

UCL EAST Artist in Residence 2019-2020

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Introduction

For the past year I have been one of the appointed artists in residence for UCL EAST, making work in response to the development of the ongoing project.

The absence of key information or knowledge and the projection of narrative onto situations as a way of working them out are subjects that help to inform the way I make work. My practice can feel like guess work, trial and error or even a process of elimination. It is my intention to make mistakes so that I have to find a solution. My work may refer to itself, for example diagrams of how I will construct or assemble the sculpture. The works can be seen as proposals or stages towards something that might never be made.

I was drawn to the residency because of the shared association with the notion of planning evident in the large scale nature of the EAST project and my own artistic practice.

We tend to have some degree of trust in places, we *believe* in them. Many places are filled with a maze of pipes, vents, bolts and beams. To many, these features are accepted as integral, they are the very thing that ensures that that place can exist. We may see the opening to a metal shaft and think to ourselves: 'I don't know where that goes, but I'm sure it goes somewhere. I trust it.' So it might seem that there isn't always a need for reassurance of knowing how something works, but maybe that just goes for the places we are used to being in.

The decision making undertaken in meetings can seem unusual sometimes, unjustified or even unnecessary. It becomes necessary to feel around for the right way to do something. To fill in the blanks. There are histories and rules that help to dictate the reasons for things. It is impossible to know them all so I jump to conclusions to make sense of it for the time being. It is interesting the way ideas can be described in different ways or translated from idea to plan to manufacture whilst being misinterpreted or misunderstood. Some of the work made during the residency could be mistaken for equipment found on a construction site, but in truth act without function so therefore inhabit a space out of the conversations between planners. Maybe they are an incorrect reading of the plan.

I was unfamiliar with the EAST campus' location on the Olympic Park. For this reason, I felt a lack of context. What has changed here? Besides a very basic knowledge of the area's history, I was ignorant. For all I knew, the walls that had begun to emerge from the ground had been there for as long as time. However, this unknowing was welcomed.

Walking around the site, it is difficult to have sense of what it will one day look like. Where are the edges? Which part will be building and which will be outside? Is that part staying or going? Like trying to describe the directions to a place without knowing where it is, or a badly drawn map. It could be a path but maybe it is an outline. But an outline for what was once there? or for what is going to be? It would seem that it would be easy for the construction team to be confused and to make a mistake. Whilst on a tour of the building plot, I learnt from the site manager that there had in fact been a mistake only the day before.

It is difficult to ignore the visual similarities between a building site and archaeological site. The newly built foundations mimic historical digs. The construction workers and engineering teasing out the once covered architecture, the hoarding protecting the ancient masonry.

Soon after this site visit, I organised a research trip to ancient Epidavoros, Greece. The ancient site is in a process of organisation and rebuilding. Stacks of old stone ready to be used or sorted. The same exhibit of a slow process of moving large amounts of matter to various area could too be seen in the Olympic Park, London. If one's mind would let them, one could believe that the two sites were in similar stages of their lives rather than one being built up while the other is uncovered.

During my time as artist in residence I adopted a fictional role of archaeologist and anthropologist. Meetings with various teams involved in the EAST project fed me snippets of information but left me with a feeling of detachment from one another. I was left to weave these ideas together. No information was kept out of reach but I decided to work it out myself, learning bits and pieces here and there but not the complete picture. Purposely limiting my knowledge to extracts of information. This role of archaeologist manifested into a character disguised as building materials such as bricks and architectural forms. The character crops up every so often within the body of work.

Covid-19 made access to information more difficult so made the fiction of my task more real. A mobile residency is an interesting concept but with Covid-19 restrictions, a more extreme distance arose and emphasised my alienation from truth. My fiction could become more apparent because of this detachment.

I was invited to join the video calls to observe the conversations between the planning committee to maintain a connection to the project. Tasked with finding a way to continue the development through the pandemic, the members of the team felt their way around a building that didn't yet exist while I wandered and surveyed the progress of the dig in my imagined excavation. Blindly navigating ancient building foundations that I had designed in the place of the new campus.

