

**Farewell to the Cave.
The Wästberg Manifesto reconsidered.**

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Manifestos are usually written when a more or less self-imposed genius wants to change, even overturn, a prevailing world order in a particular field, such as art, science or politics.

Wästberg's 2008 manifesto features lighting at workplaces, mainly offices. Thus, it did not create the same buzz in the editorial and arts columns as had the bonfire of Marx, Marinetti, Valerie Solanas, or Ted Kaczynsky – or even Hundertwasser's *Mouldiness Manifesto* against Rationalism in Architecture.

But the subject was no less important. The lighting had in recent decades... run amok. Someone must denounce this atrocity! And preferably also propose a solution to the problem.

The manifesto, largely formulated by M. Wästberg, the remarkably young founder of the newly established lighting company Wästberg, was perceived by some as a breath of fresh air in a stuffy industry, by others as a rather... pretentious document. (Manifestos tend to be.)

Perhaps the later review may be attributed to the author's age. Or the extent of the time span he endeavoured to portray: The argument was based on the cave of the Neanderthals. Stars fell in the night sky, and sabre-toothed tigers blinked. Here, the darkness of the Middle Ages was outlined, as well as the ages of steam and electricity.

Wästberg's manifesto pointed to a systemic failure that most readers in essence agreed with, but no one could be bothered to address because it was too big. (Systemic failures tend to be.)

Wästberg's conclusion in 2008: Man has become alienated from the fire. Wästberg was not suggesting that the individual so to speak had become less alive, creative or dynamic over the centuries, but that he/she had lost touch with the light. Instead of the fire in the cave (the faithful friend), you now stared into 1000-watt monstrosities of floodlight in the ceilings of the world's offices – which drowned out any intimacy and well-being.

The intimacy must be re-established in the public life of man. A whole new kind of luminaires was required, on desks, floors and walls. And they would be developed by Wästberg in collaboration with some of the world's leading designers, architects and lighting specialists.

Ten years have passed. Time for reflection. Has the manifesto had an impact on the basic problem? Has Wästberg's lamps played... a crucial role?

A star twinkles, also a sabre-toothed tiger. M. Wästberg gazes lengthily into the night sky. Well, the basic problem remains. Rome was not built in one day and hardly Helsingborg either. People are still confused, but at a higher level. The world has, after all, started to move in the direction Wästberg advocated in his manifesto. The issues raised by Wästberg are increasingly being expressed by others. In any event, the company, has done well:

Wästberg's lamps have gained quite remarkable attention and have won countless prestigious design awards over these ten years. They can be found at museums as well as offices, hotels and homes around the world. If it is because architects or users have endorsed a manifesto or merely fancy the aesthetic qualities and advanced technologies of the lamps, is again hard to say.

Wästberg has become as established as a respected actor... on the international lighting scene! M. Wästberg clears his throat. With it followed the usual rat race. The fairs, product launches, jet lag... During the process of building an independent collection of products with a clear personality and yet consistency of design, Wästberg has gained insights beyond the paradigm shifts – if that is possible.

The Jubilee Year 2018 is meant to be about consolidation. Not in financial terms, but in philosophical. For the time being, Wästberg opts out of the hysteria surrounding product launches. The company will take even greater care to ensure that existing lamps are consistently further developed and that all products developed are relevant and adaptable to ever-changing daily needs. Products must solve *real* problems for *real* people. Lamps that are not primarily beautiful. And not simply new. Or obsolete remnants of history for that matter.

Speaking of ever-changing daily needs: Offices and other workplaces are slowly starting to achieve better and more efficient lighting, thanks in part to Wästberg. On the other hand, many conventional working environments are starting to change, even disappear: People work anywhere and at anytime these days. But that is another issue. Nor does Wästberg manifest any intention to produce headlamps in the future.

That Wästberg says goodbye to the cave in 2018 may sound like a threat. As if someone is eternally fed up with sweating it out, shuts down operations, packs up the wooden clubs in the trunk (but in any event, brings them along – because you never know when you will need them).

In Wästberg's case, in fact, it is the other way around. Wästberg leaves the cave because the light outside has reached inside the cave. The world has started to grasp what is wrong, even started to understand how the error should be corrected. The wooden clubs left behind on the fire make the flames touch the ceiling.

M. Wästberg felt that it was time for a summary of “a highly dynamic decade.” He took to the pen, and proceeded to write, not a new manifesto, but a review and possible re-evaluation of the original. (He did not rule out a book of some kind as the final result.) He started pulling all-nighters, wading through Western history of ideas, history of technology and economic history – now ten years wiser and more experienced.

This time he overread Plato. For a while, he was thinking of presenting architects and retailers with a new edition of the philosopher’s *The Allegory of the Cave*, written approximately 380 BC. and included as part of the *Republic*. Here, Plato describes a cave where people behind a wall parade with objects in front of a fire, casting silhouettes on the walls of the cave.

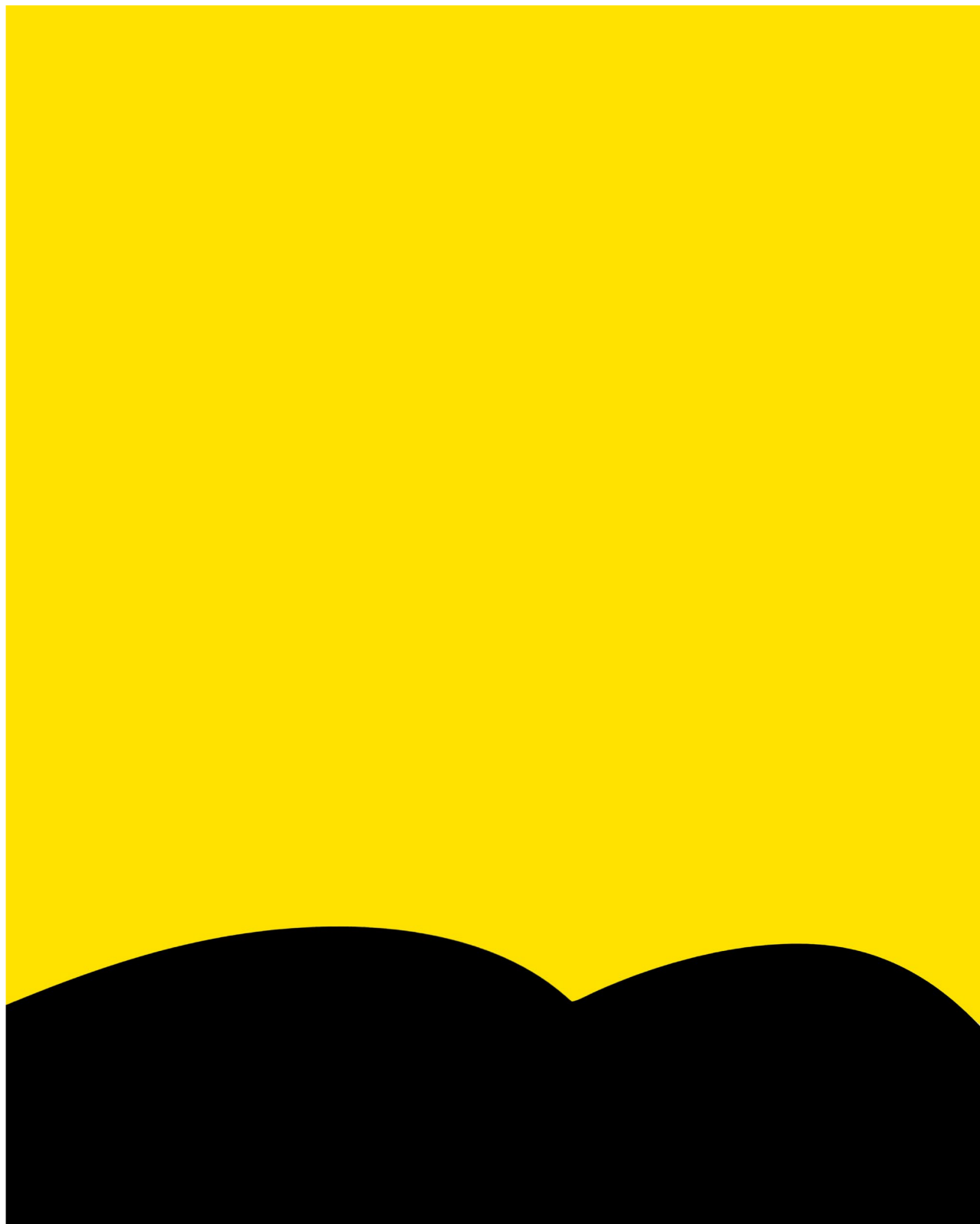
Using scissors, tea lights, corrugated cardboard from the packing room of the office and his daughters’ crayons, M. Wästberg even managed to create a pretty good representation of this mythical place.

