

Maliheh Afnan

»Tonight The Door
Towards Words
Will Be Opened«

GALERIE **KORNFELD**

Tonight The Door Towards Words Will Be Opened

*To our neighbours and friends
Saideh & Mohsen Erfan*



Maliheh Afnan

»Tonight The Door
Towards Words
Will Be Opened«

With Poetry Fragments by Sohrab Sepehri

Edited by A. S. Bruckstein Çoruh

GALERIE**KORNFELD**

That calligrapher had three kinds of writing

one only he and no other could read

one that both he and others could read

one which neither he nor others could read.

That is me.

Shams-e Tabrizi

Speak, Memory

by Lutz Becker

»The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamouring to become visible.« *Vladimir Nabokov*

Maliheh Afnan writes her paintings. She has an instinctive affinity with paper. Her inspiration flows from her Middle Eastern roots, from her deep attachment to the tradition of calligraphy and her knowledge of the mysteries of the ancient languages of the region. Her painterly script, which she refers to as *écriture*, is in essence a linear accumulation of signs. Her lines appear in single formations, in clusters or in ordered configurations, in a script seemingly written by time itself. The signs, gestures, and repetitive movements of micro-calligraphic marks contain great expressive energy. Each line, each mark has a value, a meaning within the total image. In these paintings, forces of concentration, dispersal and transformation are at work. Calligraphic elements emerge from deep earth-coloured surfaces that have been built up layer by layer like palimpsests. Composed in fluent rhythms, Afnan's scriptural structures seem to illuminate unspoken poems. Successions of pre-representational signs of abstract informality refuse to refer to any subject.

Explaining her approach, the artist says: »Script, in its essence, is abstract. I don't turn it into an abstract, it is abstract. Written in the Persian or Arab language, calligraphy has been a very highly developed art form. By tradition calligraphy is about the worship of words through writing them. But this writing had always to be readable. I was never interested in the literal meaning of the text.«

The act of writing, of making an image, its very emergence and permanent presence as an image, is its sole purpose and resolution. These paintings are active colour fields in which lines and varying densities of pigment produce subtle interactions. Lines and scriptural rhythms combine with modulations of layers of colour, their interplay creating vibrating dynamic surfaces. In these pictorial spaces, rhythmical values transcend structure and materiality, creating an environment that invites reflection, meditation, silence.

The artist has been influenced and formed by both East and West, the old Mediterranean culture and the impact of the Western modernist avant-gardes. In pursuit of her imago, her inner image, the artist's work flows unconsciously into the creation of a universal dimension in which presence and past meet. Calligraphy, the art of writing converted into an abstract language, has been her main source. But another inspirational impulse is as important for the understanding of her work. This is her love for the textures and colours of the ancient ruins of the Middle East and North Africa; for the terracotta shards found in the desert sands with fragments of glyphs and writings on them. But this experience, too, may have been extended and altered by seeing and admiring the colour of rust in our industrial cities.

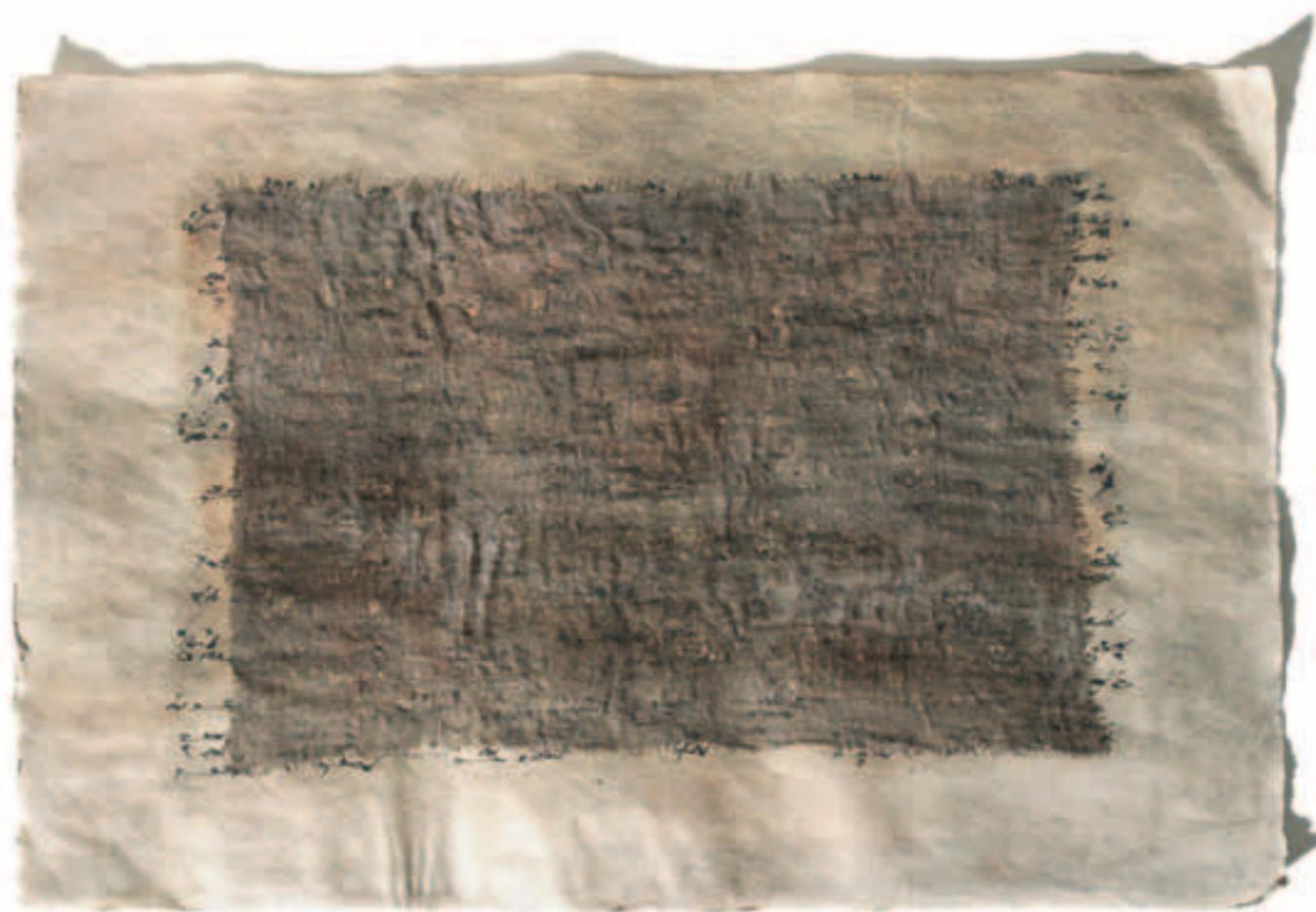
As in the works of Paul Klee and Mark Tobey, line has predominance in Afnan's work. While in Paris in the 1970s she began to make a number of haunting drawings and paintings of faces in a series she calls *personnages*. They are not portraits but represent imaginary features that seem to summarise the state of melancholy and displacement. These *personnages* are mostly male. They seem to exist suspended in time. Their faces are like landscapes marred by tragic histories and broken lives. In silent knowledge of loneliness and suffering, they seem to look at us from windows of ruins. They are like Nicolai Gogol's lost souls, victims and witnesses who have emerged from the dust of unknown streets.

