



MARJORIE VAN CURA

CAN'T
LOOK
AWAY

Gibson Contemporary at DFN Projects
13 January - 11 February 2022

Marjorie Van Cura is driven by the ever-evolving realities of the present day. The culmination of thirty years of painting, Van Cura's recent landscape-based abstractions are inspired by pivotal moments in contemporary history as represented by an inescapable ubiquity of mass media. Deeply impacted by environmental and sociological phenomena that continue to transform humanity, Van Cura pinpoints real life current events-based images that are striking in both conceptual paradox and aesthetic complexity, using them as a departure point for her densely-layered paintings. These works distill the familiar yet alarming urgency of the moment into a language that is graphic and expressionist, in order to create an entirely new and foreign space.



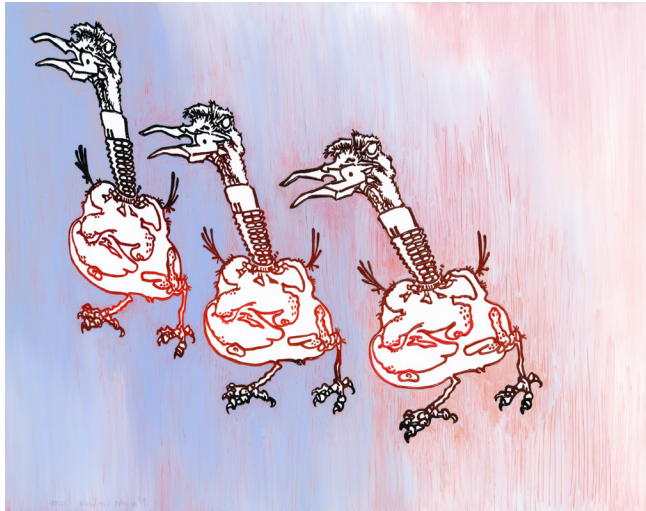
© Bridget Riley

Insisting on an abstraction that is at once recognizable and disconcerting, Van Cura's practice is entirely hand-drawn. Her mixed media drawings on translucent film are created by multiple layers of superimposed lines dictated solely by the artist's own sense of expressive freedom. In her intricate process, Van Cura fixates on an image she feels particularly attracted to and, using a blind contour technique, creates continuous outlines that speak to key elements of the image—those which she deems most important to its rendering. Influenced by the graphic and kinetic qualities of Op-art, her works vibrate with the depth and movement created by an array of dizzying lines on sumptuously diaphanous ground. Deliberate yet intuitive, her compositions take on a life of their own until Van Cura feels they are resolved. Such resolution can only be achieved once an image has been fully translated and reinterpreted through Van Cura's mental and visual mapping, creating a richness of surface.



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Van Cura has always been interested in texture, inspired as much by the luscious paintings of Wayne Thiebaud as by the tactile experimentations of Vik Muniz. What Van Cura shares with these artists is an insistence on new modes of representation in a world highly saturated with images and icons. She pursued figure-based art as an undergraduate student, then first experimented with abstraction in 2000. Her early work relied on the creation of



Untitled 0708, 2008

emotions, fears and people in her life. This thread connects her work to the present day, in which Van Cura uses an abstract language to convey reflections on the world at large.

an invented geometric alphabet of signs and symbols to convey deeply personal messages. During this time, and throughout her graduate studies, Van Cura was fueled by a desire to make work that was not recognizable, marking a real break with figuration. In 2002, Van Cura moved into her first studio in Brooklyn, creating silhouette images of machine-animal hybrids that were the intimate manifestations of ideas,



© DailyNews

of 2020 (initiating her most recent *Protest* series), act as catalysts for her work. Van Cura is also fascinated by the ongoing relationship between science and technology, one that continues to transform our landscape through endless construction and development. Widely-disseminated and consumed images and Van Cura's subsequent mapping of them are underscored by a world that is constantly shifting, and with it our understanding of these monumental and lasting changes. Van Cura's small-scale works synthesize the vast and incomprehensible events she represents.

