



FUGITIVE DUST

M. PRAVAT

CURATED BY
SABIH AHMED

6 MARCH - 2 MAY 2021

VHC

VIDA HEYDARI
CONTEMPORARY

CURATORIAL NOTE

Fugitive Dust is M. Pravat's latest solo-exhibition presented at Vida Heydari Contemporary. It brings together artworks and studies from Pravat's practice spanning from 2016, a period when he transitioned from making paintings to un-making them. Since then, his works have deployed a range of media that include brick, cement, dust, slate, wood, metal, ink and graphite, and techniques that include grinding, sandblasting, carving, flaming, washing and drying. The transition into these processes does not signify that he has left painting in favour of another medium. Rather, as an artist formally trained in and committed to painting, his work seems to have shifted towards an undoing of the very foundations of painting. Anyone familiar with the history of art is well-aware that this is not a novel or unique trajectory. What is compelling, however, is how he approaches this project.

Pravat's art practice draws on particular lived experiences of the built environment. Almost 15 years ago he moved from Vadodara, where he received his Master's Degree in Painting from the Maharaja Sayajirao University, to Delhi where he has been residing ever since. After his move to the national capital, his attention has been directed to formal (and informal) properties of architecture and the city-scape, particularly towards areas where construction projects operate on the blurry line between what is legally sanctioned and what is not. These are the areas where he spends most of his time and where his own studio is situated. Here, the ways by which infrastructures are claimed and inhabited operate through porous and precarious logics, often at odds with the rules or guidelines prescribed by masterplans and municipal authorities. This does not lend itself to the occasional romanticism evoked around informal inhabitations, but rather brings one up close to sites of immense tension between different economic realities and asymmetries of power that are at the foundation of cities such as Delhi. Pravat's practice attempts to capture specific forms of materialisations that take place amidst such environments.

The paintings that Pravat made during his early years of moving to Delhi delved into opaque fantasies mapped onto blueprints and interior design magazine covers. Gradually, his work shifted to representing under-construction sites and what seemed like abandoned incomplete buildings. There was always a simultaneous preoccupation with zoomed-out cityscapes and zoomed-in interior spaces captured through painterly distortions of maps and space studies in his work. Architectural space, enclosures, material densities, opacities and transparencies, circulations and flows, accumulations and dispersals, and the wear and tear of things have been recurring motifs in Pravat's work. According to him, his practice emerged out of the perpetual state of under-construction that surrounded him.

In 2012, Pravat co-founded the Layout Collective comprising of Delhi based artist Susanta Mondal, Zurich based artist Navid Tschopp, and now Kolkata based architect S. Boka. Together they made a series of site-specific architectural interventions between 2012 and 2017 beginning in Pravat's own studio in Neb Sarai, Delhi, going on to make further interventions in Kochi during the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, in the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, in the Sarai Reader 09 exhibition and at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, in Delhi. These 'location-based constructions' by the Layout Collective worked like architectural growths within existing built spaces of the studio, the museum, the university and the ground. They were gestures of architectural disruption within institutional structures. In Pravat's painterly practice, one can say that this figuratively broke the fourth wall.

Since 2016, as evidenced in the works presented in *Fugitive Dust*, a breakdown of the picture plane occurs in Pravat's works where we are offered not so much an integrated image of the contemporary urban-scape but a disintegration of it as blue-prints, maps, architecture and geological land mass collapse into one another. The never-ending construction of his paintings now captures the unabating move

ments between wear-and-tear, erosion, disintegration, demolition and reconstruction. The structures that are visible in his new works are made out of bricks and rubble that are further broken down. His studio is a site for multiple forms of material accumulations where the creation of these artworks mobilise a team of people who bring their knowledge from construction sites. Dust becomes an ally and a medium in his studio during the slow process of breaking down and building up his artworks.

According to Pravat, "the dust that rises from construction sites and demolition drives never settles." We often wait for dust to settle, but dust keeps rising. It knows no borders. It is terrestrial, yet it is also extra-terrestrial. It is material, yet it is also atmospheric. Dust refuses to go away, it is displaced from one location to another, from one epoch to another and from one form to another. Urban environments are steeped in dust, some cities more than others and oftentimes as a peril when measured along with particulate matter and pollutants in the air. If places were seen through a refractive index of dust, we would see enormous migratory movements of materials and bodies that we are in the midst of. Dust is a reminder of those movements that are in essence geopolitical. In Pravat's work, we observe a transitory crystallisation of these multiple states and movements. *Fugitive Dust* presents a condensed encounter with the material flux of contemporary reality through his practice.

- Sabih Ahmed

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My art practice over the years has been an attempt to capture and play with the state of things being constantly under construction. I feel that all materials have a consciousness of their own, they are bearers of memories and marks. I am interested in how they take on new forms when they interact with other materials and processes, and what happens when they disintegrate and get reintegrated into other forms. When you see urban environments in this way, everything starts appearing fluid even though the materials are solid.

Over the years, I have been looking at the most basic building block of all construction material, the brick. It is an element of architecture that provides stability. It becomes the foundation for all built structures. To even begin working with this material, I had to change my entire studio infrastructure. My work develops over a long period of time and with a number of helping hands, together with whom we rework this material.

For *Fugitive Dust* I have been in conversation with Sabih Ahmed about how dust that rises from construction sites and demolition drives never settles. This dust is very connected to construction. It thickens the air we breathe, forms clouds in the sky, sediments into the earth's crust and flows into water bodies before returning back into construction sites. A city is a continuous cycle of solid, liquid and gaseous states.

- M. Pravat





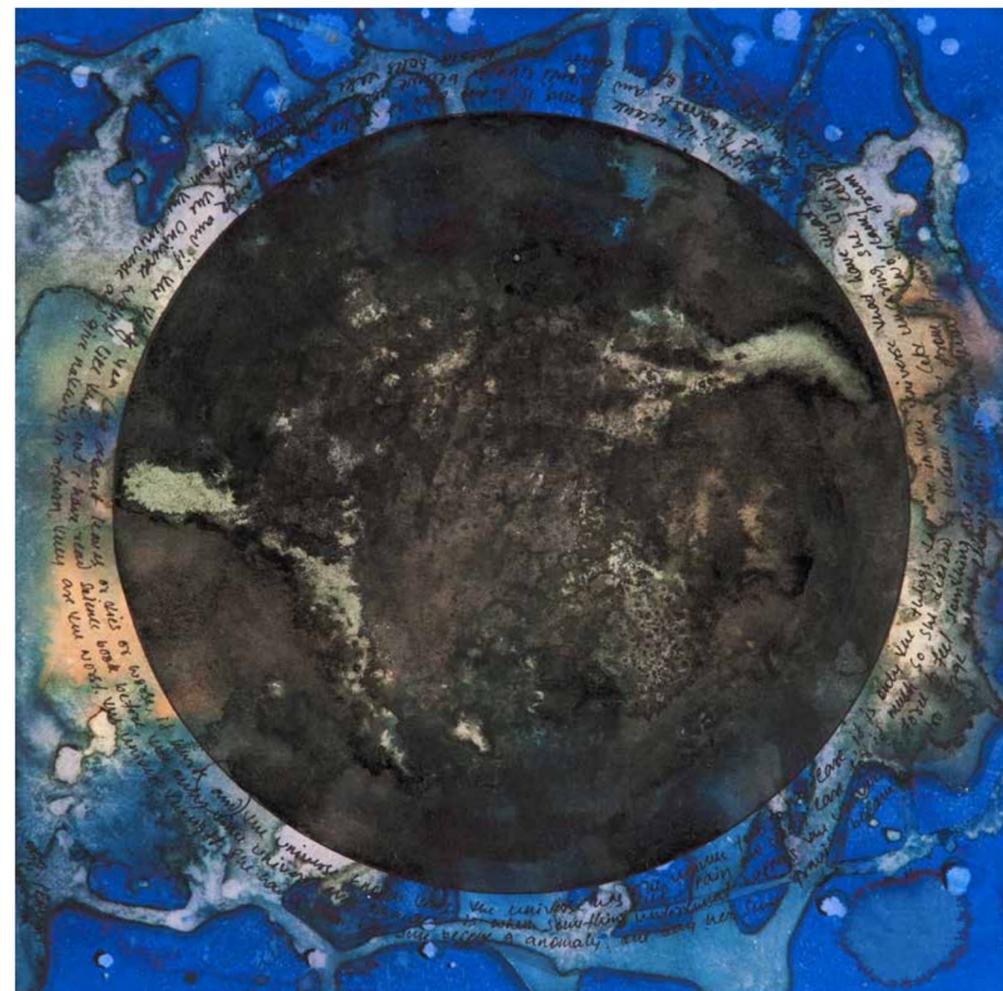
CELESTIAL BODIES - 1 (2021)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x12")



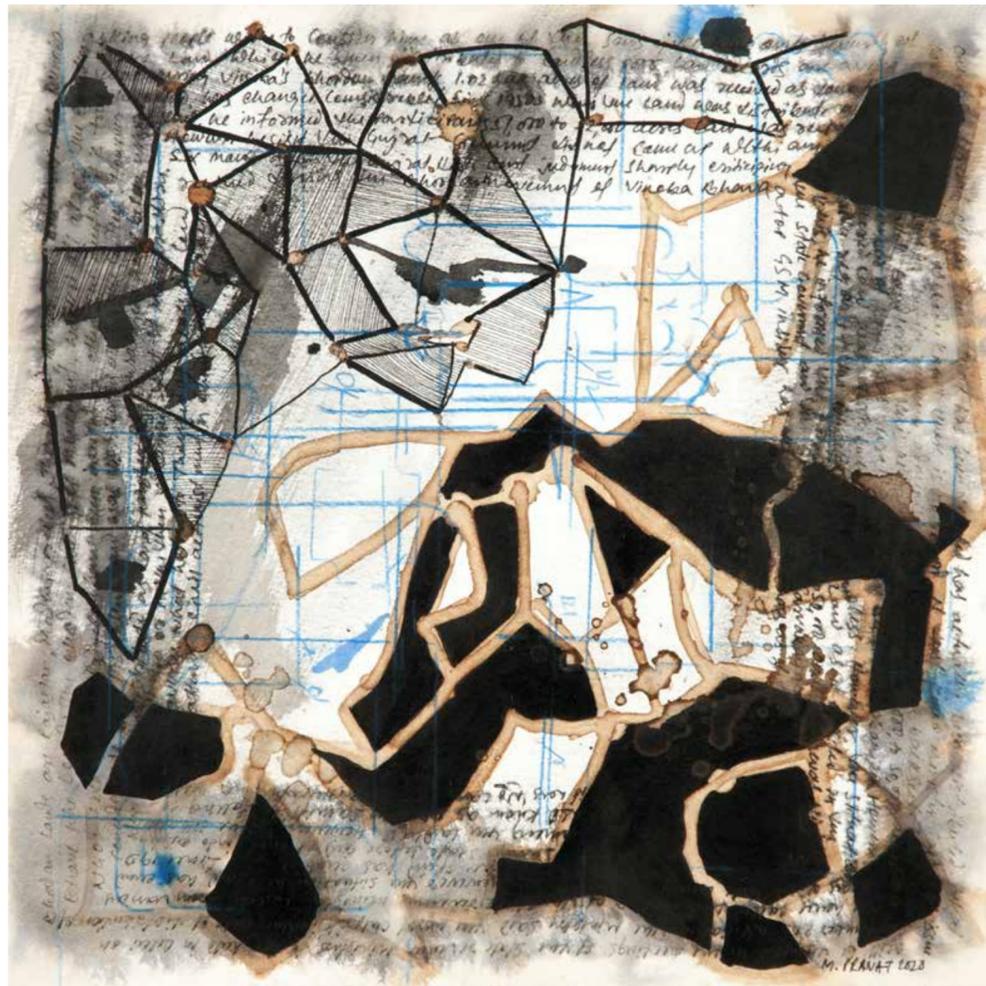
CELESTIAL BODIES - 2 (2021)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x12")



