

Sicardi

Ayers
Bacino



Gustavo Díaz: *Wild Wind, Subtle Breeze*

September 28- December 7, 2024

Gustavo Díaz: In and Out of the Studio

Gustavo Díaz's drawing table occupies about a third of the small studio in New York City where he has taken up residence for the last two years. In this diminutive space, he has created, among other works, monumental rolled drawings on exquisitely delicate mulberry paper. These unfold, literally, a sequence of "situations"—as Díaz calls his infinitely variable clusters of graphite marks—which engage in silent dialogue with one another. Some situations are coiled and dense; others are diffuse and airy. Measuring almost thirty-three feet in length, these drawings are events; they take time to apprehend, but they also reveal the artist's highwire performance in creating them. The mulberry paper is easily torn; no mark can be erased or applied too roughly without ruining the work.

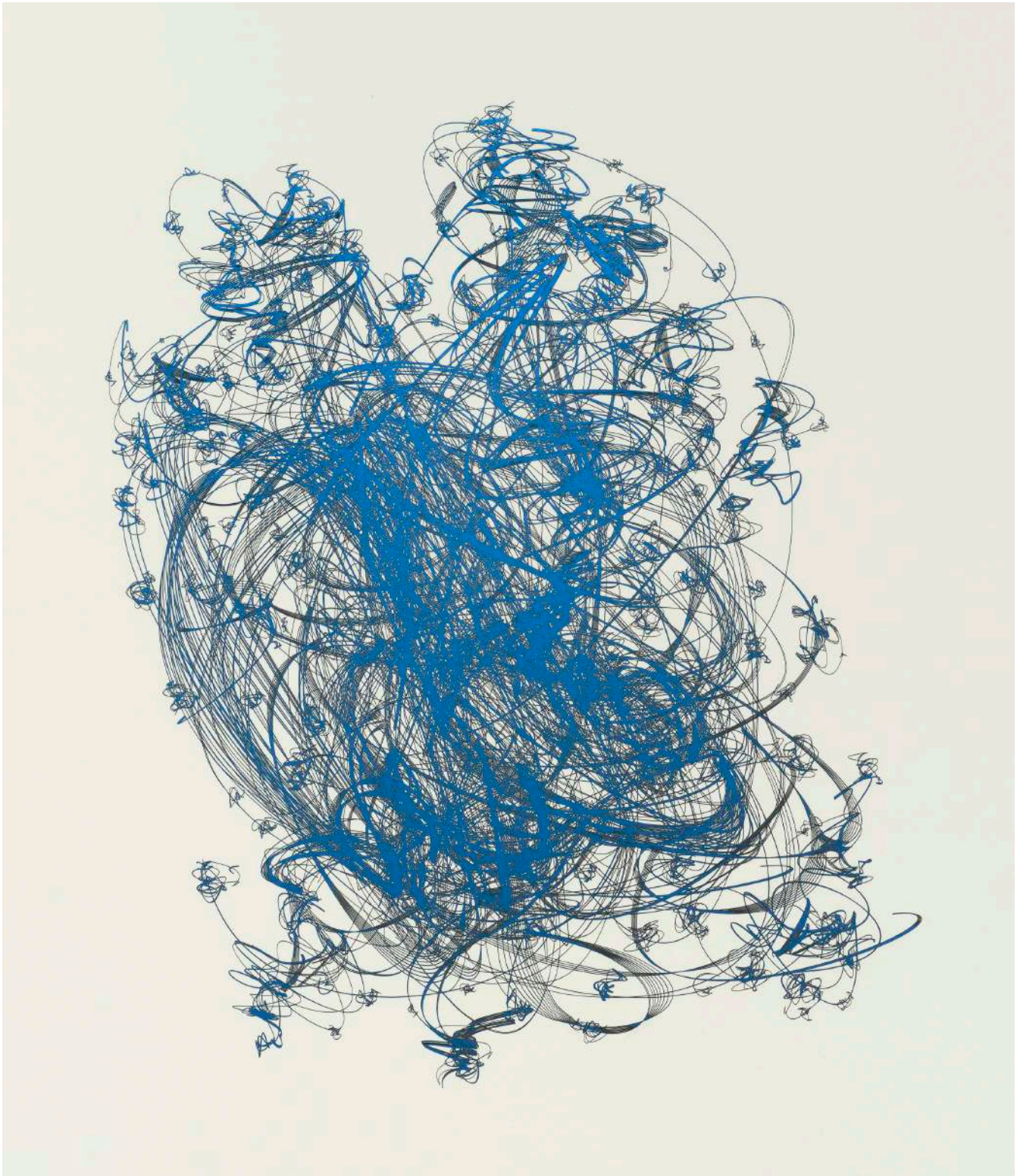
Díaz's smaller drawings on heavy cotton paper are less fragile, but they convey a similar sense of drama. While creating these laborious works, Díaz is inspired by nothing less than the complexity of the universe itself. He draws on the mathematical concept of "fuzzy logic," developed in the 1960s by Lotfi A. Zadeh. Fuzzy logic rejects the binary of ones and zeros, yes and no, true and false, positing instead a sprawling field of variables that live between certainties. This ambiguity is the stuff of life, and the drawings are Díaz's thoughts made manifest; they are both process and product. Díaz borrows from the South African artist William Kentridge the analogy of paper-as-membrane. A membrane separates, but it is also a bridge—in this case, between the artist's thoughts and the world out there. This is an old concept; in the Renaissance, *disegno* (design or drawing) was pitted against *colore* (color) and was prized for its unique capacity to express the artist's intellect.

