

Colorless & Odorless

The Intention of the Exhibition

This is my shared artistic journey---a quest to encourage and value awareness of the pollution problem manifested through my creative “lens” as a visual artist. The exhibition presents drawings and paintings created over the past decade driven by the impact of environmental violations upon our planet. I hope this presentation supports individuals as they view the imagery within my works translating what is received to an acknowledgment of our silent participations. We are one together in what can be harsh awareness.

My artwork intends to create a dialog and discussion regarding the ever-increasing threat to life on earth from the pollution of the air, sea, and land. The drawings and paintings in the exhibit speak to the issues of ecological threats from carbon dioxide, micro plastics, and massive amounts of trash negatively impacting the existence of all life forms.

The artwork, printed narrative, and discussions reinforce the idea that like most societal change it starts with the local community. We are important enlightened activists who need to consistently and fervently remind world leaders that realistic approaches to the underlying problems are dire. However, the solutions are evolutionary as well as revolutionary. Communication is key to hope, and art is key to communication.

I envision future exhibits changing, evolving with the addition of unique creative works representing additional ecological problems. My art will expand and challenge communities on a range of topics that addresses these growing concerns. I hope to plant the seed from a cultural approach proclaiming we are all a part of the problem, but more importantly we are vessels that carry the solutions, which come in many forms---this is my art.

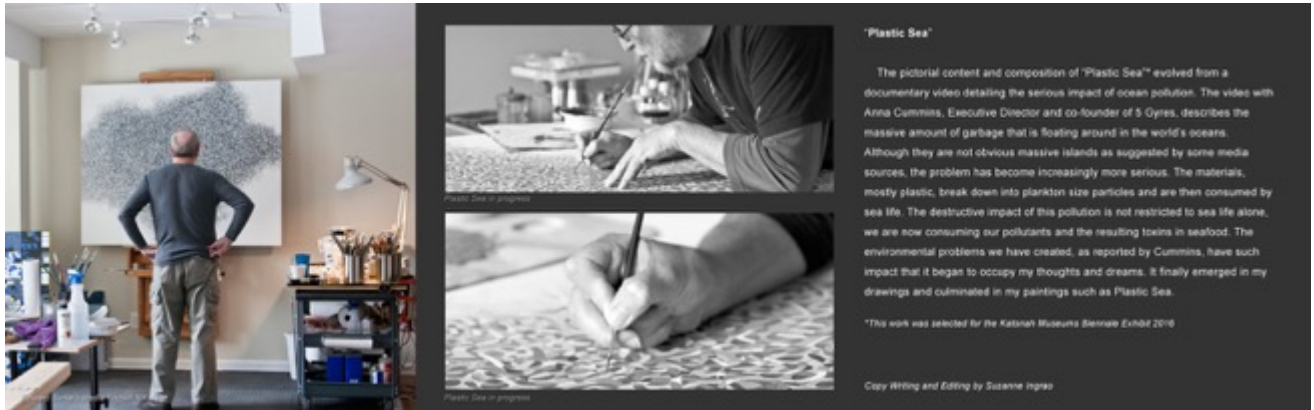
“Colorless & Odorless” The Exhibit Installation







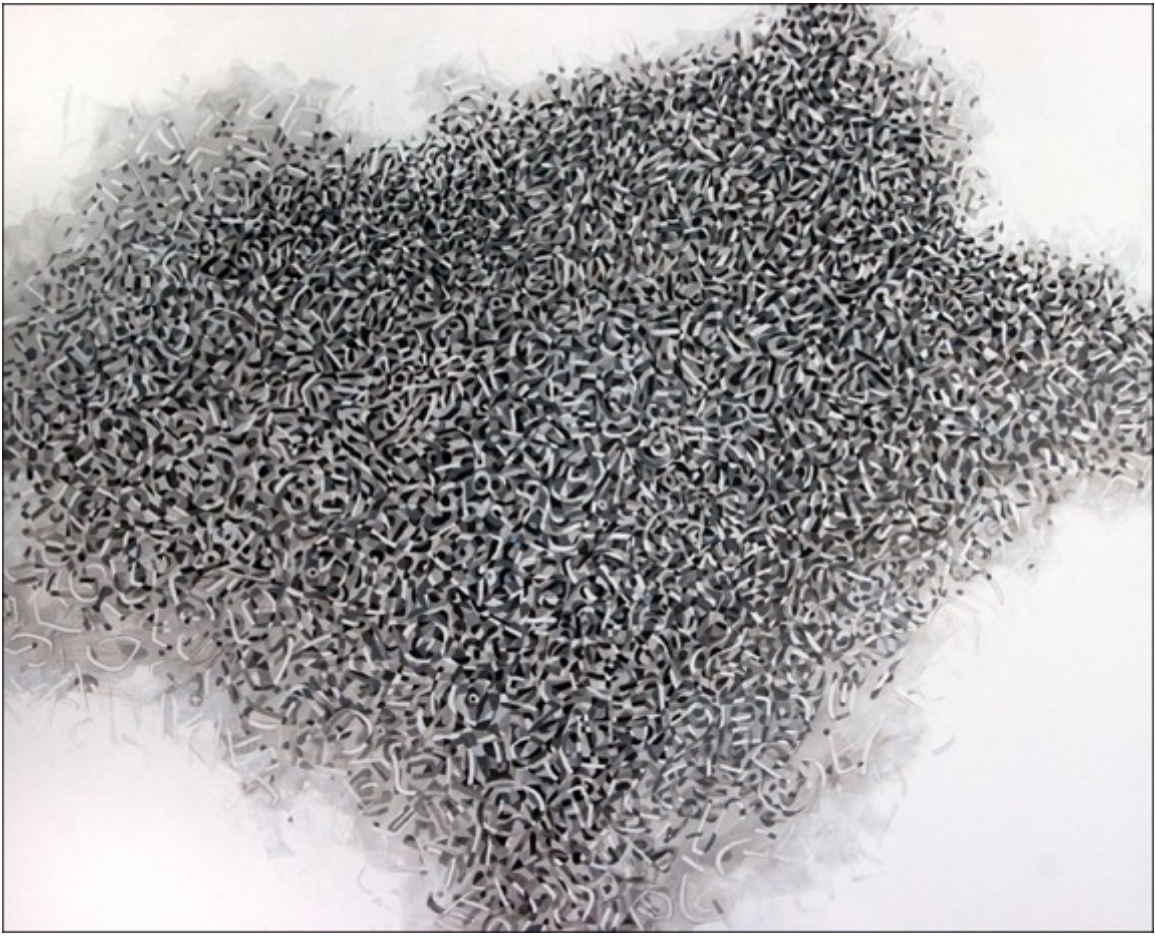
“Plastic Sea*” Narrative



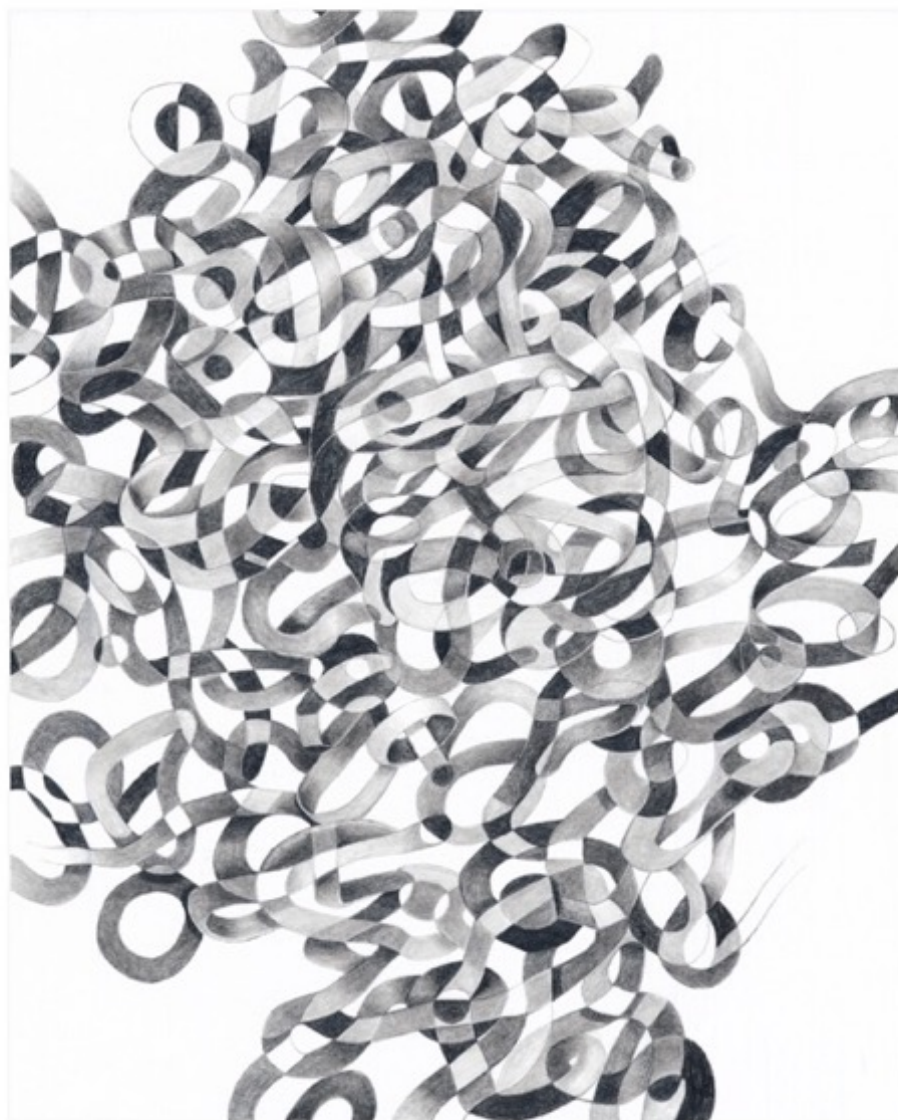
“Plastic Sea”

The pictorial content and composition of “Plastic Sea”* evolved from a documentary video detailing the serious impact of ocean pollution. The video with Anna Cummins, Executive Director and co-founder of 5 Gyres, describes the massive amount of garbage that is floating around in the world’s oceans. Although they are not obvious massive islands as suggested by some media sources, the problem has become increasingly more serious. The materials, mostly plastic, break down into plankton-size particles and are then consumed by sea life. The destructive impact of this pollution is not restricted to sea life alone; we are now consuming our pollutants and the resulting toxins in seafood. The environmental problems we have created, as reported by Cummins, have such impact that it began to occupy my thoughts and dreams. It finally emerged in my drawings and culminated in my paintings, such as Plastic Sea.

