

COBRA 1.7 PDF Copy

# COBRA

COBRA is the British Government’s emergency response committee set up to respond to a national or regional crisis. Standing for Cabinet Office Briefing Room A, the COBRA Committee comes together in moments of perceived crisis under the chairmanship of either the Prime Minister or senior cabinet ministers. At COBRA meetings, decisions and a possible response, sometimes simply a press conference, are made under real or imagined conditions of emergency and/or crisis. \*

The committee can evoke emergency powers such as suspending Parliament or restricting movement. Such emergency -based responses have ranged from tackling Ash Dieback disease to the deployment of military hardware on civilian rooftops during the London Olympics.

Emergency and crisis-based politics are becoming increasingly common as modes of contemporary governance in an age of hyped terrorism and economic and environmental crises.

\* As far as we are able to clarify, the COBRA Committee has been meeting since 1984 and has met in recent years in response to:

2007	Car bomb explodes at Glasgow airport.
2007	Two car bombs found near Tiger Tiger nightclub, London.
2007	Foot and Mouth outbreak.
2009	15 British Naval Crew are captured in Iranian territorial waters.
2010	Eyjafallajokull Volcano eruption in Iceland.
2010	Discovery of bombs in ink cartridges on UPS airplanes bound for the U.S.
2011	No-fly zone over Libya.
2011	Summer riots in London.
2012	London Olympics.
2012	Ash Tree Dieback disease.
-----COBRA RES PROJECT BEGINS-----	
2013	British and international hostages held in Tiguentourine gas plant in Algeria.
2013	Lee Rigby killed in Woolwich, south London.
2013	British hostages held in Westgate shopping centre, Nairobi, Kenya.
2013/2014	Mass floods and tidal surges across United Kingdom.
2014	Seven ‘suspect packages’ sent to Army Recruitment offices in United Kingdom.
2014	Malaysia Flight MH17 shot down over Ukraine.
2014	Continued outbreak of Ebola disease in West Africa.
2014	Islamic State (IS) captures large parts of Northern Iraq and Southern Syria.
2015	Attacks on Charlie Hebdo and Jewish Supermarket Paris.
2015	NHS workers propose nationwide strike over pay.
2015	Possible Greek exit form the European Union.

# COBRA RES

COBRA RES offers a mirror up to the official COBRA as a way of producing different information, new perspectives and alternative narratives, while existing in a mimetic relationship to the emergency Committee itself and the situation it is responding to. COBRA RES aims to re-frame the response from an aesthetic perspective, while operating as an active-archive that follows, traces and maps the constantly changing tide of emergency politics.

COBRA RES is a collective of artists and writers who aim to ask critical questions of COBRA through a series of creative responses. Reflecting and mimicking the structure of the COBRA Committee, the artists, writers and filmmakers are chosen for their relevance to the given context of the COBRA meeting. The artists and writers are given nine days from the initial COBRA meeting in which to respond to either COBRA or the context it is meeting under. For the process to work, it is important that pressure is applied to the artists and writers to prevent too much consideration, with limited facts available, in an attempt to re-create a parallel response.

Since the start of the project in January 2013, COBRA and COBRA RES have met on the following occasions:

- COBRA 1.0      Our first response was an exhibition after COBRA had met when hostages had been held in the Tiguentourine gas plant in Algeria.
- COBRA 1.1      The second response was a book of artistic and written responses to the COBRA meeting following the killing of soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich, south London.
- COBRA 1.2      Responding to the situation in Nairobi shopping centre, secret postal responses were submitted to COBRA RES by a selection of artists. The work will not be viewed or opened until the final COBRA RES exhibition in 2018.
- COBRA 1.3      DVD of artist films with accompanying book of texts, which responded to the extensive flooding which hit large parts of the United Kingdom.

COBRA 1.4                      COBRA 1.5                      COBRA 1.6

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All three events happen within one week of each other prompting COBRA RES to combine all three responses into one set. Set of three card games and a booklet of text based responses to the shooting of Malaysia Flight MH17 in Ukraine, outbreak of Ebola in west Africa and the advance of ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

- COBRA 1.7      In response to the attacks on the Charlie Hebdo magazine and a Jewish supermarket in Paris, COBRA RES invited artists to submit art works to form an exhibition and publication.

COBRA RES will continue responding to the COBRA Committee over the next three years until 2018.

For more information visit: [www.cobra-res.info](http://www.cobra-res.info)

# COBRA 1.7

Theodore Price

The COBRA Committee convened on the 8th January 2015 chaired by the home secretary in response to the brutal and horrific attacks on civilians in Paris. The nature of the COBRA RES project is to let the COBRA Committee be curator, to respond to its selected events and to use its secretive ideals of 'non-public invitation' as a clear sign of a need for our participation. We do not select the events or the surrounding elements, COBRA devises that for us. The rush to form a response does not allow us the pleasures of a polished production but instead simply binds together new ideas and alternative perspectives.

With the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish supermarket the artistic response had already gone viral before COBRA RES could consider its response. Within hours of the attack cartoonists, artists, illustrators and others spontaneously began producing drawn responses to the killings of the cartoonists and their colleagues. This was a global artistic response to a political emergency event. Yet with the urgency for unity and reconciliation it is easy to lose the space for critical distance and reflection, COBRA 1.7 begins to open up that space.

The works gathered here are part of the tertiary response; arriving long after the initial response. This third wave has the privilege of not having to focus on the incident itself but can broaden out into a wider context. Like a forensics team arriving after the fire has been extinguished and the news crews have moved on, COBRA RES invites artists to sift through the visual debris and representational rubble, and begin to piece together new connections and historical narratives. This process has led to a continuous stream of conversations between each artist and COBRA RES, examining the event and its context within the fragmented replication of the COBRA Committee, each artist taking on the role of advisor, expert or senior minister.

Like a tongue-twister that makes us tongue-tied, the emergency image-event acts like a giant whirlpool, drawing the global gaze to its core. The global undercurrents of geopolitics having collided form a momentary maelstrom before flowing into new and repetitive configurations.

When the water calms and the surface film restore the specular reflection, what will rise to the surface? What will remain?

