

Paul Pagk

Migliarino Constellation

Migliarino Constellation Series

Inarte

Residency August 2016, Italy





INARTE: Paul Pagk Constellation

One balmy summer evening, Paul Pagk and Veronique arrived in Migliarino, the ancient family seat of the Salviati family, having driven over from France. Their destination is in a spectacular setting, flanked by pine forests reaching out to the sea and located between Bocca di Serchio and a lake greatly loved by Puccini.

Paul and Veronique stayed in a very old house, supposedly haunted by the ghost of ‘La Fattoressa’, a small and harmless woman who creeps up to sleeping guests, observing them through the mist of time.

They walked under the inky sky, the darkness of which made the twinkling stars stand out like signifiers of metaphysical, alien cues. Taking the ephemerides as their point of departure, they scanned the constellation formed by Mars, Saturn and perhaps Antares.

They looked at the Botticelli which was recently rediscovered in Florence, the white marble of Pietrasanta, the gold of the Trecento paintings and the medieval cross in San Matteo di Pisa, a wonderfully varied but virtually unknown museum. Paul stood in front of the doors of Tacca in Duomo di Pisa and carefully studied the details in bronze; the geometrical shapes of the façade delighted him with their connection to the medieval bestiary; Paul listened to the music imbued in sadness of Madame Butterfly at the Puccini Festival and enjoyed the garden of San Francesco di Paola, where

Starr and Yvonne Brewster showed him the place where Adolf Hildebrandt and his daughter Lisl used to paint.

Not unlike a medium catching a ray of light through a half-opened door to a world beyond ours, he recorded all those lights and shapes, and from them created a series of drawings in which colours and points evidently referenced memories, juxtaposed into a higher level, in a parallel reality invented anew every day by Paul... a different reality in itself, in which the palpable and visible proof of summer became something eternal, invisible, regulated by other laws – a reality existing in its own inexistence.

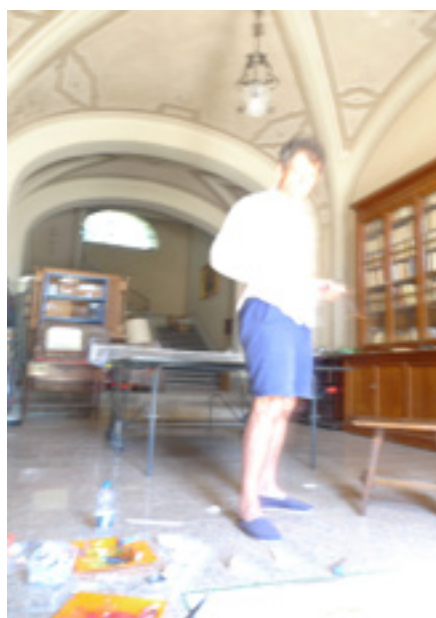
Colours of the same hue of the Renaissance tables were reinterpreted by the artist into new lines and geometrical shapes, powerful symbols such as the cross and the geometrical forms of the marble of Duomo di Pisa.

Then, in an act of generosity reminiscent of Plotinus, Paul made the decision to show his drawings, the synthesis and spirit of a place and his relationship with it, much like the sensory impressions left after a walk through a field filled with the strong smell of wild animals. For the limited period of only a day, and witnessed only by a few friends, the old barns of the villa came to life again... the blink of an eye, the flight of a butterfly, the chirping of a cricket.

All of this serves to show the power an artist can wield, how he can make what is dead come back to life; a power that ties him to the present in order to leave a sign. Art becomes a chamber concert, a note which becomes an expression and a reminder of the here and now, and urges us to be truly present, to emulate the painter and get our hands dirty, to get involved... and to be there at the very moment that the note is created by the artist’s imagination.

I think that this is the true purpose of the project. A real sense of true culture. This is not about the final product, but about taking part in the experience that will make it possible as such.

Francesca Centurione Scotto Boschieri











A STACK
OF LINES
ALIGNED
FOR PAGK

*I draw the line.
I draw the line
At poems that rhyme,
Reason's blind theme
"What does it mean?"*

*You've seen what you've seen.
It is what it seems
Variants and themes,
The cracks, the lines, the seams
"Responsibilities in dreams."
That 'line' rhymes with 'rhyme'
Should not itself define
The contours of this thing of mine
But I can not otherwise define
Another's art by such smudged signs
Of wonder and aligned design.*

*I was spun a line -
A lie of land or hand
To rise and then decline
To read a palm not a poem,
Each spoke now showing
Unspoken tales still owing,
The fortune's teller's web
A web of knowing.*

*Here we are 'reading the lines'
Like a fortune teller's benign
Hatching of a cross-hatched plot,
The dry-point of a sweaty palm
Etching itself at the end of every arm.*

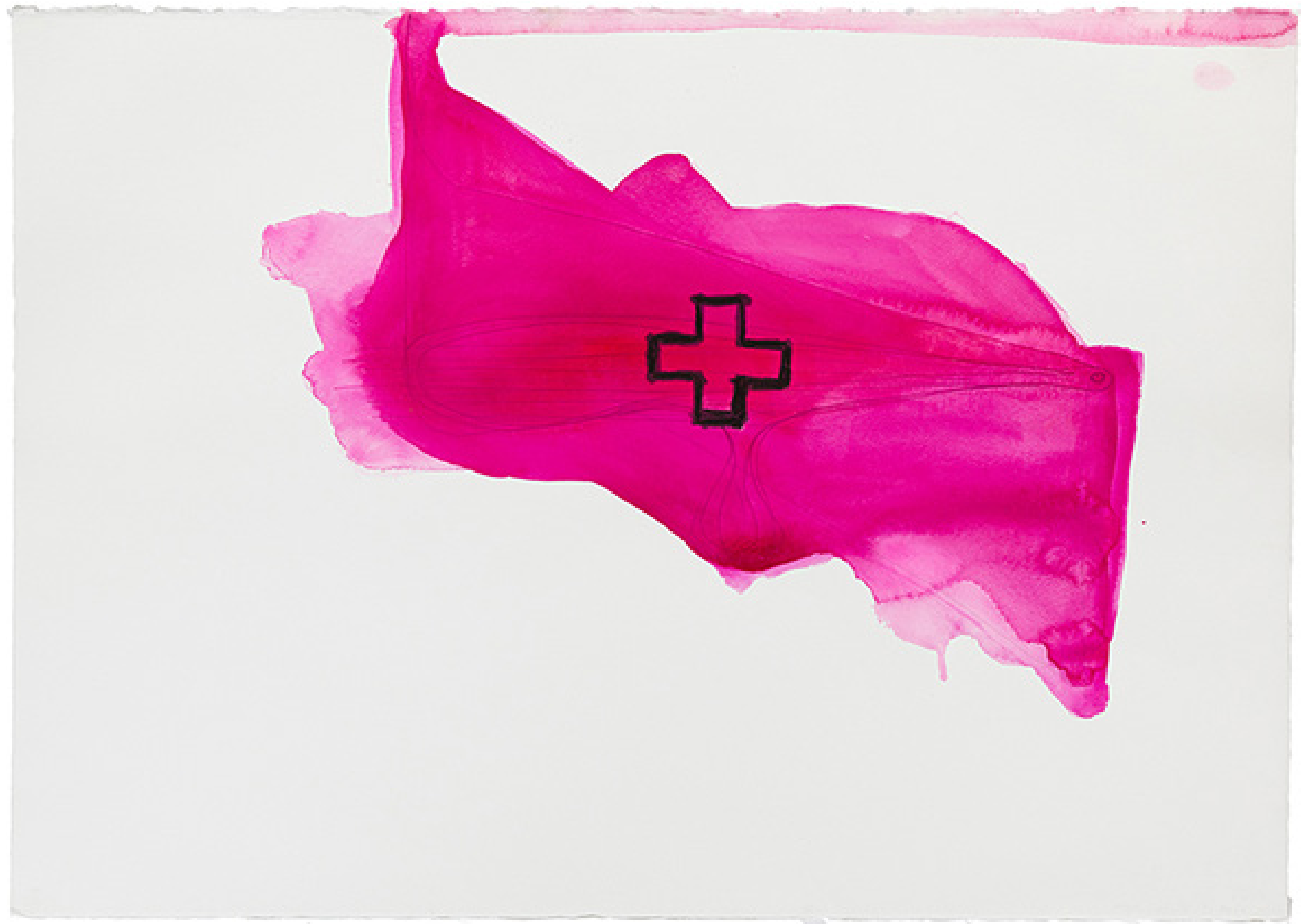
*Reading the lines,
Reading the line
From finer and finer
Down to fine –
Like the sure decline
Of stock or Alpine incline
Into sunset's solid glow.*

*The way the light
Lights us so
With bars of darker
Shadow thrown -
Bars of music
Whose staves are ruled
To horizontal latitude
Through which we move
Note by note, as if to prove
The arrow of our narrow life-line
Draws on forever, blots and stutters,
Dissolved by the sublime.*

