

Zentangle

AYISHA SASIDHARAN

with an introduction by Johny M L

2022 JANUARY



ZENTANGLE



AYISHA SASIDHARAN

SAYAHNA FOUNDATION
TRIVANDRUM, INDIA 695014

Zentangle
Ayisha Sasidharan
(Zen artworks)

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Sayahna Foundation
JWRA 34, Jagathy, Trivandrum, India 695014
URL: www.sayahna.org

AYISHA SASIDHARAN'S ZENTANGLES: MEDITATIVE ART MAKING THAT DENIES INDIVIDUALISM

JOHNY M L

At the Sanghumukham Beach, early in the morning I get this whatsapp message from 'sayahna.org' in which I find a link with some beautifully patterned pictures by an artist, Ayisha Sasidharan. I have not heard about the artist previously and her brief biodata positions her as a freelancing translator of literature. The pictures are black and white in nature, intricate floral patterns running into each other multiplying and metastasizing into varied but legible forms still not really giving a tangible figure to pin it down as 'something' that I already know. A kaleidoscope never fails to enthuse and engage me. These pictures by Ayisha catch my attention and the psychedelic feel is quite unsettling but interesting. The more you look at it, it feels like you are looking into it. There is something that holds you and draws you in. At the sea shore my daily dose of meditation (looking at the waves lashing against the shore, the ever changing patterns of clouds in the sky, their edges that gets variedly illuminated by the arrival of sunrays and so on for around twenty minutes sum up my mediation) gets a fillip by these pictures and I become curious.



Courtsey: Ayisha

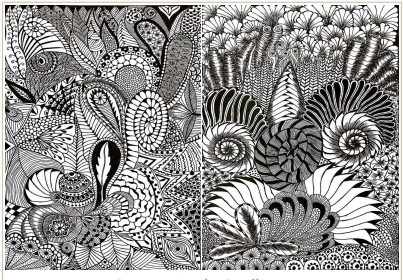
The message that came along with the pictures of Ayisha besides introducing the artist in brief words, also has described the pictorial style as 'Zentangles'. Seemingly auto replicating patterns, using curves, circles, wavy lines and triangles build the pictorial space which is less than four inches in size and does not have up, down, left or right. While working one could rotate the surface as per your need to distribute the patterns. It has a self-generated rhythm and you don't need to have a proscribed and prescribed idea about the possible outcome. As the name of the style suggests, it is meditative and absorbing. One of the websites that promote Zentangle style says that practicing Zentangle painting or drawing helps in alleviating the problems caused by phobias, manias, depressions, illnesses, laziness, pains, insomnia, lack of concentration and so on. May be that is true. Though small in size and intricate in nature, Ayisha's works give me this idea about trekking. The path may look tough and confusing but it induces some

kind of a pleasure of tackling that challenge. You tend to forget rest of the world and focus on what you do; means climbing. Here in the case of Zentangles, it is drawing patterns.



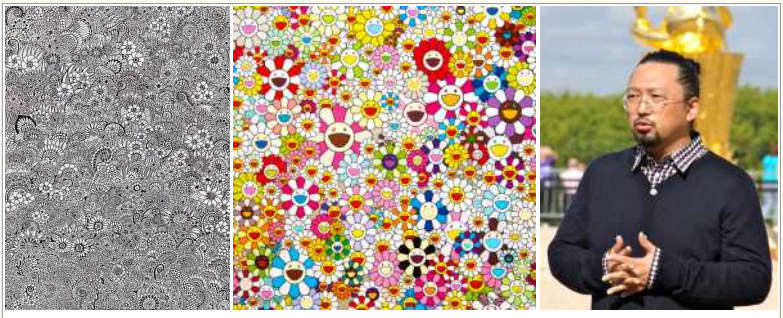
Courtsey: Ayisha Sasidharan

Rick Robert and Maria Thomas, a share market player and economic analyst, and an artist drew botanical drawings filled with calligraphic patterns, came together in life and work only to establish this style exactly in 2013. They live in Central Massachusetts in the US and with the successful franchising of the style all over the world, run an alternative museum for exhibiting the Zentangle works. The story goes like this: One day Maria Thomas was making a botanical drawing and feeling a sensation of floating and mindfulness. She felt void and complete at the same time. When Rick Robert came in she told him about the sensation and he, a practitioner of meditation, immediately told her that it was exactly the peaking state of meditation. They put their heads together and thought of making an art style that would help people meditate without the hassles of learning a technique or style. One just had to get a start. Take a piece of paper, an ink pen and go. They called the piece of paper tiles and many such tiles painted could join together to make an ensemble of works.



Courtsey: Ayisha Sasidharan

There is some kind of automatism in this style. Anybody could make it and in pure mindfulness. Mindfulness is a state of mindlessness. Anybody who wants to forget the world for the time being and focus on what they do, basically making patterns on a paper tile, they could just go on with it. People with compulsive and obsessive nature could find it interesting and at the same time the slow and calm ones who need a bit of motivation to go a little fast also could get into it. Though it is a curative and meditative art form, I find there is only one problem; the problem of having no style. The style is generic as the patterns may look unique in each formation exactly like the formations in a kaleidoscope, but it could never be repeated the way artists do in their individualized artistic styles. So it would remain a generic art form, helping the practitioners form clubs and self -help platforms and so on.



(a) (b) (c)

(a) Courtsey: Ayisha; (b) A work of Takashi Murakami, Courtsey: Johny M L;
(c) Takashi Murakami, Courtsey: Wikipedia

They do definitely make an artist out of a non-artist. Postmodern sensibilities help one to be an artist even without academic training. Here in Zentangles, one doesn't need academic training and also it ensures that one doesn't bother much about the mixing of colors because the style is created in black and white; white paper and black ink. Maria and Rick say that it does not have anything to do with Zen for they are not Zen practitioners themselves. They wanted a word to go with 'tangles' and Zen rang well with it, and none else had registered Zentangles in the website domains. So it stuck. Fortunately, the meditative part of the art making has justified the name that they chose.



A work of Aubrey Beardsley, Courtsey: Johny M L; Aubrey Beardsley, Courtsey: Wikipedia

Ayisha's works remind me the works of Takashi Murakami, the well-known Japanese contemporary artist with an international standing. He has created a series of works called Kai Kai Ki Ki where he repeats flowers and floral patterns in huge canvases and mural scale surfaces. Perhaps, he knows the mathematics of making such patterns, which is a part of the Zen practice in Japan. His references must be coming from those pattern making practices meant for calming the mind. He has given them a contemporary edge and a happy feeling. Ayisha Sasidharan's works are pleasant to look at and definitely they will help one to go deeper into one's own self or absorbed in sublime thoughts. In certain ways it gives optical illusions and cajoles forms out of it. If more than one artist comes together to show their works in the Zentangles style then it would be difficult to discern one from the other. May be Ayisha could

refer the works of the Art Nouveau painters like Aubrey Beardsley to gain individual style from the practice of Zentangles. Despite all generic eventualities, Ayisha's works have an individualistic edge and one has to see more works from her in order to see how she could lend her personal mark on those works.

Posted by Johny M L on Jun 24, 2020 in his blog entitled, By All Means Necessary. Reproduced with the kind permission of the author and is gratefully acknowledged.

