

Paths to the ideas I would like to have

Description of a course offered by Zeichenfabrik-Wien

Martin Ritzinger

1. Overview

The participants in this course paint or draw pictures and initially invent open-ended symbols that serve to map an overall picture of the course. Reflection, writing, combining the works, discussions, and, building upon this, a more in-depth, artistic creation process form a cyclical work process.

Participants progress from geometrically abstract to realistically concrete representations and descriptions of their ideas about the tasks. Through the integration and interpretation of other participants' work, they recognize and utilize unexpected information. As the course progresses, the created works are interpreted as components of a shared, imaginary map. Participants discover, design, and discuss potential, often unexpected, map content that can inspire their further development.

2. Goal

The primary goal of the course is to discover unexpected aspects and perspectives of one's own artistic abilities. Furthermore, the insights and working methods learned should guide participants in new projects, questions, problem-solving, and generally, projects leading to fantastic yet well-founded ideas and works in many fields of knowledge and culture.

3. Requirements

- Decision on preferred working material: watercolor / acrylic / pastel chalk / charcoal / graphite / colored pencils / felt-tip pens / fineliner / ink / scissors / glue; paper type and thickness, brushes, canvas;
- If you are interested in working in writing, you should have a fluent command of vocabulary and grammar in German or English.
- Interest in cross-domain working methods
- Willingness to reflect on and discuss one's own work and that of other course participants

4. Contents

- Abstract painting or drawing
- Representational painting or drawing
- Signs and symbols
- Written accounts available upon request
- Course participants choose their own equipment

5. Course duration

- A total of 5 course steps of 2,5 hours each, followed by a 15-minute break for reflection and preparation for the next step
- Approximately 14 hours in total
- Conclusion with feedback and discussion

6. Group size

4 - 8 participants

7. Course language

German and, if needed, English

8. Course materials per participant

- 1 folder that can hold the preferred paper sizes or a large bag (for acrylic canvases, if needed)
- 1 roll of tracing (transparent) paper (30cm)
- If you choose watercolor painting:
 - Watercolor paints (individual color spectrum, approx. 24 pots in one box)
 - Recommendation: 5 watercolor brushes (1 x size 10, 3 x size 3, size 10/0)
 - 1 cup for water
 - 1 pad of watercolor paper (200 - 300g/m²), rough or fine, size approx. A2 or 45 x 60cm
 - Various paper types and sizes according to your own wishes
- When choosing acrylic painting:
 - Acrylic paints
 - Paint brush
 - Canvases (50 x 50cm or similar, does not have to be square)
- When choosing colored pencils:
 - Recommendation for a box of watercolor pencils from Faber-Castell (24 pencils should be sufficient)
 - Pastel chalk: (at your own discretion)
 - Charcoal pencils (at your own discretion)
 - Graphite pencils (at your discretion)
- When choosing to work in a collage style:
 - Scissors and cutting knife (at your own discretion)
 - Wood glue (at your discretion)
 - Universal adhesive
 - Adhesive tape (possibly several colors)

9. Course steps

9.1. Map fragments and signs

9.1.1. Design

The course participants divide three sheets of paper, each with two colours, using flat, low-detail painting or drawing. A wide variety of colors is desired. The colors may differ only slightly. The backs of the pictures will be labeled with the names of the participating artists and a number.

9.1.2. Signs

Participants each invent three signs according to the specifications of a printed grid (see Fig. 1) and interpret the possible meanings of the other participants' signs in keywords, but not their own signs. Alternatively, keywords can be assigned to the signs using a random-content-generator. Through interpretation, signs become symbols. These sheets are also labeled with the names of the creators and numbers.

