned theoretical and research essays, in both Greek and English. The reader can browse through the journal online and download or print individual issues, communicated by a design that resonates with each commission's subject matter.

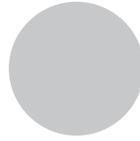




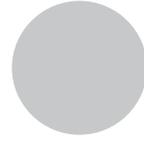
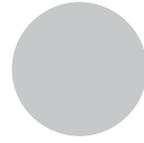








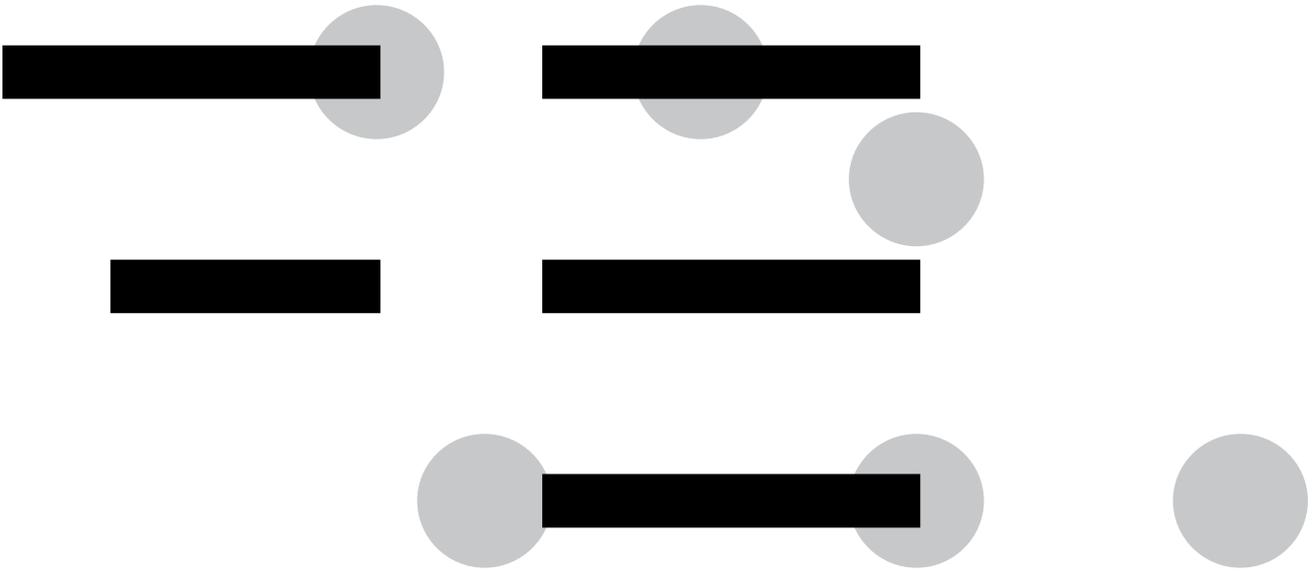


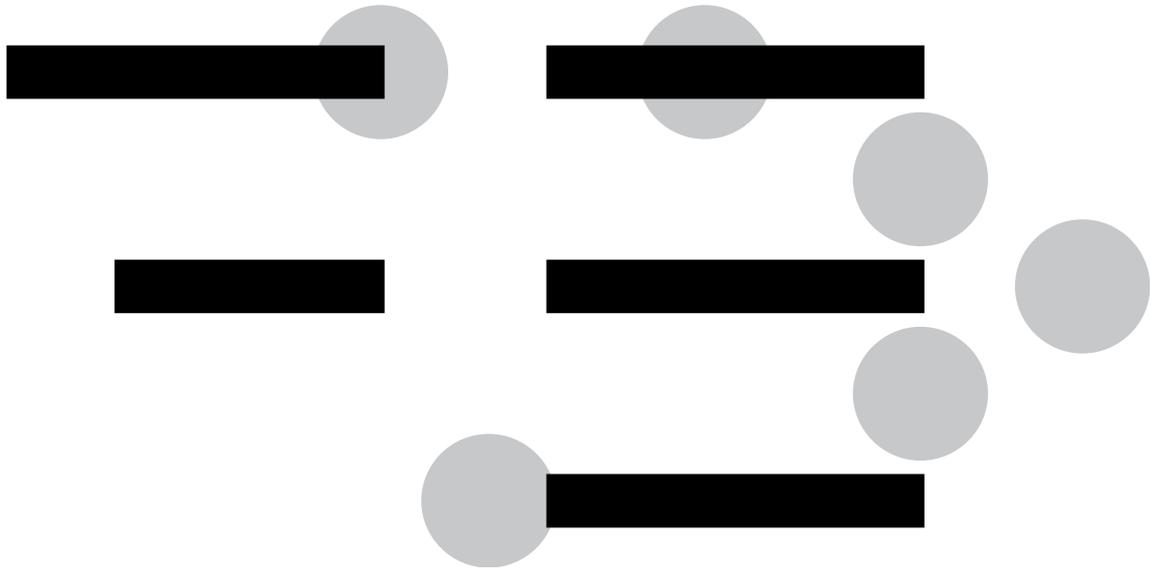


