

up the mountain in my city shoes
Allan Rand & Spencer Lai

18.02.22, 12 - 7 PM

Bossy's Gallery off-site location

AirBnB rental apartment, Apt 2003/11 Rose Lane, Melbourne CBD

Exhibition documentation, text and catalogue

Images courtesy of Jordan Halsall





Bossy's Gallery
presents:

up the mountain in my city shoes

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17.2.21, 12 - 7pm

By appointment only, contact for location.

Who Now Would Deny Me the Things that I Deserve

When I arrived it was always at the end of the day. There were never any lights on in the apartment and the white walls would be shading into dark blues and purples. I could not find the details of furniture or objects when I looked, and the contours of his face were also lost in the same way. The room was very large. Over time I had come to understand that it was one of his eccentricities to sit quietly in this space and watch the sunlight fade from the day, and at the same time (he told me) to feel himself fade or expand through the darkened space. First through the room itself and then out, into the empty air outside the window, so many stories up from the street below. Calmly sinking into darkness, always positioned in front of me, so that my silhouette would show before the broad and glowing lead-light glass panes that made up one entire wall of the room. Dark blue sky, almost black, and the last orange sunlight flashing like tracings of fire across the glass surfaces of the bank buildings that fill the city centre. It was always at dusk that he would bring me to his beautiful apartment, built on the canals of the financial district. I think that he liked to watch the way my younger body composed the open space; the way that shadows gathered across my chest and arms and in the hollows of my throat. When I remember those evenings they are oddly stretched. He would sit quietly and I would become delirious and lose track of time, and the dilation and the fading light would frame perfectly some part of me that I found obscure then and still do now; something gluttonous and vital and at the same time smelling of death. But also something humorous, which, when I was able to make contact with it, reminded me of the writers I love whose humour secured their passage through landscapes of pain and degradation. I thought that they must have been indestructible. I never knew if it was this part of me that held his interest, but I returned again and again because it was not something that I could connect to easily and because I found pleasure in this connection; and also because I liked the way that he would sometimes describe me to myself, tell me what I was capable of, tell me stories about my own limits as he saw them: intellectual, physical, sexual, limits of all sorts. I enjoyed being told about myself, and enjoyed also watching the way that his own insecurities were exposed in his judgements. I have no idea if he enjoyed the time that we spent together. Honestly I doubt that he had any access at all to these types of pleasure. Generally he was preoccupied with his work, which he told me more than once consisted in synthesising and mediating between many different academic disciplines. He would drink, and, drunk, say that what he really was was a type of consultant, and that his expertise was in demand in both the private and public sectors. Over time he would begin to speak more abstractly, about innocence, or some history of the image that he had traced out in his research; images of cruelty, images of torture. He called them the technologies of empire. He was obsessed with psychic and material control; of people, communities, of populations and their desires. He spoke often about storytelling (online only apparently) and optics, and about dispersing chemicals into the water supply. Endorphins, stimulants, suppressants, various hormones. Slow poisons. He spoke about the importance of understanding that death and suffering were arbitrary, that these things can happen to anyone, at any time. He had developed a thought experiment that illustrated this: he described to me an invisible machine that could be mass produced and seeded through the streets of the city, at random, and that would tear to pieces anyone who was unfortunate enough to walk into it. When he spoke like this the word innocence came up again and again. He said that for a community to recognise itself it needed an image of innocence. Without this, its members would not be able to mark victims for sacrifice, and the community could never truly cohere. As he talked I would play with dissociation, drifting closer and further from the room and from his voice, and just allow all of these ideas and formulations to play across my body like the patterns that form on the surface of water. The skin of my chest and face were like the surface of a deep pool that I had somehow sunken to the bottom of, a quiet pool, drenched in the golden sunlight of late summer, that makes the movements of the water glow and sparkle in patterns and cascades of white glare and liquid orange fire. From the soft silty bed I could watch the movements of the surface from beneath, looking upwards through the metres and metres of distance and the thick currents that moved invisibly, up to the air where it breaks and swells, and then eventually through that too, to the emptiness of the sky. He never offered me alcohol or other drugs, though I remember that while sitting there, coming in and out of focus, some chemical dulling or fuzzy dispersion was the only thing in the world that I wanted. In any case I would never have asked him. My words in reply were easy, and I tried not to put too much weight or thought into them. This is simply all that I can remember from back then.

Now it is different. To begin with I have rooms and apartments of my own. I have my own images to collect and order, to frame and display and also occasionally to store safely away from view until they are needed. He cannot stop me or intervene in any way. When I walk at dusk it is through the parks on the outskirts of the city, and I never enter the banking district anymore, or walk along those canals bordered with their perfect rows of harsh white lamps. But I do still think about those lists of his. In many ways mine are as crude. I have an image of a great pale stone gate that opens in the walls of some forgotten continental capital. It is much taller than the buildings of the city that recede into the background, and that merge with the grey haze of smog and clouds that form the ground of this picture. The gate is open, and dark black smoke billows out. There are crowds of tiny people moving at ground level, pressed together into

