

street demonstration

a visual investigation into a flagship activity of the demonstration society

Claude Rosental & Eugénie Zuccarelli – October 20, 2025

• *ethnography* • *visual sociology* • *public demonstration* • *media event* • *witness* • *representativeness* • *animation* • *public order*

Demonstrations of strength at large street protests, Steve Jobs's highly publicized presentations of new Apple products, and evidence of the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq presented to the UN: public demonstrations are multifaceted, and their social, economic, and political implications are considerable. Their prevalence means we live in a demonstration society (Rosental 2021), which this essay explores visually, focusing on one of its flagship activities: street demonstrations.

The analysis is based on an ethno-photographic study of the "Sciences en marche" (Scientists on the march) demonstration, which took place in Paris on October 17, 2014, and whose main stated objective was to obtain more funding for public research. This is a common type of demonstration in France: a peaceful gathering, the result of cooperation between organizers and the police, combining a sense of humor, semi-festive activities, and dramatic messages to elicit sympathy and compassion. This type of rally requires significant material and organizational infrastructure, in addition to well-honed expertise (Champagne 1984, Fillieule and Jobard 1998, Traïni 2010).

Journalists generally focus more on the content of the demands and the emotional and impassioned outpourings than on the pragmatic aspects when reporting on street demonstrations. These are the dimensions that this essay seeks to highlight using photographs and the *zoom.able* format. "Zooming" is used here in a figurative sense. For example, we don't aim to make the details of the protesters' clothing visible. Rather, we try to gradually reveal certain practices and features of the material and organizational infrastructure of the demonstration by using three successive layers. The transparency of the photos when zoomed in highlights how the various dimensions overlap.

The first layer shows that the demonstration basically consists of a route (represented in a simplified manner to emphasize its generic nature) and an endeavor to produce witnesses. Indeed, it is important to the organizers that, in the first instance, at least some of

the journalists report on the demands in a favorable light and secondarily that passersby and local residents are challenged by the protest actions. The cortege's onlookers invite us to "zoom in" on what they are observing, and so become immersed as well.

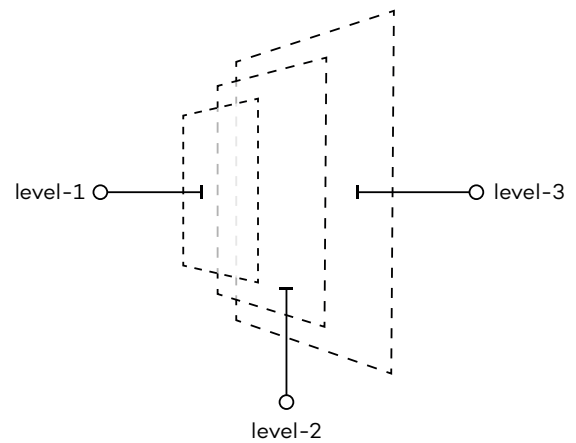
This brings us to the second layer, which specifies what the event allows witnesses to see and hear. Three phenomena are brought to light. First, the demonstration is a media event—the photographs highlight the work of journalists and the information they gather. It also aims to show the representativeness of the people it brings together, by displaying both masses of indistinguishable bodies and a multiplicity of subgroups using various visual devices: costumes (such as white lab coats, academic garb), objects (for example, microscopes), and banners identifying the institutions represented by the protesters. Lastly, various activities are organized for the media (e.g., songs, dances, slogans, speeches, sit-ins) using a variety of visual and audio tools (including megaphones, speakers, whistles, balloons, flags, and signs).

Zooming in more, we arrive at the third layer, which sheds light on another fundamental dimension of the demonstration. It relies on maintaining public order thanks to coordinated actions by the police and security services (e.g., traffic management at intersections, maintaining a traffic lane, actions at the front of the cortege to enable its progression, keeping marchers at a distance from government buildings). These activities and the use of various devices (such as walkie-talkies, vehicles, and armbands) determine the event's spatial and temporal structure.

This contribution was published on www.able-journal.org in zoom.able format:

www.able-journal.org/en/street-demonstration

The user can zoom in or out of the content by scrolling, and pan the image in any direction. By zooming in, successive layers appear.



credits

text and photographs: Claude Rosental

graphic design: Eugénie Zuccarelli

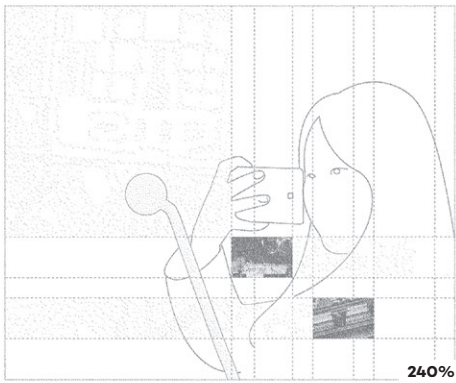
translation: Monique Gross

copy editing: Bronwyn Mahoney

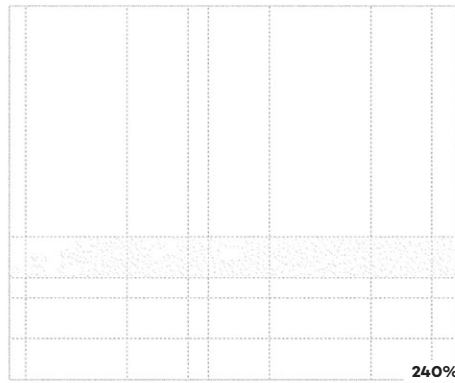
about the authors

Claude Rosental (PhD) is a sociologist and research professor at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and a member of the Centre d'Étude des Mouvements Sociaux (CNRS-EHESS-INSERM). His work focuses in particular on the sociology of logic, technologies, and public demonstrations (including public proofs, demos, and protests).

Eugénie Zuccarelli is a designer. She uses her practice to explore the visual and theoretical aspects of the imaginary and material nature of images, particularly focusing on landscape as a tool for sensitive, site-specific investigation and as a tool for creation.



