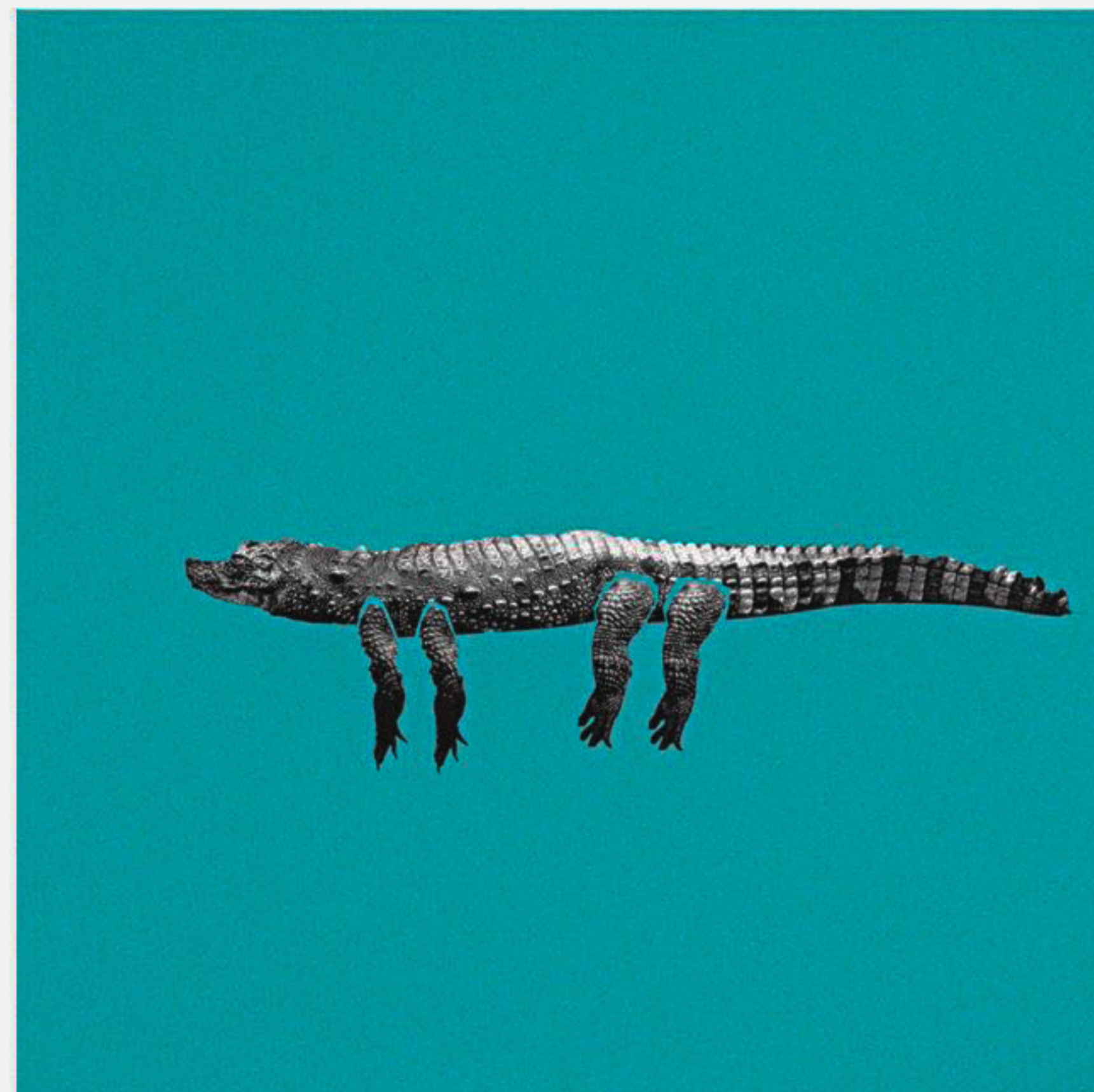
