Corrupted images

This publication is about what a digital image actually is. Not what we see when we look at one, but what the file contains, how the file was made, and what was decided on our behalf in the process of making it.

The digital image has become the dominant unit of meaning in contemporary visual culture. It is everywhere, mundane enough that we look through it rather than at it, and shaped by decisions we never agreed to. A photograph from a phone has been processed by ten algorithms before it reaches the screen. Two thirds of every colour value in it was guessed by software. Compression has thrown away whatever wasn't predicted to matter. The image arrives looking neutral. It isn't.

What follows is one image taken apart and put back together one hundred times. The source is a single Canon RAW file containing twenty six million sensor readings, cropped to a region containing the iPad 3 marketing line "we believe that technology is at its very best when it is

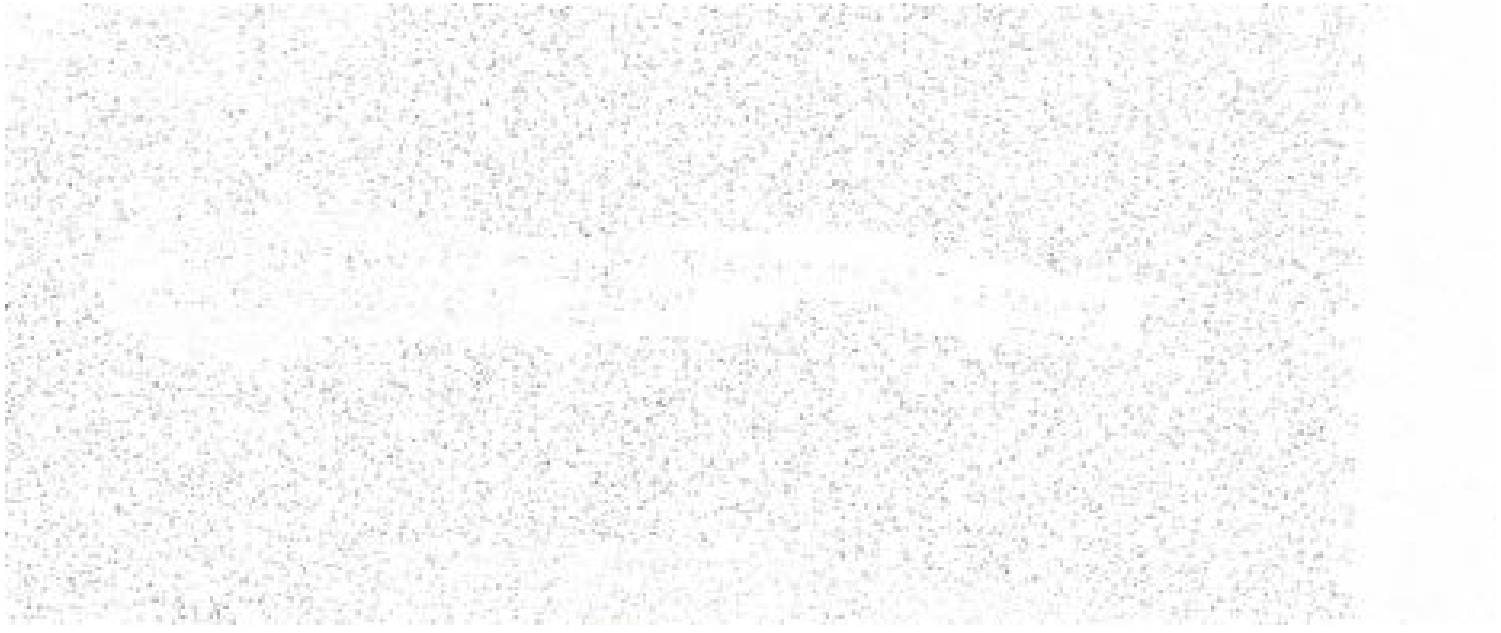
invisible.” The image was reduced to a spreadsheet of six hundred thousand pixel values and split into one hundred equal portions, each contributing six thousand pixels to the next. Each iteration is a step in the image’s slow accumulation from scattered points into recognisable form. Each is also a real spreadsheet, accessible by QR code, holding the actual numerical data the rendering depends on. The intention is to place the backend and the frontend into the same publication, so the data and the picture can be read against each other. Rendering is normally invisible work. Here it is performed slowly, in public, by hand.