a mass, but it is not clear if they are trying to escape, or if they are marching into the city and the smoke and whatever awaits them there. I have an image of a weapon built by a man who wanted to assassinate his king. It is a strange, rough and composite thing; in fact it is many weapons strapped together, with their twenty or so barrels pointed out from the second floor window of an apartment that their intended victim may one day walk by. It smells of petrol and iron and burned rubber. The apartment of the thin (so thin he must be literally starving) man who built this strange contraption smells the same. You can see every worked together rivet, every custom stitch of the machine, as it sits there primed and strangely inert. I hope that there was at least some possibility for humour, and that this starving man told jokes as he worked, even if only to himself. I have an image that is really a series of images, a set of tough, concrete surfaces that have been cut into with precision instruments. The cuts and scoring form part of a larger, linear compositions, which also include shadings in vibrant colours, and thickly layered paint. Each of them depicts a single being, a body with a face and an expression, sometimes a gesture or two. They are abstract but not extremely so. They are still obviously the bodies of people. I like to move them around the space, swap them with one another; allow them to enter into dialogues, maybe dancing, languages of all sorts. Sometimes their expressions are simple and easy to relate to, and sometimes I could spend days and days matching my face to theirs, matching my movements, my sense of the world and the city that contains us. I have other images too, hundreds of them now, and I cannot tell you easily how they have changed me, but I can say without any hesitation that the change has been wonderful, deep and clear and full of light. This is true. But there is still one that I do not often allow up into the light. It is a small painting of a pool in the forest. Small and round and bordered by hanging plants and flowers that look like they are weeping. The painting is only of the surface of the pool, which is reflective, like a mirror. It cannot show its incredible depth, the dark silt at the bottom, the animals that feed on one another down there. It sits in storage and I think it will forever. I dream sometimes that the body is still down there, so many metres down beneath the surface, and when anxiety overwhelms me (as it must every now and then - you know this too) I occasionally see it while I am conscious too. I see the youth hanging weightless and serene with the dappled light of the sun playing across the chest and the fine machinery of the throat, a body that could not be saved through any action of mine, and I feel sometimes panic and sometimes elation. Not through action, or personal courage, or sensitivity, or compassion, and certainly no possibility for renewal, since the damage has been done.



installation view, 2022

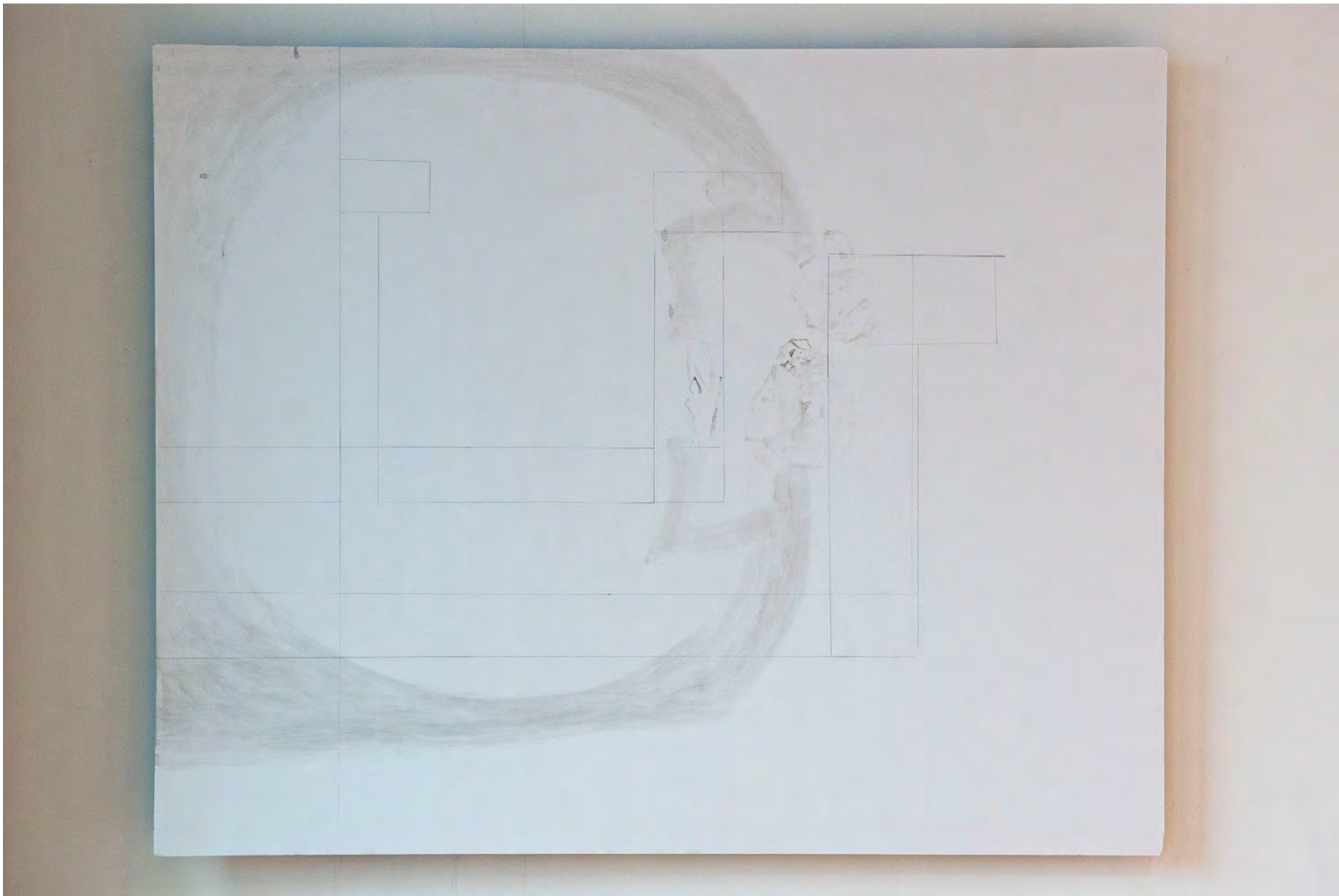
Allan Rand & Spencer Lai
untitled, 2022
Various interior furnishing and objects
Dimensions variable







