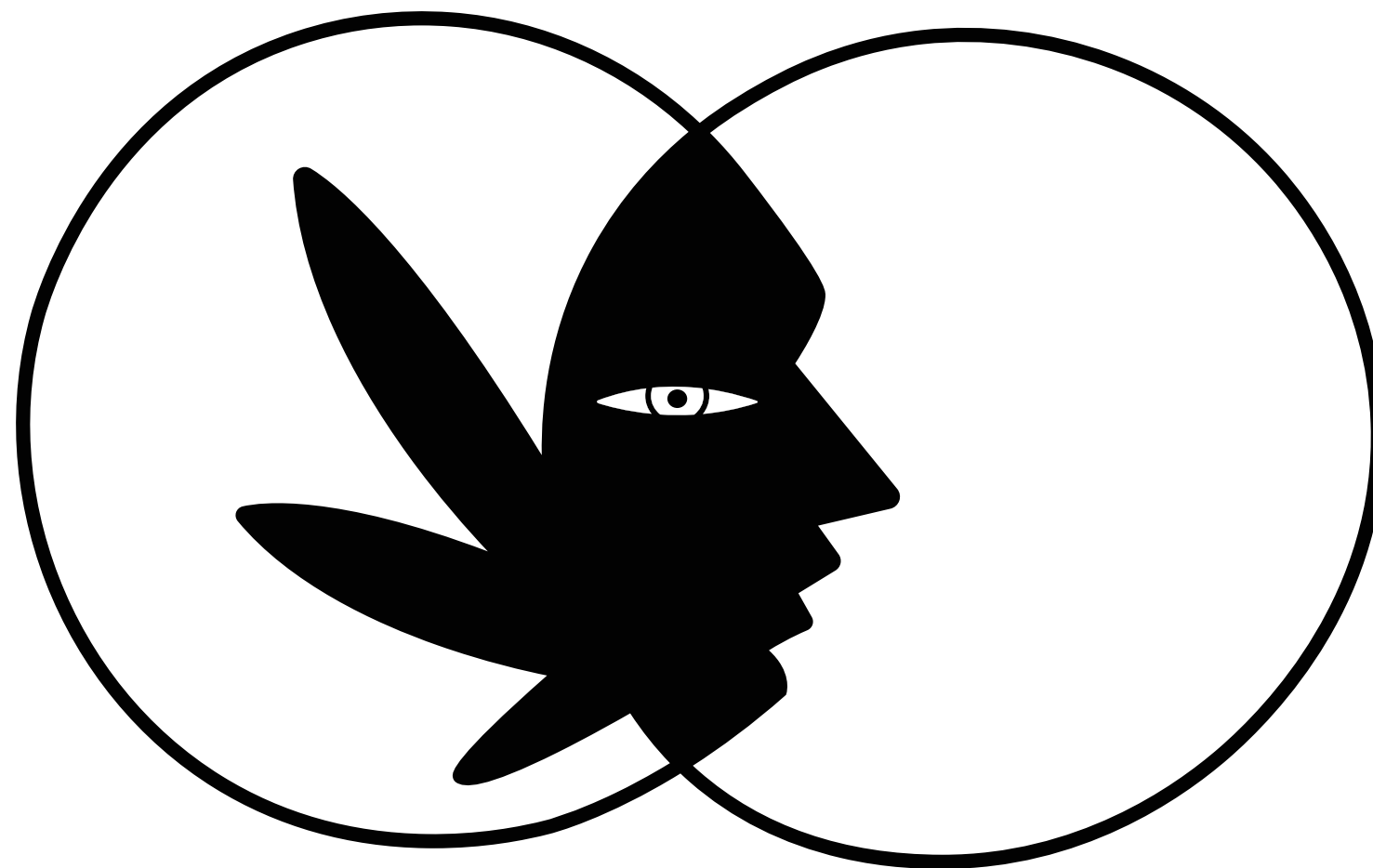


Canna-Zine

Ideation



Artist Bio

Tom D'Amore grew up in the small town of Collinsville, CT. He spent most of his time digging through his local libraries comic selections, and learning how to create his own world through the use of pen and ink. Now, Tom uses bold black and white contrast, color and intricate lifework to evoke atmosphere and surrealism.