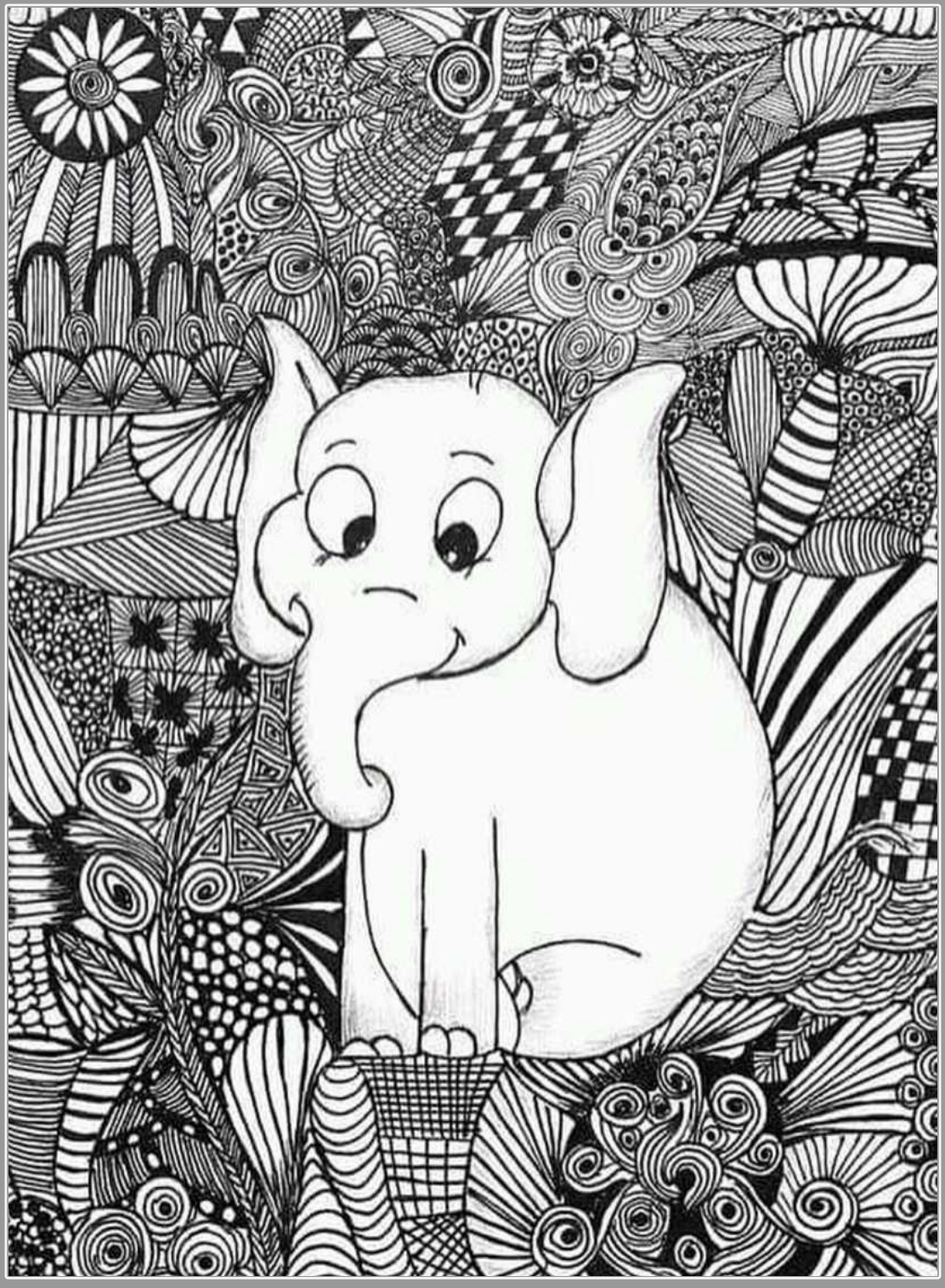


Ayisha Sasidharan

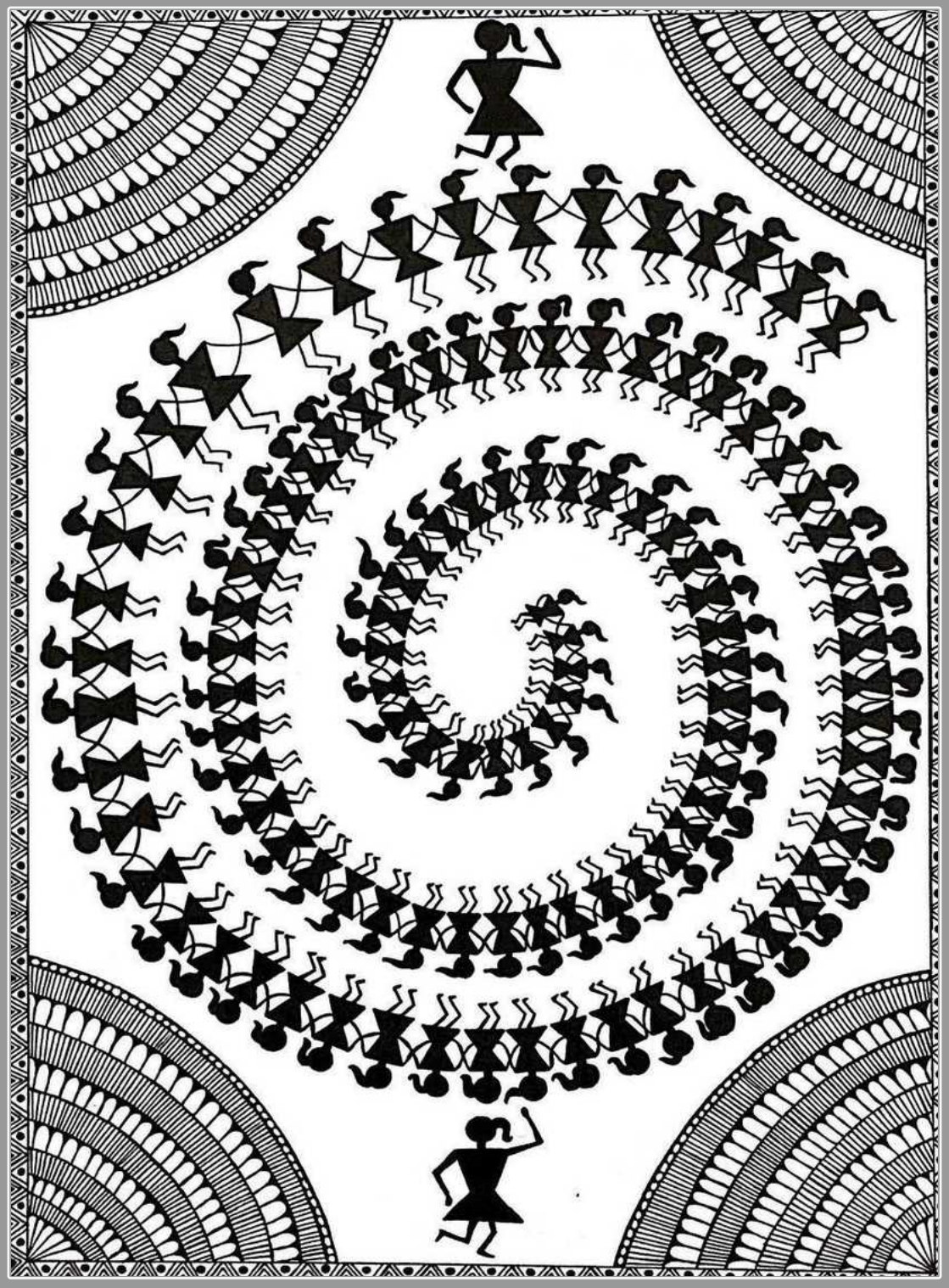
Ayisha Sasidharan is a freelance translator. Has translated short stories and books by Malayalam writers into English. Currently working as an associate editor for the "Little Genius" which is published from Emirates. She is interested in Zentangle art and has drawn black and white pictures with artist pen on paper.

