

TAXONOMY OF BREATHING

ICEBOX COLLECTIVE

Tax·on·o·my: a way of charting and organizing knowledge.

Taxonomy of Breathing is a socially conscious, multidisciplinary art project that investigates our current societal moment through the lens of breath—its vulnerability to restriction, and its power of transformation. The fragility of the body—with breath as its essential element—is a manifestation of our environment, our historical moment, and our political and social context. It is at once foundational and aspirational, embodied and symbolic.

This current watershed moment can in many ways be crystallized, condensed, illuminated, through the lens of the breath. The breath and our respiratory system are the primary targets of this virus that has swept over us and that is still reshaping the world. It is the site of the transgression, violence, and oppression that catalyzed an uprising for racial justice that has not been seen in a generation: “I CAN’T BREATHE.” Wildfires choke the West. Covid-induced isolation has resulted in blue skies in Beijing and New Delhi. Must we choose between mobility and the black lung? The pandemic, racial injustice, environmental cataclysm—the breath connects them. The breath, however, also holds the promise of transformation. In the midst of the despair, desperation, dissolu-

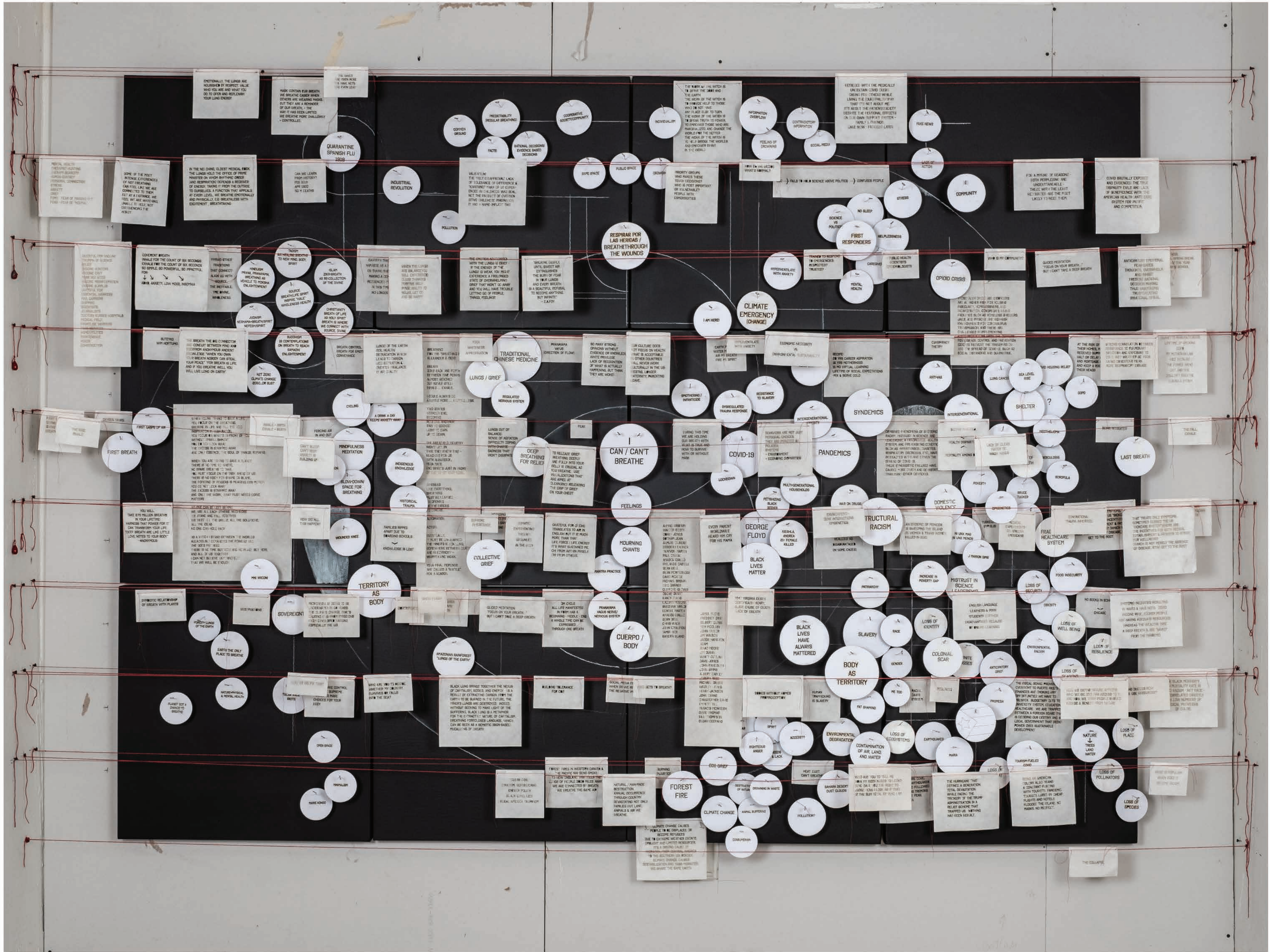
tion, and depression that follows this slow-moving unraveling of life as we knew it, there is incremental movement towards mindfulness and meditation, anchored by and centered around the simple observation of the act of breathing. Grounding us, slowing us, silencing us, giving us space to expand, offering us distance from and perspective on what we can and cannot control. In some ways, it seems that perhaps the breath is all we control . . . except when we can't.

