



Gosia van Unen

PORTFOLIO  
2024





## DNA Strain

Resin, sand, wooden panel, canvas

Size: 300cm x 70cm

2023

Sand consists of fragmented matter, broken down over millions of years, transported to different places, always on the move only sometimes immobilized temporarily within a sedimentary deposit. In many ways it can be seen as a parallel to human lives, with our unpredictable journeys full of inherent uncertainties, pressures, joys, disruptions and displacements followed by periods of rest and peace. Just as we carry our identities within our DNA, sand carries its signature within its grains. It contains information about its origin, movement, age, transformation and composition. In this work Saudi Arabia's desert sand has been collected, immobilized and re-constructed in a form of a molecular DNA strain, a visual representation of Saudi desert DNA.

## Below, close-up view DNA Strain





Inspired by the Richat structure in Mauritania, this work has been made from earth materials collected in the Nafud desert. In our travels to the north of Saudi Arabia, we encountered many naturally occurring circular formations from which this work is derived. In a geological sense, the sand has once again become immobile, captured within a sedimentary deposit.

The Eye of the Nafud  
Resin, sand, sabkha salt, pigment  
Size: 100cm diameter, weight 4kg  
2023



Precious Rain  
installation, wire mesh, glass, clay, nylon.  
Size 100cm x 2500cm x 80cm  
2023



Water is a precious resource, especially so in the Arabian Peninsula where deserts dominate the landscape since the end of Ice Age. In response to this year's exceptionally generous rainfall, I'm exploring the impact of water on the surrounding nature. Rain has turned deserts into green meadows full of ephemeral lakes. But can climate change be halted by the cloud-seeding technology? Can we support our natural environment in the face of global warming or will the precious water evaporate or be lost among the sands?

Desert Stories  
47 Sand vials mounted on board  
100cm x 120cm x 2cm  
2023



Recycling by nature, is the core concept of this project. Our understanding of landscape evolution and desert diversity depends on studying its composition. This is the reason to explore its DNA. Each vial of sand contains a virtual reference of an exact location in the Saudi desert that can be accessed through QR code.

Time Capsule and Evolution,  
Resin cast, sand, media, shells,  
concretions  
60cm x 12cm x 12cm and  
12cm x 8cm x 60cm  
2019



Time Capsule: Imagine a soil sample collected 300 years from now. It contains layers of sediments collected over decennia and reveal micro-plastics and non-biodegradable debris accumulated in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. A soil sample is a record of climate and environmental changes. It can be used to visualize time on a different scale and from a different perspective. This time capsule reveals a thin, clean layer on the top, a hopeful sign of a cleaner future.

Evolution is a prerogative of life that is in constant motion, adapting to the changing environment. The black resin shell represents all the marine creatures that adapt to those ongoing changes, transform into new iterations of the same species that has existed for millennia and will hopefully continue for many more.

Untitled abstract,  
Acrylic and media on canvas  
76cm x 96cm x 3cm  
2022





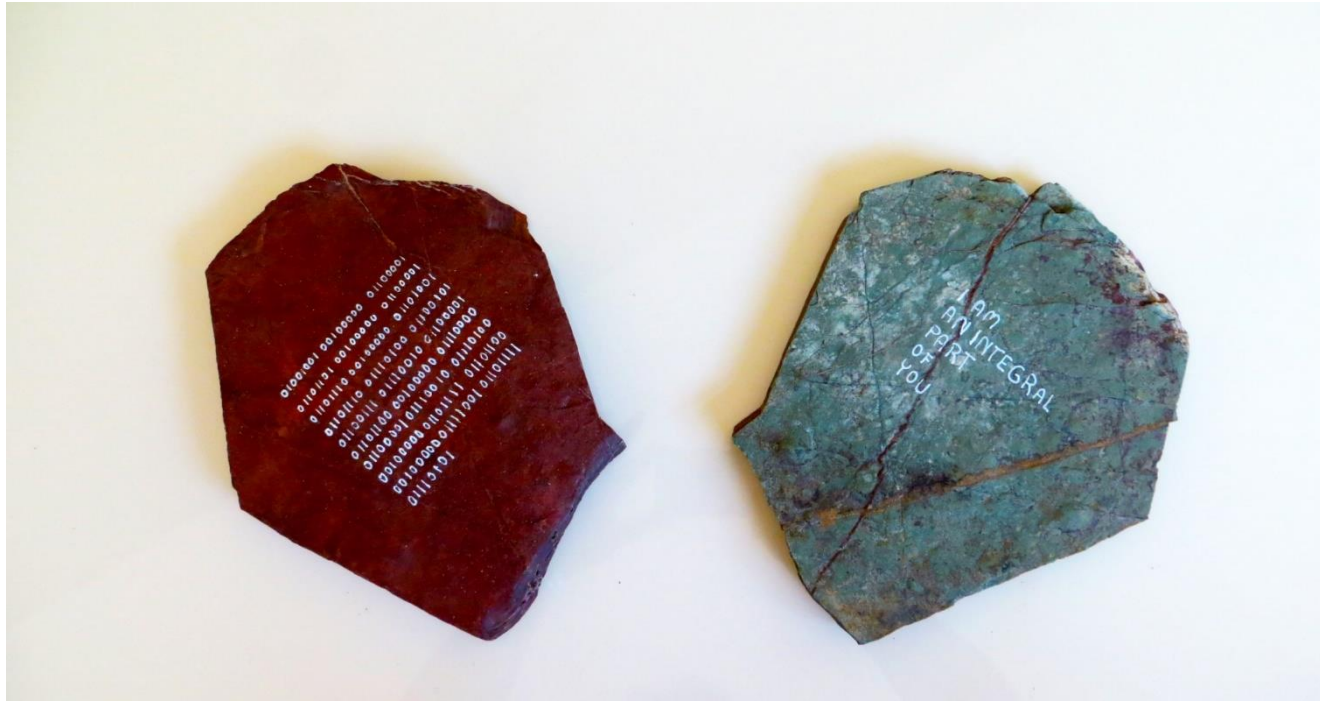


Desert(ED) Pouch,  
Metal can, acrylic paint, glass beads  
25cm x 30cm x 3cm  
2023