**This work was selected for the Katonah Museum’s Biennale Exhibit 2016*



"Plastic Sea" Acrylic on Canvas, 60" x 48".



"First Drawing of 2015" Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".
Related drawing to painting "Plastic Sea".



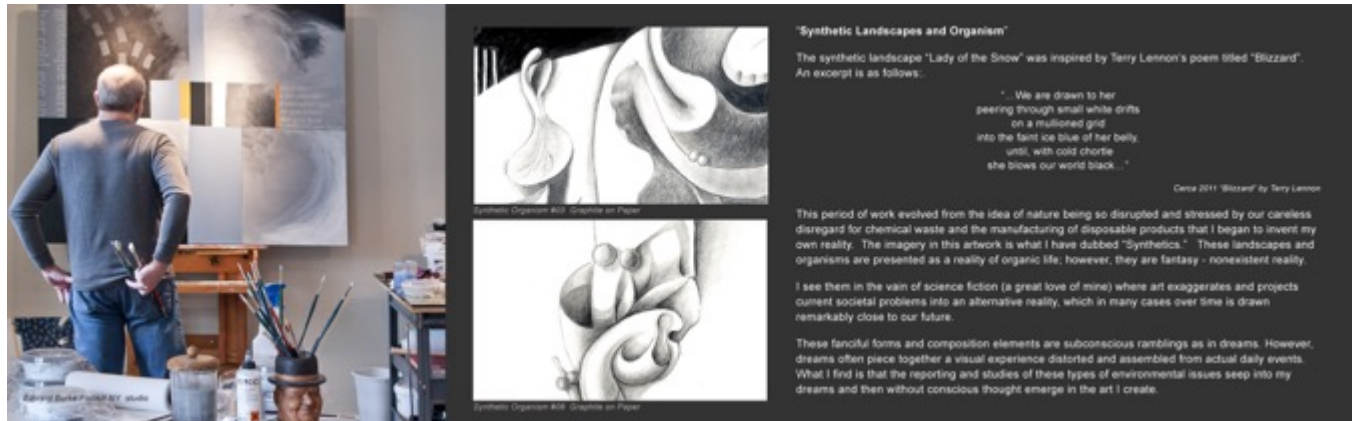
"Vinyl Line" Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".



"PoliNet" Acrylic Paint on Gray Paper 14" x 16".

Synthetic Landscapes & Organisms

Synthetics - Narrative



The synthetic landscape "Lady of the Snow" was inspired by Terry Lennon's poem titled "Blizzard". An excerpt is as follows:

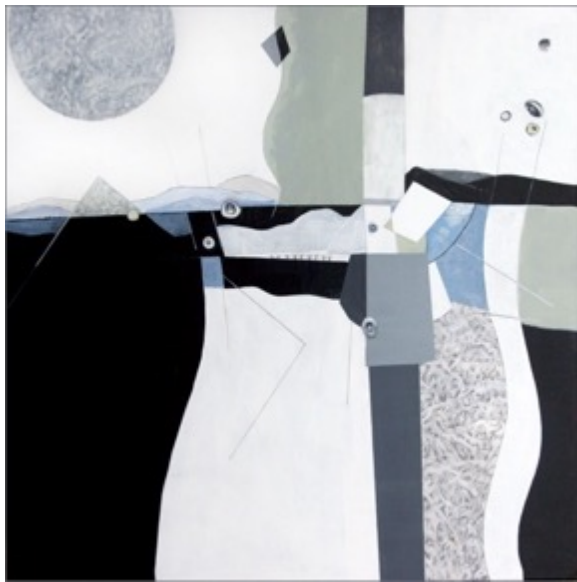
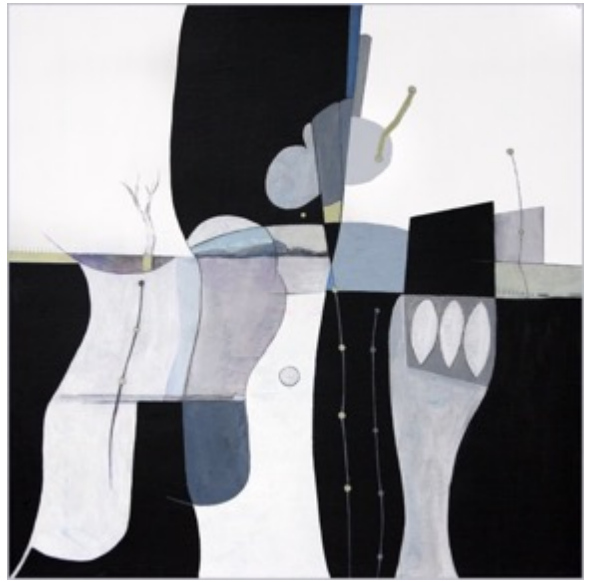
"...We are drawn to her
peering through small white drifts
on a mullioned grid
into the faint ice blue of her belly,
until, with cold chortle
she blows our world black..."

Cerca 2011 "Blizzard" by Terry Lennon

This period of work evolved from the idea of nature being so disrupted and stressed by our careless disregard for chemical waste and the manufacturing of disposable products that I began to invent my own reality. The imagery in this artwork is what I have dubbed "Synthetics." These landscapes and organisms are presented as a reality of organic life; however, they are fantasy - nonexistent reality.

I see them in the vain of science fiction (a great love of mine) where art exaggerates and projects current societal problems into an alternative reality, which in many cases over time is drawn remarkably close to our future.

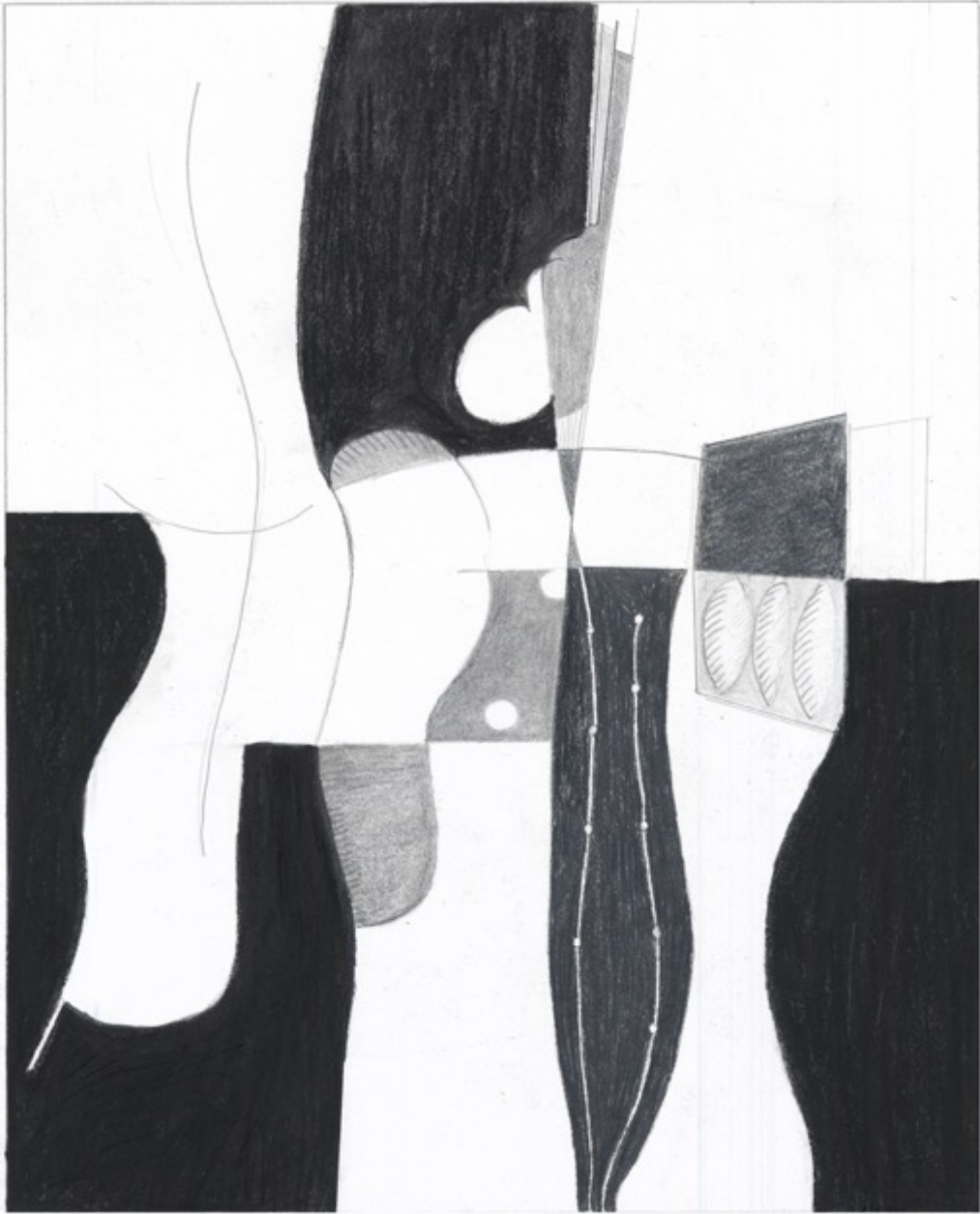
These fanciful forms and composition elements are subconscious ramblings as in dreams. However, dreams often piece together a visual experience distorted and assembled from actual daily events. What I find is that the reporting and studies of these types of environmental issues seep into my dreams and then without conscious thought emerge in the art I create.



