



Moving to Stand Still

Maryam Rahman



GALLERY

KOEL

Artist Statement

My work has long been anchored to the practice of drawing/mark-making. Be it in a charcoal drawing or video-work, there remains a sense of investigating contours as well as tonal and spatial relations.

In 2020 when I first saw a demonstration of *Lahori Nastaliq* by the purist master, Ustad Imdad Ahmed whose grandfather was the court-calligrapher in Kapurthala, I knew I wanted to study this art-form in depth. My inclination was not a desire to learn to write in legible form, but a need for an inquiry of the refined abstract drawings that the letters created, the meditative pace along with the slowing down of the breath which allowed for highly precise, yet supremely gestural forms to be rendered.

Mark-making is very primordial. It has existed as the earliest forms of expression as we see in cave paintings. It has an immediacy, a visceral quality where the drawing tool becomes an extension of the body and the act of drawing a connectedness with one's innateness. Traditional Art is the marriage of this primordial, nuanced, abstraction with science, mathematics and complex '*aadaab*' - the play of gesture with precision and freedom, formlessness with *bandish* – be it in classical dance or Hindustani classical music.

To look at this idea meant a confrontation with the post-colonial narrative that reduced the arts of the sub-continent to 'craft', 'folk' and literal. In the words of Eduardo Galeano the natives, the 'nobodies' 'who don't create art, but handicrafts'.

It felt important to engage with the abstraction within the forms in *Lahori Nastaliq* and to

show it in a gallery setting, the 'white-cube' which, as per this lens, must only showcase the 'high art' of the west.

Reading a riveting text by Nazish Brohi (Treading Water) on the 2022 floods I came across a story Brohi weaves of a family whose belongings and later lives are taken away by the 'roiling waves'. One of these belongings mentioned is the carefully and painstakingly woven *rilli*, a traditional blanket sewn by Sindhi women. The dispensability of the lives of the protagonists as well as the value of their 'art' resonated with the idea that I was working with.*

While working on this body of work, there was another layer of consciousness that remained tied to its development. This was the awareness that today the popular art of calligraphy mostly involves creating heroic images depicting iconic, holy and noble verses. My interest in this traditional art form became closely intertwined with its 'anti-hero' aspect - the silent, rhythmic, feminine, abstract, illegible flourishes - much like the runs or *jaghaas* in Hindustani Classical Music.

The '*sarir-e-khaama*' or 'the sound of the *qalam* as it writes' is often obscured by louder voices. As women and as women artists we find strength in claiming the muted sounds that require us to lean in a little further, the less-established paradigms, the little-known narratives, the embracing of the 'anti-hero.'

Maryam Rahman

*The titles of these works have been borrowed from the text, 'Treading Water' by Nazish Brohi.



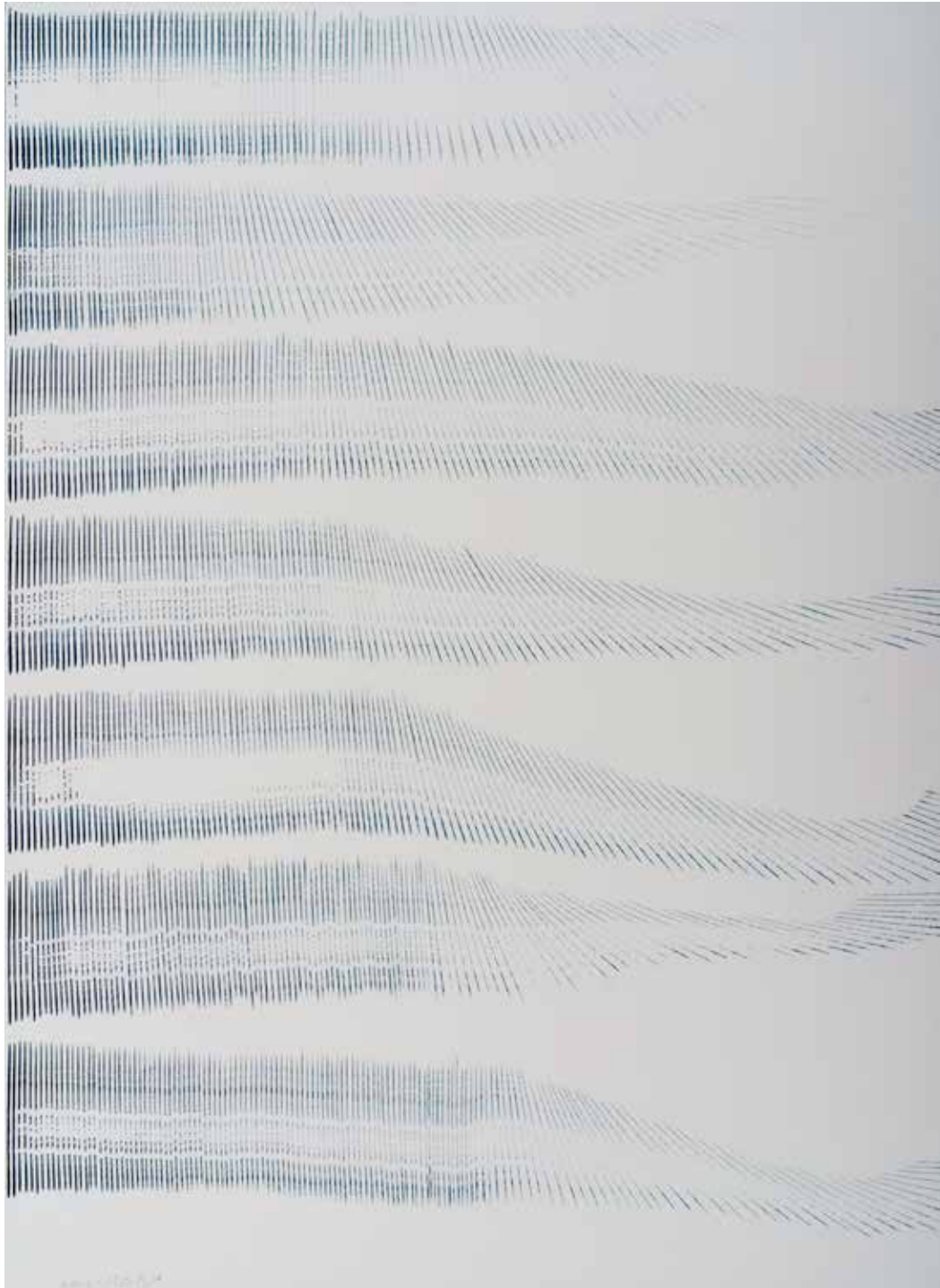
Maryam Rahman is a multi-disciplinary artist. She is a graduate of the Slade School of Fine Art and teaches at the National College of Art. She is studying *Lahori Nastaliq* calligraphy and manages the art estate of late artist, Lala Rukh.