Zentangle art is a fun way of creating beautiful images by drawing structural patterns called tangles. The art form was invented by a monk named Rick Roberts and an artist named Maria Thomas. It is a combination of meditation and art. It is spontaneous and free flowing, relieves stress and promotes concentration. Anyone can create an image without the need of being an artist.

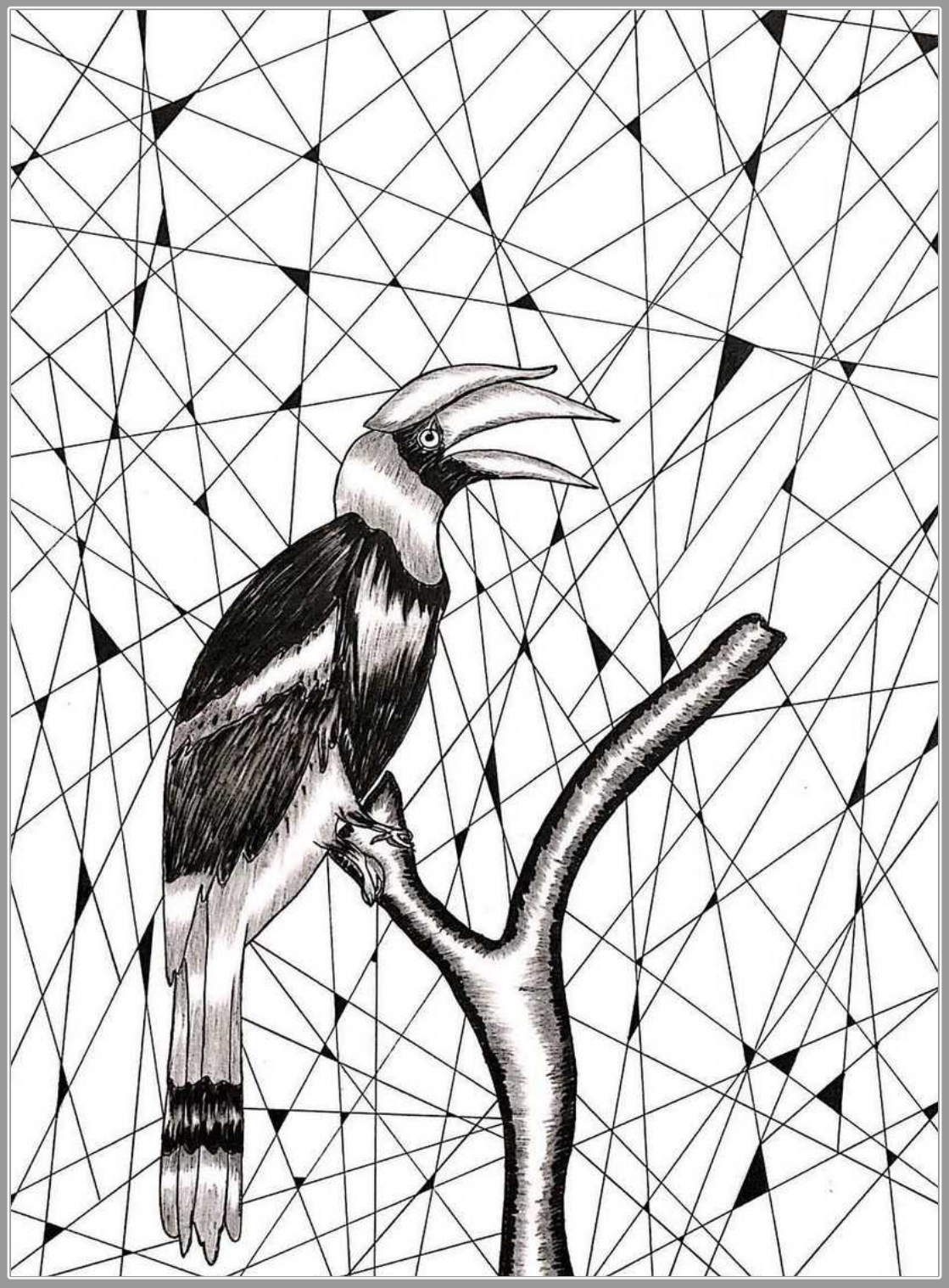
One of her zen creations has been used for the cover of *Vṛttamañjari*, a Sayahna publication, released a two years ago.



