

unplanned endings

pang solo exhibition

2019.9.18 wed ~ 10.20 sun

Published on the occasion of the exhibition
Unplanned Endings

Intersections Art Gallery,
34 Kandahar Street, Singapore 198892

18 September to 20 October 2019

unplanned endings

2019.9.18 ~ 2019.10.20

About Unplanned Endings

With monochromatic vignettes, Pang explores the role of art as a response to the feeling of personal losses. This exhibition encompasses a series of black and white drawings on paper, an ephemeral installation made from household and sundry items, and a collaborative artwork inviting the engagement of the audience.

UNPLANNED ENDINGS

Marie-Pierre Mol, co-founder
Intersections Art Gallery, Singapore

INTERSECTIONS is proud to present *Unplanned Endings*, Pang's first solo show in Singapore.

This unconventional exhibition was primarily conceived by the artist as a community project at the intersection of art and art therapy. Although Pang is first and foremost an art practitioner, his artistic practice aims to cope with the grief caused by the mourning of both his parents. Moreover, since 2018 Pang is also an art therapist at Assisi Hospice, Singapore.

Since 2011, Pang has been creating a "gentle world" where we feel the action of an intelligence that carries life, that saves and enhances it¹.

But one should not be mistaken, in Pang's installations and artworks gentleness is not associated with mawkishness. To the contrary, it is the result of a traumatic intrusion into creation. It is a symbolic force that has a transformative ability and a healing power. By sublimating mundane objects and sundries such as egg shells, cotton buds, talcum powder or dried flowers, Pang creates a world of "beauty without splendor" and invites the viewers to a sensory celebration through viewing, touching and feeling, tasting and smelling.

In 2012, the creation of over 6000 porcelain flowers for an installation titled *Departing the Departed* (旅立ち), in collaboration with Kanako Furakawa, was a milestone in Pang's practice. After this installation, repetitive acts became a central element in his creative process, adding a meditative dimension as well as a soothing effect to his works.

¹ According to a definition of gentleness given by Anne Dufourmentelle in her book "The Power of Gentleness", Fordham University Press, 2018

Unplanned Endings encompasses a series of black and white drawings on paper, an ephemeral installation and a collaborative artwork, which will be created by the visitors of the gallery. The talks with the artist and two of his art therapist colleagues will offer more opportunities to engage with the audience.

The new series of monochromatic vignettes titled "Doing Something, Doing Nothing" is based on a repetitive mark making process. The circular shapes used in these drawings add an organic flavour to what would otherwise appear mechanical. In front of these artworks the viewer may feel like a scientist witnessing a sometimes organised sometimes anarchic proliferation of cells through the lens of a microscope.

"Without Words" is an oversized artwork in which the artist experienced the unplanned drying up of the ink in his roller pen. It inspired the title of the exhibition.

The white colour dominates Pang's work mainly to express his emotions and feelings. However, the intention of the artist is also to offer a blank canvas to the viewers. In *Unplanned Endings* the visitors will be literally invited to colour Pang's work by using pastel colours on black circles outlined by the artist on the gallery walls.

Pang's "gentle world" is a world full of the tenderness experienced as a baby, where human beings are connected to the physical world through all their senses and able to understand the relationship with the other.

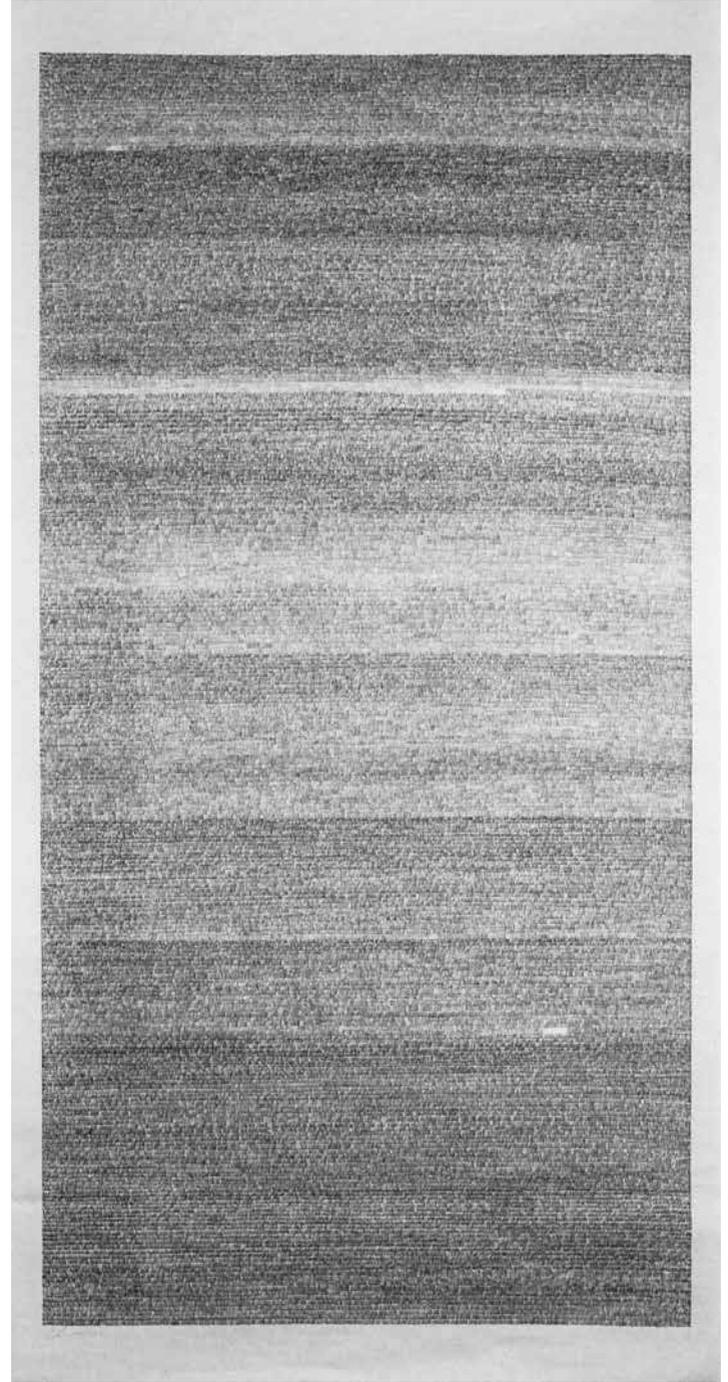
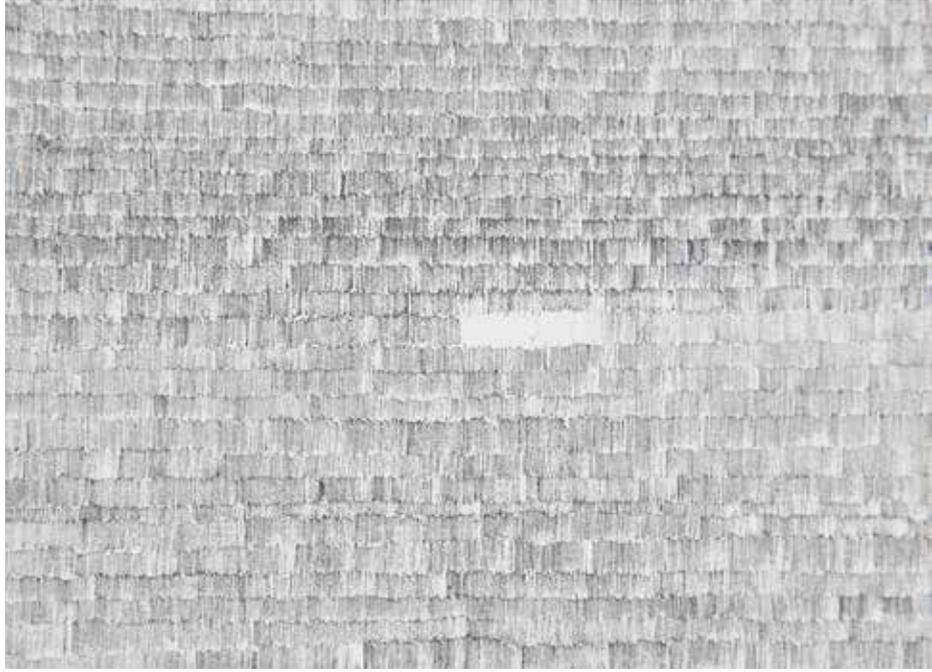
For the time of the exhibition, Intersections is delighted to invite the visitors to discover Pang's amazing world and to experience "gentleness".

without words

2018

Ink on Chinese calligraphy paper

700mm x 2000mm



RESTORE AND REPAIR

*Samantha Hickman, MA AThR
Registered art therapist*

In art therapy, the intensive, soothing result of repetitive art making has been recognized as being an effective coping mechanism to process and heal traumatic experiences. Sewing, weaving, knitting and crochet are among some of the creative outlets that invite attentive focus, to calm thoughts and occupy hands. As well as relieving anxiety, repetitive mark making aids reintegration of the self, and helps to make sense of the world.

Art is a natural stress reliever due to the endorphin stimulation generated by right brain activity. Therefore, whether it is in the re-telling of a story, the schematic drawing (of Mandala's, for example) or engaging in repetitive mark making, utilizing repetition can elicit a biological calming effect. Kramer (1971) claimed that repetition denoted inner conflict and resulted in sublimation to support healing. It is also suggested that the intrinsic qualities of recurring endeavours access a state of flow, where intense focus and absorption in artistic activity produces an optimal creative experience that increases self esteem, health and happiness.

Repetition is found throughout nature, human life and the arts, and behaviours that adopt rhythmic patterns have been embraced as effective treatments to manage affect and stimulate relaxation. Repetitive art making can incite transformation within the consistency of a recurrent theme – such as a sustained heartbeat, breath, or rhythm in music. Activities such as meditation, breathing techniques, yoga, singing, dancing, and drumming are repetitive activities that have been noted to have had radical results to manage anxiety and channel traumatic experiences.

This exhibition is a perseveratively powerful illustration of the numbing effect of grief. The persistent mark making seen in the works present as techniques to regulate, center, and process Pang's loss. His overwhelming grief is sublimated into the artworks through line and circle, like

the slow ticking of time, and the endless thoughts that surround when bereaved. The monochromatic works invite quiet contemplation through their meditative repetition, and are anything but black and white. He explores with authenticity and candidness the fog that descends when in mourning for a loved one, in this case both the artist's parents.

Line after line, circle after circle, the work draws your focus in and out, until individual lines become blurred by the collective and swim out of focus. The monotony is remarkable, as there is nothing dull about these works. They entice the viewer to step closer and see each painstaking mark as a record of thought, pain, and time. His grief is observed, felt, recognized. We can connect with each mark or circle, each grain of rice. Like grief, they engulf you.

Pang shows us that grief never leaves you; it resides within you and you move forward together, forever changed – perhaps, literally, at a cellular level. However, he illustrates how, through the repetitive process, it might be possible to create a new landscape and subsequent outlook. Stroke by stroke the rigorous uniformity, precision and discipline of the recurring lines and circles may appear to be going nowhere, but each scratch into the parchment restores and repairs with each mark.

Finally, with the help of others, Pang shows us that it is possible to advance away from the confusion and loss, to regain a sense of self and purpose, taking us from the grey of grief back into the colour of life.

Samantha Hickman became an Art Therapist to integrate her own artistic practice into working with others. Her practice focuses on people living with cancer, harnessing the power of art to enable others to find resilience and meaning as they rebuild their lives and identity following diagnosis and treatment.

