

EMILIE PUGH
FORCE FIELDS

M I C H A E L
GOEDHUIS



PHOTO: TINKERBETH

FORCE FIELDS

EMILIE PUGH was born in London in 1988 and studied at Byam Shaw School of Art and at the Ruskin School of Art and Drawing at Oxford University. She currently lives and works in London.

This appearance of a conventional, almost traditional artistic background, is deceptive and belies the reality of her emergence as one of the most restlessly boundary-breaking young artists of today's generation.

Artists who are Emilie Pugh's contemporaries today are confronted by a critical dilemma. On the one hand, they have access to a multiplicity of aesthetic choices and the freedom to do anything they want. But on the other, they have to cope with the pressure to conform to the demands of a 'culture of repudiation' which they assume feeds the expectations of the academic and commercial art-world.

In the contemporary world everything is permitted and nothing resisted, boundaries no longer exist making it impossible to violate them and resulting in the disappearance of a genuine avant-garde. The extremities that we see in the art world today poses the problem of how to attract attention... and leads often to modes of art or thought in which modern sensibility is corrupted by productions of kitsch, politics, social theory, gender issues or some other academic, pop-orientated baggage. And it doesn't change anything to adopt the word transgressive as a substitute for avant-garde.

As a reaction to today's political and politically-correct 'avant-garde' a group of artists is emerging that returns to the inherent aesthetic of the world around them and the tranquillity within nature and man. They return to the ancient old sensibilities of nature, beauty, philosophy and science, an attitude of honesty, cultural and historical depth and above all the return to the virtuosity of the artist puts forward this group of artists that are forming a small renaissance of practices worldwide.

Emilie Pugh provides a vital and unexpected example of precisely one of those individual talents who have no truck with identity politics and who are courageously running against much of contemporary cultural orthodoxy. Her work incorporates daring pictorial disquisitions, not on an ideologically formed fantasy world and its self-referential plot lines, but on an attitude of honesty to the imperatives of lived experience, an attitude of openness to the aesthetic and moral traditions that have defined our culture and, too, an acute awareness of the chaos around us in today's world.

She puts it well herself. 'I am guided by the interconnectivity of all living things. I draw on systems of belief from the spiritual to the scientific, the micro to the macro and the conflicting or confluent forces that govern them.' She is interested in capturing the experience of the ephemeral nature of things... 'we exist in a state of constant flux'.

In order to press her driving perceptions into tangible form she restlessly experiments with a versatile range of media: drawing, burning, gunpowder, chemicals, thread, 3D installation, incense stick, thread and light as well as pen and ink.

The current exhibition highlights her intellectual preoccupation with juxtaposing themes of chaos and tranquillity. In particular, the increased scale of the works in her *Cyclone* series expresses her reaction to what she perceives as the increased turbulence in the world around us. The sheer physical dimensions of *Twin Cyclone* and *Cyclone* evoke a matching physical response in the viewer... confronted with the power and majesty of nature.

In the *Trailing Edge* series Emilie Pugh uses the same 'burning' technique as in the *Cyclone* group. For this, her interest in science and its alliance with the life of the soul was fuelled by her study at Imperial College of the flow of patterns created when particles are forced over and around static objects.

Her evolution in thinking since her last body of work is well illustrated by the pen and pencil drawings which she call her 'meditation drawings.' *Enso* and *Timelines* are an exercise in repetition and movement. *Enso* is the result of hand-drawn circles over the course of months, evoking an image of atoms pulsating to the

rhythms of life itself. And *Timelines* defines the repetition of the line's 'mood' in an endless ripple of irregularities.