installation view, 2022



Spencer Lai
untitled, 2022
Pencil and watercolour on foam core
82 X 102 cm
Not for sale



Allan Rand

untitled, 2009

Felt tip pen on paper

21 X 28 cm

\$385

Allan Rand

untitled, 2009

Felt tip and ballpoint pen on paper

29.75 x 21 cm

\$450

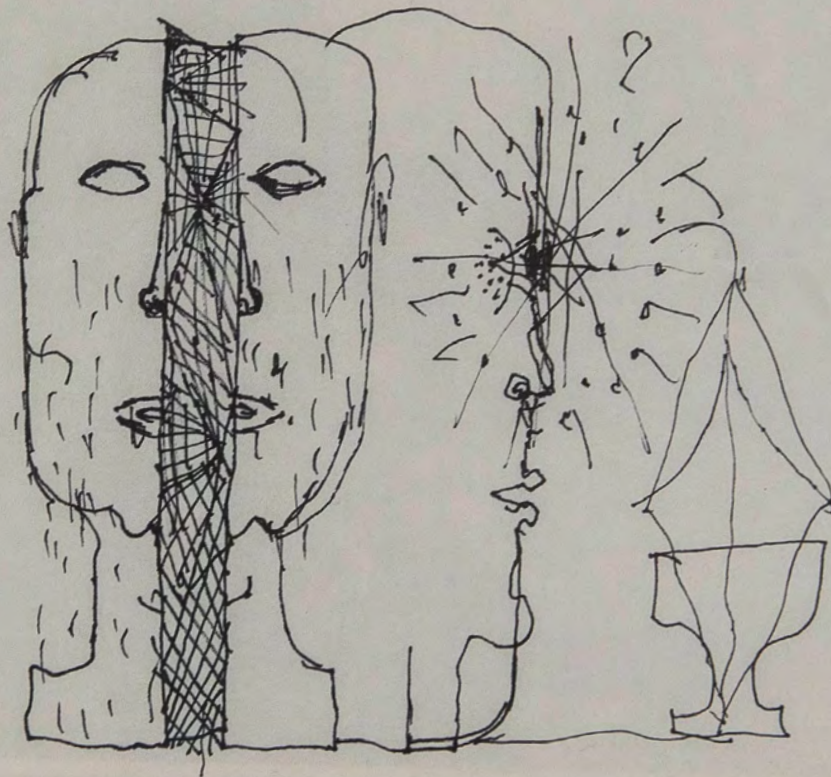
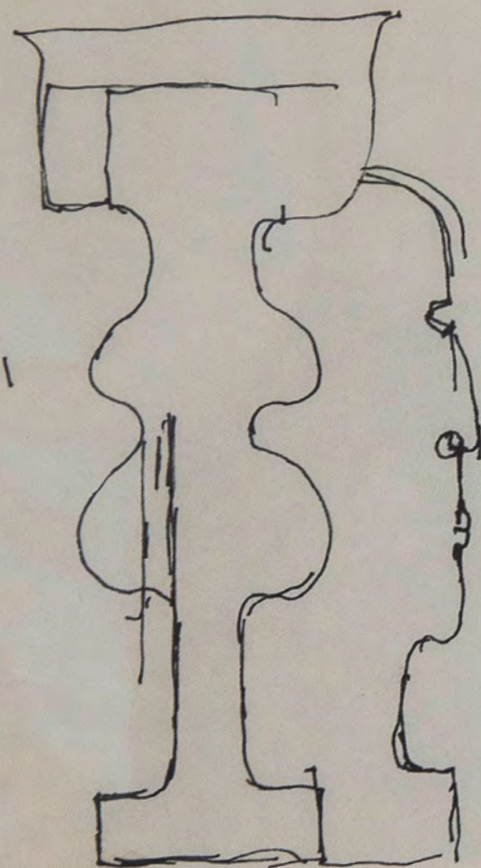
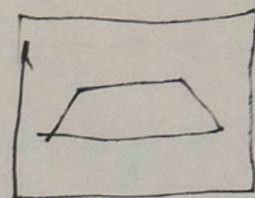
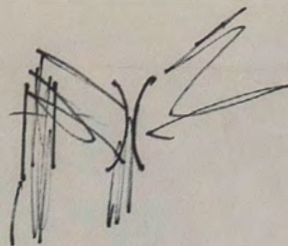
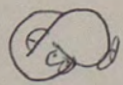
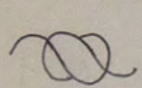
Spencer Lai

untitled, 2022

Spray paint, glass beads, plastic beads, pins, sequins on incised styrofoam

33 X 17.5 cm

POA









Spencer Lai

untitled, 2022

Bone fan segment, plastic beads, glass beads, spray paint, acrylic paint, nail polish, seashells, glitter glue, pencil on incised styrofoam

