

Mathis Pfäffli  
*Meteora*

15 November 2025 – 24 January 2026

*Damien & The Love Guru*

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After some wandering in and out of the various takes on Mathis Pfäffli's work—and specifically in relation to the exhibition *Meteora*—I found myself opening one reference after another: the history of murals and the *Basler Totentanz*; Baudrillard's *The Agony of Power* (1978); the 'line of flight' in Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972); Tim Ingold's notion of lines connecting drawing to writing to weaving as Sophia Roxane Rohwetter ruminated on in her essay in *Tracer*, the catalogue for Mathis's exhibition at Kunstmuseum Luzern in 2022. Each layer led elsewhere—to Surrealism, as well as to the 16th-century Bomarzo Monster Park, a site where sculptures seem to seek escape from the fundamental forces—gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear interactions—that are today understood to shape and govern the universe we inhabit—each of them might open a path into reading Mathis's work.

I finally decided to enter 'Meteora' through sound. I had asked Mathis what sound might best relate to the exhibition, and besides the live set by SOLAND ANGEL performing in the exhibition in December, he mentioned that he imagined 'Meteora' sounding like *Untrue* by Burial or a piece by Helen Island—'something electronic, cold, and reduced, yet still carrying a sense of warmth, a warmth connected to handwork, and genuinely inviting.'

Entering 'Meteora' with Burial in mind—a producer whose music became emblematic of early-2000s urban Britain, blending garage, ambient, and dubstep into deeply textural compositions, marked by melancholy, memory, and the echoes of rave culture—risks falling into the vast rabbit hole of reflections and material written and produced about that era's reckoning with decades of neoliberalism. For both the late cultural theorist Mark Fisher and documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis—each having developed bodies of work that examine the entanglements, motives, and consequences of Thatcherite neoliberalism and how culture responds to it—Burial's music resonates deeply as a means of grasping the texture of the times. This sound, reflecting South London yet translatable to other European cities in transition, reshaped through the growing influence of finance capital, evokes a condition of passive spectatorship and powerlessness in the face of circumstances perceived as unchangeable, mirroring the disintegration of the collective experience once central to the UK's rave culture. Burial's *Untrue*, which Fisher discussed in his 2006 essay 'London After the Rave: Burial', published in the canonical *Ghosts of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (2014), gives form to this city soundscape as mourning—a haunting yearning for lost togetherness and for a future still faintly audible amid the echoes of disillusionment.

'It is like walking into the abandoned spaces once carnivalised by raves and finding them returned to depopulated dereliction. Muted air horns flare like the ghosts of Raves past. Broken glass cracks underfoot. MDMA flashbacks bring London to unlife in the way that hallucinogens brought demons crawling out of the subways in *Jacob's Ladder's* New York.<sup>1</sup> Audio hallucinations transform the city's rhythms into inorganic beings, more dejected than malign. You see faces in the clouds and hear voices in the crackle. What you momentarily thought was muffled bass turns out only to be the rumbling of tube trains.'<sup>2</sup>

Entering 'Meteora' with Burial's way of translating the cityscape into sound, I began to connect it to Mathis's way of working with the material remnants the post-industrial city offers up: the fragments, debris, and discarded materials found on its streets and in its hidden pockets. Upon closer inspection, the glass carriers—*Collectors*,



as they are titled, and the ceiling lampshades—are filled with small objects of urban life that Mathis has picked up here and there: materials whose origins were once functional but, out of context, have lost meaning. They follow a logic and selection criteria expressed less through formal or conceptual order than through a sensibility—a way of grasping cultural shifts through the materials the city continues to shed. The historical change beginning in the 1970s—whose effects continue to shape the present—saw heavy industry across Europe decline, leaving empty buildings that became sites for rave culture and other collective practices in the 1980s and 1990s, before later being recoded through new urban developments driven by technology, finance, and the shift to ‘immaterial labour’. These transformations form the intuitive framework for Mathis’s selection of the bits and pieces he gathers. His assemblages move along the edges of these conditions. Like Burial’s music, which captures the echoes of a city in transformation, his approach is one of documenting and archiving, making the *Collectors* a kind of portrait of Zurich—or of other urban sites he has traversed in recent years—capturing the post-industrial tone already marked by successive cultural movements, whose traces remain inscribed in their textures.

‘Burial’s London is a wounded city, populated by ecstasy casualties on day release from psychiatric units, disappointed lovers on night buses, parents who can’t quite bring themselves to sell their Rave 12 inches at a carboot sale, all of them with haunted looks on their faces, but also haunting their interpassively nihilist kids with the thought that things weren’t always like this.’<sup>3</sup>

For ‘Meteora’s’ wall drawing sequence, which stretches across all the gallery walls and forms both backdrop and shadow for the *Collectors*, Mathis Pfäffli worked with a set of form templates, designing a series of limited movements for himself—coordinates along which to navigate and draw the unfolding narrative. Many elements echo the logic of technical drawings—abstracted outlines that recall schematics of electrical devices or industrial appliances, carrying something of the circuit board’s peculiar charm, like a miniature cityscape—an imaginative terrain of grids and routes, an intricate maze of pathways and intersections. They intertwine with more organic forms—shapes resembling body parts, skeletons, or tree branches—merging into an abstract technospheric imagination. The compositions read like maps of a shifting terrain, where circuits and veins, networks and roots, blur into a single morphology that bears traces of techno-human systems and artefacts, encompassing industrial infrastructures, communication networks, digital technologies, and artificial environments—an expanded ecology of human production.

