



JOURNIE CIRDAIN: *Memento Vivere*

September 8 to October 28, 2023



WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

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Journie Cirdain thinks of the drawing surface as a locus for thought, puns, personal narrative, scraps of information, remembered art history, daydreams, desires and other tangled remnants of everyday life to magically become visual. For Cirdain, drawing is the flower child of art; it's non-aggressive, laid back, experimental, lascivious, and sometimes deceptive, at least to a less observant person. For her first show at Western Exhibitions, Cirdain combines traditional drawing tropes—still life, observational drawing, even bouquets—with invented images from the subconscious that elucidates her place in the world.

Cirdain's drawings are materially minimalist, pared down to wood, graphite, and paper. Visually, they explode with a Baroque detail as Cirdain scuffs and cobbles her images together, growing organically. These are notes from the forest, a tongue in cheek psychedelic attempt to mark down the infinite and ineffable way in which all things touch, change and create each other.

Cirdain directs her images by a word, object, or with her actual body, which is placed into the center of the surface like a stone. A wide range of scratches, scribbles, smears, and detailed drawing techniques reveal the system of connections that builds upon a philosophical inquiry about how to live life. For her, drawing elaborates, crosses out, copies, and plays with the art that came before it. Her images are sometimes ironic, sometimes earnest, as Cirdain wrestles with imposed parameters, histories, and situations in her life. Her compositions are contrived together from real life observation, from the memory of the observation, or from the idea that the observation insights. They are then glued together with the myriad and infinite number of details that are specific to her experience and location at the time of making.

These drawings hold a wide-open attitude towards life. Still lives come alive, and the human experience is augmented by otherness. Borrowing from the emotional tenor of a fairy tale, Cirdain's drawings are sometimes beautiful, sometimes gruesome, and often impossible. Cirdain enjoys taking things one step further. For example, not just a memento mori, but a memento mori which borrows from 600,000 years of human impact on the death and life cycle. She asks questions which are not limited by judgements about what matters or doesn't. What happens while we sleep? How do flowers experience desire? What is a tree's perspective of time?

Journie Nikala Cirdain (born 1993, Santa Rosa, California) has shown in exhibitions at The Green Gallery in Milwaukee, Leo Marchutz School in Aix-En-Provence, France and in Illinois at the Elmhurst Art Museum, Bridgeport Art Center and Patient Info. Her work in the 2023 Western Exhibitions Drawing Biennial was written about in Hyperallergic and Chicago Reader and her writing has appeared in Chicago Artist Writers and FNEWS Magazine. Cirdain received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she was the recipient of the New Artist Society full merit scholarship, and currently lives and works in Chicago, IL.



installation view

*‘Memento Vivere’ is a Latin phrase.
It’s better known sister is ‘Memento Mori.’*

The term comes from a tradition of painted Dutch still lives in which people would paint images of still things, like skulls, flowers, insects and food. The images acted as a moralizing strategy to remind people that life is short and death is imminent; that things of flesh are momentary, passing, and soon to rot.

I prefer to think about these images from the perspective of the Anthropocene, pondering how to live a better or fuller or richer life. Instead, while taking inspiration from the Dutch still lives and their focus on the passing of various fleshy items, I focus on the incredible richness of life—on the liveliness of life.

The italic text throughout this PDF is in the voice of the artist, from notes provided about the exhibition.
If you are interested in a particular piece, please request an image so that you can zoom-in and experience the details at your own pace.

ALL FROM ONE MVM
OR THEM, ARE DANE

In Dutch still lives
Memento Mori



Desire Bouquet, 2023
Graphite and silverpoint on paper
mounted to board
60h x 40w in.
\$3000



TOTALLY

WITHIN
PAGE PATIENCE
AND PH



For this drawing, I started by using a Dutch still life of the same name that pictured a human skull and tulips, seen at the bottom of the picture plane.

