

HAN MENGYUN

ShanghART
香 格 纳 画 廊

Jewels of Impermanence

Han Mengyun

2025

ShanghART Singapore

ShanghART Singapore is pleased to present *Jewels of Impermanence*, London-based artist Han Mengyun's first solo exhibition in the gallery's Singapore space. The title is borrowed from a poem the artist penned amid the unsettling spring of 2020. The show gathers a selection of paintings and drawings made between 2020 and 2025, providing a scintillating, at times enigmatic, glimpse into the artist's pandemic-era turmoil and the spiritual composure she forged through an aesthetic meditation on impermanence.

Han's images stage an encounter between Dutch *vanitas* paintings and Buddhist depictions of skeletons and skulls. Whereas *vanitas* and *memento mori* traditions expose worldly vanity, Buddhist "meditations on repulsiveness" confront impermanence as a precondition of enlightenment. Interweaving iconographies through a repertoire of skulls, hourglasses, and other emblems of transience, Han constructs mandala-like configurations, printed with woodblocks she has collected across Asia. The mandala serves as a phenomenological prism—an architectonic map through which both the macrocosm and the psyche can be apprehended. Such material and visual hybridity stages a tension between sensuous surface and metaphysical aspiration. Works such as *Spaß und Tod*, with its skeletal hands poised in play, recall the late-medieval danse macabre and Tibetan *thangka* of the *citipati*, acknowledging death as a kinetic partner in the continuum of life and the catalyst of existential transformation.

The series marks the artist's return to oil painting which she rejected for almost a decade in search of the alternative to 'the Western'. "In the prospect of grim uncertainty", the artist says, "I felt an urgent craving for the corporeal lushness of oil, the exhilarating violence of the brush, the humble endurance of canvas—capacities ink and rice paper cannot sustain. In this existential aporia, I understood for the first time the Heideggerean *Sein-zum-Tode*, being-toward-death—the unflinching awareness of finitude makes life infinitely possible."

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

HAN MENGYUN (b.1989 Wuhan, raised in Shenzhen, China) is an interdisciplinary and multimedia artist, comparatist, filmmaker, poet and mother currently based in London. She received her BA in Studio Art from Bard College and has pursued the study of Sanskrit at various institutions such as Kyoto University before she completed her MFA at the University of Oxford with a research focus on Classical Indology and Indian aesthetic theories. Her practice is metaphorically divided between Day and Night, exploring a wide range of themes from the decolonisation of Eurasian transcultural hybridisations to personal experiences as a woman and mother.

During the “day,” Han Mengyun focuses on painting, diverging from Eurocentric frameworks—both classical and contemporary—to delve into the complex historical ties within the profoundly intercultural context of Eurasia’s past and present. Initially trained in the Western tradition of oil painting, she shifted towards embracing the complexities of historical ties and intercultural dialogues that have shaped the continent’s history. The broad focus of her research covers interdisciplinary manifestations of cultural dialogue and polyvocal aesthetic conversations—from religion, philosophy and mythologies, to trade, vernacular crafts, textile and bookmaking.

During the “night,” Han Mengyun explores her personal, emotional and psychological experiences as a woman and a mother. Her affinity for the night developed from an uncontrollable desire to write poems in darkness during episodes of postpartum depression. The night emancipated her and inspired her *écriture féminine*. Her feminist awareness and radical solidarity were kindled by Gayatri Spivak’s critical concern for the subaltern, the contradictions of existence as double binds caused by colonialism and modernity, and creative play as non-compliance. From writing and

filmmaking to painting and textile installation—often merging these forms—her Night practice examines women’s experiences, utterances, and art forms in transgenerational, transcultural, transhistorical, and inter-religious contexts, probing the roots of subalternity and the possibilities of liberation.

Recent exhibitions include (the upcoming) “Recipes for Broken Hearts” Bukhara Biennial, Uzbekistan (September–November 2025); “Lining Revealed – A Journey Through Folk Wisdom and Contemporary Vision” Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile, Hong Kong (2025); “Tracing Impermanence” AlUla Arts Festival, Saudi Arabia (2025); “Unknowness is the Way” Delfina Foundation, London, UK (2024); “Seeing in the Dark” Busan Biennale, South Korea (2024); “What Migrates Shall Remain” Zhi Art Museum, Chengdu, China (2024); “Poetry by the Barbarian” ASE Foundation, Shanghai, China (2024); “The Threshold under Turbine Vents” Sunblanket Foundation, Seoul, South Korea (2024); “The Unending Rose” ShanghART Shanghai, China (2023); “Painting Unsettled” UCCA Edge, Shanghai, China (2023); “SIGG: Chinese Contemporary art from the Sigg Collection” SONGEUN Art and Cultural Foundation, Seoul, South Korean (2023); “Bordercrossing: Possibilities and Interactions” Forbes China Contemporary Young Artists, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China (2023); “Night” esea contemporary, Manchester, UK (2022); “A Place for Concealment” Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China (2022); “The Dwelling Place of the Other in Me” Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China (2021); “Diriyah Biennale: Feeling the Stones” Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (2021); “Splinters of Jade” A Thousand Plateaus Art Space, Chengdu, China (2019); “In Between Island” Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2013) etc.

