

Frenzy/Vertigo

—12 Watercolors by Manfred Naescher

Information

Artist book, first edition 2016
Edition of 50
Signed and numbered
20 pages, 22 x 22 cm square
Paper 240gsm, saddle-stitched
Full color Indigo printing
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Photography: Pedro Malacas
Design: Manfred Naescher

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Summary

The artist book *Frenzy/Vertigo* contains twelve reproductions of Manfred Naescher's 2015 large scale watercolor series *Mit den Tieren (With the Animals)* of animal motifs based on Ferdinand Nigg's early twentieth century textile art.

On the Animal Motifs

The watercolors' animal motifs are derived from the work of textile artist Ferdinand Nigg (1865-1949). Nigg, an unsung early proponent of abstraction and near-abstract figurative art, hid clues of personal significance in his work by using animal imagery for its wide spectrum of symbolic meaning. Recurring motifs are those of the hunter and the hunted, the animal as observer, as protector or aggressor. In his work, the mythical realm collides with observed nature, as creatures of the collective imagination and their counterparts in reality are treated the same way: Animals both existing (dogs, deer, birds) and in various fictional manifestations (dragons, unicorns) are united in coexistence on the picture plane. Nigg gives equal value to all possible forms of life, providing the work with a - not entirely unproblematic - unity of fiction and reality.

From Color to Line

Most of the source imagery for the book's watercolors comes from Nigg's tapestry work, some from his paintings. In either format, his approach is fundamentally that of a painter: His pictorial subjects emerge from contrasting fields

of color, from shapes. My own practice is rooted in drawing, so in working with the line (here, a negative, white line created with mask liners; a liquid that shields the paper from the watercolor, and that can be removed once the paint has dried, revealing a white line) and in tracing the outlines of Nigg's compositions, a transformation occurs in which the original image remains recognizable, however not as itself, but as one possible version of its own memory.

Movement and Tension

The titles of the works in *Frenzy/Vertigo* are borrowed from films by Alfred Hitchcock (*Vertigo*, *Saboteur*, *Spellbound*, *Psycho*, etc.): In referring to both the movement and the tension inherent in Nigg's imagery, the titles underline notions of confusion and fear, of being hunted and hunting. Nigg's cryptic motifs suggest biographical fragments, yet they fail to reveal themselves fully, providing only hints towards the underlying complexity and ambivalence of - to use Hitchcock's terms - the "Whodunit", and, centrally, towards the complicated driving force of the "MacGuffin", which is the embodiment of both narrative motor and mystery, of source and secret. The titles describe situations, emotional states and roles that a protagonist is forced into, states that can either be accepted, or, by whichever means available, attempted to transcend. Nigg confronts these inner processes with the act of image-making, leading to richly personal work in a vivid, complex visual language of his own.

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On Ferdinand Nigg

The Liechtenstein-born Ferdinand Nigg (1865-1949) represents Modern Art for Liechtenstein: He participated in the first Werkbund exhibition (a precursor to the Bauhaus), and he was an influential professor at the German art and design schools of Magdeburg and Cologne until 1931, when he retired and left an increasingly troubling Germany for the country of his childhood, Liechtenstein. The majority of his vast oeuvre was created in secret, it is imbued with personal meaning, and characterized by daring visual and structural invention.

On the Watercolors

The large scale watercolors of this series measure between about 80 by 80 cm and about 110 by 140 cm. Each drawing is executed in monochrome color (blues or yellows) and with white lines traversing the monochrome surface to delineate and define its respective pictorial subject.

