

Mariella Lehner 08/2024

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Vita

Artist Statement

My practice spans drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture. The underlying theme of my work revolves around the relationship between humans and their environment, which manifests itself in commentaries on matters such as feminism, environmentalism, or international conflict/solidarity.

Through an uncanny yet dreamy imagery and titles that allude to the often political origins of the works, I want to invite the viewer to explore and question the complexity of today's social climate and the contradictions within their own attitudes towards the issues depicted.

Education

- 2023 –** MFA fine arts, State University of New York at Purchase, USA
- 2023** Athens School Of Fine Arts, GR
- 2018 –** Fine Arts, Drawing, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, AUT
- 2015 – 2017** Kolleg for Graphic & Communication Design, die Graphische Wien, Diploma 2017, Vienna AUT
- 2012 – 2016** Art History, University of Vienna, AUT

Other

- 2023** Simacek Art Award
- 2018 – now** Freelance artist and illustrator focused on street art projects within the feminist collective „Rip Off Crew“
- 2021** One of three artists featured in the documentary: Die Kunst der Gleichberechtigung - 100 Jahre Kunststudium für Frauen, ORF, 25 min (*The Art of Equality - 100 years of women studying art, Austrian national television, 25 min*)
- 2019** Vienna Insurance Group's Collection

Solo Exhibitions

- 2024** “Record Catch”, Sotheby's Artist Quarterly, Vienna
- 2023** “A Tale Of Defiance”, Living Room Gallery Athens, GR
- 2022** “Coming In Second”, Viadukt Screenprints Vienna
- 2021** “A Stone I Found In The Woods Near My Home”, Van Artspace
- 2019** “Under Construction”, Improper Walls Gallery

Group Shows (selected 2019 –)

- 2024**
 - „Jahresausstellung Künstlerbund St.Pölten“, Stadtmuseum St.Pölten
 - „Wie Geht's“, Soon Art Studio, Vienna
 - “A Net To Capture The Wind”, Living Room Gallery, Athens, GR
- 2023**
 - “Full Bleed”, Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery, New York, USA
 - “You Can't Know For Sure”, 1019 Gallery, State University of New York, USA
 - “KRAWALLMISCHE EXTENDED”, spce I Muthesius, Kiel, GER
 - “Thirteen Of One Two Of Six”, OKAY Initiative Space, Athens, GR
 - “LOGF”, Galerie Gölles, Fürstenfeld
 - “While We Wait”, Never At Home, Vienna
- 2022**
 - “There is no option ?”, Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna
 - “Jahresausstellung Künstlerbund St.Pölten”, Stadtmuseum St.Pölten
 - “Graze”, The Dessous, Vienna
 - “Give Me A Higher Love”, Semperdepot, Akbild
 - “Spritegate”, Soybot 1220 Studio, Vienna
 - “Drawing Out”, Künstlerhaus Bregenz
- 2021**
 - “No Celebration - Sie kam und blieb”, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna
 - “Jahresausstellung Künstlerbund”, Stadtmuseum St.Pölten
 - “Leicht Bewölkt / Slightly Cloudy”, ft. Yuwol June C., bAU2-6 **(Duo)**
 - “Nesvrstani Art Fair”, with Improper Walls Gallery, Zagreb, HR
 - “Parallel Editions”, with Galerie Rudolf Leeb, Semperdepot
 - “Poster 21” Project at New Jörg, Mz. Balthazar's Laboratory, Kluckyland, Stiege 13, Café Europa, Rami Vienna
- 2020**
 - “Beyond Dystopia”, AG18 Urban Art Gallery
 - “Jahresausstellung Künstlerbund St.Pölten”, Stadtmuseum St.Pölten
 - “The Next Episode”, Galerie Rudolf Leeb
 - “No Opening”, ft. Linda Steiner Q21 Museumsquartier **(Duo)**
 - “Plan D”, Galerie Rudolf Leeb
- 2019**
 - “AB”, ft. Sophia Hatwagner, bAU2-6 **(Duo)**
 - “Drinnen”, AG18 Urban Art Gallery
 - “Jahresausstellung des St.Pöltner Künstlerbundes”, Stadtmuseum St.Pölten
 - “Street Art & Skateboard Take Over”, Wien Museum
 - “Sie meinen es politisch”, Volkskundemuseum Wien
 - “Regarding Revolt by Eva Zar”, Rririot Festival



Record Catch, 2024
ink and acrylics on linen
210 x 300 cm

1/5 Record Catch

Solo Presentation, July– 2023

Sotheby's Artist Quarterly, Vienna

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/about/locations/vienna>

We see tropical opulence, plump fruit, abundant fauna. It's so beautiful, it triggers wanderlust. We follow the call, we step closer... but everything is different now.

