Noa Yekutieli

Through The Fog, The Distance

Wilfrid Israel Museum
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מוזאון וילפריד ישראל

Noa Yekutieli
Through The Fog, The Distance
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Through The Fog, The Distance

Anat Turbowicz

Noa Yekutieli regards herself not as an artist but as a memory researcher. In her installation **Through The Fog, The Distance** she explores the fickle nature of memory through natural disasters which erase an entire physical reality, leaving only memories that gradually blur and dissolve to make room for a newly evolving reality. The disaster, however, is not the subject of her work, but only the frame story whereby the artist observes the resulting void, the locus whose absence we feel and strive to fill, the place which we miss. The ruined house, which metaphorizes the concept of a moment that passes, that leaves a void, is not only a physical place, but also an emotional one, which carries an entire world of memories and experiences with it, a place whose disappearance elicits the need to reconstruct it completely. According to Yekutieli, this was how she "arrived at the all-so-sensitive and volatile subject of natural disasters, because there is something about such an extreme event that leads to a concise process of memory construction."

A self-taught artist, Yekutieli began her career studying pattern making and draping in a desire to engage in applied art. Each of her fashion projects was tantamount to a journey which began with painting, sculpture, and material, and ended with a garment. She decided to leave the fashion world since she felt that the creative process became superficial rather than profound. Her last fashion project involved cutting paper which was supposed to become a garment. She became fascinated with paper-cutting and gradually discovered the visual wealth and spectrum of feelings that may be obtained by means of a knife and paper. "I tried to create as many 'brushes' as possible via paper-cutting, to convey as many different feelings and energies as possible from one material, despite the limitations of black paper and knife."

In Yekutieli's art, concept and technique are one. The conceptual void is manifested in the cutting, which is a process of subtraction, elimination. "As opposed to other artistic techniques, in which you add matter and

may keep changing and altering, papercutting involves subtraction and conveys a strong sense of temporality. When something is cut out, you cannot return it. The work does not begin with meticulous planning. I initially draw, and then start working with the material in a long process, during which I change too. Pieces are slowly cut out of the paper, a texture is created, and a story reveals itself to me."

The transition from two-dimensional work to installation derived from Yekutieli's desire to deviate from the single narrative. "Installation spans a wider range of works, which enables you to experience moments of clarity and obscurity, desolation and interest. It is an experience better suited to our perception of time, which is not the sum of a process, but an abstract of a long process in which one thing leads to another." Furthermore, installation also allows reference to the space: "I like the connection with the space, with its movement, the need to relate to the limitations of the space and make them an anchor in the work. Moreover, the work in space leaves physical, three-dimensional room for the void too. By imposing limitations on one's movement in the space, the viewer is forced to heed the nonexistent as well as the existent."

In the current installation, Yekutieli divided the space into three parts; the last one is hidden behind a wall. Upon entering the gallery, the viewer is confronted with the moment after the disaster facing a swarm of debris interspersed with object fragments whose encounter generates a new reality, which did not necessarily exist theretofore. These are objects from different places and contexts, brought together by the catastrophe, which now construct a new story, a new reality.

The trail of ruins emerges from a white plaster wall, which stands for the void created when physical reality disappears and memories gradually fade. The memory images are hung on the back wall, but cannot all be

seen in one gaze. "In reality too, we cannot see the whole picture with clarity. Unintentionally, we omit many moments that occurred and are unable to experience the moment as a whole and know what preceded it. The wall is a metaphor for memory, which eliminates almost everything that happens and accepts the missing and void. If we had to carry the entire baggage of personal, familial, social, and political memory of our history, we would not have had room to absorb our experiences and develop a subjective point of view on what happens to us. We endeavor to fill the gaps so we do not feel the void, but these gaps form a significant part of our lives. They are present all around us both physically and mentally, and I believe we must always leave room for that which is absent, that which is missing, and accept it, because this is what allows for movement and change, as opposed to a situation where everythingis packed and congested."