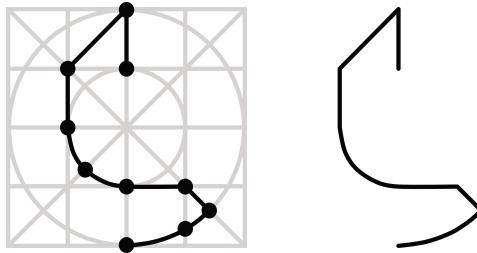


Fig. 1 left: Example of a character in the Geometric Sign Permutation Grid - 1 (GSPG-1), by Martin Ritzinger, right: the character without grid, vertices and edges

9.1.3. Assembly and Interpretation

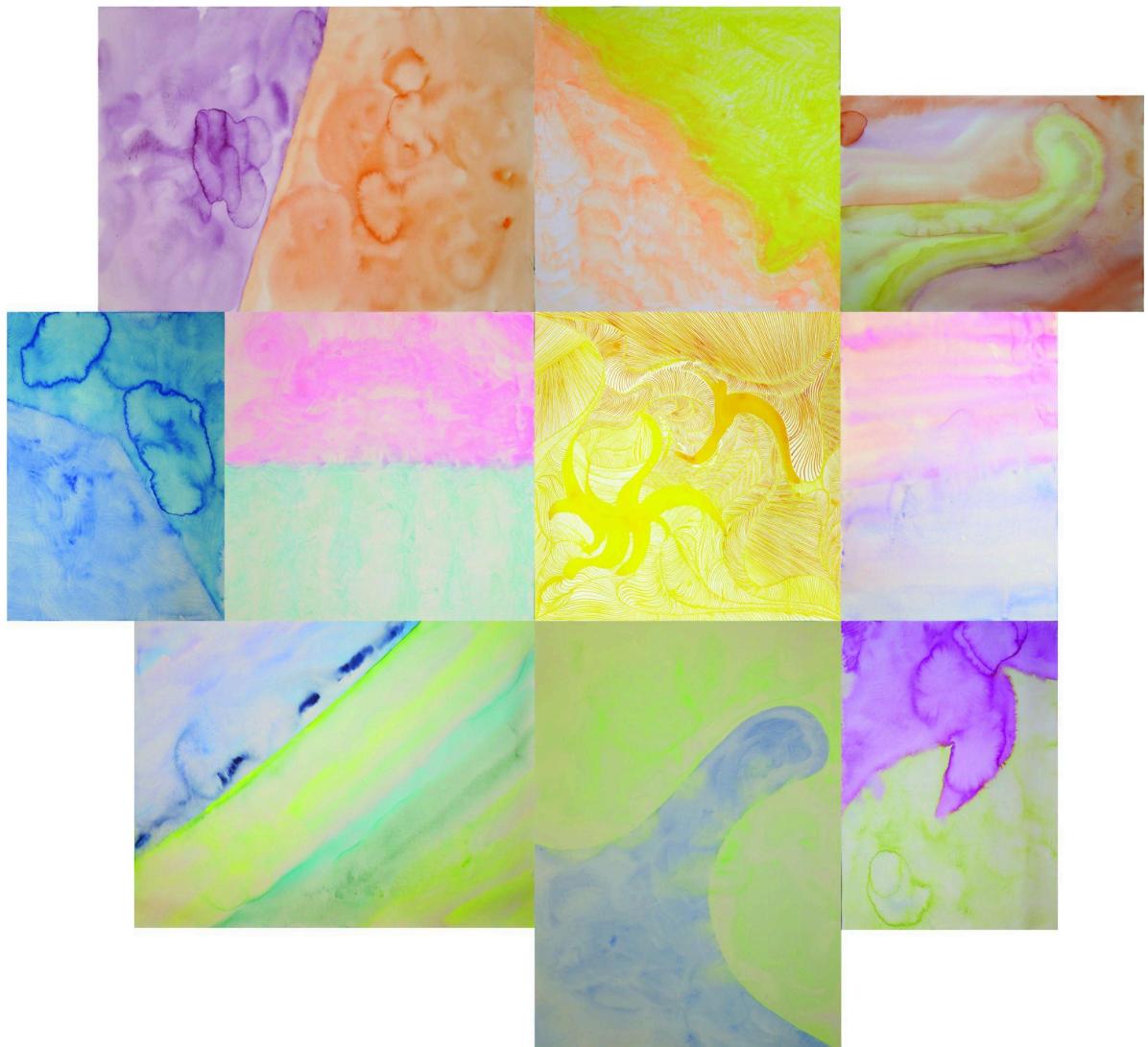


Fig. 2: A 'complete map' of works by the participants

The two-colored images are combined by the course participants. The participants discuss and, if necessary, rearrange the sheets, considering similarities, contrasts, gradients, and watercolor patterns of the colors, thus creating a cohesive whole. They identify potential paths within the overall image, which they then interpret together as a map.

9.1.4. Combination and interpretation



Fig. 3: Overlay of invented symbols and a part of the overall map

The designers position the symbols along their chosen paths on the large map. Written notes and photos document the progress of the large image as well as the participants' creative process.

9.2. Visiting a fictional location on the map

9.2.1. Selection



Fig. 4: Interpretation of a part of the overall map using invented symbols

The large image – the complete map – consists of two-colored sheets of paper with symbols drawn on transparent paper superimposed on top. Each participant chooses a part of the map that contains at least one symbol and borders the *excerpt* mentally. The participants will recreate an *image* of the selected part of the overall map using their chosen means. The symbols put on the original are drawn into the new images.

9.2.2. Signs and Symbols



Fig. 5: Newly interpolated signs are placed between the invented characters

The participants design *new signs* in the grid of the GSPG-1, which are considered *Connecting links*. The new signs function between the already inserted symbols in the new image. The previously discussed symbol meanings help in inventing and positioning the new signs. To do this, the new signs are first drawn on transparent paper and placed on the new images between the already drawn symbols, so that each new sign lies between two old symbols. Such a new sign is treated as a graphic and semantic intermediary symbol - interpretation happens - between two older neighboring symbols. Each participant assigns keyword-like meanings to the intermediary signs—for example, interpolated meanings relating to the meanings of the neighboring symbols. The new signs also become symbols through interpretation.

