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Studio Notes

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Master of Fine Art

Michaelis School of Fine Art
University of Cape Town
2022

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date:

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This MFA project is inspired by my family history which originates in Elim, a Moravian¹ mission settlement located near Gansbaai and Bredasdorp, in the Western Cape. Elim bears historic significance as a community established by German missionaries in 1824, and continues to exist as one of numerous Moravian mission settlements in South Africa. Despite growing up and living in Cape Town, I am a descendant of Elim who recognises my ancestral lineage rooted in the history of the settlement. For this reason, I consider the history of Elim as part of my heritage and have situated this particular environment at the forefront of my current research project and creative praxis.

The body of work encapsulates nearly two years, spending time in Elim over the course of my MFA project. I have incorporated distinct features, such as the historic buildings and the old watermill, as visual cues and metaphors informing my work. While in Elim, I also participated in a variety of cultural and religious traditions. These traditions became instrumental in the development of my visual language, and I included the processes and associated materials in the studio. By introducing these methodologies in my artworks, I came to perceive this body of work as an extension of the experiences and observations I made in Elim. One such example is lime washing, a method of protecting the exterior walls of buildings, which became particularly significant as a material inspiration and metaphor which permeates my practice.

Lime wash is a mixture of crushed limestone mixed with water, and is typically used to paint historic buildings as a means to repair and maintain their structures. In Elim, the lime is also used to 'wash' gravestones as a tradition of paying homage to our ancestors; a cleaning and acknowledging of the burial site. In my work the lime wash acknowledges this significance in preserving the memory of our predecessors and also signifies one of many artisanal traditions introduced by

German missionaries in the 18th and 19th centuries. As part of its pragmatic function 'lime wash' is also known as whitewash. I have included the lime wash in my studio practice for the double meaning that this term opens up - a term used to describe an attempt to conceal unpleasant facts about someone, or something.² According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, whitewashing can also be a process of altering (something) in a way that favours, features, or caters to white people. Besides its relevance to the cultural tradition, I also employ the lime wash (or whitewash) for its meaning to conceal and to alter. Here, the whitewash functions as a metaphor for the deculturation amongst indigenous people and emancipated slaves associated with the mission settlement.

In the studio I recreate the lime washing process by using it as a painting material on canvas. The size of my paintings varies quite substantially from small works to larger dimensions which I use to evoke wall-like structures, echoing the built environment in Elim. Throughout the body of work, I include lime wash to contextualise my practice as an embodiment of the materials and traditions I associate with Elim.

In addition to the lime wash, this MFA project looks to the restoration of the old watermill in Elim, established by German missionaries in 1828. When I first saw the old watermill it was in a state of disrepair, and I was interested in it as a remnant of the German mission. However, in April, 2021 the watermill was designated to be restored and, quite significantly, the process was managed by my uncle who lives in Elim. Since then the watermill has become an underlying feature of my creative practice. With the help of my uncle, I had direct access to the watermill and its restoration which inspired an endeavour to document the stages of repair. As a project concerned with reflecting on my cultural heritage, I was encouraged by the restoration projects as an effort to preserve the settlement. For this reason, the process of restoration became prominent as a live occurrence in Elim while I worked in my studio in Cape Town.

In this body of work, my interpretations of time - past, present, and future - are largely influenced by Homi K. Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist. I was particularly interested in the introduction of his book, *The Location of Culture* (1994), in which he interprets

¹ Moravian: A term related to the church, and its origins in Moravia.

² As defined by the online *Collins* dictionary.

the present as an era signalling the beyond.³ Bhabha describes his idea of the ‘beyond’ as an intervening or in-between space embodying a revisionary time in which we may “return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity.”⁴ This liminal space, as he describes it, should not be mistaken for a “new horizon,” or leaving behind the past.⁵ Instead, he expresses the beyond as a terrain ripe for reflection and reinterpreting the past as a means to re-inscribe our cultural values.⁶ By conveying the relevance of the present as an interstice through which we may envision the future, Bhabha has inspired my perspective on Elim as a German mission settlement and the origin of my cultural heritage. My project incorporates his concept of the beyond, in fact of my revisiting the cultural heritage I have derived from Elim. Here I engage the cultural traditions in an attempt to “restage the past”⁷ and introduce new ways to consider my heritage beyond its history, rooted in colonialism.

In the epigraph of his book, Bhabha quotes Martin Heidegger where he suggests that,

*A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.*⁸

As structures which signify a boundary, I was drawn to the agricultural fences crossing the landscape in Elim. I was intrigued by the precarious nature of this particular kind of fence as a makeshift structure. It is typically constructed with lengths of wires and wooden poles and thus allows one to climb over, and between its wires. In the studio I employ the fence as a boundary which may be dismantled and manipulated to function as a means to progress. This is conveyed as I re-create the fence as a ladder, allowing one to move beyond the confines of the boundary. The agricultural fence, in combination with Bhabha’s beyond exemplifies my project as a mode of moving between designations of a heritage predating the Moravian mission, and my heritage which stems from the Elim mission settlement.

By means of paintings, sculptures, monotypes, and drawings, I include iterations of the fence as a recurring motif in this body of work. In addition, I use lime wash as a primary material which has infiltrated the majority of the artworks. My studio functions as the nexus where all my observations coalesce to provide the essence of the project. The visual and material nuances embedded in this body of work are inspired by artists such as Kemang Wa Lehulere, Anselm Kiefer, Doris Salcedo, Usha Seejarim, and Phyllida Barlow. Among others, this selection of artists has influenced my interest in the materials used to create an artwork, plus its power to convey meaning. I have been particularly interested in the work of Kemang Wa Lehulere and Anselm Kiefer as artists who engage with specific materials pertaining to their shared interest in history as essential aspects of their work. I thus refer to them in this MFA project, which also explores history and heritage, as key influences in my body of work. Together, the lime wash, the watermill, and the fence, encapsulate the themes seminal to this project, whilst Homi K. Bhabha provides the appropriate theory to delineate my practice exploring my cultural heritage in a post-colonial context.

3 Bhabha, 1994:1

4 Bhabha, 1994:10

5 Bhabha, 1994:1

6 Bhabha, 1994:2

7 Bhabha, 1994:2

8 Bhabha, 1994:1









Page 20: The old shop house in Elim which now functions as the Heritage Centre.

Page 21 & 22: Details of derelict heritage buildings in Elim.

Above: The Elim watermill.

(This selection of photographs was taken in April, 2021)



Previous page: Photograph of *De Heer se Bos* (roughly translated as *The Master's Bush* or *Forest*) in Elim. During missionary years, this was a garden reserved for German missionaries. German grave stones can still be seen under the tree at present. The earliest grave dates back to 1827.

Right: Photograph of me in *De Heer se Bos*.

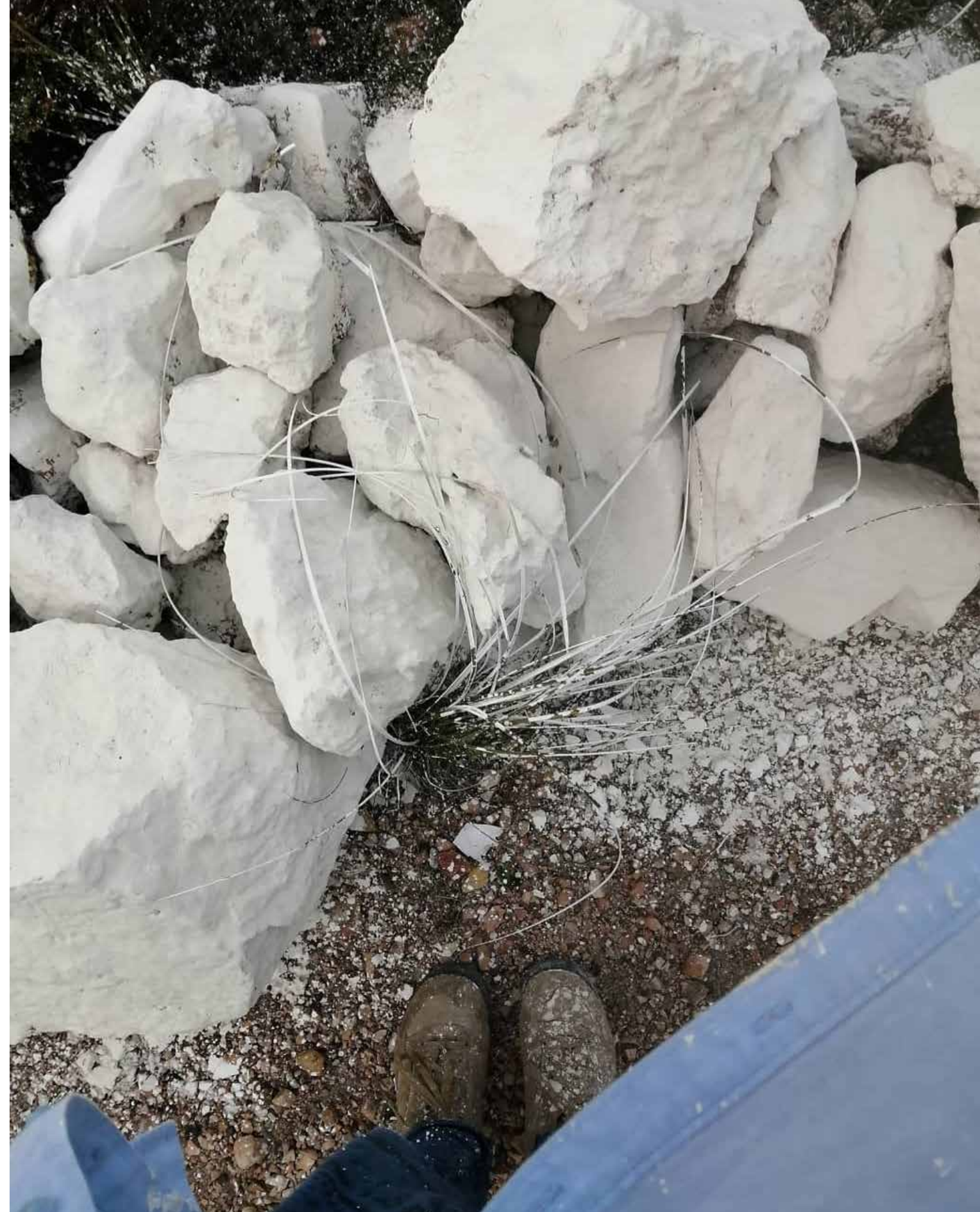




A selection of photographs taken in Elim in 2016.



In 2021, I assisted with making flower arrangements for a wedding.
These photographs were taken inside the church in Elim after preparing the flowers.





Left: Elim in past times. Images courtesy of the Elim Heritage Centre.

Above: Wheat fields in the region surrounding Elim (Photograph taken in September 2022).



Page 36:

Above: The old watermill (April 2021).

Below: The first flour milled by the restored watermill (September 2022).

Page 37:

Left: The inside mechanism of the restored watermill (September 2022).

Right: Photograph of the old watermill. (Image courtesy of the Elim Heritage centre).





The Moravian Church in South Africa

To start with, I include a brief history of the Moravian Church, and its establishment in South Africa. This history contextualises the origins of my cultural heritage as entwined with the evangelical endeavour to “bring the rest of the heathen to the Saviour.”⁹ Amongst other sources of information, the details regarding encounters with indigenous people are primarily obtained from a missionary’s diary and the letters he wrote to the Moravian headquarters, detailing his evangelical mission in the Cape. This history can thus be seen as biased toward the Moravian mission, and therefore I have not embraced it as an accurate source of information but as a narrative shaped by the German missionary who established the Moravian church in South Africa.

The Moravian Church originated in Bohemia and Moravia in the mid ninth century and in 1467, established its own ministry near Prague in the Czech Republic.¹⁰ Over centuries, the region fell under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Rome and therefore the Moravians who were persecuted by the Roman Church, fled their home country and sought refuge on the estate of a nobleman in Saxony, Germany, in 1722.¹¹ The estate became known as *Herrnhut*, a self-sustaining village community recognised as the home of the renewed Moravian church.¹² From there, missionaries were sent all over the globe to establish additional Moravian mission settlements based on Herrnhut as the blueprint.¹³ On present-day maps, Herrnhut is located between the cities of Görlitz and Zittau where the German, Polish and Czech Republic’ borders meet.¹⁴

By the time Herrnhut was established, missionary work had already commenced in other parts of the world. At the same time, the Cape was a small dependency of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC), and functioned as a victualling station for ships

9 Krüger, 1966:13

10 *A brief history of the Moravian Church*, n.d.

11 Krüger, 1966:13

12 Krüger, 1966:13

13 Van der Hoven, 2001:32

14 *A brief history of the Moravian Church*, n.d.

on their way between Europe and East India.¹⁵ The conditions at the Cape colony reflected the onslaught of European colonisation and atrocities committed against the indigenous population. The inauguration of Moravian missionary in South Africa was inspired by missionaries who touched in at the Cape on their journeys to and from missionary work in India.¹⁶ Upon witnessing the ‘plight’ of the ‘godless’ indigenous people at the Cape colony, they “*summoned the faithful in Europe to their aid*”.¹⁷

At this point, the DEIC established Dutch Reformed congregations in and around the Cape, where slaves of the Company also received religious instruction.¹⁸ In contrast, the Khoisan were excluded from religious undertakings as they were considered “impossible to Christianise,” and outside the jurisdiction of the Company.¹⁹ However, in 1736, the Dutch authorities who were responsible for “spiritual work at the Cape”, requested that Moravian missionaries be sent to the colony. The Moravian Church sent a young missionary named Georg Schmidt to initiate evangelical work amongst the Khoisan.²⁰ Schmidt was permitted for the purpose of “winning a few souls for the Saviour” on the condition that “the Moravians did not interfere in worldly matters such as making the slaves rebellious.”²¹ Accordingly, Schmidt embarked on his mission with the sole objective to christianise the Khoisan by preaching the gospel.

