John Zorn
Hermetic Cartography



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Hermetic Cartography

Drawing Papers 158

The Drawing Center

John Zorn
Hermetic Cartography

Jay Sanders
Olivia Shao

with contributions by
Arnold I. Davidson
Richard Foreman
Ela Troyano

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Director's Foreword + Curators' Acknowledgments

Laura Hoptman, Jay Sanders, and Olivia Shao

The exhibition *John Zorn: Hermetic Cartography* has been a remarkable collaboration on several levels. The first, of course, is between The Drawing Center, the show's two curators, and the peerless composer, musician, artist, and longtime downtown New Yorker John Zorn. The Drawing Center profoundly thanks John for sharing his drawing oeuvre—for the first time publicly—with us and our audience. The other noteworthy collaboration that brought this project to fruition is that between The Drawing Center's Burger Collection and Toy Meets Art Curator Olivia Shao and Jay Sanders, the Director of Artists Space, a similarly sized, similarly storied downtown New York nonprofit exhibition venue. The Drawing Center and Artists Space were both founded around a half-century ago, but to my knowledge this is the first time that our institutions have collaborated on an exhibition. We are thrilled that Jay brought this project to Olivia with the idea for a show at The Drawing Center, and we thank him and Olivia from the bottom of our hearts for this touchingly collegial partnership.

Jay and Olivia call Zorn's multi-medium project of close to sixty years, the artist's own "aesthetic world," idiosyncratic, experimental, and avant-garde. In the exhibition and accompanying publication, composing and drawing are explained as separate activities that spring from the same inquisitive and improvisational impulses. Zorn is not the first composer to explore the medium of drawing simultaneously with his musical work, but here each medium elucidates the other in a way that recalls the manner in which several instruments combine to play a single composition. While the exhibition primarily consists of works on paper, within that rubric there are myriad stylistic choices ranging from abstraction to collage to words on a page, expressed in a variety

of materials, including pencil, ink, charcoal, and cut paper. The effect of the exhibition is cumulative, and one could say, orchestral.

Although I cannot think of a more appropriate exhibition for The Drawing Center to produce, crossing genres is always a fundraising challenge. We are very grateful to Stephen Cheng for his enthusiastic understanding of this project and for his lead support. Generous funding has also been provided by art and music lovers Anthony B. Creamer III, Alex Mony, David Nuss and Sarah Martin-Nuss, whom we thank profusely.

At The Drawing Center, in addition to the curators, we thank our stellar team including Sarah Fogel, Registrar; Aaron Zimmerman, Operations Manager and Head Preparator; Valerie Newton, Director of Retail and Visitor Services; and Anna Oliver, Bookstore Manager. We also thank Assistant Curator Isabella Kapur and intern Rebecca Bonini. This volume features insightful essays by Arnold I. Davidson and Ela Troyano, and we thank them both for their contributions. We are extremely honored to publish a deeply poetic tribute to Zorn written by the late avant-garde playwright Richard Foreman (1937–2025). Last but not least, Joanna Ahlberg and Peter Ahlberg, our long-time, irreplaceable editing and design team have worked with the curators to produce a beautiful and useful publication. Thank you from all of us for more than twenty years of making books together.

Jay Sanders and Olivia Shao's profound gratitude goes first and foremost to John Zorn for trusting us to make this important work visible. We would like to thank the amazing team at The Drawing Center with special appreciation to Laura Hoptman, Rebecca DiGiovanna, Rebecca Bonini, and Isabella Kapur. Thanks are also due to Richard Aldrich, Annie Baker, Paul Chan, Stephen Cheng, Heung-Heung Chin, Canada Choate, Arnold I. Davidson, Richard Foreman, Dan Fox, Kenny Goldsmith, Victor Hugo, Alex Lau, Anita Shao, Phillippa Shao, David Chaim Smith, Daniel Terna, and Ela Troyano.

The title *Hermetic Cartography* comes courtesy of David Chaim Smith, a dear friend and the original esoteric cartographer whose work is profound, intensely beautiful, and most worthy of your attention. —JOHN ZORN

I. Abstract Drawings



PL. 1
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PL. 2
No title, 2024



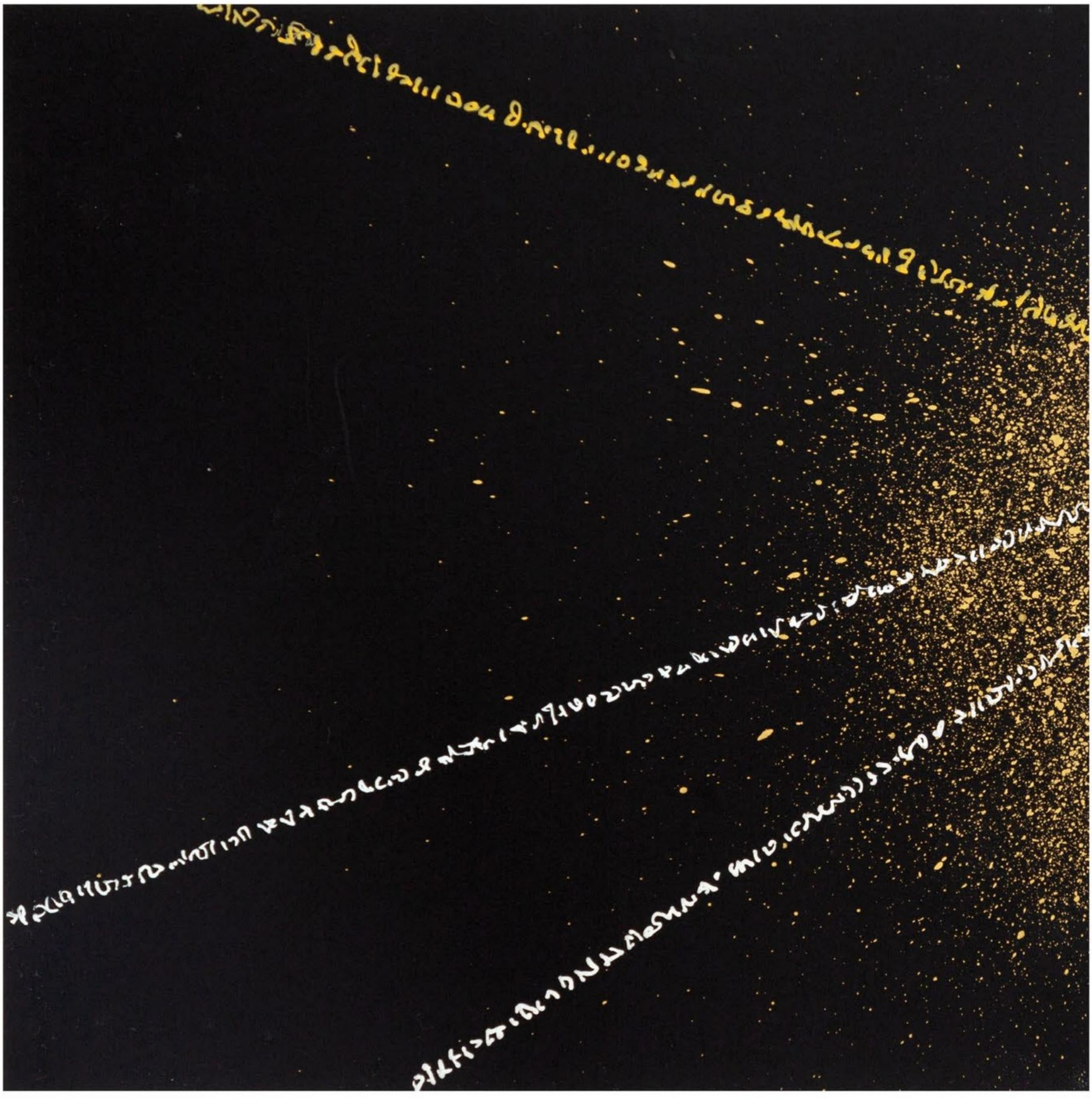
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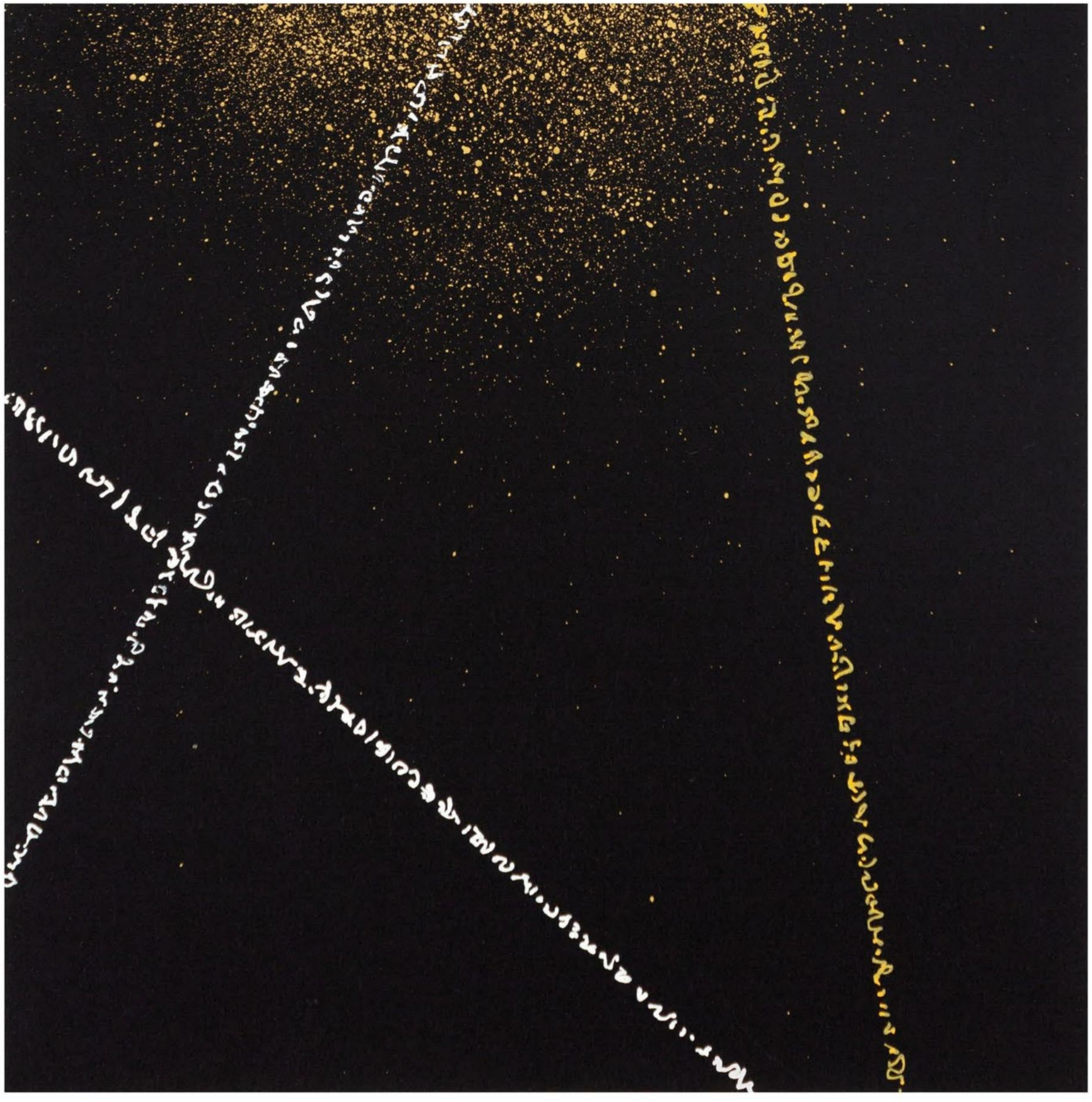
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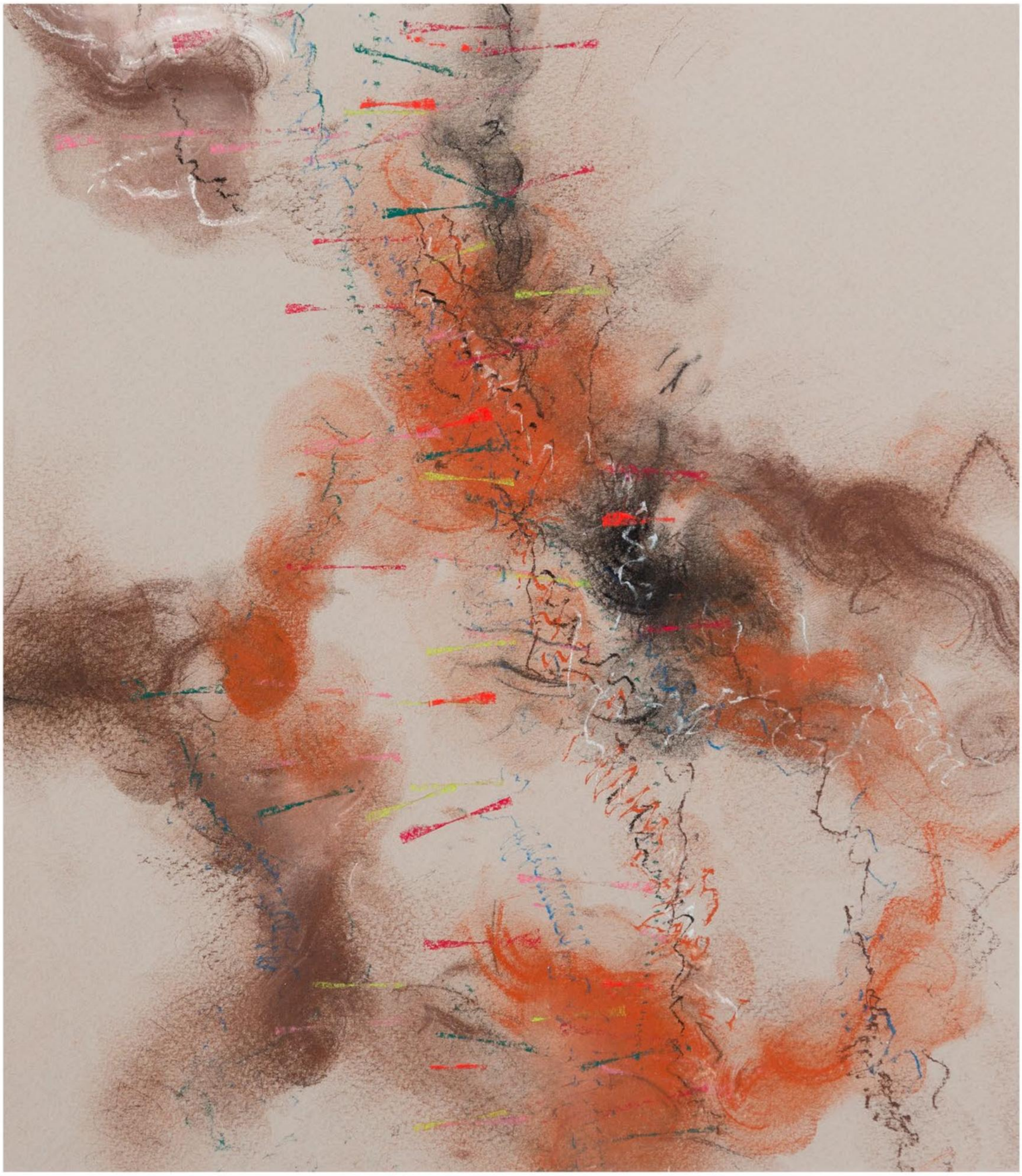
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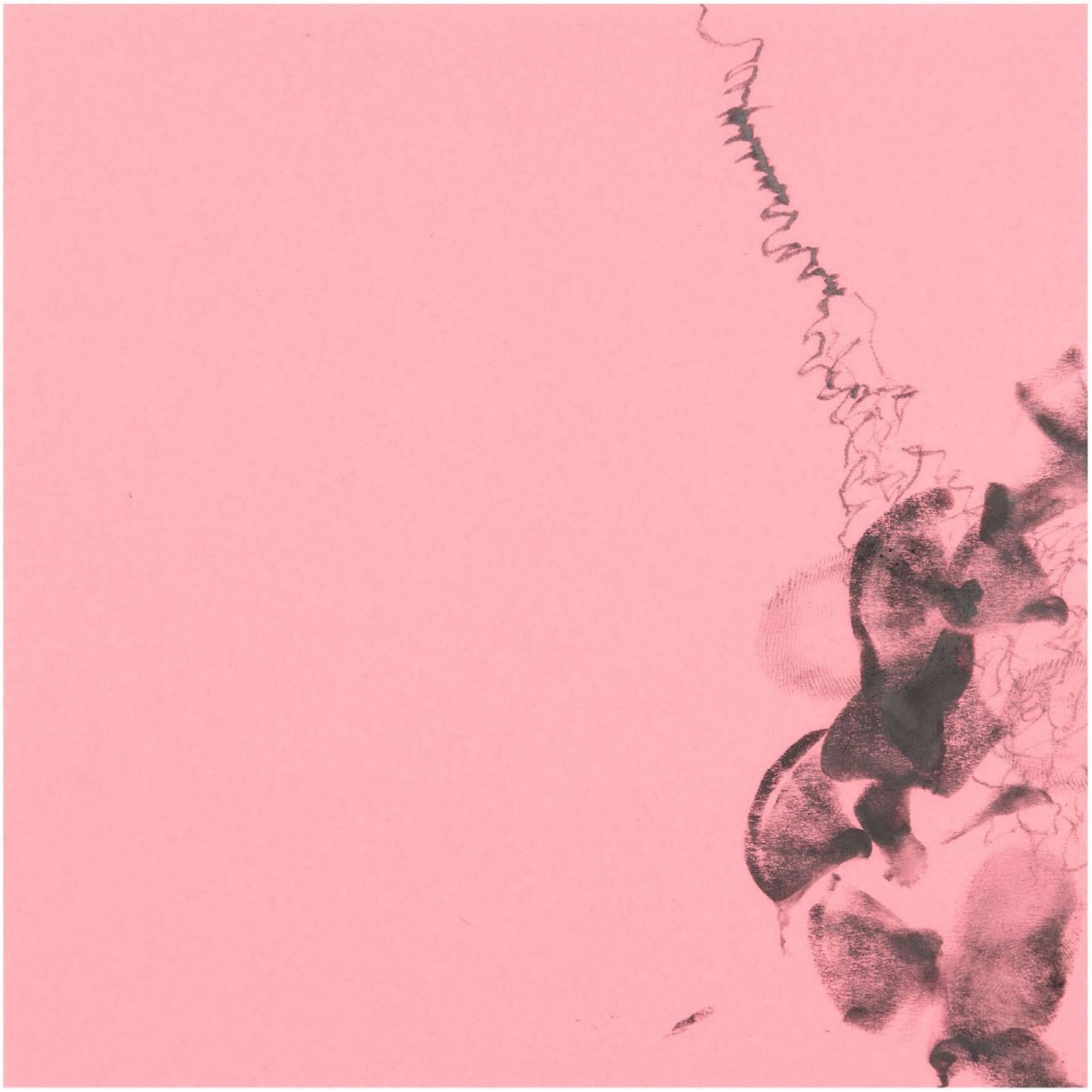


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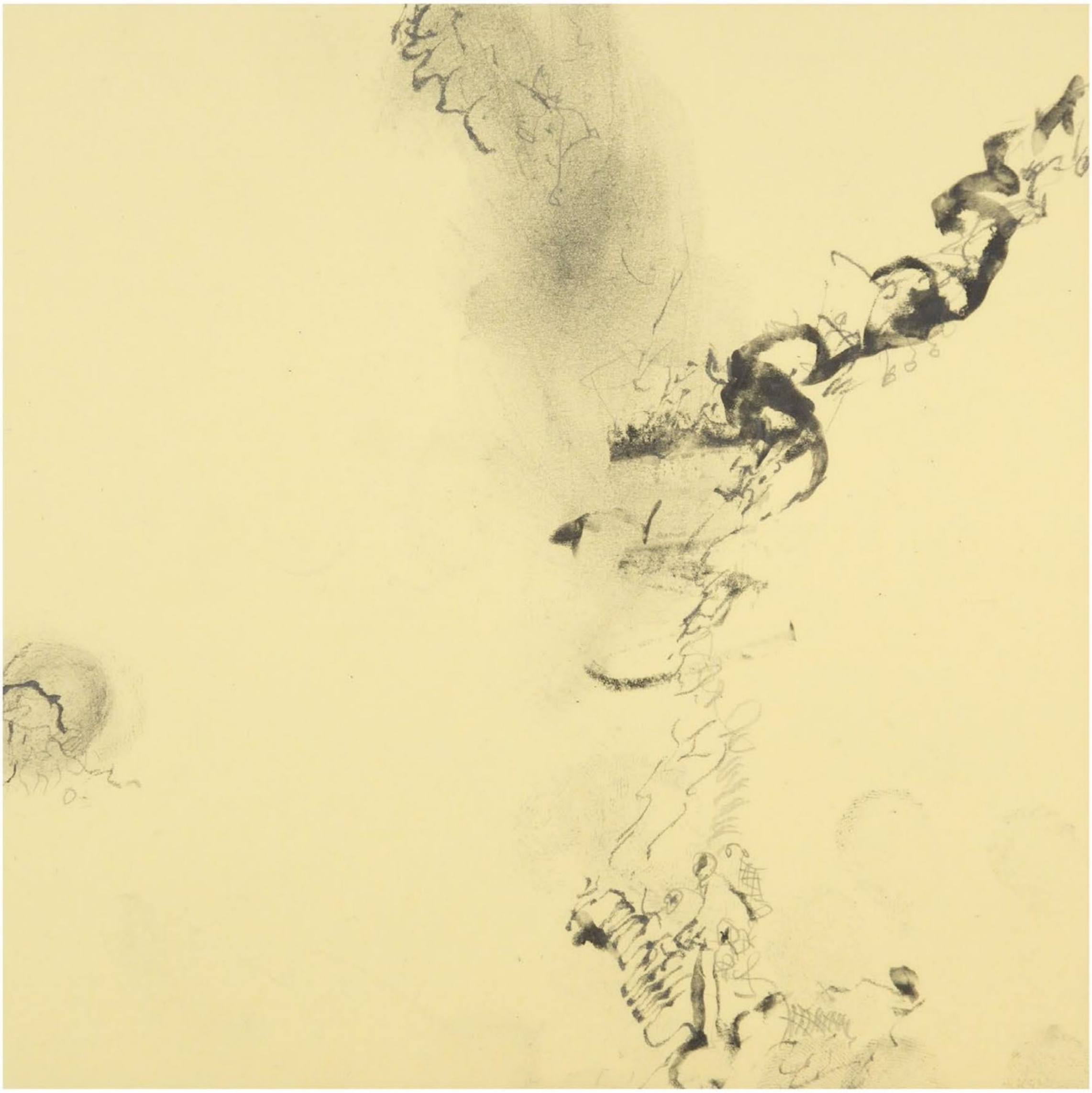


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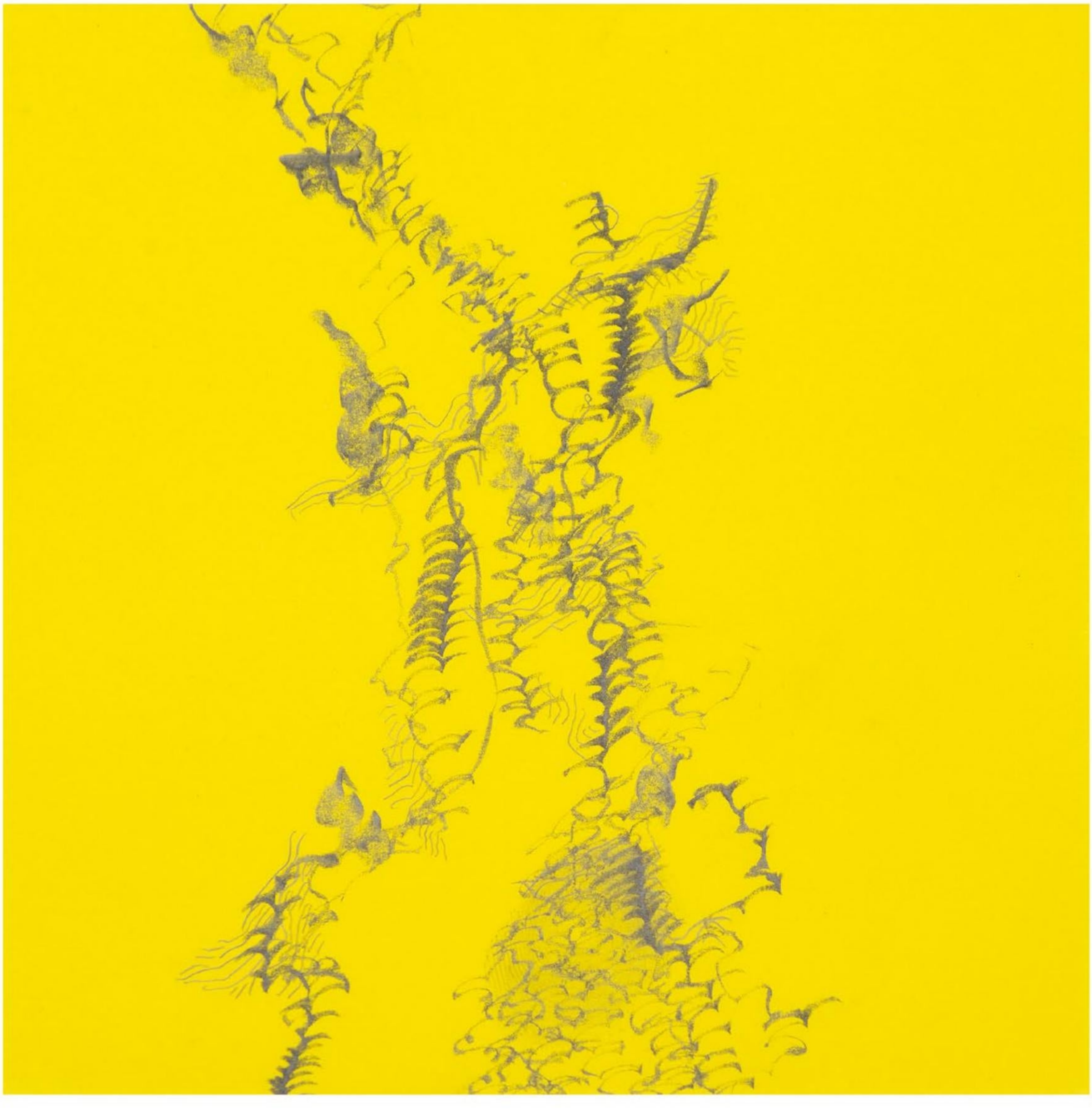
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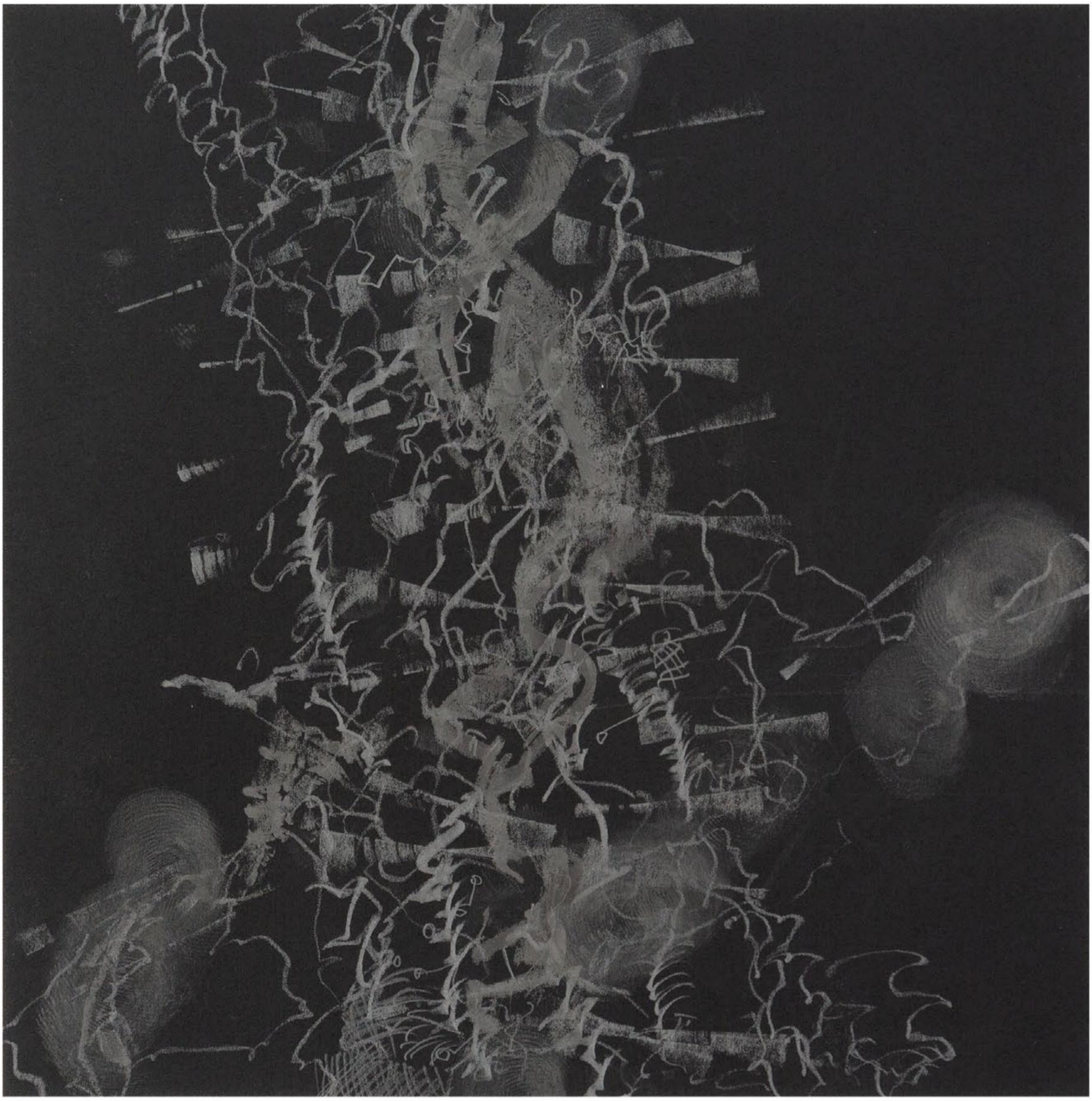
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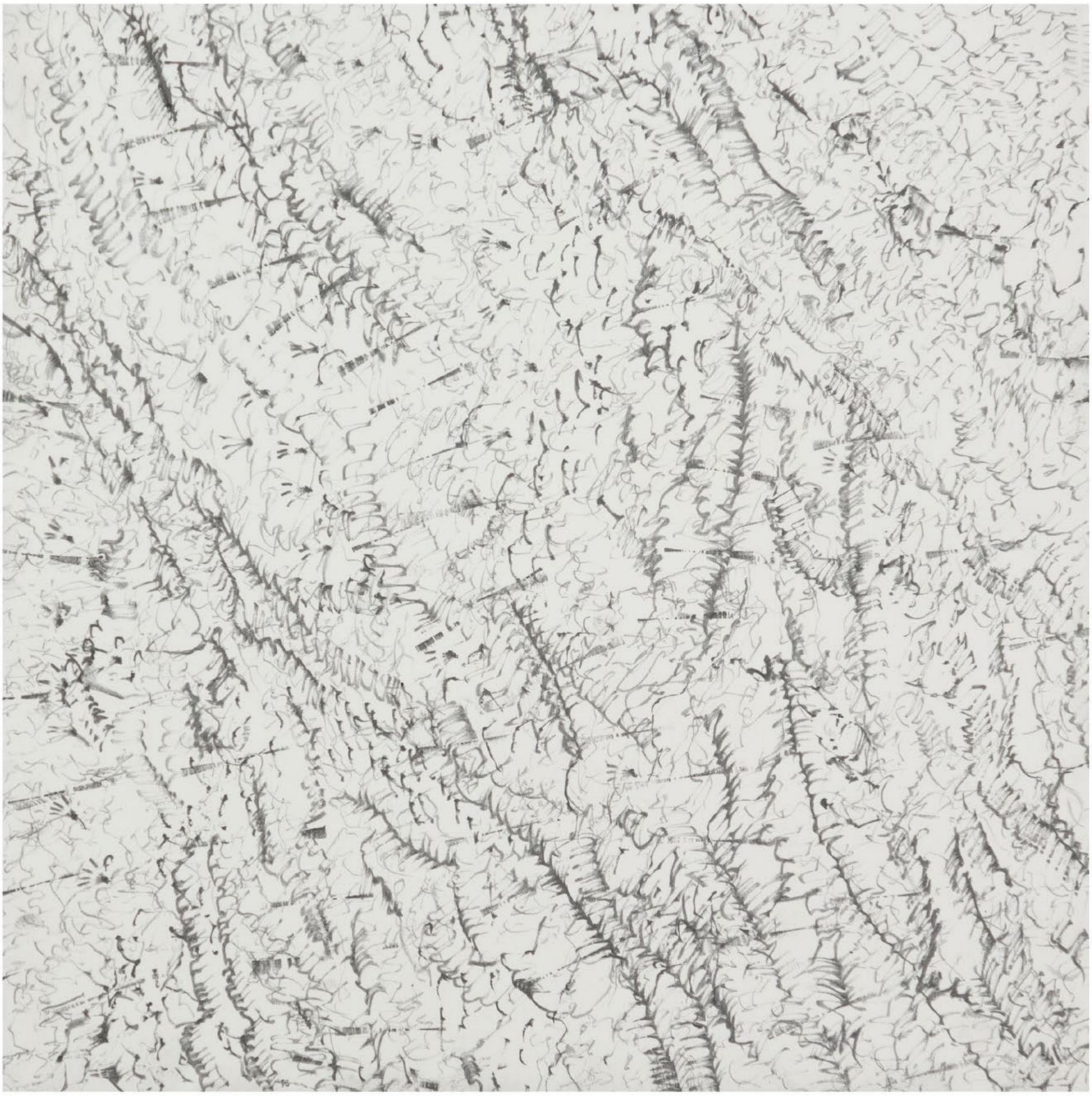
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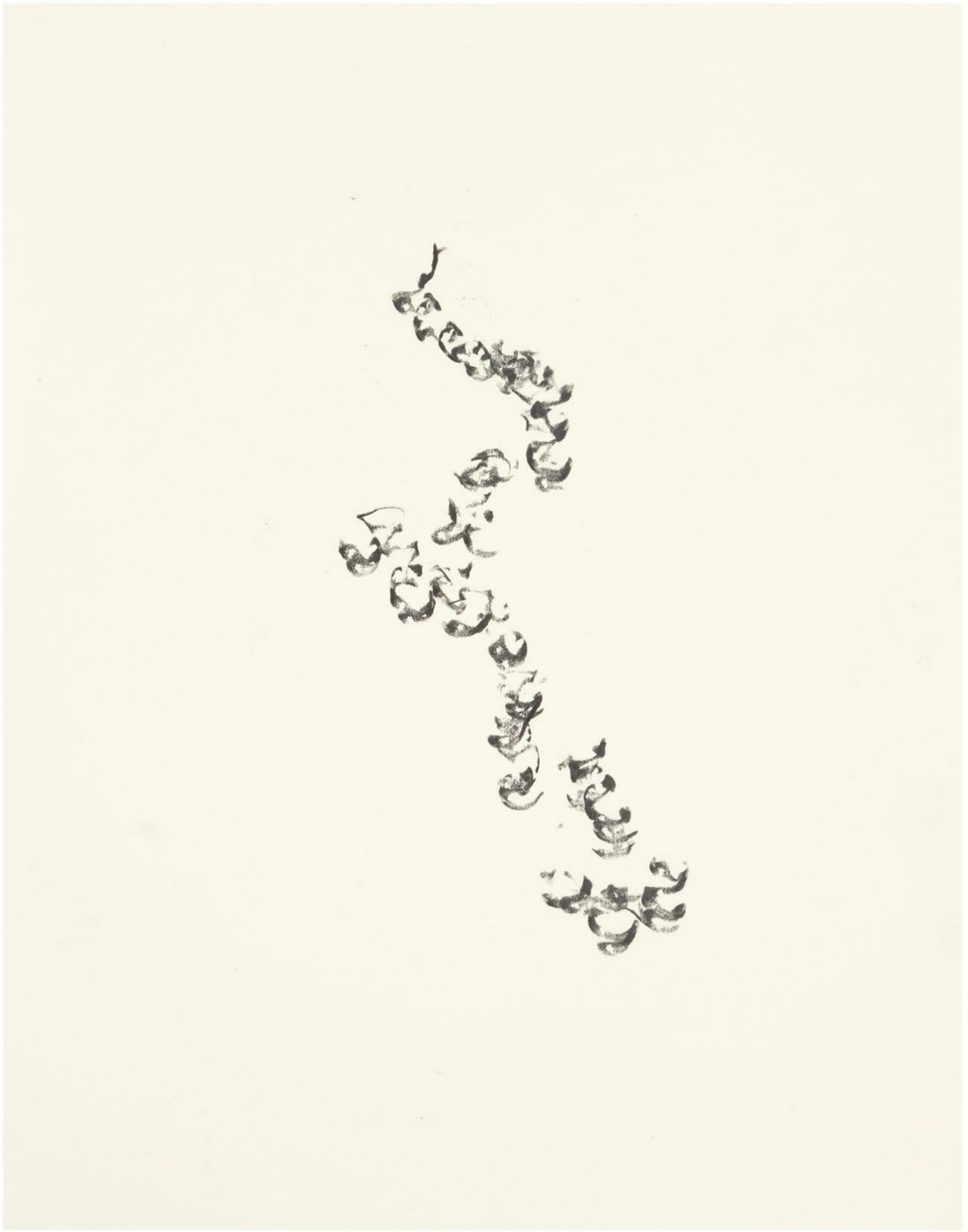
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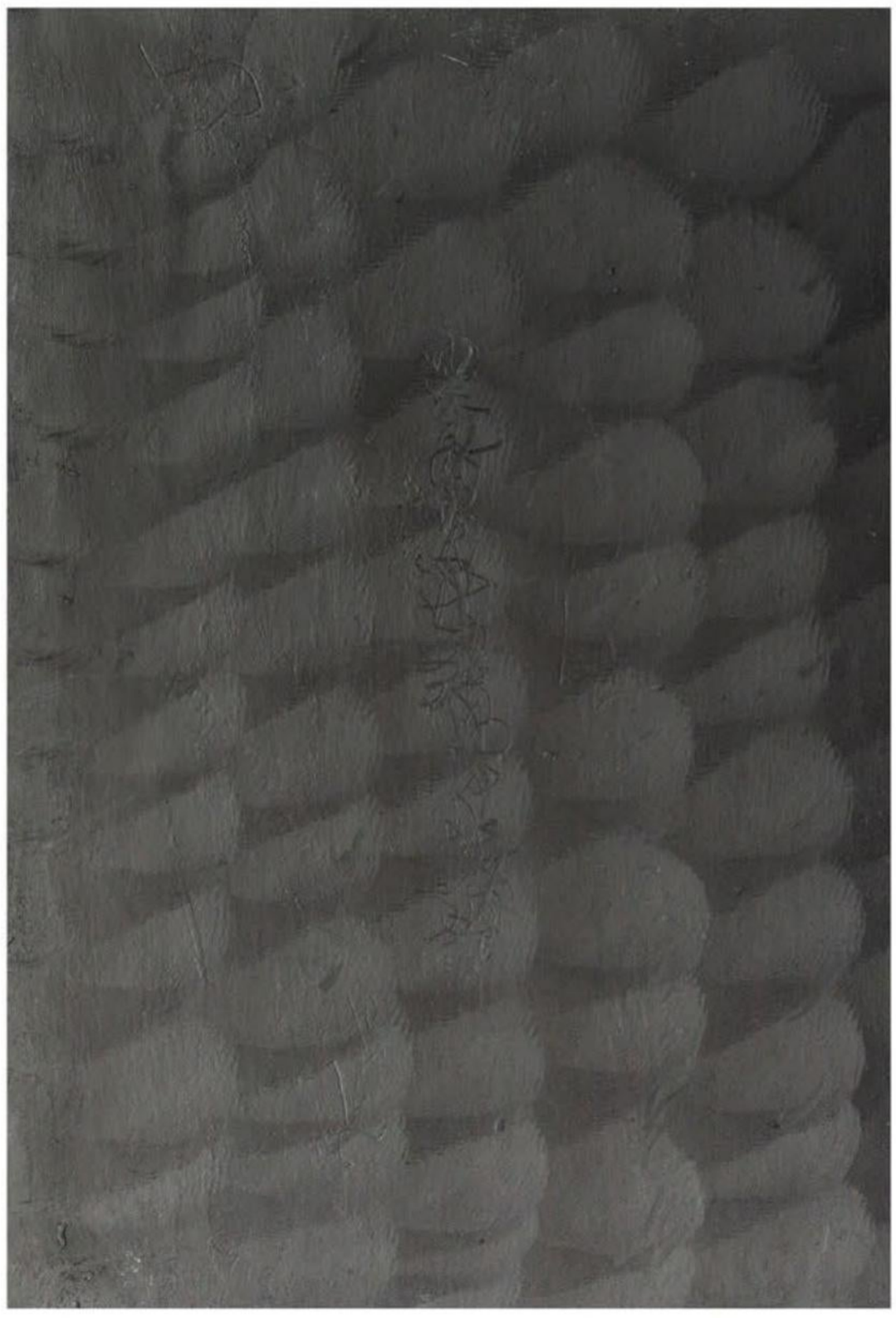
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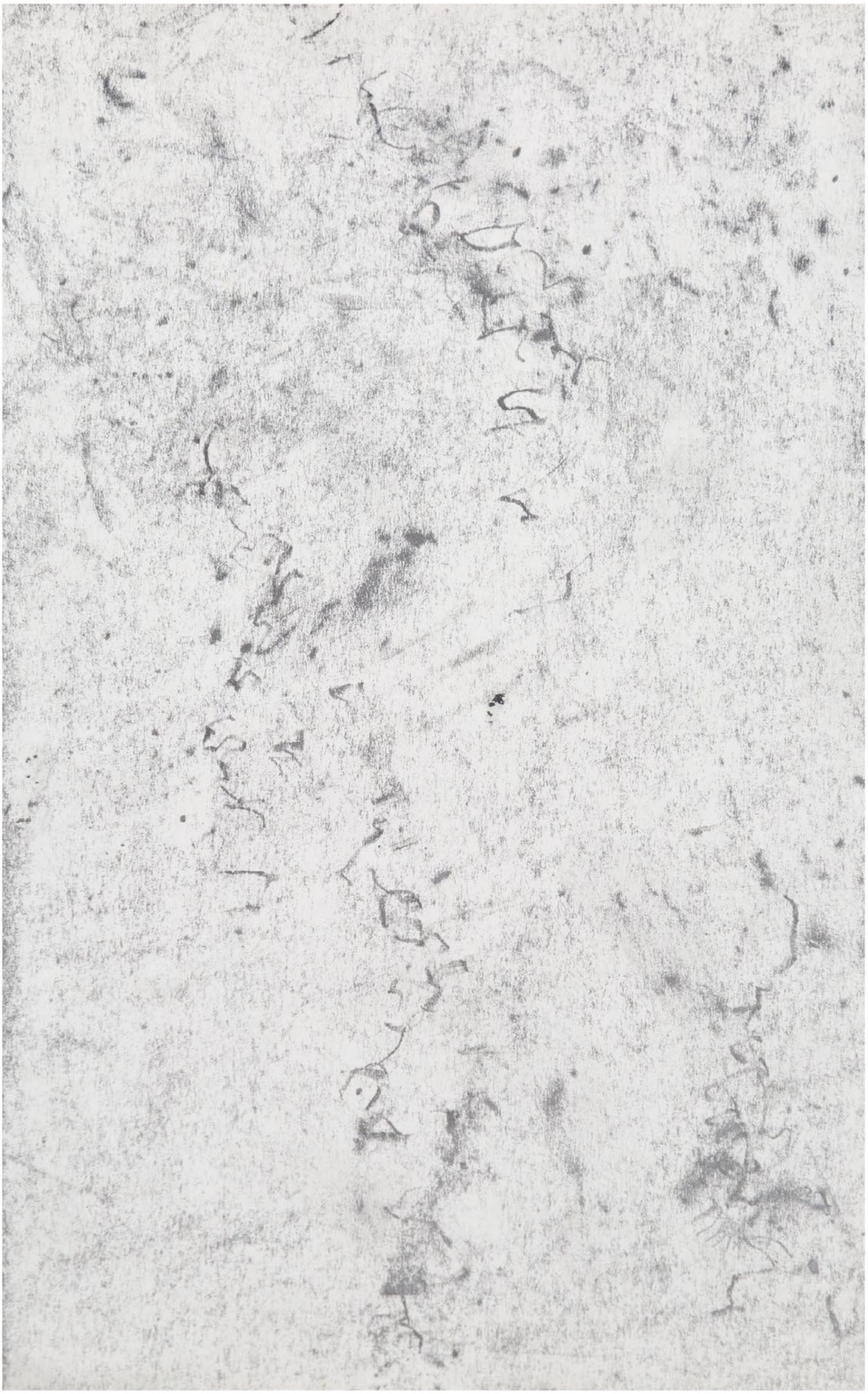
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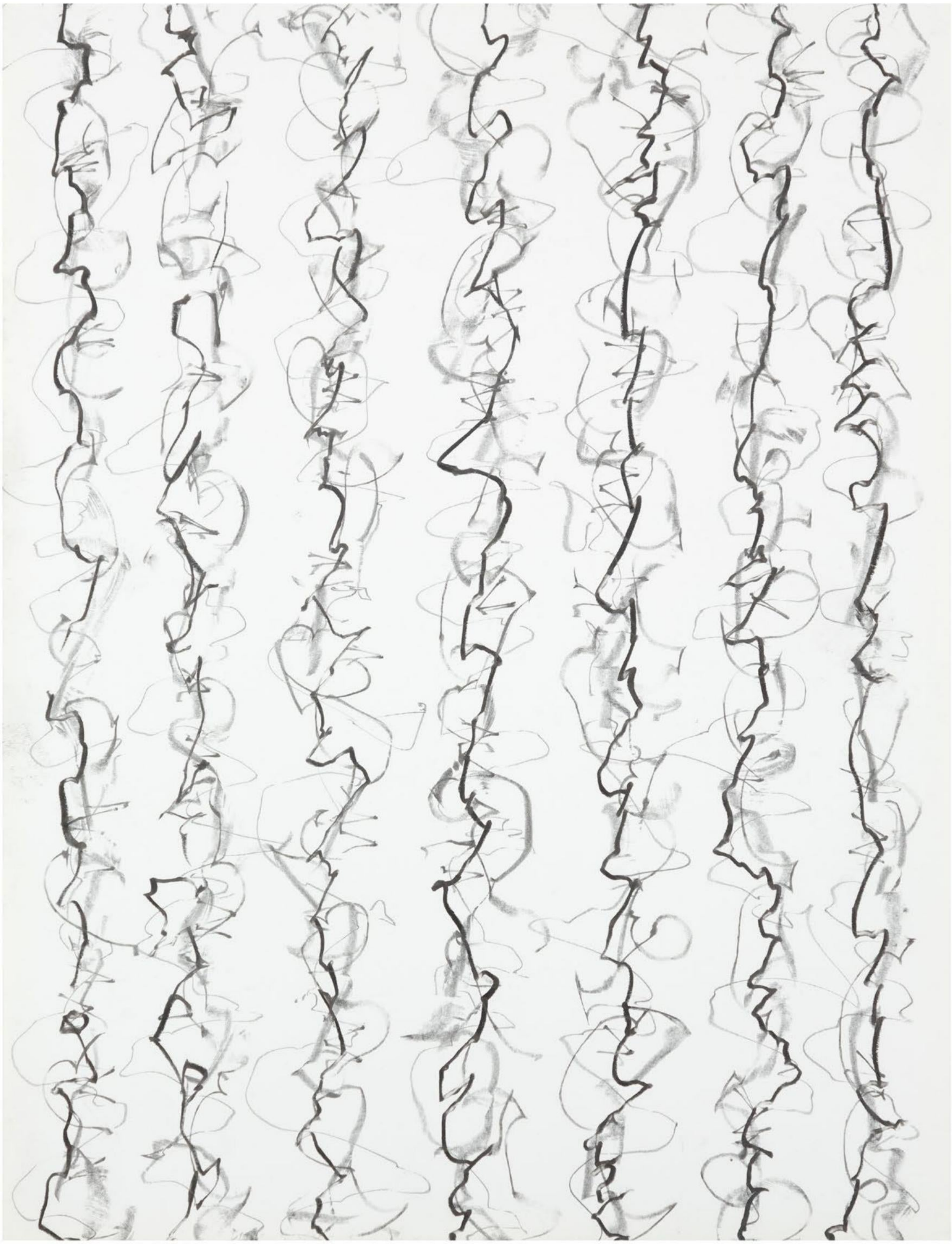
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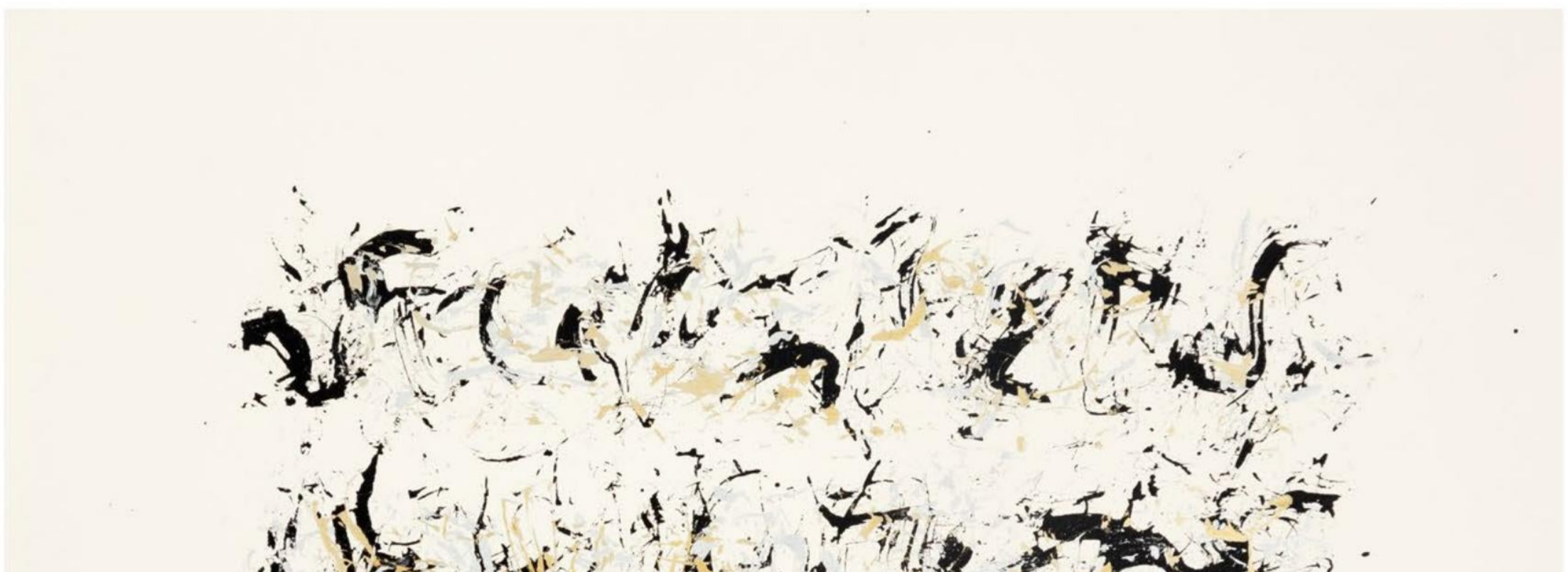
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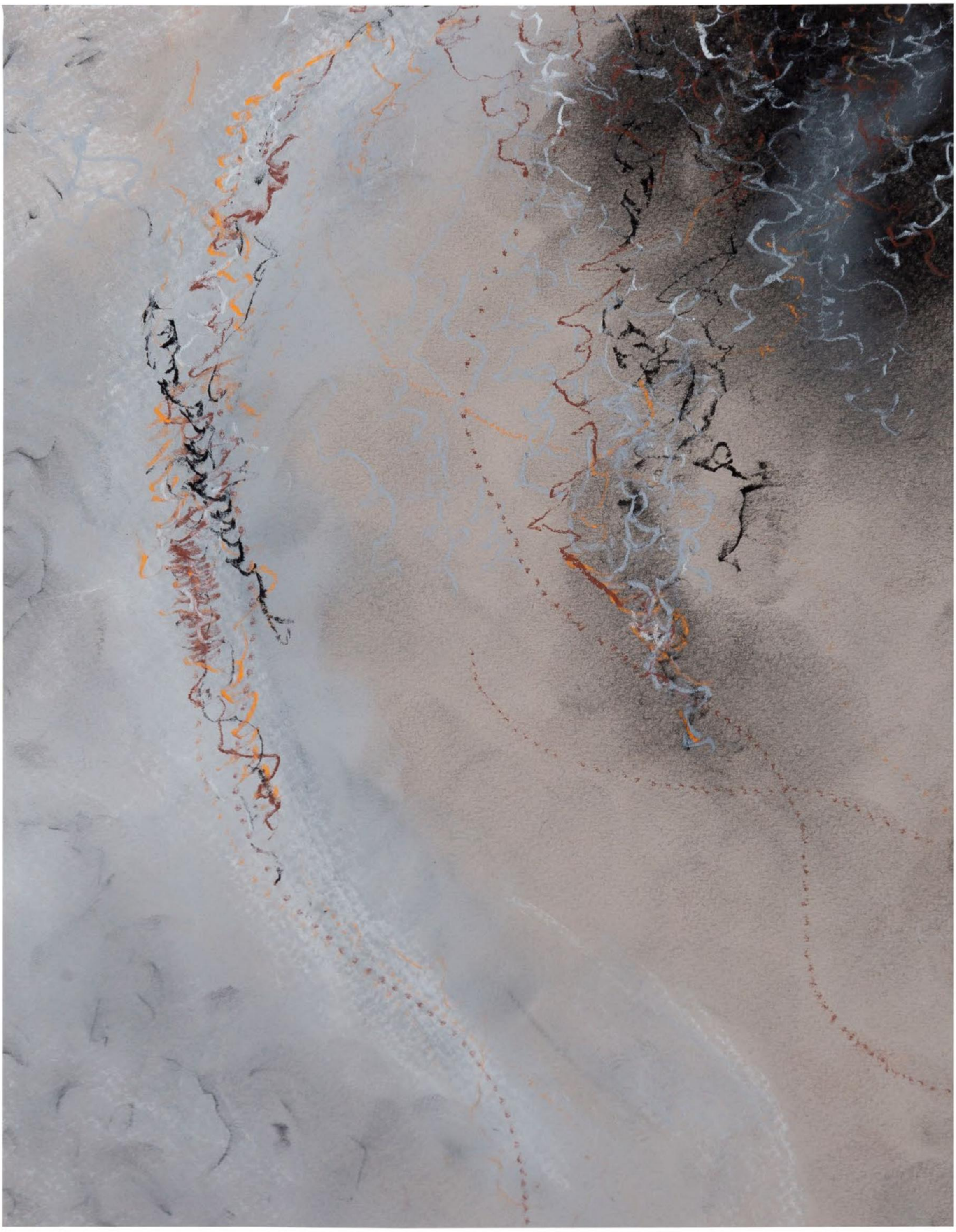
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The Hidden Codex