Background: The portfolio edition *Ferdinand Nigg mit den Tieren* (2015)

The series was first collected in 2015 in a limited edition linen bound loose leaf portfolio called *Ferdinand Nigg mit den Tieren* (*Ferdinand Nigg with the Animals*), a set that also housed eight further reproductions of watercolors, the series *Ferdinand Nigg*, as well as Naescher's essay *Das bewegte Bild* that was previously published in the monograph *Ferdinand Nigg (1865-1949). Gestickte Moderne* (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther

König, 2015). That initial edition was created by hand in a strictly limited edition of 7 unique boxes, in collaboration with the bookbinder Leah Buckareff and the textile artist Amanda Fowler who created unique embroidered animal motifs for each of the sets. It was designed in homage to a common practice of distributing art in the early twentieth century (see, for example, Alfred Kubin's 1920 portfolio *Wilde Tiere*).

The edition *Ferdinand Nigg mit den Tieren* connects a drawing strategy with the tradition of publishing and distributing art as an edition in order to create a contemporary examination (also, if you will: excavation) of the work of Ferdinand Nigg.

Ferdinand Nigg mit den Tieren was presented on December 3, 2015, at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz, as part of the museum retrospective *Ferdinand Nigg (1865-1949). Gestickte Moderne* (on view from 11.9.2015 to 24.1.2016, curated by Christiane Meyer-Stoll, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, in cooperation with Eva Frommelt-Mengou Tata, Prof. Ferdinand Nigg-Stiftung, Schaan).

Frenzy/Vertigo is an offshoot of this earlier handmade edition, in the form of an abridged, compact and affordable artist publication.

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About the Artist

**Manfred
Naescher
(1973,
Liechtenstein)
lives and
works in
Berlin**

His drawings, video works and artist books are shown internationally, a.o. in 2014 at a Carte Blanche presentation at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz, as well as in numerous group exhibitions, a.o. at Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland, 2015, at Art in General Gallery, New York, 2010; at Shibaura House, Tokyo, 2012; at the Leipzig Museum for Contemporary Art, Leipzig, Germany, 2010; at Hamburger Kunstverein, Hamburg, Germany, 2010. Naescher works in a variety of media, predominantly drawing, painting and video, and he creates and publishes artist books and editions that are distributed internationally (a.o. *Still*, Distance Over Time, Berlin, 2014, and *Nitroglyzerin und Chloroform*, self-published, Berlin, 2015).

Naescher has studied at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver (Canada), at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence (USA), and at the University of Berne (Switzerland).

Artist Statement

**The Idea of
Memory as
an Idea of
Image-
Making**

My work explores the idea of memory as an idea of image-making. My main medium, watercolour, has the unique property - in materiality and through gesture - of both mirroring and making visible the process of memory. A recording of the process is made in the time it takes the medium to dry: Water and pigment leave traces on the paper that reveal a trajectory through which the biography of the image becomes legible. The emerging image functions analogously to memory in that distortions, shifts, additions, cessations, redistributions, and re-prioritising occur. The work becomes a witness of its own gestation and transformation, illusion becomes concrete form. What remains is a memory.

»The art of allowing ghosts to come back«, as Jacques Derrida describes the medium of cinema (a statement he made while performing in the film *Ghost Dance*), implies that whoever or whatever it is that is »coming back« has been a »ghost« all along. My work uses existing imagery from the history of art, culture and ideas, often from the history of cinema - a world of ghosts, if you will - as an openly accessible archive of collective memory. According to Derrida, ghosts are manifestations of a memory of a past that has never existed in the form of a present. In other words, memory is in essence a product of artifice. My way of making images out of existing images considers the impossibility of »coming back« in any form other than that of a ghost: Memory, fragmented and ephemeral, is itself the work of ghosts.

