

# I NEED SILENCE

by Violette Pacreau - RMV

I need silence... to think, to work, to sleep, to live.

Ideas come and go, crash and transform. Silence allows them to breathe, to calm themselves, to get a semblance of order.

Noise makes them disappear.

I need silence... to grieve, to wonder, to enrage, to respect.

Silence shows emotions, it translates them, emphasizes them.

Noise cancels feelings, it diminishes them, overthrows them.

I need silence... to dream, to imagine, to travel.

Silence allows me freedom and infinity.

Noise will ground me in space and time.

I need silence.

Never the contrary

Never would I ask for a place of noise and chaos.

Never would I ask to be in a world of constant movement, of permanent madness.

Never would I ask for a constant headache where ideas are drowned, where tiredness dilutes my senses and my empathy.

I need silence.

this sentence I have been saying for long, out loud or in my mind. A sentence I have been repeating every day, every hour, every second. A sentence that comes out of anger, exhaustion, or necessity.

I say it kindly, quietly, aggressively, hysterically. I say it to friends, to strangers, to family, to foes.

People look at me with concern, with surprise, with laughter sometimes. Some answers are reassuring. Others dismissive or just out of the mark.

Silence is a human need. Silence is my survival.

I need silence.

But still, it eludes me.

This longing has now invaded all aspects of my life.  
Don't you believe me?

Let me recount a very particular and disturbing  
24 hours I've went through not so long ago.

I was out with my friends enjoying  
my time, surrounded by music and  
laughter. But for some reason, the  
sound became noise. Enjoyment  
turned to discomfort.

Dancers and entertainers transformed  
themselves into a compact mass of deformed  
shapes, trying to surround me in this sticky  
and stinky sea of decaying meat. Hands tried to  
grab me, words tried to pull me towards them, talk to  
them, speak with them, scream at them.

Through my panic, my ears started ringing loudly, covering  
all the sounds around, trapping me in a bubble of cotton and linen. My dry  
tongue didn't seem to respond. My heart pounded, ready to explode. My head spun  
and everything distorted itself.

I was suffocating. I was passing out. I needed air. I needed to be  
somewhere else. Somewhere silent.

I need silence.

I thrashed myself out in the night, hoping for the slimmest of silences, so I  
could catch my breath, so I could calm my mind back to its normal self.

But the night is not silent.

Even after the rut of activities has died out, a city still doesn't sleep. An  
eery atmosphere remains, unsettling despite the still darkness. The lack of  
sound, the low visibility activated my fearful brain, still marked by the  
drowning sound it just escaped. My senses amplified every single sound, from a  
drop in the river to the rustling leaves, as if I was not alone, as if danger  
lurked behind me.

I tried to reason myself, rationalizing each onomatopoeia as a falling can of  
soda, footsteps, laughter in the night, ... but my heartbeat was not calming  
down, my eyes couldn't focus on anything, and my breath became fast and short.

Darkness wasn't enough.

I need silence.



So, I walked, ran, sprinted home, closed my door, reassured all by texting so that everyone leaves me alone. Took a shower, cleaned myself of the outside. Checked the lock once. Twice, five times and jumped into bed, under a fort of hundreds of thousands of feathers. I repeated to myself: that's it, nothing will happen now.

I'm safe. I'm in a place I know.  
Windows are closed, doors are sealed.  
I can sleep.  
Everything is fine.  
Everything is silent.

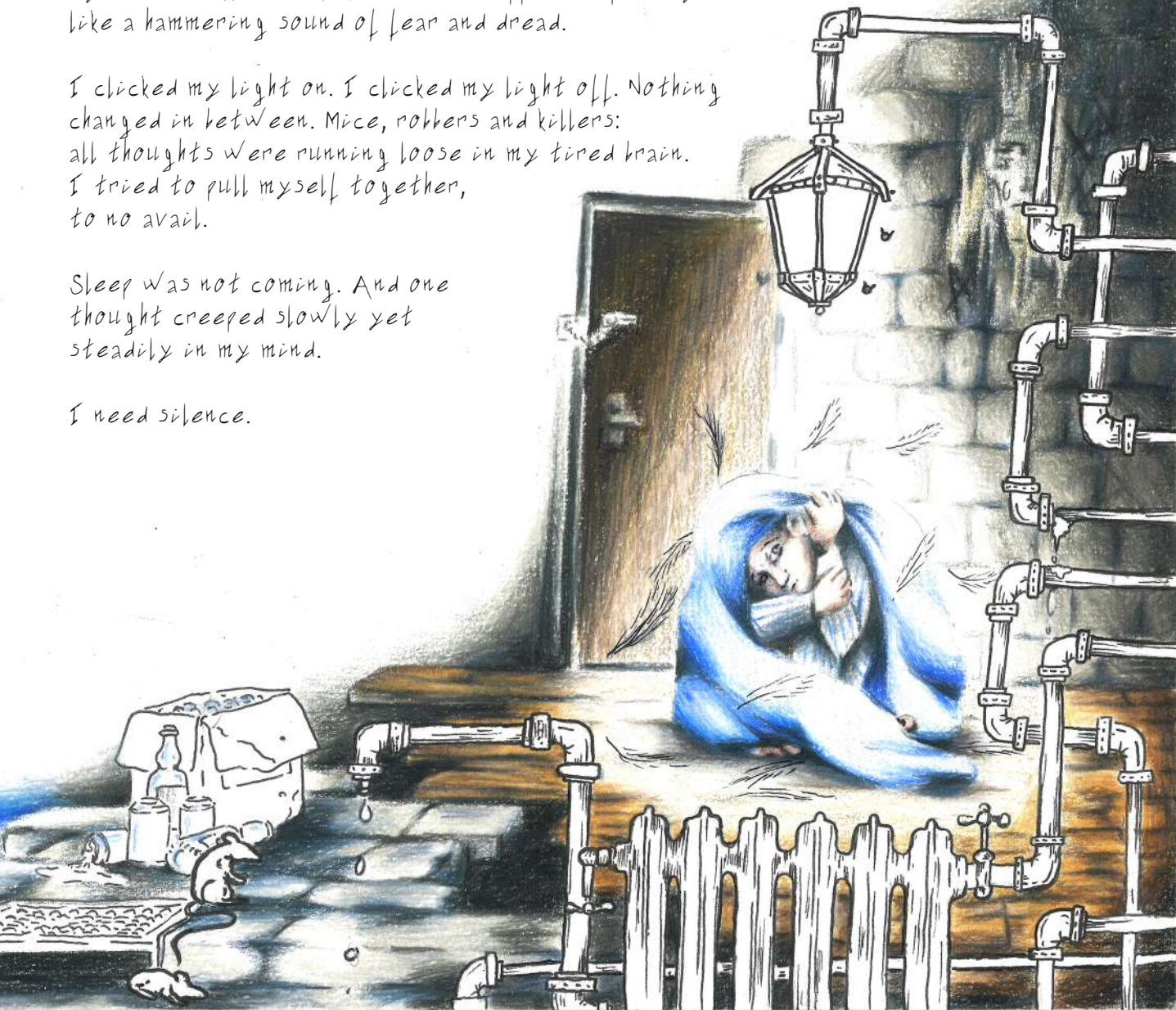
But it wasn't.

I still heard everything: the cracks of wood, the snaps of pipes, the plucks of the water drain. My eyes wouldn't close, worried of what might come next. My heart still beats like it was trapped deep in my throat like a hammering sound of fear and dread.

I clicked my light on. I clicked my light off. Nothing changed in between. Mice, robbers and killers: all thoughts were running loose in my tired brain. I tried to pull myself together, to no avail.

Sleep was not coming. And one thought crept slowly yet steadily in my mind.

I need silence.



My hopes then rested in the day to come, wishful that light would allow me to see clearly, think freely.

But then the sun rose with the new sounds that it carries, and the need for silence barged in my head, again, and again... and again.

I was still hopeful for a productive day. I had decided to study in a room full of known people, full of unknown people. It was the perfect environment to think, to work, to breathe. Rules were given to me and applied by all.

We were in the best conditions to focus on what's important.

Yet, my brain couldn't get a grip on the task. I read the same line for the fourth time, wandering between the written words, thinking of things from the past, things I was to do now, things I was to do in the future, people's demands and my lack of time to fulfill them.

The end point of the sentence appeared to my eyes.