Thesis Proposal

As long as there are people denied access to safe natural medicine or criminalized for growing cannabis, it is my duty to create cannabis art that advocates for these peoples rights. My thesis project is an illustrated book that educates and dispels the myths and misconceptions surrounding cannabis and its medicinal properties.

This book will cover the topics of the endocannabinoid system, the anatomy of the cannabis plant, medical applications, cannabis history, and ethical ways of moving forward with cannabis legalization. To make this all digestible, the through line will be interviews of professional researchers, people working in the industry, and medical patients. By contextualizing these topics and including the narrative of people, my book will create a well rounded perspective for the reader. This is especially important coming from an industry that previously was, and in most places is still underground. The images within the book will have a strong sense of line work and mark making that exists throughout my illustrations. As for how the text will exist in the book, it will be spread out alongside the illustrations to keep the reading from becoming too dense. Often, educational cannabis books are too dense for people who are new to the science of cannabis, which turns people with prohibitionist perspectives away. The text itself will be an existing, free domain font due to the amount of illustrations and writing I will need to produce. Overall, this will fulfill my goal as I have never found a cannabis education book that can balance text and it's art.

My book will be made of hemp paper, sixty pages long, printed and bound in the PNCA labs. Currently, there is a draft of the book and it will be fully written by the end of summer. During the summer I will also set it in its final format which will establish a final count of how many illustrations will be necessary. But for an estimate there should be at least 50-60 illustrations. The first three-quarters of next semester will be used illustrating and doing final touches on the book. The remaining time will be for printing and binding it together in a saddle stitch. For my oral defense I will present my printed book in two forms, a higher end hemp copy and a low cost timber print. This way there are affordable options for people with different budgets since spreading the information is important.

My illustration style focuses on line work and solid silhouette color fields. This will merge with my knowledge of the cannabis industry to create a platform for people to tell their stories and play a part in normalizing cannabis. For the last year or so I have been playing with the balance of shape and line and have found the direction I want my work to head in. But by adding my cannabis activism and interviews it allows me to reach out to the larger cannabis industry. Currently, I have been reaching out to cannabis charity to see which would be best so that every time I sell a book a portion can go right to a charity.

The influences for my book vary widely from art, storytelling, and even the medical patients themselves. Sergio Toppi is certainly an artistic hero of mine. He goes from one narrative to another so seamlessly. With huge splash pages that rely solely on line work. Where there is the color it will be used subtly which allows the lines to shine. I felt a general connection to him being Italian American. There aren't too many contemporary Italian artists that I feel such a kinship with. Another artist I am inspired by is Alex Ross. The visuals from his art feel like if Norman Rockwell started taking speed. Ross works in an incredibly fast-pace, without compromising detail. Not only is he a fantastic illustrator but he also is extremely good at creating a narrative that appeals to everyone. Often stitching together well-known characters with ones of his own creation. Humble characters who you'd never imagine going on the adventure of a lifetime. Lastly, my biggest inspiration isn't an artist but a little girl, her name is Charlotte Figi. Born with Dravet syndrome, she would have up to four hundred seizures a week. We're talking about someone who has twenty-minute seizures that can occur every twenty minutes. That is literally living life through the lens of a seizure. The Figi family exhausted all pharmaceutical options and were told that Charlotte would die. Refusing this outcome, the Figi family moved to Colorado where Charlotte could try a cannabis extract that was non intoxicating. Shortly after, she was down to two seizures a month. Cannabis wasn't just helpful for her, but it actually saved her life. Once unable to speak or walk, Charlotte now loves to dance and is living a fulfilling life. Her story inspired me to speak up and gave me the courage to make cannabis education to the forefront of my work.

The culmination of my thesis will be a cannabis education book that can appeal to anyone on a visual level regardless of their stance on cannabis. Having it on hemp paper will support and promote the industry that I love. As long as there are people denied safe natural treatments it is my duty to create cannabis illustrations to educate and remove the stigma of cannabis.