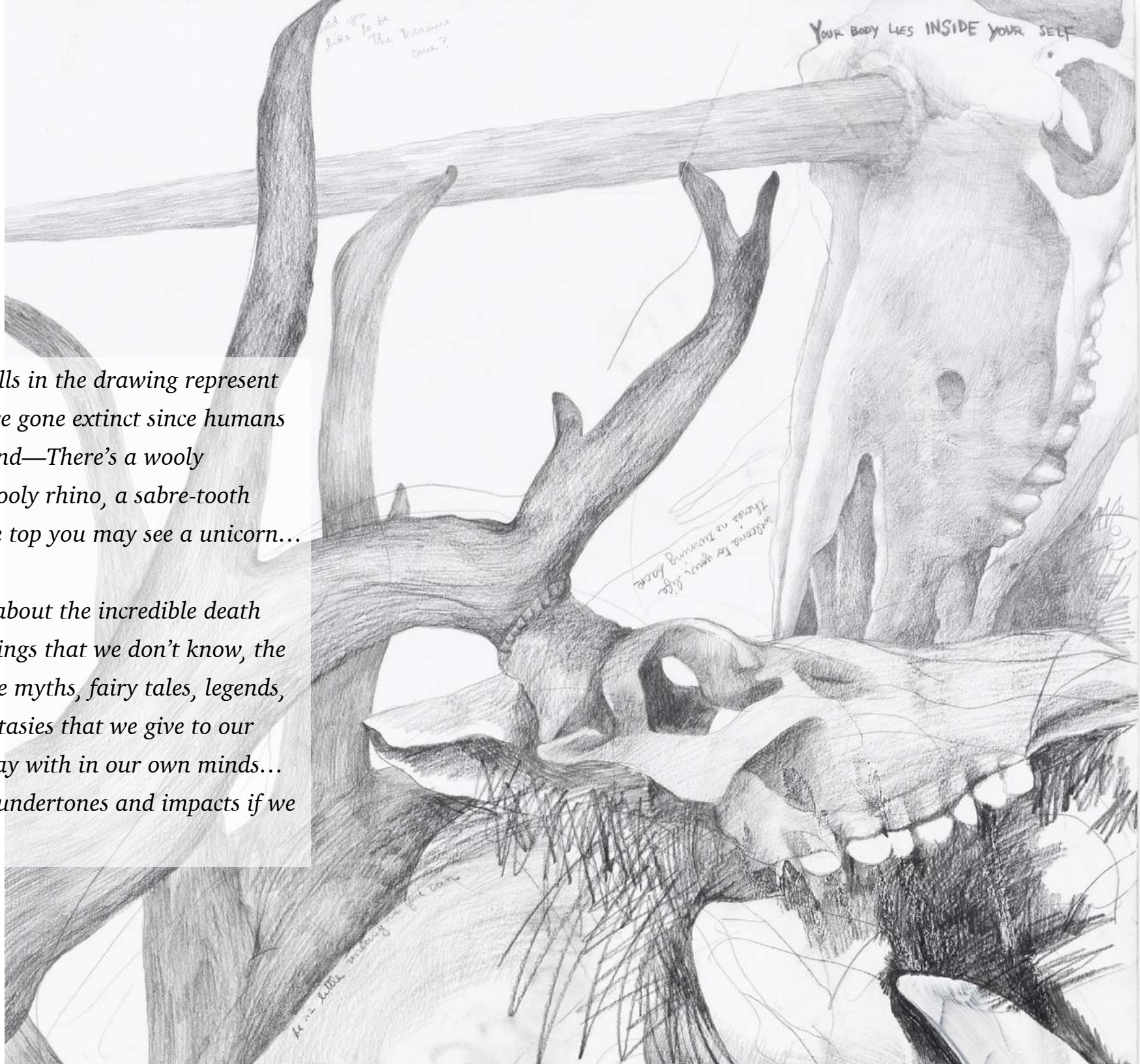
I decided to grow the image organically and blow it up proportionally from that starting point.