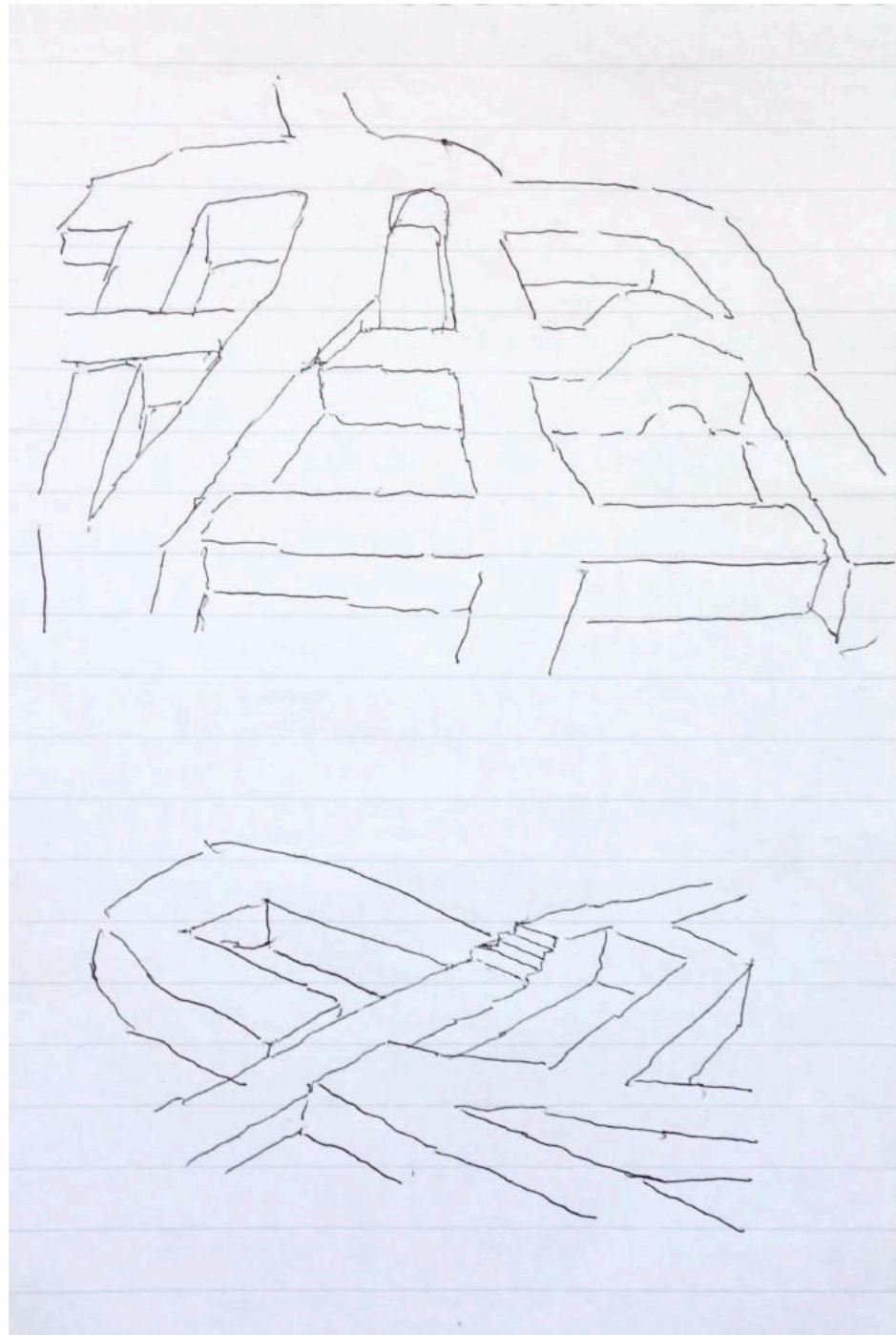
A layer on top of a layer on top of a layer. My impression of the project began to fog over whatever actually existed. The fictional history in my mind draped over the building foundations of the campus. Foundations that assert themselves into land that was once brownfield. I encourage the three layers to bleed into one another and exist simultaneously.

Mine is an excavation without breaking ground. An inability to penetrate the surface. Perhaps it is just a plan for something that will never begin.

