

Where the Body Begins

Afshar Malik

Mohsin Shafi

Sahyr Sayed

Zara Asgher

Anushka Rustomji

Madyha Leghari

Sajid Khan

Preview

4 August 2026

5 p.m – 8 p.m

Open till

25 August 2026

11 a.m – 7 p.m

Concept Note:

Bringing together seven distinct vantage points, this exhibition centers the body as both an evolving archive and the primary axis of human experience. By asking where the body begins, the works unsettle familiar binaries; individual and collective, self and other, human and nonhuman, somatic and cerebral. Rather than treating the body as a stable category, they propose it as a shifting threshold through which histories, relationships, and ways of knowing are continually negotiated within a deeply relational web of interdependence.

This collective inquiry began twelve years ago, when the artists came together for a self-organized residency in Murree, Pakistan. Through days of conversation, shared music, and material experimentation, working with everything from wire, collage, and ink to fruits and vegetables, they formed a practice rooted in play. Although the group later dispersed across continents, a shared preoccupation endured: an interest in the constitution of the body and the limits of its form.

From these early exchanges emerged a collective fascination with the body's fluidity and porosity, and with the question of what can be considered a body at all. The works in this exhibition have developed gradually through each artist's individual practice. Together, they span investigations of the female body, its visibility, vulnerability, and uneasy entanglement with the natural world. They also explore the body's relationship to the nonhuman, whether arboreal, elemental, or extending to the seemingly insentient bodies of clouds and landscapes. Across these diverse approaches, the body emerges not as a bounded object but as a site of continual exchange, where material, ecological, and social worlds meet and transform one another.

All That a Body Holds

“We’re all stuck in our bodies, meaning stuck inside a grid of conflicting ideas about what those bodies mean”

Olivia Laing, *Everbody: A Book About Freedom*

The human body and the bodily experience of being a human are fecund sources of inspiration for creatives, and have been for millennia. From stick figures on cave walls to carefully detailed anatomical studies, from life drawings to delicately carved marble renditions, the human body has perhaps been one of the most depicted across the visual arts, and even beyond. Simultaneously, the body as it exists in the world has also been one of the most contested sites. It has been romanticised, politicised and otherised; it has been debated upon, litigated and criminalised. What, though, is the human body? Is it a biological network? Does it extend beyond its physical boundaries? How does it fit within ecological and sociological paradigms?

These are the provocations that a group of artists contend with in *Where the Body Begins*. In responding to the premise, the seven participating artists also showcase the evolution of their own body of work, as each piece carries the fundamental building blocks of their artistic practices and their engagement with materials and forms. The show as a whole presents a grand narrative that charts the life cycle of a body, from foetal formations to eventual decay. Employing this arbitrary chronology allows us to map the contours of the body, as well as the exhibition.

Madyha Leghari’s ceramics become a logical entry point to the show. Four stoneware pieces examine gestational experiences and their effects on the bodies of the mother and the eventual child. This most fundamental fact, the shaping of a body that will become a human, carries within it manifold layers of bodily experiences and foregrounds essential conversations around its definitions. Where does the self end and the other begin? Does the body necessarily begin within another (human) body? In the

gestational months, does the mother retain her body for herself or is simply a nutritional vessel in service of the body to be? Leghari also looks at the technological interventions during and after birth to answer these questions: breast pumps reminiscent of cow milking machines (*A taste of heart at the back of the throat*), a body suspended foetus-like, surrounded with lab paraphernalia (*Water Bodies*). In *Gentle Hands* we are reminded of how a birthing body physically breaks to push out a new one, while *Goosebump* takes the fact of life to a more cellular level.

Similar feminine concerns echo in Sahyr Sayed's work, who continues her investigations into the porosity of a body, both physically and socially. *Mothering runnels III* expands upon previous works from this series; where earlier works expressed a certain anxiety and ferocity, this is decidedly more joyous. Abstractive petal-like female anatomy features prominently. It functions as a portal to life, but also joy and pleasure. It pulsates a palpable inner rhythm. Surrounded by this structure are Sayed's usual protozoic mark-makings and collages—these appear in *Cake V* as well. Both these works together represent a body as a place of life, as sensorial sites rife with hedonistic tendencies; they also look at feminine bodies and their socially imposed domestic accoutrements, taking the body out of itself and extending it to its immediate interior world and desires.

Desire and physicality cannot be divorced from the act of inhabiting a body. Mohsin Shafi's work underscores this. However, desire is one of the most controlled and surveilled aspects of human lives. Feminine and queer desires are constantly challenged, and so are any physical intimacies outside the confines of the heteronormative experience. Many bodies that are otherised along these lines are forced to compartmentalise these feelings. Shafi's work addresses this conundrum through several works: ceramic collars (*I Breathe. I Do... I-III*), natural flowers in resin shaped as dental moulds (*I Heard My Tooth Whisper... I-V*), and an illustration on paper (*If Schiele...*). What the pieces hold in common are repressed bodily desires and an acceptance of the self. The containers of these

emotions, similar to Sayed, take the body beyond its physical barriers and places it in communion with its familial, sentimental objects.

This layered interiority and exteriority of a body forms the basis of Zara Asgher's recent work, where she observes bodies in space and bodies interacting socially. Through observations borne of drawing in public spaces, Asgher seeks to identify the social mores that structure interactions between bodies along gendered lines and other social dynamics. She draws the body as several distinct inner and outer layers that spill upon each other to create a whole 'Body' (Divided, Divisible I-II). Attention is also paid to physical movement and reflects the anatomical concerns of Leghari and Sayed. Leaky Formations call forth the mechanics of bodily movements; all three pieces also hint at eventual failure of these biological machines.

Where does the body go once it fails though? For some, the ground, the others the air. For all, back to the elements.

Afshar Malik, Anushka Rustomji and Sajid Khan, on the other hand, occupy themselves with the body in exterior spaces, but also ponder upon on how time affects the afterlife of a body.

Anushka Rustomji, for instance, muses upon the intersection of the natural world with the human form. Drawing from her interest in mythologies and cross-cultural sacred traditions, and the visual representation of these, she imagines hybrid figures into existence. Arboreal Being I-II are both pencil on paper works that investigate the relationship between different types of bodies: humans, nature and myths. They serve as reminders that the human form ultimately returns to an elemental state, while also emphasising myths that forge connection between the human body and the natural world—a connection that often feels severed and leads to disillusioned, disembodied experiences. Rustomji's work also radiates a sense of the effects of time on bodies, on landscapes.

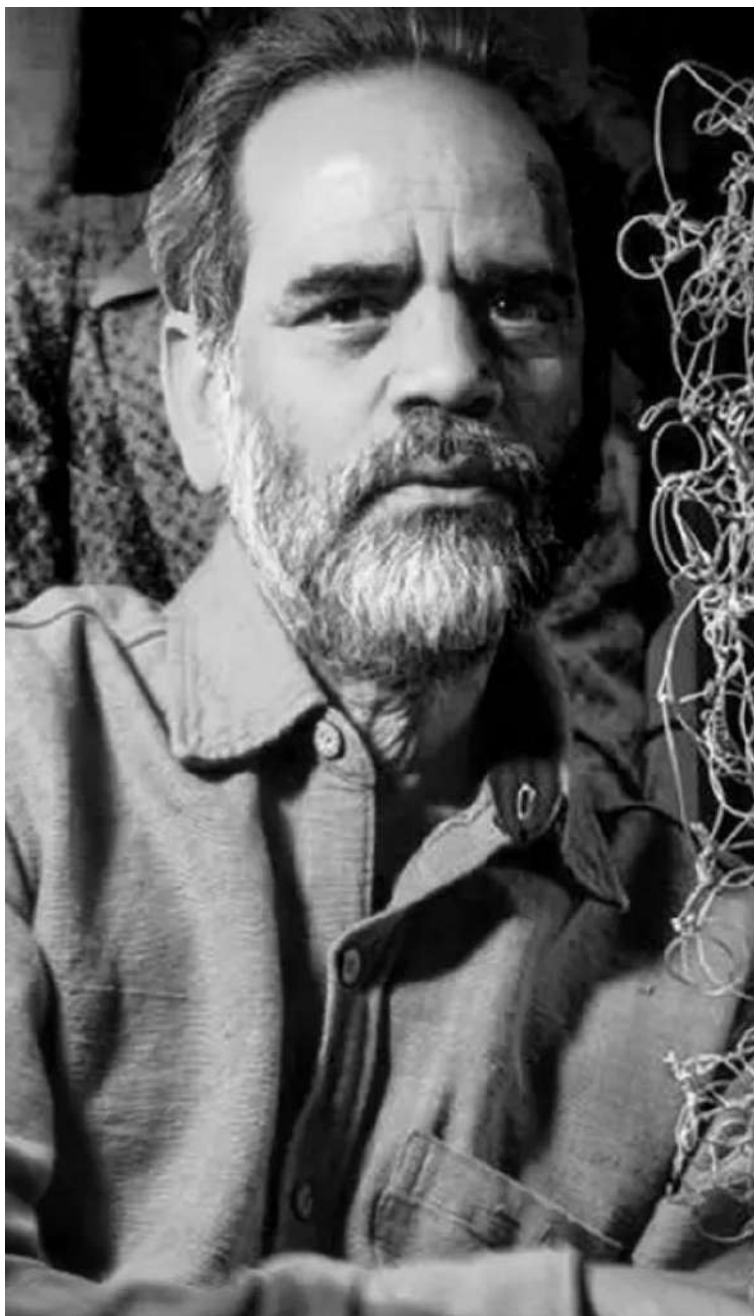
Where Rustomji looks earthwards, Sajid Khan takes our gaze upwards, to the clouds. Big roiling, swirling masses of clouds—bodies in their own right—confront us in *Disrupted Horizons*, eschewing common conception of tangible bodies. Clouds are massive compositions of water, transformed into a different state—they hold life, they hold terror, they hold imagined creatures. This transformational aspect is also reflected in *It goes*, where it comes from, where we witness destruction and metamorphosis. Khan's depiction of clouds as forms of terror and beauty result from childhood cloud gazing and living under increasingly terrifying political circumstances. His work, then, is also a story of the harm done to the body of the world.