—Manfred Naescher

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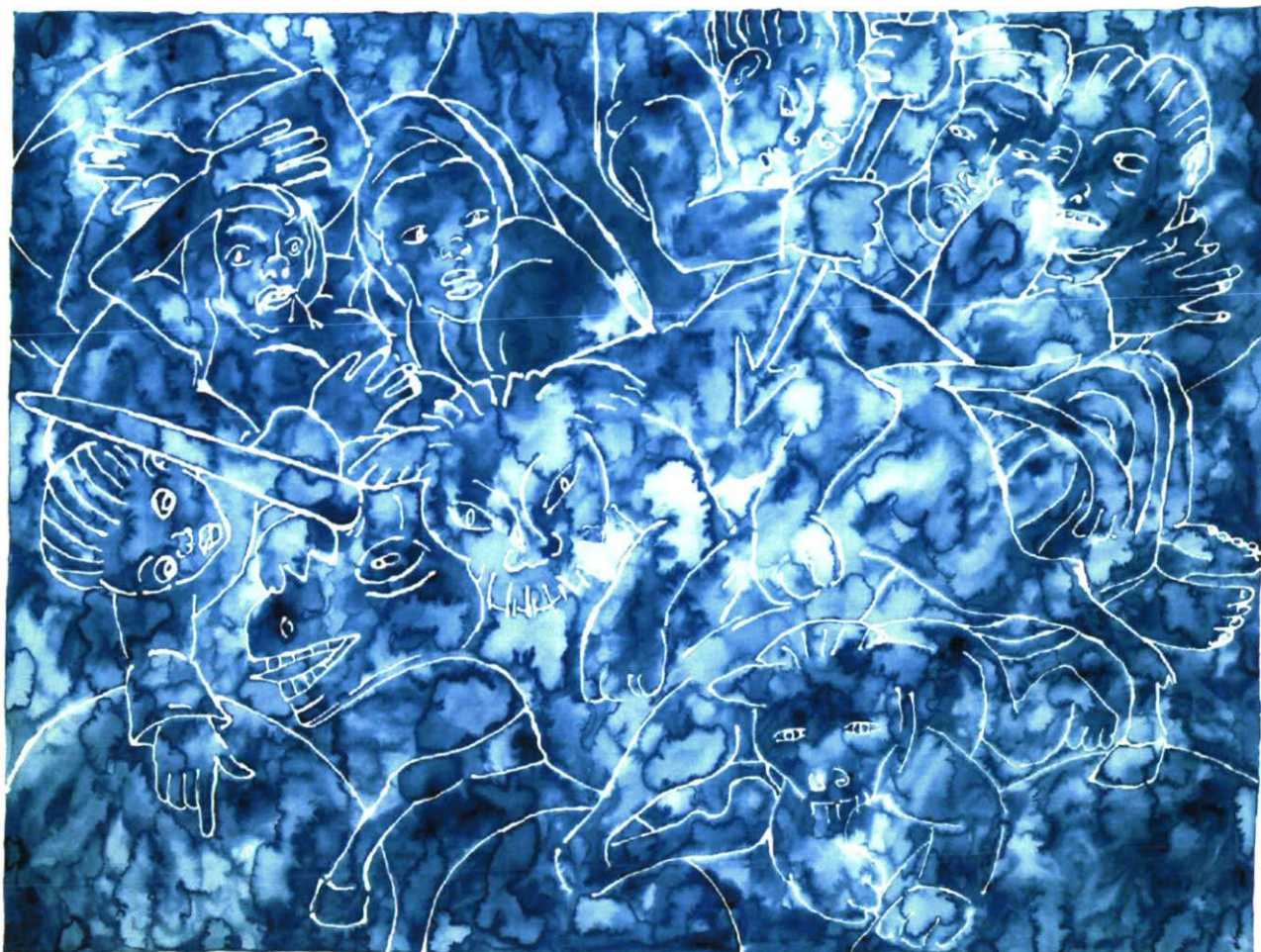
FRENZY/VERTIGO



