

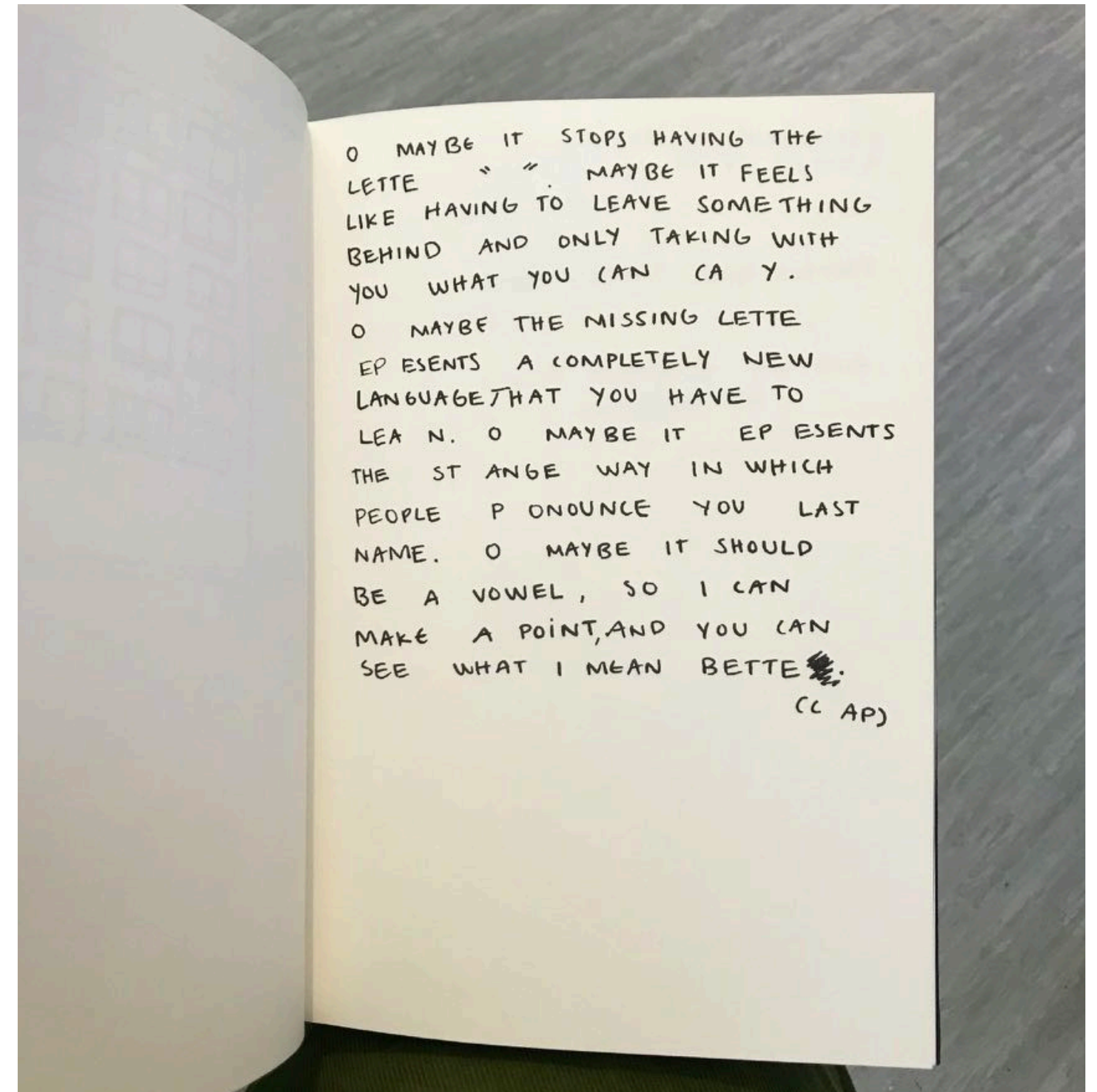
Visual Proposal

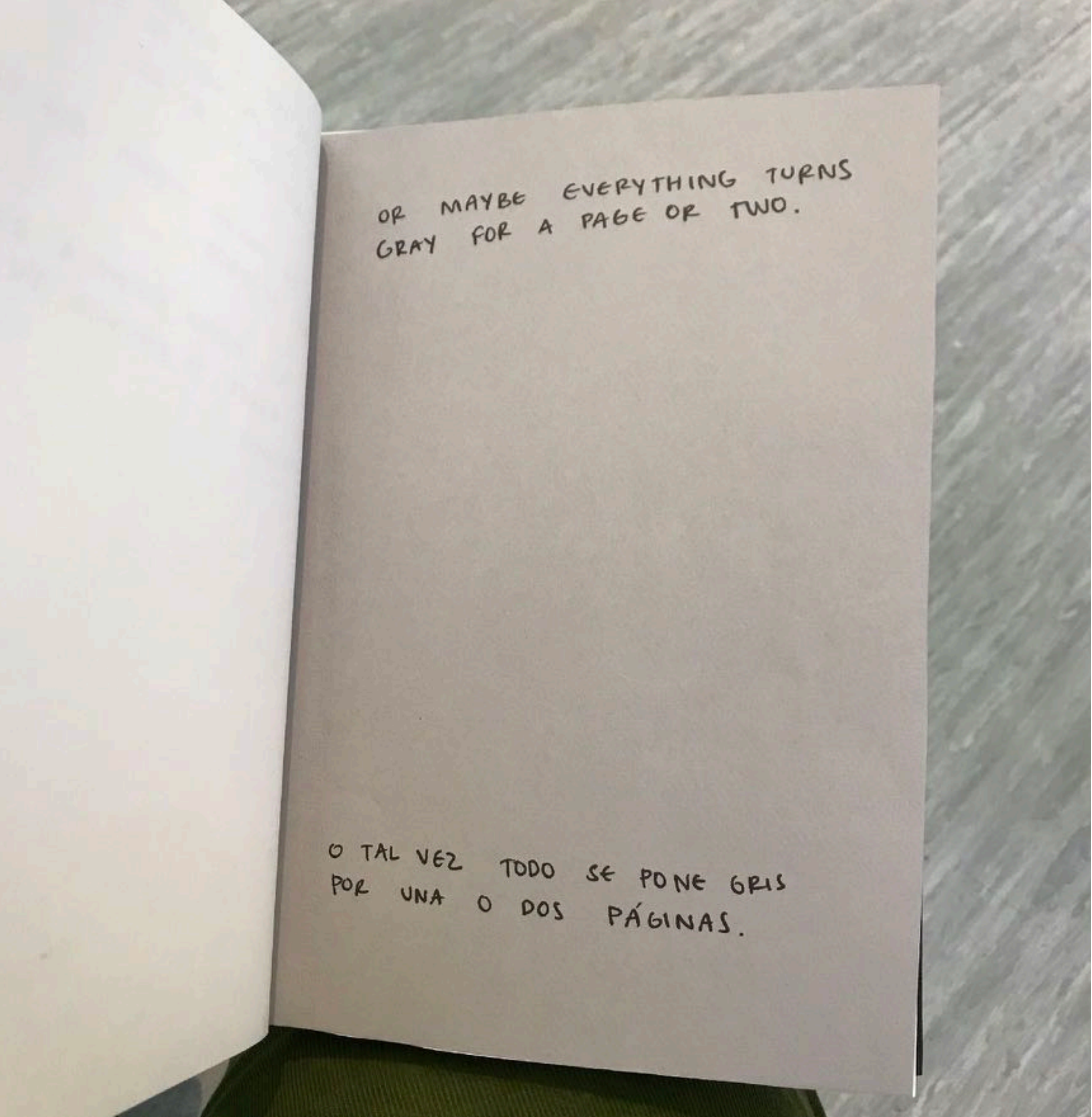
Visualizing the Migrant Experience

Maxim Zaragoza

Artist Book

In the beginning of the MA, my project was centered around artists' books and the performativity they offer storytelling through their materiality. With an artist's book, "the reader or viewer becomes a protagonist and transforms into an agent or into the entity that, through the act of paging, creates or completes the work. In order to be able to read or view the book, he must page through it and thus open up the book space." (Thurmann-Jajes, 2017)





OR MAYBE EVERYTHING TURNS
GRAY FOR A PAGE OR TWO.