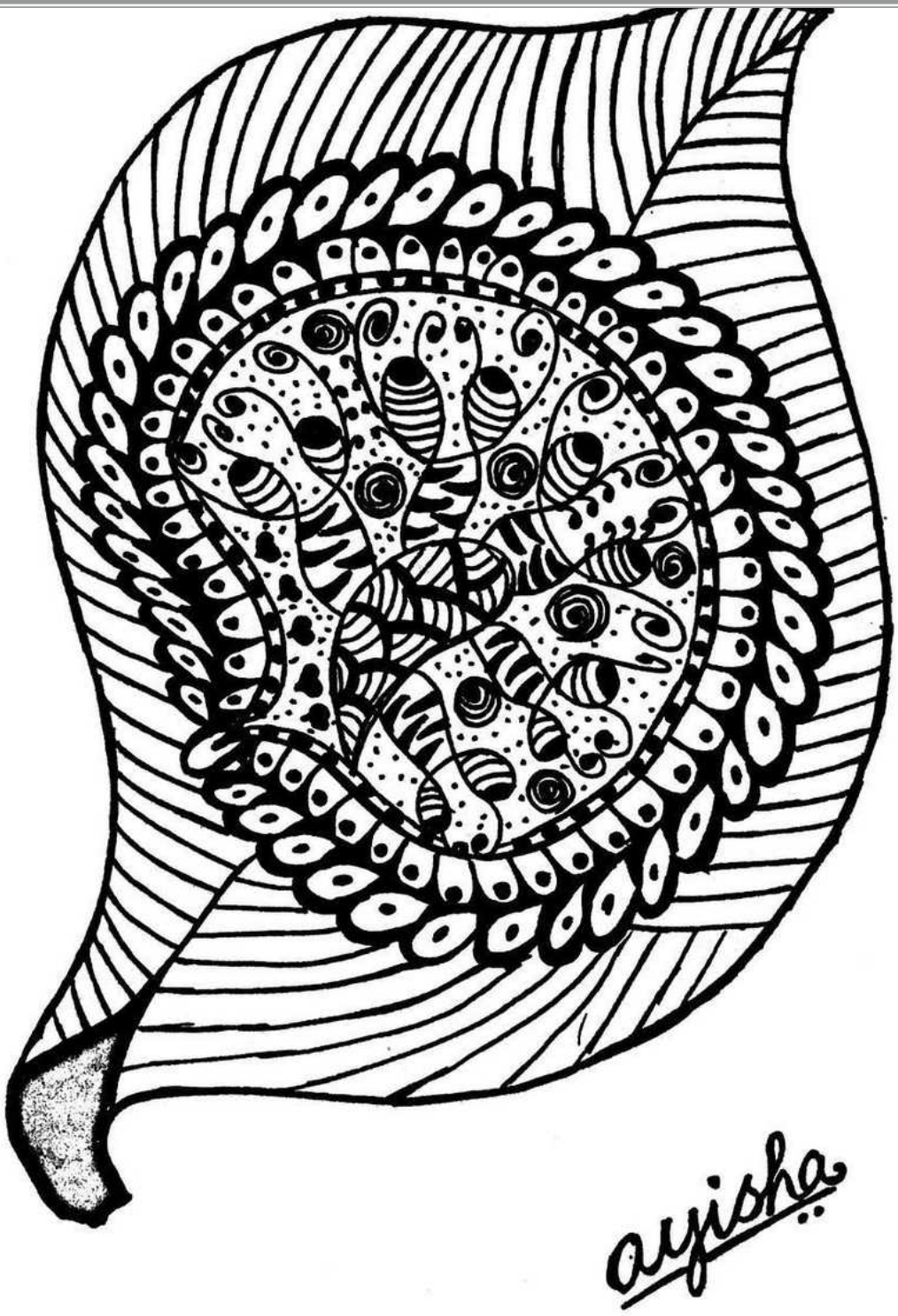
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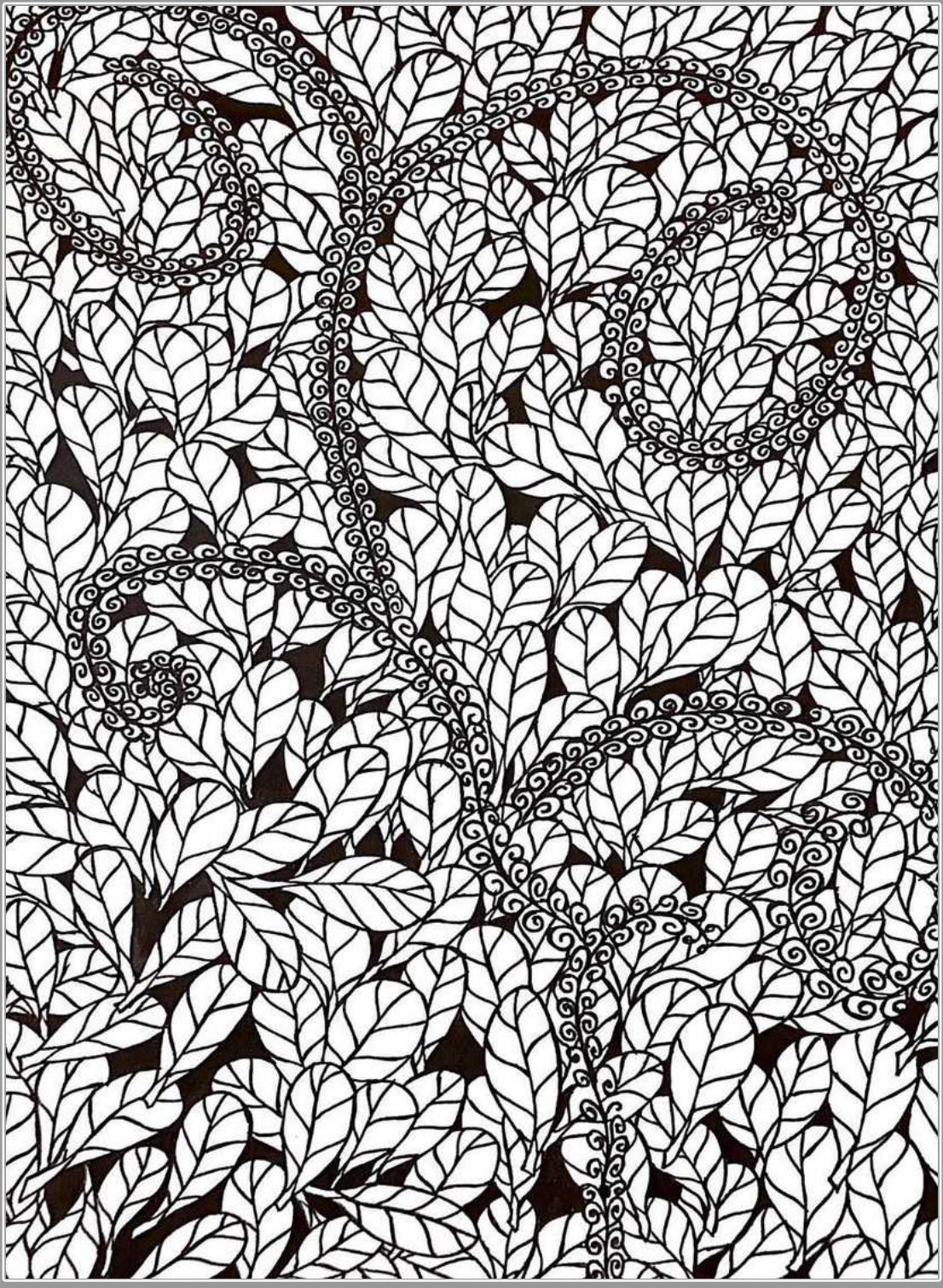