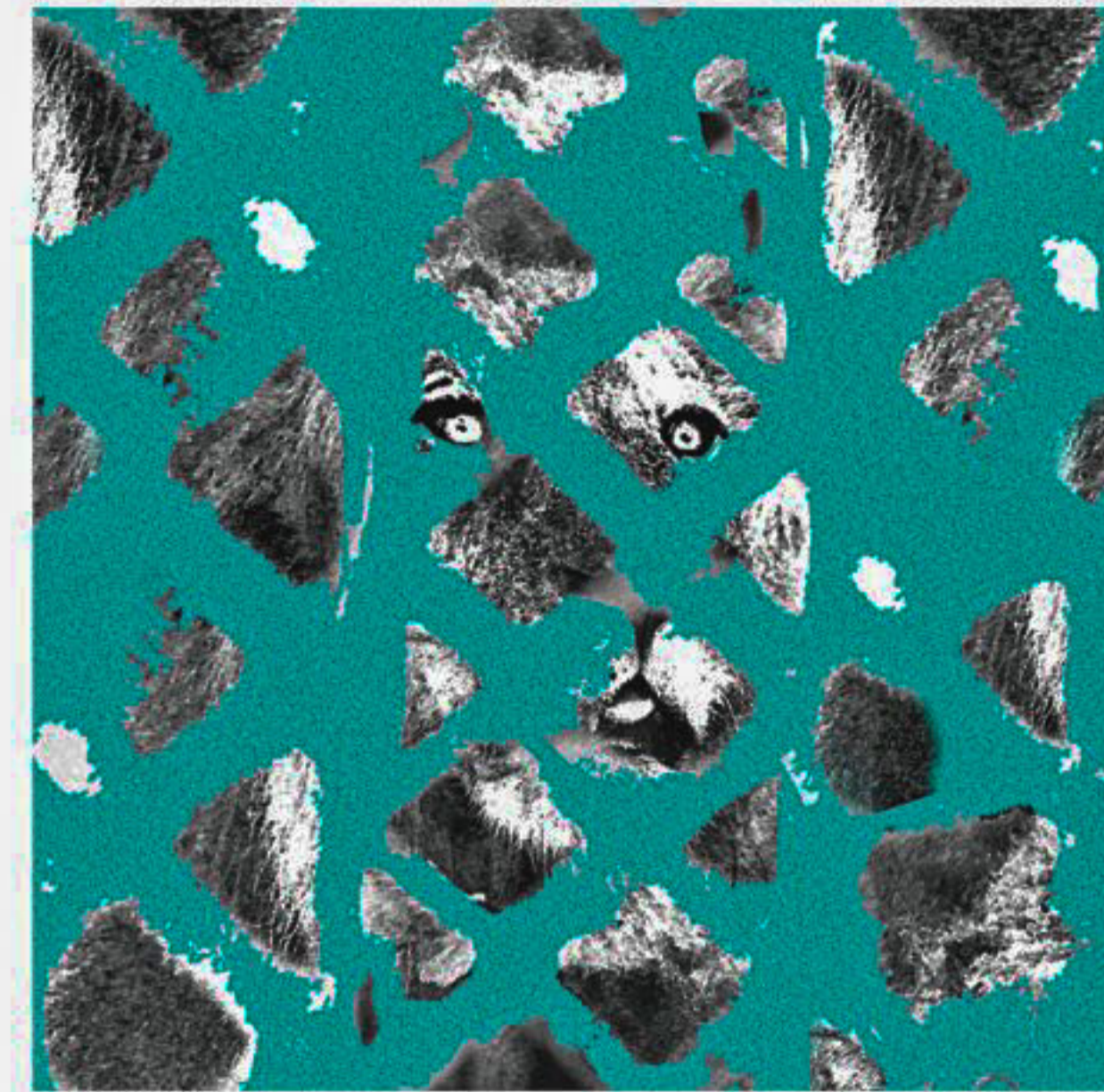
