



# HISTORY IS...

Curated By  
Dr Arshiya Lokhandwala

LAKEEREN  
The Contemporary Art Gallery

ANITA DUBE

NANDITA KUMAR

SHARMILA SAMANT

SHAURYA KUMAR

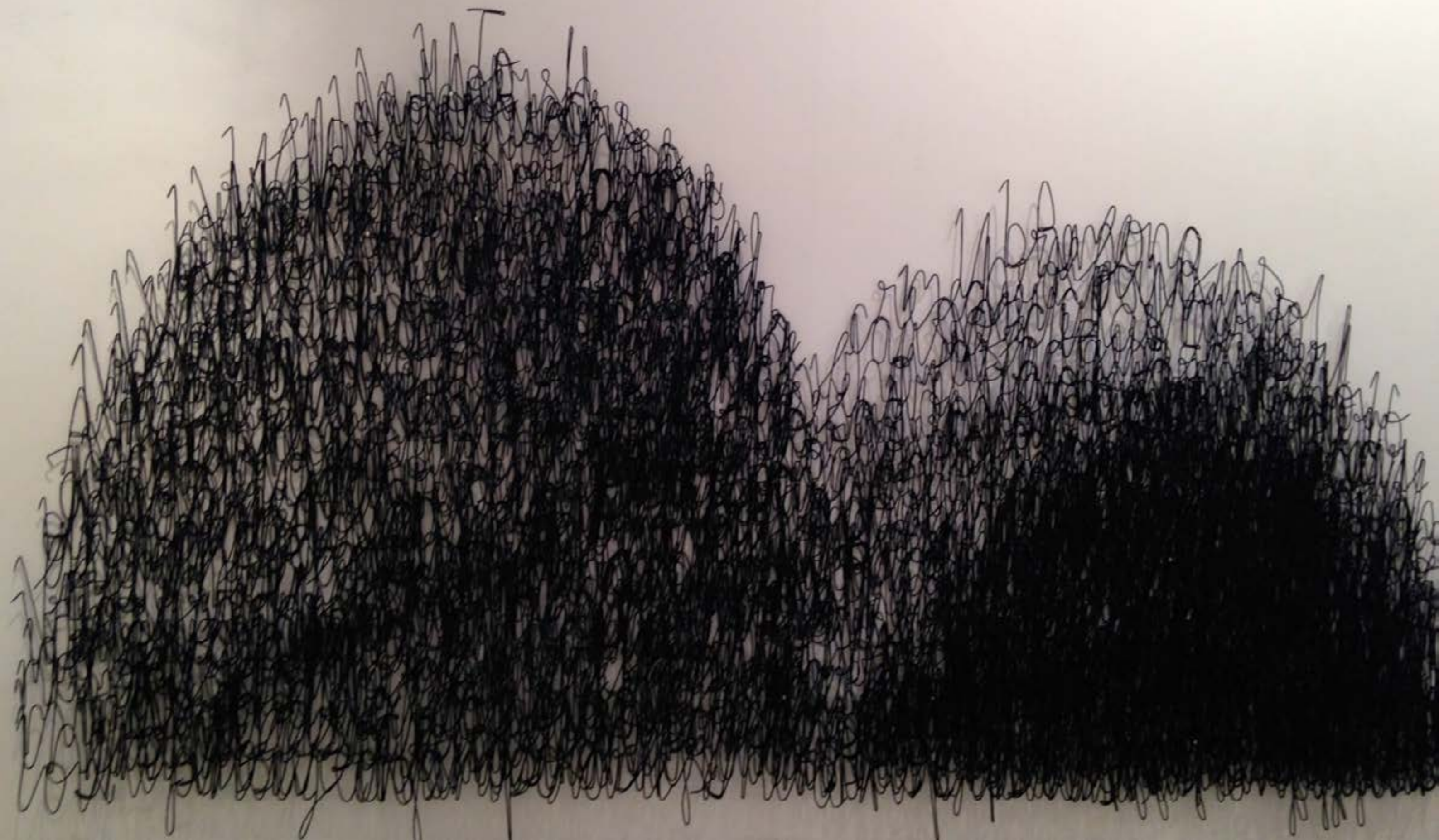
WAQAS KHAN

## CURATOR'S NOTE

DR. ARSHIYA LOKHANDWALA

History is ... is an exhibition based on the premise of Walter Benjamin's Theses on the Philosophy of History (XVI) where he suggests "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now. [Jetztzeit]. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution." [1]

In this exhibition each artist's respond their own understanding of time and temporality within their practice. In shifting from Benjamin's proposition of continuous time made up of identical and interchangeable units such as minutes, seconds, hours and days to messianic time or "historic time" which is ruptured with intensive experience filled with the presence of the "now" combines experiences of immediacy and eternity. In this exhibition each of the artist's through his/ her work seeks to find this moment through their work.





# ANITA DUBE

## Document B

Document B, 2015  
Wire and velvet on paper,  
10 feet 11 inches x 4 feet 11 inches,  
depth 2 inches

Document B remembers the precise moment in which Indian democracy’s secular credentials were shaken. That document of barbarism which was the destruction of the Babri in Ayodhaya 6 December, 1992.

For the artist it was also an attack on the female body, the erasure of the breast - that marked the triumphal rise of the masculinist right wing culture.