CELESTIAL BODIES - 3 (2021)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x12")



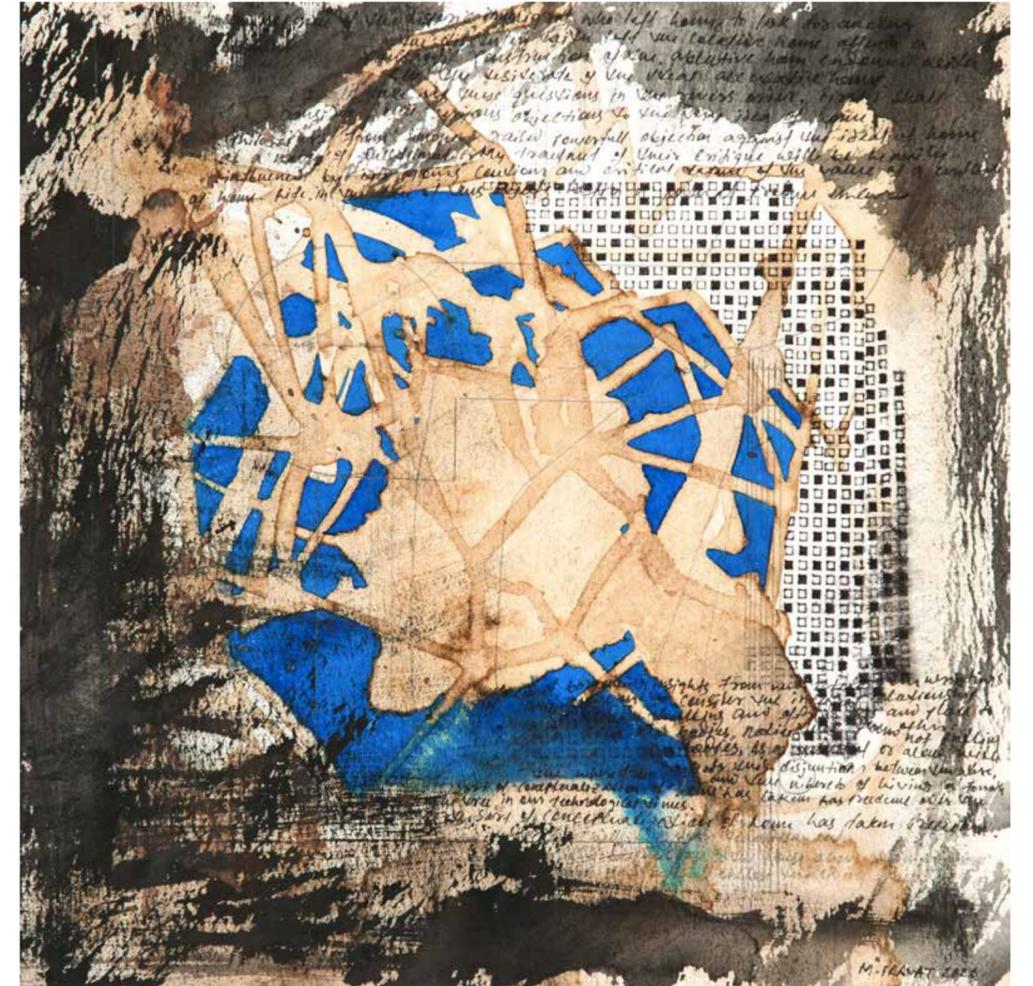
TERRESTIAL BODIES - 1 (2021)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x12")



TERRESTIAL BODIES - 2 (2021)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x12")



TERRESTIAL BODIES - 3 (2021)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x12")



ENTROPY - 1 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



ENTROPY - 2 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



ENTROPY - 3 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



ENTROPY - 4 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



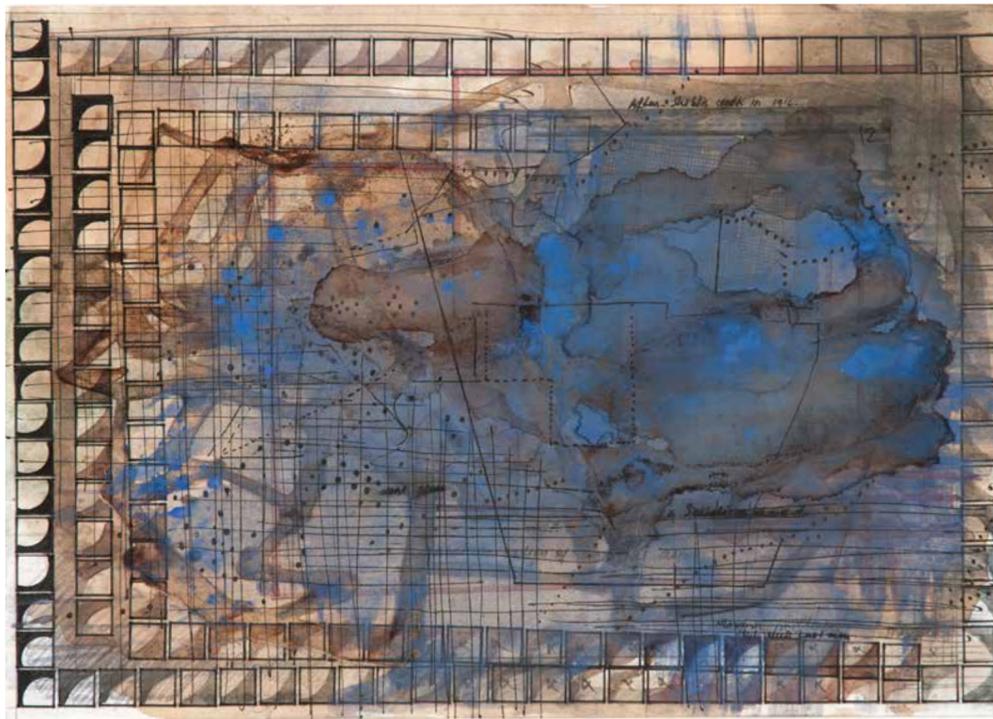
ENTROPY - 5 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



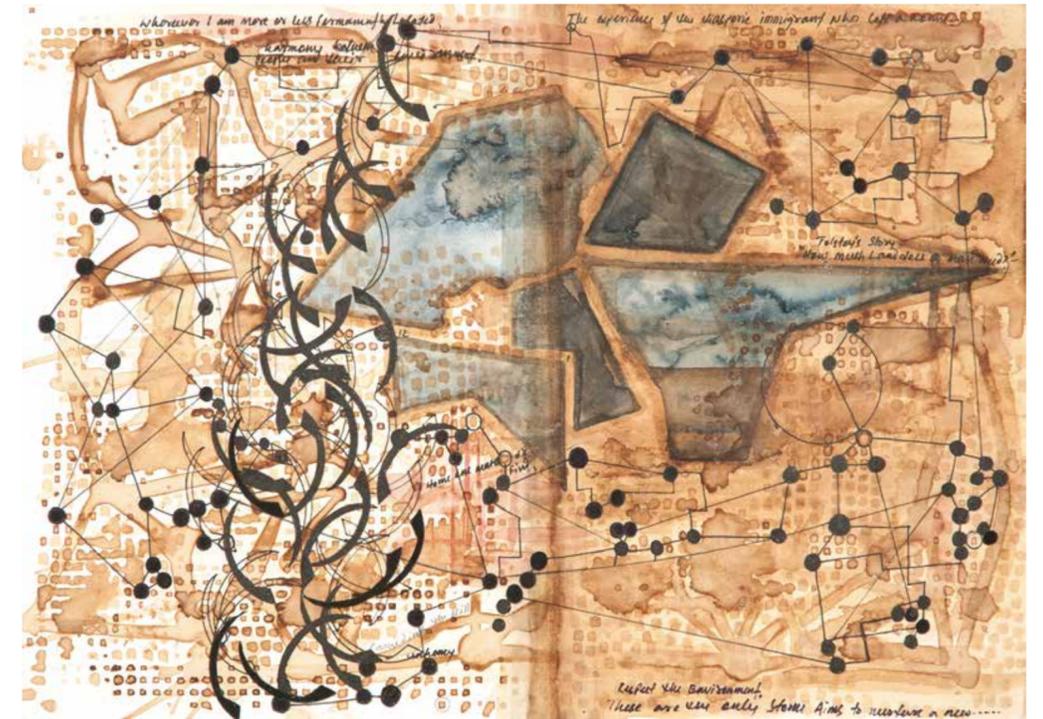
ENTROPY - 6 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