The preoccupations of all the artists in the show coalesce neatly in Afshar Malik's two pieces, both oil paint markers on acrylic foam sheets. *It Burns, It Ends* seamlessly merges the interior and exterior and is drawn as if one has stumbled upon a place without a body, but the signs of habitation are recognisable through its domestic hoard—the shoes left in the corner, the neatly arranged paraphernalia on the shelf. What makes a body and what makes a life are all elucidated in this scene. *Luminous Wind*, however, is a piece that probably reflects the central conceit of the show, as well as the essence of all other pieces presented, most concisely. We gaze upon a multi coloured forestscape; branches move in all directions, they criss-cross, twist upon themselves. It is a forest; but it can also be a neural network, a close up of cells, social structures mapped out, mycelial frameworks that, hidden, govern various aspects of our lives, or even a macrocosmic rendering of galaxy clusters. It is no wonder that Malik's work lends itself to such an all encompassing reading—he taught all the other artists after all.

Ultimately, where the body begins is a question left to the audience to answer. What is exhibited is a range of reflections. There are thematic overlaps and diversions between the works of all artists, but there is also a common element of play, as they all take liberties with materials and layers and methods. The main proposition of the show draws upon Laing's suggestion that we are stuck in our bodies and defining them is an ongoing negotiation that ultimately defines our experience of inhabiting one.

Hassan Tahir Latif

08.2026



Afshar Malik

Afshar Malik (b.1955) has always been a nomad; travelling between times, styles, surfaces, mediums and techniques. He takes any object, material, or imagery, and transforms it in his personal vocabulary. A language, recognized, remembered and respected widely and lovingly. His paintings create a realm of imagination, intuition, and invention. His characters emerge as a combination of men and women, trees, fruits, animals, and other natural elements. These paintings appear as memories of places travelled, conversations had, connections made between people and spaces.

Afshar Malik graduated from the National College of Arts Lahore in 1978. He received a British Council Scholarship to further his passion for printmaking at the Slade School of Fine Arts, London, in 1986. He returned to the National College of Art as a full-time faculty member and taught printmaking and drawing from 1988 to 2015. Besides being known as one of the pioneer printmakers of Pakistan, Afshar's art practice is widespread in different disciplines, including illustrations, cartoon-making, ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, and mixed media. As a mentor, Afshar has inspired generations of young printmakers in Pakistan with his passionate style of art-making, unique sense of humor, and lively pedagogy.



Afshar Malik

It Burns, It Ends

Oil paint makers on acrylic foam sheet

24 x 36 inches without Frame

26 x 38 inches with frame

2024







Afshar Malik

Luminous Wind

Oil paint makers on acrylic foam sheet

18 x 24 inches without Frame

20 x 26 inches with frame

2024





Mohsin Shafi

Mohsin Shafi is a reader of vernacular visual cultures whose practice unfolds through image, language, and form. Working across still and moving image, sound, installation, and text, he draws upon personal archives, regional poetics, and everyday visual languages to explore memory, desire, intimacy, and belonging within postcolonial South Asia. His recent/ongoing projects approach visual and written language as lived and embodied experiences, allowing translation, interruption, and silence to become integral to the work. Through these inquiries, the body emerges as a space where personal and collective histories are continually negotiated.

Shafi is currently a Fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany. His work has been presented internationally, including a recent institutional solo project at Kunsthalle Krems, alongside exhibitions at Bundeskunsthalle Bonn and Queer Museum Vienna, and residencies at AIR Niederösterreich, Atelier Mondial, and 1646 Experimental Art Space. He holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree from the National College of Arts, Lahore.



Mohsin Shafi

I Breath. I Do.. But You Take My Breath Away - I

Ceramic glaze

4x6 inches

2025

Edition: Unique





Mohsin Shafi

I Breath. I Do.. But You Take My Breath Away - II

Ceramic glaze

4x6 inches

2025

Edition: Unique





Mohsin Shafi

I Breath. I Do.. But You Take My Breath Away - III

Ceramic glaze

4x6 inches

2025

Edition: Unique





Mohsin Shafi

I Heard My Tooth Whisper, 'Root Canal?' Sounds Like My Kind of Deep Therapy! (I - V)

Natural Flower, Resin

2 x 1 x 3 inches Variable

2025







2026



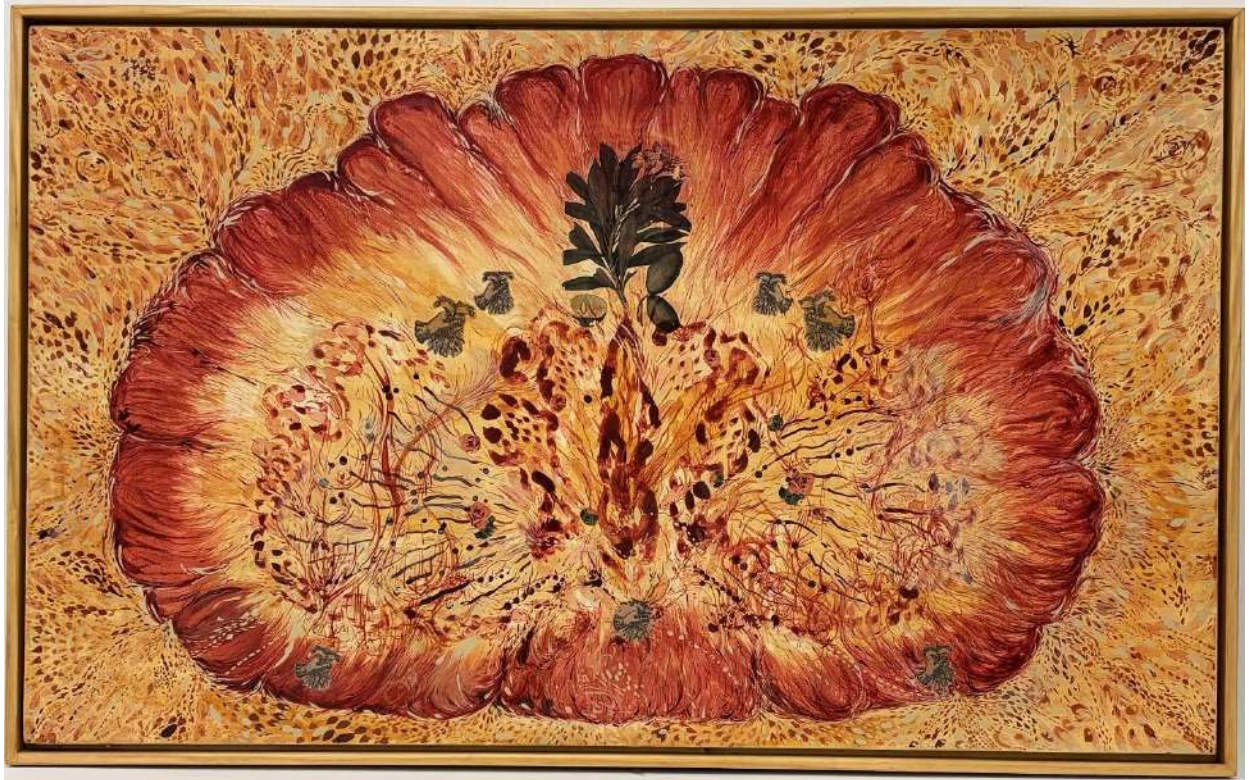


Sahyr Sayed

Sahyr Sayed (b. 1986) is a Lahore-based artist, and educator. Working across painting, assemblage, and installation her work explores domestic spaces, the social construction of gender, and the domestic hoard as an extension of the female body.

The artist has a wide collection of homely or miniature objects which are collected over the years from familial settings, friends and colleagues, to found and bought objects around the city. These collections form a central part of her practice where they spill over into the artwork tangibly as well as thematically. The work can be then imagined as time capsules of sentiments, dwellings of hope and survival.

Sayed completed her BFA from the National College of Arts (2012). Alongside her studio practice, she is currently a faculty member at the National College of Arts and an MPhil candidate. Sayed co-founded June Collective in 2022, an initiative fostering dialogue and collaboration between artists and creative communities, and has served as an Art Curriculum Consultant for the Malala Fund. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally.