iteration 1 6,000 pixels

iteration 2 12,000 pixels

iteration 8

18,000 pixels

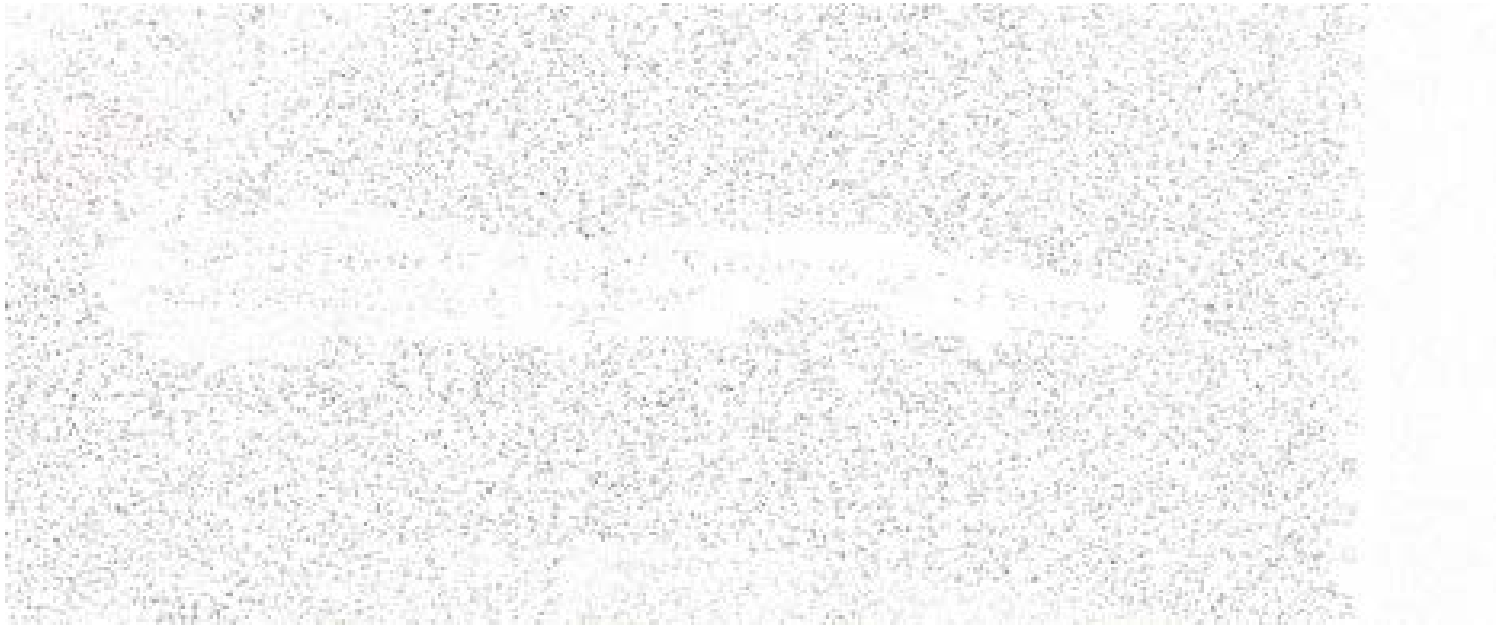


iteration 4

24,000 pixels

iteration s

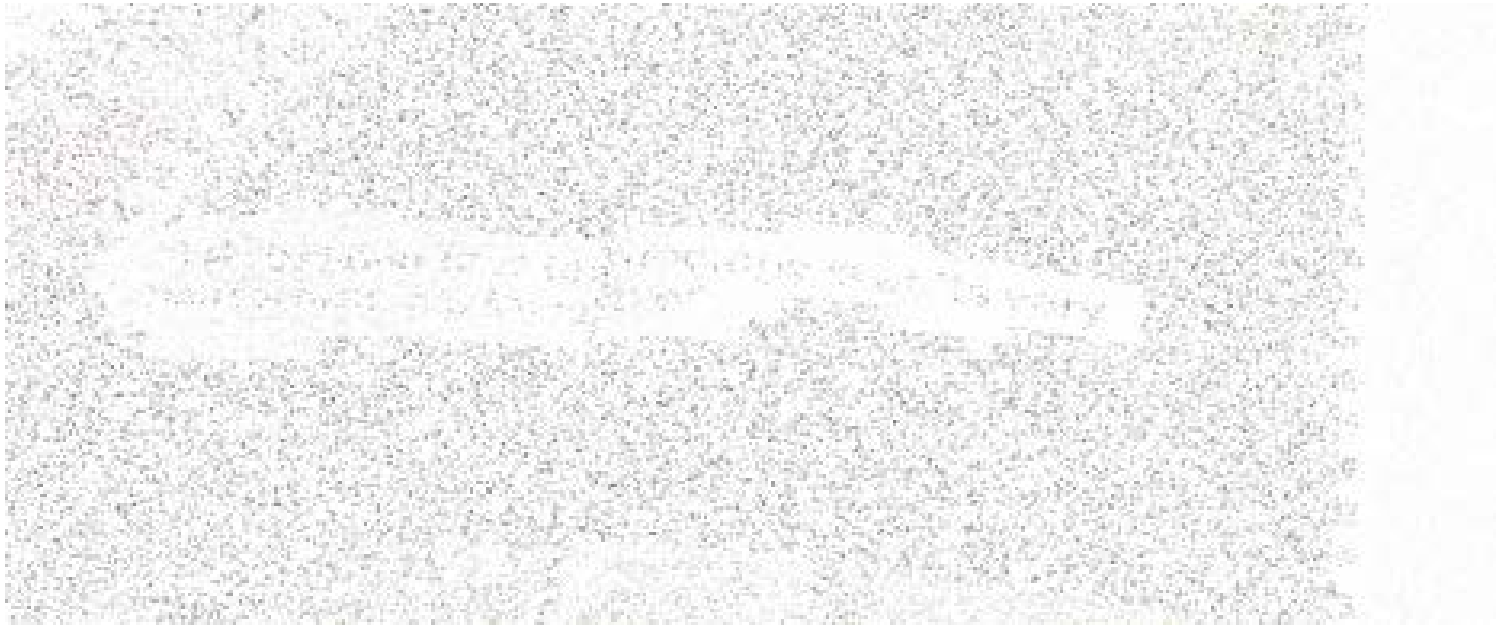
ao,aaO pixels



iteration 6 28,000 pixels

iteration 7

42,000 pixels



iteration 8 48,000 pixels

iteration 9 54,000 pixels

iteration 10 60,000 pixels

iteration 11 <8,000 pixels

iteration 12

72,000 pixels

iteration 13

78,000 pixels

iteration 14

84,000 pixels

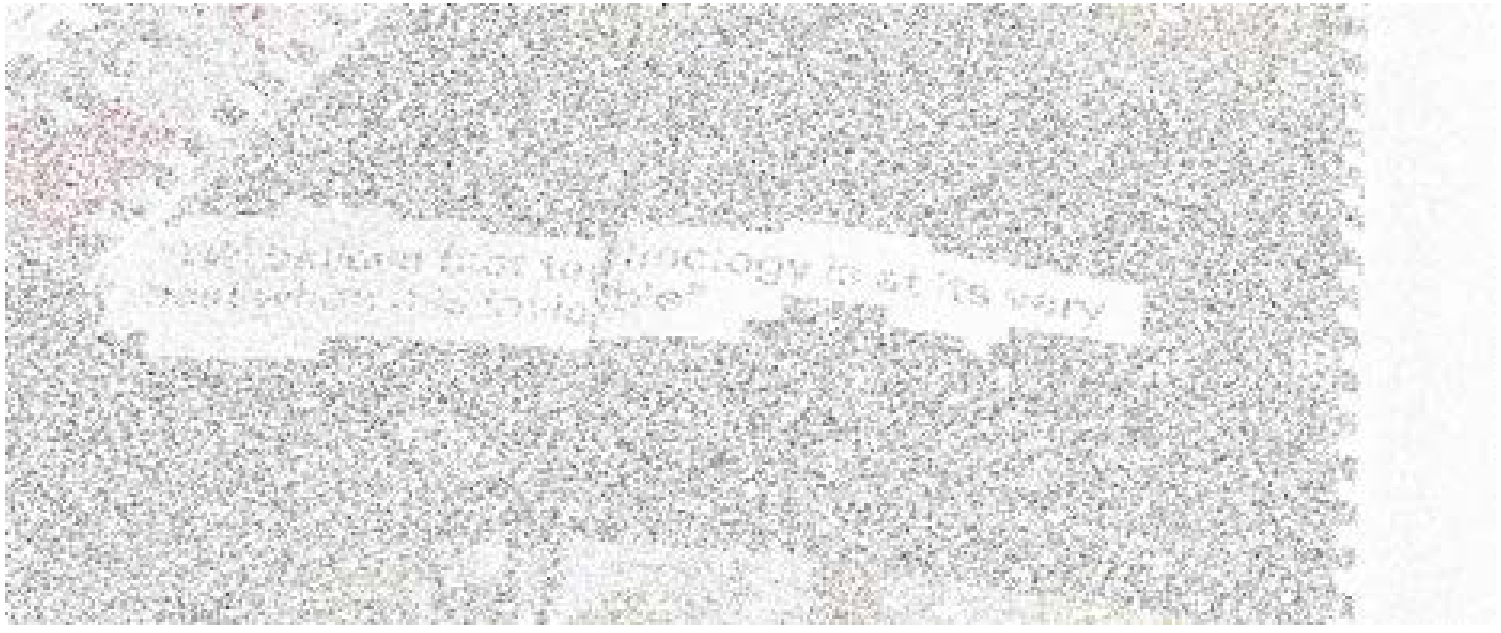
iteration 15

50,000 pixels

iteration 15 5,000 pixels

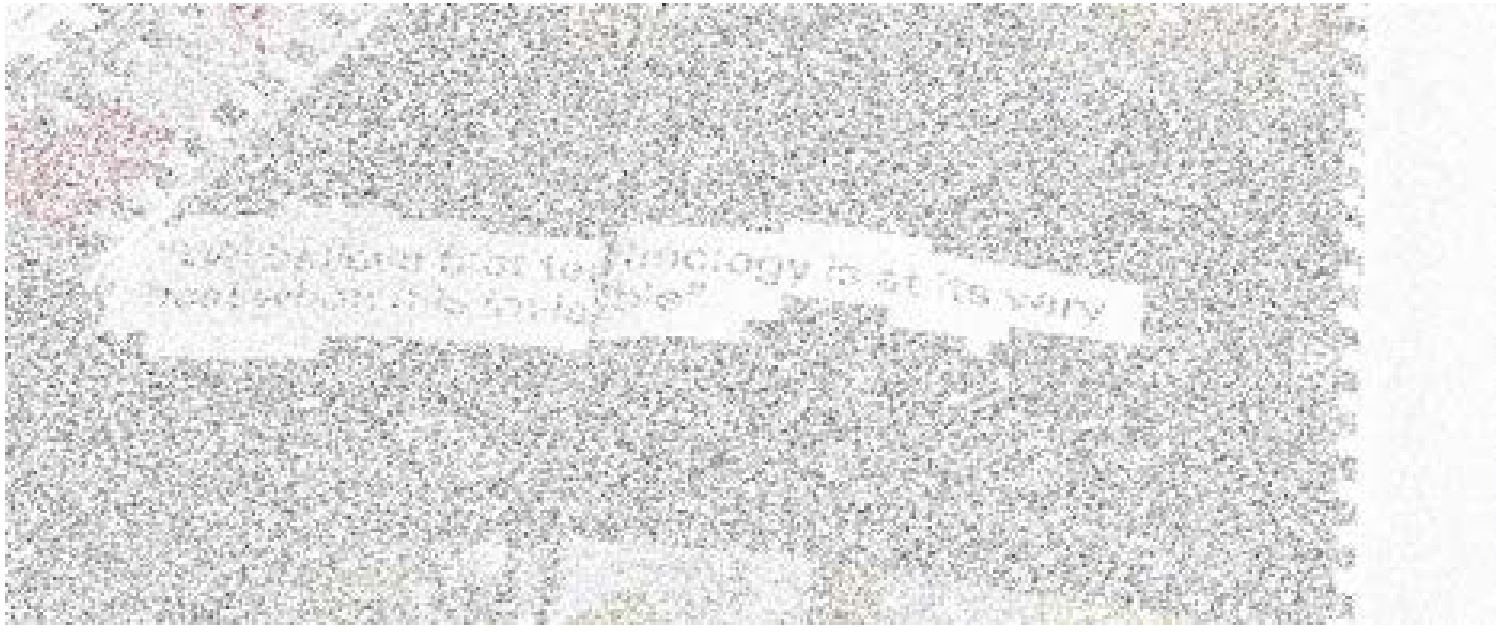
iteration 17

402,000 pixels



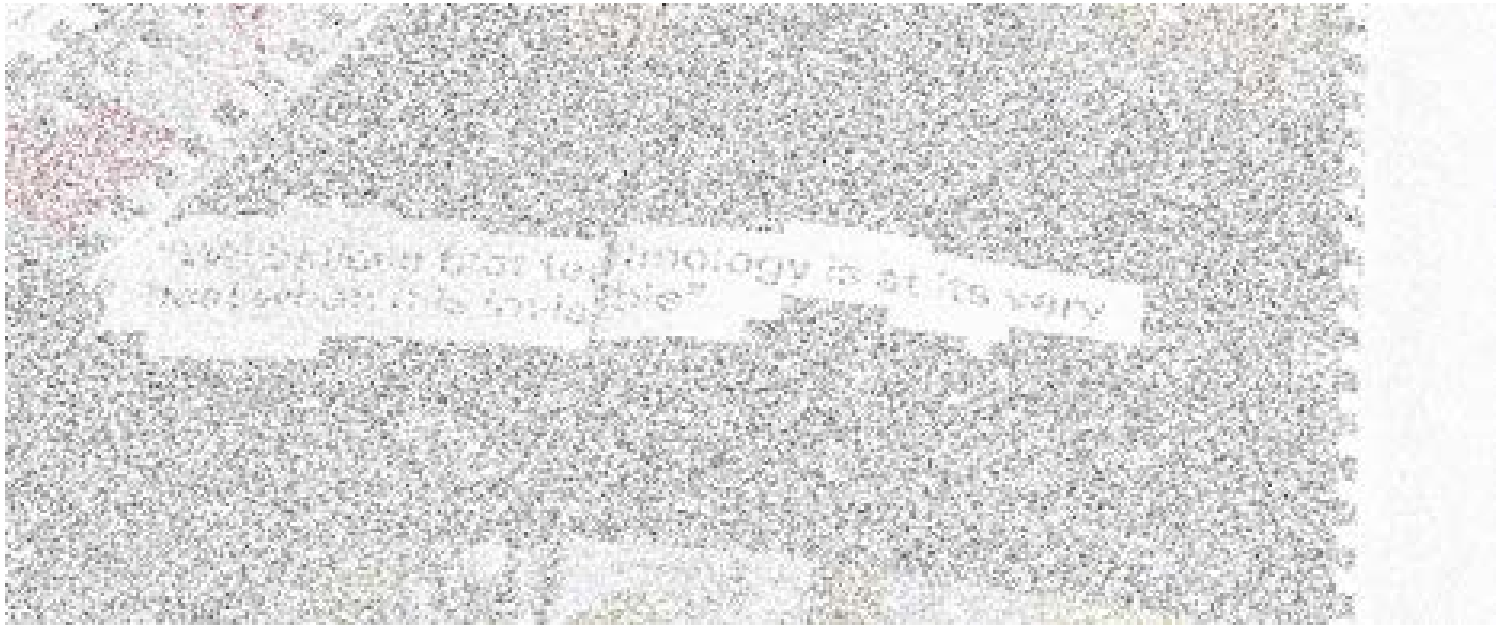
iteration 18 108,000 pixels

iteration 15 114,000 pixels



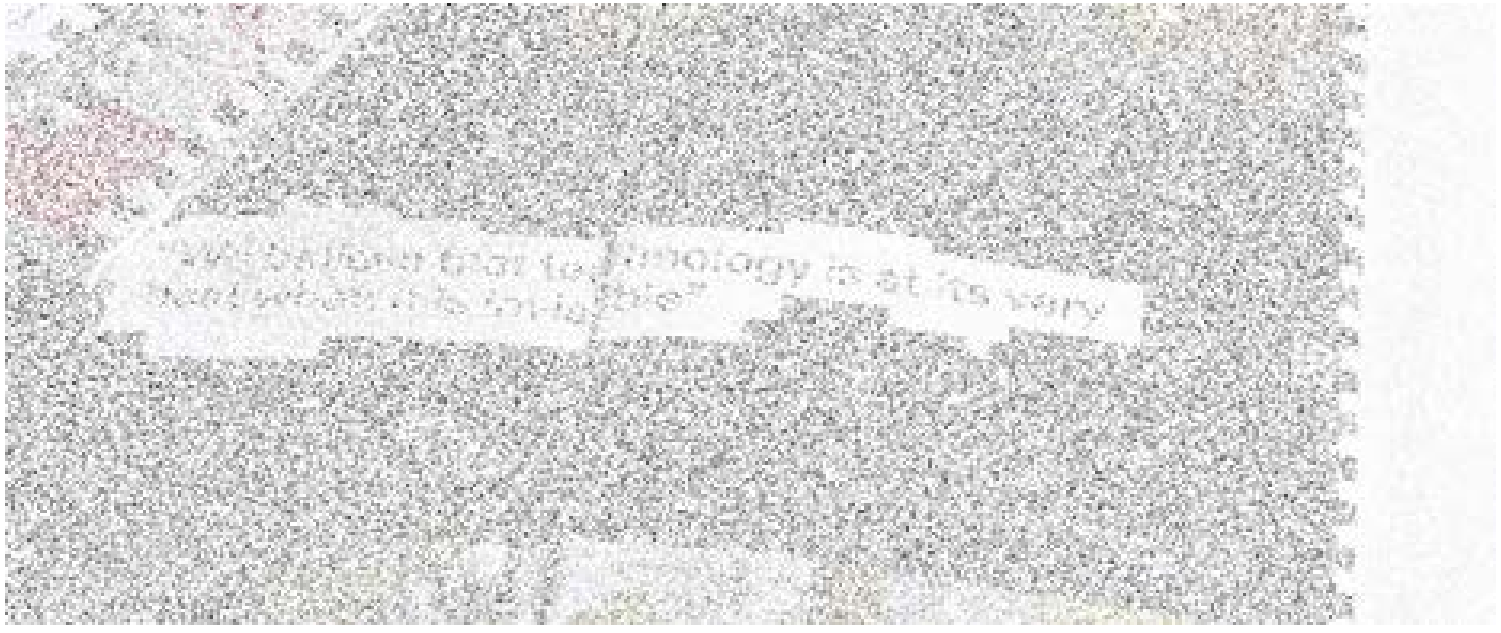
iteration 20

120,000 pixels

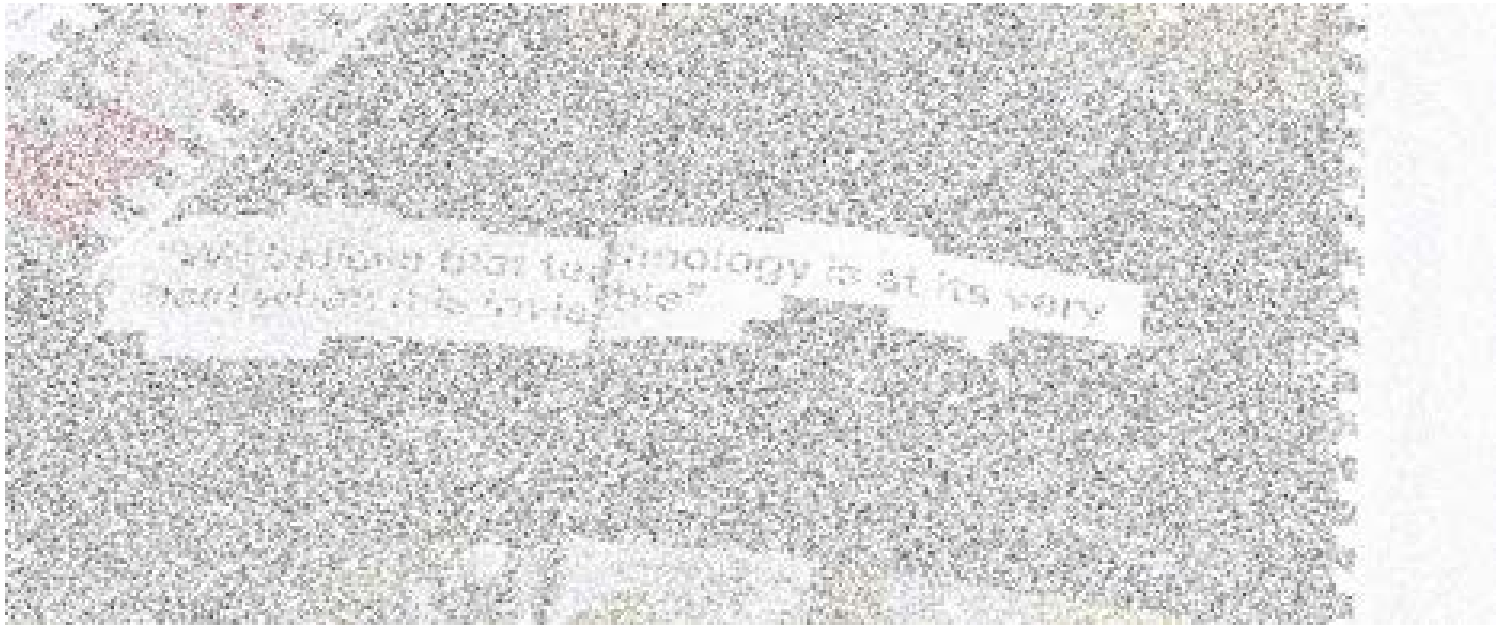


iteration 21

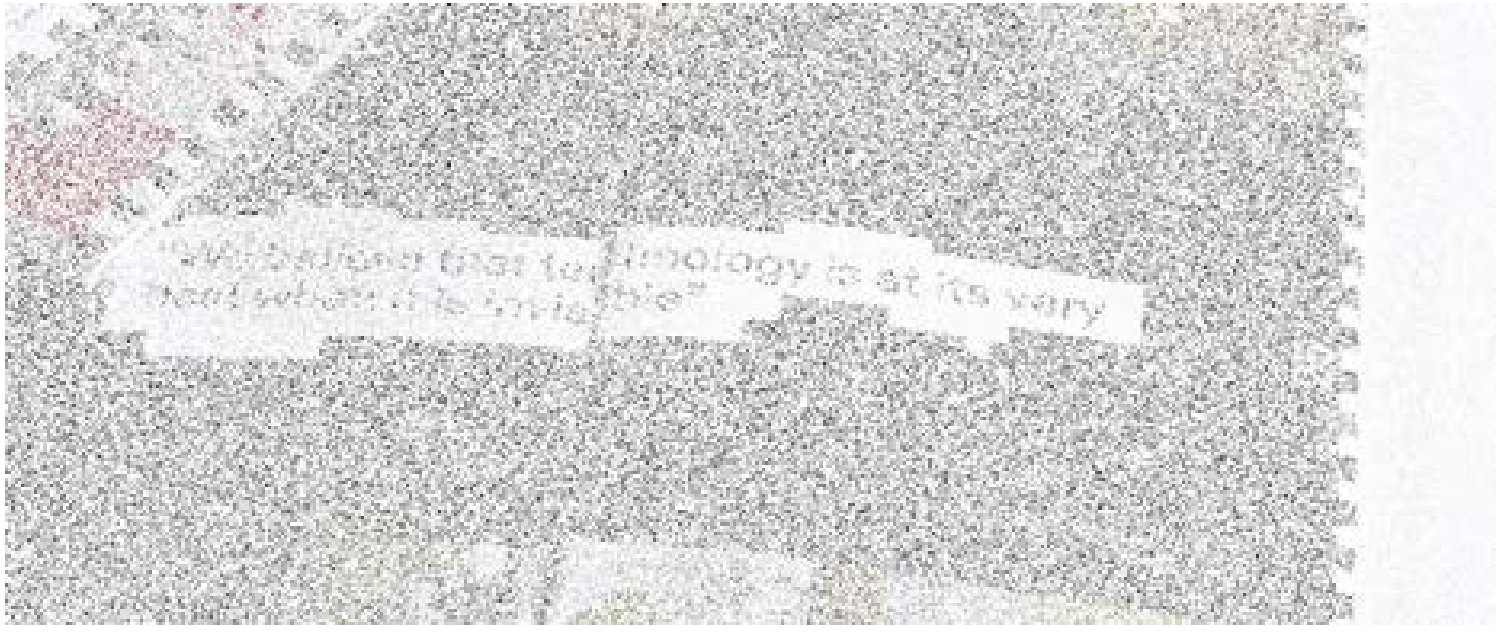