Afnan's work embraces different aspects of time. Placed in real time are making, being and becoming; the sphere of mental time belongs to inspiration and subjective perception. The artist's experiences of her own lifetime and memory, measured against the yardstick of historical time, reverberate in her paintings.

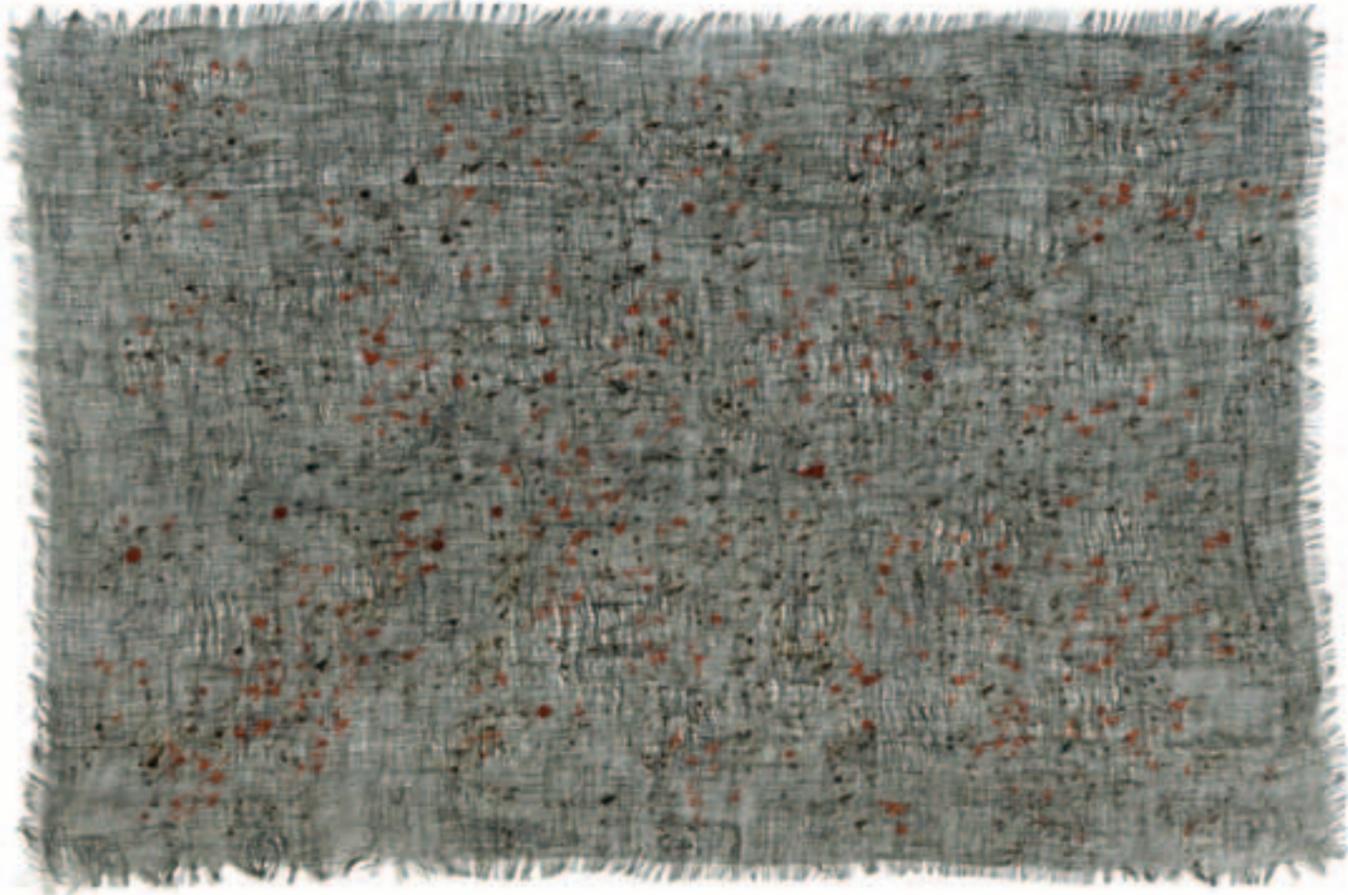
»The notion of memory is a central theme and motive in my work. I would say my work is rooted in memory, both in my own and perhaps collective memory. Unconsciously but continually I refer to places, scripts and faces from the past, both real and imagined. If all of one's life is registered in the recesses of the unconscious, then one's work might simply be an unravelling, filtering and transforming of memory through time. Memory is very real.«



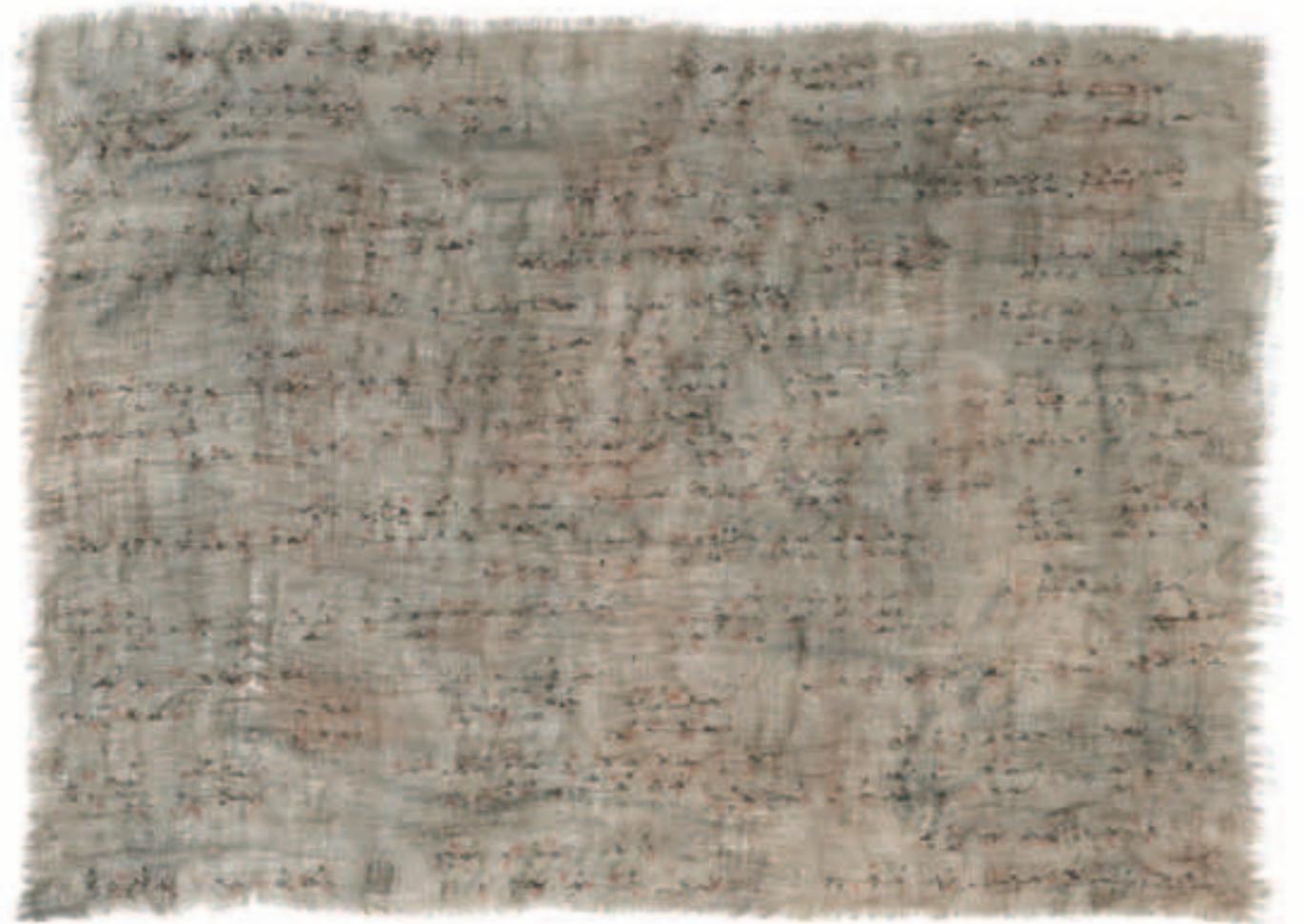
Ashes to Ashes,
Ink and mixed media
on Nepalese bark
fibre paper and gauze,
2014, 30 x 49 cm



