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Par Myriam Amroun

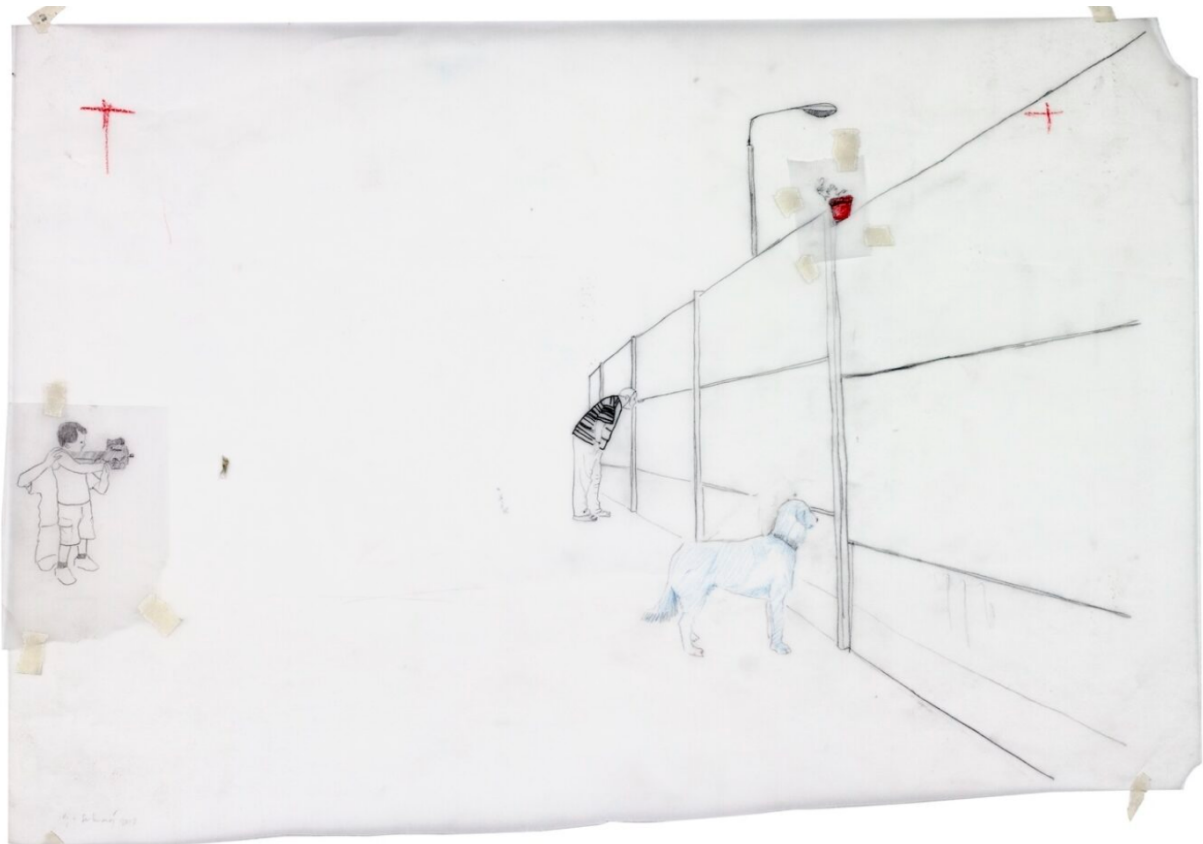
FALL 2024 ISSUE

PORTFOLIO

Drawings

Humorously and with a few ingenious elements, Selmani's drawings reveal a *Barzakh*, a divide or a portal "between the real and the artist's reimagination of it."

