

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of  
Fine Arts in Sculpture in the Department of Sculpture of the Rhode Island School of  
Design, Providence, Rhode Island

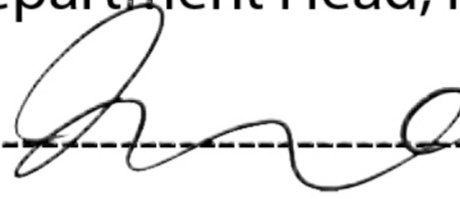
by

Ndivhuho

Rasengani  
2021

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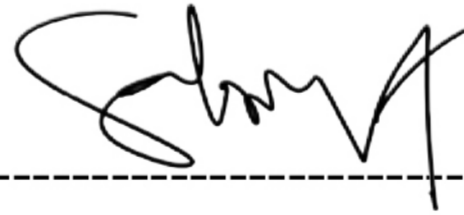
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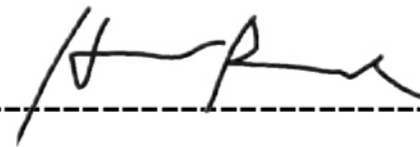
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Thesis Advisor

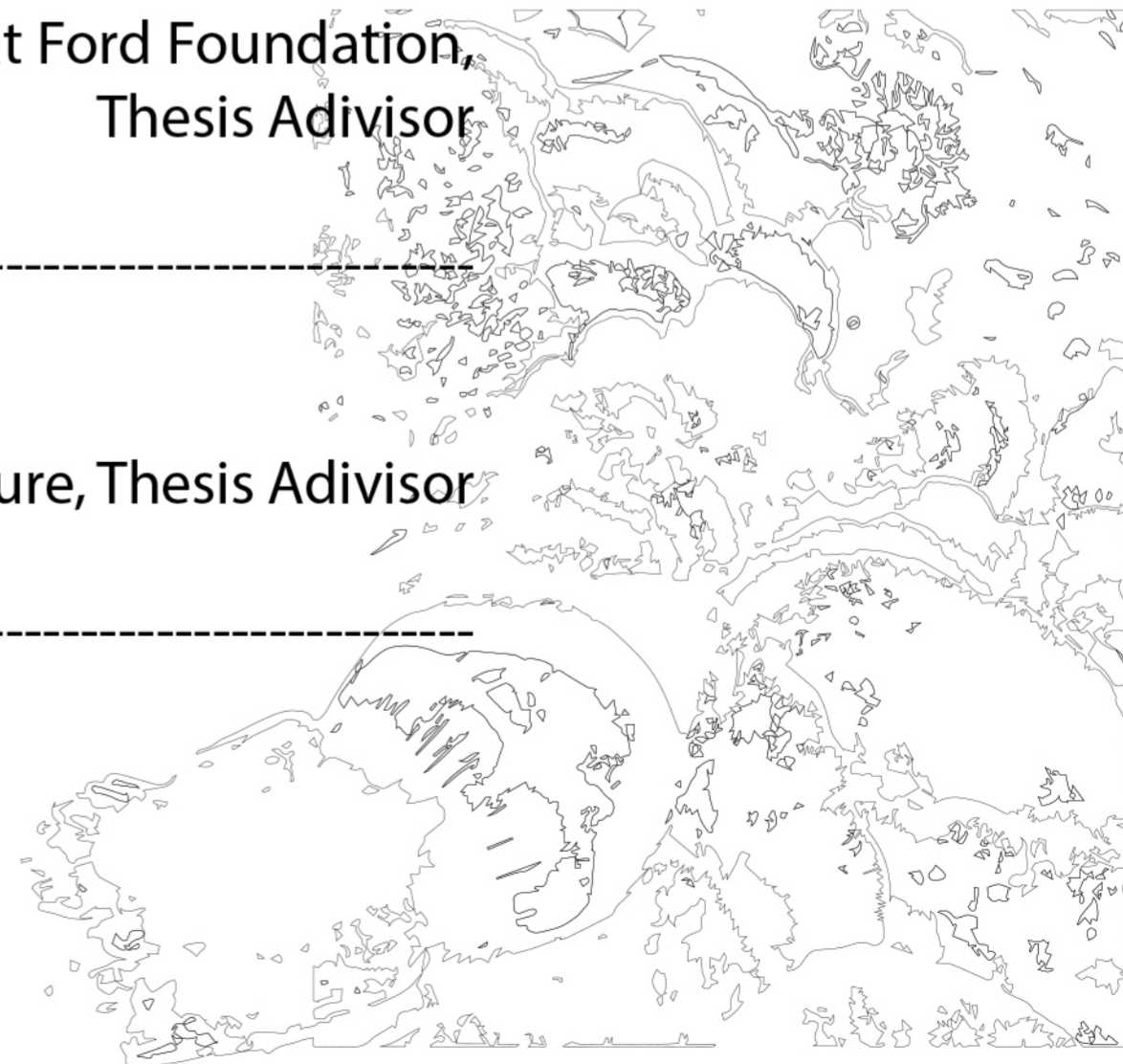


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R A S E N G A N I



N d a .

Ground.  
The land was named already.  
Davhana is the beginning.  
I am of this communal land.  
But my territory expands.  
A break in the horizon.  
And now a new name:  
Rasengani.  
Sky.

T h o h o y a n d o u ,  
M p o f u ,  
R a m a b u l a n a ,  
Davhana (First Born),  
N e s e n g a n i ,  
M a t a m e l a ,  
R a s e n g a n i .

Our clan :  
N d l o v u ,  
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B o y a b e n y a t h i ,  
Buyasonga buyasombuluka,  
Mpongo kaZingelwayo!  
Nkomo zid'ekhaya,  
N g o k w e s w e l ' u m e l u s i .

To exist in multiple worlds one has garnered the ability to observe varying social codes driven by a set of values which differ. These observations take into account the way people relate to each other and their spaces. Moving on the periphery of multiple cultures across different times brings about a sensitivity to the codes of a place, in these moments I have witnessed small fissures where new types of engagement exist. I aim to gently nudge open the seams of these hidden and blurred stories (ways of being).

This text has begun the work of expanding the conceptual mechanisms which underpin the heart behind my work. This is a body of work in and of itself... In writing this book and threading visuals, I have begun to unveil a few driving intuitive responses as a maker.