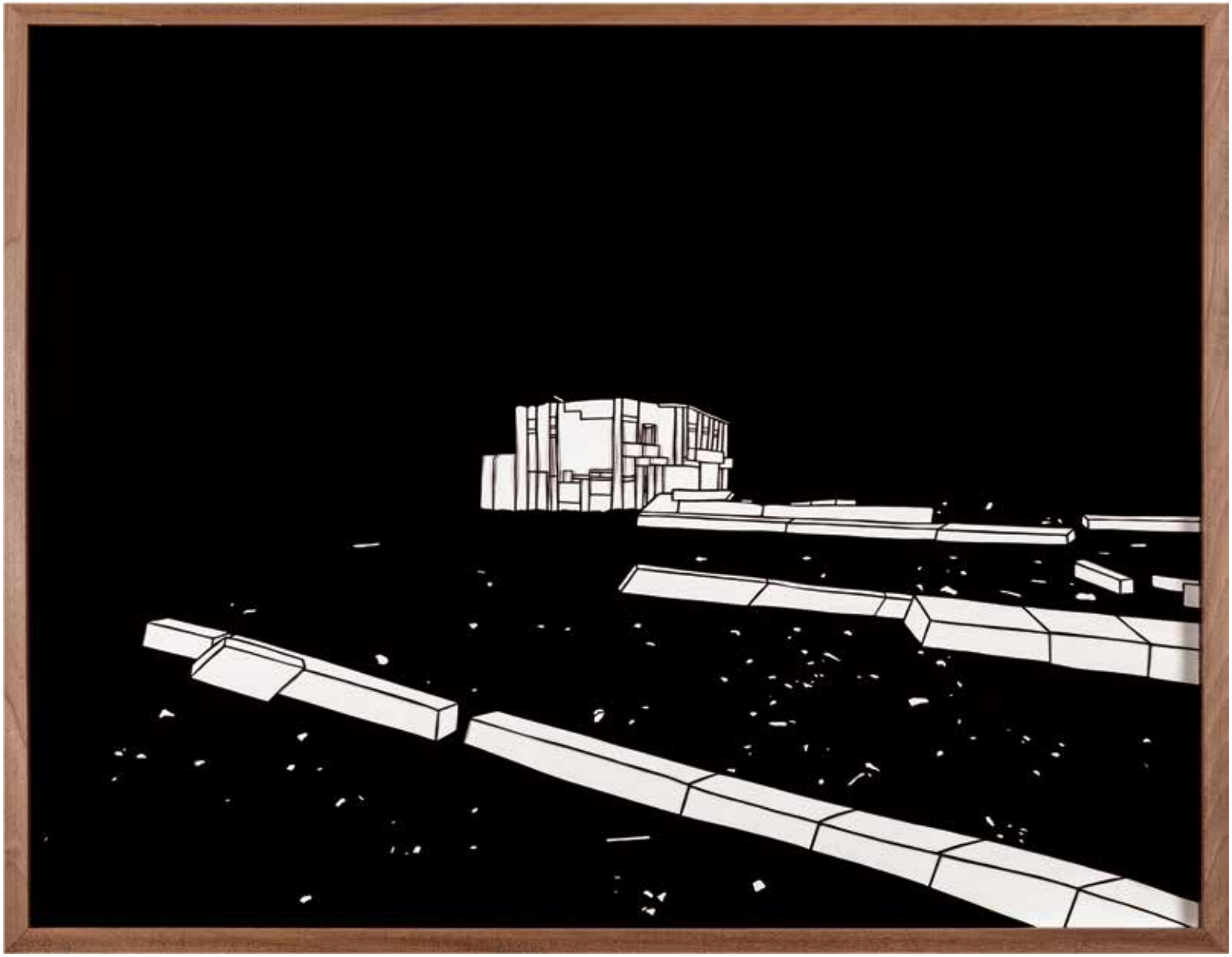
Behind the wall hide more than two hundred works featuring excerpts from a reality now gone. In these works Yekutieli distances her artwork from the catastrophic reality. She refers to the disaster from a very personal, poetic point of view devoid of criticism. At the site of destruction she seeks the sublime, and with it—the human responses which may be spotted after a disaster: the desire to assist, the compassion, the need for human contact—collective sentiments that go beyond boundaries and cultures.

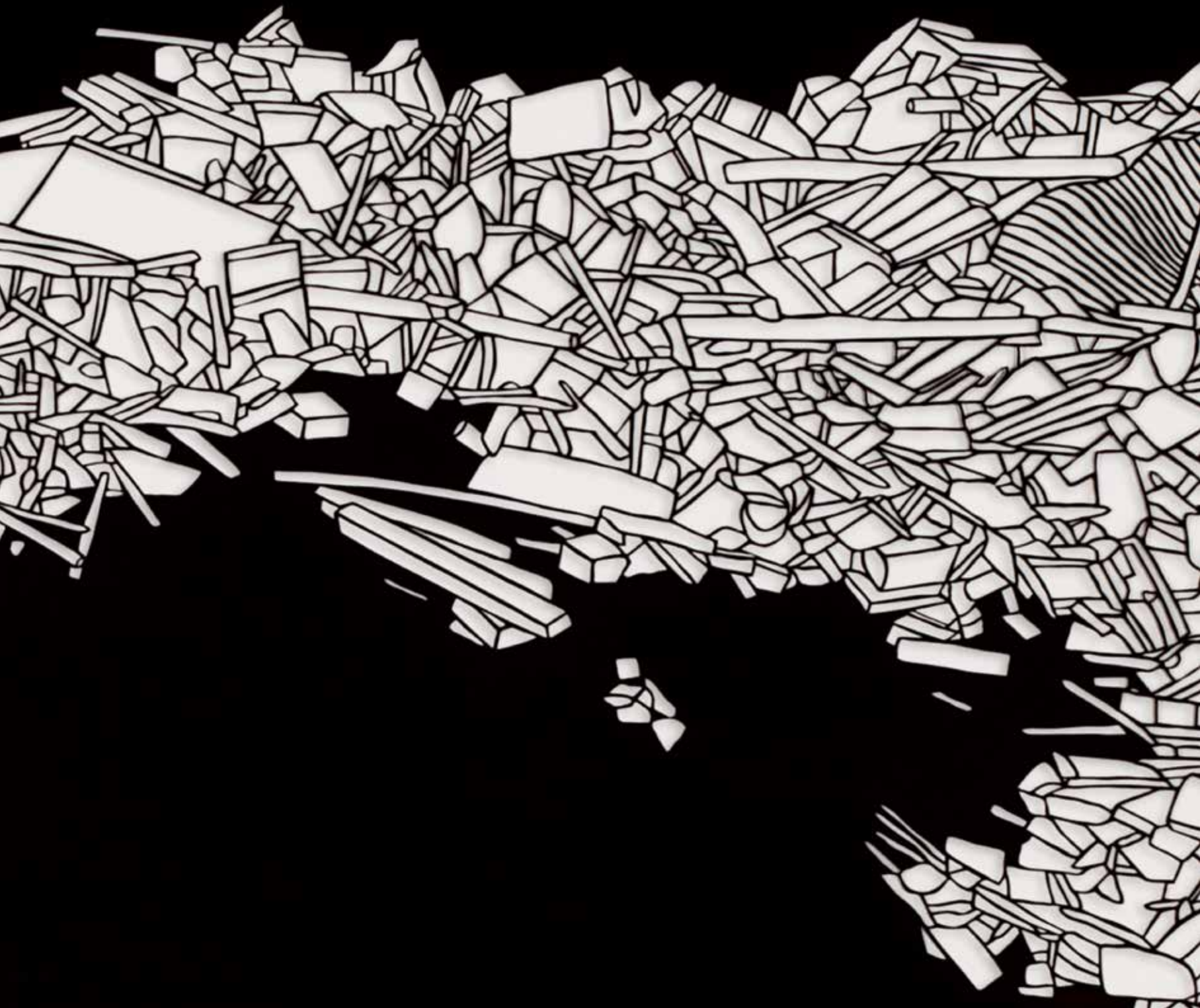
Work on the installation began by collecting photographs of disasters: from ones published in the press since the early 1930s to more recent catastrophes (tsunami in Japan, tornado and sandstorms in the USA, floods in China, etc.). Yekutieli intentionally opted for a wide range of disasters from diverse geographical and cultural loci to accentuate the dimension of universality. Although each disaster as such is local,

