

LOOT

BARBARA
WILDENBOER

SOLO EXHIBITION

05-02 // 19-03

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EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

|| THIS IS NOT
|| A WHITE CUBE





IN THIS ISSUE

03. LOOT - Spoils of War

05. About the Artist

07. Exhibition Catalogue

38. Infinitesimally Small
and Unimaginable Large

55. Provenance I & II

63. About the Gallery



Spoils of War III

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
YEAR: 2021

LOOT - Spoils of War

"LOOT" is the first solo exhibition by the South African artist Barbara Wildenboer in Portugal. The show presents about 30 unpublished works, divided into three distinct nuclei. Among these is the artist's most recent body of work, which gives the exhibition its name.

"LOOT - Spoils of war" stems from the artist's growing interest in understanding how a distinctive model of significance was generated and shaped from the historical and civilizational encounter between Africa and Europe.

These ideas are materialized through the exploration of the concept of 'appropriation.' In this exhibition, the use of "appropriation" is, on the one hand, a direct reference to the artifacts looted and expropriated from their origins in the context of colonization. Yet, on the other hand, it also translates the consistency of the artist's work, which has long involved the reconfiguration and integration of texts, books, maps, and pre-existing images into collages and three-dimensional installations. In appropriation "per se," the artist finds a truly essential working tool for constructing an artistic medium.

Transversally, Barbara Wildeboer uses in her creative process a combination of analog and digital processes that contribute to the construction of a diverse and rich body of work, primarily consisting of collages, photographic constructions, paper installations, digitally animated photographic sculptures, and book arts.

Based on this model and the concept of appropriation, over the last two years, the artist has collected images of numerous ancient artifacts of distinct origins - from Africa, Oceania, Ancient Greece, Mesopotamia, and the Americas - currently part of the collections of museums in the western world, in Great Britain, Germany, France, and the United States of America.

Removed from their original context and assembled in complex visual systems, with a surreal character, these images undergo an authorial process of

re-signification, taking on a renewed nature in this exhibition. At its genesis is an iconographic (re) reading that frames the historical weight of intercultural contacts.

Throughout the exhibition, we witness a ritual of iconographic re-signification, decoding, and re-coding of the image, contributing to the construction of a critical view of historiography and the processes of appropriation and "fetishization" of cultures.

At the epicenter of the show and of the debate that the artist thus seeks to promote, we find a set of monochromatic sculptural installations that in their configuration resemble *ladders, poles, trees, towers*. These totems or small obelisks consist of *an assimilation of different relics, fertility figures, masks, vases, and various architectural elements*.

These paper artifacts are shrewdly and ingeniously grouped in an envisioned accommodation that evokes, in an idiosyncratic and absurd way, the systematization of the Western Museum to highlight the multiple ways in which these objects can be perceived.

The collaged paper sculptures echo how exhibitions of archeological artifacts are curated, the artifacts being placed on pedestals or in vitrines, and then illuminated to produce the idea of the aura of an artwork that is far removed from its original functions. The result is some kind of documentary fiction or fictional documentary that references real things but transforms them into something else.

The concepts of originality and authorship are central elements in this exhibition by Barbara Wildenboer. In a declared challenge to the conventions of the art world, her action has been producing significant contributions to the inversion of thought in an era marked by the need to impose a decolonial ideology.

Graça Rodrigues
Curator, January 2022

About the Artist

Barbara Wildenboer lives and works in Cape Town. She is represented by galleries in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London. She is also represented in Lisbon and Luanda by THIS IS NOT A WHITE CUBE Art Gallery.

In 2007 she obtained a master's in fine art (with distinction) from the Michaelis School of Art at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. The title of her Master's thesis was *Present Absence / Absent Presence*, and the research was concerned with aspects of melancholy, loss, and longing as is embodied by the photographic medium.

Before that, she completed a BA(Ed) with majors in English literature, Psychology, and Pedagogics at the University of Pretoria in 1996, followed by a Bachelor of Visual Arts from UNISA in 2003. From 2009-2016 she worked as the head of the Photography

Department at the Cityvarsity College of Creative Arts, where she lectured Theory & Discourse and History of Photography.

In 2011 she was nominated and subsequently selected as one of the top 20 finalists for the Sovereign African Arts Award, for which she received the Public Choice Prize. She was also among the top 20 finalists for the Thamy Mnyele Fine Art Awards (South Africa) in 2021.

In addition to that, she has been awarded several international residencies, such as the Unesco-Aschberg residency (Jordan, 2006), the Al Mahatta residency (Palestine, 2009), the Red De Residencias Artisticas Local (Colombia, 2011), the Rimbun Dahan artist residency (Penang, Malaysia, 2013), L'Atelier Sur Seine (Fontainebleau, France, 2017) and Hannacc (Barcelona, Spain, 2018).