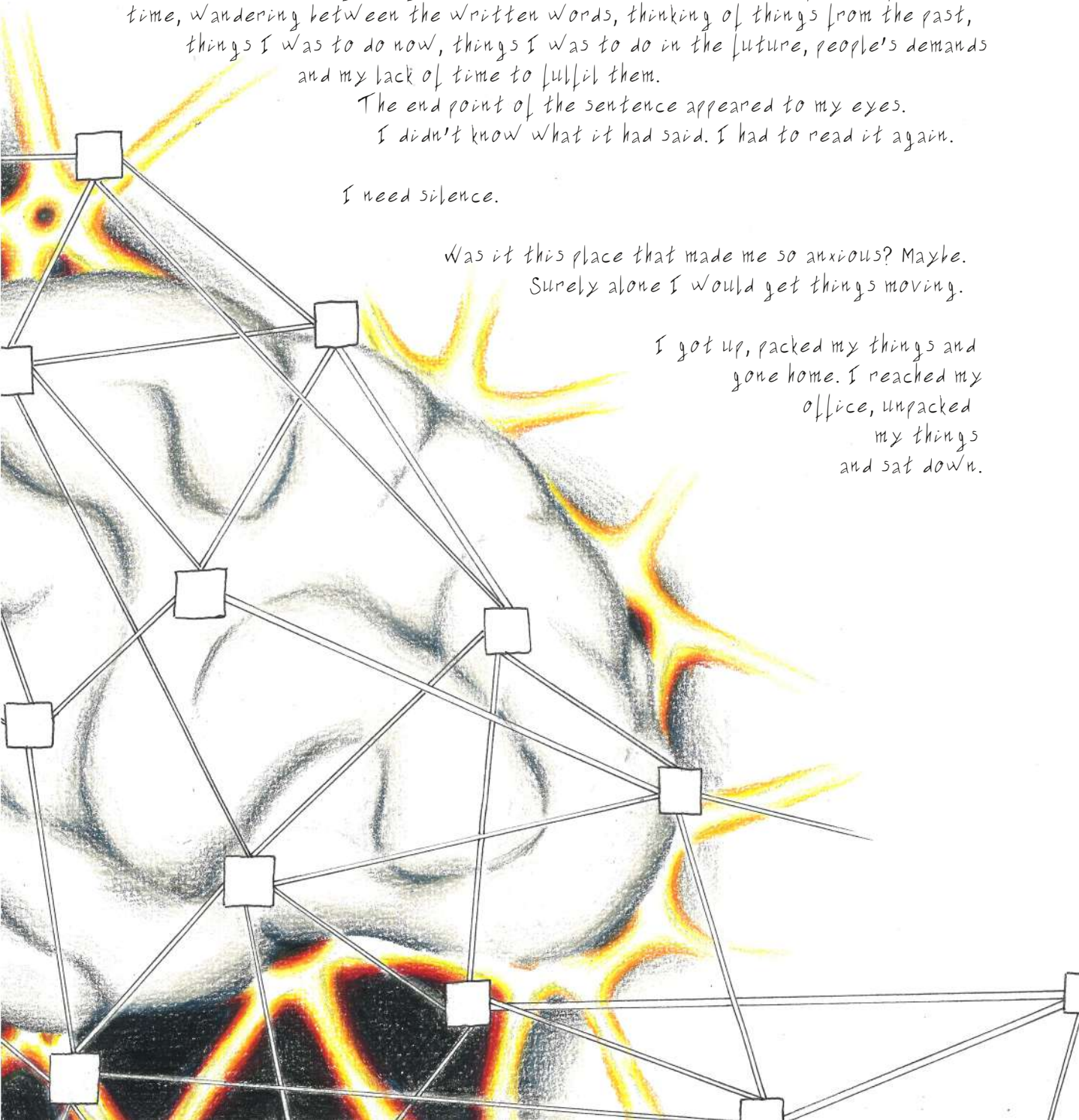
I didn't know what it had said. I had to read it again.

I need silence.

Was it this place that made me so anxious? Maybe.

Surely alone I would get things moving.

I got up, packed my things and gone home. I reached my office, unpacked my things and sat down.

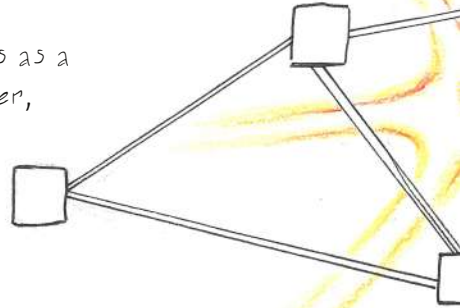


But still, my mind couldn't focus, my ideas wouldn't flow.

I got up, packed my things and gone home. I reached my office, unpacked my things and sat down.

But still, my mind couldn't focus, my ideas wouldn't flow.

I saw what I wanted to make, draw, write, but my brain was as a faulty TV zapping on its own. From one program to the other, it accelerated until the images blended together with no semblance of coherence. It created greyish lines and white noises. It moved too fast, spoke too loud for me to fight against it. I couldn't focus, I couldn't work. If I tried, anything I put on paper disappointed me.



The final nail in the coffin of my anxiety came with one clear thought: If I didn't like my work, who would?

I breathed, laid back on my chair, my arms on each side.  
I need silence.

It was then that I realized that the search for silence was a necessity. That I needed to start taking this redundant thought seriously. I needed to understand its foundation, its elements, its structure. What it would bring and erase, what it would build and destroy. I needed to search for what I truly needed, how to create it.

I need silence.

I need to be alone, somewhere quiet, somewhere safe. I need no unwanted alarms tiring my restless brain, no infinite list of things to do, no clicking clock, no dreadful deadlines. Right now, it is all I know.

I need silence.

Perfect silence.

But how could I get it?

## NOISE ABOUT ANXIETY

### references and inspiration - part I

Comics represent a crowd by reducing the distinctive lines separating bodies: t emphasize the mass and the closeness of the people in the area. See e.g. 'Dans l'ombre des bulles', on YouTube by Frederic Peyner (2017): a series of podcast describing the means and technics to draw a comic and translate feeling and atmosphere in a drawing.

Here are the different symptoms felt before losing consciousness: excessive sweating, paleness of the face, dizziness, a feeling of weakness, ringing in the ears, visual disturbances, an accelerated heart rate and a feeling of tightness in the chest. See e.g. 'Syncope et pertes de connaissance brèves' by dr Jacqueline Rossant-Lumbroso and dr Lyonel Rossant (2019)


See e.g. Nicolas Chausson thesis about 'Penser la "métropole nocturne" : entre tensions, risques ,et opportunités : une première approche des nuits de la métropole lyonnaise à travers le concept de qualité de vie.' (2019) to understand the increasing movements and activities in the night of a big city. It showcases, through the example of Lyon, how the night has now a double meaning: calm and rest to start with, but the night is also a synonym of activities for a big city, becoming more attractive and its economy more profitable.

Dracula, from Bram Stoker, and all vampire books implies that danger/depravity happens at night. Classical murder cases as Jack the Ripper, the Axeman of New Orleans, ... are also stories that have entered the folklore for their outcomes and time when they occur. They strengthen the common idea that murders and crimes are committed at night.

See e.g. study made by Francesco Rigoli, Michael Ewbank, Tim Dalgleish and Andrew Calder named 'Threat visibility modulates the defensive brain circuit underlying fear and anxiety' (2015), research on the increase of brain activity depending on whether the subject can see (or not) a threat: the brain showed more activity and stress signal when the subject had less visibility.

Connecting this academic research to a more social observation: the different types between movies depend on how the antagonist is shown. See e.g. Alien and the rest of the franchise (based on a story by O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett, 1979 - today) have different types attached to them, defined by the alien presence on screen. If the Alien appears on screen, it is an action movie, if not, it is a horror movie.





The first place most people will think of when asked, 'where can I get silence?' is the Outside. Go on break, they'll say. Go on a trip in nature. Go camping. Get out of society and the Human world.

But just writing this makes my spine shiver. Like in the dead of night in a poorly lit city, the outside is so noisy it switches the fight and fly button in my brain.

I need silence... and for me, nature is the opposite of it. Nature is full of noises and unpredictable variables. Humans can try to control the wild, but they will never succeed.

For me nature lacks the multiple layers of construction that provide comfort and security to all. It lacks soundproofing, thermal insulation and isolation from rodents and insects. It lacks all those isolations that we have put in our walls, in between each foundation and pillars. Everything that has been developed and created to make what we describe as warm, as comfy, as welcoming, as home.

It lacks protection from the Outside.

It lacks safety

It lacks silence.

I need silence... and for that I need walls.

I need a minimum amount of layers that allow me to forget about the outside, an amount of layers that allow me to focus on what is important.

Public spaces offer numerous areas, designed so that individuals can isolate themselves. But that doesn't imply that they will rest in silence.

No. Obtaining silence is more complicated than just finding walls.

It requires space and environment where you can be alone with yourself.

Some public places offer that service: libraries or monasteries for instance are spaces for retreat, invented and built solely to allow others to concentrate. Whether large or small spaces, they were created to offer the comfort of the inside and the silence to reflect on a subject of choice. They offer a systematic seclusion from the outdoors and society by their architecture and design.

Unfortunately, I know by experience that the silence they offer is not sufficient for me.

The reason for that is that I cannot decide how I can act.

Those places are made for the many, not tailored for the one.

They are public spaces where people will turn pages, seep on coffee, cough, breath, live. People will come and go in front of desks, in front of windows. They might chat, they might shush, they might glare.

All those small sounds, small gestures, small distractions, if not controlled, if not surveyed and measured will startle me, break my concentration, get me out of my reading, out of my silence.

Rules are what keep everything in place. Schedules are what makes every thought flow. Surveillance is what makes everyone behave.

I need silence.

But surveillance makes me nervous.

