

YOU SI UNBOUNDED REDUX



游思 — 邊跡的演變



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The Strings of a Traveler's Soul – You Si's artistic world.

When You Si left art school in Anhui Province to return to Shanghai, it was the beginning of a long journey that would later take him to Beijing, Australia and the United States. He absorbed the cultures and urban scenes of the places he had been to, and used the brush to keep a journal of his own personal Long March through the world of visual exploration. The artist's depiction of his exotic visions inspired by the journey – the landscape of a traveler's soul – is neither a realistic representation nor purely abstract forms and symbolism.

You Si was born in a family of artists. His father, Ha Qiongwen, and his mother, You Longgu, became famous painters of propaganda posters shortly after the New China was founded. Because of his family background, You Si came into contact with art at a young age. Like everyone else of his generation, You Si did not escape the tumult of the times during his adolescence. Those years of political tension and drama left in the people of his generation a complicated feeling that cannot be pinned down. In 1982, You Si graduated from the Shanghai Theater Academy, one of the first batch of university graduates after the Cultural Revolution ended and universities were reopened. Having majored in stage design, You Si moved north and got his first job at CCTV – an enviable job at the time. He was assigned to a program team that collaborated with a German television

station, where his caliber in stage-design soon made him a visible figure in the field of television production.

One of the rational observations of You Si's generation would be that most of them feel a deeply nationalistic self-respect. They identify with Chinese culture with a kind of uncompromising moral rigor. But they also have an irrepressible yearning for knowledge of the outside world, and a curiosity about modernity. Throughout the general excitement of the 1980s, many young Chinese artists were creating what they believed was an artistic Utopia. They were painting their ideals in a combined state of confusion and exhilaration – with an almost self-sacrificial, pioneering spirit. You Si joined this surge of artistic experimentation. His program's collaboration with the German TV station gave him an edge in obtaining international experience in art and design. Between 1982 and 1987 when the nation was beginning to open up and prosper, You Si became a rising star in Beijing's art circle as he participated in numerous avant-garde, experimental art exhibitions, while his family background and the advantage of working for CCTV also contributed to his increasing visibility as an artist. During that time period, You Si created a modern type of ink-and-wash painting. By incorporating western aesthetics, especially American abstract expressionism, into the Chinese ink-and-wash tradition, he aimed to transform a fixed

cultural formula into something new and modern.

Opportunities are gifts of fate, and they can shape one's life in mysterious ways. In 1987, You Si was invited to go to Australia as a visiting scholar. The following year, he left for the United States, staying there for the next 20 years. Living overseas separated You Si from the trends and movements in China's contemporary art scene. Domestic art movements like Political Pop, Cynical Realism and Gaudy Art – which in their turn generated a huge following at home – are absent in You Si's work. For the past two decades, he has been a sort of participating absentee in the development of Chinese contemporary art. Like Xu Bing, Cai Guoqiang, Gu Wenda and other Chinese artists who moved abroad at the end of last century, You Si chose to create art that defined himself as a Chinese artist, and his work usually looked more distinctly Chinese than the work produced by Chinese artists here at home. In contrast with artists in China who look towards the west, overseas Chinese artists unanimously chose to create art that utilizes and focuses on Chinese elements.

You Si's abstract ink-and-wash paintings are executed on rice paper, a distinctly Chinese material. In Australia, he was attracted to the aboriginals' depiction of the earth through totemic imagery. In the United States, he was





You Si

influenced by Abstract Expressionism, while his rendition of colors that evoke magnetic fields is closer to Color Field Painting. You Si's abstract imagery vibrates with a metaphysical and spiritual energy, reminding viewers of the late American artist and master of Color Field Painting, Mark Rothko (1903-1970). You Si pays great attention to the technical finesse of painting, as we can see from his delicate brushstrokes and subtle compositions. At the same time, he also achieves in his art an expression of the spirit and a metaphysical transcendence. These qualities are relatively lacking in the contemporary art world in China.

It is important to understand You Si's art from a cosmic perspective. He views nature as a stream of shifting and flickering impressions, rather than a fixed object for observation and depiction. Throughout his long march in the world of visual exploration, You Si uses colors, forms and lines to express the visible and invisible changes that constitute the eternal dynamics of this fascinating universe. He weaves "the strands of a traveler's soul" – the literal meaning of his Chinese name – into a fabric of cosmic beauty. After 20 years of living overseas, You Si has come home, and what we see in his art – peace of mind, a pristine inner world – is exactly what this long and distant journey has given him.

Victoria Lu

游思缕缕，看游思的艺术世界

从北京到上海，由上海到北京，从北京走向世界，从澳大利亚到美国，途中经历的各种文化和都会景观，游思笔下的艺术世界，是他个人视觉探索的长征之旅。在他漫漫旅途上激发出的各种异想世界，透过他的画笔所记录下来的心灵图像，既不是写实、直观的风景，也不是完全不具形象的纯粹抽象造型或符号。

出生于著名的艺术世家的游思，父亲哈琼文、母亲游龙姑都是新中国早期政治宣传画的著名艺术家。游思从小受到双亲的栽培和艺术环境的耳濡目染，他也无可避免地浸染在大时代的洗礼中，像他的同辈一般，穿越过惊涛骇浪的政治历练。他们这一代的人，内心是复杂而且莫名其妙的。游思在1982年从上海戏剧学院毕业，是文革后恢复大学教育的第一届毕业生。主修舞台美术的游思，他北上服务于中央电视台，在当时是令人称羡的出路，他也不负众望在舞台美术方面，和德国合作的一个栏目，获得各方的瞩目与好评。

从理性的角度来看游思这一代的人生，他们大多胸怀民族主义的自尊，对于中国文化认同，有着难以妥协的某种属于骨气一类的坚持。然而，从感性的角度而言，他们这一代的人，对于中国以外的世界，对于那些先进而现代化的社会，又有一种按捺不住的向往和好奇。在风起云涌的上一世纪80年代，许多年轻的中国艺术家，就在这种交杂著迷惘、亢奋，甚至带有一份舍我其谁的先锋精神，向他们以为的艺术乌托邦勇敢迈步前行。游思也不例外，当时他和德国电视台的合作，使他比一般人超前获得与国际接轨的经验，而家庭背景和他在央视服务的优越条件，他参与的实验性前卫艺术展览和活动，都使他在1982至1987年间那段蓬勃开放的时代，成为北京艺坛的风云人物。这时，他努力创作具有现代性的抽象水墨，将中国一脉相传的水墨画，结合西方，特别是美国抽象表现主义所赋予新时代的面貌，从封闭的传统形式开启了他自己的。

命运之神的眷顾，对人的一生影响是十分耐人寻味的。游思在1987年受邀赴澳大利亚担任访问学者，第二年转赴美国，从此二十年的移居

海外生涯，使他和国内的当代艺术发展分道扬镳。上一世纪末在国内沸沸扬扬的政治波普、泼皮和俗艳艺术，在游思的作品中完全看不到痕迹。他因为去国外多年，国内近二十年当代艺术发展的轨迹上，他是缺席的参与者，像徐冰、蔡国强、谷文达等上一世纪末外移的艺术家，他们都各自发展出具有中国符号的创作路线，看起来往往比大多数的国内艺术家更中国。相对于国内艺术家努力向西方看齐，已经身在西方的海外艺术家，反而突出的是他们作品里的中国元素，几乎成为异乡游子的共性。

游思的水墨抽象，显示出中国元素的部分是他使用的材质本身，他选择在宣纸上创作。在澳大利亚，游思吸收了当地原住民艺术对大地的图腾式描绘手法，在纽约，他又受到美国抽象表现主义的影响，而他画里凝聚的色彩磁场，却又更接近于色域绘画(Color Field Painting)。游思从他的抽象造型当中所释放的一种形而上的精神力量，可谓和美国的色域绘画大师 Mark Rothko(1903-1970) 产生超越时空的共鸣。像游思这样重视色彩在平面上激越升华的形而上想象空间，以精妙卓越的笔法、构图，传达他极度重视绘画性的创作态度，和充分发挥精神性的表现，这些对国内的当代艺坛而言，恰恰都是比较陌生的。

从宇宙观去理解游思的创作是重要的，自然之于他，是一种生命游历于其中的常变印象，而非观察描述的固定对象。他透过色彩、造型和线条，进行永不停歇的视觉长征，在画纸上，凝炼出天地万物有形无形的种种变化，正是以他的缕缕游思，编织起游思斑斓夺目的宇宙江山。去国二十年回到故乡的游思，展现给国人看到的，是他万里旅途中没有尘嚣的心灵世界，静谧中，少了是非。

陆蓉之 Victoria Lu

You Si - Unbounded Redux

A little under two years ago, the art of You Si was unknown to me, being hidden away as it was in New York City, residing on gallery walls in Manhattan far away from the maelstrom of the mainland Chinese contemporary art scene. Just a few months after the opening of our newest ART LABOR space, these terrific paintings made its way onto the walls of our gallery in Shanghai's former French Concession neighbourhood for his first solo show in mainland China for a long, long time.