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Walter Benjamin  
On the Concept of History  
Theses on the Philosophy of History

VII

Consider the darkness and the great cold  
In this vale which resounds with mystery.

Brecht, The Threepenny Opera

To historians who wish to relive an era, Fustel de Coulanges recommends that they blot out everything they know about the later course of history. There is no better way of characterising the method with which historical materialism has broken. It is a process of empathy whose origin is the indolence of the heart, acedia, which despairs of grasping and holding the genuine historical image as it flares up briefly. Among medieval theologians it was regarded as the root cause of sadness. Flaubert, who was familiar with it, wrote: ‘Peu de gens devineront combien il a fallu être triste pour ressusciter Carthage.’\* The nature of this sadness stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor. And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism,

# REFLECTIONS ON LOVE AND WAR

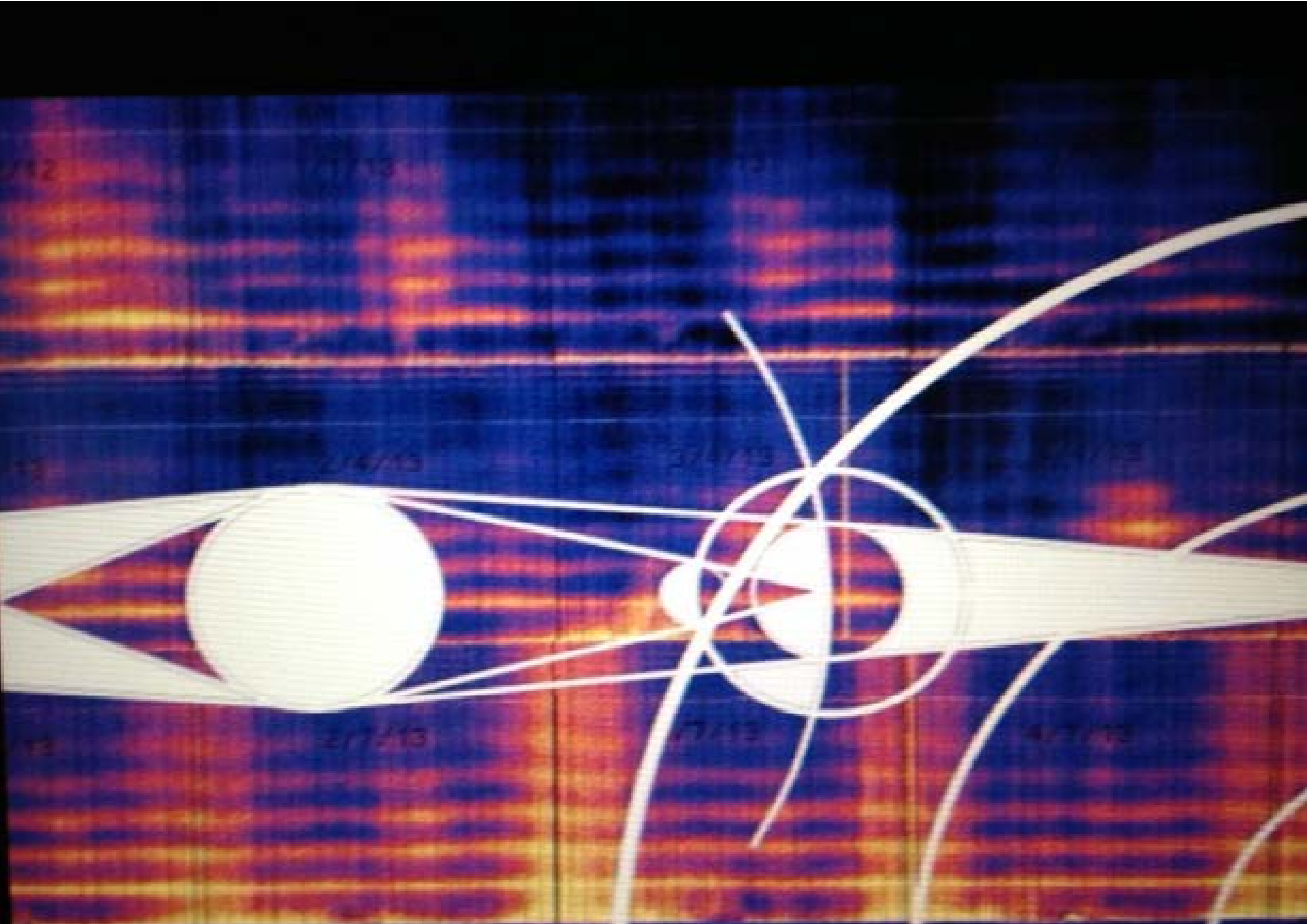
(for Y.O.)

## Instructions

1. Take a stone of your choice for one week....
2. Think of moments in history when stones have been thrown. Who threw them, at whom and under which circumstances....
3. Carry the stone in your bag or pocket, everywhere you go, for two days....
4. Place it like a sculpture, within your sight and touch, for two days....
5. Place it on your body, for as long as the weight of its pain outweighs the pleasure it gives you....
6. Photograph the stone in any way you wish, and send in your record if you want....
7. Note down your thoughts or feelings about the stone during this week, and send them in if you wish....
8. Return the stone to the crate (thank you for being responsible)....