A pouch is a container that holds things we like to carry around. An empty container found in the desert seemed just like such a pouch lost in space. I transformed it into a fabulous object that most women desire, a Desert Edition Pouch. What could be put inside? What are the essential objects worth carrying around in the first place? Desert environment in its stark, uncluttered form allows easy reflection on what is really of essence in life. Desert(ED) Pouch is a tongue in cheek observation of consumerism, collecting and discarding objects to be replaced by new ones. Stripped to the essence, all we really need could possibly fit in a flattened space of this Desert(ED) pouch.





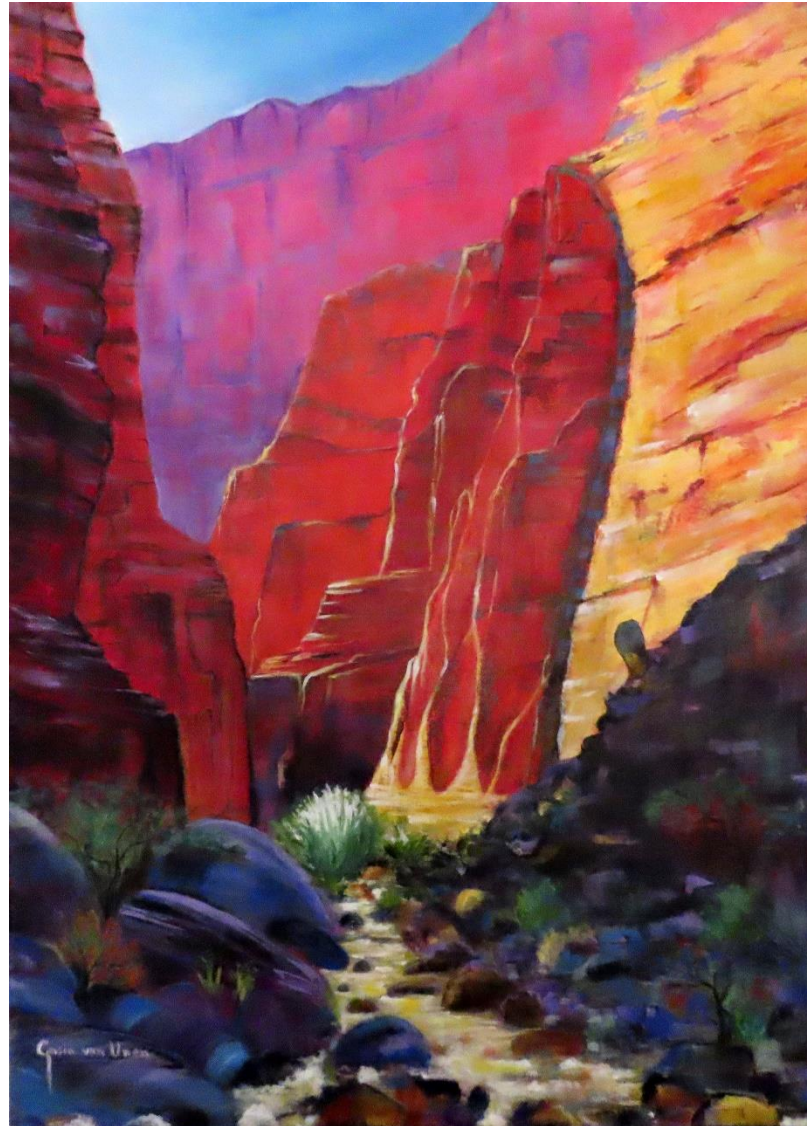
I am an Integral Part of You,  
ink on shale  
2 x 18cm x 20cm x 2cm  
2020

A rock, as a geological unit, can be seen as a data storage device that keeps a record of memories within its layers. A naturally split shale reveals its dual form; one already affected by the elements and oxidized, the other one pristine, a clean slate. Through the use of language and its binary representation they embody the connection between the natural and the virtual world; human versus machine. In larger perspective they represent intrinsic duality of nature where every value has its opposite. Language is what connects the two parts; one representing human experience, the other binary, connecting it to the virtual world. Yet they are both variables of one unit, dependent on one another, each one an integral part of the other.

