

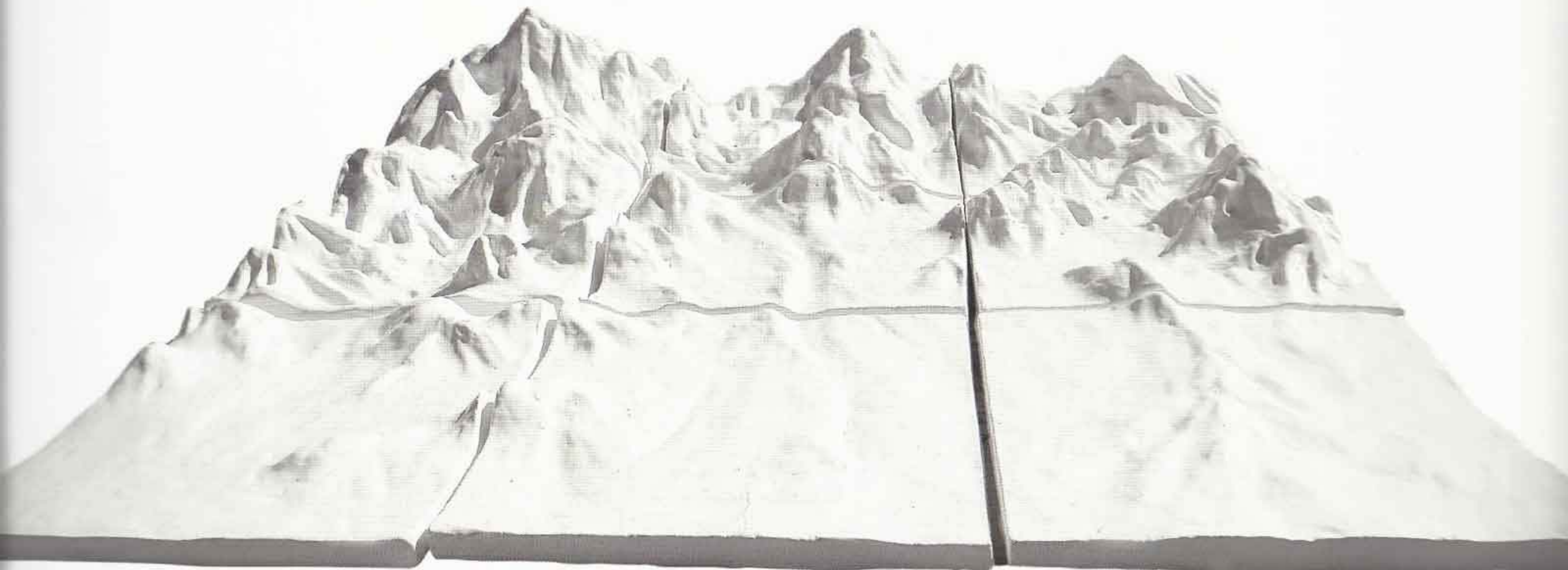
# Her Mind's Eye

WORDS: COCO MARETT IMAGES: COURTESY OF PUERTA ROJA PORTRAIT: CAROL CHAN

In 1665, Robert Hooke published the book 'Micrographia', recording his observations of everyday objects through the then-newly invented microscope. His sketches were the first of their kind, bringing to light the world around us as never seen before by the naked eye. Much like Hooke, Madrid-born Mexico-based artist Maria Garcia Ibanez possesses a fresh and enchanted perspective of the world, which she expresses in her multi-faceted works.







Mountain

I was first introduced to Maria Garcia Ibanez' work in the early days of Hong Kong-based South American gallery Puerta Roja where I immediately fell in love with one of her drawings – it was a black and white anthropological sketch of the human pelvic bone cradling a stunning, colourful bouquet of flowers. There is something so delicate and delightful about the artist's work that, corny as it may sound, never fails to bring on a sense of wonder.

However, Ibanez' latest exhibition 'Micrographia' - named after and inspired by Robert Hooke's groundbreaking observations - takes a more abstract and representational approach to the human anatomy and anthropology, featuring a series of works from sketches to sculptures and intricate laser-cut pieces. "Every time you look at it, it changes," says Ibanez of her laser-cut art. "All of a sudden it's not the paper, but the light and the shadows which becomes the art"

What influences were behind your latest exhibition 'Micrographia'?

'Micrographia' is a really, really beautiful book in so many ways. It's very important, almost a landmark, in the history of science because it captures the first time a human explored the microscopic world, exploring the most basic everyday objects such as an ant or a textile. The drawings are so interesting to see because they're so funny and so naïve.