As detailed in his diary, Schmidt, amongst 200 soldiers and sailors, cast anchor at Table Bay in July 1737, marking the inception of Moravian missionary work in South Africa.²² In the beginning, Schmidt resided with one of the Company’s governors at the Castle in the Cape.²³ Here, he passed his time reading, writing, and singing before departing to the Overberg in pursuit of indigenous converts.²⁴ By September 1737, he arrived at *Zoetemelksvlei*, one of the Company’s posts in the valley of the Zondereind

15 Krüger, 1966:12

16 Krüger, 1966:11

17 Krüger, 1966:12

18 Krüger, 1966:12

19 Krüger, 1966:12

20 Krüger, 1966:15

21 Krüger, 1966:17

22 Krüger, 1966:17

23 Krüger, 1966:18

24 Krüger, 1966:19

river.²⁵ At the post he became acquainted with Africo, a Khoikhoi man from the Hessequa tribe who served as an interpreter between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi during bartering expeditions.²⁶ Schmidt pitched a tent near the kraal of Africo and his people, and thenceforth lived amongst the indigenous Khoikhoi.²⁷ Living in close proximity to the kraal enabled him to initiate Dutch reading and writing lessons for the Khoikhoi in preparation for preaching the gospel on Sundays.²⁸ Soon after the lessons commenced, Schmidt persuaded eighteen Khoikhoi converts to attend his daily lessons.²⁹

In April 1738, Schmidt moved away from Zoetemelksvlei and resettled in the *Baviaanskloof* with eighteen Khoikhoi converts.³⁰ Baviaanskloof, which is now known as *Genadendal*, became the permanent location of the first Moravian mission settlement in South Africa. Here, Schmidt erected a hut and near his dwelling planted a garden and made a permanently running water-furrow to irrigate crops and vegetables.³¹ By the end of Schmidt’s first year in Baviaanskloof a planting cycle was established, supplying the settlement with fruit, vegetables, barley, wheat and oats.³² Schmidt’s garden also played a significant role in persuading the Khoikhoi to settle in Baviaanskloof. Initially, the Khoikhoi were unwilling pupils to both Christianity as well as Schmidt’s European lifestyle. They preferred to continue tending their livestock and living their nomadic existence, whilst being Christian required them to read and write and settle down.³³ As a solution, Schmidt encouraged the Khoikhoi to make their own gardens and assisted them in planting on allotted plots at the settlement. Once the gardens began to yield, the Khoikhoi no longer needed to forage for food, and were therefore dissuaded from moving around.³⁴ In addition to the garden, Schmidt introduced permanent houses of stone and clay walls built upon

25 Burrows, 1994:63

26 Burrows, 1994:63

27 Krüger, 1966:20

28 Krüger, 1966:21

29 Krüger, 1966:21

30 Krüger, 1966:21

31 Burrows, 1994:64

32 Burrows, 1994:64

33 Burrows, 1994:64

34 Burrows, 1994:64

“European-style foundations and corner-posts, with roofs of timber rafters covered with thatch.”³⁵ These European structures were in contrast to the traditional Khoikhoi huts which were designed for nomadic lifestyles.

Convincing the Khoikhoi to settle at the mission settlement signalled the beginning of countless impositions which imperilled indigenous culture. In addition to land dispossession, the inception of mission work at Baviaanskloof set a precedent for future Moravian mission settlements in South Africa. Missionaries welcomed indigenous people to live at these settlements on the condition that they adhered to the rules and demonstrated commitment by being baptised. Upon baptism, the converts were given new names as a symbol of their “*new and respected European Christian identity*.”³⁶ At the same time they were taught to know and pronounce their new names which often presented German overtones.³⁷ The emancipated slaves who resided at the settlement were also baptised. The process of receiving new names upon baptism was particularly significant, following the 15th century slave trade where enslaved individuals were stripped of their indigenous names and *renamed* by their masters.³⁸ The new names given at baptism echo this act of erasure. Despite being framed as a “new beginning,” individuals were deprived of their indigenous histories and cultural identities.³⁹ The emancipated slaves who resided at the mission settlements were uprooted and “transplanted” from regions such as Mozambique.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Overberg was originally traversed by migrating Khoikhoi groups such as the Hessequas and Chainouquas who possessed their own heritage and cultural identities before the region was colonised.⁴¹ These indigenous histories were entirely suppressed by the force of colonialism and the absence of written indigenous records. In this way the pervasive effects of cultural erasure were instrumental to the success of mission work; an entire set of new European values were imposed on indigenous people divested of their cultures.⁴²

Contemplating this history of erasure 285 years after the inception of missionary work in South Africa, has shaped my creative practice as a point to reflect on past impositions. Rather than confining my project to the past, I have come to see this history as a starting point to explore my heritage marked by colonial origins. In the studio, I integrated the history of restriction as a boundary which I set to overcome.

35 Burrows, 1994:64

36 Van der Hoven, 2001:60

37 Ludlow, 1992:41

38 Fitzpatrick, 2012:40

39 Ludlow, 1992:47; Hellie, 2020

40 Ludlow, 1992:56

41 Van der Hoven, 2001:65

42 Ludlow, 1992:47

Beyond the Boundary

My perception of the boundary (as employed in the studio) is shaped by the agricultural fences I have seen in Elim (*Fig. 1*). I first included the fence as representative of a *physical* attempt to demarcate boundaries in the landscape because I was intrigued by this particular kind of fence as a makeshift structure constructed with wire and wooden poles. Due to its precarious nature, the fence allows one to climb over or between the wires of the structure.

In the studio, I incorporate the fence as a visual metaphor signifying a boundary which functions as both an end and a beginning. In practice, I upend the fence and recreate it as a ladder-like structure (*Fig. 2*) hovering above and moving beyond the borders of the canvas depicting a ‘landscape’ painting. With this juxtaposition, I expand our interpretations of a boundary and disrupt the standard reading of a fence as horizontal and running across the land. The reconstituted fence acquires new meaning as something we can ascend to gain a different perspective. The fence is therefore negotiated as a means to progress despite its primary function to restrict.

In Elim, the fences are typically constructed with a selection of found wooden poles which punctuate the landscape at varying intervals. The rows of vertical poles are held together by a number of horizontal wires spanning the length of the fence. In the studio, I recreate the process of assembling wires and wooden poles (which I source in Elim). The idea of constructing and deconstructing the boundary has become a recurring motif in this body of work. The visual metaphor of the fence re-established as a ladder is inspired by the writing of Homi K. Bhabha⁴³ in his book titled *The Location of Culture* (1994). Bhabha deliberates the spirit of our time as an era characterised by re-viewing culture, in what he expresses as *the borderlines of the present* epitomised by the prefix ‘post’ - *postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism*.⁴⁴

43 Homi K. Bhabha (b.1949) is a postcolonial theorist contributing to the study of colonial, postcolonial and globalised cultures. Bhabha was born in Bombay, India and is currently a professor of Humanities at Harvard University in the United States. His work highlights the ways in which colonialism impacts the present, as opposed to being “locked in the past.” Bhabha perceives the present as an opportunity to reflect on the past in order to move beyond (Huddart, 2018).

44 Bhabha, 1994:1



Figure 1. Examples of fences typically seen in Elim (Photograph taken in September 2022)

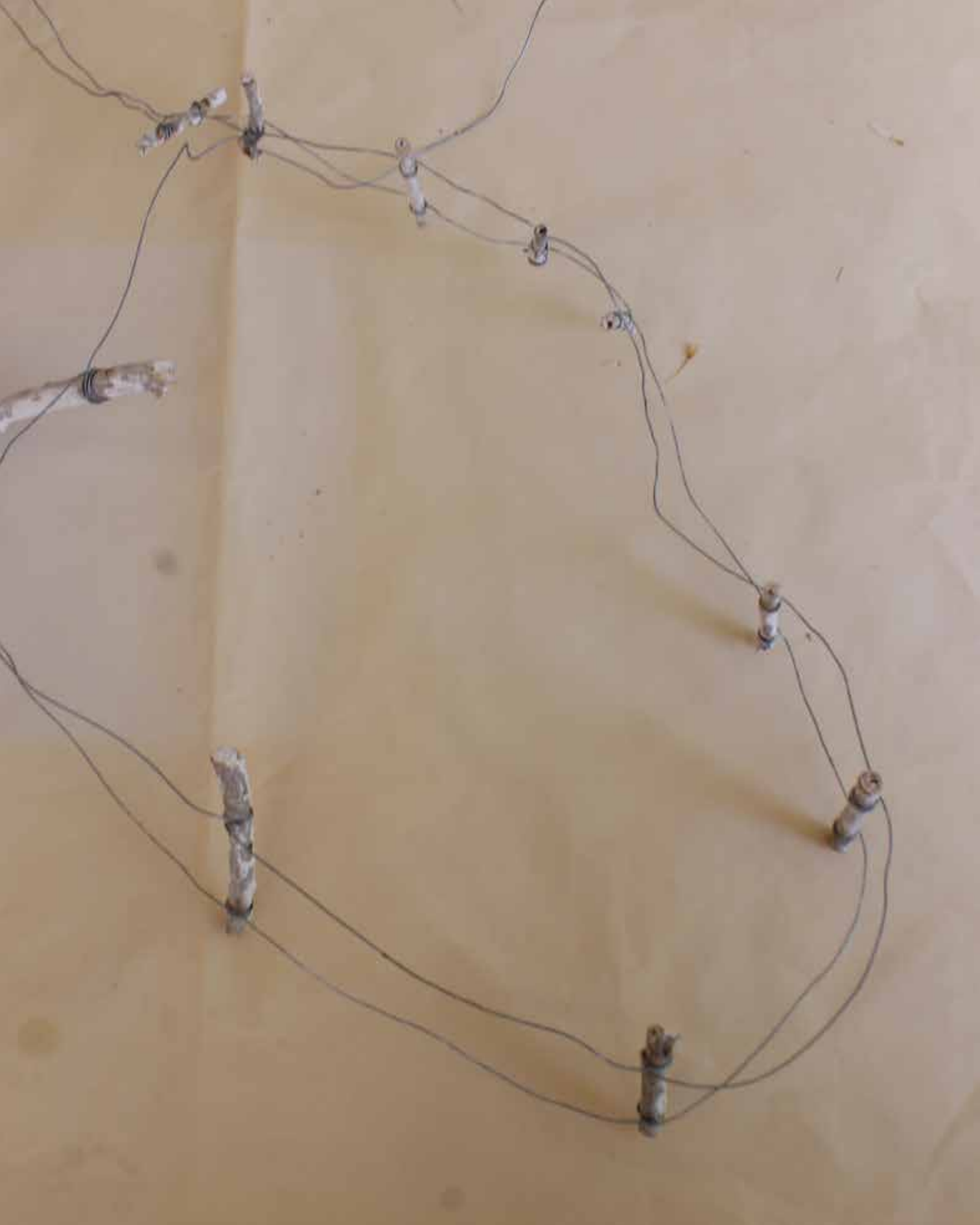


Figure 2. Recreating the fence as a ladder-like structure. Hessian, lime wash, sticks, wire and charcoal on canvas (Photograph taken by Vanessa Cowling)

Left: Detail of makeshift fence, constructed in studio.

Bhabha proposes that the present functions as an era signalling the *beyond* – the *fin de siècle* epitomised as “a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.”⁴⁵ He characterises this state of transit as a point of disorientation and restlessness which invokes “a disturbance of direction.”⁴⁶ Here, he frames the present as a space allowing us to revisit and reflect on *different* cultural temporalities. In this description, he suggests that *the question of culture* is located in the realm of the *beyond*.

Bhabha elaborates on the idea of the beyond by referring to the artist Renée Greene who metaphorises a stairwell as a liminal space (Bhabha, 1994:3). He states that,

*“The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy...”*⁴⁷

Greene’s stairwell is reminiscent of my ladder-like structures and represents the in-between space gesturing the beyond.

With that said, Bhabha argues that our understanding of *beyond* should not be perceived as *leaving behind* the past, but rather:

*“Being in the ‘beyond’, then, is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell ‘in the beyond’ is also, as I have shown, to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic community, to touch the future on its hither side. In that sense, then, the intervening space of the ‘beyond’, becomes a space of intervention in the here and now.”*⁴⁸

45 Bhabha, 1994:1

46 Bhabha, 1994:1

47 Bhabha, 1994:4

48 Bhabha, 1994:7

As a site to revisit the past, I incorporate the beyond as a personal in-between space to reflect on my cultural inheritance. Bhabha describes the in-between (or intervening) space as a terrain for negotiating “new signs of identity” that have emerged in moments of historical transformation (Bhabha, 1994:2). He cites Renée Greene who argues that the terms of cultural engagement require people to step outside of themselves to see what they are doing (Bhabha, 1994:3). In practice, I embody a back and forth movement as I travel between Elim and my studio in Cape Town. By doing so, I can participate in the cultural traditions as a member of the community but I am also able to reflect on the practices in a different context. Here, Bhabha has influenced my regard for tradition by arguing that,

*“The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition.”*⁴⁹

The idea of “restaging the past” is particularly interesting in relation to the cultural traditions in Elim. Despite its origins, celebrating these customs and beliefs signify a certain rootedness in the settlement and therefore offers a personal sense of belonging. It is precisely in *restaging* the traditions in a postcolonial context which allows me to re-establish its value in my individual and communal selfhood. As a *personal* intervention within the in-between moment, I contextualise Elim’s traditions (such as lime washing) as a strategy toward embracing our diverse cultural heritage. In the studio, my reflections on heritage are epitomised by recalling and re-establishing the past in what Bhabha describes as the *here and now*.