BY MASSINISSA SELMANI



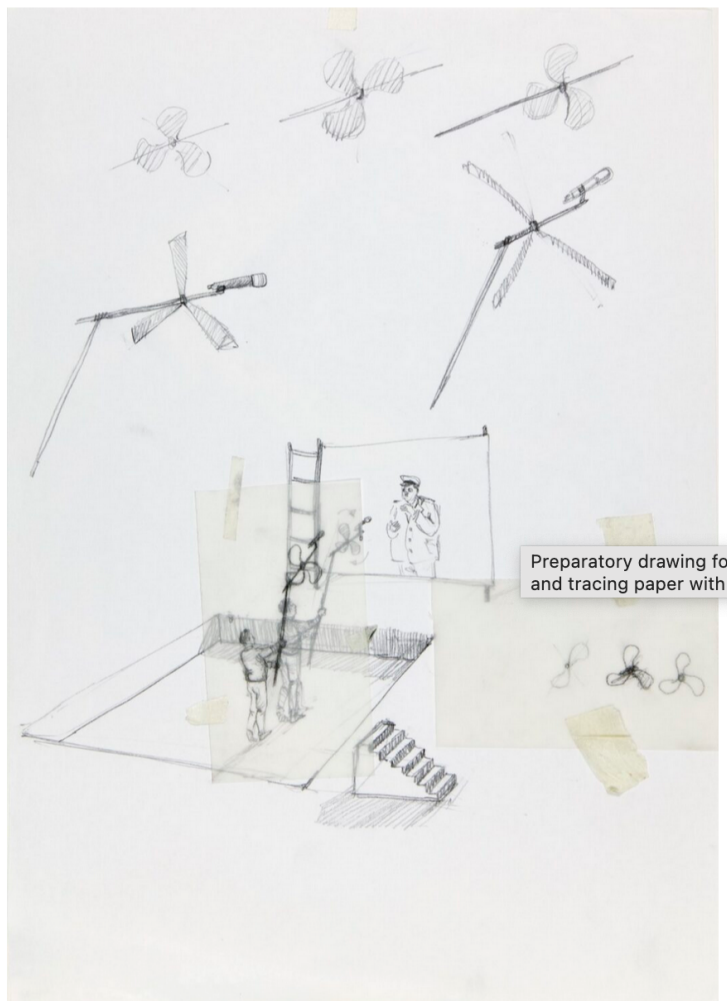
Preparatory drawing for *Do we need shadows to remember? #2*, 2013, graphite, felt-tip pen, and colored pencil on paper and tracing paper with tape, 15.75 x 19.75 inches. Images courtesy of the artist. Works © ADAGP Paris.

Massinissa Selmani depicts in his drawings figures assembled in absurd or inscrutable situations that unfold in confounding environments. Anonymous protagonists might engage with curious architectural elements in expanses of blank space, as in the preparatory drawings for *Soon* (2016), or they might set or avoid a scene, as in the sketch for *The unfathomable dawn* (2018). Selmani often copies the disparate fragments of his drawings from documentary sources, later resurfacing them in graphite and colored pencil in finished works on paper.