**doing something,
doing nothing**

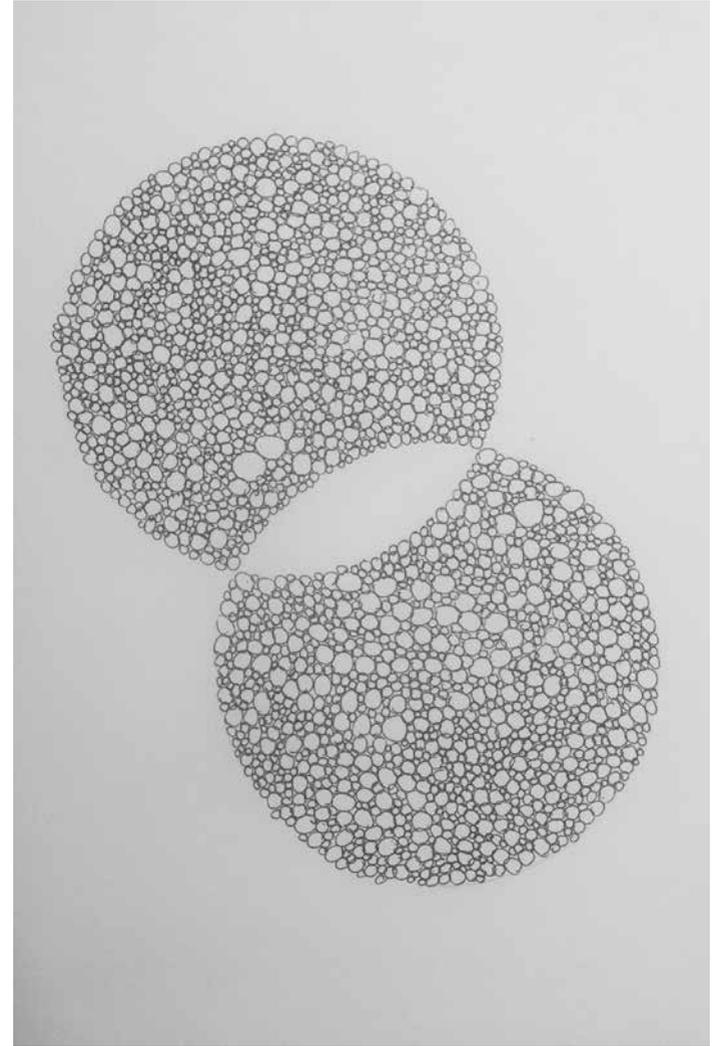
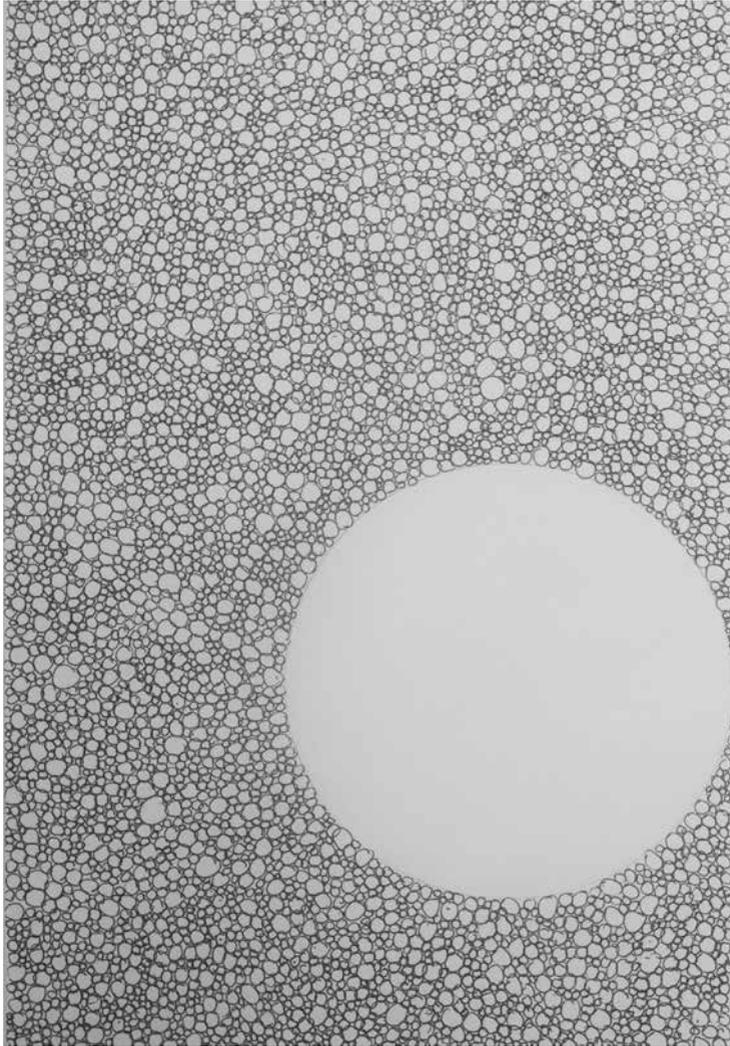
2018 / 2019

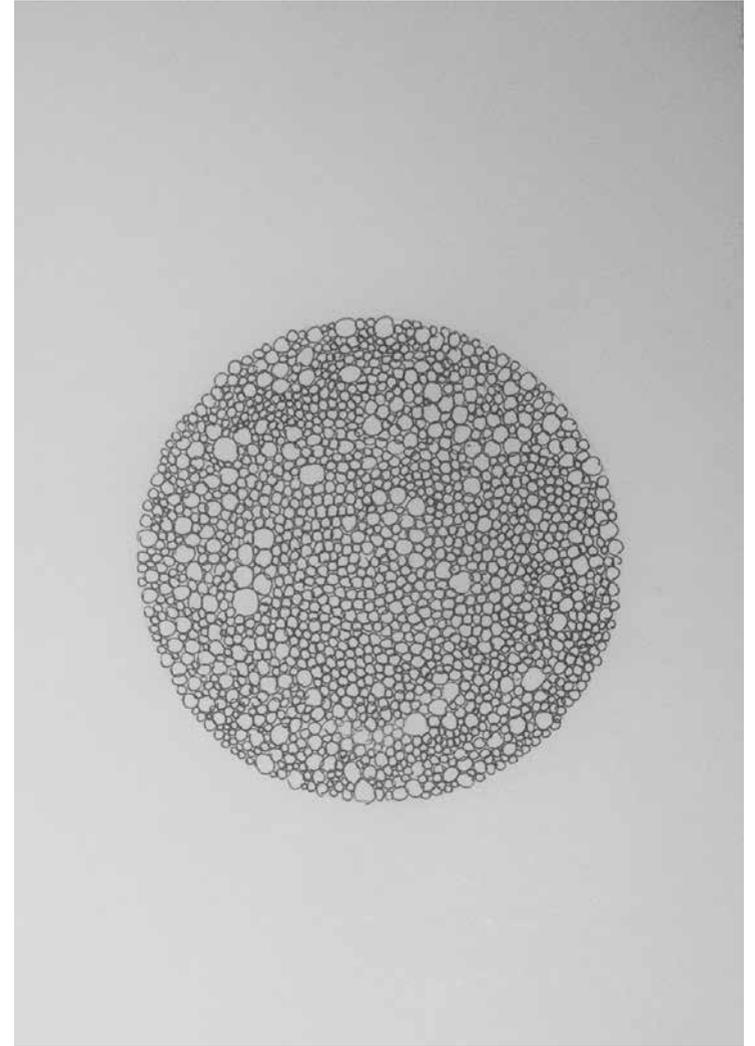
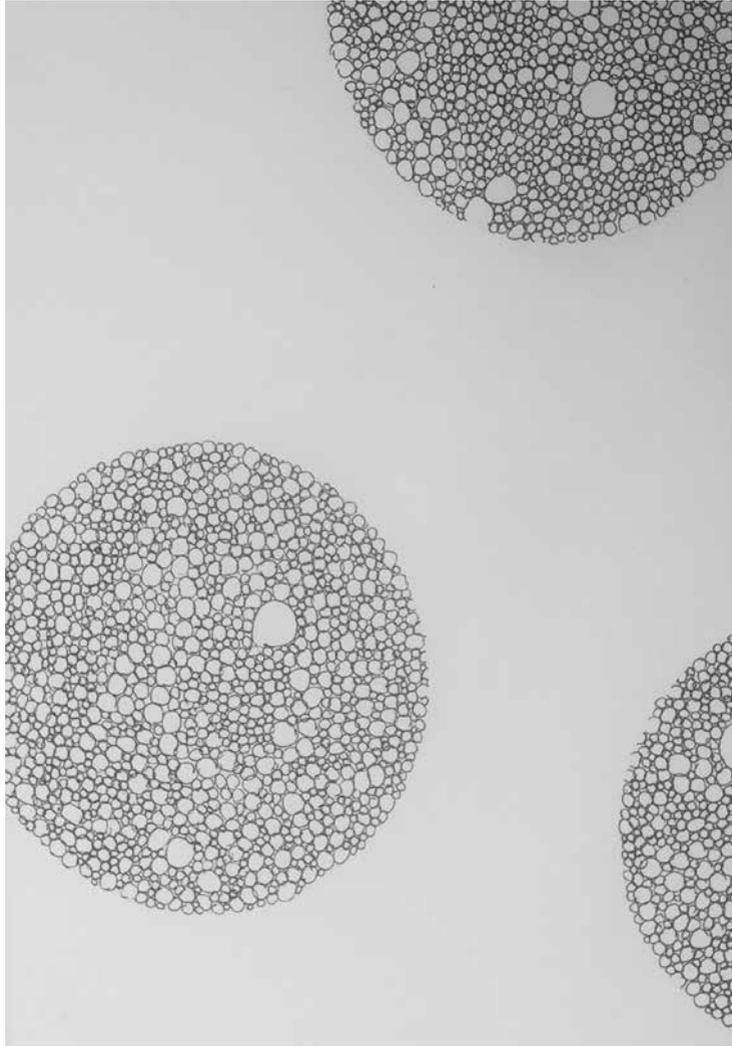
Ink on 200gsm paper