ENTROPY - 7 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



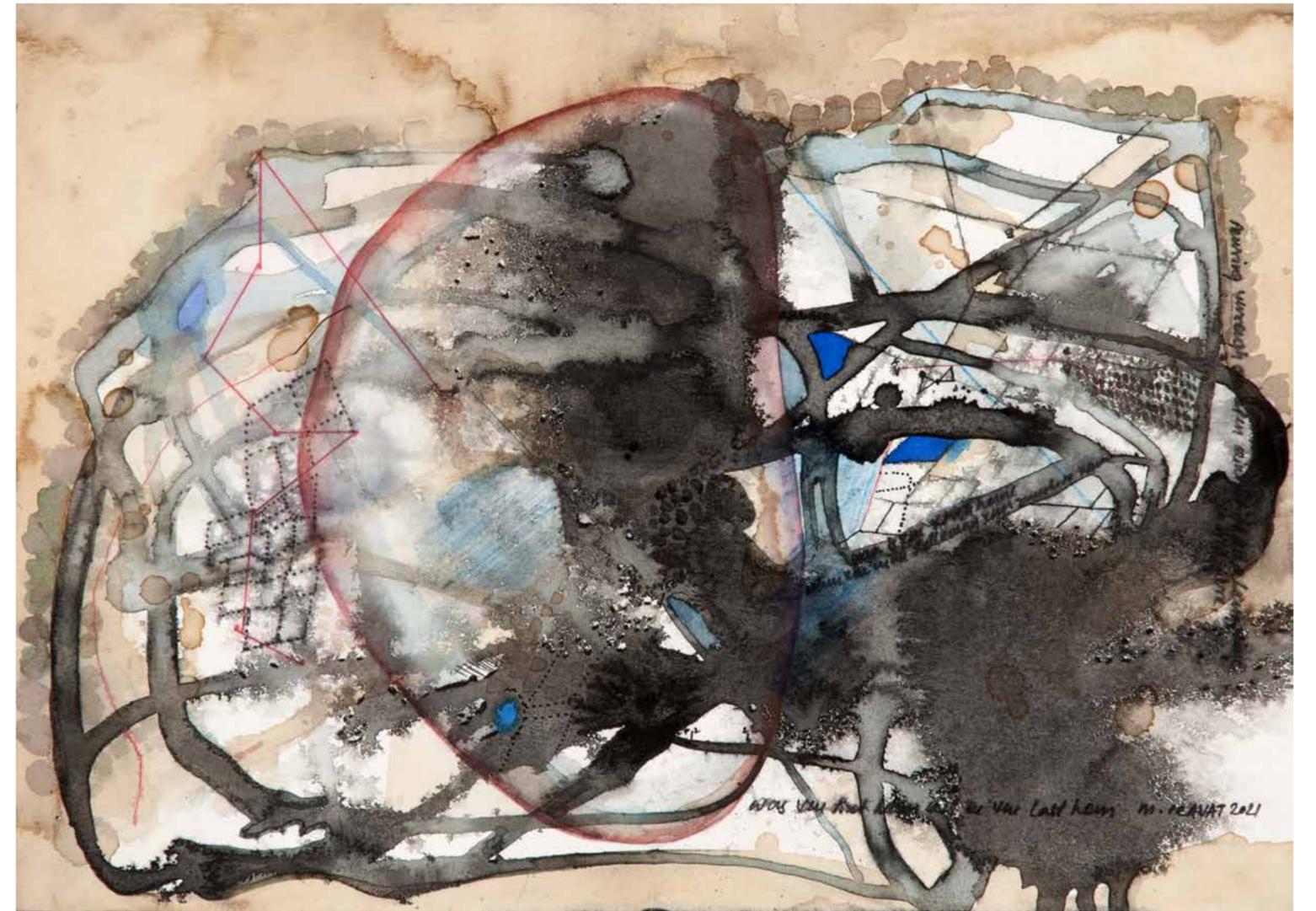
ENTROPY - 8 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
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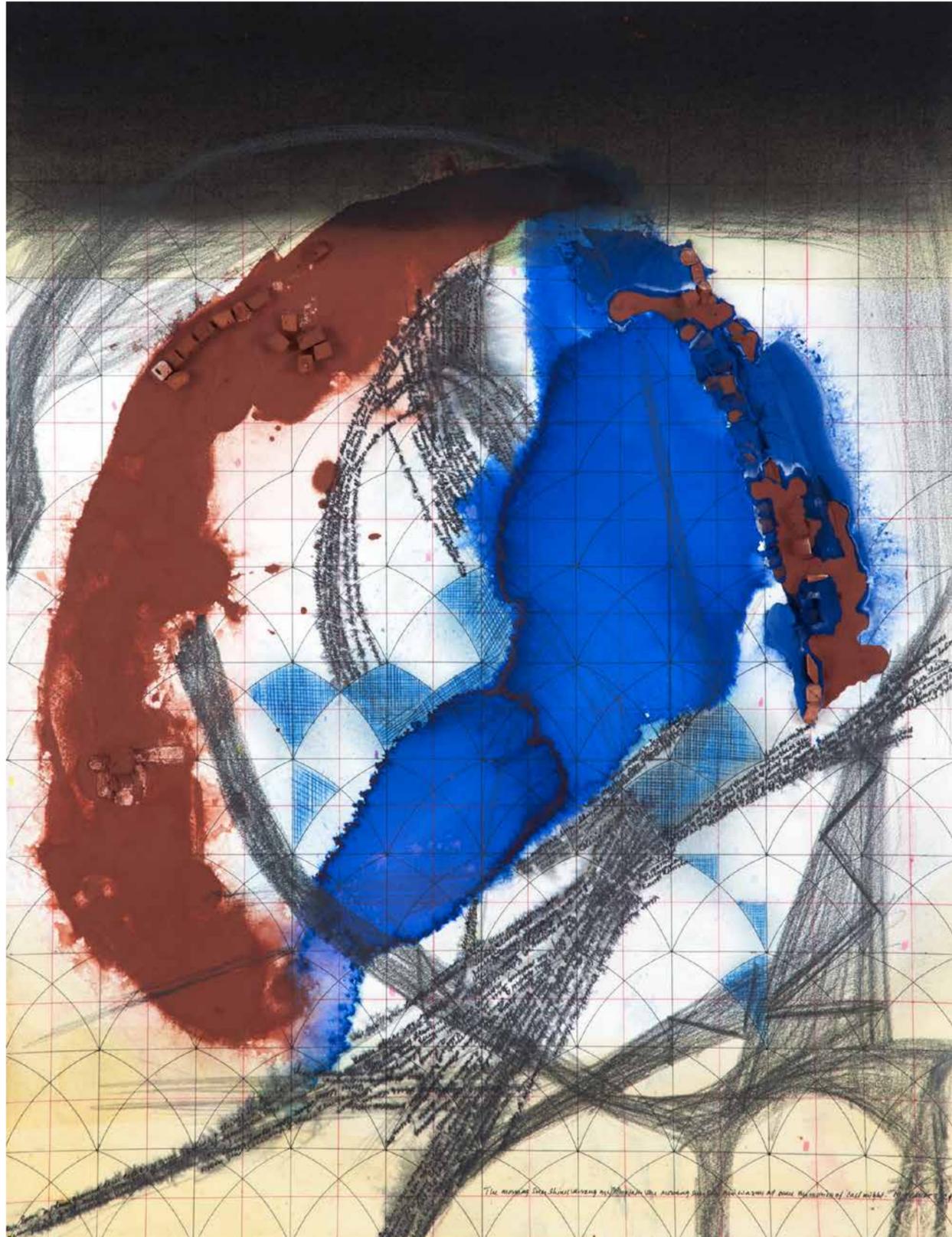
ENTROPY - 9 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
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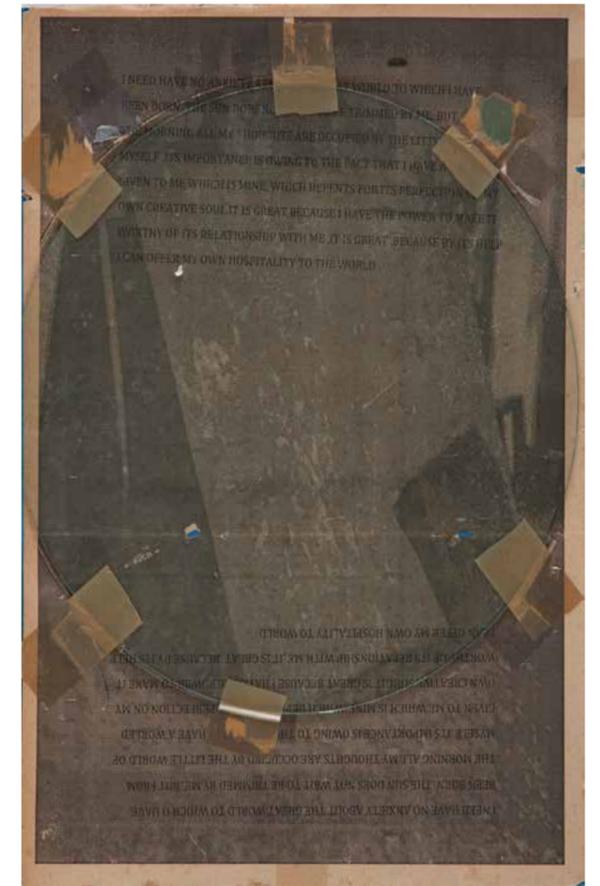
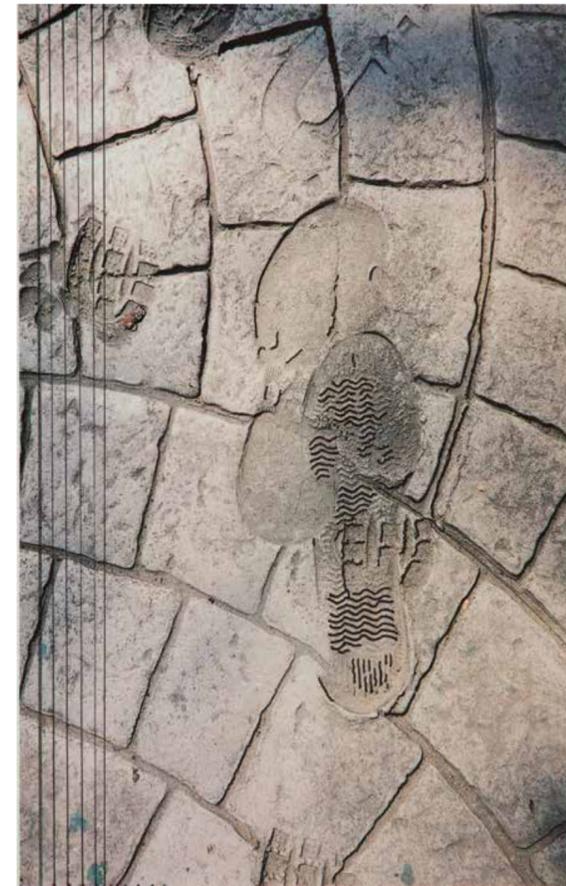
ENTROPY - 10 (2020)

Mixed Media on Hahnemuhle Acid-free Paper
26.7 x 34.3 cm (10.5 x 13.5")