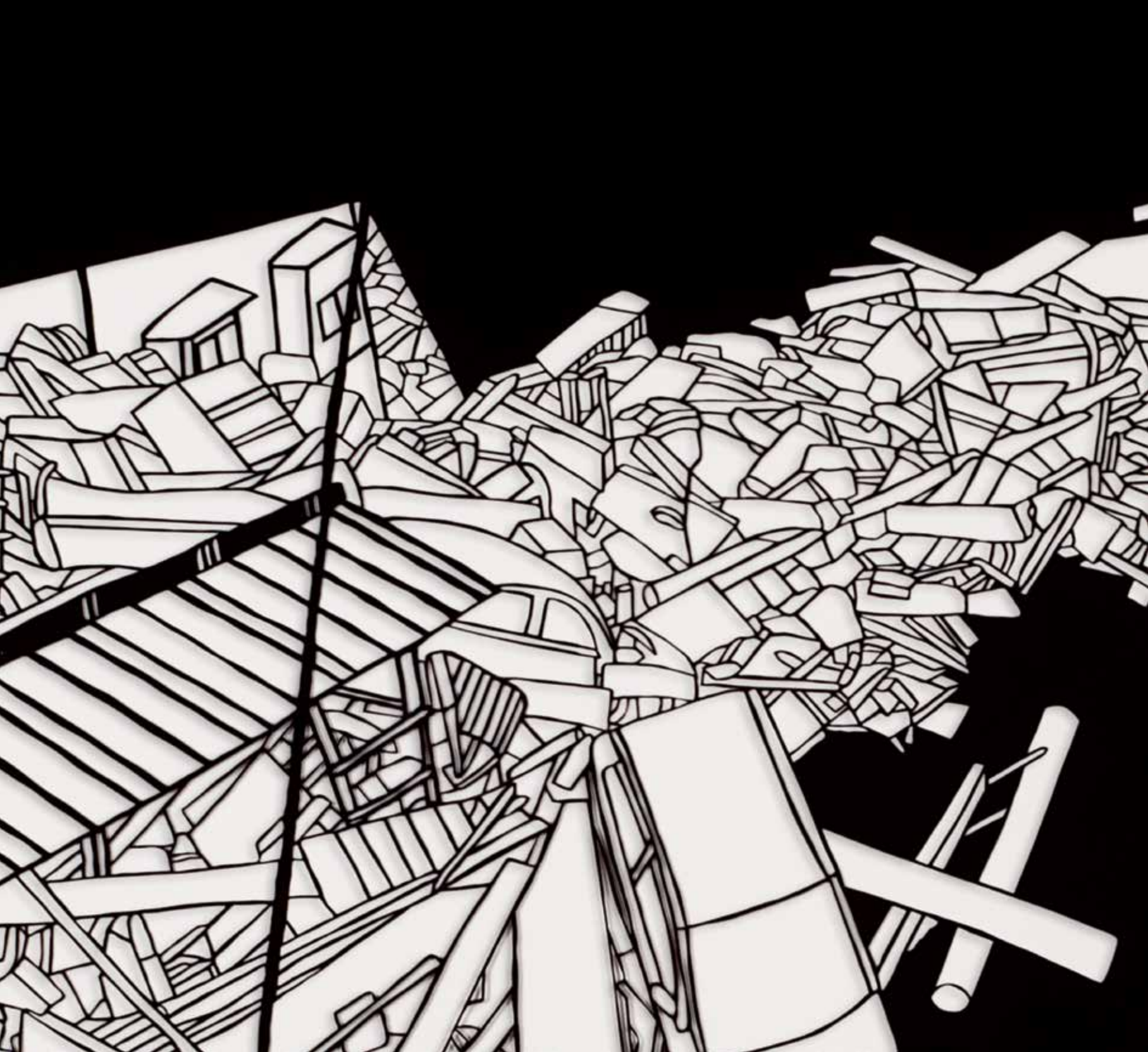
together they constitute a universal experience which elicits identification and compassion, generating a common denominator, a collective memory for people from different physical, emotional, and historical places. At the same time, Yekutieli does not idealize the crisis. She also refers to the estrangement that sometimes develops between people who experienced the same calamity, since each constructs a different memory of the event.