"Synthetic Landscapes" 1, 2, 3, and 4, Acrylic on Canvas 24" x 24



"Synthetic Landscape 05 2014" Graphite and Charcoal on Paper 14" x 16"



"Synthetic Landscape 06 2014" Graphite and Charcoal on Paper 14" x 16"



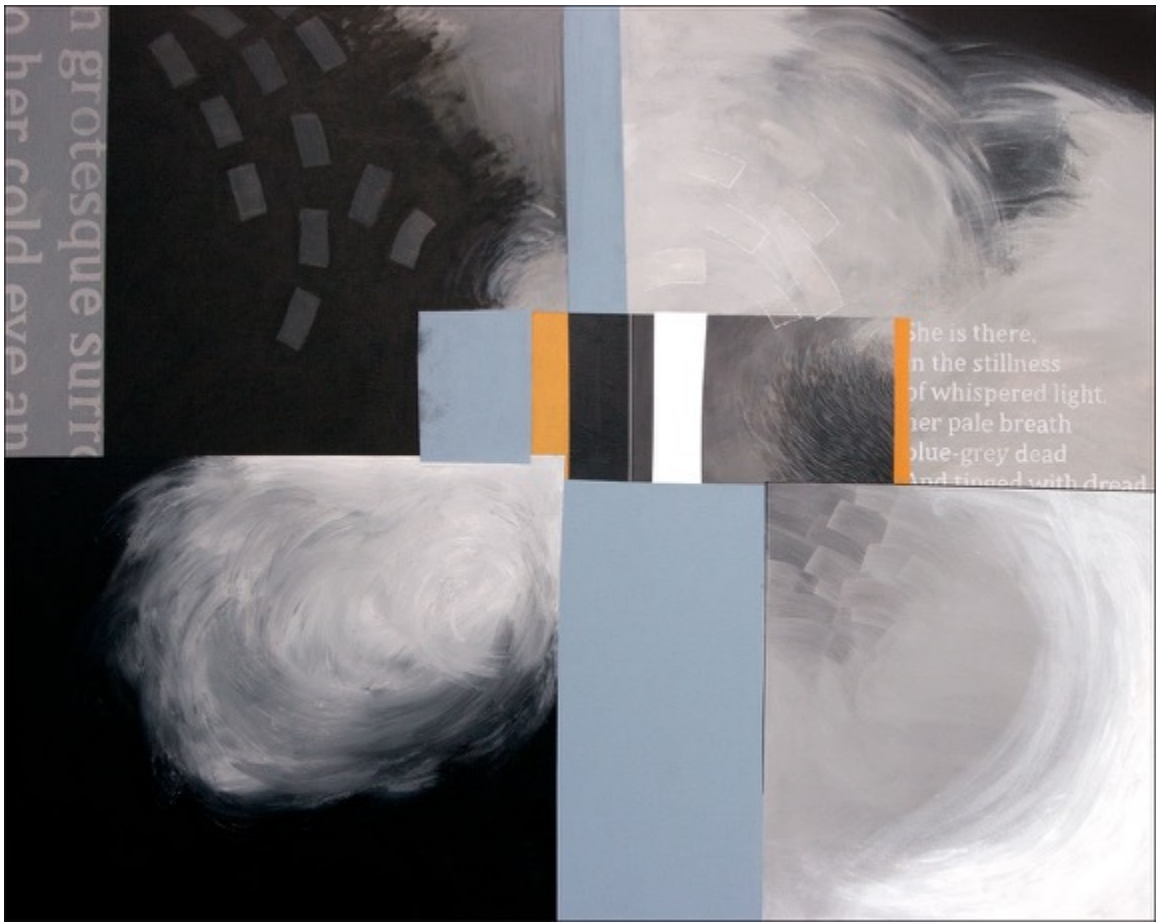
"Synthetic Landscape 07 2014" Graphite and Charcoal on Paper 14" x 16"



"Untitled Drawing 04" Graphite and Charcoal on Paper 14" x 16"



"Windswept" Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40

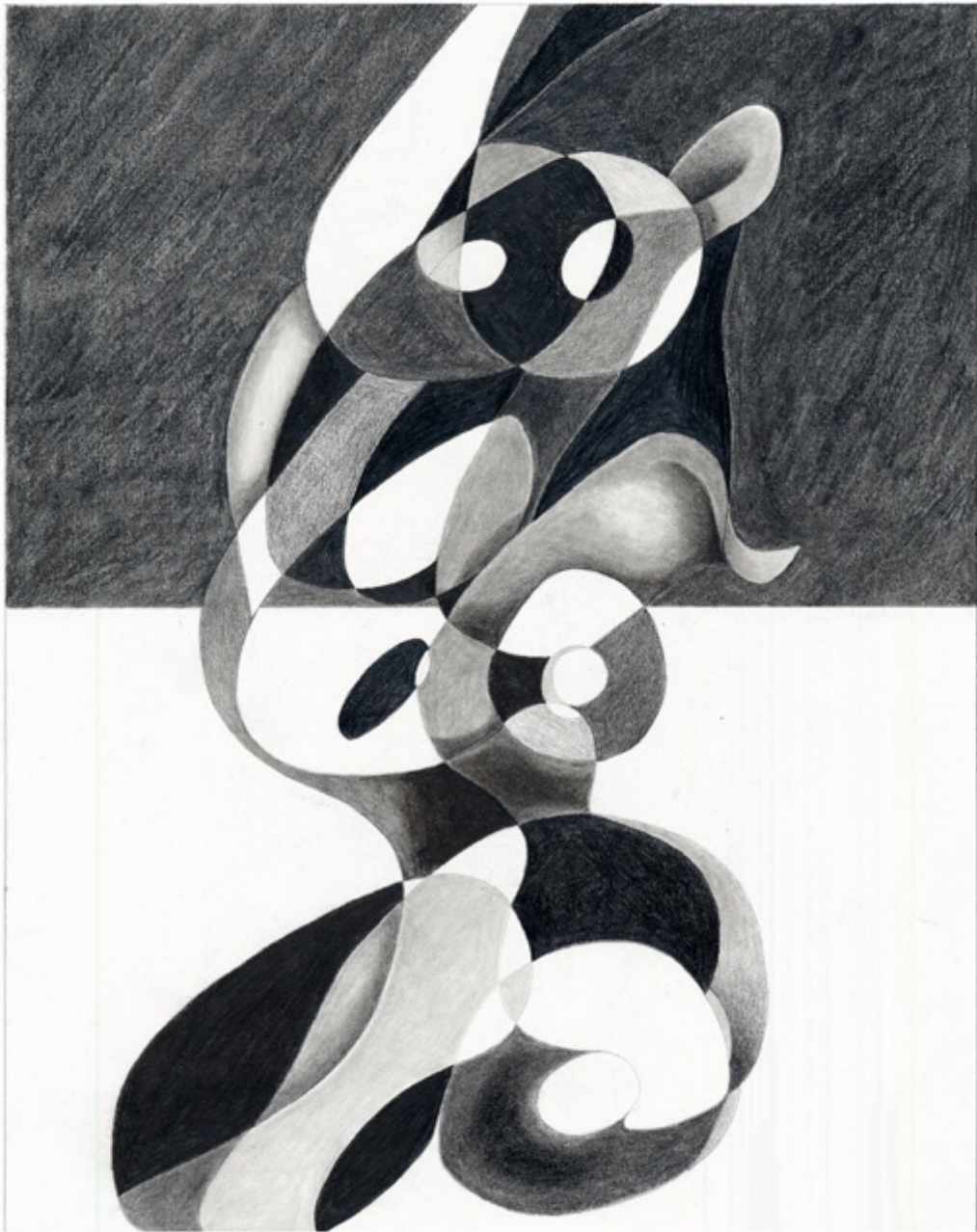


“Lady of The Snow” Acrylic on Canvas 60” x 48
 (Inspired by Terry Lennon’s poem of the same title.)