Jewels of Impermanence

Han Mengyun

无常的宝石

灾难总将寂静归还给世界
在这索居和沉默里，
只有内心的细语。
没有过去也没有未来，
在死亡将至的日子里，
只有现在。
清晨的鸟鸣让恐惧成为幻影，
夜晚的月亮推开浮云，
仅为崭露光明的真相。
我的心似洁净的月盘，
被时间的流逝打磨成一面镜子，
照映着万物的宿命。
古波斯人将诗句比作珍宝，
我视无常为宝石，
死亡的光辉亦可照亮生命。

Jewels of Impermanence

In the silent alter of the mind,
the soul awakens to whisper words of truth.
That's the gift from disasters,
a garland of quietude.
There is neither past nor future.
The present is forever present.
That is also my present.
May the song of birds break the dawn.
May fear manifest itself as mere illusion.
The siege of clouds fails to capture
the night-dwelling moon, whose mission
is to reveal the veracity of light and compassion.
My mind becomes clear and still,
like a pond holding moonlight,
like a mirror polished in the river.
The ancient Persians wear poetry like jewellery,
I take impermanence as treasury of light
shedding on the vicissitudes of life.

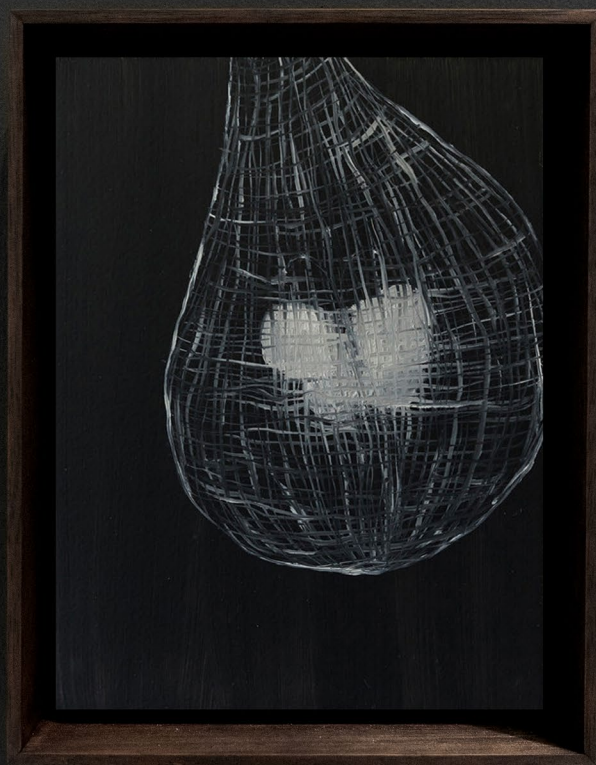
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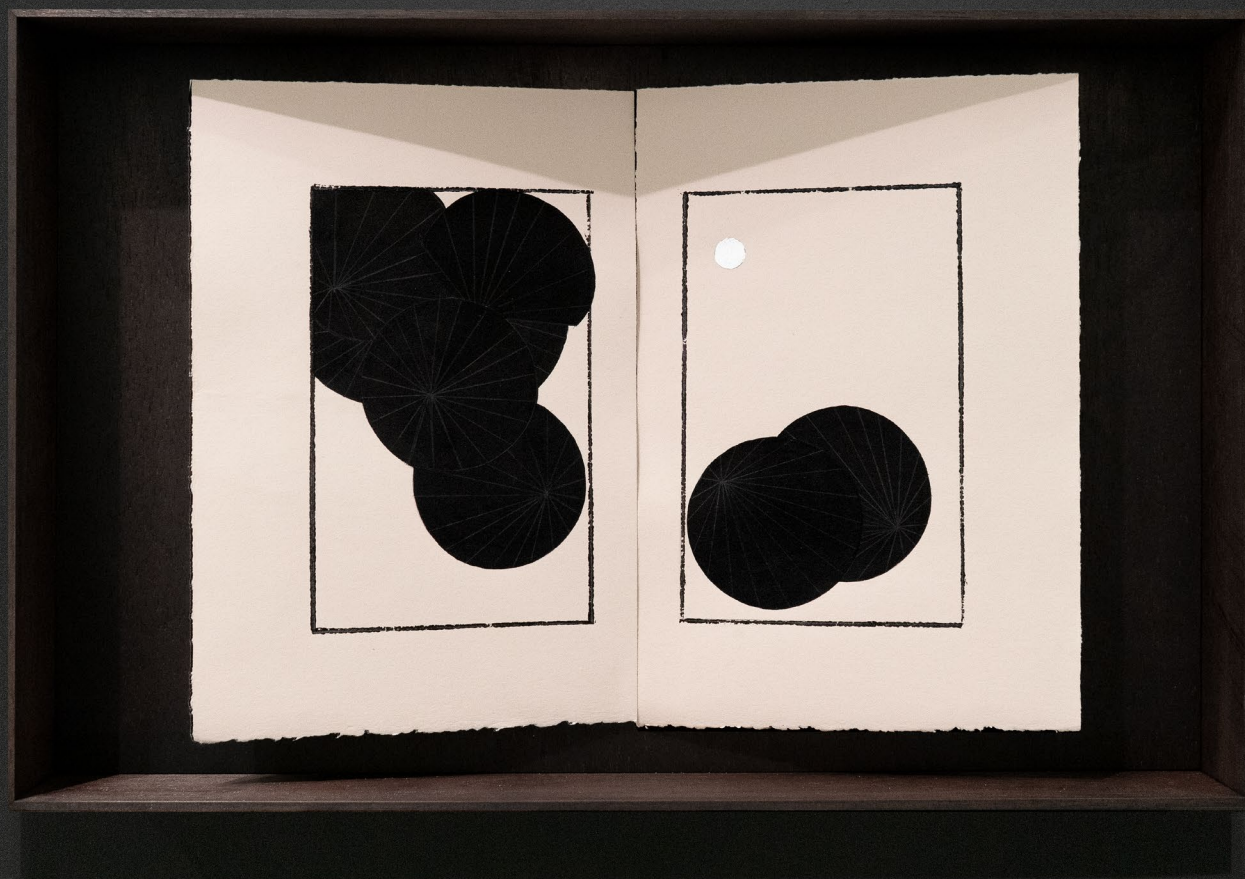
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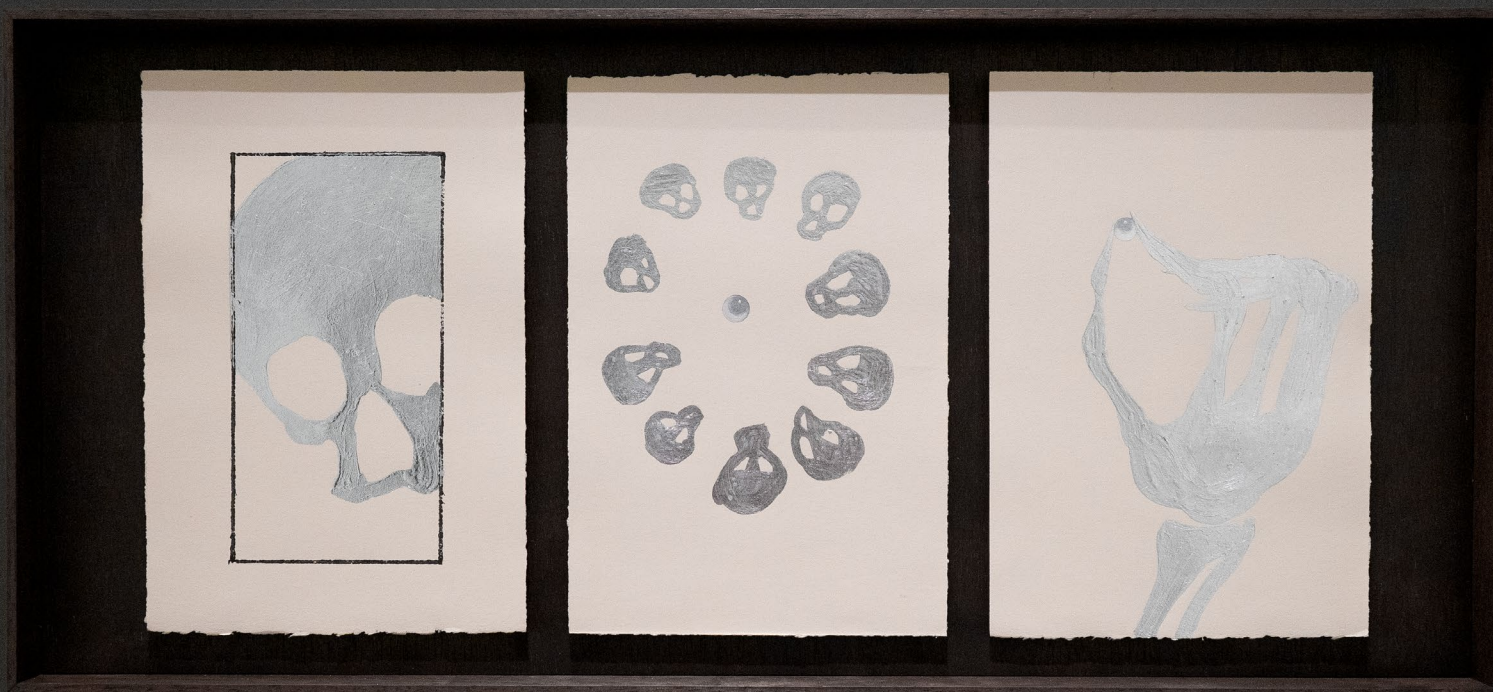
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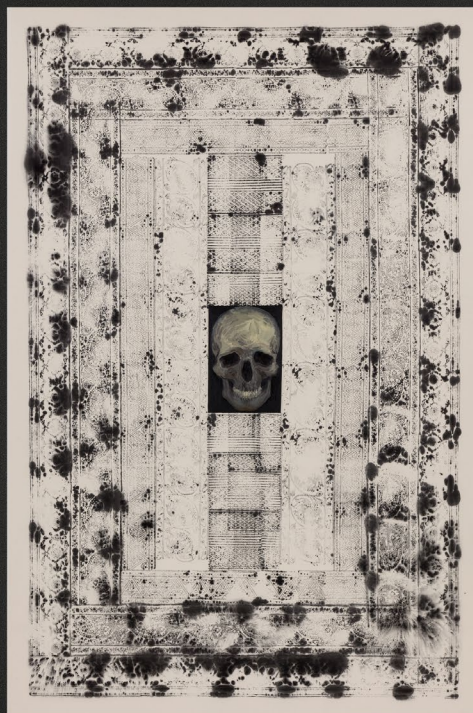
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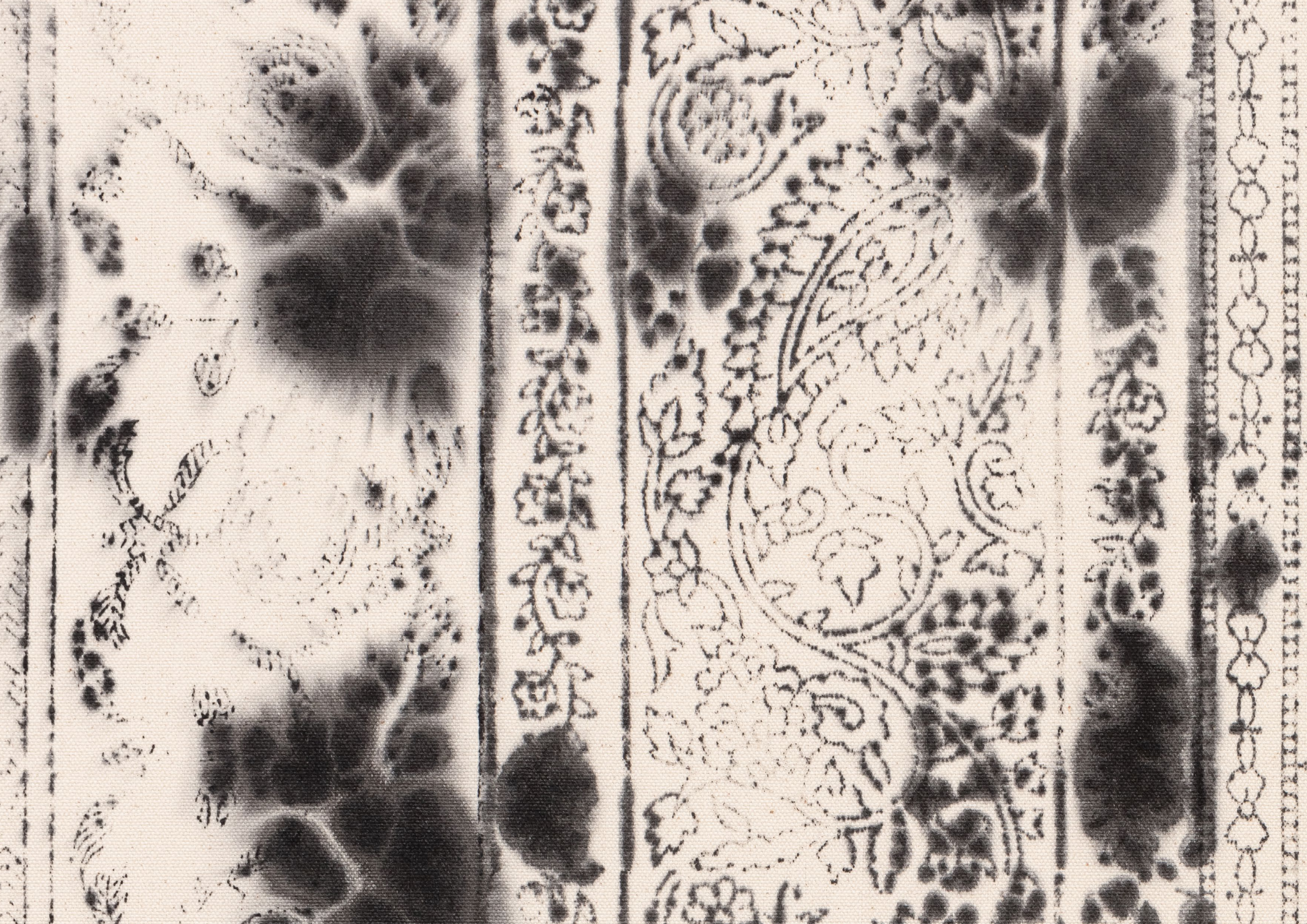


