

\* Monday

PRESENTED BY AMC COLLEZIONE COPPOLA

No. 6 – SEPTEMBER MMXV

- order pizza boxes.

- fix/finish model.

- fix - reattach cord beard + make mane.

- order pink paper.

- shoot studio - make folder - "studio process",  
with dates...

↓  
shoot every week or so...

- saw woman fix formal sculpture



FEATURED ARTIST  
IN THIS ISSUE:

URI  
ARAN

"The discord of meaning in language is something I'm interested in. I don't know if it's because English is not my mother tongue; I see a delay of meaning. I see things as mediated—almost everything is quoted."

Uri Aran<sup>1</sup>

## THE IDEA OF SOMETHING FEELING PERSONAL

In the 2013 video *Untitled*, produced for Uri Aran's solo exhibition at the South London Gallery, a man seated in a domestic interior offers a rough description of the various growth phases of a human being, from the incontinence characterizing the first years of life to adolescent excesses. At certain moments the shots overlap with images of Aran's two-dimensional works on paper or wood that possess the tactile quality of a palimpsest, in which traces and materials settle on the support and almost impregnate it. This brief story – ranging from the child's concentration on his own body to the conquest of socialization skills marking adulthood – is suddenly interrupted on two levels: first by an off-screen voice asking the man to repeat what he just said, and then immediately after that by the appearance of a fixed image that, given its low definition, is reminiscent of an amateur video of a school dance recital.

At this point, *Untitled* unfolds like a blurry study of family remembrance, affection and the disintegration of memory, through the faint accumulation of moments that seem to clash. For example, the conventional nature of what we are observing becomes evident after a few minutes. The filming cannot be defined as actual staging, but at the same time we are not looking at moments from a diary or documentary (on several occasions, the man asks, "Do you want me to look into the camera or...?" and "Do you want me to talk about fictional characters?"), and then we finally get to the point marking the start of a new take with the classic "September first, take 1"). The wobbly filming of a year-end dance recital returns more and more frequently, alternated with a computer screen on which a conversation program seemingly appear and disappear, and its remote users seem to be two parents.

I'm dwelling on the description of this work because I think it contemplates many of the subjects running through Aran's multimedia output: the effect of an emotional crescendo associated with symphonic music, the amateur aesthetic of filming, the frequent interruptions that clearly convey its conventional and constructional character, and the mediated nature of images associated with sentiment and memory.

On the one hand, through the language of video filming and editing *Untitled* underscores the centrality of the devices of collage and assemblage in Aran's oeuvre, but on the other its initial appearance as an intimate and personal anthology immediately gives way to the feeling of observing a far stranger and more ambiguous object than it might seem to be at first glance. Let's focus on the filming of the dance recital. No narration has been constructed around it. We don't know whose memories these are, so once the sentimental attachment of the person who produced them has been eliminated, these images can no longer be viewed as a "memory" but as the idea of a memory, an abstraction and a convention (it is no coincidence that in cinema – regardless of whether we're talking about a thriller or a drama – the same obsolete filming supports often appear, such as 16mm and VHS, when the aim is to create a revelatory moment digging into the past).<sup>2</sup>

What we can define as a predominance of formal over narrative aspects is an essential strategy in Aran's work, especially if we consider another aspect of the removal of images from their original context: the artist's use on several occasions of passport pictures without any indication of the nationality or biography of the people portrayed. This occurred in the installation of