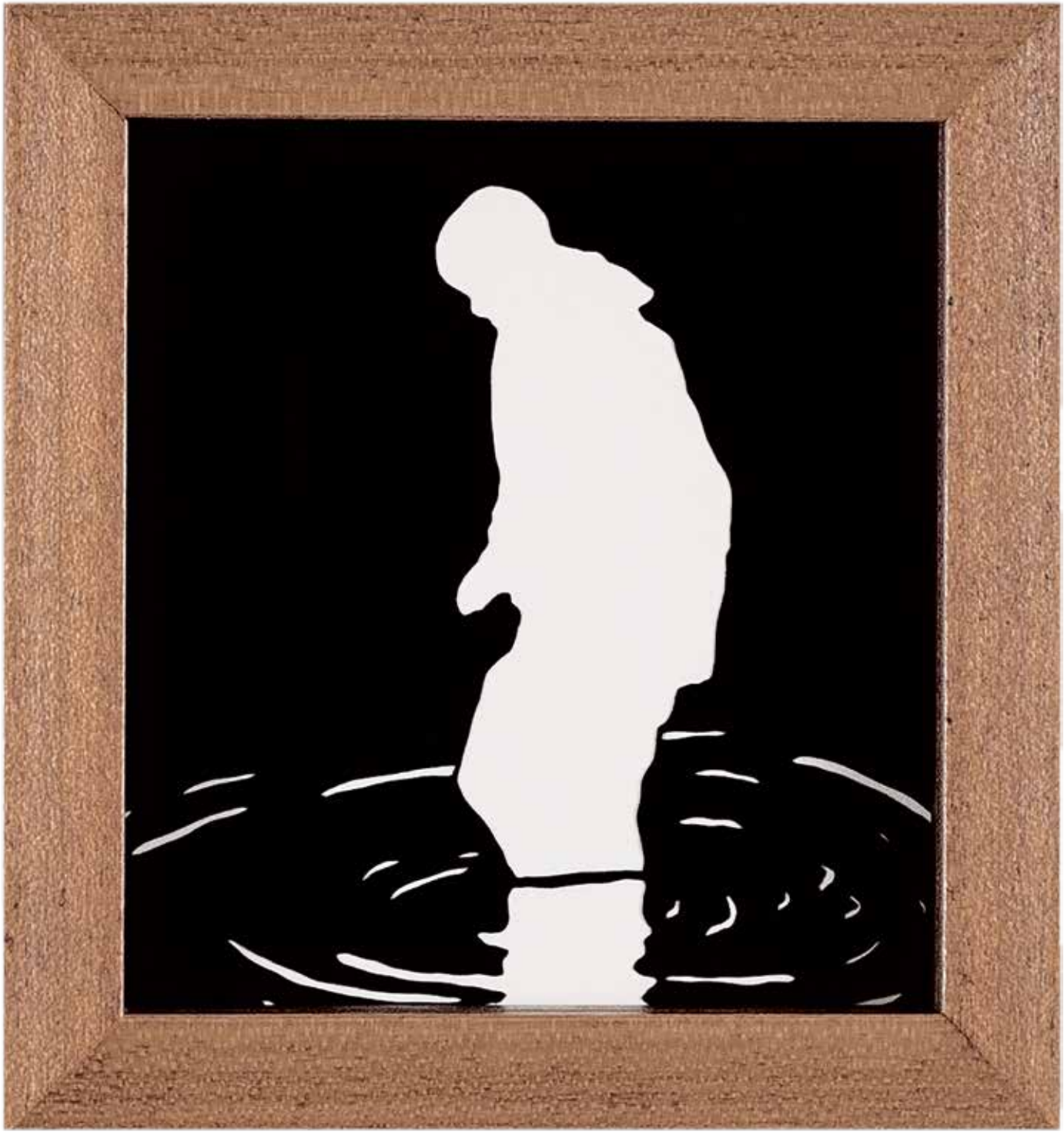
From each photograph Yekutieli cut out an image by a papercutting technique. The images were hung on the wall regardless of their geographic location or time. The ostensibly arbitrary mounting creates a new reality which is reflected from the cluster of memories. The wall is "a compilation of moments, like time capsules which are framed, whether consciously or not, by more and less significant moments before and after the catastrophe, linking different cultures in different times, and juxtaposing them as a complete reality, which attests to memory more than to catastrophe." The viewer is intentionally restricted, prevented from seeing the full picture, as in "real life." "We often regret not being able to remember a given moment of great happiness or pain, and feel frustration that we fail to recall the things as they happened. I would like to create an experience which explains why we cannot remember everything. Had we remembered everything, we would have felt suffocated and would not have been able to go on."

