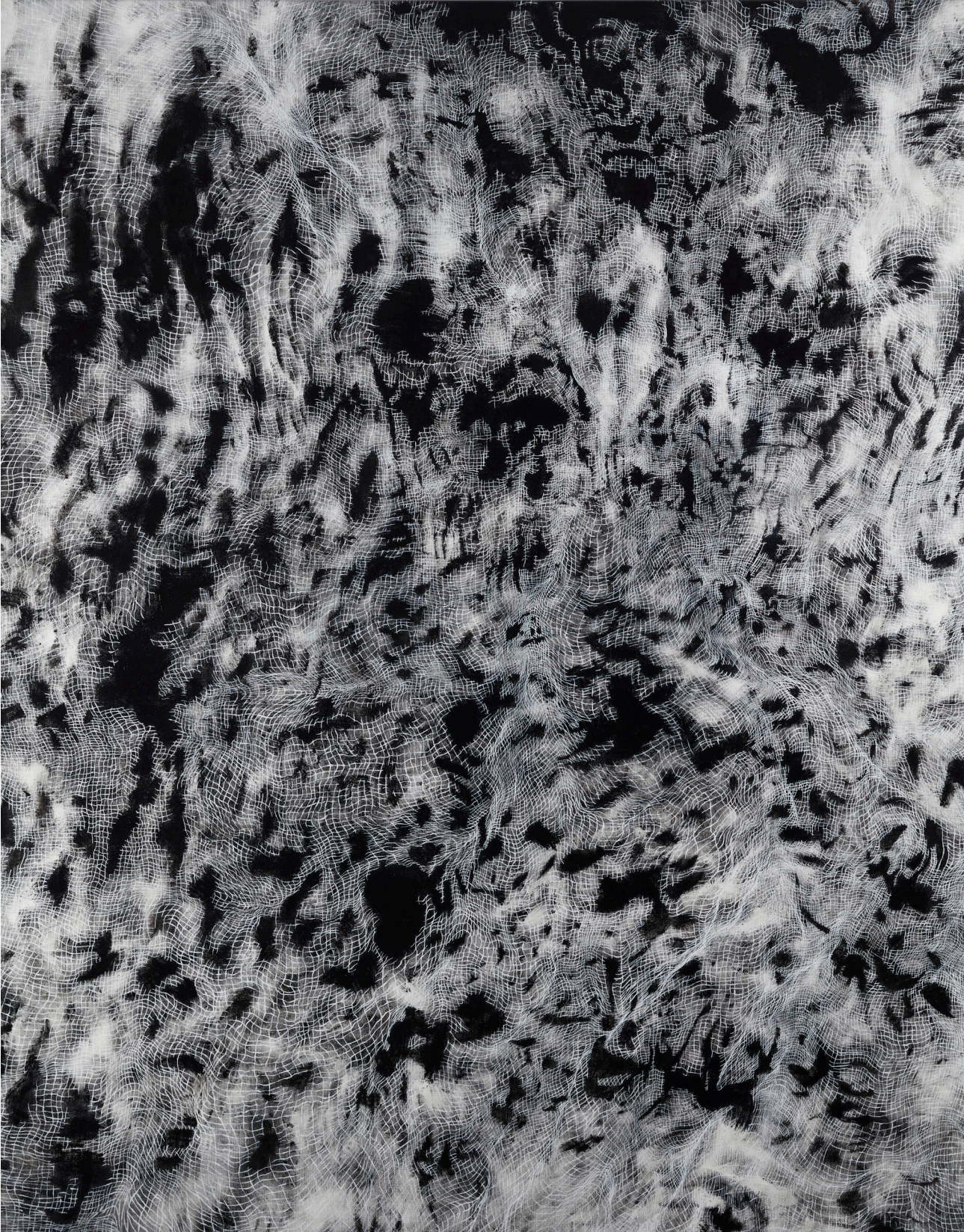


Pulling Threads|2021

A solo exhibition by **Mel DARE**

Curated by **Sue STARCKEN**

Gallery25



The stories I tell myself, 2017, acrylic paint on Belgian linen, 198 x 157cm

Pulling Threads|2021

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Curated and to be officially opened by **Sue STARCKEN**

Opening event: 26 August 2021 5pm - 7pm

Exhibition dates: 27 August - 16 September 2021

Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 4pm

CREAtec Floor Talk: 8 September 2021 12:30pm - 1:30pm

Artist-Led Tour: Sunday 12 September 2021 2:30pm - 3:30pm

Building 10, 2 Bradford St, Mount Lawley

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Cover Image: *The Stories I Tell Myself* (detail), 2017, acrylic paint and ink on Belgian linen, 193 x 193cm