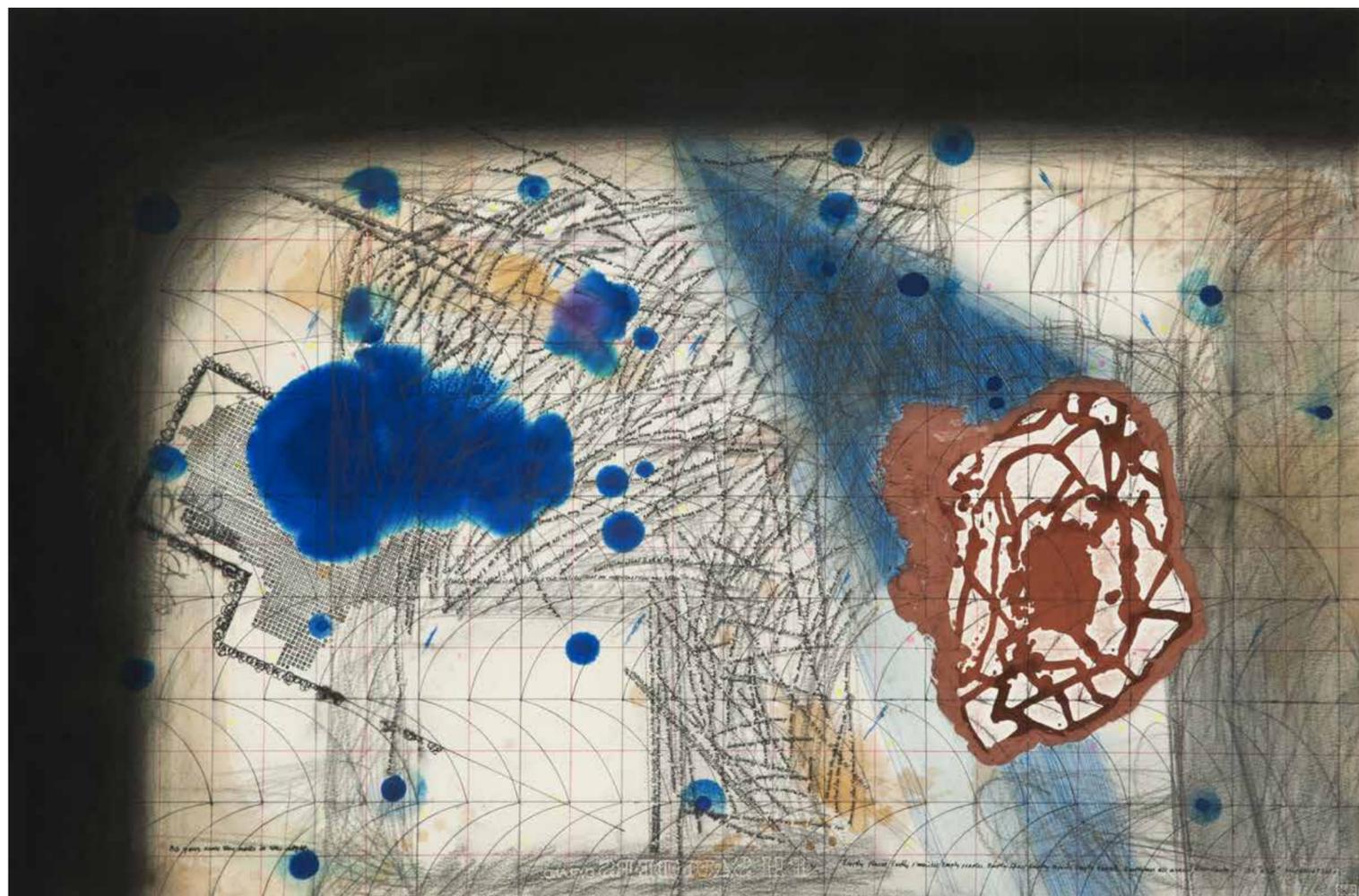
UNTITLED (2021)

Mixed Media on Waterford Acid-free Paper
66 x 50.8 cm (26 x 20")



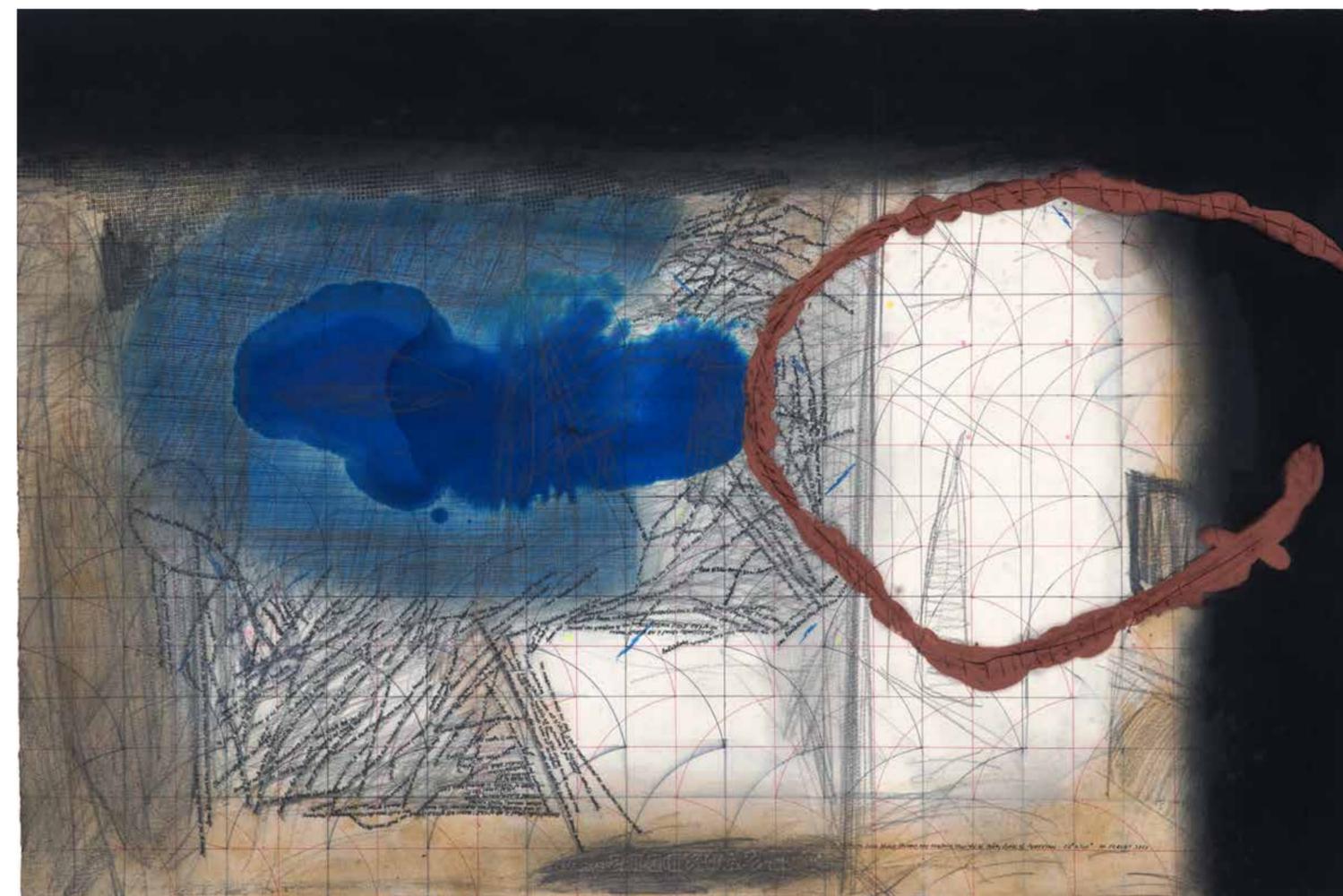
NOTEBOOK - ITERATION 1 (2016 ONWARDS)

Mixed Media on Paper
152 x 104 cm (59.8 x 41")



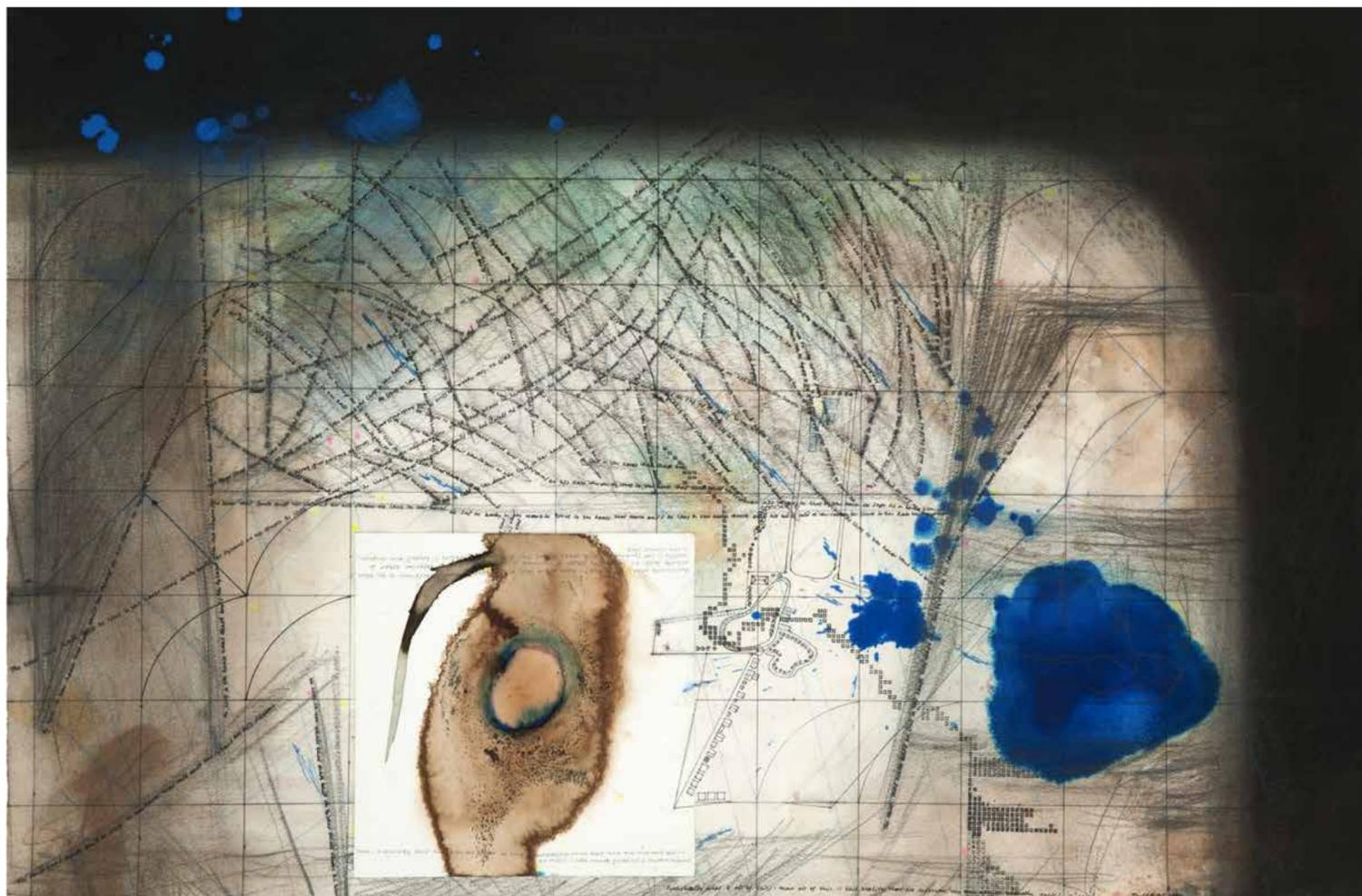
PERFORATED EARTH - 1 (2021)

