

Canan Tolon *Sidesteps*

Edited by Ziba Ardalan
Parasol unit, London

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Foreword

Canan Tolon may consider herself to have been an artist since the 1980s, but her artistic vision and formidable imagination have been with her since childhood. This I concluded after my first encounter with her, and since then I have only become more convinced of it.

Tolon, who has never ceased to be a creator, has always gone about her work in total freedom and most often with objectivity. As one would expect, her art expresses her physical and psychological perceptions of the world and represents in some way the dichotomy between reality and illusion. Looking at Tolon's works – the often seemingly impossible assemblages of man-made, disparate objects; the chance process of rust allowed to become integral to a work; the grass grown on a canvas and allowed to dry out over the course of an exhibition; and finally her creation of precarious spaces in her paintings – one may begin to grasp the extent of her understanding and feeling for the unpredictable nature of life. Yet, rather than expressing any form of anxiety, they give the impression that the artist takes pleasure in challenging all obstacles.

Apart from a short spell in the late 1980s when she made a few works that were both personal and figurative, at the forefront of most of Tolon's work is her interest in dealing with space, gravity and chance interactions. In some of her figurative works, such as *Futur imparfait*, 1986–1999, she even treats the body as landscape. Tolon's later works, made during the past fifteen years, are seemingly abstract and architectural in appearance and highlight her tenacious interest in creating vertiginous spaces that often seem to loom precariously in the air. Informed by her knowledge of and interest in photography and architecture, Tolon makes her paintings and works on Mylar by first applying many layers of paint, of which she then scrapes away just enough to manipulate the space until it generates repetition and a filmic illusion of movement. Whether the scale of a

work is large or small, the rhythmic repetition and layering of paint on the canvas entice its viewers to look back and forth and up and down as they attempt to identify, decipher and to interpret what seem to be recognisable spaces, only to discover that it is all a purely illusionistic game.

Encountering such an intelligent and thought-provoking artist and organising this exhibition of her work has been a real pleasure, a truly special experience that has enriched my curatorial life. From the outset, Canan Tolon's hard work and commitment to showing her work at Parasol unit and her attention to every aspect of that have been remarkable. No mere words can adequately express my thanks to her.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to all the lenders, who agreed to part with their prized works for the duration of the exhibition and without whose generosity this show could not have come together. I thank The British Museum, London; di Rosa Collection, Napa; Vehbi Koç Foundation Contemporary Art Collection, Istanbul; and to the following individuals: Peter J. Cohen; Suzie Buchholz and Yoshi Tome; Revna Demirören; Megi and Haldun Dostoğlu; Pınar and Hakan Ertaç; Hakan Ezer; Ali Güreli; Judy Haselton; Tim and Nancy Howes; İrfan Keskin; Ari İstanbulluoğlu Kireçyan; Alev Komili; Ebru Latifoğlu; Mehmet Sözbilir; Kevin and Maggie Regan; Rıza Tansu; Berna and Tolga Tuglular; and those who chose to remain anonymous.

I am immensely grateful to Haldun Dostoğlu of Galeri Nev, Istanbul. He and his staff could not have been more helpful in locating and securing the loan of numerous works, as well as assisting us in many other ways. My thanks also go to Canan Tolon's galleries in the United States: the Von Lintel Gallery, New York, and to Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco.

I am very appreciative of Bill Berkson, who made the impossible possible and contributed an enlightening essay to this publication, and also John Yau who, despite his busy schedule, so ably took on the task of writing what is an insightful essay.

Berna Tuglular, a Parasol unit friend and supporter, single-handedly devised and succeeded with an intelligent strategy to provide significant funding for this exhibition. I cannot thank her enough for her commitment to Parasol unit. Also, for their financial support, I am hugely grateful to Isik Kecici Asur, Caroline Landin, Mine – H. Cem Bahadir, Aylin Benardete Sarihan, Şeli Elvaşvili, Derin Mermerci, Ebru Ozdemir, Edwina Sponza, Yosun Reza, and Billur-Atilla Tacir.

In this our ninth year of existence Parasol unit continues to publish a comprehensive catalogue to accompany each of its exhibitions. Our invaluable collaborators, Helen Wire, Marc Kappeler and the staff at Moiré, Zurich, have been unfailingly admirable in their respective editing and designing of our publications. I am hugely thankful for their contribution and assistance in so many ways.

As always, the staff at Parasol unit have been a huge asset and I would like to thank Juan Alvarez de Lara Sieder, Lucy Britton, Wing-Sie Chan, Gemma Colgan, Hanna Hewins, Nicola Pomery, Curt Riegelneegg and Lucy Ward for all their commitment and inspiration.

*Ziba Ardalan
Founder/Director*



9 *Dis-figurative Work, 1–5, 1988*
The Advantages of Disgrace (1) Mixed media 71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in)



Dis-figurative Work, 1-5, 1988
The Advantages of Disgrace (2)

Mixed media

71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in)

10



Dis-figurative Work, 1-5, 1988
The Advantages of Disgrace (3)

Mixed media

71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in)

11



Dis-figurative Work, 1-5, 1988
The Advantages of Disgrace (4)

Mixed media

71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in)

12



Dis-figurative Work, 1-5, 1988
The Advantages of Disgrace (5)

Mixed media

71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in)

13



Untitled, 1988

Assemblage with photographic
prints, copper wires and acrylic

76 × 46 cm (30 × 18 in)

14

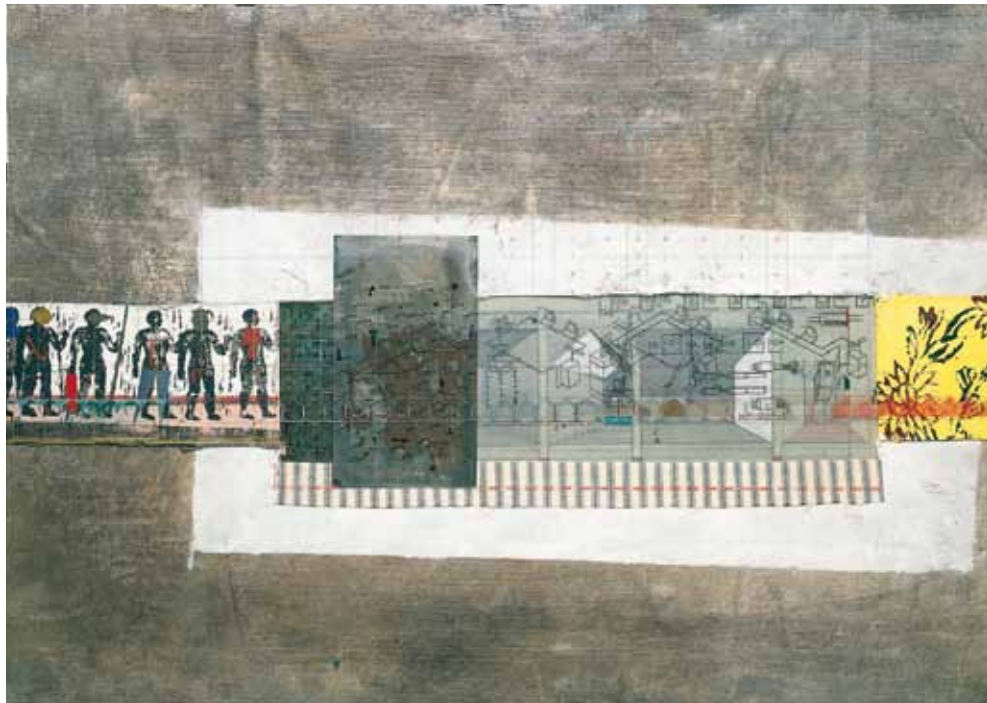


Untitled, 1988

Assemblage with photographic
prints, copper wires and acrylic

77 × 46 cm (30 × 18 in)

15

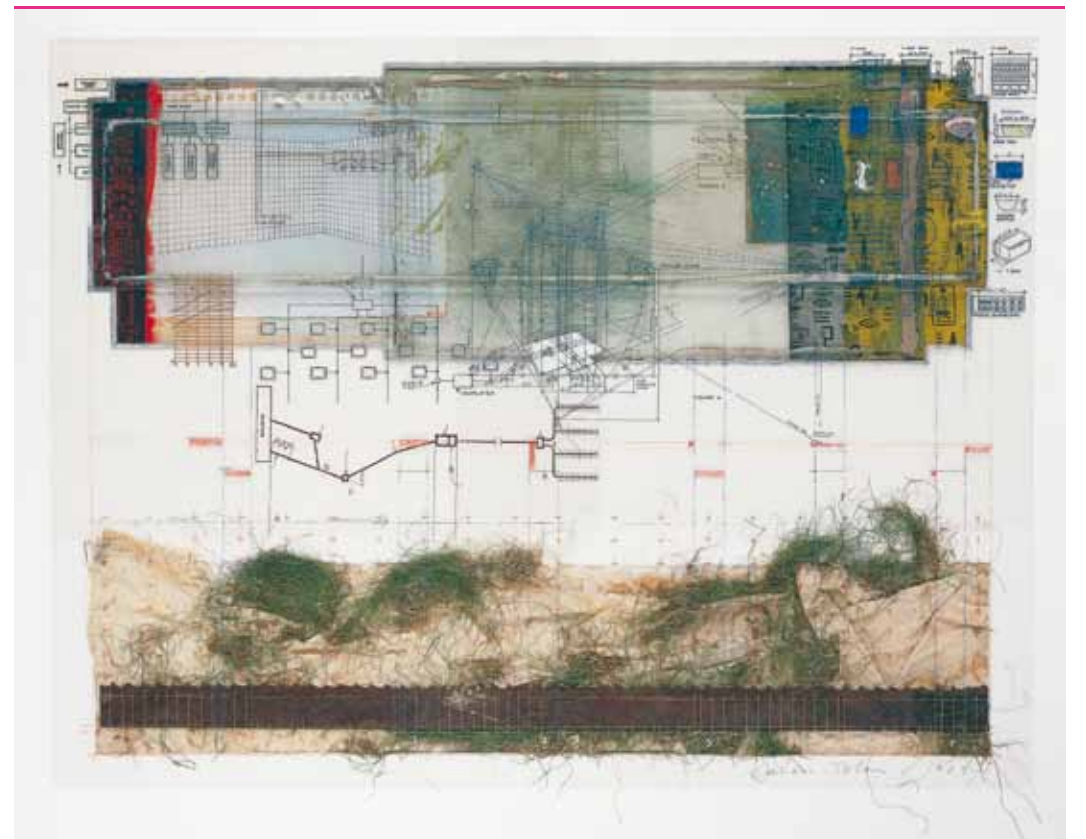


Keeping up with the Joneses, 1989

Mixed media

51 × 71 cm (20 × 28 in)

16



Crypto-Dreamhouse, 1989

Mixed media collage with glass,
steel and grass

38 × 51 cm (15 × 20 in)

17



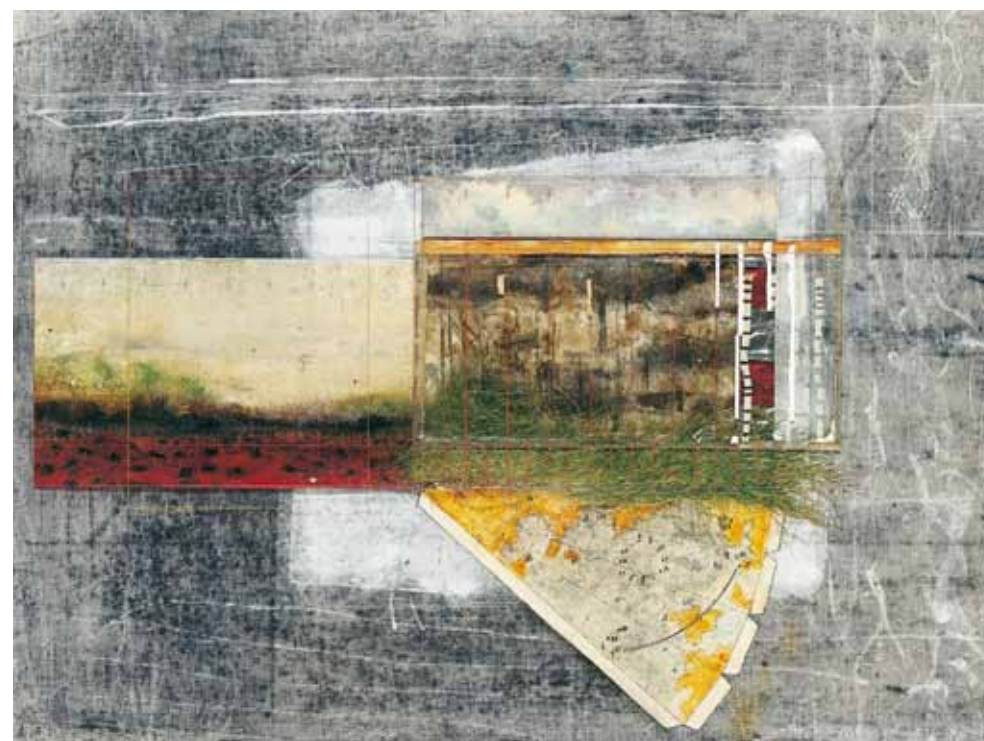
Untitled, 1990

Glass, photographic prints and
acrylic on canvas

51 × 71 cm (20 × 28 in)

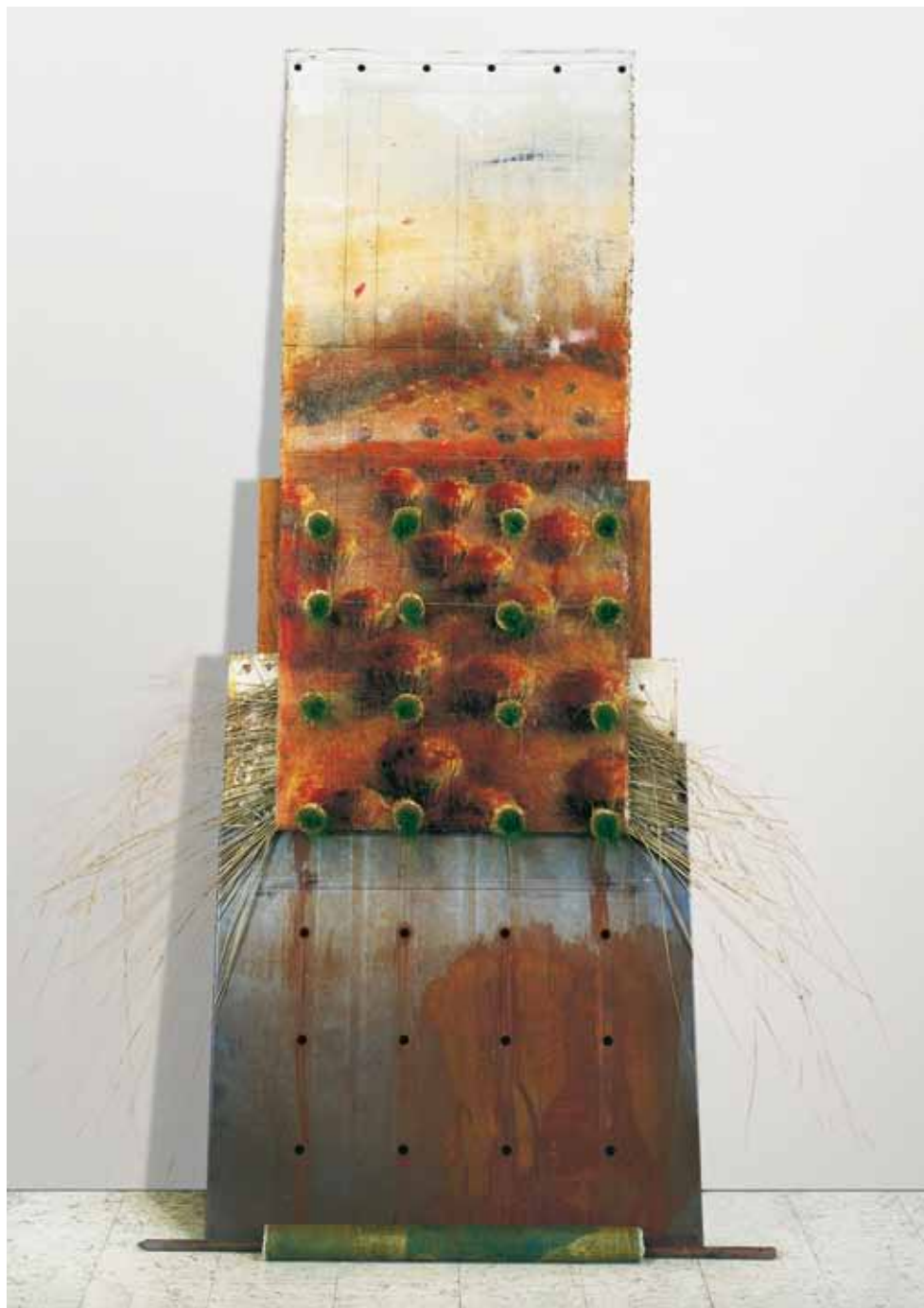
18

19



Untitled, 1990

Glass, grass and acrylic on canvas 61 × 71 cm (24 × 28 in)

















Untitled, 1991

Photograph, glass, bottle-caps,
metal, grass and acrylic on canvas

51 × 71 cm (20 × 28 in)

34



35

Baski IV, 1993

Oil on linen and acrylic on silk veil

132 × 221 cm (52 × 87 in)













Canan Tolon's Open Limits

I follow my own path, at my own pace. And my work will remain a reflection of the way I see the world, as it sways with each step that I take, as if it were hanging precariously from a pendulum. Canan Tolon¹

A great deal of Canan Tolon's art, including its often tremulous rhythmic qualities, exists, as it were, 'under pressure', a phrase she used for the title of one of her 1990s sculptural-cum-process pieces: a row of seven thin metal bands, each topped with a spread of growing grass, each tightly bowed in a complex frame with a mobile base. Part of the suspense in *Under Pressure*, 1994, [p.46] derives from the awareness that each sheet is, as Tolon has said, 'like a blade ready to snap'.

Tension, release, precariousness, confinement and what Tolon likes to call the 'guessing game' – open-ended as it is about what if anything is recognisable in the intricate grids and whorls in her paintings of recent years – are basic elements of this pressurised world. Foremost, however, is an ongoing negotiation with gravity, a phenomenon of which Tolon has been extremely conscious since contracting polio in her infancy. Partly because her capacity for upright activity is limited, and partly because she simply prefers it, she works her pictures on the floor, using gravity as an intimate force. The horizontal, literally grounded process envelops her in what she calls 'a total body act':

I am literally on the canvas when I work, practically lying on it while working. It also gives me a clearer view of the work while I am standing over it, as I am more experienced at looking at the landscape right at my feet, with my eyes always glued to the ground as it is when I walk. Before I take each step, I am always testing the quality and textures of the surface to make sure it is safe, or slick or slippery. My works are true landscapes, at true scale, with a life that is naturally in a horizontal position. When it is finished it is pulled off the ground with all the impurities and stuff that it picks up with it.

Tolon's work doesn't lean on the fact of her disability but rather absorbs and, to a large extent, collaborates with it. In recent years her imagery has moved towards the rapturous, evoking types of pleasure and terror associated with the Sublime. Early on, her strong affinity with the 'closed environment' of Samuel Beckett's characters – 'strangers in their own bodies', as Tolon describes them – found expression in images of isolated human forms in boxes. By the early 1990s she was making art works using natural materials such as grass, earth and straw. The grasses grew and dried up. Some works were completed by exposure to the elements outdoors. She drenched her cloth and steel pieces with water, prompting the growth of rust and mould; works on canvas were stained with geometrical arrays of coffee grounds. In the texts and images amassed for her 1999 book *Futur imparfait* [pp.146–182] she confronted her own medical history and the suspended life it had imposed upon her.

Born in Istanbul in 1955, Tolon lived for ten years in a French rehabilitation facility, during which time she spent long periods inventing kaleidoscopic image worlds for herself. (To her, the components of *Under Pressure* and other similar works look like 'a row of stretchers lined up as hospital beds'.) Tolon remembers her time in the hospital,

with the 'big family' of other patients, as generally a happy one. What proved more daunting was getting acculturated to the world outside, adjusting to its conventions.

For thirteen summers, from her late teens to her early thirties, she travelled around the Turkish countryside, especially in the disputed eastern territories, photographing people, architecture and the distressed land there. (The Turkish-Kurdish conflict was raging at the time, as was the so-called 'low-level war' between political factions.) During the same period, Tolon studied architecture, earning a Masters Degree at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1983, for a profession she had no intention of practising.

Photography and architecture are the ghosts in Tolon's pictorial regime. With each she maintains a deep but guarded connection. That her father worked as an architect accounts only partly for the feeling for architectural forms and prospects that unmistakably pervades her work (and which she herself sees as contiguous with her childhood fascination with spatial relations). As for Tolon's own inconclusive forays into the field, the life of a professional architect proved to be another sort of ill-fitting box, antithetical to both her social conscience and her need for a more wildly imaginative art. If, as Boris Pasternak said, poetry is 'in the grass', Tolon might say further that 'the grass' is what most contemporary architecture couldn't care less about. She told Constance Lewallen, 'It did not take me very long to realise that my attitude towards architecture was more passionate than professional.' And on another occasion she remarked, 'In the end, it was a job to pay for my art material. Not a career.' As it was, Tolon absconded cannily from her erstwhile training with a select array of accoutrements: Mylar, the plastic drafting film used in architectural offices; razor blades, a straight-edged ruler, black ink. The ink has since been supplanted, first by oil sticks, then by free-flowing paint.

Tolon's present-day, compact studio in the edge city of Emeryville, California, sits among modestly appointed industrial sheds that now house, alongside the older warehouses, biotech and software companies. (The local Peet's Coffee headquarters is around the corner, and Pixar Animation Studios is just a few blocks away.) The 'seeing-in' experience of a typical viewer of Canan Tolon's paintings may call to mind similar neighbourhoods, as well as more blatant residues of antique industrial milieus – spectral remains of oil derricks, shipping containers, and decrepit panoramas where factories and auto body shops once dominated. (Tolon's works of the late 1980s and early 1990s, made soon after her defection from architectural practice, incorporated collaged photographs of much of the same architectural range, plus 'vacant ... landscapes, such as ghost towns, battlegrounds, no man's lands'.)

There are no objects in these views. Often the perspective tilts, and one imagines oneself gazing down upon huge stretches of what looks like spoilage; at other times, a sheer frontality obtrudes like a rock-face or the gutted front of some disused highrise with its girders awry. All such envisionings are plausible, but what at first begs to be seen as solid fact could just as well be a ghostly shape on an echogram or, as Tolon herself says, 'retinal frottage – a rubbing of something that is not really there'.

Tolon's putative vistas, insofar as they refer to landscape at all, are those glimpsed while rushing through them, grasping at salient parts and allowing the variousness of the expanse to engulf one's sight. Never quite resolving into anything nameable, such furtive blips remain suggestions only, their main point of reference being Tolon's invitation to engage more fully with what is there to be sorted out. Because this type of abstraction exists where no absolutes apply, the marks across the surface breed suggestion – innumerable signposts

along the recombinant associational tracks to which pattern recognition is prone. The more open the suggestion, the more one feels oneself participating in the artist's urge to make visible a substitute world. (It's said that Piranesi, whose 'prison' etchings Tolon discovered for herself when she was sixteen, imagined that his mission as an artist was to create a new universe.)

The black-and-white images worked up by Tolon's method of scratching and slashing away blade-fuls of slick black pigment from the white support can easily be taken for products of screen printing or some other photographic device. Some, especially the ones involving reduplicated forms, look like filmstrips, or else passages of swift



MS Costa Concordia, Licensed image in *The New York Times*:
 Andrea Sinibaldi / AP / Press Association Images.
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currents of water apprehended laterally. Another telling correlation, that I noticed in September 2013, was the front-page *New York Times* close-up photograph of the partially submerged wreck of the massive Italian cruise ship MS *Costa Concordia*, its many tiers of gouged-out cabins resembling nothing so much as one of Tolon's more wayward, dilapidated grids.² Tolon herself enjoys the puzzler that, more than any other medium, black-and-white photography seems to edge closer to reality, and the tension that ensues: 'The photographic resemblance of the painting suspends it between reality and imagination, rendering it curiously unstable that way.'

Expansive as the paintings are, they begin in restraint and carry auguries of imminent collapse. They allow the eye little rest and seemingly limitless access. The indeterminate scale is at once lifelike and surreal: despite (or because of) the multiplicity of orthogonals on which the pictures are regularly built, there are no clues as to the size of anything that you see in them, how near or far, or whether any definable objects are supposed to be apprehended. A single horizon is imperious, but a stack of multiple registers cancels hierarchy. There is no confusion between the lines; Tolon has zero tolerance for drips, although wiping with rags is permitted. From picture to picture, silhouettes repeat, pile up, disperse. Immersion is required, and once you commit to it, the worldview, for all its hampered aspects, feels astonishingly complete: painting and viewer contending as one with the bafflements that space presents.

If one of Tolon's major themes is the severity of limits, she matches that with an equally strong will to luxuriate in the spaces her pictures often open out to. Marcel Duchamp spoke of the intention behind his *3 Standard Stoppages*, 1913–1914 – a work with which Tolon feels a particular affinity – as being 'to imprison and preserve forms obtained through chance', and its purpose 'to cast a pataphys-

ical doubt on the concept of a straight line being the shortest route from one point to another'. Tolon's carving-away process may call up the spectre of a prisoner resolutely digging a clandestine passage out of a cell, but once done, they have a musical extravagance. (Her horizontal markings often look like musical staves.) A flick of the blade reveals a fresh edge, a flare, an avenue. Among the densely packed flecks and otherwise vertiginous chasms, you can feel particles passing through one another in a riot of elemental physics where nothing gets in anything else's way. Perceptually, the paintings are there to be danced with, outstripping contemplation – surfaces that never sleep.

1 'Interview with Canan Tolon by Constance Lewallen', *Canan Tolon, Limbo*, Istanbul: Galeri Nev, 1998.

Note: Most of Canan Tolon's words quoted in this essay are taken from *Canan Tolon, Limbo*, but some are from Bill Berkson's own conversations with the artist or paraphrased from her conversation with Ziba Ardalan as published in this book, *Canan Tolon*, London: Parasol unit, 2014.

2 The cruise ship MS *Costa Concordia* ran aground off the Italian coast on 13 January 2012.

John Yau

The Bureau of Lost and Found Identities

Our origins do not make us who and what we are; they have nothing to do with identity and self-knowledge. Canan Tolon

I am beginning to think that working backwards is one of the essential features of a deep experience of art. First, there is the work – be it painting, drawing, sculpture, installation or any other medium. And, if the work holds my attention, and perhaps even perplexes me, it is likely to achieve the second step, which is to pull me across some kind of threshold, igniting a desire to look further, to dig deeper, to think harder. In some cases, the curiosity is too quickly answered and my desire to learn more fizzles out. I see a work and I realise that I don't really need to see it again, that I don't really need to return to it, because it hasn't opened up unforeseen and unlikely pathways in my thinking. This is definitely not the case with the paintings of Canan Tolon. Seeing and thinking go hand-in-hand when it comes to the art that I find sustaining, and with Tolon I feel that I am just at the beginning of both.

I first saw Tolon's paintings in the *Somewhere Now* exhibition, her first solo show at the Von Lintel Gallery, New York (April 18 – May 25, 2013). Initially, I was convinced that she must have painted over surfaces imprinted with out-of-focus, black-and-white photographic images of buildings. Since I could not tell where the photographic image ended and the mark-making began, I started to

scrutinise the surface, my eyes slowly sweeping over it like a mine detector looking for hidden clues.

As I kept refocusing, I found myself increasingly enthralled by the work's layered spaces and ragged structures, and by the wild range of associations they stirred up – from Piranesi's invented prisons (*Carceri d'Invenzione*, 1750) to Eva Besnyö's photographs of a bombed-out Rotterdam in the 1940s. I soon realised, however, that there was no photography involved, nothing overtly referential to anchor the work and by extension our experience of it. Tolon purposefully sets the viewer adrift in a domain that evokes oversized, dehumanising architectural structures; the mutable skylines rising over vast, spreading urban sprawl; the speculative fiction of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling; the digital network of the Internet in a state of frozen decay.

The only material that Tolon applies to her pristine surfaces is black oil paint, with muted traces of other colours ranging from pink and red to blues and yellows. Black, however, dominates, with the other colours acting as stains and accents. Everything is made of paint that has been pulled, scraped and removed. Moreover, the paint seems neither brushed nor poured. Instead, the artist employs tools with straight edges or absorbent bodies: squeegees, rulers, razor blades and sponges. Her method shares something with architecture and archaeology, which are diametrical opposites. One is concerned with building and the future, while the other is determined to uncover and learn from the remnants of obsolete built environments. Here, I had my first inkling that one of Tolon's concerns might be the collapse of the commonplace human model of time, which is inherently invested in the future, in utopian ideals. If everything we erect is destined to become a ruin, what should we be building, especially in light of the major impact it will have on the environment?