MANFRED NAESCHER

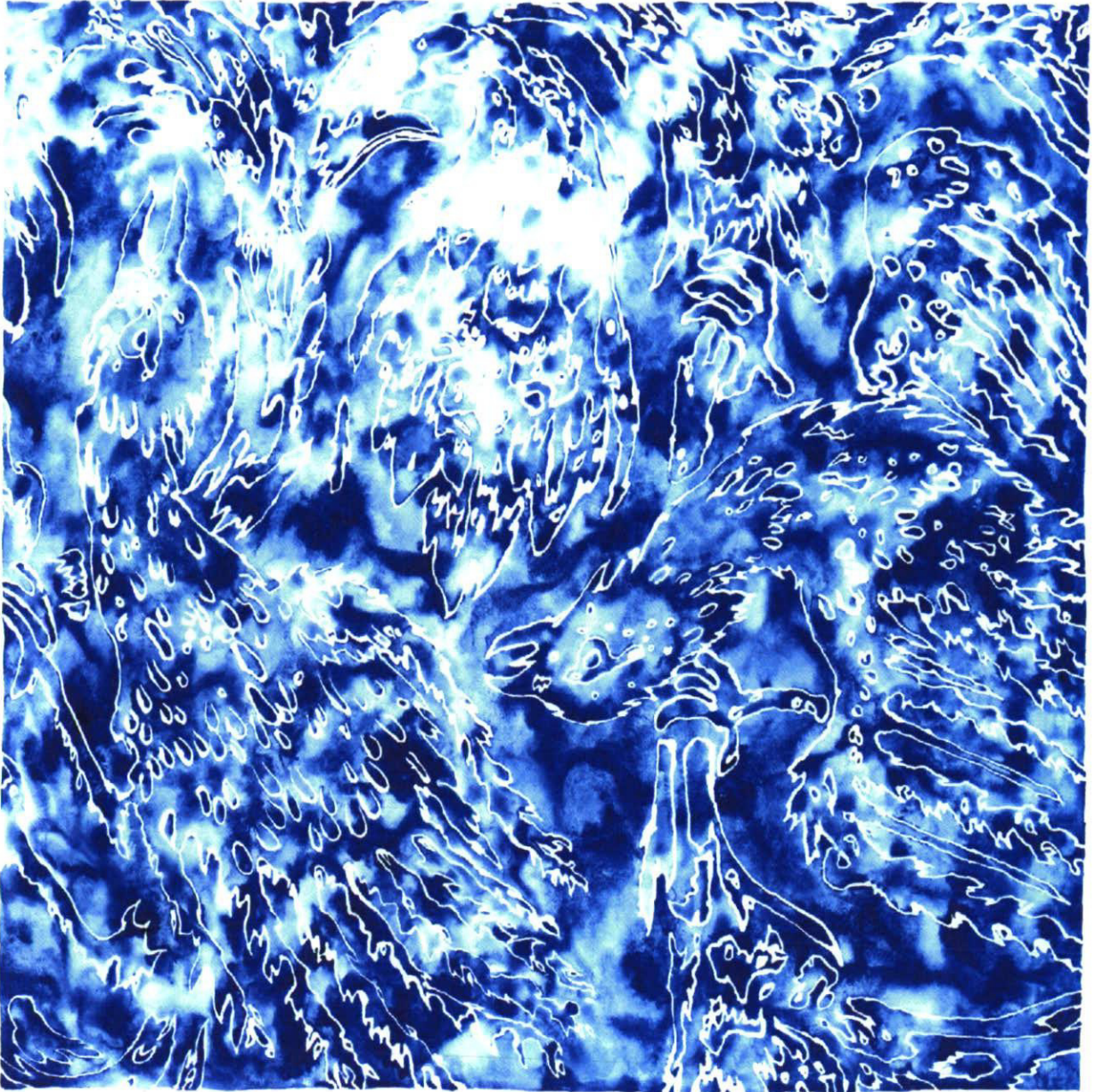
Frenzy/Vertigo
Book Cover

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