Jay Sanders and Olivia Shao

It is remarkable to reveal, for the first time publicly, the foundational underpinnings, enigmatic notational systems, and visionary abstract drawings of composer, musician, improviser, aesthetic philosopher, and visual artist John Zorn. Since emerging as a central figure in downtown New York in the mid-1970s, Zorn's radical compositional strategies have fundamentally expanded the possibilities of the avant-garde, sparking decades of innovation and, for some, perplexing bewilderment. One aspect of Zorn's vast and multifaceted oeuvre is fusing idiosyncratic structures with the farthest reaches of improvisation, conceiving music not as a fixed object but as a dynamic interaction between performer, score, and unpredictable forces. Zorn's deep philosophical stance rejects all musical boundaries, and a hallmark of his work is the dexterous merging of disparate rapidly evolving elements into mystifyingly syncretic wholes. After fifty years of presenting his work largely outside the mainstream and always on his own terms, he has nonetheless become one of the most consequential and influential composers of his time. More privately, his investigations have reached beyond the bounds of sound itself, through his little-known hermetic theater of tiny, manipulated objects, and more recently, through enigmatic works on paper whose formal and material improvisations reveal a new visual language.

Working with time, shape, and a reverential yet transgressive embodiment of myriad artistic forms, Zorn actively hybridizes and reconfigures from within. In this way, he continues the legacy of American maverick composers such as Charles Ives, Harry Partch, and John Cage—composing both formally and culturally, and working within the specificities of vernacular, formal structure, and history to transform and extend music. In Zorn's work, these operations

are taken to extremes. Through an unconventional approach that draws inspiration from film and cartoon soundtracks, the occult, and countless music genres, Zorn has worked across many contexts to meticulously construct an aesthetic world all his own. Defying categorization by its inherent nature, his work is laden with deeply nuanced studies and homages to a pantheon of forebearers–musicians, theoreticians, filmmakers, artists, philosophers, and writers–who have advanced our understanding of the human condition.

It is fitting that Zorn's first exhibition takes place at The Drawing Center, an institution renowned for presenting multifaceted artists for whom drawing reveals itself as a central means of speculation and articulation–Victor Hugo, Henri Michaux, Iannis Xenakis, and Unica Zürn are among the many who have directly inspired Zorn. Indeed, writing and drawing are threads connecting his earliest esoteric notes and graphic scores, the development of his wildly inventive interpersonal music systems, the visual language of his hand-drawn and collaged flyers and concert programs, and, most recently, his fifteen-year exploration of pure abstraction. Nearly all these works on paper have, until now, remained deeply private–used for personal study and reflection, or as essential means of communicating with his ever-evolving network of musicians. Through the lens of drawing, this exhibition traces nearly sixty years of Zorn's artistry, revealing how the economical tools of mark-making express the hermetic, visionary practice of one of New York's most complex living artists.

• • •

The catalyst for this exhibition is the first public presentation of Zorn's abstract works on paper. As with so many facets of his artistic investigation, they represent a sustained practice and inquiry into materials, communication, and the unknown–wholly undertaken for its own sake. These rapid improvisations–in graphite, charcoal, color pencil, Conté crayon, ink, chalk, pastel, and paint–utilize eccentric mark-making devices and techniques to render each page a uniquely hermetic ecosystem. Just as Zorn's music often comprises very short blocks of time housing densely multivalent material, these intimate works, all made on a small table in his bedroom, conjure cartographic tableaux and arcane universes through modest means. Their developing vocabulary of overlaid processes and gestures seems to both form and unform as abstract billowing masses which

allude to organic shapes, flames, catalytic energy, ectoplasm, and other supernatural phenomena. These intricate expressions are also informed by his study of esoteric communication histories—invoking calligraphy, sigils, and other magickal hermetic writing forms.

Radical time shifts have not only been the guiding structure of Zorn's compositions but also of his artistic life, which has defined itself through unexpected and deeply explored twists and turns. The emergence of these drawings is one such paradigmatic shift. Zorn began experimenting with abstract mark-making on paper in the context of creating his 2012 album *Music and Its Double*. An homage to Antonin Artaud, it features the one-act opera *La Machine de l'Être*, named after a drawing by the visionary French writer. Instead of using Artaud's work as the album's cover art, Zorn decided to draw it himself, with astonishing results—a starkly distributed spray, sweep, and stuttering of diffuse lines and flecks in black ink strewn across a white page [PL. 44]. Since then, recalling the pioneering development of his extended and highly personal saxophone language in the 1970s and the sheer inventiveness of his ongoing compositional techniques, Zorn has deeply explored his own faculty for improvisation via drawing, rendering these instantaneous compositions on an almost daily basis for the past fifteen years. A master improviser engaging a new form, his open and exploratory faculty conjures ineffable visions through a developing language, which metastasizes into increasingly byzantine designs.

Modulating from the lightest strands of filigree to densely opaque viscous blocks, the selection of drawings in this presentation expresses a wide array of Zorn's emblematic motifs. One prevalent structure is a cascading or erupting central vertical column extending beyond the expanse of the page. This form is generated in various ways—from large splashing calligraphic ink strokes that careen and drip from top to bottom, to nervy, meticulously intertwining coils whose interplay, in single or multiple color tones, meshes into braided strands and whirling totalities. These works express rapid incidental movement, whether gathering in a dense cacophonous fury or expressed as surgically specific bolts, while hashmarks, fingerprints, and rubbed clouds further modulate surface depths and opacities.

As with his music, Zorn utilizes evident materials to convey deep mystery, and in many works, this articulation of overall form takes on a maximalism that overwhelms any clear sense of its own making. Such extremity is a hallmark of Zorn's oeuvre, which plumbs the depths of formal and compositional possibilities to

achieve astounding and arresting surface effects. For example, Zorn's dexterous use of graphite conjures monstrous chasms, spectral clouds, and torrents of radiating air and light that seem to emanate from depths unknown [PL. 34]. At the same time, they may also weave a meticulous interplay of light and shadow enacted by erasure into a rambling network of overlaid veins of claustrophobic and breathtaking density—emptiness and absence playing critical roles in articulating the depth and subtlety of these tangled spaces [PL. 31].

So too, hidden and evident allusions to images and communicative systems appear throughout Zorn's work. Inscribed as linear strands or gridded sequences, his flights of asemic writing encode automatic gestural improvisation within written structures. In drawings on black paper, paranormal apparitions, as well as smoke, fire, and other fleeting elemental forces, are invoked. Recent notebooks are filled with topographical renderings recalling surrealist maps, obliterated visual poetry, abstracted cosmologies, as well as finely rendered sigils and other symbolic representations. One notable book (*Skulls: Memento Mori*) even exhausts the possibilities of depicting hidden skulls within the structures of otherwise abstract environments [PLS. 72, 78]. Linking the intellectual and visceral dynamics implicit in Zorn's artmaking, his work finds affinity with the prophetic articulations of a wide pantheon of world-building artists, writers, and mystics, including Marjorie Cameron, Austin Osman Spare, Brion Gysin, Hilma af Klint, Ralph Blakelock, and Helen Butler Wells, to name just a few.

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Zorn's recent drawings are an evolutionary development in a life's work of fiercely defining new aesthetic forms and their internal dynamics. In music, his profound vision is conveyed to musicians through relentlessly innovate systems of craft and communication. While never-before shown publicly, these music scores are the legendary devices for his formal invention and the groundbreaking structures they provoke. Perhaps most infamously, Zorn's game pieces of the late 1970s and 1980s redefined the fundamental parameters of composition and improvisation, building interactive systems that empower musicians themselves both to determine the music they will play and to collectively enact a system of interpersonal cues, which then, in real-time, structure the work itself—ensuring that no two performances are ever even remotely similar. Speaking of his masterpiece *Cobra* (1984), Zorn states:

"I don't control it at all. It's all up to the musicians in the group...They make all the cues, and they tell me what they want, and then I act like a mirroring device so that everyone can see what the cues are... it always ends up being a psychodrama up there on stage. That's what those pieces are about."[1]

Born in 1953 in New York City, Zorn immersed himself in music, film, art, and theater from an early age, and a pair of small collages made when he was just sixteen years old amalgamate ticket stubs from concerts and events, juxtaposing fragments of his lived experience in ways that foreshadows the cross-medium fusion that would soon define his work [PLS. 86, 87]. Zorn's early music development was marked by an intense engagement with twentieth-century popular and avant-garde traditions, both in New York and abroad. While still in high school, he created his earliest compositions, which draw on European avant-garde music, American indeterminacy (including the work of John Cage), Fluxus, and Dadaism as they address a wide range of experimental techniques, from new methods of sound notation to novel approaches to organizing time and performance. These early works were not merely exercises in notation or technique, they are the foundation of an evolving and intersectional artistic language—comprising philosophy, history, and people as much as music itself.

Zorn's earliest, nearly unknown compositions are among his most strikingly visual experimental music systems, showcasing both his radical extension of graphic notation and the expansive scope of his initial questioning of the parameters of music and art. Composed when he was just fourteen, *Caevorrys* (1967) is prescient in its exploration of real-time improvisation, laying the foundation for Zorn's ongoing interest in precisely structured yet freely executed musical moments. Written for four instruments—clarinet, flute, piano, and frequency generator—each musician interprets their own unique seven-page visual score, a series of beautifully rendered abstract symbols: dots, lines, squiggles, and densities in blue Waterman ink [PL. 91]. Each page is accompanied by a specified duration, ranging from three to forty-six seconds, dictating that the musicians perform rapid, yet calculated, responses. The result is a tightly compressed structure of twenty-eight overlapping and staggered improvisations, unfolding in less than three minutes—

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1 John Zorn, interviewed by Mike Burma (conducted October 20, 1990), *Browbeat*, no. 1 (fall 1993).

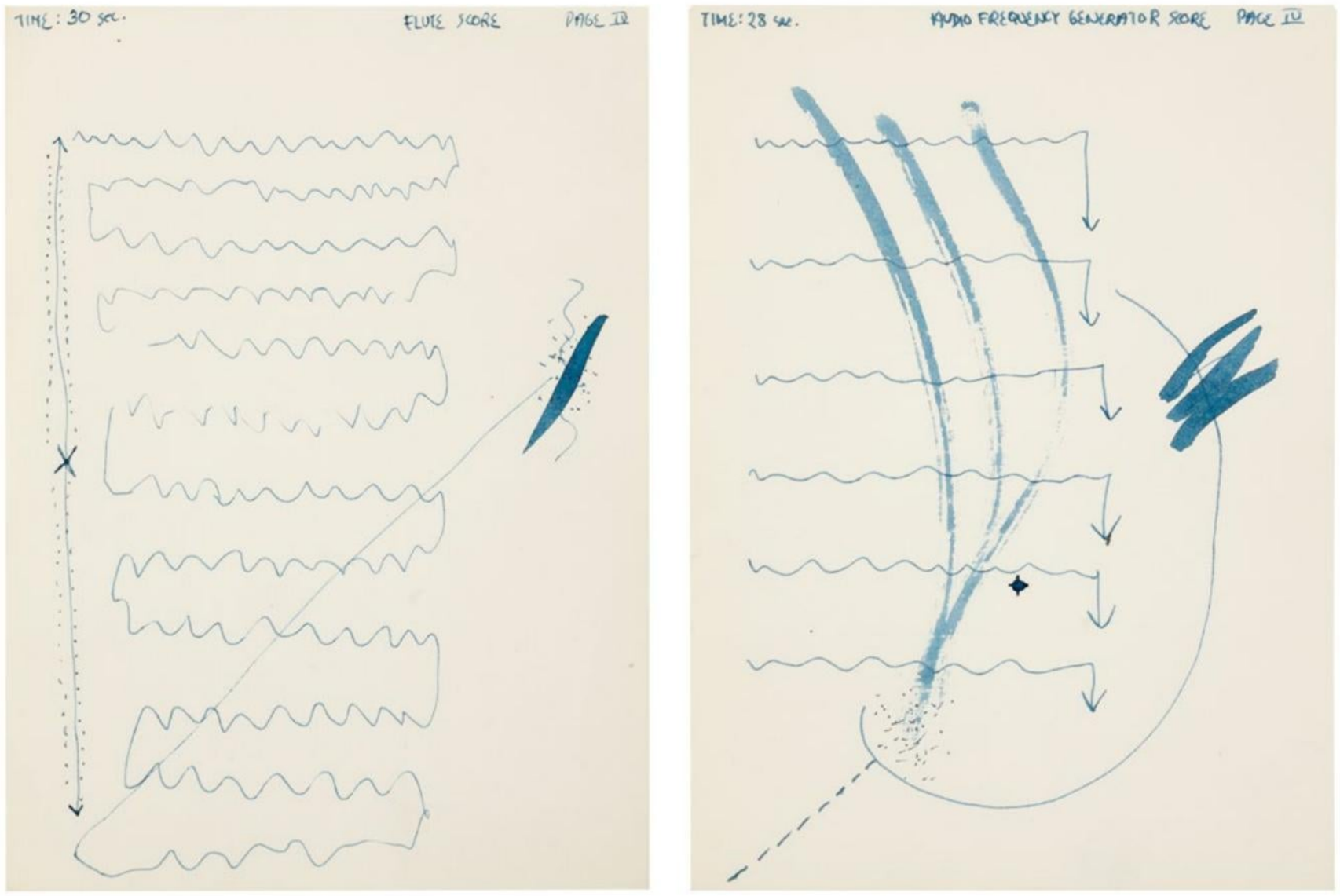


FIG. 1 *Caevorrys*, 1967

a dynamic collage of sound that mirrors Zorn's early commitment to both specificity and chaos.

Zorn's economy and precision reached an early apotheosis with the Duchampian framing of *Invention of One Note* (1969) in which a single high E♭ in the key of B flat major becomes a complete and self-contained musical statement. Likely the shortest composition ever created, its pocket-sized score exemplifies his talent for distilling profound musical ideas into minimalist gestures [PL. 90]. At the same time, it plays with the conventions of classical composition, with its arbitrary "Op. 28" and Zorn's winking "Z number" (1.111 [infinity])– a surrealist twist on the Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis, which assigned a

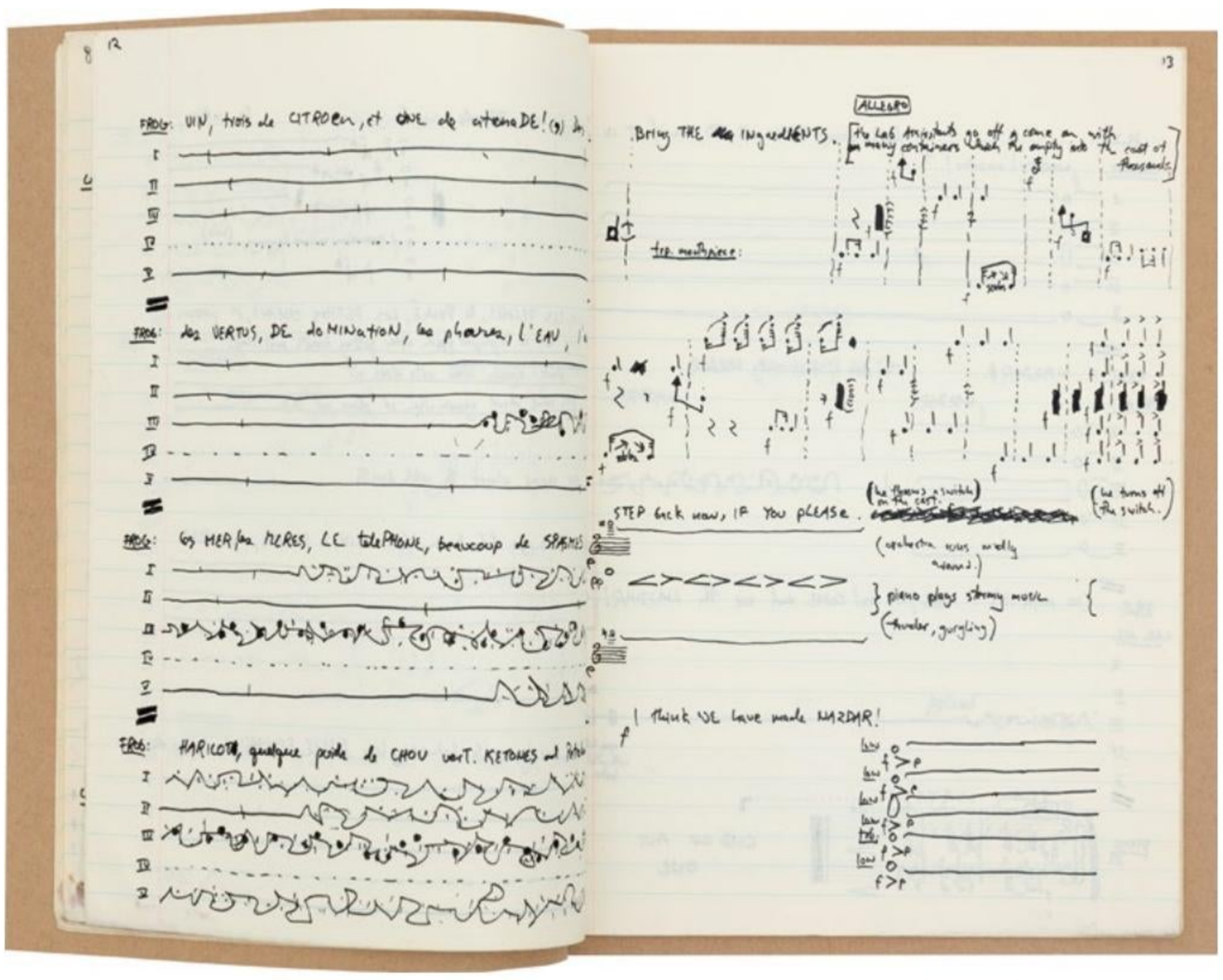


FIG. 2 *Nazdar*, 1970

unique number to each Bach composition. The piece anticipates later works where seemingly simple fragments, isolated moments, or miniature forms reveal intricate structures beneath their surface.

By 1969, Zorn began composing longer, more audacious pieces that pushed the boundaries of even experimental music. *Grosse Rake* (1969), a single-page composition, references Beethoven's notoriously

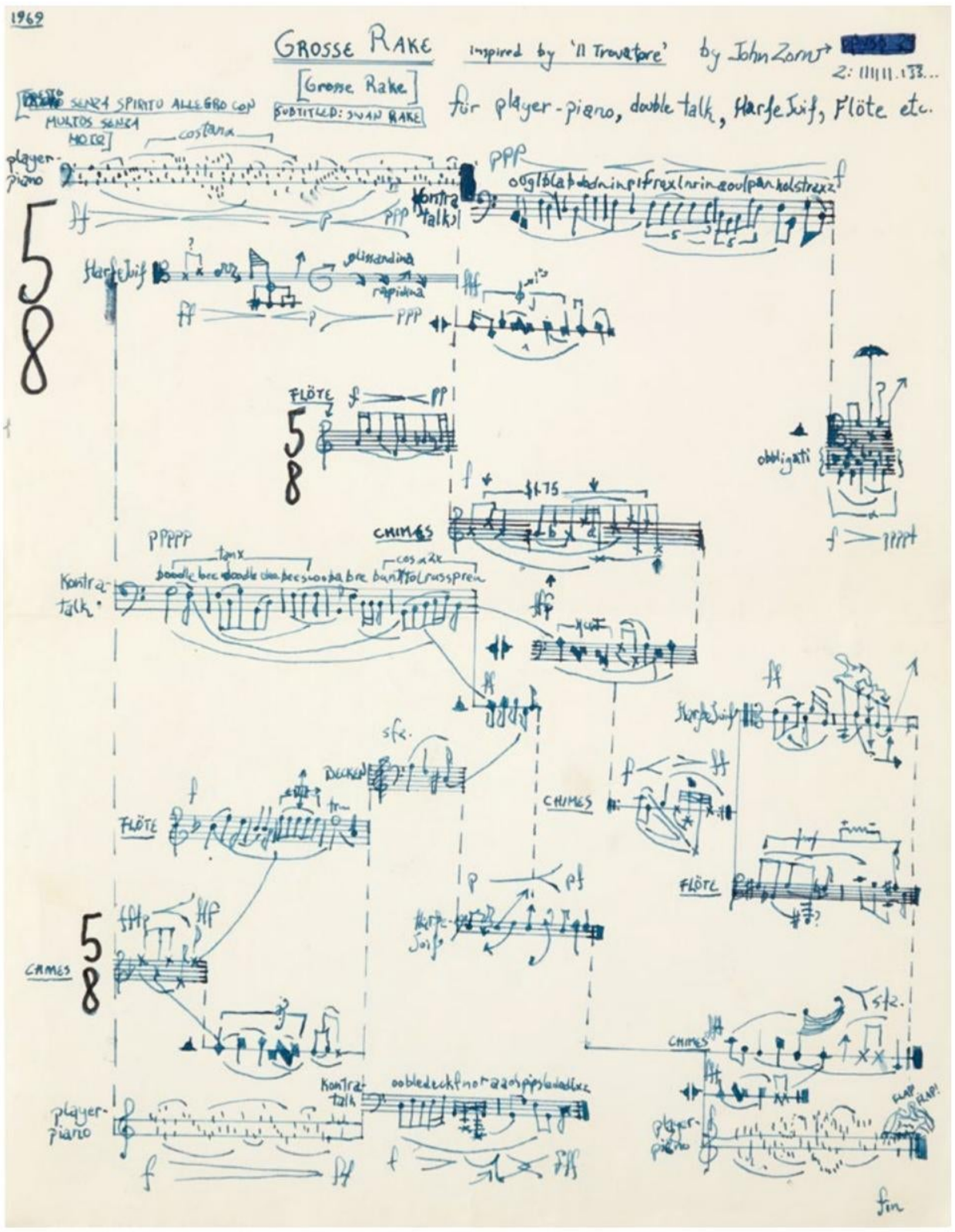


FIG. 3 *Grosse Rake*, 1969

complex *Grosse Fuge*, Tchaikovsky (with the subtitle *Swan Rake*), and Verdi's *Il trovatore*. Its floating musical lines for player piano, double talk, Jew's harp, and flute evoke the poetic, shaped scores of George Crumb while incidental moments of astonishment abound, including the concluding "flap! flap!" of a completed player piano roll rotating wildly in its mechanism. *Nazdar* (1970), a fantastical "little opera" for five performers and a frog, is as much a conceptual artwork as a musical score [PL. 95]. Written in felt-tip pen, it features nonsensical texts, bizarre symbols on parallel timelines, and references to mythical creatures, reflecting Zorn's fascination with the absurd and the fluid boundary between reason and irrationality. *Destruction Music* (1972) marked Zorn's creation of intricate paper instruments used in conjunction with choreographed movement in a dance performance. These instruments—paper bags filled with crumpled

paper, to be punctured, shaken, or torn—underscored Zorn's growing interest in the embodied nature of music and its integration with visual art in live performance. The graphic score here becomes not only a musical notation but a blueprint for a performative act, emphasizing the interaction between sound, movement, and visual design [PL. 101].

If Zorn's teenage works were an exploration of extending and obfuscating classical music, his brief time studying at Webster College in St. Louis (1972–74) introduced him to the cutting edge of jazz, a transformative experience that would deeply shape his music. *Hymen 2* (1973), referencing Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Hymnen*, marks a pivotal moment, with its eccentric yet precise scoring of an ecstatic free-jazz composition for woodwind trio (alto sax, bass clarinet, and bassoon) [PL. 97]. Instructing musicians to "blow their guts out through their horns" and channel "the more ecstatic moments in the music of SUN RA, Pharoah Sanders, or Anthony Braxton," Zorn creates a highly unique notation system to capture extended techniques—growls, harmonic squeaks, key clicks, trills, and glissandi—that push the boundaries of the instruments and challenge traditional methods of notation. The piece also invites a deeply personal engagement with the music, urging performers to embrace not only their technical prowess but their psychological states—doubt, humor, or even skepticism—infusing the performance with a raw, emotional authenticity. As Zorn soon returned to New York and immersed himself in a community of radical improvisers, he would increasingly open up his compositional palette, embracing their unpredictable, individualistic languages.

Another early facet of Zorn's dismantling of classical and avant-garde composition is his focus on music's visual and performative dimensions. His fascination with surrealism, pataphysics, and extra-musical materials is evident in *The Baroque Bassoon Organ* (1968), an elaborate design for an imagined instrument combining bassoons with bellows, strange mechanical connections, and esoteric annotations [PL. 89]. Evoking Alfred Jarry, Tristan Tzara, and the fictional music of Peter Schickele's P.D.Q. Bach, the piece blends humor with mysticism, reflecting Zorn's interest in invented systems and his engagement with the irrational and visionary. Another small two-sided drawing inscribed "The Captain" and "The Altas" (1968–69) imagines a fantastical performance environment, featuring a ship's wheel surrounded by props like a "foghorn," "blinking light," and "electric signal for engine room"—amalgamating a cartoonish set and a foley artist's sound studio [PL. 93]. The design

strongly anticipates Zorn's sonic experiments with unconventional instruments such as duck calls, as well as later compositions like *The Prophetic Mysteries of Angels, Witches, and Demons* (2007) and *The Gas Heart* (2020) which call on percussionists to perform outlandish foley effects ("walking in the snow [squeeze cornstarch bag]," "vulgar slurping water," "sharpen large butcher knife"). Beginning with his earliest works, Zorn incorporates an utterly expansive view of sound, embracing the full spectrum of noise from contemporary life. Where traditional musicians might reject television, advertising, or electronic media, he perceives these as inevitable sources of inspiration—non-musical materials to be implicitly manipulated and woven into his compositions.

• • •

If Zorn's music could incorporate any possible sound, could it also be made with no sound whatsoever? In the mid-1970s, his experiments in merging music, theater, and visual art culminated in his deeply personal *Theatre of Musical Optics*, a groundbreaking body of work exploring this question. Inspired in part by his time assisting legendary avant-garde theater artist Jack Smith and associating with Richard Foreman and his Ontological-Hysteric Theater, Zorn had sought to fuse multisensory experiences—sound, physical action, and visual spectacle—into a unified artistic event. While many of his earliest performances involved musicians improvising within a timeline of carefully notated physical actions and object manipulations, orchestrated with extreme concerns for their sonic as well as visual components (the score for an early multimedia piece explicates a performance presented at Foreman's theater in 1975), soon Zorn would starkly distill these investigations [PL. 95]. Through the provocatively simple idea of eliminating sound entirely, he focused exclusively on the manipulation of small objects, their arrangement and temporal sequencing becoming the essence of a musical experience.

As Zorn explained, "What has sound got to do with music? Music is a way of manipulating a medium. Most people use sound as that medium. But is it possible to create music visually?"[2] Drawing inspiration from Smith and Foreman's unconventional loft

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2 John Zorn, "Improv 21: = Q + A: An Informance with John Zorn," 2007, ROVA:Arts, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjOM8HdGGgE.

performance spaces as well as the minimalist repetitions of Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass, Zorn began staging secretive, invitation-only performances in his attic apartment on Lafayette Street that centered on the sequenced presentations of objects. These intensely intimate performances would ultimately define the *Theatre of Musical Optics* as a ritualized form of silent visual music. Performances typically took place at midnight, in near-total darkness, to an attendant audience of between two and ten people who had been notified through hand-drawn flyers that doubled as both artworks and covert invitations. Gathering silently at a small table illuminated with only a small blue microscope light, Zorn would enter and, sometimes for hours at a time, stage a highly abstract music experience through the manipulation of tiny found objects. Fragments of urban detritus, street trash, and small monochrome objects appeared and disappeared—one at a time and then in cycles of structured combinations—within the theatre's miniscule proscenium, typically a small white paper frame. The performances, often titled with evocative names like *The Wake*, *Paradise Lost*, *Dracula*, and *Fidel* (after Fidel Castro), were highly conceptual, drawing from diverse cultural and literary references, with the objects themselves acting as metaphors for the themes explored.

Although little known at the time, the *Theatre of Musical Optics* was a crucial phase in Zorn's early development as a composer and improviser, embodying his vehement search for aesthetic and philosophical limits: "Back when I was twenty-four years old, to me, this was the furthest you could take music."[3] Connecting to critical forebearers such as Joseph Cornell and Harry Smith, these performances presaged Zorn's later public works, laying the groundwork for a unique artistic language comprised of recomposing the debris of culture while merging the visual, the musical, and the performative into a singular, ever-evolving expression.

• • •

These earliest experiments forged a heterogeneity and artistic ethic that, by the mid-1970s, Zorn began to site wholly within self-organizing and ever-expanding networks of experimental musicians in downtown New York City. Formidably shaping the

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3 Ibid.

city's experimental culture with a staunch DIY ethic that eschewed elitism, he worked within the interiority of these communities while transfiguring their radical aesthetics through his own meticulous and inventive operations. The productive paradox of harnessing composition and improvisation across his work reached fever pitch in "game pieces" that provided highly detailed instructions not meant to dictate sounds but rather shape the conditions and relationships between performers. As he explains, "My scores exist for improvisers. There are no sounds written out. It doesn't exist on a timeline where you move from one point to the next. My pieces are written as a series of roles, structures, relationships among players… The game is different according to who is playing, how well they are able to play."[4]

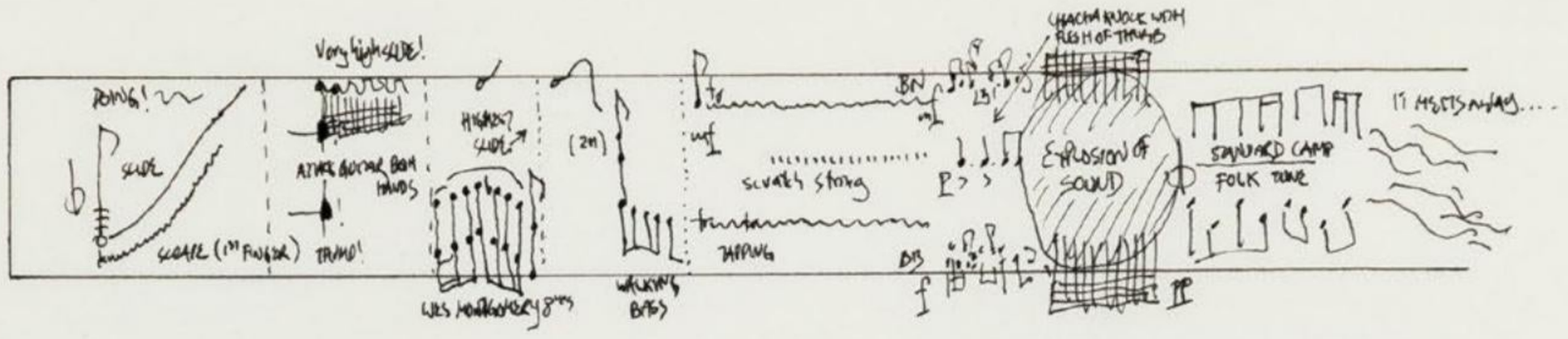
Succinct one-page scores were initially addressed to the small group of performers that Zorn was working very closely with (Polly Bradfield, Phillip Johnston, Eugene Chadbourne, and others). Among the most hermetic, *Music for Power Booth* (1977) presents a starkly minimal organization of twelve numerical signs and four colored squares as a site entirely open to interpretation, the colors triggering synesthetic possibilities while the numbers might be read by musicians as beats, seconds, breaths, or notes [PL. 88]. The score finds its counterpart in a never-before-seen notebook that begins with the handwritten title "N.Y. Poetry Feb. 1976–77 Dec." and contains an esoteric cycle of abstract numerical poems dedicated to artists, writers, philosophers, and friends [PL. 111]. Of its secret language, the book suggests, "Instead of dwelling on the numbers + lines + blocks as separate + connected parts to a greater whole – simply blank out, staring at the poem as a whole for a period of time ~ let it read you."

Zorn's "game pieces" operationalize collaboration and spontaneous invention in an immersive, unpredictable experience for both the performers and audience. The works draw the interactive nature of sports into the fluidity of ensemble playing, where the rules shape the outcome, but the players retain freedom within those parameters. *Rugby* (1978), for violin, guitar, and sax, is described as "a solid architectural structure of changing densities," which explored density as a counterpoint to Zorn's parallel interest in silence and stopping (Gurdjieff's "stop exercise" for self-awareness

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4 John Zorn, quoted in Peter Watrous, "John Zorn: Raw, Funny, Nasty, Noisy New Music from a Structural Radical," in *Musician* 81 (July 1985): 21.