Exhibition view, Tashkeel Gallery 2021

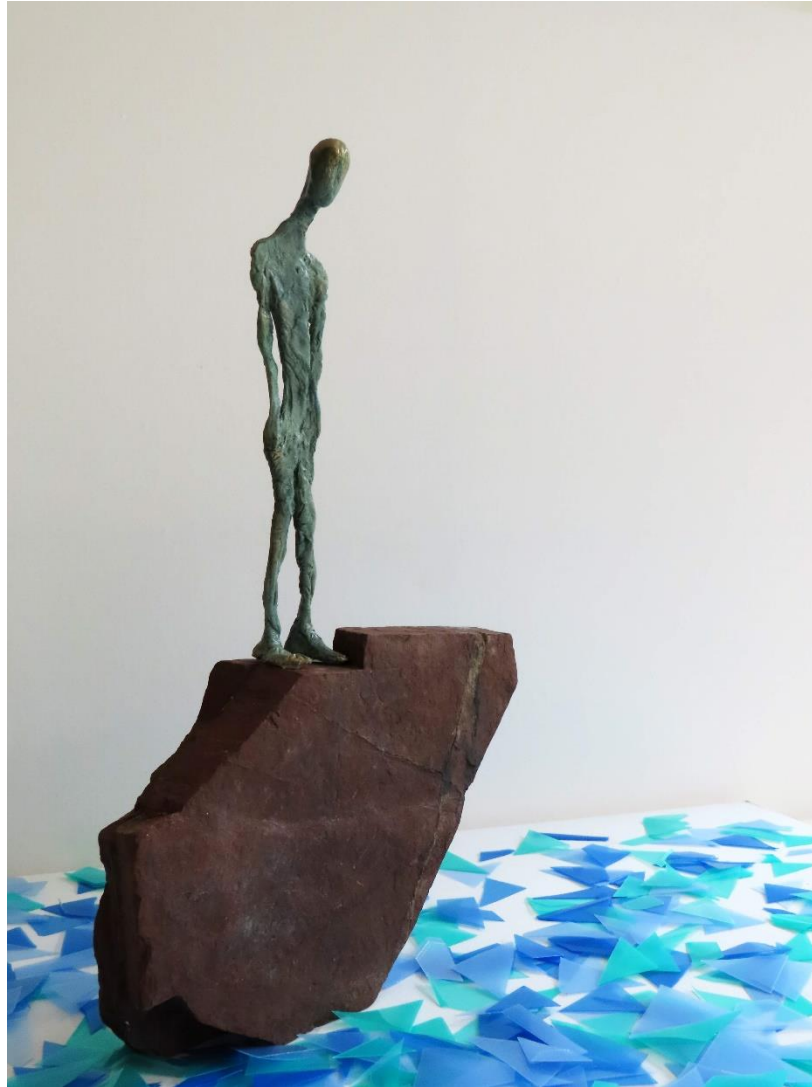


Secret Wadi,  
Acrylic and media on canvas  
70cm x 100cm x 3cm  
2023



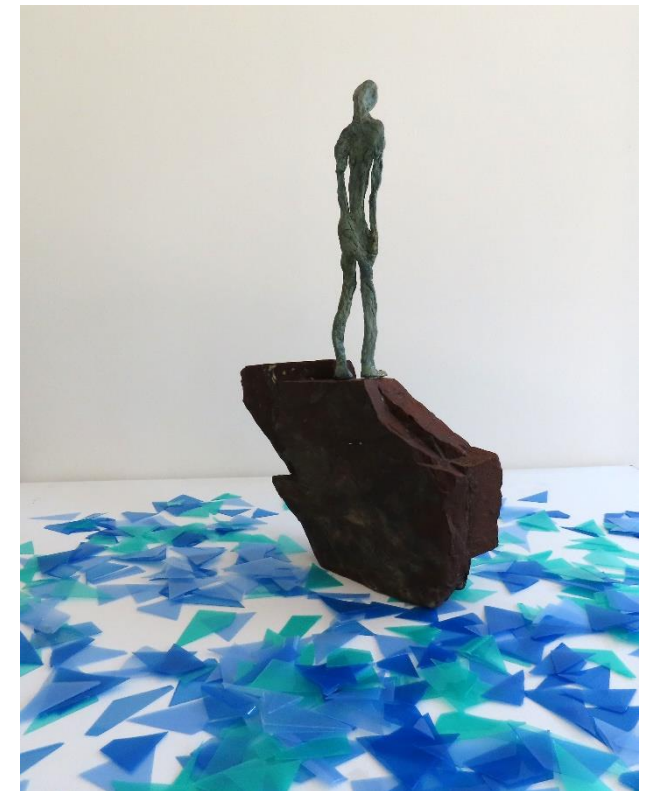
In an increasingly developing city, it's more and more difficult to find quiet places of outstanding beauty. The serendipitous discovery of a secluded wadi, opposite a cement factory, was an inspiration for this work. A juxtaposition of nature with the industrial environment nearby elevated the pristine character of the secluded wadi even further. The sunset transformed the towering cliffs of the Tuwaiq Escarpment into an extraordinary landscape bursting with color. A moment of time captured in 2 dimensions.