O TAL VEZ TODO SE PONE GRIS
POR UNA O DOS PÁGINAS.

Through this medium, I wanted to explore the migrant experience and posed the question: Is there such a thing as a universality in the migrant experience? If so, how can it be visualized?

The problem with “universality”

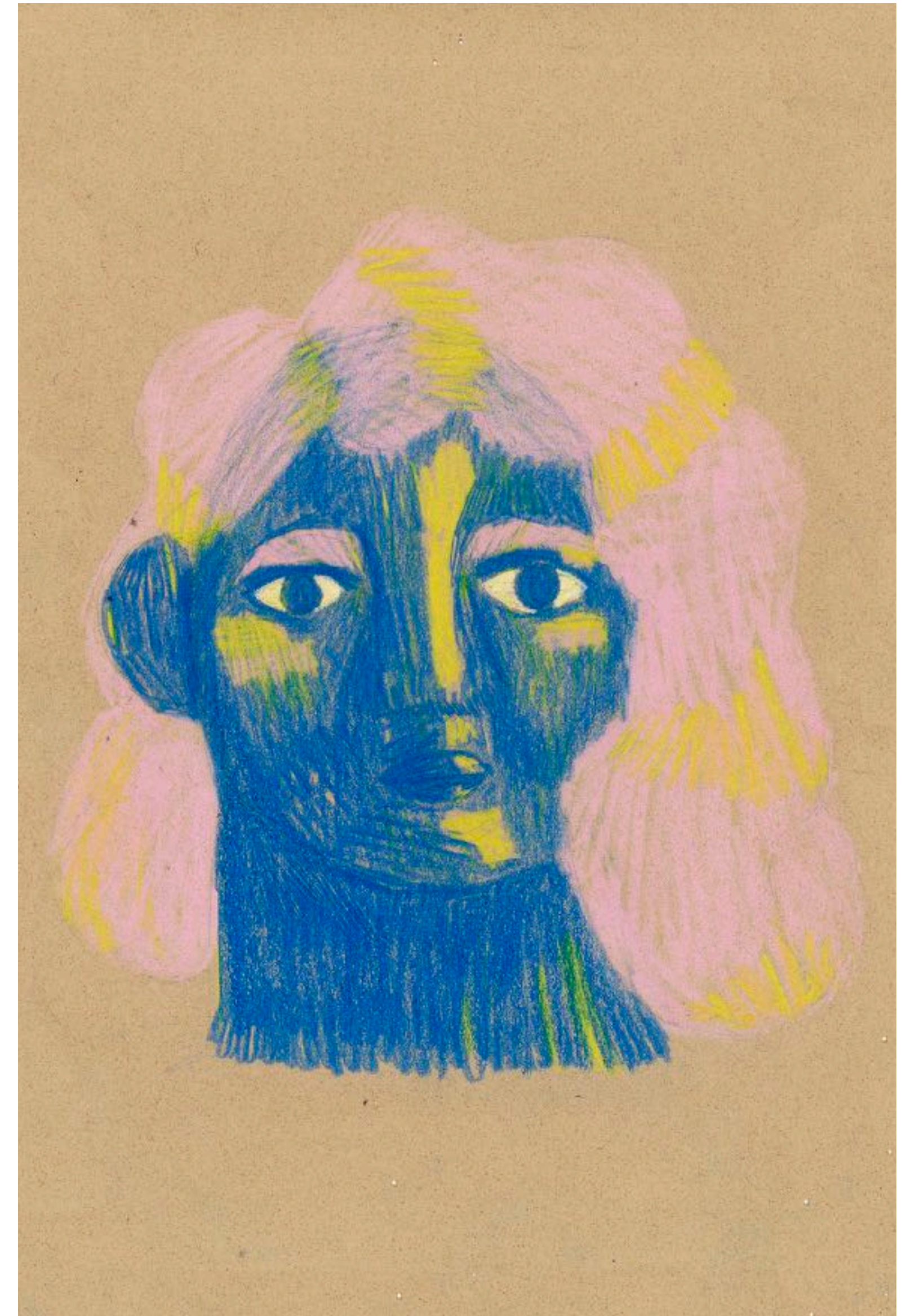
I interviewed migrants in Aberdeen to discuss the concept of belonging, material culture, and general experiences. I quickly realized how different each experience was and their individual relationships with objects in terms of identity, in which I supposed a certain universality could be found.

