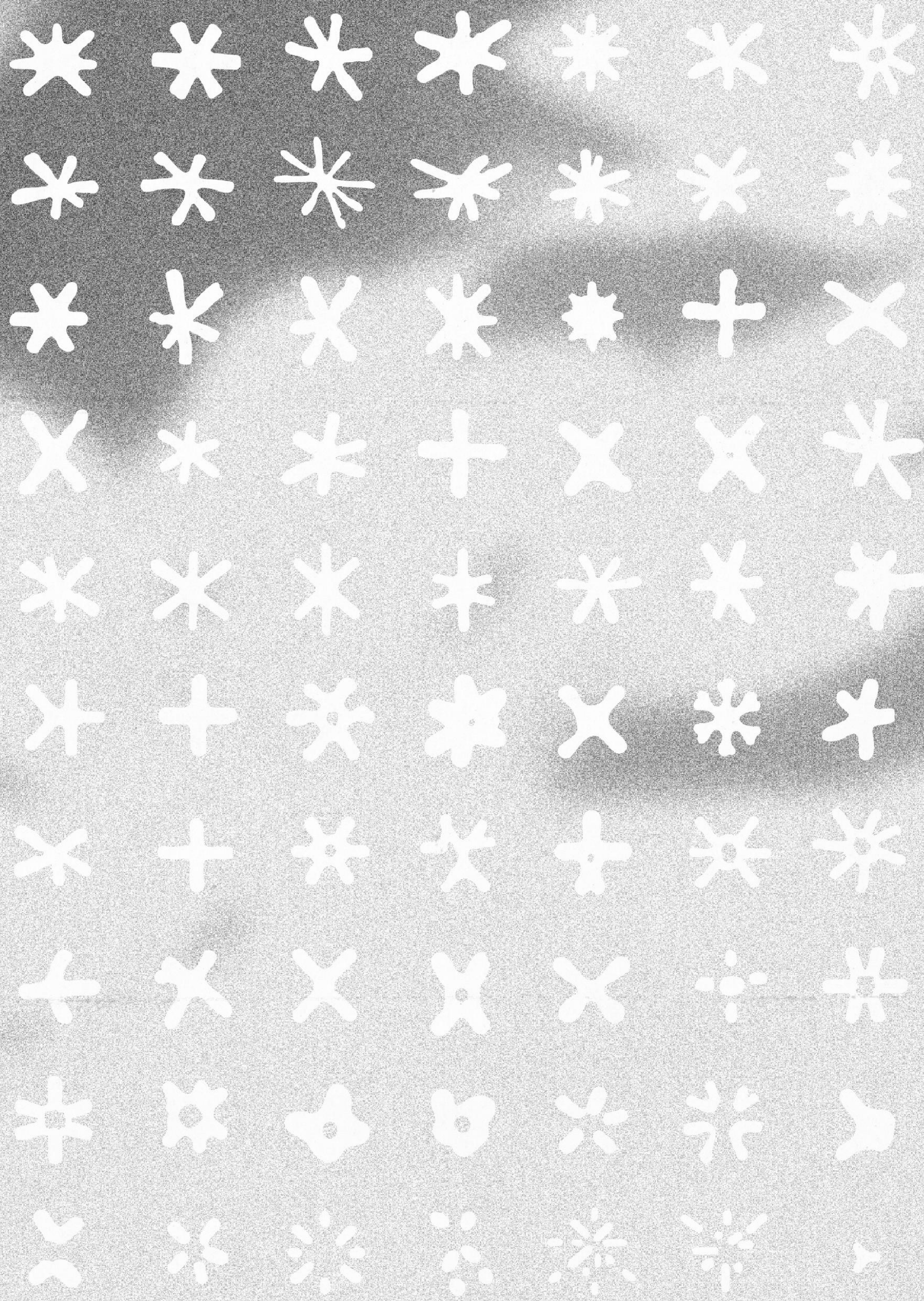


synapse-symbol





synapse-symbol explores the effects and development pertaining to how we look at symbols, particularly symbols created, distorted, or degraded with generative technologies.

introduction

In the age of the so-called AI Revolution, many of the networks, machines, and tools we use are rapidly changing the way we're viewing and approaching design. synapse-symbol explores the effects and development pertaining to how we look at symbols, particularly symbols created, distorted, or degraded with these generative technologies.

synapse-symbol utilizes the machine learning based neural network Midjourney to explore these changes, giving the system inputs of different symbols and observing as they warp, shift, transform, and degrade. This neural network reinterprets these human made symbols into hybrid, fluid, and ever changing forms that challenge our traditional understanding of symbolism and meaning.