Mixed Media on Waterford Acid-free Paper
68.5 x 101.6 cm (27 x 40")



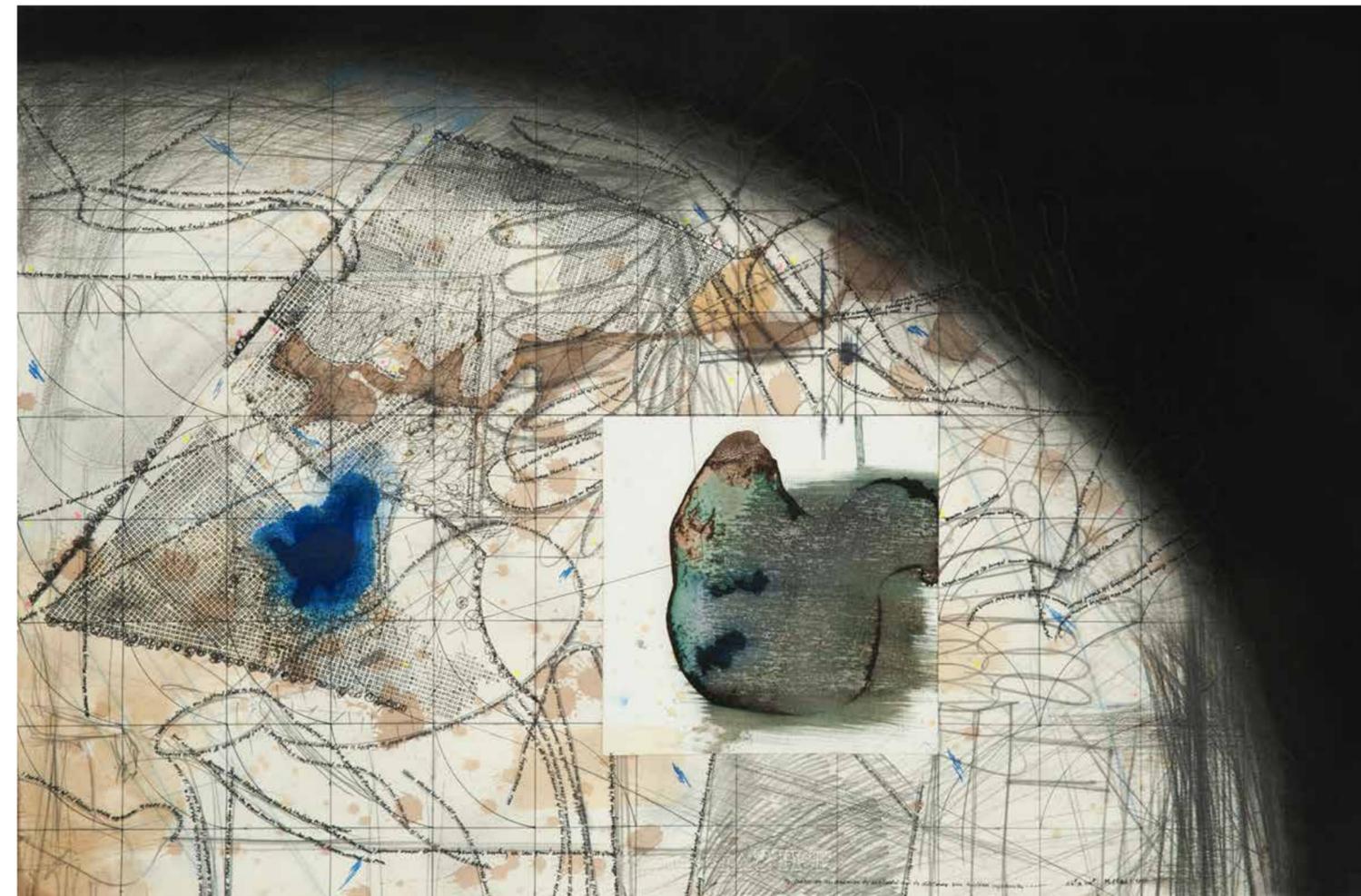
PERFORATED EARTH - 2 (2021)

Mixed Media on Waterford Acid-free Paper
68.5 x 101.6 cm (27 x 40")



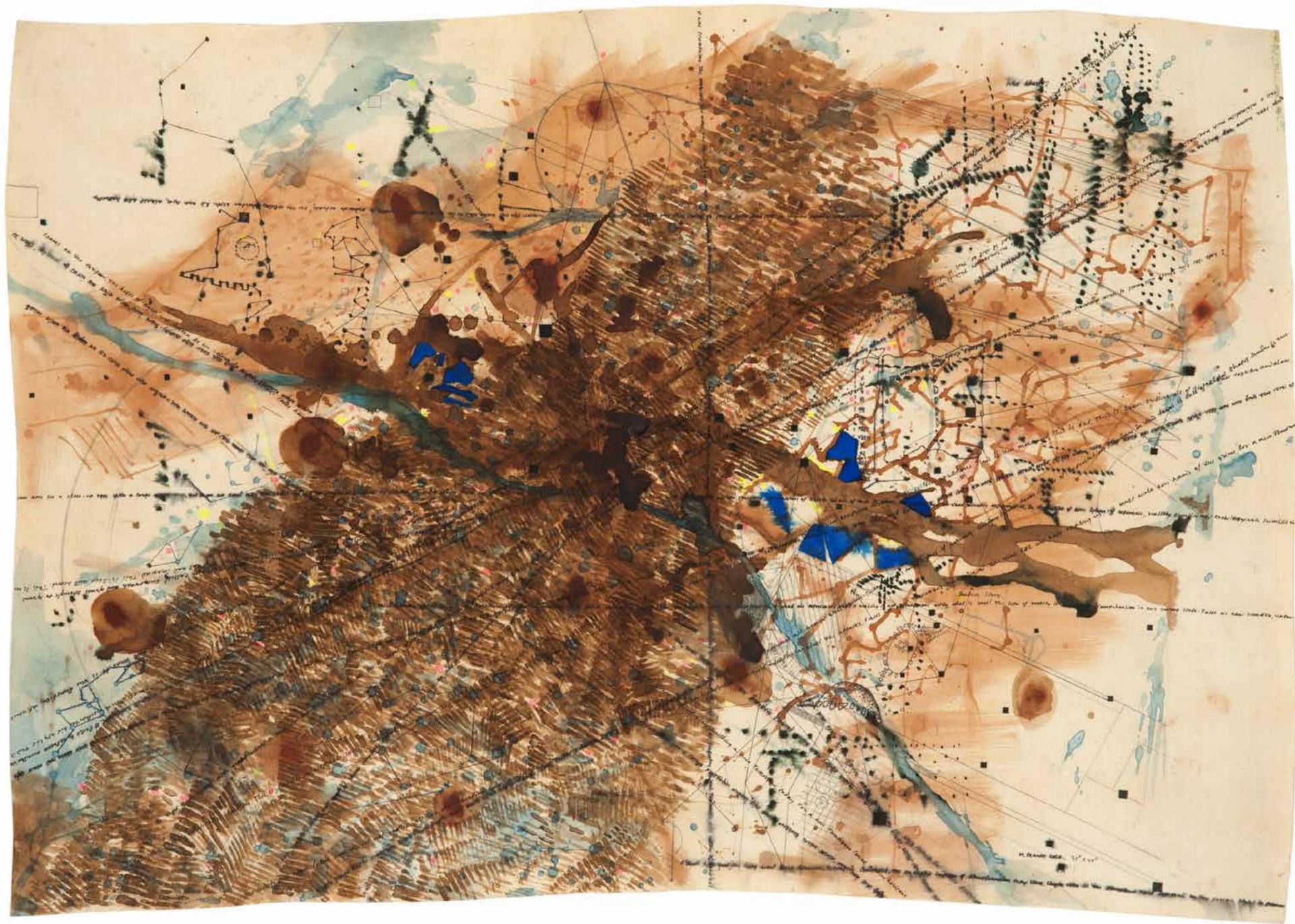
PERFORATED EARTH - 3 (2021)

Mixed Media on Waterford Acid-free Paper
68.5 x 101.6 cm (27 x 40")



PERFORATED EARTH - 4 (2021)

Mixed Media on Waterford Acid-free Paper
68.5 x 101.6 cm (27 x 40")



SETTLEMENT - I (2021)

Mixed Media on Handmade Canvas
76.2 x 101.6 cm (30 x 40")



SETTLEMENT - II (2021)

Mixed Media on Handmade Canvas
76.2 x 101.6 cm (30 x 40")



GRANULAR STRUCTURES - 1 (2021)

Digital Print on Museum Etching 350 GSM,
Acid-free Archival Paper
61 x 81.2 cm (24 x 32")
Edition 1 of 3



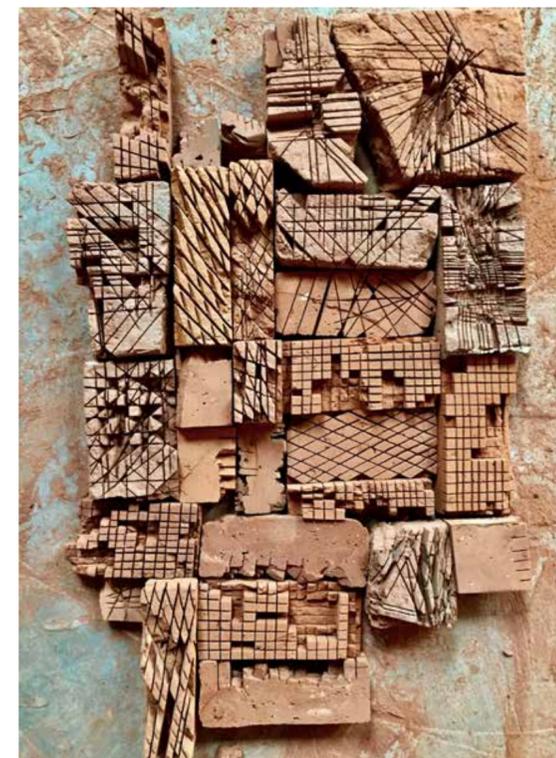
GRANULAR STRUCTURES - 2 (2021)

Digital Print on Museum Etching 350 GSM,
Acid-free Archival Paper
61 x 81.2 cm (24 x 32")
Edition 1 of 3



GRANULAR STRUCTURES - 3 (2021)

