

a concentration of power

Curated by Alexander Gorlizki
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There's a common assumption that the "miniature" in Indian miniature paintings refers to the size of the artwork. While they were most commonly hand-held manuscripts to be lingered over in close proximity rather than viewed on a wall, some of the paintings were quite large and the diminutive refers to the artists' brushes, the finest of which are tipped with a single squirrel hair.

It's mesmerizing to watch a master miniature painter at work. The quiet, intense focus, the occasional barely perceptible holding of the artist's breath, as if the slightest exhalation might interfere with the hand muscles and distort the lines (which are indeed breath-taking in their delicacy). In this tradition, concentration is everything: the painting is either perfect or it's wrong.

The painter's language is revealing. You need "soft hands" to achieve such tender subtlety but "force" too because it demonstrates the clarity of vision, an unwavering steady hand, and clear intent. This is true even when painting a leaf in the margin but particularly so when applying the "cut" or the outline that delineates the face, which is the ultimate test for the master painter.

If softness, delicacy, force and concentration are essential qualities in the making of a miniature painting (or the finest lace, wood carving or silver filigree work for that matter) they also play a part in how we look at them. In slow, careful looking, you feel the eye as a muscle focusing in on the infinitesimal details and tracking patterns where they exist. An intense relationship develops in the intimate space between the object and the viewer. It's the same distance and a similar connection that earlier existed between the object and the artist and this forms an empathy and kinship between the maker and the viewer.

The story goes that when Alberto Giacometti lived in a hotel room in Geneva during WWII, his entire artistic output could fit into six matchboxes. There are also accounts of him whittling down his sculptures to such minute, precarious forms that his brother Diego surreptitiously removed them before they disappeared altogether. Looking at the Swiss artist's very small sculptures and maquettes recently alongside the much larger bronzes I began to consider what is lost and what is gained by such a reduction in scale. What was the artist hoping to gain in taking so much away?

To begin, why do we equate size with power? Are mass, volume and weight always implicitly associated with strength or fragility? Public sculptures celebrating national pride, military conquests or heroic achievements rely on scale to capture public attention, to be seen by more people and from a greater distance. Giant artworks outside

financial institutions or in corporate lobbies imply largesse in relation to wealth, value, and status. Cathedrals were built to subsume us, to remind the congregation of our own insignificance in relation to the almighty. In these contexts, size is equated with a form of power that's used to impress, possess, dominate and even oppress. Power exists because it's held over another.

The notion of power is still however essentially symbolic or metaphorical, rooted in concepts of the dominant belief system. There are of course alternative forms of power. The magic powers of a talisman worn in a pouch round the neck, a lucky charm kept in one's pocket, or a cherished photograph; all these may be profoundly powerful objects for the individual. Edward Snowden's thumb-drive that held thousands of NSA documents can signify the fundamental change in how we perceive the State. The image of a single bullet has enormous symbolic power, as does a diamond wedding ring.

While these objects may be viewed as having innate qualities, we choose to invest them with our ideas of power and relevance, but this is equally true of whatever qualities we project onto a gigantic Richard Serra sculpture. It's just stuff.

"A Concentration of Power" aims to explore various ideas of power and the ways in which they might take shape in smaller forms. Size is relative of course, but is always fundamentally experienced in relationship to the human body. The exhibition brings together objects that span over fifty centuries from a wide range of cultural and geographic origins, some by artists we know and others that are anonymous. Some are naturally formed. All the objects, drawings and artifacts in the exhibition feel personal and intimate, and their power appears to be in inverse proportion to their size.

In its' most common usage, a concentration of power alludes to political, social or economic control in the hands of a few. A close-up painting of an American police-officer's cap could be exactly that and no more, but in the hands of the artist and activist **Peter Krashes**, it symbolizes state power, made somehow more ambiguous by being worn by an African-American police officer. **Eyal Danieli's** diptych of figures drawn from different angles with their arms held up evokes the fascist salute and demonstrates the power of a simple physical gesture to carry the weight of massive political and historical forces. **Conor Wilson's** shiny, fleshy pink ceramic object is a replica of the hand controller or "joystick" of the Apollo 11 Lunar Module, wittily correlating male lust and the urge to control nature. We are ever ready to simultaneously take cues and load our own interpretations, and this is frequently true of depictions

of animals such as **Jackie Elcock's** moody miniature painting of a bat hanging upside down and apparently waking up, or **Sarah Woodfine's** drawing of a snake with its emphatic fangs so carefully drawn on a long sheet of paper that is itself coiled around a stick. **Alison Wilding's** patinated brass "X" resembles a flattened mollusc or a compressed DNA helix, but also pieces of a complex interlocking puzzle.

The infinite potential of language as a powerful tool is presented in a number of works in the show. "Everything" by **Mujeeb Bhatti** has the appearance of an ancient holy tablet but if it is religious scripture etched into bronze, it reads as the words of a very uncertain, hallucinating prophet. There's another allusion to language and antiquity in **Paul McNeil's** miniature tower of babel-like coiled structures made by embedding various fonts of letter-press into porcelain. Are they full of hidden meaning or the by-products of a fidgeting typesetter? There's no direct reference to written or spoken language in **Matt Tiernan's** wildly gestural, densely entangled tubes crammed onto an A4 sheet, but they evoke the intense energy (possibly rage) of a scream. By contrast **Siobhan Liddell's** "Loose Knot Tight" seems so casual, but made from ceramic it could self-reference the futility of making art: it would shatter if it were put to the test. **Matt Connors'** is known for his complex, richly coloured paintings, but his minimal, highly polished brass plate with markings in the four corners resembles a worn out brass Yantra (meditation power diagram). It's hard to avoid relating **James Castle's** work without references to his profound deafness, and here the insulation of muteness is symbolized by a pale pink landscape seen through a wire fence. **Dom Sylvester Houédard** was an artist, poet and Benedictine monk who created concrete poems with an Olivetti typewriter. "divinely bladed thunder bride" reflects the artist's belief in the transformative potential of his "typestracts" to evoke mystical experience.