During the later part of the last decade, Van Cura began to explore themes relating to climate change and sociopolitical movements, informed by the conflicted intersection of mass media and fine art. Powerful events with profound consequences, including Hurricane Sandy in 2012 (ushering her *Disaster* series) and the social justice and police reform protests

When Hurricane Sandy ravaged the Atlantic coastline, Van Cura felt an immediate emotional connection to the devastation inflicted on both the

natural and man-made world. The onslaught of catastrophic images that flowed from televisions, computers, mobile phones and print media in a continuous loop are manifested directly in Van Cura's vertiginous depictions. Likewise, her new protest-inspired images are charged with a frenetic and chaotic intensity that echo the fraught events collectively experienced in real-time through an inevitable hyper-awareness of news reporting and social media. While Van Cura is fueled by the graphic, reverberating qualities of her abstraction and the viewer's perception of it, she is likewise galvanized by the sociopolitical commentary that her work inherently, albeit not overtly, embodies.



AP photo

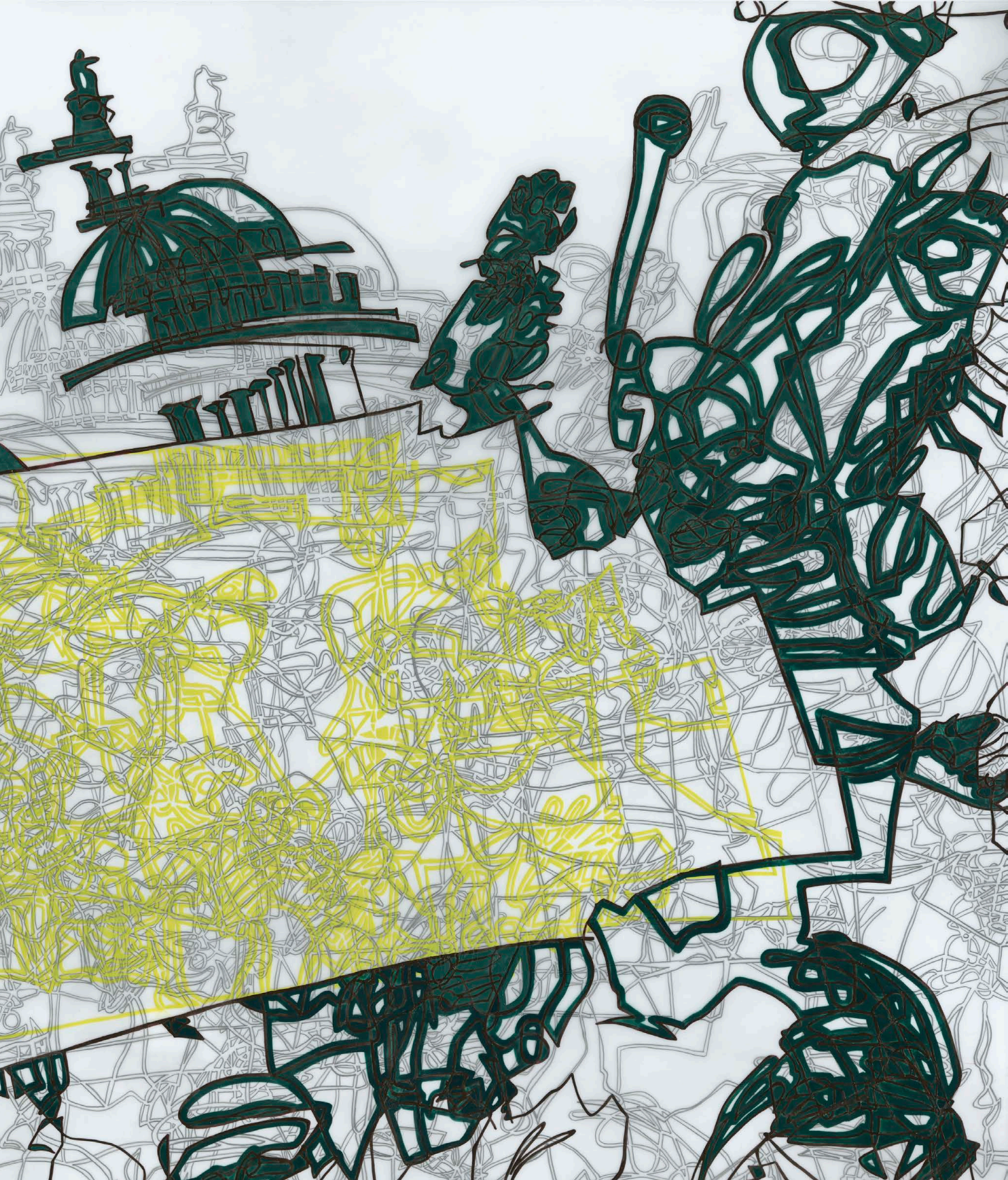
In one of her most compelling works, *Untitled 0120* (2020), Van Cura responds to a heartbreaking photograph of hundreds of flooded cars piled on top of each other, reflecting not only climate-based destruction but also the irreversible effects of mass consumerism. Van Cura is drawn to aerial views that emphasize the “terrible beauty” paradox that drives her visceral aesthetic