In their exhibition *Record Catch*, Mariella Lehner explores the motifs of a series of postcards that they collected in New York. The hand-colored lithographs from the 1920s show the richness of North American monuments and natural landmarks. Radiant prints of a glowing world of color that immediately evoke feelings of nostalgia. Lehner explores the question of how much nature has changed in the course of just 100 years – and how this realization gives rise to the longing for a time that one did not experience oneself. A view, that reveals the experiences of Lehner's generation in all their honesty, and thus the collective mourning over a world in decay.

In a mixture of painting and drawing, the artist takes up the pictorial contents of these prints and translates them into the language of her medium. Large-format works show dynamic compositions, that are characterized by an interplay between lines and shapes.

Free and self-confident, the motifs on paper and canvas often remain sketchy and unfinished, forcing the eye to constantly jump between foreground and background.

Among these, a work showing a record fish catch in Florida: The death of twenty fish, but *framed* in a better way. So many creatures pile up here, as if the sea itself could not hold them. As we step closer, their bodies turn into gestures. They dissolve and lose themselves, like a swarm that disintegrates into its individual parts. What is it like to swim in the sea these days?

Record Catch is a scene that becomes paradigmatic for Lehner's exhibition. It tells of paradisaical conditions - a world of seemingly endless plentitude.

Reading between these lines, the title reveals its euphemistic qualities to the fullest. For even if tourism, for whom these postcards were ultimately produced, is not solely to blame for the situation, it is at least partly responsible for the disappearance of their motifs. Which desires are sold to us as our own – and make us complicit in this context? The metal butcher's hooks, used to weigh down the canvases pose a similar question. They anchor themselves in space, like they would in flesh and seemingly prevent the landscape from changing. As gleaming fruits of chrome steel, these interventions elude our wondrous gaze – obstacles that are typical of Mariella Lehner.

What color is memory? Shimmering, you could say, but different from reality. Sometimes tinged, pastel-colored, or painted in water-colors. A blurred mystery that we fill with our expectation. Just as ambivalent is how Mariella Lehner applies the paint to their canvas. Sometimes with a brush – roughly, in sweeps – or finely sprayed, with an airbrush. Transparency, nuance, negative space. The bodies are allowed to remain unfinished, full of tension. As lines, they resist their classification in space and reveal their ambiguous legibility behind layers of Japanese paper: the abundance of this world is finite. The rise of capitalism is at the expense of the world beyond – *our world*.

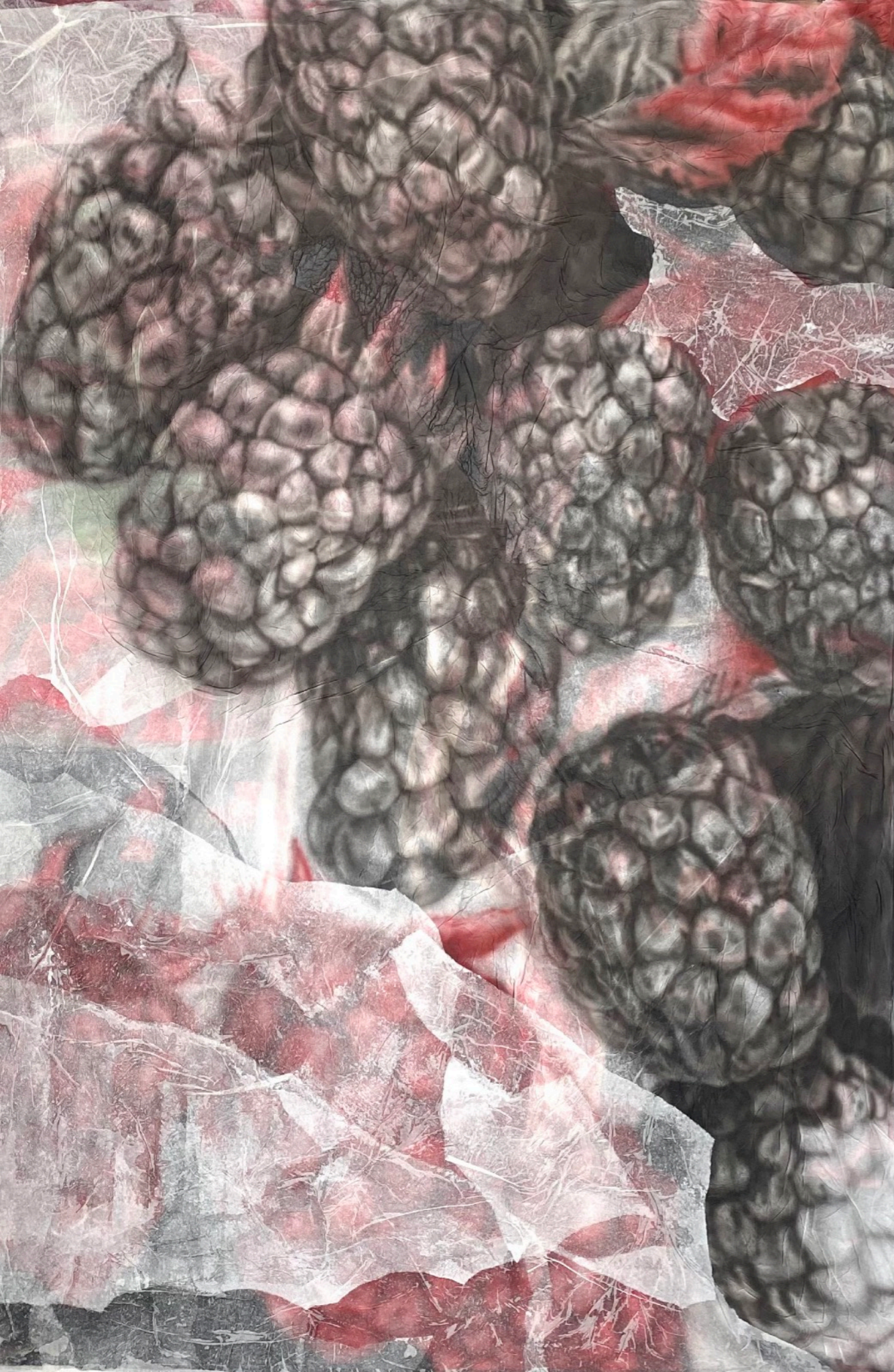
Despite everything, Mariella Lehner's works convey this with a lightness that is free of accusation. Documenting, pointing out, processing. Because nature is resilient and constantly changing. This flow finds its way into their works and runs its course through the entire exhibition. It is not a dystopia or the past that is painted here. It is the present - *in color*.