Provoked to look at the paintings closely, to move right up next to their compressed but airy surfaces, I become acutely conscious of my body in space and its particular orientation towards the physical world. At the same time, it occurs to me that the disorienting gap between seeing and knowing might have been part of the artist's intention – that this chasm or slippage is something that many of us, myself included, might routinely gloss over in our daily lives. How often are we exactly where we want to be, doing exactly what we want, and not thinking about an alternative possibility? Perhaps disorientation of one kind or another is the norm rather than the exception.

Despite my initial sensation that the work had a photographic basis, it quickly became evident that Tolon isn't interested in *trompe l'oeil* or in any other method of tricking the viewer. Soon, I was buzzing with questions, which deepened as well as propelled my curiosity. There was so much about her work that engaged me, that challenged my thinking. Usually, when a painting slows down the viewing experience, the goal is to create a contemplative space that might convey a feeling of transcendence or self-reflective calm. Nothing of the sort happens with Tolon's work. Instead of calming me down, it made me edgy, and even bewildered me. I kept thinking that I wasn't seeing what was there, as if the work were pulling at some lost memory buried deep within me, some inchoate emotional state that I had covered over in order to move on.

In Tolon's paintings, looking parallels excavation, the time-consuming process by which the work comes into being. She uses a sharp razor blade to scrape away layers of black oil paint, to uncover worlds at once intact and ruined. She seems to be drawing in reverse, which is to say that removal (a form of erasure), rather than addition, is central to her paintings and works on Mylar. It is a cumulative process – both quarrying and shaping the layered pigment, its viscous

materiality – that yields the final, compressed array of geometric structures, which seems to be changing before our eyes. This is because the scraping blurs the edges of the structural forms it creates, which slip in and out of the voids or gaps between them.

At one point, the stacked layers – determined, I suppose by the width of the razor blade or whatever tool the artist used to scrape away the paint – reminded me of film frames, which, paradoxically, were passing before my eyes too quickly to discern their images. It was as if seeing and memory had been separated just enough to make what might seem familiar – the ruins of a city seen in the documentary mode of black-and-white – elude recognition, leaving this viewer at least with a pervasive sense of unease. I felt I was wandering in a reality which I knew should be familiar, but wasn't. A glitch seemed to be planted in something as basic and essential as the connection between cognition and memory. Here, it should be noted that *Glitch* is a title Tolon gave one body of work, and that she has titled others *Reflex*, *Limbo* and *Fugue*, each evoking a bodily action or state of mind.

The other thing that struck me was that for all the repetitiveness in any one painting, no part of the composition was exactly like any other. Continual change and constant difference, however minute, became apparent. This feeling of change is one reason why my earlier analogy to film seems so apt. Even when nothing seems to change – as in Andy Warhol's notorious film, *Empire*, 1964, which consists of more than eight hours of the Empire State building shot in real time from a single stationary camera – everything does change because time passes. We can't step outside of time, we can only shape its passing.

Since my first encounter with Canan Tolon's paintings, I have learned that she works across a wide range of mediums: drawing, collage, sculpture and installation. I have pored through a number of cata-

logues, including a bi-lingual monograph, *Canan Tolon* (Istanbul, Turkey: Finansbank, 2011), as well as spent time with her in the restaurant of the HotelAmericano in Manhattan's Chelsea. Along with insightful essays by Jacquelyn Baas and Richard Ingersoll, the monograph contains an interview between the artist and Constance Lewallen in September / October, 1997, in Berkeley, California. The following are some of the basic facts that I learned from Lewallen's interview, from various essays and from talking with Tolon.

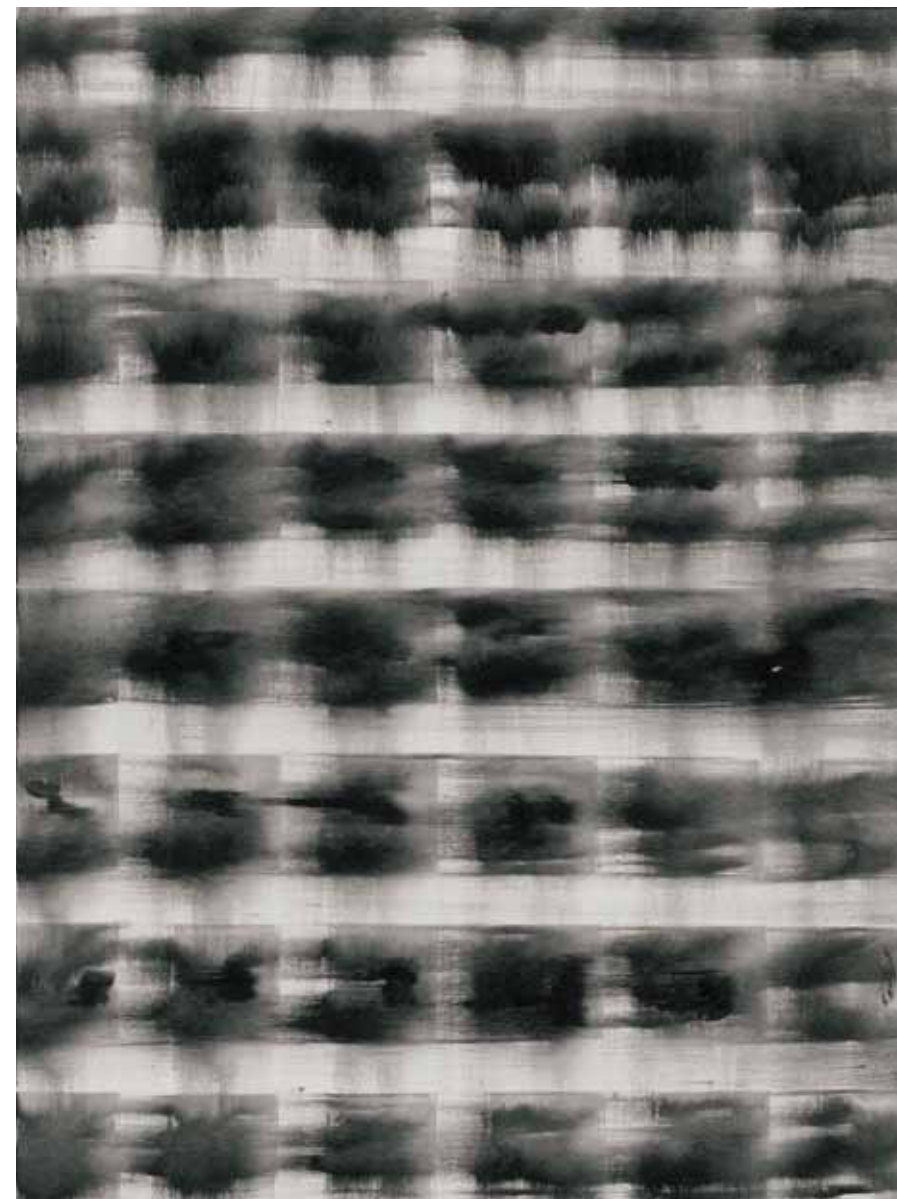
She was born in Istanbul in 1955. After contracting polio at a very young age, Tolon was sequestered in a hospital in France until she was eleven. In her interview with Lewallen, she observes that:

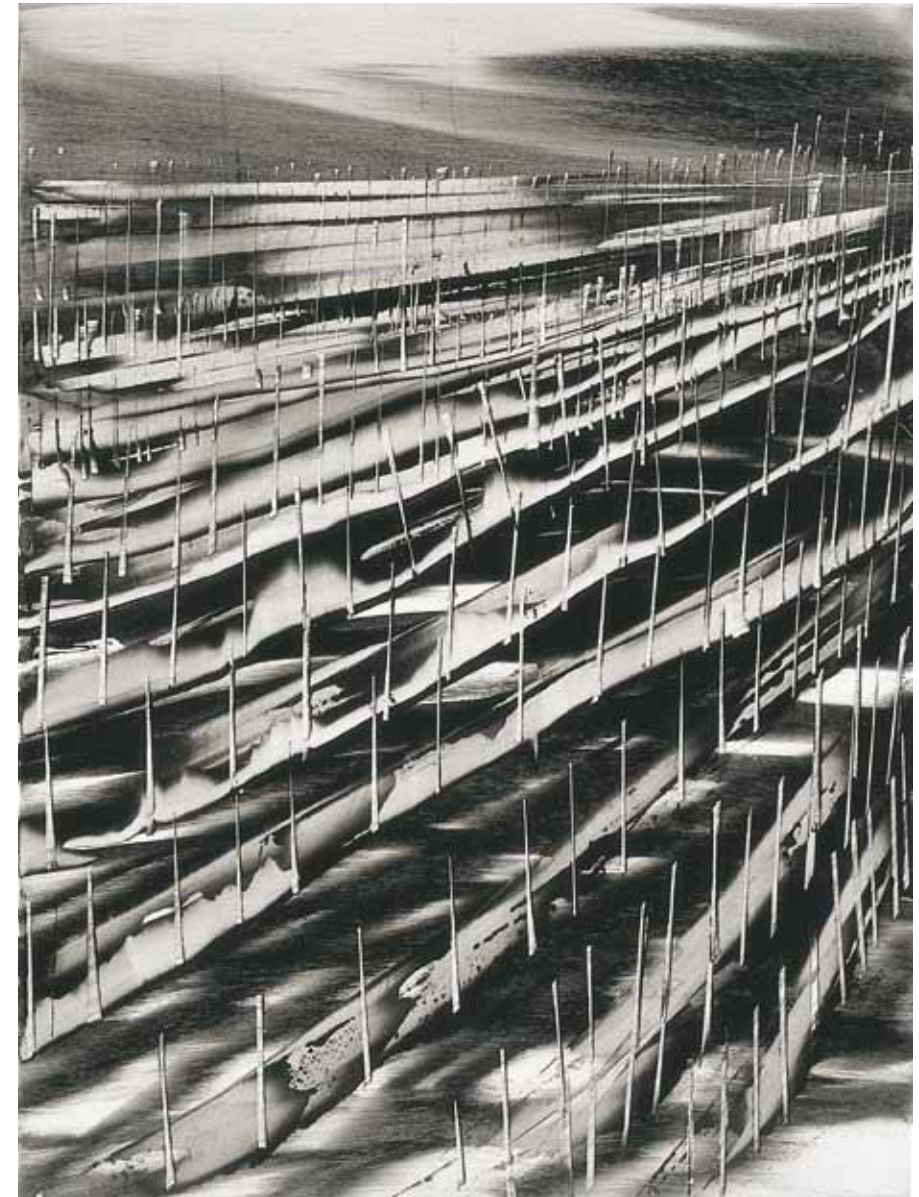
From my bed where I had to stay for months, I used to create pictures by looking at a bright area until it burned my retina. It created instant pictures that were projected onto my eyelids. Then, if I looked at another bright spot, moving my head slightly, I would offset it by printing another image over it, creating multiple exposures. I turned my head, to turn the images upside-down. I would play like that, composing images for hours, layering them, colouring them by rubbing my eyes vigorously, and looking at them fade slowly until they were gone. My bed was an endless source of inspiration. It was like a kaleidoscope of constantly unfolding dioramas. I imagined aerial views of the unmade bed, and I could discover hidden landscapes in the folds of the sheets and blankets. With the slightest movement they would be destroyed and new ones would appear. And I was enfolded in these constantly changing landscapes. These short-lived landscapes – which were in a perpetual state of destruction and construction – could only last if I looked at them very carefully, making a mental note for future memories. I can see all this now in my work.

I don't think it is farfetched to suggest that the extreme particularities of Tolon's childhood formed the seedbed of her art. And yet, for all the personal background that informs her work, it is also

evident that it is neither overtly autobiographical nor remotely anecdotal. And if one is inclined to believe – as some people do – that all work is autobiographical, reducing it to cause-and-effect, then one misses the radical change that Tolon has engendered in her art. It is not about her or her condition. Rather, what strikes me now – even as I re-read that passage from her interview – is that her work seems to arise out of a visionary state, that for Tolon, seeing is a transformative act that ultimately thrusts the viewer into an imaginary space.

Tolon studied literature and philosophy in Turkey. She went on to study in Scotland, Germany and England, where she gained a BA in design from the Middlesex Polytechnic and Architectural Association in London. In 1983, she completed her master's degree in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. All of these facts may point to various aspects of her current work, but none of them explains it. This is why I return to Tolon's paintings, why I want to learn more about them and myself. Her work transports me to a place where I don't learn how to see, but where I sense that seeing is just the beginning of the journey Tolon makes possible.





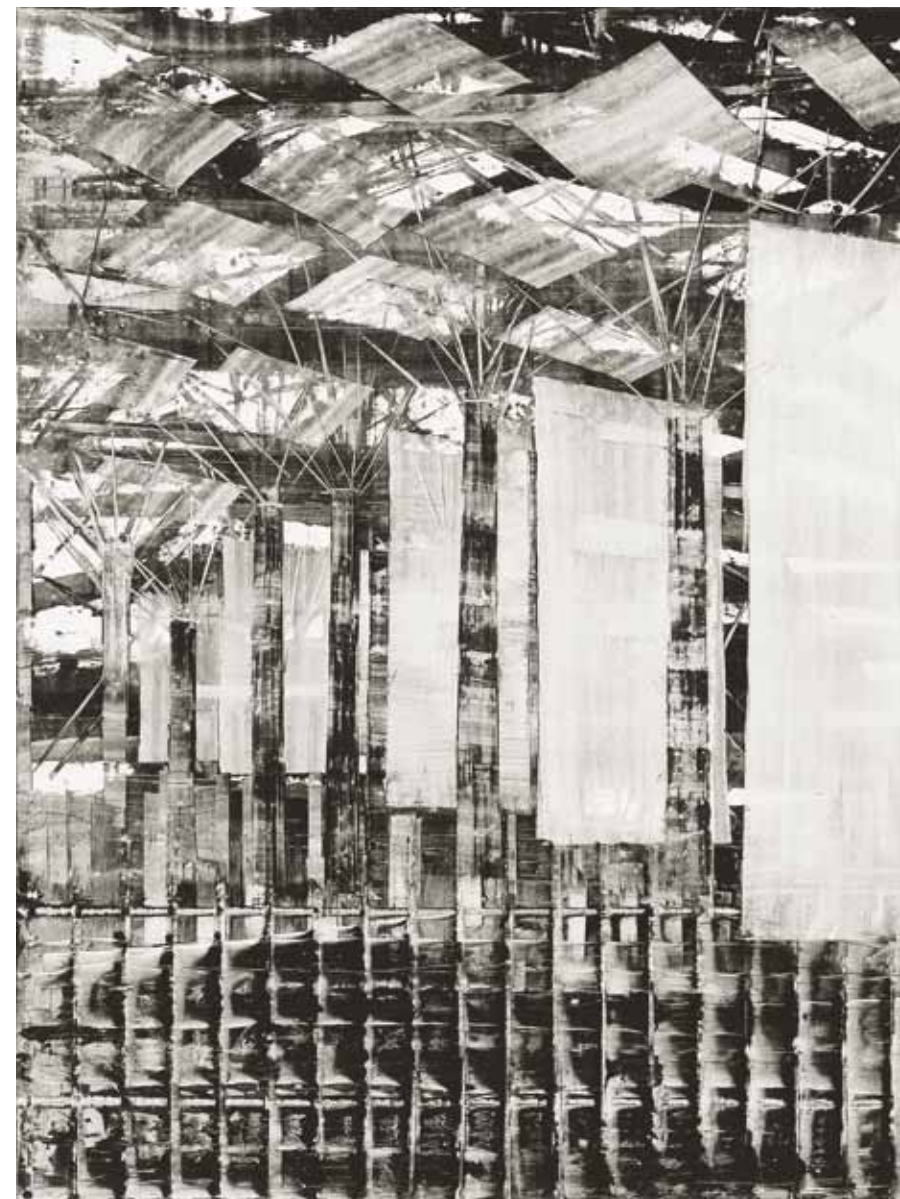


Untitled, 1997

Black oil paint on Mylar

Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)

66

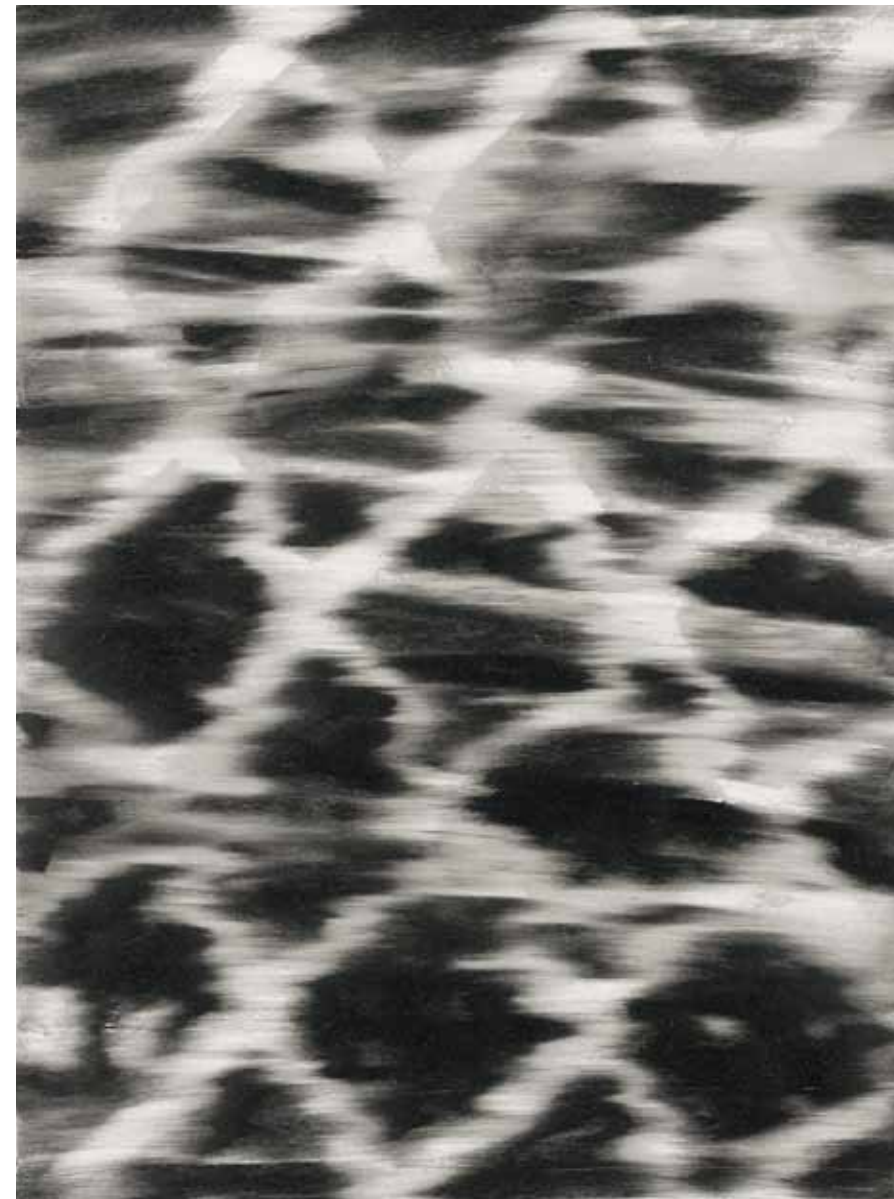


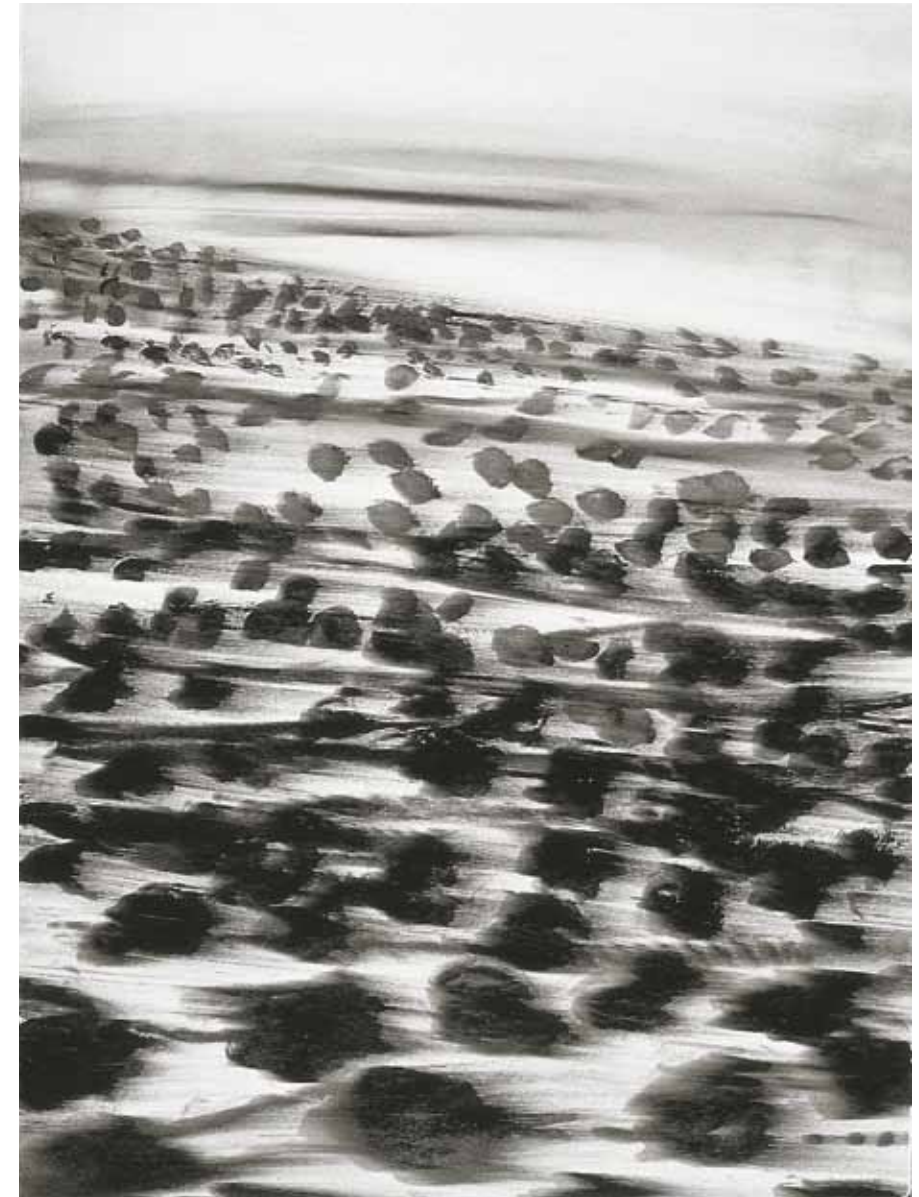
67

Untitled, 1997

Black oil paint on Mylar

Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)











Untitled, 1999

Black oil paint on Mylar

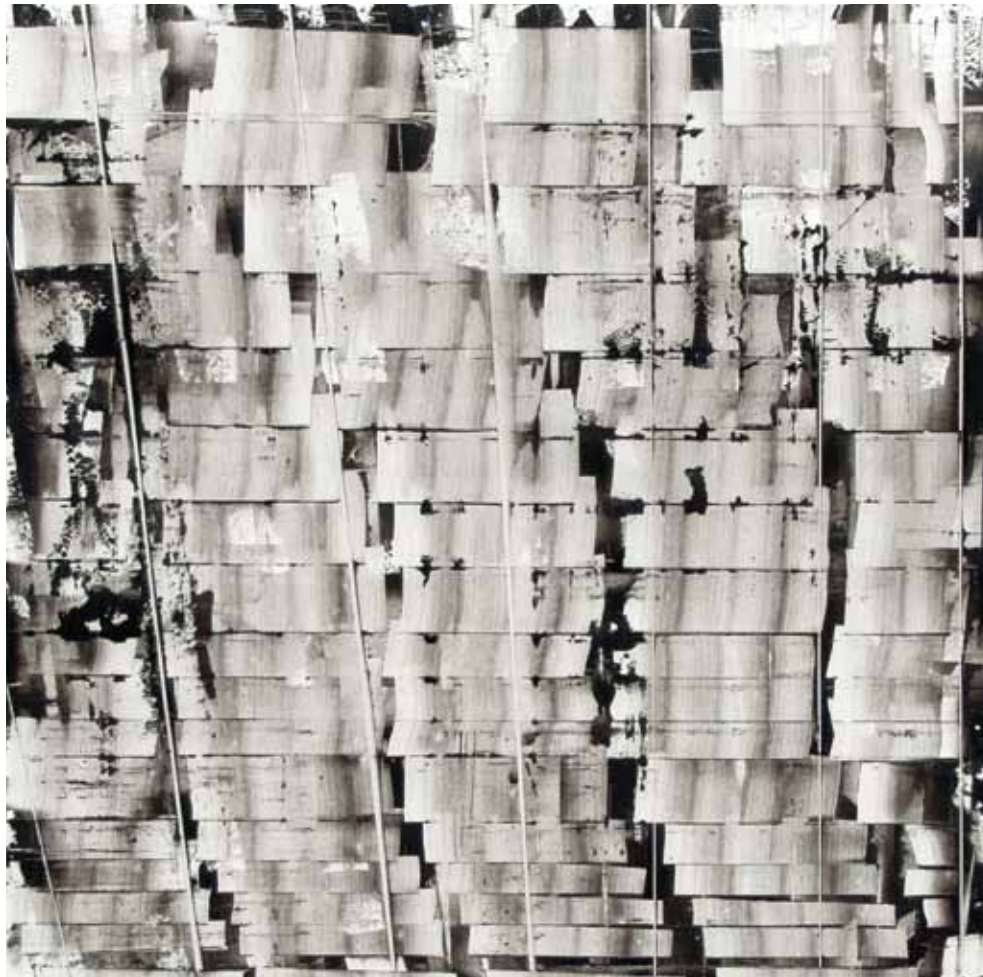
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Untitled, 1999

Black oil paint on Mylar

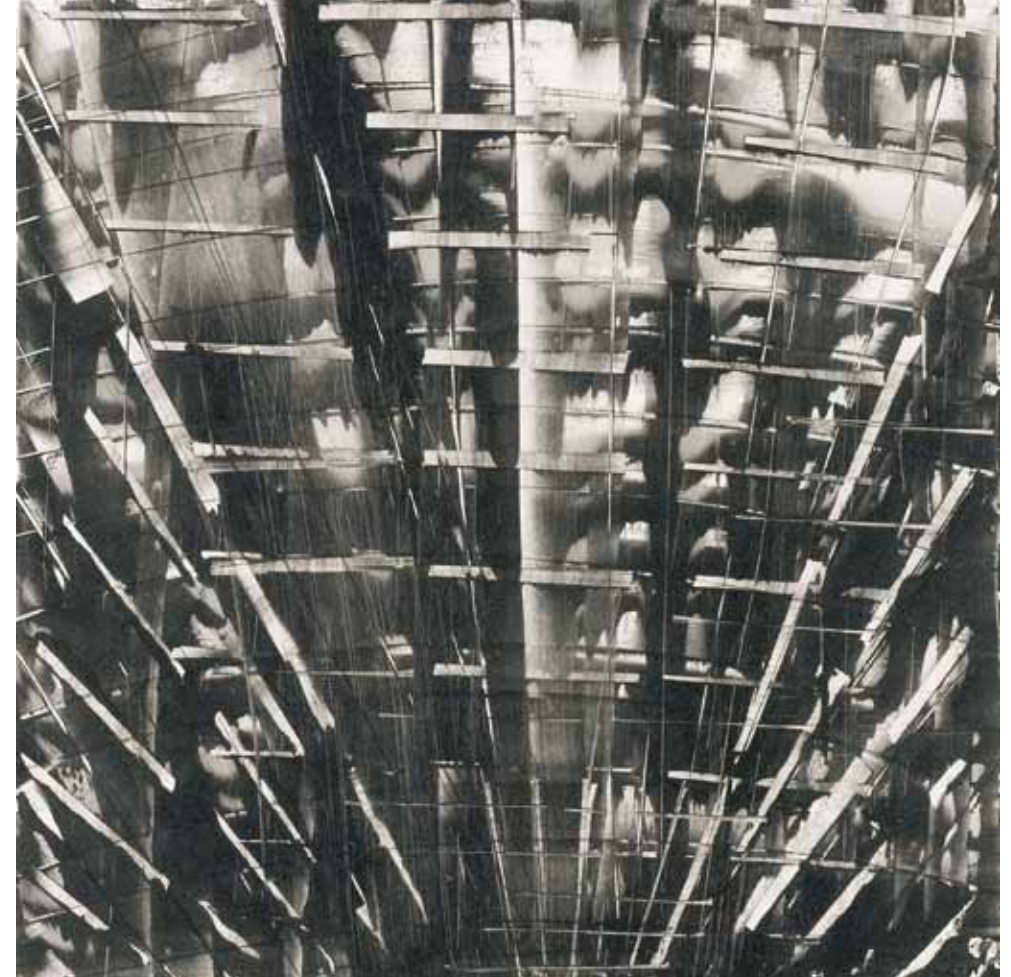
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)