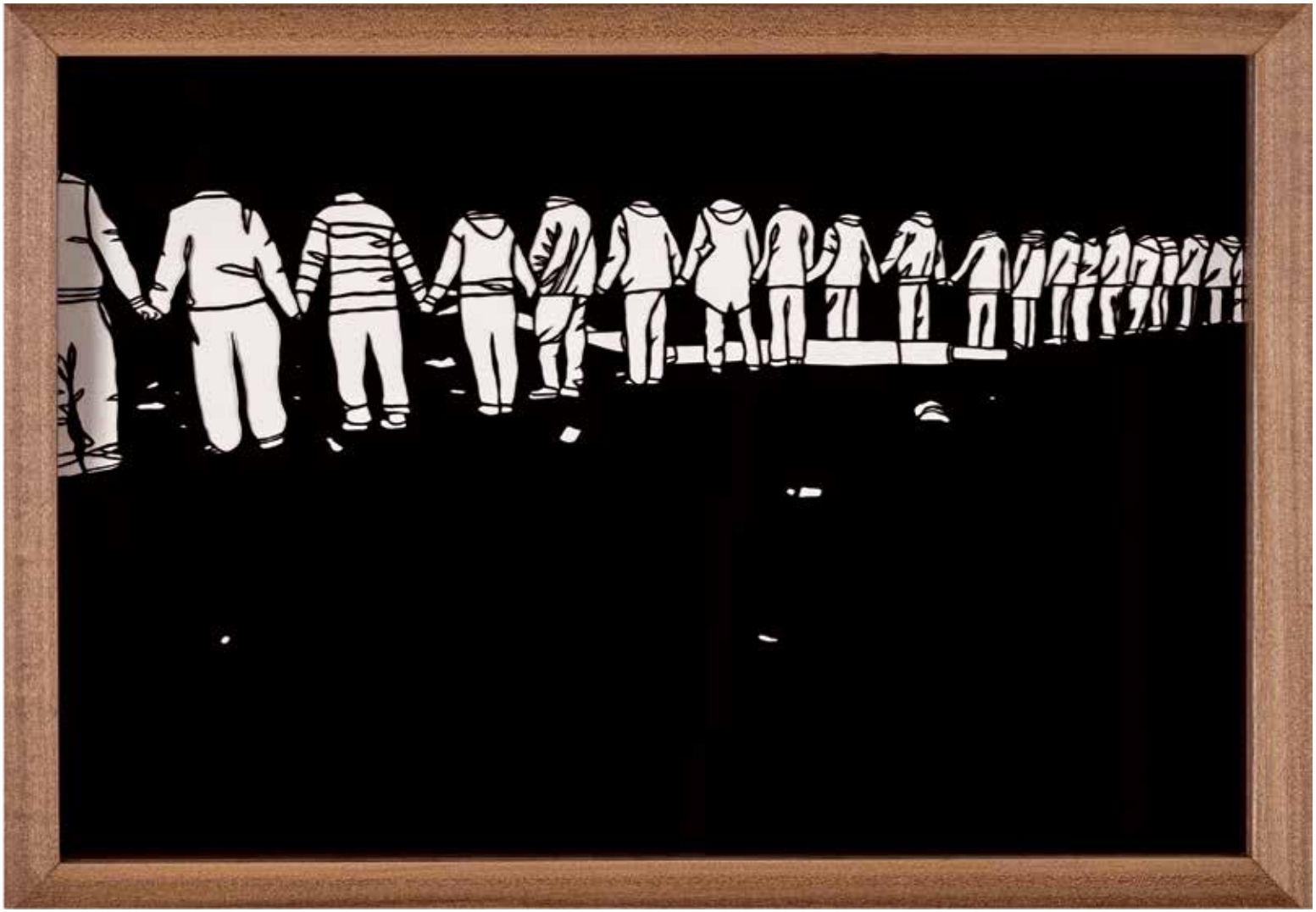
Yekutieli orchestrates an intentional dissonance between a raw material and a delicate technique, between overt and covert, visible and invisible, excess and absence, thereby invoking discomfort which burdens the senses and prevents experiencing the work as a whole. Yekutieli thus takes us out of our comfort zone, making us reconsider the workings of memory.