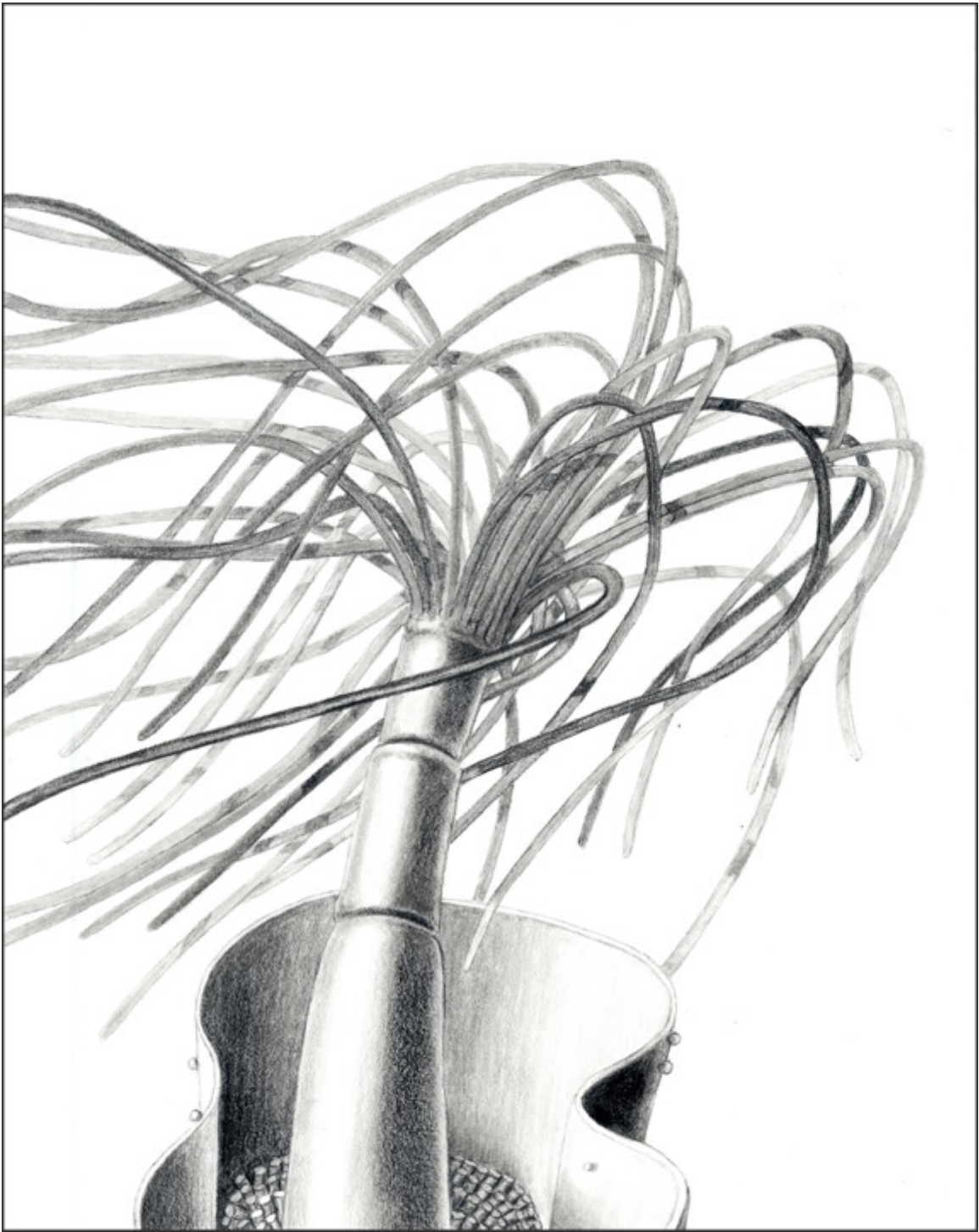
“...We are drawn to her
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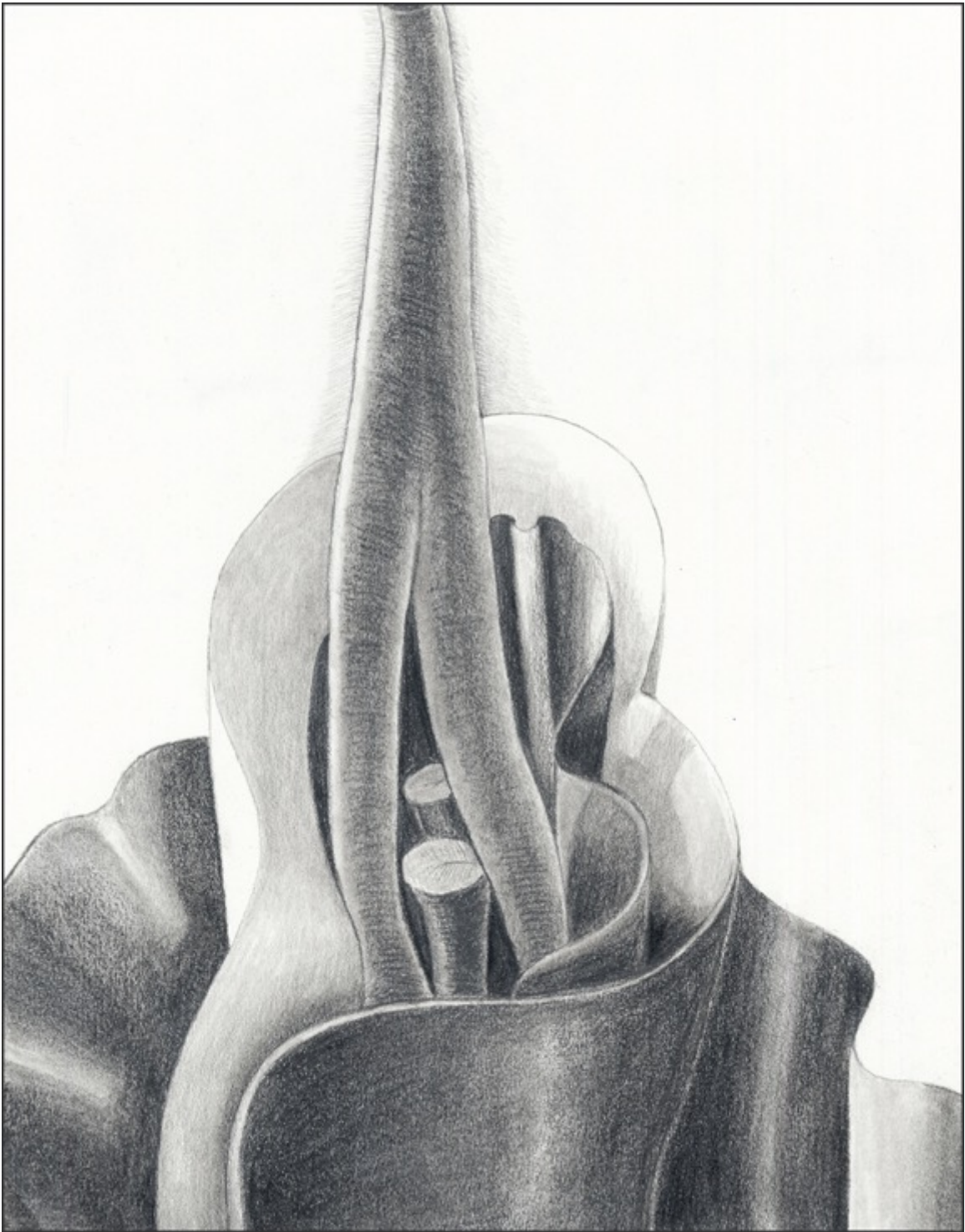
"Synthetic Organism 2015" Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40"



"Synthetic Organism 02 2014" Graphite and Charcoal on Paper 14" x 16"



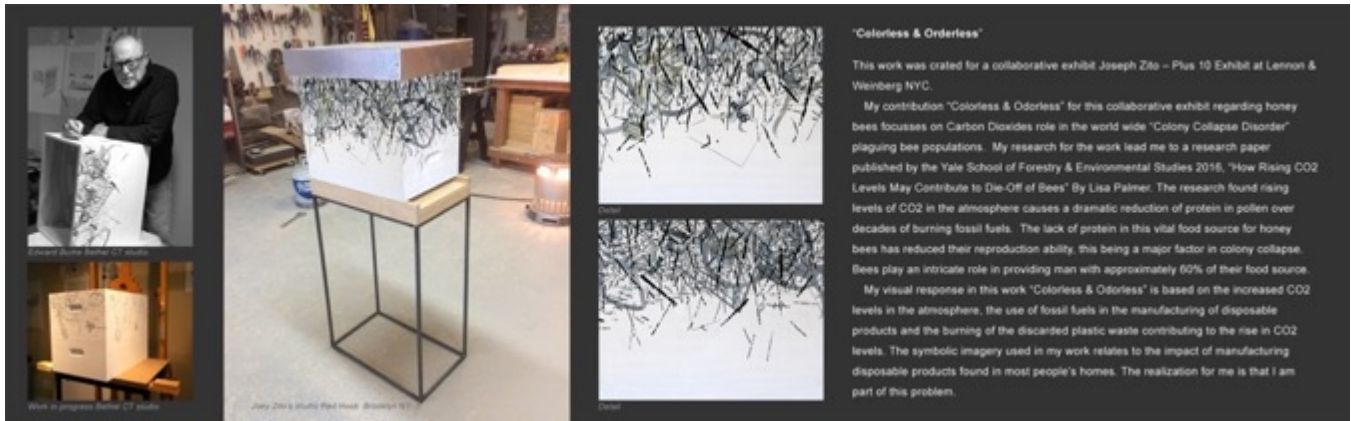
“Synthetic Organism 01 2009” Graphite on Paper 14” x 16”



Synthetic Organism 04 2009" Graphite on Paper 14" x 16"

Colorless & Odorless

Colorless & Odorless - Narrative



This work was created for a collaborative exhibit "Joseph Zito – Plus 10" at Lennon & Weinberg NYC.