Spoils of War I

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
YEAR: 2021



Spoils of War II

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
 DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
 YEAR: 2021





Spoils of War IV

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
 DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
 YEAR: 2021



Spoils of War V

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
 DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
 YEAR: 2021





Spoils of War VI

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
 DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
 YEAR: 2021



Spoils of War VII

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
 DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
 YEAR: 2021





Spoils of War VIII

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
 DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
 YEAR: 2021



Spoils of War IX

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
YEAR: 2021





Spoils of War X

DESIGNATION: Paper construction
 DIMENSIONS: 38 x 220 x 6 cm
 YEAR: 2021



The Caryatids I

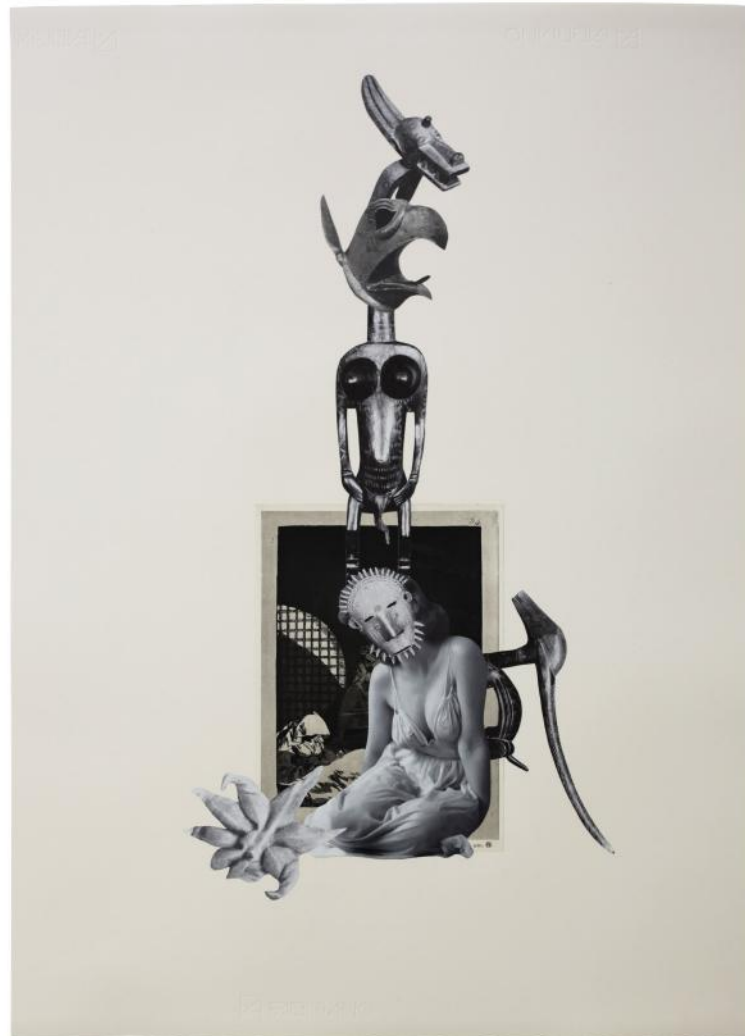
DESIGNATION: Hand-cut analogue collage on Fabriano
 DIMENSIONS: 70 x 50 cm
 YEAR: 2021