126,000 pixels



iteration 22 432,000 pixels

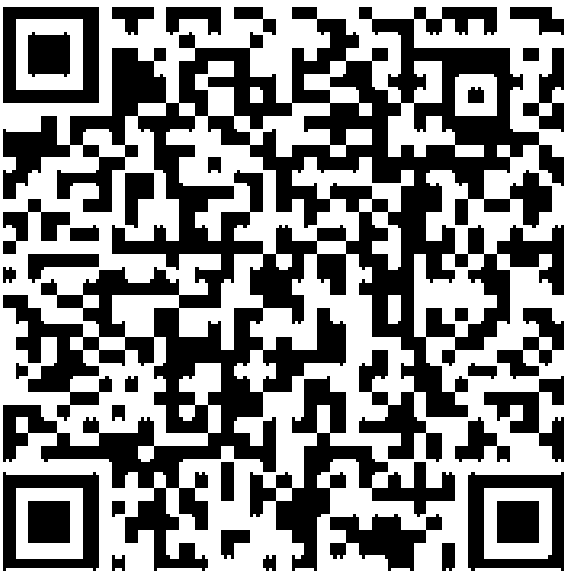


iteration 23 138,000 pixels



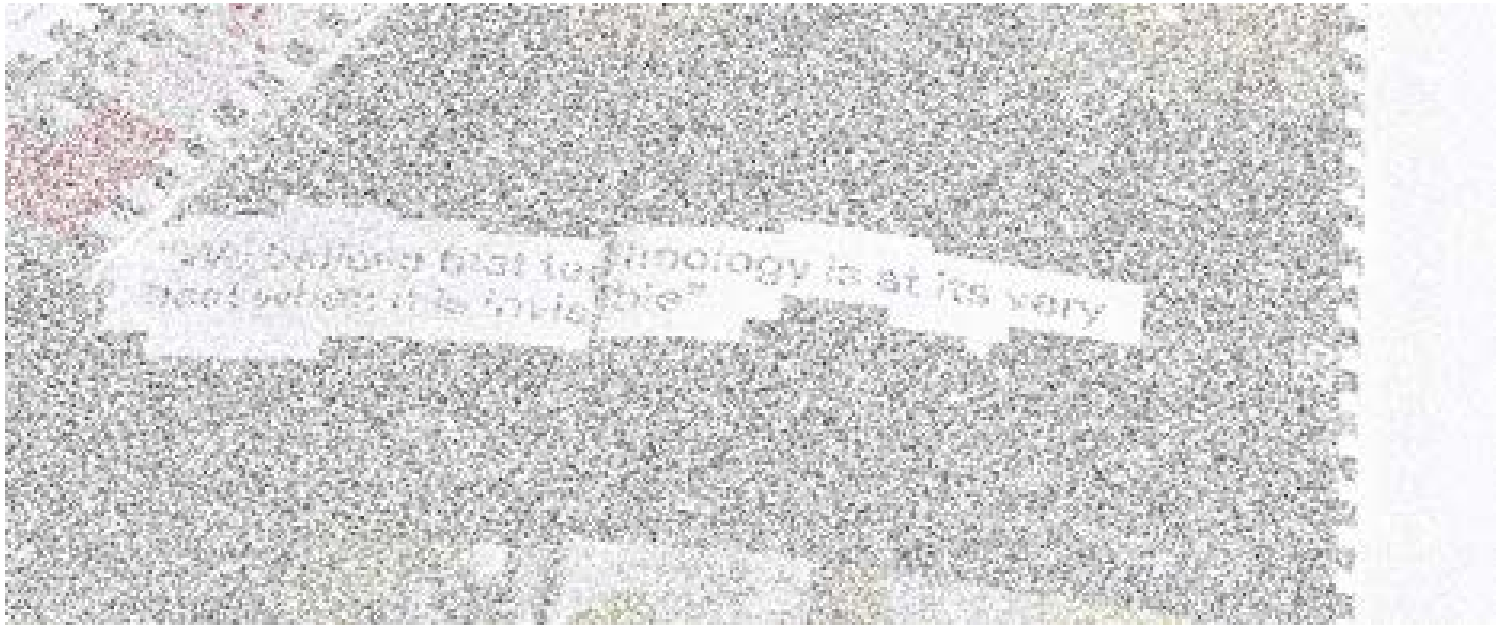
iteration 24

144,000 pixels



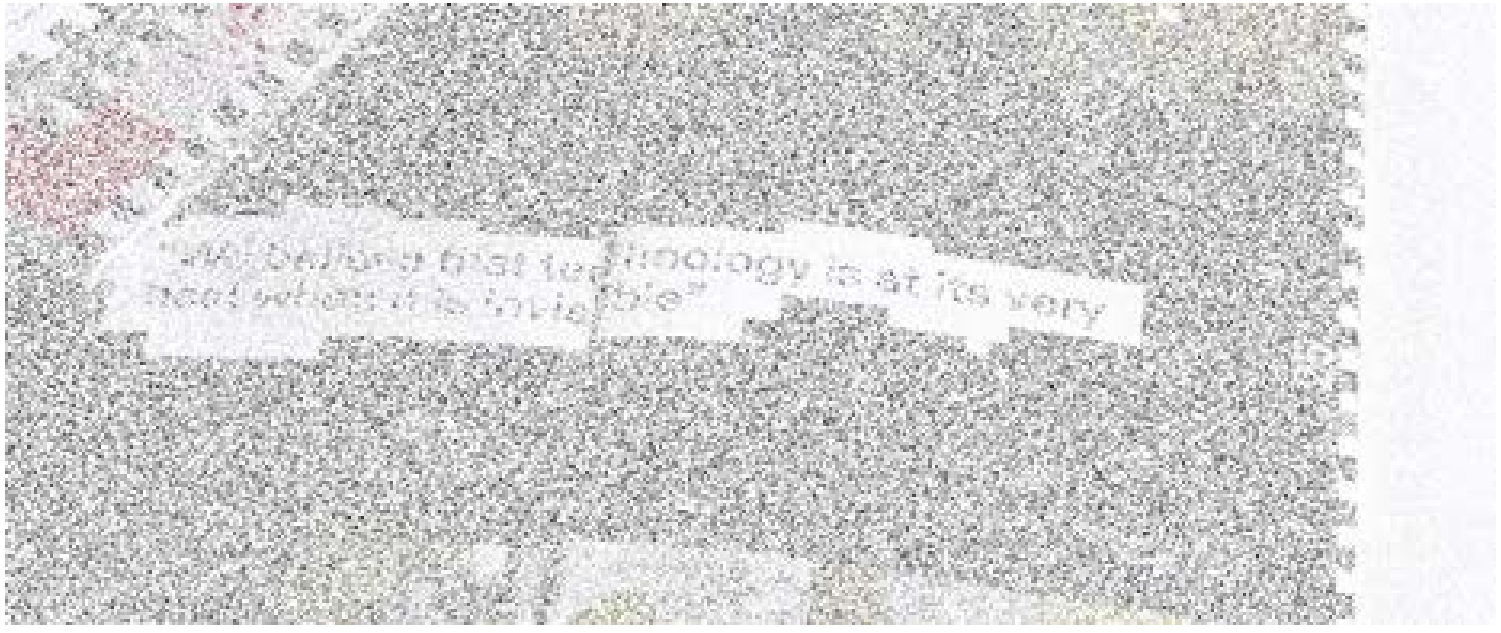
iteration 25

150,000 pixels

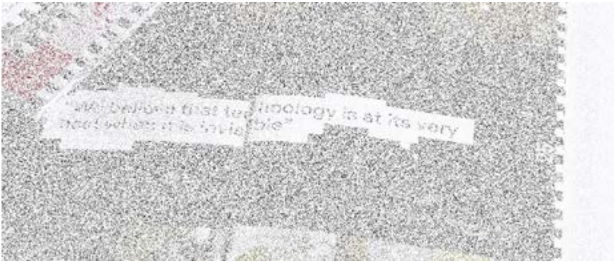


iteration 26

156,000 pixels

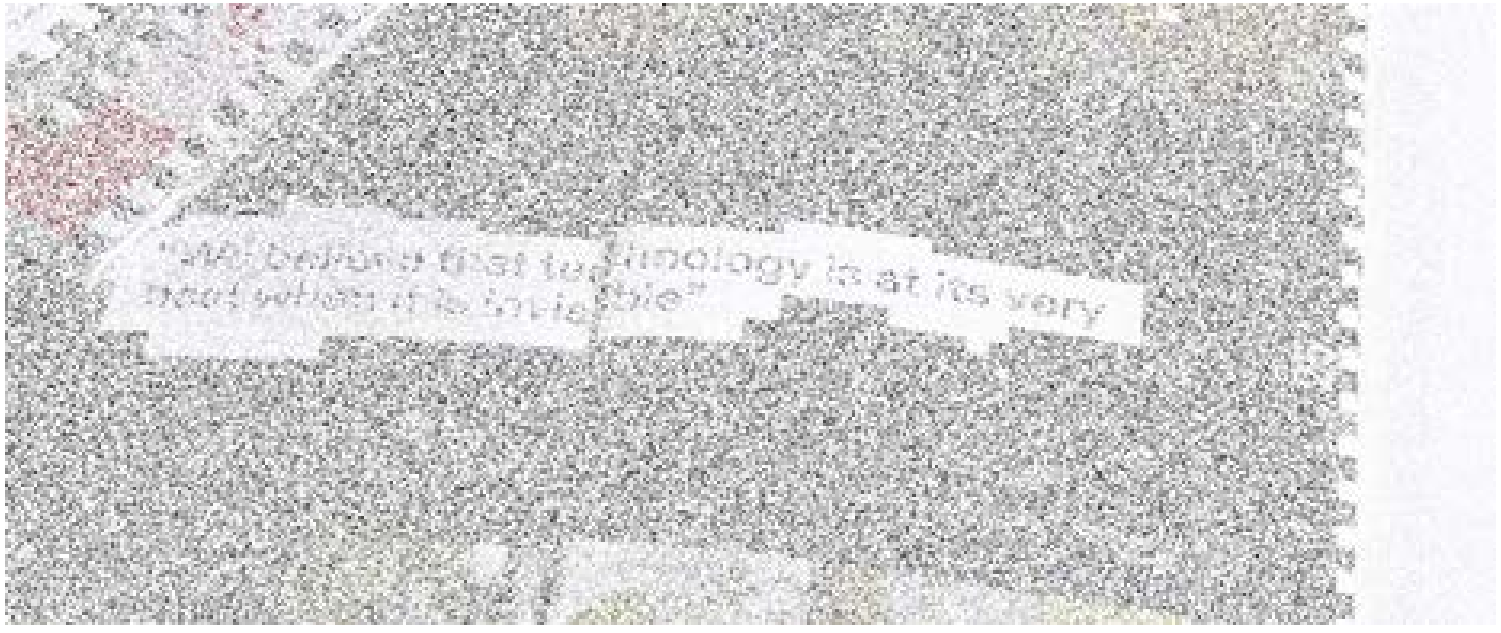


iteration 27 162,000 pixels



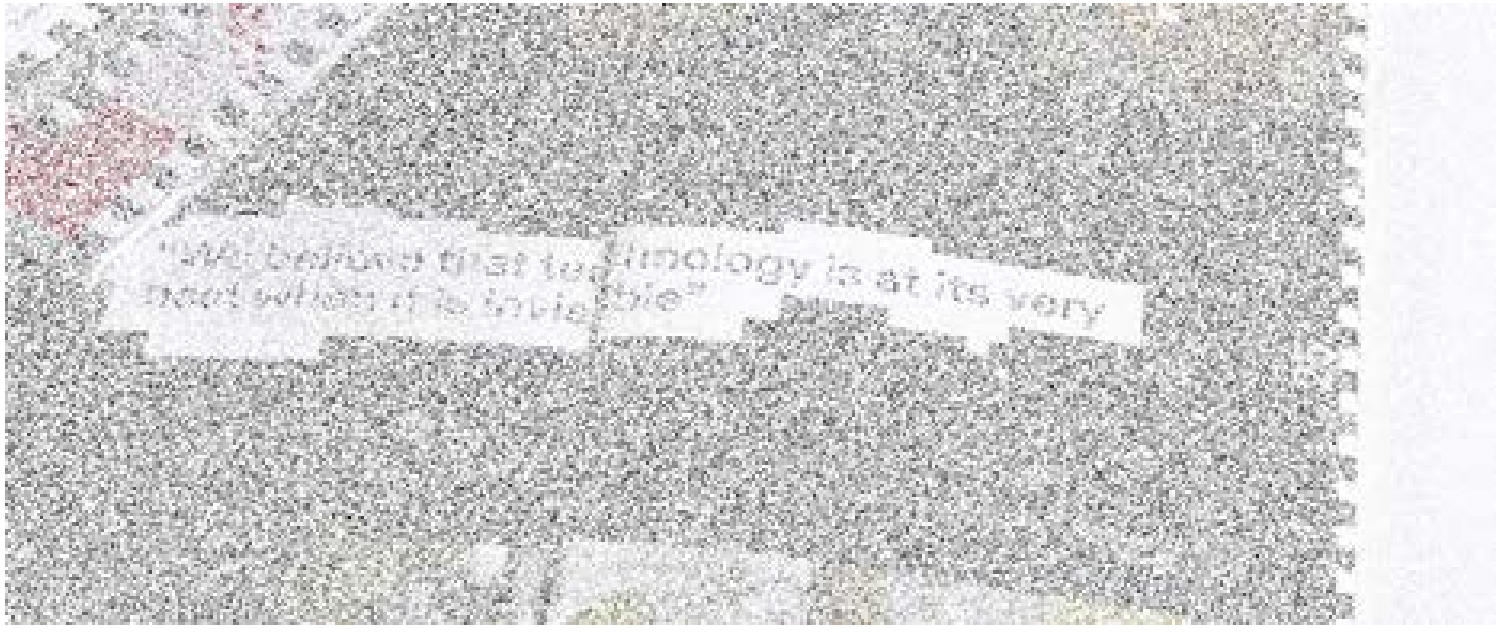
iteration 28

458,000 pixels



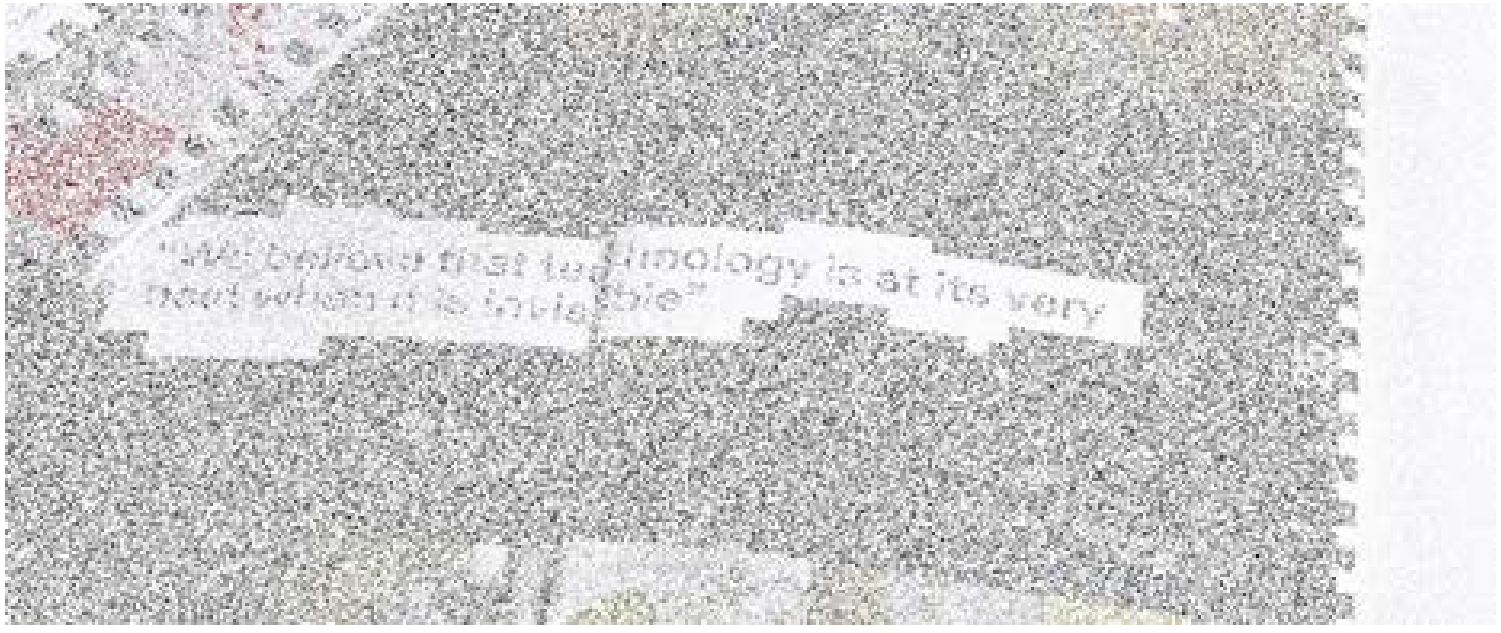
iteration 25

174,000 pixels



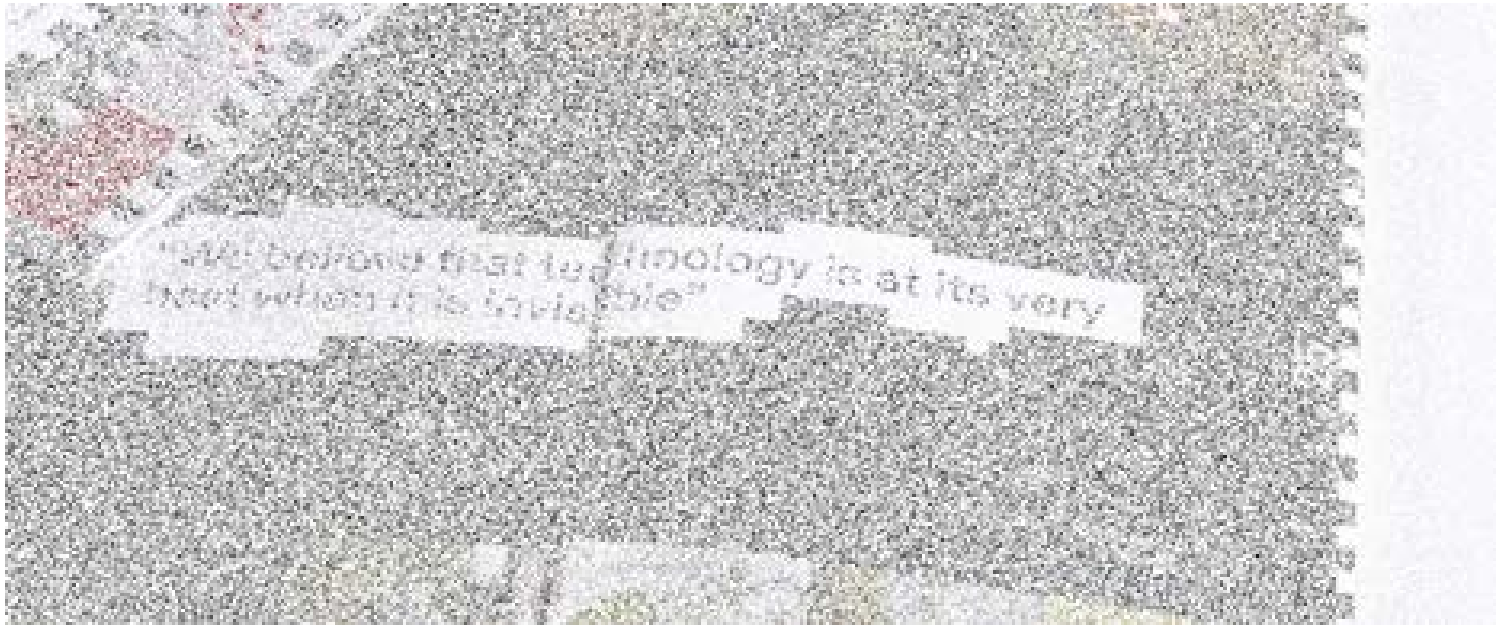
iteration 80

180,000 pixels



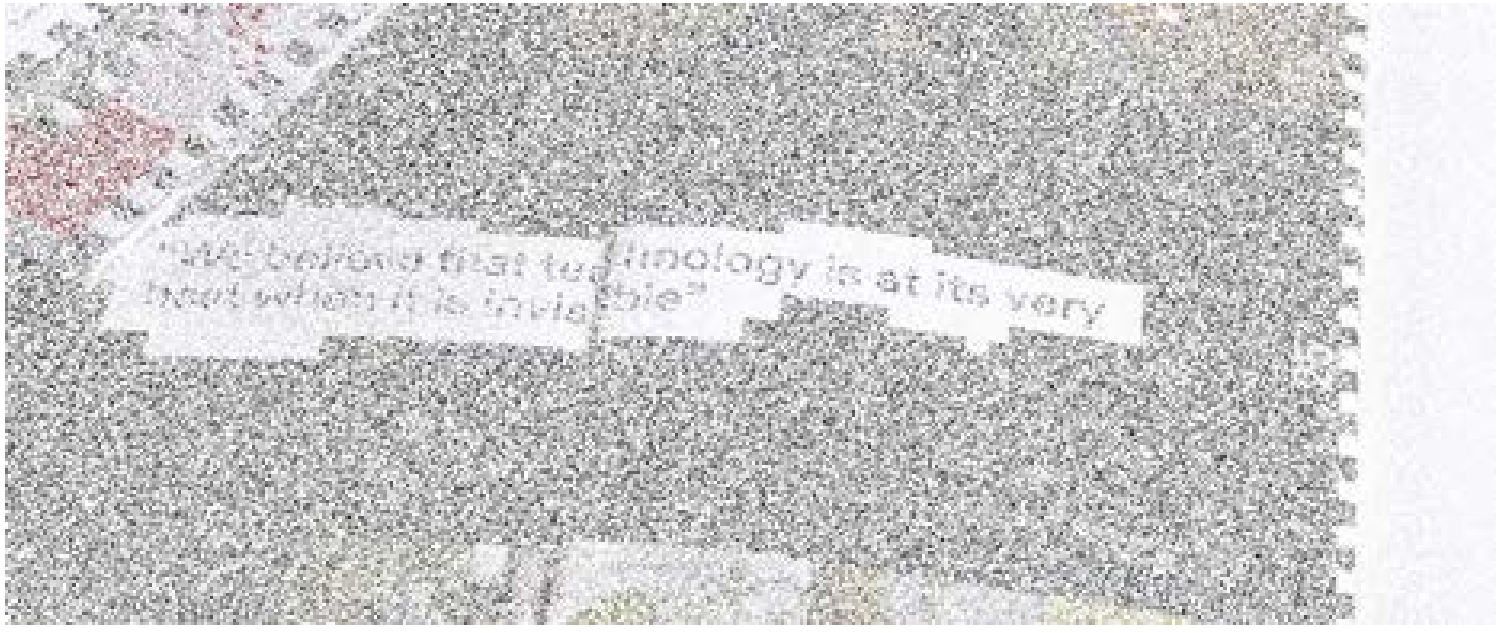
iteration 31

186,000 pixels



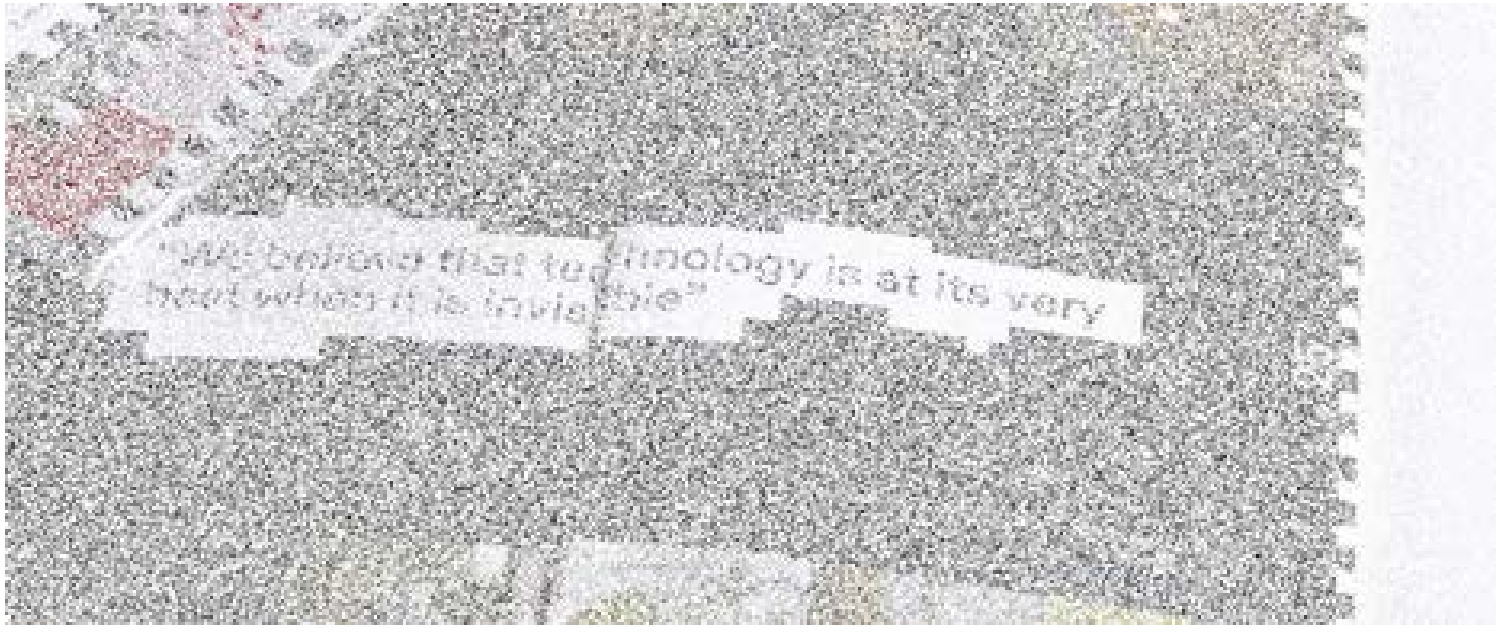
iteration 32

192,000 pixels



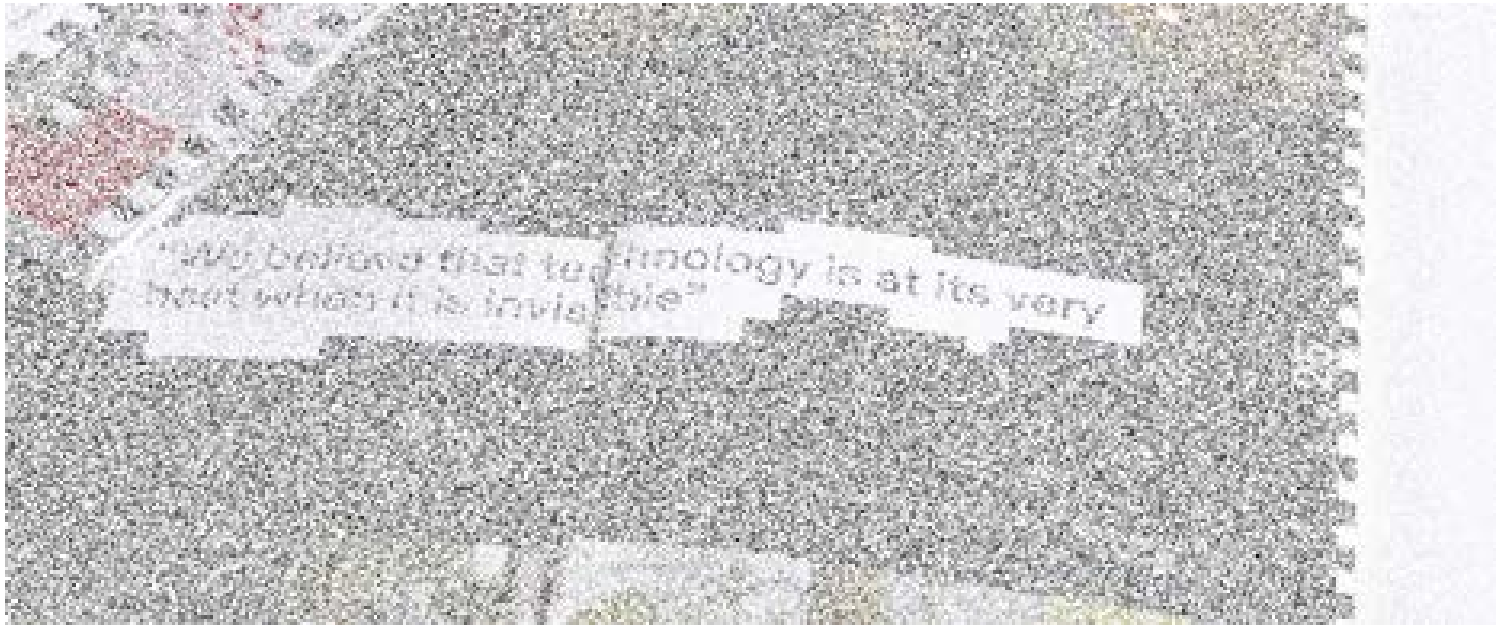
iteration 33

198,000 pixels



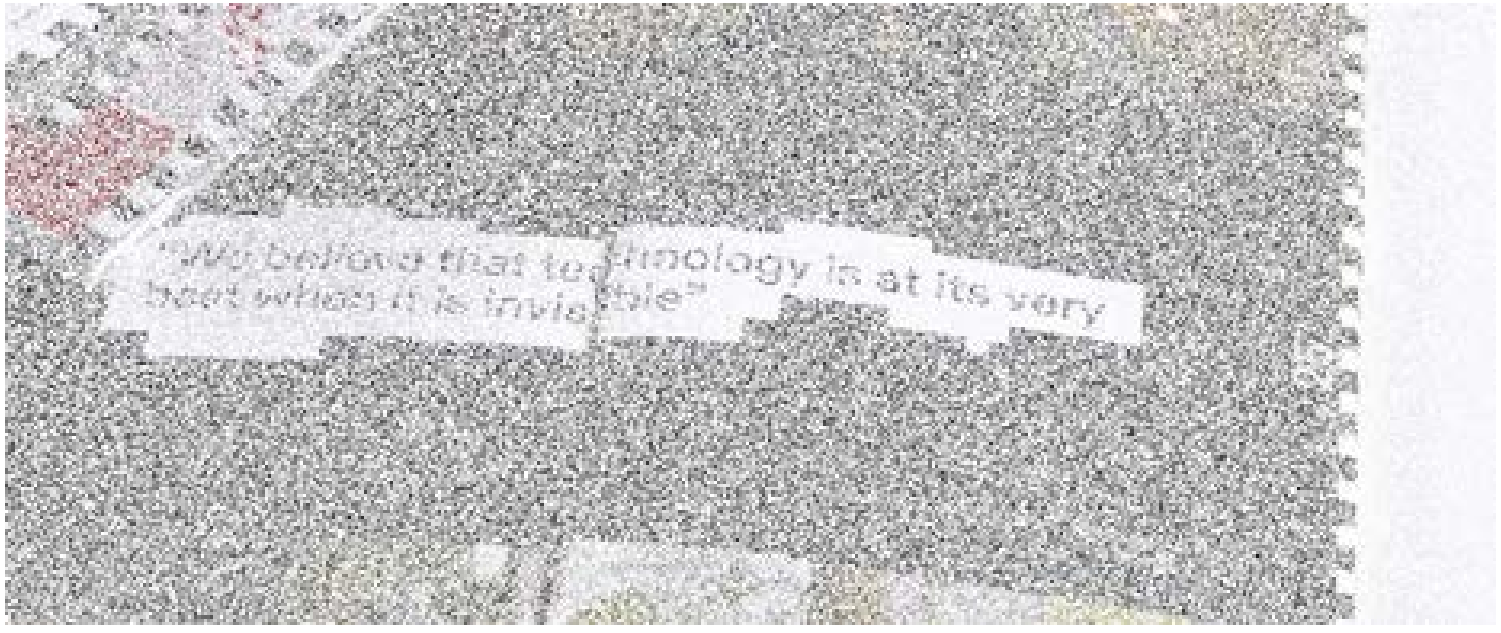