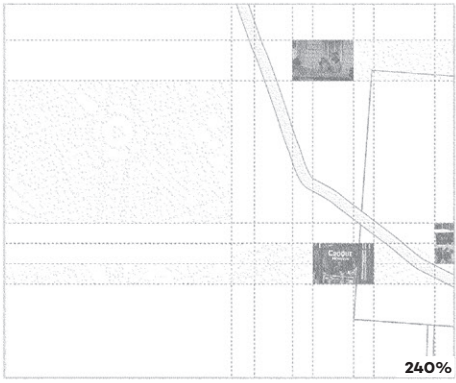
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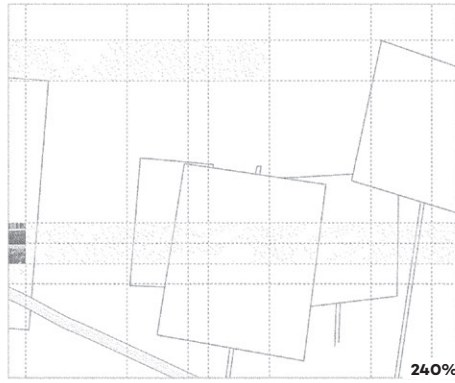
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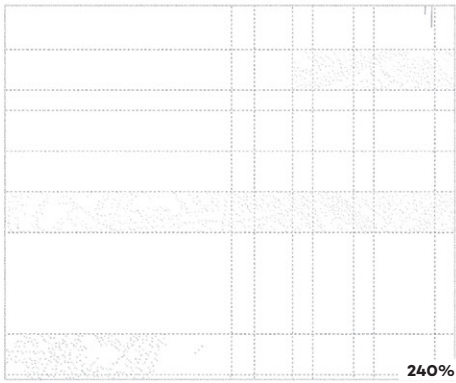
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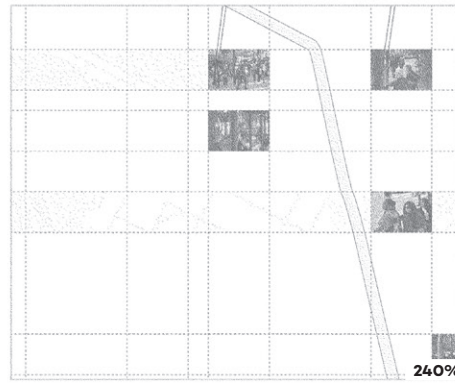
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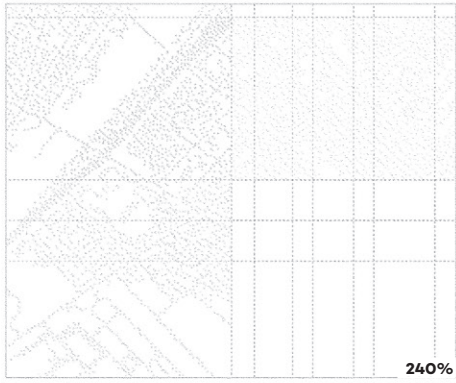
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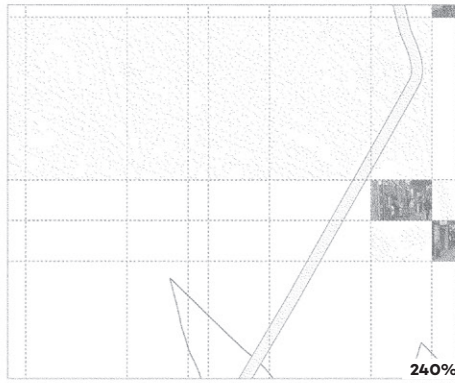
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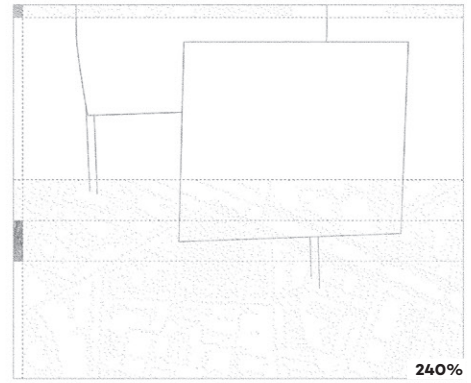
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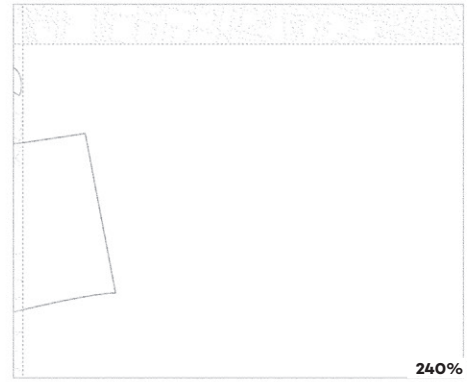
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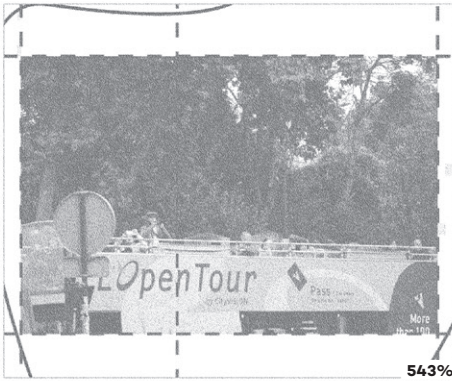
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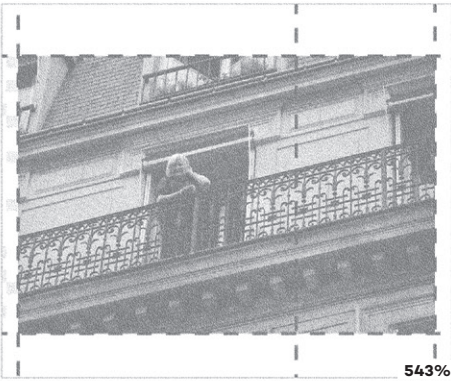
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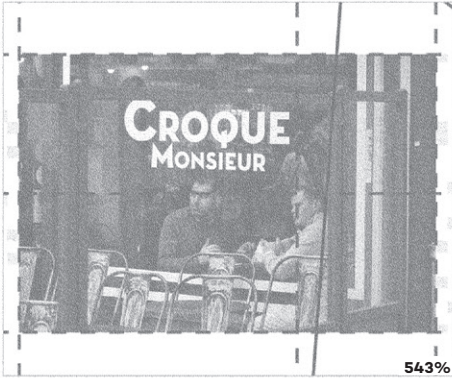
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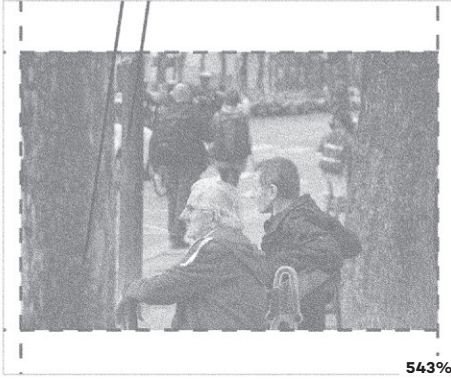
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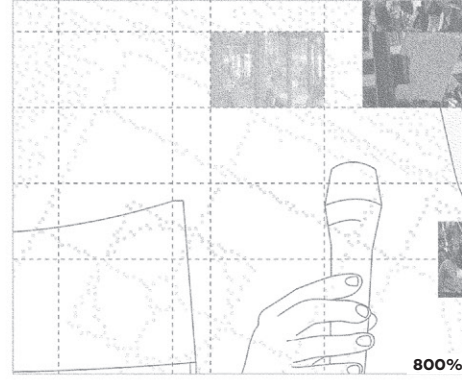
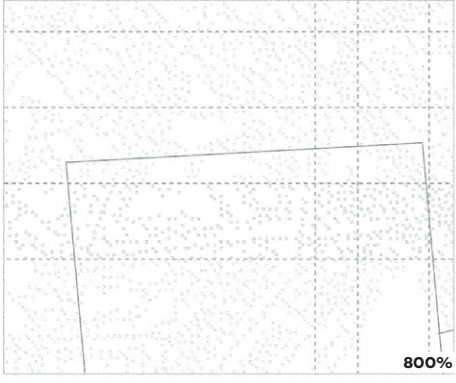
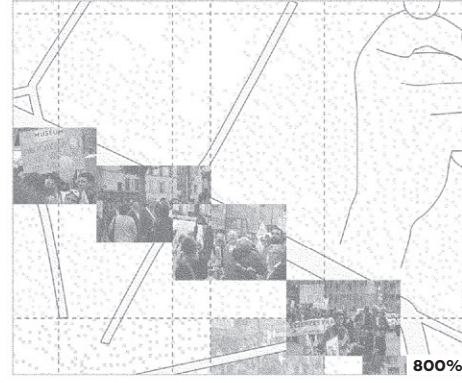
