

Dona Mayoora

Listening To Red

To my eternal muse

Red Whispers

Malayalam (member of the Dravidian language family in Kerala, India) and English are two of the languages poet-artist Dona Mayoora speaks, writes and illuminates. Contemplating this collection, the conclusion becomes obvious she volunteered as a scribe for Red rendering its whispers through the prism of asemic writing. Works outside this group prove others, such as Blue, also whisper secrets to her inner ear. Moreover, many of her works exhibit by subject of choice and illuminated poetic- and artistic-lined voice, the nuances heard by her intuitive ear.

Asemic writing, a *post-literate* movement, begins with surrealists sourcing from the unconscious to play with meaninglessness, anti-syntax made-up writing shapes. Abstract expressionists exploring with calligraphy-like brush strokes expanded it, again from the unconscious. Some point further back, to rock art as asemic because of its “contemporary meaninglessness.” From the 1950s into the 1990s increased use of abstract verbal signs, iconographics and calligraphies found in global visual text arts solidified by the late 1990s into what has become a formal movement. “Post-literate” carries implications beyond the constraints of this movement. Nevertheless, literally tongue-in-cheek or not, the apocalyptic, or pessimistic suggestion requires comment. There is some justification for this post- of many post-s forming the deconstructive post-modernist fence line, plucked atonally as if a new music of the spheres with which to rewrite the past and present projecting into a future of its own image. Their argument arrives from obvious positive consequences of computer graphics reinventing what the printing press destroyed in Eurocentric cultures, illuminated books and calligraphy. Calligraphy in these regions remains reduced to pretty writing. Iconographic images convey quicker in meaning, greater in expanse than word. That graphics ubiquitously populate today’s media leads to a logical assumed eventuality: image replaces word. However, most asemic writers create without conscious meaning, “write” from the unconscious

asking readers/viewers to create their own meaning and intent of the work. Essentially, Rorschach art.

With the eclipse of symbolism by the pre-World War I avant-garde painters, the arts, except perhaps music, have been lead by painters, not poets, in Eurocentric cultures. From this, though not its direct cause, evolved in the late 1940s non-reference art followed by non-reference poetics. The work refers only to itself. Symbols were outlawed as were other references external to the work causing the illiteracy of iconographic symbols and other symbolic usage. Intent of the artist had no consideration. Criticism devolved to material content, brush stroke, color, and so forth. Non-referential poetic theory and criticism followed suit and tied to a jumbled dialectical-materialism philosophy justifying their materialistic poetic and sometime-misuse of Buddhist philosophy to support meaningless expressionism. Some asemics scribble (their term) meaningless abstract images and calligraphies. Are we heading into the desert of the self-indulged? Bleak as this may appear, this worship of the mirage, I suggest an optimism seen in Dona Mayoora’s interpretations of Red’s commentary during her moments of silence or contemplation. Hers and a handful of other abstract calligraphers may be forging the initial steps reinvigorating lost Eurocentric calligraphy and illumination traditions. Here neither unconscious sourcing nor scribble reside. Conscious intent and meaningful iconographic abstraction abide: “Will Red (the square symbol) be heard, was my first thought. If there is no common language for communication, how will it be interpreted by the listener (bracket). Between these two symbols there are barriers, flow of gestures etc. Is the listener hiding, or is the listener eagerly waiting to hear Red. I often found myself in a situation where people misunderstood what others say and/or misinterpret what one is saying. Even with a common medium of language.”

Many are red’s symbolic and associated meanings: anger, blood, courage, danger, desire, energy, fire, heat, id, joy,

longing, love, malice, passion, radiance, sensitivity, sexuality, strength, stress, vibrance, vigor, willpower, wrath, and so on. Enter a red painted room, blood pressure elevates, metabolism increases as well as enthusiasm and energy levels. Red belongs to Satan and Cupid. Many reds are muddy, unlike the clear, bright red rose representing a light-filled heart. In Sufism, red sulphur transforms silver to gold, the symbol of enlightenment. Theosophy's red, the 6th ray of their spiritual rainbow, means devotional love.

In late April 2018 three women visual text artists, composing, writing, drawing, collaging or painting with red, were introduced by Serendipity and Synchronicity. Dona Mayoora and Dawn Nelson Wardrope I met through my editing and publishing interests on the Internet. While in San Francisco, I met Yuri Shimojo; she was present at her exhibition, *Sumi and Shu*, the day following her opening. After one of the more meaningful introductory exchanges with an artist, I purchased her catalogue. Apparently she felt the same, honoring our meeting by accompanying her signature with the ideogram *en*: fate, karma, a blood relationship, connection, or tie. Its extended karmic meaning holds within it a synchronistic meeting in a significant spacial context during which the special connection is made. Part of our discussion, since her art bridges shamanic iconographic traditions across many unassociated groups she worked with, dove into the use of iron oxides as the first reds in Africa nearly 300,000 years ago, to cinnabar based red applied following a traditional Japanese approach for her series, and to the fact an hour and a half drive north of my home the once oldest known North American First People's mining site was found uncovered by ocean activity in 1990. The Chumash 6000 years ago pounded large cinnabar boulders into smaller stones to transport for rock art and other arts. The ocean later destroyed it. Our garden hosts a few surviving fragments from the beach viewable from the mountains of southern Big Sur.

Those familiar with typography know *en* is the space

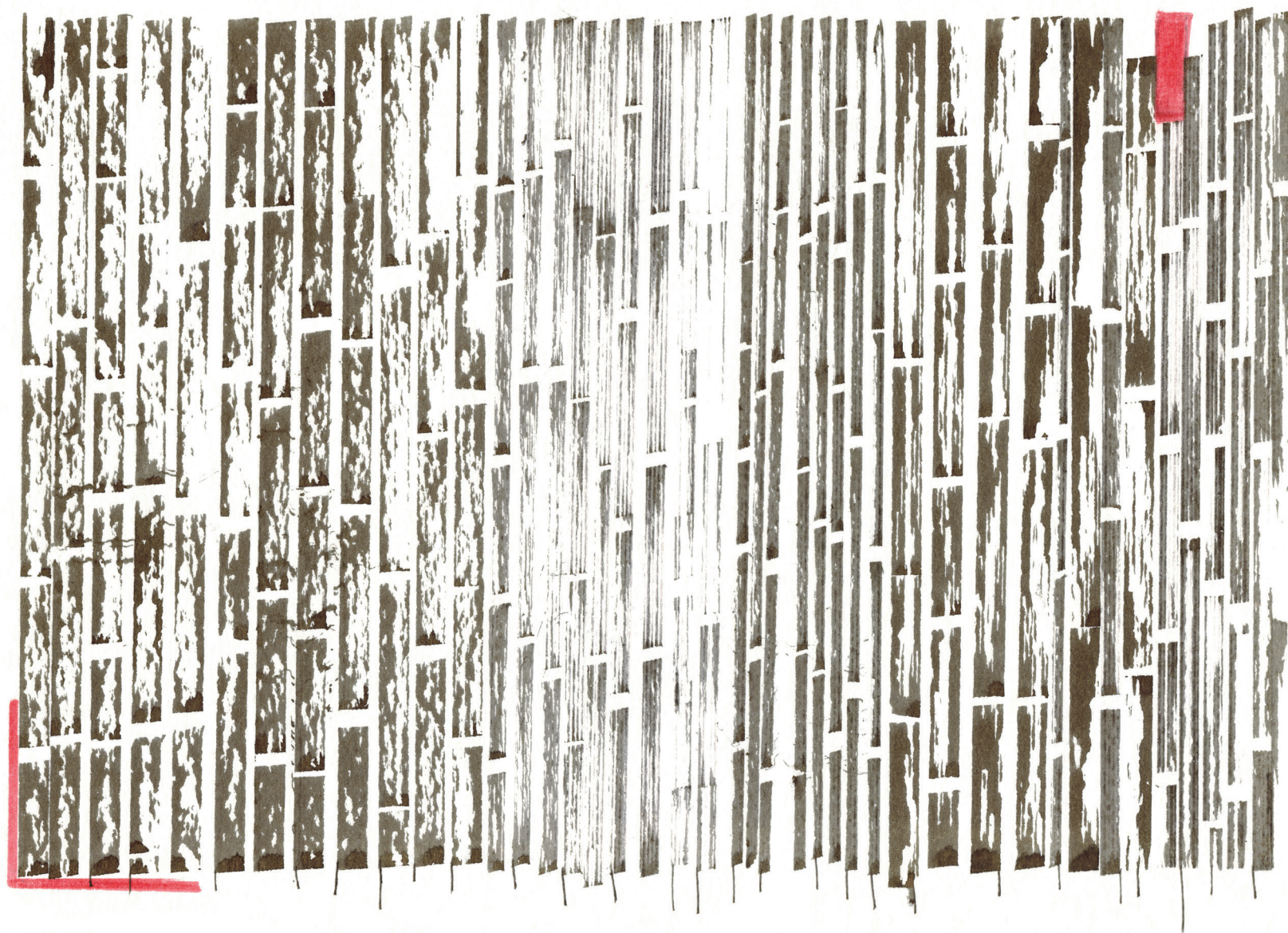
between words and letters. The diligent typographer employs *en* to form and inform negative space pleasant to the trained and untrained reader's eyes. The skilled asemic artist-writer manipulates *en space* beyond the liner lineup of iconographic symbols merging with the *em space*, the space between lines of type, moving the abstract forms into rhythmic dance, also pleasant to the eye. Her rendered dances came from listening to **Red** with the ear centered in the word heart.