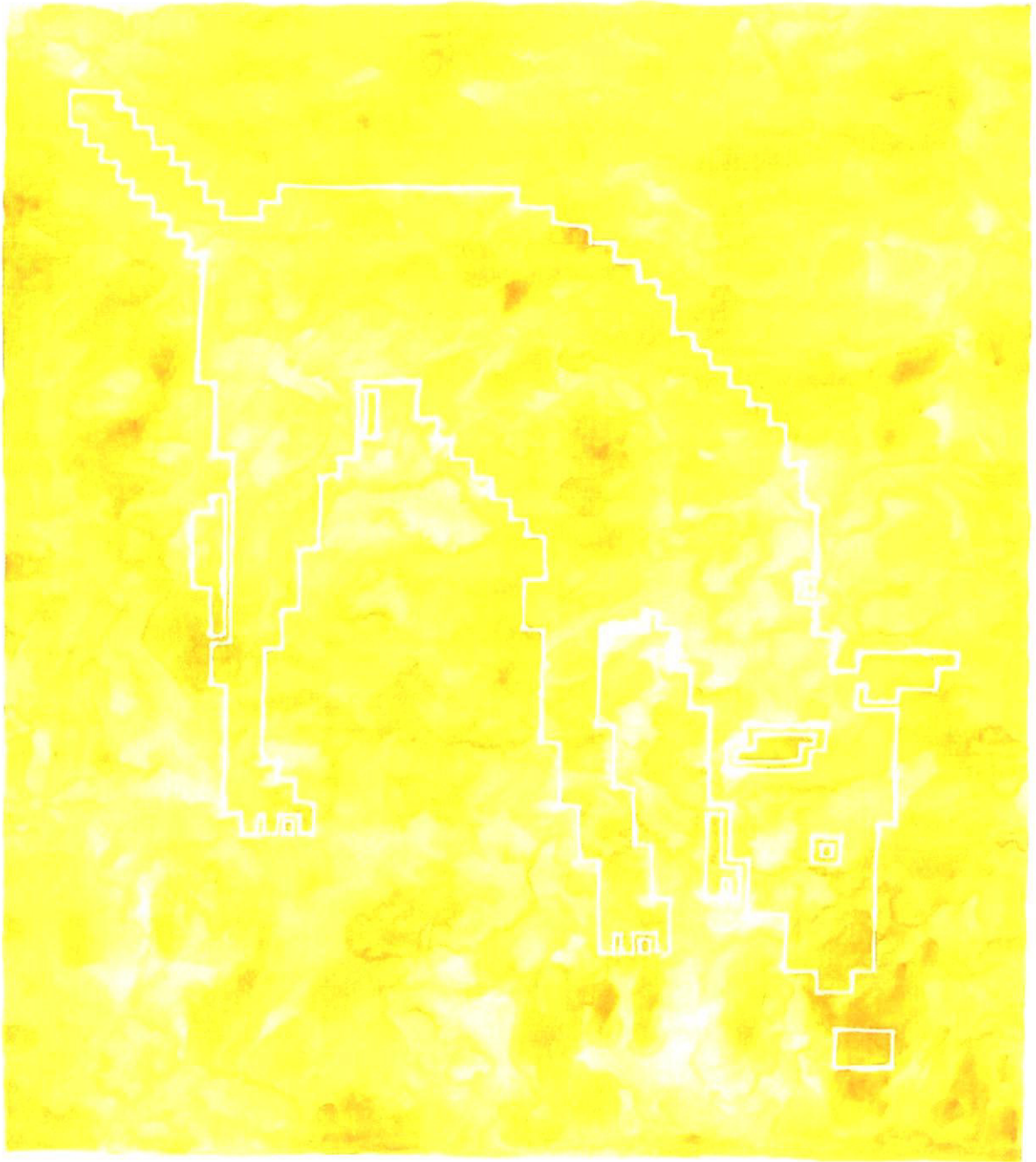
To Catch a Thief
Watercolor on Fabriano Paper
104 x 137 cm, 2015