Other works in "A Concentration of Power" express faith through more familiar representations of idols and deities. The minute **Amulet of Ptah**, the ancient creator god and patron of artists from the late dynastic period in Egypt (c 600 BC), and the **Ethiopian Icon** depicting Jesus extending his hand in a blessing are used as icons of worship. The **Dibu** or carved wooden clapper from the matriarchal Bakongo tribe in Western Congo had a ritual function too. It was used to awaken spirits (or possibly for use during hunting). **Karun Thakar's** cluster of masonry nails, cast in solid silver and hanging (by a thread) is also reminiscent of a talisman hung from a doorway to ward off the evil eye.

Complex layers of belief can be reduced to simple geometric and organic forms in art as another way to focus our attention, or as a tool for contemplation. The Hindu priest and astrologer, **Badrinath Pandit**, drew

Shaligrams or cosmic stones as homages to the various avatars of Lord Vishnu. There's a reverence for minerals in their own right in the work of **Heidi Gustafson** who forages and collects ores, either for her personal research or to apply in her drawings such as "Ochre Study" made from ground down Eocene hematite foraged from volcanic Persian Gulf island of Hormuz, Iran (dated to be approximately 580 million years old).

The dot or circle as an archetype is also a starting point for many of **Sanou Oumar's** mandala-like drawings. "11/12/2016" made from pen, marker, and colored pencil is a meticulously drawn star-shaped form that looks like it's spinning in outer space. **Jurgen Tauscher's** "Aeroplane" also references intergalactic travel and science fiction and there's a sense from this self-taught artist that outer space corresponds to inner, mental space. **Lucy Heyward's** "Oneness" is based on another elemental form, but in this case the conjoined eggs have mutated without giving a sense of what's to come. As ever, we are the meaning makers, responsible for how the metamorphosis takes shape in our own imaginations.

A number of the works in the show evoke our dream worlds and we can all attest to the power of fantasy. "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie" by **Hugo Guinness** depicts a lady lying on the grass but she's also apparently suspended in her dream, floating above a watchful German Shepherd. **Mahali O'Hare's** "Bench" adopts vaguely recognizable forms – an empty bench in front of a painting in an otherwise empty room, but the blurriness and dissolving edges suggest an in-between state of awareness. **Ruth Marten** taps in to the Surrealist technique of manipulating and overpainting photographs to dissolve the distinctions between reality and fiction. "Serie 35" painted on a vintage postcard depicts a naked lady morphing into the background of liquid steps and vaporous trees, while **Ken Tisa** mines his own memories and the fluidity of personal identity and imposed definitions in the clown-like "Self Portrait as a Dog Ballerina."

Allegorical imagery is used to condense complex human experiences into visual forms. Cupid and Venus signify the complexities of love and lust in the miniature engraving by the 16th Century painter and printmaker **Hans Sebald Beham**. The human form appears in many of the works in the show such as the **Afghan figure** (c. 1st Century) carved in bone. The woman seems reticent, covering up her nakedness while the **Female steatopygous figure** from the Amlash culture (1st Century BC) is more readily associated as a matriarchal idol or fertility symbol. **Colter Jacobsen's** miniature drawing "Block Underwear (Facelessbook)" of a man from the shoulders down in his underwear lying supine on a bed is a very tender depiction of masculinity. The standing man "That is dew" by **Leonhard Fink** is also unabashedly full frontal, bearing his

teeth and smoking a cigarette, surrounded by myriad floating creatures and words. **Snowden Flood's** "Meret" a set of teeth covered in rabbit fur under a bell jar, is a rather eerie homage to the fur-lined teacup by Surrealist artist Meret Oppenheim.

There are a number of small scale references to architectural forms in the collection. **Nathalie de Leval** created a series of miniature wood reliefs of Joost van den Bergh's gallery and used them to create a set of embossed prints, and **Eric Himmel's** "House of Mirrors" is a complex construction of interlocking spaces like a Dr. Caligari building made from scraps of wood and mylar. **Leopold Strobl** usually focuses on mysterious landscapes and abstract forms but is represented here by a tilting city apartment block that looks like it's a still from a movie or seen through the window of moving car. While the architectural works are versions of larger or imagined spaces, **Philip King's** work is a maquette for "Genghis Khan", a conical tent-like form with antlers is a miniature version of his seminal fibreglass sculpture.

Landscape and the natural world feature in a number of works in the exhibition too. **Keris Salmon's** cyanotype print of a view above a valley is expansive and ready for exploration in contrast to the tightly cropped "Trees along a River" by Antiguan artist **Frank Walter**. Geology is combined with performance, sculpture and clothing in the work of **Dunhill & O'Brien** who's "Stone Appreciation: Okasan (mother)" features a lump of lava rock housed in a temple-like structure that's worn over the shoulder.

Jewelry and adornment has historically been used to confer wealth and status in a small scale. The **chevron glass beads from East Java and Venice** (from c. 1st Century and 1500s respectively) were made for personal ornamentation (and possibly barter) and the solid gold 19th Century **Ashanti ring** (from present day Ghana) was worn by royalty in ceremonial occasions.

