

# Dark Light

Ebony Rose

*Yamakiwa Gallery and Artist Residency, Kamiebiike, Japan*



## Introduction

### Image of Kamiebiike:

*The daily offering of vegetables, pickled daikon, umeboshi plums and mochi. Lessons in Charring lotus roots. A handmade door latch.*

*Chisel marks on a surface consistent like tracks. An iron tea kettle: hot coals, a blacksmith hammering.*

*Paper separating one room from the next where shadows silhouette on the surface. The sounds outside permeating within, the cold permeating within too- no separation from elements.*

*Daily hikes up the mountain. Daily soup: miso broth with vegetables, tofu and fish. A return to what is basic and whole. The neighbour in her eighties having been born in this house. The cemetery in plain view. At harvest time a celebration including the beat of a drum and sitting under a dwelling partially inside, partially out.*

*The bright autumn colours fell and turned to winter.*





## Dark Light

*"When the tongues of flames are in-folded into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one."*<sup>1</sup> -T.S. Elliot

While an artist in residence at *Yamakiwa Gallery* (Mountain Edge Gallery) I created an installation and a series of drawings in response to the traditional Japanese farm house setting and my exchanges with the villagers. The installation continued through multiple spaces and common to my work there was an evocation and experiencing of time: the present, the residue touch of the hand, and phenomenon changing. In this body of work darkness was emphasized and death alluded to. Inspired by the Japanese Zen word *shoji* that translates to life-death where these two words are only separated and connected by a small hyphen,<sup>2</sup> in this installation death and dark to life and light were not so much separate entities but parts of the whole.

In the entranceway water puddled on the floor in the shape of organic and perfect circles and cindered lotus roots were frozen in a block of ice. They acted as a threshold and stopping

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<sup>1</sup>Eliot, T.S. *Four Quartets. Little Gidding.* Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1944.

<sup>2</sup>Ostaseski, Frank. *Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us about Living Fully,* FLATIRON BOOKS, 2018, p. 1.

measure where one had to navigate around an obstructed path to get to the door. Transformed lotus roots that were frozen, a block of ice resembling a gravestone that melted, water in the shape of a circle evaporating conjured life cycles, loss and a wider scope of time. On opposite walls were drawings of a cross-section of the lotus root. The cross-section consisted of holes for oxygen that appeared in the form of a flower-like shape. The root was drawn both representationally and abstracted further to resemble the lotus flower.

In another space (the attic of the farmhouse) columns of cut shoji paper intersected two rooms and vanished into darkness. Shoji doors, a common feature in Japanese architecture and found throughout the *Yamakiwa Gallery* farmhouse are sliding doors. Through the sliding of a door one space becomes two or two spaces become one.<sup>3</sup> The paper was folded with various line patterns that replicated and extended existing patterning within the building. Cut outs of organic circle shapes stood in as voids and holes that also replicated the circles found throughout the installation. The columns stood somewhere between monumental and diaphanous. Where in the previous space the materials of water and earth were close to the ground, in the attic space there was a heavenly quality where long white columns stand in a dim room and gently moved with the breeze. Subtle washes of colour cast from the window glowed on their surfaces where very fine lines from the folding were present. The view through the window were trees, the garden or snow, weather dependent, and a small graveyard.

In a room adjacent to the installation watercolours of the rose also echoed the lotus. The roses oscillated between dimensional and silhouetted and they hung near a shoji window where silhouettes of plants shadowed onto the surface at various times in the day. The repetition with the rose drawings alluded to practice and *getting-to-know intimately*. The pairing of these two flowers, the lotus (in the ice) and the rose (in the drawings) were also based on the meeting I had with the villagers. I was inspired by the continual acts of kindness. (Each day one of the resident villagers would drop prepared food or vegetables at the doorstep. Another villager generously taught me the craft of charring plants, in particular charring lotus roots). I made numerous rose studies, seventeen of which to give to the seventeen households in the village. I chose the rose as a symbol from my home and also because of the parallel symbolism of both the rose and the lotus.

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<sup>3</sup>Grande, John K. *Balance: Art and Nature*, Black Rose Books, 2014.