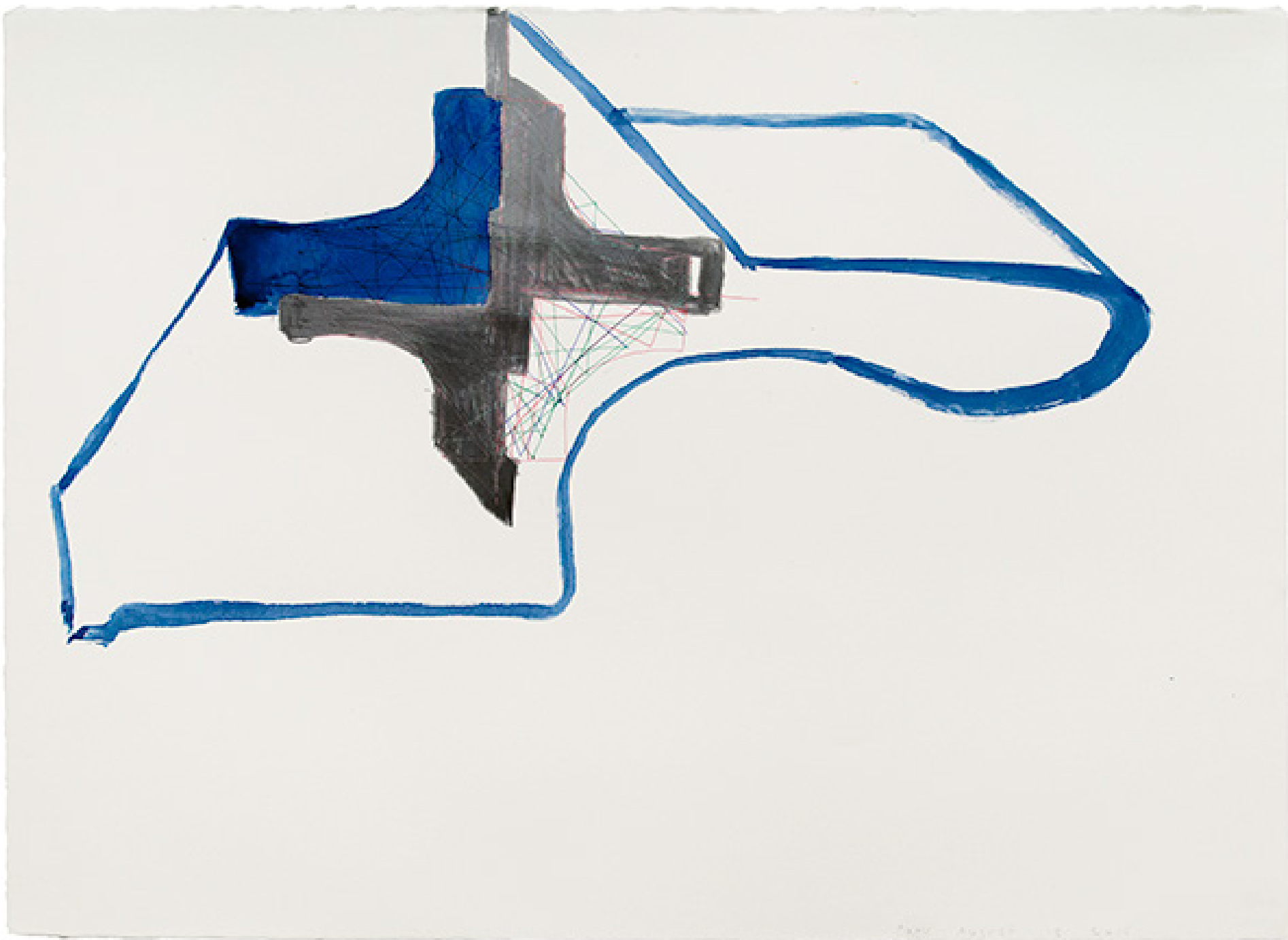
*I draw a line
At visual rhyme
I draw a line
At making time -
Wider or fine.*

*Draw, draw, draw
Draw like a bridge
Or like a breath,
Your last, your best.*

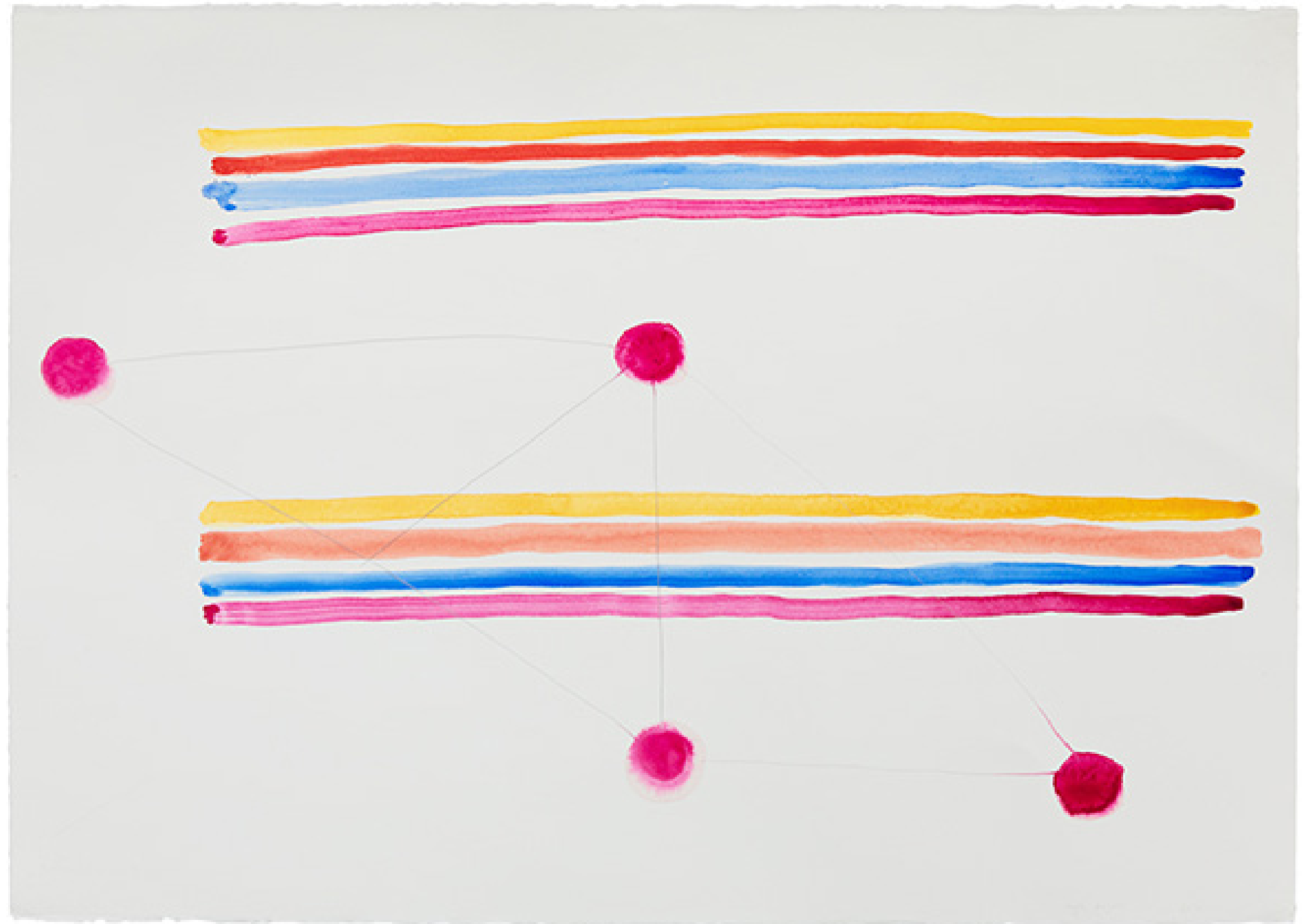
*I draw a line
I draw a line
At visual rhyme
Or poems that rhyme
Signs upon signs,
Lines upon lines
Until the final dot..
The black ink spot..
Marks the end of time.*