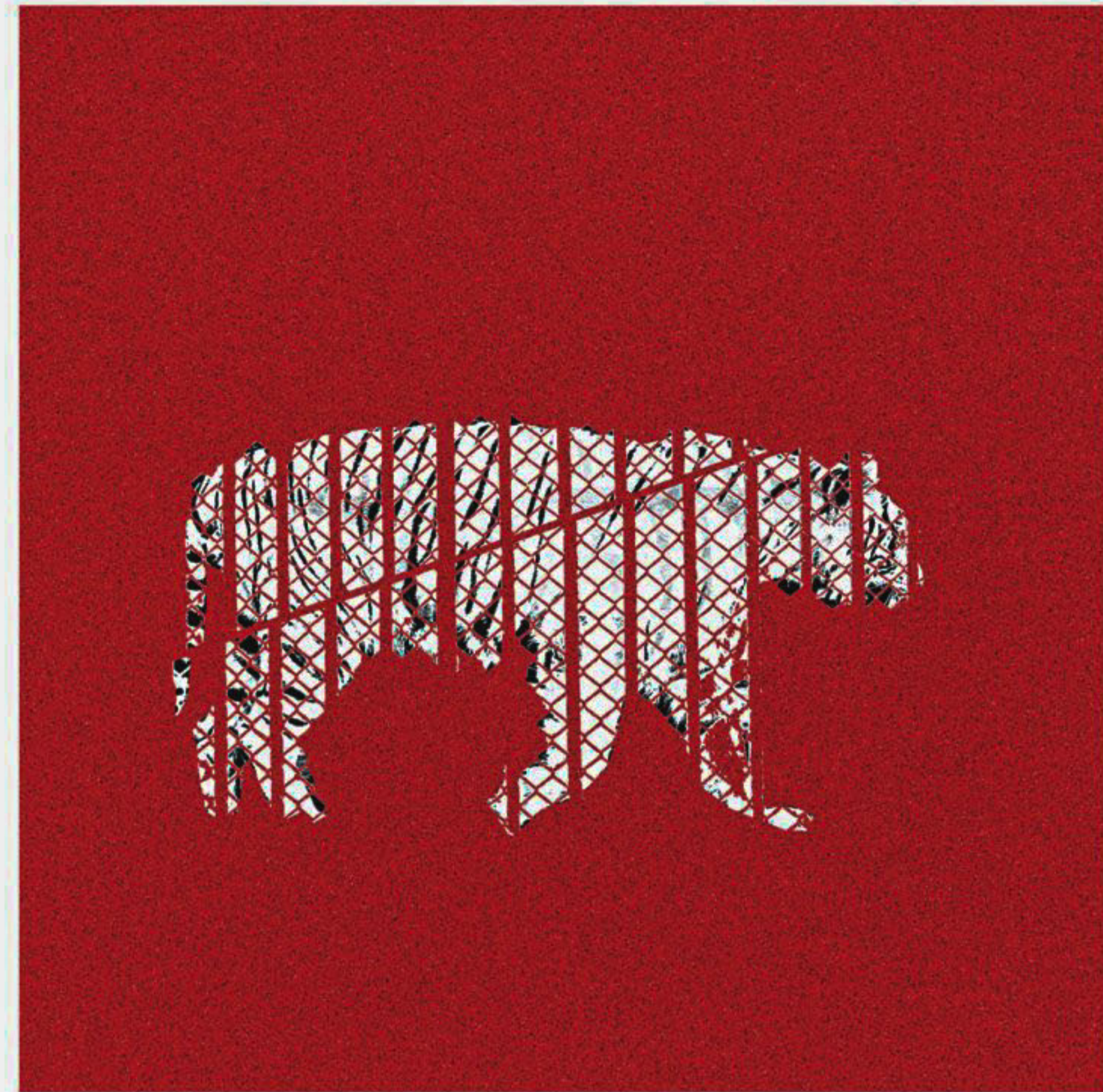