I was thinking not just about a singular lifespan, but about the entire history of humans.

Memento Mori, 2023
Graphite and silverpoint on paper
mounted to board
60h x 40w in.
\$3000

The animal skulls in the drawing represent species that have gone extinct since humans have been around—There's a woolly mammoth, a woolly rhino, a sabre-tooth tiger, and at the top you may see a unicorn...

I was thinking about the incredible death and array of things that we don't know, the deep history, the myths, fairy tales, legends, stories, and fantasies that we give to our children and play with in our own minds... that have deep undertones and impacts if we allow them to.





*I love to read, and I'm
especially inspired by
stories and fairy tales.*



Sleeping Beauty, 2023
Graphite and silverpoint on paper
mounted to board
81h x 72w in.
\$6000



Reading the Brothers Grimm version of Sleeping Beauty led me to consider the wisdom that can be gained from sleep and quietness and stillness — There's a general focus in society on what we can do, on the actions we can take, on the tasks that can be accomplished. By contrast, the passive parts of life, the sleepiness, allow for non-action.



The Question Is directly

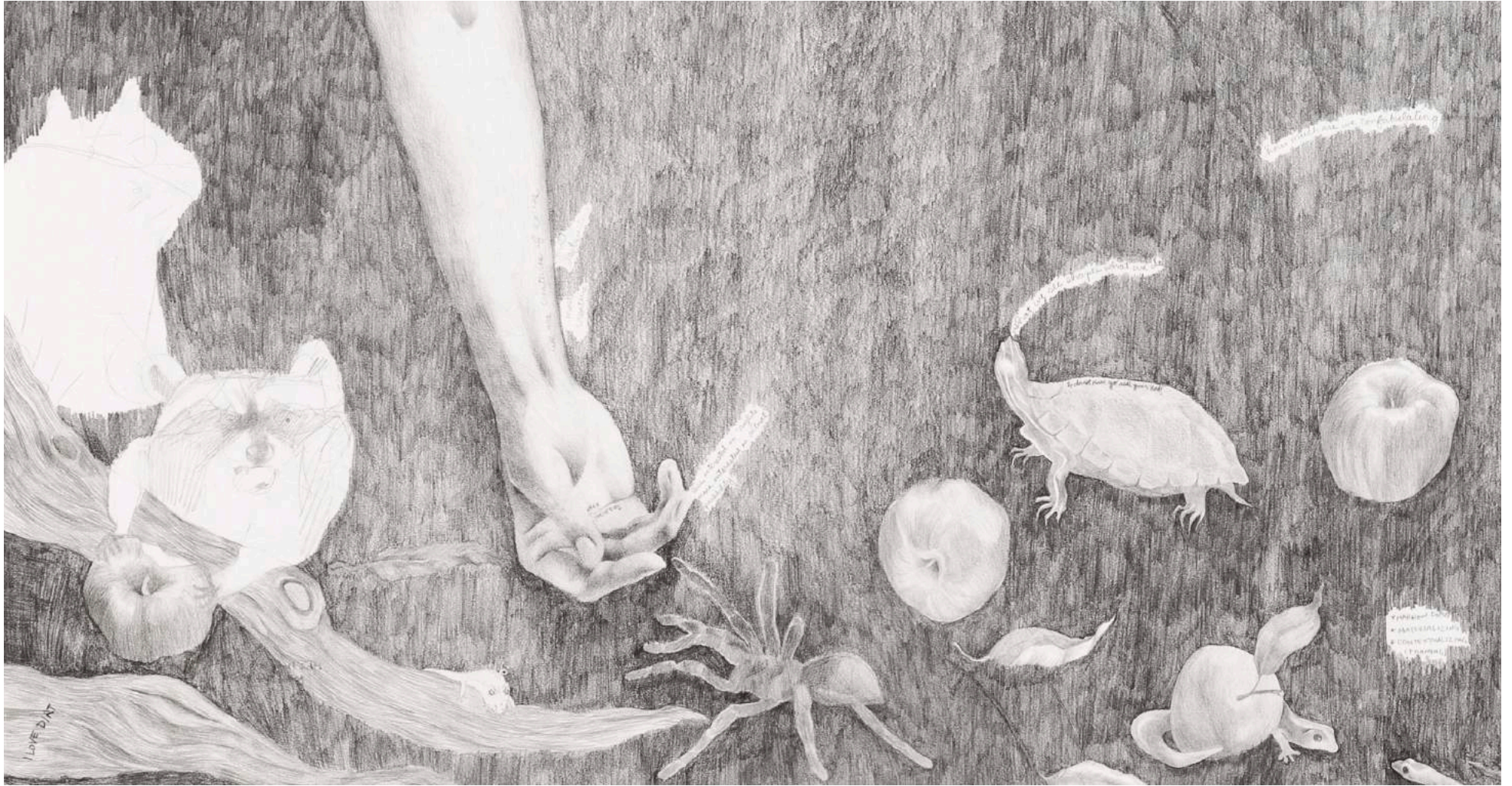
WE ARE ALL COLLABORATIVELY
DREAMING UP THE WORLD
TOGETHER

