

Cannibalism City

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Abstract

This visual essay, “Cannibalism City”, depicts an imaginary city under the attack of Covid-19 in different perspectives. Since January 2020, many cities have been locked down due to the pandemic. Overwhelming news on mass media had been building a thick wall and stuffily enclosing the city. Two significant ensuing policies, quarantine and social distancing, have a profound impact on social urban life and gradually expose the cannibal nature of the city under the painted skin of virtue and morality. The essence of *Cannibalism* in this city lies beyond this pandemic, composed of even more complicated social issues, including egotism, racial discrimination, class conflict, political disputes, etc.

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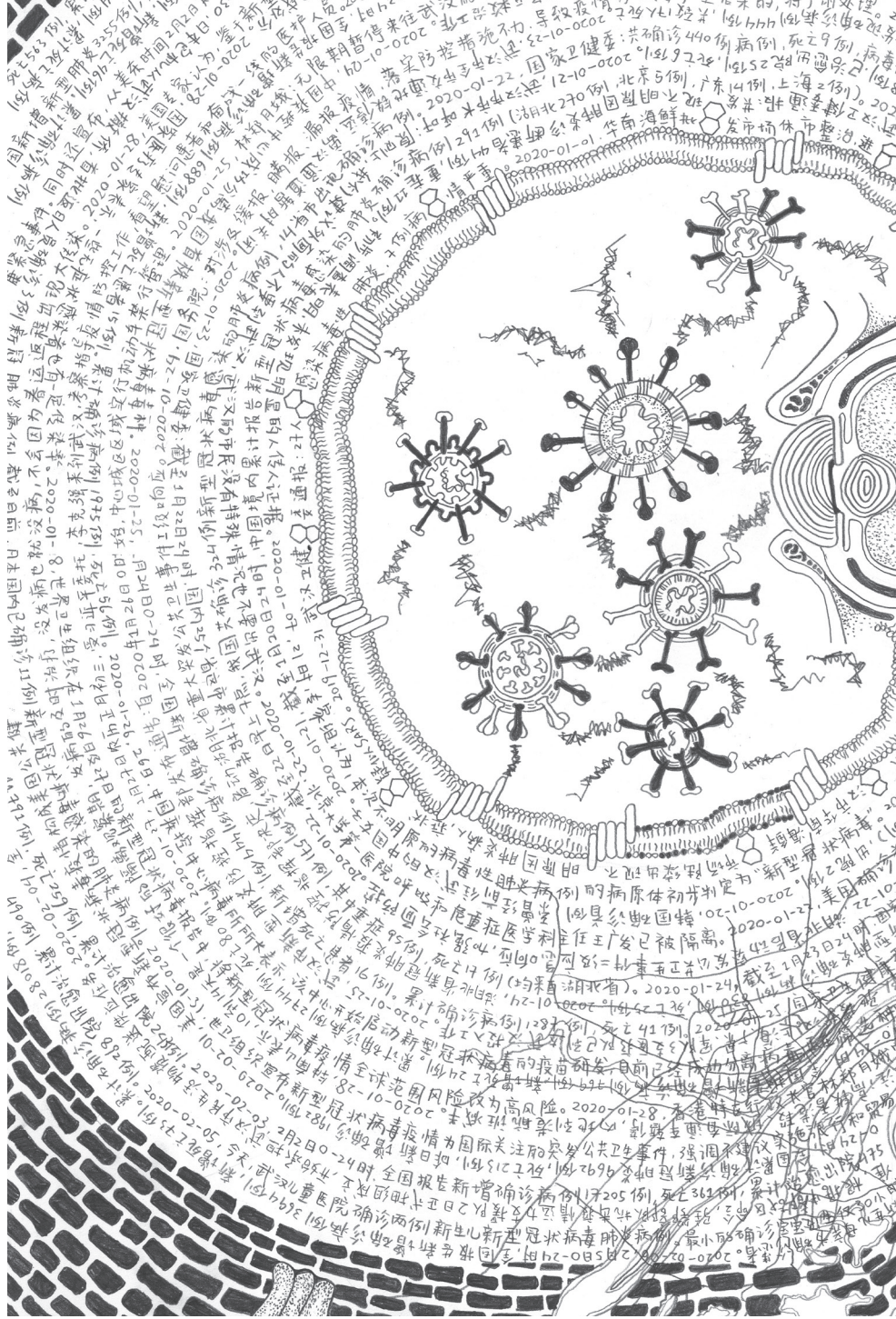
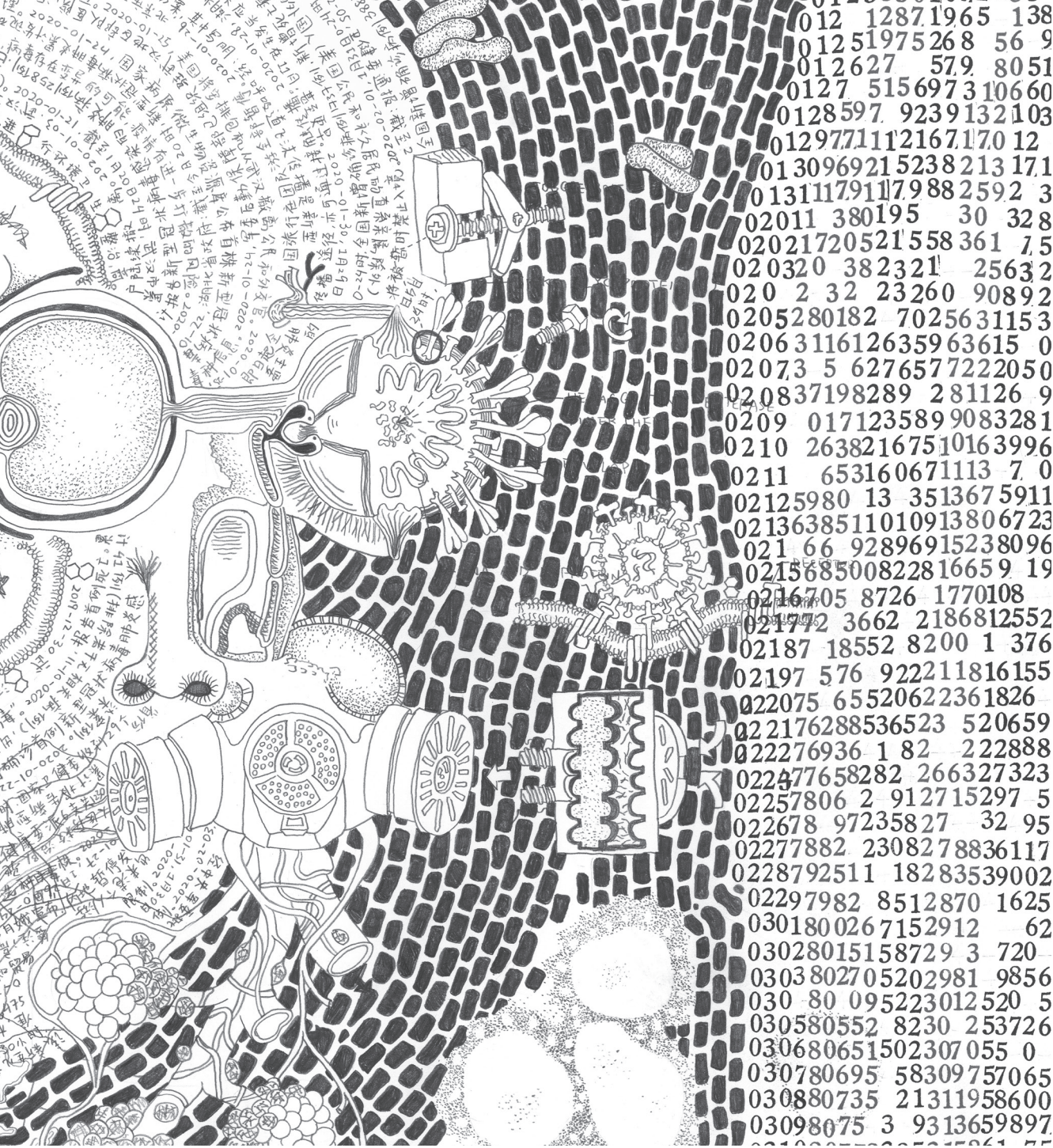