Neural networks are systems based on the structure of the human brain, designed to recognize patterns and learn from data. These systems contain interconnected nodes which process and transform information, refining the data through multiple layers of abstraction and providing the user with some sort of output. In synapse-symbol, the neural network operates as a tool to transform and reconfigure human made symbols, creating fluid and hybrid abstract representations. This process highlights and examines the interplay between technology and symbol, human and image, and representation and meaning.



on decay
* symbol & image



synapse-symbol relies on the idea of letting a machine create new symbols for humans to re-examine - creating symbols from pre-existing manmade input and spitting them back out, subject to reinterpretation. The end results of these symbols oftentimes curiously resemble crude or child-like drawings or symbols, creating a new primal state of being for these symbols.

on decay
* symbol & image
2025



When submitting several asterisk figures to Midjourney input and requesting a merger of all the styles, the neural network doesn't reproduce the symbol as humans understand it - it deconstructs the symbol, parsing it into basic geometric shapes and patterns.

In certain output instances, the symbol undergoes a process of "degradation" where its original meaning becomes warped, transformed, and sometimes entirely unrecognizable and alien. This process of symbolic breakdown works to mirror the degradation of symbol and image in broader cultural trends and presents the viewer with a reshaped, abstracted, and alien representation of what once was.

the *lettrist* movement¹⁹⁴²_t

While examining the changes and effects neural networks have on symbols, the Lettrist movement became an important driving factor behind synapse-symbol's exploration of the subjugation of symbols to abstracted meanings. The Lettrist movement was an avant-garde, post-Dadaist based movement established in Paris in the 1940s by Romanian immigrant Isidore Isou. At the core of the movement, the artists rejected traditional literary forms in favor of a radical exploration of language and symbols.

Some of these ideas served as a basis for the visual exploration conducted in synapse-symbol, where AI-driven systems break a symbol down into pure visual form, separating it entirely from any preconceived cultural or linguistic context and forcing it into something new. Like Lettrist symbol and letter combinations led to different meanings in their work outside of conventional interpretation and linguistic structure, neural network technology output can challenge these traditional cultural and semiotic systems by producing new combinations, structures, and interpretations.

1 new structures

Some of these ideas served as a basis for the visual exploration conducted in synapse-symbol, where AI-driven systems break a symbol down into pure visual form, separating it entirely from any preconceived cultural or linguistic context and forcing it into something new. Like Lettrist symbol and letter combinations led to different meanings in their work outside of conventional interpretation and linguistic structure, neural network technology output can challenge these traditional cultural and semiotic systems by producing new combinations, structures, and interpretations.