iteration 34

204,000 pixels

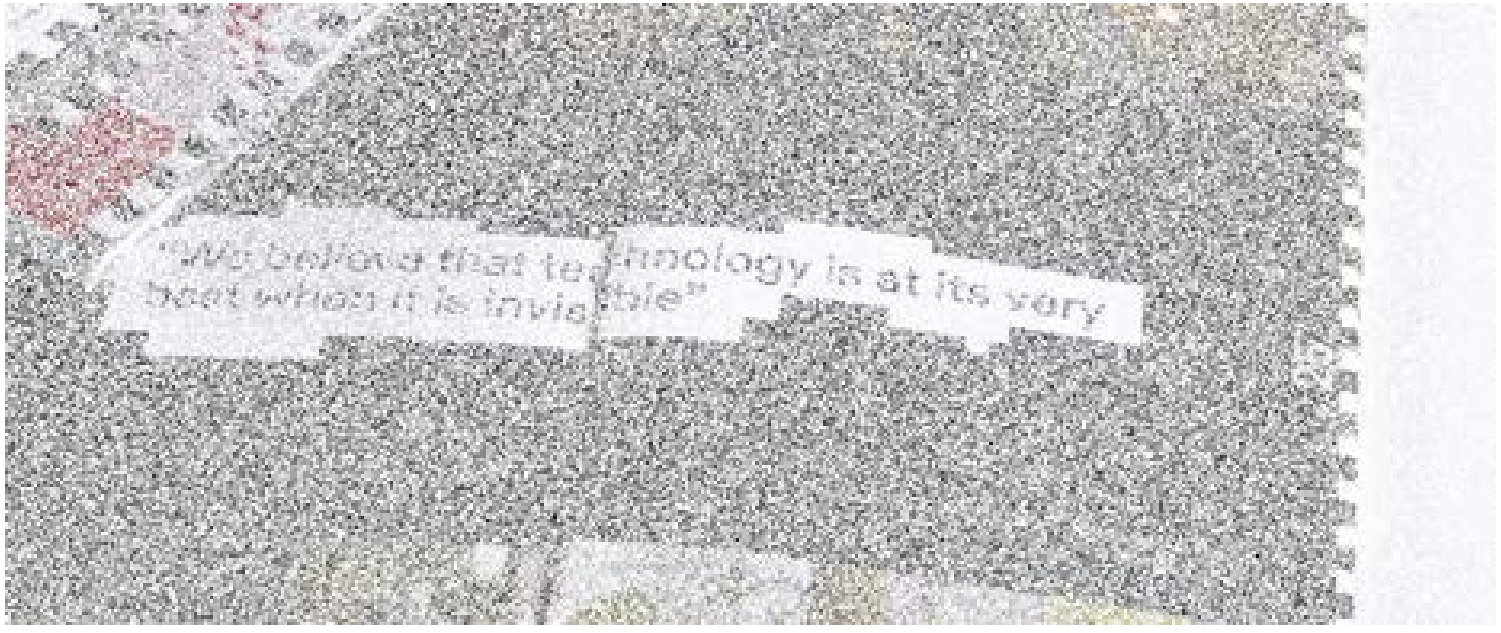


iteration 35

210,000 pixels

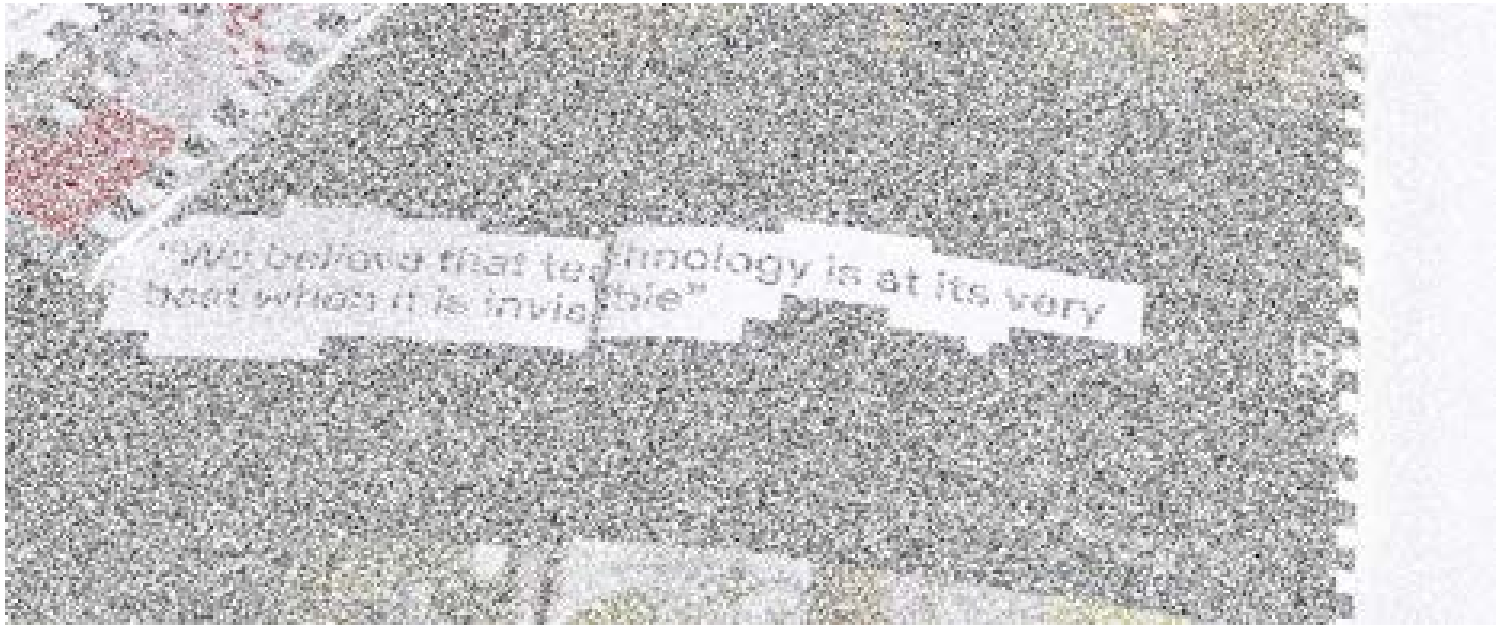


iteration 86 216,000 pixels



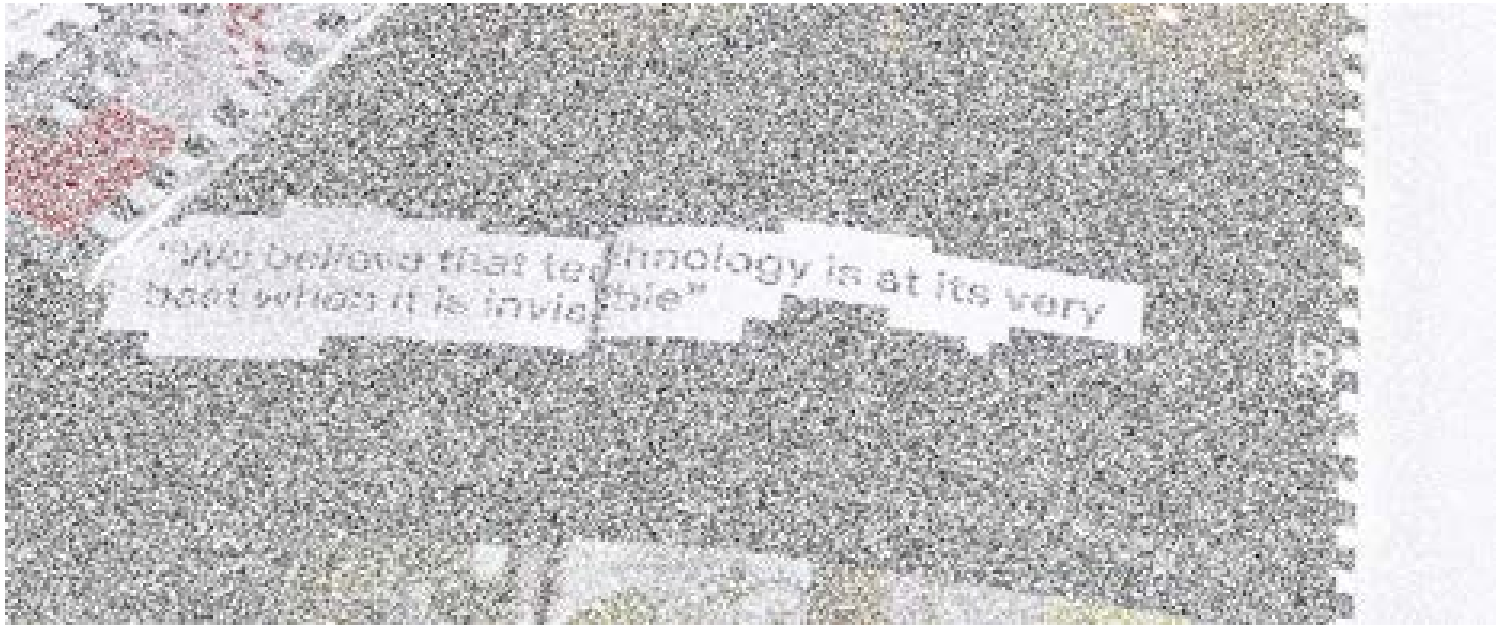
iteration 87

222,000 pixels



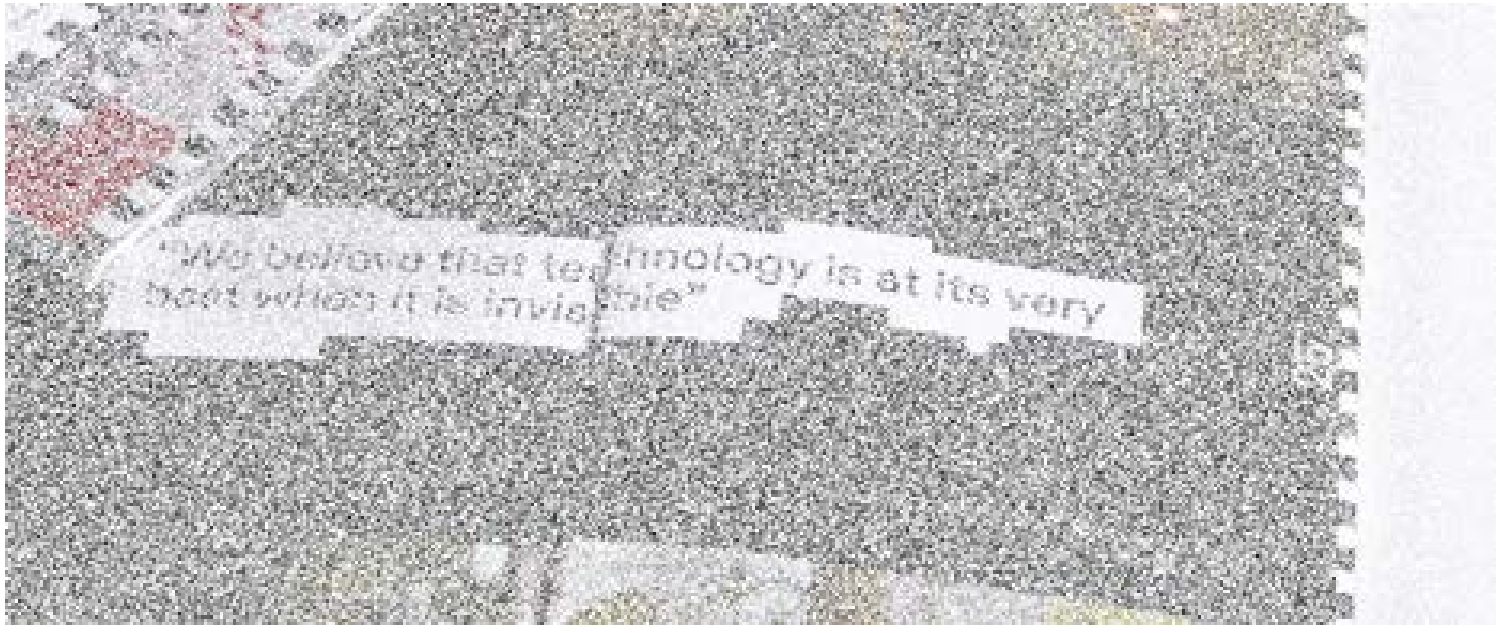
iteration 88

228,000 pixels



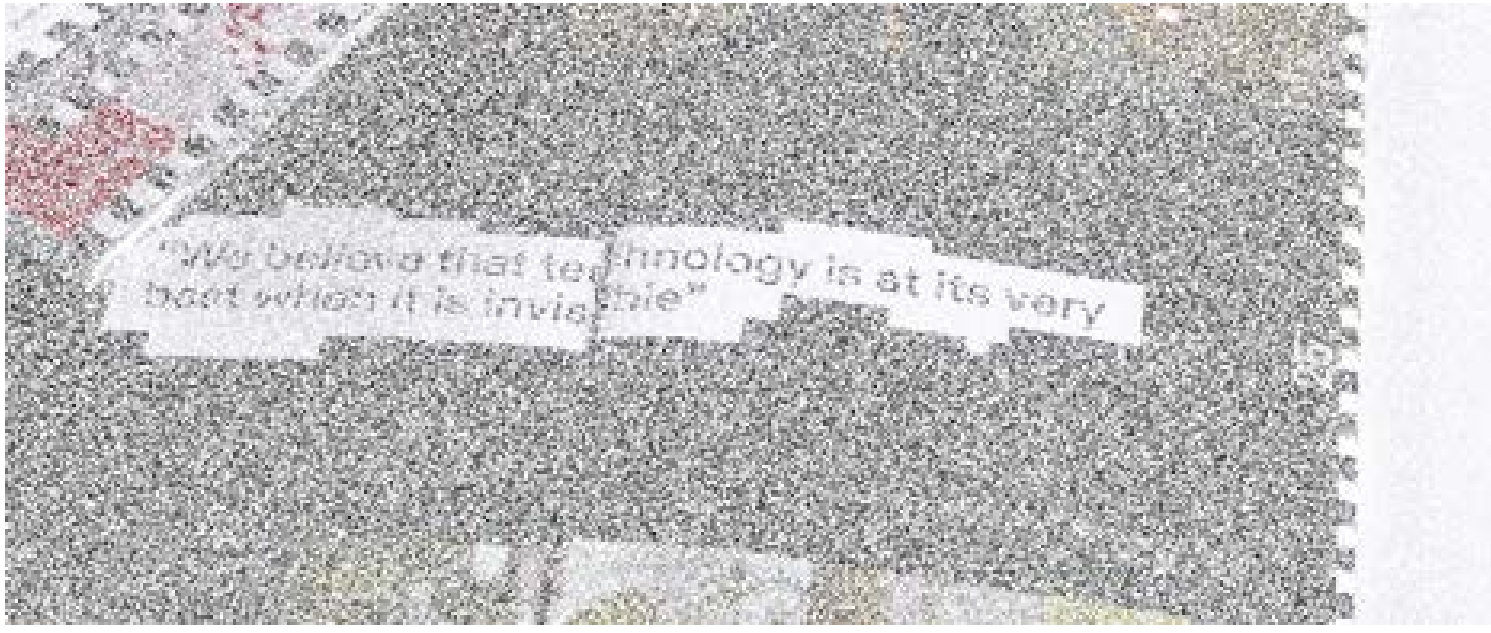
iteration 88

234,000 pixels



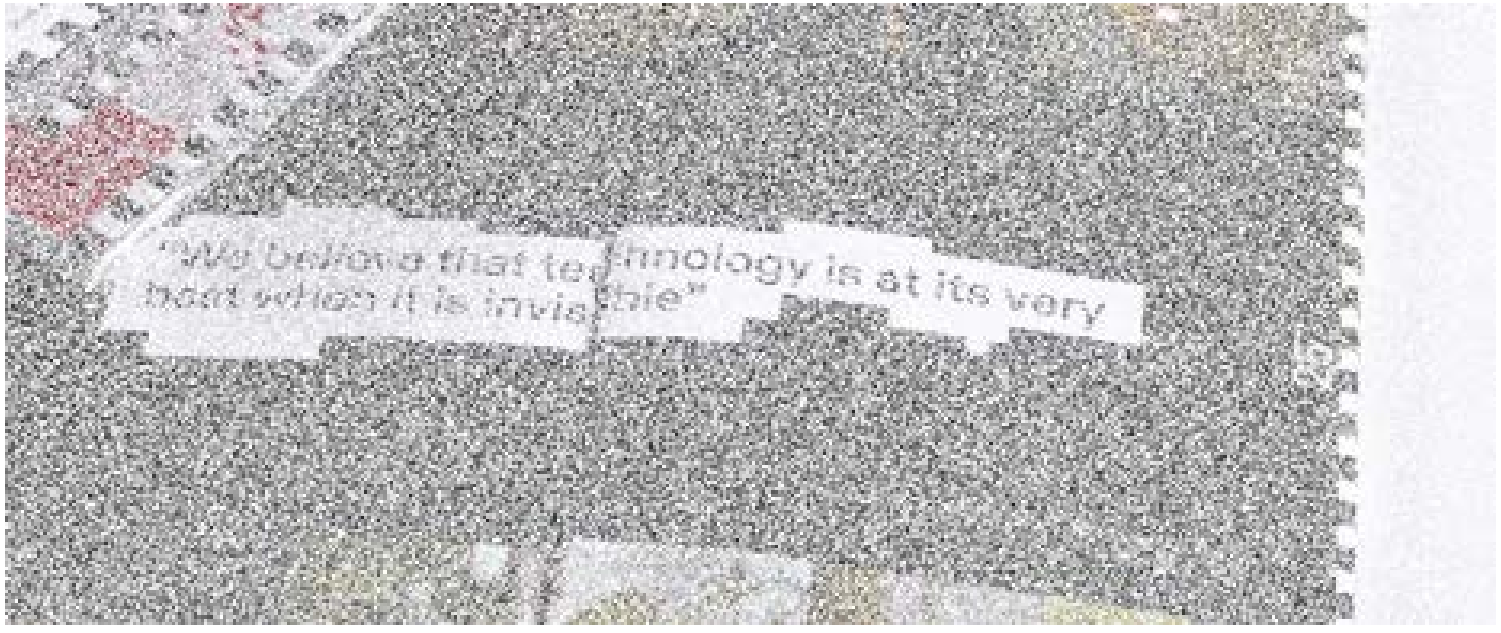
iteration 40

240,000 pixels



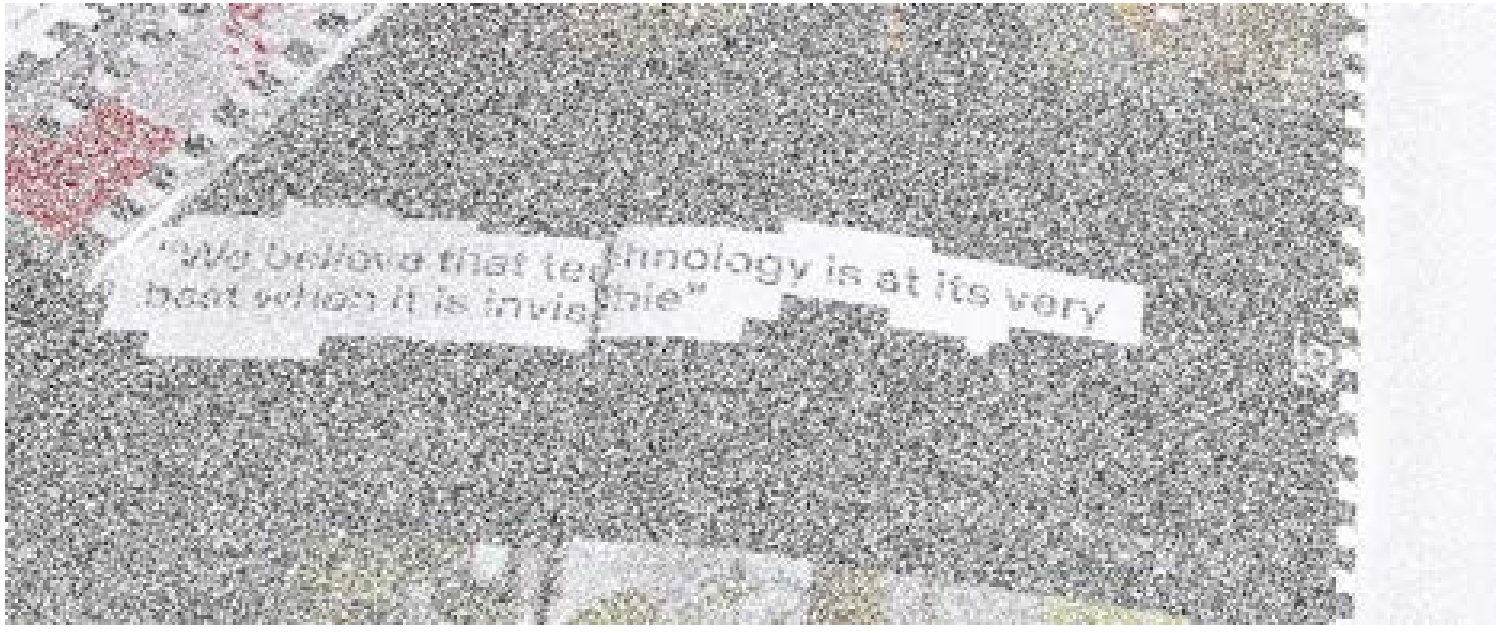
iteration 41

246,000 pixels



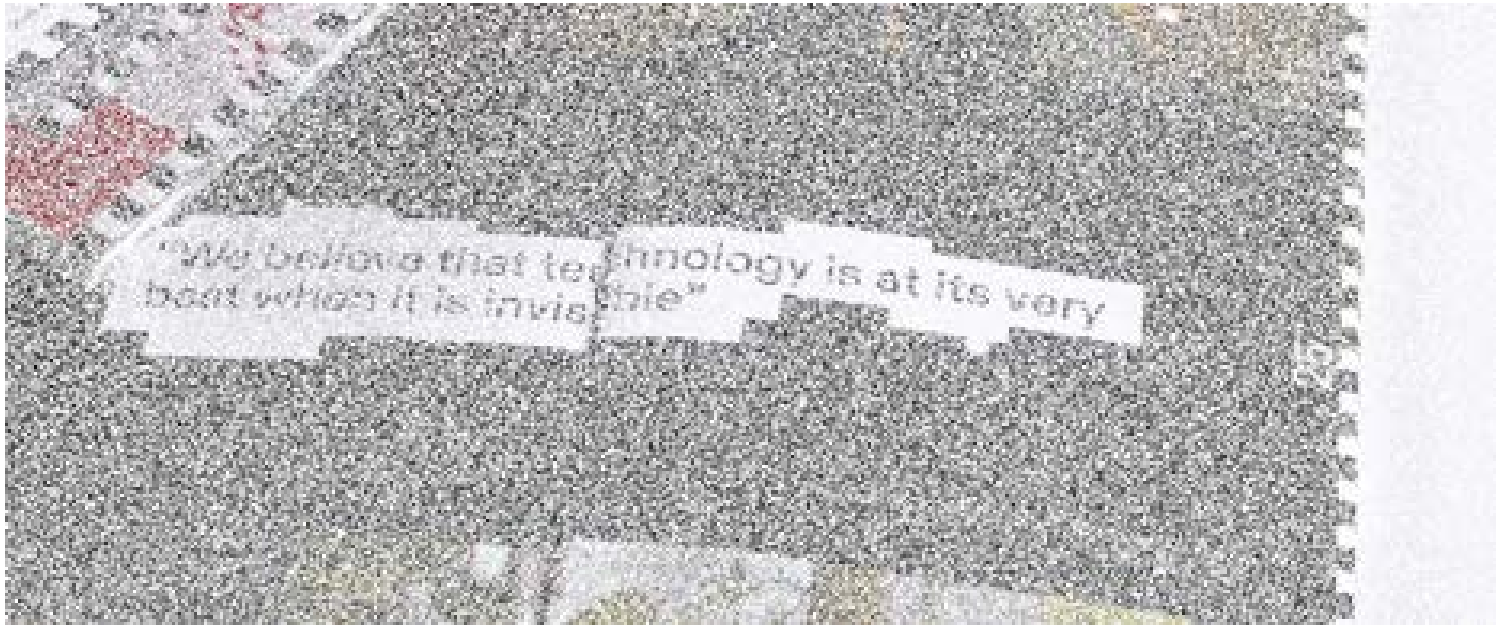
iteration 42

252,000 pixels



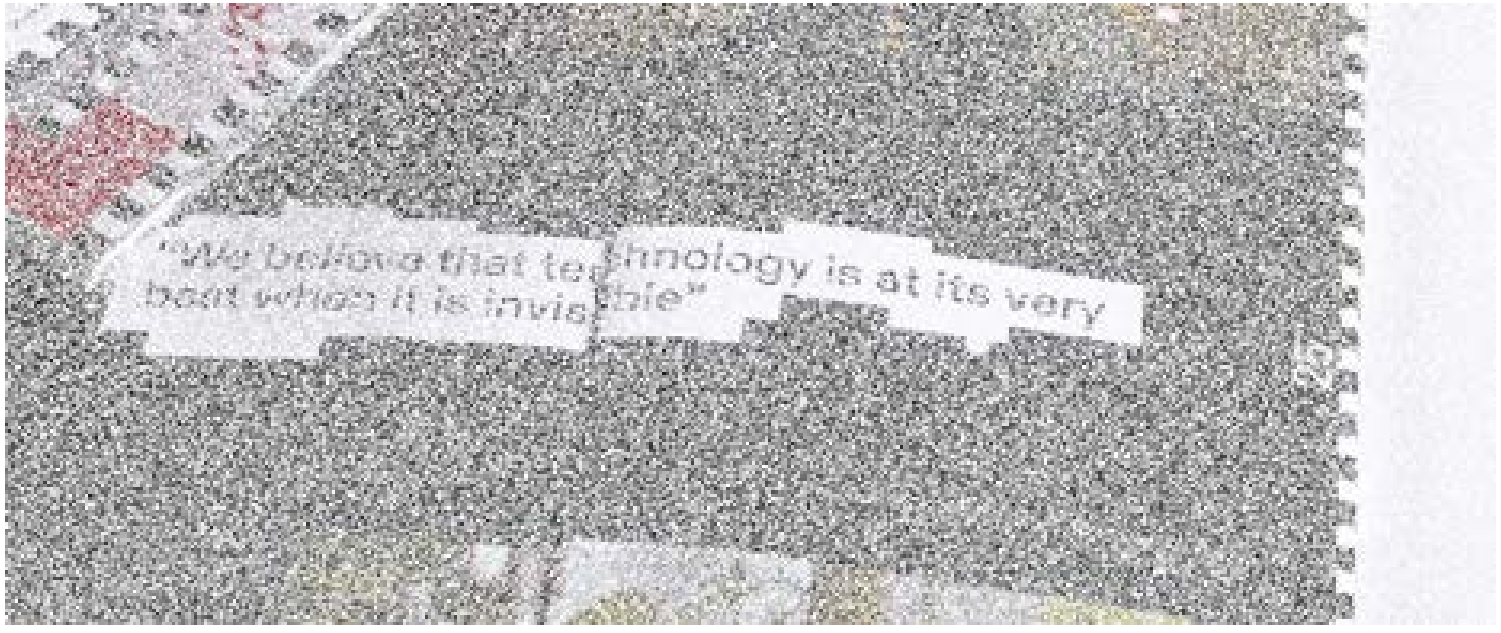
iteration 43

258,000 pixels



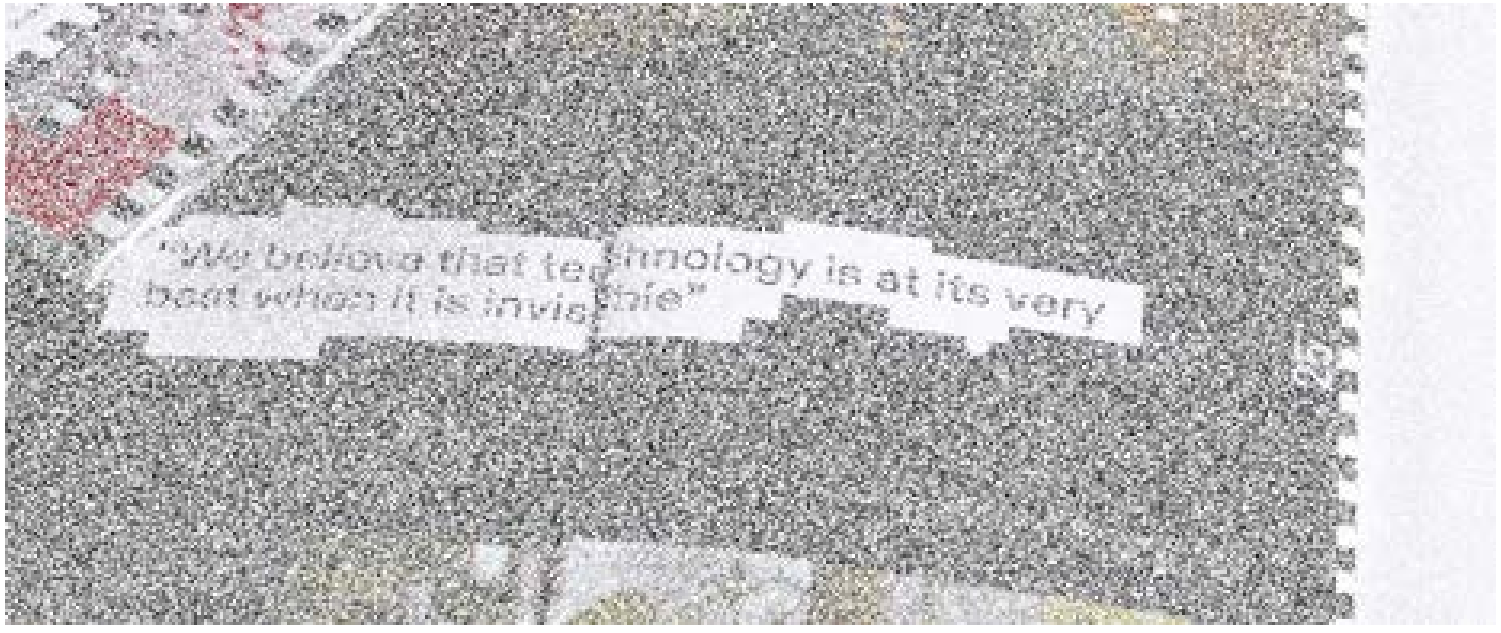
iteration 44

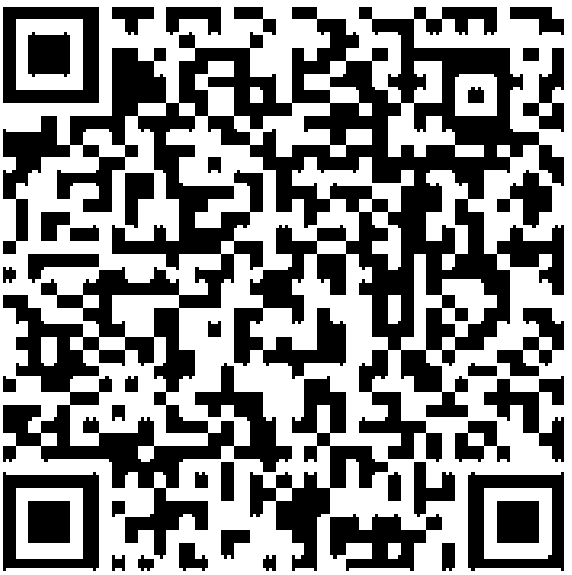
2s4,000 pixels



iteration 45

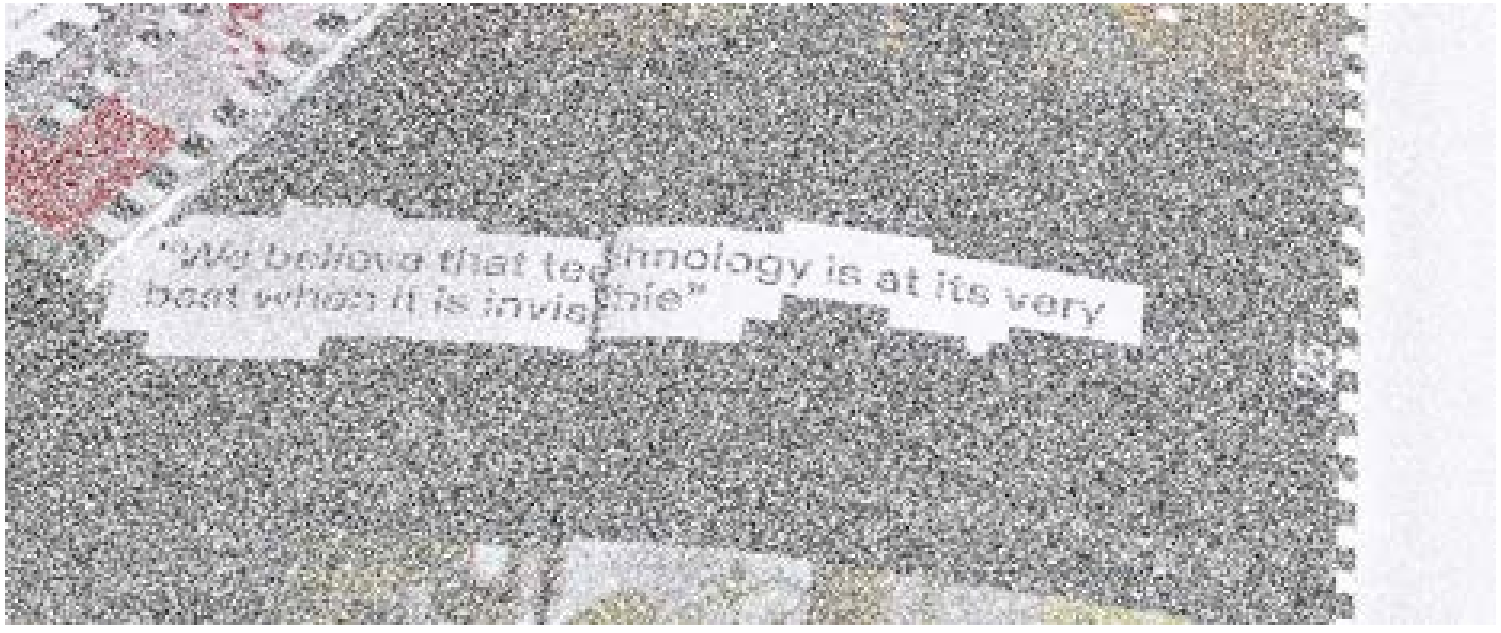
270,000 pixels





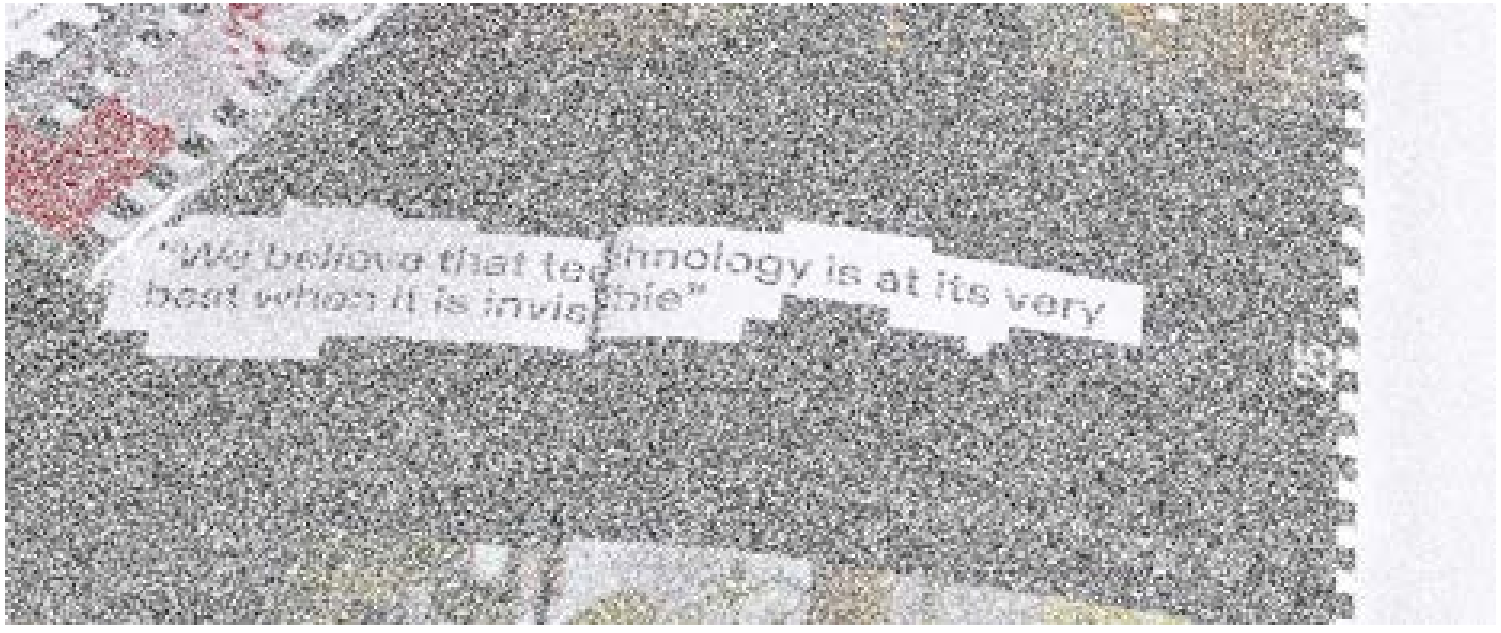