Will it be the first image that ruptured the news stream, the car parked in the street with its doors wide open? Or the image of the shooting of the policeman as he lay helplessly on the pavement? Or will it be the Charlie Hebdo front cover depicting Mohammed or the faces of X and Y? How do these images move up the hierarchy and become totemic visual symbols within the historical narrative? How does one image become the alpha image? Is it simply the news desk editor or is something else at work, some sort of visual meme or combination of both?

General history and public memory will not remember the victims' names, it will only remember the image. The frozen moment is what will resonate. The event could not happen without the image. Boko Haram massacred 1000 + people in Nigeria the day after the Paris attacks yet there were no live pictures of the event. Only days later when a satellite photograph could confirm the desolation of dwellings did the story briefly take hold on news channels.

The pictures of death are more valuable than the lives themselves. Photographs of previous violent emergency events, such as the Omagh bombing or the 7/7 attacks in London have defining after-images and taglines. The holiday snap of a man with a child on his shoulders seconds before the bomb explodes, or the image of the exploded London bus or the woman with a mask across her face. These images and titles are etched in our memory as snapshots of emergency events.

The COBRA Committee, and the media, frame the individual event in a national emergency narrative, but the event started long before the two gunmen entered the Charlie Hebdo building. But how far back did it start? In prison? Images of Abu Ghraib torture? The Iraq wars? French occupation of Algeria? And when will it end?

As the government rolls out its stock response in support of its own political agendas, with increased electronic surveillance and tighter immigration, so too we at COBRA RES revert back to the gallery space. We have previously used other formats; books, games and films, but with our last publication of reappropriated card games in December 2014, one month before this latest event, there was little time to re-group and re-assess. The gallery space and this newspaper becomes an improvised open-file entitled 'COBRA 1.7'. It documents and addresses a brief moment on the radar before it slips beneath another emergency episode. In this way the exhibition is an attempt to slow down the event, make the rupture remain visible on the surface for longer, with enough time to place a marker flag in the shifting sand before the next tide of emergency politics returns and washes away the old lines. It is only by plotting the course of these ruptures, building a constellation of the emergency events, that we can examine their ontology and begin to consider where it might be heading.

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Curated by Theodore Price

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# BIOGRAPHIES

## Paul Antick

Paul Antick's latest written and visual work has mainly used the phenomenon of dark tourism as a start point. His projects, including *Smith at Auschwitz: Research Product #5*, *itourist?*, *Bhopal to Bridgehampton*, and *Smith in Palestine*, have appeared as essays in books and journals, gallery pieces, including performances, and billboard posters sited in a variety of public spaces in the UK and continental Europe. His work has been supported by various galleries, including John Hansard Gallery (UK), Walter Philips Gallery (Can) and Galeria Ruzs (Pol). He is currently employed by University of Roehampton, London.

## David Birkin

David Birkin studied at Oxford University, the Slade School of Fine Art and the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program.

Birkin was an artist in residence at Yaddo and on the Art & Law Program in New York. He was the recipient of the 2010 Sovereign Art Prize (Barbican, London), the 2012 Celeste Prize for Photography (Museo Centrale Montemartini, Rome), a National Media Museum bursary and a graduate scholarship by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Past exhibitions include the Courtauld Institute, Photographers' Gallery, Saatchi Gallery, and Mosaic Rooms, London; Solyanaka State Gallery, Moscow; Tallinn Kunstihoone, Estonia; Dumbo Arts Center, Brooklyn, MoMA PS1 Rockaway Dome, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Forthcoming exhibitions include *Le Centre d'Art et Photographie de Lectoure*; *Copperfield Gallery*, London; *FotoFest*, Houston; and *MUDAM Museum of Modern Art*, Luxembourg. He is based between New York and London.

## Theodore Price

Theodore Price is an artist, writer and curator of COBRA RES. His recent books include *The Right to Be Forgotten* (Longhouse 2012), *COBRA 1.1* (ed. 2013 COBRA PRESS) and *COBRA 1.3* (ed. 2014 COBRA PRESS). He is currently working on a new film and book documenting a series of conversations on aesthetics and emergency politics (funded by A:N). Price is visiting lecturer at Goldsmiths University of London and The American University of Beirut, Lebanon. [www.theoprince.com](http://www.theoprince.com)

## Oliver Ressler

Oliver Ressler is an artist and filmmaker who produces installations, projects in the public space, and films on issues such as economics, democracy, global warming, forms of resistance and social alternatives. Over the years, he collaborated with the artists Zanny Begg (Sydney), Ines Doujak (Vienna), Martin Krenn (Vienna), Carlos Motta (New York), Gregory Sholette (New York), David Thorne (Los Angeles) and the political scientist Dario Azzellini (Caracas/Berlin).

## Nikita Kadan

Nikita Kadan works with painting, graphics, and installation, often in interdisciplinary collaboration with architects, sociologists and human rights activists. His practice is a critical investigation into the experience of present-day Ukrainians and their relationship to their Soviet past. He is a member of the artist group REP (Revolutionary Experimental Space) and founding member of Hudrada (Artistic Committee), a curatorial and activist collective.

Kadan's work has been exhibited internationally, including exhibitions at Kiev Biennale at Art Arsenal, CCA Ujazdowski Castle Warsaw, ZKM Karlsruhe, Pinakothek der Moderne Munich, Castello di Rivoli, 55 Biennale di Venezia, DAAD Galerie Berlin, and Saatchi Gallery. He was nominated for the PinchukArtCentre Prize in 2009 and won it in 2011.

## Stephen Forrest

After a short career as an Advertising Art Director I started a long career as a documentary and portrait photographer, photographing everything from riots, foreign wars to 'A list' celebrities for a variety of internationally respected publications such as the Guardian Weekend Magazine, The New York Times, Newsweek, Intelligent Life Magazine and Stern Magazine.

As well as editorial work, I have worked with International and UK Governments on long-term projects, as well as on my own personal projects.

As an artist, I am interested in exploring, through photography and film, the West's current political discourse and obsession with safety, control and humanitarianism in the form of domestic and foreign military interventions.