Notions of agency became relevant in the diversity of migrant experiences, also, and privilege had to be taken into account in their representations. This is why I decided to make the narrative more personal, but not necessarily autobiographical.





Collage/Color Pencil



Color Pencil

Going digital

With this in mind, I started a blog where I compiled different stories and illustrations concerning my personal experience as a migrant, in which I explore various aspects of life it affects, such as language, the culture surrounding death, landscape, food, grief, feminism, displacement, mythology and the juxtaposition of these.



Collage

The blog has been an effective way to keep track of my creative process and research, and to resolve issues concerning the mobility of objects significant to a migrant's identity.



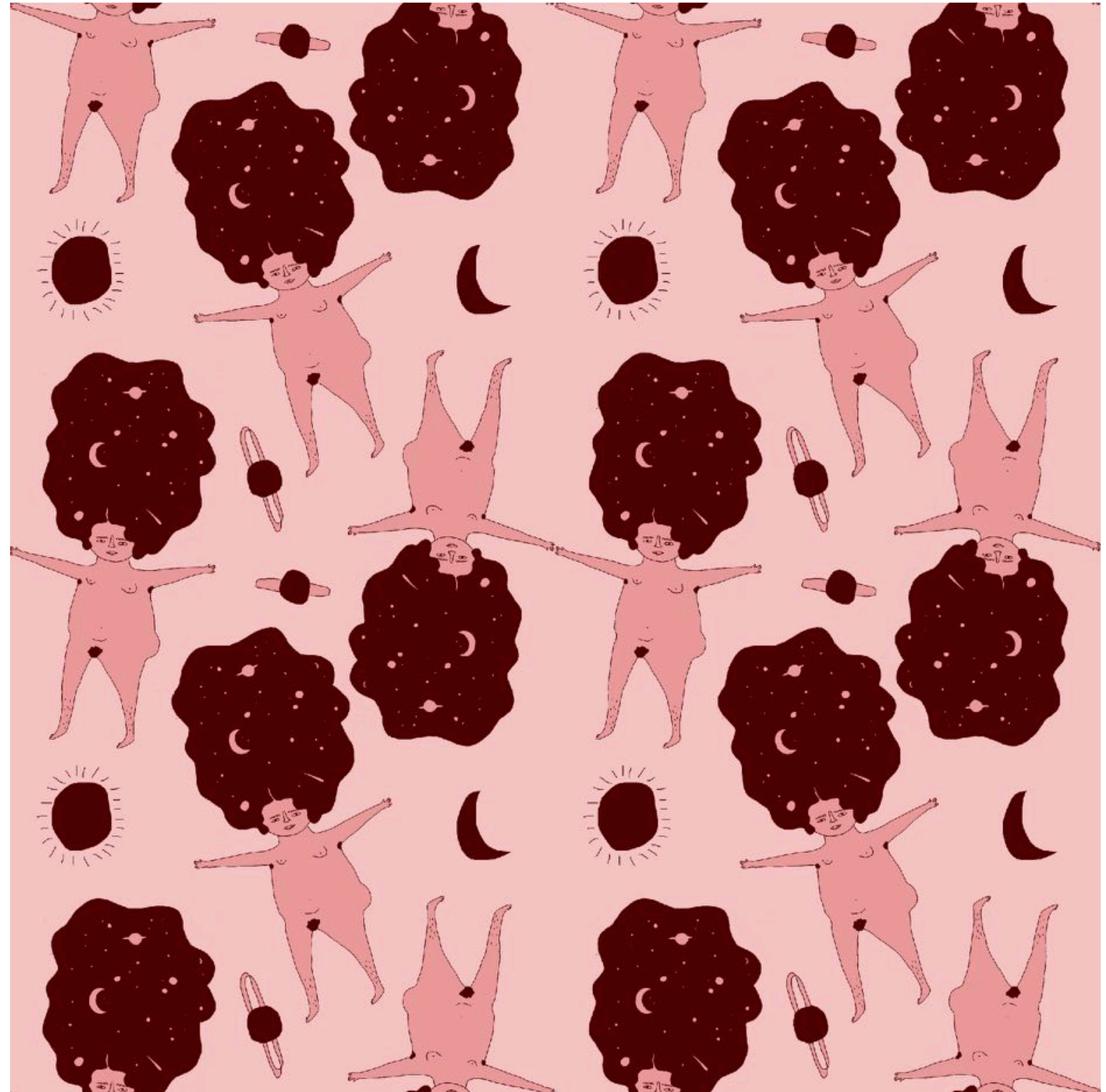
I got interested in the different places in which different cultures deposit grief. In México, we place it on Day of the Dead shrines, for example, and in Aberdeen in memorial benches.