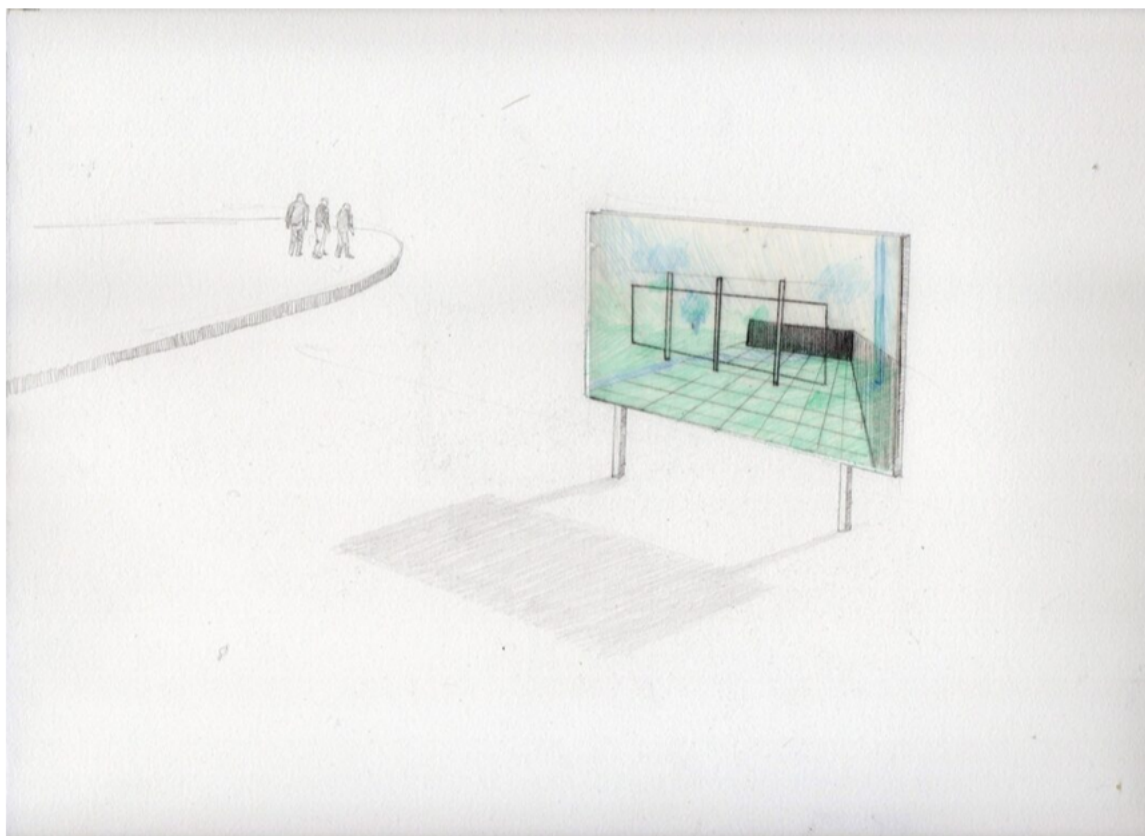
Several of the preparatory drawings in this portfolio show this aspect of Selmani's practice, such as the sketch for *The next day's detour* (2019), in which small drawings on tracing paper have been taped together to create a cohesive yet incongruous composition. In this transfer, however, the source images' original contexts are erased, revealing a sort of *Barzakh*, a barrier or a gateway between the real and Selmani's reimagination of it. The preparatory drawing for *Do we need shadows to remember? #2* (2013) registers this phenomenon in the figures' interaction with architecture: a wall creates an object of intrigue for a man and dog alike, who peer through openings in the concrete block into the as-yet unknown.

Selmani has been based in Tours, France, for nearly two decades, relocating from Algeria after the end of the nation's Black Decade. Confronted with violent headlines about civil war, Selmani perhaps looked to newspaper cartoons to reflect on conflict with humor, an approach he has maintained in his work since. In the sketch for the artist's animation *Pretext* (2019), for instance, a political official speaks into microphones equipped with fans, which circulate the hot air. Selmani's work evinces a wry sensibility yet is marked by absence or displacement. In the process of trivializing historical events, the artist ultimately asks the question: Who am I in the midst of all this?