There is an expression used in some Spanish-speaking countries concerning memory and conflict: “*respirar por las heridas*,” which translates to “breathe through the wounds.” In this moment, it may also help us locate breath as both present at the site of the wounds and capable of transforming them—the promise of healing, faith in the regenerative power of life, our ability to survive.

Our project explores the “act of breathing” as an archive of fleeting moments. *Taxonomy of Breathing* was born of the basic need to understand the world in 2020. A group of artists—now the ICEbox Collective—started by drawing a map. We charted current events: police brutality, smoke and wildfire, and COVID attacking the lungs. We found these seemingly disparate disasters were all connected by the breath. And in following the thread of breath through spiritual and healing practices, and the concept of “breathing through the wounds,” we discovered a platform for connections across cultural boundaries; and a structure to spark conversations and build an archive of this watershed moment in history.

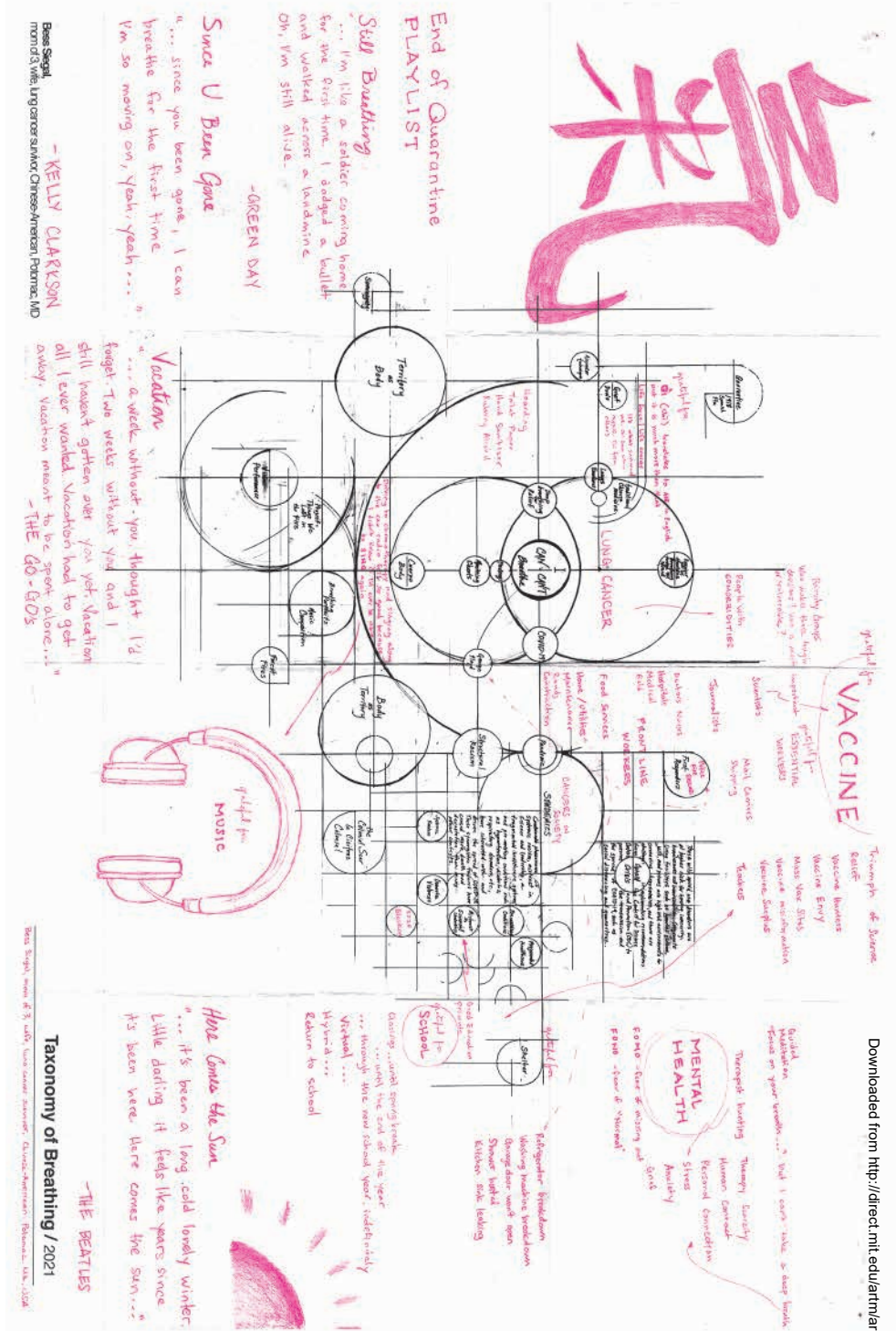
Global issues need global perspectives, so we distributed 100 maps across the globe to gain critical and diverse perspectives on how