It served and will continue to serve as a baseline making manifesto or rather it serves as a promise to keep searching for wonder in this very disorienting world we live in.



Material

Resonance:

Material complexities become apparent through inscriptions or rather the legibility of what has been left after I expedite its dilapidation. Each inscription is a trace of ones own memory or the fragments that lay still enough to be impressed upon the surface of the sculptures.

To fashion a new spatial installation one needed to create an index of alternative plans in haunting. I had to think through ways to corrupt the instruments which allow most to perceive the extent of known spaces.

Only then are we able to dream anew.



R E P O S E :

I propose that one begins to see clearly when artistic intuition and material composition move to one rhythm. In the stillness we are able to exhume hidden ways of being.

N o m a d i c :

What spatial distinctions can be made for those who choose to be nomadic and those who are forced into it? In a conversation this question came up and it took several weeks of rumination to come to some resolution: Being authentic. Approaching the work authentically as it pertains to my story allows for a harmonious and synchronised path in my quest in trying to cobble together a new series of spatial configurations whose DNA emanates serenity.

What are the implications of sharing a story? Ethics behind gathering and disseminating knowledge systems regarding visual and aesthetic configurations of space. Ones resolve to trace the blurred moments when, I as, the nomad venture into lands previously known but discoloured by experience is an act of acknowledging. In other contexts the nomad is imparting new wisdoms and this is how new stories continue to thrive. Almost as if the nomad is a bee whose pollen are the stories from the Earth, Sky and People.

How do these forms exist or rather what generates these forms? A question I continually seem to butt up against when showcasing my work. I think this question misses the point. The point is to allow the mind to meander and consider new possibilities around the curation of space and most importantly to imagine the stories and histories that brought those works to life.

However these forms have a deep rooting and history in how they are birthed. As a South African black creative, from a middle-class home, I have been afforded the opportunity to reconsider spatial norms because I have been taught how spatial devices have been used in the past specifically as a mechanism to segregate, extract and pillage.

I am inherently curious about what I do not know and seek to learn new things from multiple viewpoints. I explore and investigate new(as it pertains to me) spaces with the intent to expand ways to organise space and bring about a unique aesthetic endemic of culture and societal codes. With this inquisitiveness I am trying to surface my inherent value system encompassing collection, movement, observation and fabrication. The process of surfacing is made possible when nature and circumstances align.

Teetering between these objects as mediums for carrying meaning. In tandem with this the works purpose is to fracture presupposition or preconceived notions around moving about a space or in reading implicit social contracts.

There is true importance on collapsing time. Thinking about what it means to build sculptures that are connected in this way with collapsing. Threaded between the sculptures there is a peculiar striving to complicate the relationship between past and future. Teetering between memories and d r e a m s .



Tread in a manner of:

sensitively acknowledging...

contradictions, such as: stability being attained  
through continuous movement.

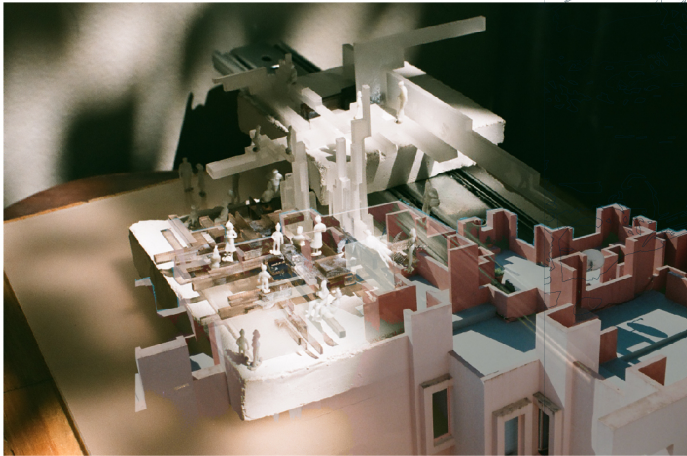
attachment and detachment...

perpetual blurring and merging of...

producing ripples, upon the surface of reality,  
which offer new reflections or ways of seeing.

existing in the multiplicity of character and form.

balancing on edges in order to thread and weave  
multiple spatial inclinations.



Well of Serenity:

Serene environments aid in the attempt to disseminate these stories. When gliding through these spaces as a nomad there have been glimmers where nuanced ways of living do so in harmony. The sculptures and environments I am creating grapple with these notions of coexisting in the light. An homage to those moments captured and impressed upon the surface of ones subconscious (interior mental space).

Curating an aesthetic archive from geographical movements, cultural knowledge and aspirational codes. To provide said archive (translation strategies) in conjunction with the spatial devices the participant is given a glimpse into my sensitivities.

Treading between components for design builds and object/spatial-devices.

An aesthetic archive which traces, reifies and collapses aesthetic codes, putting forth a semiotic inquisition into connate narratives of [Brown Nomadic people in the diaspora.] In doing so I will be exhuming ghost-experiences. Here I expand my intentions in using the word ghost, I believe it to be lived experience and knowledge systems previously unincorporated into popular society. Ghost's can be thought as "a faint secondary image caused by a fault in an optical system, duplicate signal transmission, etc." (oxford language). Translations from the ephemera of these stories into sculptures and spaces will become my repository of aesthetic marks. The act of archiving these spatial elements will communicate my value systems around making, placing and existing(being).



In

Naming:

What of this?

In naming we are able to glimpse meaning and intent.

Allowing the work to communicate its inherent qualities one is able to glean and hear its name. These inherent qualities are only expressed when approached with the correct temperament. In the guise before the name has been offered there is true mutability in the physicality and ethereal-nature. With a sensitive approach one is almost able to dance between the layers of the spatial palimpsest.

Necessitated by the sculptures mutability is a need to be in sync to the cadence or rhythm reverberating between the sculptures.







# G r e e t i n g s :

Welcoming is an important cultural code I have lived and experienced. The mechanisms in which one is able to understand this welcoming is in mirroring the host or being given free rein to operate languidly.

The latter can be seen in the instance when one is visiting a family member, we typically would move through the home past the "formal living room" into the kitchen/living area where I am invited to treat the space as my own and to partake in the resources at my own leisure. This is contrasted by the former mechanism of mirroring where guests who are led into the "formal living space and offered resource at timed intervals follow the decorum or social cues.

