

The Virtue of Language

The Artwork of Milbert Mariano

Most words are accompanied by a solid form that exemplifies its meaning, such as “book” corresponding to a real, visible book. But certain words lack this illustrative referent. They are what French philosopher Jacques Derrida calls “first principles,” conceptual terms that cannot be linked to tactile elements such as love, liberty and God. But whereas literary theory reveals this absent link between metaphysical and material, art closes this gap by creating the referent. This is the intrigue of art, the ability to make manifest what was once abstract. Art is the mastery of translating mere contemplation into a visualization of human thought. Milbert Mariano’s work is a perpetuation of this ideology, rendering spirituality, philosophy and language into tangible representations.

The collection features an amalgamation of language and the divine—one a marker of distinct cultures, the other a reminder of a prevailing universality by using parts of Ecclesiastes from a Russian Bible. These verses are threaded throughout the five pieces, creating an individual theme for each, but also providing a collective motif.

The collages explore the intertextuality of culture and religion, history and philosophy, by mingling icons from various societies. Yet the art is not only multi-layered in technique, but also in meaning. The first in the series, “Nouveau Jeu,” interprets “a time to be born and a time to die” from Ecclesiastes 3:2. A crucifix is superimposed against the faint outlines of a labyrinth, creating a fascinating metaphor of spiritual journey; but it collides against a backdrop which displays the intricate designs of currency. Another is a time line of Filipino history, tracking symbols of heroism and defeat that have dominated the country. The colonization of the Philippines and the first step towards democracy are both condemned and celebrated through deliberately fragmented images of key leaders from the country.

The subjects portrayed in the art are themes that have held much relevance in the artist’s life. Mariano is interested in the relationship between culture and spirituality and the shared ideologies that exist within them. He is also a student of language; currently he has been practicing his “very limited” conversational Russian. His past collections have focused on historic women from different cultures, meditation and prayer. For this series, he wanted to incorporate language and type to illustrate spirituality in a way that would transcend culture, needing not to be translated, but found.

—Julie Z. Lee

Milbert Mariano is an assistant professor of art at Pacific Union College and a graphic designer for the college’s publications. He graduated with a bachelor of science degree in graphic design from PUC and is currently working on his master of fine arts at the Academy of Art.

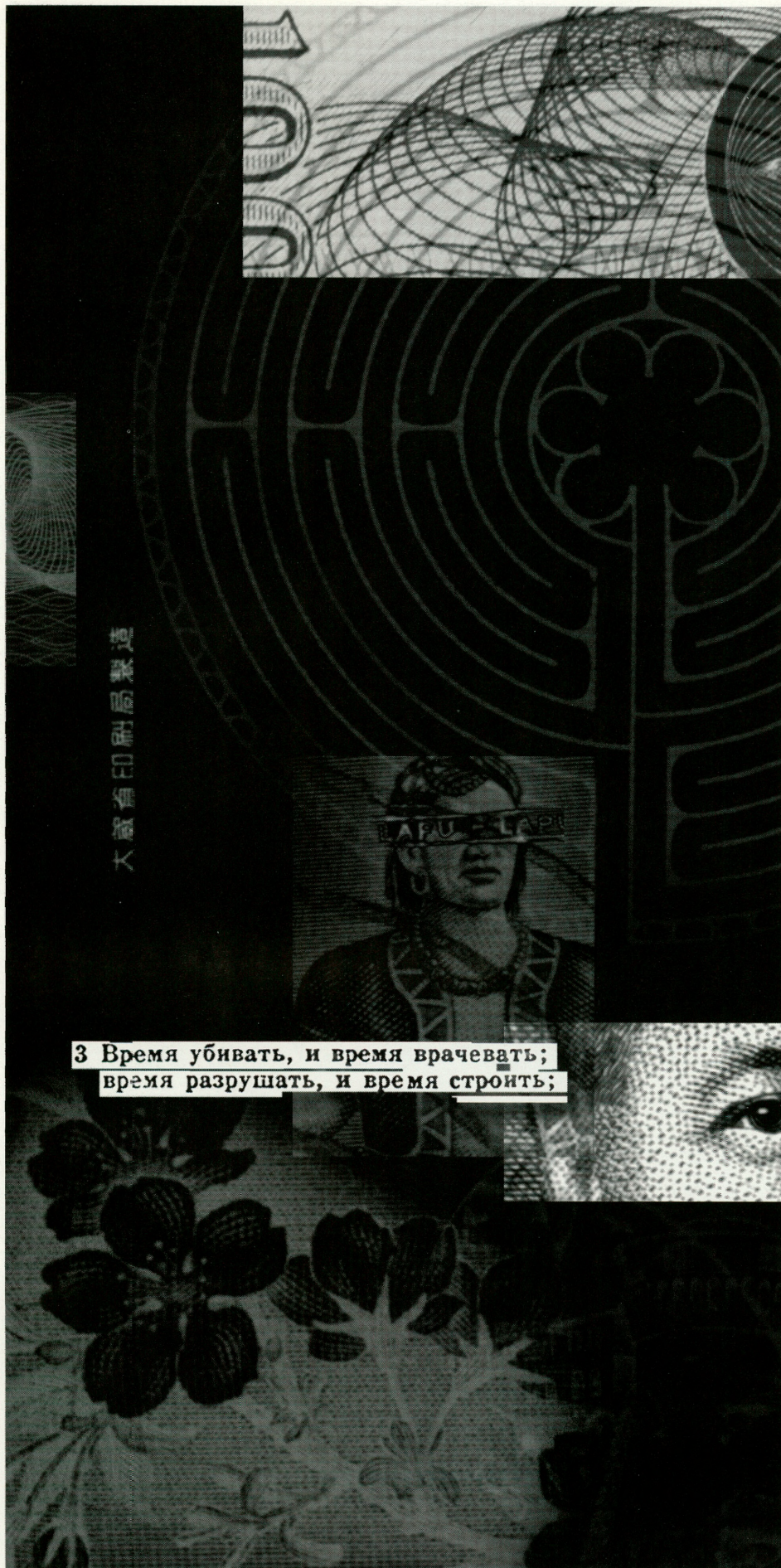
Julie Z. Lee is an intern writer at the Pacific Union College office of public relations. She graduated from PUC in 1998 with degrees in English and psychology.

