

I have seen sparks fly out  
When two stones are rubbed,  
So perhaps it is not dark inside after all;  
Perhaps there is a moon shining  
From somewhere, as though behind a hill--  
Just enough light to make out  
The strange writings, the star-charts  
On the inner walls.

-Charles Simic, "Stone"



# Stone Beings

*Researched & Created by*  
**KATIE CERATO**



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“Healing Hands,” Linocut and Woodcut, 2021

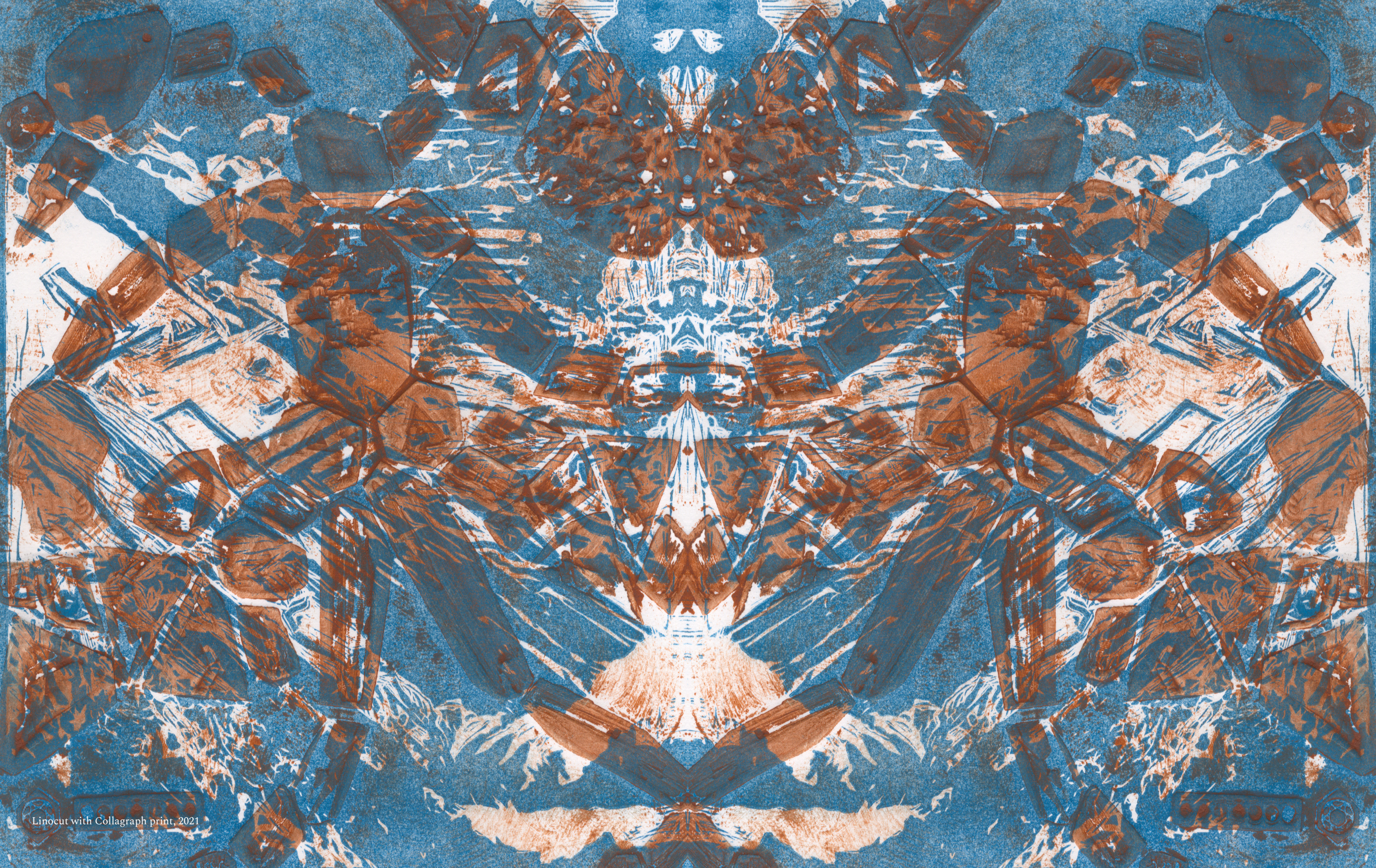
# Forward


*“WHEN WE HOLD A STONE, IT’S LIKE WE’RE HOLDING OUR OWN HAND.”*

*“How can something inorganic like a stone affect a living organism, such as me, with an experience I would describe as ‘energy’?”<sup>1</sup>*

It is easy to question the relevance stones hold for us as humans, but the pervasiveness of the crystal world is established in the very nature of the physical universe. All matter is made up of atomic particles arranged in a “definite organized crystal structure.”<sup>2</sup> This lattice bestows great stability of form and allows for a regular flow of electromagnetic energy— energy which can be transduced into mechanical energy (and vice-versa) through what is called the Piezoelectric Effect. Piezoelectric crystals acquire a charge when compressed, twisted, or distorted, and the earliest applications of this effect go back to the 1920s, when it was found that using crystal oscillators vastly improved the stability of early broadcasting systems. Due to its stability as channels are split/narrowed to allow greater use of the radio spectrum, Quartz is still used to this day in radio technology— and beyond.

With this capability in mind, it is not inconceivable that stones may be capable of interacting with other forms of energy not yet perceived by scientific instruments, including those related to the human body/ consciousness. The hexagonal crystal structure of DNA returns us to the principle of universal crystallinity to remind us that, “We are not so different, so separate from the inorganic world of minerals...If crystallinity is indeed a property of both stones and humans, our interaction [is more plausible than it seems].”<sup>3</sup>



The image features two dark green, textured rock fragments, possibly obsidian or a similar volcanic glass, positioned horizontally across the center. The background is a complex, abstract composition of brown, gold, and blue tones, resembling a marbled paper or a textured surface. The rock fragments have a rough, crystalline appearance with some internal striations and a dark, almost black, outer layer. The overall aesthetic is primitive and earthy.

“The first time a human ancestor used a rock to smack open a nut, she opened the way to a culture that may have increasingly selected for genes underlying dexterity and imagination”<sup>4</sup>

**Primordial**



Stone monoliths loom in the background, lit by a fiery sun not dissimilar from the flames illuminating the walls of the Chauvet Cave paintings– the oldest human art ever discovered. Since our origins, stone has served as our refuge: housing us, protecting us, feeding us. When our ancestors first began striking stones together to create tools, the path was laid before us in which our hand morphology evolved its unique dexterity.<sup>5</sup> To then use *my* hands and *this* brain to create work about stones felt like a repayment, a tribute, a thank you.

Through the process of treating stones with heat- often accomplished by burying pieces beneath a fire for multiple days- our ancestors were mimicking those same processes that take place within the Earth, almost as if we were learning directly from the planet. Fire as an engineering tool facilitated a path of evolution that allowed human beings more control over their environment. Heat treatment allowed early humans to make use of local stones that may be of poorer quality when making special-purpose tools, which were vital in the acquisition of adequate food resources. It was difficult to successfully achieve fine pressure-flaking with

the most commonly used stones such as chert, flint, chalcedony, and jasper. However, their flakeability improved so significantly with controlled heat treatment that the material took on attributes closer to that of higher quality stones such as obsidian<sup>6</sup> (which can be seen at the bottom right of my *Primordial* piece).

Interestingly, the use of this technique appears at roughly the same time as widespread evidence for symbolic behavior- signaling the development of increasingly complex cognitive abilities. Heat-treatment also served to beautify the artifacts it helped produce, further contributing to cognitive development.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to my research I hadn't considered the link between beautification and cognitive development, especially in the context of a causal relationship. While researching the benefits of heat-treatment beyond aesthetic considerations, I inadvertently came full circle to an understanding that the development of beauty in neolithic times is one of the factors that made us human. We evolved as a species from our work with the stones around us, and we have continued to do so from prehistory up until today.