The Caryatids II

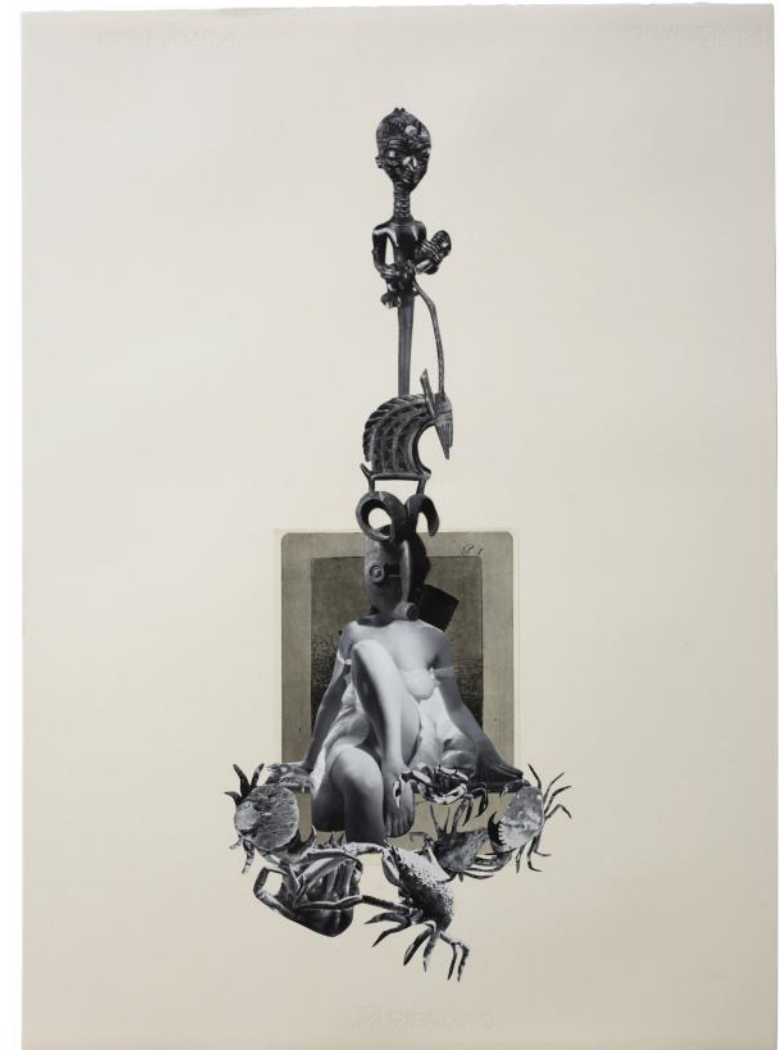
DESIGNATION: Hand-cut analogue collage on Fabriano
 DIMENSIONS: 70x 50 cm
 YEAR: 2021



The Caryatids III

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut analogue collage on Fabriano
 DIMENSIONS: 70 x 50 cm
 YEAR: 2021





The Caryatids IV

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut analogue collage on Fabriano
 DIMENSIONS: 70 x 50 cm
 YEAR: 2021



The Caryatids V

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut analogue collage on Fabriano
 DIMENSIONS: 70 x 50 cm
 YEAR: 2021





The Caryatids VI

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut analogue collage on Fabriano

DIMENSIONS: 70 x 50 cm

YEAR: 2021

Infinitesimally Small and Unimaginable Large