In all, Bhabha’s ideas provide the framework from which I develop my practice by stating that,

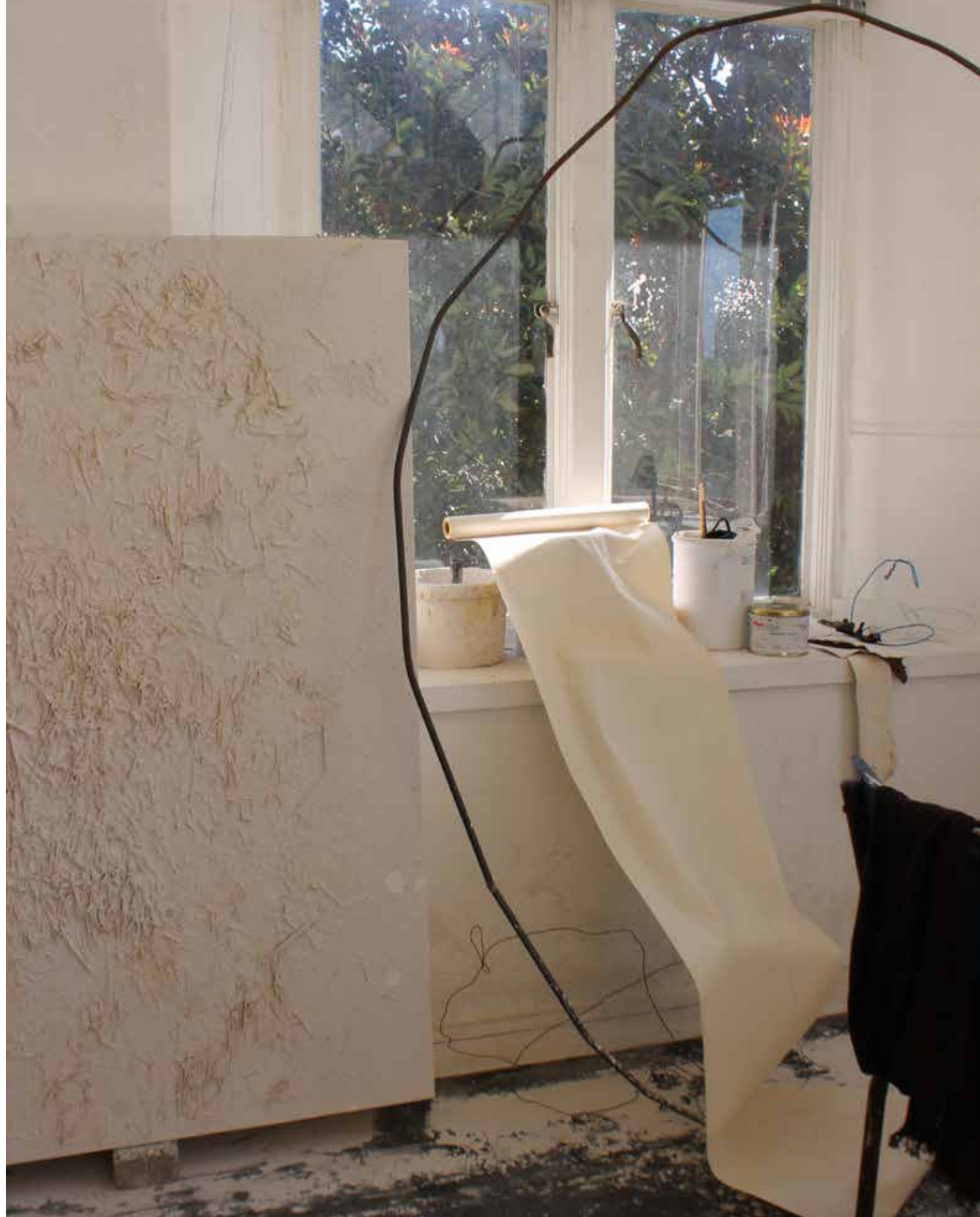
*Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.”*⁵⁰

49 Bhabha, 1994:2

50 Bhabha, 1994:7

In the Studio





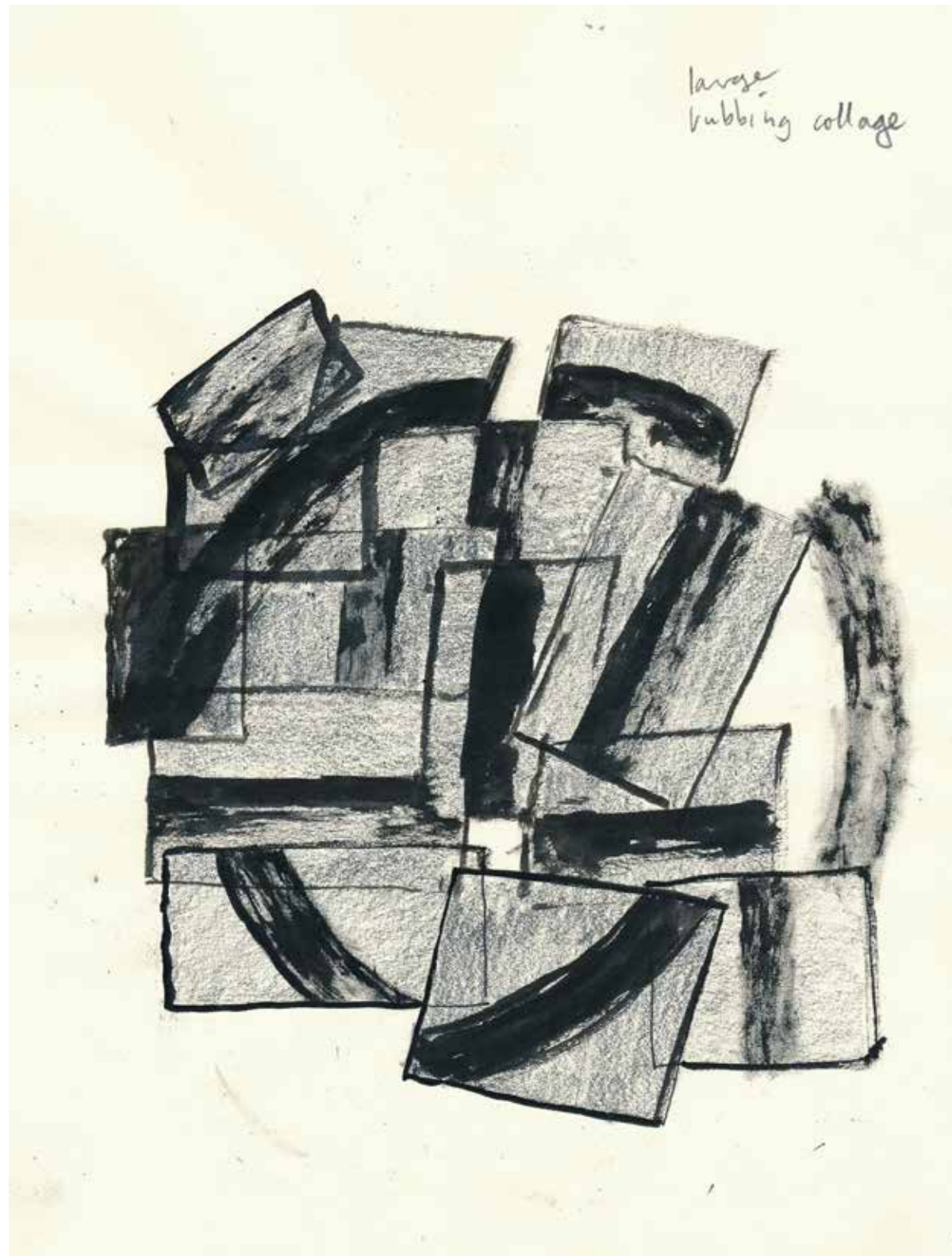


Plotting Intentions:

A selection of preparatory drawings in charcoal, ink, and pencil on paper.



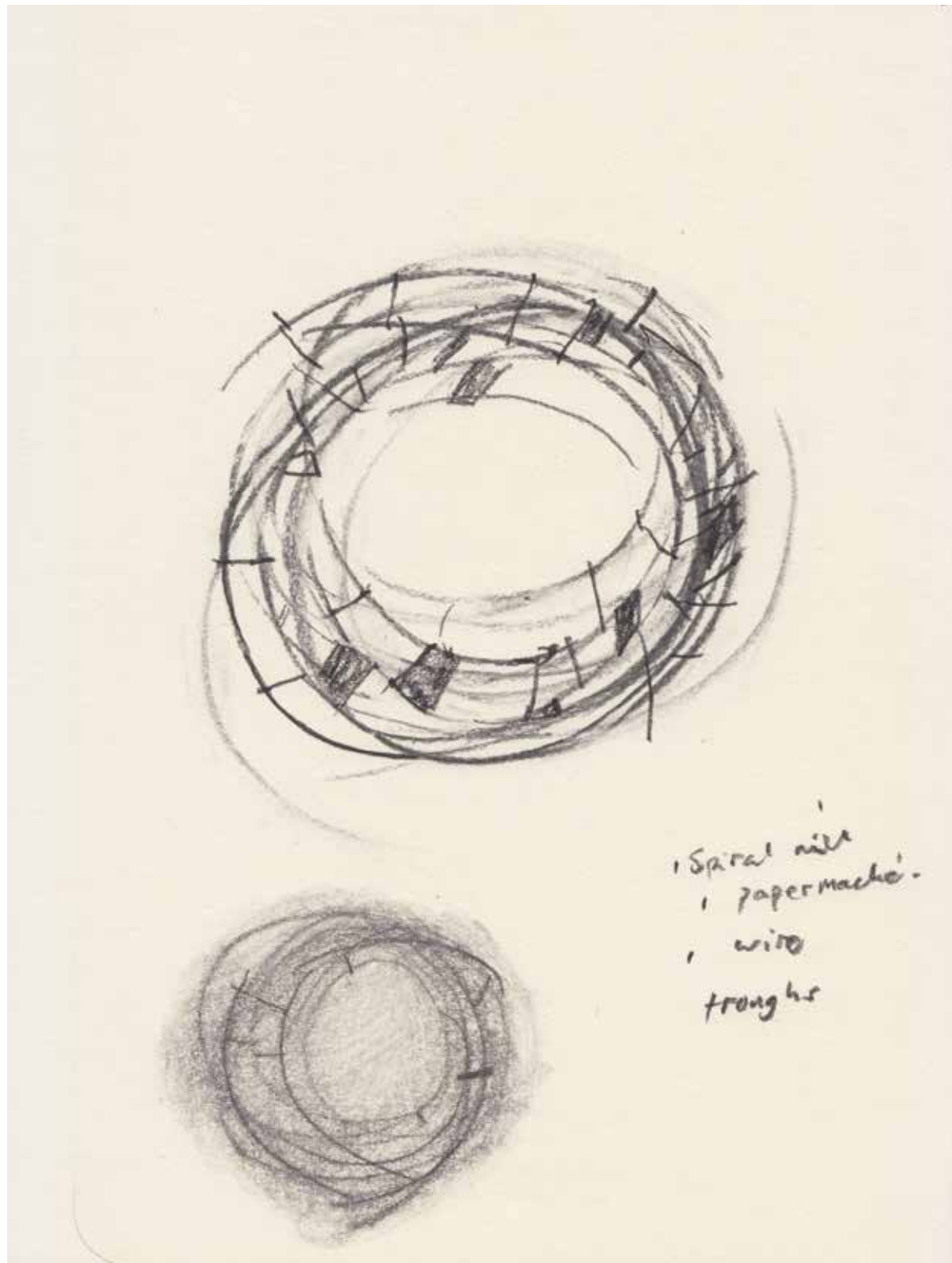
An idea to consolidate concepts with a 3-dimensional mindmap spanning 1m x 1.5m. Ink on paper (21 x 29.7cm).



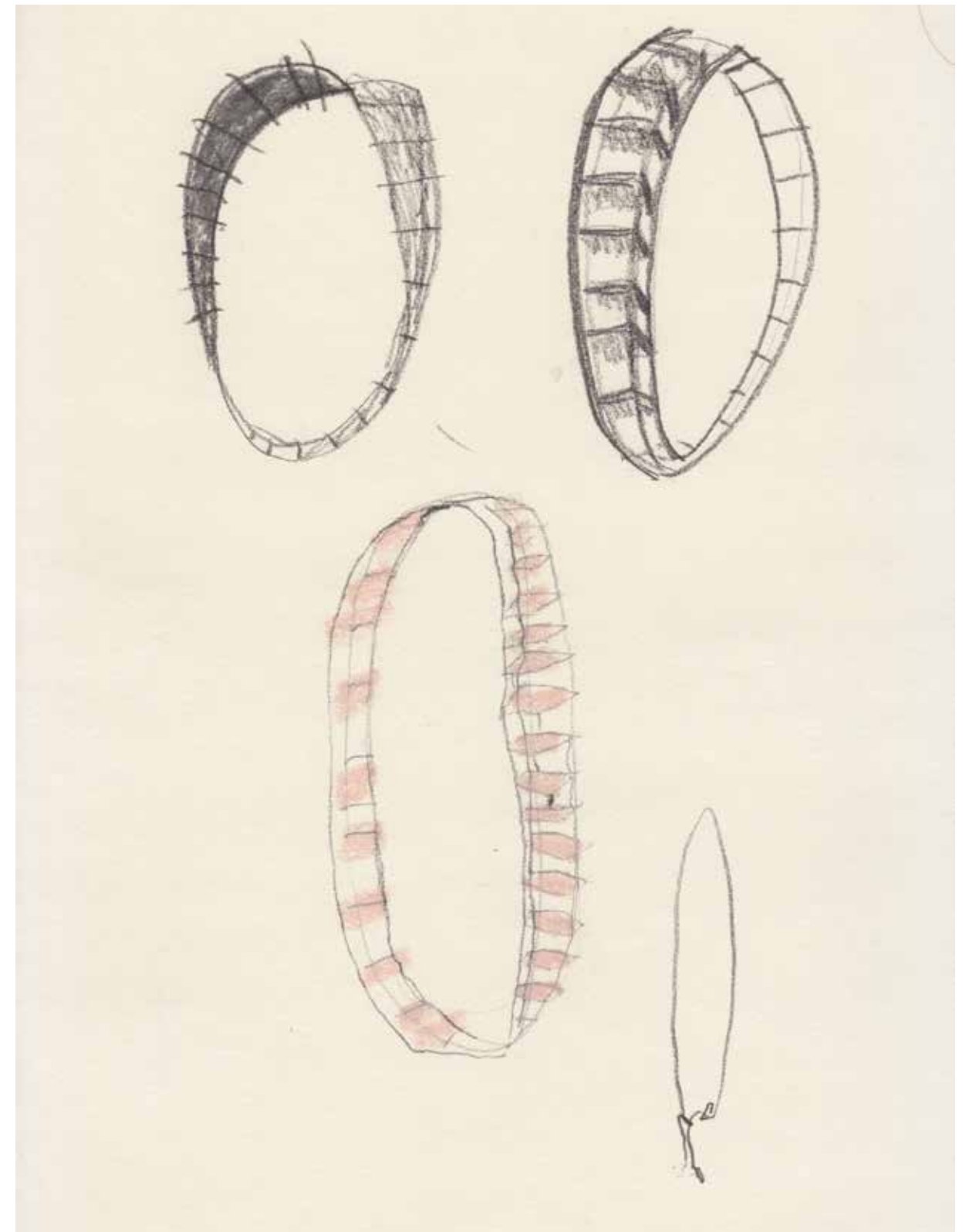
Above: Envisioning a collage constituting life-size rubbings of the Elim watermill. Ink, charcoal and pencil on paper (21 x 29.7cm).