The Question Is
more

The Question Is more than social relations

we ourselves
are

the



This contrast led me to symbolically visualize all the animal and plant life that would have the opportunity to come alive and express curiosity if the human — or the protagonist — of the story was completely still.

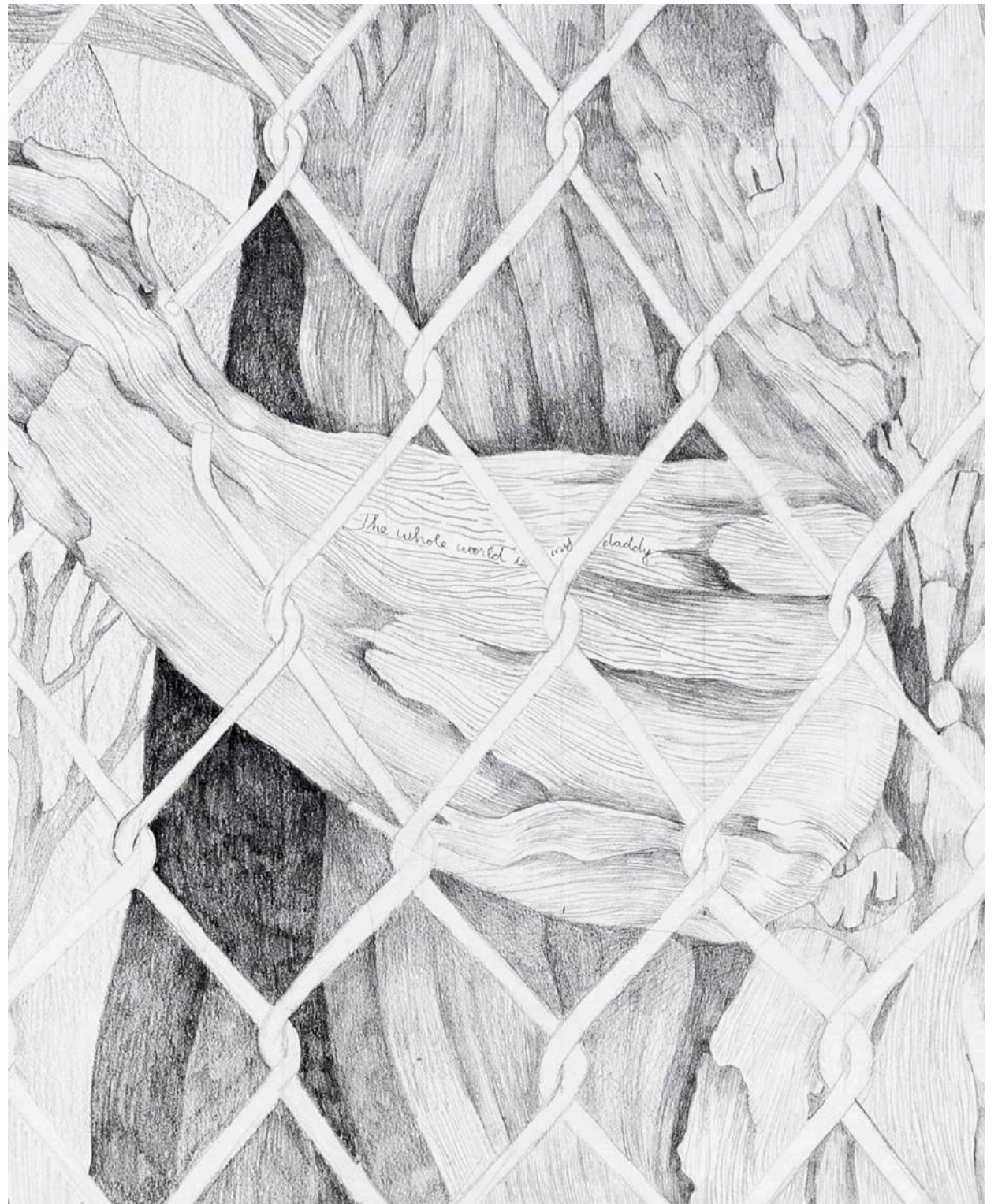
Young Tree, 2023
Graphite and silverpoint on paper
mounted to board
60h x 39w in.
\$3000