Barbara Wildenboer (b. 1973, South Africa) investigates the philosophical concept of aesthetics throughout a range of different mediums and processes. By exploring this concept alongside phenomena such as temporality, fractal geometry, and the interconnectedness of all living things, she exposes the connections between a myriad of life forms, from the microscopic to the immense.

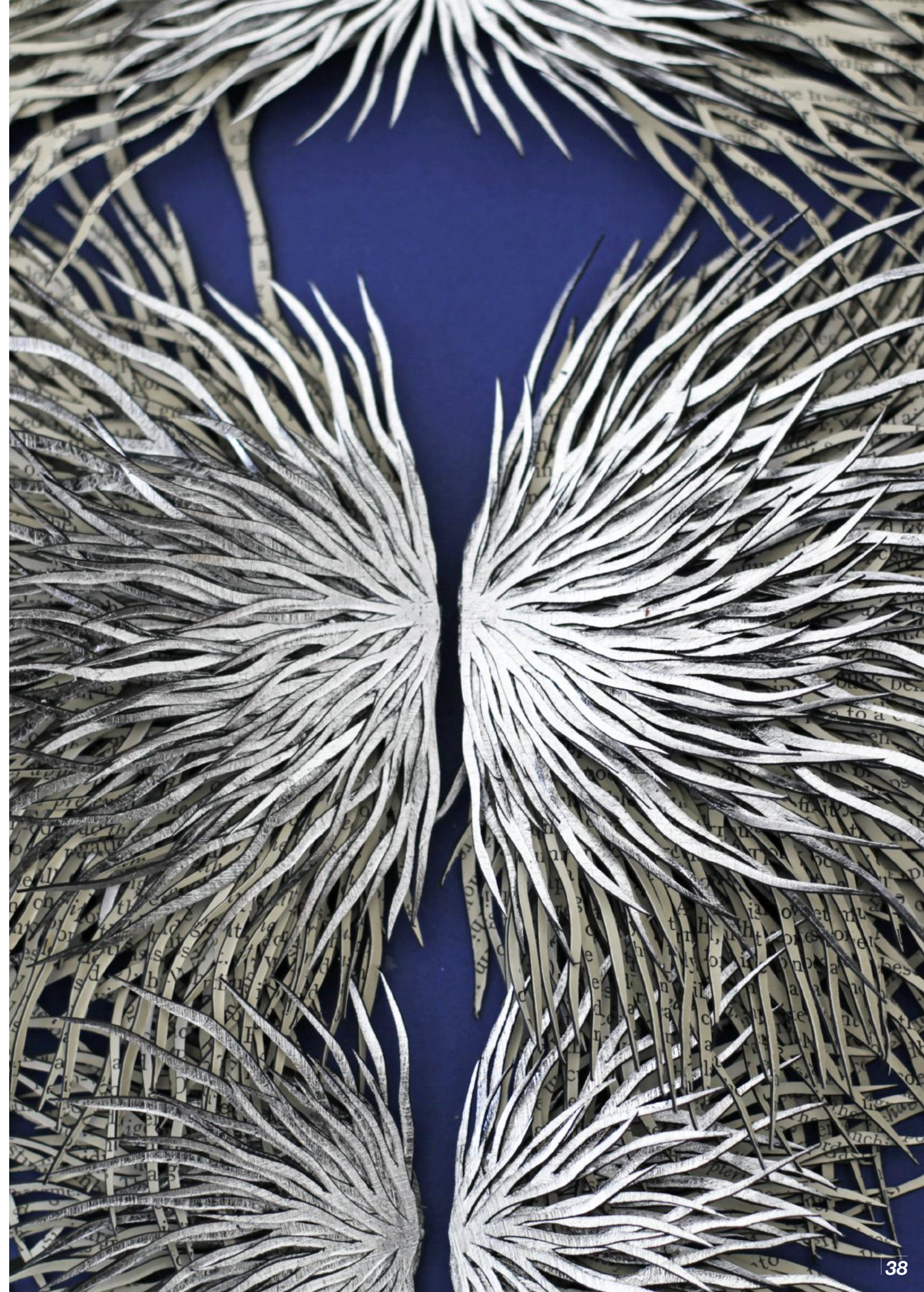
Wildenboer's primary focus is on environmental aesthetics, which she sees as encompassing both natural territories and the human interaction with the natural realm. Her work is also concerned with the idea of the mathematical sublime (an aesthetical notion first developed by Immanuel Kant) and how the infinity and boundlessness of the universe transcend the limits of reason.