Right: Examples of rubbings in ink on newsprint.



Preparatory drawings for a sculpture inspired by the watermill. Charcoal on paper (21 x 29.7cm).





Envisioning a large painting of the watermill exhibited on an easel.
Ink on paper (21 x 29.7cm).

Preparatory drawing for the large watermill painting spanning 3m x 3.6m.
Ink, charcoal and a splatter of acrylic paint on paper.

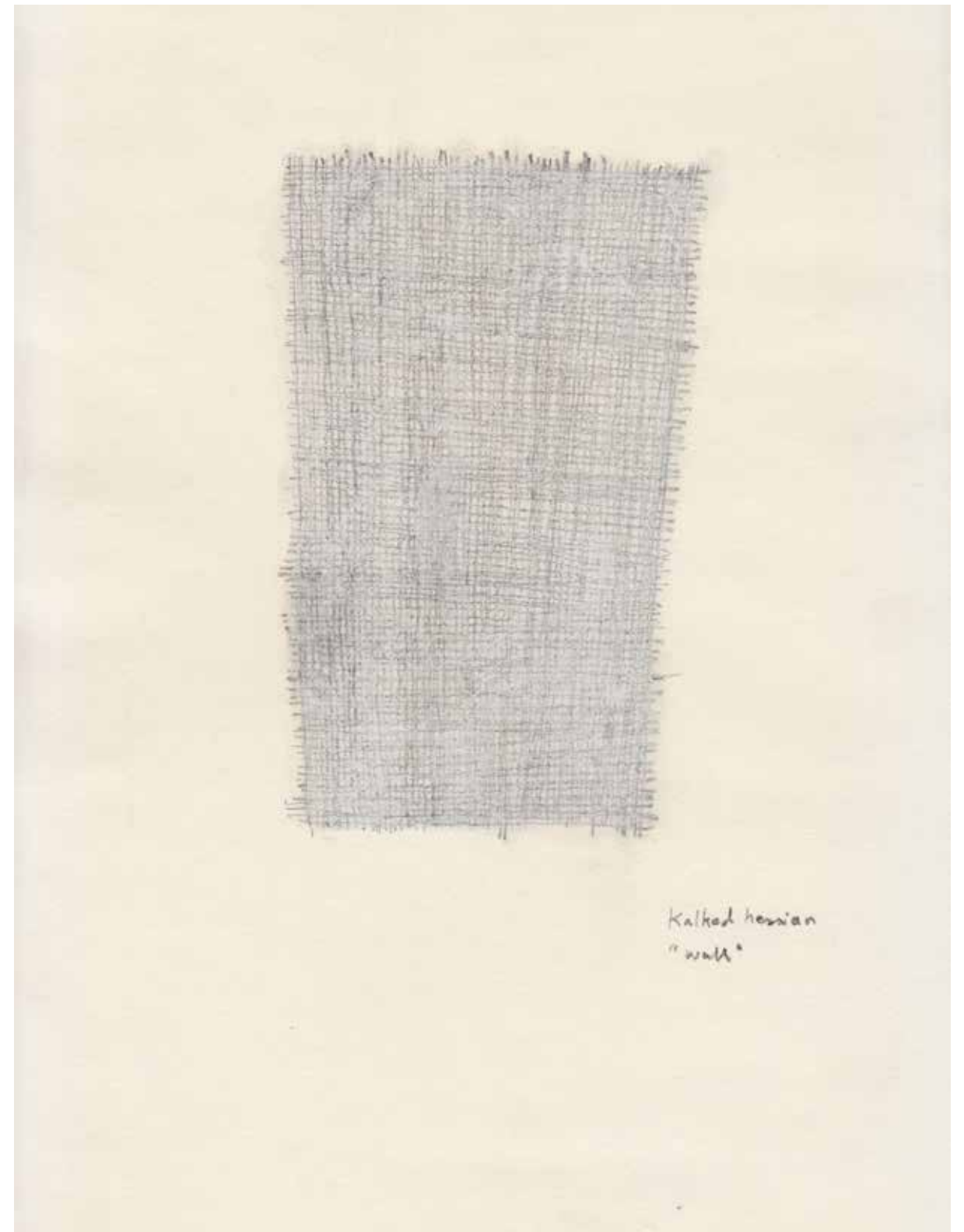




Additional preparatory drawings for the large painting of the watermill.

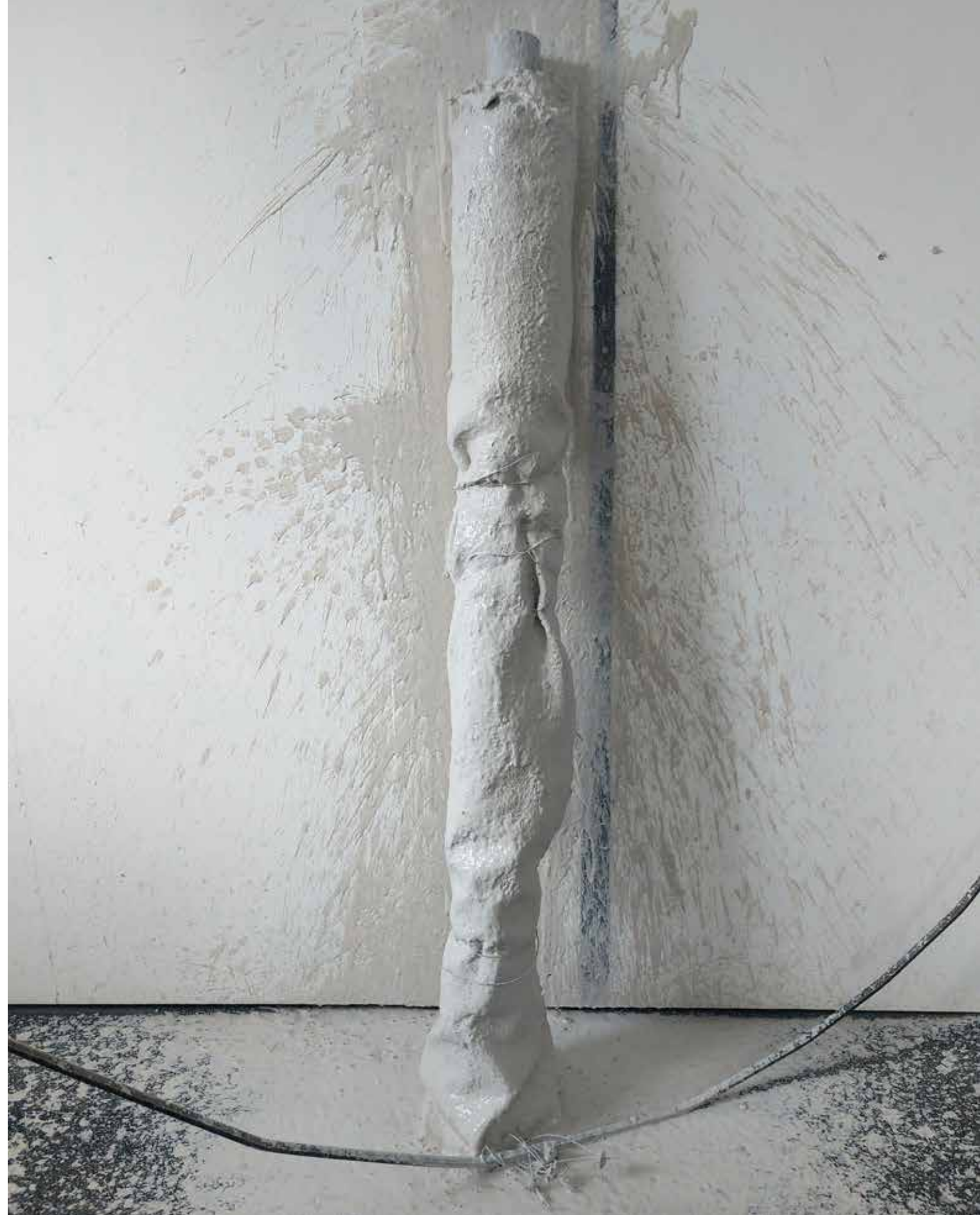


Preparatory drawing depicting a makeshift fence, wrapped in a “blanket” of lime-washed hessian. Charcoal and pencil on paper (21 x 29.7cm).

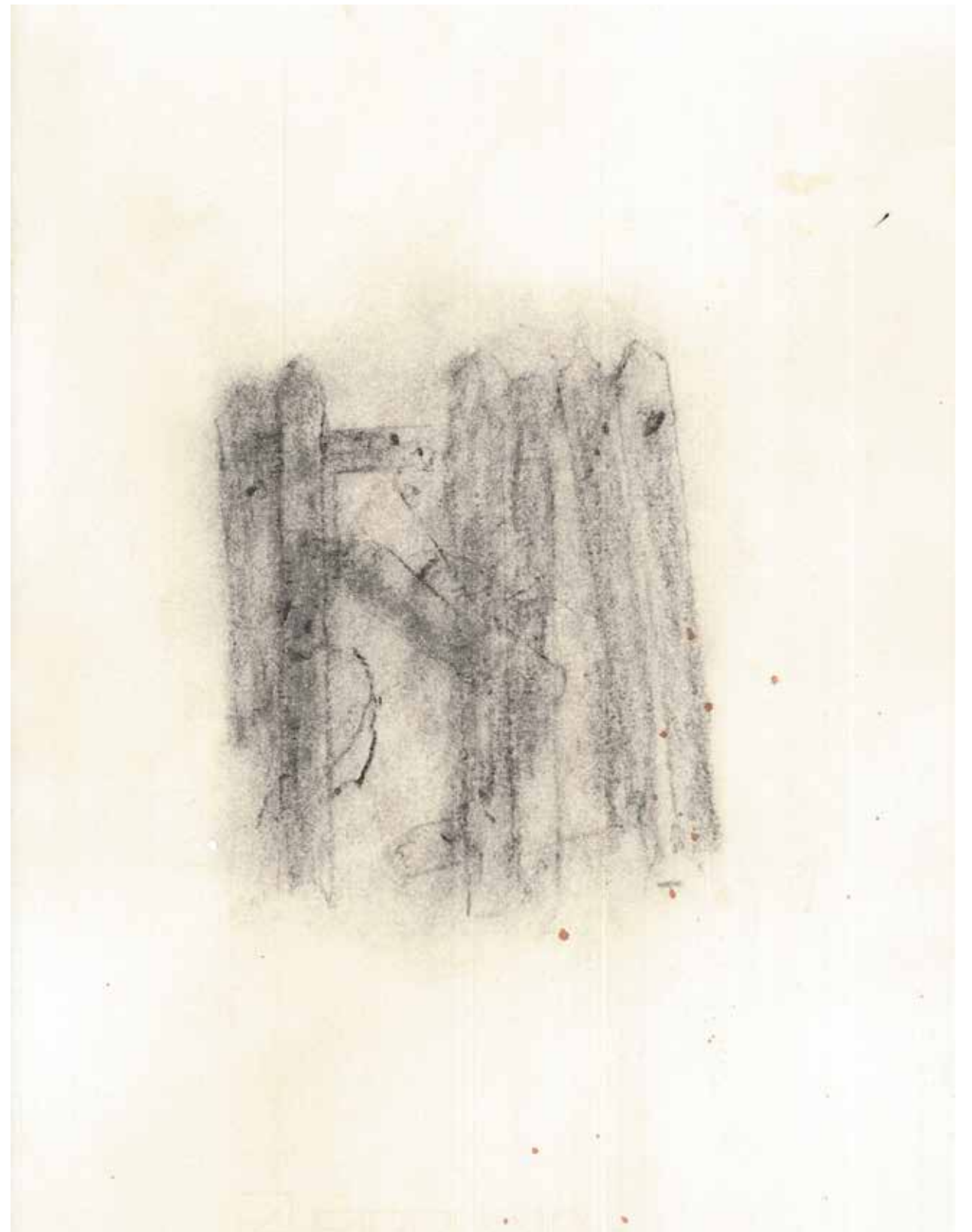


A drawing depicting the lime-washed hessian, initially envisioned as a “wall.” Charcoal and pencil on paper (21 x 29.7cm).