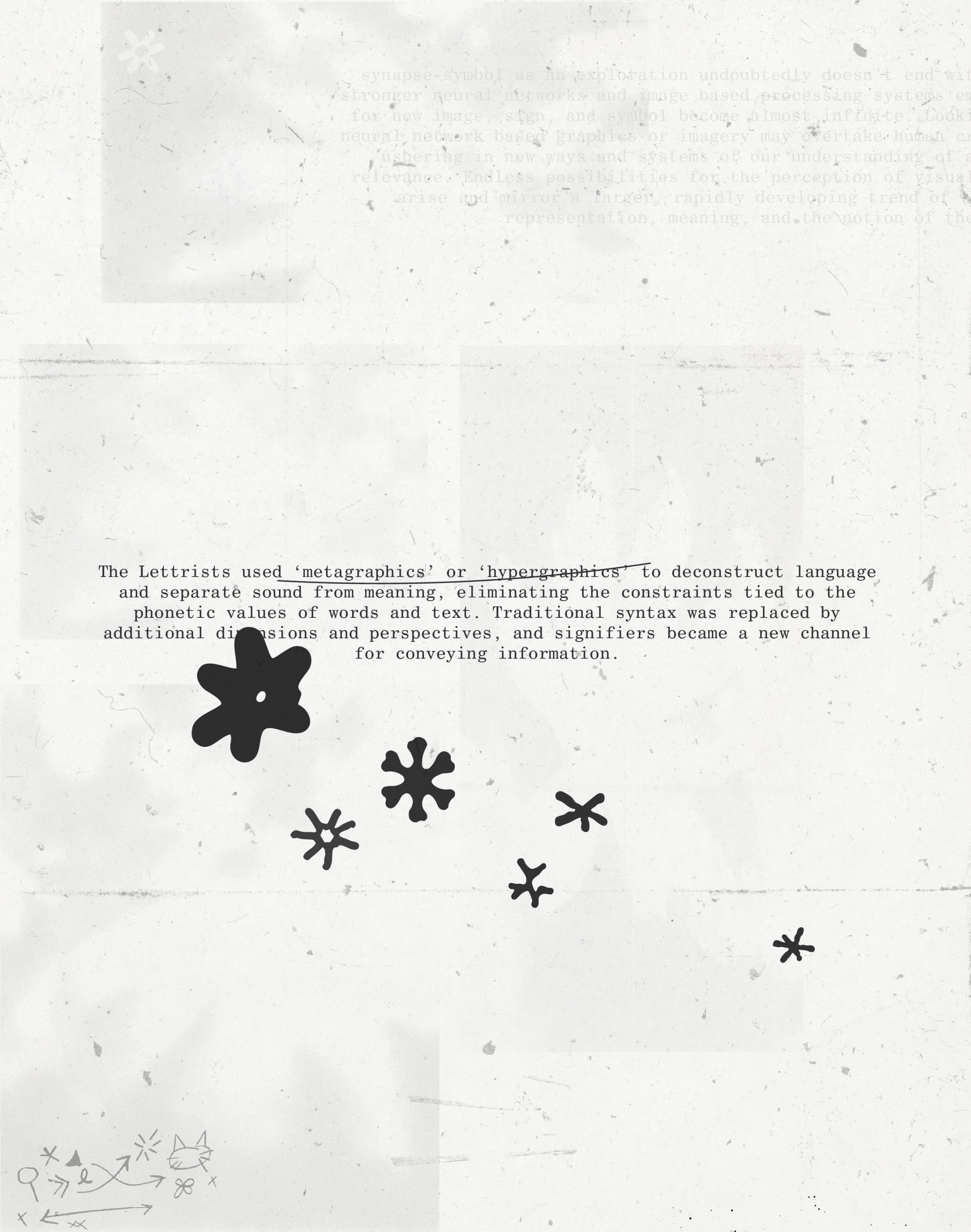
Their desire for the loss of semantic content in any and all poetry in favor of single letters or symbols that become more arbitrary or idiosyncratic resonate with synapse-symbol's exploration of what symbols could mean in various contexts of assigning meaning or relevance.

2 new meanings

Lettrist visual art started to work with signs of the past, present, and even invented cultures, combining different signs in place of words to create new meanings and expressions.

3 and interpretations

Isou even began to deconstruct various periods of art and reimagining it in Lettrist form - he would destroy the idea of the classical image and use scraps of trashed film to etch graffiti into, rendering them unrecognizable.



synapse-symbol as an exploration undoubtedly doesn't end with stronger neural networks and image based processing systems' emergence for new image, sign, and symbol become almost infinite. Looking at neural network based graphics or imagery may overtake human creativity, ushering in new ways and systems of our understanding of visual relevance. Endless possibilities for the perception of visual information arise and mirror a larger, rapidly developing trend of digital representation, meaning, and the notion of information.