69 X 18 cm

POA





installation view, 2022



Spencer Lai
untitled, 2022
Balsa wood, silk
organza, nails,
festoon lights,
Perspex, antique
wooden figure
48 X 25 x 92 cm
Not for sale

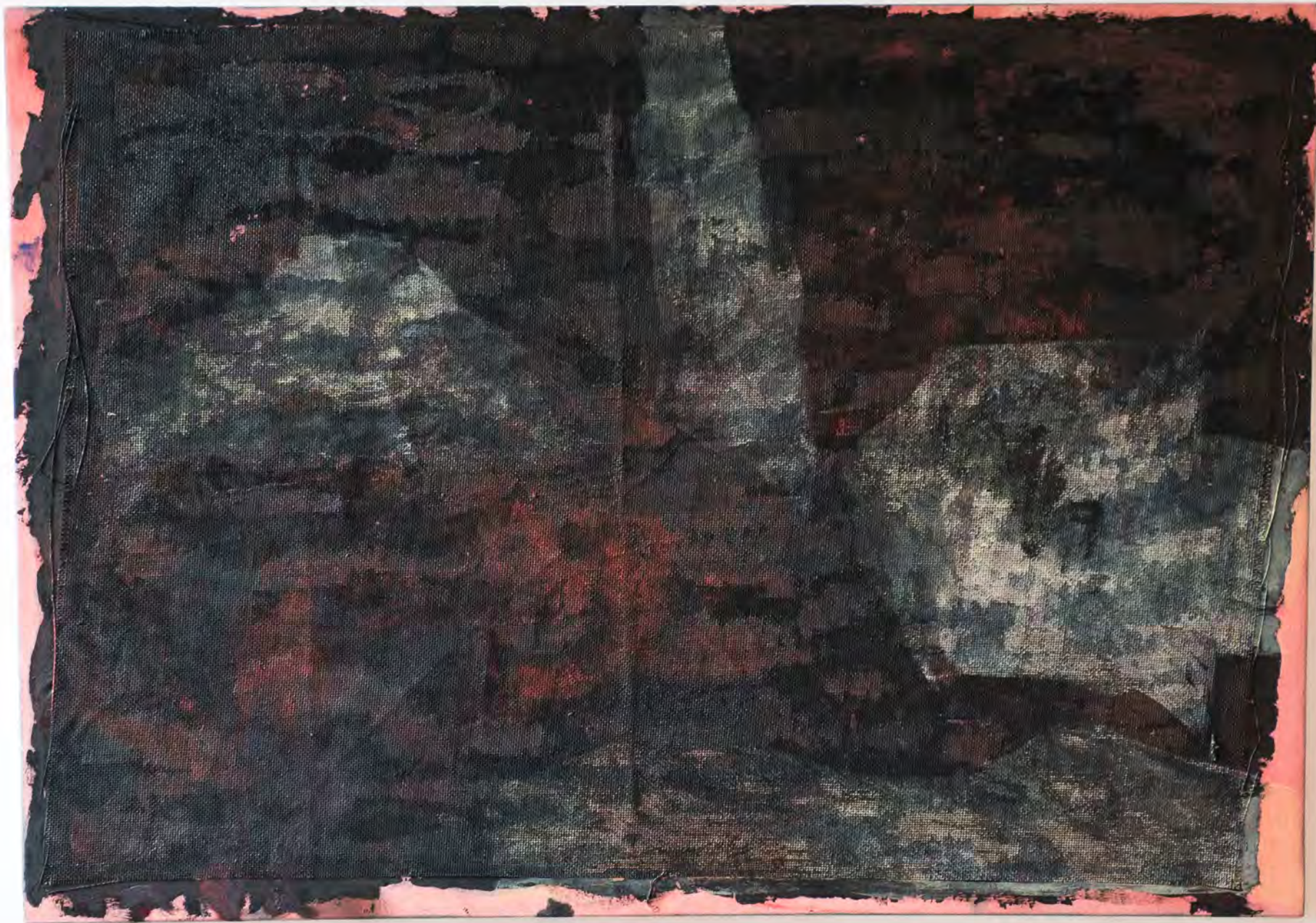