Wildenboer uses a combination of analog and digital processes to produce a diverse and rich body of work that primarily consists of collages, photo and paper constructions, installations, digitally animated photographic sculptures, and

book arts. A decade ago, Wildenboer started a large-scale book project named "Infinitesimally Small and Unimaginable Large." This ongoing project, inspired by the short story by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel," uses the library as a metaphor for the universe.

By altering books, maps, and other found objects from secondhand bookshops and markets, Wildenboer creates three-dimensional paper works that reflect how humankind is affected by globalization, economic upheavals, scarcity, political corruption, wars, epidemics, and natural disasters.

In all her paper sculptures and collages, there is a playful aspect of creating references within other references - attention being drawn to our understanding of science as mediated through text and language. As a result, Wildenboer creates in her work an entirely alternate reality that exposes and explores modern human life and the fragility of the symbiotic relationship between man and ecology.





DESIGNATION: Hand-cut altered book
 DIMENSIONS: 45 x 35 cm
 YEAR: 2021



An Encyclopedia of World History

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut altered book
 DIMENSIONS: 25 x 35 cm
 YEAR: 2021

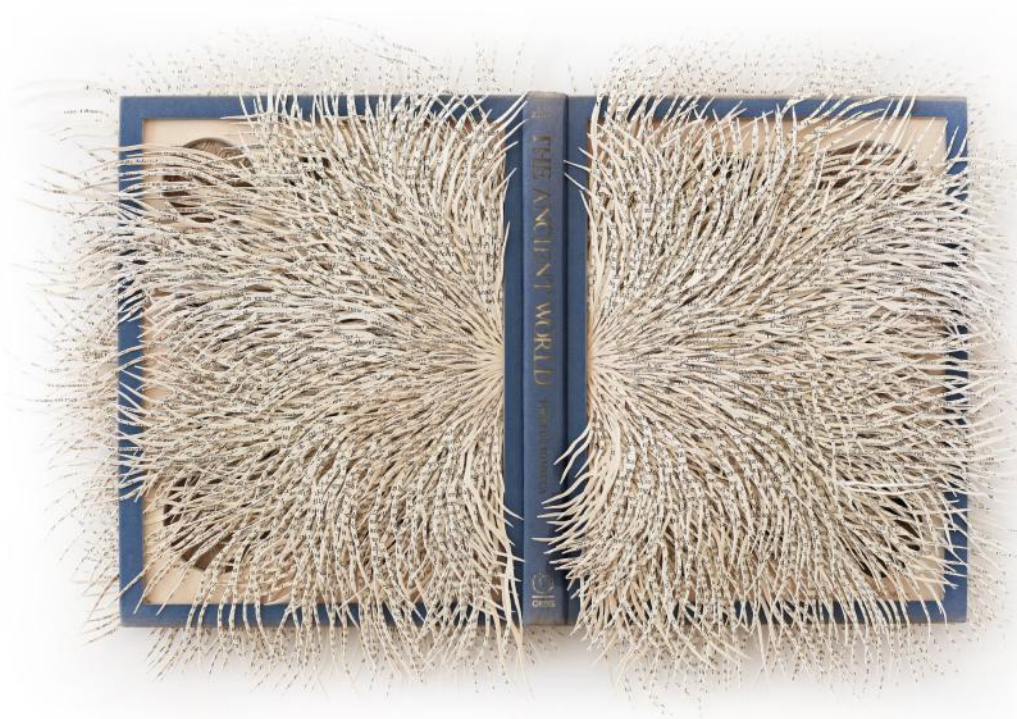


AN
 ENCYCLOPAEDIA
 of
 WORLD
 HISTORY



Dawn of the Gods

DESIGNATION: Hand-out altered book
 DIMENSIONS: 45 x 35 cm
 YEAR: 2021



Ancient World

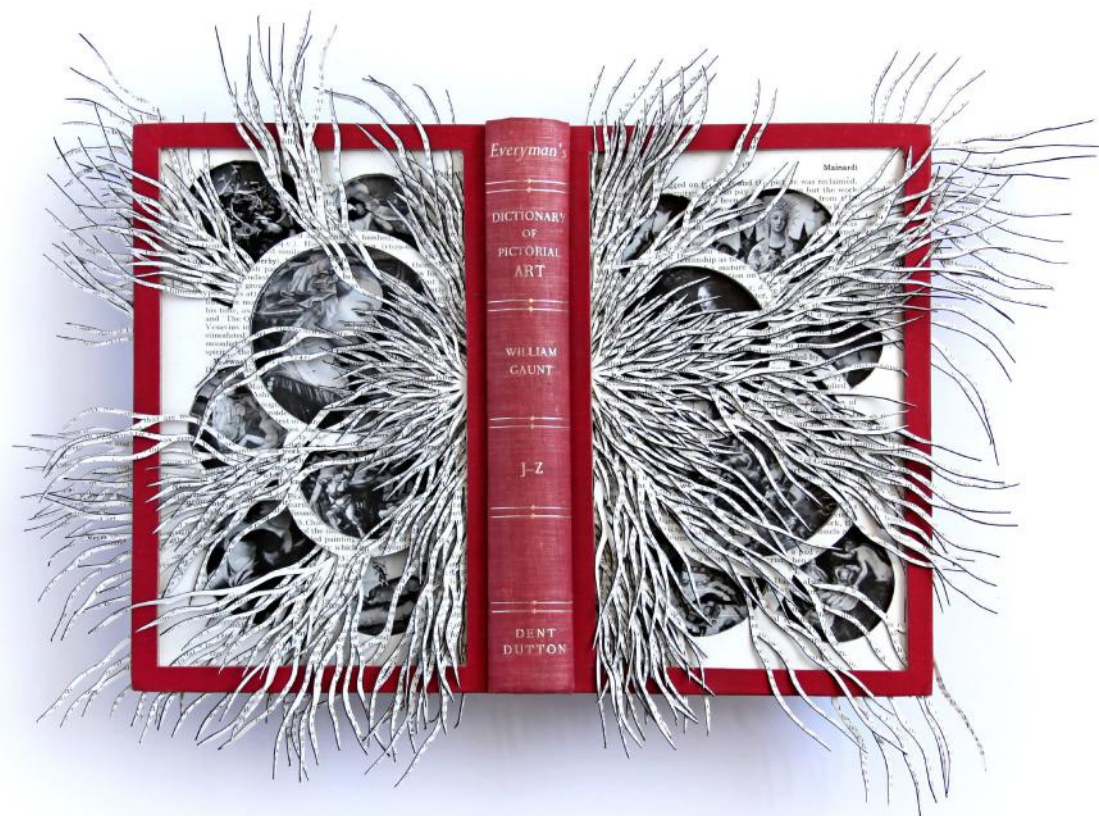
DESIGNATION: Hand-cut altered book
 DIMENSIONS: 50 x 40 cm
 YEAR: 2021