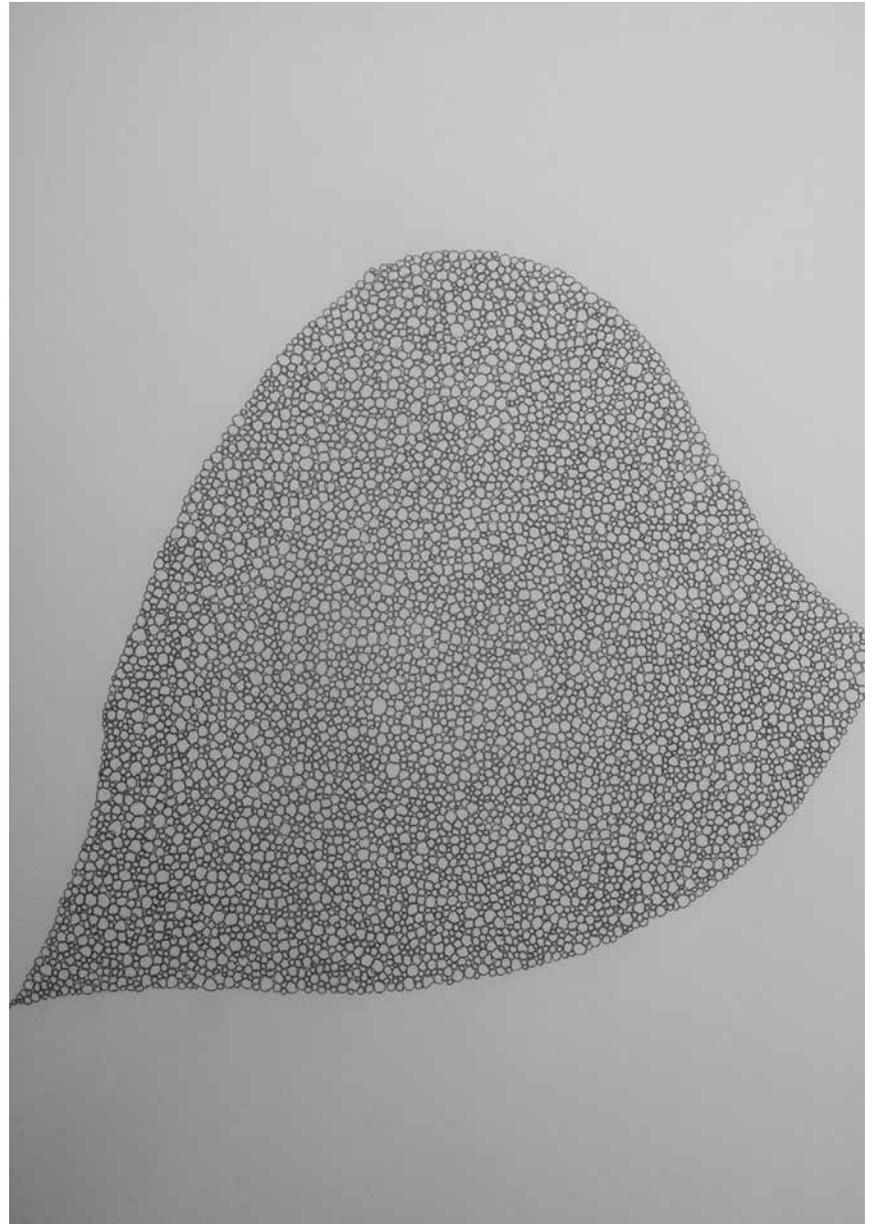
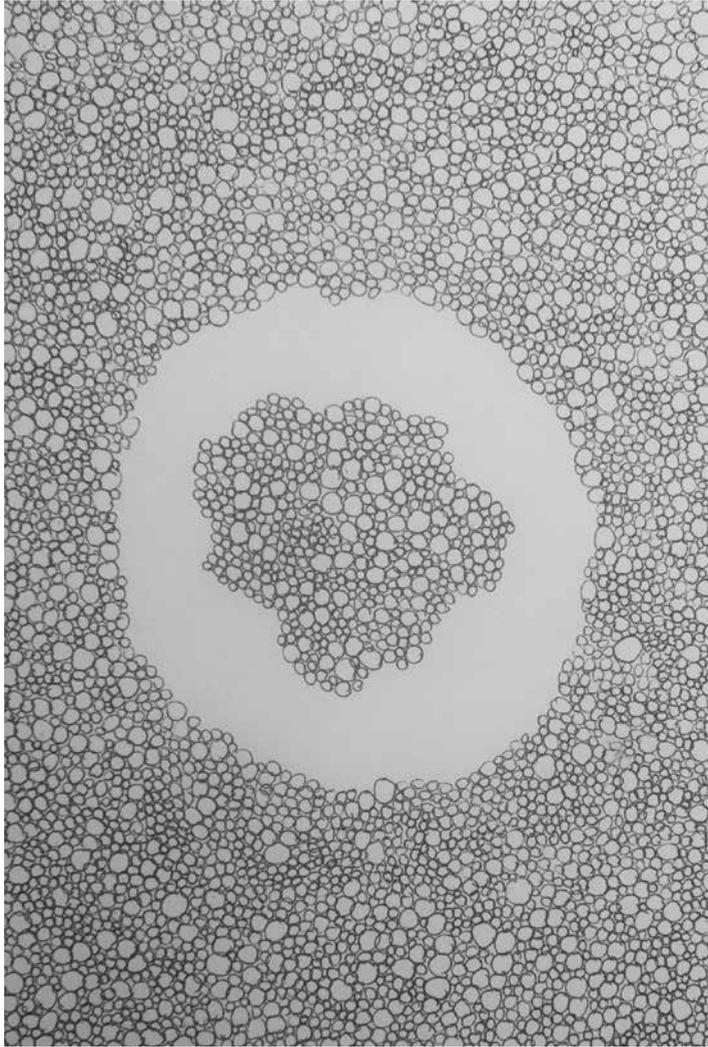
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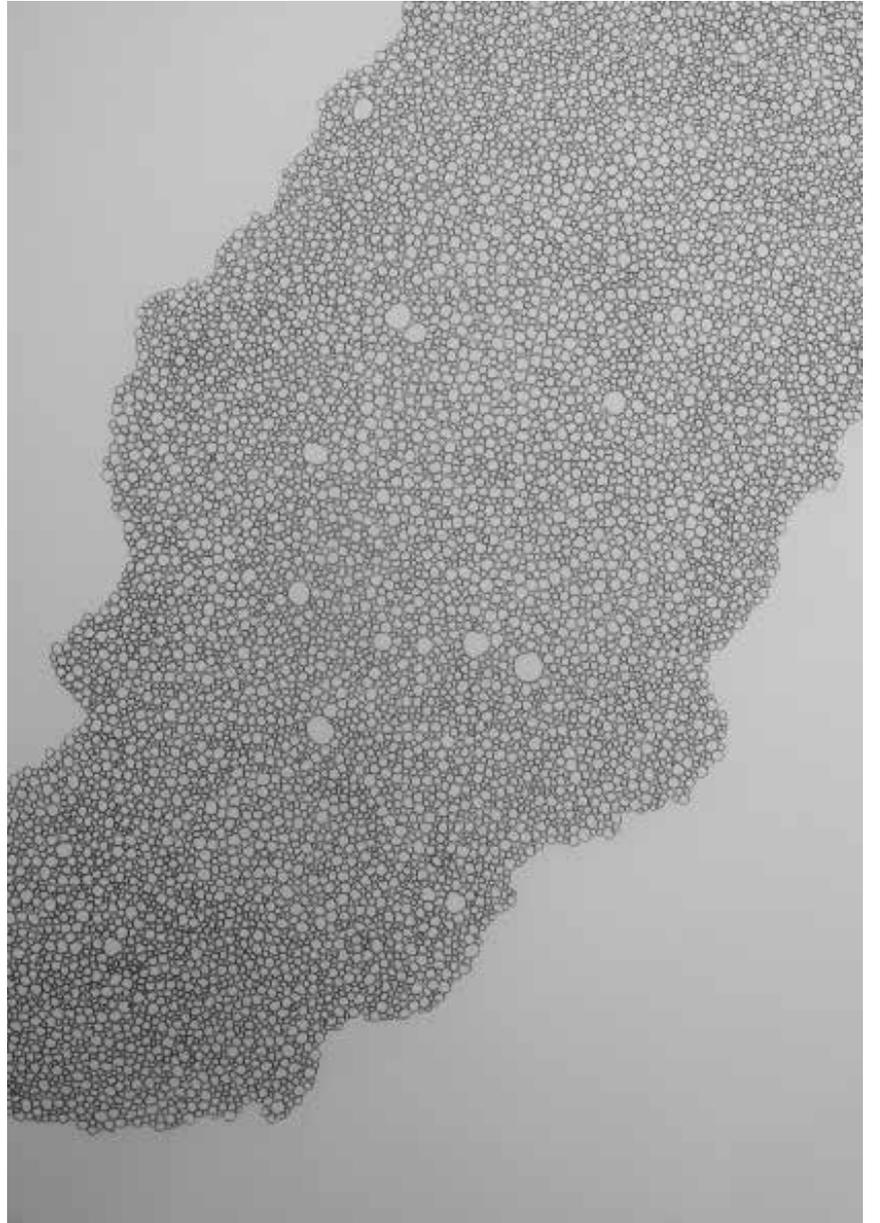
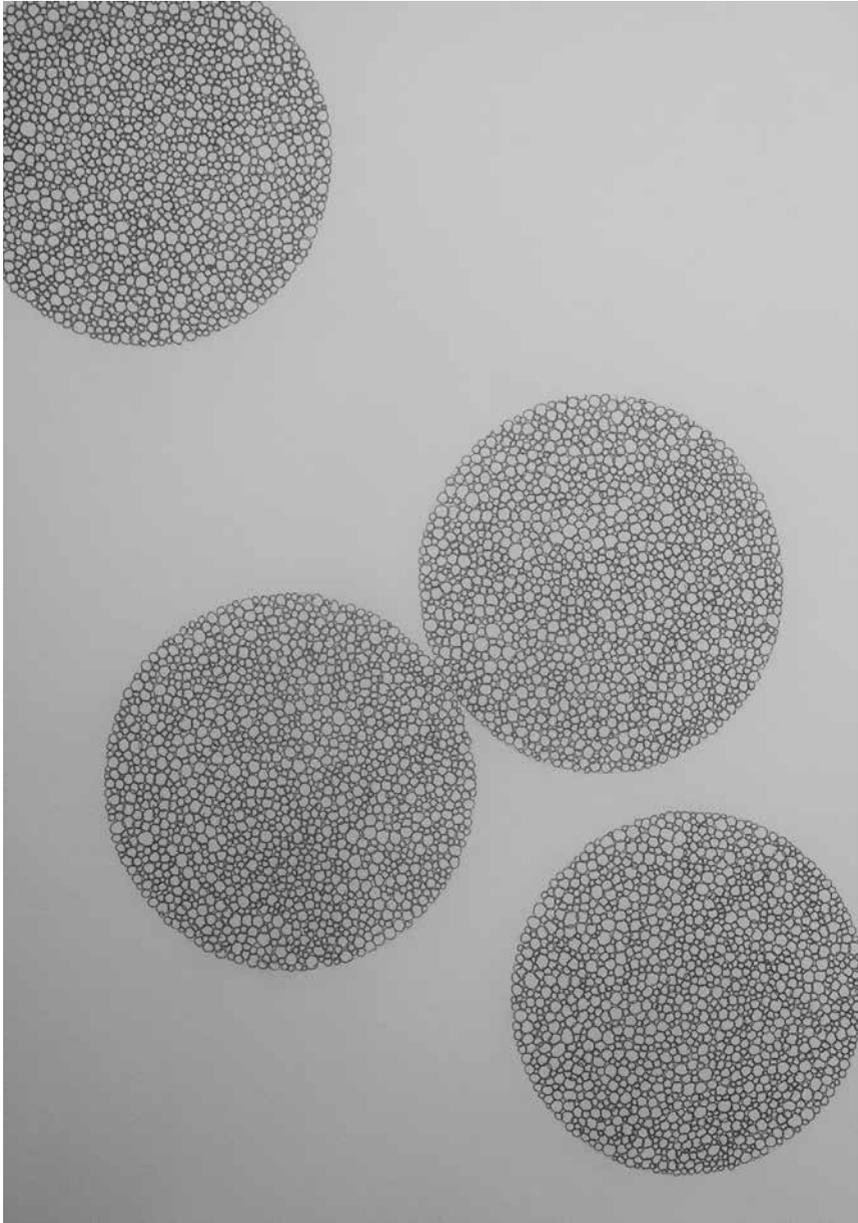
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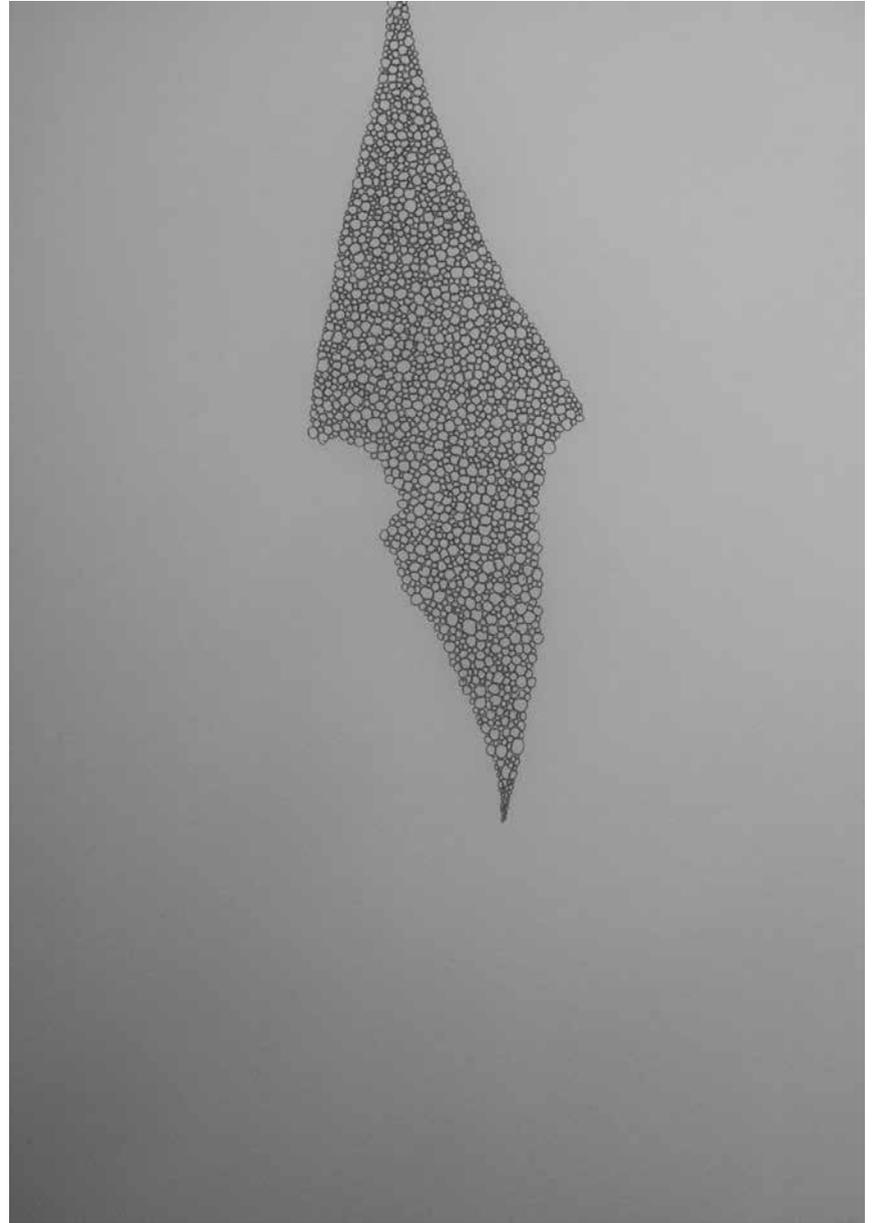
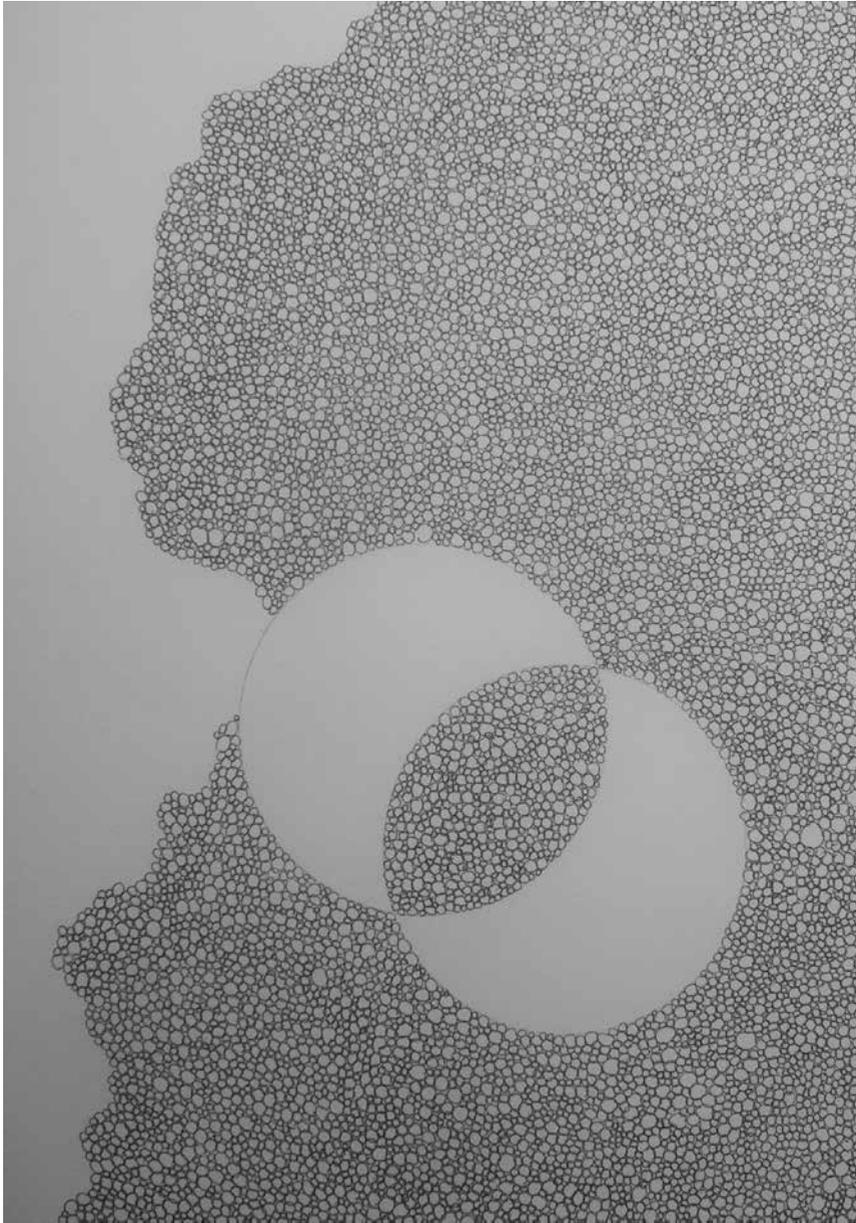
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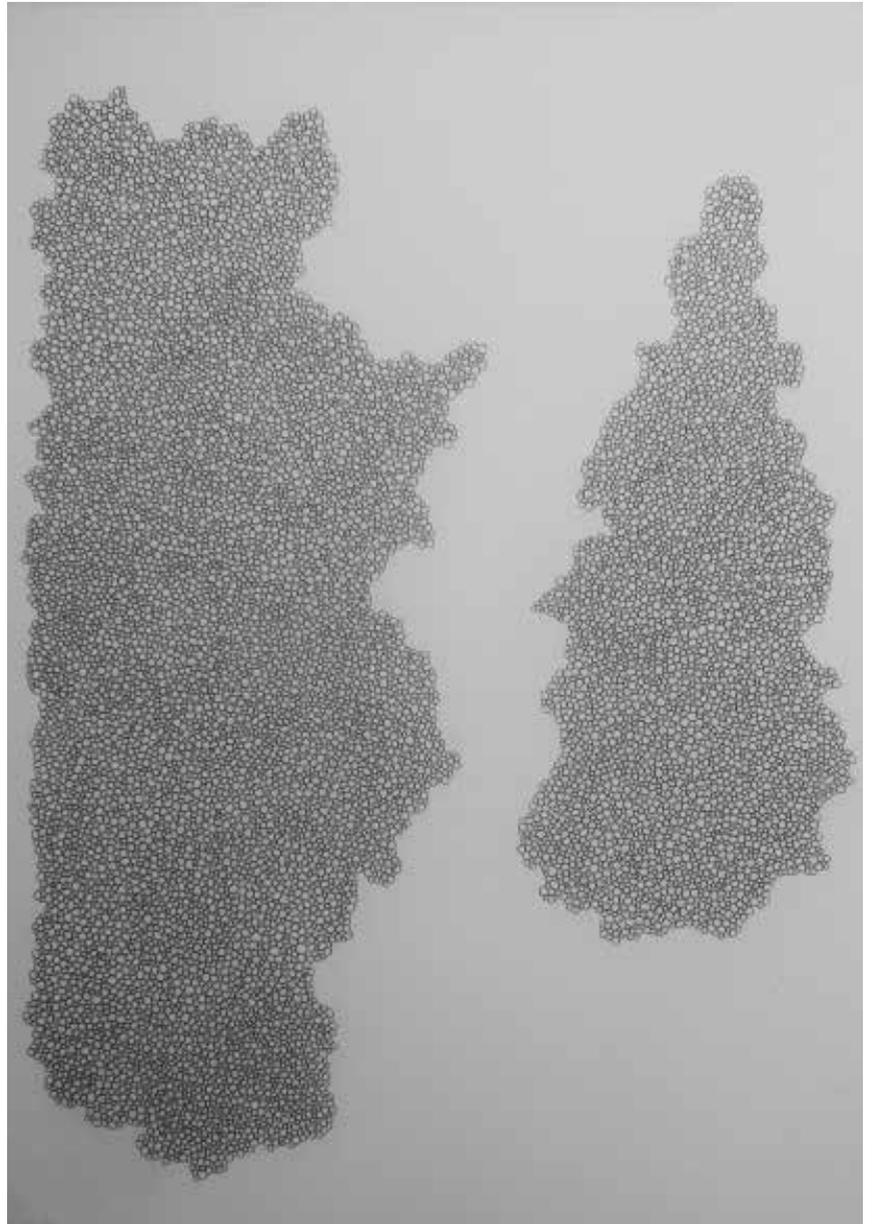
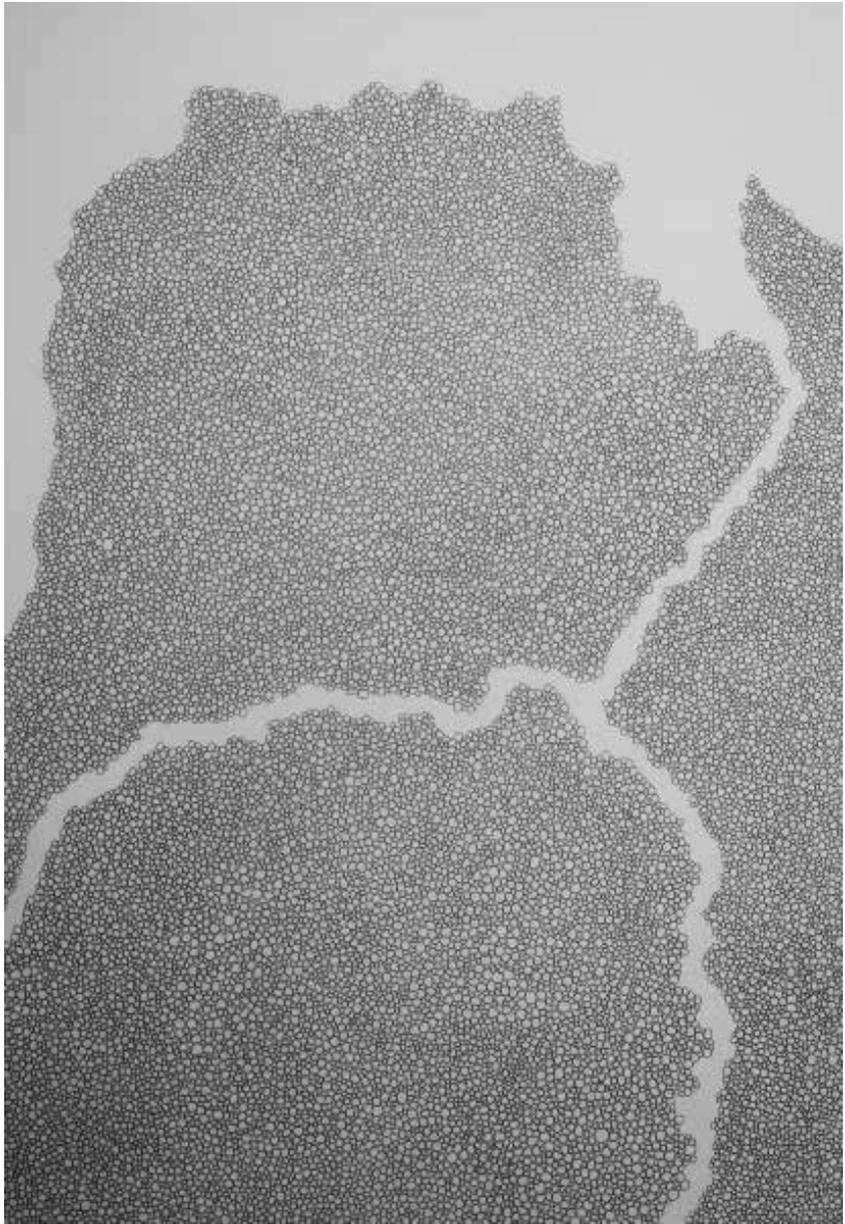