Díaz's studio offers further clues to his thought process. Its surfaces are covered with intricate tableaux consisting of objects from nature—feathers, shells, driftwood, bird nests, fungi—and Díaz's sometimes indistinguishable counterparts in cut and otherwise manipulated paper. Neat displays of books attest to Díaz's far-ranging curiosity: artist monographs jostle picturesquely with fiction by fellow Argentine Jorge Luis Borges and volumes on chaos theory and fuzzy sets, ornithology and ecology. CDs add another layer; Díaz studies music and listens to it while he works. Glenn Gould's profound life-long engagement with Bach's *Goldberg Variations* is a source of special fascination. Like Gould, Díaz is devoted to the world and the work of the studio. Using the metaphor of a uterus, Díaz likens the studio to a biological system imbued with the power of renewal and rebirth.

The present exhibition finds Díaz at an inflection point. Previously known for his cut-paper pieces, which are technical as well as visual marvels, he spent most of the last three years away from the machines and printers that he directs, conductor-like, to make that work. During this time, he developed an intimate relationship with paper and graphite and a distinctive, wide-ranging vocabulary of marks and physical gestures. He has returned to his machines, but he brings the discoveries of his tireless draftsmanship with him. In a series inspired by ornithological flight patterns, he incorporates the tempo and dynamism of hand drawing into the maddeningly meticulous technical work the cut paper pieces demand. The paper is cut by extreme heat, which sometimes singes its edges, leaving them black. There is a poetic tension between fire, which we tend to think of as chaotic, and the otherworldly precision of Díaz's work. After the paper is cut, he returns with pencils, drawing on the cut paper to create zones of seeming transparency—further complexities. Díaz describes this approach as "a cycle of drawing from the mind (the concept), the hand, then the computer, the machine, the hand again." Díaz also activates this cycle in a series of drawings and cut paper that addresses the phenomenon of the vortex. He is less interested in the precise physics of a vortex—a mass of whirling air—than in its metaphorical capaciousness. The vortex gestures toward complexities of all kinds: disorder, instability, disequilibrium, and the flows of time. These works, and others in Díaz's oeuvre, draw on the concept of "dissipative structures," first articulated by the Nobel prize-winning Belgian physical chemist Ilya Prigogine. The term describes a higher-order system formed from powerful, disruptive fluctuations in simpler subsystems. The vortex is an example of such a system. It is, simply, the other side of chaos.

There appears to be a central paradox in Díaz's practice. How can temporal flows and exchanges of energy be expressed in static works of art? Each work consolidates a constellation of ideas, imprinting them onto a final form (however dynamic that form may be). An exhibition extracts a moment from an artist's practice and isolates it from the flows of time. For Díaz, who has devoted himself to the study of complexities, there is something unsatisfying in all of this. But it is precisely the impossibility of resolving this dilemma that pushes him toward constant innovation and evolution. This is the ongoing and limitless work of the studio.

Rachel Federman, PhD



From the series: The Birth of Time.

