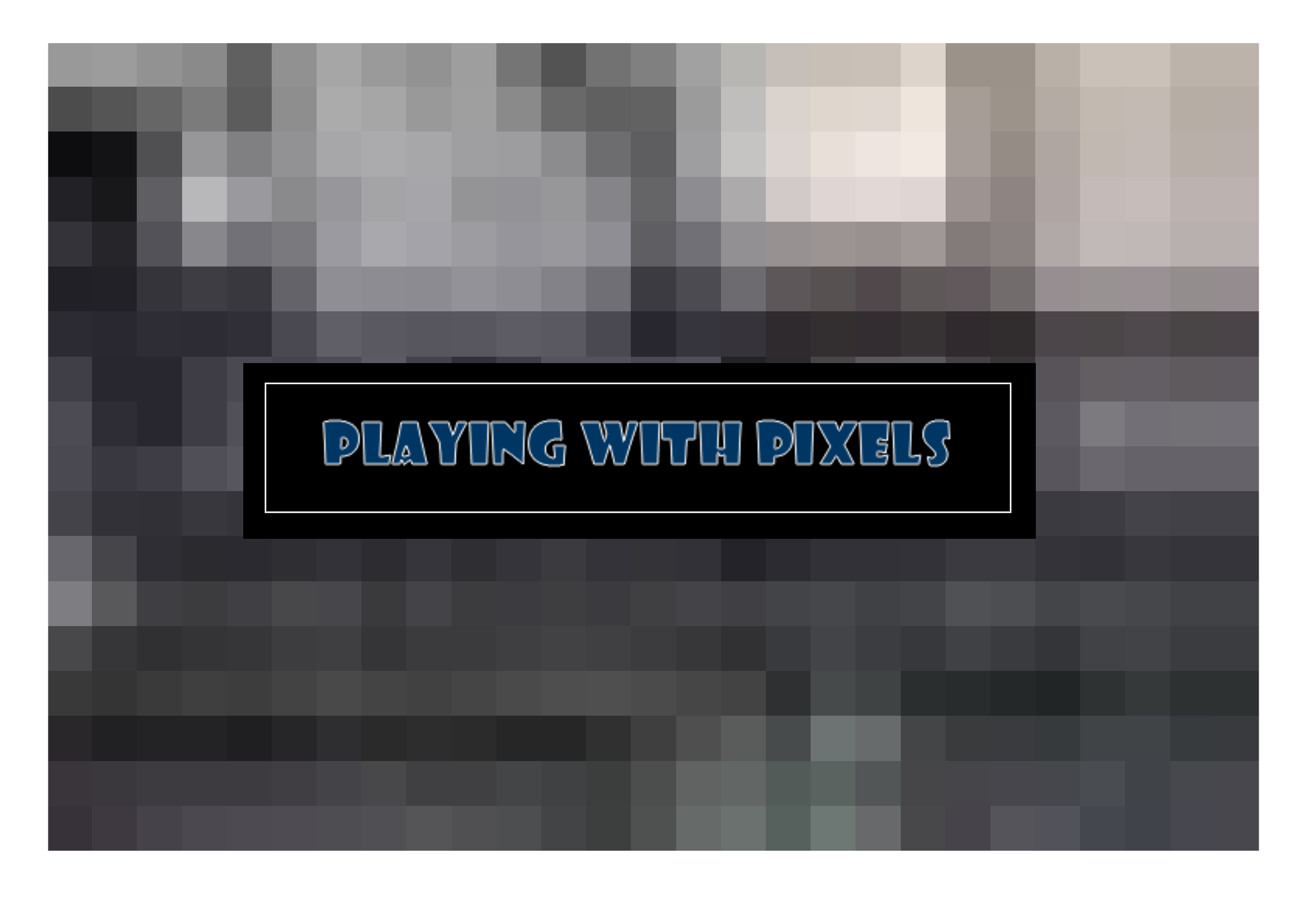


The image features a pixelated background with a color gradient. The top right corner is a light beige, transitioning through grey to a dark blue/black at the bottom. A solid black rectangle is centered horizontally and vertically, containing the text 'PLAYING WITH PIXELS' in a blue, pixelated font with a white outline.