Fine liner and acrylic

Adjustments

When it is not possible to physically carry these possessions, the digital becomes imperative in the process of belonging. With the pandemic, the digital quality of the blog has made it easier for me to adapt the way I will present my work, as well.

Although the materiality that working with paper added to storytelling was something I was very interested in, the performative quality of storytelling will not necessarily be lost.



Digital illustration

Little Stories of Little Grievs

I will compile these little stories I have been sharing on a blog, along with others from the first semester in a different, more specifically curated space. This way, the narrative can be designed and experienced with this “digital bridge” in mind.

The Xoloitzcuintle

A little story about how souls travel in Mexico

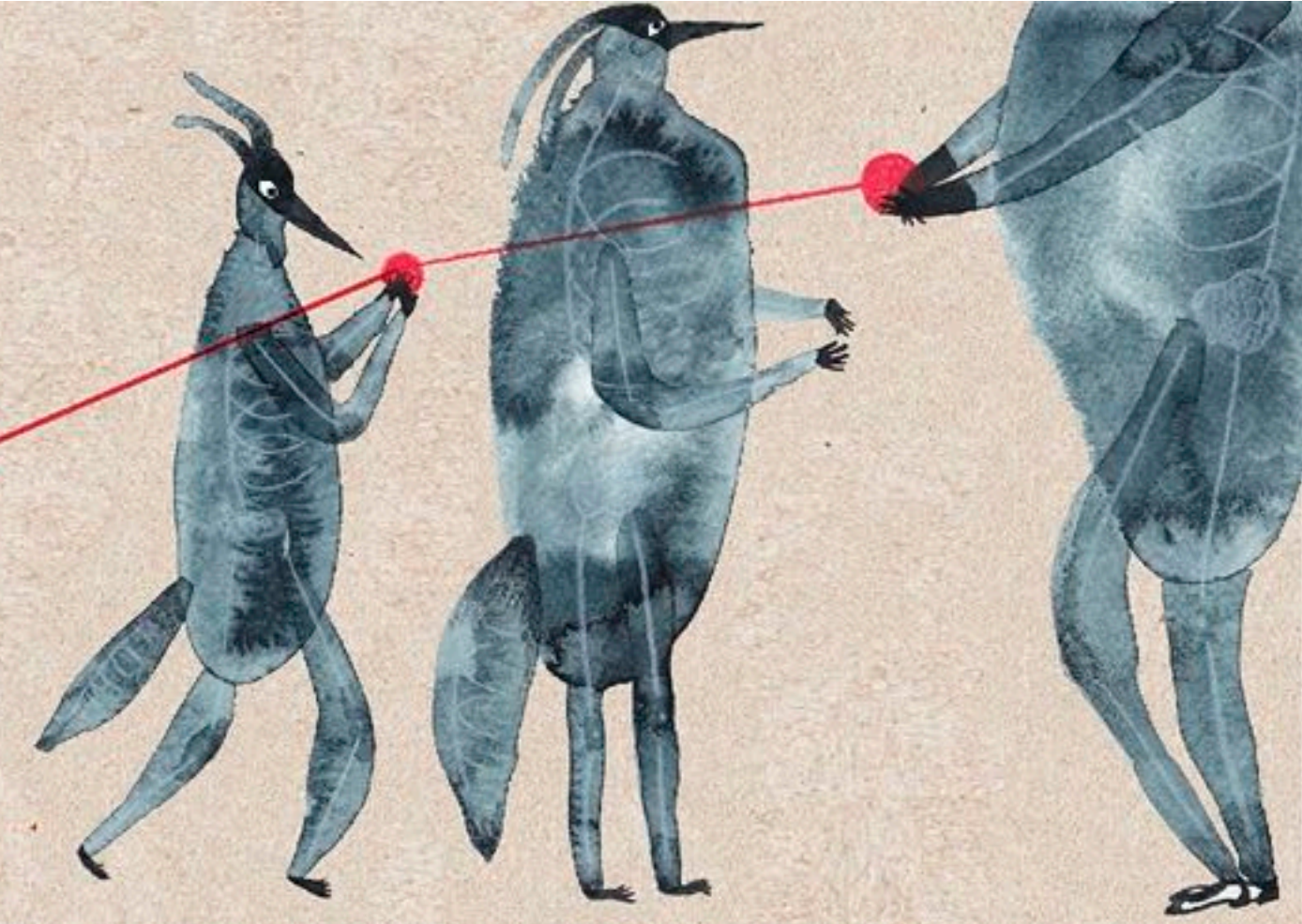
They travel on the backs of hairless dogs. Xoloitzcuintles help them cross the river. Maybe horses do that in Scotland. They would need brogues.

Collage



Acrylic ink,
color pencil,
digital

When the little souls began to float away, they held on to the rowan berries as they flew past the tree tops. They each took one and let the weight bring them back down to the ground, landing close to the river bank. The kelpabrijes waited patiently.



“May I have your ticket?”, the tallest kalpebrije asked.

The little soul looked around and noticed other little souls handing the rowan berries to the kalpebrijes.