уширать, время нас
мя вырывать посаже

NOUVEAU JEU DES
L'USAGE DES

Nouveau Jeu



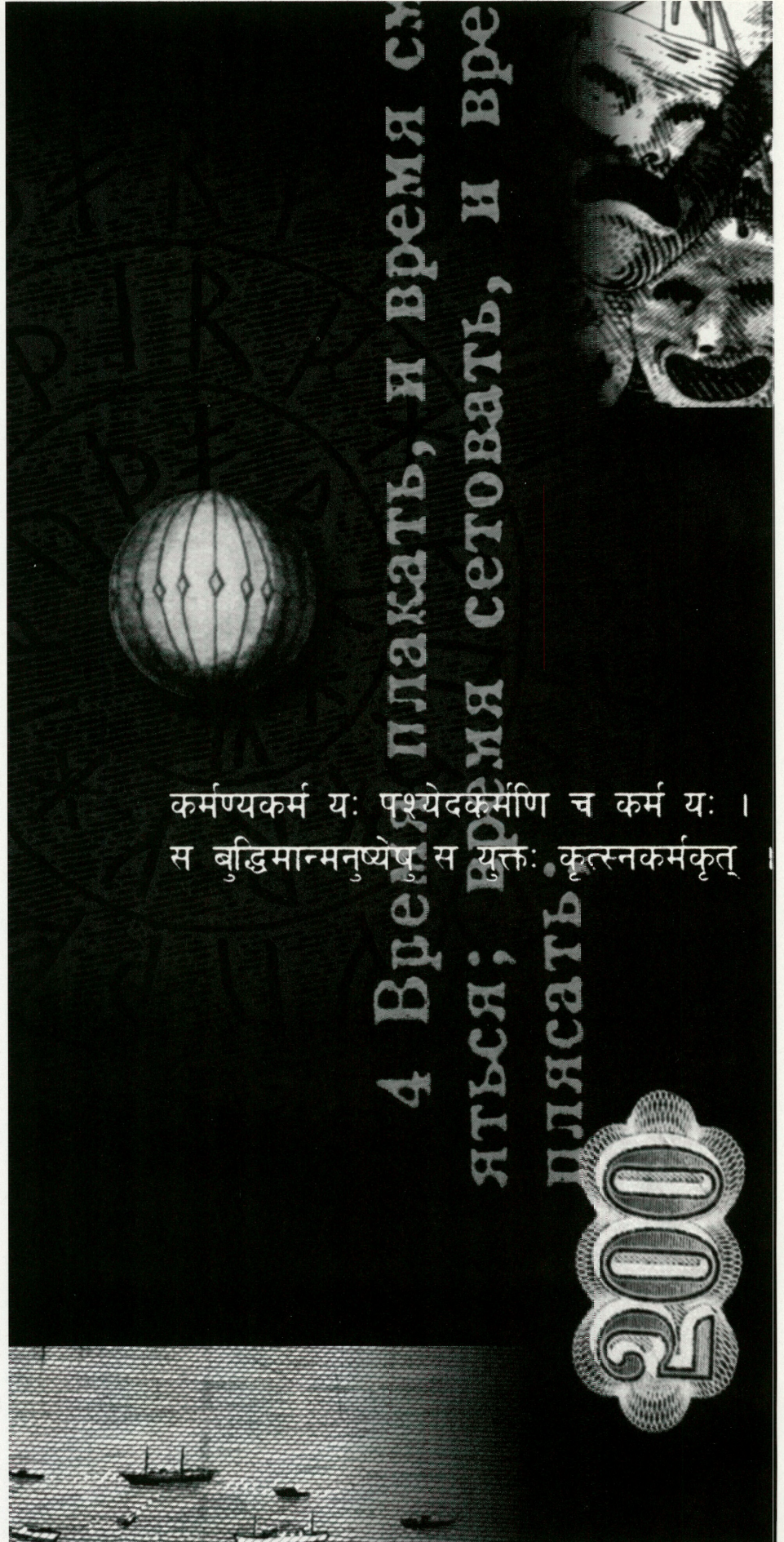