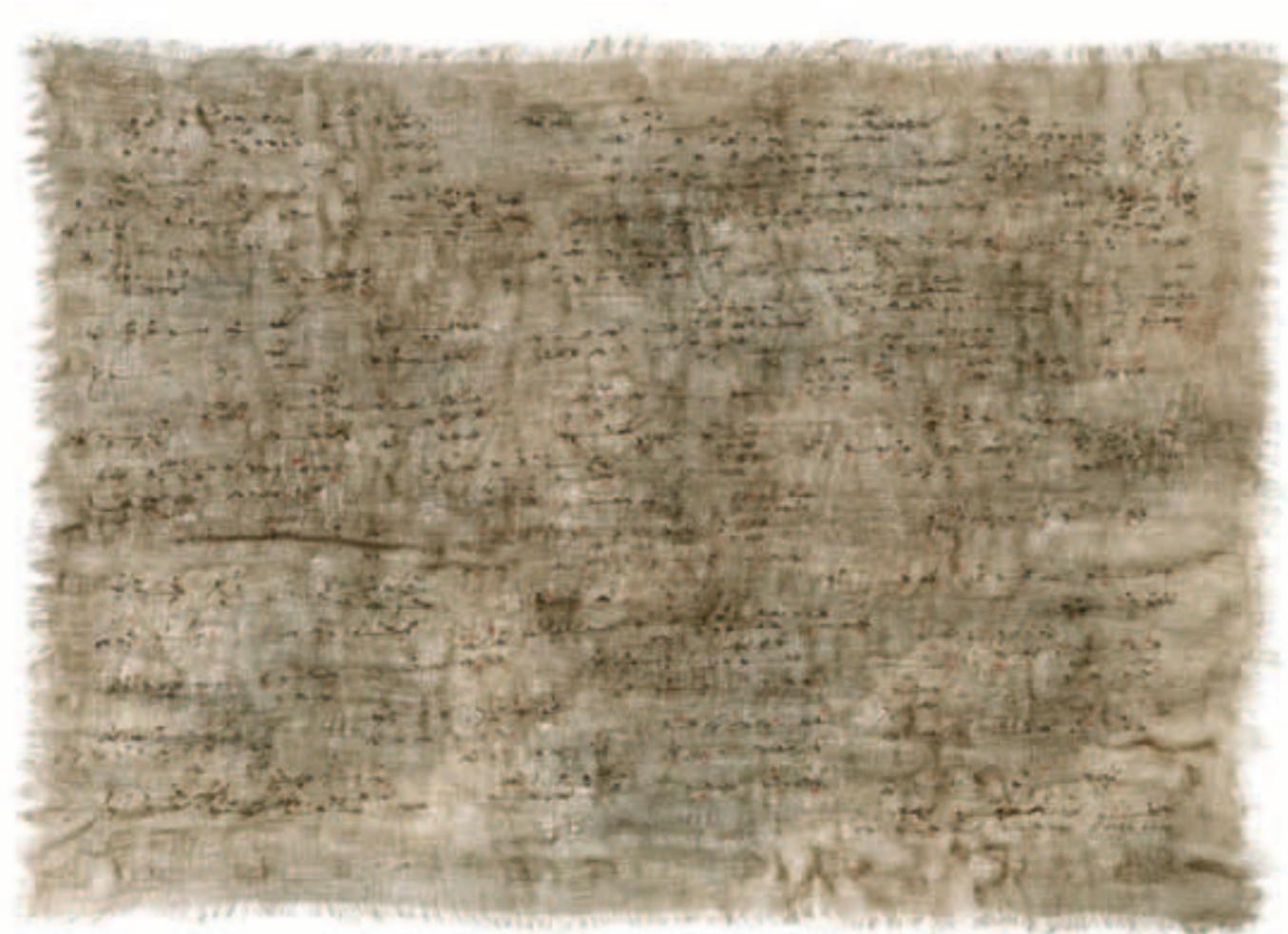
Veiled Signals,
Ink and gauze on
Nepalese paper, 2011,
30 x 47 cm