Digital Print on Museum Etching 350 GSM,
Acid-free Archival Paper
61 x 81.2 cm (24 x 32")
Edition 1 of 3



GRANULAR STRUCTURES - 4 (2021)

Digital Print on Museum Etching 350 GSM,
Acid-free Archival Paper
81.2 x 61 cm (32 x 24")
Edition 1 of 3

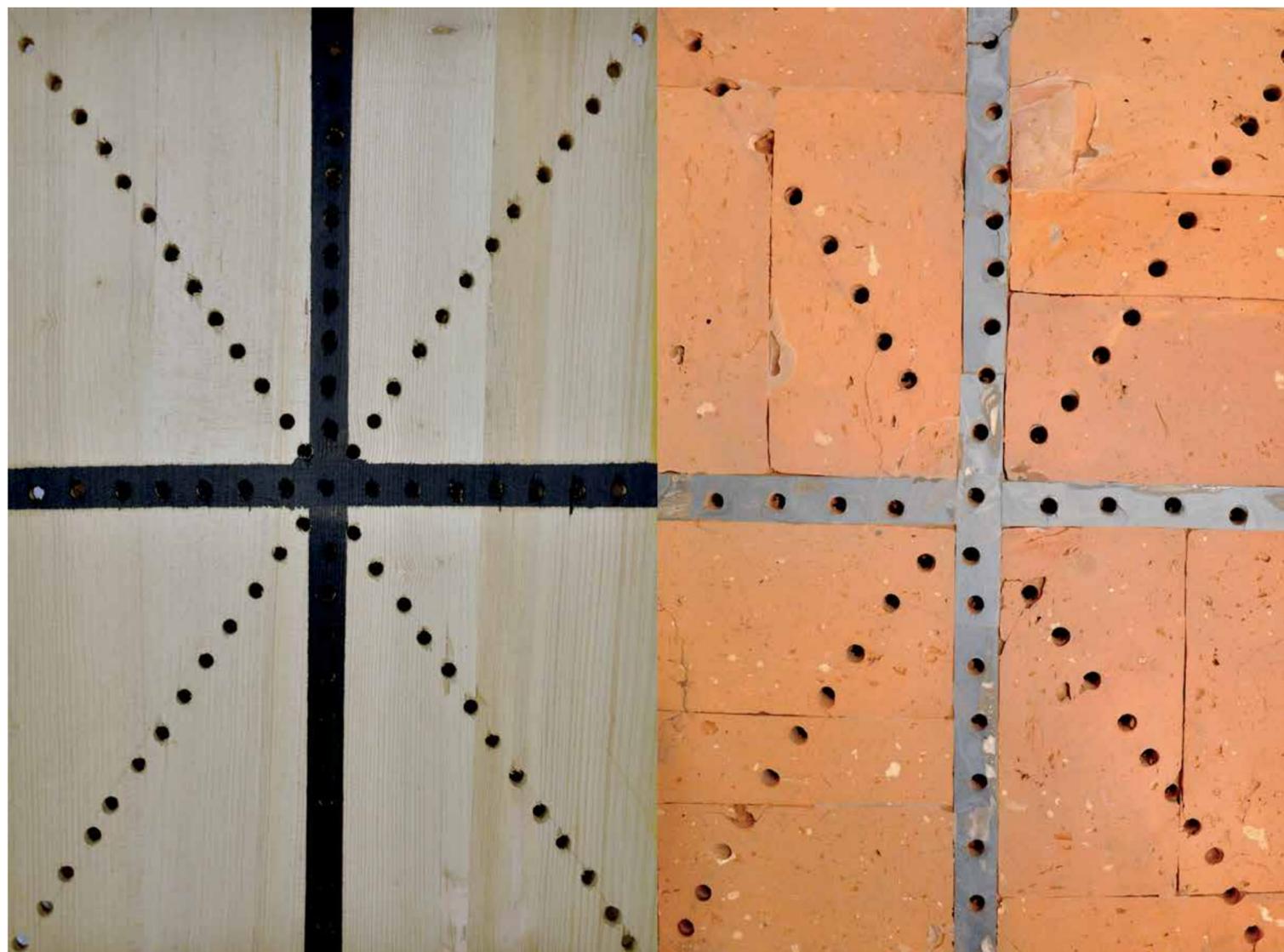


DIAGRAM OF UNFORMED DESIRES - 1 (2017)

Cut Slate, Wood and Bricks
58 x 81 cm (22.8 x 32")



DIAGRAM OF UNFORMED DESIRES - 2 (2017)

Cut Slate, Wood and Bricks
58 x 81 cm (22.8 x 32")

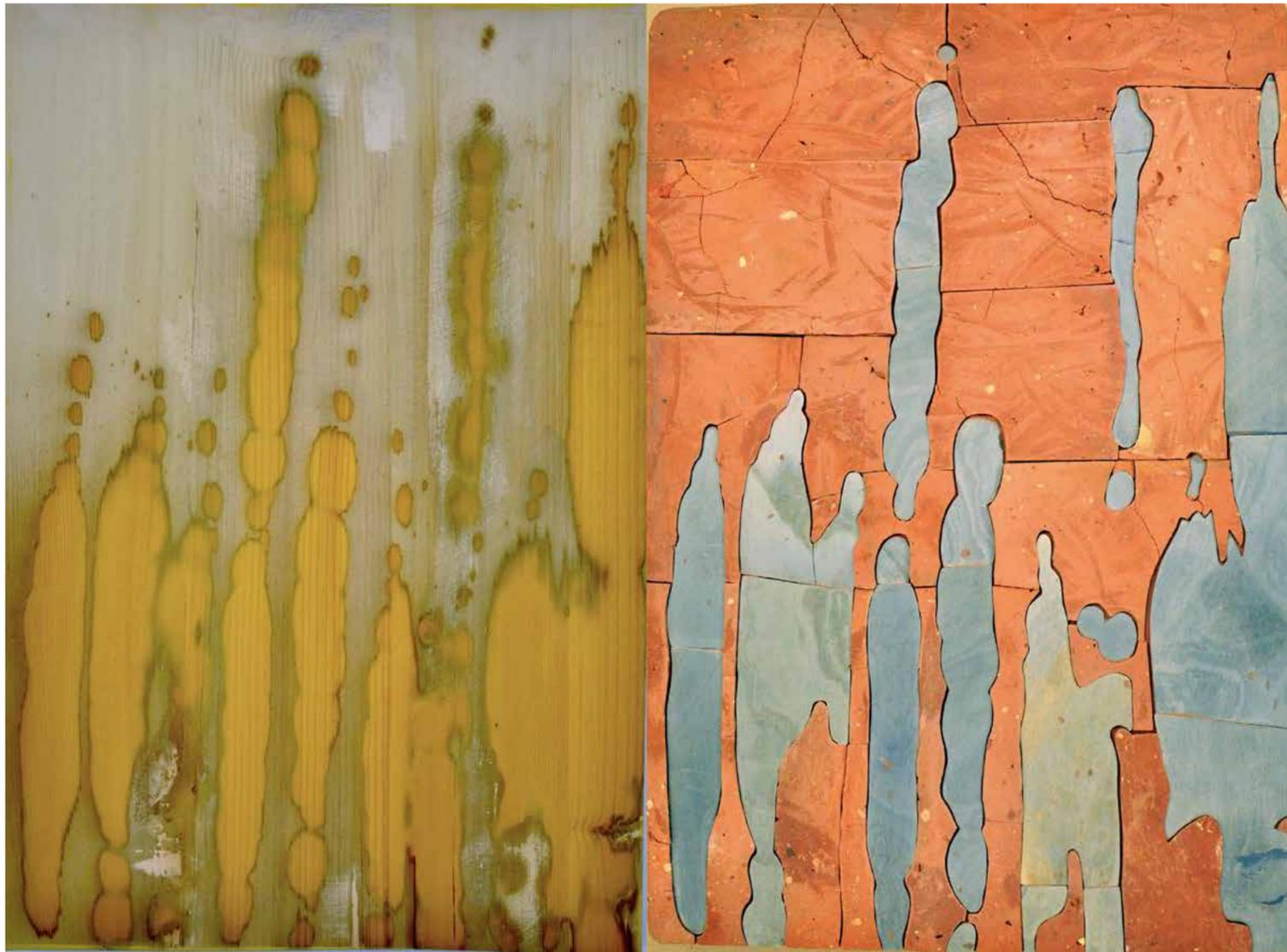


DIAGRAM OF UNFORMED DESIRES - 3 (2017)

Cut Slate, Wood and Bricks
58 x 81 cm (22.8 x 32")



DIAGRAM OF UNFORMED DESIRES - 4 (2017)

Cut Slate, Wood and Bricks
58 x 81 cm (22.8 x 32")



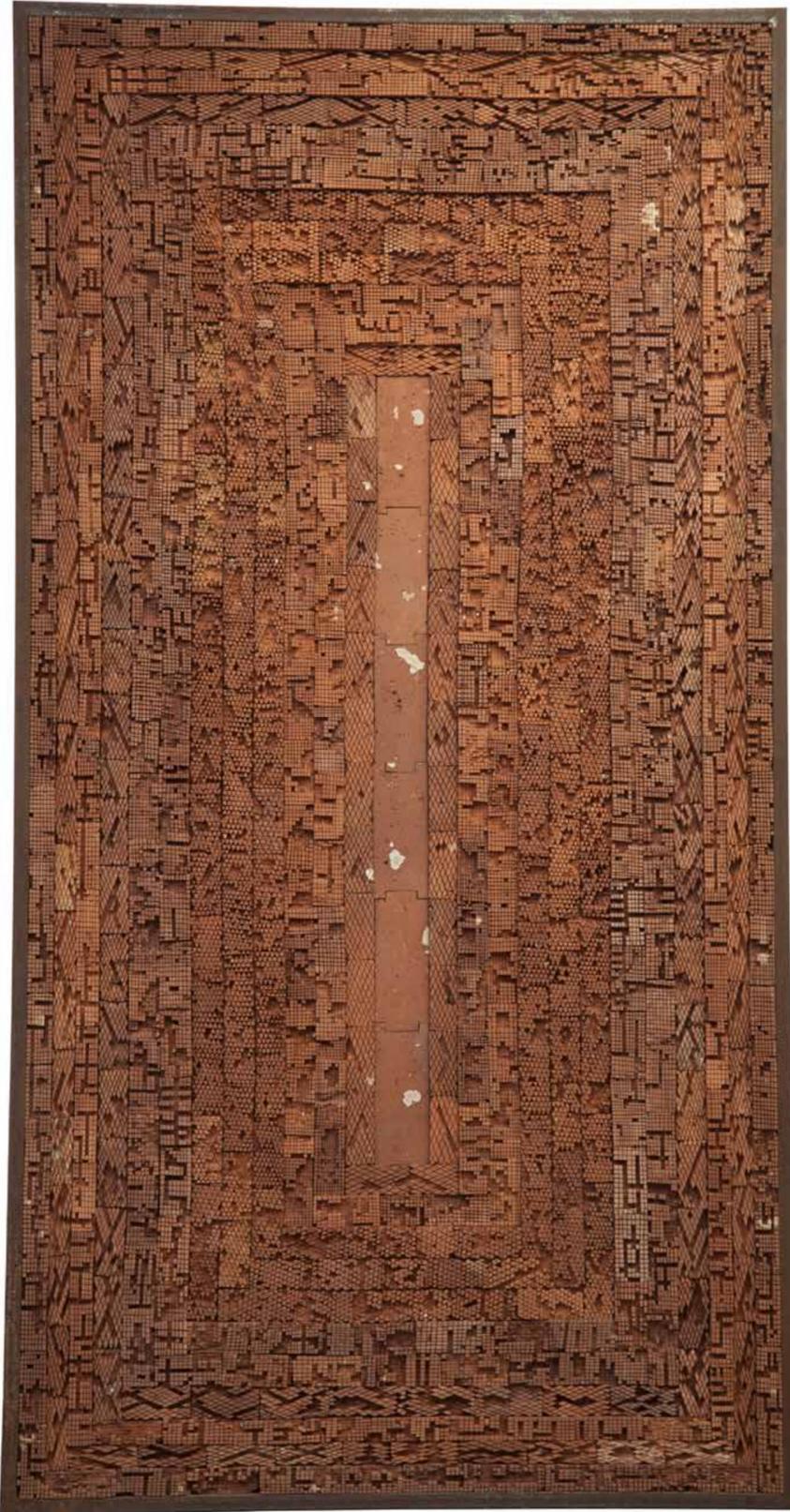
THE AMBASSADORS, AFTER HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (2017)