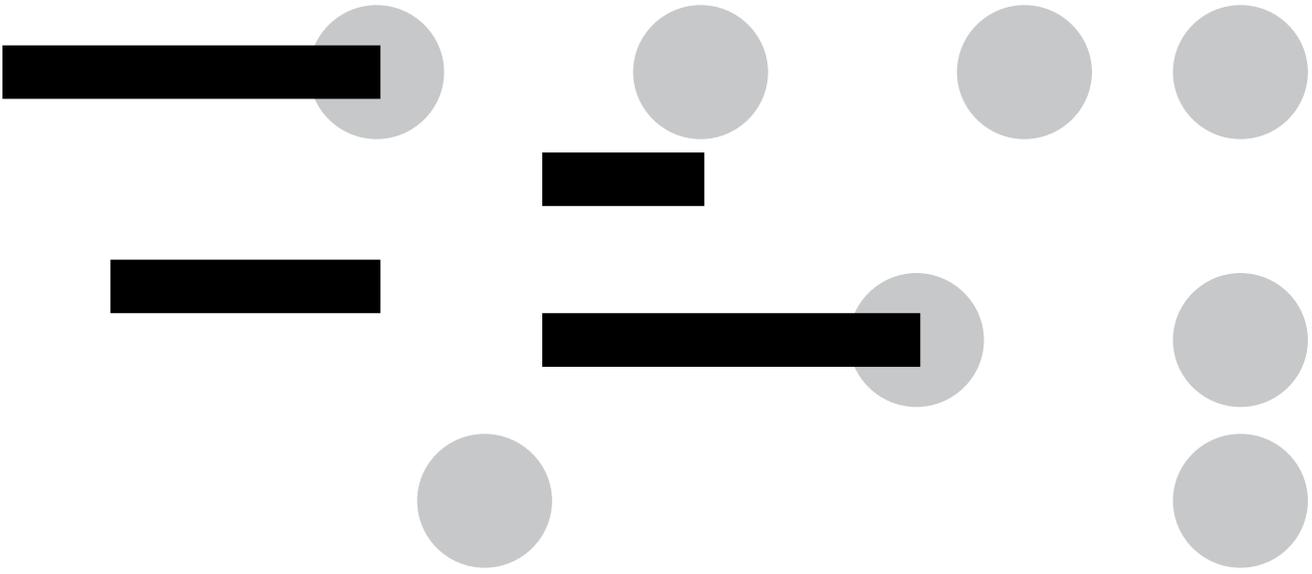


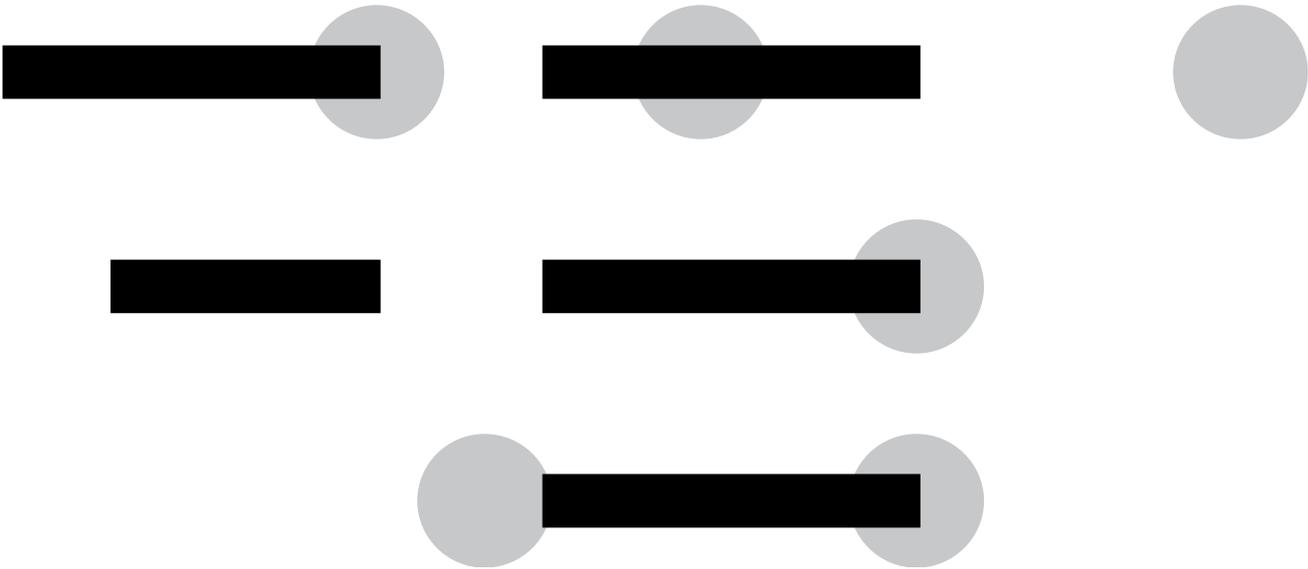


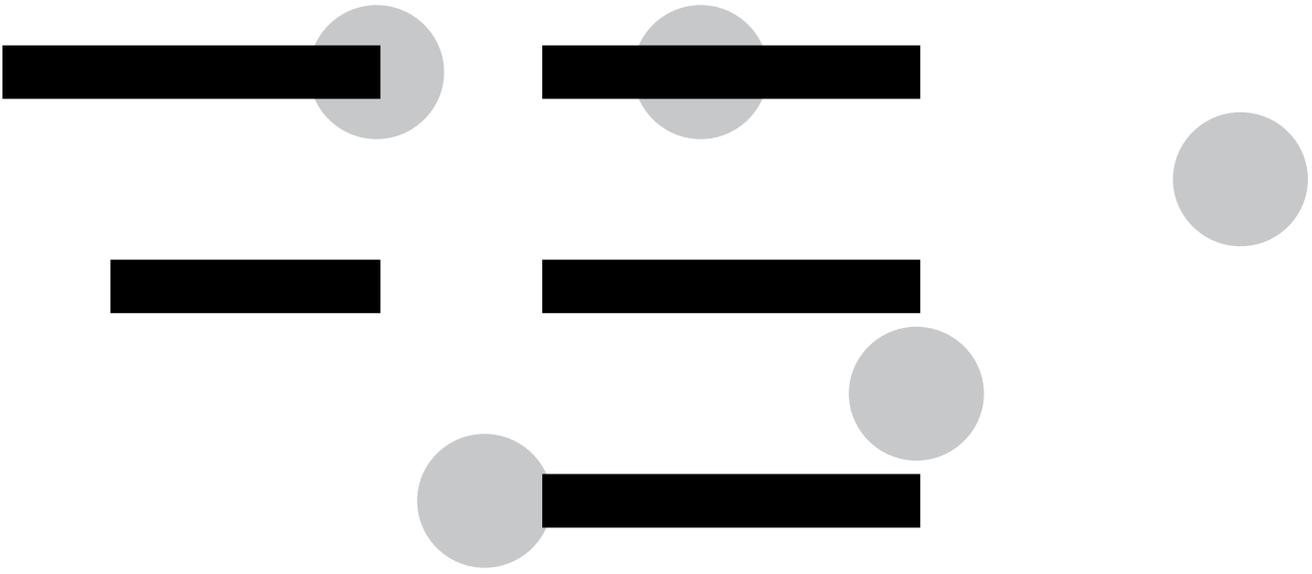




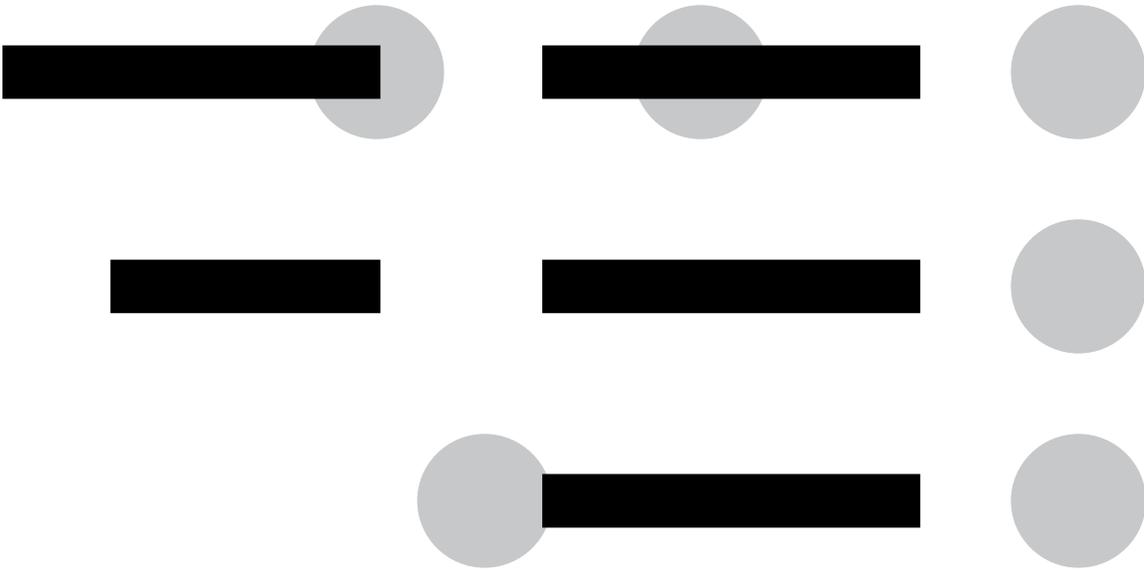