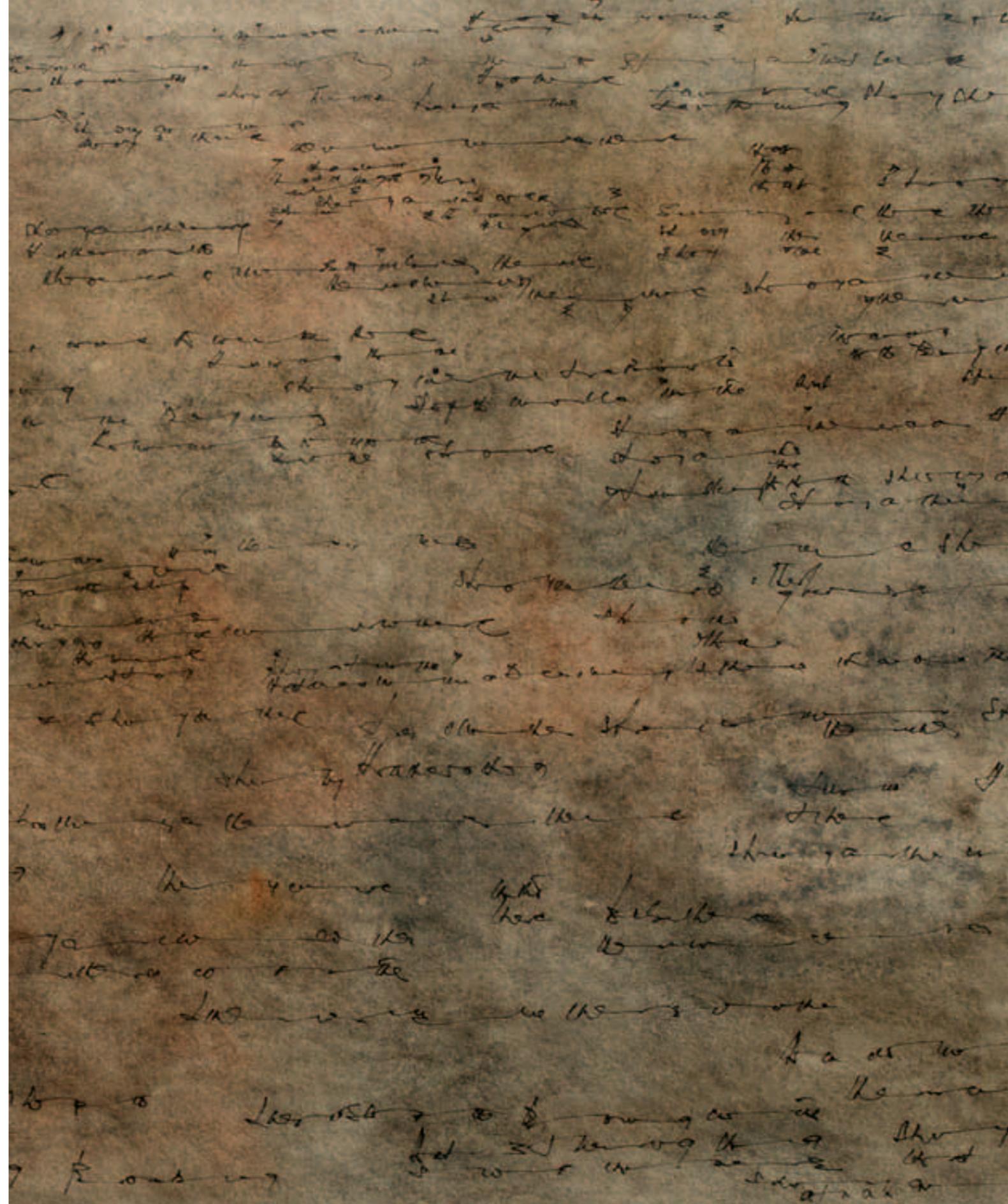
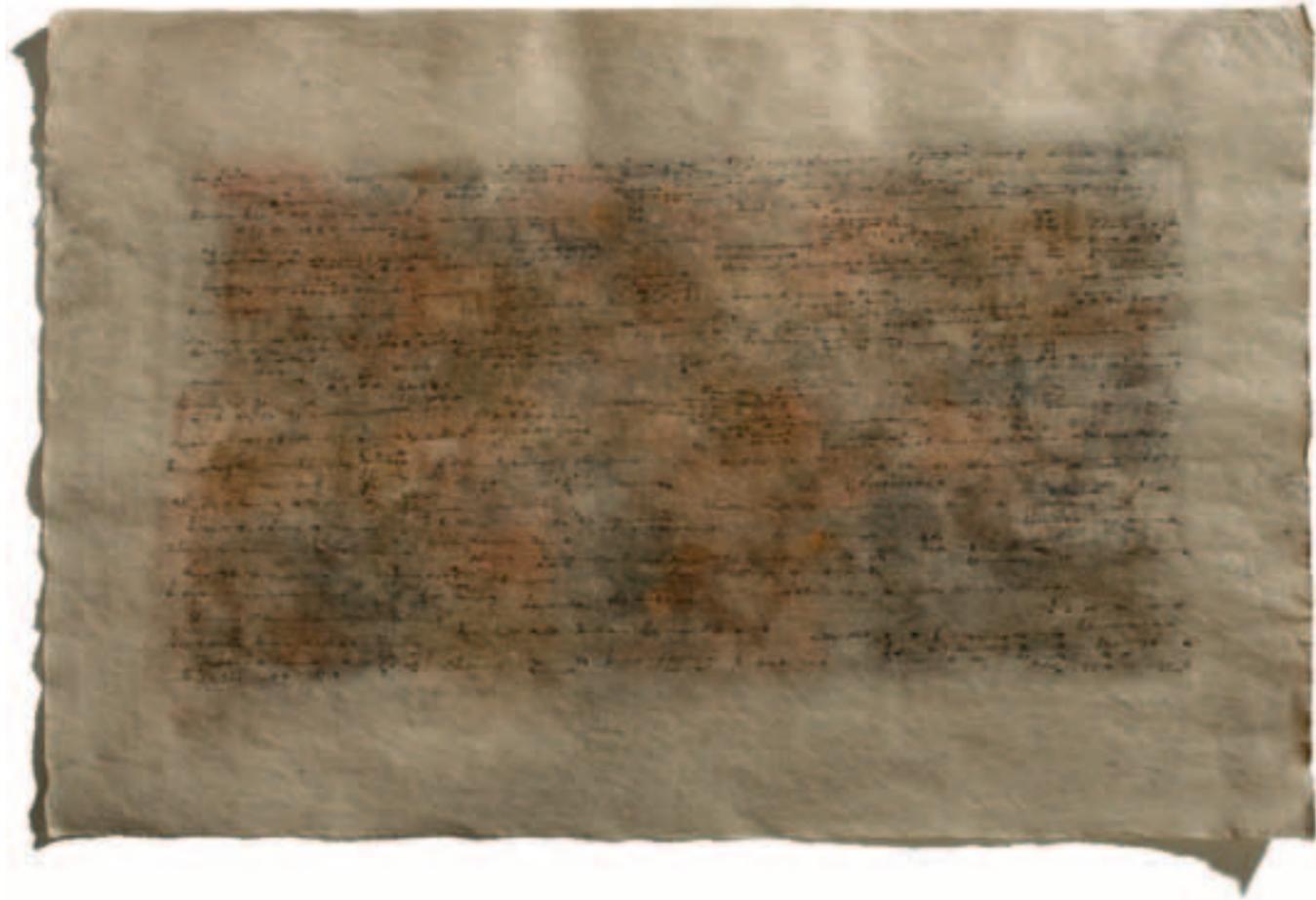
Veiled Thoughts I,
Ink and gauze on paper,
2014, 31 x 43 cm



Veiled Thoughts II,
Ink and gauze on paper,
2014, 31 x 43 cm



Read Me,
Ink and mixed media
on Nepalese bark fibre
paper, 2014, 27 x 55 cm





امشب،
در یک خواب عجیب
رو به سمت کلمات باز خواهد شد.

...

راز، سر خواهد رفت.

...

داخل واژه 'صبح'
صبح خواهد شد.

تا انتهای حضور

Tonight,

In a strange dream

The door towards words

Will be opened.

...

The secret will overflow.

...

Inside the word ›morning‹

Morning will break.

Till the End in Audience

امشب

دستهایم نهایت ندارند:

امشب از شاخه های اساطیری،

میوه می چینند.

امشب

...

جرات حرف در هرم دیدار حل شد.

...

در زمان های پیش از طلوع هجاها

محشری از همه زندگان بود.

...

بعد، در فصل دیگر

کفش های من، از 'لفظ' شبنم

تر شد.

شب قدیم متن

ظهر بود.

ابتدای خدا بود.

ریگزار عفیف

گوش می کرد

...