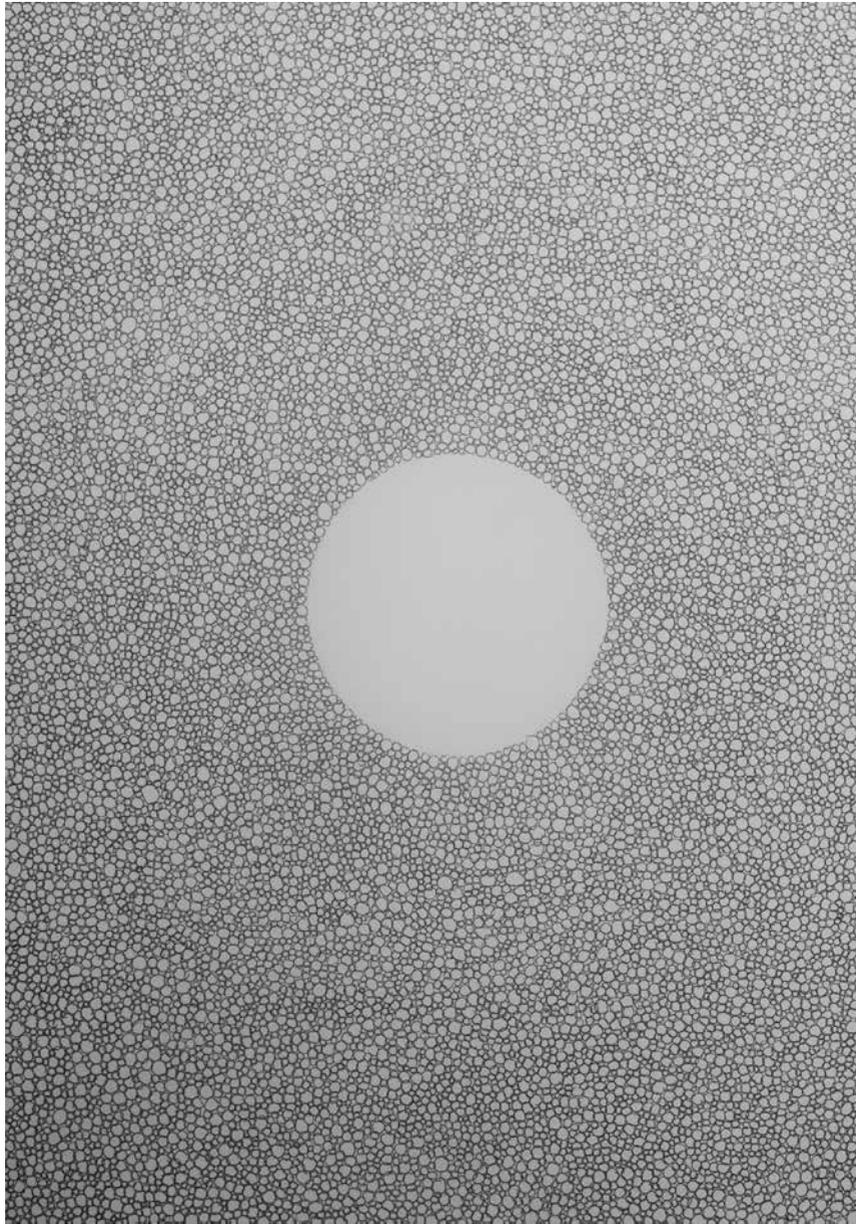
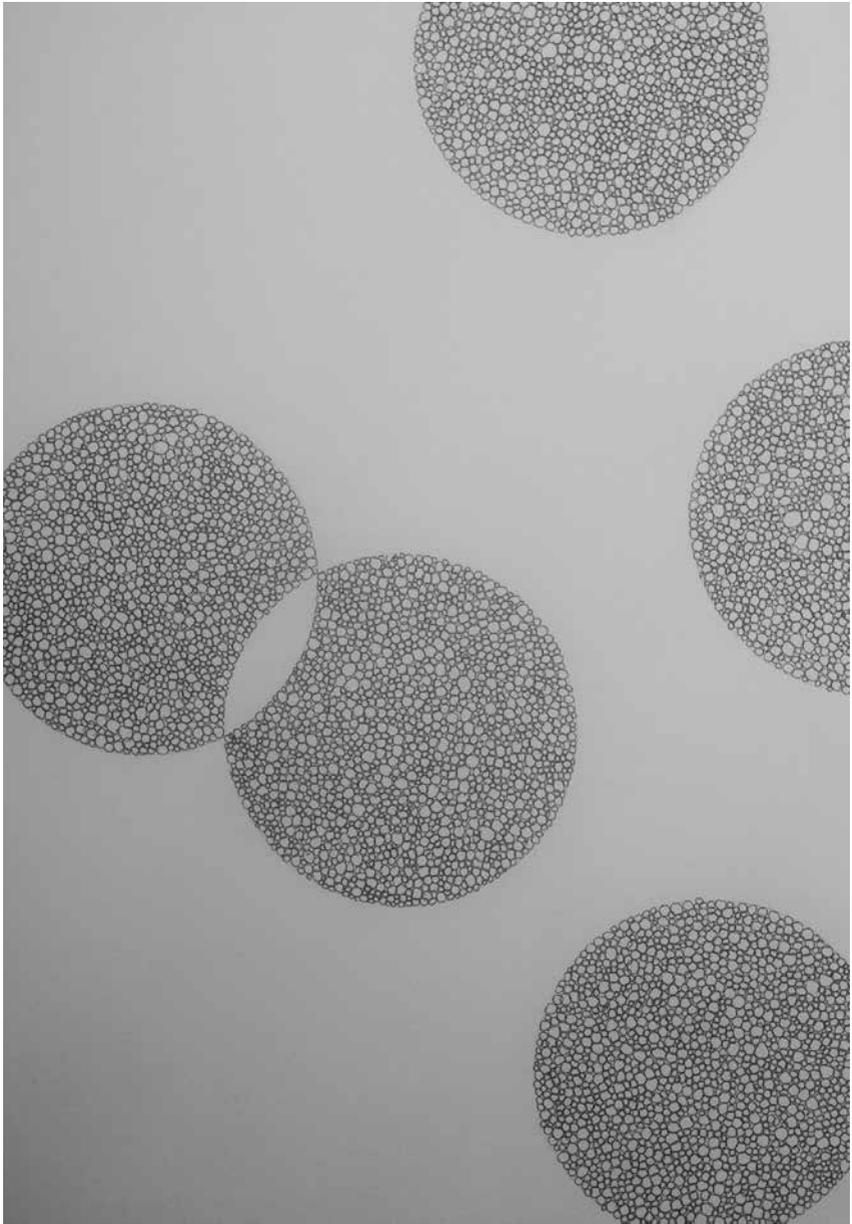