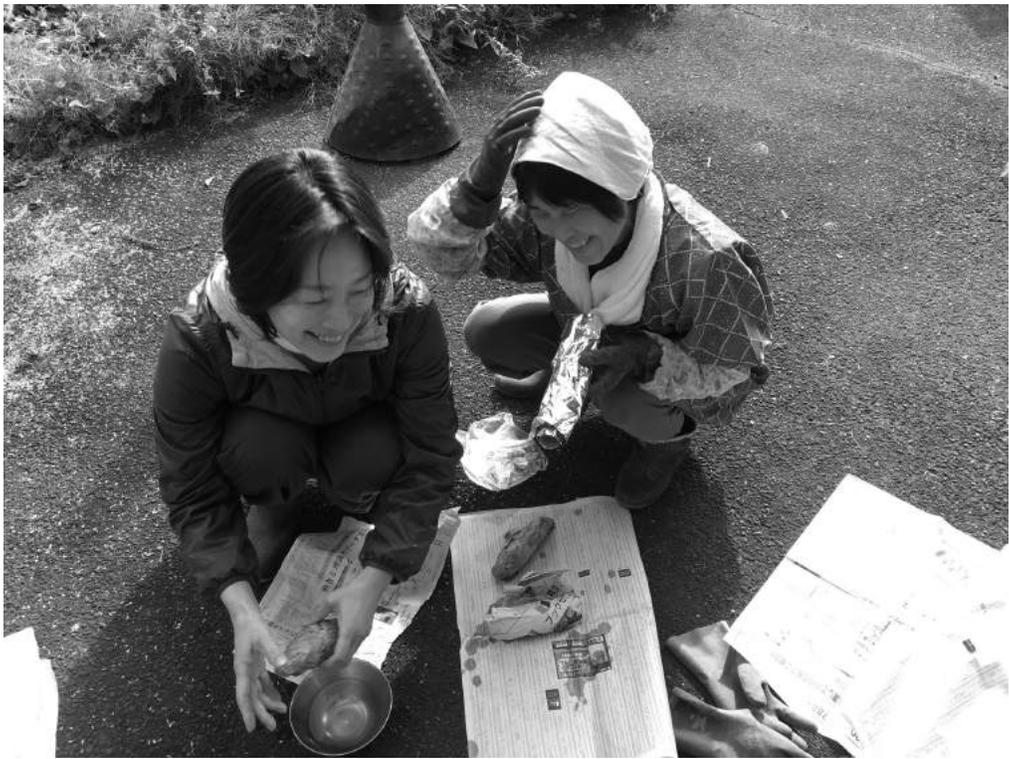
Process

Aiko, Looking at my cut lotus roots.





Working with Yuri Fukushima, director of Yamakiwa Gallery and Aiko, the neighbour who taught me how to char lotus roots.