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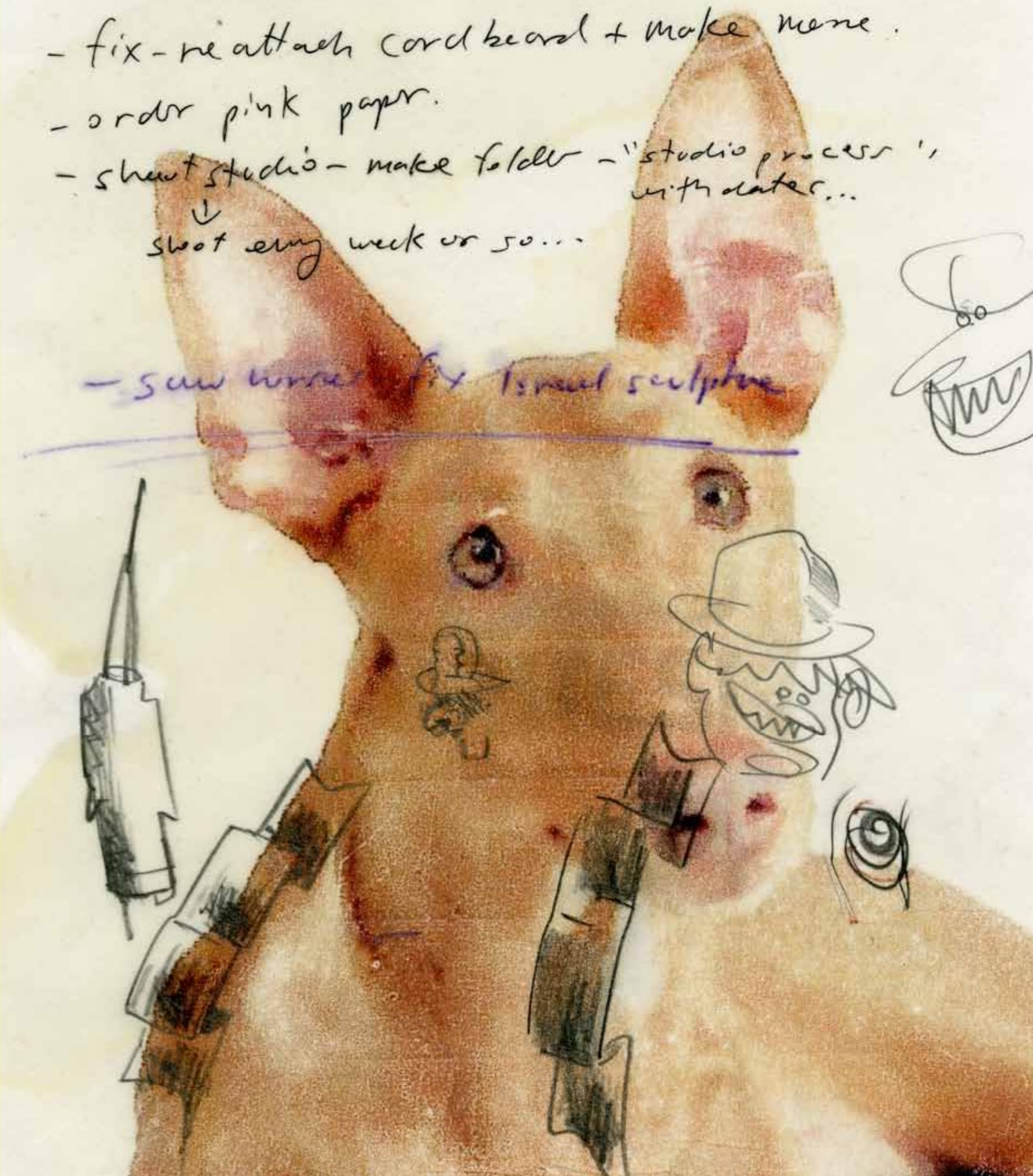
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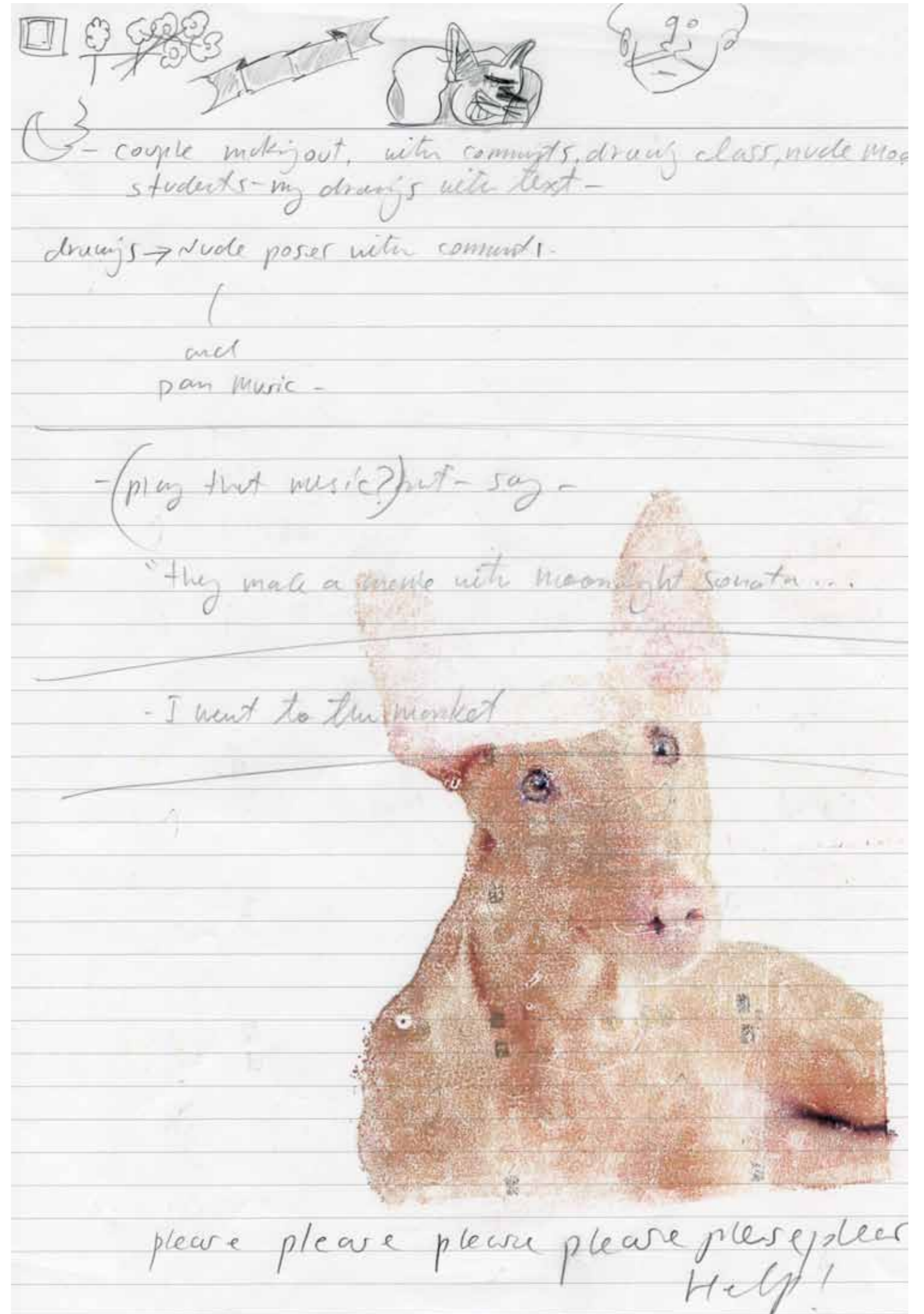
- order pink paper.

- shoot studio - make folder - "studio process", with water...

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shoot every week or so...

