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BA Fine Art XD pathway Stage3
Unit 11 Portfolio

Artist Statement

One of the driving forces behind my creative practice is the exploration of memory as a pathway to self-discovery. In my work, I delve into the complex journey of human growth and transformation, often drawing parallels between the embryonic state and the constantly evolving self. In my first project, *Embryo*, the image of the egg serves as a universal symbol of life, rebirth, and creation. It embodies the paradox of fragility and potential—an object that, as a container, holds both the hope of new beginnings and the inherent vulnerability of existence. The human starting point also begins within a container, and through the outpouring of experience and memory, it transitions from simplicity to complexity—completing the transformation from “I am” to “who I am.”

Both physiological and psychological growth unfold through cycles marked by rupture and reconstruction. From the outside, one cannot perceive the changes occurring within the embryonic shell. Human evolution is rarely linear; it involves repeated shedding and renewal, resembling the cyclical rebirth symbolized by most embryonic life forms. Such transformation is not without struggle—the act of breaking free from the shell represents a departure from the old and an embrace of the unknown.

I grew up under a traditional Chinese education system. My childhood was filled with schedules, discipline, and structure. I never really questioned why I had to learn certain things, like painting or calligraphy. Painting felt freer, more intuitive. But calligraphy—especially the way I was made to practice it—was different. I spent hours every day repeating the same strokes. I was just a child, and it felt mechanical and punishing. I developed sleep issues, and my hands would tremble when I held things. That experience—though long past—left a deep trace. It became part of my body, almost like a ritual I couldn't stop performing. Looking back, I now see that repetition and discipline are part of how we shape ourselves. But they also come with their own kind of cost. In my practice, I question this double-edged nature of repetition—how it can build identity but also reinforce constraints. Just like a shell can be both sanctuary and prison, our habits, our training, even our culture, can both hold and hold us back.

Looking back, I now see that repetition and discipline are part of how we shape ourselves. But they also come with their own kind of cost. In my practice, I question this double-edged nature of repetition—how it can build identity but also reinforce constraints. Just like a shell can be both sanctuary and prison, our habits, our training, even our culture, can both hold and hold us back. This tension—between persistence and compulsion, between control and freedom—is at the core of what I explore. Some behaviors give us structure, others become hard to escape. In my work, I'm interested in how pain—especially psychological or embodied pain—can also be a site for transformation. I ask myself: is healing about moving past what hurt us, or is it about learning to live with those wounds as part of who we are?

During a crit and an audience intervention, I experienced a moment of warmth and redemption. I began to reconcile with my past and my family. I discovered that my work sparked curiosity in people from different cultural backgrounds. Audiences wanted to know what I was writing, praised the beauty of my calligraphy, and encouraged me to free myself from personal constraints. These responses helped me immensely and led to new inspiration in my creative process. I began experimenting with extending Chinese and European calligraphy into different spaces and contexts—transforming written characters into abstract gestures, focusing purely on the beauty of lines and ink, rather than merely conveying my memories. This intersection of personal liberation and audience interaction led me to reflect on the balance between self-protection and self-sacrifice. Growth, I came to understand, requires both solitude and solidarity.

Now, calligraphy has become something different for me. It's no longer just about discipline or tradition—it's become a quiet, daily ritual that helps me ground myself. A kind of healing. Through it, I've found new ways to connect with my cultural roots, and also to share them. I hope that people who encounter my work can feel curious about this small part of Chinese culture—and maybe even find something of themselves in it.

At the heart of my practice is a simple question: how do we live through the paradoxes of being human? We want freedom, but also safety. We learn through repetition, but also get trapped by it. We grow through pain, but also long for ease. By returning again and again to the image of the egg—its containment, its quiet power—I try to create a space where transformation, in all its fragility and force, can be felt.



Embryo (2024)

Mixed media: resin, twine, fabric

30x30x40cm

The egg is personified as the original self of life. In the environment of growth, external norms and expectations are coiled like ropes, both protecting and limiting the possibility of birth. The paradox of "bound in growth" touches on the individual's struggle and awakening in the social structure.

The image of the egg tightly wrapped in a rope suggests discipline and control over the body. This discipline is not direct violence, but "gentle oppression" - bondage in the name of protection. Think of Foucault's analysis of how the body is domesticated in modern society in *Discipline and Punishment*. Is there really a "free" starting point when individuals are invisibly bound by power structures (family, education, social morality) at the beginning of their lives?

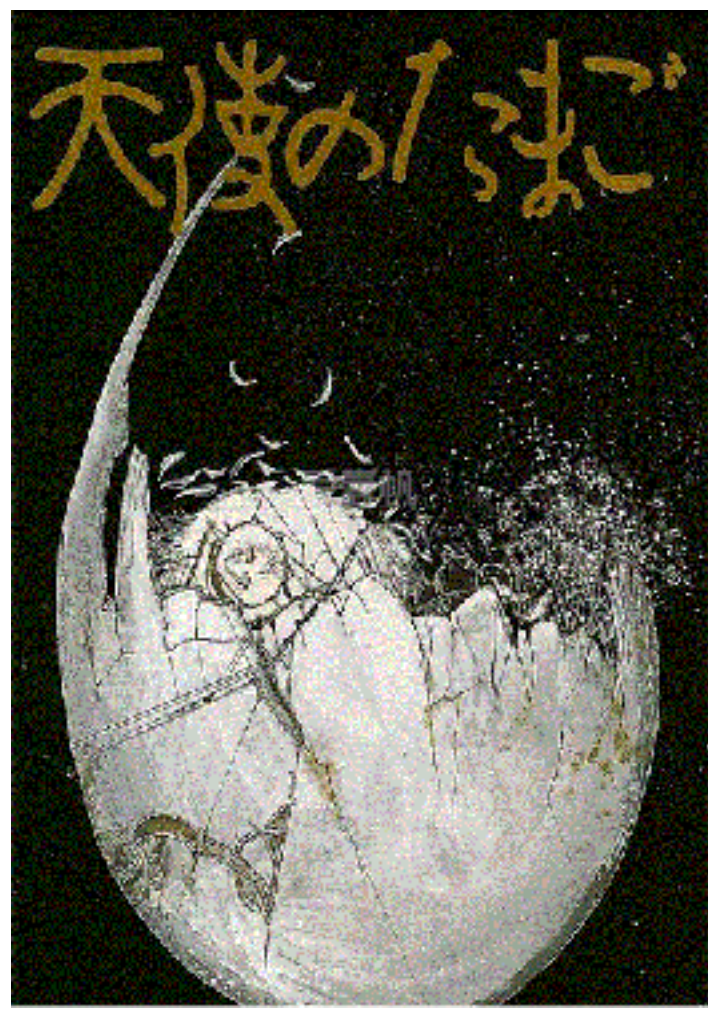
The egg symbolizes the hidden life and possibility, but its external binding shows the suppression of the "external self" on the "internal self". In the process of self-growth, we constantly internalize social standards and use these "ropes" to tie ourselves.

Documentation of Completed Works



Embryo (2024)
Mixed media: resin, twine, fabric,
pillow
30x30x40cm, 30x15x60cm

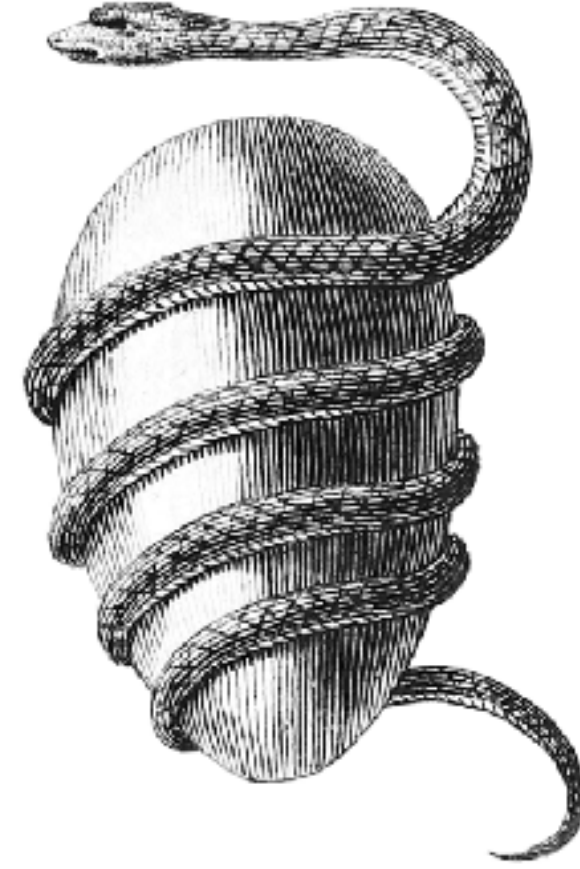




<Angel's Egg>



<Mardock Scramble>



Jacob Bryant's Orphic Egg (1774)



<Dark soul 3>- Filianore with broken egg



Annette Messager, *My Vows*, 1988–1991. Photographs, colored graphite on paper, string, black tape, and pushpins over black paper or black synthetic polymer paint. Overall size approximately 356.2 x 200cm. Museum of Modern Art. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2010.

Petch Coyne's Untitled #922 (The Strange Bird) Exhibited in You Know Who at Abdülmecid Efendi Mansion, Turkey
October 23, 2022



The Garden of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch



ostrich egg



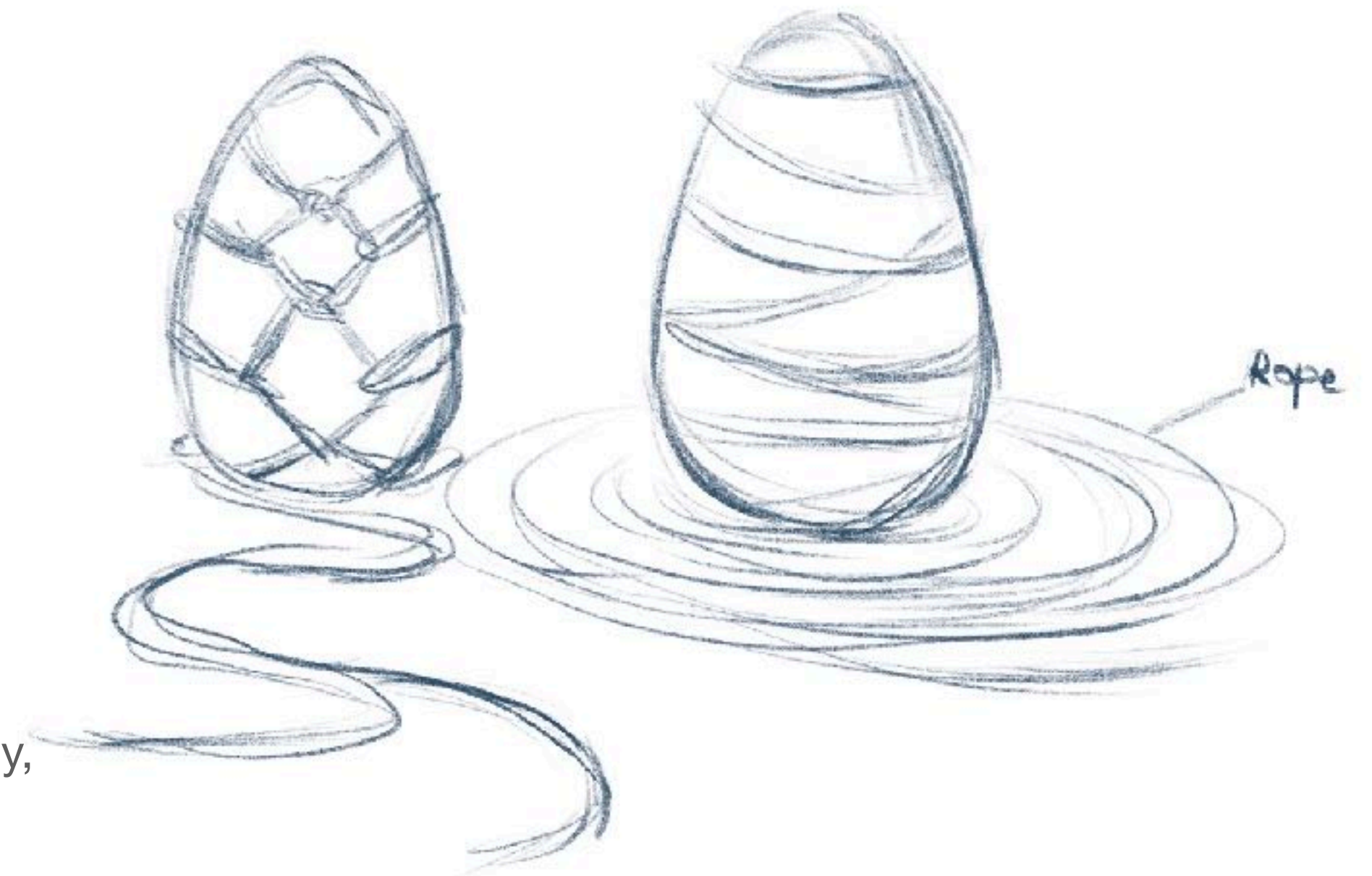
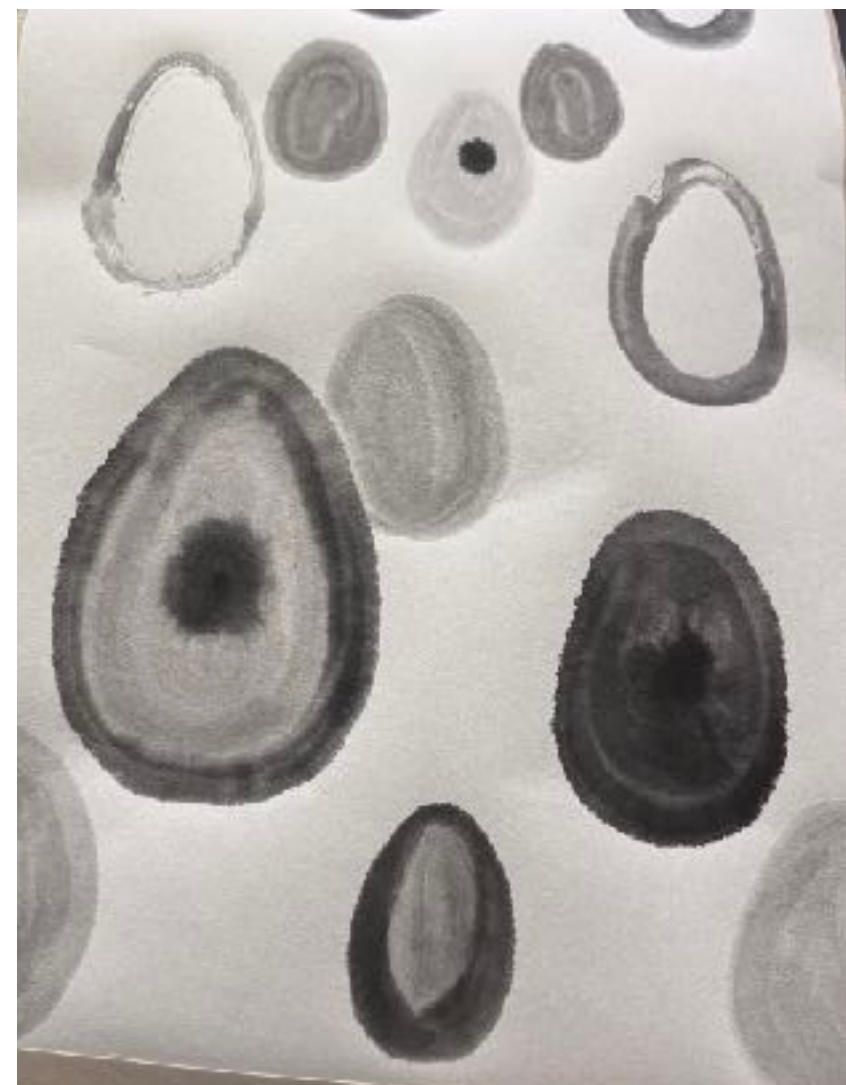
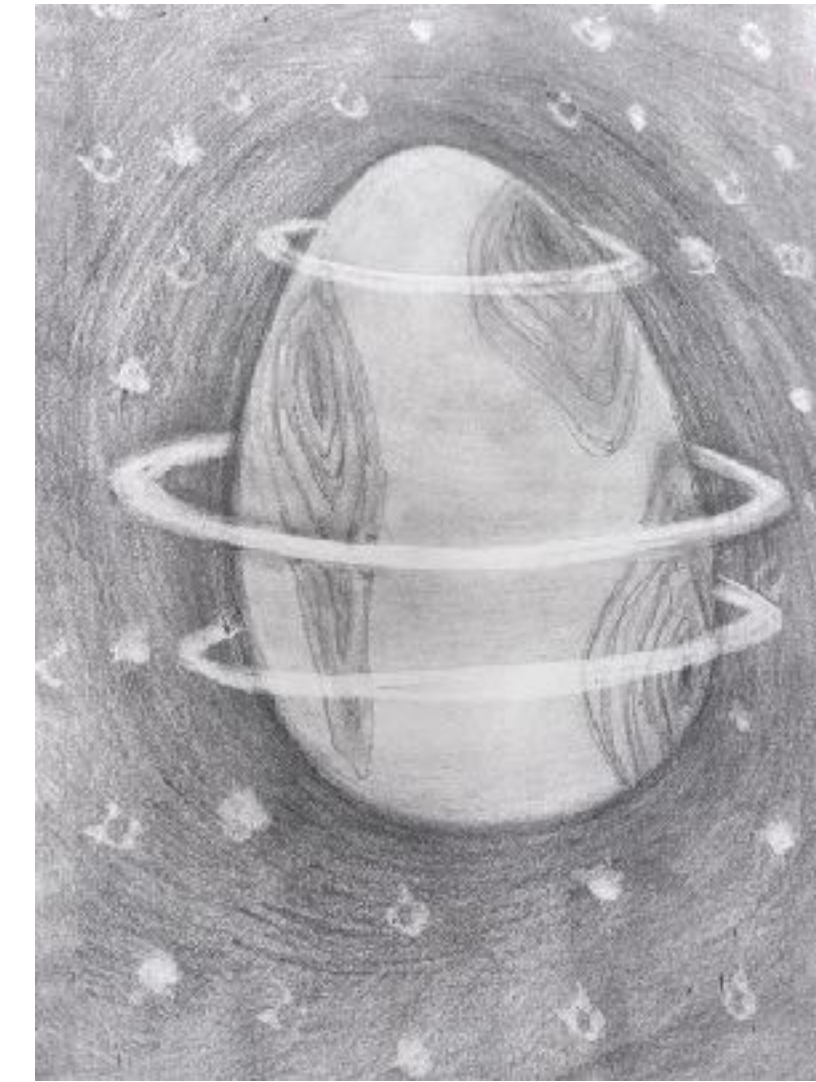
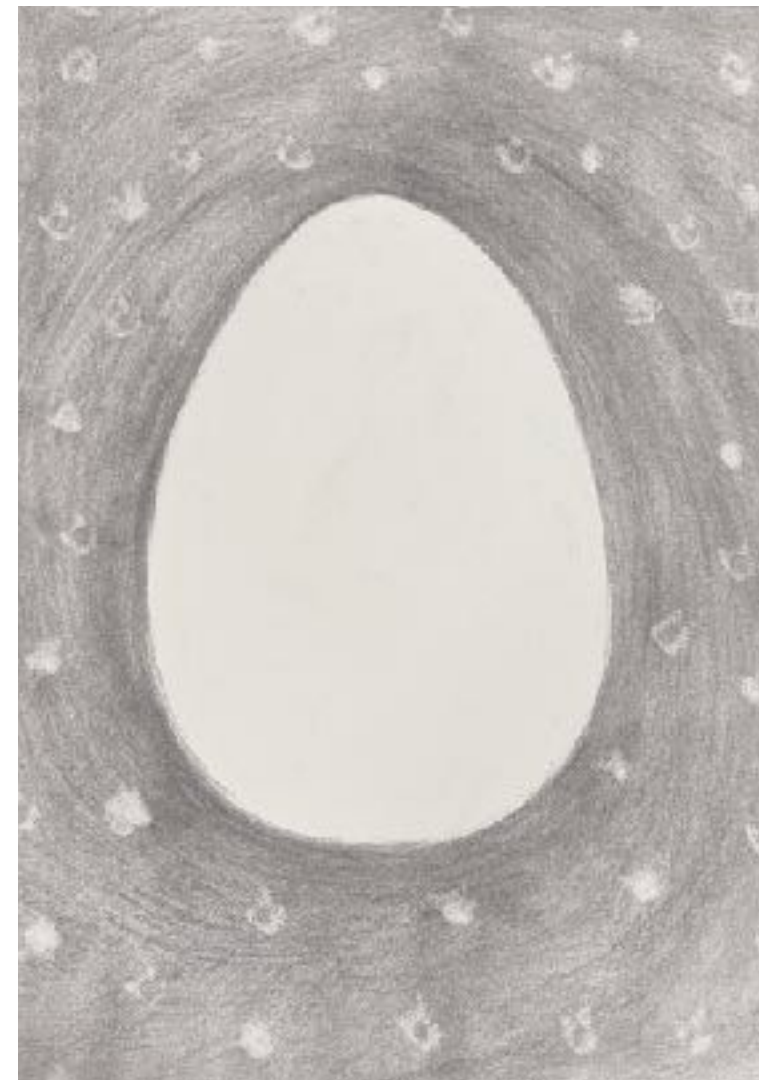
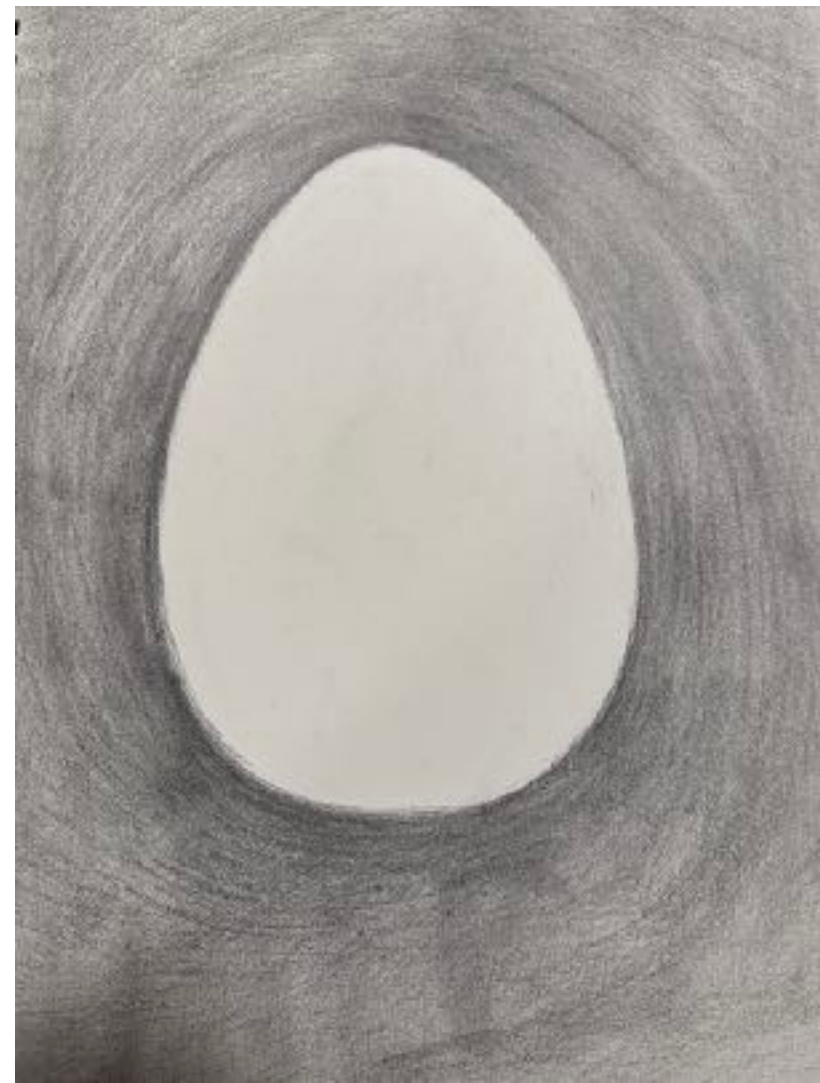
<Berserk>-behelit