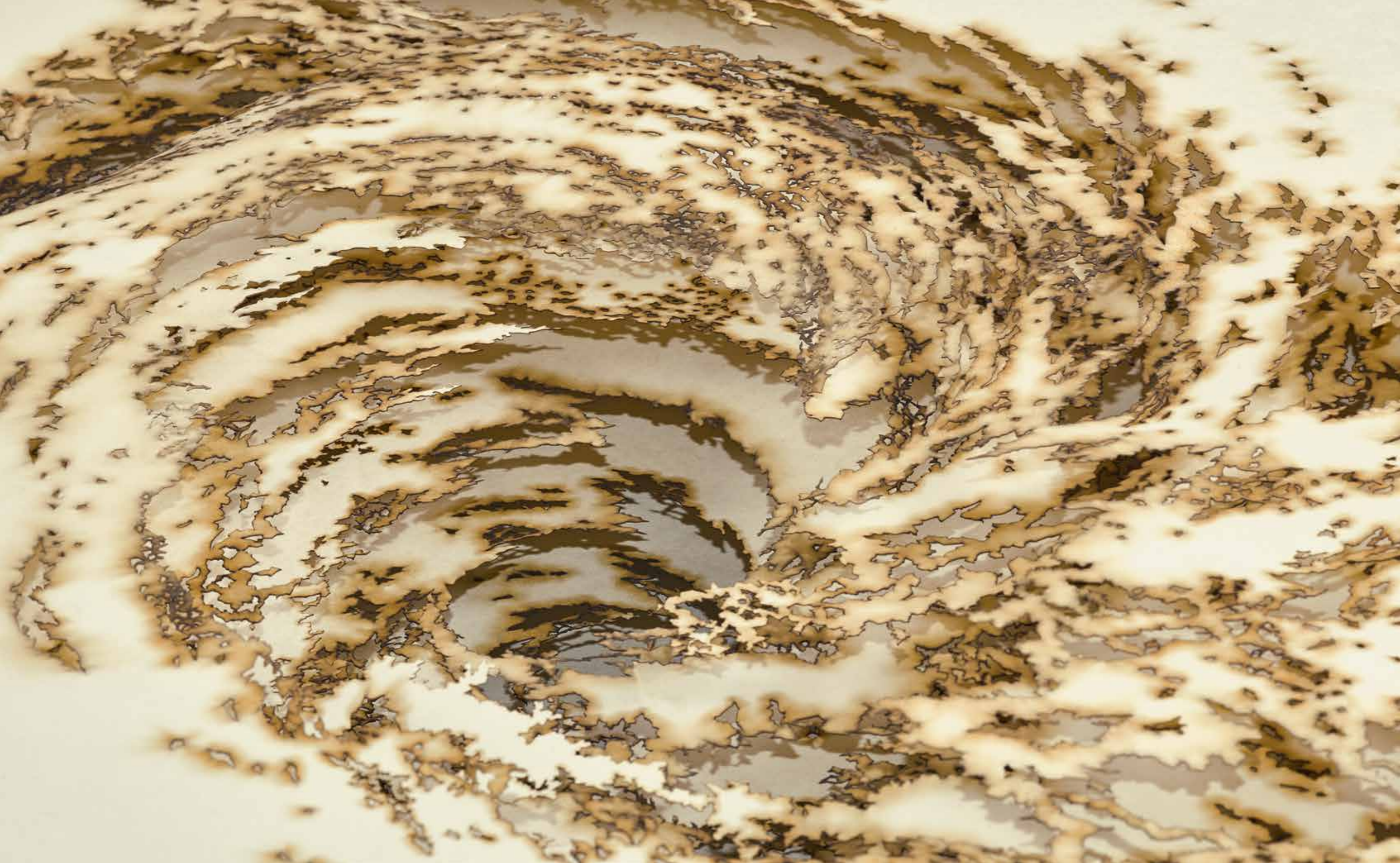
This return to ancient philosophy and meditation culminates in her beautiful drawings of antique Scholar Rocks from the collection of Marcus Flacks. Apart from this bravura display of virtuoso draughtsmanship, these works hint at her concern to find an aesthetic route between the 'soul and science'... an anchor within the endless flux of her fleeting world. Flacks himself refers to these rocks as 'meditative portals.' Portals that connect the physical world to the that of the psyche.

This group of 14 works presents a beautiful selection of Emilie Pugh's oeuvre encompassing her ideas, interest and views of the world at large.