| SHUTTERSTORIES |

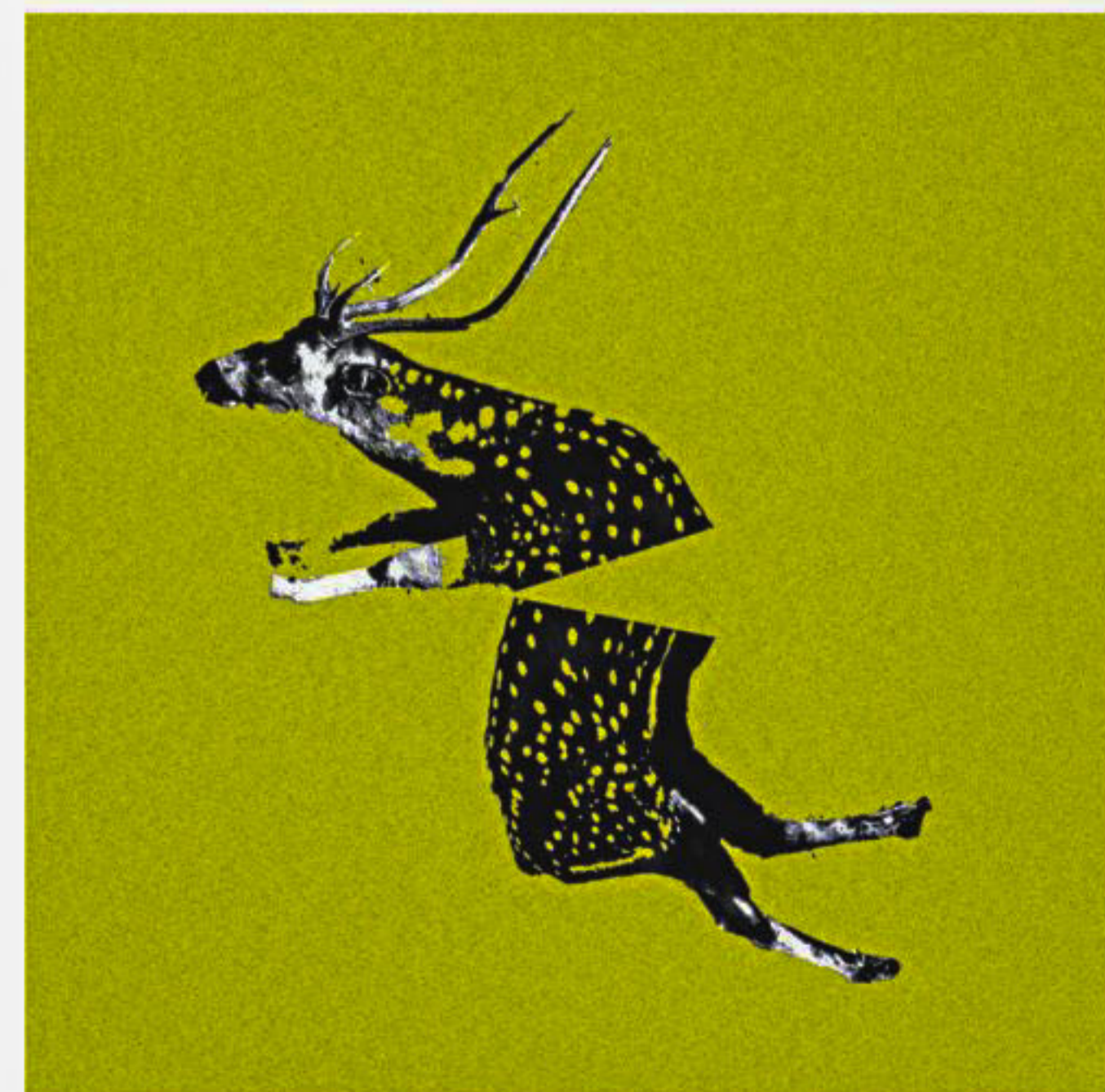