Forlorn  
Armored poly-clay, shale  
40cm x 30cm x 10cm  
2019

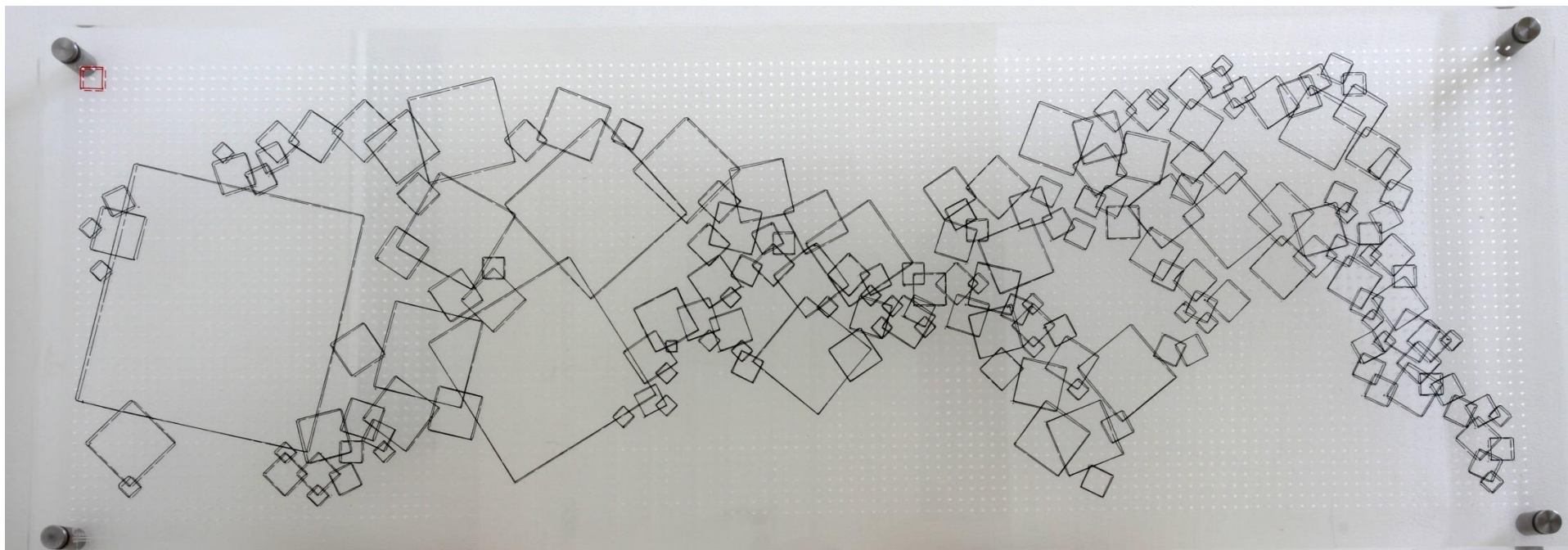


Forlorn: An emaciated human stands at the edge of the precipice; below him, a vast ocean. Being on higher ground offers time for reflection. There are many alternatives to choose from and one can only speculate his next move. Will it be one step forward to plunge into the all-encompassing ocean? Will it be a silent retreat into a life without hope. Or a gargantuan effort to avert impending disaster? These are the questions we ask ourselves every day: How to act in the face of impending disaster or a growing crisis? Do we dare to take the stand?

Back view



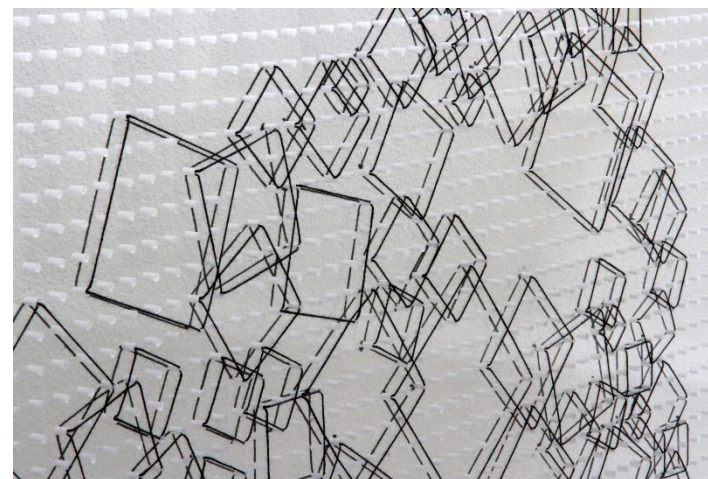




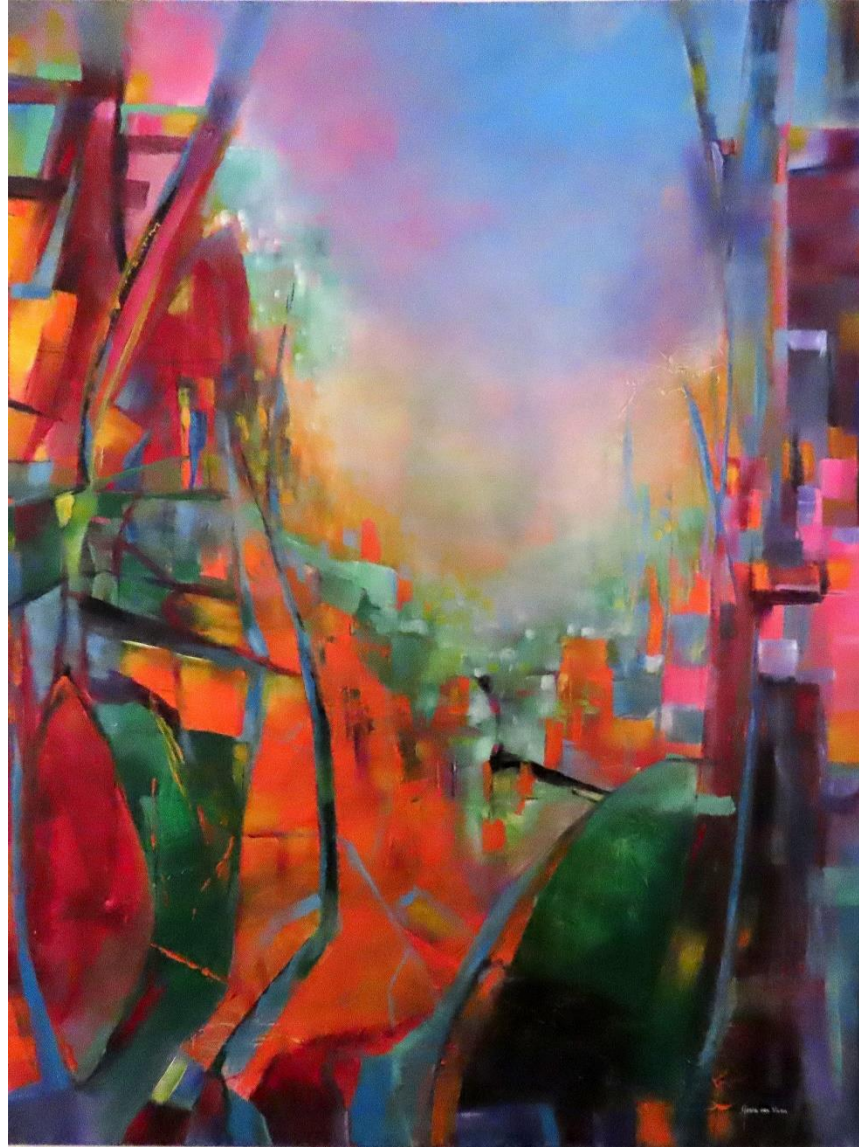
Back to Square One  
Cotton thread on perforated acrylic panel  
140cm x 50cm x 5cm  
2018