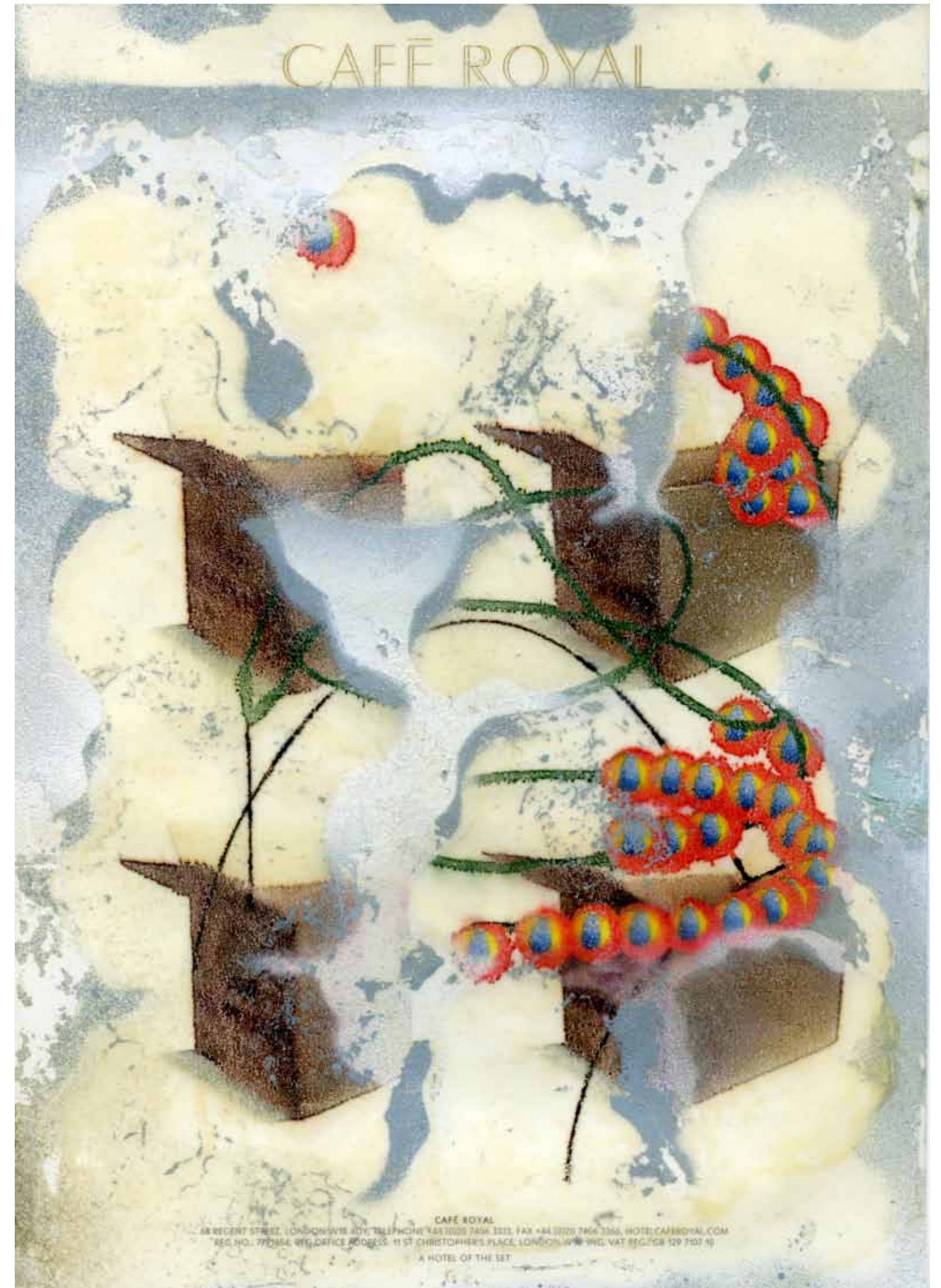
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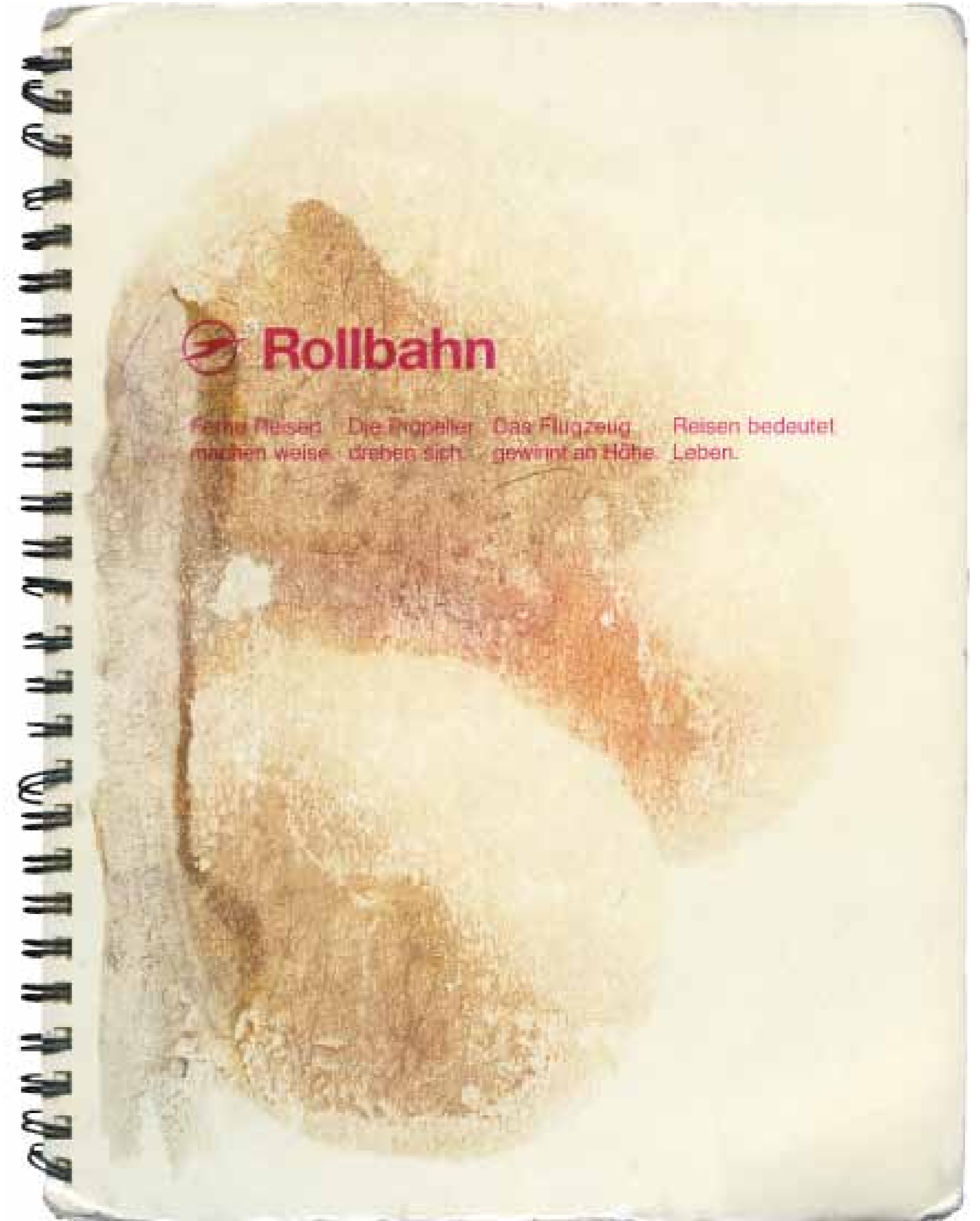