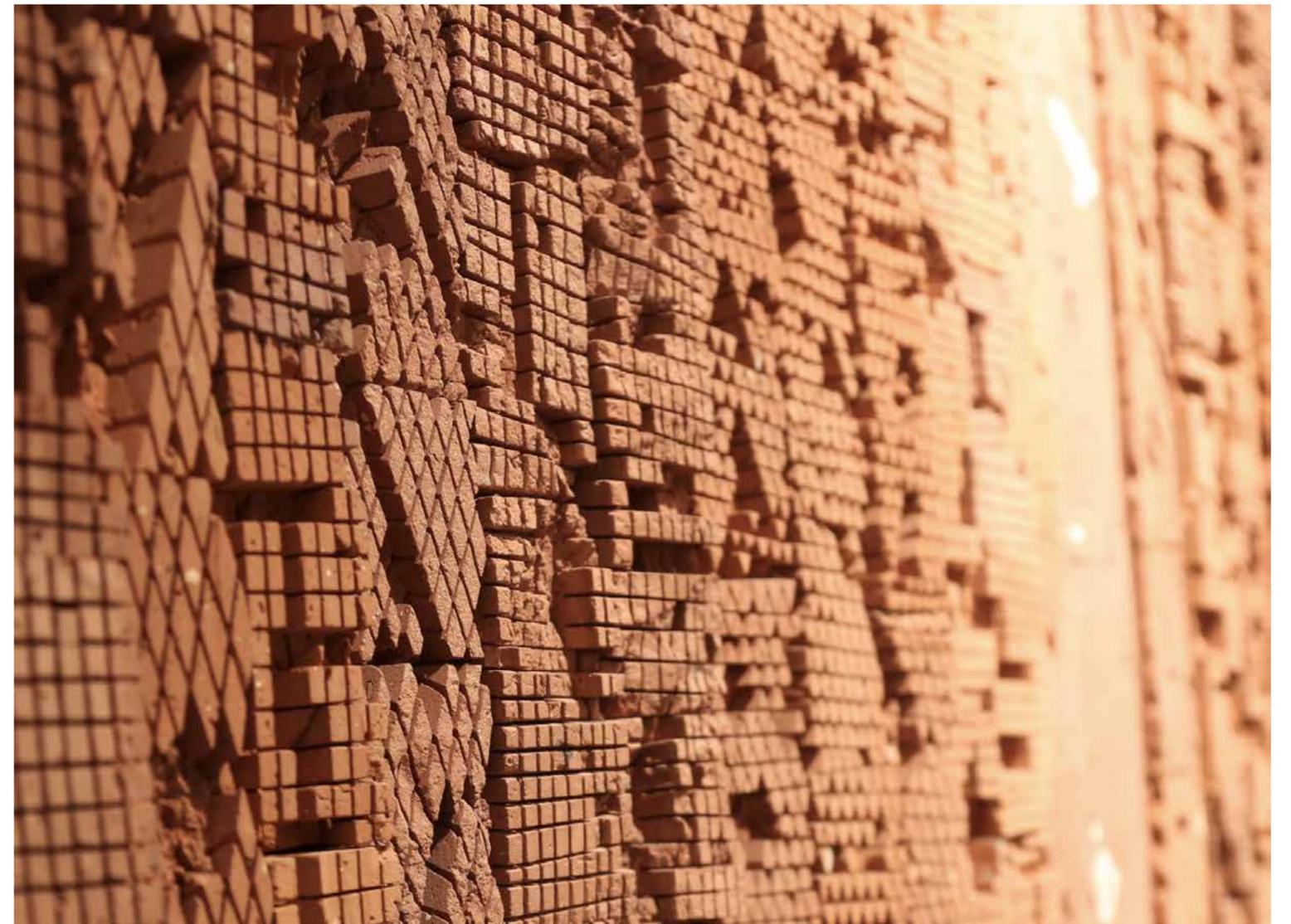
Cut Out Slate, Bricks and Wood
122 x 244 cm (48 x 96") (set of 8 parts)
Pedestal: 99-74 x 244 x 122 cm (39-29 x 96 x 48")



MOVEMENT IN STILLNESS - 1 (2020)

Fired Bricks, Metal Frame, Cement, Concrete, Board
237.5 x 123.5 x 7.6 cm (93.5 x 48.6 x 3")