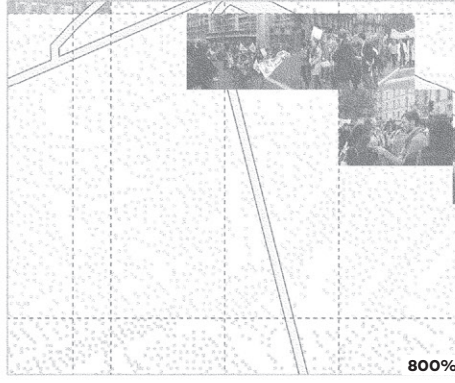
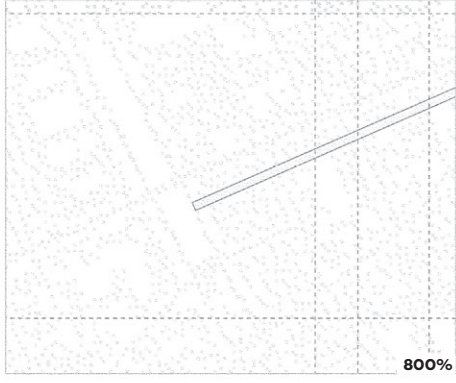
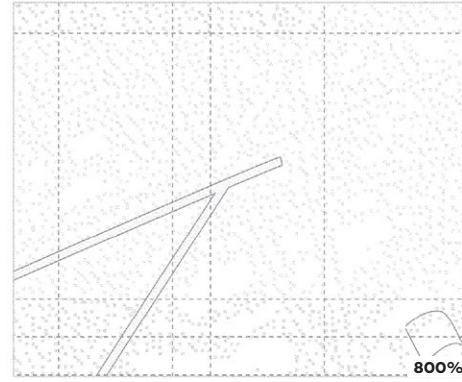
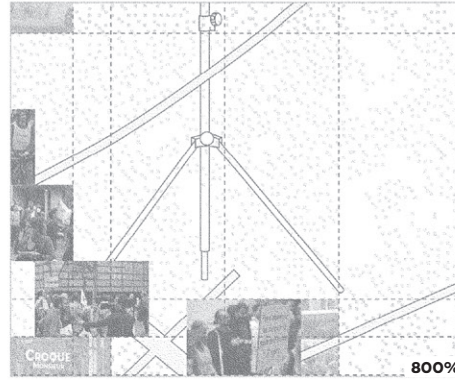
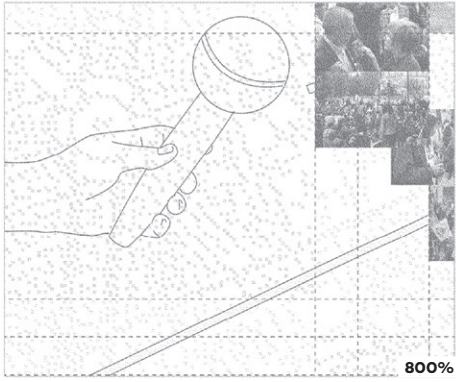
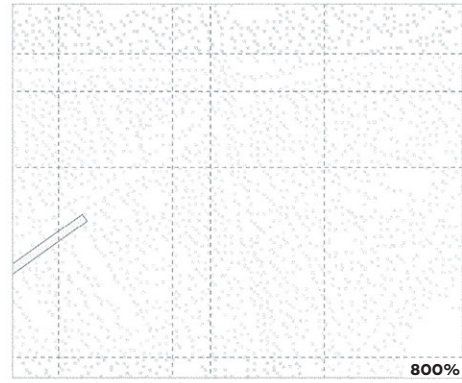
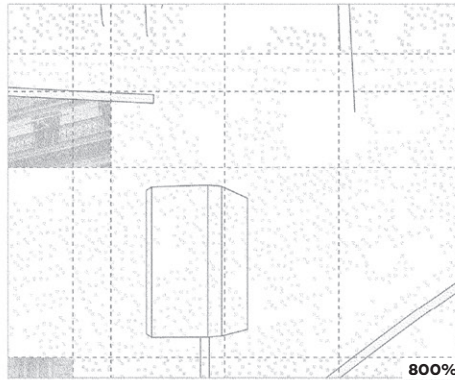
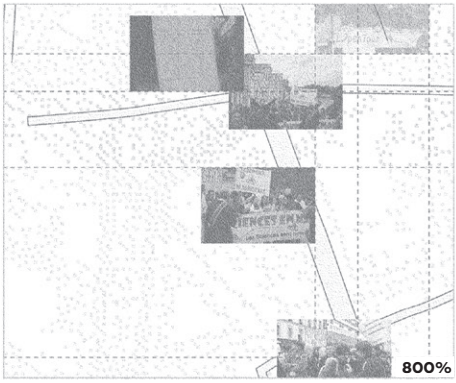
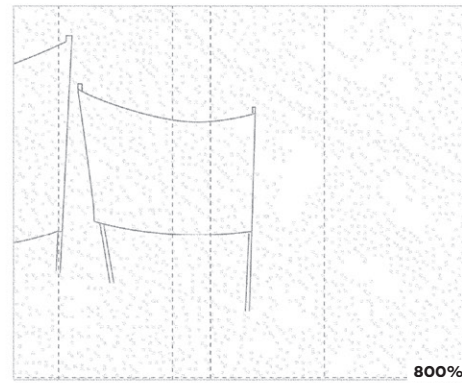
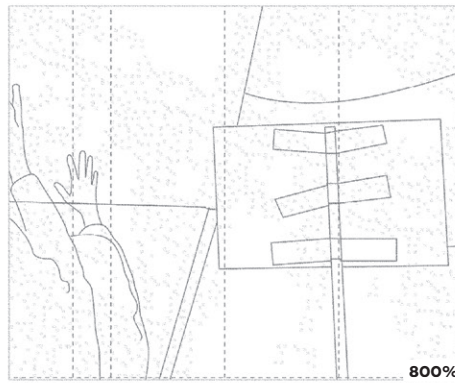
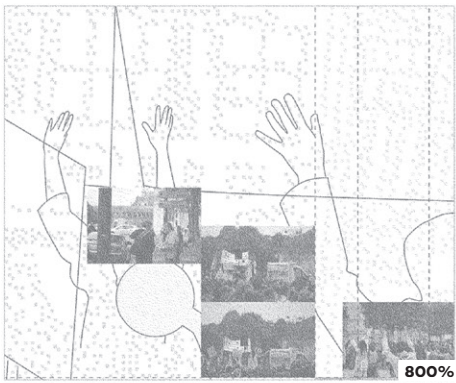
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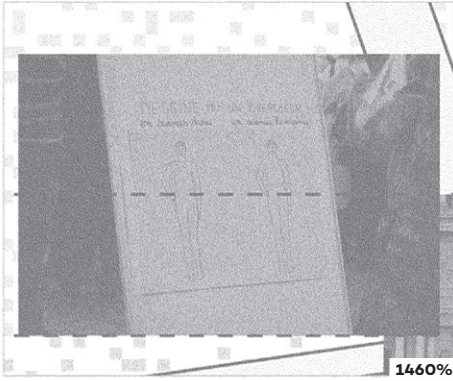
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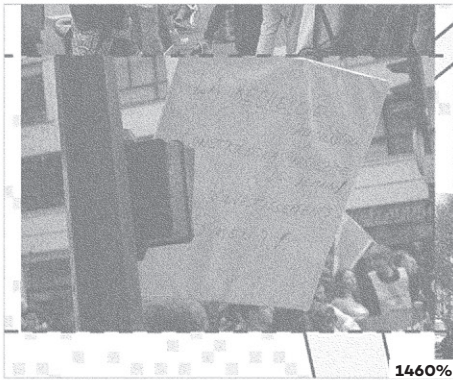
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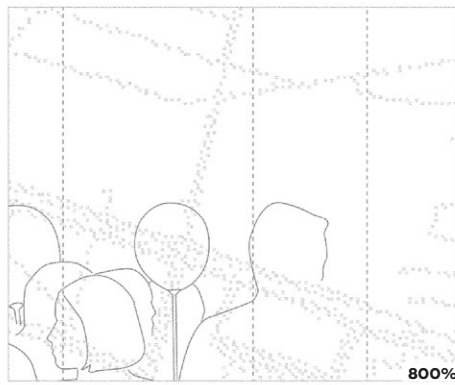
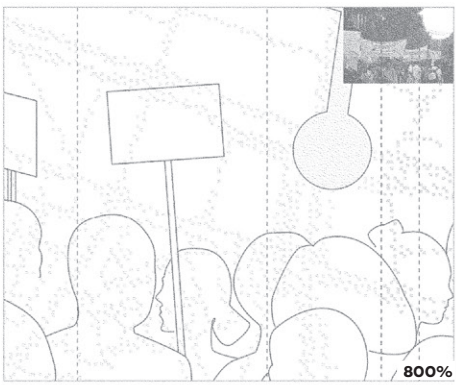
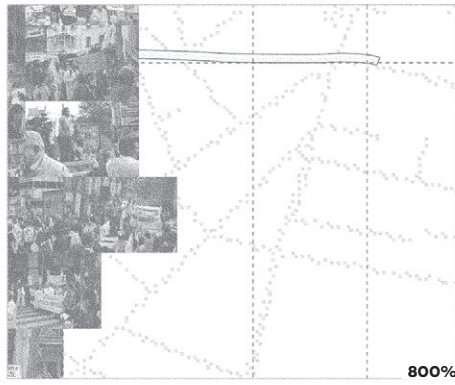
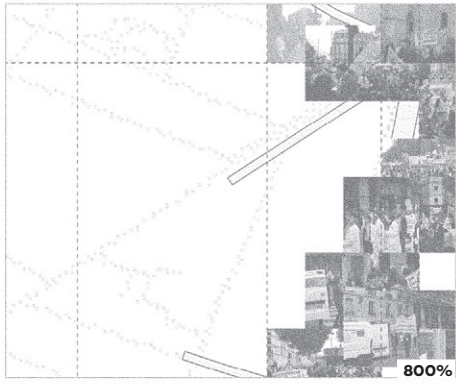
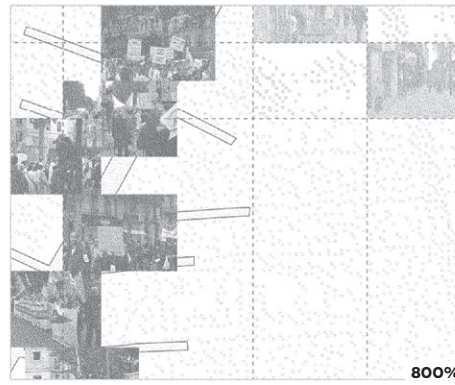
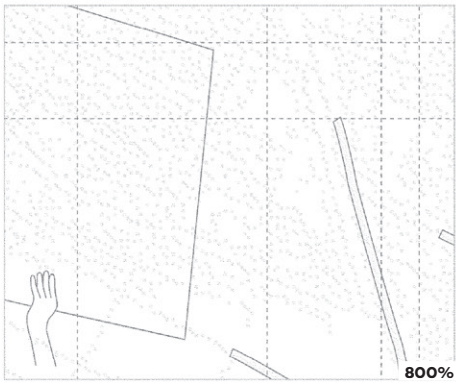
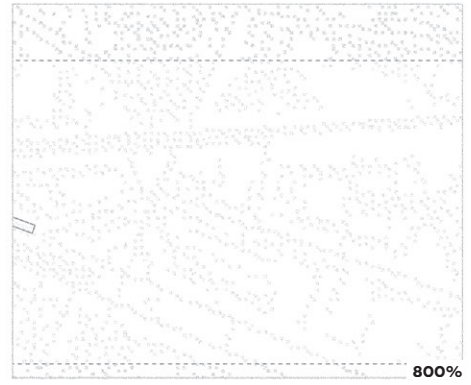
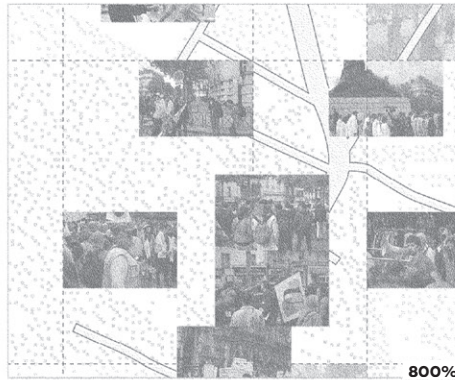
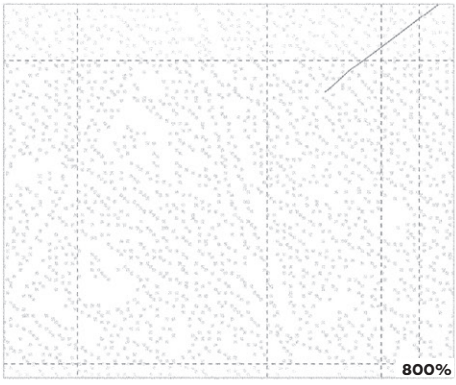
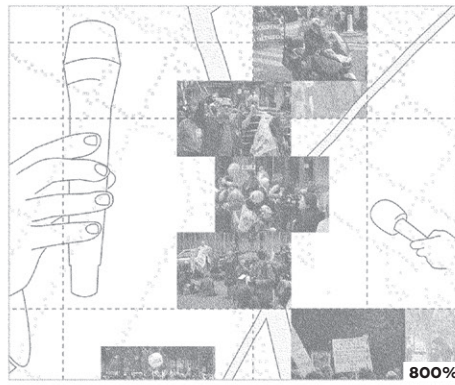
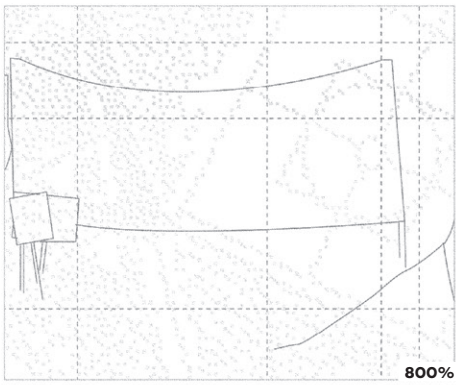
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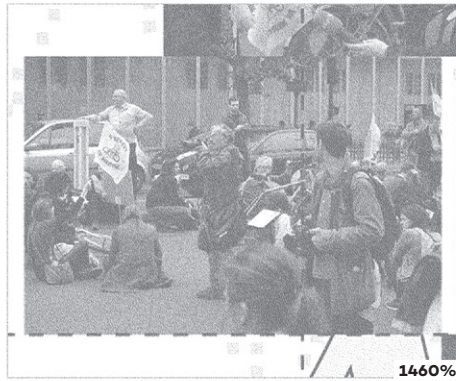