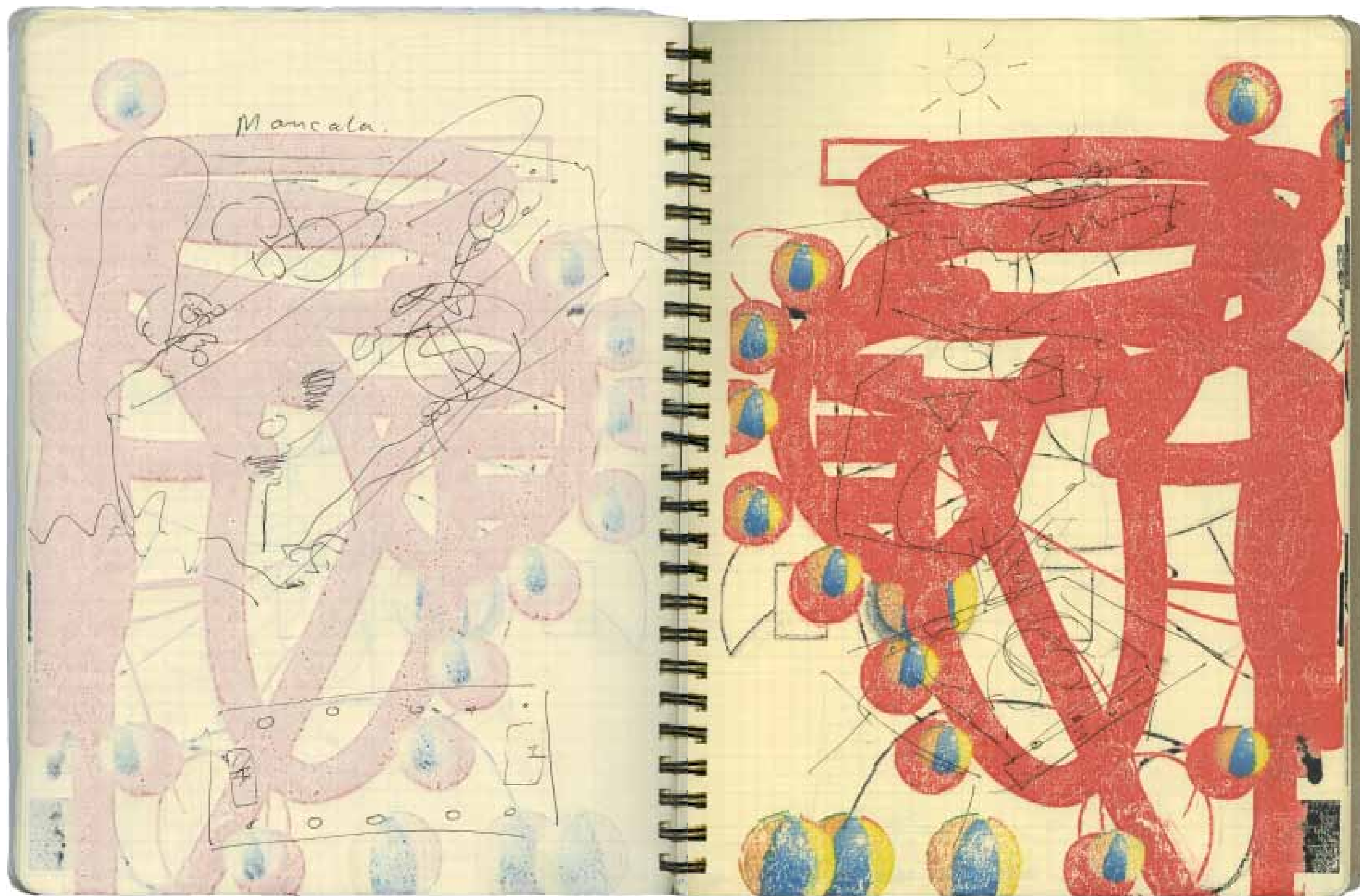


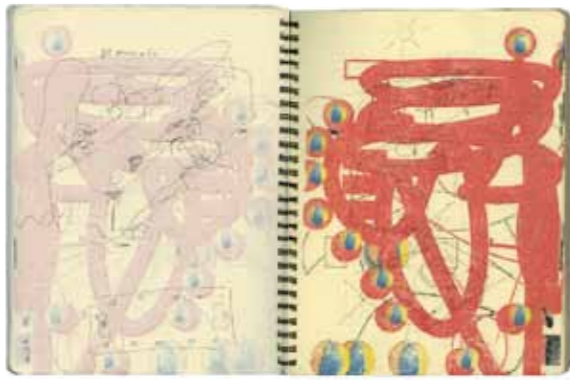
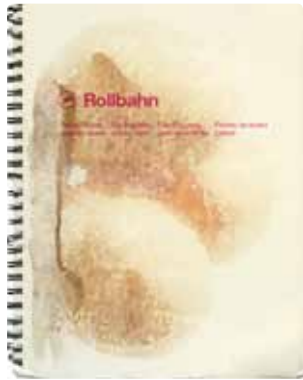


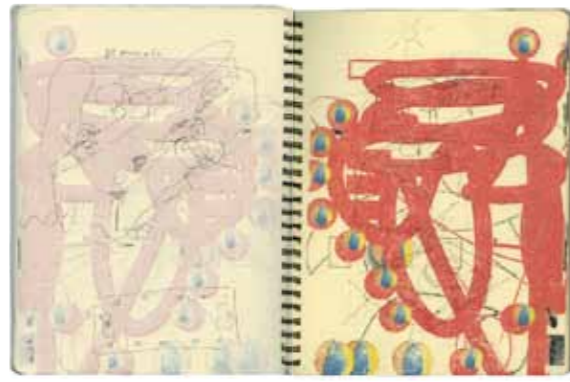
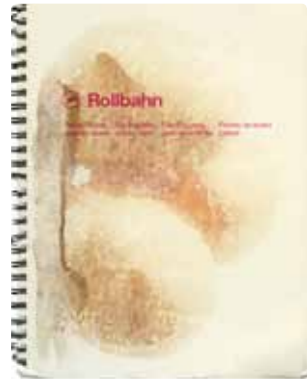


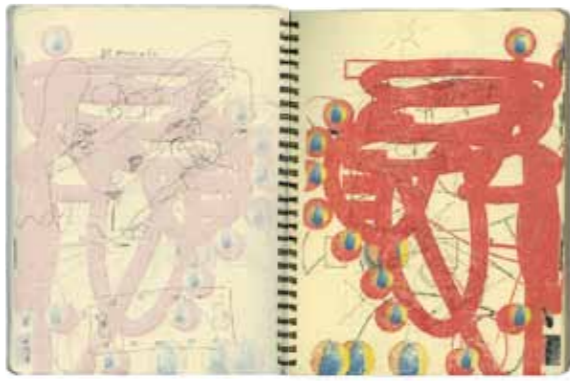
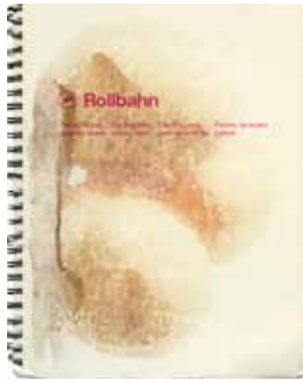