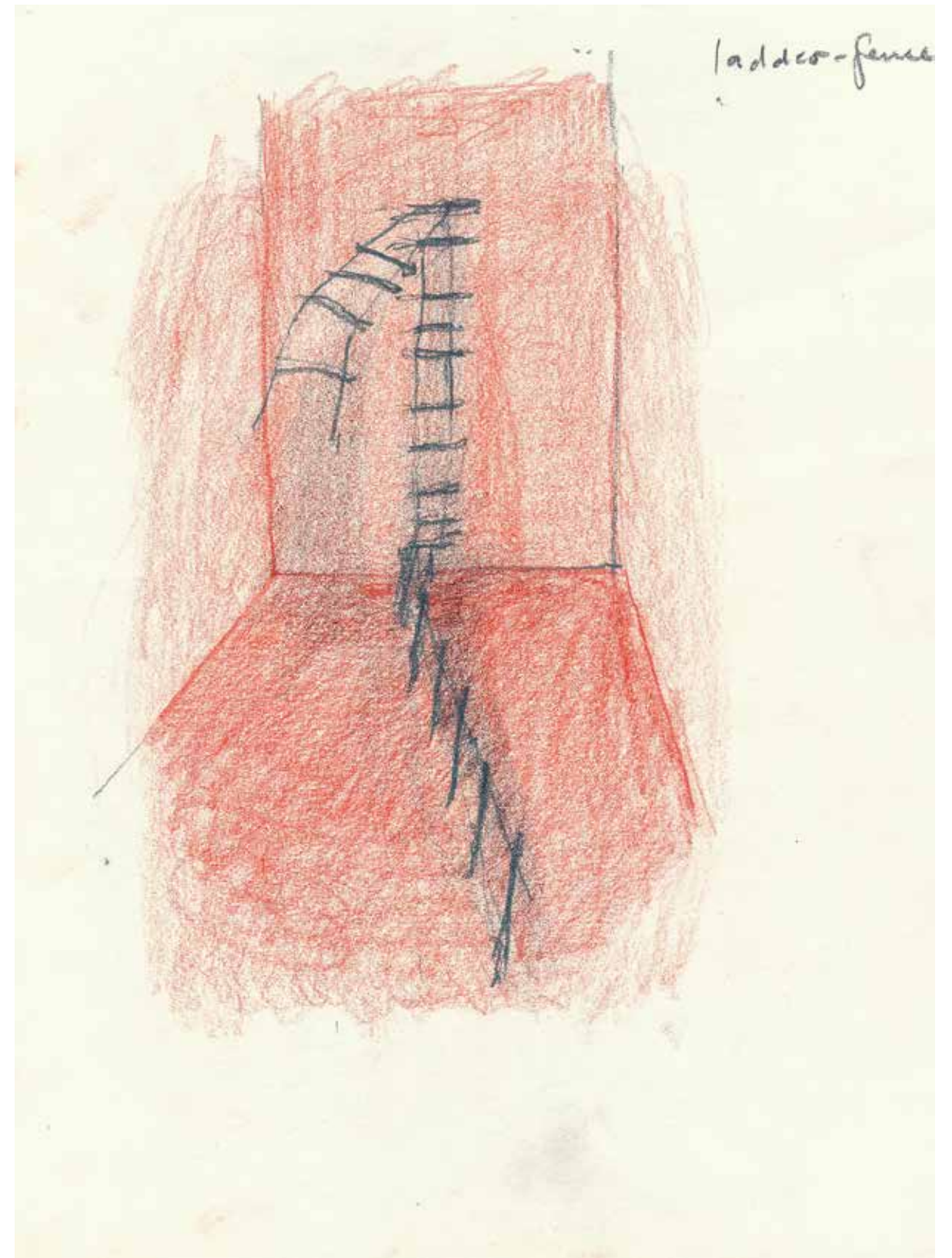
In process: The lime-washed hessian covering a wooden pole.



Preparatory drawing for *Entries* (2022), depicting a broken gate.
Charcoal on paper.

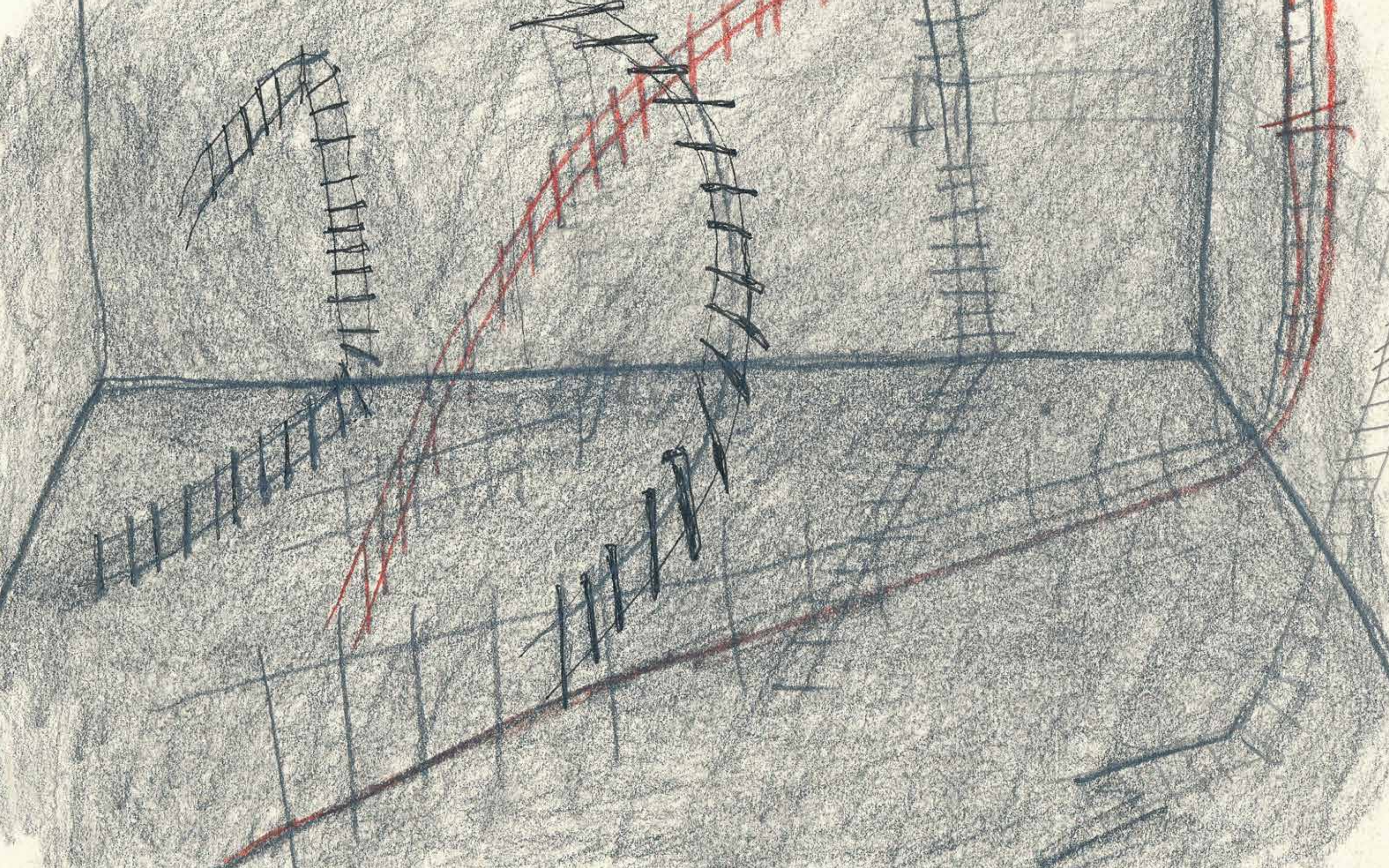


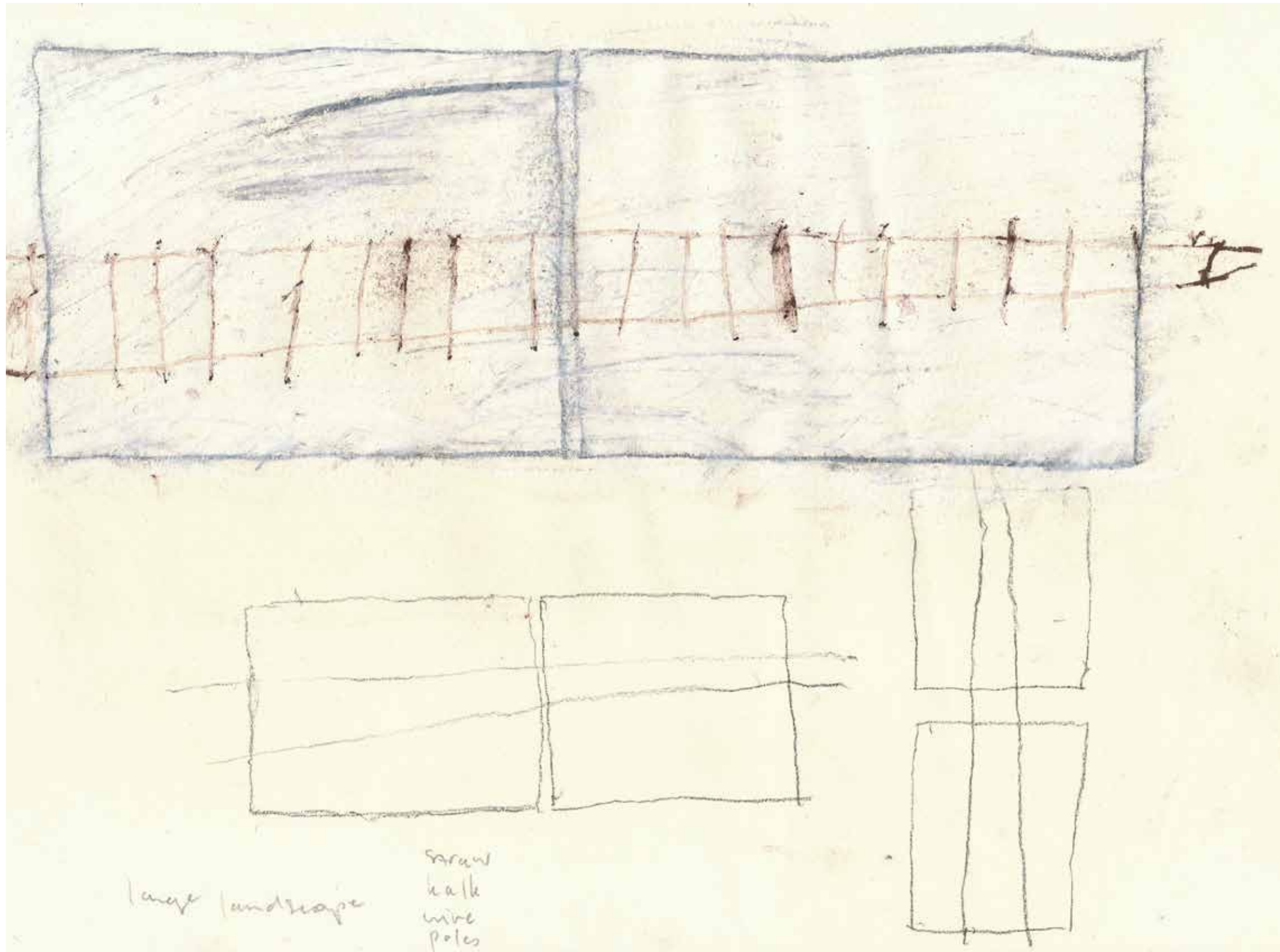




Right: A drawing depicting a makeshift fence running along the studio floor and up the wall. Playing with ideas of a fence, becoming a ladder. Pencil crayon on paper (21 x 29.7cm).

Next page: Additional idea to fill a room with fences, transforming into ladders. Pencil on paper (21 x 29.7cm)

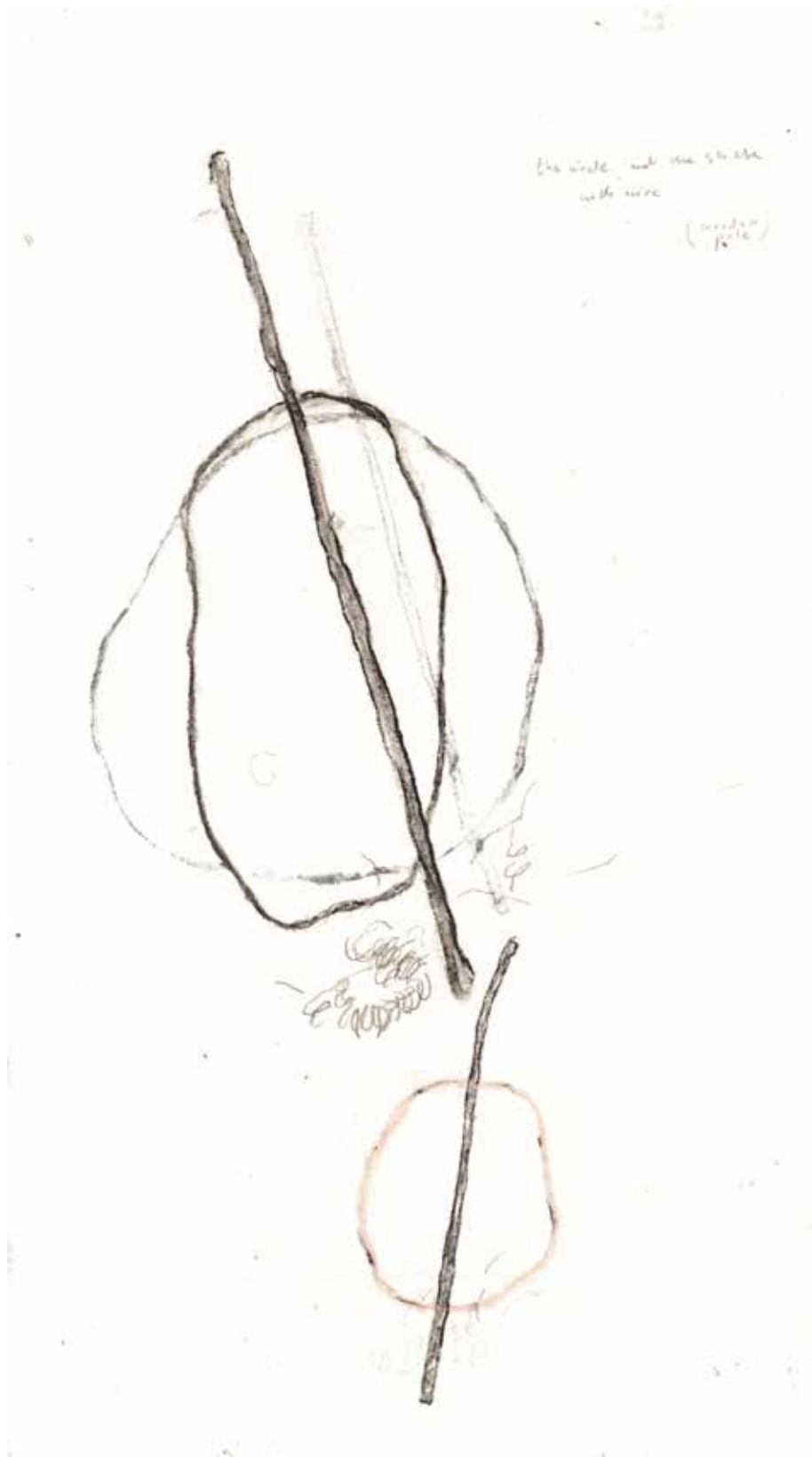




Preparatory drawing for a landscape painting depicting a makeshift fence hovering above the canvas.
Pencil and crayon on paper (21 x 29.7cm).