کی

انسان

مثل آواز ایثار

در کلام فضا کشف خواهد شد؟

اینجا همیشه 'تیه'

Midday.

The beginning of God.

The immaculate stretch of sand

Listened

...

When

Will humanity,

Like the song of bountiful generosity

In the speech of space be discovered?

Here Always ›Teeh‹

Tonight

My hands have no bounds:

Tonight from the mythical branches,

They pick fruits.

Tonight

...

In the warmth of the meeting came the courage to speak.

...

In ages before the rise of alphabets

Was a great gathering of all living things.

...

Then, in another season

My shoes, from the word ›dew‹

Became wet.

Ancient Text of Night

It is morning.
The bird of purity sings.
...
Between a tree and the green instant
The recurrence of deep blue blends
with the longing for speech.

But
Inviolable whiteness of paper!
The pulse of our letters,
Beats in the absence of the calligrapher's ink.
In ecstasy's memory, the attraction of forms is lost.

The book must be closed.
One must rise
And walk along the stretch of time,
...
Arrive at the encounter of tree and God.
...
Some place between rapture and illumination.

Both Line and Space

صبح است.
گنجشک محض می خواند.
...
بین درخت و ثانیه
تکرار لاجورد با حسرت کلام می آمیزد.

اما ای حرمت سپیدی کاغذ!
نبض حروف ما،
در غیبت مرکب مشاق می زند.
در ذهن حال جاذبه شکل از دست می رود.

باید کتاب را بست.
بلند شد در امتداد وقت قدم زد،
...
باید به ملتقای درخت و خدا رسید.
...
نزدیک انبساط جایی میان بیخودی و کشف.

هم سطر هم سپید

آه، در اینار سطح ها چه شکوهی است!
...
یک نفر آمد
تا عضلات بهشت
دست مرا امتداد داد.

تا نبض خیس صبح

What splendour in the generous giving of superficial things!
...
Someone came and
Stretched my hand
Up to the sinews of heaven.

Till the Wet Pulse of Morning

رخت‌ها را بکنیم:
آب در یک قدمی است.
روشنی را بچشیم
...
و بیاریم سبد،
ببریم این همه سرخ، این همه سبز.
...
بپاشیم میان دو هجا تخم سکوت.
نخوانیم کتابی که در آن باد نمی آید،
کتابی که در آن پوست شب‌نم تر نیست
...
پرده را برداریم:
...
بگذاریم که تنهایی آواز بخواند،
چیز بنویسد،
به خیابان برود.
...
صدای پای آب
...
بگذاریم:
...
بگذاریم تنهایی آواز بخواند،
چیز بنویسد،
به خیابان برود.
...
صدای پای آب
...
بگذاریم:
...
بگذاریم تنهایی آواز بخواند،
چیز بنویسد،
به خیابان برود.
...
صدای پای آب

Sound of the Footsteps of Water

’فکر کن که چه تنهاست
اگر ماهی کوچک دچار آبی
دریای بی‌کران باشد.’
...
همیشه فاصله ای هست.
دچار باید بود،
و گرنه زمزمه حیات میان دو حرف
حرام خواهد شد.
...
’کجاست جشن خطوط؟’
...
A small fish must feel
if it is preoccupied with the blue
colour of an endless sea!
...
There is always a distance.
One must always be preoccupied,
Otherwise, the perplexed whisperings between two words
Will be forbidden.
...
’Where is the feast of all lines and writings?’
...
’And where was it that we sat on nothingness
And in the warmth of an apple washed our hands and faces?’

The Traveller

رنگی کنار، این شب بی مرز
بی حرف مرده است.

مرگ رنگ

درون دره تاریک،
سکوت بند گسسته است.

دره خاموش

A colour, on the edge of night,
Wordless, has died.

The Death of Colour

In the dark valley,
Silence has broken its bonds.

The Silent Valley



(Pages 25-31)
Celebration (series of
six), Ink and water based
colours on Nepalese
bark fibre paper, 2013,
19 x 28 cm



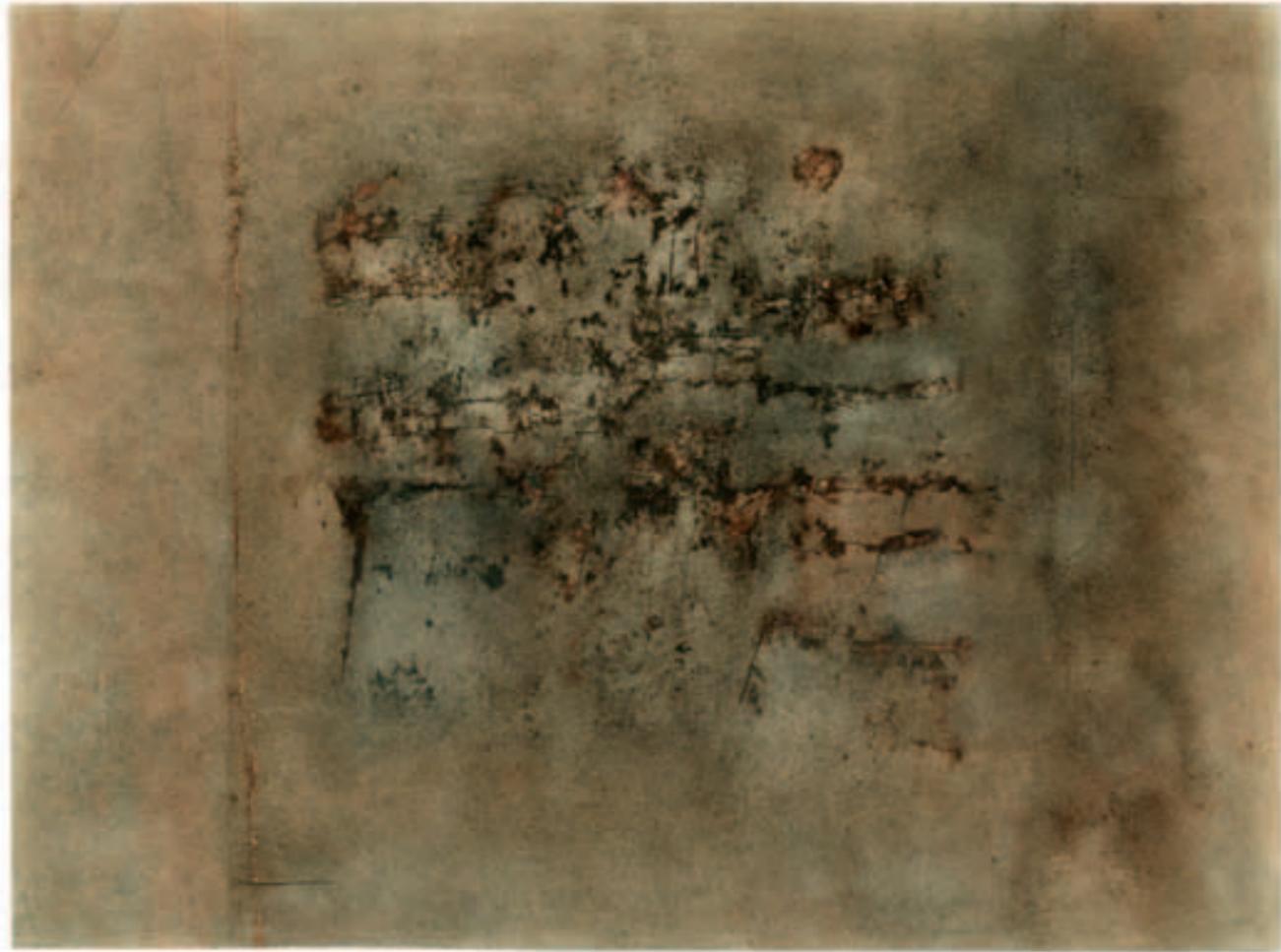




[Following page]
Contained Thoughts,
Mixed media on paper
in perspex jars, 2011,
Various dimensions



