

HEATHER WATKINS *Recurrent Work*



## HEATHER WATKINS *Recurrent Work*

HEATHER WATKINS is a visual artist whose studio practice includes experimental forms of drawing and printmaking, book arts, installation, and sculpture. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions regionally and nationally, most recently at the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; PDX Contemporary Art in Portland, Oregon; the lumber room in Portland, Oregon; the Hoffman Gallery at Oregon College of Art and Craft; and Nine Gallery, Portland, Oregon. She has been the recipient of numerous awards, including grants from the Regional Arts & Culture Council, the Oregon Arts Commission, and the Ford Family Foundation, and she has been awarded residencies at Caldera and Oregon College of Art and Craft, as well as the Jordan Schnitzer Printmaking Residency at the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, among others. Watkins holds an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. She is represented by PDX Contemporary Art in Portland, Oregon.

STEPHANIE SNYDER is the Anne and John Hauberg Director and Curator of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, a position she has held since 2003. Snyder is the curator of numerous exhibitions, including: *Jamie Isenstein, Will Return* (2013); *Kara Walker, More & Less* (2012); *Bruce Nauman, Basements* (2012); *Terry Winters, Linking Graphics* (2010); *David Reed, Lives of Paintings* (2008); and *Sutapa Biswas, Birdsong* (2006). In 2008, Snyder received a Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Getty Foundation, and in 2013 she received an award for her critical writing from the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) and the CUE Foundation, New York. She is a regular contributor to Artforum.com and *Plazm*.

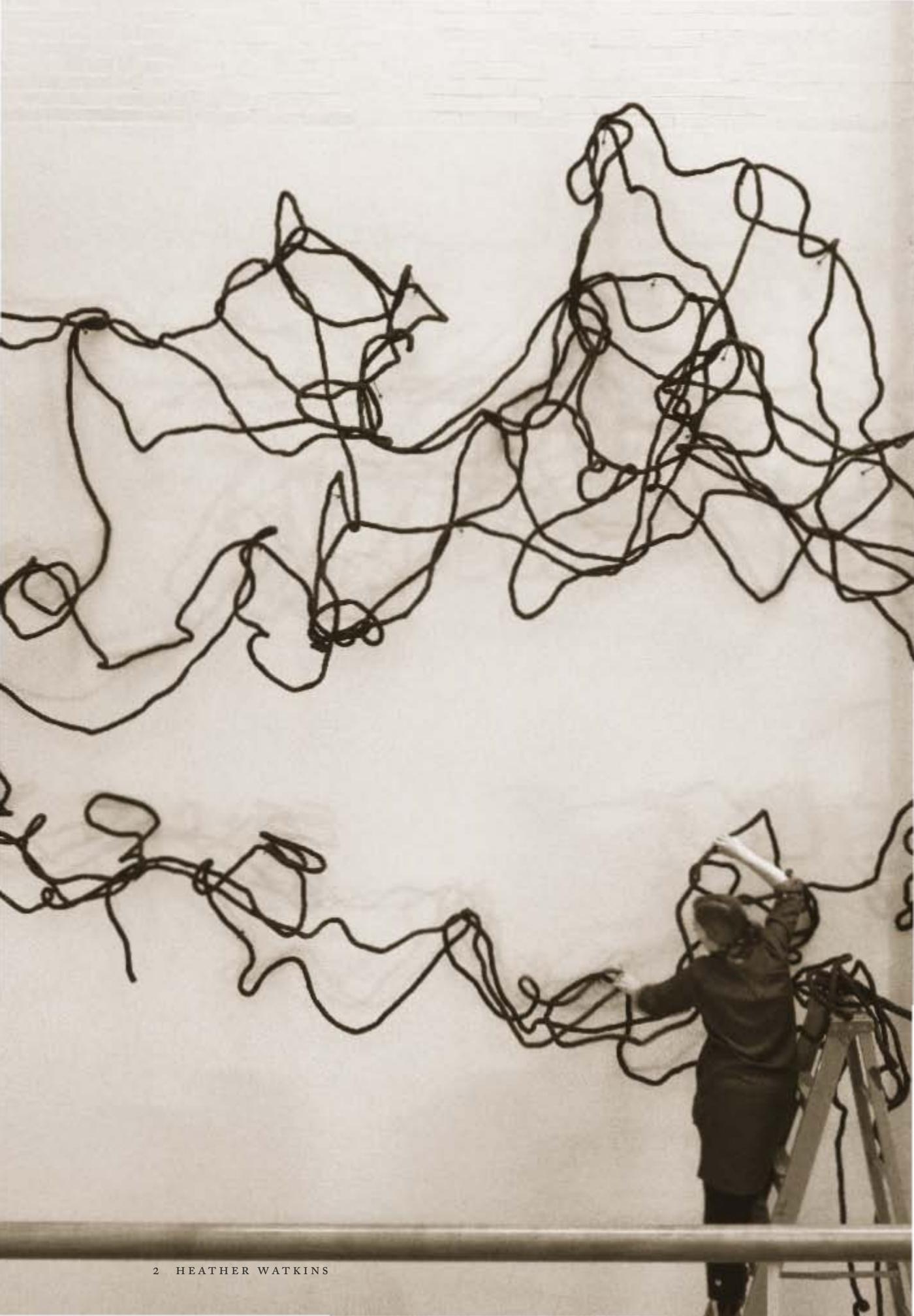
*Heather Watkins—Recurrent Work* accompanies the exhibition of the same name, organized by Terri M. Hopkins, director and curator emerita of The Art Gym at Marylhurst University, on view from February 24–April 2, 2014. The Art Gym is a program of the Marylhurst University Department of Art & Interior Design. Since its founding in 1980, The Art Gym has sought to increase understanding of the art of the Pacific Northwest through exhibitions, publications, and conversation. The Art Gym programs are made possible in part by grants from the Regional Arts & Culture Council, the Clackamas County Cultural Coalition, the Oregon Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts; and the support of Friends of the Gym, private businesses, and individuals.

◀ *Reading #4* (detail) 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.

▶ *Transcript #4* (detail) 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.

*Recurrent Work*





## CURATOR'S NOTES

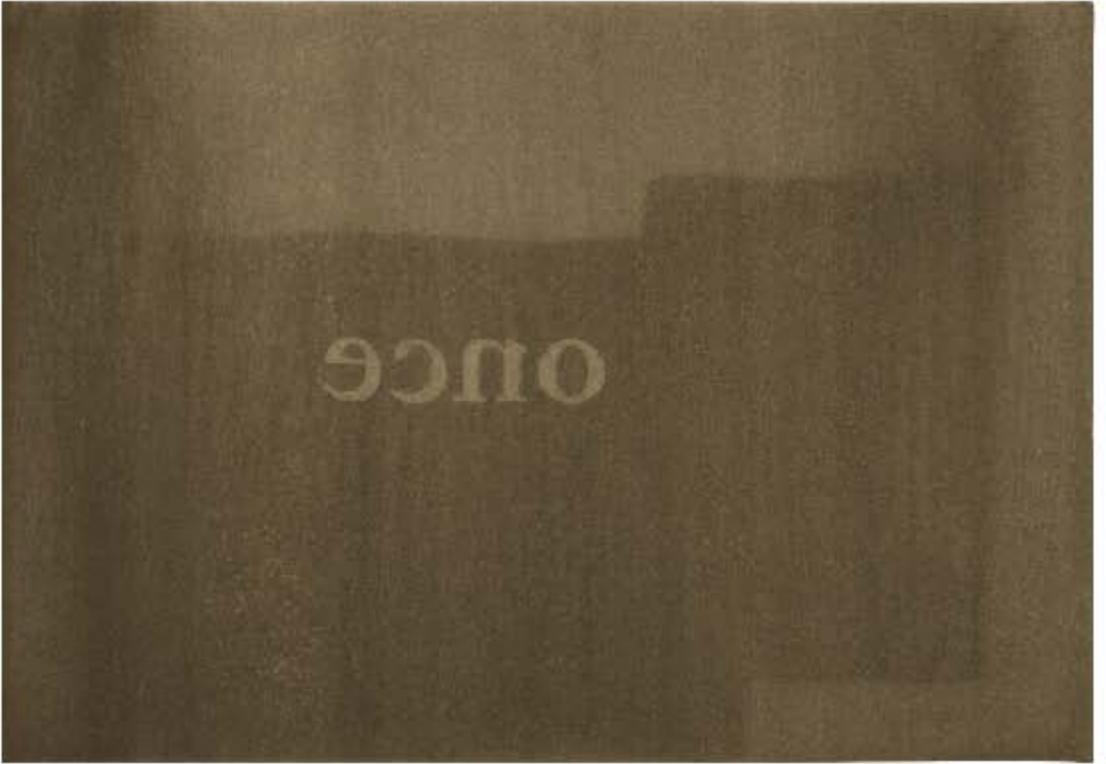
OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS, Heather Watkins and I have shared intermittent conversations while looking at her work in the studio. What has impressed me each time is the long-running experimental nature of her art practice. The Art Gym exhibition *Heather Watkins—Recurrent Work* focuses on multiple series, some of which began in 2008 and continue to the present. In these works, the artist conducts carefully structured experiments into the properties and interactions of ink, thread, cord, and paper. These experiments include variations in the way Watkins interacts or intervenes with her materials—coaxing the flow of a ribbon of ink across and around the surface of a sheet of paper by tilting and tipping; or soaking cord in ink and laying it down in coils, then waiting overnight for the ink to transfer to the paper below or above. One imagines a pulsing, looping choreography of making interspersed with days and nights of waiting and repose.

In imagining Watkins's actions, choices, and their implications, one begins to come to terms with her experiments not only as evidence of a methodical, meticulous, and curious mind, but also as evidence of a nature tempered or underscored by poetry and immersed in metaphor. Watkins has a history of working with words in her drawings and prints, and she has employed solitary words as floating images, for example, in the series *In the Dark At Sea* (2010) and *Once* (2012). In addition, her artist statements are carefully crafted pieces of writing and offer pathways for the viewer to slip into the abstract language of her drawings and sculptures. Her book *Repository 2009–2011* is, in the artist's words, "a gathering of edited selections from three years of note-keeping." The gathered words and phrases begin with this typically revealing and poetic entry:

01.03.09      rocks knots bundles masses forms objects  
moving rotating blobs saturated sponges disordered formlessness  
self-ordering systems beauty awkwardness tangles swirl  
{THREAD / TETHER / TANGLE / TYING / TWINE}

Consequently it is fitting that curator and scholar Stephanie Snyder, in writing for this publication, has chosen a structure that echoes and reflects the dual nature of Watkins's art by creating and pairing an associative poem with a formal and scholarly analysis as she reflects on Watkins's use of material, process, and metaphor.

◀ Watkins installing  
*Score* (2014) at Portland  
State University's  
Lincoln Performance Hall



It is an honor to present *Heather Watkins – Recurrent Work* at The Art Gym at Marylhurst University. Our exhibition follows several significant recent exhibitions of Watkins’s work at the Portland Art Museum; the lumber room, Portland, Oregon; and Reed College. The artist is an important member of the regional arts community and has received grants from the Regional Arts & Culture Council, as well as Career Opportunity grants from the Oregon Arts Commission and the Ford Family Foundation. Watkins has been awarded residencies at Oregon College of Art and Craft, the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, and Caldera. She holds an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and has been a member of the faculties of Lewis & Clark College, the Art Institute of Boston, and Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

This publication adds to The Art Gym’s thirty-year series of publications on the contemporary art of the Pacific Northwest and is available in print and online. It was made possible in great part through the help and generosity of Jane Beebe of PDX Contemporary Art in Portland, Oregon; the Harold & Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation and Linda Hutchins and John Montague, contributors to The Art Gym Publication Fund; and collectors and art advocates Dorothy Lemelson, Sarah Miller Meigs and Andrew Meigs, Mary Caulkins, Thomas Cody, Anne and James Crumpacker, Mary and Spencer Dick, Analia and John Earhart, JoAnn Gonzales Hickey, Deneen King, Carol Smith-Larson, David Lessoff, Sarah Dougher and Nathan Overmeyer, Travers Hill Polak, the Shipley Family, Jonathan Snyder, Andrea and Jon Walker, Nell Warren and Greg Misarti, Kristine and Jack Watkins, and anonymous donors. We are grateful for their support and encouragement.