Detail of the wooden poles used to construct the fences in studio.





Left: Ideas for an assemblage of found objects.

Right: Preparatory drawing for an additional landscape painting depicting a fence which reads as a ladder, extending above and beyond the canvas.





RECOMMENDED INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR PLISTS FOR

- Factories
- Compounds
- Stables
- Farm Buildings

Visual and Material Influences

Lime Washing

Lime wash is a substance comprised of crushed limestone mixed with water. This material is applied to historic buildings as a form of maintaining or repairing a structure. In this context, lime wash is valued for its capacity to allow traditional buildings to “breathe.”⁵¹ The porosity of the material reduces the effects of condensation and allows moisture to evaporate, thus preventing the structure from decaying.⁵² Lime wash is also a substance which does not completely harden or set and therefore caters to structural movements in historic buildings.⁵³

The thought of a *breathing* and *moving* structure suggests the idea that the historic building is “alive.” By *allowing* the building to breathe, the lime wash preserves the structure and the history it represents.

Besides its appearance in the traditional structures in Elim, my first *proper* experience of lime washing was during the days leading up to Easter in 2021. I participated in the Easter festivities where, among other rituals, we visited the *akker*⁵⁴ to clean our ancestor’s graves (*Fig. 3*). This tradition of *paying homage* occurs annually and is epitomised by washing the graves with lime followed by decorating the tombstones with flowers. The celebrations are concluded with a sermon on Easter Sunday. As the sun rises, the congregation participates in a pilgrimage, walking from the church to the graveyard for the *opstandingsdiens*⁵⁵ where we commemorate those who passed away in that particular year. During the ceremony, the brass band accompanies the congregation who sing hymns; part of the Easter liturgy led by the pastor.

51 Frantom, n.d.

52 Frantom, n.d.

53 “*Historic Preservation Materials Explained*”, n.d.

Note: Structural movement is common in historic structures and is often caused over time by changing seasons. This movement may manifest as cracks and bulging in the building.

54 In Elim we use the term *akker*, to refer to the graveyard.

55 *opstandingsdiens* is an Afrikaans term which directly translates as “resurrection service”

The process of lime washing graves conjures thoughts around past times and predecessors we have not met before. In a sense, the gravestone becomes a monument acknowledging the existence of those histories despite it being unreachable. Personally, the process of lime washing the graves is significant as an act of *remembering*. I have thus included the material in my studio practice as a gesture emulating the tradition in Elim.



Figure 3. The ‘akker’ in Elim
(Photograph taken in September, 2022)

As an act of remembering, I contemplated the burial site with reference to the artist Kemang Wa Lehulere who *activates* the past by *unearthing* forgotten histories.⁵⁶ Among other themes, Wa Lehulere is known for interweaving the life stories and works of deceased South African artists such as Ernest Mancoba (1904-2002) and RRR Dhlomo (1901-1971) in his work.⁵⁷ His interest in these historical events and moments is prompted by its potential *to help us deal with questions of the present*.⁵⁸ In a specific artwork titled, *Bird Lady in Nine Layers of Time* (Fig.4), the artist looks to the neglected narrative of the late artist Gladys Mgudlandlu.⁵⁹

This artwork emerged from a separate series titled ‘*Does this Mirror have a memory*’ where the artist invited his aunt, who visited Mgudlandlu’s house as a child, to make chalk drawings of the artworks she remembered seeing in Mgudlandlu’s home.⁶⁰ The drawings depicting a mural signified the *possibility* of a mural at the house in Gugulethu and later led to an excavating endeavour where the artist began a *literal* process to uncover the mural on the wall. *Bird Lady in Nine Layers of Time* is a video work documenting the process. In the artwork,

*we see the inside of a home, with someone peeling away layers of paint and plaster in a rectangular shape, gradually exposing a piece of a hidden mural, buried by new inhabitants over time, all but removed from physical space and memory. Eventually, a bird with a red beak and a yellow wing on what seems to be a blue skyscape is revealed.*⁶¹

⁵⁶ Kemang Wa Lehulere (b.1984) is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Cape Town. Amongst numerous exhibitions, Wa Lehulere has presented solo exhibitions at Lombard Freid Projects, New York (2013); Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town (2012/2015); and the Goethe-Institut, Johannesburg (2011). Wa Lehulere is a co-founder of *Gugulective* (2006), and a founding member of *The Centre for Historical Reenactments* in Johannesburg. He also received the Deutsche Bank’s “Artist of the Year” award for 2017 (Inggs, n.d.).

⁵⁷ Inggs, n.d.

⁵⁸ Inggs, n.d.

⁵⁹ Gladys Mgudlandlu (1917 – 1979) is a self-taught South African artist known for her paintings of landscapes and birds as well as subject matter inspired by Fengu and Xhosa myths. Mgudlandlu is celebrated as one of the first black females to present a solo exhibition in apartheid South Africa. After her death in 1979, her murals decorating the walls of her home were painted over and thus faded into the memories of those who had the privilege of experiencing them (Artmag, n.d.).

⁶⁰ Inggs, n.d.

⁶¹ Kritzinger, 2017

Wa Lehulere describes his work as ‘*a protest against forgetting*’ and in this artwork he demonstrates the continuum of the past as it intersects with the present.⁶² The reference to ‘*layers of time*’ in the artwork’s title is already reminiscent of the burial site dating back to the German mission, and also emphasised by the fact that the mural remained embedded until it was “recalled.” In a sense, the bird revealed under the layers of paint is symbolic of Mgudlandlu’s history being re-introduced or *released* after a period of dormancy. This idea of releasing, or *activating* history is appropriate when considering my practice.



Figure 4.
Kemang Wa Lehulere,
*Bird Lady in Nine
Layers of Time*, 2015.
(video stills)

⁶² Inggs, n.d.

The process of “chipping away” paint and plaster is similar to my method when working with lime wash in the studio. Usually, I use the material to coat or “plaster” my canvasses to prepare a surface upon which to draw or inscribe. At other times, I use the lime wash to cover what has *already* been painted or drawn on the canvas. In this process of adding and reducing, I create a record of the marks, indentations, or pigments which have converged on the canvas.

For example, *Entries* (Fig.5) is an artwork inspired by the ruined gate which used to be the entrance to the watermill in Elim. I was intrigued by the parts, rotten but held together with wire and nails, and reinforced with additional planks of wood.

The painting characterises entry points and passageways. The gate represents a literal thoroughfare - a portal, an arrival, a departure, a state of flux, or perhaps a point of lingering or teetering on the edge. On the other hand, the materials I use *pierce* and *infiltrate* the surface and occupy both sides of the canvas.

The artwork started as an ink painting depicting the gate in a watery burnt sienna, dripping from the canvas. The layer of ink was then covered with strips of calico resembling bandages dressing the deteriorating gate. Upon sealing the calico, I mixed a bucket of lime wash combined with clay and splattered it over the entire canvas. The textured surface dried stark white with hints of the underpainting escaping the chalk-like covering.

The hardened fabric is reminiscent of a picket fence, disguised by the mixture of lime wash and clay. Despite it being concealed, the form is in relief and thus remains noticeable, albeit ambiguous. In its obscurity I incorporated nails and a single wire intersecting the vertical strips. These additions protrude from the canvas and are reminiscent of the elements on the original gate. I hammered the nails into the painting’s frame which resulted in subtle indentations and bulges in the canvas. I later tore parts of the calico, disjoining it from the surface and revealing the layers underneath.

These gaps have been most intriguing as they conjured thoughts around the negative space as an opening or *breach* in the surface and according to the Collins dictionary, “*if someone breaches a barrier, they make an opening in it, usually leaving it weakened or destroyed.*”



Figure 5. *Entries*, 2022.

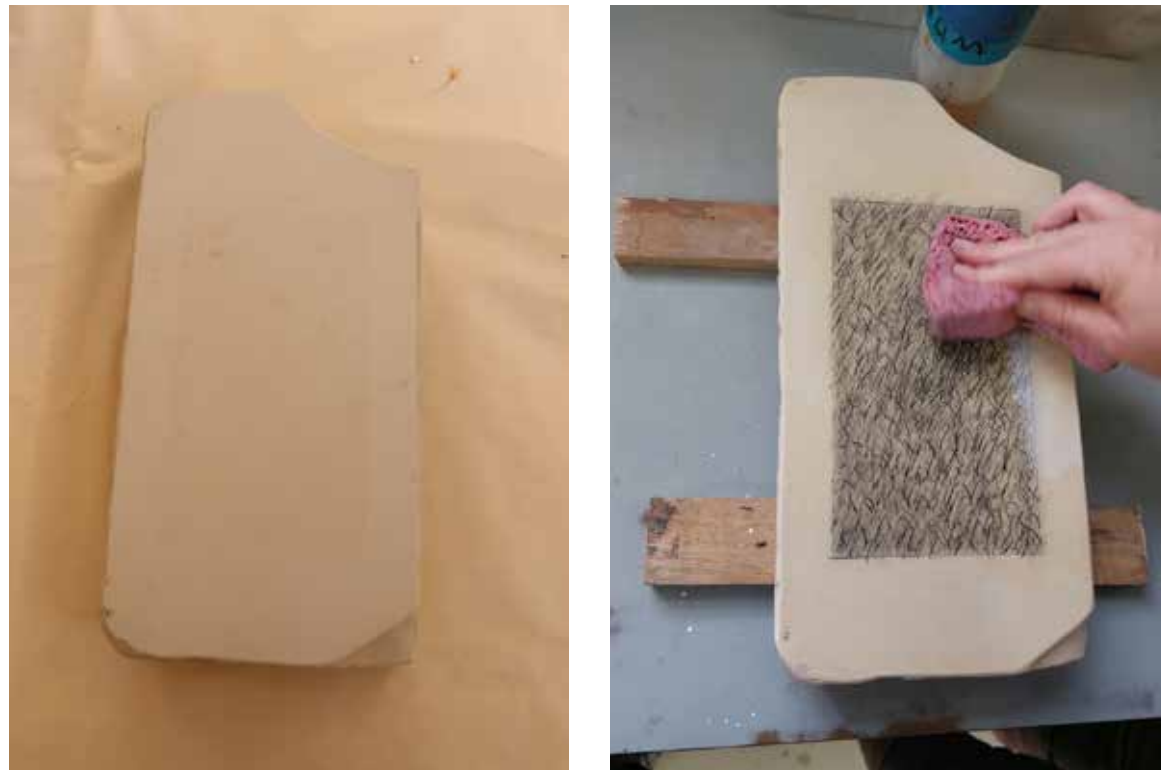
Ink, charcoal, lime wash, nails, wire, clay, calico, and rusting medium on canvas. 1800 x 1500mm
(Photograph taken by Vanessa Cowling)



Details of *Entries* (2022)



In addition to the lime wash, I engaged with *lime stone* as part of the stone lithography process. I was first interested in the lime stone because it is the primary source of lime wash. However, in stone lithography, the lime stone is significant as the surface upon which inscriptions are made. The act of *inscribing* connotes a sense of permanence – a mark ingrained in the stone and imbuing the stone with meaning. Stone lithography constitutes a process of “activating” memory in the lime stone thus preserving the marks meeting the surface. The stone’s memory is activated by a chemical product called the *oleomanganate of lime* which stores the drawing you have made on the lime stone “so that during processing, the image is always there though not always visible”⁶³ I came to see the lime stone as an object which receives and carries meaning and therefore the process of lithography became particularly notable.



Above: Block of lime stone with and without drawing on the surface.

lime stone

- inscribing onto the surface
- “memory of the surface”
- multiple points, ~~at~~ potential to alter or add to the individual points.
- Connotations of “preserving” in both lime wash + lime stone.
- Imbuing the lime stone with meaning by making my personal marks on the surface
- Thinking of the weight of the limestone
 - ↓
 - ‘Carrying’ or ‘holding’ meaning.
- The ghost of the image; erasing the image/drawing with another limestone. Grinding the stone with another stone

63 WMU Printmaking. n.d. *Stone Lithography*. Available: https://wmuprintmaking.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/2_stone_lithography.pdf [2022, October 16].



lithograph /
wood block (without
proofing)
inspired by Jay DeFoe
The Rose
1958



Figure 6. Untitled series. Multiple editions of one stone lithograph. Variations created with chine collé additions.
(Print inspired by preparatory sketch on the right)

When contemplating the intricacies of a surface, I am most intrigued by the artist Anselm Kiefer and his landscape paintings.⁶⁴ His paintings emulate his longstanding exploration of German history following the second world war. His work “represents a microcosm of collective memory” and reflects a range of cultural, literary, and philosophical allusions referencing the poetry of Paul Celan, Kabbalah mysticism, and the Old and New Testaments, among other recurring themes.⁶⁵ I have thus perceived his paintings as a site where histories collide. Suffused with *melancholic mourning for the devastated landscape of Germany*, Kiefer’s paintings demonstrate a “reconstitution” of the past in the context of the present.⁶⁶ His paintings are often produced by overlaying different layers of colour and paints on old canvasses which accumulate meaning over time.⁶⁷

As a process distinguished by *sedimentation, overlaying, burying and rediscovering*, Kiefer’s work is described as “weaving a sort of pictorial geology.”⁶⁸ With its archaeological nuances, his paintings are interpreted as “weighted” – surfaces *charged* with meaning.⁶⁹

“A painting aspiring to be a sculpture...”⁷⁰

Kiefer’s reservoir of materials includes sand, straw, ash, lead, clay, shellac, and rusted metal. I am most interested in these materials as an extension of the German landscape laden with histories over time. Kiefer “builds” his paintings by constructing, destructing and *reconstructing* his surfaces. Personally, his process hints at Homi K. Bhabha’s sentiments regarding the present as a site to reflect on our histories.⁷¹

64 Anselm Kiefer is a multidisciplinary artist born in 1945, in Badem-Württemberg, Germany. “Born during the closing months of World War II, Kiefer reflects upon Germany’s post-war identity and history, grappling with the national mythology of the Third Reich. Fusing art and literature, painting and sculpture, Kiefer engages the complex events of history and the ancestral epics of life, death, and the cosmos...Kiefer’s oeuvre encompasses paintings, vitrines, installations, artist books, and an array of works on paper such as drawings, water colours, collages, and altered photographs” (“*Anselm Kiefer*”, n.d.).