“Our ancestors were mimicking those same processes that take place within the Earth, almost as if we were learning directly from the planet...”



“Primordial,” Mixed Media/ Assemblage, 2021





Post-Collagraph on Lino (Ghost Print), 2021



# Divine

“And you shall set in it settings of stones, four rows of [three] stones...And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Tummim; and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart”<sup>8</sup>



“One explanation for the celestial qualities of rock crystal may derive from the persistent belief in the material’s means of formation– usually understood to be a sudden petrification from water to stone, the formation of a kind of super-hard ice... Thus the petrified status of rock crystal might attest to the material’s previous proximity to God, a transformative act memorialized in the substance attesting to divine presence. Not only, therefore, does it document the past presence of the holy, but it also records a singular moment–  
**A moment of Revelation”<sup>10</sup>**

A cluster of Cerussite protrudes from the right corner, with its points angled into the heavens. This crystal choice is one of synchronicity; Initially, I chose this particular specimen for how its shape language and colors fit into the composition. However, when I went to refresh my memory on Cerussite’s qualities, I found it to be a stone which facilitates alchemical transformation of the self in pursuit of drawing down the Divine into the physical human persona. For the unfamiliar stone I’d included to align so perfectly with my intentions only served as a further confirmation of the reality of stone energies.

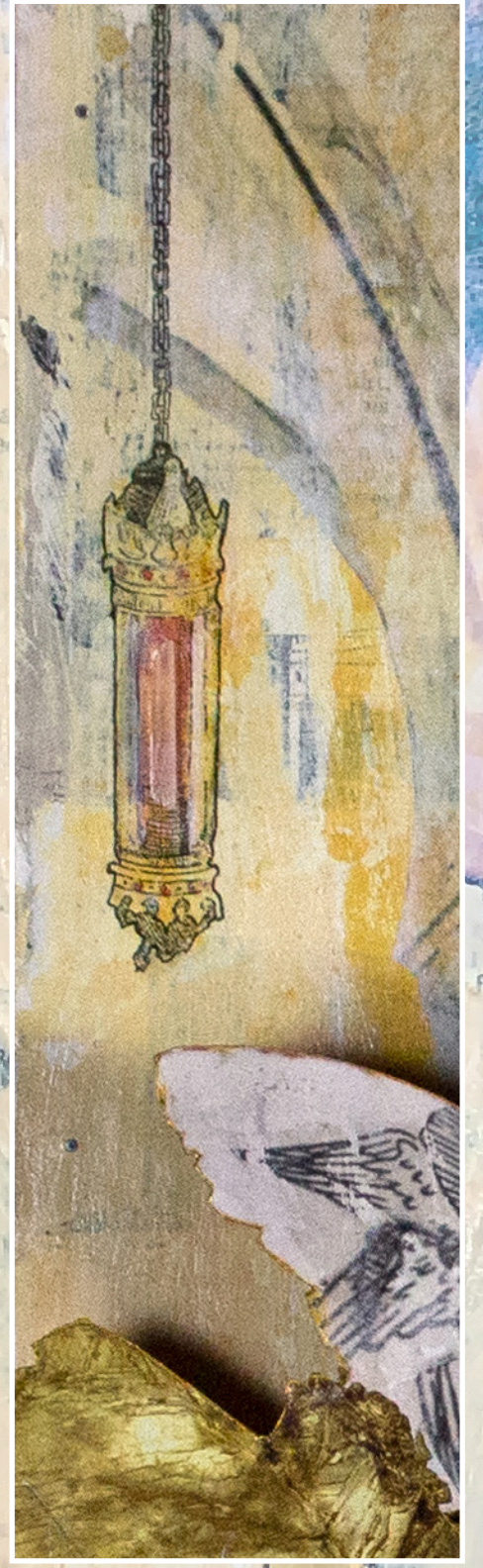
In addition to the Cerussite, I had intentionally stacked the figures in the composition to enforce the notion of channeling divine universal energy. Through the levels of angels, the celestial is drawn down from the heavens. The dominant figure wears the garb of the High Priest of the Israelites, the divinatory function of which allowed the High Priest to determine the decision of the Lord when it came to communal matters. This purpose

is spelled out clearly in the breastplate’s name, *Hoshen Mishpat*, which literally translates to “the breastplate of judgment.” The layout of the vestment is described in Exodus: “And you shall set in it settings of stones, four rows of [three] stones...And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Tummim; and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart” (Exodus 28:17-30).

From the start of this project I’ve been fascinated by the notion of stones in Abrahamic faiths, specifically in ancient Jewish history. With my own disrupted connection to my Jewish heritage, I was immediately drawn to the story of the breastplate: this beautifully adorned assembly of stones, used to interface with God. To see this relation to the divine through the same stones I have in my own collection only serves to reinforce my underlying thesis: humanity’s special connection to stone runs as far back as we do. As for the stones, they far precede us and will long outlive us.



