



‘lightly touching the earth back’

Eilis O’Connell

2020



The Appetites of Gravity 2003
Bronze, Stainless Steel
Unique
520 cm high
Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland
Photograph Eilis O'Connell

Foreword

We have worked with Eilis O'Connell since 1993 casting and fabricating sculptures both on a large and small scale. Her sense of form and material have always appealed to us. We share concerns for craftsmanship and the appropriateness of construction methods and this connection to the chosen material is central to the forms she makes.

Gourds are a passion of Eilis's; this vegetable of the squash family is cultivated all over Africa for a whole range of purposes. By binding the growing fruit cultivators can shape them into any given form: spoons, bowls, water vessels, snuff boxes, brewing containers, funnels, sunshades, musical instruments and resonators as well as bee hives and divination implements; the list is long. The sense that nature can be grown into forms by careful binding is a truly unique and symbiotic relationship between plant, natural process and grower; it is in a sense a perfect analogy for the way Eilis makes sculpture.



Capsule for destinies unknown 2017
Galvanised Steel, Stainless Steel, Polycarbonate Sheeting
Unique
1350 cm long
'ARK' Chester Cathedral 2017



Reedpod 2006
Hand Forged Copper, Stainless Steel
1330 cm high
Commissioned by Howard Holdings for Lapps Square, Cork
Photograph Eilis O'Connell

Nature is of course a great source of inspiration albeit not the only one for Eilis.

Industrial buildings, forts, tools, implements of all kinds can be equally inspiring to her. Materials themselves suggest shapes and the working techniques of this same material can in turn suggest forms – accidents in nature or process can lead to new ways of seeing, thinking and making which are all potential for Eilis's inquisitive making process. Linking such diverse source of inspiration and seemingly chaotic stimulation is her personal sense of the Poetic. Poetry in the simplest sense, like a poet reconstructs common every day words into concentrated, magical and moving art, Eilis takes material and shape and reconfigures it into new meaningful and beautifully articulated sculpture. Many of Eilis's sculptures recall D. G. Rossetti 'moment's monument' sonnets or odes to a material or shape, forms bursting, folding, curving, turning, weaving, cutting, merging, flowing and balancing. They achieve a simultaneous feeling of both great antiquity and novel modernity, primal and advanced.



Slope 2010
Steel, Epoxy Resin
Unique
290 cm high
'Crucible' Gloucester Cathedral 2010



Atlantic Oak 2013
Bronze, Stainless Steel
Edition of 3
400 cm high
'Crucible 2' Gloucester Cathedral 2014



Each Day 2003
Bronze
Unique
240 cm high
'In Retrospect' Gallery Pangolin 2003



Ovo 2019
Bright White Carrara Marble
182 cm high
Avolon, Dublin
Photograph Fionn McCann

Material is always important to Eilis and she has found personal and new meaning for bronze, stone, wood, wire mesh, corten steel and much more.

Meaning is teased out of these durable materials with her sense of simplification. However, economic means do not imply a lack of intellectual curiosity. Shape has meaning and these forms ask questions how? Why? When? What? Which? They stimulate memories of other ideas and this visual thinking is rewarded with answers reinforced by the eye and hand caressing the forms over and over.

Eilis's thinking is a haptic journey of discovery, of herself, a material, a process and an image. As a maker the object is handled, turned, questioned, thought and felt, it is the feeling in both senses of the word that makes the object into sculpture. Never a minimalist but certainly a reductionist Eilis concentrates an object into its intense, essential form, through making.

The 'Found and Given' series, a growing and changing body of work, are like Eilis's 'ready-mades'. Unlike the manufactured objects chosen by Duchamp for their blandness and the century that has seen ready-mades evolve through the ideas of hundreds of different artists, in these conceptual works Eilis shares her inspiration and prompts our own thinking with objects, that are to her, bursting with associations, relevance, connection and beauty; search and you shall find.

We are delighted and honoured to exhibit this collection of Eilis's sculpture and works on paper here at Gallery Pangolin, where material craft and process are equally revered.

Rungwe Kingdon
March 2020



Effigy
2007
Bronze
Edition of 9
29 x 10.5 x 3.5 cm

Catalogue

Your eyes can tell you so much more than I can

the artist says – perhaps as a form of encouragement, perhaps as a warning.