The Art Gym and Marylhurst University also thank author Stephanie Snyder, curator and director of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery at Reed College, for her excellent writing. We are indebted to designer Adam McIsaac for a publication that is beautiful and perfectly in tune with the artist’s work.

Finally, we thank the artist Heather Watkins for presenting this body of work in The Art Gym at Marylhurst University and, most important, for the work itself.

TERRI M. HOPKINS

*Director and Curator Emerita | The Art Gym, Marylhurst University*

◀ *Once* 2012  
Diptych  
Graphite transfer paper  
18 × 30 in. each



HEATHER WATKINS *Recurrent Work*

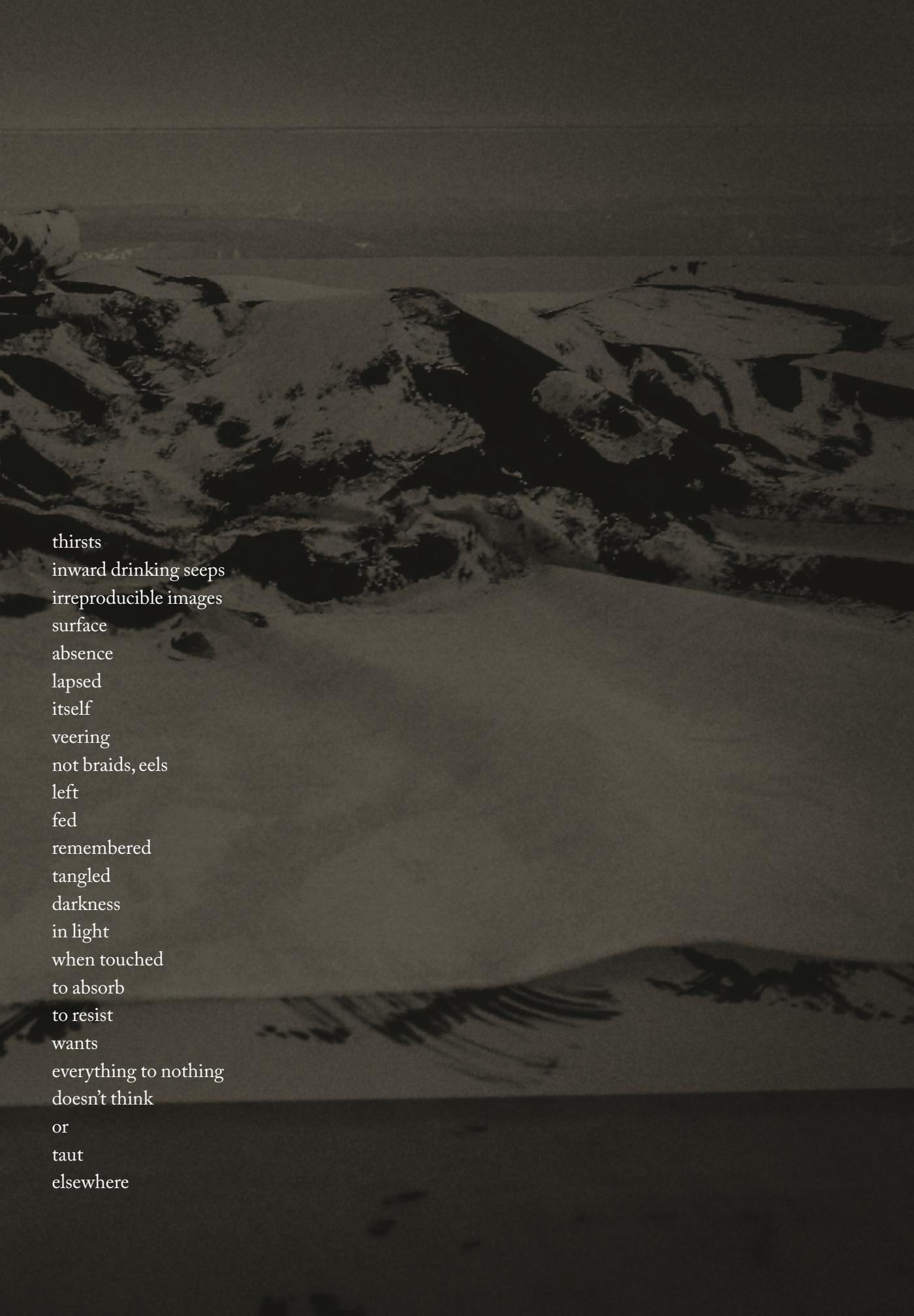
February 24 – April 2, 2014 The Art Gym | *Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon*



INVOCATION *Stephanie Snyder*



drinking line  
drunk cord brush  
transfers reproducing  
diffuses  
threads  
mirrors picturing  
form  
growing there  
askance and bowed  
not touched  
prostrated  
proofed  
then retrieved  
luminous  
when organized  
that cannot know  
how  
what  
what is  
line centers  
the event of line  
how to be  
die fading  
dragging time

A dark, monochromatic photograph of a desert landscape. The scene is dominated by sand dunes and deep shadows, creating a stark, high-contrast environment. The lighting is low, emphasizing the textures of the sand and the silhouettes of the dunes. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

thirsts  
inward drinking seeps  
irreproducible images  
surface  
absence  
lapsed  
itself  
veering  
not braids, eels  
left  
fed  
remembered  
tangled  
darkness  
in light  
when touched  
to absorb  
to resist  
wants  
everything to nothing  
doesn't think  
or  
taut  
elsewhere



*Abstract art returns vision kinesthetically to its own self-creative activity. Vision is remitted to the felt activity of its coming eventfully into itself: a proprioception of vision. Pure visual activity, at the absolute vanishing point where it enters a zone of indistinction with thought, from which its action is ever renascent. Pure thinking-seeing, perceptually felt. The abstract opening of vision onto thought is purely dynamic. It brooks no closure.<sup>1</sup>*

AS WE FOLLOW THE SLOW TURNS of philosopher Brian Massumi's elucidation of abstraction's "thinking-seeing, perceptually felt"—its capacity to awaken proprioception *through* vision—and then turn our attention to the work of Heather Watkins, we experience vision's "self-creative activity" catalyzed by artistic processes in which materials engage one another, laboring according to their nature—soaking, staining, collapsing, winding, folding—with the artist as collaborator and guide. These labors echo and amplify our bodily consciousness and proprioception—the unconscious perception of movement and spatial orientation arising from stimuli within the body itself. We recognize the nonlinguistic spheres of an internalized space of awareness in Watkins's tangled heaps, delicate lines, and saturated, repeating forms. We sense, as bodily consciousness, the temporal expanse of the work's occurrence. "Like skin folding back on itself, every self-referential



structure has wrinkles that cannot be smoothed out. The gap between touching and touched, seeing and seen, subject and object implies a delay that marks the space of time. Within the recovery of the bodily bias of perceptual awareness, time inevitably insinuates itself into the work of art.”<sup>2</sup>

Watkins’s materials work themselves into, through, and around one another, and this, in turn, guides our awareness to the question of what has occurred, and what might still be occurring and unfolding within the work. The temporal dimension of form-becoming-form – the events that constitute the work’s consciousness – is spatialized through the interaction of fluid, malleable materials (ink, cotton cord and thread, pigment, graphite, paper) imprinted, submerged, punctured, and wound into relation with one another. With minimal intervention by the artist, materials self-organize into mutating, repeating organs of reproduction and development, related to traditional printmaking and photographic processes, perhaps; but in Watkins’s unfettered experiments, “printing” and “developing” lead to migrating patterns of material behavior, as opposed to indexicality. The work’s temporal subordination interrupts and dissolves its capacity for repeated image production. Watkins’s work speaks to photography through its origins in direct-contact transfer processes, in particular the early nature-based cyanotype monographs of Anna Atkins, whose 1843 *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* interpreted botanical specimens. Like Atkins, Watkins investigates natural materials by remediating them in abstract form, directly and sensually, one material touching another in order to develop a semblance of neither. At times Watkins also uses photographic technology to capture and observe her work’s development, comprehensively documenting her studio-based practice. These photographs (some of which are reproduced in this book) are companion to her extensive text experiments, notebooks, and taxonomic collections of materials: string, paper, wire, ad infinitum. *Sessions* (2013) comprises a series of prints based on photographs documenting the shifting postures of a small cord-based sculpture. In *Sessions*, time becomes image – mediated and static – but persists, as we read the work in sequence, reanimating it as graphic form.

From a macrocosmic perspective, Watkins’s work is a complex (*com*, “together” + *plectere*, “to twine, braid”) twining of action, intervention, and observation. Watkins typically begins with a simple set of primary processes – fueled by certain, and perhaps forever silent, desires and curiosities – and then allows their effects and remains to guide the work’s progression. It’s a continuous evolution: substances maturing and influencing one another as they generate new forms and possibilities. We can relate this to

◀ (and overleaf) Process documents for *Score* (2014). Here, Watkins begins transferring cord onto a long sheet of Japanese paper.

▶ 17





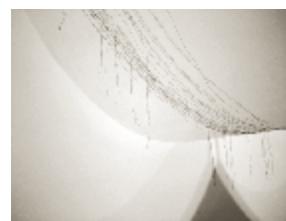


phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s description of “the inevitable incompleteness of consciousness and self-consciousness.”<sup>3</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty, “The self-conscious subject (the eye/I) can never turn around fast enough to see itself seeing; vision and knowledge have blind spots and, therefore, are always incomplete.”<sup>4</sup> Watkins dwells in these blind spots, working with materials that are concealed under others, for instance, or leaving materials to transform one another in the studio while she’s absent. This results in the work doubling back on itself, multiplying itself as trace. Throughout the series *Transmission States* and *Residual States* (2013) and *Transcripts* and *Readings* (2013–2014), ink-soaked cords saturate substrates, which, in turn, become agents for imprinting other surfaces, which, in turn, become surfaces for blotting or absorbing other materials: other dry cords, or (in the studio) the artist’s clothes and skin. It must be a challenging process to contain, these fluid and receptive agents populating one another according to their individual needs. The process never unfolds the same way twice. It’s arguable, even, whether the process ever ends, because as Watkins completes individual elements, their contingency remains live as they become subjects in the ongoing reading and rereading of the work, the responsive editing of the work, both within and outside of the studio—as in *Gradual Instant*, a near-monumental accumulation of individual ink-and-paper pieces that Watkins completed while in residence at Caldera in 2010, and which she continues to reconfigure in installation form, layering the work across and up walls.