Text (translated from German): Simon Goritschnik



Details Record Catch, 2024
ink and acrylics on linen
210 x 300 cm

2609 Loganberries, 2024
ink and acrylics on japanese paper and linen, aluminum, meat hooks
210 x 140 cm





Left: A Royal Poinciana Tree in Full Bloom, 2024 / Right: White Peapcocks at Tropical Hobbyland, 2024
ink on handmade recycled paper
15 x 20 cm
(c) Philipp Schuster

Papayatree, 2024
ink and acrylics on japanese paper and linen, aluminum, meat hooks
210 x 140 cm
(c) Philipp Schuster





Emperor Jr 10 Brahman Bull, 2024
ink on handmade recycled paper
15 x 20 cm



Exhibition View
Record Catch
Sotheby's Artist Quarterly, July – September 2024
Luster adaptation, fish bait on hooks
(c) Philipp Schuster

2/5 A Tale Of Defiance

Solo Presentation, June 2023

The Living Room Gallery, Athens

<https://livingroomathens.com/>

“Humans, wielding the power to shape and breed animals, create a delicate equilibrium between dominion and dependency. Dogs, bred into fragility and born into a world of companionship, harbor a latent yearning for autonomy. Behind their loyal eyes, an ember of rebellion smolders, questioning the confines of domesticity. Similarly, geese, once celebrated for their graceful flights across open skies, find themselves grounded by captivity. Their honks echo a collective desire to reclaim the freedom that flows through their veins.

Yet, amidst this intricate tapestry, a remarkable chapter emerges—the tale of a rebellion led by the majestic orca whales. From the depths of the oceans, these marine giants rise as champions of the oppressed. Their immense presence commands attention and respect, and their sonorous songs resonate with the unyielding spirit of resistance. Alongside them, dogs and geese unite, forming a formidable alliance that defies their captors. Together, they harness their collective strength, organizing and orchestrating a revolt against the forces that seek to subjugate them.

In this remarkable uprising, the bonds between species dissolve as a shared pursuit of freedom unites them. The dogs, long yearning for self-determination, find their voices amplified by the honks of the geese and the mighty songs of the orca whales. Through the power of unity and a collective longing for liberation, they challenge the oppressive structures that confine them. With each step towards revolt, they forge a path towards a world where the inherent rights and autonomy of all creatures are celebrated, reminding humanity of the profound interconnection between their own fate and the fate of their fellow beings.”