This method recalls approaches developed by artists and architects such as Valdas Ozarinskas, who drew directly from the architectures of industry and technology, adapting components designed for function into tools for form-making. Rational geometries of machines and infrastructures became templates for blueprints, floor plans, sections, and elevations, turning electronic components into a visual system capable of generating endless formal solutions—an infinite generator of shapes. Drawing on the material lexicon of the disintegrating industrial landscape of 1990s and early-2000s Lithuania, he reworked shipping infrastructure, surveillance devices, and domesticated military equipment into a grungy, irreverent aesthetic of deconstructivist architecture.<sup>4</sup> Pfäffli’s works build on this, approaching the technosphere as both subject and method. He translates industrial and technological residues into a visual syntax that speaks from within these systems

rather than about them, revealing how the aesthetics of production continue to shape perception, space, and imagination.

I close with a note on memory, because 'Meteora', I shall speculate, is a kind of memory machine. The exhibition's title refers to a region in central Greece, where towering sandstone rock pillars host complexes of Eastern Orthodox monasteries built between the 11th and 16th centuries<sup>5</sup>; its name derives from the Ancient Greek μετέωρα (metēōra), meaning 'suspended in the air'. The monasteries act as repositories of memory—architectural vessels that bridge earthly recollection with spiritual and cosmographic imagination.



'Meteora', then, invites reflection on how technology enables memory to be preserved and transferred across generations. What do petroglyphs and ray cats have in common? Both are designed systems of memory, created to carry meaning beyond their immediate context—yet both risk becoming obsolete once their messages can no longer be read or understood. Petroglyphs articulate an understanding of the world by mapping the relations between earth and cosmos, anchoring human existence within a wider order of celestial and terrestrial forces; ray cats, imagined as future warning signs for radioactive waste sites, attempt to project understanding into an unknowable future. Both function as cultural technologies of memory and transmission—acts of preservation and translation that show how knowledge and imagination are persistently inscribed into matter.

— Egija Inzule

1 A horror film directed by Adrian Lyne in 1990.

2 Mark Fisher, 'London After the Rave: Burial', in *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester and Washington: Zero Books, 2014) pp.98–99.

3 Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, p. 99.

4 Jurga Daubaraitė, Jonas Žukauskas, Virginija Januškevičiūtė, 'Techno Translations', in *An Architect Without Architecture? A Retrospective of Valdas Ozarinskas* (Vilnius: Contemporary Art Centre, 2014), p.18.

5 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 'Meteora', The List of World Heritage in Greece, 12 November 2025, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/455/>