"A Concentration of Power" comprises a number of works that suggest or represent human activity. "Areas for Action – New York City" are records of events orchestrated by the artist **Oliver Herring** in 2010. Strangers would be invited to participate in public happenings and performances but the degree of spontaneity allowed for surprising and potentially shocking outcomes. **Roger Ackling's** "Voewood" made by directing intensely magnified sunlight in carefully arranged patterns over a simple wooden surface is one of those works that is both compelling as an object but also invites us to imagine the artist at work.

This is true too of the **Egyptian Predynastic Fish-tailed knife**. Made of flint approximately 5000 years ago, its very finely serrated edge suggests it was used for the "Opening of the Mouth" ceremony, preparing the dead for mummification. Tools are by definition used to increase or focus power and this is also true of the undated **Pre-Columbian axe**.

The perceived relationship between object and maker is also a common focus in the more prosaic crafts with which we're all directly familiar. **Ludmila Mueller Leal** uses everyday sewing techniques on recycled materials to tell stories. "How Many Guitars" depicts a rock guitarist smashing his instrument – a scene that would otherwise be recorded in documentaries about wayward musicians. **Larry Krone**, known for his performance, set and fashion design, and installation work also uses sewing and embroidery in "Underpants of Many Colors #3" which transforms a pair of Y-Fronts into a baroque, bejewelled patchwork that was a prop for one of his musical performances.

If the phrase "concentration of power" is inverted to the "power of concentration" they might amount to the same thing. Just as the concentrated focus of a master Indian miniaturist can lead to an intensely compelling experience for the viewer, there's a similar effect of the super realistic portrait of the artist's mother by **John Borowicz**. The degree of detail and precision of the bushwork is especially noticeable in the foggy faraway cast of the sitter's eyes. **Madeline Fenton's** oil painting "Quails Eggs in Chinese Bowl" also appears to suspend time, exuding stillness much in the style of a Dutch still-life.

"A Concentration of Power" is a reflection on the ways in which artists can focus and distill experiences, beliefs and visions into intimate, potent, hand-held forms. The exhibition itself can be condensed into two objects that were either partially or entirely formed by the the most powerful force of the all: Mother nature. The **pestle and mortar**, from the Costanoan (or Ohlone) Natives of Central California, expresses in it's vulva-like form, the most elemental aspect of female power. It is however, a functional object, used to pound and grind seeds, acorns and other material, requiring the user to focus intense mechanical energy into a single point. The final object that exists with neither human nor even Earth-based intervention is the small beautifully patinated and striated **meteorite** that travelled through the solar system, into the earth's atmosphere and crashed into a field in the Kullu Valley of Northern India. It expresses the ultimate power of nature.

Alexander Gorlizki



1

Alison Wilding RA

X

Patinated brass

27 x 24 x 3 cm

Courtesy of Karsten Schubert, London

£20,000 plus VAT



2

Female steatopygous idol

Amlash culture, 1st Millennium BC

Terracotta

Height 14 cm

Courtesy of Charles Ede, London

£12,000



3

Hans Sebald Beham

(1500–1550)

Venus and Cupid

Engraving on paper

5.5 x 3.5 cm

Private collection UK

NFS



4

Conor Wilson

HandController; Variable edition of 12: No. 4,
2006

Ceramic

14 x 8 x 6 cm

£1,200 plus VAT



5

Wood clapper (*dibu*)

*The handle finely carved as the head
of a flamingo*

Bakongo tribe. Congo. c. 1900

18 x 11 x 7 cm

SOLD



6

Jackie Ellcock

Fruit Bat #1, 2018

Oil on canvas

15 x 10 cm

SOLD



7

Nathalie de Leval

Imprint 10 Bury Street, 2018

Ash, oak, walnut and beech

21.5 x 21.5 x 3 cm

£1,200 plus VAT



8

Lucy Heyward

Oneness, 2018

Duck eggs, plaster lining

8.5 x 7 x 6 cm (approx)