## Karen Mirza and Brad Butler

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler's work spans filmmaking, installation, drawing, publishing and curating. The artists draw influence from critical moments of change, protest and debate. This includes an accumulation of works entitled *The Museum of Non Participation* (2009-present). The term "non participation" for the duo is a device for questioning and challenging current conditions of political involvement and resistance. The Museum of Non Participation embeds its institutional critique in its very title, yet it releases itself from being an actual museum. Instead it travels as a place, a slogan, a banner, a performance, a newspaper, a film, an intervention, an occupation: situations that enable this museum to "act."

Recent exhibitions include *The Museum of Non Participation: The New Deal* at the Walker Art Centre (April - July 2013), *Gestures of Citation* at Performa 13 (2013) and *MIRRORCITY* at the Hayward Gallery (October - December 2014). The Museum of Non Participation was nominated for the 2014/15 Artes Mundi 6 Award for visual artists who engage with the human condition, social reality and lived experience. Their most recent film *The Unreliable Narrator* is installed at the Whitechapel Gallery from Jan 14th until 6th April 2015. Karen Mirza and Brad Butler are also the founders of the artist film and video space: *no.w.here*, now in its 10th year. [www.museumofnon-participation.org](http://www.museumofnon-participation.org), [www.no-w-here.org.uk](http://www.no-w-here.org.uk).

## Michael Sanders

Much of Michael Sanders' work is an attempt to understand and to reappropriate dubious military technology by gently subverting it and turning it back on itself.

Recent exhibitions of his work include: *Ruin - Investigations into Future Archaeology* (Kruglak Gallery, California 2008); *ColdWarmHotline* (BT Artbox Project displayed outside the MoD HQ on Victoria Embankment, London 2012); *A Focus For Memory* (The Collection and Usher Gallery, Lincoln, 2012); *Subversive Design* (Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, 2014). In 2012 he staged a pop-up exhibition to mark the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis at Casa Del Alba, Havana. He has made one radio programme - *Target Practice* for BBC Radio 4 - in collaboration with producer Katie Burningham.

Michael Sanders was winner of the CPFM 2011 Commission Prize.



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The Other 911

To Whom it may concern

Few will pause to reflect on the 911 of 1973. The images of the bombing of the Moneda Palace, the despair on the face of Salvador Allende shortly before his suicide, the defiant expression of Pinochet and the public burning of books that became the symbol of military brutality.

This coup was engineered by Richard Nixon, and the Pinochet regime remained in power for 16 years introducing repeated violation of human rights and the (neoliberal) economic policy of Milton Friedman. Allende's socialist nationalisations were reversed, privatisation was introduced with the elimination of tariff barriers, the banning of trade unions, and a massive influx of foreign capital. Unemployment reached 30% and 55% of the population fell below the poverty line.

During the airforce bombardment of the Presidential palace, Allende addressed the nation one final time:

"Workers of my country: I want to thank you for the loyalty that you always had, the confidence that you deposited in a man who was only an interpreter of great yearnings for justice, who gave his word that he would respect the Constitution and the law and did just that. At this decisive moment, the last moment when I can address you, I wish you to take advantage of the lesson:

Foreign capital, imperialism, created the climate in which the armed forces broke their tradition, victims of the same social sector who today are hoping, with foreign assistance, to reconquer the power to continue defending their profits and privileges. Because in our country fascism has been already present for many hours - in the face of the silence of those who had the obligation to act."

11 September 1973

*The Other 9/11.*

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The Museum of non Participation.  
Karen Mirza and Brad Butler.





caretaker

1.

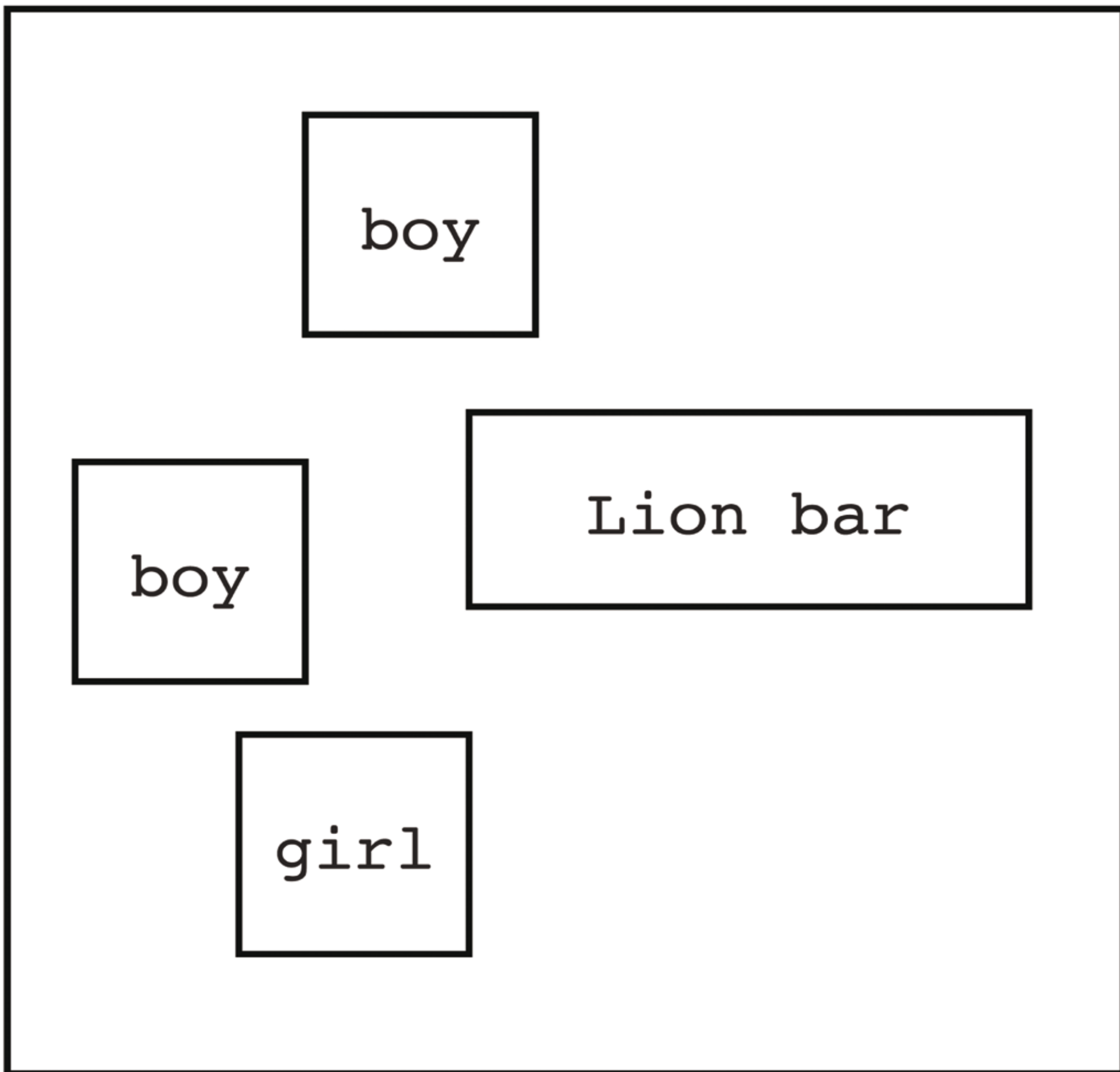
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grenade