I want to explore questions about the fragility of materials and the relationship between the fragility of life and nature

Inspiration&Research

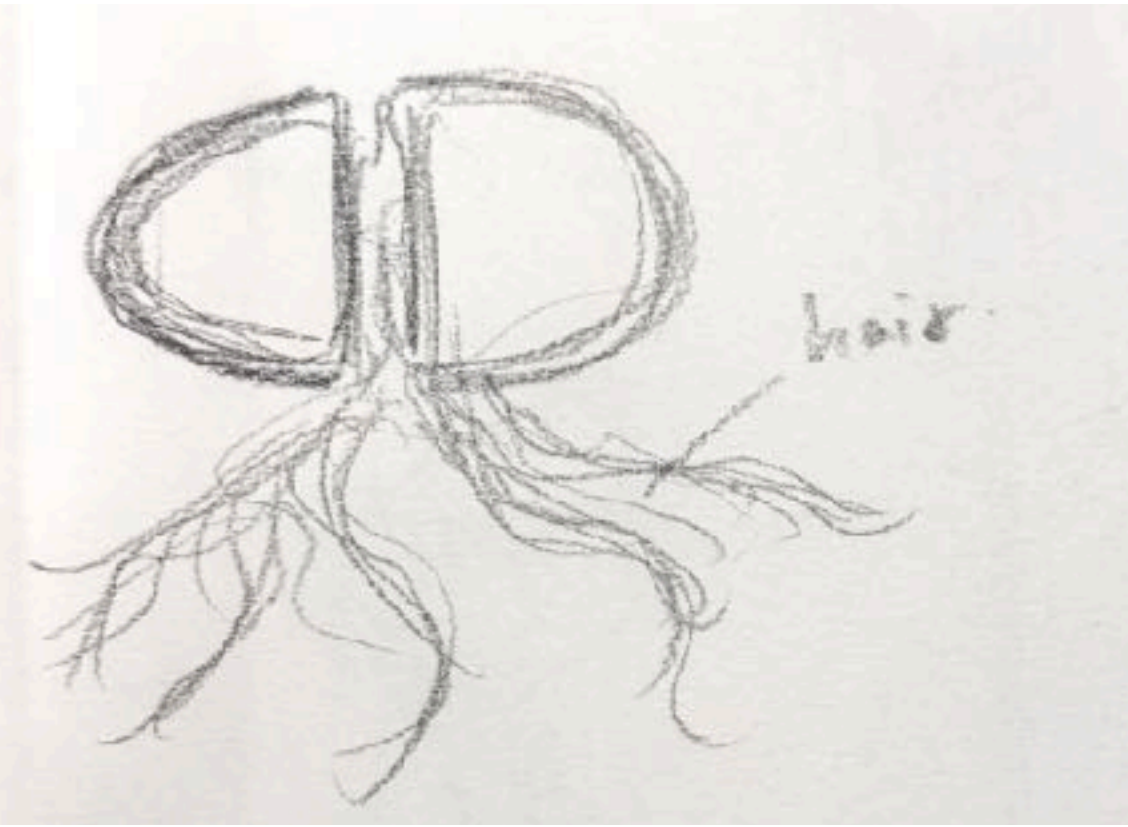
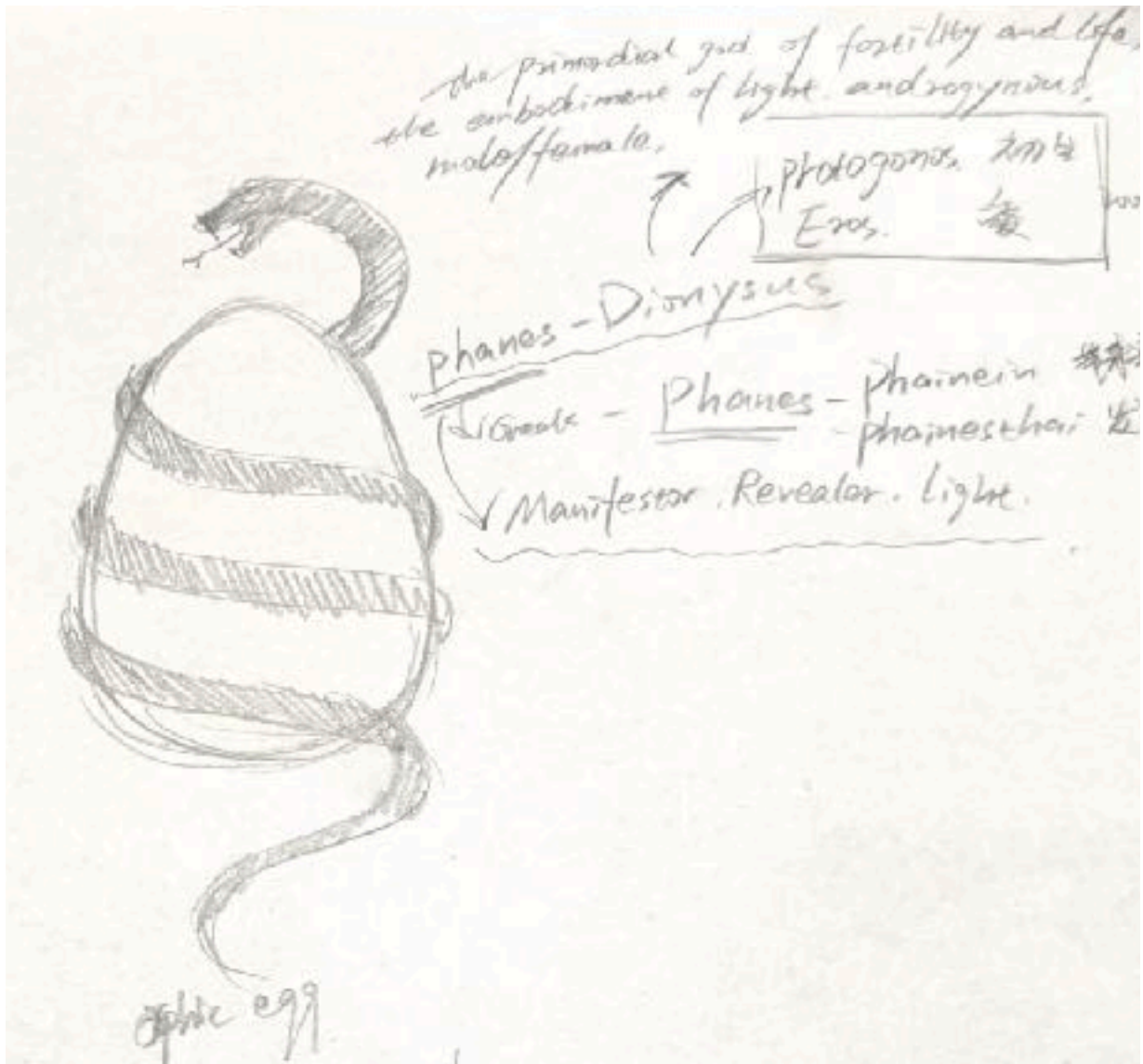
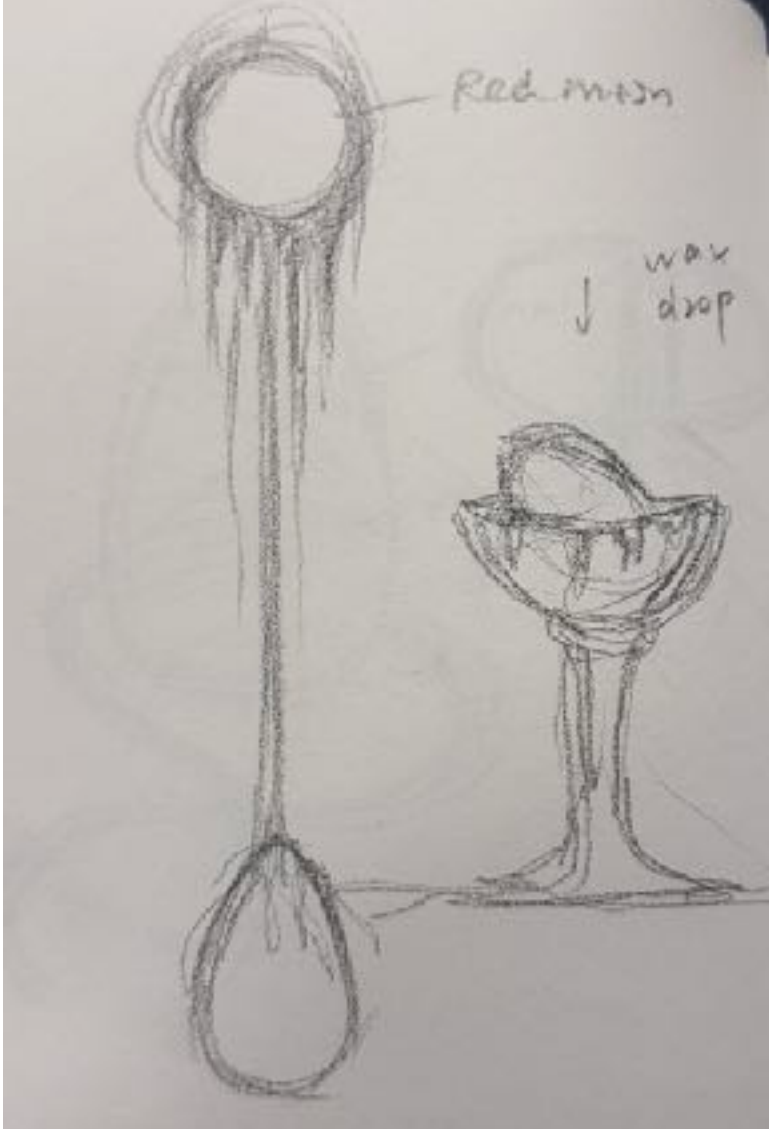
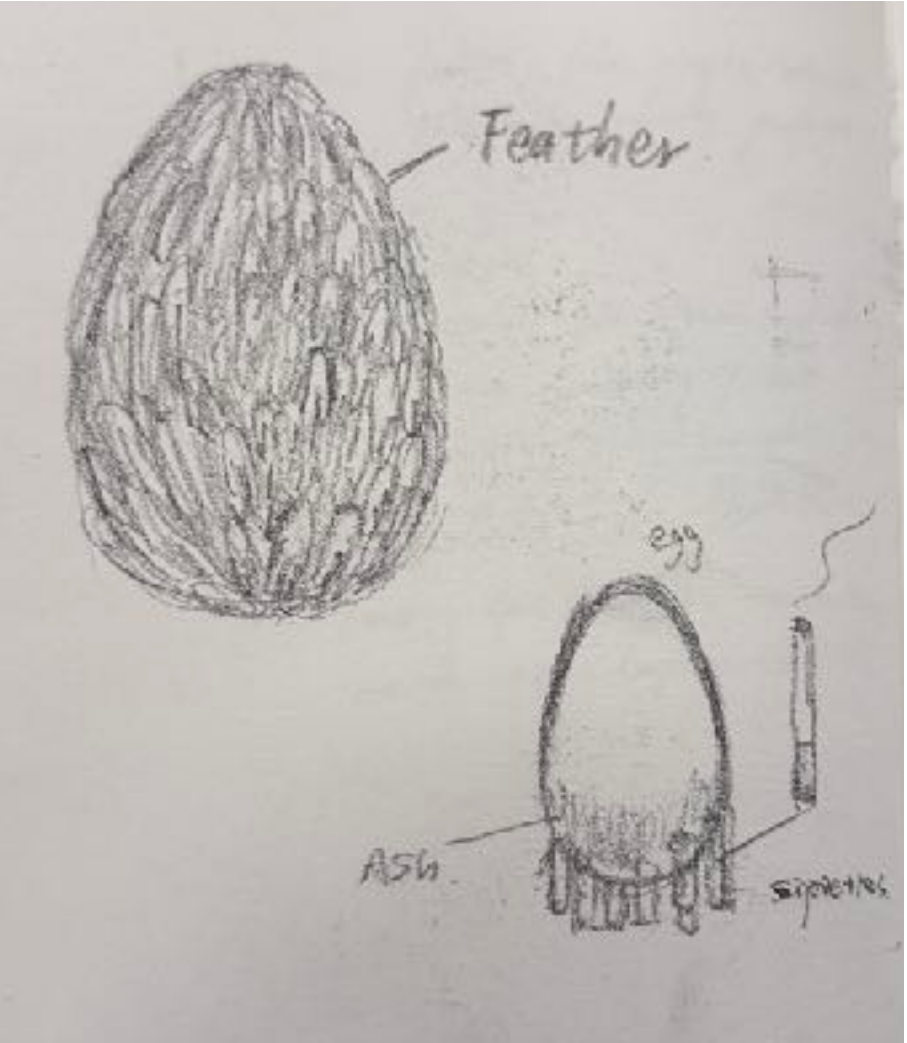
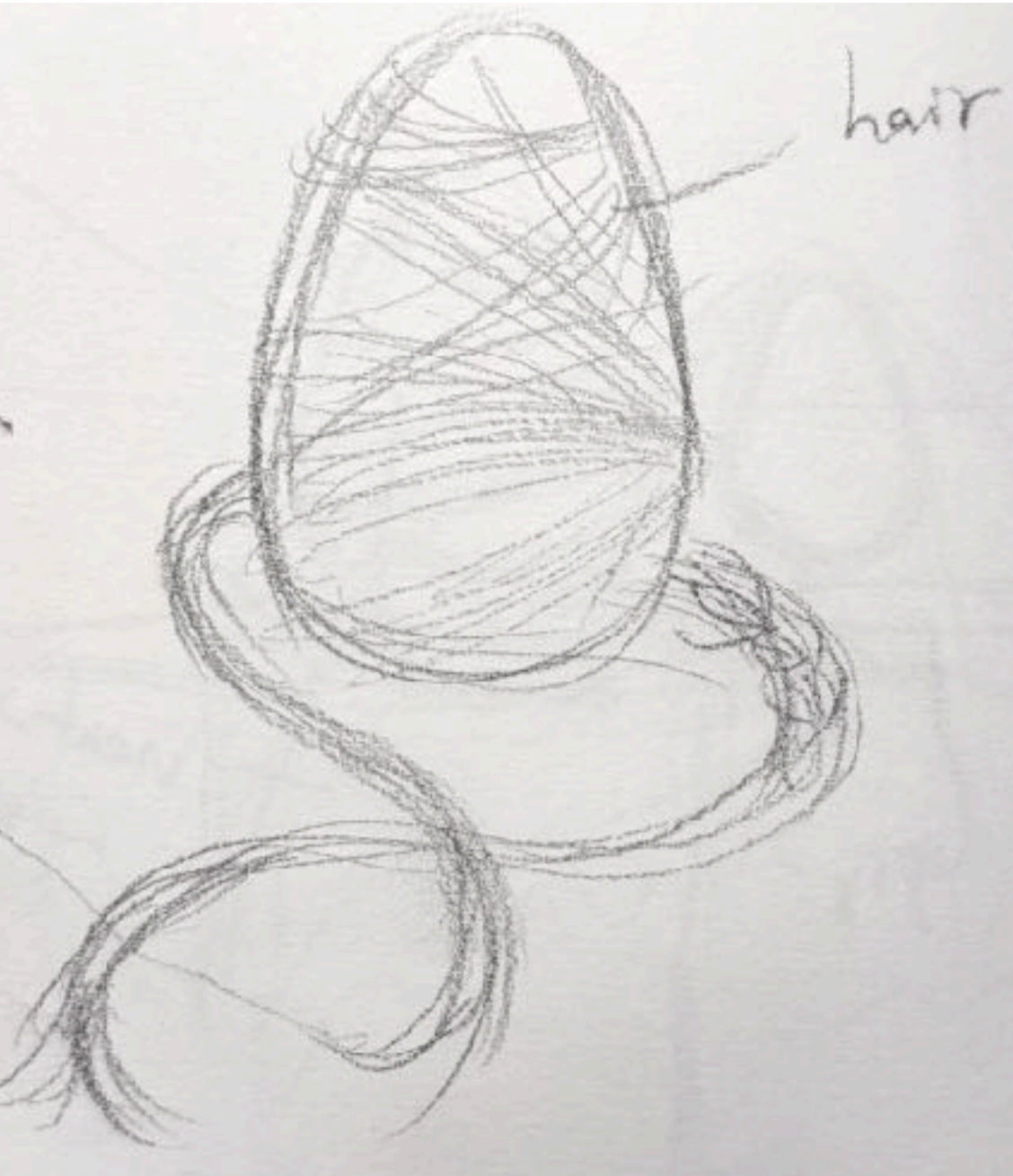
Embryo - Life - fragile material