These social codes denote layers of privacy, which in turn begin to set up boundaries. I am grappling with these mechanisms and as such have to continually assess whether I am giving access to the viewer by giving them free rein to move about or if the act of mirroring is necessary.

As the work has developed my interest in distorting ways of seeing, understanding and being require a new reading of the spatial configurations. Thus my approach to welcoming as being a combination of inviting the viewer to watch how I move through the space but also letting them know that freedom and participation are encouraged.

In a discussion questions around viewership was posed: "are all viewers welcome in the same way? And is everything on view?"

What informs or rather necessitates a new reading of the spatial configurations is particularly due to the root nature of the work which derives its value from my repository of aesthetic mark making that becomes spatial asemic writing.

“The forms that asemic writing may take are many, but its main trait is its resemblance to 'traditional' writing—with the distinction of its abandonment of specific semantics, syntax, and communication. Asemic writing offers meaning by way of aesthetic intuition, and not by verbal expression” (Jacobson, 2021).

I translated this new framework of mark making instead to bear some semblance to architectural drawings specifically the cartesian map. Where my ideas perhaps diverge from asemic writings is in its “abandonment of communication.” The sculptures and spaces, I create, distort and disrupt the exclusionary nature of mapping and introduce narratives which are connected by an alternative set of social values and codes.



## C o s m o s :

To build a cosmology (mid 17th century: from French cosmologie or modern Latin cosmologia, from Greek kosmos 'order or world' + -logia 'discourse,') which mirrors and exhumes hidden narratives from our current reality. It is in this tracing that I teeter between visual codes in the form of memories impressed upon my mind from generations of old and Aesthetic symphonies from the present. "Images claim us... Follow the lead of these living images... probe their expressive , cognitive, and imaginative possibilities until they assume meaningful articulation both in form and in language."(West, 2011)

Of the images within the archive, recirculation seems to be a pivotal. One cycles through visual cues from a database with the aim of reactivation. The choices of which images come together in this reactivation reveal that which is hidden, ones own biases and proclivities can be read in the aesthetic datum lines.

These are my own navigational strategies and tactics as a nomadic artist. a dead reckoning of sorts. "In navigation, dead reckoning is the process of calculating current position with the aid of celestial navigation" (wiki)

D e a d :  
The ghost's of the past (memory),  
Putting to rest that which has  
perished or dilapidated.

R e c k o n i n g :  
building from the discarded, re-eval-  
uating, reconciling and, revising.  
Thinking it about practice.

"Something Torn and Something  
New" First section Ngugi (Not every-  
thing is gone... It is not there it is  
something new) culture idea  
In the Wake Christina sharp "Wake  
Work" The ship as it moves... How to  
engage the wake.

Reconceptualising ways to “walk beautifully, talk beautifully and live beautifully.”(yogi 2018) Re-order and Re-presence(Imaginative capacities) by stretching ones imaginative capacities in unveiling discretely hidden spatial configurations.

“What are the ways of thinking that dead to be gone” We live and to speak to the word

“facts and truth: attempt to convince us that things are gone. A productive way of colonial... making the connection between memory, time, reckoning and dead.” (Christopher Roberts)

The temporal.



There is a need for knowledge to continually be prodded and reconfigured. Reason being is that one of the pillars in expanding knowledge is in being curious. A hypothesis is followed by testing until such a point that enough data can be reviewed in order to add to a body of knowledge. When thinking through the perspective of the individual or group we see that there is bias thus the need to continue to add to the body of knowledge while also Redefining the results in order to factor in the biases which inherently excludes.

The work attempts to re-Contrive space through threading multiple aesthetic (codes). Ethically integrating stories of my tribes, one recognises that the archive itself is fragmented cobbled together from impactful occurrences which I experience through a bias lens. Re-presenting narratives from my lens? Our connections to silent codes of "decorum"



M e k h a n é :

Connected by the embers of our souls (creative energy).

Collaborations: As a nomad venturing into new territories the act of welcoming has been integral in expanding my knowledge base. Mutability is the catalyst in accruing and being able to translate these new ways of curating objects which begin to delineate space. The act of negotiation (relating to business) transitions to a convening (more familial) where each participant trusts in the others abilities. This act of relinquishing control is echoed in the sculptural elements where moments of clarity arrive from unification.

This is the ritual: Selah



R A S E N G A N I

N d a .

Ground.  
The land was named already.  
Davhana is the beginning.  
I am of this communal land.  
But my territory expands.  
A break in the horizon.  
And now a new name:  
Rasengani.  
Sky.

T h o h o y a n d o u ,  
M p o f u ,  
R a m a b u l a n a ,  
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Material

Resonance:

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To fashion a new spatial installation one needed to create an index of alternative plans in haunting. I had to think through ways to corrupt the instruments which allow most to perceive the extent of known spaces.

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G r o u n d :

Exhuming speaks to resurfacing that which has been buried. What lays beneath is a network of roots and nutrients with a depth and surface orientation. For life to arise, the health of this primordial condition is foundational. My interior perception of ground began with veld: "Afrikaans, from Dutch, literally 'field', "(Oxford) as an open horizontal plane, far reaching and abundant. To inhabit the veld is to follow an ever iterating root system held by the fiery core as well as a weighted extension of rock outcroppings piercing the surface. When conceptualising a sculpture, I ask: How does it sit on the ground? What is the informing rooting system? What ensures its affirmative power?

Boundaries as porous:

This condition particularly affect the next two instruments. In merging materials I am concerned with gauging the extent to which the edges fray or dematerialise. There is a fixation or a grasping towards a moment where the physical properties of the boundary, the edge, slowly vaporise but the mind is able to perceive its invisible existence and continuity. This is what I perceive to be treading between reality and an invisible realm in which many nomads and hidden figures are participants  
o f .

D o n g a :

IsiZulu word which translates to wall. In its pronunciation the "o" vowel is a deep guttural sound which supports the kind of gesture a wall can make. Incorporating the Earth-Sky concept we see this physically translated as demurely sturdy and low.

S t u l o :

IsiZulu word which translates to seat.

There is true importance on collapsing  
time. Thinking about what it means to  
build sculptures that are connected in  
this way with collapsing. Threaded  
between the sculptures there is a  
peculiar striving to complicate the  
relationship between past and future.  
Teetering between memories and  
d r e a m s .



Planes which are suspended rather than they are on a fulcrum between fact and fiction. There is a joy in imagining these spatial vignettes. There's a choreographed impact on the body when these ideated spaces are scaled up.