PLAYING WITH PIXELS

FROM BURNT STICKS TO PIXELS

There are some things in life that are so marvellous that they defy belief. When babies make their way down that delivery tube to end up in The World, just think for a moment what they are confronted with: meaningless chaos. Yet two years later they are communicating with other humans by a variety of means, the most astonishing being that they have begun to use Words – at least to some degree. What an achievement!

Words themselves are pretty amazing as well. Predecessors of *homo sapiens* managed – somehow – to progress from grunts and guttural noises to devise vocal sounds that stood for certain meanings that the rest of the grunTERS around them came to agree upon. (“Watch out! There’s a predator about!” ; “It’s going to piss down any minute!”) This in itself is a fairly impressive achievement, though birds and animals have managed to do much the same thing.

But what a small child manages to do is to make sense of the chaos it is confronted with *from scratch*. Somehow it just manages to work it out. No classes, no tutorials – nothing but its own little brain. It really is a most impressive feat.

But let’s go a little further. Adult *homo sapiens* have managed to pull off a similar impressive feat. Not only did they get to communicate with each other by using agreed meanings of sounds, they went a staggering step further and worked out ways to make marks on things which they agreed stood for the sounds they were communicating with. They invented writing. That, too is quite an achievement. And as things turned out, people all over the world managed to do the same thing – to invent marks to stand

for their particular set of grunts and what they meant to them. And this gave us different languages, both written and spoken. Just think of all the different marks that have been devised to achieve this end – Chinese and Japanese ideograms, Arabic script, Cyrillic script, the rounded characters of Burmese script, reading from left to right or right to left or up and down – and of course there is a bewildering array of many more solutions to this problem.

OK. That’s a pretty oversimplified account of how we began to use marks to stand for spoken sounds. But, being the sort of inventive beings that we are, it wasn’t too long before we’d worked out a way of making marks than enabled us to notate even musical sounds in much the same way.

They used all sort of things to make marks – from charred sticks to carefully-sharpened goose quills, from brushes of various kinds to quite hi-tech manufactured pen nibs. And more. When I began to make marks, and push around puddles of paint, that was pretty much where things stood. I was using fine steel pen nibs, paintbrushes of various shapes and sizes, with the occasional diversion into sharpened paddle pop sticks, sponges and windscreen wiper blades. The point is, the mark making was direct. If you put a mark in the wrong place you were stuck with it, most of the time. In time, when blokes like Gutenberg and Caxton came along, humans found ingenious, though cumbersome, ways to be able to make multiple copies of these marks, and printing was born.

But then along came a development in a completely different sphere of knowledge and understanding that was to have unimaginable consequences for just about every

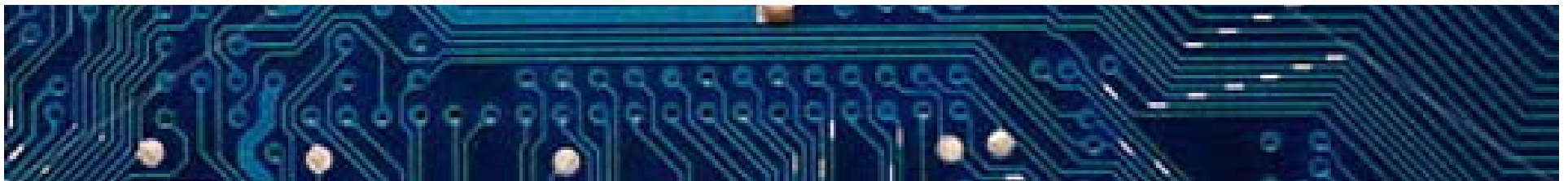
arena of human endeavour -- the binary numeral system, or base 2 number system. It utilized only two digits, 0 and 1, and somehow managed to reduce just about anything you can think of to combinations of just those two digits. Don't ask me how, though. It's a complete mystery to me, but binary thinking came to underlie the dominant system that drives modern computers, and anything that these days we call "digital". For instance, in the realm of music, computers can reduce the complex sounds and rhythms of Stravinsky or the clangorous dissonances of Thrash Metal to 0s and 1s. (The "Music" drawer on this website owes its existence to the process of digitization).

To me the whole digital revolution is uncomfortably close to magic. You can look on what we've done, collectively, as adults, as being of the same order as what babies do when confronted by totally unordered chaos at birth. These developments are so marvellous that for people like me it's still very hard to get your head around it all.