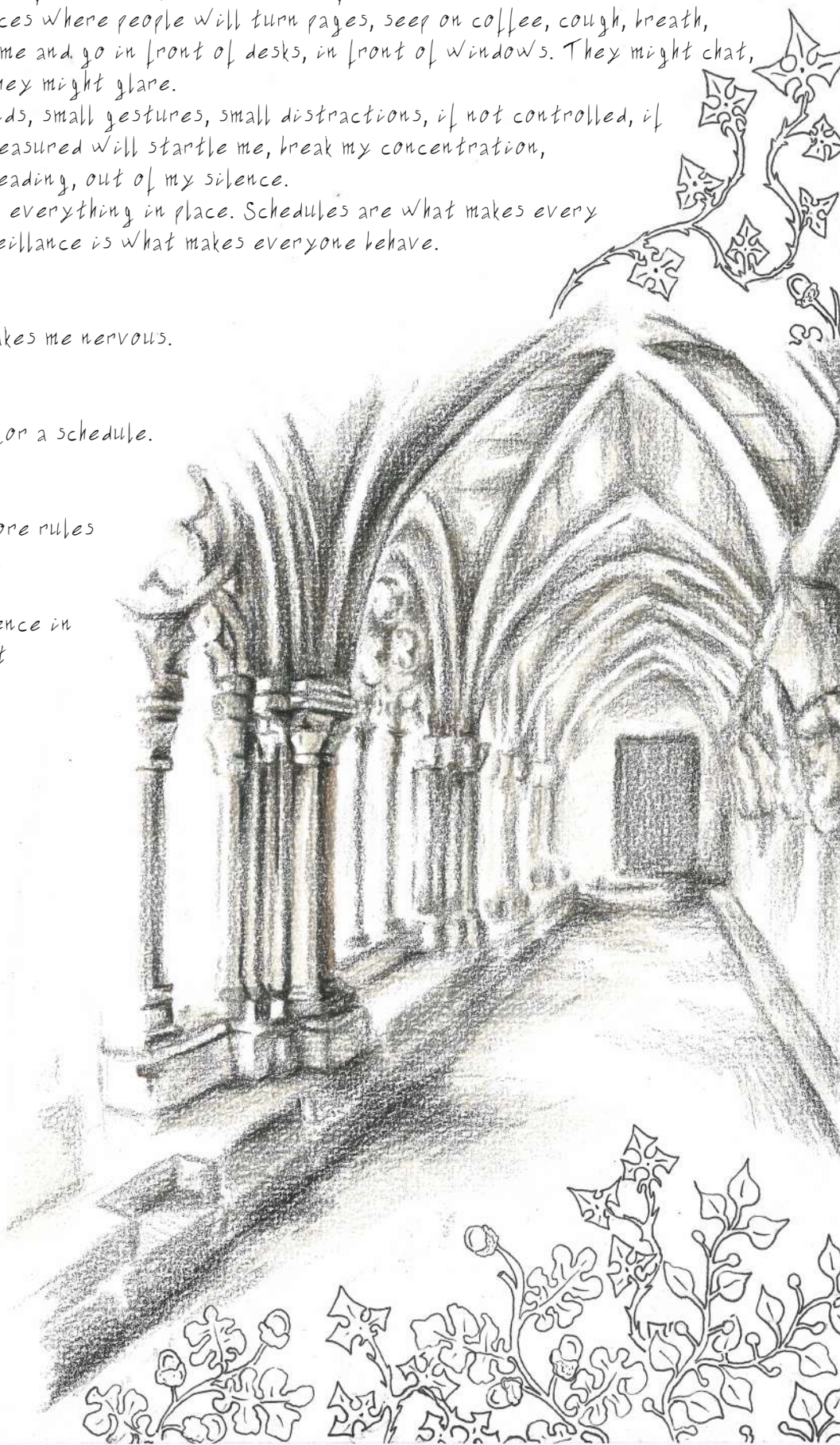
I need silence.

But it can't wait for a schedule.

I need silence.

But I don't need more rules to learn and follow.

What I need, is silence in an environment that I fully control.



So, then again, in my search for silence, I return to my apartment. It is where I've been running to in the past. It is logical for me to run back to it now.

My apartment offers a degree of isolation from the outside, different means to avoid others to come in and distract me. Neighbours might be an issue, though. Their power tools would vibrate through my walls, their footsteps resonate on my ceiling, the common front door slam each time there is passage, ... and who am I to forbid them their daily activities?

Apartments in modern buildings are designed to mitigate these sounds. Noisy rooms as kitchen and bathrooms are placed in such a way they create defensive wall to invasive means. Corridors are mere sentry walks to access the most secure and quiet places. And bedroom or office are the fort and main tower protected by the design of the architect. Everything is designed as a fortified castle for you to hide and defend against sound and noise, neighbours and foes.

I need silence and my appartement might still allow me to finally obtain it.

No one will tell me when to learn, when to leave. No one will tell me what to say, what to read. No one will tell me how to make, how to act. I can choose whatever room I want to be in, stand in, eat in, sit in.

I can choose every feature in that room: from temperature, to lights, from colour to texture, from furniture to trinkets. I can choose a room far from outside movement, far from noise and distraction. One where I feel comfortable, cosy and home. When my choice is made, I can lock my door, cut the phone, close the windows. I can isolate myself from the outside and feel safe in a space I know all too well.

But isn't that also an issue?

Since it is my apartment, my home, I know about all the trivial things that I own.

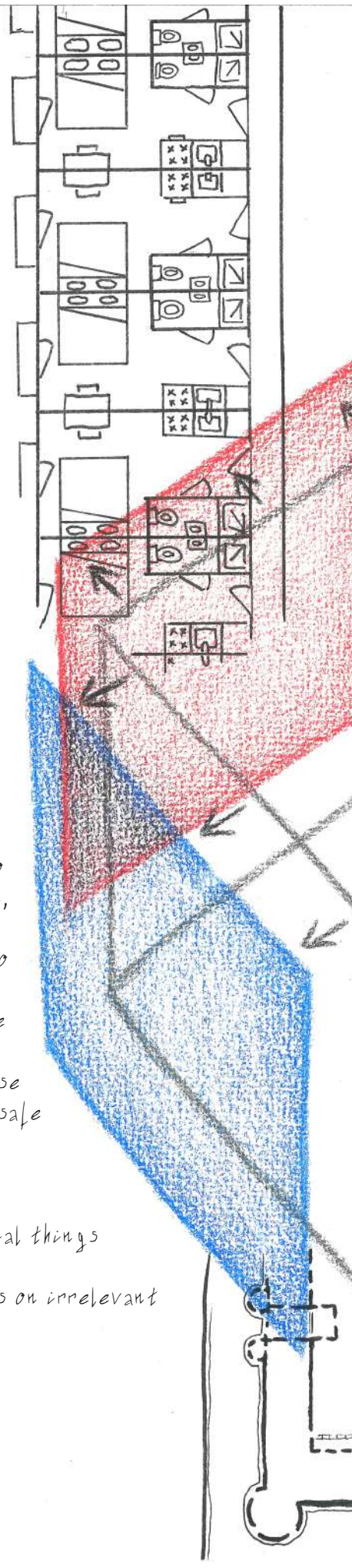
Voices will start whispering questions, turning my thoughts on irrelevant problems:

Is my fridge full?

What is the amount of laundry laying in the bucket?

When was the last time I cleaned the bathroom?

Changed my sheets?



Since it is my apartment, I will have full access to all distractions such as my books, mangas, comics, access to all my disc, music and films. Whenever I will look around, a new thought will cross my mind, a new task, something I've been putting aside and that my brain will think that I need to solve right now.

Problems are stacking, piling up and crumbling on me slowly by the minutes. I'll get overwhelmed with the amount I must do, the amount I want to do.

I know that, in the end, nothing will be done.

I need silence.

Maybe I could get rid of all the visual aspects that distract me?

As heartbreaking as it sounds, throwing away all my belongings seems to be the way to obtain what I need. Without my

belongings, I would create the perfect blank space, for my brain to wander freely, mundane concerns forgotten. Out of sight, out of mind as they say.

I would have to paint all the walls, floors and ceilings, erasing all the ghostly stains of my ancient possessions, so that I can forget them completely. One unique colour for the entire space. One simple, uniform and clear colour to which my brain doesn't get attached.

I would need a colour that doesn't initiate feeling:

I would eliminate all bright colours: yellow, red, pink. They give me joy and glee.

I would eliminate all dark colours: blue, green or black. They close down a space, making me suffocate.

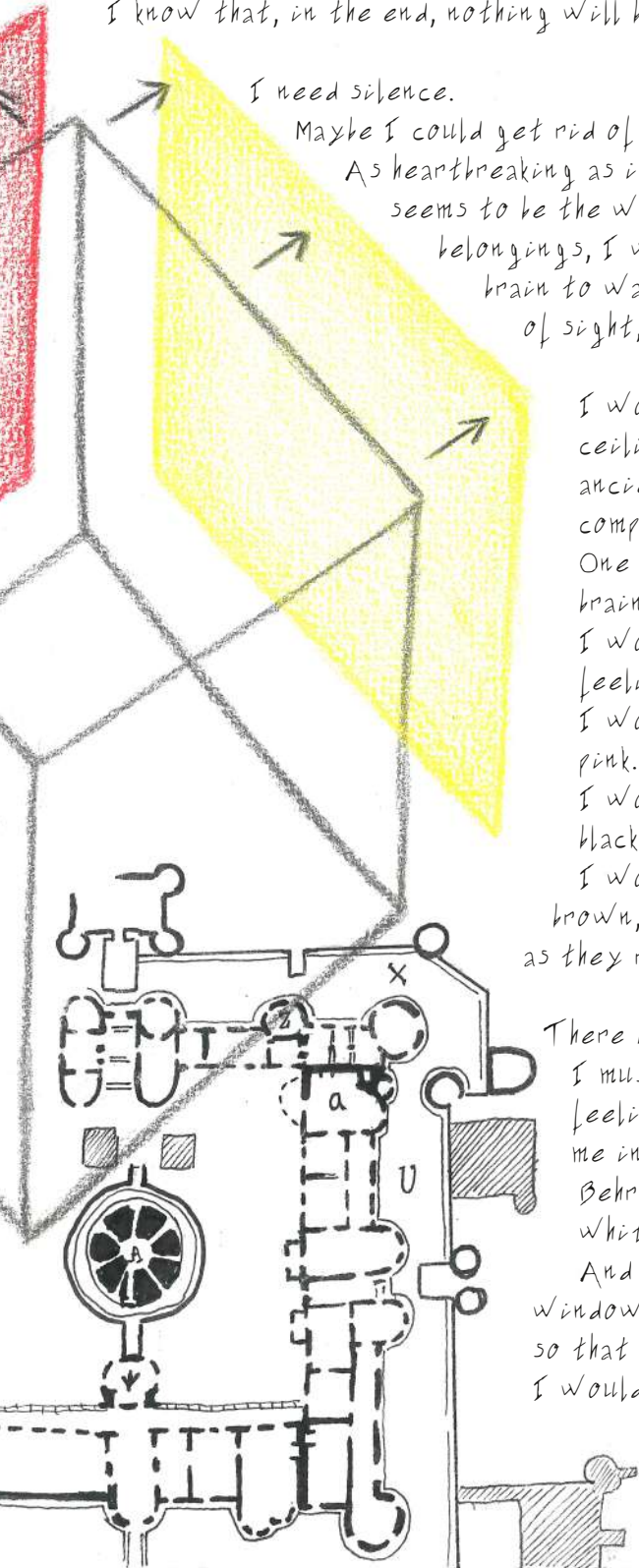
I would go with a neutral colour: not beige or brown, as they remind me of skin. Not pastels or fluo as they remind me of children.