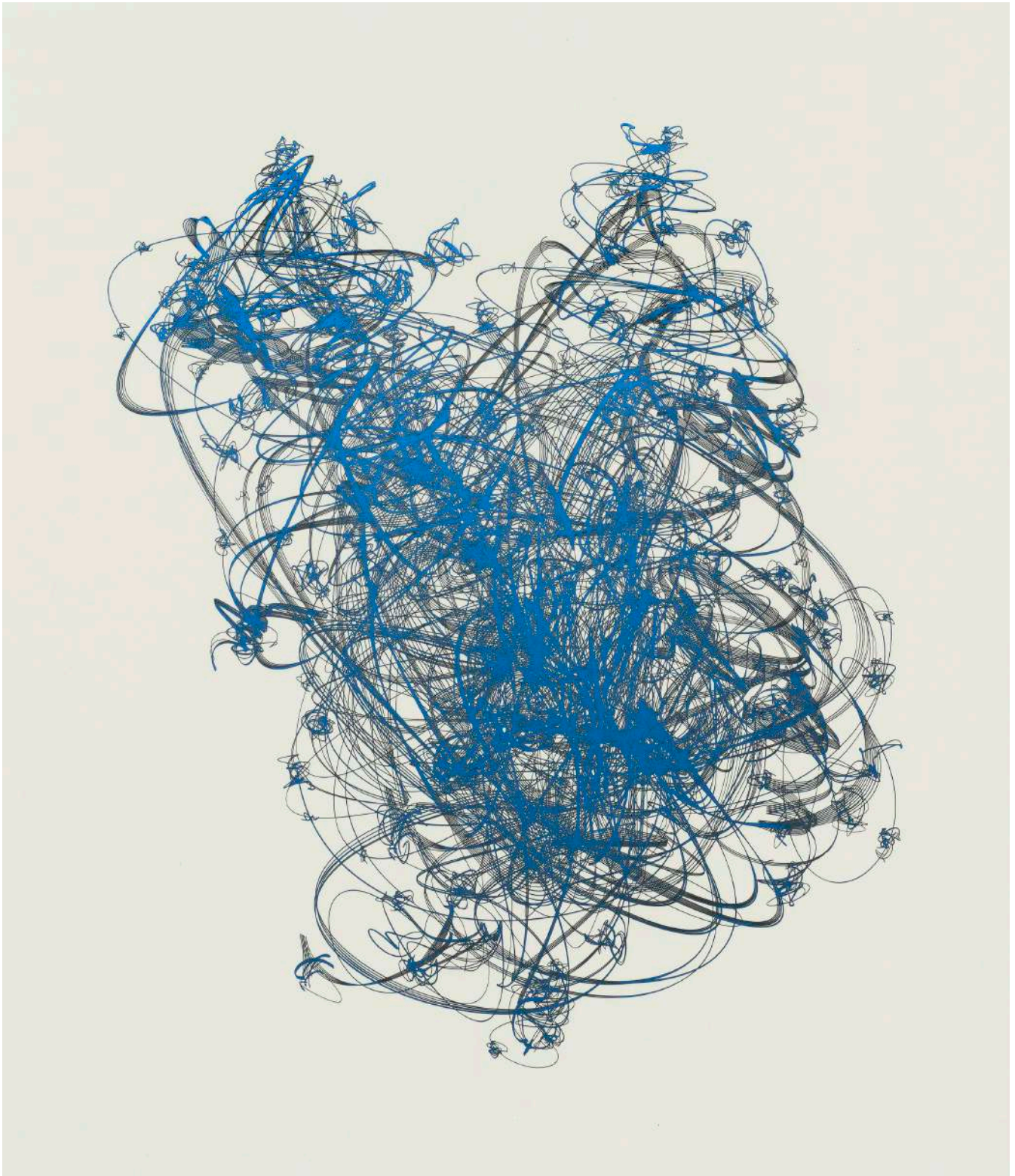
Simulation 1, 2024

Cut out paper

28 1/2 × 24 1/2 in.

72.4 × 62.2 cm.

(DiazG-237)



From the series: The Birth of Time.

Simulation 2, 2024

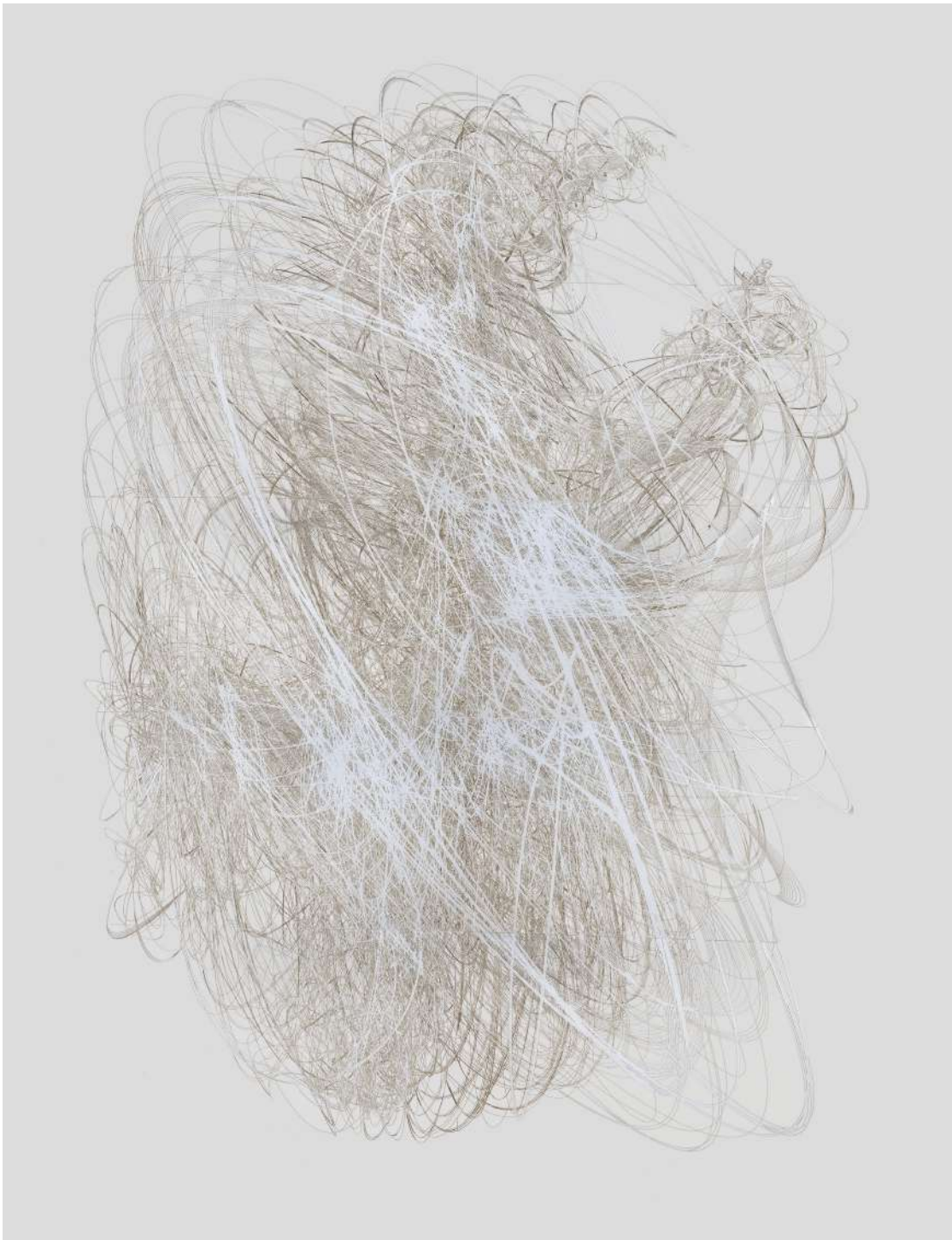
Cut out paper

28 1/2 × 24 1/2 in.

72.4 × 62.2 cm.