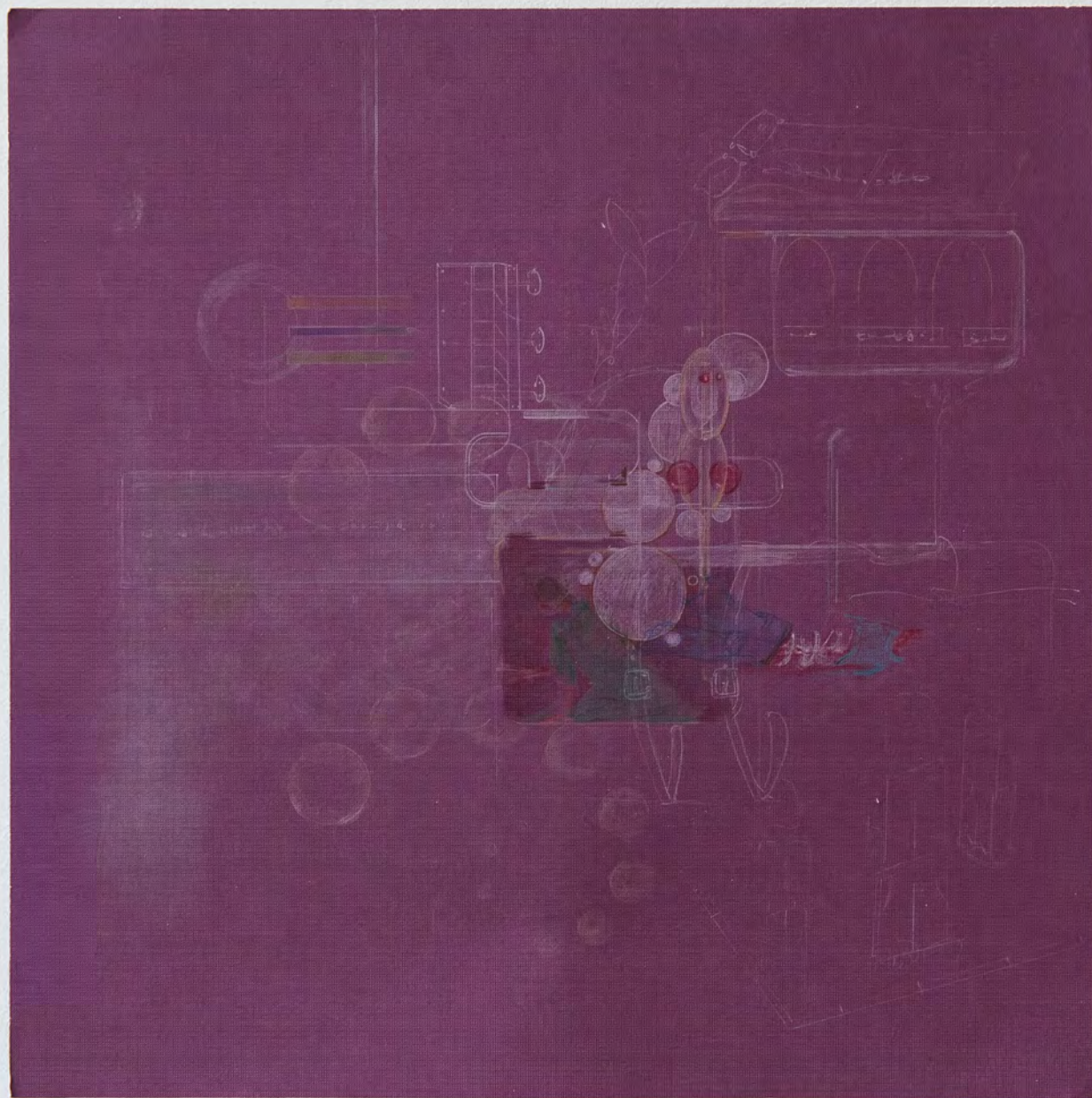


installation view, 2022





Allan Rand
untitled, 2022
Acrylic, glue, oil, gesso, chalk pastel and plastic gauze mesh on cotton
51.5 x 75 cm
\$3600