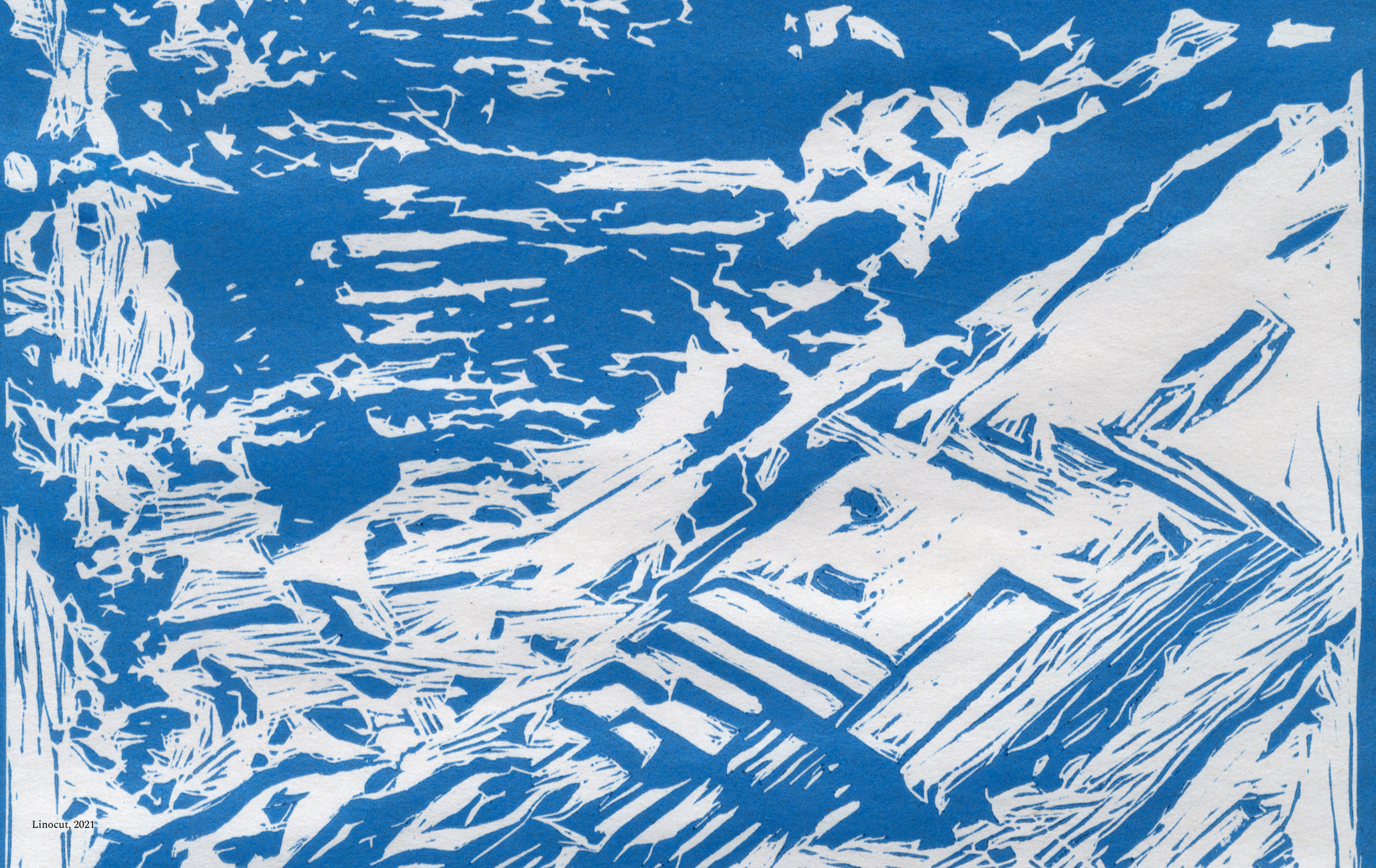
“Divine,” Mixed Media/Assemblage, 2021



...the world  
...the world  
...the world  
...the world  
...the world

...the world  
...the world  
...the world  
...the world  
...the world

...the world  
...the world  
...the world  
...the world  
...the world



“We forget the fact our computers run on quartz;  
*Technology only catches up with magic...*”

# Motherboard



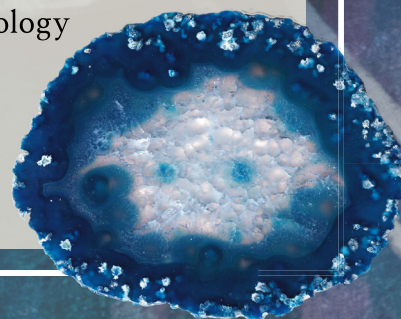
When discussing a crystal specimen it's important to acknowledge its shape, as each has its own unique attributes. A crystal cluster radiates energy rapidly in all directions from its points. A cluster of Pyrite, so critical to the functionality of computing, protrudes outwards from the base of the composition. I find this appropriate for the piece: demonstrating the swiftly proliferating effects of microelectronics on human technological advancement. The hand which holds the microchip is crowned with Herkimer diamonds (a specific type of ultra-clear quartz), indicating both quartz's innate ability to store information and its status as the base from which microchips are created.

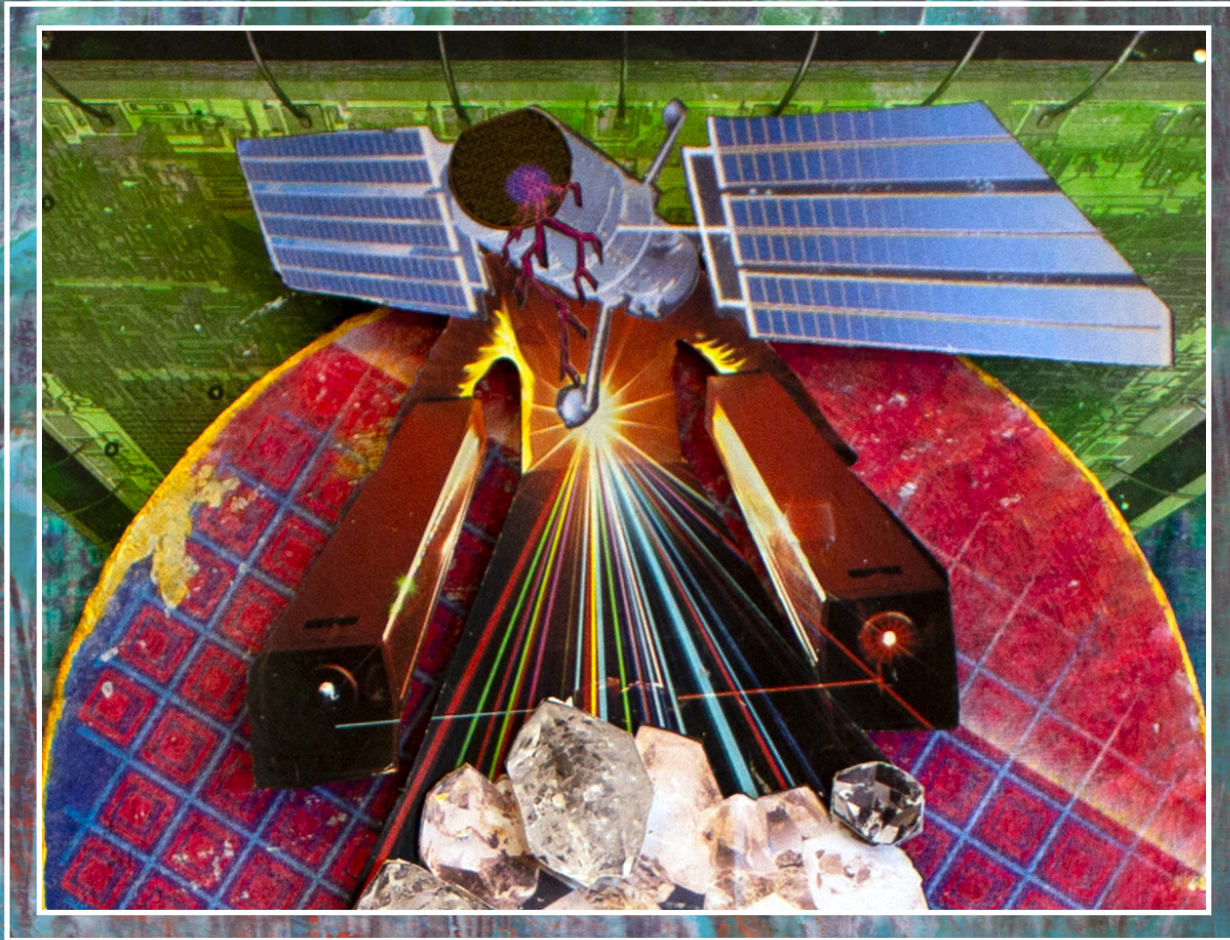
The material which constitutes the base of the chip is originally refined from quartz, which is made up of silicon and oxygen. The silicon is purified and then melted down to be regrown into long crystals, which are sliced into thin wafers. Chips are made on these wafers, with each holding hundreds of thousands of microscopic transistors. One of these wafers can be seen rimmed in gold within the piece: its halo-like shape evoking a sense of otherworldliness. Once the wafer has been cut, "techniques reminiscent of silk screening would stack and stencil the wafers with layers of insulation

and crystal, the crystal doped with infinitesimal pockets of impurities laid out in some 300 identical chip-circuit patterns..."<sup>11</sup>.

