



Dr Kate Aspinall lives and works in London. She divides her time between two distinct yet inevitably enmeshed professional activities: **art production and art history**. Her art practice includes intricate pencil work, experimental mixed media drawing, painting, and sculpture. Recent pieces involve either **surrealistic juxtapositions** or **expressionist bodies**, both of which explore the **phenomenon that we call 'self'** and how it can be porous or fractured as it expands and contracts along the boundaries of our relationships. Grounded in **feminist critiques of the contained, rational individual**, this visual approach also **challenges the long-held distinction between ephemera and presentation pieces**.

Recent residencies and projects include: **'To Tame a Bubble, a Homo Bulla Project'**, originally a fellowship and grant from the Institute for Advanced Study, Central European University, Budapest/Vienna (2020, cancelled due to Covid) and **'Blueprints for an Emergent Personality'**, a Vertigo Starts Residency in collaboration with the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona (2018-2019) (p.11). Her drypoint Floating Woman no. 5 was selected for the **2024 East London Printmakers Box Set** and is now in **the V&A collection** (p.4). Kate is currently working on a return to fine pencilwork with **'Fish Out of Water'**, double portraits of fractured egos (p.3), as well as continuing to develop the themes of her more experimental mixed media series, such as **'Elastic Skins'** (p.5), **'Monstrous Birth'** (p.7) and **'Wrestlers'** (p.9). In all her work multi-figure compositions stretch and strain against membranes of care, which are both suffocating and life-enforcing.

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KATE ASPINALL

b. 1983 Boston, MA, USA
Lives and Works in London, UK

Residencies and Awards

- 2020, Artist Fellowship, Institute for Advanced Study Central European University, Budapest (declined)
- 2018-2019, Art Residency from Vertigo Starts for placement in Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain
- 2017, Grant for Royal Drawing School, London
- 2010-2013, Art School Departmental Doctoral Award (full scholarship, stipend), University of East Anglia
- 2008, Fellowship and grant from the Rocky Mountain Women's Institute Denver, US
- 2004, Tessa Trethowan Bursary for Dissertation Research, University of St Andrews

Solo and Group Exhibitions

- 2024, Drawing Humans, The Living Arts Collective, XYZ Gallery, London (Group)
- 2024, East London Printmakers Box Set, London (Group)
- 2018/19, Vertigo showcase, IRCAM and The Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (Group)
- 2018, Jerwood Drawing Prize Exhibition, London (Group)
- 2017, 'Drawn Together', Mercer Chance Gallery, London (Group)
- 2016, Alumnae Show, Dana Hall Gallery, Wellesley, MA, US (Group)
- 2016, 'The Other Side', Monsoon Collective, Tucson, AZ, US (Group)
- 2013, 'The Space Between Moments', Loughton Art Centre with the Big Draw, London (Solo)
- 2008, 'Anatomy & Process', Vertigo Artspace, Denver, CO, US (Joint)
- 2008, 'Lines, Lineage, and Lore', Rocky Mountain Women's Institute, Denver, CO, US (Group)
- 2006, 'The Thing with Feathers', Pirate Contemporary Art Gallery, Denver, CO, US (Joint)
- 2004, 'Is Intimate Space Birds Fly Through?', Byre Gallery, St. Andrews, Scotland (Solo)

Professional Experiences

- 2013 – present, Artist producing paintings, sculpture, drawings, and prints
- 2013 – present, Independent scholar, producing publications from original research
- 2018 – present, Adjunct Lecturer, Yale University in London, Courtauld Institute of Art
- 2018 – 2022, Accredited lecturer for the Arts Society, a global educational organisation
- 2013 – 2018, Consultant, Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, Catalogue Raisonné Project, NYC
- 2015 – 2016, Conceived and ran Topolski Studio's popular Historical Materials-Life Drawing
- 2009 – 2012, Lead organiser of the Feliks Topolski Archive Project, London
- 2008 – 2009, Prints and Drawings Room Assistant Curator and Researcher, Courtauld, London

Academic

- 2010-2013, PhD, University of East Anglia, 'Attitudes to Drawing in Britain, 1918-1964'
- 2008-2009, MA, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, Distinction on Dissertation
- 2001-2005, BA/MA (Hons), University of St Andrews, History of Art, 1st Class

Select Publications

Chapters in books:

- 'A Painter's Painter: Considering the Legacy of William Coldstream' in *Coldstream Remembered: Portraits of a Painter*, ed Catharine Coldstream (Bristol: Sansom & Co, forthcoming).
- 'Occluded Depths: Frank Auerbach and Drawing' in *Frank Auerbach, Drawings of People*, eds Mark Hallett and Catherine Lampert (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).
- 'The Aesthetic of Scientific Authority in a Nuclear Age: Jacob Bronowski and Feliks Topolski' in *British Art in the Nuclear Age*, ed Catherine Jolivet (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014).

Journal articles

- 'Artist Versus Teacher: The Problem of David Bomberg's Pedagogical Legacy', in *Tate Papers* no.33 (2020)
- 'Style Cults & the School of Thick Paint', contribution to 'Art by the Many', Conversation Piece coordinated by Thomas Crow in *British Art Studies*, 7 (30 Nov 2017)
- 'A Signature of Our Race: Herbert Read and the Line that Links Medieval Illumination and 1930s British Modernism', *Visual Resources* 32:1-2 (2016).
- 'A Mark of the Times: Charcoal and the Borough Group'. Borough Road Gallery (2016).

Reviews, Criticism

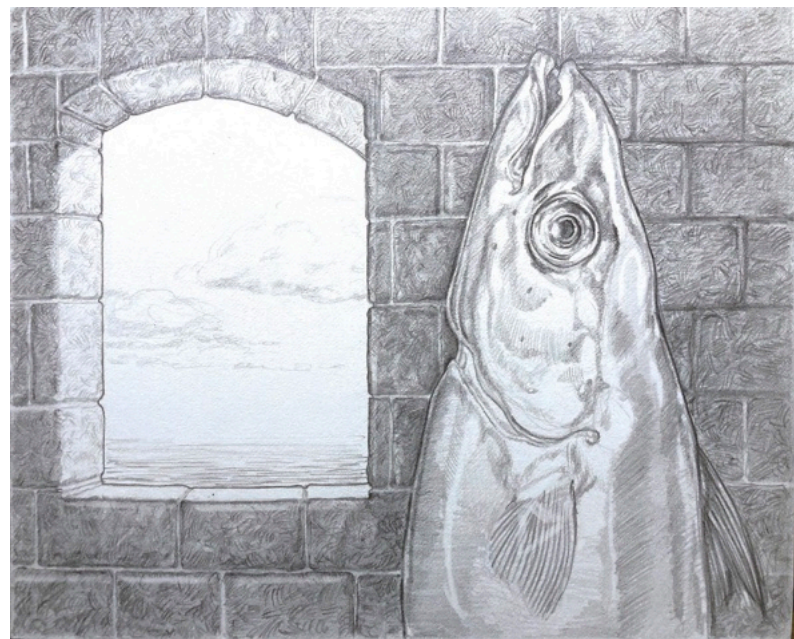
- 'Review of Walter Sickert at Tate Britain', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 1:1 (August 2022)
- 'A Garden Shut Up, a Fountain Sealed', Review of Sussex Modernism: Retreat and Rebellion at Two Temple Place, London, *3rd Dimension: The PMSA Magazine* (April 2017)
- 'Creating Artists', Review of The London Art Schools: Reforming the Art World, 1960 to Now' in *Art History* (February 2017)
- 'True and Pure: Frank Dobson and Eric Gill Drawing from Life, Review of Daniel Katz Gallery Exhibition, *3rd Dimension: The PMSA Magazine* (July 2016)
- Review of The Inspirational Genius of Germany: British Art and Germanism, 1850-1939, by Matthew Potter, *Immediations*, 3:2 (2013)

Personal

Nationality: British and American

Languages: English (mother tongue), reading comprehension in German and French

Services: Elected chair of Freelance and Independents Group for Association for Art History (AAH), representing the interests of freelance art workers on the governing board (2015 – 2018)
Co-founder of the Modern and Contemporary British Art Discussion Group, London(now the Early Career Researchers Network at the Paul Mellon Centre, London) (2009 – 2013)



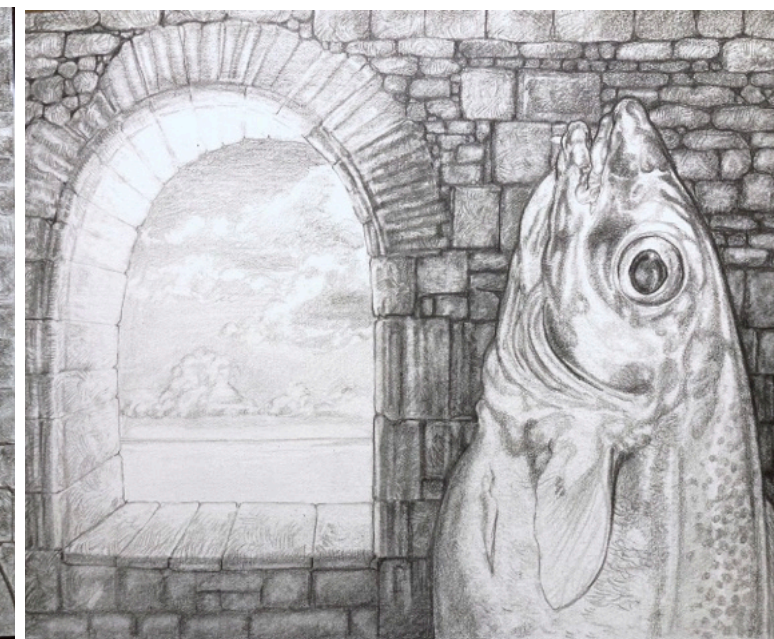
Fish out of Water: Coley, 2024
18.4 x 22.7 cm, graphite on paper