(DiazG-238)





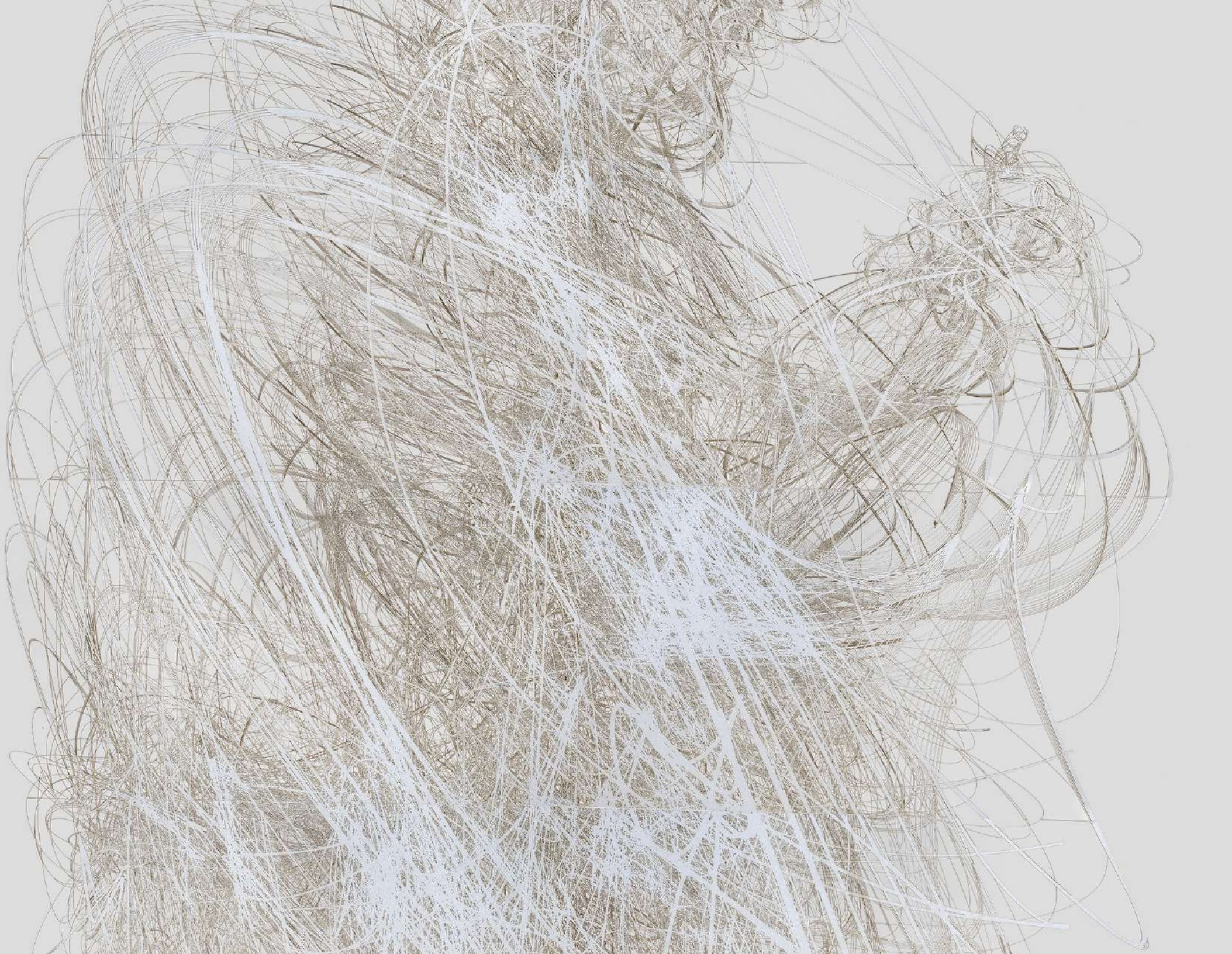
From the series: Vortex Temporum: At times, I am the wind... There shall not be a single thing that is not a cloud. (An approximation of Borges), 2024