MICHAEL GOEDHUIS

Overleaf
TWIN CYCLONE, 2019
Six layers of burnt *kozu* paper
100 × 160 × 19 cm



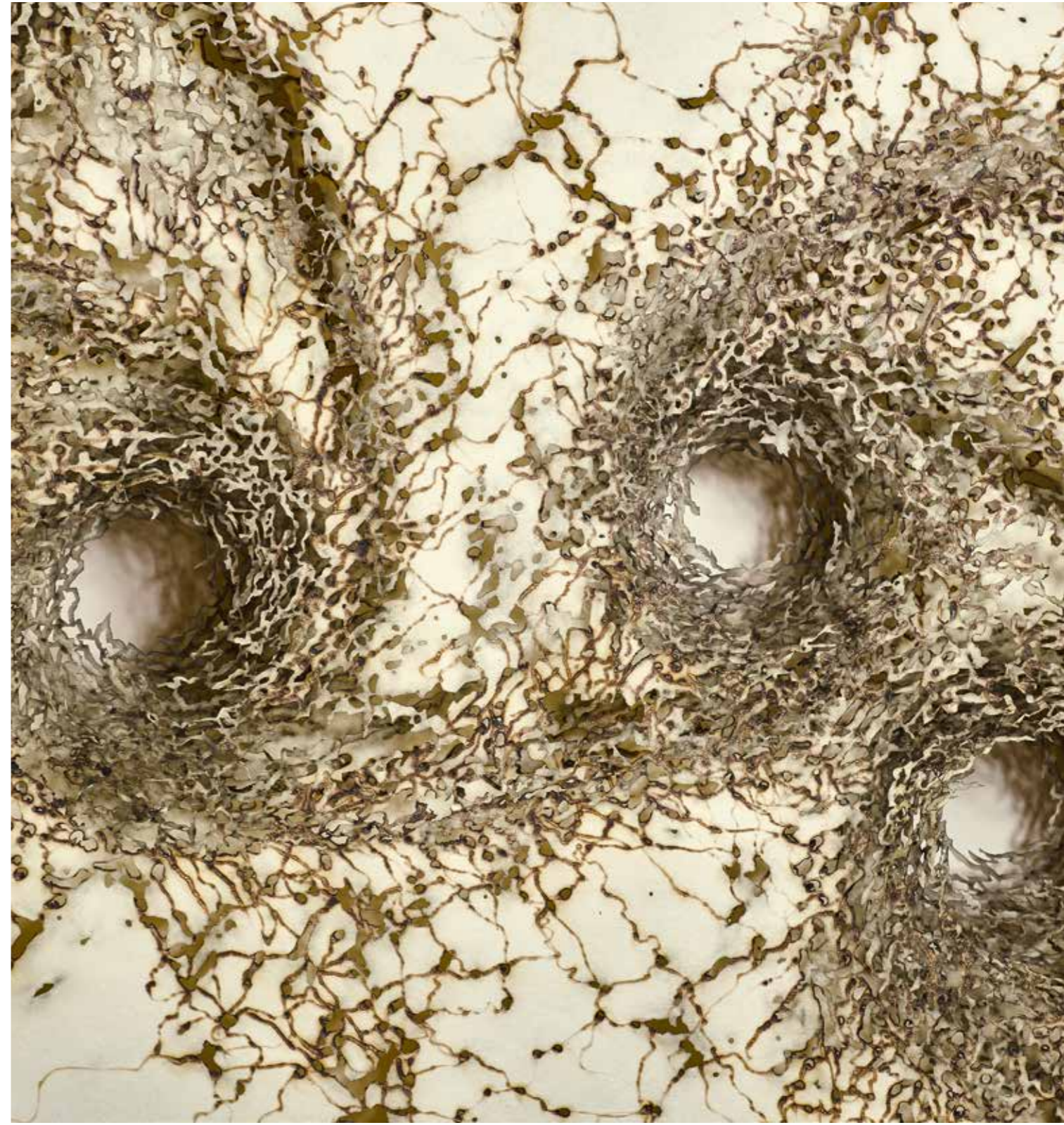




SCHOLAR ROCK I, 2019
Pencil on paper
110 × 92 cm



TIMEFOLDS, 2019
Three layers of burnt *kozu* paper, cast rock and gold leaf
180 × 90 × 7.5 cm



TIMEFOLDS, 2019 (detail)

INFLECTION POINT, 2019
11 layers on burnt *kozuke* paper on steel plinth
80 × 60 × 32 cm