Entrance Installation

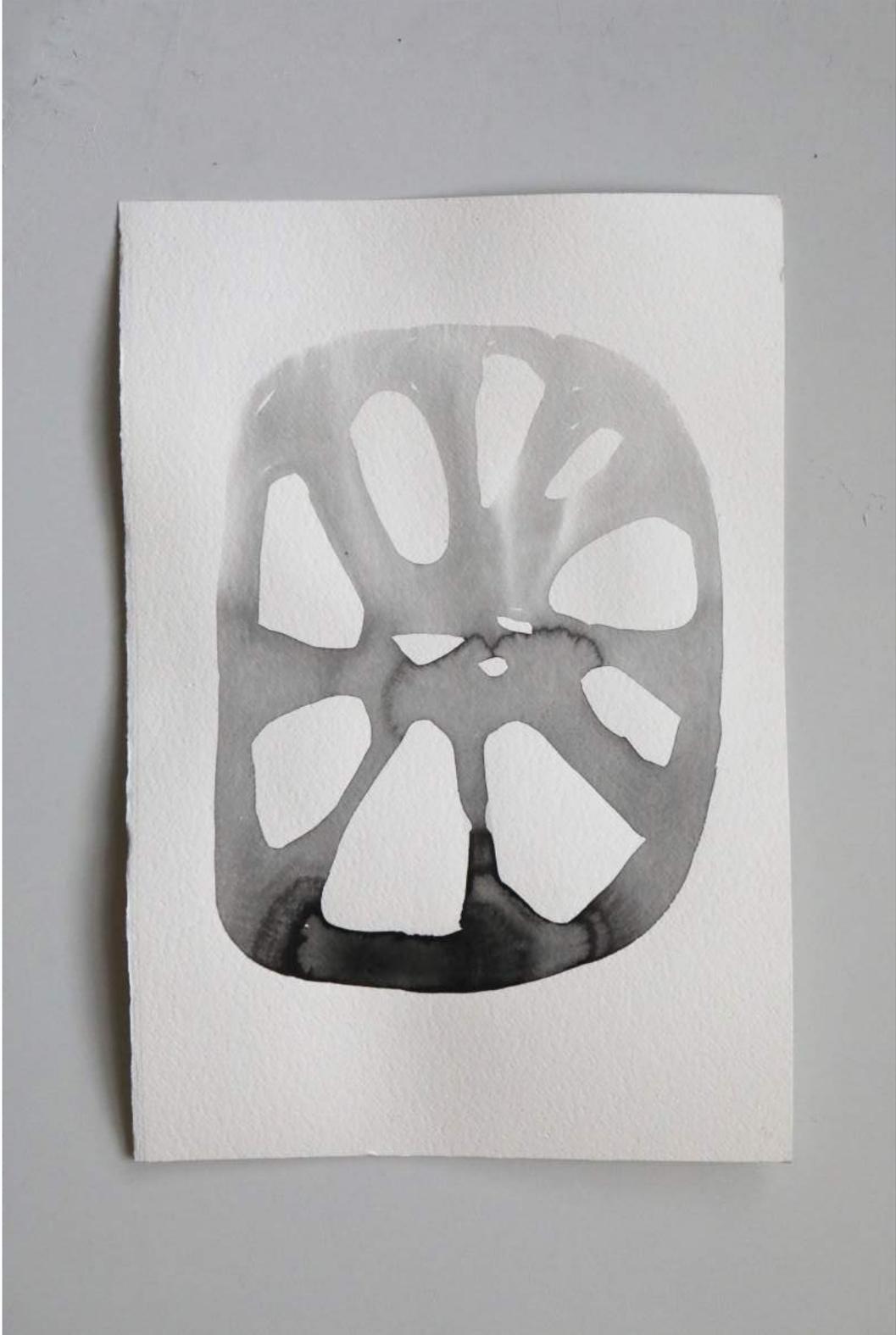