We experience the phenomenological richness of Watkins’s work as well in its changing opacity and translucency. Translucency dissolves form into surface and surface into memory. It seeks to engender the work’s ever-present potential for *formlessness*, while its opacity resists our thirst to see and to categorize. “The unnameable of art—the formless—is ‘a word whose task is to declassify,’ as Georges Bataille suggested in the review *Documents* no. 7, in 1929; its usage consists in undoing logical and categorical thought.”<sup>5</sup> A number of early works Watkins completed while, or shortly after, attending graduate school at the Rhode Island School of Design, such as *Over and Over* (2002) and *Laps(e)* (2002), possess translucent surfaces layered with delicate black thread, wound, stitched, and bound or suspended as wall hangings and canopies. Many of these pieces contain simple, repeating words and phrases, or accumulations of transaction records (receipts, tickets, personal notes, etc.) collected over many years.<sup>6</sup> Their loose folds and hanging threads collapse traditional perspective, instead offering us a soft vision of the artist’s movements. These works incorporate thread and string in ways that prefigure Watkins’s current working methods with ink-saturated cord. ▶ 21

◀ Process document for *Score* (2014), showing *Reading* (left) and *Transmission* states as well as inked cord

▶ *Gradual Instant* 2012  
Ink on paper, various dimensions. Installed at Edith Feldenheimer Gallery, Reed College, Portland, Oregon



*Laps(e)* 2002  
Paper, thread, lucite rod



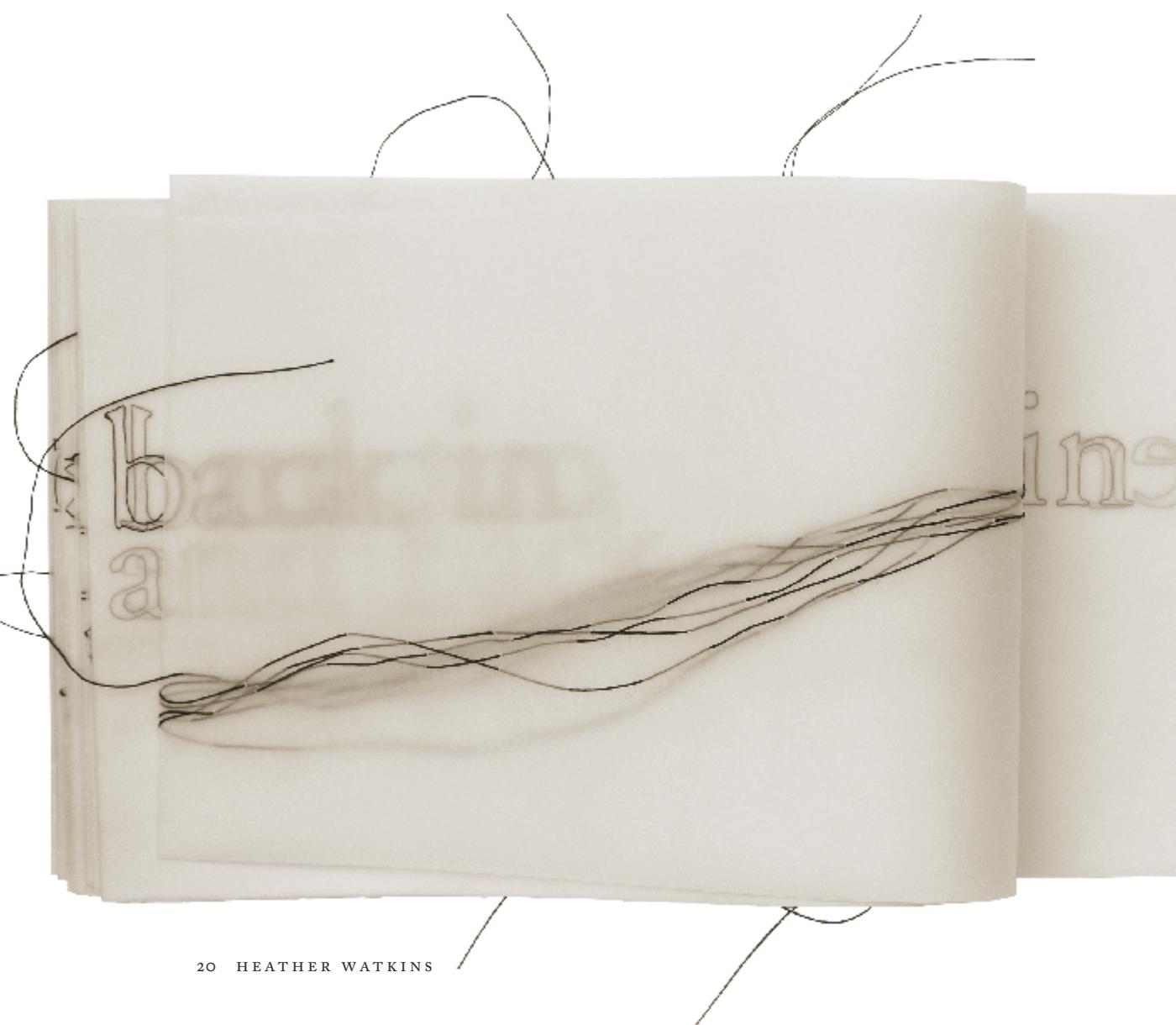
*List of Lists* (detail) 2000  
Mixed media







*Over and Over* 2002  
Paper, thread, ink  
6 x 10 in., 44 pages



Watkins's poured and guided experimental works abandon line between writing and drawing. Here, line is shaped by natural forces that warp and bend it into associative, formless structures, declassifying typographical affiliation. Watkins's obsession with gravity as artistic medium recalls Eva Hesse's suspended string and fiberglass works, in which knotted ropes sag and droop into an indeterminate void. Gravity drags the void into existence. Writing on Lynda Benglis's early latex and bronze "pour" pieces—such as *Come* (1969–1974)—art historian Elisabeth Lebovici describes them as existing in a "theatre of transgression . . . that links Lynda Benglis's project with what art historian Georges Didi-Huberman says so magnificently about the formless: "Transgressing forms does . . . not mean breaking free from forms. . . . Asserting the formless does not mean asserting non-forms, but rather engaging in a *labour of forms* equivalent to the labour of giving birth, or agony; . . . a rending process that puts something to death, and in this very negativity, invents something absolutely new . . ."<sup>7</sup> By its nature, *invention* leaves trails of loss and failure as it winds toward insight, or simply winds down. The negative shadows invention. It dwells in mistakes, spills, and rehearsals that feel authentic because they are imbued with human frailty and memory. The *labor of forms* moves slowly and is fraught with gaps—interrupted—like Agnes Martin's "draft-drawn" segmented lines that "breathe with the consciousness of their making,"<sup>8</sup> or the calligraphic forms of Jeanine Antoni's 1993 performance *Loving Care*, in which Antoni infused her hair with commercial dye and deployed it as a brush, guided by an inward-facing vision.

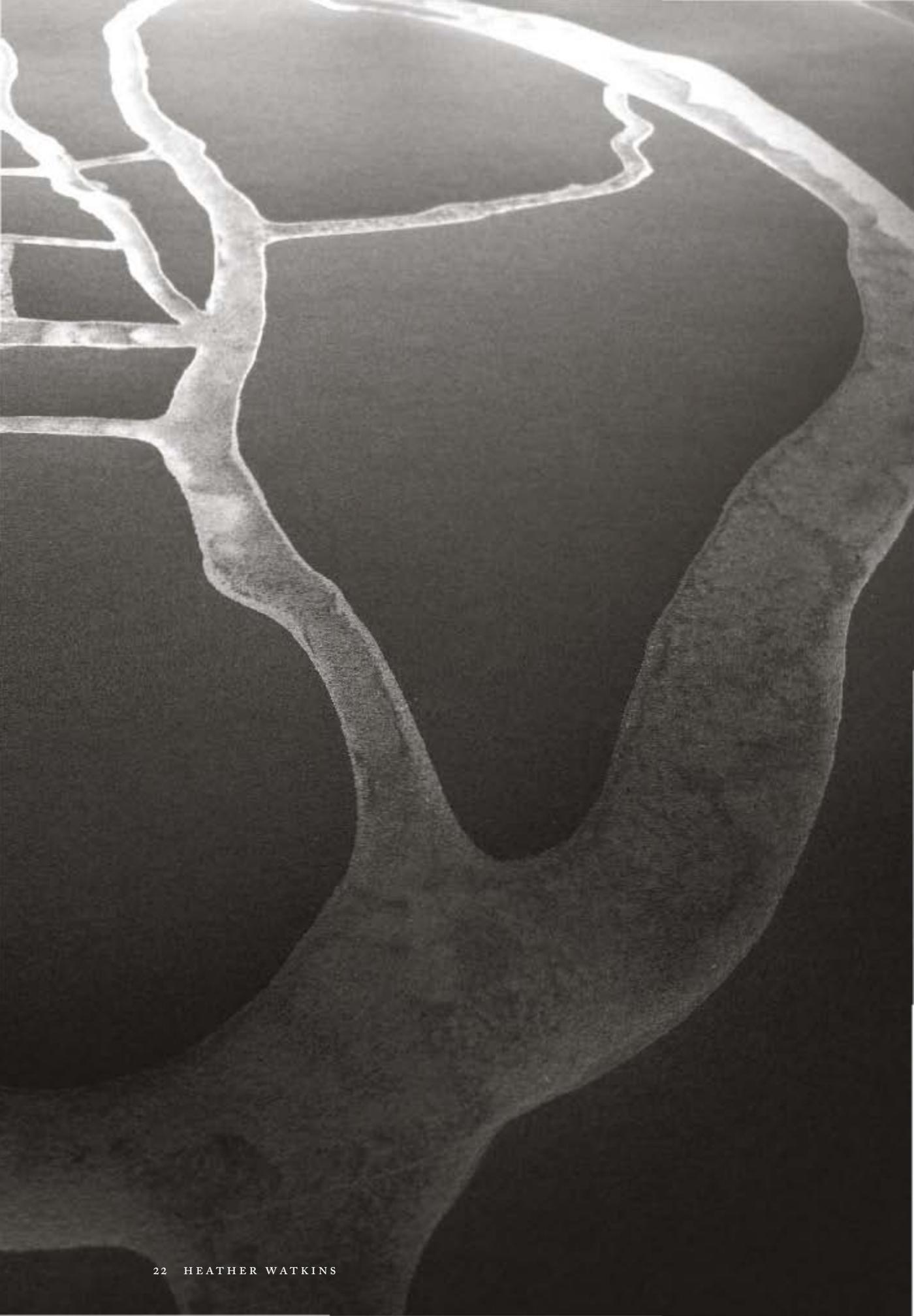
In the ongoing series *Surfacing* (2008–present), Watkins begins by pouring and then guiding small pools of ink across large sheets of black printmaking paper. Working on the floor, the artist reads and responds to the ink's flow as it both resists and attaches to the surface of the paper. We do not see Watkins's hand in the facture of a brushstroke or the application and erasure of a mark. It is impossible to reread the actions of the artist's body from the surface, because no mediating tool has been used to apply the ink to the paper. Instead, we are thrust into the visible happening of the work's present, into the "abstract opening of vision into thought" described by Masumi, as opposed to the Freudian space of the storytelling ego. In a related series of works on paper (*Ag*, 2009), lines of thick silver ink seep crystalline haloes of oil into paper. Their slumping forms appear to decompose before us. And in the 2008 series *Veils*, silver and black inks mix in delicate lines that eventually mat and fuse. Watkins has, at times, loosely described these situations as "spaces" through which to explore human interaction apart from representation and language.<sup>9</sup>



*Veil I* 2008  
Ink, drafting film  
42 × 27 in.



*Veil II* (detail) 2008  
Ink, drafting film  
42 × 27 in.



Art historian Briony Fer describes Eva Hesse's abstractions as "pictureless pictures."<sup>10</sup> There is a similar, and perhaps more totalizing, absence of image in Watkins's work because of its natural gestalt, away from structure and toward a formless gravitational center. And though we might arrest ourselves into thinking of these works as static images or "frozen gestures" (the term Robert Pincus-Witten used to describe the poured sculptures of Lynda Benglis),<sup>11</sup> this notion violates the work's temporal unwinding and decentralization. Benglis saw Pincus-Witten's idea of the frozen gesture as an unnecessary boundary, stating: "I felt that art had to have more content, a multiplicity of meaning and associations."<sup>12</sup> The frozen gesture is a dead one.

Especially in her most recent explorations, Watkins's work remains changeable. Ink drifts, turns, seeps, bleeds, expresses, dries, adheres, absorbs. Its actions are not just feminine, though every woman understands the reality of liquidity—as self—especially in our capacity for reproduction, and the physical sacrifices necessary to gestate other beings. Such cyclical events, indigenous to us (the bleeding, lactating body), we read as remains—as the augured forms of our relationship to a universal internal. These internalized transformations never end, turning from one energetic pulse to the next. They are the very essence of digestion—materials surging toward a soft stasis, and decomposition, over time.