people were experiencing their world. The maps amount to an international round table discussion to gain a more complete understanding of the complexities of this historical moment. The participant responses to the maps were cataloged and laser cut into a system of varying shapes, then assembled into one large scale installation, resulting in a multi-layered aggregated map of written reflections, suspended as if prayer flags, as a witness to this moment. This aggregated map is also the source material for a complex body of ART projects that further unpack and explore individual elements of the map: drawings, photographs, paintings, videos, and music compositions, all in various stages of production, from complete to conceptual. *Taxonomy of Breathing* aims to generate in the

breather, the listener, the viewer, a visceral, embodied effect that redirects awareness to the centrality of this simple, vital act with consequences in the political, social, environmental, intellectual and spiritual realms; a ripple effect that expands and touches the entire world. Follow the project at www.iceboxcollective.studio.

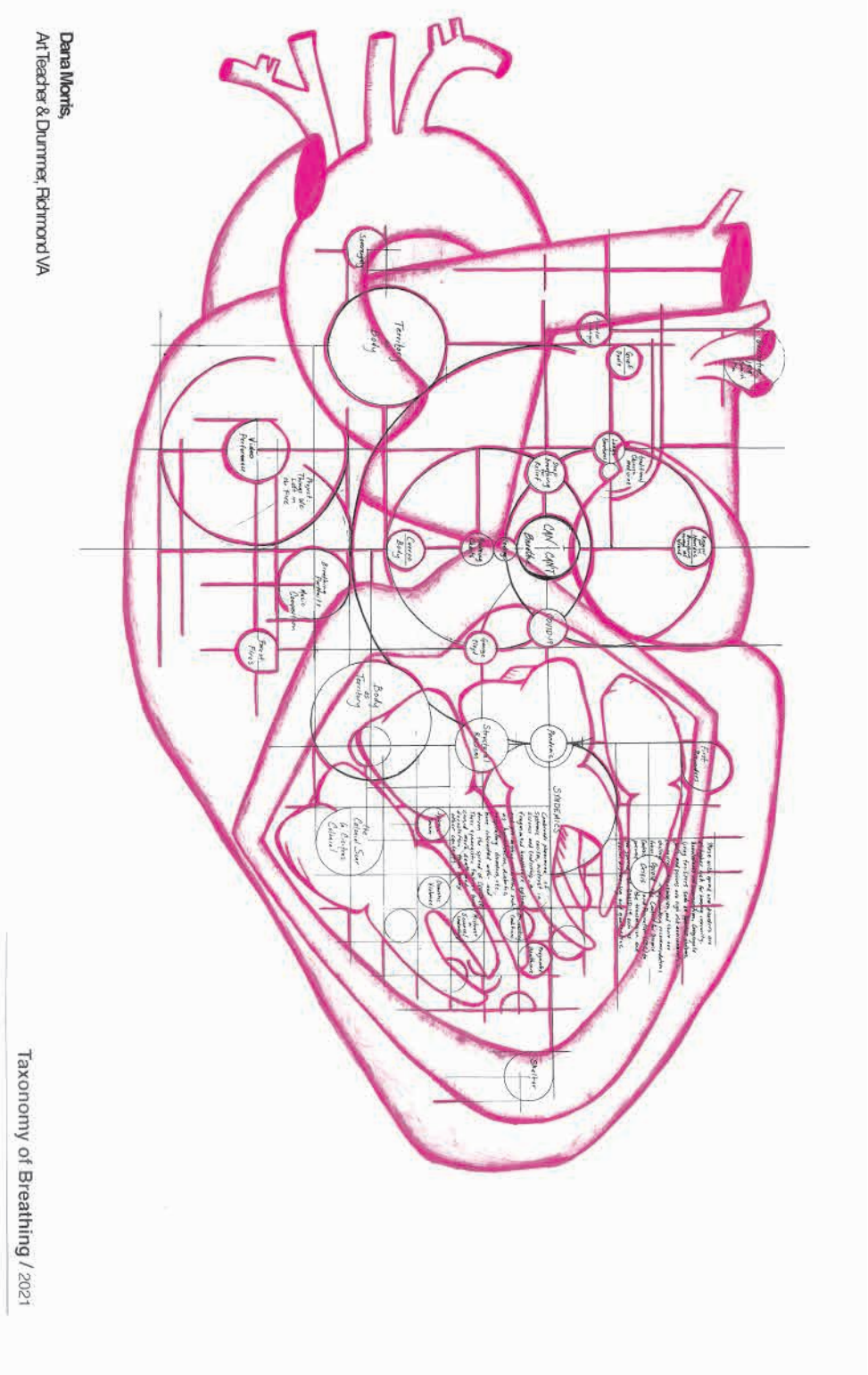


Aggregated Map 1 - Maps Collected July - October 2021

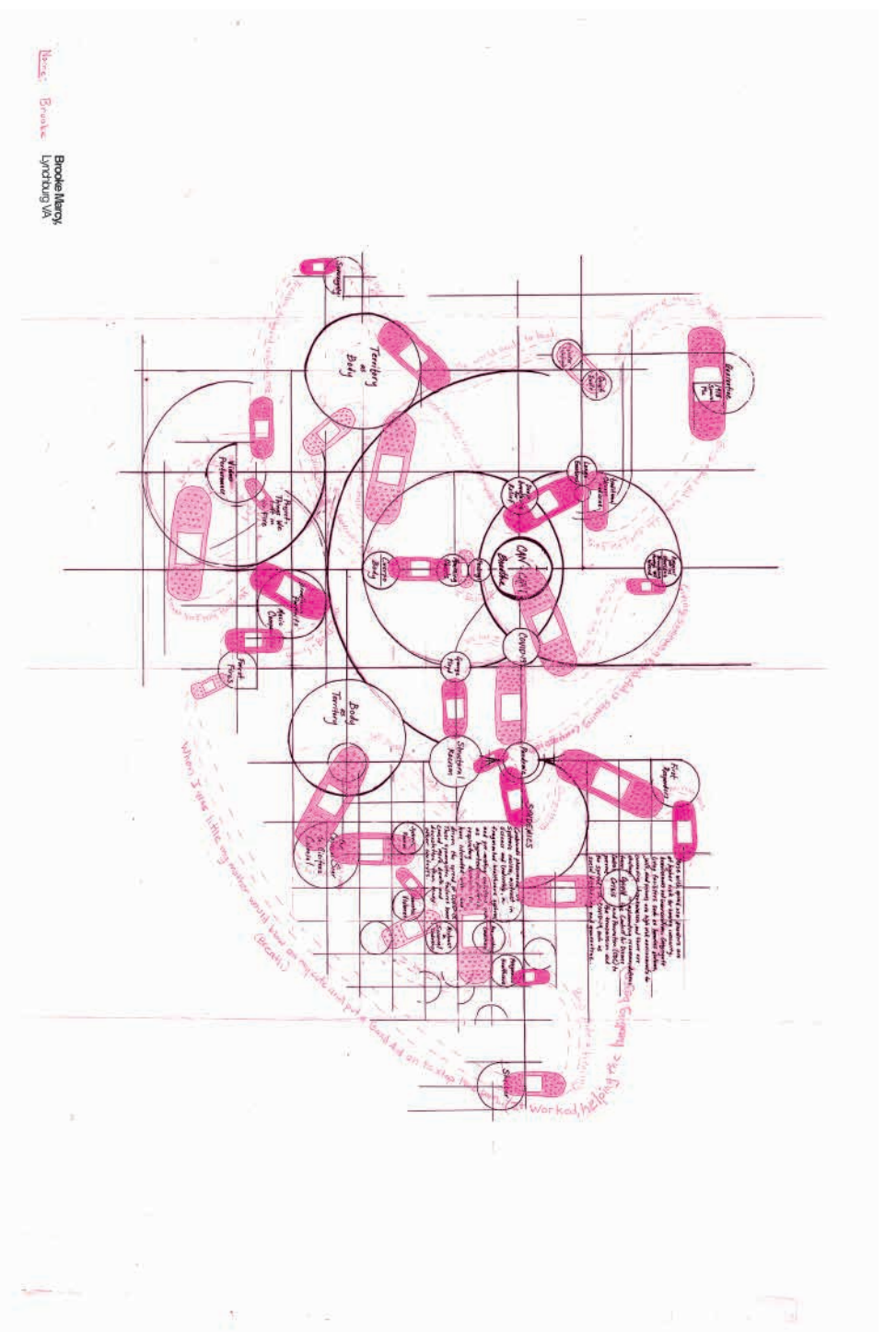