One day in early Spring, You Si arrived at the gallery with rolls of rice paper in hand, and spread them out on the floor of the gallery, unrolling meter after meter of the most interesting and truly unique art work I had seen in quite some time. One can probably remember most of the "wow" moments in a lifetime of viewing art, maybe the first time seeing a roomful of Bacons or Basquiats, or most recently Cai Guoqiang's Guggenheim show. As You Si laid out his work for me to have a look at, I knew immediately I had been offered a gift by the hand of fate.

There across the floor was art work with obviously a lot of heart and soul, clearly very clever and original both in style and technique. These were ink paintings You Si had created without a single thought in mind other than what was truly on his mind. Authentic art gets an immediate reaction. This was art true to the artist's intention. I had met that day a Chinese artist making art having little or nothing to do with China other than the fact it was on rice paper and scrolls – which I found refreshing. You Si has been painting what I feel is a new and true art form, and like some of the best of the artists who happened to have been born in China,

the aforementioned Cai Guoqiang for example, he had found this originality while dealing with the different kinds of challenges which present in the big wide world.

The mandate of ART LABOR from the very outset was the representation of new styles of both local and international art, and to provide a more globally oriented platform than some of the other galleries in the Chinese contemporary scene, which occasionally feels more focused on local artists and is, we feel, too often ethno-centrally inclined. While keeping a finger or two in the soup of his Chinese roots - by his use of Chinese materials such as ink on rice paper - You Si is constantly reinventing himself, producing images which more recently contain very little reference to his cultural origins. This takes a certain amount of initiative, and I might even say courage, in contemporary China, when everything right now is all about China, and to take the stance of an independent in a society where showing your pride in membership is presently the expected norm.

Everything from the application of materials, or his constant experimentation with layout, topic and colours, all show an artist who belongs to the world, not just a school, a city or a country, much as ART LABOR intends to. And while his work may appear at first glance to lean toward the more decorative side, those who know well his work and the artist personally are aware there are several layers of comprehension to be had, messages of freedom of self, overt and subtle sexuality, strong emotional implications, and an exploration of the biological and metaphysical realms, from micro and macro perspectives.

In his early pioneering days in the

1980's as one of the avant-garde ink wash artists of the Beijing scene, he staged, along with friends, some of the first underground independent exhibitions, and faced criticism and discouragement from those who had the authority to make or break careers in the ink wash painting scene, traditionally a very ancient and, until then, conservative art form.

Eventually choosing to take the opportunity for greater personal growth offered by an artist residence in Australia and then moving on for further artistic freedom to the challenging art center of the world, New York City, You Si escaped these early restraints and has developed, in my opinion, into one of the most stylistically original artists working in China. Despite or because

of the challenge of being a Chinese artist painting ink on paper in New York during the late 80's, a time when there was much less interest in a Chinese contemporary scene yet to take off, he has never wavered from his total commitment to making art that comes directly from his personal inspiration, art for no one but himself, but still taking such immense pleasure when anyone else enjoys it. You Si's art is something very special indeed, paintings we are so very pleased to have at ART LABOR.

August 21, 2008

Martin Kemble
Director
ART LABOR Gallery, Shanghai



情与理的交织——游思的画

一般来说，绘画是表达感情的手段，不直接表达观念和哲理。但是综观绘画史，凡是被称之为“杰作”的艺术品，作者在抒发感情的后面，莫不隐晦地暗示某种带有哲理性的观念。至于到了现代社会，哲理性的绘画成为重要的一个系列，原因之一是复杂的社会生活给予艺术家以多种切入点去认知和剖析其中林林总总的现象，画家已不满足单纯的直观印象的描述，观赏者也期望从艺术中得到更多的思想启迪。再者，现代美学张扬创作者的主体性格，鼓励艺术家们根据自己的素质、修养与爱好，表现自我感受，也给有哲理性思维的艺术家施展才能的机会。不过，纯哲理性的绘画往往是抽象的，如俄国至上主义画家马列维奇，荷兰新造型主义画家蒙德里安等。他们或者在绘画作品中消解了绘画语言的观赏性，而强调点线面构成的寓意性；或者干脆用黑与白，用不同指向的线和形，表达晦涩难解的哲学观念。当然，也有不少有哲理性的绘画寄寓在形象化的语言之中，如康定斯基。

游思的绘画包含两种类型：一类是用装饰性的手法，把各种不同形状的生物体组织结合在一起；另一类画面上是形状同一的近乎抽象的符

号。前者乍一看如色彩的植物图案，后者给人的印象犹如望远镜下游动的细胞体。游思迷恋于这些奇突的图像，当然不是用它们给人以一般意义上的美感，而肯定是用来表达他对纷纭复杂的现实世界的态度。这些互相重叠、交错、纠缠在一起的或如枝如蔓的图像，或如大小细胞体的结构，布满整个画面，不留空隙。画面上有的色彩斑斓，有的仅单纯的黑白灰。这里有轻松的飘逸，有沉重的蠕动；有丰满的喜悦，有单一的孤寂；有宏观的关照，也有细部的精微……游思展现在我们面前的是他对人生、对艺术的思考。他的画是理性的，但语言中不失情感的表露，可以说是情与理的交织。游思出身于绘画世家，自幼受艺术熏陶，深造于上海戏剧学院舞台美术系，后又从事艺术设计和在水墨艺术中进行探索，并长期在美国从事现代艺术创作。他的这段不平凡的艺术经历，交汇成笔下不同于别人的画面，构成他目前独特的艺术面貌。不用说，游思是有心人，是善于运用各种资源，善于发掘和利用自己心灵潜质来进行创造的艺术家的。

祝他的展览取得圆满成功！

邵大箴



Morphe in Jangala / 深处, 2008.
Ink on Rice Paper, 180×180cm.



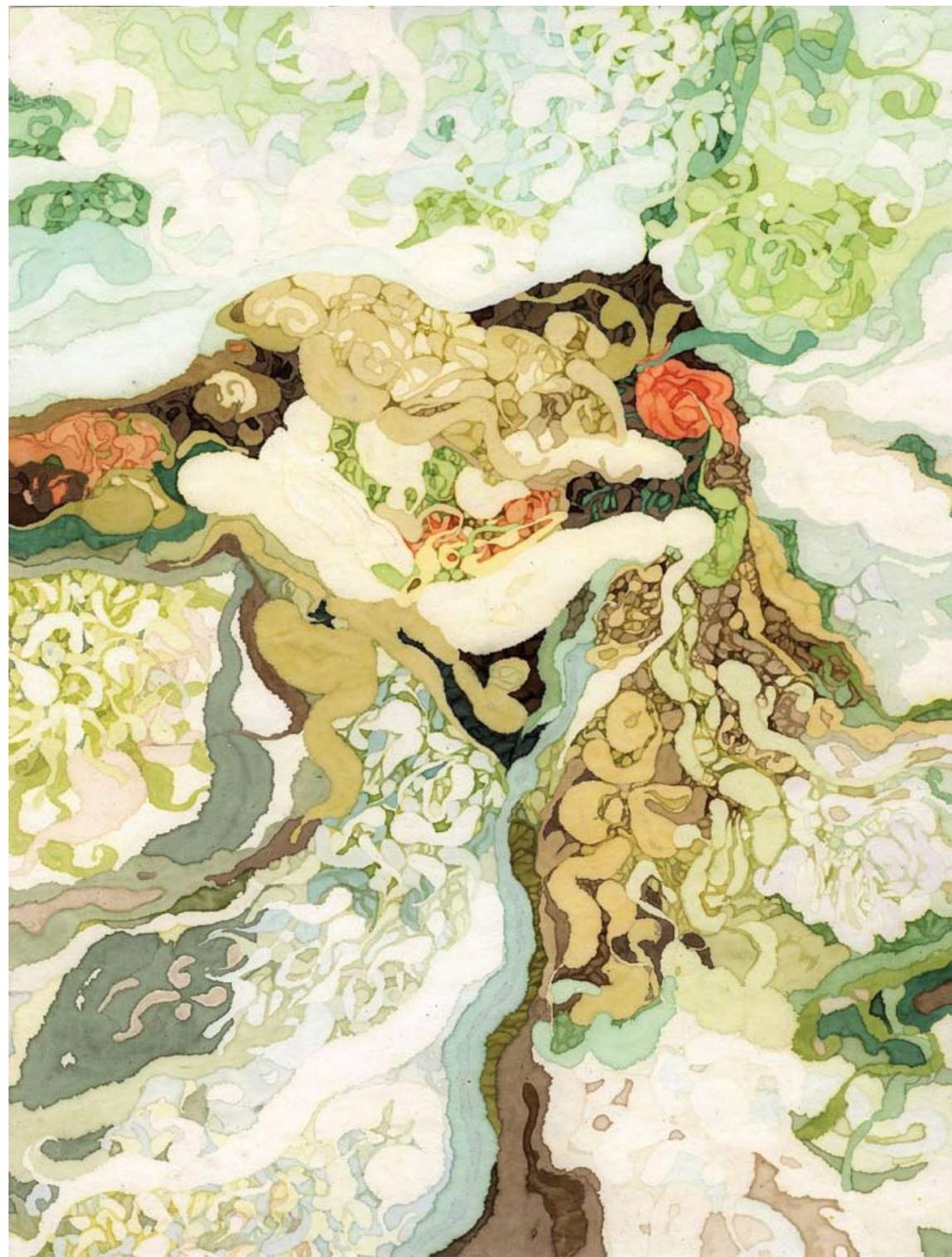
Loss of Control / 失控, 2003.
Ink on Rice Paper, 240×117cm.