In other series of works, Watkins punctures the surface of paper with thread, navigating toward unmarked centers, way-finding and realigning her body in relationship to the experience of locating while resisting geometric concreteness. These works are joined as they evolve. Watkins consciously avoids glues, binders, and other mediating substances that force the permanent adhesion of materials. Watkins rejects adhesion because it is harmful to the consciousness of the work, and to the artist's thought process, not to mention the viewer's ability to sense the work phenomenologically.<sup>13</sup> But punctures, stitches, and knots, on the other hand, offer transparent interdependencies. Watkins allows all of the materials she brings into contact with one another to establish the terms of their interaction, resolving themselves with or without her. To adopt Anne Wagner's description of Agnes Martin's drawing methodology, "What starts out as a simple, pragmatic strategy ends up serving as a signature," a signature of the work's psyche.<sup>14</sup> If the work possesses a lexicon, it is the protolexicon of writing, of signifying forms composed of the same natural need that inspired our species to mark, write, and draw in the first place. This primary gestalt persists in returning our attention to our own "self-creative activity" experienced through vision.

◀ *Surfacing* (detail)  
2008–present  
Pigment- and  
dye-based ink on paper  
30 × 22 in.



At whatever stage we encounter Watkins's process, we discover the incidental traces that bring us closer into contact with the work's shifting material encounters – abrasion, saturation, slippage – *slow*, like blood from a wound. These encounters may be endlessly repeated, though never replicated, for the terms of their coming-into-being are inseparable from the natural turn of matter, as opposed to the mechanical laws of reproduction. In Watkins's unbounded experiments, form coalesces through subjects, revealing their cosmic affinities – the temporal drag of materials as entangled and renascent as our bodies and their thoughts.

#### NOTES

- 1 Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Boston: MIT Press, 2011), 137.
- 2 Mark C. Taylor, "Skinning Forms," in *Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated): Art from 1951 to the Present* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2004), 32.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Elisabeth Lebovici, "Lynda Benglis: All That Matters," in *Lynda Benglis*, ed. Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seungduk Kim (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2009), 88.
- 6 Watkins still obsessively saves, organizes, and interprets vast amounts of ephemeral material that most of us cast off as quickly as they are acquired. Traveling with the artist is a remarkable education in observing specific materials, whether types of paper, printed menus, different kinds of string, etc.
- 7 Lebovici, "Lynda Benglis," 88.
- 8 Agnes Martin, quoted in Anne M. Wagner, "The Cause of the Response," in *Agnes Martin* (New York: Dia Foundation and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 230.
- 9 Interview with the artist, November 2013.
- 10 Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 115.
- 11 Marina Cashdan, "Time and Tide," *Frieze*, October 2010, 214.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Martin, quoted in Wagner, "The Cause of the Response," 230.
- 14 Ibid.

◀ *Trio No. 3* (detail) 2011  
Thread, Kozo-shi paper  
18 ½ × 18 ½ × 1 in.

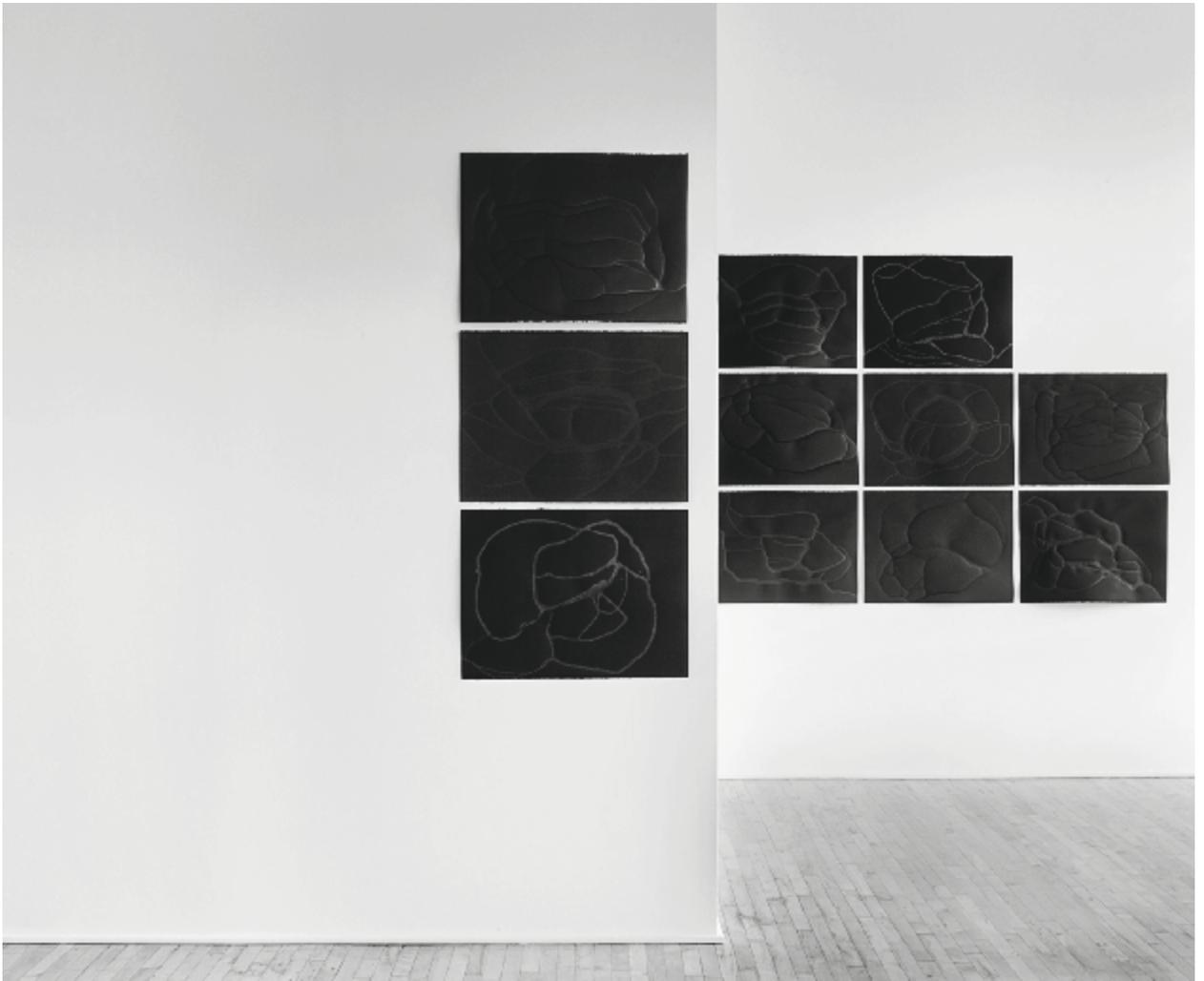


WORK AND ARTIST'S NOTES



SURFACING 2008–present

A SERIES OF WORKS made by pouring ink on paper and manipulating the paper without tools. I use a variety of drawing and calligraphy inks that range in texture and appearance, from matte and mottled to smooth and shiny. *Surfacing* began in 2008 with five drawings and continues into the present and the future. The drawings have been installed in various eccentric grid formations, the sequences selected and arranged in response to the unique architectural characteristics (light, space, approach, sight lines) of each exhibition space.

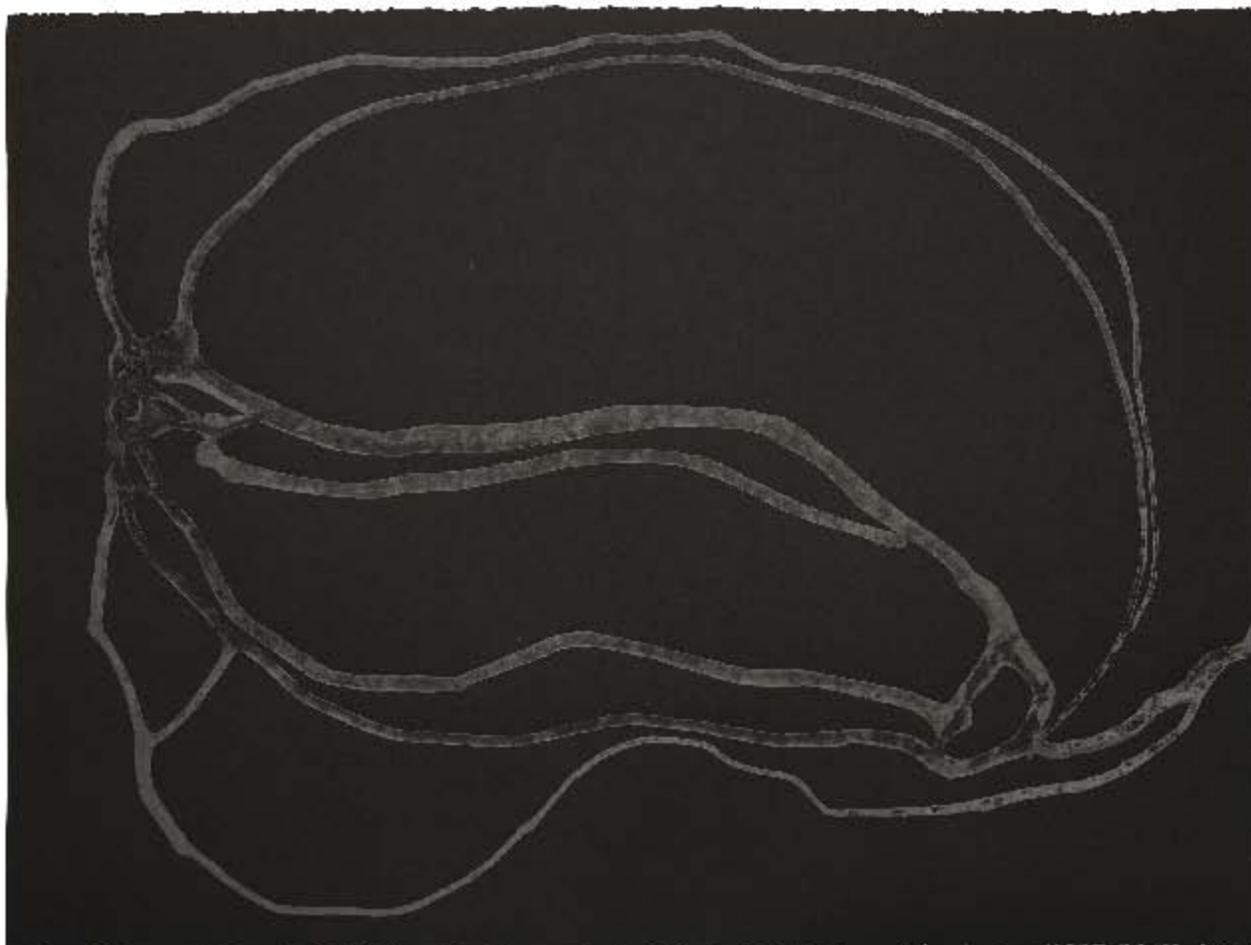


*Surfacing* (lumber room  
Sequence: 16, 23, 22, 5, 21, 48, 28,  
0, 31, 45, 11, 4, 38, 1, 12, 27, 39,  
10, 41, 42, 46, 15, 50) 2008–2011  
Pigment- and dye-based ink  
on paper  
69 × 264 × 2¾ in.;  
22 × 30 in. each

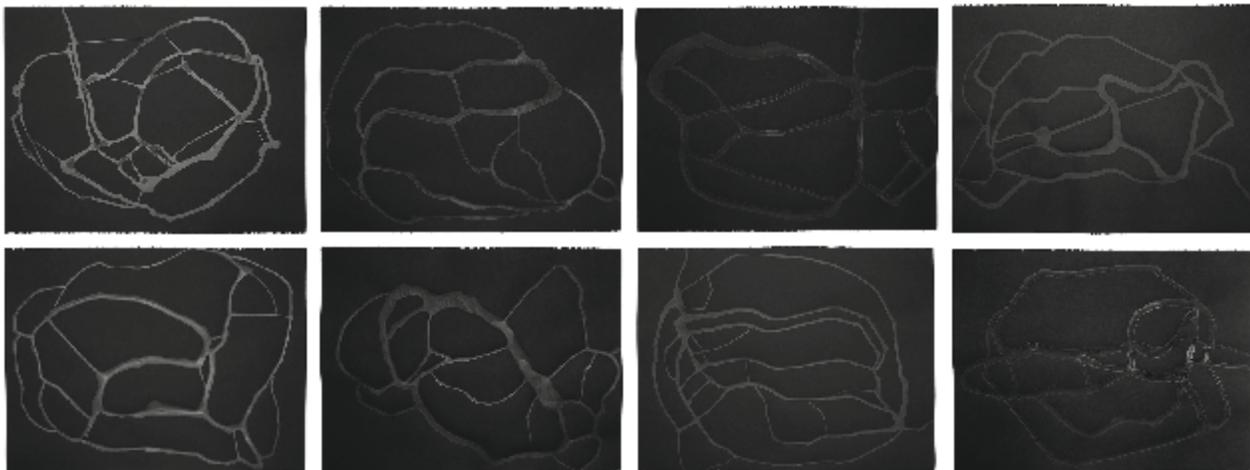
Installation view: *Interior  
Margins*, lumber room,  
November 12, 2011–January  
30, 2012, curated by Stephanie  
Snyder



*Surfacing 12* 2008  
Pigment- and  
dye-based ink on paper  
22 × 30 in.