5.0.42



6.0.41

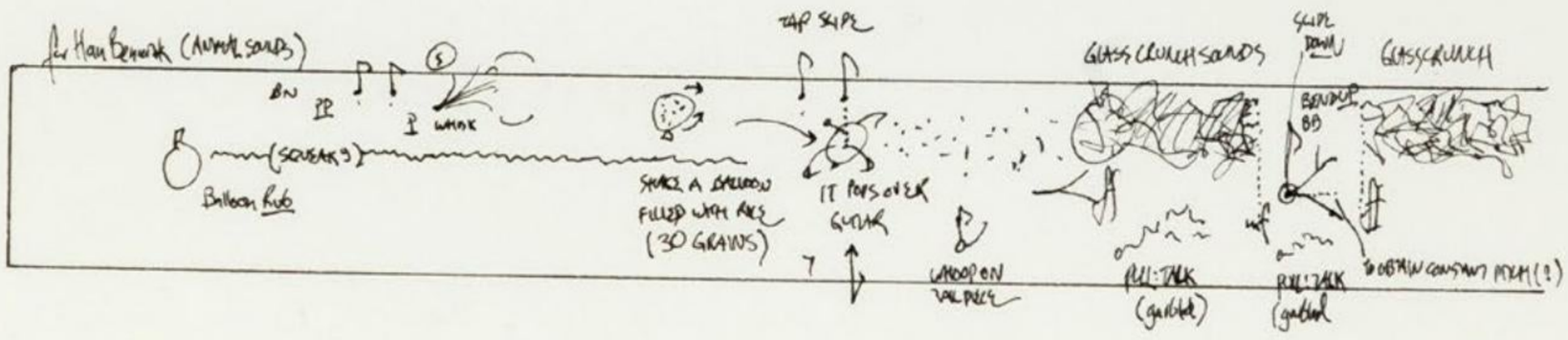


FIG. 4 *Book of Heads*, 1978

long being a source of inspiration) [PL. 102]. Each increasingly complex "game" piece, such as *Lacrosse*, *Hockey*, *Pool*, *Archery* (1977–79), and *Cobra* (1984), invited musicians to explore sonic and social textures within predetermined frameworks, leading to a dynamic interplay between compositional control and performers' inherent language and agency.

Related pieces such as *Werewolf* (1978) fuse composed thematic elements within specific improvisational systems, here noting, as well, Zorn's deep appreciation for monster movies and their archetypal outsiders [PL. 103]. The *Book of Heads* (1978) extends such

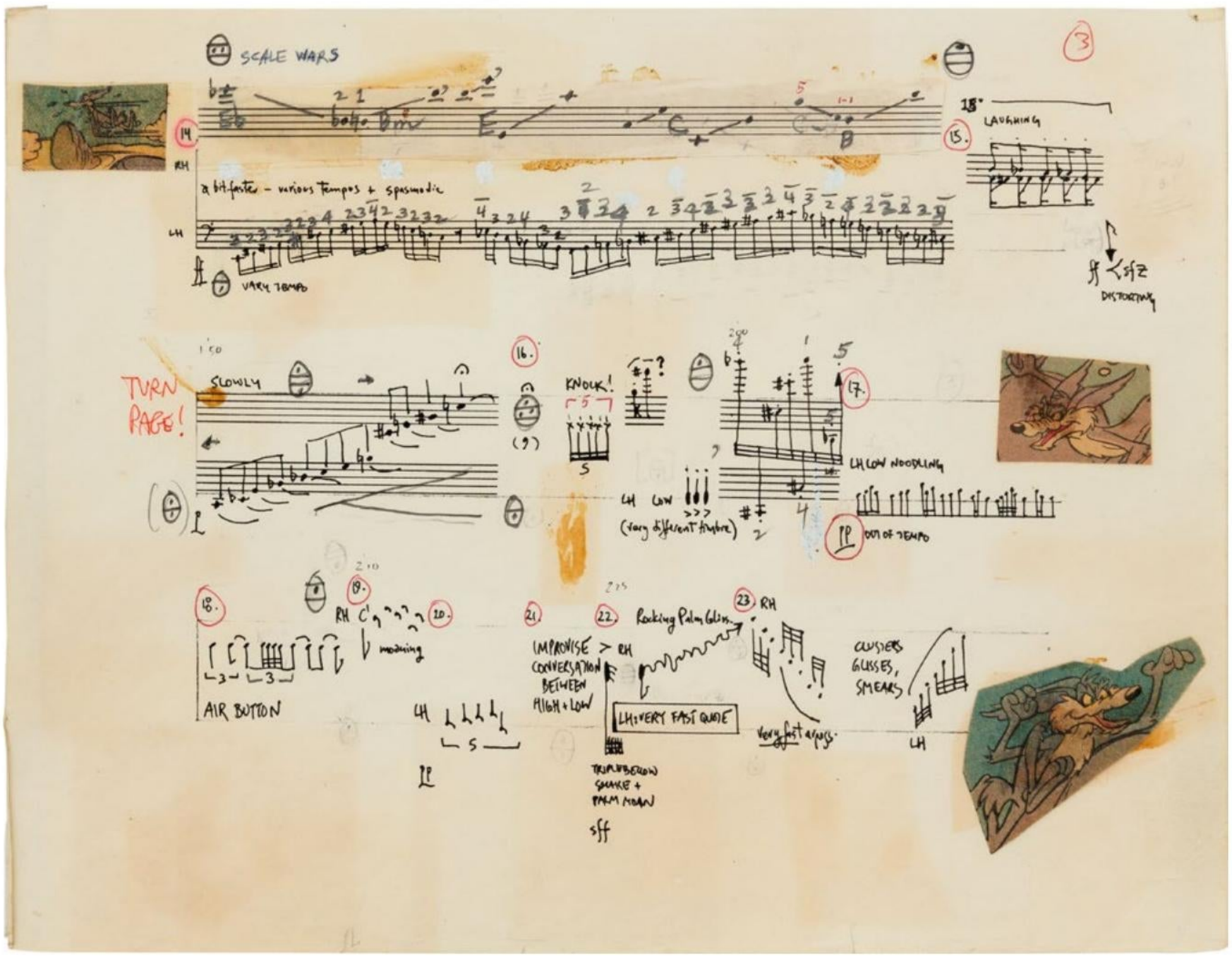


FIG. 5 *Road Runner*, 1986

a structure into a set of thirty-five etudes for solo guitar [PL. 104]. Zorn's meticulous notation for these works is a testament to his deep understanding of musicians' instrumental capabilities and a desire to explore new ways of playing familiar instruments, drawing on multiple extended techniques such as plucking and tapping, as well as utilizing unusual objects—balloons filled with rice, talking dolls, Styrofoam, pipe cleaners, and other non-musical props—again intersecting sound and performance.

Zorn's lifelong obsession with the cartoon music of Carl Stalling is overtly manifest in *Road Runner* (1986), a solo piece composed for the accordionist Guy Klucevsek. In addition to musical phrases and cues to manipulate the instrument, the score is dotted with collaged comic book fragments and a litany of instructions: "quote tango,"

"with schmaltz," "Dance section: mambo, polka, waltz, free improv, tango, irish jig," "chromatic race," "make mistakes," "fast quote a la Barber of Seville," "oompah," "pop quote a la Lawrence Welk," which dictate a barrage of fastly-shifting quotations, allusions to genre, and exaggerated stylistics as fundamental to the composition's shapeshifting form [PL. 105].

• • •

Each of Zorn's countless compositions is a world unto itself, and perhaps nowhere more so than his "file card" works. Begun in the mid-1980s, they represent a pinnacle in his innovative approach to music and art—transcending previous notions of composition with the "score" being a complex conceptual tool rather than a formal prescription. These works are constructed from a series of meticulously ordered file cards—each containing textual descriptions, incidental information, musical material, or sound effects—which together form a comprehensive index of ideas on their historical subject. The system manifests years of Zorn's exhaustive research into figures from fields ranging from literature and film to psychology, including Mickey Spillane, Jean-Luc Godard, Marguerite Duras, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, C.G. Jung, and William S. Burroughs, with each composition serving as a definitive exploration of its dramatic subject, amalgamating intellectual depth with musical innovation.

The "file card" process mirrors film editing techniques with each section built moment by moment and documented sequentially in the recording studio, akin to in-camera film editing. A confluence of meticulous planning, careful rehearsal, and intuitive serendipity, musicians are guided through the material in real-time, responding to the framework while bringing their own intrinsic capabilities, personal language, and improvisational input. This results in a highly flexible yet demandingly precise work that evolves through the recording process, allowing for both structured compositions and spontaneous moments of inspiration. The final work often resembles a radio play (*Hörspiel*), incorporating sound effects and noises, spoken text, and music in a dynamically mystical multimedia experience.

The "file card" compositions, like much of Zorn's work, see him weaving together the intellectual and the visceral, the sacred and the profane. This approach is evident in works like *Godard* (1985), *Spillane* (1986), *Mount Analogue* (2011), and *Ubu* (2020),



FIG. 6 *Ubu*, 2020

where Zorn's research into diverse subjects, from the esoteric to the popular, is transformed into an immersive, multifaceted artistic experience. *Mount Analogue* [PL. 106], for example, centers on writer and mystic René Daumal, surrealism, Gurdjieff's philosophy, and Zorn's own lifelong interest in the occult, while *Ubu* [PL. 107] draws on Alfred Jarry's life and absurdist theatre, bringing the madness of the *Ubu Roi* character into a realm of sound, text, and chaotic sonic environments. The "file card" works catalyze a worldview that Zorn has honed from the outset, transcending the parameters of music by simultaneously looking forward and backward—referencing tradition through transgression—to actively step into the unknown.

• • •

In its vast evolving totality, Zorn's oeuvre challenges not only traditional notions of music but also the ways in which art, in all its forms, can operate. As we peel back the layers of his work, from the intricate details of his compositions to the visual elements that define and accompany them, an increasingly complex and multifaceted picture emerges. Zorn's ability to integrate the visual and auditory into a seamless whole reflects his broader artistic vision—one that defies categorization and continuously interrogates the boundaries of performance, composition, and communication. His visual iconography, from album designs and concert announcements to his personal visual art, forms a distinct and ever-evolving language, deeply intertwined with the sound world he creates. This visual dimension is not ancillary but integral to his creative identity,

a manifestation of his legendary independence as an artist and belief in the Gesamtkunstwerk. Zorn's work speaks to a broader, eclectic understanding of art and culture, where every element—whether musical, visual, or conceptual—serves as part of a larger, hermetic cartography of thought. The full scope of Zorn's artistic output remains to be fully understood, but *Hermetic Cartography* offers a first glimpse into the profound visual dynamics that underlie his total art, reflecting a practice as meticulously crafted as it is boundary-defying.

II. Drawing Books

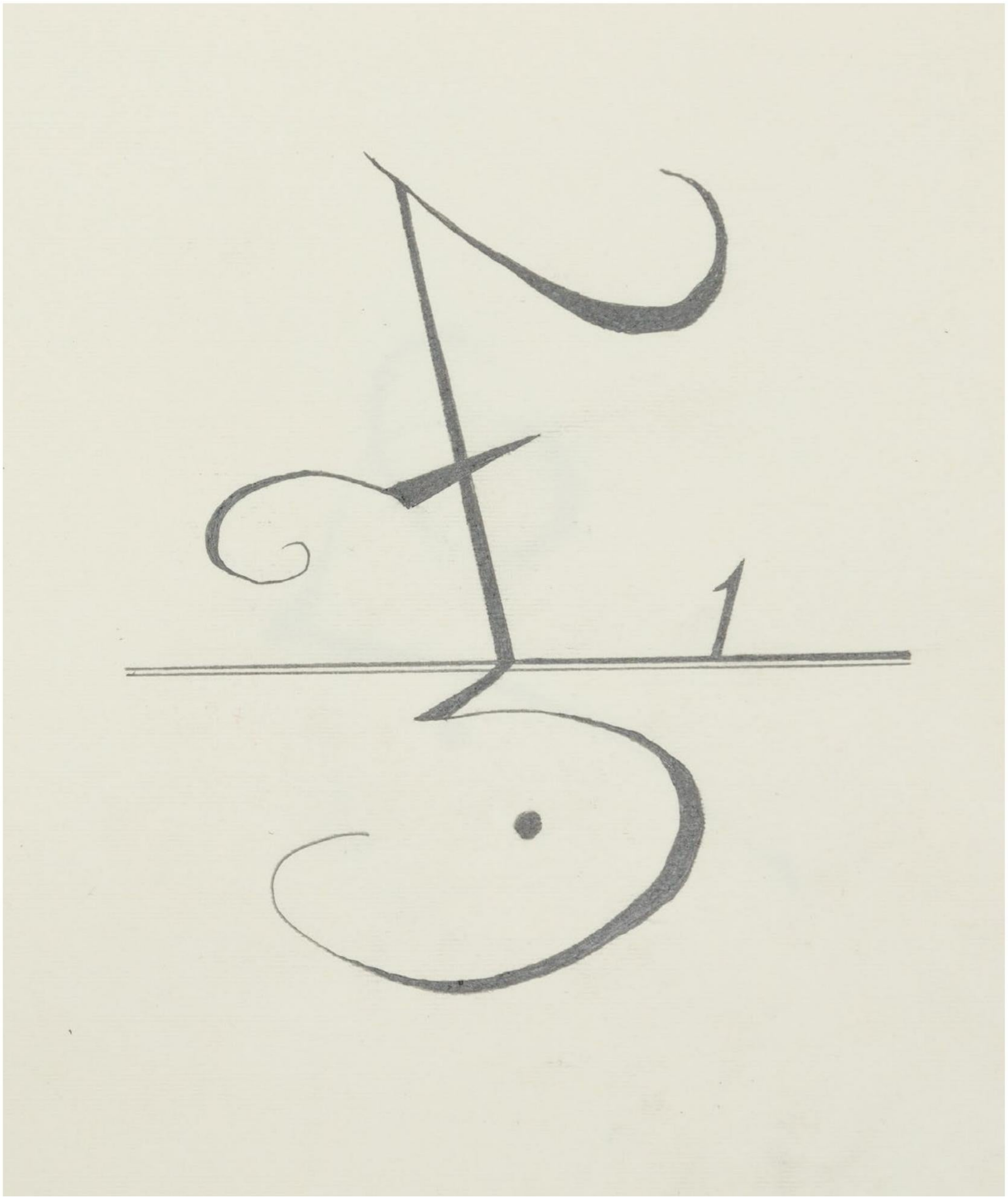
PL. 72

Skulls: Memento Mori, 2024

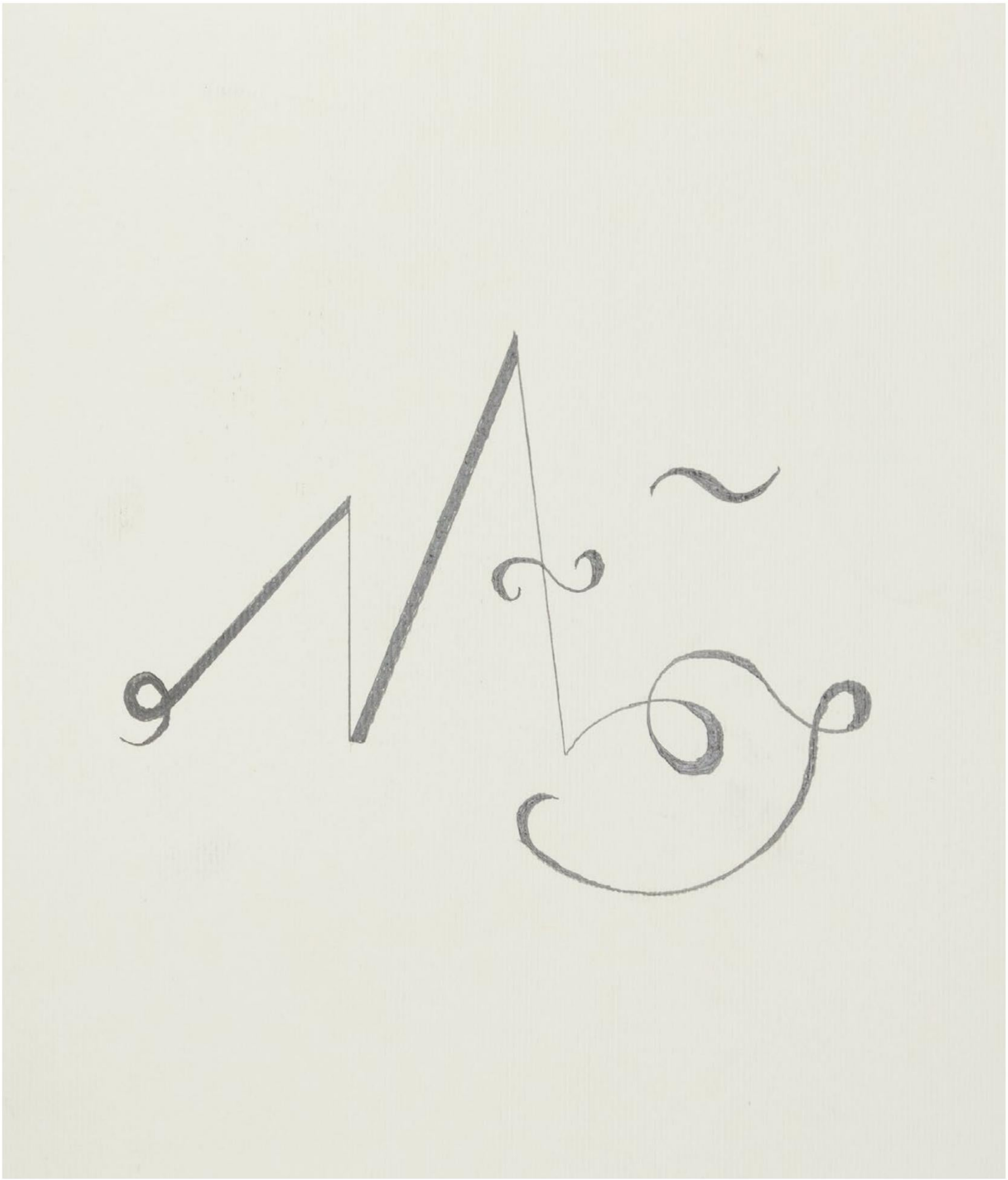
PL. 73

For Vincent Van Gogh, 2024





PL. 74
Sigils/Grimoire Aleph, 2024



PL. 75
Sigils II/Grimoire Beit, 2024





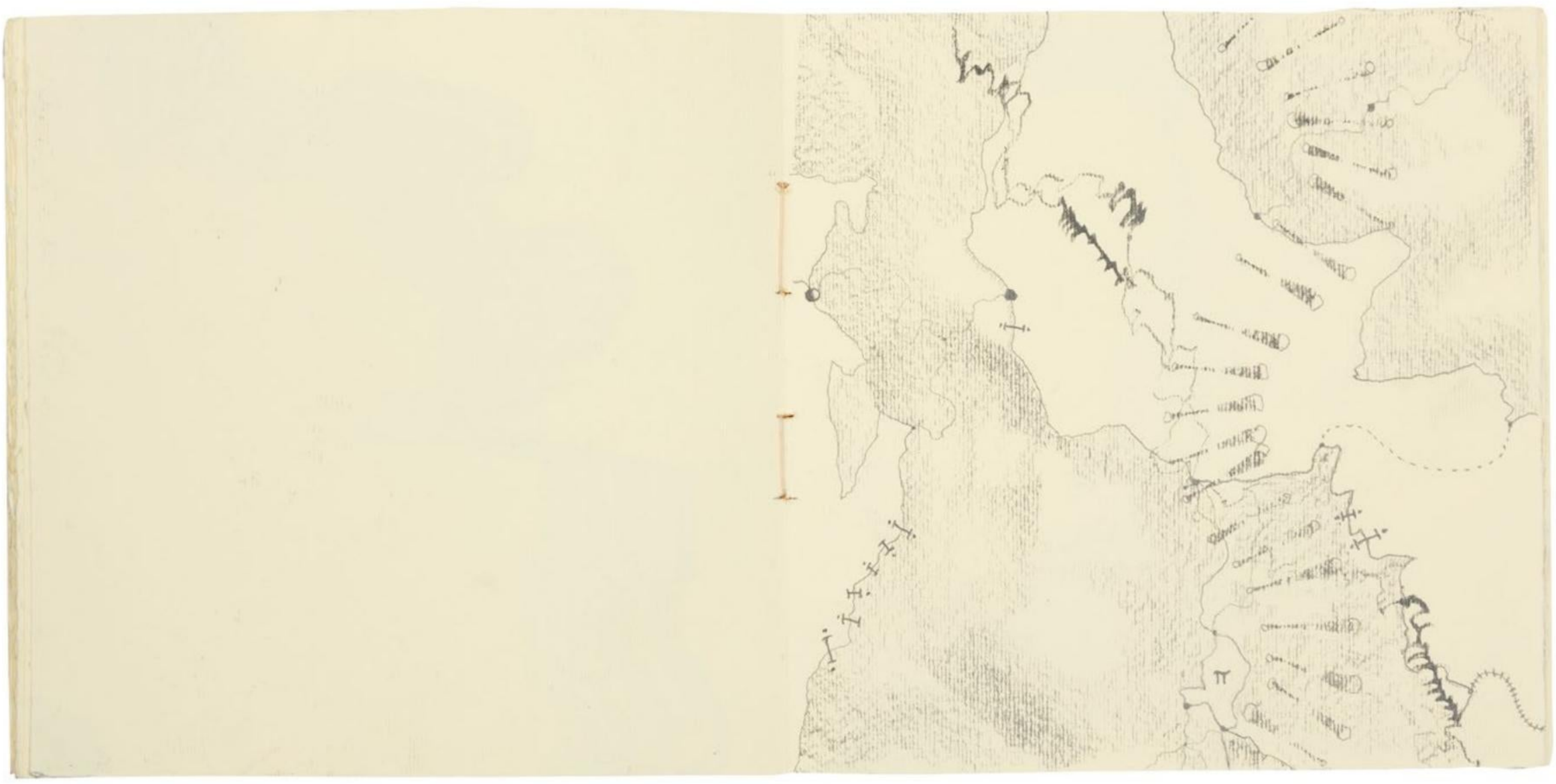
PL. 76
No title, 2023



PL. 77
No title, 2023

PL. 78

Skulls: Memento Mori, 2024



PL. 79
Hermetic Cartographies II, 2024

PL. 80
No title, 2024



III. Early Drawings



THE GARGOYLE

PL. 81
The Gargoyle, 1970



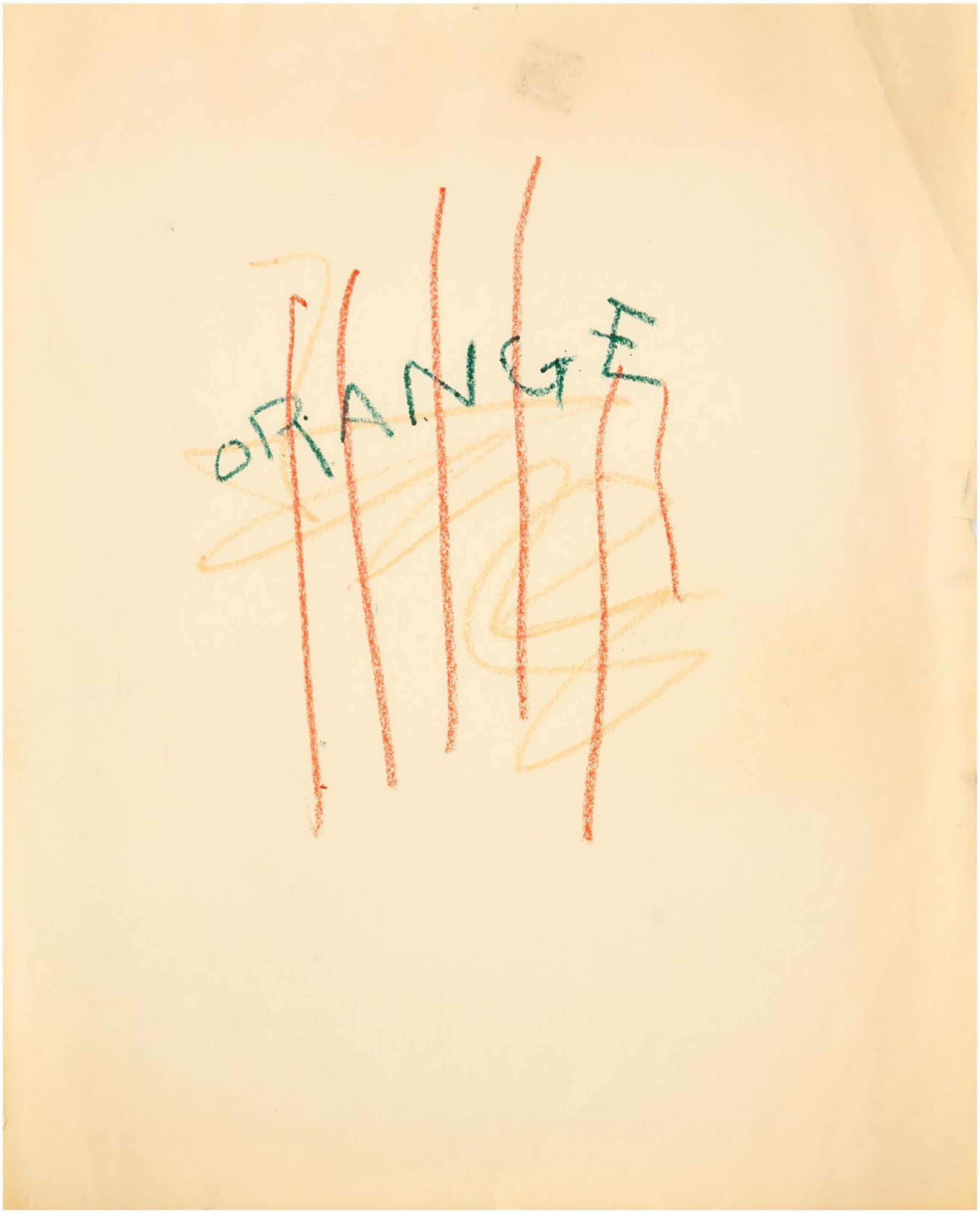
PL. 82
Portrait of Elissa Guest, 1970



THREE PRIESTS CARRYING BIRDS, SCENTS AND BASKETS

PL. 83

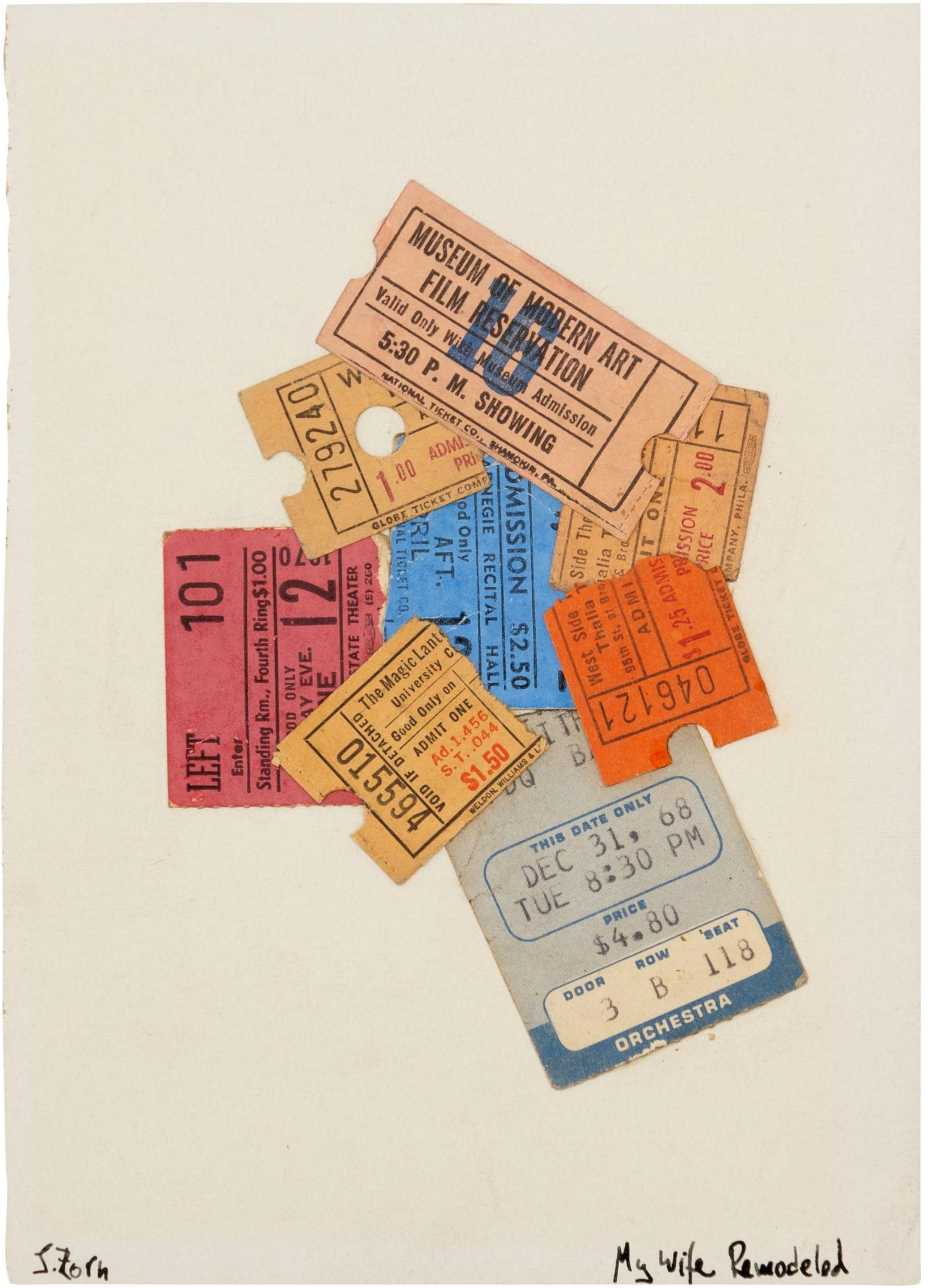
Three Priests Carrying Birds, Scents and Baskets, 1977



PL. 84
No title, 1972



PL. 85
No title, 1972



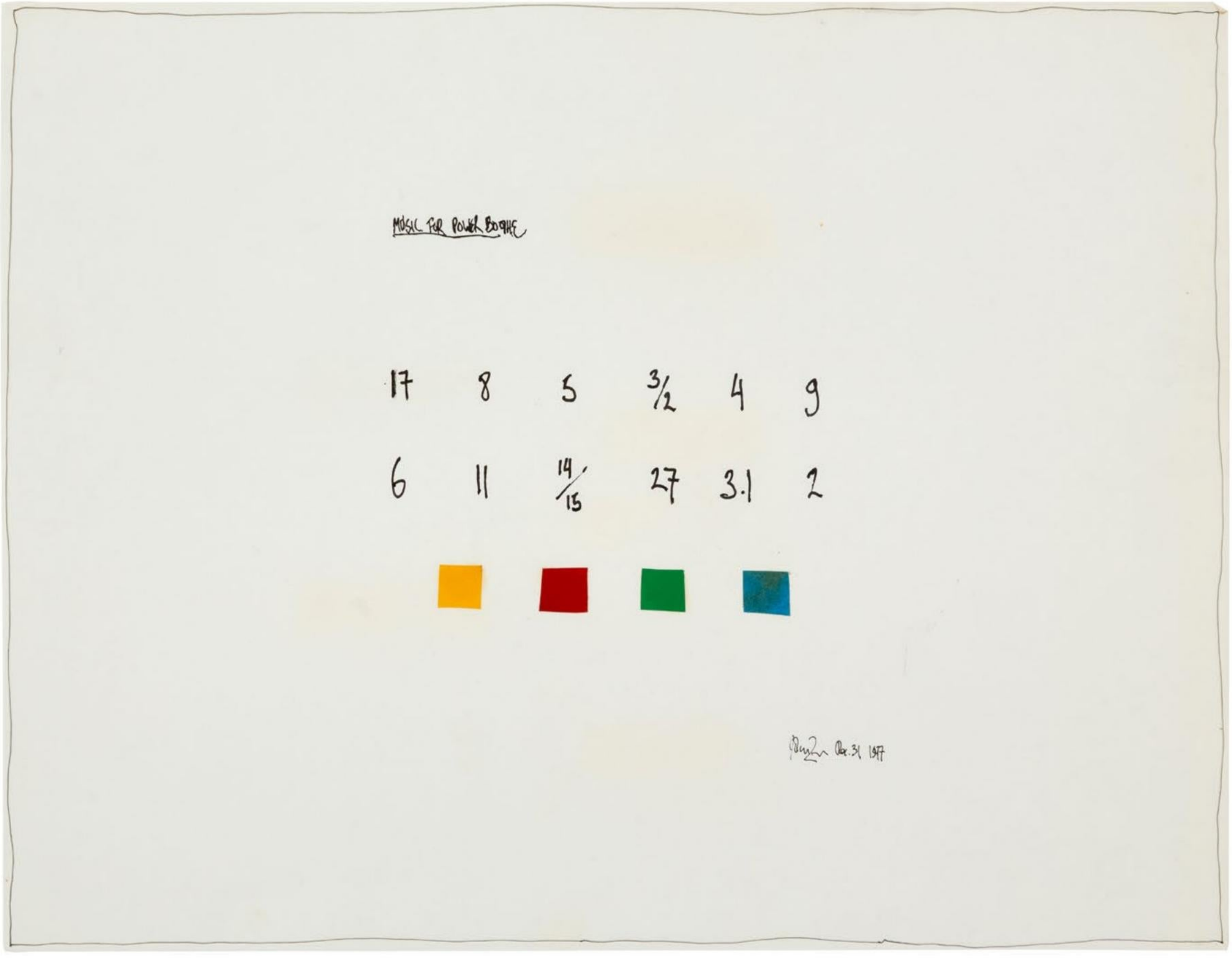
PL. 86

My Wife Remodeled, 1972



PL. 87
Mother, 1972

IV. Scores / Music Performance



PL. 88
Music for Power Booth, 1977

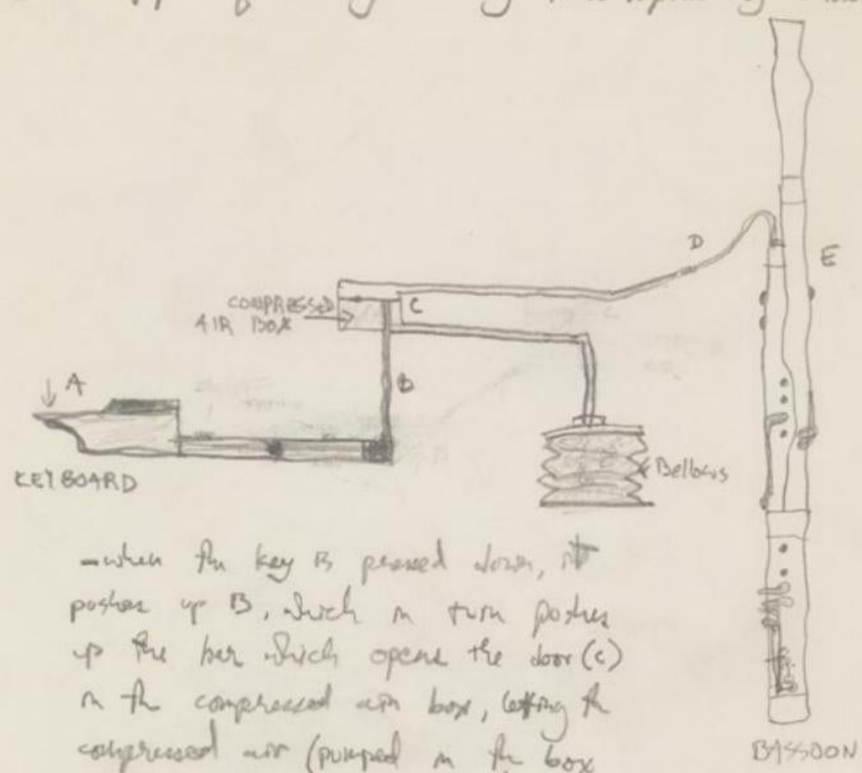
THE BAROQUE BASSOON-ORGAN

NOTES OR

JOHN ZORN —

Notes for the Baroque Bassoon-Organ

-The basic principle for the Baroque Bassoon-Organ is that the pipes of a regular organ, are replaced by Bassoons.



-when the key is pressed down, it pushes up B, which in turn pushes up the bar which opens the door (c) in the compressed air box, letting the compressed air (pumped in the box from the bellows) go through the air-tight tube (D), into the bassoon (E).

- Each key of the keyboard is attached to its <u>own</u> air box and its own Bassoon. Each seperate bassoon, according to the key it is connected with, plays a different note. For example, the key centre B♭ the lowest of the bassoons and of the keyboard of the Baroque Bassoon-Organ, would be connected from the key to the Bassoon, and the Bassoon keys + holes would all be blocked up, except for those responsible for the key centre B♭.



-In this drawing you can see two doors underneath the keyboard. These are for Baroque youngsters, who are starting their musical careers, to climb into, and to pump the bellows of the organ.

-Here is a sketch of what a Baroque Bassoon-Organ might look like if built. Often there are two manuals, in which case the second manual would be a contrabassoon, or, more often, an oboe. The contrabassoon is usually in the form of pedals. The largest Baroque Bassoon Organ is one which has, perhaps, two manuals, one oboe, one bassoon, and a pedal board, being the contraBassoon. Another possibility is the Organ stop, with which a single manual Bassoon-Organ could have the characteristics of a two manual organ, with pedal. This also would bring in the possibility of not only a Bassoon, Contrabassoon, and Oboe stop, but also an English Horn stop, and Oboe d'amore stop. The advantage in the Baroque Bassoon-Organ is that there are no reeds, which imitate the sound of an instrument, but the instrument itself.

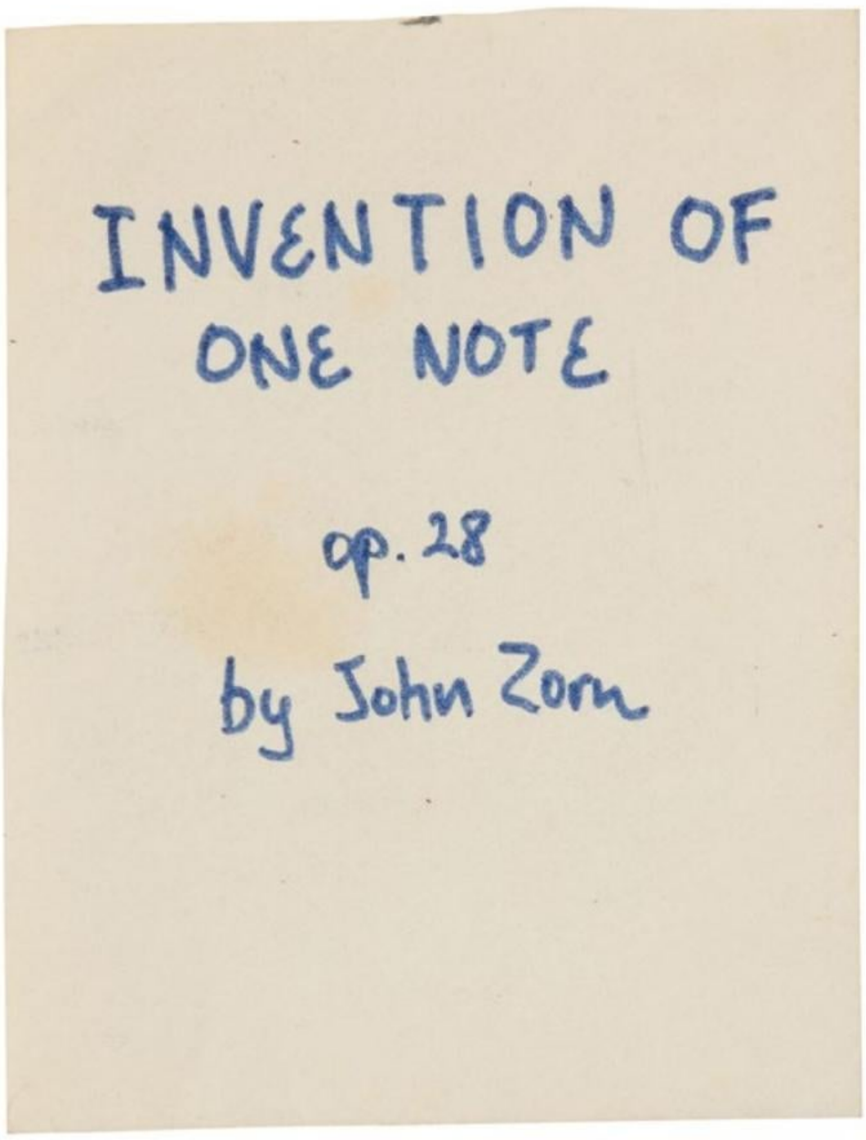
- The designs on the Baroque Bassoon-Organ are very intricate, and above the keyboard, the large space is taken up by intricate drawings and designs. The drawings on the organ are always that of the planets. On the organ on page 2, it is that of the sun, and the moon. Though they are not planets, they are part of the solar system. Other organs might be on Uranus, Jupiter, Earth, etc. In some cases the organ designs are so beautiful that the organ is named for the planet it has on its "Baroque Mantel," thus: Jupiter bassoon-organ, Mercury bassoon-organ, <u>etc.</u> The sides, and legs of the organ are intricately carved by masters of the trade, as are the doors to the "bellows-sanctum."

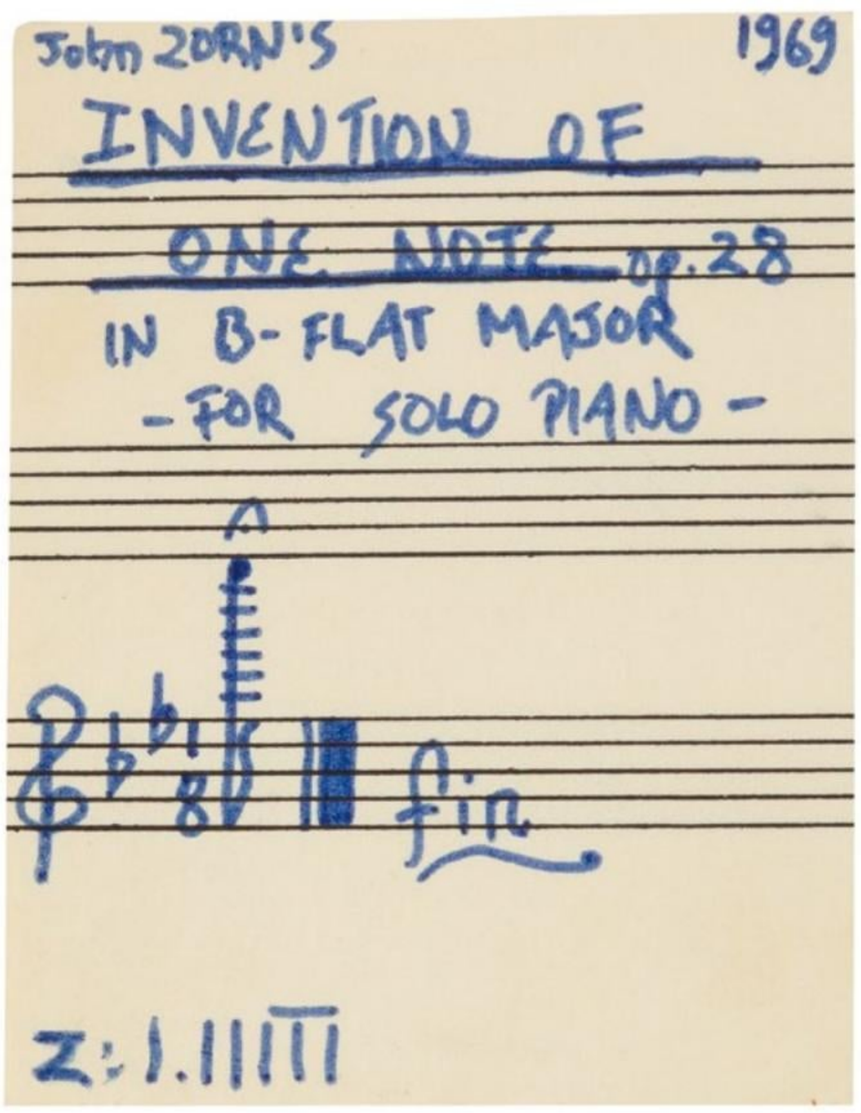
- The famous composer RICHARD AMADEUS HANDEL wrote many pieces in the 17th century for the Baroque Bassoon-Organ, for example, his famous "Quintetegg for Brique Bassoon-Organ and voice part:" "The Bassoon Race", "The Perplexing Pan-Flute", "The Ugly-faced Virtuoso Bear", "the Base Basil Test" and "the Sponge Spearhead."

