

## Tony Spencer Portfolio MA Art Therapy



*Nothing 'is' Immediate* exhibited at spudWORKS, Sway 2021

Geometric Sculptures by Tony Spencer

In this portfolio the geometric sculptures numbered 1 to 5 were created for the project titled *Nothing 'is' Immediate*.

The project presents the five platonic solids, which are archetypal forms that many ancestral civilisations believed held a universal agency. There is ongoing debate about their origin, as in countries including Scotland, archaeologists have unearthed late Neolithic carved stone balls that resemble the five geometric shapes. However, it is generally agreed that the discovery of the five platonic solids are attributed to the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid and philosopher Plato, as evidenced in his work *Timaeus* (ca. 350 BCE). Through observing the natural world, they suggested that the combined forms represent all possible created shapes in the universe. In addition, they assigned each form with one of the elements of earth, water, air, fire and ether.

By creating and presenting life size versions of the geometric forms, I'm interested in exploring ratios, harmonics, light, proportion and their mystery. Offering a multisensory, interactive and calming experience, for viewers to re-engage through curiosity.

Link to video file from the exhibition at spudWORKS 2021: <https://youtu.be/cw3PLKz-Tpo>

1.



## THE CUBE

2019

Geometric sound sculpture based on the Platonic Cube  
From the series *Nothing 'is' Immediate*

Reclaimed wood, black 2.0 acrylic paint, glass beads, caster wheels, electronically triggered sounds  
90cm x 90cm

According to the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 350 BCE), the Cube represents the element Earth. *The Cube* was the first sculpture in a series of the five platonic solids that I created for the project *Nothing 'is' Immediate*. *The Cube* contains an internal space, which I consider to be a place for healing. I intentionally charged the sculpture with the energy of the full moon, during a performed ritual on Old Winchester Hill, Hampshire. During the ritual I locked myself within *The Cube* and using my grandfathers reconditioned brace-drill and bit I drilled holes into the wooden sides, creating sacred geometrical patterns.

*The Cube* was exhibited as part of the Bournemouth Emerging Artist Festival (BEAF) 2019. During the exhibition I performed ACTS a series of live performances where I locked myself within *The Cube* and created harmonic sounds by playing four Himalayan singing bowls. Viewers were invited to experience the sounds through listening and physically connecting to the exterior vibrating wooden surface of the sculpture.

2.



## NOTHING WOULD DISTURB ME

2020

Geometric sound sculpture based on the platonic Icosahedron  
From the series *Nothing 'is' Immediate*

Reclaimed wood, bronze tinted acrylic mirrors, black 2.0 acrylic paint, caster wheels, electronically triggered sounds  
90cm x 90cm

According to the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 350 BCE) the Icosahedron represents the element water. The exterior of the sculpture is built from recycled wooden triangles, connected by a mathematical angle of 138 degrees 8 minutes. Inside of the sculpture each triangular surface is covered with 20 bronze tinted acrylic mirrors, creating a kaleidoscopic distortion of infinite space and depth. In holistic healing practices it is suggested that the form and colour are associated with the sacral region of the body. This area located under the navel, is thought to be where we process our emotions. The sculpture's internal sense of depth symbolises the immersion of our emotional thoughts into a space of deeper feelings, intuition and imagination.

The sculpture includes sensor-generated responsive sounds of Himalayan singing bowls, produced in accordance to mathematical ratios, and with the fundamental note of D.

3.



## TETRAHEDRON

2021

Geometric sound sculpture based on the Tetrahedron  
From the series *Nothing is Immediate*

reclaimed wood, yellow flock, caster wheels, electronically triggered sounds  
120cm x 120cm

According to the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 350 BCE) the Tetrahedron represents the element Fire. The inside surface of the sculpture is covered with canary yellow flock. When the viewer looks within the form, they activate the sculptures harmonic sounds from a concealed speaker underneath, which creates a physical vibration creating an illusion of movement in the flock fibres.

The sculpture includes sensor-generated responsive sounds of Himalayan singing bowls, produced in accordance to mathematical ratios, and with the fundamental note of E.