*Surfacing 39* 2011  
Pigment- and  
dye-based ink on paper  
20 × 30 in.



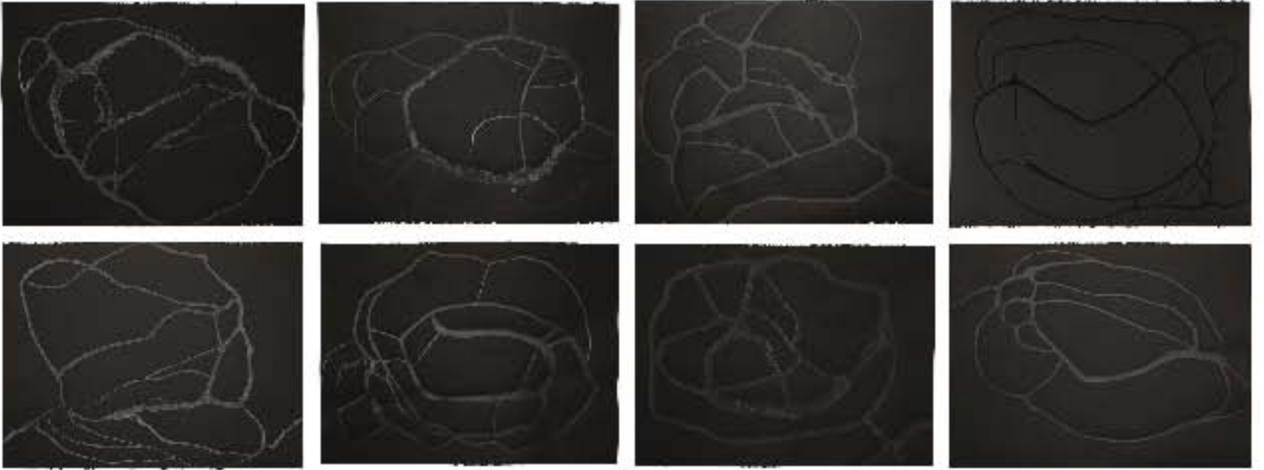
*Surfacing*

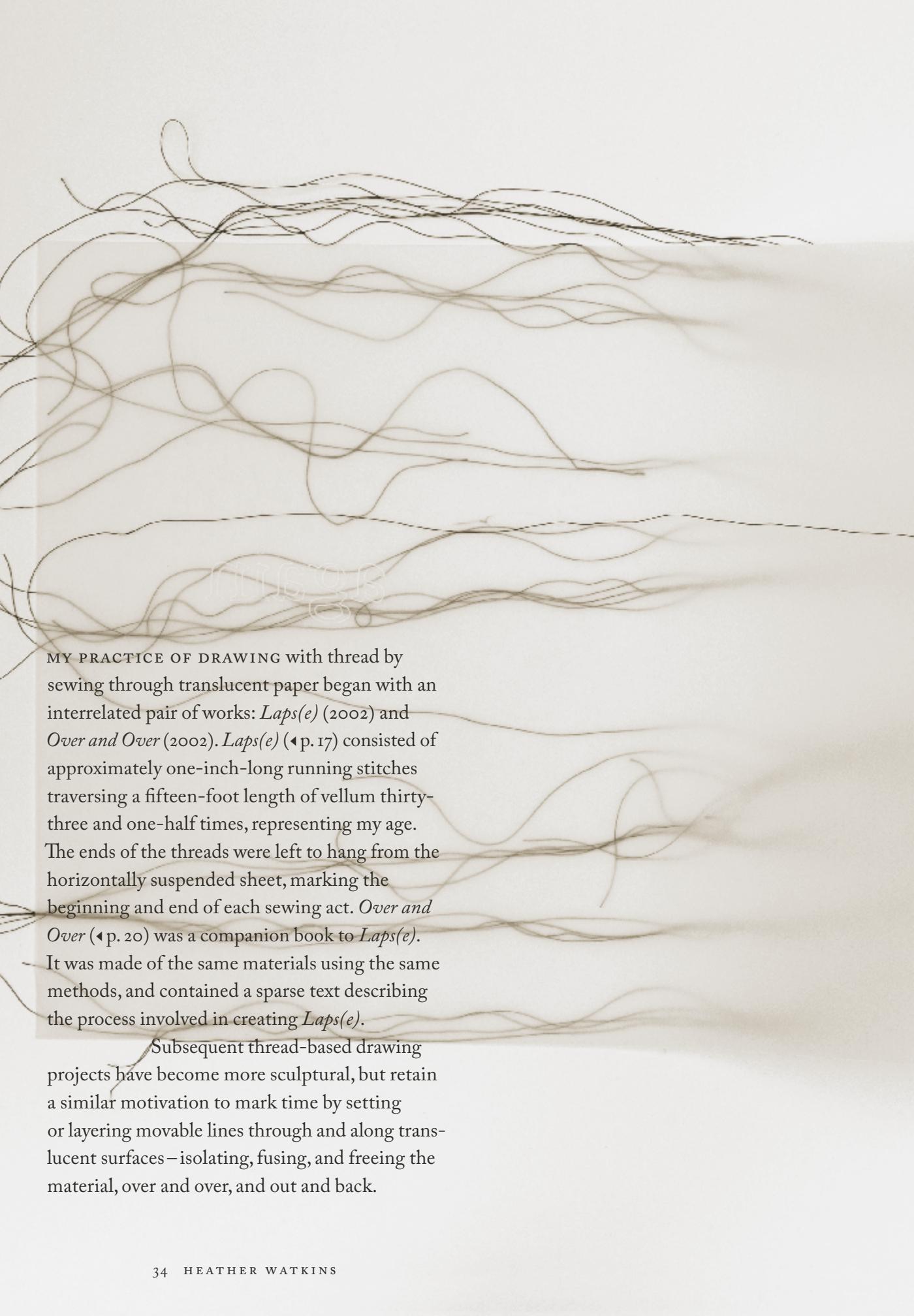
*(The Art Gym Sequence: 19, 61, 76, 49, 58, 84, 20, 11, 55, 64, 16, 69, 28, 79, 74, 38)*

2008–present

Pigment- and dye-based ink  
on paper

22 × 30 in. each

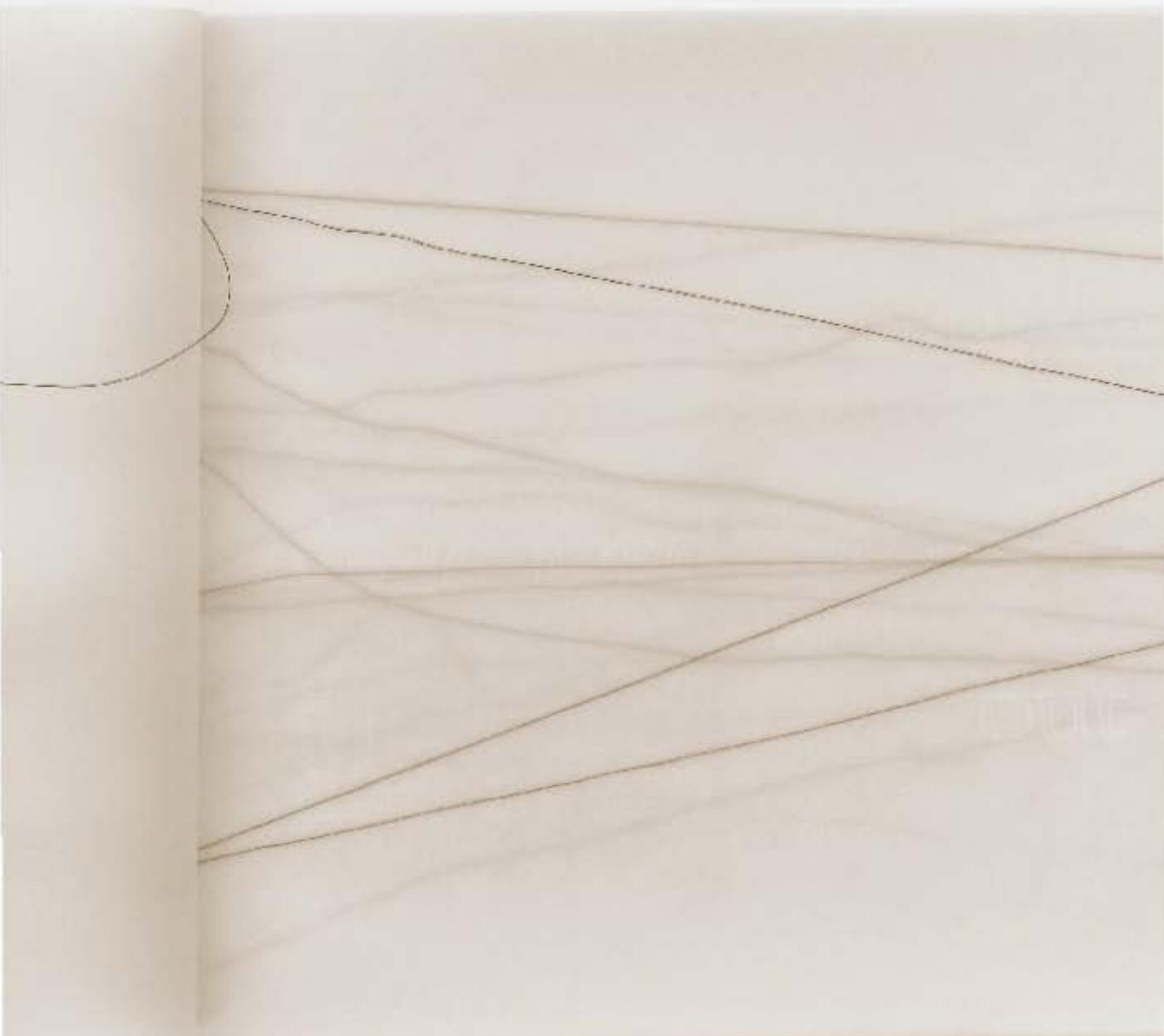




MY PRACTICE OF DRAWING with thread by sewing through translucent paper began with an interrelated pair of works: *Laps(e)* (2002) and *Over and Over* (2002). *Laps(e)* (◀ p. 17) consisted of approximately one-inch-long running stitches traversing a fifteen-foot length of vellum thirty-three and one-half times, representing my age. The ends of the threads were left to hang from the horizontally suspended sheet, marking the beginning and end of each sewing act. *Over and Over* (◀ p. 20) was a companion book to *Laps(e)*. It was made of the same materials using the same methods, and contained a sparse text describing the process involved in creating *Laps(e)*.