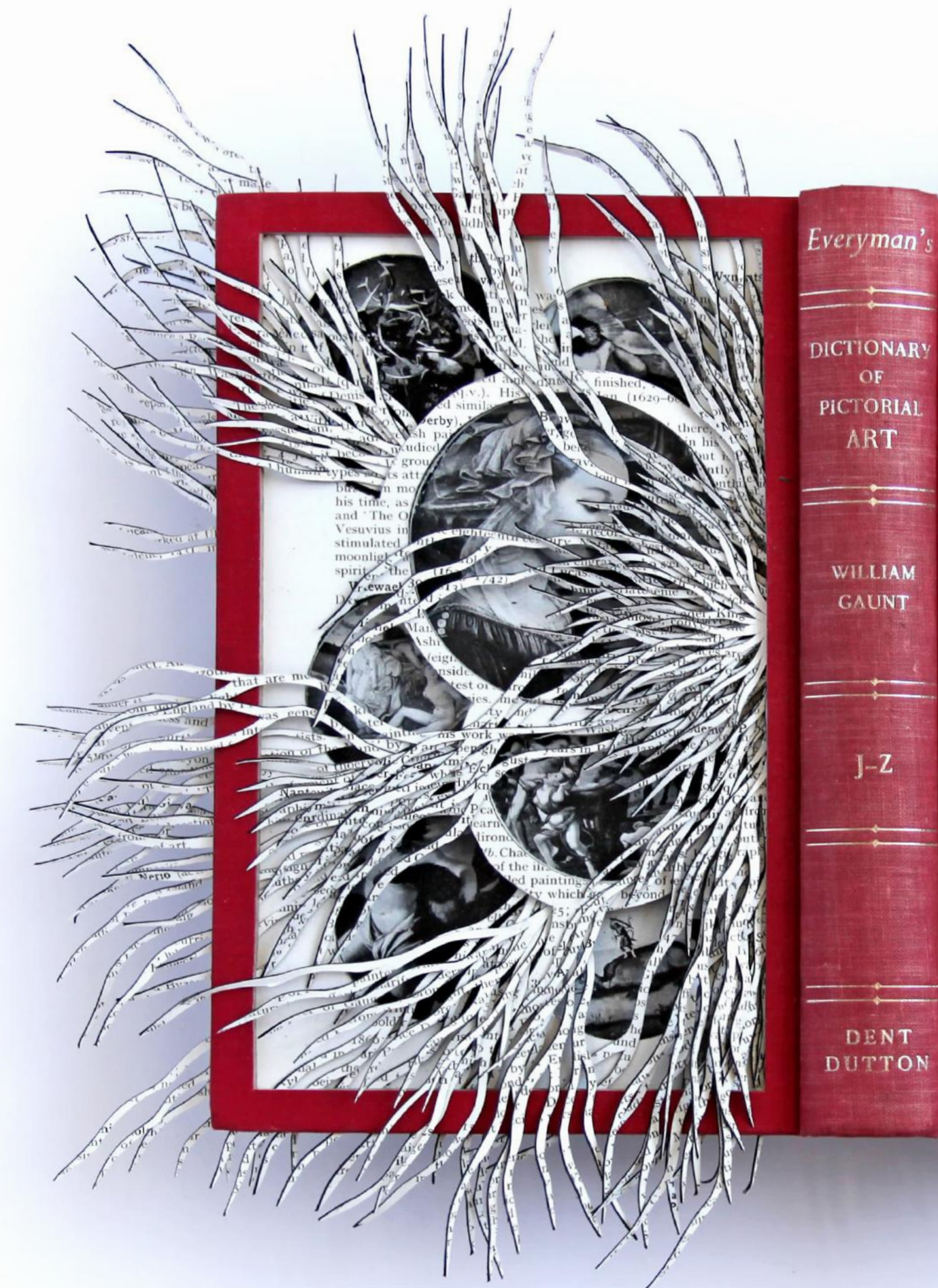
Personal Idealism and Mysticism

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut altered book
 DIMENSIONS: 48 x 58 cm
 YEAR: 2022