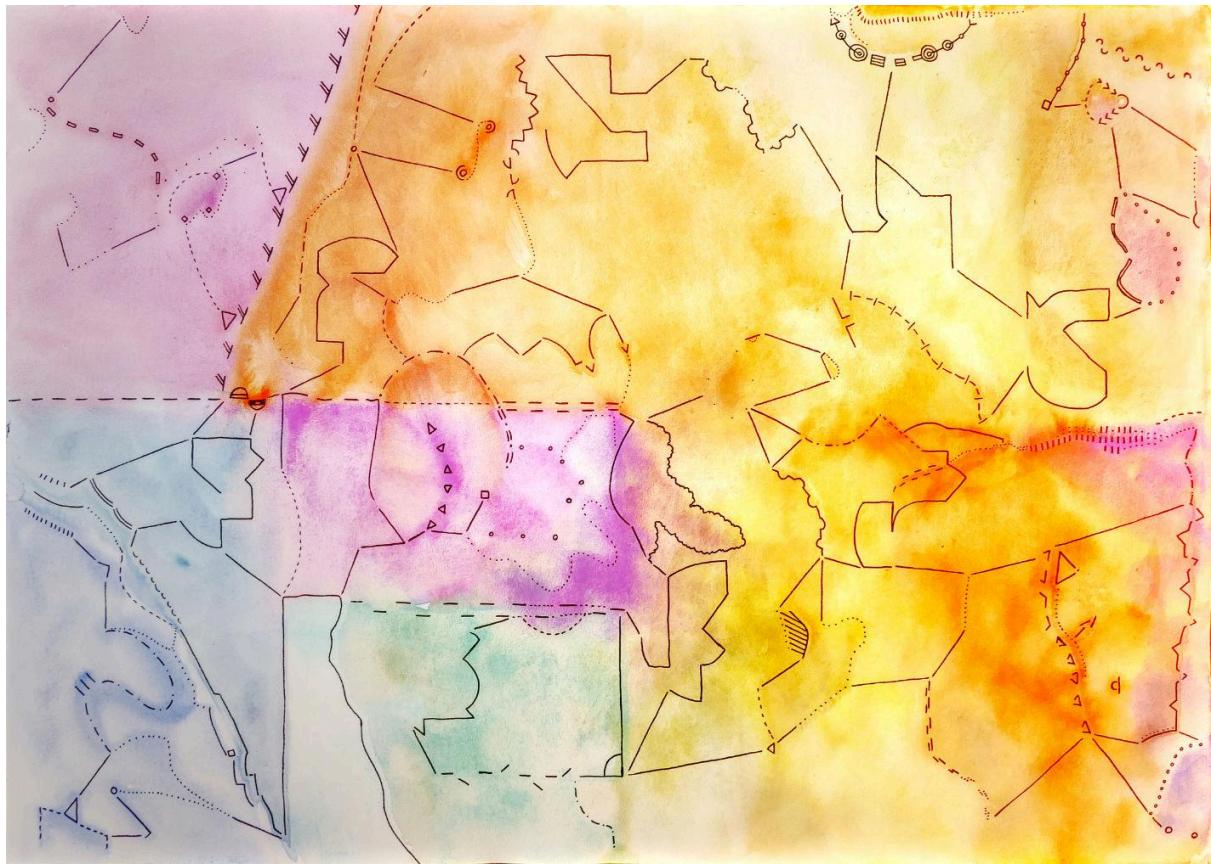


Fig. 6: A part of the overall map becomes a map by drawing lines, dots and hatches

Then the spaces between all the symbols on the new image are filled by dots, lines and hatches - for even more *indefinite cartographic information*- condensed.