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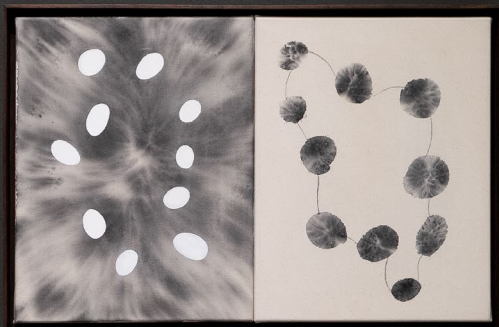
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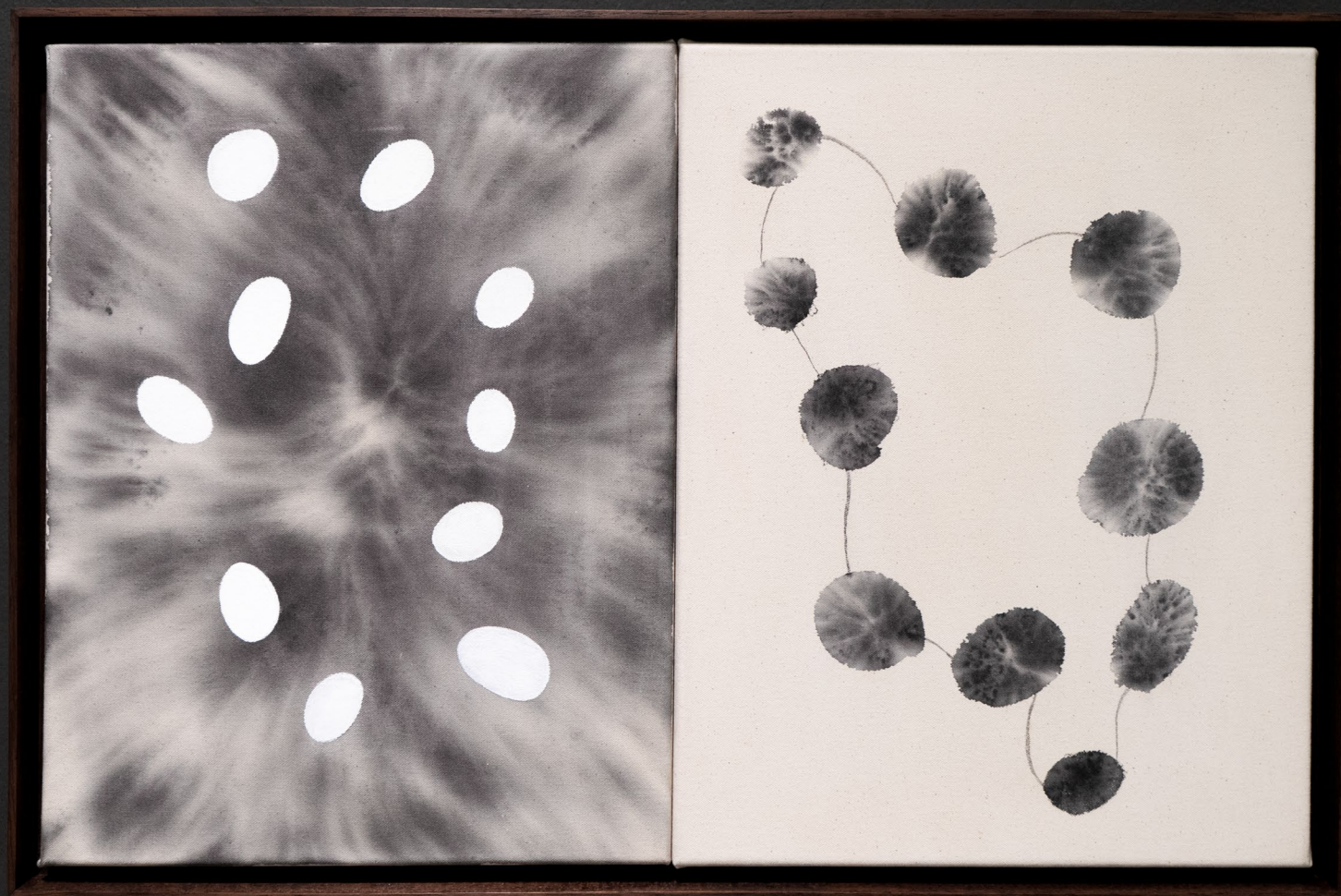
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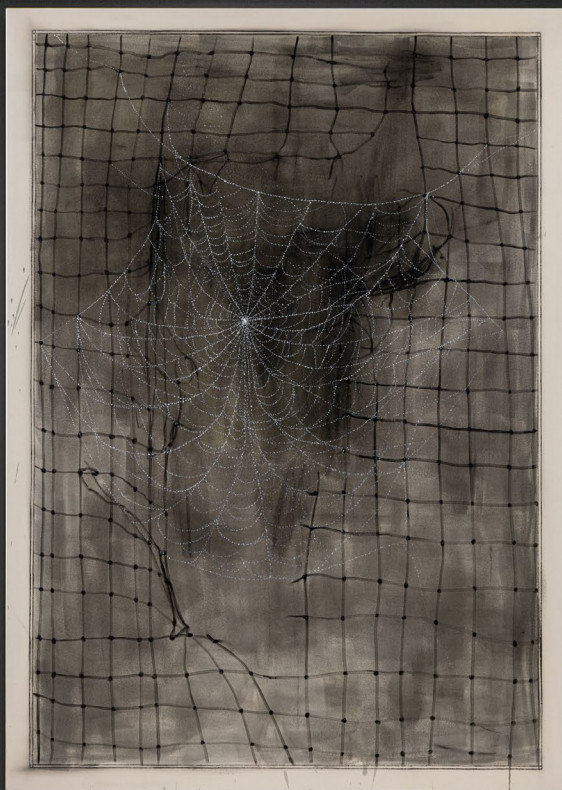