nurse

nurse



I recently went to Europe and discovered some amazing things: 1. In order to provide the perfect cover, some jihadis, like the man in this photograph, seek employment as caretakers at former Nazi death camps like this one in Poland. One day very soon all of the caretakers will take off their uniforms and fly to the UK with Ryanair, where they'll meet other caretakers in pubs in Tottenham and talk about how to blow up buses. The man in this photograph is originally from Pakistan and spent several years learning how to rape white women at a jihadi training camp not far from the border with Afghanistan. 2. On the shores of Lake Wannsee in Berlin, I heard female jihadis disguised as nurses whispering about the possibility of staging suicide attacks in Dolphin Square in London. Apparently they want to bump any forthcoming stories about the sexual assault of children by British politicians and other very important people off the front pages of newspapers and other mainstream media outlets. When I told the two 'nurses' in this photograph that an outstanding story like that doesn't appear very often on the front pages of quality newspapers in Great Britain, or anywhere else for that matter, they thanked me, then immediately called their handlers in Switzerland. (Sorry, is this not making any sense?) 3. 3.1 million junior jihadis have recently congregated in rural areas across the continent and begun plotting the overthrow of Great Britain, including ATOS. In view of the British media's preoccupation with free speech - a preoccupation shared by most media platforms throughout the free world, the

explosive

woman



girl

glass

AK-47

cheeky little eight year old jihadi in this photograph told me that: I don't much like thinking about decapitating English kids the same age as me...Please, please mister, will you include what I just said in your important article? (I told them I was a journalist. It's the only way I can get people to talk to me). 4. I wrote this. 5. A top secret group of Japanese women wearing identical tops are planning to hijack articulated lorries in Calais and then force the drivers to take them to London where, all being well, they'll pray on the steps of the National Portrait Gallery in Trafalgar Square and then fuck and behead apostate pigeons, politicians and vulnerable Jewish children. The women in this photograph asked me not to tell anyone what they were planning to do, but in the interests of national security I decided to ignore them. 6. This little girl in Athens told me that: : في يكي في ني شافلا كانه لوقي ني توب ري مي دال فل طقف ... Which, according to Google Translate, means : Just because Vladimir Putin says there's fascists in Kiev doesn't mean there aren't fascists in Kiev. OK. 7. In Prague I was informed that security agents in Central and Eastern Europe have been warned to be on the lookout for a variety of suspicious architectural features. Strategically placed window frames are a sign that jihadis could be in residence. Telegraph poles and grass verges indicate possible subversive activity in the area. Cinder block maisonettes are above suspicion, but any property where the proportion of glass (see photograph) exceeds that of other building materials, including concrete, wood, brushed metal and so on, will be expropriated by the security services and auctioned off in Mayfair. 8. I wrote this.