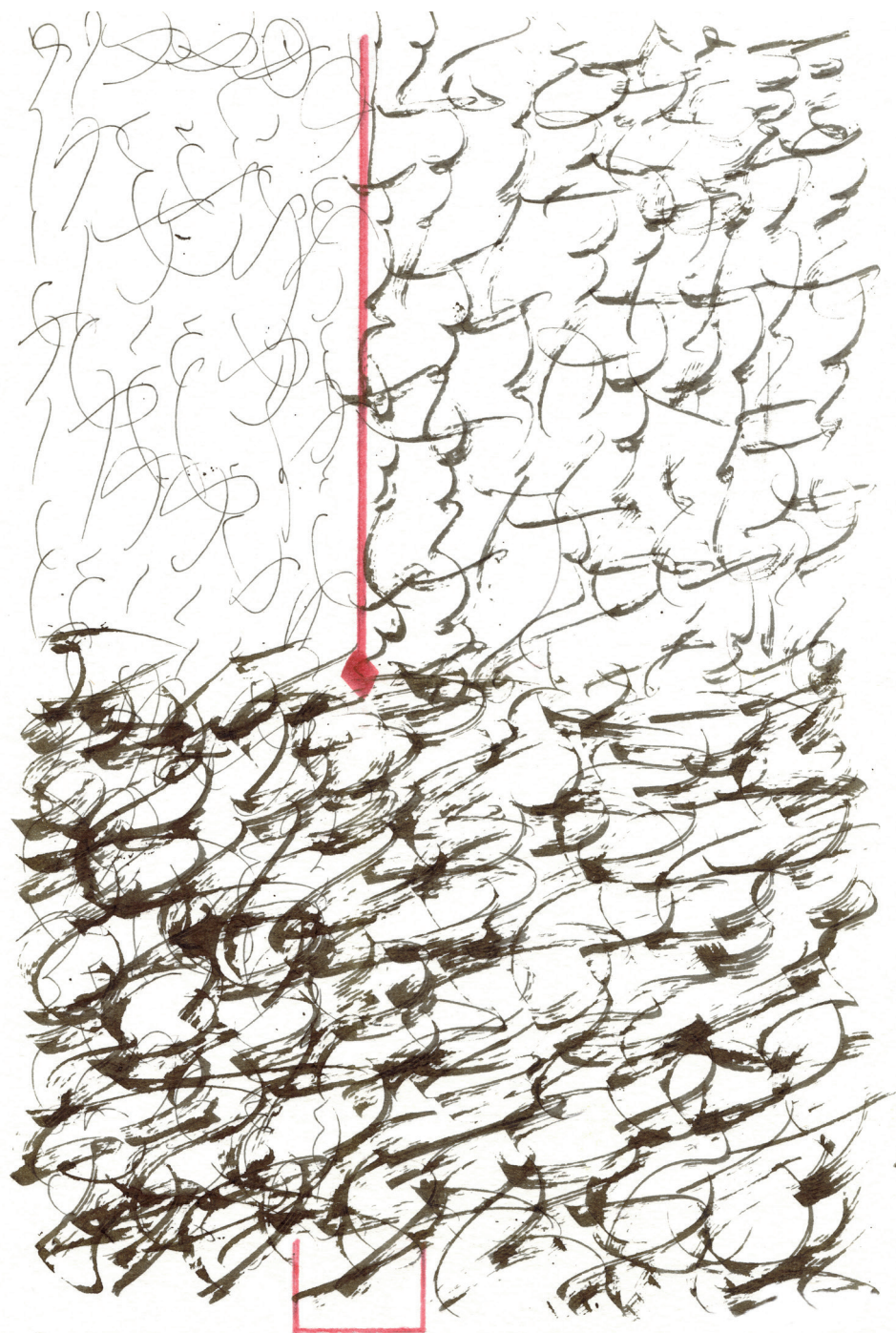
That being said, let us, then, bring our chairs, attachments to **Red**, conscious or not, and sit around her waiting campfire cast in a full moon light seen on the first page. Red-lined pathways are marked. The courageous can follow the lines to the fire. The cautious can follow the lines stopping at the boundary of uncomfortable radiance. Or, we can sit in a circle. Page by page glowing images appear and disappear, erasing mind-chatter to hear fiery tongues spell and whisper secrets, secrets **Red** also speaks in the languages of other colors. Note that Dona listens to clear, bright **Red**. Thus, always present, the transcendent. The transcendent, if heard, if realized, means that one turning to another in the circle sees their self in one grand talking-to-self monologue. However, most do not want to *hear* or *see*. The collection is an earwax remover. Experiential illumination transforms, erases the cataracts of opaqueness, vaporizes or exiles "isms." Transcendancy resides in her other works; one, a series of lyrical homages to the calligraphic flourished Zen Circle. Another, perhaps a learning from this series: "Rumī's Rubies," – the **Red** square with red abstract writing strokes suggesting his poetry. Her homage to Rumī, while outside the frame of this collection, nevertheless being informed by it, orbits hearts open for ascendant change that begins with clarity of unfiltered listening.