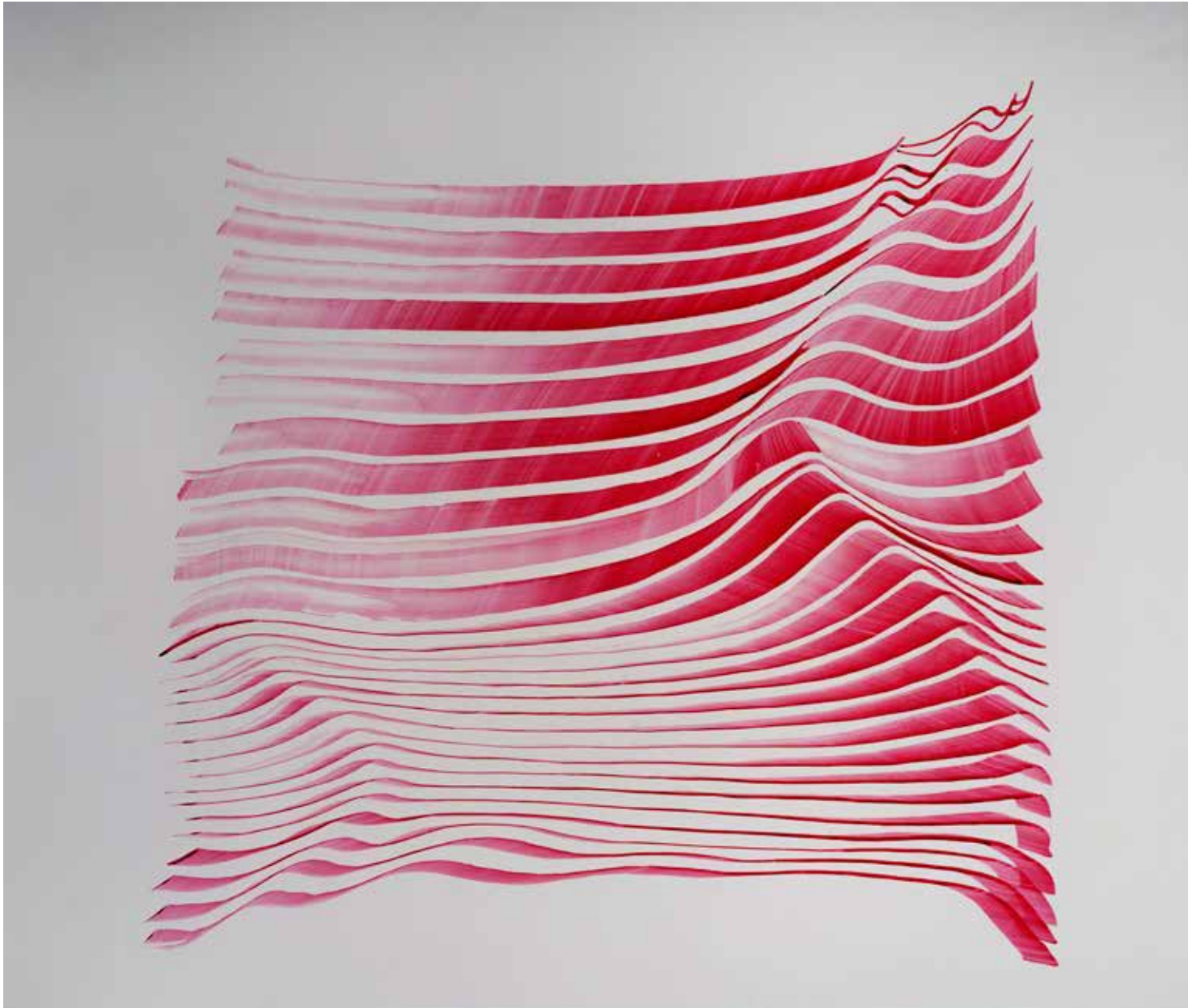
Ustad Imdad Ahmed



Someone who will listen 1
Reed pen and ink on Art Card
28 x 48 inches
2023



Someone who will listen 2
Reed pen and ink on Art Card
22 x 28 inches
2023