Anita Dube  
Reflections on Love and War  
Instruction piece



## An abstract artwork by Robert Rauschenberg. The background is a grid of blue and red lines. Overlaid on this are white geometric shapes, including circles and a large, elongated, white, cone-like shape pointing towards the right. There are also several thin, white, curved lines that intersect the grid and the geometric shapes.

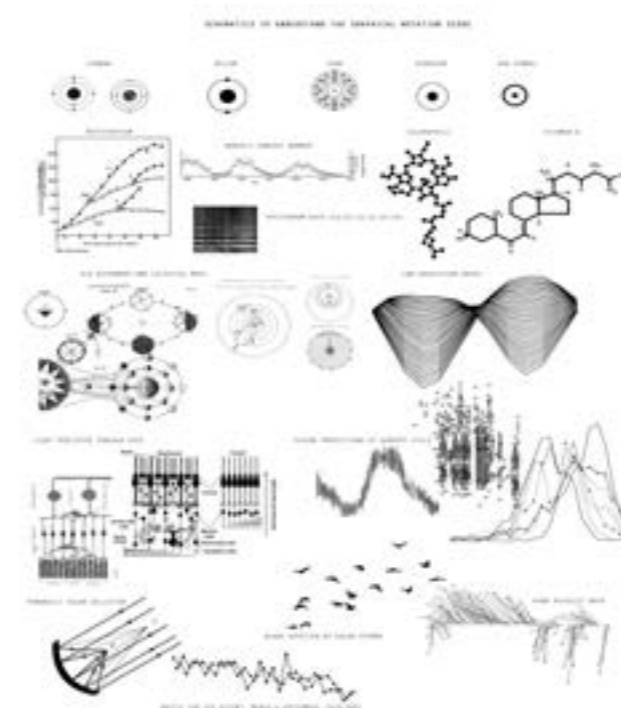
126.22hz , 2015

356.87cm x 22.86cm

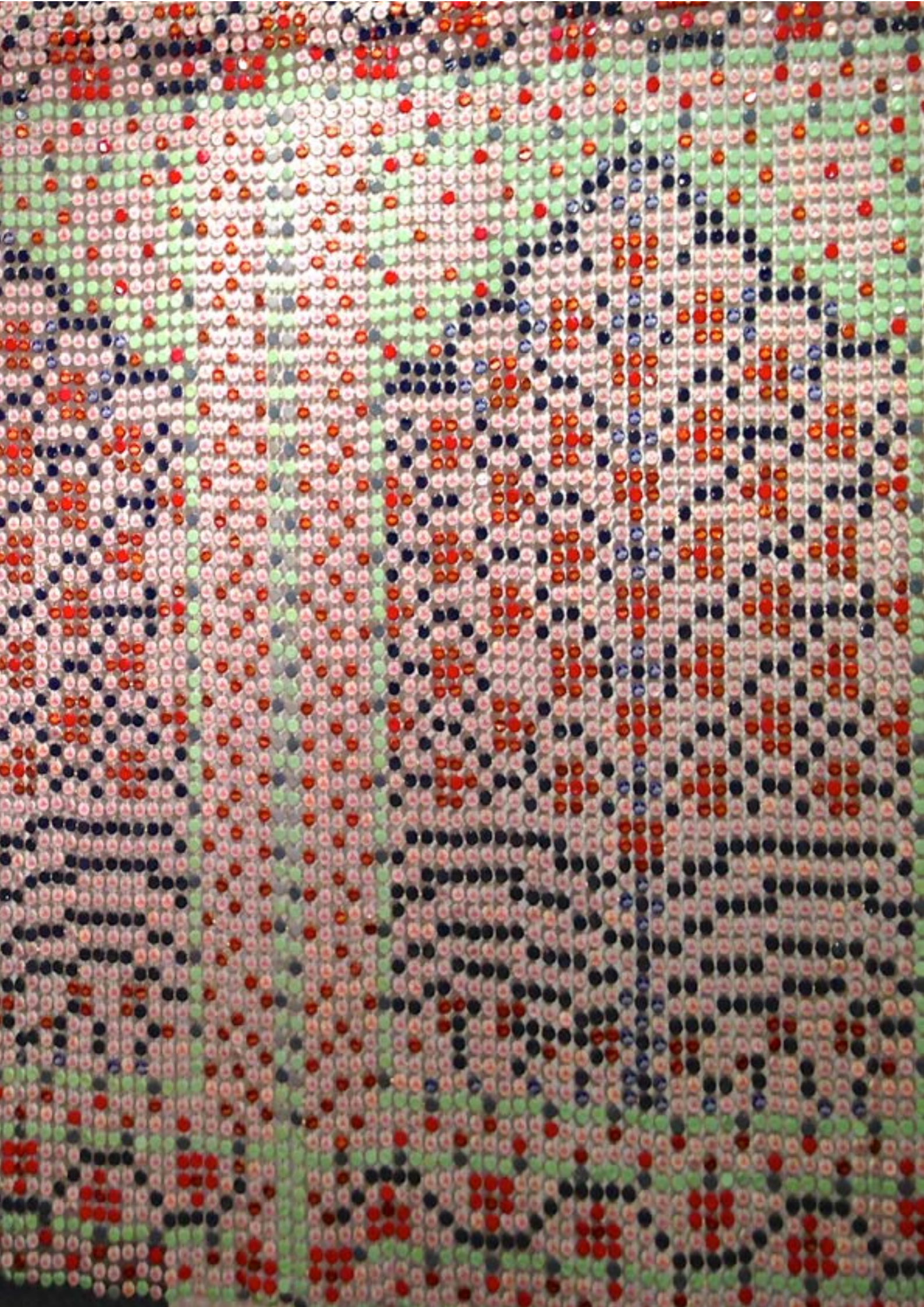
Document B remembers the precise moment in which Indian democracy's secular credentials  
126.22hz is inspired by graphical notation, where music is represented by visual symbols outside  
the realm of traditional music