4.



## LIFE LOVES YOU

2021

Geometric sound sculpture based on the platonic Octahedron  
From the series *Nothing 'is' Immediate*

Reclaimed wood, pink tinted acrylic mirrors, pink flock, caster wheels, electronically triggered sounds  
90cm x 90cm

According to the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 350 BCE) the Octahedron represents the element Air. The title of the work and the eight pink tinted acrylic mirrors forming the top octahedron of the sculpture, represent the concept of 'mirror work'. This is a method developed by author Louise Hay, where a person is encouraged to look at their own reflection, and to develop a better connection to themselves, through trust and self-acceptance.

The sculpture includes sensor-generated responsive sounds of Himalayan singing bowls, produced in accordance to mathematical ratios, and with the fundamental note of F.

5.



## ALL ARE RELATED

2021

Geometric sculpture based on the dodecahedron  
An addition to the series *Nothing is Immediate*

Materials: reclaimed wood

Edition 6

25cm x 25cm

According to the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 350 BCE) the Dodecahedron represents the element Ether. The work was created during the 2021 COVID Pandemic. During this time, all scheduled exhibitions for the project *Nothing 'is' Immediate* were postponed due to the temporary closure of partnering galleries. My reaction to this was to create and install dodecahedron shaped nesting boxes within the trees outside the four galleries. It offered the public a way to engage with the project, and draw their attention to habitat loss, and the provision of safe spaces for birds to raise their young.

6.



## LIMPETS

2022

Geometric sound sculptures based on the limpet in the shape of a geometrical nonagon

Recycled pallet wood, electronically triggered sounds

80cm x 80cm

Sound sculptures created during the Your Voice 2 artist residency project in November 2022. The two weeks residency was hosted by Artspace Portsmouth in partnership with Motiv8, a Portsmouth based charity, that supports the needs of young people.

Click to view pop-up exhibition: <https://youtu.be/vJXEx7PGs4>

7.



## FLESH AND BLOOD

2019

A kneeler created to explore the transformation of profane into sacred and the ritualistic act of kneeling

Recycled pallet-wood, mirror, fabric and pyrography

The positioning of the mirror invites the viewer to kneel and confront their own reflection. From this position they can read words of affirmation burnt into the surface of the wooden kneeler in reverse. Using words such as 'life loves you' and 'do you remember where you came from' the work aims to create a connection between a ritualistic act and a way that supports the viewer in seeing existential aspects of themselves.



8.



## SPEARMAN

2017

A full-size single-screen video installation depicting a West African musician

Shown at the Kartong International Festival, The Gambia and Journeys Festival International, Portsmouth, UK

I met Spearman from 2012-14 during a two-year self-directed residency living in Kartong Village, The Gambia. We were both members of Kouma Kan Africa, a new performing troupe of drummers and dancers, who came together to represent the village at festivals, including the annual Kartong International Festival. During this time, we were disciplined, and developed a strong relationship through rehearsing five days a week for 3 hours per evening. In 2014 the economic crisis and political unrest in the country forced men from the rural villages, to journey the 'backway' to Europe. Spearman was one of the men from the village who decided to take this journey, which had a big impact within the community. Growing media attention talked about the 'migration crises' and there were many reports of migrant deaths at sea. It took a long time to find out if anyone had survived, and if they were ok. Like many migrants, the young men travelled without passports, and there was no guarantee they would return to the village.

The aim of Spearman was therefore to transport an essence of him home in order to occupy a transient place performing at the Kartong International Festival 2017 with remaining members of Kouma Kan Africa. Through the work my aim to create a platform for a wider dialogue about the reasons for migration, and explore themes of solidarity, home, existentialism, African tradition, identity and integration.

9.



## SOLUTIO 1

2022

Mokuhanga Woodblock Print

Paper: Hosho 90g

22.5cm x 14cm

Edition 45

*Solutio 1* presents the two minimalist geometric symbols of a triangle and circle. The composition is a representation of the more rigid masculine principles of the ego undergoing an instinctive transformation. From a series of prints influenced by the psychic components of alchemy according to psychoanalyst Carl Jung.