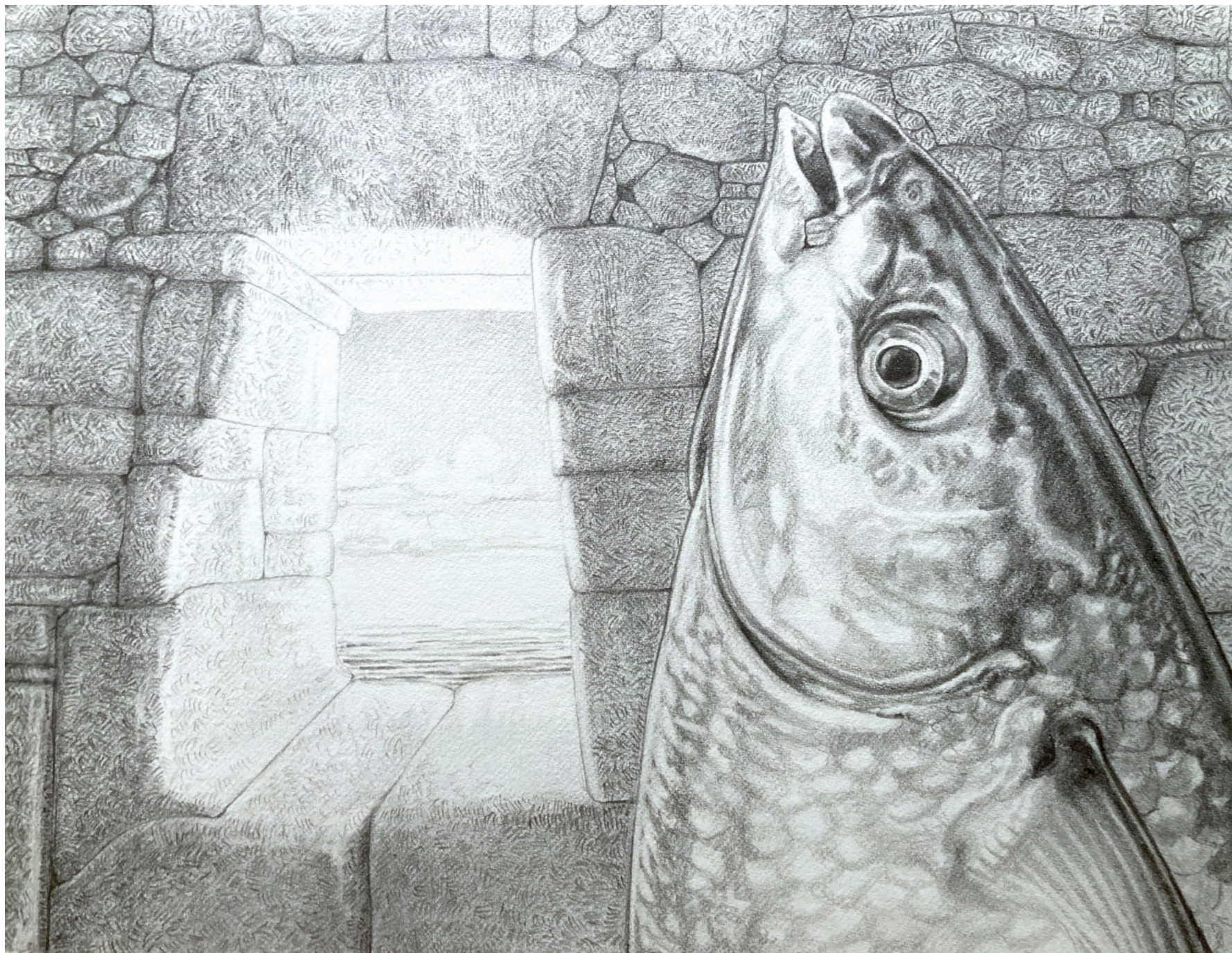
Fish out of Water: Common Sole, 2024
17.3 x 22.7 cm, graphite on paper



Fish out of Water Cod, 2024
18.4 x 22.7 cm, graphite on paper

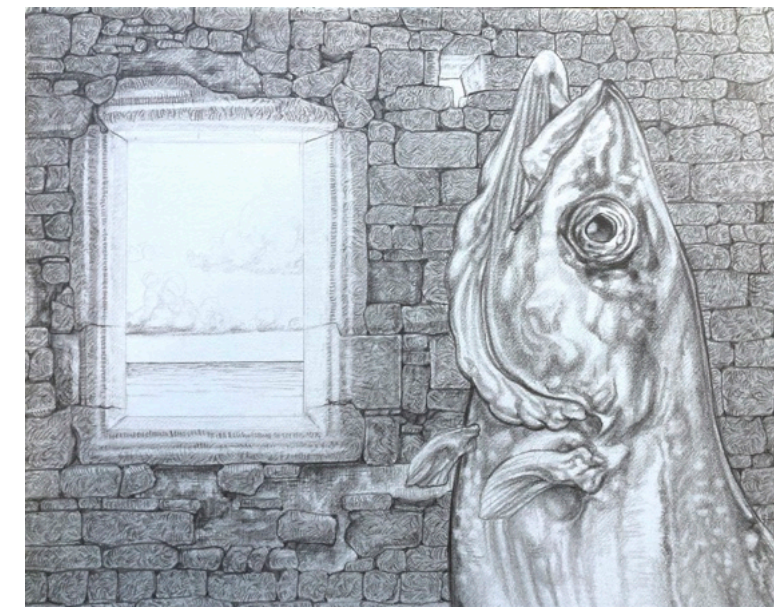


Fish out of Water Haddock, 2024
18.4 x 22.7 cm, graphite on paper

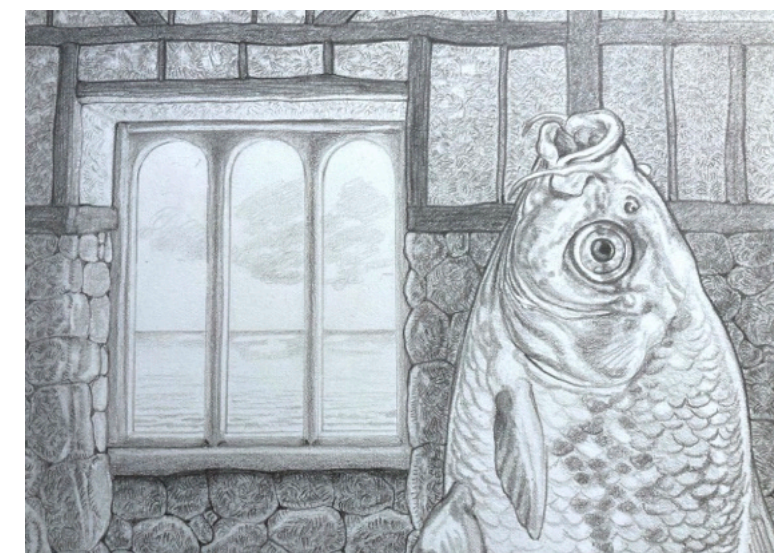


Fish out of Water: Pollock, 2024
18.4 x 23.7 cm, graphite on paper

Fish out of Water is a series of small intricate drawings, inspired by Belgian surrealist **René Magritte's** *Search for Truth* (1966). I encountered his drawing at an art fair and became fixated on the perfection of it as a **double portrait**. Each of my drawings depict a thing (fish) alongside that which it depends upon and yet finds itself separate from (water). **Nothing physical keeps the fish from their waters.** The weather is calm. The windows are large, but the rooms are dark and the fish, be it from apprehension or circumstance, hides from that which completes it. Each teeter on the brink of bringing themselves to gaze out or run away.