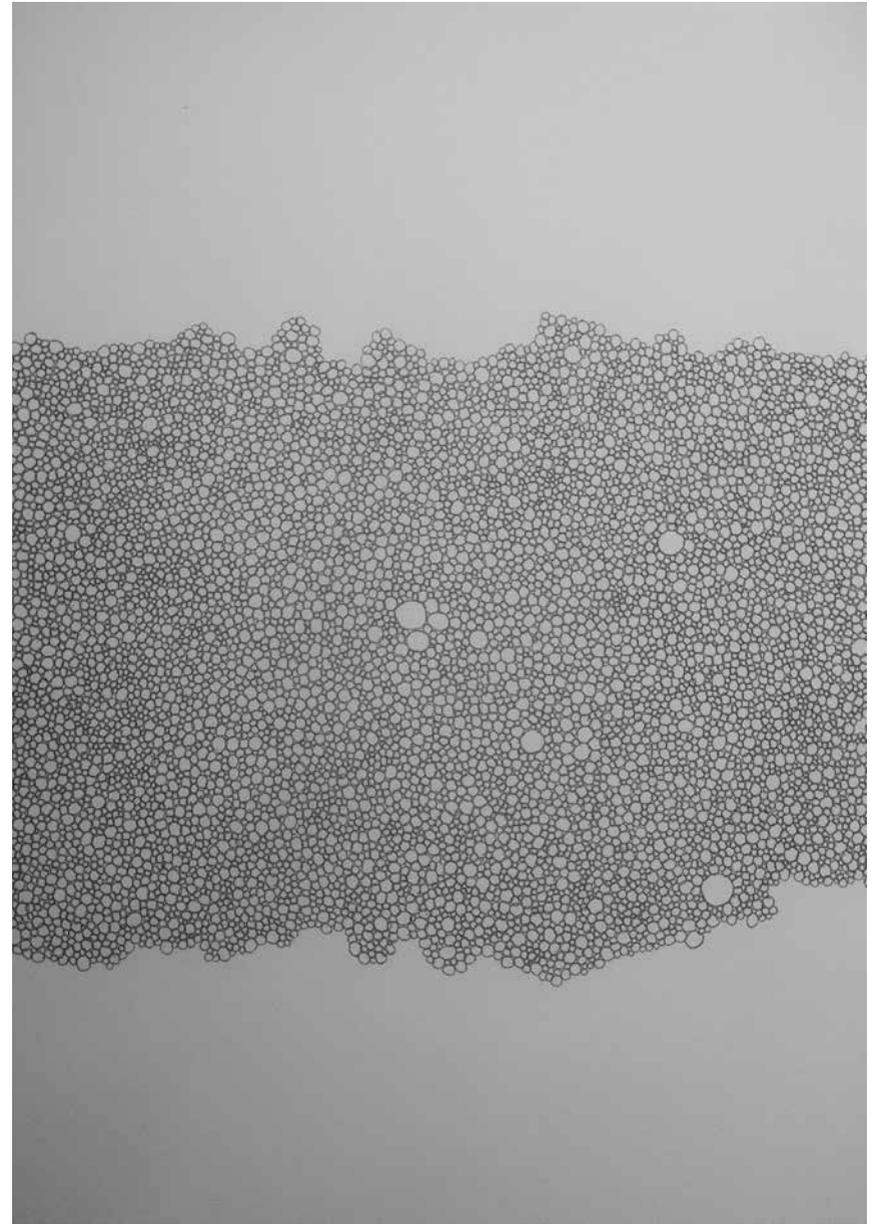
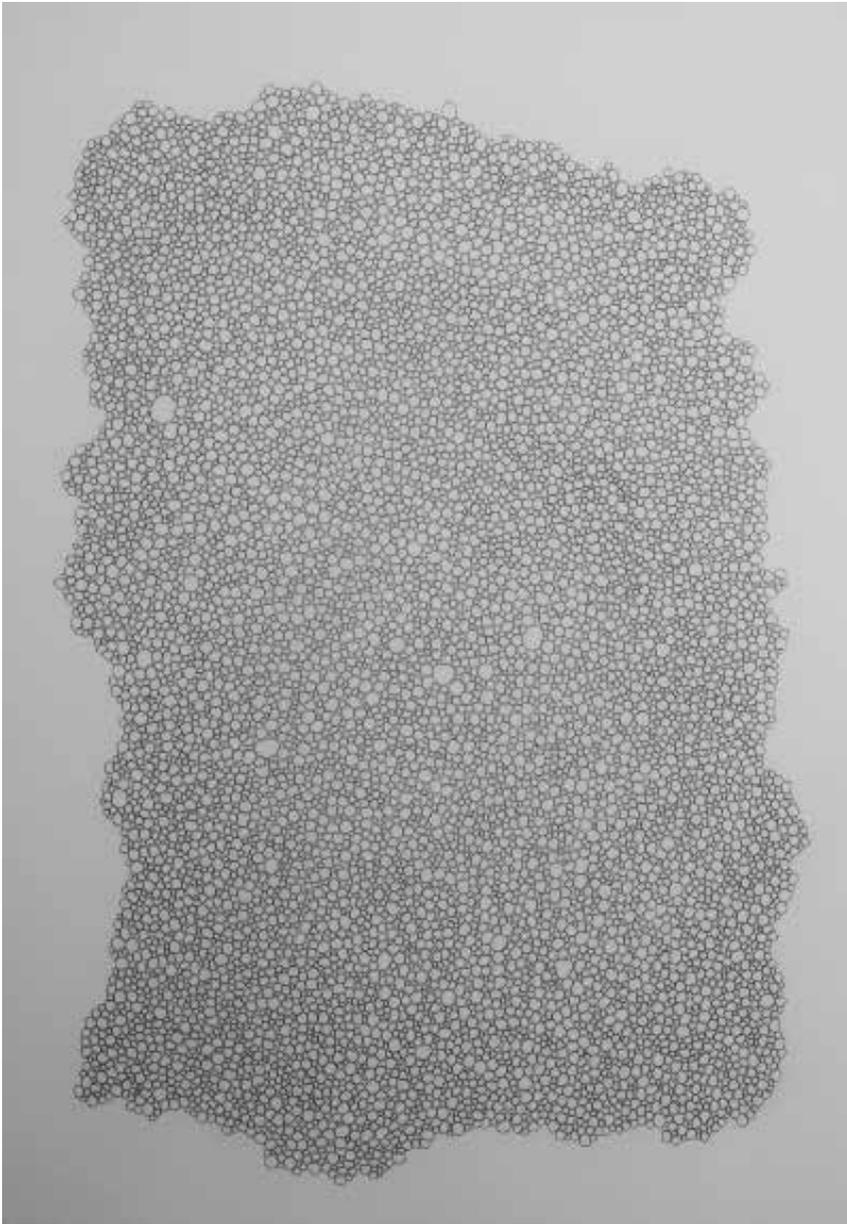