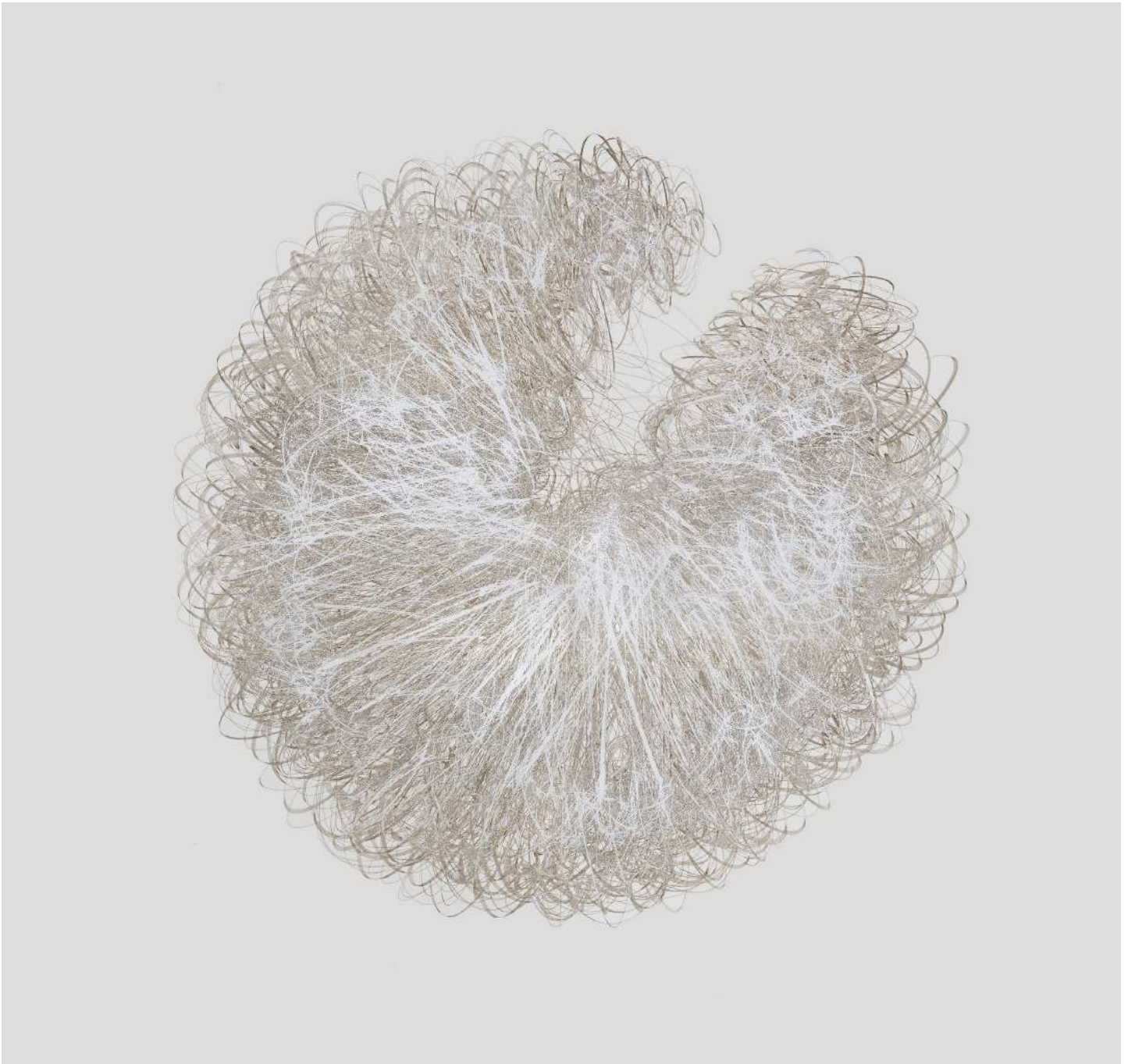
Cut out paper

86 58 × 63 in.

220 × 160 cm.

(DiazG-235)





"...and men felt lost in time and space. In time, because if the future and the past are infinite, there cannot really be a when; in space, because if every being is equidistant from the infinite and the infinitesimal, there cannot be a where. No one exists on a certain day, in a certain place; no one knows the size of his own face." J.L. Borges, "Pascal's Sphere", 2024

Cut out paper

51 31/32 × 51 31/32 in. 132 × 132 cm.

(DiazG-234)





The mysterious man, the secret friend of O.

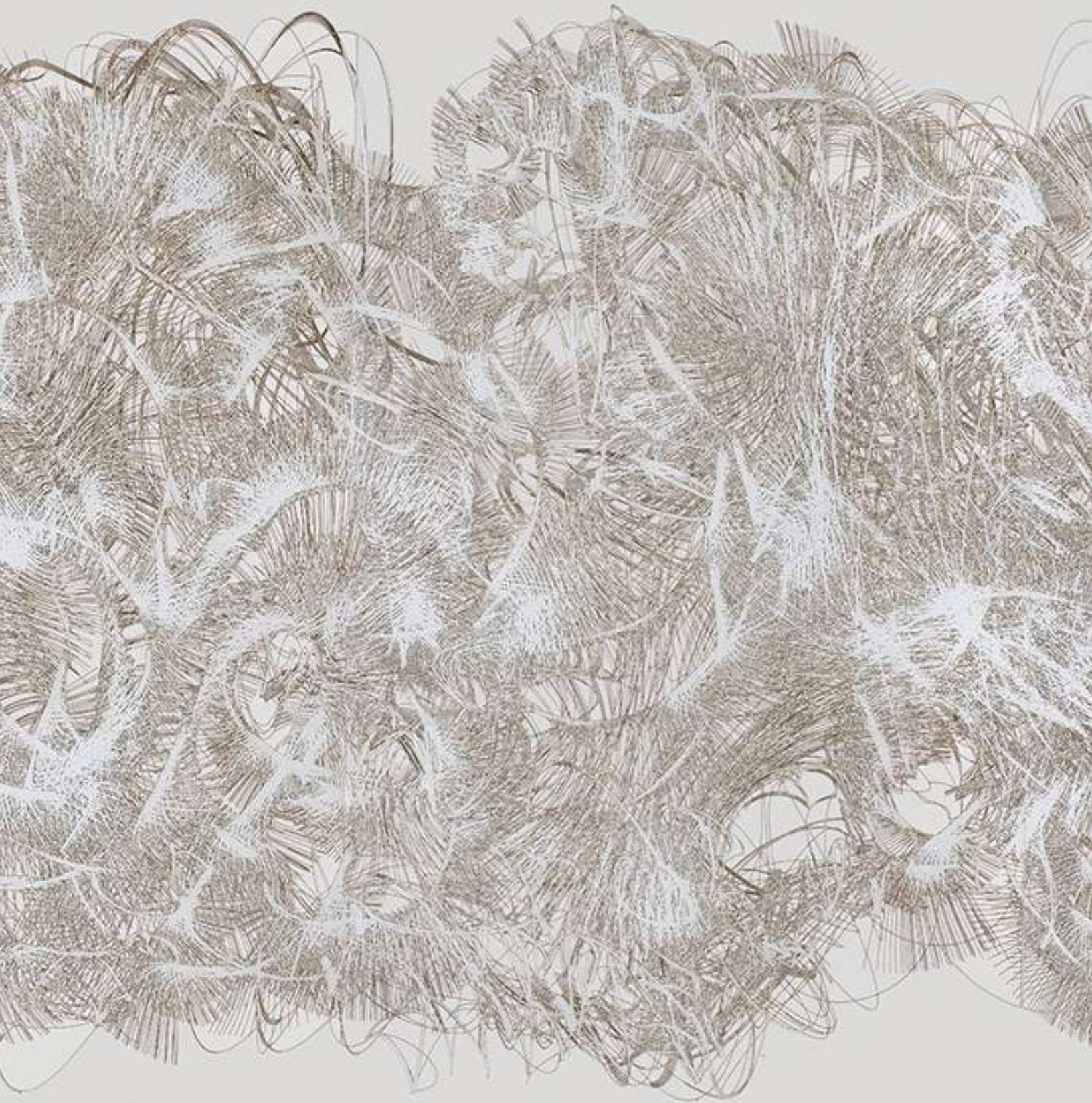
Messiaen, resists letting the birds go. Seeing that his failure is inevitable, he collects a few feathers with the intention of eternalizing their flight... minutes later, a bird came down the walk....someday in May of 1981, 2024

Cut out paper

28 11/32 × 85 7/16 in.