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Ghostly traces billow and drift, shuffling globular forms into transfixing profiles. Drawn graphite contours assume geometric and extemporary silhouettes, and paintings siphon ethereal contours from the recesses of history, metaphoric inquiry and the maverick vision of the artist. A prodigious body of work, the exhibition *Pulling Threads*, is drawn from a vast compendium of works that showcases a broad catchment of artist Mel Dares' inspiration and honed technique as well as her towering capacity for sheer hard work. Ever alert to the memorial moments and venerated fragments that mark our roving, Mel discerns the heartbeat of an idea in what is around her and what is underfoot. She chases up the symbolic potentiality embedded in materials as well as the latent narrative that frames memories. On a hefty scaffold of research, meticulous exploration and meditative contemplation, Mel hones her iconic creative practice. Poignant and prolific, her work piles aloft a significance that confers a veritable surfeit of enlightening motifs and dynamic conceptual forays. A broad host of connections rustles up a spirited narrative from a lexicon of intriguing ambiguity.

Mel Dare is an artist of enduring distinction. Over two decades of continual arts practice has equipped her to effectively explore and push the bounds of her pursuits whilst developing the techniques, processes, materials and conceptual finesse to unfetter the inner alchemy of her praxis. Experientially, history seems to have invoked a compelling allegorical dimension in her approach. A reservoir of deep cultural memory buoys the allegorical clout of the stories the artist chooses to share. As the daughter of a third-generation farming father and a refugee mother, Mel's background tenders a poetically ambiguous compendium of lived experience illuminating the stories that rove widely with their chroniclers. From her childhood home in the vast, open spaces of regional Western Australia stories percolated unimpeded, generating lavish pickings for the infused narratives that would, ultimately, underscore her practice. Stories of families and of friends - of heartbreak and loss, jubilation and triumph. Stories that are carried in historical perpetuity, modified through the vagaries of interpretation, time and telling. Omnipresent, stories loom large and small, audible or hushed, palpable or imaginary. Mel deftly plumbs stories for their arcane utterances. She unravels their thorny antipathy as well as their silken affection and conceives the narrative thread of lore that flourishes with telling and listening.

Travel to her mother's homeland in the Czech Republic has been a powerful stimulus for looking to fabrics as a source material. In the hands of Mel's artistic faculty, fabric takes on a soaring metaphoric air. She fashions deeply signifying works that occupy a shifting, fissured space and she unearths the stories that are intricately woven through and within fabric. She plies the surface to evince its heart and configures its essence to spark a subjective personal narrative. Mel unravels the sublime in everyday objects and musings as well as the fatefully momentous shifts that we all encounter at some time or another in our lives. She annexes an emblematic language that courts the esoteric in a tableau of contrasting interpretive possibilities. In a profoundly tender series of works that summon a bittersweet introspection, Mel unequivocally means to explore and convey the intricacies of personal narrative. She considers the cogent ambiguities of fabric whose inherent attributes sanction the disparate manifestation of oppositions. Fabric can nurture yet, equally, it can harm. It can be diaphanous or opaque, protective or suffocating. In her words, Mel muses that fabric can both "trap and isolate us", and that the threads of our experience help us to "navigate self, our place in the world and our own lives". Her wrapped and stitched works look for all the world like sentient entities and, read in succession, the objects liberate and confine concurrently – and linger ultimately at a juncture that is compatible with the dynamism of divergent readings.

Keenly rendered, Mel's works evoke mysteries alongside the ultimate currency of mortality itself. Aligned with the grand mosaic of her visual arts practice (drawing, painting, textiles), her works articulate the acute pathos of loss, the unknown and the paradoxical 'absences' of those near to us. The build-up of these pieces into a coherent compilation of works sets up a framework for immersion that pivots on sequential life cycles: growth, collapse and renewal. The world as we now experience it offers up more bewilderment than trusted expectation. Mel ponders the state of things and conveys her thoughts gently, quietly through her work. Her woven vernacular is a textual cipher of the polarities that are intrinsic to her script. In this context, Mel elicits distinct binaries that emerge through this process. For example, she posits woven nets that are figuratively created to help prevent us from falling - but then they are just as likely to switch into portentous traps.