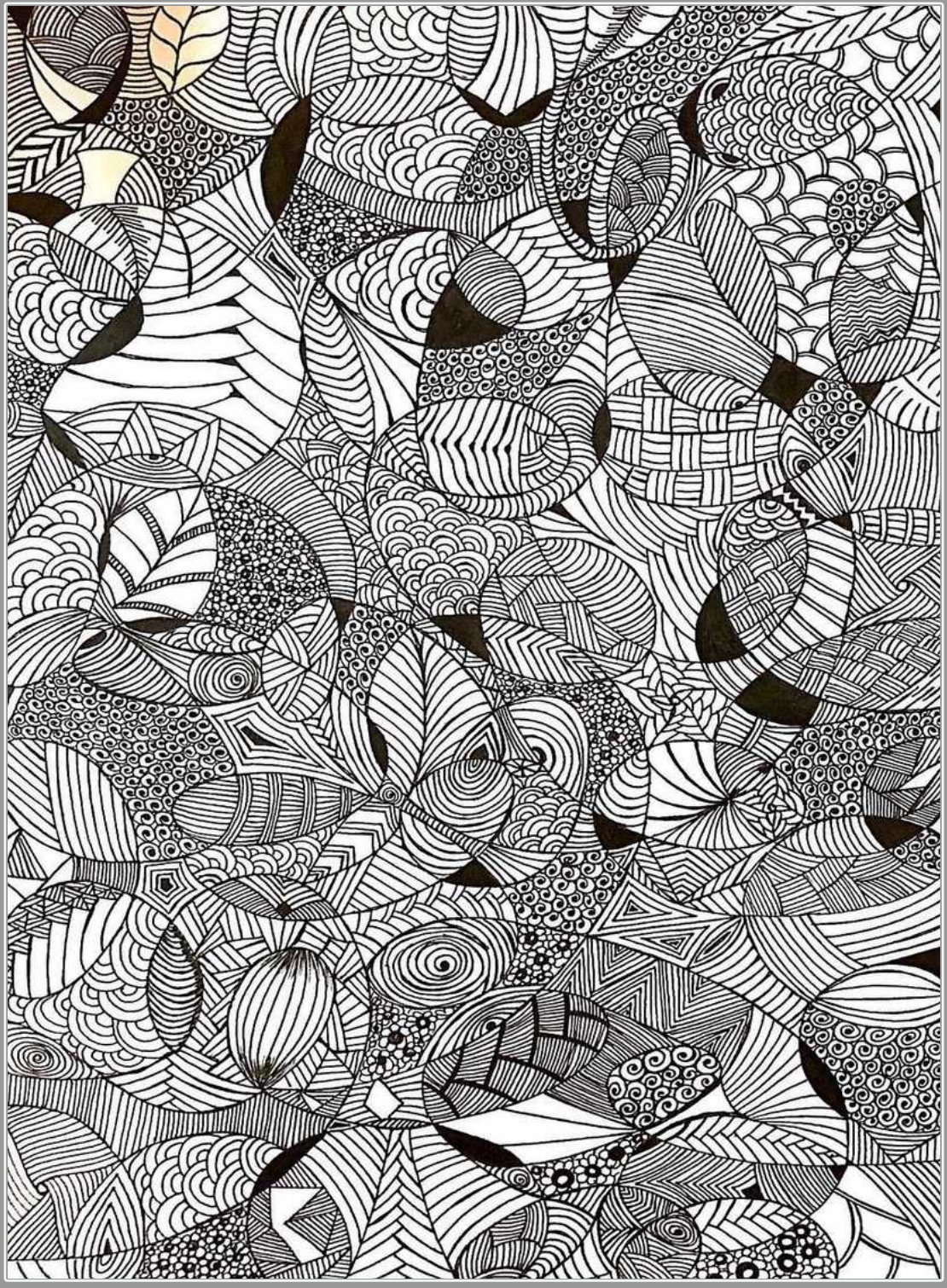
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ayisha

