



Via Ponte di Legno 9, 20134, Milano (MI)

+39 324 9974878

info@artnoble.co.uk

P.IVA 11255910967

"COSE BIZZARRE"

JERMAY MICHAEL GABRIEL

Solo exhibition curated by Elisa Giuliano

7 November - 31 January, 2025

Exhibition Catalogue

COSE BIZZARE

Text by Elisa Giuliano

“I am what time, circumstance, history, have made of me, certainly, but I am, also, much more than that. So we are all.”

James Baldwin, *Notes on a Native Son*

Cose Bizzarre is Jermay Micheal Gabriel's first solo exhibition in Italy. It takes place at ArtNoble Gallery and presents a body of work in which Jermay explores that “much more” invoked by Baldwin in *Notes of a Native Son*. His works in fact expose a set of codes that aim to transcend the paradigms of European history, revealing instead a genealogy that is more universal, but also deeply personal. Through their play with absence and presence, with form and being-formed, with doing and being-done, the works presented in *Cose Bizzarre* show how sensory perception and cognition are situated both materially and historically, venturing, however, to provide information about the future through a critical understanding of the past and present.

Cose Bizzarre takes its name from an expression often used by the voiceover of Istituto Luce documentaries to describe the objects, clothing, houses, rituals and customs of the indigenous peoples encountered in Ethiopia and Eritrea by Italians. The word “bizarre” has an uncertain etymology, but historically it has represented the strangeness, originality, and extravagance of “wild”- agile, quick, energetic, and unpredictable thinking, like a fairy that inspires awe. Jermay Michael Gabriel addresses this awe by materially

intervening on images, nomenclatures and dates initially produced as ideological tools in support of colonial rule.

In order to generate a re-reading of Italy's colonial past, Jermay Michael Gabriel has in fact immersed himself in that expanded archive—located between the Horn of Africa and Italy—that includes drawings, photographs, sounds, songs, documents, monuments, and stories, in search of memories that, if discovered and interpreted, can unravel and unhinge those mythologies that still symbolically and politically shape historical memory. The creation of a phantasmagorical bus ride among Italy's Via Adua, the scattering of charcoal and burnt clay traces on the ground, the burning of messages and words, and the exposure to ravages of time of photographs taken in the Italian colonies, are some of the gestures that the artist has exercised on existing memories, preventing them from being enclosed into a defined gaze.

The works presented in *Cose Bizzarre* are thus direct interventions on matter, exercised by Jermay Michael Gabriel to surface its different layers. This molded matter is in fact transformed into a fossilized landscape, itself inscribed in a manipulated cartography, in which it is possible to trace those memories that, in a constant flux, move on non-linear trajectories. These gestures, expressed to conceal or reveal, raise a question: is it better to bury memory under the dust of time or should it be allowed to resurface in the full view of all?

Cose Bizzarre is an exhibition that as a whole exposes how visions and representations of people and places as radically “other” than ourselves depend mostly on power relations that are often difficult to break or reverse. Jermay Michael Gabriel reminds us through his works, and through his approach to artistic research, of the fatigue involved in reversing the gaze from the margins, as the power relations that constituted them can seem ultimately indelible. We can thus still aspire to a critical understanding of these power relations and our role within them. In *Cose Bizzarre*, Jermay Michael Gabriel stimulates and instigates this precious understanding by actively and materially intervening in the visual paradigms that, though created in the past, continue to fuel dominant ideologies in the present.