Back to Square One, is a look at urban expansion that takes place all around us. As cities grow clear direction in which one is heading may be lost. Original ideals fade away with the passage of time and new uncoordinated growth takes place. It is important to critically look back at our own actions, re-center, find the original ideals and return, back to square one.

Detail



Staccato,  
Acrylic and media on canvas  
100cm x 120cm x 3cm  
2022





Memory Stick,  
wood, copper, computer components,  
limestone  
35cm x 30cm x 25cm  
2019



An analogy to digital storage device found in nature, a tree keeps the record of its life within its rings. Similarly, limestone rock represents a cumulative memory of sea creatures that lived and died to create it millions of years ago. Juxtaposing these natural objects with our temporality through embedded electronic objects, I'd like to shift our gaze to a much larger timeline.



END and  
ENTER,  
box, recycled keyboard, algorithm-  
based text, resin  
2x 15cm x 10cm  
2019



Syntax is the set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a language, usually including word order. It also is the structure of statements in a computer language. With a finite number of letters comprising a single keyboard, an algorithm creates multiple outcomes. END VIRTUAL SELF MOCK-UP is one such outcome. ENTER POST-SYNC GLUM is yet another. They were both created from the same characters but offer very different result. By using language and discarded computer parts I'd like to reflect on the multiplicity of choices we have, our growing digital dependency and a bleak prospect of leaving it.



*Among the threads*

*lie the beads of time*

*capsules of memory*

*Buried among the filaments*

*relationships that lasted*

*But a moment*

*Time and space collapsed*

*Within the cushioned reflection*

*Of shared passion*

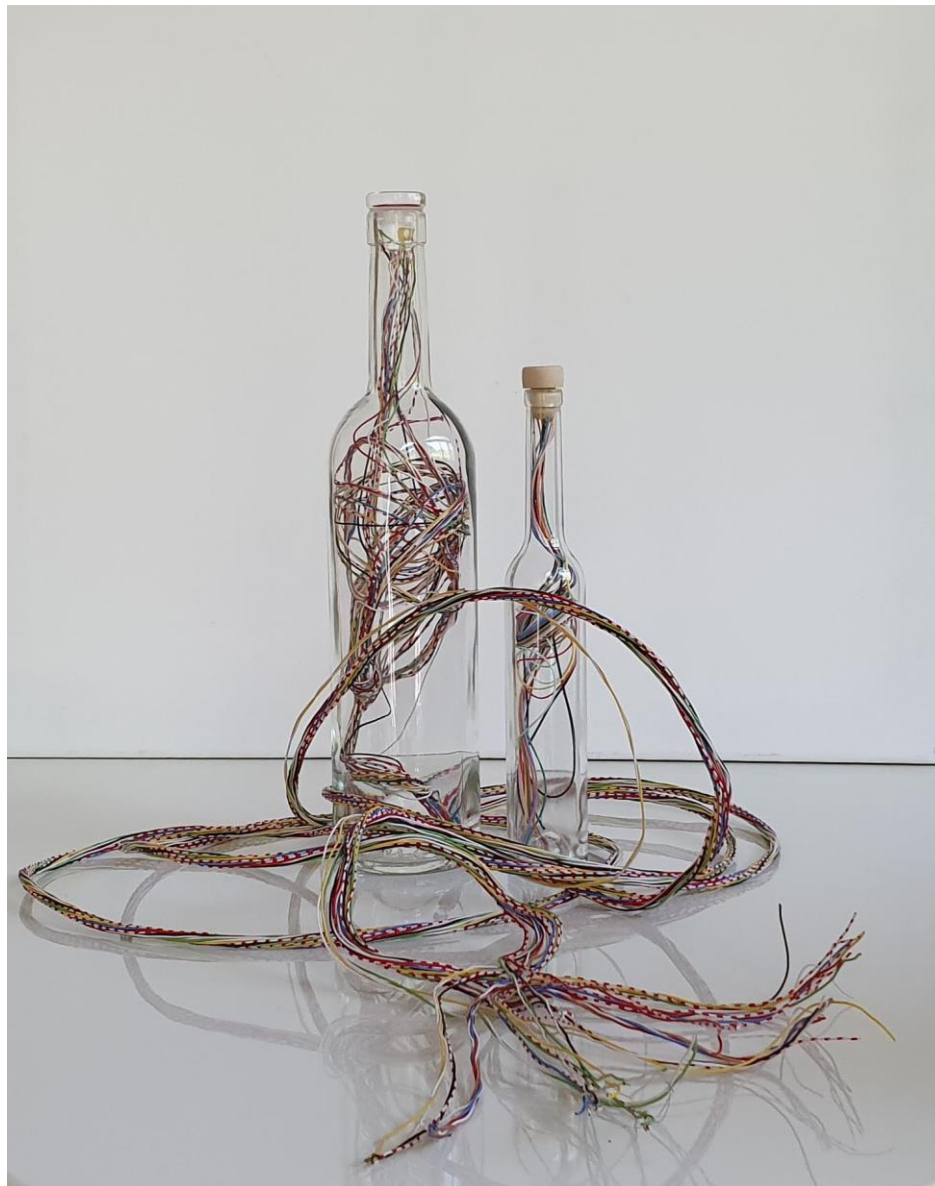
Entropy I, II, III  
Hemp rope, metal rack, copper, text,  
algorithm  
100cm x 150cm  
2018