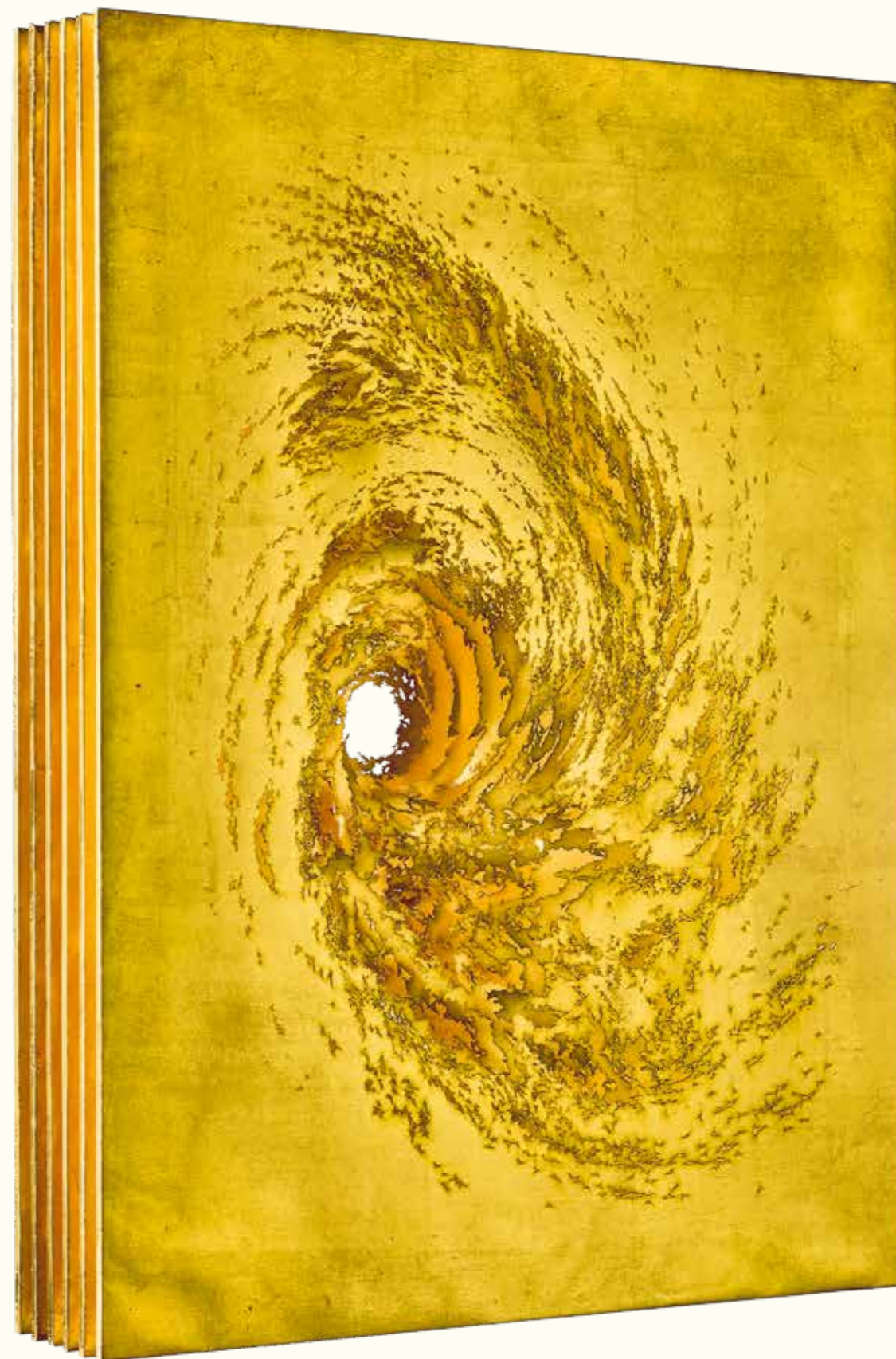


SOLAR SNARE, 2019
Burnt *kozu* paper