The Lettrists used 'metagraphics' or 'hypergraphics' to deconstruct language and separate sound from meaning, eliminating the constraints tied to the phonetic values of words and text. Traditional syntax was replaced by additional dimensions and perspectives, and signifiers became a new channel for conveying information.

asterisk

the asterisk

the asterisk was chosen as the one symbol to be examined through the process of neural network input/output both for the sake of visual simplicity as well as its cultural significance. The asterisk is one of the earliest symbols used by humans, being used as early as ice-age cave paintings. It was one of the only 32 symbols to be used consistently in art throughout the Stone Age, painted in red (ochre) or black (manganese dioxide).

However, one of the first written uses of the asterisk as a way to correct text is seen in 200 BC, by writer Aristarchus of Samothrace. This symbol was called the asteriskos, meaning little star. Beyond correcting texts, asterisks also evolved to become useful for other writing based features such as notation or even censorship for profanity.

on repurposing

The simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization reshaping the asterisk and its forms can influence new ways to observe the effects of emerging technology on the symbol and the image - new alien appearances, contexts, and imagery arise and shift our perceptions and attachments of meaning.

the asterisk

Beyond being a symbol humans connected to the concept of correction, notation, or censorship, the asterisk also represents a mirror of the natural world through our desire to make a sign or icon as the shape is also often representative of both a star and flower. This decision to focus on the asterisk contemplates the idea of the natural world, or at the very least depictions of the natural world, becoming transformed and warped by contemporary technology.

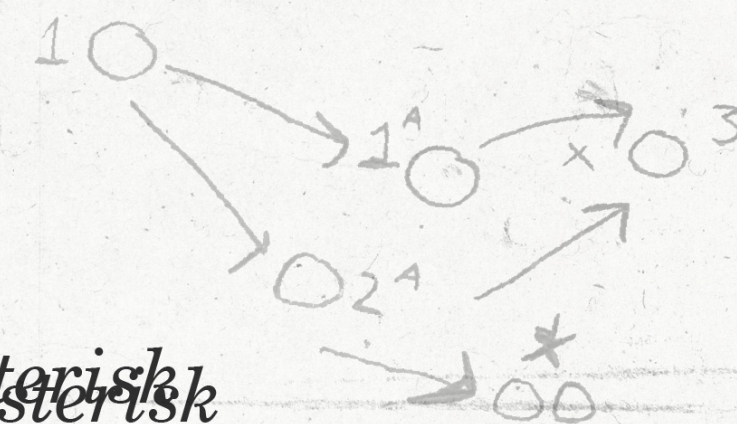
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As image and text become increasingly deconstructed through the mediation of technology, these things are no longer the stable representations they were once prevented to us as. Instead, symbols become shapes subject to constant reinterpretation, abstraction, and change. Now more than ever, the symbol becomes an object of constant flux, being broken down and degraded through various machines and networks.



