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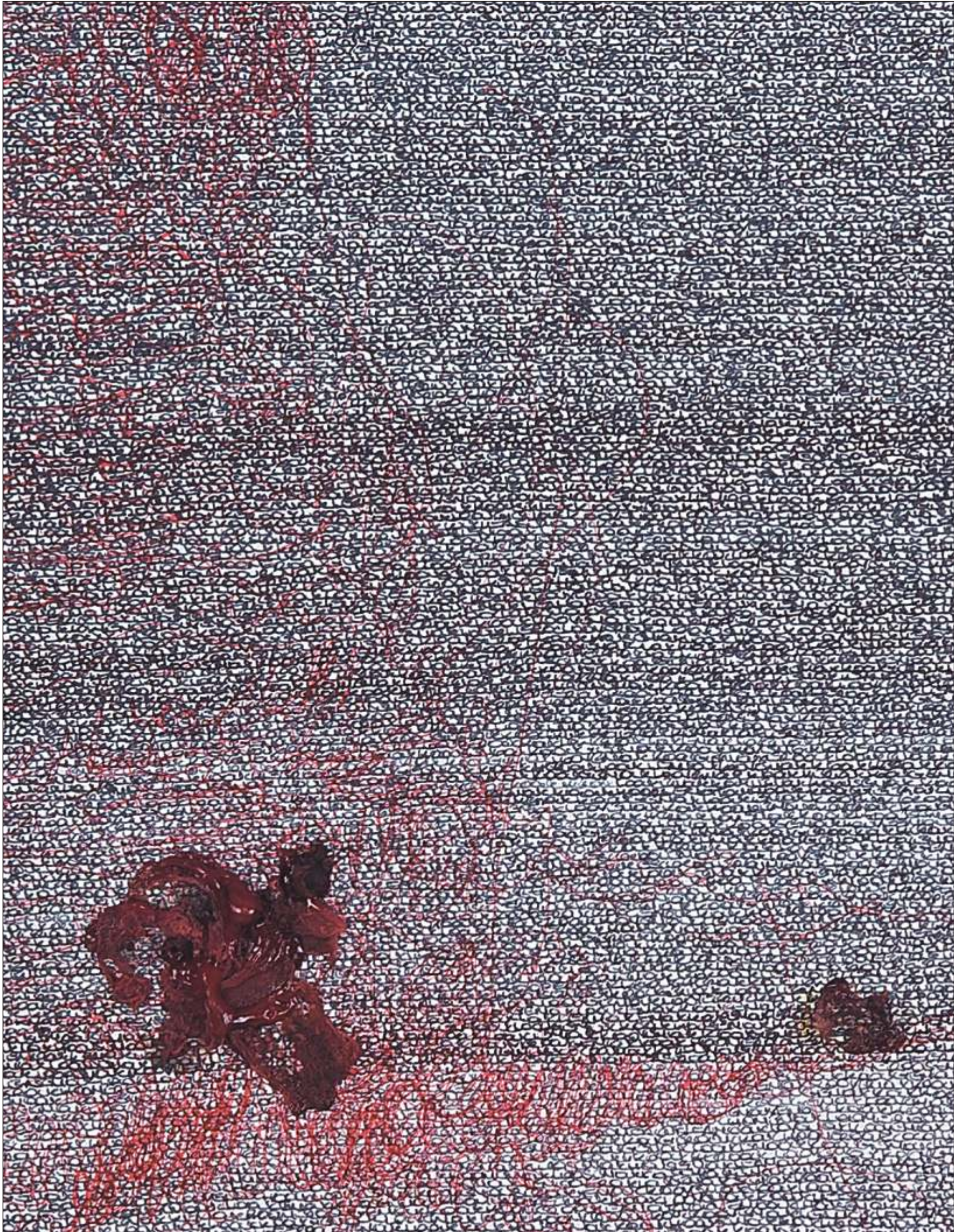
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Miniatures Contemporaines
du **PAKISTAN**



Alexis Renard
Art Islamique - Art Indien

AISHA ABID HUSSAIN



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Je suis heureux de vous présenter le premier solo show d'Aisha Abid Hussain. Cette exposition est l'occasion de découvrir des oeuvres qui reflètent le questionnement d'une jeune femme pakistanaise sur son quotidien et son histoire personnelle.