150 × 150 cm



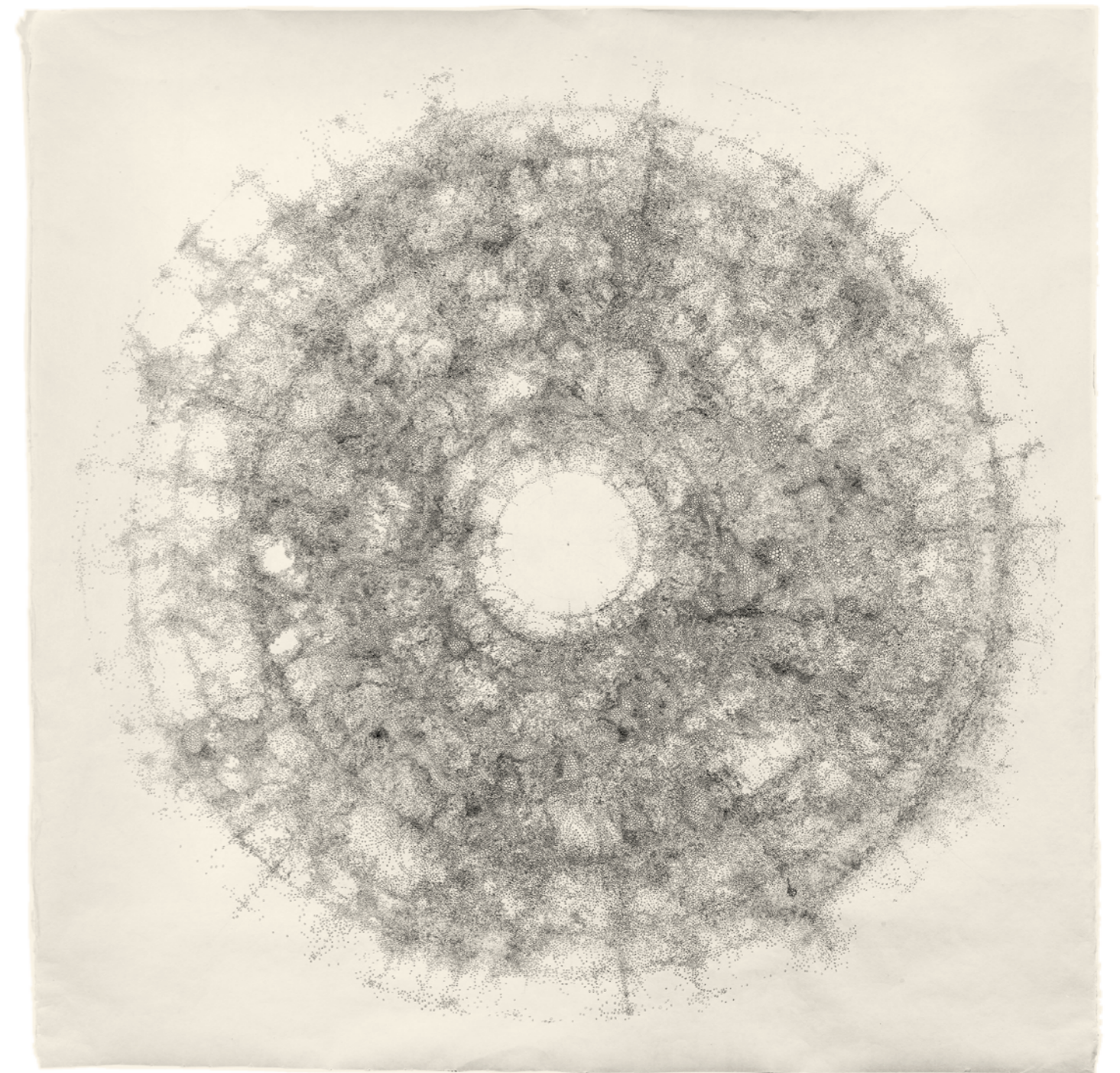