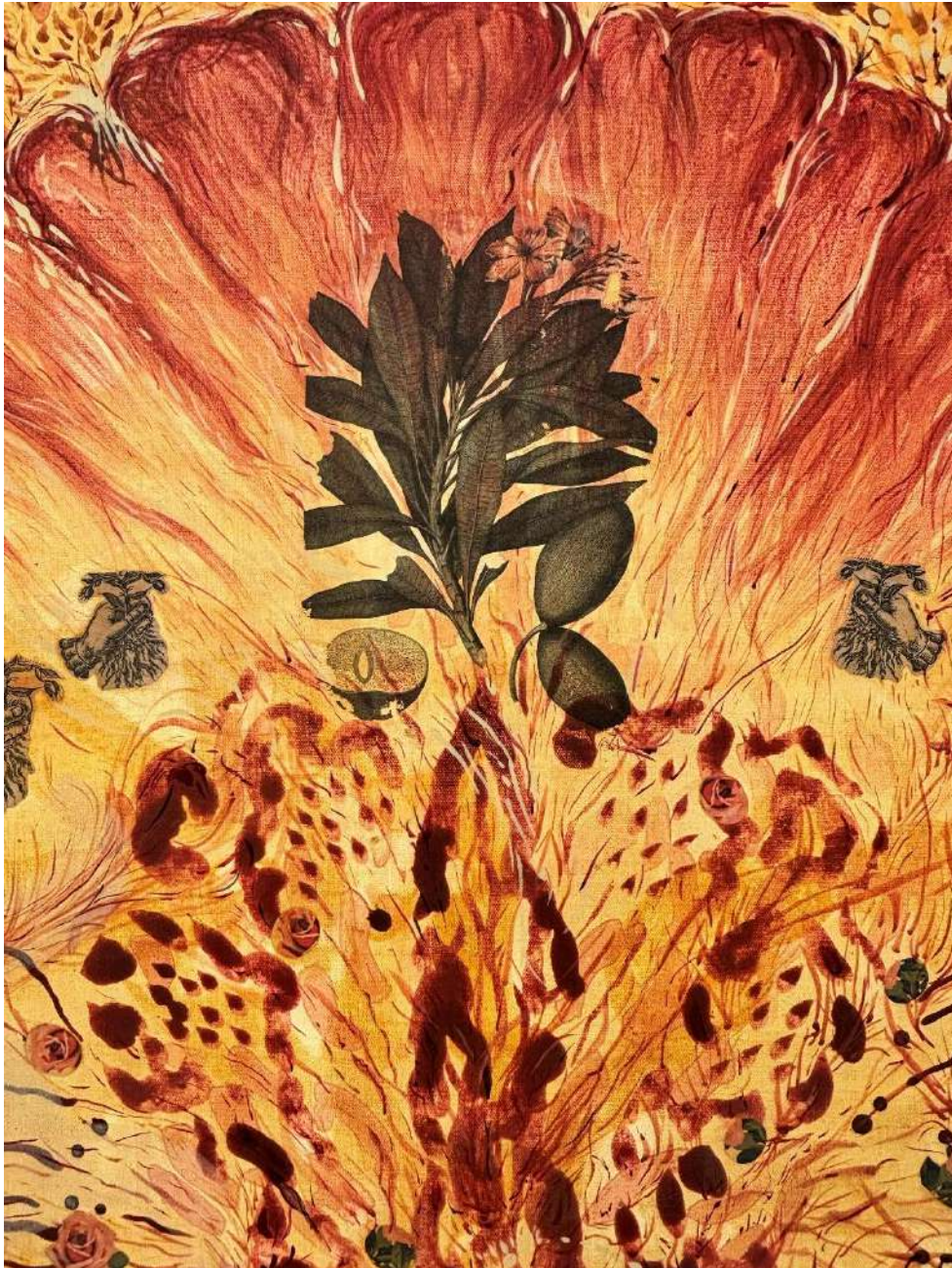
Sahyr Sayed

Mothering runnels III

Acrylic, collage, photo transfer on canvas

38 x 61.5 inches with Frame

2026









Sahyr Sayed

Cake V

Acrylic, collage, Collage on canvas

19 x 25 inches with Frame

2026





Photograph by Lu Chen

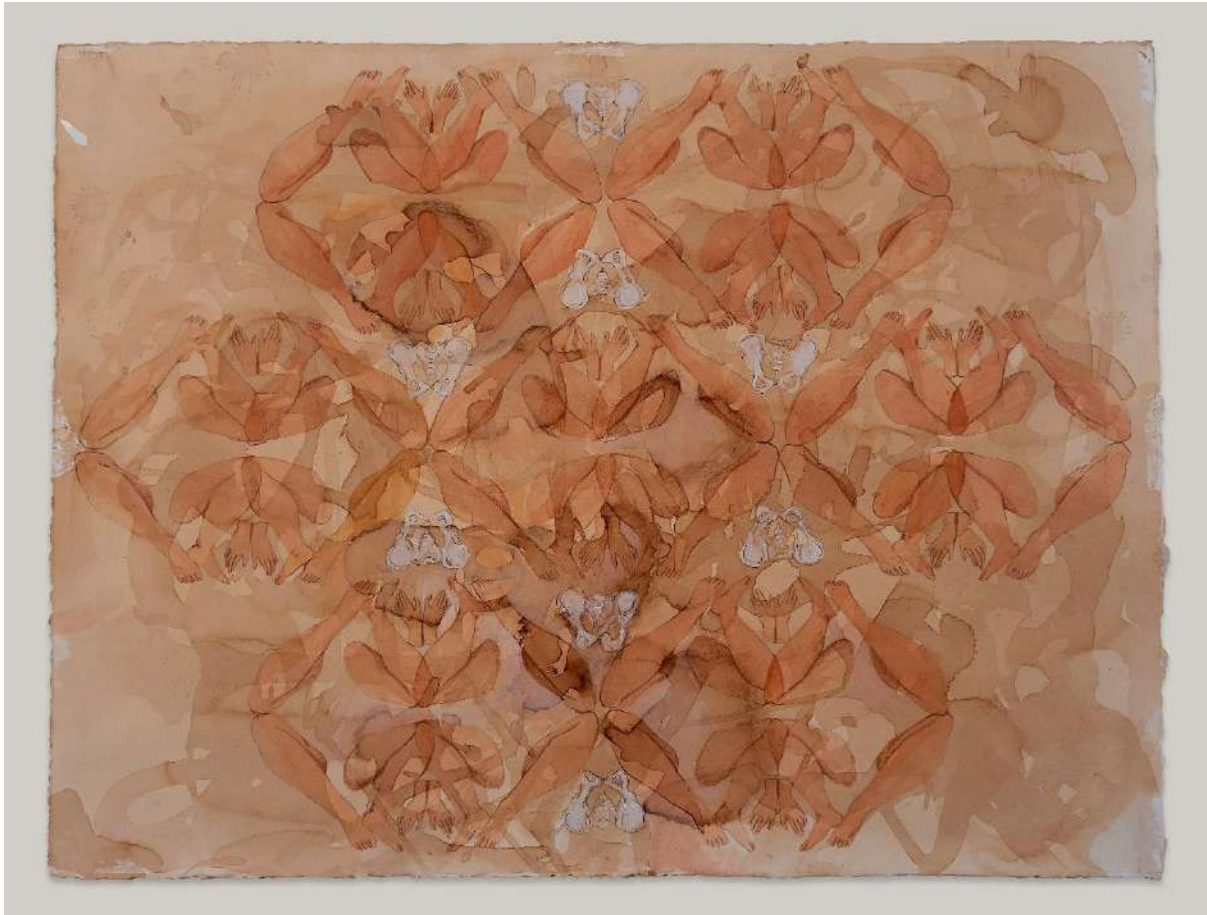
Zara Asgher

Zara Asgher (b.1987) is a visual artist and educator from Lahore, Pakistan, currently living and practicing in Finland.

Drawing in public spaces is an integral investigative tool used to map out power dynamics governing gendered behavior and social interaction. Repetition plays a central role forming these behavioral patterns. Through repetition, norms take hold, structuring the body's movements, desires, and ways of being. The subsequent studio practice takes shape from these observations.

The drawings and paintings then visualise and conceptualise the human body as a set of layered surfaces where internal and external realities disconnect. The artworks isolate the glitches where the body slips, where it disconnects from itself and others. New modes of sensing and becoming emerge, mapping alternative landscapes.

Asgher holds a BFA from National College of Arts (2011), Lahore. She was awarded a scholarship to pursue an MA in Nordic Visual Studies and Art Education at Aalto University (2022), Finland. During this time, she worked on art educational programming with the Espoo Museum of Modern Art (EMMA), and the Finnish Museum of Photography. Asgher is working as an After School Activities leader at the European School of Helsinki. Apart from her independent practice, she is also working as part of an artist duo with Laura Hasanen in Helsinki from 2022.