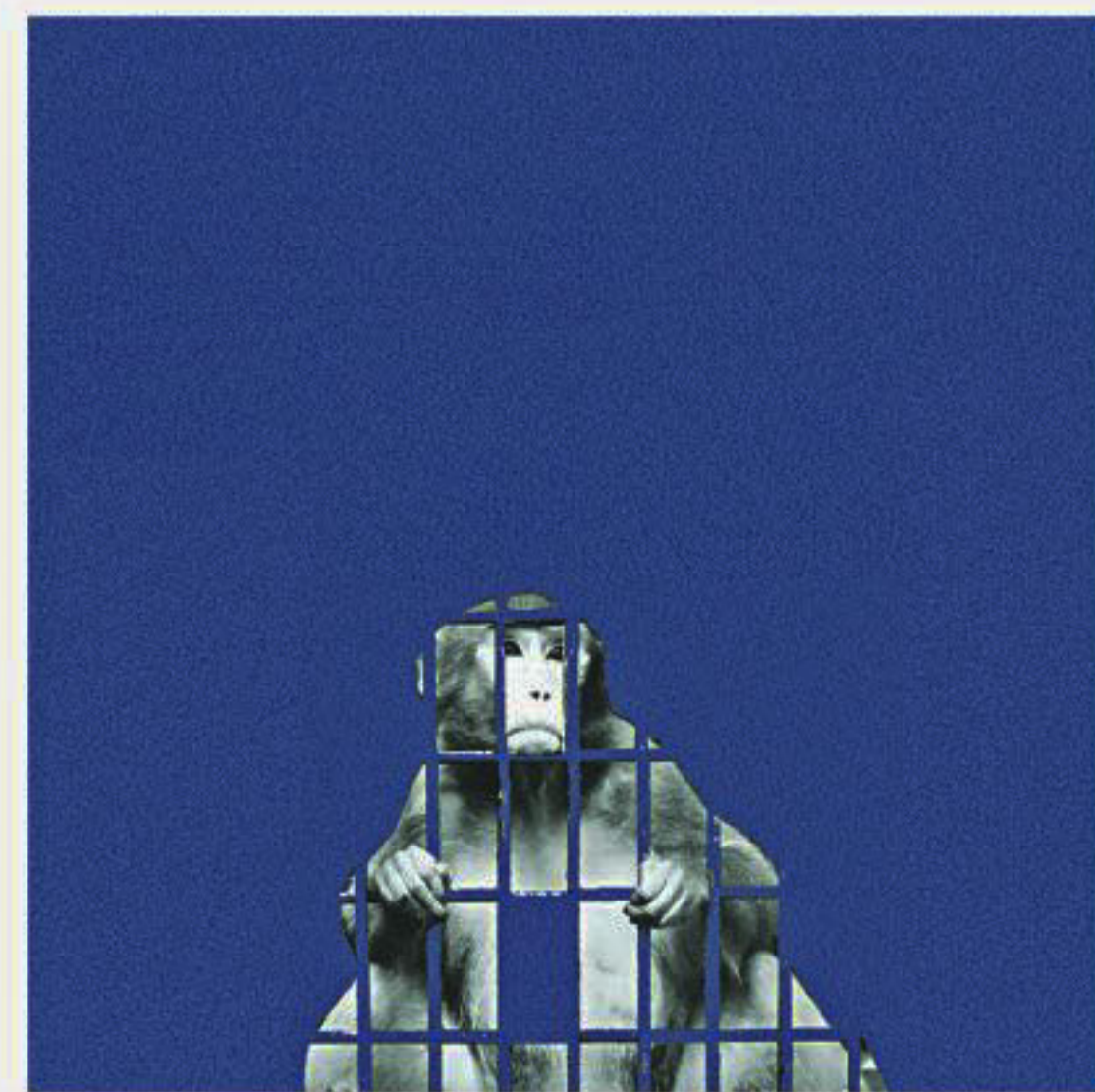