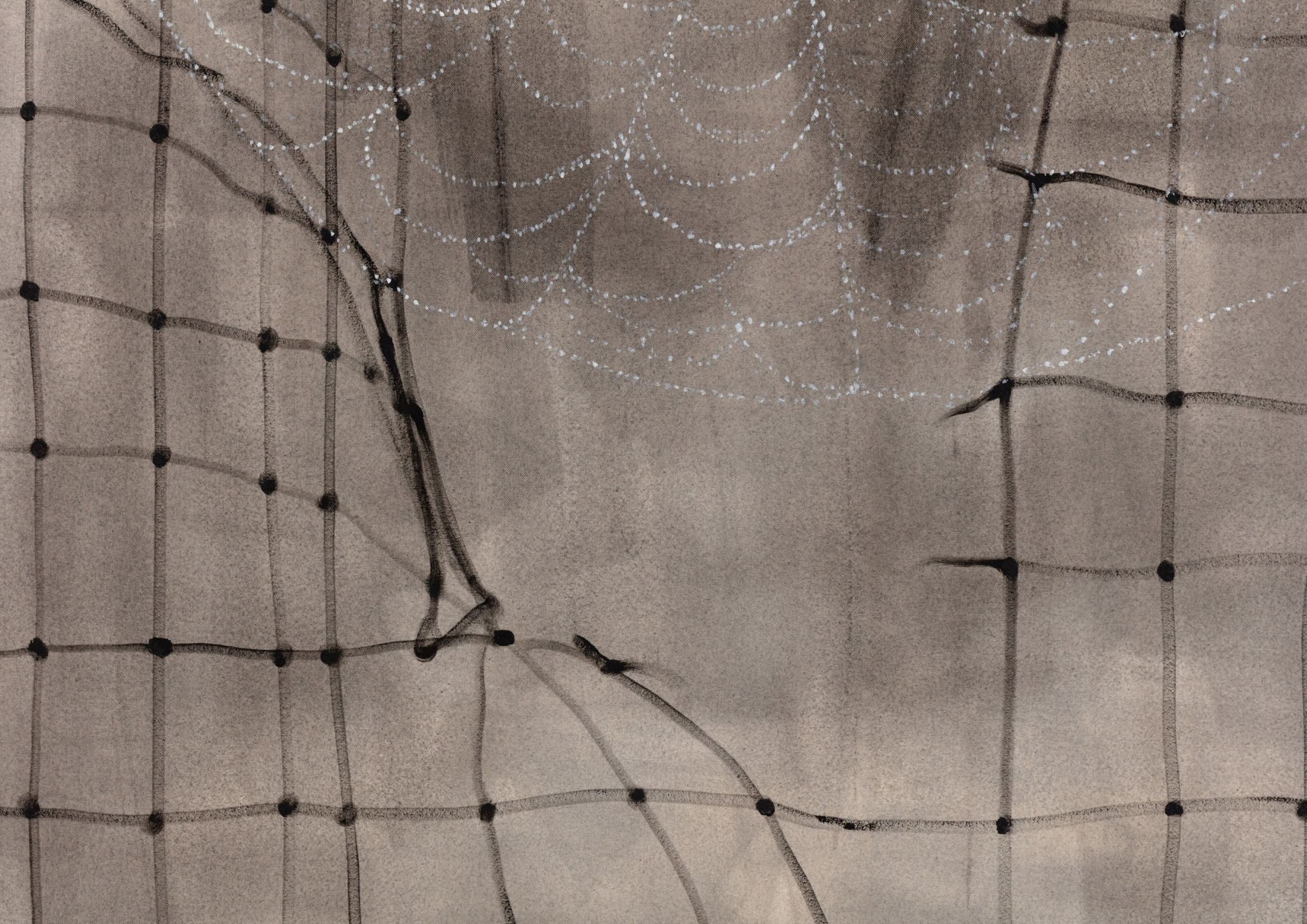












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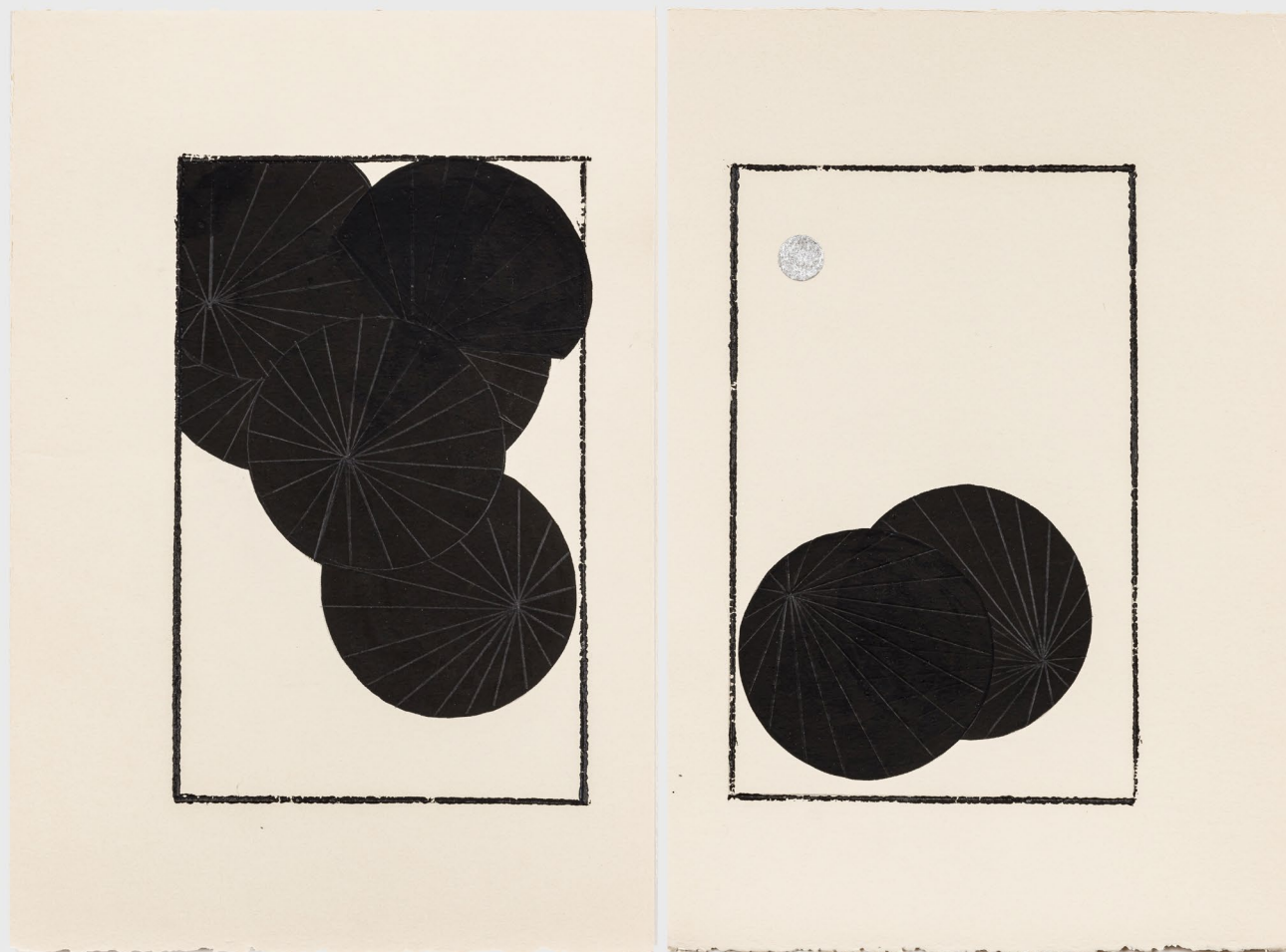
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LIST OF WORKS



Spring Besieged