I leave her studio on a winter evening. Driving west I watch as the countryside, familiar in daylight, becomes strange in the building dark – edgeless, undetermined. Out the windscreen and in the sullied mirrors, passing forms remind me of things I have seen earlier in the afternoon. The hours spent looking have been impressed on my perceptions, leaving outlines and traces I can neither grasp nor shake. From the blurred shrubbery and the beams thrown by headlamps, from the lifting, dropping, furrowing surfaces of the fields, her sculptures come back to me.

The moon is either full or so nearly full that its asymmetry is indiscernible. It seems, one moment, as if it is made of clear cast resin, and the next, of Portuguese pink marble, and the next, of pure silver.



Appetites of Gravity
Maquette
2018
Bronze
Edition of 10
26 x 13 x 13 cm

They come in families

the artist says, but it might be that a bronze gives birth to a watercolour, that a palm-sized carving is sister to a monumental twist of steel. Their relationships may be understood solely by the artist, or not even by the artist, for she works primarily by sight and touch – by divination – rounding up objects and fabrics, weaning them off the ready-made world.

There are two sheds, she tells me, *the Shed of Inspiration* and *the Shed of Practicality*.

The first shed is a depository for the items she collects; a vault of material memories and wordless prompts. The second shed contains the unwieldy, untidy things. It is where the vital yet unbeautiful tasks take place.

The contents of the sheds leak out into the main studio space. Around its edges, on hooks, sills and shelves are the ancestors of her finished pieces. Their resemblances are sometimes displayed – a pallor or posture – and sometimes concealed. She picks up a branch of monbretia and shows me a kink in a papery leaf, smoothing it out with her fingertips. She is a specialist in singular details such as this. A sculpture might set the slightest aspect – a gesture or fold – into stone or steel, but she is as likely to be prompted by a convoluted system as by the minutiae. She shows me a book about data visualisation, describing the orderly beauty of the coloured dots, knotted lines and numbers that appear baffling and yet make pure sense.

When she works, it is with a rigour of precision and play; she is amplifying details; she is compressing networks.



Ridge
2019
Iranian Travertino Oniciato
Edition of 3
9 x 31 x 8 cm

I try to touch the earth lightly

the artist says, though she is keenly aware that her art practice leaves an ecological footprint disproportionate to her life. I refute the concept that her sculptures could ever seem wasteful. Instead, they distort the status quo of materials, compelling the unassuming passer-by to pay attention, to question a strange object with a familiar fabric, its use and place in the environment.

Out the window of her studio, a slanted valley changes with the moving clouds.

Obscured beneath its green lid, there are simple forms – bones, shells, spoons, arrow-heads – and there are convoluted systems – the roots of trees and the hyphae of fungi, the cables and fibre optic wires which create the internet.

And as the light changes, there is the ghostly reflection of a conical steel structure – from outside the studio onto the opposite slope,

her sculpture lightly touches the earth back.