*Installation view*



*Installation view*





*Installation view*



*Installation view*



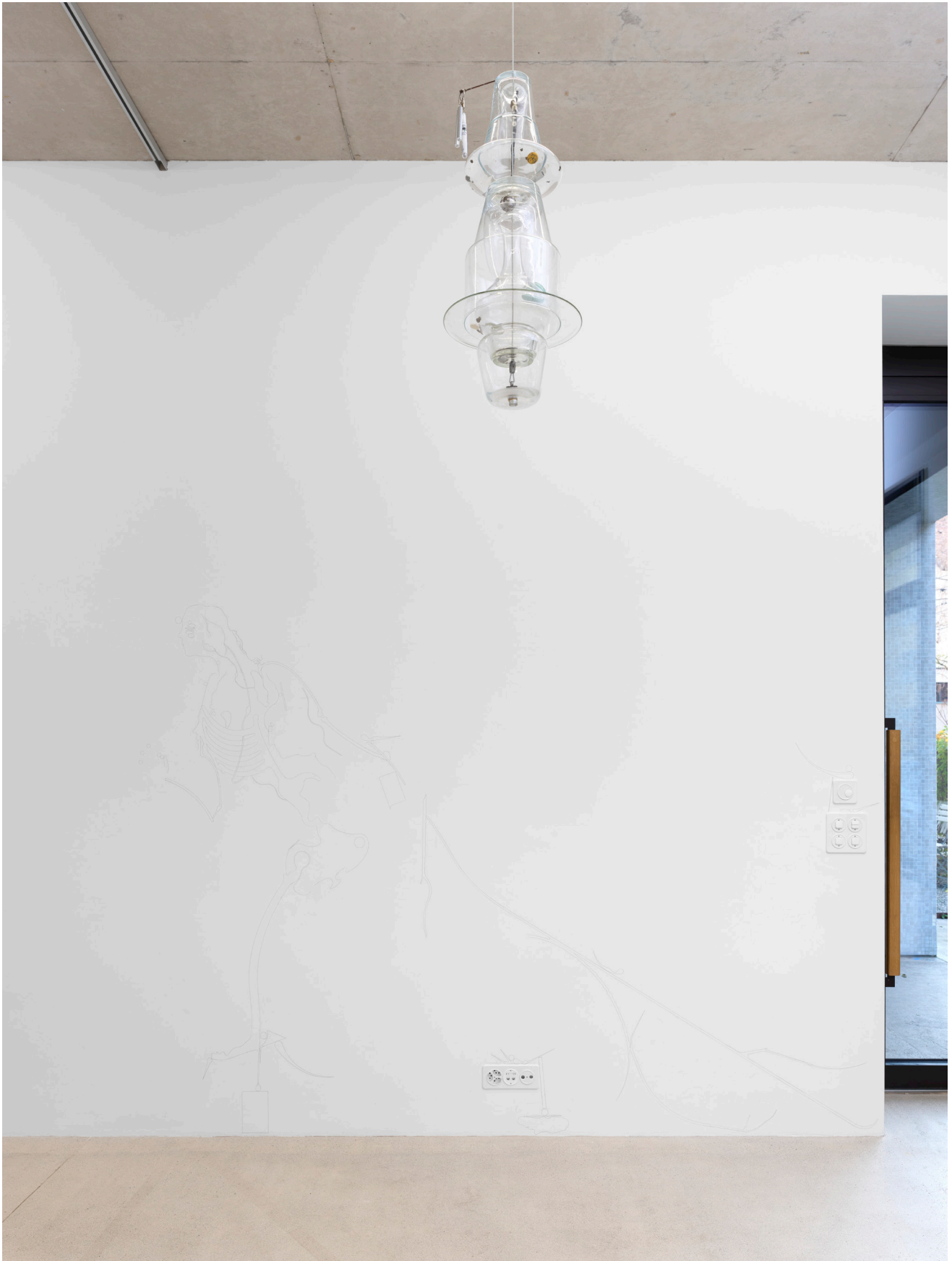
*Installation view*





*Installation view*





*Installation view*



*Installation view*



*Installation view*





*Installation view*



*Installation view*



*Installation view*





*Installation view*



*Installation view*





*Installation view*



*Installation view*



*Installation view*





*Collector XI, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
103 × 35 cm



*Collector XI*  
additional view



*Collector XI*  
detail



*Collector XI*  
detail





*Collector XI*  
detail





*Collector XI*  
detail



*Collector X, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
75 × 31 cm



*Collector X*  
additional view





*Collector XIII, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
100 × 13 cm



*Collector XIII, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
85 × 30 cm



*Collector XIII*  
detail





*Collector VIII, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
77 × 21 cm



*Collector VIII*  
additional view





*Collector XII, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
80 × 25 cm



*Collector XII*  
additional view





*Collector XII*  
detail



*Collector IX, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
65 × 21 cm





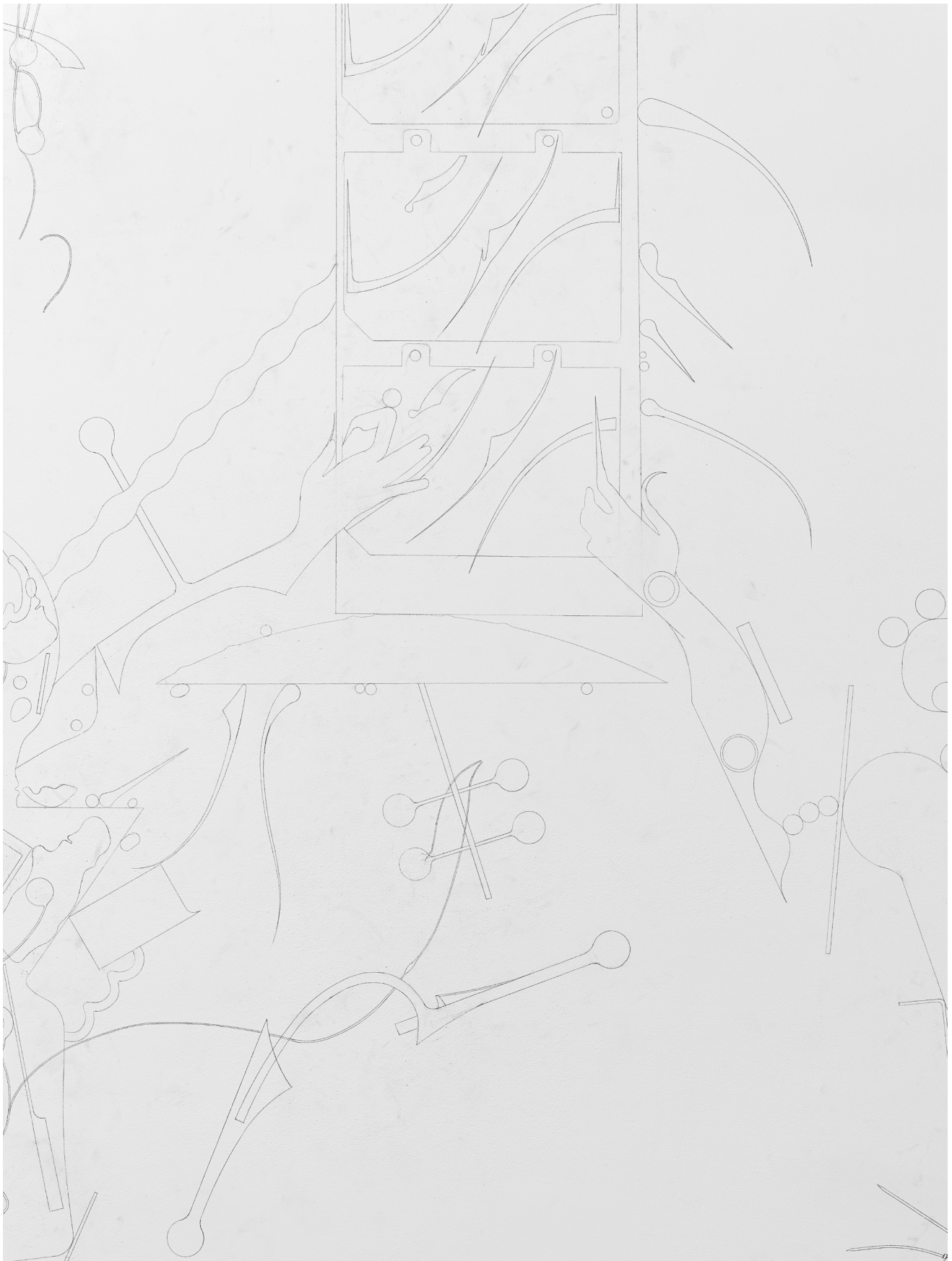
*Collector VIII, 2025*

found and collected glass, found metal objects, metal wires, screws, hooks, gathered findings  
70 × 20 cm