Fractured

capsule:

Each sculptural object is a spatial constellation in and of themselves. Sculptural objects exist in the various location of fabrication which I am privy to. Once the objects have moved through the process of naming I can bring them together to form a spatial device. These spatial devices are choreographed into a cohesive whole exhuming a new spatial configuration radiating iridescence from each c o n s t e l l a t i o n .

Sculptural Object = Note (Constellation) Me = Composer

Object+Object = Melody (Spatial Device)

Device+Device = Music or Chorus (Spatial Configuration)

Once I hear the music my role shifts, I become the choreographer

Spatial Configuration+Body = Dance (Space to ponder)

A dance which impacts how we...

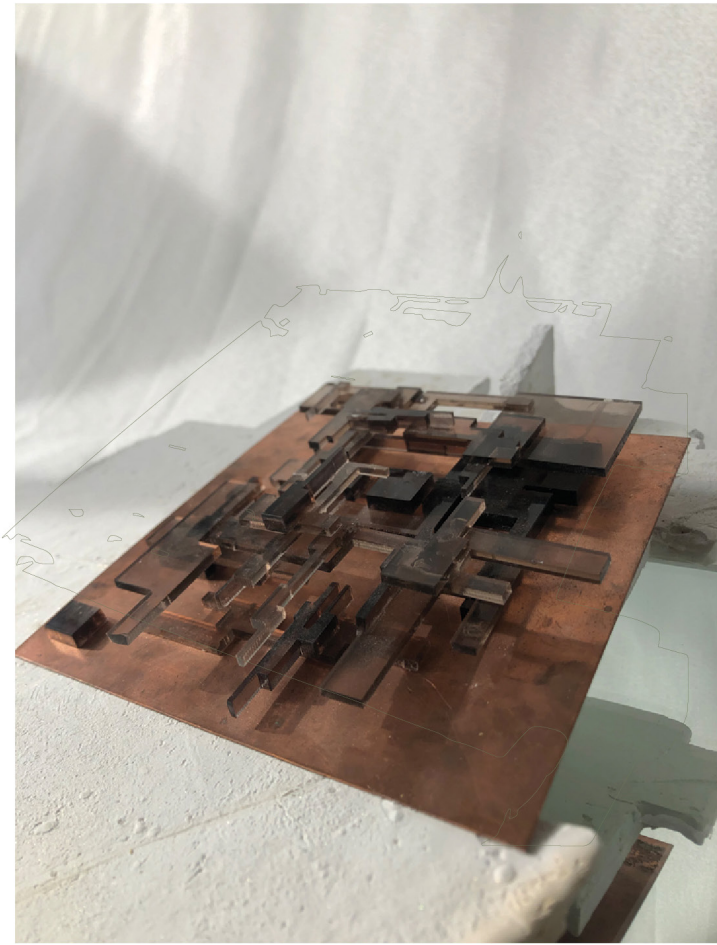
Walk+Talk+Live= Think and be.

How does one aggregate material to manifest this interior world? What modes of threshold are necessary to firstly welcome fellow nomads while reconceptualising spatial devices we have grown accustomed to?

“Now a box generates a very simplistic architectural equation. One is either inside this box or outside it. The transition from one condition to the other is through a precise and clearly defined boundary: the front door. Inside and outside co-exist as opposites, in a simple duality. How very different from the pluralistic and subtle variations of air and light conditions generated by the open-to-sky spaces.” (Charles Correa, 1996)