Dictionary of Pictorial Art

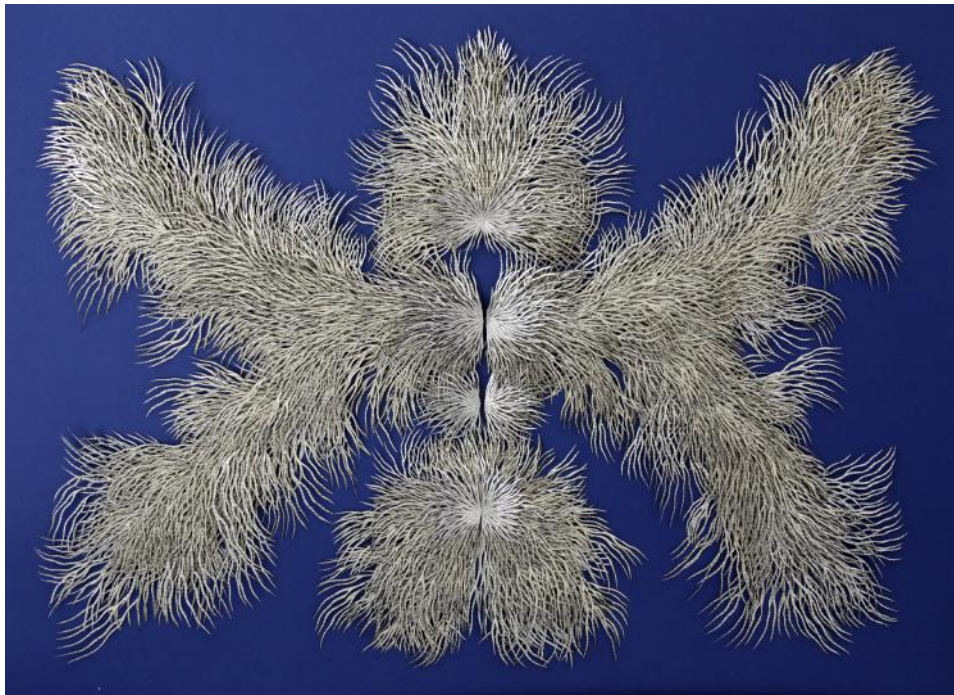
DESIGNATION: Hand-cut altered book
DIMENSIONS: 50 x 60 cm
YEAR: 2022





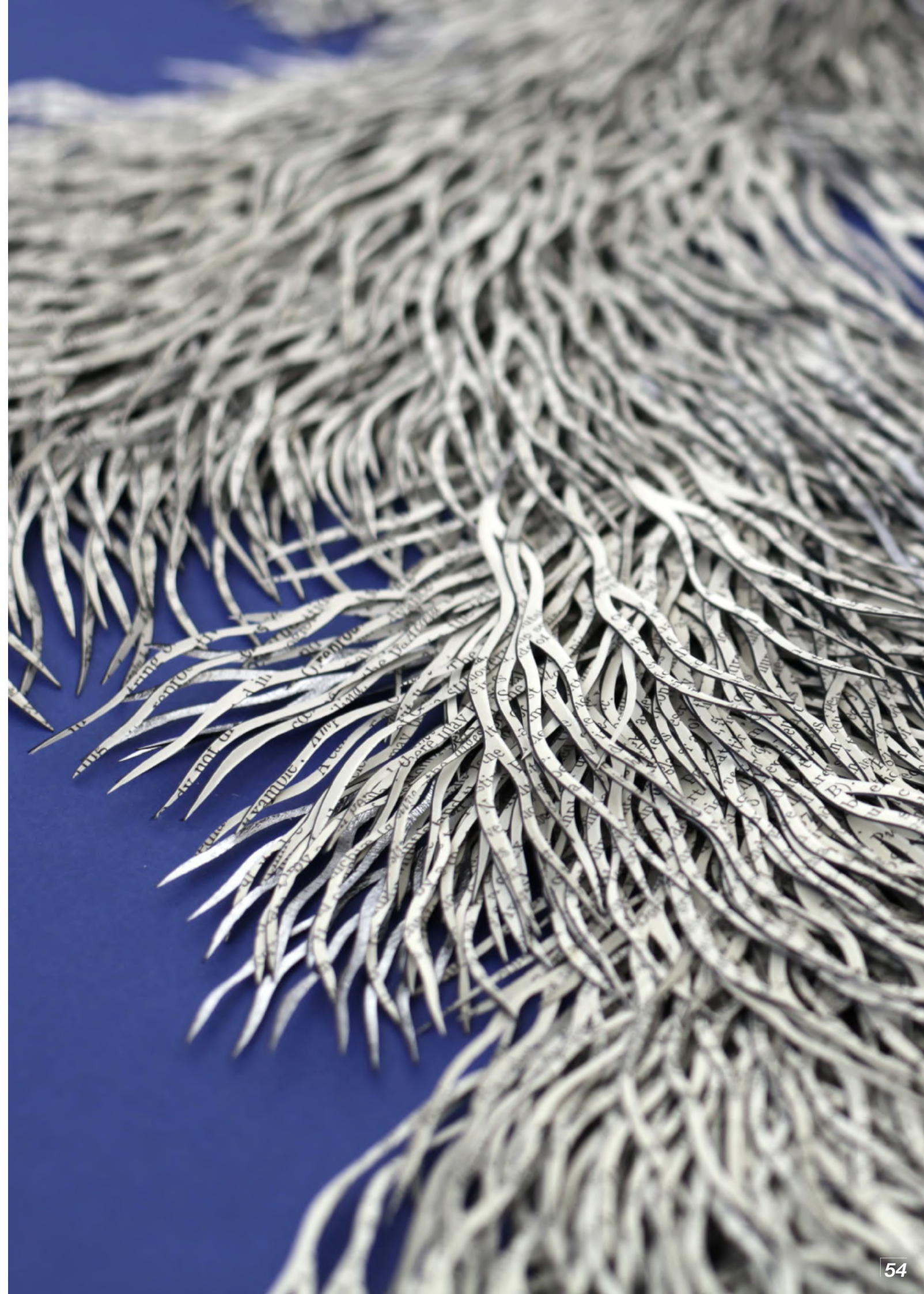
Prehistory

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut altered book
 DIMENSIONS: 45 x 35 cm
 YEAR: 2021