There is only one colour left.

I must turn to white. Containing all colours, all feeling and mixing them to dull them all, inspiring me into an expressionless figure. I would get the Behr Ultra-Pure White PR-W15 (LRV 94.4). The whitest paint in the market.

And everything would be covered. I would have no windows, no doors, no floors, no ceilings, no limits, so that my mind can be free to bounce in space.

I would create my perfect white cube.





I removed all distractions; my mind is quiet. But since there are no objects left, sound washes back in.

I need silence and my house resonates.

Sound waves dance with no restraint.

Free of angles and holes.

Free of rough surfaces and cottony walls.

They multiply and mix together whenever I move, breathe, speak or sigh, creating a cacophony of echoes and noises.

My empty room is not an anechoic chamber or an auditorium.

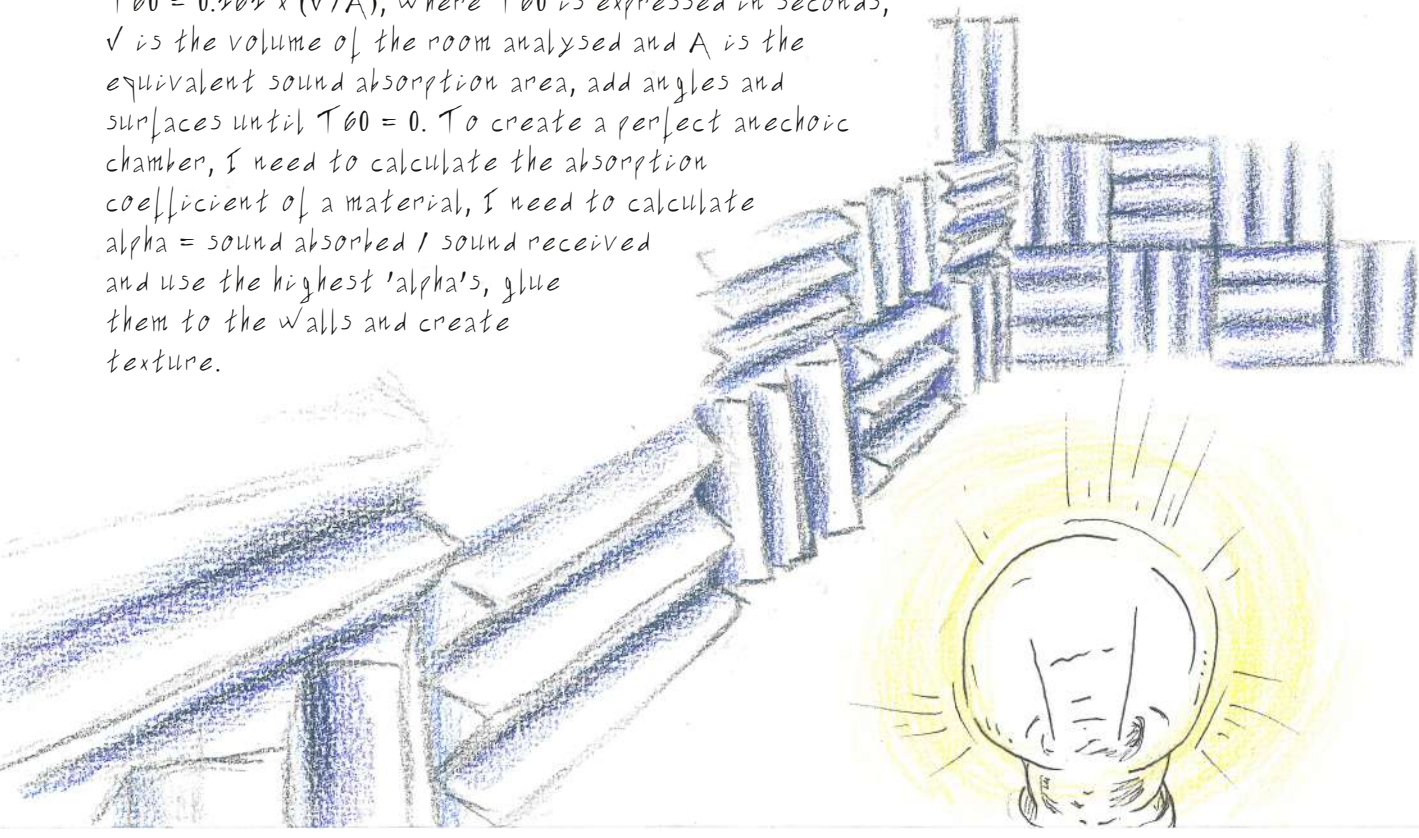
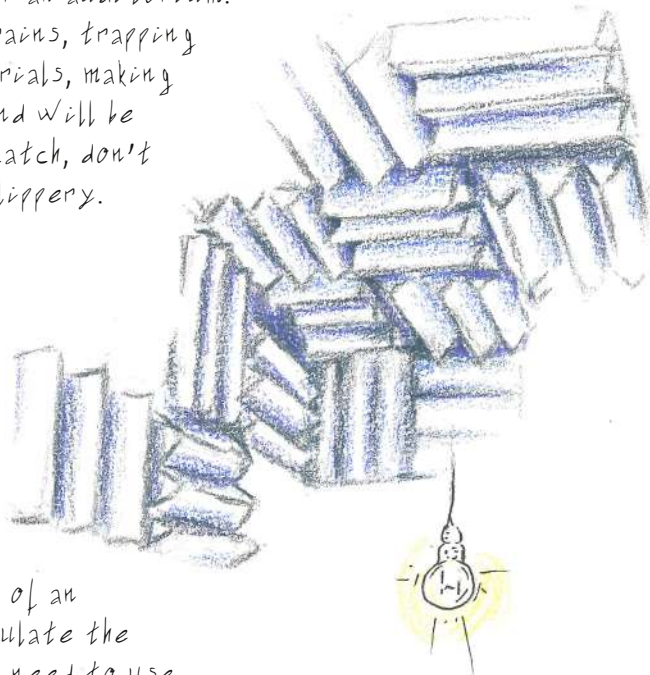
It isn't a fabulous maze of textures and grains, trapping sounds and waves in heavy and hollow materials, making sure they never come back, making sure sound will be played once, be heard once. My walls don't catch, don't lose, don't trap. They're flat, smooth and slippery.

I need silence and a new problem has been presented to me.

I need silence and for that I need to reconfigure my room so that all sounds are muffled out.

Let see ....

For complete silence, to emulate the walls of an auditorium in my own room, I need to calculate the reverberance time with Sabine's formula. I need to use  $T_{60} = 0.161 \times (V/A)$ , where  $T_{60}$  is expressed in seconds,  $V$  is the volume of the room analysed and  $A$  is the equivalent sound absorption area, add angles and surfaces until  $T_{60} = 0$ . To create a perfect anechoic chamber, I need to calculate the absorption coefficient of a material, I need to calculate  $\alpha = \text{sound absorbed} / \text{sound received}$  and use the highest 'alpha's, glue them to the walls and create texture.



I need silence but by trying to create it, perfect it, I'm going back to my first problem.

By recreating a silent room, I must incorporate visual distraction, create something I wish to touch, gaze and clean. It is as if I'm stuck in a perfect loop where I can only choose between visual or auditory distraction, without hope of successfully eliminating both.

Is it really a tough problem, though?

No. It isn't.

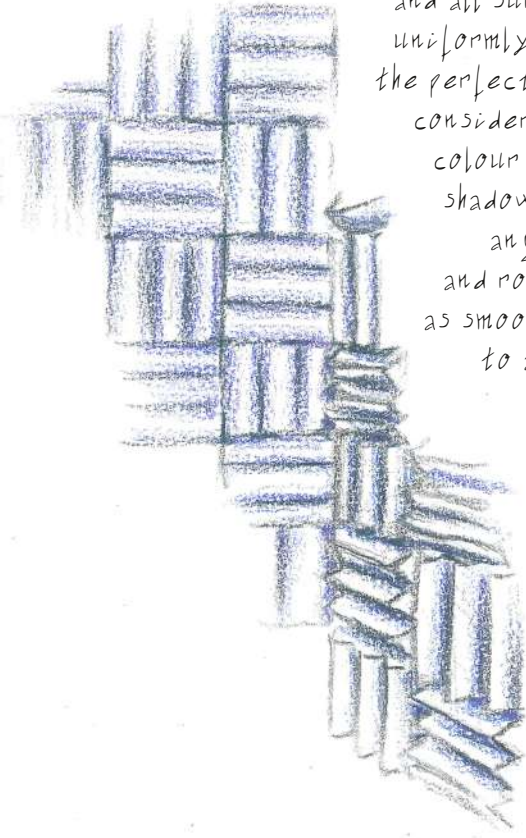
It isn't because the colour I've chose already solved it.