9.2.3. Selection and Detailing

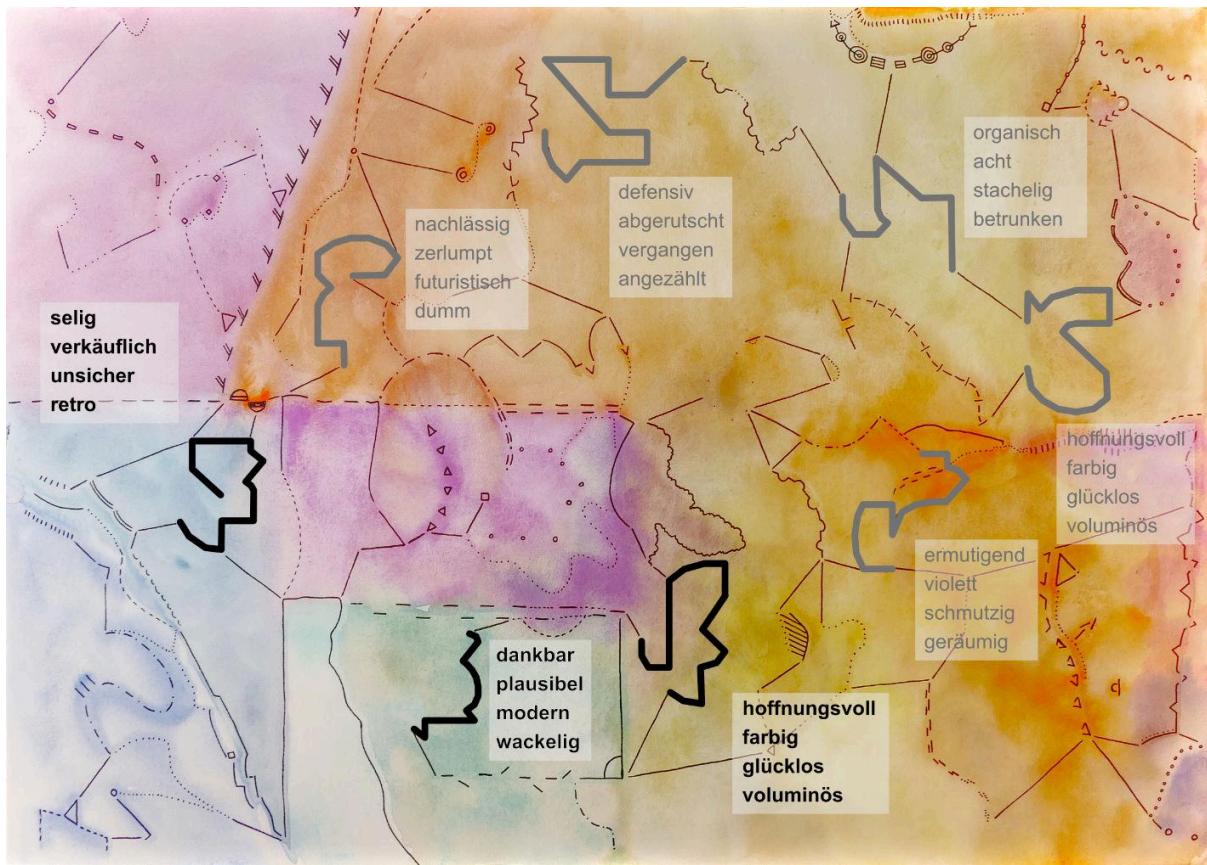


Fig. 7: Selection of three adjacent characters and their assigned meanings (here: German adjectives)

Based on the meanings of the first symbols - assigned by the participants - they deepen the design of their selected area of the large, composite image in detail, using painting, drawing and writing. This could mean per participant **three adjacent symbols** and their assigned meanings are more precisely represented as a landscape with characteristics.



Fig. 8: Immersion into a part of the overall map, including the part's symbols and meanings

On new sheets ***new insights*** are created coming from the ideas from the participants, as well as, if applicable, ***texts*** that illustrate the artist's immersion into selected map areas (e.g.: by creating perspectives, architectural plan sketches and building top views, travelogues, dialogues that take place in the selected area).

9.2.4. Signs and Symbols

The participants present their chosen image area to the group, with special reference to the most recently created works: picturesque, graphic and written ***mergers of the existing components*** of their area of the large picture map. Viewers note ***keywords***. Then they design ***new signs*** on gridded sheets and give them to the presenter, who takes the new signs and once again notes down keywords relating to their area.