Spencer Lai
untitled, 2021 - 2022
Colour pencil on paper
30 X 30 cm
POA



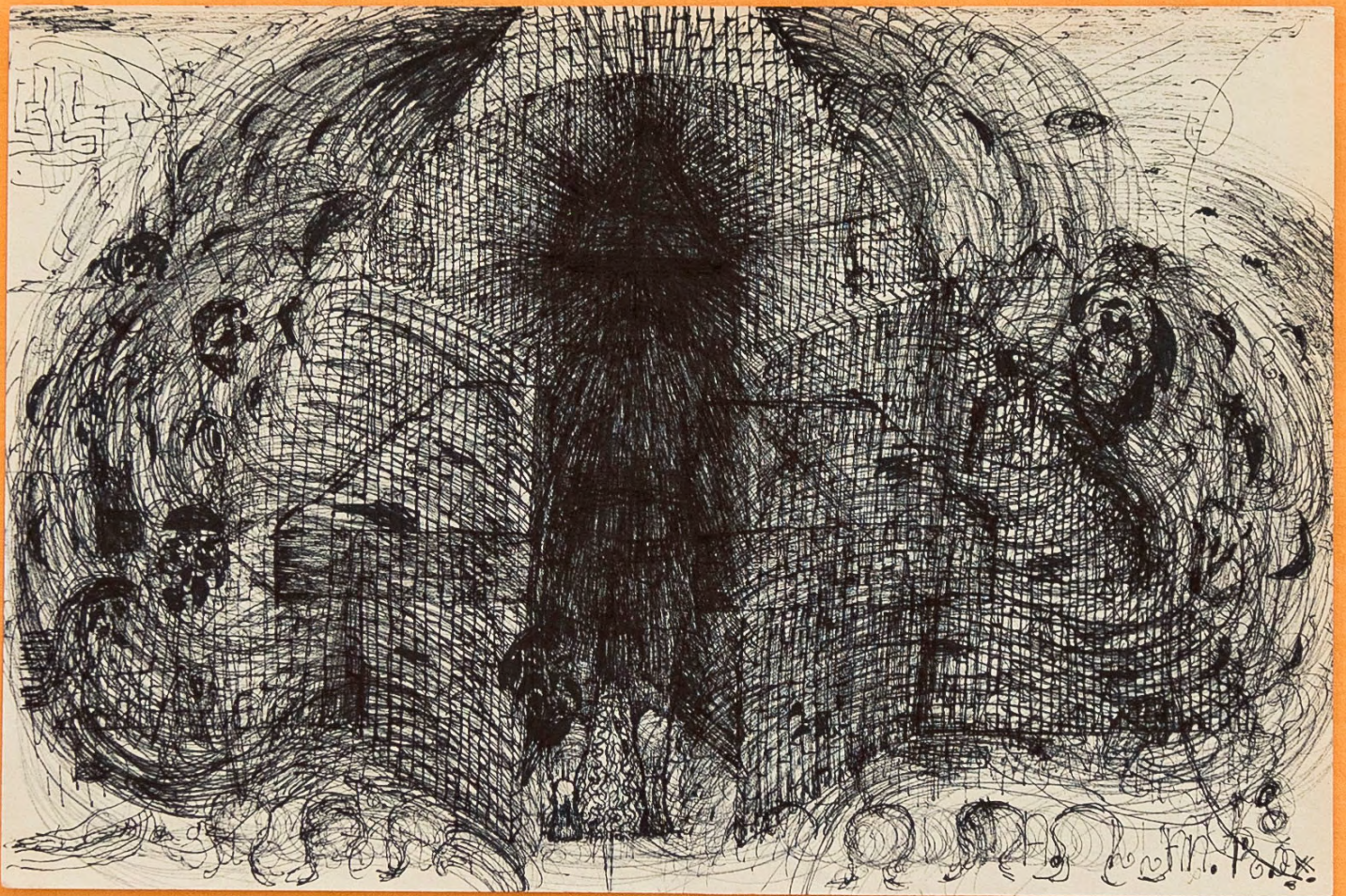
installation view, 2022

installation view, 2022