Zara Asgher

Leaky Formations

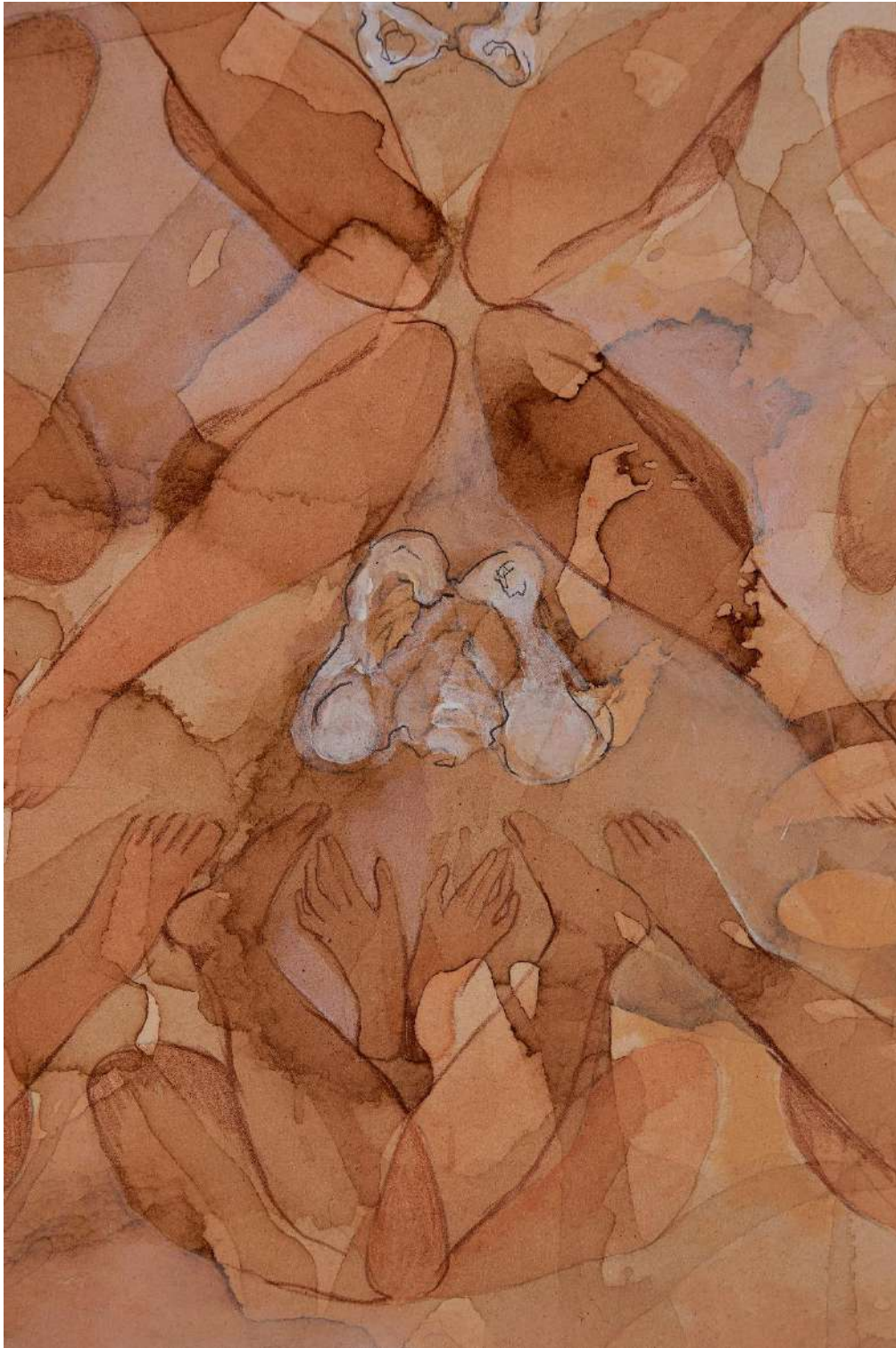
Mixed media on paper

22 x 29 inches without Frame

26.5 x 33.5 inches with Frame

2026







Zara Asgher

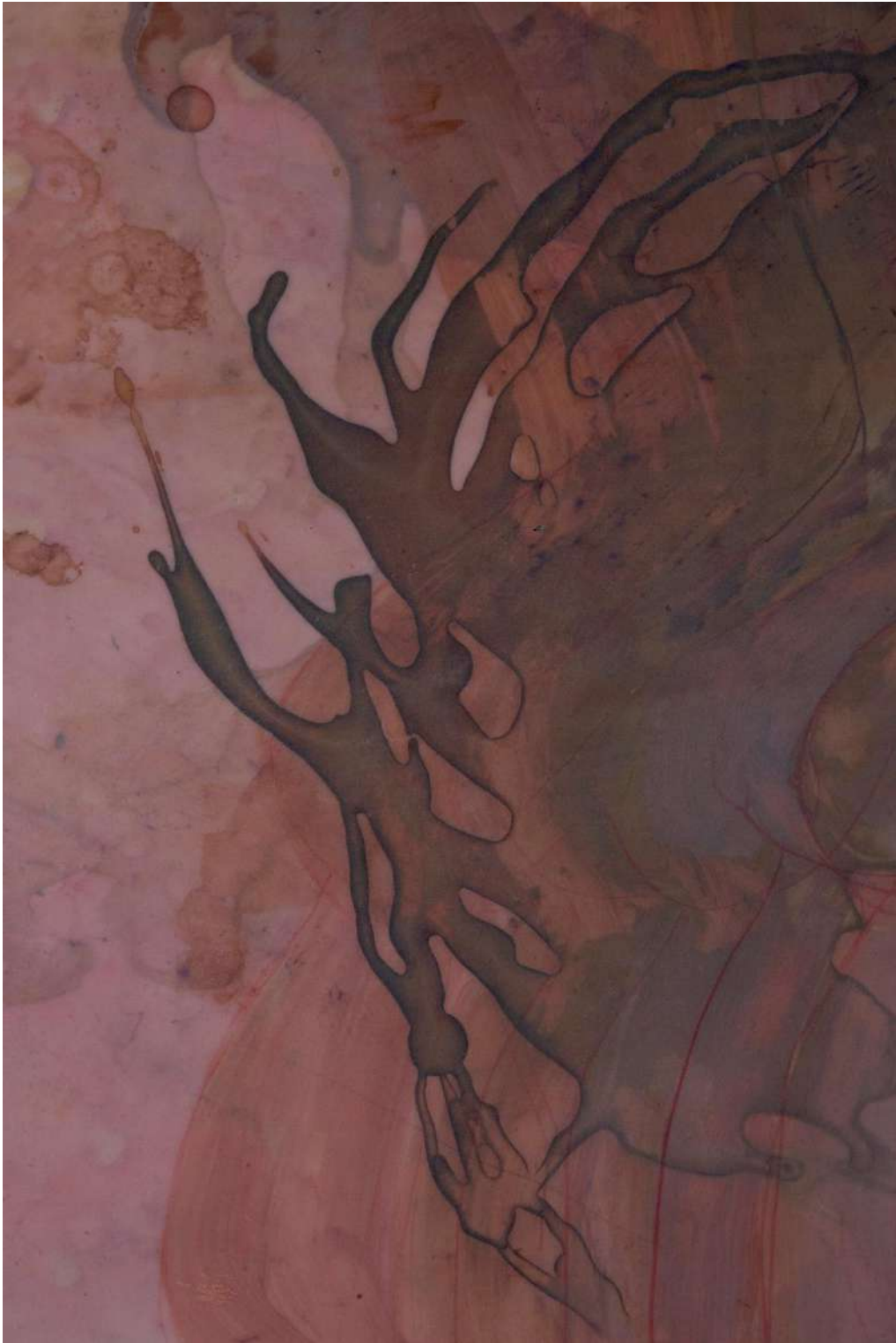
Divided, Divisible (I)

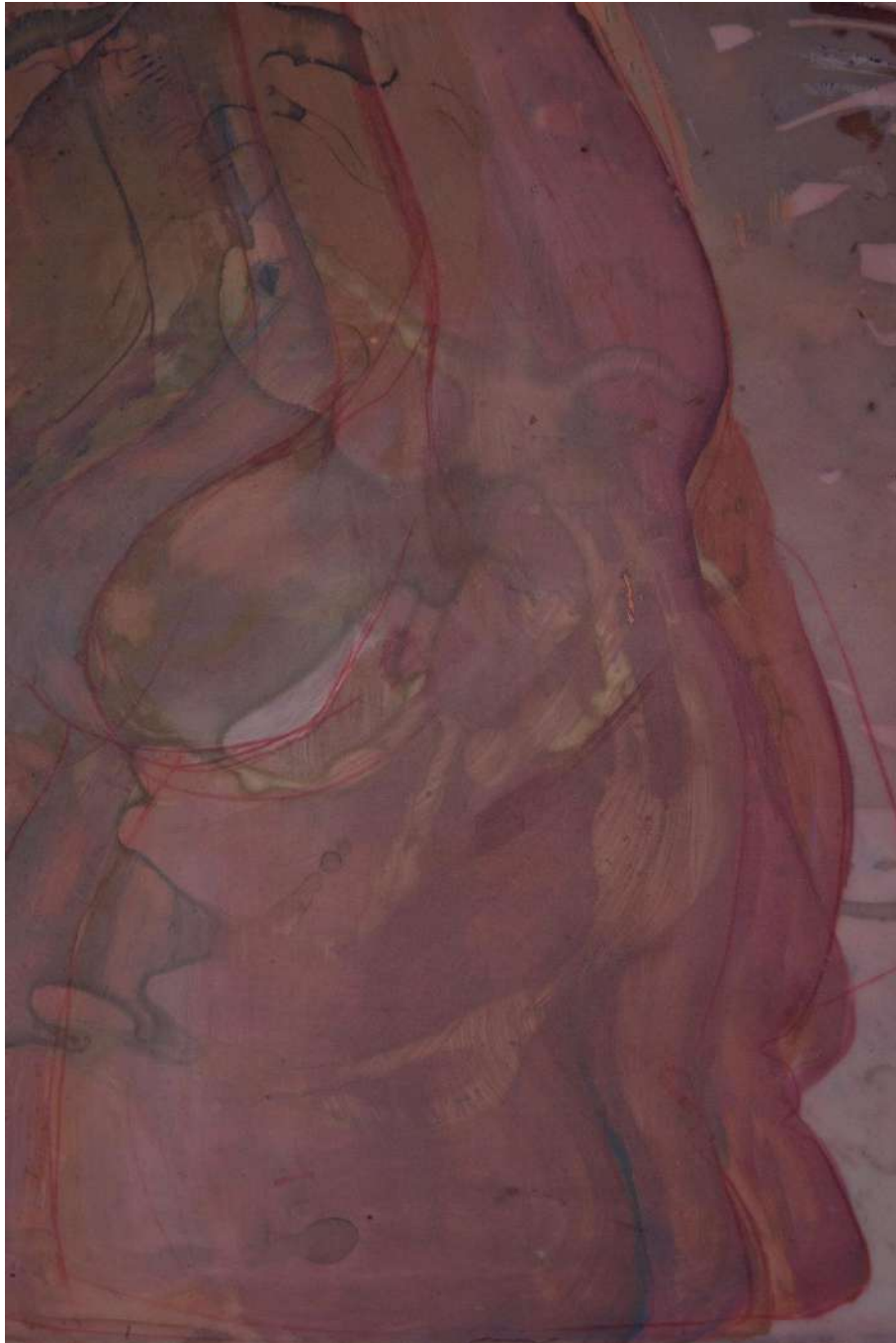
Acrylics on vellum drafting sheets

11 x 14 inches without Frame

15 x 18 inches with Frame

2025







Zara Asgher

Divided, Divisible (II)