72 × 217 cm.

(DiazG-236)





*Disregarding observation, we can assume
that everything is in motion at the origin of any event, 2024*

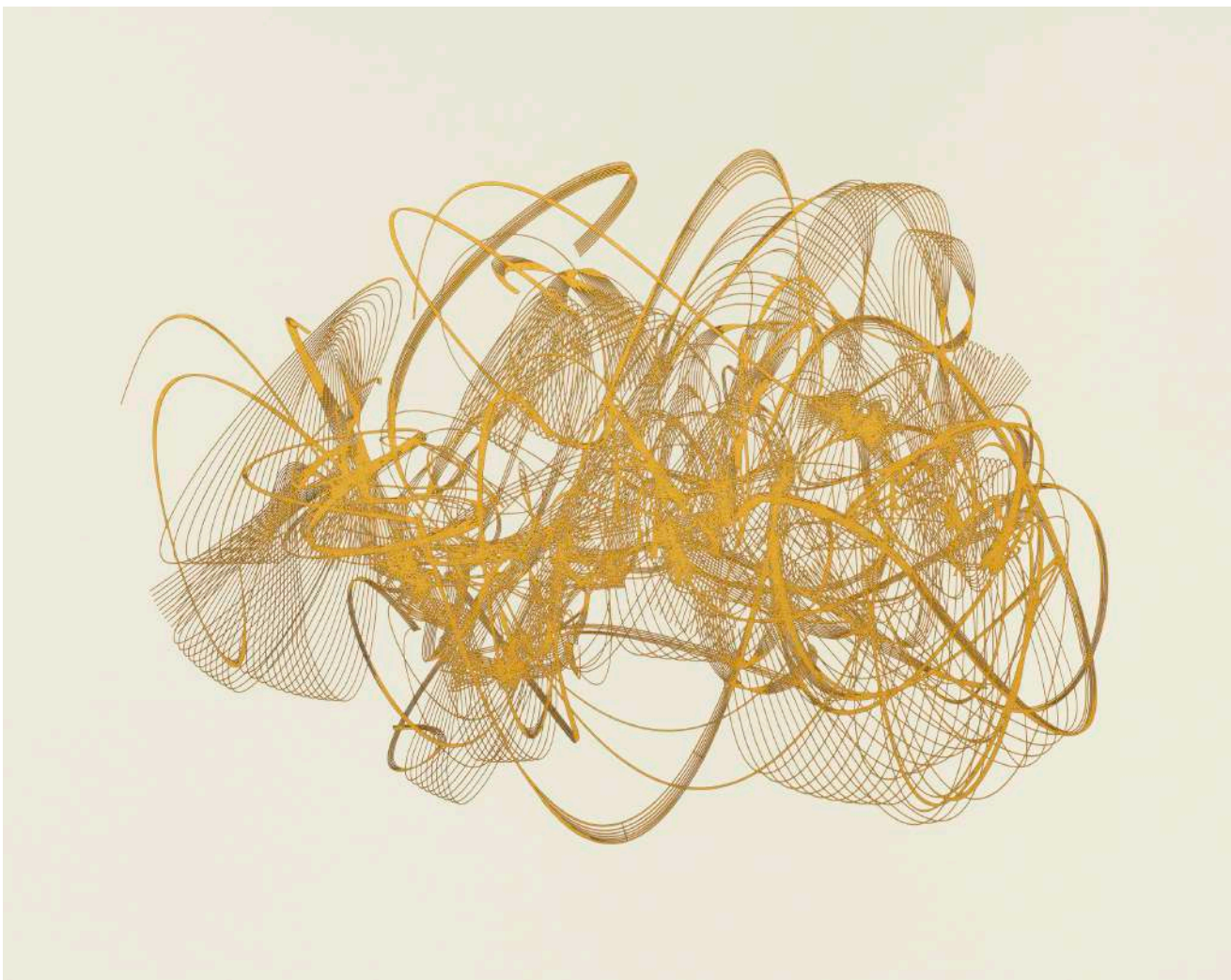
Cut out paper

24 × 19 in.

61 × 48.3 cm.

(DiazG-233)





From the series: "Golden Writings."