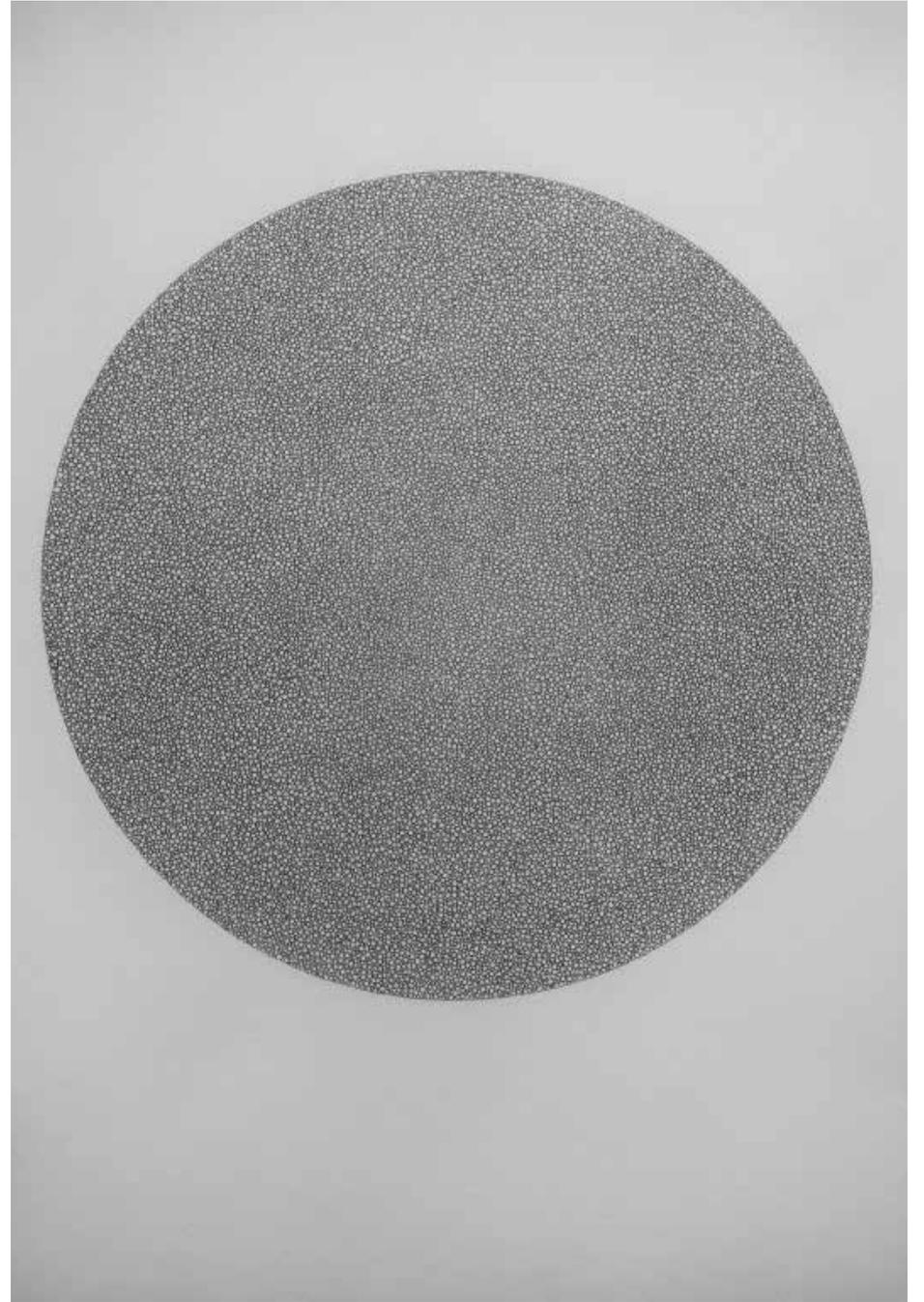
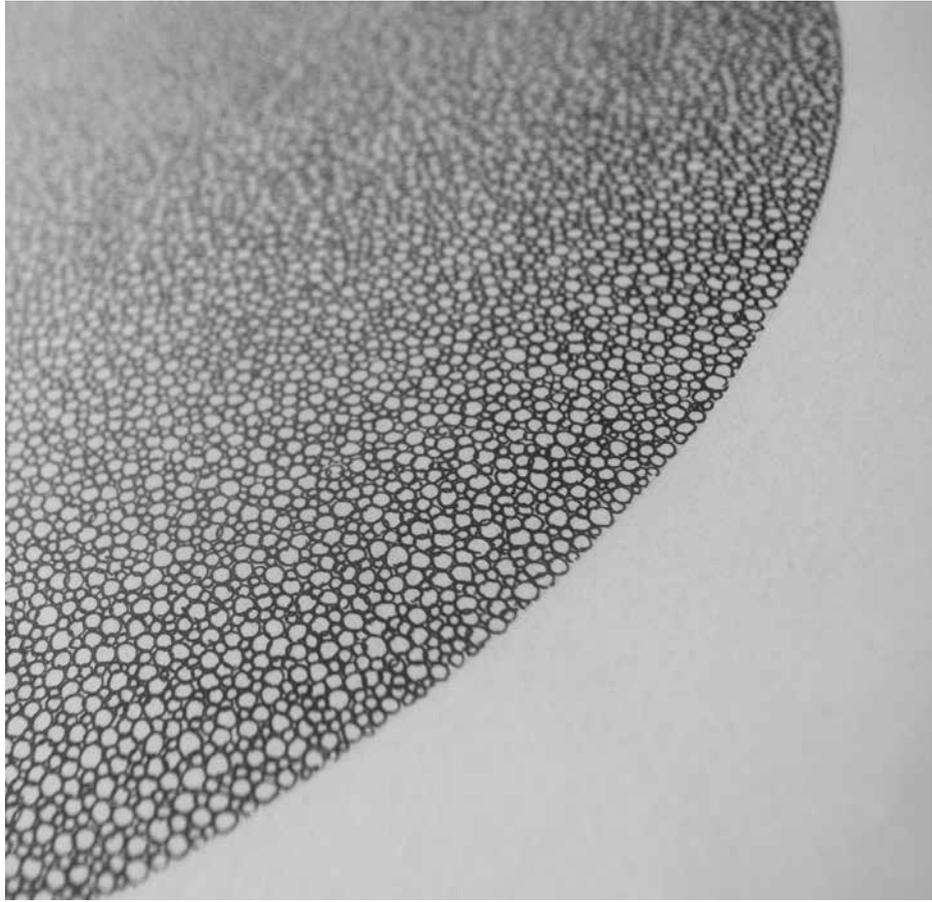


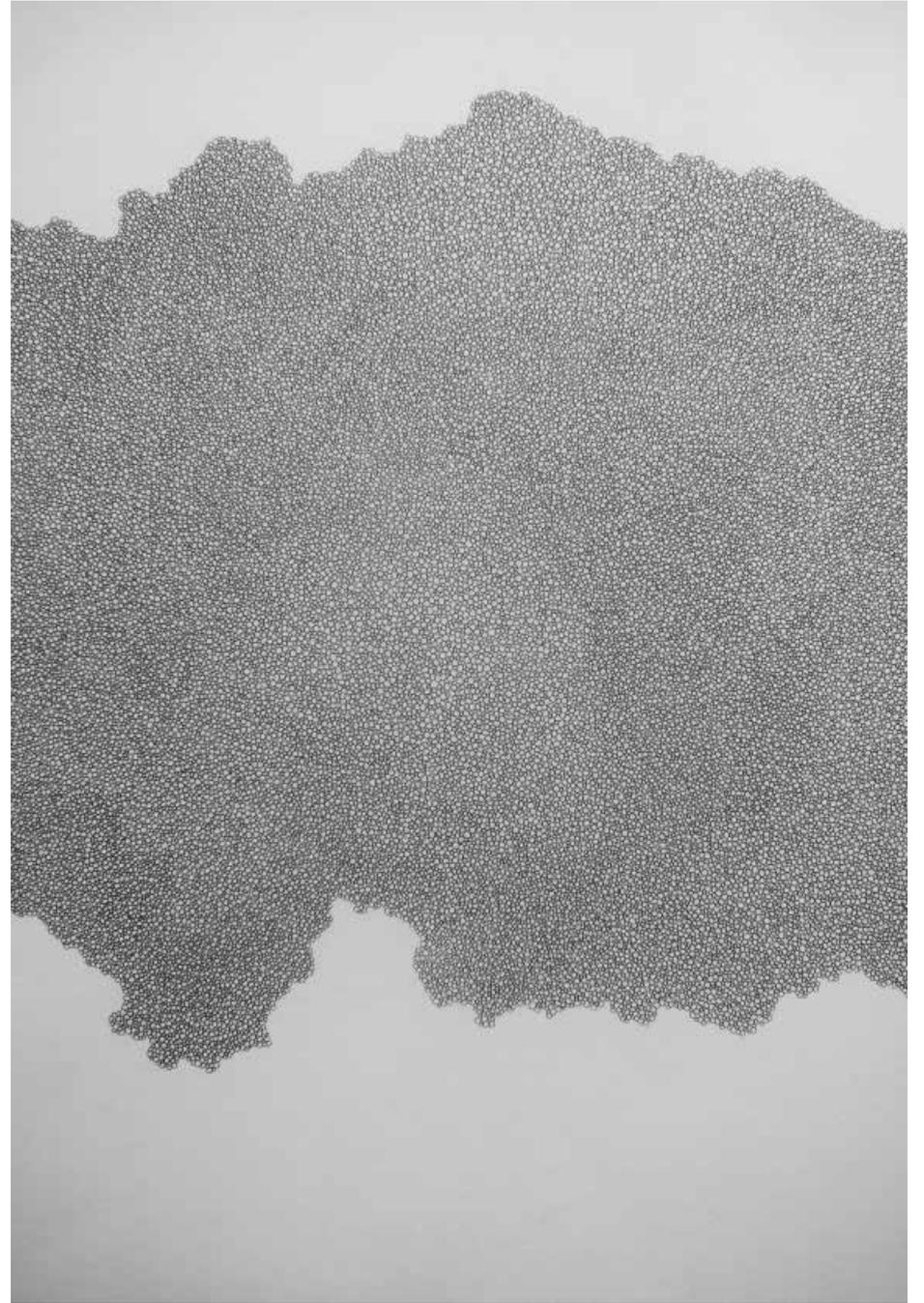
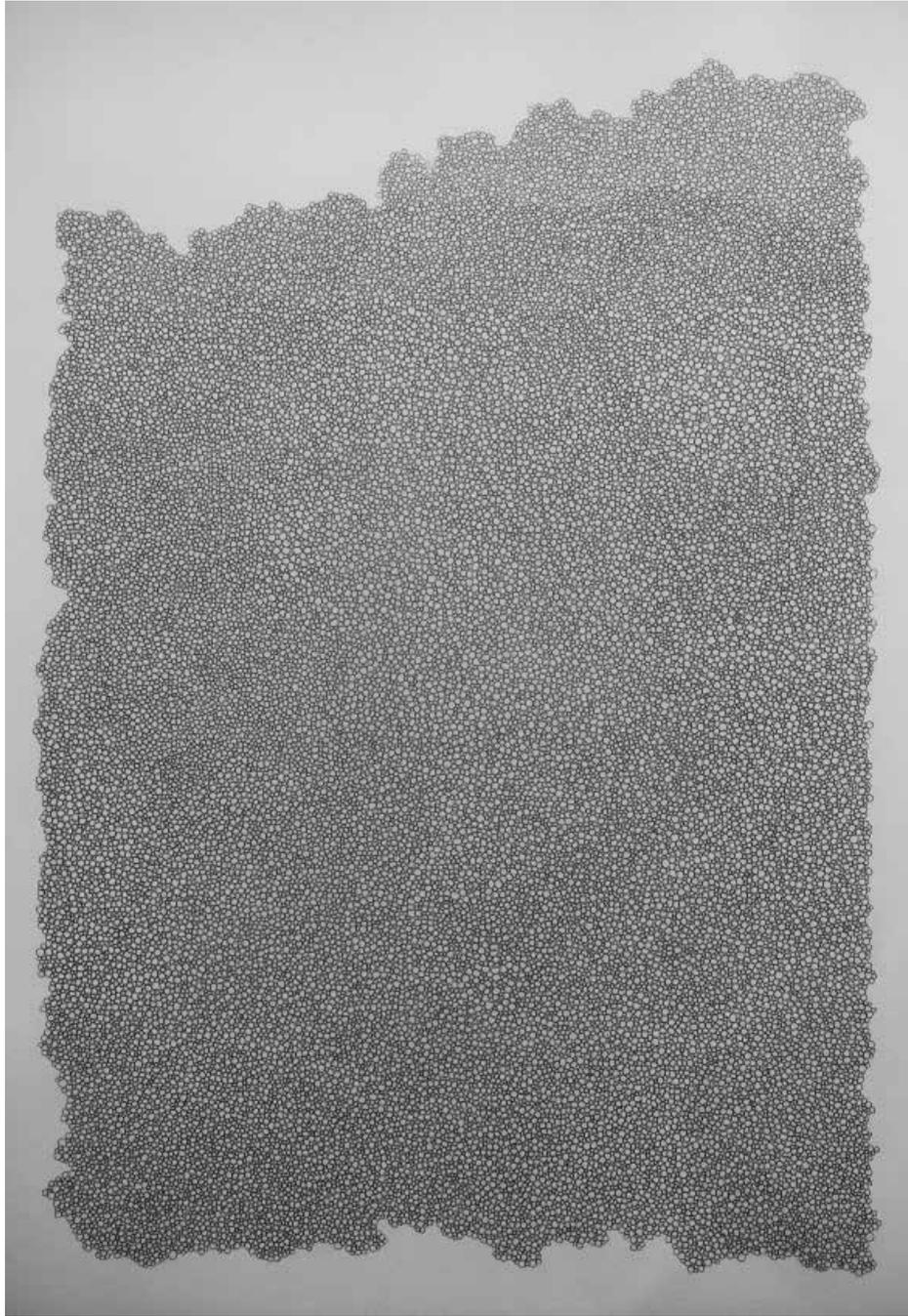