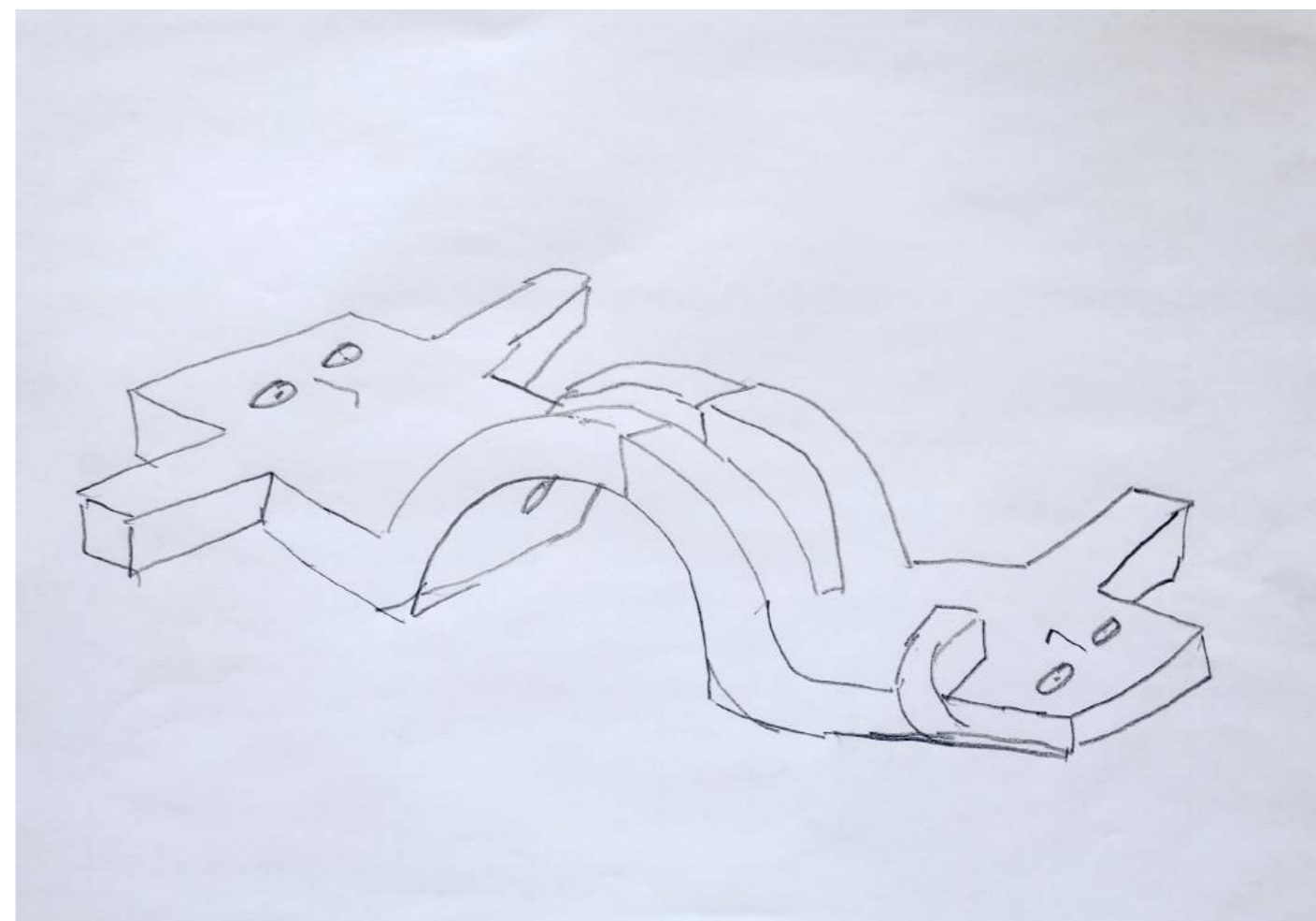


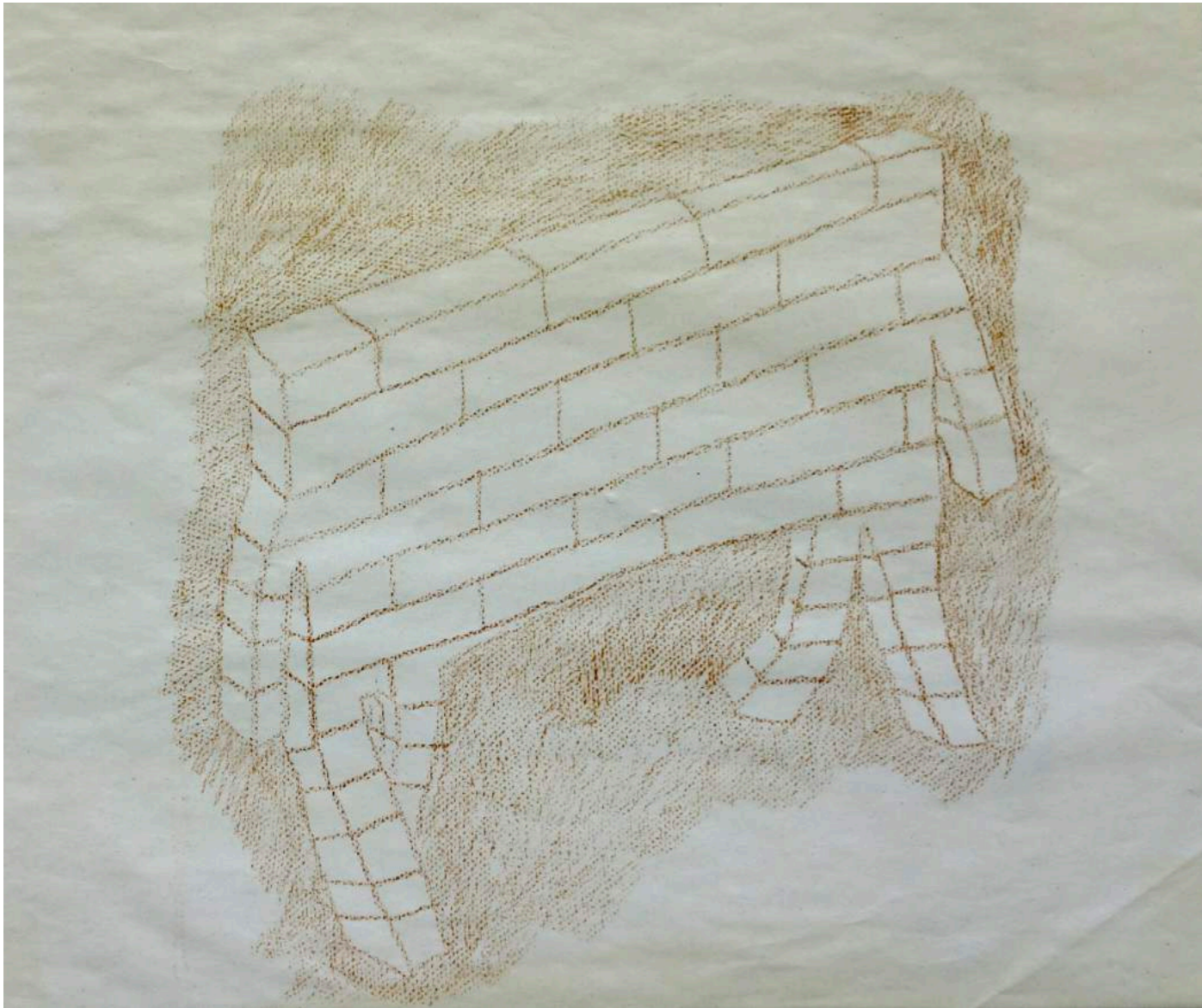