Fig. 1 - Media Fortress. The text in Chinese around the wall is a collection of daily Covid-19 news from 30 December 2019 to 6 February 2020 on Chinese mass media. For example, the transportation network leaving Wuhan was closed on 23 January 2020. The numbers on the right are daily Covid-19 data of total cases, suspended cases, deaths and recovered cases from 21 January 2020 to 14 March 2020 published by Chinese government.

Media Fortress

On 23 January 2020, the city of Wuhan was locked down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Overwhelming daily news on mass media had been stuffily enclosing the city. People are struggling to breathe. Facing the



daily death toll, we become insensitive and seem to have long forgotten that each number represents a fresh life. The media had been building a thick wall, suffocating the city, as well as alienating our hearts.

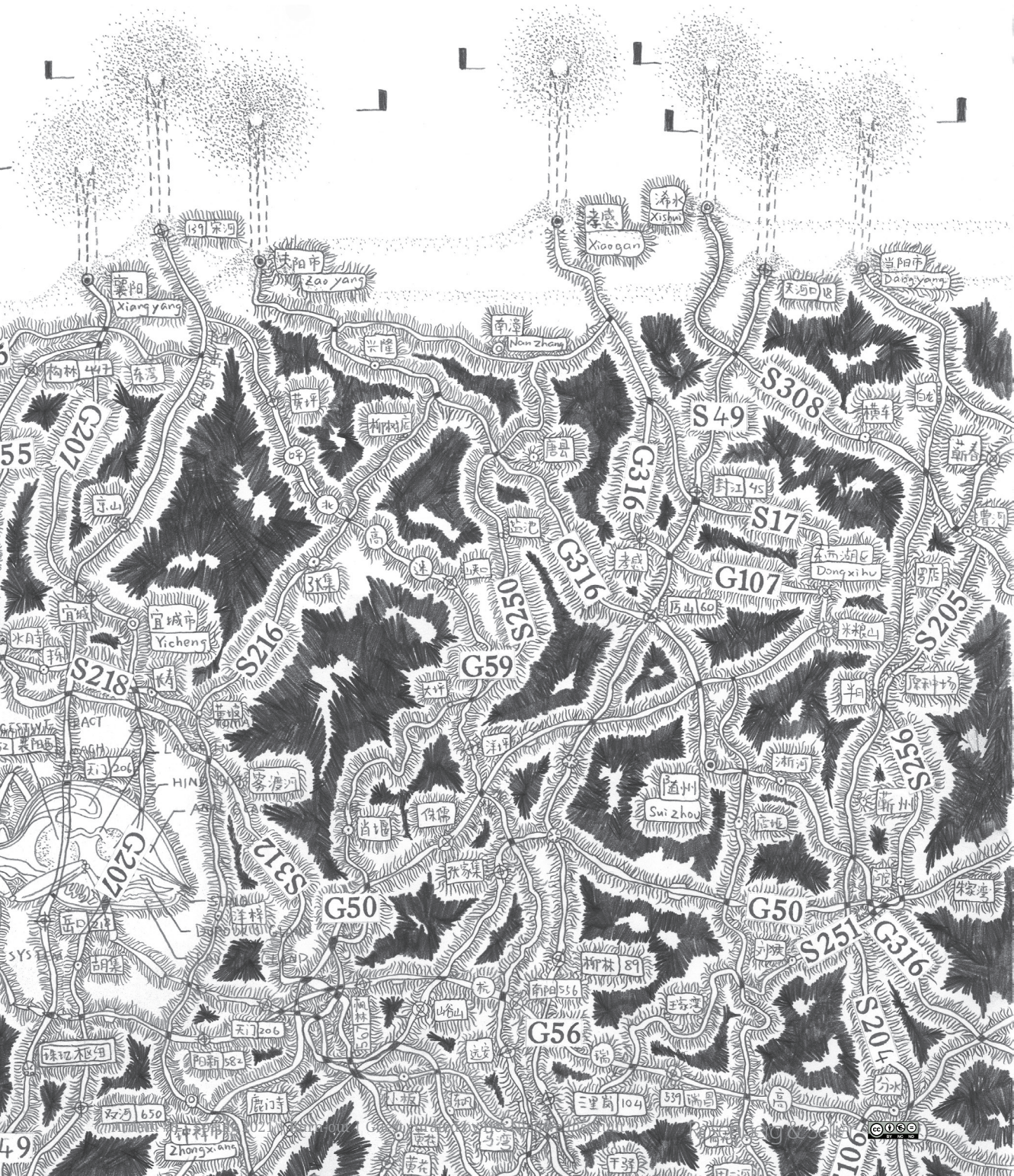
Ant Colony

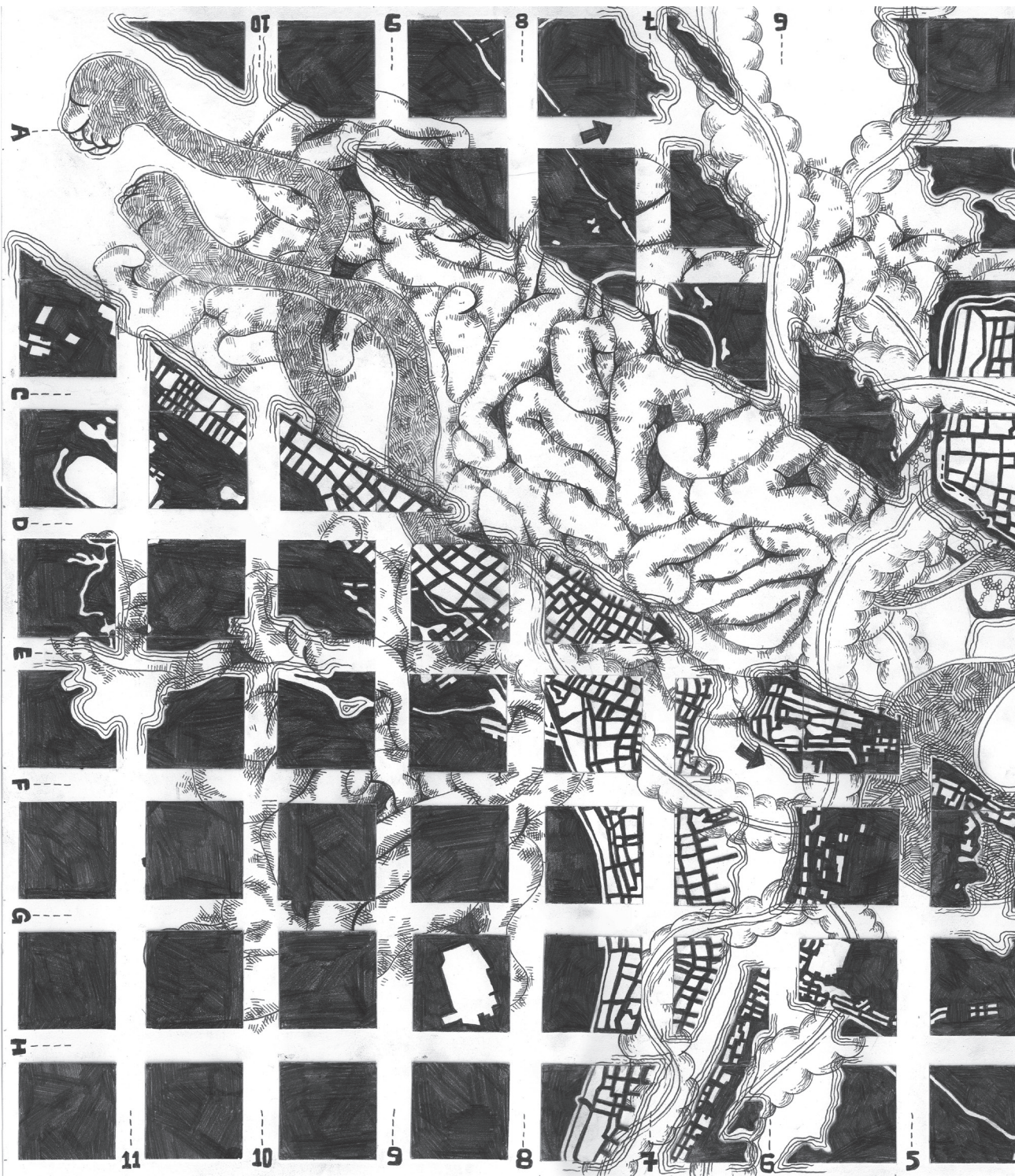
This disastrous pandemic turned the city into an ant colony, where everything looks well organized above the ground. Underneath, however, it is as intricate and chaotic. People are asked to quarantine themselves



at home. We are controlled by the queen ant, moving only in the narrow tunnels. We are waiting, waiting for an opportunity to crawl up, and soon forget the mess.

Fig. 2 - Ant Colony. The ant colony is composed of the highway system in Hubei, China.





Social Intestine

The city is shattered by social distancing, where the fragments stare at each other with no interaction or communication. It reveals the dirty