10.



## BATHED IN VENUS

2022

Mokuhanga Woodblock Print

Paper: Ho-sho 90g

22.5cm x 14cm

Edition 40

*Bathed in Venus* depicts the ego undertaking the process of transformation, as it becomes submerged into the subconscious. From a series of prints inspired by the symbolic processes of alchemy, in accordance to psychoanalyst Carl Jung.

SKETCHBOOK PROCESS



LIMPETS

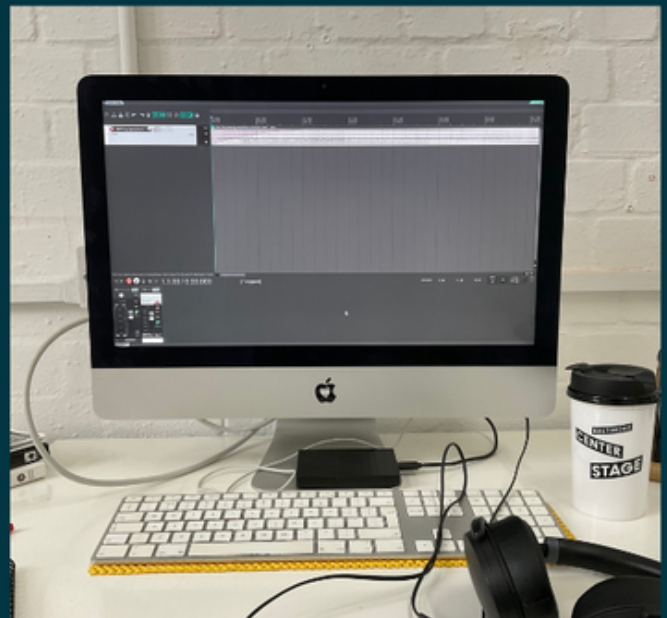
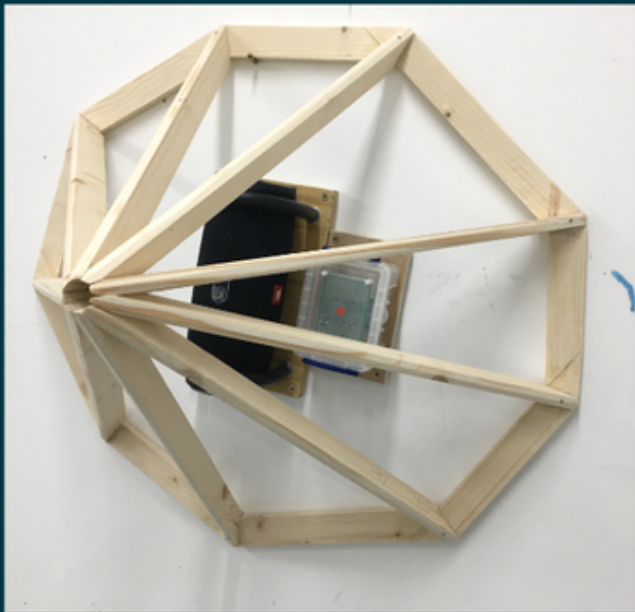
2022

Geometric sound sculptures based on the limpet in the shape of a geometrical nonagon

At the start of the Your Voice 2 residency, I was provided with 15 recorded interviews made by the young people of Motiv8 in 2021. The interviews were recorded in the first iteration of the project, which offered skills in interview techniques and the use of digital recording equipment. The subject of the interview questions was 'what it's like to be a young person in today's society'. Whilst listening to the 15 recorded interviews, the conversations that I found the most compelling were their shared concerns around the subject of mental health.

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The requirements of the residency were also to deliver two workshops for some of the young people. The first workshop I delivered was based on field recording. I introduced the young people to professional hand-held sound recording devices together with omnidirectional, hydroponic and contact microphones. The sound equipment provided a practical experience for the young people to observe through listening and capture the sounds from around the shoreline of Old Portsmouth. The use of different microphones enabled them to immerse themselves in sounds that we often filter out or that are inaccessible to the human ear.