Fish out of Water: Thin Lipped Mullet, 2024
18.4 x 23.7 cm, graphite on paper

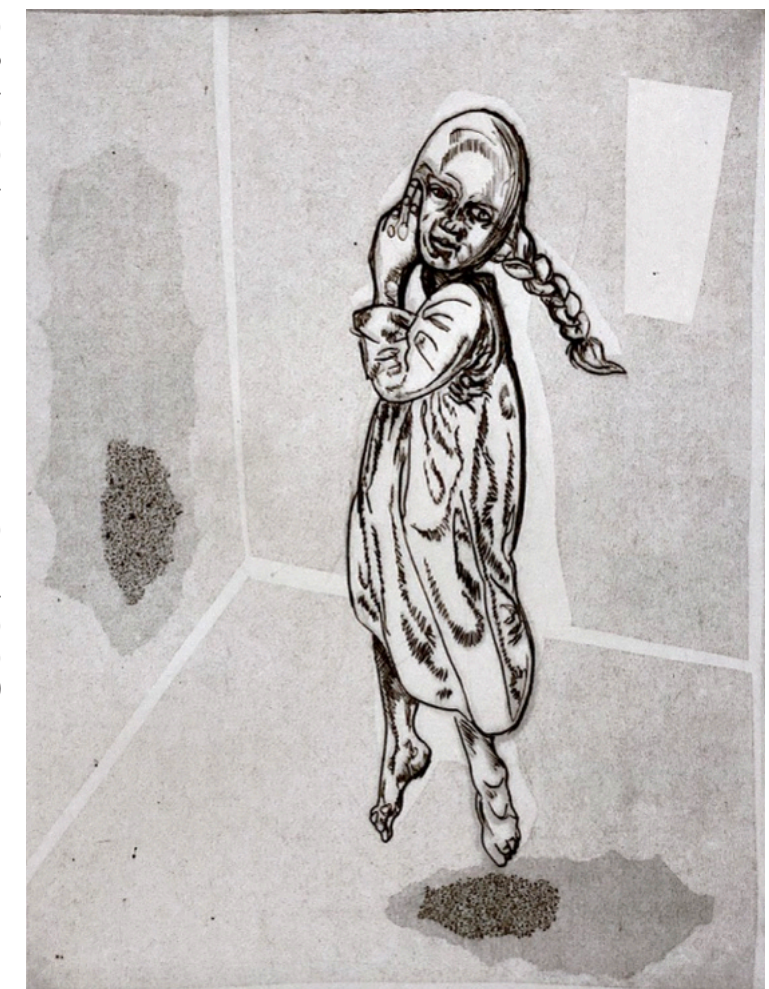


Fish out of Water: Goldfish 2024
18.4 x 22.6 cm, graphite on paper



(above right)
Floating Woman no. 6
 2024
 20.7 X 21 cm (image)
 30.5 x 30.5 cm (support)
 drypoint, series of 14

(left)
Floating Woman no. 5, 2024
 19.5 x 19.9 cm (image)
 30 x 30 cm (support)
 drypoint, series of 44
 Part of 2024 East London
 Printmakers' Boxset



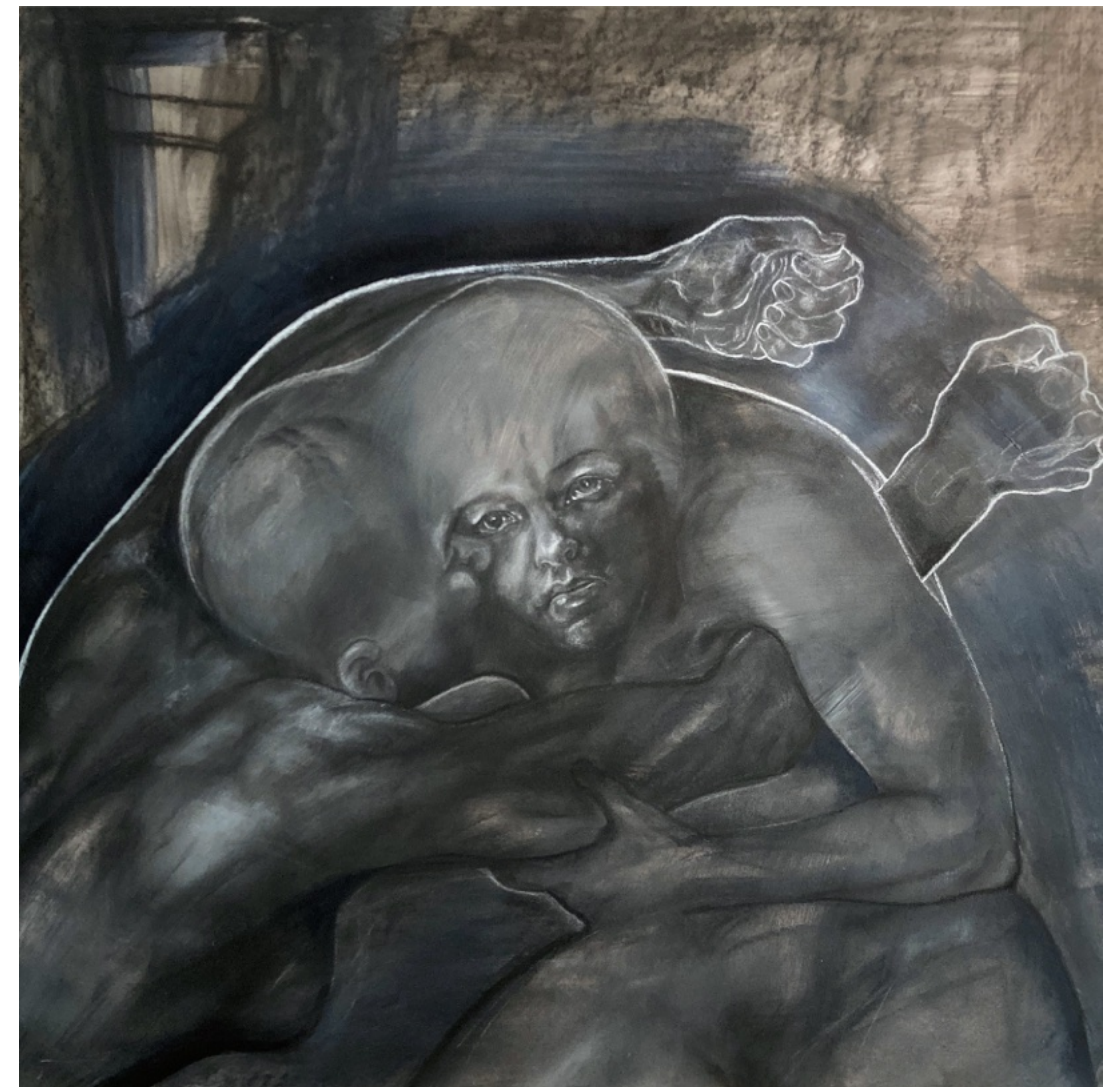
(right)
Floating Woman no. 1
 2024
 20.2 x 15.5 cm (image)
 35 x 25 cm (support)
 drypoint, series of 20

Floating Woman is a **drypoint print** series comprised of **surrealist portrayals of haunting**. The women are proxies of our awareness of ourselves and our bodies in space. They are suspended within intangible pressures. Their bodies are composed of wispy lines – they are fragile and febrile – and yet the air around them thickens, becoming anthropomorphic as it gains texture, menace, and weight. The **shapes are like moods** or worries, coagulating from the air, threatening and circulating. And yet the women themselves are ghost-like forms. **Sheets over heads or gazes into nothingness** represent a form of **futile hiding**. The nature of using drypoint over a series adds dynamism to this: as the prints are pulled the textured air fades, lightening its weight on the central figures, and yet they continue to bear the heaviness.

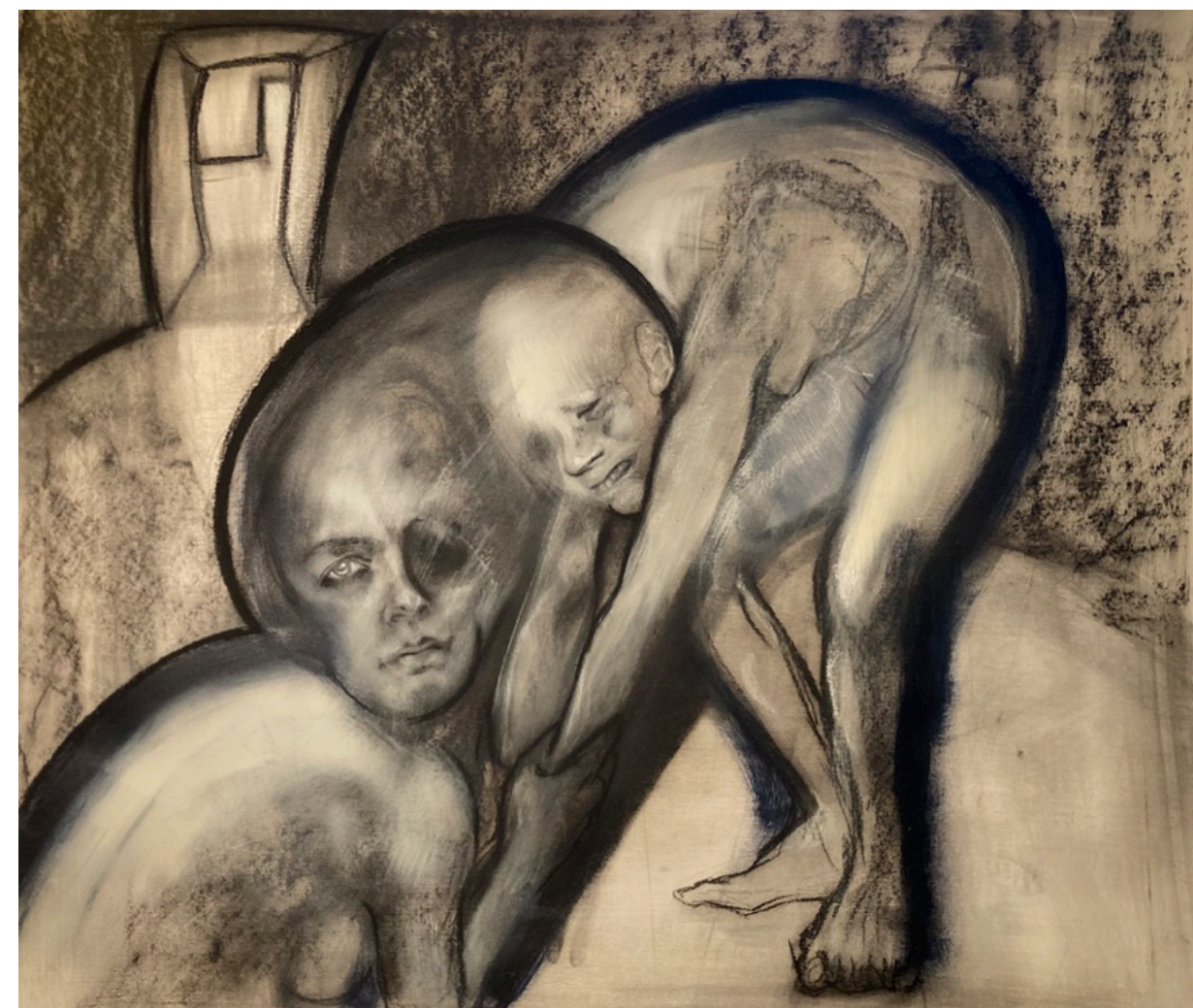
Elastic Skins is a series of **psychological drawings**. Connected to the Wrestler series, here pushing and pulling replaces grappling. Faces and bodies bleed into those we love, depend on, or are dependent upon us. **Care like honey confuses inside and outside** as bodies melt into a single protoplasm, willingly or unwillingly, their separateness becoming compromised to the point of no return. This sense of **the body as something closer to a bubble** or foam rather than a discrete, contained machine is inspired the biomorphic art Edward Munch and Hans Arp as much as by Southern Australian Aboriginal **rock art**, where bodies swell and loop out over others, consuming each other through acts of connection, whether fighting or love making, but equally are in danger of popping, whereupon the delicate lines fall slack and empty.