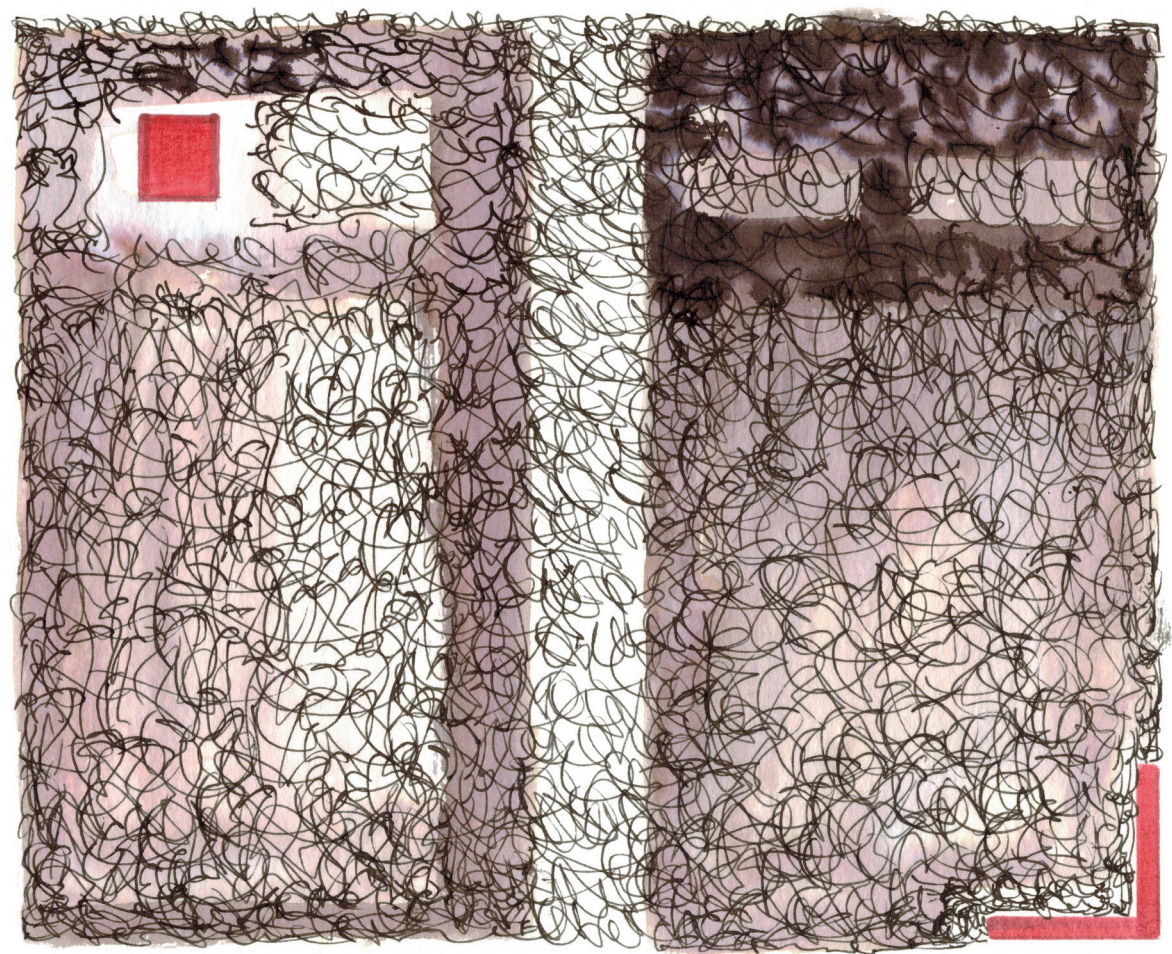
Karl Kempton
Oceano, Ca
June, 2018

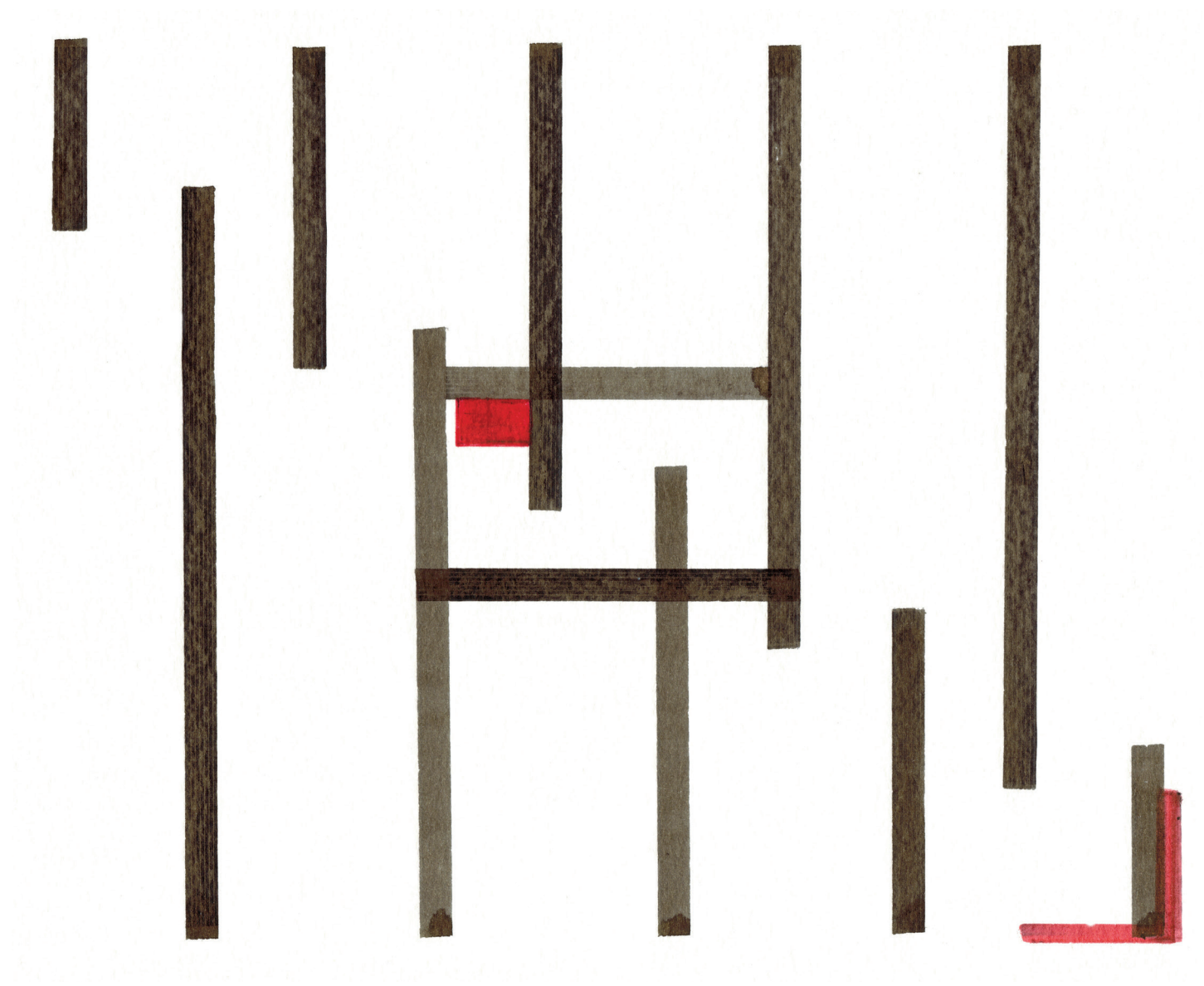
Listening To Red