Italy Sightseeing (2023)
Lightbox, LED
99 x 19 x 5 cm







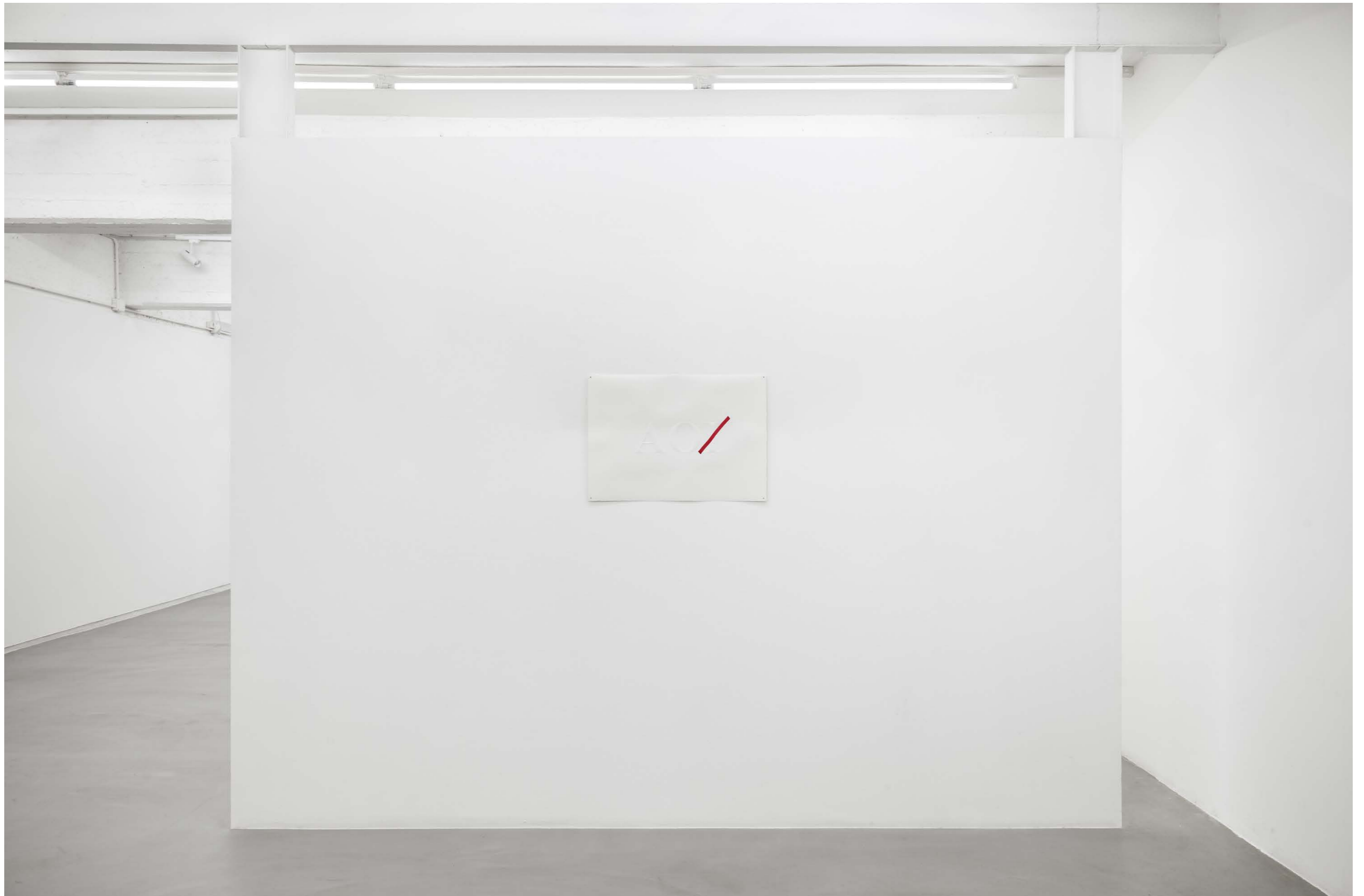
Via Dogali (2023)
Engraving on Carrara marble
20 x 45 x 2 cm