2020
Oil on panel
15x20x2cm



Friendship under the Moonlight
2024
ink and silver leaf on paper
each 28.5(H) x 19cm



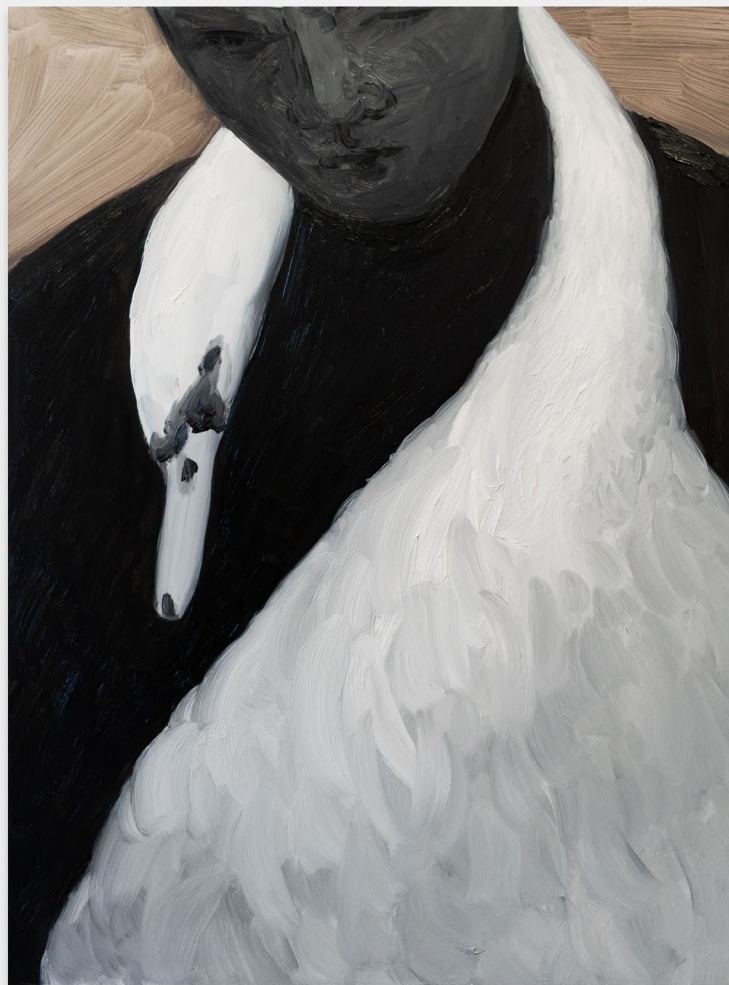
Reunion
2024
ink and silver leaf on paper
each 28.5(H) x 19cm