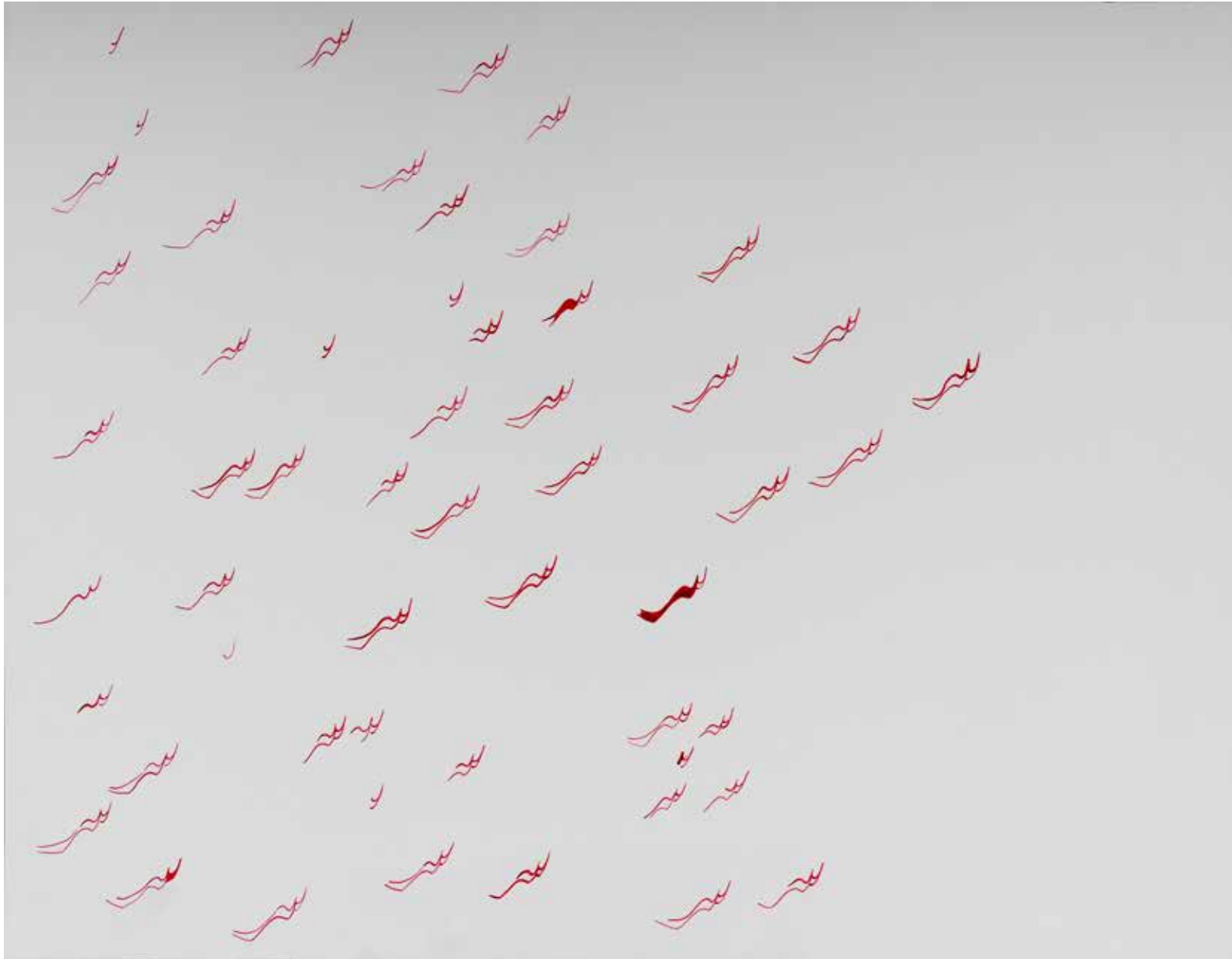


Roiling Waves 1

Reed pen and ink on Art Card

19 x 22 inches

2023

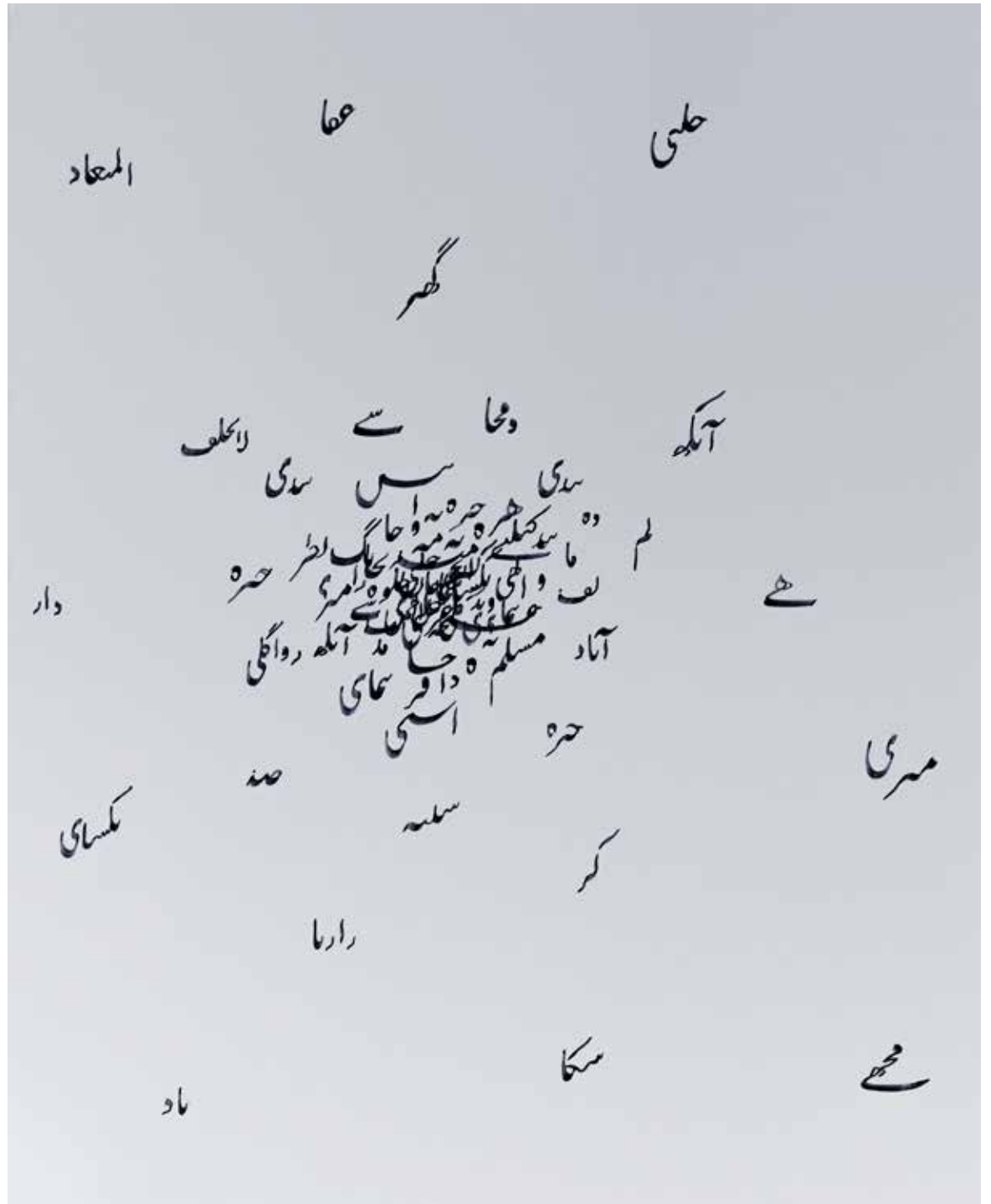


Roiling Waves 2

Reed pen and ink on Art Card

22 x 28 inches

2023

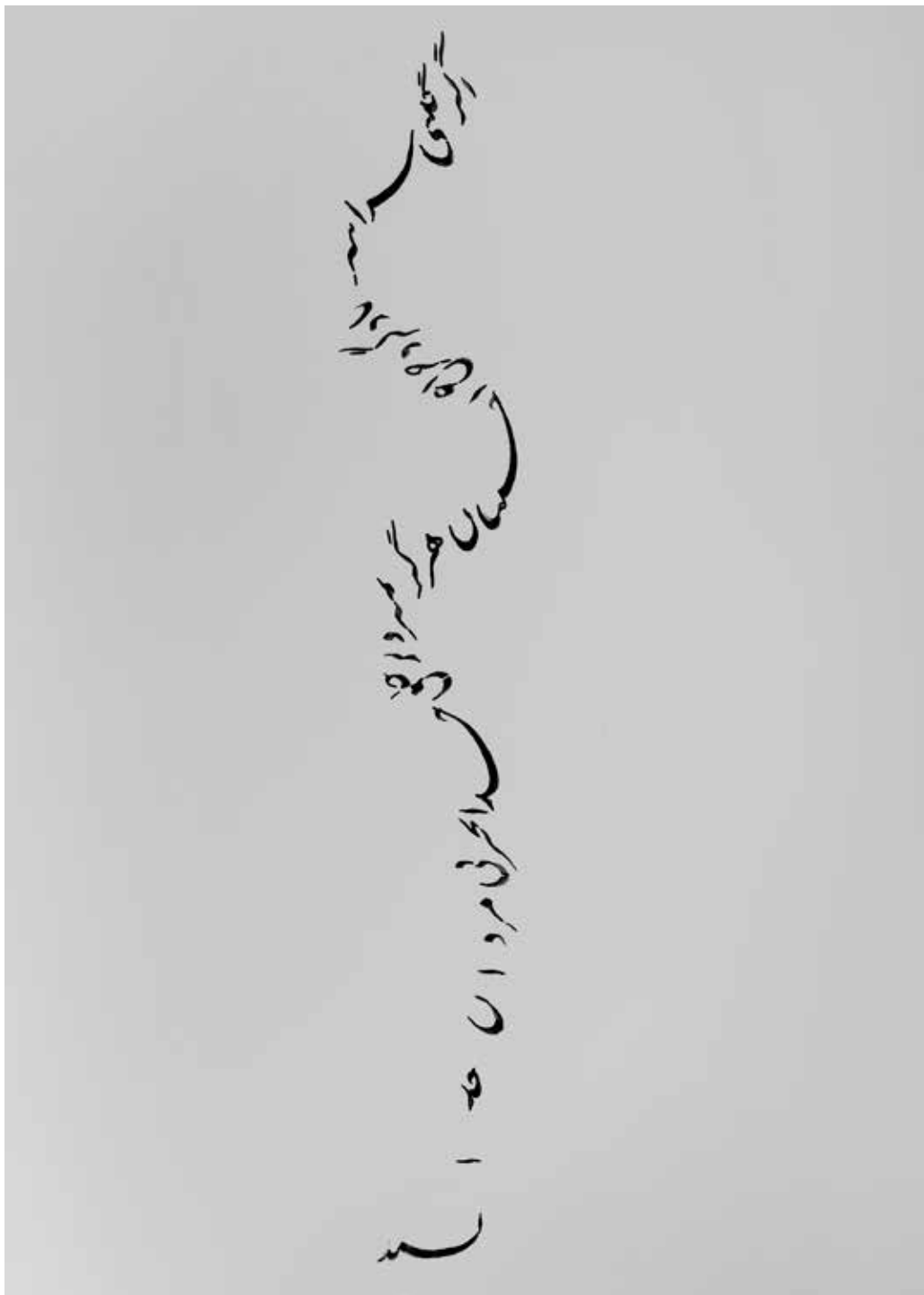