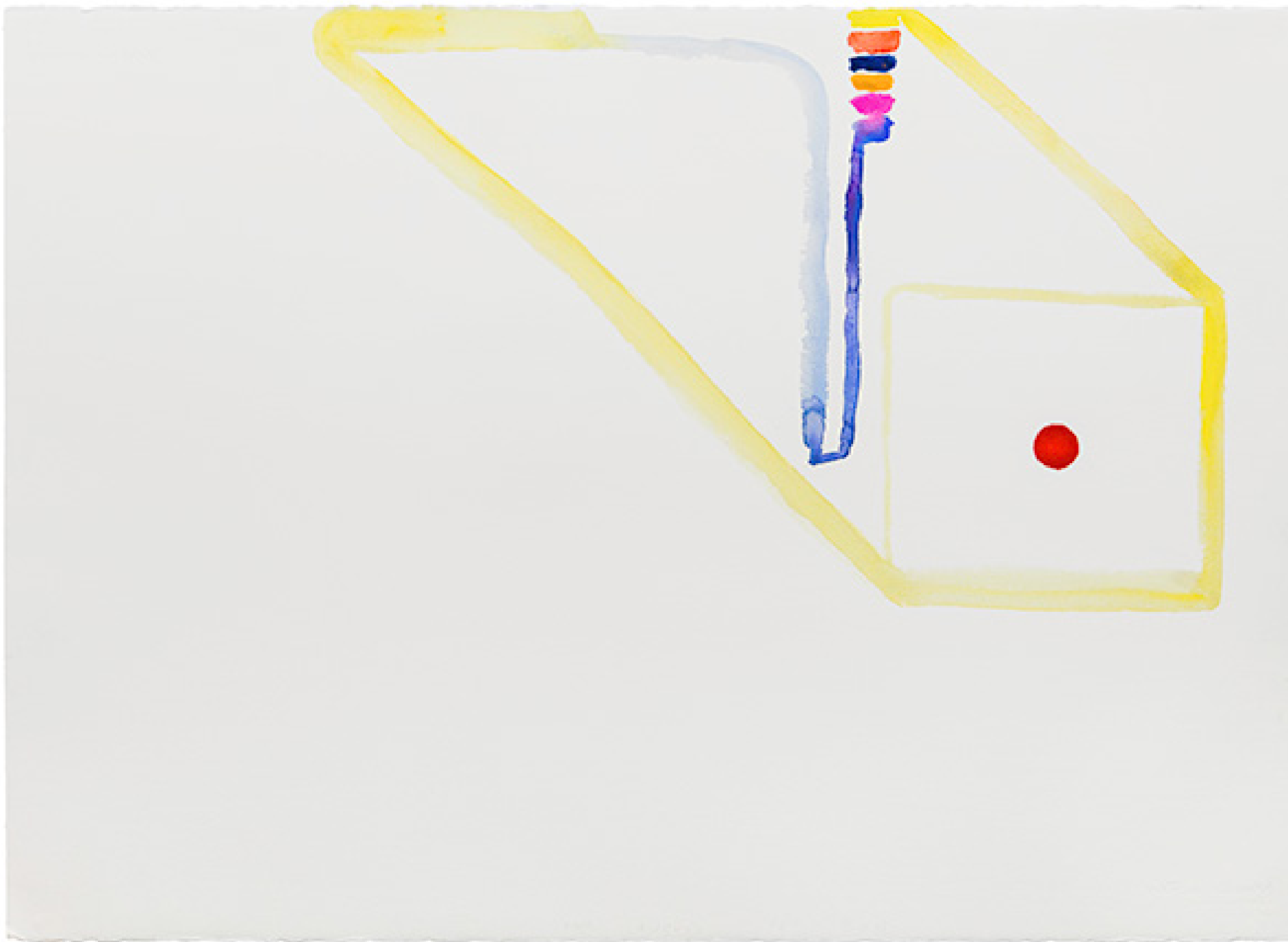
Conté and watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



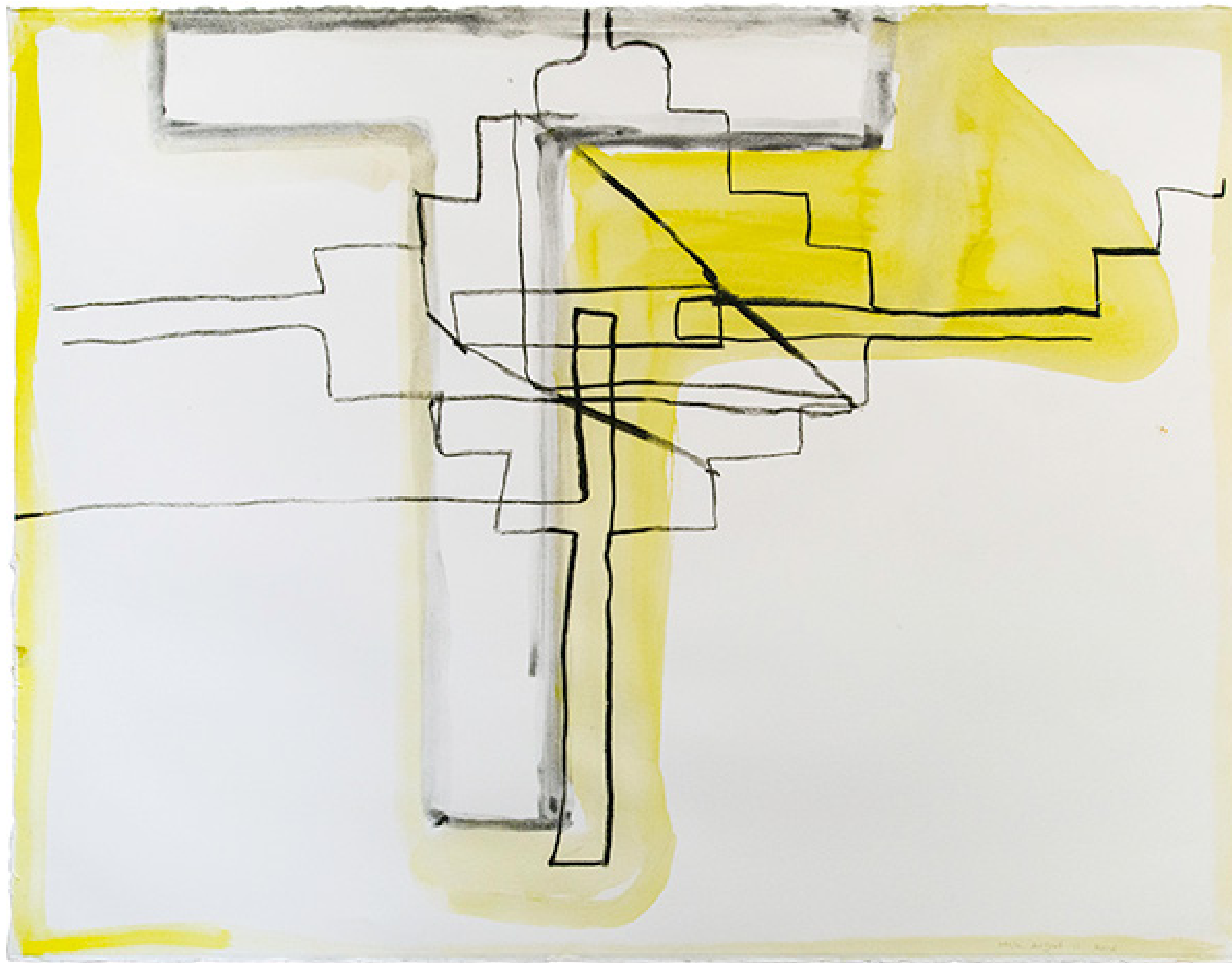
Graphite, ballpoint and watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



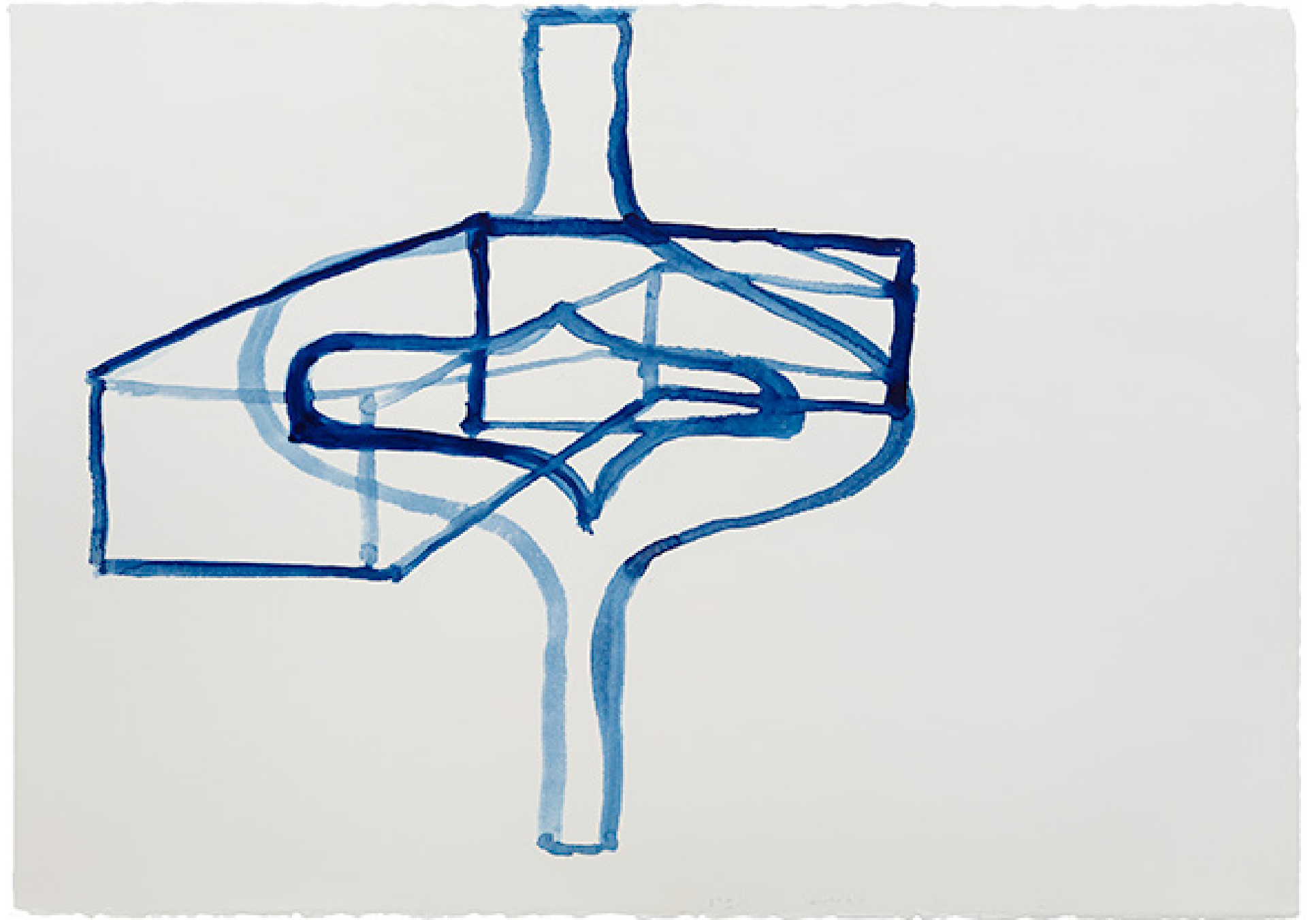
Watercolor and pencil on paper, 22" x 30".