If the setting is right, the brush angle respected, and all surface covered uniformly and lit with the perfect lighting system considering direction, colour and intensity, shadows can be erased, angles hidden, and rough surfaces are as smooth and sleek as glass to a human eye.

I need silence  
because for me  
sound is the real enemy,  
the only enemy.

My search is and remains silence.

And my search seems to reach its end.



## NOISE ABOUT ARCHITECTURE

### references and inspiration - part II

For Alain Corbin, nature is the ultimate place for tranquillity and rest. See e.g. [History of rest](#) (2023), which explains how rest and sleep have evolved over history and changed with the industrial era.

'The rooster Maurice of Saint-Pierre d'Oleron in Charente Maritime' was a case in 2017, in which a rooster was brought to court because he was singing too loud and too early.

[Hot Fuzz](#) (Directed by Edgar Wright, co-written with Simon Pegg, 2003), shows a very active cop sent to a supposedly very quiet town in the middle of nowhere, for him to calm himself down... except that it isn't quiet at all. Dark comedy and horror movies often reinforce the idea that the countryside is not 'quiet'.

There are a lot of unsolved cases of disappearing hikers and dead campers where most of the time, we are left to wonder if they fell to their death, got eaten by an animal or killed by a human. See e.g. Kriss Kremers and Lisanne Froom case (2014) and the Keddie murders cases (1981).

In many companies, confidentiality is key. All open spaces must offer a certain degree of privacy to its employer or employees. The French Association of Normalisation (AFBOR - 2016) had to norm Acoustic - Performances acoustiques des espaces ouverts de bureaux, the NF S31-199 to ensure that that confidentiality would be respected.

Here is a chronological experience and description of the access of libraries through my life:

Library Gutenberg, 75015: there was a room before entering the library: it looked like a decontamination procedure to filter air between the spaces.

CDI of College Andre Citroën: located at the end of a corridor hidden between two sets of stairs and separated from the public space by two sets of doors.

Library of Panthéon Assas - Paris II university: located in between two floors, separated from the common movement of the students and teachers and a library outside of campus.

The Pantheon library: access was given through a specific authorization. The entrance was even equipped with metal detectors and guarded. The main study area was separated from the street by two rooms and four doors.

The Rietveld library: located in a secondary building, and hidden underground, only accessible through a steep staircase.

See e.g. Architectural projects and demands on the national website of France to build libraries for the public and their demands for multiple layers of spaces in the design of library.

There are rules you must follow in libraries: all are displayed in the entrance and reminded by the librarian if crossed. 'Règle et règlement en médiathèque', a document written by the French government (2013), explains by who and where they must be applied.

When booking a retreat in a monastery, one must accept to participate in all domestic work and assist to the spiritual work to be able to access quiet places, study places, meditative spaces. For reference, see e.g. [La règle de Saint Benoît](#), written in 530 by Benoît de Nursie that establishes a monastic way of life and a framework for the coenobitic life for his disciples.

Monasteries are built after a strict choice of the location. Their design is cleverly thought to facilitate work and prayer, considering the vows of the monks. See e.g. 'Archéologie des monastères du premier millénaire dans le Centre-Est de la France. Conditions d'implantation et de diffusion, topographie historique et organisation', written by Sebastien Bully (2009) for a detail study of first millennium monasteries architecture and history.

The panopticon is a design of institutional building with an inbuilt system of control, originated by the English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham (1791). In this prison, the prisoners cannot see where the guards are and what they are looking at. But the guards can always see the prisoners. It creates for the prisoners this illusion of constantly being watched, creating for them anxiety, paranoia, loss of dignity and privacy.

See e.g. Francis D.K. Ching book, Architecture: shape, space, organisation (4th edition, 2012) about balance, avoiding wasting valuable space and how it can have an impact on the way people interact with the construction to understand the importance of placement of rooms, empty spaces and living spaces in architecture.

Floor plans of new student buildings (like DUWO appartements in Amsterdam) or hotels (Novotel or Sofitel) give a clear view of separation between private and common area by the placement of kitchen and bathroom in between to assure full satisfaction from the customer.

When a colour is mentioned, it is often associated to a meaning related to its history or a general feeling that has been passed through its shades. See e.g. The Book of Colour Concepts, written by Alexandra Loske, (historic approach of colour, 2024), Colour. A course in mastering the art of mixing colours, written by Betty Edwards (practical approach to colour, 2004), Le petit livre des couleurs (and all the others following in the colour serie, 2007), by Michel Pastoureaux

For the idea of perfect white, see e.g. 'Flare Perception', by Willem de Rooij, exhibition shown in October 2021 in the Fons Welters gallery, in Amsterdam. The artist had painted the walls of the gallery 8 different shades of white: the whole concept was that perfect white doesn't exist in the market, their value being always a bit different from each other.

It is a saying in art that there are no straight lines in nature: only shadows and shapes ("There are no lines in nature, only areas of colour, one against another" - Edouard Manet, concept later adopted by multiple art historians as Hector Obalk). Surgery lights is a good way to prove that: scalytic lights are used to erase all shadows during a medical operation, through a mechanic of adding different spots, in different angles so all areas are covered. It erases all the shadows left by organs and leave only the shapes.

Anechoic chambers were created so that militaries in submarines could not be heard by enemy sonar since even walking in a submarine can be deadly for the whole team. See e.g. Le Chant du Loup (movie directed by Antonin Baudry, 2017)

There are multiple auditorium or record studio with blocky and angular architecture in the world (Radio France - Paris 16th district, France, Blackbird Studios - Nashville, United States of America, ...): all the different balconies, squares and cones on the walls are placed there after research and planning to break the sound waves instead of making them bounce and resonate.

For the concept of white cube, see e.g. 'Inside the White Cube — The Ideology of the Gallery Space' by Brian O' Doherty (1986), about the complexity and all that goes into the conception of a white space. Those spaces are supposedly created to allow the full freedom for the artist to create but it can also sterilize the art.

The perfect white room was shown in THX 1138, film directed by Georges Lucas (1971): some scenes show the characters in an seemingly endless white space - a perfect pretence of freedom that the characters don't have in the movie.

I need silence and my room seems to finally fulfil all my criteria.

If all is followed, I am locked in a white room where the walls never end, the ground don't touch, and the ceiling don't exist.

I finally have it: no distraction, no connection to the outside, no rule, no planning, no sound. Silence in its purest form, in a perfect white universe.

Silence.

Standing, sitting, laying in this white emptiness, my brain finally relaxes. Nothing to do, nothing to respond to, nothing to answer to.

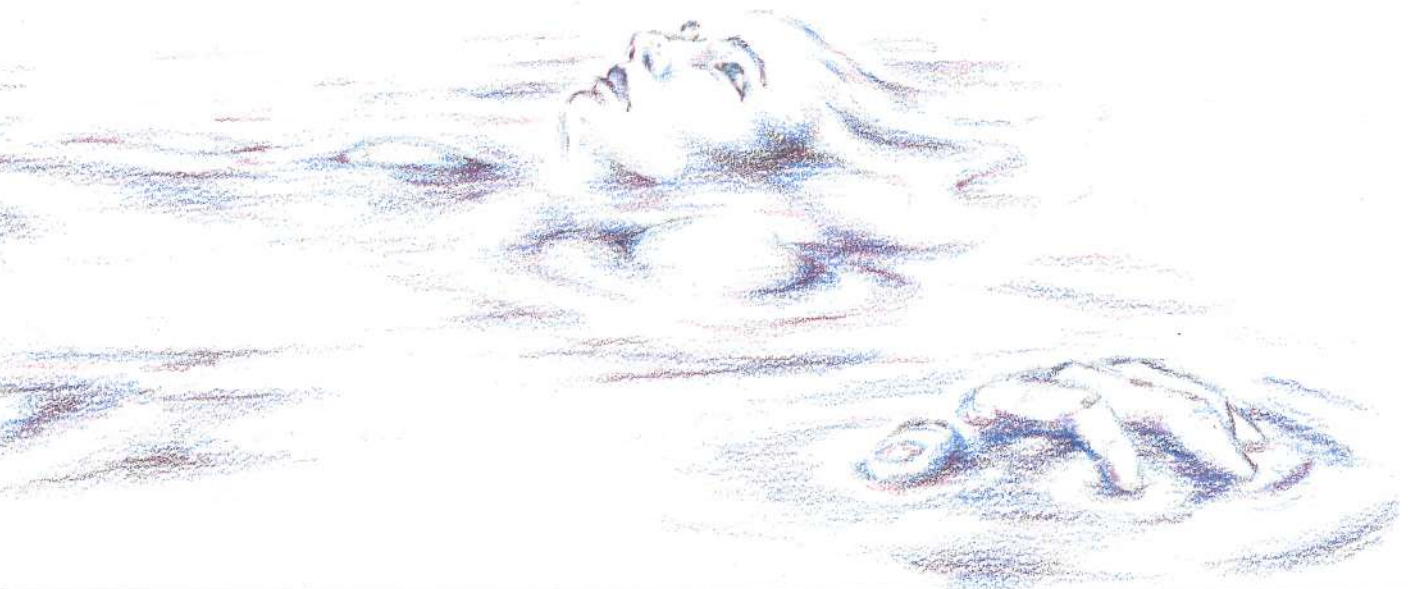
The stress hormone will get lower and lower the more time I spend in this room. Cortisol becomes almost non-existent, leaving my frontal cortex free to create, memorize, dream. I can fully rest, obtain what has been described as 'the rest of the soul'.

Silence.