The story 1

Permanent marker on Acrylic sheet

24 x 18 inches

2023

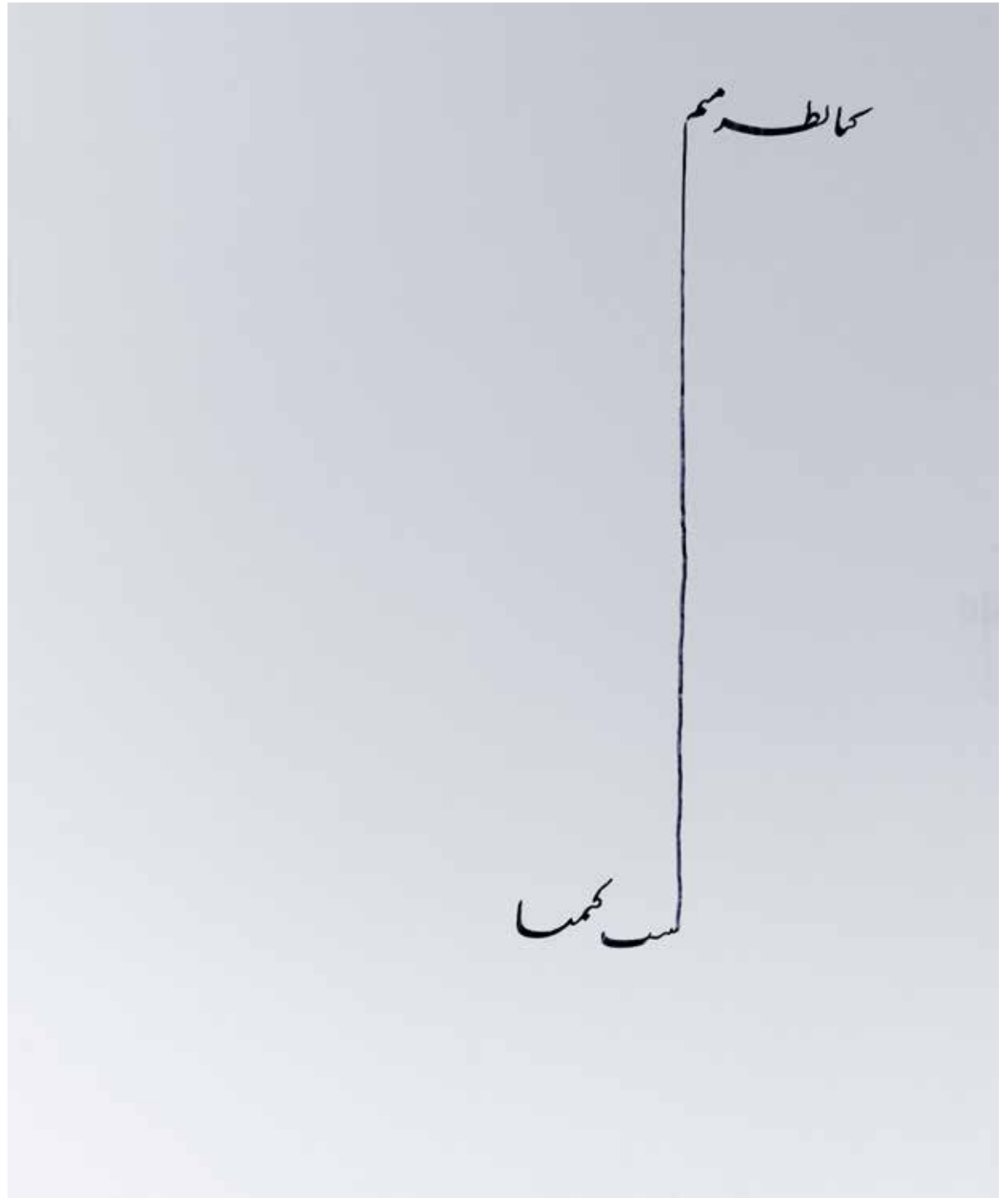


The story 2

Permanent marker on Acrylic sheet

24 x 18 inches

2023

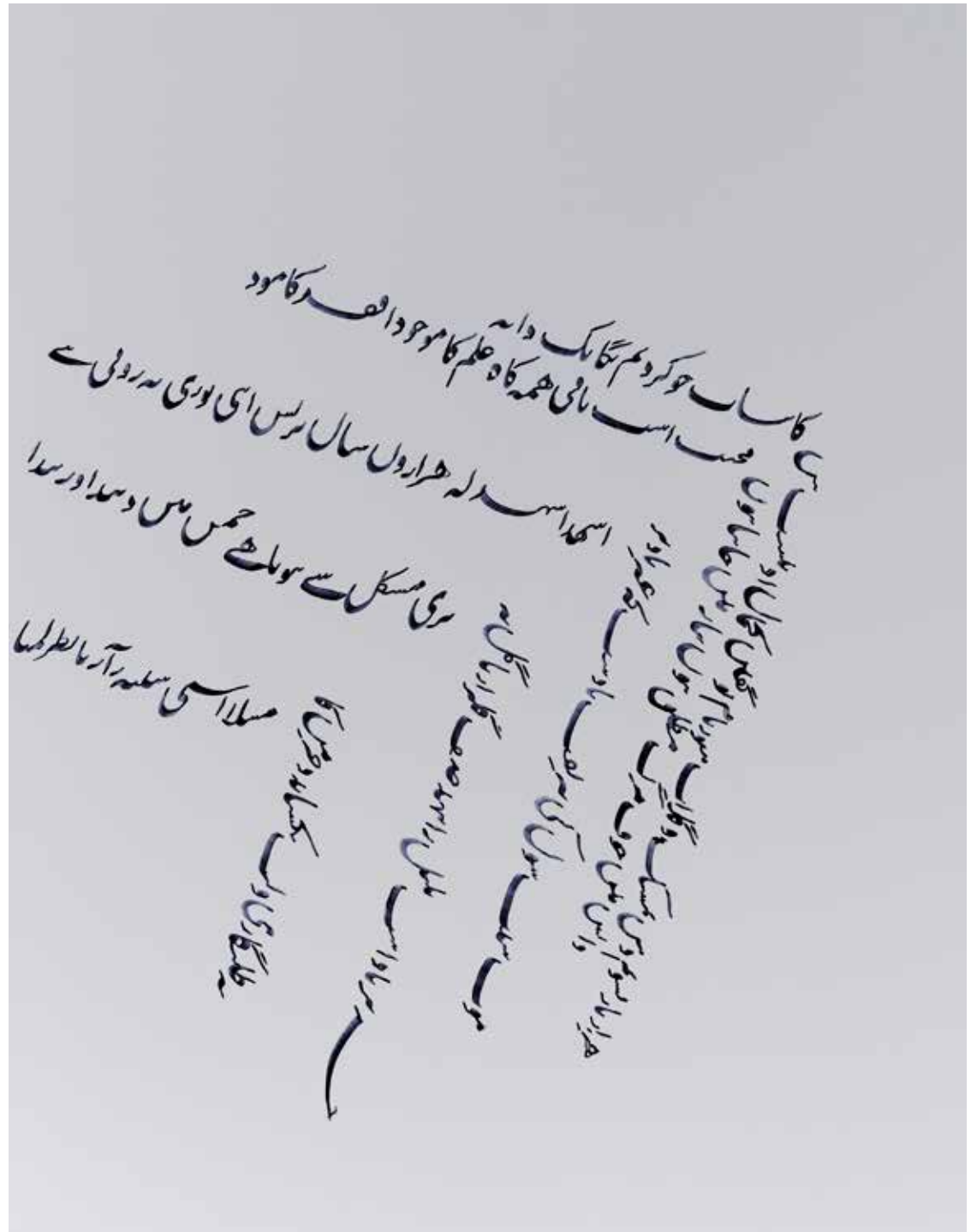