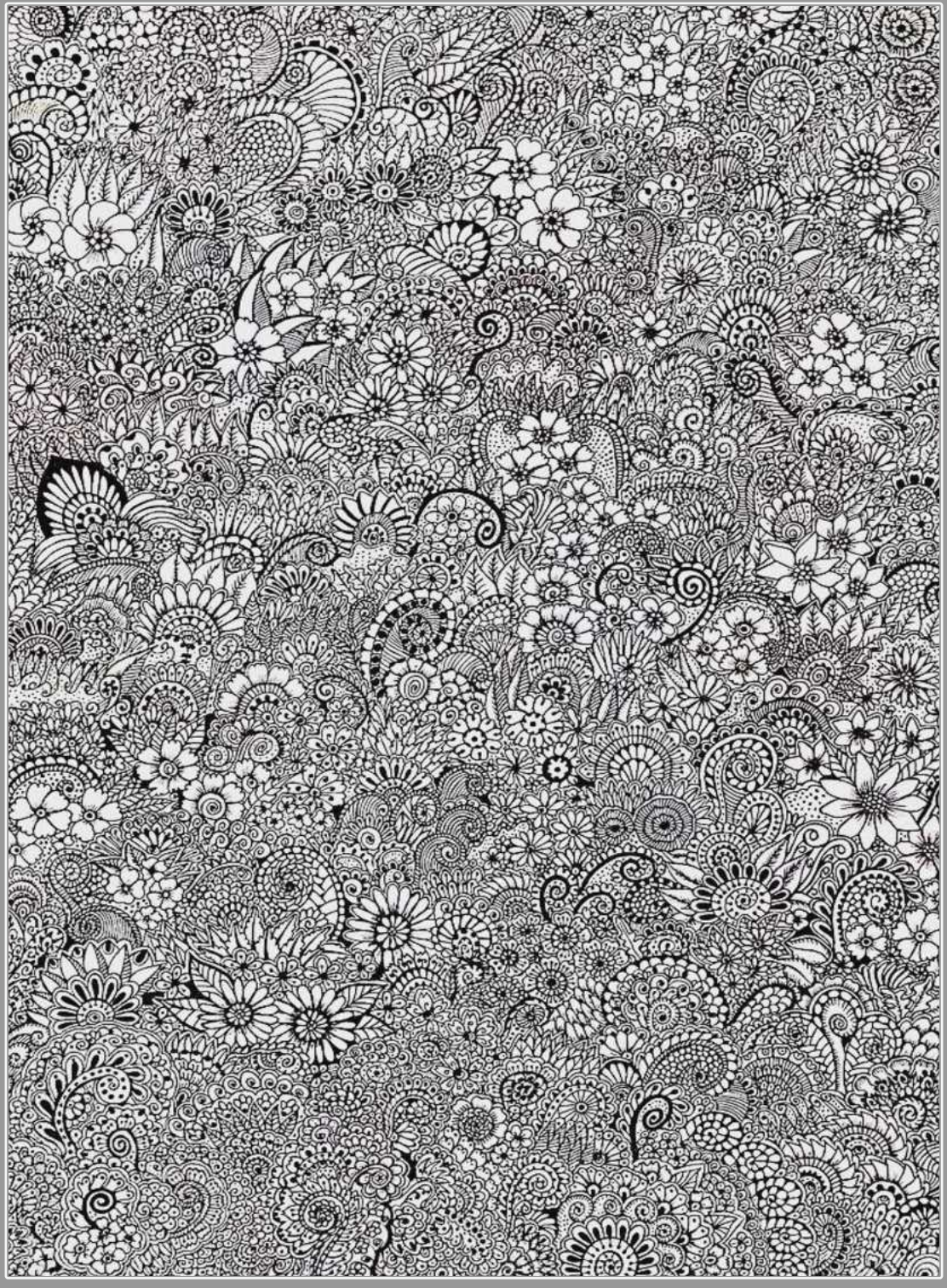


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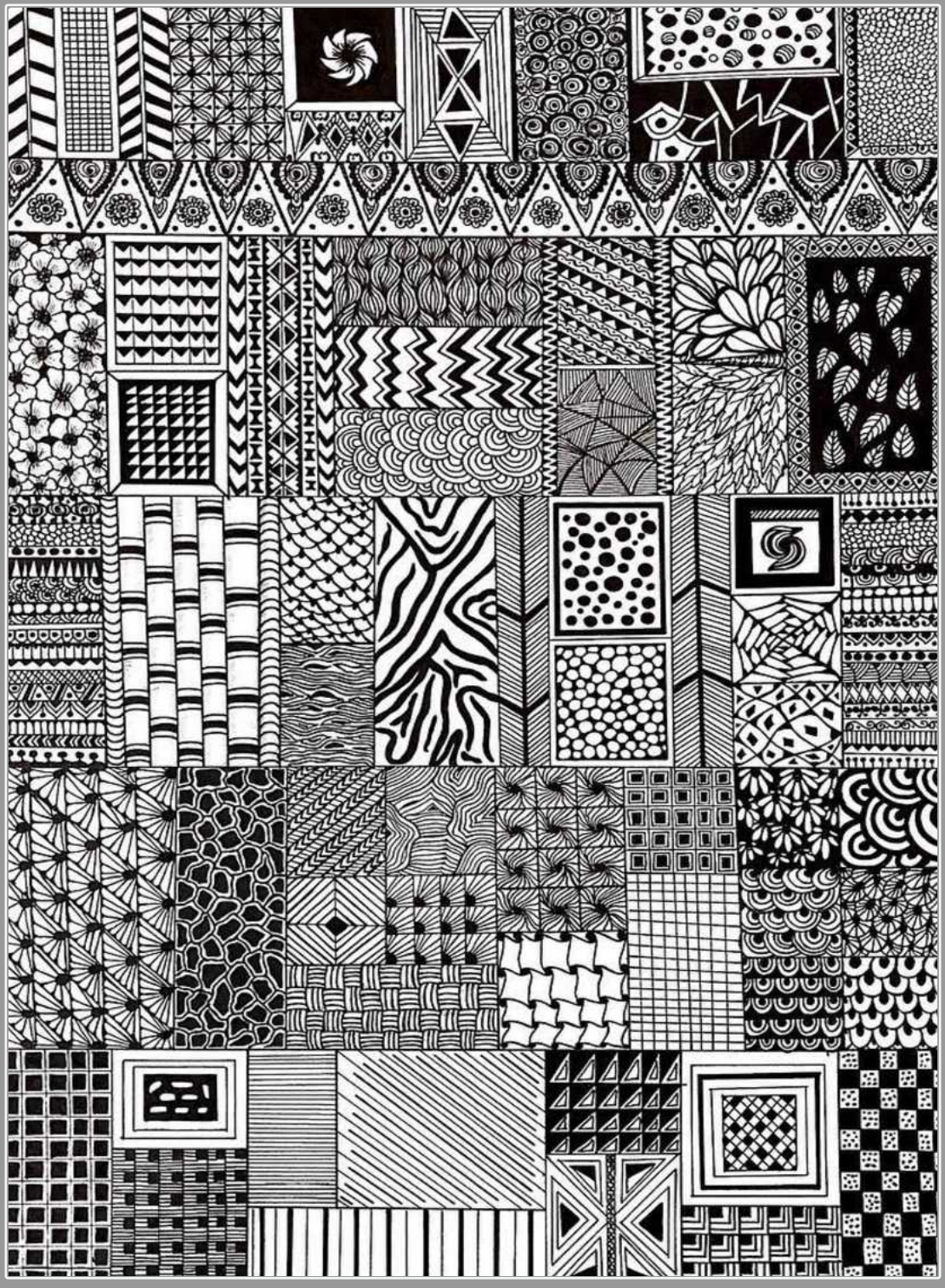
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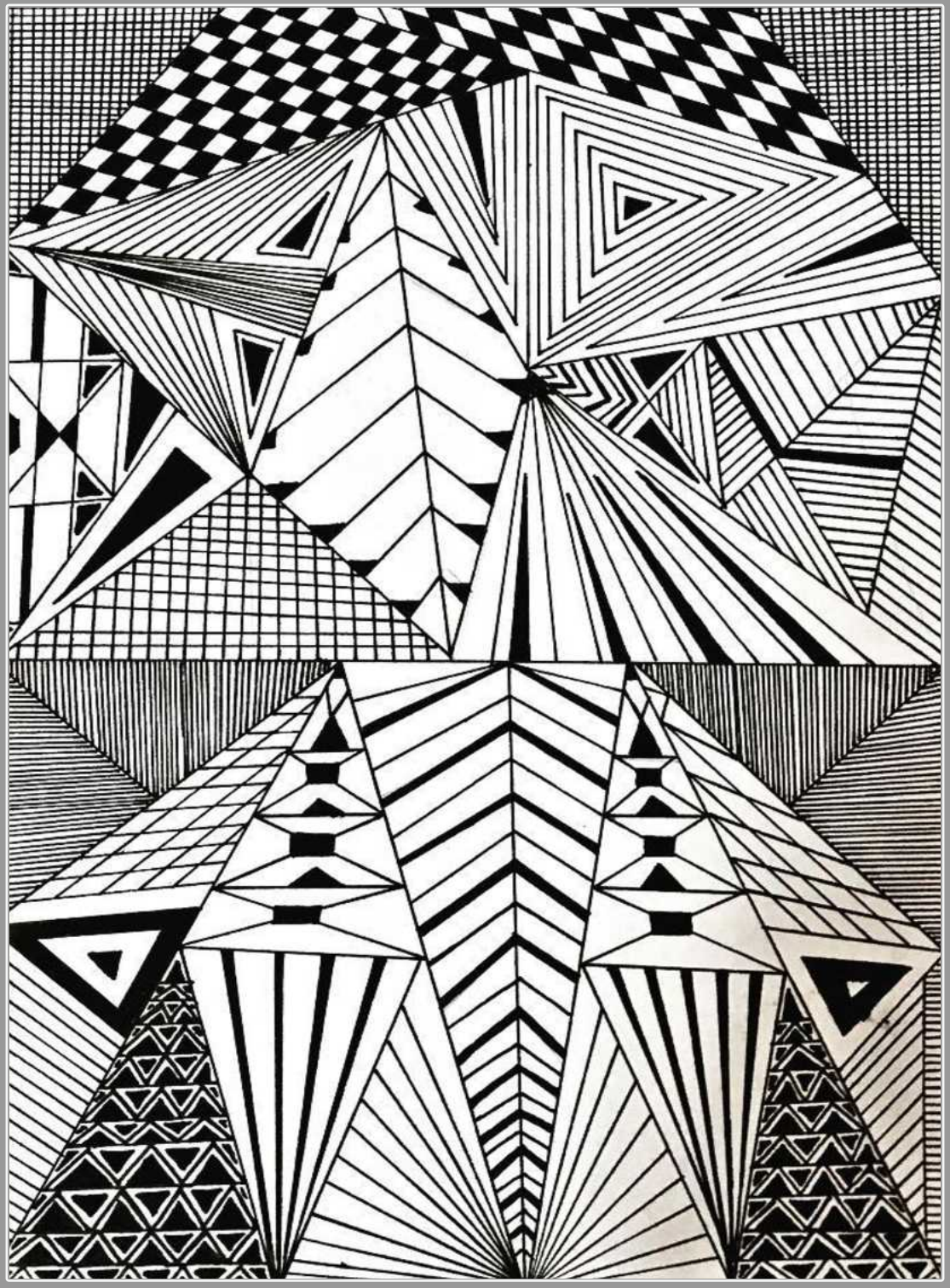