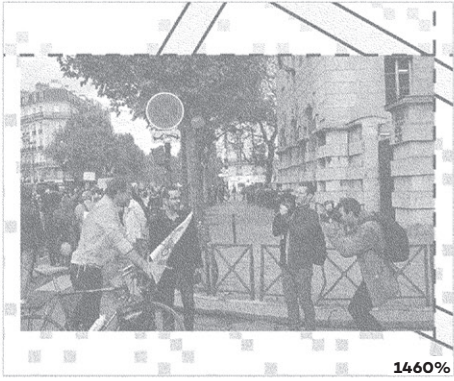
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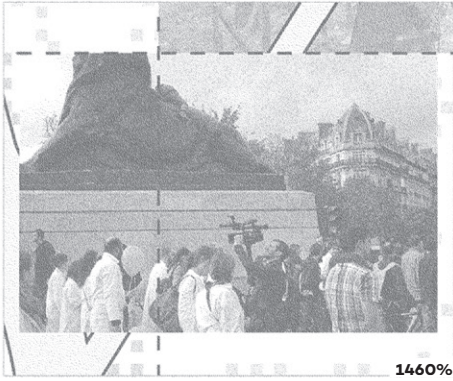
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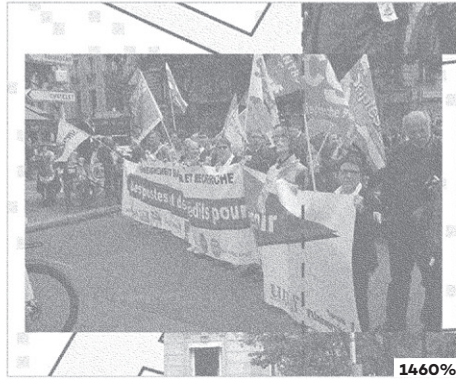
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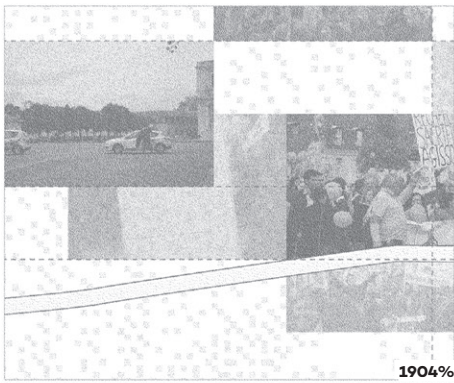
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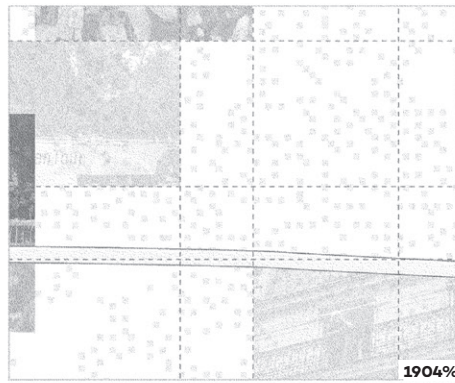
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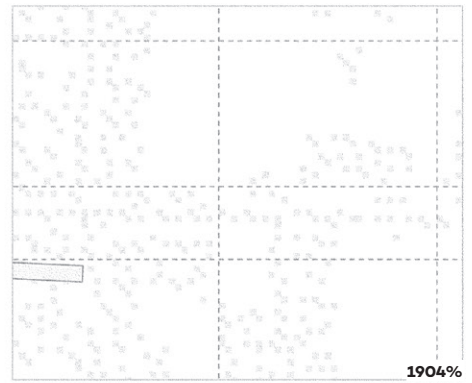
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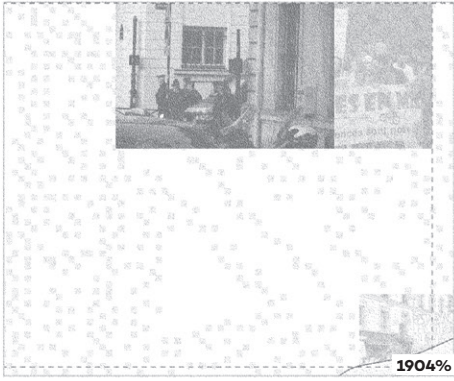
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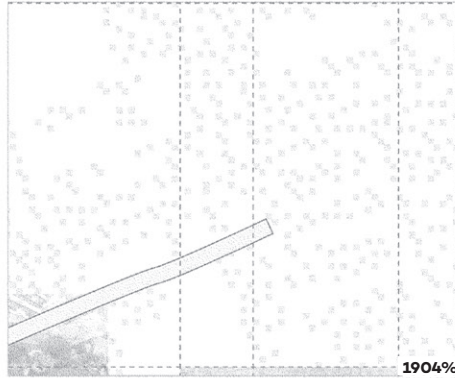
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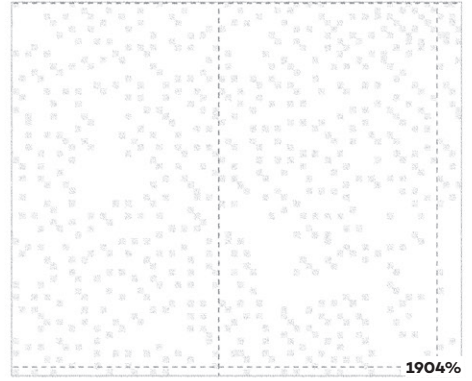
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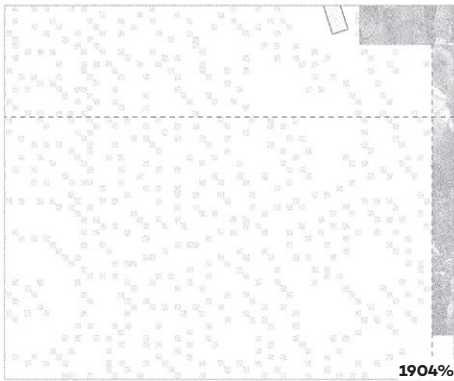
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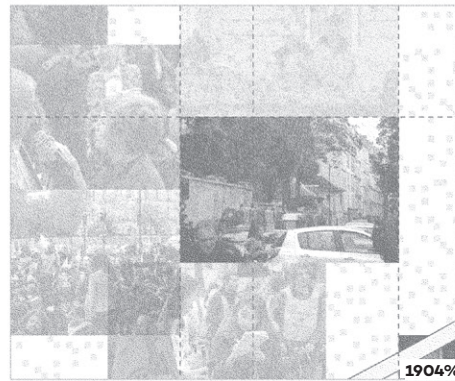
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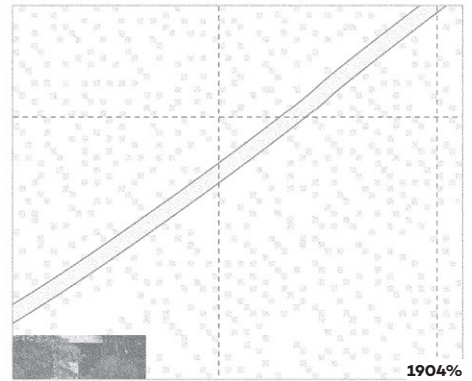
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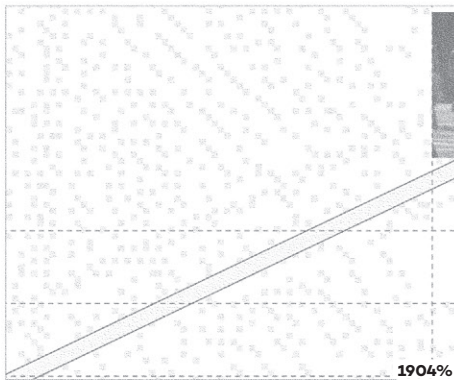
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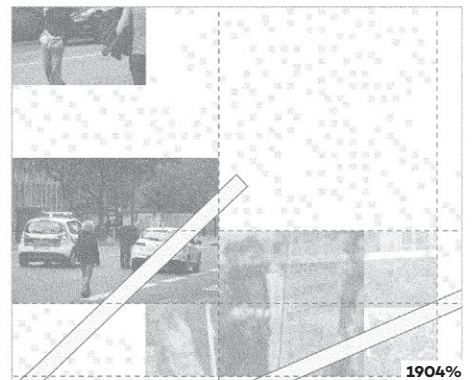