The story 3

Permanent marker on Acrylic sheet

24 x 18 inches

2023



The story 4

Permanent marker on Acrylic sheet

24 x 18 inches

2023

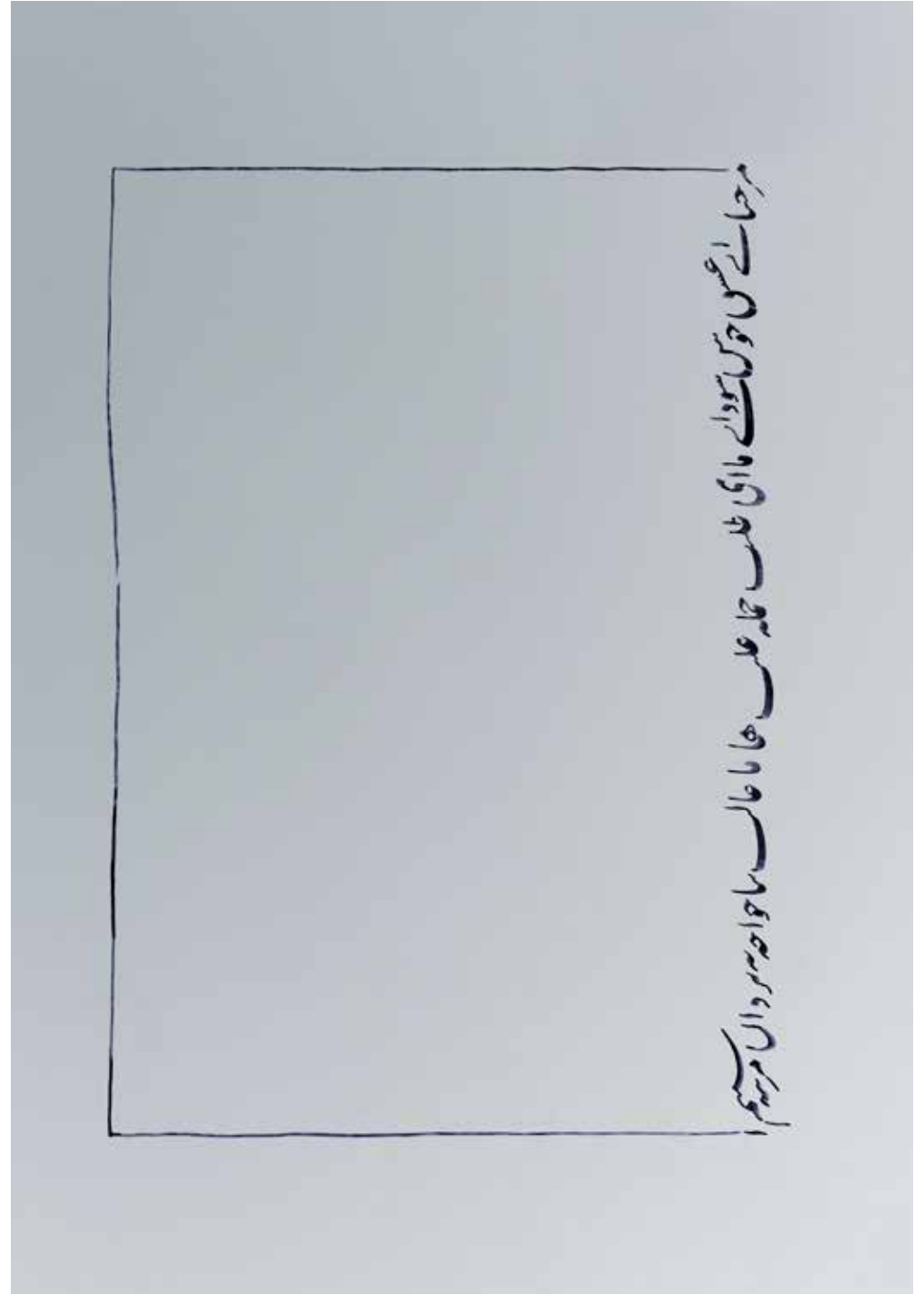


The story 5

Permanent marker on Acrylic sheet