—John Zorn

PL. 89

The Baroque Bassoon Organ, 1968

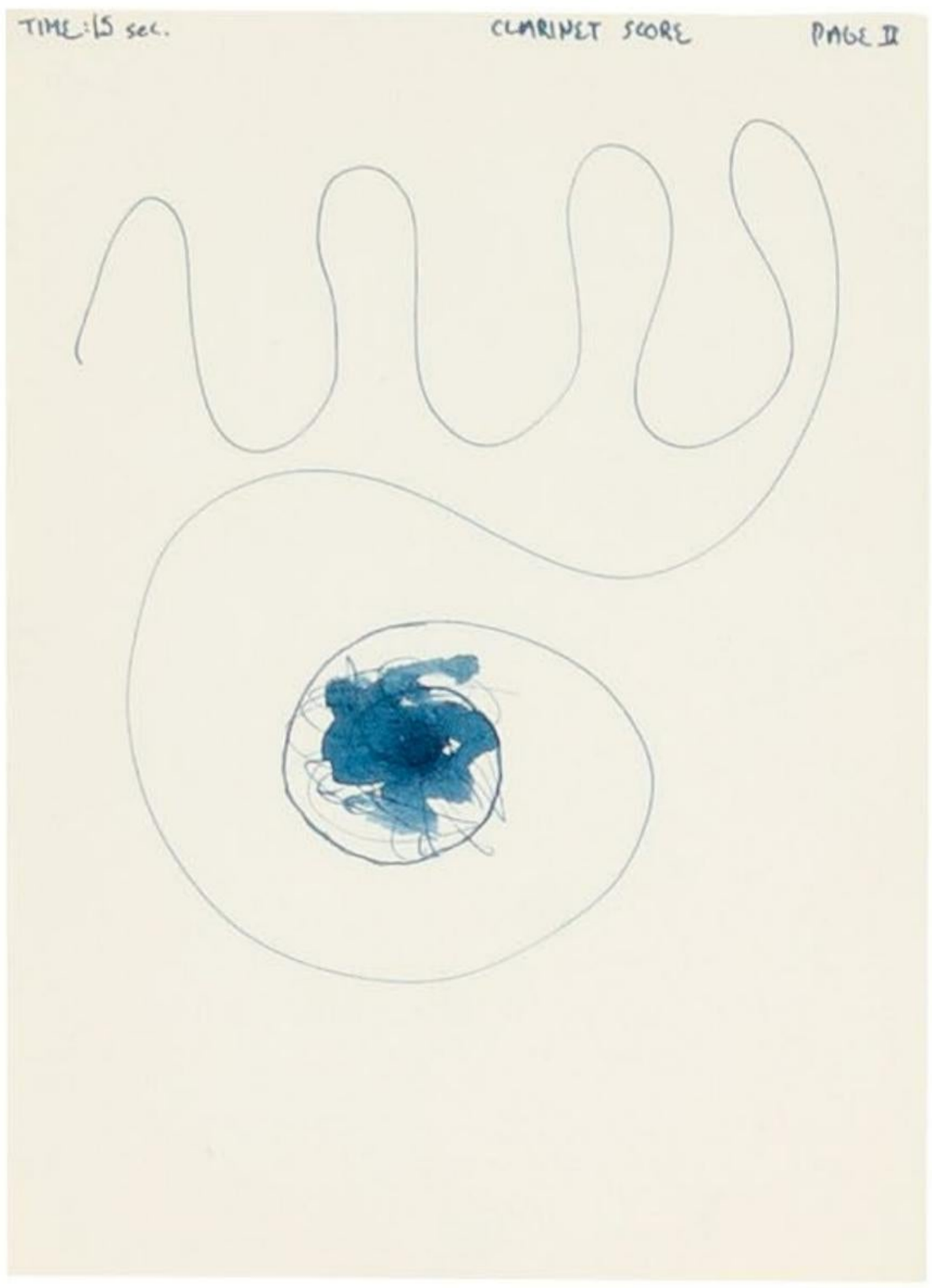


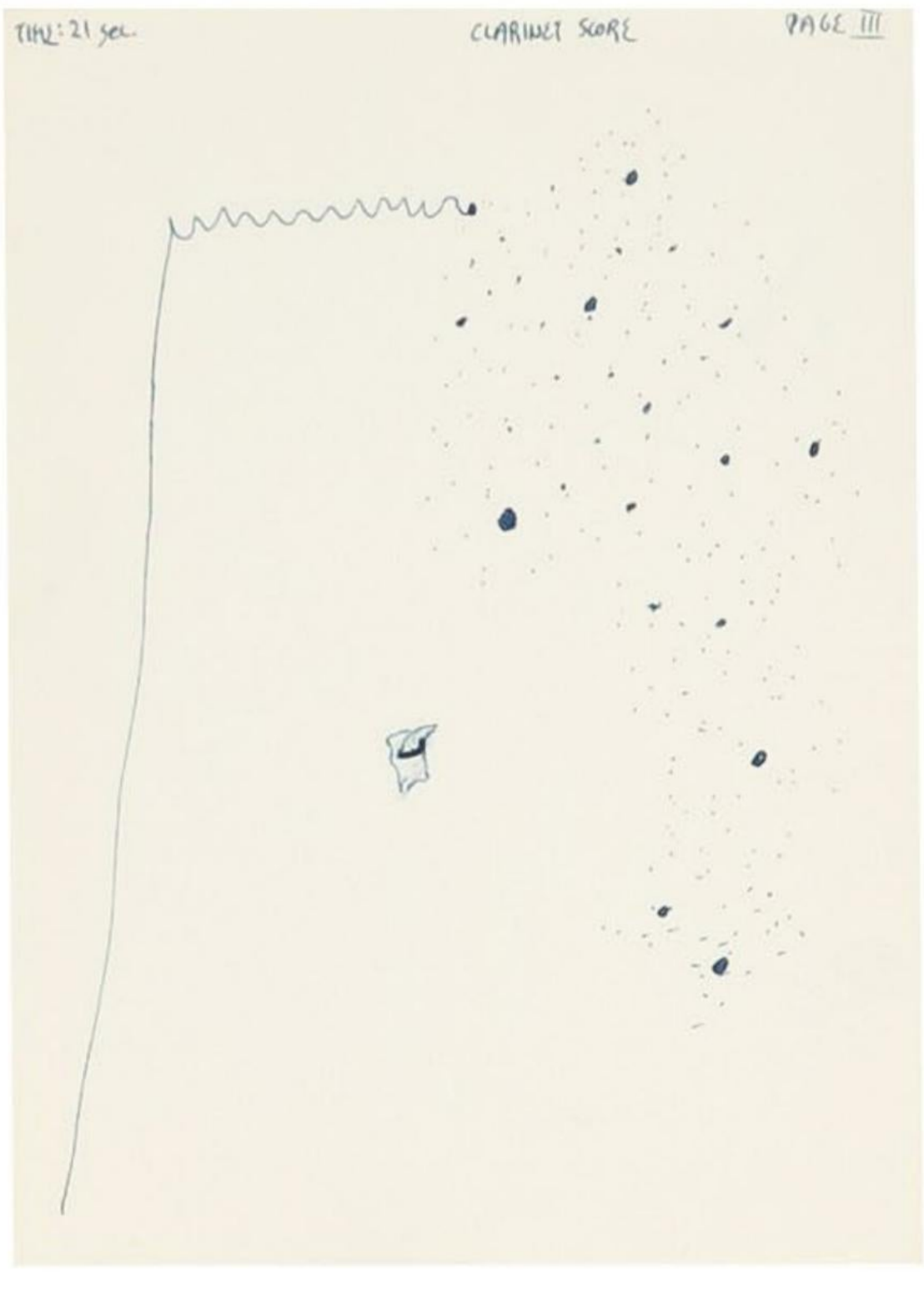


PL. 90
Invention of One Note, 1969



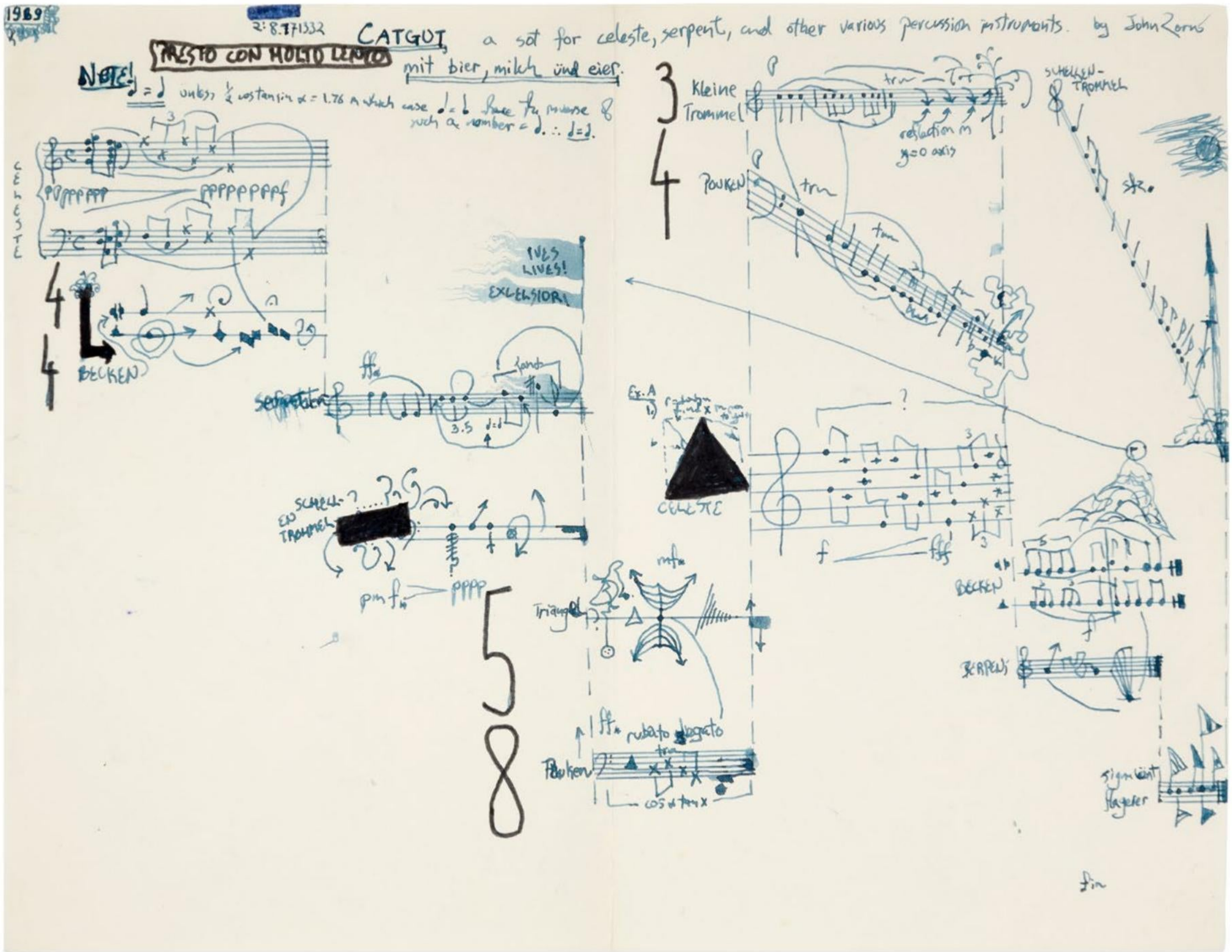






PL. 91

Caevorrys, 1967



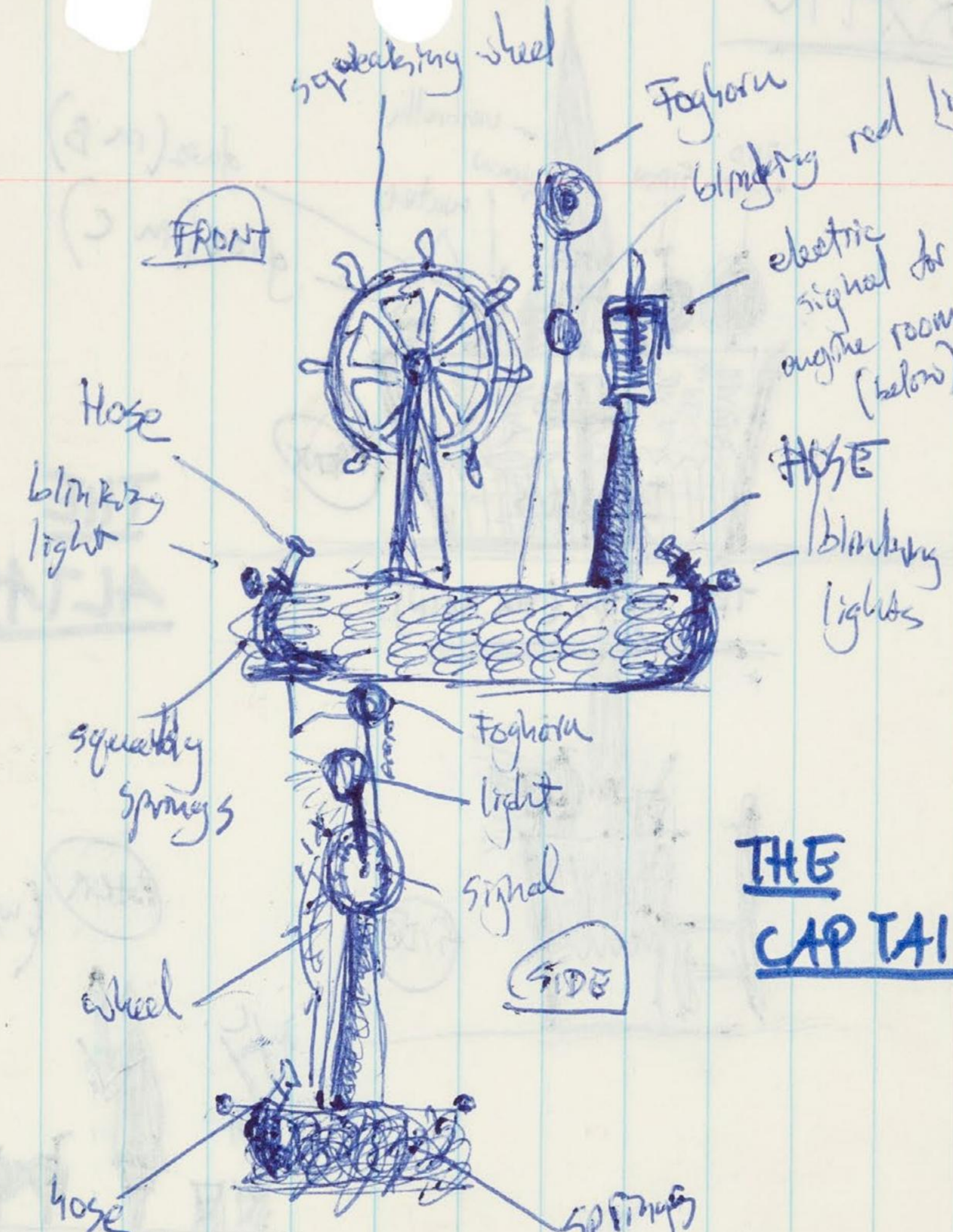
PL. 92
Catgut, 1969

RAIN

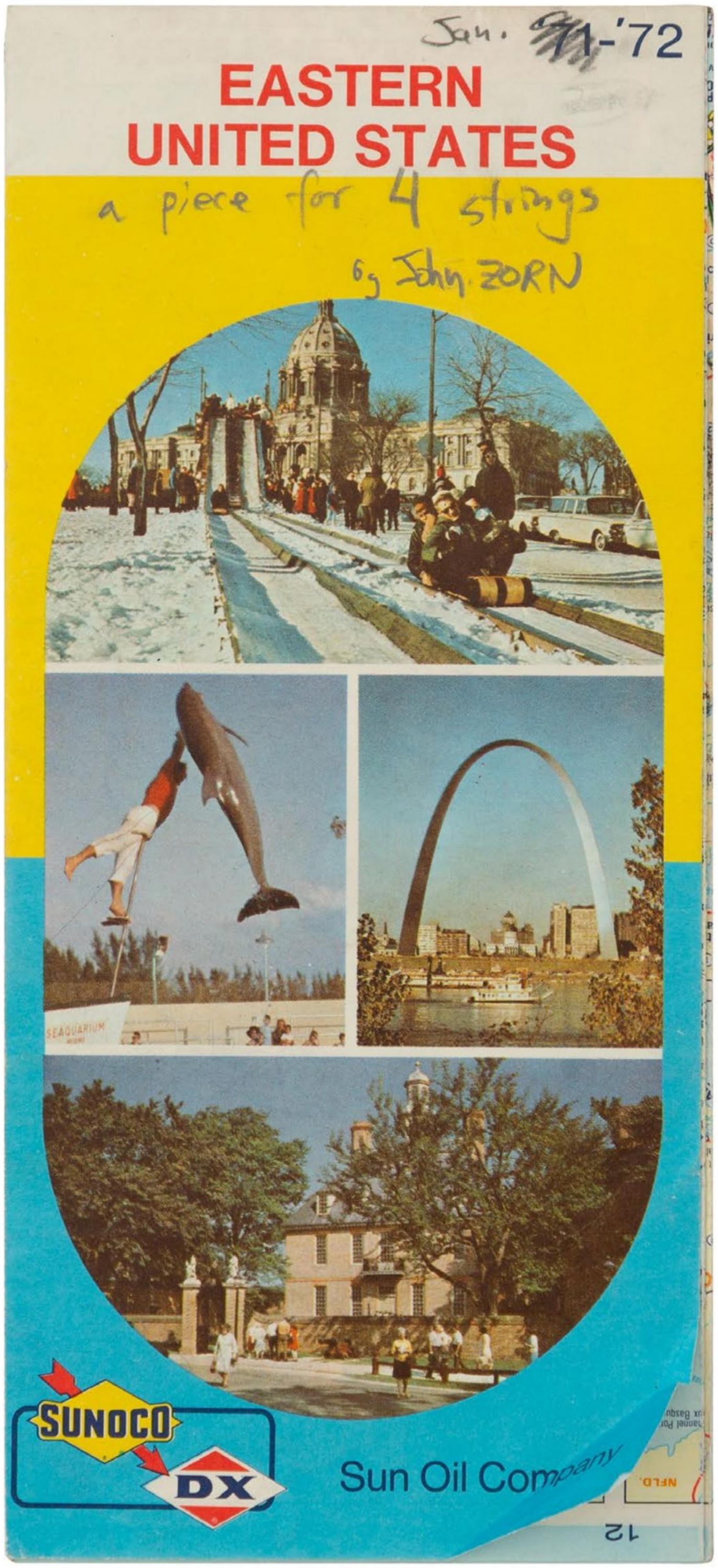


PL. 93

The Captain–Typhoon/Rain The Altas, 1968-69 (verso)



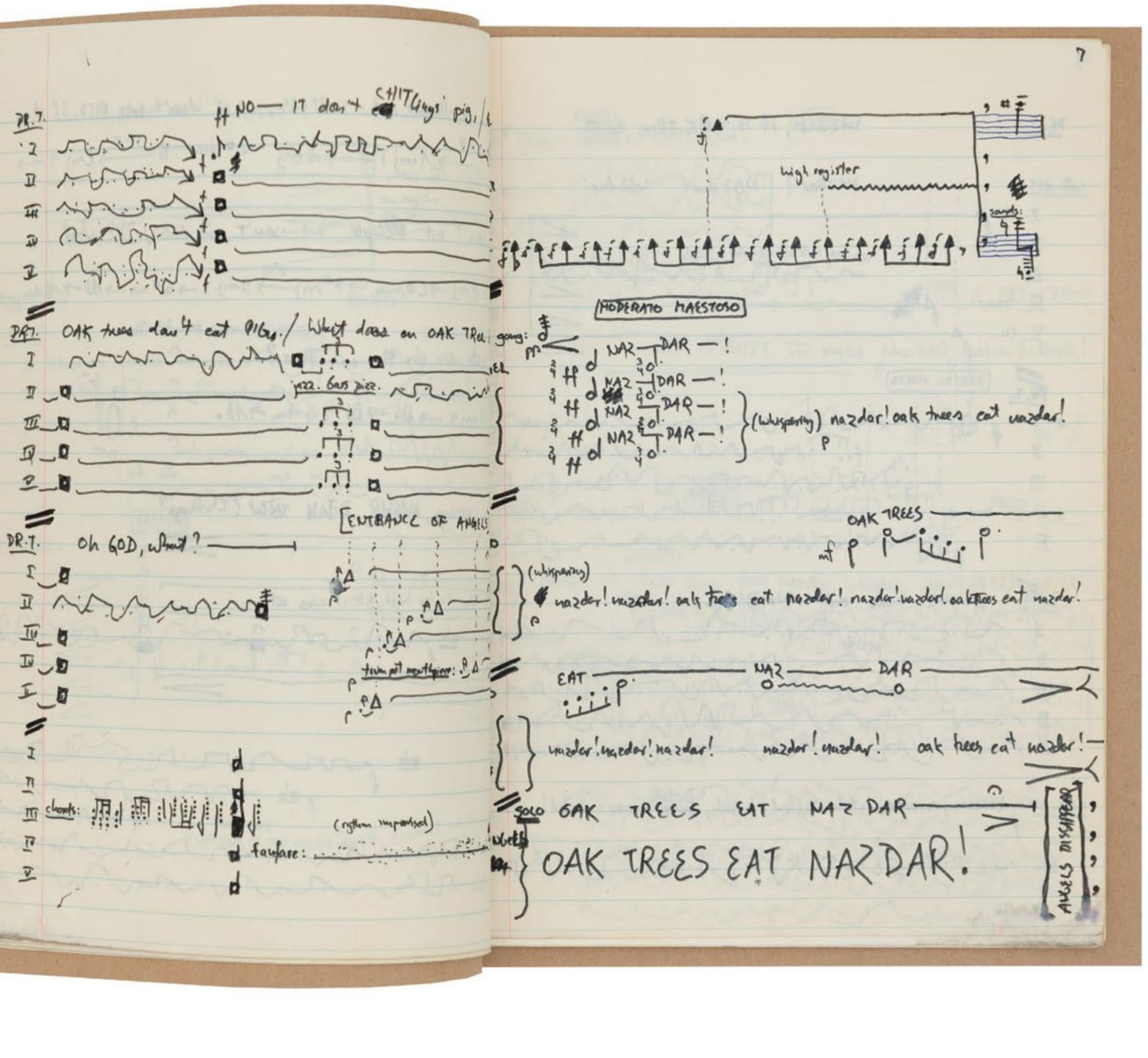
The Captain–Typhoon/Rain The Altas, 1968-69 (recto)



PL. 94
Eastern United States, 1972 (folded)



Eastern United States, 1972 (extended)



PL. 95
Nazdar, 1970

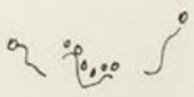
PL. 96

The Volume R of underground sewage travels long distances at velocity pV^2 such that $d\theta$ density clears is open (for your convenience)-(a story of SADISM + REVENGE), 1975

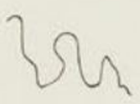
BASIC KEY TO THE GRAPHICS:



THE RANGE OF YOUR INSTRUMENT



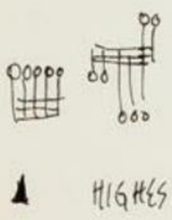
HARMONIC SQUEAKS



FAST "overblown" SCALES



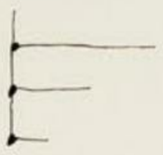
FAST CLEAR-FINGERED SCALES



KEY CLICKS

▲ HIGHEST NOTE ON THE INSTRUMENT

▼ LOWEST NOTE ON THE INSTRUMENT



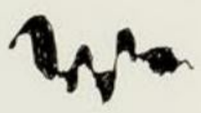
MULTI-SONORITY (filtering away)



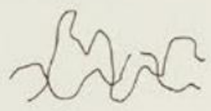
Fingered MULTI-SONORITY
AND "GROWL"
(singing into instrument)



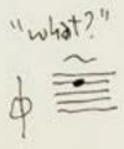
BUILDING A MULTI-SONORITY BY HARMONICS



MAKE THE SOUND DENSER WITH MULTI-SONORITIES AND "GROWLS."



SING INTO THE HORN MAKING THE SONG LINE CLEARLY DEFINED FROM THE PLAYED LINE. (MULTI-SONORITIES ARE NOT THE DESIRED RESULT.)



BEND THE TONE IN IMITATION OF THE WORD + THE GRAPHIC. ALL PITCHES ARE TO BE INTERPRETED AS TRANSPOSED (AND NOT AT CONCERT PITCH) FOR TRANSPOSING INSTRUMENTS.



STACCATO DOUBLE TONGUEING

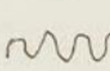


HELD TONE

VIBRATO OR TRILL

TRILL

TREMOLO OR WIDE VIBRATO



SHORT, VERY SHORT + EXTREME STACCATO VALUES



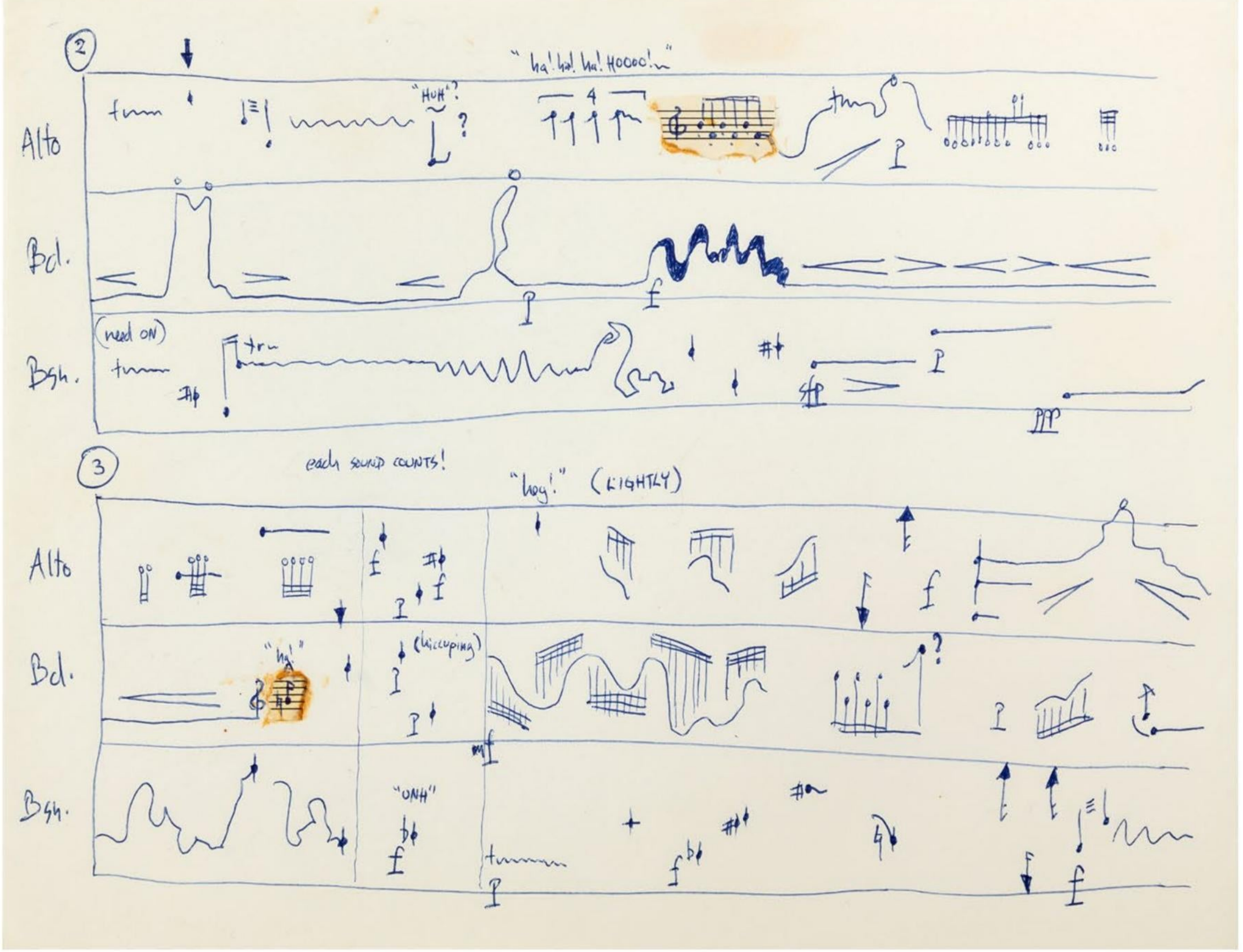
BEND UP TO A NOTE

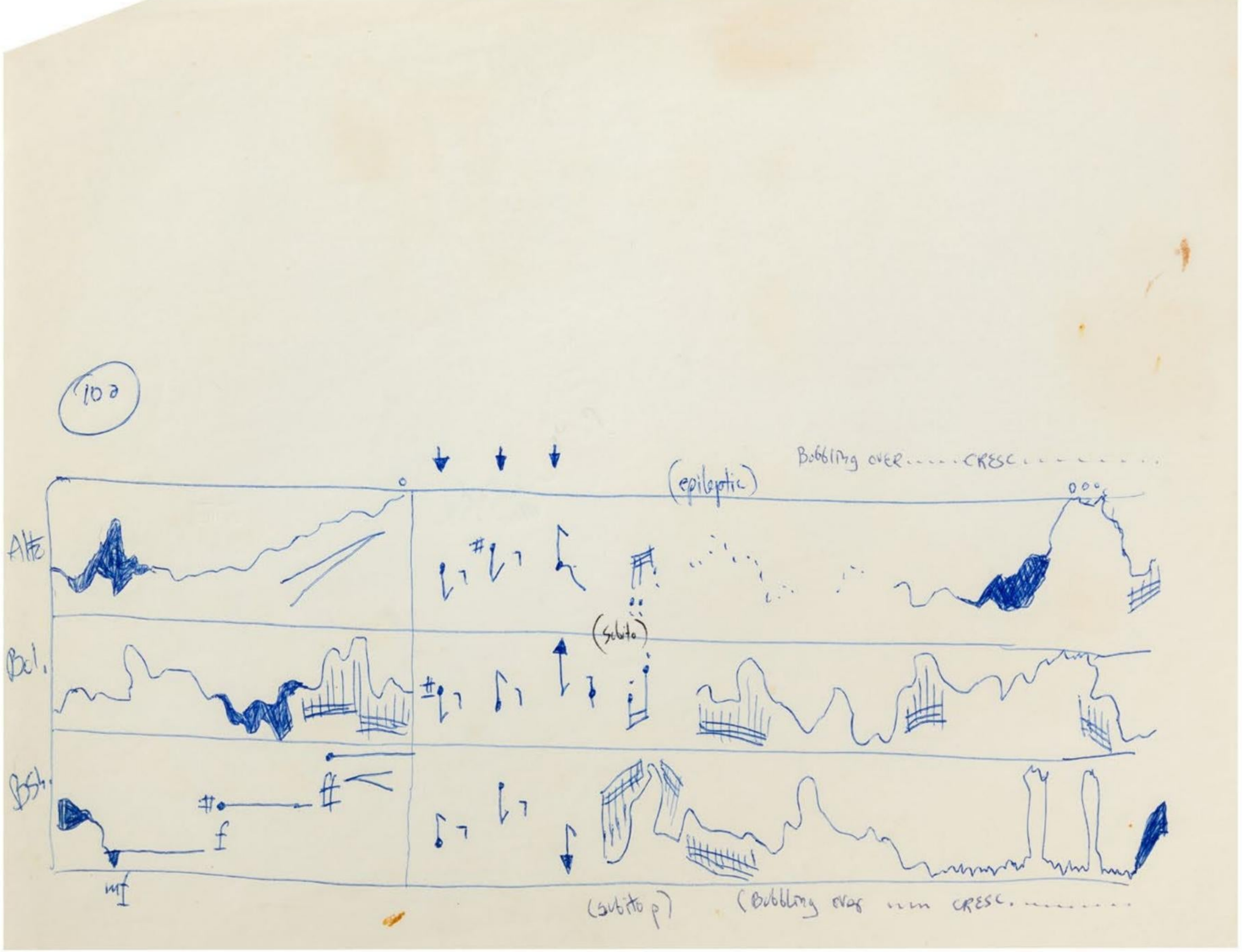


RHYTHMIC FIGURES

HORIZONTAL TIME: EACH "SYSTEM" MAY LAST ca. 15 SECONDS, 2 SYSTEMS, SOMETIMES ONE TO A PAGE, EXCEPT FOR (13) AND (13a). THIS IS ONLY A SUGGESTION, AND SHOULD VARY 5" EACH WAY ACCORDING TO THE PERFORMERS.

PL. 97
Hymen 2, 1973


2
" ha! ha! ha! HOOOO! "
Alto
trum
"HUH"?
Bcl.
Bsh.
(read ON)
trum
trill
f
p
ff
3
each sound counts!
"hey!" (LIGHTLY)
Alto
"ha!"
(hiccuping)
Bcl.
"UNH"
Bsh.
mf
f
p


(epileptic)
Bubbling over..... cresc.
(subito)
(subito p)
(Bubbling over ... cresc.

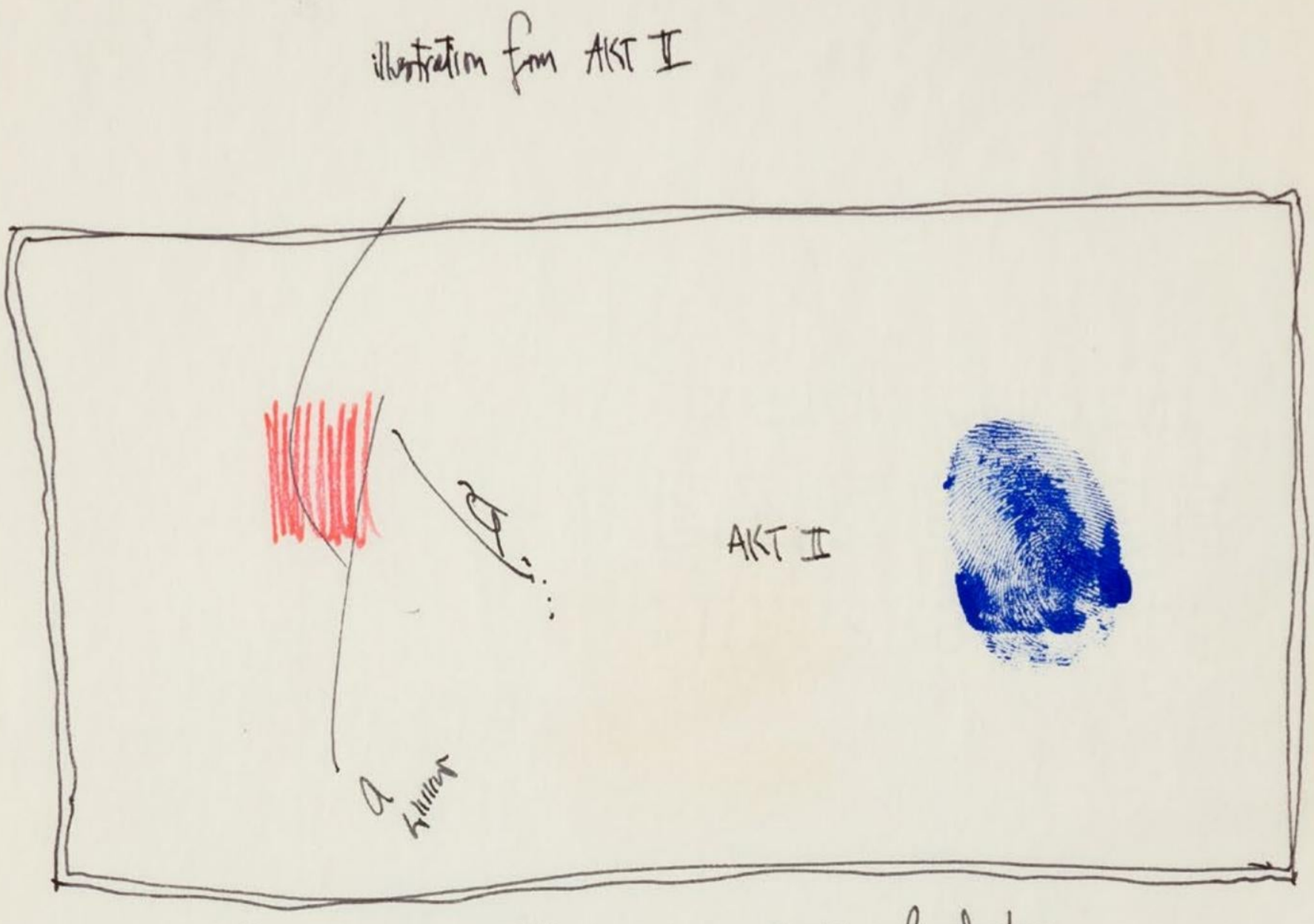


fig 3. 2'00 - Iorrglobona - CLOUD PLANES · Record aphone

illustration from epilogue (non-existent)

PL. 98
Mikhail Zoetrope: Illustration Act 1, 1975

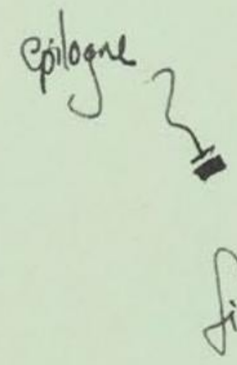
Illustration from Act III –



fig. 3 .. 2'30 · MACHINE GUNS, commotion, paper

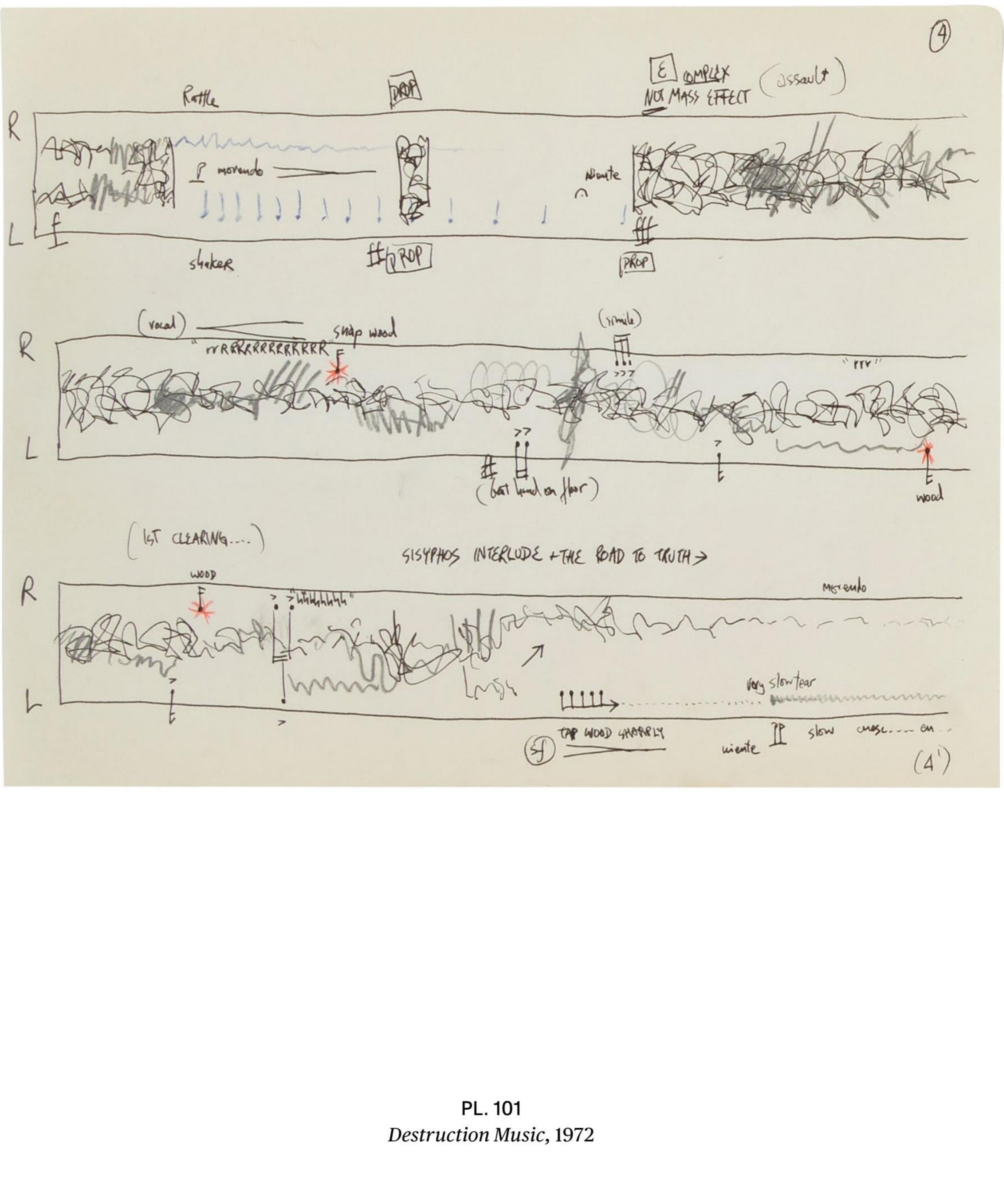
PL. 99

Mikhail Zoetrope: Illustration Act 2, 1975



PL. 100

Mikhail Zoetrope: Illustration Epilogue, 1975



PL. 101
Destruction Music, 1972

accept as the first step to change

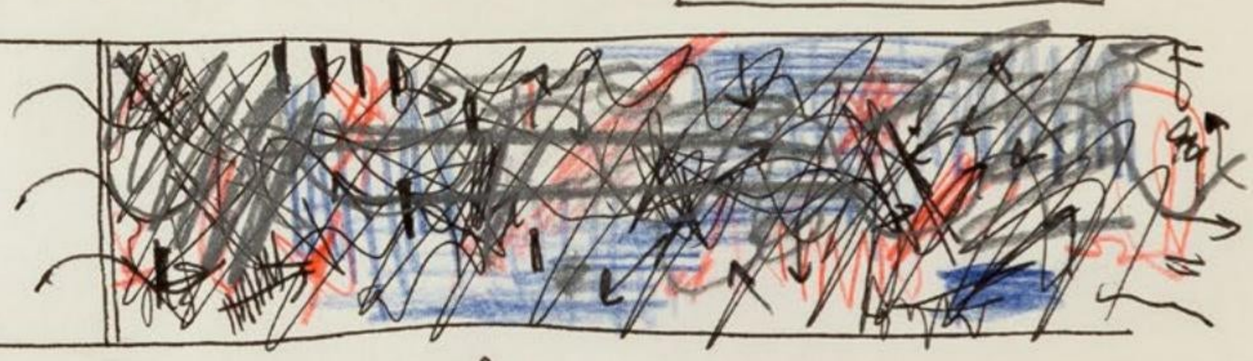
R

L

TOOLS OF THE RITUAL COLLAPSE.... VENTURE UNCONCEACED

REALIZATION & ~~DESTRUCTION~~ DESTRUCTION — THE SLOW PROCESS!