Thesis Abstract

Canna-Zine by Thomas D'Amore follows the author's journey of understanding why Cannabis has been such an instrumental medicine for his chronic pain. The journey starts with a serious injury and takes on the history of Cannabis, while following the movements that fought for its recognition. The zine is 8.5 x 5.5 inches, 28 pages, and completely printed on hemp paper. Made for cannabis-curious people or those on the fence, Canna-Zine works to soothe hard to digest information, and to provide a stepping stone for more knowledge.

Oral Defense

Hi everyone, Thank you all for coming so early in the morning.

My name is Thomas D'Amore and for my thesis I wrote and illustrated a cannabis educational zine, focusing on medicinal use, prohibition laws and movements that have fought for its legalization. My journey with Cannabis started while I desperately sought to treat my chronic pain. When I was a young kid, I took a family trip to Cape Cod. I remember one sunny summer day, while playing and ravaging through the sand at the beach, I felt a sharp pain in my knee. I looked down and realized I had a cut, that delve deep down to the bone.

Years later, as a teen, I began developing pain on my achilles right on the same leg. Through longboarding, and working long hours at my part time job, I began stretching that Achilles. As you could imagine, have a previous cut ACL injury, and a stretched achilles tendon on the same leg is incredibly painful. The chronic leg pain that came from it made daily obligations nearly impossible. I also began putting most of my weight on the opposite leg to compensate, creating minor, but still noticeable, leg pain on the other leg. Sometimes, I would spend days bound to the house, unable to walk. This injury completely changed my relationship with cannabis. This plant allowed me to use my leg again.

I knew that for my thesis project, I needed to share the benefits this plant can have on so many people around me. Cannabis can be beneficial in ways I could not have imagined before doing my research.

So, in the end I wrote and illustrated a zine that focuses on the Cannabis plant's medicinal and recreational value, my personal experience realizing how crucial this medicine is, the laws that made prohibition possible, and the medical movements that have fought for its recognition. The zine is 8.5 x 5.5 inches, 28 pages, and completely printed on hemp paper. I made this zine with cannabis curious people in mind as my target audience. People who are on the fence about it or those who just want to learn more but don't want to read a cold, difficult to digest book. My thesis has changed a lot since I started but I am happy with how it has evolved.

When I presented my thesis proposal it was important to me to stay away from stereotypical cannabis art. Most being seen as "Stoner Art". Old school cannabis art seemed to hold the demonization that had been imposed on cannabis itself and was perpetuating stereotypes about who the consumers might be. A breakthrough was realizing that this "Stoner Art" was seen so negatively because of the negative stigma surrounding cannabis. I realized this as I looked at cannabis art from around the world.

Alex Grey is one of these artists. He is well known for his amazing anatomical art that depicts spiritual scenes, many of which include drugs such as cannabis. Yet no matter how amazing or scientifically based his art is, to many people, his work will still only be seen as drug art, completely ignoring the intricate and accurate details involved.

Though I disregarded "Stoner Art" as being unprofessional. I do still believe that a lot of the art I see being promoted, feels outdated. For this zine, I kept the art black and white. This keeps the visual language unified and leaves room from the beautiful intricate textures of the hemp paper to shine through. I wanted to give a raw feeling for an intimate book. I had to consider my visual language very heavily. I wanted to keep my imagery simplified to shape-based illustrations. This allowed for symbolism and motifs to really drive the imagery forward. With a focus on shape, I was able to draw on similarities within words. For example, when discussing the unjust jailing of people of color, and how this is directly connected to privately owned jails. I began word mapping: Private, Money, Prison, Manufacture, Copy, Machine, Profit. Through these key words, I began sketching, and eventually ended up with an image of a jail in the shape of a printer machine printing out money.

I took the same process when talking about those still sitting in prison for cannabis charges within legal states. The word mapping started again: Prison, Dispensary, Cannabis, Boom, Roots. From this merged an image of a cannabis plant in a standard pot. Within the soil is the prison, where many still sit. At the top is an image of a dispensary, and the blooming business.

At that point I stopped creating a zine that changed its art style to conform to what the largest audience wants to read. Instead I drew inspiration from artists like him to dig into my roots and the people that normalized cannabis in the art world.

A major change I faced while making this zine was its format. Originally I was very ambitious and wanted to do a large book that was over 50 pages. Its content would have a mix of personal narratives along with in depth cannabis science. At that point, I also did not really have a solid idea of who I wanted as an audience. This all changed after I received feedback from my thesis proposal.