Dance of Genes / 物种地迁移, 2003.
Ink on Rice Paper, 241×118cm.



Cerebral Ribbon / 飘逸的飘, 2008.
Ink on Rice Paper, 180×180cm.



Rise / 苏醒, 2006.
Ink on Rice Paper, 44.8×33.5cm.



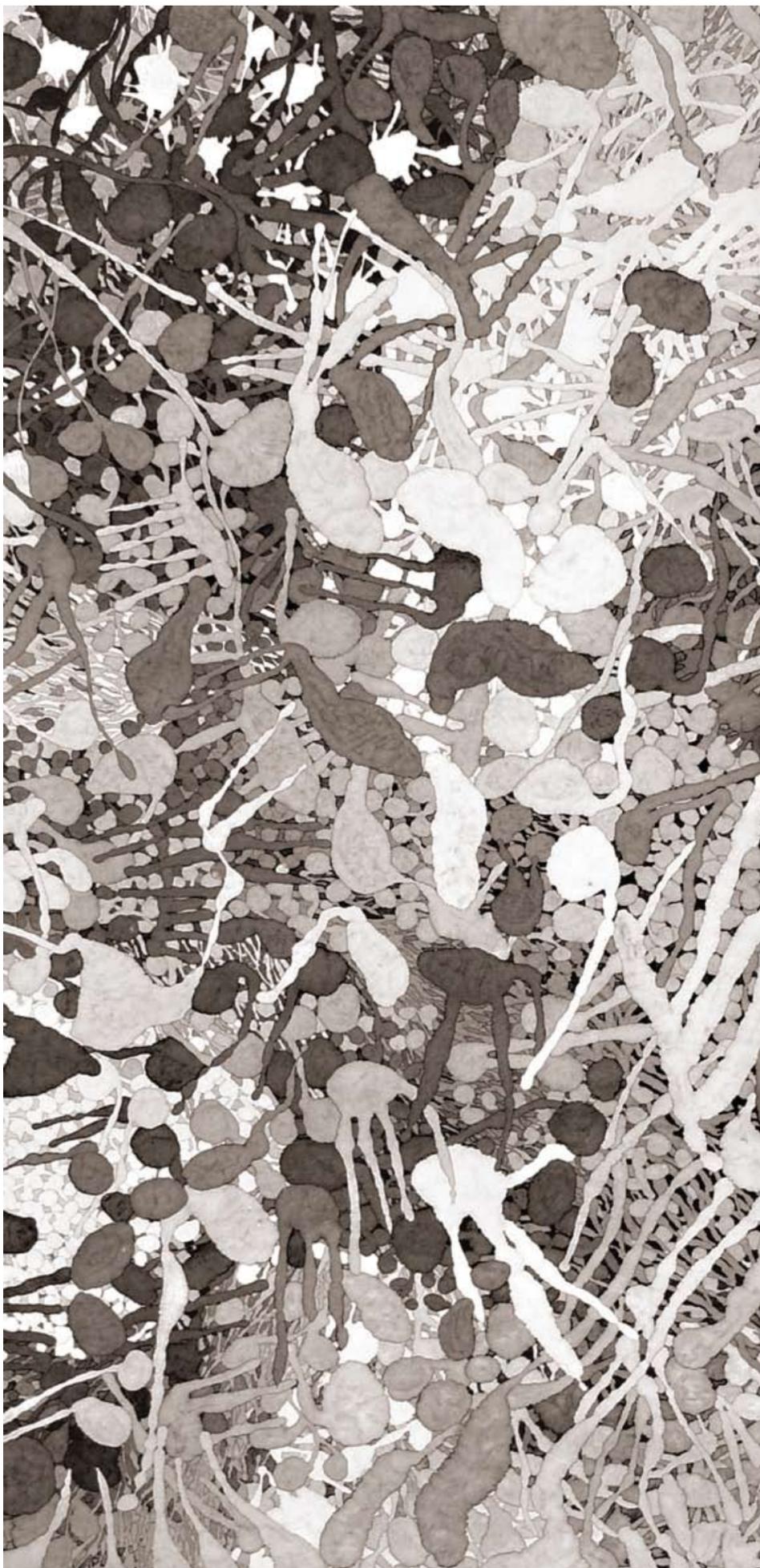
Nova Terra / 新物种, 2006.
Ink on Rice Paper, 44.7×33.7cm.



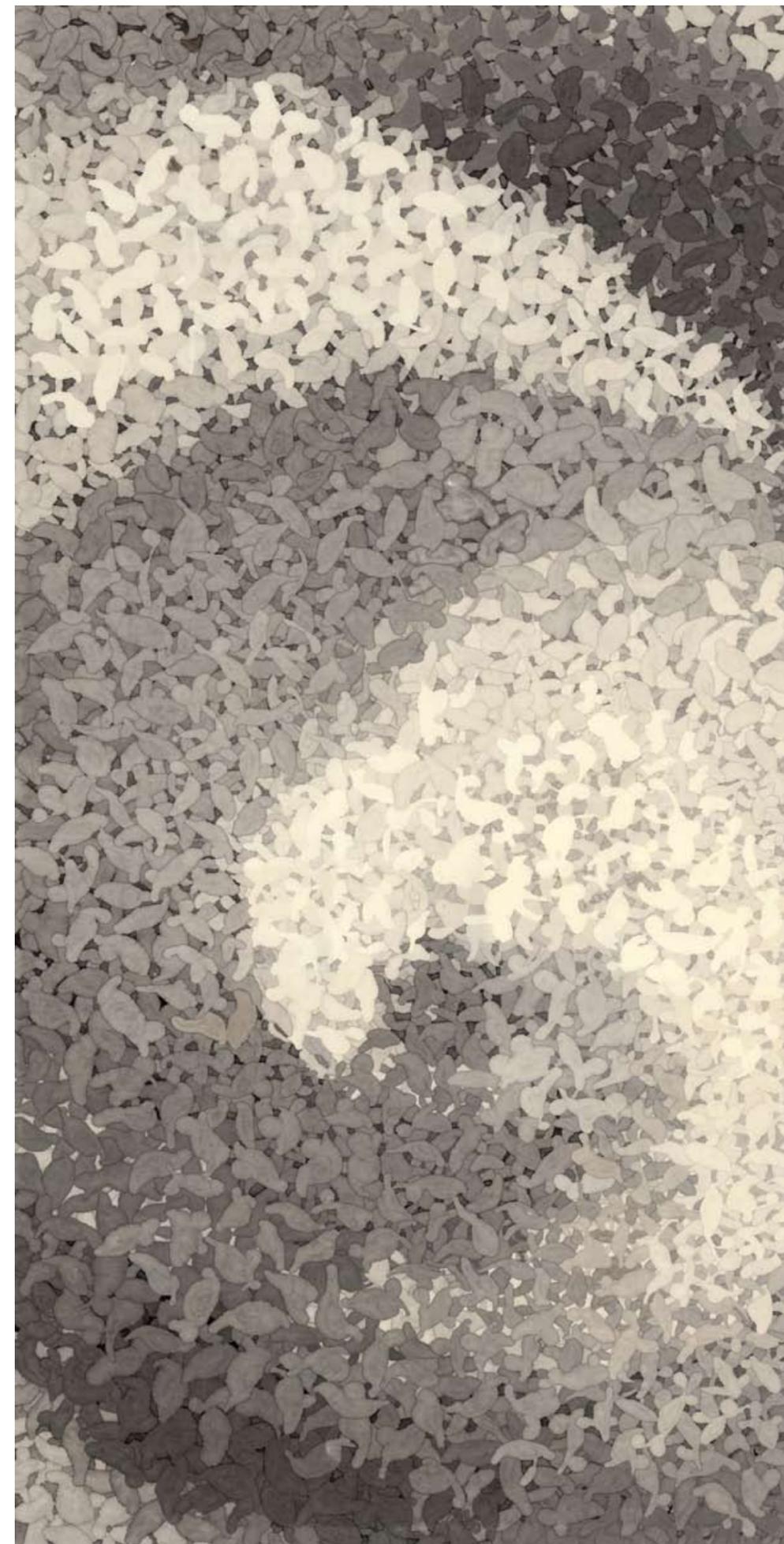
Whirlpool / 漩涡, 2006.
Ink on Rice Paper, 45.3x35cm.