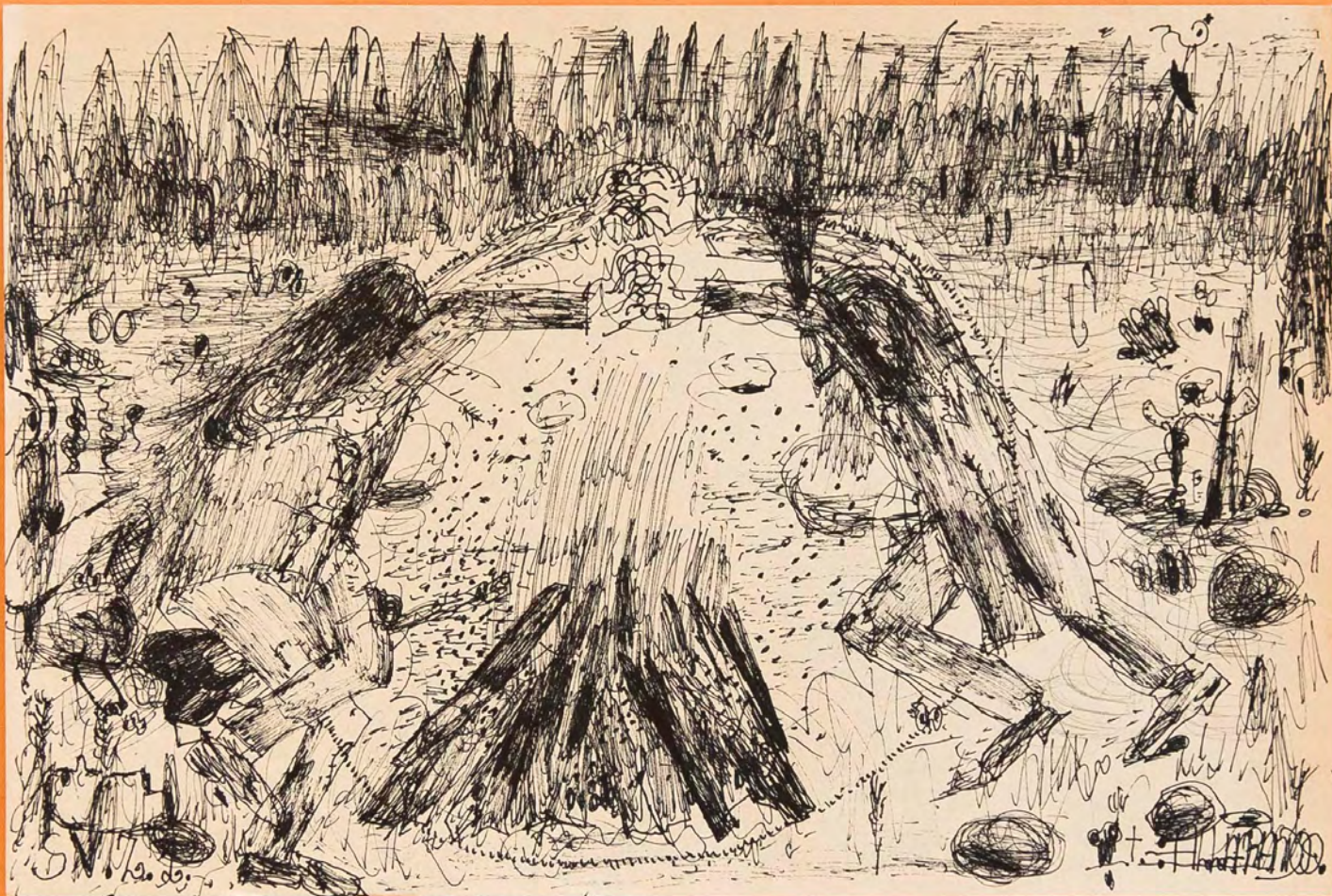




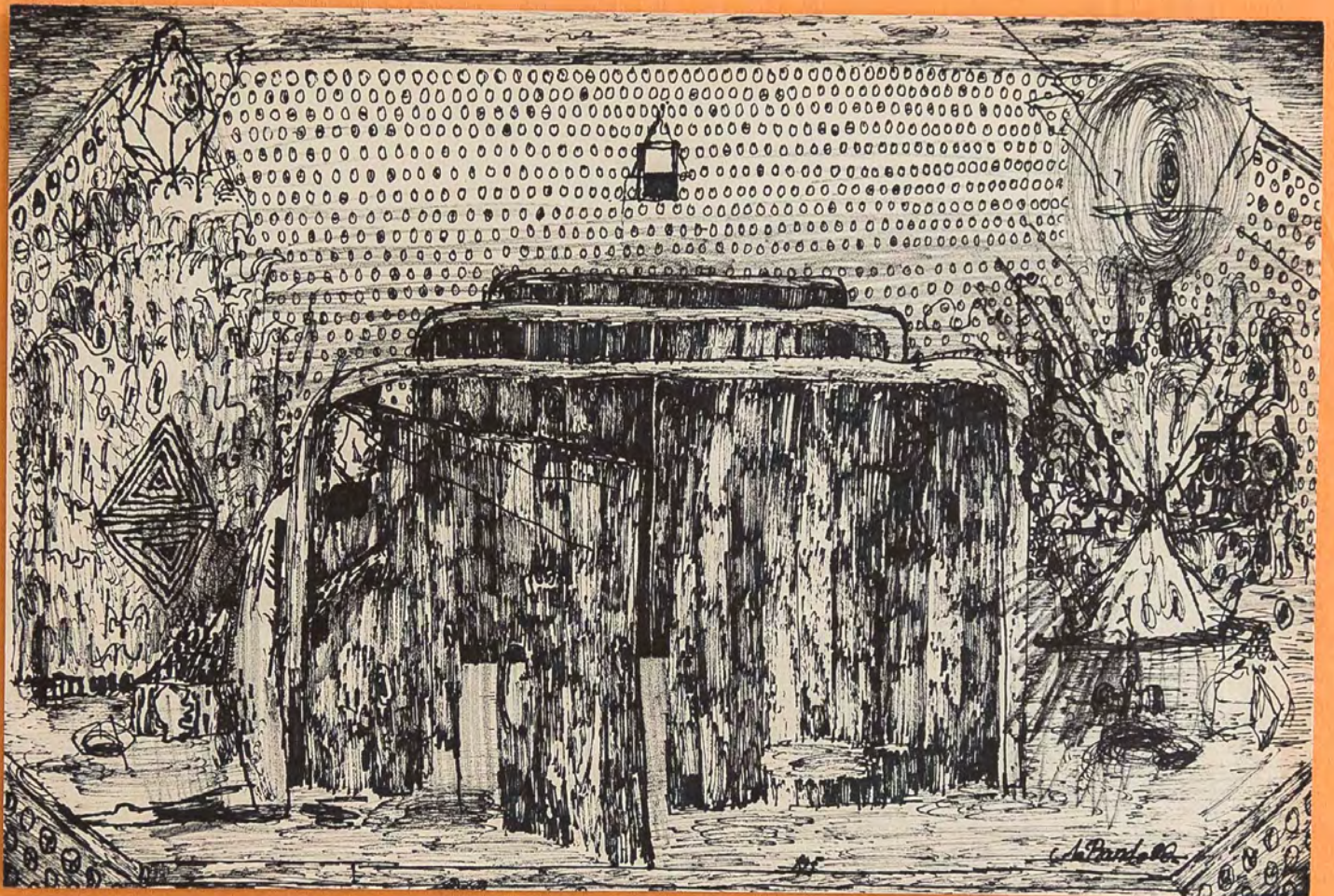




Allan Rand
untitled, 2009
Felt tip pen on paper
51 X 81 cm (29.5 x 21 unframed)
\$600