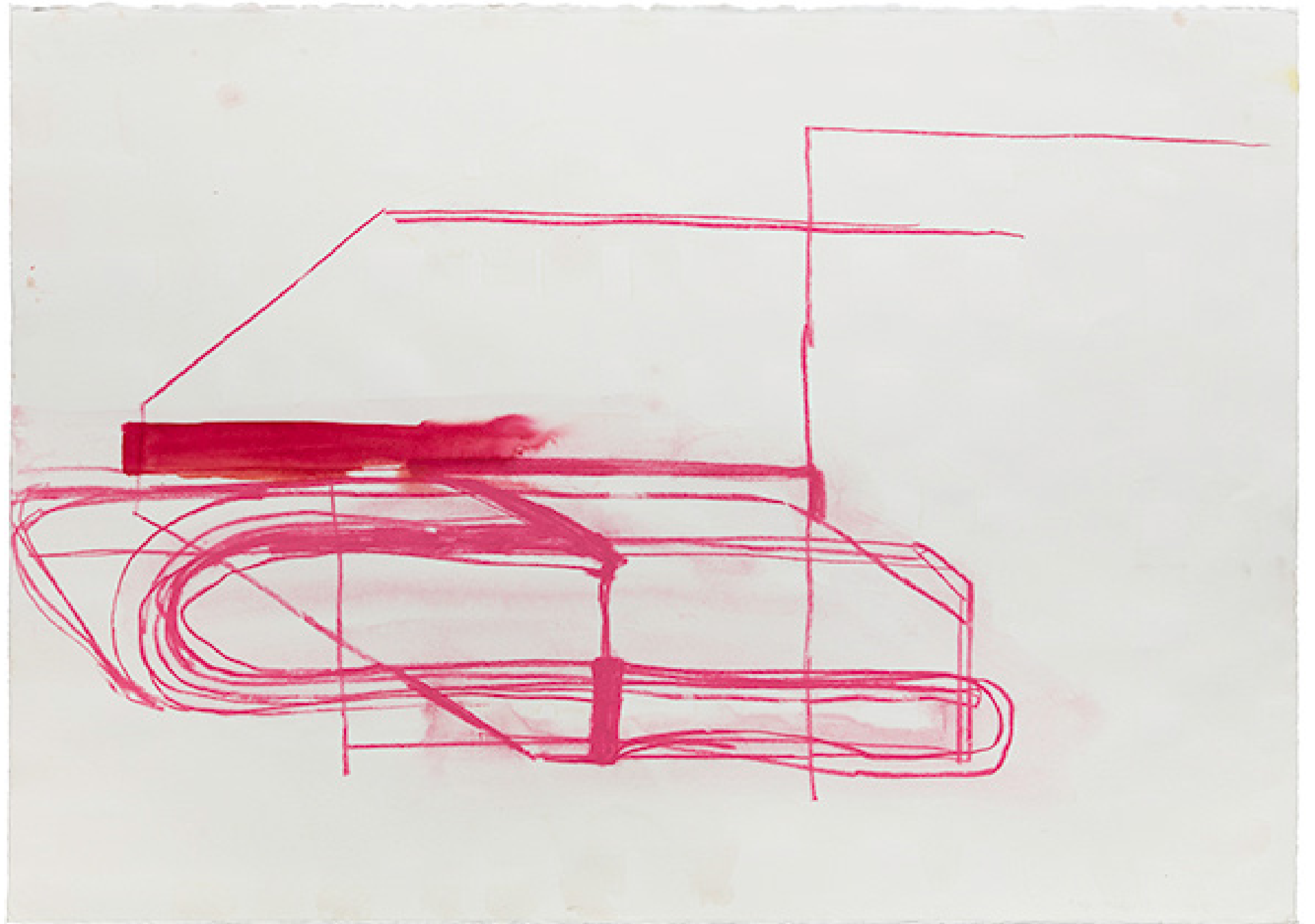
Watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



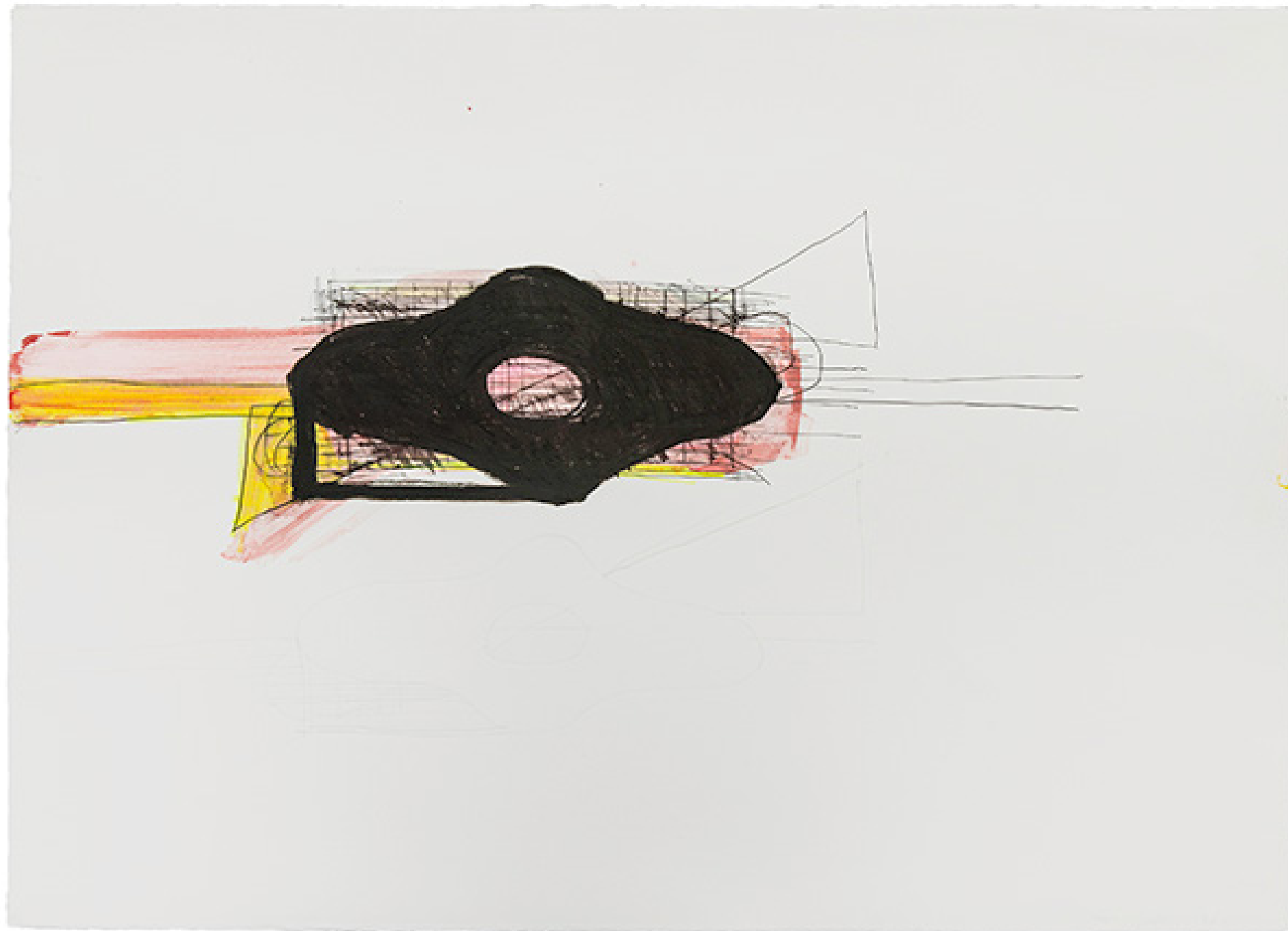
Conté and watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