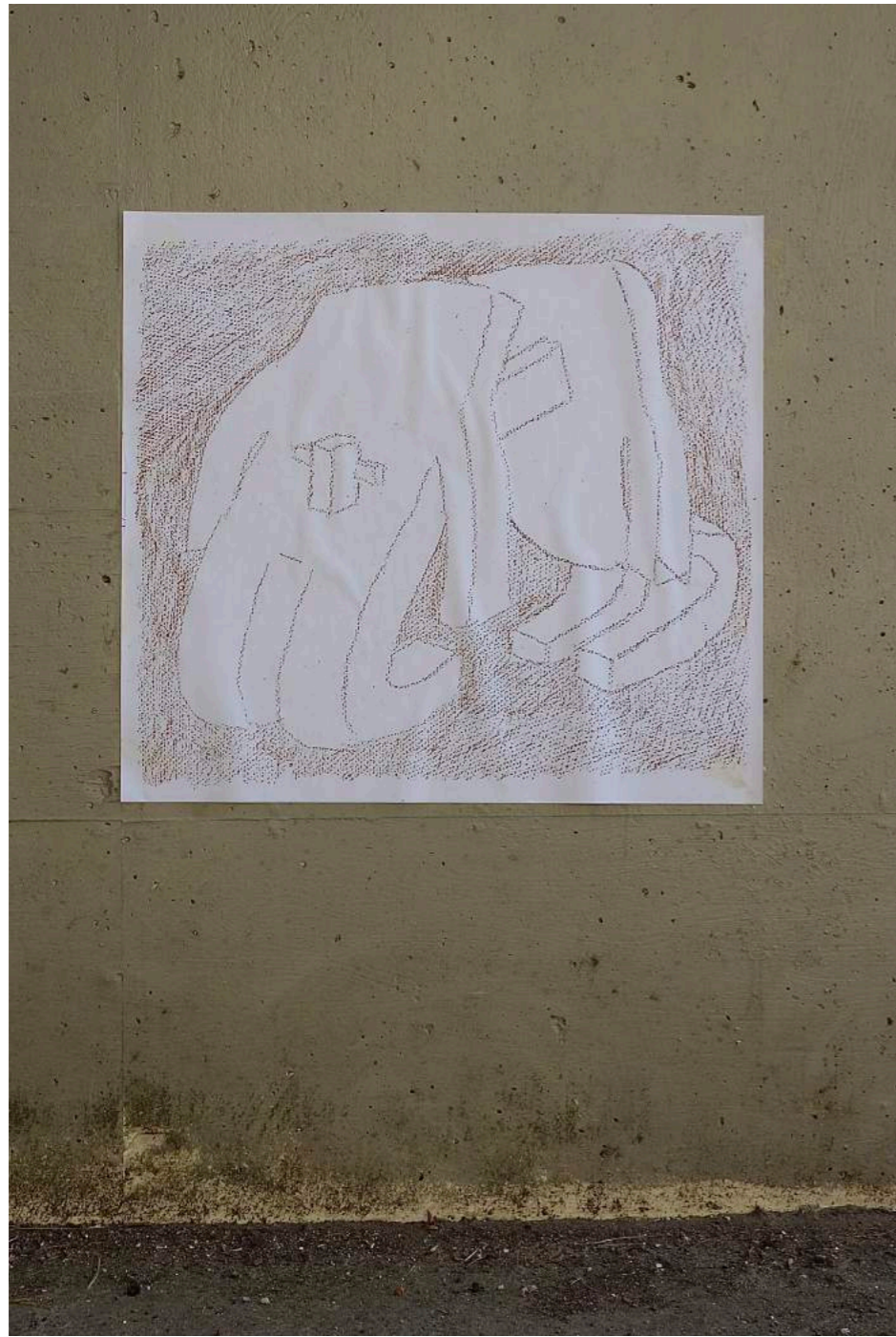