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01000001 01101101 01101111 01101110 01100111 00100000 01110100 01101000 01100101
00100000 01110100 01101000 01110010 01100101 01100001 01100100 01110011 00100000
00001101 00001010 01101100 01101001 01100101 00100000 01110100 01101000 01100101
00100000 01100010 01100101 01100001 01100100 01110011 00100000 01101111 01100110
00100000 01110100 01101001 01101101 01100101 00001101 00001010 01100011 01100001
01110000 01110011 01110101 01101100 01100101 01110011 00100000 01101111 01100110
00100000 01101101 01100101 01101101 01101111 01110010 01111001 00001101 00001010

01000010 01110101 01110010 01101001 01100101 01100100 00100000 01100001 01101101
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01110011 01101000 01100001 01110010 01100101 01100100 00100000 01110000 01100001
01110011 01110011 01101001 01101111 01101110 00100000 00001101 00001010
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Capsule of Memories,  
Glass bottles, computer wire  
30cm x 40cm x40cm  
2019



There is a moment when a digital input in a form of a typed message leaves our fingertips and speeds towards a much larger network. This is when a new digital memory is created. This memory does not remain the same for long but is affected by and transformed within the virtual matrix. Over time, it becomes tainted, distorted or corrupted turning into a false memory. I try to capture and contain the moment a memory is created in its original form, preserving it like a message in the bottle.



Windows 20.20,  
Digital print, silver thread on canvas  
50cm x 60cm  
2018

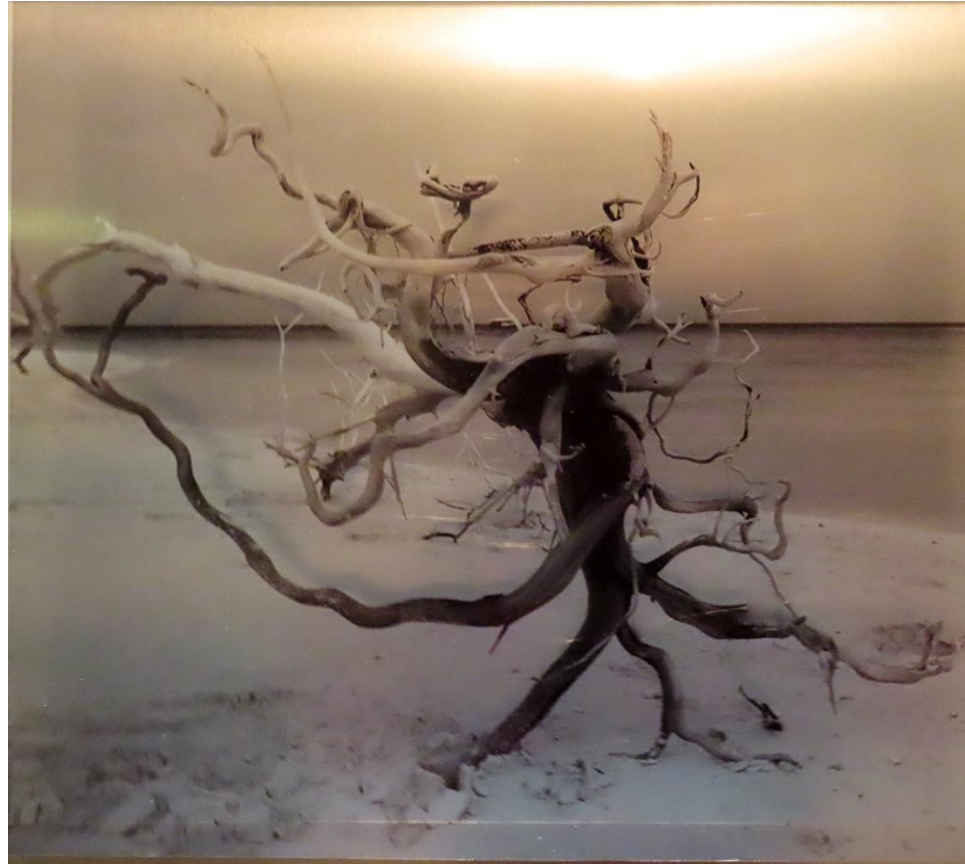


Is there a new kind of spirituality emerging from virtual reality? Do we know what to believe in the world dominated by half-truths and fake news? Is it possible to find all the answers we seek on-line? These are the questions I'm posing through this work. It is worth to reflect on our digital dependency affecting our personal lives and the prospect of real-life alienation.