Ces oeuvres transcendent le vocabulaire classique de la peinture de miniature dont elle maîtrise parfaitement la technique.

Son travail minutieux ainsi que l'omniprésence du texte nous font entrer dans un univers que l'on pourrait rapprocher de certains travaux d'écriture automatique. Il s'inscrivait au départ dans une démarche basée sur le journal intime de sa mère et dépasse aujourd'hui cette thématique pour aborder une réflexion plus complexe sur son statut de femme au sein de sa famille et de la société pakistanaise contemporaine.

En présentant ses peintures et ses installations, j'espère donner l'occasion au public de sortir de l'image univoque véhiculée sur le Pakistan, et de découvrir l'intense force plastique de l'oeuvre d'Aisha Abid Hussain.

OBJECTS OF LIBERATION

By Aasim Akhtar

A painting that is an act is inseparable from the biography of the artist. The painting itself is a 'moment' in the adulterated mixture of life whether moment means, in one case, the actual minutes taken up with spotting the canvas or, in another, the entire duration of a lucid drama conducted in sign language. The act-painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence. Painting could now be reduced to that equipment which the artist needs for an activity that would be both an alternative to utility and idleness. Guided by visual and somatic memories of paintings that Aisha Abid Hussain has seen or made memories which she did her best to keep from intruding into her consciousness, she has accepted the prevalence of the inorganic and assigned supreme significance to the wound both in her own life and in the history of her times arguing for symbols of wounding or lesion as a way to break through the insentient. As Joseph Beuys, in his autobiographical notes, described his birth as an “exhibition of a wound drawn together with plaster”; and his Bathtub of 1960 was concerned with the initial trauma of birth, by which man is first exposed to the cruelty of the outside world. In this context it is interesting to note that Hussain herself remarked that the red in 'Emancipation' looked like blood.

The allusion to menstrual blood threatens the patriarchy with its fear of the maternal body. Horror of menstrual blood is a refusal to acknowledge the subject's corporeal link to the mother. It marks the site of an unspeakable and unpayable debt of life, of existence, that the subject (and culture) owes to the maternal body. Hussain uses nature to confront culture, and thus disturbs identity, system, order. Critics have, however, attempted to disinfect the malignant nature of her work by interpreting it as evocative of elemental feelings and the eternal process of growth and generation in nature.

Despite whimsical nuances, the works' artificial and dissonant colours contribute to a markedly distancing effect that emerges as well from the sexual connotations implicit in Hussain's juxtaposition of organic and mechanical forms. Hussain has extolled her drawings as body texts, thus underlining the transformation of reality into a semantic dimension and locating the construction of meaning in an oxymoron that emphasises her work's underlying absurdity. Her improvisations around textual elements, which she has used often quite mimetically as the source material for drawings, display a strong, innate sense of the absurd that may have been reinforced by Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka. Clean, hard lines related to those in technical diagrams, soft materials as paper and gold foil fulfill an inverted, illogical function.

The wound is not only an inner feeling, however; it is also an opening to the outside world. In the modern age, it signifies the disruption of the anthropomorphic notion that an object owes its identity to an organic whole, a soul. In defiance of transcendental interpretations, subjectivity thus manifests itself in the polarity between fear and desire. The individual experiences it as an irremediable lack, an inner dichotomy, and also as the unplumbable depths of the self. This dual meaning is expressed again and again in Hussain's work. Thus her work becomes a perpetual translation of her quest for an object that lies between fear and desire: a quest motivated and sustained by her awareness of her own wound, that absence of meaning or oneness in response to which an artist creates a work.

Inspired partly by her fascination with serial structures, Hussain has almost rejected the hierarchy of painting in favour of architectural designs and environments in which such contrasting elements as light and shade, noise and stillness, immateriality and gravity, are made to merge and dissolve. The optical effect of the boxes, in which the structural significance of the interstices is equivalent to that of the closets themselves, is itself a play on opposites: of light and shadow, motion and stillness, reality and illusion. Transformation is implicit not only in this appearance but in the works' construction and conception as well. For 'I Live in 1 x 1" Square' which had great symbolic significance for Hussain, is both the material guarantor of each object's concrete reality and the conceptual purveyor of its own inverse: the lack, the wound.