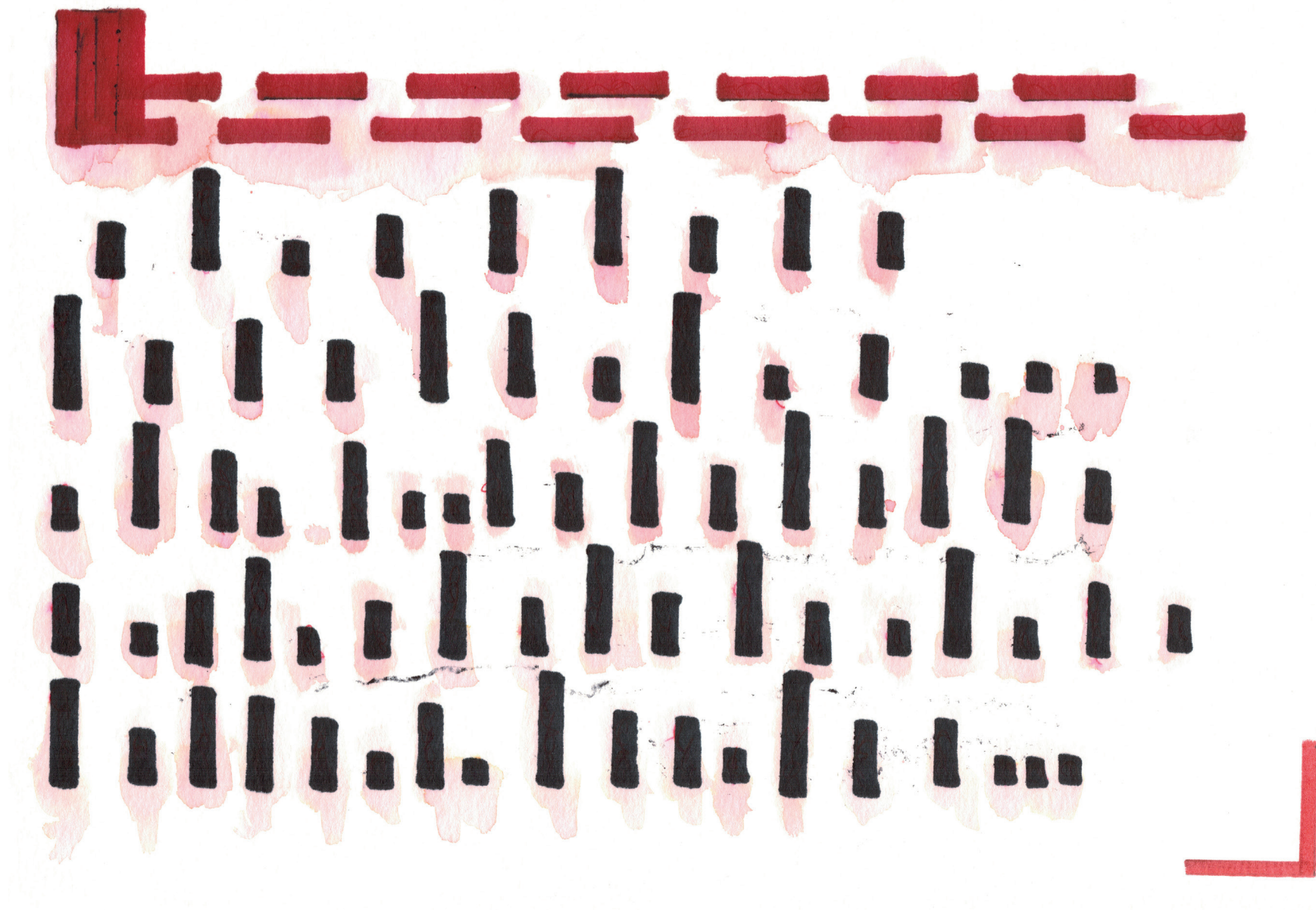
Poetry in Visual Verses

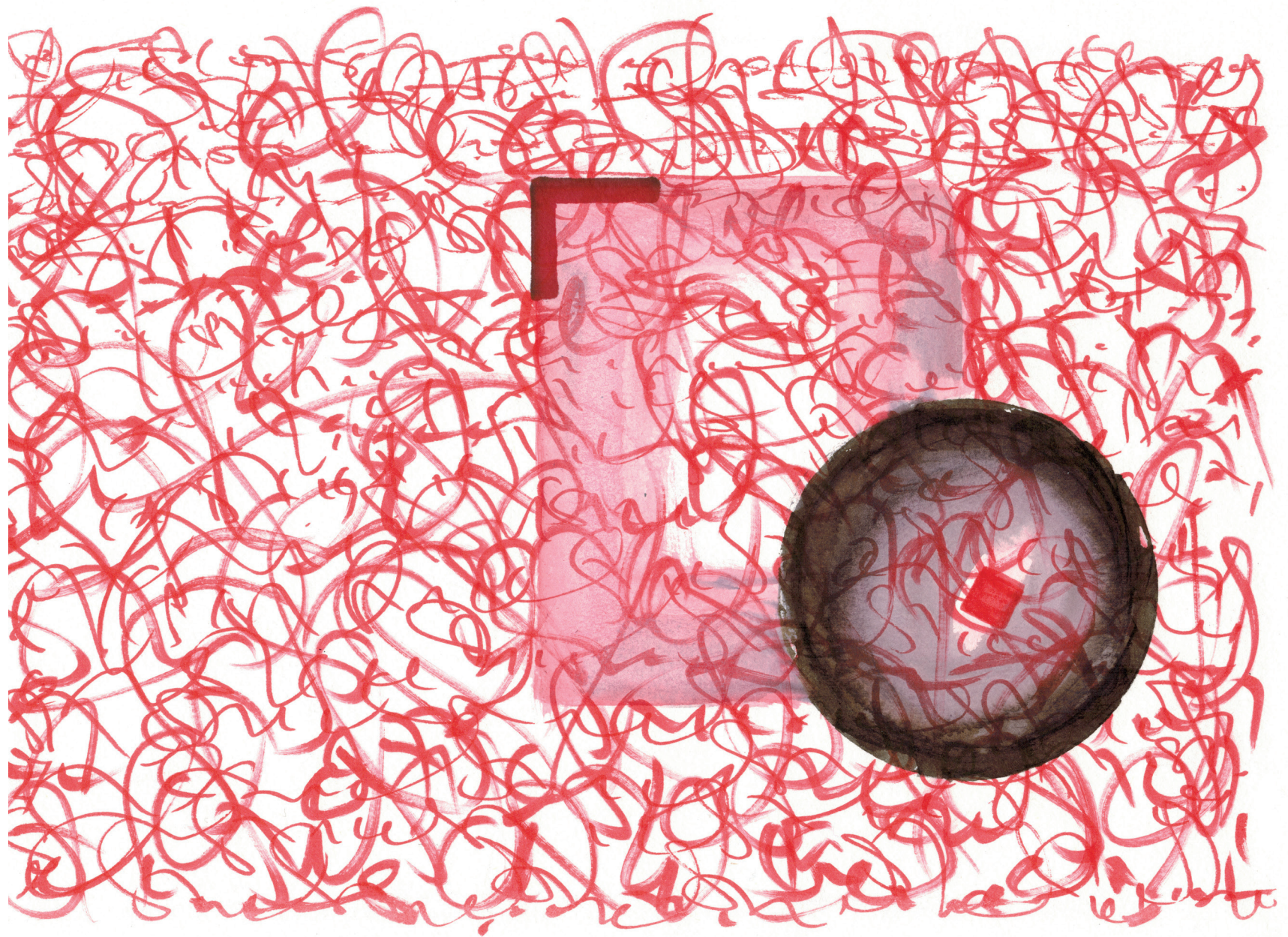


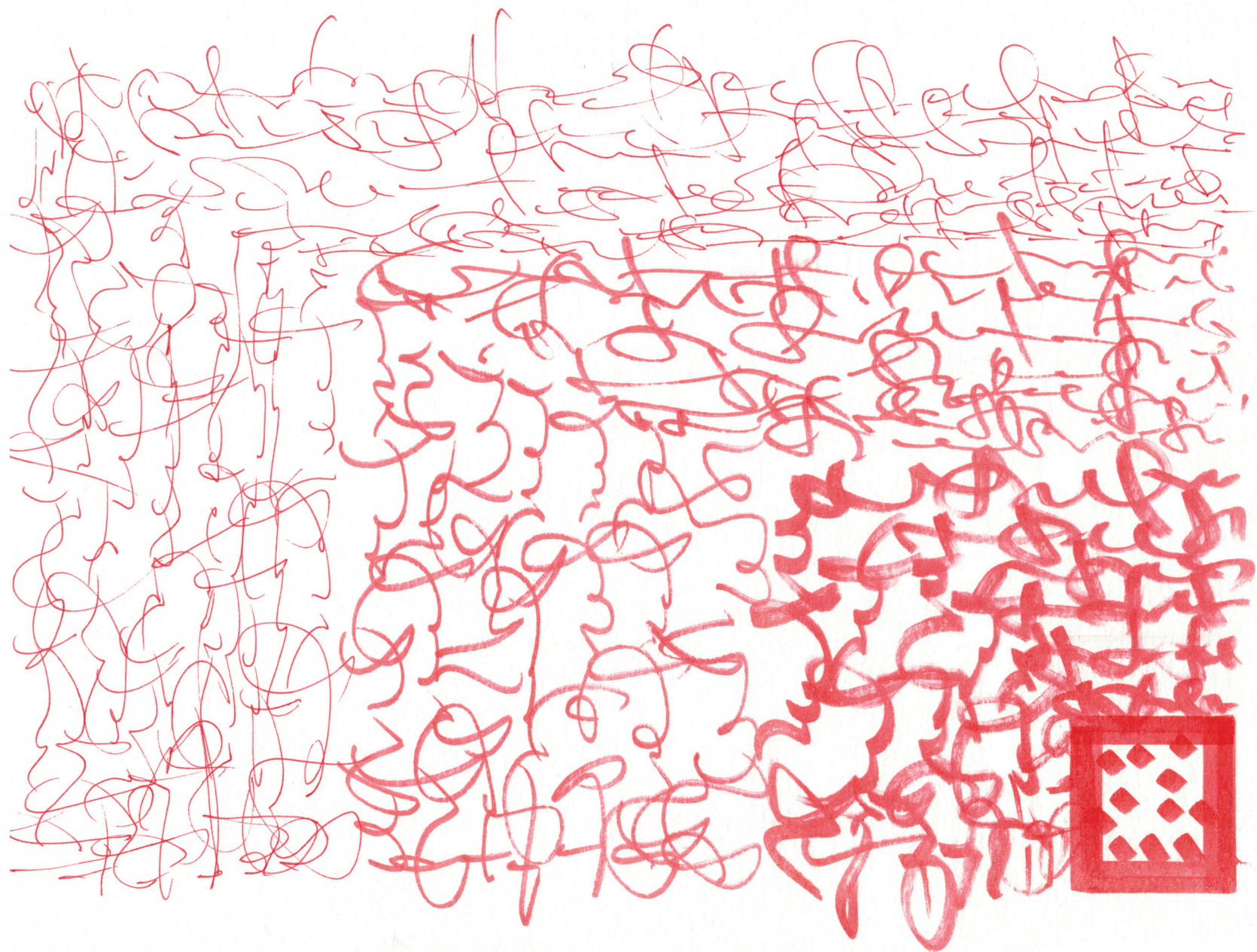