*Where The Sun Still
Shines*, Oil pastel and
mixed media on paper,
2014, 22 × 21 cm



Landscape In A Dream,
Oil pastel and mixed
media on paper, 2014,
31 × 23 cm



Aftermath I,
Ink and mixed media on
paper, 2014, 40 x 58 cm



Aftermath II,
Ink and mixed media on
paper, 2014, 40 x 58 cm



The Wall,
Mixed media on paper,
1991, 69 x 100 cm



Nocturnal City,
Mixed media on paper,
1987, 73 × 107 cm



Maliheh Afnan in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist

London, April 2010

Obrist: You were born in Palestine.

Maliheh: I was born in Palestine, of Persian parents. There was a small Persian community at the time. My family left, because the situation became very difficult.

O: Were you already interested in art as a child when you were in Palestine?

M: Yes, but my art background was not so much painting as it was manuscripts, calligraphies, carpets and these things. As a child, I was interested in writing. I couldn't write, but I used to pretend that I could write and I would fill pages with writing. I had a young uncle who was an artist, and his studio fascinated me. But I started on my own, because there wasn't much art education at school, and when I went to university in Lebanon, there was no Art major at the American University of Beirut at the time, so I majored in Psychology and Sociology.

O: Your early work is from the early sixties. Is that in Lebanon?

M: No, I started when I went to America as an art student. In Lebanon, there was a lot of copying of Van Gogh and other artists, but nothing to speak of. I was busy with my university studies and there was no creation whatsoever.

O: And then something happened in America.

M: Yes. I got the chance to go to Art school, and that's when the whole thing started for me. I enrolled at the Corcoran School of Art and did an MA in Fine Arts.

O: There is one painting which you did in 1961: »Lady With The Hat«. That's still very figurative, but then very soon, already in 1962, you find your language. There is an incredible transition—you go from a figurative copying process to a very structural, almost abstract, very dark sort of field. What was your epiphany?

M: I did that painting when I was in Art school; the lady with the hat was a model in class. But on my own I would do other things, and that is where the idea of writing and using it in my work came back. I rather doubt there was a moment of epiphany.

O: Was it a gradual process?

M: There are certain things that naturally, gradually came out in my work, although not intentionally. One is the passage of time over something. There is almost a conscious effort to make something look ancient or ageing, whether it's a face or a landscape. Another point is that earthen

things appeal to me; things that relate to the Earth. And, of course, always scripts, whether it is Persian script, Arabic script, or even English script. For me, script was a point of departure. The meaning was totally irrelevant. It is like an invented writing.

At one time I was very curious to see where these things came from. This was my first love, writing. And I think it will also stay with me. I love all the materials—the brush, the eraser, the sharpener; their smell, their sound, their feel.

O: Is your writing a form of automatic writing?

M: Almost. Sometimes there is a word that comes out. It's inevitable. But it is totally meaningless; it is the form of the words rather than the proper lettering of one letter after another to make a meaning.

There is one painting, called »My Story«, of 2007, which is *lisible*. It started out as my tombstone. And it begins with the date of my birth. The writings on it are all highlights of my life; addresses where I have lived, certain dates that are important, people that have been important in my life.

O: That's like a map of your life, or a compressed biography.

M: Yes, it is a map of my life, although I am very reticent about putting myself into my work, even though it is my work. I've tried, unconsciously, to get out of my work.

O: Mapping plays an important role in your work. Do you think that your paintings are maps?

M: It could be. Even when I do a *personnage*, I feel it is the map of a life on the face. And the older the face, the more interesting it is. There is nothing more uninteresting than a young face. It's beautiful, but uninteresting.

O: Baghdad-born architect Zaha Hadid talks a lot about calligraphy and the inspiration of calligraphy. It's interesting that architecture, visual art and literature in the Arab world seem to be very connected to drawing and calligraphy.

M: Absolutely. Our cultural heritage in the Middle East is basically calligraphy in all its forms, whether it is on vellum paper, on copper, on silver; and, of course, architecture. We don't have a history of painting as such. For us, painting is a foreign thing.

O: If one looks at your work, it's painting, but it's also writing.

M: I haven't said this, but some people have remarked it. In a sense, I write my paintings, whether it is just writing, a *paysage*, or even a *personnage*. They are linear in quality and very much like writing. Even the materials that I use are pencil, pen and ink. Very often I add colour.

O: So, in a sense, your work is in the tradition of calligraphy.

M: Yes, but I am not a calligrapher. If you see the dictionary, it says that calligraphy is »decorative writing.« Traditionally, calligraphy was meant to enhance the Qur'an; done beautifully and artistically, yet the meaning is very important. Even though it's highly stylised, the net end of calligraphy has to be *lisible*, whether it's poetry or the Qur'an, Persian or Arabic calligraphy. I don't think that mine is »decorative writing«. I use writing as a point of departure, a source of line. The meaning has absolutely no significance in my work.

O: There is a very strong connection to poetry, both in the Arab world and in Iran. Is there any Arabic or Iranian poetry you are inspired by?

M: Less so. I was not raised in Iran and my reading material is neither Arabic nor Persian, even though I can read them. Of course, when you are raised in Iran, poetry is a part of your life. Everybody can recite poetry in Iran, especially Hafiz, Saadi and Khayyam. I don't have this background. I enjoy it, but it isn't really a part of my upbringing. I read English poetry, whether it's American or British poets. For example, I read the poetry of Emily Dickinson at one time, and I liked it very much. There is a line which is in one of my paintings, »Death is the only secret«, or some such thing.

O: Have you ever collaborated with poets or done books with them?

M: No, I haven't. I am a very solitary person by nature, and I can only work alone, knowing I'm not going to see anybody that day, in my studio, and then I go into myself. It's very difficult to go into yourself when there's somebody else.

O: Is it a situation of trance in which you work?

M: No, it's just a certain calm, a sort of inward journey, I would say.

When I work, I don't know beforehand what I'm going to do. I start the work, and then it tells me what to do. It builds itself, and at some point, I edit. I am more of an editor than a creator. It feels like there is an energy that comes through me, and I feel very connected to a very ancient past. I literally feel it.

O: Have you ever worked on canvas?

M: I have, but I love paper, all kinds of paper. Paper for me is a wonderful thing, whether it's rice paper, plain consol paper or cardboard. It has many possibilities.

O: Your paintings are very multilayer. Do you work on them for a long time?