(left)
Elastic Skins no. 1
 2018
 89 x 62 cm
 graphite, charcoal, inks,
 and acrylic on paper



(above right)
Elastic Skins no. 12
 2023
 76.5 x 78 cm
 graphite, charcoal,
 chalk, ink, and acrylic
 on paper



(right)
Elastic Skins no. 11
 2023
 67.3 x 77 cm
 graphite, charcoal,
 chalk, and acrylic on
 paper



(above)
Elastic Skins no. 4
 2021
 32 x 19.7 cm
 graphite, charcoal,
 sanguine, inks, and
 acrylic on paper

(above)
Elastic Skins, no. 9
 2023
 80 x 54 cm
 graphite, charcoal,
 chalk, inks, and
 acrylic on paper



(left)
Elastic Skins no. 7
 2022
 85 x 80 cm
 graphite, charcoal,
 sanguine, chalk,
 inks, and acrylic on
 paper

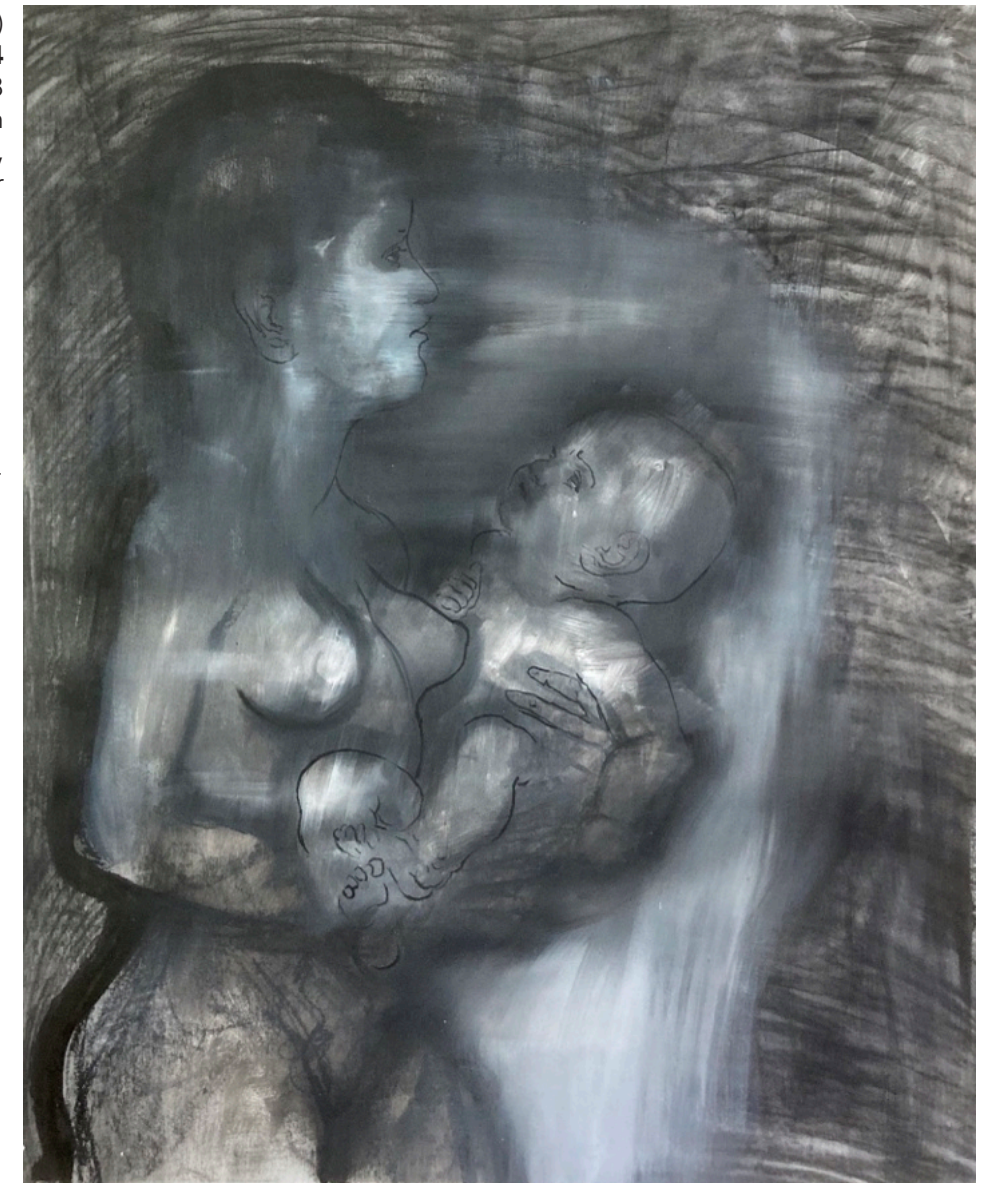
(right)
Elastic Skins, no. 2
 2021
 69.6 x 51 cm
 graphite, charcoal,
 sanguine, chalk,
 inks, and acrylic on
 paper

Monstrous Birth revolves around the recognition of sameness and otherness. Birth is the experience of the self splitting – making two lives united by need, where once there was one. Each remain extensions of and strangers to the other. I am fascinated with **the ego-mirror that parents are to children and children are to parents** – how we can be so a part of and apart from each other. In *Monstrous Birth*, drawn bodies, like the paper that supports them, are stained, scoured, and strained to breaking point. **Black outlines** materialize like clarity amidst confusion or like external wombs, simplifying chaos to inside versus outside and us versus them. The series was my first embarkment into a continued interest in **how selfhood is contingent on relationships**. Emotions like love create external, binding bodies – a bond that is sometimes life-affirming and sometimes mutually destructive.



(top right)
Monstrous Birth no. 4
 2018
 80 x 100 cm
 graphite, charcoal, inks,
 and acrylic on paper

(bottom right)
Monstrous Birth no. 6
 2018
 100 x 80 cm
 graphite, charcoal,
 inks, and acrylic on
 paper



(left)
Monstrous Birth no. 2
 2018, 83.5 x 72.5 cm
 graphite, charcoal, inks,
 and acrylic on paper



Monstrous Birth no. 3
2018
80 x 80 cm
graphite, charcoal, inks,
and acrylic on paper



Monstrous Birth no. 5
2018
80 x 95 cm
graphite, charcoal, inks,
and acrylic on paper



Monstrous Birth no. 9
2018
80 x 85 cm
graphite, charcoal, inks,
and acrylic on paper



(right)
Monstrous Birth no. 5
2017, 83.5 x 72.5 cm
graphite, charcoal, inks,
and acrylic on paper

The Wrestlers is a contemplation of relationships. Bodies rolling and wiggling are locked in an impossible attempt to unite selfhoods. **Inhuman humans** arrested from scrabbling and grappling with each other look up. They, like Maenads and the other **wild women of Greek mythology**, are **embodiments of un-tame-able drives**. In this case for unity and yet also the egoism of dominance. Suspended between actual and ritualised struggle, **crowned by flowers**, that are both the mementos of ur-wildness and the symbolic garlands of civilisation, the wrestlers are immersed in each other, rising or sinking from the enmeshment limbs and psyches. From between a gap in arms they crawl as if reborn. Each **attempt to grasp only brings distance** just as the attempt to tame ourselves only makes us more animal.