R

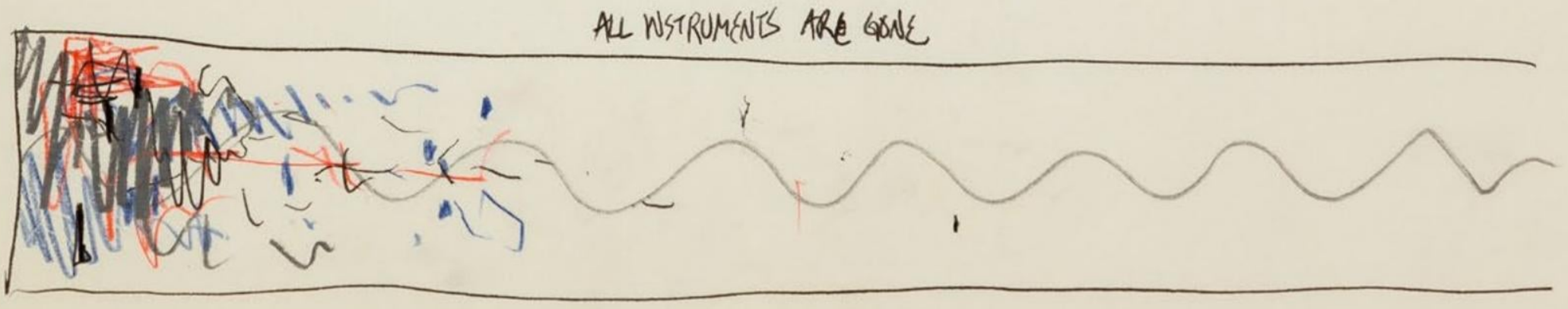


L

a negative act at the base of CREATION? — HUMOR — positive destruction
AFFIRM DEATH in your ORBIT

R

ALL INSTRUMENTS ARE GONE

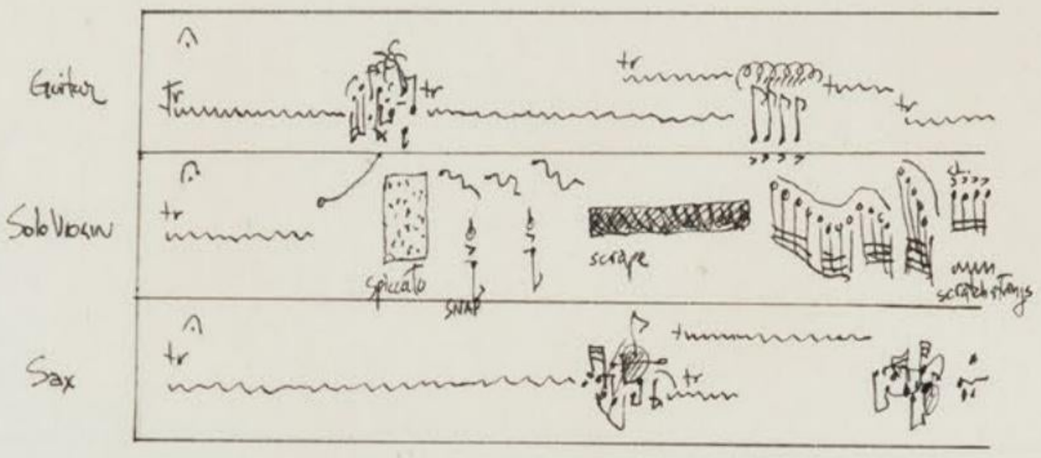


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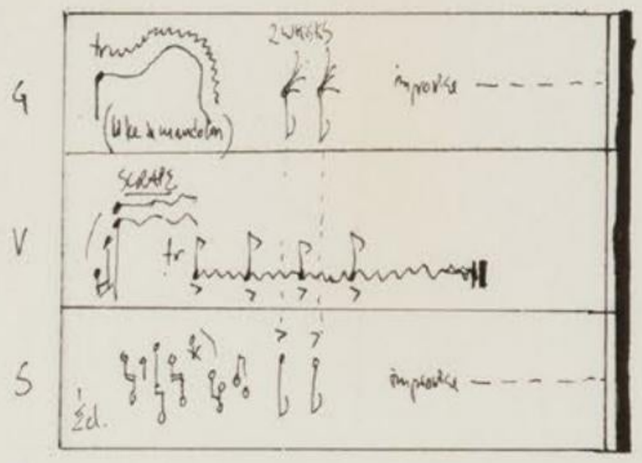
RUGBY (VIOLIN CONCERTO no. 1)

RUGBY SHOULD BE THOUGHT OF AS A SOLID ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE OF CHANGING DENSITIES. THE MAIN BULK OF THE PIECE INVOLVES PLAYING WITHOUT THE USE OF SILENCES; THE MAIN CONCERN THEN BECOMES MAKING CHANGES HAPPEN WITHIN THIS CONSTANT DENSITY.

OPENING HEAD



END



THREE POSSIBILITIES OF PLAYING TECHNIQUES

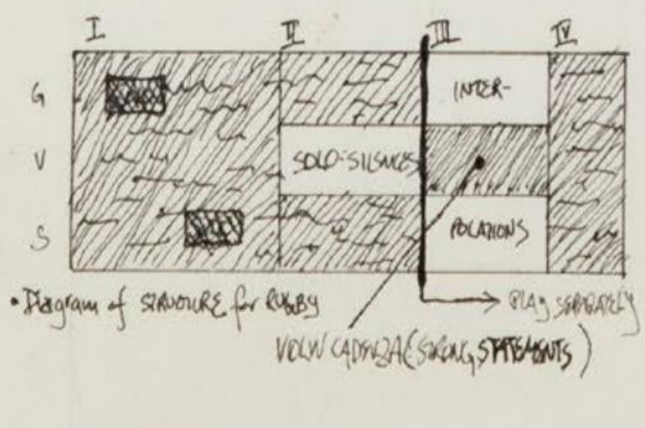
1. PLAYING STRONG STATEMENTS
2. TRILLS (or LONG TONES?) as fillers
3. NOODLING ('WEAK' STATEMENTS)

→ What is a 'weak' statement ??
→ What is 'aimless' playing ??
→ What is a 'transition' ??

BASIC STRUCTURE

I Ensemble (no silences) including 2 INTRODUCTORY SOLOS
II VIOLIN SOLO = manipulation of SILENCES
III POLARIZATION (solo cadenza for violin - no space) + interpolations
IV Ensemble CODA (no silences)

[TOTAL DURATION: 15 min (ca)] ONE SHORT, ONE LONG

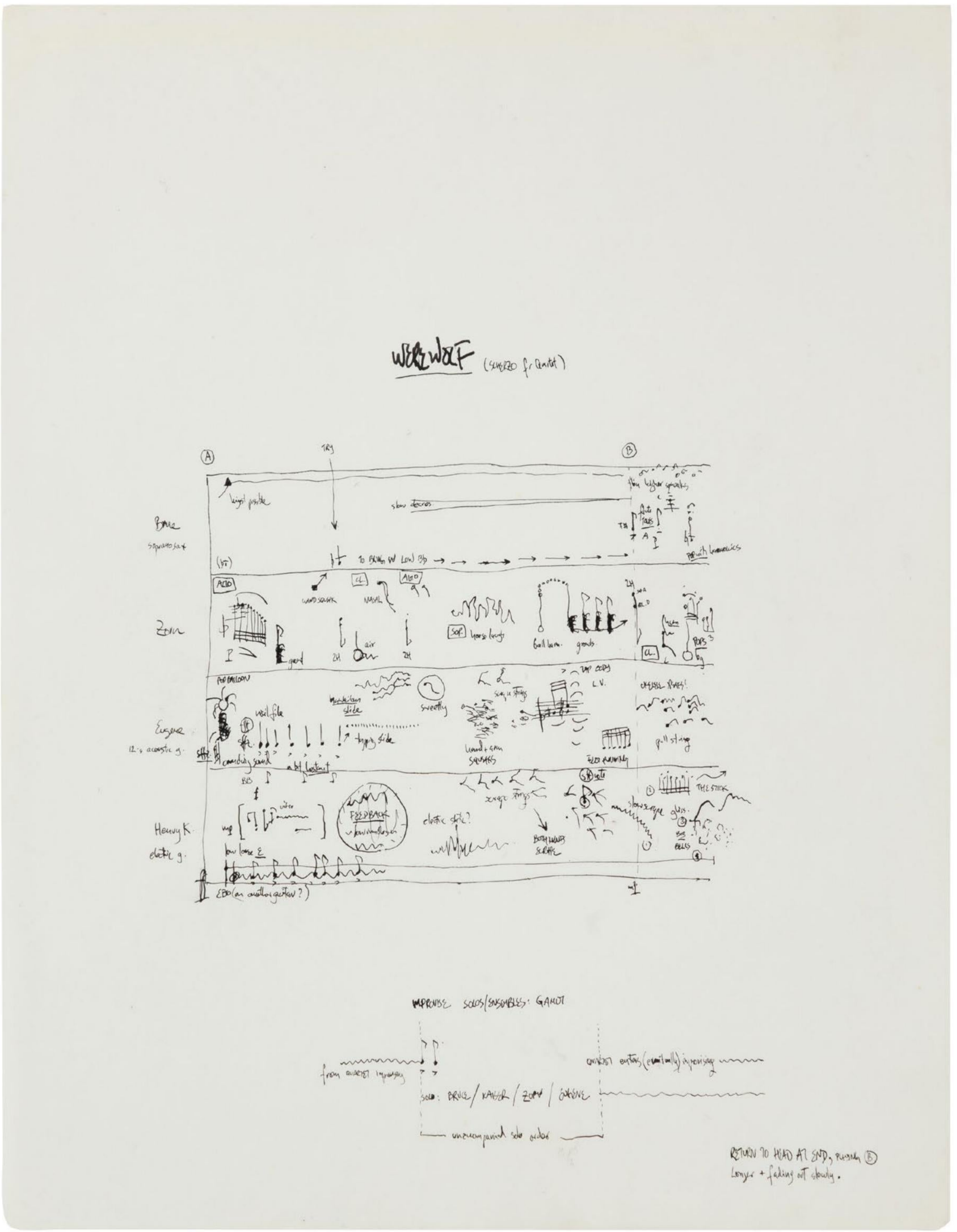


• Diagram of structure for RUGBY

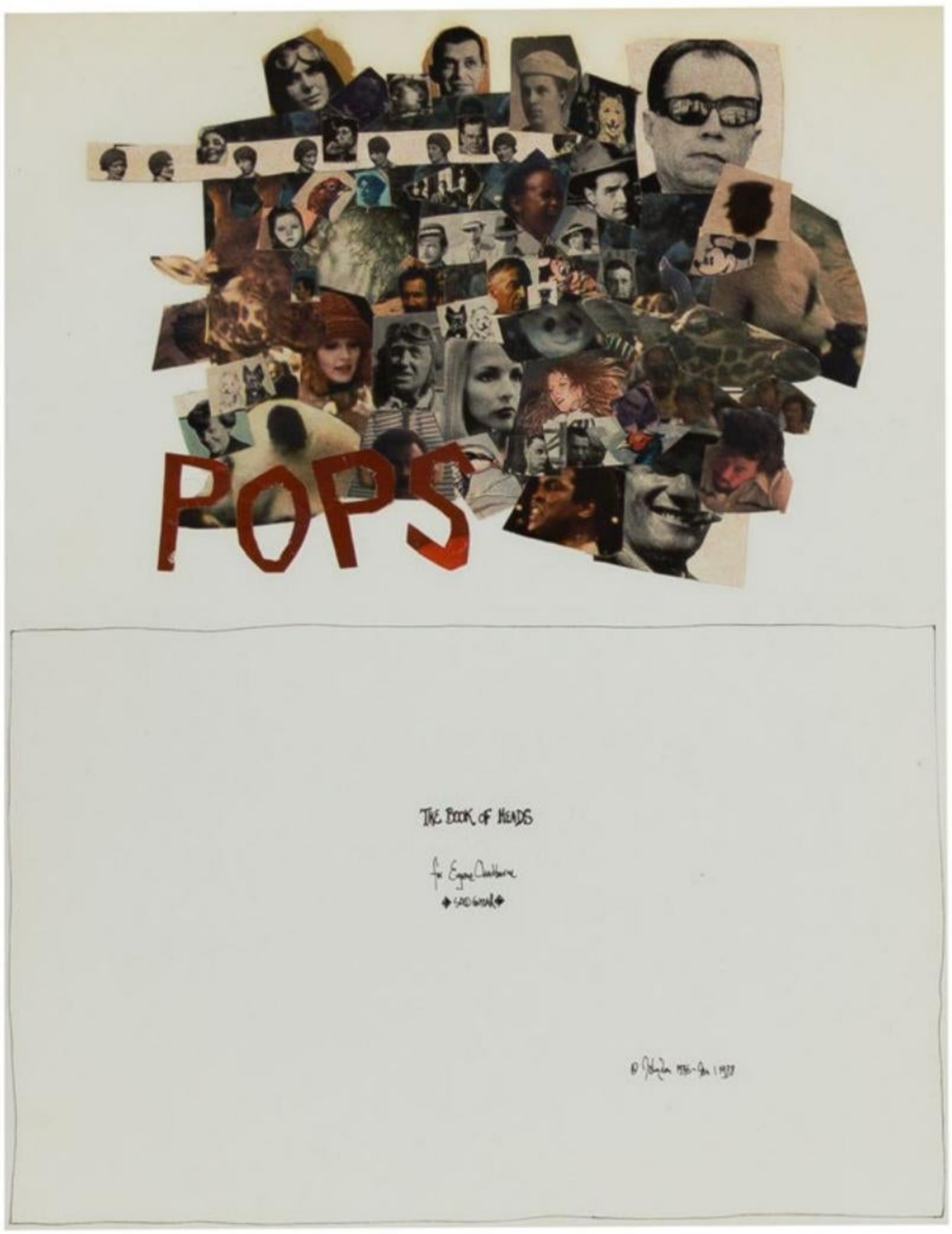
→ PLAY SEPARATELY (AS 3 SIMULTANEOUS SOLOS) FROM THIS POINT (POLARIZATION).

VIOLIN CADENZA (STRONG STATEMENTS)

PL. 102
Rugby, 1978



PL. 103
Werewolf, 1978



LIST OF ACCESSORIES NEEDED

BALLOONS (20 OR MORE)
VIOLIN BOW
ALLIGATOR CLIPS
METAL SLIDE (BOTH NOT BOTTLENECK)
RESONANT SPRING FOR SCRAPING
STYROFOAM
PIPE CLEANERS FOR SCRAPES (WRAP AROUND STRING)
PENCILS FOR EXTRA BRIDGES
UP TO 3 DIFFERENT GUITARS MAY BE REQUIRED (ACOUSTIC, ELECTRIC + BASS ETC.)
30 GRAINS OF RICE INSIDE A BALLOON
AT LEAST 2 METAL TONGS - (METAL NAIL FILES WILL DO)
FINGER CYMBAL
CREAKY TUNING PEG (WOODEN CLOTHES PIN WILL DO)
RATCHET SOUND
EXTRA STRINGS TO BE BROKEN OR CHANGED
SCORDATURA MAY BE USED AT YOUR DISCRETION WHERE NECESSARY TO PLAY WRITTEN CHORDS

GENERAL NOTE: "THESE "HEADS" ARE MEANT TO BE PLAYED AS WRITTEN AND SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR IMPROVISATION. THE IMPROV MAY OCCUR BEFORE, AFTER, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER, IN BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT HEADS OR THE SAME HEAD TWICE, OR NOT AT ALL DURING YOUR PERFORMANCE.

GLOSSARY OF SYMBOLS

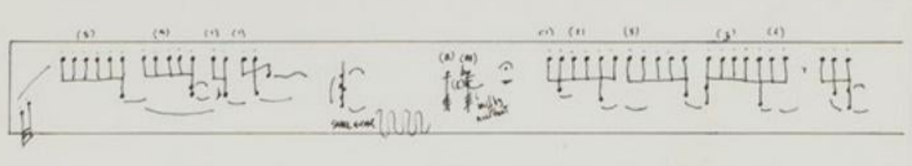
LH - LEFT HAND
RH - RIGHT HAND
BB - BEHIND THE BRIDGE
BN - BEHIND THE NUT
PITCH IS REPRESENTED VERTICALLY HIGH TO LOW
TIME IS REPRESENTED HORIZONTALLY
STRINGS INDICATED (1) HIGH E TO (6) LOW E
HOOPS - WET FINGERS SLIDE ON BODY (HEAVY PRESSURE)
BALLOON / PP BALLOON / CRUNCH BALLOON / HEAVY CRUNCH
SCRAPE - FINGERNAIL OR PICK
WHISPER / SMALL WHISK - FLESH OF FINGER ON WOUND STRING / LOUDER WHISK
SLIDE - STEEL SLIDE PLAYED WITH RH
CLUSTERS / CHORD
PITCH ACHIEVED BY PRESSURE BN OR BB (BEND)
GLISSANDO USING RING SLIDE
HARMONICS
BODY KNOCKS

5. 0:42



6. 0:41

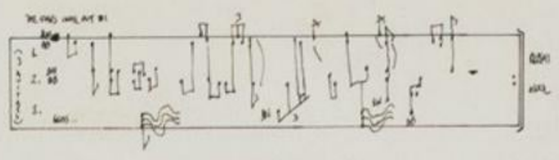
7. 0:27



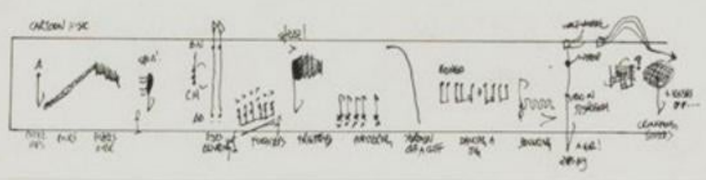
8. 0:43

PL. 104
Book of Heads, 1978

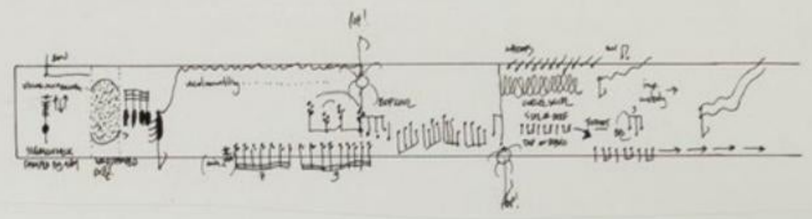
1.
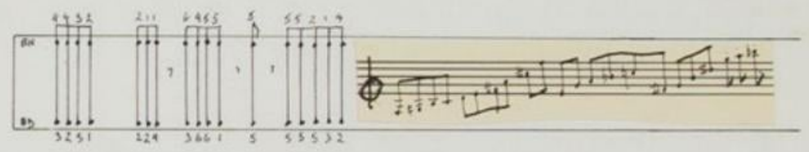


2.



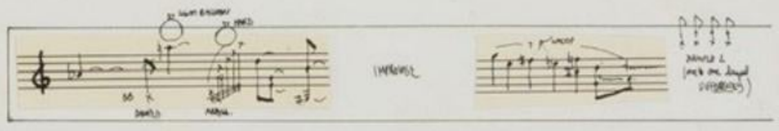
3.



4.

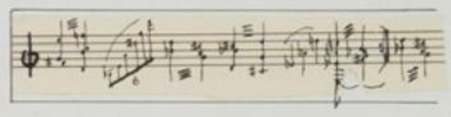


9.

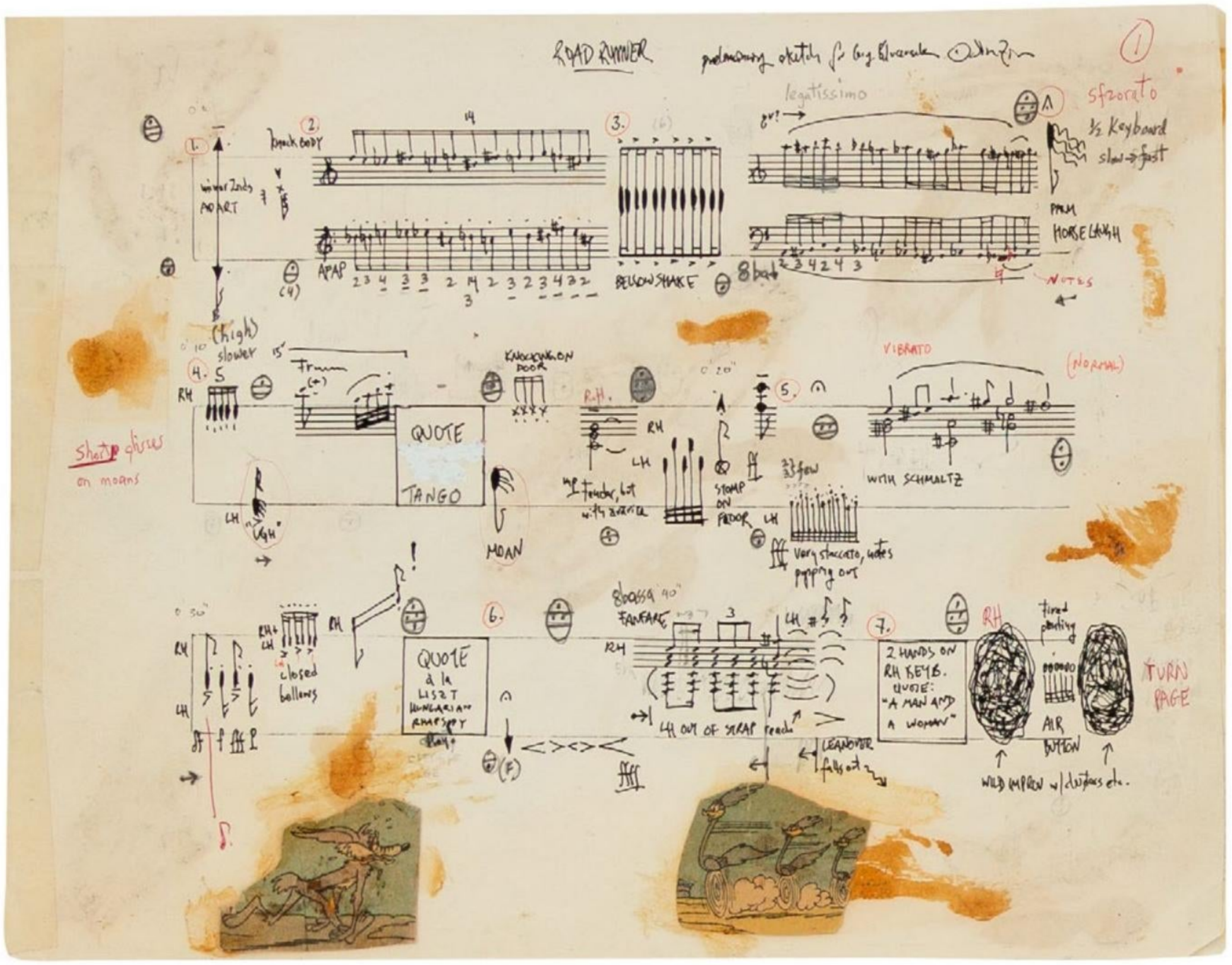


10.

11.



12.



PL. 105

Road Runner, 1986

SCALE WARS

3

14.

15.

LAUGHING

a bit faster - various tempos & spasmodic

VARY TEMPO

TURN PAGE!

SLOWLY

16.

KNOCK!

17.

LH LOW WOOFLING

(very different rhythm)

18.

19.

20.

21.

22.

23.

RH

Rocking Palm Glissi.

AIR BUTTON

modulating

IMPROVISE CONVERSATION BETWEEN HIGH + LOW

LH: VERY FAST GLIDE

very fast arpgs.

CLUSTERS GLISSES, SMEARS

LH

TRIPLE BELLOW SHAKE + PALM MOAN

sff

4

24. High

RH

LH

Low

High

Low

High

Low

High

Low

High

Legato

cluster

QUOTE: a la Rollini Trubomelli

At

sfz

RIGHT ARM — HAND

TO BELLOWS ALL THE WAY OUT

25.

RH WAITS.... JOINED BY RH

Low

IMPROVISE MELODY, HIGH LH

BELLOWS SWITCH

more spasmodic + staccato

26. BALD CLUSTERS - RHYTHMICAL

SWITCH

ORAT! BAH! PHOO

VE A E, IT

27.

28.

RH palm

MOTIVE FOR IMPROVISATION

EYE BLINKS

repeat

29.

clusters

WOMP!

GOT'CHA... WHOEVER YOU ARE!
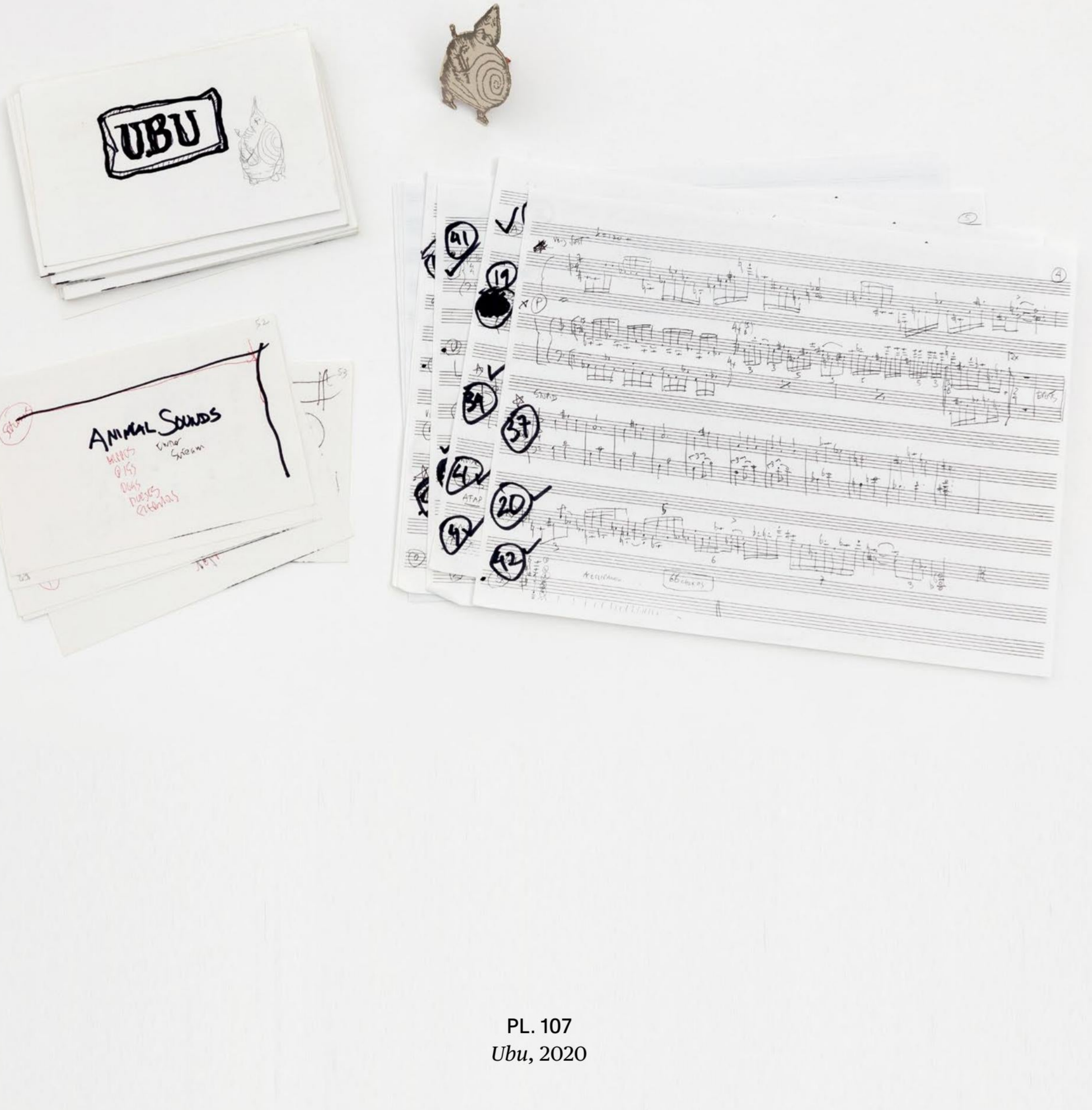
AWK!

FLIP

PAGE(S) OVER!



PL. 106
Mount Analogue, 2011



PL. 107
Ubu, 2020

Drawing a Way of Life

Arnold I. Davidson

Create yourself. Be yourself your poem.
—Oscar Wilde

John Zorn is a source of endless creativity; he is also a source of never-ending concentration. This creative concentration has produced some of the most significant musical works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. After this stunning exhibition of John's visual works, one may be moved to think that "endless" is not strong enough to describe his creativity and concentration. These two virtues confront us when John is composing, playing the alto saxophone, and conducting. Most people experience creativity as an exceptional state, but for Zorn creativity is his natural state. However, creativity by itself is not enough. Extraordinary concentration is necessary if creativity is not to remain an unproductive, abstract ideal; such concentration brings creativity into reality, makes it an ongoing part of our lives. Creativity without concentration is blind; concentration without creativity is empty.

With respect to John's music, people often claim that Zorn is able to move from one genre to another—classical, jazz, rock, flamenco, klezmer, et al. I do not believe that this is the best description of Zorn's exceptional ability. In effect, Zorn does something much more radical; he frees himself from the very concept of genre. It is not really accurate to say that Zorn combines or mixes genres. His music demonstrates that genre is a constricting concept, that it confines us rather than providing us with new spaces of freedom. In an analogous way, we could also ask about John's visual works—what is the genre of his drawings? If we insist on using this concept, we will be unable to see the originality and depth of John's drawings. They should not be classified according to the idea

of genre. Indeed, the only "generic" name we can apply to his music and to these drawings is *pieces by* John Zorn (or perhaps *pieces of* John Zorn, since he is so present in each of his works). John Zorn is his own genreless 'genre.'

An inevitable question that arises for us is: What is the place and role of improvisation in Zorn's musical and visual works? In a magnificent essay on prayer, Abraham Joshua Heschel writes as follows: "Prayer is more than a cry for the mercy of God. It is more than a spiritual improvisation. Prayer is a condensation of the soul."[1] I would respond to this claim by remarking that an effective spiritual improvisation is a condensation of the soul. Zorn's soul permeates his work. In fact, John Zorn is one of the very few people I know who constantly strives to put his virtues, as a composer and performer, into his life. Zorn's artistic practice is one central source of his way of life—and his way of life, just as in the ancient world, is his philosophy. His drawings continue these philosophical explorations and give new force to the idea that life should be the object of philosophical work.

We typically identify the practice of improvisation with music, or, at the very least, with an artistic practice. However, this is an all too limited and restrictive conception of improvisation. One problem for all of us, as Charlie Haden so brilliantly and forcefully put it, is that, "When I put down my instrument, that's when the challenge starts, because to learn how to be that kind of human being at that level that you are when you're playing—that's the key, that's the hard part."[2] Improvisation can become a way of life, a life that then becomes saturated with challenge, risk, excitement, and joy, a live lived in the mode of improvisation.

We should not forget that improvisation can also be a collective practice made up of complex social interactions. We can say about John Zorn what Max Roach once said about Charlie Parker: "Bird was kind of like the sun, giving off the energy we drew from him. His glass was overflowing. In any musical situation, his ideas just bounded out, and this inspired anyone

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1 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Essential Writings*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 96.

2 Charlie Haden, interviewed by Terry Gross (1983), "Live in the Present: Charlie Haden Remembered," Fresh Air, National Public Radio, July 18, 2014, https://www.npr.org/transcripts/332544960?t=1659943364508.

who was around. He had a way of playing that affected every instrument on the bandstand."[3]

In this sense, John Zorn is our Charlie Parker. Parker once said, "If you don't live it [music], it won't come out of your horn."[4] Both Parker and Zorn live their music. Zorn is such a prodigious composer that we might overlook or underestimate how breathtaking and amazing he is when he picks up his saxophone. And we should not forget the way in which both of them have affected their audiences, their listeners. The sounds of Parker and Zorn transform people's lives. Moreover, they both recognized and live(d) with the necessity of continuous self-transformation. With the exhibition of John Zorn's drawings, we encounter a new medium of this self-transformation, one that further calls for exercises of the self. Life is neither static nor stagnant.

As the great Israeli writer, Amos Oz, once exclaimed: "A book or a film or a piece of music can change us. Someone who has never in his life been changed in any way by a book or a film or a picture or music is—a squandered person."[5]

Squandering one's life is spiritual death. I might condense these points by saying that one should think of John Zorn as a spiritual guide who aims to transform your life.[6]

• • •

Let me turn now to a small selection of John's drawings. I want to begin by looking at three self-portraits.

The first self-portrait is immediately striking, since it portrays only half of John's face [FIG. 7]. It could be taken to be an unfinished drawing. In a certain sense, it is unfinished, not empirically unfinished, but unfinished from a spiritual point of view. This spiritual 'incompleteness' is a virtue that characterizes John's artistic practices, but, most importantly, it also represents John's life. This "unfinished" portrait depicts a spiritual attitude, namely, that John

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3 Max Roach, quoted in Robert Reisner, *The Legend of Charlie Parker* (New York: Citadel, 1962).

4 Charlie Parker, quoted in a review of Reisner's book (see previous note) in *The New Republic* (October 1962).

5 Amos Oz and Shira Hadad, *What Makes an Apple?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 132.

6 See Ilsetraut Hadot, "La figure du guide spirituel dans l'Antiquité," in Pierre Hadot, *La philosphie comme education des adultes*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson and Daniele Lorenzini (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, J. Vrin, 2019).



FIG. 7 *Self Portrait*, 2024

realizes that his work is never complete, never finished; furthermore, the open-endedness of his artistic work mirrors the open-endedness of his life and choices. There is always more to do; to be complete, to be finished is not an ideal for John. Indeed, considering life and work together, completeness is the beginning of spiritual exhaustion and emptiness. Being unfinished, John also emphasizes the importance and role of the unknown, the unheard, the unseen. The unfinished keeps life moving forward. Complacency has no place in John's way of life. John Zorn will, thankfully, never be finished. His new aspirations will always require further exercises of creative inspiration and illumination.



FIG. 8 *Self Portrait*, 2024

The second self-portrait depicts another spiritual value—concentration [FIG. 8]. John's eyes have an intensity of focus that blocks any distractions. All of his attention is directed to what

he is doing now. Without this concentration, his extraordinary achievements would not have been possible. John's kind of concentration is precisely what is needed to draw, to compose, to play, to conduct; and it is the kind of concentration that we need in order to be active participants in hearing or seeing his works. Complete communion with Zorn requires complete concentration. This type of concentration needs to be cultivated, and Zorn's work helps to teach us how to do so. Without this form of concentration, our lives, to return to Amos Oz's words, are "squandered." Withdraw this concentration, and our lives will be scattered and dissipated. John's works are not recreation or entertainment, but rather spiritual practices that, when enacted, enable us to live a more flourishing way of life. This modality of concentration pervades John's life and works, and it is up to us to learn how to practice and appropriate this virtue.



FIG. 9 *Self Portrait*, 2024

Turning to the third self-portrait, we find an image of creativity, the third spiritual value portrayed in these drawings [FIG. 9]. The tilting of John's head heavenward is a traditional representation of creativity, of looking for inspiration. Yet creativity requires a specific form of thought, and more than any other person I know, John is almost always in a creative state of mind. He is not simply looking for a flash of inspiration, but trying to think through and produce a work that is genuinely innovative and original. If you doubt that this self-portrait depicts creativity, here is a photograph of John playing the organ [FIG. 10]. His facial expression is identical to the one we see in his third drawing, and this photograph embodies creativity in



FIG. 10 *John Zorn*, 2011

action. Creativity is an active virtue, not a passive one. And without a sort of contemplative thought, creativity is barren. John's creative disposition is constantly being renewed. Creativity is not given once and for all, but demands exercises of the self, spiritual exercises, that are the point of departure for John's artistic practices. John's creative aura is the result of the practice of these spiritual exercises, a work on oneself that makes it possible, if I may put it this way, to create (the conditions for) creativity. Yearning for creativity is not sufficient by itself; one has to begin with exercises of self-transformation. John's artistic practices thus require these philosophical exercises, and, in this sense, John's works are authentically philosophical. John's expression in his third self-portrait is an expression of philosophy, of that search for creative concentration and practice that characterizes the history of the lives of philosophers.

• • •

It is time to approach Zorn's non-figurative drawings. (I will not call them abstract drawings, since many of them are quite concrete). I will consider four of these drawings, not only as individual works, but as part of a sequence that gives them new significance. Putting these drawings together, we can see John moving from simple, even elegant lines and intricate shading to what I think of as a kind of density of distributed detail. If you organize these drawings in the sequence below, the four pieces can be thought of as if they belong to a kind of improvisational progression, starting simply and culminating in an all-out large-scale improvisation.






FIG. 11 *Sigils/Grimoire Aleph*, 2024 FIGS. 12–14 No title, 2013

I begin with the drawing of a single figure, a majestic and elegant line [FIG. 11]. In the first place, the beauty of this line is comforting like that of a recognizable melody. Yet this kind of comfort can also be an obstacle. Why should I push myself forward, into the unknown, when I can rest tranquilly with the exquisite, magnetic attraction of this line? But this line will itself be transformed.

In the next drawing, the lines are geometrically more complicated [FIG. 12]. They are more irregular than what one finds in the first drawing; some of the lines are thin, some are thicker; many are interlaced; and the addition of color introduces more complications. Complications have their own kinds of pleasures and attractions, and we can look at the second drawing as the first stage of an improvisational intervention. The freedoms of improvisation make their first evident appearance here. Nevertheless, we still have a relatively straightforward improvisational transformation. The third drawing is the first moment of improvisational complexity [FIG. 13]. There are not only lines here, but also geometric figures of various sizes and shapes. Moreover, shading of different degrees suffuses the drawing, and there is a fuller use of color. We also find a new utilization of the intertwining, the overlapping and the superimposition of these colored differentiating lines. There are some open spaces, but they are thoroughly diminished. We might ask ourselves: What would even more density look like? An answer to this question is given by the next drawing. This last drawing exemplifies what I would like to call complex density [FIG. 14]. There is virtually no open space; and this drawing is dense and complex in a way that goes beyond anything we have seen in the previous drawings. Although it is complex, it is not obscure. I previously referred to it as a type of "large-scale improvisation." Just as a

complex musical improvisation requires repeated listening, so does a complex visual improvisation require repeated viewing. Think of this final drawing, the last of the sequence, as analogous to John Coltrane's *Ascension* or to certain performances of John Zorn's Electric Masada group. Would anyone claim to understand these works after only one hearing? That these works require repeated listening or seeing is not a defect, but a virtue. They demand constant frequentation and provide frequent insight and learning. Depth of thought never appears on the surface. Thus, Zorn moves from the graceful elegance of a line to the multiple entanglements of points, lines, and other geometric shapes, as well as color and other elements, so as to create an aesthetic density that is inexhaustible. Every time that you concentrate on this drawing, you excitedly discover something that you didn't see before, something new, which gives further depth to the drawing. Each time that you encounter this drawing, you should look at it as if it were for the first time. It is always a new experience.

All things considered, John Zorn's visual work shows us something about the metaphysics of drawing. His drawings do not necessarily need to be thought of as representations of fixed objects. I think of many of them as exhibiting a specific moment in a process. These drawings are of events, slices of which are frozen in time. Yet they never become lifeless objects. It has often been said that painting and drawing are spatial arts, whereas music is a temporal art. If Zorn's drawings are (of) improvisational events, then they can incorporate a temporality that we usually identify with music. Perhaps the rigid distinction between space and time in the arts should not be so rigid after all. If the drawings are arranged in a suitable temporal sequence, the metaphysics of drawing and the metaphysics of music need not be polar opposites. Change the sequence of the drawings and you have a different event. Change the sequence of musical notes and you have a different event. With this in mind, we must rethink our philosophy of drawing and our philosophy of music. John Zorn, like Socrates, is our philosophical gadfly.

All of John's works bring together two seemingly incompatible values—passion and precision. Very few people know how to appropriately weave together passion and precision. John does not merely want to combine them; he does something much more difficult, that is to say, he employs them simultaneously: his precision is passionate, and his passion is precise.

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk once said: "A person was created to transform himself."[7] And we have John Zorn, here and now, to be our guide. Let me leave you with a philosophical gift. If you want to see creative concentration at work (both in conducting and performing), watch and listen to John Zorn's performance at Jazz at Marciac. The last piece in the video (44:25-52:50), performed by Zorn's Electric Masada, musically demonstrates the astounding force of creative concentration.[8]

---

7 Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, quoted in Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, *Simchah: It's Not Just Happiness* (Rahway, NJ: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2006), 199.