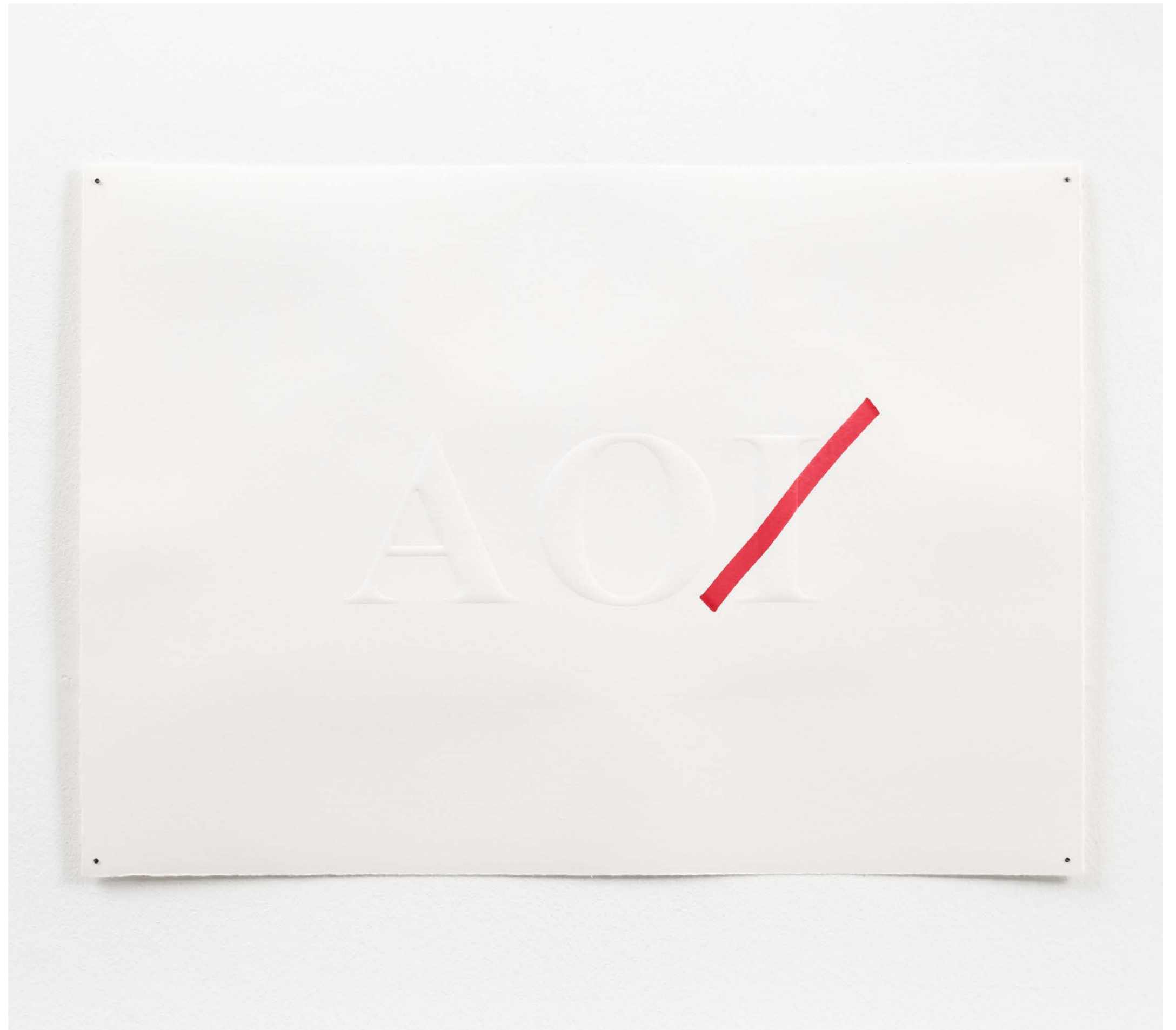


Via Adwa (2023)
Engraving on Carrara marble
20 x 45 x 2 cm



Via Adwa (2023)
Engraving on Carrara marble
20 x 45 x 2 cm





AO (2024)