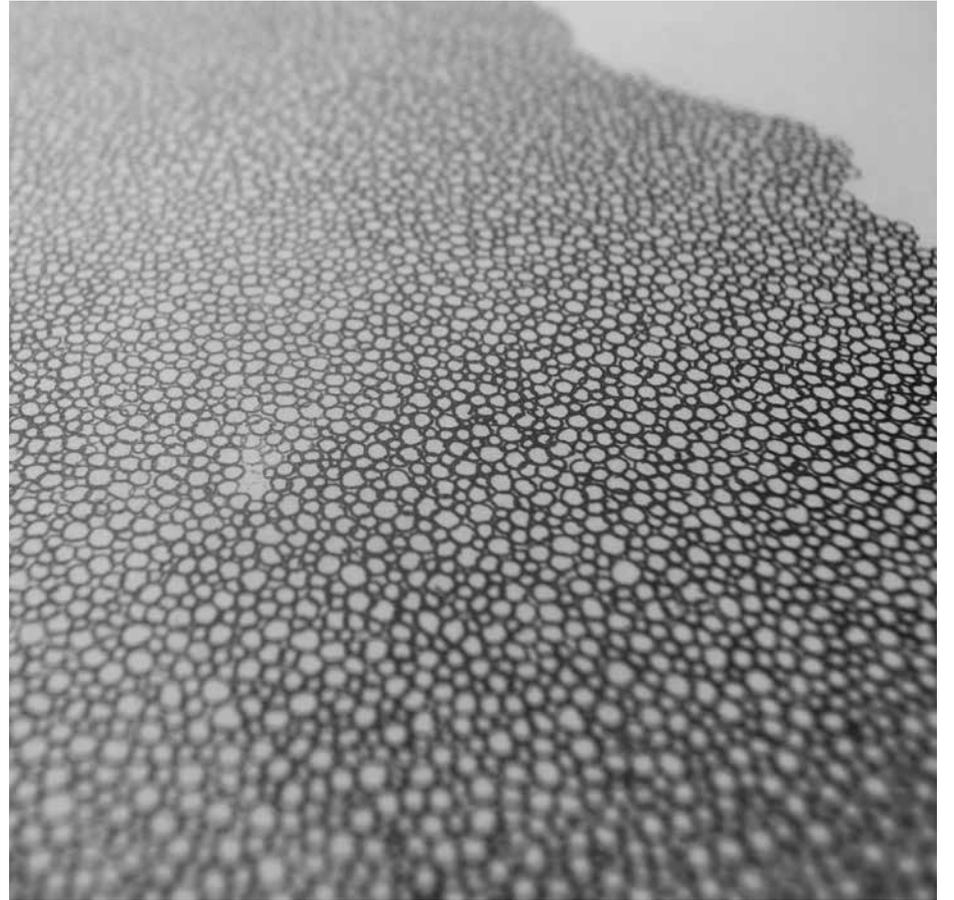
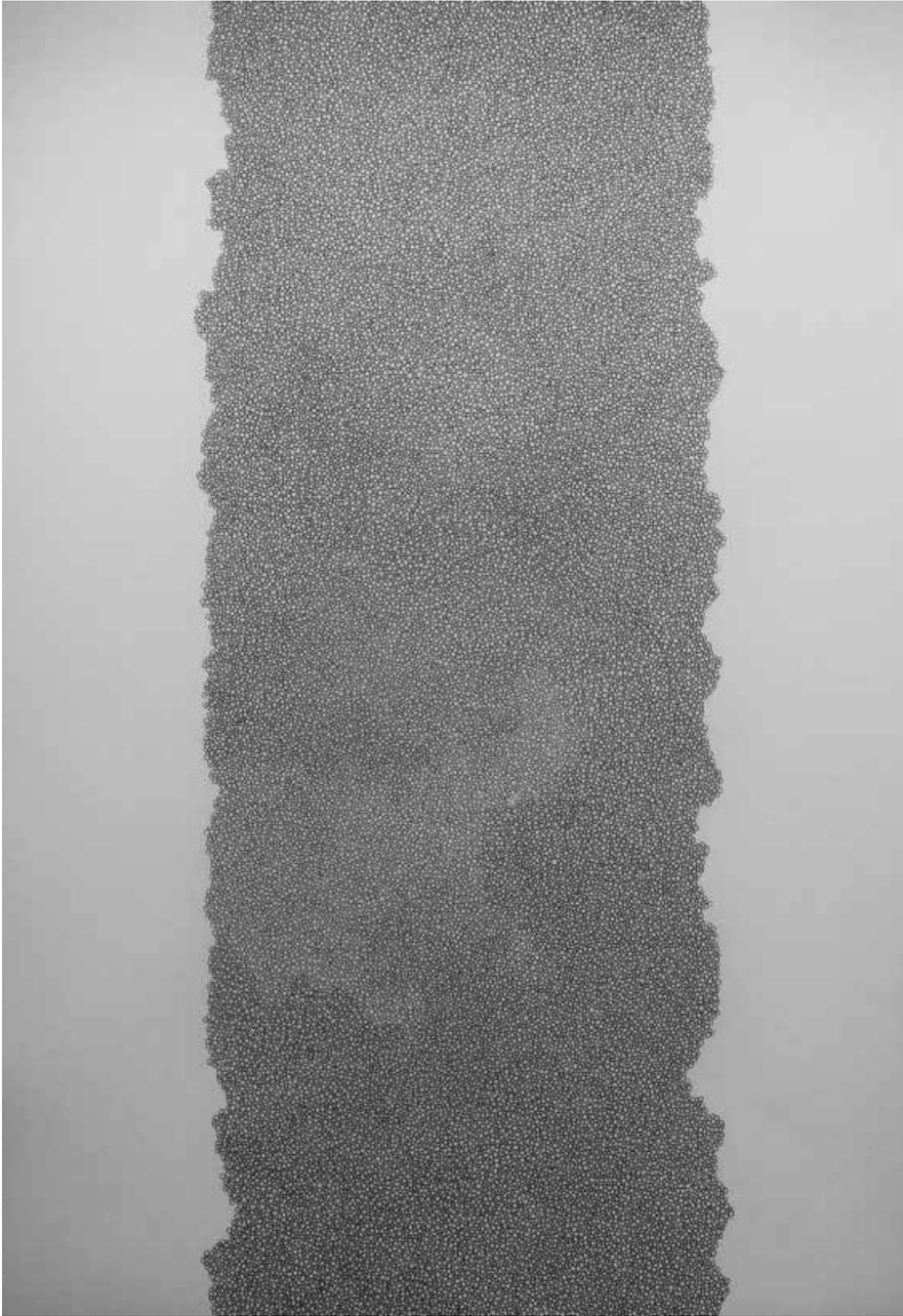












WE ARE HERE TOGETHER FOR A WHILE

Yen Phang

Dear Pang,

How do we talk or write about death and dying?

While I thank you for the opportunity to contribute a piece of writing for your latest solo exhibition, I do also wonder: why did you ask me, and do I have anything of worth to contribute on this subject matter?

Because death is not something we speak of in everyday conversation. We are still considered "young". We still have much of the stories of our own lives to write (or so we hope), filled with many more adventures and relationships yet to come, more work left to be done.

Yet every story has an ending, every book, a last page.

Perhaps you asked me to write something because I've recently come in close proximity to death, and am now processing loss and grief. Does that give me any more insight than the next person about this topic? This question sounds deceptively rhetorical, but in fact does not bear the fruit of easy answers.

The truth is, Death as an Ending does not take the form of any clear definite punctuation for us who are left behind.

The proverbial 'last chapter' came too early for Nick, my partner of 19 years, in Spring of 2018. The discovery of lower abdominal pains led to a diagnosis of late-stage cancer.

Fast forward nine months to 9 December 2018, 2.30AM... A phonecall from the hospital, followed by a hurried taxi

ride, and a run up the slope from where I was dropped off, up to Palliative Ward 83.

His parents and sister were able to get there earlier thankfully, since they lived closer. I joined them quietly, not wanting to disturb the serenity, thinking “phew, finally he’s getting some sleep after nights of pain and lack of rest.”

After about a minute, his sister whispers to me, “feel his hand. His body’s still warm.” It took me what felt like an eternity - but was in fact perhaps 5 seconds - to realise what she had meant. We had missed his ‘final full stop’ by mere minutes. His book had already been closed by the time we got there. There was nothing left to write, nothing left for us to read. We stood there around him, without words.

Dear Pang, thank you.

Viewing your piece ‘Till the End (of Time)’ transports me back to that very moment of the realisation of Nick’s passing, where a universe of confusion, sadness, anger, and relief unfolded, subsequently held in suspension within a few, short seconds, followed by more than a minute of silence.

The grief process is unique to each of us. Yet through the simple gesture of a clock mechanism, and the circular spread of uncooked rice and talcum powder radiating from its centre, you somehow are able to remind us of a more connected, shared humanity even during times when our grief feels inevitably experienced in isolation. The world gives us no clear compass to guide our complex emotions; the terrain of sadness and loss sometimes cannot be navigated with certain directionality. Its visual power comes not from scale or dimension, but from the disorientating sweep of the second hand, but placed in a lateral respite rather than against a wall.

‘Till the End (of Time)’ is in essence an interiority of

rememory,¹ projected upon the bare spaces of the gallery floor and walls. The force of that very remembrance, bound up in personal grief narratives, now thrusts towards me standing here with your work in the present-future.

I still am not sure why it seemed so natural for me to approach you for coffee, during the times before and after Nick’s passing. Was it because I had known already about your experience in hospice care through your Masters in Art Therapy programme at LASALLE College of the Arts? This particular suggestion seems like an unlikely reason, and such an attribution of cause and effect inaccurately reduces my request for your company to base-transaction, too reliant upon the notion of direct exchange (caffeine-beverage-for-counsel) around perceived experience and expertise (yours, that is).

The truth is, our lives have always been very loosely threaded together not just by goodwill and the occasional professional collaboration, but by Death, ever since your first exhibition as a collective, *Departing the Departed* (旅立ち), at the Substation in 2012.²

Oddly enough for me, while your mediums of choice might ostensibly present as “installation” or “found object” (amongst other material varieties) to the world, my personal experience of your practice has felt otherwise. Your real medium doesn’t lie in anything contained within mass, but rather in the intangible – of lost connections, missed relations, and expanded quietude. In your case, sensed materials are mere proxies for the subjective and the relational, moulded by your artist’s tools which comprise your sensitivity to nuance, your lightness of signification, and your equanimity with uncertainty, translated into an

¹Here, I shamelessly lean upon Toni Morrison’s idea of “rememory”, which feels fitting in a situation where one is dealing with a disconnect from the almost-familiar. *Memories are circles, and so are the stories we tell about our pasts.* Toni, Morrison. *Beloved*. 2004. Vintage Books, New York. P. 43.

²“Departing the Departed”, in collaboration with Kanako Furukawa, 2012, Porcelain and Liliium Candimum, The Substation.

honesty that at once both immediately responds to and yet also transcends the conditions of your time, environment, and circumstance.

For example, in your participatory installation “Someday, someone will colour my world”, the heart of the work is not only in the messages or drawings left behind by your visitors, but also the incidental accumulation of the drifts of pastel powder, the remnants of audience-action and intention. We are not just what we present to the world, but also a accretion of dust, of already dead particles.

For those of us grieving, the death of a loved one could be seen as a point in our past. But while their story has concluded, ours continue.

Unplanned Endings is a singular point in the continuing narrative of your life and practice, as manifest through the various roles you play, of which “Artist” is merely one of them. Once we acknowledge the fact that terms like “Art” and “Artist” are convenient (but ultimately insufficient) shorthands, we could perhaps open up our experience of your current artworks presented within the context of present gallery space, to embrace their full dimensionality beyond merely discrete objects or installations.