The Reef,  
Acrylic textile and media on acrylic plate  
3 x 100cm x 120cm  
2017

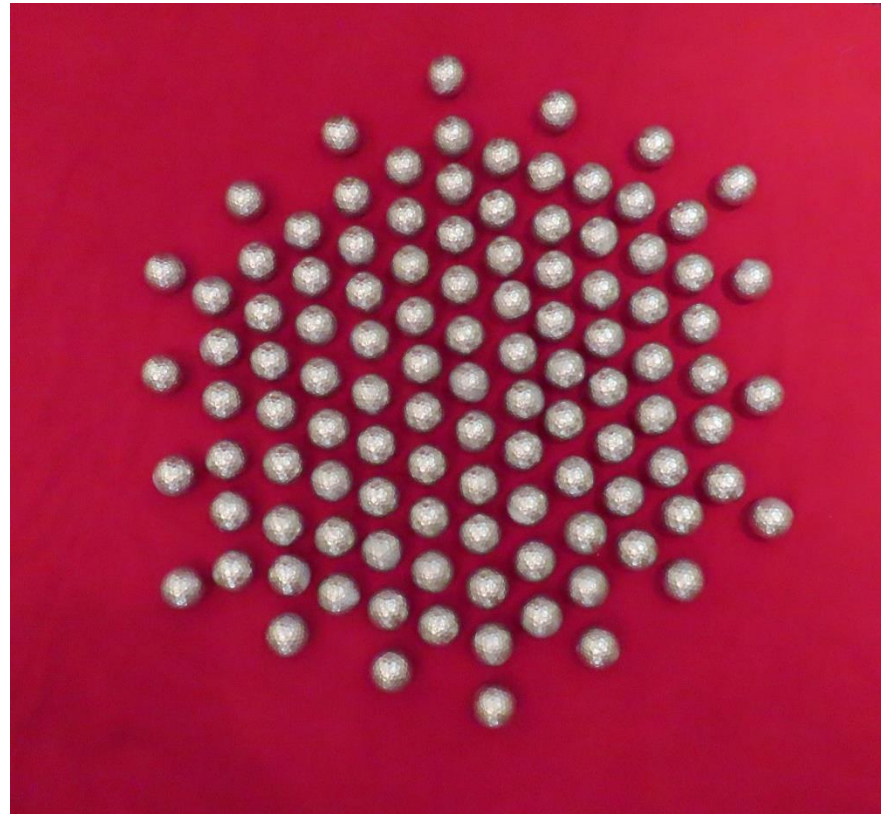




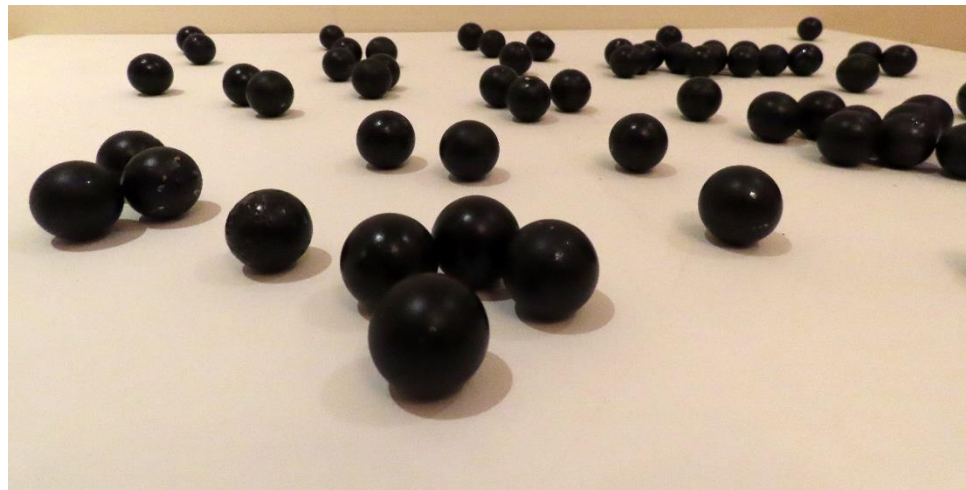
Lost in Space, refers to our steadily increasing disconnection with reality. We spend a lot of time communicating, learning and playing within a virtual space. The difference between the real and the virtual becomes distorted and blurred like the branches/roots of this mangrove tree. The beach and the sea coalesce into one undefined space with the sky. Like the astronaut in zero gravity, we become disoriented, uprooted and gradually lost in space.

Lost in Space,  
Digital image on transparency and  
aluminum, 50cm x 50cm  
2017





The Beginning I and II. The starting point of this project was elemental silicon (Si). It is the main component of sand, very common in nature and in its pure form, it has become the very core of computer industry. This simple element somehow transcended the natural world and evolved into a powerful tool capable of sustaining the entirely new virtual reality. Emerging from the chaos of unorganized atoms, the crystal structure of silicon was gradually obtained allowing us to enter the Digital Age.



The Beginning I and II  
108 x 4cm spheres, approx. 90cm x 90cm  
108 x 2cm spheres, approx. 120cm x 60cm  
2018