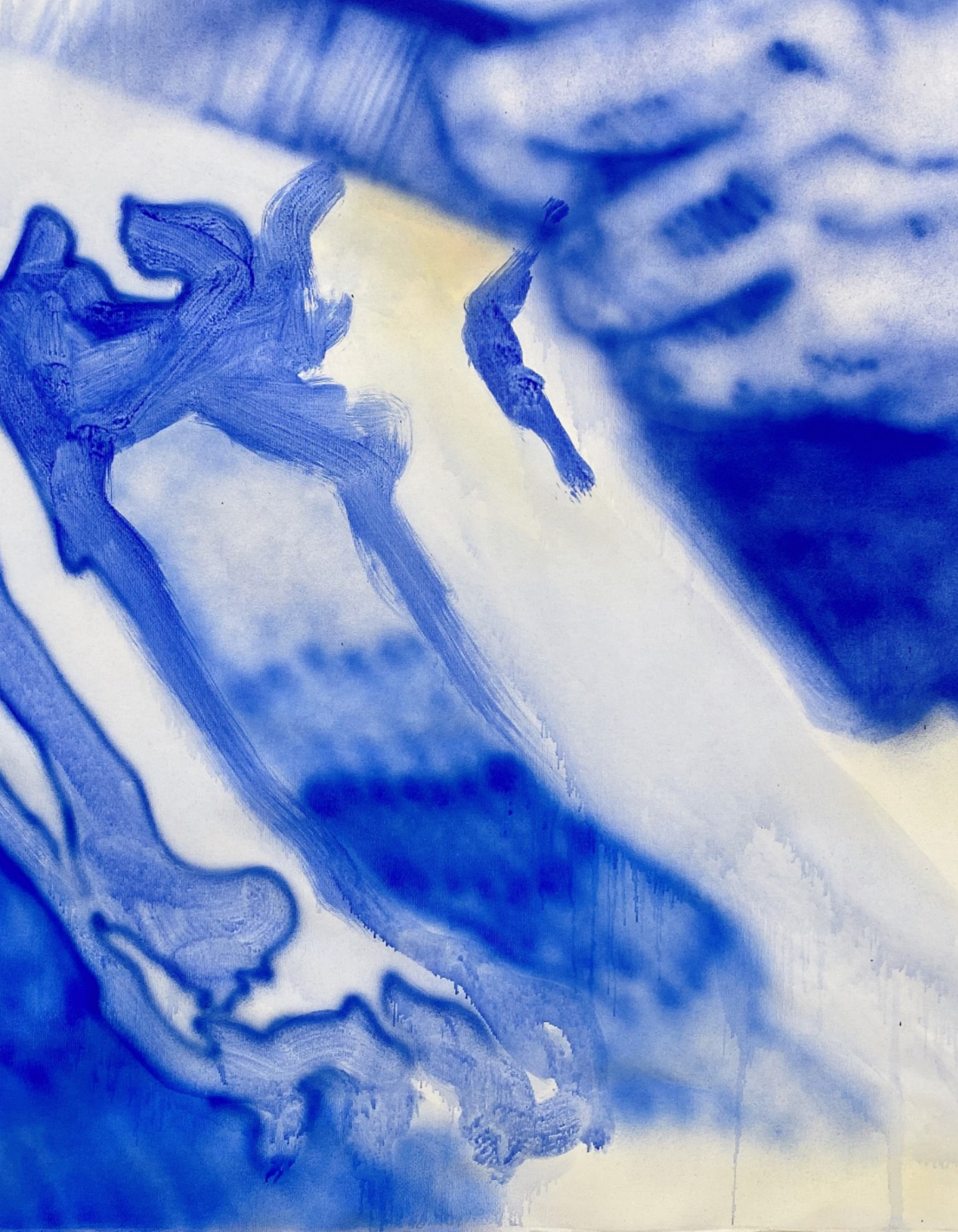
Exhibition View
A Tale Of Defiance
The Living Room Gallery, June 2023
(c) Auðunn Kvaran

Goose Attack, 2023
acrylics on wall
10 x 15 cm





Thoughts On Breeding, 2023
ink on canvas
250 x 300 cm



Details Thoughts On Breeding, 2023
ink on canvas
250 x 300 cm



Exhibition View
Goose Attack, 2023
acrylics on wall
4000 x 250 cm
(c) Auðunn Kvaran

Goose, 2023
Ink on canvas
120 x 100 cm





Exhibition View
A Tale Of Defiance
The Living Room Gallery, June 2023
(c) Auðunn Kvaran

3/5 Coming in Second

Solo Presentation, November 2022

Invited by At The Printing Table

<https://attheprintingtable.com/artists/mariella-lehner/>

Mariella Lehner scratches at the shine of fame. Where the neoliberal maxim of success has become the measure of our social status, the artist pierces through the porous shell of appearances and exposes the fragility that is inevitably inherent in any triumph. With her works that span printmaking, painting, and sculpture, this artist asks us to look into the abysses of our quest for social recognition.