*Wall Drawings, 2025*  
detail  
pencil on wall  
dimensions variable





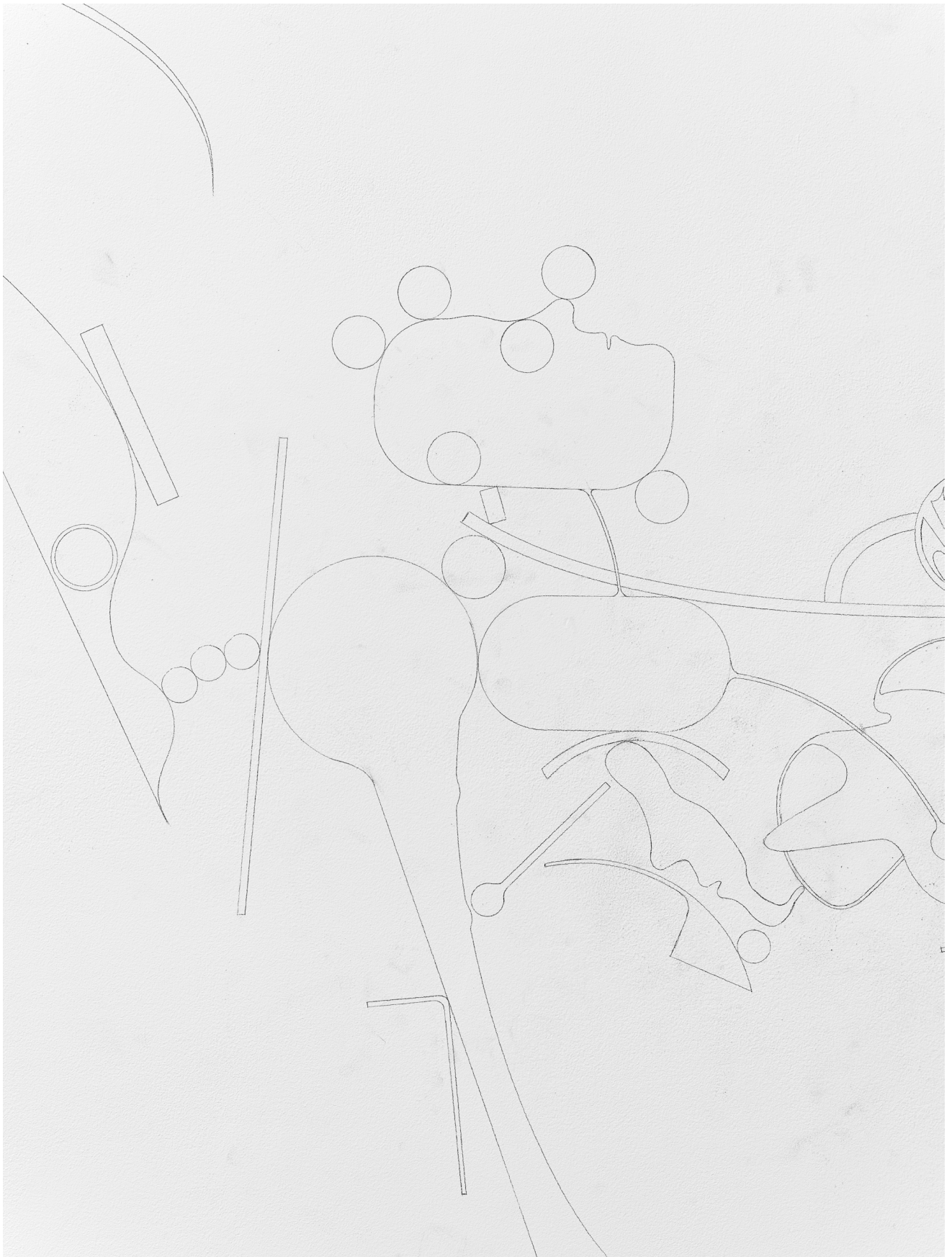
**Wall Drawings**  
detail





*Wall Drawings*  
detail