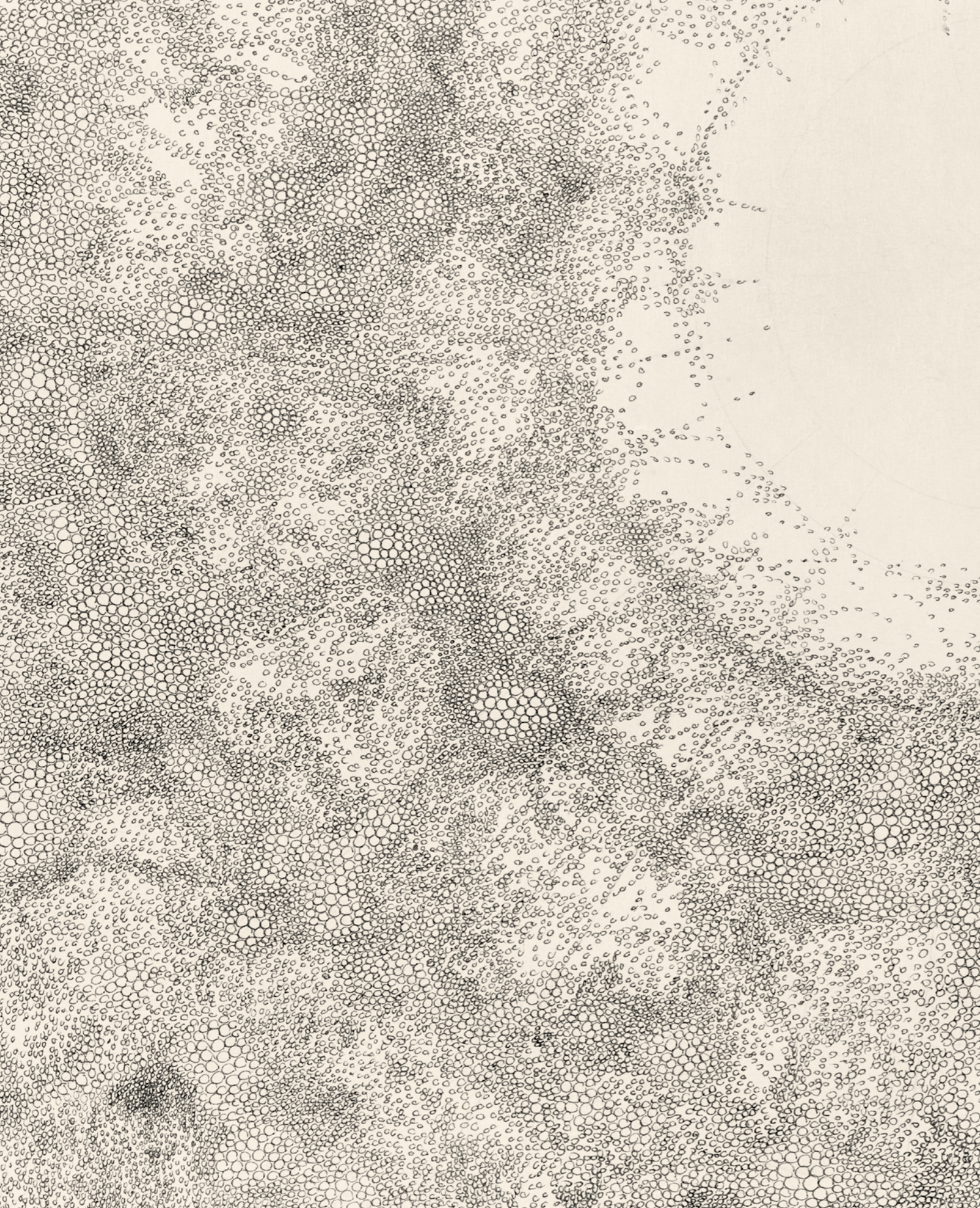
SCHOLAR ROCK III, 2019
Pencil on paper
110 x 92 cm