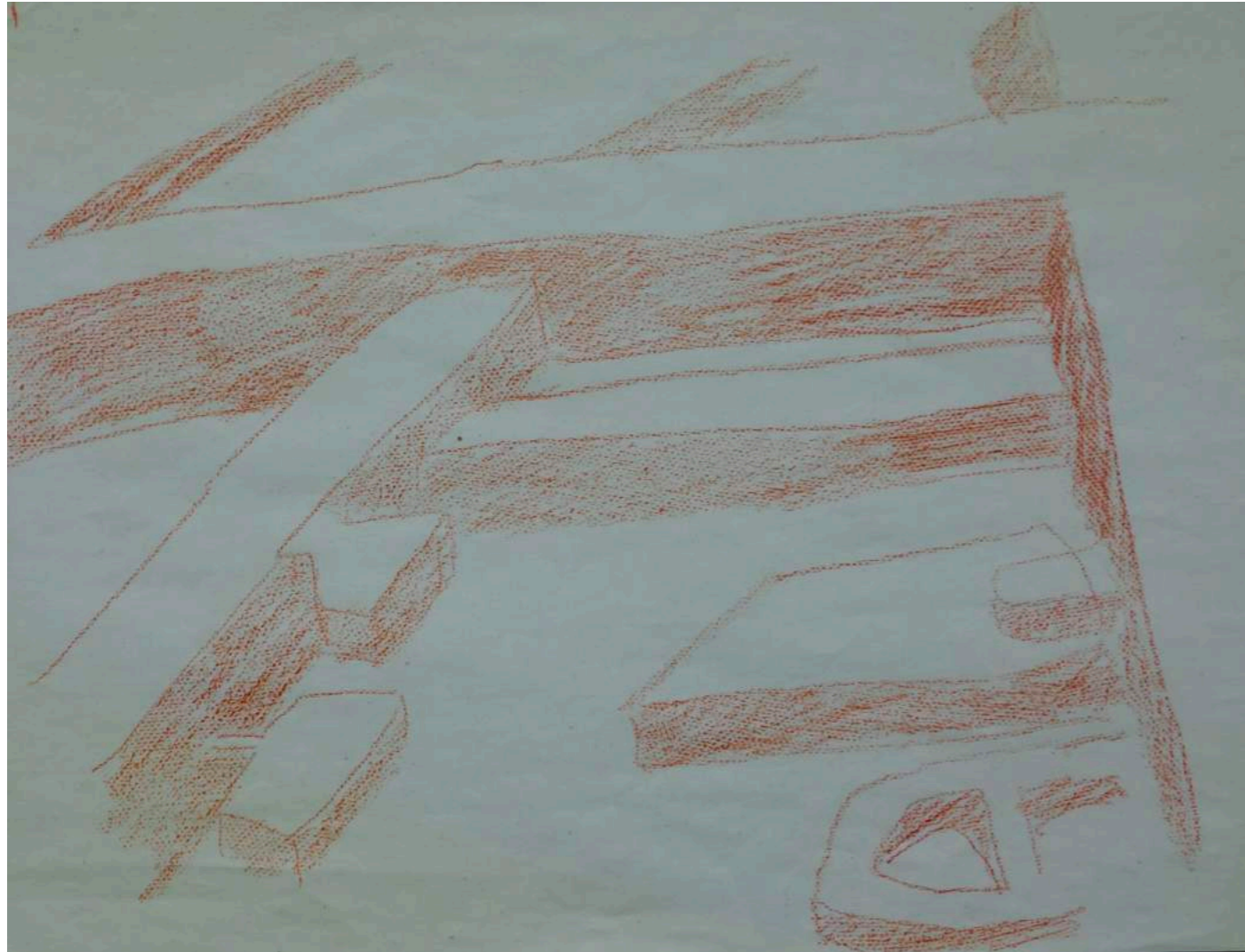


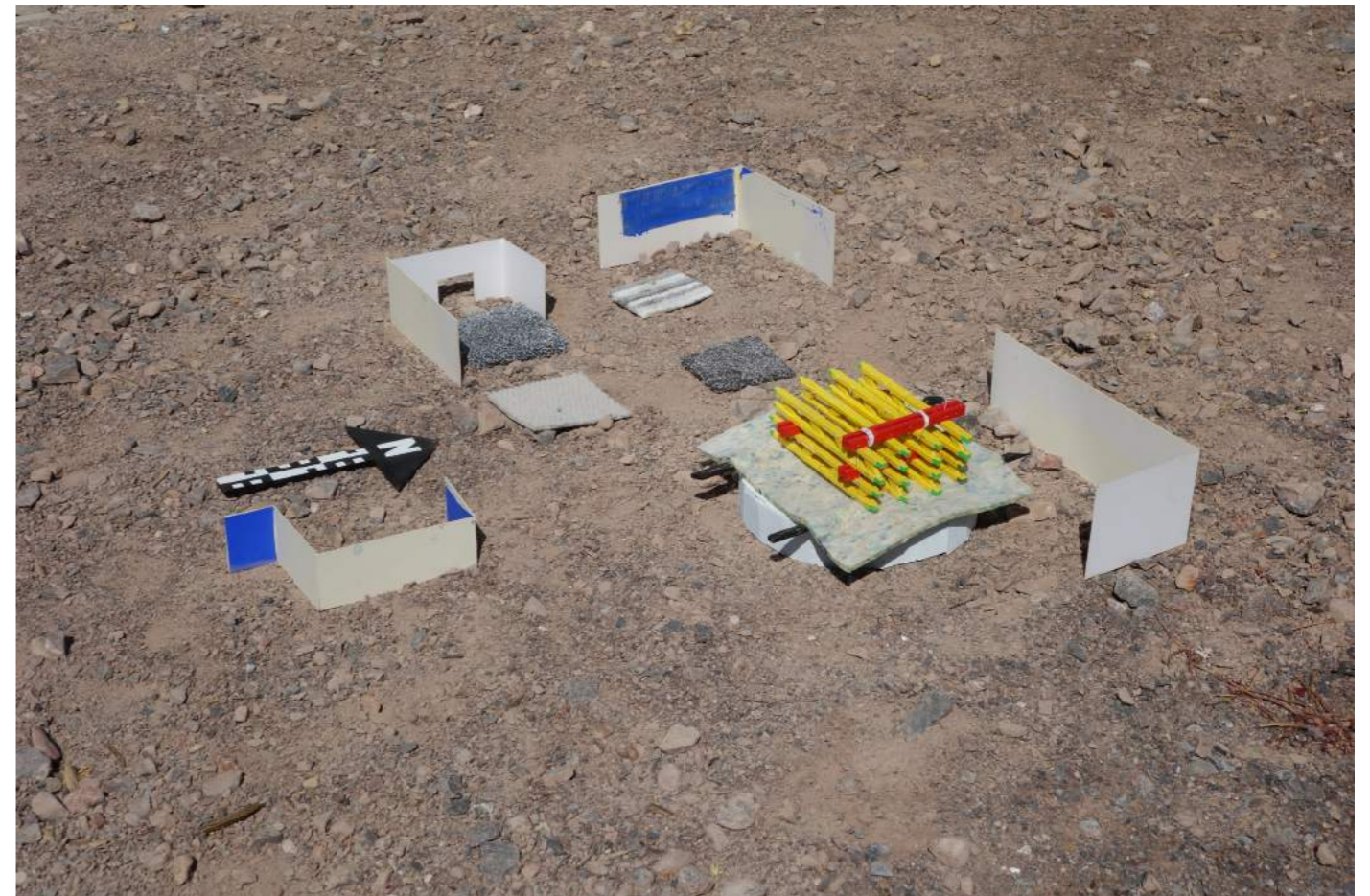