大誠齋印刷局製

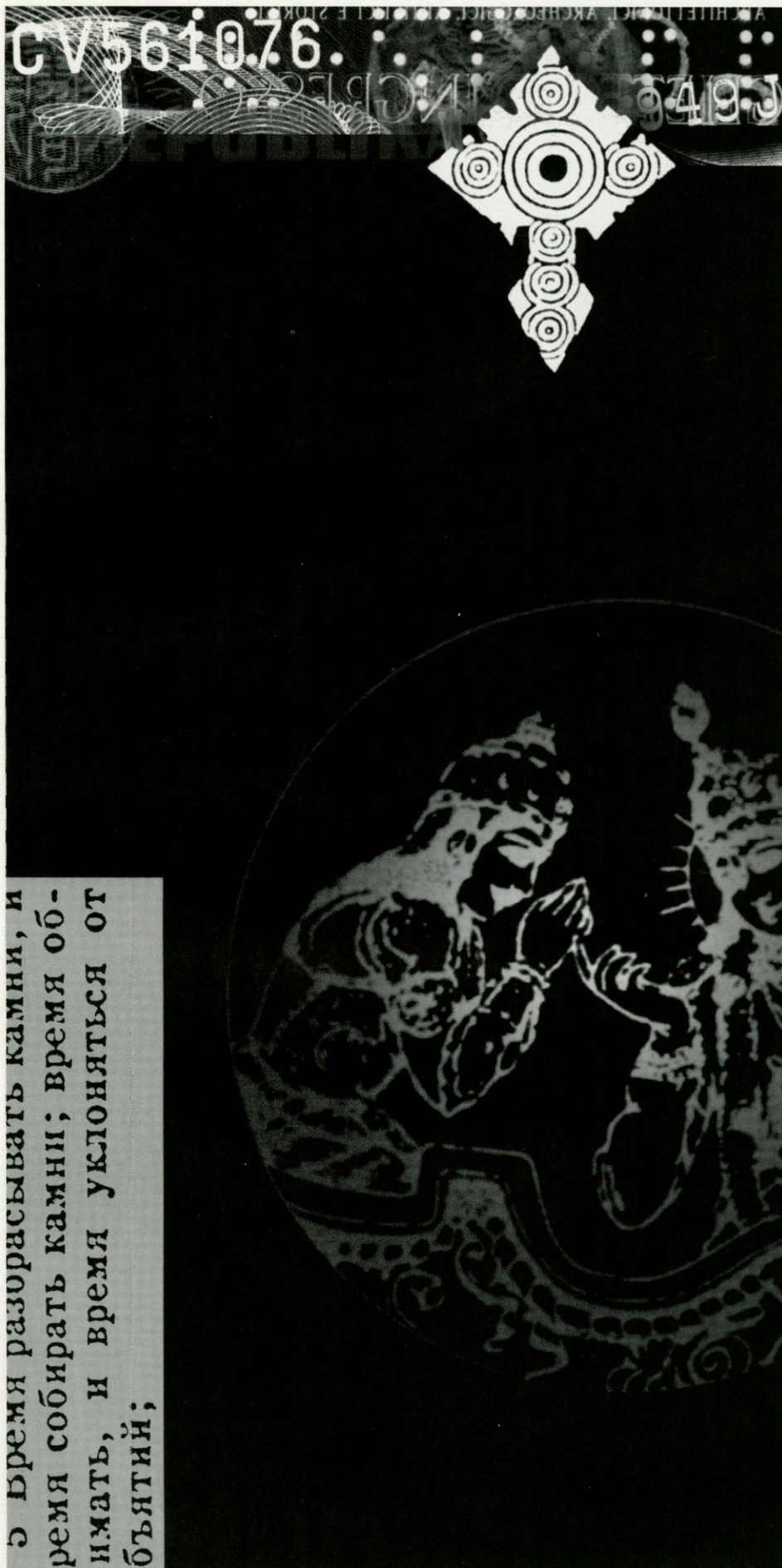
3 Время убивать, и время врачевать;
время разрушать, и время строить;