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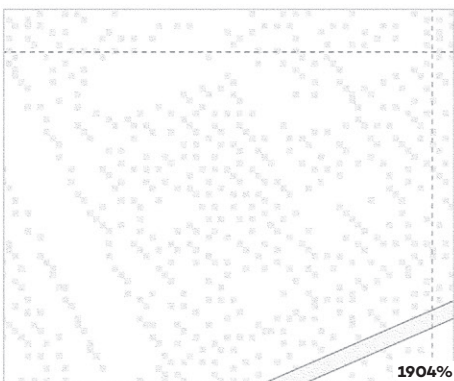
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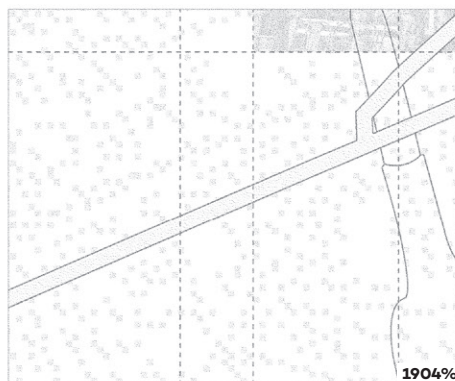
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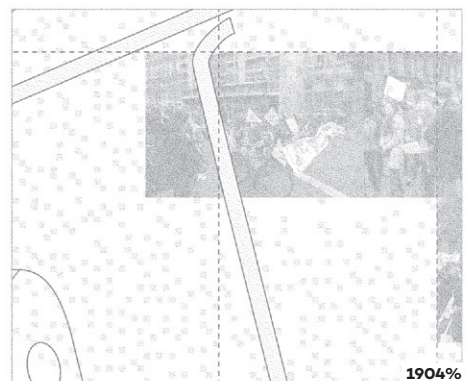
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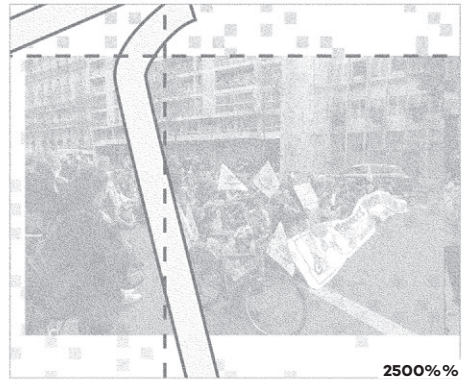
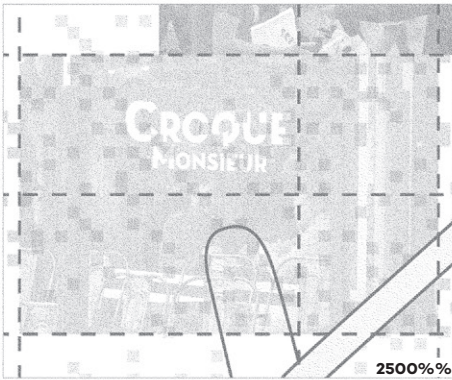
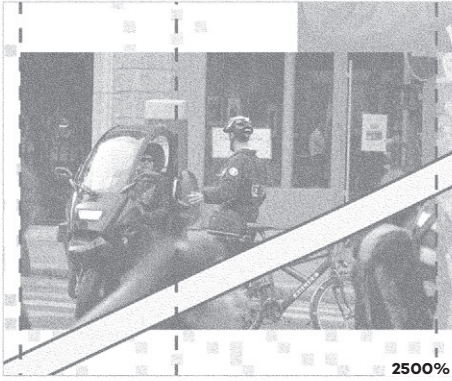
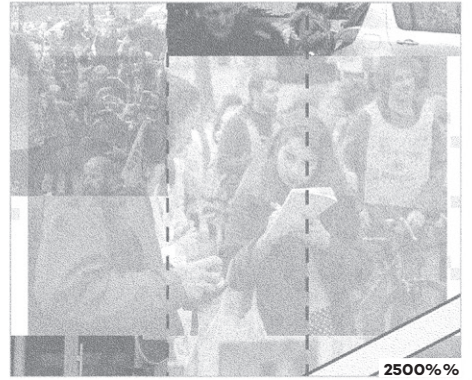
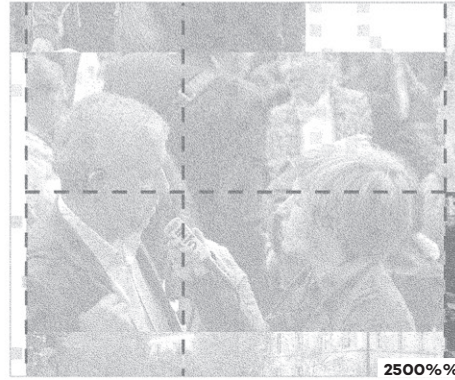
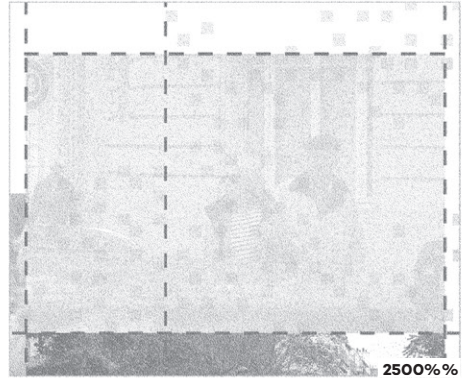
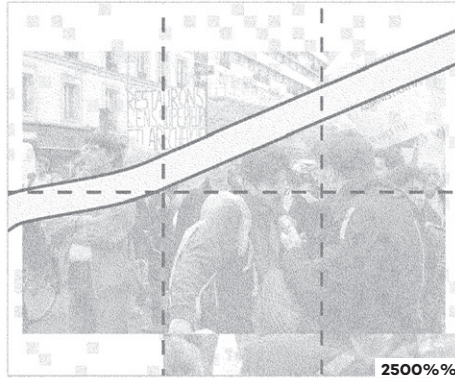
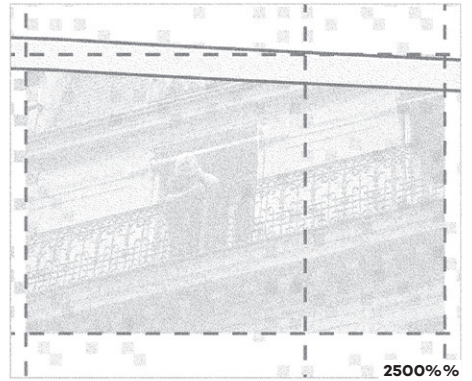
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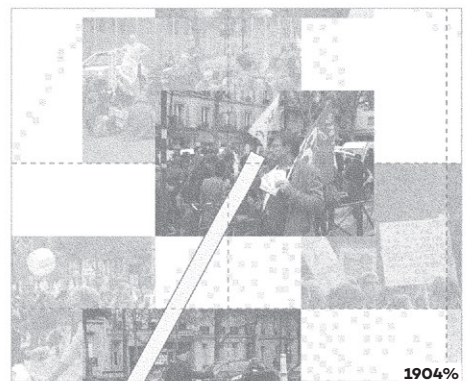
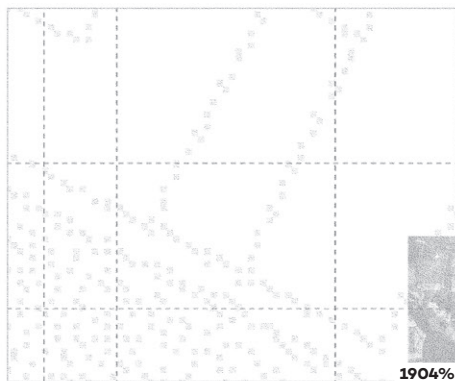
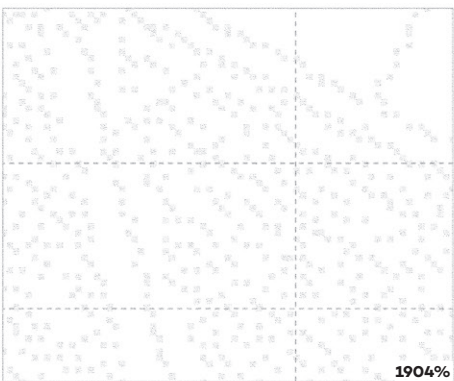
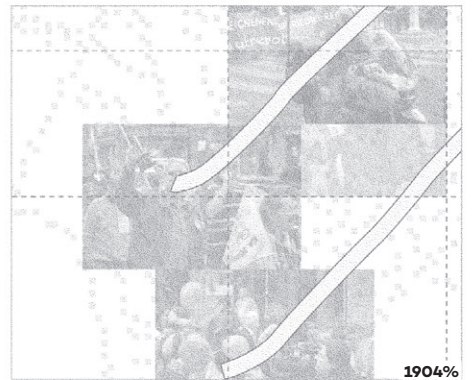
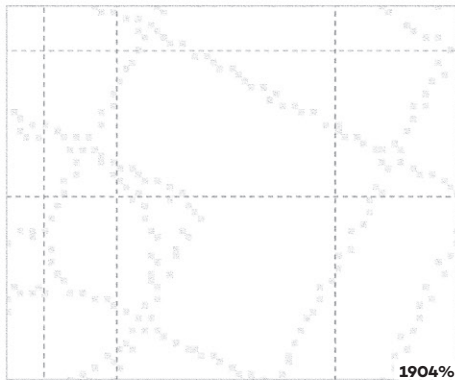
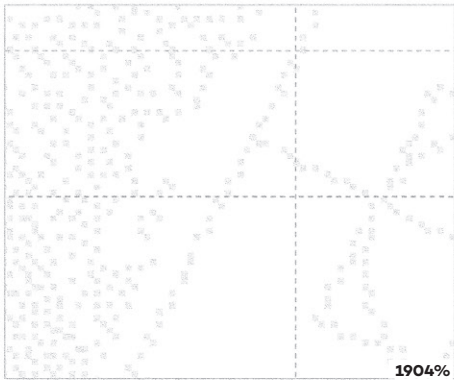
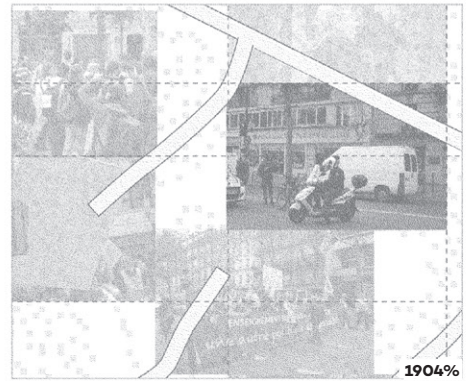
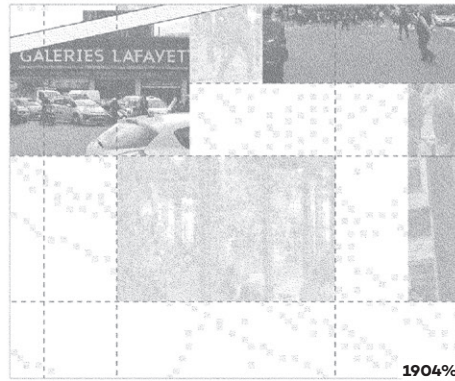
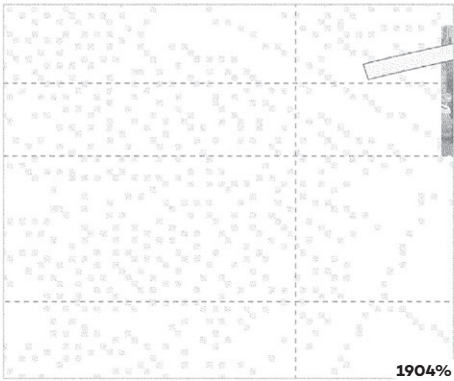
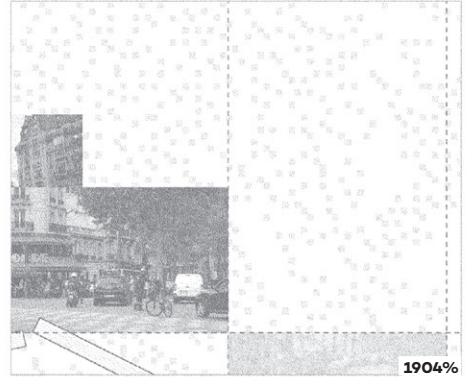
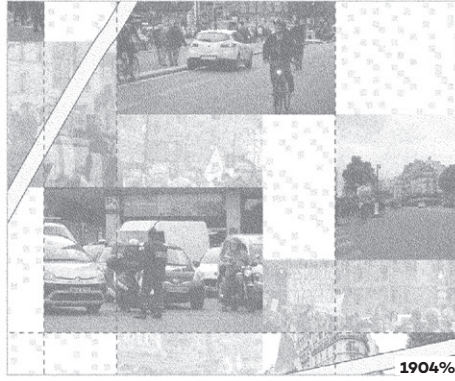
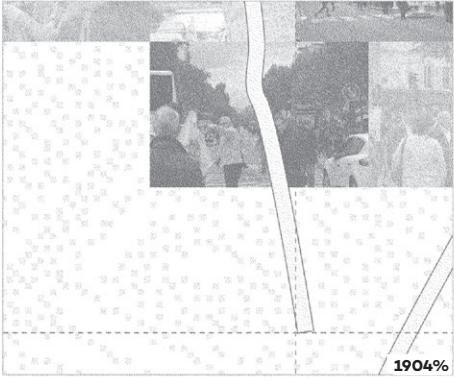
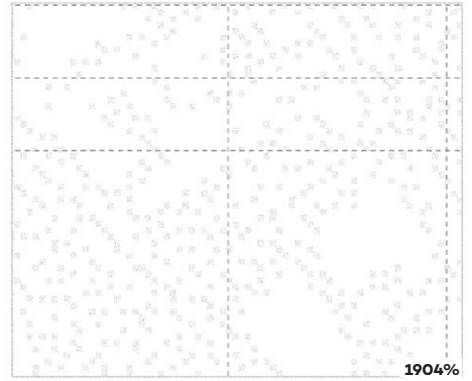
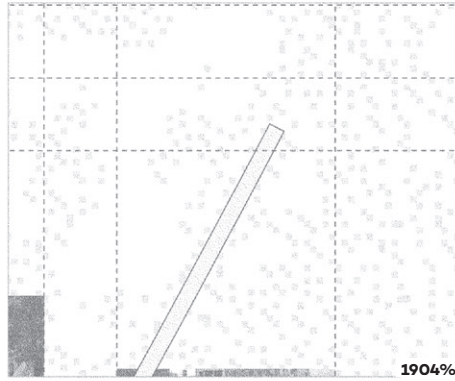
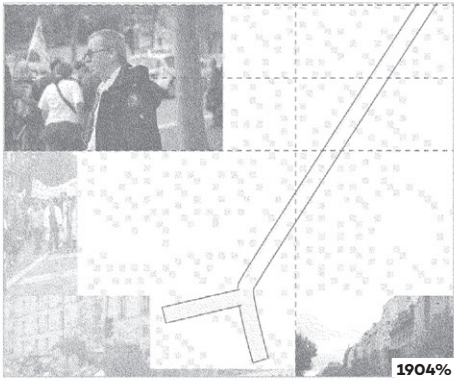