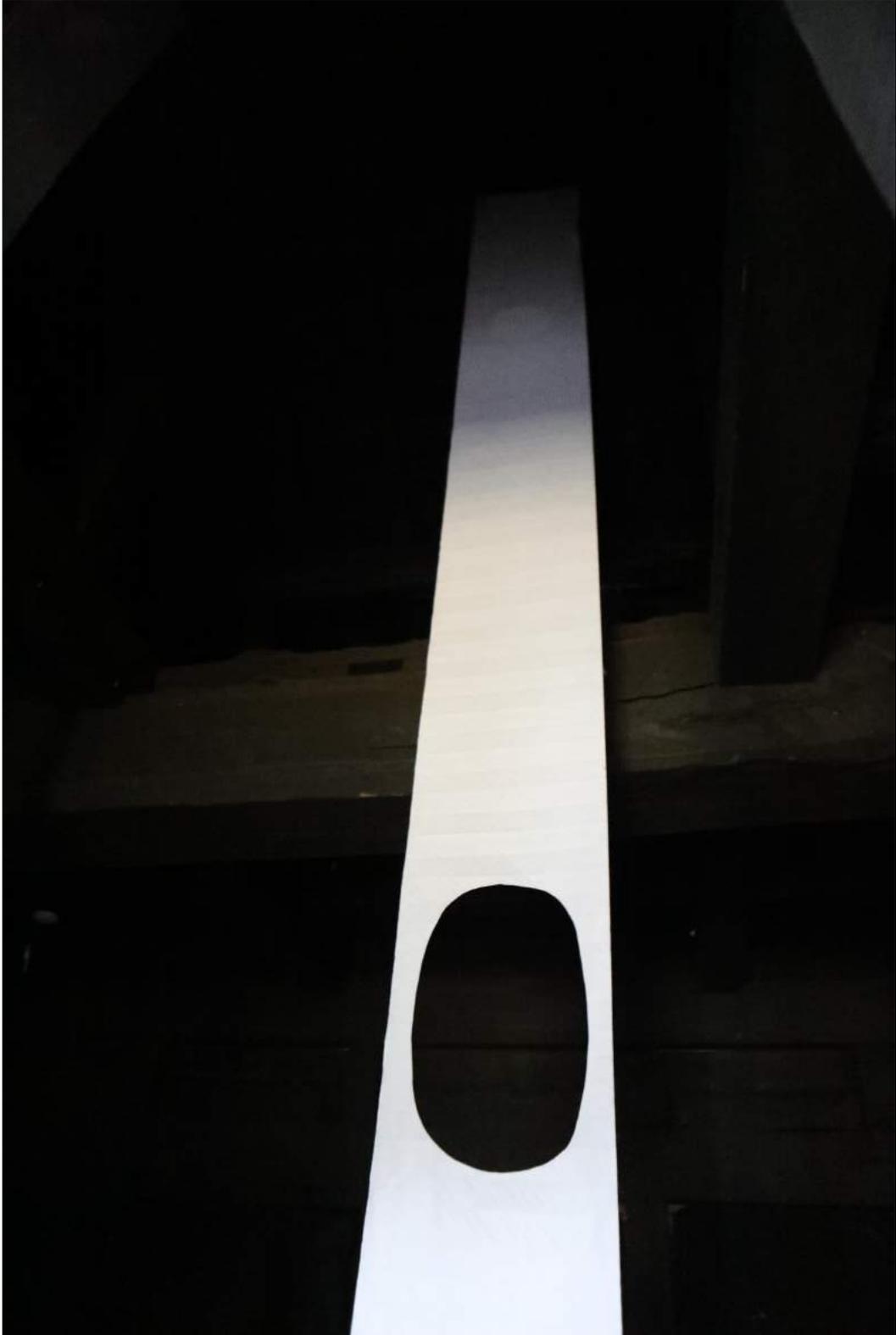




The Attic

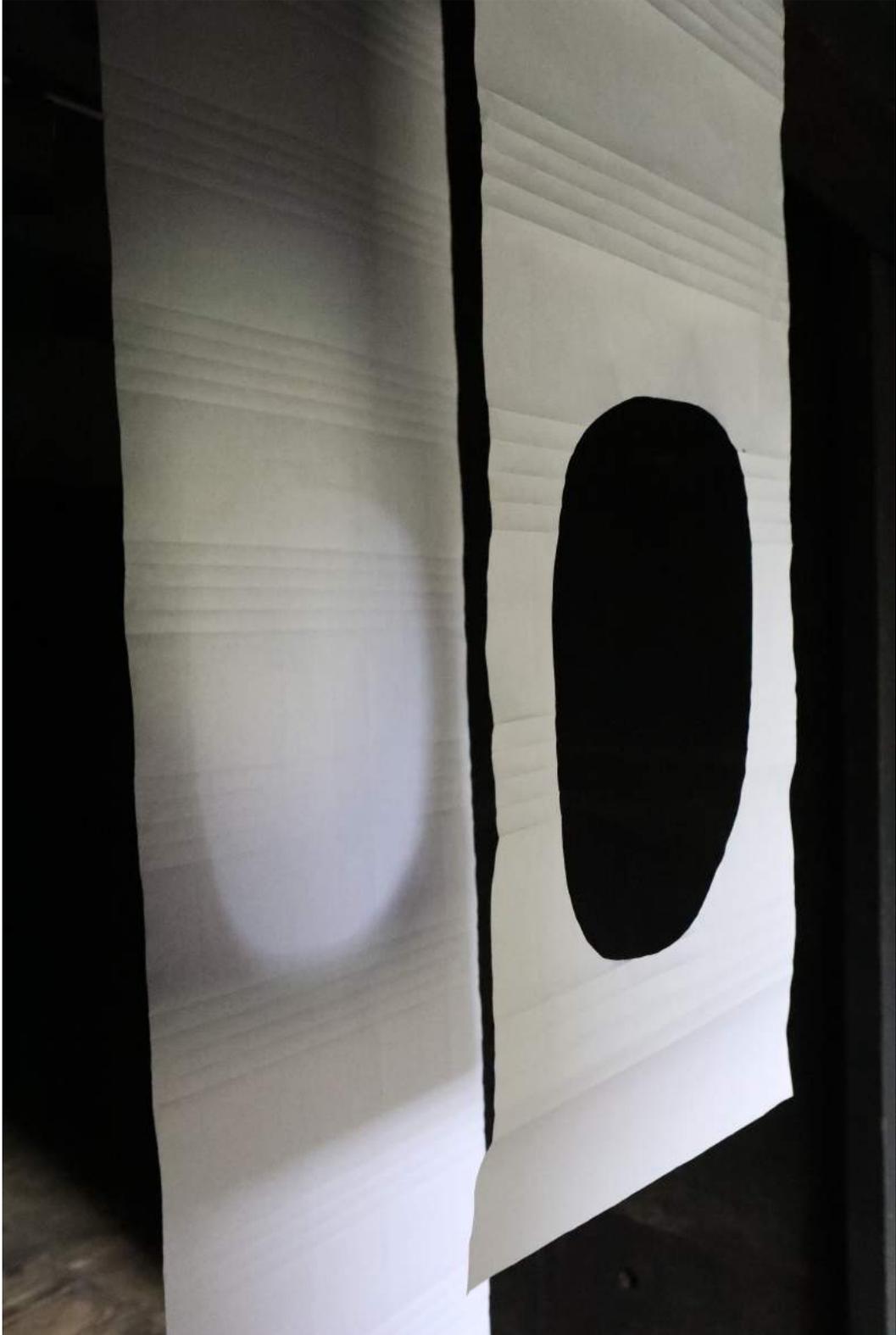