From Lapu-Lapu to Roxas

To Mourn–To Dance

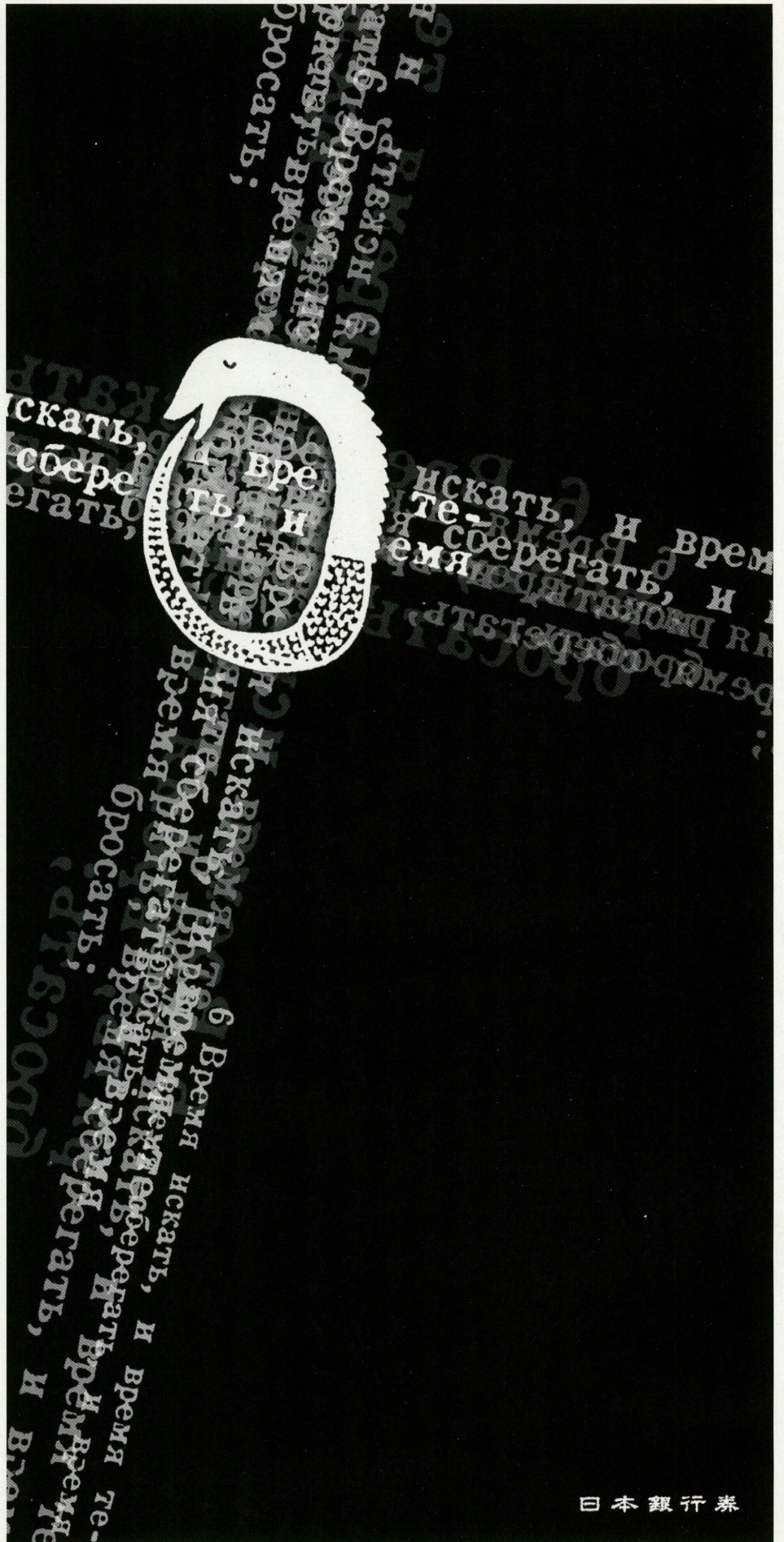


Э время разорасывать камни, и
ремя собирать камни; время об-
нимать, и время уклоняться от
объятий;



Republika

Infinity



日本銀行券