response. The surreal images represent tragedy and loss in globally-scaled human and economic terms while remaining hauntingly beautiful as overwhelming sensation. Impressed in our minds, we are morbidly fascinated by the apocalyptic—a “can’t-look-away” quality that keeps us coming back for more. We falter between a heavy sense of being lost and, perhaps, not finding a way out, while in awe of the incomprehensible and inexplicable sublime. Like Caspar David Friedrich’s famous protagonist in the artist’s seminal *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818), back turned to us in contemplation of the grandeur of nature, Van Cura invites us to gaze beyond the specificity of form into a sea of future possibilities.

Valentina A. Spalten
January 2022

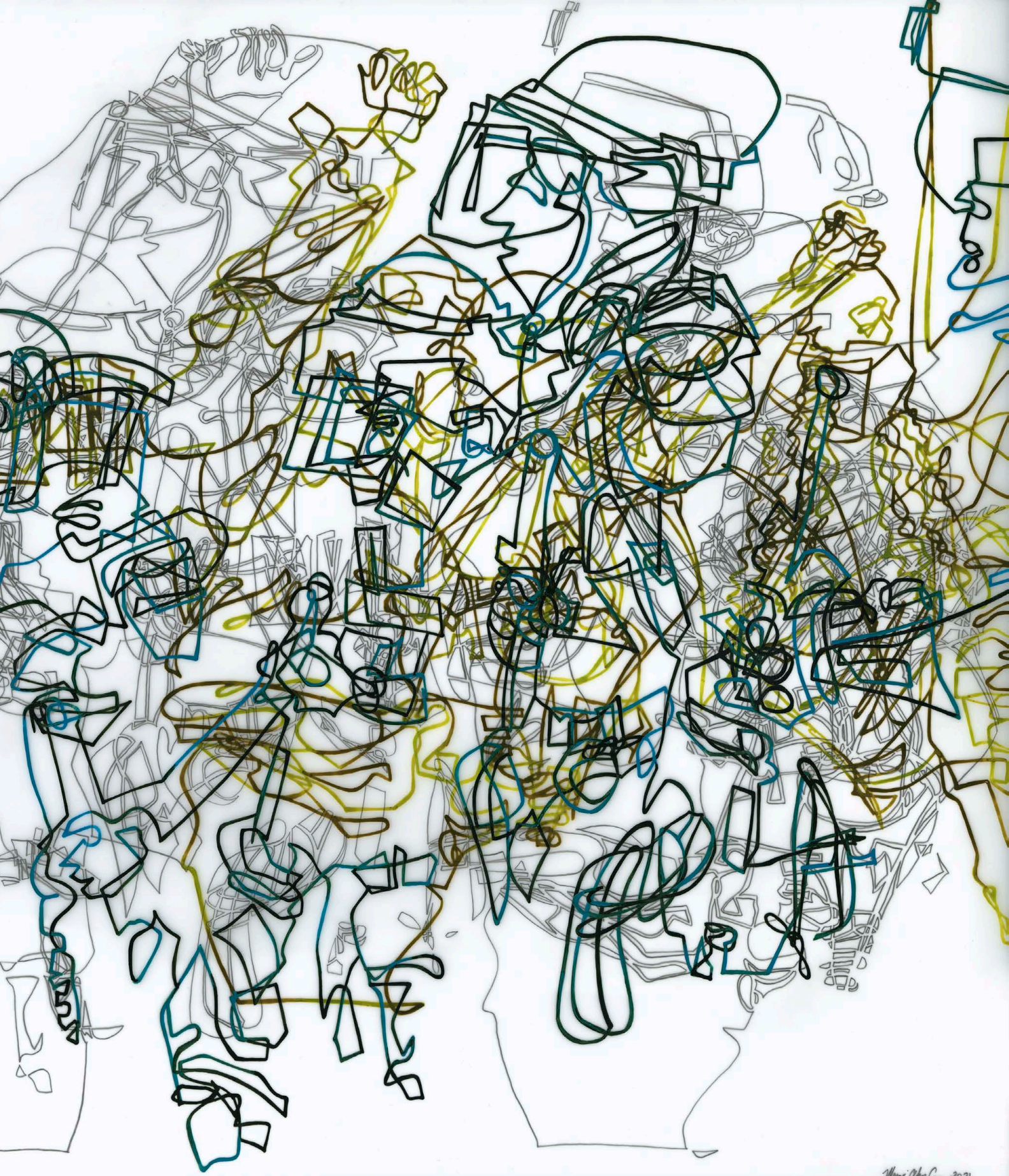
Untitled 0321, 2021
Graphite and ink on
translucent film
14 x 17 inches