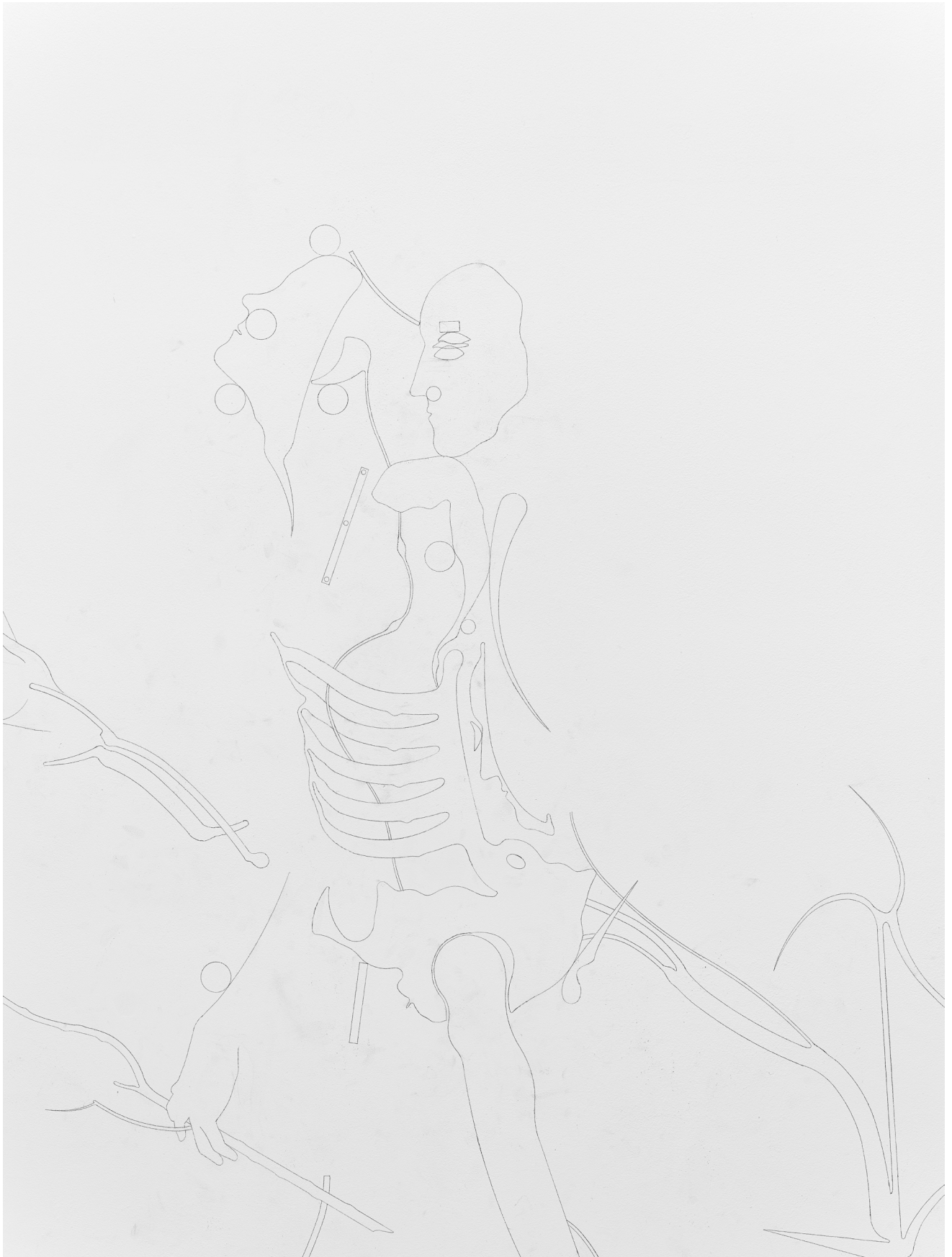
**Wall Drawings**  
detail





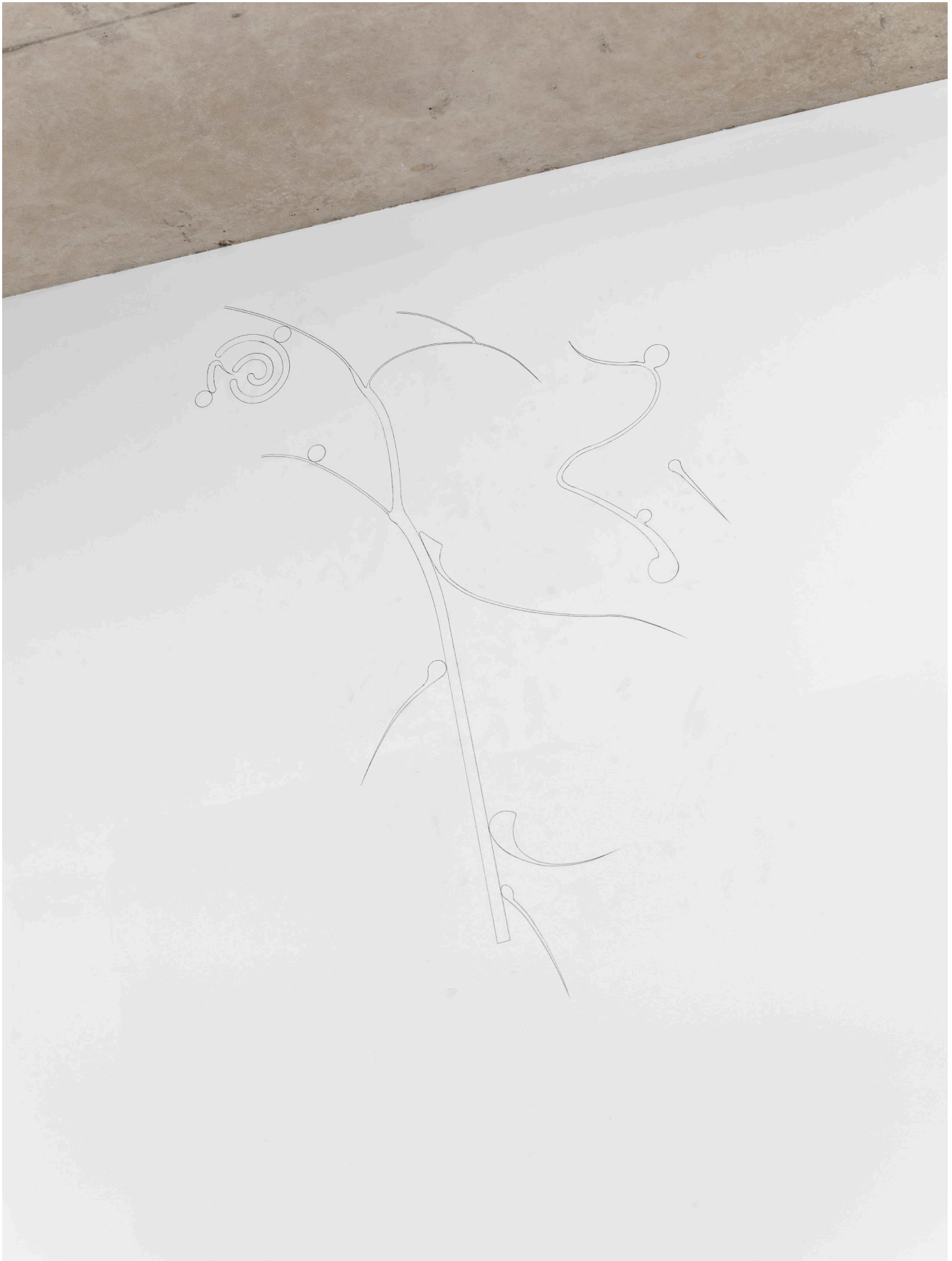
**Wall Drawings**  
detail



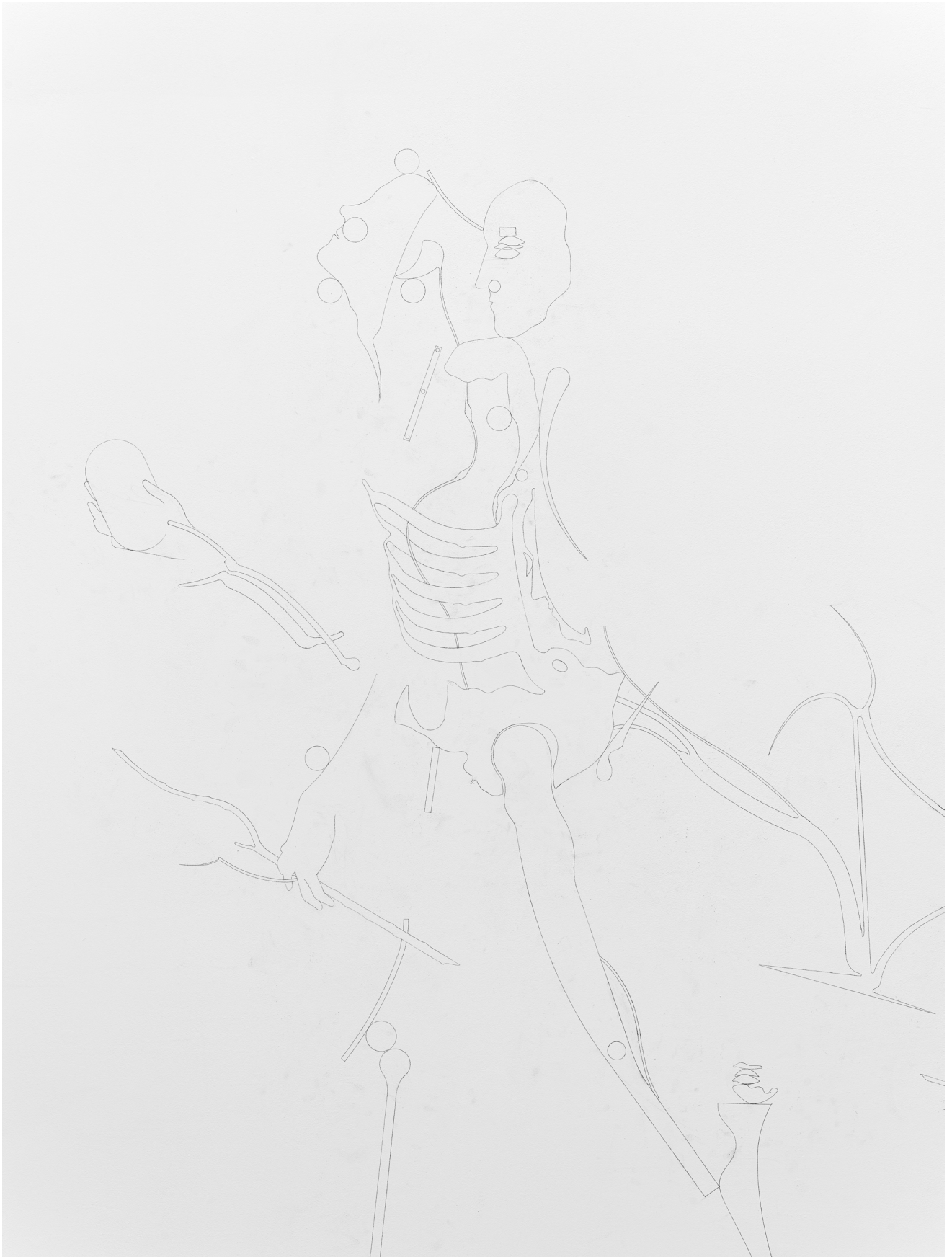