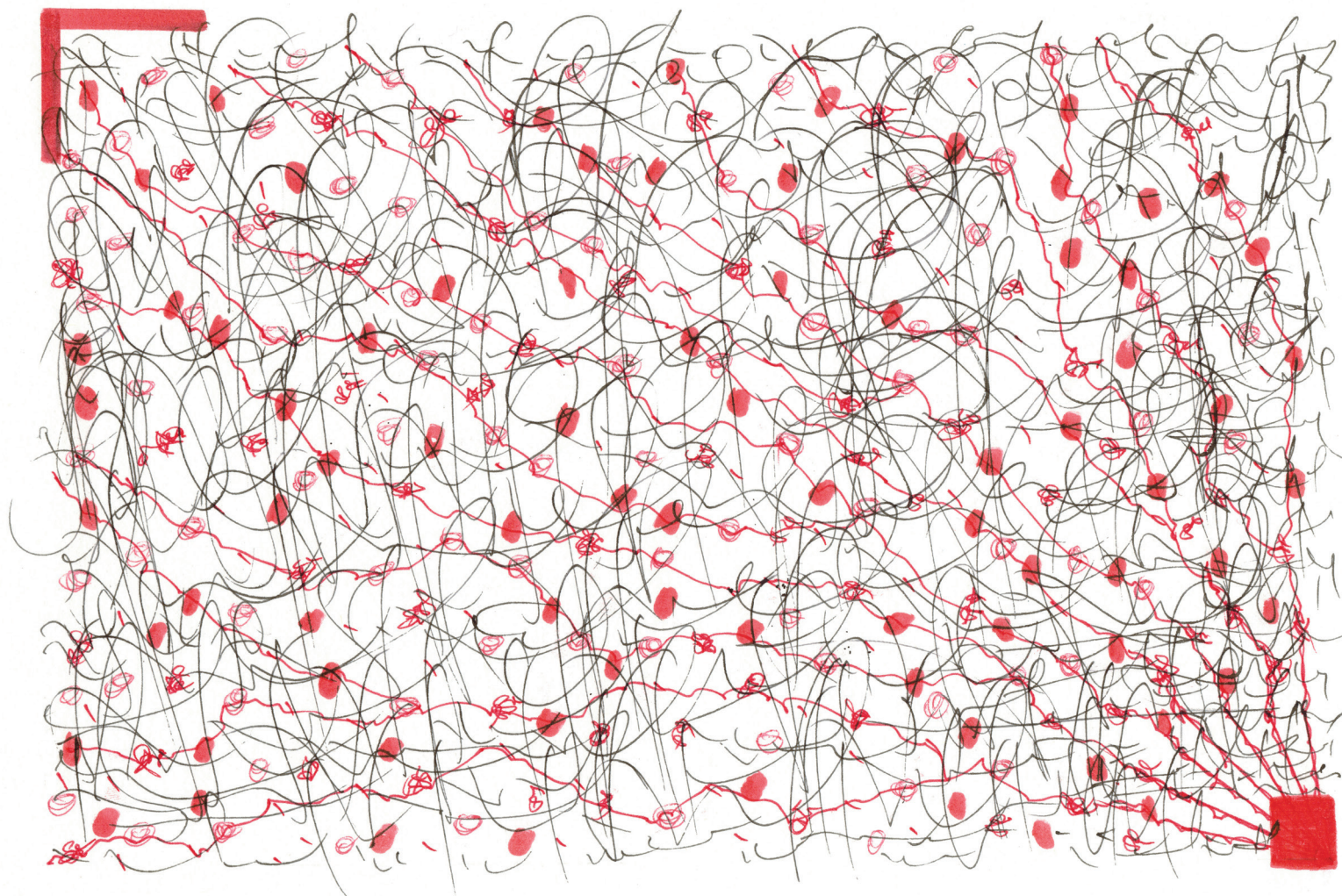


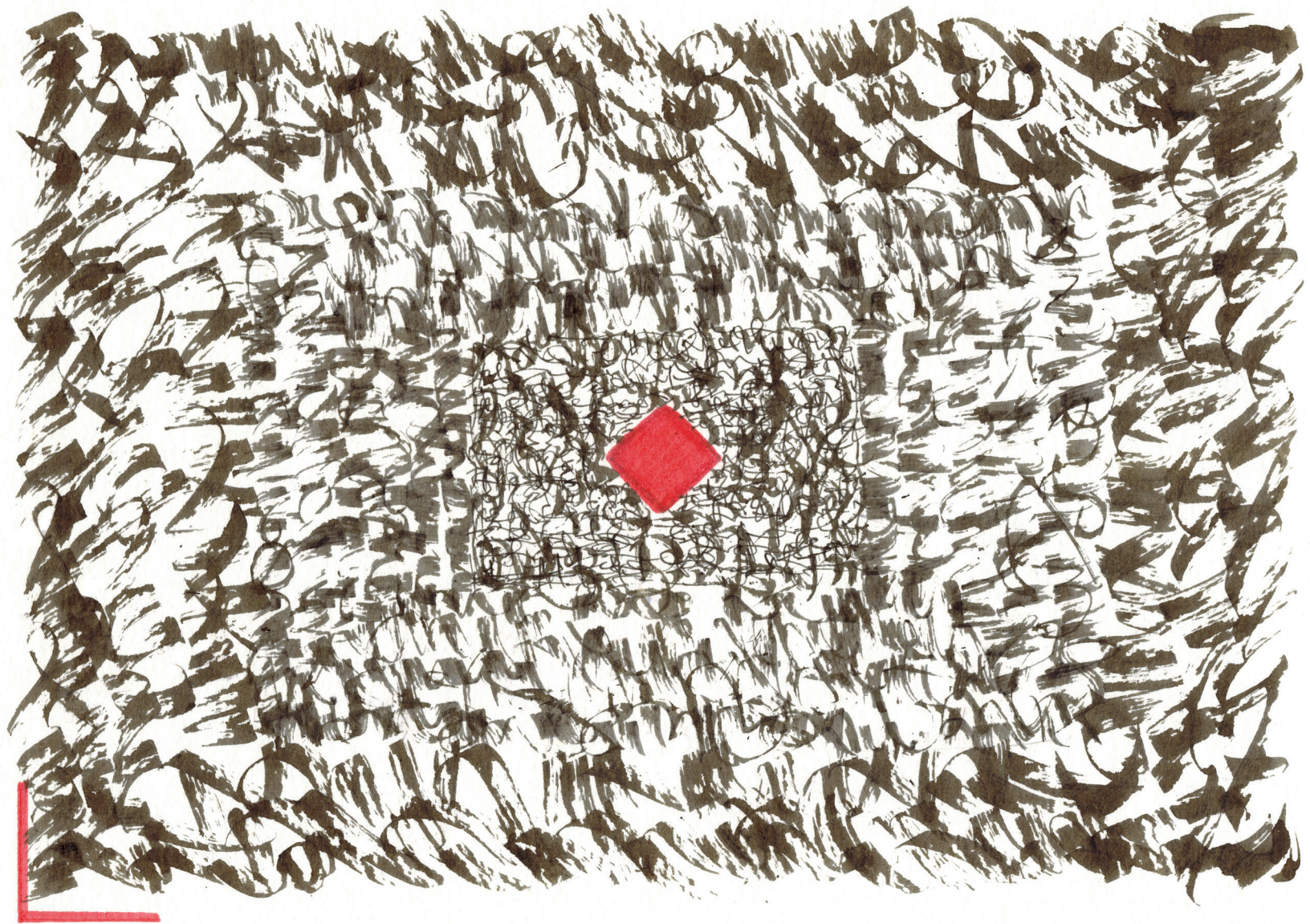


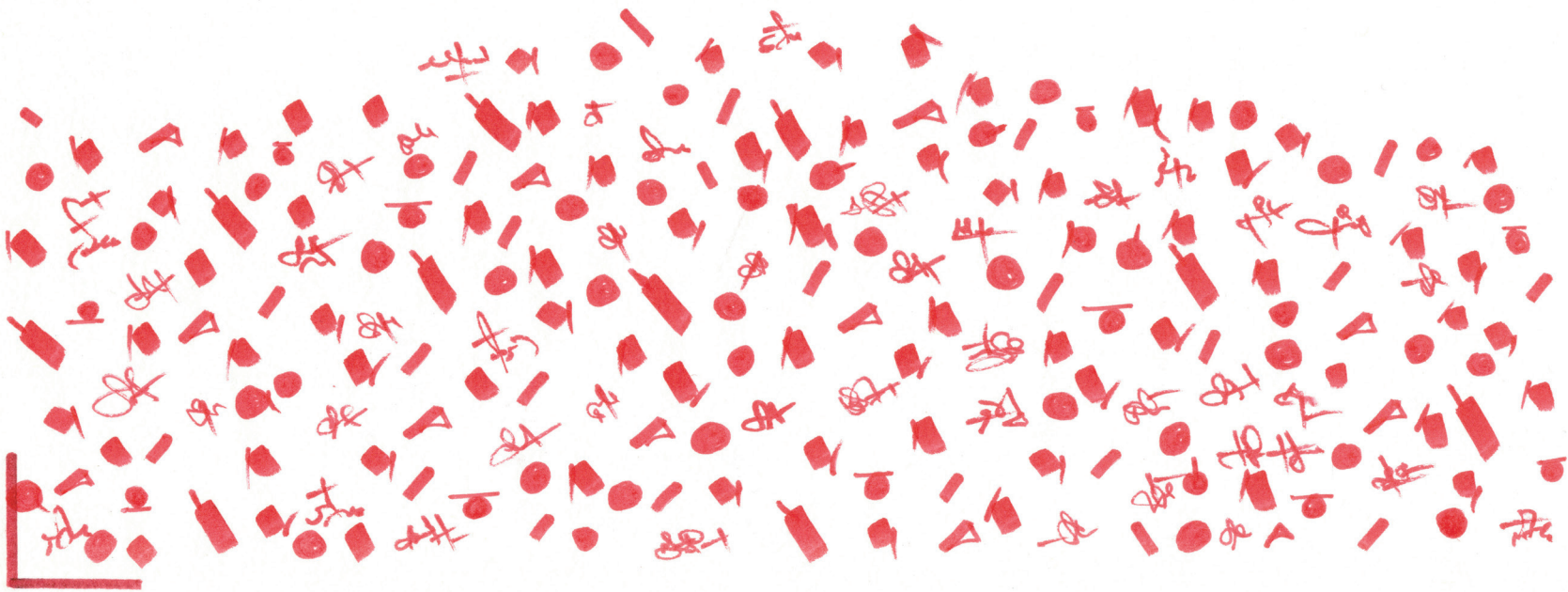