Writings that move but are not water, 2024

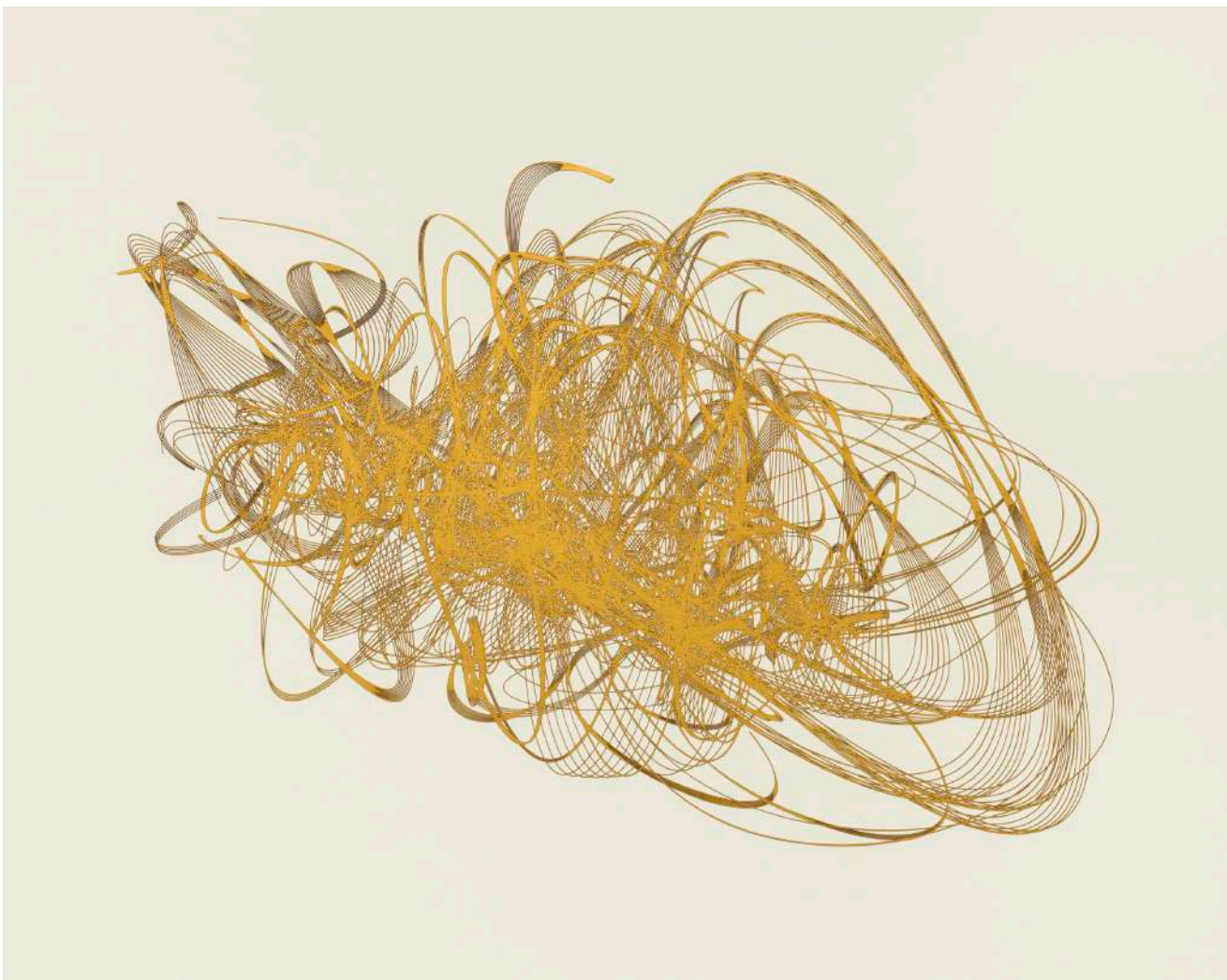
Cut out paper

19 × 24 in.

48.3 × 61 cm.

(DiazG-226)





From the series: "Golden Writings."

Writings knotted like nests, 2024

Cut out paper

19 × 24 in.

48.3 × 61 cm.

(DiazG-229)





Five actions: 1- Practice the balance of the pencil. 2- Texture the sight. 3- Uncover a brief and nearby event. 4- Walk along the edges. 5- Do not smother the fire, 2024

Graphite on paper

30 1/4 × 44 1/2 in.

76.8 × 113 cm.

(DiazG-239)



From the series: "Paper Membrane,"

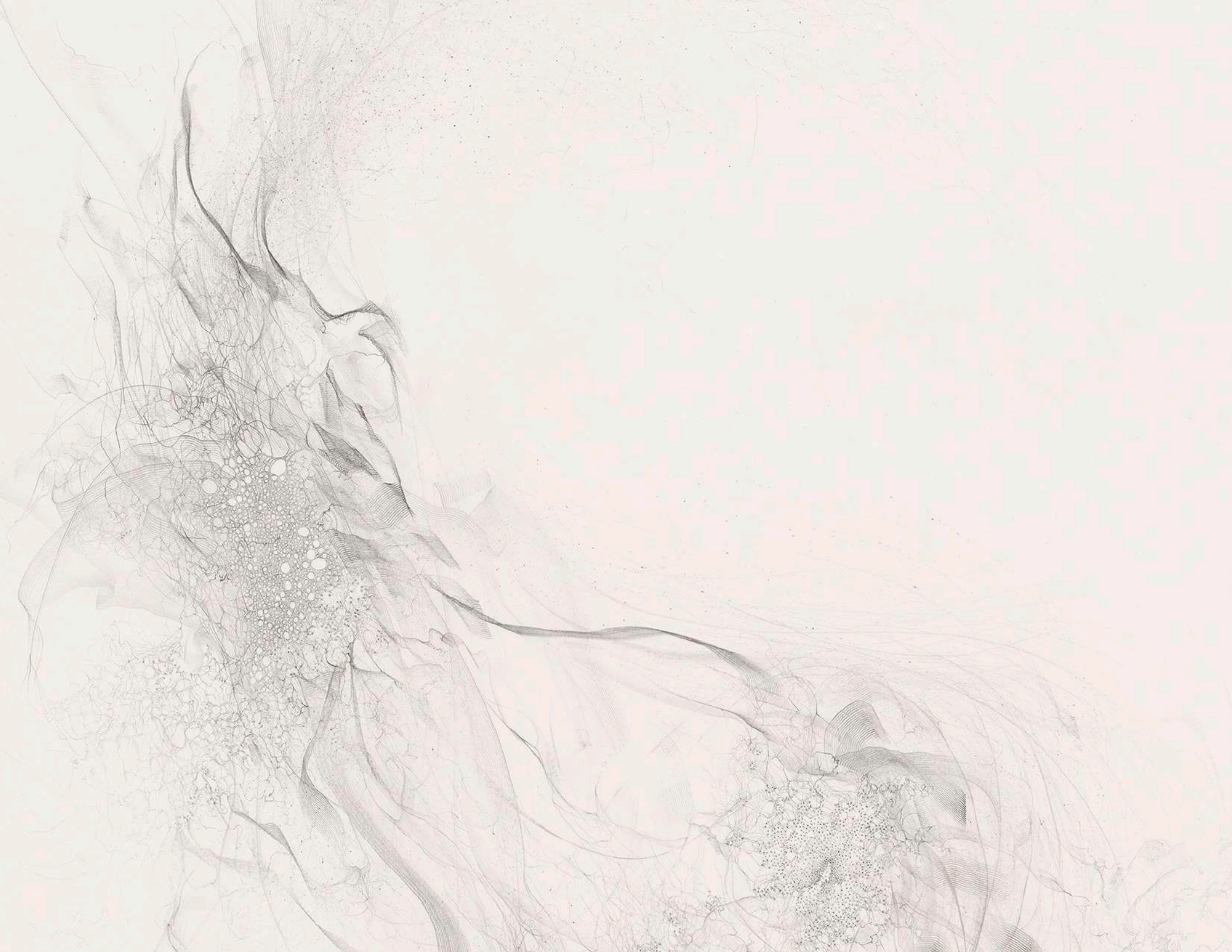
Tearing through space's structure, the horizon ceases to exist, 2024