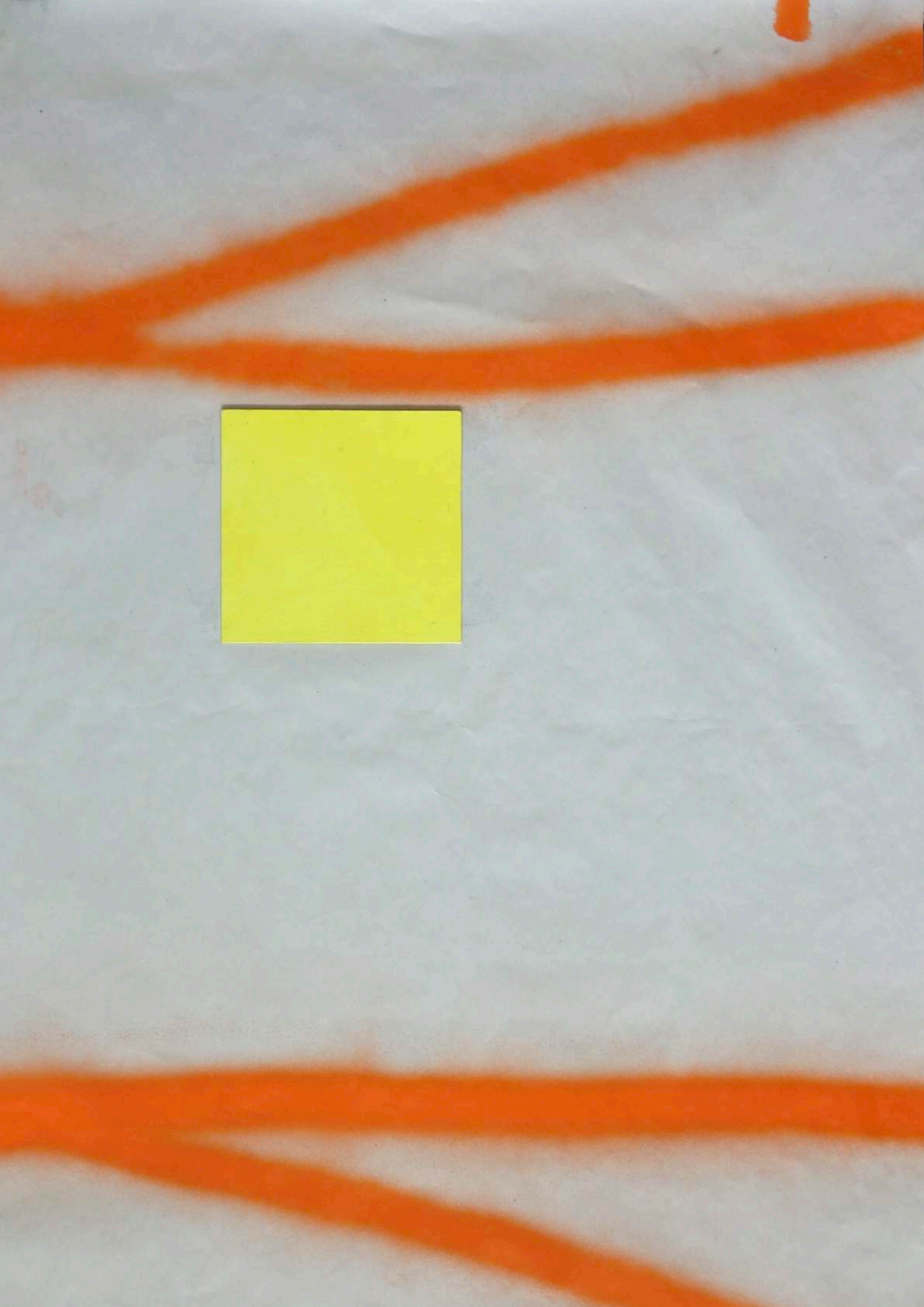