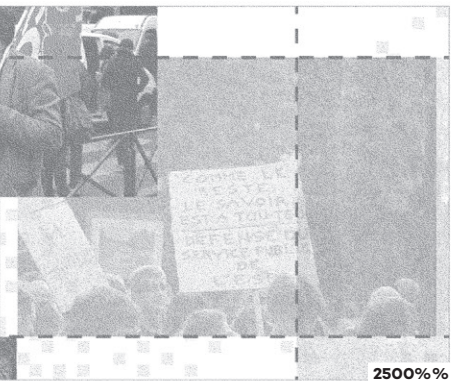
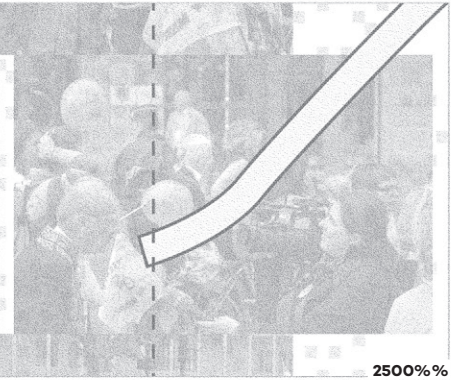
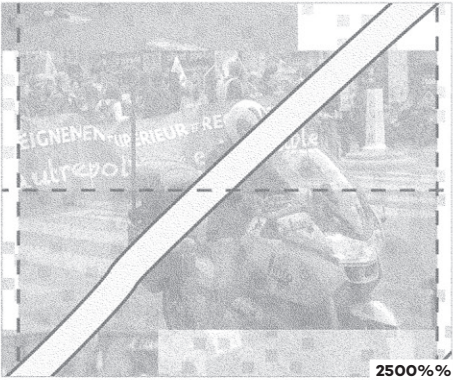
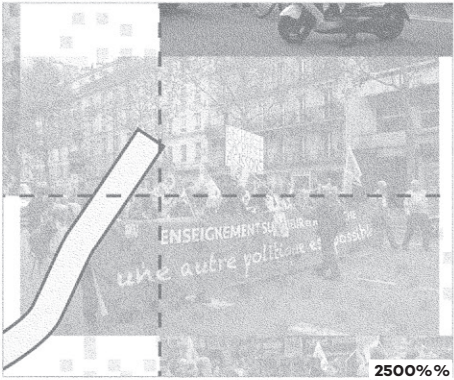
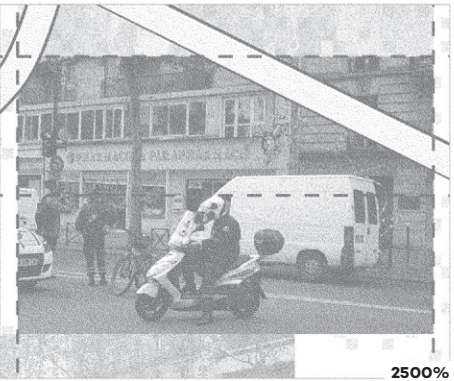
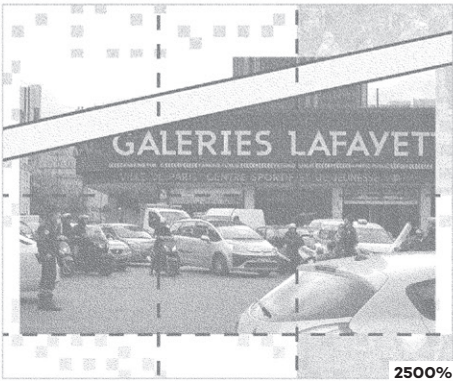
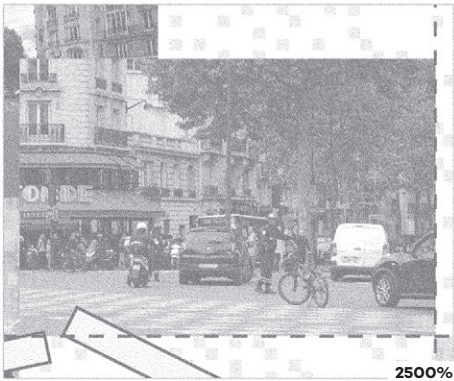
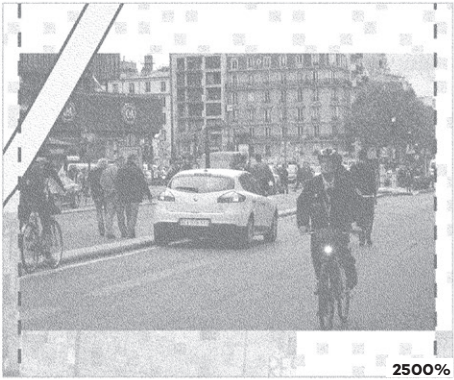
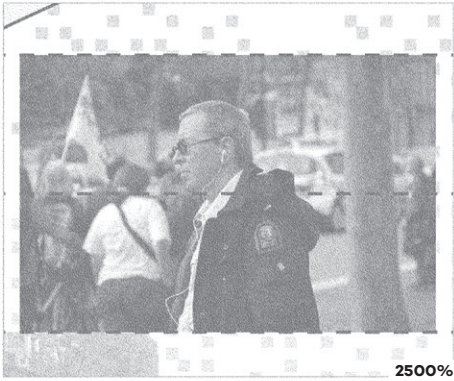
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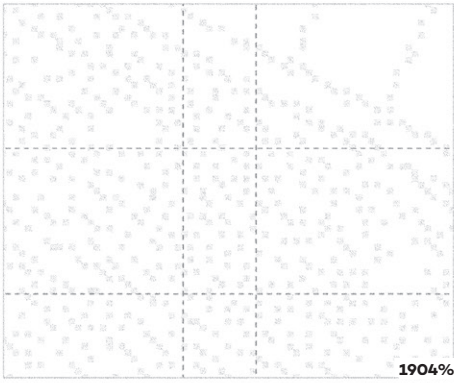