Sketch



This page shows my various possibilities in drawing eggs, I tried pencil painting, ink painting. Finally, I decided to use ink painting as the foundation material for my subsequent works

Process & Research



This page shows a few of the creative forms I have in mind, including the idea of hair winding around the egg, hair flowing out of the shell, feathers wrapped around the egg, a candle as a chassis to hold the egg, and a rope to bind the egg.

Pillow Binding - Sleep Disorder



Mixed media: twine, fabric, pillow

30x15x60cm



This page shows me tying up more pillows. I chose pillows because they are soft and squeezed like human bodies. And I suffer from chronic sleep disorders, so I think pillows fit well with my creative concept as a material. I learned Shibari (Japanese binding) which used: Turtle (diamond pattern) binding, Rifle tie, Single wrist binding

Inspiration&Research



Louise Bourgeois
Ode à l'Oubli (36 pages)
2004

movie<Undo>Shunji Iwai



OVER THE CONTINENTS, 2011
Chiharu Shiota

keyword: Bruising, pain, scars, alopecia areata, sleep disturbance, somatization, restraint

On the left is my experimental proof of self-restraint, and a sleep disorder that causes alopecia (missing hair on multiple scalp patches).

Process



This page is about my pillow burning experiment and painting process. I chose to use burning to simulate the burned body, and watercolor and colored charcoal to simulate bruises and scars.

Process



I used hot glue to nail black feathers onto the canvas as a background for the later work

feather on the canvas 180x80cm

Documentation of Completed Works



Sleep Disorder (2024)

Mixed media: feather on the canvas,
twine, fabric, pillows

30x30x40cm 180x80cm

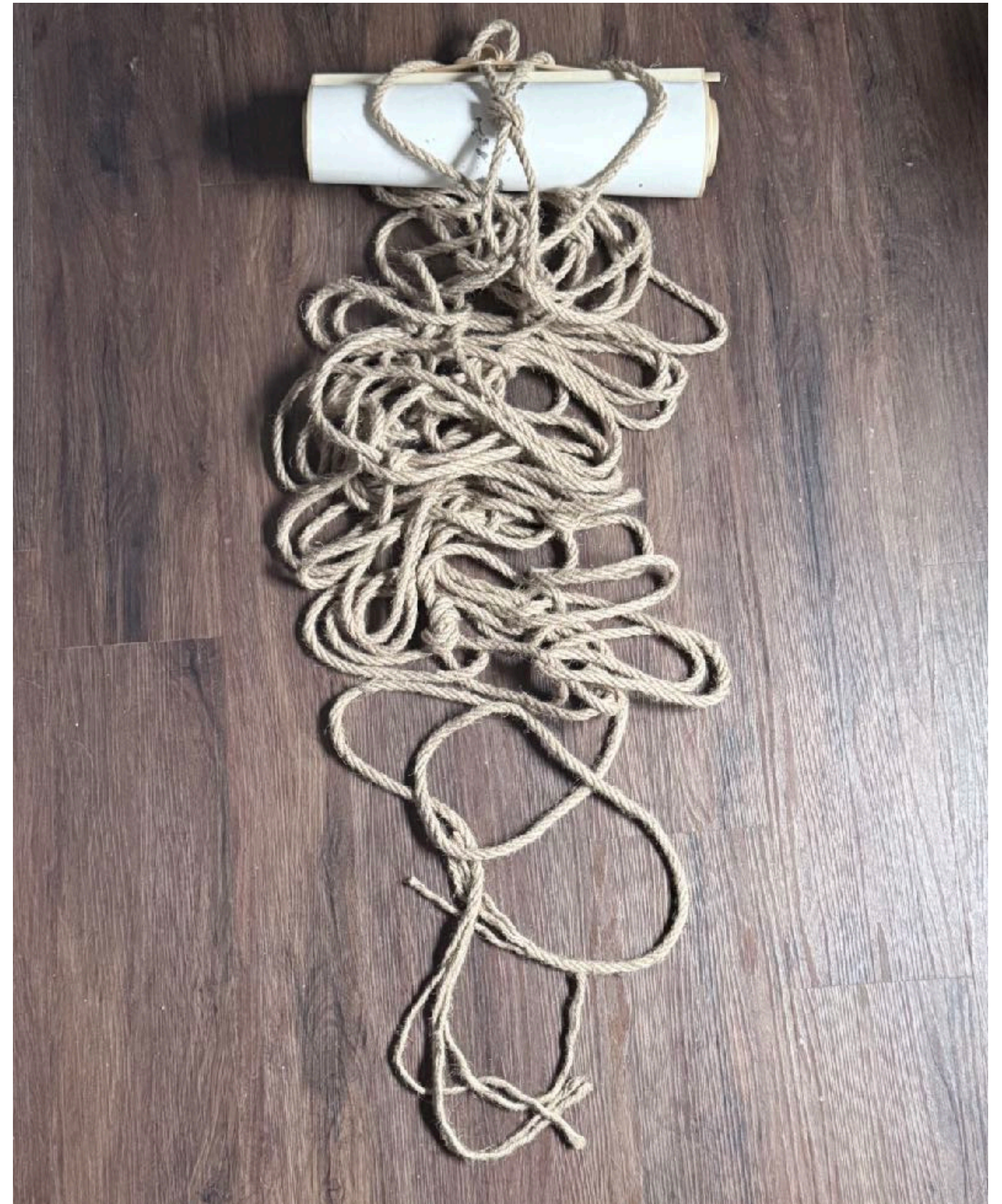
Open Studio Process



Shibari Process

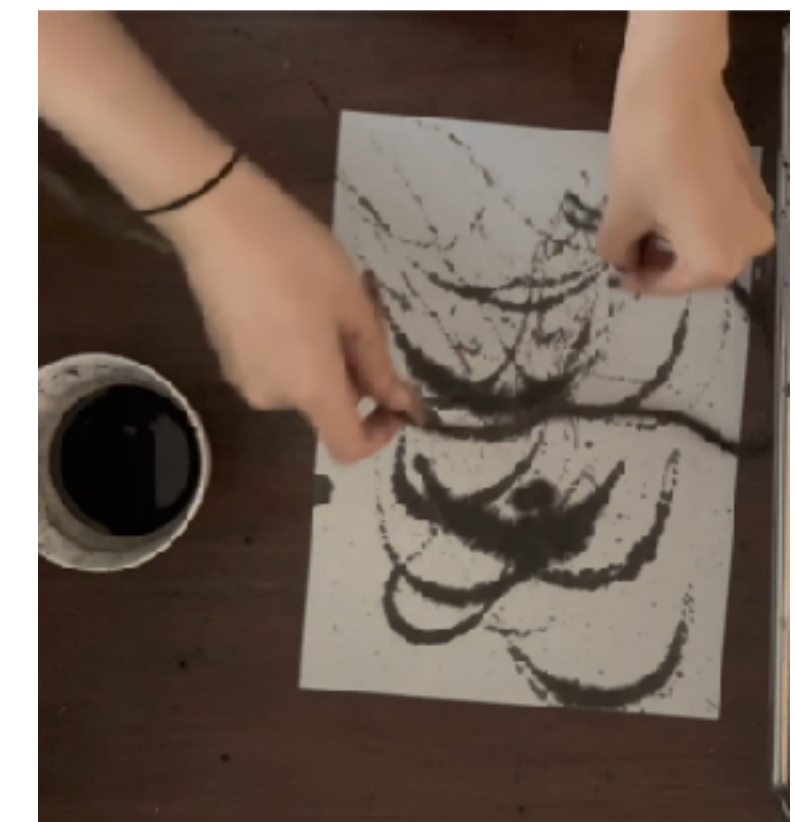
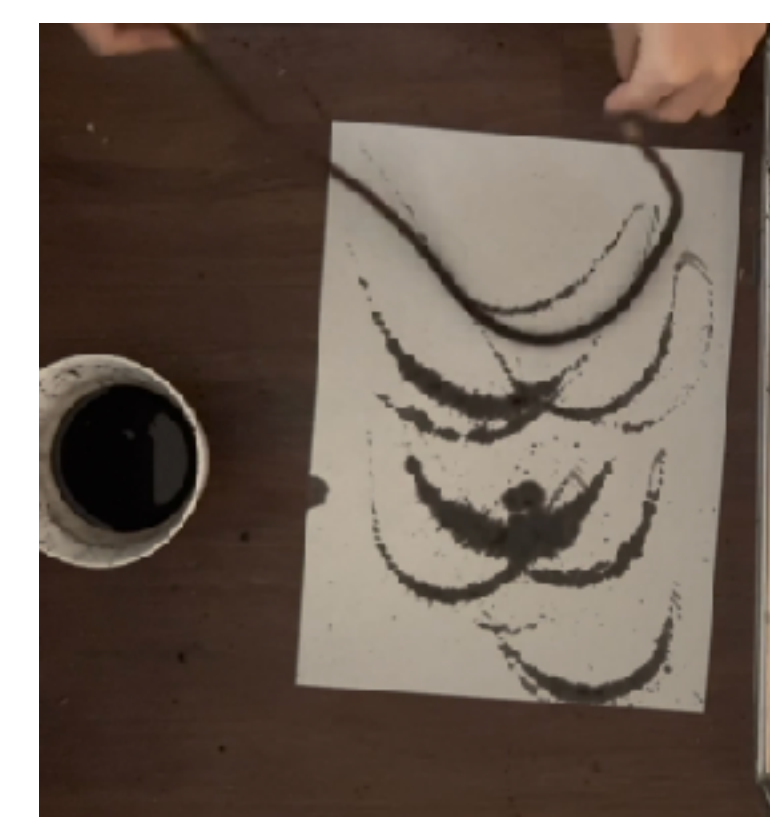
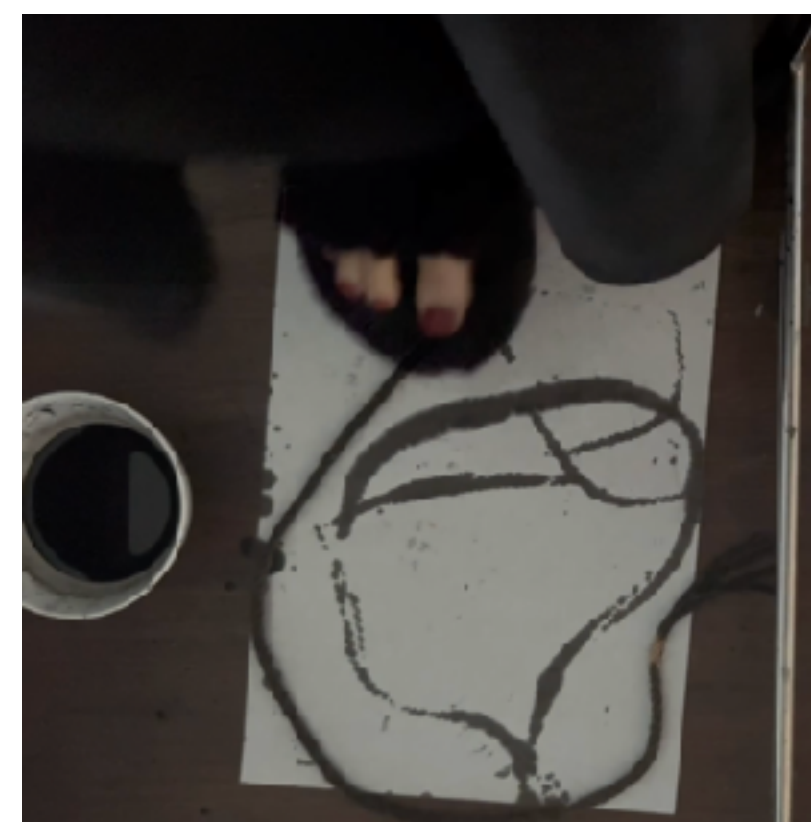
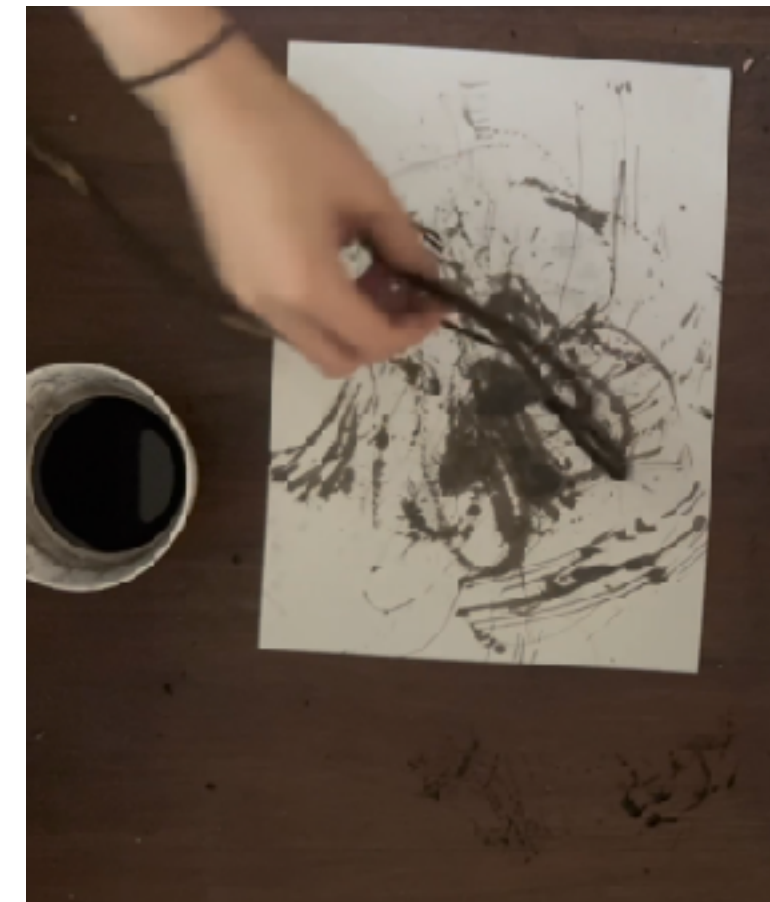