Sounds like paradise, in a world where you are overly  
stimulated, in all aspects of your life: food, looks, activities,  
studies. A place where there is no body  
to distract you, no one to push you, nothing  
to bother you. Nothing  
to think about.  
I would finally breath.

I needed silence and it seems as I've finally reached it.  
Still, something is wrong.



As time goes by,  
in this environment  
with no stimuli something  
would start bothering me.

The lack of images  
deteriorates slowly  
my concentration, my memory,  
to the point where familiar  
places, familiar faces will disappear.  
I will start hyper focusing on one thing  
to try not to forget it, the thing will  
become an obsession, my only thought, digging my grave to madness  
faster as nothing can stop it.

I don't need to think long, to know what my obsession would be. Why?

I need silence yet in this completely sterile white space my  
body betrays me.

My mind will obsess on my lack of food, get frustrated on my  
lack of energy, furious with my lack of movement, panicked  
with my lack of breath. Everything will feel like it is  
spinning and moving. Nothing will be stable and I will have  
nothing to hang on to. Being constantly in a bright, white  
light will tear up my eyes, making them dry, making me cry.  
I will not be able to sleep, to rest, or to fully regenerate my brain.

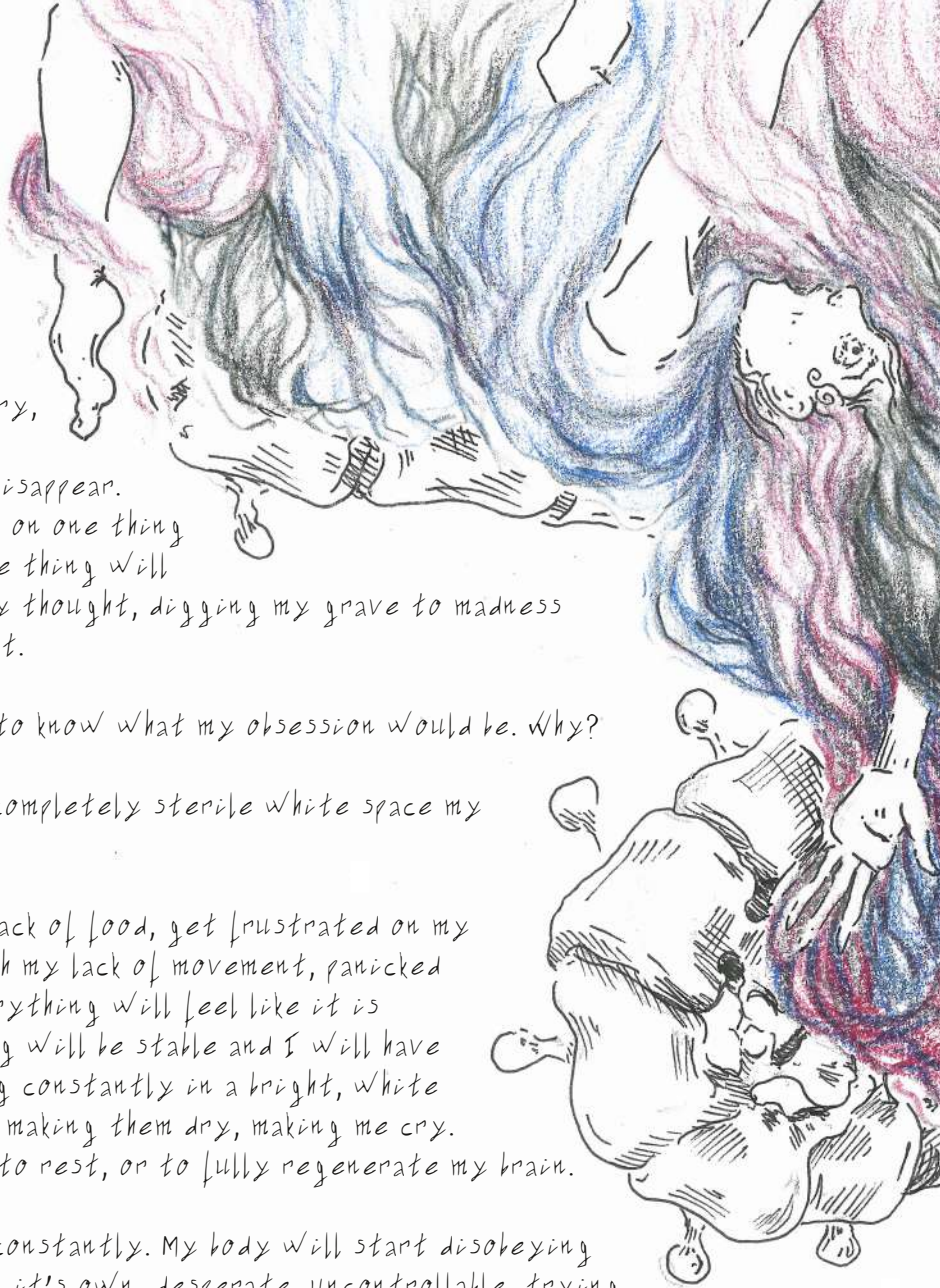
My mind will scream at me constantly. My body will start disobeying  
me. It will start moving on it's own, desperate, uncontrollable, trying  
to save me despite all the harm it could self-inflict. Trashing itself on the  
walls, eating itself completely, hoping for an escape but leaving only skin and bones  
to remain.

In this white universe, I might have control over my room, its layout, its lighting,  
its colour, but I have no control over my body and its will to live and survive.

I need silence. And it eludes me again, and again and again.

I need silence. Absolute silence, where no thoughts, no sound, no noise can be heard.  
I want it. Why can't I get it?

The human ear might not be the most precise system of the animal kingdom, but it  
still catches any frequency between 20 and 16 000 Hz. This frequency band is large  
enough to ensure that an ordinary human can't ever experience 'absolute silence'.



We are still able to hear our own breath, heart, stomach and body. Even a deaf person can sense the rising and hammering of its chest from his lungs and muscles.

To achieve absolute silence, or more precisely, to make my body as silent as the room around me, I would have to go into the void, the emptiness of space.

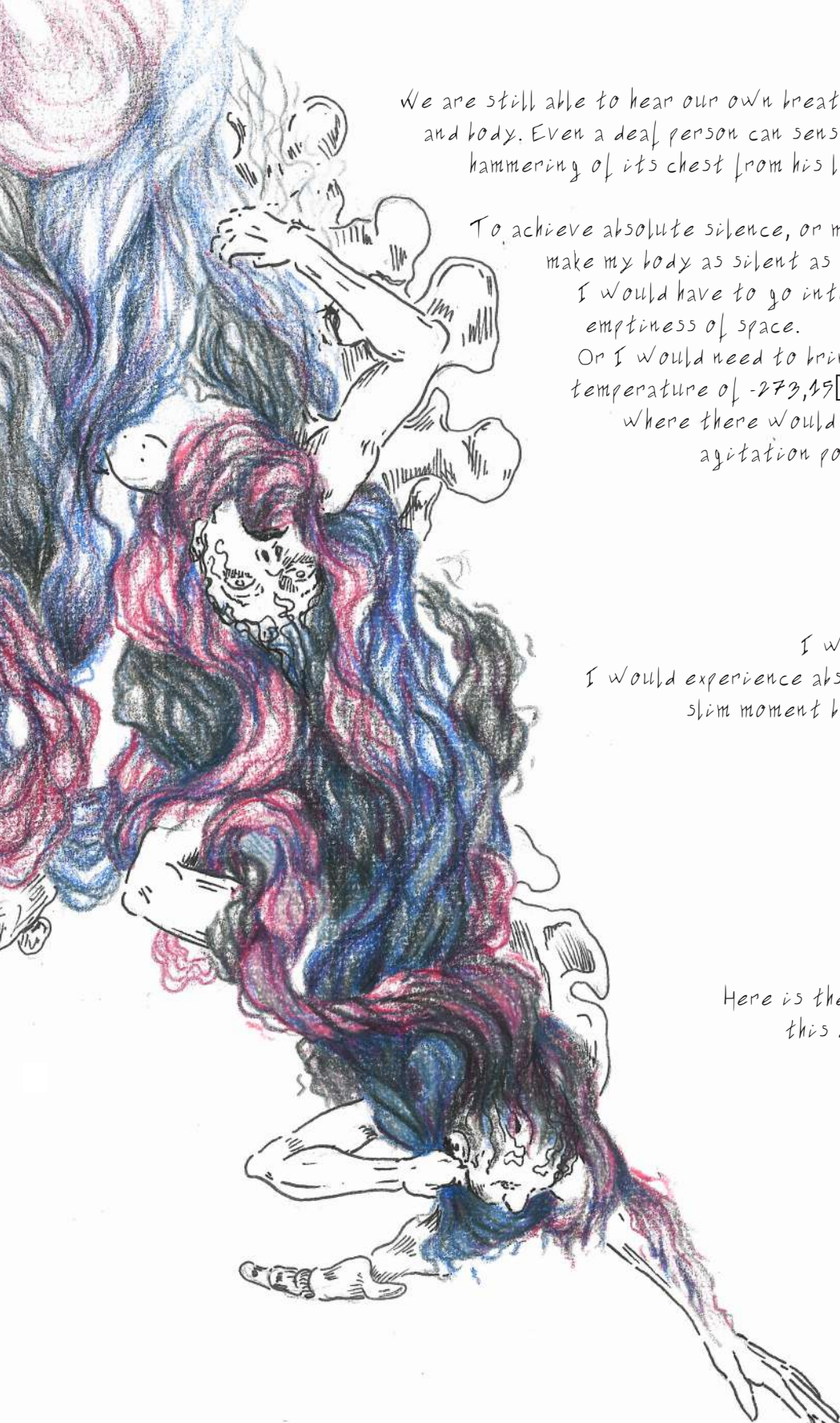
Or I would need to bring my room to a temperature of  $-273,15^{\circ}\text{C}$  a temperature where there would be no molecular agitation possible, the absolute temperature of  $0\text{K}$ .