Embossing on 100% cotton paper, 350g
Edition of 5 + 1AP
50 x 70 cm

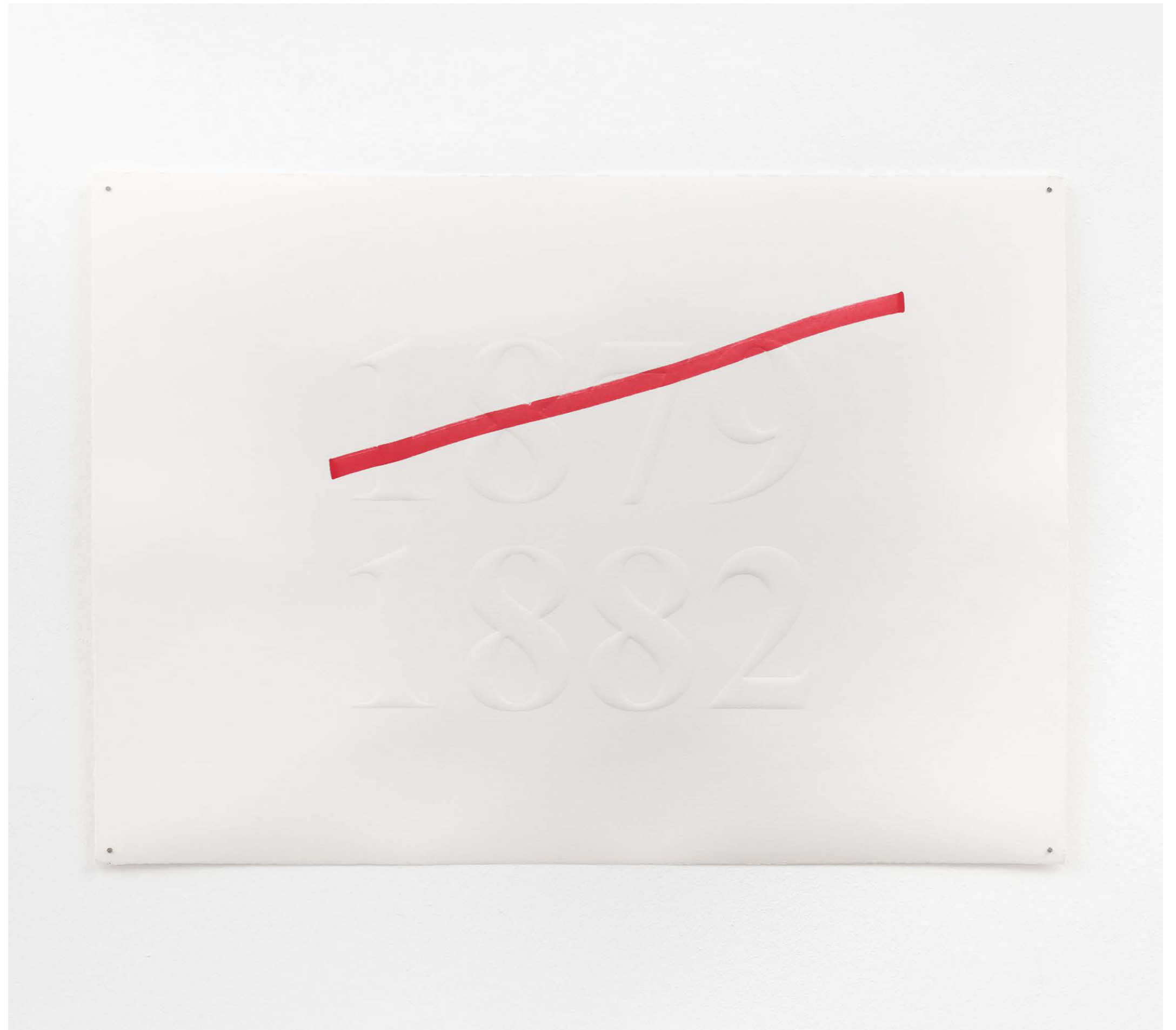




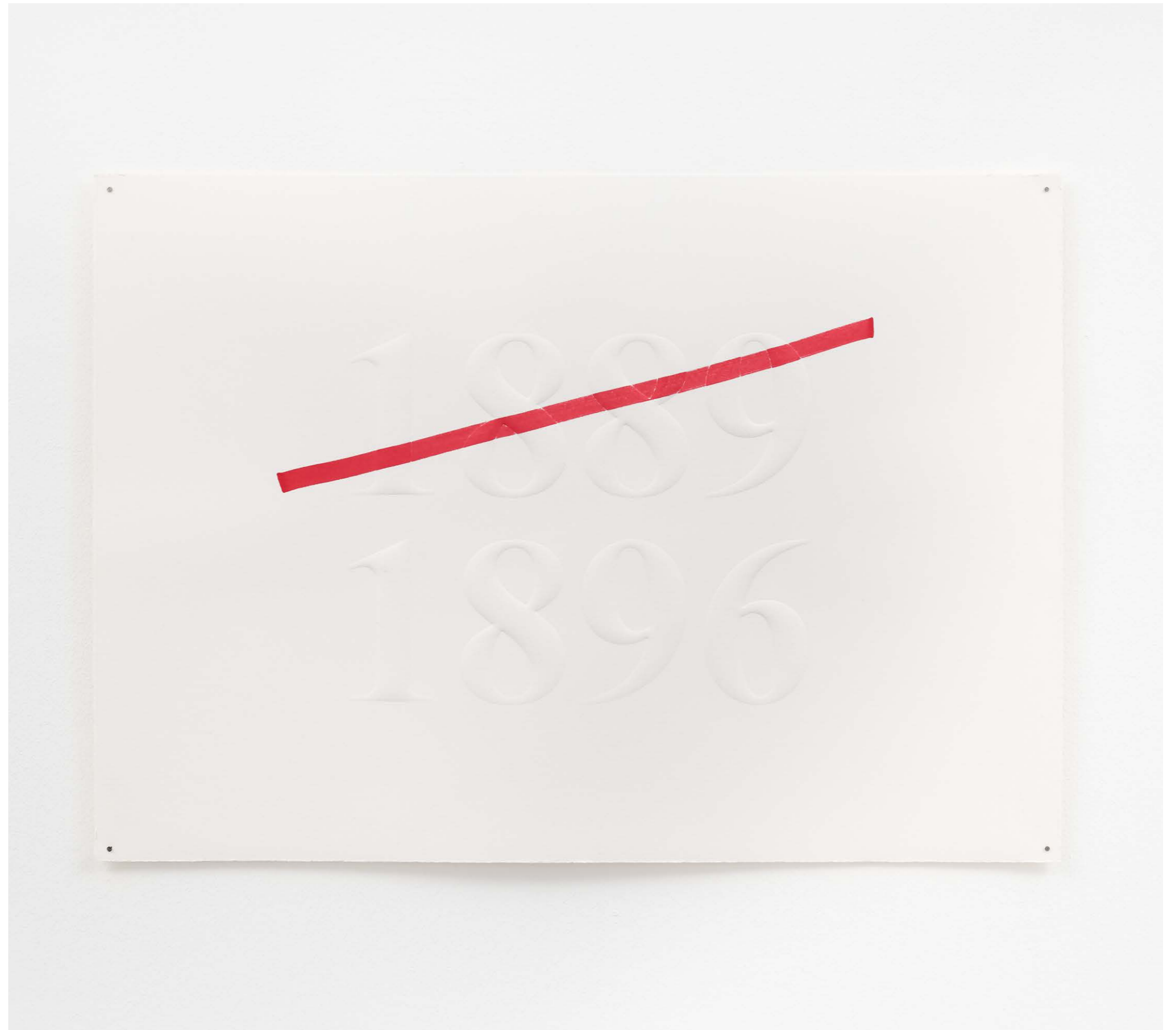
1935
~~1925~~

1889
~~1896~~