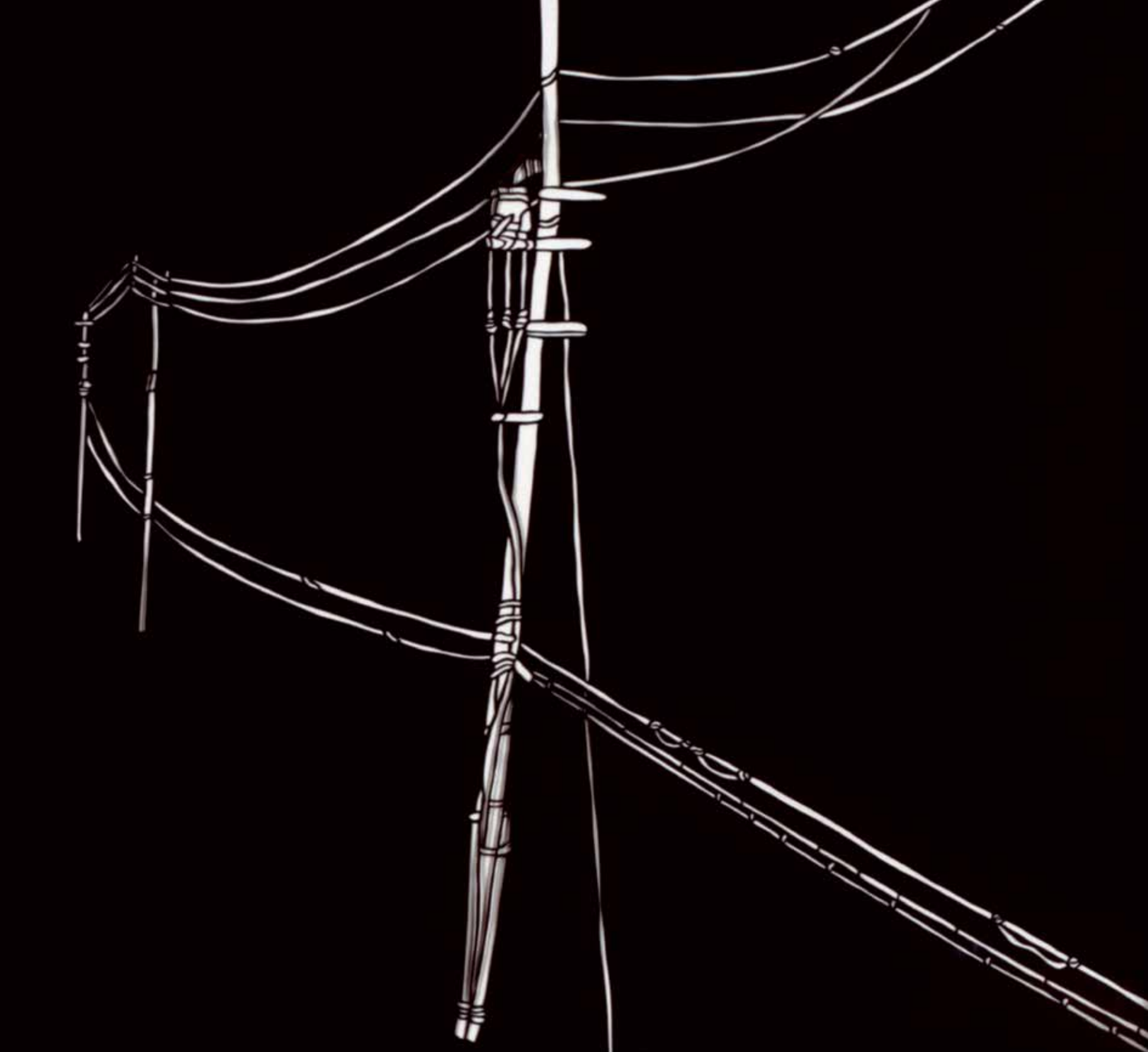


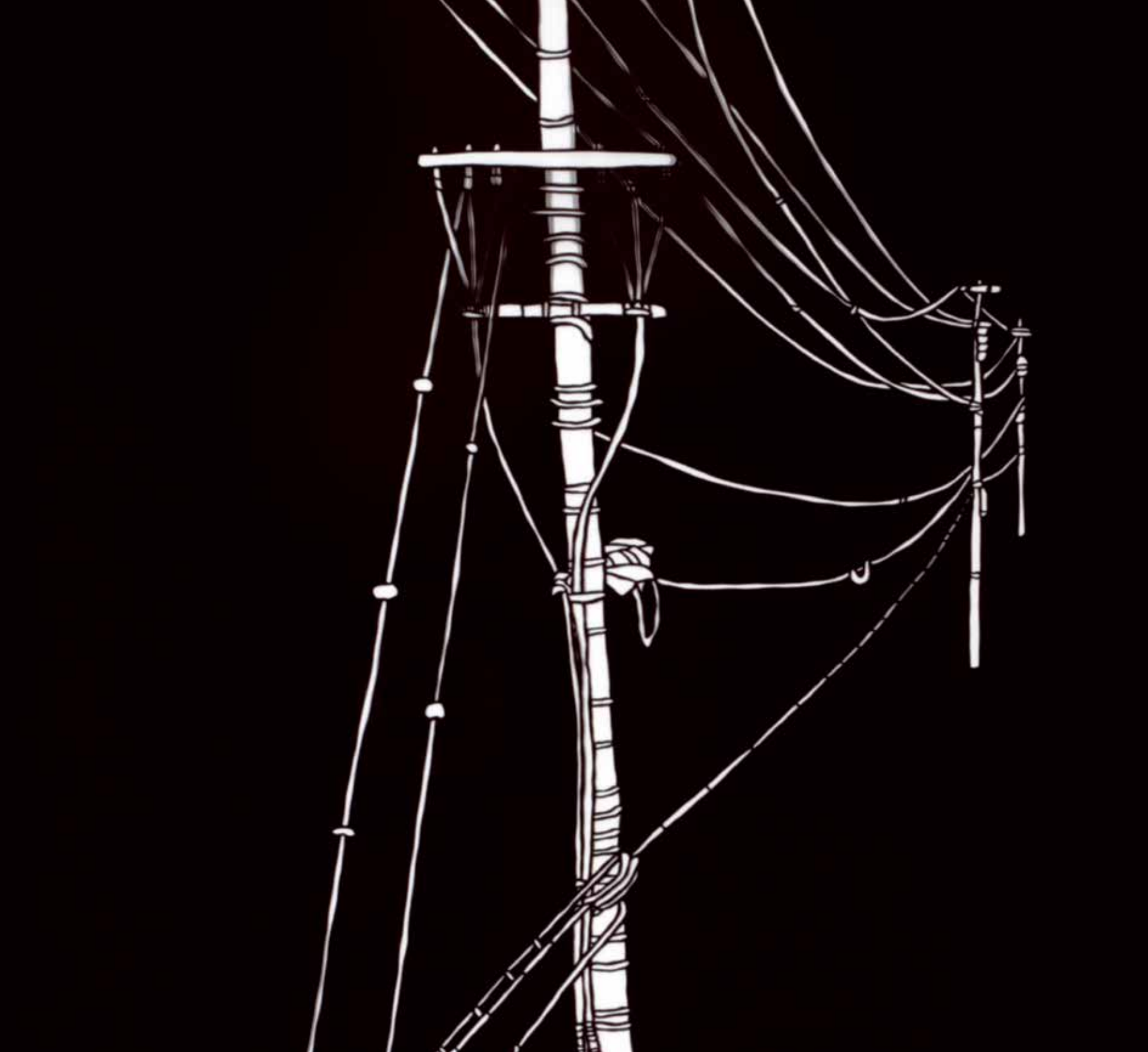


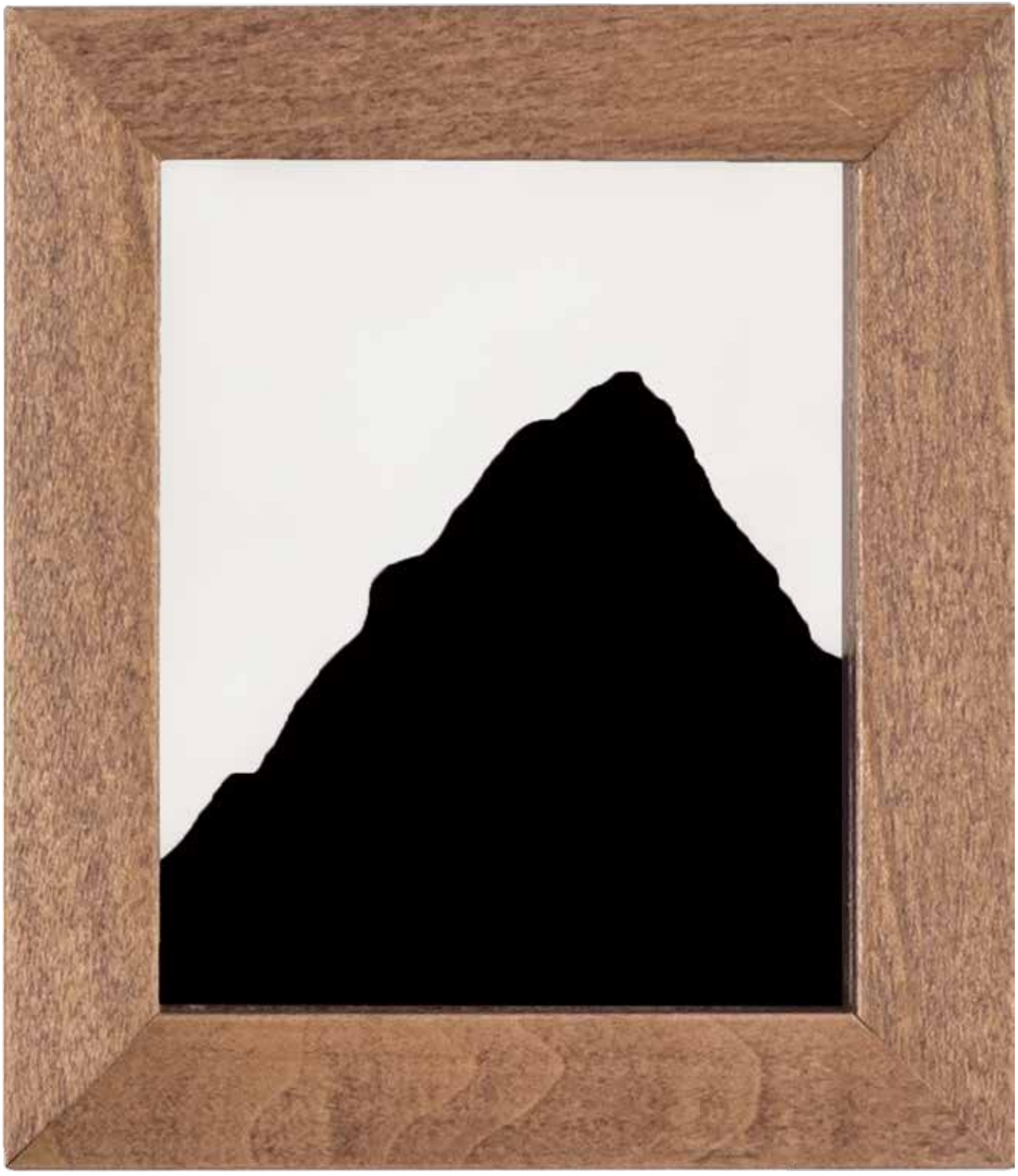


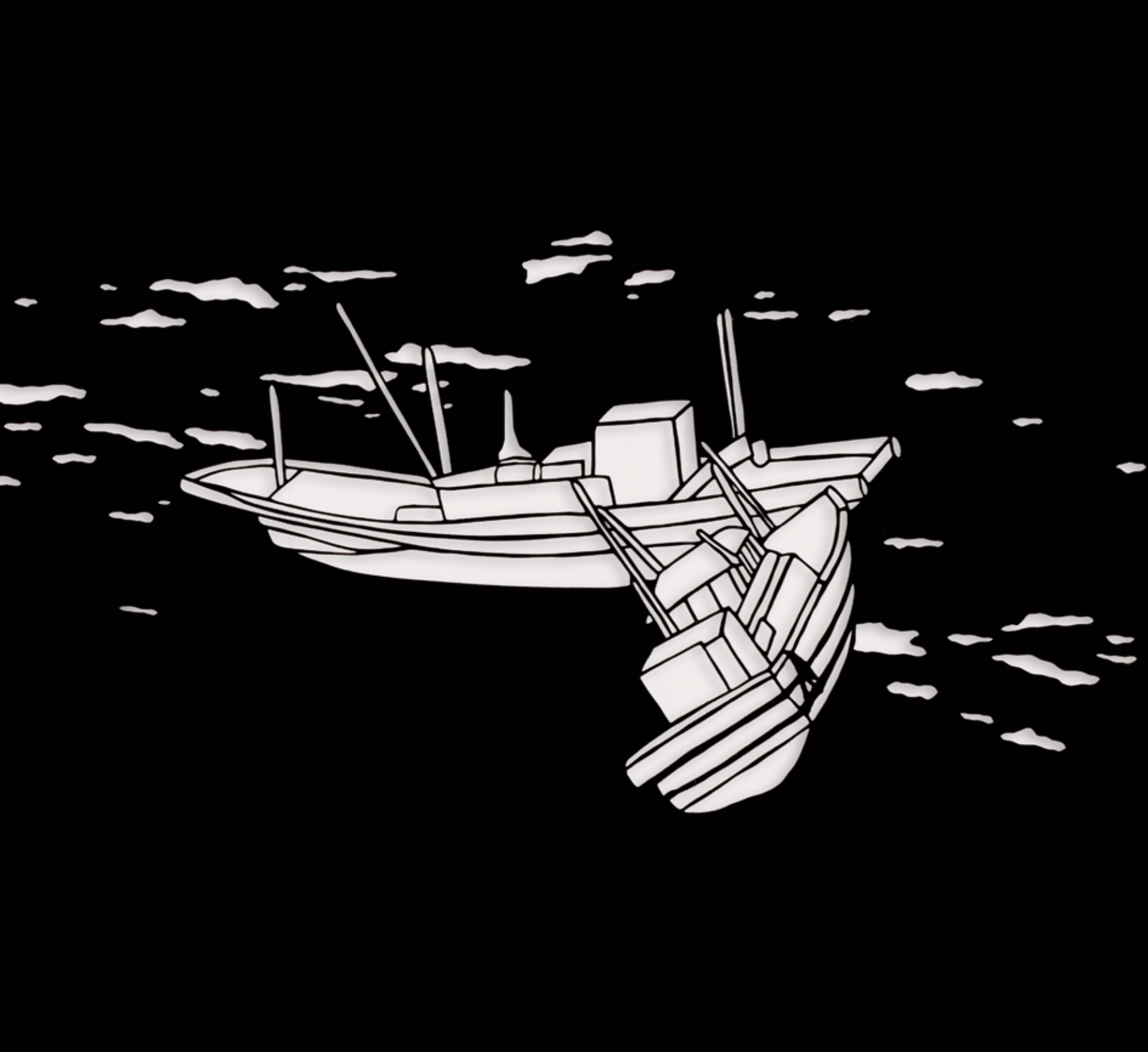


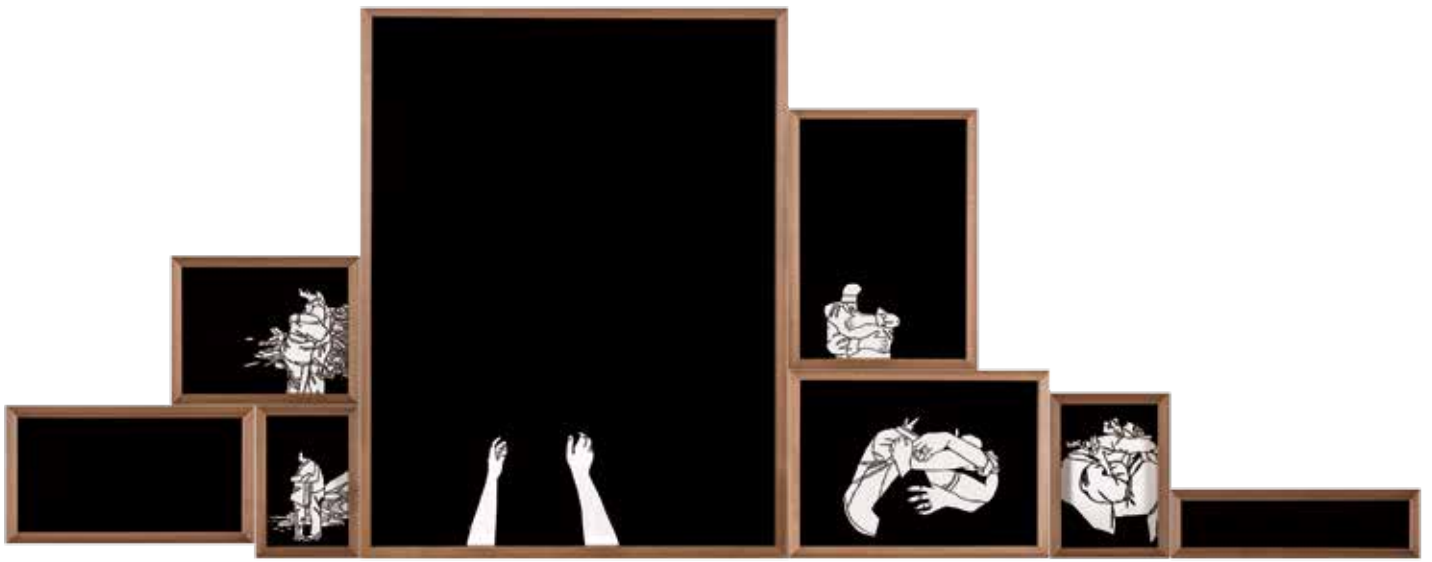












Biographical Notes

Born in California, 1989; immigrated to Israel in 1995; lives and works in Tel Aviv

Self-taught

One-Person Exhibitions

2014 - **Through The Fog, The Distance**, Wilfrid Israel Museum of Asian Art & Studies, Kibbut Hazorea, Israel; curators: Shir Meller-Yamaguchi, Anat Turbowicz (cat.)