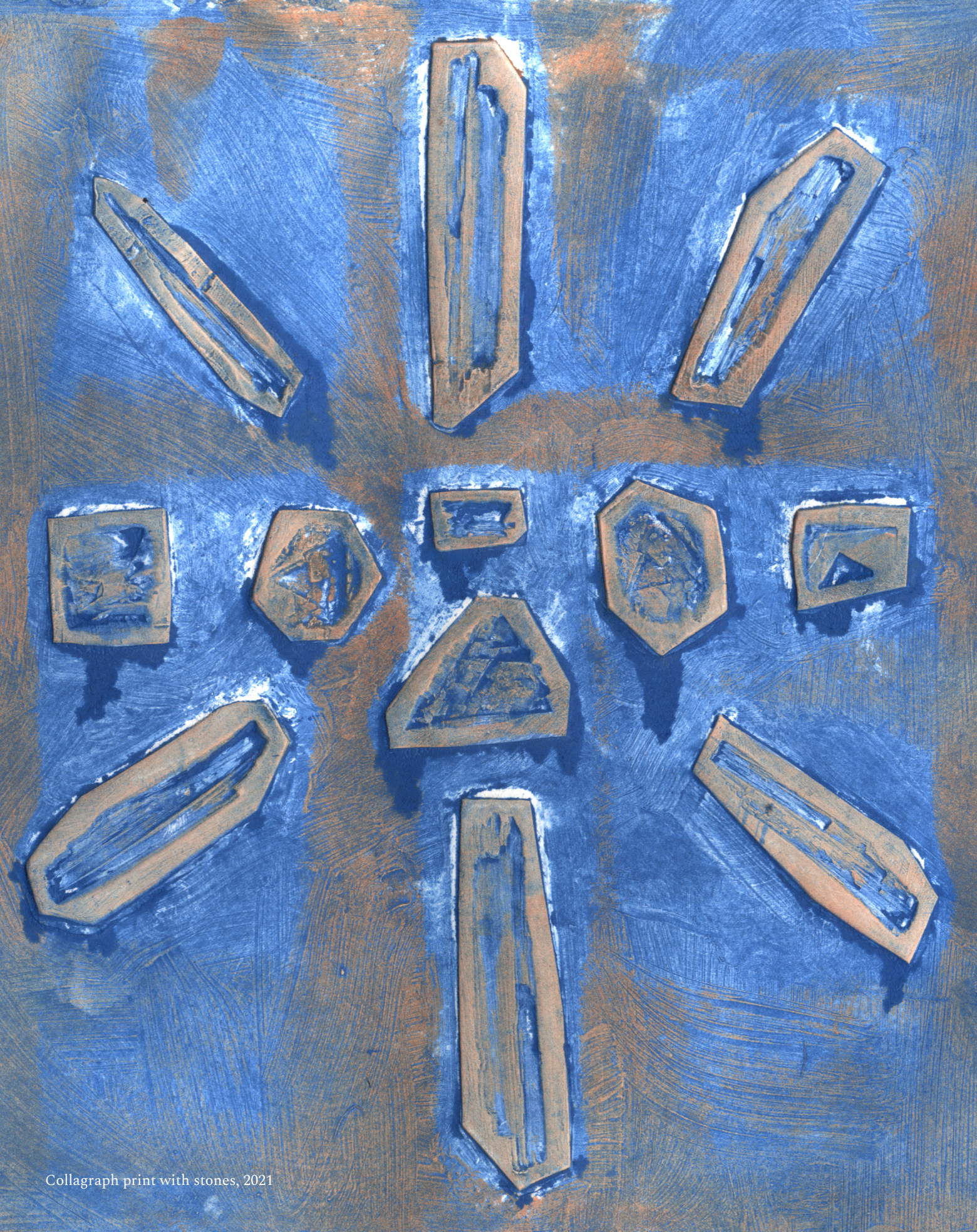
In the early days of microelectronics, there had been issues with transistors breaking off of plastic circuit boards. The remedy became to "make the crystal in a transistor serve as its own circuit board. When the snake ate its tail, the integrated circuit— since dubbed the chip—was born"<sup>12</sup>. This reference to the Ouroboros- the snake perpetually consuming itself- stunned me, as it had been one of the major symbols cycling through my brain during the conception of this project. I was reminded of the work of Jeremy Narby and his theories regarding twin serpent origin myths, DNA, quartz, and the nature of consciousness. The cosmic serpent closing a circuit in order to unlock knowledge was already an image fresh in my mind from reading his book of the same name.

It also did not escape my attention that the existence of most of our modern technology is utterly contingent on the properties of quartz, the very same stone that Narby spoke of... It became more and more apparent to me that technology only catches up to magic.









Collagraph print with stones, 2021



Collagraph print with stones (embossment), 2021

# Artist Statement

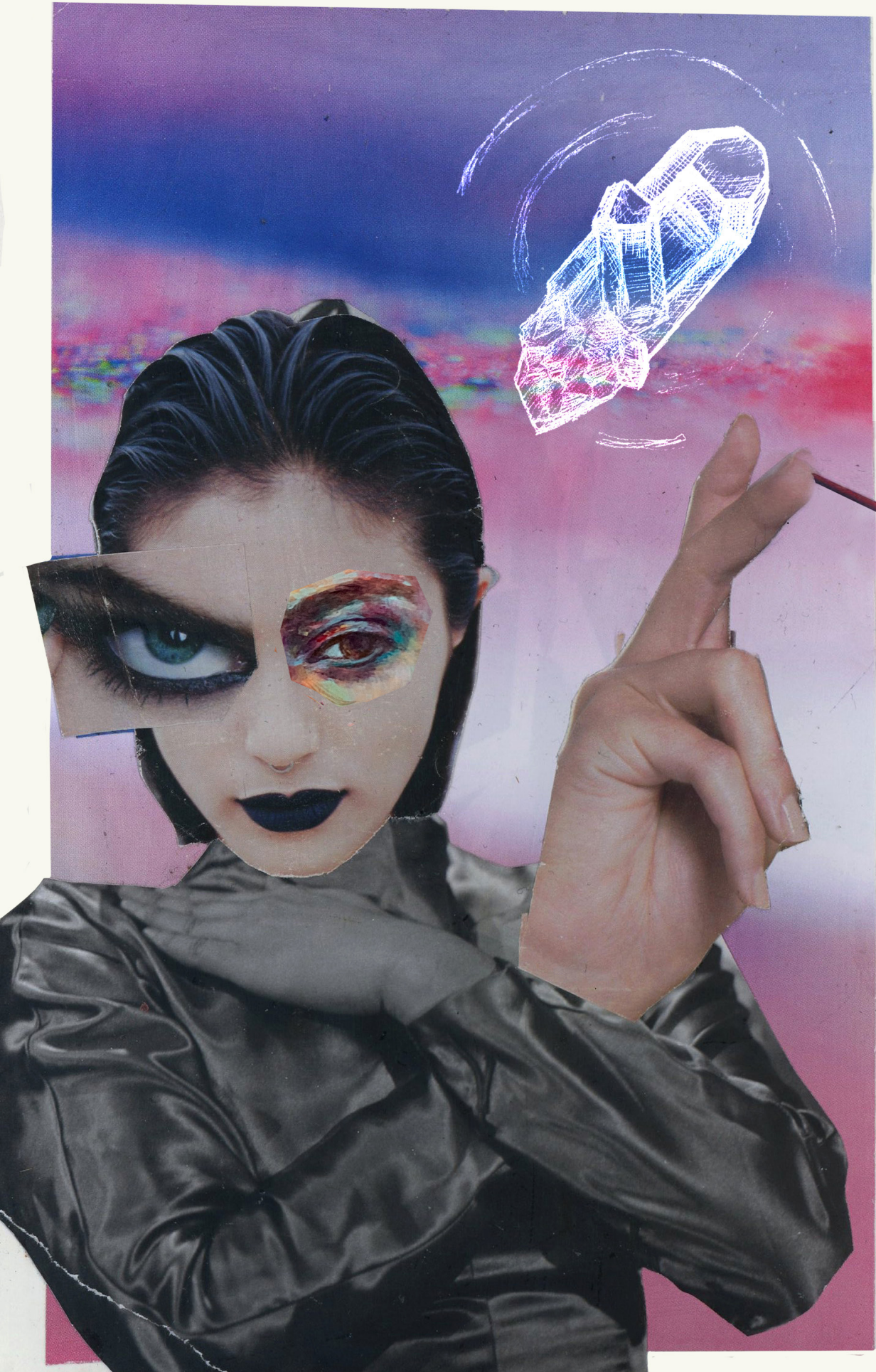


*Focusing on how mankind's interactions with stones (minerals) facilitated our own evolution, this body of work will explore how humanity is inextricably bound to stone—stemming from the primordial into the future.*

I undertook this project as an attempt to ground myself. Stone has been our refuge as long as we've needed shelter—raised in the Granite State, I grew up under the watchful eye of the Old Man on the Mountain.