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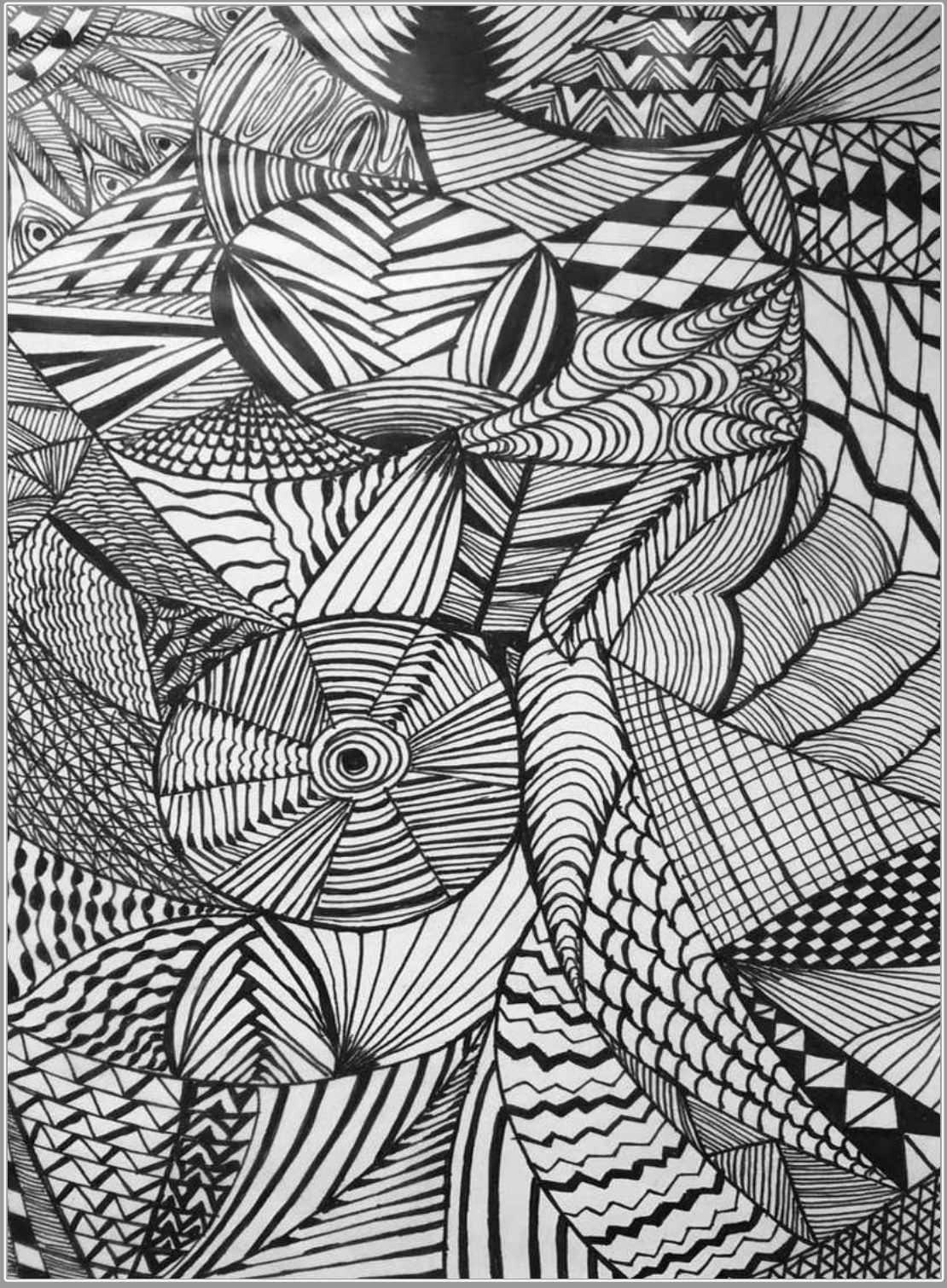
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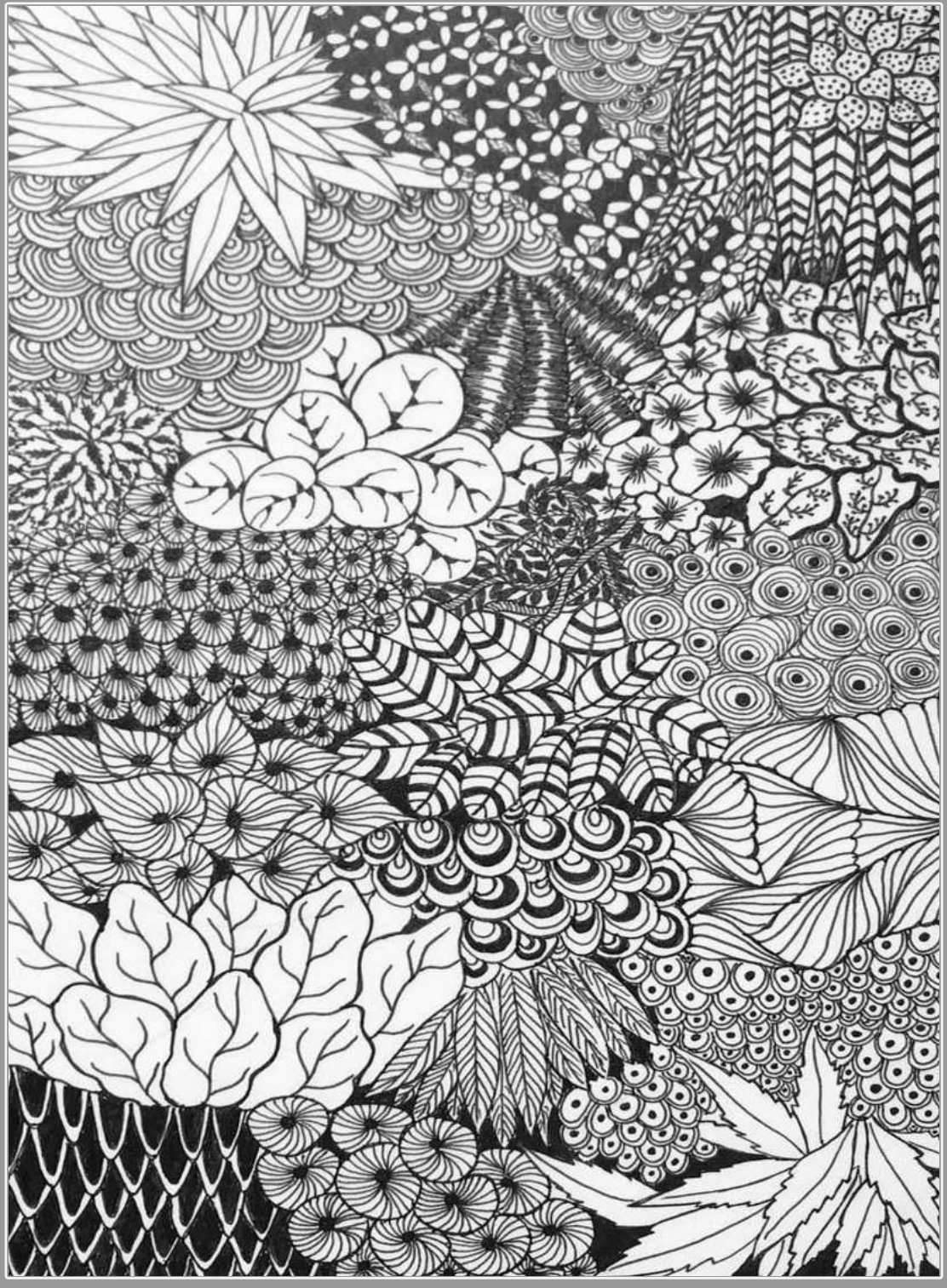