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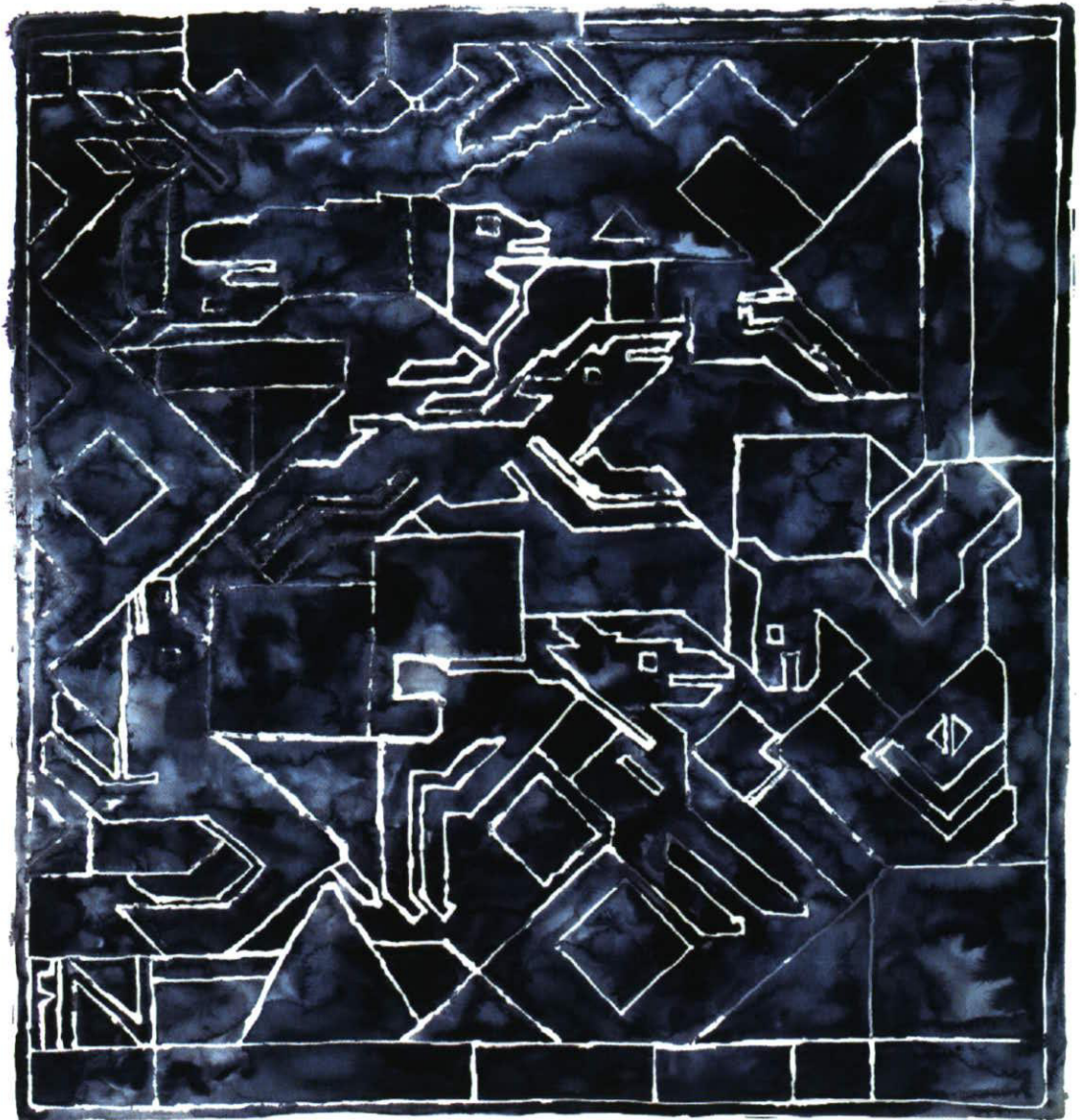
The Birds
Watercolor on Fabriano Paper
80 x 80 cm, 2015