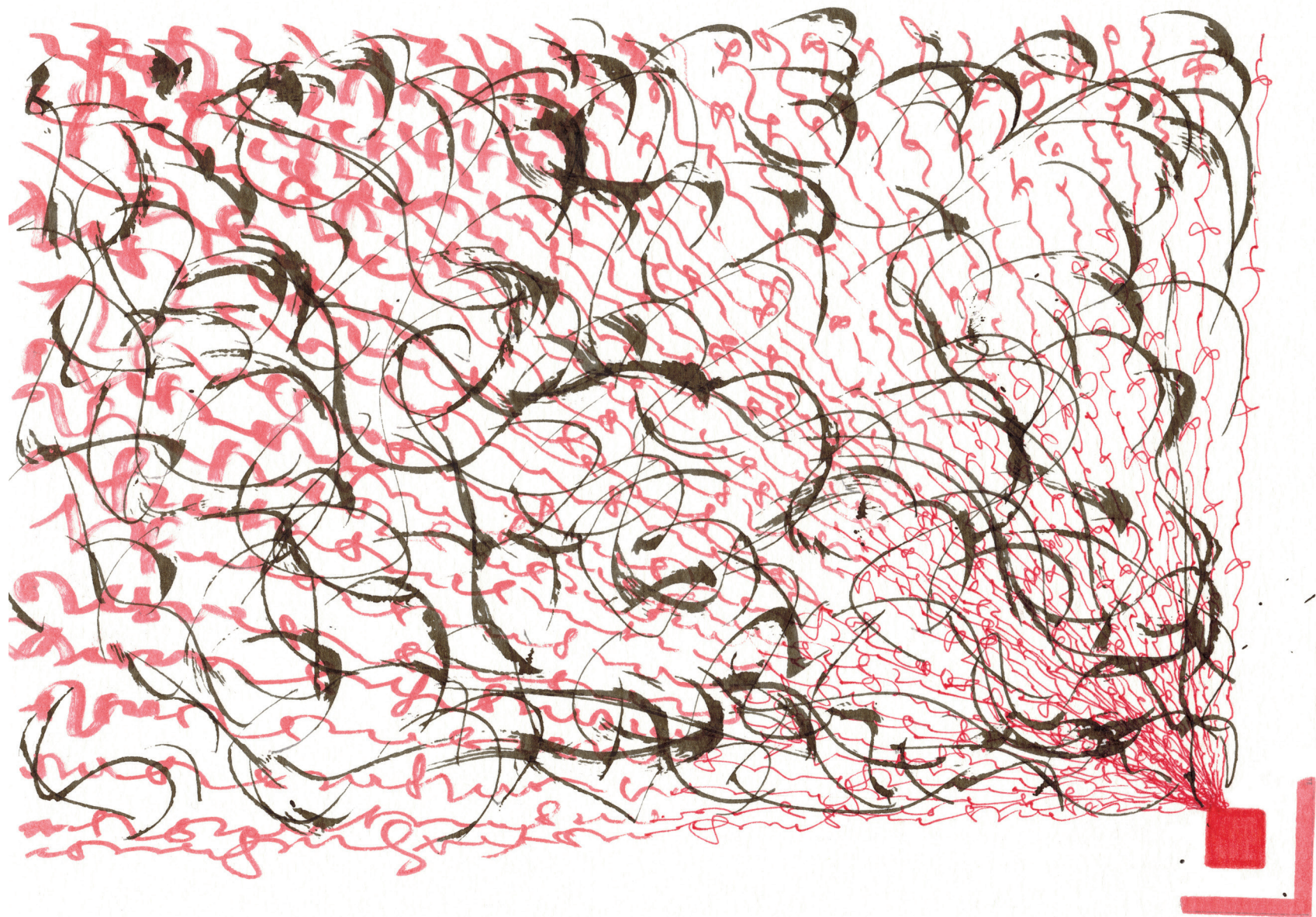


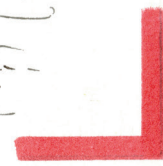
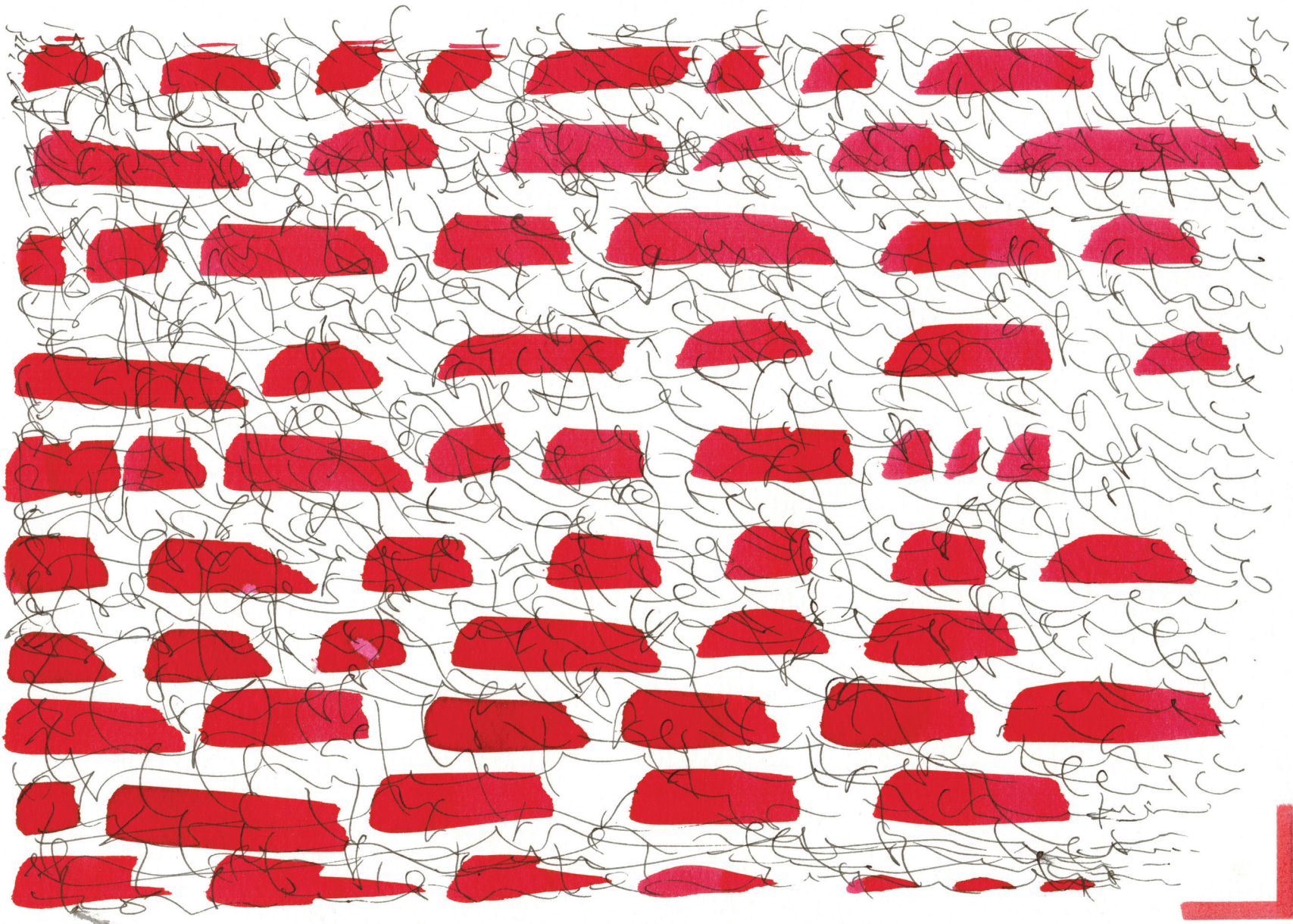