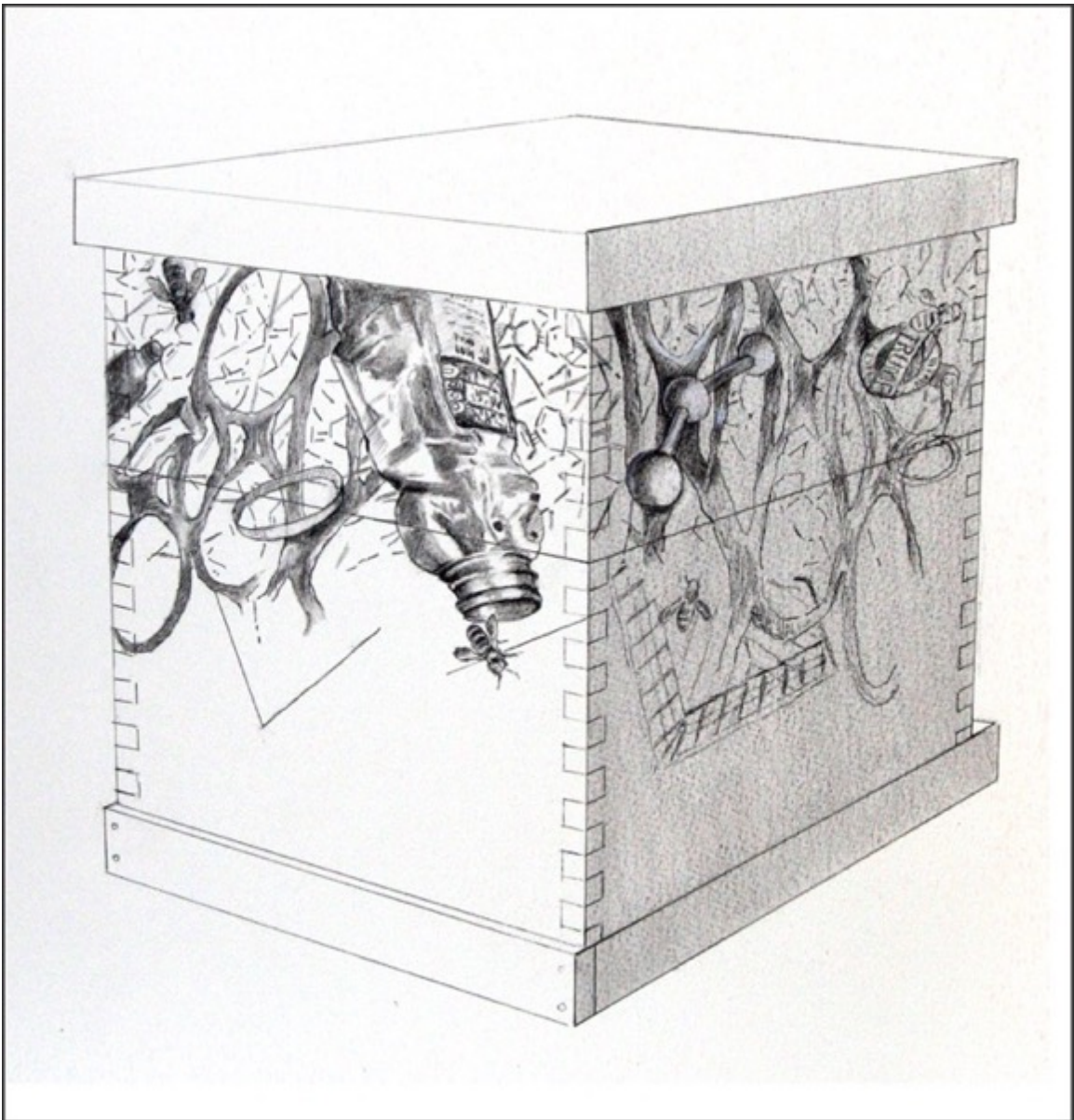
My contribution "Colorless & Odorless" for this collaborative exhibit regarding honey bees focusses on carbon dioxide's role in the worldwide "Colony Collapse Disorder" plaguing bee populations. My exploration for the work led me to a research paper published by the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies 2016, "How Rising CO2 Levels May Contribute to Die-Off of Bees" by Lisa Palmer. The research found rising levels of CO2 in the atmosphere causes a dramatic reduction of protein in pollen over decades of burning fossil fuels. The lack of protein in this vital food source for honey bees has reduced their reproduction ability, this being a major factor in colony collapse. Bees play an intricate role in providing man with approximately 60% of their food source.

My visual response in this work "Colorless & Odorless" is based on the increased CO2 levels in the atmosphere, the use of fossil fuels in the manufacturing of disposable products and the burning of the discarded plastic waste contributing to the rise in CO2 levels. The symbolic imagery used in my work relates to the impact of manufacturing disposable products found in most people's homes. I soon realize "I am in fact part of the problem."