M: Yes, over and over. I rub the pigment into the paper with my finger ..., and it's layer upon layer. There was a period when I did works that are like a maze. There is also *écriture*, but I took the paper, I scratched the *écriture*, then turned the paper upside down, and then rubbed dry pigment over it with my hands. I love working with my hands. And my colours are earthen colours but sun-kissed. During the civil war in Lebanon, I also did a lot of burning with a blow torch in several works. Unfortunately, there is great beauty in destruction.

O: You did a lot of structural work in the beginning. When did the *personnages* start?

M: I believe the faces started when I was in Paris. I don't know what triggered it. I used to do little caricatures, ink on paper, quick caricatures. And then, I developed them into paintings. There are no models; it's just faces from memory. I noticed they are all men. I have only one woman. And they all have lives of suffering. They are not happy people. A lot has happened to them; there is displacement, there is suffering.

O: It's interesting that these characters assume a very important place in your apartment.

M: Yes, I have kept a few things from different periods for myself. It's almost like I have taken different bits and pieces from my roles, things that matter to me, and I have put them all together. And I live with them.

O: It's like a retrospective of your work. Do you also collect old books?

M: It's interesting; my uncle, who was an artist, later on in life became a collector of manuscripts. When he died, he left me his collection in his will. I donated part of the collection to the British Museum in his name, and I kept some of the manuscripts for myself.

O: Were they Arabic manuscripts mostly?

M: Both Arabic and Persian. Different Kufi scripts, old Qur'ans, poetry. He had become quite an expert in those things.

O: And your own work is a continuum of the manuscripts?

M: Yes, but nothing is intentional. When I work, it is almost as though I said: »Speak, Memory«*— and the thing happens. But nothing is intentional or planned in advance.

O: Memory is a very important aspect in your work.

M: Absolutely. Memory is crucial in my work. Not only my memories; I feel connected to a distant memory also. It's a continuum. Memory is a strange thing, because it's filtered with time, and it changes. It's never really the same. Memory is a continuously dynamic thing.

O: Do you think that your landscapes are the landscapes of your childhood?

M: There is a link that I had forgotten. Ten years ago, I went back to Haifa, where I was born and where I lived. Of course, all the memories came back, and I found certain shapes that recur in my work. I could see them from my home in Haifa.

O: Do you have any unrealised projects?

M: Yes, I have two. I use very subdued colours in my work. I don't use bright colours and if I do, usually I put another layer to darken it. I would love to have an exhibition where the lighting is direct sunshine on my work. Because it brings out every nuance of every little bit of colour I have used. Occasionally, the sunshine comes through my window on my work and it's a totally different thing. To my mind, it is ideal. But it's an impossible project, I think.

Another idea is to create a world of my work, to have a room where my work, *écriture*, *paysage*, and *personnage*, is projected on the wall, to go into that room and to feel the space completely dominated by this world. Because all these works are living in that world. It's my universe.

O: It would be an immersion. The viewer would be immersed inside the work.

M: It would be an immersion, yes. Because even when you have an exhibition, you have paintings on a wall, but they are still limited in size, there are lots of white spaces, and so forth. I would like to create such a universe. I don't know if it's ever going to be realised, but it's nice to hope.

*Nabokov's book, »Speak, Memory«



Tablet,
Plaster of Paris and
water based paint,
2000, 25 × 23 cm



A Personal Note

I love the work of Maliheh Afnan. She is a poet of lines, of earthen colours and iconic signs. She creates dreamlike scenes, delicate palimpsests in which personal memories are stored, intriguing and of magic beauty.

It was in conversation with the artist in her beautiful London studio, that the constellations of this exhibition came about: all unexpectedly and as a gift of surprise.

When I went to see Maliheh Afnan in the fall of 2013, her sister, Bahiyeh Afnan Shahid, had recently published her translation of Sohrab Sepehri's »The Eight Books« into English. For the first time, the poetic work of this much-admired Persian poet of the 20th century came to be known to the world at large.

Maliheh Afnan handed the book over to me and we started reading some of the verses. We were charmed by the beauty of the words: »Tonight, in a strange dream, The door towards words will be opened,« »My hands have no bounds: ... they pick fruits ... In the warmth of the meeting came the courage to speak.«

I began to imagine a tiny anthology of poetry consisting of the artist's and my own favorite passages, put together especially for Maliheh Afnan's work, to be shown side by side with her work in a fleeting, ephemeral way, to mirror its spirit and to bring out the aura of her delicate works. I remembered I had seen splintered fragments of poetry, composed of light and letters, in an exhibition in Vienna entitled »a little bit of history deleting«, curated by Isin Önel, a dear colleague, in 2012.

This is how I came across the two artists Eva Beierheimer and Miriam Laussegger. They did something very felicitous with our tiny anthology of poetry, much in tune with the artist's work, with Sohrab Sepehri's poetry, and with the architectural settings of Galerie Kornfeld's space, all at once.

Galerie Kornfeld's directors, Alfred Kornfeld and Mamuka Bliadze, exhibited a rare enthusiasm and generosity of spirit when meeting my desire to present Maliheh Afnan's new works at their gallery in Berlin. Mamuka Bliadze's visit at Maliheh Afnan's studio was immensely pleasurable; we looked through all the works and loved what we saw. We chose new works, still fresh with paint; works that haven't been put on show yet and are waiting to meet the face of the world.

Shulamit Bruckstein Çoruh, Berlin in June, 2014

We thank Rose Issa Projects for her gracious collaboration in preparing this exhibition. And we thank Lutz Becker for granting us the rights to republish his text »Speak, Memory« that he wrote for his own show »Maliheh Afnan: Speak, Memory« at Rose Issa Projects in 2013. And thanks to Hans Ulrich Obrist who provided us the interview he conducted with Maliheh Afnan in her studio in April, 2010. And a big thank you to the editorial team: Raha Rastifard for doing all the work in Farsi, Mona Cattaoui for her careful editing work, Pina Lewandowsky for setting the book so beautifully, and Tilman Treusch and Christoph Nöthlings for their meticulous copy editing.

(Following page)
Eva Beierheimer/
Miriam Laussegger,
»Tonight The Door
Towards Words Will
Be Opened«, digital
photography, architec-
tural setting: Galerie
Kornfeld Berlin, 2014

Think how lonely
A small fish must feel if it is preoccupied with the blue color of an endless

There is always a distance.
One must always be preoccupied.

In a strange dream
The door towards words
Will be opened.
The secret will overflow.

I opened the door: a piece of sky fell into my glass.
I drank both water and sky.

What splendor in the generous giving of superficial things!
Someone came and stretched my hand

One day
I shall come
All insults from lips I shall remove.
All walls I shall tear down.

Friends I shall make.
For walks I shall go.
Light I shall eat.

Call me
Let us steal life, then,
Two encounters, divide it,
And make it round.
Water like a word on the line of my silence,
The luminous, celestial body of Ishq
That fell while I slept



Maliheh Afnan was born in 1935 to Persian parents in Haifa, Palestine, where she lived until 1949. Her family then moved to Beirut, where she went to high school and later graduated with a BA from the American University of Beirut in 1955. In 1956 she moved to Washington DC, where she graduated with an MA in Fine Arts from the Corcoran School of Art (1962). Between 1963 and 1966 she lived in Kuwait and then returned to Beirut, where she lived until 1974. She spent the following 23 years in Paris, where she had numerous exhibitions, before settling in London in 1997, where she lives today.