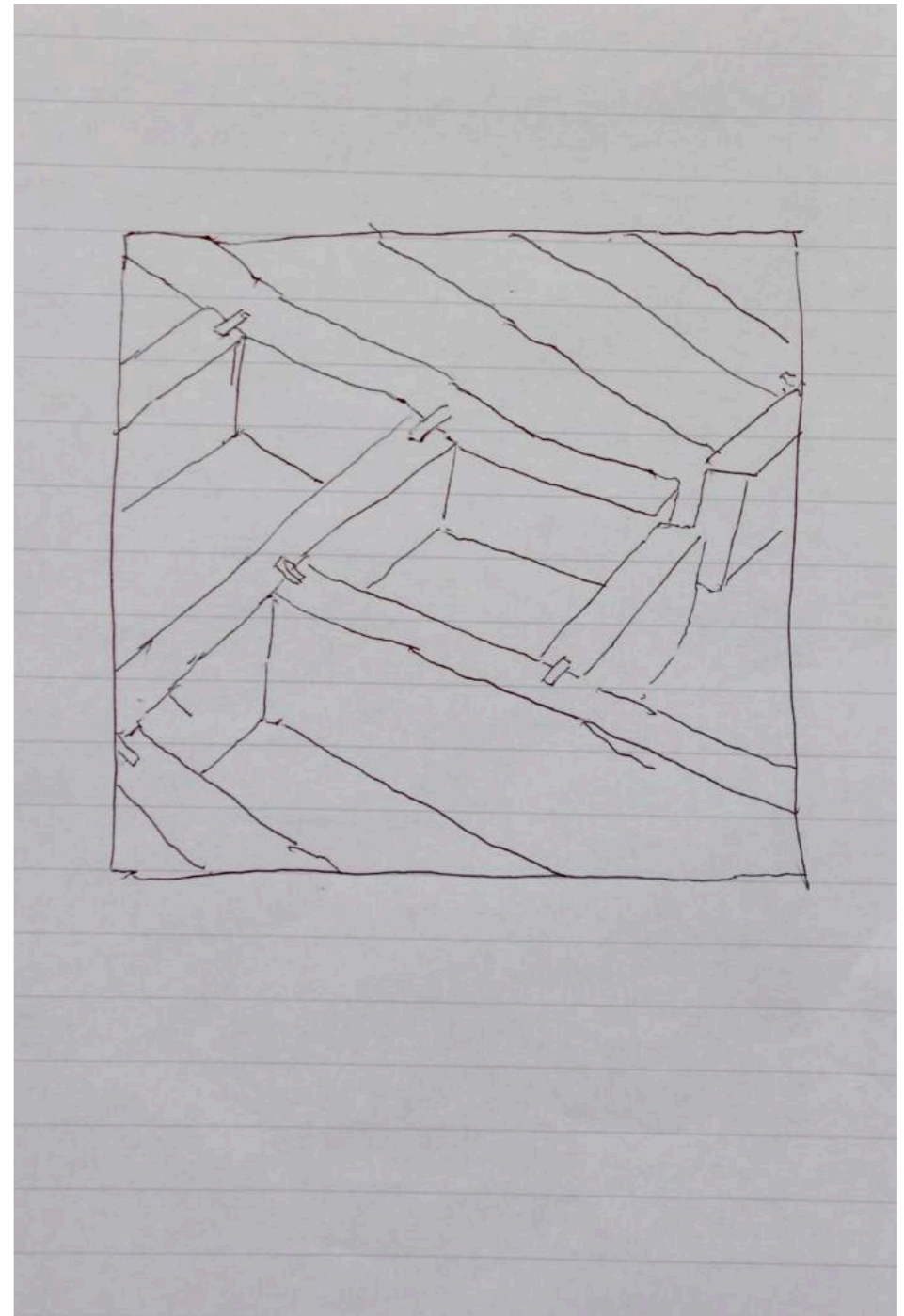
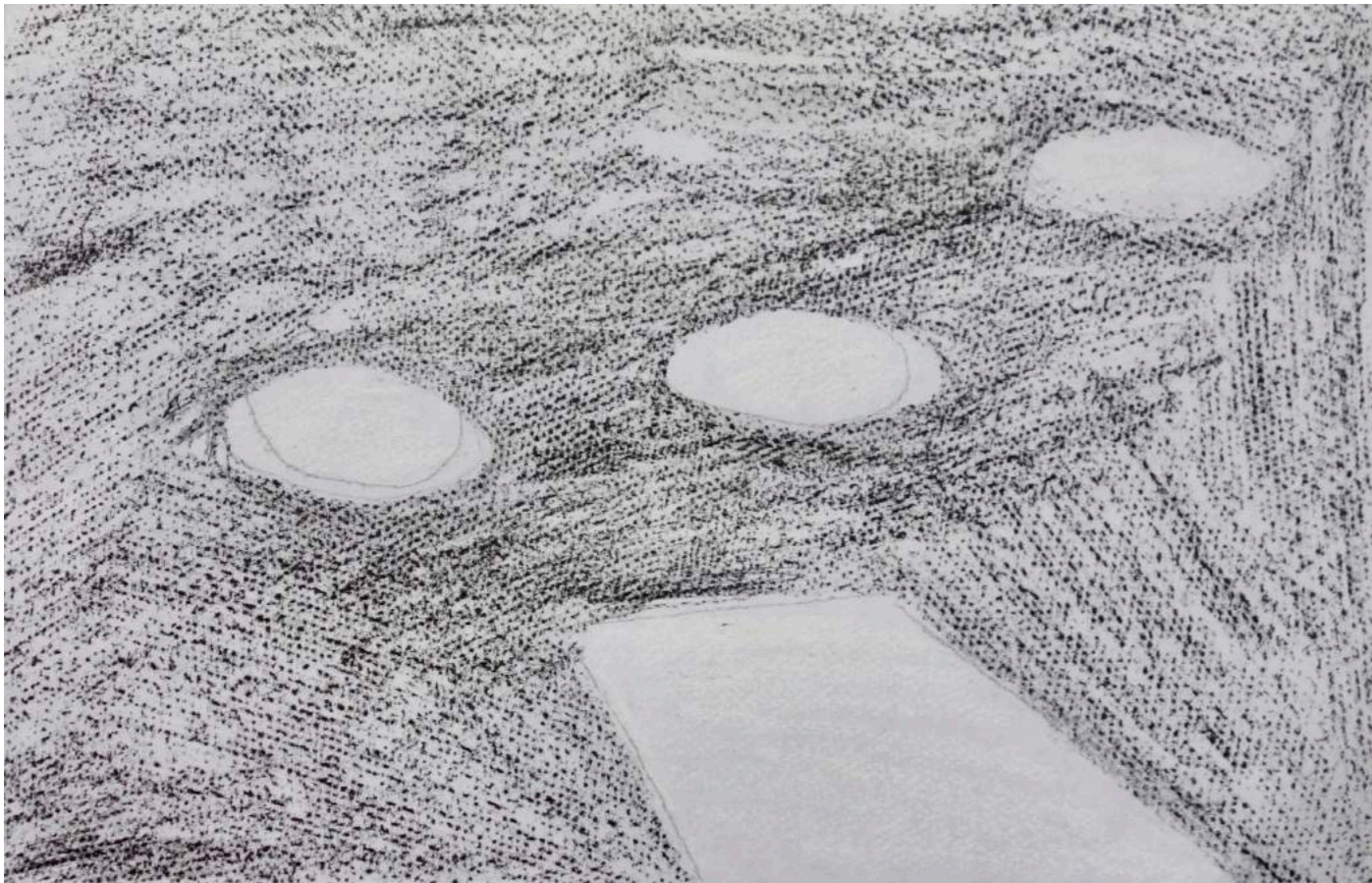