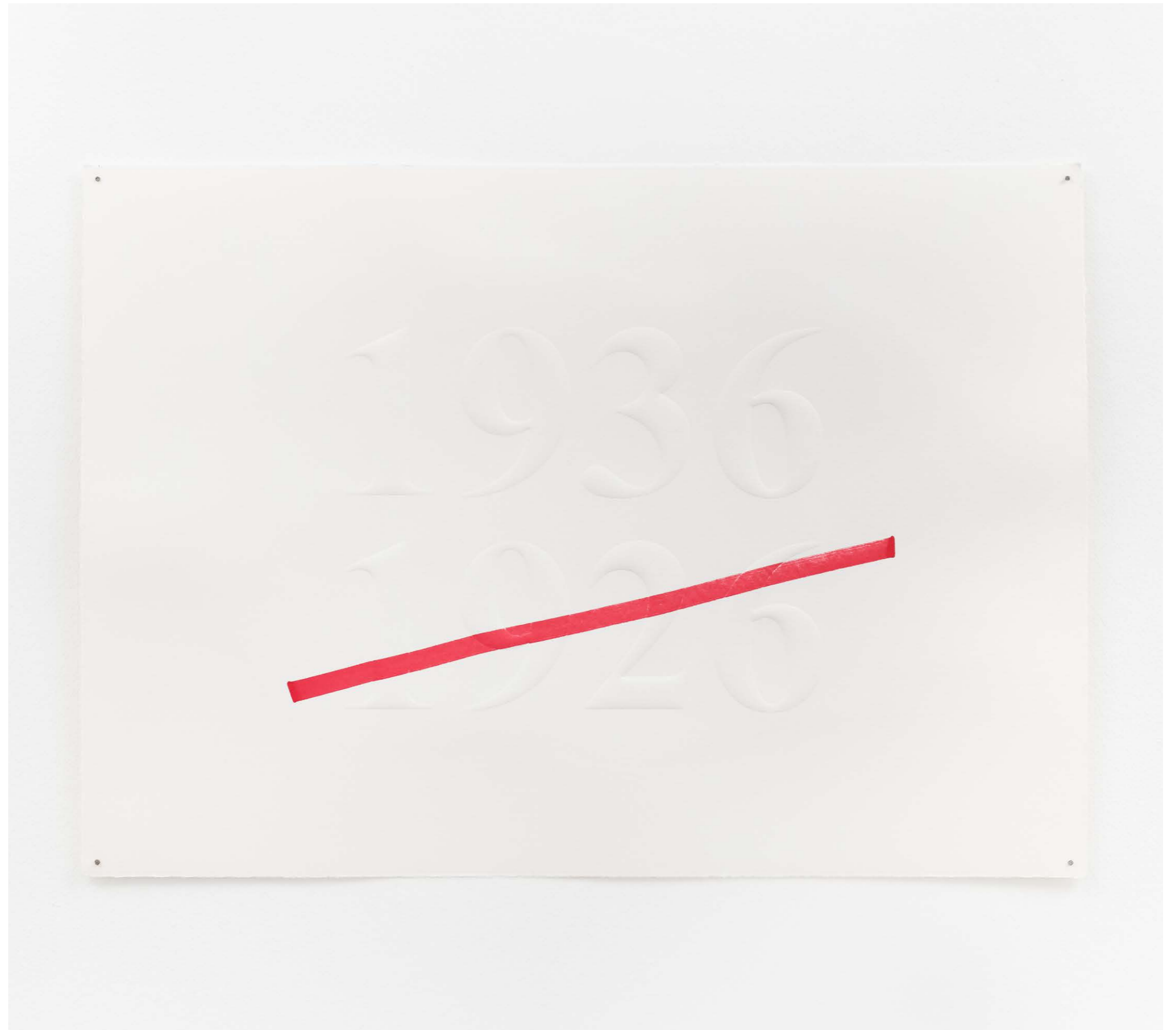
1883
~~1882~~



1882 (2024)
Embossing on 100% cotton paper, 350g
Edition of 5 + 1AP
50 x 70 cm



1896 (2024)
Embossing on 100% cotton paper, 350g