A Change in Circulation / 循环中的转换, 2006.
Ink on Rice Paper, 45.2x35cm.



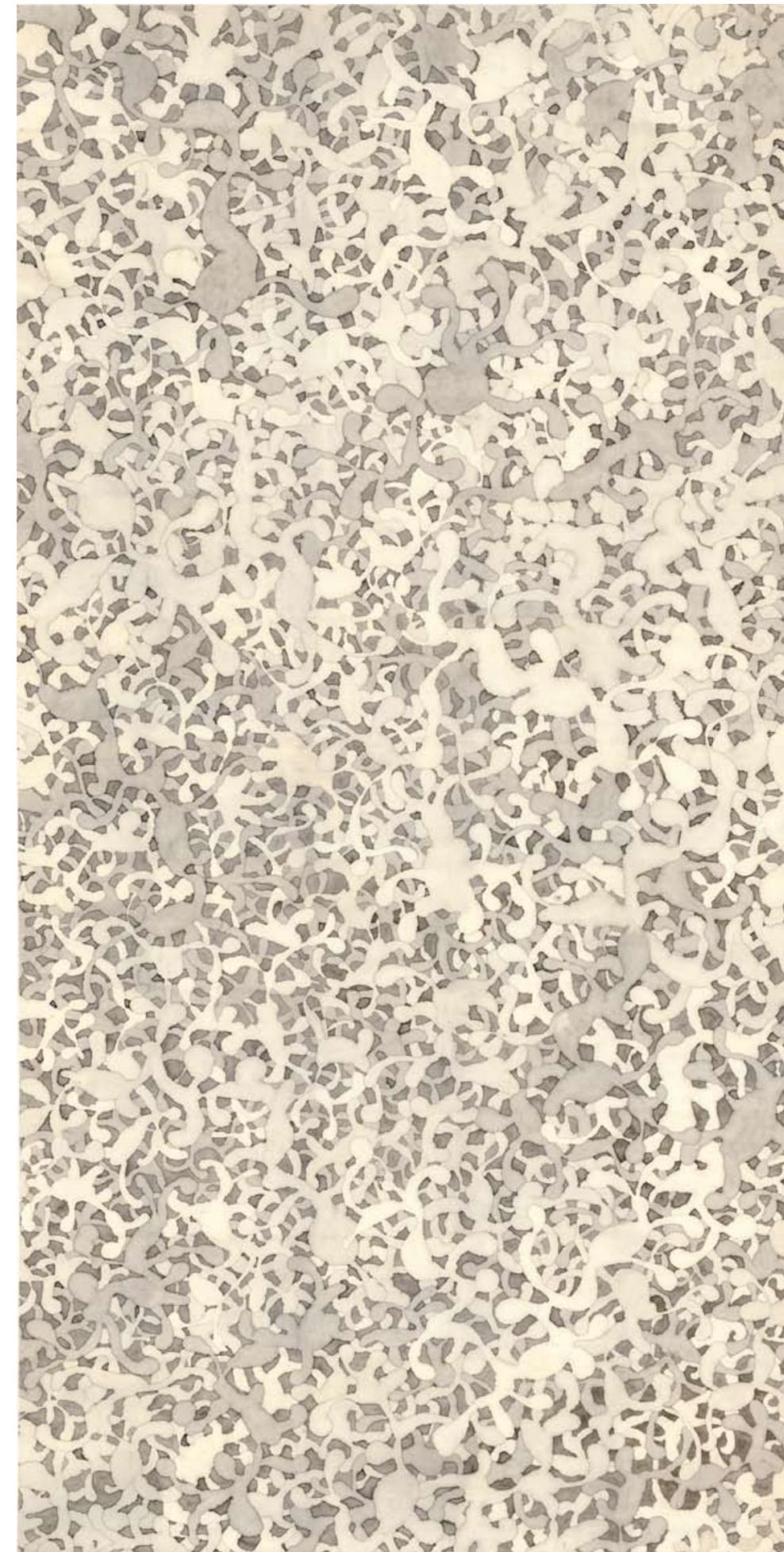
Neurosis Lost / 消失的神经, 2002.
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×124cm.



Smooth Spin into Void
均衡的移动, 2005.
Ink on Rice Paper, 245×123cm.



Alienation in Swirl / 变异的旋, 2003.
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×124cm.



Mystery: You Me And the Other
无声的耳语, 2001.
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×124cm.



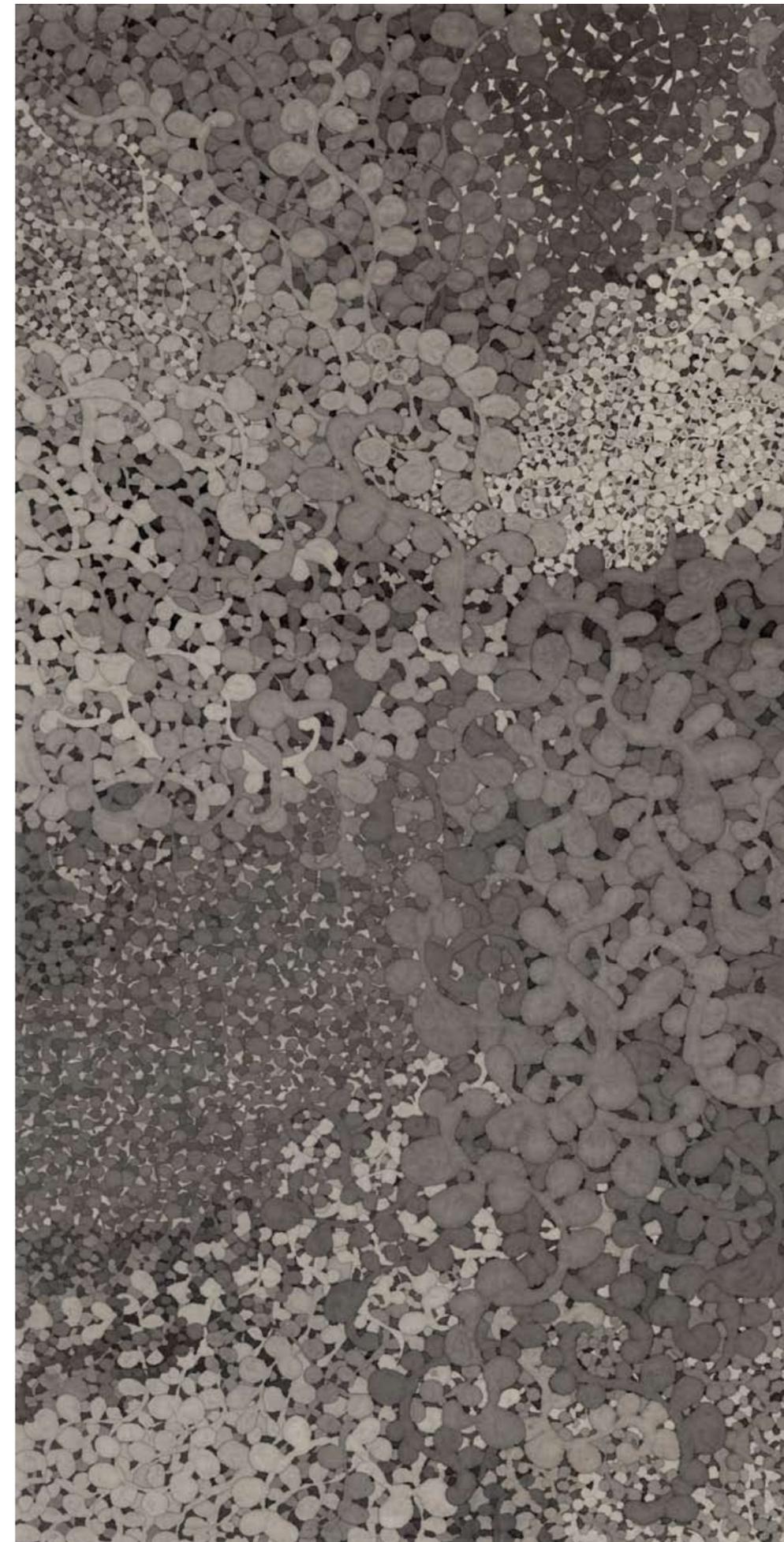
Busy in Alteration / 繁茂的变异, 2008.
Ink on Rice Paper, 122.5×123.5cm.