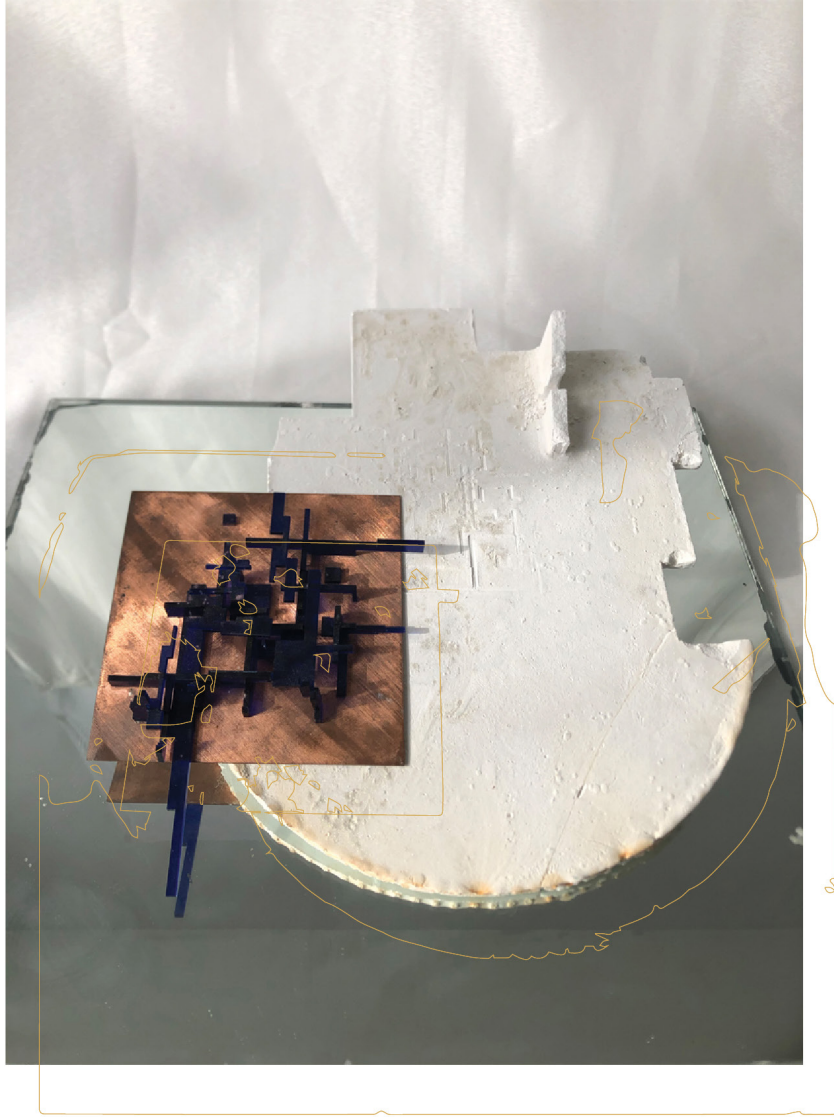




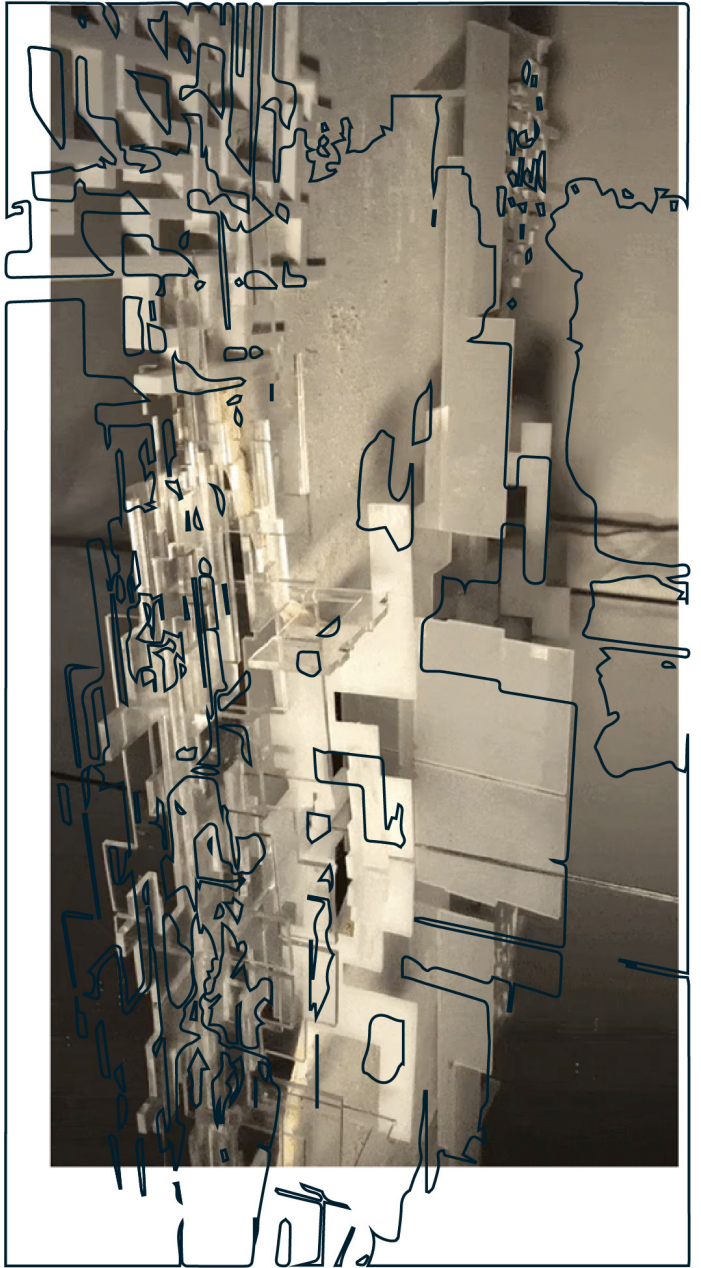


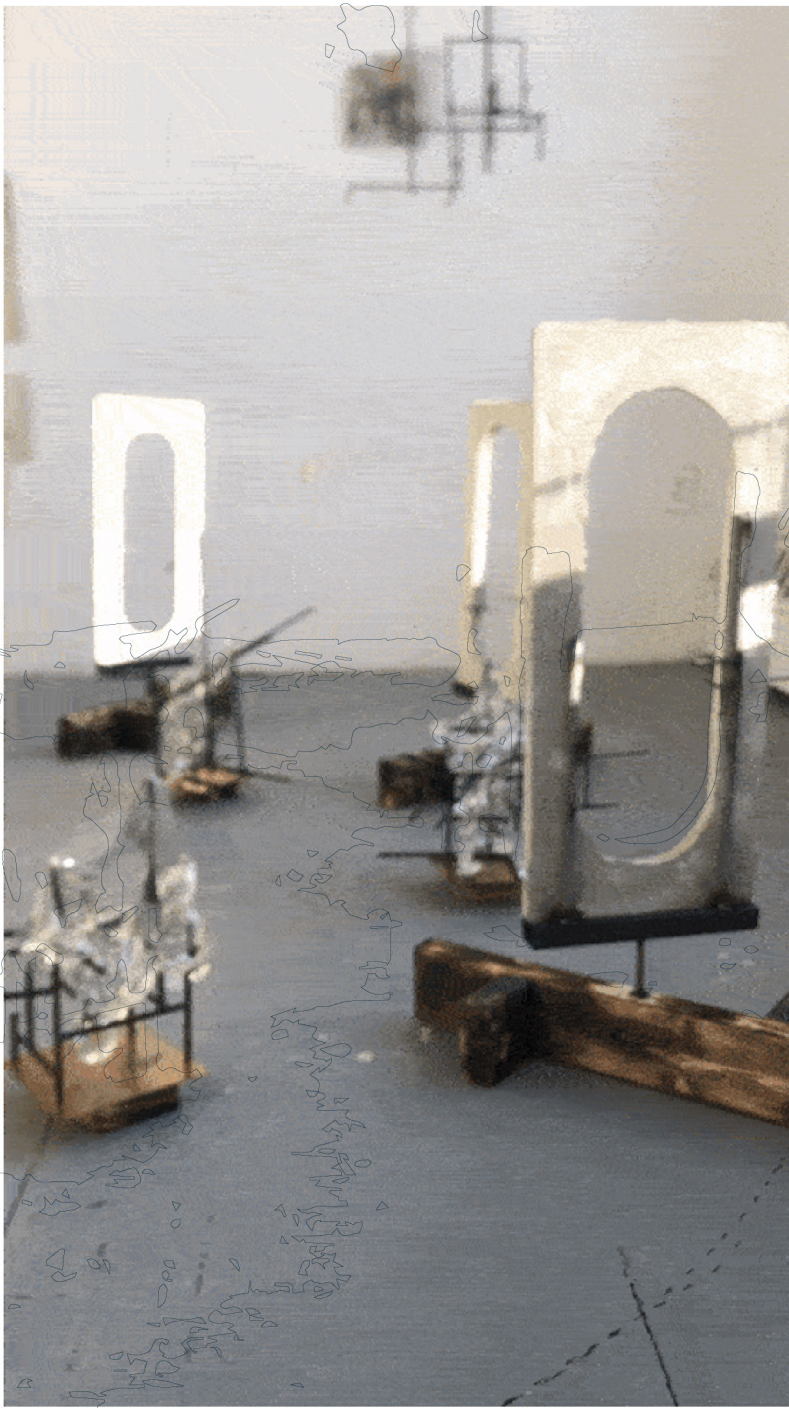


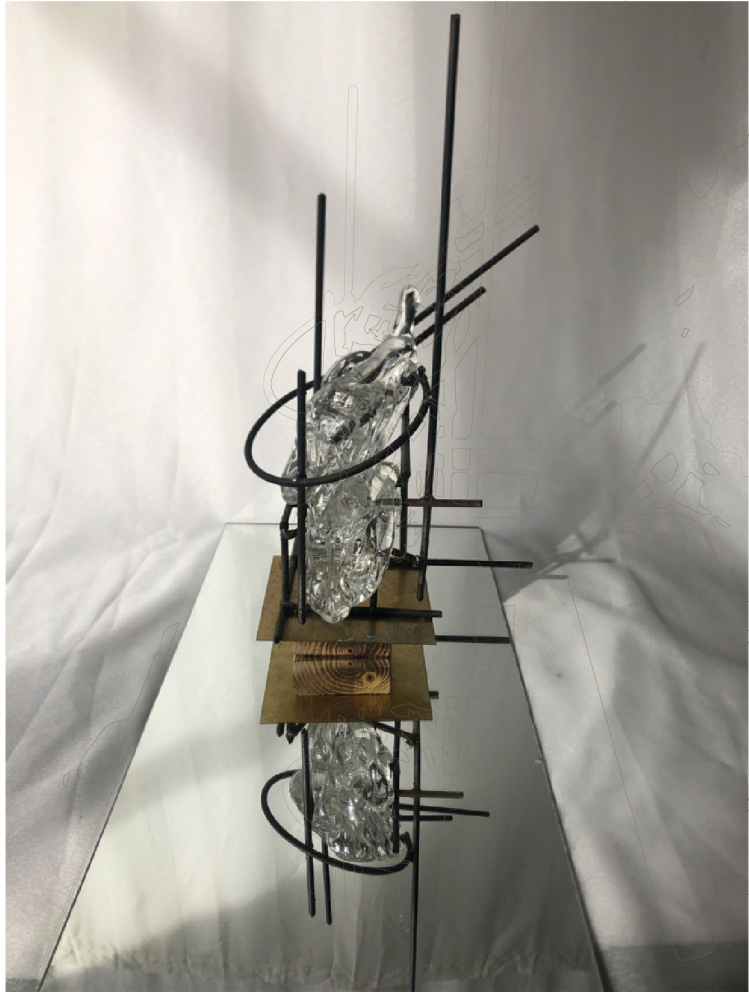