iteration 46

276,000 pixels



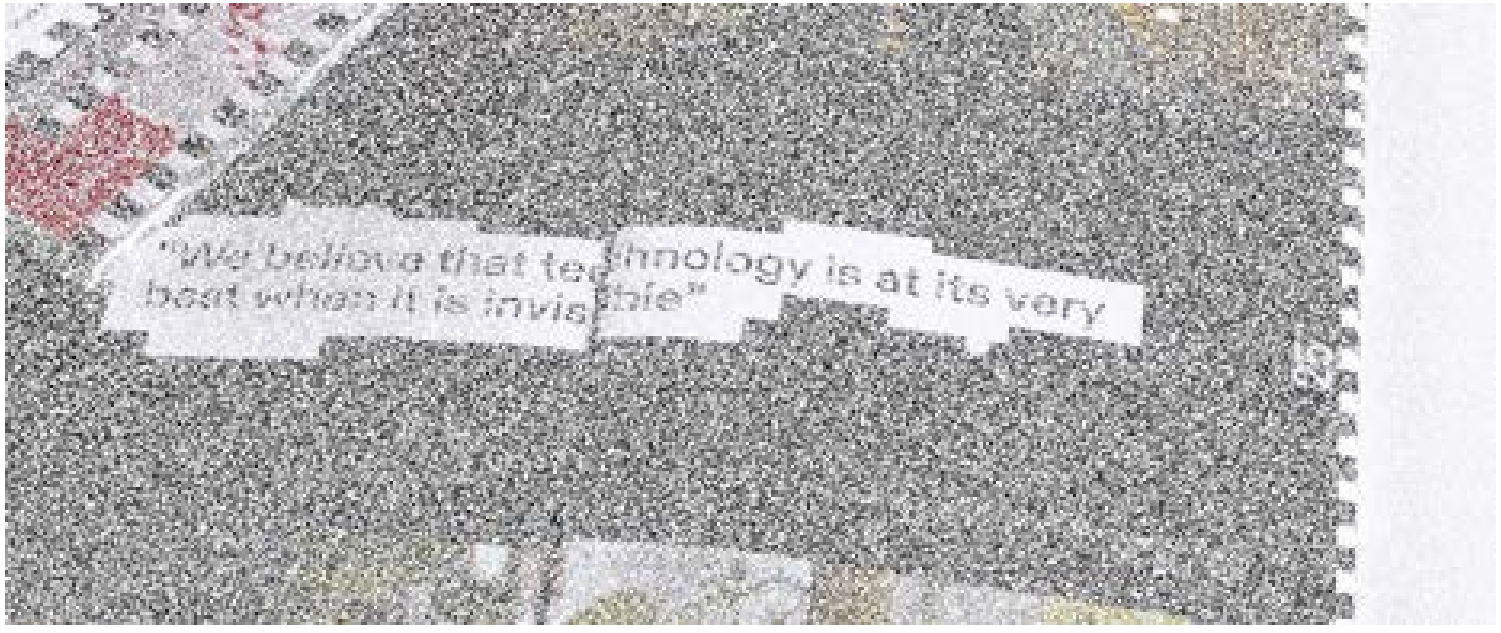
iteration 47

282,000 pixels



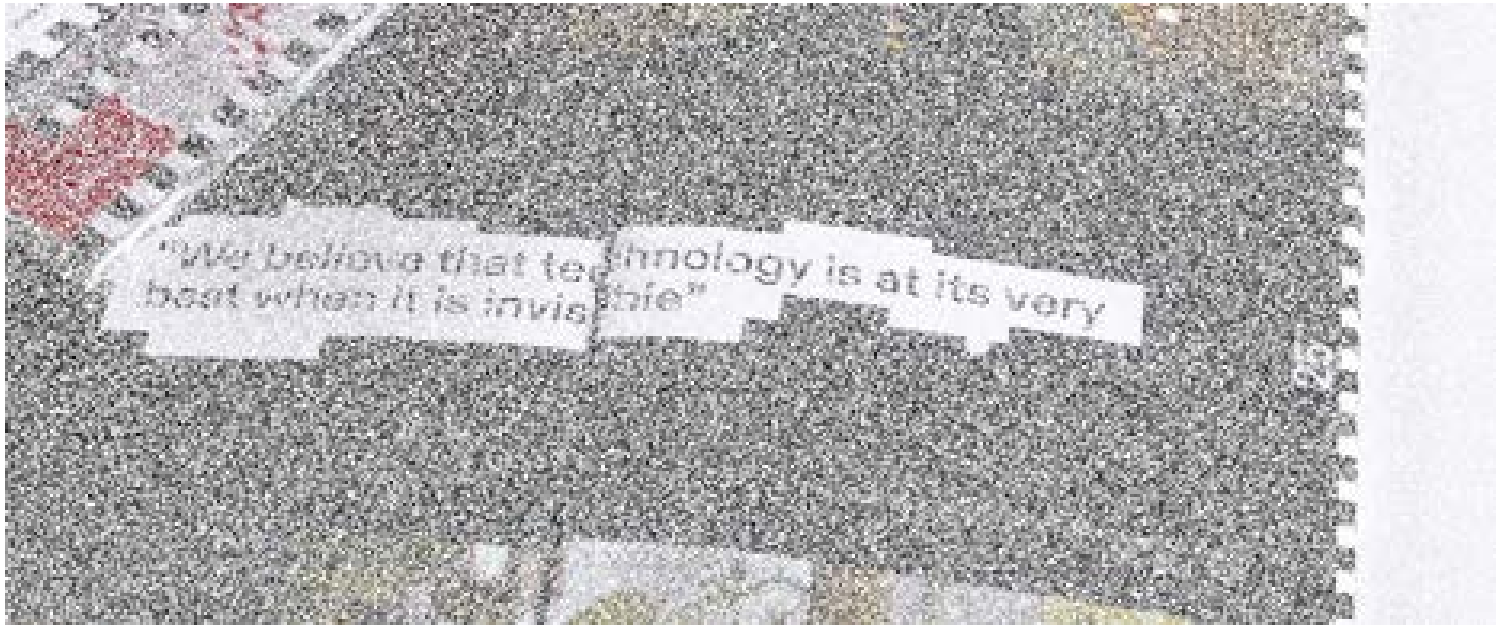
iteration 48

288,000 pixels



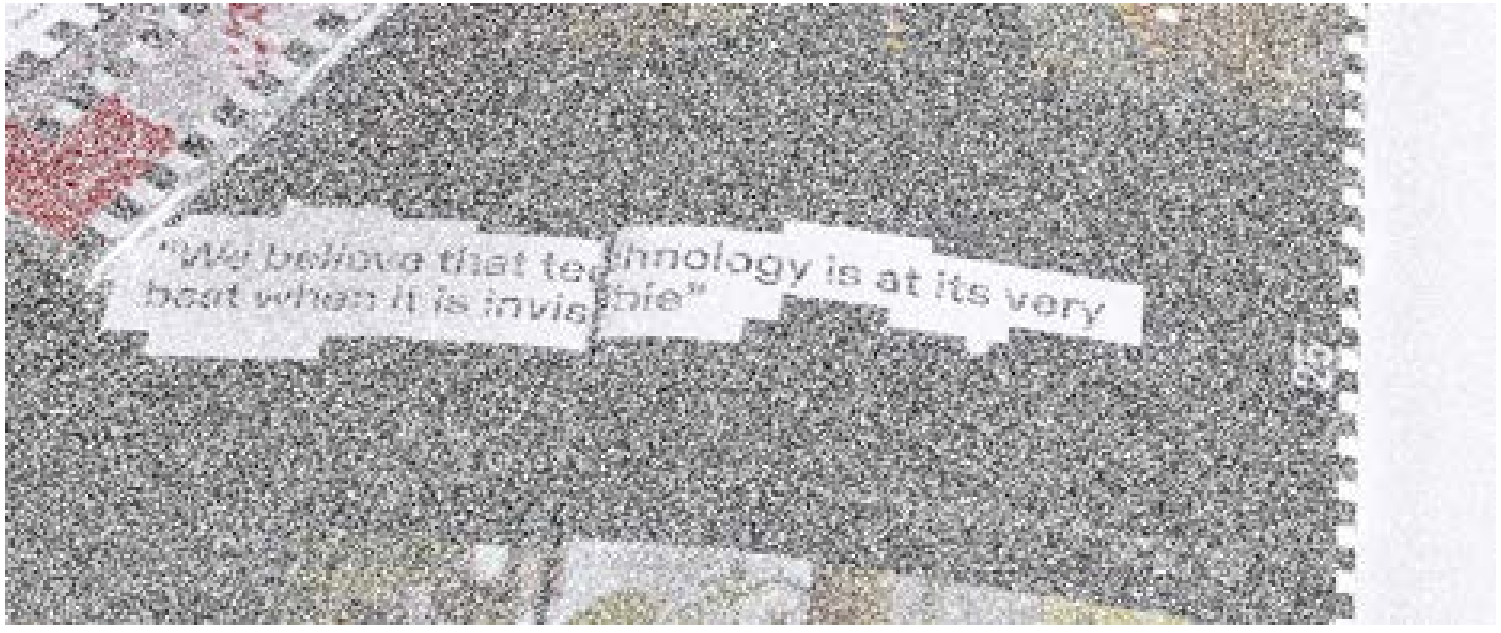
iteration 49

294,000 pixels



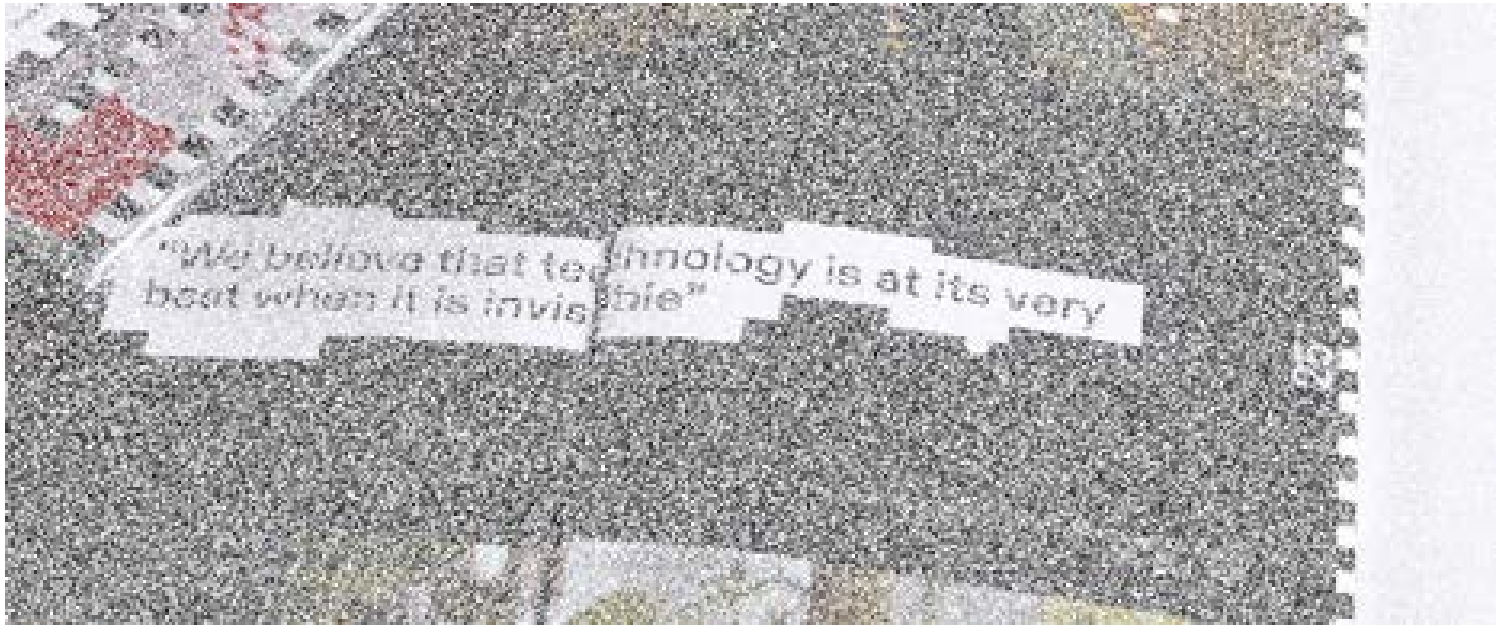
iteration 50

300,000 pixels



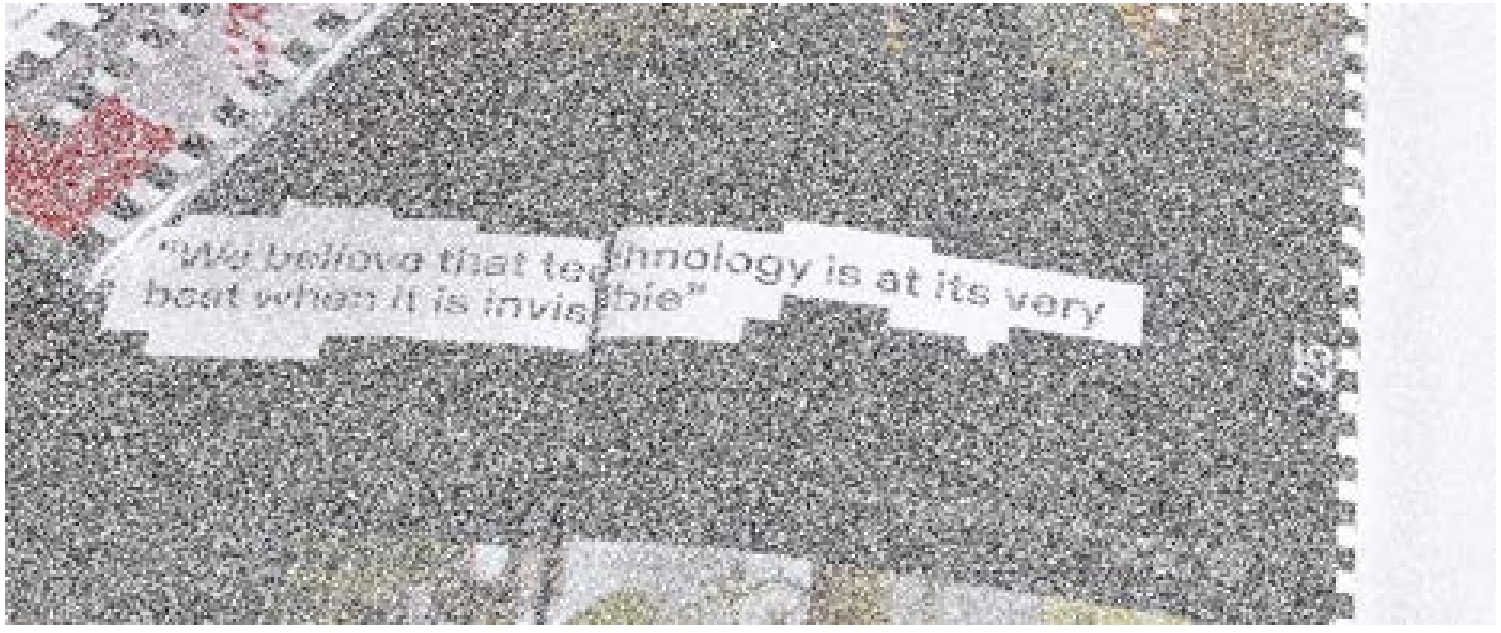
iteration 51

306,000 pixels



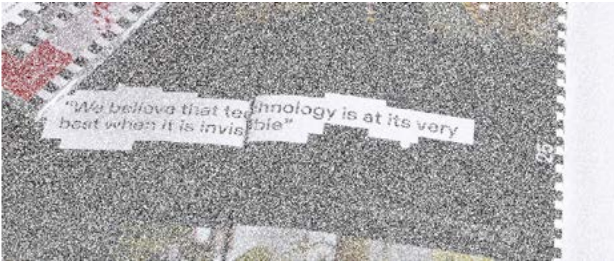
iteration 52

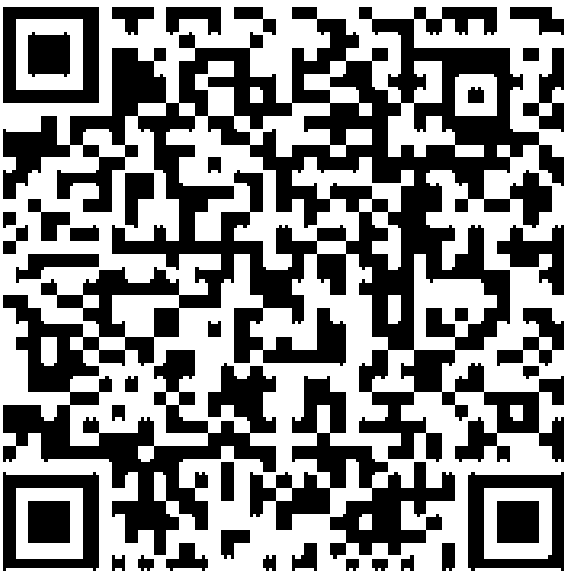
812,000 pixels



iteration 53

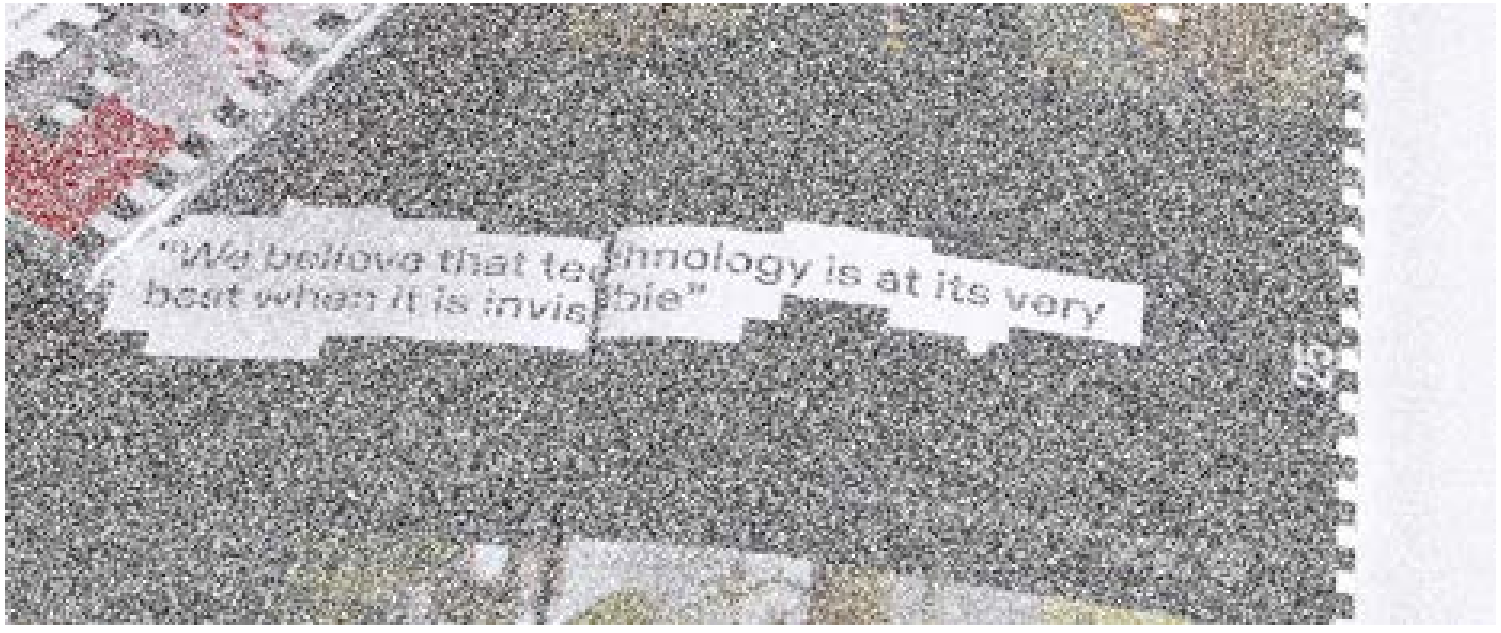
318.000 pixels



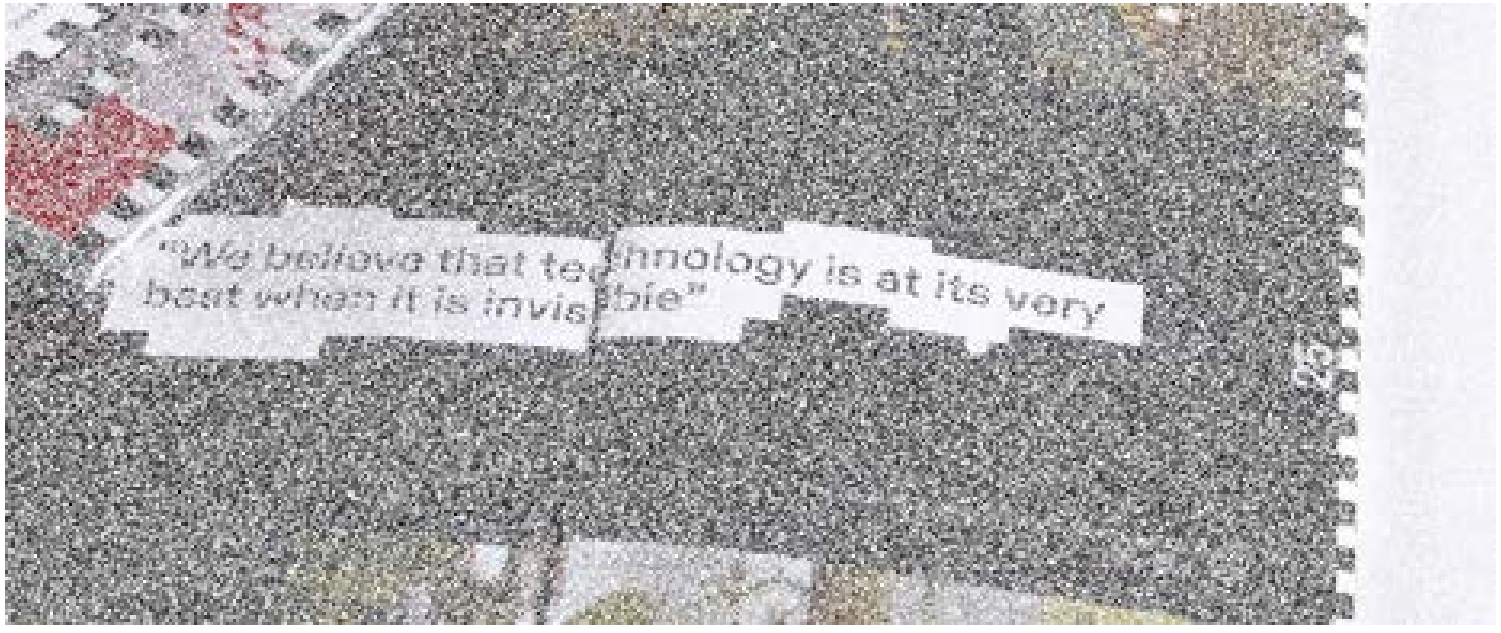


iteration 54

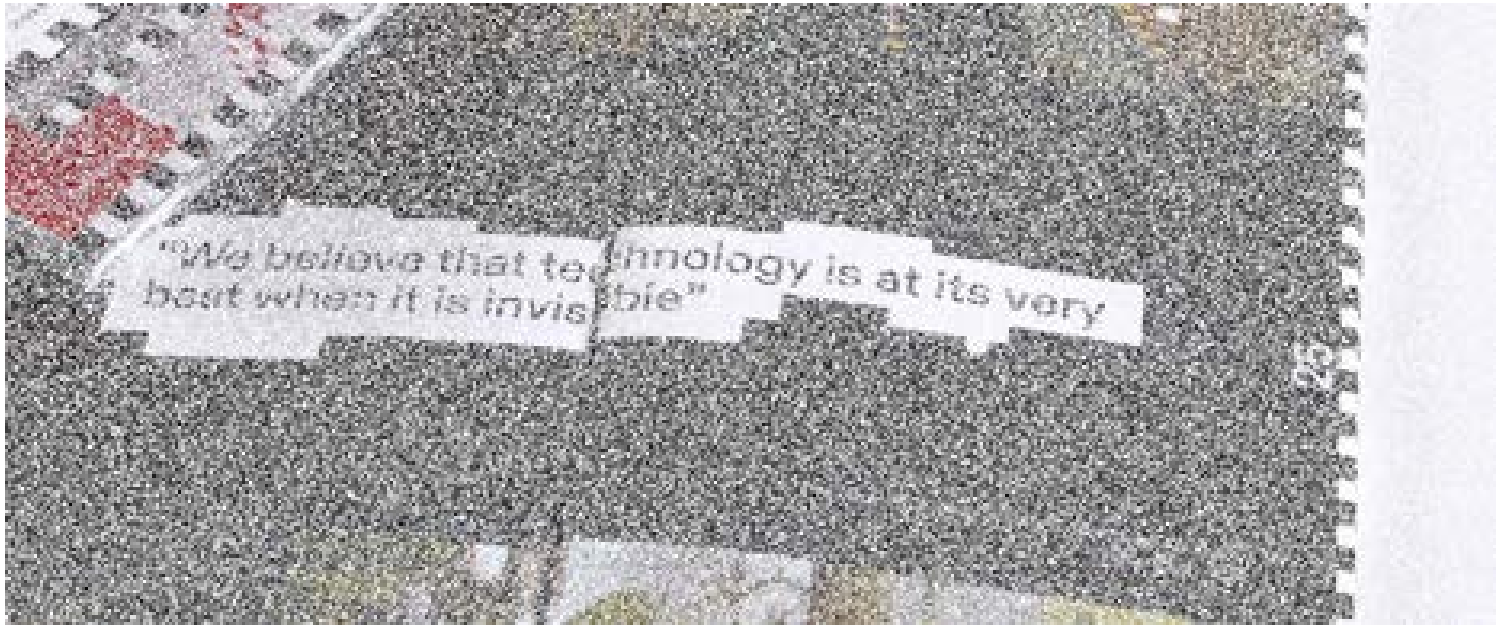
324,000 pixels



iteration 55 330,000 pixels

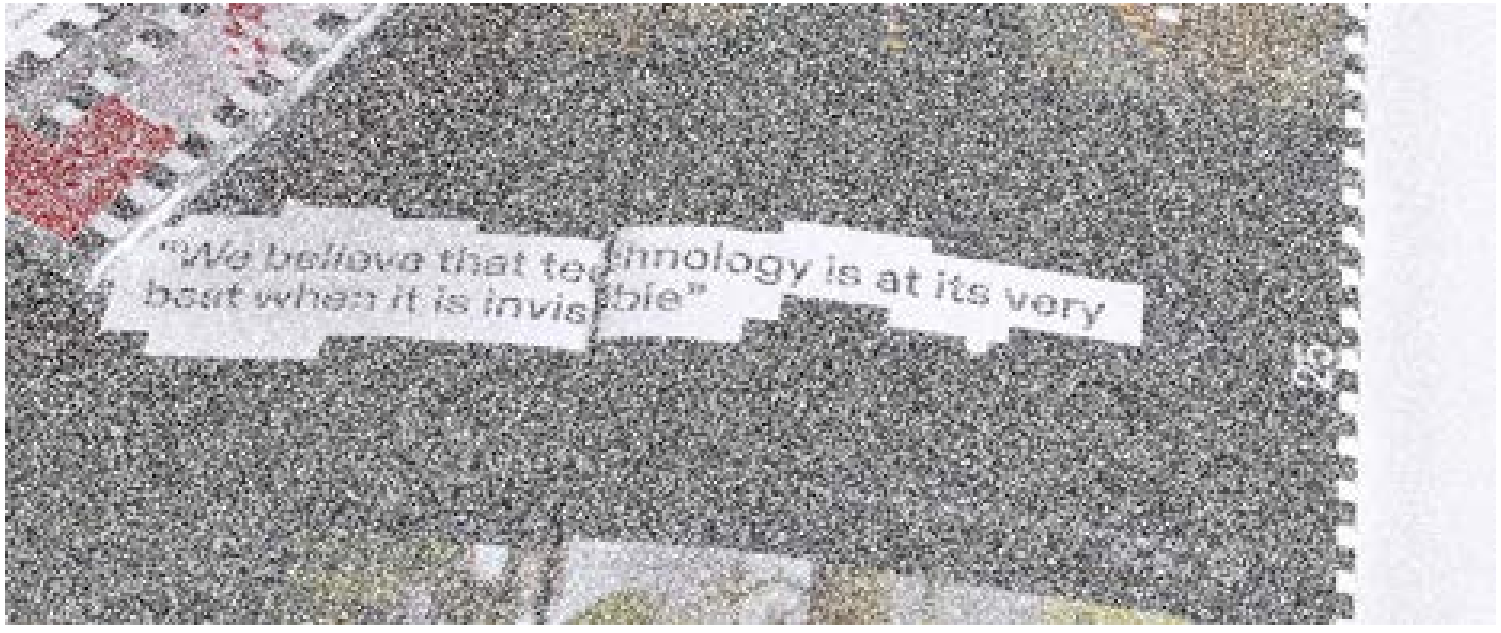


iteration 56 338,000 pixels



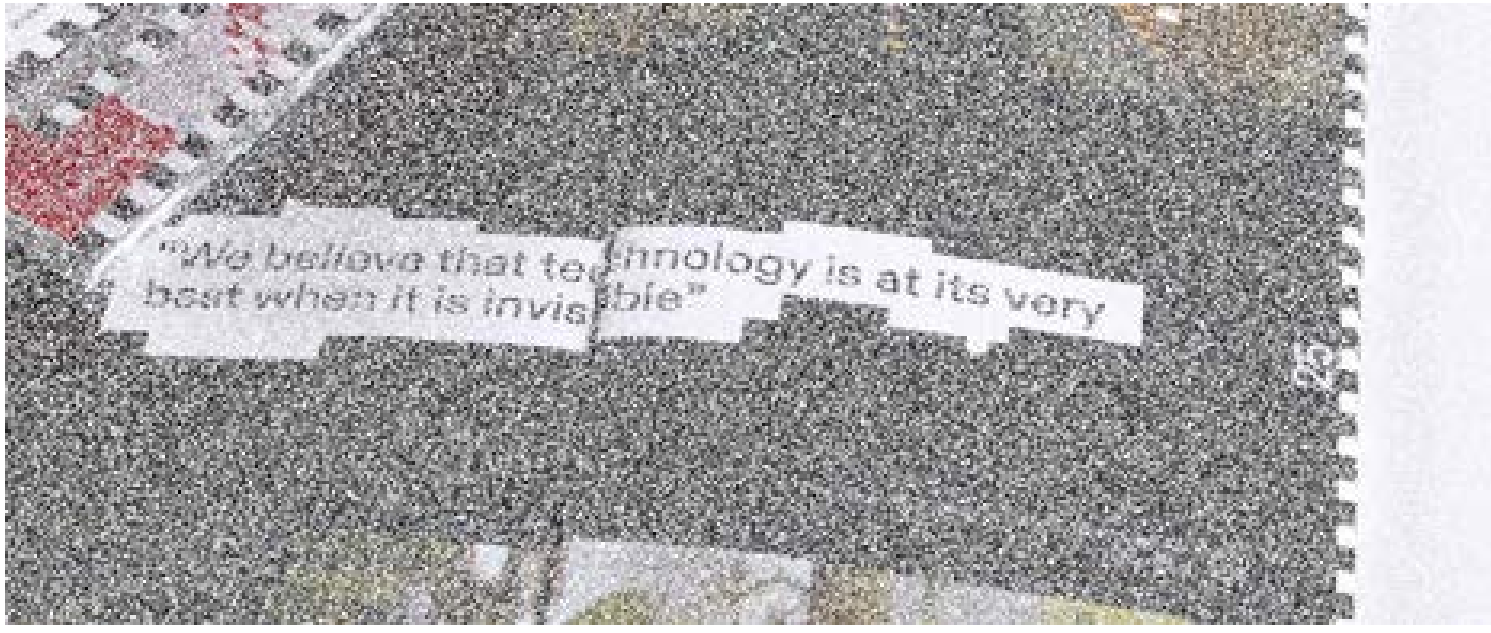
iteration 57

342,000 pixels