(above left)
Wrestler no. 1
2019
100 x 79 cm
oil and emulsion
on canvas



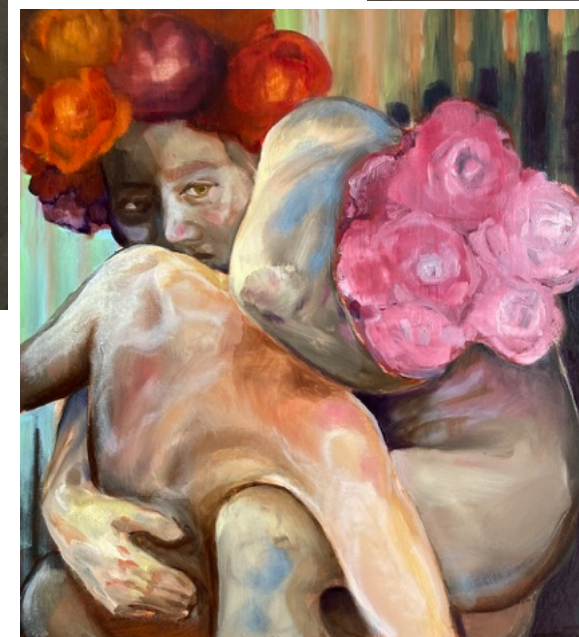
(top)
Wrestler no. 4
2020, 100 x 69.7 cm
graphite, charcoal,
sanguine, oil, acrylic,
and gold leaf on canvas

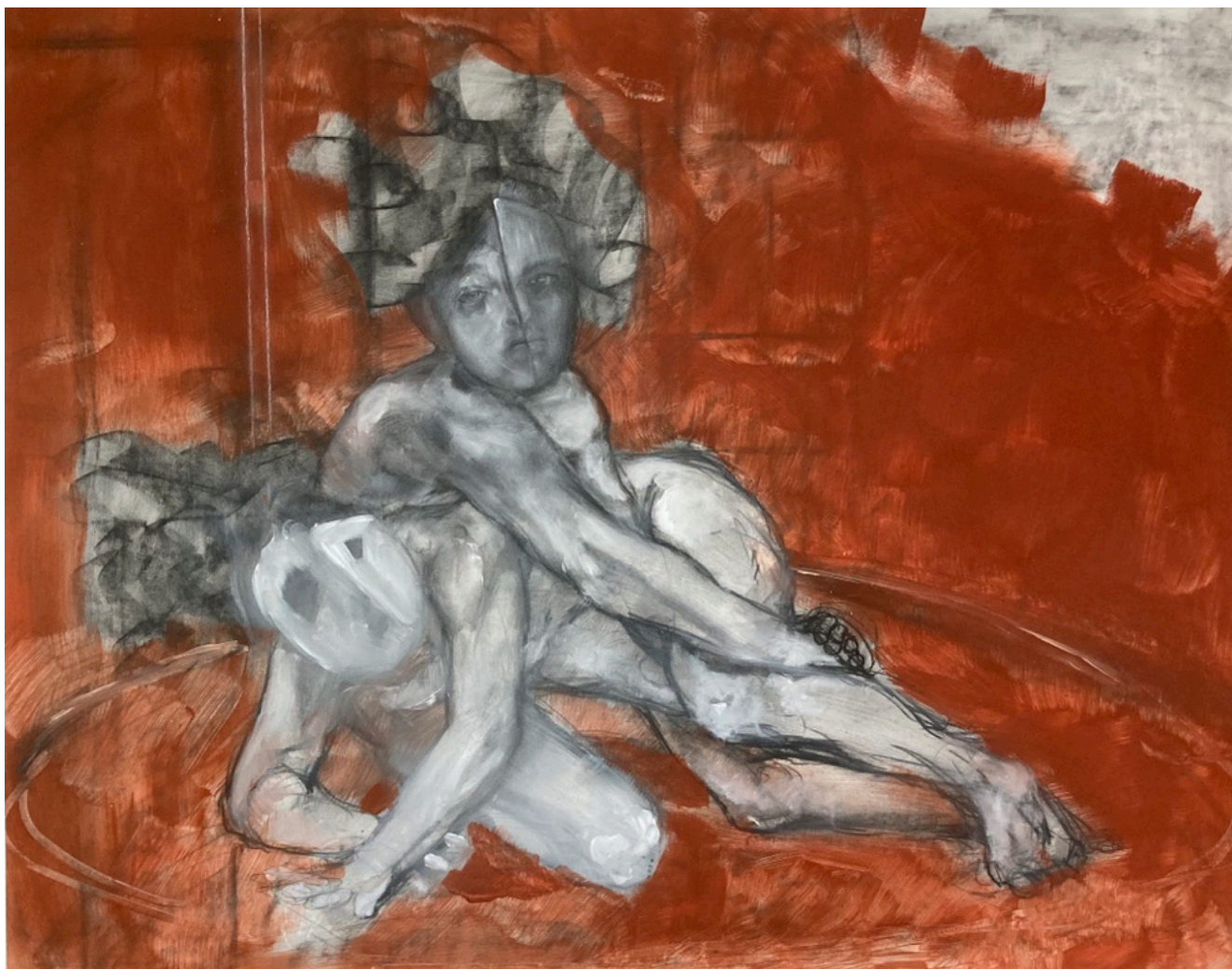
(middle)
Wrestler no. 2
2019, 100 x 69.7 cm
oil and emulsion
on canvas



(bottom left)
Wrestler no. 7
2021, 45 x 40 cm
acrylic on canvas board

(bottom right)
Wrestler no. 10
2023, 45 x 40 cm
acrylic on board





(top)
Wrestler no.8
 2020, 100 x 69.7
 cm, graphite,
 charcoal, inks, and
 acrylic on paper

(top right)
**Preparatory
 Wrestler** 2019,
 41 x 29 cm,
 pencil, gouache
 , and gold paint
 on paper

(top far right)
**Preparatory
 Wrestler 2**
 019, 41 x 29 cm,
 pencil, gouache ,
 and gold paint on
 paper



(bottom left)
Wrestler no. 9
 2023, 90 x 73 cm,
 charcoal, sanguine
 graphite, inks,
 chalk, and acrylic
 on paper

(bottom right)
Wrestler no. 11
 2023, 90 x 73 cm,
 charcoal, graph-
 ite, inks, chalk,
 and
 acrylic on paper



Blueprints for an Emergent Personality was created as a **Vertigo Starts Residency** (2018-2019) in collaboration with AMORE at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, a computational linguistics lab developing a **form of AI** which explores the phenomenon of **childhood language acquisition**, especially reference. The artistic aim of the residency was to visually explore the **representation of non-human personalities** using data from the AMORE model lab, and the surrounding Barcelonan streets. The result was an archive of a 140-page sketchbook, preparatory mixed-media works, and six large drawn-paintings on paper, which spoke to hypothetical emotional flashpoints of this particular learning process. **Visual perplexities, confusions about identity**, a fundamental dissociation from a human's recognizable visual world weave a psychic terrain of AMORE's potential non-human selfhood.



(top left) **AMORE Sketchbook, Sheet 20**
2018-2019, 21 x 30 cm
pencil and inks on paper