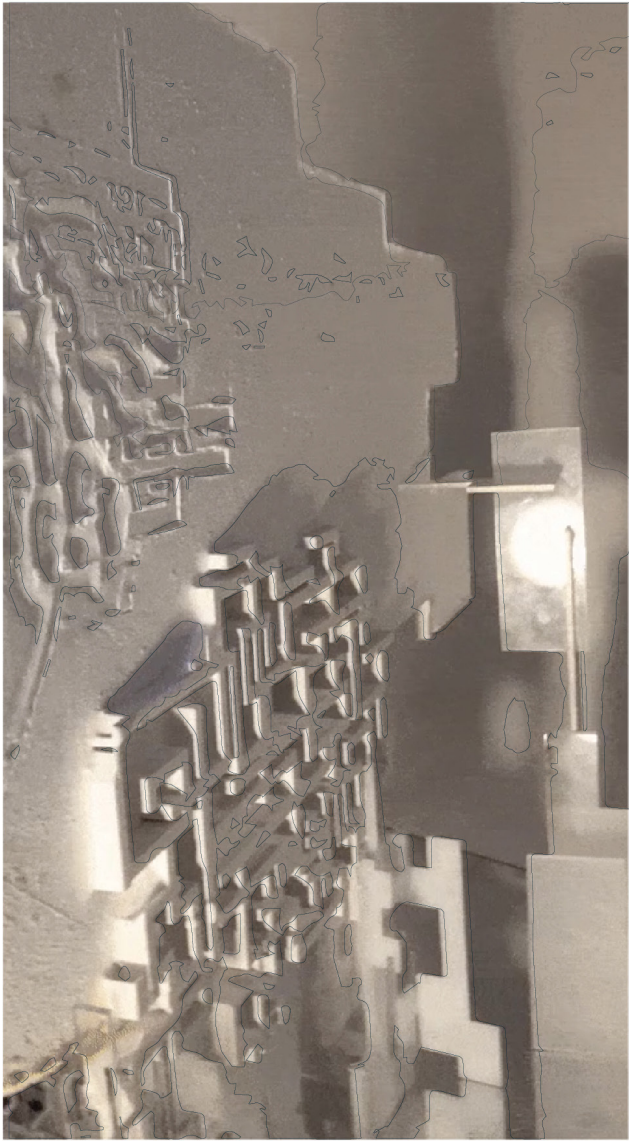








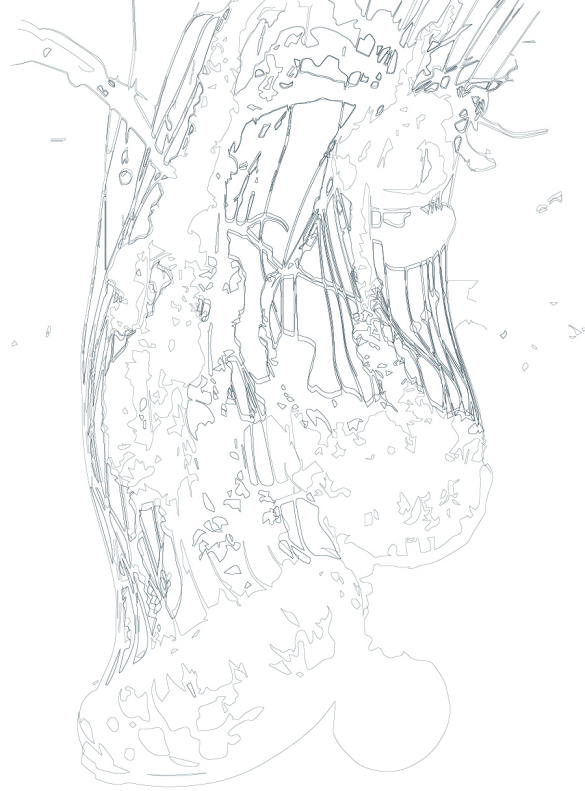








This is the ritual: Selah



R A S E N G A N I



N d a .