Acrylics on vellum drafting sheets

11 x 14 inches without Frame

15 x 18 inches with Frame

2025



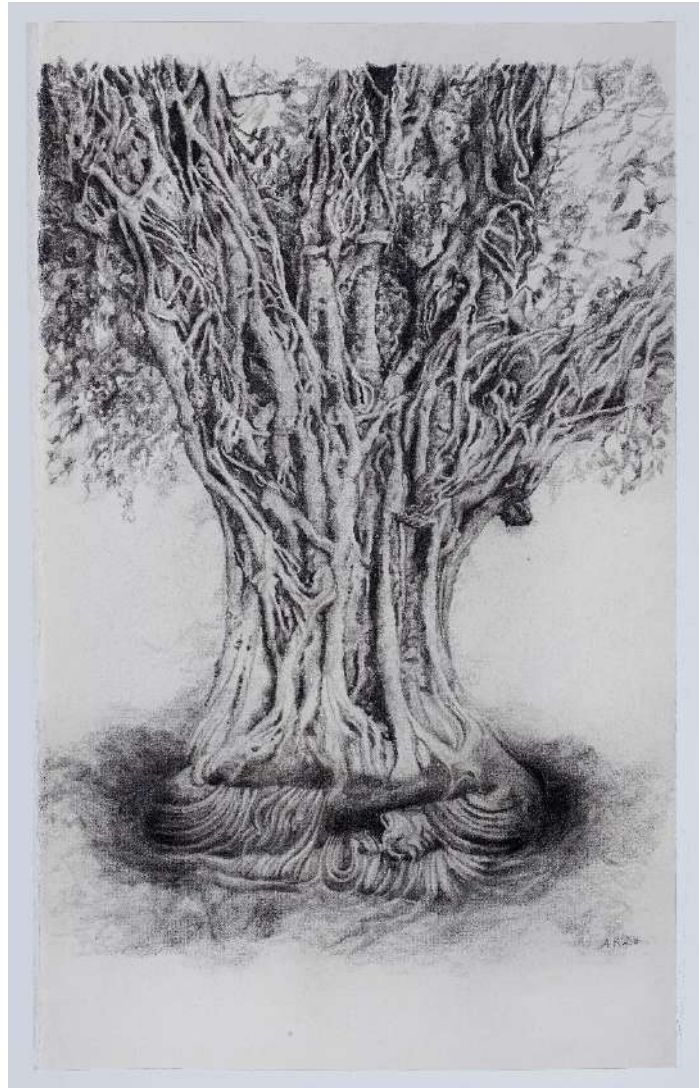




Anushka Rustomji

Anushka Rustomji (b. 1989) is a visual artist whose practice examines themes of cultural and historical erasure, duality, and transcendence. Her works are influenced by the visual representations of mythologies and cross-cultural sacred practices and traditions of the Global South. The work in this series seeks to explore the connection and coalescence of the human form with plant entities. These amalgamations result in drawings of forms of imagined beings, whose bodies are rooted in the commonplace of cross-cultural mythologies focusing on ancient arboreal stories (some originating from subcontinental sacred art references, and others being depictions found in ancient Near-Eastern texts). The myths themselves emphasize the idea of hybridization, not just of bodily form, but as manifestations of the sacred and the earthly, that seek to access divinity within humanity.

She is an alumna of the National College of Arts, (Lahore) and was a participant in the Pilotenkueche artist residency (Leipzig). Rustomji has exhibited her work internationally, including at *Way of the Forest*, Colomboscope (Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2024), *The Land Sings Back*, (Drawing Room, London, 2025) and is a faculty member at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi.



Anushka Rustomji

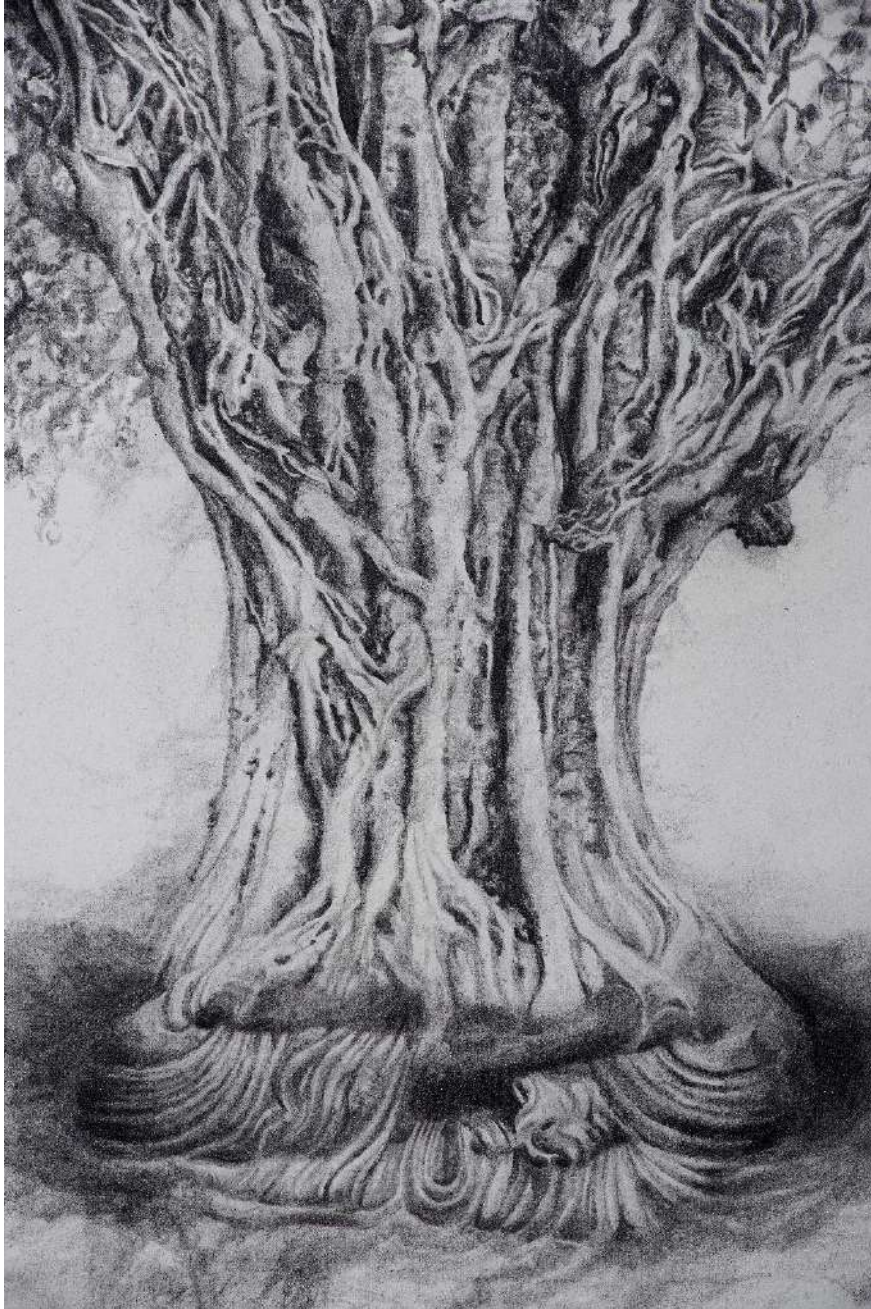
Arboreal Being (II)