Sara Baume
2020



Falling
2016
Watercolour, Gouache, Cotton Rag Paper
35 x 30 cm

Node
2003
Bronze
Edition of 5
9 x 20 x 14 cm





Five Vessels
Maquette
2006
Bronze, Stainless Steel
Edition of 5
37 x 37 x 35 cm



Trajectory
2015
Ink, Watercolour, Cotton Rag Paper
21 x 21 cm

Sublime Geometry
2016
Sterling Silver
Edition of 10
7.5 x 8.5 x 11 cm



Flung Blue
2019
Bolivian Sodalite
Edition of 3
71 x 29 x 20 cm





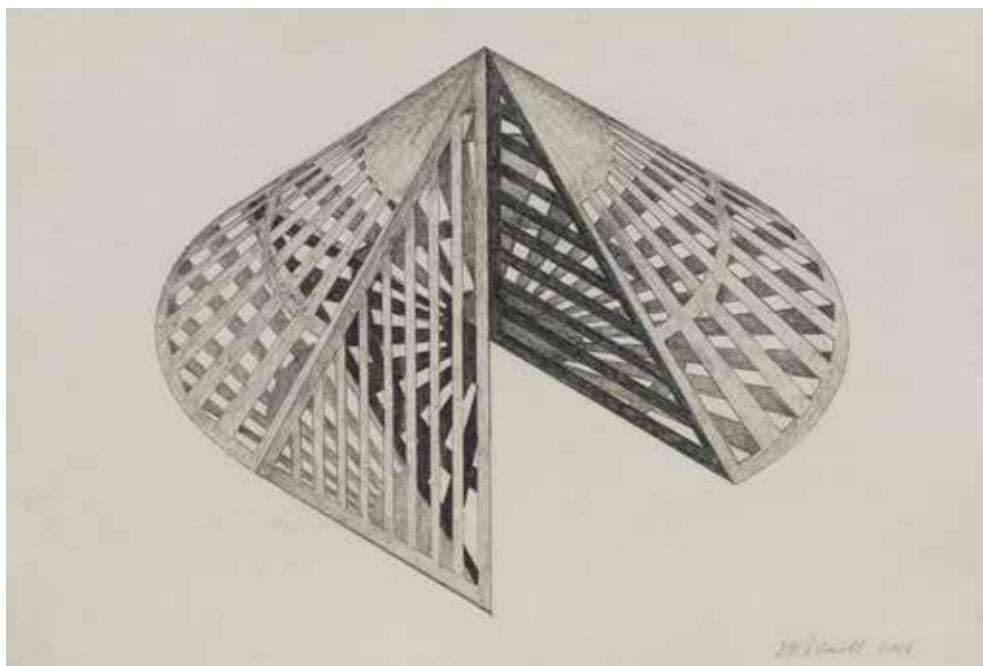
Pink Horizon
2016
Watercolour, Cotton Rag Paper
25 x 35 cm



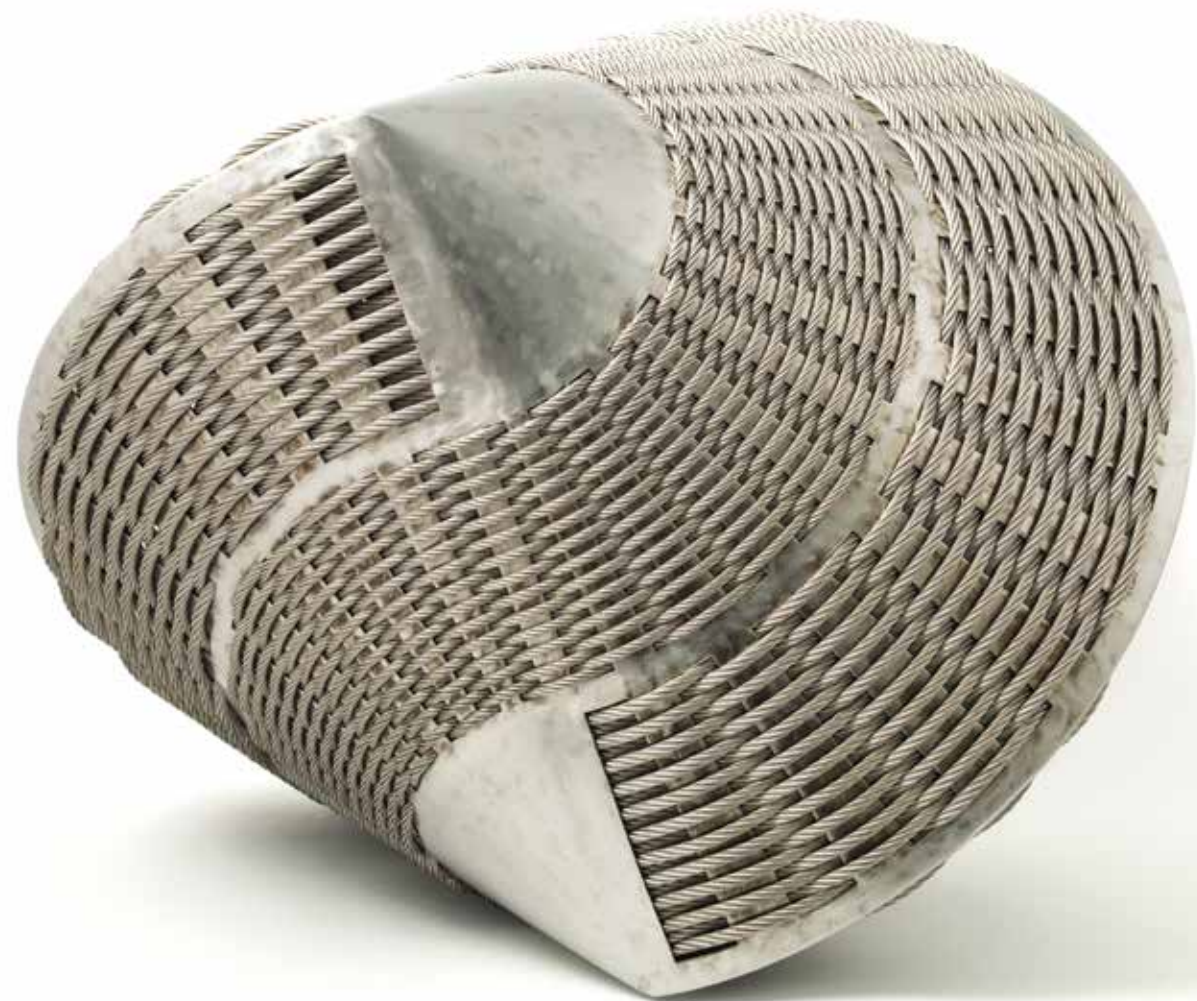
Scribble
2016
Bronze
Edition of 10
24 x 34 x 27 cm