With 'We All Have Closets Series' Hussain's subversion of the conventional relationship between picture plane and frame is far more explicit. The frame, which was traditionally peripheral or extraneous, is here privileged. It further signifies painting's demise as a medium too limited to contain within its frame the meaning and absurdity of Hussain's art.

Hussain has taken as her theme the human being in his encounter with the world and its demands and sought a formulation to express an altered, revolutionised human condition.

Recalling Lacan's evocation of the fragmented body, her quest for something of her own involved a reconciliation of opposites, of conscious self and its elusive, non-identical complementary “other”: the unconscious. While Hussain's insistent embrace of such polarities of form as well as meaning relates to the existential pairing of extremes that implode into the absurd, it suggests parallels as well to Beuys's emphasis on art's transformative power, its ability to achieve a balance between past and present, the material and the spiritual, the personal and the universal. For Hussain too, art and life are linked in an almost mythical way. It is hardly surprising, then, that she has sought to give expression to unconscious material through her art.

Ultimately, Hussain's preoccupation with polarities, of self as well as materials hard and soft, technological and natural, inorganic and organic comes closest to the principles guiding Beuys's art. His conception of the expanded definition of art and social sculpture purposefully conjoin mythic and rationalistic elements. If these at first seem wildly disjunctive, they in fact demonstrate the essential polarity that distinguishes the human condition. Words regularly serve Hussain as a primary medium and as a link between or catalyst for other media. In all their instrumentalities, words are certainly crucial to Hussain. Language is her aesthetic scout and emotional confidant. Although she has been more confident in her command of form than in her writing, nevertheless, it is as much by verbal as by plastic means that she daily unburdened her imagination and probed its contents, diligently indexing thoughts and thereby restructuring her thinking. This practice and its gradual evolution away from run-on confession to a fragmentary matter-of-fact prose defines her corresponding separation from the artistic generation in whose shadow she was educated.