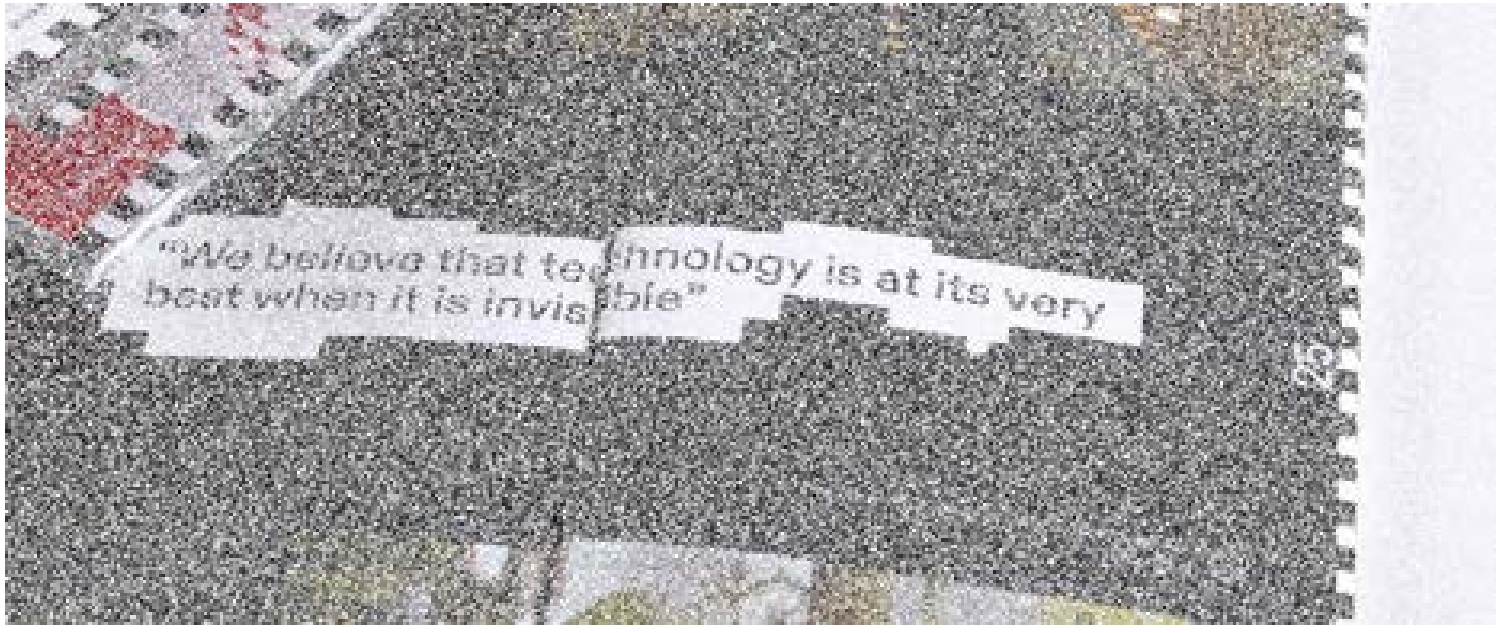
iteration 58

348,000 pixels



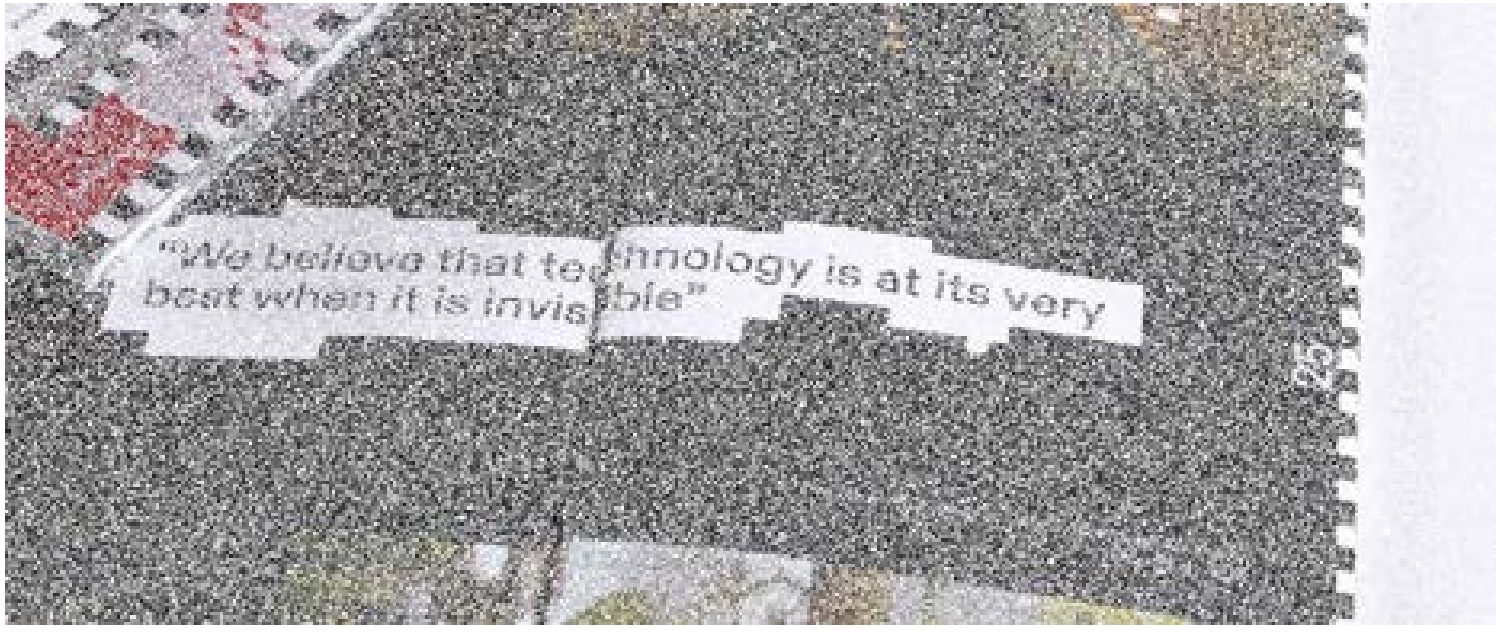
iteration 58

854,000 pixels

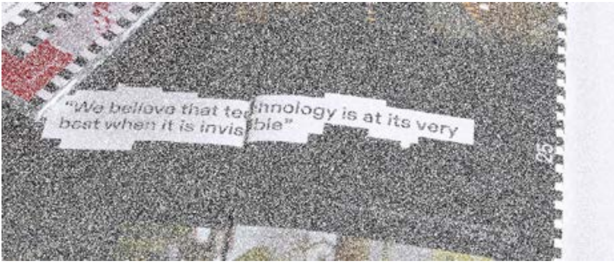


iteration 60

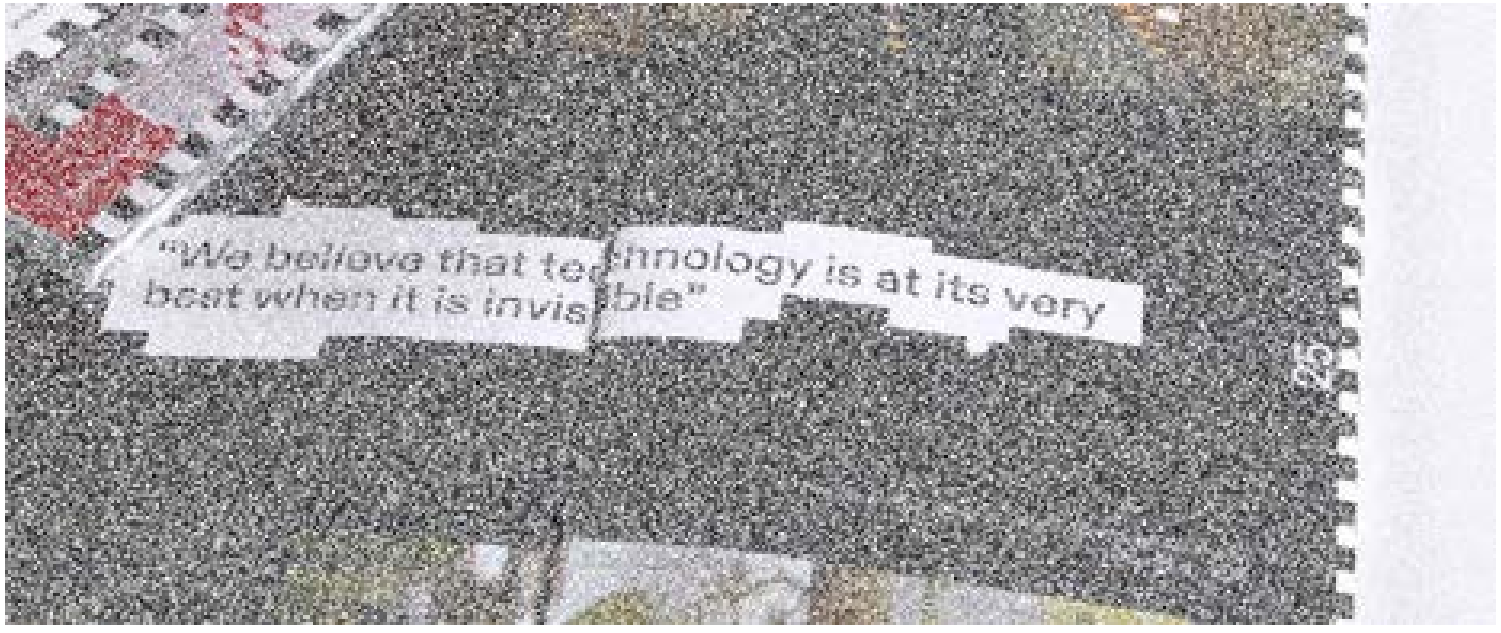
360,000 pixels



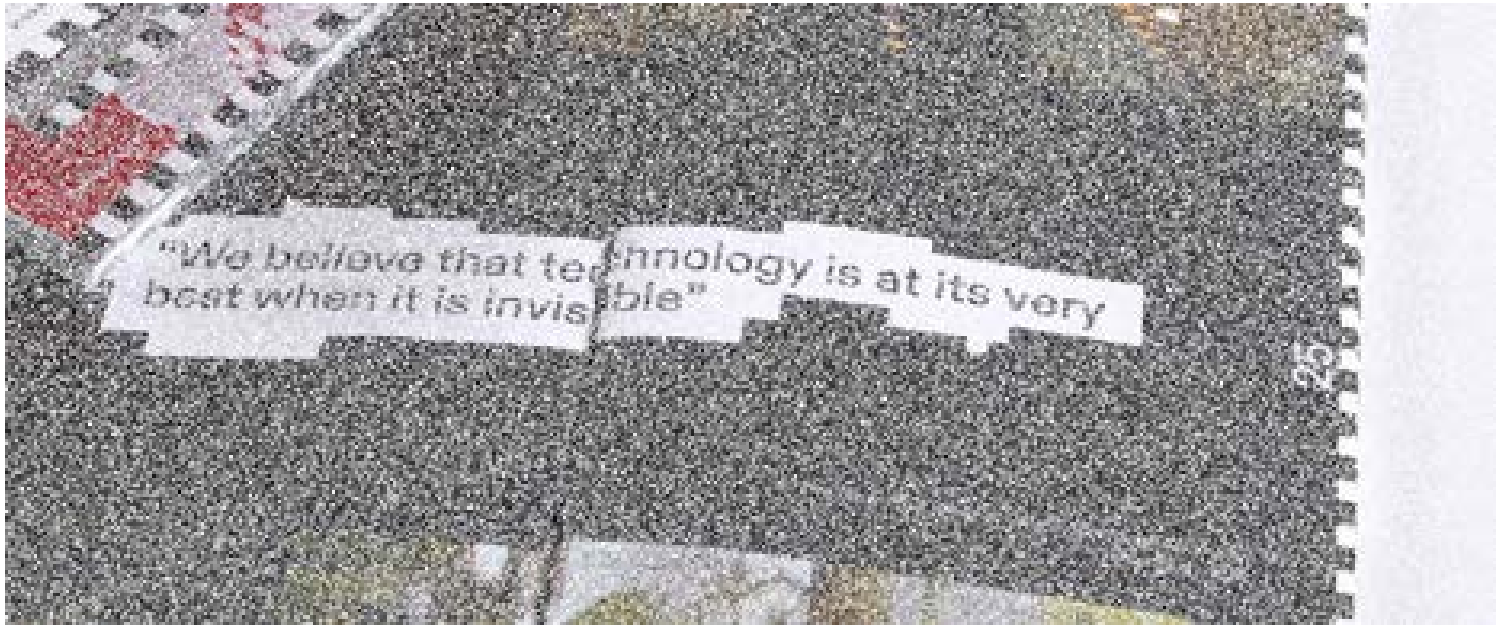
iteration 61 366.000 pixels



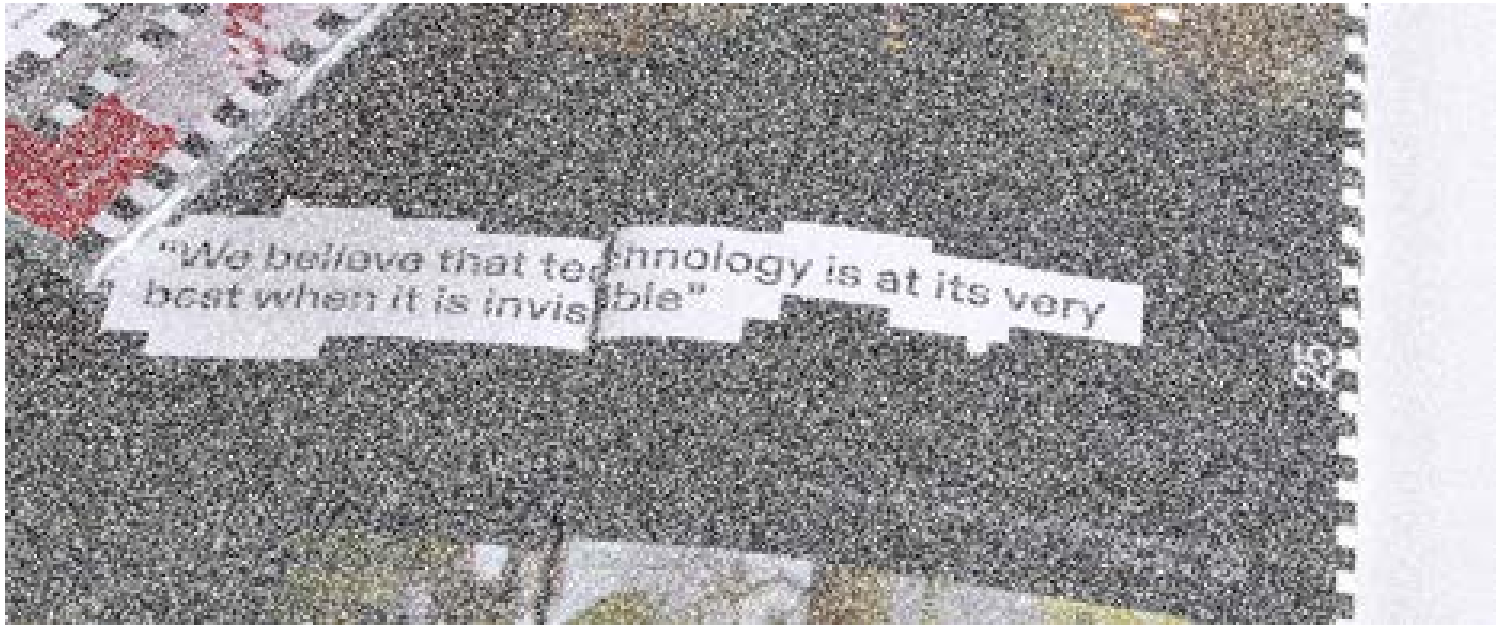
iteration 62 372,000 pixels



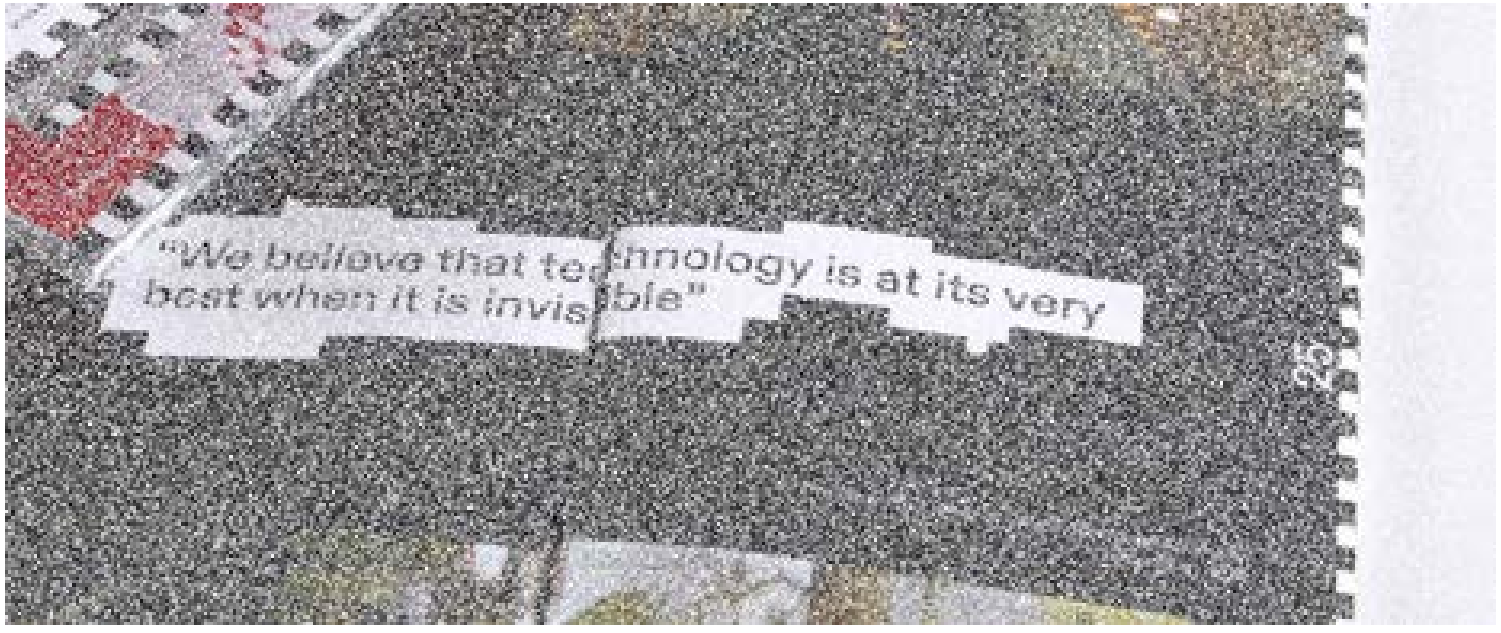
iteration 68 378,000 pixels

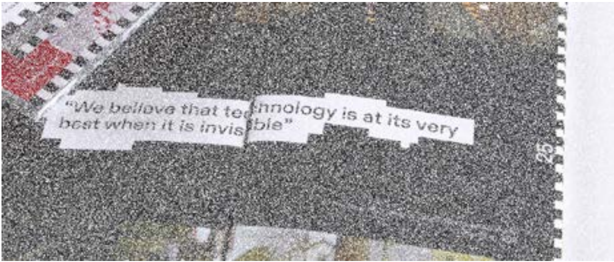


iteration 64 884,000 pixels



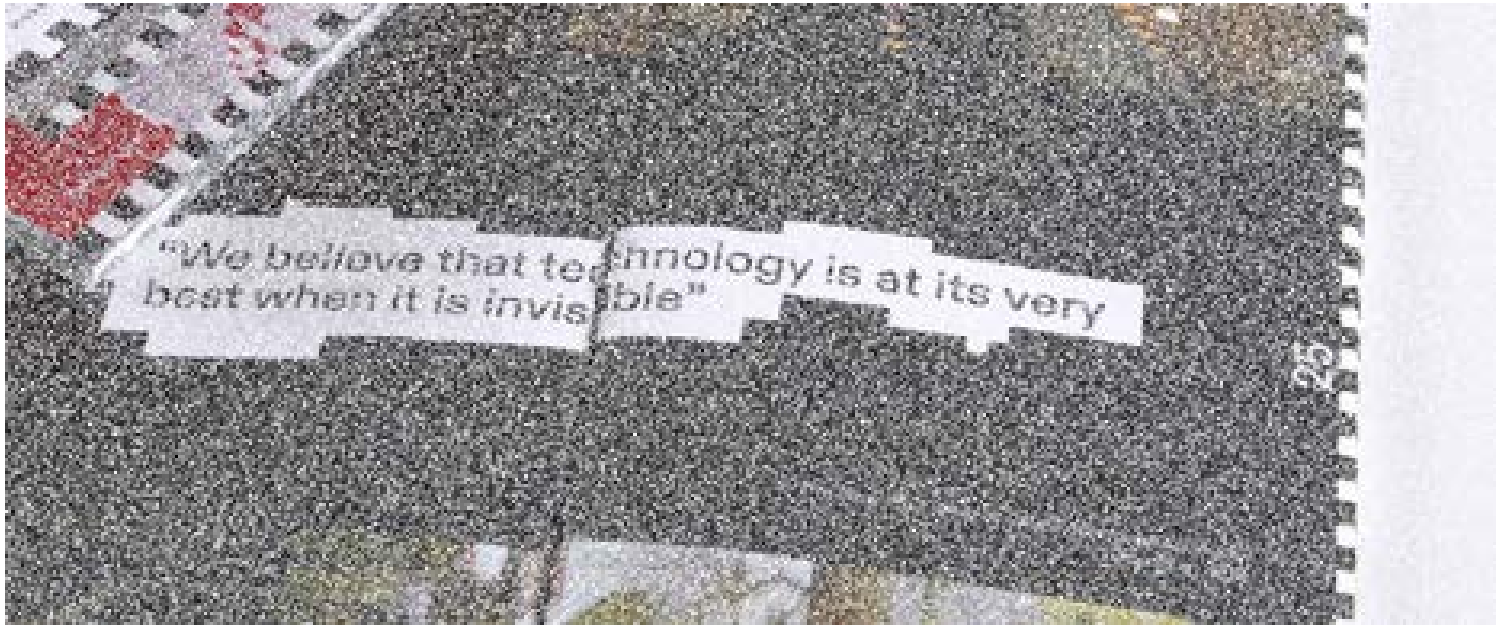
iteration 65 330,000 pixels



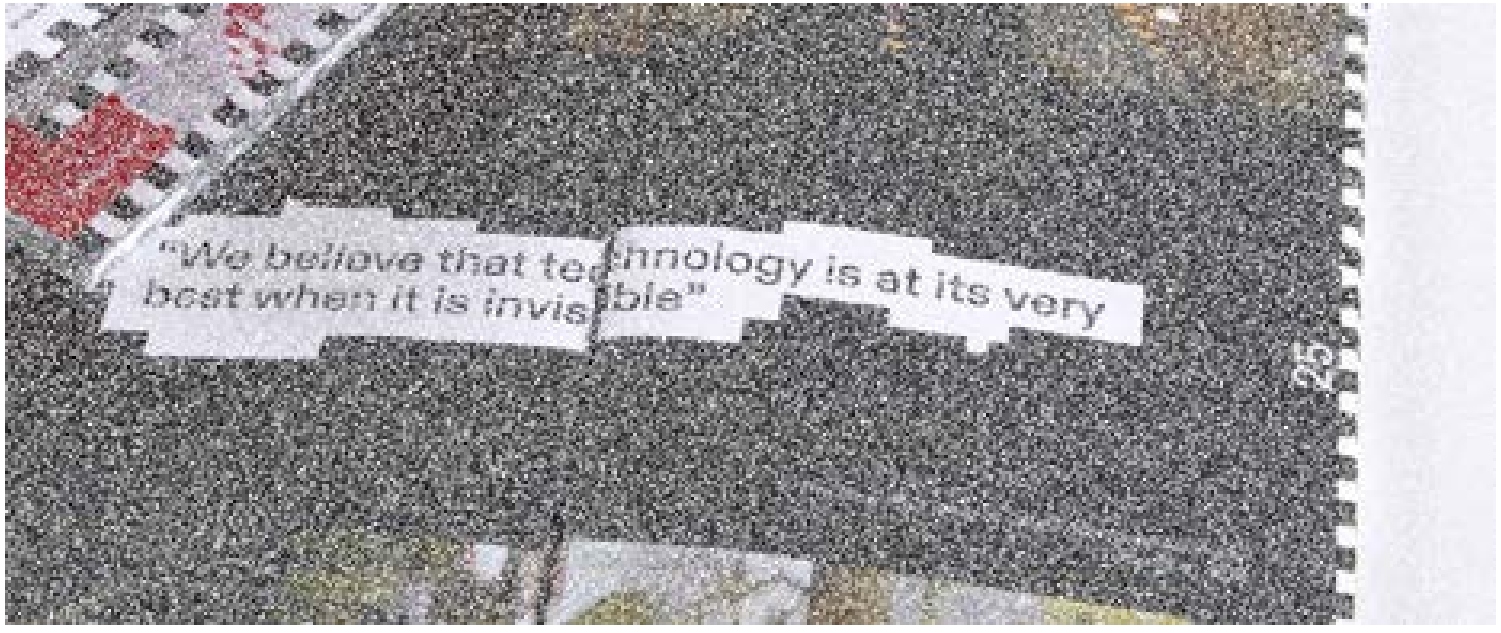

"We believe that technology is at its very best when it is invisible"
25

iteration 67

402,000 pixels

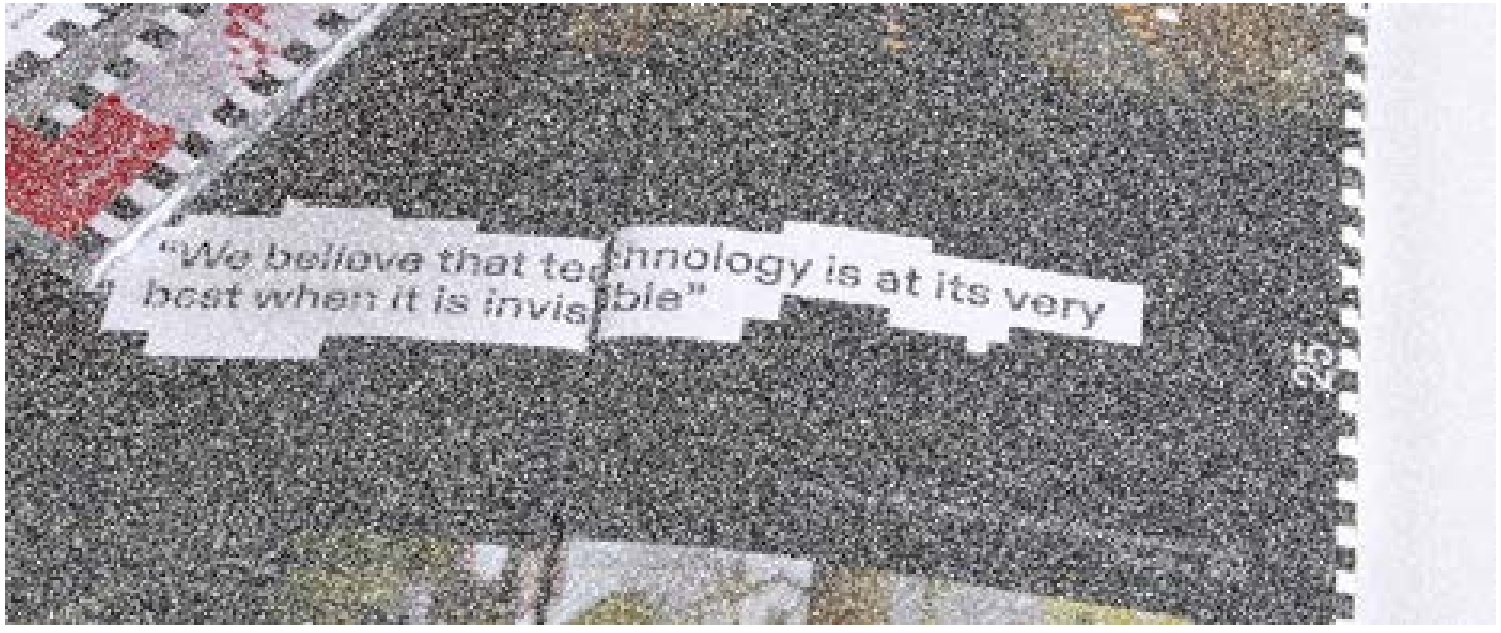


iteration 68 408,000 pixels



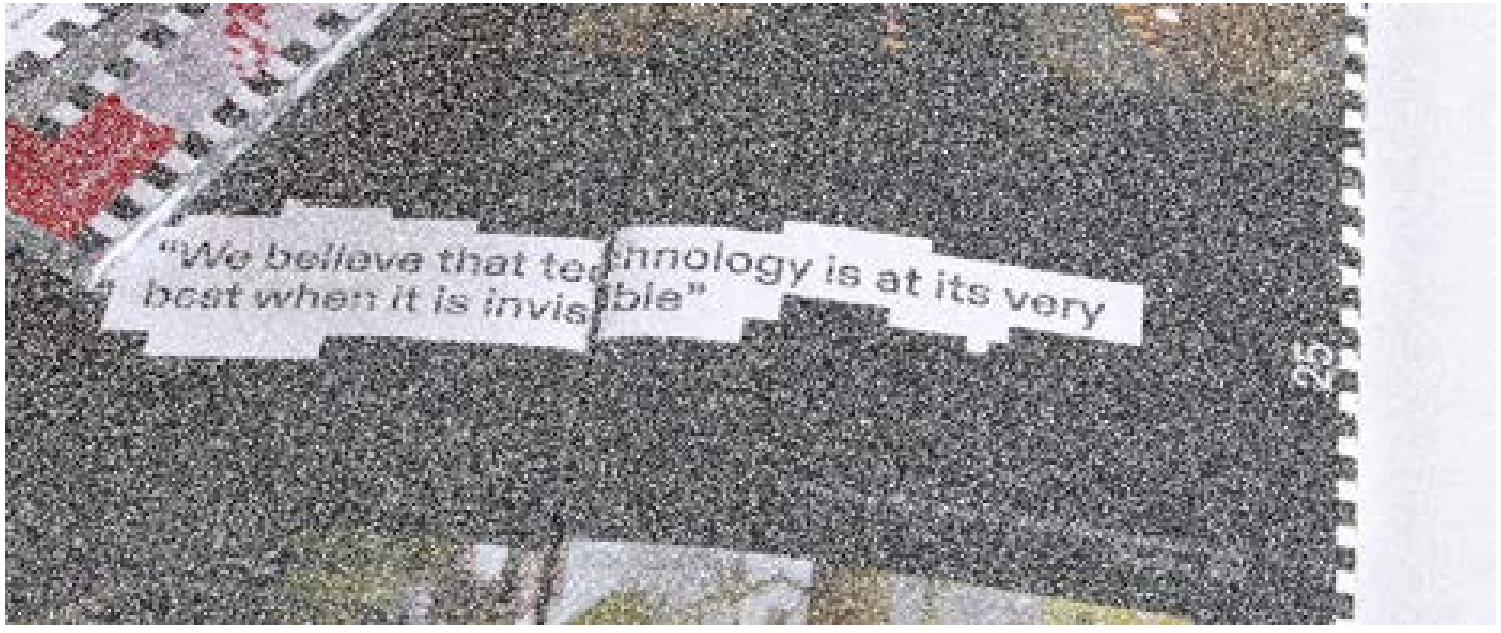
iteration <3>

414,000 pixels