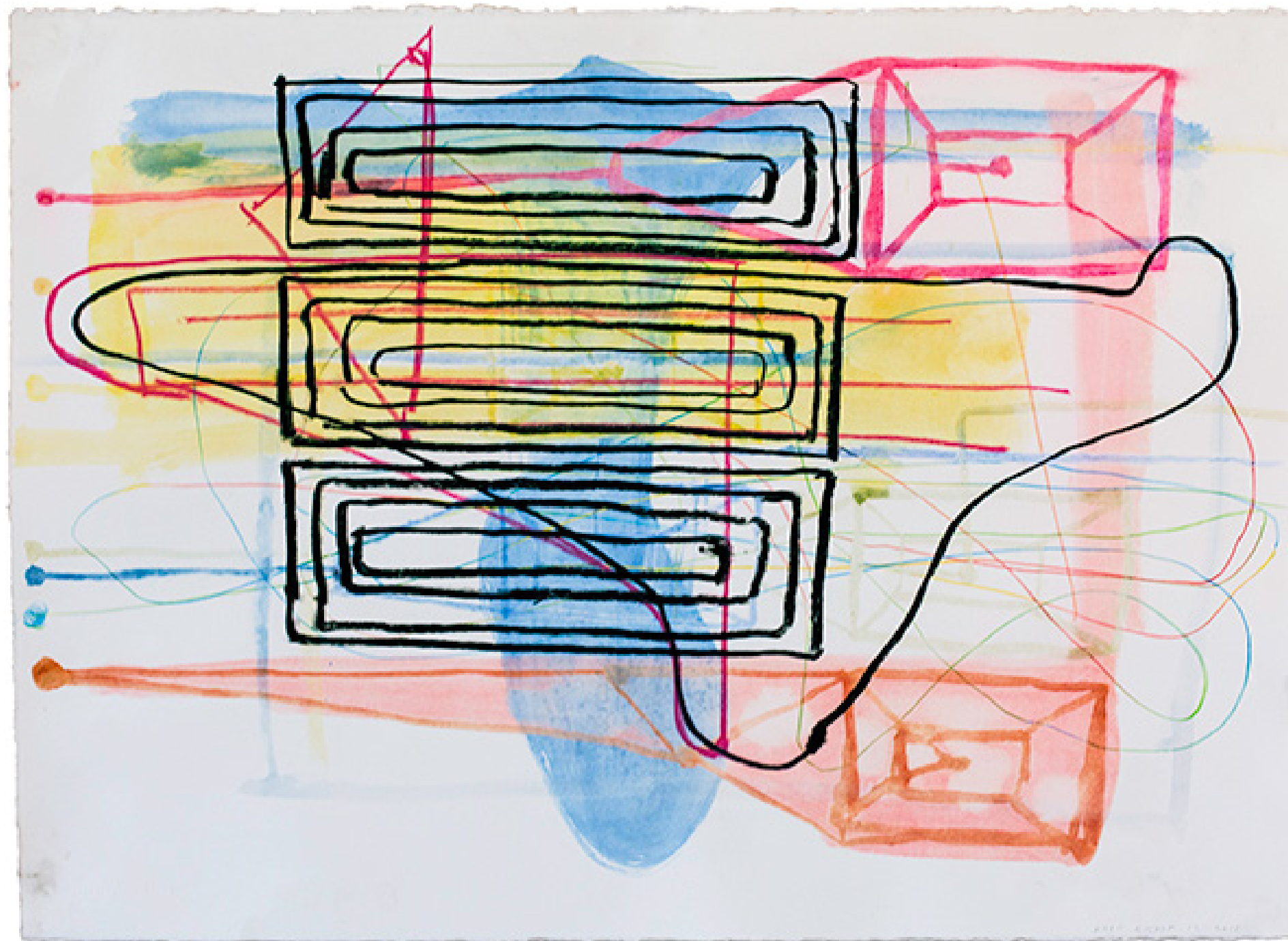
Watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



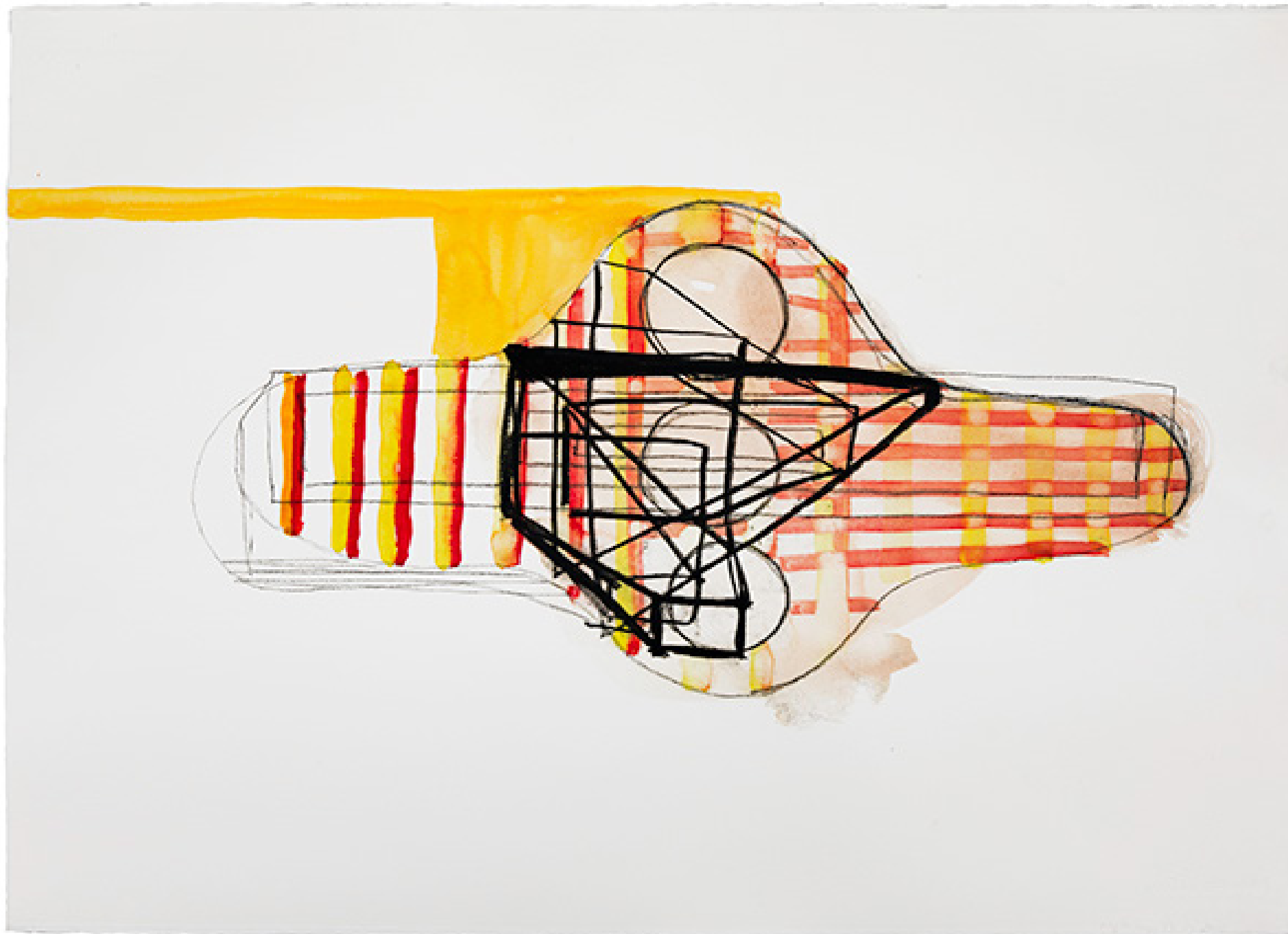
Conté and watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