**Wall Drawings**  
detail



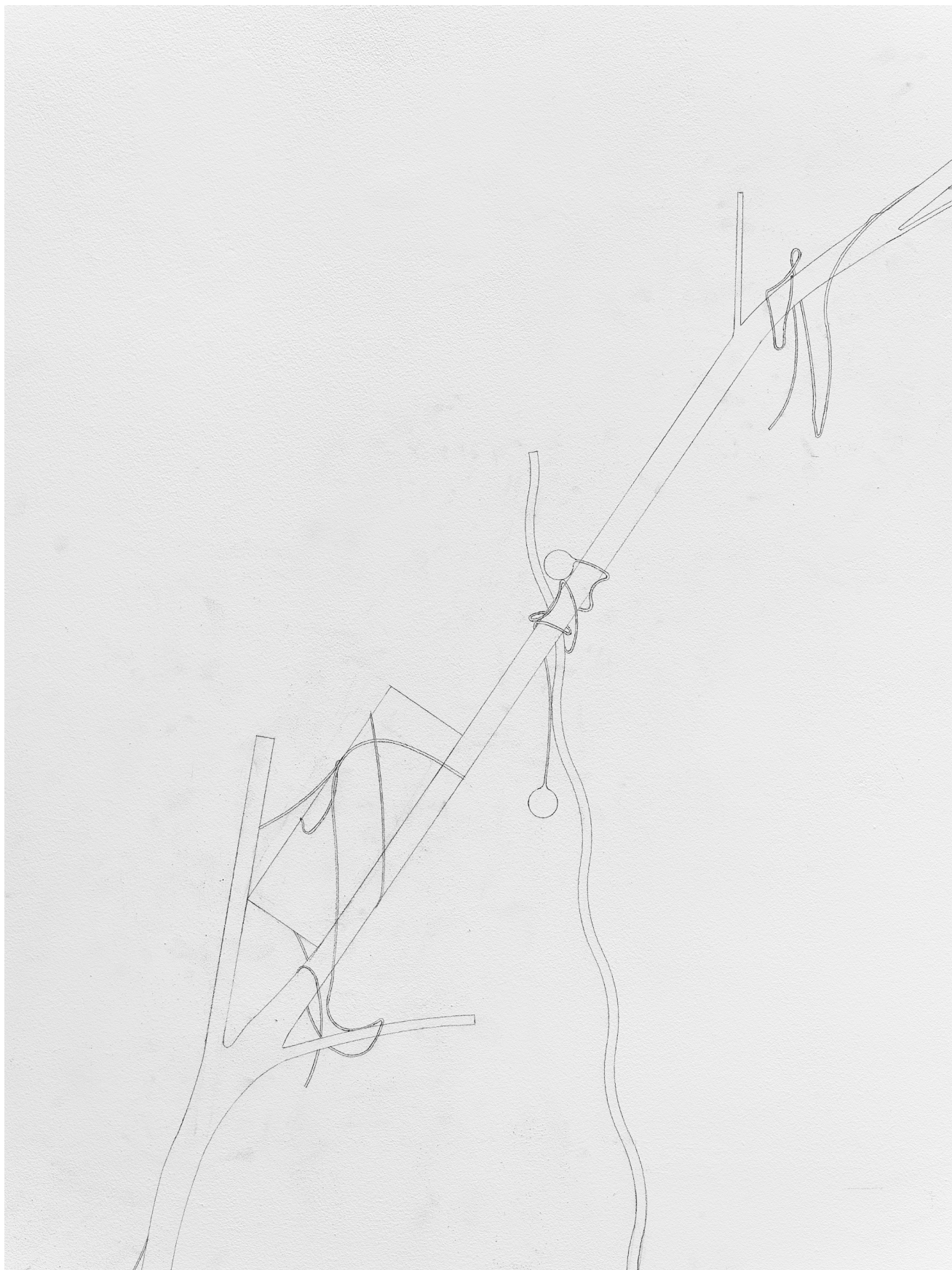


**Wall Drawings**  
detail



**Wall Drawings**  
detail





*Wall Drawings*  
detail