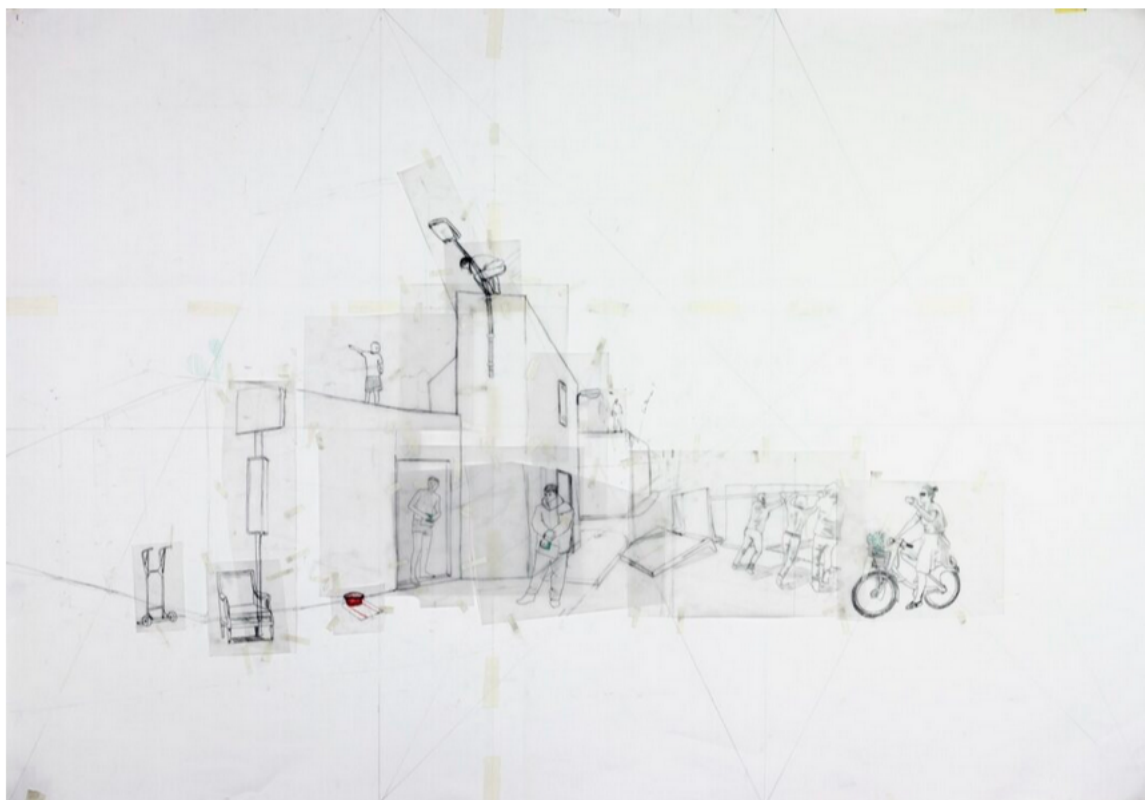
—Myriam Amroun



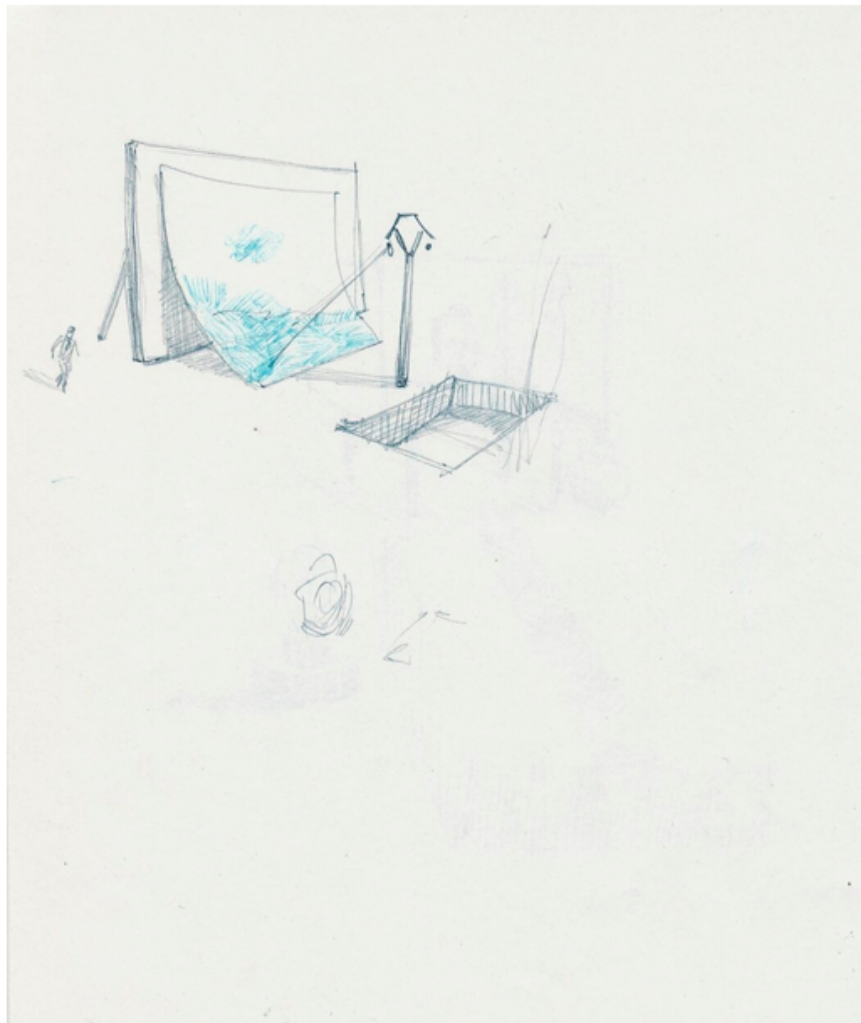
Preparatory drawing for the looped animation *Pretext*, 2019, graphite on paper and tracing paper with tape, 11.75 x 8.25 inches.