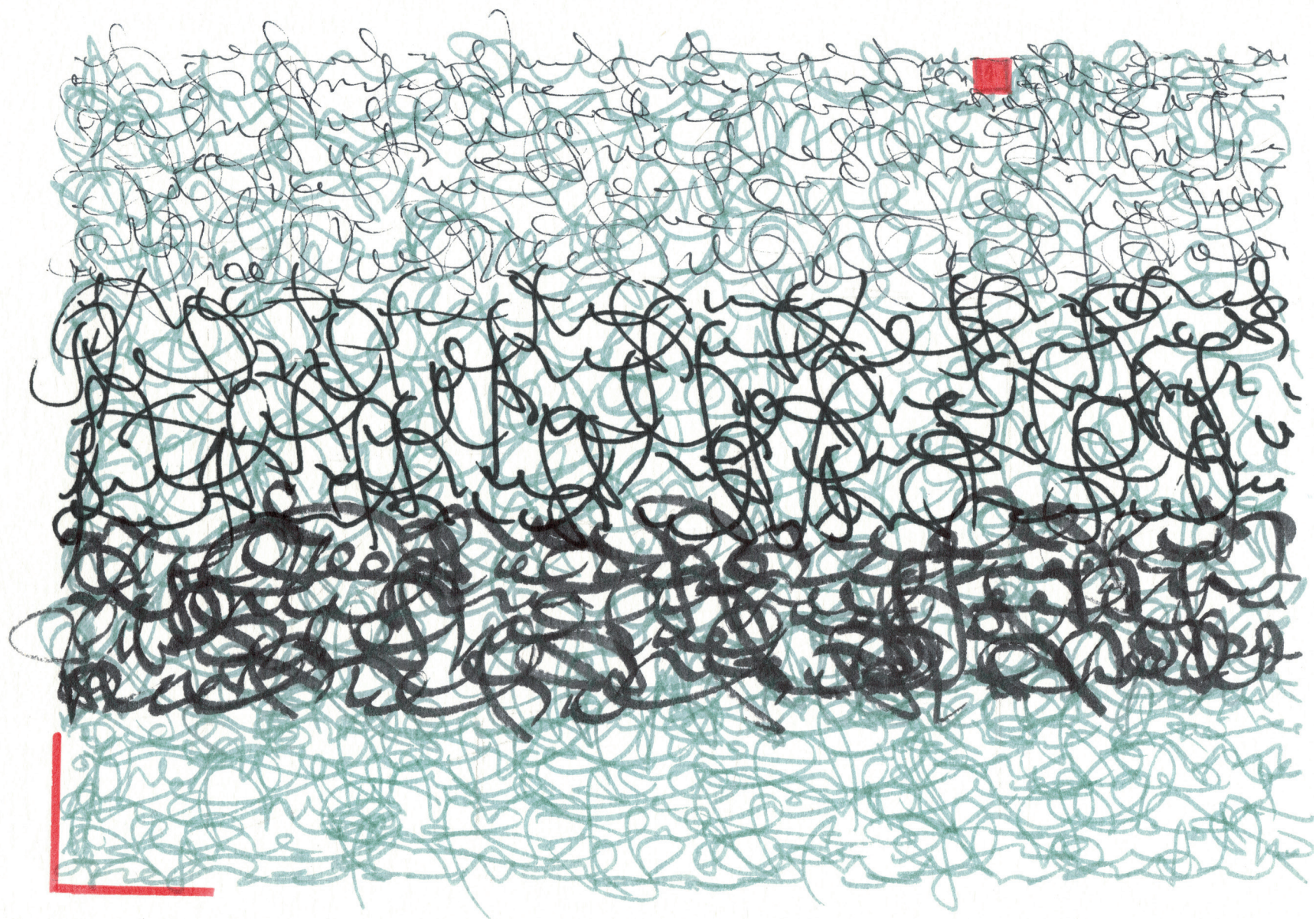


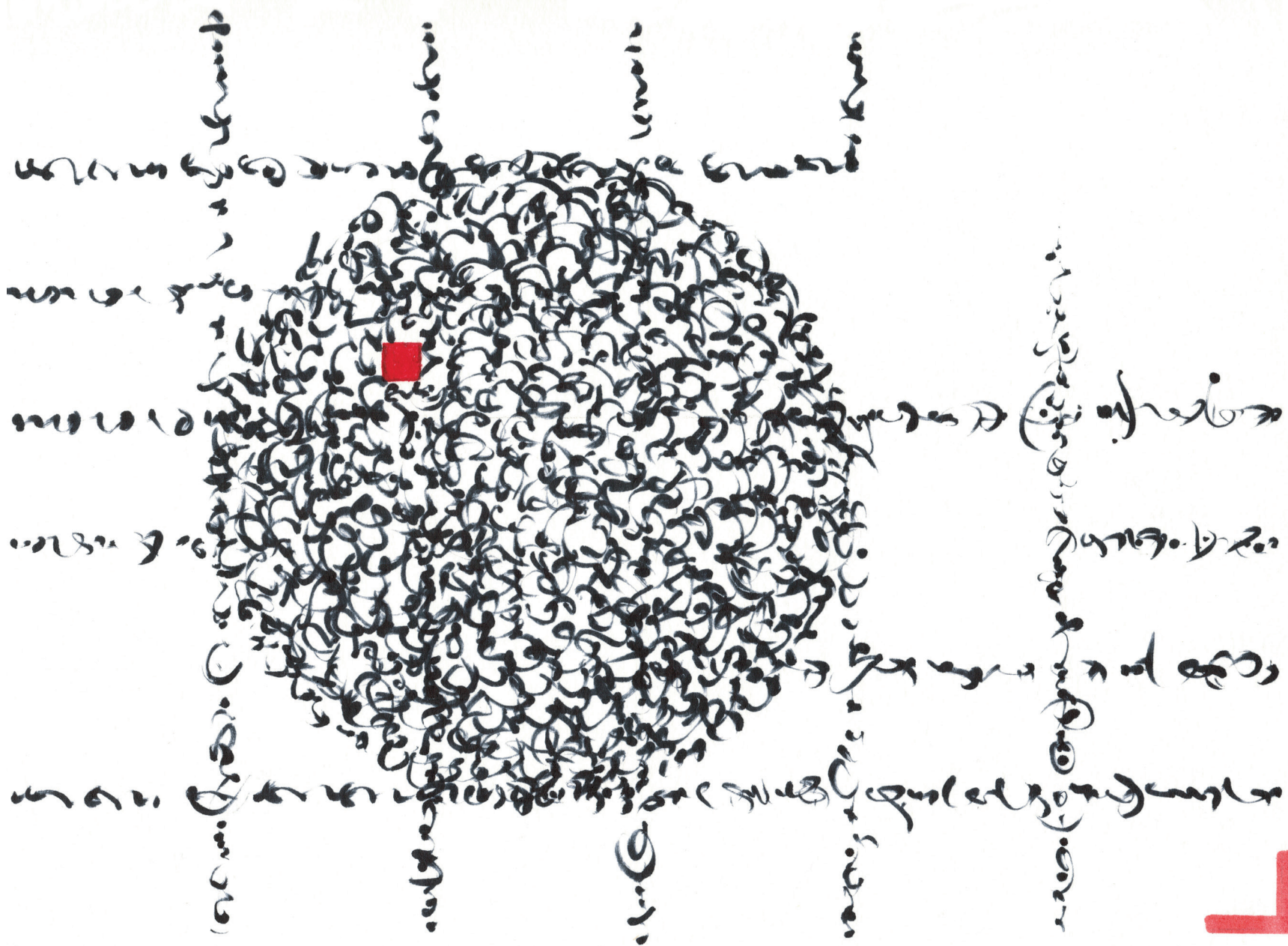




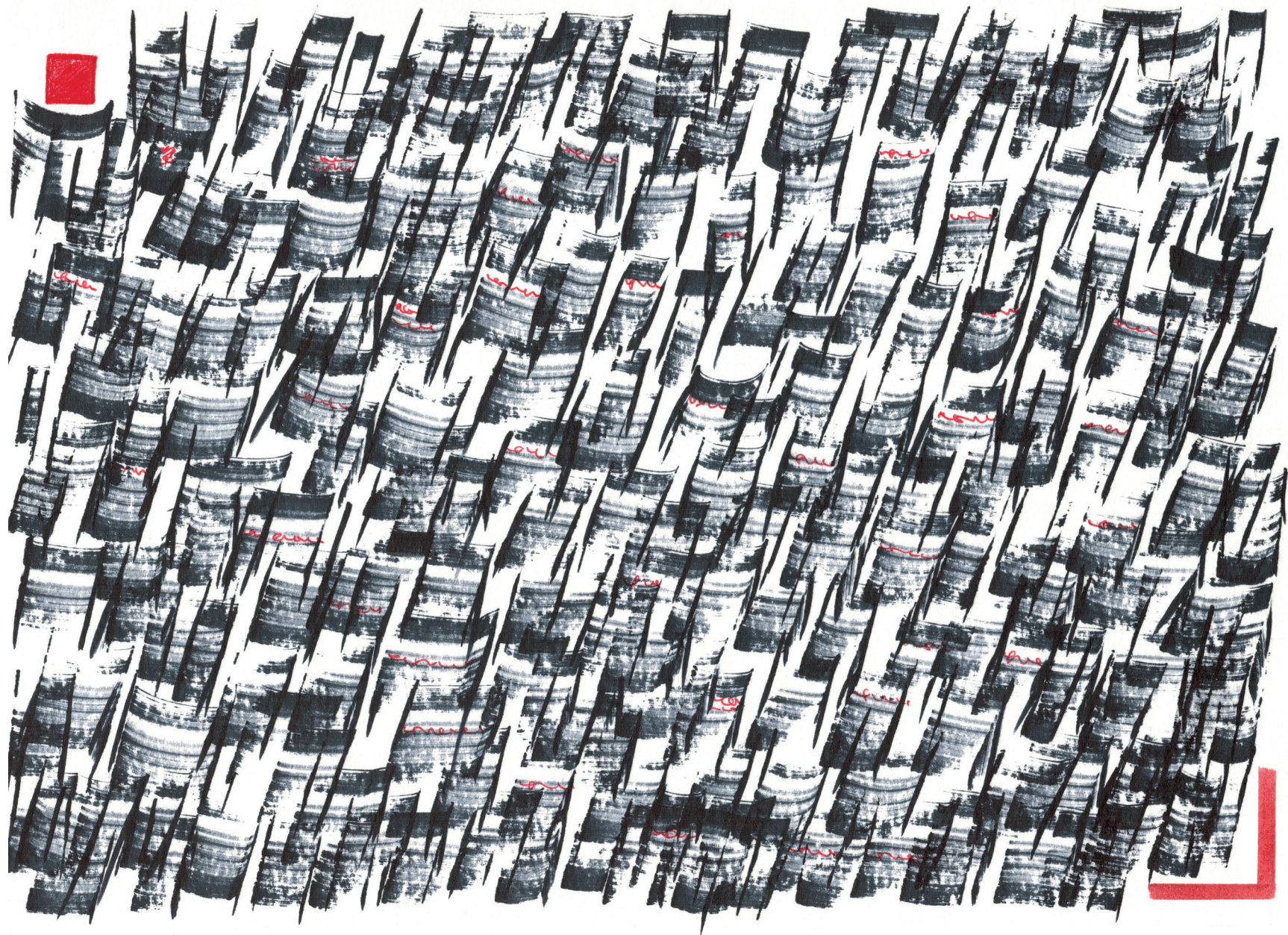








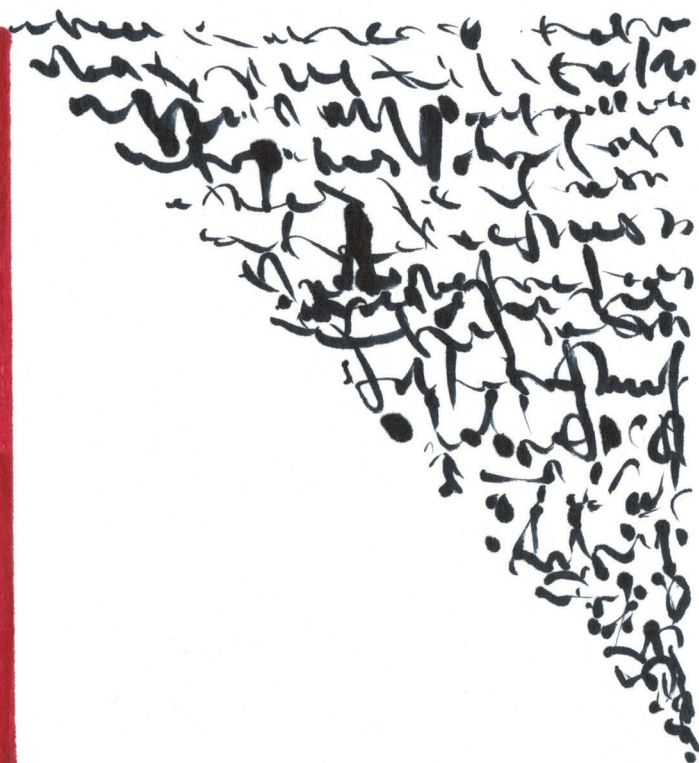
~~Dear Sir,~~
~~I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst.~~
~~and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.~~