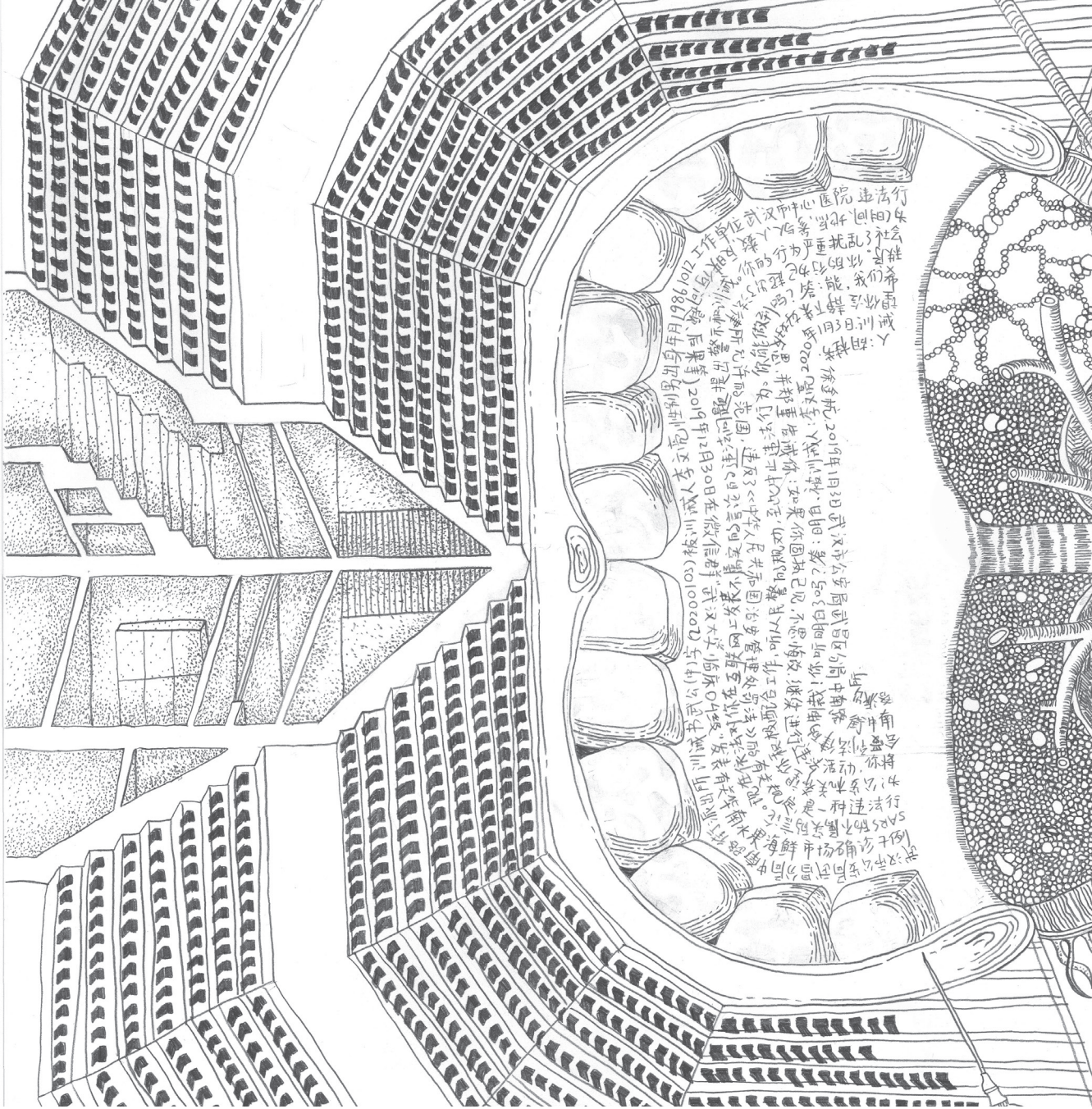
Fig. 3 - Social Intestine.



intestine through the six-foot gap, full of egotism, racial discrimination, class conflict, political disputes, etc. A painted skin has been torn apart and the essence of *Cannibalism* in this city is exposed.

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Cannibalism City

Cannibalism City, it reminds me of a paragraph in *A Madman's Diary* by Lu Xun:

In ancient times, as I recollect, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history has no chronology, and scrawled all over each page are the words: "Virtue and Morality." Since I could not sleep anyway, I read intently half the night, until I began to see words between the lines, the whole book being filled with the two words, "Eat People." (Lu, 1960)

Fig. 4 - Cannibalism City. The text in the middle is about Dr. Li Wenliang, one of the Covid-19 whistleblowers, who died from the disease on 7 February 2020 at age of 33.



Who is eating? Is it the city? Who is in that city? Is it us? We are spectators standing in the Colosseum, watching the city open its giant bloody mouth and eat people, applauding, eventually falling into the mouth. "Perhaps there are still children who have not eaten men? Save the children..." (Lu, 1960).

Reference

Lu, X. (1960), *Selected stories of Lu Hsun*, Beijing, Foreign Language Press.