When I got hold of my first digital image manipulation program, and started to try to find out the things you could do with it, it took me a while to wake up to the fact that the program was, in effect, yet another way to make marks. It was the apotheosis of the tradition of the burnt stick. It was radically different to how we had been doing things,

but it was a mark-making tool (among many other things) nonetheless. And it could be used in combination with the "old ways" if desired. It seemed to me that if you really knew what you were doing you could render just about anything that you could think of in two dimensions. It was so flexible a tool that you had to broaden your creative approach so as to take advantage of what it could do. It needed a whole new way of thinking about images and making marks. This was a pretty big ask for someone about to go on the old-age pension. But I gave it a go anyway.

In the pages that follow, the first two drawings of horses were made using a fine-point pen and black ink. A sort of benchmark of the old ways, you might say. But all of the images after that have had some sort of digital mischief wrought upon them. They are the result of all sorts of experimentation on my part as I played around trying to see just what I could do with Photoshop CS3 (Ext). By now, this particular program is doubtless well outdated, and would be bread-and-butter boring to a professional graphic artist. But it contains enough digital magic and graphics horsepower to keep me happy trying to become even a little bit proficient with what must be one of the most revolutionary ways to make marks that mankind has ever devised. It's a project which is sure to see me out.







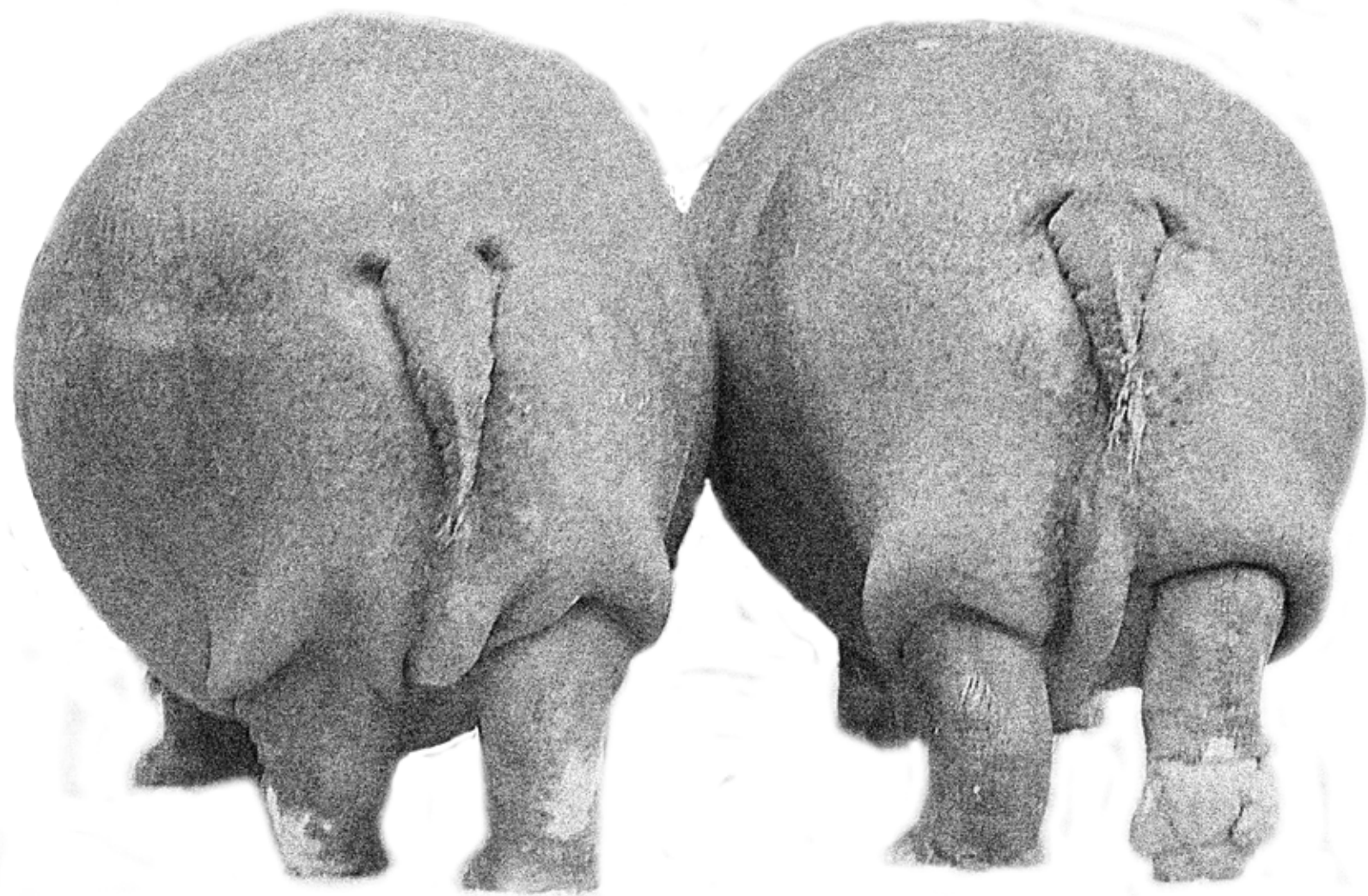










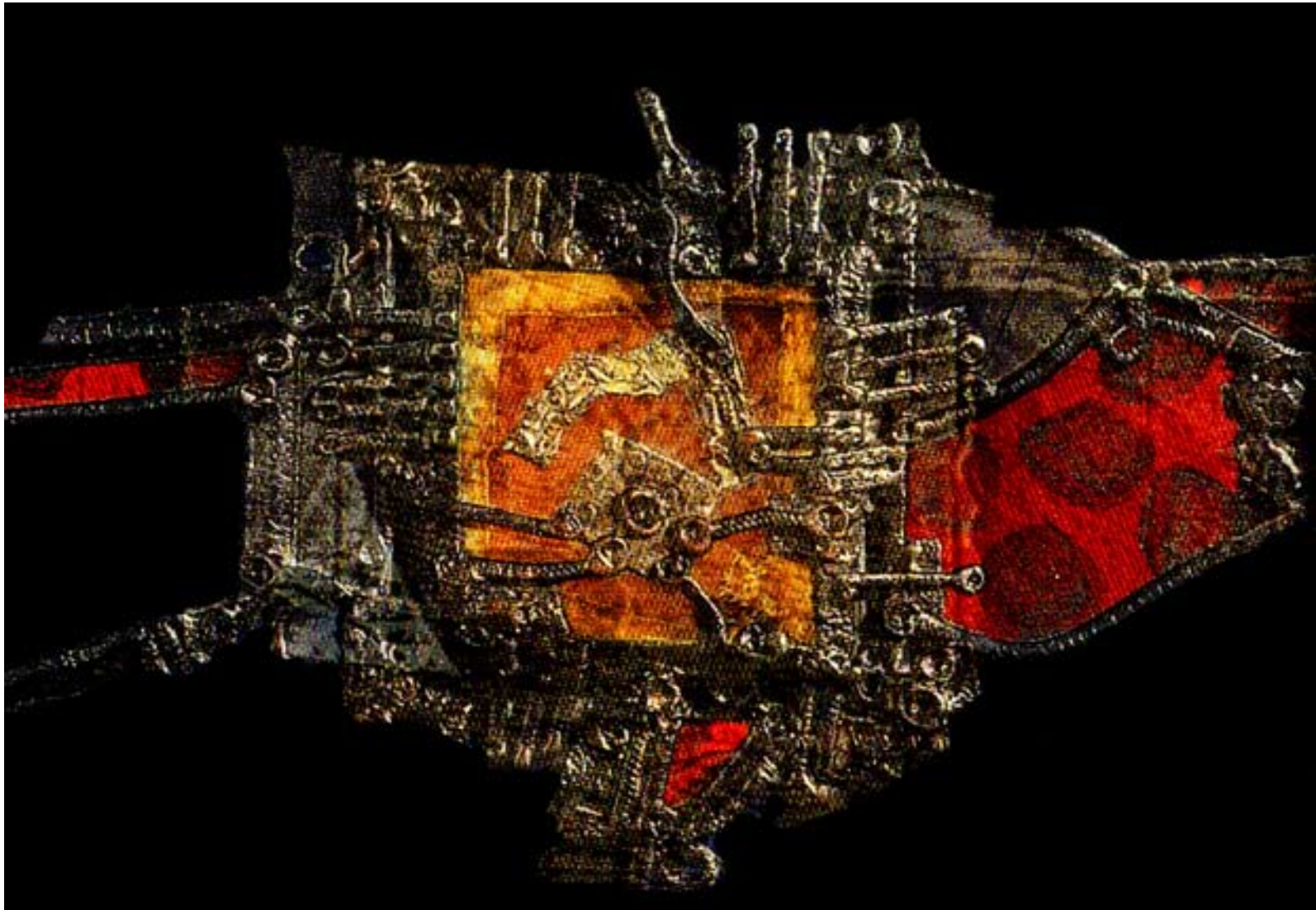


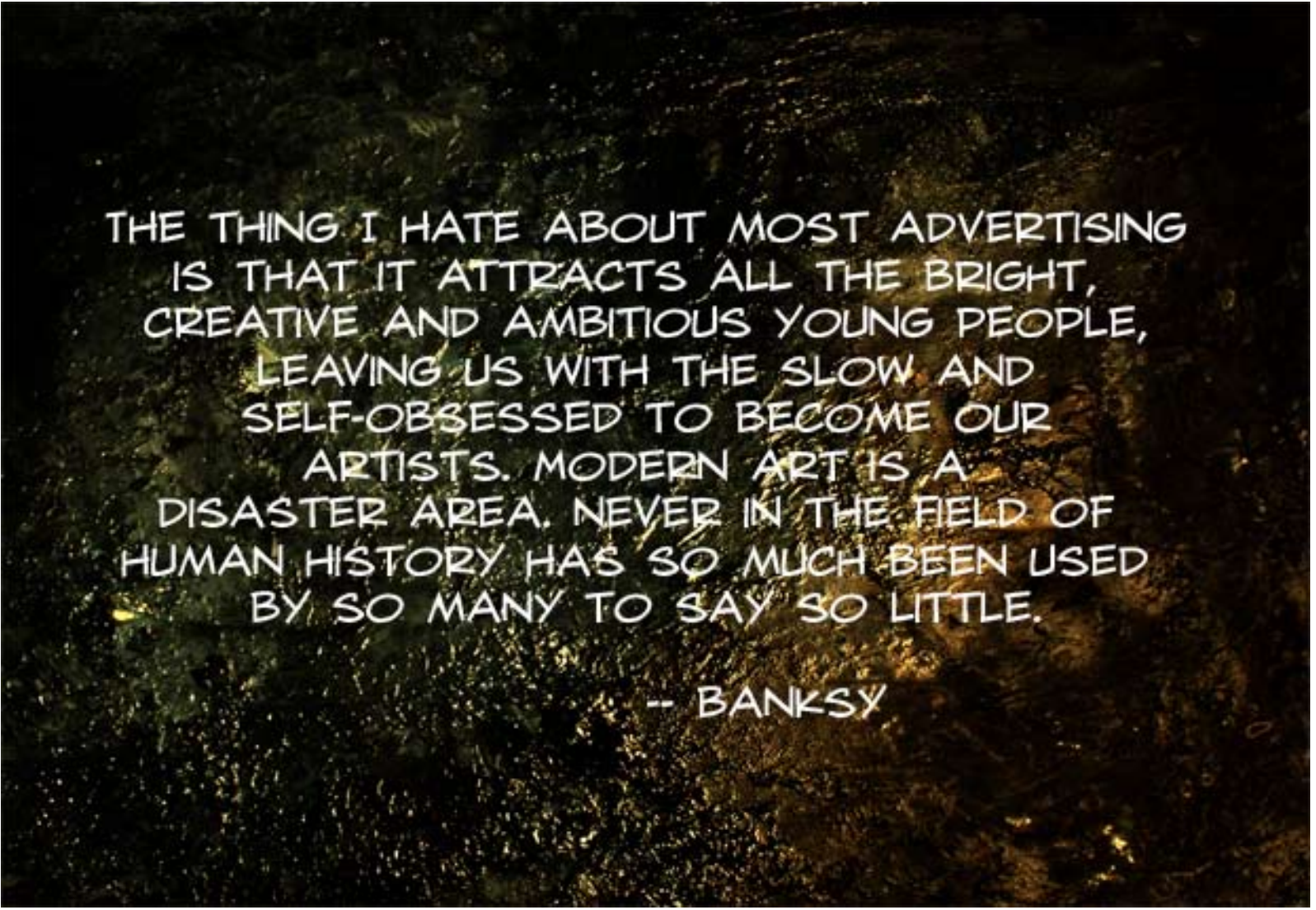






TAMWORTH TOWN HALL STEPS





THE THING I HATE ABOUT MOST ADVERTISING
IS THAT IT ATTRACTS ALL THE BRIGHT,
CREATIVE AND AMBITIOUS YOUNG PEOPLE,
LEAVING US WITH THE SLOW AND
SELF-OBSSESSED TO BECOME OUR
ARTISTS. MODERN ART IS A
DISASTER AREA. NEVER IN THE FIELD OF
HUMAN HISTORY HAS SO MUCH BEEN USED
BY SO MANY TO SAY SO LITTLE.