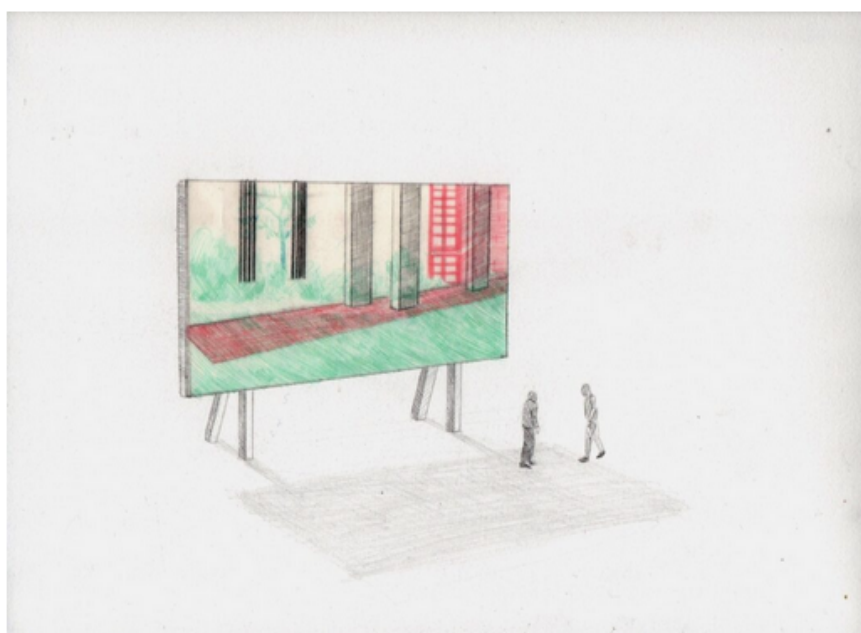
Preparatory drawing for the series *Soon*, 2016, graphite and colored pencil on paper and tracing paper, 8.25 x 12.25 inches.