THEM

IMAGES AND TEXT: MD ATA ISLAM KHAN MOJLISH

During my visit to the Mirpur National Zoo, unsurprisingly, I noticed how the animals are not treated too well. But what really broke my heart was that the visitors didn't care too much either.

All that mattered, to them, was just a glimpse of the exotic animals. That they could breathe seemed to be enough. To think that they could possibly live an easier life with proper care is still foreign to us. Torn out of their natural habitat, they are placed in cages for cheap casual entertainment. They are thrown smack in the heart of Dhaka's blinding bustle and put on display to satisfy the colourful whims of the industrial grind.



| HARASSMENT |

"Do you understand what I am saying? How many times do I have to repeat that your scarf cannot cover your forehead? I will rip out your scarf if you don't remove it!" - shouted an official at Rayerbag Regional Passport Office to a middle-aged woman. The irony of this incident is that the official was a female, wearing a burka and she was yelling at a passport seeker for wearing a burka. I was witnessing this while waiting to complete some required formalities for my passport.

The aforementioned statement makes it obvious how 'well behaved' the officials can be towards the people who go to get their passports made. Not to mention most of the passport seekers were from middle and lower middle class backgrounds, and some of them knew very little about how procedures were carried out. In this feature, I will discuss a few key points that will help me elaborate why my visit to the passport office was a terrible experience. The points I shall use to extrapolate my arguments are the location of the office, infrastructure, and behaviour of officials.

Let's start with location. The first question that arose in my mind was, why is it so far from the main roads? Why is it so hard to reach by car or a CNG? The route to Rayerbag Regional Passport Office is terrible because of both- poorly maintained roads and the distance from the main roads. In other words, the office is located in a very congested residential area. With the narrow and broken roads, the only way to reach there was by rickshaw.

The next crucial problem was the infrastructure. If the process was explained properly then, considering the crowd it will not take more than two hours to complete all the formalities for passport. However, it was not possible due to bad infrastructure of the building. For example, after standing in a line for hours the passport seekers were asked to fill up the online passport form and for that, they were asked to visit room no

PASSPORT IN EXCHANGE FOR BAD BEHAVIOUR

ZAIMA ZAHRA



201. It sounds simple, right? But here is where it gets complicated-- inside room 201 there were six rooms. This simply created chaos and confusion among

people. Another problem that I could not ignore was the brokers. Even though there was an appealing token system going on

to ensure brokers do not break in, it still did not do much to deter them. The brokers were there, conducting their deals smoothly, where on the other hand, we were standing in line for hours to get our work done.

Nothing can increase the pace of work without proper facilities and the passport office was gravely lacking in those terms. There was no generator backup, which made the situation pretty awful and the process lengthy. Because the office is located in a packed and congested area, it was very dimly lit, making it quite difficult to see. Therefore, for an hour, the two-storied building was dark and suffocating during power cuts.