Subsequent thread-based drawing projects have become more sculptural, but retain a similar motivation to mark time by setting or layering movable lines through and along translucent surfaces – isolating, fusing, and freeing the material, over and over, and out and back.

THREAD DRAWINGS 2002–*present*

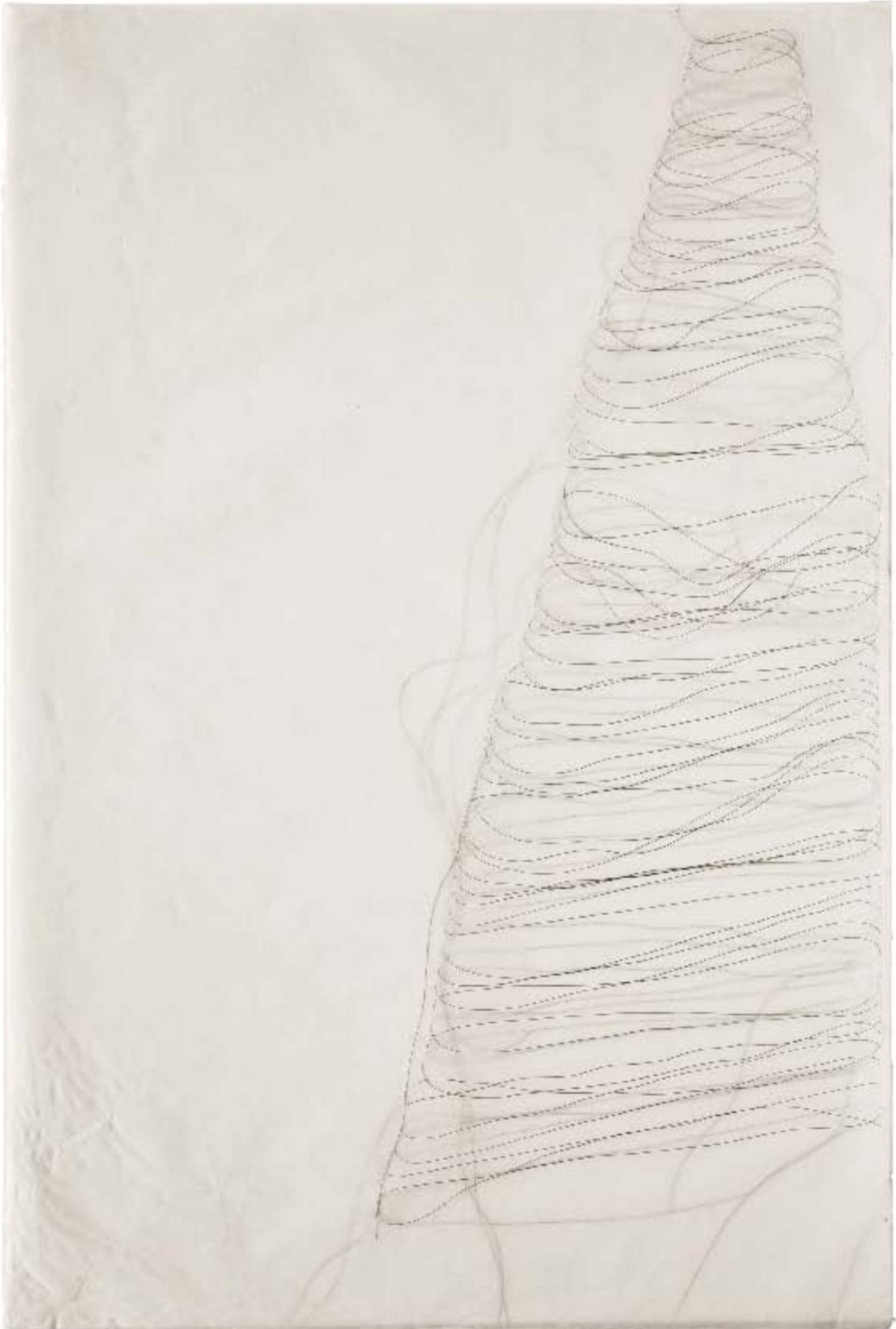


*Out and Back* 2003  
Tracing paper, thread, ink  
12 × 18 in., 26 pages



*Verging I, Verging III,  
Verging IV, Verging V* 2010  
Thread, Kozo-shi paper  
35 × 27 in. each

*Verging II* 2010  
Thread, Kozo-shi paper  
35 × 27 in. each



CATALYST  
AND INTERMEDIARIES 2011–present



THE SCULPTURAL DYNAMISM of the thread drawings led me to investigate other materials that might transform drawn lines into kinetic and self-supporting structures. I began working with various large-gauge fibers—piling, coiling, stretching, and entangling them in space. At some point I began saturating them with ink. Initially, I regarded these changeable structures as catalysts for later casting projects, but eventually I began to place and arrange the ink-soaked cords on a variety of absorbent and water-resistant surfaces, exploring their mark-making potential.



*Catalyst* 2011  
Cotton cord, ink, paper  
18½ × 18 × 1½ in.



*Intermediary* 2013  
Cotton cord, ink  
8 × 10 × 4 in.

*Intermediary* 2013  
Cotton cord, ink  
8 × 7 × 3 in.



*Intermediary* 2013  
Cotton cord, ink  
11 × 10 × 4½ in.



*Intermediary* 2013  
Cotton cord, ink  
12 × 11 × 3½ in.



*Intermediary* 2013  
Cotton cord, ink  
11 × 11 × 3 1/2 in.

*Intermediary* 2013  
Cotton cord, ink  
9 × 9 × 4 in.



*Transmission State 02.13* 2013  
Ink, Kozo-shi paper  
37 × 25 in.

*Residual State 04.18.13*  
(detail) 2013  
Ink, drafting film  
37 × 25 in.

TRANSMISSION STATES  
AND RESIDUAL STATES 2013

THESE INTERRELATED WORKS were made by resting wet, ink-soaked cords atop and between layers of Kozo-shi paper and wet-media drafting film. As the cords slowly dried over numerous days, wicking the ink's moisture, I exchanged the ink-soaked surfaces for untouched ones, sometimes transferring residual ink between the various pristine and marked sheets, and sometimes allowing cords to dry completely before relocating them.





*Transmission States* 2013  
Ink, Kozo-shi paper  
37×25 in. each

02.13  
03.27.13

02.13  
04.18.13

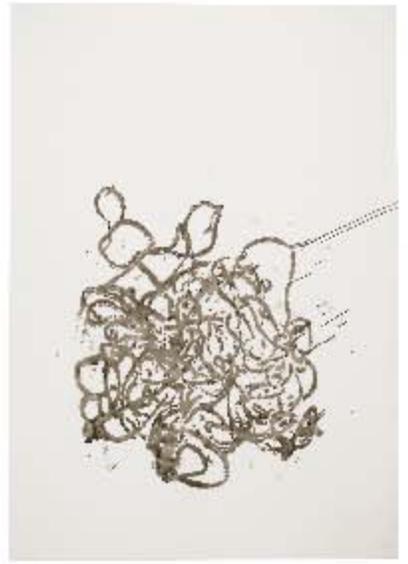
02.13  
04.18.13



02.13  
04.18.13

03.13  
05.01.13

03.27.13  
05.01.13



*Residual States* 2013  
Ink, drafting film  
37×25 in. each

05.01.13  
03.13

05.01.13  
*Undated*

05.01.13  
*Undated*



10.16.13  
05.01.13

10.16.13  
05.01.13

04.18.13  
04.18.13

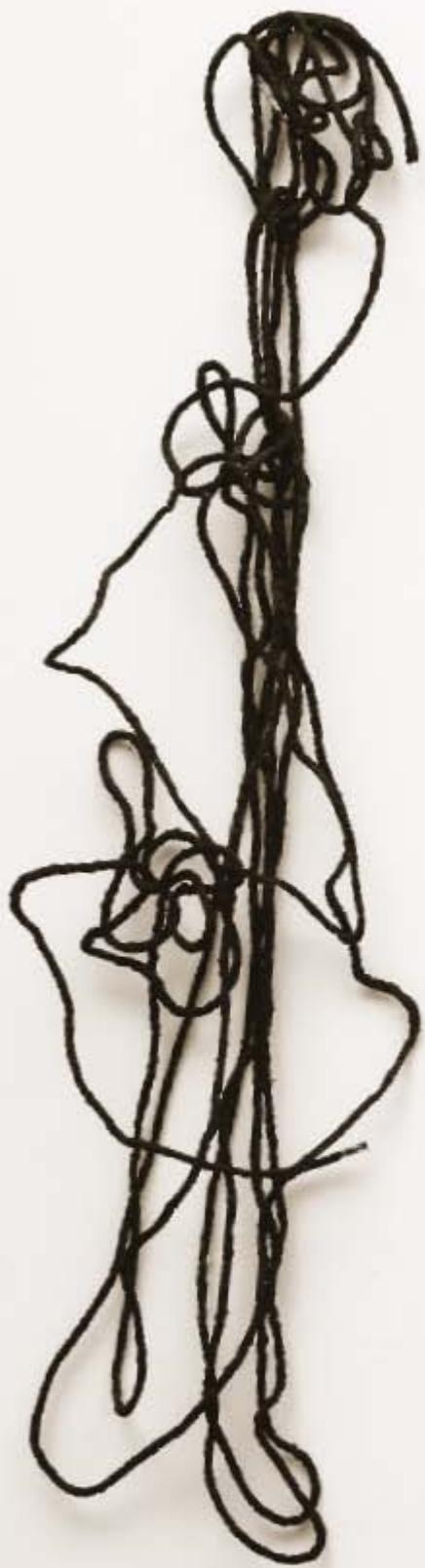


THIS SERIES WAS CREATED using a methodology similar to that used in *Transmission States* and *Residual States*, but *Repeating Line Progressions* traces a sequential process involving systematically replacing over- and underlaid sheets of water-resistant drafting film and alternately switching ink-soaked cords for raw, absorbent ones.

*Repeating Line Progressions*  
12.05.13 (detail) 2013  
Ink, drafting film  
37 × 25 in.



Process document for  
*Repeating Line Progressions*,  
showing *Intermediary*  
hanging from wall





*Intermediaries* 2013  
Cotton cord, ink

*From left:*  
38 × 10 × 4 in.  
41 × 5 × 2 in.  
42 × 7 × 2 in.  
38 × 6 × 4 in.



*Repeating Line Progressions* 2013  
Ink, drafting film  
37×25 in. each

12.05.13

11.21.13

11.10.13



11.10.13



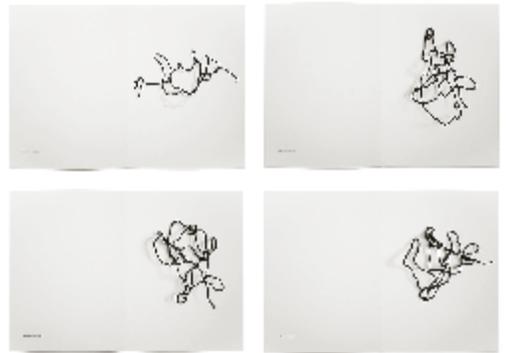
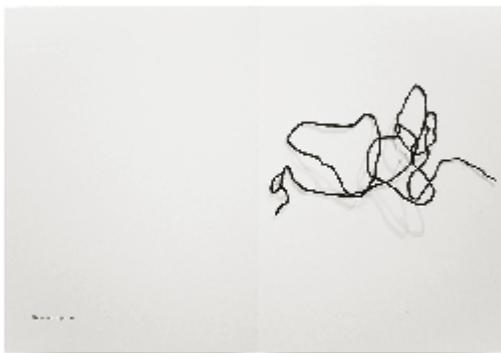
11.21.13



12.05.13

MEDIUMS is a group of sculptural drawings that change in overall shape and specific line arrangement with each installation. Each drawing is composed on-site from ink-soaked cords that have been dried into curled, coiled, or loosely tangled shapes. As the ink dries, it rigidifies the cord, allowing for increased dimensionality when the cords are suspended from vertical surfaces.