rendition. In this particular score, varied data and graphs have been arranged to form a sound score inspired by the Sun and its effects on Earth. Such as data gathered from the beginning of time; to the atomic structure of the sun; graphs of phototropism, solar spots and sun spectrum; ancient maps of the solar system and lunar cycles; chlorophyll, ganglion and vitamin D which respond to sunlight; weather formation or in short life itself. The structure and interpretation informed by Walter Benjamin's concept of 'Messianic' time, in which time is a fluid and a relative concept associated with the experience of immediacy, facilitates the creation of non-linear connections as specific, past or future points. The empirical data inspires sound through symbolism and intuitive interpretation in the form of the image.

Literal interpretations also create new associations when they are juxtaposed against each other (for example, the sound of birds taking off against the sound of ice melting and cracking). Though the score is read from left to right and has a linear progression of time, the varied data and graphs are not time bound and are open to artistic interpretation. barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.







# SHARMILA SAMANT

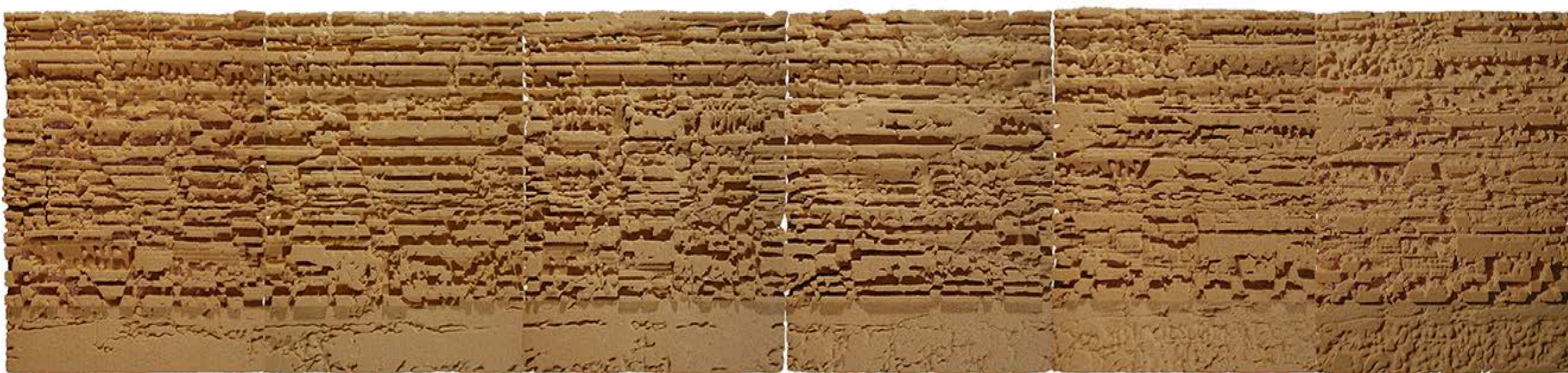
## Halcyon Days

Halcyon Days, 2015  
8.5' X 19'

In 2010 I was invited to respond to the weapons and textiles collection at Powis Castle in Wales. The collection was created by two generations of the Clive family: Robert ( Clive of India, as he was popularly known, served in the East India Company several times between 1744 to 1767, set the stage for the British Empire on the subcontinent.) and his son Edward (who married Henrietta Herbert, daughter of the 1st Earl of Powis). The tension between the local population and the British increased in the late-18th century, with the Indian opposition led by Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore, or Tippoo Sahib as the British called him, who was the ruler of the south Indian state of Mysore. Events came to a head at the Battle of Seringapatam in 1799. Tipu Sultan was defeated and many of his possessions were acquired by the British as spoils of war.

The spectacular items that became a part of the Clives' share included Tipu's magnificent state tent, one of the gold tiger's head finials from Tipu's throne; and the two cannons in the courtyard, of the castle entrance. The tent which intrigued me the most has a plain off-white exterior, but the interior made of hand-painted cotton chintz in the kalamkari technique block-printed, resist-dyed and hand painted in an intricate repeating pattern of acanthus cusped niches, with a white ground, with each enclosing a central vase with symmetrical flower arrangement, predominantly in reds and blues. The colours of red, white and blue, which are the colours of the Union Jack and strikingly also of the crown caps of the Kingfisher beer.

Halcyon, a bird of classical greek legend of Alcyone, identified with the kingfisher, is said to breed about the time of the winter solstice in a nest floating on the sea, and to have the power of charming winds and waves into calmness. current use of 'halcyon days' tends to be nostalgic and recalling of the seemingly endless sunny days of youth or good times.