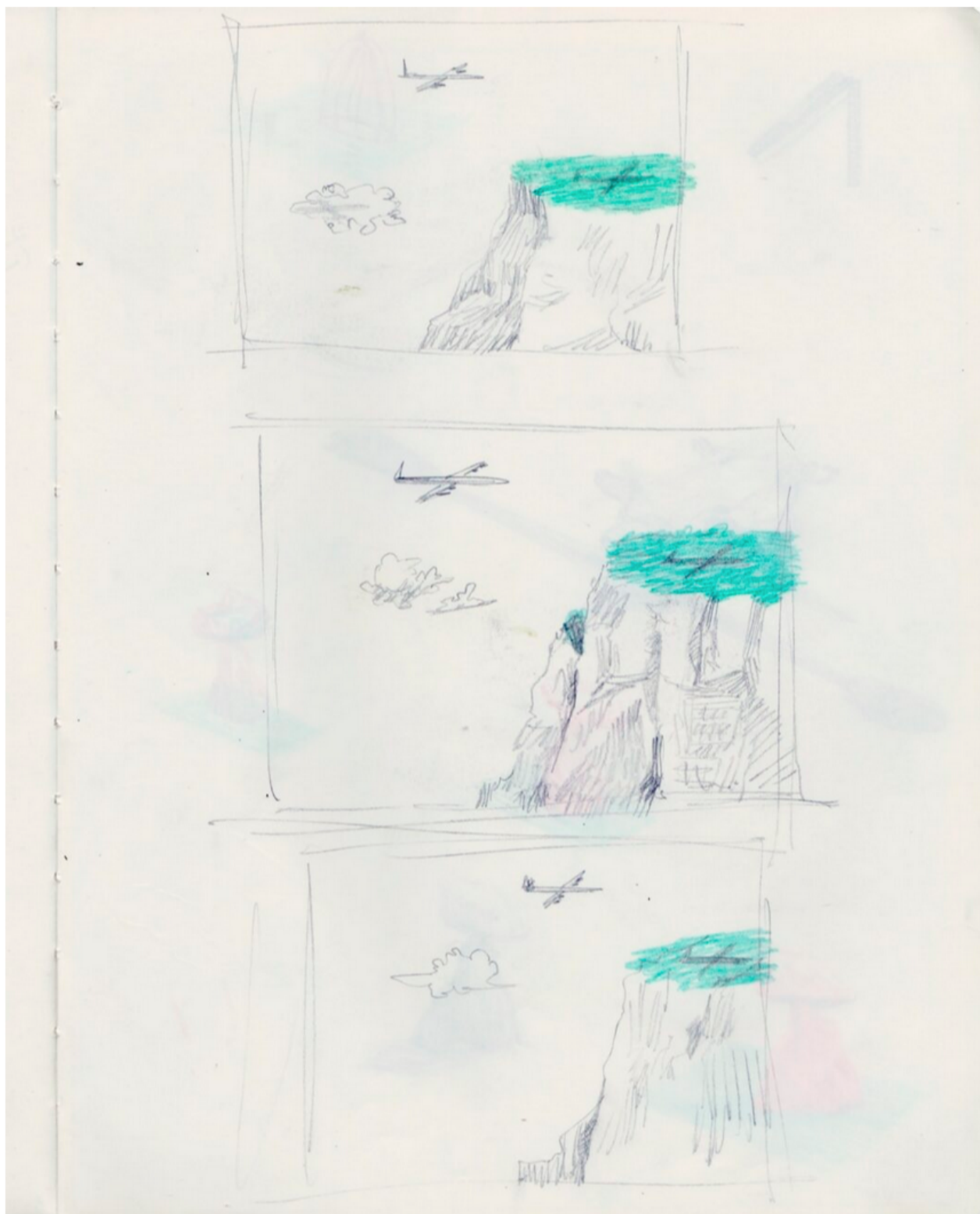
Preparatory drawing for *The next day's detour*, 2019, graphite and colored pencil on paper and tracing paper with tape, 30.75 x 44 inches.



Sketch for the series *The unfathomable dawn*, 2018, graphite and colored pencil on sketch-book paper.



Preparatory drawing for the series *Soon*, 2016, graphite and colored pencil on paper and tracing paper, 8.25 x 12.25 inch



Untitled sketch, 2022, graphite and colored pencil on sketchbook paper.