H O R I Z O N



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H o r i z o n :

From the veld one sees in all directions, however this plane has a distinct separation with the sky. As a creature who annually ventured to the sea, another version of horizon presented itself. To read horizon from the sea is to lift the veil of this demarcation towards the seamless. Here the breathing rhythm of the tides, lapse gradually and harmoniously. All things move in syncopation to this beat. The horizon is the mirror line between visible and invisible, reality and fiction.

Invisible

continuities:

Describes my use of direction. Our beautifully complex minds have this ability to draw conclusions based off small amounts of information. Knowing this, I almost try to create connections between different spatial instruments using the edges to direct ones eye, body and mind. Similar to connect-the-dot books or exercises, where there is an initial intake of the beginning and end, we then begin to trace these clues and it seems that once you have completed a few connections you see the full image. I would like these instruments to have that very same effect but instead of tracing with the pen one does so with their body.

Logic of  
A p p e a r a n c e  
+  
D i s a p p e a r a n c e :

In trying to balance Translucent and Opaque elements complexity arises ascribed to each layer being nebulous in nature. Spilling and slipping into the crevices of the other layers one must curate to give moments of clarity where people are able to be anchored in this newly distinguished space. This distinction is due to the new configuration being uncharacteristic to a palimpsest which speaks to a linear layering of time, instead I aim to distort notions of time.





There is true importance on collapsing time. Thinking about what it means to build sculptures that are connected in this way with collapsing. Threaded between the sculptures there is a peculiar striving to complicate the relationship between past and future. Teetering between memories and dreams.

T h r e s h o l d :

Sets the rhythm and pace.

L i g h t  
betwixt and between:

Lacuna: "an unfilled space or interval, a gap"  
(Lexico). Space can only be understood by  
calm play that is held between light and  
shadow. Depth perception is all in relation to  
light. We also read time in relation to light.

Khoros

'chorus':

Incorporating moving mechanisms which will facilitated and assist in viewing the intricacies of the spatial configuration. This movement must be in cadence with each individual sculptural object composing the whole. The nature or intent of each sculptural object needs to be in the same key enough to be s y n c o p a t e d .



Connected by Sacred passage:

Connected to a home. There are untraceable or passive ephemera which bind many nomads, settlers on the diaspora and settlers at the birthplace. Are there mechanisms which speak to activating the sacred rhythm of this ephemera?

We breathe deeply. To intake a breath is to  
allow the sounds of the environment in...  
A moment to listen.

We exhale producing a song. Perhaps  
melodies of gratitude or cries of melan-  
choly... A moment to respond.

Measured we have found a deep strength  
through controlling our cadence building  
interior worlds, sacred spaces centred  
around wells of serenity... A moment to  
be in community with self and the tribe.

On the periphery we have devised  
systems to keep breathing out songs of  
gratitude even in spaces unduly polarised  
by our presence.