# SHAURYA KUMAR

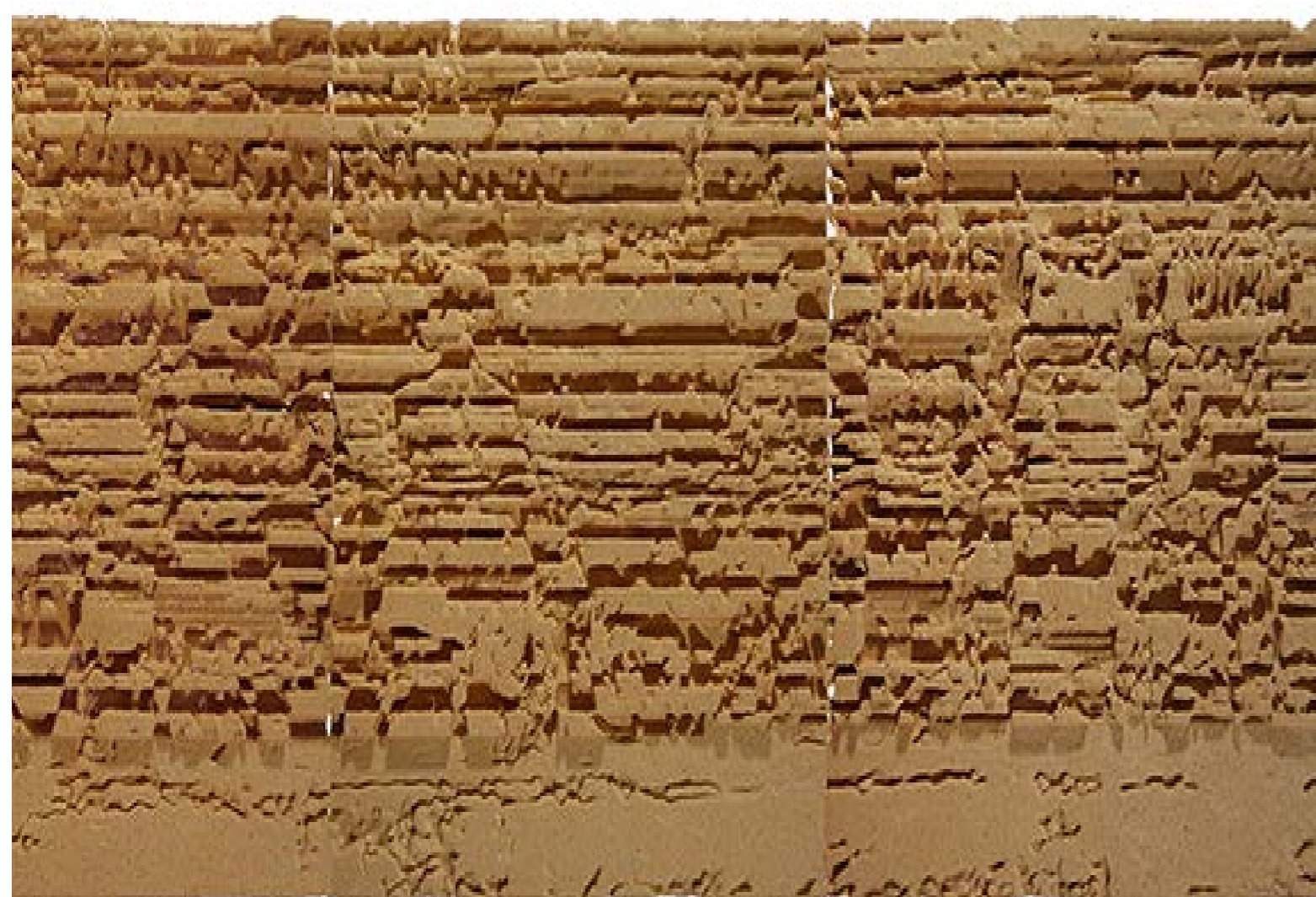
## Friese with inlays

Showing Scenes of Dairy Farming

ca. 2400 BCE

Missing from Baghdad Museum since 2003 CE

Ceramic relief tiles printed using ZCorp 400 rapid prototype printer 8.5” x 45.75”



Many of the important artifacts of the early Mesopotamia were displayed in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad till 2003 CE when the museum was strategically looted amidst the chaos of the infamous war in Iraq. Out of about 15,000 artifacts that were initially looted, only 35% have made their way back to the museum, and only a few more have been identified or seized by the law enforcement authorities around the world.

Though a few of the most important artifacts like the Sacred Vase of Warka dated 3000 b.c.e. has been returned, other very important historical pieces like the headless statue from early Mesopotamia that has probably the first inscription stating the figure as a king, have not been found. Another piece of great significance displayed here that still remains missing is an alabaster relief, which is one of three fragments from a single stele that dates to the time of the Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia, circa 2334 - 2154 BCE

Looting of art and artifacts for profit has been an integral part of the war in the Middle East. Museums in Beirut were looted in the 1970s, the Kuwaiti museums were looted and burnt down by the Iraqi troops in 1991, and the Kabul Museum in Afghanistan was ransacked twice, once after the heavy bombing in 1993, and then in 2001, just before Taliban leaders destroyed much of non-Islamic art. In each case, art objects made their way to international markets, often ending locked up in secret vaults of private collectors and museums. The scrutiny of these stolen art objects in the international market is much more rigorous now than ever before, with museums and collectors refusing to buy such artifacts, or often turning them in to the authorities after acquiring them. But many a time, the loss is severe and irreparable as it becomes increasingly difficult to identify the origins of rediscovered objects and ascertain their authenticity, especially when the archives of the museums, like that of Baghdad Museum in Iraq, were completely burnt down.