Changing Financial Weather,  
Acrylic and media on canvas  
122cm x 76cm  
2012



Autumnal Red  
Acrylic on canvas  
120cm x 80cm  
2015

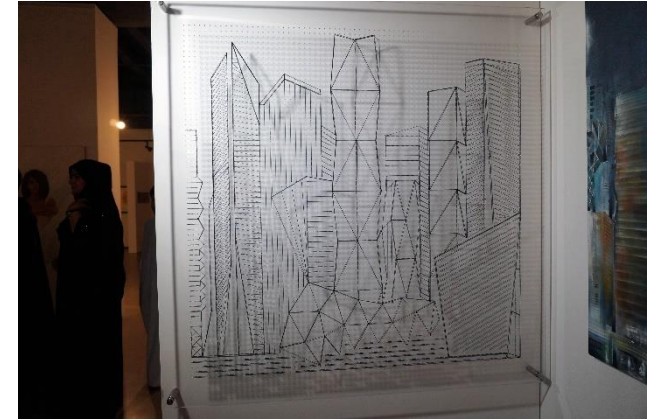
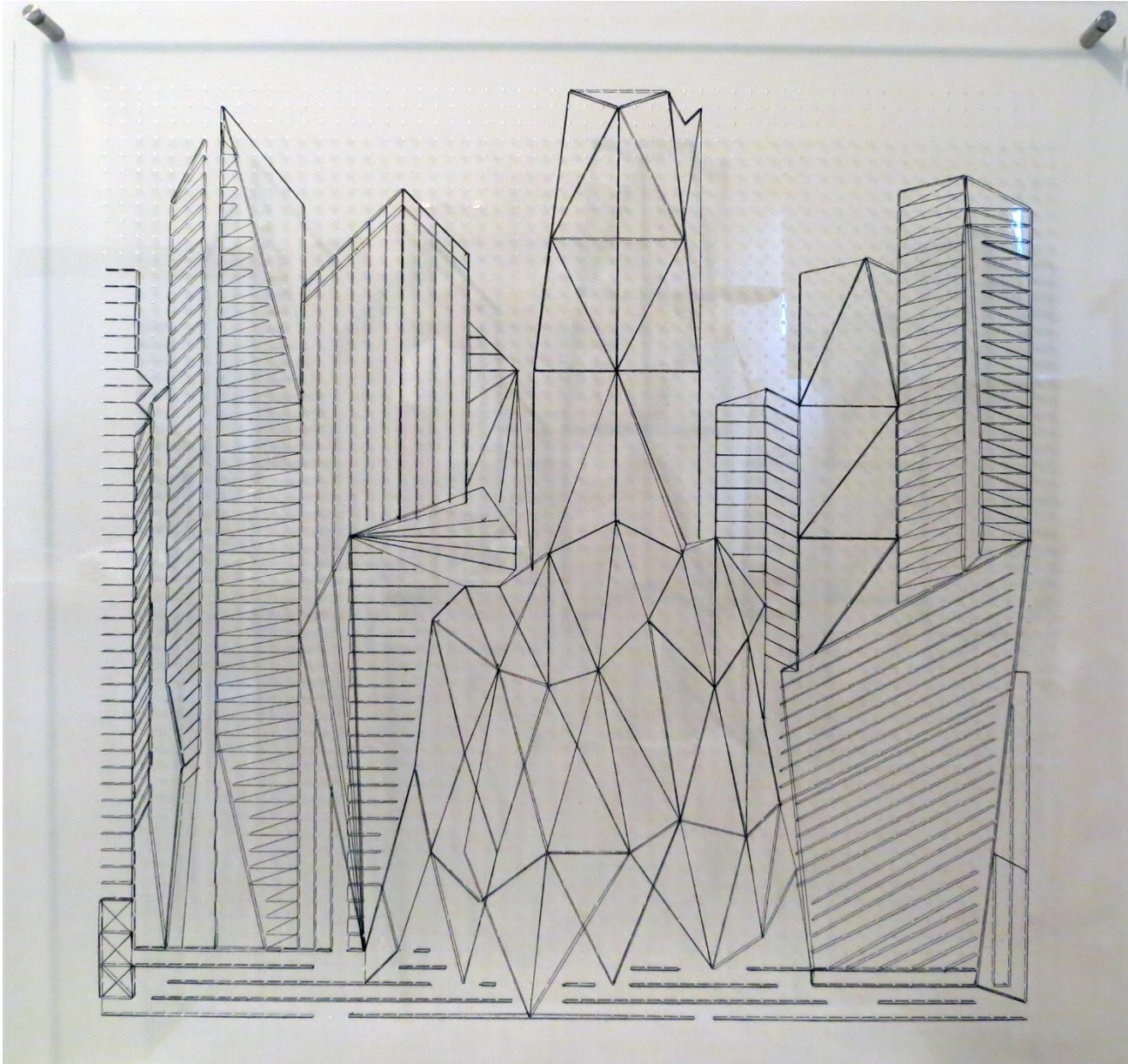


Exhibition view, Areej Art Café 2015



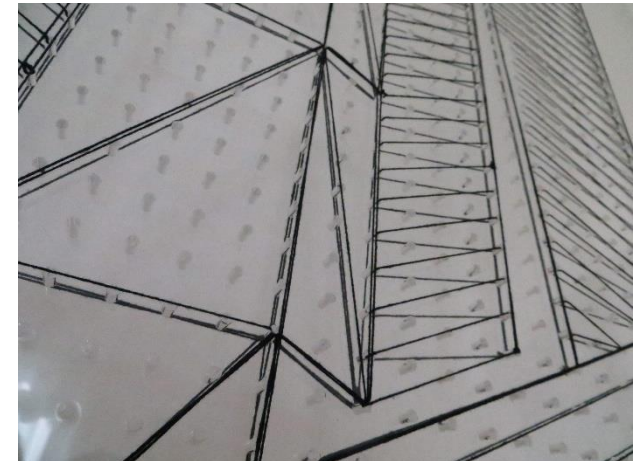


Futurescape (KAFD)  
Cotton thread on  
perforated acrylic panel  
122cm x 122cm x 5cm  
2012



Exhibition view, Naila Gallery 2015

Detail





Waterbird,  
Poly-clay, wire, pigments, natural stone  
Size: 25cm x 40cm  
2012