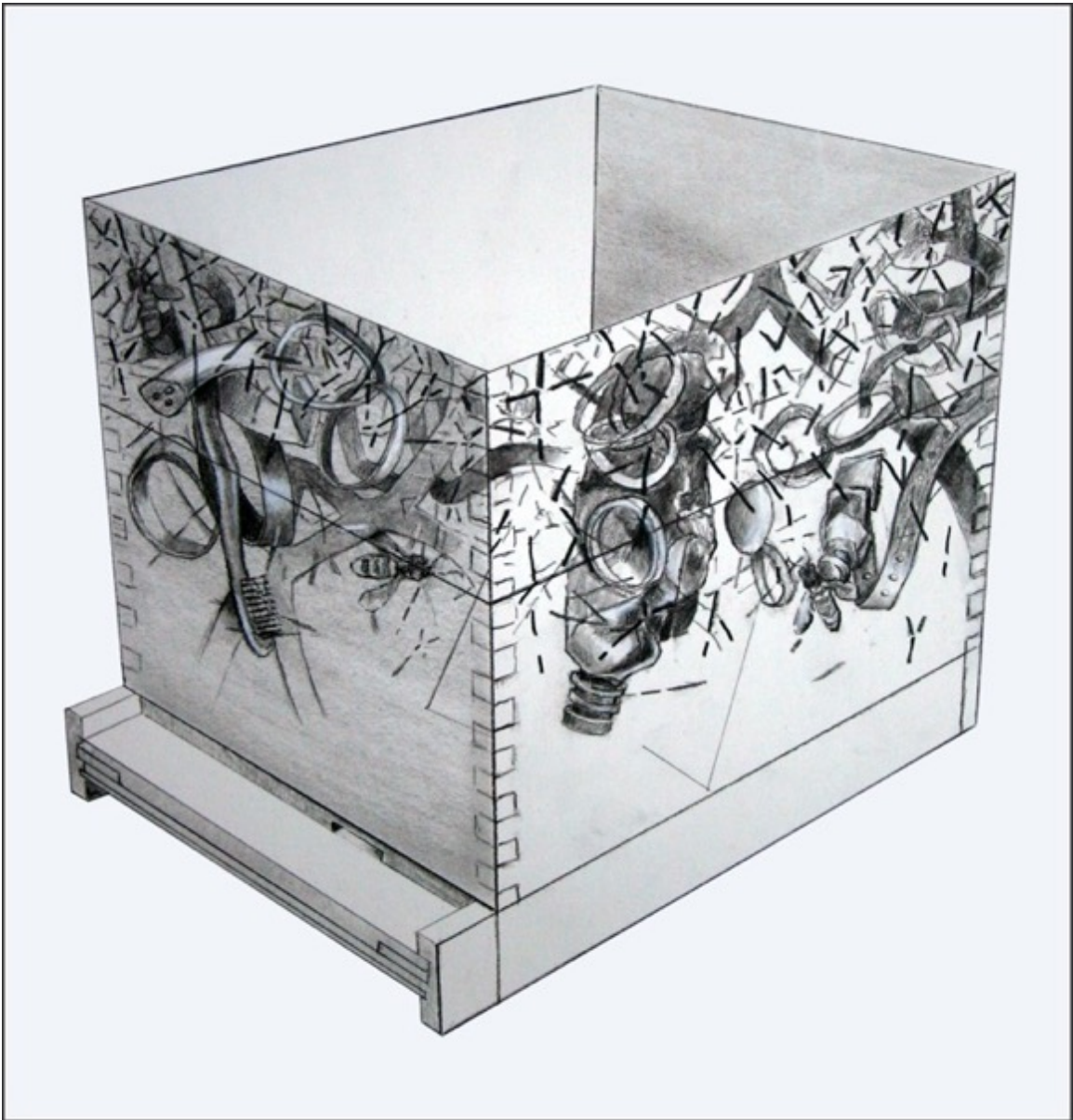


“Colorless & Odorless” Acrylic on Wood

Langstroth Hive Box and Sand – fabricated by Joseph Zito



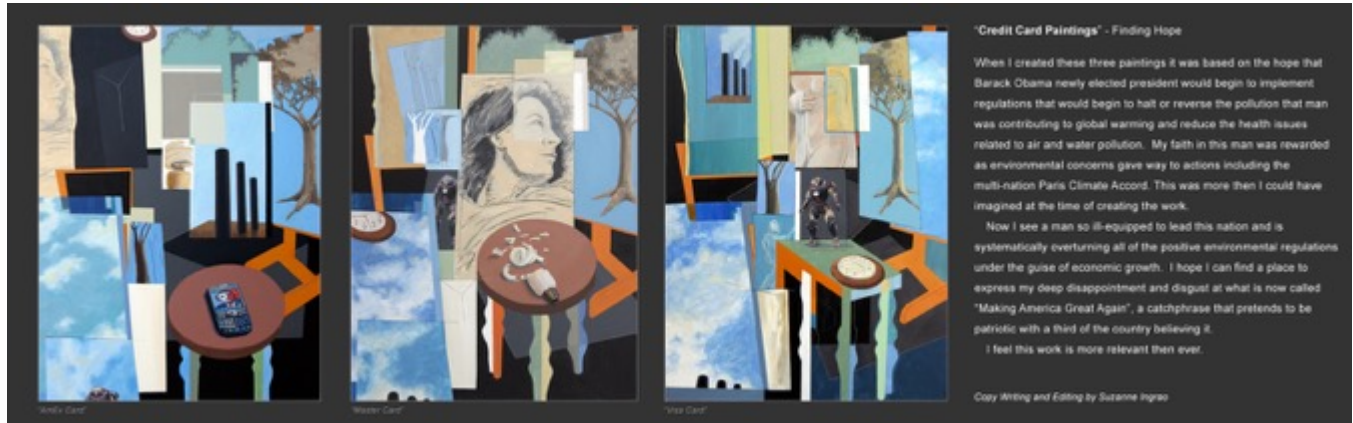
"Odorless & Colorless 1" 18" x 24" Graphite on Paper.
Preliminary drawing for project.



"Odorless & Colorless 2" 18" x 24" Graphite on Paper.
Preliminary drawing for project.

Credit Card Paintings

“Credit Card Paintings” - Finding Hope - Narrative



When I created these three paintings it was based on the hope that Barack Obama, newly elected president, would begin to implement regulations that would halt or reverse the pollution that man was contributing to global warming and reduce the health issues related to air and water pollution. My faith in this man was rewarded as environmental concerns gave way to actions including the multi-nation Paris Climate Accord. This was more than I could have imagined at the time of creating the work.

Now I see a man who is ill-equipped to lead this nation and is systematically overturning all of the positive environmental regulations under the guise of economic growth. I hope I can find a place to express my deep disappointment and disgust at what is now called “Making America Great Again,” a catchphrase that pretends to be patriotic with a third of the country believing it. I feel this work is more relevant than ever.



"Amex Card" Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40"



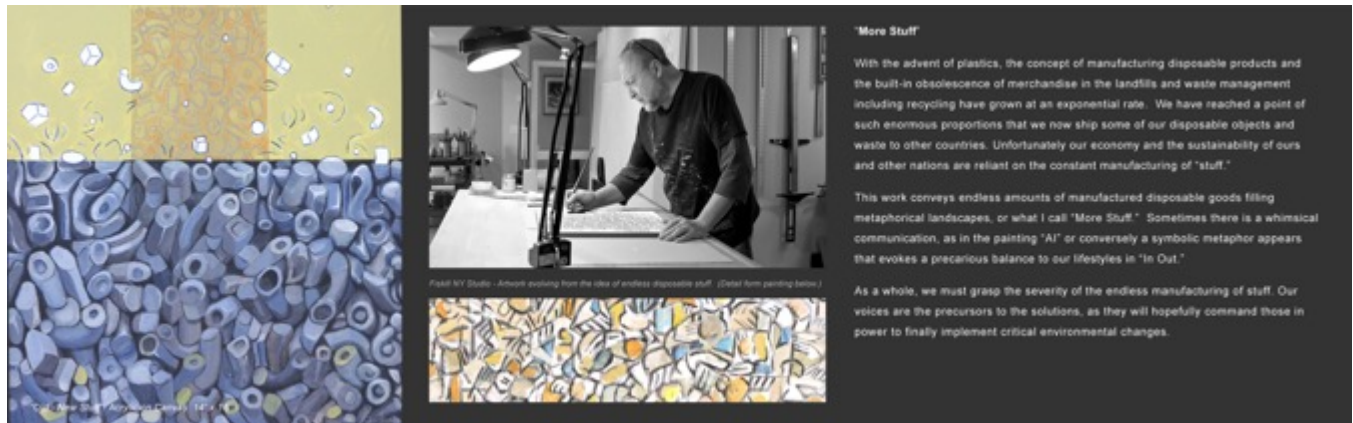
Master Card" Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40".



"Visa Card" Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40"

More Stuff

“More Stuff” - Narrative



More Stuff

With the advent of plastics, the concept of manufacturing disposable products and the built-in obsolescence of merchandise in the landfills and waste management including recycling have grown at an exponential rate. We have reached a point of such enormous proportions that we now ship some of our disposable objects and waste to other countries. Unfortunately our economy and the sustainability of ours and other nations are reliant on the constant manufacturing of "stuff."

This work conveys endless amounts of manufactured disposable goods filling metaphorical landscapes, or what I call "More Stuff." Sometimes there is a whimsical communication, as in the painting "AI" or conversely a symbolic metaphor appears that evokes a precarious balance to our lifestyles in "In Out."

As a whole, we must grasp the severity of the endless manufacturing of stuff. Our voices are the precursors to the solutions, as they will hopefully command those in power to finally implement critical environmental changes.

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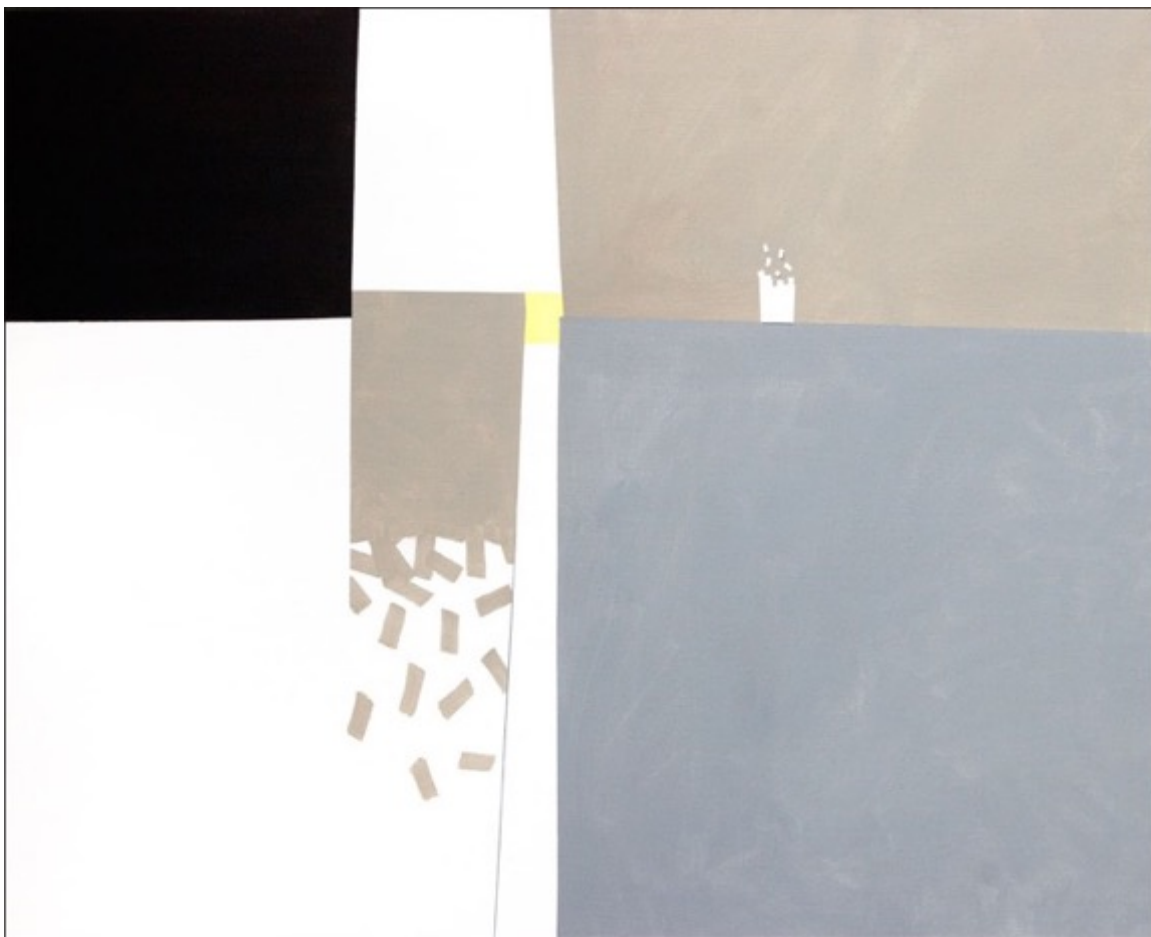
As a whole, we must grasp the severity of the endless manufacturing of stuff. Our voices are the precursors to the solutions, as they will hopefully command those in power to finally implement critical environmental changes.