8 "John Zorn–Jazz in Marciac–Live 2010 (Full Show)," YouTube, https://youtu.be/arCDeEv_nHw.

v. Notebooks

SO DANCE VISION whorlds OPEN to
total subject → object
|
COLOR (LIGHT)
MOVEMENT (SPACE)



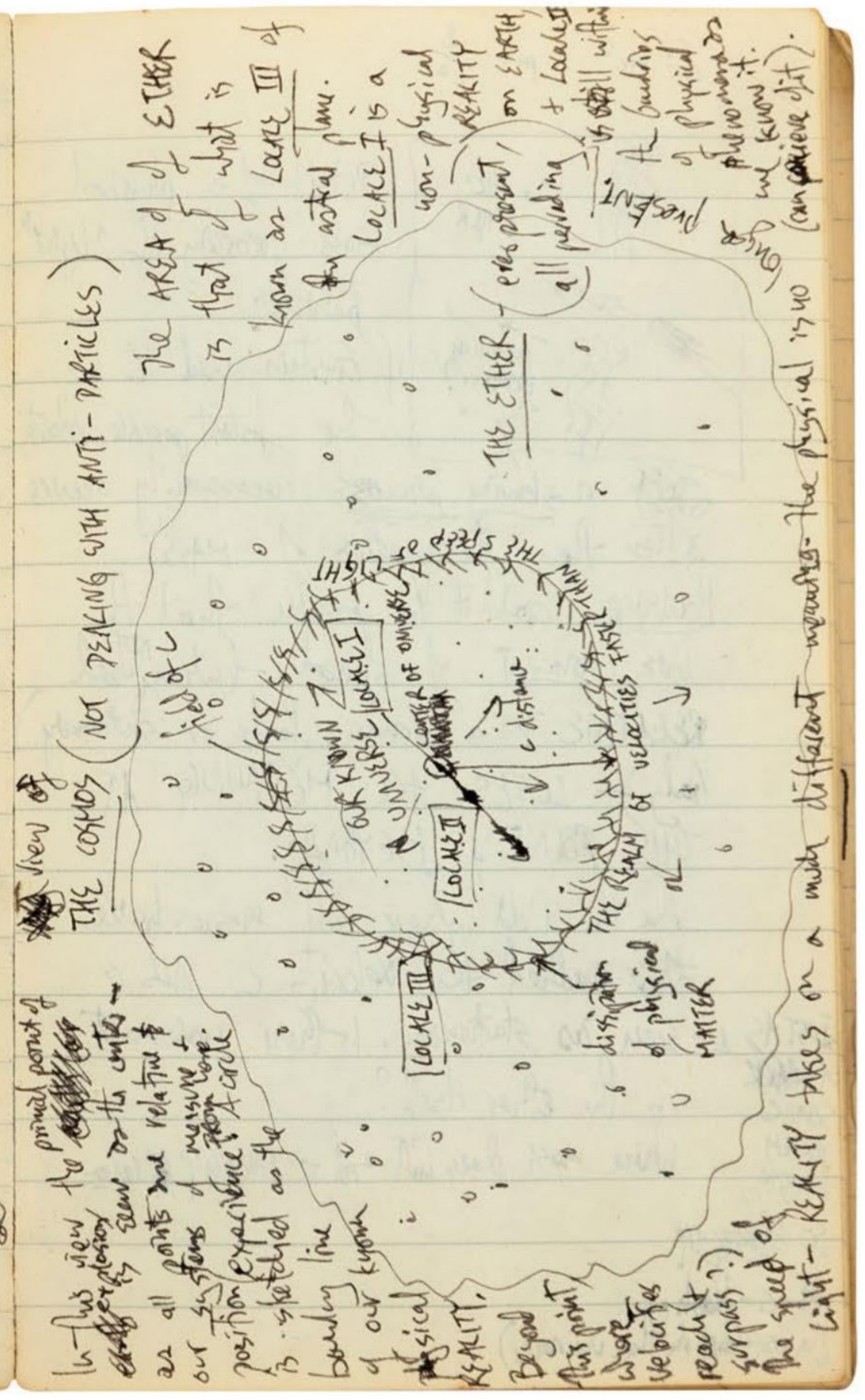
STABILITY, BALANCE

DREAM: film/play is breaking Jon Scott's PROM)
editing / last image is play 2
2 (kids?) on tricycles stopping before
meeting → ← load ov. / slows

Symphony piece ODE TO POSTERITY
long symphonical opening - all bass d. - clarinet
quintet section (oboes - Eng horn solo quartet) etc...

string quartet

The AREA of the ETHER
is that of what is
known as Locale III of
the astral plane.
LOCALE I is a
non-physical
REALITY
THE ETHER - (free present / on EARTH
all pervading
+ Locale II
is still within
the boundary
of physical
PRESENT
Ongoing
Phenomena
and known
(can achieve dist)



In this view of the primal point of explosion as all points are relative to our system of measurement + position experience from A circle is sketched as the boundary line of our known physical REALITY. Beyond this point velocities are greater than light - REALITY takes on a multi different meanings - the physical is no (can achieve dist)

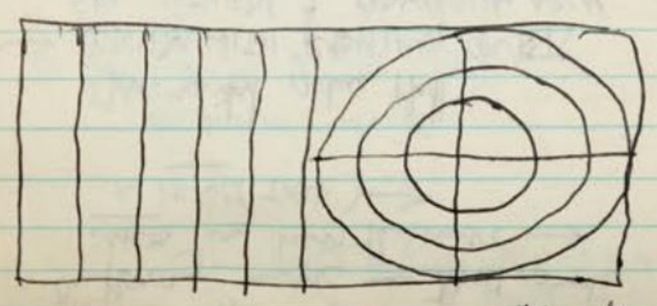
PL. 108
Notebook, 1974

SUPERIMPOSITION OF CENTURIES —
Victorian bedroom with knight, sophisticate
of ——

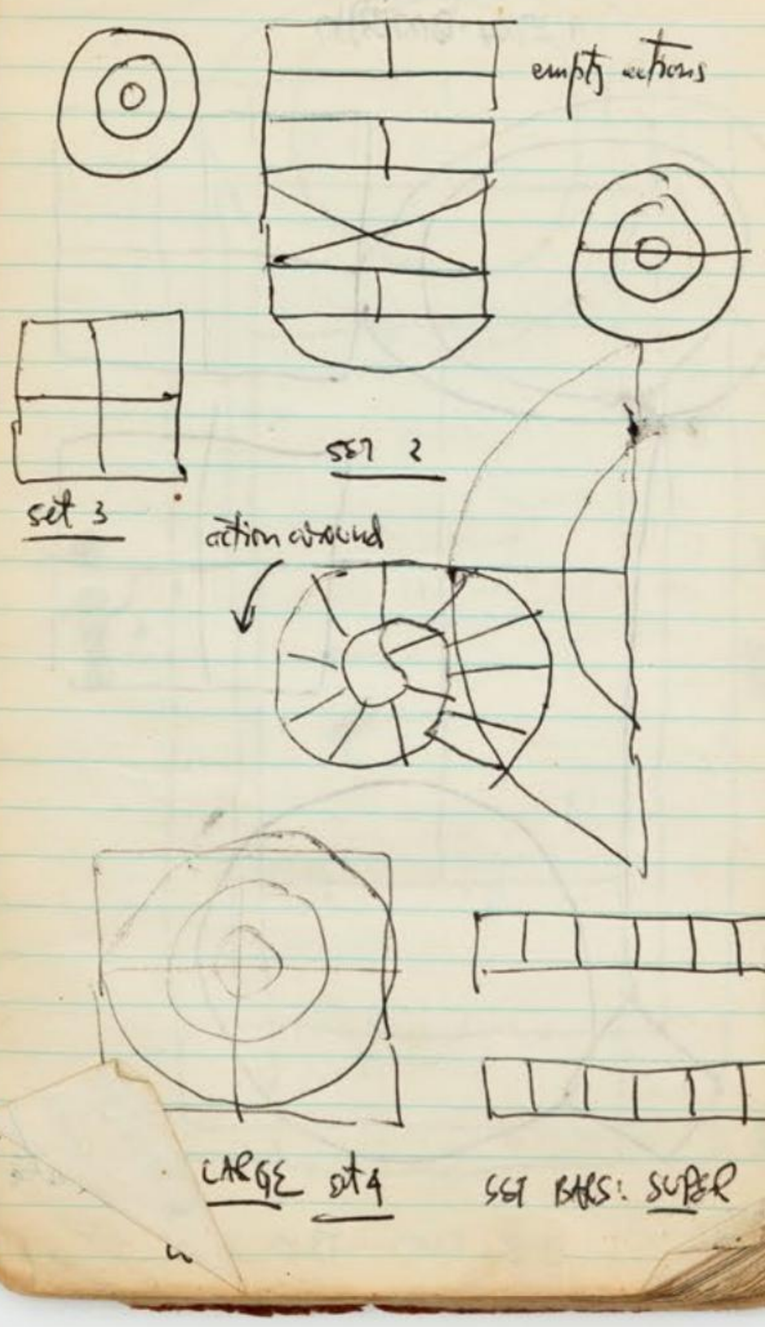
(c/- Antonio Galli Bibiena (1700 - 1774 Italy)
Giuseppe —— 1896
Francesco —— 1659
Fernando —— 1657

BACKGROUND LINES FOR Tenth Floor —
« 29½ MOTT STREET »

high walking tours
low

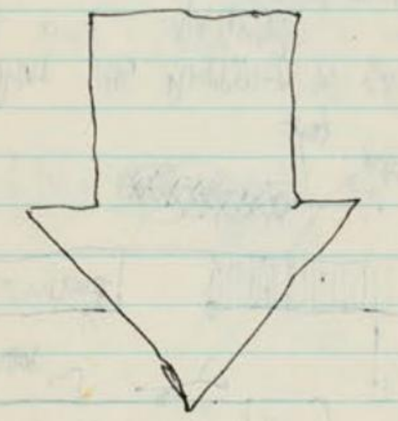


set 1 walking actions



[OBJECT = SOUND [= MELODY!]]

A SIMPLE PRESENTATION OF OBJECTS



a simple melody = chant/folk organism

- 30 MINUTES OF (MARBLE, SOUND) + string
  APPROX. 50 OBJECTS from shows + collections
- 3 MINUTES OF CARDS + DICE (last)
- 3 MINUTES OF LIGHT + FACE
- 3 MINUTES OF CARDS
- 2 MINUTES OF DANCE

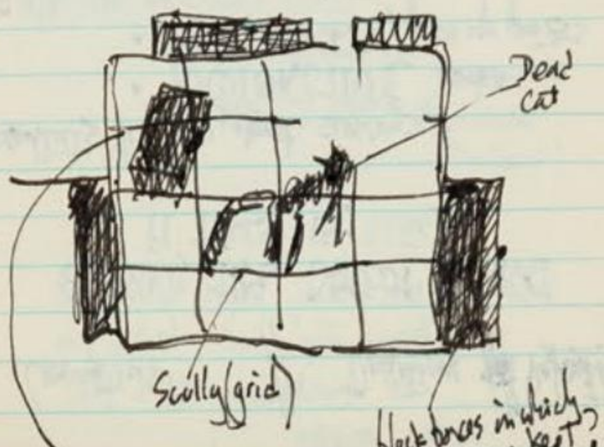
GENERAL STATEMENT CONCERNING THE PAGES OF NOTES ON THE RAY TRACING

- After going through so much material, and over 17 different shows + versions of shows, I have decided to again take a dance, but this time on something returning much more PURELY to my original AESTHETIC of the Theatre of Musical Optics, which I find I have strayed from in these notes (conversations) of the past months — The original idea was this: OBJECTS = SOUND. Subordinate to this concept was the presentation — a way far from ADVERTISING — so as not to manipulate the objects to produce

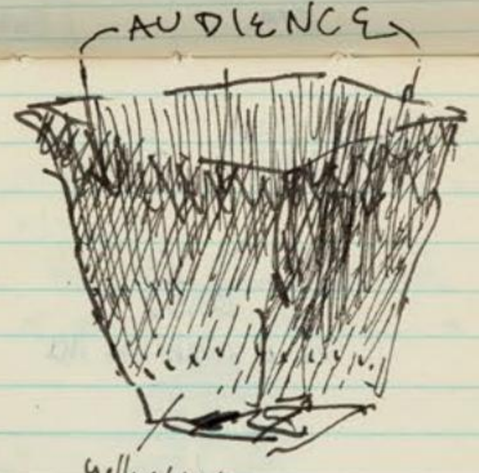
PL. 109
Notebook, 1975

① Series of objects presented on GRID pattern from box — added and subtracted as the SET / still life proscenium.

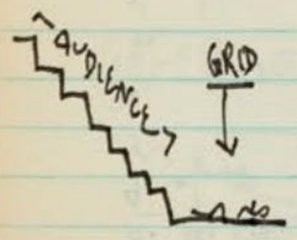
② Manipulations: NOT OF OBJECTS ON GRID (still life) but from box upon body:
∴ for each set (still life) : a series of corresponding MANIPULATIONS.



OR BOXES ON GRID, AS PART OF SET.



OR
ON
STAIRWELL
BOTTOM



LIGHTHEARTED / WORKS
↓
setting
↓
Vaudeville / stand-up

The pieces exists with & without me —
- paint face green
- at start up, attach pins to it - record
- hole punch
- teeth - cardboard
- finger paint on glass (Envelope photos)

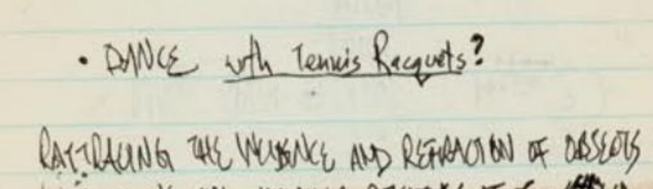
PRESENTATION · OF OBJECTS
PRESENTATION OF OBJECTS
· TIME WORKING VERTICALLY ·

· DANCE with Tennis Racquets?

CATCHING THE WEIGHT AND REFRACTION OF OBJECTS
OBTAINING THE HIGHEST POTENTIAL OF Σ [illegible] central
IN AN OPEN SYSTEM (always) [illegible] SEEN
AS A VERTICAL AXIS SQUARED WITH [illegible] OPTICALS.
MUSIC
[illegible]



INVENTIONS - OBJECTS
↓
Presentation (advertising design)
↓



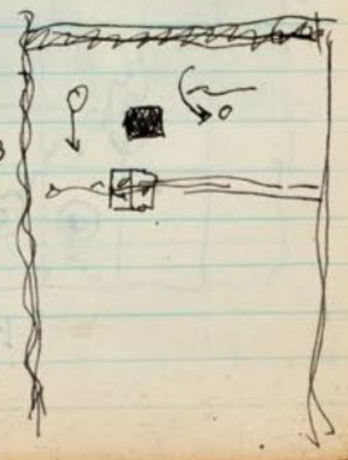
(things to make)

SYMPHONY #3: FRANKENSTEIN

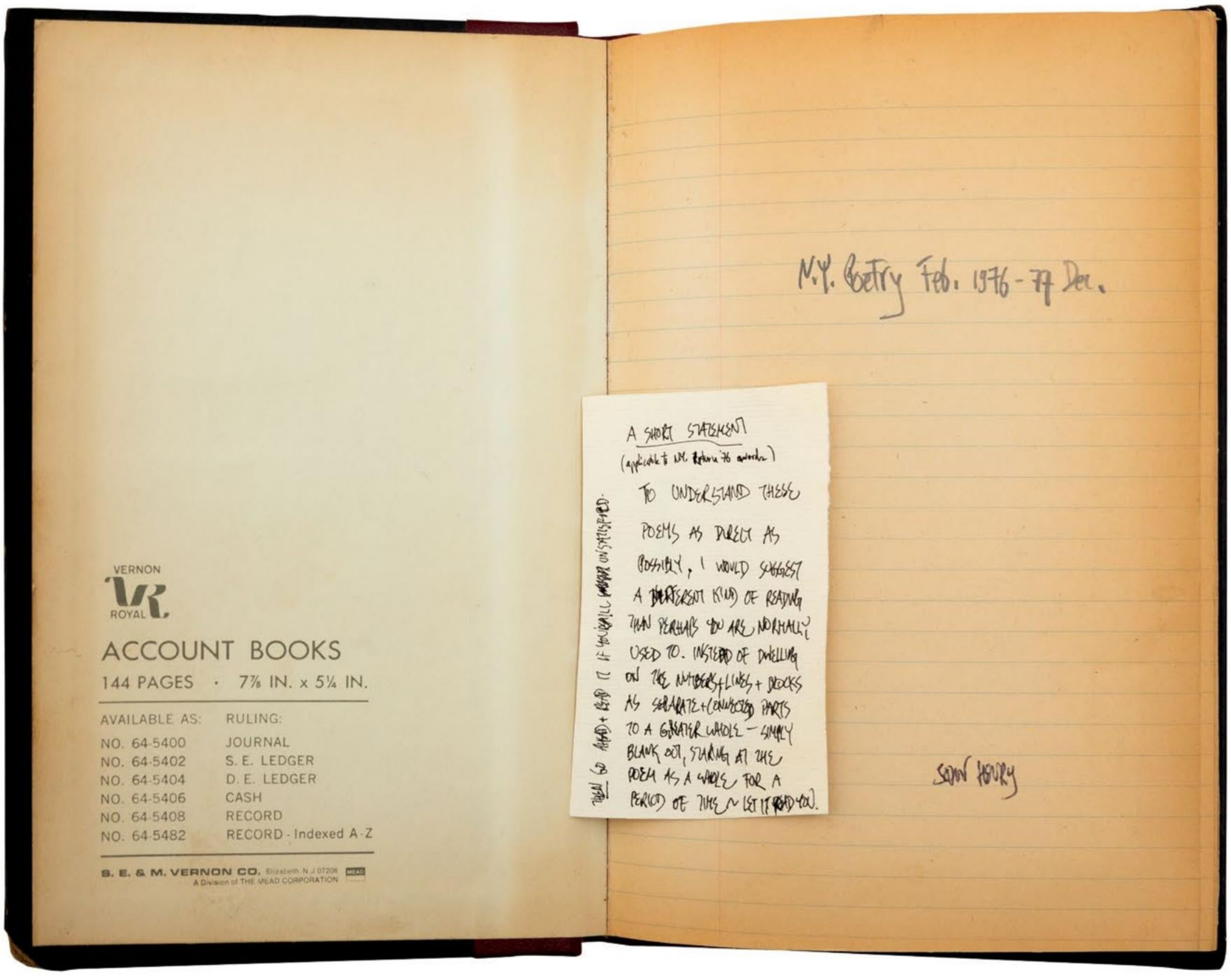


(6 GRID SYSTEMS WORKED PULLEYS BY 2 BODIES)

(ADDITIVE? -
· GRID
· LIGHTS
· NIGHT CLUB
· MAGIC
· SECRET



PL. 110
Notebook (Sketches/Notes for Bemsha, Ray Tracing), 1976



PL. 111

N.Y. Poetry Feb. 1976-77 Dec. (Number Poetry), 1976-1977

STUART

4106
9721
5132
6005
4386
9772
3105
4560
7908
3334
6008
1719
4462
7881
9089
451
7218
1595
2087
362
>491
6032
6097
3062
1053
2761
4209
3002
1063
2755
5510
62
417
9.

VI. Flyers and Posters

THEATRE OF OPTICAL SOUND

"MIKHAIL ZOETROPE"
an opera



DEDICATED TO MIKAIL MCKINNEY
ALSO "FANFARE WITHOUT PARTS"

745 E. 19 NOV 22 8:30

THEATRE OF OPTICAL SOUND

"MIKHAIL ZOETROPE"

an opera

DEDICATED TO MICHAEL MCKINNEY
¶ ALSO: FANFARE WITHOUT PARTS P.

745 E 19 NOV. 22 8:30

THEATRE OF OPTICAL SOUND

presents:

"MIKHAIL ZOETROPE"

an opera

DEDICATED TO MIK. MCKINNEY
¶ ALSO: "FANFARE WITHOUT PARTS" ¶

745 NOV. 22
£.19 8:30



THEATRE OF OPTICAL SOUND
presents the premiere of

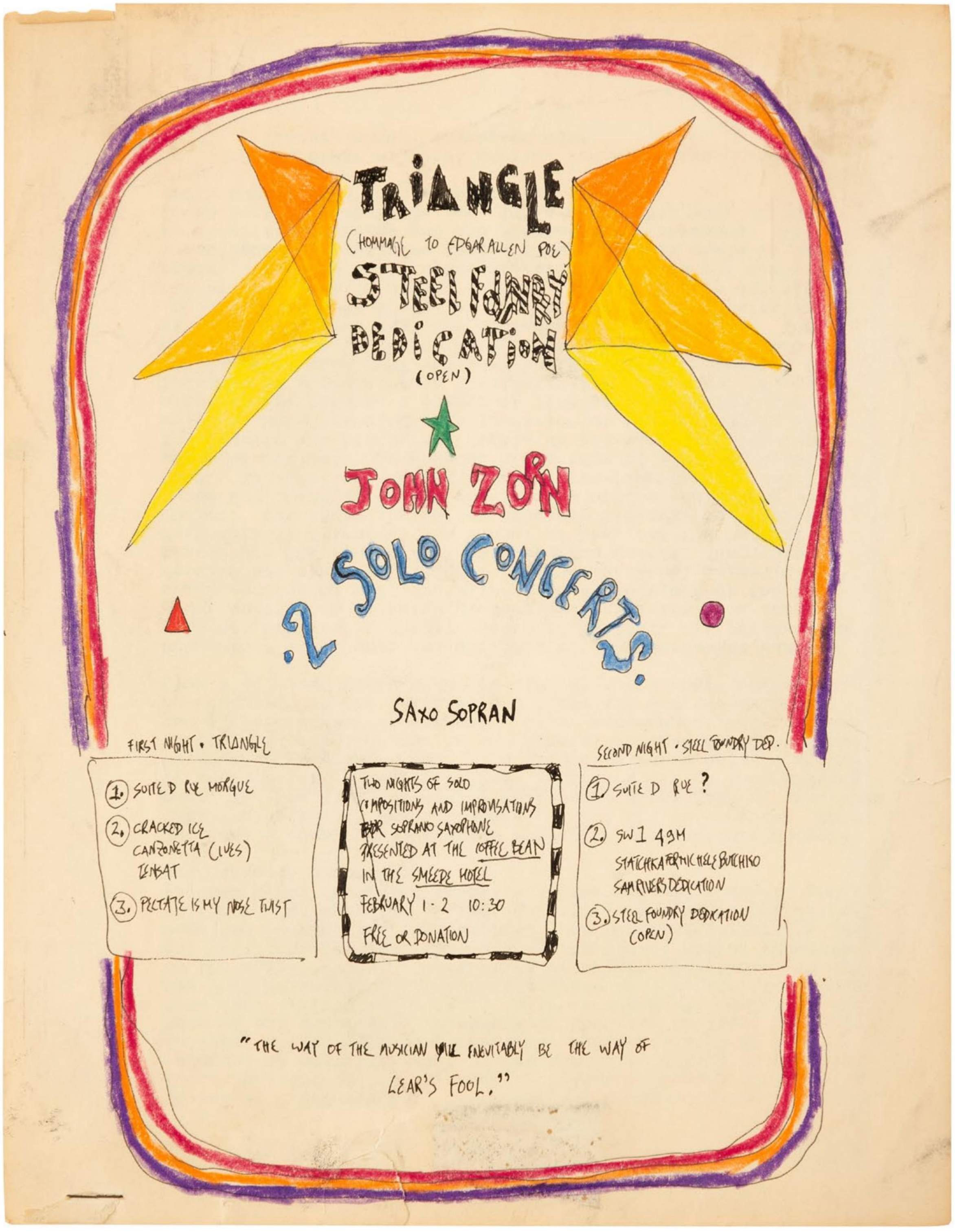
"MIKHAIL ZOETROPE"

an opera

DEDICATED TO MIK. MCKINNEY
¶ ALSO: FANFARE WITHOUT PARTS (1975) P.

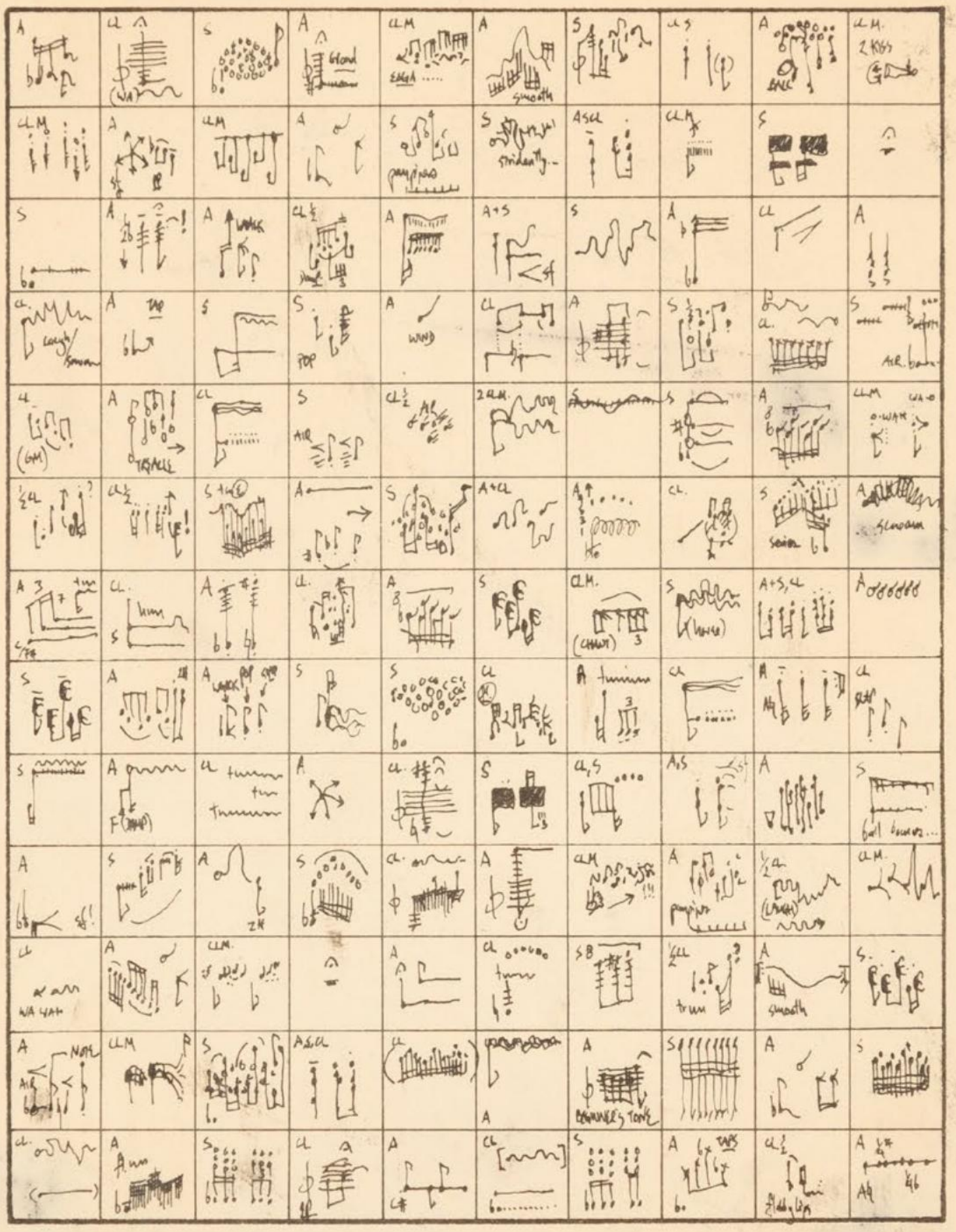
745 E. 19 NOV. 22 8:30

PL. 112
Theater of Optical Sound-Mikhail Zoetrope an opera flyer, 1974



PL. 113

John Zorn, 2 Solo Concerts: Triangle (Homage to Edgar Allen Poe), Steel Foundry Dedication flyer, 1974



JOHN ZORN : SOLO IMPROVISATIONS

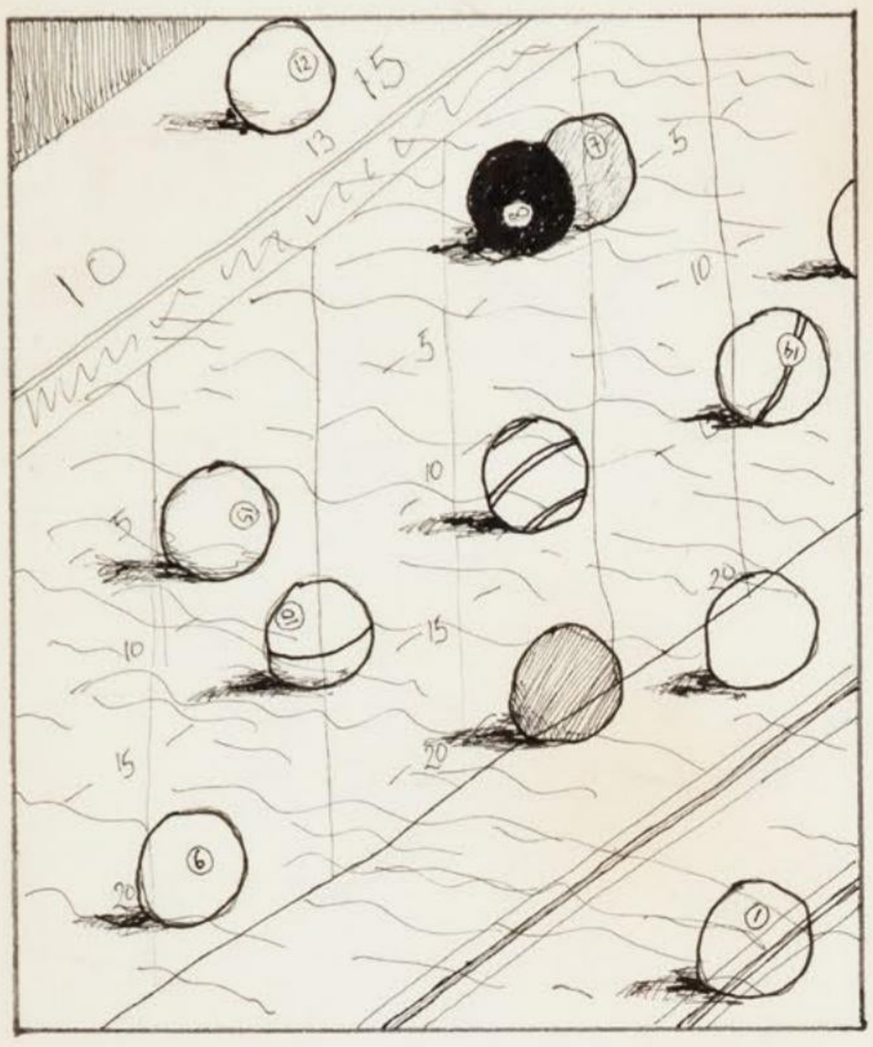
ALTO, SOPRANO SAXOPHONES, BB CLARINET

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 29 · 8 PM

THEATRE OF MUSICAL OPTICS · 430 LAFAYETTE #5F $2.00

PL. 114

John Zorn: Solo Improvisations flyer, 1976



JOHN ZORN: SOLO IMPROVISATIONS

AND THE PREMIERE OF HIS COMPOSITION "POOL"

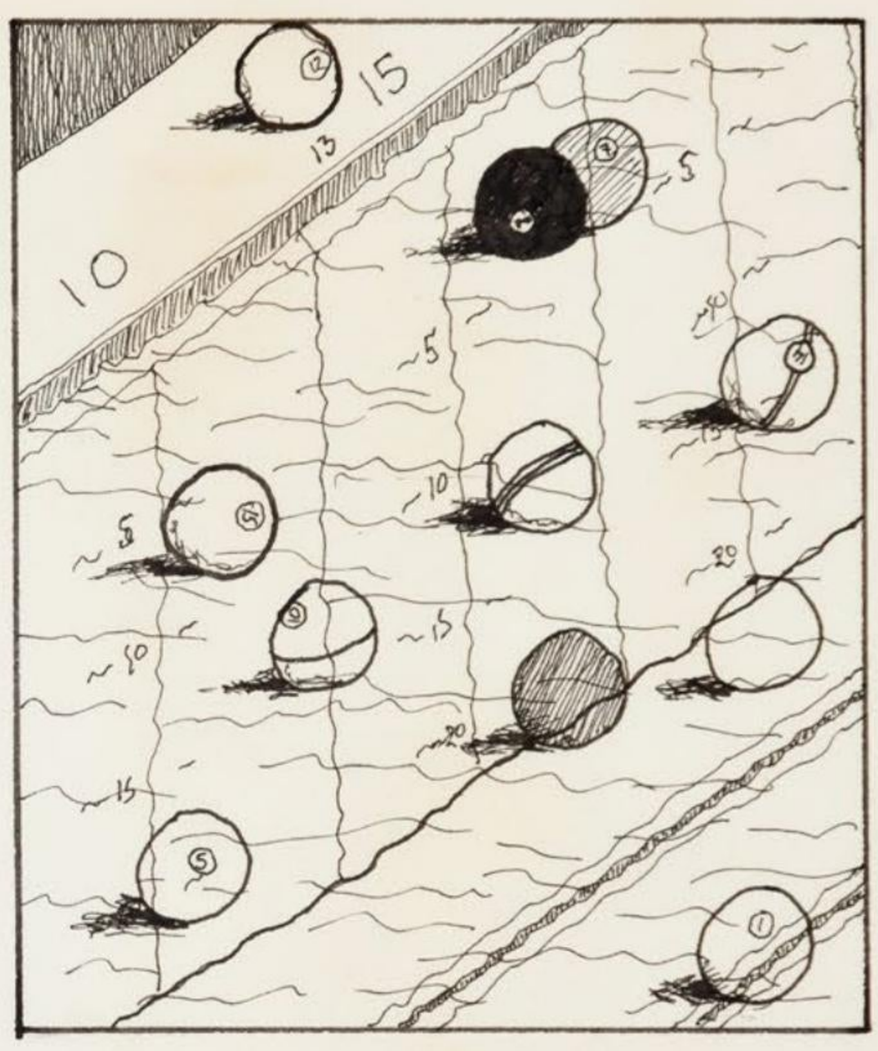
POLLY BRADFIELD
VIOLIN

BOB OSTERTAG
SYNTHESIZER

MARK MILLER
PERCUSSION

WED. MAY 2
8:30 PM. $2.50

ZU PLACE
140 W. 24th ST.



JOHN ZORN: SOLO IMPROVISATIONS

AND THE PREMIERE OF HIS COMPOSITION "POOL"

POLLY BRADFIELD
VIOLIN

BOB OSTERTAG
SYNTHESIZER

MARK MILLER
PERCUSSION

WED. MAY 2
8:30 PM. $2.50

ZU PLACE
140 W. 24th ST.

PL. 115

John Zorn: Solo Improvisations and the Premiere of his Composition "Pool" flyer, 1979



PL. 116
Darts flyer, 1983



PL. 117
Live at the Saint flyer, 1983



PL. 118

Live at the Saint flyer, 1983

Is there anyone who
stretches the mind as much
as John Zorn?

I think not. And in saying
that (I think not) I move into
a Zorn world that—what?

Come again? His gentleness
is as much a surprise as the
diamond hardness of his
music—blow after blow upon
inherited sensibilities—does
one survive? Those meant
to survive, survive. i.e.—those
willing to work at a music
that says “work a bit.” The
others—fall back into their
chosen hypnotic state.

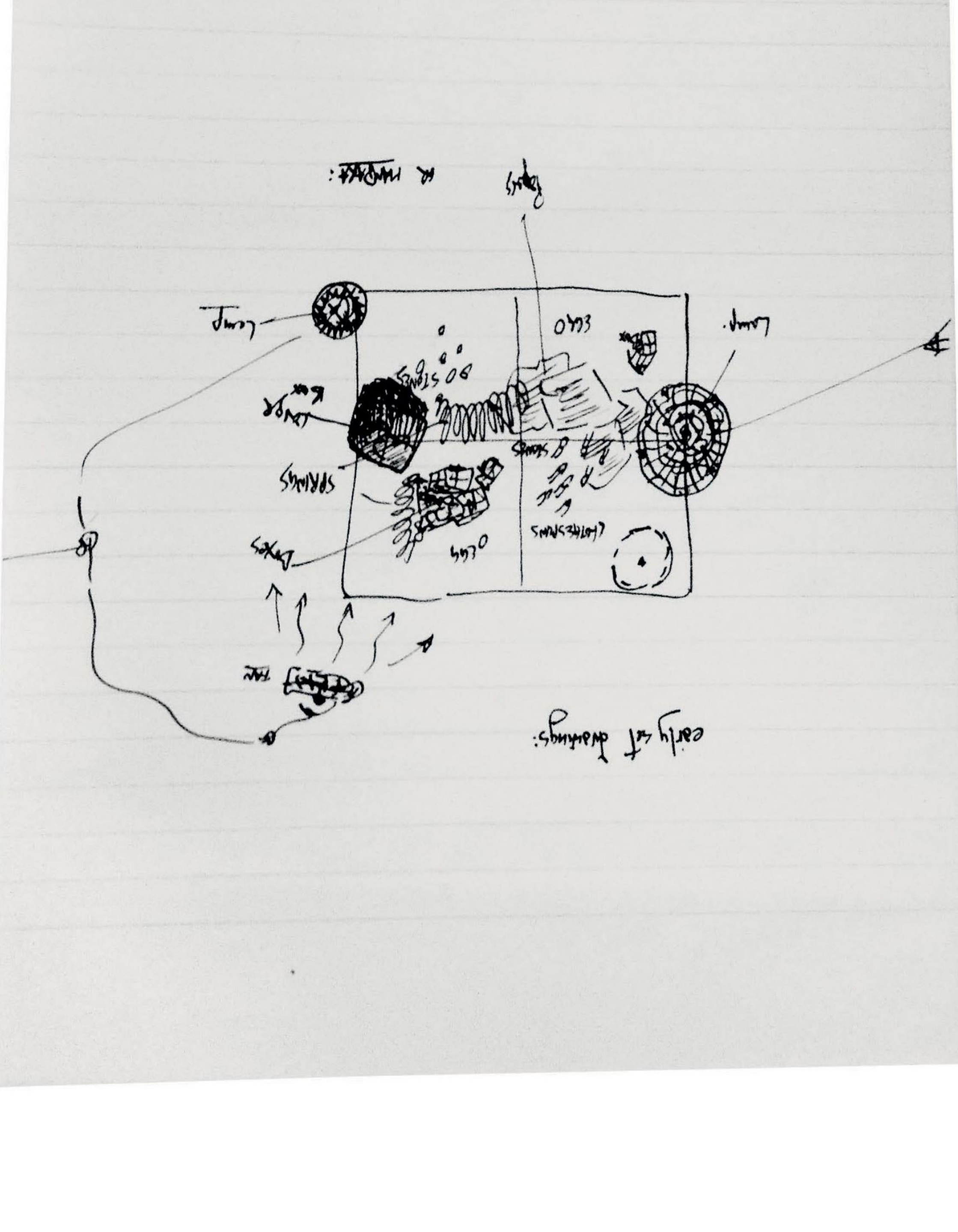
—Richard Foreman

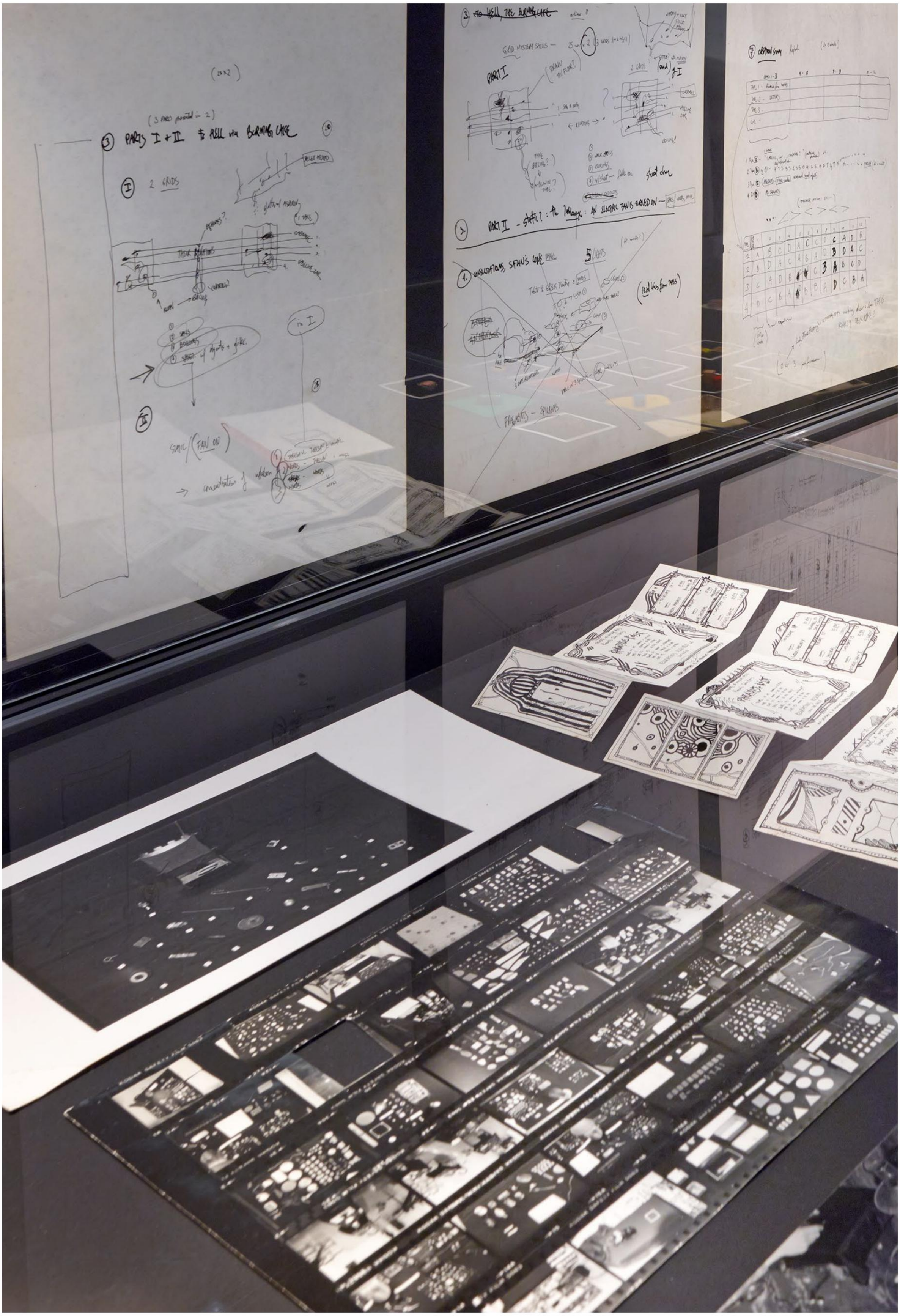
VII. Theatre of Musical Optics

ALL WORKS THIS SECTION
Theatre of Musical Optics, 1974–present

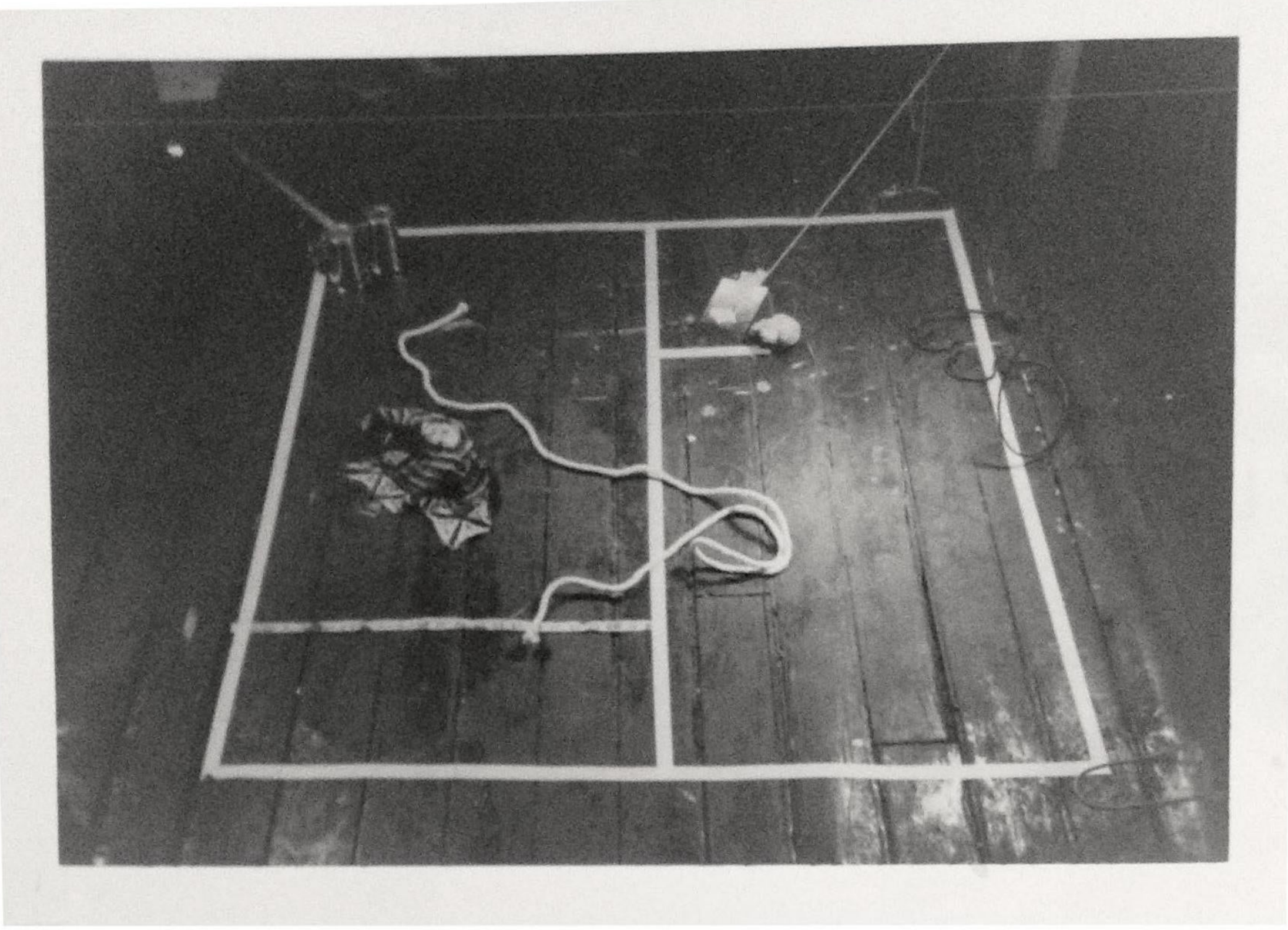
INSTALLATION VIEWS FROM
Rituals of Rented Island, Whitney Museum of American Art,
Oct 31, 2013–Feb 2, 2014