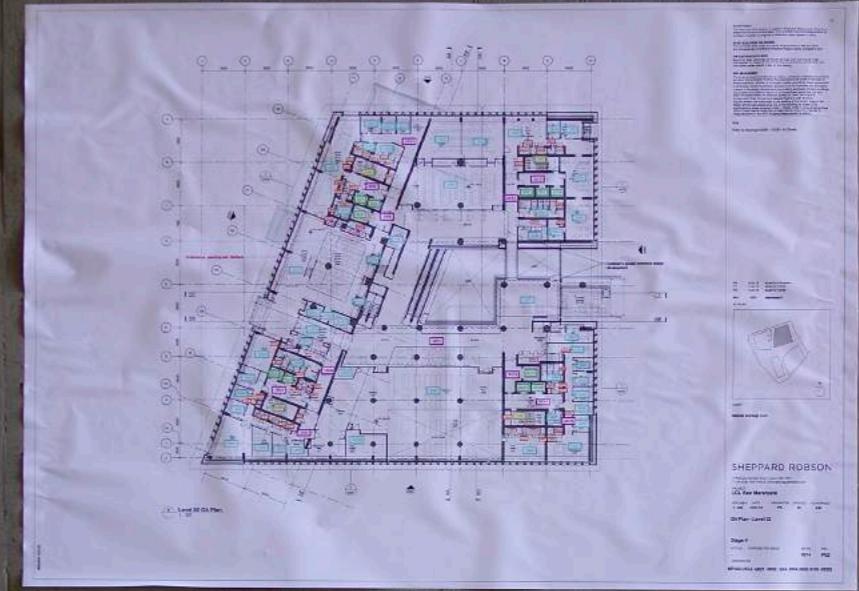












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