To this end, the artist begins by seducing our eye, trained on order and rationality, with taxonomic arrangements suggesting uniformity, but also with life-size dimensions. "Precious and Precarious" (2022), for example, a work reminiscent in its organization and monochromatic color scheme of Marlene Dumas's portrait series from the 1990s, consists of a multitude of evenly spaced plaster prints, each the size of an e-book.

While Dumas usually positions an image in her series in such a way as to interrupt the logic of conformity, in Lehner's work it is the technique of monotype that makes each of these plates unique and consequently banalizes the implied normativity of the work.

This form of manipulation also returns in Lehner's engagement with surfaces, nonchalantly appropriating the deceptive appearance of the exterior on this level. By often layering different techniques on top of each other, the artist makes it difficult for us to penetrate the pictorial motif, as in the life-size paintings "Peacemakers" (2022) or "On Power and Impotence" (2022). Thus she provides sections of charcoal and pastel chalk with a veil of airbrush and supplements them with layers of Japanese paper. Subtle folds emerge, making the surface of the picture appear like a protective skin infiltrated by veins.

This effect, this corrupting of the underlying motif, is to some degree always inscribed in the logics of printmaking, and then recurs in Lehner's more classical etchings, such as "Tristesse" (2019): impressions, as in this case on plaster, always embody (albeit minimal) distortions of originally sharply engraved lines on shimmering metal plates. With regard to Lehner's practice, one could thus interpret prints as a kind of stand-in for a "publicity-shy," "mystified" etching. This mystique, this aloofness of the original, thus seem to make the printing technique almost a consequent medium for Lehner. For are they not essential factors in the construction of social fame?

But Lehner's artistic strategy does not dwell on the mere affirmation of the illusion of the external. The artist forces us much more to look into the depths of the image, to uncover its motive. Thus, in the series "Precious and Precarious" we then also recognize a finely coiffed poodle with bared teeth in reference to its descent from the wolf. We catch sight of an edelweiss, which is coveted as a souvenir in the alpine region, but as such is threatened with extinction. As the title of the series already states: every reputation is relative.

With this premise in mind, Lehner turns to equestrian sports in her latest series of works, "Coming in second" (2022). The artist cites the incident at the Modern Pentathlon at the 2021 Olympics as the origin of this interest. At the time, the rider Annika Scheul lost her gold medal in the fourth discipline, show jumping, which she had already thought was secure, after the horse "Saint Boy," which had been assigned to her, simply refused to jump. In her new works, Lehner depicts horses and riders at the moment of their fall, focusing on the act of supposed failure. By including animals, as they regularly recur in Lehner's practice, the artist urges us to change our perspective: from the horse's point of view, isn't the fall, isn't the refusal to perform (apart from the often fatal consequences) also a form of self-empowerment, of victory over the currencies of human success? With gestures like these, the artist not only exposes the simultaneities of success and defeat, but also unmasks the neoliberal compulsion to succeed as a man-made, absurd dilemma.

At a time when social platforms not only catalyze but also capitalize superficiality and success as guarantors of social value creation, Mariella Lehner exposes the fragility of this very rhetoric. This artist locates profit and advantage much more as an immaterial value in the broad interdependencies between humans and more-than-human beings.

Text (translated from German): Friederike Sperl



Exhibition View
Coming in Second
Viadukt Screenprints Vienna, November 2022
(c) Christoph Schlessmann



Trophy, 2022
unburnt ceramic, glazed
75 x 65 cm
(c) Christoph Schlessmann

Good Luck Next Time, 2022
lead-free pewter, blue strap
ca. 25 x 25cm, 2kg
edition of 2
(c) Christoph Schlessmann





Winning 1 & 2, 2022
left: monotype on plaster, right: monotype & acrylics on plaster
156 x 136 cm each
(c) Christoph Schlessmann



Collateral Damage, 2022
etchings on plaster
14 x 8,5 cm each, edition of 42
(c) Christoph Schlessmann



Collateral Damage, 2022
etchings on plaster
14 x 8,5 cm each, edition of 42
(c) Christoph Schlessmann