The Winged Victory

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut paper sculpture
 DIMENSIONS: 112 x 82 cm
 YEAR: 2021





PROVENANCE I & II (2022)

Provenance I & Provenance II are filled with symbolic and mythological references. There is a very strong emphasis on narrative and how both ancient and contemporary stories frame our understanding of history.

Wildenboer uses the medium of collage to create contemporary Vanitas within the context of our present-day landscape. She explores related themes of superstition, intuition, premonition, and ancestry in an attempt to suggest an interconnection between macrocosm and microcosm and a synergetic link between living forms that are independent of time and culture.

They reflect on how humankind is affected by wars, globalization, economic upheavals,

scarcity, political corruption, epidemics, and natural disasters. Using media images and information selected from various sources, such as science and natural history books, old war magazines, and journals of art and anthropology, Wildenboer constructs alternate realities that are suggestive of the adaptation and forming of new relationships where all is not lost.

Instead, humankind ekes out a tentative balance with each other and the natural world. The collages are amusing on modern human life and the fragility of the symbiotic relationship between man and the ecology. This nebulous relationship is jeopardized by consumerism, greed, and a sense of disconnection with each other and the natural world.



Provenance I

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut sculptural collage
 DIMENSIONS: 155 x 95 cm
 YEAR: 2021





Provenance I

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut sculptural collage
 DIMENSIONS: 155 x 95 cm
 YEAR: 2021



Eternal Expansion I - VII

DESIGNATION: Hand-cut paper sculpture
 DIMENSIONS: 29, 26, 19 cm Ø
 YEAR: 2020





About the Gallery

THIS NOT A WHITE CUBE is an international contemporary art gallery with exhibition spaces in Luanda (Angola) and Lisbon (Portugal). Representing and collaborating with international established and emergent artists, the gallery's program focuses on relevant and powerful narratives and discussions associated with the African continent and its diaspora. Despite the profound connection with Africa, it is the first Contemporary African gallery in Portugal that focuses not exclusively on Lusophone circles but also the emerging aesthetics of cultural and artistic productions from the Global South. The gallery maintains a regular and significant presence in important international art fairs.

THIS NOT A WHITE CUBE extends its intervention beyond the physicality of the gallery space with exhibition projects that enhance the extension of the art world to a multiplicity of places, inviting curators and artists in occasional collaborations that provide enriching visions and dialogues.

Founded in Luanda in 2016 by Sónia Ribeiro, current CEO, and becoming a leading art gallery in Angola, the project expanded in 2019 to one of Lisbon's most emblematic neighborhoods, Chiado. Given Portugal's historical connection with Africa, Lisbon was considered a natural location for this first expansion of the gallery and an important gateway to Europe.

Both exhibition spaces have an independent program, offering collectors and enthusiasts a focused and strong view of contemporary artistic production from the African and South American continents and their diaspora.

As of 2016, the Gallery has represented, exhibited, and collaborated with both emerging and established artists. Since then, the gallery has remained true to one of its primary goals of providing artists with the opportunity to share their unique perspectives through their work, thus creating and promoting discussions around relevant historical and contemporary narratives in the context of globalization.

As such, within an extensive yearly program that includes regular exhibitions in Lisbon and Luanda, the collaboration in diverse cultural projects, and a consistent presence on numerous international art fairs, attention is drawn to issues such as identity, memory, heritage, cultural heritage, and social change. In addition, artists from the gallery frequently feature on major platforms like museums, biennales, and important exhibitions around the globe.

Its three directors, Sónia Ribeiro, - CEO and founder - Graça Rodrigues, - curator - and Ngoi Salucombo - Executive director of the Angolan delegation - have a singular entrepreneurial and artistic vision based on a solid curatorial and collaborative - based art project approach.

In 2019, the gallery founded "O CUBO", a non-profit platform that seeks to boost experimentation and research, through the development of a program of artistic residencies, editorial projects, archive mapping, and the establishment of a network of local and international partnerships.

The gallery has already presented numerous exhibitions in Angola, South Africa, France, Italy, the UK, and Portugal but continues to expand and develop its connections worldwide.

THIS IS NOT A WHITE CUBE



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