Rash Totem to Chaotic Expansion / 欲望的图腾, 2007.
Ink on Rice Paper, 180×180cm.



Space Time Curvature / 失重, 2002.
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×124cm.



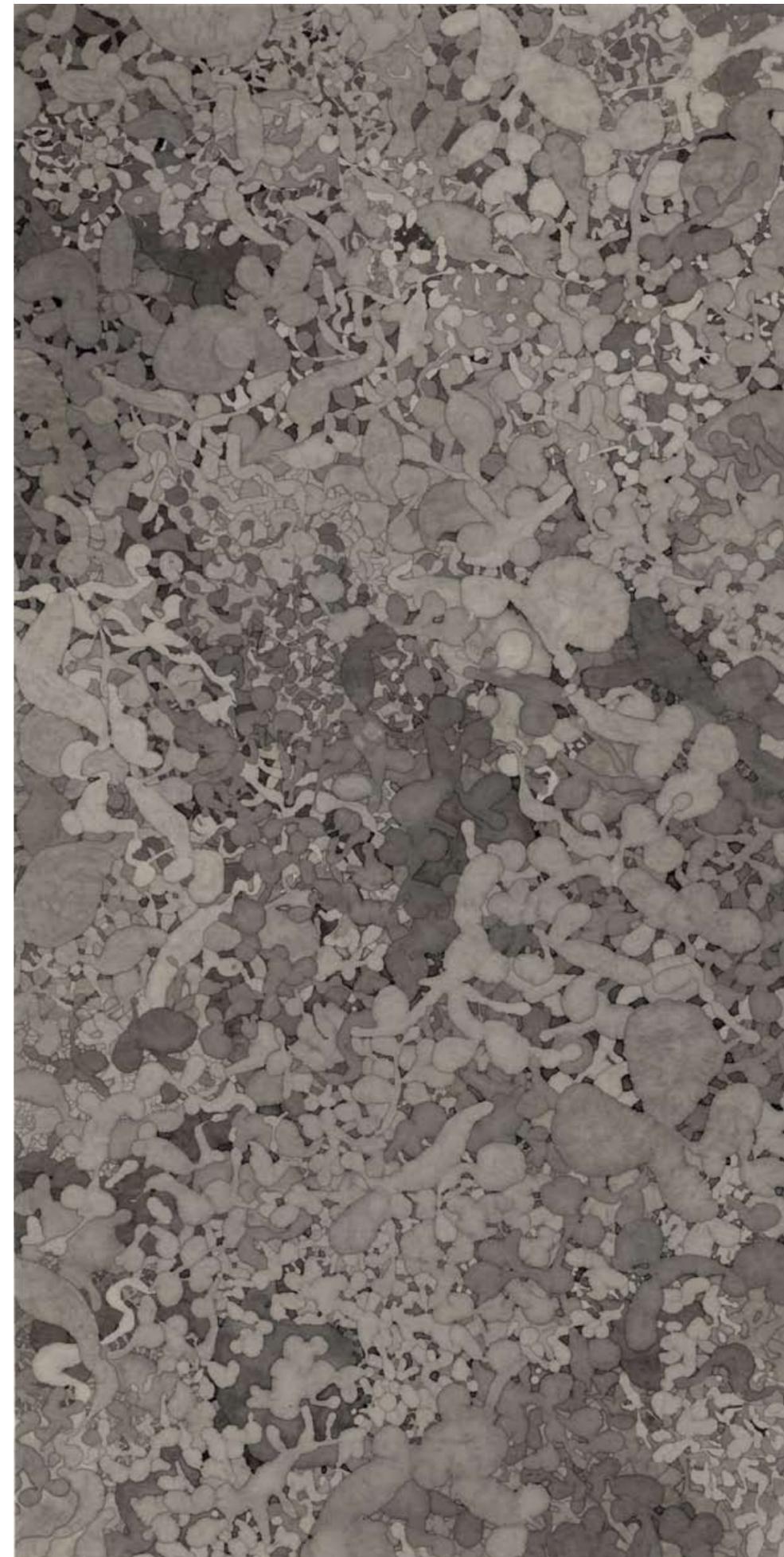
Monochrome Foliage / 肢体语言, 2004.
Ink on Rice Paper, 245×123cm.