Process

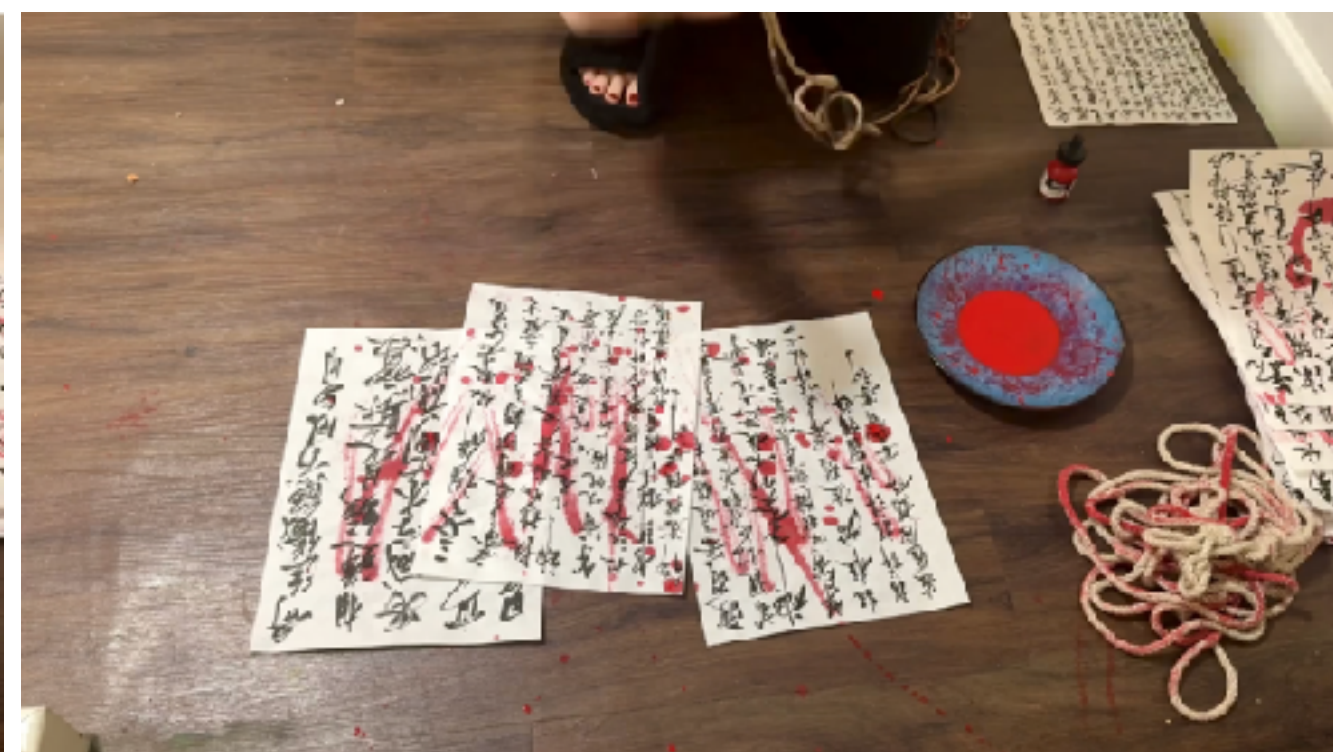
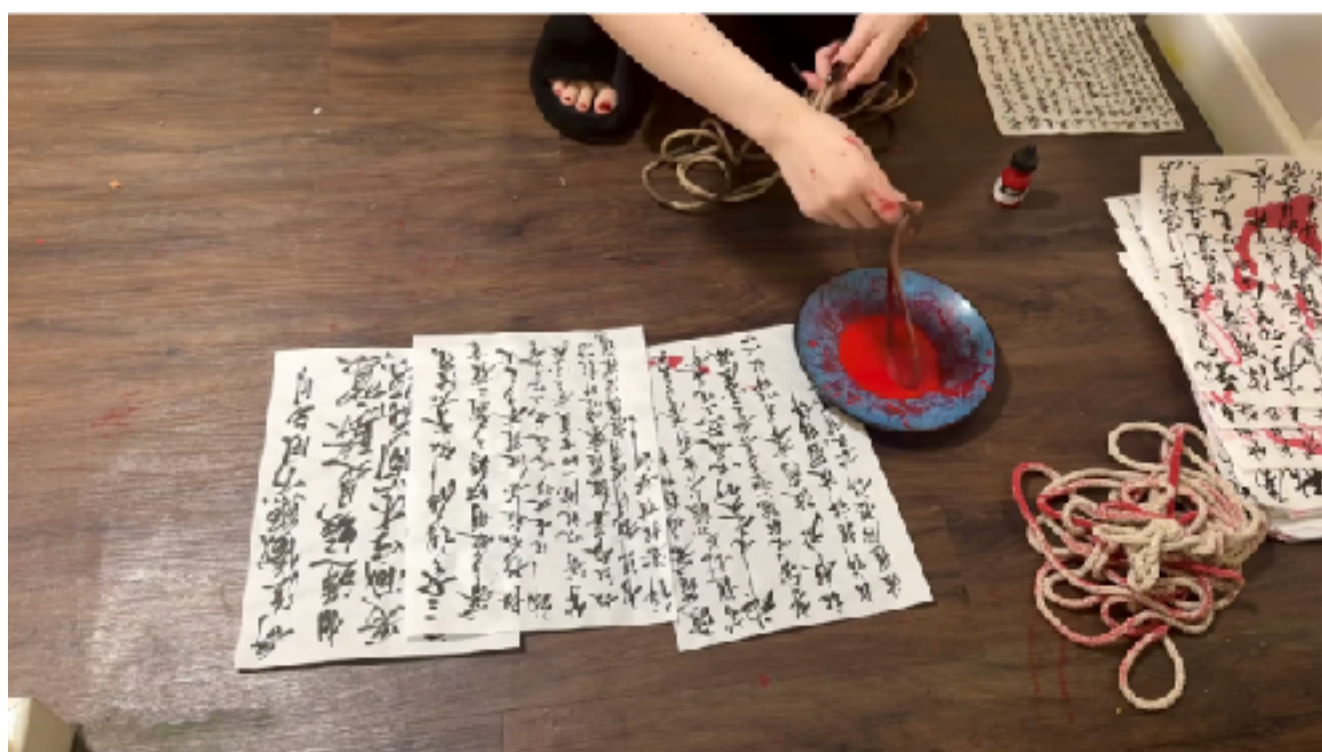
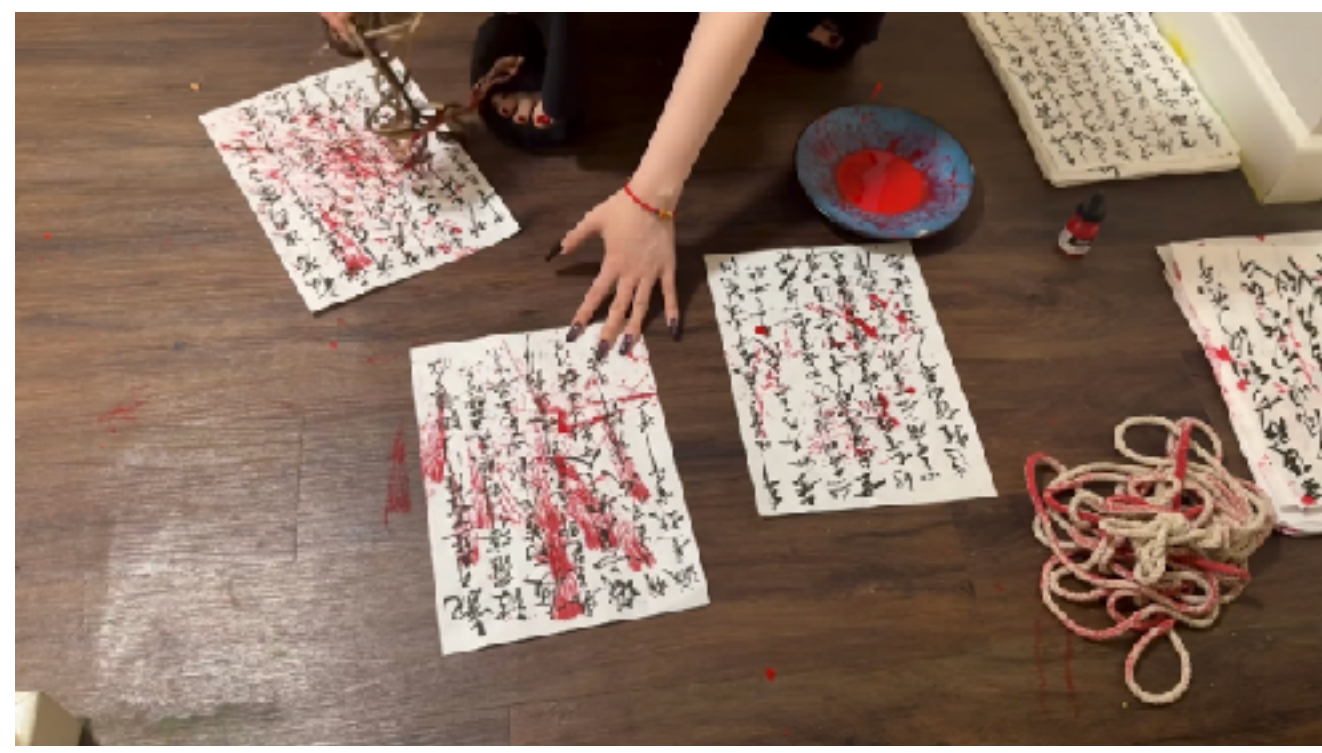


This page shows the creative idea of hanging pictures and tying with twine.

Process-Experiments with twine and ink

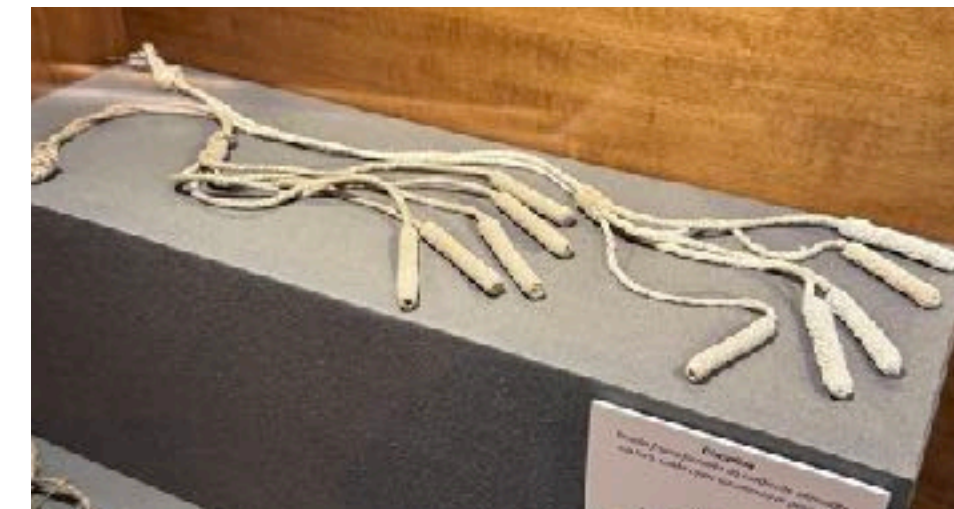


Process&Research



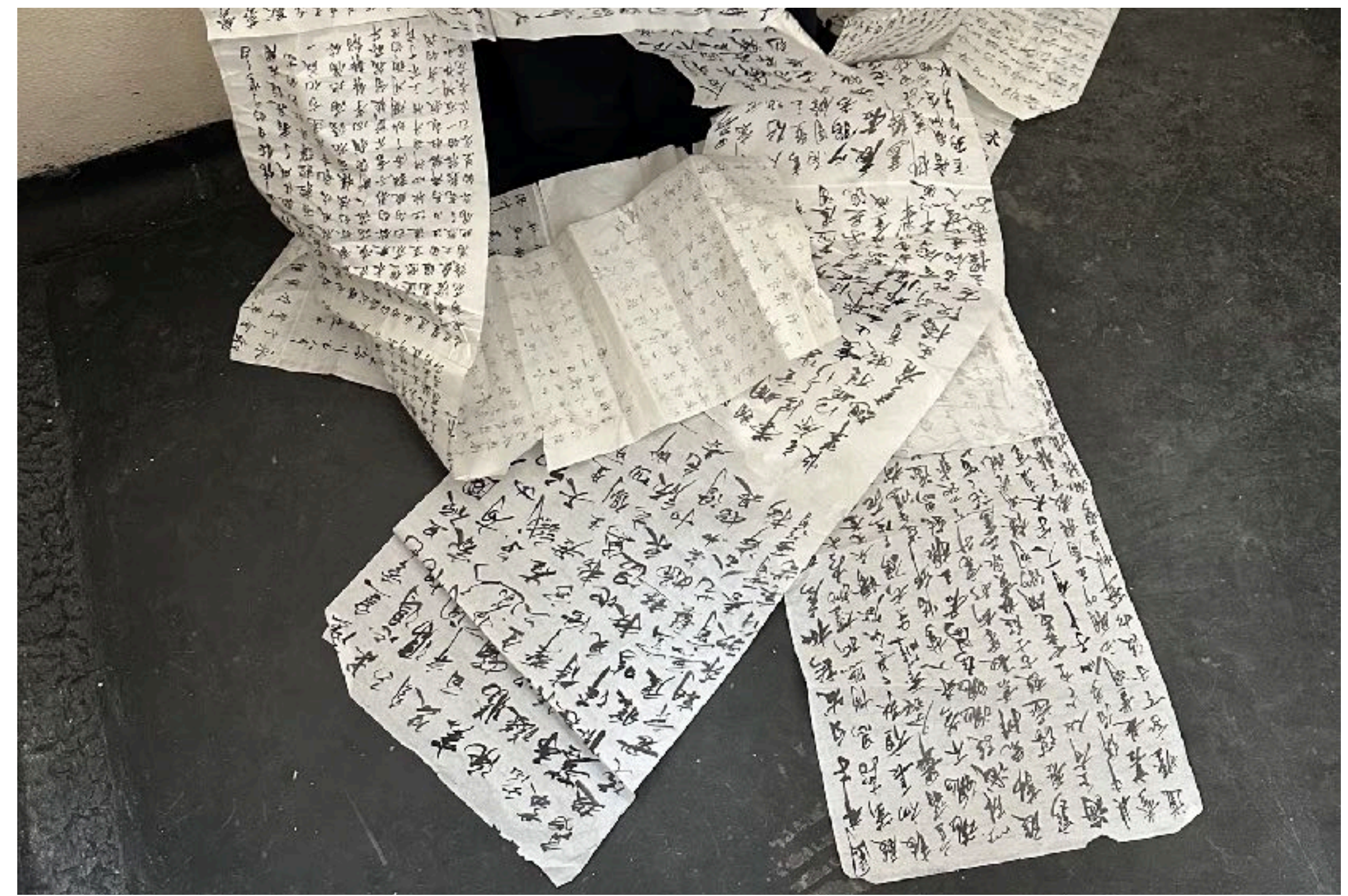
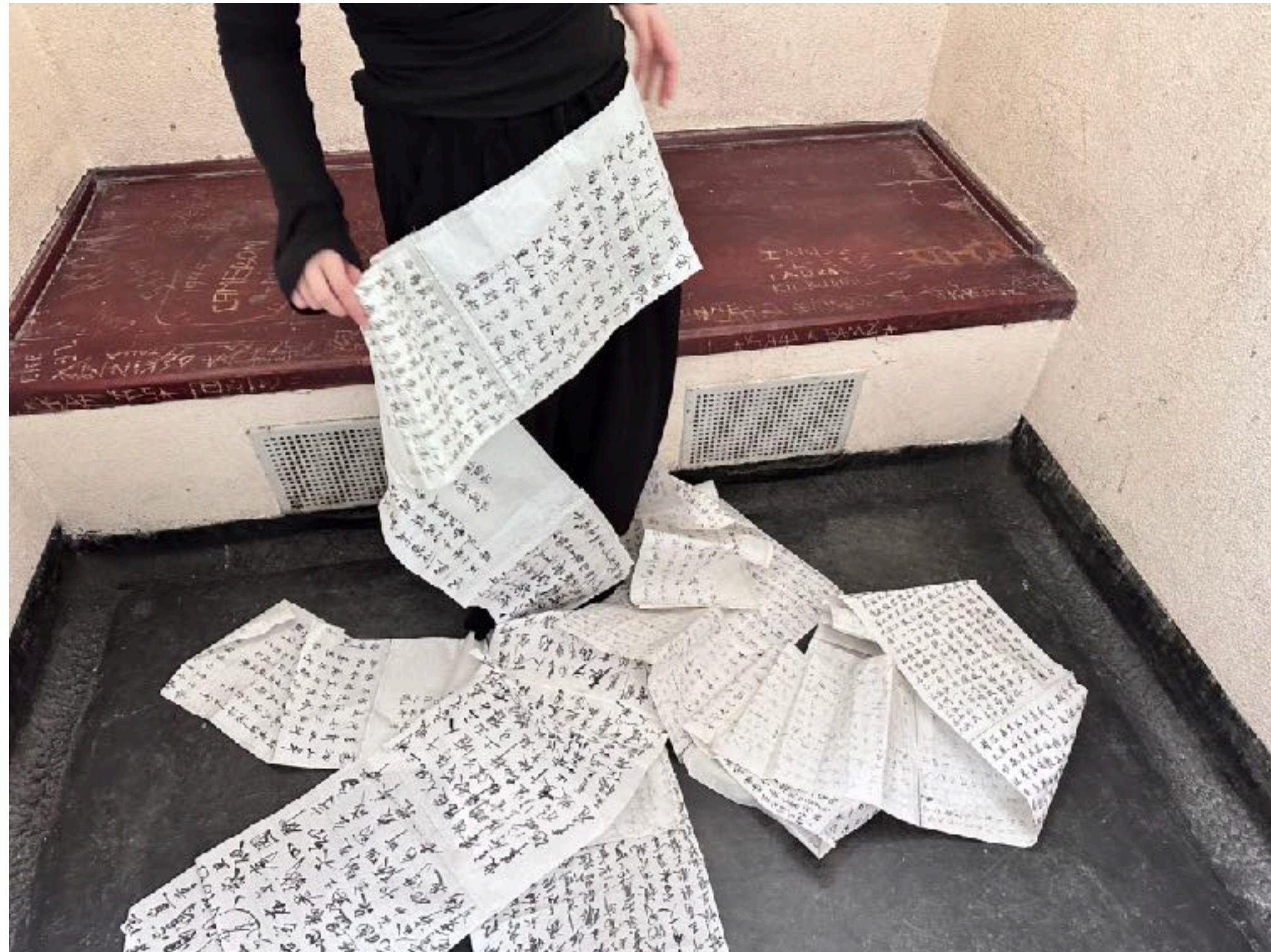
Il cilicio originariamente era una veste ruvida che veniva indossata a diretto contatto con la pelle ed utilizzata per fare penitenza e mortificare la carne. Per estensione con questo termine si indica anche la cinghia in metallo, con uncini, che viene stretta attorno al corpo in modo da provocare un dolore costante finalizzato alla penitenza.