Edition: 30 unique pieces

Courtesy of Handel Street Projects London

£750 plus VAT



9

Hugo Guinness

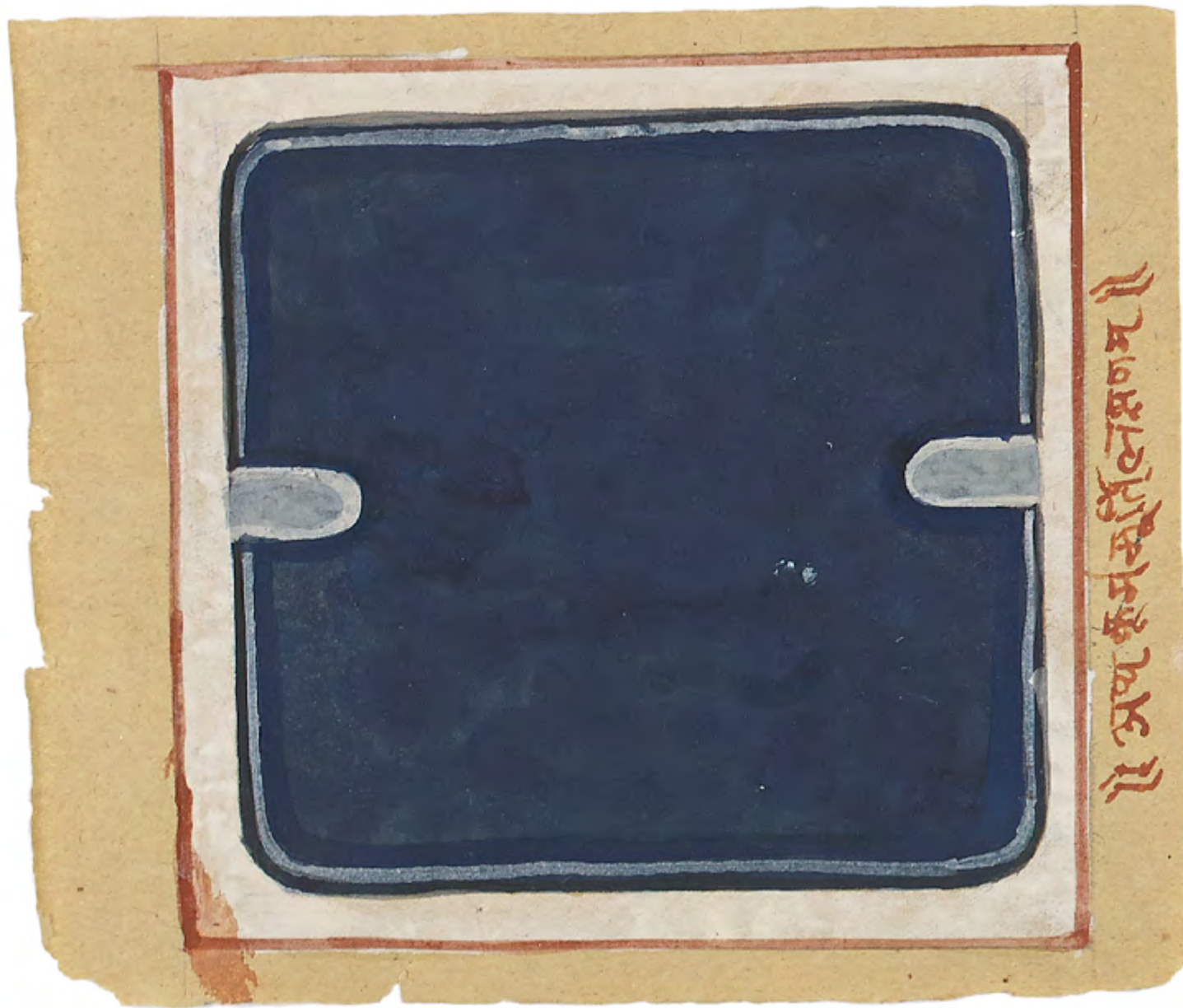
Let sleeping dogs die, 2018

Oil on board

22.5 x 28 cm

Courtesy of John Derian New York

\$6,500 plus VAT



10

Badrinath Pandit

(c. 1915–1999)

Salagrama

Gouache on paper

13.5 x 11.5 cm

£2,500



11

Leopold Strobl

Untitled, 2016

Pencil, coloured pencils on newsprint,
clad on paper

8.4 x 9.6 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Gugging, Austria

£1,475 plus VAT



12

Eric Himmel

House of Mirrors, 2018

Wood, mylar film, and concrete

17.5 x 12 x 9.5 cm

\$850 plus VAT



13

James Castle

Untitled, patterned landscape in pink, n.d.

Found paper, colour of unknown origin

12 x 10 cm

\$6,000 plus VAT



14

Mahali O'Hare

Bench, 2017

Oil on board

17.7 x 12.7 cm

£450 plus VAT



15

John Borowicz

Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 2017

Oil on panel

17.5 x 15 cm

\$3,750 plus VAT



16

Amulet of Ptah

The ancient creator god and patron of artists. He holds the 'was' sceptre (symbol of prosperity) and wears a skull cap and archaic beard. Egypt, Late Dynastic Period, circa 600BC
Brilliant blue faience
3.6 x 0.6 cm
£1,250



17

Siobhan Liddell

Loose Knot Tight, 2017

Glazed ceramic

29 x 14 x 4 cm

Courtesy of Gordon Robichaux, New York

\$2,000 plus VAT



18

Ruth Marten

Serie 35, 2018

Gouache on 20c. Photo postcard

13.5 x 9 cm

\$1,250 plus VAT



19

Matt Tiernan

Untitled, 2018

Acrylic on yupo

30 x 23 cm

\$1,250 plus VAT



20

Roger Ackling

Voewood, 2013

Sunlight on wood, Two parts

3.9 x 3.9 cm and 4 x 4 x 4 cm

Courtesy of Ingleby Gallery and

Annely Juda Fine Art

SOLD



Paul McNeil

Fragments, 2018

Porcelain pressed into antique
letterpress type

Variable sizes, 3 to 7.5 cm (approx)

£120 plus VAT each



22

Karun Thakar

Untitled, 2018

Silver, thread

7 x 7 x 4 cm

£1,000 plus VAT



23

Keris Salmon

Untitled, 2018

Cyanotype

15 x 17.5 cm

\$800 plus VAT



24

Colter Jacobsen

Block Underwear (Facelessbook), 2010

Watercolour on paper

10.7 x 7 cm

Courtesy of Corvi Mora, London

\$2,500 plus VAT



25

Dunhill & O'Brien

Stone Appreciation: Okasan (mother)

MDF, felt, lava rock

27.5 x 20 x 16 cm

£ 1,500 plus VAT



26

Fish-tailed knife

Egyptian, Predynastic-Early Dynastic Period,
Naqada II-2nd Dynasty, c.3500-2686 BC