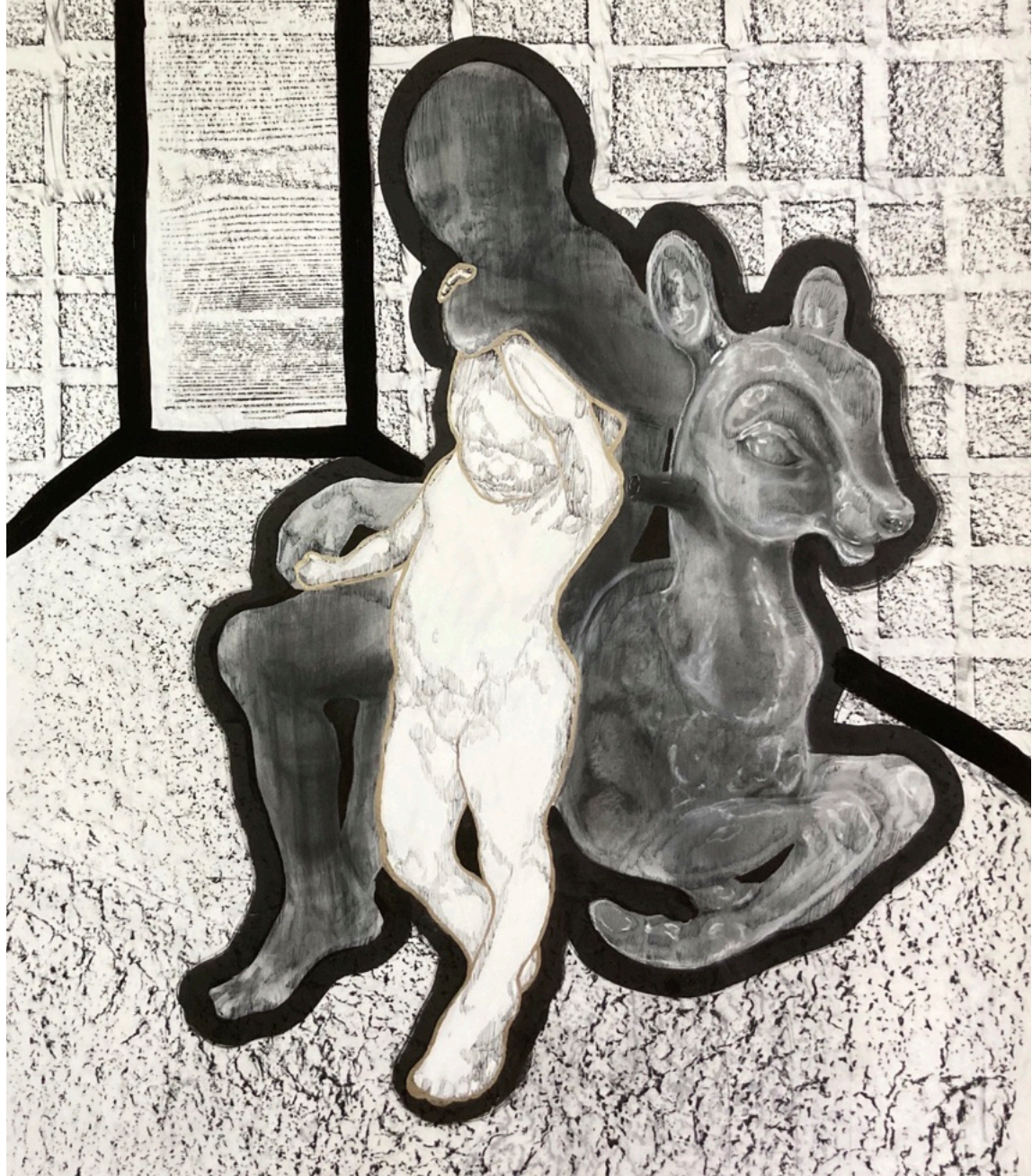
(bottom left) **AMORE Blueprints no. 4**
2019, 100 x 80 cm
crayon, ink and acrylic on paper



(top middle) **AMORE Preparatory Collage**
2018-2019, 50 x 50 cm
inks, printed material, and acrylics on paper

(bottom right) **AMORE Blueprints**, 2019,
100 x 80 cm, graphite,
ink, crayon, and acrylic
on paper

(top right) **AMORE Sketchbook, Sheet 8**
2018-2019, 21 x 30 cm
pencil and inks on paper



Blueprints no. 5
2019, 100 x 80 cm,
graphite, ink,
crayon, and acrylic
on paper



(bottom left) **Blueprints no. 6**
2019, 100 x 80 cm,
graphite, ink,
crayon, and acrylic
on paper



(bottom right) **Blueprints no. 7**
2019, 100 x 80 cm,
ink and crayon on
paper



A succession of bodies folded inwards, **hands flapping and dragging** as if drained and crushed. Other hands, leaving their wide prints as they press the drawn bodies deep under the flatness of the papers' surfaces. **Greif, impotence, and anger** so deep it is warped and warping. Each piece is a wail.



(left)
Broken Hands no. 1
2018, 150 x 122 cm
graphite and charcoal
on paper



(top)
Broken Hands no. 1
2018
150 x 122 cm
graphite and charcoal
on paper



(bottom)
Broken Hands no. 2
2018
130 x 160 cm
graphite and charcoal
on paper

Music-like repetition and sequence using found-wood, gold leaf and pencil drawing It grew from my attraction to the early medieval Catholic iconography I had seen while living in Munich of carved rows of near-identical figures, often in white stone and fragmented. **Moods of bodies like musical notes suggest emotion** as they sink or rise in and out of the boredom of eternal waiting, every once and a while **clashing with the flamboyance of horror**, inspired by the Renaissance painter Artemisia Gentileschi's *Susanna and the Elders*. In many ways this series is a **portrait of recovery from trauma**. For every moment of intensity around it are ones of ambivalent quietude.



(top) **Susanna after the Elders Panel no. 1**
2010, 54 x 101.5 cm, graphite and pencil
on paper, gold leaf on found wood

(bottom) **Susanna after the Elders Panel no. 2**
2010, 55 x 100 cm, graphite and pencil
on paper, gold leaf on found wood



**Susanna after the Elders
Diptych (left panel)**
2010
graphite and pencil on paper
gold leaf on found wood

**Susanna after the Elders
Diptych (right panel)**
2010
graphite and pencil on paper
gold leaf on found wood

An adult nursery rhyme: the sequence of inter-changeable images of a little girl, who is led by a boyish creature into a **dream-like, nonsense world of anthropomorphic characters.** The series was an experiment with **suggesting narrative without fixing it.** Each composition has an entrance and an exit, redolent of a beginning and an end, as well as a range of characters, some recurring, but the precise nature of the links in the story are fluid – like a riddle or a puzzle, speculation is the point.

WDaLO no. 1
2006, 16.5 x 11 cm
graphite and coloured pencil on paper



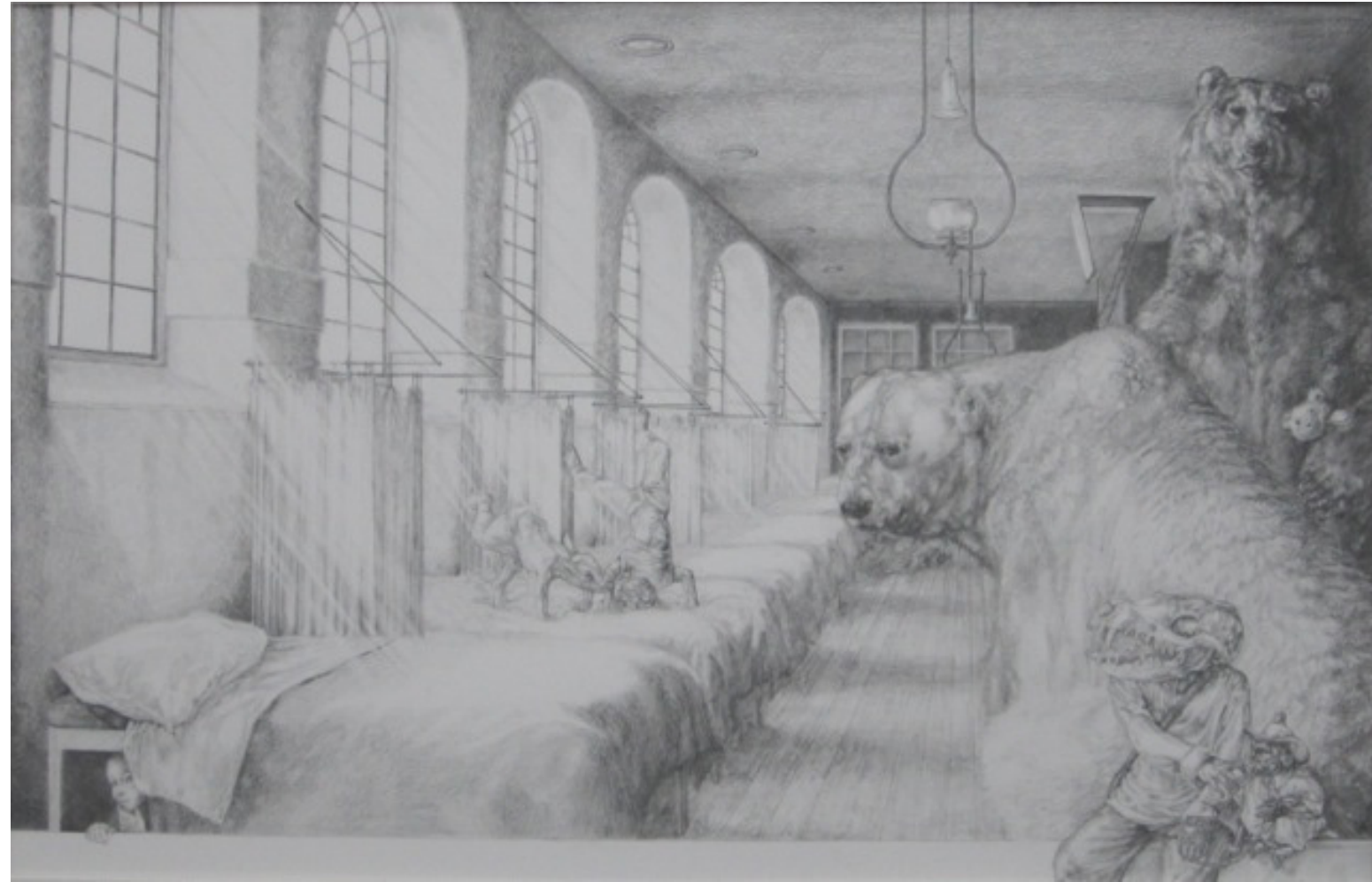
(left)
WDaLO no. 2, 2008, 45.7 x 59.7 cm
pencil on paper

(top right)
WDaLO no. 3, 2008, 45.7 x 59.7 cm
graphite and coloured pencil on paper

(bottom right)
WDaLO no. 4, 2008, 45.7 x 59.7 cm
graphite and coloured pencil on paper