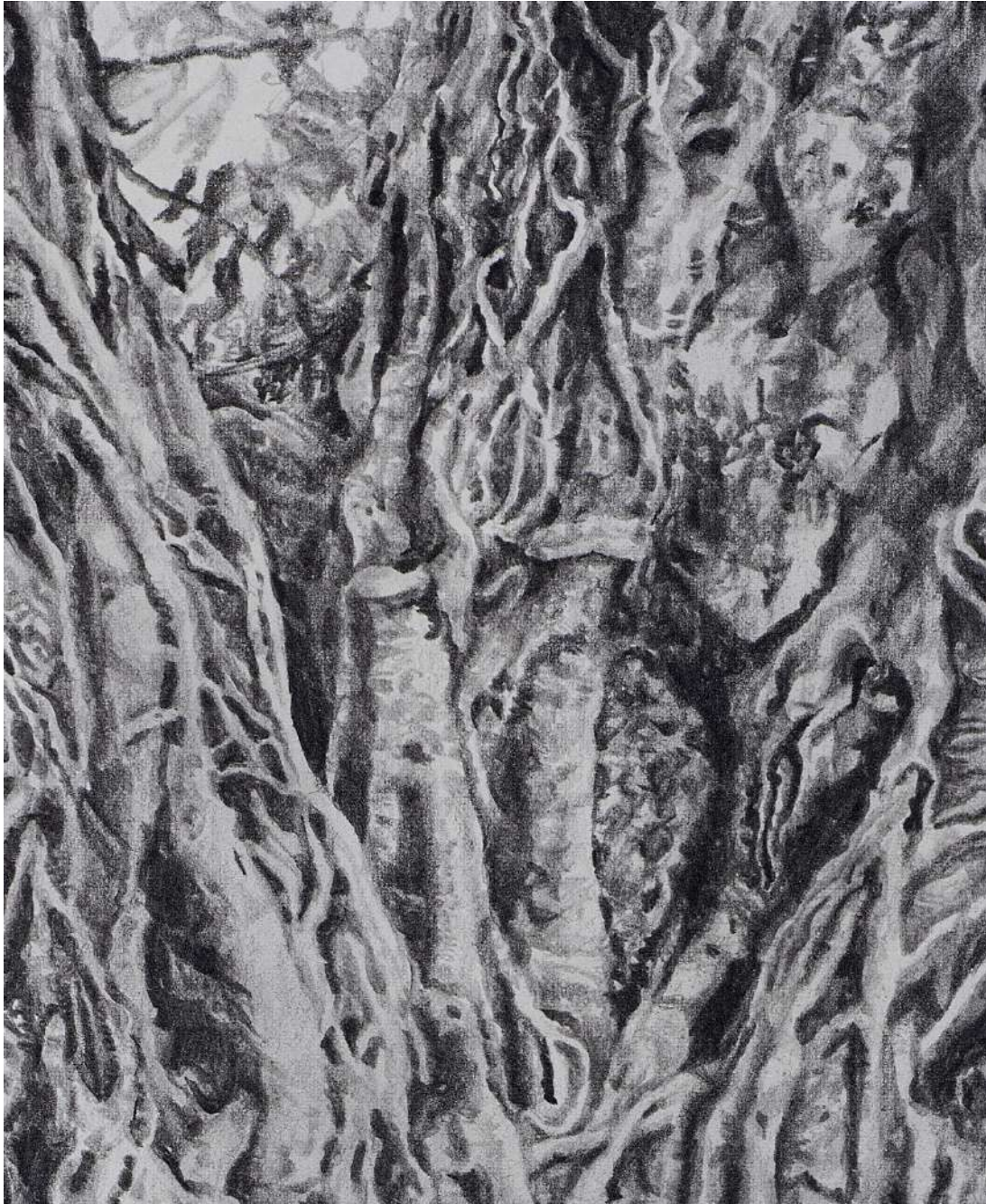
Pencil on paper

18 x 11 inches without Frame

23 x 16 inches with Frame

2026







Anushka Rustomji

Arboreal Being (I)

Pencil on paper

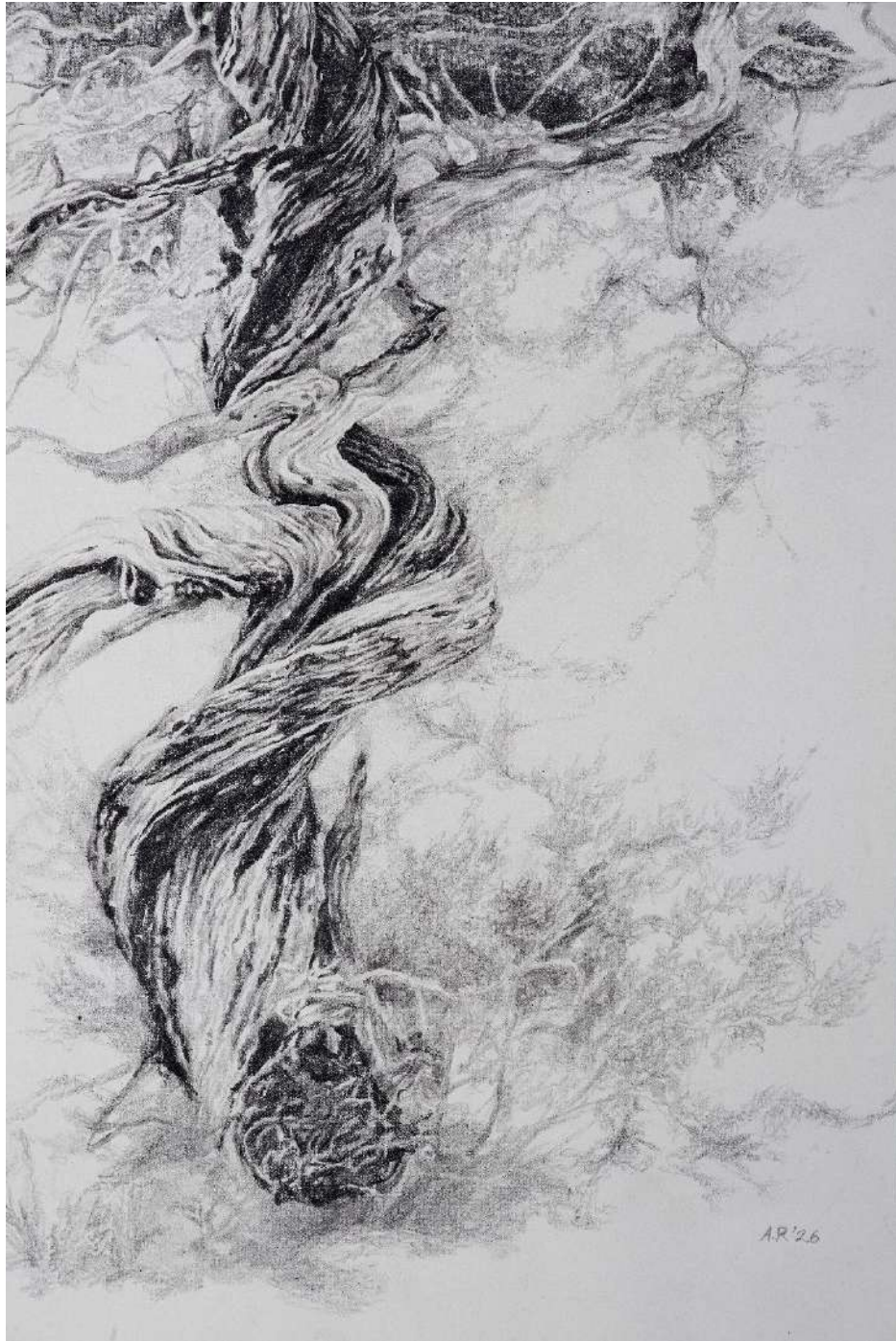
27 x 11 inches without Frame

32.5 x 16.5 inches with Frame

2026







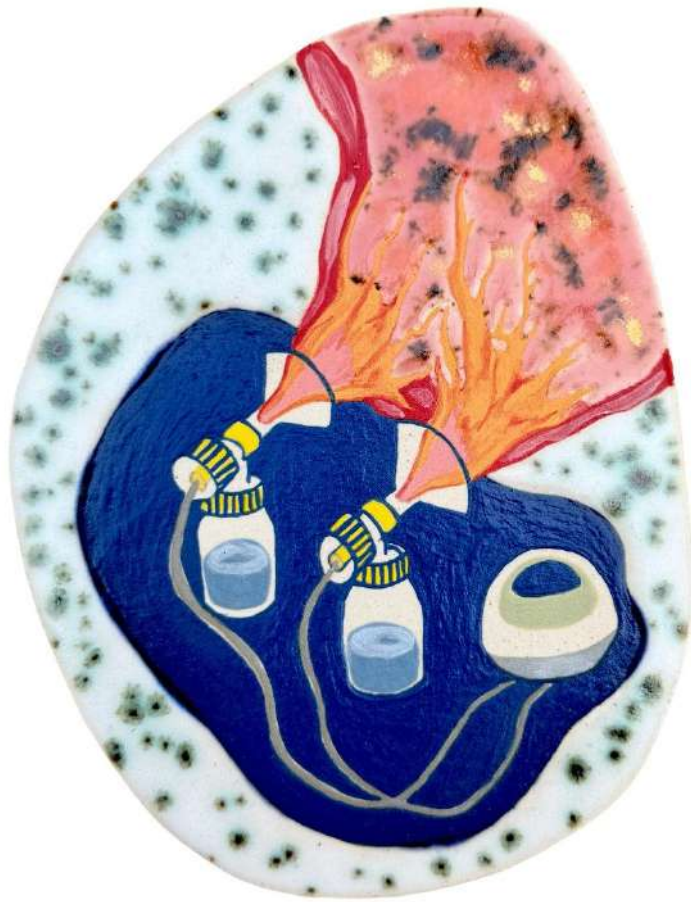


Madyha Leghari

Madyha Leghari (b. 1991) is a visual artist, writer, and educator, currently based in Washington DC. Her practice often addresses the instability of language and the body revealing how both resist fixed meaning. In recent works, she is interested in the phenomenological experience of pregnancy, a condition in which the body becomes multiple, time folds in unfamiliar ways, and the boundary between self and other is breached. She also examines the tenuous and often contradictory ways we define what is “natural,” especially in relation to gestation and birth.

Madyha earned a BFA at the National College of Arts, Lahore (2013) and an MFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (2018) through a Fulbright Scholarship. Madyha has been the recipient of the Folger Artistic Research Fellowship, Nicholson Studio Residency; Bresler Residency at VisArts; Wherewithal Research Grant; Hamiltonian Artists Fellowship; Mansion Artist Residency; Delta Research Placement at the Flat Time House; Vasl Fiction Writing Mentorship; Siena Art Institute Artist Residency and the Murree Museum Residency. She is currently a finalist for the Trawick Prize and a semi-finalist for the Patricia Massey Momentum Award.

Madyha has exhibited globally at prestigious venues including the Kreeger Museum, Pera Museum, Karachi Biennale, University of Colorado Boulder, Bennington College, Sea Foundation, The Institute for Experimental Arts, Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival, Images Festival, and others spanning the Americas, Asia, and Europe. Her work has found mention in the Washington Post, Artforum, and The News Pakistan, amongst others. She has upcoming exhibitions at The Nicholson Project, VisArts, University of Maryland and the Phillips Collection.