The cilice was originally a rough robe that was worn in direct contact with the skin and used to do penance and mortify the flesh. By extension, this term is also used to indicate the metal strap, with hooks, which is tightened around the body in order to provoke a constant pain aiming penance.



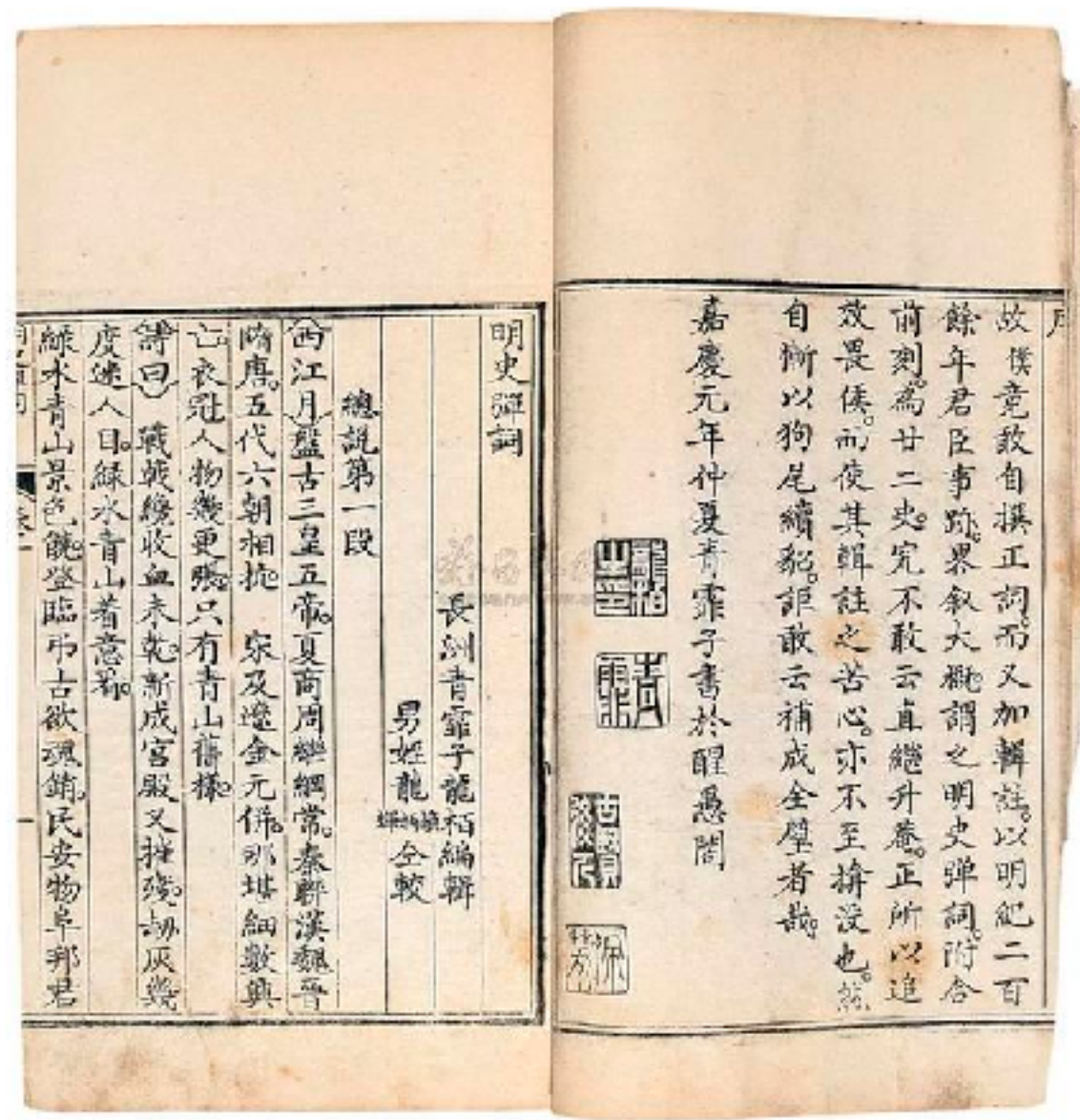
My inspiration for using ink to whip calligraphy paper comes from caning, a form of punishment in both the East and West. I read in a museum in Rome that religions often use whips to whip themselves to achieve the effect of self-discipline.

Calligraphy Processing&Experiment

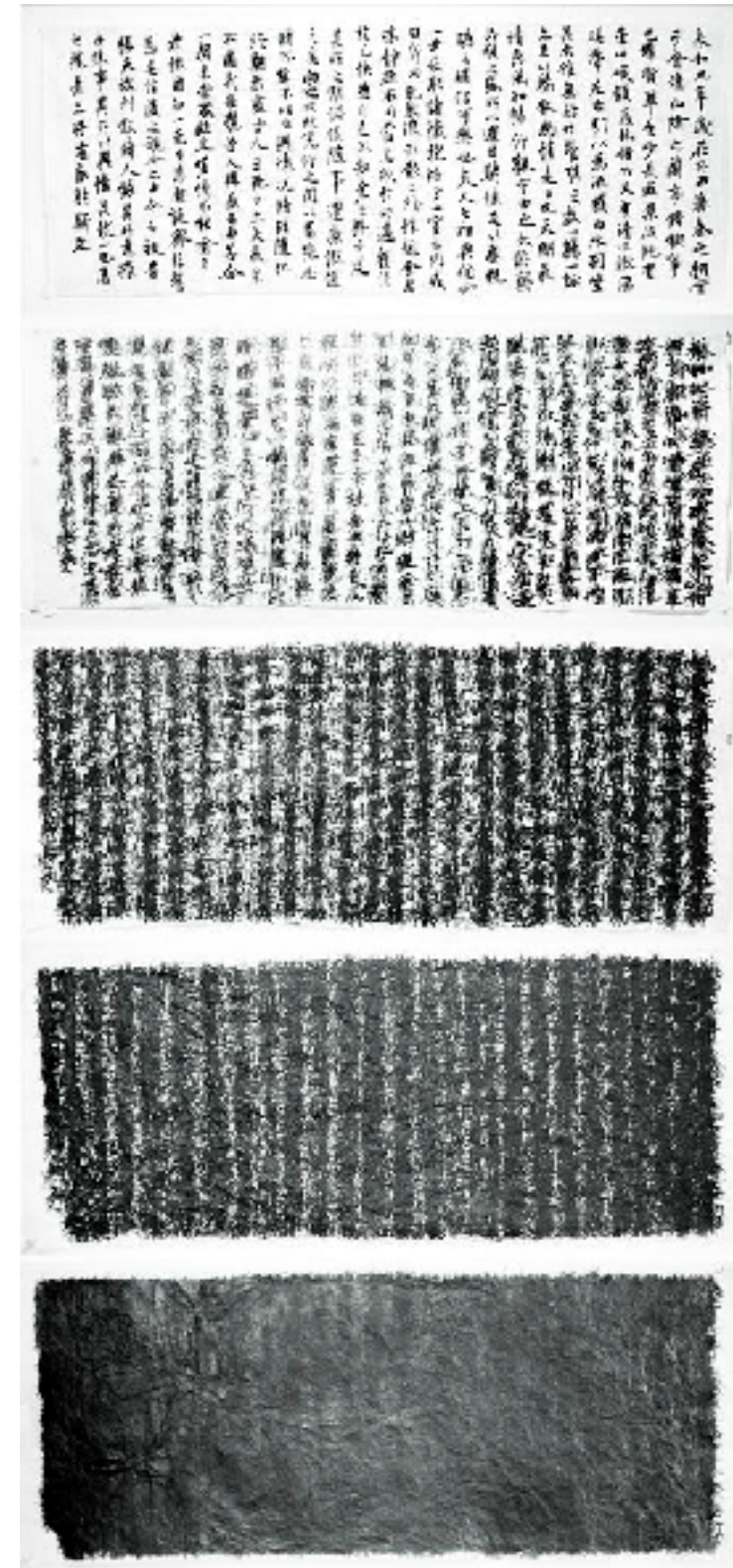


This page records my process of writing calligraphy and my attempts to connect my body with calligraphy

Inspiration&Research



A political persecution of the literati by China's autocratic rulers, the Chinese Dictionary defines it as "an old term for a ruler who, in order to persecute intellectuals, deliberately extracted words and phrases from their writings and wove them into a crime"



Copying the Preface to the Orchid Pavilion
One Thousand Times
Qiu Zhijie 1990-1995



Qing Dynasty Document



Roman Opalka, 1965/1-∞

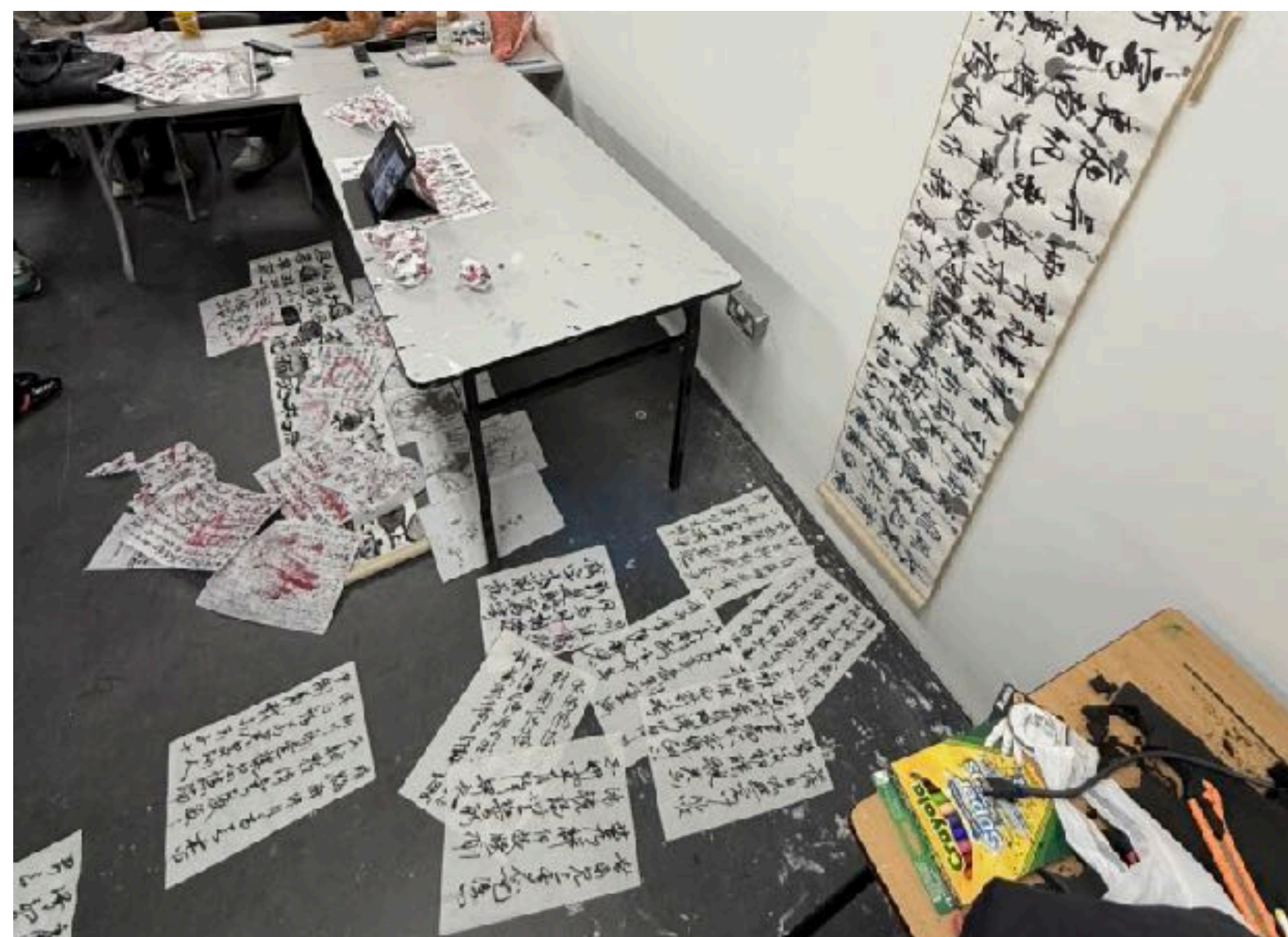
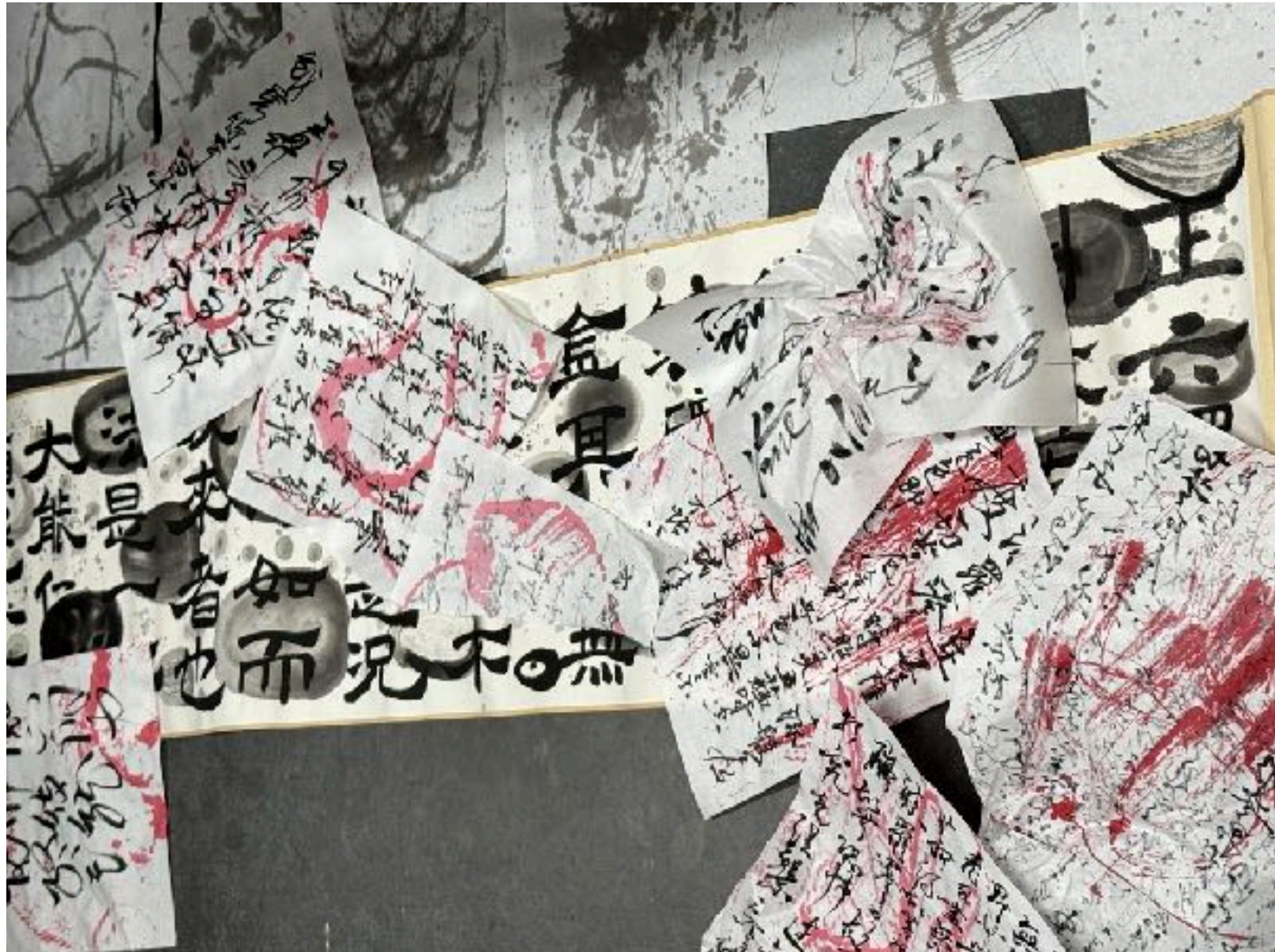
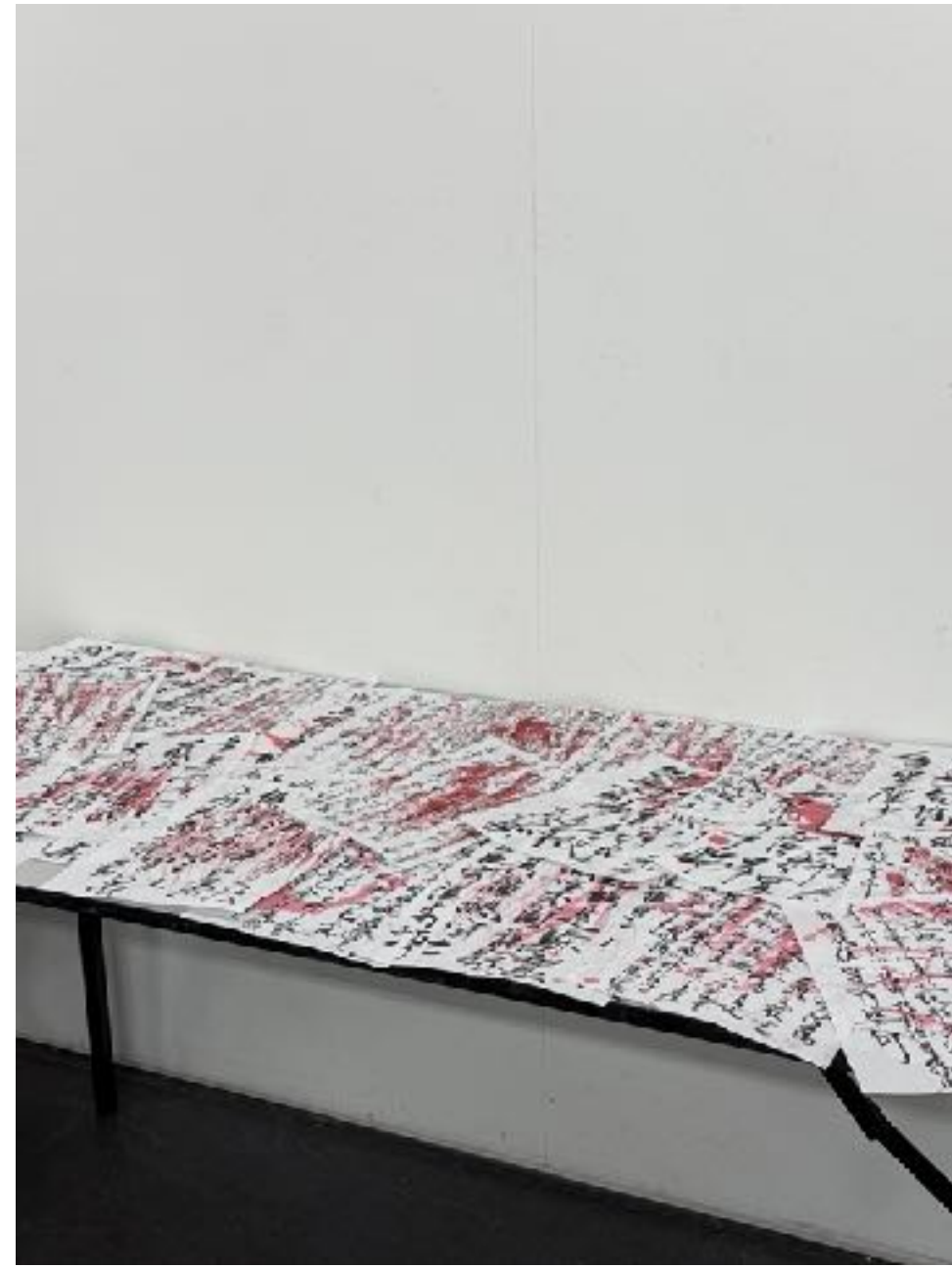