Identification of art objects is often problematic, as archives of many art objects did not exist in the first place. Many a time, in order to hide the origin/identity of the artifact, the marauders would saw or hammer down a part of the object and sell it in pieces, thus contributing to the permanent loss of heritage and history.

Scholars are calling this looting of the Baghdad Museum as the single most severe blow to cultural heritage in modern history. “This is like destroying all the museums at the Washington Mall” says Eleanor Robson, an Assyriologist at the University of Oxford, U.K. This is not just a great loss to the legacy of Iraq, but is a much greater loss to the entire human kind.





# SHAURYA KUMAR

## Pillar at Hampi

Medium: Paper, Styrafoam, Natural  
Dyes, Glue  
121.9 x 43 x 43 cms, 2014

“Why ask where I come from, O dwellers of the East,

Knowing my homelessness you laugh as you taunt.

Delhi that was once a select city in the world,

Where only the chosen lived of every trade;

Then the heavens looted it and left it desolate,

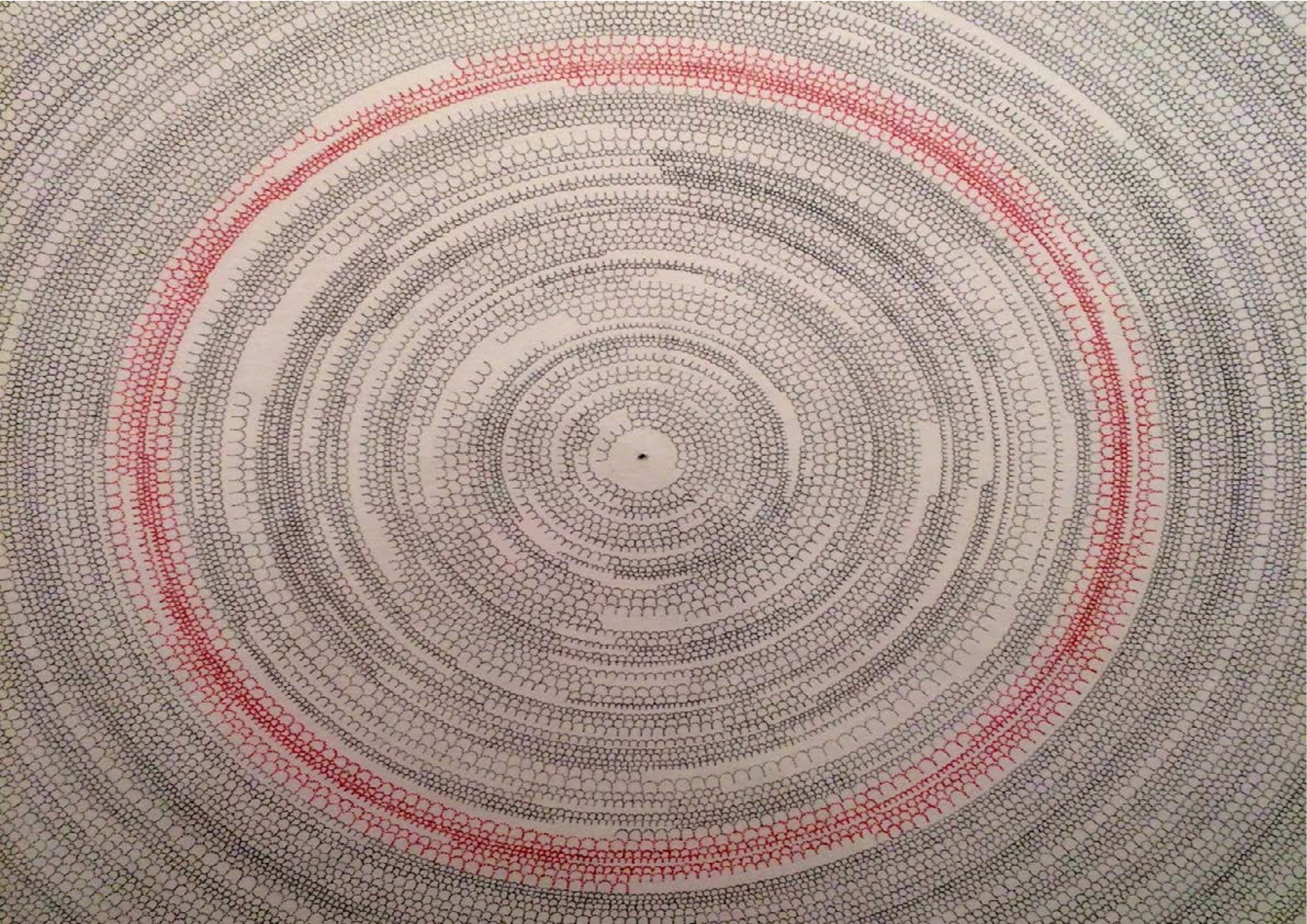
I am a citizen, of that ruined place.”