Take for example, ‘Without Words’. Even without the reveal of any personal context to the piece, it is very possible to acknowledge its autonomy and personhood as abstract-art-object, by us being sensitive to our encounter with it, noticing the ‘skin’ of the chosen surface of Chinese calligraphic paper, going close and letting our vision swim within the field of minute pen marks that on the surface seem to reject notions of personal expression,³ but in fact betray a fully-formed bodyness within the framing of measured gesture over time.

³Self-expression being a ubiquitous vehicle for healing within practices of art therapy.

Because in your art practice, your works are never mere servants to semiotic function. They do not need to be mere vessels for meaning. They just are.

And they move beyond that even, adding the dimension of relationality through artwork-as-invitation, or art-object-as-call-to-action. As is the case for ‘Doing Something, Doing Nothing’. The piece instigates, and provides release, exemplifying notions of confluence, unforced intersections, a silent conversation unfurling spatiotemporally in this space, during this time, within our short lives. We are here together for a while.

You yourself have also experienced loss of your own. My natural instinct was to ask during pertinent times, “is there anything that you need?”⁴ Why do you pursue art, and pursue it in the way that you do?

We might buy into the belief that “you are what you do”.⁵ Okay, sure, as artists, you have artworks to create, shows to put up, bills to pay. I suspect though that you have seemed to have moved past such utilitarian functions of an artist’s role in the larger spheres of market or cultural programming. Because even in the face of death, we still have to continue living, and in grieving, still consider the practical. And you Pang are nothing if not pragmatic.

Could it be that decades after Abraham Maslow’s first conception of the model for human needs,⁶ that he had supplemented the need for self-actualisation on the top

⁴As clichéd as this sounds, Abraham’s original publications of his hierarchy of human needs warrant a revisit: Abraham H. Maslow (1943), “A theory of human motivation”, *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.

Abraham H. Maslow (1943), “Motivation and personality”, Harper, New York. We will come back to Maslow again later.

⁵As individual express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with their production, both with “what” they produce and with “how” they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining the production”. Thanks Marx. Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*. 1998. Prometheus Books, New York. Pp. 10-11.

⁶Abraham H. Maslow (1969). “The farther reaches of human nature”. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1(1), 1-9.

of the hierarchy with self-transcendence? "That is, the greatest attainment of identity, autonomy, or selfhood is itself simultaneously a transcending of itself, a going beyond and above selfhood. The person can then become relatively egoless."⁷ What an odd sentiment. From the inward and individualistic, to the collapsing of the I-Thou binary into a new awareness of self-within-ecosystem.⁸ And this is the spirit in which I experience *Unplanned Endings*. Your visual voice is personal, relatable, and intimate. Yet it comes from a place of unassuming generosity, without you even knowing it.

The days that followed Nick's passing were shrouded in blur of conversation. Arrangements needed to be made with the funeral parlour. Information had to be disseminated to friends and family. Expressions of care and condolences had to be received with equal kindness and grace.

Words. So many words. Yet still so difficult to talk about death, and loss.⁹

But now, it has become less difficult for me, partly because of your current show and past practice, partly because of this opportunity to write for you.

In short, what I'm trying to say is this: I hope that you will

⁷Abraham H. Maslow (1999). "Peak-experiences as acute identity experiences". In A. H. Maslow, *Toward a psychology of being*, 3rd ed., NewYork: Wiley, p. 117.

⁸It is foolish to repeat maxims with uncritical faith (swathed in the comfort of "motivational" language). Meaning-making narratives can transform into platitudes and false myths over time. Do have a look a few of the more critical explorations: Joe Robinson, "American Identity Crisis: Are You Your Job?", Huffington Post, 7 February, 2012. (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/self-identity_b_1128731). Victor J. Seidler, *Recovering the Self: Morality and Social Theory*. 1994. Psychology Press, London.

Robin, I also have a title for you, given your religious background: Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash a Revolution in Your Life In Christ*. 2011. Thomas Nelson, Tennessee.

⁹At this juncture, I would like to harken back to your book of poetry as well: Calvin Pang, "Going Home". 2016, Singapore, self-published.

see *Unplanned Endings* as more than just an exhibition containing your latest artworks. Apart from the evolution of your ideas and visual vernacular which is exciting in itself, what you have also done for the rest of us is created room for others to perhaps begin finding their own language of loss and grief, whether with words, or not.

And for that, thank you Pang.

Yen Phang (b. 1979, Singapore) inhabits space where the biological rubs against the controlled. His current preoccupations revolve around exploring concepts of dirt and the regulation of bodily processes and interactions, played out through the rubric of painting and performance.

till the end (of time)

2018 / 2019

*Uncooked rice, talcum powder and
clock mechanism.*

Dimension variable







someday, someone will colour my world

2019

*Marker and pastel on wall
Site-specific*



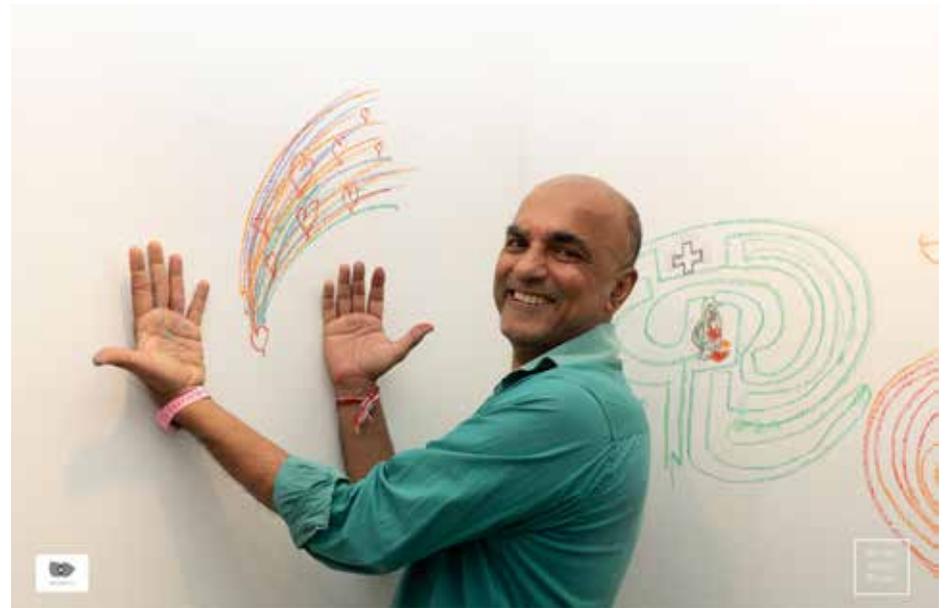




Photo: Yen Phang





EVENTS

As part of *Unplanned Endings*, there will be a series of accompanying events taking place at Intersections Art Gallery on two Friday evenings.

All events are free to attend.

Friday, 20 September, 19:30 ~ 20:30

Art as a companion in grief: a personal perspective

Nonverbal expressions such as art have been acknowledged as powerful tools to support emotionally heavy experiences following loss and bereavement, when words are sometimes inadequate. Pang will be sharing about how his art practice had provided him with the means to grieve – through written words, installations and repetitive art making.

Friday, 4 October, 19:30 ~ 20:30

Art therapy in palliative care: a local perspective

Pang will be joined by two other registered art therapists Moni Pang and Gillian Ong for that evening. Through an art experiential and conversations, this will provide audiences a glimpse into the role of art in palliative care settings within the Singapore context.

For enquiries, please email art@intersections.com.sg

BIOGRAPHIES

About the practitioner

Pang (b. 1986, Singapore) is a registered art therapist and an art practitioner. He works with narratives from everyday encounters and had presented his work at international art therapy conferences in Australia and the United Kingdom. He is currently practicing as an art therapist in a hospice setting in Singapore and is also a contributing author for *Found Objects in Art Therapy: Materials and Process* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, forthcoming 2021).

His installation works have been commissioned by the Singapore Art Museum (2017) and Owl Spot Theater in Tokyo, Japan (2016 & 2017). He is represented by Intersections Art Gallery, Singapore.

About the guest art therapists

Moni started her career as an engineer, progress to be a management consultant, an entrepreneur, an art educator, an artist, and now her latest vocation as an art therapist. She embraces change and challenges herself in new endeavours. Moni's inspirations come from her interactions with her students at Clay Cove (a ceramics studio she established since 2002), corporate clients, and patients in palliative care. Every encounter is a moment to seize, embrace and cherish. She celebrates life.

A social worker and art therapist, Gillian has worked with diverse populations that include the area of disabilities, HIV work, mental health and palliative care. Currently an art therapist in a hospice, she witnesses the tremendous capacity within us for transformation and healing through art, and the need for compassion to self and others in the journey of life.



Art as a companion in grief: a personal perspective
on Friday, 20 September 2019, 19:30 ~ 20:30



Art therapy in palliative care: a local perspective
on Friday, 4 October 2019, 19:30 ~ 20:30

RESOURCE LIST

A list of books, articles, films, and a music album have been compiled by Pang to accompany his solo exhibition at Intersections Art Gallery. This compilation expands on the concepts and ideas raised through this exhibition and his wider creative and clinical practice. In this list are some resources exploring (sometimes intersecting) themes on art making, grief & bereavement, and on death & dying.

Ackerman, D. (1990). *A natural history of the senses*. New York: Random House.

Allen, P. B. (1995). *Art is a way of knowing: A guide to self-knowledge and spiritual fulfillment through creativity*. Boston, MA: Shambala Publications.

Alter-Muri, S. & Klein, L. (2007). Dissolving the boundaries: Postmodern art and art therapy. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 24(2), 82-86.

Bardot, H. (2008). Expressing the inexpressible: The resilient healing of client and art therapist. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 25(4), 183-186.

Bardot, H. (2013). The universality of grief and loss. In P. Howie, S. Prasad & J. Kristel (Eds.) *Using art therapy with diverse populations crossing cultures and abilities* (pp.256-266). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Barnes, J. (2017). *Death*. UK: Vintage.

Bat-Or, M., & Garti, D. (2019). Art therapist's perceptions of the role of the art medium in the treatment of bereaved clients in art therapy. *Death Studies*, 43(3), 193-203.

Beaumont, S. L. (2013). Art therapy for complicated grief: A focus on meaning-making approaches. *Canadian Art Therapy Association Journal*, 26(2), 1-7.

Bowlby, J. (1979). *The making and breaking of affectional bonds*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Casement, P. J. (2006). *Learning from life: Becoming a psychoanalyst*. London: Routledge.

Connerton, P. (2012). *The spirit of mourning: History, memory and the body*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Devine, M. (2017). *It's ok that you're not ok: Meeting grief and loss in a culture that doesn't understand*. Canada: Sounds True Inc.

Dreifuss-Kattan, E. (2016). *Art and mourning: The role of creativity in healing trauma and loss*. London: Routledge.

Erwin, A. & Erwin, J. (Director), Bond, C. (Producer). (2018). *I can only imagine* [Film]. USA: Lionsgate

Fujimura, M. (2009). *Refractions: A journey of faith, art and culture*. Colorado Springs: NavPress

Gawande, A. (2014). *Being mortal: Medicine and what matters in the end*. USA: Picador.

Hara, K. (2008). *White*. Japan: Chuokoron-Shinsha, Inc.

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Intersections

INTERSECTIONS ART GALLERY

Founded in Singapore in 2012, Intersections is interested in artworks which tell a story and crystallize encounters between different art forms.

A vision that is depicted in the gallery's logo of two intersecting shapes,

Intersections's mission is to bridge cultures through the arts and the gallery space provides easy access for the unsuspecting passer-by to an encounter with art and culture.

Intersections represents artists based in Southeast Asia, with a primary focus on contemporary Burmese art. The gallery owner strives to discover and develop young talents through eclectic and purposeful exhibitions.

Intersections also offers customs services to make any place arty.

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for believing in my art practice.

My colleagues
for being there to support this exhibition.

My peers
for your holding when things fell apart for me.

Mum and Dad
for giving Jovin and I your best, with what you have.

all my artwork
for being my companion when nothing else makes sense.

&

thank you Jesus,
for being my every good thing.

He is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
Colossians 1:17 (NIV)

unplanned endings

2019.9.18 ~ 2019.10.20

Pang's solo exhibition,
is presented by:



Intersections

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www.intersections.com.sg
art@intersections.com.sg

Opening hours:

Wednesdays to Sundays: 14:00 ~ 19:00
September 20, Friday: 14:00 ~ 20:30
October 4, Friday: 14:00 ~ 20:30
Closed Mondays, Tuesdays & PH

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