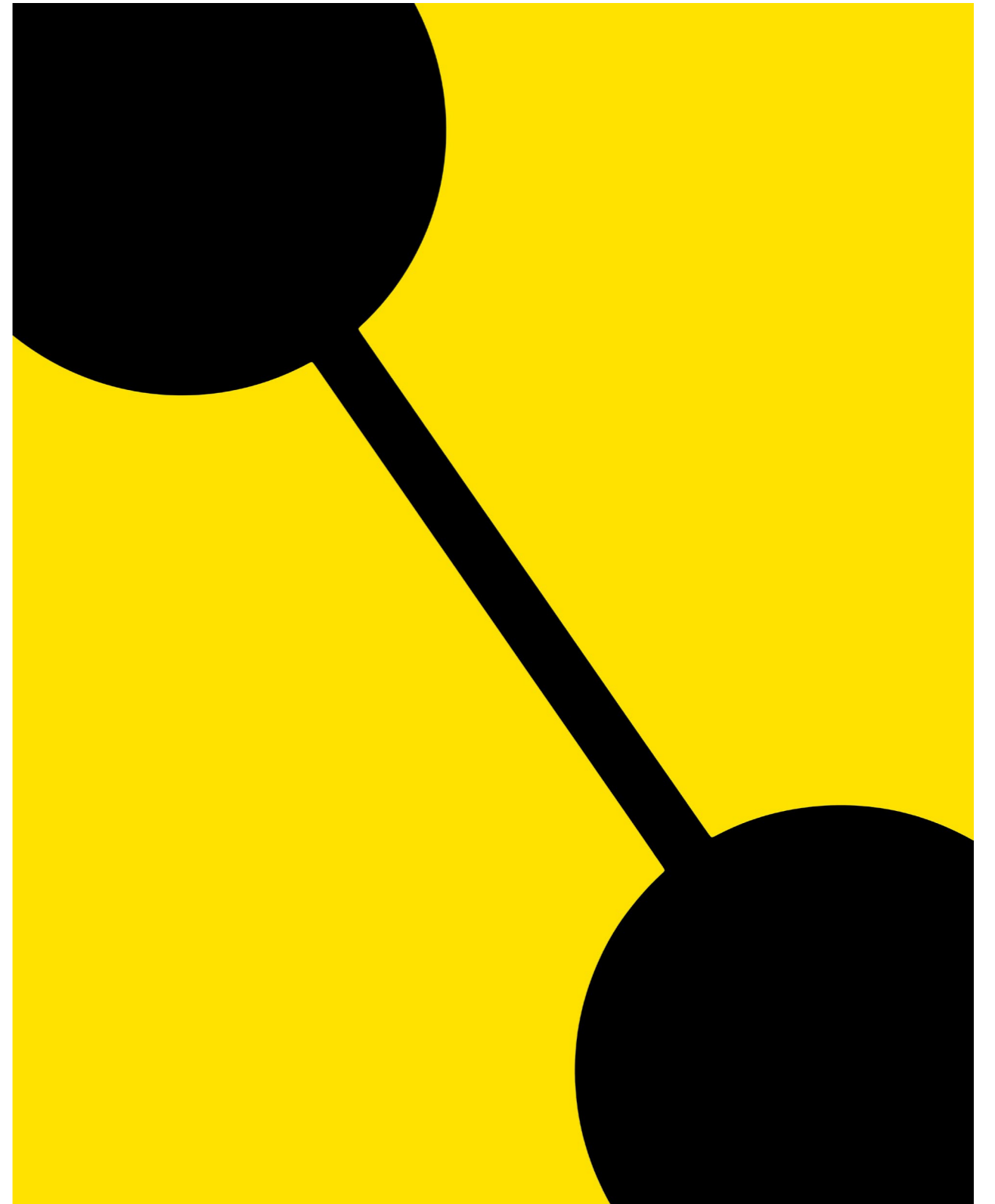
In the original manifesto of 2008, the text is accompanied by images of starry skies. And this time? Swedish photographer Dawid (world-renowned) once helped Wästberg photograph a conceptual lamp made out of paper. Now he was asked to immortalise the existing range, created during the period 2008–2018.