Flint

Length: 11cm

Courtesy of Charles Ede, London

£ 5,200



27

Ludmila Mueller Leal

How Many Guitars, 2018

Embroidery, cotton and acrylic thread
on jeans

21 x 19 cm

£250 plus VAT



28

Bone figure

Afghanistan, circa 1st century

9.5 x 1.7 cm

£1,750



29

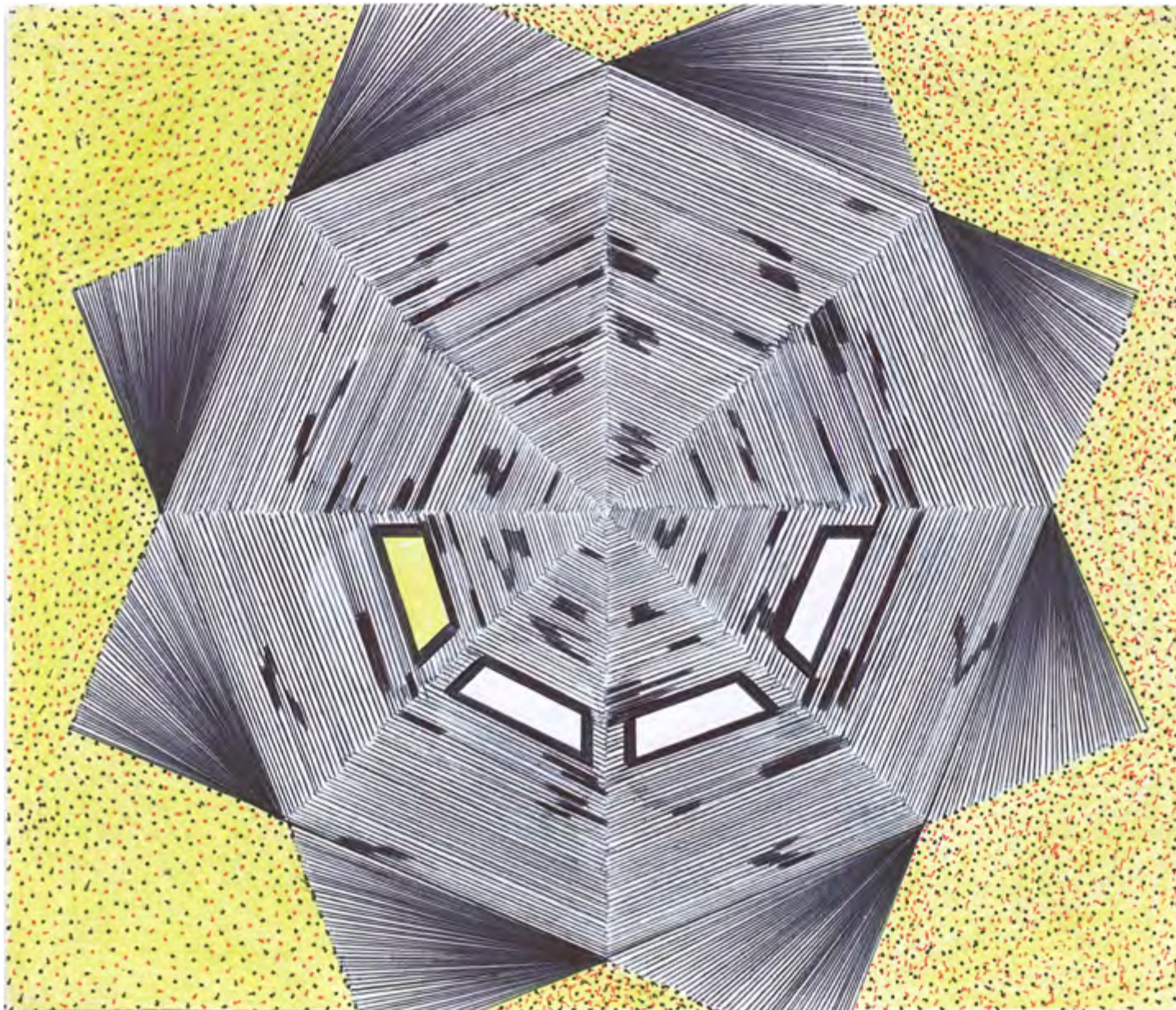
Sarah Woodfine

When all the birds are in the sky, 2015

Pencil on paper, steel rod

60 x 15 x 25 cm

£3,500 plus VAT



30

Sanou Oumar

11/12/2016, 2016

Pen, marker and colored pencil on paper

18.5 x 21.5 cm

Courtesy of Gordon Robichaux, New York

\$950 plus VAT



31

Snowden Flood

Meret, 1995

Plaster, Wax, Acrylic, Rabbit fur

7.5 x 7.5 x 6.5 cm

£450 plus VAT



32

Frank Walter

Trees along a River

Oil on card

5 x 4 cm page size

Courtesy of Ingleby Gallery Edinburgh

£2,200 plus VAT

In the beginning there was
beginning there was
everything in the
beginning everything
was the fullness of all
there ever was
Everything was the
fullness of all there is
now Everything is the
fullness of all there will
be Everything alone
is everything Ever
is ever everything
Everything was
Everything now is also
you Everything is all
you will ever be Ever
you can never
Everything alone is
you There is no other
you but everything
Everything is the unborn
of you Without birth you
are Everything
Everything is the unborn
of you Birth is the idea of
you Birth is the thinking
you are What you are
only ever Everything
Everything is all there is
Everything is all there
ever will be Everything
alone is only you you
are everything There is
nothing There is
is everything