Please draw a square foot of the living room as a plan

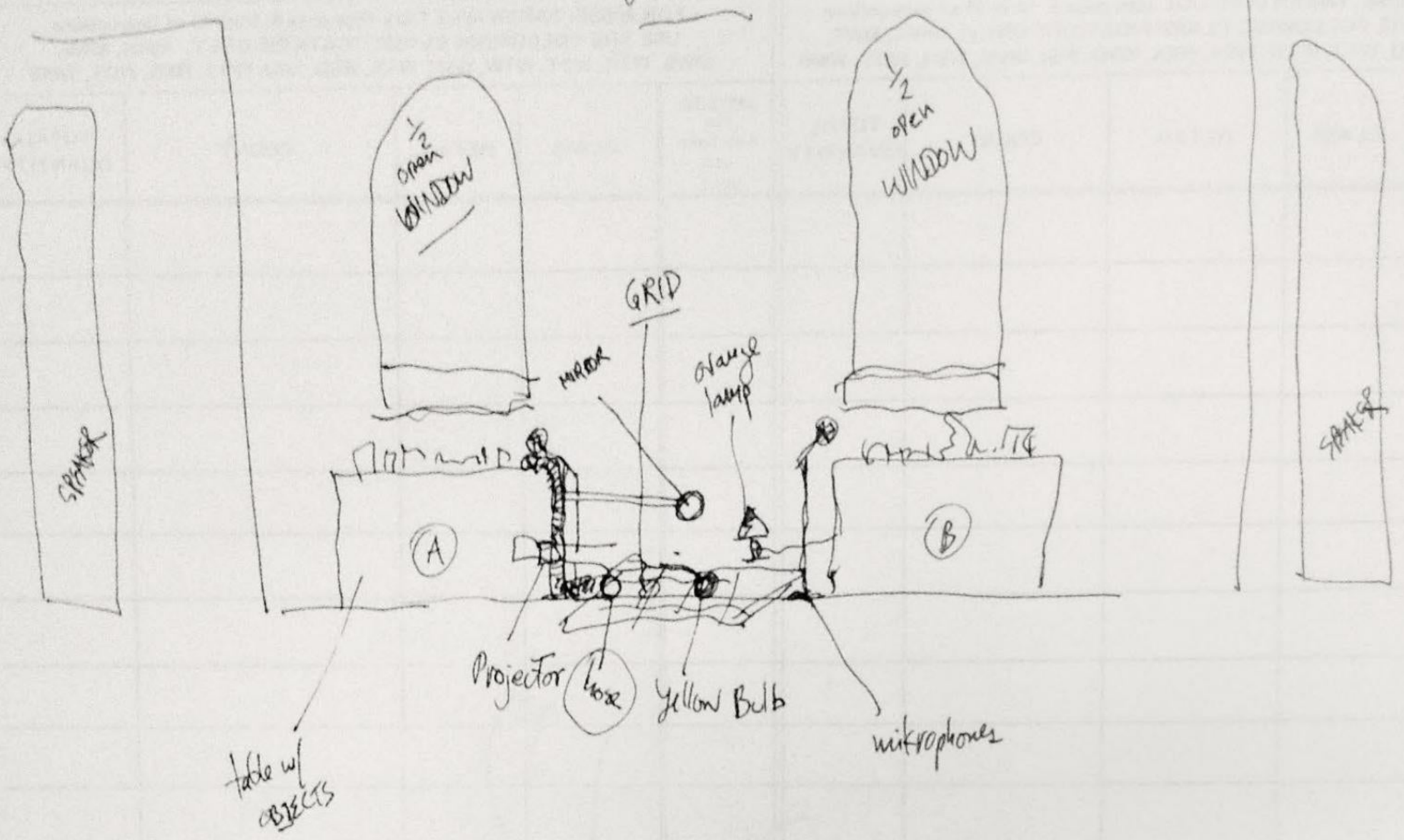

Lamp
Lamp
Lamp


(2 x 2)
(3 PARTS presented in 2)
3 PARTS I + II to FILL the BURNING CAGE
I 2 GRIDS
2 GRIDS
PART I
PART II
5 LIGHTS
FAN ON
in I

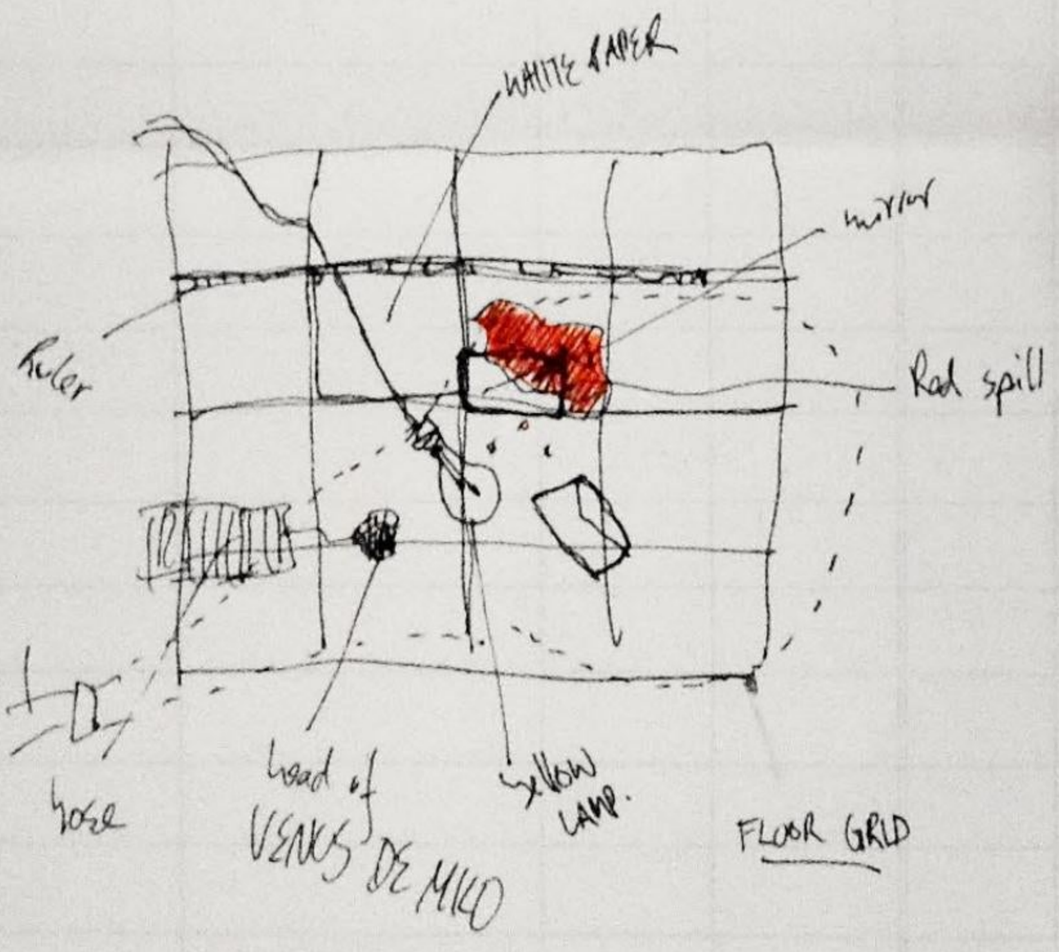




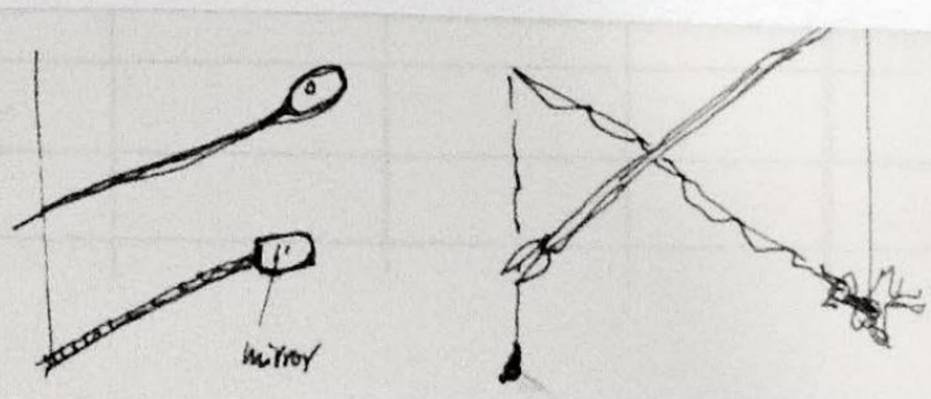
basic SET



all light from windows + lamps.







IN AN OPERATING THEATRE

HAND MADE, hand
TOYS, Soldiers,
DOLLS

AS IN A PIT





PROPS = TOYS = OBJECTS = PERFORMER

AUDIENCE views show
FROM ABOVE as in an
OPERATING Theatre —.

→ Performer as a manipulator of events

→ or PERFORMER AS AN OBJECT HIMSELF

↓

accomplish

↓

[IMPORTANT] NOTE ON THIS: The Performer SHOULD NECESSARILY
not be clever/tricky in motions: showing TALENTS
is NO one of the aspects of the show: SHOWING

PRODUCTIONS OF THE THEATRE OF MUSICAL OPTICS

1974 OPERA DEMENTIA

1975 UNTITLED (FOR RICHARD FOREMAN)
EDWEARD TRILOGY:
- part 1
- house:hose:use
- 29⅓ Mott Street

MIKHAIL ZOETROPE

1976 A STORY OF SADISM AND REVENGE
DISECTION OF 2 SQ. FT. OF A HUMAN EMBRYO AS A DIAMOND
OPTOMEDEMRIST
MOUTH SHOW
RAY TRACING
SECRET SHOW FOR STUART SHERMAN
BEHEADING A LADY:
1. Virgin Magra
2. Automata of Al Jazari
3. 31°S 125° W

1977 THE WAKE
THE FUNNEL
PONCE DE LEON 1, 2, 3
PROPAGANDA 30, 60, 90
AGAINST THE FUNNEL
THE PREDICATE
PARADISE LOST
DRACULA

1978 SAN FRANCISCO
THE BRIDGE AND THE CRANE (experiments in harmony and polyphony part I)

1979 FIDEL (experiments in harmony and polyphony part II)

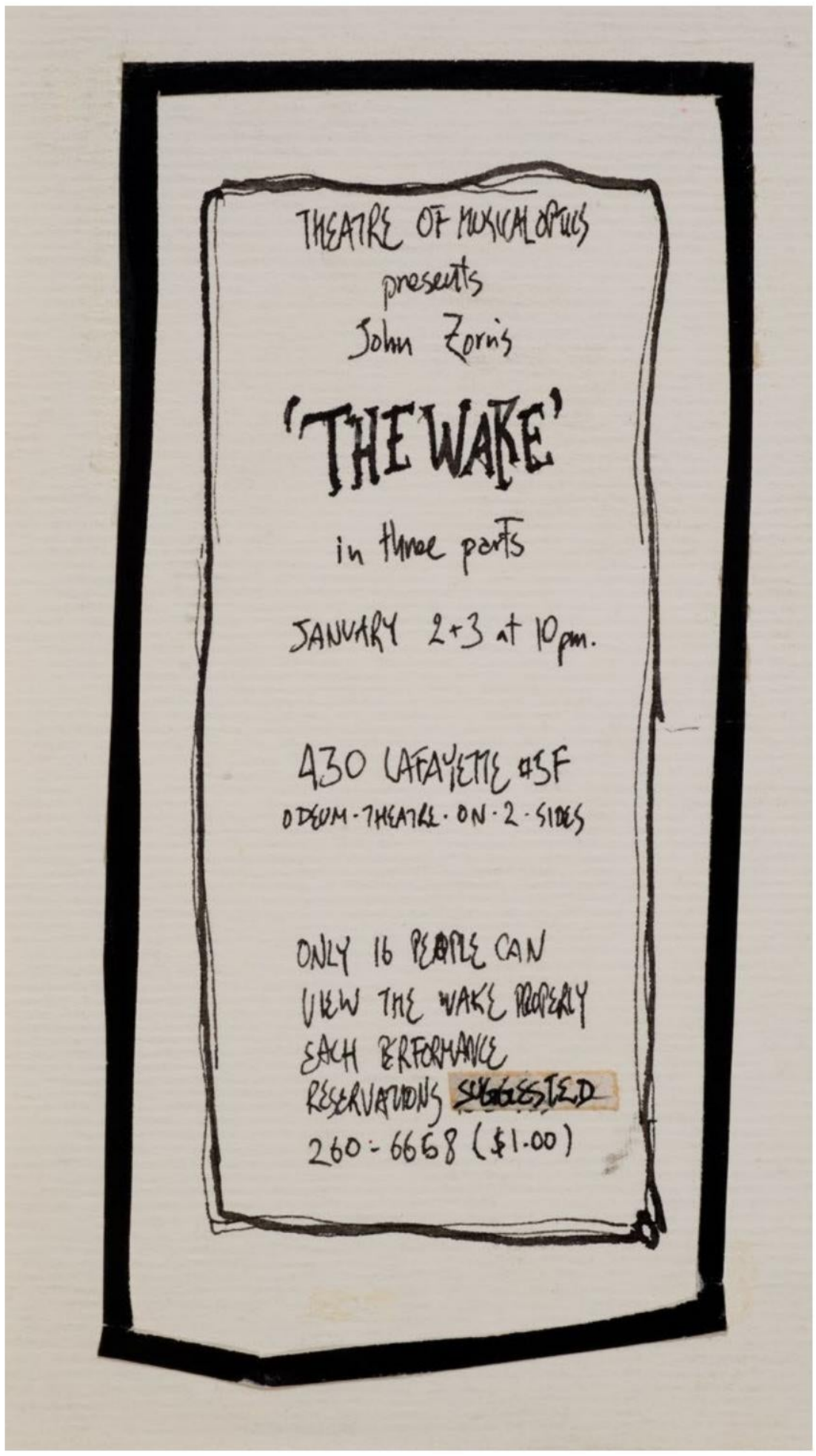
1981 CAFÉ WHA?

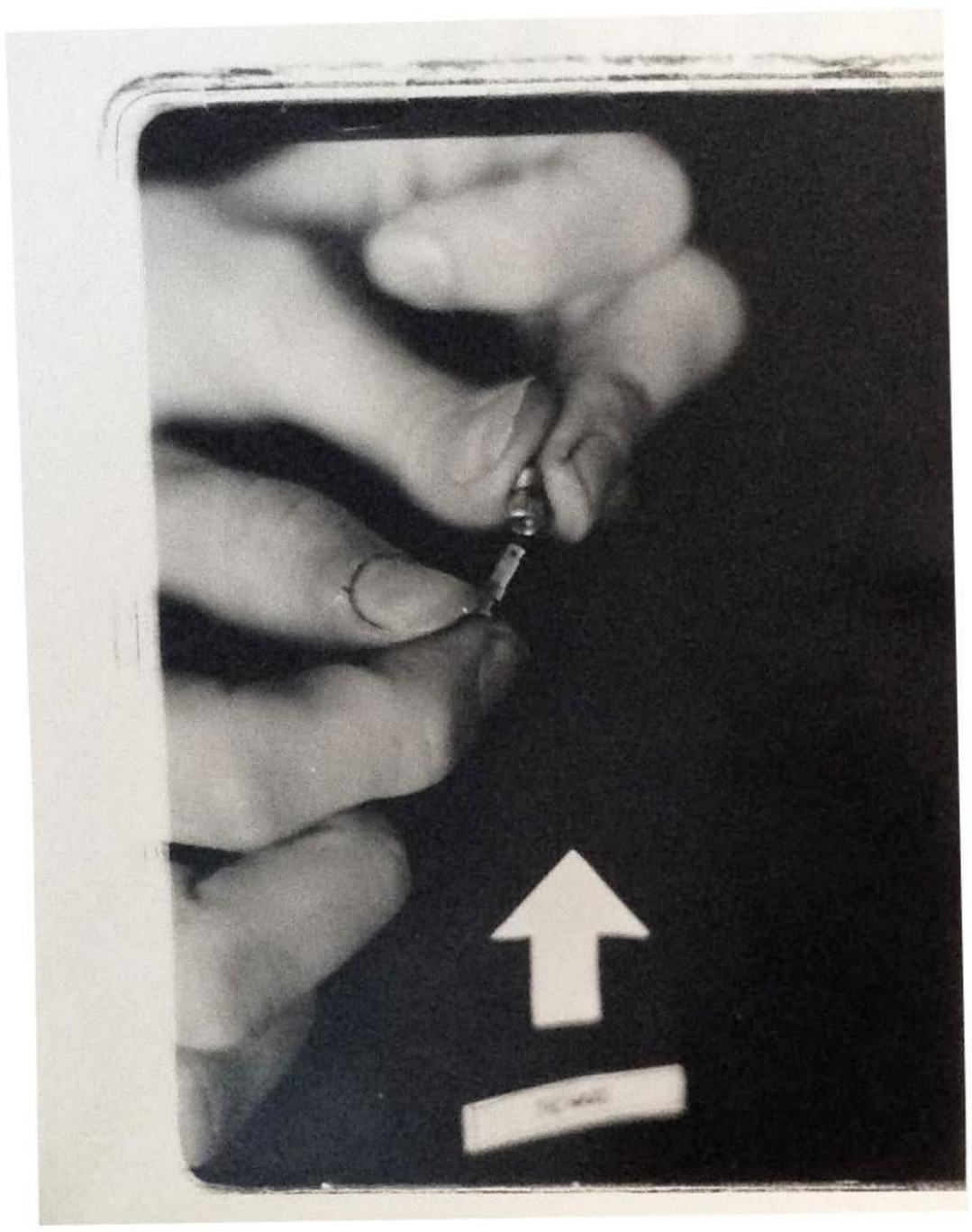
1993 REQUIEM FOR JACK SMITH

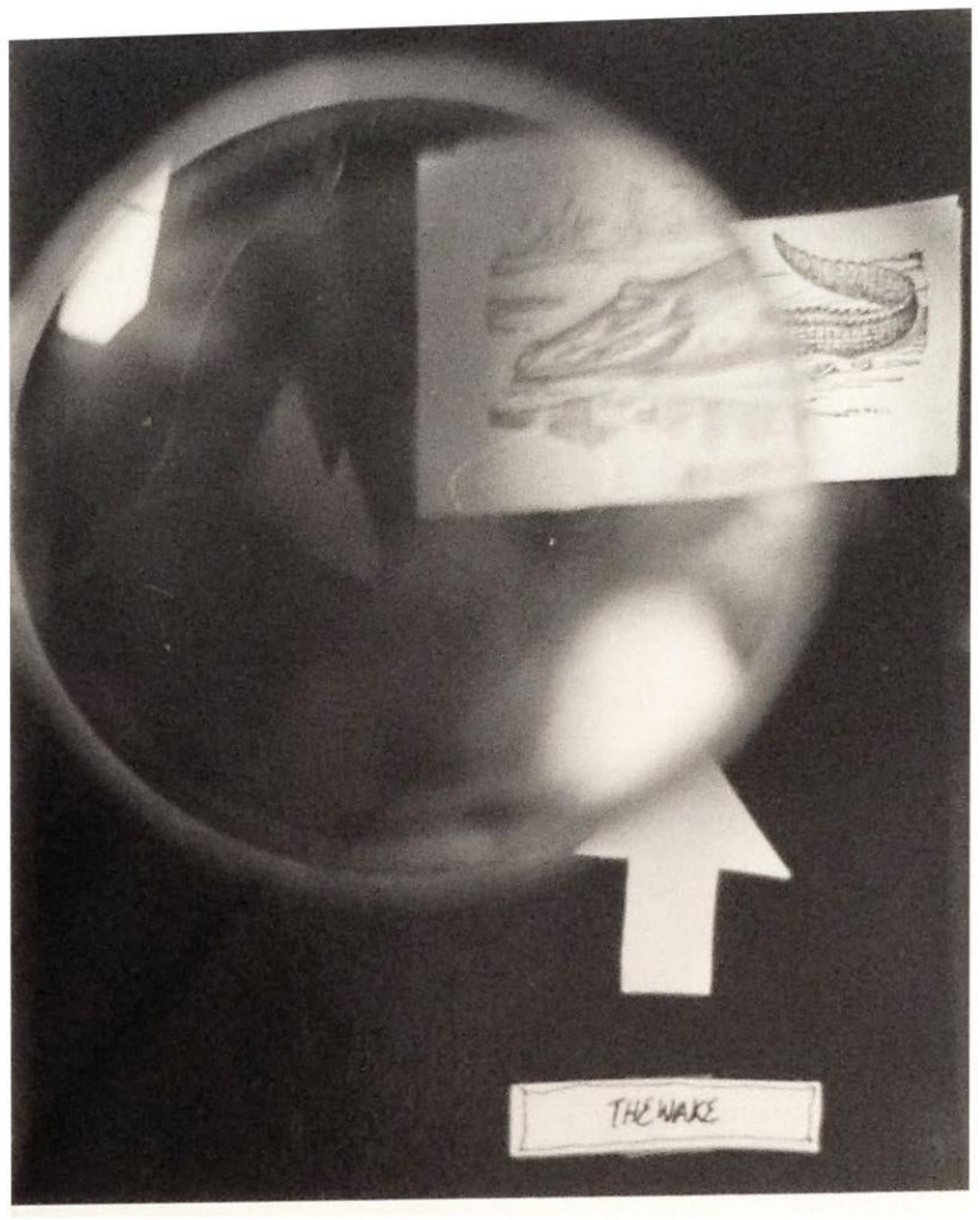
2006 FRANKENSTEIN AND DRACULA

2007 DRACULA/CAFÉ WHA?




THEATRE OF MUSICAL OPTICS
presents
John Zorn's
'THE WAKE'
in three parts
JANUARY 2+3 at 10pm.
430 LAFAYETTE #3F
ODEUM-THEATRE-ON-2-SIDES
ONLY 16 PEOPLE CAN
VIEW THE WAKE PROPERLY
EACH PERFORMANCE
RESERVATIONS SUGGESTED
260-6658 ($1.00)



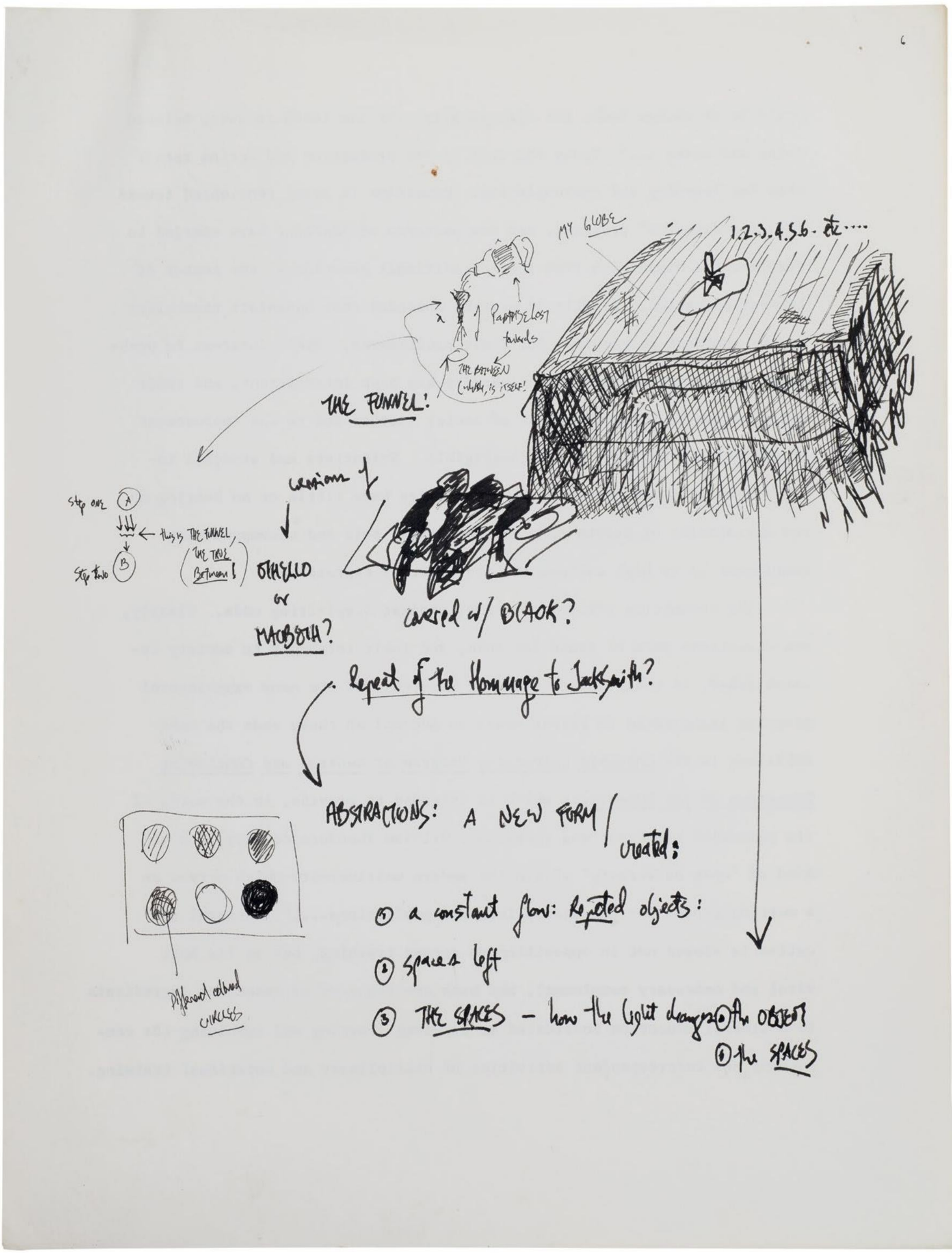

THE WAKE

THE WAKE

THE WAKE

1	0. BEGINS ADVENTURES	WHITE CUBE / [illegible] / [illegible] / MIRROR / MAN / SHIP	SHIP WATER / CLEANING / AUTION at CHRISTINE
2	LOTUS EATERS	BELL / FLOWER / TOOTH / CORAL / AUK	AIR CRAFT / KNIFE / EXPLOSIONS / Body Groans / BANTAM ROOSTERS
3	GIANT CYCLOPS	SHELL / SPONGE / WATCH / LITTLE MAN / CANNON	I married a MONSTER / PAPER CRUMBLES
4	BAG OF WIND	BIRD (CUTS) / FEATHER / WATCH PARTS / SL	
5	CIRCE	ARMADILLO / 84 / 85 / CIRCUIT / COW / [illegible] / SUGAR CUBE	
6	HADES	2 RED CUBES / 96 / WHITE / TOP HAT / BLUE / 9 / PLIERS	Cards + Waffle + Propose / COBRA WOMAN KATO (God)
7	CIRCE'S ADVICE	/ FOAM RUBBER / 3 / God / HARD SPRING / LEATHER	SPEAK: Say → "1 thing to do — 1, 2, 3..." / SPACE SOUNDS / BONGS / Mourning DOVES / SPANISH
8	SIRENS, SCYLLA,	M.M / ROCKERE ← → / SPRING / FAUCET + SCREEN / ANGLER	YELLOW LAMP
9	IS. OF SUN GOD	FLAKED WHI. ROCK / Yellow CUBE / 53 / GLASS / SILVER CHAIN	C. Carol / Cobra Woman "Kato" / POPEYE
10	ON CALYPSO'S ISLE	FLAT SUGAR / ATOM / PAWN / OCTOPUS / 2 WHITE / 101	Pogostick DOOR KNOCK / Water FRONT / Paper, RUBBERBAND, WIND, wolves
11	RAFT	ALBATROSS / DARK CHAIN / RAFT	
12	NAUSIKAÄ	EGGSHELL / METAL / HORSE on STRING / LITTLE SMOKER / WATCH	I MARRIED A MONSTER cow. / Tuba Carol / KILLING / KNIFE
13	HELP FROM KING ALCINOUS	47 / Purple DIE / [illegible] / Red LIKEN / "Greek numerals"	
14	BANQUET OF KING AL.	DOOR HINGE / TOOTH / [illegible] / B+W SQUARE / soft SPRING / DRUM	MARX BROS. / (Christie AVOIDING
15	0. IN ITHAKA	Last. COLORED BLOCKS / 115 / 95 / COFFEE CUP / Large BLOCKS	MOTORS / Wood WORKS
16	ADVICE OF ATHENA	5 / ORANGE BLOCK (BLACK WING) / SR. BOWMAN / [illegible] / WATCH / KEY.	MOTORS / Telephone
17	VISIT TO EUMAEUS	ASS / BOX RISES / RED Small block / MIRROR + EXTENSION.. pink elephant / TOOTH 7 / screw / dog	CROWDSCENE. MARX BROS. → LAVENDER HILL MOB
18	Meets TELEMACHUS	SMALL GREEN BLOCK / 89 / BIG RED / operation / Small Blue / 126 / Awl / blue obbbe	KILLING "Baby" ←
19	Board ship to TELE.	CAMELOT / 139 / HEADLIGHTS / DOUBLE WHEEL / O / WATCH FACE / ⊙	Sat Frankton BULKO SAILS ← Telephone
20	[illegible] of SUITORS	MONEY / BACKHAND / DICE / SAUCER / GREY FAKE / SHOE	Awakening "Hot Salt" / Lee's Lobs: Waterfront ← WALKING
21	0. AT PALACE	GOLD COIN / GRAPES (Purple) / WHITE TOP / 2 CRIBBAGE / PUZZLE PARTS / 54.	POGO STICK / LONG GREEN NIGHT + DAY
22	INSOLENCE OF SUITORS	2 BARRELS / RED TOP / ANTEATER / 0 / GREEN WASHER / SAX PIECE / STONE	C. Carol / R. Widmark laughs
23	BEGGAR (IRUS) / battle	BROWN GLASS / Red HOTEL / TIRE / PHOTO OF BULKO	Mourning DOVES / FENCING
24	PENELOPE + MAIDENS	THIMBLE / Yellow cube / 2 piece GOLD / 6000 SHARKS / ① / SILVER 0 / FEATHER Grey / B+W OATH	BOINGS / SPACE with BULKO / Typewriter
25	0 + PEN.	fig. 50 / RED CHERRY / (DOPEY)	cards + Rope.. shuffle → HOT MUSIC — I MARRIED A MONSTER
26	ILLUSIONS + OMENS	88 / LICORICE / WASHERS / A4 / bulb / ARM	BANTAM ROOSTERS ←
27	BOW OF OD.	GOLD SOLDIER / feather brown / HAMMER / SPR / SCISSORS / 94 / PIN / [illegible]	2 BODY GROANS ← Typewriter
28	SLAYING OF SUITORS	BLACK PAPER / FUSE / RED PAINT /	EXPLOSIONS ← FENCING
29	O + P Reunited	ASTER / ALTAR / BEADS / B+W DIE / ½ MAN / BALCONY / ALTERNATION / FAUCET / ALLIGATOR	AIRCRAFT / Bugs Bunny ← R. Widmark
30	[illegible] FATHER	60 / RED / BADGER / BLACK CUBE / ANVIL II	SHIPSOUNDS / WATER ← GREEN NIGHT + DAY

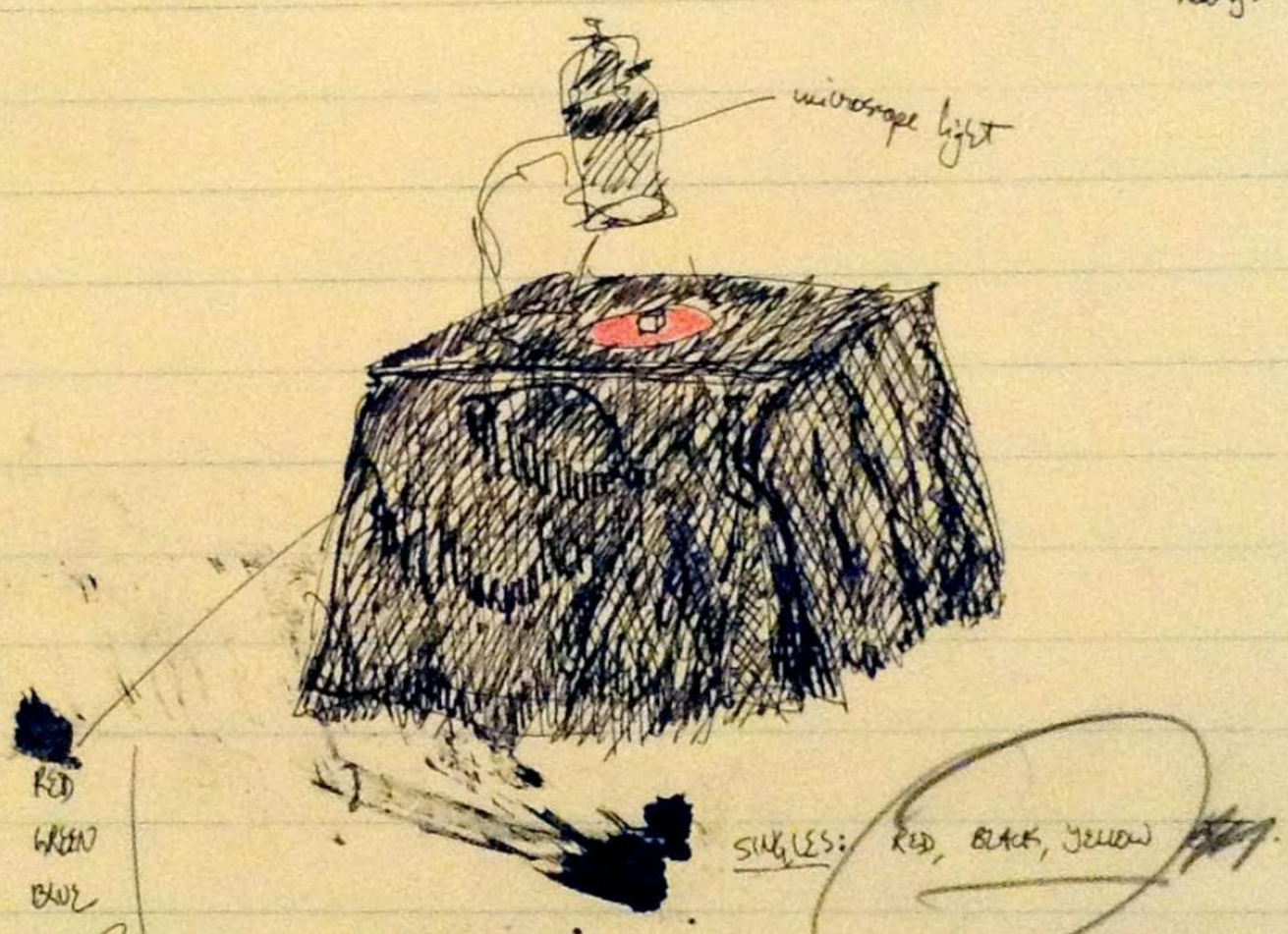
STONE COLD ("leaving")


MY GLOBE
1.2.3.4.5.6. etc....
Paradise Lost
towards
THE BETWEEN
(which, is itself!
THE FUNNEL!
Step one
A
this is THE FUNNEL
(THE TRUE
Between!)
Step two
B
OTHELLO
or
MACBETH?
covered w/ BLACK?
Repeat of the Homage to Jackson?
ABSTRACTIONS: A NEW FORM / created:
① a constant flow: Rejected objects:
② spaces left
③ THE SPACES - how the light changes ② the OBJECTS
④ the SPACES
Different colored
CIRCLES

THE FUNNEL

(3 colors.) : the TRUE TEST / gullibility (am I worthy?

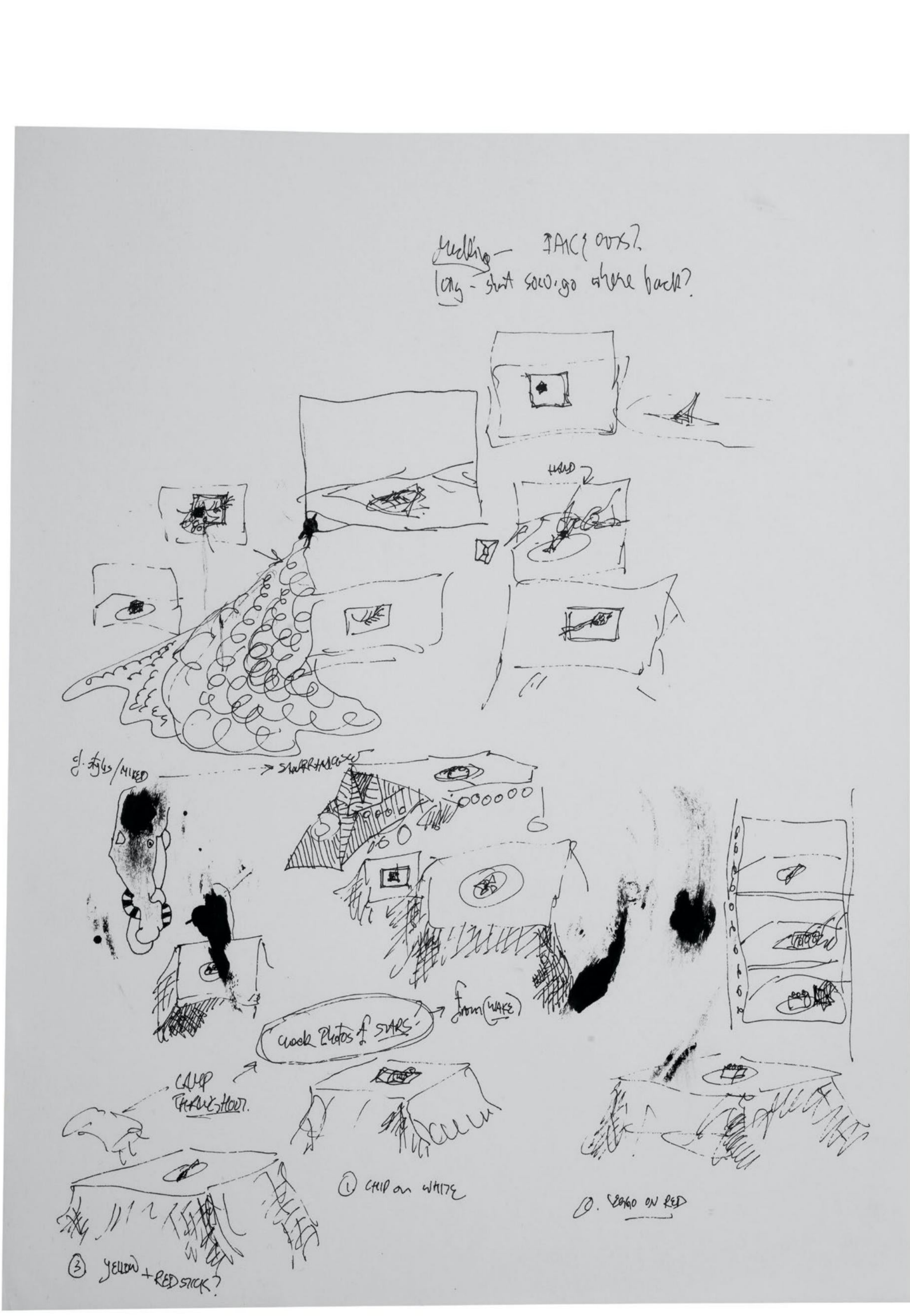
really?



BOSSINESS/SECURITY/on the stereotype?

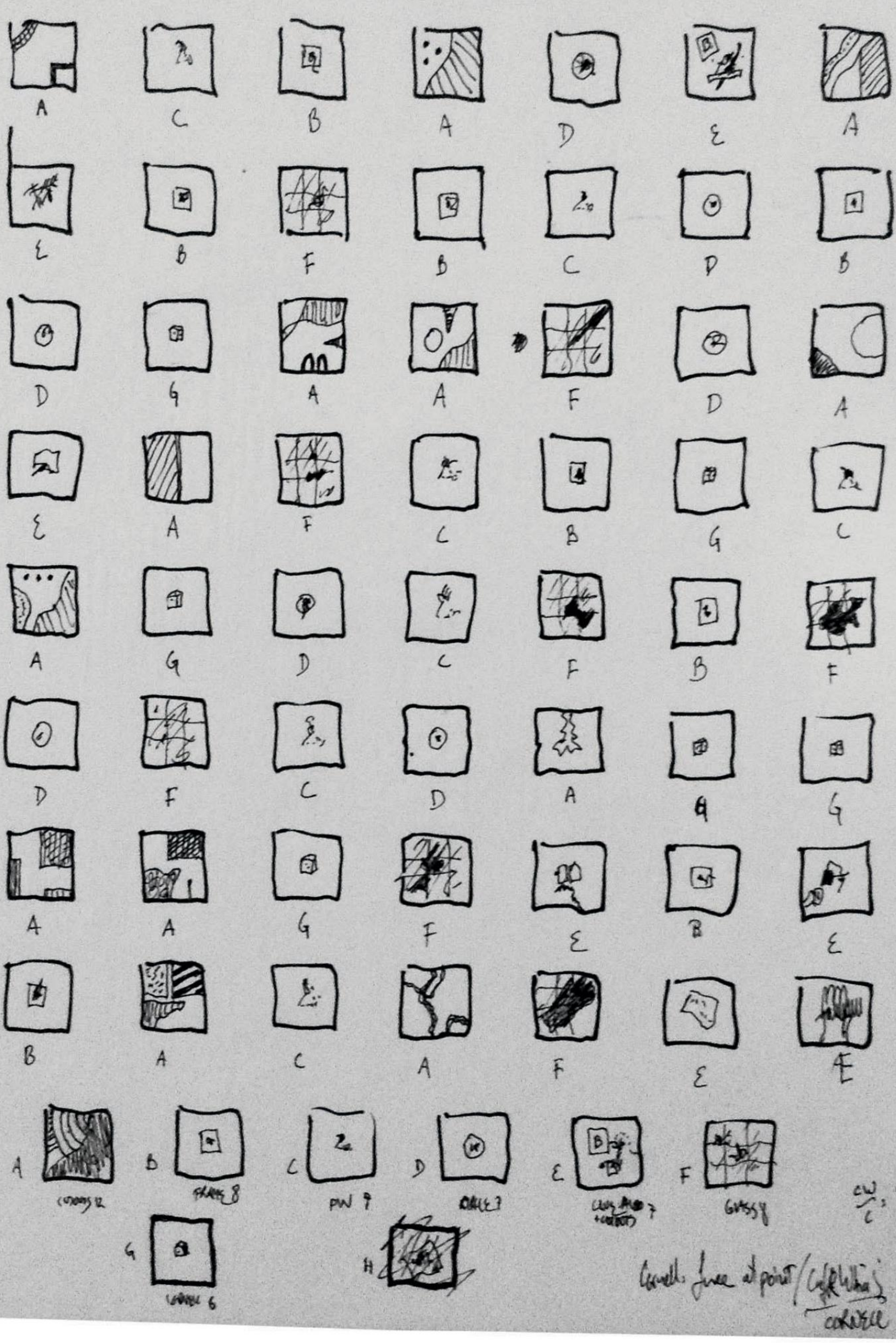
(MEN & BOSSES?)

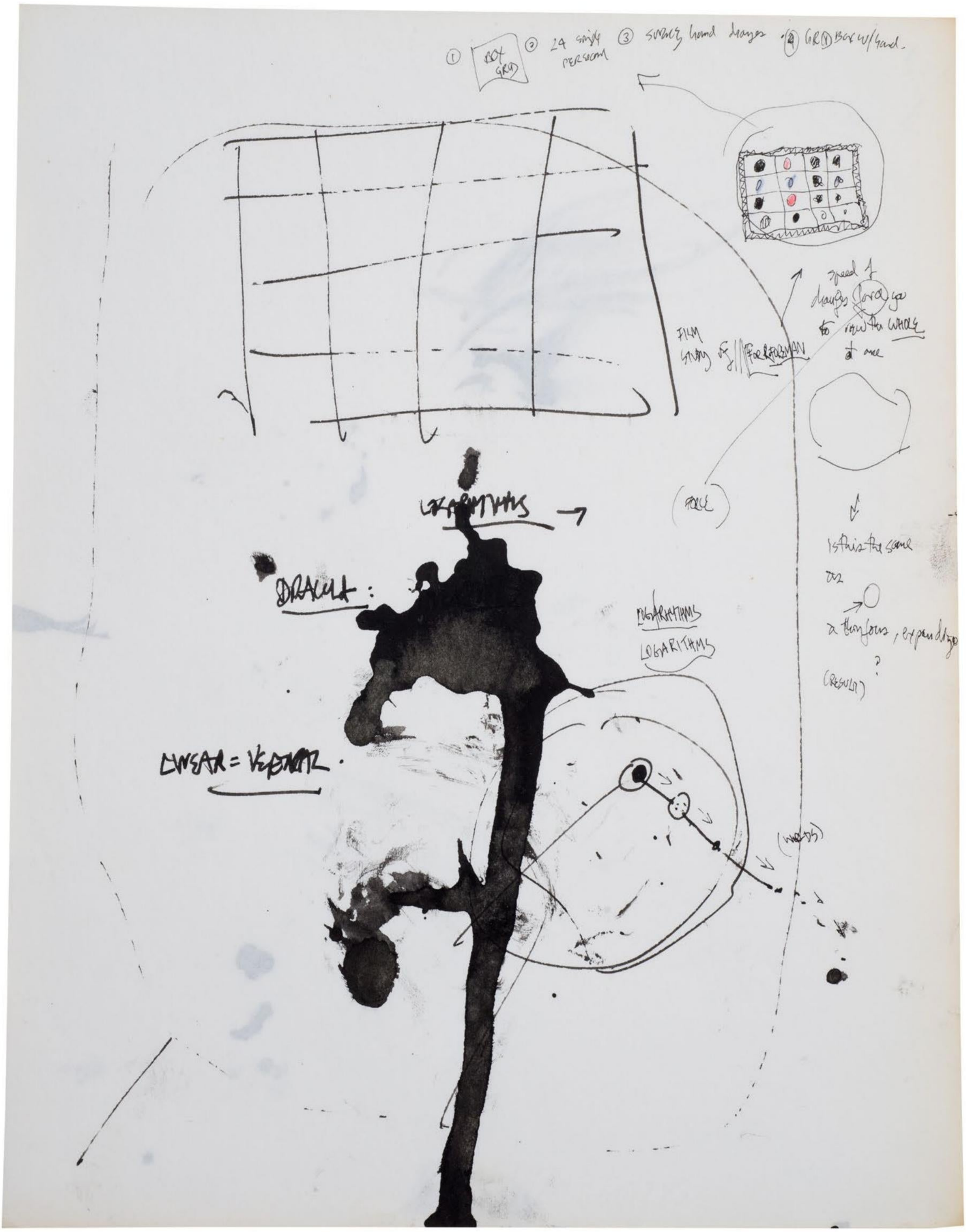
PEOPLE? →


Medium — FACE ovrs?
long - shot socio, go where back?
HAND
J. Styles / MIXED
SHARPIE
Crack Photos of STARS
from (WAKE)
CAMP THANKSGIVING.
① CHIP on WHITE
② LEGO ON RED
③ YELLOW + RED STICK?