Mel Dare has amassed a consequential breadth of experience in her arts practice. The body of works selected for this exhibition chime in their lucid narrative. Paintings, drawings and object work share a common vernacular, and all have a hand in the continuance of this narrative. The rendering of fabric and its' ample manifestations forms part of Mel's impetus to make work – whether as the actual substrate or as its allegorical expression. The work is driven by a rationale

of intellectual curiosity as much as it is a catalyst to tell the cloistered stories of life and to pack broken boundaries with the cryptic gauze of existence. These tender works provide a haven for contemplation whilst they illuminate the threads and fragments that comprise the strands of our unique individual histories.

Sue STARCKEN 2021
Artist, Curator, Writer

Acknowledgements:

Although my art making is done in solitude it is can not be conceived nor exist in the world without others. I would like to thank the following people for their support, enthusiasm and generosity in making this exhibition possible: Curator Sue Starcken for providing a visual and written narrative which encapsulates this body of work. Stuart Elliot for co-installing the exhibition. Danielle Fusco for designing the catalogue and co-ordinating the exhibition. Danielle Fusco and Lyndall Adams for editing the catalogue. Edith Cowan University and the ECU Galleries committee for giving me the opportunity to exhibit this body of work. Artists and curators I have collaborated with in the last eight years including but not confined to: Olga Cironis, Claire Bushby, Madeleine Beech, Peggy Lyon, Ashley Yihsin Chang, Paola Anselma, Caroline Lunel, Gemma Ben-Ary, Rizzy, Greg Sikich, Jess Boyce, Ron Nyisztor, Yvonne Doherty, Felicity Johnson, Andrew Nicholls and Clare McFarlane. As well as MJAC and Arteles Creative Center residency programs. And last but not least Mil Dare and Douglas Bell.

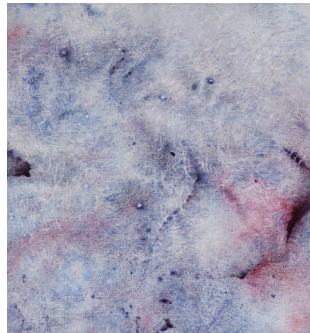
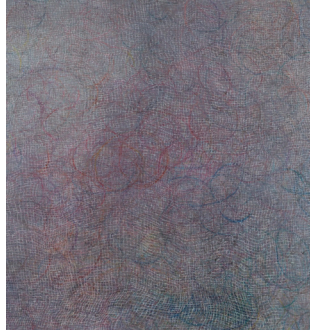
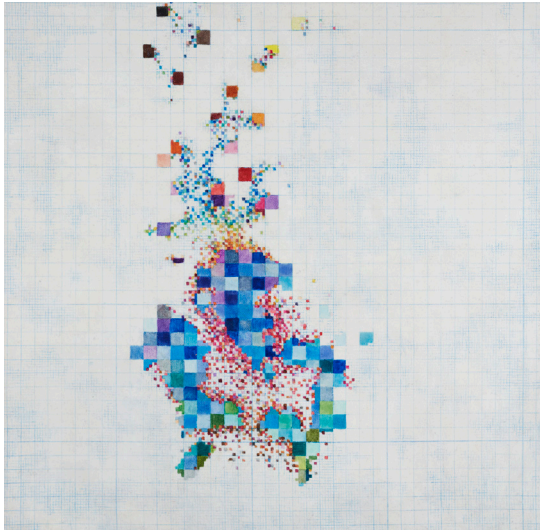
- Mel Dare

Biography

Mel Dare is a Perth based visual artist who primarily paints and draws. Since graduating from Curtin University with a BA (Visual Arts) Honours in 1999 she has exhibited 12 solo, 3 duo and been selected for numerous group shows. Dare has had residencies at Arteles Creative Center (Finland), MJAC and PICA. The artist has been a member of Gotham Studios since 2008. She has taught art in many different organisations including prisons, TAFE, FAC and Curtin University. Dare's work is included in the Edith Cowan University, City of Joondalup, St John of God, Princess Margaret Hospital and Old Swan Brewery as well as other private and public national and international collections.

Artist's statement

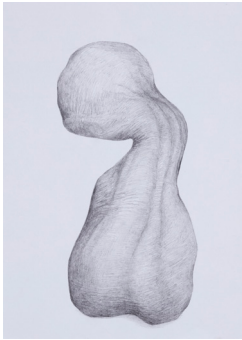
Pulling Threads explores and seeks to convey the intricacies of personal narrative. This body of work began in 2013 when the artist revisited her mother's homeland Czech Republic. Dare is interested in how meaning is constructed within individual subjectivity. In the stories we tell ourselves and others to explain who we are. Stories woven from threads of experience into the fabric we each call myself. The artist has had a practice for over 20 years. This is her twelfth solo exhibition. The artworks are selected by curator Sue Starcken from the last seven years of Dare's practice include paintings, drawing and sculptures.