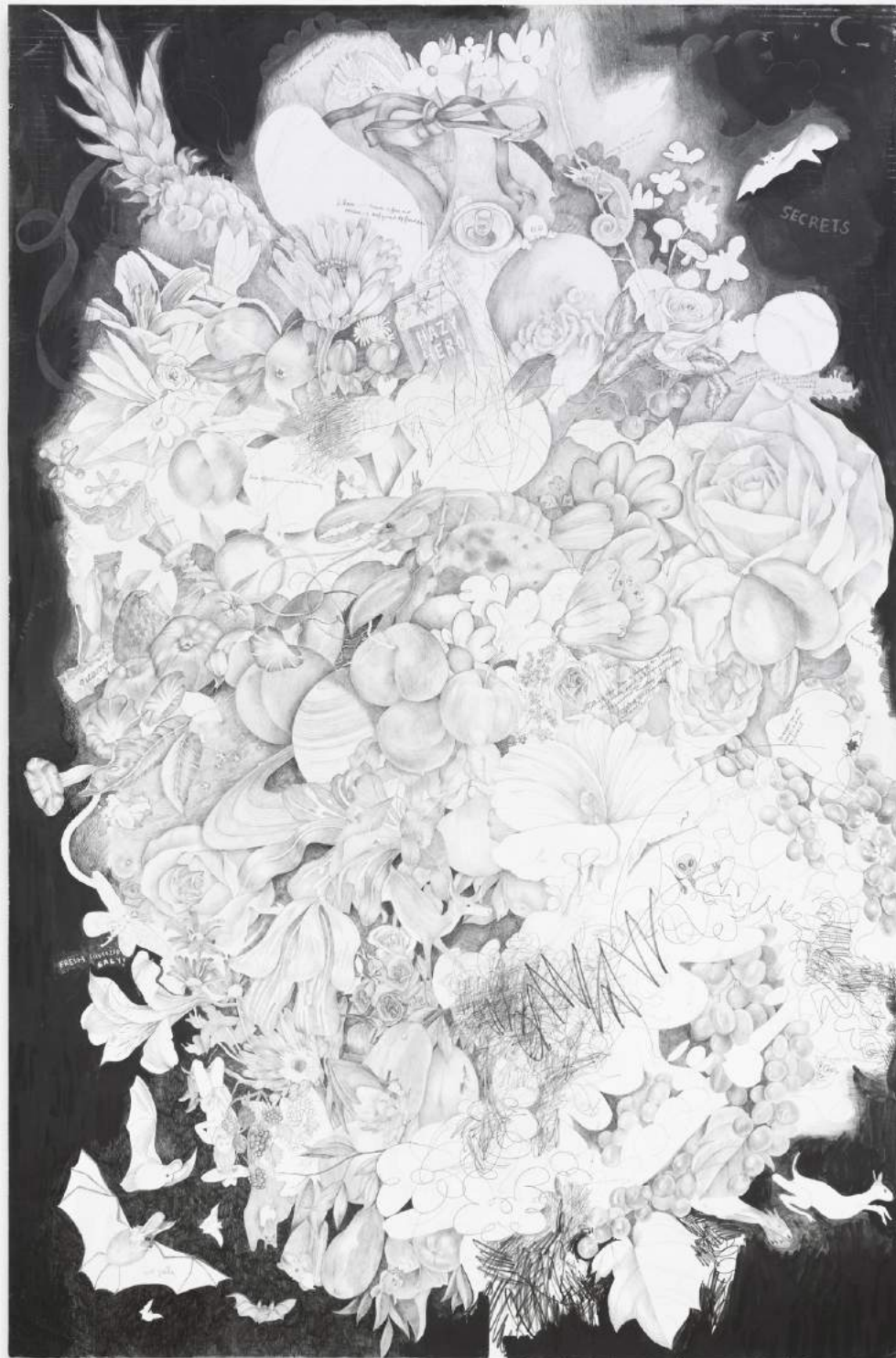


In my mind, writing is a form of drawing; it's essentially a series of marks and lines placed in a specific order that is symbolic.

*The text is made up of
personal notes, quotes from
books, musings on texts that
I'm involved with, song
lyrics, phrases, or limericks
that come to mind while I
draw in silence.*







This drawing also started as a copy of a Dutch still life. After starting, I let my fantasy take over, allowing a peach in the original still life to lead me through a word association game in image, in drawing, and in manual, physical motion.

Festoon, 2023
Graphite and silverpoint on paper
mounted to board
60h x 40w in.
\$3000

I am drawing things from my own life that surround me. It's interesting to notice how strange and rich and full of mystery the mundane objects in my life are.