Spoonwoman
1990
Bronze
Edition of 25
19 x 7 x 6 cm





Quarter Drop Cone
2019
Pencil, Cotton Rag Paper
30 x 43 cm



Carapace
2018
Stainless Steel
Edition of 5
36 x 46 x 46 cm



Unlikely Monuments Series
Gourd Elongated
2010
Bronze
Edition of 5
68.5 x 13.5 x 12 cm

Unlikely Monuments Series
Single Antennae
2010
Bronze
Edition of 5
73.5 x 16 x 16 cm





Billow
2015
Bronze
Edition of 5
28 x 36 x 14 cm

Slope
2019
Portuguese Pink Marble
Edition of 3
32 x 35 x 19 cm





Extrude 2
2016
Bronze
Edition of 10
14 x 22 x 13 cm

Edged Camarna
2004
Bronze
Edition of 5
37 x 15.5 x 18 cm





Cairn
2014
Ink, Watercolour, Cotton Rag Paper
20 x 20 cm

The Square Inside
2010
Frosted Resin
Edition of 10
15 x 22 x 22 x cm





Toor
2005
Bronze
Edition of 5
13 x 20 x 19 cm

Earth Pillow
2009
Patinated Copper, Epoxy Glass Composite
Unique
183 x 104 x 20 cm