"Discarded Landscape" Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40



"AI" Acrylic Paint Marker on Gray Paper 18" x 24



"In Out" Acrylic on Canvas 60" x 48"



"Rise, Fall", Acrylic on Canvas, 30" x 40"

Three Stacks, Red Dot, Green Dot

“Three Stacks, Red Dot, Green Dot” - Narrative



These paintings relate to the Credit Card paintings, as they explore the issue of manufacturing and its impact on the environment.

However, there is another idea driving this work: developing paintings that interact with each other. This is also a part of the artistic endeavor for the Credit Card paintings. Although these paintings are composed to have an aesthetic and content that allows each work to stand on its own, it is also intended that grouped together the paintings’ impact and significance are intensified. I am intrigued with the idea that these paintings at some point may never be seen together again. They may reside in different locations yet they will always be joined together by the intentional intertwined relationship that allows these paintings to communicate something of broader significance when they are together than when they are apart.

Conceptually the idea is to see these paintings as if they were stills from a film where the compositional elements (the cast of characters) move and change, reinvent themselves or new characters might enter the frame. The paintings are realized as if they were out-takes from a film of random thoughts.

Copy Writing and Editing by Suzanne Ingrao

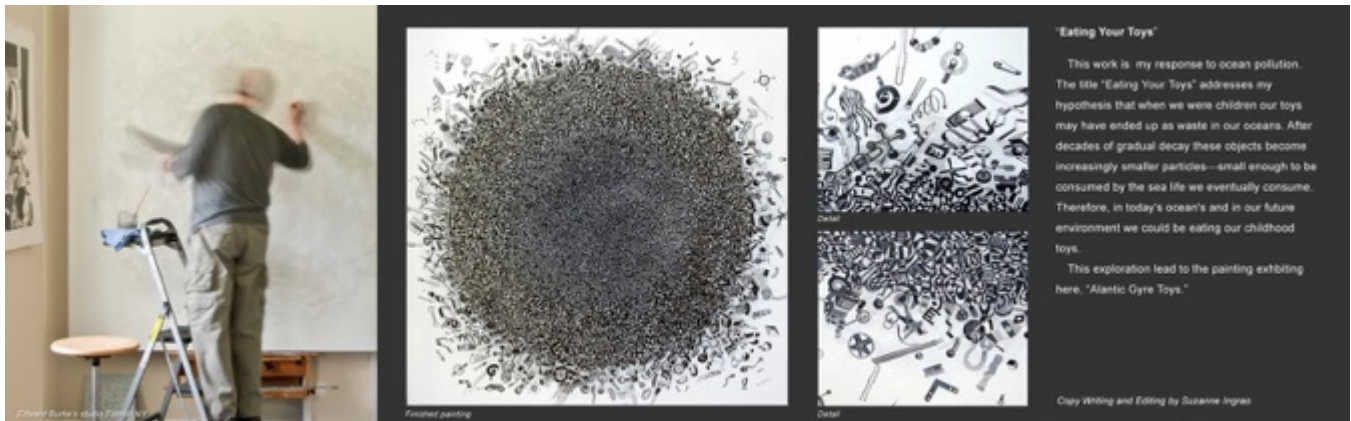


"Three Stacks, Green Dot" Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40"



"Three Stacks, Green Dot", Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40".

“Eating Your Toys” - Narrative



In this work I use symbolic representational objects in a massive circle as a metaphor for the current state of pollution in the world's oceans. The title “Eating Your Toys” addresses my hypothesis that when we were children our plastic toys and play objects may have ended up as waste in the ocean. After decades of gradual decay these eroded and decomposed objects become smaller particles (this is now termed micro-plastics)-small enough to be consumed by various types of sea life. When we sit down to a meal of salmon, tuna, lobster we consume these micro-plastics. Therefore, in today's oceans and in our future environment we could be “eating our childhood toys.”

This musing about and hypothesis led to a second painting in this exhibit, “Atlantic Gyre Toys.”



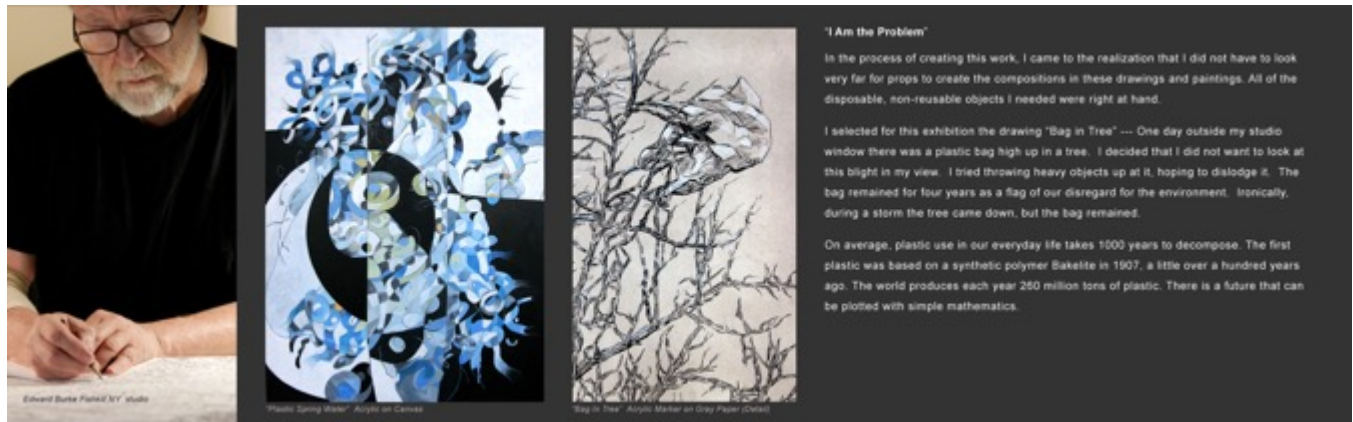
"Atlantic Gyre Toys", Acrylic Paint, Cut Canvas on Raw Canvas, 30" x 40".



“Buck Rogers” - Related drawing of a childhood toy.

“I Am The Problem”

“I Am The Problem” - Narrative



In the process of creating this work, I came to the realization that I did not have to look very far for props to create the compositions in these drawings and paintings. All of the disposable non-reusable objects I needed were right at hand. I did not have to go and rummage around in others trash it was simply a matter of looking around my studio and home.

There is a drawing I selected for this exhibition “Bag in Tree” that was a four-year unintentional investment of my time. One day outside my studio window there was a plastic bag high up in a tree. I decided that I did not want to look at this blight on my view. I tried throwing heavy objects up at it, hoping to dislodge it. I fashioned together long poles to dislodge it to no avail. The bag remained for four years as a flag of our disregard for the environment. Final during a storm the tree can down, however the bag remained.

On average plastic use in our everyday life takes 1000 years to decompose. The first plastic based on a synthetic polymer Bakelite 1907 a little over a hundred years ago. 260 million tons of plastic the world produces each year. There is a future that can be plotted with simple mathematics.



"Plastic Spring Water", Acrylic on Canvas 30" x 40".



“Untitled Drawing” Graphite Pencil on Paper 14” x 16”.

Related drawing to painting “Plastic Spring Water”.



“Untitled Drawing”, Graphite Pencil on Paper 14” x 16”.

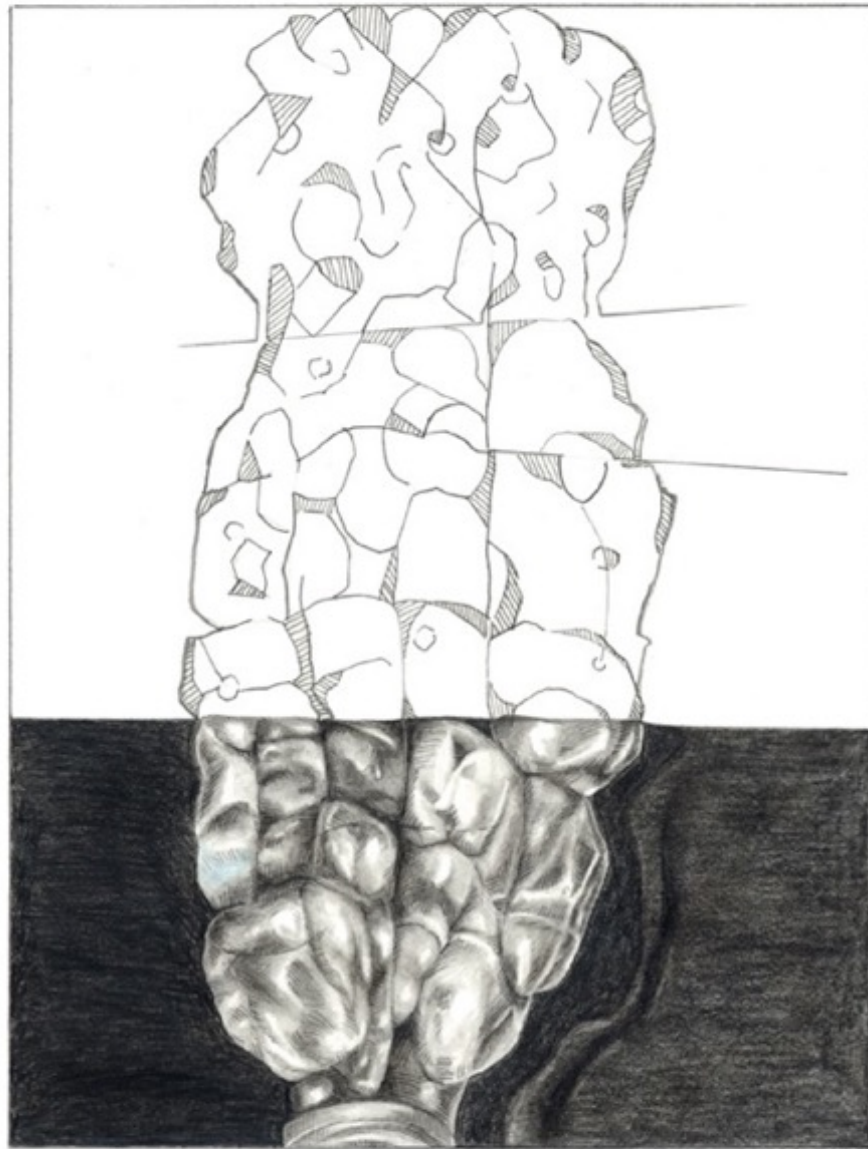
Related drawing to painting “Plastic Spring Water”.