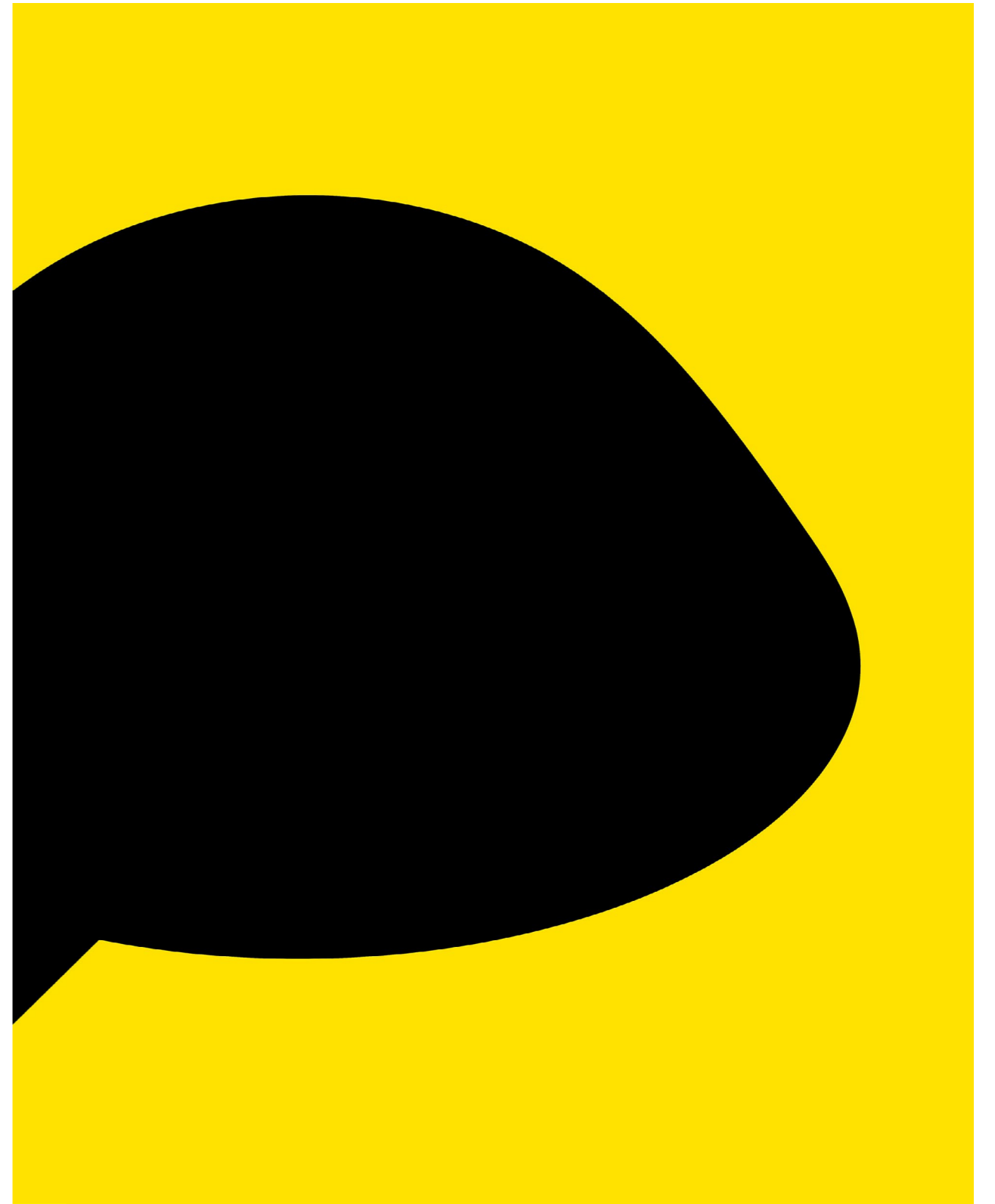
Under no circumstances could the lamps be photographed as product news, but rather... “as testimonies of an ongoing paradigm shift.” Although M. Wästberg has aged, fragments of his pretensions still remain.

Dawid went into the studio. And the result was an unprecedented suite of photographs, in condensed yellow and black. What Dawid accomplished, with Wästberg’s lamps instead of man-made silhouettes on a cave wall, can almost be regarded as a kind of allegory of Plato’s over-two-thousand-year-old allegory: As you know, shadows cast by objects are merely imperfect representations of real objects. But in Wästberg’s case, the interpretation is more delicate. After all, the objects here represent both the light and the shadows.

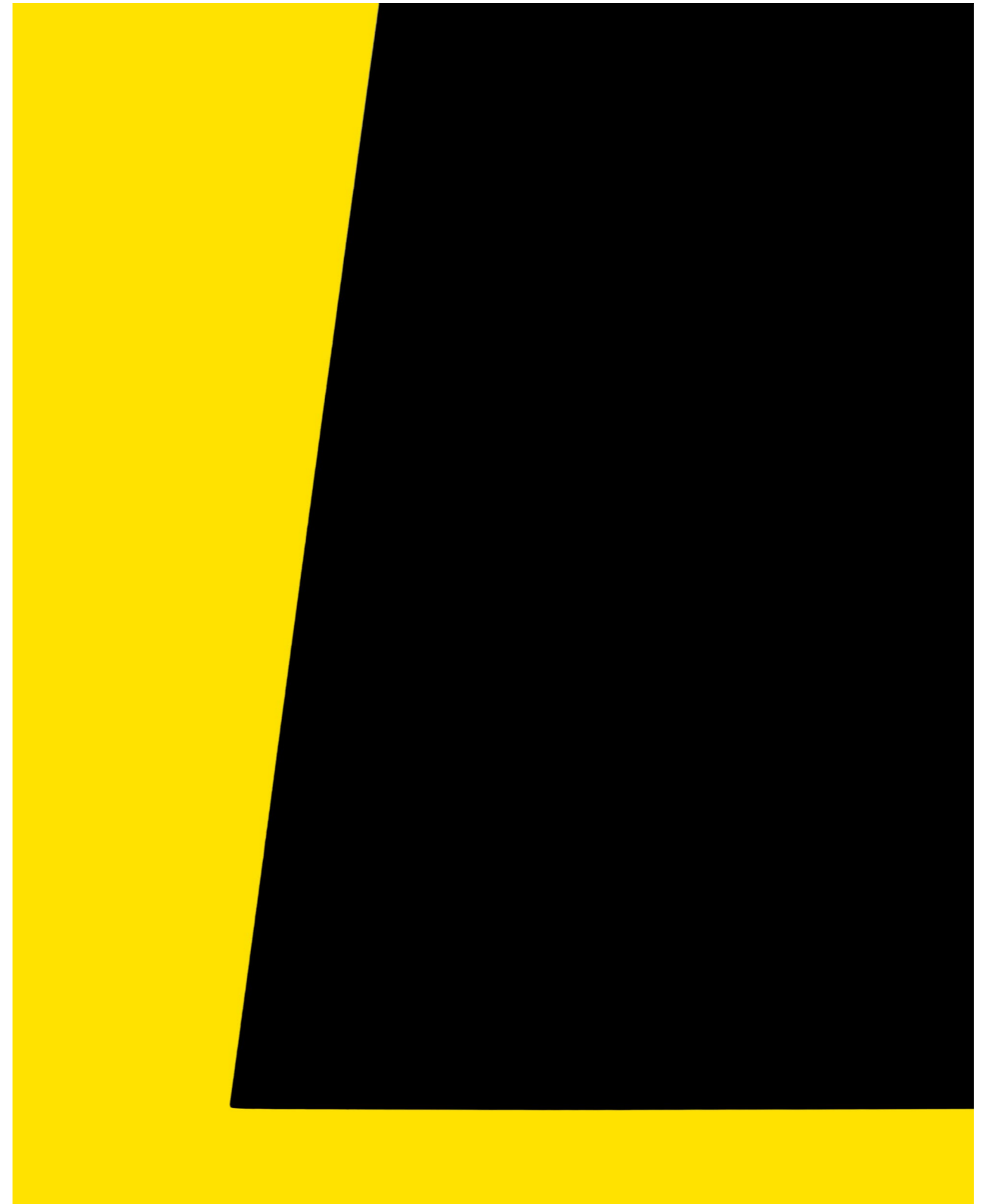
Plates.