The structure of an illustration thesis was a challenge for me: To ask me what I will create is to search for a prophecy of geologic time. This process is not linear— it takes alternating periods of settling and pressure for the creative sediment to seep into the cracks towards becoming its “final” form (before it, like us, returns to dust). For each piece of this project, this process akin to the rock cycle needed to occur. The compressed particles became metamorphic: their nature transmuting as materials change to reveal a result that is beyond the sum of its parts. Sometimes in chaos an idea suddenly appears with perfect clarity, formed as instantaneously and as polished as volcanic glass. But crystallization can also be slow, a methodical process of repetition ad infinitum. The methods of consideration for each piece took place in the same way the Earth churns stone into its next reincarnation.

I reach the end of my thesis semester to see my ideas for the first time. Three months feels like a blink attempting to cover the multifaceted history of humans and stones. I know enough now to know I am only just getting started, and the scope of this project goes far beyond my time in school. I'm grateful to sense deep inside me that this is work I will be pursuing for the rest of my life.

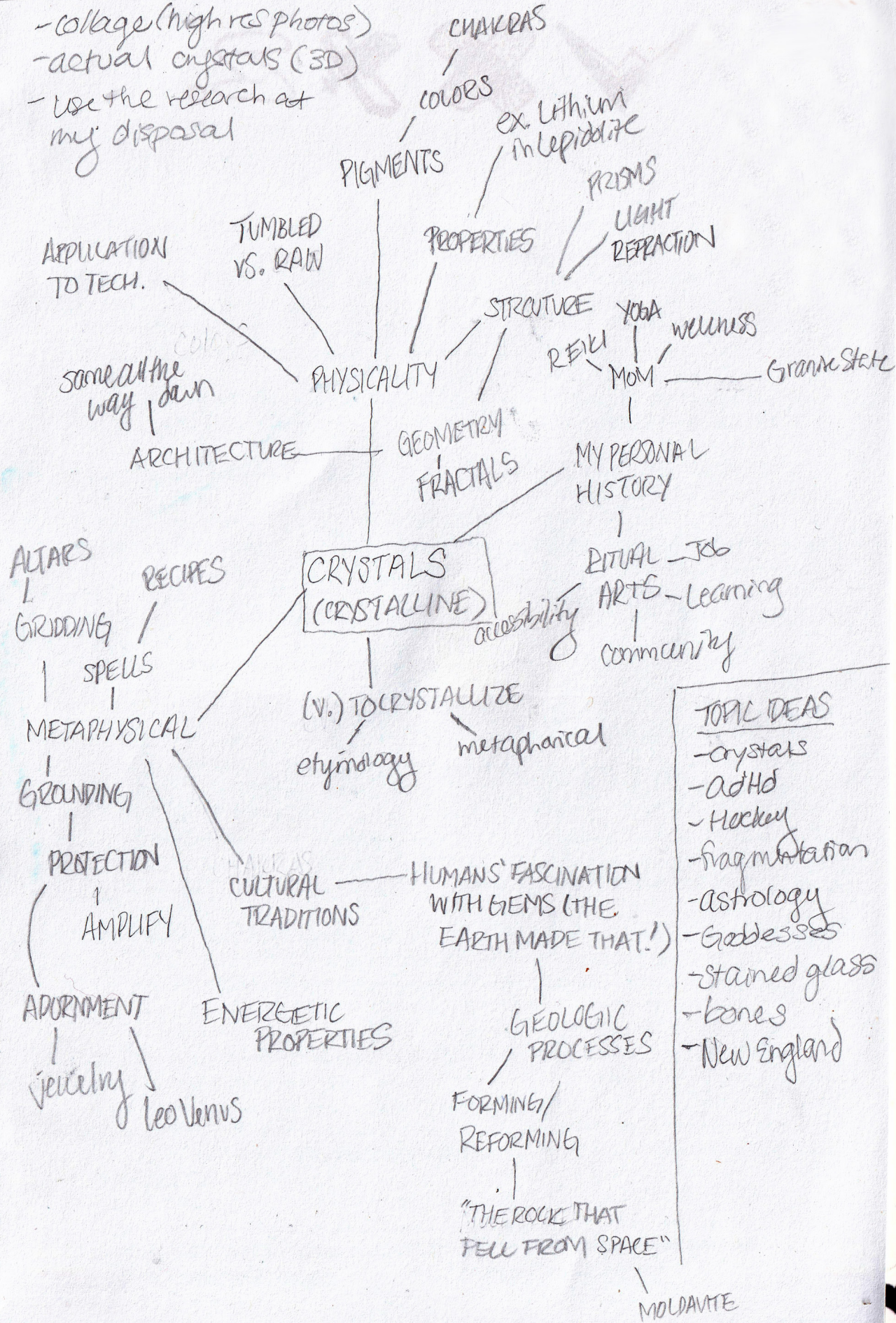


# Process

“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and to *know the place for the first time*” - T.S. Eliot



- collage (high res photos)
- actual crystals (3D)
- use the research at my disposal



Thesis -  
 Anaphic  
 ↳ biblical  
 ↳ smth you  
 could my  
 research

[See "12" in the back]  
 BEEPS:  
 "HYPER"

→ collage  
 → pop  
 → planning of the Great Mutiny against British Imperialism  
 → h dorkers refuse to load armaments for use against

thesis -  
 hands (healing, tools, etc)  
 clarity/purity

0 PDT  
 and two wounded as cops fire into crowd at Jackson State, GA  
 Cooperative will overpp  
 Circle of life  
 ↳ chart  
 ↳ sky

→ do a spread  
 (reading) abt  
 thesis  
 alchemy

→ ball-joint doll  
 → meany valley

5/23/21

Bob was right — it helped to talk out my thesis with other people. Through that the word "exploratory" came up about my process, which really helps capture why I feel like my process is backwards for thesis. Knowing this is helpful though to structure the way I talk about my own work. "Through exploratory collage, I will..."

- construct an ode to holy ornament (uniqueness)

- submerge the senses in the experience of different stones

Maximed, Maximal, maximal! - divine - sacred - spirit

spirit objects

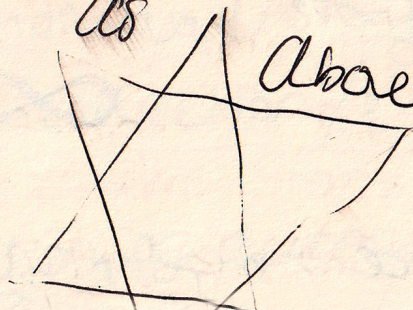
heaven

on

earth

(love is in the earth)

as above



☆ As above so below!

# QUARTZ

found worldwide!

☆ Most powerful energy amplifier in the world because of its unique helical spiral crystalline form

↳ absorbs, stores, releases, and regulates energy

↳ also great for unblocking energy

↳ generates electromagnetism and dispels static electricity

↳ holding a quartz crystal in your hand doubles your biomagnetic field

"containing every color possible, Clear Quartz works on all levels of being" (HALL, 225).

↳ quartz stores information like a natural computer  
↳ they are a spiritual library waiting to be accessed  
↳ the most ~~receptive~~ efficient receptor for program



smoky quartz

☆ AT A MENTAL LEVEL, QUARTZ

↳ aids concentration  
↳ unlocks memory



**When we hold a stone, it is like we are holding our own hand.**

These were the words my guides passed onto me, and upon hearing them this project was born. Prior to my meeting with a psychic, I was struggling to find a way to frame my project. I knew I wanted to work with stones, but what did that mean? I'm grateful for this guidance I received when I needed it the most; This project would not have been possible without it.