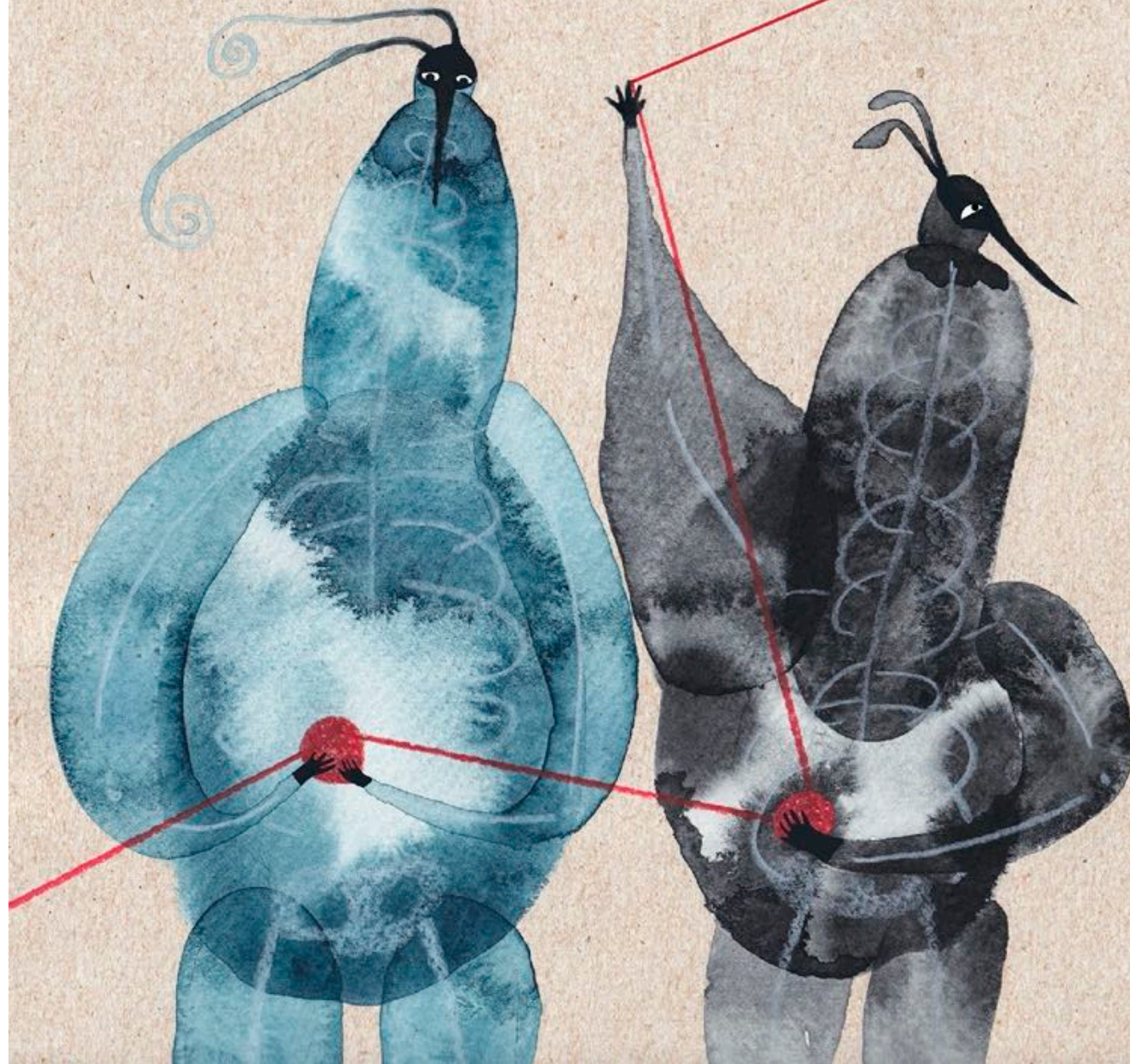
“One single trip, please”, she said as she handed over hers.

The kelpabrije tied a red string around the berry and gave it back to the little soul.

“Where are we going?”, she asked.

“Upstream, to the mountains, where the river begins”, the kalpebrije replied as he walked towards the water. The little soul followed and felt the strings on the berries pull with every step. She looked at the other little souls and noticed they were all now connected.

The kelpabrije got in the water and offered his back to the little soul.



If I'm Not Back Tomorrow

A little story about big pains we share.

10 women are murdered in Mexico daily.

We cry fire for them.

On the streets.

We scream.

If I'm not back tomorrow, burn it all.



Etching, aquatint

Manuela

A little story about a big woman.

Manuela missed a lot. She missed the purple flowers, her mother, the color of her bedroom, and the plane flying above her heading towards all those things, she thought. She also missed her father and green tomatoes.

Manuela's new bed was wide, her coat thick, and her trousers long enough to cover her legs, which happened to also be wide and thick. The view from her new window included one river, two mountains and three or four birds. She didn't know with certainty because seasons here changed before they could get acquainted.



Acrylic

I have breakfast here

A little story about the rooms in which we are and the ones in which we are not.

Some days I get sad and frustrated, but I have found comfort thinking about my house in Mexico and all its rooms. It is uncertain when I'll be able to go back and see my mom, but every now and then I imagine what she is doing in the living room and wonder which chair she is sitting on in the kitchen.



Collage, acrylic, graphite

- I made animated gifs of some of the illustrations. You can find them and other ***Little Stories of Grief*** here: <https://maximjournal.photo.blog/visual-proposal/>
- Digital portfolio: <https://maximzaragoza.com>