Untitled 0821, 2021
Graphite and ink on
translucent film
14 x 17 inches



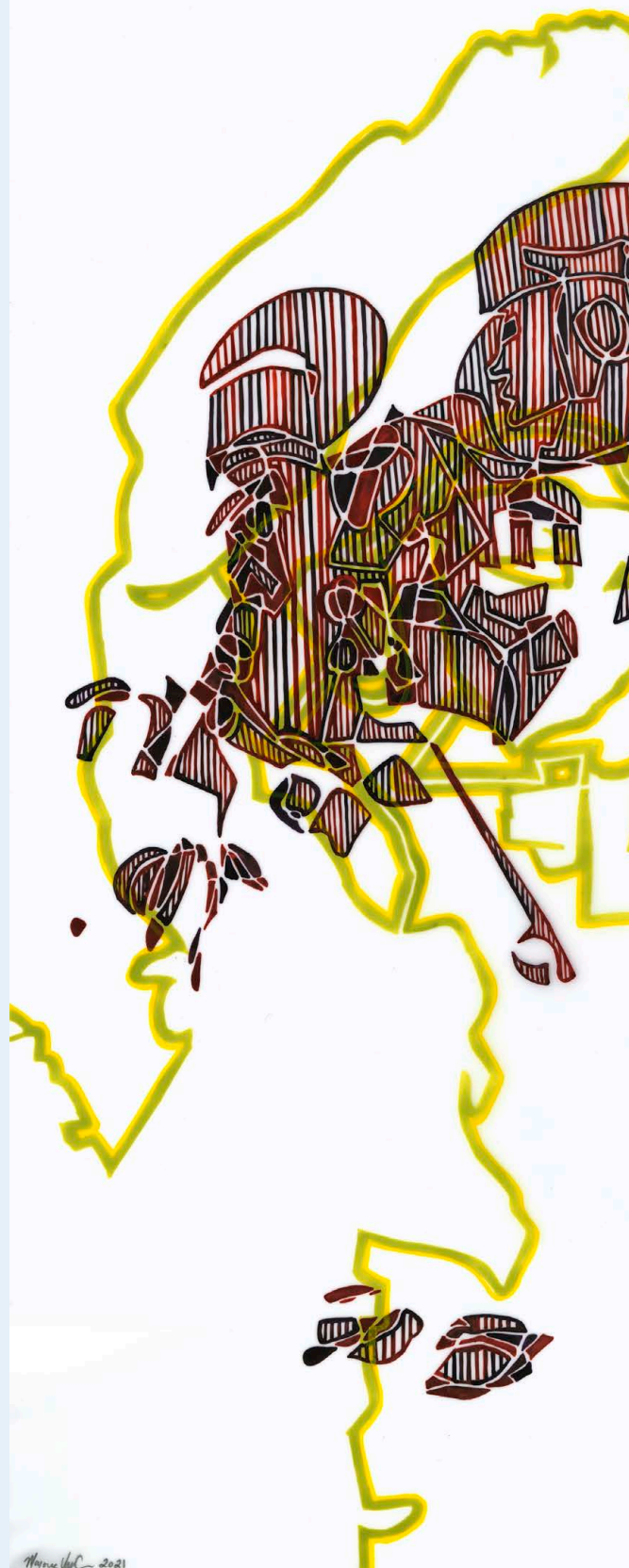


Wang Chen 2021

Untitled 1421, 2021
Ink on translucent film
