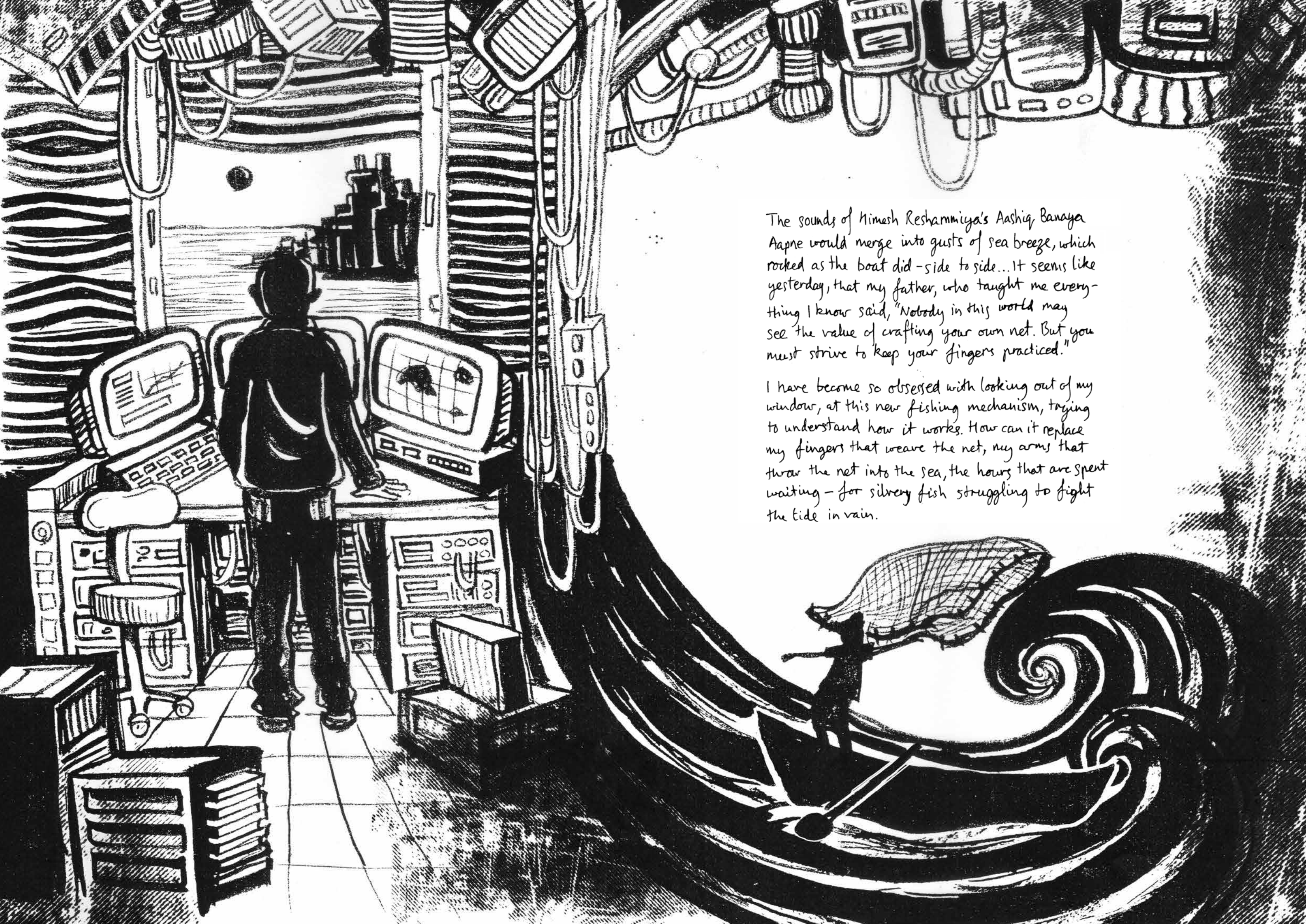



THE LAST FISHERMAN OF BOMBAY





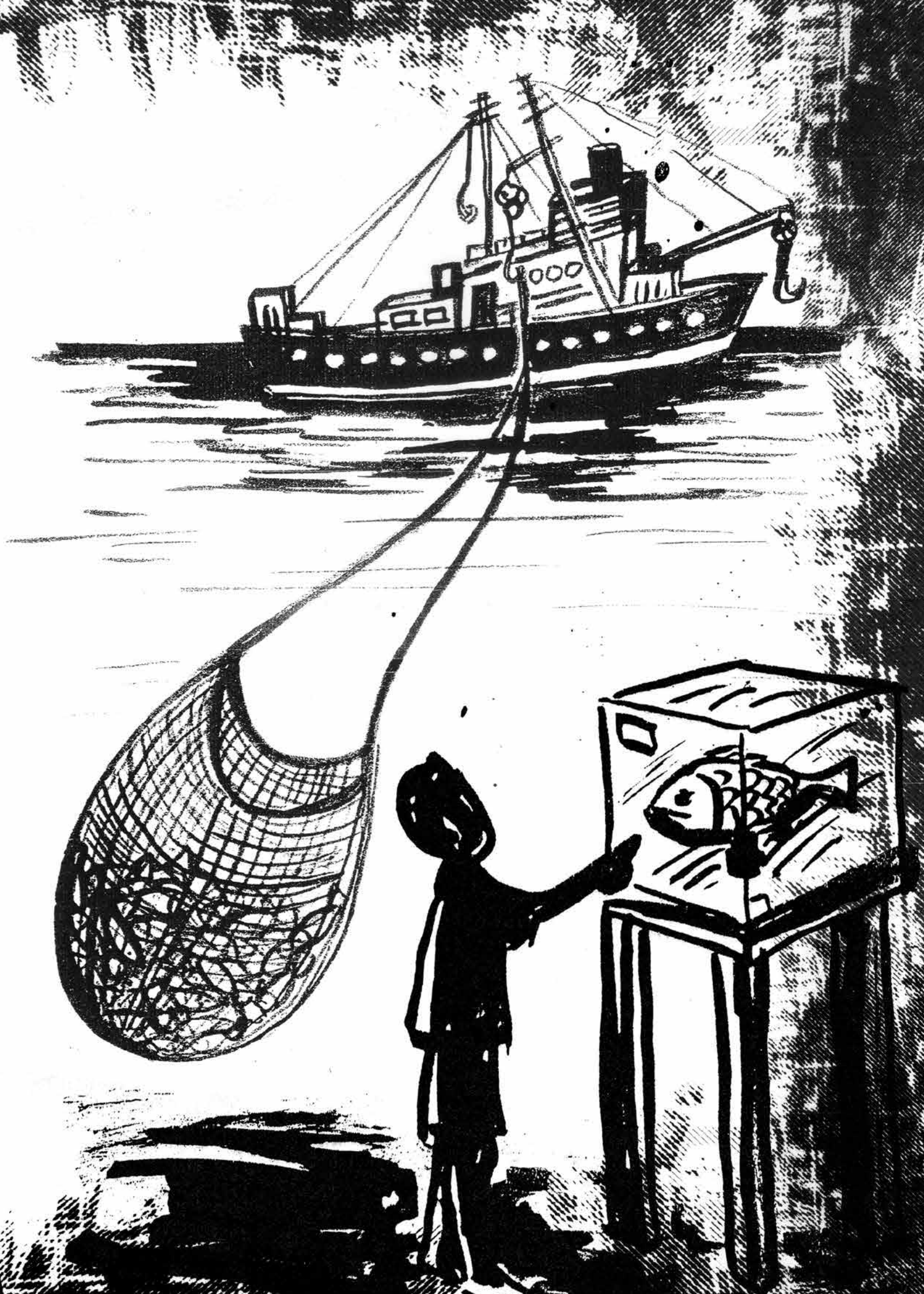
The sounds of Himash Reshammiya's Aashiq, Banaya Aapne would merge into gusts of sea breeze, which rocked as the boat did - side to side... It seems like yesterday, that my father, who taught me everything I know said, "Nobody in this world may see the value of crafting your own net. But you must strive to keep your fingers practiced."

I have become so obsessed with looking out of my window, at this new fishing mechanism, trying to understand how it works. How can it replace my fingers that weave the net, my arms that throw the net into the sea, the hours that are spent waiting - for silvery fish struggling to fight the tide in vain.



Our community fought to warn people about the trawlers, and the deep-sea fishing. There is value in a practice passed on from generations, from decades of living around and with the sea.

Who knows where this knowledge sits now, where my hooks have been stored. A big glass cabinet filled with two-dimensional images. I imagine... grimy hands and sweaty noses pressed against it for a better look. A child telling his friend on a school excursion to the Museum of Mumbai Fisherman at Sassoon Docks: "These are baits and lures that were used for fishing, a long time back. I know because my grandfather was a fisherman. Look at how old they are now."



A year or so back strict regulations were imposed in the pretext of preserving already depleted ocean resources; shut down restaurants to save our seas!"

We were given employment opportunities; to be operators of the fishing drones. I can't bring myself to sit behind a desk and control a machine that is supposed to be more efficient than me! I still dream of the smells at the last fish auction and feel like I might lose my mind. I'm living without a purpose, but surely this business cannot be my livelihood.