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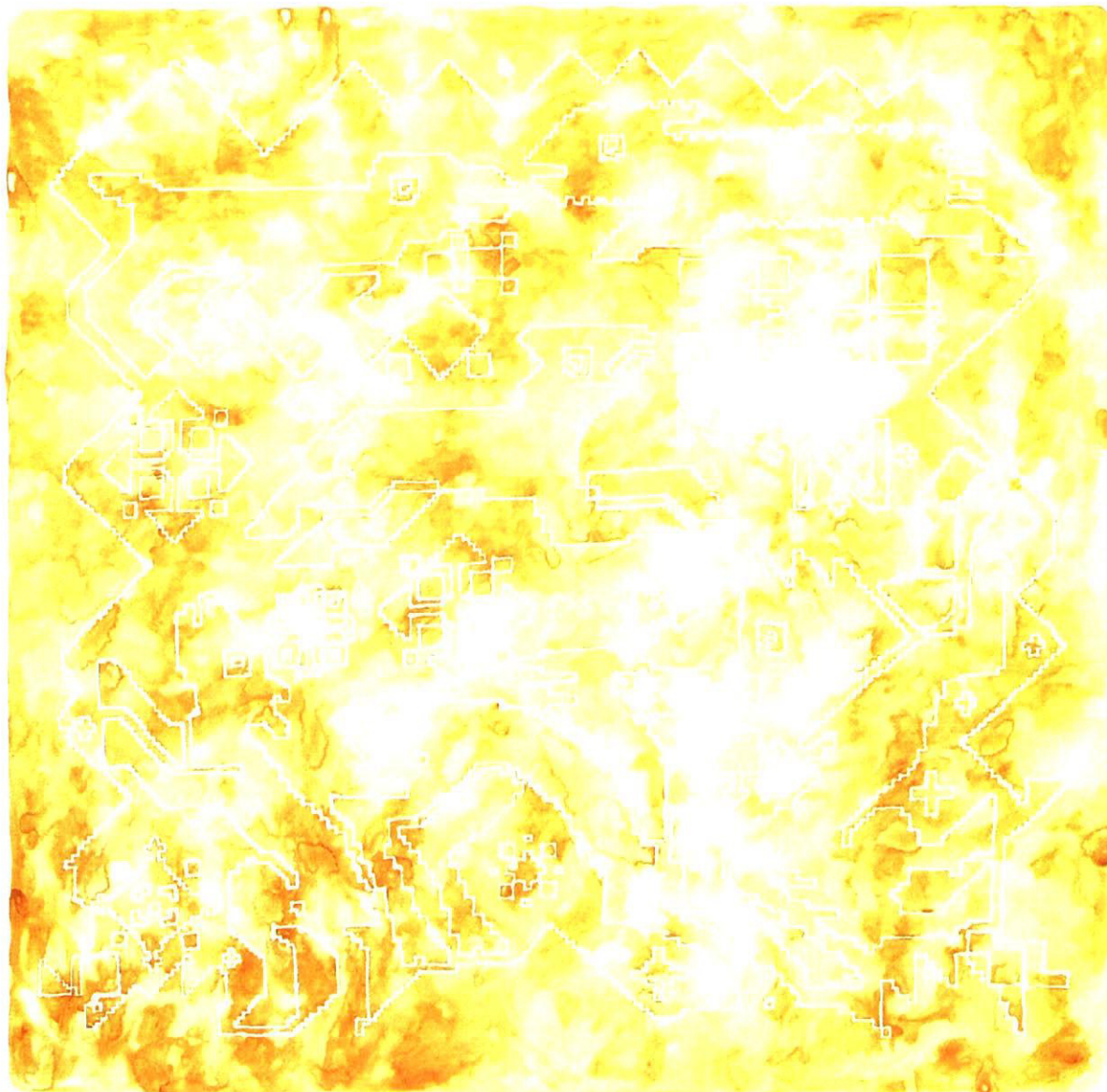
Shadow of a Doubt
Watercolor on Fabriano Paper
100 x 89 cm, 2015

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Frenzy
Watercolor on Fabriano Paper
88 x 85 cm, 2015

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Vertigo
Watercolor on Fabriano Paper
100 x 100 cm, 2015