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*We Have a Situation Here*

Oliver Ressler

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*Red Route*

Theodore Price

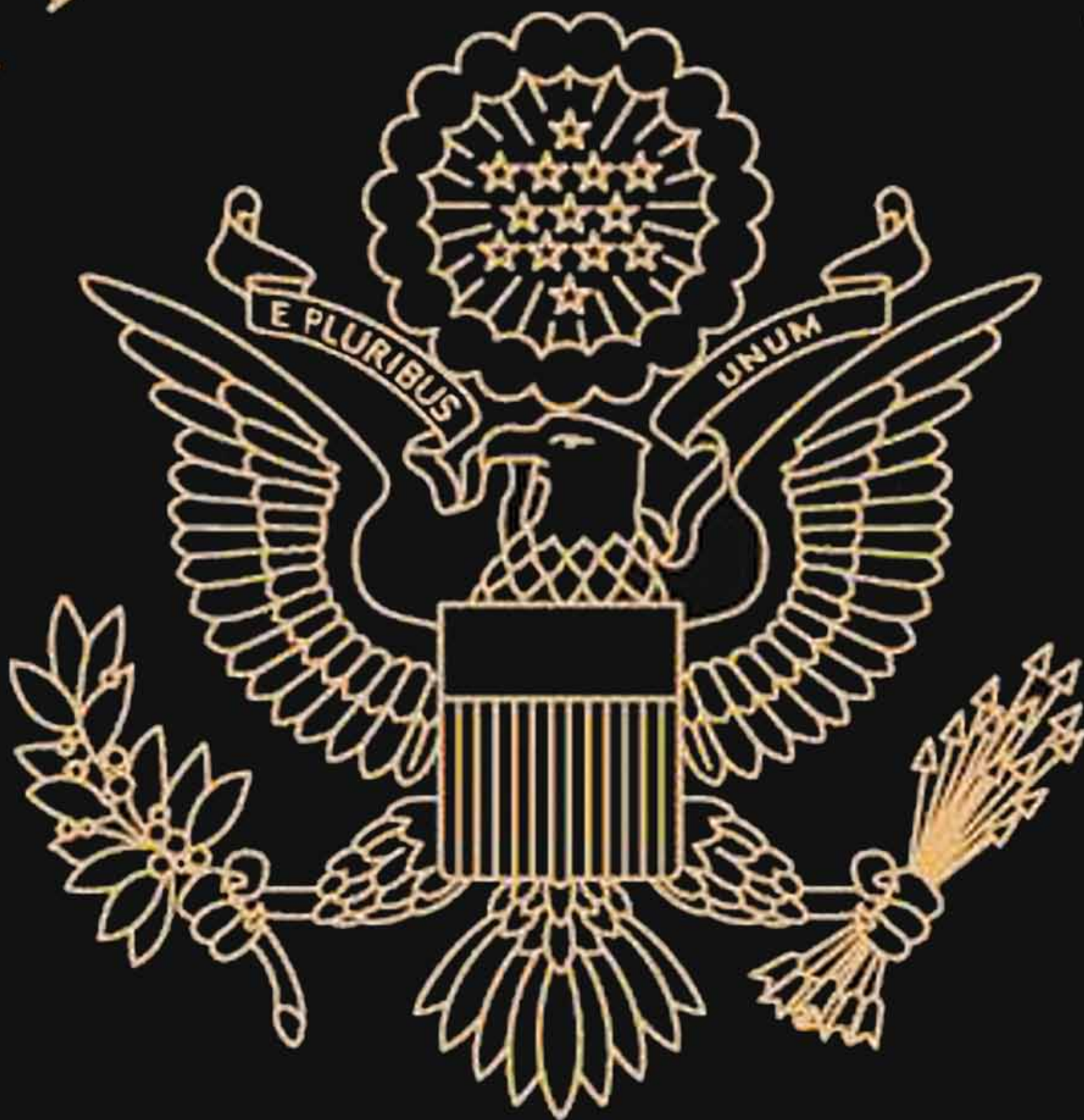
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UNITED STATES