17 x 14 inches



Untitled 1121, 2021
Ink on translucent film
14 x 17 inches





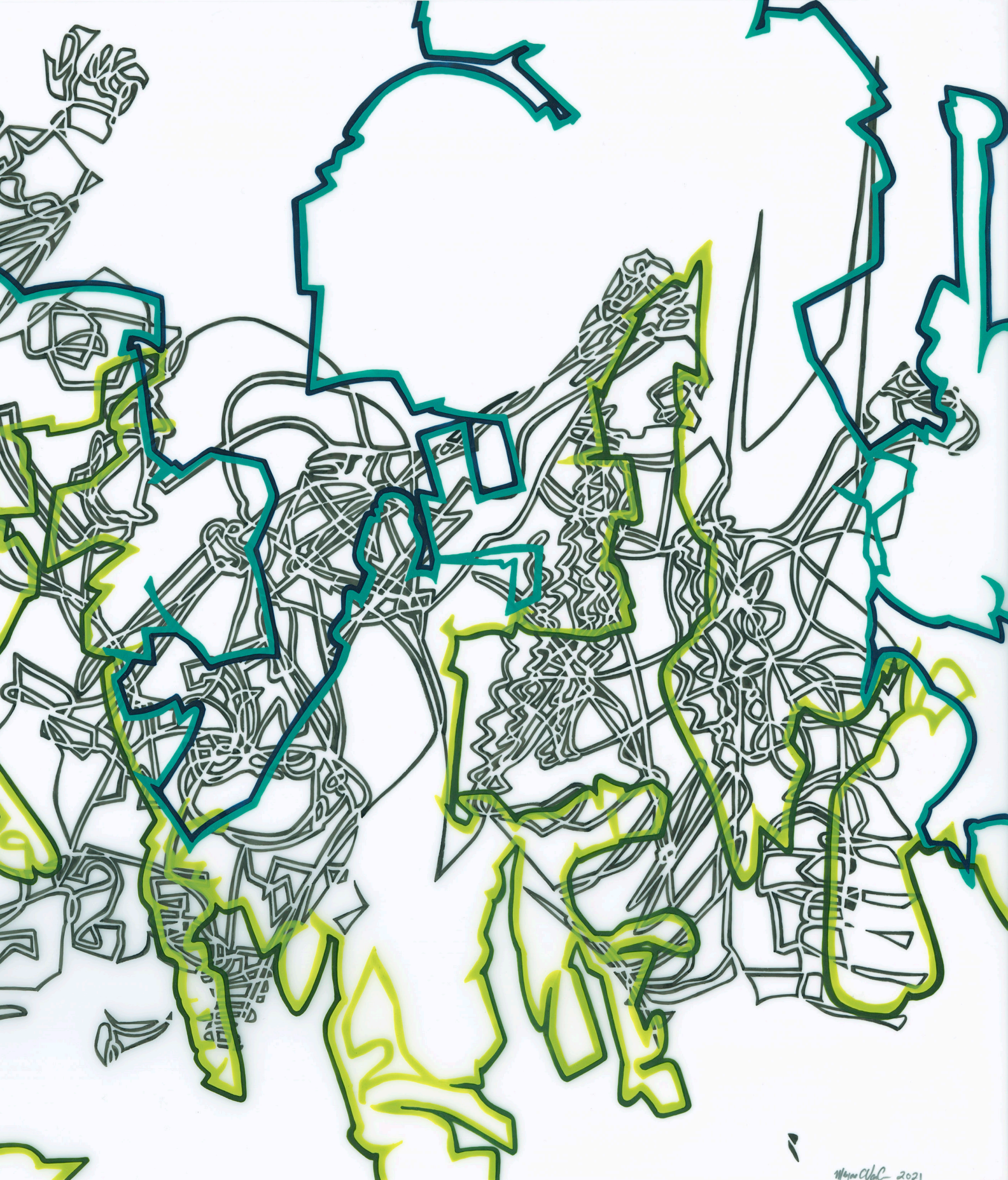
Untitled 1221, 2021
Ink on translucent film
14 x 11 inches