"Communion," Acrylic on Wood, 2021

# Psychic Notes

30 MINUTES ON AUGUST 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2021 WITH BETSY PALMER

★ First thing they showed was me gathering flowers, which is symbolic  
 ↳ This is my life path, my spiritual path  
 ↳ Represents a gathering of beauty, creativity & knowledge

↳ ALSO SEEKING THE BEST (highest vibration)  
 ↳ Whatever does not appeal to me, I leave alone (pass by & leave the 'ugly flowers')  
 ↳ I'm very selective in what I absorb into my knowledge centers, my life, and also my belief system  
 ↳ I'm very mindful how I speak to myself (inner communication) and how to be positive to others as well as myself.  
 ↳ I'm doing it right ☺ Being careful and kind to

★ Snatched the reins from my parents before adulthood ← "OK, my turn!" and then heels locked back!  
 ↳ "I'm raising myself now, I am who I am — you did a good job, but life got this"  
 ↳ Took control of my own life/decisions: very independent & self sufficient  
 ↳ Been this way long before Betsy and I sat together (maybe even ages 13 or 14)

— introduction with the guides ends here [5:38] —

Q: What messages do I need to hear the most / what is not getting through to me bc I resist?

★ REMEMBER TO STAY GROUNDED!

↳ Seeing me put my feet flat on the ground and feeling my presence, feeling my existence on the Earth plane — remember to do this

↳ Also helps my body's systems run smoothly

~~~~~ HERE I ASKED ABOUT GROUNDING WHILE LIVING ON 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR

→ Going for walks, standing outside, even just leaning against building... feet should touch Earth for 20-30 minutes every day. Being outside on ground level is helpful.

[8:00] ~~~~~→

★ Even just taking my stones, holding them in my hand, moving/sensing them  
 ↳ As Betsy was saying this, the guides were like "Give Katie the stones to hold!"  
 ↳ Also make sure to speak to Gaia directly, recognize her as her own consciousness, and don't forget to thank her!"

★ The guides are also saying I have a lot of knowledge  
 ↳ Showed Betsy the tablets already inserted in me... says I come in with a lot of inherent knowledge that I'm activating as I go (switches turning on)  
 ↳ I'll always know where to go/what to do next (apparently I'm doing a good job)  
 ↳ Don't be afraid to have both my Earthy personality and spiritual personality  
 ↳ The down-to-Earth version of me can "cause some smoke, break the rules, yell, and scream and not be nice all the time and that's okay, because there's this aspect of me where my higher self is saying 'I'm on Earth! I wanna have fun!' want to be down and dirty, getting dirty in the mud!"  
 ↳ Make the most of both of those sides, because there's no judgment from the other side about our actions other than what we have to answer for over there.

"just be perfectly you!" - my guides ♡  
 ↳ showing this dichotomous aspect of myself that says "I don't always want to be good... but I am good!"  
 ↳ This is me, all in between! The full spectrum of me, and I should play in it while I'm here in this life  
 ↳ There is no right/wrong for me in my choices/behaviors... they're not going to tell me what to do beyond making sure to MAXIMIZE my experience.

~~~~~ HERE I ASKED ABOUT THINGS + LOOKING FOR CLARITY [12:50]

★ The guides liked/thought it was ironic that I used the term "stepping stones"  
 ↳ They're talking about pulling in the energy of gemstones, and how they're some of the most precious things on the planet; even when they're not cut/beautiful they still have energy and meaning... even agendas (their words!)  
 ↳ Sees me as a two year old child, going around and picking up the pretty stones  
 ↳ They've long been a fascination of humans! We've been bonded to them as long as we've been here on this planet! ↳ usage included in this  
 ↳ whether it's to make a fire pit, or a gift to show love, she sees me running with the meanings of stones/gems/crystals + how they've evolved

★ My guides already knew what we were discussing before Betsy even knew my question! (First thing they did was have me pick up the stones ☺)  
 ↳ caves provide shelter, living IN stone, inside these granite mountains, protection  
 ↳ weapons, hunting - sociological aspect (how they're valued now)  
 ↳ used for grounding, healing, balancing. Still adornment, but a connection to the Earth in a world where technology rules  
 ↳ a piece of Earth in our hand keeps us solidly tied to where we came from