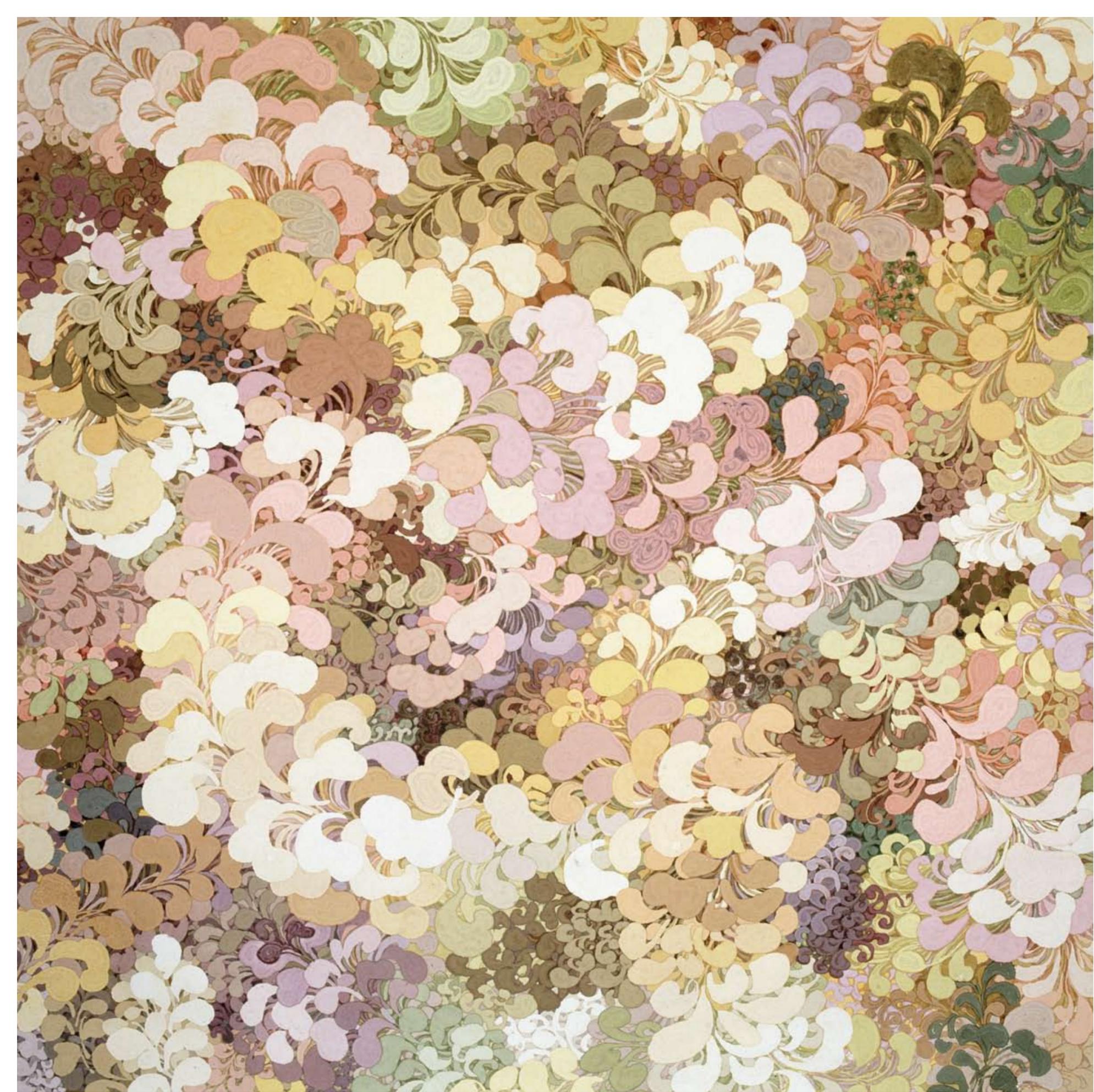


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Ecology Space Time Curvation
互动的生态与时空, 2004.
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×372cm.

Unbalanced Infinity / 静谧的生长, 2002.
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×124cm.



Heavenly Depression / 幽暗的天堂, 2003.
Ink on Rice Paper, 242×121cm.



Pastel Rounds / 周而复始, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 180×180cm.



Retrograde of Essence / 退化, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 180×180cm.



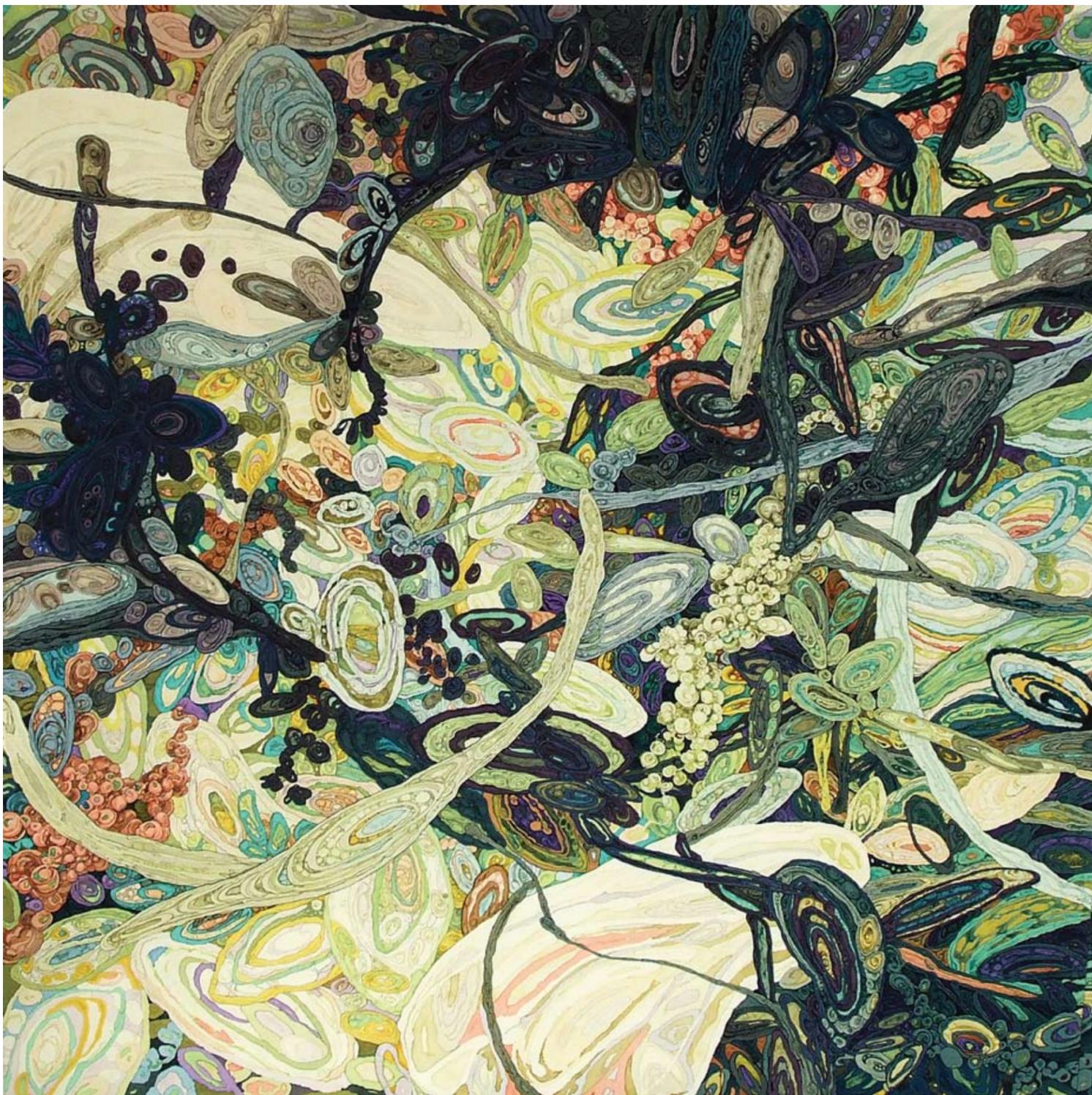
Internal Nuage / 生态的云, 2000
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×123cm.



Slow Soft Growth / 生长, 2001
Ink on Rice Paper, 144×122.4cm.



Opening Folds of Jade / 绽开, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 178.5×179.5cm.



Mitosis without Scaffold / 穿越的裂变, 2006
Ink on Rice Paper, 180×180cm.



Geometric Intrusion / 时空的图腾, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 179.5×179cm.



Choreography / 飘逸之舞, 2005
Ink on Rice Paper, 59×121cm.



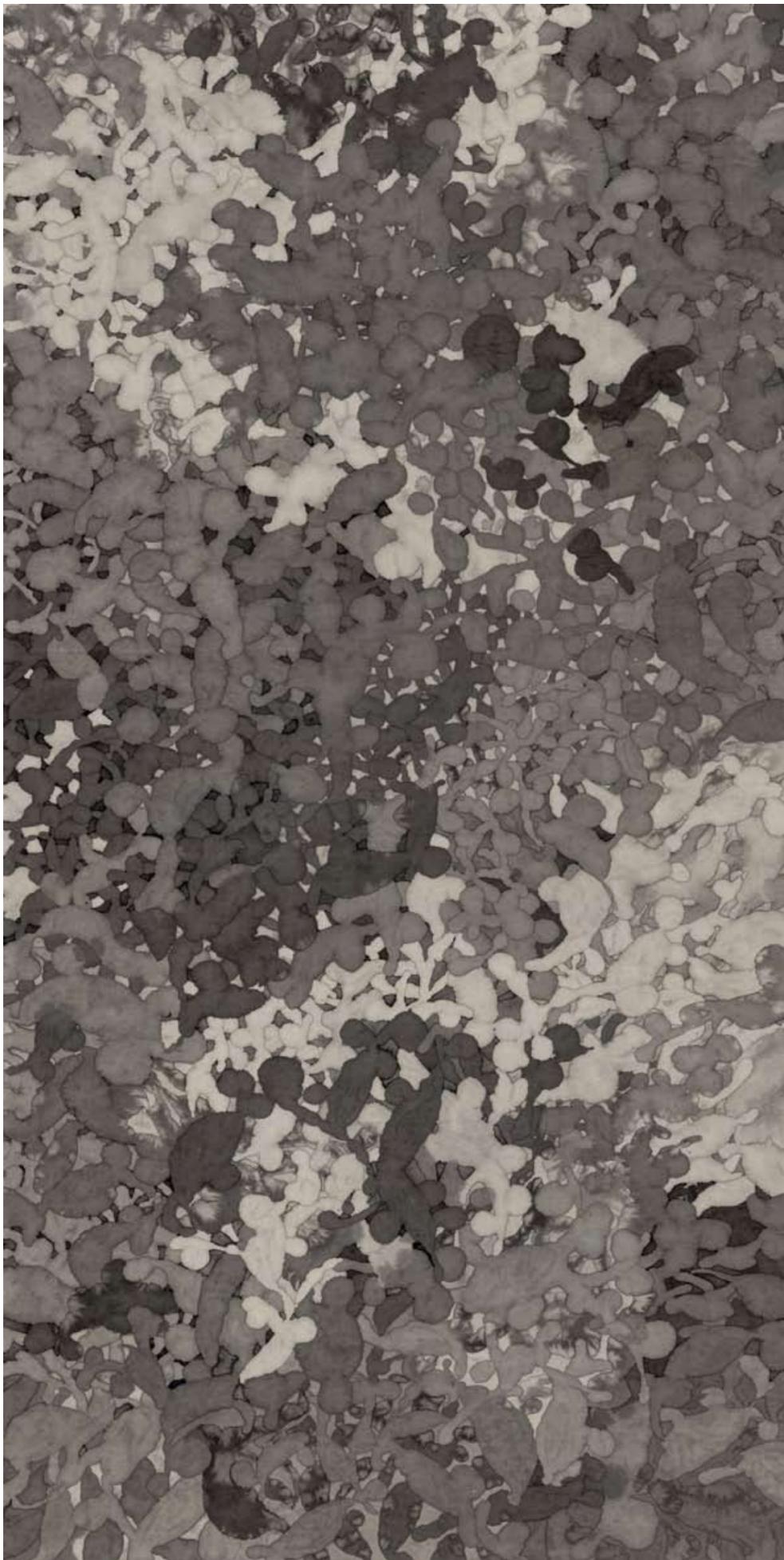
Fluxus / 旋之盘旋, 2005
Ink on Rice Paper, 59×121cm.