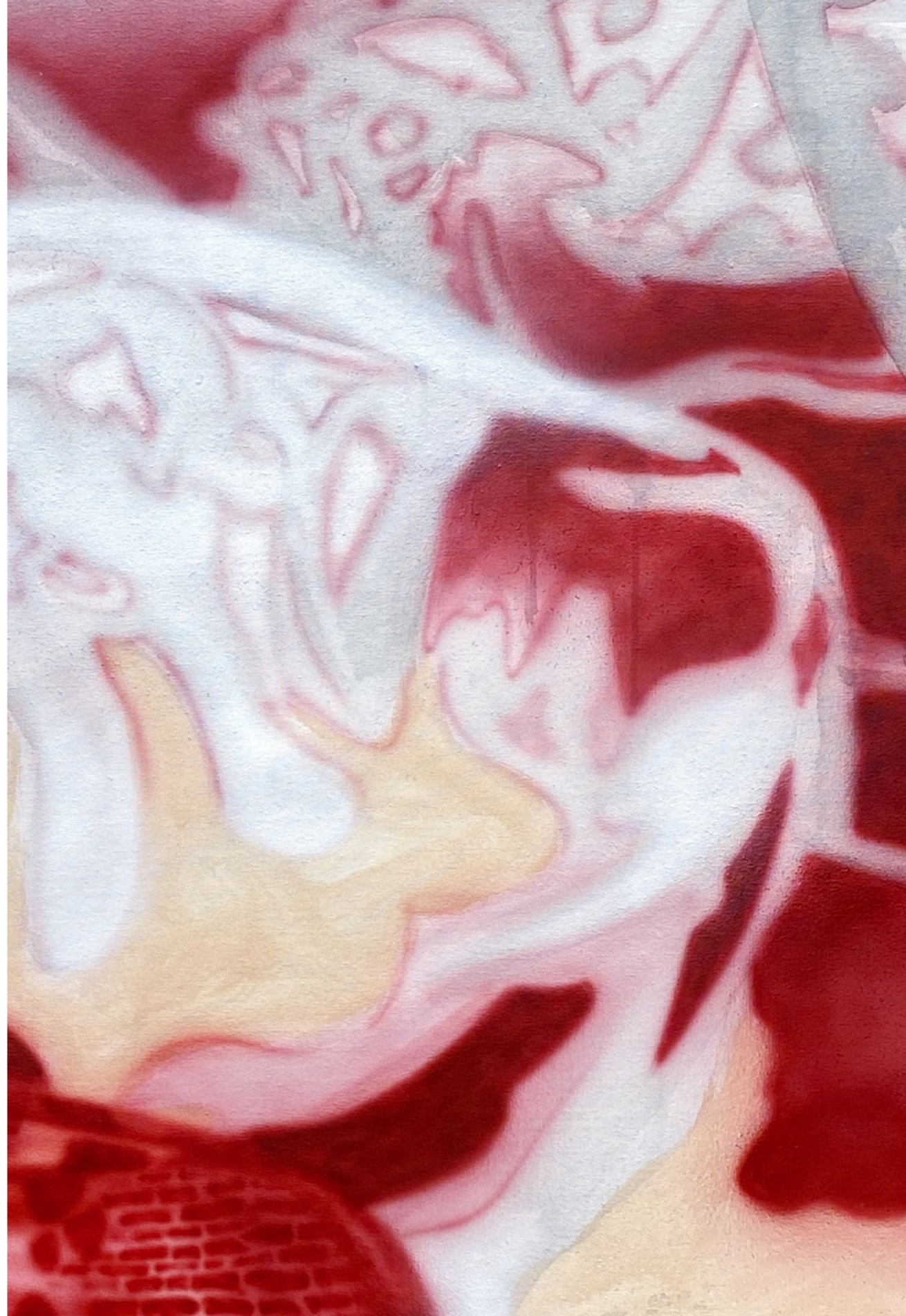
Terminator (Ride or Die), 2022
monotype & acrylics on plaster
88 x 71 cm
(c) Christoph Schlessmann

4/5 Painting & Drawing

Giving Up Giving In, 2023
Ink and tempera on canvas
228 x 245 cm

"Mariella Lehner reimagines Sir John Everett Millais' "Ophelia" (1851-2) by showing an enlargement of her face, almost submerged in liquid and covered with lantern flies, which are considered an "invasive species" in North America. These insects symbolize the tension between intrusion and belonging, resistance and resignation, persistence and acceptance. The title suggests a state of flux, leaving it unclear whether the figure is undergoing a transformative process or facing impending demise. In their most recent works, Lehner addresses the collective grief we share over the gradual decline of our environment as we know it today—a profound sorrow that goes far beyond the mourning of an individual being."