Red Thing
2015
Watercolour, Cotton Rag Paper
35 x 25 cm

Unlikely Monuments Series
Squared
2010
Bronze
Edition of 5
108 x 24 x 20 cm





Collide
2016
Watercolour, Cotton Rag Paper
41 x 29 cm

Humanoid
2014
Bronze
Edition of 5
54 x 10 x 8.5 cm



Concretion
2019
Portuguese Pink Marble
Edition of 3
26 x 28 x 35 cm



Morphwall
2009
Bronze
Edition of 5
27 x 60 x 19 cm



Contort
2013
Bronze
Edition of 5
177.5 cm





Curve to Edge
2012
Clear Cast Resin
Unique
14.5 x 35 x 12 cm



Enclosure
2016
Bronze
Edition of 10
15 x 38 x 9 cm



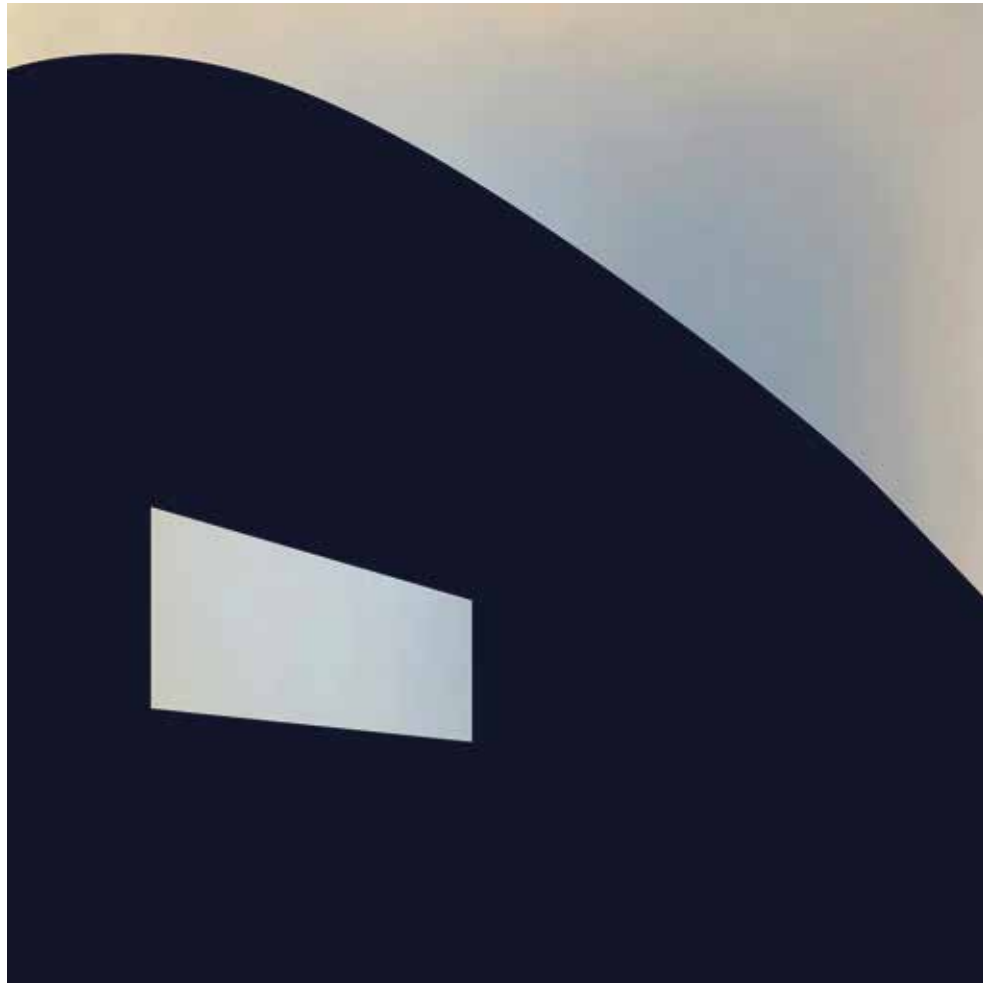
Wren's Nest
2009
Clear Cast Resin, Nest
Unique
25 x 25.5 x 21 cm

Bounce
2010
Stainless Steel Mesh, Aluminium, Wood
Unique
240 x 103 x 16 cm



Unlikely Monuments Series
Pressure Vessel
2010
Bronze
Edition of 5
57.5 x 16 x 16 cm





Potential Building
2008
Digital Print, Hahnemühle Paper
Edition of 6
74 x 71 cm



Carapace
2003
Bronze
Edition of 20
16 x 21 x 17 cm

Cone W
2014
Bronze
Edition of 10
20 x 42 x 25 cm



Unlikely Monuments Series
Unlikely Monument No. 5
2010
Bronze
Edition of 5
56 x 11 x 15 cm



Liss
2016
Bronze
Edition of 10
23 x 52 x 19.5 cm





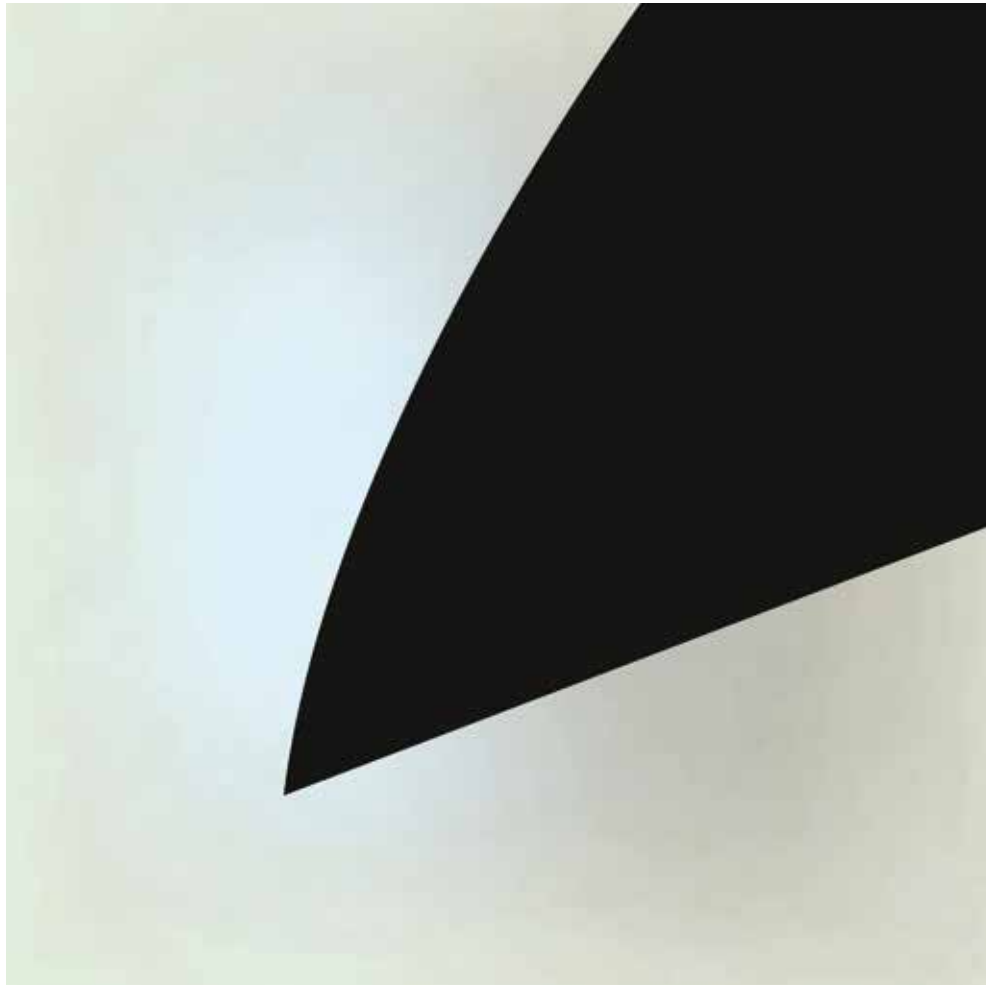
Column
2016
Ink, Watercolour, Cotton Rag Paper
21 x 21 cm