Antony Gormley, 《BODY XV》 (2011)



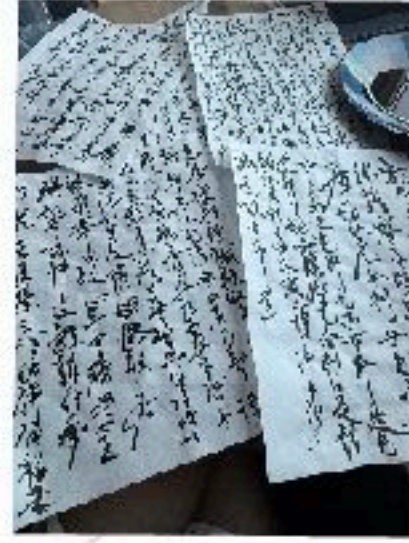
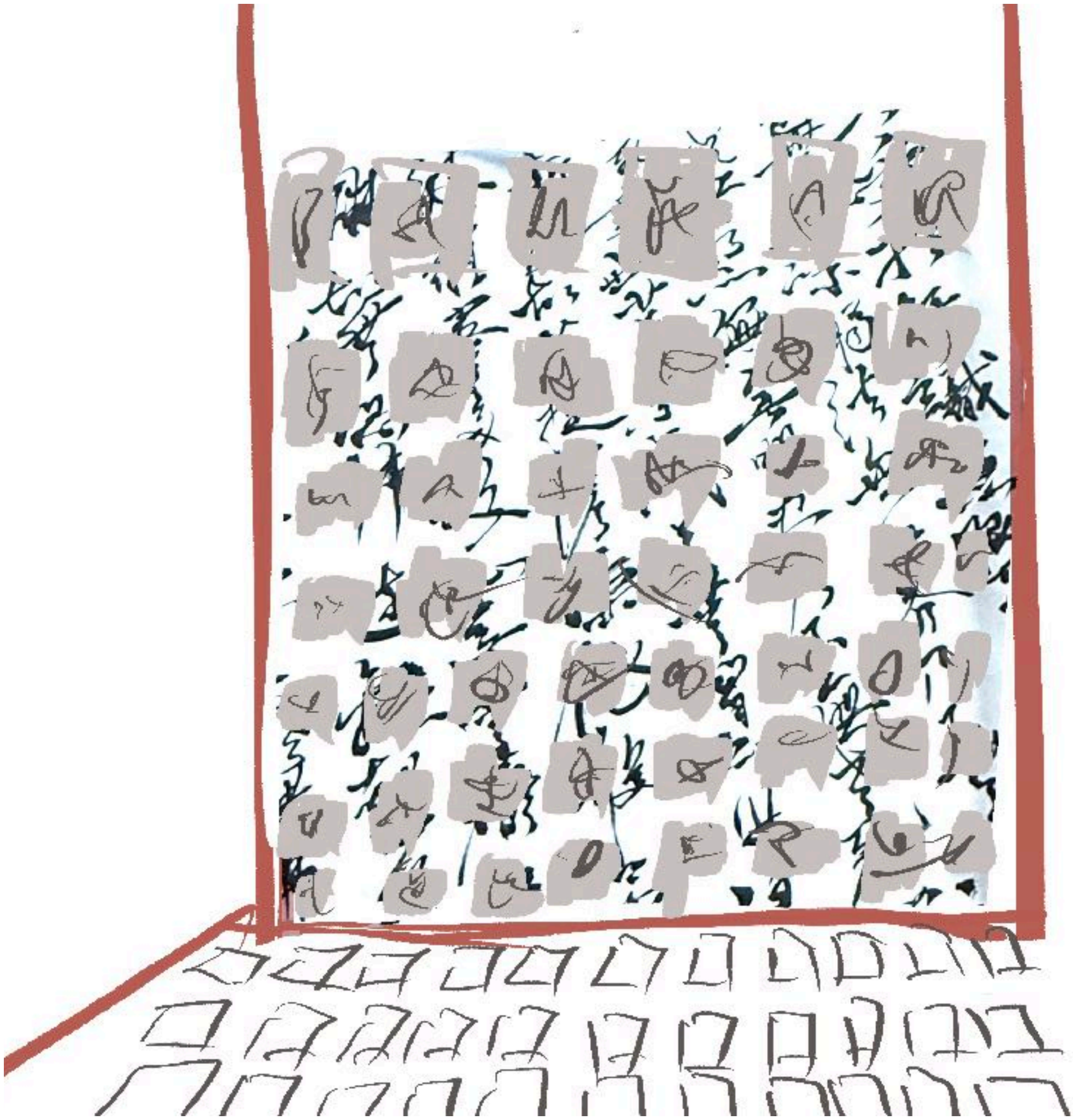
Mythos of Lost Dynasties Series—I Evaluate Characters Written by Three Men and Three Women, Gu Wenda, 1985

Crit+Audience intervention

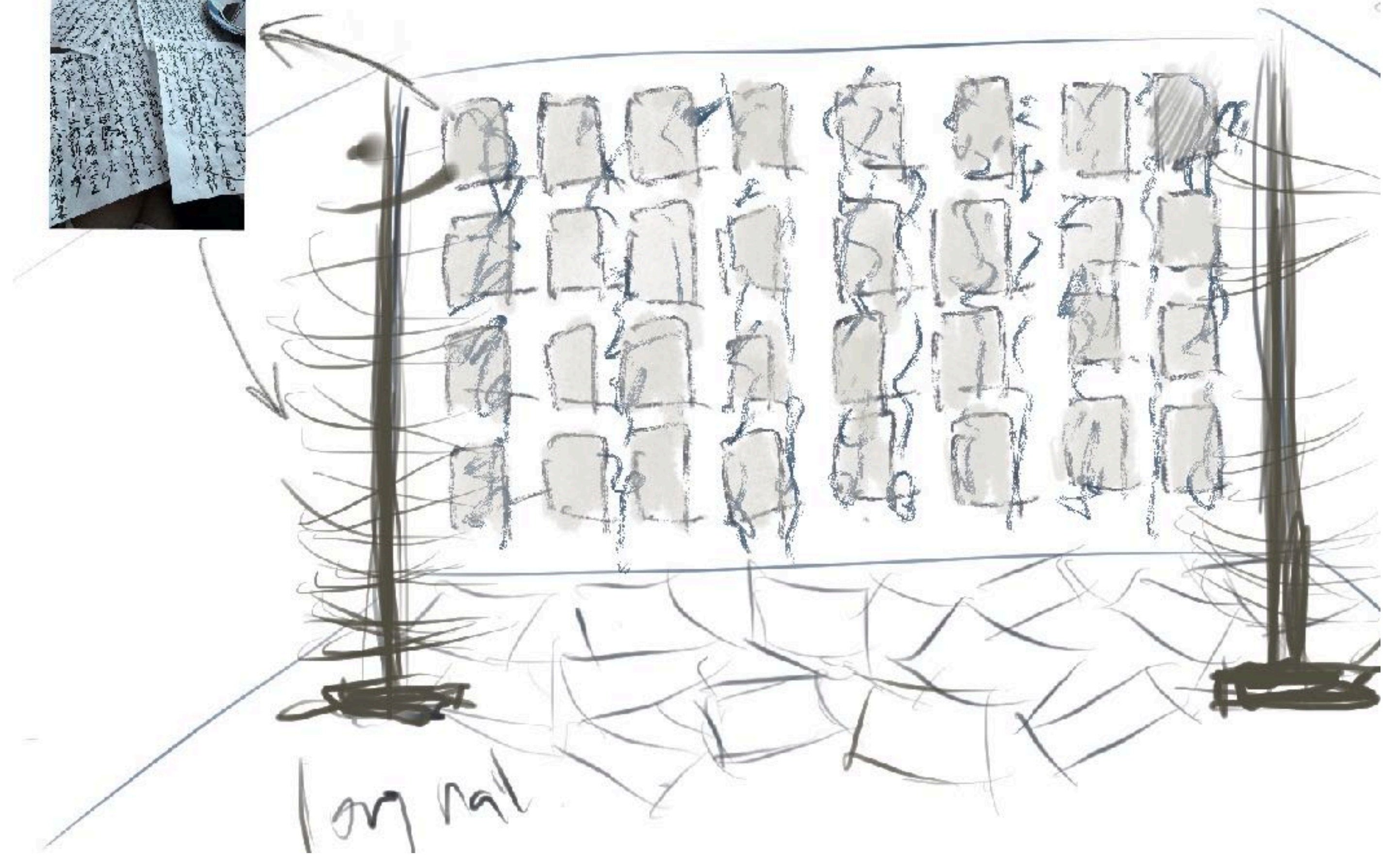


This page shows that I let the audience do whatever they want with my calligraphy works, you can see that some people choose to tear, knead, destroy, some people choose to fold into paper planes, and some people choose to take away the works for collection. This performance art is inspired by Marina Abramovic's 1974 work Rhythm 0.

Open Studio Installation planning

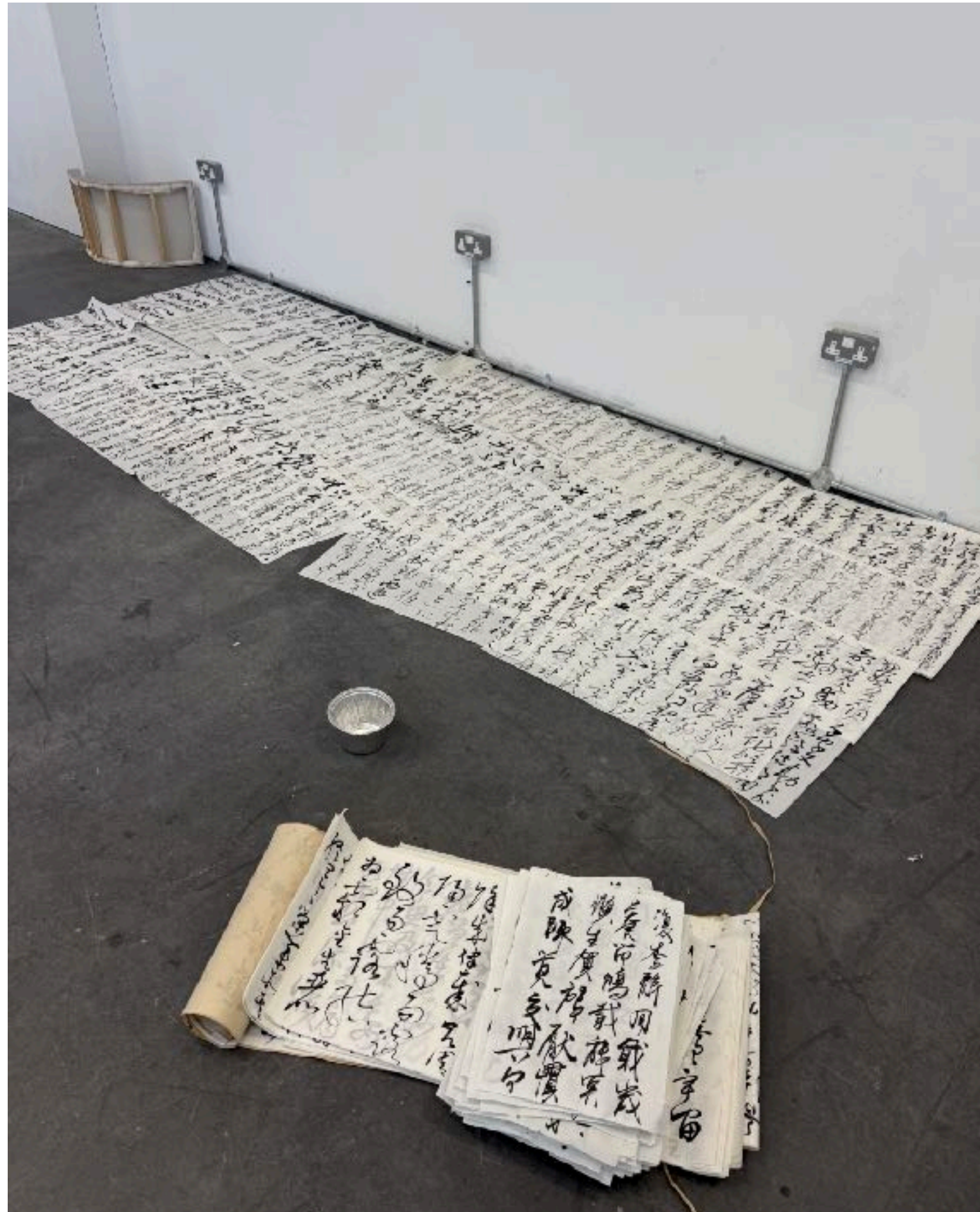


Calligraphy
on wall



According to the given space, I think of two display forms, one is to write calligraphy directly on the wall, and the other is to paste calligraphy works on the wall

Process



The writing on the wall is from Heart Sutra, originally in Sanskrit.

Other pieces on rice paper also include the contents of ancient Chinese poems and scriptures.

However, my original intention is to de-read calligraphy and treat Chinese calligraphy as pure line symbols.