33

Mujeeb Bhatti

Everything, 2018

Bronze

18.5 x 7.7 cm

£1,500 plus VAT



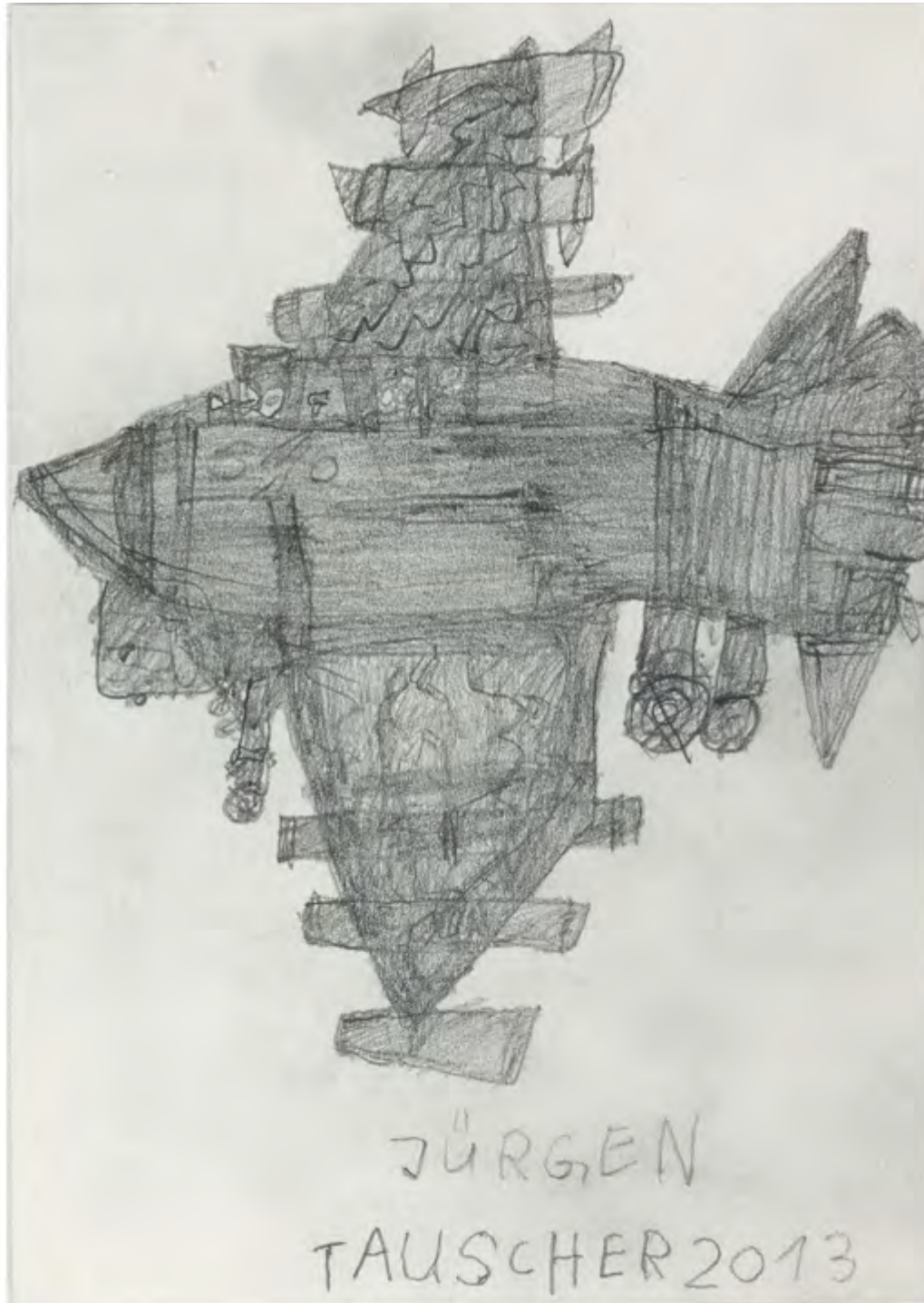
34

Stone Axe

Pre Columbian, age unknown

26 x 12 x 4 cm

£1,750



35

Jürgen Tauscher

Aeroplane, 2013

Pencil on paper

15 x 10.6 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Gugging, Austria

£485 plus VAT



36

Larry Krone

Underpants of Many Colors #3, 2007

Fabric, embroidery floss, Swarovski crystals,
elastic, label

30.5 x 45.5 cm

(or men's size "Hunky")

\$3,000 plus VAT



37

Elisabeth Kley

Small Bottle with Checkered Leaves, 2016

Glazed earthenware

25.5 × 17.8 × 17.8 cm

Courtesy of Canada, New York

\$2,500 plus VAT



38

Eyal Danieli

Some Very Fine People, 2018

Oil stick on paper mounted to board, diptych
two sheets

19 x 9 cm each

\$950 plus VAT



39

Heidi Gustafson

Ochre study #24, 2018

Ediacaran hematite (~580 million years old)
foraged from volcanic Persian Gulf island
of Hormuz, Iran

Black iron coal, on paper

18.4 cm x 11.4 cm

\$800 plus VAT

Matt Connors

Untitled, 2016

Etched brass

20.3 x 25.4 x 0.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Herald St, London

\$12,000 plus VAT





41

Meteorite

Found in Kullu Manali valley

4.5 x 5 x 3 cm

Private collection UK

NFS



42

Ken Tisa

Self Portrait as a Dog Ballerina, 2008

Gouache on handmade paper

30.5 x 20 cm

Courtesy Kate Werble gallery, New York

\$1,600 plus VAT



43

Oliver Herring

*Six of fourteen videos from Areas for Action –
New York City, 2010*

Duration: 25 minute, 57 seconds

Price on request



44

Gold Ring

Ashanti, 19th century

5 x 4 x 2 cm

£3,500

Dom Sylvester Houédard

(1924–1992)