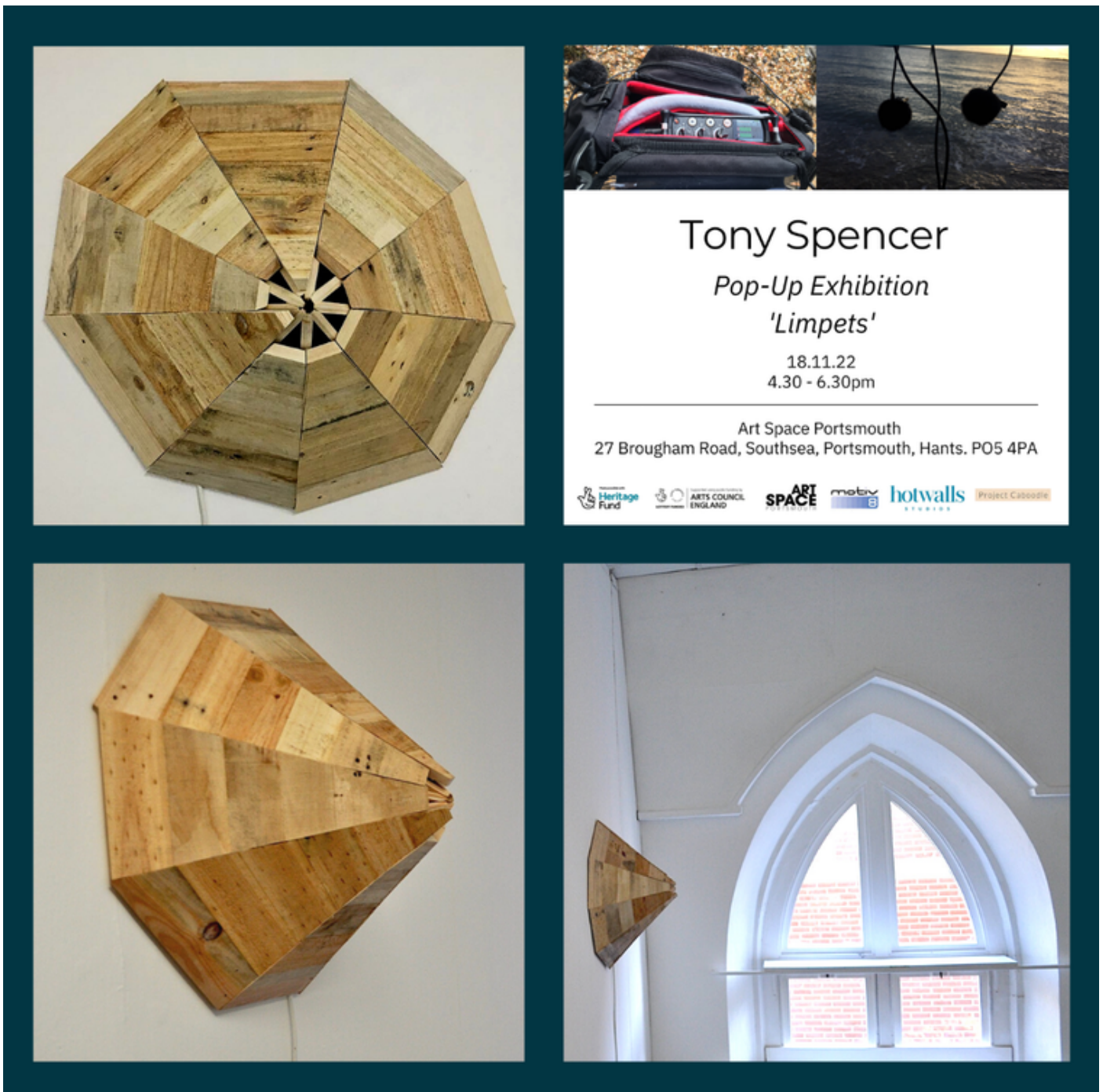
Whilst exploring the shoreline, the rocks and wall at the base of the Round Tower, we observed the ecological footprint, that included limpet shells. The limpets symbolised a sense of place, ecological heritage, resilience, and the geometrical balance found within nature. I decided to use this form as an inspiration for my sculptural design. Back at Artspace studios, I sketched designs based on the limpet and simplified into the geometric form of a nonagon. I built three wooden

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sculptures, that would each house electronics and a speaker, for projecting the projects recorded sounds.