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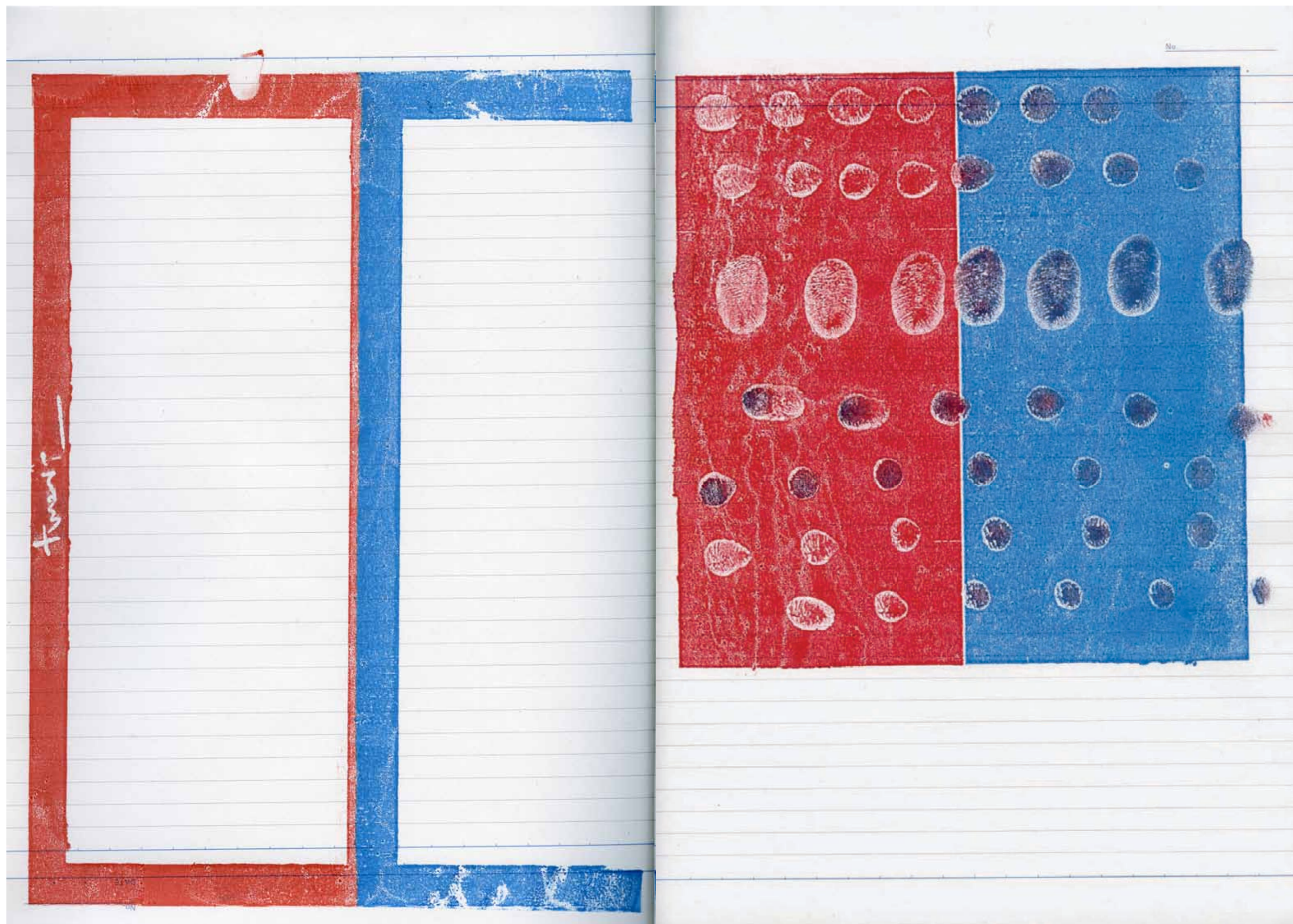
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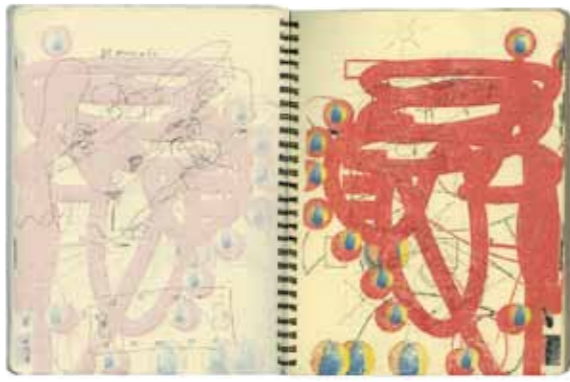
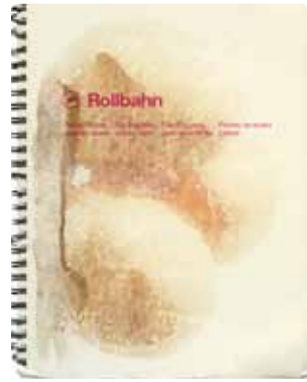
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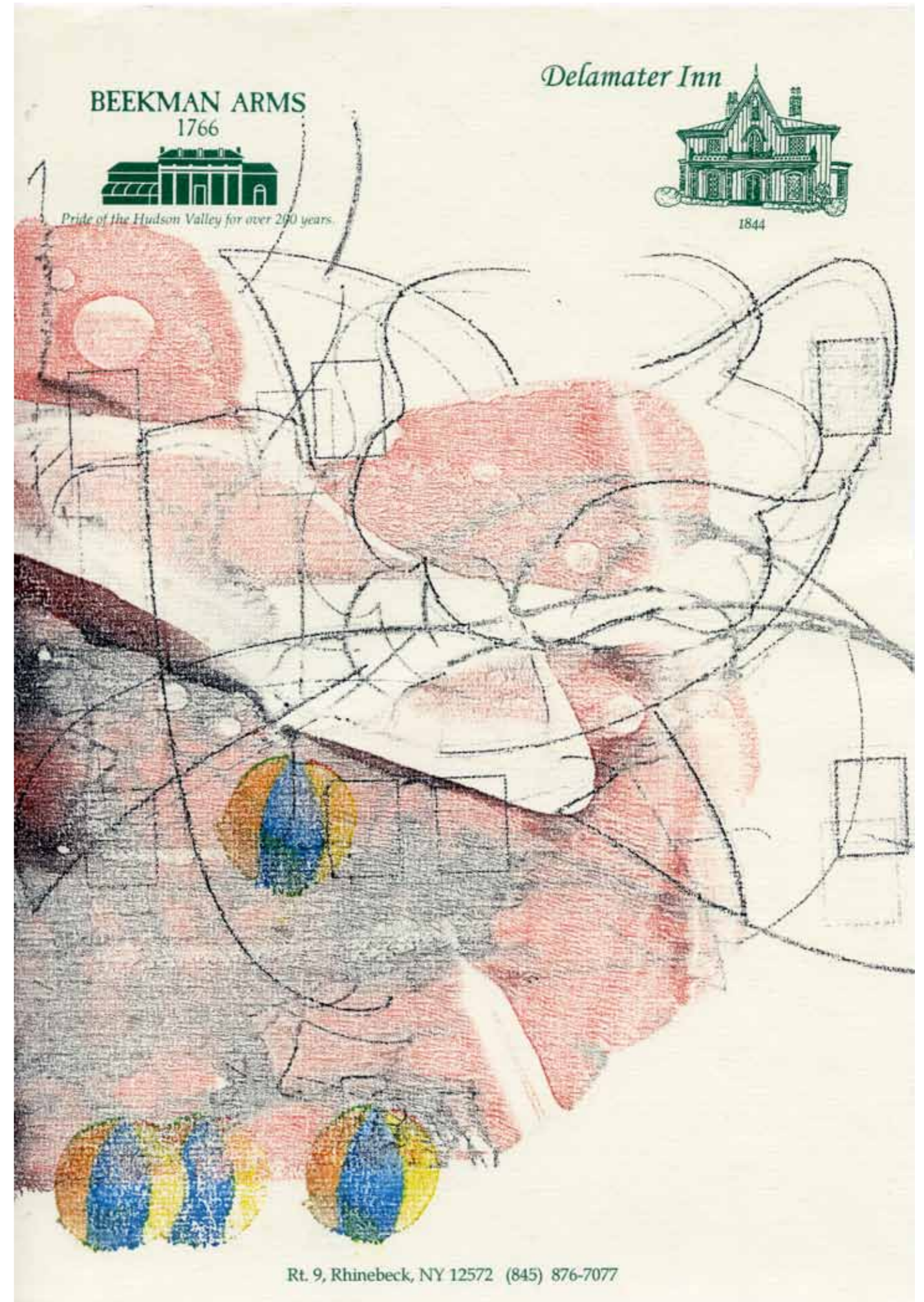
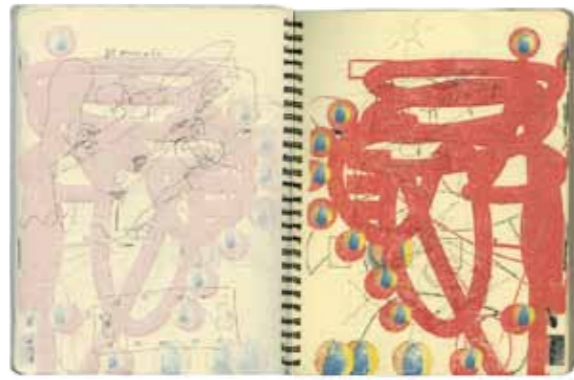
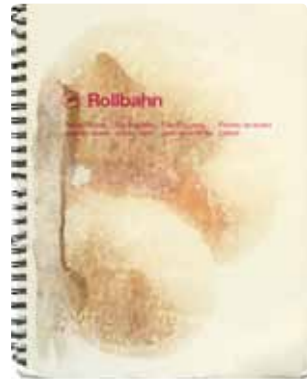
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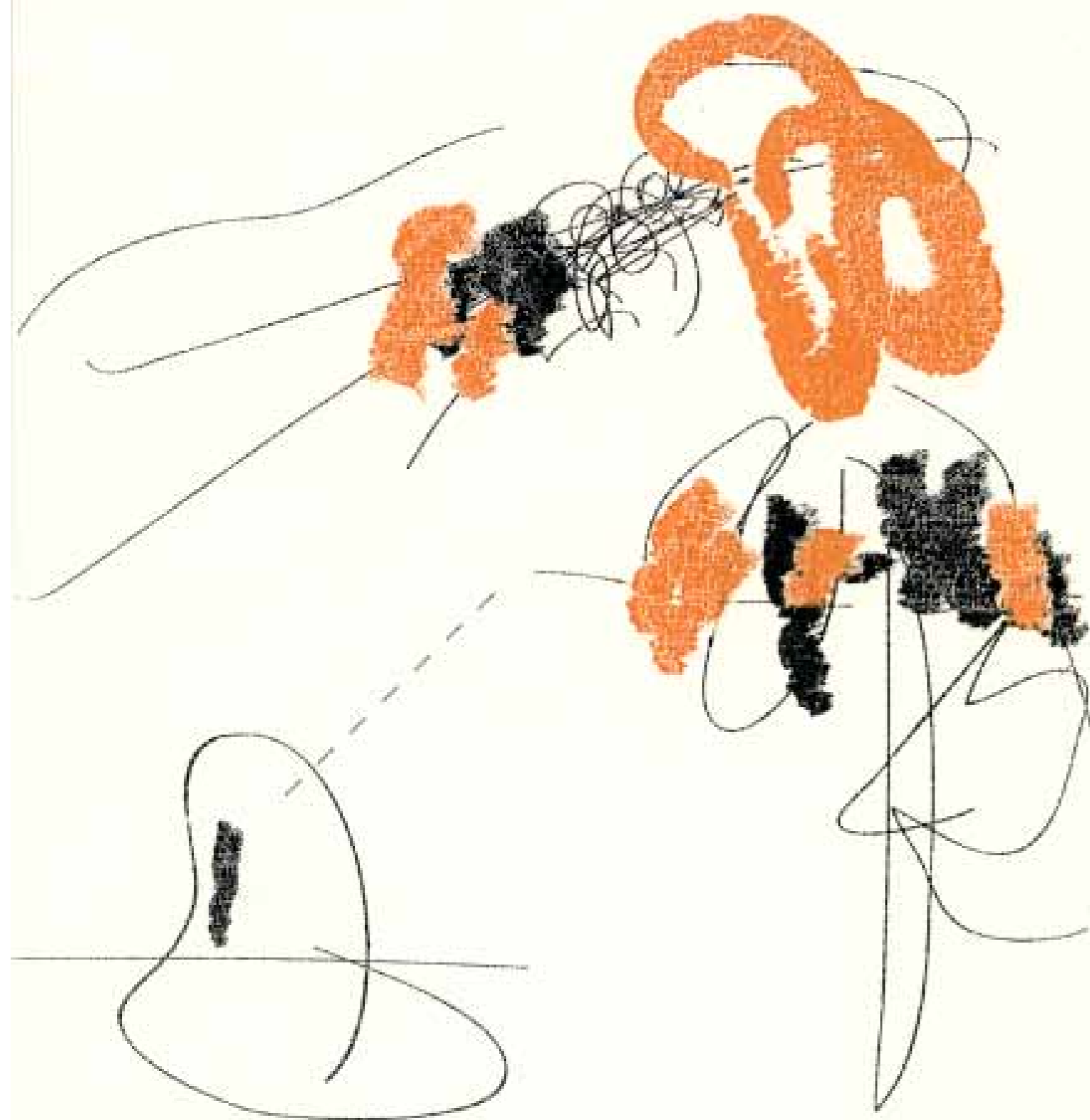
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Disegnato da Giulio Bonaldi