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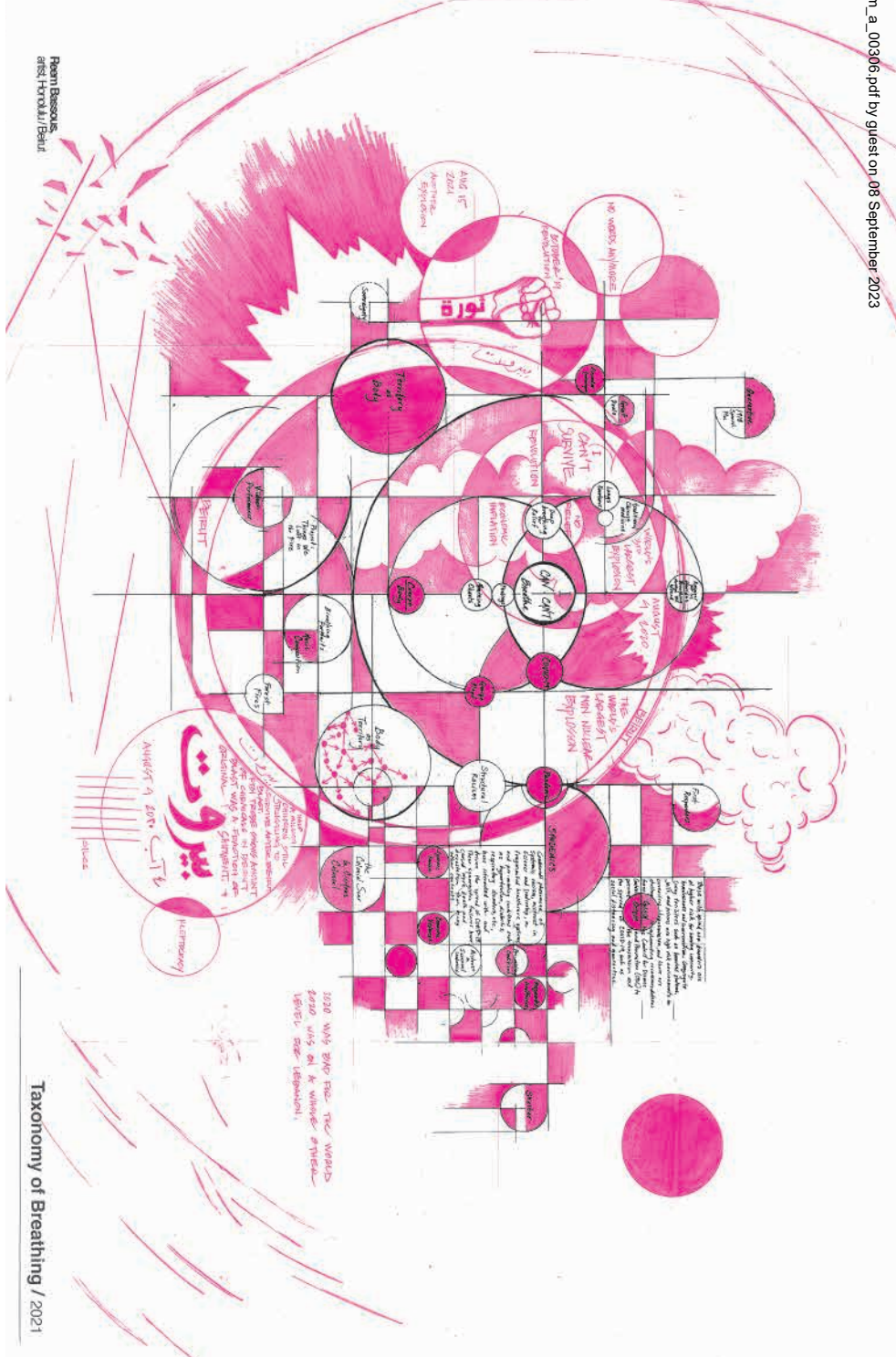
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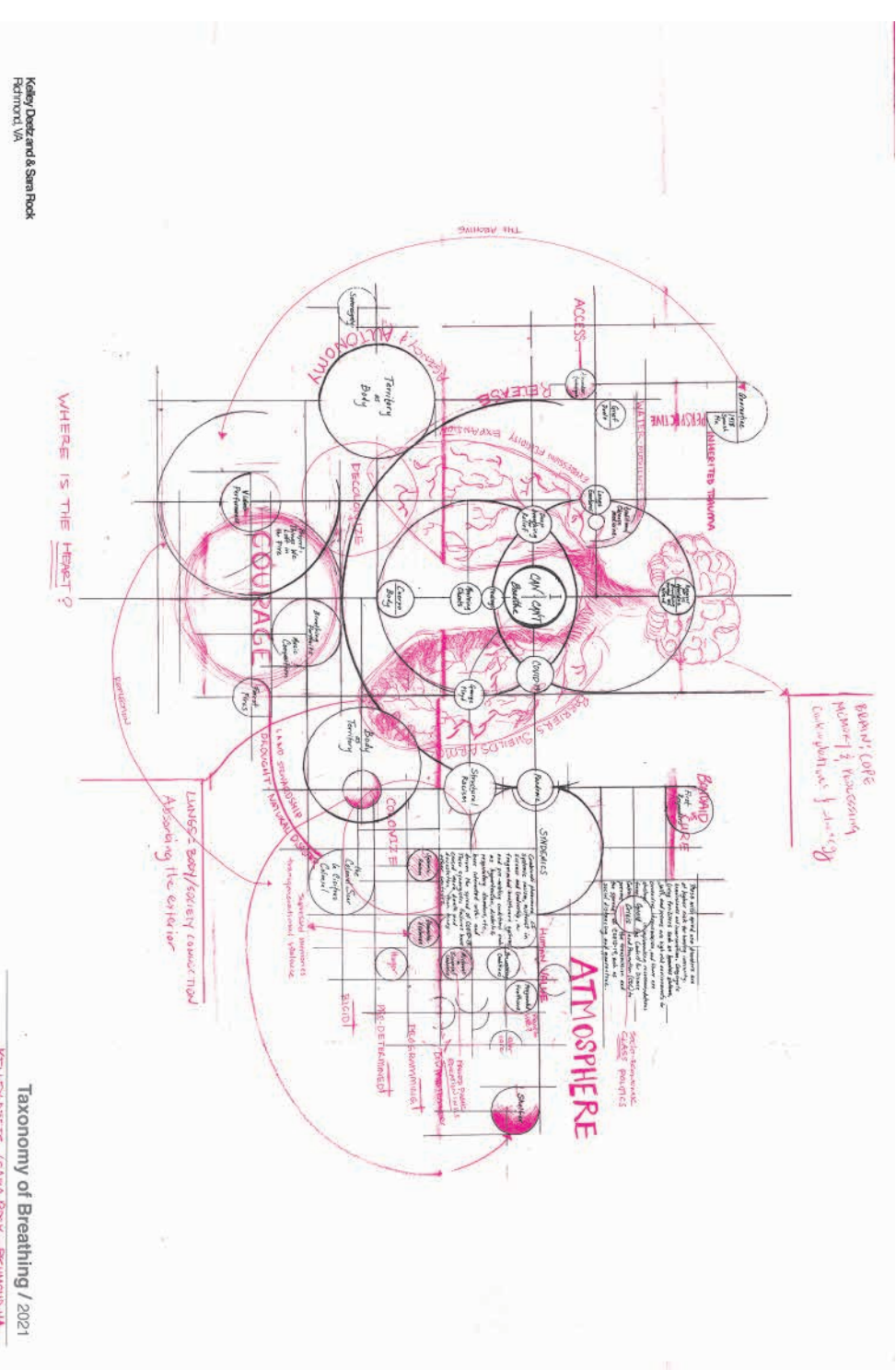
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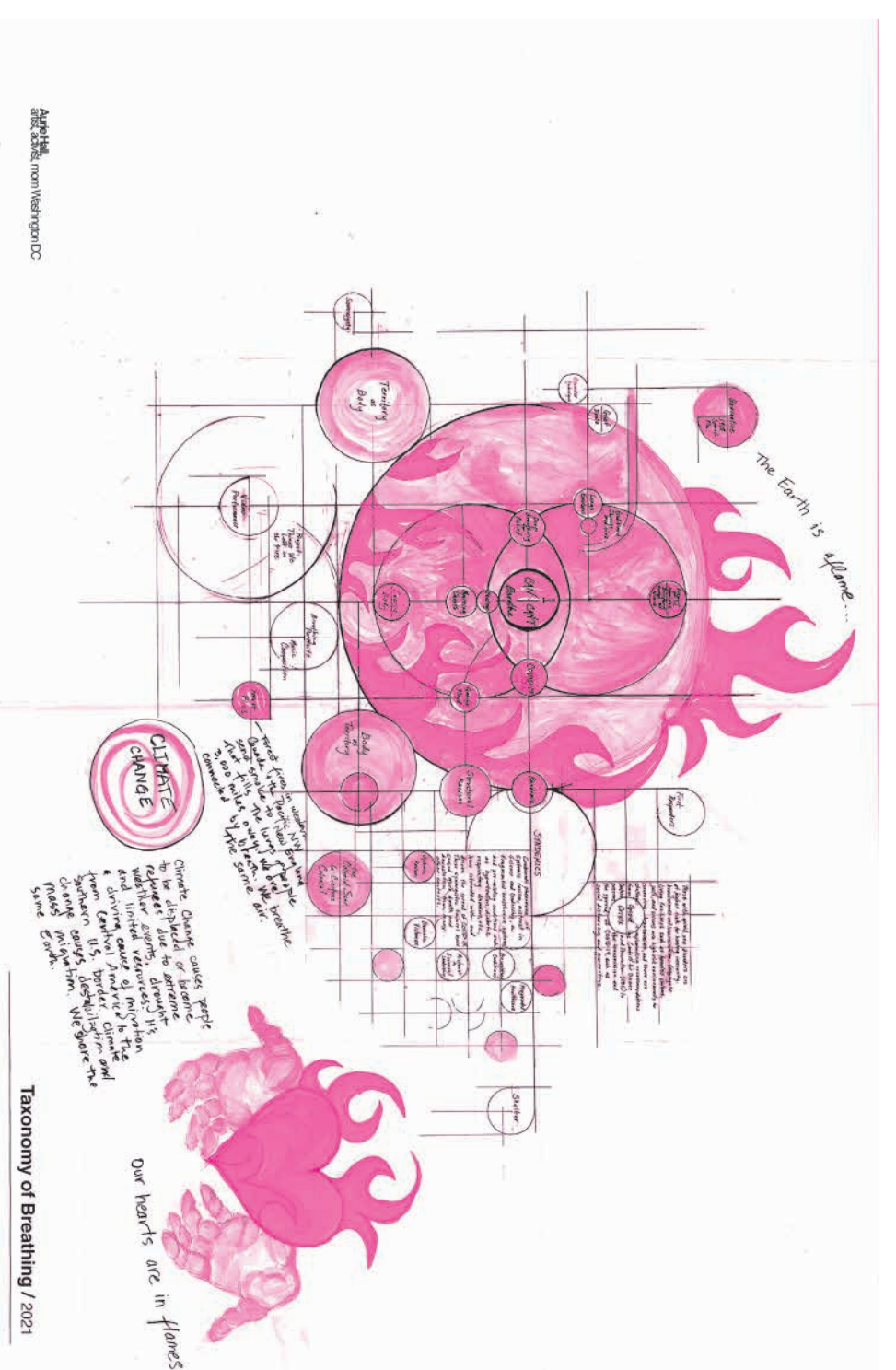
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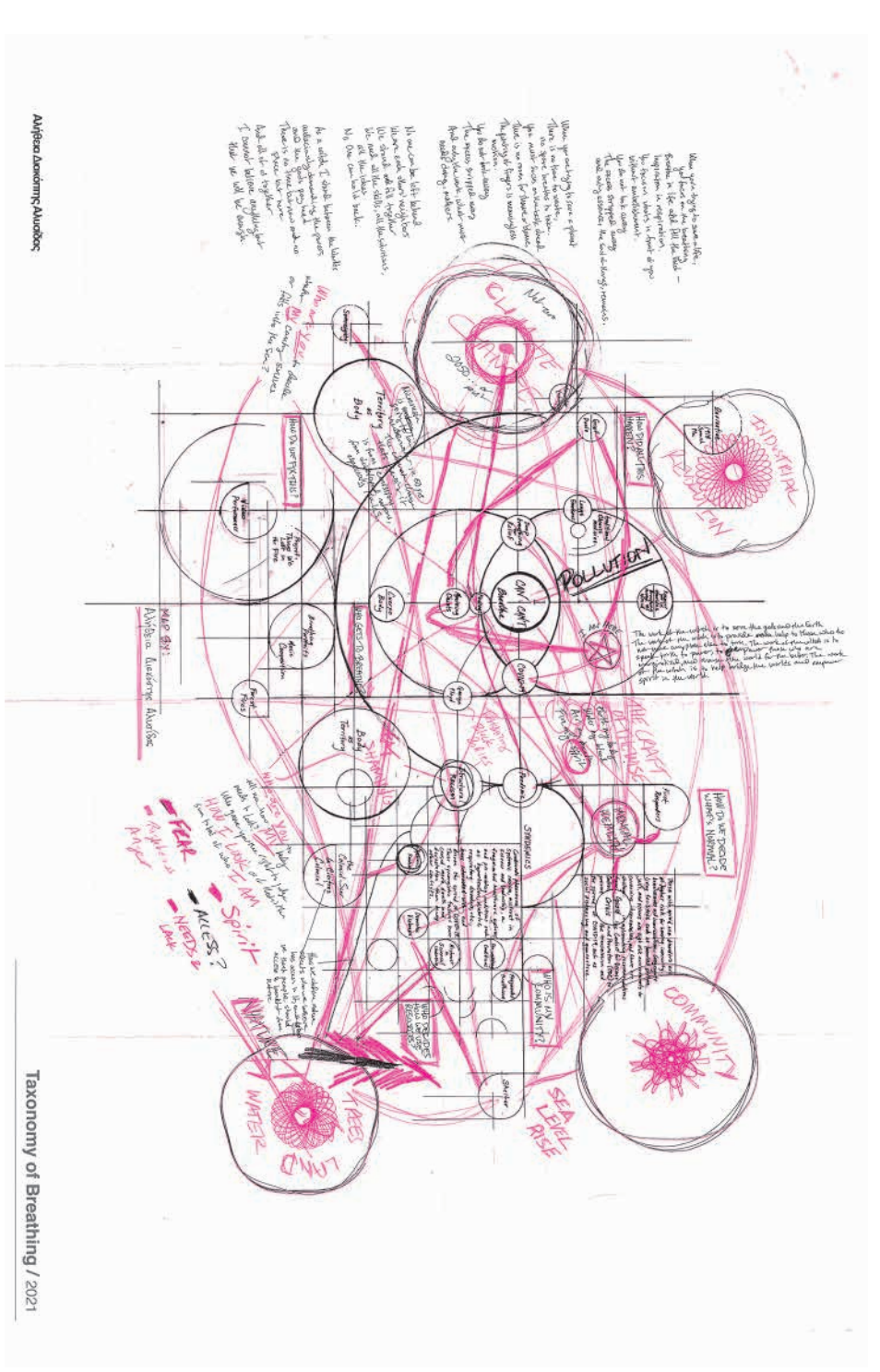
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