Wayne Clark 2021

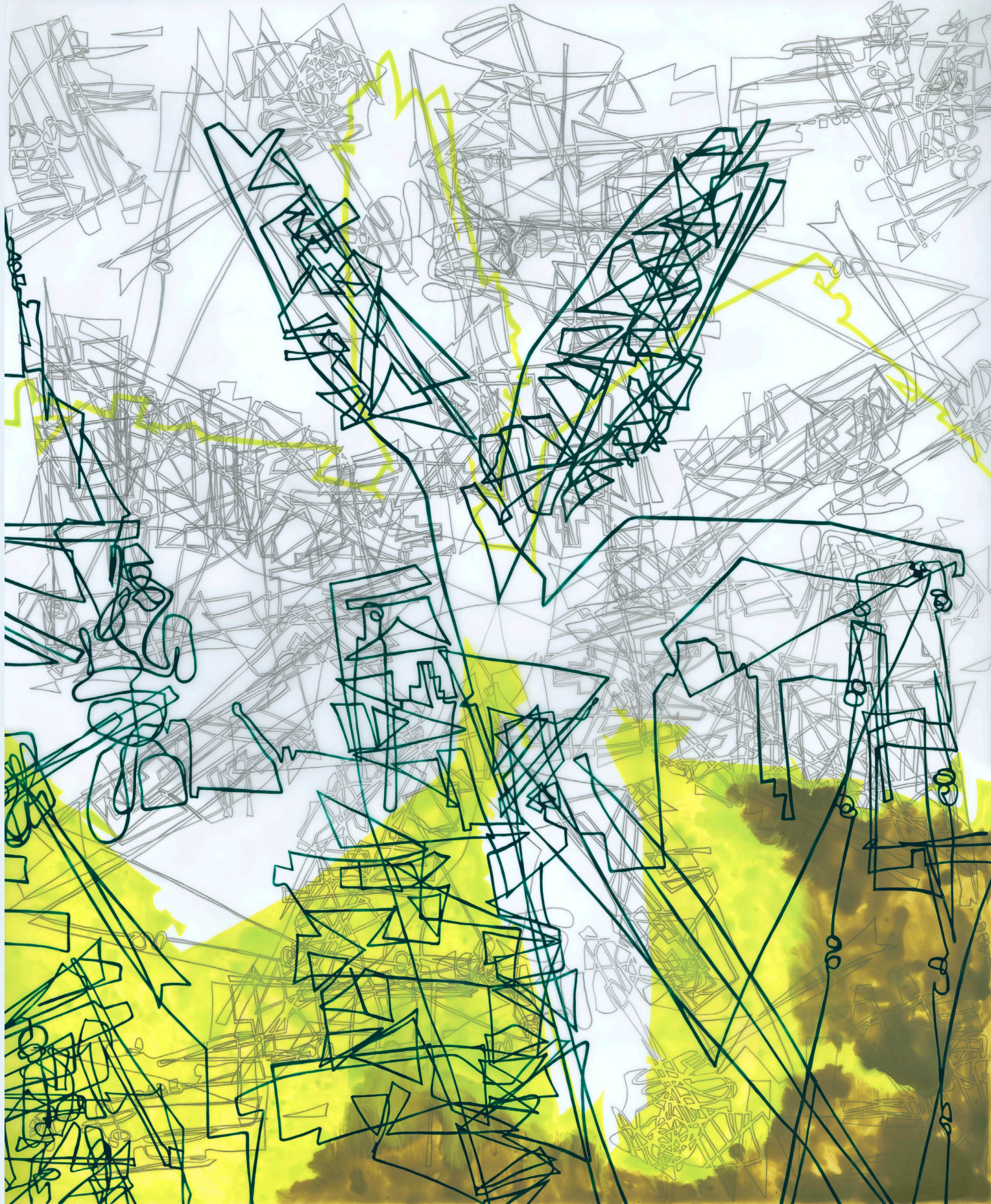
Untitled 1321, 2021
Micron pen and ink on
translucent film
11 x 14 inches