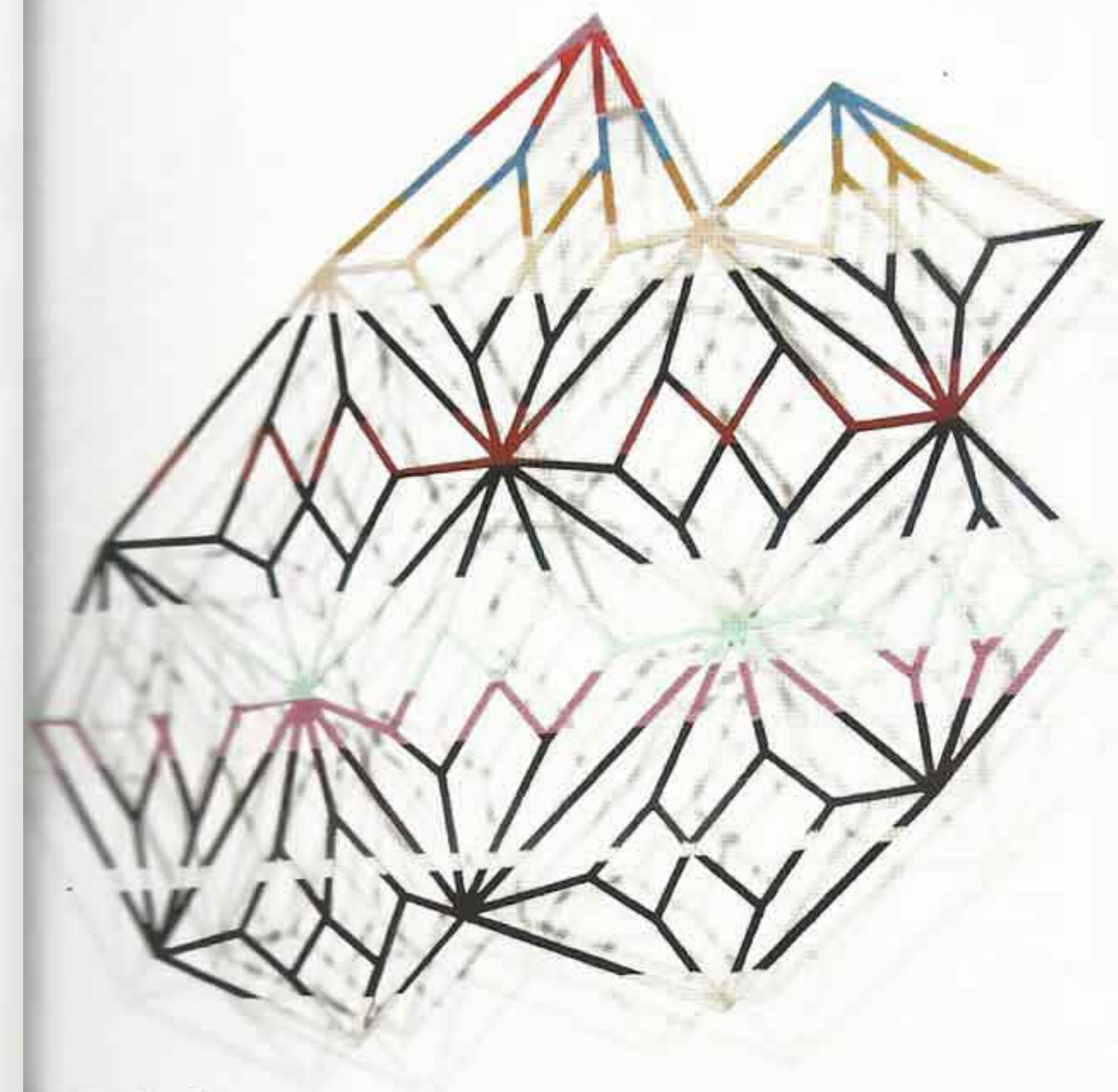
The majority of my works are inspired by anthropology – particularly this one other book which explains the way citizens grow in their territory. Sometimes, the sprawling development in our world takes on organic forms, but we're completely oblivious to this unless you're looking from above - these growing cities can take on the form of a cell or a beehive or sometimes even the blood in a human vein - but my work is up for interpretation, you wouldn't know if I'm talking about something very little like the wings of a fly or a big city. The relation between body and territory is very important in my work.