Of course, the small stalls selling fish-fry suffered and were made to shut down; one by one. What replaced them were glassy foodhalls, with an aesthetic that remained uniform across Mumbai — where only high dignitaries, and prosperous businessmen are granted entry. I watch from my half-submerged shanty room, as drones deliver fresh fish to these establishments on the dock.



ON THE FUTURE OF LIVELIHOODS

Etymology of 'Livelihood':

livelihood c.1300, *livelode* "means of keeping alive," from O.E. *lifad* "course of life," from *lif* "life" + *lad* "way, course" (see *load*). Spelling assimilated 16c. to words in -hood. Earlier *livelihood* was a different word, meaning "liveliness."

At our studio, and other workplaces no doubt, we have been discussing how the nature of work will change with technology rapidly overhauling many industries. It seems that work, both paid and unpaid, voluntary and involuntary, stands to change. We acknowledge the unsettling fear we all have- of machines replacing man, and what a world like that might look like.

For our current purpose, rather than focussing on 'work' broadly, it would be more pertinent to muse on the future of livelihoods in India, specifically looking at fishing communities. India has 3827 fishing villages, while Maharashtra has four indigenous fishing communities. The Koli community, frequently referred to as the 'original residents of Mumbai,' have passed their skills and techniques of sustaining a livelihood down through generations. The present generation of Kolis however, do not need to carry on the traditional fishing practice, and are shifting to other occupations, which require different skill sets.

The word livelihood thus suggests a sense of heritage and tradition — wisdom that is passed on from generations, as learning is ingrained in community practices. These questions arise while deliberating on the future of community livelihoods:

How does a need to sustain a livelihood and choices of work intertwine in today's times? Does a chance to move away from traditional practices, compromise knowledge that has been built over time? Can machines and technology indeed replace traditional skills, and thus sustainable fishing practices, to save the planet? Will vested business interests overuse advanced technology, and leave the world in a dystopic dilemma?



THE CONCEPT:

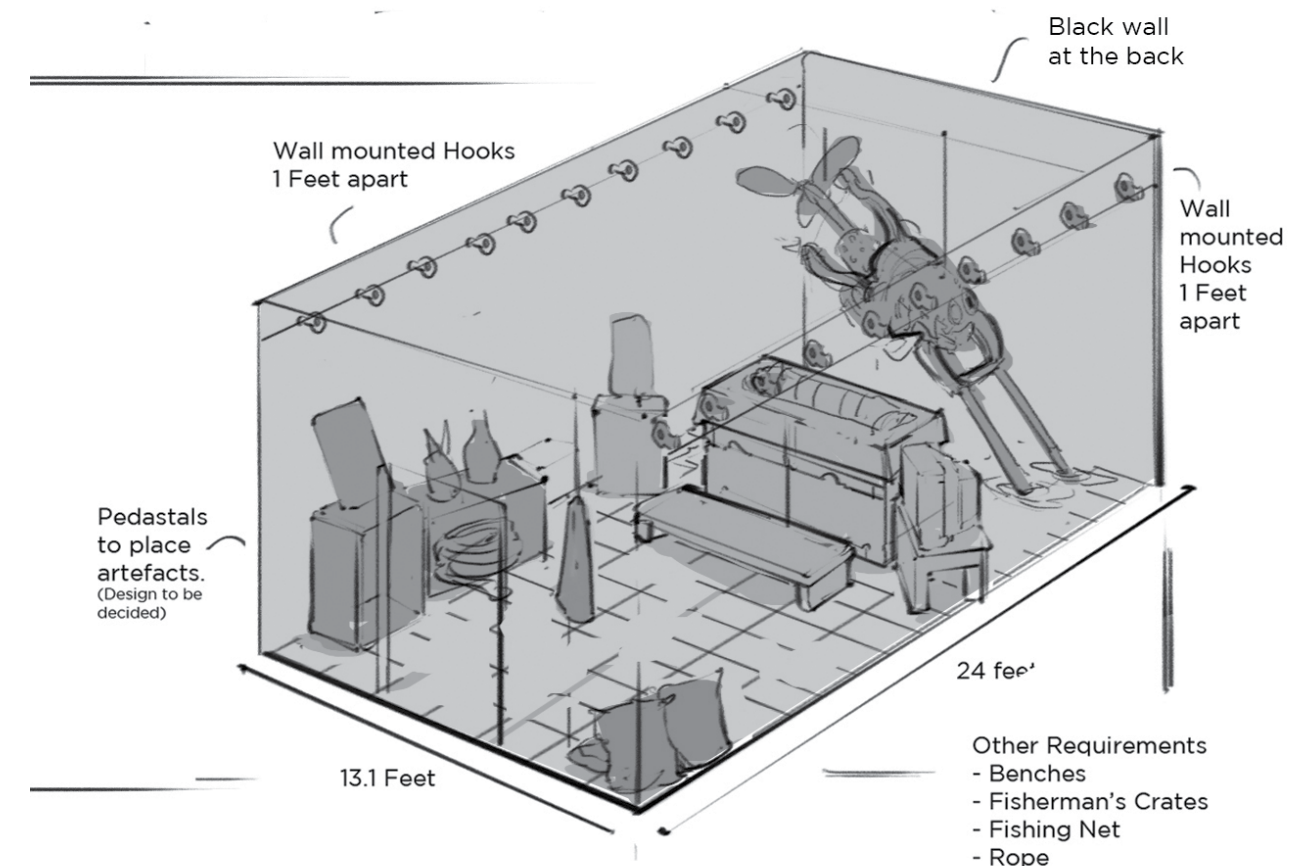
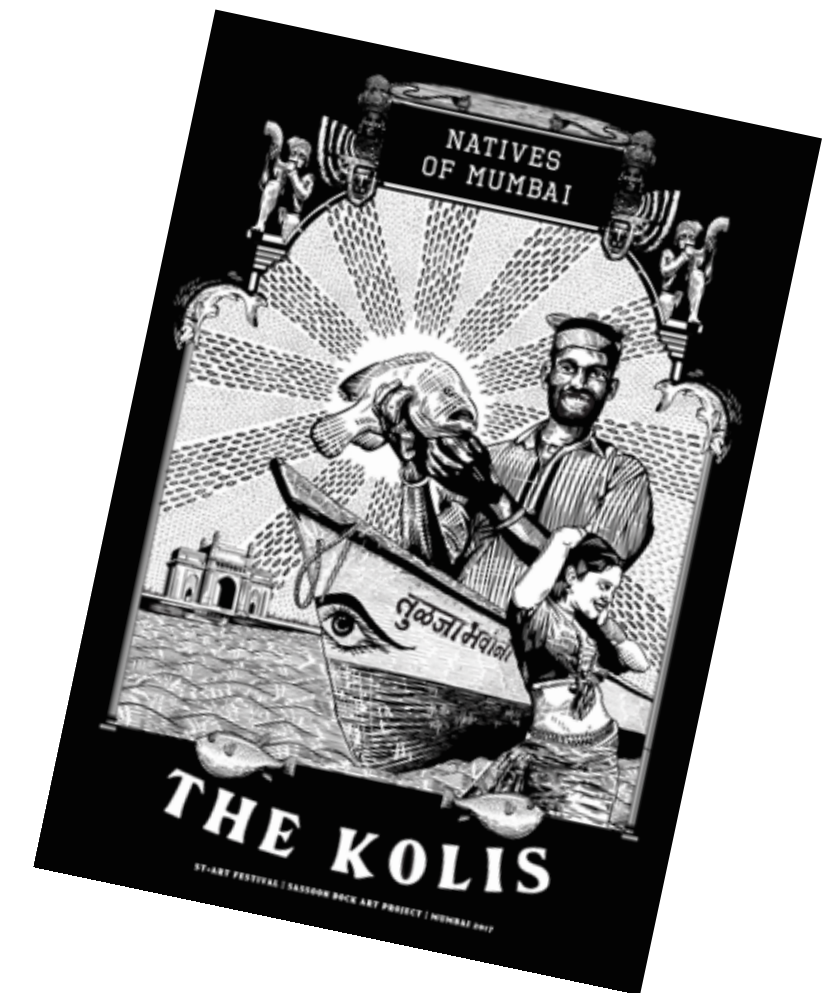
Using the trope of dystopic futures, we imagined what the last fisherman's room would contain and look like. We sketched out a space that represents inner turmoil, and mirrors events in the outside world.

THE MECH:

A view from the fisherman's room to the outside, holds the mechanism he obsesses over. Our team spent time digging through scrap-yards and metal shops in North Goa, to find the right pieces for the future fishing drone.

THE SPECULATIVE FICTION:

A first-person account providing a peek into the fisherman's words and worlds..





ENQUIRY



Our studio - Quicksand - has been consumed with thoughts about the future in recent months. It is, after all, a way to be optimistic in the extremely pessimistic times we find ourselves located. The Sassoon Docks, where our hosts St+Art Festival are located for now, are undergoing a disruptive transformation - the area might soon become a symbol of urban pride for the limitless city of Mumbai. Sassoon will be a contemporary playground of restaurants, bars and entertainment experiences. Will there be a memory of the fishermen who occupy these docks in the latest instalment of its ongoing history? What are the consequences of technology and progress on the fishermen communities that have long inhabited Sassoon? What would be the psychological mood of the 'Last Fisherman of Sassoon'? In collaboration with Tandem Research, we provide some clues as fiction, a few rambles and some dystopic ponderings.



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