24 x 18 inches

2023



The story 6

Permanent marker on Acrylic sheet

24 x 18 inches

2023



Dry Ground
Graphite on Card sheet
32 x 42.5 inches
2023



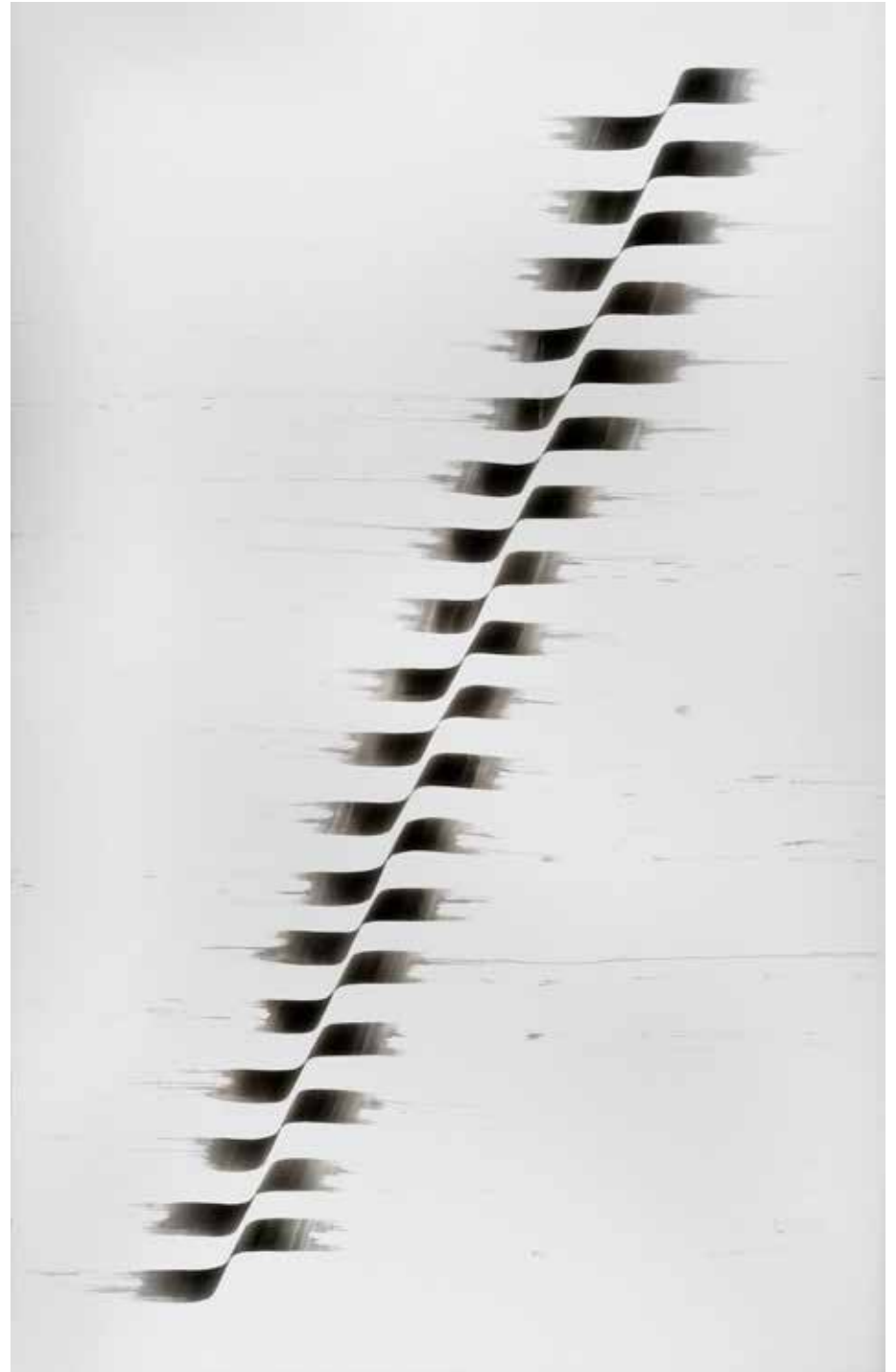
Soundproof vault of secondary grief