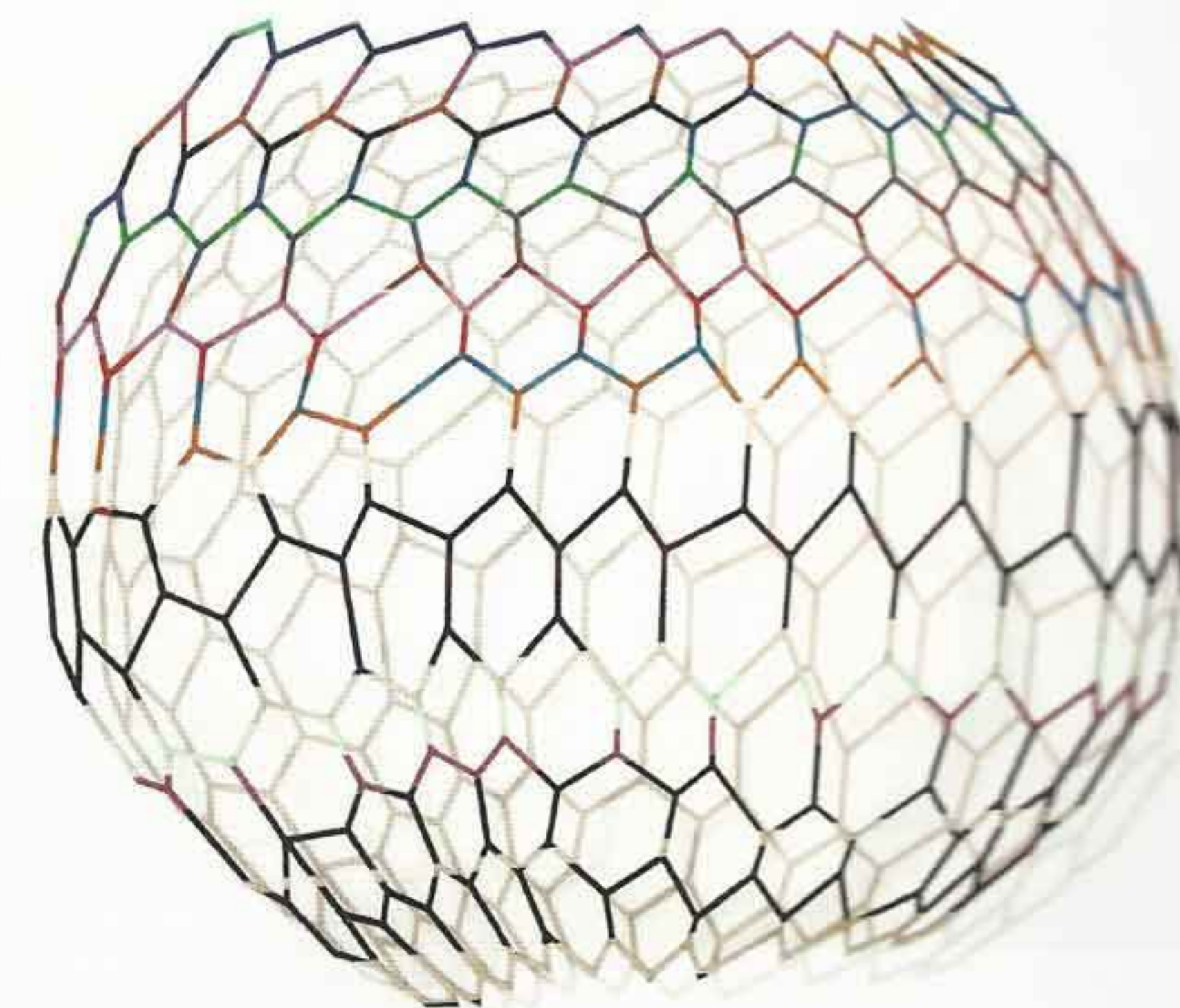
Micrographia No.12



Micrographia No.4

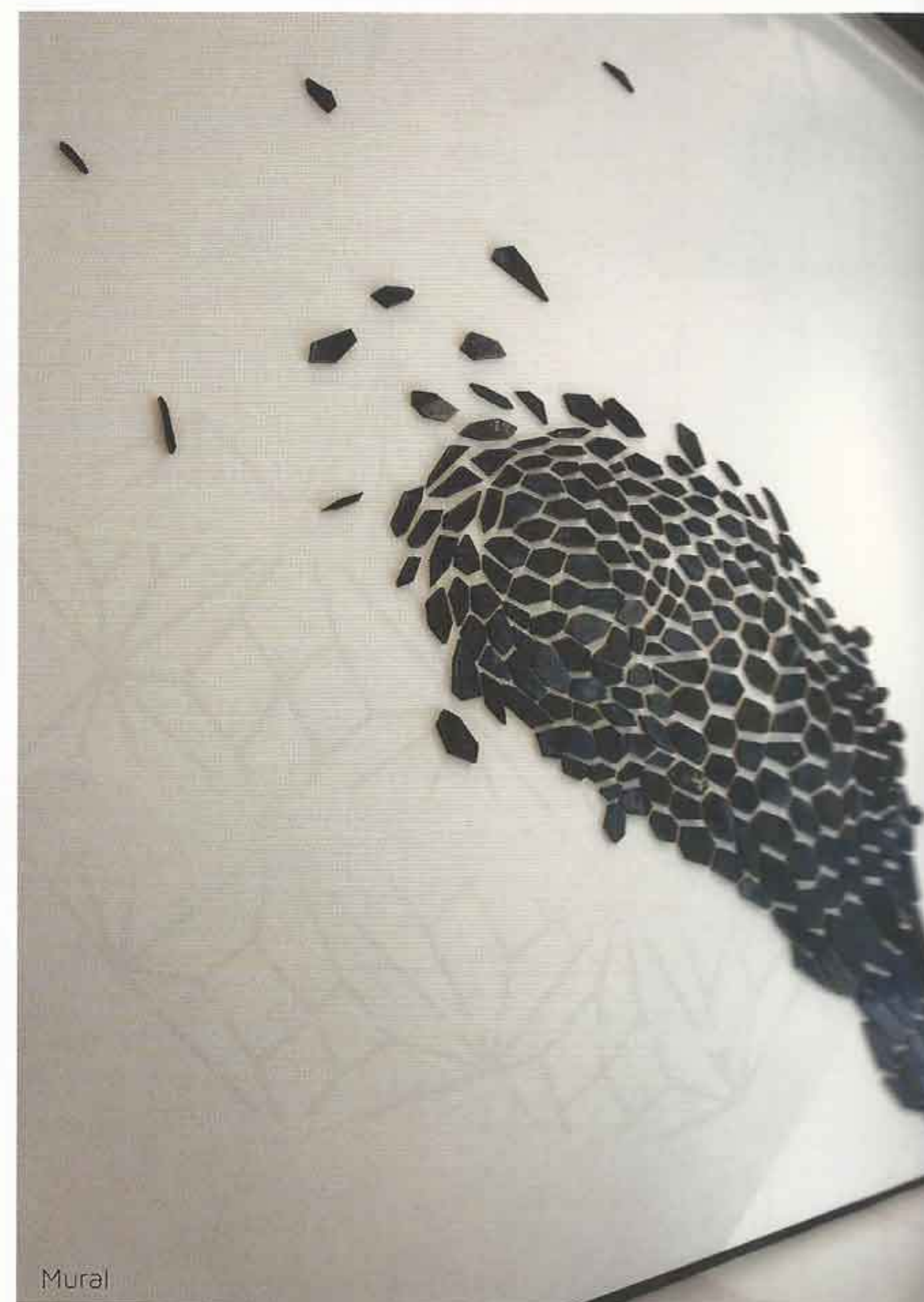


Micrographia No.5

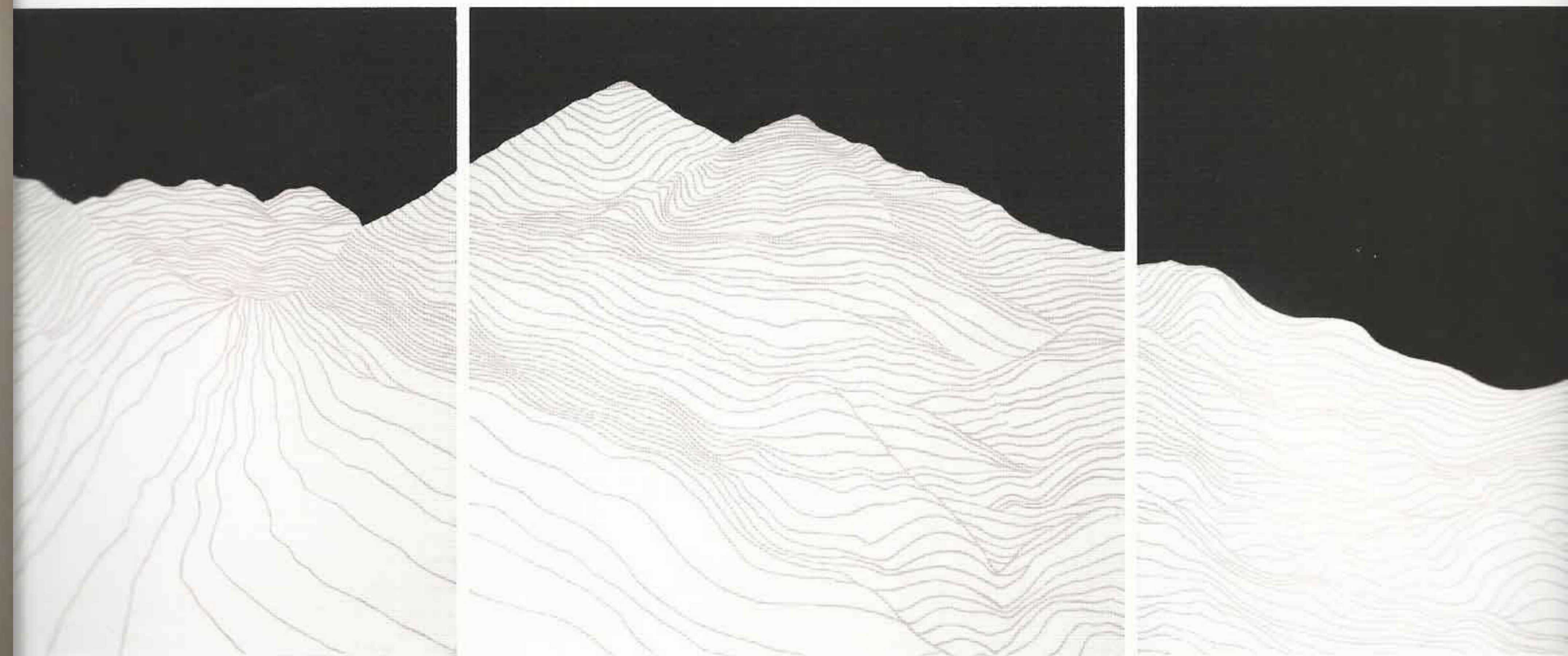


Micrographia No.13





Mural



These books are born through the authors' or artists' quest for a fresh perspective... what did you find through creating these works? I didn't really think about real things, they are so complex! I think I have a more abstract concept about the things I want to talk about, for example, landscapes and the human body. In my work, there is often a sense of repetition, but also connection; they all belong as part of a series rather than exist as independent works. I did a series where I took an image from a book of cities, scanned and printed it onto cotton paper. I then painted over it with watercolour and sometimes gouache for different effects, but still using the same image as a base. I'm so intrigued by how many different variations and feelings you can make with just one image. Sometimes I find the results beautiful but other times, not so much; sometimes they turn out to be dangerous or even disturbing.

Mountains are one of your favourite subjects to draw or sculpt, what is it that makes you want to recreate them?