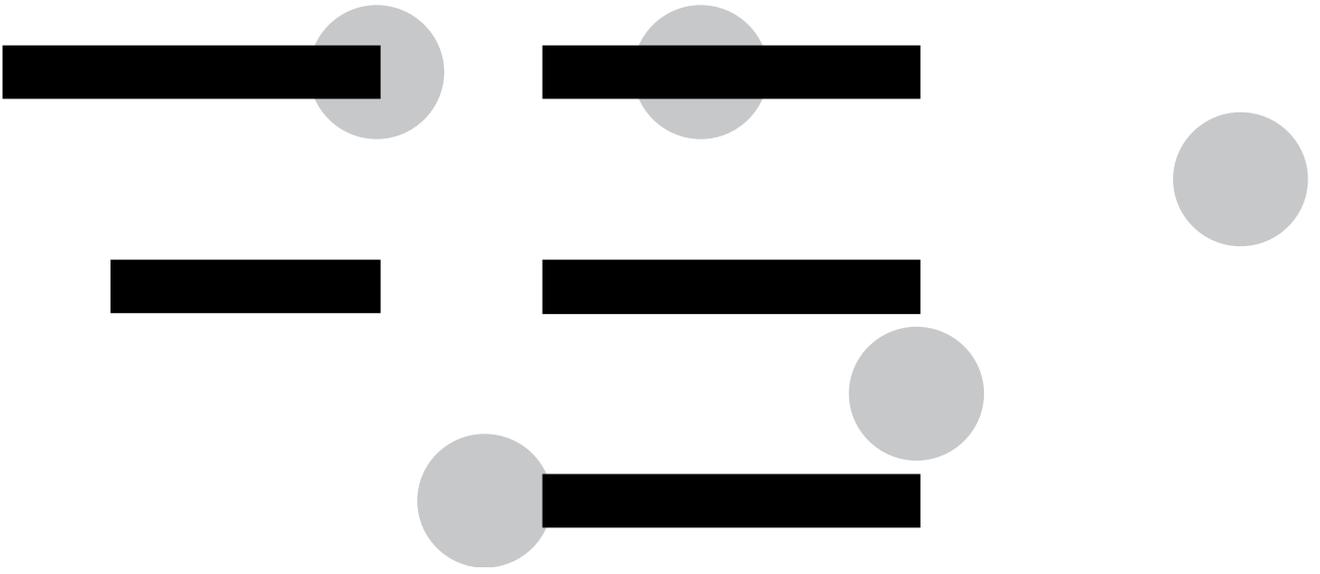


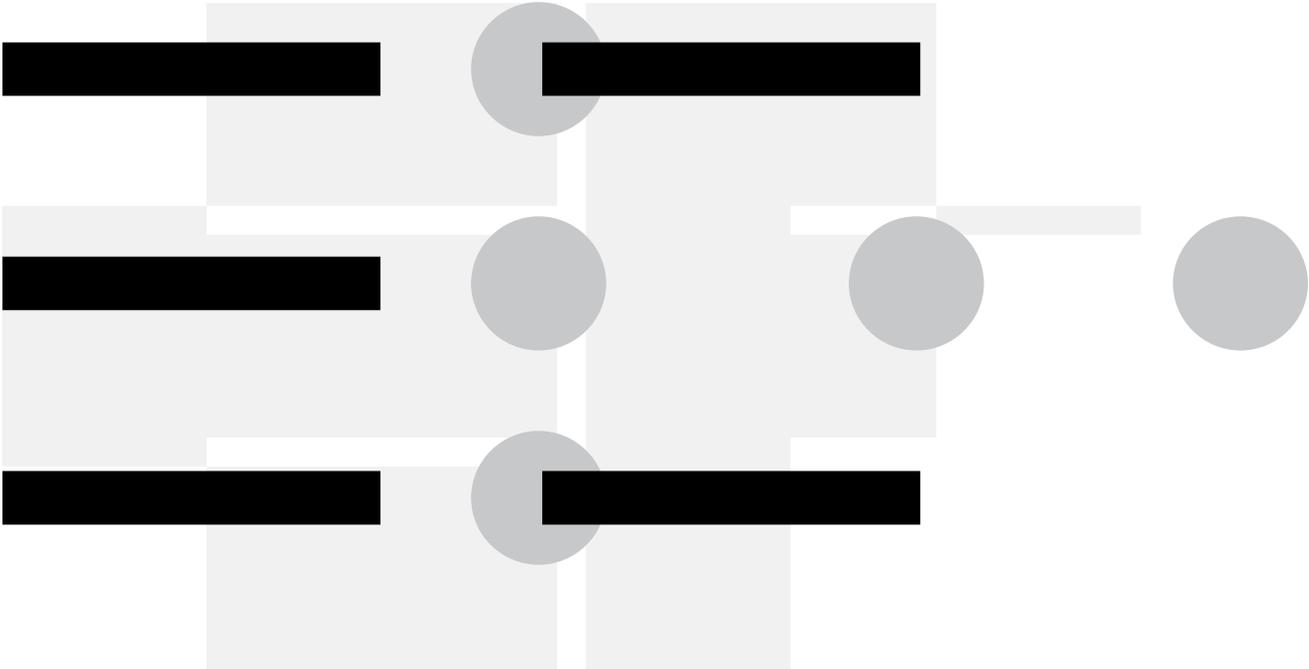












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