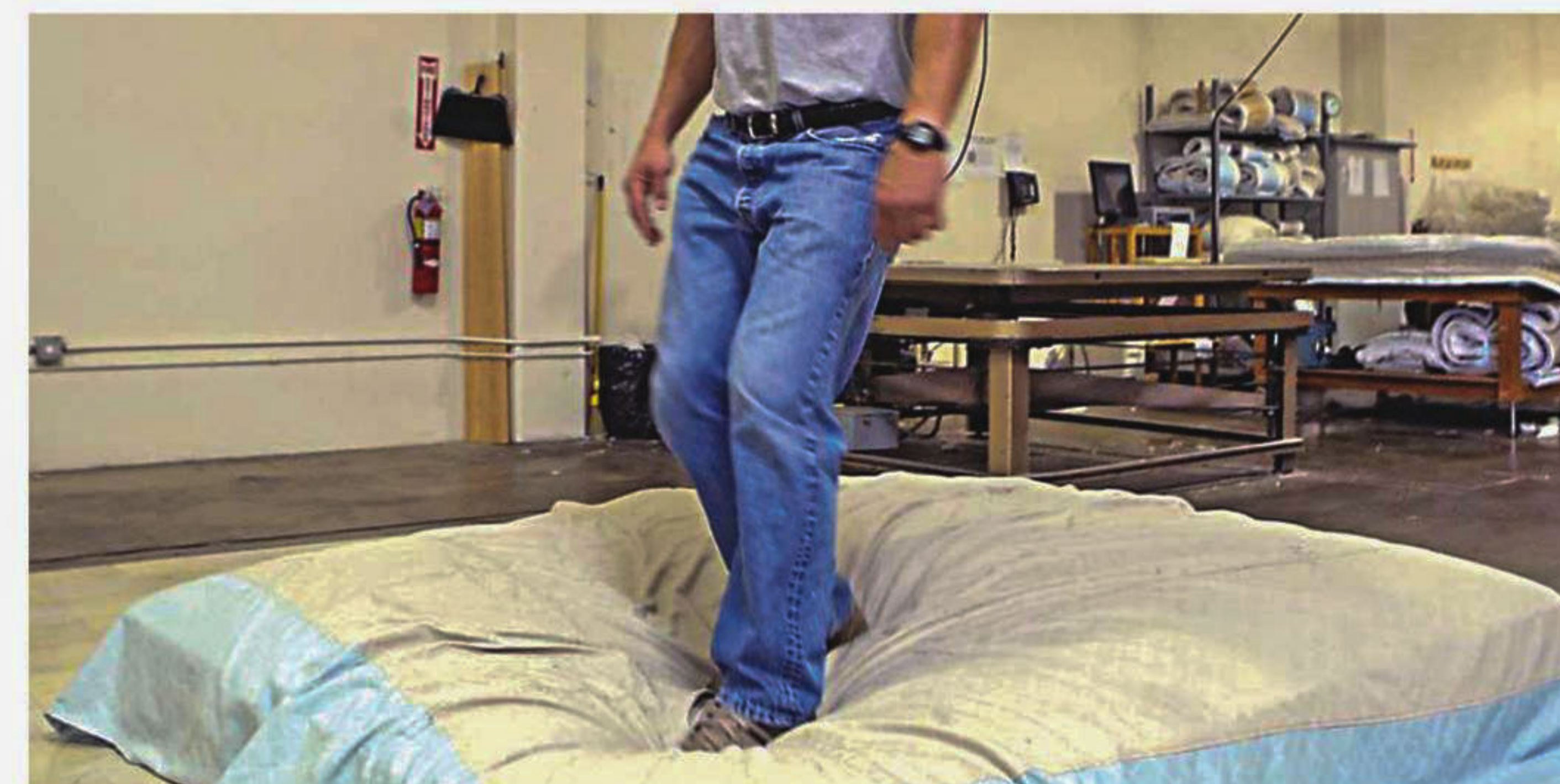
Imagine you start your day by taking a rough ride to the passport office; then you stand in long lines for tokens. After that, you go inside the office only to get confused with room numbers and then again, stand in a queue when at that very moment load shedding occurs. You might think a day cannot get any worse but another terror awaits you out there - the behaviour of the officials. It was unbelievable how the officials were treating the passport seekers. It is understandable that most of them were less educated and many of them lacked the understanding about the formalities of getting their passports made, but this does not make them subject to manner-less behaviour from officials. Judging by their behaviour, it simply felt like all passport seekers were nothing but savages. Yelling at people for not understanding the process and for asking a simple question was a very common scenario. I have personally seen an official threatening a woman saying, "I will tear your form, if I have to repeat myself again."

Although my day at the passport office was terrible, the process was appreciable but not satisfactory. The only way to speed up and turn this process into a successful project is to incorporate stricter attention towards the behaviour of the officials, along with proper facilities. ■

| STRANGE PROFESSIONS |

JUMP TO EARN

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



Jumping on the mattress to touch the ceiling was a favourite childhood game for most of us. However, for many people, jumping on the mattress carries a much bigger meaning. For them, it is their livelihood. Yes, mattress companies around the world hire professional mattress jumpers whose service is imperative in testing the strength, elasticity and fabric quality of their high-end mattresses. A professional mattress jumper has to jump on the mattress up to around a hundred times to fully compress the multiple layers of cotton, wool and polyester coverings inside. The jumping requires such special skill, steps and weight which the manufacturers cannot expect from machines. Reuben Reynoso, a professional jumper of San Francisco's McRoskey mattress factory, in an interview to San Francisco Chronicle said that "It's a work and there is a right way and wrong way to do it. At first we have to cover the mattress with a special protective covering so that footprints do not damage the outlook of the product. Then I keep jumping on the mattress through a checkerboard pattern, five jumps on the middle, five jumps on one edge then five jumps on the other edge."

"Every day I jump on around three mattresses and the pay is good because it is a vital job. The carefully maintained balance that creates uniform pressure on the mattress is vital to ensure endurance of the product," he adds. It seems weird that a person is getting paid simply for jumping on the mattress but without these professionals our comfortable sleep after a tiring day of hard work would be impossible.

PHOTO: INTERNET