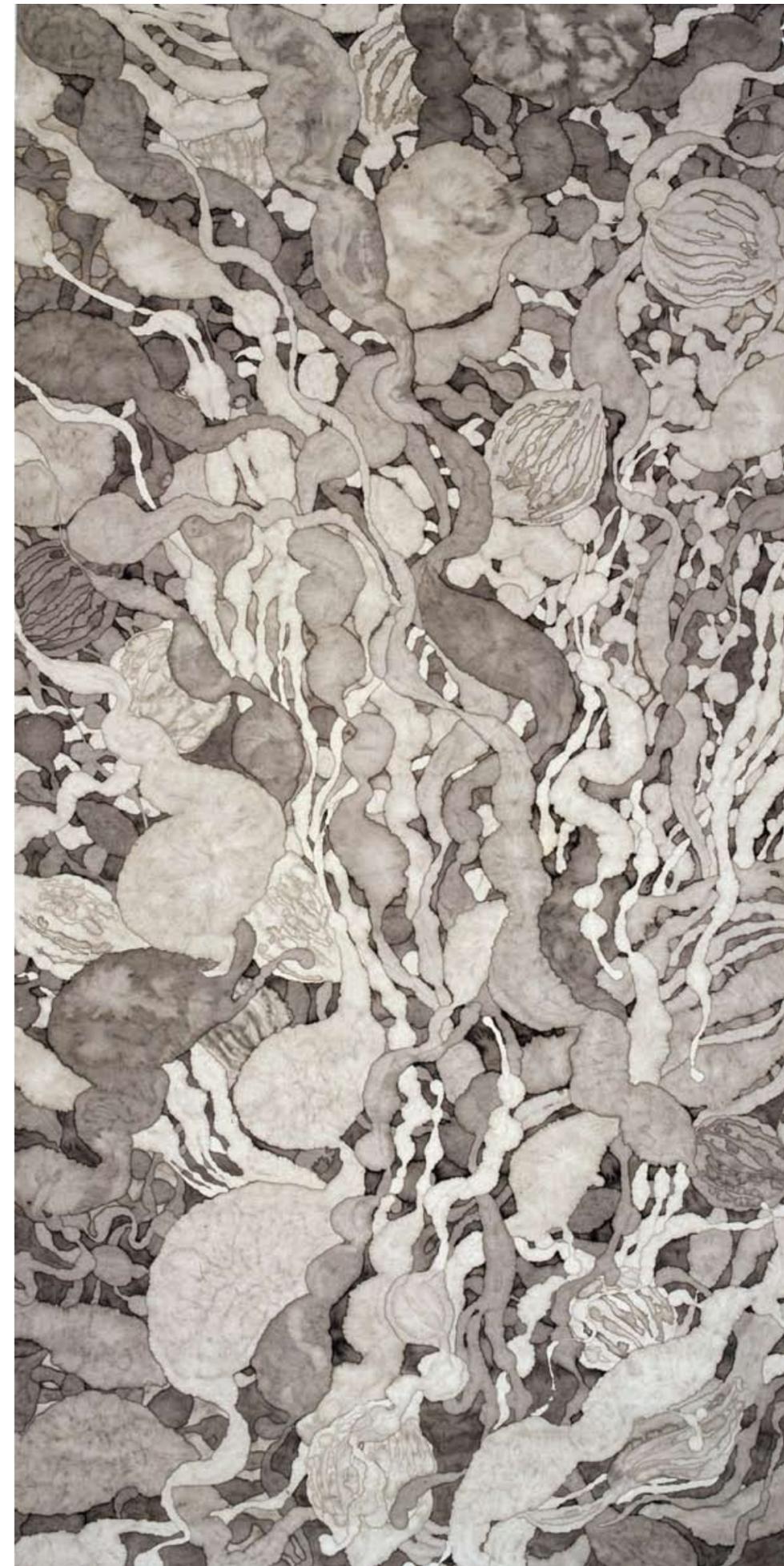
Spawn Against Blue / 繁殖, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 122×123cm.



Organic Sprouting / 攀延中的繁衍, 2006
Ink on Rice Paper, 180×180cm.



Reorganized into Movements
分化的群体, 2004
Ink on Rice Paper, 245×123cm.



Ballooning to Continuance / 蔓延, 2001
Ink on Rice Paper, 248×124cm.



Tangerine Vein / 橙子的舒缓, 2007
Ink on Rice Paper, 123.5×83cm.



Floating Champagne Spine / 浮, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 123.5×83cm.



Audience to Expansion / 参与, 2002
Ink on Rice Paper, 245×123cm.



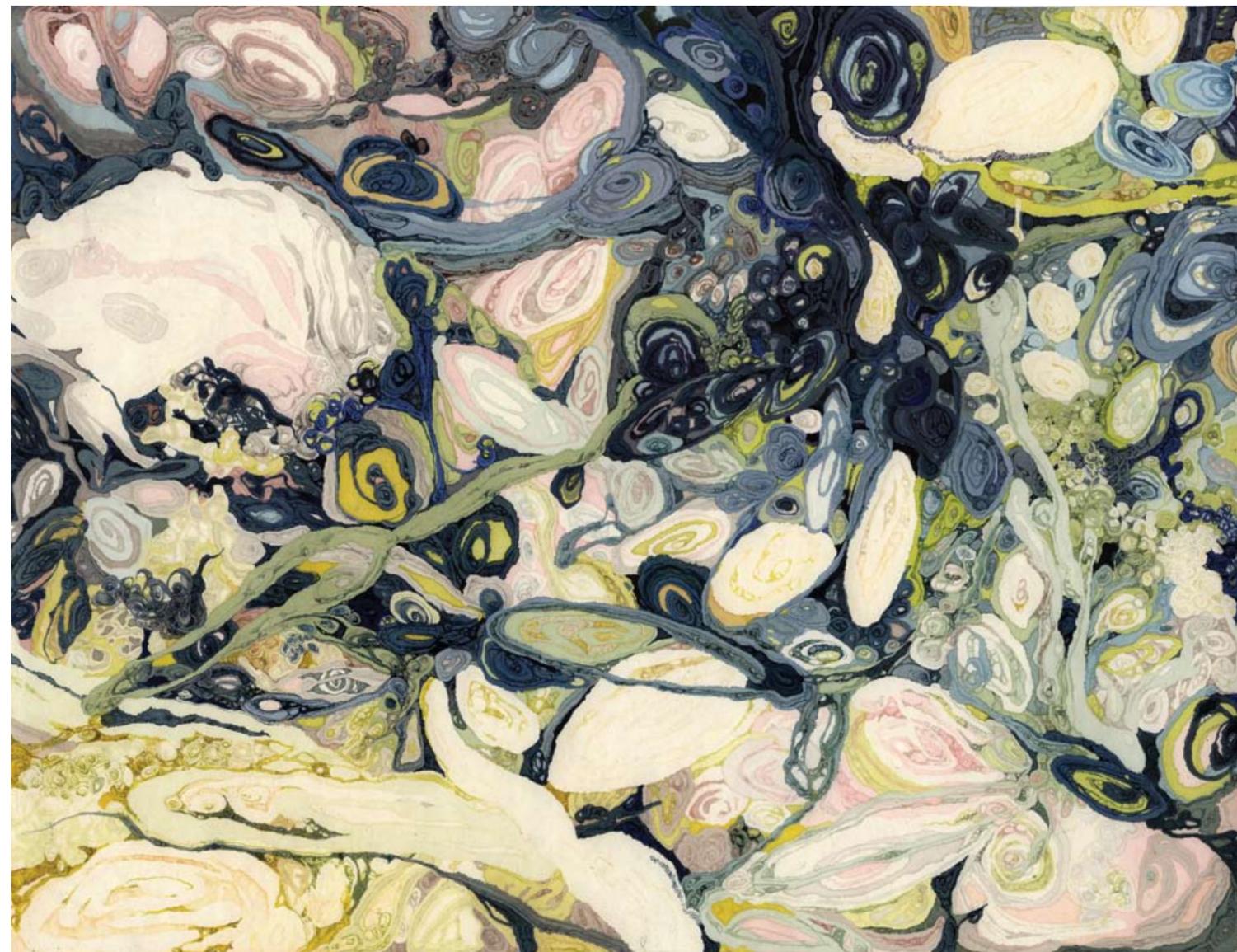
Living Landscape / 生物风景, 2001
Ink on Rice Paper, 246×123cm.