Divinely bladed thunder bride 291269, 1969

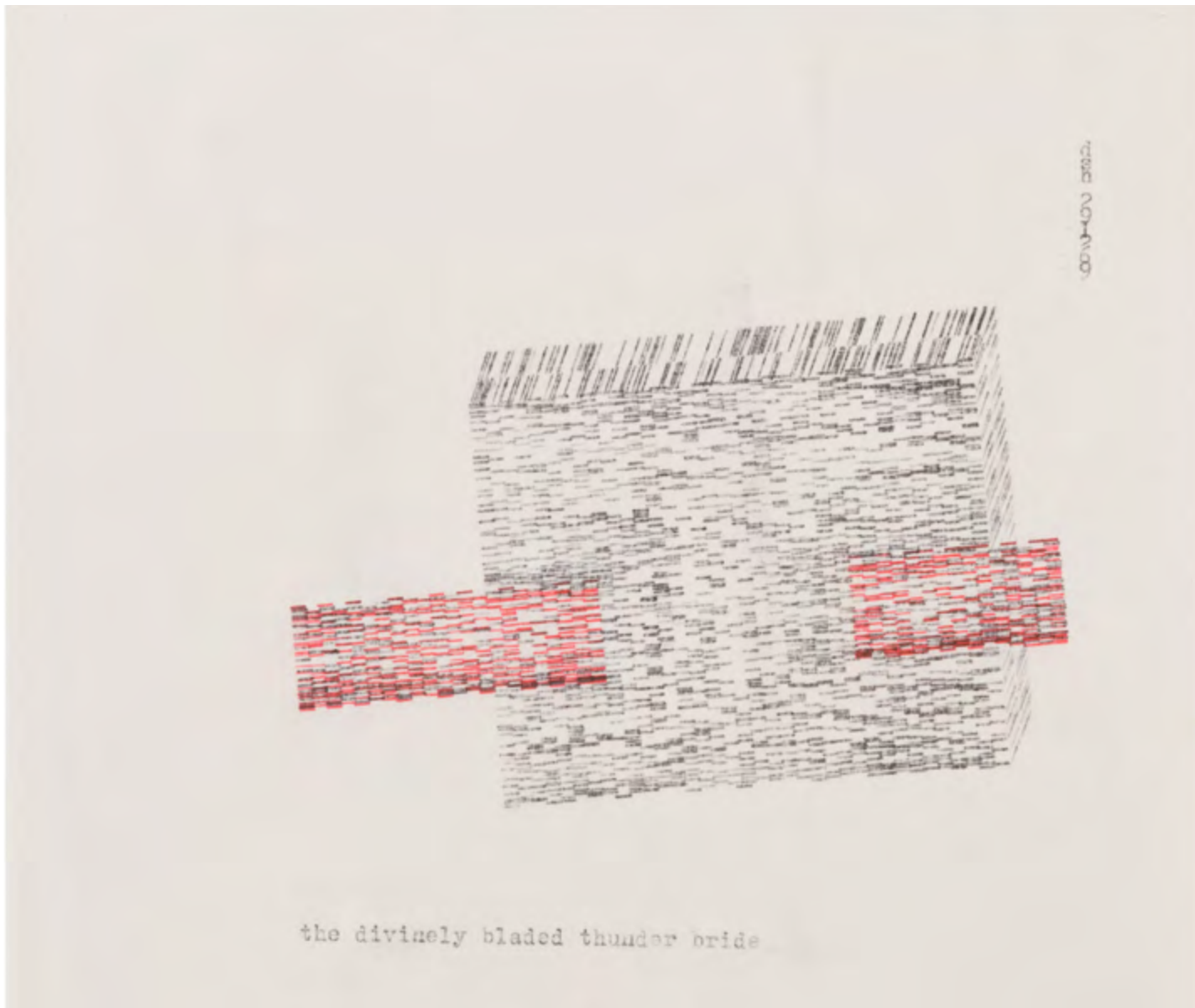
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16 x 19.1 cm