Don't Be Such a Girl 1 - 8, 2021, acrylic paint and ink plus coloured pencil on canvas, dimensions variable



Veil, 2015, acrylic and ink on linen, 100 x 75cm





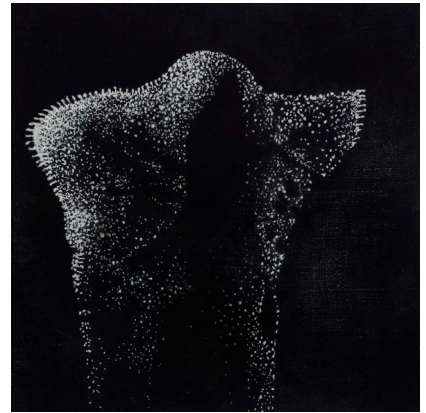
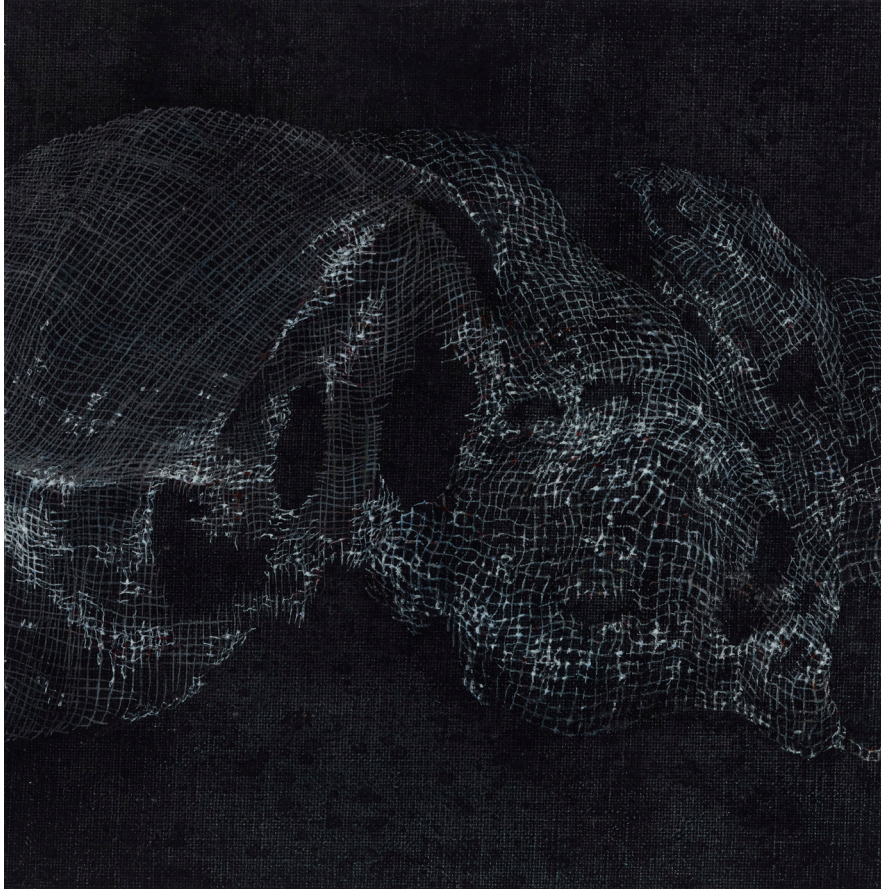
Endings are Beginnings, 2017, acrylic paint and ink on Belgian linen, 2 x (168 x 122cm)