The sea is no beautifier

please deployment
in 2004

wiping like a woman
in a lost soul

I have known a face not
MTERIALLY disfigured by freckles

ATION
BREWING
HAZY
HERO

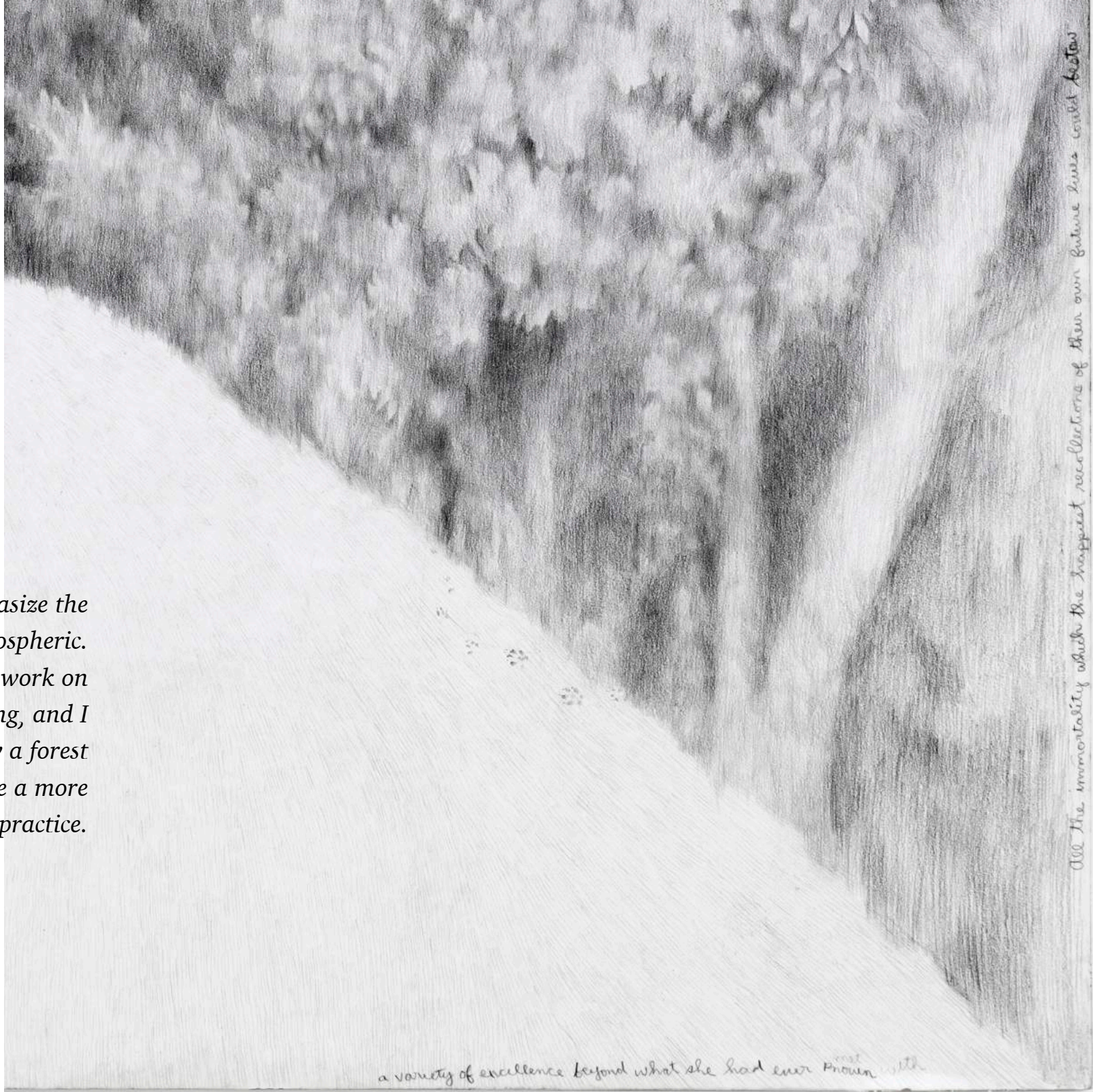


My focus was less on individual objects in this drawing, as sometimes I can get very linear and object-focused.