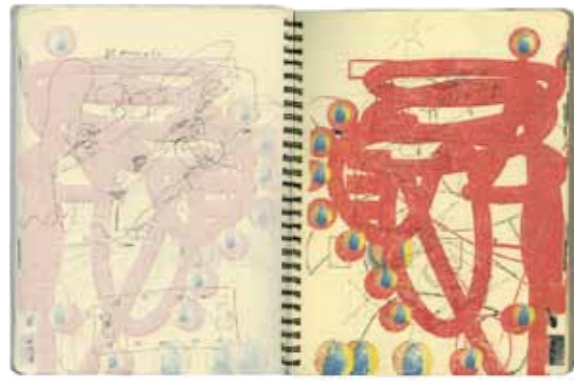
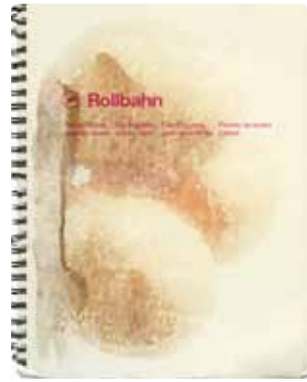
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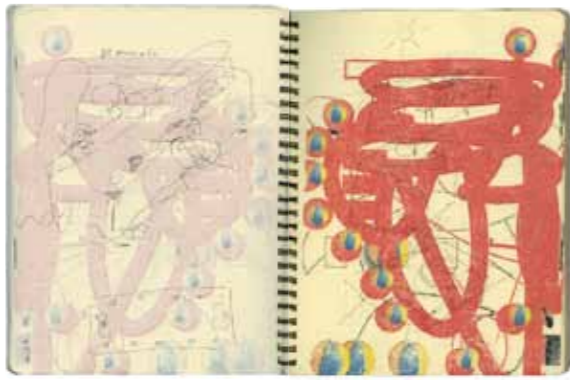
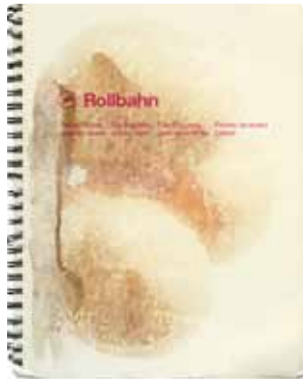