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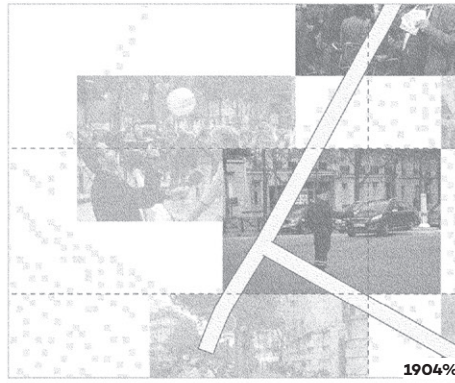




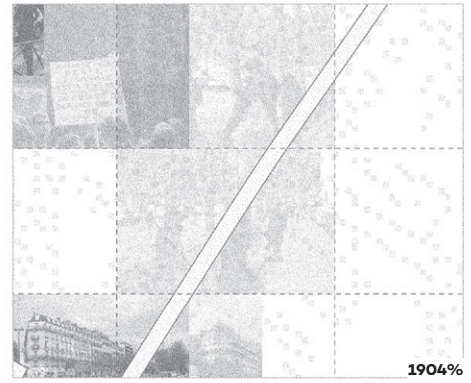




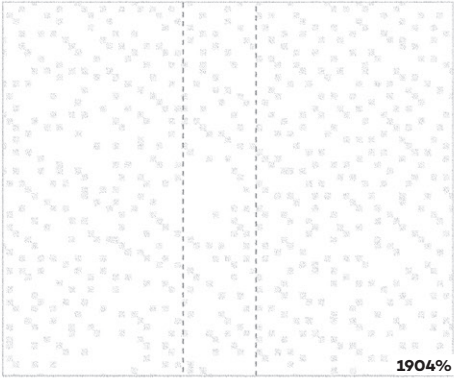
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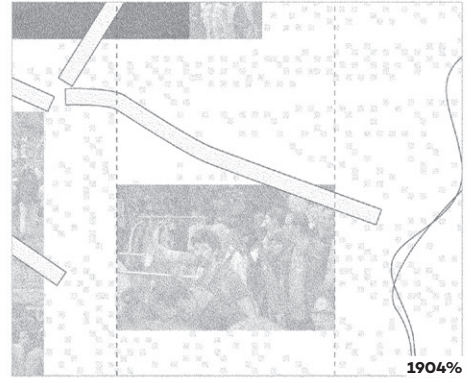
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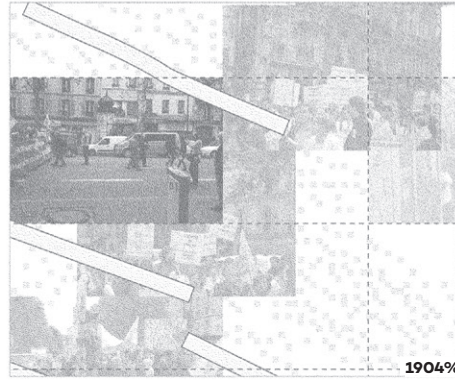
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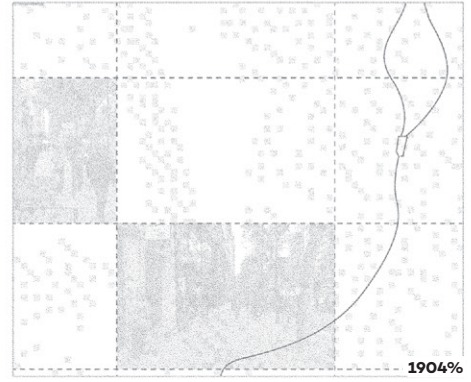
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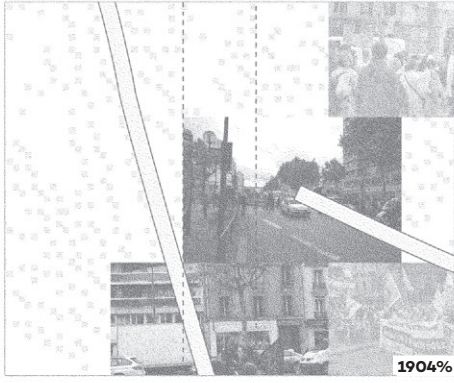
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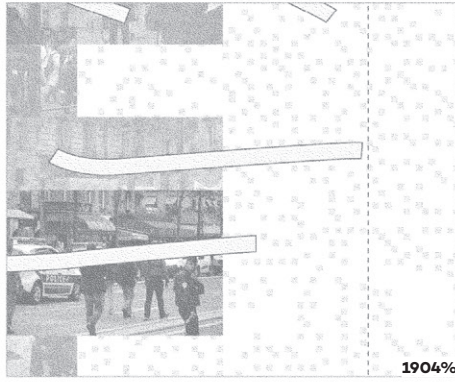
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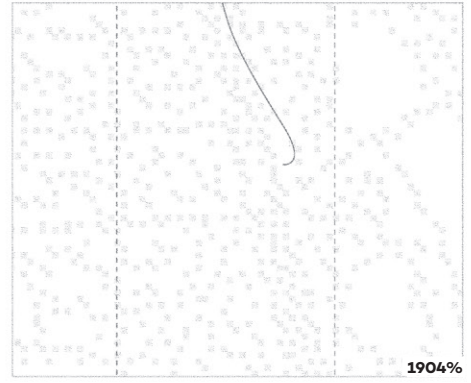
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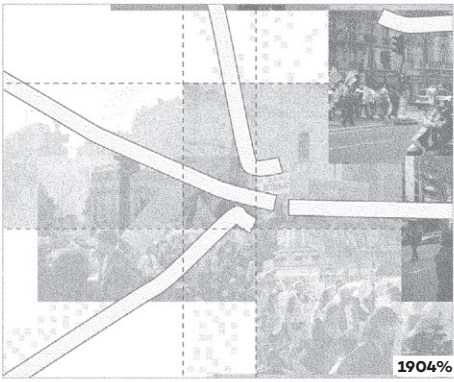
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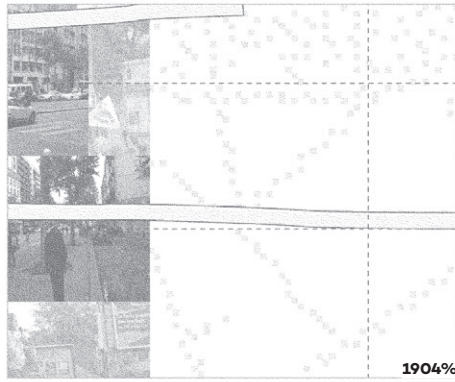
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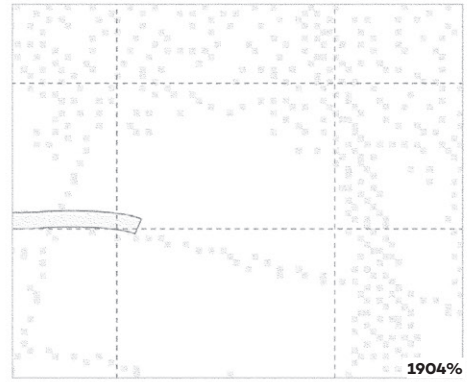
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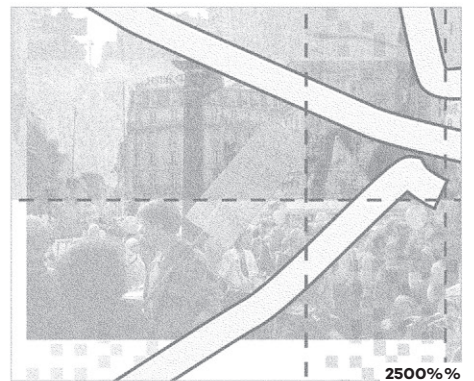
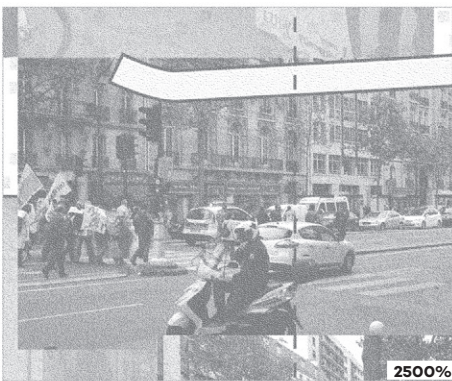
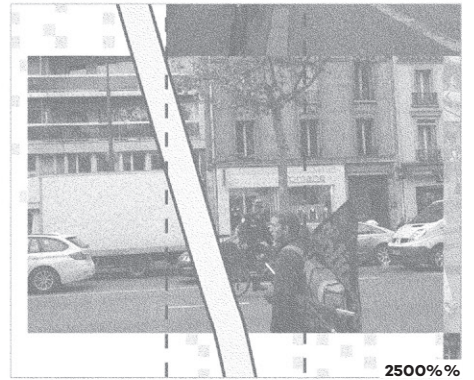
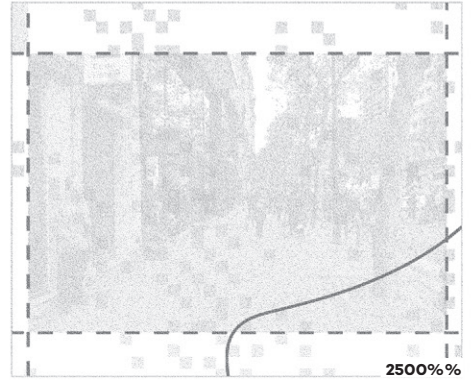
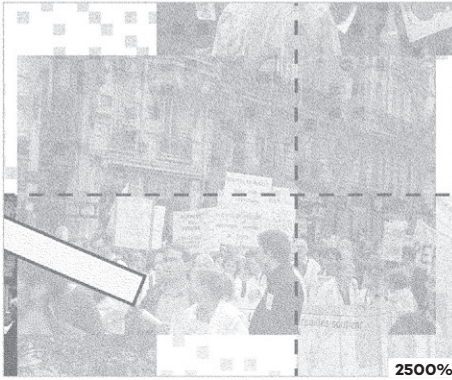
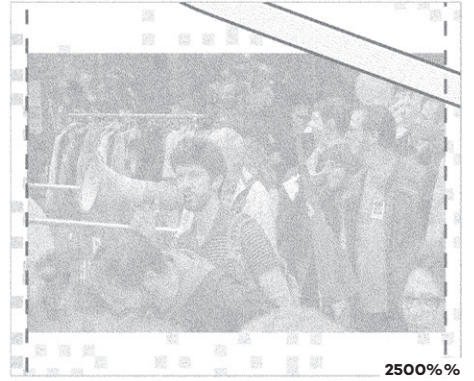
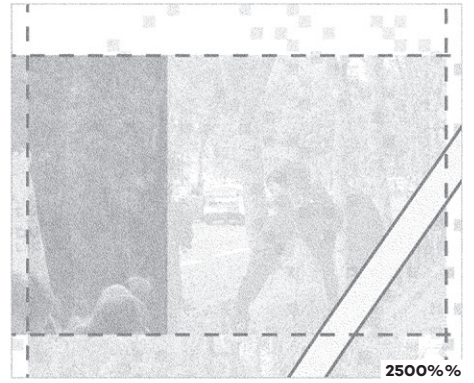
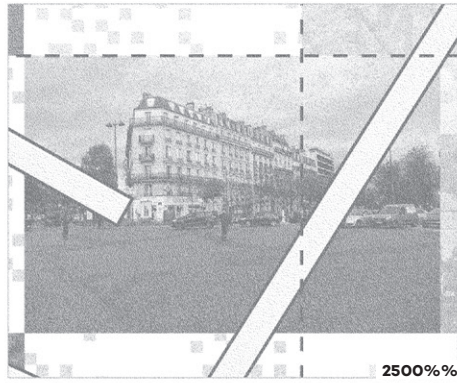
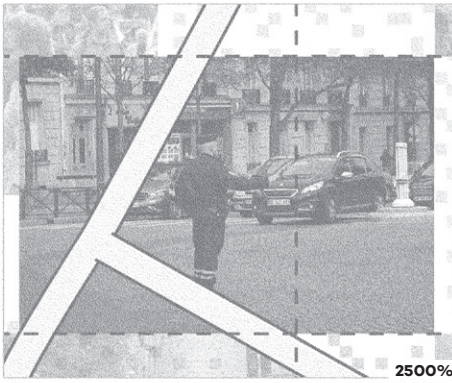
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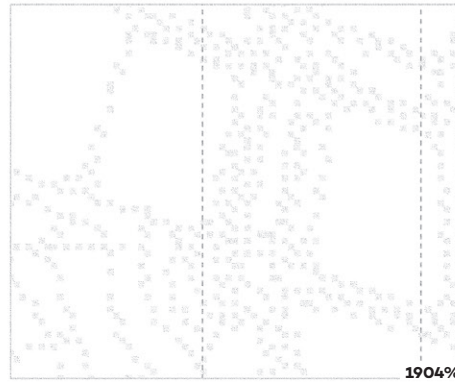
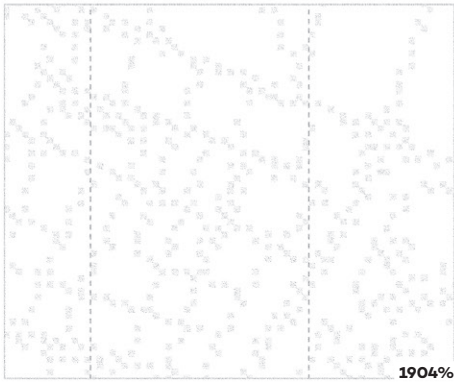
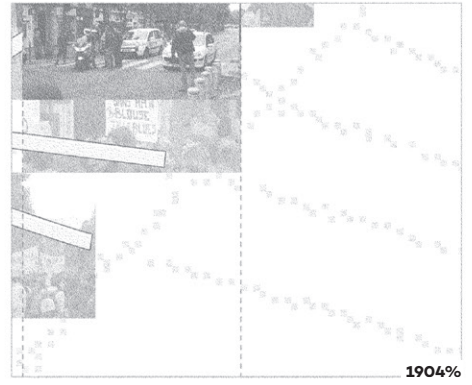
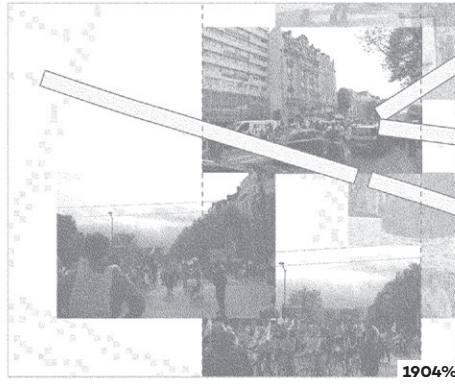
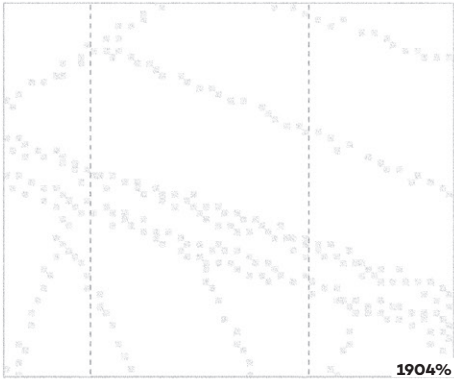
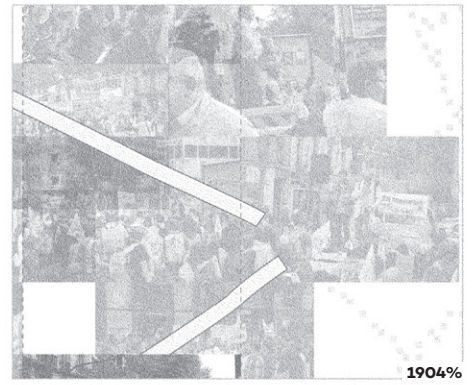
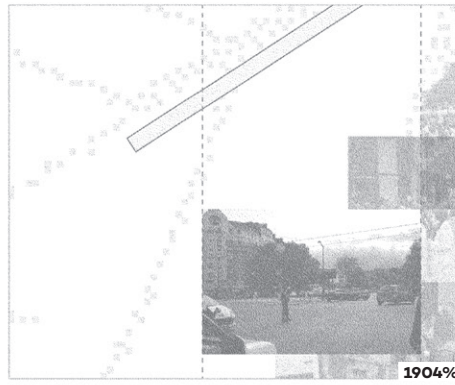
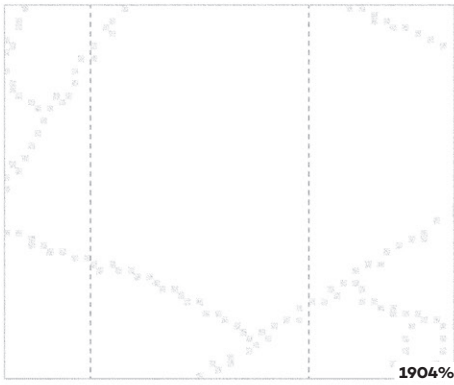