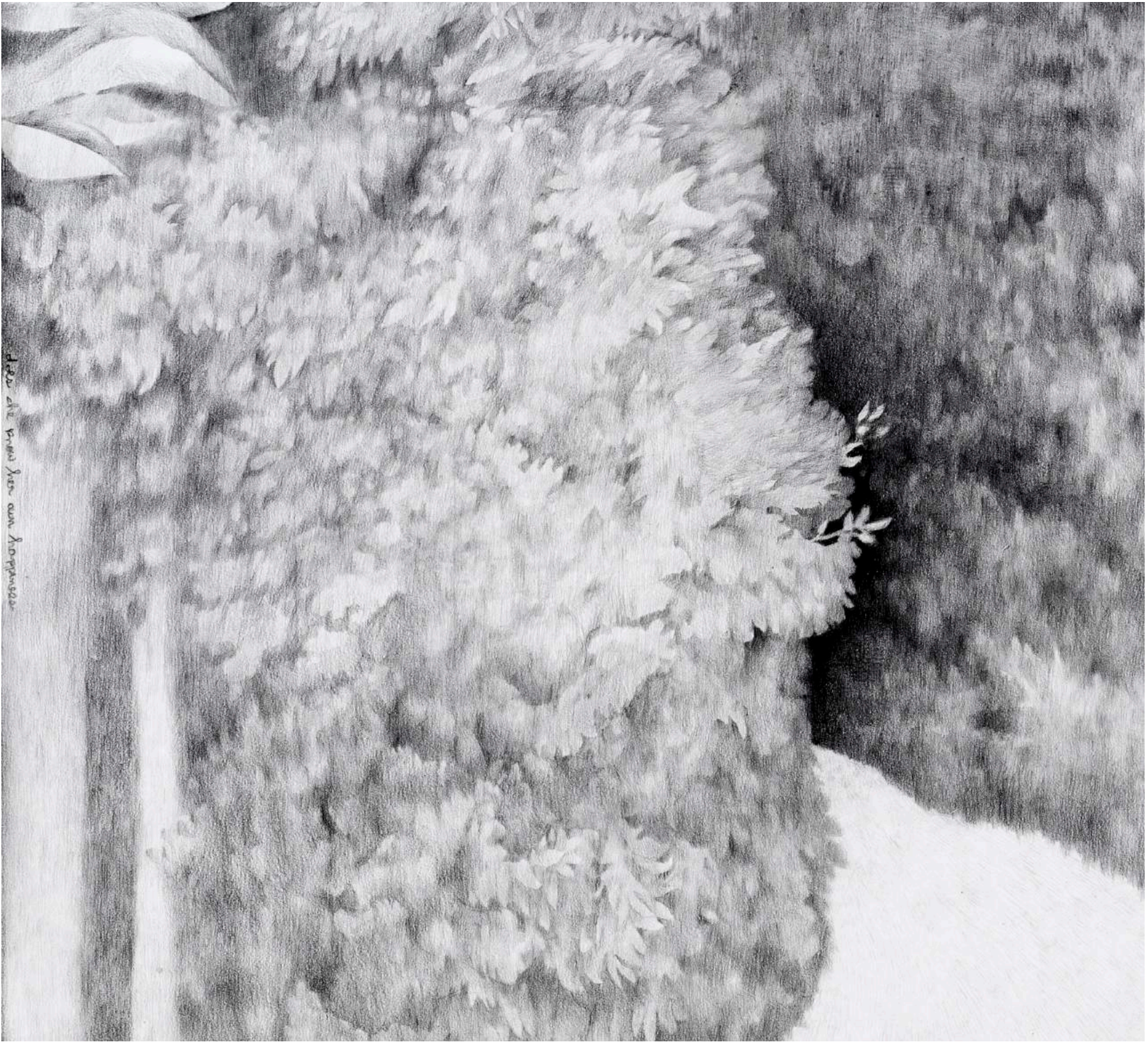
There is Pleasure in a Pathless Woods, 2023
Graphite and silverpoint on paper
mounted to board
60h x 40w in.
\$3000

Here, I wanted to emphasize the drawing mark as atmospheric. It's very meditative to work on this kind of mark-making, and I think it's fitting to draw a forest in order to explore a more atmospheric drawing practice.



All the immortality which the happiest recollections of their own future lives could bestow

a variety of excellence beyond what she had ever known with



den die vromen van Jeruzalem

This drawing is based off of a Brothers Grimm story in which a castle is under a 100-year curse of complete stillness.



Castle Walls, 2023
Graphite and silverpoint on paper
mounted to board
59h x 39.5w in.
\$3000



A blanket of roses and attendant thorns covers the entire castle, and for 100 years, men trying to enter the castle to wake the princess get caught in the bushes and die, leaving their skeletons behind.



Elegant

SOME FIRST EVOLUTIONARILY SPEAKING

Spiral

I shall die with this way out

I love the image of dead princes stuck and tangled in 100 years-worth of roses.



In the end, a prince arrives right at the 100-year mark, walks through the roses unharmed and wakes the castle. I love this ending because, instead of being a fight or culmination, it's simply a story about patience and right timing.



installation view



installation view



installation view

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FUNNY
RYE
MOODY
TENDER

ALL FROM ONE W/M