9.3. Discovery of a spatial peculiarity of the location

9.3.1. Detailing

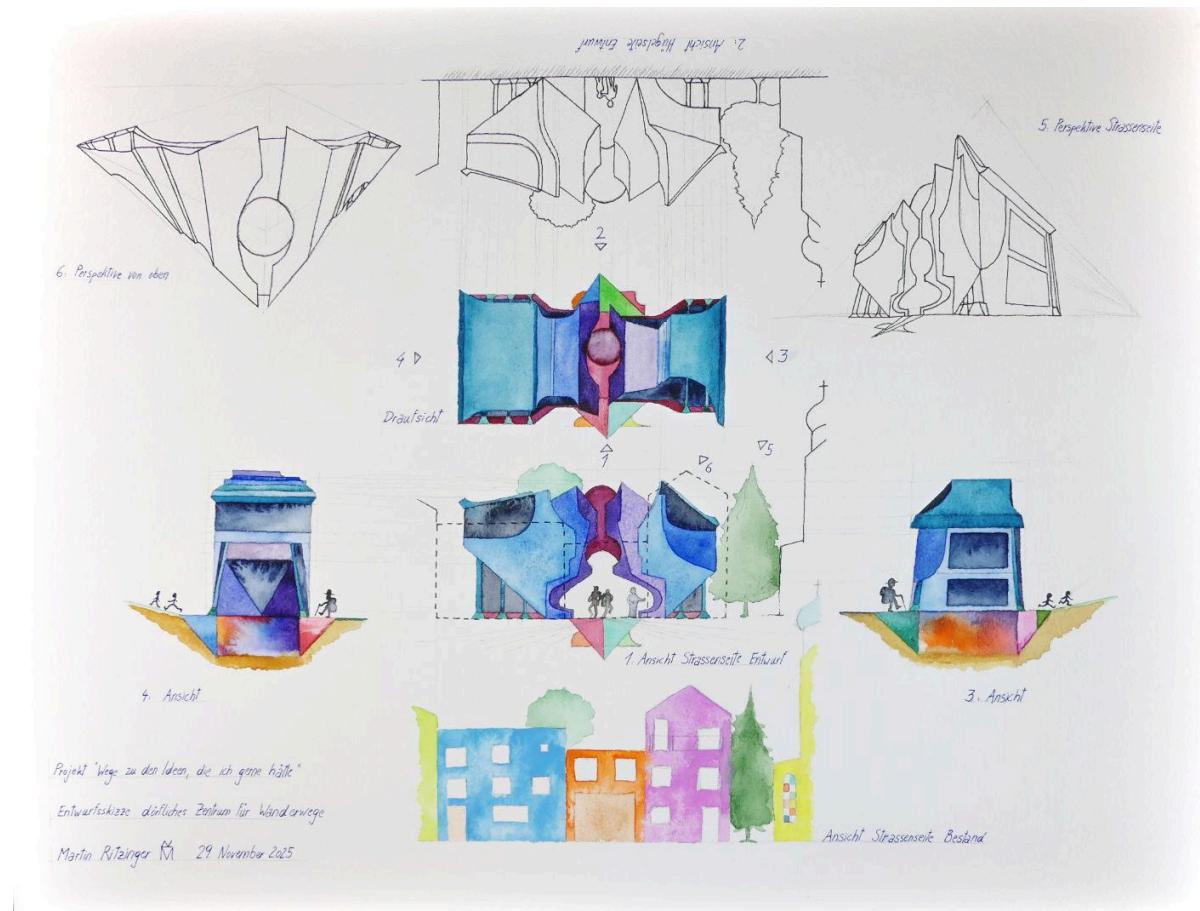


Fig. 9: Elaboration and representation of a spatial peculiarity

In order to translate the presented content of the selected and already presented parts of the large map/image from imagination into visual form, the course participants express their ideas through imaginary-abstract or realistic-concrete paintings or drawings, and possibly also through writing – here an architectural-design theme.

9.4. Acquisition and revitalisation of a building at a characteristic location

9.4.1. Detailing



Fig. 10: Detailing a selected room feature

The course participants now choose one **topic of general space use** (from everyday professional life, building history, neighborhood relations, vacancy, new construction, building afteruse, etc.) and intertwine this space utilization theme with their chosen **spatial peculiarity**. The shown example image places an architectural design sketch of a glass dome of an imaginary building at the center of a sequence of works from the course.

The designers increase the level of detail in their knowledge of this imaginary spatial situation by exploring the chosen building's use in greater depth, either visually or in writing, often using a combination of several techniques of visualization and representation. Subsequently, the newly developed insights into the imaginary building are placed next to or arranged on the large image map and presented to the other participants.