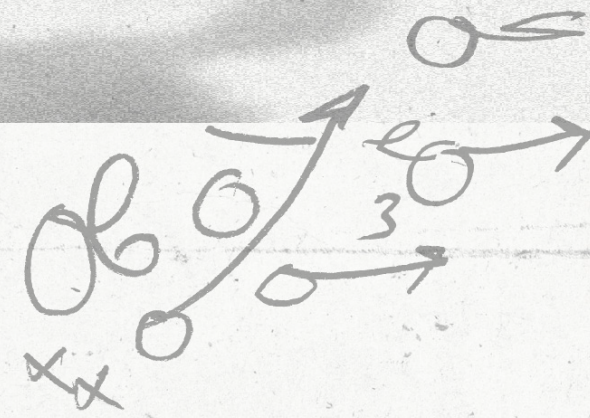
the asterisk

the asterisk



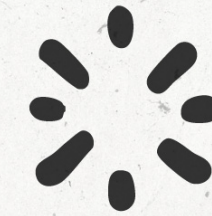
reinterpreted

decayed



written in 2025 by emilio lanzador

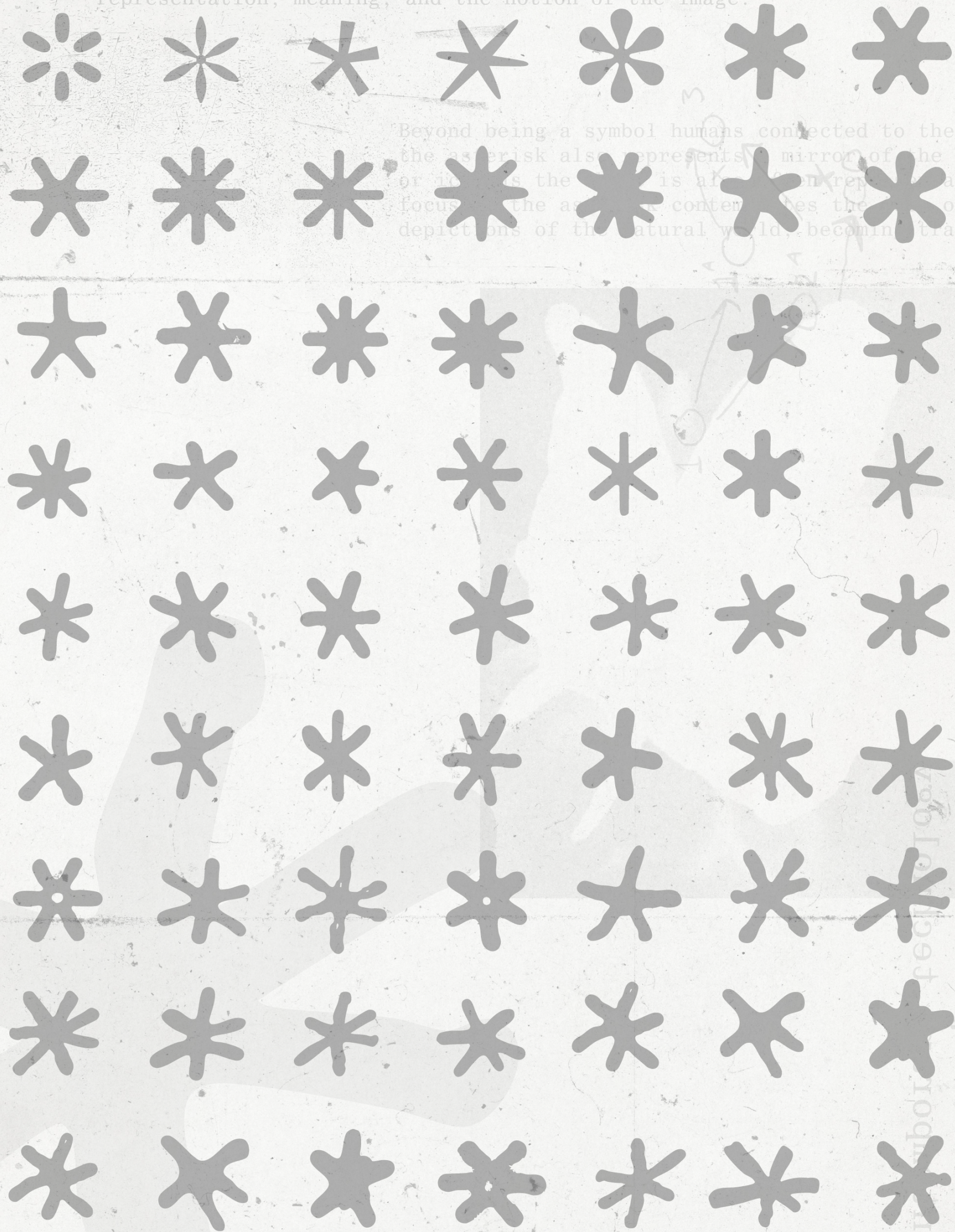
synapse-symbol as an exploration undoubtedly doesn't end with this text - as even stronger neural networks and image based processing systems emerge, the possibilities for new image, sign, and symbol become almost infinite. Looking towards the future, neural network based graphics or imagery may overtake human created content entirely, ushering in new ways and systems of our understanding of assigning meaning or relevance.