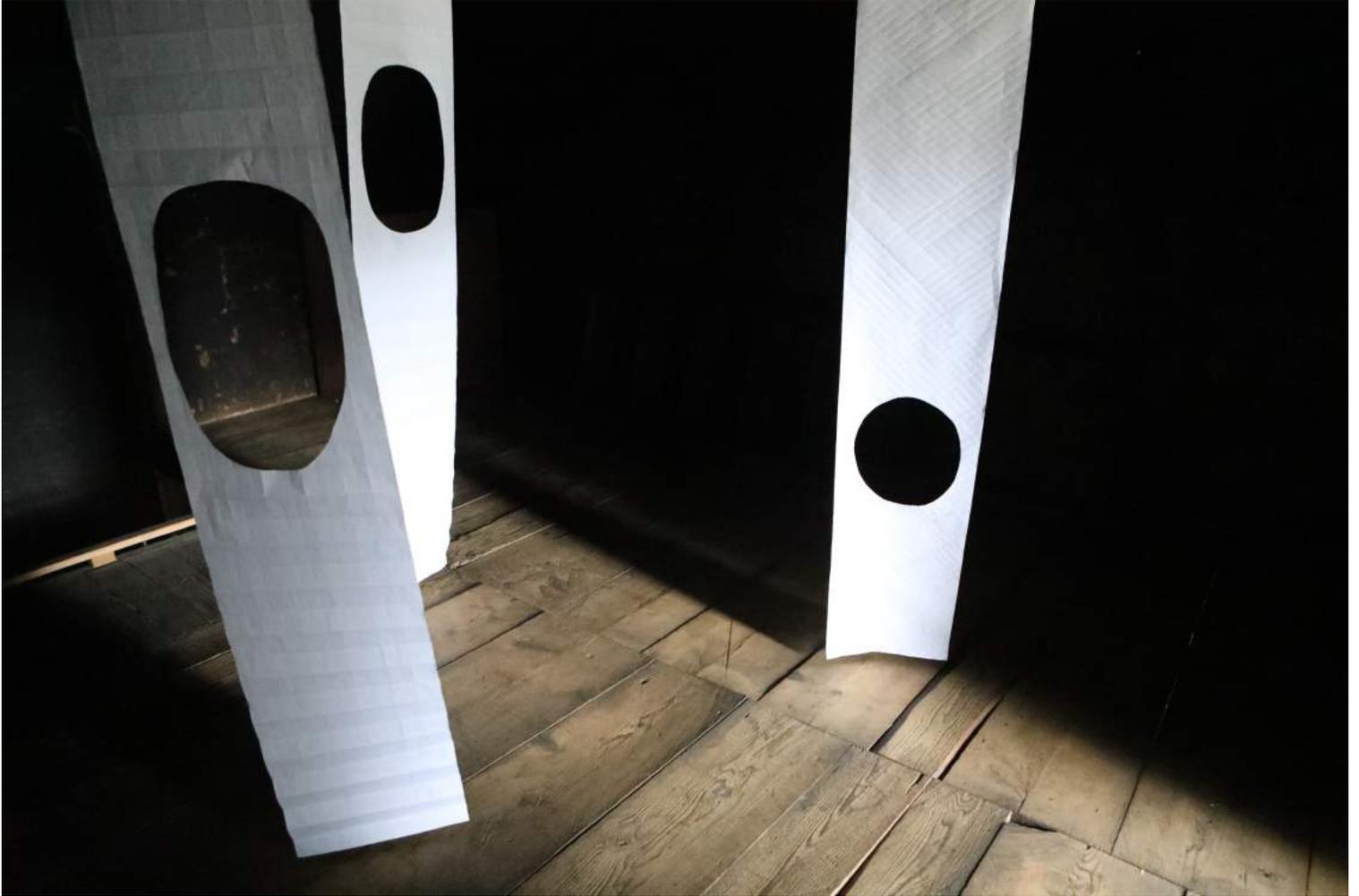










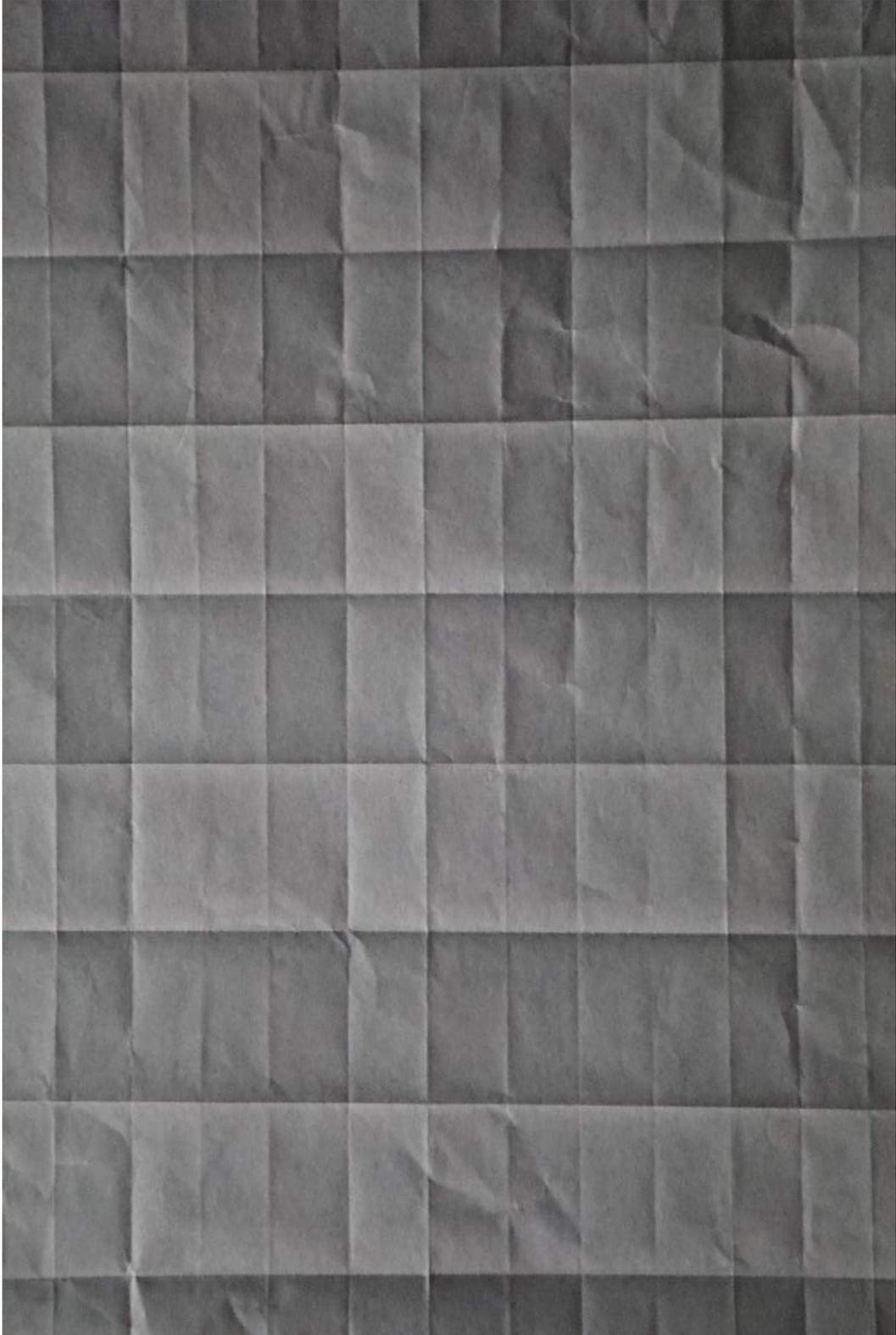