In the second workshop with the young people, I demonstrated the process of installing artwork for an exhibition, enabling them to develop practical and problem-solving skills. This included assembling the sculptural work and positioning it within the exhibition space, with consideration of how the viewer would activate the sounds to engage with the artworks content.

The three geometric sculptural forms were presented at a pop-up exhibition. The sculptures concealed and contained the electronic sensor-generated sounds activated by the movement of viewers within pre-determined areas of the gallery space.



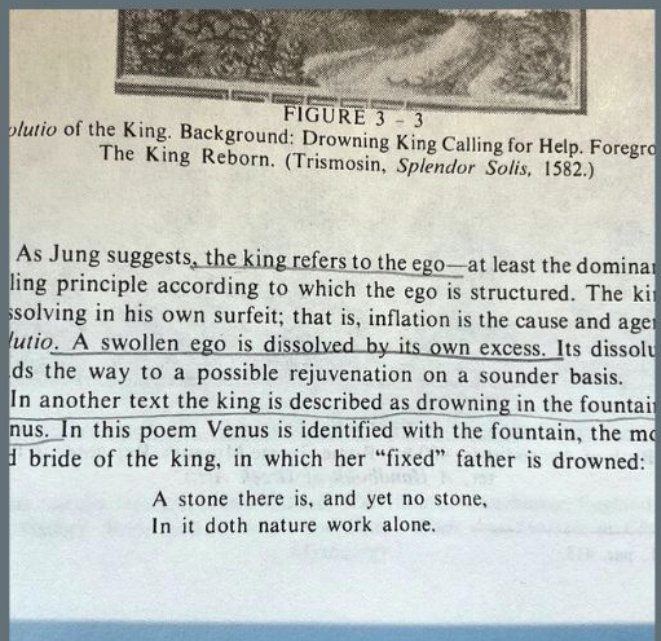
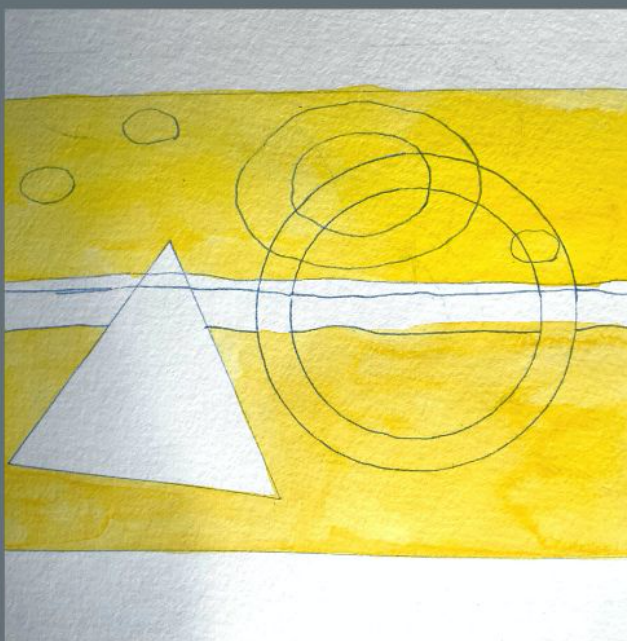
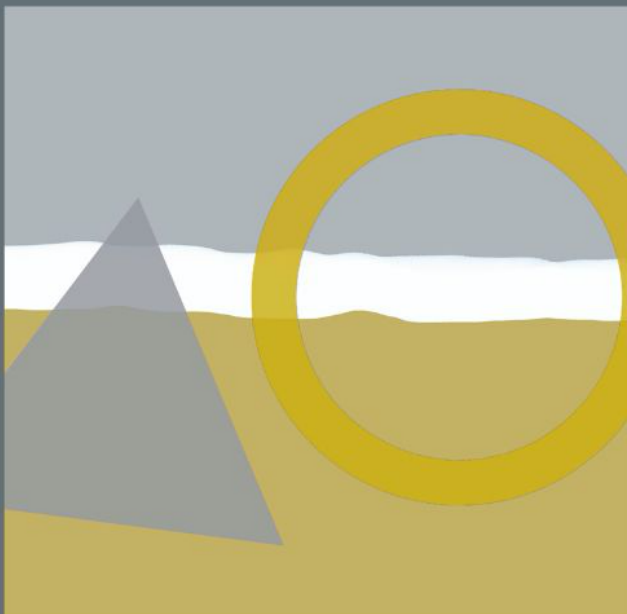
Two of the sculptures produce the sounds of audio field recordings from Old Portsmouth, captured by the young people during a residential workshop. The third sculpture, produces the sounds of