(top left)
WDaLO no. 6
2017, 41 X 55 cm
graphite and
pencil on paper



(top right)
WDaLO no. 9
2017, 34 x 53 cm,
graphite and pencil
on paper

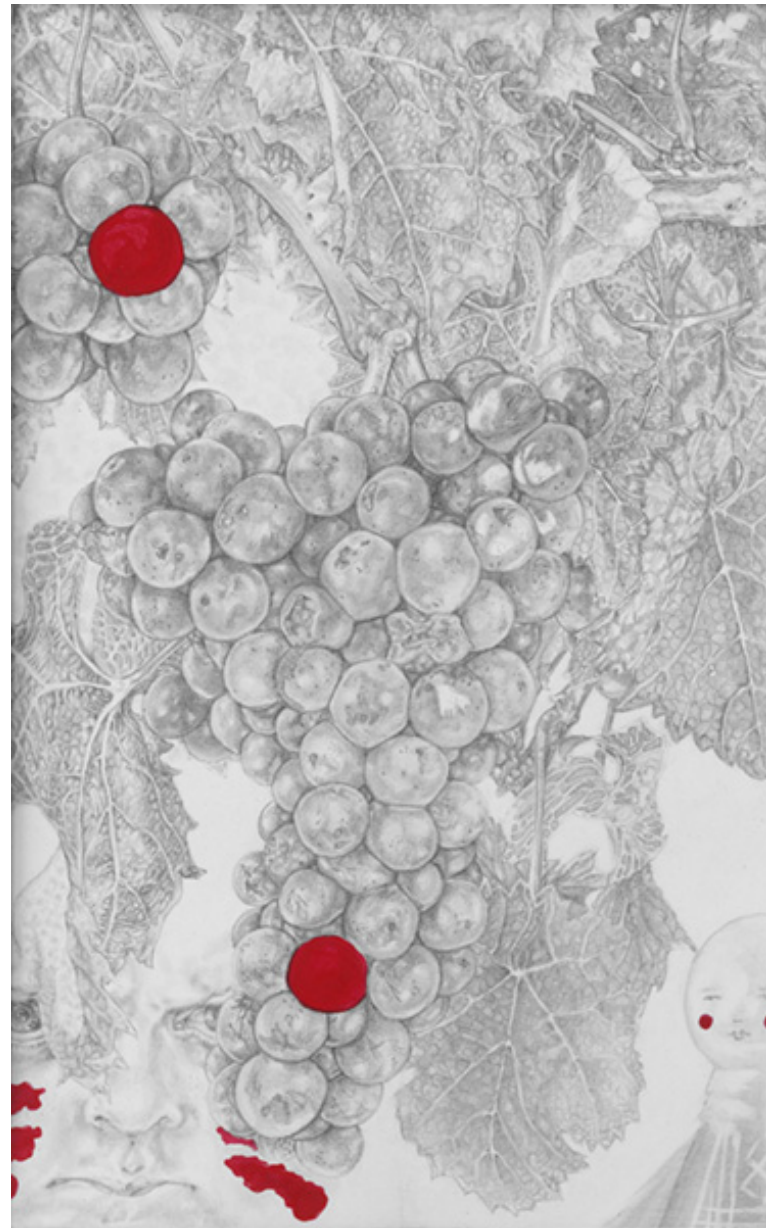


(bottom left)
WDaLO no. 10
2018, 41 x 60 cm
graphite and pencil
on paper

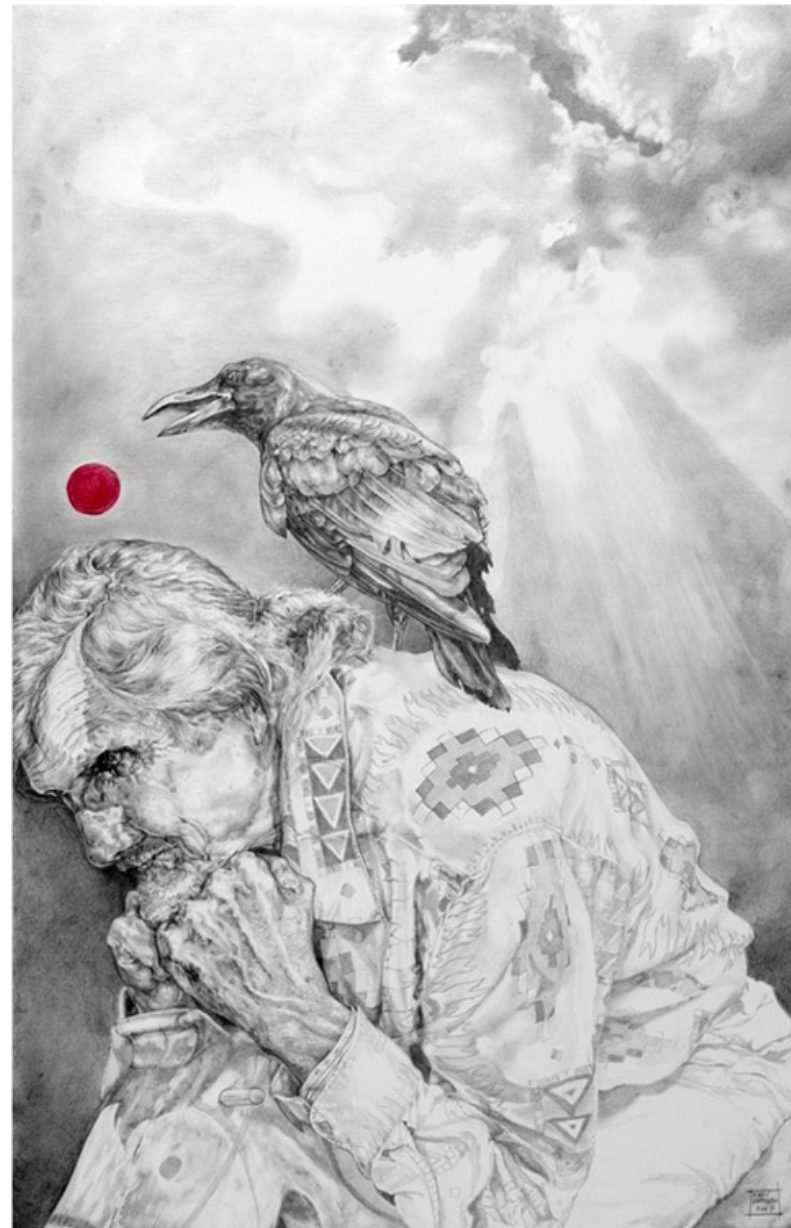


(bottom right)
WDaLO no. 8
2017, 41 x 49 cm
graphite and
pencil on paper

A time of detail: this selection of pieces created in Boulder, Colorado marked my interest in **photo-realistic pencil work**. Pieces were produced with 2B pencil and graphite powered on hard-pressed card. Using magnifying glasses the rich terrain of skin, of fabric, and of the crumpled flesh of grapes was rendered obsessively – it took me about **an hour per each inch cubed**. The pictures on the right-hand page were developed and exhibited as the **youngest fellowship recipient of the Rocky Mountain Women’s Institute in Denver** – wherein I focused on consequence in the form of **original sin** as well as other forms of both **figurative and literal entanglements** resulting from bad decisions.



Domesticity
2008
63.5 x 30.5 cm
graphite, pencil,
and ink on paper



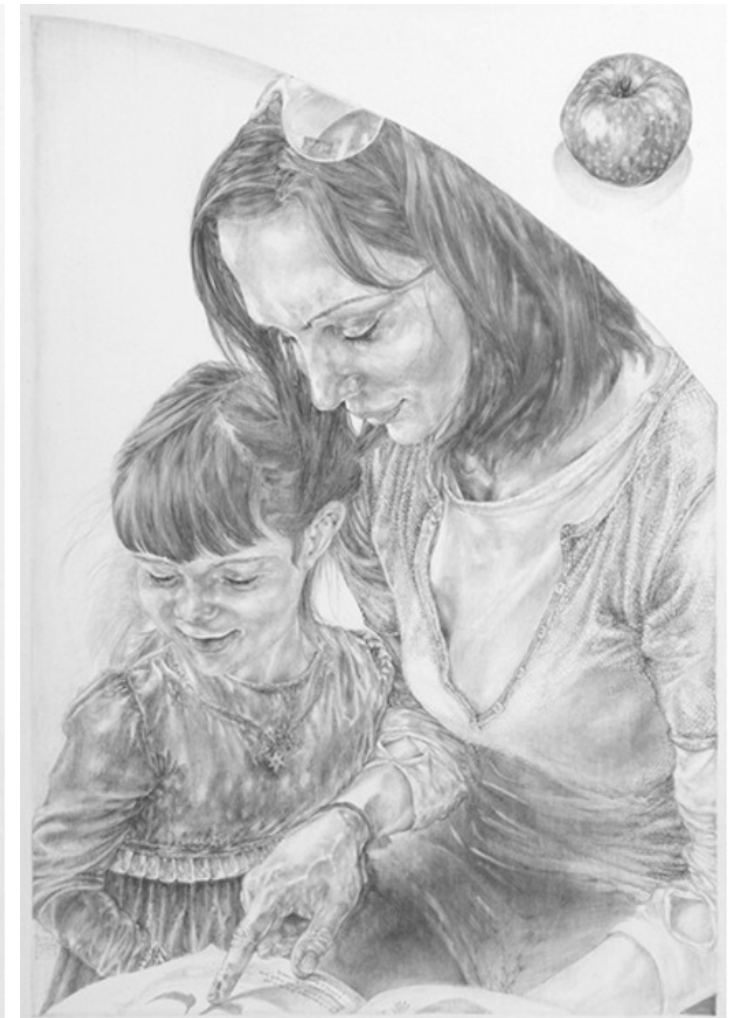
Iron Knees
2007
83.8 x 43.2 cm
garphite and pencil
on paper