It was brought to my attention that if I wanted to spread awareness and knowledge, then the cost of a book that large would make it inaccessible to the audience I was trying to reach. The best way would be to break the book down into smaller versions or volumes, that could eventually get published together anyways.

Over the summer, I helped my partner participate at the Portland Zine Symposium which was held here at PNCA. Being in that environment was very eye opening. I realized that there is a lively culture around zines, and I knew that if I wanted people to have easy access to this information, a zine would be the best way to do so.

Another major change came during midterms. This was where the voice of the book took another direction. Because I was trying to balance a personal and a scientific voice, I was practically creating two books in one. This created a very robotic and boring voice that only appealed to someone who was as much of a nerd about cannabis as I am. I needed this zine to grab the attention of those who aren't cannabis nerds. I wanted to answer questions and inspire my readers to ask new and more in depth questions about cannabis.

Tom D'Amore

Canna-Zine

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Oral Defense 2

So after realizing the entire voice of my book was not how I wanted it, I rewrote my entire script and remade nearly all of my images. While this certainly worried my mentor that late in the process, it was the right thing for me to do.

The change I made was to merge these two voices through myself as the narrator. This took me completely out of my comfort zone. While I don't hide the fact that I consume cannabis, I wasn't sure if I was ready to tell my personal story and my relationship with this medicine in my art. I decided that being raw, and putting myself out there would best help me connect with my audience. For those with chronic pain and consume cannabis as treatment, this book will make them feel heard. For those who are curious about the plant as medicine, this book will inspire further research with a solid foundation of where to start.

Through my process, it was very important for me to talk upon the unfair laws, and the imbalance that is coming along with unethical legalization. When sharing my project amongst my peers, I noticed a concerning amount of misinformation. Some shrugged it off and claimed that because it is legal in this state, and federal legalization seems to be on the way, the project was not relevant. This was of most concern as I have been struggling with the fact that I sell cannabis to people all the time at a local dispensary. Yet, there are people in Oregon, and other legal states, still sitting in jail for cannabis convictions after their states legalized.

In 2016, nearly 600,000 people were arrested for cannabis possession. Consider the state of Colorado, which legalized medical cannabis in the year 2000, and then recreational use in 2014. A report from 2016, sourced through the Colorado Department of Public Safety, states that the incarceration for Black people and weed-related charges is still 3 to 4 times higher than that of white people.

Legalization has indeed, decreased Cannabis related arrest. But still, the decrease affects groups differently. For white people, the incarceration for cannabis crimes decreased by 51%, For Latinx people it was 33%, and only a 25% decrease in the Black community.

I acknowledge that it is such a privilege to have been living in an illegal state and have the choice to move to one where I could be safe from the War on Drugs while I pursue my dreams. My book not only touches on the scientific discoveries but offers insight on the racist laws that created Cannabis prohibition in the first place and how that still affects legal states.

Working in the cannabis industry, I understand that my customers have a lot of questions to be answered about the plant and its uses. But I also understand that I cannot reasonably answer all of these questions in a zine, especially while activists and scientists still have to find for their right to research

I quickly learned that many people were intrigued by what I call the "CBD boom". This CBD boom has increased immensely in only the past year or so. As legalization spreads throughout the country, many seem incredibly interested in the CBD compound and believe in the falsehood that it is superior to THC since it does not have an intoxicating effect. In my zine, I touch upon the misconceptions surrounding CBD.

Going into any grocery store in 2019, you will see products on the shelf labeled as hemp derived CBD products. However, many of these use "Hemp seed oil" or such little amount of CBD without any THC that the products become nothing but a marketing tactic. I know that that the general public, specially medical patients picking up my zine, needed to know how legalization is still being uprooted through capitalist marketing. By educating the reader, I look to evoke a higher demand for ethical change within the Cannabis industry.

So, inspired by Scott McCloud's graphic novel titled, "Making Comics", I decided to draw myself in the book as the narrator guiding my audience through the story line. Having myself as the narrator brings in a personal and intimate relationship that people have with this medicine. As I talk to my audience directly, I ultimately work with the reader to make the science more digestible, and more interesting. The zine becomes a conversation between me and my audience.