Edition of 5 + 1AP
50 x 70 cm



1936 (2024)
Embossing on 100% cotton paper, 350g
Edition of 5 + 1AP
50 x 70 cm



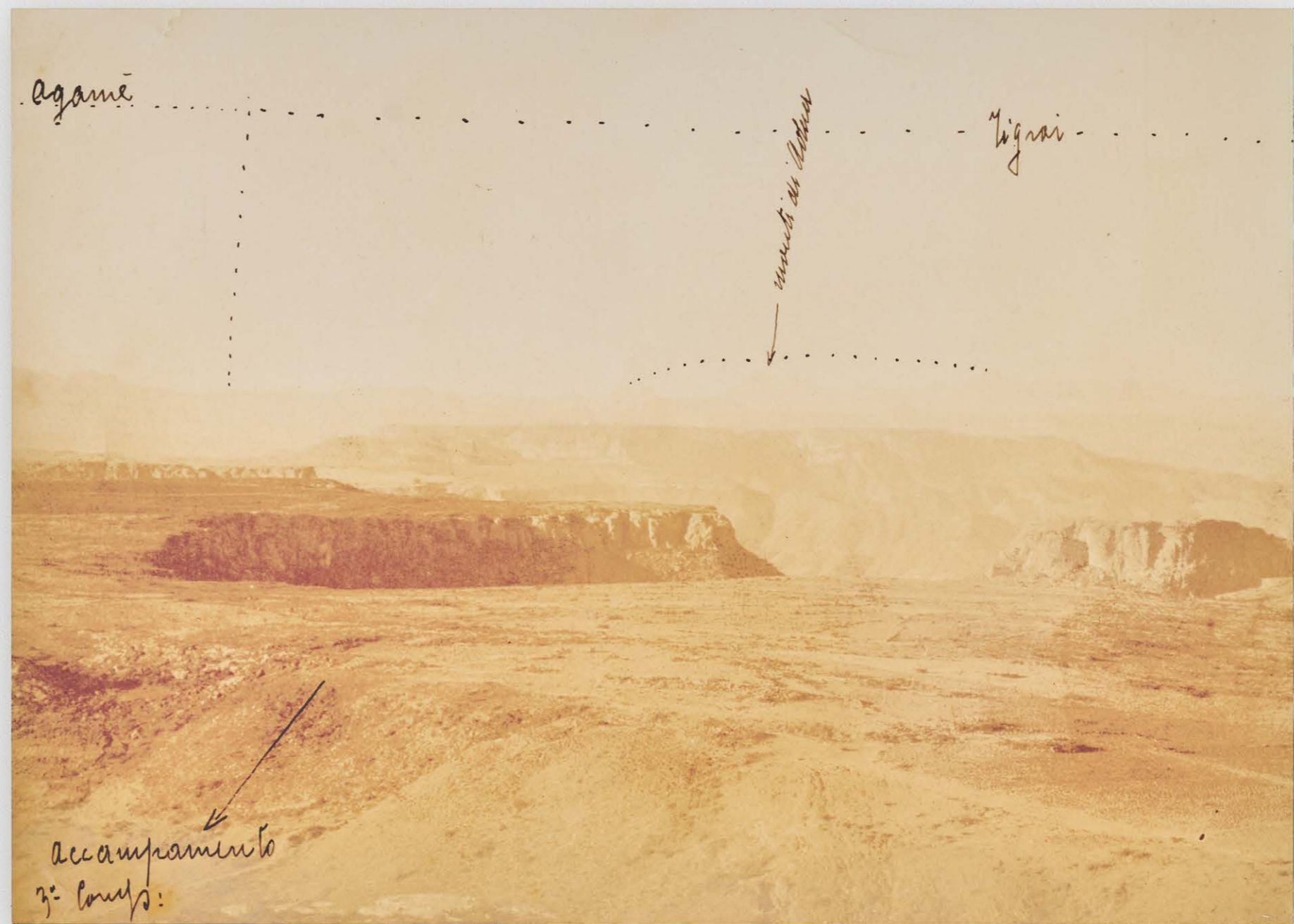
Semplicemente deserto (2024)