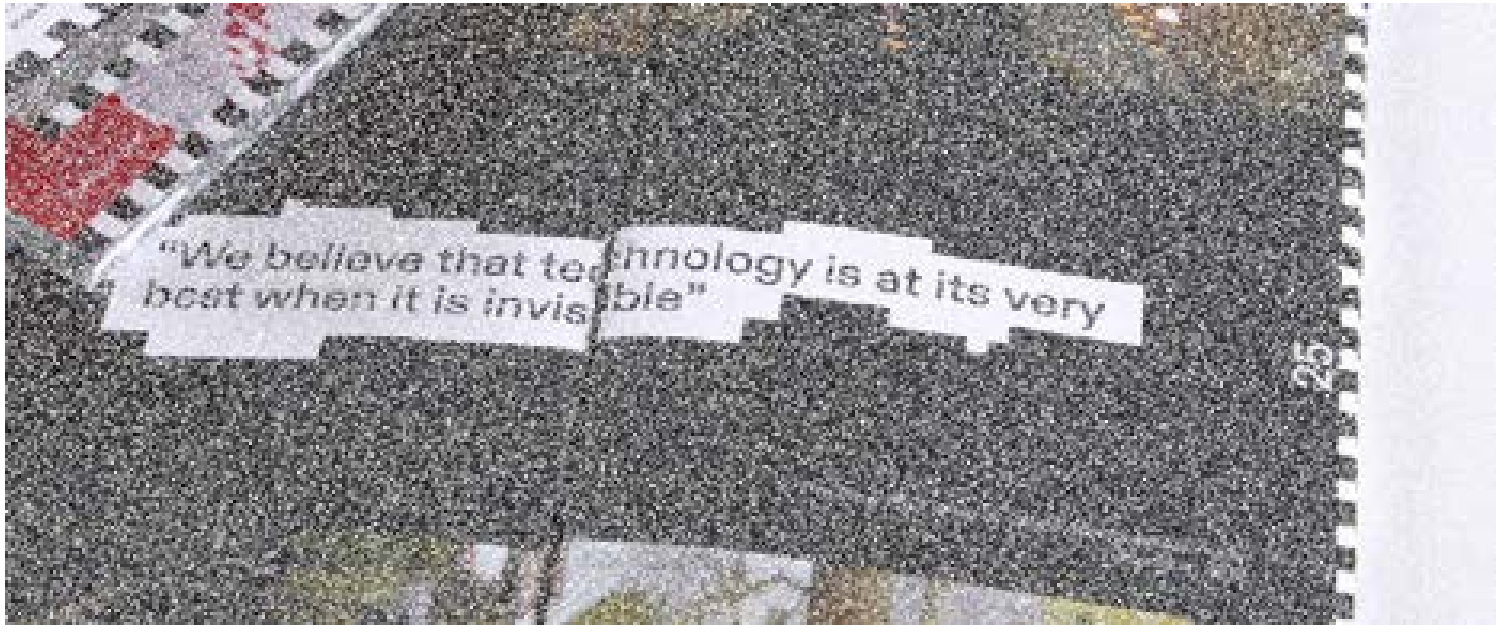
iteration 7a

420,000 pixels



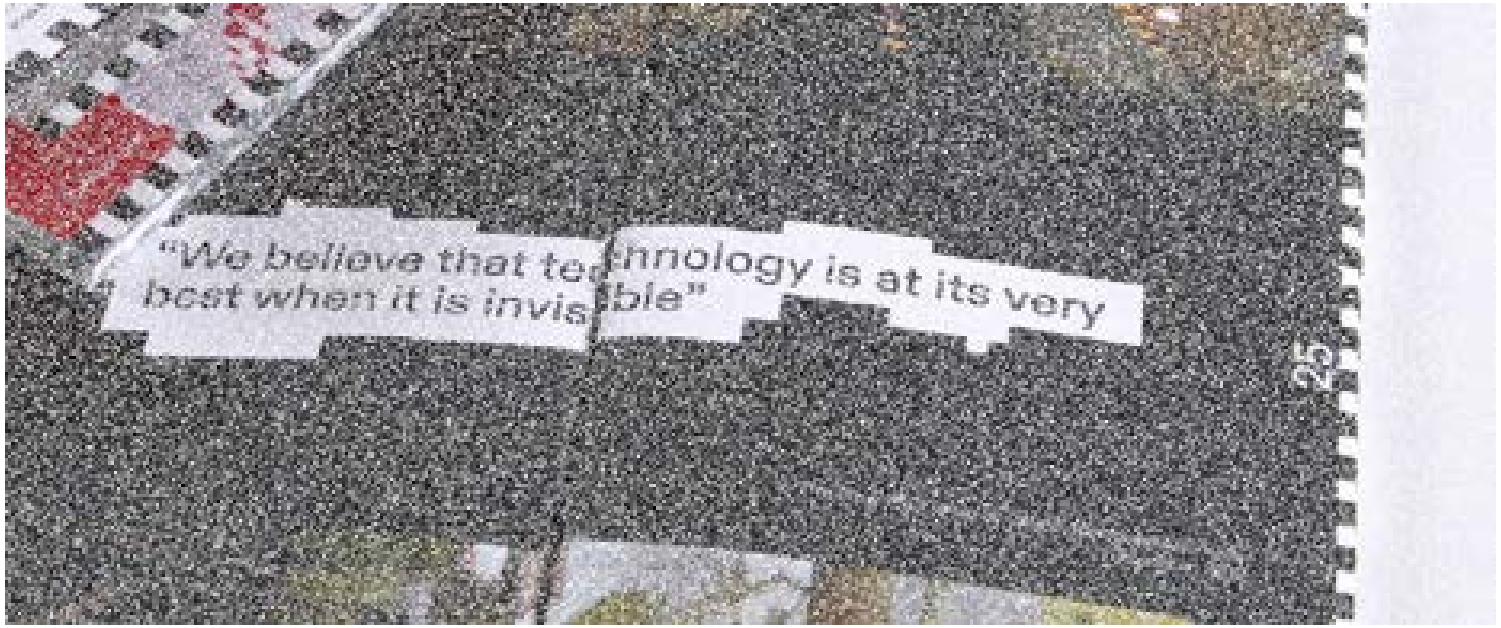
iteration 71

426,000 pixels

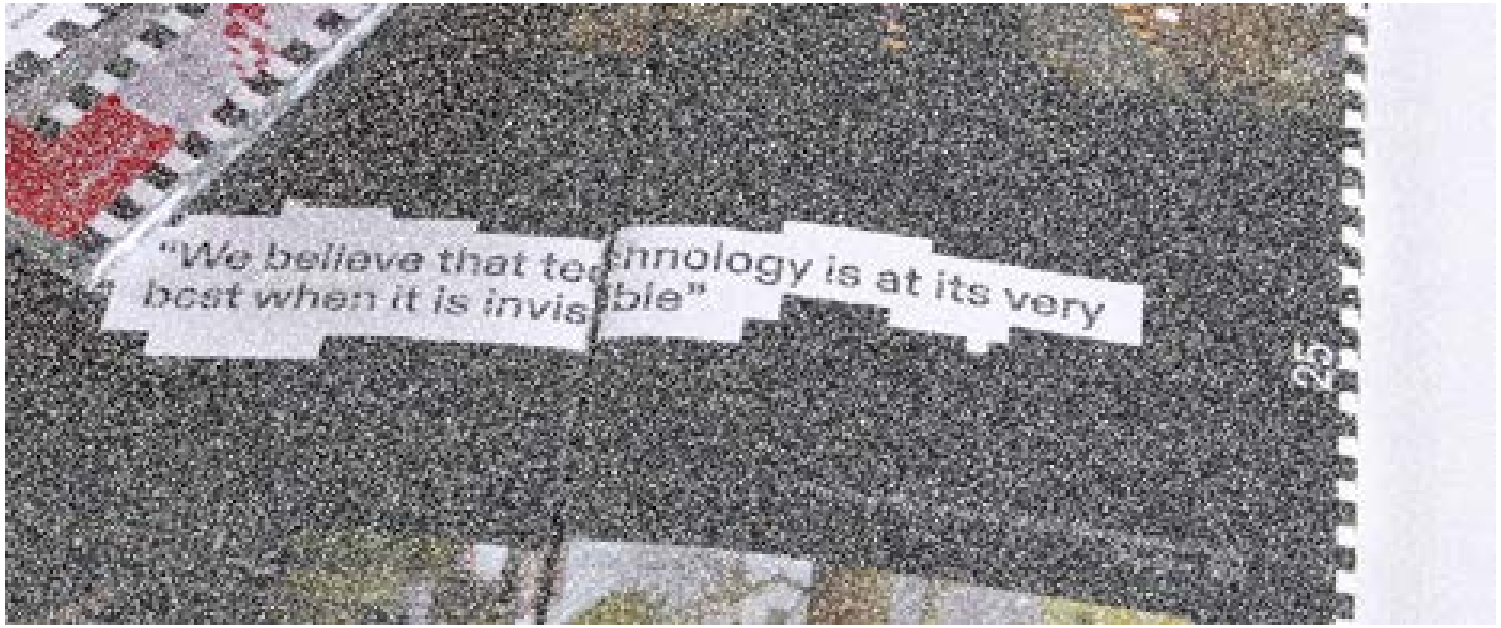


iteration 72

432,000 pixels

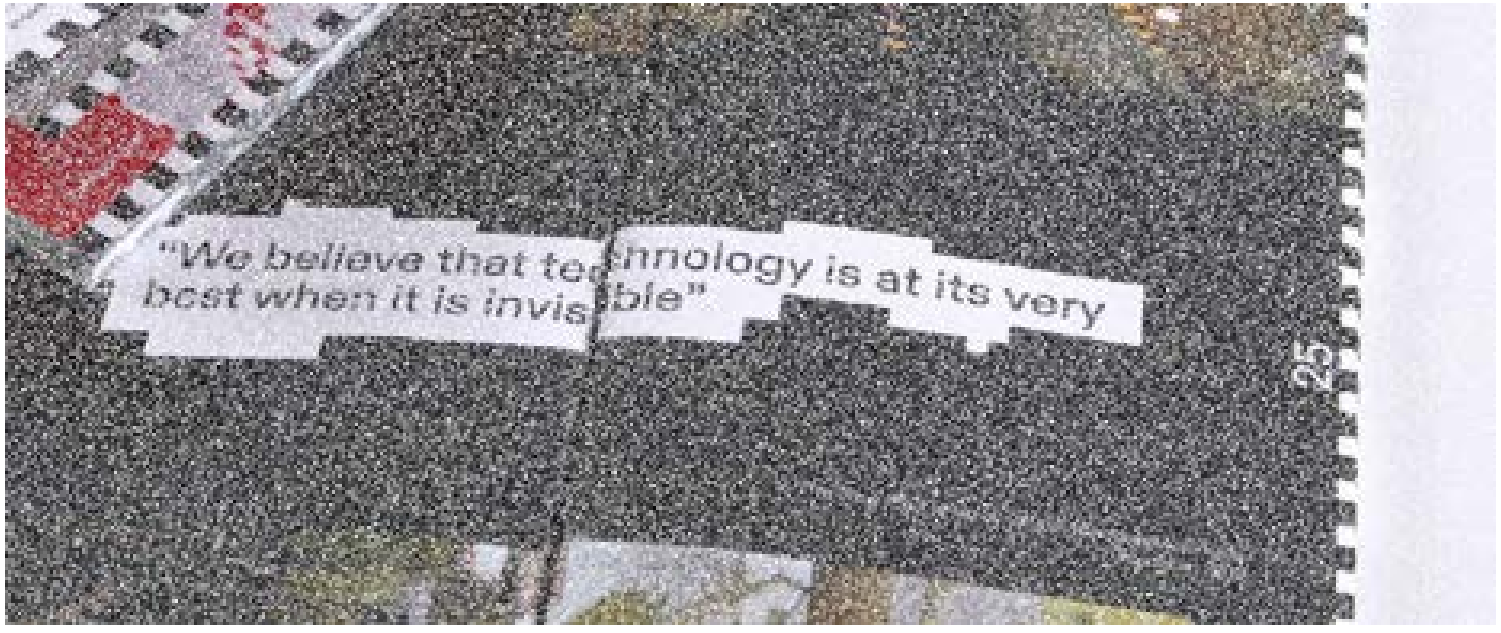


iteration 73 438,000 pixels



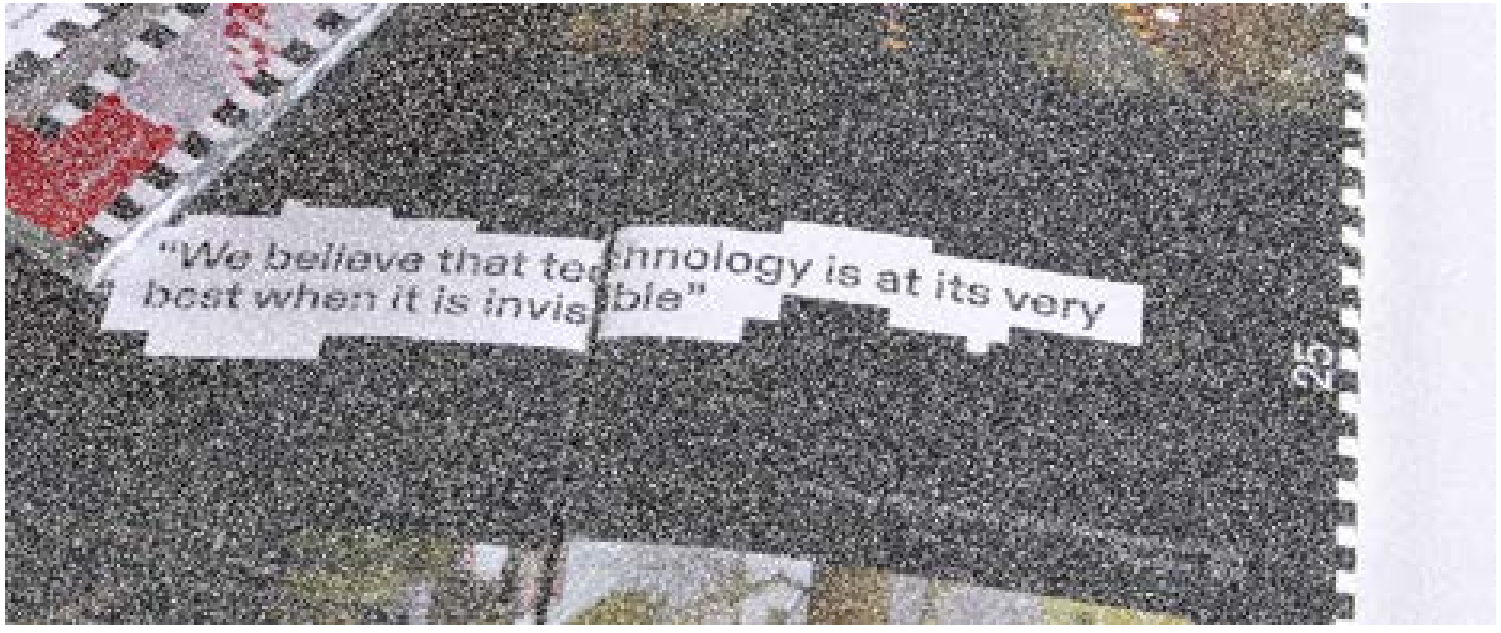
iteration 74

444,000 pixels



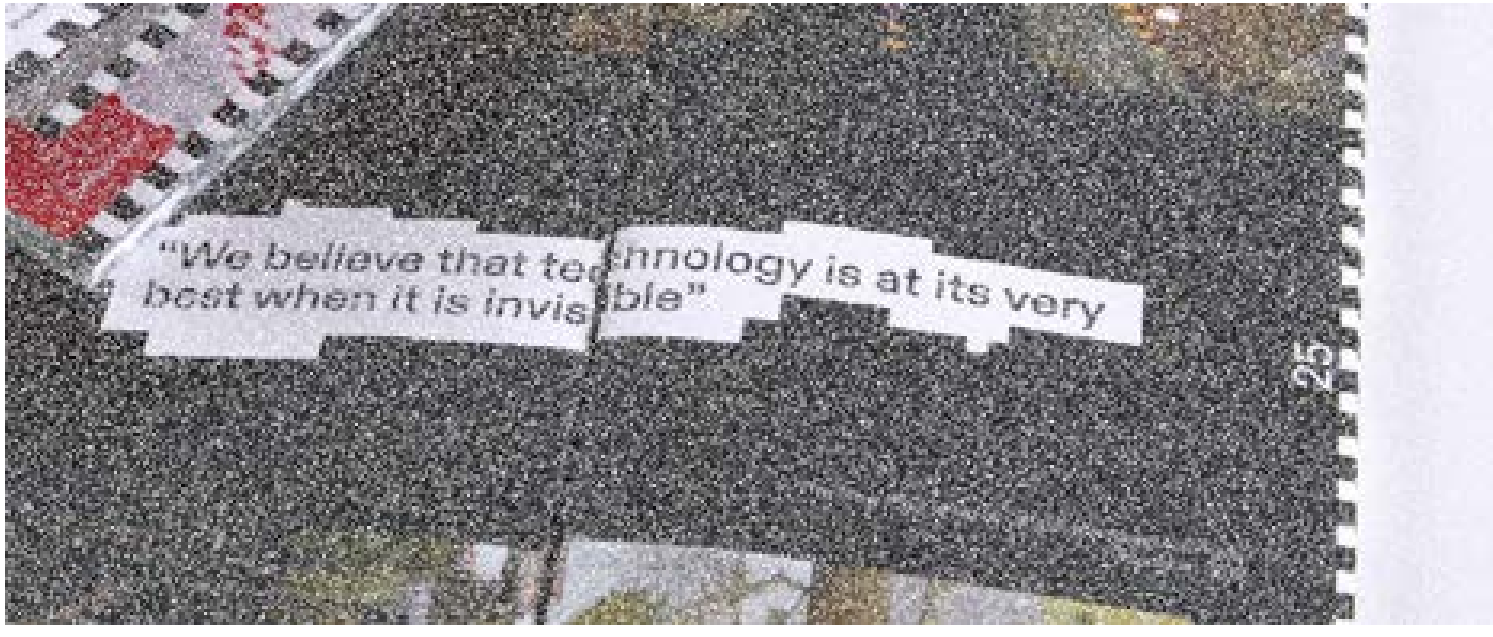
iteration 75

450,000 pixels



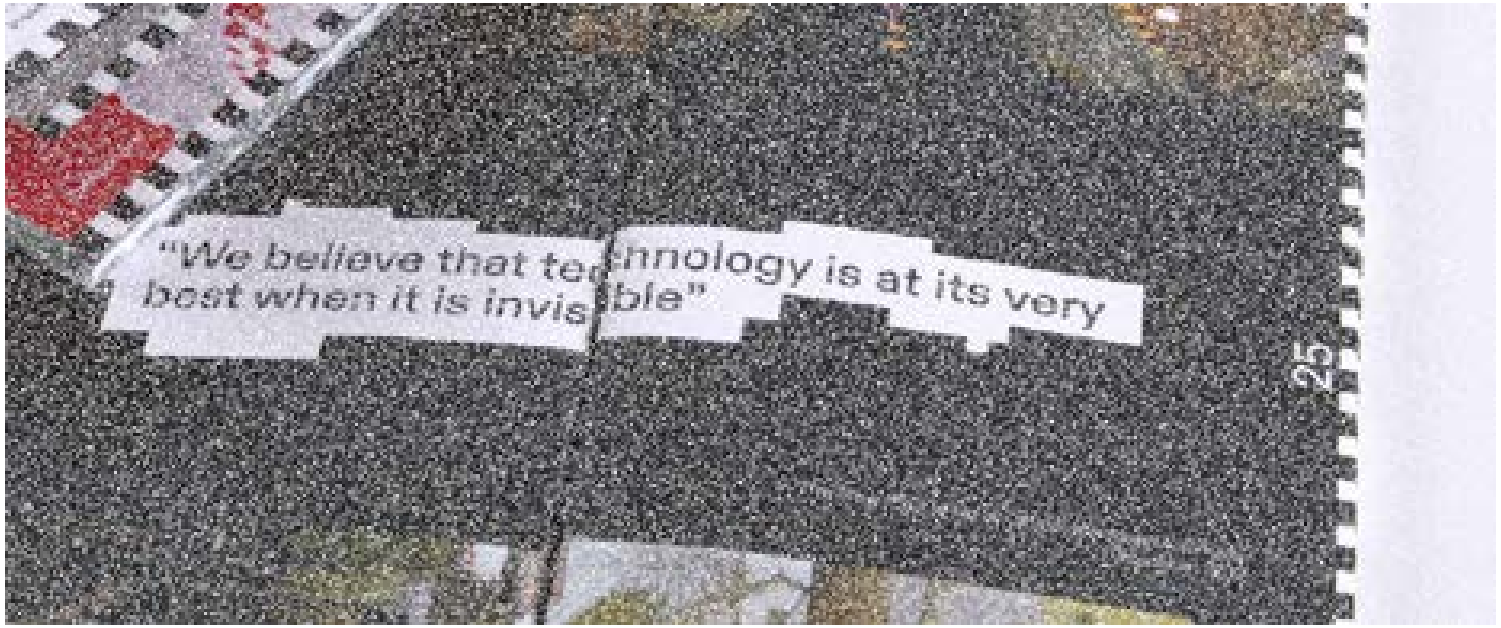
iteration 78

458,000 pixels



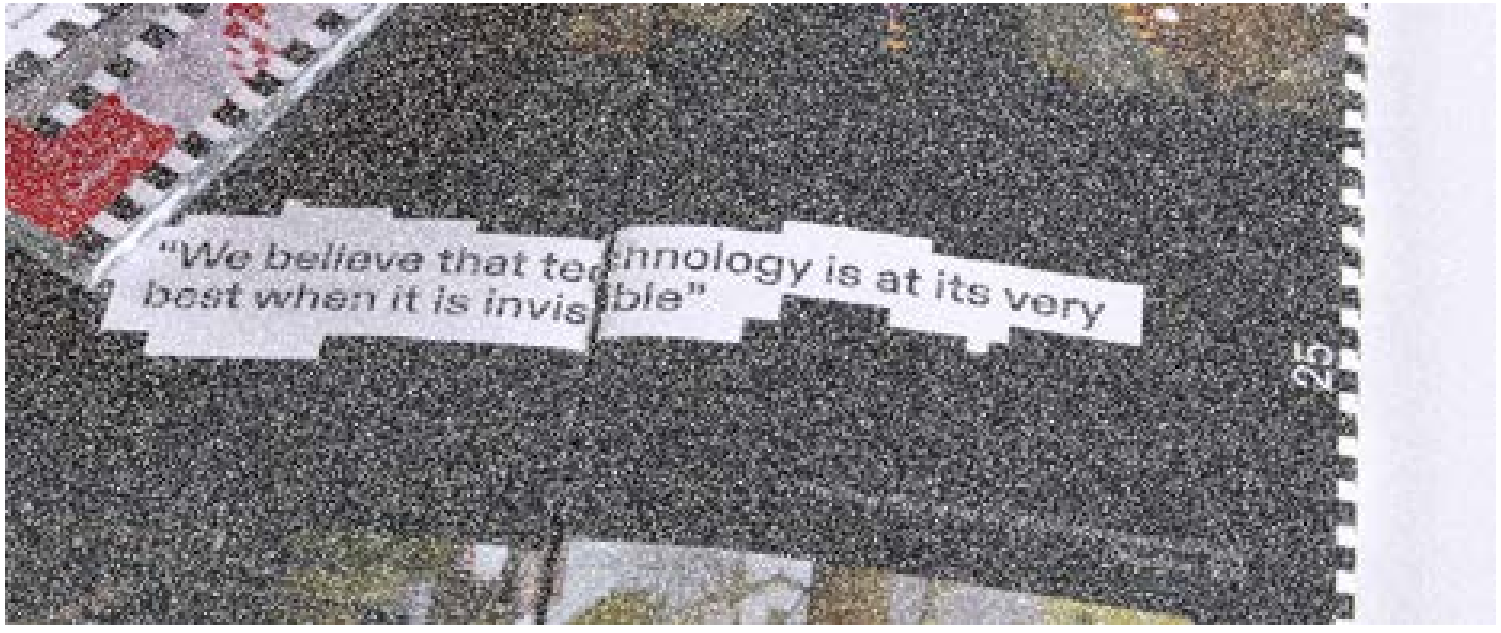
iteration 77

462,000 pixels

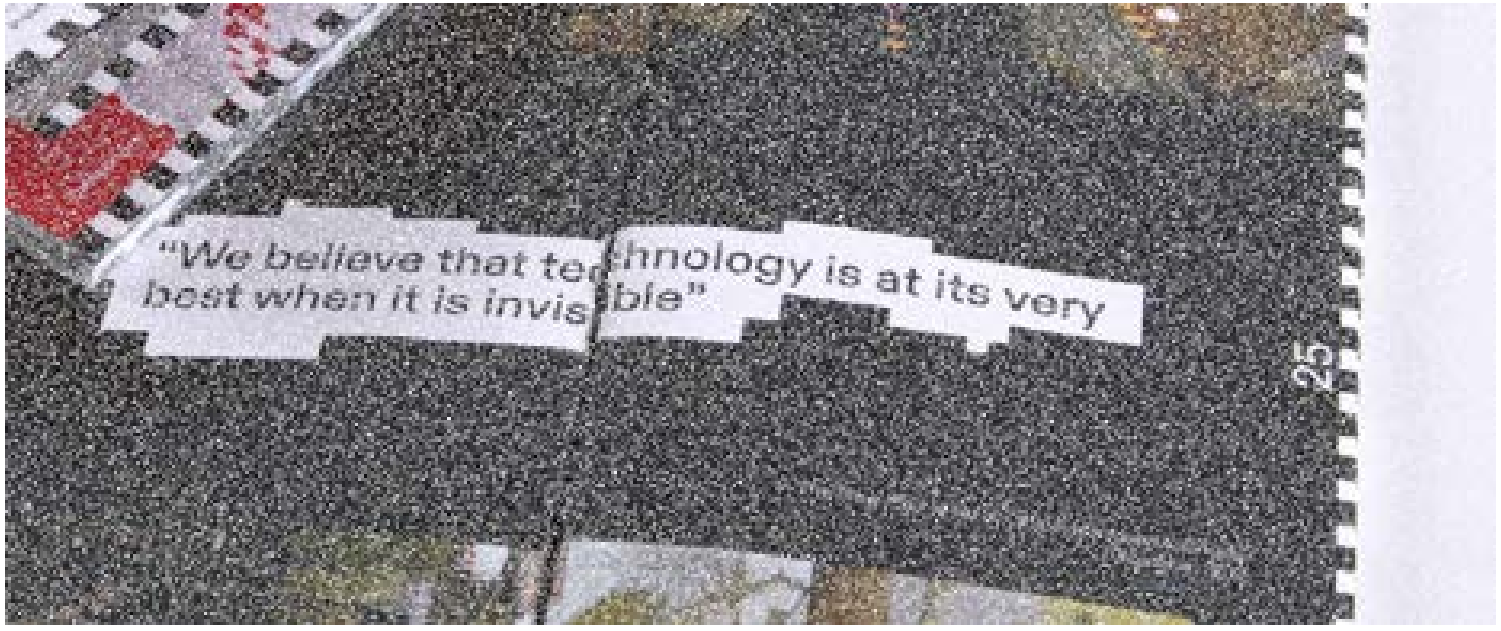


iteration 7a

488,000 pixels

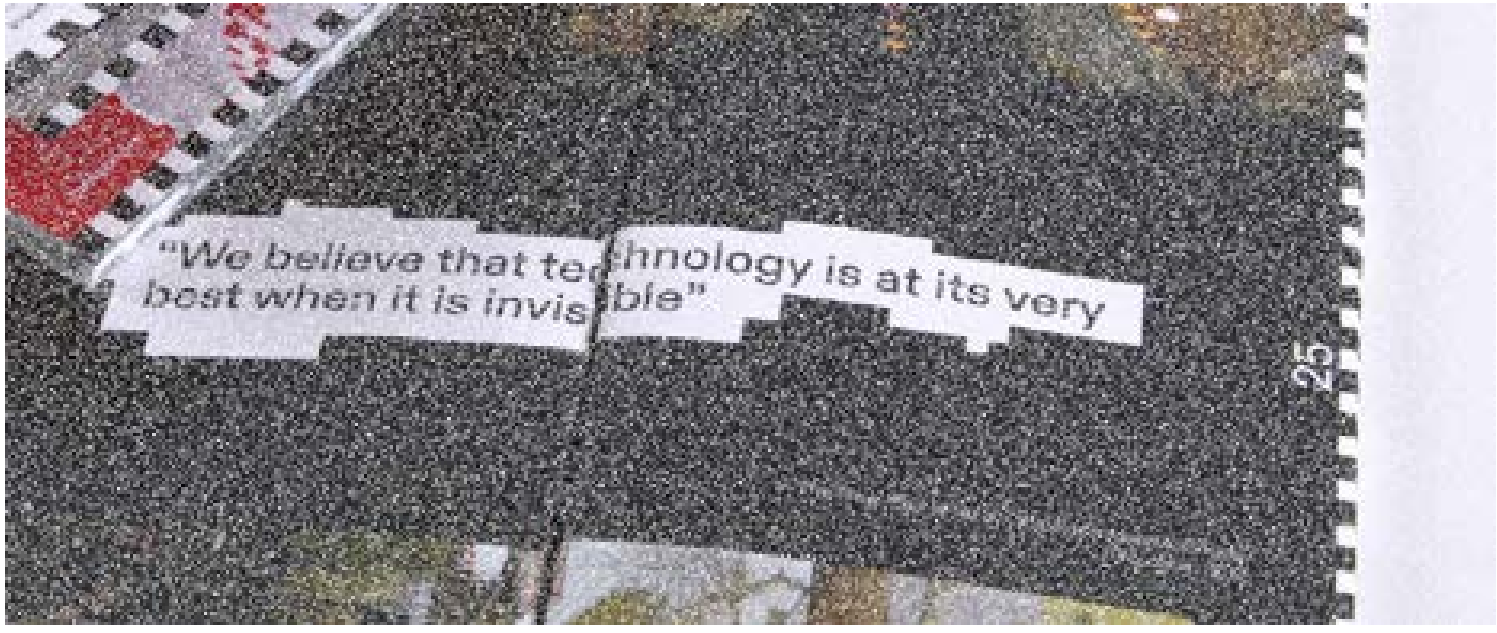


iteration 73 474,000 pixels



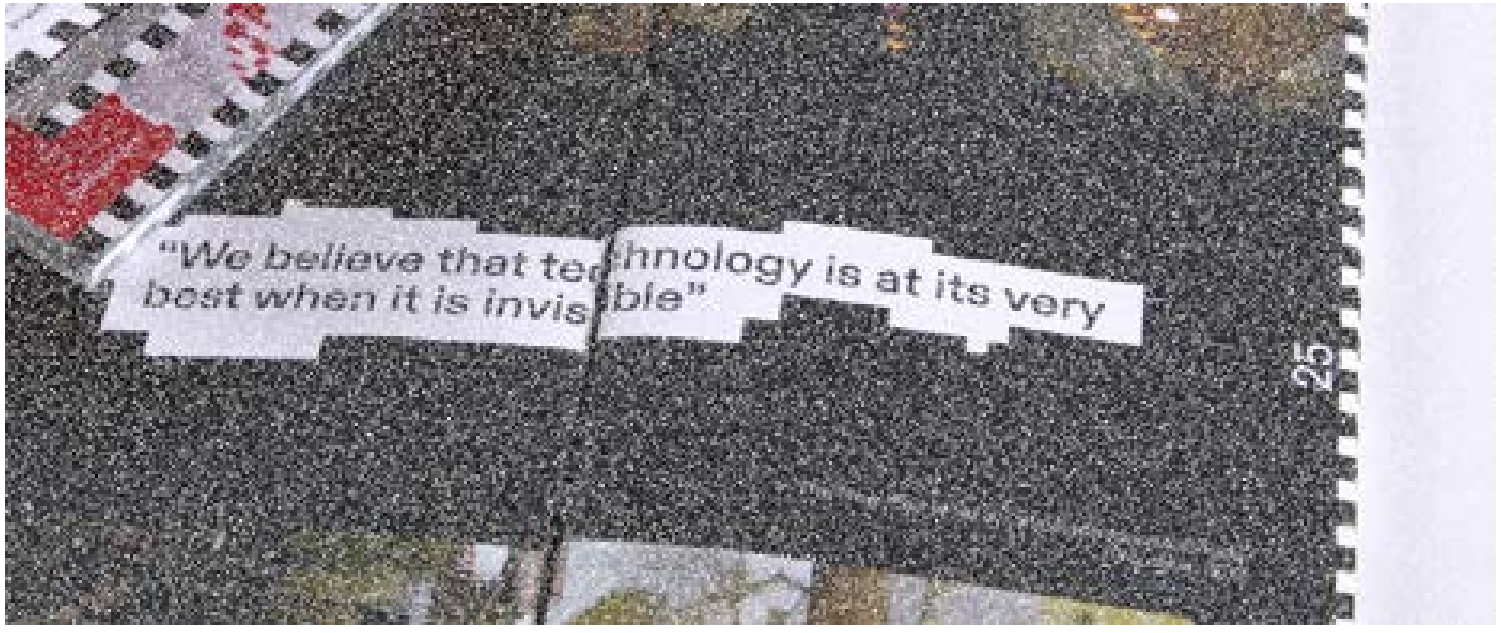
iteration 80

480,000 pixels



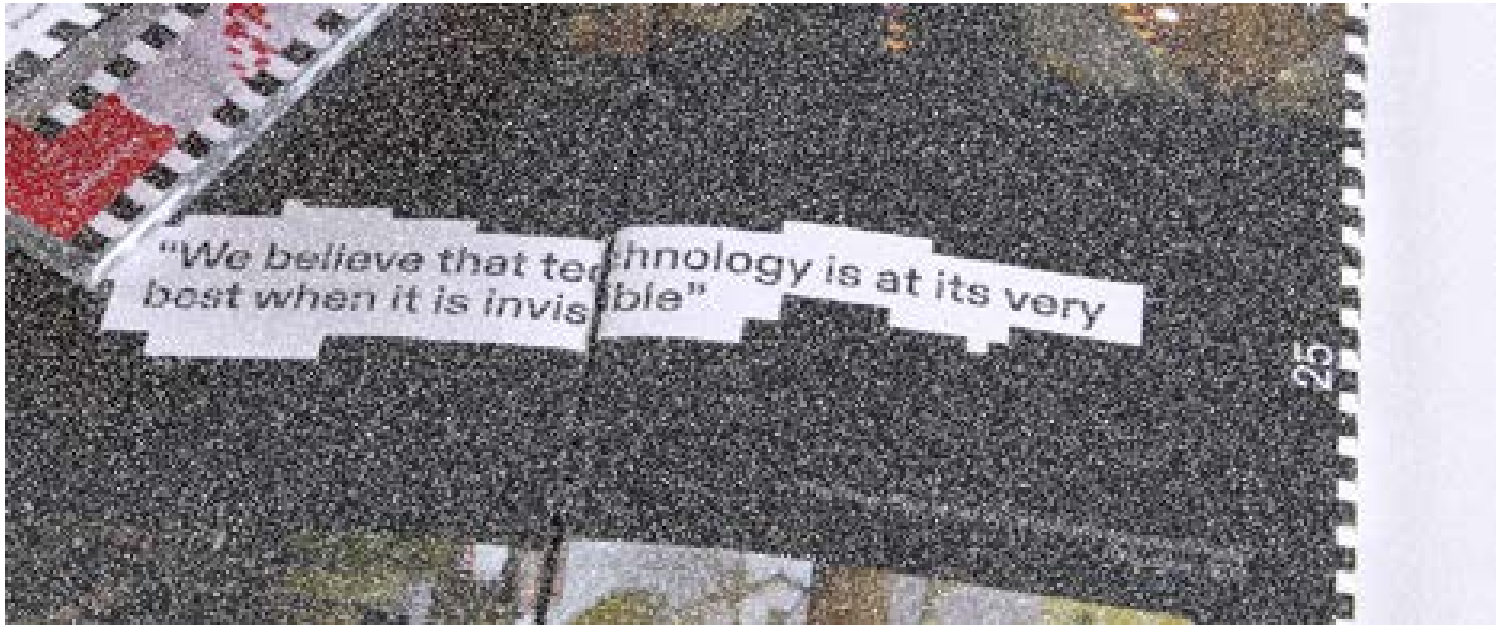
iteration 81

486,000 pixels

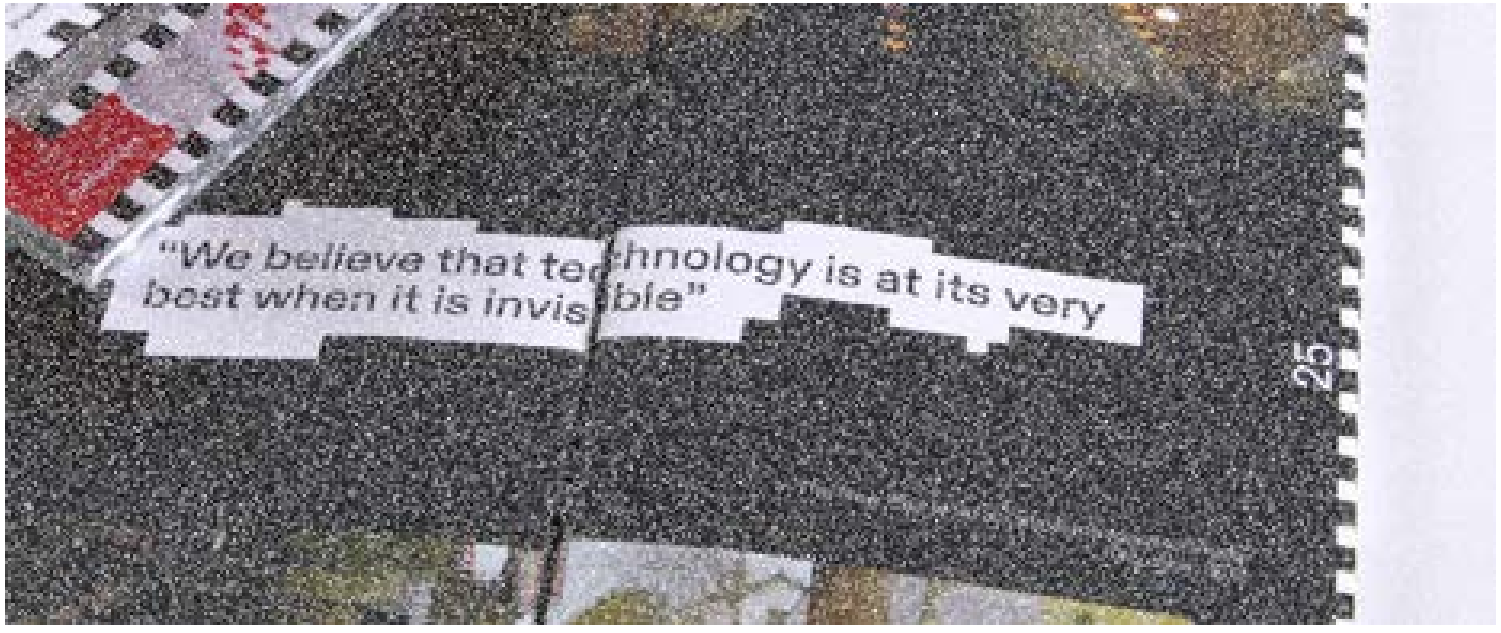