I discuss topics such as the endocannabinoid system, or the ECS. A complex and relatively new discovery which was named after cannabis because it was found while tracing how THC interacts with the body. But the ECS is more than it's connection to cannabis. It is responsible for keeping our organs in balance. It does this by facilitating the communication between cells. There are no real accurate ways of depicting the ECS since it is a system living within cells. Because of this, having a narrator make topics of this complexity easily digestible for the audience.

I was also inspired by comic books for paneling and scientific infographics directed to children. I found that these infographics were simple and appealed to those who wanted to absorb as much information in a small amount of time. I created this book for the easily distracted. I merged infographic and illustration to showcase as much information as possible in the most condensed yet emotive way possible. I used the idea and style of infographics to talk about serious issues that can be hard to understand by people who don't experience it. For example the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people with Cannabis charges.

As a writer and a budtender I know I cannot explain everything in a zine. Making the choice to condense so much information was not easy. I started this project with much ambition, but condensing and pulling the book into a smaller more focused mode, absolutely benefited the effect I want to create.

As a zine, the information I have provided becomes much more accessible to a wide range of audiences. I look to attend various Zine fairs to sell and promote the zine. I can see this zine living in medical focused dispensaries throughout the country. Cannabis clinics, such as the American Cannabinoid Clinics. Which is local and founded by the Knox family, a family of doctors focusing on helping medical patients consume cannabis in the most effective way. I see this zine in comic stores such as Floating World Comics. I see individual panels from this zine as editorial or spot illustration in articles. The possibilities are endless.

I realize that the expansion of more Canna-Zine volumes, will continue the spread of information, and will become more and more updated as new research and laws surface. I know that creating the spark of interest for the reader would send them into an even more in depth journey of doing their own research, or even being more susceptible to asking questions.

This whole process of making the zine has been a rollercoaster, ultimately an amazing experience. It showed me that if I pushed myself I could create something that was not only uniquely mine but something new that I can bring into the cannabis industry.

Oral Defense 3

It is not secret that art is influential. Whether it is a pro-life poster or a build a war campaign, art has the power to move people. Prohibitionist art was extremely successful in this and was able to terrify millions of a plant that they were already consuming. As the legalization market is still young, I feel as though it is my job as an artist and an activist to contribute to the visual language of this new cannabis movement. Within my research for this zine, I was able to interview a big range of cannabis enthusiast. I began by interviewing medical patients. This was a range of people dealing with anywhere from endometriosis to rare cellular diseases. I also interview Valerie Corral; founder of California's Compassionate Use Act, and founder of a hospice care center located in Santa Cruz, directed to patients who use medical cannabis to treat terminal conditions. Valerie, very literally, was one, if not the biggest contributor to the legalization of medical cannabis in California. I then interviewed Emma Chasen, a cannabis activist, educator, consultant and founder of Eminent Consulting Firm. No matter how these people interact with cannabis, we all had one thing in common: to deconstruct stereotypes and inspire others to think about ethical legalization, and how so many people could benefit from this plant as opposed to turning to opioids.

I hope that this zine will inspire further research amongst my audience, and hand them the proper tools to ask questions that could accurately lead them to the right answers. Working in this project allowed me to take down my walls and really analyse my investment in educating people on cannabis. My research allowed me to consider all variables affecting the cannabis industry while bringing my own thoughts and ideas we can create proper change. As country-wide legalization seems to be approaching, I consider the start of this series to be coming out at the perfect time. I need to reach out to the canna-curious before federal legalization. This is to promote a new generation of cannabis enthusiast to consider all of the factors that come with legalization and how we can promote ethical growth. Thank you all so much for listening, I will now open it up to the panel.

Creative Brief

Project Vision

A zine that focuses on the Cannabis plant's medicinal and recreational value, my personal with chronic pain, the laws that made prohibition possible, and the medical movements that have fought for its recognition.

Audience

I made this zine with cannabis curious people in mind as my target audience. People who are on the fence about it or those who just want to learn more but don't want to read a cold, difficult to digest book.