Untitled, 1999

Black oil paint on Mylar

Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)



Untitled, 1999

Black oil paint on Mylar

Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)



Untitled, 1996

Acrylic, rust and wax on canvas

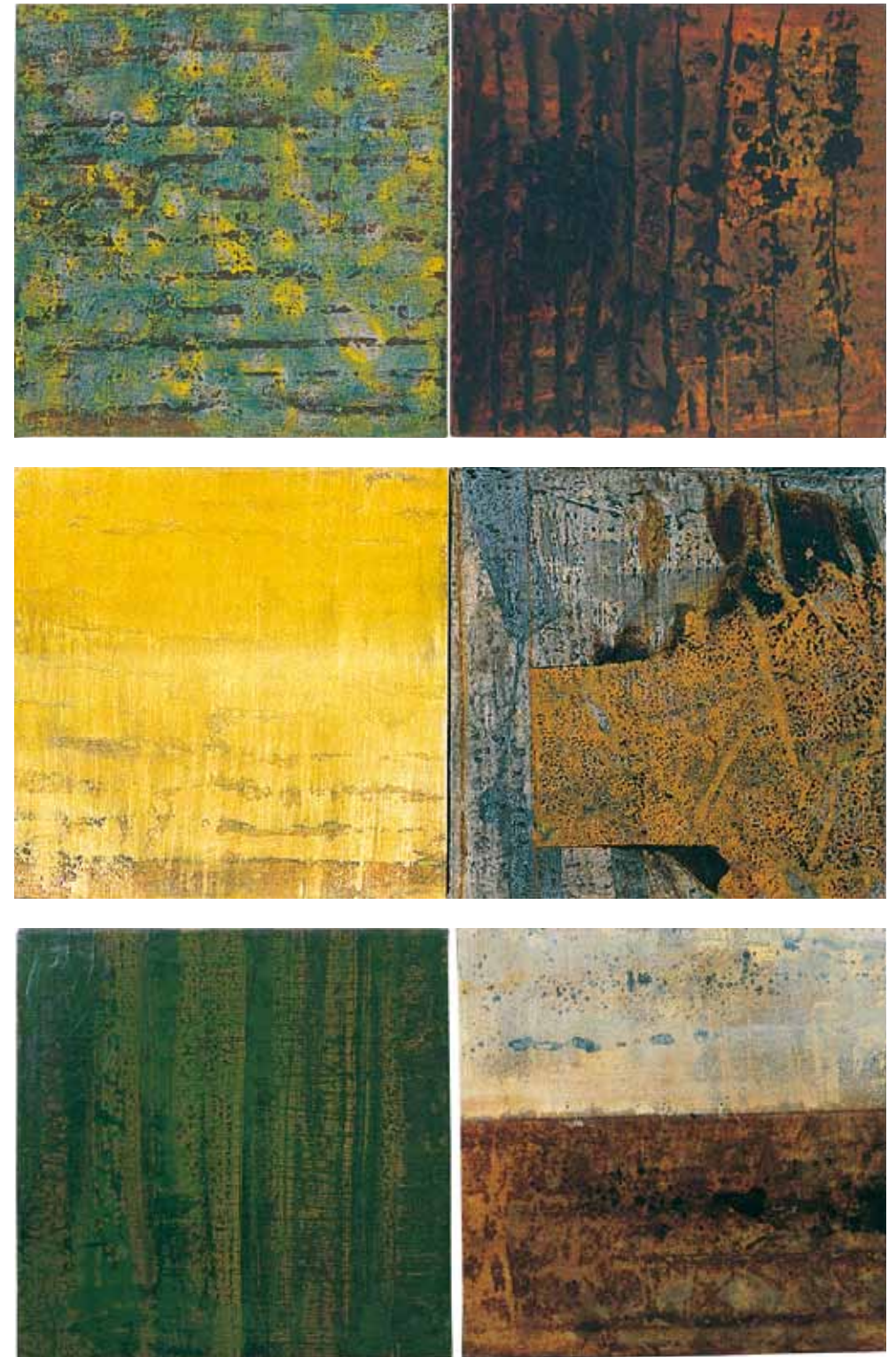
152 × 132 cm (60 × 52 in)



Untitled, 1996

Acrylic, oil, rust and wax on canvas

132 × 112 cm (52 × 44 in)







Untitled, 1999

Rust and pigment on canvas

91 × 61 cm (36 × 24 in)

86

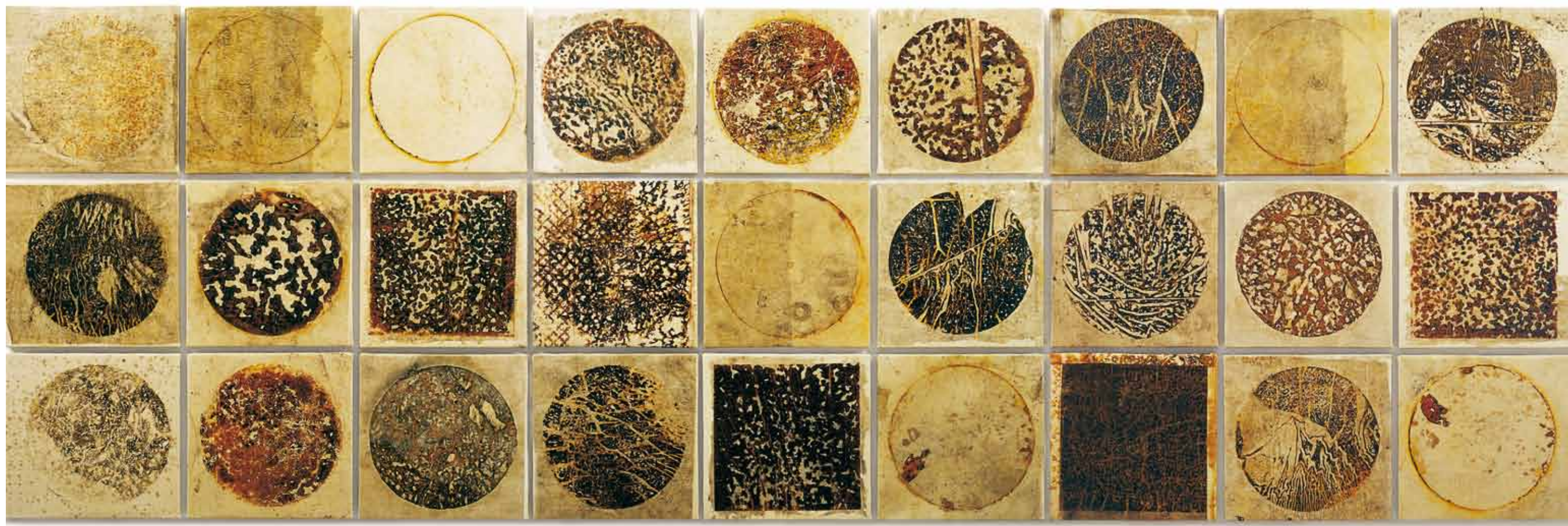


Untitled, 1999

Rust and pigment on canvas

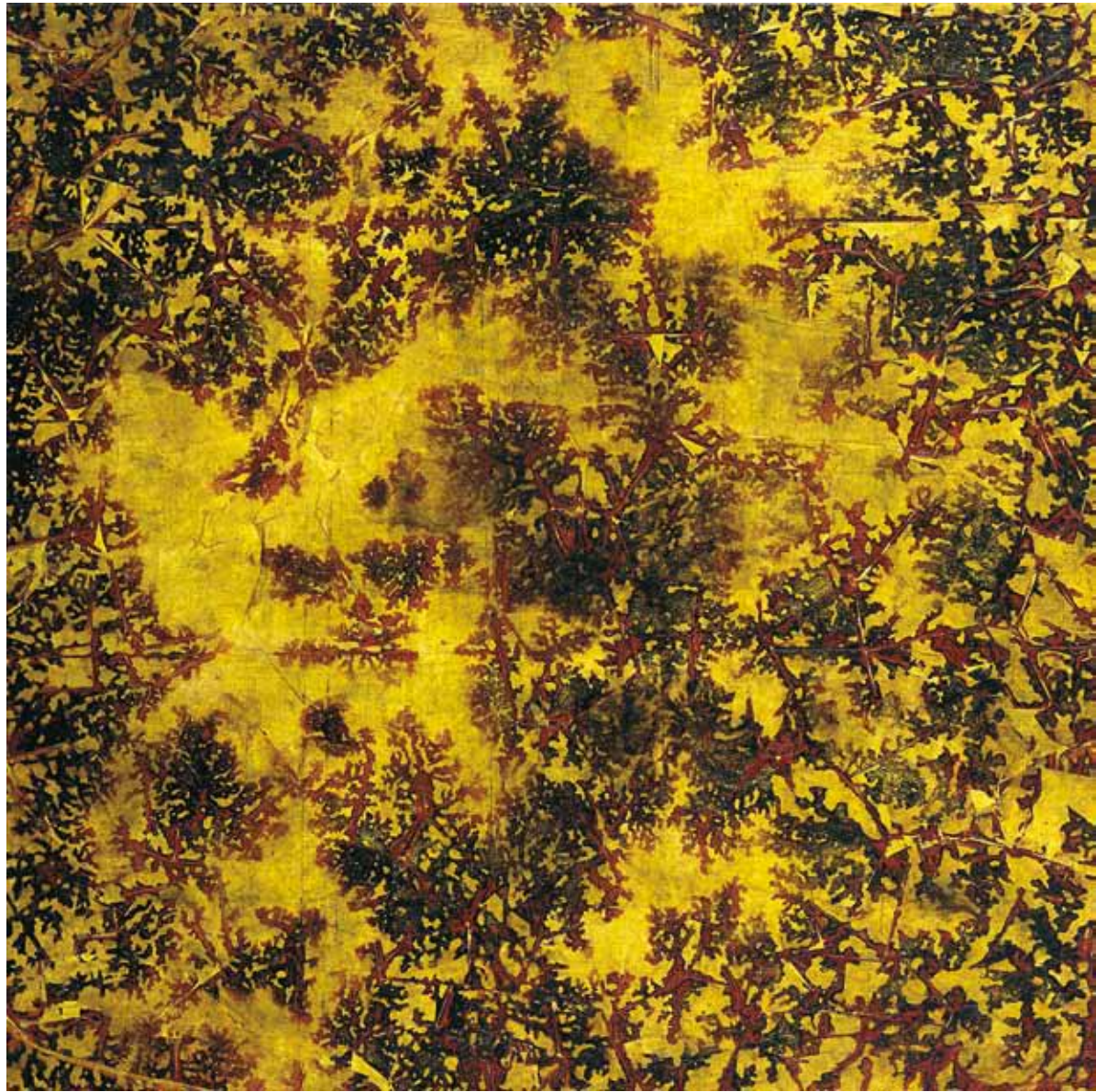
91 × 61 cm (36 × 24 in)

87









Untitled, 2001

Rust and pigment on canvas

99 × 99 cm (39 × 39 in)



Untitled, 2001

Rust and pigment on canvas

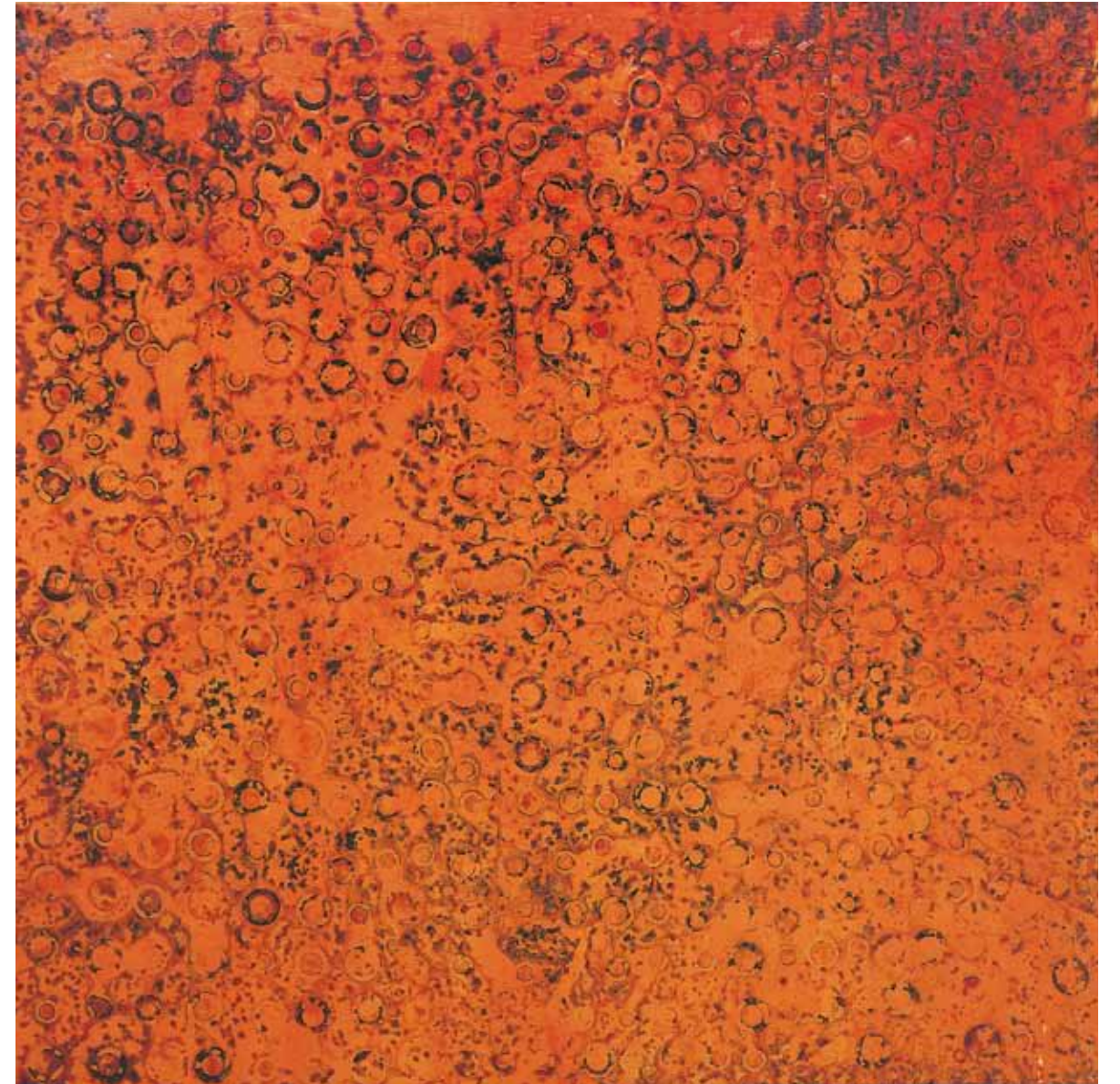
99 × 99 cm (39 × 39 in)



Untitled 12, 2002

Rust and pigment on canvas

122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)



Untitled, 2004

Rust and pigment on canvas

122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)



Untitled, 2004

Rust and pigment on canvas

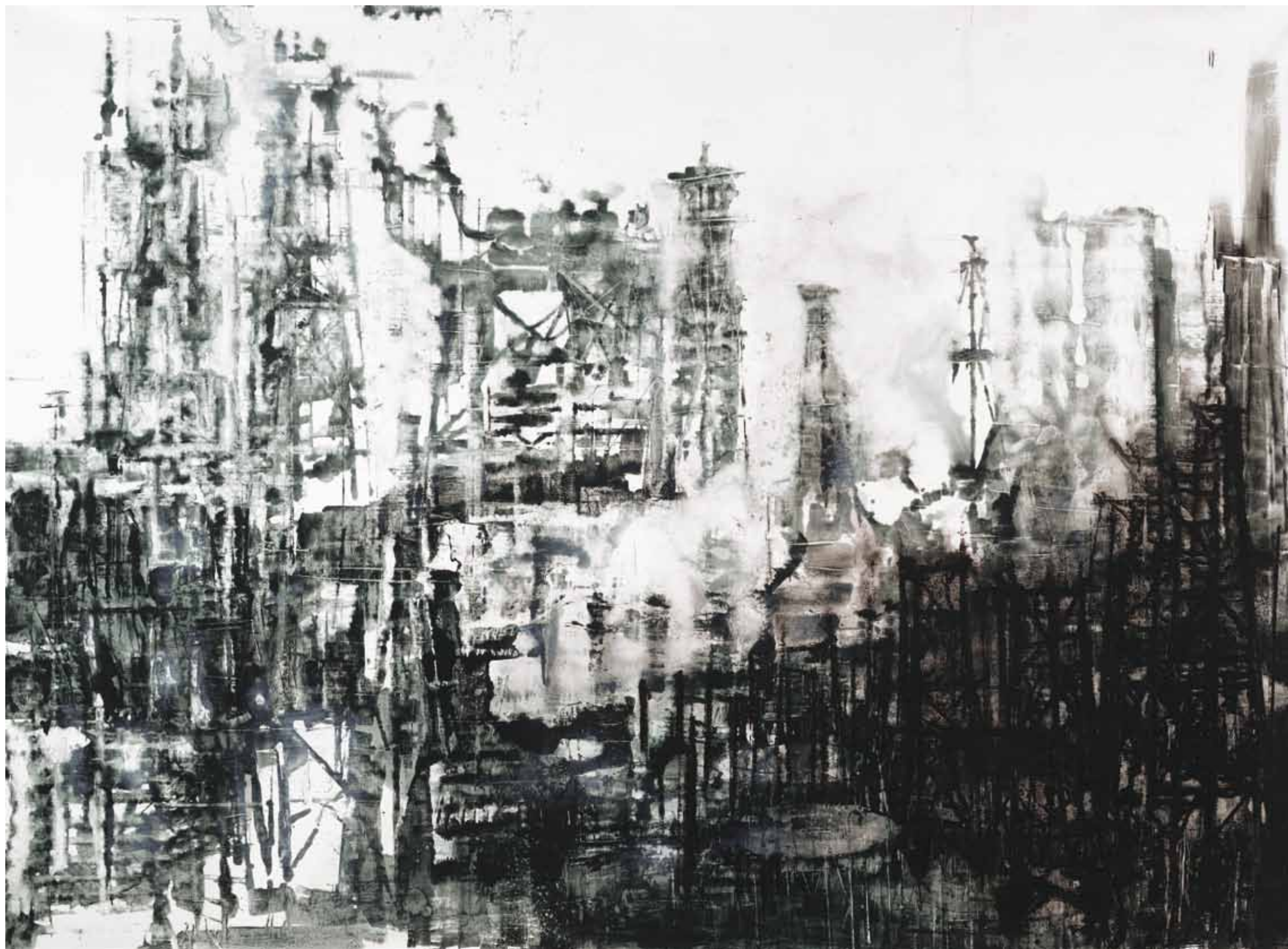
122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)



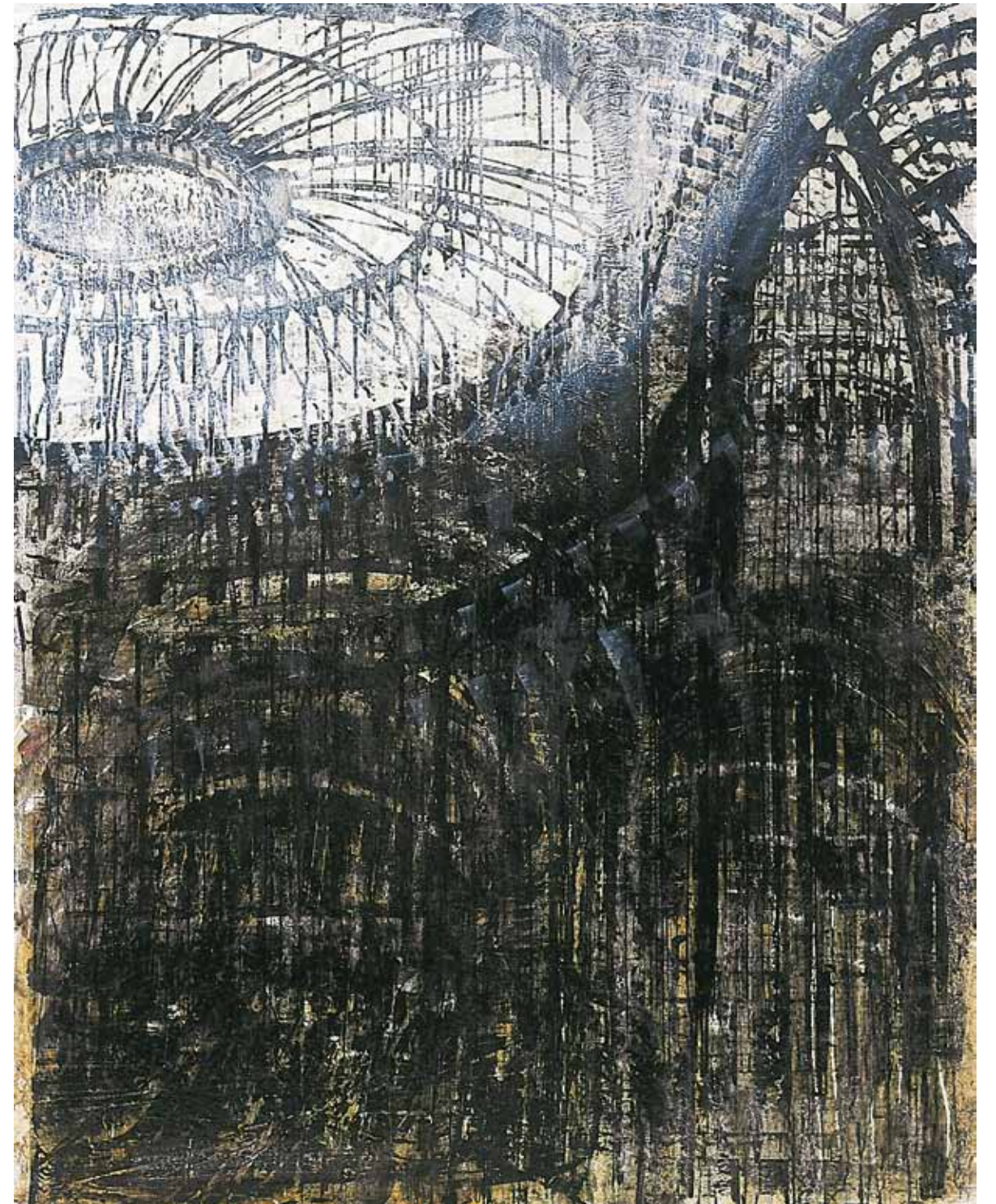
Untitled, 2004

Rust and pigment on canvas

122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)









Untitled, 2004

Rust and pigment on canvas

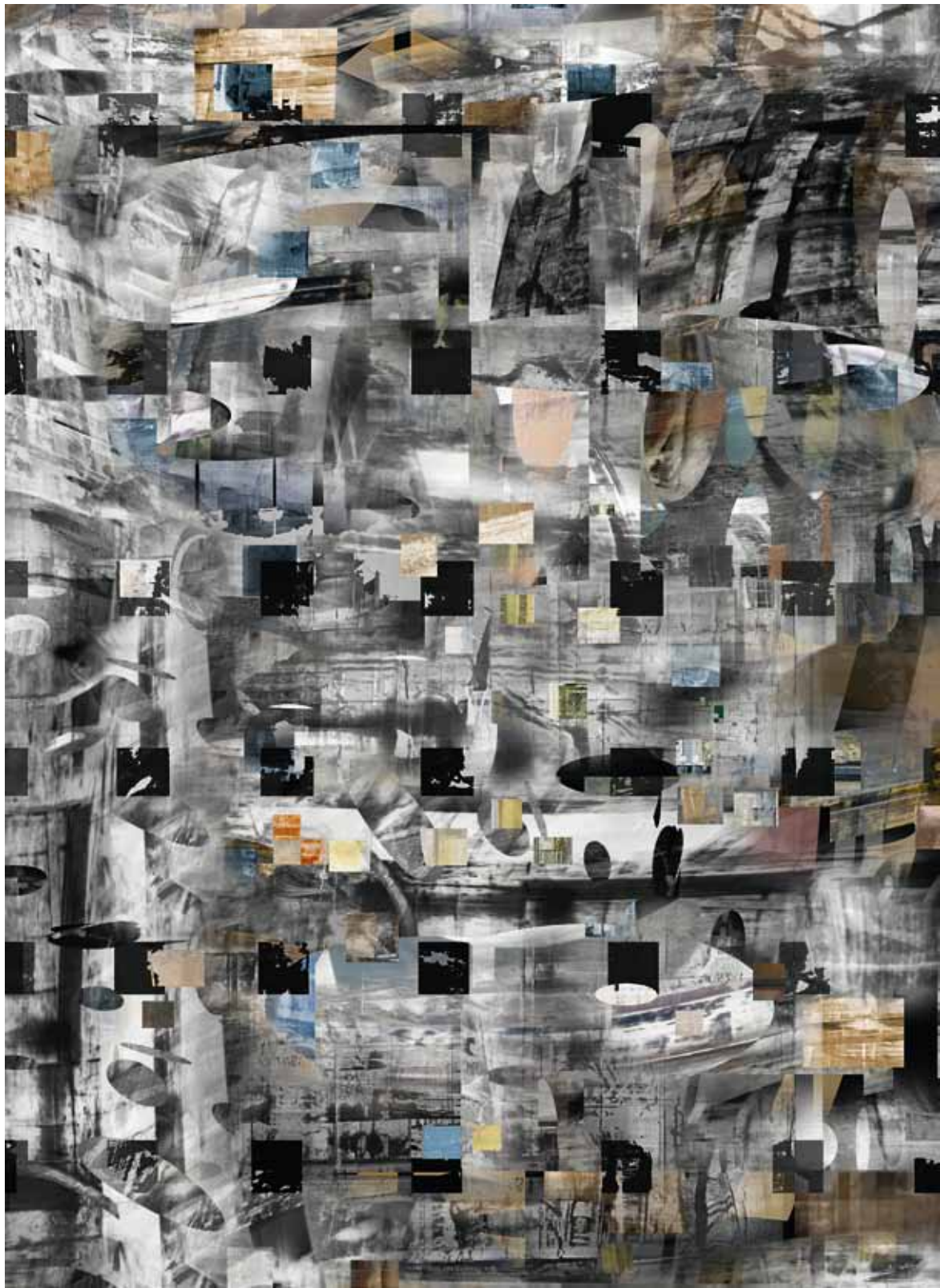
99 × 122 cm (39 × 48 in)



Untitled (diptych), 2007

Rust and pigment on canvas

130 × 122 cm (51 × 48 in)

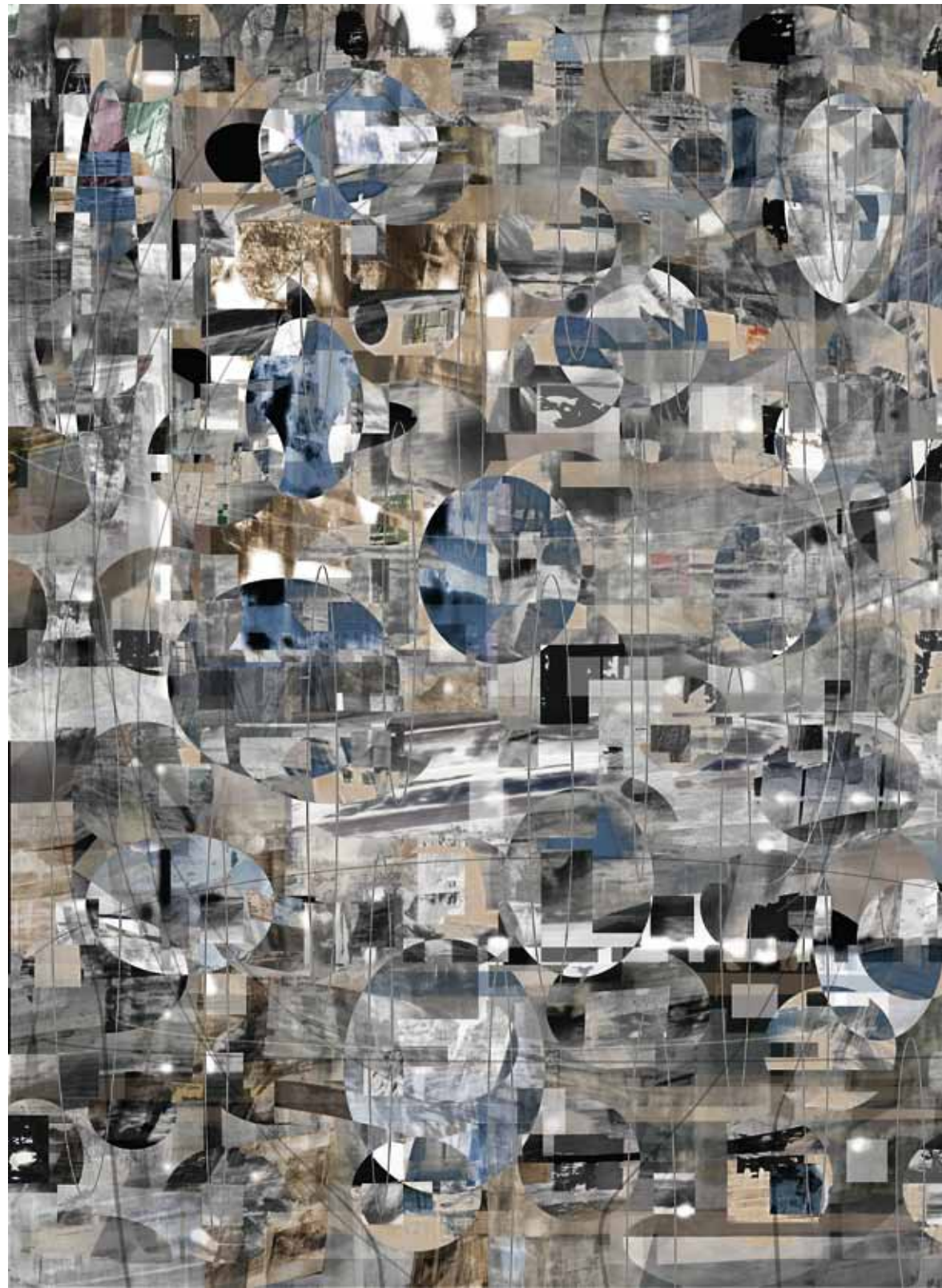


Fugue 6, 2009

Digital pigment print on paper

117 × 90 cm (46 × 35 in)