To me, mountains represent origin and they also represent time. You can't see that the mountains are moving, but they move and they grow. I'm fascinated by time and physical scale – mountains are something we will never fully understand. They put things into perspective. We each only live around 100 years, if that; the mountains, to me, reaffirm that we as human beings are such a micro part of the world's history.

What is it about the human anatomy that fascinates you?

It's just something that's so complex to understand and so incomprehensible, it's the same sensation, to me, as the galaxy for example. I can't understand it because it's so big. You talk about the distance between planets and I can't understand it. And I think it's the same inside the human body. There are so many things, so

little, so microscopic that it's more or less the same; we have the universe inside us.

When did you decide that art would be your career?

I can't pinpoint a particular moment in time, but I believe that every day you make choices, you choose which way you will go, what you want to do with your life, and I just knew. I feel extremely lucky to be an artist because every day is a surprise.

You came to Mexico from Madrid with the intention of staying for a year, but you've been there for the last five. What kept you there?

My first scholarship in Mexico was actually for six months but when I arrived in Mexico I knew I needed more time. So before I knew it, those six months just grew and grew and grew. Mexico is fantastic because it gives me the freedom that I need to create. I live in Oaxaca in the south of Mexico, which is a beautiful culturally rich city and is home to many contemporary artists. There are also many Mexican indigenous artisans in Oaxaca who work with clay, glass, and traditional painting, so it's great as a young contemporary artist to be able to reach into these skills that have gone through generations, learn to use different materials and translate them into a totally different, contemporary language.

This is your first time in Hong Kong. What were you expecting before you came?

Well I had so much work to do that I really didn't sit down and imagine what I was going to find. So far I haven't had the time to visit galleries or museums but in general, I think Hong Kong is amazing. I feel like I'm in a very important place at this moment in the world.