Spaß und Tod
2020
Oil on panel
30x40x2cm



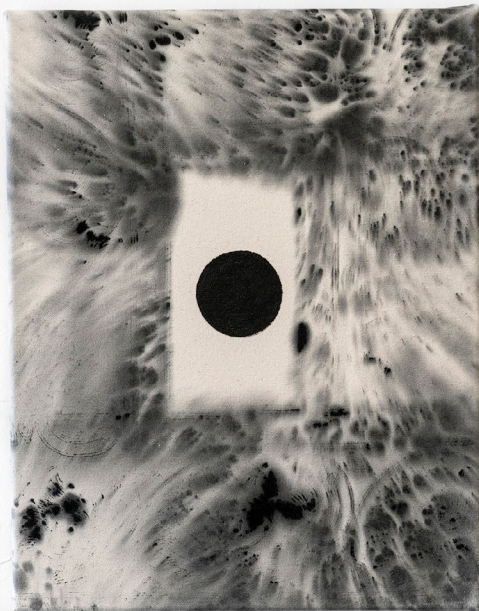
Guardian of Time
2020
Oil on panel
30x40x2cm



Leda and the Swan
2020
Oil on panel
30x40x2cm



Auguries of Innocence
2020
Ink and acrylics on canvas
35.5x35.5x2cm



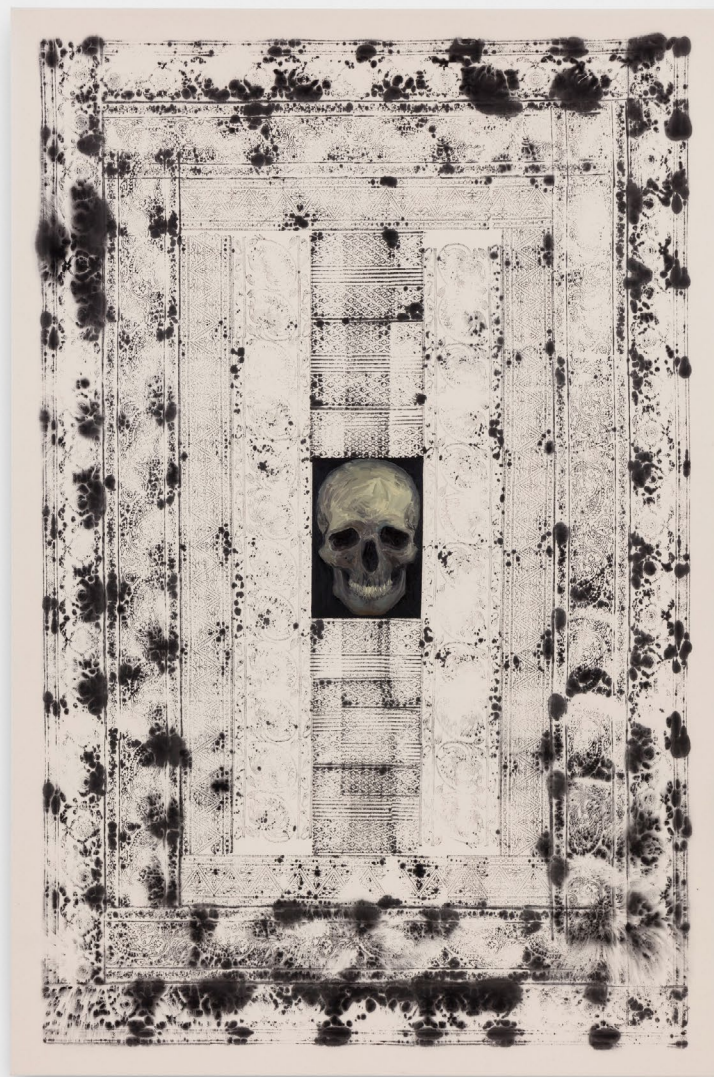
Sehnsucht
2020
Ink and acrylics on canvas
30x45x2cm



The Order of Things
2020
Ink and acrylics on canvas
35x45x2cm



Eternity Blossomed
2020
Oil and ink on canvas
65x75cm



Samsara I
2020
oil and acrylic on canvas
210 (H) x150cm



Samsara I
2020
Oil on canvas
150x210cm



Inner Landscape
2024
oil and acrylic on canvas
210 (H) x140cm

ShanghART M50 香格纳M50

普陀区莫干山路50号16号楼, 上海, 中国 200060

Bldg 16, 50 Moganshan Rd., Putuo District, Shanghai, China 200060

T: +86 21 6359 3923 | m50@shanghartgallery.com | info@shanghartgallery.com

ShanghART WB Central 香格纳西岸中环

徐汇区西岸瑞宁路288号4幢, 上海, 中国 200032

Bldg 4, No. 288 Ruining Road, Xuhui District, Shanghai, China 200032

T: +86 21 6359 3923 +86 18917671295 | info@shanghartgallery.com

ShanghART SUHE 香格纳苏河

静安区文安路30号二层204, 上海, 中国200085

204, 2/F, 30 Wen'an Road, Jiang'an, Shanghai, China 200085

T: +86 21 6359 3923 | info@shanghartgallery.com

ShanghART Beijing 香格纳北京

朝阳区机场辅路草场地261号, 北京, 中国 100015

261 Caochangdi, Airport Side Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China 100015

T: +86 10 6437 3032 | infobj@shanghartgallery.com

ShanghART Singapore 香格纳新加坡

吉门营房, LOCK路9号02-22, 新加坡 108937

9 Lock Road, #02-22, Gillman Barracks, Singapore 108937

T: +65 6734 9537 | infosg@shanghartgallery.com