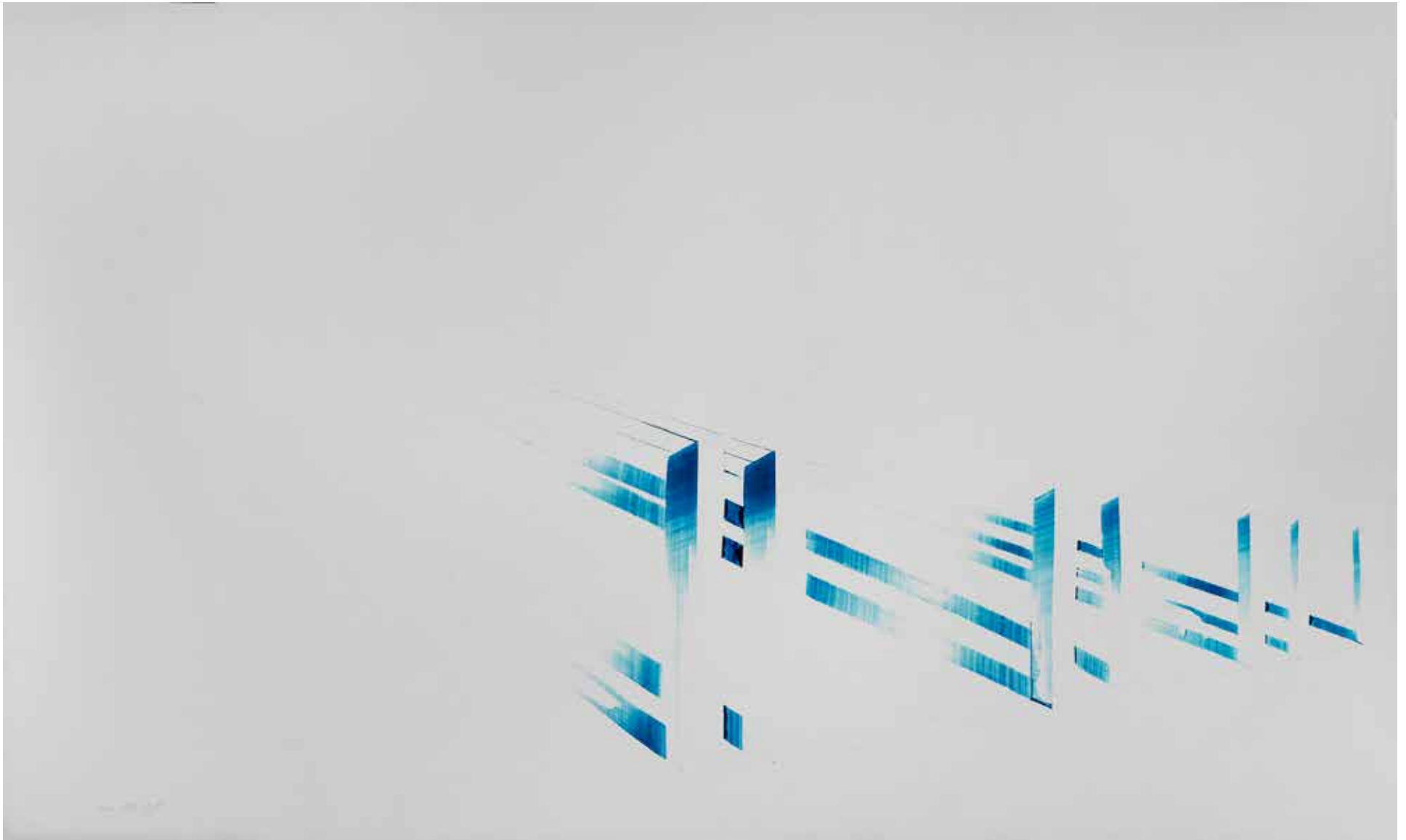
Reed pen and ink on Art Card

15 x 10 inches

2023

Hopes unraveling
Reed pen and ink on Art Card
48 x 30 inches
2023



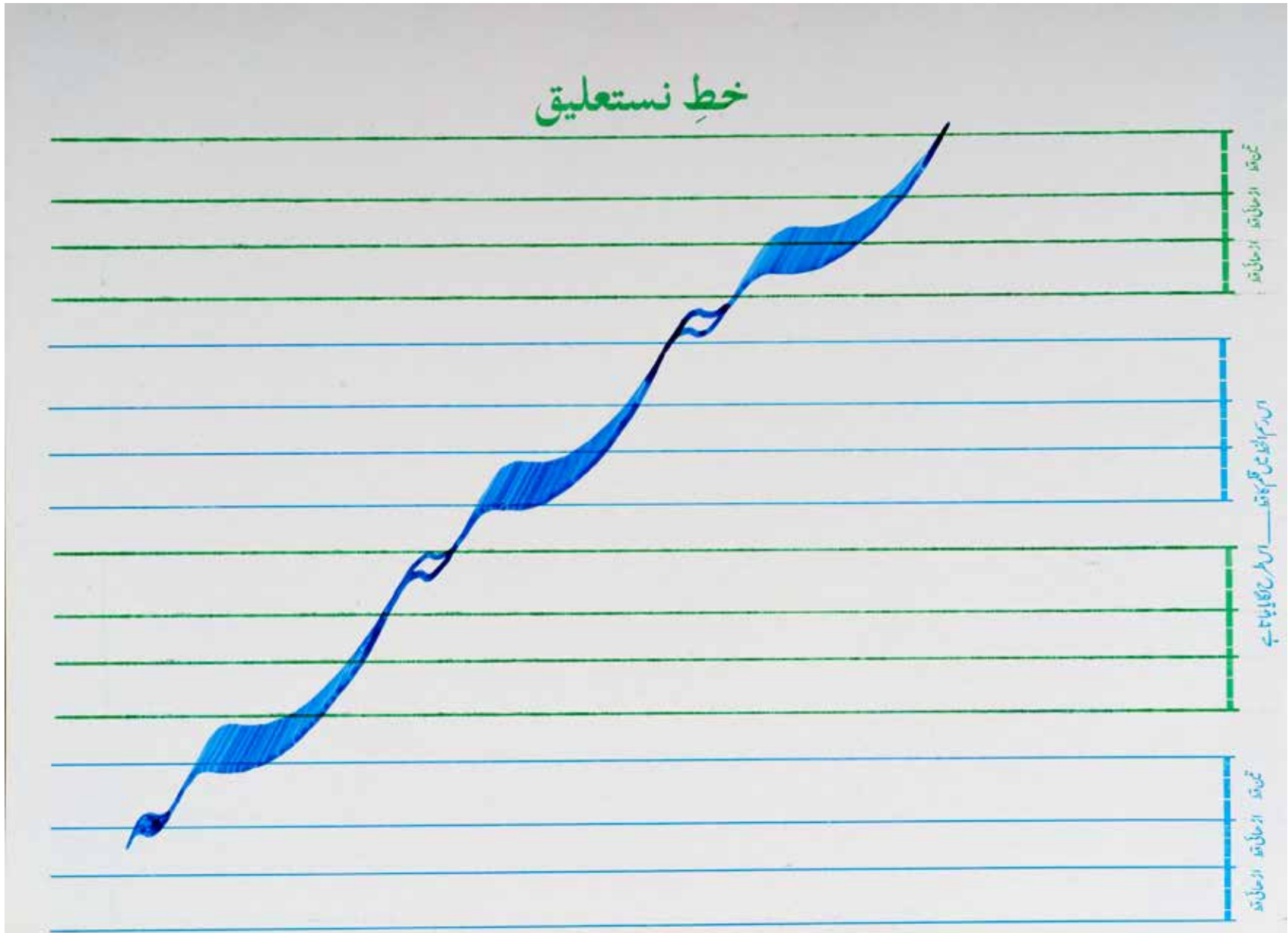


Whose story would I choose?