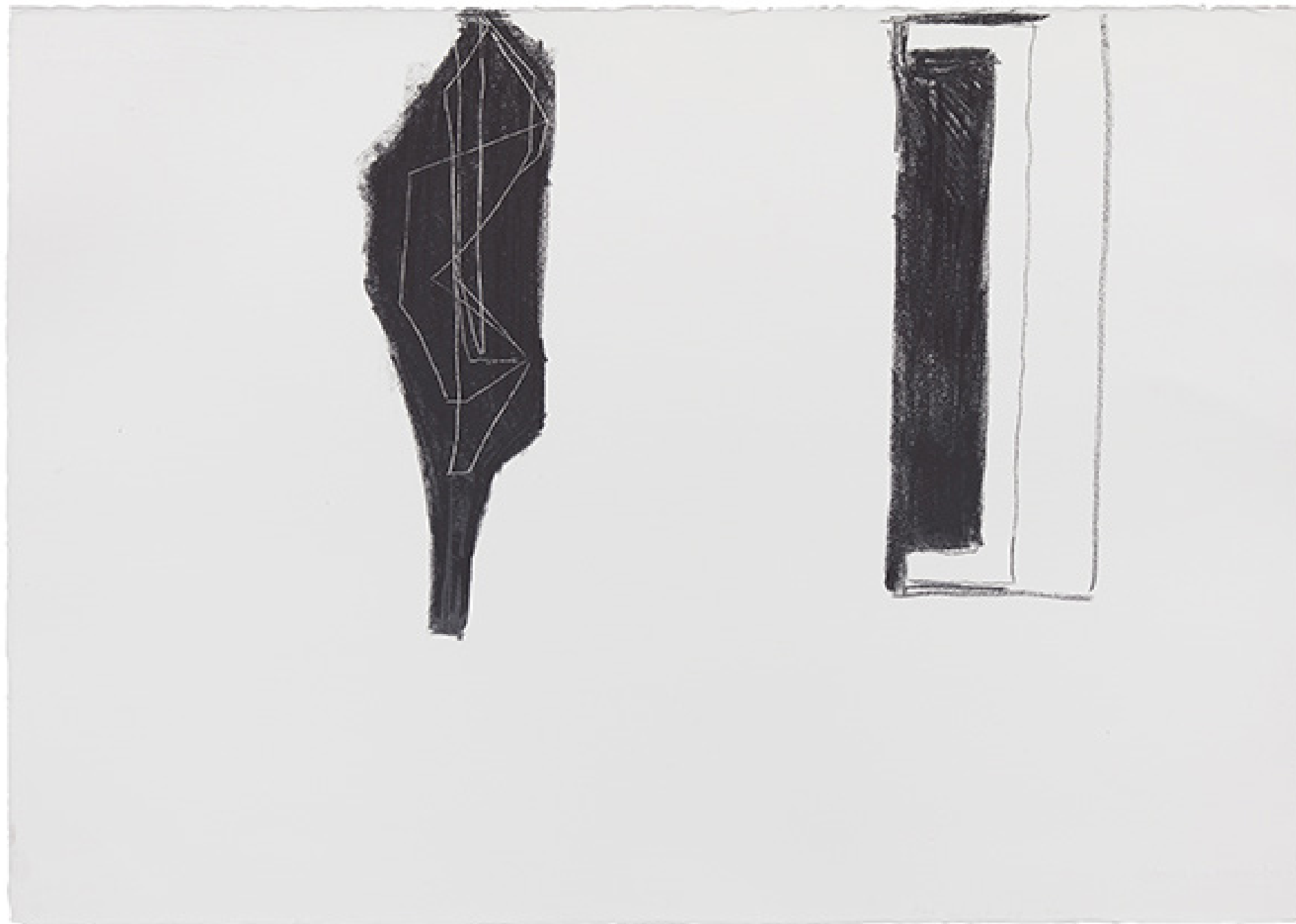
Conté, ink and watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



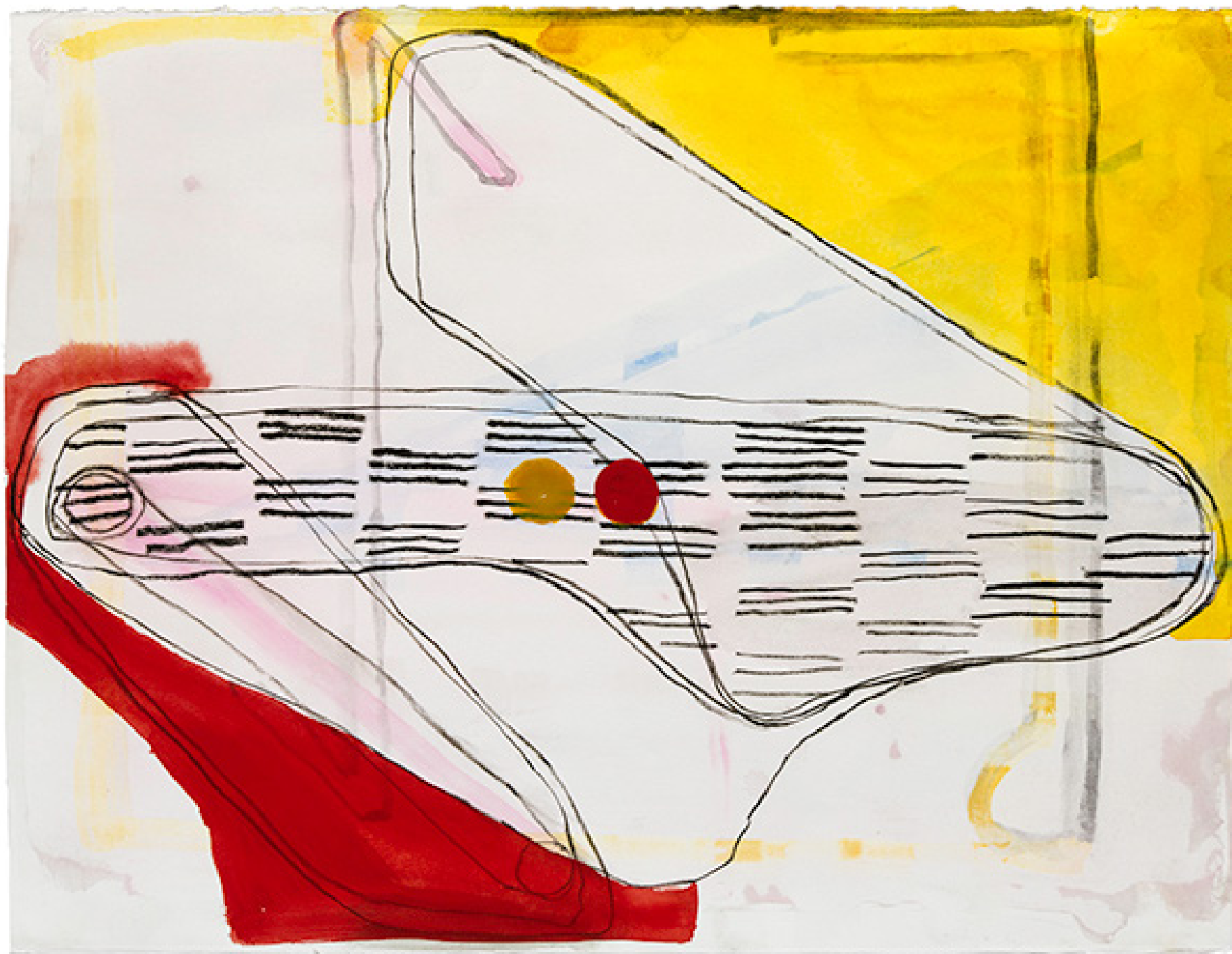
Watercolor, conté and colored crayon on paper, 22" x 30".



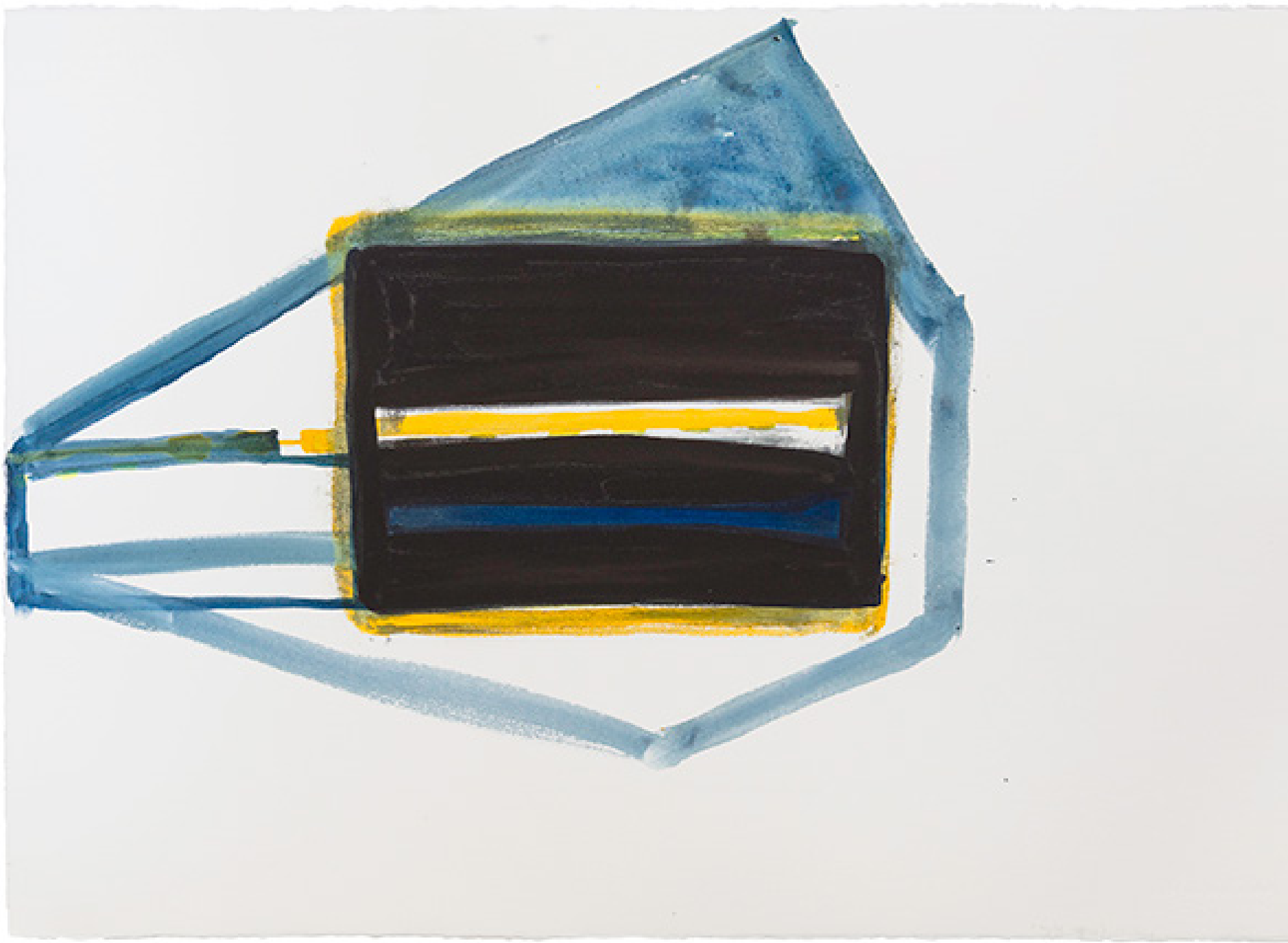
Watercolor, conté and pencil on paper, 22" x 30".