2013 - **Among All of Our Intentions**, Dwek Gallery, Mishenot Sha'ananim, Jerusalem; curator: Raz Samira (cat.)

- **Incorporeal Reality**, Marina Gisich Gallery, St. Petersburg, Russia (with Yael Balaban)

- **A Document of a Passing Moment**, Artstation Gallery, Tel Aviv

- **1952**, The Art Gallery, Kibbutz Givat Haim Ihud, Israel; cuator: Hanush Morag

2012 - **Baggage**, The Cliff Gallery, Netanya, Israel; curator: Maya Kashevitz (cat.)

2011 - **We Forgot It in People**, OpusDV Gallery, Tel Aviv

Selected Group Exhibitions

2014 - **Partners**, Chelouche Gallery for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; curator: Tal Amitai-Lavi

2013 - **Paper Art in Israel II**, Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv; curator: Sorin Heller (cat.)

- **Point of View**, Artstation Gallery, Tel Aviv

- **A Station in Time**, the Old Train Station, Kfar Yehoshua, Israel

- **The Female Being**, The Zimmer Gallery, Tel Aviv; curator: Mika Nesher

2012 - **On a Small Scale**, Zadik Gallery, Jaffa; cuator: Hana Korman (cat.)

2011 - **Portrait of a City**, Riviera Gallery, Bat Yam, Israel; curator: Yona Reuveni