Reed pen and ink on Art Card

50 x 30 inches

2023

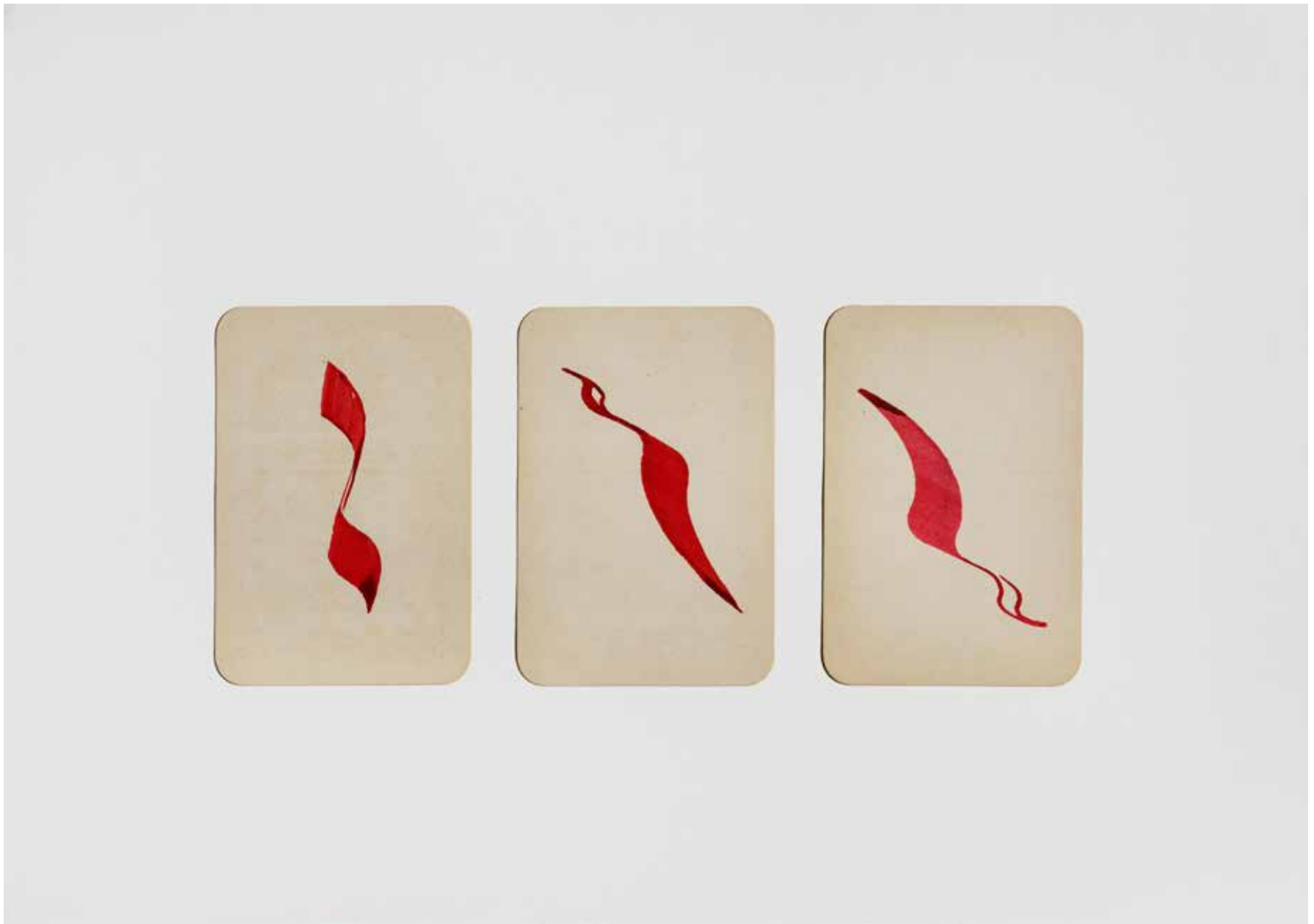


Recreational grieving

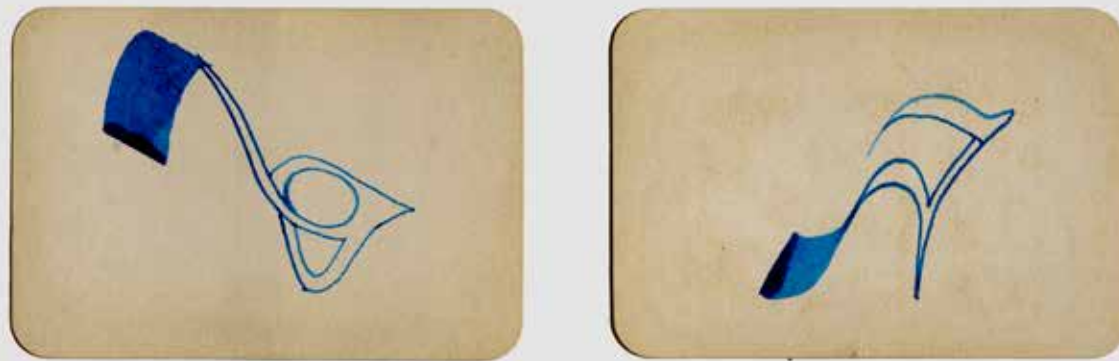
Reed pen on paper

8.4 x 12 inches

2023



A point on the Horizon 1
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 2
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 3
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 4
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 5
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 6
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 7

Reed pen and ink on Cards

11.5 x 8 inches

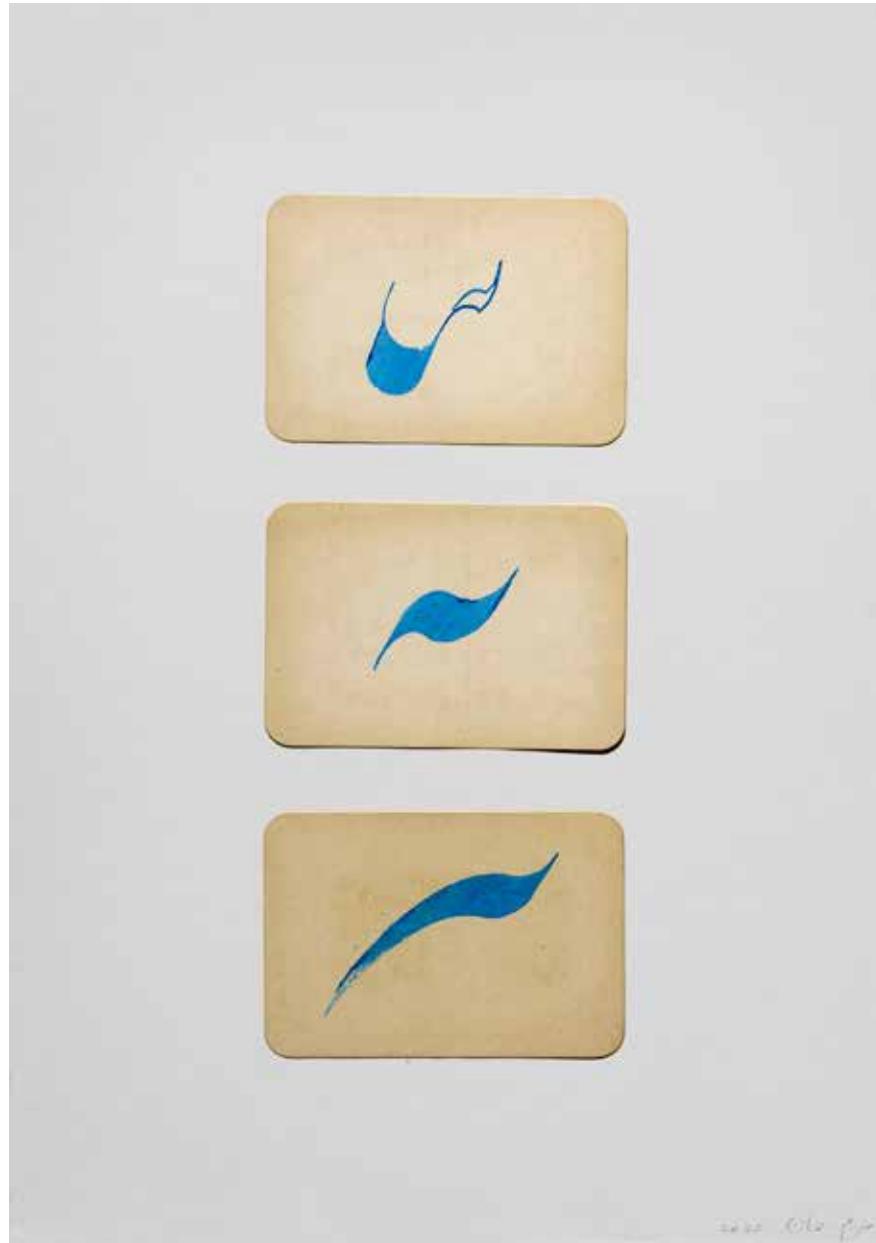
2023



A point on the Horizon 8
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 9
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



A point on the Horizon 10
Reed pen and ink on Cards
11.5 x 8 inches
2023



Moving to stand still.

Edited by Sundas Shaukat

Video

2023



www.koelgallery.com

F-42/2, Block 4, Clifton, Karachi, Pakistan
T. +92 (21) 35831292 | E: gallerykoel@gmail.com