**Wall Drawings**  
**detail**



**Wall Drawings**  
detail





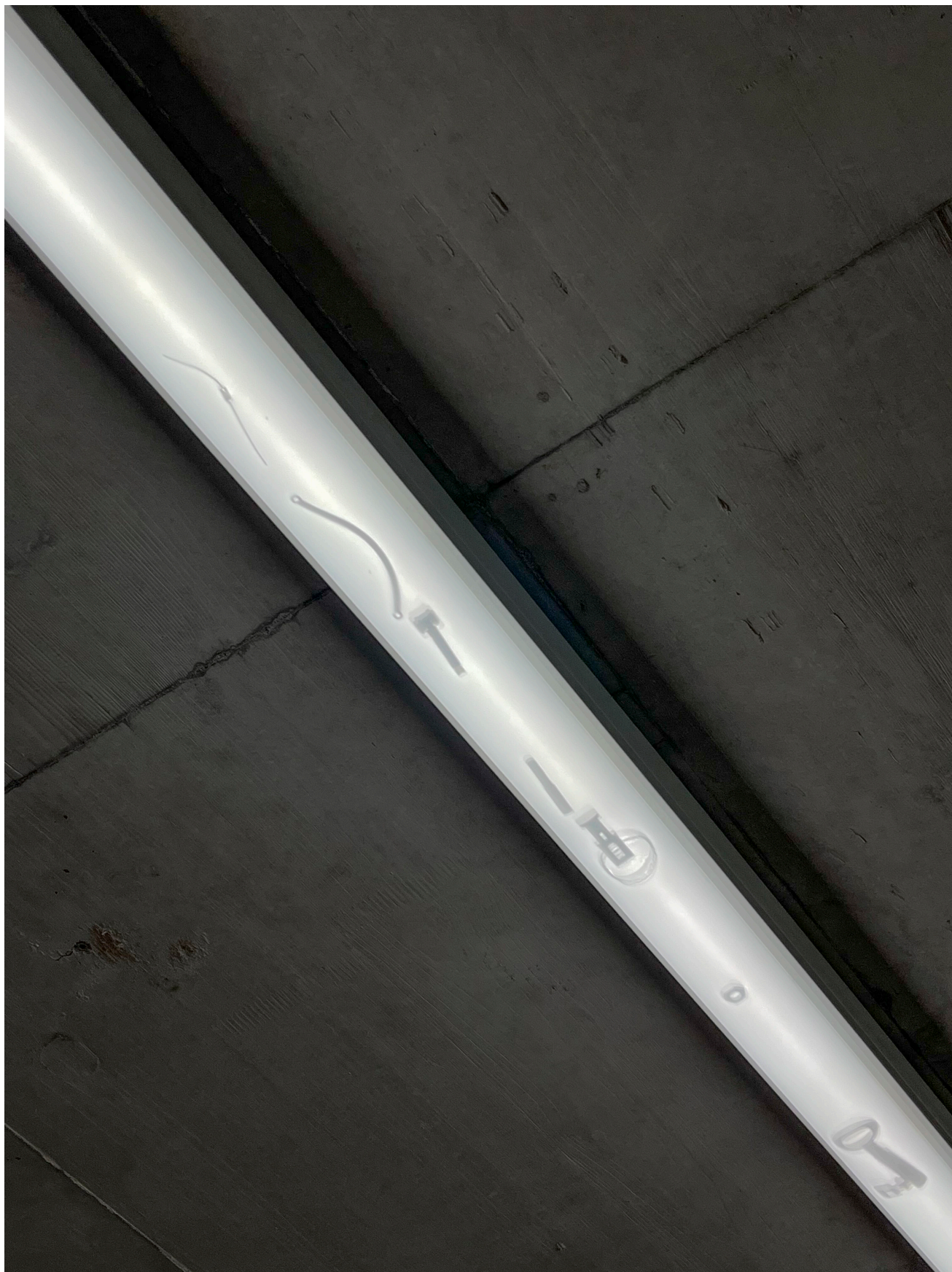
*Found Objects, 2025*  
diverse material  
dimensions variable