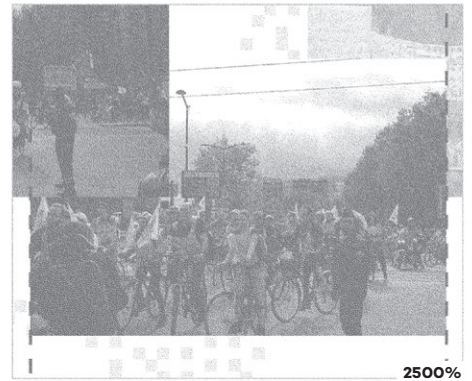
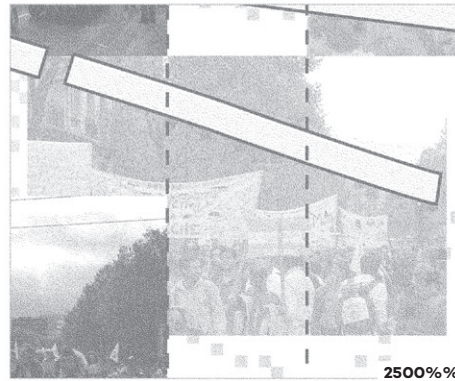
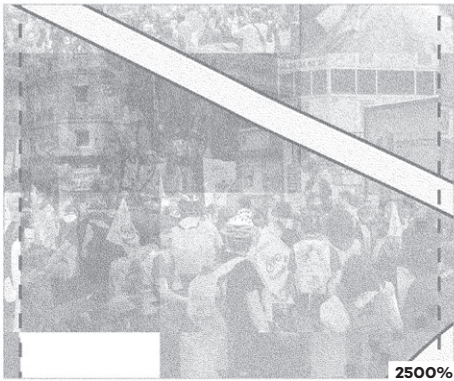
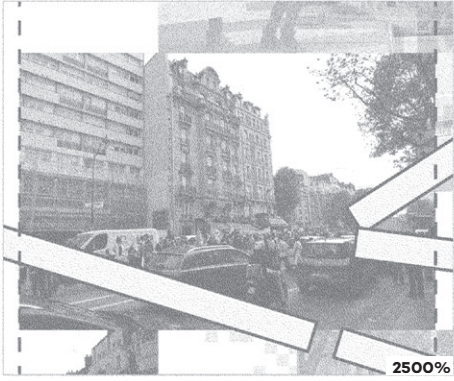
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