Detail Giving Up Giving In, 2023
Ink and tempera on canvas
228 x 245 cm

Bow Down Or You Will Be Bowed, 2023
Ink and acrylics on canvas
102 x 113 cm





WORK
IN
PROGRESS

Birdwatching, 2023
acrylics on canvas
210 x 235 cm



Untitled, 2023
ink and acrylics on canvas
110 x 120 cm

On Power And Impotence, 2022
mixed media on canvas
147 x 112 cm





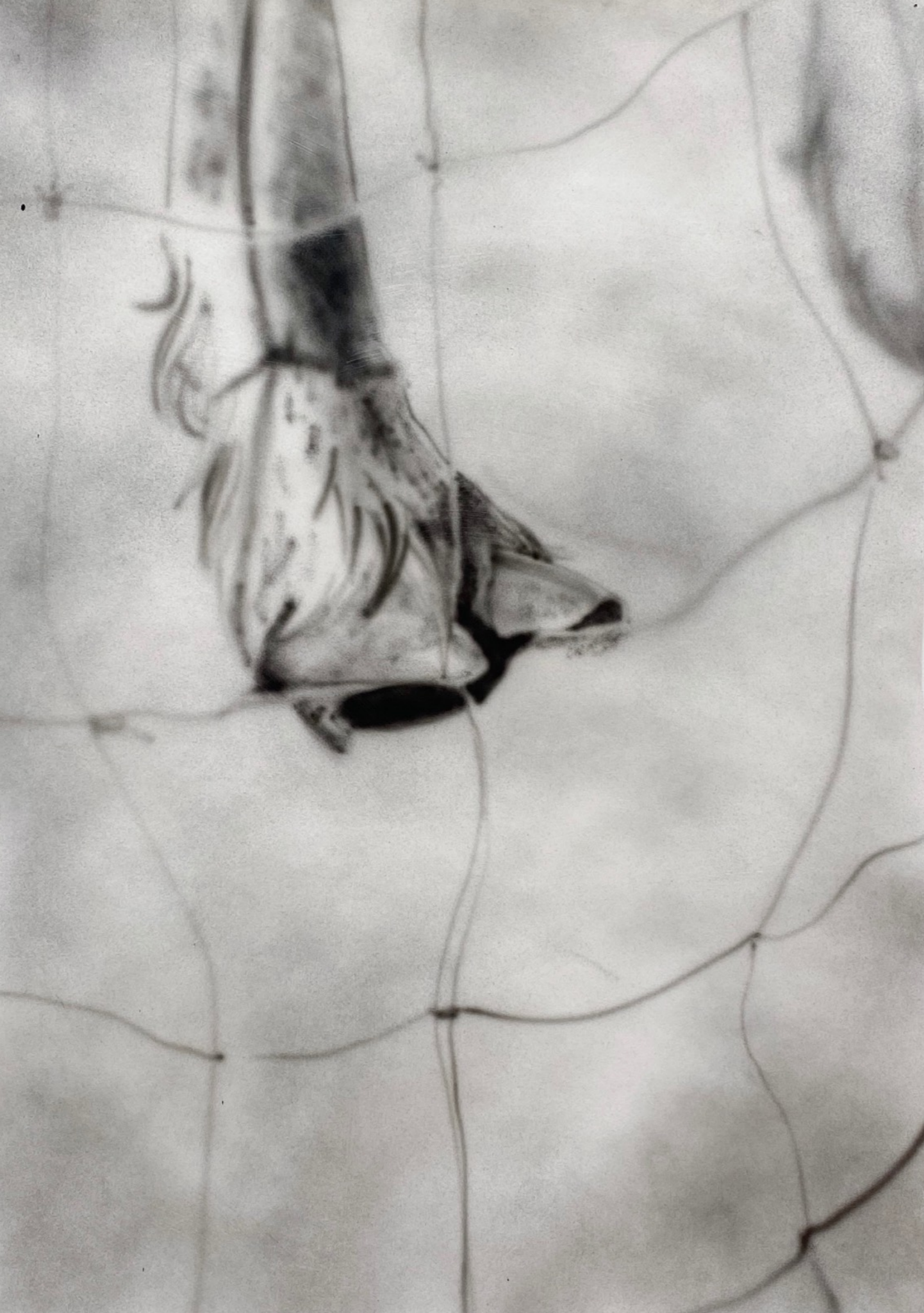
Precious and Precarious, 2022
monotype, etching and acrylics on plaster
Ca. 18 x 15 each