65 “*Anselm Kiefer*”, n.d.

66 Rampley, 2000:75

67 Celant, 2011:214

68 Celant, 2011:214

69 Celant, 2011:214

70 Celant, 2011:214

71 As part of this essay, I expand on Bhabha’s concepts in the section titled “*The boundary and beyond.*”

Kiefer’s oeuvre suggests multiple modes of contemplating life and history. He engages the significance of *meditation* in his creative practice by employing the recumbent man as a recurring theme. His painting titled *Athanor* (2007) (Fig. 7), for example, gestures a state of deep thought.

In this self-portrait,

“A naked man is stretched out on the ground. Lying on his back, the arms slightly away from his body, like in the yoga position called “corpse pose” (savasana); an evocative definition of a state of vigil, of dream, midway between sleep and death. Above him and for the full height of the canvas, there is a dark, deep sky dotted with stars, white cloud and Milky Ways...A vertical line seems to link the man to the sky, the land to the universe. In the cracks of the earth, one can discern slender pourings of lead irrigating the devastated land. At the centre of the picture, the artist has traced out a silvery line and, above, a golden one; on the right-hand side, there are three words in the artist’s hand – *nigredo, albedo, rubedo* – explaining that these are three alchemical colours, black, white and red, corresponding to the lead, silver and gold.”⁷²

The reference to alchemy extends into the title of the painting as *Athanor* refers to an alchemist’s furnace which continuously supplies its own fuel⁷³, making it possible to create the philosopher’s stone.⁷⁴ Despite the reference to alchemy being somewhat contrary to my work, I am intrigued by the ideas of metamorphosis which emerge from this place of meditation where the artist “*physically embodies and lives his thinking and feeling.*”⁷⁵

72 Celant, 2011:213

73 As defined by the *Collins* dictionary

74 Celant, 2011:213

75 Celant, 2011:213

Figure 7. Anselm Kiefer, *Athanor*, 2007

Image source:
<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/28/7b/66/287b66de3a6627bace8967689b3f5d3c.jpg>



The Straw

Straw is an agricultural by-product consisting of the stalks left behind by crops such as wheat and barley after harvesting. As a residue of the agricultural landscape in Elim, I incorporated it in my practice as a material gesturing toward sowing and harvesting. I thought about how one *prepares* for a season - ploughing and irrigating to *feed* the land in order to yield crops.

In the studio, I employed the straw in my paintings and monotypes. In one particular work, I used the straw to build the substratum of a landscape painting spanning 5.4 metres in length (*Fig. 8*). I continued by covering the straw with layers of lime wash. The heavy weight, paired with its density, evoked a landscape laden with the remnants of past seasons. Once the thick layer had set, I used a paint scraper and a screw driver to scrape away the material concealing the canvas. With reference to ploughing and harvesting, I consider the canvas as symbolic of a landscape *being prepared* for further endeavours. Simultaneously, I perceive the 'cleared' canvas suggestive of a landscape that is spent. I thus included the painting *because* it oscillates between a desolate terrain and a fertile landscape.

The monotype prints, on the other hand, are impressions of the straw (*Fig. 9-11*). In this series, I attempted to 'recreate' the surface of the landscape painting (*Fig. 8*). In the process, the layers of straw materialise as a combination of negative and positive space – an effect I consider appropriate in relation to the painting comprised of the absence and presence of straw on the canvas.



Figure 8. Landscape painting, process work.



Above: Process work with straw.

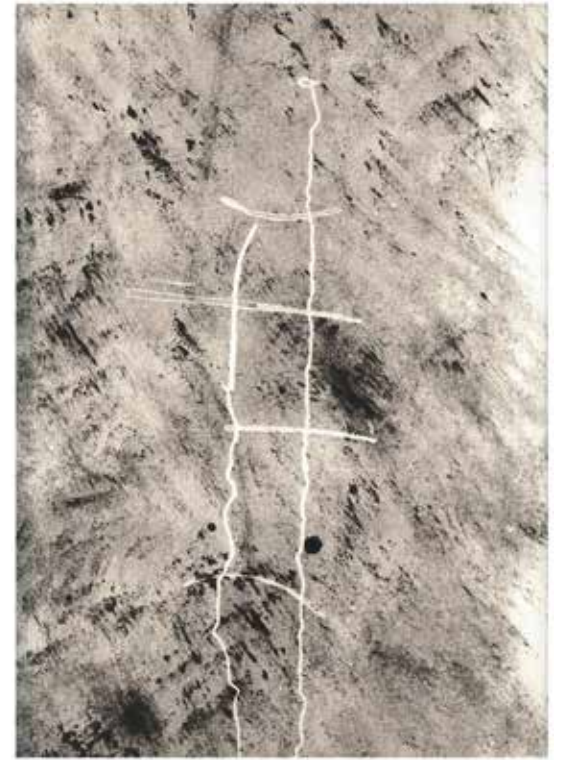


Figure 9. Impressions of straw - Monotype



Page 82: Figure 10. Collage of straw - Monotype

Page 83: Figure 11. Straw, bound together with string - Monotype



Further examples of monotypes part of the body of work.

Elim and the Watermill



Page 80: Figure 12. Teofilus Cloete (b.1908), the last miller of the old watermill (circa 1970).
Photograph courtesy of the Elim Heritage Centre.



Figure 13. The old watermills in Elim, operated by residents of the community (circa 1940 and 1910 respectively). Photographs courtesy of the Elim Heritage Museum.

I first became interested in the watermill following a braai at our stoep in Elim in 2021 when my Uncle Freddy (Fredrick Goliath) shared that he would be renovating the old watermill, originally established in 1828. He told us that it was still in the original wood, albeit damaged by rot and vandalism. I remember that we were all fascinated by the one-hundred-and-ninety-four-year old watermill which had operated in the time of the German mission. Uncle Freddy inspired the rest of the braai party to share their stories about the watermill. In conversation, I learnt that the last miller was Teofilus Cloete (b.1908), a relative of my grandfather. Some of us shared our disappointment in the loss of his knowledge in running the mill, and wondered who would reignite the skill. Teofilus' story also inspired debate about our family tree, where we discussed our roots and relations to Elim, and other mission settlements in the Western Cape. I listened to my parents speak about our family tree constituting the Cloete's, but also the October's⁷⁶ who were descendants of the slaves who settled at mission settlements. My mother's father is one of them.

The conversation returned to the mill. We spoke about Elim's history in the 1800s and 1900s, and its relationship with neighbouring communities as an economic hub. The watermill was also significant to the surrounding farmers who brought their wheat to be milled. The mill reminded us of the wealth of water, running in streams and underground fountains in Elim which is crucial to the functioning of the watermill. I was proud to be part of the conversation, as a site for sharing oral histories. The stories were invigorating and I thought of Elim with reference to the Bible, where it is described as a lush oasis in the desert. I contemplated the significance of the oasis as a place of refuge after a desert journey and recognised a kinship with *our* Elim in the Overberg. The time I spend in Elim is restorative. Not only in a spiritual or physical sense, but also in my relationship with the studio and my creative praxis. I often consider Elim the place where I am able to *inhale*, whilst the studio is a site invoking *exhalation*. In this exchange, I fuel my praxis. Furthermore, in its association with meditation, the inhaling and exhaling is akin to the Roman concept of *otium* - a category of time designated for solitude and self-renewal. The idea of *regathering the self* is a crucial aspect of my creative praxis as I work between Elim and the studio. It has inspired my studio praxis as a point of regathering or *re-collecting* histories which

⁷⁶ The surname *October* bears reference to the tradition of naming slaves after the months of the year.

have shaped my reality, and experience of the world. In the opportunity to recollect, I am taken ‘beyond’ myself in order to return *in a spirit of revision and reconstruction*, as Bhabha describes.

“Revision” is a word that describes the act of *revising*. To revise is to look at, or examine something again. In the process of re-examining histories specific to Elim, I embrace the act of *dwelling* in the space as an archaeologist, or a social anthropologist might. In a text titled “*The temporality of the landscape*”, Tim Ingold expresses that,

*the landscape tells – or rather is – a story. It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past.*⁷⁷

In this description, Ingold communicates that the landscape is an enduring record of, and testimony to *the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves*.⁷⁸ “Dwelling” is therefore crucial to my creative praxis in that it allows me to form, and strengthen connections with my community in Elim. Through conversations and participating in the community, I maintain my sense of belonging. I particularly enjoy spending time with older generations as an opportunity to engage with experienced histories. Here, Ingold encapsulates my perspective by stating that,

*The novice hunter, for example, travels through the country with his mentors, and as he goes, specific features are pointed out to him. Other things he discovers for himself, in the course of further forays, by watching, listening and feeling.*⁷⁹

77 Ingold, 1993:153

78 Ingold, 1993:152

79 Ingold, 1993:153

These sensibilities - observing, listening, and feeling – drives this body of work as an inherently social and familial pursuit. My creative praxis engages a *personal* meditation on the history of the church *because* it is entwined with my family history. The conversations begin at home and unfold in the public sphere where I experience counter-narratives and points of view. Bhabha highlights these disparities by asking,

*How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?*⁸⁰

I do not know the answer to Bhabha’s question, but I acknowledge that these complexities exist in the community of Elim. The disparities evident in the lived experiences and family histories embedded in the settlement represents our greater, collective history. In this regard, the history which haunts Elim becomes apparent in the social and economic fabric of the community. I am privileged to be a member of the Elim community and, more significantly, to be in a position to reflect on its cultural heritage. In this sense, I am able to step outside of the community to examine its complexities in an alternative context. The materials I have used, for example, bear a different significance in the studio in comparison with its use in Elim. In the studio I use lime wash as a painting material on canvas while in Elim it is used to whitewash walls. In Elim, the whitewash is symbolic of an aesthetic tradition representing a standard of maintenance, but in the studio, I have made associations between the act of *whitewashing*, and cultural erasure. By obscuring the original function of these materials, I create possibilities to re-interpret meaning.

In coming back to the conversation on the stoep I mentioned earlier, I would like to mention the significance of the watermill pervading my creative praxis. Initially, it was the restoration of the watermill which inspired my research project. I was interested in the process of replacing the rotten and damaged components with new, replicated

80 Bhabha, 1994:2

pieces of wood. The restoration project was a great undertaking which I attempted to document, however, the process leant itself to alternative modes of thinking around restoration and preserving our heritage. As the watermill sparked conversation about our histories and family tree, I considered what it meant as a monument “resurrecting” historical narrative. I associated the inoperative mill with a state of dormancy, and therefore the news that Uncle Freddy was to restore the mill became particularly significant. Moreover, Uncle Freddy had scheduled to begin the restoration in April 2021, about the same time my current research project commenced. I was encouraged by the thought that my uncle and I were working concurrently despite being in different locations. While I contemplated our heritage in the studio, he was grappling with a physical manifestation of our history *in Elim*.

The watermill signifies a deep-rooted connection with the settlement. Besides its history rooted in the German mission, its association with bread and water makes it symbolic of sustenance. Furthermore, in its relation to agricultural lands and harvesting wheat, it acquires a cyclical connotation where the seasons become significant. Once the wheat is harvested, the mill, powered by water, grinds the wheat to make flour. The cyclical connotation extends beyond the demarcation of seasons, in that the movement of the mill is epitomised by the wheel, revolving around its axle. Here, the rotating mill alludes to a clock, where the hour hand revolves around the spindle. Symbolically, restoring the mill back to its function revives it from dormancy, and heralds a continuation of its relevance as a historical monument and also a continuation of postcolonial debate.



Page 128: **Figure 14.**

Image on the left (April, 2021): Uncle Freddy (Fredrick Goliath) (left) and Craig Goliath (right). Facilitators of the watermill restoration.

(On the white board, it reads “*Salig is die sagmoediges*”, which is translated as “*blessed are the lowly.*”)

Image on the right (September 2022): Uncle Freddy at the restored watermill.

Page 129: **Figure 15.**

Photographs of the derelict watermill in Elim, taken in April 2021.