Courtesy of Richard Saltoun, London

£11,500 plus VAT





46

Coptic icon

Ethiopia 18th century

8.5 x 17 x 1.7 cm

Price on request



47

Chevron glass beads

Venetian circa 1400–1500

Large: 5 x 3 cm

£2,250

Small: 3.2 x 2.2 cm

£950

Jatim glass bead

East Java circa 1st century

4.2 x 2.5 cm

£2,250

All beads provenance: Alistair McAlpine
Collection

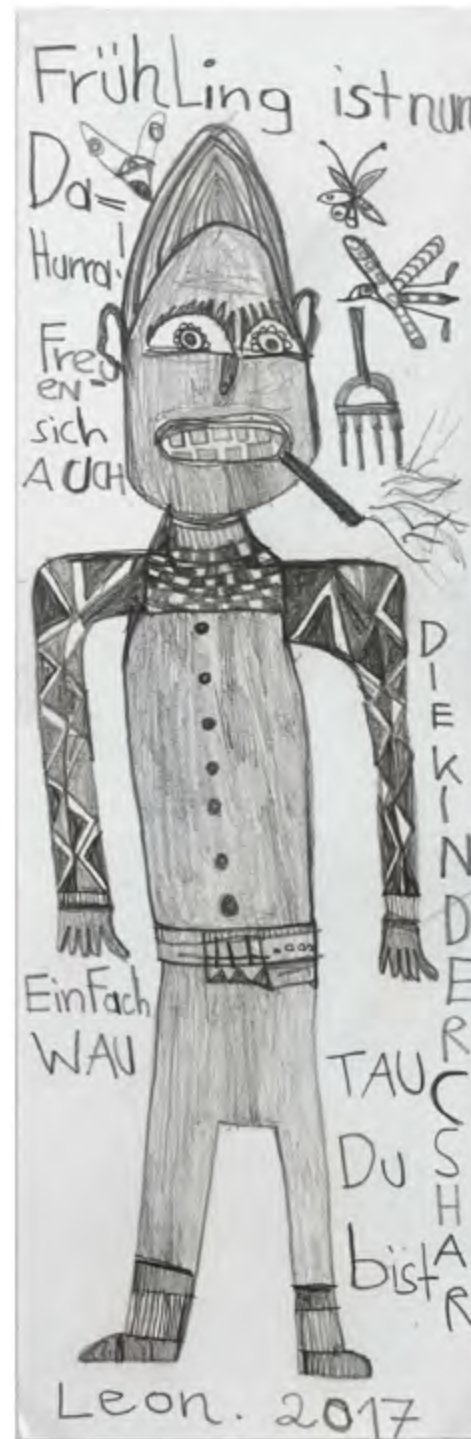
Leonhard Fink*That is dew, 2017*

Pencil, coloured pencil on paper

20.9 x 6.7 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Gugging, Austria

£875 plus VAT





Alexander Gorlizki

Rolodex (Piccadilly), 350 drawings, 2018

Plastic, metal and mixed media on paper

18 x 12.5 x 15 cm

\$8,000 plus VAT



50

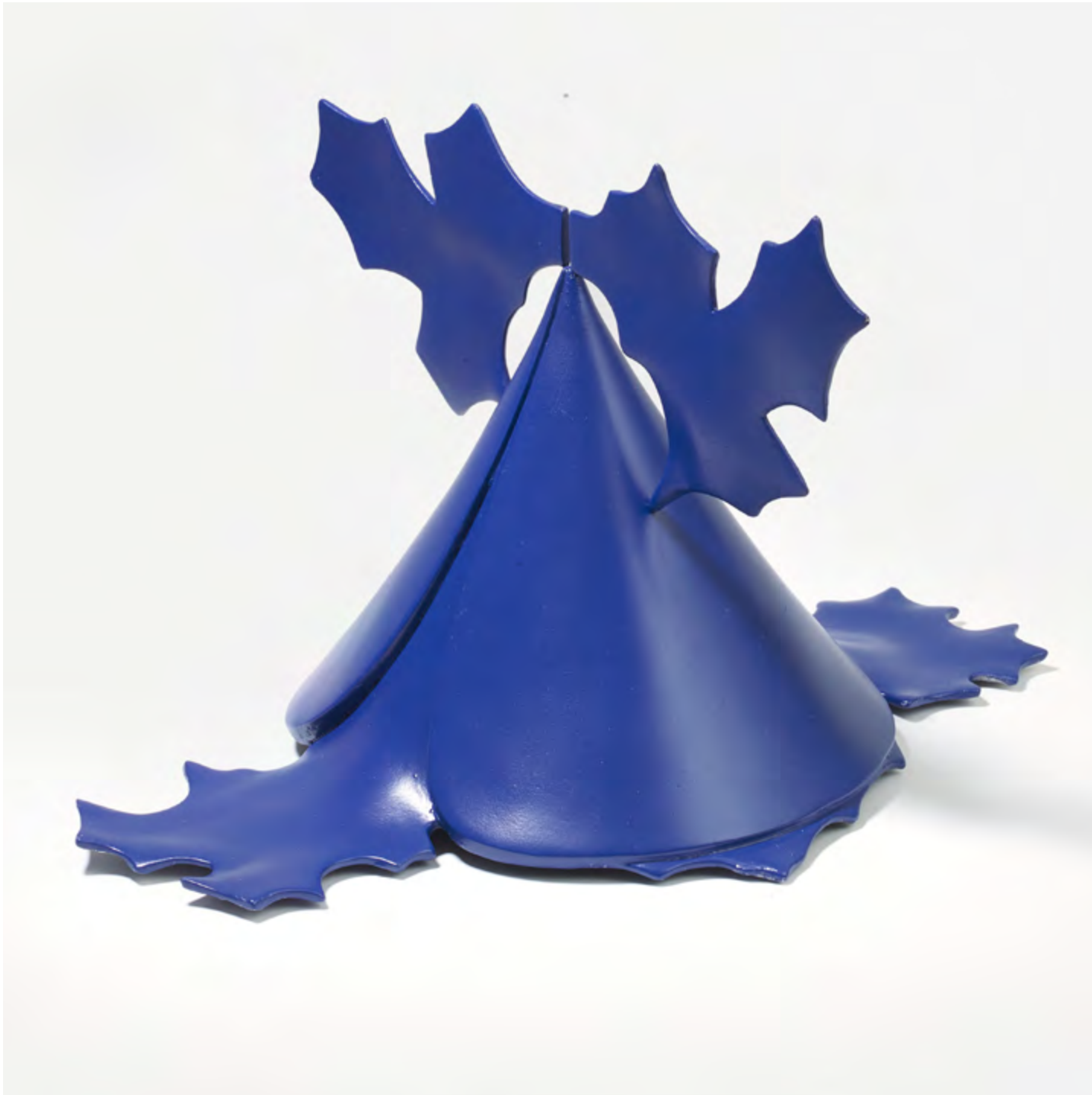
Madeline Fenton

Quails Eggs in Chinese bowl, 2017

Oil on board

23 x 28 cm

£1,600 plus VAT



51

Philip King RA

Maquette for Genghis Khan, 2014

Plastic

22.5 x 28 x 36 cm

Private collection UK

NFS



52

Peter Krashes

Hat, 2013

Gouache on paper

19.5 x 26.5 cm

\$1,800 plus VAT



53

Mortar and Pestle

Stone, age unknown

Found in Northern California,
Ohlone/Costanoan, USA

15 x 26 x 20 cm

Courtesy of Heidi Gustafson

NFS