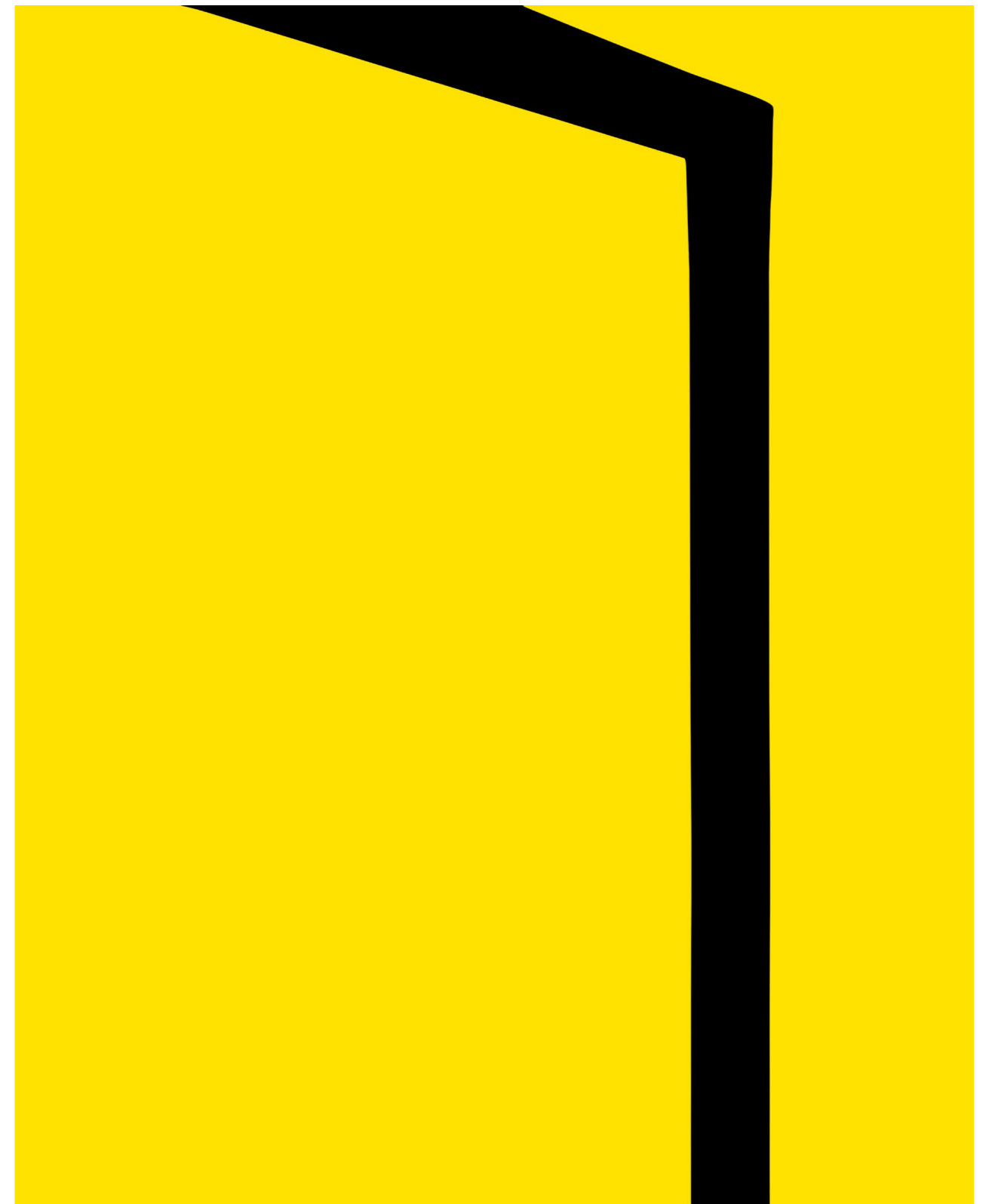




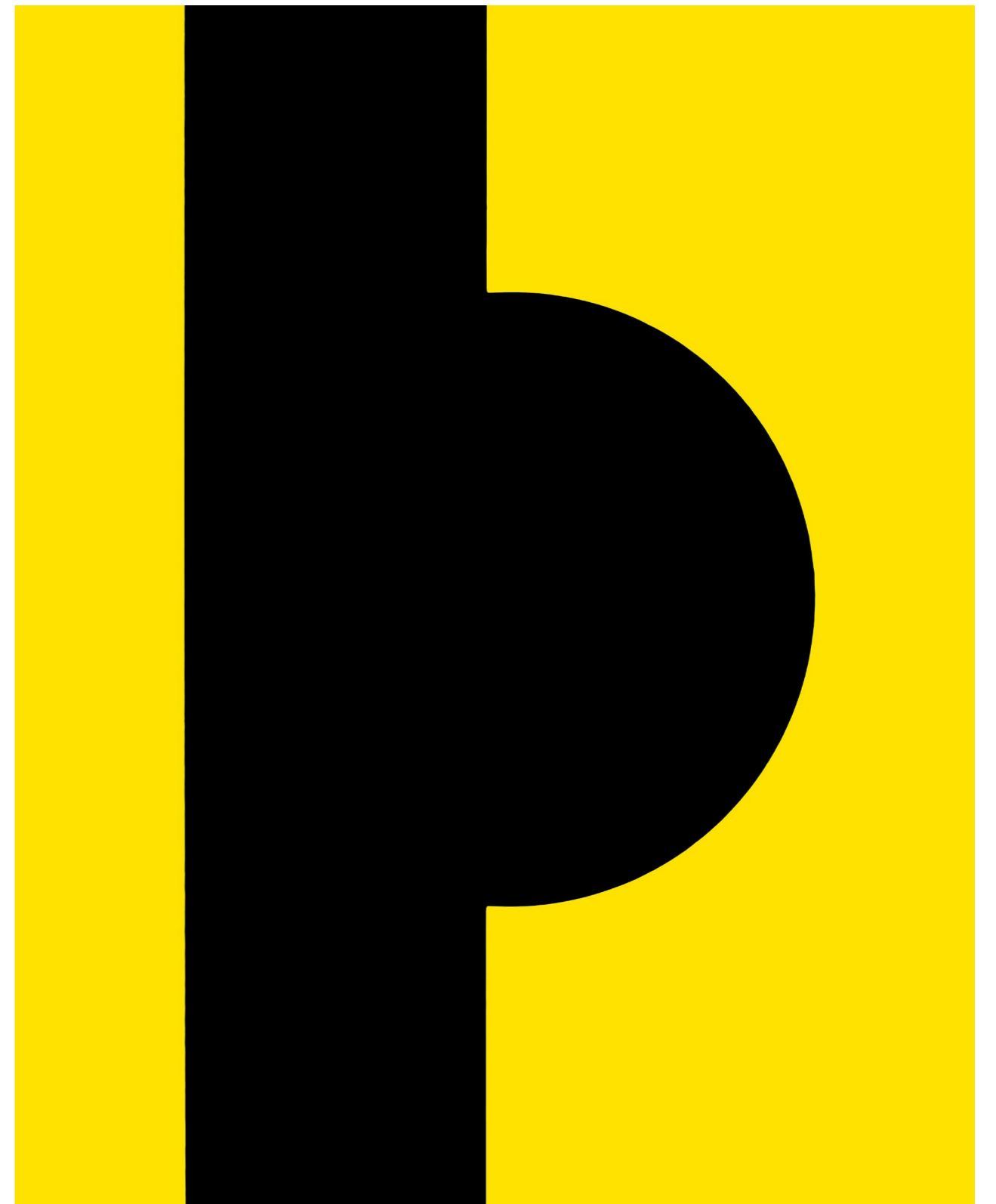


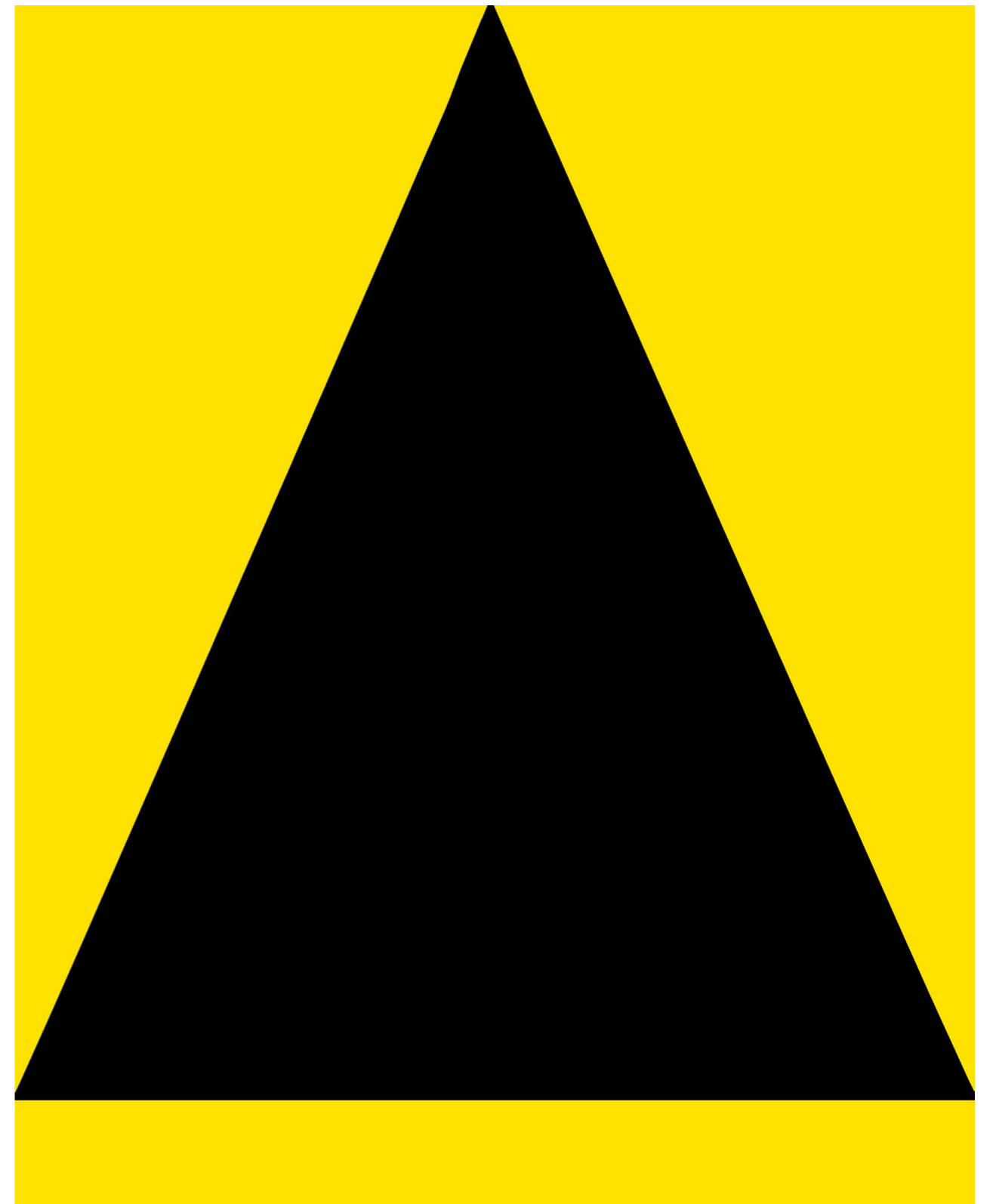


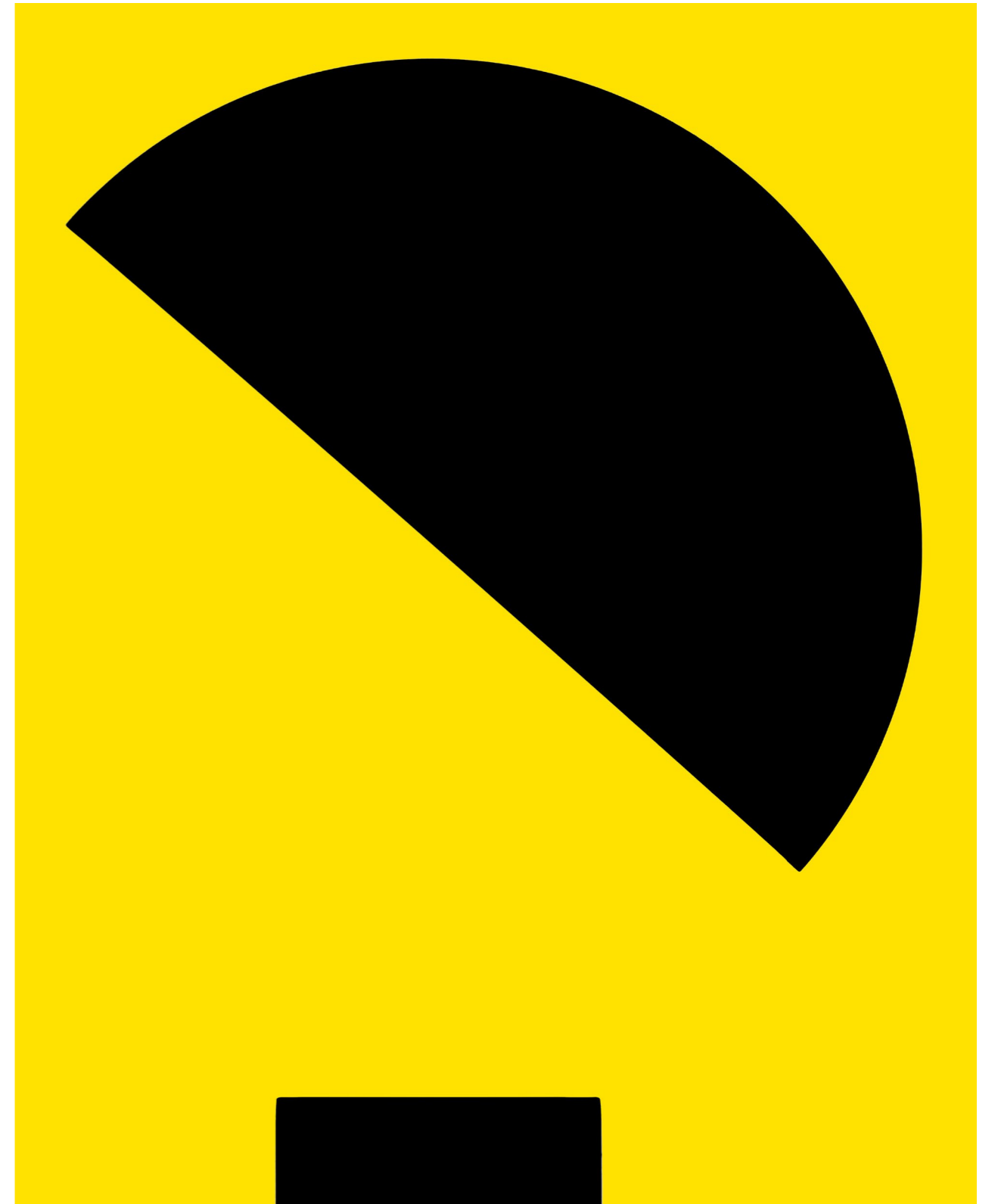


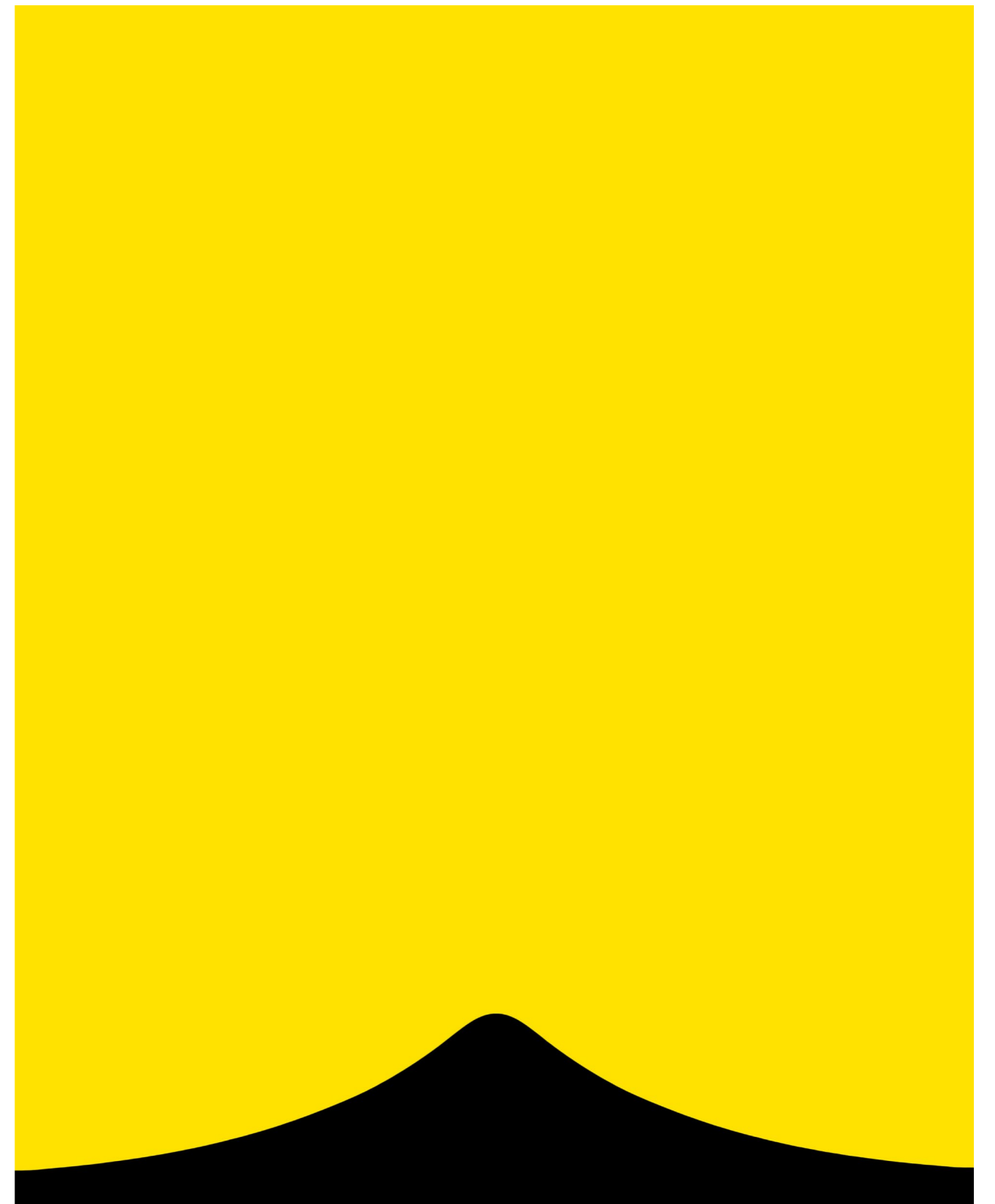


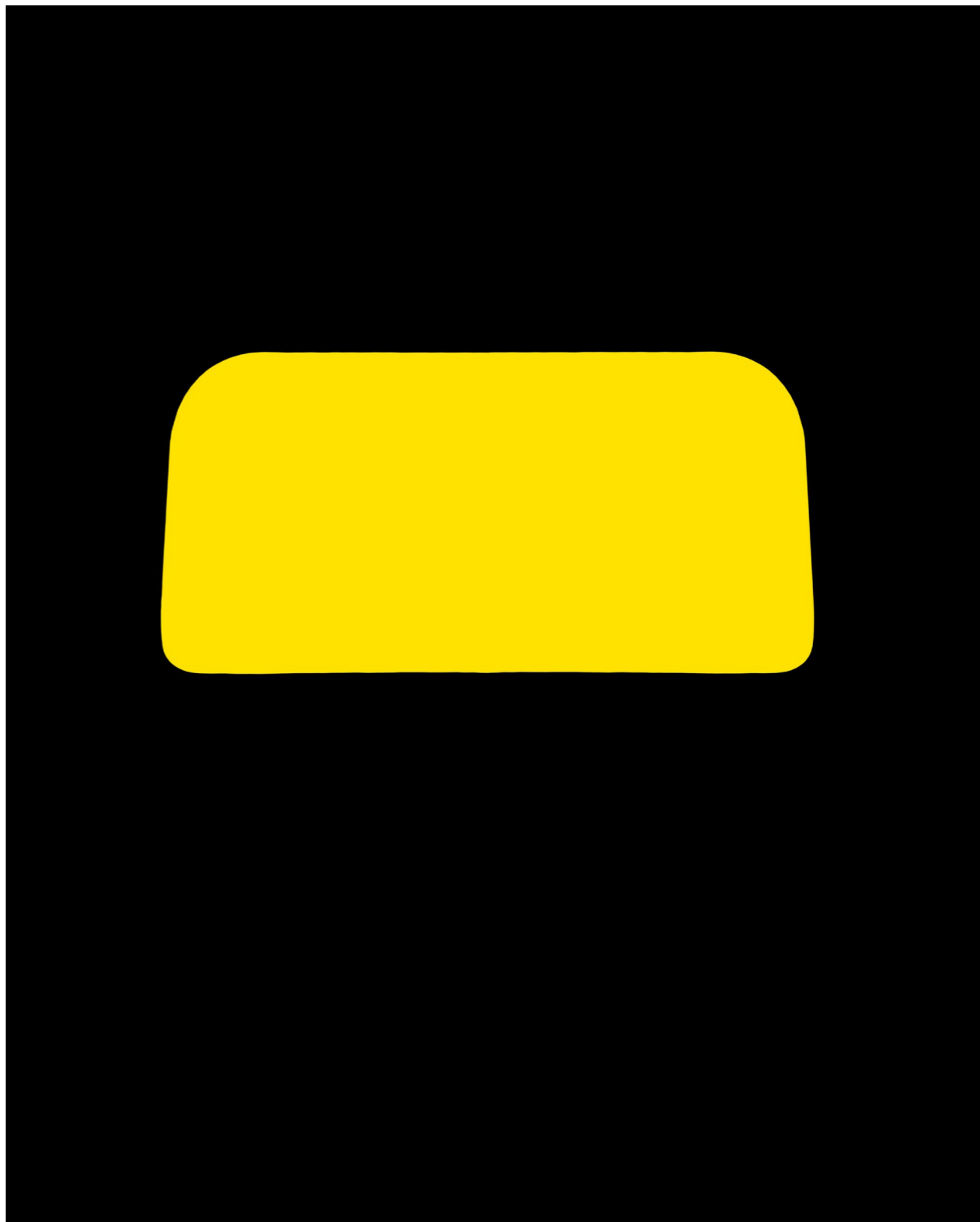


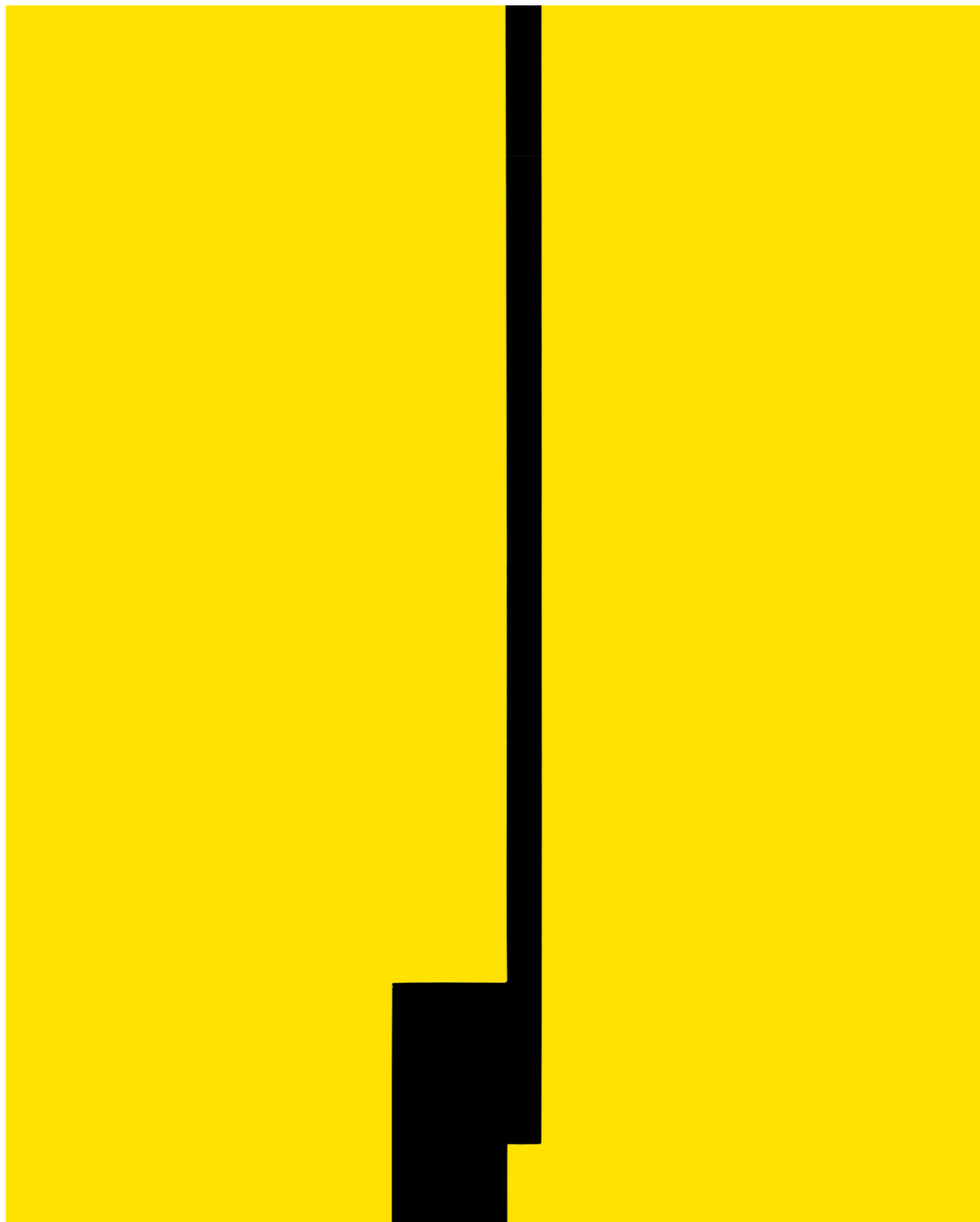


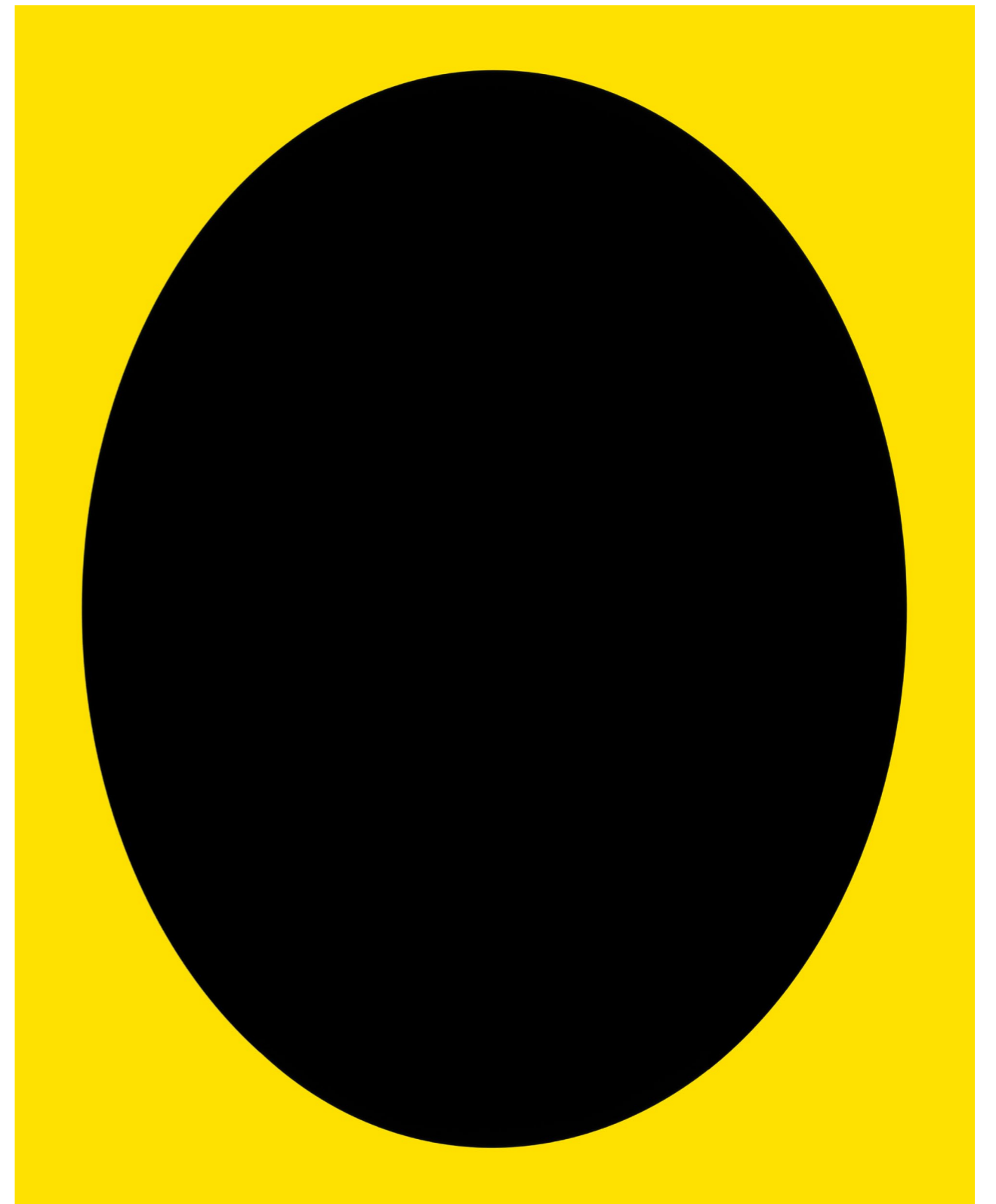


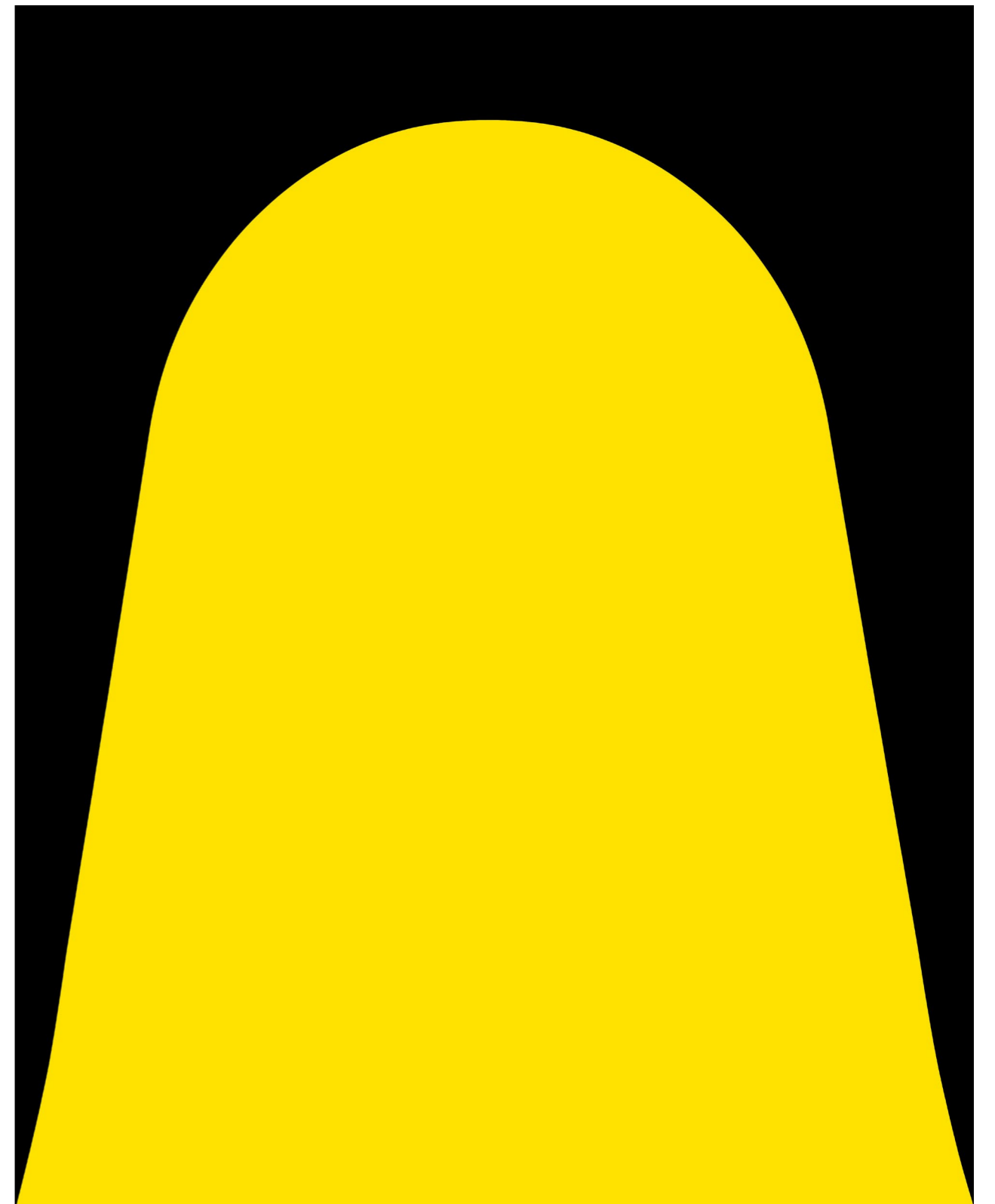