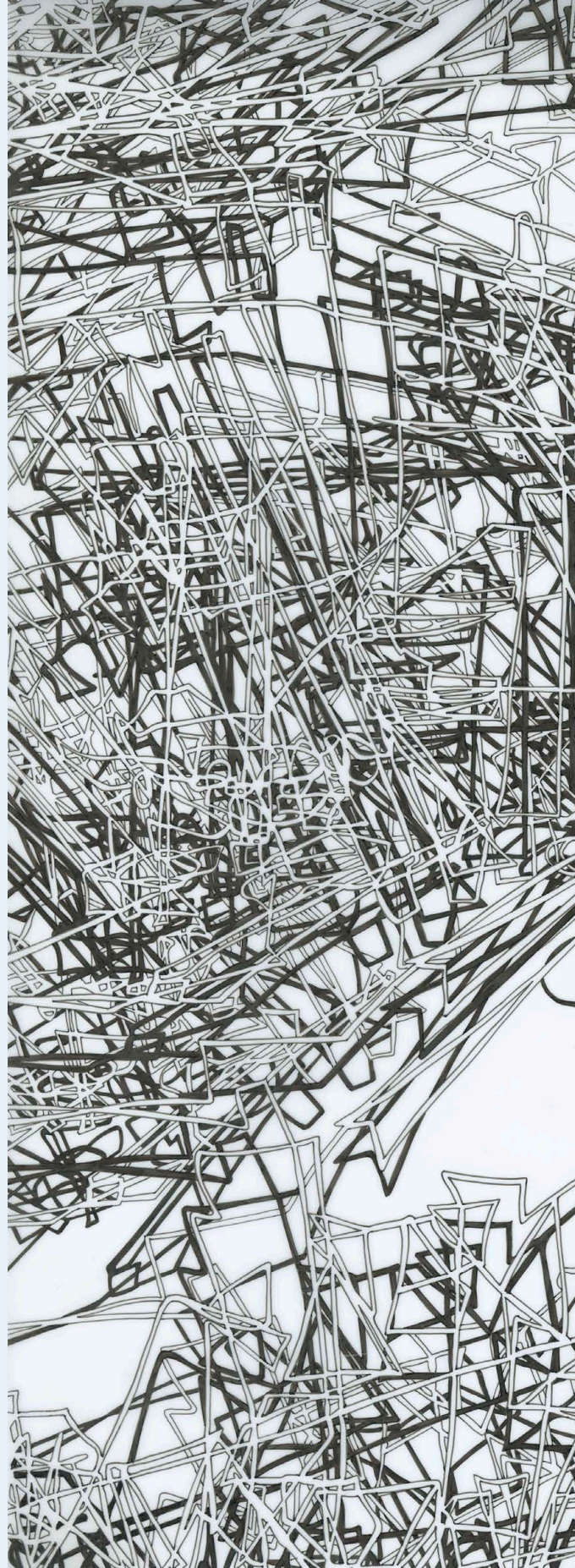


Wayne A. C. 2021

Untitled 0520, 2020
Graphite and ink on
translucent film
17 x 14 inches



Untitled 0420, 2020
Micron pen and ink on
translucent film
14 x 17 inches





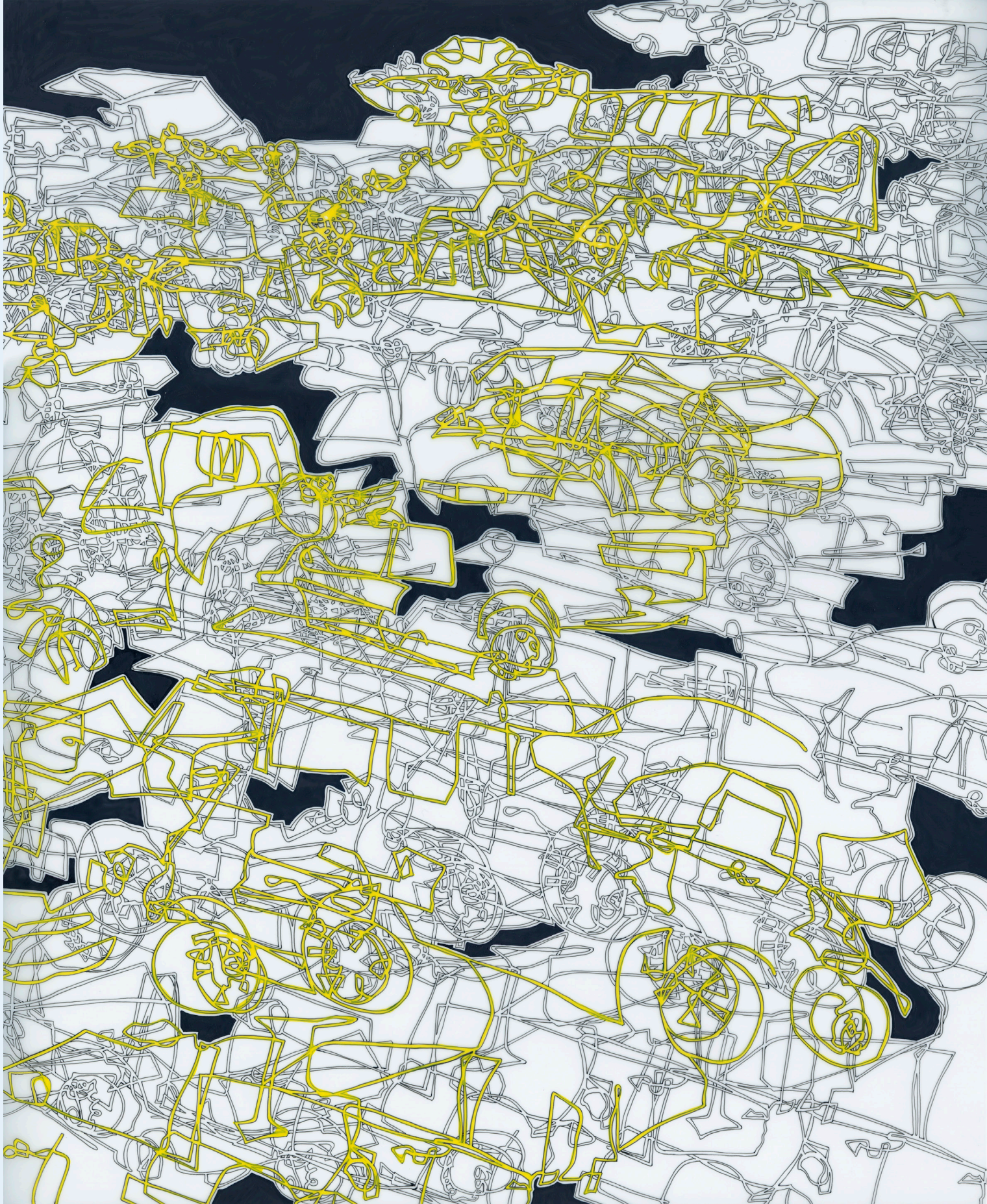
Untitled 0320, 2020

Graphite and ink on
translucent film
17 x 14 inches



Wang Wei 2000

Untitled 0120, 2020
Micron pen and ink on
translucent film
17 x 14 inches



Untitled 0319, 2019
Ink on translucent film
14 x 17 inches





Untitled 0518, 2018
Ink on translucent film
14 x 17 inches





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