Madyha Leghari

A taste of heart at the back of the throat

Stoneware, underglaze and glaze

6 x 4.4 x inches & 3mm thickness

2026





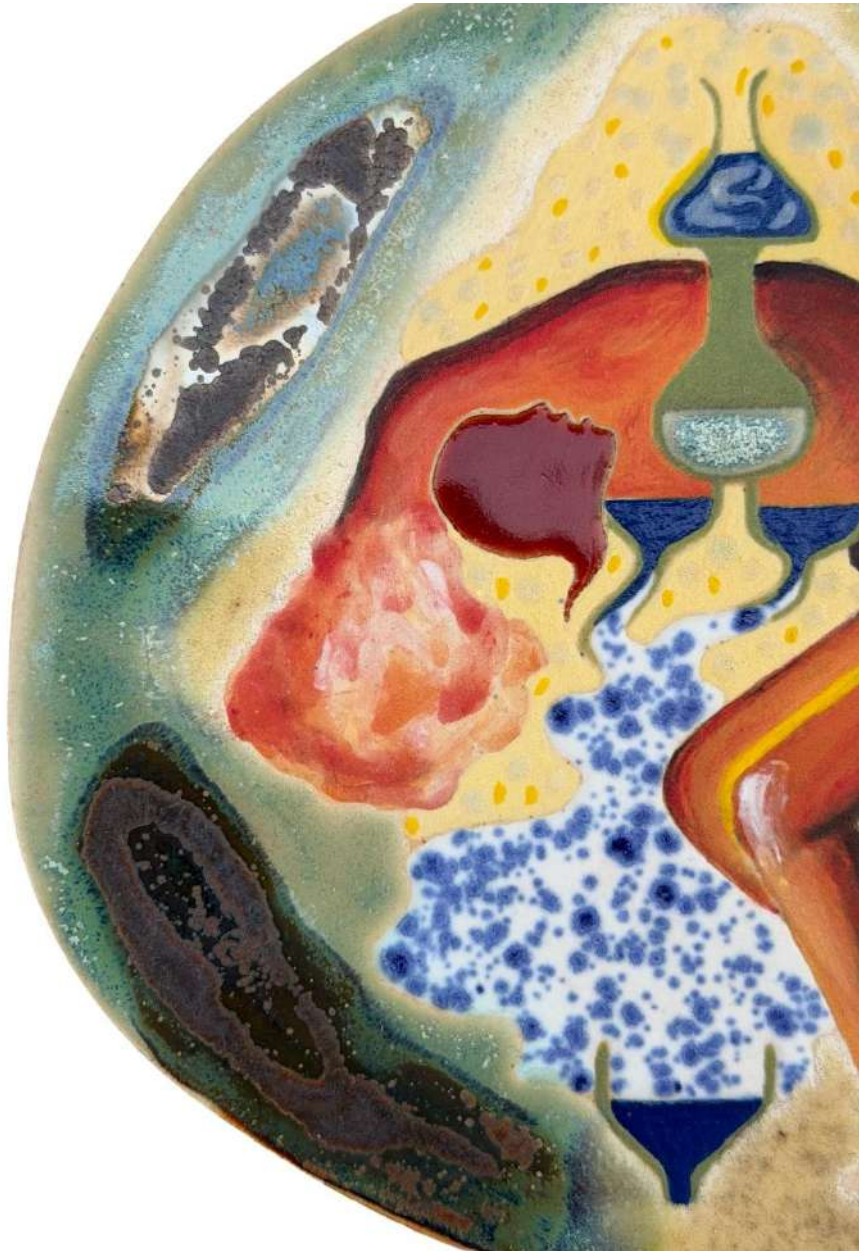


Madyha Leghari

Water Bodies

Stoneware, underglaze and glaze
5 x 5.2 inches & 3mm thickness
2026







Madyha Leghari

Gentle Hands

Stoneware, underglaze and glaze

4.2 x 5 x inches & 3mm thickness

2026







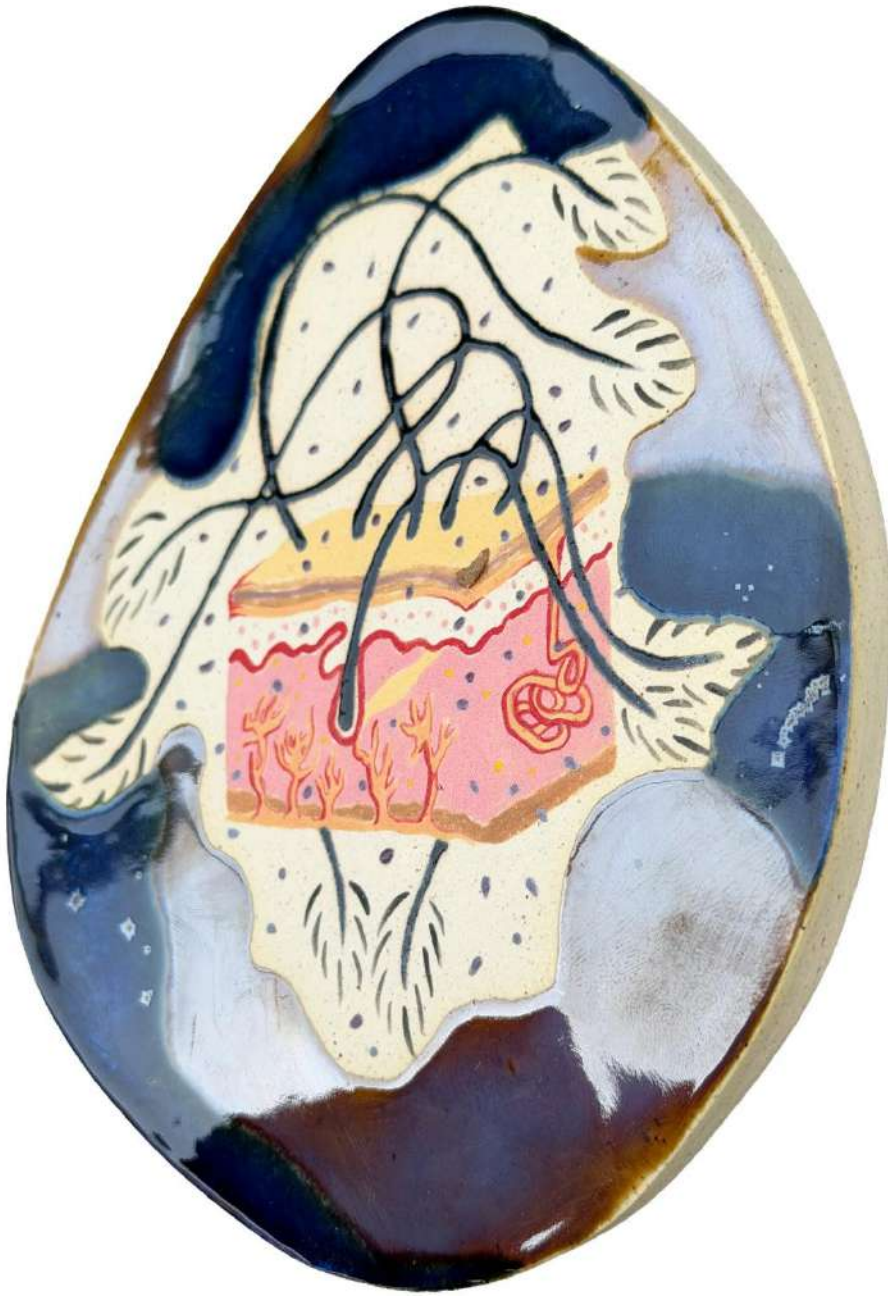
Madyha Leghari

Goosebump

Stoneware, underglaze and glaze

5.3 x 4.2 inches & 3mm thickness

2026







Sajid Khan

Sajid Khan (b.1984) is a visual artist, educator and curator living and working in Lahore, PK. Khan's drawings are meticulously rendered in graphite creating visual depth with high contrasting tones. What appear to be scenic visuals on one hand, on the other, disguise the weight of immense terror. Khan plays with the paradoxical possibilities of themes of beauty and horror. Growing up he associated clouds with peaceful afternoons of play where they were reimagined into various shapes and creatures. However, as the political situation continued to worsen and religious conflict aggravated clouds emerged from explosions signaling devastating aftermath.

Khan has a Masters in Art Education from SVAD, BNU (2019) and Bachelors in Fine Arts (2011) from The National College of Arts in Lahore. He teaches Miniature painting and Drawing at NCA, Lahore. Khan has exhibited in multiple group shows including three solo shows. He has also curated multiple shows at The White Wall Gallery in Lahore.