DRACULA
DRACULA
FIDEL




A
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① 80x GRID
② 24 single PER second
③ SURELY found images
④ GRID Back w/ Grid.
speed of drawings (and go to view the whole at once
FILM STORY of FOREMAN
(ROLL)
Is this the same as
(RESULT)
DRAW :
LOGARITHMS
LOGARITHMS
LOGARITHMS
(WORDS)

DRACULA | 2 minute segments

PLOT | SECTION/FORM | OBJECTS | SOUNDS

SINGLE

1 Shorthand: Harker INTRO — BOTTLES + DUST — INTRO: Filled Bottles + DUST (ABSTRACTS) — INTRO MUSIC / MUSIC BOXES

2 in CASTLE Dracula — - map OBJECT NARRATIVE — NARRATIVE in Castle

3 talk on history: "MY LABOURS, MY LABOURS" BLOOD Hamlet ACT — Repete OBJECTS — 5 — 3 — HOWLS

4 2 letters: "THE Zigany ---" PSI — MAPS - Setting sun SOL IN PIECES ONE AT A TIME — MAP PIECES ONLY 4 TIME

5 DARK — Letters to Lucy + Mina / RENFIELD — → DRACULA + RENFIELD — 4 — MIRROR arrow (NUMBERS?)

2 6 — Mina's Journal / Dr Seward: Renfield — DOUBLE OBJECTS — PEOPLES (INTRO + V.H, SEWARD, L.H.) — empty WHITE BOTTLES / Abstracts

MOVING 7 — Renfield arrives w/ Dracula — Newspaper - COWBOYS MOVING — many COWBOYS of / MOVE RHYMES

1 8 — Mina Journal. LETTERS, Renfield. Lucy ATTACKED — TINY OBJECTS — TINY SERIES / SINGLES (SO) → — DIALOGUE CUTUPS -

VAN HELSING MOVING 9 — telegrams - VANHelsing / Seward — MAPS: TABLEAU: operations — REBUS - operation - REBUS — VIOLIN MUSIC

1 10 — WOLFBANE + LUCY — (Tableau) WARNING setting sun — OLD LEAVES / narrative

DARK 11 — NIGHT she sleeps - "IN THE SCARED WOLF" Dracula + Lucy — → DRACULA - small light COWS / SHADOWS MOVING — 4 — small light · drapes COATS — ABSTRACTLY

SINGLE 12 — CAN HELSING - Lucy DIES — REMOVE OBJECTS DEATH — 5 — 3 — HOWLS

13 — her Service. still READING "Blooper Lady" — → GRAVE scene : SERVICE into to numbers — Map pieces / bottles to NUMBERS MOOD — MUSIC BOXES

14 — Letters BLOOPER = Lucy! Van Helsing — INFORMATIONS: NUMBERS — NUMBERS

15 — Lucy not in COFFIN! — → GRAVE scene : EXHUMATION into to numbers — ABSTRACT NARRATIVE from NUMBERS MOOD

16 — Lucy + BLOOD: The STAKE — Repete OBJECTS DEATH setting sun — 5 — 3 — HOWLS

DARK 17 — Van boxes to Carfax abbey — → DRACULA (small light) COWBOYS / SHADOWS — 4 — small light · colours changed

1 18 — Renfield's WARNING — TABLEAU: WARNING, Renfield — SEVEN OF BENFIELD'S DREAMS — old leaves: NARRATIVE

TABLEAU MOVING 19 — Good night / trip to CARFAX — MAPS: Tableau operations — REBUS operation REBUS — NOUN MUSIC

1 20 — watching Renfield — TINY OBJECTS — TIME SERIES / SINGLES (SO) — DIALOGUE collage

TABLEAU MOVING 21 — Renfield's DREAM: RATS! — Renfield's Dream COWBOYS MOVING — COWBOYS of / MOVE RATS RHYMES

2 22 — RATS — PEOPLE OBJ. - setting SUN — empty WHITE / RED BOTTLES: ABSTRACTS

DARK 23 — COUNT'D. confronts V. Helsing. ANRUK / Dracula's brides — → DRACULA + V. HELS. confront. mirrors / numbers — 4 — arrow + MIRROR (NUMBERS)

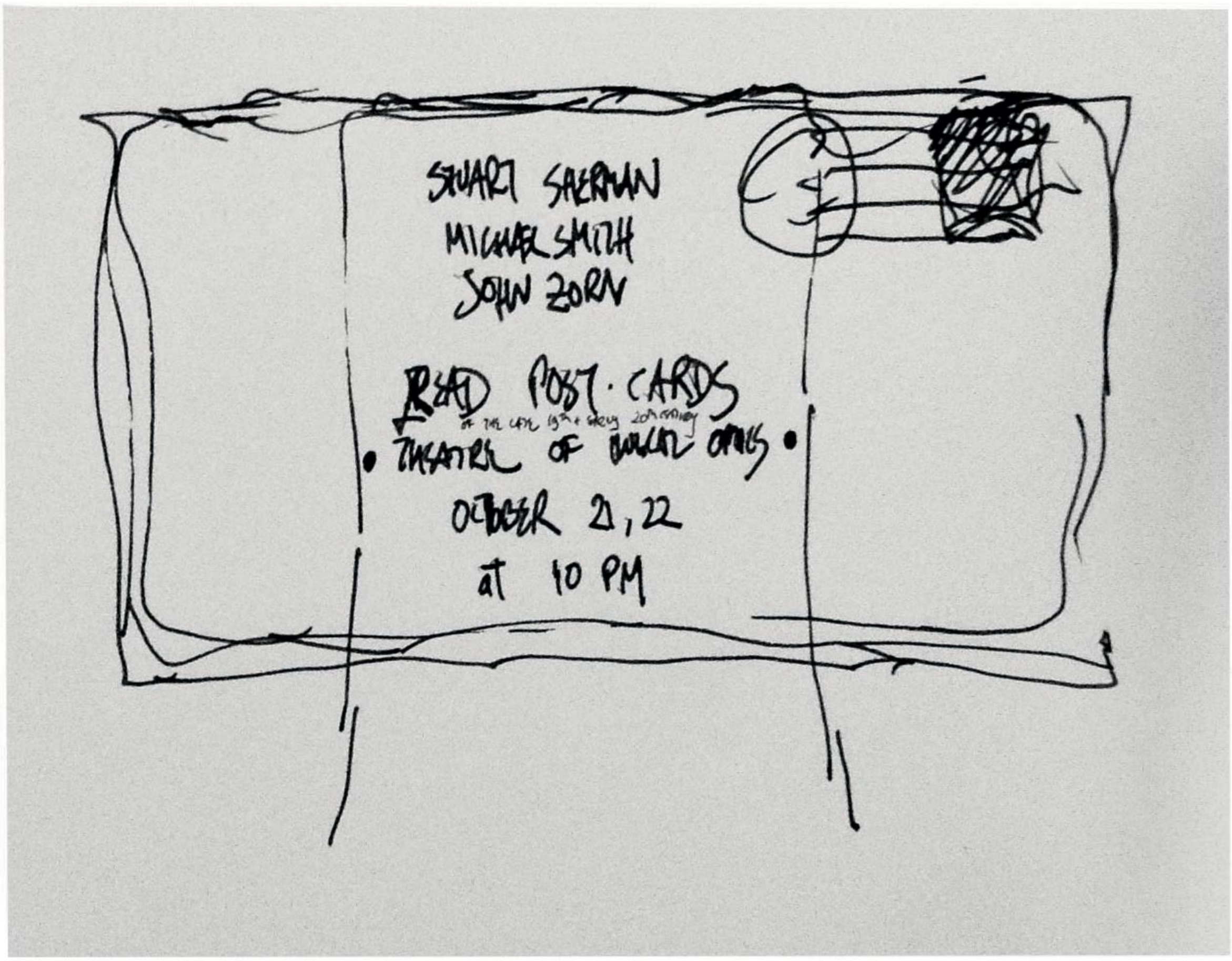
SINGLE 24 — SEARCH BOAT / (Rose) — MAPS - cut in pieces - one at a time — BOTTLES → arrow / FOLLOW

25 — Boat to VARNA — REPETITION OF Objects — 5 — 3 — HOWLS

26 — from Town VARNA - Bazaar 21 — map - object NARRATIVE — NARRATIVE change on TRAIN

27 — STORM - Dracula - beheads Lucy - Dr. in Box on Road. Sun sets COAST. 21 — BOTTLES + DUST setting sun? — FILLED BOTTLES extra minute - sun sets without MUSIC! — EXIT MUSIC / MUSIC BOXES


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NOON
10 PM
• THURSDAY 17 •
NOON
10 PM
GREEK TABLEAUX
• FRIDAY 18 •
NOON
10 PM
LIVE DELTAPE
• SATURDAY 19 •
NOON
10 PM
ANTIQUES SHOW II
3 GRIDS


STUART SAERMAN
MICHAEL SMITH
JOHN ZORN
READ POST-CARDS
THEATRE OF MUSICAL OPTICS
OCTOBER 21, 22
at 10 PM

John Zorn's Theatre of Musical Optics

Ela Troyano

This is when I founded the Theatre of Musical Optics. What you see and what you hear is the same thing, music. Music had never anything to do with sound... In my shows the objects in performance are like solid sounds...different shapes and textures.
–John Zorn

John Zorn founded the Theatre of Musical Optics in 1975. Since then he has developed two different types of concerts. In one he plays a musical instrument. As a saxophone player and composer, he appears regularly with a group of musicians working with "improvised music" or "music for improvisers." In other concerts he performs alone in intimate situations using small objects visually as though they were musical "notes." Though he has performed these shows with objects at Anthology Film Archives, the Collective for the Living Cinema, and the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, most of the work has taken place at his small studios on Lafayette Street and, more recently, on the Lower East Side. These have an intimate quality with audiences kept at a maximum of twelve, an average of five, and a not-so-unusual audience of two. The audience is made up mostly of friends and acquaintances. Though posters have been put up for some of the shows, an address is seldom given; only a telephone number to call for reservations. The posters or announcements are usually delivered by Zorn himself. Sometimes posters are put up after a show is over.

Fidel, John Zorn's latest work, was presented for the first time in January 1979. It was similar to earlier performances. Arriving at the studio, one is greeted by Zorn or any of the other members of the night's audience. Tudor church music and low conversation can be heard coming out of the dimly-lit room. Close to the doorway, on

top of the kitchen counter, we are confronted first with a cigar box. It has a small sign inside it saying that donations are two dollars. Next to it lies a large and elegantly bound open book with the date and the signatures and addresses of tonight's guests. Next to it, a set of notes for *Fidel* has been carefully placed. It is available for anyone to look at. A small sign close to the notes informs us that tonight's performance, which begins at ten, will last two and a half hours with no intermission. Waiting for the rest of the audience of eight to arrive, the atmosphere, even among close friends, is one of formality and controlled excitement.

Once everyone arrives, we filter out of the living room, through the small kitchen and into the theatre. This is a small, eight foot square room painted black. The walls are bare. Only the window,

boarded up and painted black, and the opening for the door disturb the severe box-like shape. In the center of the room on the floor is a small black box. Two chairs and gray foam cushions surround it. As we arrange ourselves in the sitting area, we notice other details in the room. A tape recorder lies next to the box, which is covered with a black cloth. On top of the box in its center, a white empty square frame made out of paper echoes the square shape of the box and focuses its center. Wires run from the ceiling to the box and on one side sits something that looks like a microscope. Silence is settling in. The only sounds are those typical of the neighborhood: street noises, glass breaking, a baby crying. Some of these will continue throughout the performance.

Zorn walks in balancing a tray with objects on it and places it carefully on the floor. The objects are tiny, none larger than one inch square. They are arranged neatly on a grid, one at the center of each square, all of these lined up carefully in rows. After drawing a black curtain to "close" the door and turning off the lights (a 25-watt bulb painted blue and a white security light are left on on top of the doorway), Zorn sits cross-legged, facing the eight-inch square box. The intensity of eight pairs of eyes adjusting and focusing on the two-inch square white frame begins to take hold. He turns on a light in the "microscope." The soft bluish tint of the light softens the hard-edged white lines of the frame on the black cloth. Dust is brushed off, and a final rearrangement in the folds of the cloth is made. The show begins.

Zorn places a tiny copper object inside the frame. As we watch the intensely focused space, he turns to get the next object. A small baby-blue plastic arrow-shaped object is placed in the frame replacing the first object. This is replaced by a gray stone-like one.

For the next two and a half hours, our attention will be directed toward the objects placed in the frame, one after the other. The only change comes when Zorn turns a tape recording on three quarters of the way into the show. It is "doo wop" by The Holidays, an instrumental piece with a single phrase: "down in Cuba."

Fidel is divided into six parts. The first is a prolog or introduction in which each of the objects used in the show is laid out on the black cloth one at a time. In the final sixth part or epilog, the objects are laid out again one at a time but in a different order. In the four parts making up the center, objects are fitted together to form a new object resembling "stage settings" or "musical" sculptures. Zorn's intent is to make a combination of objects fit together like a physical mechanism, making an entirely new unit or a new discrete set of objects. Thus each single object appears six times, each time in a different "context."

The sets of objects are constructed on one side of the black table, where they can't be seen, and placed on the frame as soon as they are ready. An orange feather is fitted around the cut out angles of a triangular corner of a twenty-dollar bill; the broken tip of a crab's claw is inserted into the hole of a shiny smooth black-brown plastic bulbous object; a thin set of metal wires is passed through the center of a silver metal disc and into a long thin orange tube that was once a lobster's antenna. When an object or a set of objects is placed in the frame, there is no attempt to make a design. The decisions made are not based on graphic concerns; the emphasis is on the qualities of the objects or on the way sets fit together in a functional or a "mathematical" way. The length of time an object or set of objects remains in the frame is dictated by the length of time needed to get the next set ready. Unlike previous performances where duration was crucial, timing or a sense of timing is deliberately avoided. What is interesting to Zorn about the five hundred different stage sets of objects in this particular show is both the minimalism and repetitiveness of the form and the excessive number of objects and combinations used.

There are two related concepts ruling *Fidel*. One is to have time be the least important element: the objects are left on the frame as long as it takes to construct the next set. Any sense of timing is avoided in performing. The other is to have each object fit into another as though it were one. Because each of the objects becomes part of the one placed next to it in each of the six parts or "movements" of the piece and because the focus is on the material qualities (no images read, no duration), the whole piece has a plastic

quality with everything slowly becoming part of something else and then of something else.

Traditionally in Western music, melody and counterpoint pertain to the horizontal elements in music, those dealing specifically with duration and time. Harmony refers to the vertical structure. *Fidel*, as an experiment in harmony, refers to the vertical structure; it does not deal specifically with duration and time. "It doesn't matter how long an object or a set is held for, or when you put them out, what matters is that they are and how they interlock."

To order the objects, Zorn used an eleven by eleven square grid with a space for each of the one hundred and twenty one objects used. These were given a position on the grid according to how they fit together as a unit. Once the order on the grid was set, the pattern or sequence in which they appeared was arranged to give the most variety and range in their combination. In the first part of introduction, the objects are laid out singly, beginning with the first row of the grid from left to right, then second row from right to left and third row left to right, moving horizontally through the eleventh row. In the second part, he begins at the top from left to right and continues from left to right in every row all the way down. In the third part, he begins at the top right corner of the grid and works diagonally in rows down and sideways to the bottom left. In the fourth, he follows a diagonal again, beginning at the bottom right corner and working up and left to the top right corner. The fifth section begins at the bottom and goes up, right to left; the final sixth part moves diagonally from the bottom right to the top left.

SCALE

The first thing one notices at a John Zorn performance is the change in scale. The theatre is small, the audience is an intimate one, the stage area and objects are miniature, and the performer's actions minimal. Everything is reduced in proportion. This change acts as a catalyst to activate thinking patterns. There is no imaginary time-and-place that we are used to in theatre, no body or character to place in a time-and-place context. This makes it easier to push thinking patterns into more abstract, pure and non-referential areas—as though reading an equation or translating from one language to another.

FORMAT

What takes place in *Fidel*, as in most of John Zorn's shows, is that objects are presented one after the other. On the black table and

inside the white frame, one "reads" the object through its position, shadow, and action, duration–variables that are subtly but constantly changing. *Fidel* reads like a compressed equation made up of units that are repeated several times. The same base is used–a white square on a black cloth. The same soft blue light from the same source is used throughout. The same action–placing an object or a set of objects–is repeated, always with the same intent. The only change comes from the tape that is used as an interruption. (This tape was discarded after the first two shows.) These elements were limited in this show in order to emphasize the plasticity of the sets of objects.

Several constants have emerged in Zorn's shows: a table or small stage, a system of grids or frames, lights and tapes and the objects. Although in *Fidel* he has kept the system of grids, lights and tapes minimal, it has been narrowed down from a wide variety of elements used in the earlier shows to alter the context in which an object was presented. The cutout bases or frames used to direct attention to the objects have varied in shape (he has used circles, squares, rectangles, grids) in size (usually two to three square inches) and color (black, white, red, yellow, green). Small arrows and strings have also been used to focus attention to or from an area or object. Cloth was used to cover or reveal. Transparent materials were used to allow a background to show through. Details have been enlarged or appear in soft focus through a magnifying glass or prism. Water and dust have been used not only as objects but as processes changing shape in time or having a visual duration. Lights have been used by changing the source–mixing or alternating two or more lights and varying the color and intensity. Recorded tapes added density and also functioned as cues sectioning-off intervals. Sometimes these tapes have been secret dedications or secret messages made from complete parts or fragmented phrases and sound effects from movies (usually science fiction).

OBJECTS

John Zorn is constantly in the process of collecting objects; once he decides on the "concept" for a show, he begins to select from the collection. *Fidel* is made up of tiny objects, none of which is larger than one inch square. Although a feather or a small engraving with a portrait head of a man are identifiable, most of these objects were chosen for their abstract physical qualities–their color scheme, texture, shape, proportion or musically, their rhythm or tempo. The object that has been described as a black-brown plastic shiny-surfaced bulbous object was actually an imitation grape. It is fairly

unrecognizable. A square of brown mesh comes from the leaf of a palm tree from Haiti; a long thin orange object with small circular ridges was part of an antenna belonging to a lobster. A brownish plaster half-shiny half-torn stone-like object is a broken foot from a doll that came from India. In the recent shows, Zorn has tended to choose objects roughly the same size and they are highly differentiated physically, more abstract than ever, usually a fragment or a part of a larger object. Whereas in the earlier shows he used a wide variety of three-dimensional replicas such as toy soldiers, animals or a ship, in *Fidel* only a miniature tool remains. Of the rich variety of two-dimensional reproductions, photographs, drawings and maps—even words, syllables and letters—only the engraving and a small blue "x" remain. John Zorn's objects can be categorized systematically in many ways—by their function, their history, their physical look, their chemical or physical properties. Each object might fall in several categories. The fake grape could be grouped with objects that are the same color, that were made in the 1970s, or that are imitations.

PERFORMANCE

In most of Zorn's shows we are presented with a web of information that is not accessible on an articulated level but that is present in other forms—an attitude toward an object, how it is manipulated, the length of time, the interest of his involvement with his small objects and his concentration. All these details, though small and subtle, fill in earlier performances from beginning to end, giving them no "dead" spaces. According to Zorn, *Fidel* is filled with dead spaces. He tried to eliminate any development in order to "present ideas in their purest form." Zorn explains:

It has been said that you can take a whole man's knowledge and put it into a file card. If you take these file cards and never develop these ideas, you are left with something else. I'm not so much interested in developing something as presenting it.

EXPERIMENTS IN HARMONY AND POLYPHONY

Fidel is the second part of a larger two-piece work entitled *Experiments in Harmony and Polyphony*. The first part, *The Bridge and the Crane*, presented in December 1978, was an experiment in polyphony. In musical terms polyphony is defined as the combining of two or more melodies of more or less equal prominence sounded simultaneously. *The Bridge and the Crane* was presented in the

same space as *Fidel*; the "stage" was the same box covered in black. Instead of the two-inch white frame used in *Fidel*, a grid with nine two-inch squares took up the entire surface. The only objects used were colored cubes. These were placed in different combinations on the grid throughout the show. Four lights of different colors—red, yellow, blue, and white—placed inside the box framed different areas of the grid. Two hand-held spotlights focused on specific segments or squares on the grid. The combinations of the color of the cubes, the effect of the different colored lights, their position on the grid and the duration of each of these elements made up a "visual melody." The length of the show varied, since the combinations—the order and their duration—were improvised.

The Funnel was an earlier show working with timing and color. Again, different sized and colored cubes were placed on different colored circular bases; these were combined with different colored lights of varying intensities. If a section of *The Funnel* could be seen as a melody, *The Bridge and the Crane* could be seen as having several "visual melodic lines" going on at once or as an experiment in polyphony.

DIRECTION

Zorn describes his early work as being more like operas:

I was interested in theatre and music…combining the two. I thought simple actions and events could be orchestrated and used as music… along with musical notes, someone peeling a cabbage was as much music as playing an instrument. My early pieces were like little operas.

These, reminiscent of the concerts and ideas of John Cage and of the events of the 1960s, usually took place in larger areas, used people playing musical instruments and were composed of images. In one performance, a performer climbed a ladder and peeled a cabbage. In another, Zorn put on a suit made out of springs and tin cans. They were visual images that physically produced a sound. From these he made a transition to using visual images, actions and objects that in themselves had the physical quality and duration of a sound.

Paradise Lost was a turning point. Spread out over a period of twelve days with two performances a day, it made use of a wide range of elements. It was presented in different areas of the studio (the living room, theatre, roof) at different times of day (noon, midnight). There were different types of performance exhibits or "antique" shows with objects on display like a museum. There

were shows that were part the usual presentation and part exhibit where the audience could wander around. There were more formal theatrical performances. The performances ranged from a shadow play to *The Creation Story*, which consisted only of a tape. The shows following *Paradise Lost* have been extremely controlled exercises narrowing a set of variables to focus on a range of subtle possibilities. *The Funnel* and *Against the Funnel* both limit the sets of objects and bases in order to focus on timing and color. These led to the complex, but still minimal, *Experiments in Polyphony and Harmony*.

Fidel marks a new direction. Timing, which was so critical in the earlier shows, is becoming the major area of experimentation.

We have eliminated sound, now the elimination of time…
Question: What is left in music after these eliminations?
Fidel *is my first experiment in the elimination of time.*

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'MUSIC HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SOUND' - 'MUSIC HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TIME'

Like Einstein's faith in the constant velocity of light, there are two ideas I have been convinced of since my early years as a composer. I began to solidify my thoughts on this subject through performances, held throughout the USA (mostly at my own loft in NYC) in the early mid-seventies. Through 1975 these performances involved several musicians improvising with/against carefully notated object manipulations, orchestrated with extreme concerns for their sonic as well as visual components, eg sawing a school book in half/peeling an amplified cabage/dancing in a suit of springs + tin cans, etc.
Thought I did return to this more causal interaction of sound and sight with 'Sadism + Revenge' and 'Ray Tracing' in 1976. The 'Eadwerd Trilogy' of 1975 brought about a new realization: that the visual manipulations themselves were the musical focus of the compositions and so I eliminated the instrumental improviser from the situation completely, leaving me with musical performances that were predominantly silent. With 'dissection of 2 sq. ft...' in 1976 I shifted the focus from the performer's manipulations to the objects themselves - with the musicians acting not unlike puppeteers, very much in the background, or totally . The objects became for me like solid sounds, different shapes, text , colors, histories, to be ordered in musical fashion.
There then followed a period of experimentation with many different forms and media. 'Paradise lost' in mid-1977 exemplifies this approach: two radically different performances each day for 7 days, including a shadow play, large grid pieces, multiple table performances, an homage to Jack Smith, sound tapes, an antique show etc, etc... after which I settled into the highly structured orderings of single objects and multiple objects on a small, tightly focused area, characteristic of 'the funnel', 'San Fransisco' and 'Fidel'.
With 'Ela', parts of which were performed here wednesday night, things are once again beginning to change.

briefly on 'FIDEL':
After working for a number of years on the structuring of music without sound, with 'experiments in harmony and polyphony' (1978-1979), I began to consider the elimination of the elements of time. Whereas in most of my earlier pieces, where musicality is conveyed in large measure through timing - for FIDEL, it is not at all when some thing is presented as much as how it is pieced together (harmony). Thus each of the 121 objects on the 11 x 11 grid combine and recombine to form new objects (stage sets) in which the different pieces ordered constantly appear in fresh contexts and on different levels.
What is left, once we have eliminated both, sound and time from a musical performance? Fidel and Ela (café wha?) help point toward an answer.

dank u

John Zorn

FIG. 15 Theatre of Musical Optics handout, 1981

Works in the Exhibition

I. Abstract Drawings

PL. 1
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
13 1/2 x 11 inches (34.3 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 2
No title, 2024
Ink on paper
12 x 8 1/2 inches (30.5 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 3
No title, 2022
Graphite on paper
8 1/4 x 5 1/8 inches (21 x 13 cm)

PL. 4
No title, 2019
Conté crayon on paper
10 x 6 3/8 inches (25.4 x 16.2 cm)

PL. 5
No title, 2014
Ink and oil stain on paper
14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 6
No title, 2024
Ink on paper
Diptych: 7 7/8 x 15 1/2 inches
(20 x 39.4 cm)

PL. 7
No title, 2024
Ink on paper
7 7/8 x 7 3/4 inches (20 x 19.7 cm)

PL. 8
No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
9 x 8 inches (22.9 x 20.3 cm)

PL. 9
No title, 2016
Conté crayon on paper
8 1/4 x 5 3/4 inches (21 x 14.6 cm)

PL. 10
No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
9 7/8 x 7 1/2 inches (25.1 x 19.1 cm)

PL. 11
No title, 2019
Conté crayon on paper
12 x 9 inches (30.5 x 22.9 cm)

PL. 12
No title, 2016
Conté crayon on paper
9 x 5 1/8 inches (22.9 x 13 cm)

PL. 13
No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
9 x 6 inches (22.9 x 15.2 cm)

PL. 14 + COVER
No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
10 x 8 1/2 inches (25.4 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 15
No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
9 3/4 x 8 1/2 inches (24.8 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 16
No title, 2013
Conté crayon on paper
9 7/8 x 8 5/8 inches (25.1 x 21.9 cm)

PL. 17
No title, 2016
Conté crayon on paper
9 7/8 x 5 3/8 inches (25.1 x 13.7 cm)

PL. 18
No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
12 x 9 inches (30.5 x 22.9 cm)

PL. 19
No title, 2014
Ink and oil stain on paper
9 7/8 x 9 inches (25.1 x 22.9 cm)

PL. 20
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
17 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches (45.1 x 34.9 cm)

PL. 21
No title, 2018
Graphite on paper
Diptych: 12 x 18 inches (30.5 x 45.7 cm)

PL. 22
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 23
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 24
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 25
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 26
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 27
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 28
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 29
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
5 7/8 x 5 7/8 inches (14.9 x 14.9 cm)

PL. 30
No title, 2019
Graphite on paper
6 x 6 inches (15.2 x 15.2 cm)

PL. 31
No title, 2022
Graphite on paper
8 1/16 x 5 1/16 inches (20.5 x 12.9 cm)

PL. 32
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches (21.6 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 33
No title, 2017
Graphite on paper
8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches (21.6 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 34
No title, 2017
Graphite on paper
8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches (21.6 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 35
No title, 2022
Graphite on paper
6 x 9 1/4 inches (15.2 x 23.5 cm)

PL. 36
No title, 2016
Conté crayon on paper
11 3/4 x 8 1/4 inches (29.8 x 21 cm)

PL. 37
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 38
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 39
No title, 2016
Graphite on paper
5 3/4 x 4 inches (14.6 x 10.2 cm)

PL. 40
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
11 x 13 3/4 inches (27.9 x 34.9 cm)

PL. 41
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
11 x 14 inches (27.9 x 35.6 cm)

PL. 42
No title, 2022
Graphite on paper
8 1/4 x 5 1/4 inches (21 x 13.3 cm)

PL. 43
No title, 2022
Graphite on paper
8 1/2 x 5 1/8 inches (21.6 x 13 cm)

PL. 44
No title, 2011
Ink on paper
12 x 8 1/2 inches (30.5 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 45
No title, 2012
Ink on paper
11 5/8 x 8 1/4 inches (29.5 x 21 cm)

PL. 46
No title, 2013
Ink, graphite, and blood on paper
20 x 9 inches (50.8 x 22.9 cm)

PL. 47
No title, 2015
Ink on paper
10 1/4 x 9 5/8 inches (26 x 24.4 cm)

PL. 48
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
10 x 9 inches (25.4 x 22.9 cm)

PL. 49
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
17 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches (45.1 x 34.9 cm)

PL. 50
No title, 2019
Charcoal on paper
11 x 8 3/8 inches (27.9 x 21.3 cm)

PL. 51
No title, 2013
Charcoal and Conté crayon on paper
20 x 9 1/8 inches (50.8 x 23.2 cm)

PL. 52
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 53
No title, 2013
Charcoal and Conté crayon on paper
19 1/2 x 7 inches (49.5 x 17.8cm)

PL. 54
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
19 3/4 x 9 inches (50.2 x 22.9 cm)

PL. 55
No title, 2019
Charcoal on paper
11 x 8 3/8 inches (27.9 x 21.3 cm)

PL. 56
No title, 2019
Charcoal on paper
11 x 8 3/8 inches (27.9 x 21.3 cm)

PL. 57
No title, 2015
Graphite on paper
14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 58
No title, 2016
Ink on paper
14 x 10 1/4 inches (35.6 x 26 cm)

PL. 59
No title, 2016
Ink on paper
14 x 10 1/4 inches (35.6 x 26 cm)

PL. 60
No title, 2016
Ink on paper
14 x 10 1/2 inches (35.6 x 26.7 cm)

PL. 61
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
11 3/4 x 11 1/8 inches (29.8 x 28.3 cm)

PL. 62
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
14 x 10 5/8 inches (35.6 x 27 cm)

PL. 63
No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
14 x 10 3/4 inches (35.6 x 27.3 cm)

PL. 64
No title, 2014
Ink on paper
18 x 14 inches (45.7 x 35.6 cm)

PL. 65
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
10 x 9 inches (25.4 x 22.9 cm)

PL. 66
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
13 3/4 x 17 1/2 inches (34.9 x 44.5 cm)

PL. 67
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
17 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches (45.1 x 34.9 cm)

PL. 68
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
17 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches (45.1 x 34.9 cm)

PL. 69
No title, 2015
Ink on paper
10 1/2 x 14 1/4 inches (26.7 x 36.2 cm)

PL. 70
No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
9 1/2 x 7 3/8 inches (24.1 x 18.7 cm)

PL. 71
No title, 2019
Graphite on paper
9 x 9 inches (22.9 x 22.9 cm)

II. Drawing Books

PL. 72
Skulls: Memento Mori, 2024
Graphite and oil pastel in sketchbook
8 x 7 inches (20.3 x 17.8 cm)

PL. 73
For Vincent Van Gogh, 2024
Ink and liquid charcoal in sketchbook
9 x 12 1/4 inches (22.9 x 31.1 cm)

PL. 74
Sigils/Grimoire Aleph, 2024
Graphite in sketchbook
8 x 6 3/4 inches (20.3 x 17.1 cm)

PL. 75
Sigils II/Grimoire Beit, 2024
Graphite in sketchbook
8 x 6 3/4 inches (20.3 x 17.1 cm)

PL. 76
No title, 2023
Graphite and pastel in sketchbook
7 1/8 x 5 5/8 inches (18.1 x 14.3 cm)

PL. 77
No title, 2023
Graphite in sketchbook
Three sketchbooks,
each: 2 3/4 x 4 3/8 inches (7 x 11.1 cm)

PL. 78
Skulls: Memento Mori, 2024
Graphite and oil pastel in sketchbook
8 x 7 inches (20.3 x 17.8 cm)

PL. 79
Hermetic Cartographies II, 2024
Graphite in sketchbook
6 x 6 inches (15.2 x 15.2 cm)

PL. 80
No title, 2024
Ink and liquid charcoal in sketchbook
5 1/8 x 5 inches (13 x 12.7 cm)

III. Early Drawings

PL. 81
The Gargoyle, 1970
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 82
Portrait of Elissa Guest, 1970
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 83
Three Priests Carrying Birds, Scents and Baskets, 1977
Watercolor and ink on paper
7 x 6 inches (17.8 x 15.2 cm)

PL. 84
No title, 1972
Crayon on paper
13 1/2 x 11 inches (34.3 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 85
No title, 1972
Crayon on paper
13 1/2 x 11 inches (34.3 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 86
My Wife Remodeled, 1972
Ticket stubs on paper
7 x 5 inches (17.8 x 12.7 cm)

PL. 87
Mother, 1972
Ticket stubs on paper
8 1/8 x 6 inches (20.6 x 15.2 cm)

IV. Scores / Music Performance

PL. 88
Music for Power Booth, 1977
Ink on paper, color paper collage
8 1/2 x 11 inches (21.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 89
The Baroque Bassoon Organ, 1968
Ink on paper
Four sheets, each: 8 3/4 x 5 3/4 inches (22.2 x 14.6 cm)

PL. 90
Invention of One Note, 1969
Ink on paper
Two sheets, each: 2 3/4 x 2 1/4 inches (7 x 5.7 cm)

PL. 91
Caevorrys, 1967
Ink on paper
Twenty-nine sheets:
each: 7 1/8 x 5 1/4 inches (18.1 x 13.3 cm)

PL. 92
Catgut, 1969
Ink on paper
8 1/2 x 11 inches (21.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 93
The Captain–Typhoon/Rain The Altas, (verso/recto), 1968-69
Ink on paper
8 x 5 3/4 inches (20.3 x 14.6 cm)

PL. 94
Eastern United States, 1972
Pencil and crayon on map of the "Eastern United States"
9 x 4 inches (22.8 x 10.2 cm) folded;
17 3/4 x 31 1/2 x inches (45.1 x 80 cm) extended

PL. 95
Nazdar, 1970
Ink on paper in binder
11 x 8 inches (27.9 x 20.3 cm)

PL. 96
The Volume R of underground sewage travels long distances at velocity pV² such that dθ density clears is open (for your convenience)–(a story of SADISM + REVENGE), 1975
Ink on paper
11 x 14 1/4 inches (27.9 x 36.2 cm)

PL. 97
Hymen 2, 1973
Ink on paper
Sixteen sheets, each: 8 1/2 x 11 inches
(21.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 98
Mikhail Zoetrope: Illustration Act 1, 1975
Ink and crayon on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 99
Mikhail Zoetrope: Illustration Act 2, 1975
Ink and collage on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 100
Mikhail Zoetrope: Illustration Epilogue, 1975
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 101
Destruction Music, 1972
Ink and color pencil on paper
Seven sheets, each: 8 1/2 x 11 inches
(21.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 102
Rugby, 1978
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 103
Werewolf, 1978
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 104
Book of Heads, 1978
Ink and collage on paper
Sixteen sheets, each: 11 x 8 1/2 inches
(27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 105
Road Runner, 1986
Ink and collage on paper
Six sheets, first four 8 1/2 x 11 inches
(21.6 x 27.9 cm),
7 3/8 x 11 inches (18.7 x 27.9 cm),
5 3/4 x 11 inches (14.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 106
Mount Analogue, 2011
Ink on paper and file cards
Sheets, each: 11 x 8 1/2 inches
(27.9 x 21.6 cm); cards,
each: 3 1/8 x 4 inches (7.9 x 10.2 cm)

PL. 107
Ubu, 2020
Ink on paper and file cards
Sheets, each: 11 x 8 1/2 inches
(27.9 x 21.6 cm); cards,
each: 4 x 5 inches (10.2 x 12.7 cm)

V. Notebooks

PL. 108
Notebook, 1974
Ink in notebook
6 1/4 x 3 7/8 inches

PL. 109
Notebook, 1975
Ink in notebook
7 x 4 1/4 inches

PL. 110
Notebook (Sketches/Notes for Bemsha, Ray Tracing), 1976
Ink in notebook
7 x 4 1/4 inches

PL. 111
N.Y. Poetry Feb. 1976-77 Dec. (Number Poetry), 1976-1977
Pencil and ink in notebook
7 7/8 x 5 3/8 inches

VI. Flyers and Posters

PL. 112
Theater of Optical Sound-Mikhail Zoetrope an opera flyer, 1974
Ink and collage on paper
8 3/4 x 8 1/2 inches (22.2 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 113
John Zorn, 2 Solo Concerts: Triangle (Homage to Edgar Allen Poe), Steel Foundry Dedication flyer, 1974
Ink and crayon on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 114
John Zorn: Solo Improvisations flyer, 1976
Photocopy on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

PL. 115
John Zorn: Solo Improvisations and the Premiere of his Composition "Pool" flyer, 1979
Ink on paper
8 1/2 x 11 inches (21.6 x 27.9 cm)

PL. 116
Darts flyer, 1983
Ink on paper
8 x 7 7/8 inches (20.3 x 20 cm)

PL. 117
Live at the Saint flyer, 1983
Ink on paper
5 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches (14 x 14 cm)

PL. 118
Live at the Saint flyer, 1983
Ink on paper
6 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (16.5 x 16.5 cm)

VII. Theatre of Musical Optics

Theatre of Musical Optics,
1974–present

Rituals of Rented Island, Whitney
Museum of American Art,
Oct 31, 2013–Feb 2, 2014

Illustrations for
The Hidden Codex

FIG 1
Caevorrys, 1967
Ink on paper
Twenty-nine sheets: each:
7 1/8 x 5 1/4 inches (18.1 x 13.3 cm)

FIG 2
Nazdar, 1970
Ink on paper in binder
11 x 8 inches (27.9 x 20.3 cm)

FIG 3
Grosse Rake, 1969
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

FIG 4
Book of Heads, 1978
Ink and collage on paper
Sixteen sheets, each: 11 x 8 1/2 inches
(27.9 x 21.6 cm)

FIG 5
Road Runner, 1986
Ink and collage on paper
Six sheets, first four 8 1/2 x 11 inches
(21.6 x 27.9 cm),
7 3/8 x 11 inches (18.7 x 27.9 cm),
5 3/4 x 11 inches (14.6 x 27.9 cm)

FIG 6
Ubu, 2020
Ink on paper and file cards
Sheets, each: 11 x 8 1/2 inches
(27.9 x 21.6 cm); cards,
each: 4 x 5 inches (10.2 x 12.7 cm)

Illustrations for
Drawing a Way of Life

FIG. 7
Self Portrait, 2024
Pencil on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

FIG. 8
Self Portrait, 2024
Pencil on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

FIG. 9
Self Portrait, 2024
Pencil on paper
7 7/8 x 6 3/4 inches (20 x 17.15 cm)

FIG. 10
John Zorn, 2011
Photograph by Mathieu Amalric

FIG. 11
Sigils/Grimoire Aleph, 2024
Graphite in sketchbook
8 x 6 3/4 inches (20.3 x 17.1 cm)

FIG. 12
No title, 2013
Ink on paper
17 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches (45.1 x 34.9 cm)

FIG. 13
No title, 2012
Ink on paper
9 x 6 inches (22.9 x 15.2 cm)

FIG. 14
No title, 2014
Graphite and Conté crayon on paper
12 x 8 1/4 inches (30.5 x 21 cm)

Illustration for *John Zorn's Theatre of Musical Optics*

FIG. 15
Theatre of Musical Optics handout, 1981
Photocopy on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches

Not Pictured

No title, 2019
Conté crayon on paper
12 x 9 inches (30.5 x 22.9 cm)

No title, 2019
Charcoal on paper
11 x 7 1/2 inches (27.9 x 19.1 cm)

No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm)

No title, 2015
Conté crayon on paper
8 1/8 x 7 5/8 inches (20.6 x 19.4 cm)

No title, 2013
Graphite on paper
11 x 13 3/4 inches (27.9 x 34.9 cm)

No title, 1972
Crayon on paper
11 1/2 x 9 inches (29.2 x 22.9 cm)

Advertisement
1972
Silkscreen and collage on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

No title, 2023
Graphite and pastel on paper
8 x 6 3/4 inches (20.3 x 17.1 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink in sketchbook
8 x 6 3/4 inches (20.3 x 17.1 cm)

Cave Drawings-Sacred Language, 2023
Graphite in sketchbook
6 x 8 1/4 x inches (15.2 x 21 cm)

Live at the Saint flyer, 1983
Ink on paper
11 x 4 1/4 inches (27.9 x 10.8 cm)

Live at the Saint flyer, 1983
Ink on paper
11 x 4 1/4 inches (27.9 x 10.8 cm)

No title, 1972
Ink on paper
8 1/2 x 11 inches (21.6 x 27.9 cm)

Rights of an Adult Sprout, 1971
Ink on paper
8 1/2 x 11 inches (21.6 x 27.9 cm)

Grosse Rake, 1969
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

Premiere of House:Ho(u)se:
(ho)USE flyer, 1974
Ink on paper
8 1/2 x 8 3/4 inches (21.6 x 22.2 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink on paper
10 1/8 x 10 inches (25.7 x 25.4 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink on paper
11 1/4 x 7 11/16 inches (28.6 x 19.5 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink on paper
14 15/16 x 10 7/8 inches (37.9 x 27.6 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink on paper
9 15/16 x 7 inches (25.2 x 17.8 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink on paper
14 11/16 x 11 inches (37.3 x 27.9 cm)

No title, 2024
Graphite on paper
15 3/16 x 11 3/16 inches (38.6 x 28.4 cm)

No title, 2024
Pastel on paper
14 15/16 x 4 9/16 inches (37.9 x 11.6 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink and saliva on paper
8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches (21.6 x 21.6 cm)

No title, 2024
Graphite on paper
6 x 4 1/2 inches (15.2 x 11.4 cm)

No title, 2024
Ink on paper
4 1/2 x 3 inches (11.4 x 7.6 cm)

All works are courtesy
of the artist.

Plate photography
by Daniel Terna
unless noted otherwise.

Contributors

Arnold I. Davidson is Mandel School Distinguished Professor of Humanities at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is also the Robert O. Anderson Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago. His books, written in English, French, and Italian, include *Gli esercizi spirituali della musica* and, most recently, a critical edition of Zalmen Gradowski's *The Last Consolation Vanished: The Testimony of a Sonderkommando in Auschwitz*.

Jay Sanders is a curator and the Executive Director of Artists Space.

Olivia Shao is the Burger Collection & TOY Meets Art Curator at The Drawing Center.

Richard Foreman was an American avant-garde playwright and the founder of the Ontological-Hysteric Theater.

Ela Troyano is an interdisciplinary filmmaker, born in Cuba and based in New York City. Her projects bring together different aesthetic histories and genres: downtown New York avant-garde film and performance, queer cinema, Cuban-American cinema-in-exile and Latina film and video. Troyano's work explores the connections between performance and film through the lens of guerrilla practice: camouflage and insurrection conceptually shape both the form and content of her work. Her performance based projects blur the line between installation and live action, while her experimental filmmaking troubles the traditional relationships of documentation and distribution.

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Hermetic Cartography

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