SENATE

*E PLURIBUS UNUM,  
'Out of many, one.'*

David Birkin

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SEE THINGS FROM

THE BARANKE

THANK YOU

FEEL

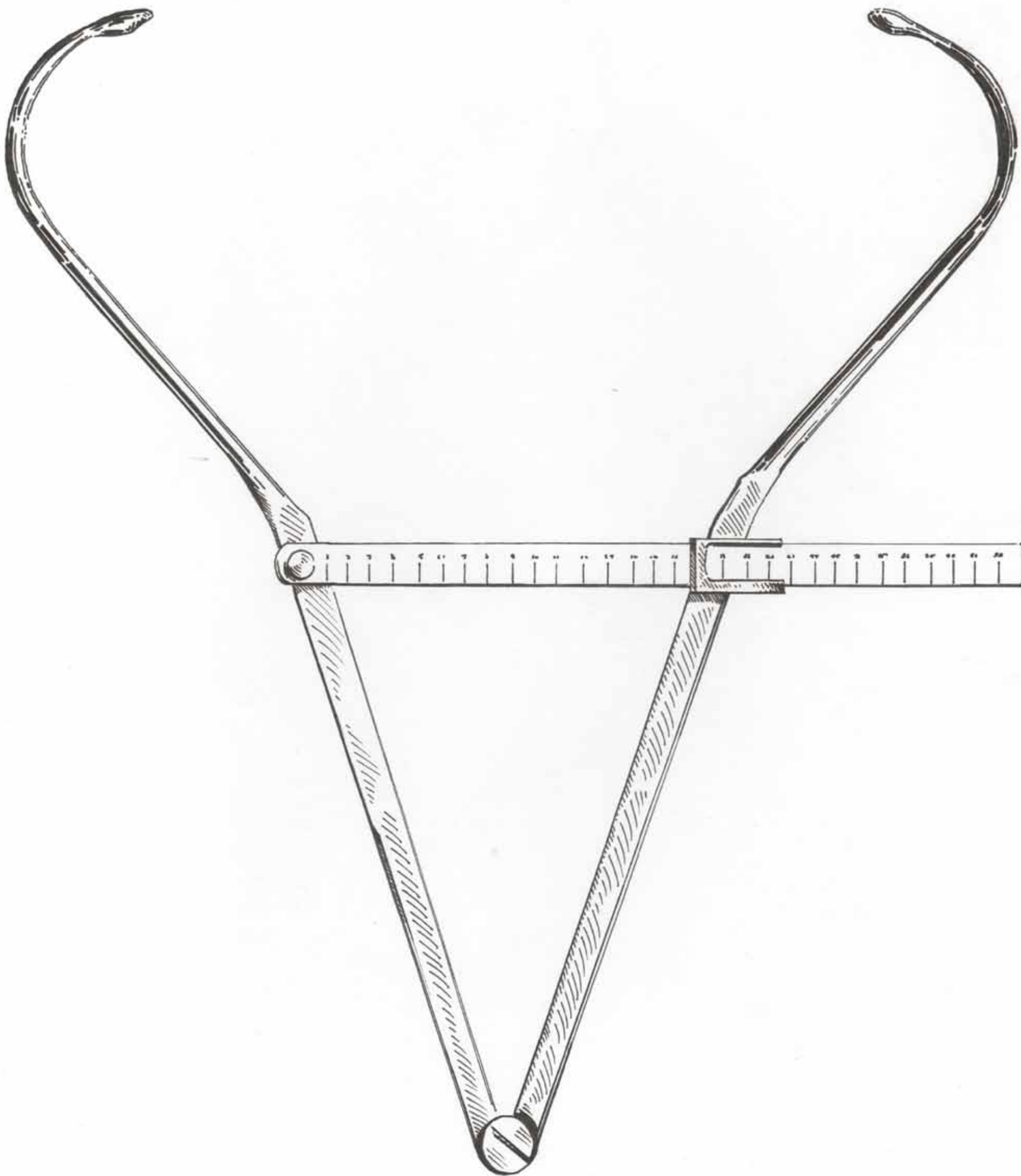


# DIFFERENT ANGLES

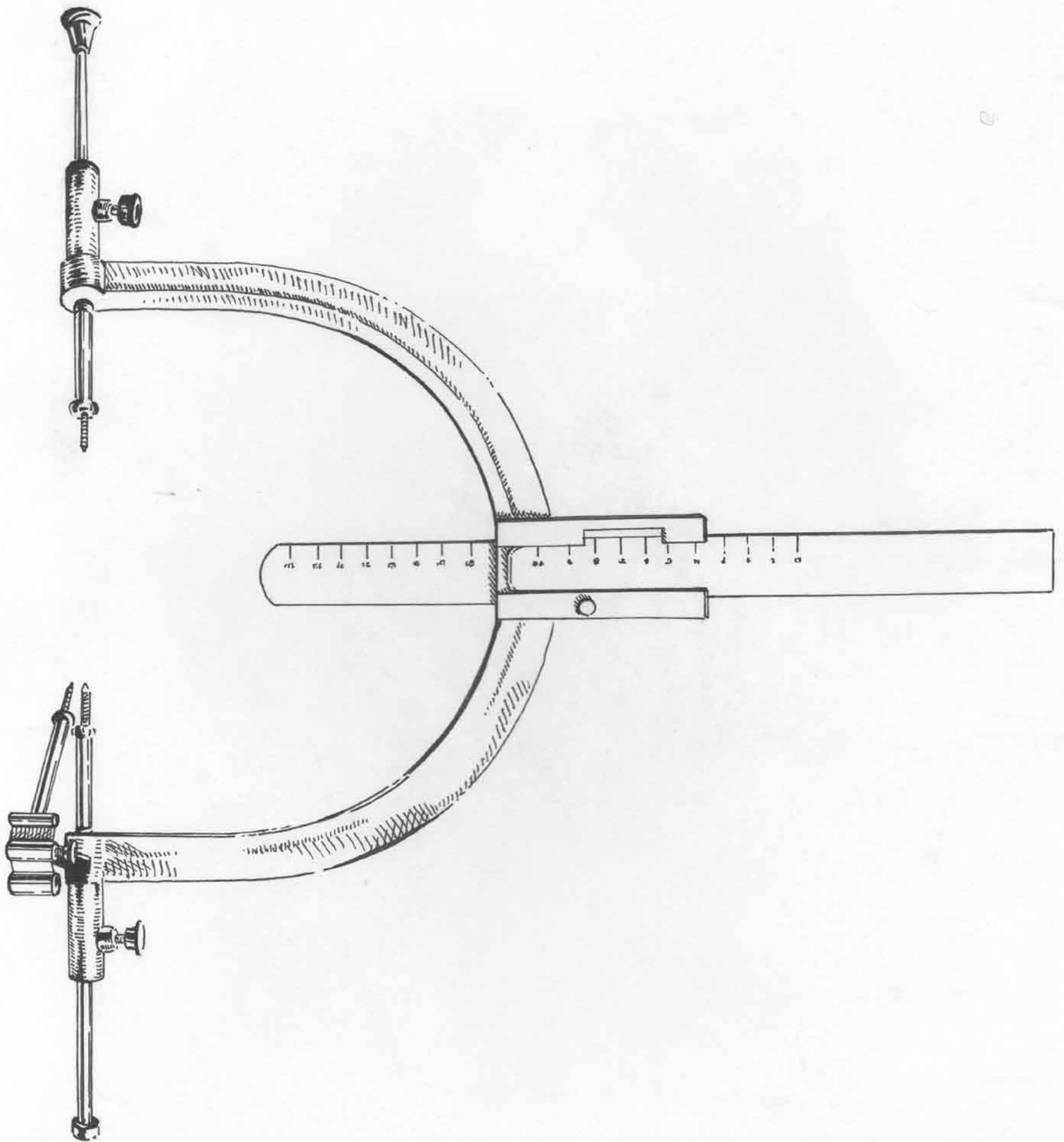
DO NOT  
SELF-CENSOR

*Reflections on Self-Expression in  