The Word
2008
43.2 x 44 cm
string, graphite
and coloured
pencil on paper



(bottom left)
Bitten Apple
2008
53.3 x 38.1 cm
graphite and
pencil on paper

(bottom right)
Un Bitten Apple
2008
53.3 x 38.1 cm
graphite and
pencil on paper



A selection from a much **larger body of early work** produced between 2002 and 2006, while I was living in first St. Andrews, Scotland and then in Boulder, Colorado. They are **works of associative freedom** – image-assemblages produced more or less organically according to impulse and feeling. Although I hated the label of surrealism at the time, these works were **inspired by the freedom of expression that early French Surrealism promised**. Produced during a troubled time in my life – navigating sexual violence and adulthood – such emotive automatism was healing to make as well as **symbolically dense compositions**. The resulting, intricate, large, pencil works (the biggest from this time is a 200 x 200 cm tryptic) were meant to test the then stigma against pencil drawings as presentation pieces. They unfold their secrets slowly over time, like puzzles or conversation pieces.



(top right)
Air no. 1
2006
45.7 x 121.9 cm
pencil on paper



(right)
Air no. 2
2006
45.7 x 101.6 cm
pencil on paper



(bottom right)
Those Silly Things
2004
59.7 x 91.44 cm
pencil on paper



Swing no. 2
2006, 45.8 x 91.4 cm
pencil on paper



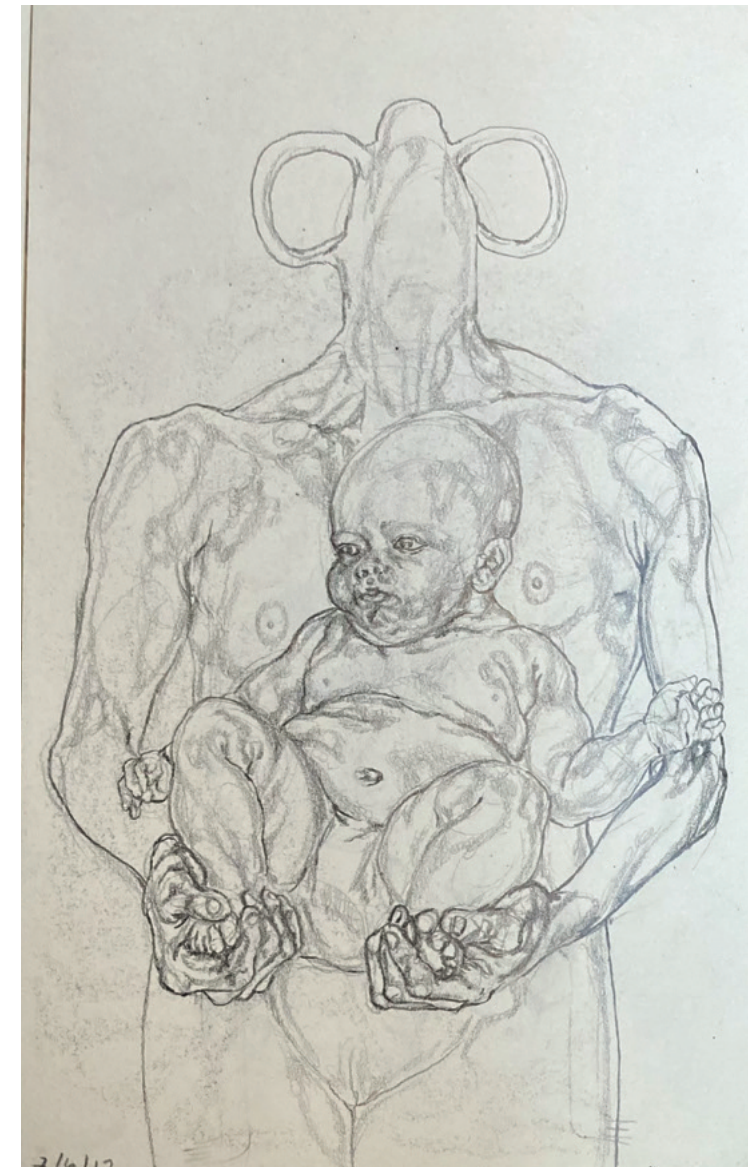
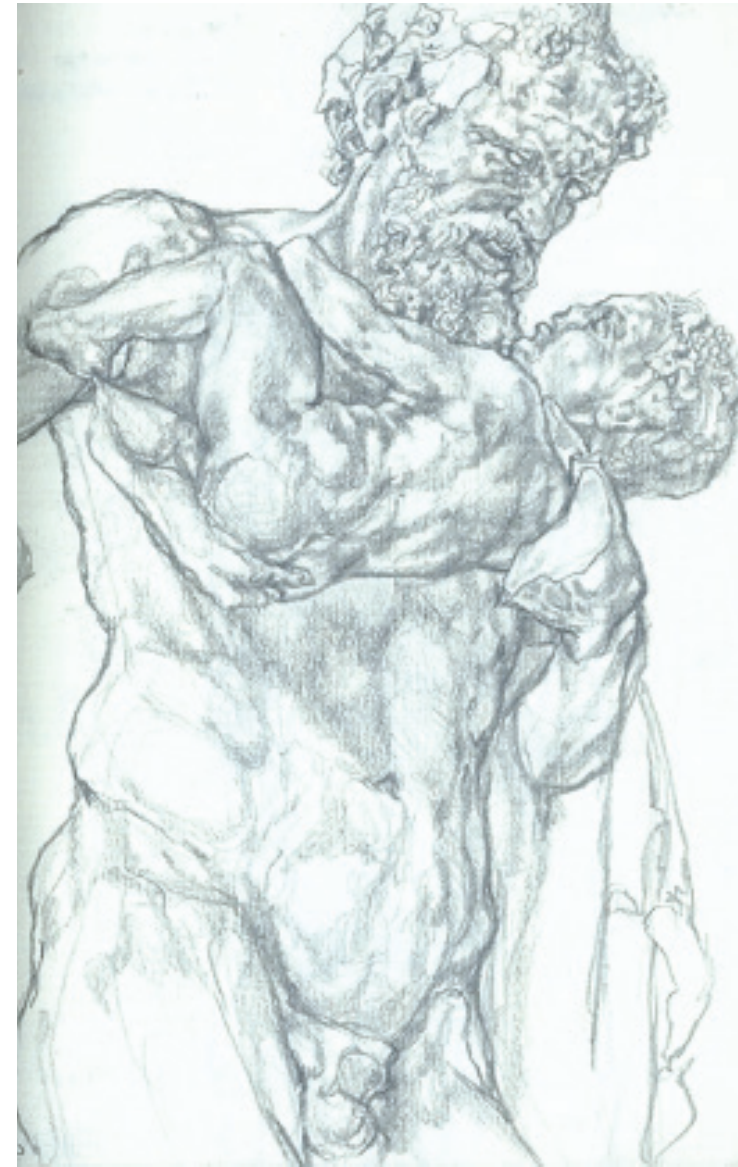
Fleeing Moon
2005
91.5 x 43.8 cm
pencil on paper



Holy Yawn
2004
128.3 x 33 cm
pencil on paper



Keeping a **sketchbook** at hand became a habit in my early adolescence, and since then **I have filled around forty-five books of varying sizes**, many self-bound. I sketch observationally as well as to resolve my thoughts and emotions. Pieces within the books cover **architectural studies, portraits, preparatory studies** for big pieces as well as **surrealistic compositions**. Over the last decade I have favoured the thicker and more ruggedly bound Cavallini books – whose large size (15.2 x 20.3 cm) and c. 400 pages lasts longer, allowing each book to become akin to a friend rather than an instrument. I do, however, also keep a few side-pieces: one with thicker paper for ink studies and a pocket one for long walks. I feel naked if I am without one.



A **simple love of nakedness** and of the **mechanics of the human body** has led life drawing to become a crucial aspect of keeping my eye and hand sharp and nimble. Sometimes this is with regular models, sometimes in studios, and sometimes with people I love. Always there is a **fascination with how we relate to our bodies**, when we settle into ourselves during long poses as well as with the beauty of how tendon, muscle, and bone interweave into a uniquely experience-shaped form – **each one a puzzle.**



(top left)
Life Drawing, Jack no. 1
2013, 41 x 29 cm
pencil on paper



(top right)
Life Drawing, Jack no. 4
2013, 41 x 29 cm
pencil on paper



(bottom left)
Life Drawing, Jack no. 3
2013, 41 x 29 cm
pencil on paper



(bottom right)
Life Drawing, Jack no. 6
2013, 41 x 29 cm
pencil on paper



Life Drawing, Jose
2023, 59 x 42 cm
sanguine on paper