-- BANKSY



HILL END

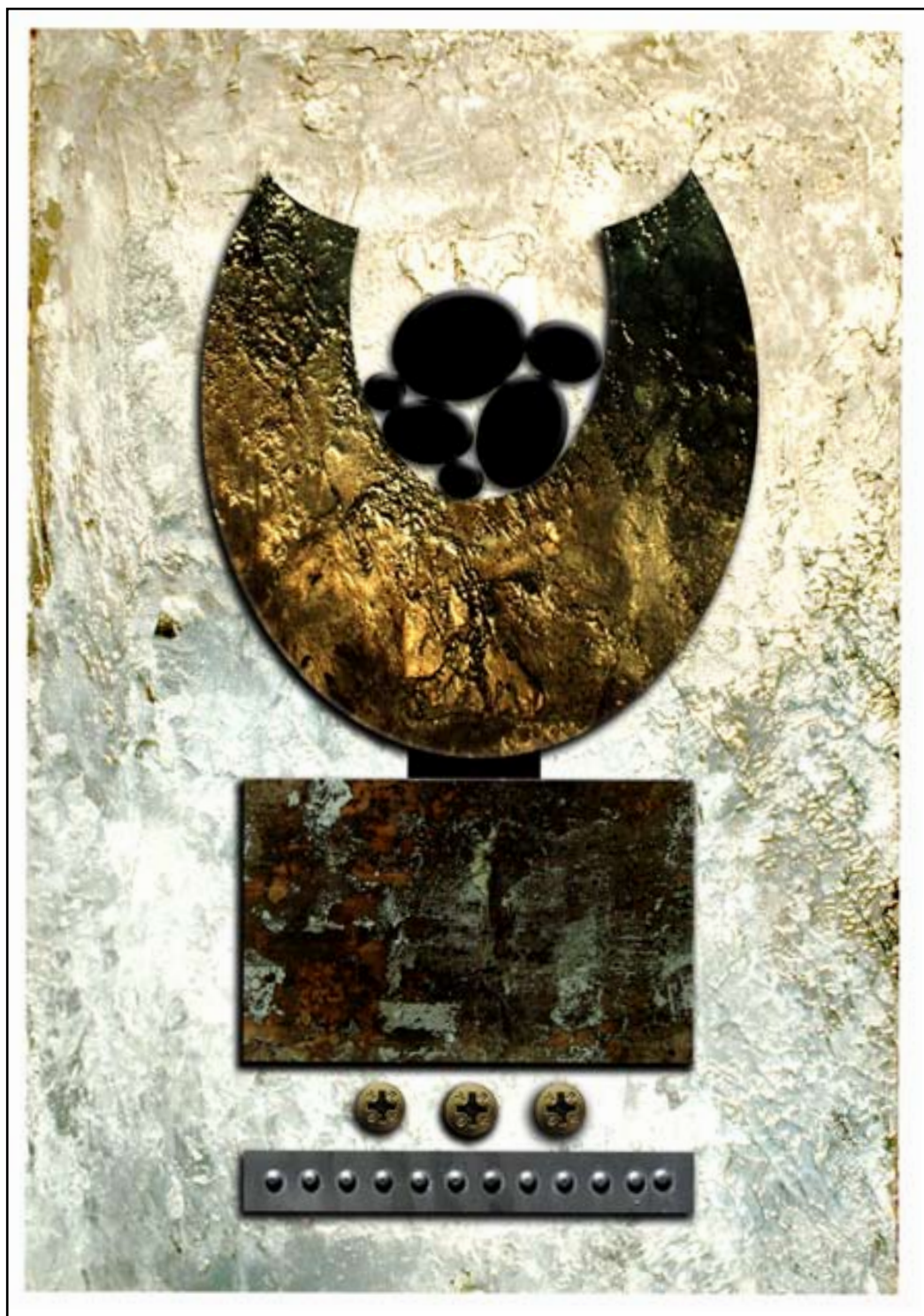


DECORTICATION



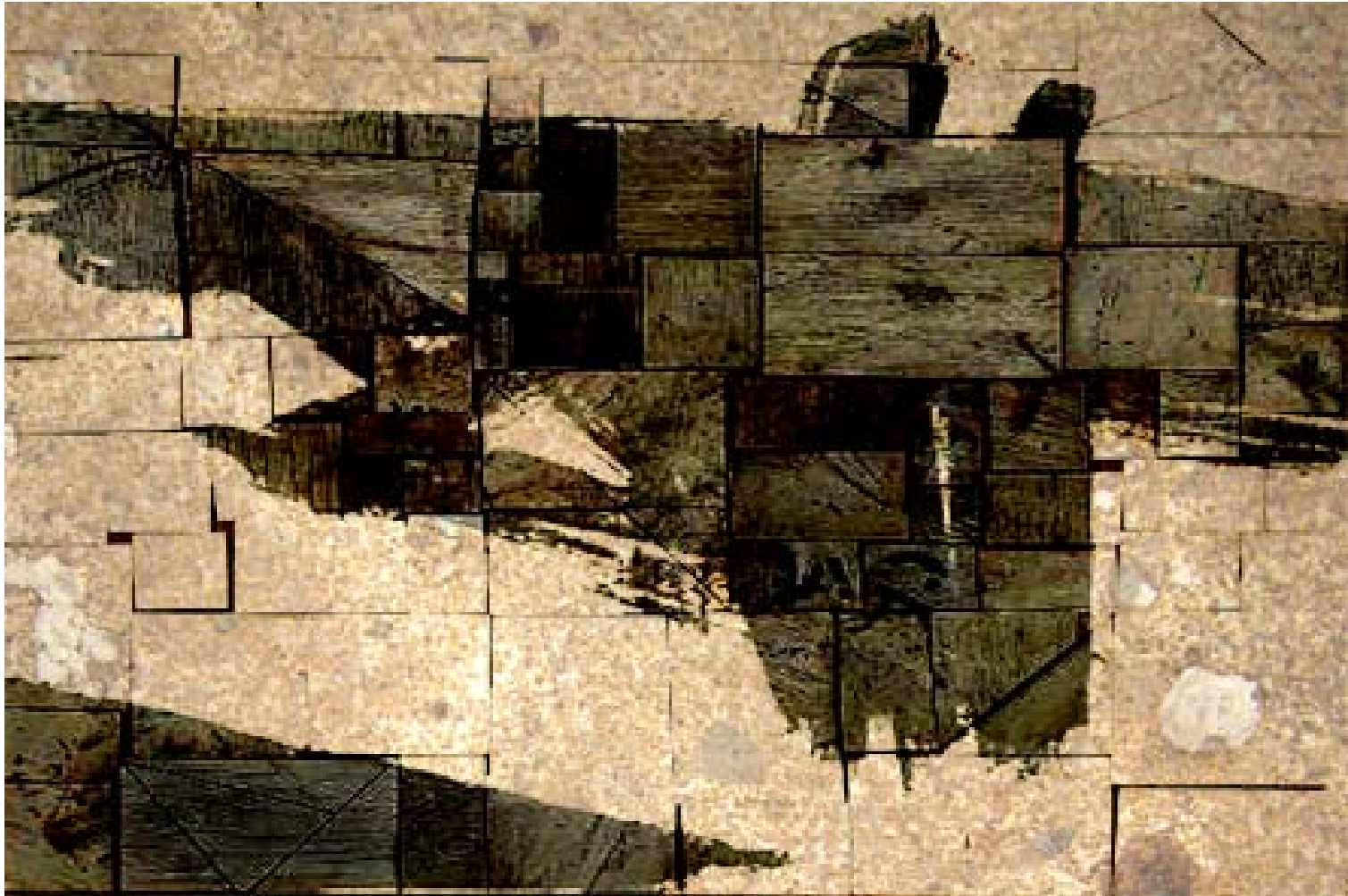
since drawing on
toilet walls is done
neither for critical
acclaim, nor financial
rewards, it is the
purest form of art.
-- discuss





POD ABSTRACT







WALL AT GULGONG