Methods+Materials

The zine is 8.5 x 5.5 inches, 28 pages, and completely printed on hemp paper. It was assembled and printed by me on the 4th floor pinter at PNCA. The hemp paper is grown and sourced from San Diego USA.

Comparative Media

There is nothing like this zine currently out in the world. When it comes to the style of the book I am heavily inspired by Jack Herer and his book *The Emperor Wears No Clothes* as well as Rockwell Kent's illustrated edition of *Moby Dick*. Another inspiration is Alex Ross, a good example of an artist tackling the conversation of art about drugs like cannabis and spirituality in a way that is being taken seriously.

Marketplace Application

I plan on making more of these Canna-Zines, eventually building up a collection that could be printed together in a larger book. Until then they will be sold at Zine fairs and sent to doctors offices to inspire patients that their medicine is okay.

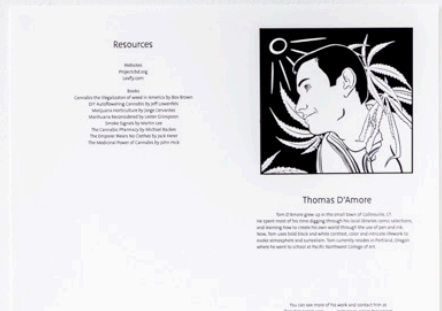
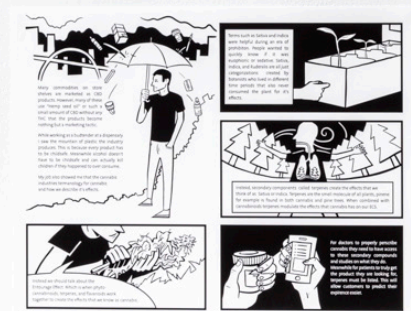
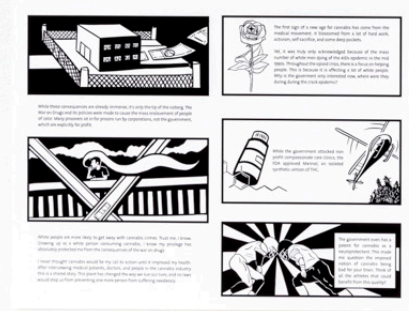
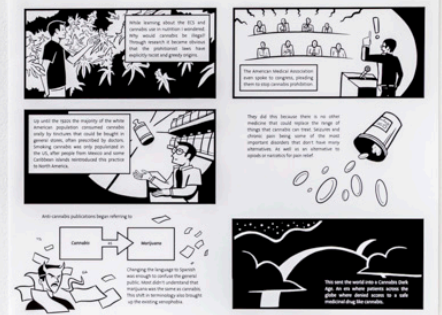
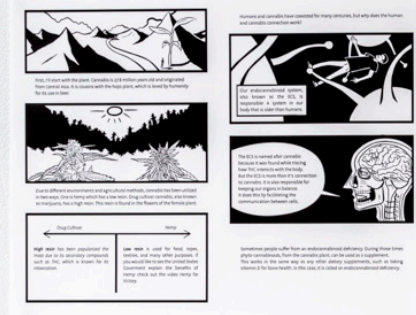
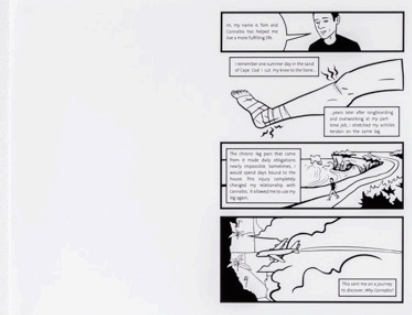
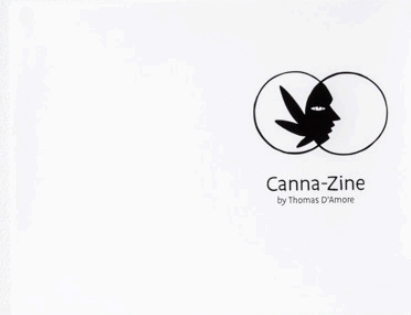
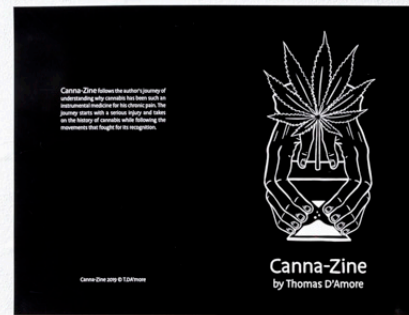