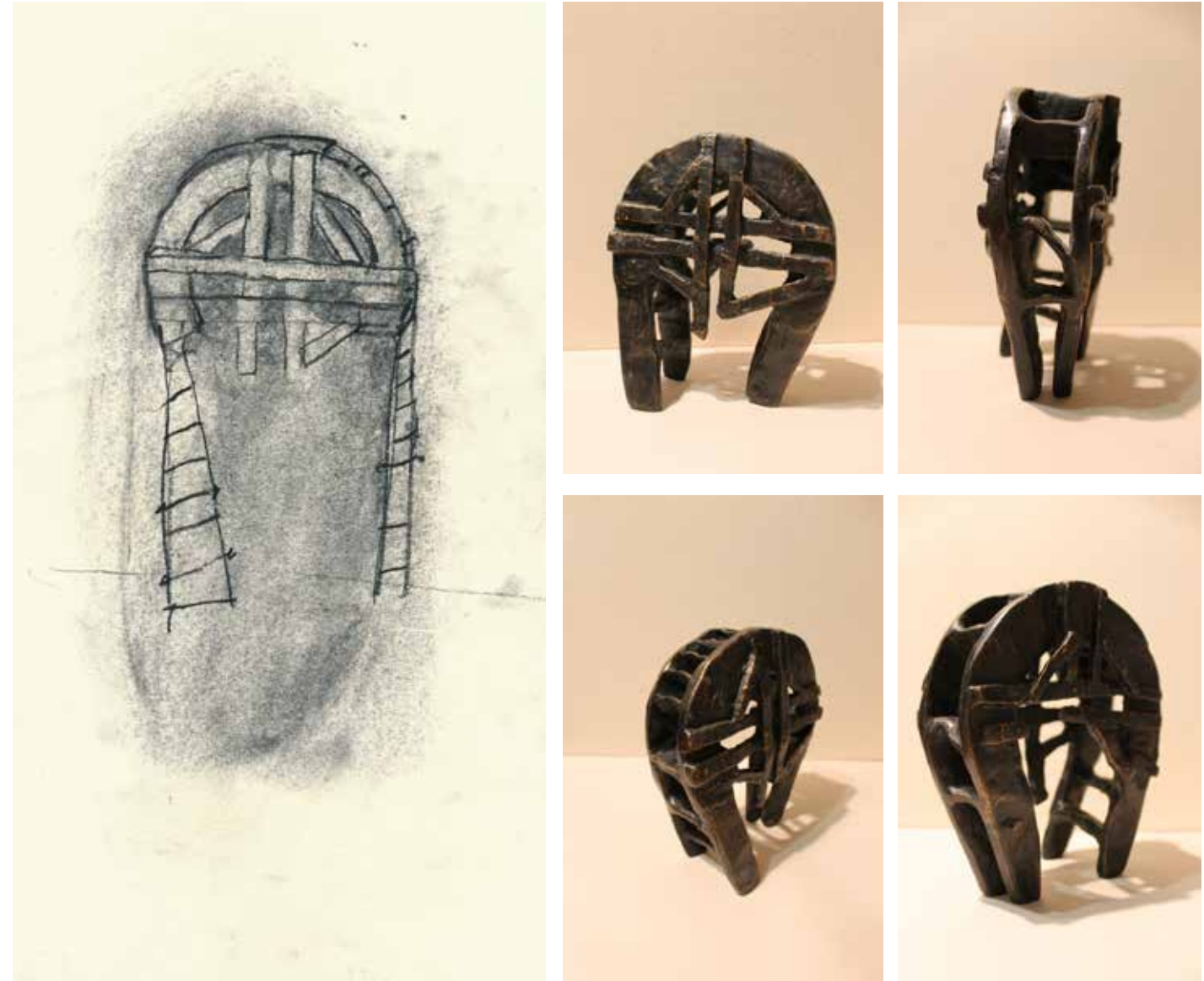
The Watermill in Bronze

The bronze watermill emerged from a charcoal drawing depicting the watermill, unfolding as a ladder (Fig. 16). I looked to the paddles of the watermill as representative of steps elevating the structure. This charcoal drawing is one of numerous preparatory sketches for works which materialised as paintings and sculptures. I first considered the smaller rendition of the watermill to juxtapose the life size structure in Elim. I contemplated the bronze sculpture as a token I could carry with me between Elim and the studio – at one point, I considered *burying* the sculpture in Elim for it to grow a *natural* patina. In the end, the bronze watermill became a self-standing sculpture propped on my studio desk, embodying various elements in my body of work (Fig. 17).

In a podcast titled “*A Brush With,*” William Kentridge was asked about his bronze works, reminiscent of alphabetical letters and symbols such as an ampersand, coffee pot, or a simplified drawing of a megaphone. He explained:

It's about giving an image a weight - so when you do it as an ink drawing on paper it has no weight, it's just – it's in two dimensions. Or if you even tear it out of thin paper, the silhouette of it – it has no heft. But as soon as you start adding cardboard to it and wax and then make a cast of that and cast it in bronze you're suddenly given a weight to that very ephemeral, either letter or word. So, it's giving words a weight...

A sculpture starting as a preparatory sketch in charcoal, made me interested in Kentridge's sentiments around *transforming* a drawing on paper into something that carries *weight*. By casting my interpretation of the watermill in bronze I actualised the drawing as an object which bears meaning beyond the idea on paper.



Left: **Figure 16.** Preparatory sketch for the watermill in bronze. Charcoal on paper (21cm x 29.7cm)

Right: **Figure 17.** Photographs of the watermill in bronze. Bronze Sculpture with a black patina (12.8cm x 15.3cm)

Onse meul is so 'n belangrike brokkie nuus hier in die omgewing van die Strandveld. Interessant het ons uitgevinne van ons meul wat 'n groot rol gespeel het in hierdie kontrei. Allie omliggende boere het van ons meul gebruik gemaak en ons het so pas ontdek dat hul bergens plek was op ons kerk se solder; en interessant, 41 pilare en 11 van hulle het 'n naamplaatjie waar hul stoorplek was.

Die name wat voor kom is soos Jan Swart, Piet Wessels, Paul Colijn, Thys Lourens, en nog vele meer. So, die solder kan jy sien is behoorlik...is behoorlik uitgetrap al en is baie gevaarlik om daar op te gaan omdat die solder baie baie gebruik was; selfs soos die meul ook hier onder. Die meul kom aan van af 1828 af al, dis ons tweede meul en as jy kyk die trappies hier binne in die meul, hy's al skoon uitgetrap al, hoe die mense gestap het oppie solder en hoe't hulle...dis eintlik gevaarlik maar vir ons is dit 'n baie groot geskiedenis.

Ons meul is nou, die 24 September weer ge-open en dis 'n groot trots vir ons. Is 'n baie groot trots vir ons

(a pause)

Ons eerste meul is by die ingang van Elim vannie Bredasdorp kant af en dis eintlik hartseer om te sien dat die gebou nou so lyk want by daardie gebou kan jy sien van hoe lank af al die gebou aankom, en hier kan ek vir jou verduidelik die Khoi het regtigwaar 'n groot rol gespeel in Elim...vannie manier die gebou, gebou is met klip... klip en, en die moddersteen, nê. So, die oumense van destyds was baie goed.

Mense kan maar vir ons sê hier was nie mense in Elim nie, voor die sendelinge hier gekom het nie...Vogelstruyskraal sê baie...dis 'n *kraal* ennie Khoi, die Khoi het hul werk geken hier... Die Khoi was weggedryf hier...hulle was weggedryf van hulle verblyfplekke af. Hierdie kontrei wremel van krale...die kontrei *wremel* van krale, en die slawe en die Khoimense het 'n groot rol gespeel hier. Ek kan vir jou sê wie die mense was wat hier was toe die sendelinge hier gekom het. Die dat hulle in elke boek skryf die vyf gesinne van Genadendal afgekome – dit is nie waar nie. Dit is nie waar nie.

Van 1825 af kan jy sien hoe die mense aangeteken is van Genadendal en Elim - hoe hulle *gedoop* is hier in Elim en gekonfirmeer is hier in Elim so onse history is is baie, baie groot...en ek kan vir jou sê hierdie meul het vir ons eintlik op die map gebring want hy was eintlik 'n korporasie gewees vir, sover as Bloemfontein...oral, *oral* in Suid Afrika...

Die mense wat hier kom handelsdryf het en dit verklaar die boeke hier binne...dis als opskrif. En ons het die grootste hout watermeul in Suid Afrika en dis onse trots en hy's nog steeds is hy in werking. Hy's nou seker vir die derde keer (as ekkie nie reg het nie) ... die derde keer is hy nou geheel en al gerestoreer en dit is deur ons plaaslike mense, soos broer Freddy Goliath wat ook 'n groot skreinwerker is en dit is 'n kuns wat hy aangeleer het en dis ook so...hierdie goete word van geslag tot geslag oorgedra...sy oupa was 'n groot skreinwerker hier in Elim en op die naburige plase.

Hier binne staan tot banke wat hy gemaak het. Vir elke kind van hom het hy 'n bank gemaak en hier binne is een in die museum ook. Dit is op bruiklêen.

Die voorste gedeelte van die meul is ook as 'n museum verklaar en dit kan jy sien is in 1947 deur Rembrandt Van Rijn as 'n nasionale, oppie plaque staan dit, dis 'n nasionale gedenkwaardigheid hier binne maar ons as gemeenskap moet maar self sien dat die plekke instand gehou word...

(continues)

Ons history moet voortgaan...en hy gaan voort want ons moet dit lewendig hou vir die toekoms...

(ends).

Our watermill is an important feature in the Strandveld region. Interestingly, we discovered that the mill played an important role in this region as the farmers in the surrounding areas used the attic of the Elim church as a storing place for their milled wheat. There are 41 pillars in the attic, and 11 of them are marked with name plates where individuals stored (their harvest).

Names such as Jan Swart, Piet Wessels, Paul Colijn, Thys Laurens and many more can still be seen. You can see the attic is worn and weathered and dangerous to enter. The mill has a history dating back to 1828. This mill is the second mill (in Elim), and as you can see the steps are tattered and worn as the result of so many people climbing the steps. It is actually dangerous (to enter), but for us it is an important piece of history.

Our mill was re-opened on the 24th September (2022) and it is a great source of pride for our community.

(a pause)

Our first mill was situated at the entrance of Elim from the direction of Bredasdorp. It is sad to see this old building in such a state of disrepair because it bears evidence of when this building originated. Here, I can share that the Khoi played an important role in Elim...judging by the way this building was constructed with stone and mud bricks. The people of past times were very good.

People may tell us that there were no people living in Elim prior to the missionaries. (Elim's original name) *Vogelstruyskraal* says alot...it implies that it was a kraal, and the Khoi knew their trade here...The Khoi people were driven away from their dwellings. This region was filled with kraals, and the slaves and Khoi played an important role here. I can tell you who the people were who were living here when the missionaries arrived. Documentation stating that the (first) five families came from Genadendal, is not true. It is not true.

Since 1825 you can see how people from Elim and Genadendal were documented and how they were christened and confirmed in Elim. Our history is extensive...and I can tell you that the mill has actually put us on the map. It was actually a corporation (for regions) as far as Bloemfontein, and everywhere in South Africa...

People who came to trade bares evidence to this as recorded in books inside. It is all recorded. We have the biggest wooden watermill in South Africa. This working mill is our pride and is still working. It has been restored for the third time, if I'm not mistaken. For the third time it has been fully restored by local people such as brother Freddy Goliath who is also a skilled carpenter. This skill is transferred from generation to generation. His grandfather was also a great carpenter in Elim and neighbouring farms.

In the museum, we have one of the benches which he made for his children. It is on loan.

In 1947 the front section of the watermill was also declared a museum by Rembrandt Van Rijn. As seen on the plaque, it is a national monument. As a community, we must see that these buildings are maintained.

(continues)

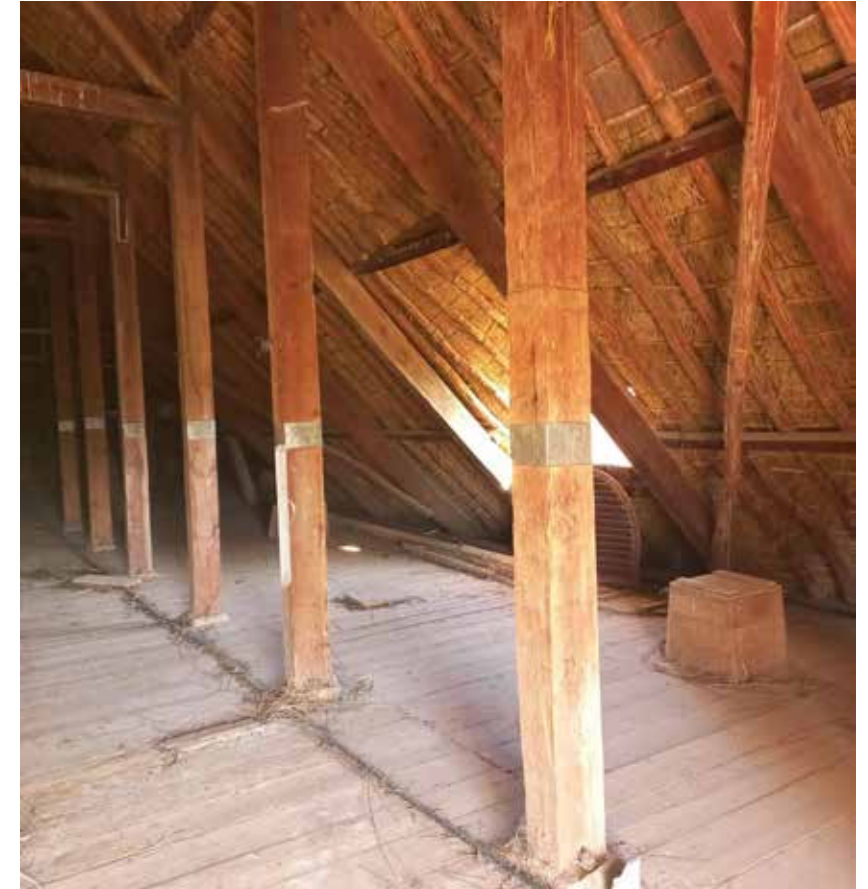
Our history must continue...and it will continue because we must keep it alive for the future.

(ends).

Figure 18. Parts of the speech delivered at the watermill's opening ceremony, by Amanda Cloete, the custodian of the Elim Heritage Centre.



Above: Photograph taken in 2016 of the first watermill in Elim dating back to the 1700's as mentioned by Amanda Cloete in our conversation (Fig. 18).



Right: Photographs of the pillars in the church attic discussed in the conversation with Amanda Cloete (Fig. 18). (Images courtesy of Amanda Cloete).

On Saturday, the 24 September 2022, the community of Elim hosted an opening ceremony to celebrate the restored watermill. Amanda Cloete, the custodian of the Elim Heritage Centre shared a speech detailing parts of the watermill's history (Fig. 18). She discussed the origins of the mill and the role it played for farmers in the region. Following the speech, we walked to the watermill and witnessed the sluice gates opening. A gush of water started down the stream toward the watermill. Within seconds, the watermill was propelled by the force and set in motion.

Ideas of progress and movement within mission settlements was echoed in the sermon on Sunday morning. I was intrigued by the message based on tradition and transformation. The minister, Professor K. August, discussed the importance of our heritage, and also relayed the fact that heritage and tradition is meant to transform with the spirit of the time in order to maintain its significance.

Personally, the church service corralled the ideas permeating my practice. In the church we came together as a community connected by our histories rooted in Elim, and our religious beliefs shaped by German missionaries. The sermon encapsulated our heritage as a point of reflection, thus providing an opportunity to prepare for the future. In the church service I was no longer an *individual* contemplating my heritage, but a member of the community sharing a moment to reflect on our history and its place in the future.

Page 137: Photographs taken at the opening ceremony in Elim.

Page 138: Photograph of the entrance to the watermill in Elim.



Blessed
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Studio portrait taken in October 2022.