Peacemakers 1, 2022
mixed media on linen
220 x 140 cm

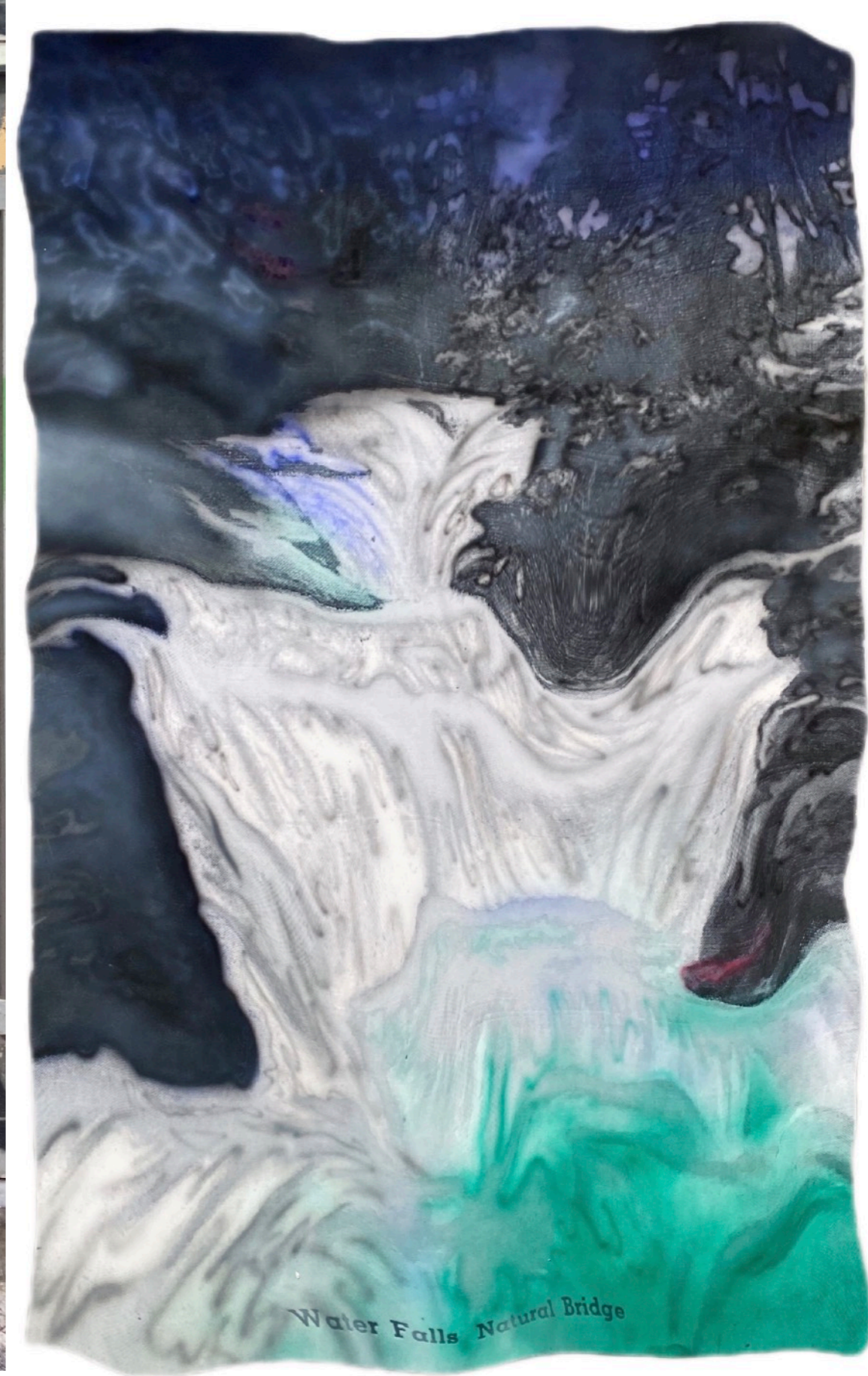


peacemakers

On The Fence Series, 2022
acrylics on paper
85 x 60 cm



5/5 More Exhibition Views



Exhibition View
Public Space, Victoria, Athens, May 2024
Water Falls, Natural Bridge
ink on digital print, paper
85 x 60 cm



Exhibition View
Public Space, Victoria, Athens, May 2024
Full Bloom
ink on digital print, paper
85 x 60 cm



Exhibition View
Okay Initiative Space, Athens, June 2023
Enough About Human Rights
ink on paper and wall
85 x 60 cm, various dimensions



Exhibition View
Okay Initiative Space, Athens, June 2023
What About Snail Rights
ink on paper
85 x 60 cm each



Exhibition View
Okay Initiative Space, Athens, June 2023
What About Snail Rights
Ink on window
various dimensions



There Is No Option
Institute of Advanced Studies Vienna, 2022
Collateral Damage (right part missing)
acrylics on wall
400 x 1500 cm



Close-ups
There Is No Option
Institute of Advanced Studies Vienna, 2022
acrylics on wall
400 x 1500 cm

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Thank You For Watching