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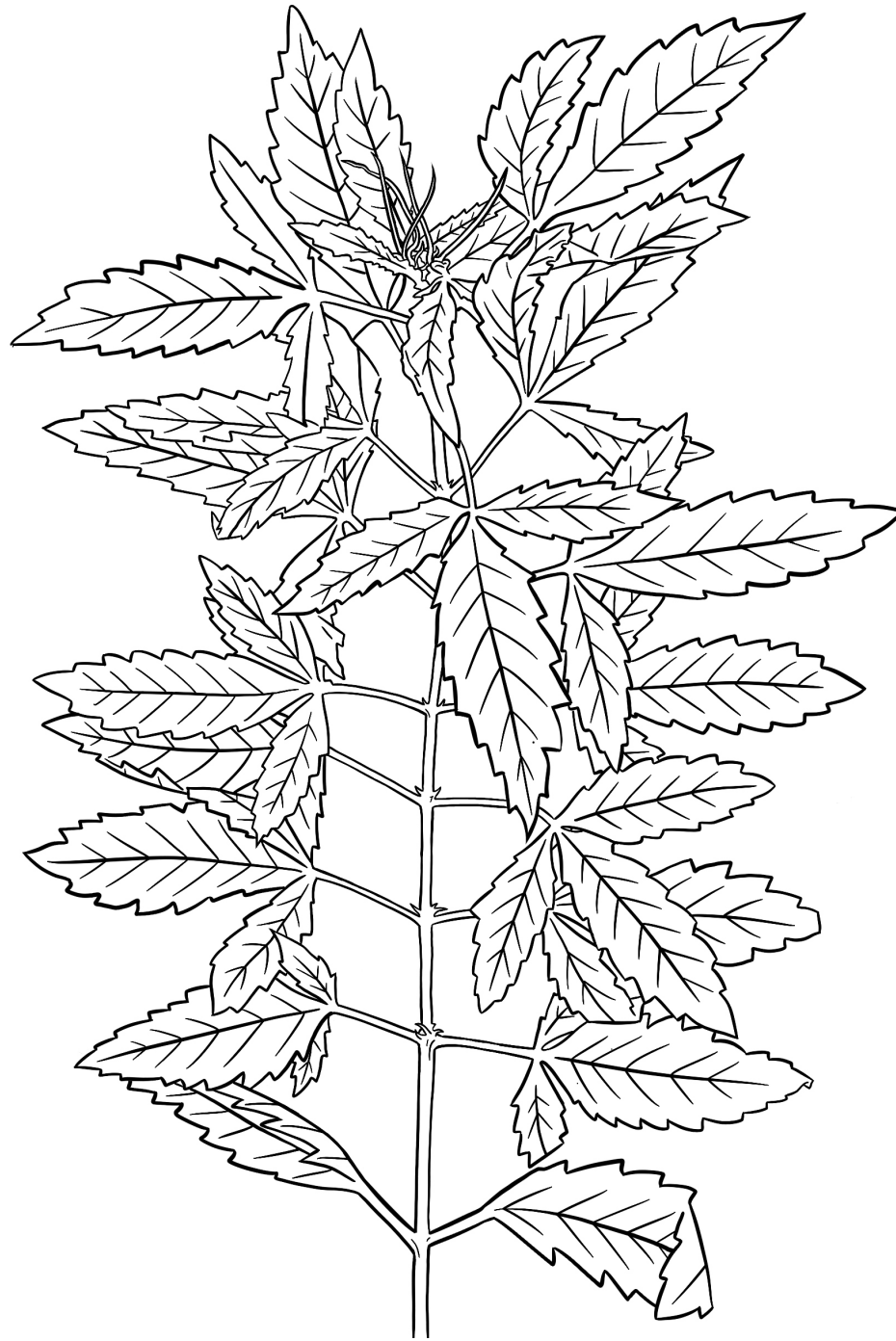
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