9.5. A narrative of life in the buildings, locations, and landscapes of the map – presented visually or in writing

9.5.1. Collage

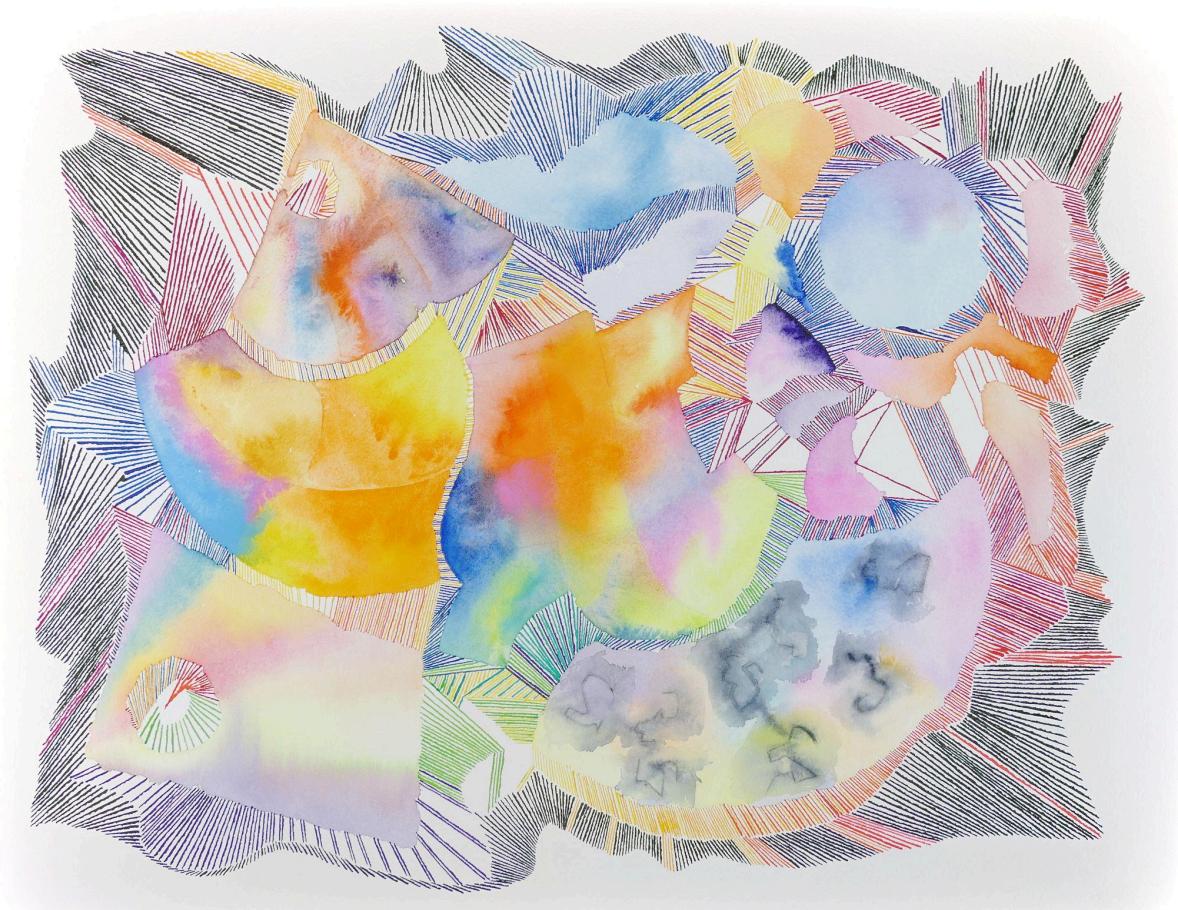


Fig. 11: A collage-like retrospective on one's own work

At the end of the course, the participants look at their chronologically collected and numbered works and paint, draw, or write a *collage-like retrospective* - a *single image or single text* - about their discoveries in the map they created.

10. New tasks

Participants are encouraged to formulate a sequence of tasks for independent work with regard to the objectives of this course. If needed, further questions and tasks relating to the steps of the course can provide support.

11. Transfer of one's own idea

The task and experience of the last course step (*Narrative of life in the buildings, locations and landscapes of the map*) encourages the artists to reflect on their own work as well as that of others. The chronologically numbered works allow participants to track the sequential increase in complexity and level of detail of both the tasks and the finished pieces.

Comparing current tasks with self-formulated keywords for future tasks should awaken the desire to redesign and discover a fictional landscape that contains challenges and ideas from the participant's life.

12. *On times, balances, and contradictions* (Additional course in development)