Allan Rand
untitled, 2009
Felt tip pen on paper
51 X 81 cm (29.5 x 21 unframed)
\$600



Allan Rand
untitled, 2009
Felt tip pen on paper
51 X 81 cm (29.5 x 21 unframed)
\$600

installation view, 2022



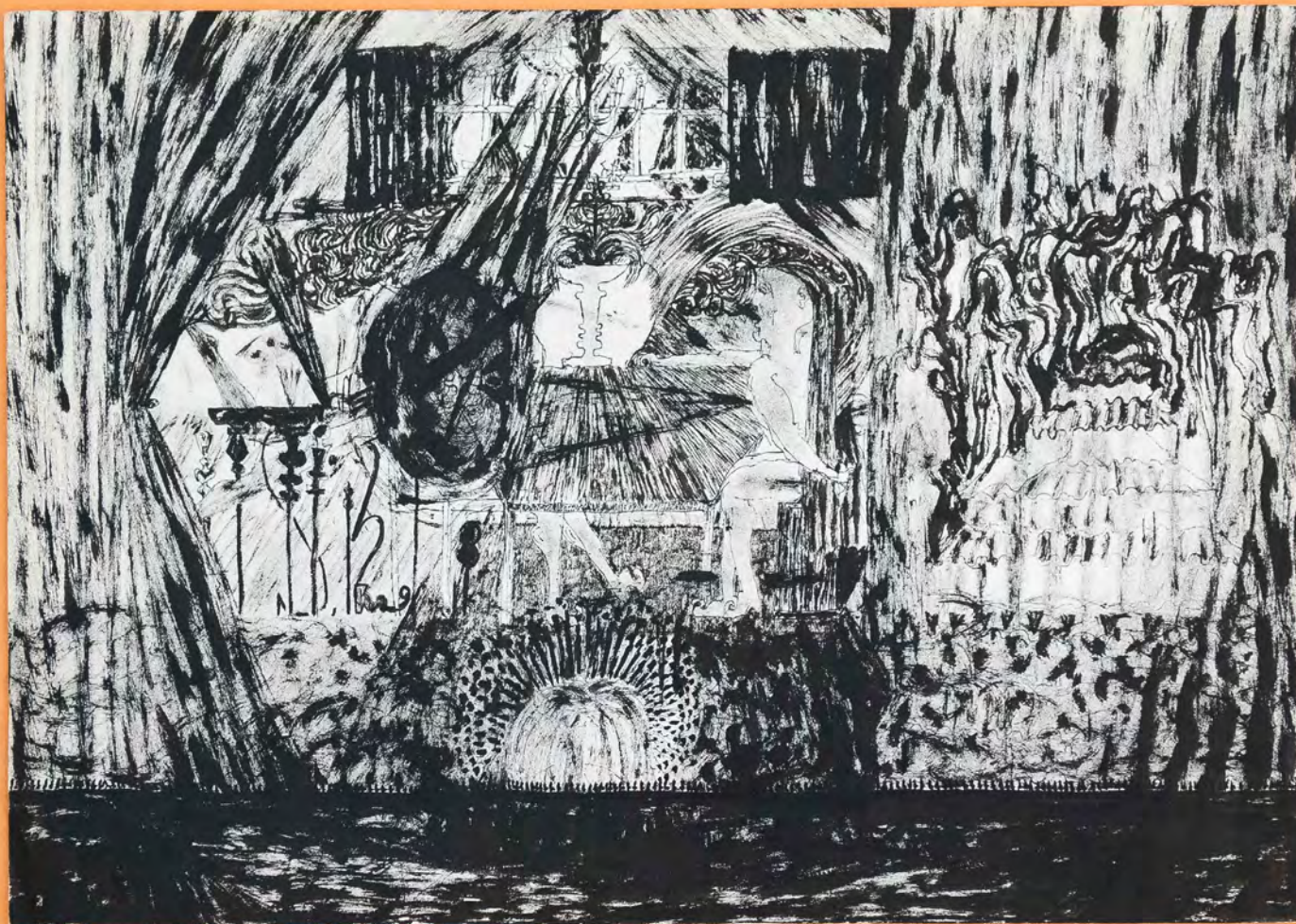
Spencer Lai
untitled, 2022
Found plinth, spray paint
Not for sale





Allan Rand
untitled, 2009
Felt tip pen on paper
29 X 42 cm
POA





Allan Rand
untitled, 2009
India ink on paper
51 X 81 cm (42 X 29 cm unframed)
\$900



Allan Rand
untitled, 2009

Felt tip pen on paper
51 X 81 cm (29.5 x 21 unframed)
\$600



Allan Rand

untitled, 2009

Felt tip pen on paper

51 X 81 cm (29.5 x 21 unframed)

\$600

2003