I wouldn't survive it. I would experience absolute silence for a slim moment before my body dies.

I need silence.

Here is the thing. yet I reach this dreadful conclusion:

to achieve the silence I'm looking for, the absolute silence, where nothing can bother me, myself or others, I need my body to die.



## NOISE ABOUT MADNESS

### references and inspiration - part III

The white room torture is a form of torture used in some countries where someone is locked in a room with little to do, look at or think. The interview of Amir Fakhraoui (2017), who was locked in one of these rooms for six months gives a very disturbing description of what he has lived through and what he has experienced.

The Royal Payer (Schachnovelle, 1943) novella from Stephan Zweig also describes a man locked in one of these rooms, with only one distraction: a chess book. His descent into madness is realistically described in this novel and gives you an example of how obsession can occur and what they can become.

See e.g. 'Isolement et contention en psychiatrie générale Méthode Recommandations pour la pratique clinique', written by the Haute Autorité de Santé (France, 2014), to see the multiple layers, measures and rules to follow before putting someone in isolation. It confirms that isolating someone has a terrible effect on that patient and must be used lightly in a controlled environment.

For all the neuroscience and neurochemistry, combine different research on what the front cortex is and creates, what Cortisol is and how they affect each other. For more details, see e.g. 'Stresse et Mémoire' by Florence Ghika-Schmid, François Ansermet and Pierre Magistretti (2001).

According to a discussion I had with Dr Fanny Meunier (CNRS director, leads research on psycho and neurolinguistics), the brain is technically lazy. At a young age, it will create automatisms and routines to simplify human's life. But the brain also gets "bored" and asks for stimuli which can be created by change or by novelty. The amount of automatism that the brain has created will simplify the tasks, allowing it to learn new information, save it and create a new automatism. Like a muscle, it is important to train the brain otherwise it might fall asleep and work on minimum effort. But like muscles, too much is not ideal either. The brain can function in a certain number of stimuli for a certain amount of time. It will saturate if this time or amount goes overboard (headaches, crying, ...).


'The rest of the soul' comes from the multiple translation of 'Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom' from Francis Bacon's books, *Moulin* (1561). This sentence was the conclusion to his chapter on rhetoric. This argument of the 'rest of the soul' has then been used to explain retreat in monasteries or isolated areas, to rest and get ideas and thoughts together. Nowadays it is mostly used in religion.

For an example of what the lack of sleep can do, see e.g. *Le Horla* written by Maupassant (1885). It is a short story of a man losing sleep and becoming more and more paranoid, imagining creatures suffocating him during the night. His stress increases by not knowing what is happening creates more and more realistic hallucinations and harmful behaviour to himself.

NASA says "No sound can travel in space". It's on their website on the page: Sonifications - NASA Science. It is explained by the lack of movement of atoms in space, via the lack of air.

The temperature absolute 0 was defined by William Thomson. It means a temperature of 0 kelvin (-273,15°C) where no movement can be observed in any realm (molecular, nuclear, ...). It is supposedly impossible to obtain it.





That doesn't sound right.  
That's not what I'm looking for.

My body is what's strongest in my life right now.  
My body can stand, walk, sit.  
It can dance, scream, jump.  
It heals itself, breath on its own, lives on its own.  
It can draw, paint, sculpt, write and run half marathons.

It has carried me out of a crowded bar, ran me to  
safety under my bed cover, travelled me through  
school, work, life, hiked me around nature,  
on top of mountains and around lakes,  
wandered me in the libraries and monasteries.

It helped me create a completely isolated  
room in my apartment

Fuck

I don't want it to be dead, empty and  
soulless. I want to keep it thriving as it  
has in the past, even if my mind  
doesn't always follow.

And that's my issue from the start: my mind.

I need silence to heal my mind, restore it, calm it.

All along my search, the only thing that would have been completely untouched by absolute silence, would have been my mind. Sure, I would get mad. But then again, it isn't solving my problem.

I would still be obsessed with something  
I want to get, need to get.

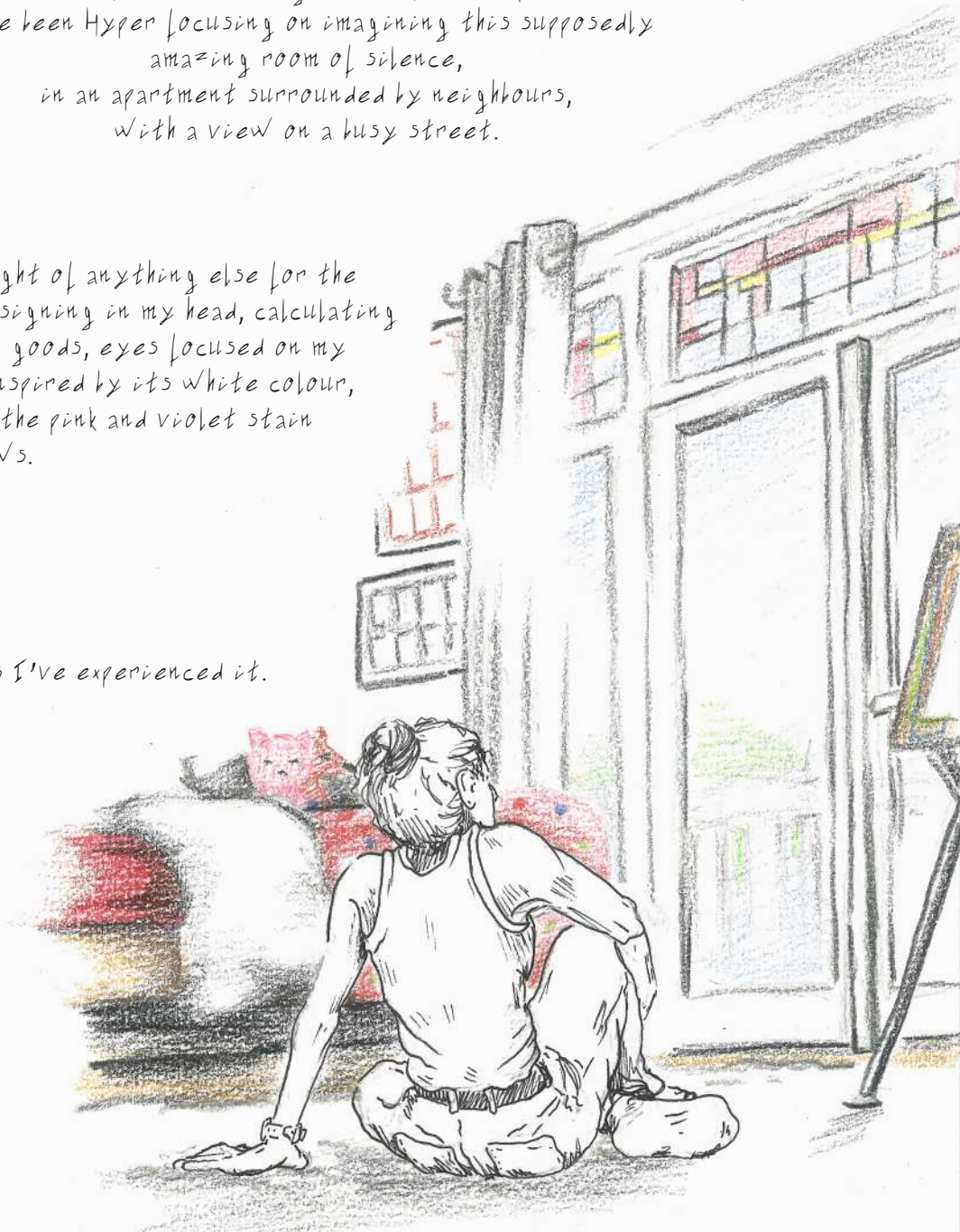
I need silence but maybe, I've been looking at the wrong silence.

Now, funny enough, I've been working on my perfect anechoic room for a certain amount of time, in my chair, looking at all my books, plushes and laundry.

I've been Hyper focusing on imagining this supposedly  
amazing room of silence,  
in an apartment surrounded by neighbours,  
with a view on a busy street.

And I haven't thought of anything else for the past hours. Just designing in my head, calculating the wrongs and the goods, eyes focused on my ceiling, getting inspired by its white colour, perfect canvas for the pink and violet stain glass of my windows.

I need silence  
and for a few hours I've experienced it.





The simple truth is that the world is never silent.

Between the geophony of earth itself, moving constantly under our feet, transforming, melting and reforming and the biophony, the sound of the world around, the sound people try to get and hear when they "take a break from the city". We are constantly surrounded by noises and sounds and for as long as human has lived and will live, it will be the case.

Their complete absence would be terrifying and announcing something dreadful.

What most people try to flee, what I've been trying to flee, is anthropophony.

The sounds and noises of human creation. The noise that amplified and added to our common life for the past centuries. It is starting to be more and more complicated to avoid. Even in complete nature, in the middle of the forest it is now almost impossible to avoid the unnatural sounds.

But more than pure noise, it is also everything that can be thrown at you: information, news, report, ...

When you look into history books or even fiction books written before the XX century, it would take anyone days to cross France from north to south, weeks to obtain news in a letter sent by a friend from Spain to the Netherlands and the local news about the Japanese government would not be transmitted in the daily newspaper in Germany at all.

And it was normal.

Everything is going faster now. We are bombarded by thousands of information all day long, rules and instructions to follow, sometimes completely contradicting themselves, feeding our brain with overloading useless stuff.