small but critical shift in framing?  
 ↓ also

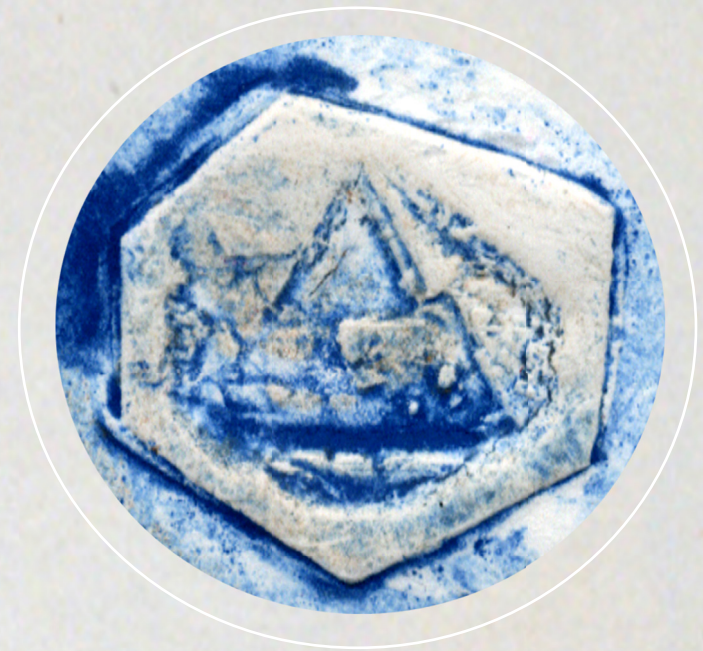
our relationship  
 [14:25]

~~~~~ HERE I ASKED IF THERE WAS ANYTHING PRESSING  
 ★ ASK for their help to channel thesis MY GUIDES WANTED TO TELL ME [23:40]  
 ↳ I don't have to do it on my own! They're there for me!  
 ↳ Keeps seeing me start with cavemen/early man + turning it into an anthropology report  
 ↳ Crystals, gems, stones, pieces of Earth - they're all very important [24:20]

★ When we hold a stone, it's like we're holding our own hand. In other words, it's what we're made of! It's the essence - where the stones are from, so are we!  
 ↳ This is a part of us + there's a consciousness/energy to it, which we become more and more aware of as we evolve.  
 ↳ It's not just fire/protection/shelter; we've evolved with them

★ Guides are really big on me making an outline; make 5 or so sentences about where I'll start/where I'll end up and create the sections - they will help me fill in each one  
 ↳ They'll get me from A → B ↳ start primordial, evolves to when we become farmers, etc. ↳ construct as a narrative!  
 ↳ could do anthro perspective, religious access of it, stone tools, jewelry making, evolution of human kind, practical day to day use ↳ lots and lots of ways to do this  
 ↳ In war we didn't throw rocks, we shot cannonballs + fired bullets: symbolically it's still the same - using Earth's elements for killing (But also remember there's a healing aspect)  
 ↳ If I go in sections, talk about the fascination with gems/rocks from early mankind  
 ↳ How we evolved + how our use of minerals evolved (can break it down to a molecular level as minerals)  
 ↳ even to technology (silicon, quartz, timekeeping) (we both got the chills here)

How we evolved + how minerals evolved with us ~~~~~



# KATIE CERATO

★ THESIS FALL 2021 ★

→ visual facet  
- stone tools  
- cave paintings

★ = DEFINITE

PRIMORDIAL

PIECE (BEGINNING)

3-5 BIGGER PIECES

↳ DRAW FROM 1 OF THESE EACH

↳ DEPENDING ON HOW IT GOES MAKE SOME OF THEM SNACKS?

! CRYSTALS GO TO WAR / ULTRASOUND SNACK  
↳ COULD BE A GOOD PLACE TO START

WORSHIP / ADORN / (TRANSCEND) ?

! crystal being snack

ALCHEMIZE TRANSMUTE (DISCOVER)

↳ visual facet  
beakers etc  
↳ keep thinking

→ visual facet  