Graphite and pencil on paper, 22" x 30".



Watercolor and conté on paper, 22" x 30".



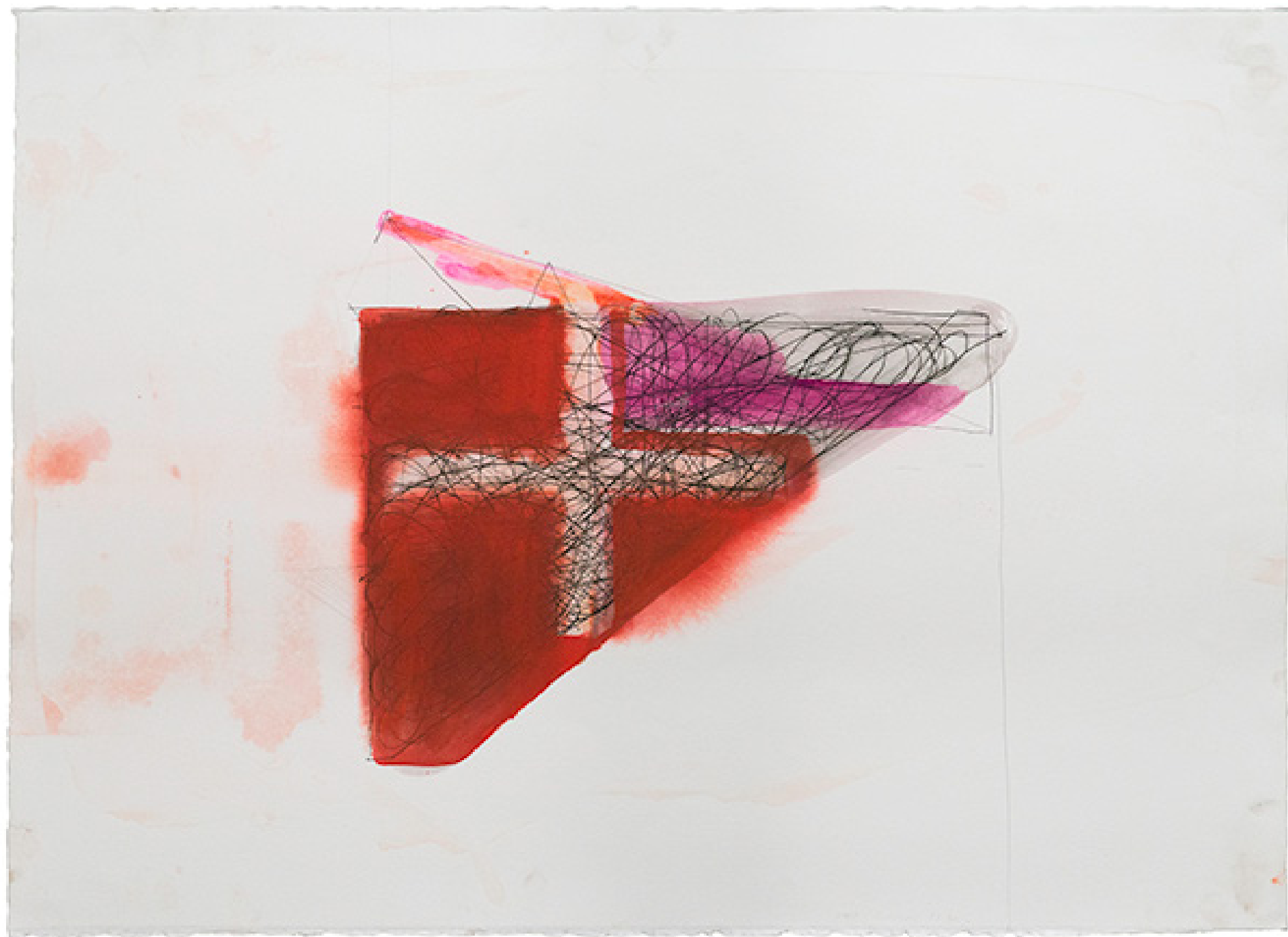
Watercolor and ink on paper, 22" x 30".



Watercolor, pencil and graphite on paper, 22" x 30".



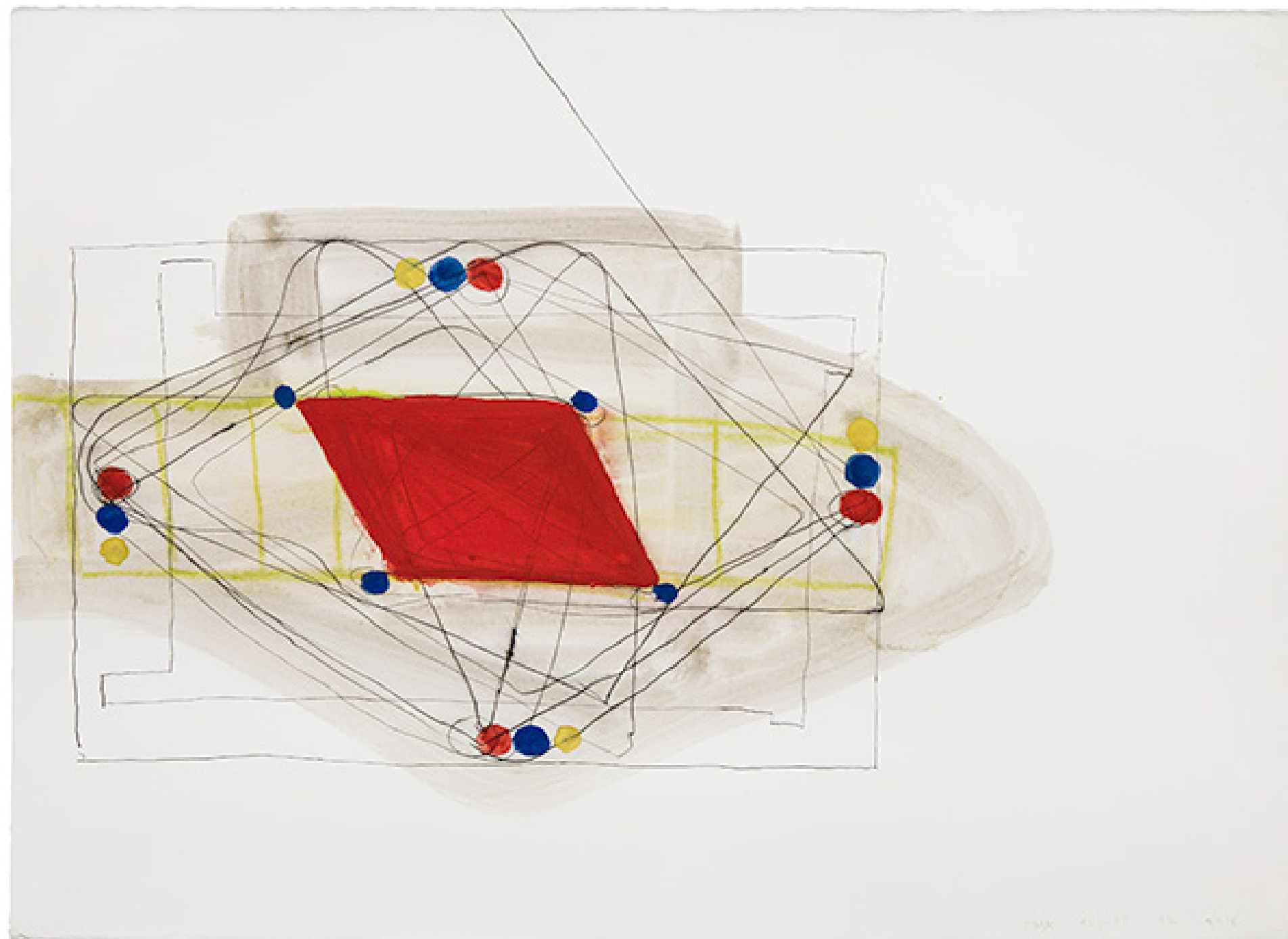
Watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