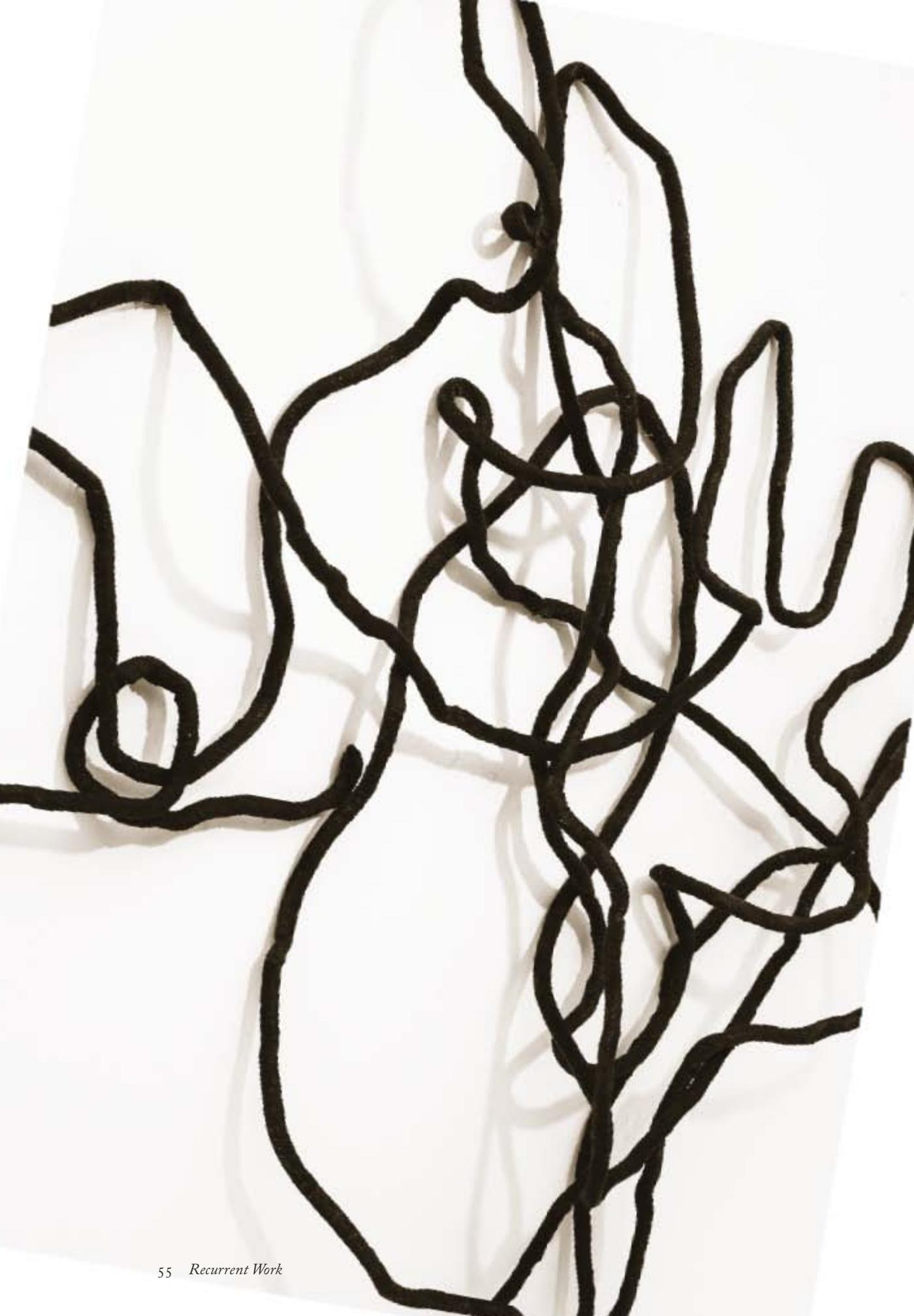
A related portfolio of photographic prints, *Sessions*, depicts the two cords that comprise *Medium*—the first work in this group, created for the exhibition *APEX: Heather Watkins* at the Portland Art Museum—in various arrangements. The prints document the date and time of each rearrangement.

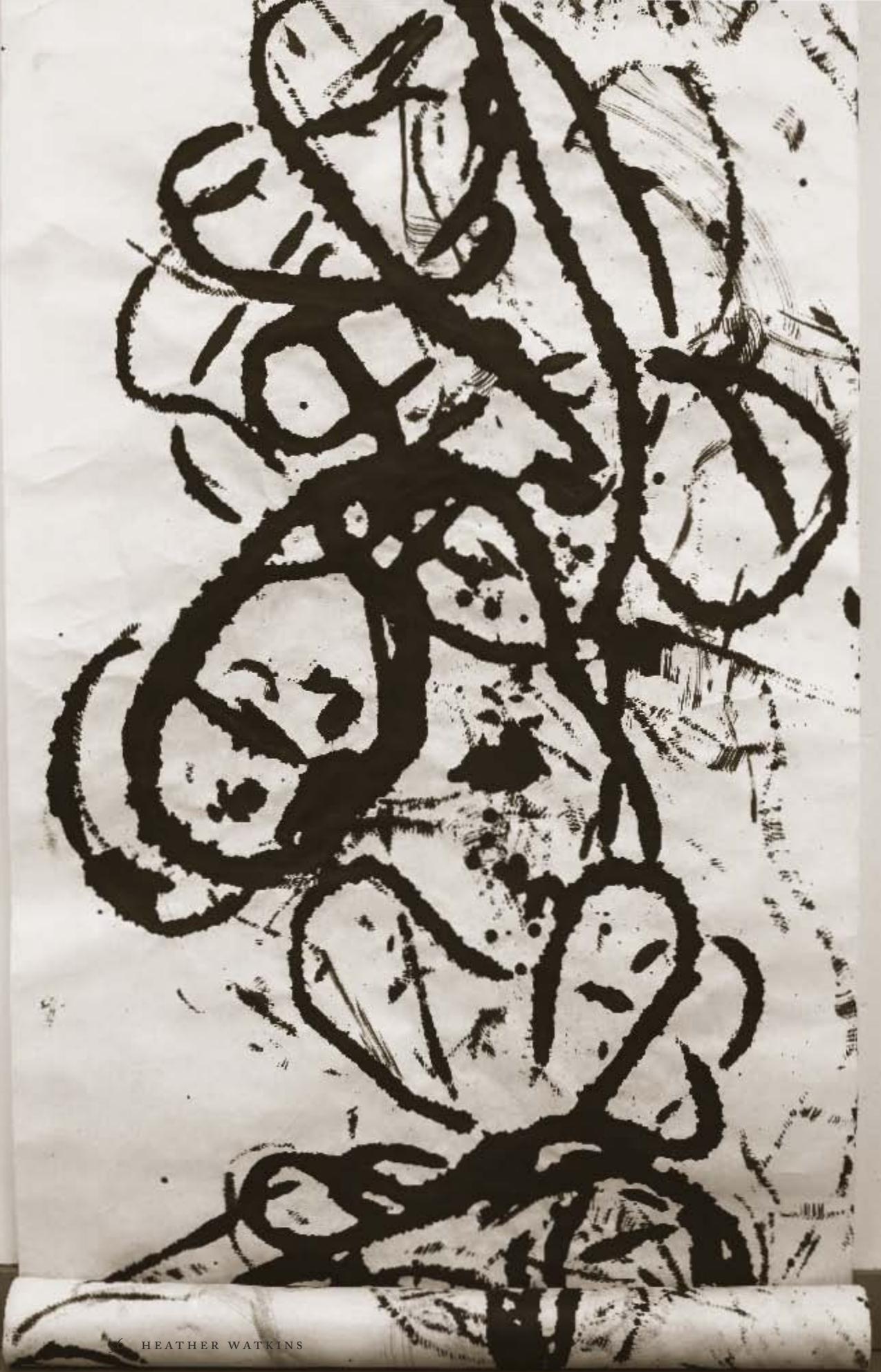


▲ *Small Medium* 2014  
Cotton cord, ink  
Dimensions variable

*Sessions* 2013  
Digital pigment prints on  
cotton rag paper  
Edition of 8  
15 × 11 in. (closed)

▶ *Medium* (detail) 2013–present  
Cotton cord, ink  
Dimensions variable





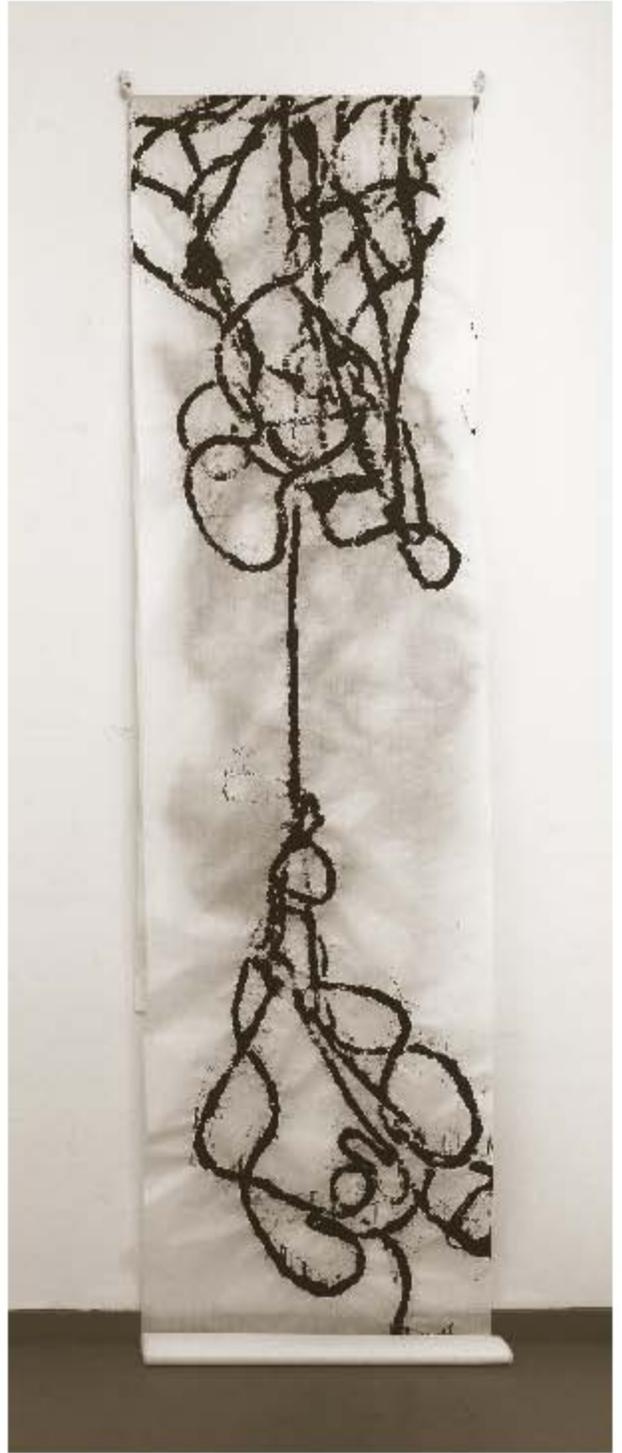
THE TRANSFER PROCESSES at the core of *Transmission States* and *Residual States* were the result of a new working methodology that allowed me to create sculptures and drawings simultaneously. By arranging and rearranging soaked cords on long rolls of Japanese paper, the paper absorbed—and then transferred—the various positions of the cords. I titled these paper-based works *Transcripts* and *Readings*, not only because they document the making of the sculptures that interact with them, but also because they interpret and “read” the sculptures as they form. The *Transcripts* are formed underneath the cords, and the *Readings* are made by overlaying the inked cords with thinner sheets of paper.

In producing the wall-mounted sculptural drawing *Score* (► p. 62), I produced both a *Transcript* and a *Reading* for each of the fifteen cord sculptures I made for the installation.