GOLD CYCLONE, 2019
24 carat gold leaf on six layers of *kozuke* paper
80 × 60 × 18 cm



GOLD CYCLONE, 2019 (detail)



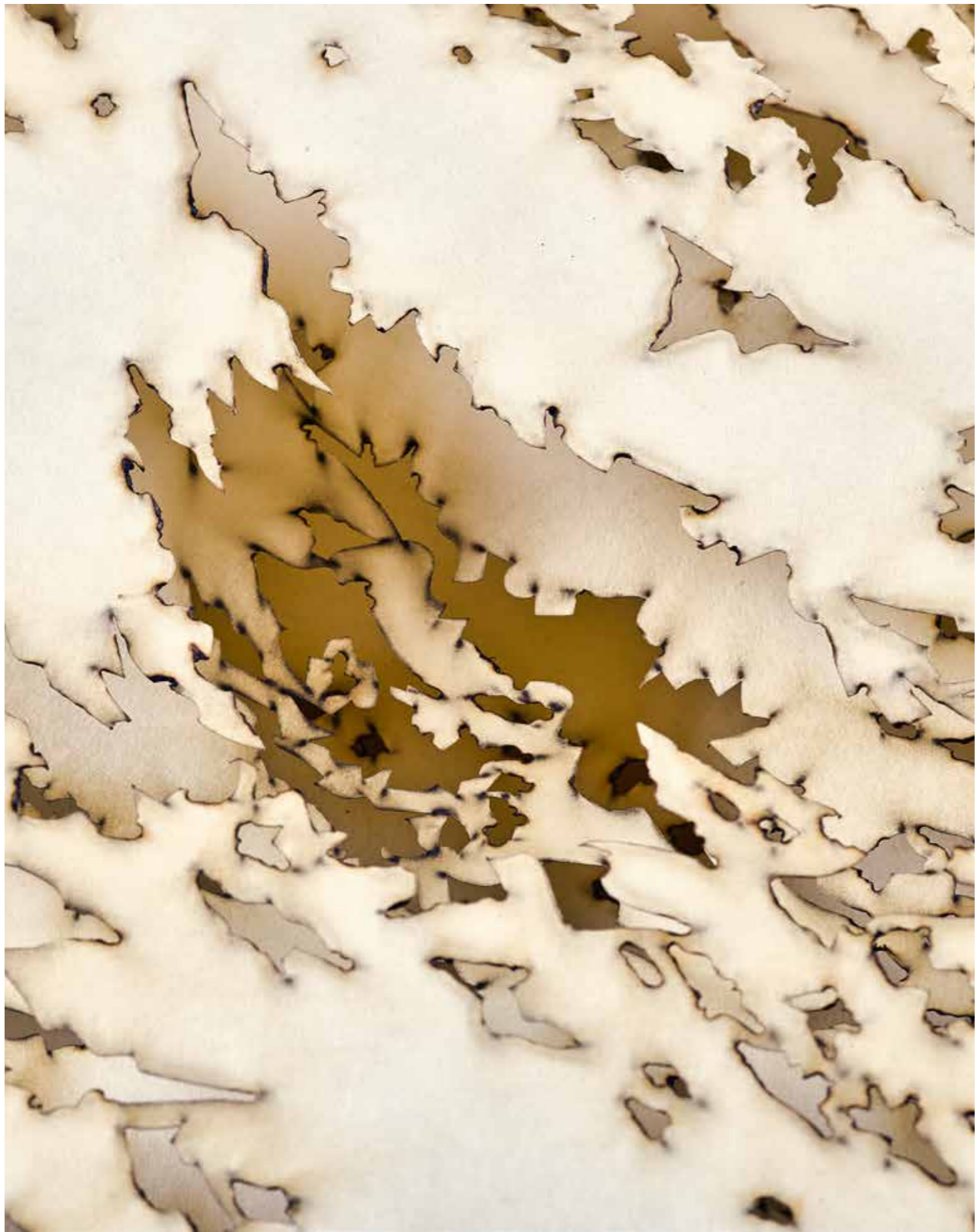


ENSO, 2019
Pen on *kozuke* paper
100 × 100 cm



CYCLONE, 2019
Six layers of burnt *kozuke* paper
110 × 150 × 19 cm







HELIANTHUS, 2019
Two layers of burnt *kozu* paper
120 × 120 cm



HELIANTHUS, 2019 (detail)



PHOTO: GIULIA SAVORELLI

EMILIE PUGH

Born London, 1988

Education

2006–2007 Byam Shaw School of Art, London

2007–2010 The Ruskin School of Fine Art and Drawing, Oxford

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2019 *Force Fields*, Michael Goedhuis at Tomasso Brothers, London

2017 *Motions of the Mind*, Michael Goedhuis, London

2016 *Topologies*, Hunter/Whitfield Gallery, Clerkenwell, London

2016 *States of Becoming*, The Cob Gallery, London

2014 *Tracing Pathways*, Kunsthalle m3, Aterlierhaus Mengerzeile, Berlin

Group Exhibitions

2019 *She Persists*, Heist Pavilion, Palazzo Benzon Venice Biennale

2019 *Into the Sea*, Tree Line Residency, Italy

2018 *Her Stories*, Protein Studios, London

2018 *Adventures and Curiosities*, Hauser and Wirth, London

2017 *Drawing Now*, Cob Gallery, Paris

2015–2017 *Cold Folds*, Emilie Pugh and Alice von Maltzahn, Blacks Club, London

2014–2015 *Interact*, East Wing XI Courtauld, London

2014 *Material Identity*, Rook and Raven Gallery, London

2014 *Intra*, Emilie Pugh and Alice von Maltzhan, The Asylum, London

2008 *Box Ladder*, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford

Prizes

2015 Longlisted for *Aesthetica* Magazine art prize

2009 Shortlisted for Pirye Prize, Oxford University Press

Residencies

2019 ‘Tree Line Residency’, Calpalbio, Italy

2013–2014 Aterlierhaus Mengerzeile, Berlin

2009 Draw International, Caylus, France