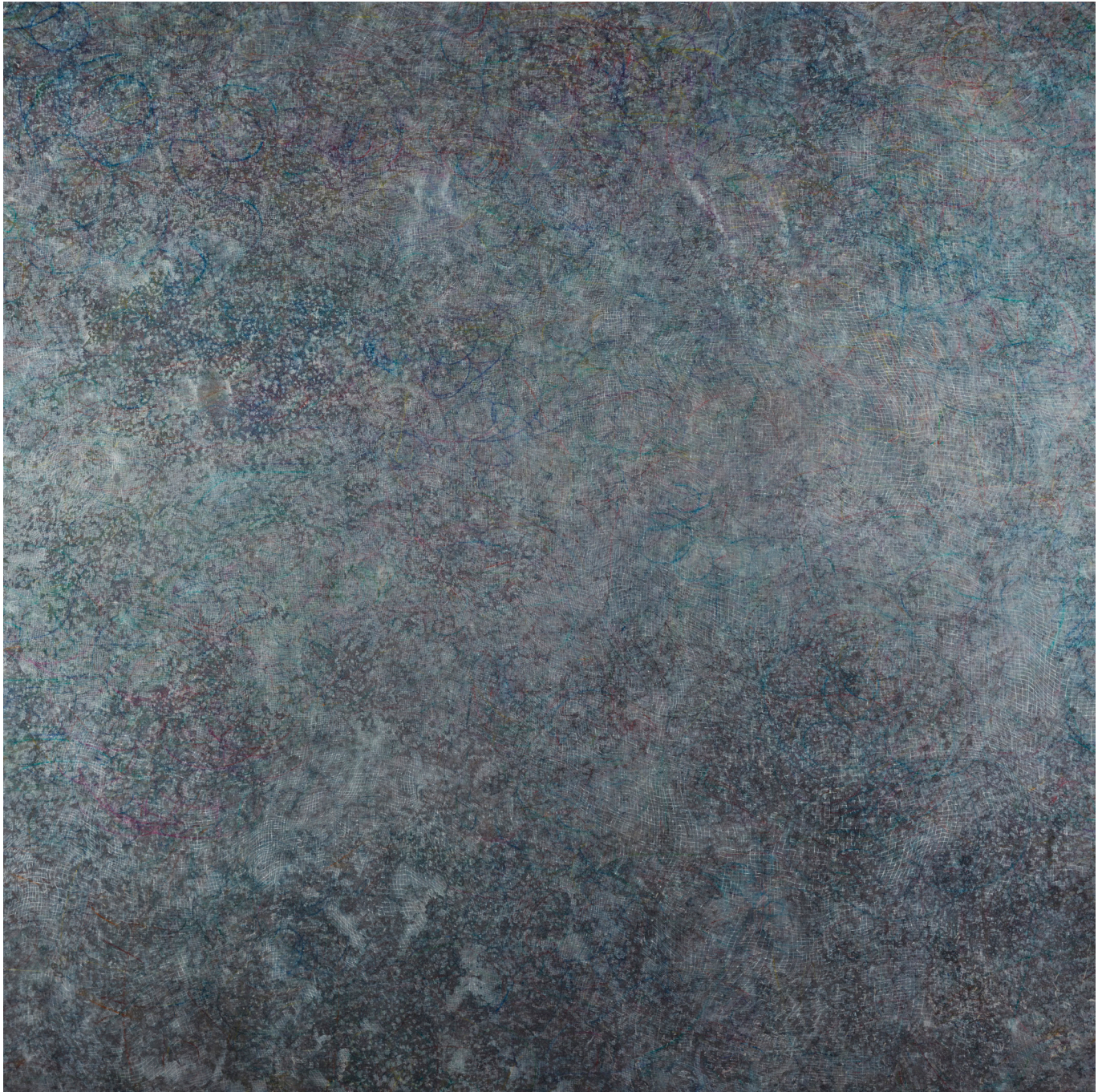
Mending Broken Boundaries 1-26 of 27, 2019 - 2020, gauze on broken concrete fence pillars, dimensions variable



Left: *Mending Broken Boundaries No.1 of 27*, 2019, gauze on broken concrete fence pillars, 15 x 8 x 7cm
Top right: *Mending Broken Boundaries No. 4 of 27*, 2019, gauze on broken concrete fence pillars, 7 x 10 x 6cm
Bottom right: *Mending Broken Boundaries No. 27 of 27*, 2019 - 2020, gauze on broken concrete fence pillars, 9 x 17 x 11cm



Left: *Elaborate*, 2018, acrylic paint and ink on Belgian linen, 30.5 x 30.5 cm
Top right: *A thought not fully realised*, 2016, acrylic paint and ink on linen, 25 x 25cm
Bottom right: *Cloak No. 2*, 2015, acrylic paint and ink on linen, 22.5 x 22.5cm



Thaw, 2018, acrylic paint on Belgian linen, 193 x 193cm



The weight of waiting, 2017, acrylic paint and ink on wooden panel, 80 x 119cm
Courtesy of the Edith Cowan University Art Collection

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