- breastplate of High priest

INDUSTRIALIZE WEAPONIZE (COAL)

→ visual facet  
- gray belching smoke  
- factory

→ visual facet  
- the chip

HIGH TECH

DEFINITE PIECE (RETURN TO ORIGINS / SPACE AGE)

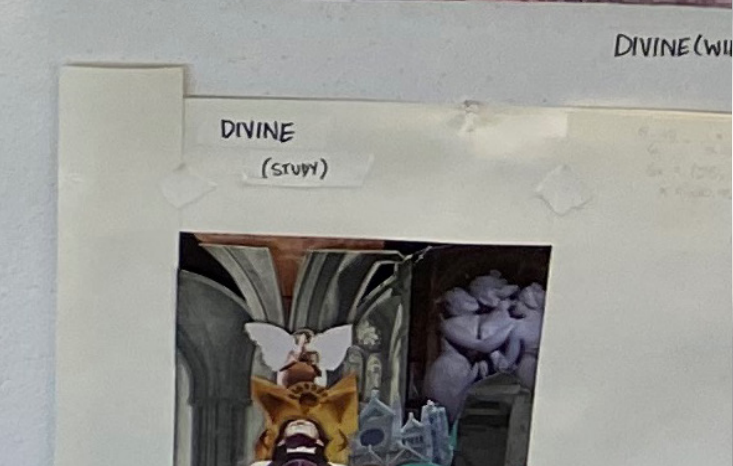
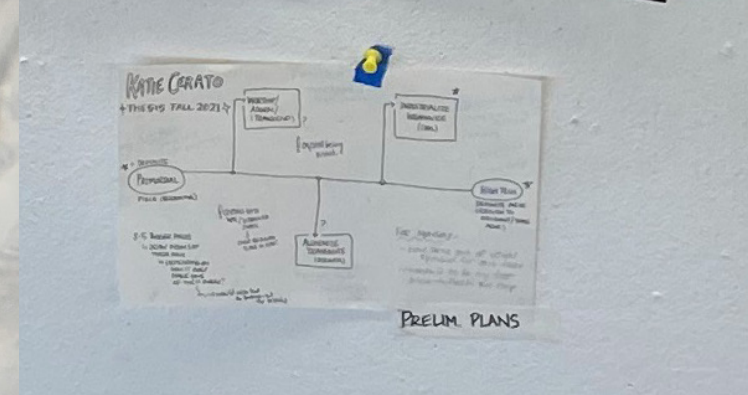
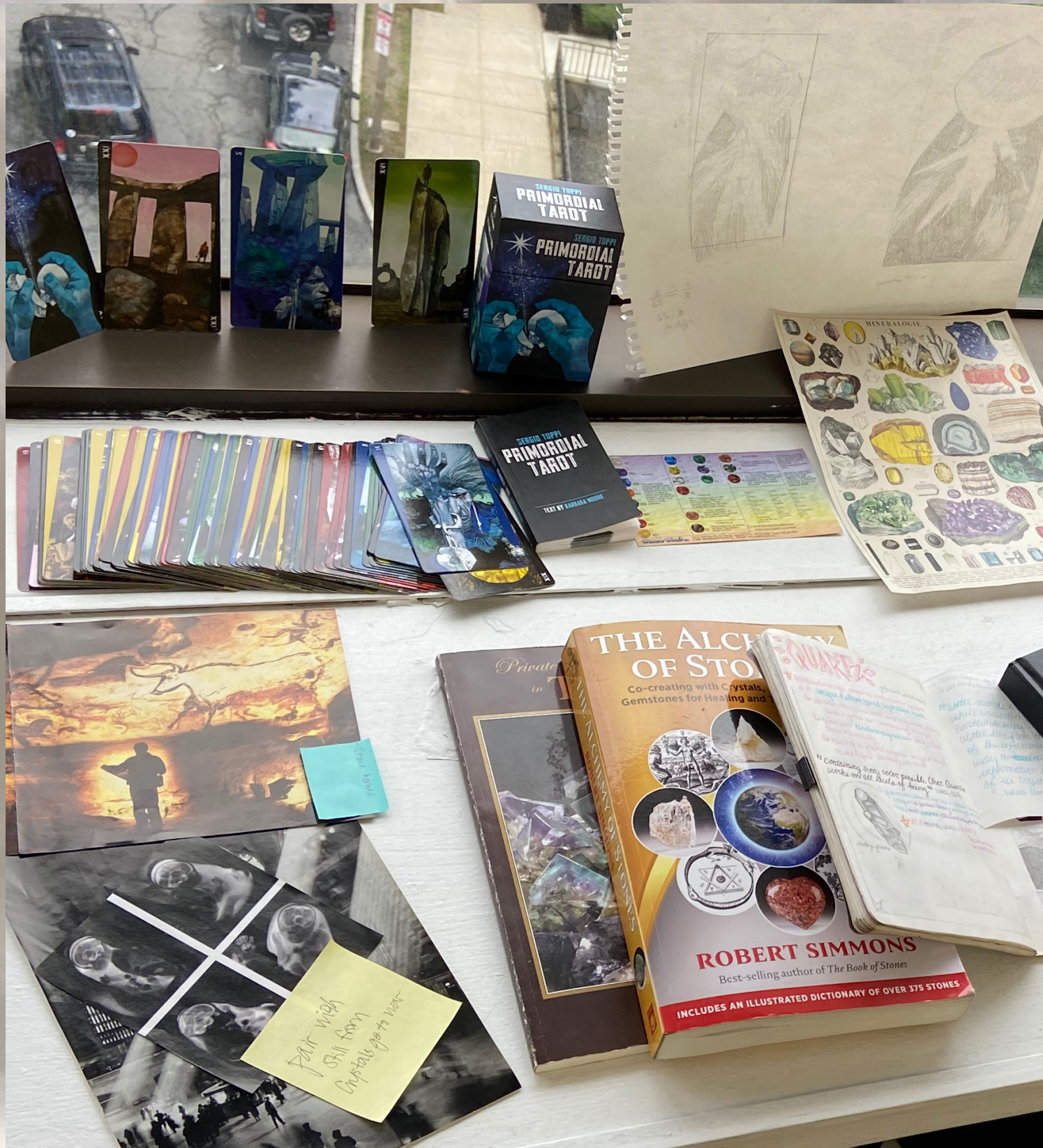
FOR MONDAY -

- have some sort of visual symbol for each facet  
- choose 1 to be my first piece to flesh out comp

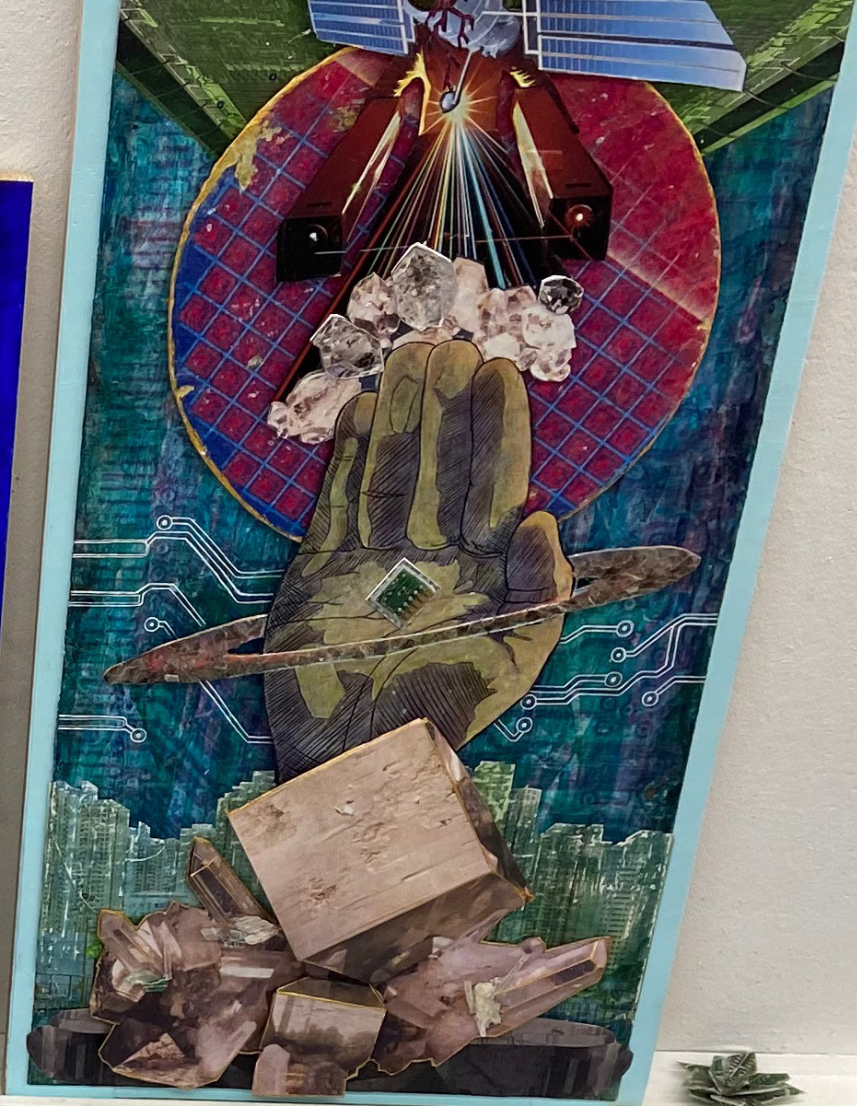


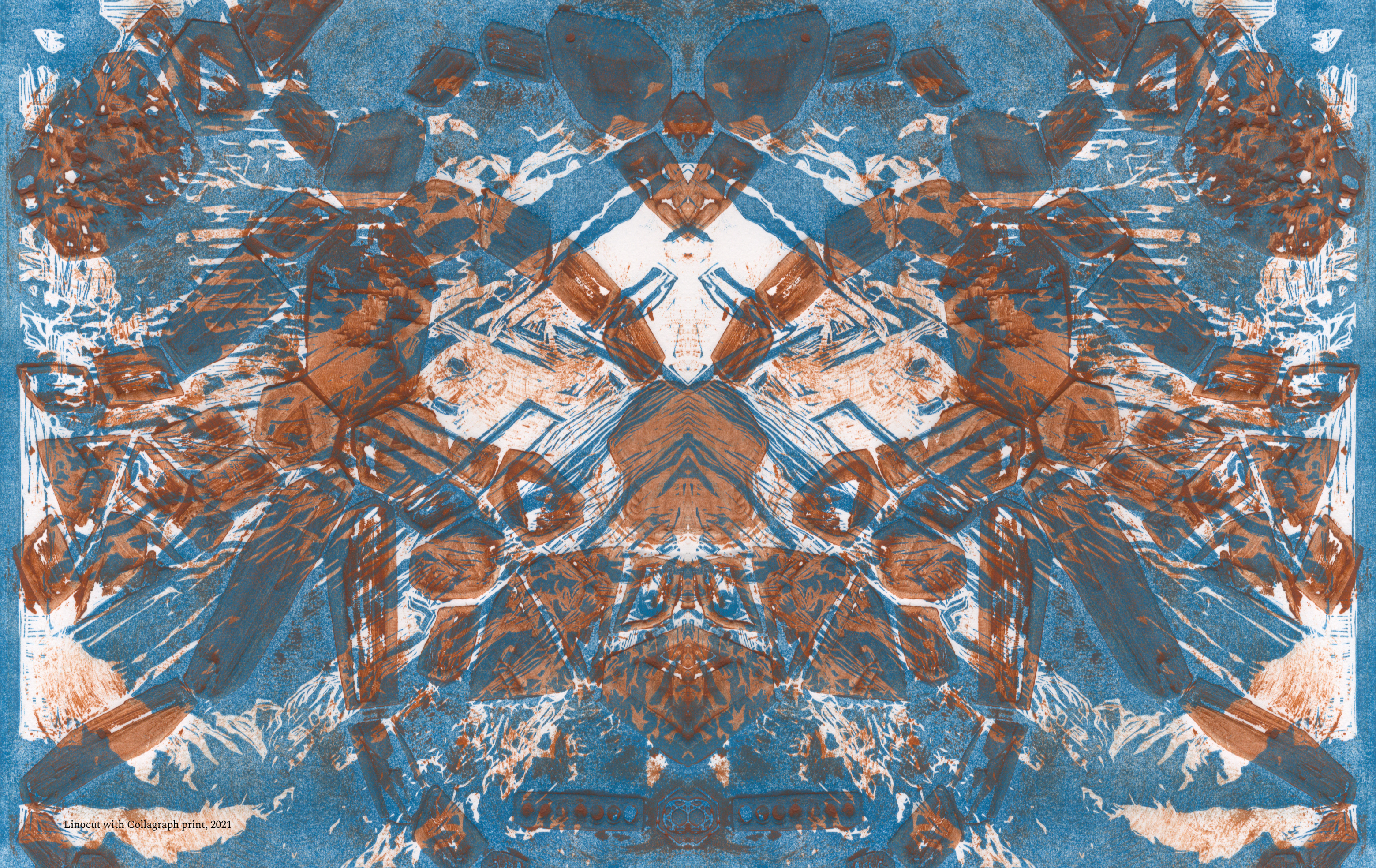
September

October



# December





Linocut with Collagraph print, 2021



## About the Artist

I have always found myself drawn to mixed media as a means to construct a nuanced image. Each medium speaks with a different voice, and integrating their songs together brings a level of complexity to a piece that excites me. The chorus defies immediate translation and creates a more intimate experience of interaction as the materiality of each component is questioned. Whether in the form of a print, collage-based assemblage, or intuitive painting, all my work is constructed in carefully considered layers— some visible, some obscured, but each necessary to achieve the final result.

I used to wonder at my tendencies towards bright colors and high saturation, but I grew up watching the natural world around me cycle through four distinctly vibrant seasons. Growing up in New Hampshire, my surroundings felt like a rainbow. With our state nickname, “The Granite State,” stone was implicitly foregrounded in my mind from a very young age, and I haven’t strayed far. I’m incredibly lucky to work with crystals for my job, and it brings me joy to learn from them and spread that knowledge to others. Integrating my work with stones into my art-making practice has unlocked something inside of me, and I know they will continue to guide me forward in my evolution as an artist.

# Special Thanks

The Ritual Arts Crew

*Toni, Camilla, Jess, Ishijah, Reggie, India,  
Logos, Lovebomb, Morph, and Scrubius Pip*

Bob Maloney

Campbell Mclean

Jack and Gabi

Mel & Jill & Bandit

My Families

Noah Prior

Randy Garber

The Universe

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Senior Illustration Thesis 2022

Massachusetts College of  
Art and Design