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recorded interviews by the young people, sharing their concerns around the subject of mental health. Although the recordings were taken at different times, the iconic sounds of Old Portsmouth created a physical space, which held the conversations.

### MOKUHANGA JAPANESE WOODBLOCK PRINTING

Since 2022, I started to diversify my art practice and incorporate the medium of Mokuhanga, Japanese woodblock printmaking. With this development I also started a new project themed on the psychic components of alchemy according to psychoanalyst Carl Jung. My process and methodology included researching the seven stages of alchemy, from the book *Anatomy of the Psyche, Alchemic Symbolism in Psychotherapy* by author Edward E Edinger. The themes of my work take inspiration from the text and reference images from 16<sup>th</sup> Century Alchemic woodblocks.



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The images above present a sketchbook process for the print *Solutio 1 (8)*. The image in the top right presents the symbolic figures of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century woodblock print titled *calcination of the king*. In this image the King symbolises gold, and according to Jung, gold or the King represents the psychic component of the ego. Furthermore, the depiction of the King being devoured by the Grey Wolf, is a representation of the more rigid masculine principles of the ego undergoing an instinctive transformation. In my own interpretation of this process, I use abstract geometry to create another layer of symbolism. The ego is symbolised by a gold circle or band, and the wolf is symbolised by a grey triangle. I created some of the work on an iPad in the software Procreate, which for me was a new process of working.