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- I. w084 studioilse / Ilse Crawford
 - II. w102 chipperfield / David Chipperfield
 - III. w103 sempé / Inga Sempé
 - IV. w111 van severen / Maarten van severen
 - V. w124 lindvall / Jonas Lindvall
 - VI. w126 claesson koivisto rune / Claesson Koivisto Rune
 - VII. w127 winkel / Dirk Winkel
 - VIII. w132 nendo / Nendo
 - IX. w151 extra large pendant / Claesson Koivisto Rune
 - X. w152 busby / Sam Hecht & Kim Colin
 - XI. w153 île / Inga Sempé
 - XII. w162 dalston / Sam Hecht & Kim Colin
 - XIII. w164 alto / Dirk Winkel
 - XIV. w171 alma / Tham & Videgård
 - XV. w172 bokeh / Daniel Rybakken

Dawid (Björn Dawidsson), b. 1949, has been called Sweden's first post-modern artist. He has for over thirty years been making series of photographically based artworks, examining the nature of the medium and exploring issues of perception. His work is represented in prestigious collections and museums around the world.

Wästberg is a Swedish lighting company aimed at bringing back light to human proximity, by restoring the private spheres man has been deprived of during decades of misguided pursuit of efficiency and standardisation. The universally acclaimed lamps are created in close collaboration with some of the world's most renowned architects, designers and lighting experts, and have earned prestigious awards for their combination of aesthetics, cutting-edge technology and resource conservation.