iteration 82

492,000 pixels

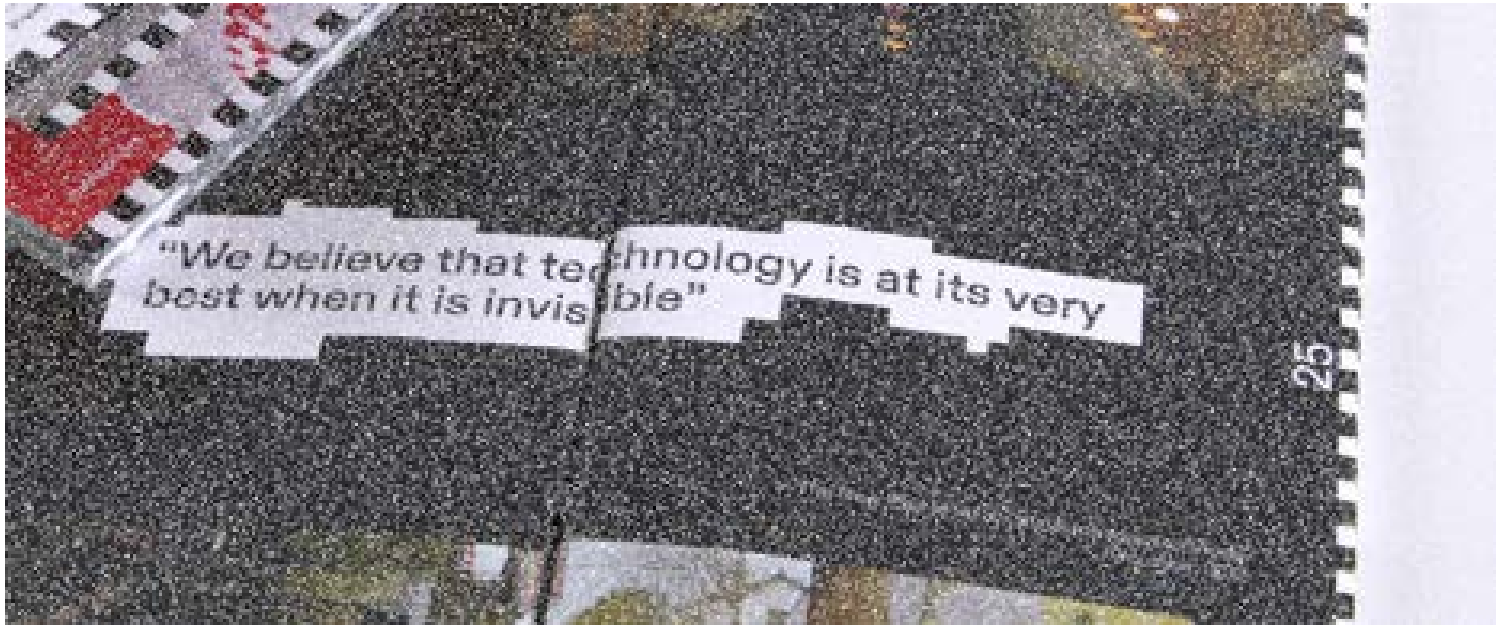


iteration 88 488,000 pixels

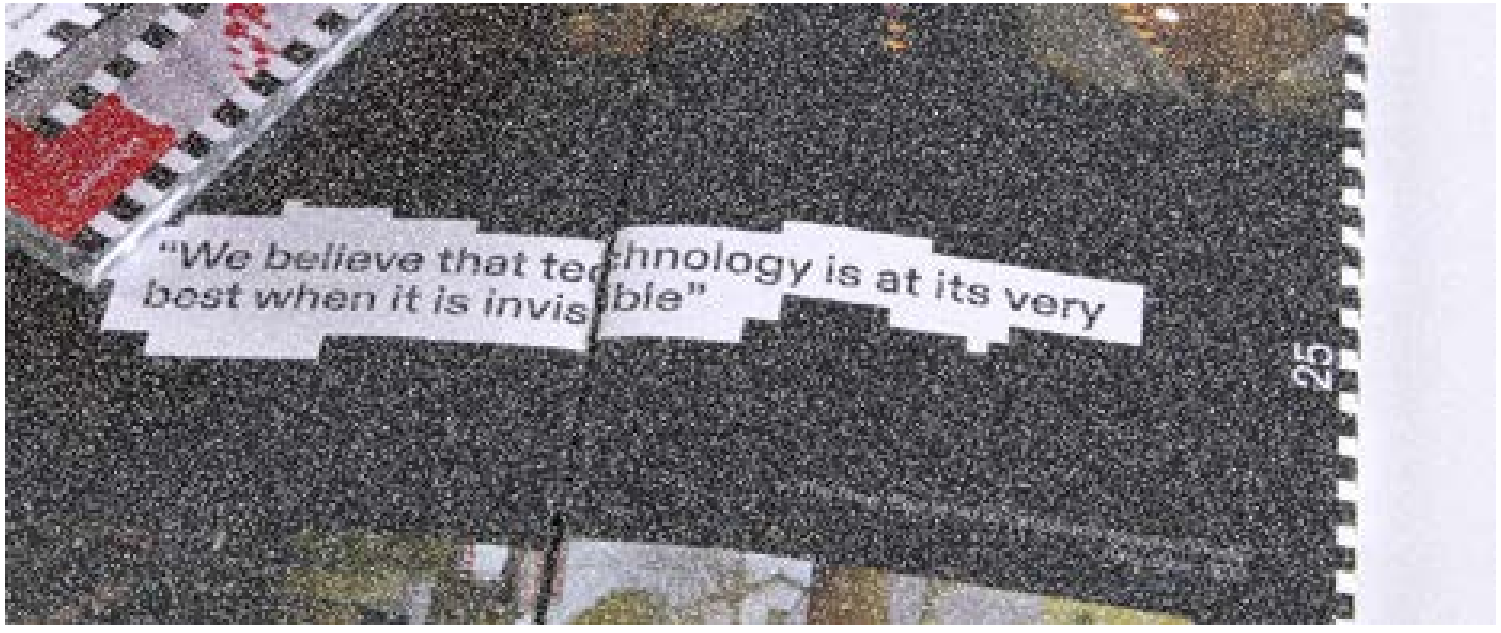


iteration 84

504,000 pixels

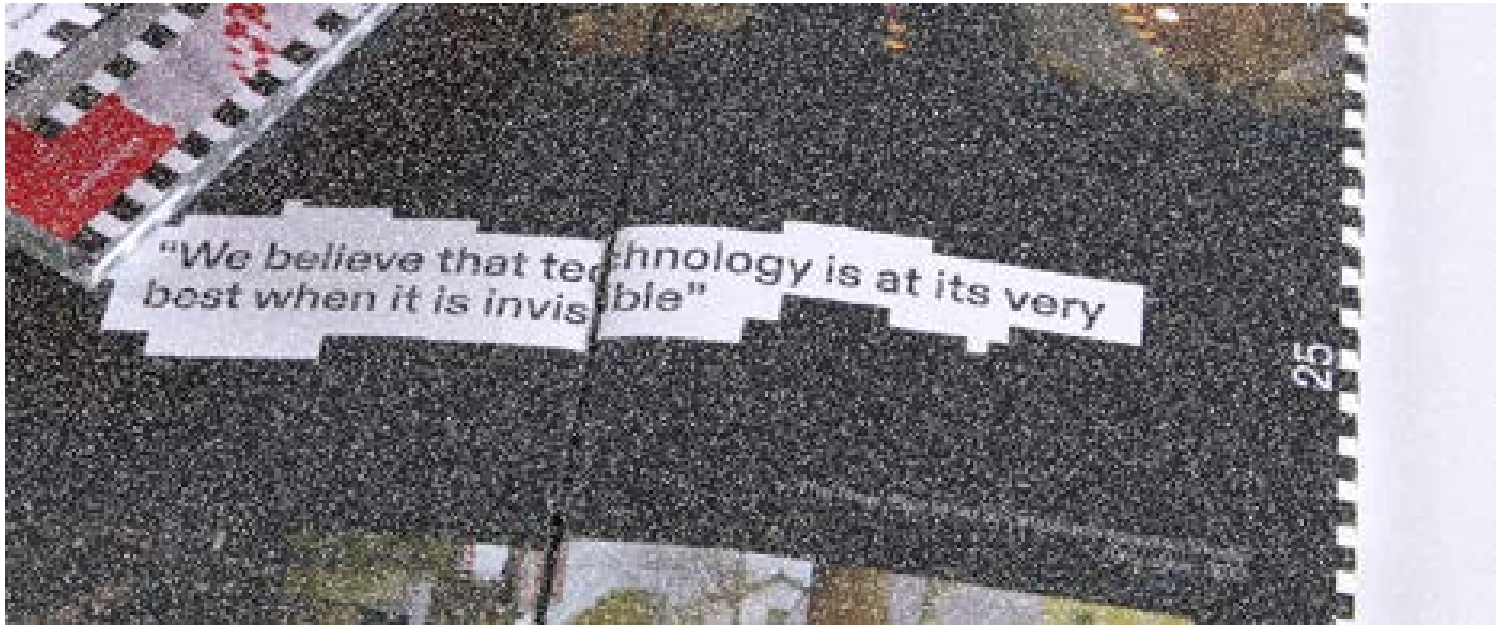


iteration 85 $10,000 pixels



iteration 86

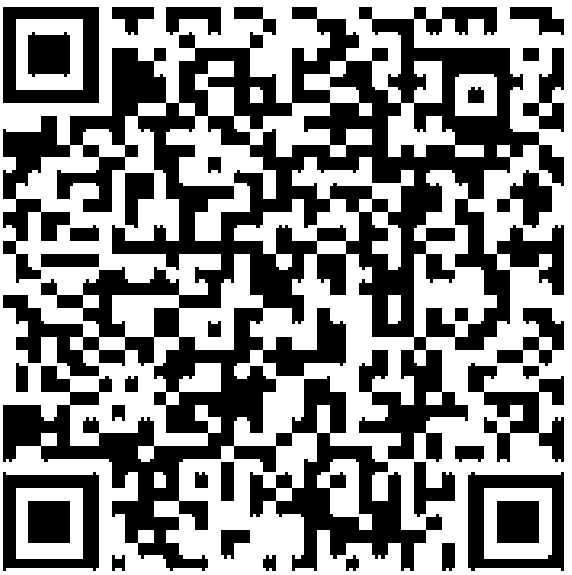
516.000 pixels



iteration 87

522,000 pixels

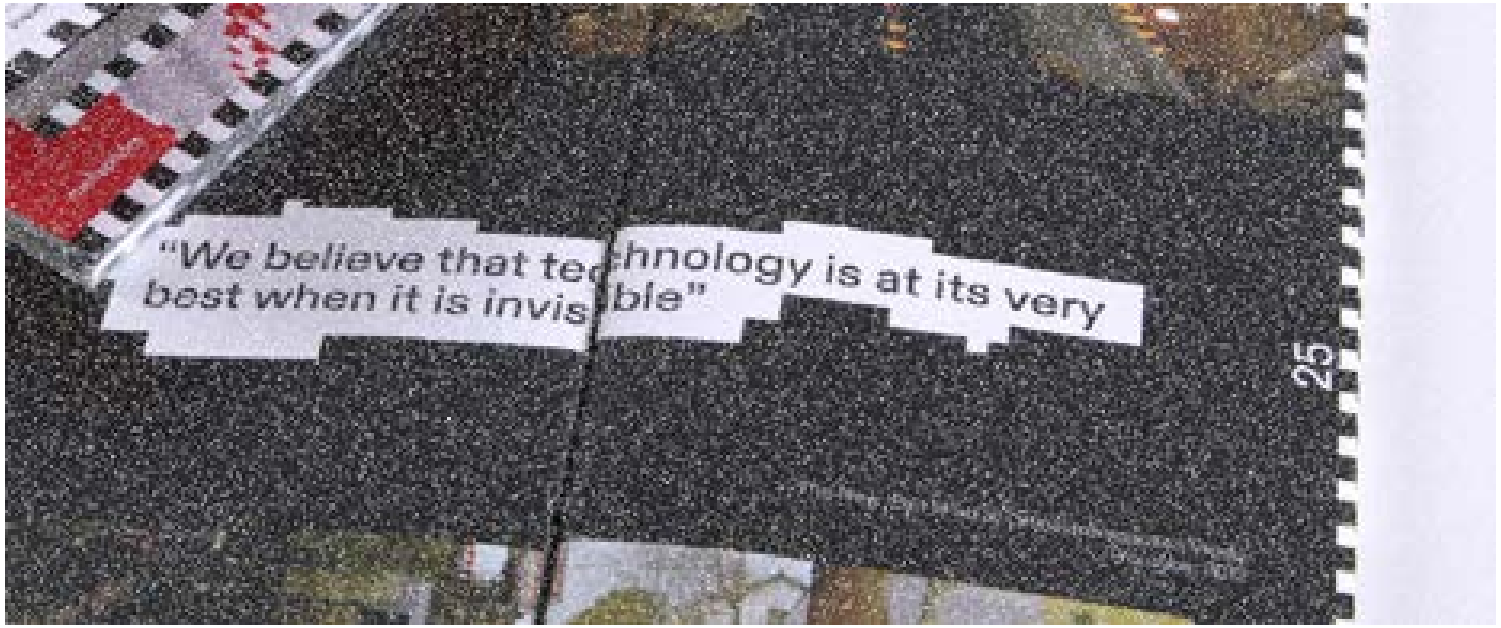
iteration 88 528,000 pixels



iteration 88 534,000 pixels

iteration 50

540,000 pixels

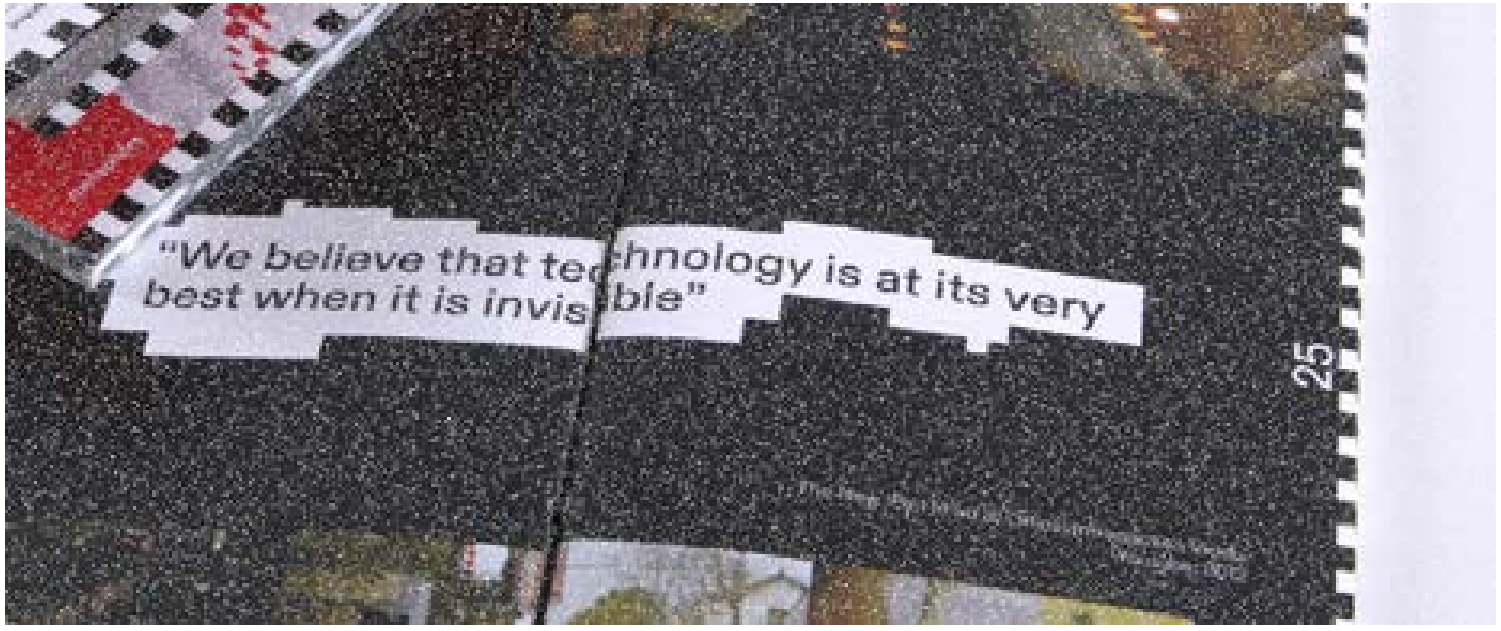


iteration 31

546,000 pixels

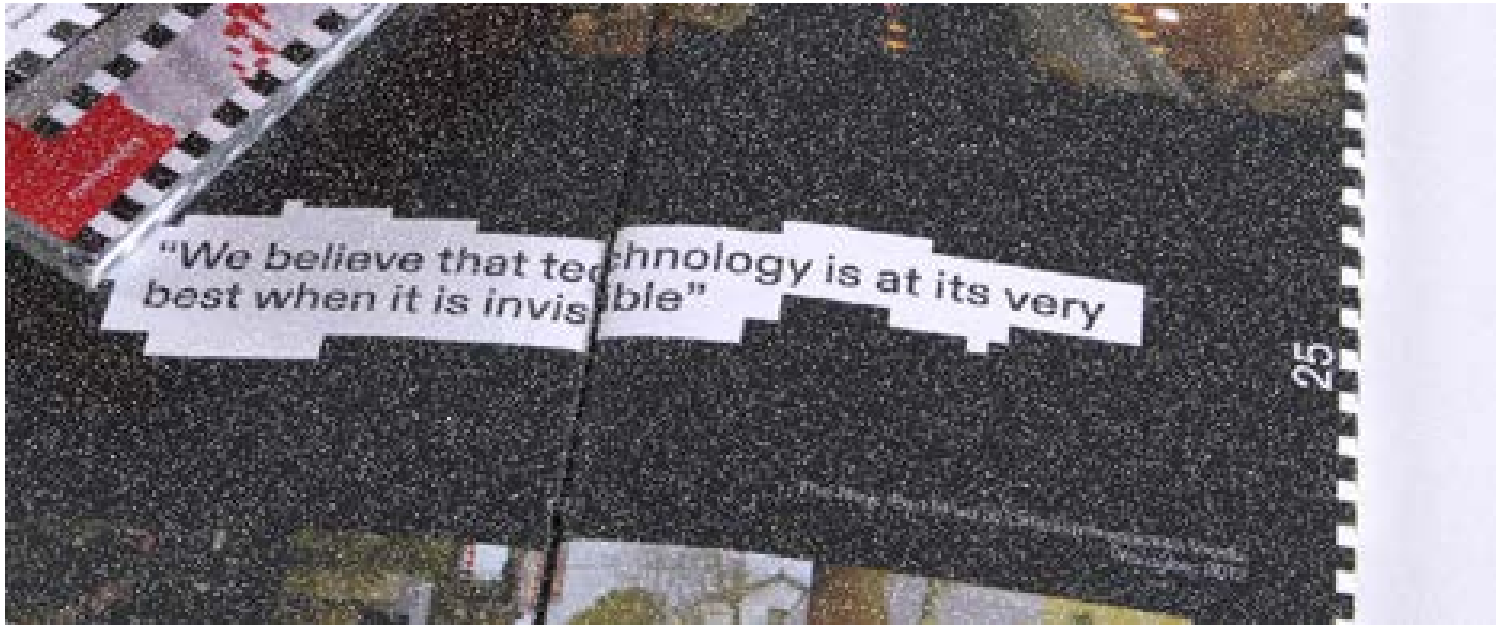
iteration 32

552,000 pixels



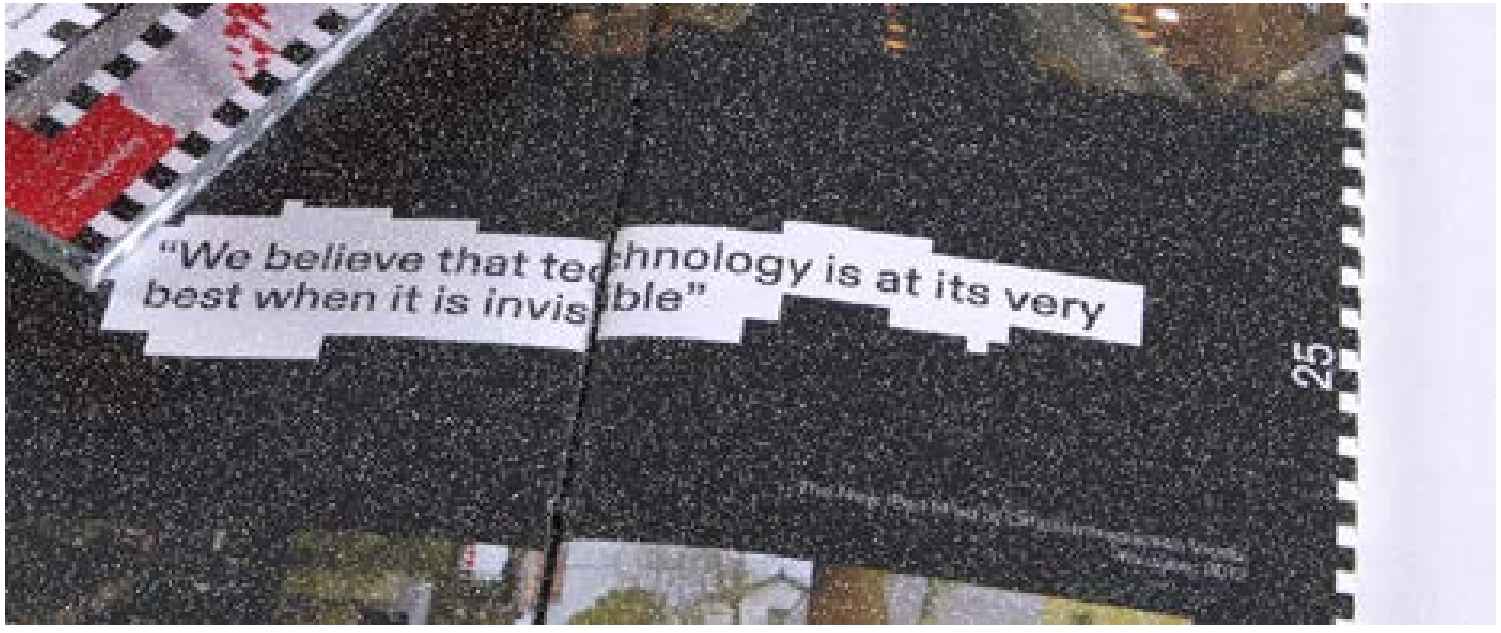
iteration 38

558,000 pixels



iteration 34

564,000 pixels



iteration 55 570,000 pixels

iteration 56 576,000 pixels

iteration 57

552,000 pixels

iteration 38 588,000 pixels

iteration 33 554,000 pixels

iteration 100 600,000 pixels