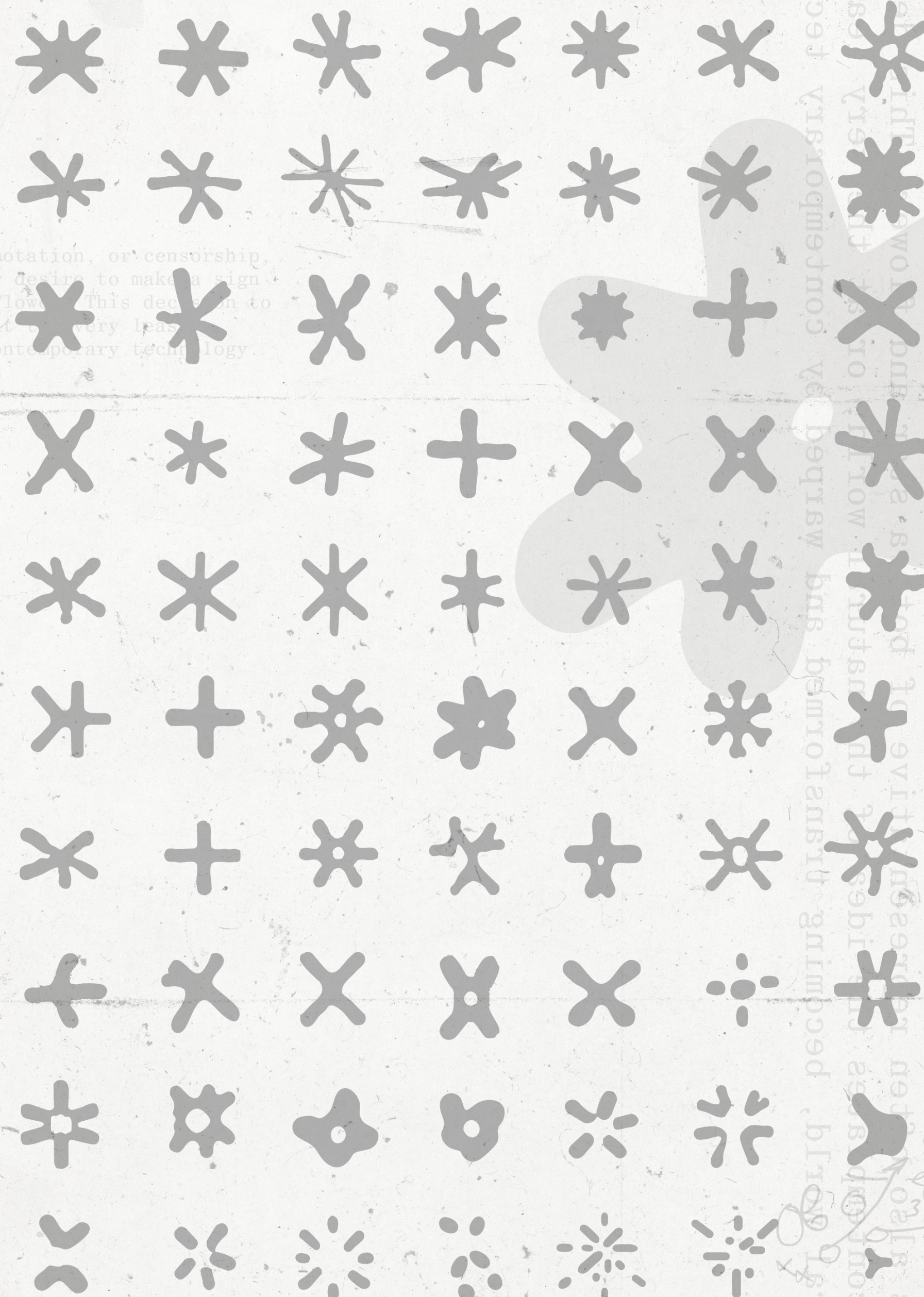
looking towards the future

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The entirety of the asteriks created in the process, starting with the pure forms derived from typeface sets that would be pushed to be rapidly transformed and deteriorated.



The symbols break down into primitive, child-like forms before ultimately degrading into unrecognizable, broken figures.