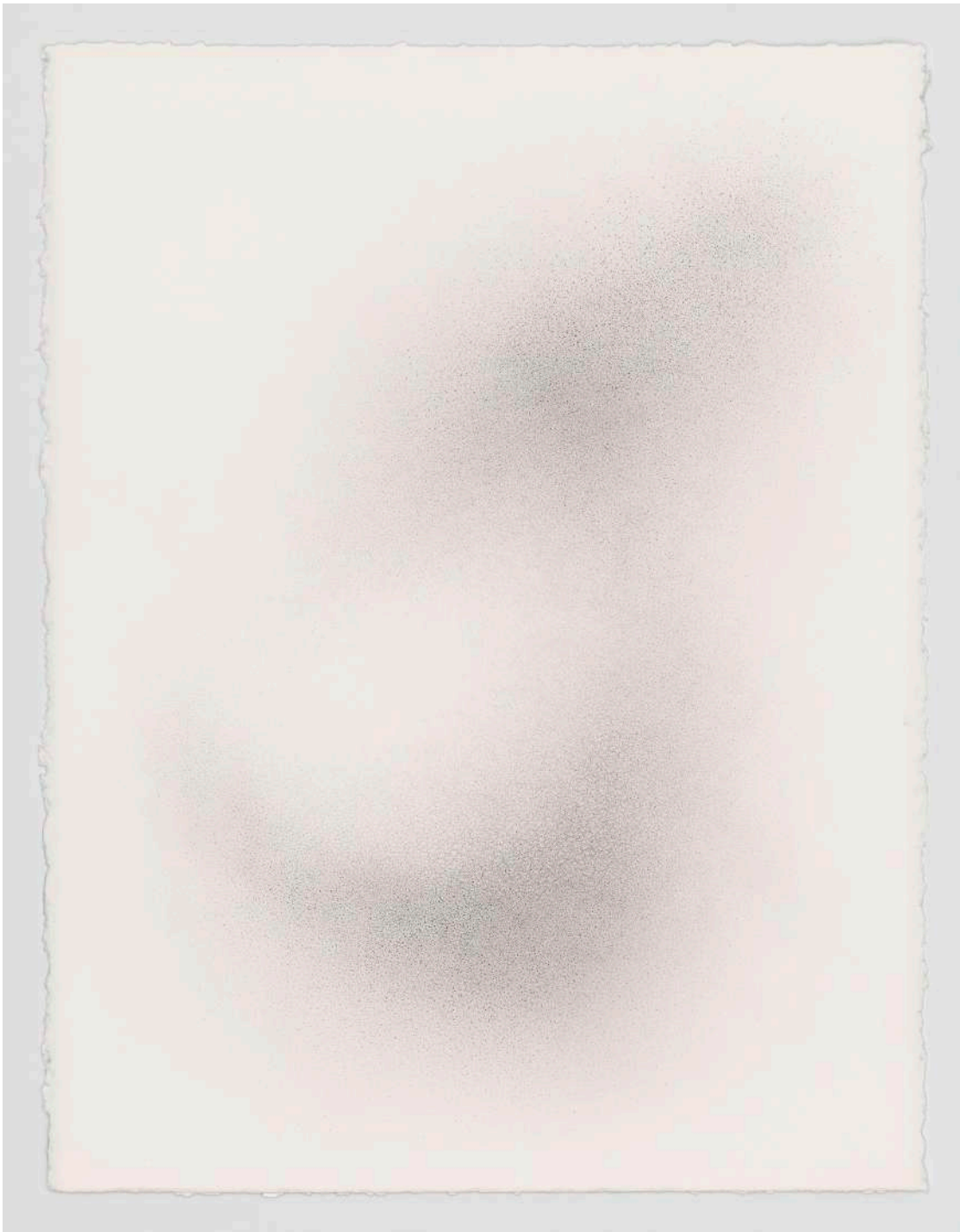
Graphite on paper

30 × 23 in.

76.2 × 58.4 cm.

(DiazG-242)





From the series: "The Whisperers of Poetry

Pose Two Questions" Where does the drawing end? Where does the drawing begin? Ilya

Prigogine smiles, 2024

Graphite on paper

30 × 23 in.

76.2 × 58.4 cm.

(DiazG-240)



From the series: "The Poetry Whisperers

Pose Two Questions, "Where does the drawing begin? Where does the drawing end? Lotfi

Zadeh smiles, 2024

Graphite on paper

30 × 23 in.

76.2 × 58.4 cm.

(DiazG-241)