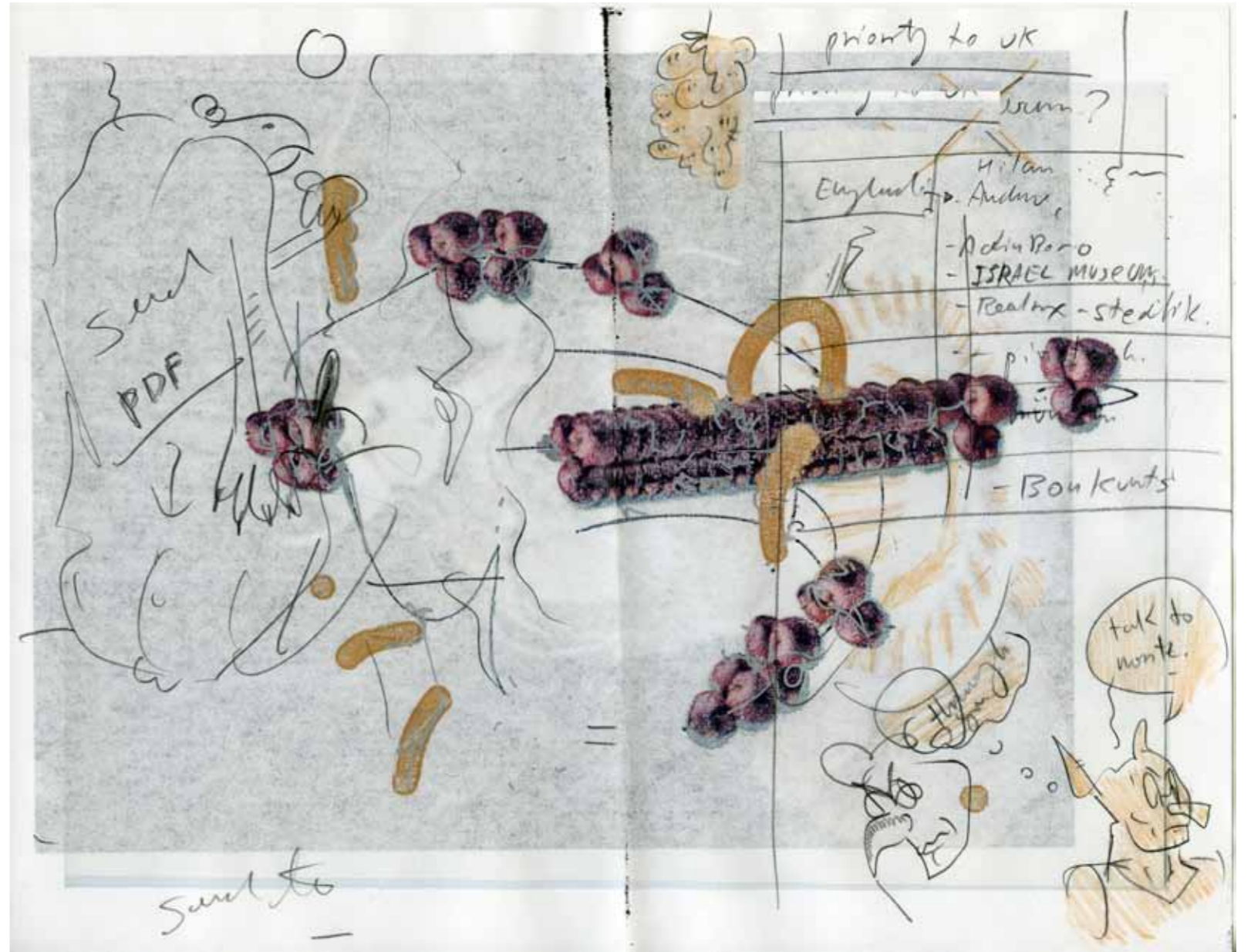
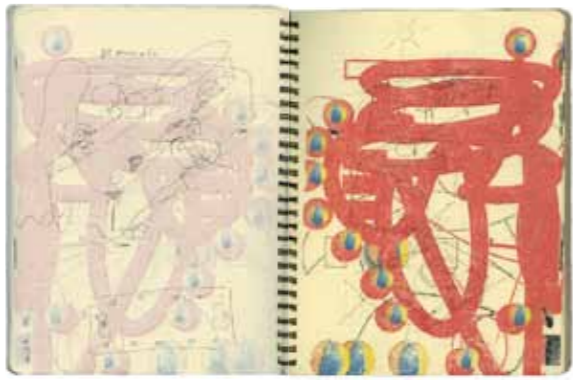
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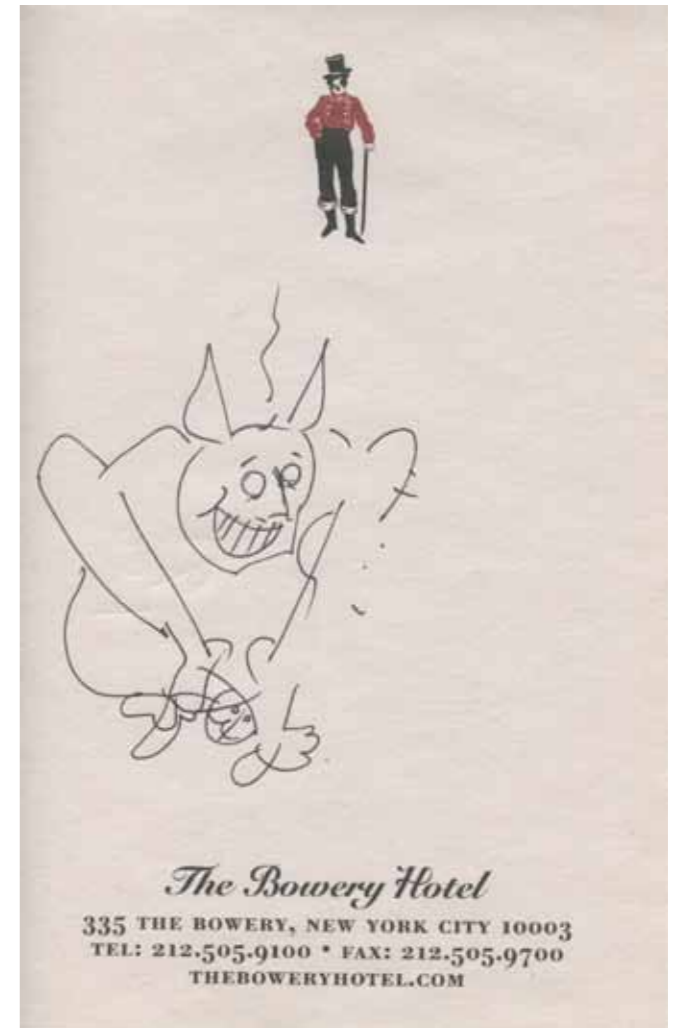
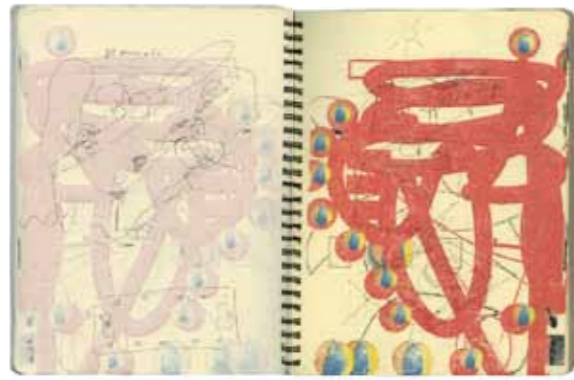
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seven photographic prints entitled *Untitled* (2013), presented for the solo exhibition at the South London Gallery, but also in *Departments* (2014), the series of sculptures with which Aran participated in the 2014 Liverpool Biennial. The latter are part of a body of works that has already become iconic in his production, that is the composition of various materials and objects arranged on horizontal planes. While the emotional and sentimental effect that the use of classical music brings to Aran's videos is "blocked" by a series of interruptions – on both a verbal and editing level – overturning their unity and ruining their potential for pleasure and empathy, it is equally true that the "political" temperature the signifier of the passport photos should also guarantee to the work is likewise suspended and rarefied. It is relegated to a limbo in which there are no stories of migrations and transnational crossings, but just the *idea* of an assigned identity, of delimited and categorized culture and appurtenance.