Sajid Khan

Disrupted Horizons

Graphite on Wasli Paper

58 x 39 inches Without Frame

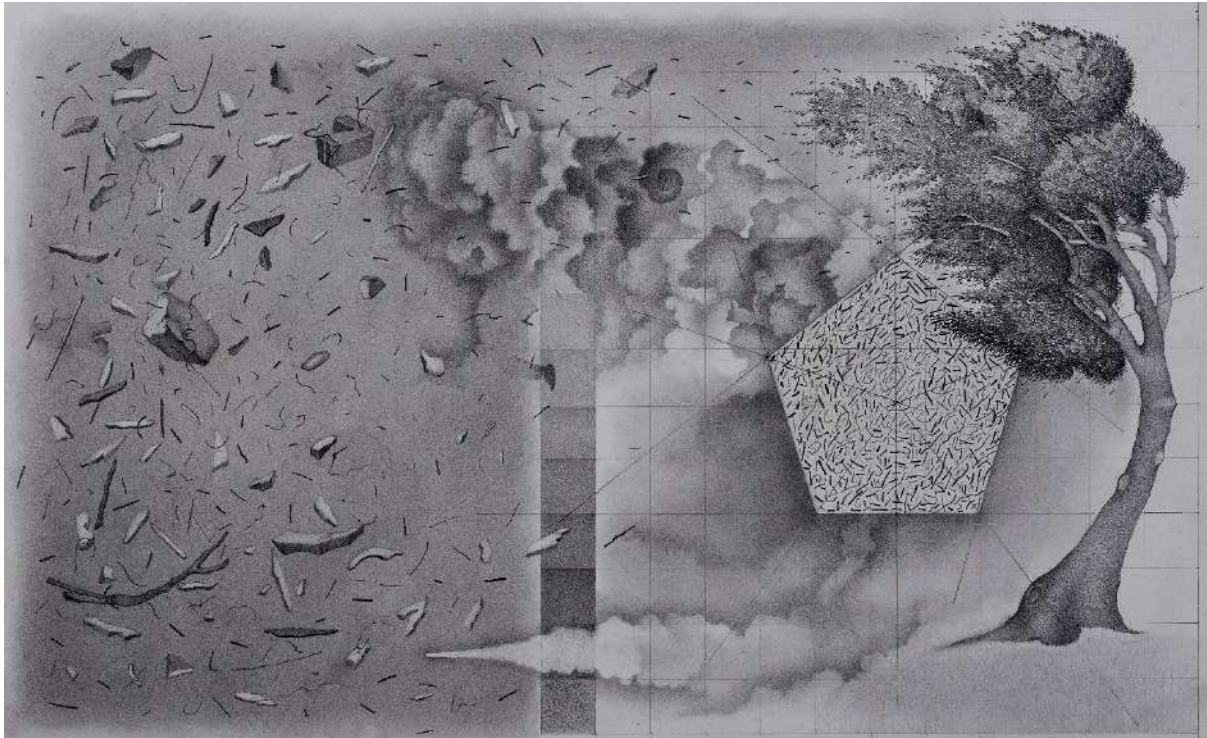
61 x 42 inches with Frame

2025, 26



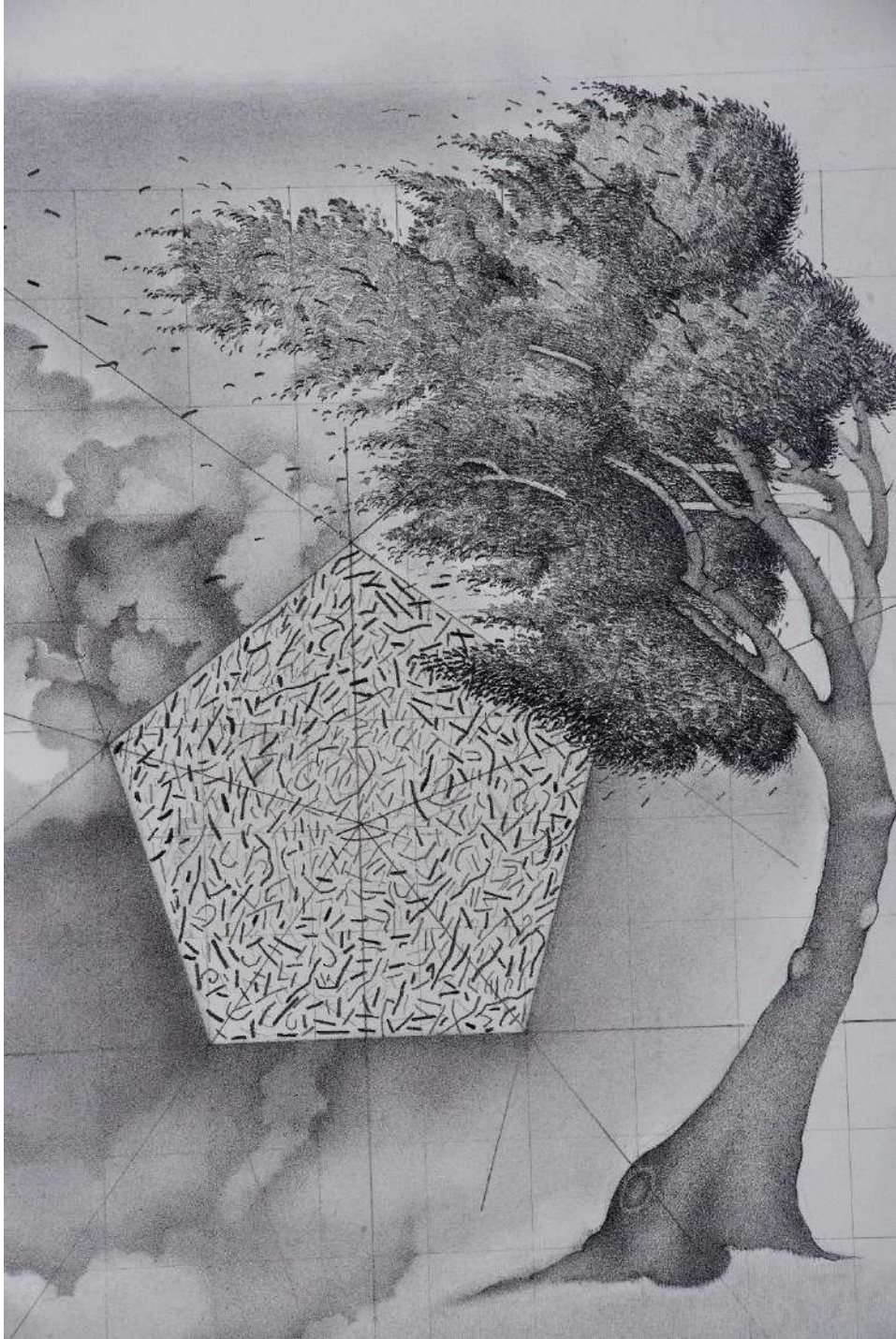


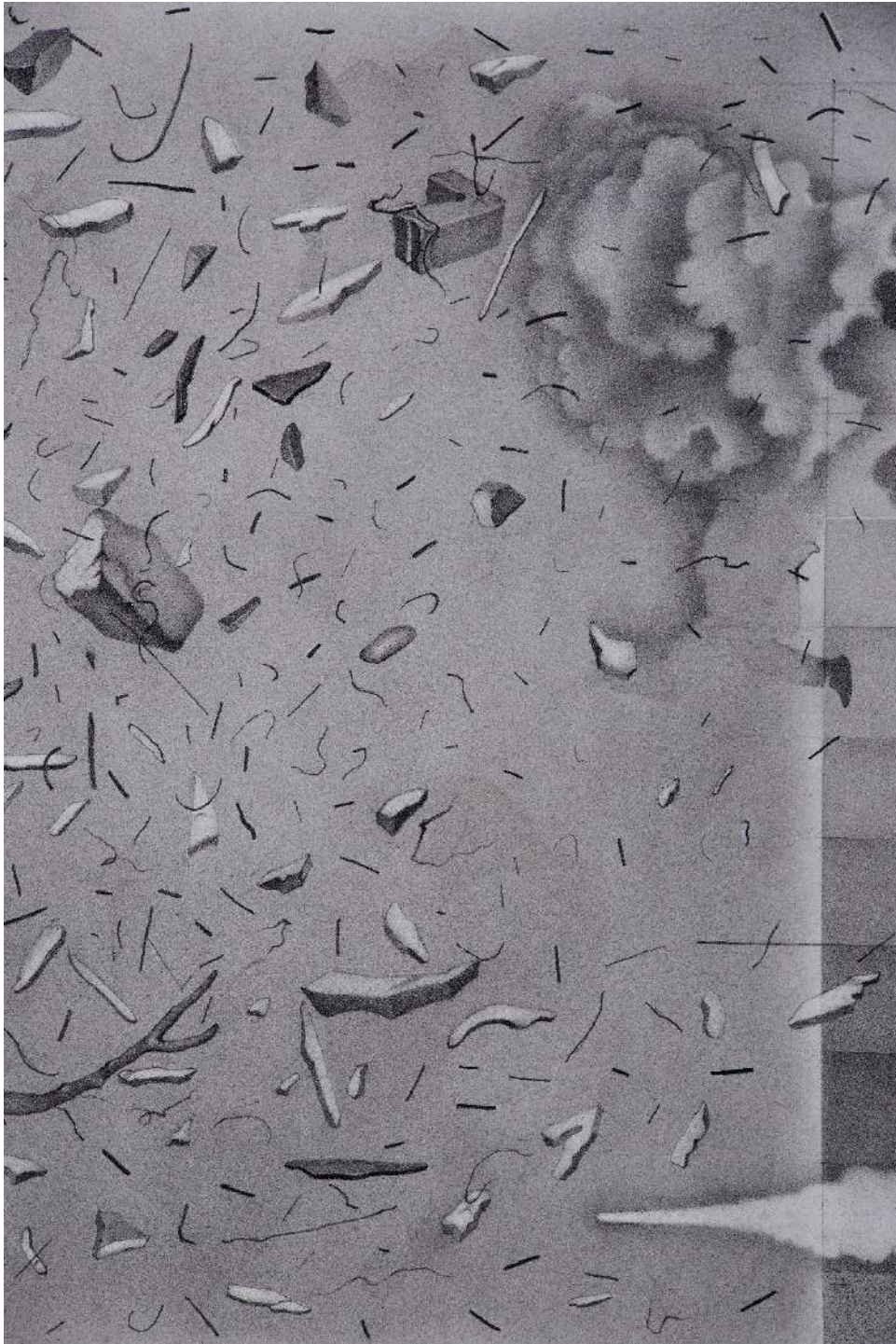




Sajid Khan

It goes, where it comes from
Graphite on Arches Paper
13 x 22 inches Without Frame
19 x 28 inches with Frame
2026





About Whitewall Gallery:

White Wall intends to showcase the art practice of some of the most influential artists today and contribute to scholarship by producing catalogues and eventually books to accompany exhibitions. We aim to invite artists with sustained practices, prominent curators, historians and writers to collaborate and promote research and address the wider discourse on art, its prevalence, evolution and role in our lives. Taking this purpose forward, workshops will be conducted by our exhibiting artists with the purpose of actively contributing to education, connection, inclusion and collaboration with the multiple layers of our communal ecology.