Adding to that, the easy access to everyone in your personal life through text, social media, emails, phones, ...

No wonder the sentence 'I need silence' is so prominent to everyone.

Maybe the silence I've been looking for, this need I've been feeling, is my lack of knowing when to stop.

As I said, information flows constantly filling my eyes and ears. Even in a completely isolated, white box, sensation and feeling crosses my mind, even as basic as 'I'm hungry'.

Don't get me wrong, all this information is important for us humans. It is not a lie when we say that humans are social animals. The reason you become mad in an isolated place is because of the lack of interaction and stimuli on your brain. It is the connection, the discussion, the questions we have with others that makes us evolve, grow and change, and most importantly keep us sane. But it is also important to note that to ensure a continuous line of thought, you need silence.

You need silence in between each word for that people understand you.

You need silence to hear and reflect on what you are saying, what people are saying, communicating and answering.

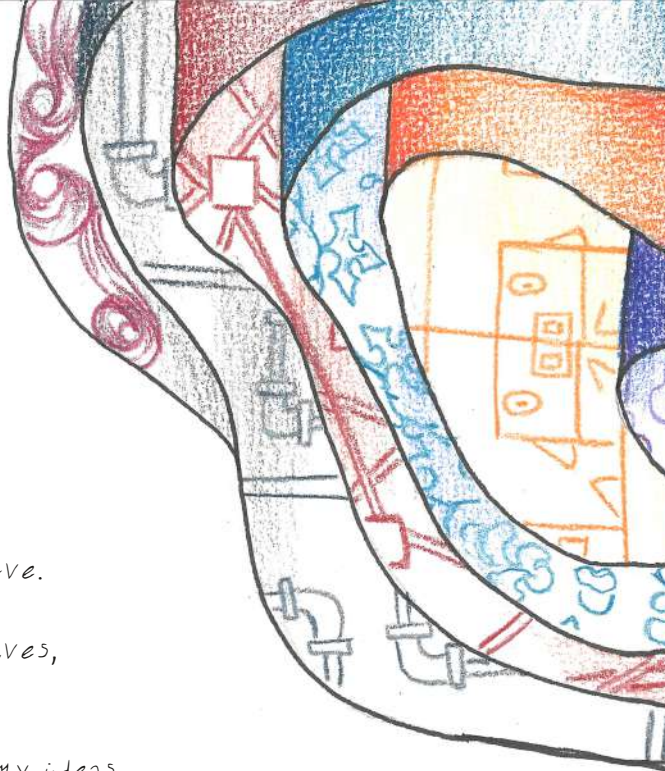
You need silence to sleep and for your brain to fully function.

You need silence for you to understand what's going on.

Without silence, you lose track, you don't hear the last part of the argument, you feel lost and confused in all the information sent your way, drowning between the must and the should, the real and the fake, the mean and the friend.

The silence I need is the silence to put myself back together, repair myself. I need to have everything buzzing and bothering me to go away for a moment for that I can finally get to sort things out, to make things, to achieve things.





This brings me to my first lines:

I need silence to think, to work, to sleep, to live.  
Idea comes and goes, crashes and transforms.  
Silence allows them to breathe, to calm themselves,  
to get a semblance of order.

And silence I got through this text: ordering my ideas,  
pounding the right or wrong ways to do things,  
focusing on what I felt was important at the time,  
locking everything else out.  
I've combined noises and sound to create a hypothetical  
world and end with a linear and simple answer.

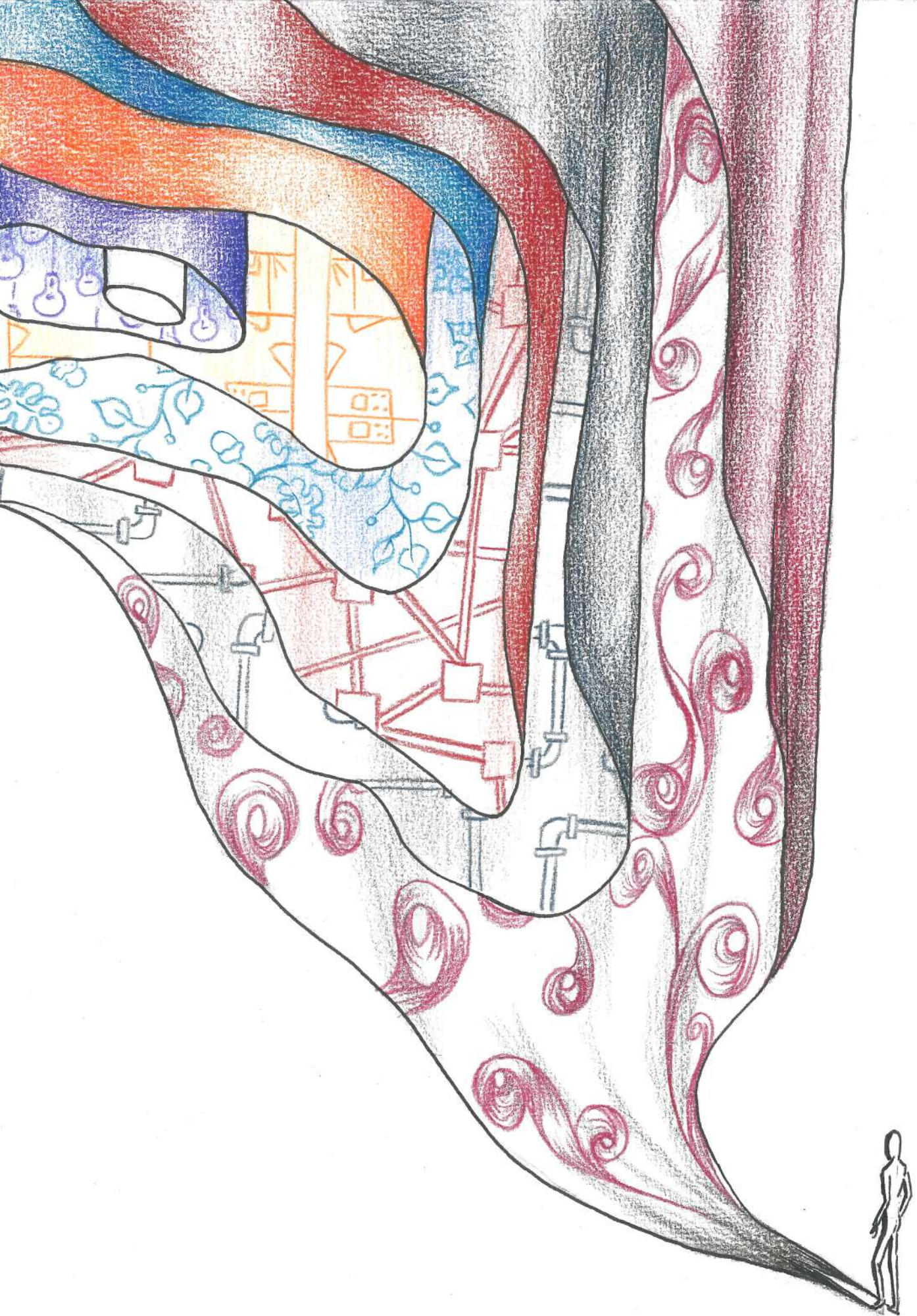
Silence is what creates the balance your brain needs to function.  
Balance implies equilibrium. Not excess.

I've just needed time. I've needed to create a white canvas, a white sterile place,  
that I then filled with colours, words, emotions, and ideas.

It is just one option.

you can go on a hike and scream your lungs out on top of a mountain.  
you can seat in a library for hours, read a book surrounded by strangers.  
you can retreat in a monastery, follow a schedule and rules made for you.  
you can be with friends or alone.  
you can be outside or inside.

you choose what silence you need.



## NOISE ABOUT LIFE

### references and inspiration - part IV

There is a saying in France: 'when rats abandon ships'. It implies that life flee a space that is condemned to certain destruction. It is taken from when ships were about to sink, rats would flee from the ship's hold, alerting the sailors that something was indeed wrong. It is often used in zombie movies. Rats flee before the wave of zombies arrives alerting the survivors of their upcoming. See e.g. *28 Days Later* (directed by Danny Boyle, 2001)

In movies, directors will often use big view of deserted streets and abandoned town to show how catastrophic the apocalypse has become: it is a quick way to show how life has been destroyed. See e.g. 'A quiet place' (directed by John Krasinski, 2018).

In literature, *I am a Legend* by Richard Matheson (1953) plays on the wait of the main character. When it is daylight, it is quiet and eery: he knows the beasts are around but hidden. When they come out in the night and make noise, he almost feels relieved to know where they are.

There are today only a few spots on earth where you would not hear Anthropophic noises. They are listed on google, ranked from 1 to 10. One of them is in the state of Washington in the US and measures exactly 1 square inch. To obtain this inch, they had to change the course of airplanes, pushing them on cities or other areas and augmenting their time of travel.

In the book *J'ai l'énergie d'une lionne dans un corps d'oiseau*, (written by Patricia Bouchenot-Déchin, 2022) about the life of the artist Rosa Bonheur, it is described that when she was a child, she spend almost a week to go from Bordeaux to Paris. Today, by train, it would take two hours.

The 11th Edition of *Data Never Sleeps* states that in 2023, 241 million emails were sent, there were 6.3 million google search, 360,000 tweets and 42 years of content streamed ... per minute.

As an example of contradicting instructions, see any nutrition advice on the internet: depending on the nutritionist, the advice about water, sugar or fat can be very different. See Colleen Christensen video 'Why nutrition is confusing AF' for a short summary.

The 'me time' trend is trending with 18 470 000 000 results on google when searching for 'what is a me time'.