Afnan has had several solo shows, including »Speak, Memory« (curated by Lutz Becker), Rose Issa Projects (2013); »Traces, Faces, Places«, Rose Issa Projects (2010) to celebrate the publication of her book of the same name; »Selected Works: 1960–2006« (2006) and »Maliheh Afnan: Retrospective« (2000), both at England & Co, London; and also solo exhibitions at Galerie Mouvances, Paris (1996); Théâtre de Beyrouth, Beirut and Galerie 10 Bonaparte, Paris (both 1994); Leighton House Museum, London (1993); Galerie Arcadia, Paris (1987); A&A Turner Galerie, Paris (1982); Galerie Brigitte Schehadé, Paris (1980); Galerie Principe, Paris (1978); Galerie Cyrus, Paris, presented by Michel Tapié (1974); and Galerie Claire Brambach, Basel, presented by Mark Tobey (1971).

She has participated in numerous group exhibitions around the world, including »Asemic: Henri Michaux,

Maliheh Afnan, Fathi Hassan, Lutz Becker«, Cultuurcentrum Brugge, Belgium (2014); »The Blue Route: Journeys and Beauty from the Mediterranean to China« at the Boghossian Foundation, Brussels (2013); »Hope Map«, Cultuurcentrum, Brugge (2013); »Persian for Beginners«, Rose Issa Projects (2012); »The Art of Writing«, Kurhaus-Kolonnade, Wiesbaden (2011); »Zendegi: Twelve Contemporary Iranian Artists« (curated by Rose Issa Projects) at Beirut Exhibition Center (2011); »Miragens«, a touring exhibition at Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Brasilia (2010–11); »Modern Times – Responding to Chaos«, at Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge and De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea (2010); »Taswir«, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2009); »Contained Thoughts«, Courtauld Institute of Art, London (2008); »Re-Orientations: Contemporary Arab Representations«, European Parliament, Brussels (2008); »Routes«, Waterhouse & Dodd, London; »Word into Art«, DIFC, Dubai (2008 – previously at The British Museum, London, 2006); »The Dance of Pen and Ink«, The State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow and The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg (2007–08); »Iranian Contemporary Art«, Curve Gallery, Barbican Centre, London (2001); »Salon de Réalités Nouvelles«, Espace Eiffel Branly, Paris (1997 and 1984); »Traditions of Respect: Britain and Islamic Cultures« (The British Council, 1997); »Salon du Dessin et de la Peinture à l’Eau«, Espace Eiffel Branly, Paris (1995); »Salon d’Automne«, Thoirigny-sur-Marne, France (1994); »Exposition inaugurale«, Galerie du Chêne – Donald Vallotton, Lausanne (1992); »Collecting 20th-Century Art«, The British Museum, London (1991); »Painting and Sculpture at the End of the 20th Century«, European Cultural Centre of Delphi, Greece (1998); »Selected Artists«, Kufa Gallery, London (1987); and »Paysages«, Galerie Faris, Paris (1985).

Maliheh Afnan’s work is represented in several public collections, including The Metropolitan Museum, New York; The British Museum, London; and Institut du Monde Arabe, Akkram Ojeh Foundation and »BAI Bank Collection«, all in Paris. She has also featured in several publications, most recently Familiar Faces (2013, Rose Issa Projects) and Maliheh Afnan: Traces, Faces, Places (2010, Al Saqi Books & Beyond Art Productions).

Eva Beierheimer / Miriam Lausegger

Eva Beierheimer and Miriam Lausegger have been working together on different art projects since 2004. Most of their work revolves around the interaction between text and visual art, where the text itself becomes an integral part of the art work.

Eva Beierheimer and Miriam Lausegger studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. Their works have been shown at several national and international exhibitions.

Eva Beierheimer, born 1979 in Graz, lives and works in Stockholm and Vienna.

Miriam Lausegger, born 1980 in Vienna, lives and works in Vienna.

Lutz Becker

Lutz Becker is a director and writer of political and art documentaries, a practicing painter and video artist, and a curator of exhibitions. He is an expert on the Russian avant-garde and Italian Futurism. He curated an exhibition of drawings by George Grosz »The Big No« which is currently touring Great Britain. Originally from Berlin, he lives and works in London.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

Hans Ulrich Obrist (born 1968, Zurich, Switzerland) is co-director of the Serpentine Galleries, London. Prior to this, he was the curator of the Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris. Since his first show, »World Soup (The Kitchen Show)«, in 1991 he has curated more than 250 shows.

Obrist’s recent publications include »A Brief History of Curating«, »Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating But Were Afraid to Ask«, »Do It: The Compendium«, »Think Like Clouds«, »Ai Weiwei Speaks«, »Ways of Curating«, along with new volumes of his Conversation Series.

Sohrab Sepehri

Sohrab Sepehri (1928–1980) is considered one of the major modern Persian poets. Born and raised in the ancient city of Kashan, educated in Teheran, and widely travelled, he belonged to the generation of »New Poets« who sought to break free from traditional settings in poetry and life. Sohrab Sepehri’s verses did not necessarily rhyme or have a strict meter. Yet, he invoked mystical traditions by the Sufis and other sages of old. His poetry addresses nature in visual sceneries of stunning beauty, and the human being, even if resounding with loneliness, is shown as an integral, interconnected part of it.

Sohrab Sepehri’s work »The Eight Books« counts among the most well-known poetry in Iran. It was translated into English for the first time by Bahiyeh Afnan Shahid in 2012.

Almút Shulamit Bruckstein Çoruh

A.S. Bruckstein Çoruh is the founding director of Taswir projects, writer, researcher, philosopher, and curator of international exhibitions and artistic research projects.

Taswir projects

Taswir projects is a collaborative agency for artistic research, developing concepts for exhibitions, research projects, and other activities in cooperation with international partners in the arts and sciences.

Imprint

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Cover: Maliheh Afnan, *Read Me*, Ink and mixed media on Nepalese bark fibre paper, 2014 (detail)

Frontispiece: Maliheh Afnan, *Veiled Signals*, Ink and gauze on Nepalese paper, 2011 (detail)

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Anthology of Sohrab Sepehri's poetry:
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Poetry Fragments:

- p. 17 [Till the End in Audience],
Sohrab Sepehri, op. cit., 161.
p. 18 [Here Always ›Teeh‹], op. cit., 160.
p. 19 [Ancient Text of Night], op. cit., 152.
p. 20 [Both Line and Space], op. cit., 151.
p. 21 [Till the Wet pulse of Morning], op. cit., 144.
p. 22 [Sound of the Footsteps of Water],
op. cit., 78–93.
p. 23 [The Traveller], op. cit., 96–109.
p. 24 [The Death of Colour], op. cit., 35/
[The Silent Valley], op. cit., 34.

Interview between Hans Ulrich Obrist and Maliheh Afnan edited by Mona Cattaoui in collaboration with Taswir projects, © Maliheh Afnan and Hans Ulrich Obrist, with special thanks to Mona Cattaoui.

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