Rite of Spring / 春之祭, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 127×177cm.



Bare Nerves / 裸的脉络, 2006
Ink on Rice Paper, 35×45.2cm.



Stretched Evolution / 异变的延伸, 2006
Ink on Rice Paper, 34.5×44.8cm.



Mistaken Marine / 错乱, 2003
Ink on Rice Paper, 245×123cm.



Opening onto Elsewhere
异乡的通道, 2004
Ink on Rice Paper, 245×123cm.



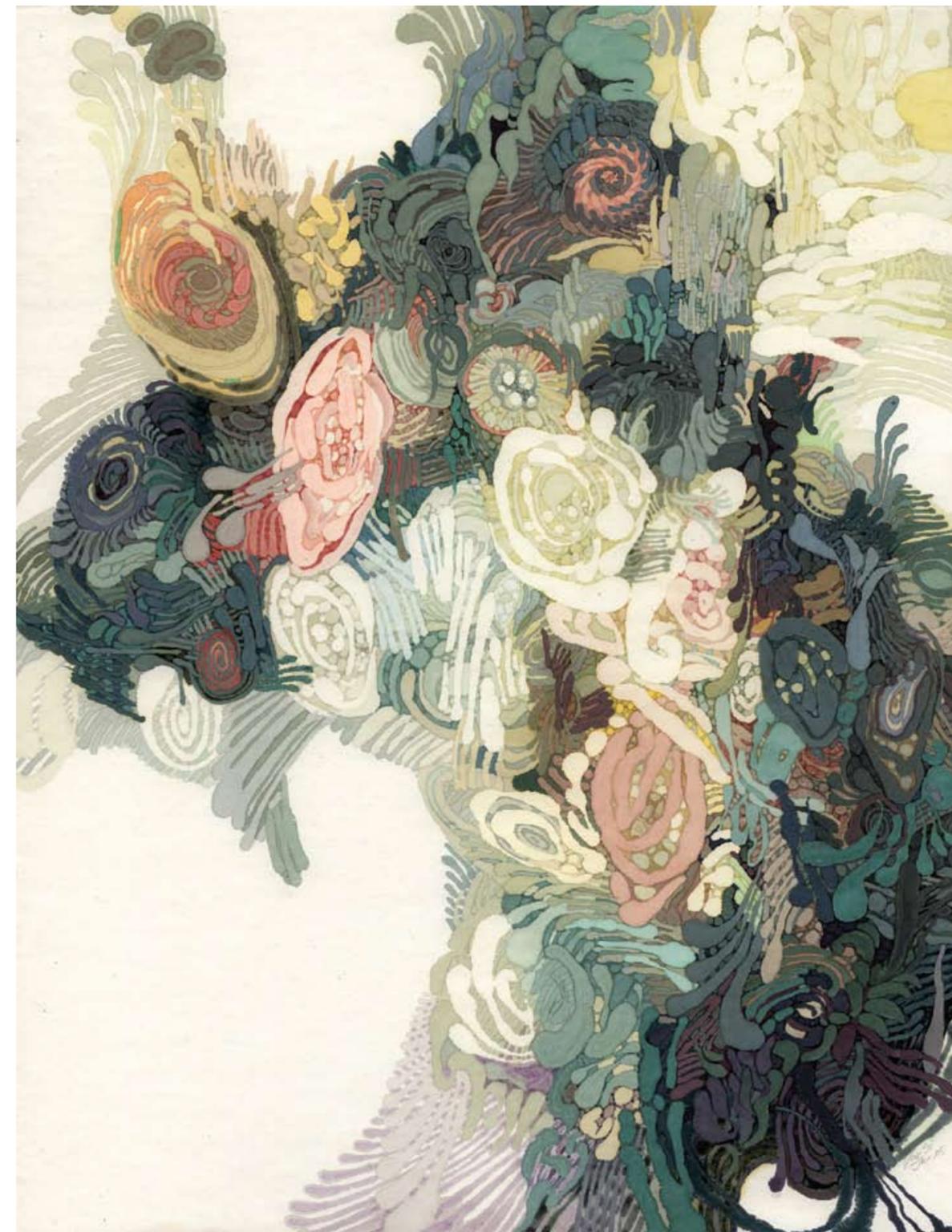
Mapping Biology / 生物地图, 2004
Ink on Rice Paper, 247×124cm.



Pink Ezekiels / 色欲, 2005
Ink on Rice Paper, 245×123cm.



New Fruit / 奇异果, 2006
Ink on Rice Paper, 44.8×33.5cm.



Stone / 岩, 2006
Ink on Rice Paper, 44.7×34.5cm.



Escaping Protoplast / 失序的繁衍, 2008
Ink on Rice Paper, 177×127cm.



Blue Movement / 兰色的异动, 2006
Ink on Rice Paper, 44.8×33.5cm.

You Si

CV

Education

Shanghai Theater Academy
Shanghai, China
Anhui Province School of Arts
Hefei, China

Solo Exhibitions

2008	<i>Unbounded Redux</i> Shanghai Sculpture Space (Sponsored by ART LABOR)	Shanghai
2007	<i>Unbounded</i> ART LABOR Gallery	Shanghai
2000	<i>New Paintings: Ink on Paper</i> Abraham Lubeiski Gallery	New York, USA
1994	<i>You Si: Paintings</i> Chinese Culture Institute	Boston, USA
1988-1989	<i>Beijing Young Artists Exhibition to New York and Boston</i> Multiple venues	USA
1988	<i>An Exhibition of Painting by You Si</i> Holdsworth Contemporary Art Gallery	Sydney, Australia
1987	<i>Contemporary Chinese Ink and Wash</i> Swedish Embassy	Beijing, China

Group Exhibitions

2008	<i>3 Man Show – (Former Classmates)</i> East Link Gallery	Shanghai
2004	<i>Vacation Nation</i> Pierogi Gallery	New York, USA
2003	<i>The Best of Brooklyn Comes to Boston</i> Bernard Toole Gallery Pierogi Presents	Boston, USA
2002	<i>Boiled and Fried</i> Pierogi Gallery	New York, USA
2001	<i>International Ink-wash Painting Exhibition</i> Shanghai Art Museum	Shanghai, China
2000	<i>Big Apple Chinese Painting</i> Kalkodo Gallery	New York, USA
1997	<i>Overseas Artists Exhibition</i> Hong Kong City University	Hongkong
1989	<i>Contemporary Chinese Painting</i> Manhattan East Gallery of Fine Arts	New York, USA
1986	<i>Contemporary Chinese Ink and Wash</i> Beijing University and Qinghua University	Beijing, China
1985	<i>Contemporary Ink Painting</i> Beijing Astronomical Observatory	Beijing, China

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