"I Am the Problem 2", Acrylic Marker on Gray Paper 18' x 24".



"Bag In A Tree", Acrylic Marker on Gray Paper 18' x 24".



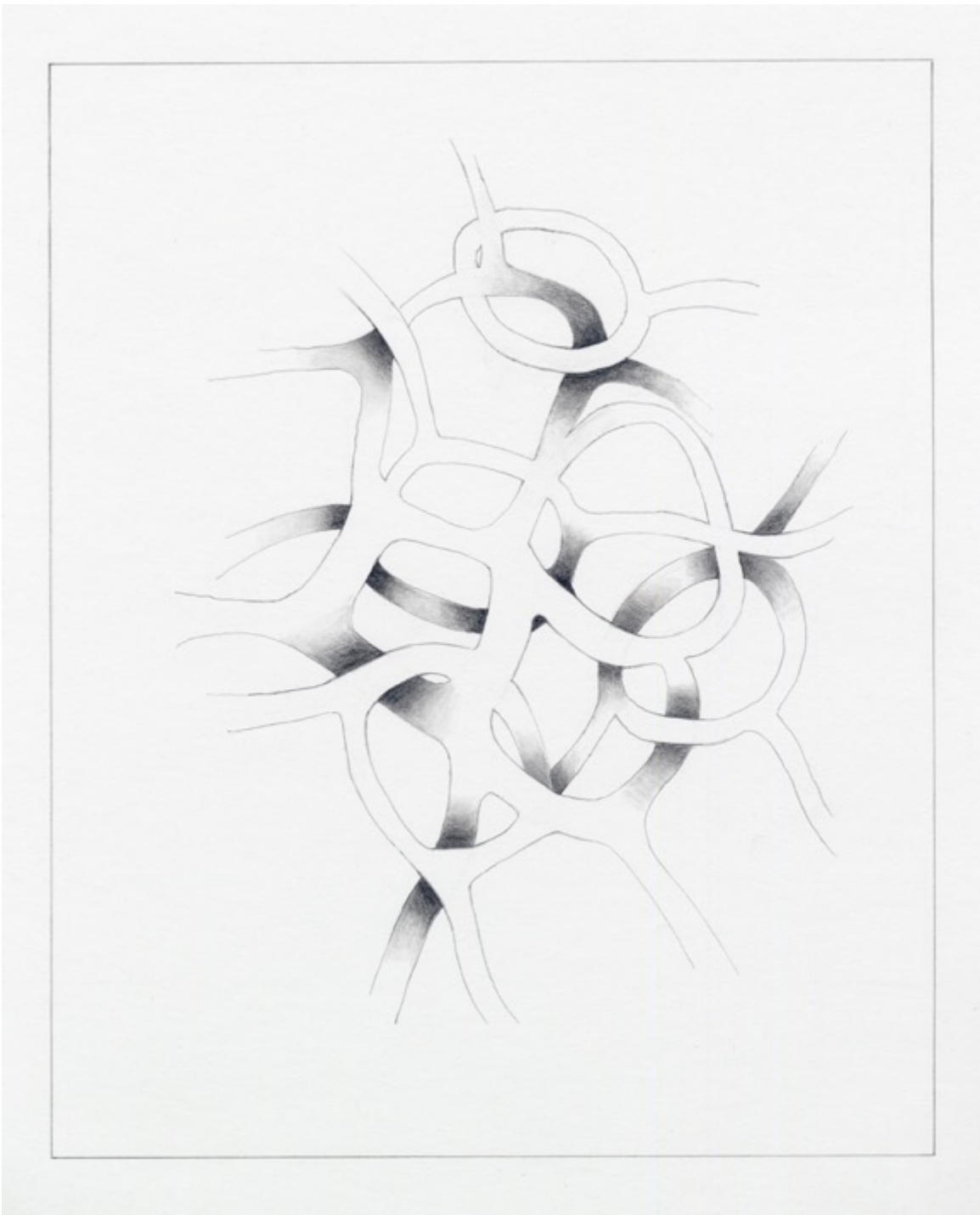
Burying Your Head in the Sand", Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".



"I Am the Problem 1", Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".



"Out of the Nest", Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".



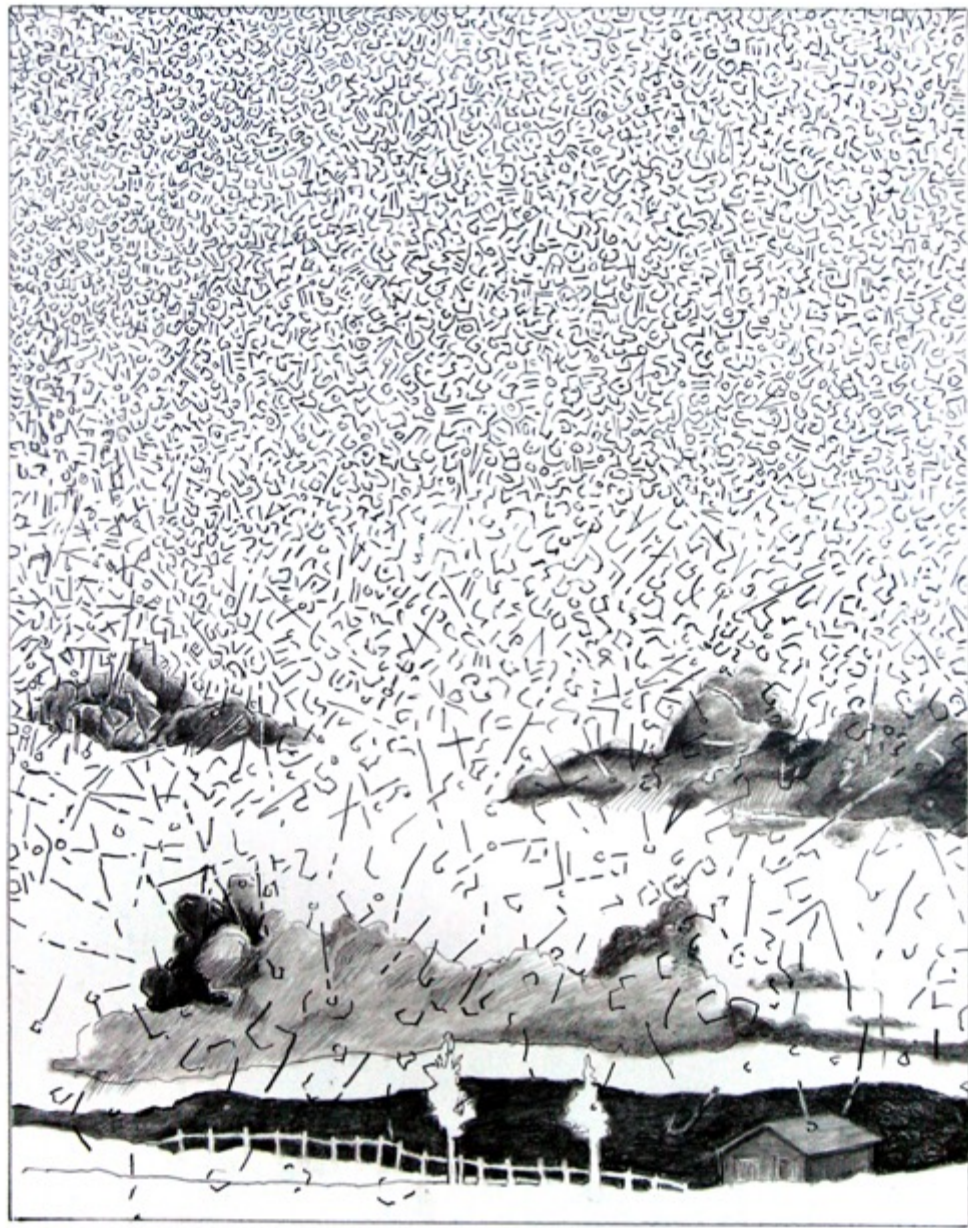
"Plastic Carrier", Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".



"Solid Smoke", Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".



"Carbon Cloud", Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".



Carbon Sky 2018

Elwan G. Burt

"Carbon Sky", Graphite Pencil on Paper 14" x 16".