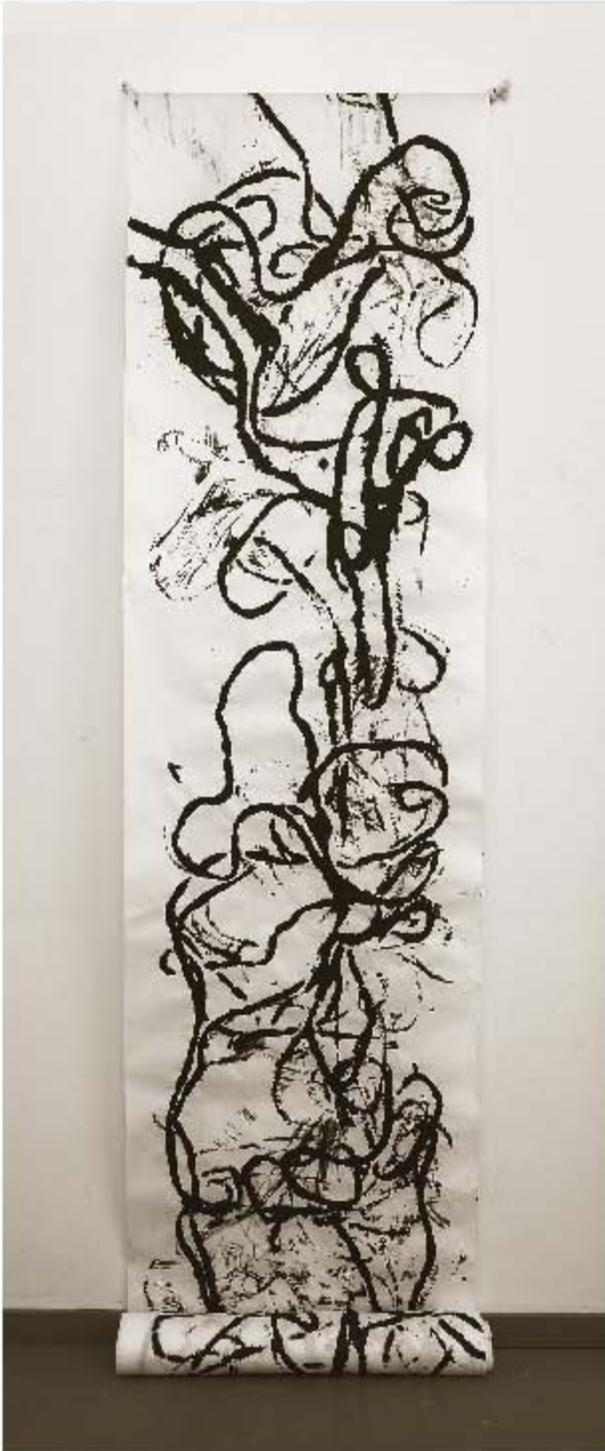
*Transcript #7* (detail) 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.



*Transcript #4* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 x 38 in.



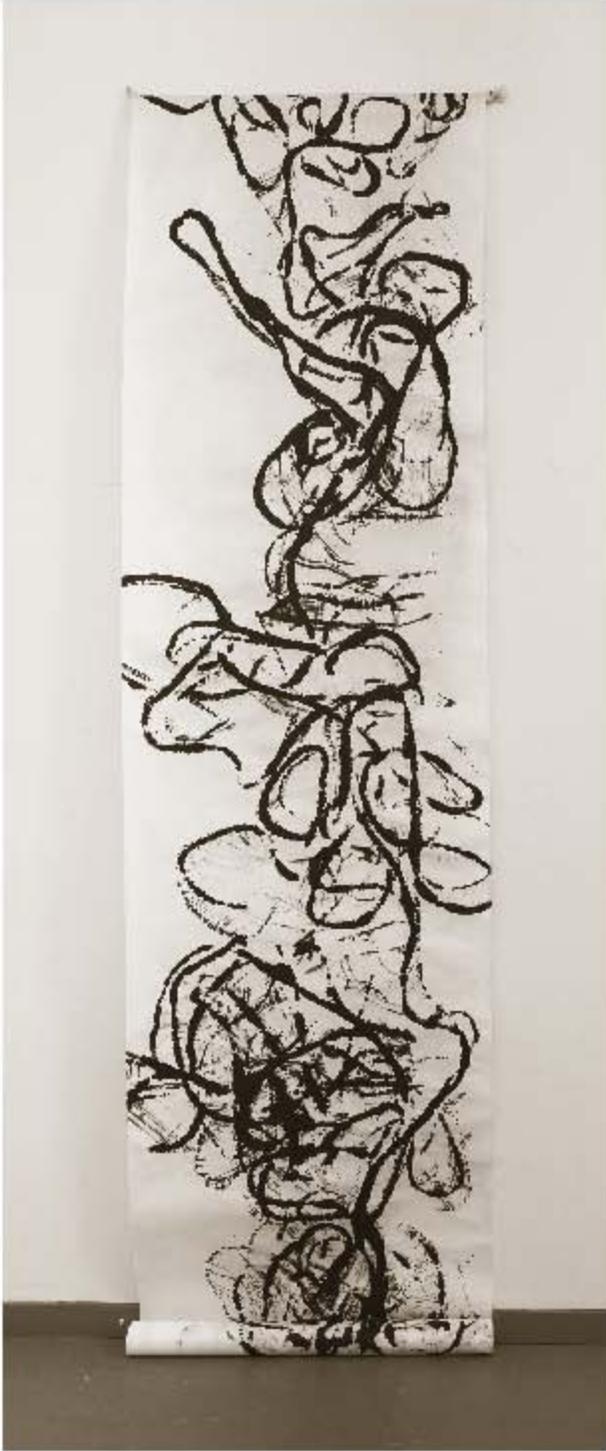
*Reading #4* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 x 38 in.



*Transcript #5* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.



*Reading #5* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.



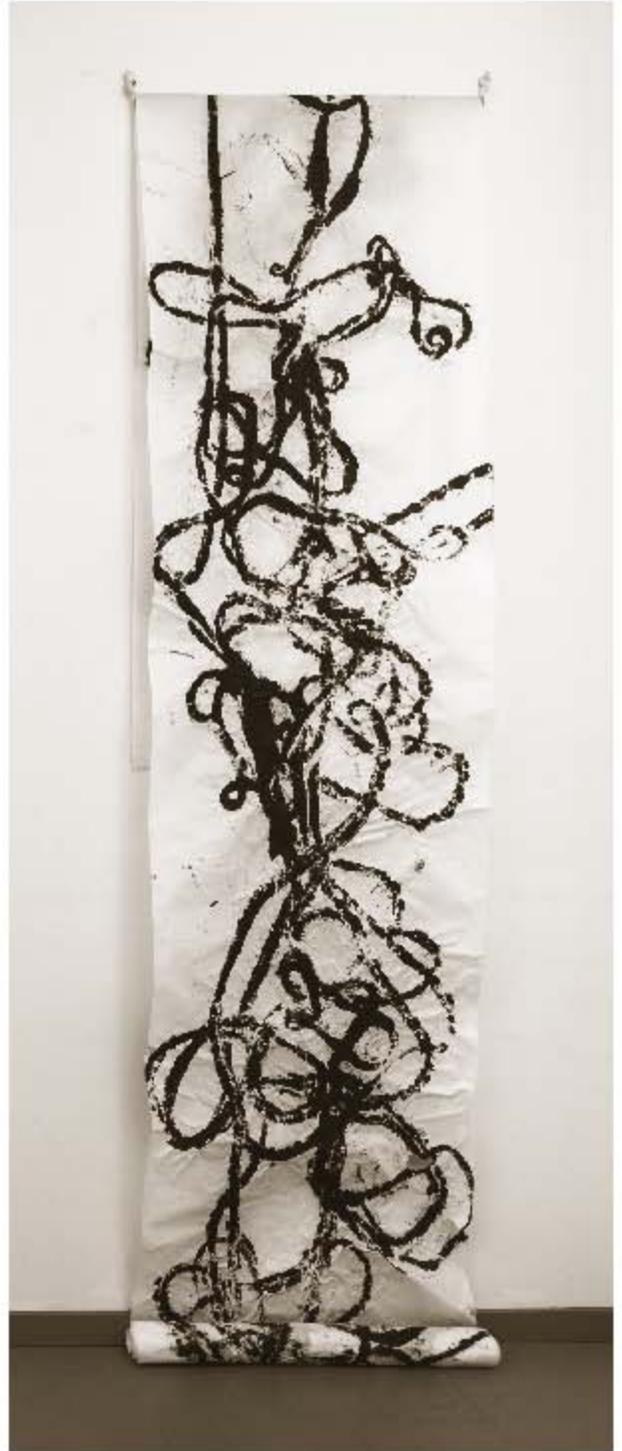
*Transcript #7* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.



*Reading #7* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.

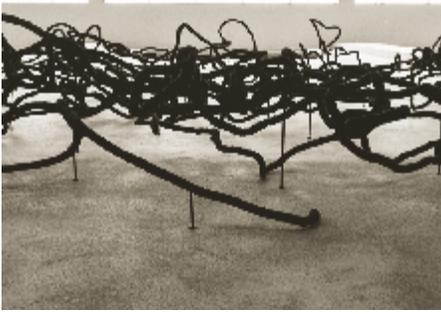


*Transcript #10* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.



*Reading #10* 2013  
Ink, mulberry paper  
280 × 38 in.





SCORE 2014

SCORE was commissioned for the north atrium of the Lincoln Performance Hall at Portland State University. The work is made of more than five hundred yards of wide-gauge cotton cord, which has been saturated with India ink, then shaped to create sequences of fluid yet arresting forms. *Score* traverses the exterior wall of the auditorium, wrapping the performance space. The work is secured to the wall by means of mild steel rods anchored to the masonry at approximately 150 points. The movement of the line and its arcing and twisting energy derive from the qualities of the cord when soaked and dried. I manipulated the cord to achieve the greatest degree of dimensionality and fluidity, propping the cord on the mounts so that the curves and coils of the material stand as visual and kinetic evidence of the process that has shaped them.

- ▲ Installation view in light well
- ◀ View from Theater Level, looking east
- ▶ View from second floor, looking west

*Score* 2014

Ink, cotton cord, mild steel

Installed at the Lincoln Performance Hall, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon

Commissioned by Portland State University as part of Oregon's Percent for Art in Public Places program



## ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I EXTEND MY HEARTFELT THANKS to many friends and colleagues who have supported my work in innumerable ways. My sincere appreciation goes to Terri Hopkins, whose invitation to show my work at The Art Gym set in motion an energizing, reflective exchange about art and life, which has informed this exhibition and this book. I offer my deepest admiration and gratitude to Stephanie Snyder for her generosity in turning her incisive and refined attention to the materials, processes, thinking, and output that make up my work. Her brilliant writing formed the conceptual core around which this book grew. Adam McIsaac realized the design of this book with a clear vision, collaborative openness, and steely resolve. I am truly grateful to Adam for his dedication, patience, and pitch-perfect insight.

I wish to thank Jane Beebe of PDX Contemporary Art for her commitment to my work and for her extraordinary efforts in realizing this publication. I am deeply grateful to the individuals and organizations whose generous contributions made this book possible. This catalog records a period of intense, expansive, joyful work, and the opportunity to document this important period in my career in such a significant way is a tremendous gift.

I would like to recognize the excellent work of Todd Clark and Blake Shell of The Art Gym, and Caitlin Moore of PDX Contemporary Art. Thank you to Zoë Clark and Abigail McNamara for their undaunted studio assistance. Special thanks to Christopher Israel and Lydia Reissmueller for special projects. For ongoing studio conversations, I thank Todd Alden, Anna Hepler, Tucker Malarkey, Michelle Ross, David Shafer, and Marie Watt. And for their abiding love and support, thank you, Mark Annen, Jake Annen, and Kristine and Jack Watkins.

*Heather Watkins – Recurrent Work*

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► *Medium* (detail) 2013–present

Cotton cord, ink

Dimensions variable



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*Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon*

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