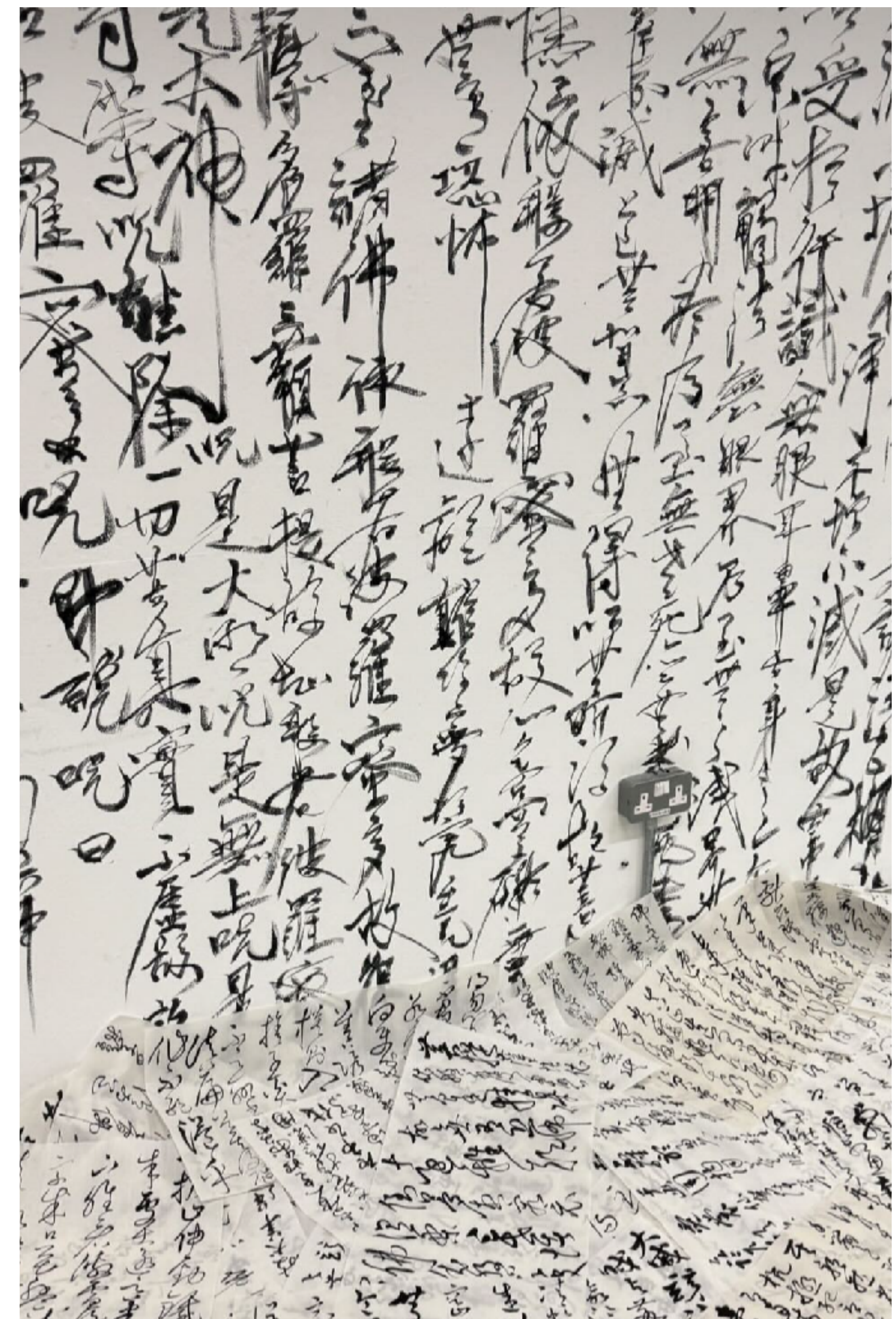
OPEN STUDIO



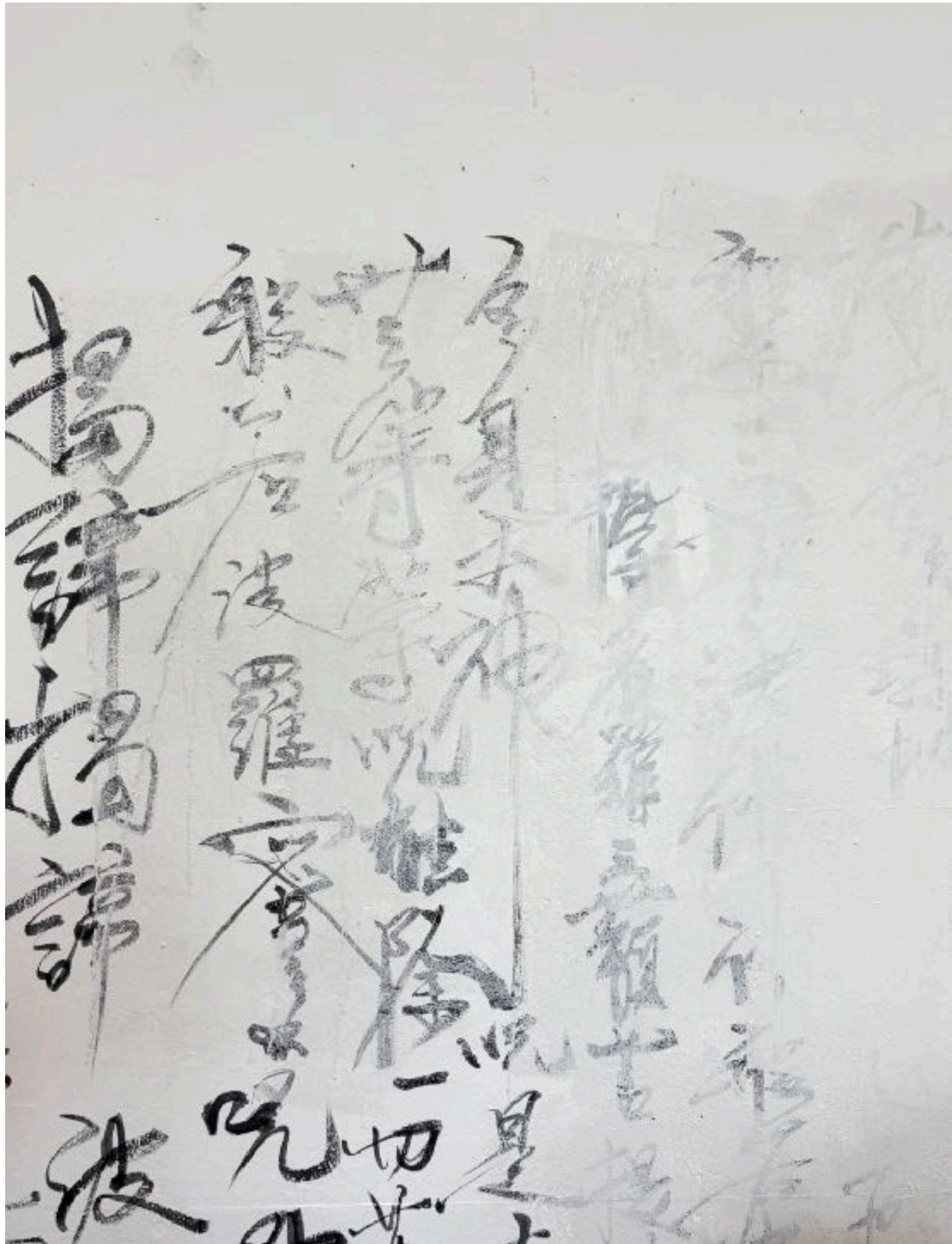
Untitled (2026)

Mixed media: wall, ink, rice papers, scroll paper

220x180cm, 30x150cm, 35x175cm, 35x138cm, 68x46cm



OPEN STUDIO



From 0-1-0, everything goes back to the origin of the cycle.
This act of removing the exhibition and painting the wall also echoes the reincarnation in Buddhism.

Processing&Experiment



I attempted to add calligraphy on the basis of the previous binding of pillows and eggs. The content I wrote was "Like ADream" by the poet Li Qingzhao.

Documentation of Completed Works

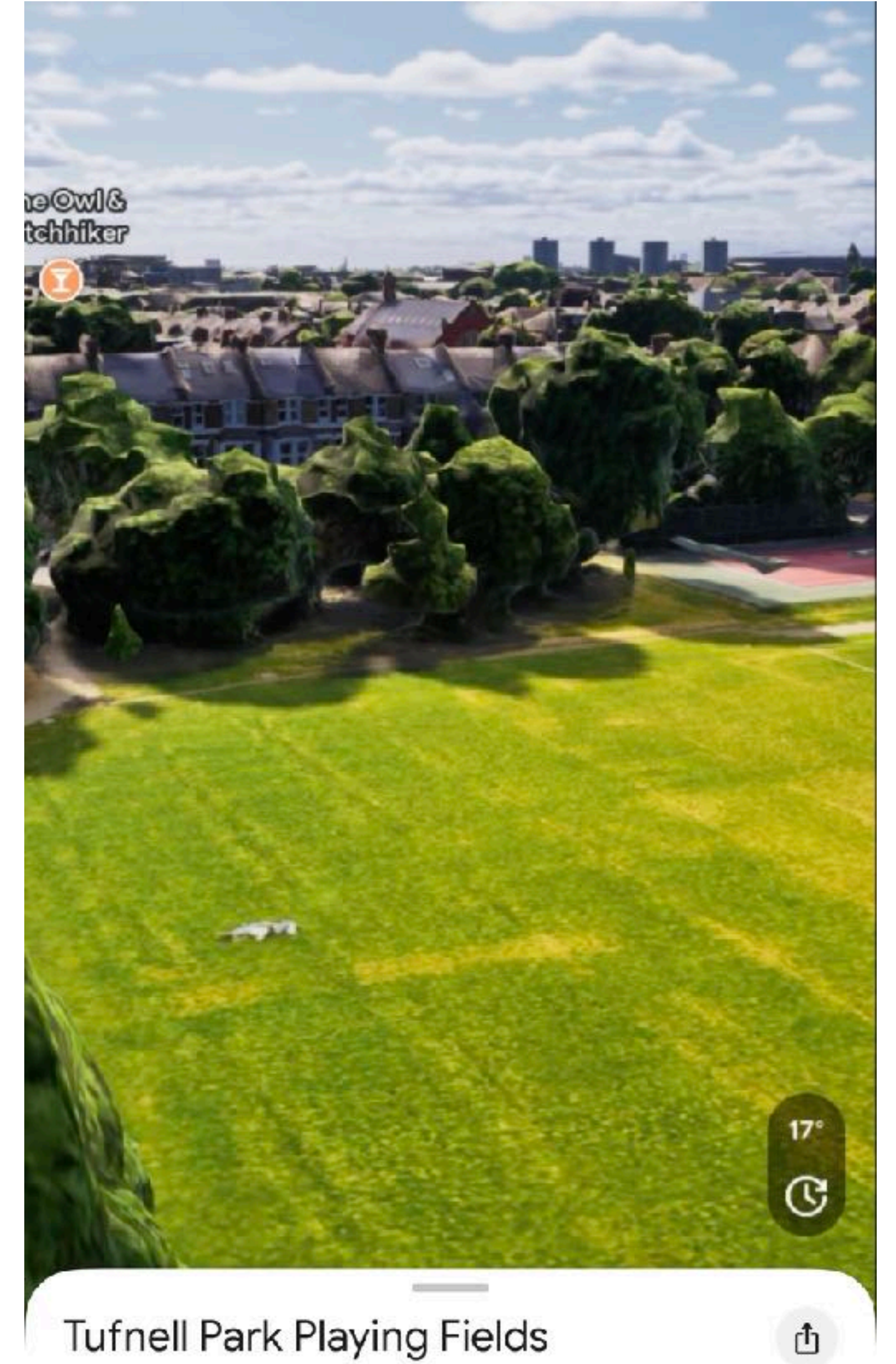
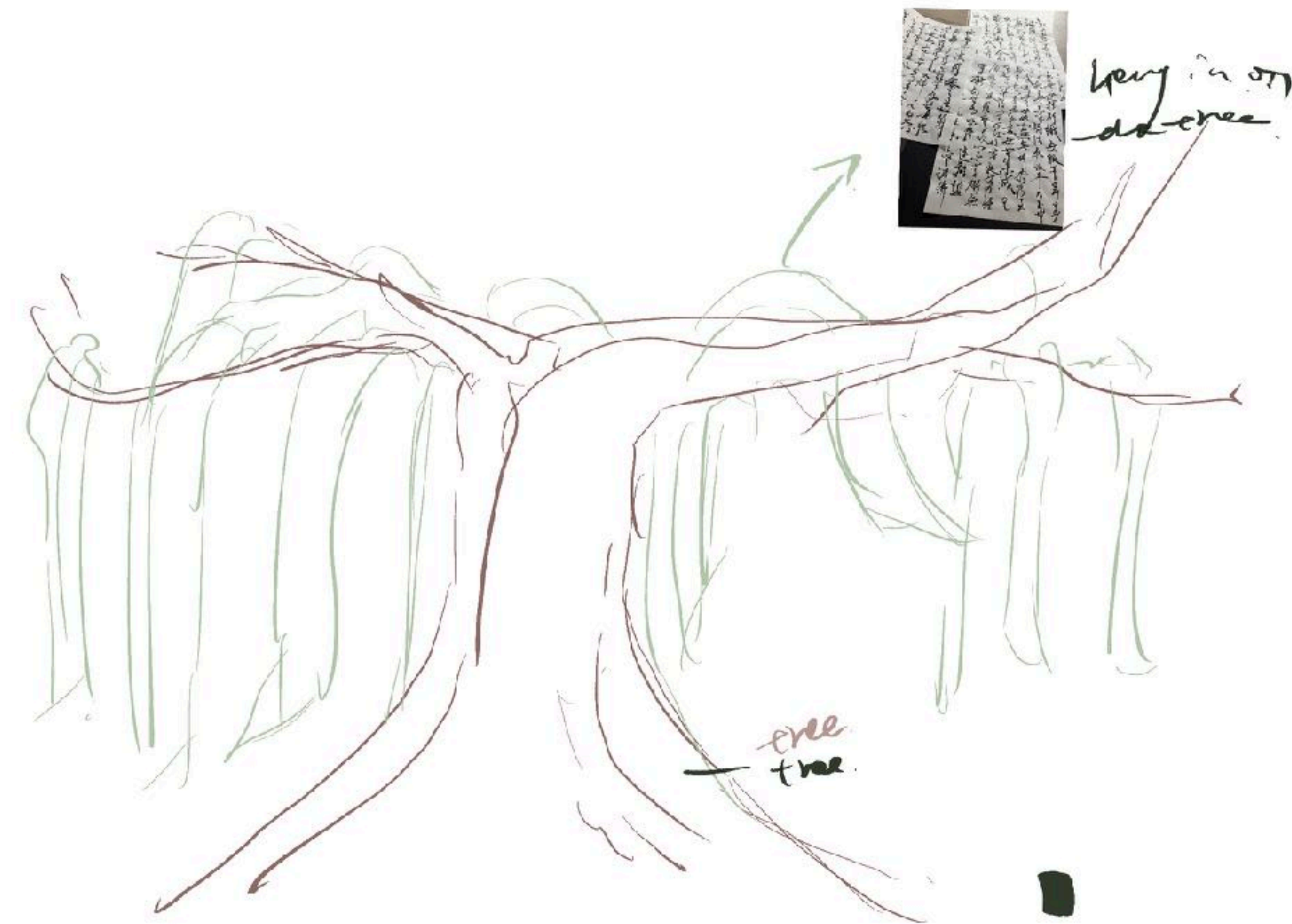


Memory Bubble (2025)

Mixed media: Plastic, ink

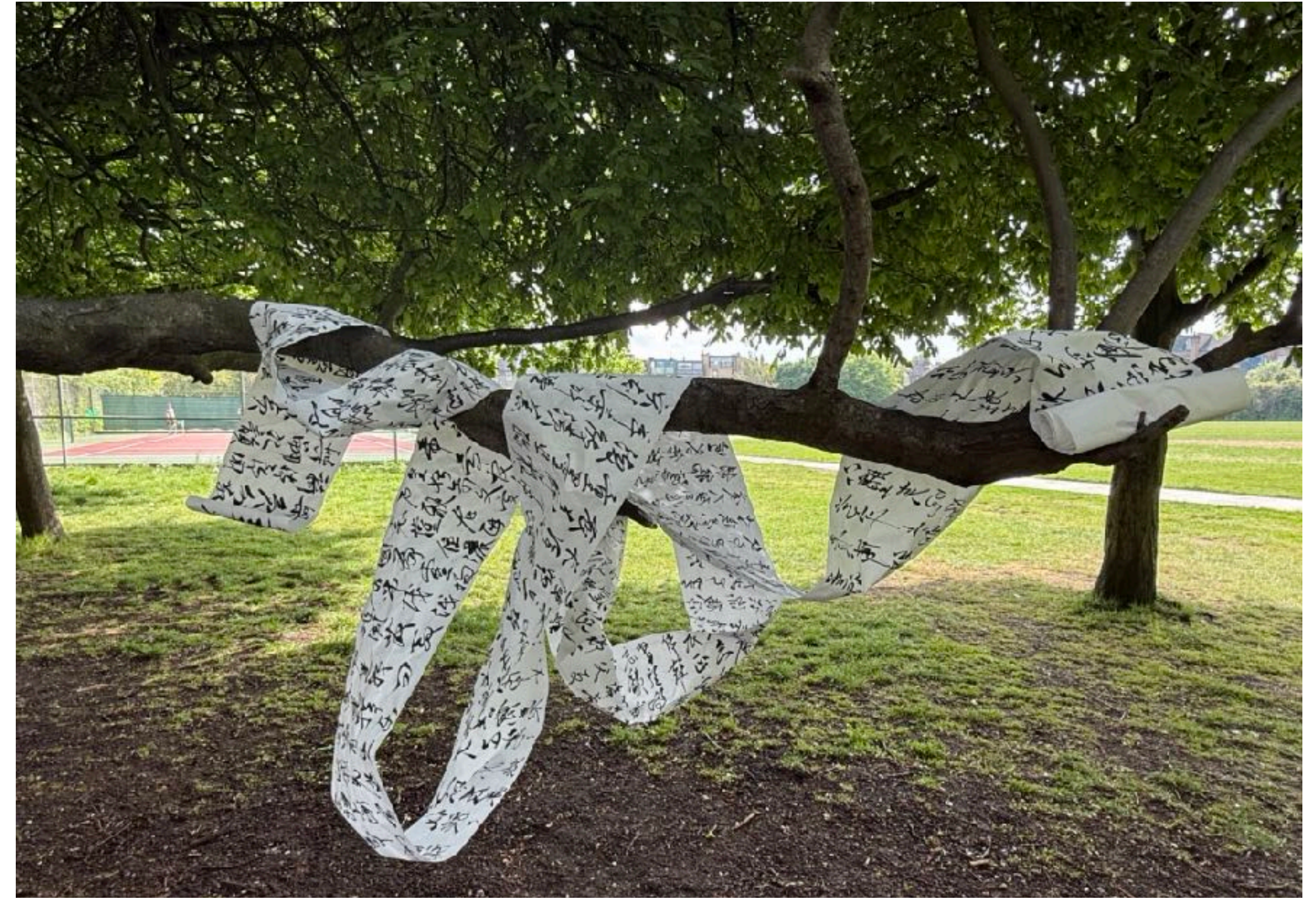
30x15x60cm

Planning & Processing



This is my plan to relate my works to the natural ecological environment. I chose the empty Park (Tufnell Park) as the display of the work.