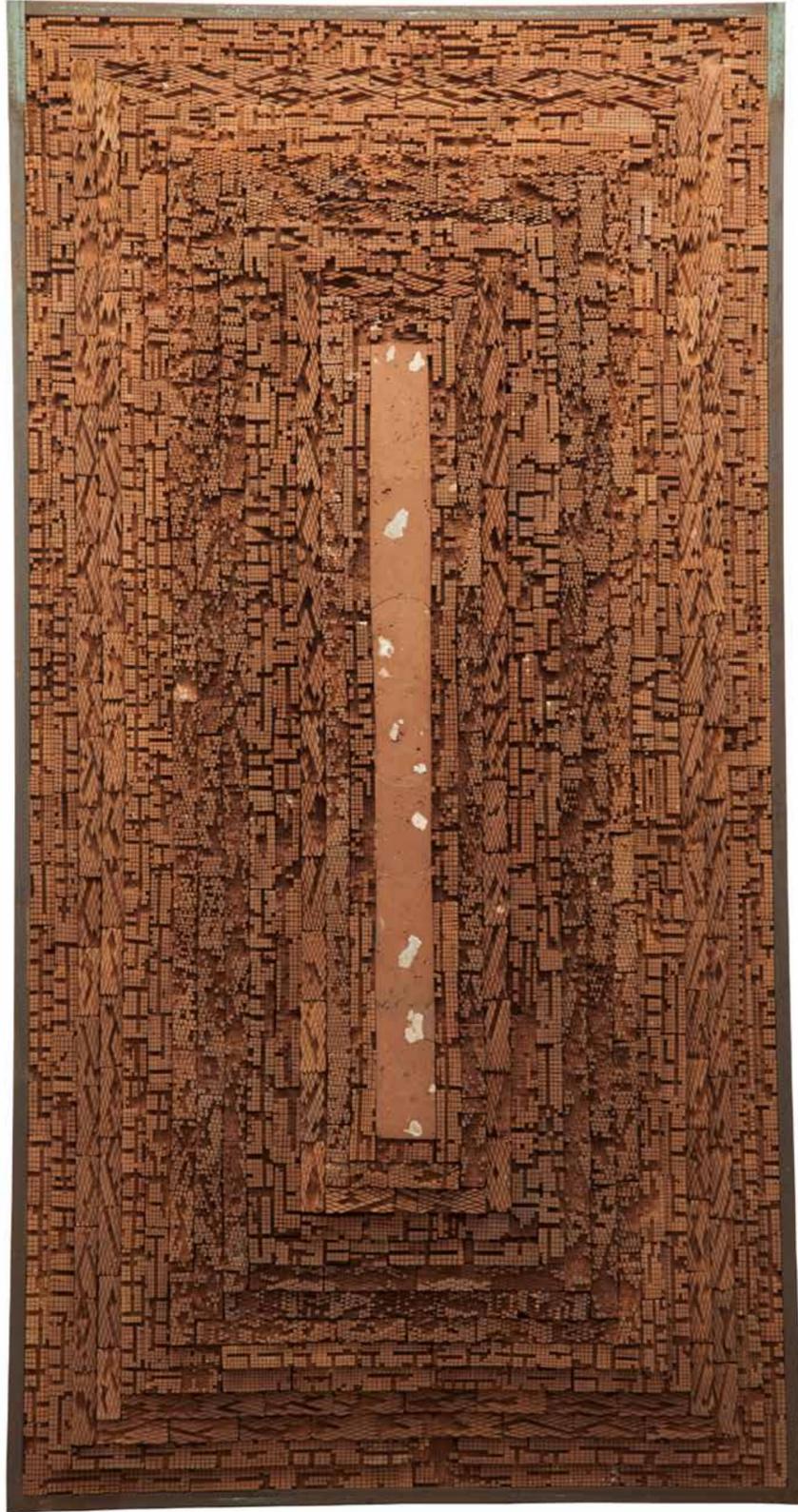


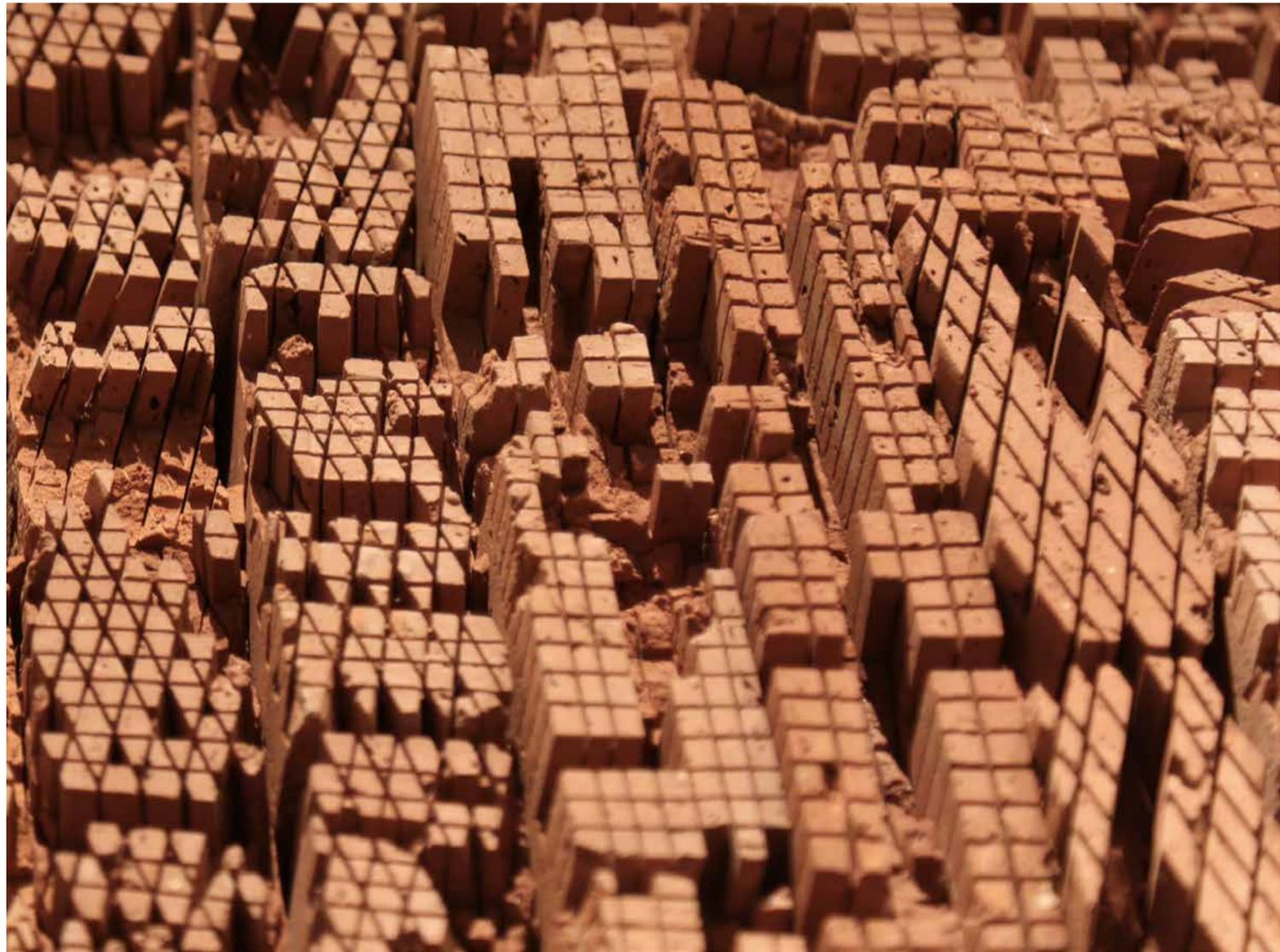
MOVEMENT IN STILLNESS - 1 (2020) Details

Fired Bricks, Metal Frame, Cement, Concrete, Board
237.5 x 123.5 x 7.6 cm (93.5 x 48.6 x 3")

MOVEMENT IN STILLNESS - 2 (2020)

Fired Bricks, Metal Frame, Cement, Concrete, Board
237.5 x 123.5 x 22.9 cm (93.5 x 48.6 x 9")





MOVEMENT IN STILLNESS - 2 (2020) Details

Fired Bricks, Metal Frame, Cement, Concrete, Board
237.5 x 123.5 x 22.9 cm (93.5 x 48.6 x 9")





M. PRAVAT

M. Pravat completed his Bachelor's degree in painting in 2002 and his Master's in 2004, both granted by the Faculty of Fine Arts at M.S. University of Baroda. His practice examines architectural forms and materials through a fractured lens. Over the years, his works have been presented in solo and group exhibitions, biennales and art fairs in Colombo, Delhi, Dubai, Mumbai, New York, Seoul and Zurich. His recent solo-exhibitions include 'Liquid States' in 1x1 Gallery, Dubai (2017); 'From Today, I Have No Future', Aicon Gallery, New York (2017); and 'Blue Print', Nature Morte, Delhi (2011). He is a member of the Layout Collective along with artists Navid Tschopp, Susanta Mondal, and architect S. Boka, and their projects have been exhibited in the Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2012), Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (2013), INSERT (2014), the Colombo Biennale (2014), and in non-institutional sites in Delhi and Zurich. He has been the recipient of the ProHelvetia artist residency in Switzerland. Pravat lives and works in New Delhi.

M. PRAVAT

Education

2002 – 2004: M.F.A. (Fine Arts) Painting.
M.S. University of Baroda
1998 – 2002: B.F.A. (Fine Arts) Painting.
M.S. University of Baroda

Solo Exhibitions

2017: *Liquid States*, 1x1 Gallery, Dubai
2017: *From Today, I Have No Future*,
Aicon Gallery, New York
2011: *Blue Print*, Nature Morte, New
Delhi
2010: *What Takes Place in Memory*,
Gallery LVS, Korea, Seoul
2008: *Under Construction*, Nature
Morte, New Delhi
2008: *Late Again*, Art Musings, Mumbai
2007: *In-Depth*, Anant Art Gallery, Kolk-
ata
2006: *Theatre of the Absurd*, Anant Art
Gallery, New Delhi

Group Exhibitions (Selected)

2018: *SAHMAT*, New Delhi, India
2018: *When is Space?*, Jawahar Kala
Kendra, Jaipur
2017: *Summer Show*, 1x1 Gallery, Dubai
2014: *Delineating Memories*, Gallery Ex-
hibit 320, New Delhi
2012: *Still Life*, Gallery Art Motif, New
Delhi
2012: *Art Chennai*, Chennai
2010: *Linear Obscurity*, Bose Pacia, New
York
2010: *Invisible City*, Aicon Gallery, New
York
2009: *Architectonica*, curated by Peter
Negi, Gallery Seven Art Ltd.
2008: *Sub-Architecture Continental*,
curated by Peter Negi, Galerie Alain le
Gaillard, Paris
2007: *Harvest*, Arushi Art Gallery, New
Delhi
2007: *Emerging India*, Royal College of
Art London
2007: *Art Fair*, Paris
2007: *High on Art*, Visual Art Gallery,
India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

2007: *Team Unteamed -11*, Art Konsult,
New Delhi
2007: *Instilling Life*, Hacienda Art Gal-
lery, Mumbai
2006: *Full Circle*, Rabindra Bhavan,
New Delhi
2005: *Art and Soul*, Gallery of Contem-
porary Art, Mumbai
2005: *Generation To and Fro*, Kaleido-
scope Gallery, Vadodara
2005: *Transgress*, Priyasri Gallery of
Contemporary Art, Mumbai
2004: *Colloquial Dialects*, Kaleido-
scope Art Gallery, Vadodara
2004: *Fun Fair*, Faculty of Fine Arts, Va-
dodara
2003: *Positive Vision*, Faculty of Fine
Arts, Vadodara
1996: West Bengal State Academy
Annual Exhibition
1996: Annual Exhibition of State, Lalit
Kala Academy
1995: Indian Society of Oriental Art,
Annual Exhibition

Projects and Collaborative Works

2018: *Bhubaneswar Art Trail 2018*, Orissa

2017: *NOWHERE*, work with Paubha Painters, Nepal

2016: *Derived From The Metropolis*, Kolkata

2015: (ongoing) *Distribution of Space*, New Delhi

2014: *I'm tired of feeling so terrible all the time, can you tear me?*, Dreier Frenzel, Lausanne (Switzerland)

2014: *studiowork*, in collaboration with David Semper (Germany), personal studio space, New Delhi

2005: *Living it Out In Delhi*, collaborative installation with artist Vivan Sundaram along with rag pickers

Location-based Construction

(Layout Collective, comprising of M.Pravat, Navid Tschopp, Susanta Mondal, and S. Boka)

2017: *Embrace our River*, Chennai

2015: *Layout 8*, Public Art Project, Zurich

2014: *Layout 7*, Colombo Biennale, Colombo

2014: *Layout 6*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

2014: *Layout 5*, INSERT 2014, New Delhi

2013: *Layout 4*, Sarai Reader 09, Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi

2013: *Layout 3*, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi

2012: *Layout 2*, Kochi Muziris Biennale, Fort Kochi

2012: *Layout 1*, private studio space, New Delhi

Residencies, Awards, Workshops and Camp Participation

2014: Artist Research Fellowship Grant, Pro Helvetia, Switzerland

2010: Artist Award of Grant, Pro Helvetia, Switzerland

2008: Artists Camp, Indonesia

2008: Artists Camp, Egypt and Turkey

2007: Artists Camp, Kenya

2007: Le Meridien Camp, Gallery Beyond, Mumbai

2004: Nasreen Mohamedi Award, Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda

1999: Workshop, Gujarat Lalit Kala Academy, Edar

1997: Platinum Jubilee Life Saving Society Kolkata



SABIH AHMED

Sabih Ahmed is a curator and writer based in Dubai. He currently holds the position of Associate Director and Curator of Ishara Art Foundation. His curatorial work and research focus on modern and contemporary art of South Asia through diverse itineraries, languages, and inter-disciplinary formations. Prior to Ishara, Ahmed was a Senior Researcher and Projects Manager at Asia Art Archive from 2009 to 2019. He has led research projects around the digitisation of seminal artist archives, digital bibliographies of art across multiple languages, and organised colloquia and seminars around digital archives and educational resources. Ahmed was a Curatorial Collegiate member of the 11th Shanghai Biennale curated by Raqs Media Collective in 2016, has served as a Visiting Faculty at the Ambedkar University, Delhi from 2014-2019, and his writings have been published in various international publications. Ahmed is currently on the Advisory Board of Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation, Delhi.



VHC

VIDA HEYDARI

CONTEMPORARY

VHC is founded by Vida Heydari, a curator and gallerist with over 14 years of diverse experience in the global art world. She has worked with accomplished Indian, Iranian and Chinese contemporary artists and has also consulted for various private and public collections.

Established in 2020, VHC is Pune's newest contemporary art gallery. VHC celebrates art by partnering with artists, promoting their work and connecting them to art lovers. The gallery showcases works by local and international artists and through its collateral programs aims to contribute to the cultural fabric of Pune city. VHC endeavours to create a platform to encounter and engage with relevant contemporary art practices from around the world.

VHC also celebrates the art of fine cuisine with its restaurant. The experience of engaging with art is enhanced by the cuisine on offer, where the restaurant serves as a space of encounter, conversation and reflection.

VHC

VIDA HEYDARI

CONTEMPORARY

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www.vhc.art