108



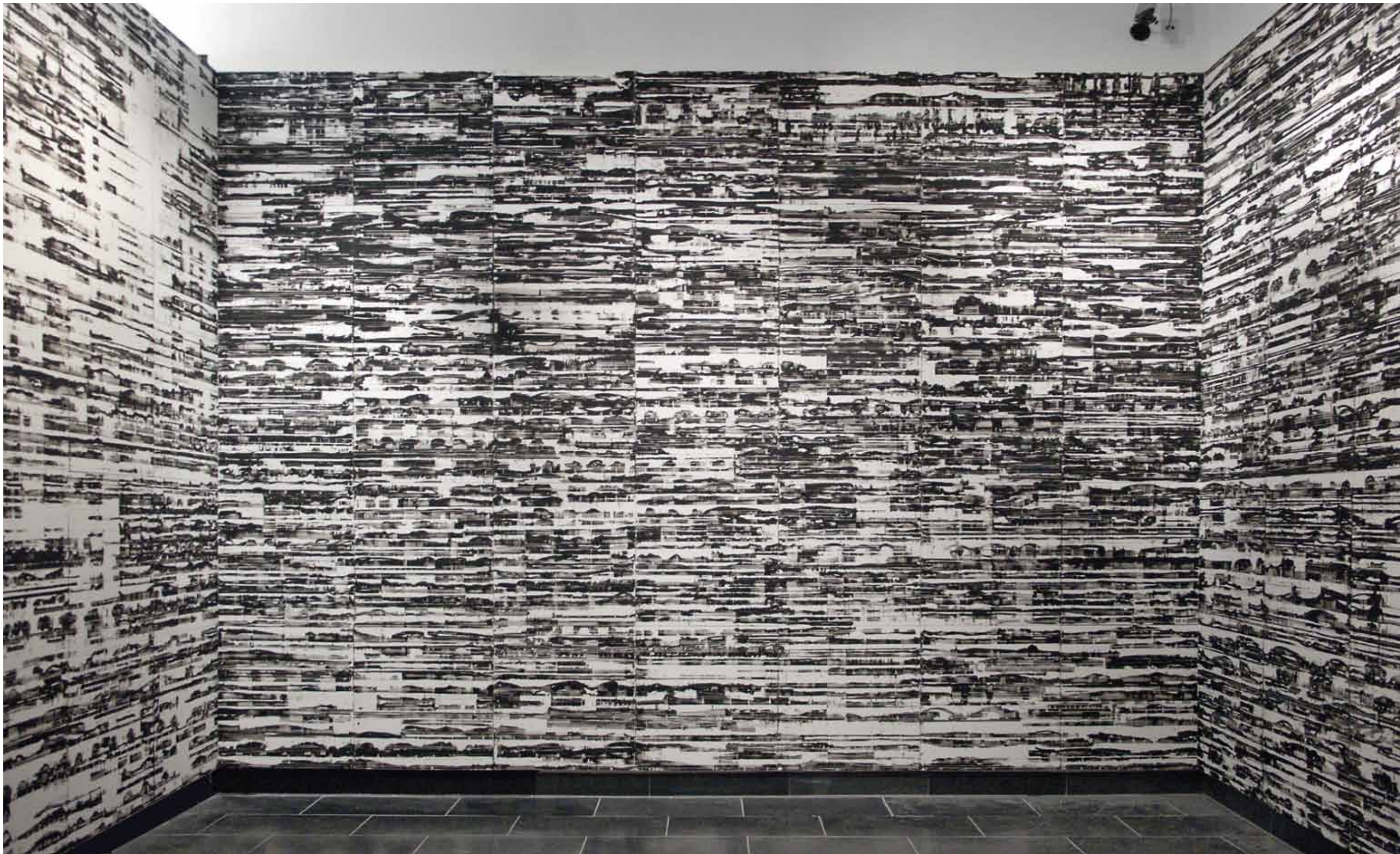
109

Fugue 7, 2009

Digital pigment print on paper

117 × 90 cm (46 × 35 in)





Time After Time, 2012

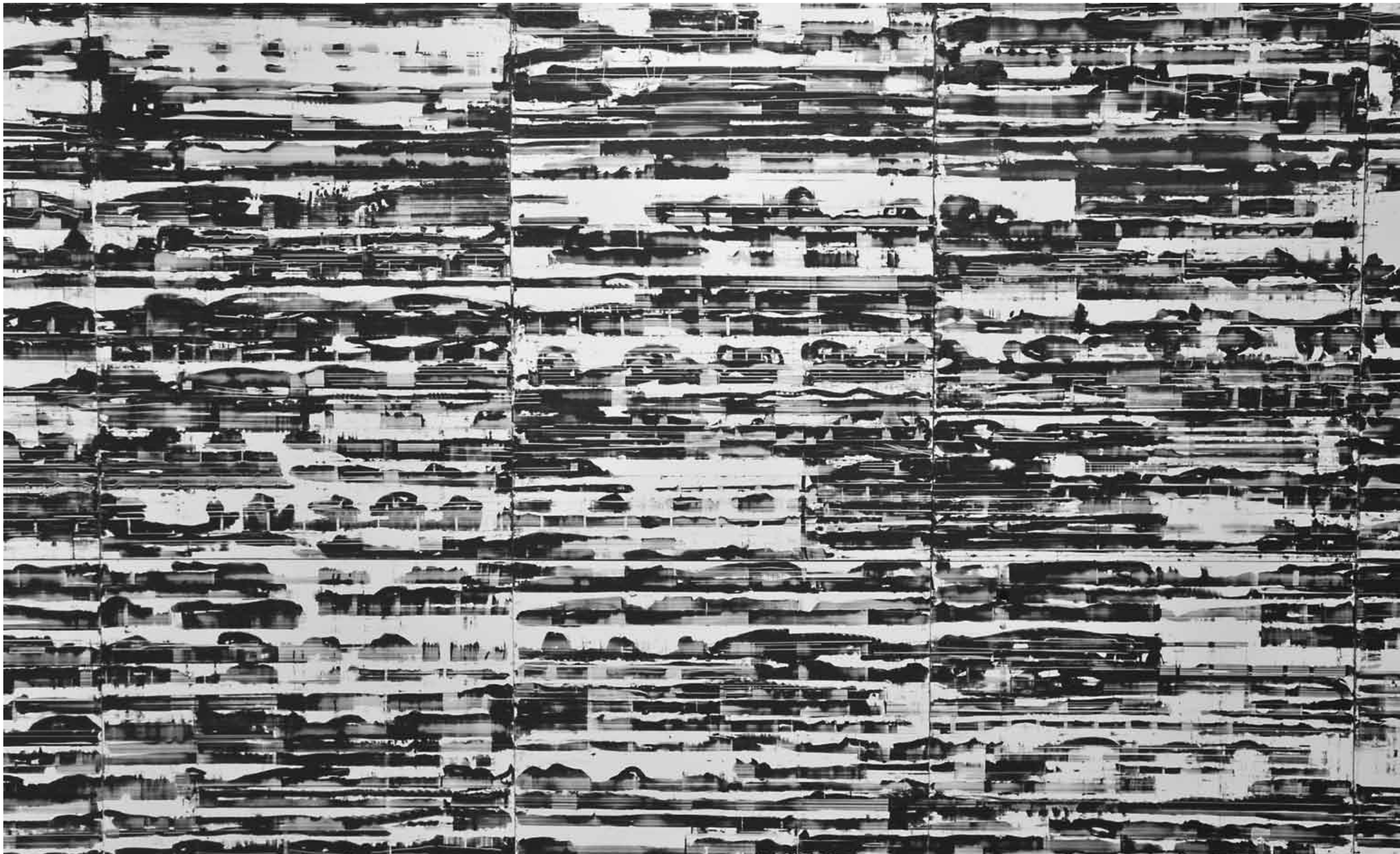
Oil on clayboard

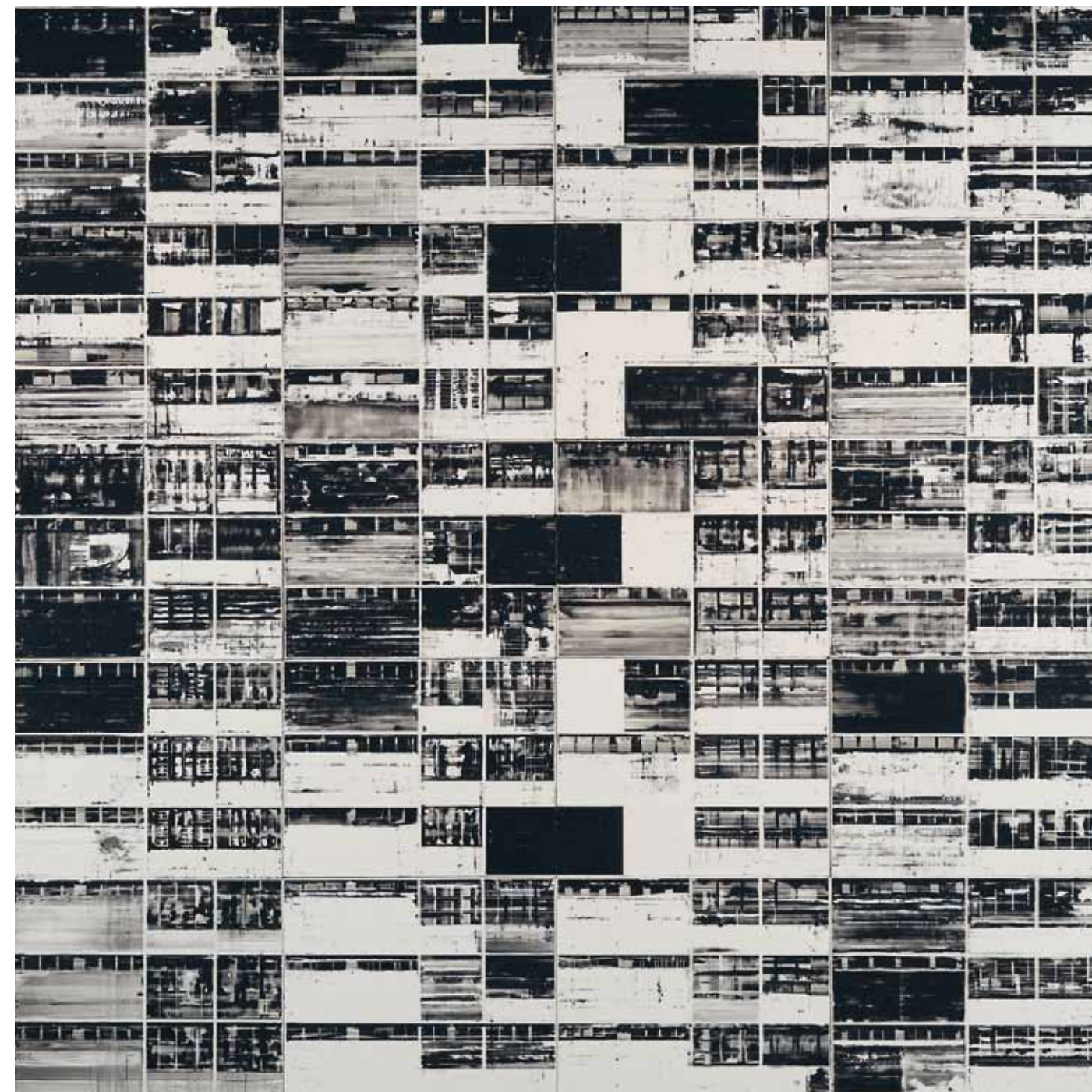
125 panels
Each 61 x 61 x 6 cm (24 x 24 x 2¼ in) 112

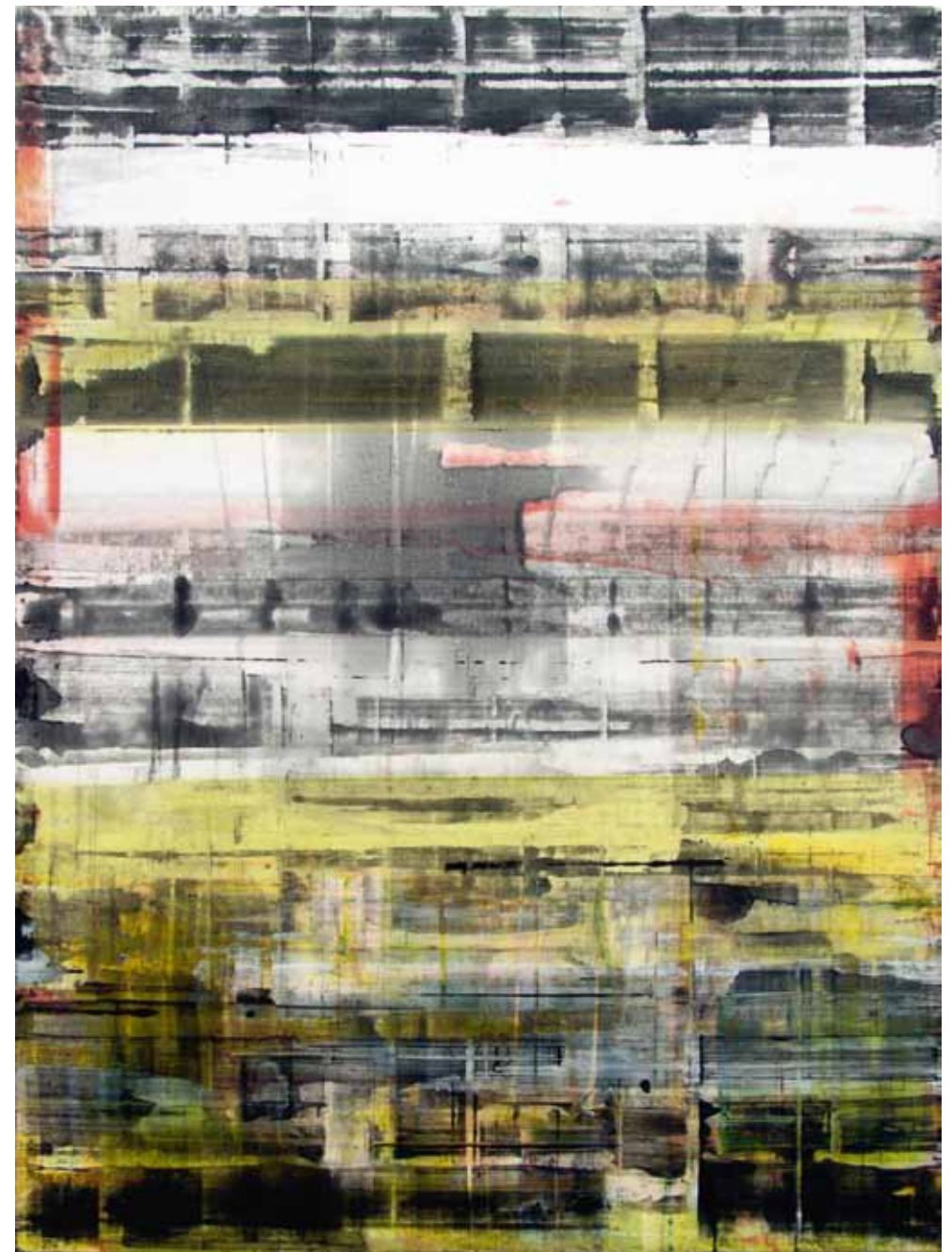
113

Wall 1, 3 : 305 x 549 cm (120 x 216 in)
Wall 2: 305 x 427 cm (120 x 168 in)

Installation view, Institute for the Humanities,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor









Untitled, 2011

Oil on canvas

51 × 41 cm (20 × 16 in)

120



Untitled 8.3, 2013

Oil on canvas

91.5 × 61 cm (36 × 24 in)

121



Untitled 5.3, 2013

Oil on canvas

61 × 46 cm (24 × 18 in)

122

123

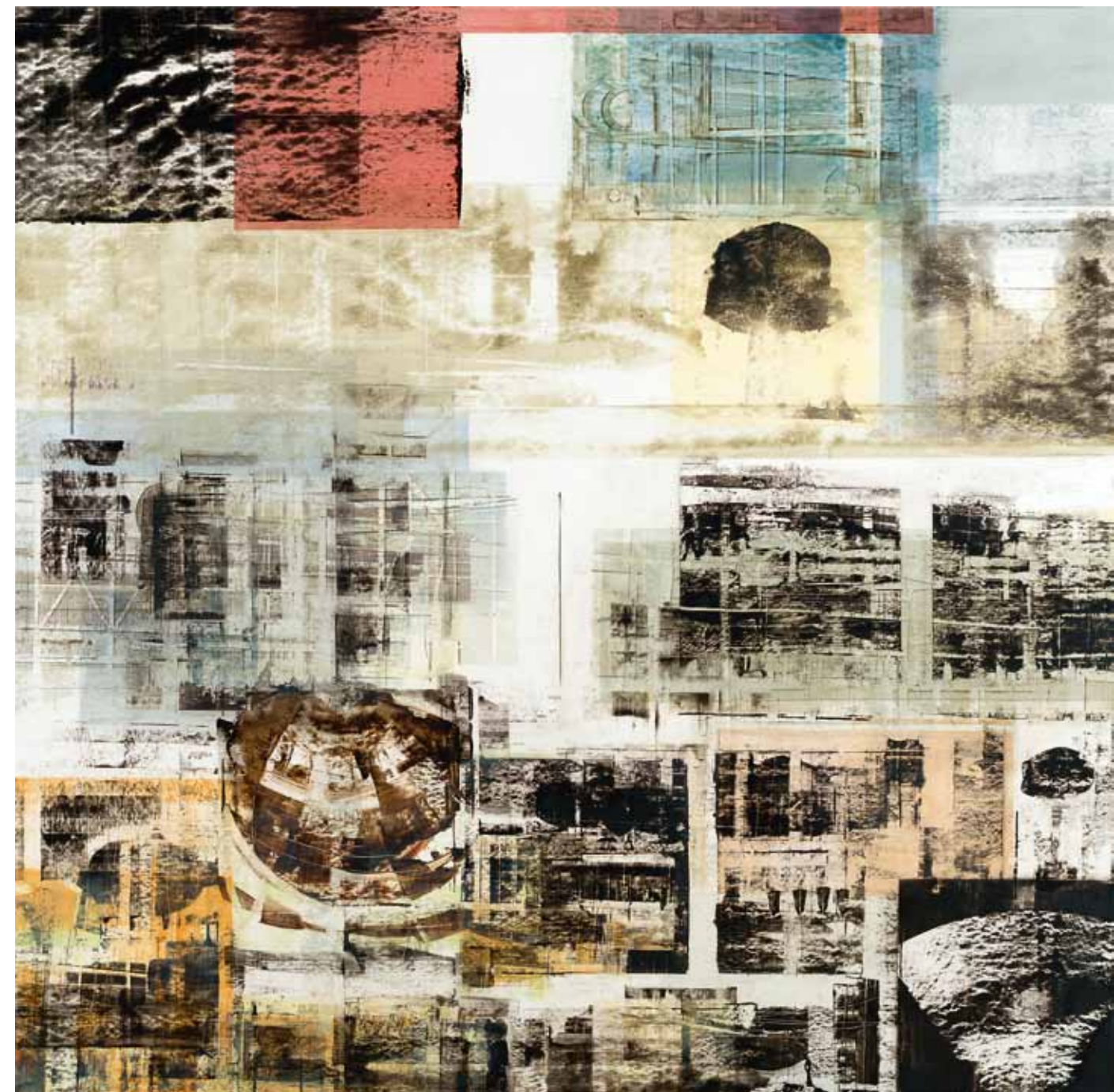


Untitled 6.3, 2013

Oil on canvas

51 × 41 cm (20 × 16 in)





Canan Tolon in conversation with Ziba Ardalan



Ziba Ardalan: From the outset your work has taken a path between what could be called 'organic' and what could be defined as 'architectural' or 'structural'. Are you making a statement about nature and culture?

Canan Tolon: While I was working on these pieces, I probably would not have described them as 'organic' because I was primarily using man-made building materials. At the time I was working in architectural offices downtown trying to make a living; while, in my free time, I foraged for discarded materials for my projects in the industrial part of the town where I lived. Although I was too broke to buy art supplies, I was surrounded by rich sources of discarded building materials, and other discards from offices, like the leftover ends of Mylar rolls, graphite dust, cardboard, etc., I would sift through piles of such things to build my installations. Life in an industrial part of a city, surrounded by warehouses and train tracks, exposes you to a peculiar way of looking at nature and culture juxtaposed. You are not part of the city nor part of the countryside. Everything seems quiet and dead, yet 'life' continues its processes amidst the decay in this polluted environment. As I worked with the various materials, I became more and more aware of the particular behaviour of each of them in relation to one another. Those that were apparently inert were energised by their reactions to other materials nearby or to the impurities of the environment they were in. They seemed dead, yet

alive; delicate, yet strong and unstoppable. I became preoccupied with this 'organic' life cycle happening amidst the decaying (man-made) construction materials, which took over to complete the cycle of construction /destruction, for their return to nature, and so on. So, what was organic had a hidden structure. And, inevitably, that became part of my work and the focus of attention in my later work.

The materials used in your early works are intriguing. How did you go about creating these works? Why did you use garment fabric and patterns, straw, grass and so on? For example, you used to make grass grow on your canvas for the exhibition, which by the end of the show would have dried out. What were you expressing? Was it an aesthetic decision or were you allowing chance to enter your work, or was it meant as some kind of memento mori?

I have always been interested in movement rather than inertia. I am fascinated by the residual markings of the passing of time as recorded on a material. In the industrial neighbourhood where I lived, I had access to so much discarded material. Together with the surplus of scrapped office supplies, it provided me with all I needed. Foraging was an important part of the process of my work. I used what was readily available. At the time, I had a small studio with access to the roof, where I could work outdoors. I made the natural elements, such as changes of temperature, humidity, impurities, the wind, etc., become part of the work. The reaction of the materials to the elements and to one another initiated my work as they left the marks of their transformation on the canvas. Depending on the inherent behaviour of the materials – their rejection or attraction to one another – life slowly developed on the canvas. Grass seeds came to life, steel rusted, dust settled, colonies of mould pervaded, etc., as all the materials lay on the roof in the open air. They were landscapes stripped to their elementary state. They revealed inherent self-consuming urges

for subsistence in their discreet struggle. I considered them to be true landscapes, at a true scale. Dragging them indoors to the gallery exposed them to other elements. At first, the grass growing on the canvas looked artificial and indestructible, but over the course of the exhibition the colour changed as the grass slowly dried out.

Rather than a death-watch, my work called attention to the process triggered by that presumably static state which, in fact, continued through further 'life' cycles. The transformation, caused by the presence of life, became a display of temporality, survival and resilience, rather than death.

Recently, the British Museum acquired one of your early works, Futur imparfait, 1986–1999, [pp.146–182] which we are thrilled to include in your solo exhibition at Parasol unit. The work consists of a series of thirty-three ink and crayon drawings on Mylar, seemingly drawn spontaneously. The title Futur imparfait translates literally as 'imperfect future', which could allude to the imparfait tense in the conjugation of French verbs, explaining a past that has been going on for a while. Images from this work appear in a book you published with the same title. You have often mentioned that this is a very important work for you. What does Futur imparfait refer to?

Futur imparfait is a book I wrote with a French text, French being my 'native' language. It was published in 1999 and was the result of many years of writing and drawing. The drawings, published with related texts, are very much part of the whole. So they were not drawn at all spontaneously. In fact, Mylar, being such a resilient material, allowed many years of reworking. During the writing process, the drawings were edited, corrected, erased, and modified over a period spanning from 1986 to 1999; the past was revisited and re-processed in the present tense in a continual state of being reworked. I have always been as much preoccupied with time as with space. In the book,

I was referring to the way one can be stuck in a state of non-belonging – of *alterité* (otherness) – and, when lacking the reference of time and space, one can be totally overwhelmed by what is to come.

As you say, *futur imparfait* literally means ‘imperfect future’ although the *futur imparfait* tense does not in fact exist. It is recognisable as such only by association. I was also referring to the state of being imperfect in the eyes of others. The book was very personal, and an intimate project. It was about a time when I found out that home is not where I spent my childhood, my mother tongue was not my mother’s, home was not where my parents lived, and it may not even be the place where I presently live. The book was about being visible and invisible at the same time, being in a state of limbo.

You were born in Turkey, spent many years in France and the United Kingdom and have been living in California for a number of years – a real citizen of the world. In a previous interview, you said something which is both true and beautiful: ‘I believe that home is where your feet are, and culture is what you have picked up along the way to get where you are.’ Are you happy with what you have picked up along your journey?

Yes, I said that sixteen years ago, in *Limbo*, an interview with Constance Lewallen, when I was asked where home was for me.¹ After all these years, I now realise how true that still is for me and for a lot of other people who, like me, do not care to be defined by nationality or origin, and who know how little effect it has on the message they voice. Questions about origin and home are often based on already established notions that one is not ‘from here’, or ‘with us’, and may not even be ‘from there’. The battle against exclusion is a slippery one, and one I think need not be won to make your point in life. To be put in a constant state of absence does not bother me. In fact, it is a state that defines me.

I would like to talk for a moment about your figurative works in which the body of a naked woman is seen enclosed or framed in a box-like environment. These are quite delicate and vulnerable works and in some ways they remind me of Joseph Cornell’s magical boxes. In making those works, Cornell was often translating his desires and dreams of far-distant places, which resulted in a treasure-like quality with a touch of surrealism. What was your intention in creating your figurative works in a confined box-like environment?

The figures were to be considered as objects of study or of curiosity, as if to be experimented on for some medical or scientific purpose. They could be considered as freaks boxed in their own assigned world. You are right, like Cornell’s boxes, there is something reminiscent of vitrines or theatre sets which makes these figures look as if they may be required to perform or entertain. There is a certain expectation when figures are placed in boxes, packaged like toys, displayed as if they await a command or a gesture to animate them. They were based on my early childhood experiences. As a young girl, I often felt my privacy was being violated, when a spectacle that inspired curiosity or pity was made of me.

Staying a little longer with your figurative works, including the Futur imparfait drawings, which all predominantly feature human figures and are extremely beautiful, and haunting. They remind me of some of Rebecca Horn’s works. From her extensive use of fibreglass in making her sculptures, Horn contracted a lung condition and had to spend a year in a sanatorium. Sensitised to the vulnerability of one’s body, and lonely, Horn went on to produce an important group of body-related works. Are you aware of them?

I am aware of her work in general but not of the particular ones you are referring to. But I can see what you mean. It is true that during convalescence the mind is totally focused on the body, especially

when getting to know new boundaries and limitations. As a child, for instance, it is rather more difficult to assume those limitations early enough. There is a lot of introspection and a lot of observing and transference going on. Often unaware of what really happened, and why, a child may feel condemned to tell its story *ad nauseam* to those eager to know. In the process, humour may alleviate the experiences. It is true that when the body is confined, one tends to explore other means, and one's mind starts to wander, to explore space, perceive distances and experience the surrounding environment in most particular ways. It is like being condemned to a perpetual childhood, one I regrettably consider is often impossible to outgrow in the eyes of others.

Would you say that these early works of yours express in some way human vulnerability, angst, or even insecurity?