A work by Aran may seem personal to the point of being solipsistic, but his words in conceptualizing his practice are instead surprisingly clear. And the assertion of an analytical and conceptual agenda for his practice is equally clear, given that, in describing the process of removing the narrative datum, Aran sustains:

Sentimentality is an exaggeration of emotional conventions or tropes. It seems logical to me that I should explore this in part through the manipulation of linguistic tropes. I don't see how it is possible to think about sentimentality without philosophical analysis ... I hope to examine it by orchestrating diverse sets of signifiers that cause the viewer to become aware of his own complicity with pre-determined emotional triggers.<sup>3</sup>

An analytical penchant, manipulation and close scrutiny seem to be central to Aran's work. They are operations with which the artist informs both the language of video filming and editing as well as his practice of sculptural assemblage, given that a highly significant part of his oeuvre acquires the form of sculptures and installations on tables and horizontal surfaces. In these types of works Aran deliberately explores nearly all the meanings implicit in the form of the work surface: the dissection of a whole and the taxonomic arrangement of parts isolated from each other, manipulation, the study of classification, the invention, care and preservation of the unstable, the transitory aspect of the work in progress and the suspension of this provisional temporal dimension. As Declan Long writes:

This busily cryptic *bricolage*... appears to manifest, in each instance, a distinct moment within an obscure project of analysis, arrangement or assembly... His intricate, inconclusive investigations frequently have the look of abandoned experiments; their forlorn contents the confusing leftovers of tasks that, for some reason, have been temporarily stalled. Rather than supporting a satisfying sculptural pose, Aran's work-table pedestals often present moments of uneasy artistic pause.<sup>4</sup>

In his videos Aran dismantles the unity of action, narration and music, he disconnects the characters from the authenticity of their stories and, in doing so, he overturns the principle

of the suspension of incredulity, leaving the spectator without that "catharsis of identification"<sup>5</sup> mentioned by Fionn Meade regarding the artist's *modus operandi*. At the same time, however, in his sculptures another principle of fullness and integrity is eroded in these small, fragile landscapes of fragments.

As abstract as the relationships Aran explores in his work may be – the assignment of meanings, their conventionality and mobility, the fragility of memory and of the supports through which we convey it, the generation of values and their maintenance – the scraps of experience that the artist holds together within the formal systems he produces are equally irreducible in their individuality. In pursuing this project of his, Aran in fact assigns dense, occasional and extreme materiality to domains – such as language, media and morals – that seem obvious yet are imponderable in their pervasiveness. And he does this through the fragility of the materials he uses, the amateurish feel of his filming, the constant rumination that crosses his works and the precariousness of the bonds that – materially and metaphorically – hold the different parts of his oeuvre together. Through work that does not prove to be comforting by any means, despite its apparent nostalgia, Uri Aran seems to take up the legacy of an artist such as Bruce Nauman in an idiosyncratic and extremely personal way, if we consider the theme of language as the place where psychological tensions settle and through which they move, or the assumption of individual responsibility connected with the act of seeing, or even a certain brutality – which Aran expresses in a way that is as effective as it is submissive – in disjoining and disconnecting images, materials and meanings from each other, creating spaces that have nothing reassuring about them.

The subject residing in Aran's work is a radically contemporary one that tries to come to terms with the emotionality pervading the strategies of politics and marketing, and that attempts to negotiate emancipation and abandonment, control and spontaneity. It is a subject that ostensibly has the entire memory of the world at its disposal, yet seems to have a hard time holding on to its own. And that finds moments of enlightening and poignant beauty even when it realizes the conventionality of its own feelings.

1. The artist in a conversation with Orit Gat in "Portfolio: Uri Aran," *Modern Painters*, April 2012.

2. The title of this essay is a quotation by the artist in the conversation with Gat, in which Aran sustained: "Someone once asked me, 'It feels so personal, how do you expect me to get this?' For me, if you just try to take a step to the left or to the right and think about the idea of something feeling personal without having a specific personal narrative to it, it's almost like using it – the idea of the personal – as a formal tool."

3. The artist in a conversation with Cecilia Alemani in "I Believe in Mimicry," *Mousse*, December 2010.

4. Declan Long, "In its Place", *Frieze*, November–December 2014

5. Fionn Meade *We have each other*, in *Uri Aran* (Zurich: JRP Ringier / Kunsthalle Zurich, 2015), Margot Heller, Beatrix Ruf (eds.), p. 65

**URI ARAN**

Born in Jerusalem 1977 — Lives and works in New York

*'Humans have a compulsion that begins in childhood to arrange and group things. Children create, and most of the time recapitulate, a code through which they will eventually navigate the "profusion" of things in the world long enough to reproduce themselves. In my own work the excitement and simultaneous pathos associated with the limitations of taxonomy are always present.'*

*I who want*

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