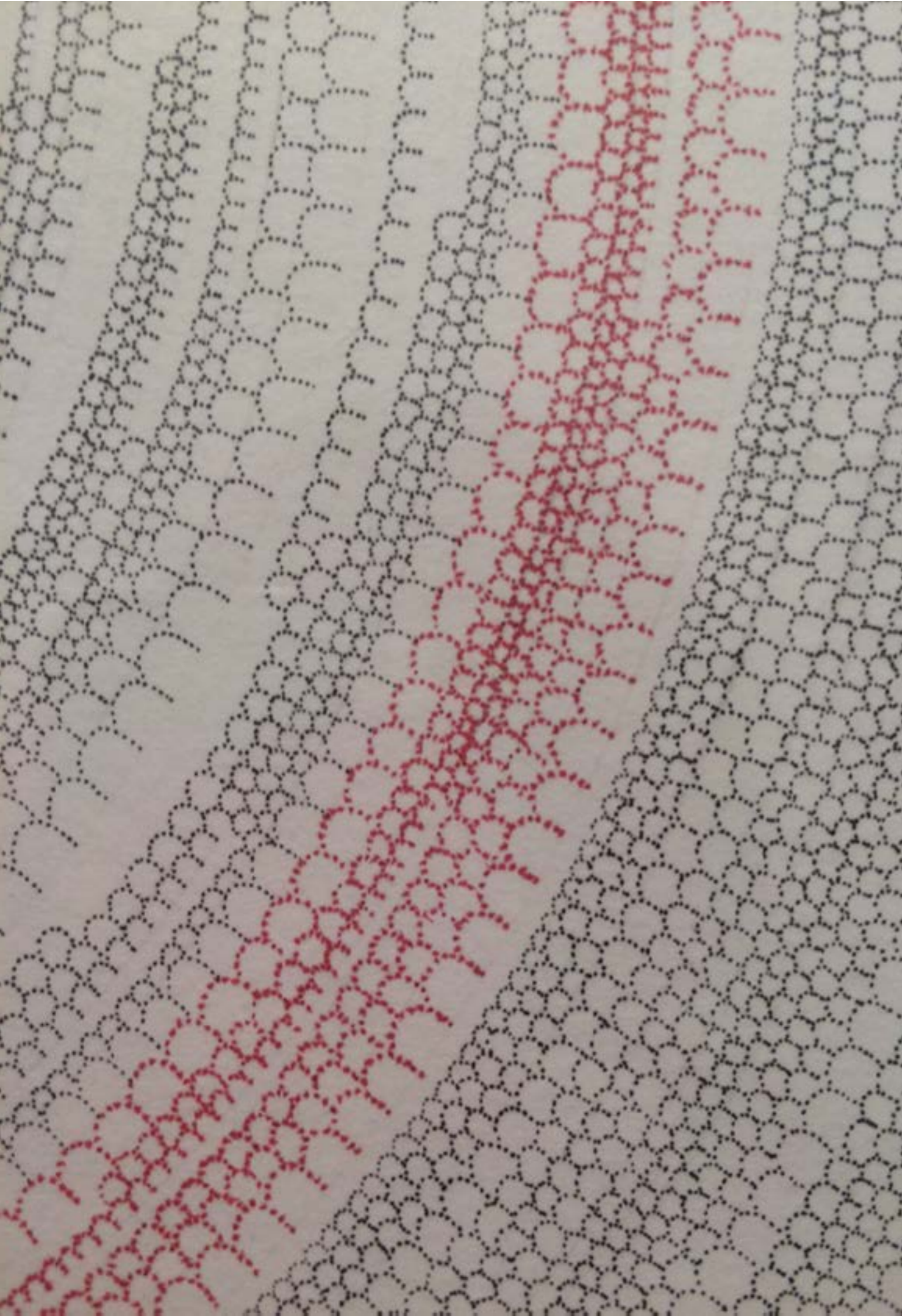
Meer Taqi Meer

Constitution of India stipulates that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of composite culture. We thus, have a special responsibility for preservation of our heritage as one of our fundamental duties.

But Performance Audit of Preservation and Conservation of Monuments and Antiquities performed by the Comptroller General of India and presented to the Parliament in March of 2013 illustrated otherwise. Upon joint physical inspection of 1655 monuments and sites out of the 3678 centrally protected monuments and sites spread nationwide, it was discovered that 92 monuments (6 per cent) have disappeared and have become “not traceable” within the last 10 years and many more left in complete disarray with their fate left in hands to predators, vandals and iconoclasts.

Such is also the state of Hampi in Karnataka that falls under the jurisdiction of Archeological Survey of India, Bengaluru Circle. This sculpture, replica of a granite pillar currently lying in the mandapa at Hampi, through its material contrast captures this marginalization of history and symbolizes the history that was once rich and glorious but is now fractured and forgotten. The paper pulp, dyed with natural pigment dyes, mimics the worn appearance of ancient monuments. Though the sculpture lacks the specificity of a particular site, the rich texture, form and volume conjures the monument’s long-lost luster, its glory and exuberance. Though its tangible presence suggests solidity and permanence, the sculpture remains just paper—organic and friable.