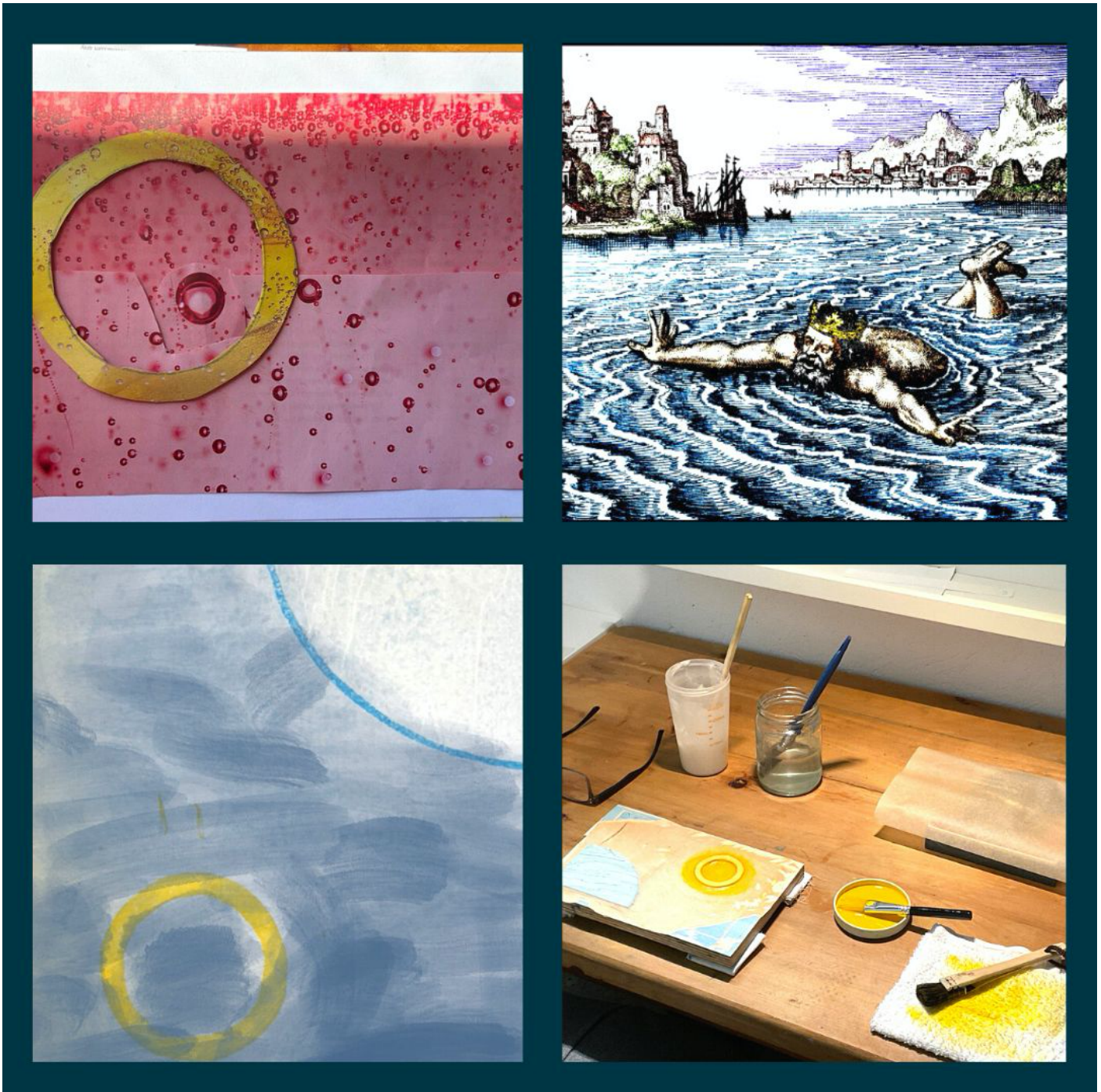


The images above show the process of carving woodblocks, and printing. Two blocks were used to produce yellow and grey layers, and experiment with overlapping the colours to produce a sandier yellow. At this stage the printed image represented the alchemic process of calcinatio. During the process of proof printing, I decided to add another layer of blue/grey at the top of the