Rose Studies







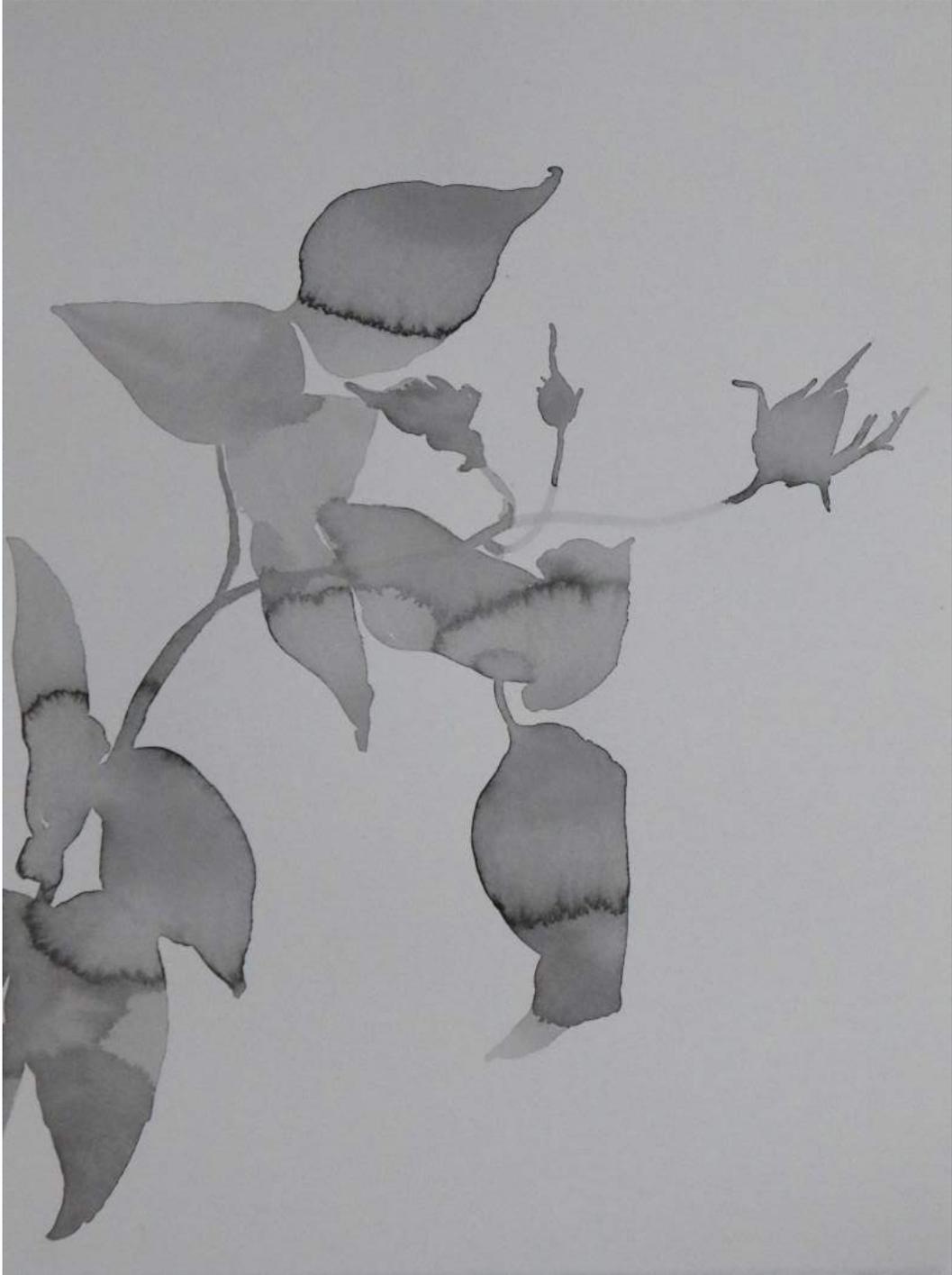




















Gathering at the opening











Ebony Rose and Yuri Fukushima

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