# WAQAS KHAN

## Woven Fragments

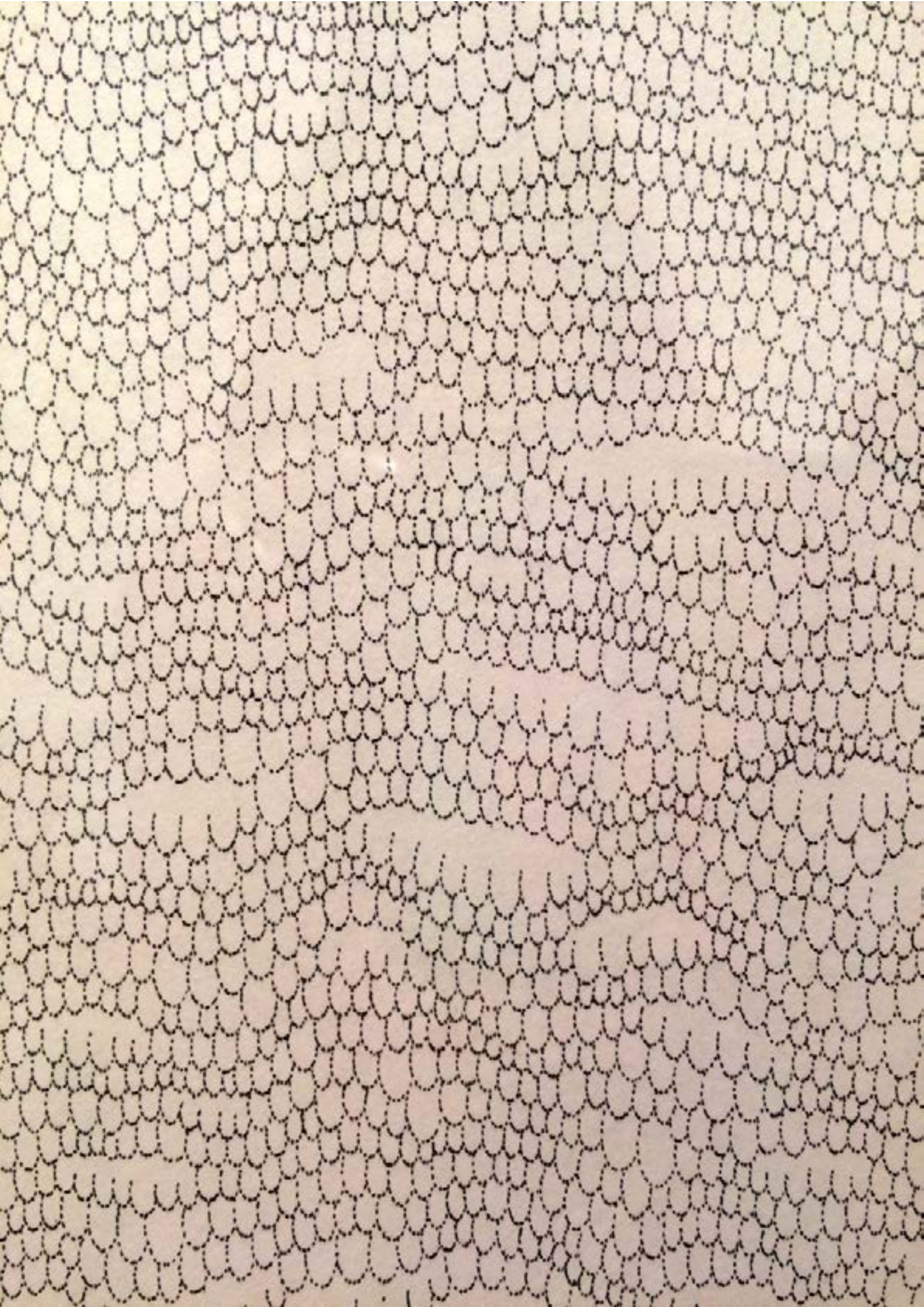
Woven Fragments, 2015

Medium: Archival Ink on Wasli Paper

130 cm x 170 cm

“In an attempt to understand the relationship between history and time it is important to pose the basic question as to what is time and history. The associative nature of both ideas cannot isolate the people shaping it. The universe is encompassed with the idea of time and has multitude meanings that philosophes and visual practitioners have tried to explain through the lens of different discourses and visual expressions. According to Emile Durkheim, the relationship between individual and groups with the society is enriched by historical ideas. Therefore the visual expression of time in particular could be seen in phases, where initially it was about capturing the moments stemming from religion, sociopolitical historical events interconnected with everyday life, but in this day and age, the interpretive nature of time, ever changing, layered with multiplicity was an inquiry raised by the avant garde who went against the grain of status quo and brought to surface the questions of how history has shaped the cultures through institutions creating operational societies. Therefore the significance of questioning the created meanings cannot be undermined. Hence it opens up the inquiry of the construction and codes of cultures specifically for the carrier groups.





# WAQAS KHAN

## Intervening Dialogues

Medium: Archival Ink on Wasli Paper  
56 cm x 71 cm



# LAKEEREN

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Gallery Timings : 11 am - 7 am Closed On Sunday