Unlikely Monuments Series
Arc End
2010
Bronze
Edition of 5
88.5 x 16 x 16 cm



Whorl
2017
Bronze
Edition of 7
21 x 24 x 30 cm





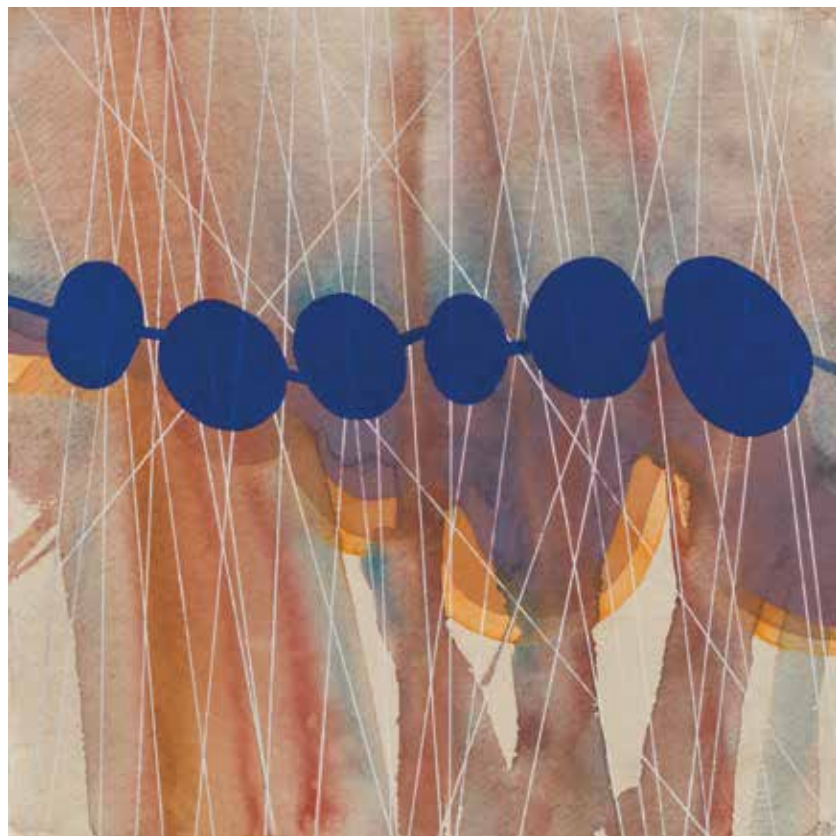
Downtown
2008
Digital Print, Hahnemühle Paper
Edition of 6
74 x 71 cm

Grown / Made
2012
Bronze
Edition of 3
186 cm



Corallium Rubrum 5
2010
Clear Cast Resin, Coral
Unique
25 x 24 x 14 cm





Beaded
2013
Ink, Watercolour, Cotton Rag Paper
30 x 30 cm

Hole Stones
2018
Bronze
Edition of 10
12.5 x 23 x 12.5 cm
12 x 15.5 x 12 cm



Thornmorph
2019
Portuguese Pink Marble
Edition of 3
60 x 20.5 x 30.5 cm





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