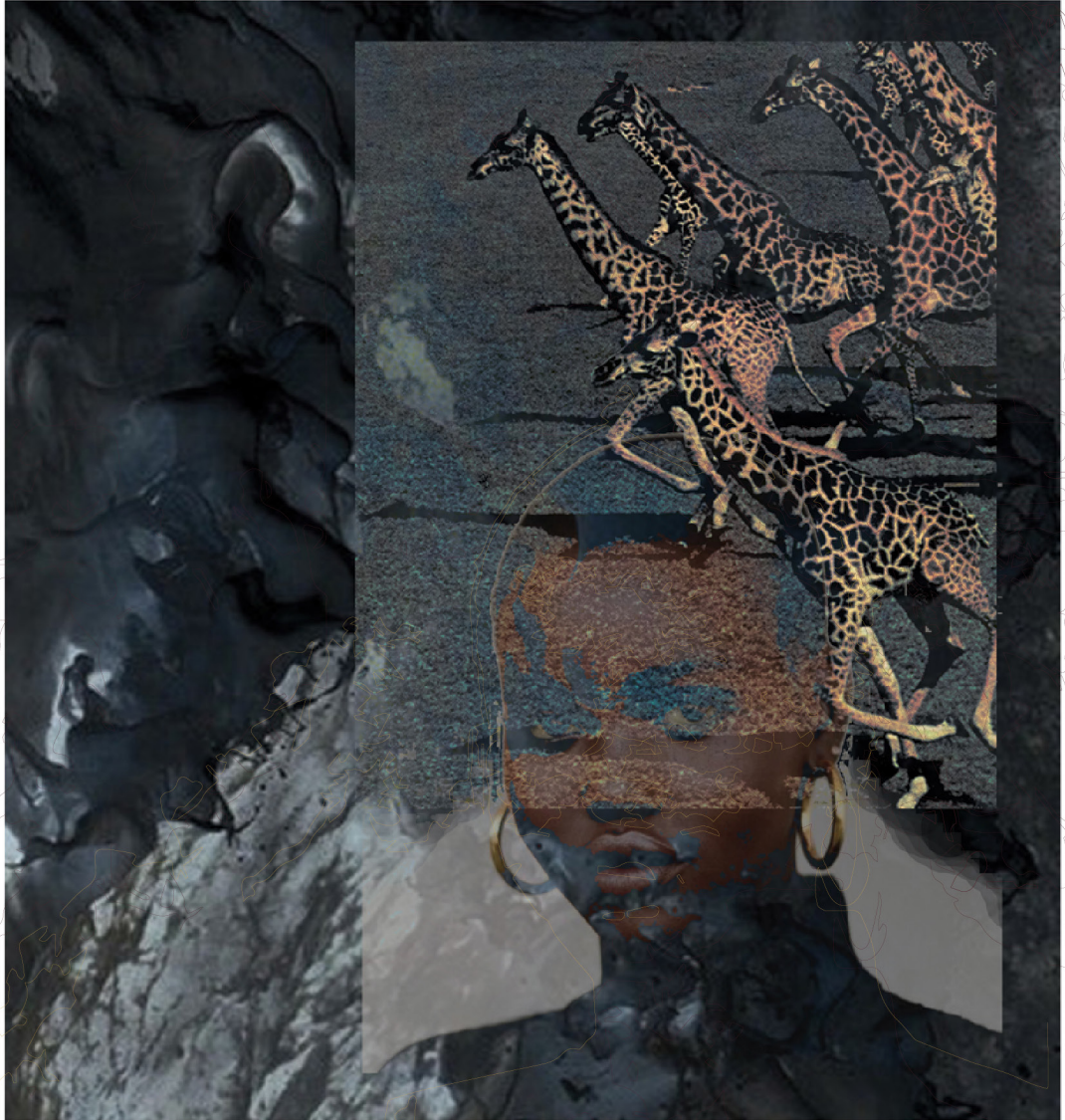


"Hovering over the surface:"

















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S k y :

To turn skyward is to enter an atmosphere  
unbound by gravity and reference points.  
Opening to this vastness, to this infinity,  
dreams arise as does breath, distant shores  
and moon.

Fractal

||

Scale:

Fractal denotes a geometry in which the minute components have the "same statistical character as the whole"(oxford). The character I seek to imbue is a sense of serenity. Another denotation is "in describing partly random or chaotic phenomena such as crystal growth and galaxy formation."(oxford). Thus my conception in thinking of the multiple spatial configurations at multiple scales as being part of a cosmology of spaces | perceive.

Aperture for the Mind:

Giving people an opportunity to function in a liminal space. In utilising the mechanism of reflection, the participant is implicated not only through the body but in their manner of thinking about time, light and space. Mirrors positioned around the sculptures perform two roles: it tampers with our perceptions of the physical sculptures and offers glimpses of oneself in relation to...



Instruments for the dance:

Moving forward with my initial premise of time being an entropic-collage(chaotic yet curated) The sculptures naturally feel other worldly not corresponding to the parameters of "decay" and other surface qualities. Space that weaves together new ways of seeing(acknowledging), moving(curiously experiencing) and understanding.

There is true importance on collapsing time. Thinking about what it means to build sculptures that are connected in this way with collapsing. Threaded between the sculptures there is a peculiar striving to complicate the relationship between past and future. Teetering between memories and d r e a m s .



"Let"

creates

Light:









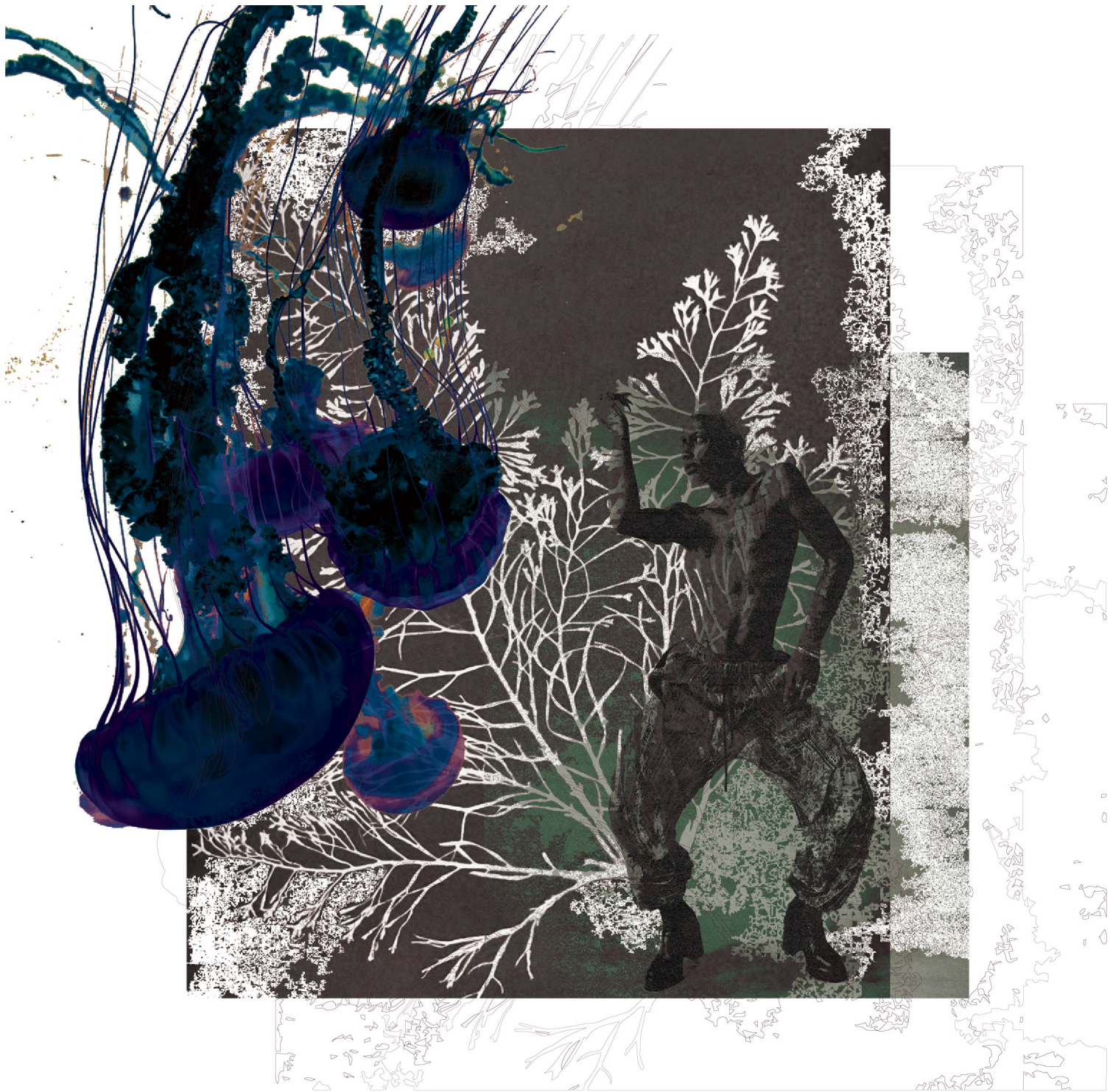
















This is the ritual: Selah