FineArt print on dibond

Edition of 3

70 x 100 cm





Tigray - ትግራይ (2024)
FineArt print on dibond
Edition of 3
50 x 70 cm



Adwa - ግድብ (2024)
FineArt print on dibond
Edition of 3
50 x 70 cm



Palazzo fantasma (2024)
FineArt print on dibond
Edition of 3
70 x 100 cm





Meskel - መስቀል (2024)

Burnt wood, coal, archival photographs

160 x 240 x 240 cm





Città fantasma (2024)
FineArt print on dibond
Edition of 3
70 x 100 cm







1 - 8 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



2 - 2 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



3 - ƒ (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



4 - \bar{a} (2024)

Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



5 - ㉔ (2024)

Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



6 - ⅞ (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



7 - 7 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



8 - 8 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



9 - 9 (2024)

Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass

20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



10 - I (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



11 - 16 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



12 - 12 (2024)

Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass

20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



13 - II (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



14 - 14 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



15 - 18 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



16 - 12 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



17 - 17 (2024)
Manipulated archival photograph, plexiglass
20 x 15 x 3.5 cm, framed



JERMAY MICHAEL GABRIEL

Born in 1997 in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia.
Lives and works in Milan, Italy.

Jermay Michael Gabriel is an Italian-Ethiopian-Eritrean trans-disciplinary artist. His work is based on an experimental, and often extreme, effort to resist the permanence and elusiveness of the Italian colonial archive through the subversion of its symbols of power. Gabriel's artistic practice embraces both sound and contemporary art. He starts from the assumption that spaces at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalisation, visibility or representation do not produce liberation. Colonial trauma does not have a linear trajectory, nor does memory. It sinks into the fibres without a temporal pattern and crosses generations, going back and forth between past, present and future. Gabriel's process chronicles the multifaceted dimensions of these journeys, exorcising trauma through sound, installation and performance, embracing cultural legacies and collective memories as a form of healing.

Jermay Michael Gabriel is also a member of the music duo Plethor X together with sound designer Giovanni Isgrò. He is also the founder and director of BHMM (Black History Month Milan) and the founder of Kirykou (Milan). His work and performances have been presented in various biennials and exhibitions including Malta Biennale (2024, Malta), Lagos Biennale (2024, Lagos), Fondazione Pirelli Hangar-Bicocca (2024, Milan), Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Carrara (2023, Carrara), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (2022, Berlin), Museo delle Civiltà (2023, Rome), Museo delle Culture - Mudec (2021, Milan), Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Toronto (2024, Toronto), Museum of European

and Mediterranean Civilizations (2023, Marseille), Fondazione Sozzani (2023, Milan), Maschio Angioino (2022, Naples) amongst others.





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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Matthew Noble

matthew@artnoble.co.uk

+39 324 997 4878 // +44 753 202 3805

Ilaria Baia Curioni

ilaria@artnoble.co.uk

+39 333 565 0565

ARTNOBLE.IT