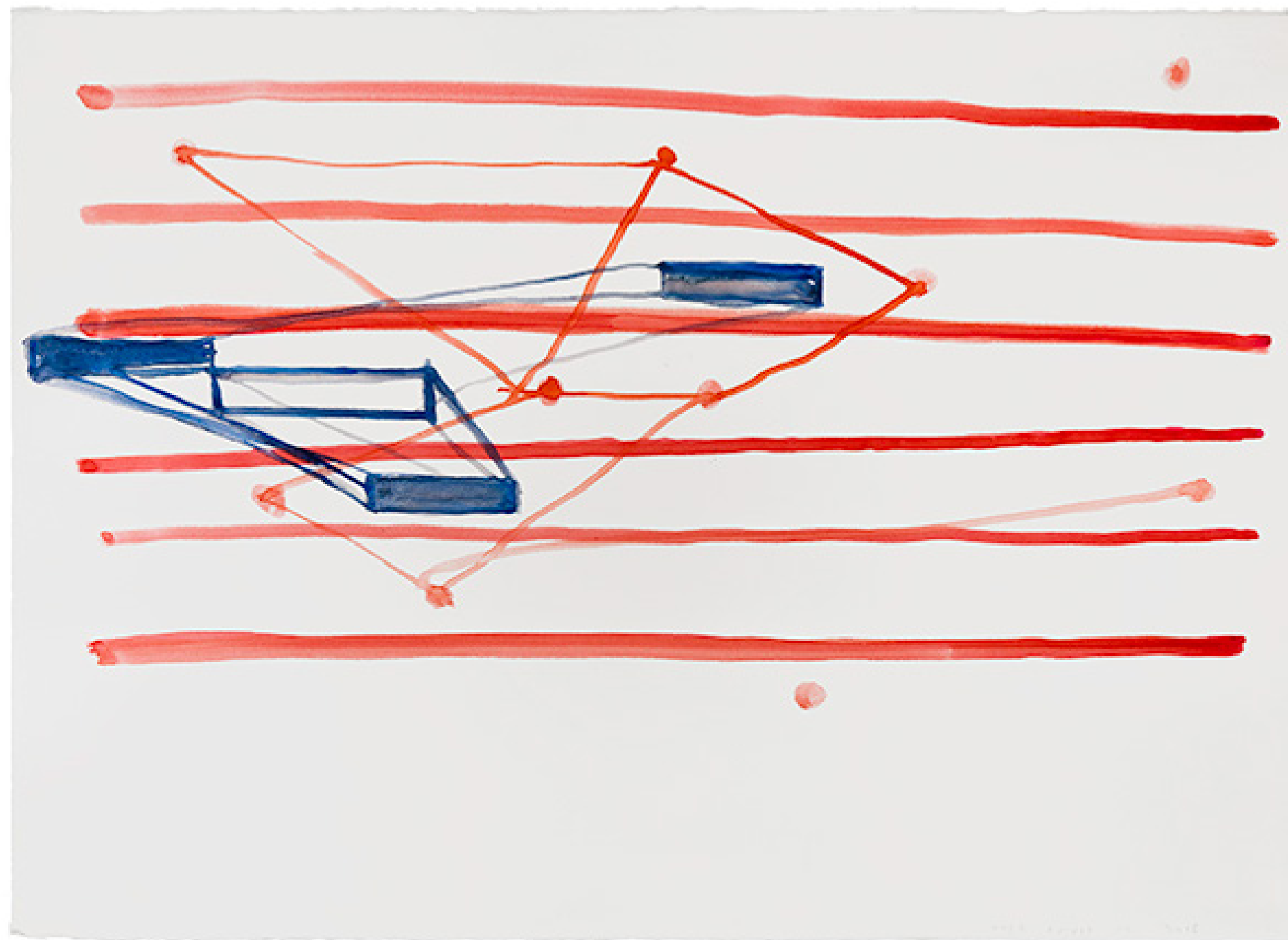
Watercolor, ink and pencil on paper, 22" x 30".



Watercolor and ink on paper, 22" x 30".



Watercolor, ink and conté on paper, 22" x 30".



Watercolor on paper, 22" x 30".



Watercolor and graphite on paper, 22" x 30".



Graphite and ink on paper, 22" x 30".

The Tenses of Drawing

Drawing comes from the verb to draw, a gathering or pulling. One can pull things together or apart and drawings typically do both. The English has an advantage here, as the European languages tend to ground the activity in ideas of projecting, planning, and designing: disegno, dessin. The Spanish dibujo means, literally, to clear away the brush, to clarify. The German zeichen and its various cognates in northern European languages emphasize instead the idea of signing, marking, symbol making. The continental words underline drawing as abstraction: the drawing proposes a design, reveals, makes a mark, figures a symbolic message. The English drawing, instead, is a structural concept. It emphasizes an action, it suggests a surfacing, and it has the element of time built into it.

Under the English conception of the activity, those traces of hands on the walls of some prehistoric caves truly are early instances of humans drawing. They are the vestige of the hand placed on a surface before they are the symbol of a hand or of a body or of humanity. They are the trace of an activity of placing and feeling, and, inevitably, of a body's drawing away.

The various potentials of drawing were given new scope with the introduction of paper, a Chinese invention imported into Europe through Arab intermediaries beginning in the 12th century. Drawing existed before paper; Pisa's Museo delle Sinopie is a monument to a millennia-long practice of drawing on walls, and also, in a sense, a farewell to that tradition. From the fourteenth century on, especially, that thinking (whether in preparation for a painting or not) proliferated on the new, mobile, and relatively inexpensive surface, a development that in turn changed all the related arts.

Drawings on paper pulled together before and afters in new ways, while also pulling them apart, distending time, as if allowing us to explore it. The marks on a drawing are not only registrations of an idea, or renderings of observed reality, but have a secondary function, which



is to stand in for a possible further work to be realized in the future. Or, when the drawing is made after a previously existing work, it extends a work into other works. Even when drawings stand on their own, they suggest other realizations that will happen at another time and in another place. Drawings are instantiations, not merely instances. Their true subject is time itself.

After 1500 in Europe, drawings assumed a life of their own and were collected in their own right, a development that loosened the direct relationship between drawings and “finished” works, turning them into one of many tracks visual art could take. Yet even in the most recent developments, such as in the works on paper by Paul Pagk, drawings retain something of the dynamic temporal positioning that have marked them all along. The lines are there for themselves, but also as tokens. Their tentativeness is part of their meaning. The color drains from a line towards the end of the stroke. The line wobbles as it suggests straightness, revealing straightness to be an abstraction. Drawings seem to register a surfacing from elsewhere, and also lend themselves to further transport.

Alexander Nagel, art historian, author of *Medieval Modern* (2012), *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (2011), *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (2000) and co-author of *Anachronic Renaissance* (2010.)



In her book *The Human Condition* (1958) Hannah Arendt introduces *natality* “as a conceptual moment when one is born into the political ... where acting together can create the truly unexpected.” (Champlin, 2013). It refers to a capacity to be in the world, which is alive with others and events one cannot control. Arendt explains how through the political, an interaction, idea or act can take on a life and direction of its own, with a trajectory impossible to predict even by its author(s).

Arendt’s idea of natality seems to encapsulate both Alex Nagel’s contextualisation of Paul Pagk’s drawings and Inarte’s mission. When Nagel writes: “... The line wobbles as it suggests straightness, revealing straightness to be an abstraction. Drawings seem to register a surfacing from elsewhere, and also lend themselves to further transport,” we can imagine Paul Pagk’s drawings coming into being from and with their own sense of agency. Straightness is an abstraction – things are not as they seem - nor perhaps as they were consciously intended. Once born the works are in orbit with the wider world. The unexpected is to be expected.

Like Paul Pagk’s drawings, Inarte is born from and about exchange and interchange. The artist’s internal dialogue is intrinsically linked with his experience of the world. Paul Pagk’s Migliarino drawings could not have been executed elsewhere. His experience there is in and of the drawings, both of which lend themselves to “further transport.”

Amy Jo Spitalier



Photography Van Anh Nguyen.

Photography Philippe Gronon.

Photography Jean-Francois Rogeboz,

Courtesy Galerie Eric Dupont.

Design Pauline Galiana.