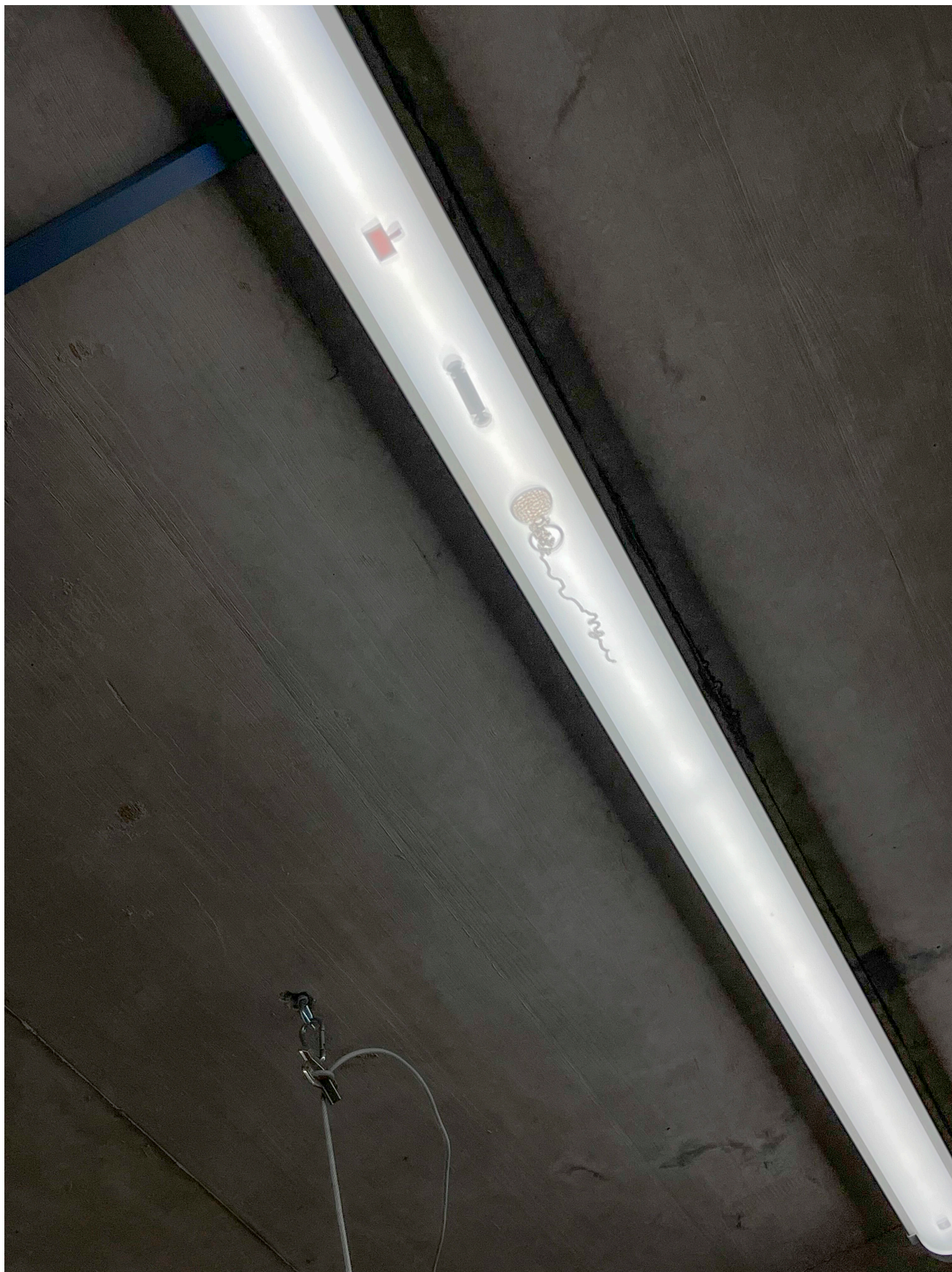
*Found Objects, 2025*  
diverse material  
dimensions variable





*Found Objects, 2025*  
diverse material  
dimensions variable





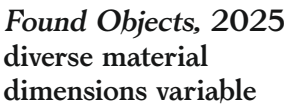
*Found Objects, 2025*  
diverse material  
dimensions variable





*Found Objects, 2025*  
diverse material  
dimensions variable





*Found Objects, 2025*  
diverse material  
dimensions variable





*Glass, 2022*  
engraved drinking glasses  
1dl



*Glass*, 2022  
engraved drinking glasses  
1dl





*Glass, 2022*  
engraved drinking glasses  
1dl



*Glass*, 2022  
engraved drinking glasses  
1dl





*Glass*, 2022  
engraved drinking glasses  
1dl



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