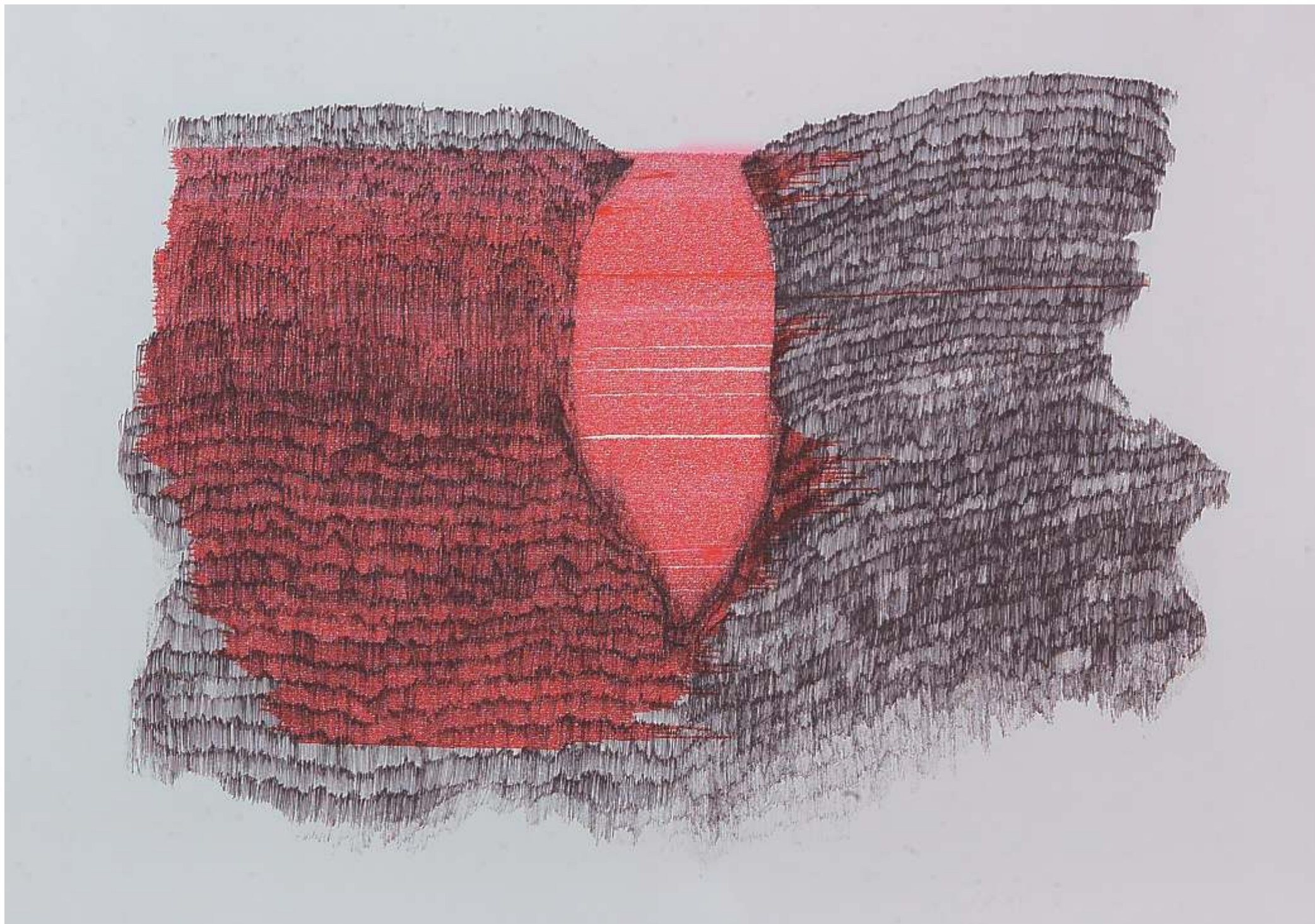
Throughout her life, Hussain has recorded her private thoughts and feelings as well, though more intermittently and telegraphically as her ideas came together and her career began to take off. Prone to anxiety and doubt, she filled diaries with admonitions, project outlines, ambitious declarations, and detailed accounts of her troubled days. While the arcane usages found in her word catalogues open up aesthetic possibilities and anticipated her work's 'effects', this habitual soul searching gave worried voice to her art's psychological causes. Predictably, these journal entries resound with youthful clichés and urgencies, dwelling, as they do, on the narcissistic dialogue between the young woman as good girl and the artist as bad that is flawed and self-reproachful girl.

In 'Purani Kitabain', the mind-boggling realisation of how much concentration it would take to thread each cilium-like length of copper wire through each of the myriad of punched holes brings the message home more forcefully. That the artist resumed and persevered in this endeavour makes the poignancy of thus 'marking time' and so by analogy the hopeful obstinacy of all human projects pitted against time achingly apparent. Without melodrama, certainly, but with every bit of fatalistic and improbable industry she could muster, Hussain used repetition to test Samuel Beckett's deadpan declaration of survival and continuity of will: “I can't go on, I'll go on.”

The peculiarity of the body as a motif is derived from its intrinsically contradictory character. While it embodies the artist's desire to pursue the beauty and sensuality of the human body, it had to be denied simultaneously. In other words it is a motif that has always displayed the tense relationship of strong desire and an equally strong rebuttal.