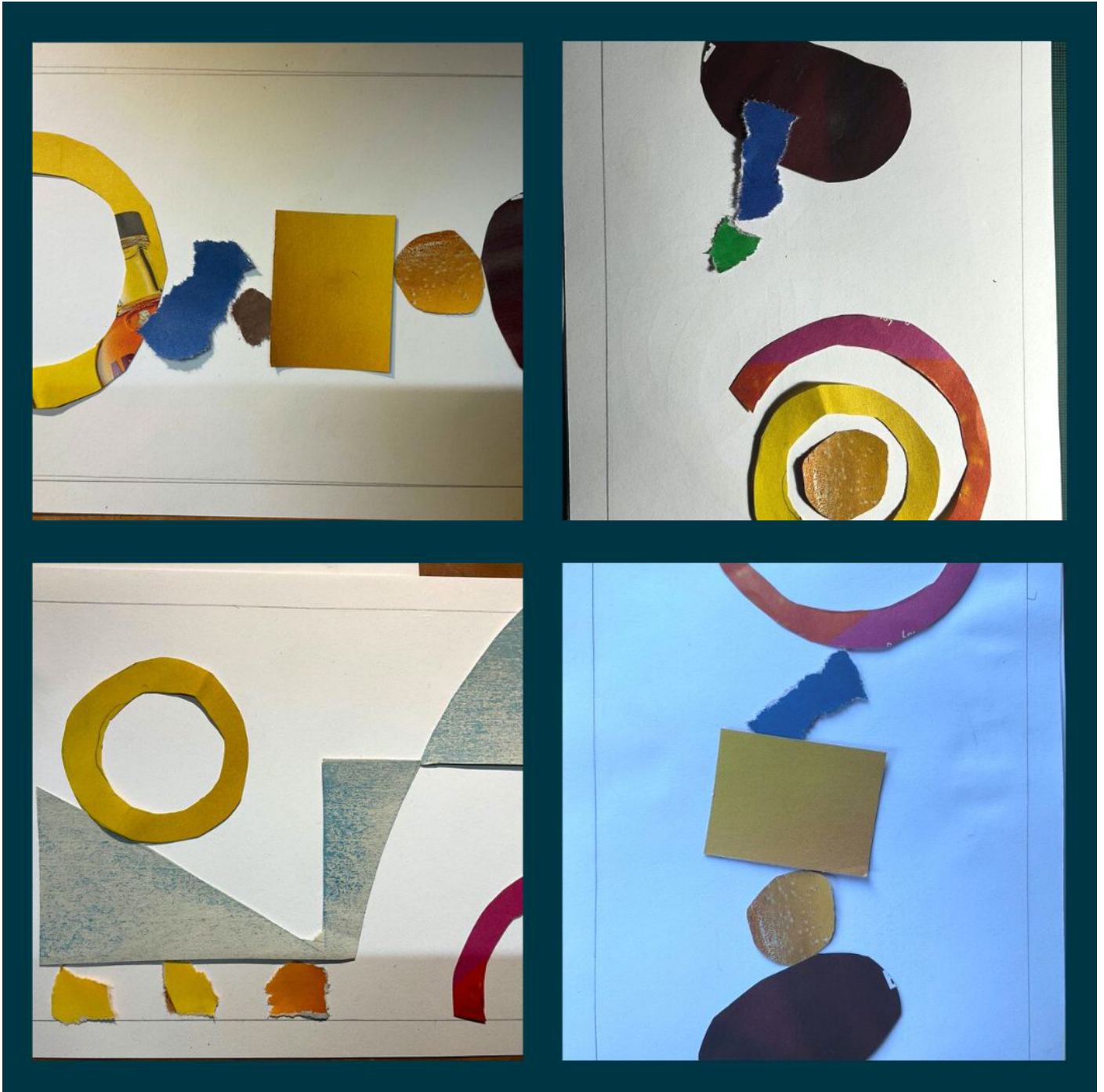
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print, that would suggest the start of the process of Solutio. For this third layer I experimented with organic patterns to break up the straight geometric lines and suggest a more fluid process; presented in the final work titled *SOLUTIO 1*.



The print titled *Bathed in Venus*, continues with the components of alchemy, exploring a process where the ego's fixed static attitudes are examined and dissolved by the unconscious. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century woodblock print in the top right image, the ego is again represented by the King, this time submerged in water. My own work represents the ego as a gold ring, and the realm of the unconscious is depicted as a place of watery depths. I added a further sphere at the top right of the print, to indicate the ego being observed by the more feminine characteristic of Venus. I changed the scale of the sphere and line thickness in comparison to the gold ring, to experiment with an aesthetic proportion.

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During the sketchbook process I started to use collage as a new way of working. This helped to move away from the rigidity of creating line and form; offering a more instinctive way of working. The images above are further examples of how I created composition with geometric collage shapes. My intention is to continue with collage as a way to explore future printing within this series.

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In the print *Bathed in Venus* I'm also exploring traditional Mokahanga printing techniques, such as Bokashi (gradient) and Gomazuri (mottled effect). The skill with printing multiple editions, is to develop a printing rhythm and to reduce the amount of paint, so each print has the same degree of bokashi and gomazuri intensity.