In the grand scheme of things, we are all vulnerable, dangerously unaware, and dangerously optimistic. My early work dealt with the fragility of the balancing act of what we call life. And these balances have been tilting one way a little too long while we are being pulled to look the other way. I point at how easily we can be tricked into thinking that things are okay, we are encouraged to be divisive, and expected to be hopeful, etc. Too many people have Panglossian views of the world and feel they are empowered, while actually losing their grip on things. But I am not a preacher or a clairvoyant, nor a ventriloquist. I am not that kind of artist, and it would be naïve and presumptuous of me to think that my work can resolve these problems. I only hope that might entice people to take a closer look at things, maybe from another angle, or from multiple perspectives.

As a whole, one could say that your work deals with issues relevant to abstraction, except for a brief spell early on in your career during 1988–89, when figuration appears in your work. Yet, from your writing I understand that a lot of things that happen in your so-called

'abstract paintings' have followed your vision of the world around you. Could you elaborate a little on the nature of your work?

As my work became more and more public, it became less intimate and less personal, partly because the works were too often misinterpreted as self-portraits, thought to be modelled after my own body, and the subject to be based on my personal story. My goal was to focus on the body in general, as an object of study, and the way it is seen, interpreted, and judged, in relation to its immediate surroundings. I wanted the works to be considered something like semi-transparent mirrors, in which one could also see something of oneself. As the focal point was turned on me as the subject, I instead redirected it to the landscape with the same attention and concerns I'd had for the human body. After the publication of *Futur imparfait*, where I told everything I could about myself and my early life and the varied environments and cultures in which I had grown up, I decided that I was done with the overt representation of the figure. The absence of the figure released my work from erroneous references often caused by automatic associations. I am still preoccupied with the body, especially in my installations, which require the participation of viewers, and in my paintings, where figureless spaces are experienced at multiple viewing angles, inciting multiple and diverse interpretations.

During the preparation of this exhibition I came to realise that your works on Mylar are hugely important to you. Some are figurative, like those in Futur imparfait, while others express different artistic concerns, such as abstraction, geometry, space and gravity. Could we talk about them for a moment?

Mylar, pencils, ink and razor blades were materials widely used in architectural offices, but as I often am with a new series of work I was keen to develop a new technique that would suit the concept. I had been working on my impermanent installations, so working on Mylar

with black oil sticks was a switch, a kind of transition to my later oil paintings. I was trying to find a technique that best conveyed my vision of space and fascination with gravity. As in my three-dimensional work the main focus of the drawings is space, and the rhythmic repetition of some of the shapes formed a pattern, pulling and pushing the whiteness of the paper to trick the eye into some sort of guessing game. Although we are perfectly aware of the impossibility of a world without colour, images rendered in black-and-white seem more representative of reality, like evidence truer than truth that our trained eyes interpret as true testimonies. Because the works on Mylar resemble black-and-white photographs, they are often thought to refer to actual places or moments in history and, therefore, seem to suggest the possibility of a narrative, but upon closer inspection the 'photographic reality' falls apart.

When did you first show your work publicly and how did you feel about going public? What did you expect?

My first show, in 1980 or 1981, was of semi-documentary photographs of the quiet industrial neighbourhood by the train tracks, where I lived. But what I would consider to be my first real exhibition was the one I had in 1986, a large exhibition of my photographs documenting thirteen consecutive years of summer travel all over Turkey, starting in 1973. I wanted to know the country, especially the war-torn eastern regions. I especially wanted to document the destruction of rural landscapes and their vernacular architecture during the times when interrupted and abandoned constructions were replacing them. Territorial claims tore the land apart, displacing families, forcing them to live in poverty and sometimes underground. I observed an amazing burst of creativity throughout their struggle for survival. People subsisted in very hard conditions but their ingenious and creative ways of using and reusing material kept their homes beautiful,

and with the little they had they maintained their dignity. Those invaluable learning experiences had a profound impact on the way I view landscapes and the environment.

That was the beginning of my career as an artist. However, in truth, I had never planned on it. I never went to art school nor ever took art classes. I have been drawing and painting from as early as I can remember, and it was an important tool of expression during my childhood. I was offered a box of oil paints when I was fourteen, which immediately put me to work, but after my third painting I was totally bored and convinced that I would rather go back to drawing and cutting and gluing images. I had visited artist studios when I was young and found them unpleasant and unwelcoming, smoky and dusty environments, and I imagined the life of an artist to be too hard and depressing! Then, one day, I was offered a camera.

Your paintings appear to have been made by the application of many layers of paint. In them, recognisable images of certain kinds of reality collide with an illusory space that you frequently create. Is that something you do intentionally? If so, how do you make a conceptual connection between reality and imagination?

I have used various layering techniques in practically all of my work. The piles of building materials in my installations, the mirrors, the drawings, the collages, and the later oil paintings have all used some form of layering technique. Spatiality is visually created when one layer obliterates another. Multiple juxtapositions and layering of forms and shapes also generate visual references that are totally incidental. Non-linear narratives that may result from these associations also add a form of temporality to a work.

Not unlike the technique used for my works on Mylar, I use sharp tools on the slick surface of the canvas to fashion shapes in a push-pull arrangement with the background. In *Glitch*, 2007–2009, [pp.102, 110]

a painting series I worked on a few years ago, I often had to convince viewers that neither prints nor photographs were used in the paintings, that what they 'saw' was purely imagined. The conceptual connection with reality is only illusory. I would rather engage the viewer in a visual guessing-game than employ borrowed images. Obviously what is seen can only exist with the viewer's participation, and therefore varies as each individual's experience is a uniquely personal interpretation. My aim is to produce paintings that are recognisable, yet elude description.

I read that you are fascinated by the work of Samuel Beckett. As we know, Martin Esslin considered Beckett's Waiting for Godot a masterpiece of the 'Theatre of the Absurd'.² You have also mentioned your interest in the work of the French novelist Raymond Queneau, who in 1960 co-founded Oulipo, or Ouvroir de littérature potentielle (workshop of potential literature). Could you elaborate on the notion of the absurd and whether it means something in your work?

The first time I read Beckett's play *Fin de partie* [Endgame] it made an indelible impression on me. I thought it the best tragicomic rendition of life in general. I was also attracted by Queneau's use of language. Anything repeated over and over again would become absurd. A word, a story, a gesture becomes comical, almost hysterical. As a child I felt I was condemned to tell my story over and over again, like a broken record. I felt as if I were acting in a bad play, each time hoping it would be the last. The obligation of having to repeatedly explain something makes one question the question. In Beckett's *Textes pour rien* [Texts for Nothing], the narrator is simultaneously the actor and the audience, inside and outside his own body. He is the interpreter of his own gesture. In other words, the narrator continuously watches himself watching himself as he writes the text. I created *Reflex*, 2010–2011, [p.117] a series of polyptychs that were based on this concept. The work

was created with the repetitive motion of a gesture, using muscle memories, until the shapes became a pattern and the repetition generated a filmic movement. In this technique, the senselessness of repetition produces meaning in a totally unplanned way. The rhythmic black paint strokes on the white background recall those of musical scores on a page, or those of a time-lapse photograph. They optically create some kind of motion, like a visual hiccup, or a broken record.

You have used coffee grounds, grown grass and emphatically let rust occur on your paintings, so I assume you are interested in process. Shall we talk about this for a moment?

Yes, I pay a lot of attention to process. Looking at the range of techniques I have used over the course of my career, you can see that most of them are invented. I like hands-on techniques. And I like to work with chance. The techniques I use are as random as they are premeditated and studied. The paintings, for instance, are formally as precise, rhythmic and structured as they are evasive, accidental and fluent. I am constantly working on finding an appropriate technique for the message I want to convey. In the series where I used the unpredictable coffee-grounds technique, I was referring to the irresistible impulse we have to relate the shapes we see to things we recognise, the way we do when cloud gazing. But the shapes in coffee grounds are arbitrary and are often 'read' to predict the future, while also making reference to the past. My use of coffee grounds was a way to engage the viewer in a two-way reading and to stimulate the likelihood of a dialogue.

If process is an important part of your work, then time must be an equally significant element. You also just mentioned it. How do you relate to time?

Most processes take time, especially when working with techniques that produce uncertain results. It takes a lot of time and attention to

work with live materials and let things grow and die on the canvas, especially if material reactions are expected to be part of the production of the work. It is possible to discern the different stages locked within the layers where I have interrupted a process in full bloom. The layering, the multiplicity of perspectives, and the shifting eye-levels may require several takes to experience them. In many of my work titles, such as *Fugue*, 2009–2010, [pp.108,109], *Reflex*, 2010–2011, [p.117], *Futur imparfait*, 1986–1999, [pp.146–182], *Then, and then*, 2012, *Time after time*, 2012, [pp.112,114], etc., pauses, repetition, movement, or both conjugated tenses are implied. Rather than presenting a narrative or history, it is the recording of these series of instants that create the element of time in my work. Multiple moments that are experienced concurrently seem to extend time. It takes time to see through the superimposed layers of the paintings, as it takes time for the eye to conjugate the overlapping fragments. And when movement, time, and space are implied within the layers of the work, as in a filmstrip, then one instinctively tends to create a narrative.

When I look at your paintings, I am struck by the complexity of space in them. May I talk about that? First of all, let me observe that you are definitely interested in creating space. Also, you have made public your interest in the work of the eighteenth-century Italian artist, Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Can you explain the monumental spaces in your paintings? Do they stem from the fact that you studied architecture?

Often I wonder if it is not the reverse. I have always been drawn to the work of great space manipulators and many architects who were able to apply their vision to real space-making. Certainly, my study of architecture has given me the knowledge to construct most of my installations and to figure out tricky angles whenever I have used refracting mirrors. Deceptive spaces interest me very much indeed,

especially environments that seem unreal, or landscapes that defy reality, which as a result, make you wonder if you should ever trust your own judgment.

In the often monumental spaces in your paintings one feels the presence of a void, as if something or somebody ought to have been there but is not, or has just left the space or perhaps been obliterated. Do you agree and if so how do you explain it?

In music, partially removing a sound lets it be heard louder. Certain parts in a painting, which have been obliterated or removed, or simply left out, produce the necessary void that makes the pin-wheeling composition stand in its delicate equilibrium. This is not unlike the void between the gears of a machine – or a play, if you will – that is necessary to facilitate the movement of the machine. The removal of the focal point stimulates the eye, visually setting the painting in motion and provoking a push-pull action with the background. Viewing angles vary from plan-view to panorama, from background to foreground, and from erasures to form. The eye moves from precise forms to elusive ones, and focus adjusts from close-up to remote. This process seemingly multiplies the focal points, and produces conflicting perspectives, with interrupted lines and intercepted fields of vision, thus bringing in the element of time as an additional dimension. All this results in the dispersal of information rather than the communication of a narrative.

Another prominent and recognisable element in your work is transience. One has the impression that everything in the work is in a state of flux. Do you not believe in permanence?

When totally immersed in the creative process, absorbed by the moment, posterity is not the first thing that comes to mind. I was making work with whatever I could lay my hands on and was not preoccupied with the fact that my works would not outlive the show, let

alone survive me. Their temporality suited the message I was trying to convey at the time. I was working on *Still Lifes*, 1990, [pp. 20–27] a fifteen-part installation produced with live materials, where each piece was condemned to die during the course of the exhibition. The work was temporal, but the message was anything but futile. Most of my early works, that were published in *Limbo* in 1998, have not survived and many have self-destructed, as I had expected. A thread runs through all my works, even those that have disappeared. The message is constant, it remains, and the point I tried to make survives the work – just as these words are likely to survive this show [at Parasol unit].

You talk about chance as an important component of your work, especially when you employ coffee grounds or let rust enter your work. What is your conscious contribution in this process? And how does process in your work compare to that of, say, the mid-twentieth-century American artist, Helen Frankenthaler?

I can see the resemblance when I look at the photographs of her working on the floor over unstretched canvases. In solitude, she manipulates the shapes on unprimed canvases that cover the floor from wall to wall, using gravity until the diluted paint has been absorbed. Frankenthaler is known to have worked on raw canvases, letting them soak up the pigment until they have gained a velvety lustre. She followed the guidance and enticement of the random stains that appeared on her canvas. I too work in total solitude. I am not sure if I relinquish my control as much as she may have. I use chance in my work, but nothing is random. Before I start painting, unlike Frankenthaler, I prepare my canvases until they are very slick so that I can manipulate the paint until the fortuitous moment when I have obtained the shape I want to keep. I really think that perfection is accidental. Knowing the expected result of each reaction I cause by tropism to occur on the canvas, I can provoke it, or stop and seal it

within the layers when the shape is sufficiently internally-formed. Working with tones yields various ranges of possibility. I have to make my choice fairly quickly before the paint sets in the grain of the background. Sometimes the shapes are so loaded with references that they may appear like borrowed images to tempt the eye into a guessing game, but they are not.

How much control do you have over the final result of your process driven works?

I have greater control over provoking and interrupting reactions, and in manipulating the overall appearance of a work, than I have over the texture, which depends on the environment. I work in silence in the privacy of my studio, but in total chaos. And in these conditions I embrace fortuitous accidents, which I think is one way to capture the perfect moment. I use materials that react to one another and thereby leave marks of their transformation on the material I work on. I let nature take its course, while I interfere before the material reactions have exhausted all their energy. The materials I use vary, but what remains constant is my use of chance and my active interfering, interrupting and sealing of a moment within the layers of the paint.

How do you wish your audience to understand your work? And what issues in it encourage communication with them?

Space is my main focus, especially in the way it is visualised, politicised, imagined, and remembered. It takes time to see through the superimposed layers of the paintings, as it takes time for the eye to conjugate the overlapping fragments. I wish to offer another way to experience what we think we know, but as I said earlier, I am neither a preacher nor a clairvoyant so I can only suggest, without dictating, how to look at my work. Some may find that my rust work makes references to Islamic art or to medieval tapestries or ceramics. Some may find similarities with artists I may never have heard of.

It is impossible to prevent one's urge to make references. My paintings are abstract, but often one might find a figure and build a narrative around it. I consider this to be part of my work. We live in an era where we are constantly bombarded with images, impressing us on many levels, consciously and subconsciously. Our attention span is stretched beyond its limit until it seems as if we are all suffering from collective attention deficit hyperactivity. I think that is why we tend to look for something recognisable, we need to make associations. Everything seems to have a sense of *déjà-vu*. I hope one would be prompted to look more closely, only to find that the reference is subjective and illusory, and to wonder if the response is common to all, or the reverse – a lonely, impossible-to-share experience.

I am aware that you avoid the 'cultural identity' label, for instance, by not appearing in group shows that define artists by their geographical origin. How can an artist's work be endangered by such cultural identity labelling?

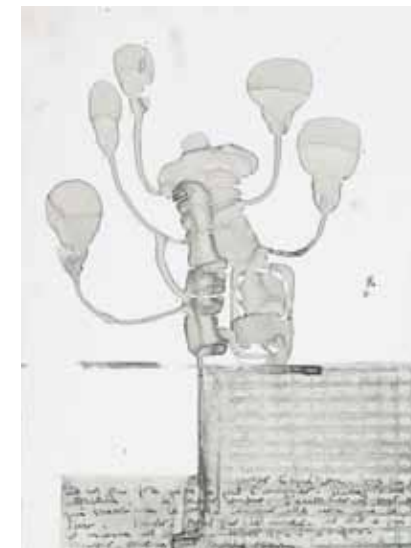
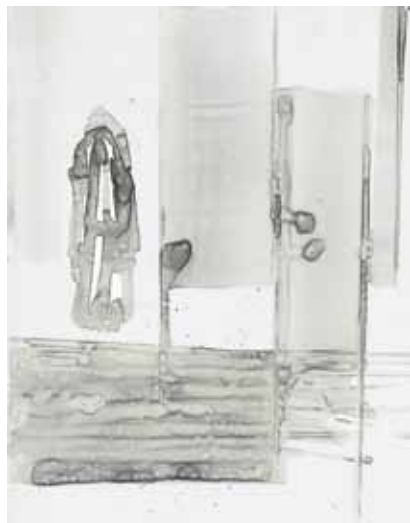
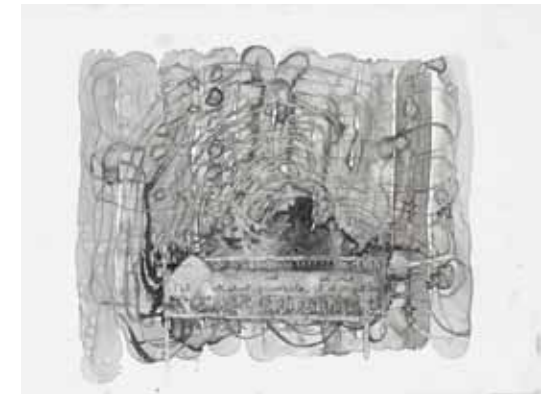
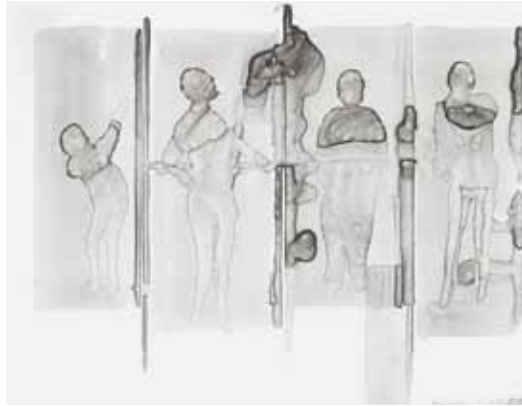
As I said earlier, I acknowledge my own personal view of the world, and I try to look at things on a wider scale and to give my work multiple focuses. I avoid representing a specific culture because such works can verge on folklore, which leads to stylised messages or clichéd object-making. It would be unrealistic to think that the rest of the world falls outside my remit. I find exhibitions organised around cultural distinctions to be divisive and far less inspiring than those that are based on common concepts coming from different geographical regions of the world. Today, the stress on cultural divisions has yet to yield any very fruitful engagements. That is what I mean when I avoid such labelling and exclusive cultural branding, which seem only to serve marketability and distort the intended message.

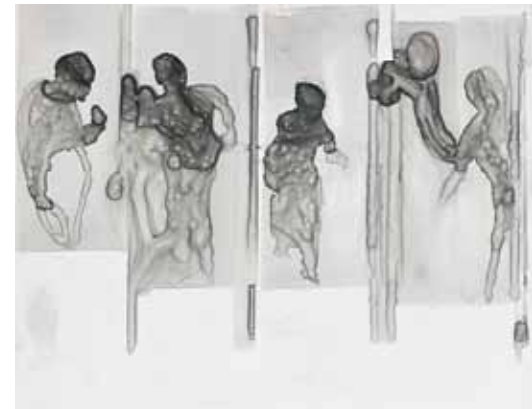
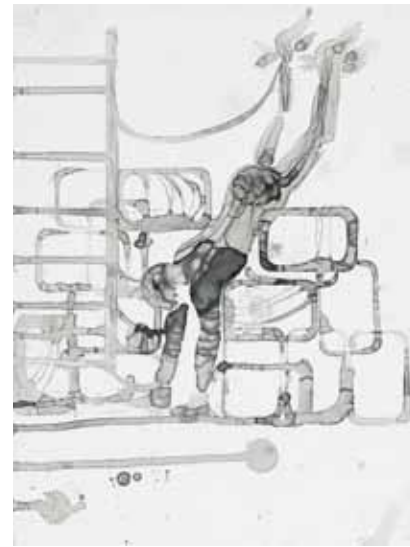
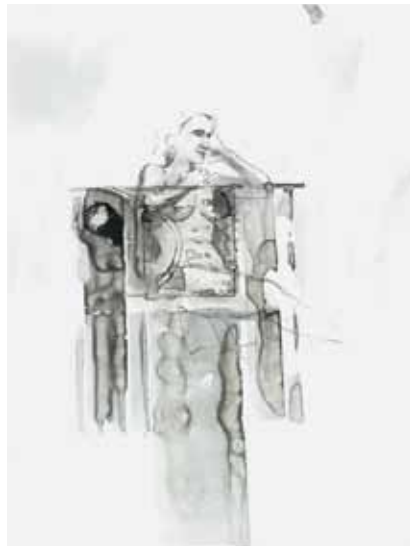
We are in the second decade of the 21st century. What are the issues in art today and do they differ from those relevant in the last 50 years?

Art viewing and appreciation have changed, it is true, but there is no right or wrong. Some artists farm out their work, some have their factories, and some others – like me – prefer to work alone, introspectively. Some have felt obliged to make political works of art, or were lured into self-orienting, or have been enticed to use the misfortunes of others as material for their art. Many have confused price with value, fame and notoriety with talent and mastery. The glamorisation or mystification of this career has disappointed many young and talented artists whose voice has been stifled by the ugly shuffles of the secondary art market. It is sad to say that I would rather see my work self-destruct than to see it become someone's currency, or to be kept in some dusty storage. After all, art is primarily an invitation and, if successful, it creates a fertile ground for communication. It won't save the world but it will encourage the exchange of ideas, and maybe more.

1 'Interview with Canan Tolon by Constance Lewallen', *Canan Tolon, Limbo*, Istanbul: Galeri Nev, 1998.

2 Martin Esslin (1918–2002), in his introduction to *Penguin Plays: Absurd Drama*, London: Penguin Books, 1965.





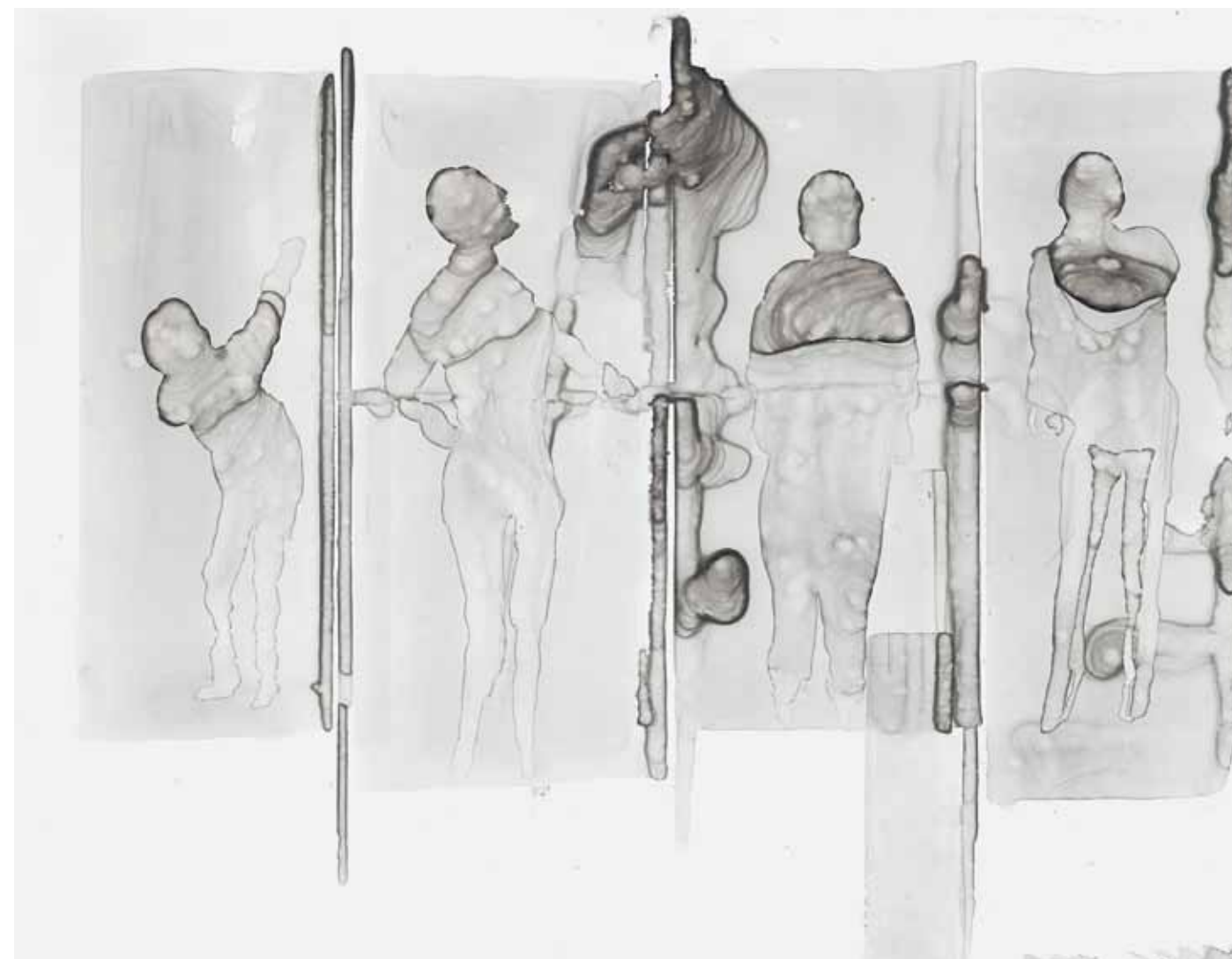


Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink and graphite on Mylar

35.7 × 27.9 cm (c. 14 × 11 in)

150

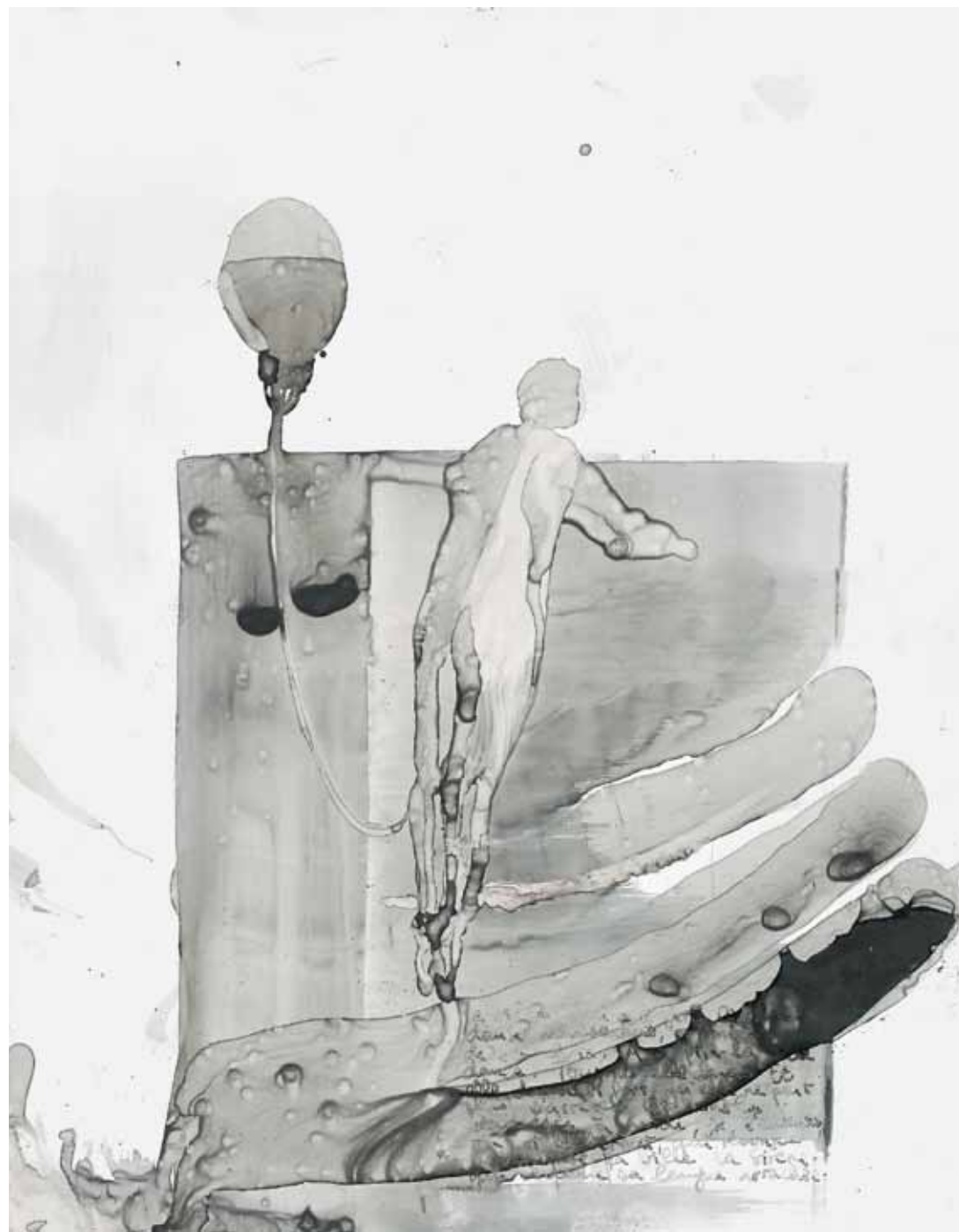


151

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink and graphite on Mylar

27.9 × 35.6 cm (c. 11 × 14 in)



Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

152



153

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)



Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

154

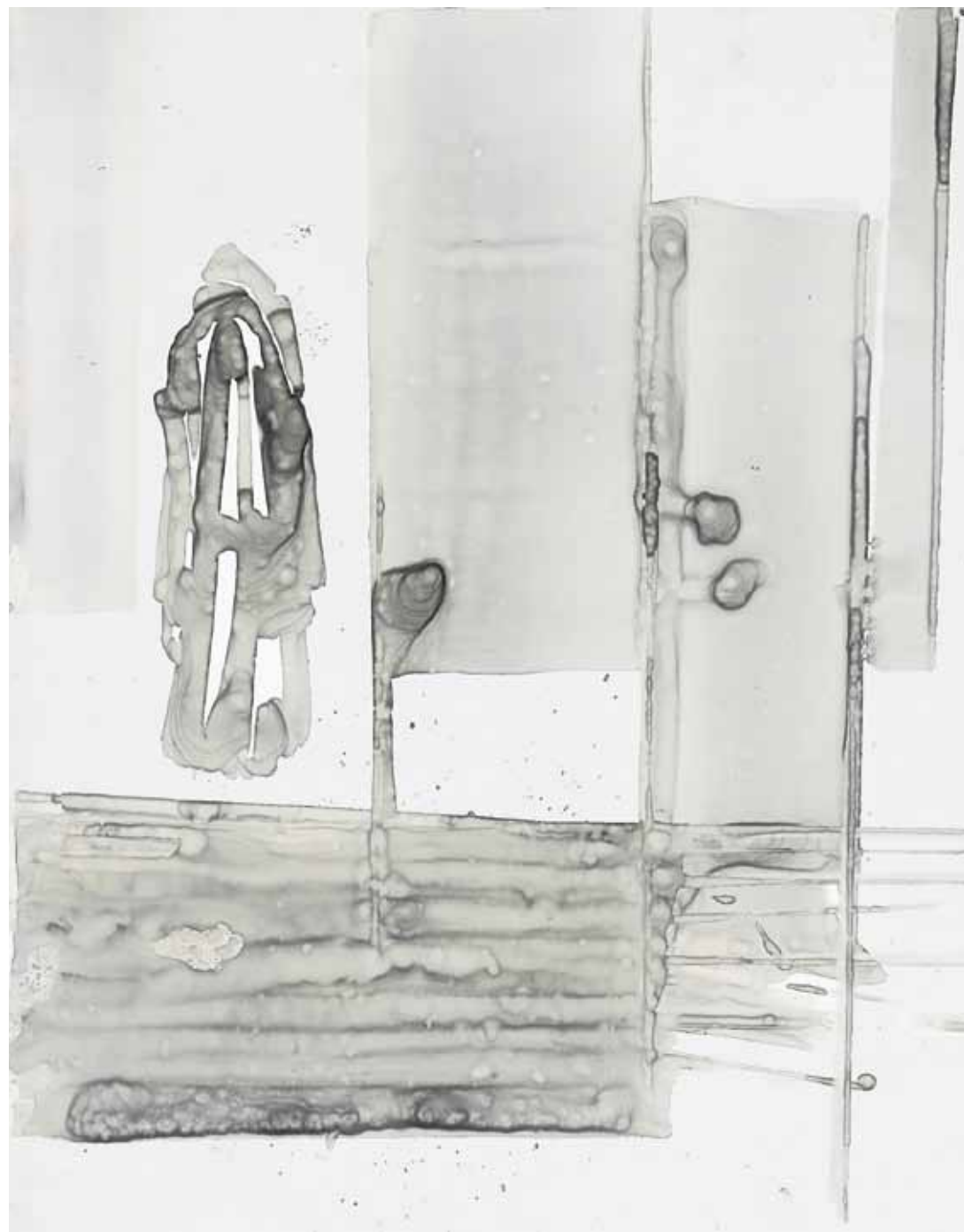


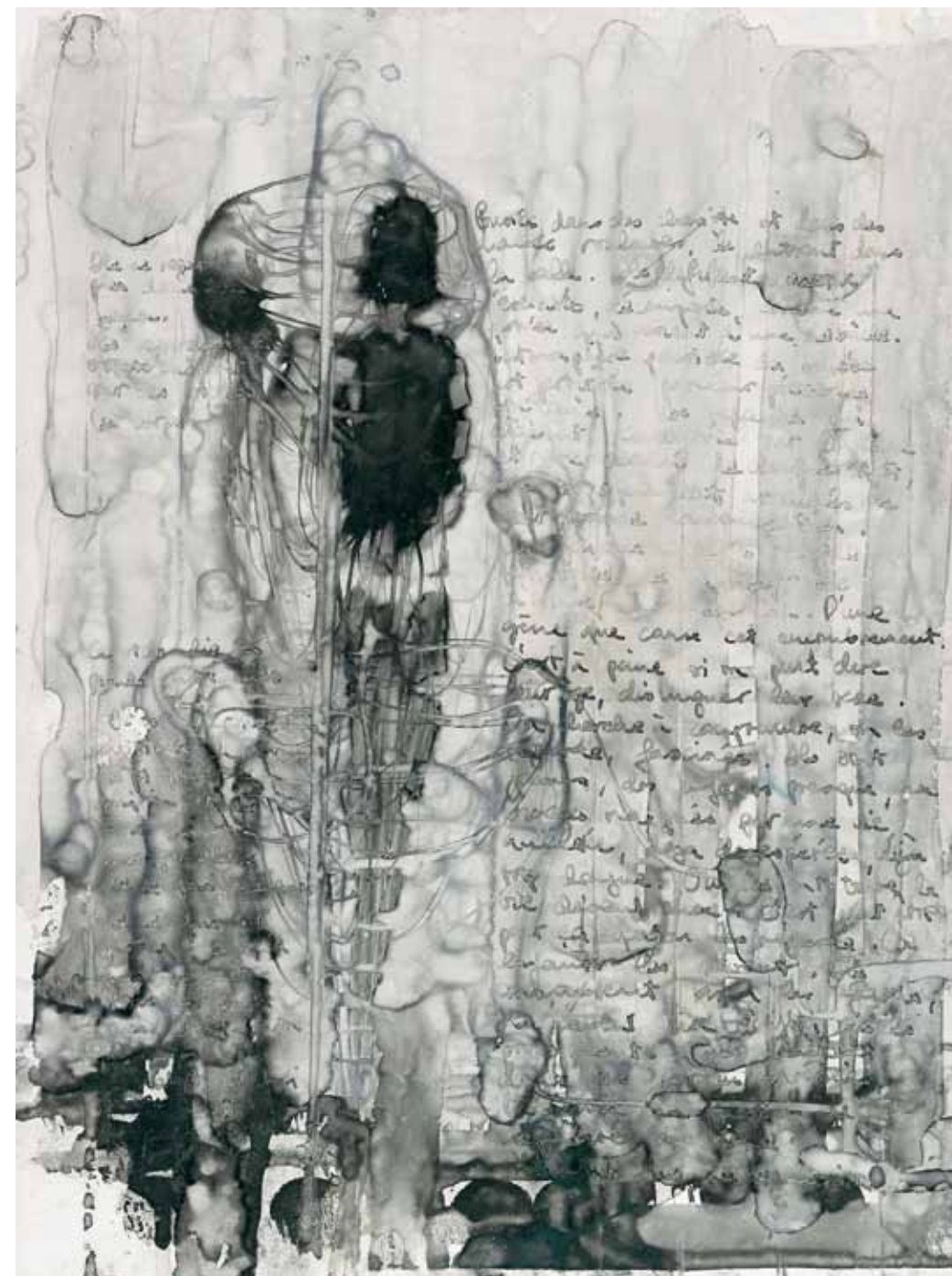
155

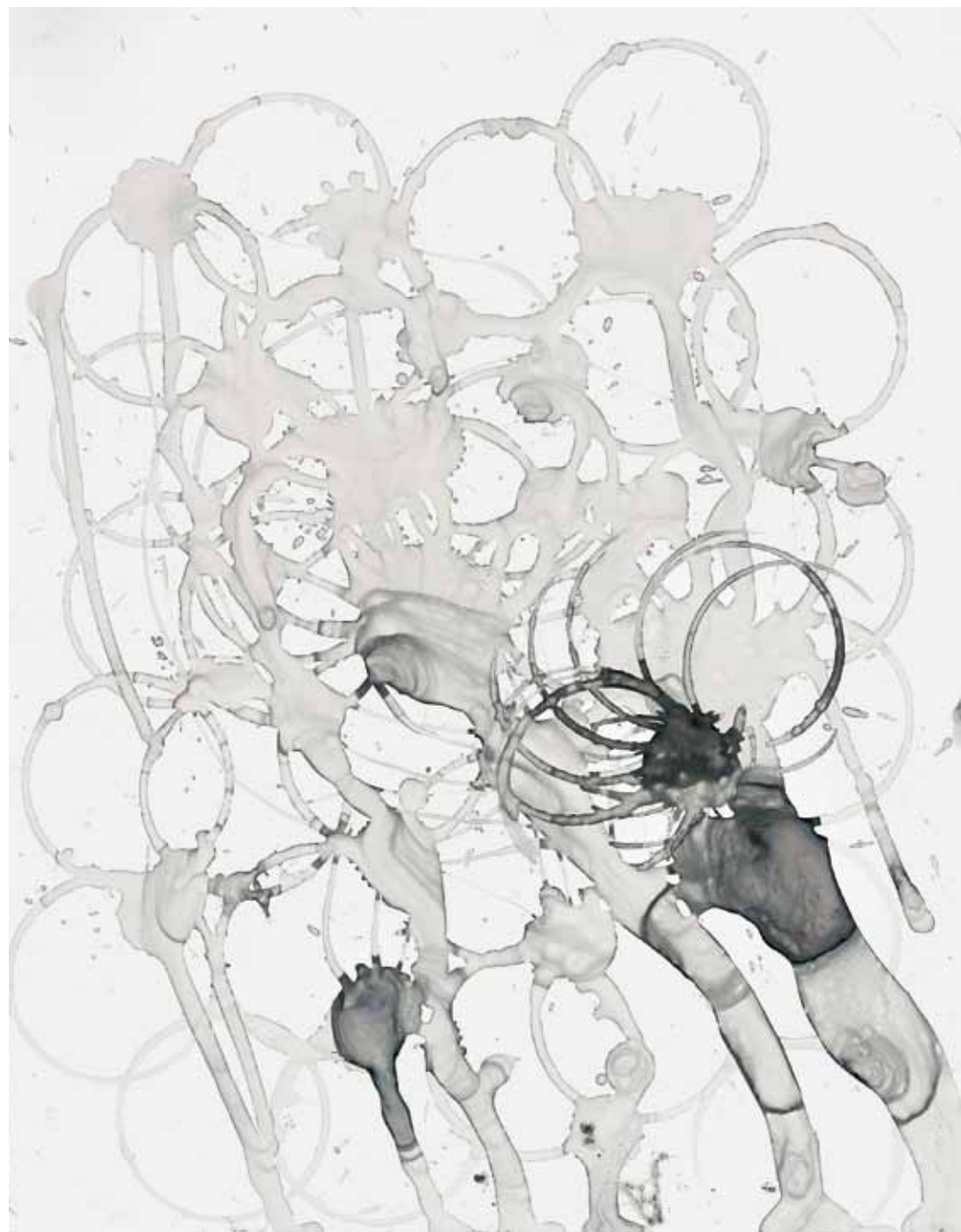
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

27.9 × 35.6 cm (11 × 14 in)





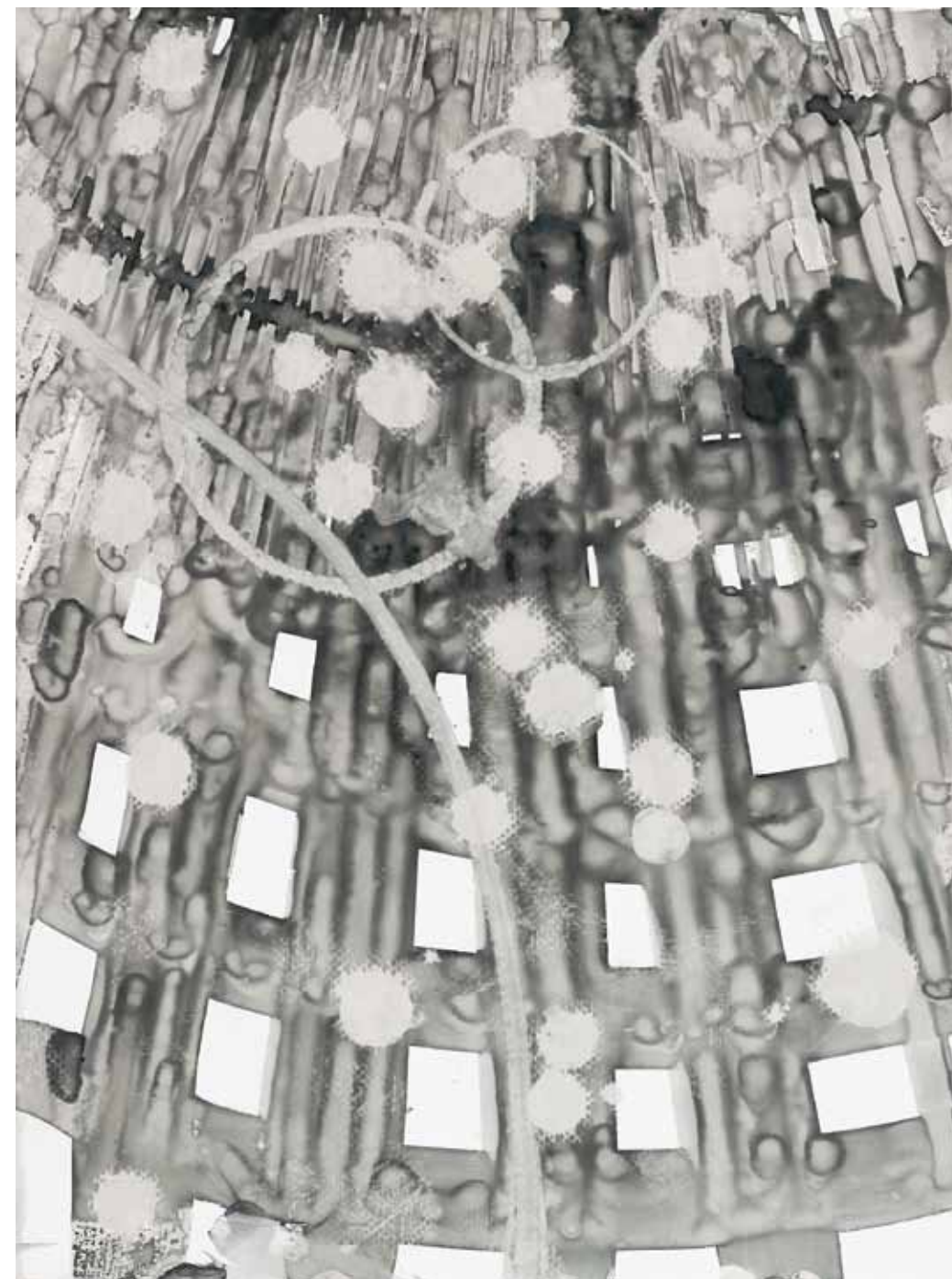


Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

160



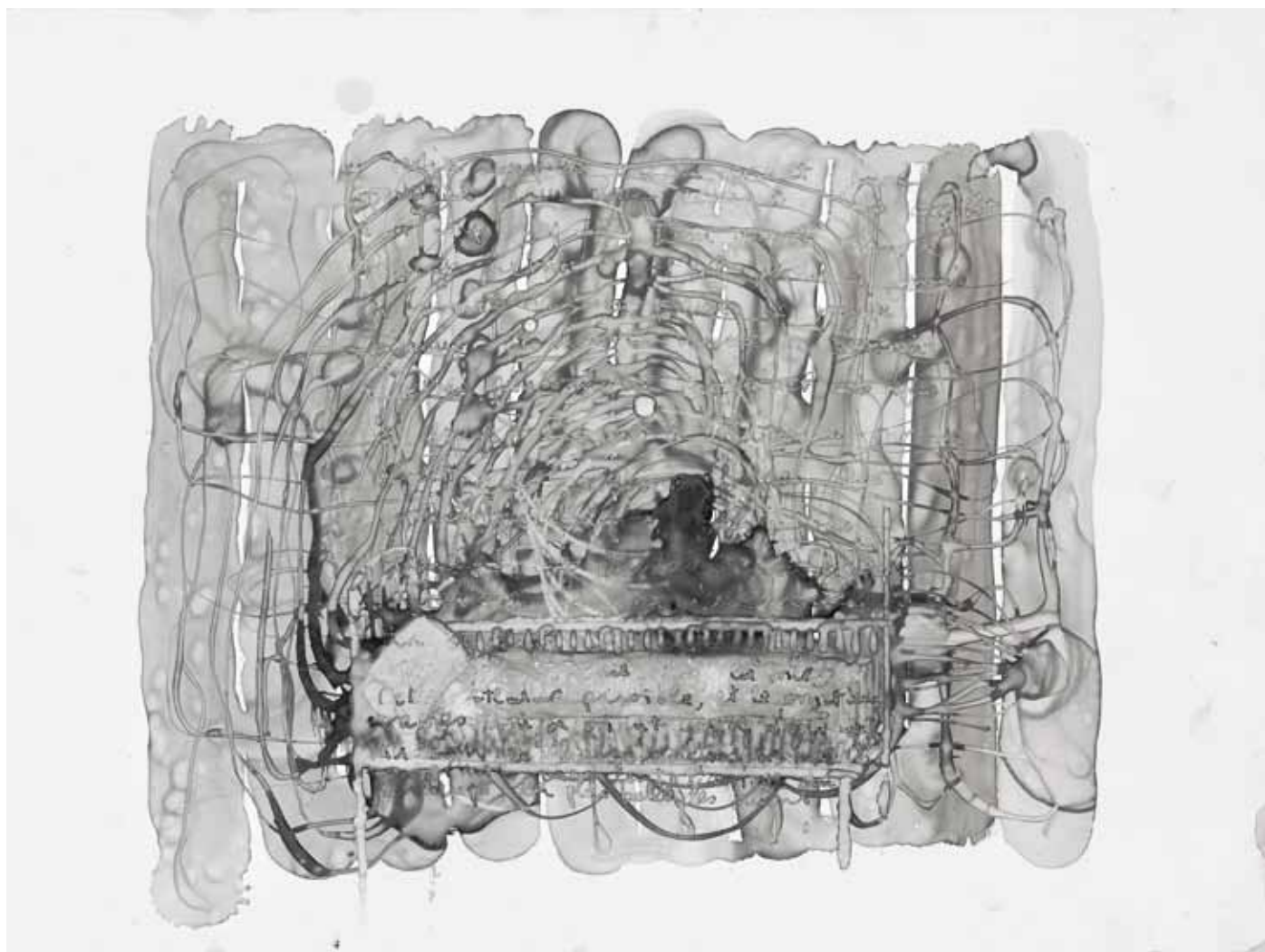
161

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

30.4 × 22.9 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)



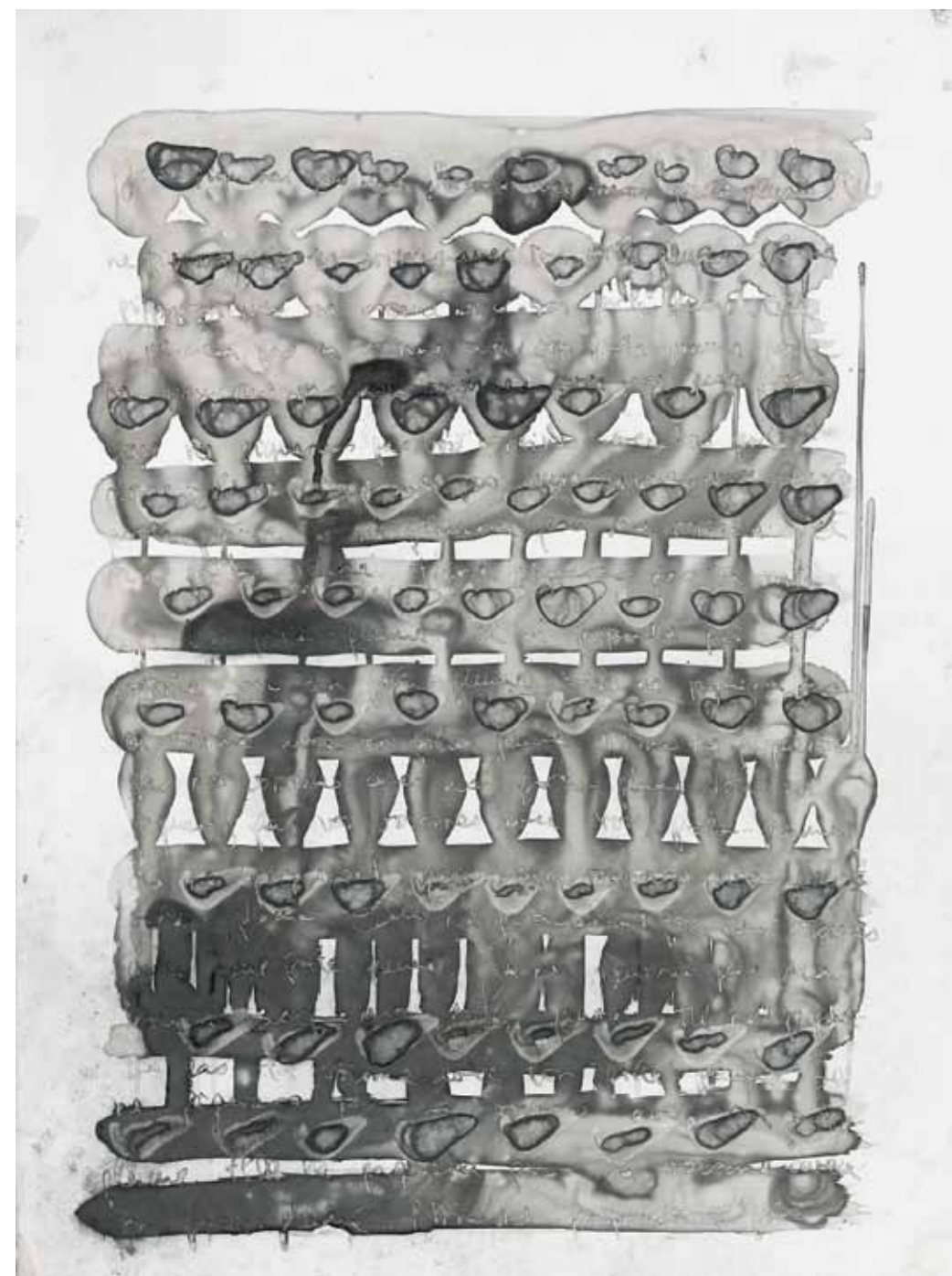


Futur Imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

22.8 × 30.4 cm (c. 9 × 12 in)

164

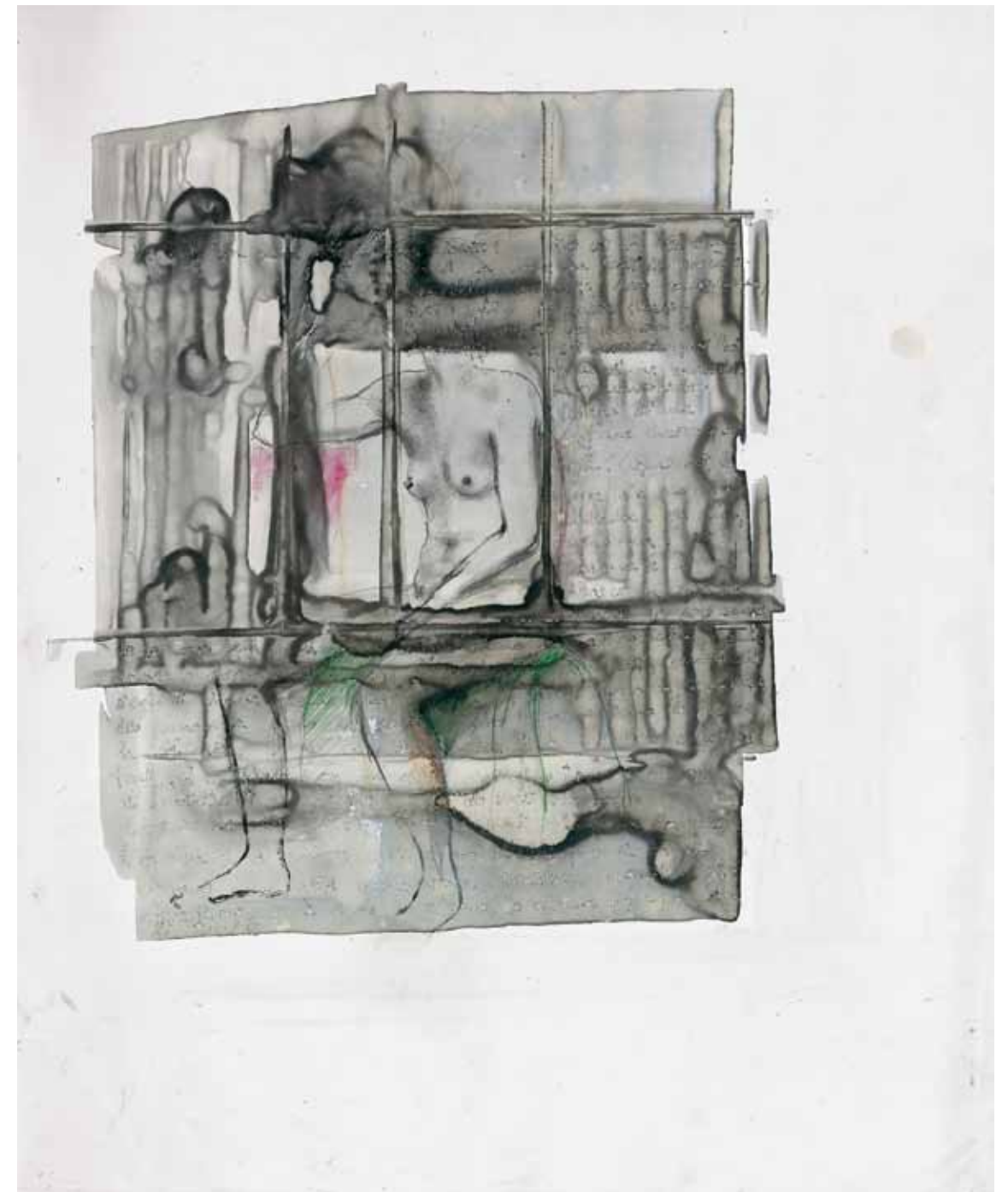
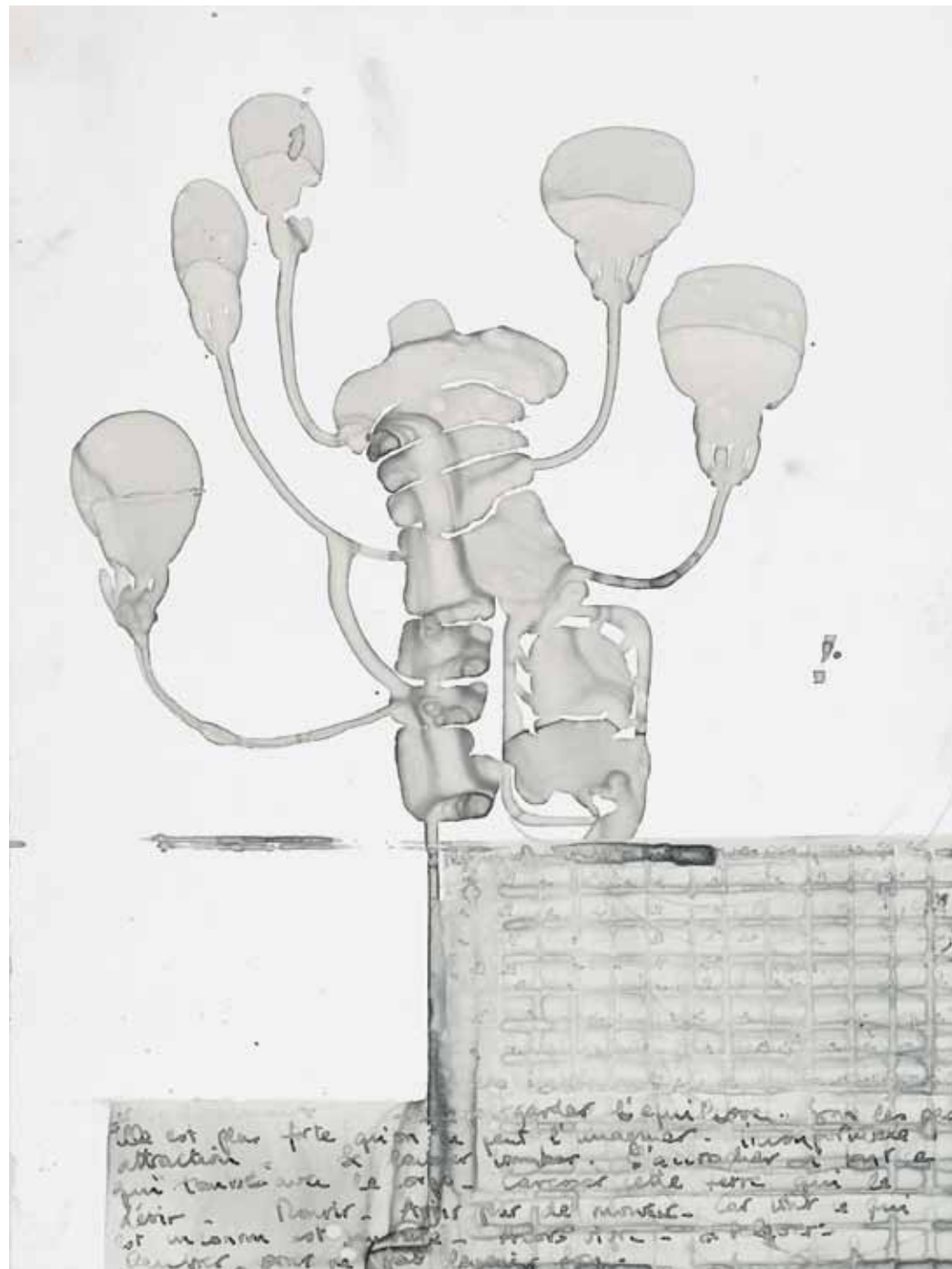