Difficult Times*

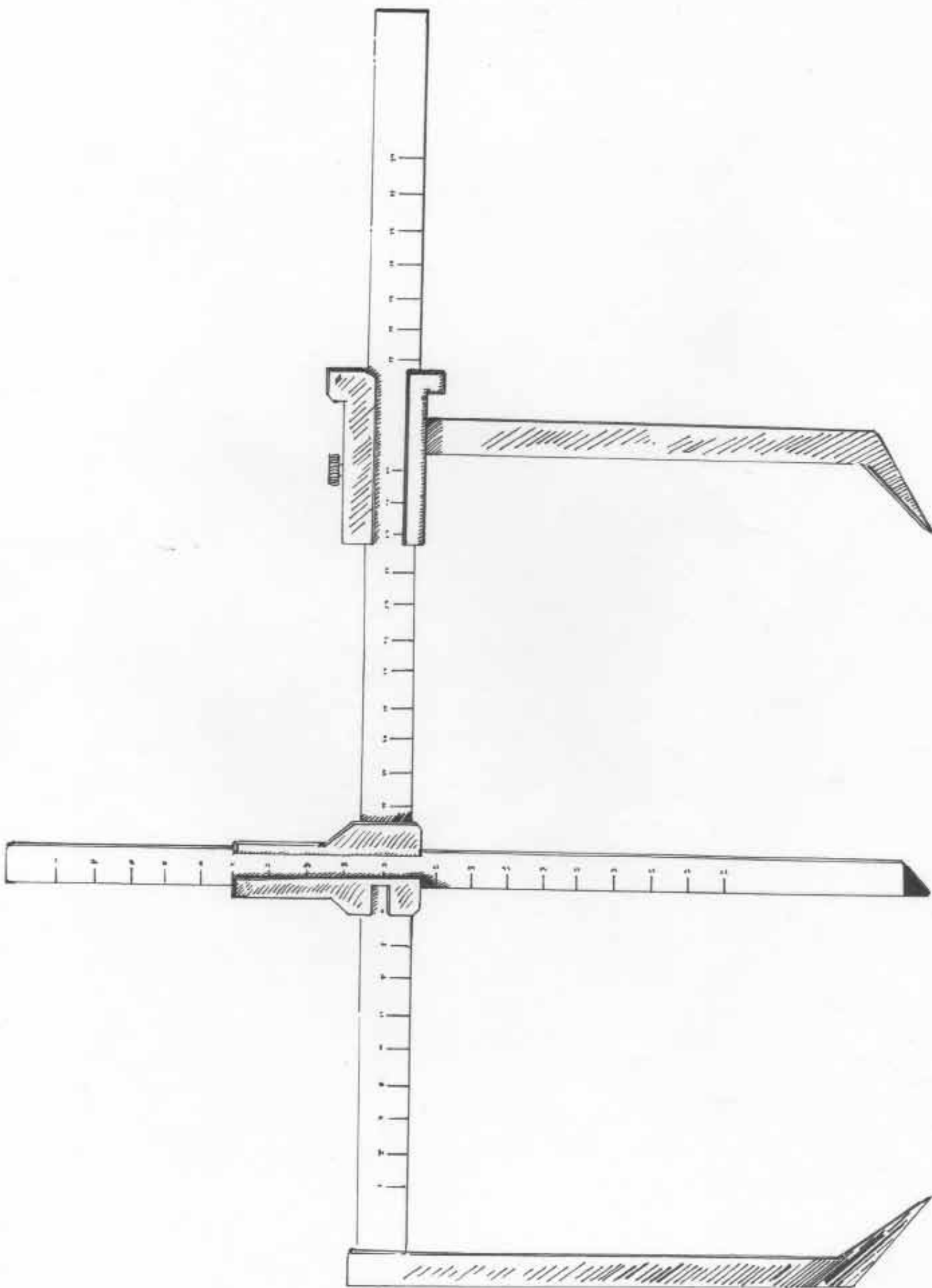
Michael Sanders



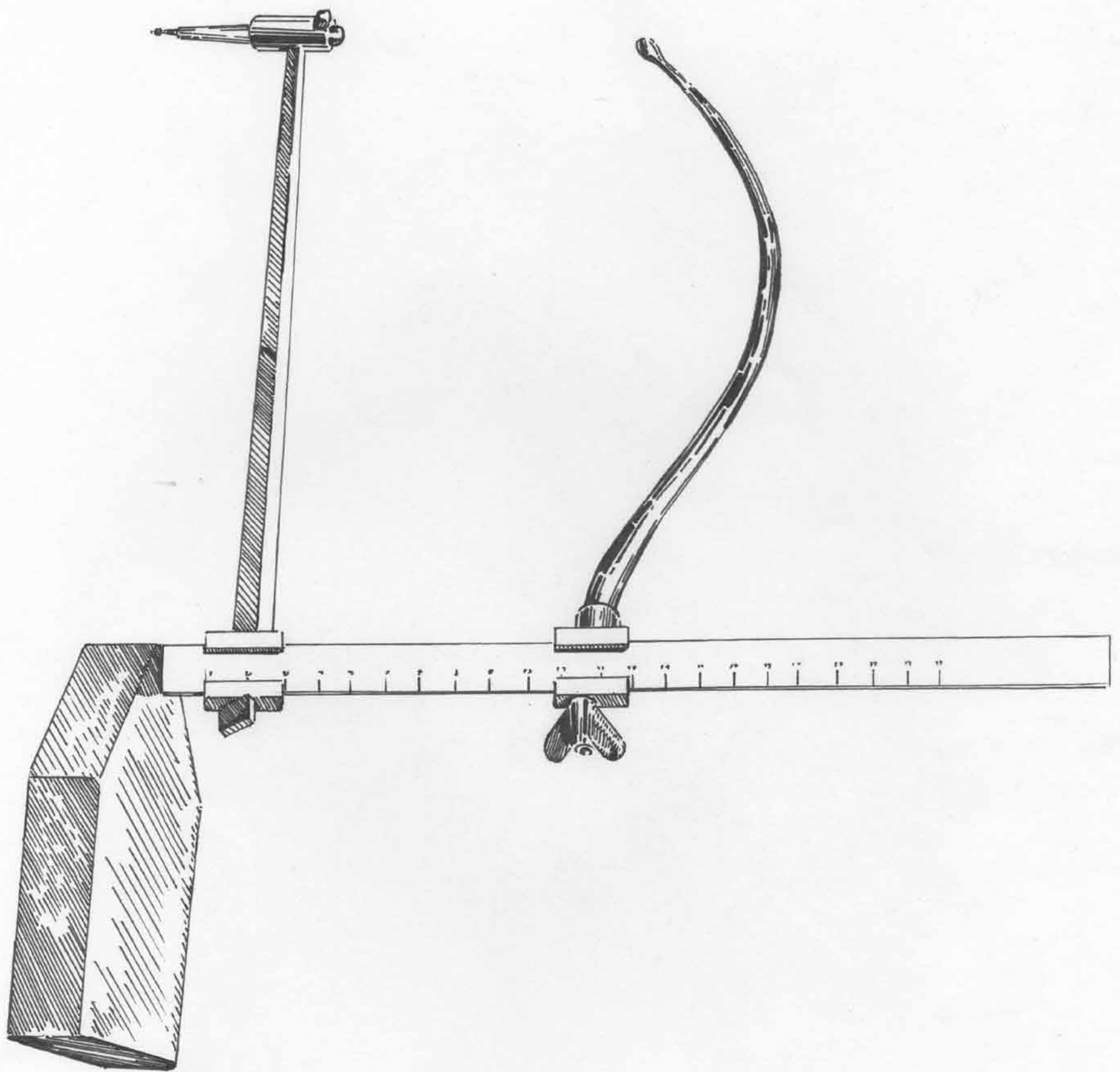
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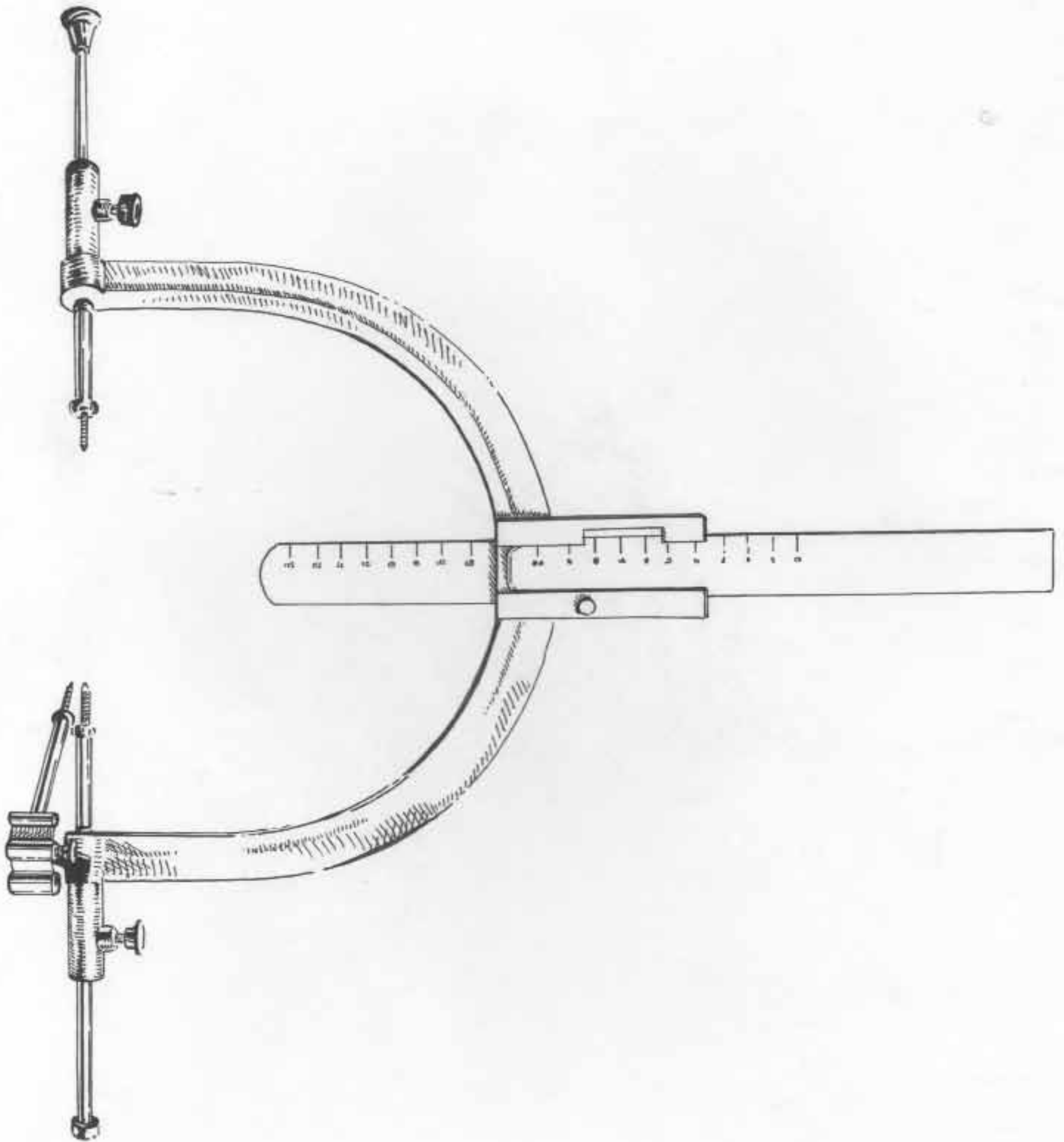
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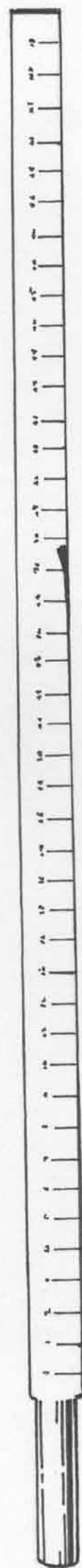