Processing&Experiment



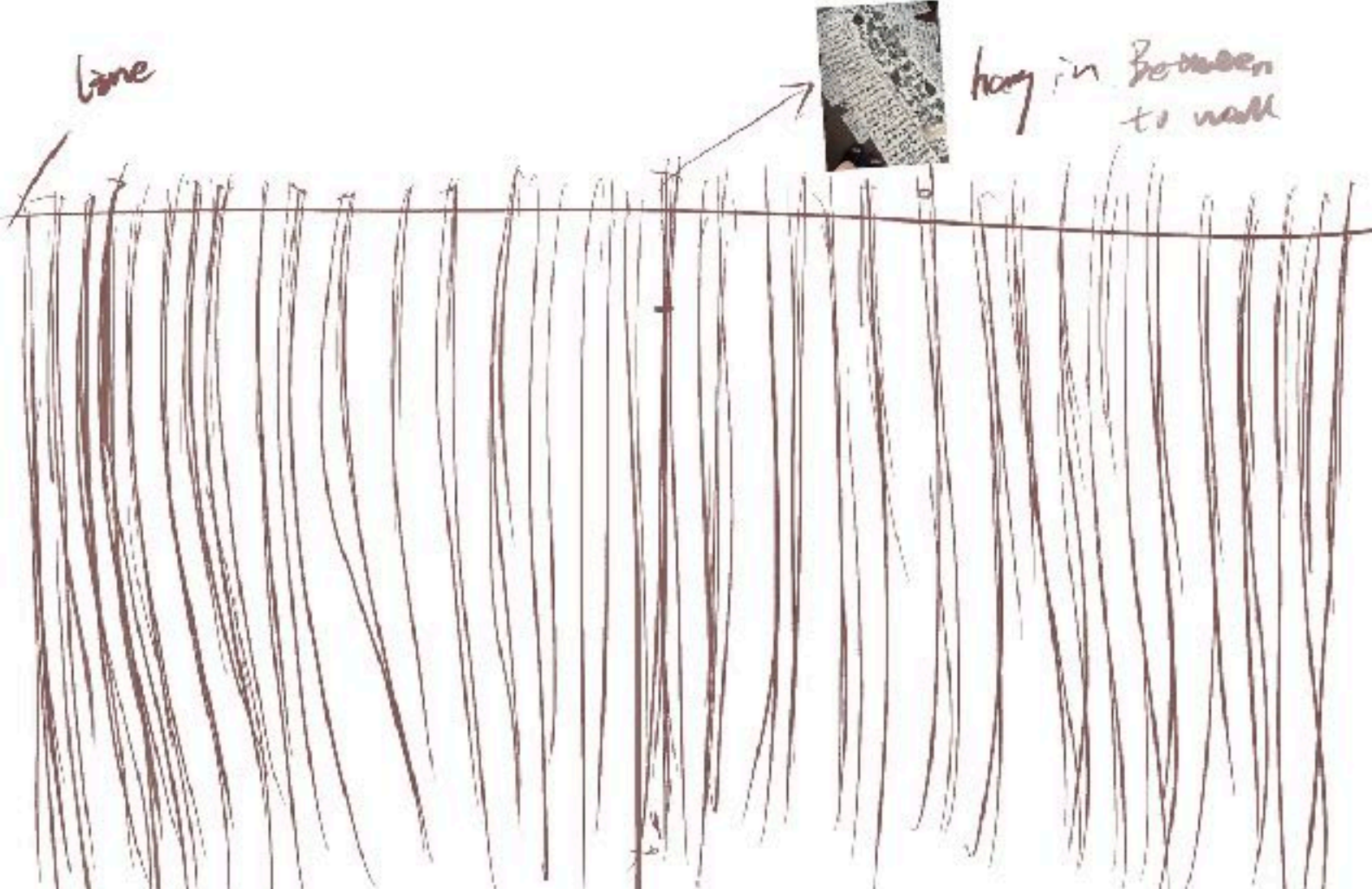
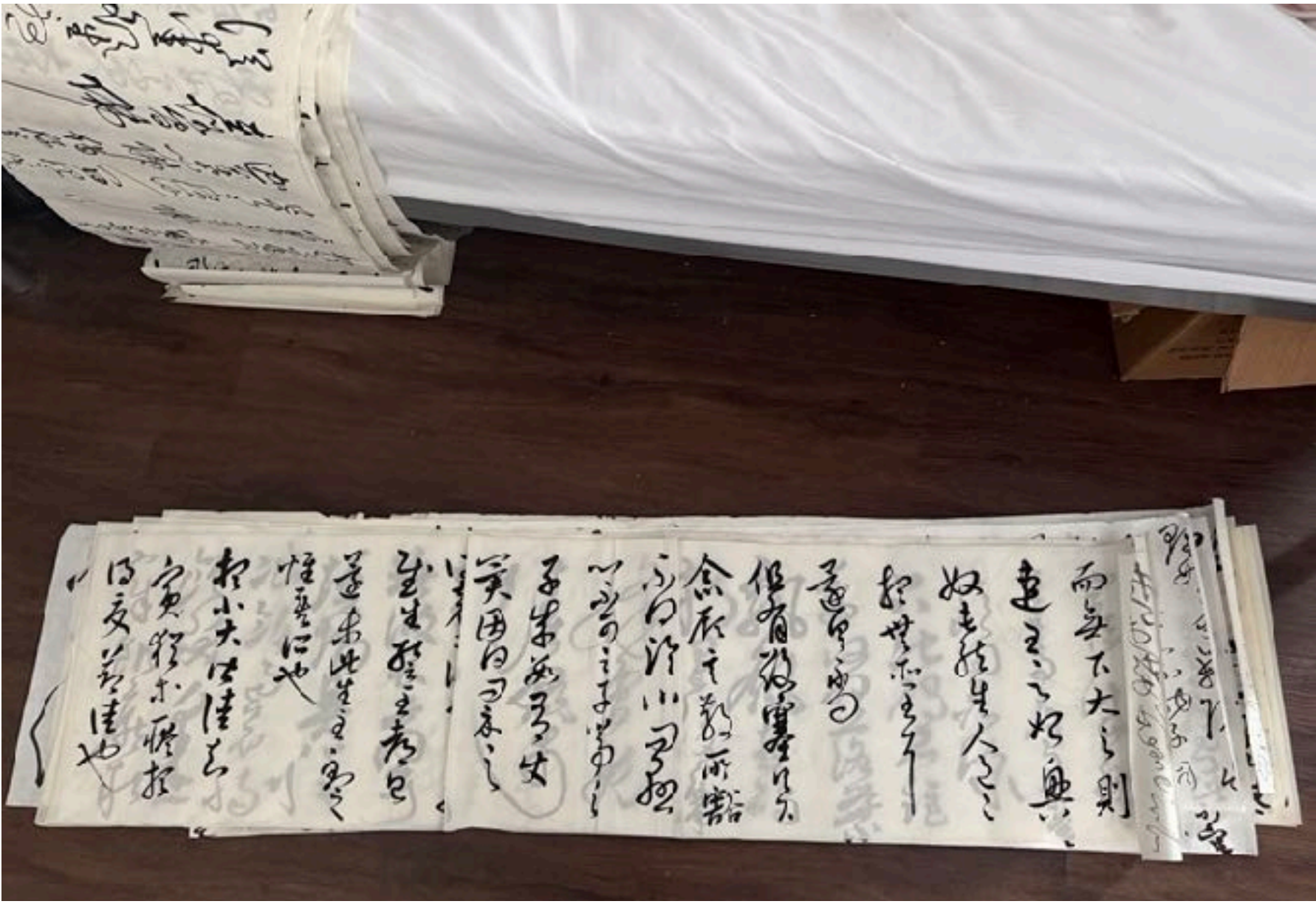
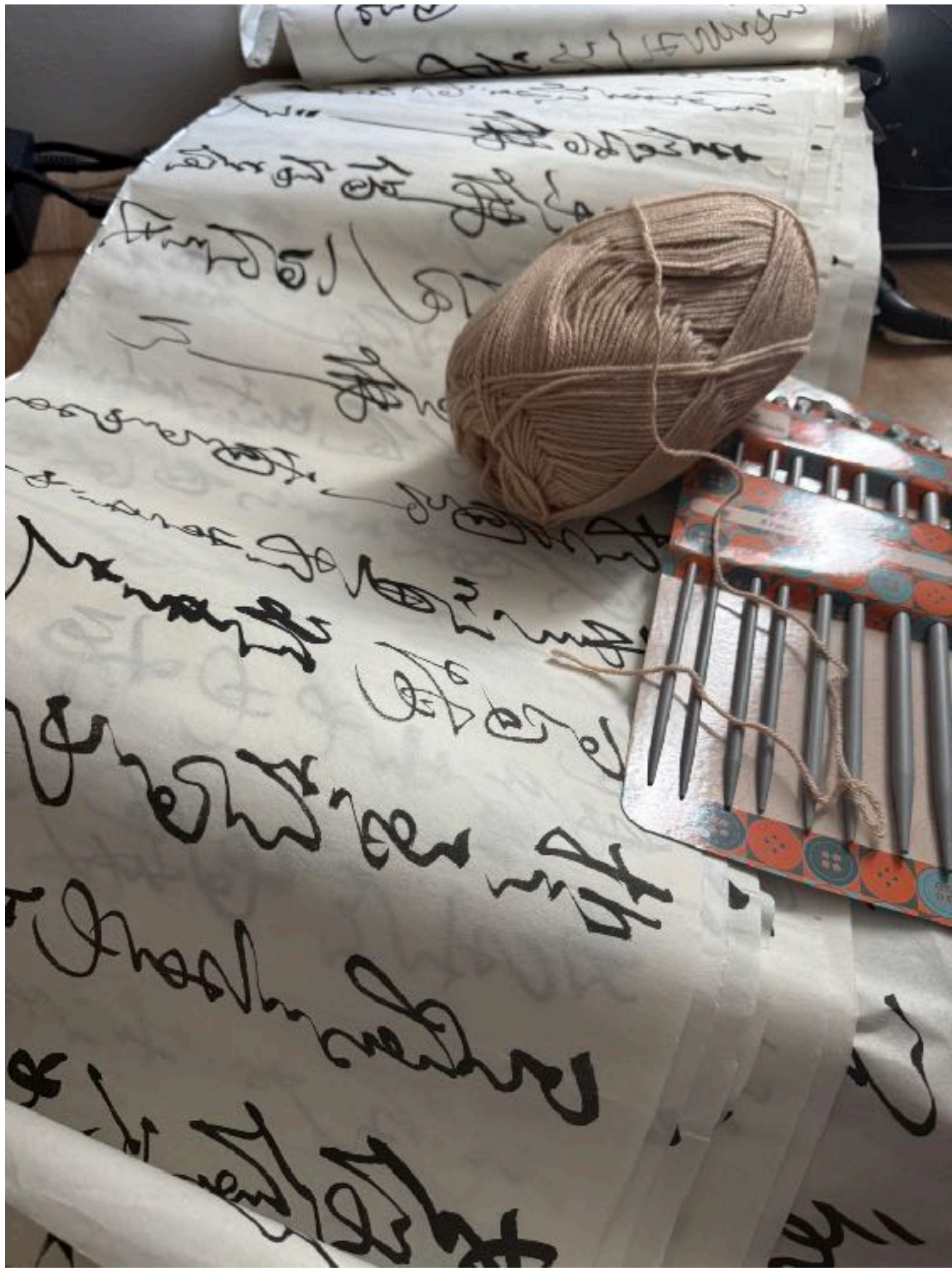
Thousand-character text (2025)

Mixed media: xuan paper, ink, tree

35x2500cm

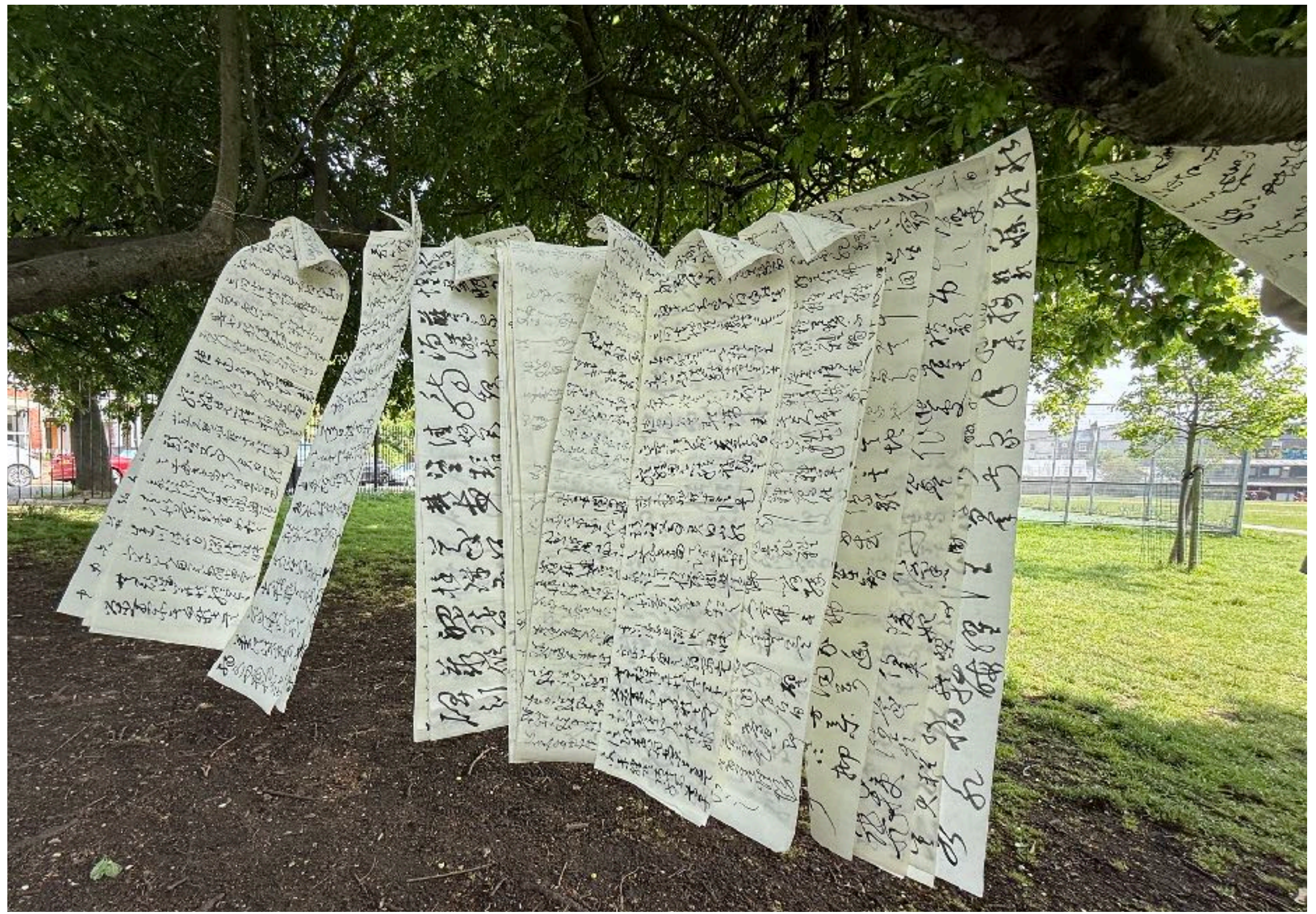
The calligraphy I wrote on a long scroll winds around the tree. In the endless growth of nature, humans attempt to anchor time and memory with words. The "Thousand Character Text" entwined among them is both a yearning for order and a cry out to nothingness. Trees grow by themselves, and people and books fade by themselves. In the long river of time, records will eventually be forgotten, and language will return to silence.

Processing



This is my attempt to pass cotton rope through the calligraphy scroll, hoping to make a device similar to a curtain and hang it up. The audience can move and touch the calligraphy to appreciate the lines of each page of the text

Processing&Experiment



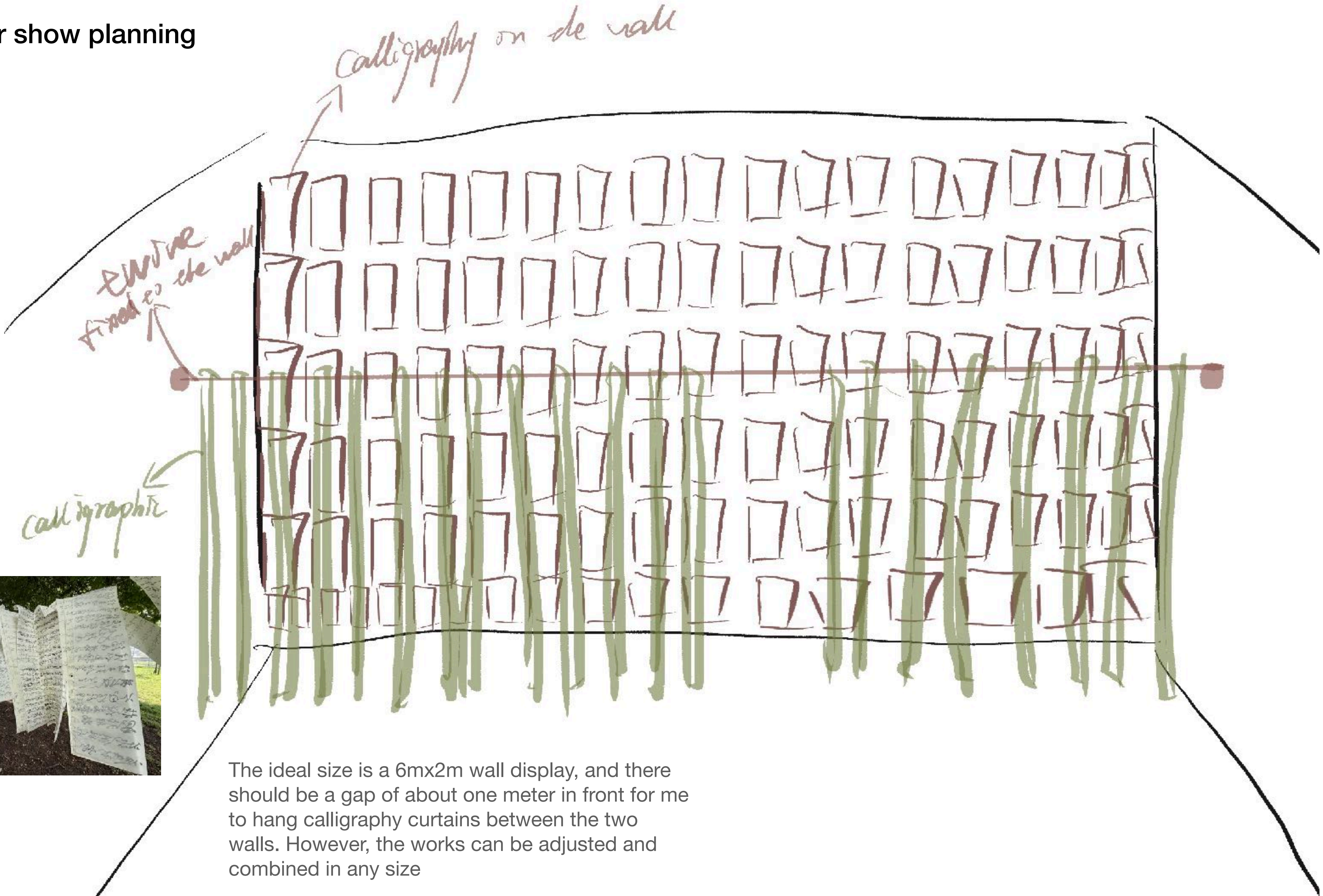
Calligraphy curtain (2025)

Materials: Xuan paper, cotton rope, tree

35x130cm

I chose to hang this "calligraphy curtain" work among the trees in the park. It contains 30 pages of paper. The load-bearing capacity of the cotton rope can withstand the pressure of the paper. During the experiment, even when the wind blew, the calligraphy paper did not break. The possibility of exhibition is very high when it is fixed between two walls for indoor display.

End of year show planning



The ideal size is a 6mx2m wall display, and there should be a gap of about one meter in front for me to hang calligraphy curtains between the two walls. However, the works can be adjusted and combined in any size