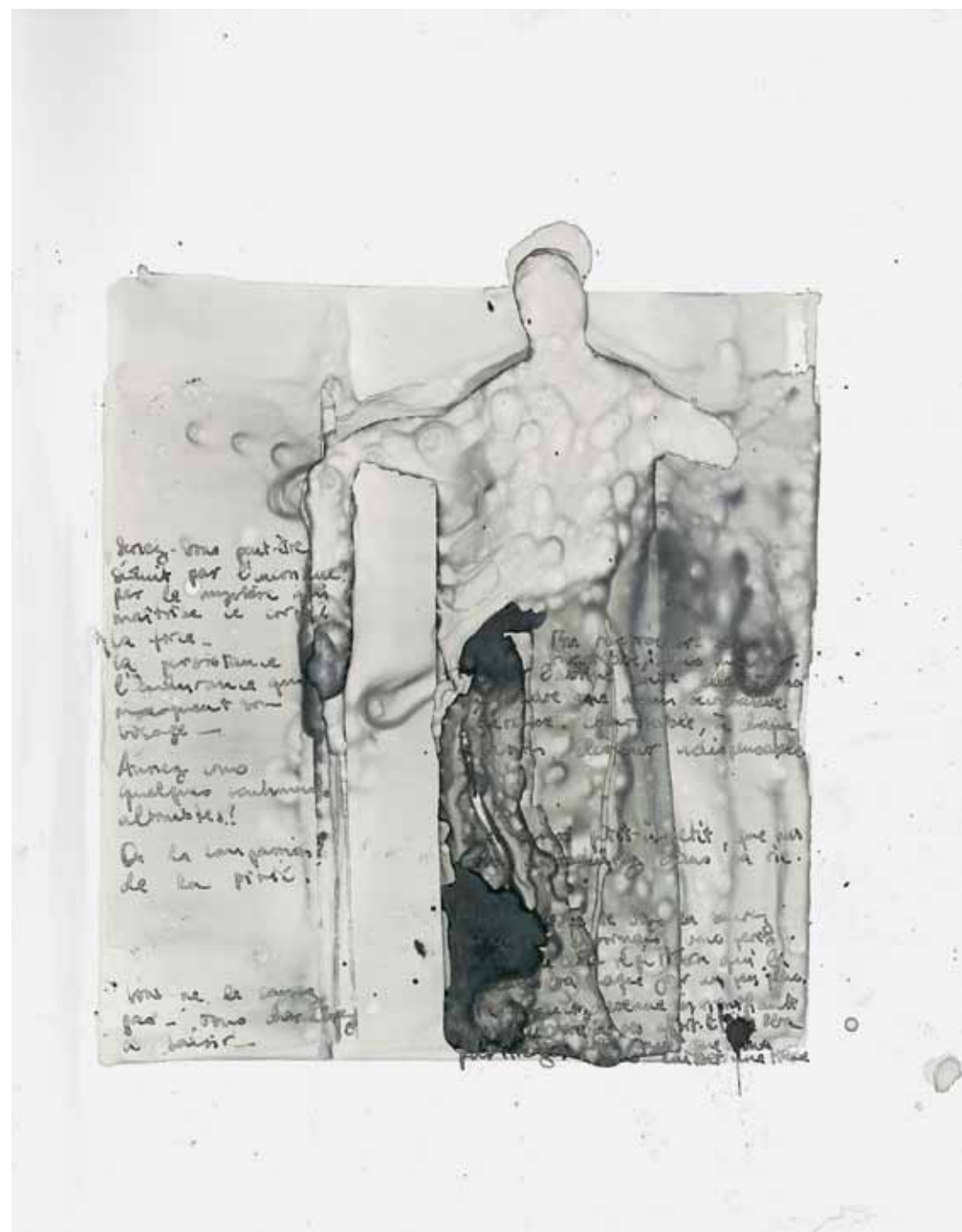
165

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)







Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink and graphite on Mylar

43.2 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

170



171

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar

42.9 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)



Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink and graphite on Mylar

43.2 × 35.5 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

172

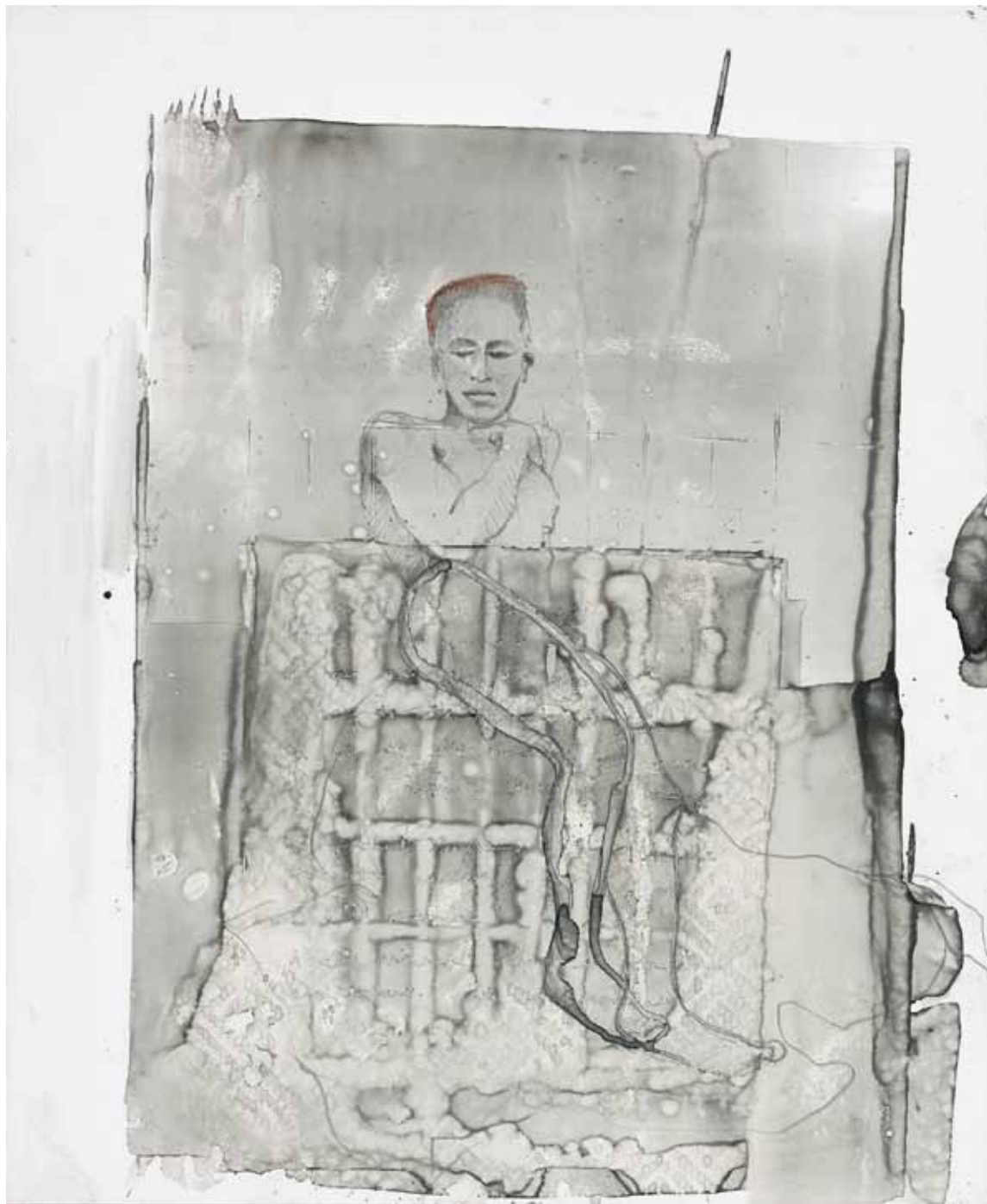


173

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

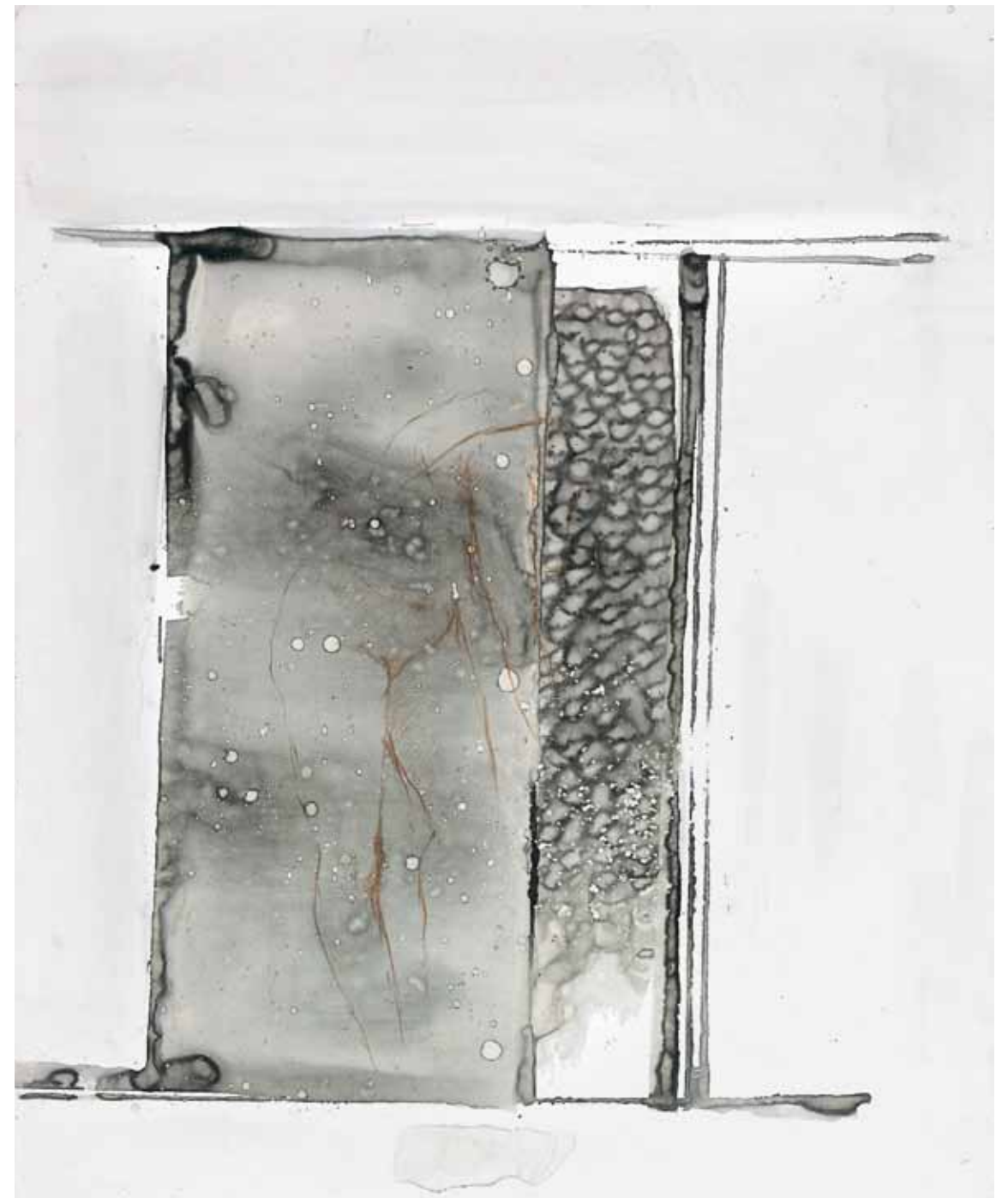
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar

43.1 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)



Futur imparfait, 1986–1999 Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar 43.1 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

174



Futur imparfait, 1986–1999 Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar 43.1 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

175

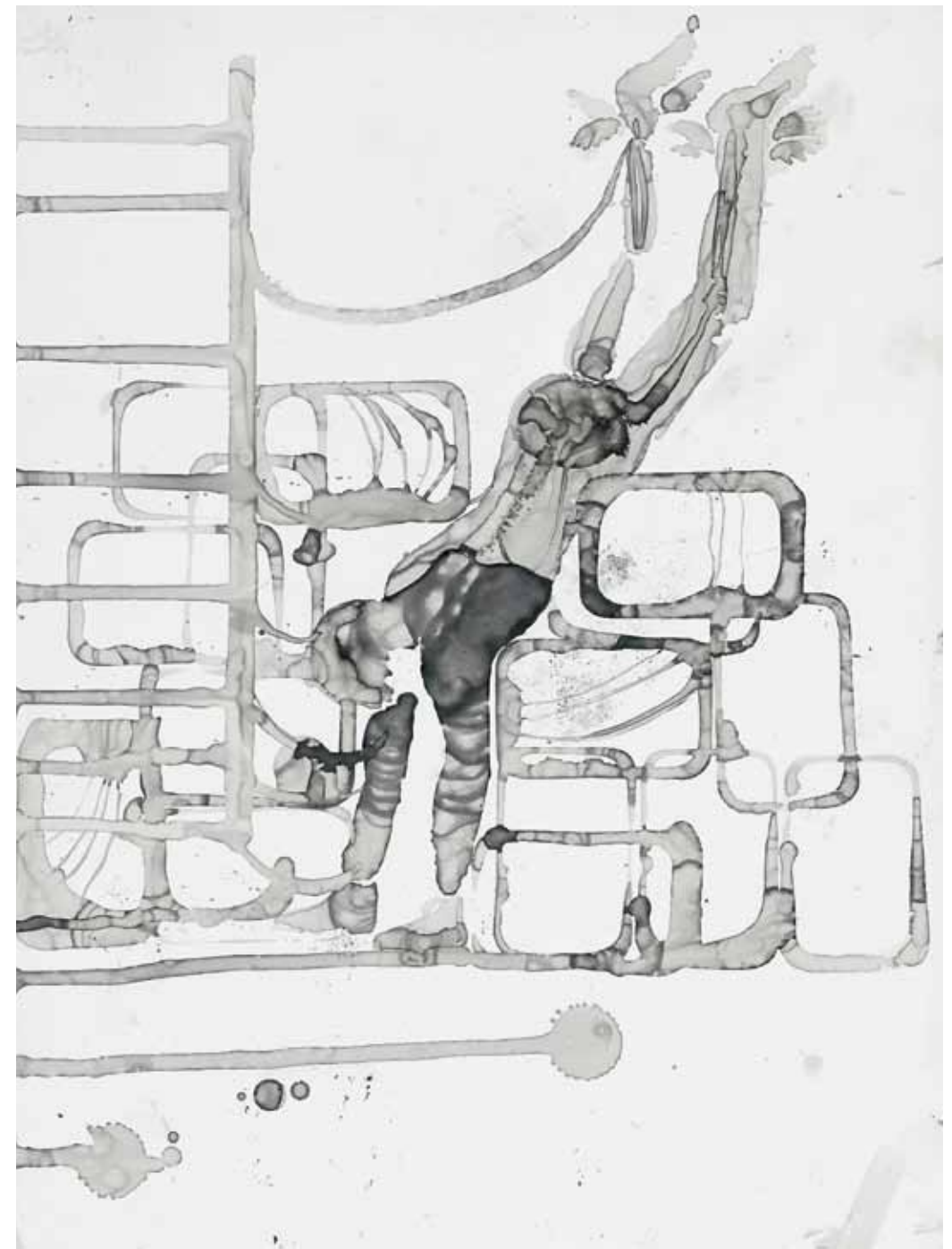


Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

176

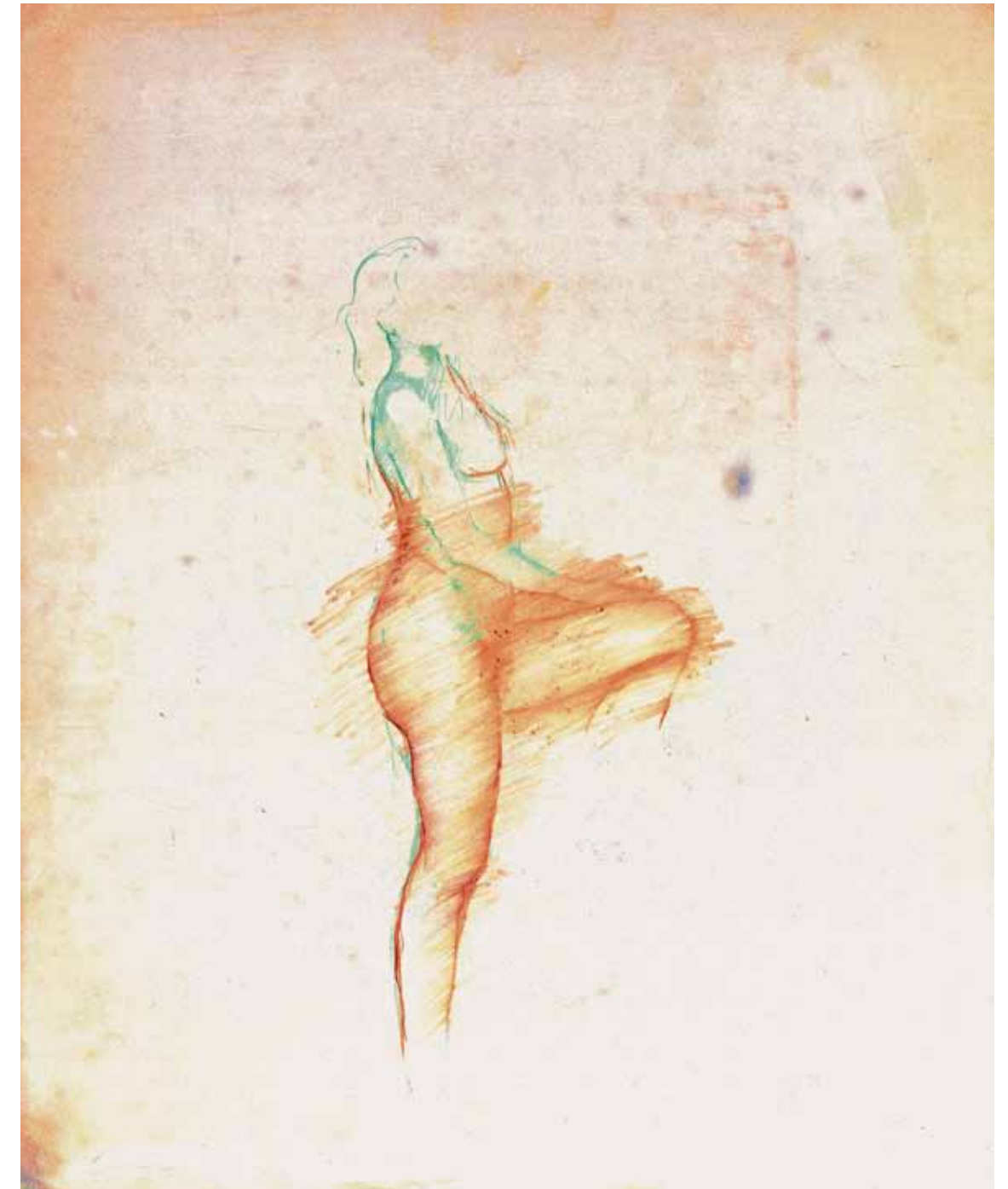
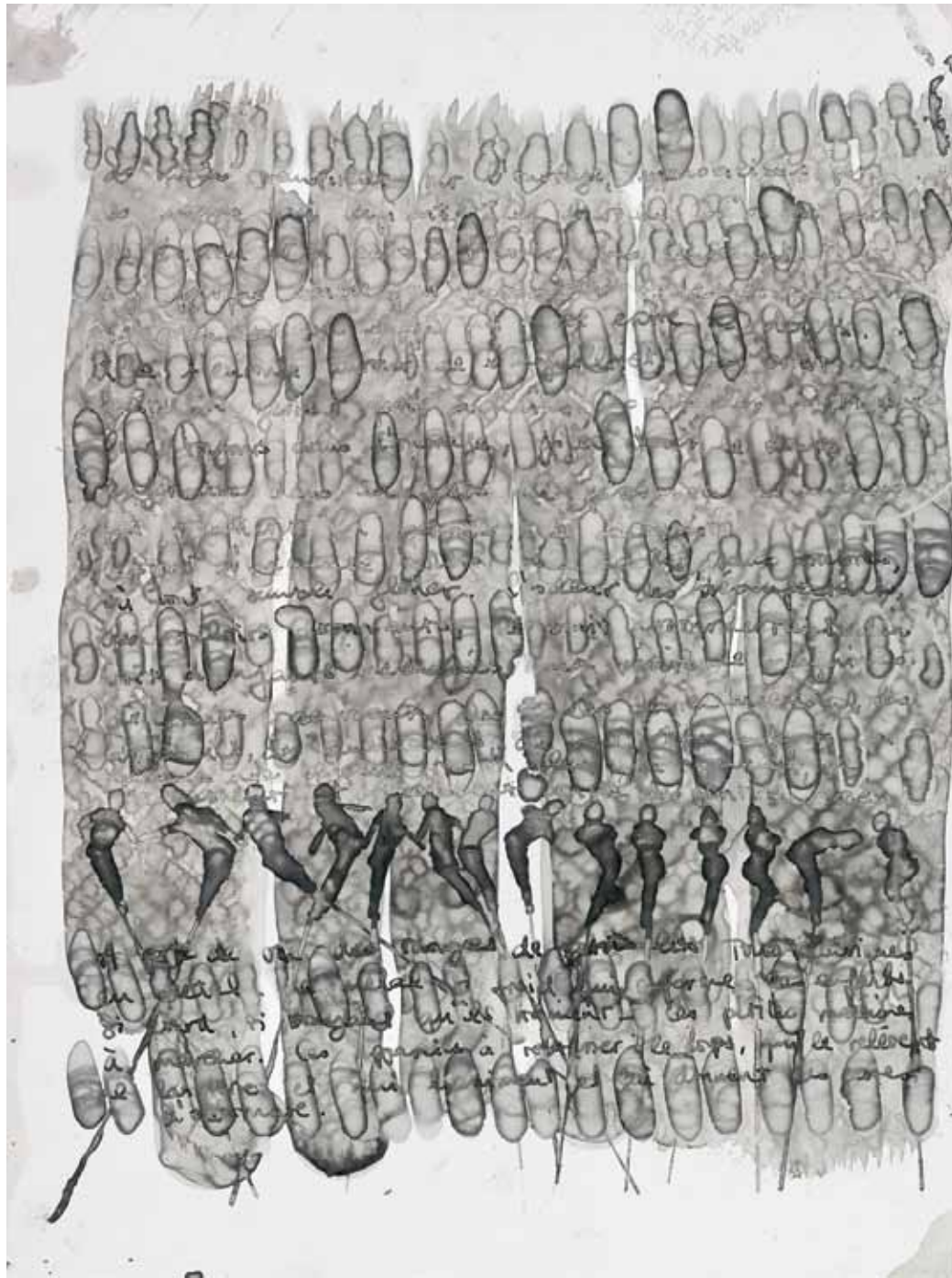


177

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink on Mylar

30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)



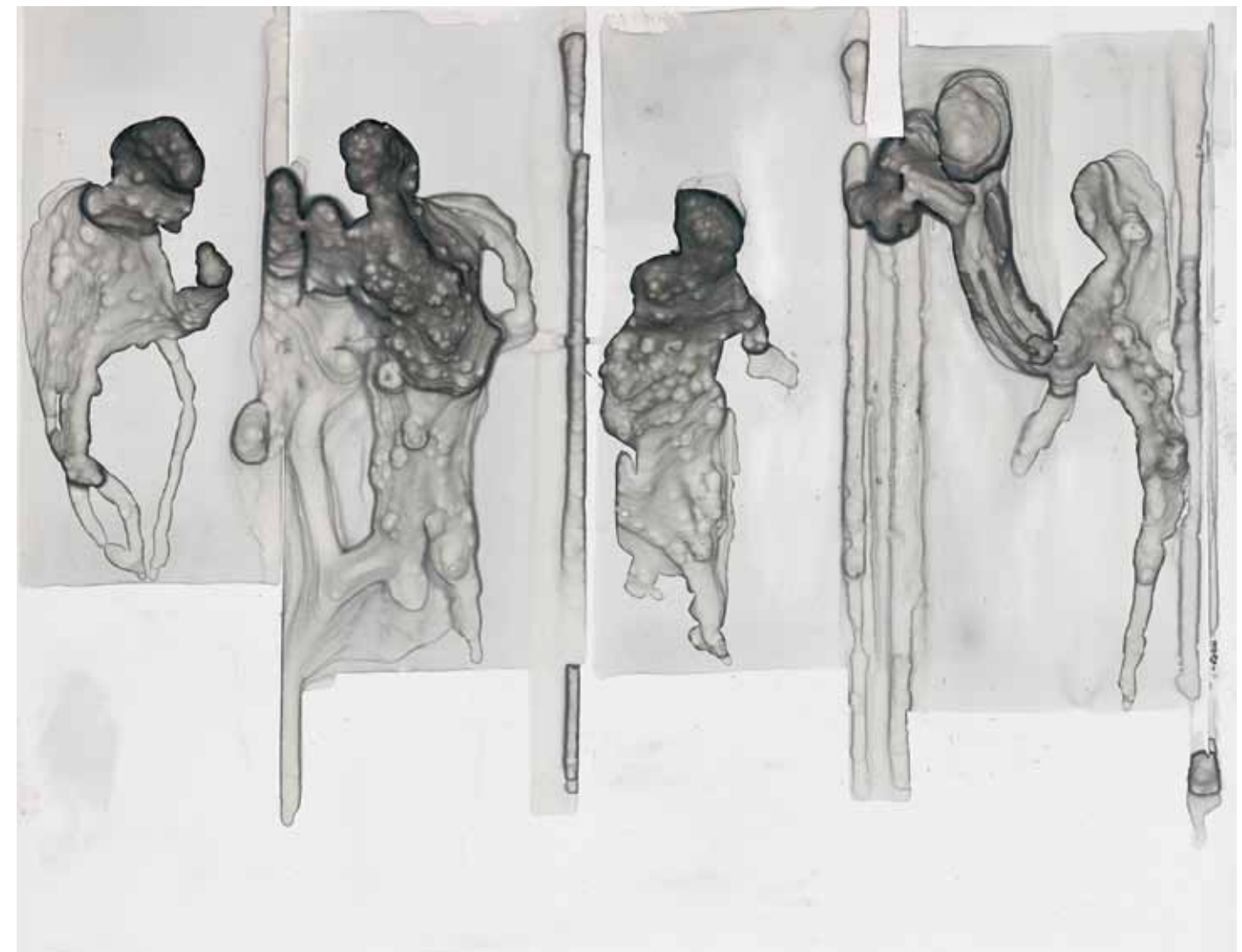


Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar

43 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

180



181

Futur imparfait, 1986–1999

Graphite and crayon on Mylar

27.9 × 35.6 cm (11 × 14 in)