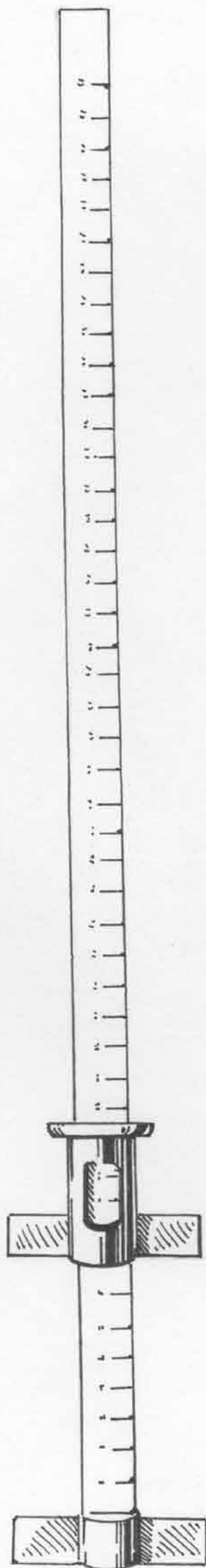
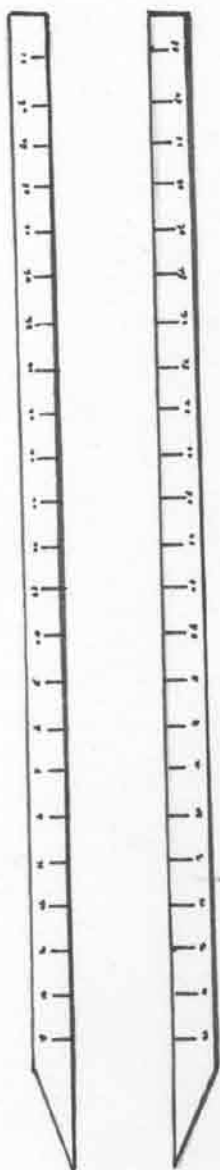
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Untitled

Nikita Kadan





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*North - Central - South*

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