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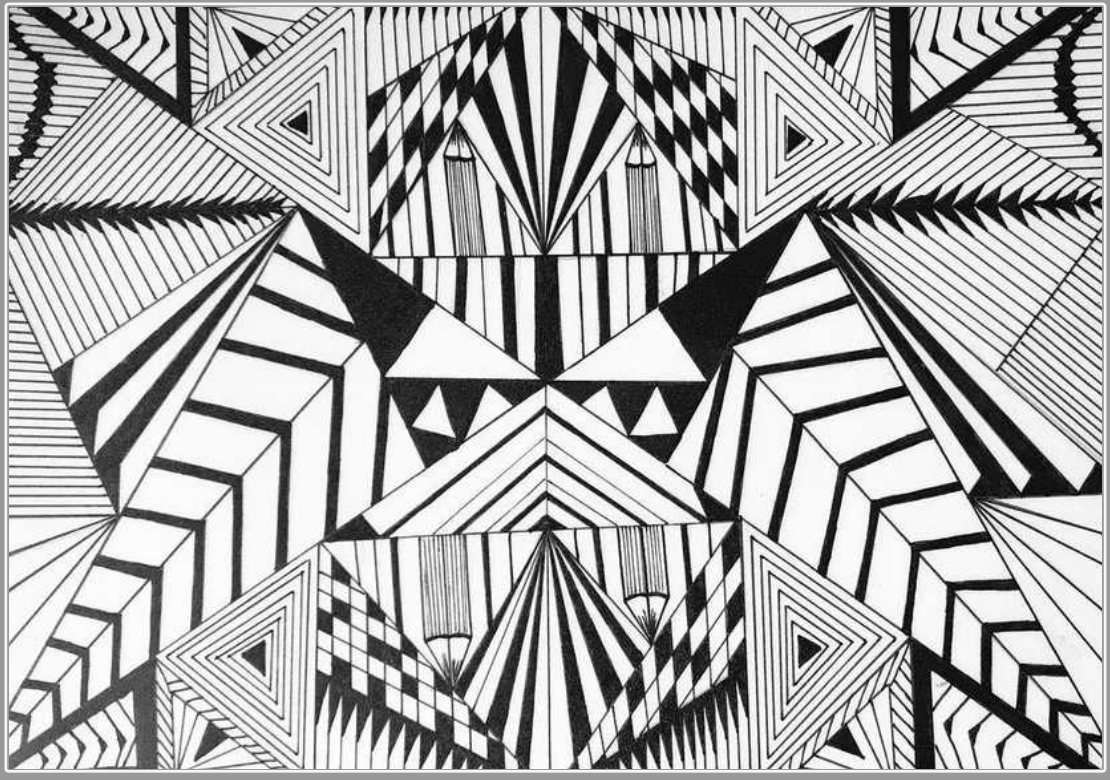
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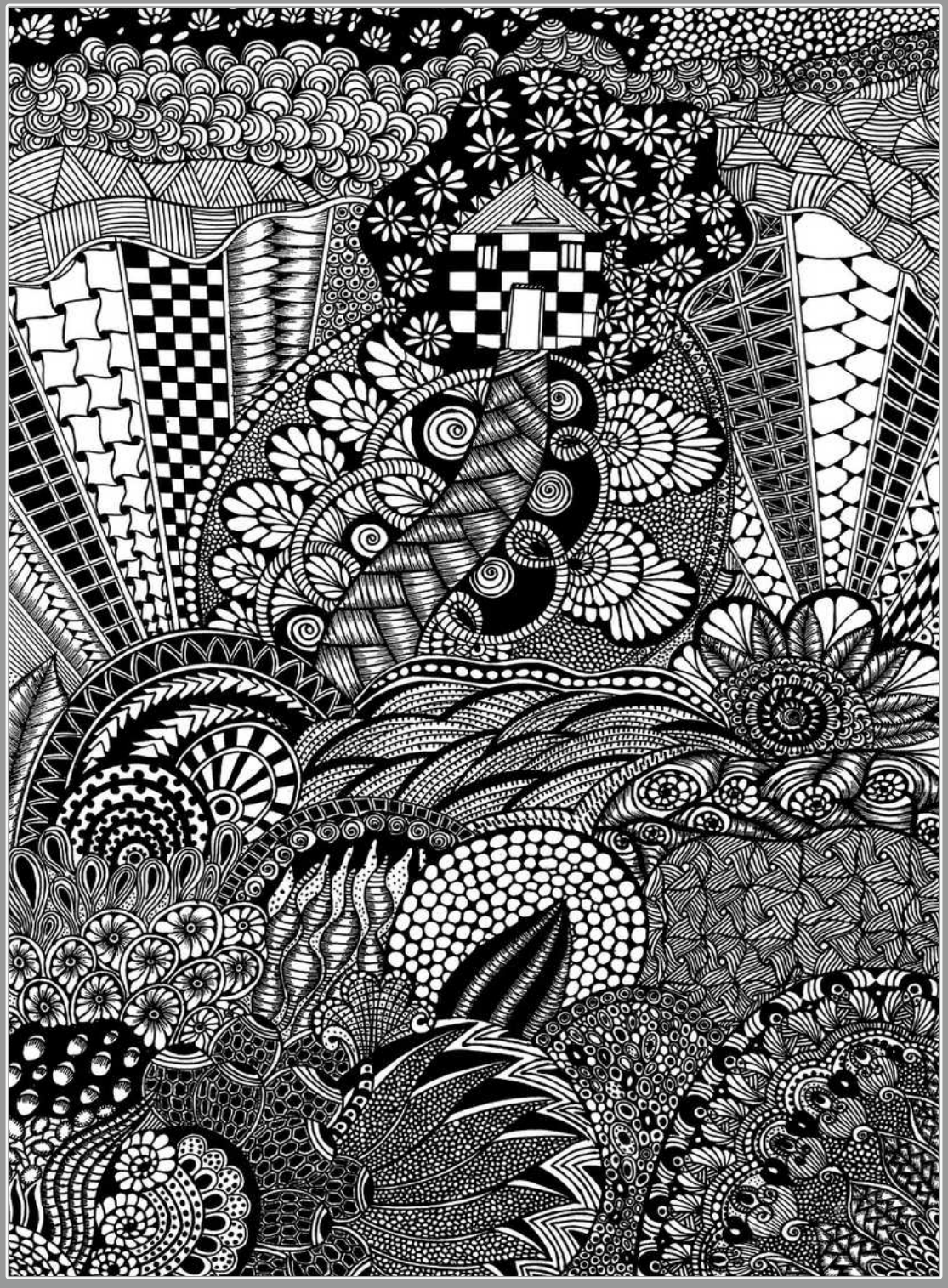
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