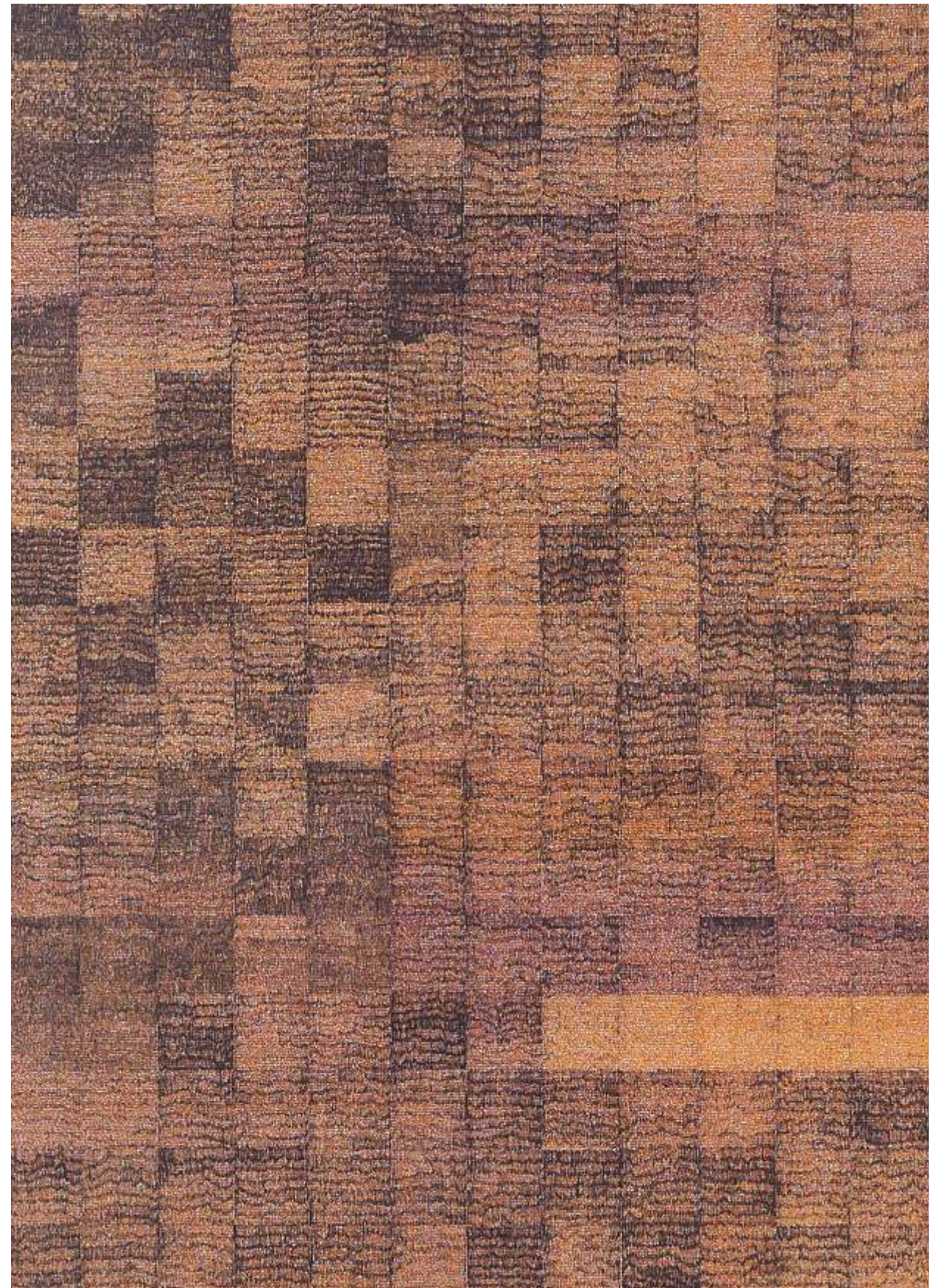
Conditioned fixation
Size: 26x20" - 66x50 cm
Medium: water color inks on wasli



Emancipation
Size: 26x20 - 66x50 cm
Medium: water color ink on wasli



I live in 1x1"square
Size: 26x20" - 66x50 cm
Medium: water color inks on wasli





We all have closets I
Size: 10x11.5" - 25x29 cm
Medium: water color ink and resin on acrylic



We all have closets II

Size: 10x11.5"- 25x29 cm

Medium: water color, collage and resin on acrylic



We all have closets III

Size: 10x11.5"- 25x29 cm

Medium: water color ink and collage on acrylic



We all have closets IV

Size: 10x11.5"- 25x29 cm

Medium: water color ink, collage and resin on wasli and acrylic



We all have closets V
 Size: 10x11.5"- 25x29 cm
 Medium: water color ink, collage, pencil
 and resin on acrylic



We all have closets VI
 Size: 10x11.5"- 25x29 cm
 Medium: water color ink, collage, pencil
 and resin on acrylic