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| List of works | 15 | 33 |
| Dimensions: height × width × depth | <i>Untitled</i> , 1988 | <i>Untitled</i> , 1990 |
| Unless otherwise stated, all images are courtesy of the artist. | Assemblage with photographic prints, copper wires and acrylic | Garment patterns, acrylic and sheet metal on canvas |
| | 77 × 46 cm (30 × 18 in) | 114 × 112 cm (45 × 44 in) |
| 9 | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | Photography: Mehmet Mutaf |
| <i>Dis-figurative Work, 1–5</i> , 1988 | 16 | 34 |
| <i>The Advantages of Disgrace (1)</i> | <i>Keeping up with the Joneses</i> , 1989 | <i>Untitled</i> , 1991 |
| Mixed media | Mixed media | Photograph, glass, bottle-caps, metal, grass and acrylic on canvas |
| 71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in) | 51 × 71 cm (20 × 28 in) | 51 × 71 cm (20 × 28 in) |
| Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell |
| 10 | 17 | 35 |
| <i>Dis-figurative Work, 1–5</i> , 1988 | <i>Crypto-Dreamhouse</i> , 1989 | <i>Baski IV</i> , 1993 |
| <i>The Advantages of Disgrace (2)</i> | Mixed media collage with glass and steel, grass | Oil on linen and acrylic on silk veil |
| Mixed media | 38 × 51 cm (15 × 20 in) | 132 × 221 cm (52 × 87 in) |
| 71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in) | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | Collection Hakan Ezer |
| Vehbi Koç Foundation Contemporary Art Collection, Istanbul | | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell |
| Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | 18 | 37 |
| 11 | <i>Untitled</i> , 1990 | <i>Untitled</i> , 1991 |
| <i>Dis-figurative Work, 1–5</i> , 1988 | Glass, photographic prints and acrylic on canvas | Glass, copper, rod, garment patterns, acrylic, wax and grass on canvas |
| <i>The Advantages of Disgrace (3)</i> | 51 × 71 cm (20 × 28 in) | 142 × 120 cm (56 × 47 in) |
| Mixed media | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | Photography: Melih Uçar |
| 71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in) | 19 | 38 |
| Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | <i>Untitled</i> , 1990 | <i>Topographer</i> , 1993 |
| 12 | Glass, grass and acrylic on canvas | Linen, steel, grass seeds and water |
| <i>Dis-figurative Work, 1–5</i> , 1988 | 61 × 71 cm (24 × 28 in) | 61 × 305 × 147 cm (24 × 120 × 58 in) |
| <i>The Advantages of Disgrace (4)</i> | Collection Rıza Tansu | Installation view, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, USA |
| Mixed media | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell |
| 71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in) | 20–27 | 41 |
| Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | <i>Still Lifes</i> , 1990 | <i>Untitled (polyptych)</i> , 1992 |
| 13 | Mixed media | Wax, garment patterns, coffee grounds, grass and acrylic on canvas |
| <i>Dis-figurative Work, 1–5</i> , 1988 | Each 244 × 71 × 46 cm (96 × 28 × 18 in) | 183 × 198 cm (72 × 78 in) |
| <i>The Advantages of Disgrace (5)</i> | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell |
| Mixed media | 29 | 42 |
| 71 × 51 cm (28 × 20 in) | <i>Untitled</i> , 1990 | <i>Theodolite</i> , 1993 |
| Vehbi Koç Foundation Contemporary Art Collection, Istanbul | Acrylic, oil and wax on canvas | Wax, glass, steel, garment patterns, coffee grounds and acrylic on canvas |
| Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | 114 × 112 cm (45 × 44 in) | 112 × 203 cm (44 × 80 in) |
| 14 | Photography: Mehmet Mutaf | Collection Alev Komili, Istanbul |
| <i>Untitled</i> , 1988 | 31 | Photography: Benjamin Blackwell |
| Assemblage with photographic prints, copper wires and acrylic | <i>Untitled</i> , 1990 | |
| 76 × 46 cm (30 × 18 in) | Straw, acrylic, oil and wax on canvas | |
| Photography: Benjamin Blackwell | 114 × 109 cm (45 × 43 in) | |
| | Collection İrfan Keskin | |
| | Photography: Mehmet Mutaf | |

44
Baski II, 1993
Glass, grass, oil and acrylic on linen
142 × 287 cm (56 × 113 in)
Photography: Önder Ergun

46
Under Pressure, 1994
Grass on sheet metal in tension, steel support
102 × 244 × 508 cm (40 × 96 × 200 in)
Installation view, Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM, USA
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

63
Untitled, 1995
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

65
Untitled, 1995
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
di Rosa Collection, Napa
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

66
Untitled, 1997
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Collection Judy Haselton

67
Untitled, 1997
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Collection Megi and Haldun Dostoğlu
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

68
Untitled, 1997
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

69
Untitled, 1997
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

71
Untitled, 1997
Oil stick on Mylar
Sheet size 25 × 18 cm (10 × 7 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

72
Untitled (diptych), 1996
Mixed media
112 × 183 cm (44 × 72 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

75
Untitled, 1997
Oil, rust and acrylic on canvas
122 × 140 cm (48 × 55 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

76
Untitled, 1999
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Courtesy of Suzie Buchholz and Yoshi Tome
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

77
Untitled, 1999
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

78
Untitled, 1999
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)
Collection Peter J. Cohen, New York

79
Untitled, 1999
Black oil paint on Mylar
Sheet size 36 × 28 cm (14 × 11 in)

80
Untitled, 1996
Acrylic, rust and wax on canvas
152 × 132 cm (60 × 52 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

81
Untitled, 1996
Acrylic, oil, rust and wax on canvas
132 × 112 cm (52 × 44 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

83
Untitled (diptych series), 1996
Rust and acrylic on canvas
Each 46 × 91.5 cm (18 × 36 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

85
Untitled, 1996
Acrylic, rust and wax on canvas
122 × 229 cm (48 × 90 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

86
Untitled, 1999
Rust and pigment on canvas
91 × 61 cm (36 × 24 in)

87
Untitled, 1999
Rust and pigment on canvas
91 × 61 cm (36 × 24 in)

88
Untitled, 2000–2001
Rust and pigment on canvas
Each 33 × 33 cm (13 × 13 in)
Photography: Hakan Aydoğan

91
Untitled (polyptych), 2001
Rust and pigment on linen
152 × 152 cm (60 × 60 in)
Photography: Hakan Aydoğan

93
Untitled (polyptych), 2001
Rust and pigment on canvas
267 × 274 cm (105 × 108 in)
Collection Pınar and Hakan Ertaç
Photography: Hakan Aydoğan

94
Untitled, 2001
Rust and pigment on canvas
99 × 99 cm (39 × 39 in)
Collection Ari İstanbulluoğlu Kireçyan
Photography: Barış Özçetin

95
Untitled, 2001
Rust and pigment on canvas
99 × 99 cm (39 × 39 in)
Collection Ari İstanbulluoğlu Kireçyan
Photography: Barış Özçetin

96
Untitled 12, 2002
Rust and pigment on canvas
122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)
Collection Revna Demirören
Courtesy of the artist and Galeri Nev, Istanbul
Photography: Barış Özçetin

97
Untitled, 2004
Rust and pigment on canvas
122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)

98
Untitled, 2004
Rust and pigment on canvas
122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)
Collection Mehmet Sözbilir
Courtesy of the artist and Galeri Nev, Istanbul
Photography: Barış Özçetin

99
Untitled, 2004
Rust and pigment on canvas
122 × 122 cm (48 × 48 in)
Collection Ebru Latifoğlu
Photography: Barış Özçetin

100
Everything is Hunky-dory No. 1, 2005
Oil on canvas
170 × 231 cm (67 × 91 in)
Ali Güreli Collection
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

102
Glitch II, 2007
Oil on canvas
140 × 180 cm (55 × 71 in)
Tim and Nancy Howes, private collection
Photography: Eli Ridgway

105
Untitled, 2000
Acrylic, rust and oil on linen
152 × 114 cm (60 × 45 in)
Photography: Benjamin Blackwell

106
Untitled, 2004
Rust and pigment on canvas
99 × 122 cm (39 × 48 in)

107
Untitled (diptych), 2007
Rust and pigment on canvas
130 × 122 cm (51 × 48 in)

108
Fugue 6, 2009
Digital pigment print on paper
117 × 90 cm (46 × 35 in)

109
Fugue 7, 2009
Digital pigment print on paper
117 × 90 cm (46 × 35 in)

110
Glitch V, 2008
Oil on canvas
137 × 229 cm (54 × 90 in)
Collection Berna and Tolga Tuglular
Photography: Hakan Aydoğan

112
Time After Time, 2012
Oil on clayboard
125 panels, each:
61 × 61 × 6 cm (24 × 24 × 2¼ in)
Wall 1: 305 × 549 cm (120 × 216 in)
Wall 2: 305 × 427 cm (120 × 168 in)
Wall 3: 305 × 549 cm (120 × 216 in)
Installation view, Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Courtesy of Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco
Photography: Canan Tolon

114
Time After Time (detail), 2012
Oil on clayboard
125 panels, each:
61 × 61 × 6 cm (24 × 24 × 2¼ in)
Wall 1: 305 × 549 cm (120 × 216 in)
Wall 2: 305 × 427 cm (120 × 168 in)
Wall 3: 305 × 549 cm (120 × 216 in)
Installation view, Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Courtesy of Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco
Photography: Canan Tolon

117
Reflex 6, 2011
Oil on clayboard, 20 piece polyptych
203 × 203 cm (80 × 80 in)
Photography Barış Özçetin

119
Untitled, 2011
Oil on canvas
61 × 46 cm (24 × 18 in)
Private collection, New York

120
Untitled, 2011
Oil on canvas
51 × 41 cm (20 × 16 in)
Courtesy of Kevin and Maggie Regan

121
Untitled 8.3, 2013
Oil on canvas
91.5 × 61 cm (36 × 24 in)
Courtesy of the artist and Von Lintel Gallery, New York

122
Untitled 5.3, 2013
Oil on canvas
61 × 46 cm (24 × 18 in)
Private collection, New York

123
Untitled 6.3, 2013
Oil on canvas
51 × 41 cm (20 × 16 in)
Courtesy of the artist and Von Lintel Gallery, New York

125
Untitled 16.3, 2013
Oil on canvas
61 × 61 cm (24 × 24 in)
Courtesy of the artist and
Von Lintel Gallery, New York

127
Untitled 1.8 , 2013
Oil on canvas
158 × 158 cm (62 × 62 in)
Courtesy of the artist and Galeri Nev,
Istanbul
Photography: Barış Özçetin

128
Untitled 3.3, 2013
Oil on canvas
36 × 30.5 cm (14 × 12 in)
Courtesy of the artist and Von Lintel
Gallery, New York
Works not in the exhibition ?

Futur imparfait series

146–182
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150
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink and graphite on Mylar
35.7 × 27.9 cm (c. 14 × 11 in)

151
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink and graphite on Mylar
27.9 × 35.6 cm (c. 11 × 14 in)

152
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

153
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

154
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

155
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
27.9 × 35.6 cm (11 × 14 in)

156
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.7 × 27.9 cm (c. 14 × 11 in)

157
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.7 × 27.9 cm (c. 14 × 11 in)

158
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

159
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.4 × 22.9 cm (12 × 9 in)

160
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

161
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)

162
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

163
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)

164
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
22.8 × 30.4 cm (c. 9 × 12 in)

165
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)

166
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)

167
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar
43 × 35.5 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

168
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.7 × 27.9 cm (c. 14 × 11 in)

169
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)

170
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink and graphite on Mylar
43.2 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

171
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar
42.9 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

172
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink and graphite on Mylar
43.2 × 35.5 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

173
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar
43.1 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

174
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar
43.1 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

175
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar
43.1 × 35.6 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

176
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
35.6 × 27.9 cm (14 × 11 in)

177
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.4 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)

178
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink on Mylar
30.3 × 22.8 cm (c. 12 × 9 in)

179
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar
43.1 × 35.6 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

180
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Ink, graphite and crayon on Mylar
43 × 35.7 cm (c. 17 × 14 in)

181
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Graphite and crayon on Mylar
27.9 × 35.6 cm (11 × 14 in)

182
Futur imparfait, 1986–1999
Graphite and crayon on Mylar
35.6 × 28 cm (c. 14 × 11 in)

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Photograph: Canan Tolon

Biography

Canan Tolon
Born 1955 in Istanbul.
Lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area,
California, and in Istanbul, Turkey.

Education

- 1983 Master of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, California, USA
- 1980 Bachelor of Art, Middlesex Polytechnic/ Architectural Association, London, UK
- 1979 Fachhochschule, Trier, Germany
- 1976 Napier University, Department of Design, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
- 1975 Baccalauréat, Philosophie-Lettres, École Française d'Istanbul, Turkey

Solo Exhibitions

- 2014 Canan Tolon: *Sidesteps*, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London, UK
- 2013 *Somewhere Now*, Von Lintel Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 2012 *Time After Time*, Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan, MI, USA
Then, and then, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2011 *Reflex*, Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2010 *Fugue*, Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
- 2009 *Break-in*, Artists' Gallery, SFMoMA, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2008 *Glitch*, Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
Glitch, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2005 *Everything is Honky-dory*, Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
Everything is Honky-dory, Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2004 *Blind Trust*, Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
Blind Trust, Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
- 2003 Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, USA
Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
Angle of Repose, Mills College Museum of Art, Oakland, CA, USA
- 2001 Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
- 2000 Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
Nothing to Declare, Borusan Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
- 1999 Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
- 1998 Kaza Eseri, Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
- 1997 Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, USA
Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey

- 1996 Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
- 1993 Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
Still Lifes, Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM, USA
Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
- 1992 Harcourts Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 1991 Galeri Nev, Ankara, Turkey
Pro-Arts Gallery, Oakland, CA, USA
Bemis Gallery, Bemis Foundation, Omaha, NE, USA
Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
Still Lifes, Maçka Art Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
- 1990 University of California at Berkeley, CA, USA
- 1984 University of California at Berkeley, CA, USA

Group Exhibitions

- 2013 *Past and Future*, Istanbul Modern Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2012 *1st International Kyiv Biennale*, Mystetsky Arsenal, Kiev, Ukraine
Istanbul Modern-Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- 2011 *Zwölf im Zwölften*, Tanas, Berlin, Germany
Beyond the Apparent, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Dream and Reality, Istanbul Modern Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Driven to Abstraction, Von Lintel Gallery, New York, USA
Confessions of Dangerous Minds, The Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
- 2010 *Second Exhibition*, Arter, Istanbul, Turkey
+infinity, Cer Modern, Ankara, Turkey
A Dream ... But Not Yours, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, USA
- 2009 *Istanbul Next Wave*, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany
New Works, New Horizons, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2008 *In and Out of Istanbul*, Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, PA, USA
Bay Area Now 5, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA, USA
Modern Experiences, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2007 *J.P. Morgan Chase Collection*, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Istanbul Now, Lukas Feichtner Gallery, Vienna, Austria
21st Annual Exhibition, Emeryville, CA, USA
Modern and Beyond, Santralistanbul, Istanbul, Turkey
Nev/ Tepebaşı, Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey

2005 *For Tiles*, İznik Tiles Foundation, Haghia Sofia Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Contaging with Nature, Aksanat, Istanbul, Turkey
2nd Pedestrian Exhibition, Karaköy, Istanbul
Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey

2004 *Observation, Interpretation, Multiplicity*, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul, Turkey

2003 *Turkey-Plastic Dialogues: Verheugen Selection*, City Hall, Brussels, Belgium
Galeri Nev, Istanbul, Turkey
Organize ihtilaf/Organized Conflict, Proje4L Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art, Istanbul, Turkey

2002 Rundetårn Art Center, Copenhagen, Denmark
Permanent Collection, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul, Turkey
1st Pedestrian Exhibition, Nişantaşı, Istanbul, Turkey

2001 Topkapı Museum, Istanbul, Turkey

2000 *Space/Time*, Galeri Nev, Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey

1999 *Cover/Contour*, Galeri Nev, Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey
Re-Generation, University of California Art Gallery, San Diego, CA, USA
Crossing Zones, De Paul University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL, USA
Lack/Excess, Galeri Nev, Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey

1998 San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA, USA
Bolas Museum of Art, Bolas, CA, USA

1997 Southern Exposure, San Francisco, CA, USA

1995 *Long Horizons*, Falkirk Cultural Center, San Rafael, CA, USA
Charlottenborg Center for Arts, Copenhagen, Denmark

1994 *Forms of Address*, Walter / McBean Gallery, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, USA
Nexus Institute Gallery, Berkeley, CA, USA
Zyzyva, Victoria Room, San Francisco, CA, USA
Coming Across, Euphrat Museum-DeAnza College, Cupertino, CA, USA

1993 Topkapı Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Southern Exposure, San Francisco, CA, USA

1992 *3rd International Istanbul Biennial*, Istanbul, Turkey
Sanart '92, Ankara, Turkey
Montgomery Gallery, San Francisco, CA, USA
Bemis Gallery, Bemis Foundation, Omaha, NE, USA
San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA, USA
Alsace Plurielle, Mulhouse, France

1991 *Off the Wall*, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NE, USA

1990 Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA, USA
Bemis Foundation, Omaha, NE, USA

1989 Gallery Vienna, Chicago, IL, USA
Nerlino Gallery/Soho-New York, NY, USA
American Institute of Architects, San Francisco, CA, USA

1988 Viridian Gallery, New York, NY, USA

1987 California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco, CA, USA

Solo Exhibition Publications

2014 Ziba Ardan (ed.), *et al*, Canan Tolon: *Sidesteps*, London: Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art

2013 Cathy Lang Ho, *Somewhere Now*, New York: Von Lintel Gallery

2012 Jacquelynn Baas, *Then, and then*, New York: Gallery Paule Anglim

2005 Canan Tolon, *Tıkırında Herşey*, Ankara: Galeri Nev

Articles/Selected Publications

2013 'Introducing Established Contemporary Artists from Turkey', *Exhibist*, Sept. 2013: 10
'Picture This: Right Here, Right Now at Von Lintel Gallery', *Arte Fuse*, 21 Apr. 2013
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2012 Sarah P. Hanson, 'Istanbul's Art Market Soars to New Heights', *Art + Auction*, Nov. 2012
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'Bay Area Art Picks', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 Feb. 2012
Julius Purcell, 'The Shadow and Truth', *Financial Times*, 7 Feb. 2012

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Esin Eşkinat, *Hayal ve Hakikat/Dream and Reality*, Istanbul: Istanbul Modern Art Museum, 2011: 80, 156–57, 232
Yıldırım Türker, 'Canan Tolon', *Radikal*, 12 Feb. 2011: 17

2010 Esra Sarigedik Öktem, *A Dream ... But Not Yours: Contemporary Art from Turkey*, Washington, DC: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2010: 60–63

Emre Baykal, *İkinci Sergi/Second Exhibition*, 1/2, Istanbul: Arter, 2010: 164–74
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2009 Kenneth Baker, 'Three Artists at Fort Mason', *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 4, 2009: E3
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2008 Kenneth Foster, *Bay Area Now 5*, San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 2008: 94–95
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Levent Çalıkloğlu, 'Görme Kültürümüzle Hesaplaşmak', *Milliyet Sanat*, Oct. 2008: 24–5
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Gunter Verheugen, *Contemporary Painting and Sculpture from Turkey*, Brussels: Cabinet of the Commissioner, 2003: 28–29
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 Fulya Erdemci, *Organize İhtilaf / Organized Conflict*, Istanbul: Proje4L, Istanbul Museum of Contemporary Art, Sept. 2003: 164–71
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 ‘Resmin yeri neresi?’ *Radikal*, 27 Sept. 2003: 4
 2002 Fulya Erdemci (curator), *Istanbul Yaya Sergileri 1: Kişisel Coğrafyalar Küresel Haritalar / Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions 1: Personal Geographies, Global Maps*, Istanbul: Kolektif Productions, 2002: 225–30
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 Evrim Altuğ, ‘Dikkat Sanat Eseri Çıkabilir!’, *Radikal*, 30 Sept. 2002: 23
 Evrim Altuğ, ‘Ebedi Yıkımın Tanıklığı’, *Radikal*, 4 Jan. 2002: 18
 Ahu Antmen, ‘Canan Tolon Sergisi’, *Sanat Yıllığı*, Jan. 2002: 54–55
 Bente Christensen-Ernst, *Istanbul: An International Reflection*, Copenhagen: Rundetaarn Gallery, 2002: 76–79
 Dilek Şener, ‘Sanal Dünyanın İmge Avcısı’, *Milliyet Sanat*, Jan. 2002: 64–5
 Nevin Ünalın, ‘Resim İçin Risk Gerek’, *Cumhuriyet Dergi*, 13 Jan. 2002: 8
 ‘Sanat Yürüyor!’ *Vizyon*, Oct. 2002: 97
 2001 Beral Madra, *Istanbul Gidiş-Dönüş III / Roundtrip Istanbul III*, Istanbul: Borusan Culture and Art Center, 2000: 26–35
 Raul Cabra and Dung Ngo, *American Furniture*, New York: Universe Publishing / Rizzoli, 2000: 156, 158–59
 Bike Erkek Zoto, ‘Canan Tolon: Ölü doğanın ötesinde’, *Millyet*, 14 Oct. 2000: 10
 1999 Canan Tolon, *Futur imparfait*, Paris: Editions P.A.U., 1999
 Ali Artun and Haldun Dostoğlu, *Türkiye’de Çağdaş Sanat, Müze Kitap*, Istanbul: Galeri Nev, 1999: 436–81
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 Beral Madra, *Multiples for Body and Soul*, Istanbul: Borusan Culture and Art Center, 1999: 37
 1998 Constance Lewallen, ‘Interview with Canan Tolon’, *Canan Tolon: Limbo*, Istanbul: Galeri Nev, 1998
 Esra Aliçavuşoğlu, ‘Resim Yapmak Sorumluluktur’, *Cumhuriyet*, 17 Oct. 1998: 21
 Buket Öktülmüş, ‘Tolon’un Kaza Eserleri’, *Radikal*, 11 Oct. 1998: 20

1997 Lale Filoğlu, ‘Canan Tolon’un Pas ve Kahve Telvesiyle Yarattığı Resimleri İstanbul ve Ankara’da’, *Vizyon*, Jan. 1997: 86–87
 Ahmet Köksal, ‘Doğal izlenimlerden doğal yorumlara’, *Milliyet Sanat*, 15 Jan. 1997: 42–43
 1996 Howard Junker, *Zyzyva*, Spring 1996: 47–54
 1995 Ali Artun, *I Am Another: 11 Tyrkiske Kunstnere*, Copenhagen: Charlottenborg Center for the Arts, 1995: 34–36
 Erol Akyavaş, ‘Canan Tolon benim için Türk resminin en taze seslerinden ...’, *Vizyon*, Nov. 1995: 159
 Chris Bruce, *Architecture in Perspective 10*, Rockport, MA: Rockport Publishers, 1995: 71
 John Rapko, ‘An End to Nature: Long Horizons at Falkirk Cultural Center’, *ArtWeek*, June 1995: 17–18
 1994 Chris Bruce and Kathleen Shields, *Withinsight: Visual Territories of Thirty Artists*, Santa Fe: Western States Arts Federation / NEA Publications, 1994: 85
 Jean-Edith Weiffenbach, *Forms of Address*, San Francisco Art Institute, 1994: 24, 25–26
 Meredith Tromble, ‘A Conversation with Canan Tolon’, *Artweek*, 3 Nov. 1994: 11
 Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, ‘Ölü Doğa / Anti-Manzara’, *Arredamento Dekorasyon*, Jan. 1994: 156–57
 Ali Artun and Selda Somuncuoğlu, 1995–2000 *Central Bank Collection of Turkish Modern Art*, Ankara: Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, 1994: 257–59
 Jeff Barbosa, ‘Immigration Influences Artists’ Work’, *Cupertino Courier*, Mar. 9, 1994: 2
 George M. Beylerian, *Chairmania*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994: 112
 Laura J. Tuchman, ‘A World Without Borders’, *Mercury News*, 20 Mar. 1994: 3, 28
 Canan Tolon, ‘Immigrant Art, Commentary’, *San Jose Mercury News*, 13 Mar. 1994: 17
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 Howard Junker, *Zyzyva*, Fall 1994: 129
 Carolyn Leal, ‘Coming Across: Euphrat Shows Works by Recent Immigrants’, *The Neighbor*, 9 Mar. 1994: 10
 Jan Rindfleisch, *Coming Across*, Cupertino, CA: Euphrat Museum of Art, 1994: 64–65
 1993 Neery Melkonian, *An Interview with Canan Tolon*, Santa Fe: The Center for Contemporary Arts, 1993
 Dean Balsamo, ‘It wasn’t Exactly the Art Biz as Usual in ’93’, *Pasatiempo*, Dec. 1993
 Dean Balsamo, ‘Canan Tolon’s *Still Lifes*’, *Pasatiempo*, 30 April 1993

Neery Melkonian, ‘Istanbul: The Third International Art Biennial’, *THE Magazine*, Jan. / Feb. 1993: 17–19
 Diane Armitage, ‘Critical Reflections: Canan Tolon’, *THE Magazine*, May 1993: 40
 Tomur Atagök, *Contemporary Women Artists*, Istanbul: Istanbul Ministry of Culture, 1993: 21, 75
 Tom Collins, ‘Tolon’s *Still Lifes*: Un-poetic Fragments of Ongoing Decay’, *Journal North*, 29 April 1993: 4
 Abdülkadir Günyaz, ‘Bienal Dedikleri’, *Türkiye’de Sanat*, Jan.–Feb. 1993: 401
 Sezer Tansuğ, ‘Sahte Avangardın Avlanma Süreci’, *Türkiye’de Sanat*, May–Aug. 1993: 28–33
 ‘İmajlarla Kuşatılmış Bir Yaşam’, *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Dec. 1993: 3
 Beral Madra, ‘Kültürel konumumuz ve İstanbul Bienali’, *Hürriyet Gösteri*, Mar. 1993: 106–09
 Jason Silverman, ‘Artist has a New Twist on Painting by Numbers’, *Pasatiempo*, 16 Apr. 1993: 4
 1992 Ann Elliott Sherman, ‘Materials Reborn at SJICA’, *Metro*, 16 Apr. 1992: 45
 Daphne Deeds, *Seven Artists [Who Happen to be Women]*, Omaha: Bemis Foundation, 1992: 9
 Vasıf Kortun, ‘3. Uluslararası İstanbul Bienali / 3rd International Istanbul Biennial’, Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 1992: 218
 Kim Levin, ‘Significant Others in Istanbul’, *The Village Voice*, 1 Dec. 1992: 54
 Kyle Macmillan, ‘An Adventure in 3-D’, *Omaha World-Herald*, 17 July 1992: 33, 37
 Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, ‘Ölü Doğa / Anti-Manzara’, *Arredamento Dekorasyon*, Nov. 1992: 142
 Frank Celbulski, ‘SFDA Introductions ’92: Canan Tolon’, *Artweek*, 6 Aug. 1992: 22
 Joanne Huddleton, ‘Introductions ’92’, *The Arts Monthly*, July 1992: 2
 Ahmet Köksal, ‘Bienal’den İzlenimler’, *Milliyet*, 26 Oct. 1992: 16
 Kyle Macmillan, ‘An Adventure in 3-D’, *Omaha World-Herald*, 17 July 1992: 33, 37
 Beral Madra, ‘Fark Göremiyorum Ya Siz?’ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 Nov. 1992: 11
 1991 Ludmila Behramoğlu, ‘Hep Görüleni Görünür Kılmak’, *Cumhuriyet*, 14 Mar. 1991: 7
 Demet Elkatip, ‘Çöplükte Güzel Şeyler Var’, *Günes*, 14 Mar. 1991: 11
 Sezer Tansuğ, ‘Canan Tolon ve İki Sergisi’, *Topaz*, 15 Mar. 1991: 48
 1989 Louise Kollenbaum, ‘The San Francisco Focus Design Awards’, *San Francisco Focus*, July 1989: 42–43
 1988 Ali Çetinkaya, ‘Göz kamaştıran sergi’, *Hürriyet*, 10 Dec. 1988: 5

Public Collections

The British Museum, London, UK
 Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turkey
 IKSv (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and the Arts), Istanbul, Turkey
 Nesrin Esirtgen Collection, Istanbul, Turkey
 Omer Koç Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey
 Santralistanbul, Istanbul, Turkey

Residencies and Awards

2012 The Kidder Residency in the Arts, Institute for the Humanities, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
 2007 Emeryville Public Arts Award, Emeryville, CA, USA
 2000 Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
 1999 Center for Mediterranean Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA
 1998 Arts Council of Wales, Berllanderri Sculpture Workshop, Wales, UK
 1997 Gamblin Fellowship, Artist in Residence, Vermont Studio Center, VT, USA
 1996 Artist in Residence, The Camargo Foundation, Cassis, France
 1995 Artist in Residence, The MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH, USA
 1994 Western States Arts Federation WESTAF / NEA (Painting), Denver, CO, USA
 1992 Artist in Residence, Bemis Foundation, Omaha, NE, USA
 1991 Artist in Residence, Bemis Foundation, Omaha, NE, USA
 1989 San Fransico Focus Design Award, San Fransisco, CA, USA

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Front cover
Canan Tolon, *Untitled* (detail), 1997
Opposite
Canan Tolon, *Reflex 6* (detail), 2011
198–199
Canan Tolon, *Untitled 1.8* (detail), 2013

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