~~I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours obedient servant,~~
~~Wm. L. G. [Signature]~~

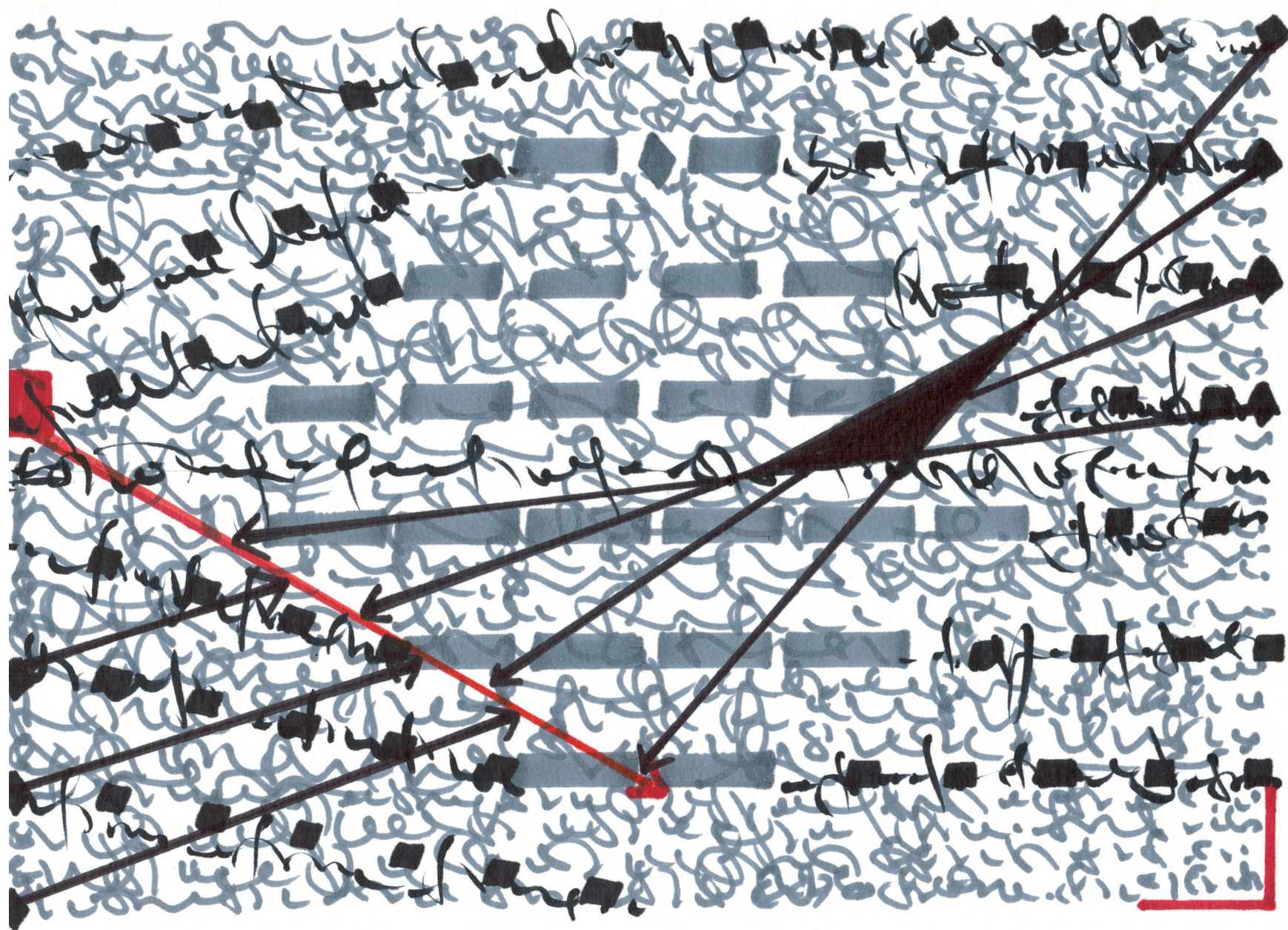




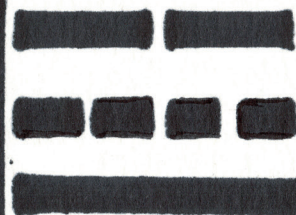
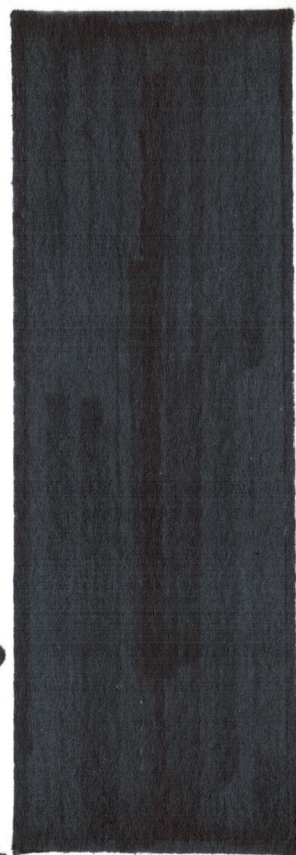
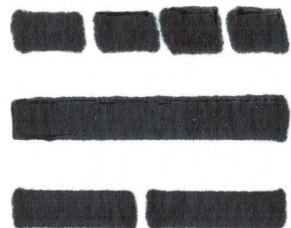








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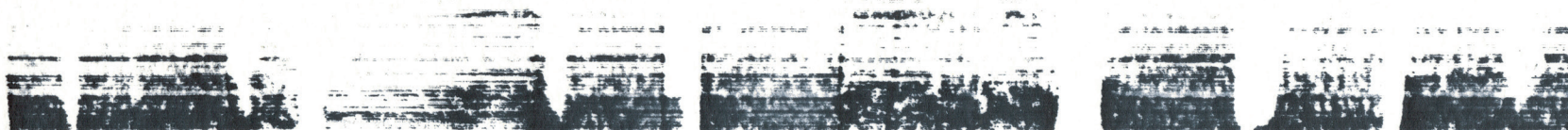
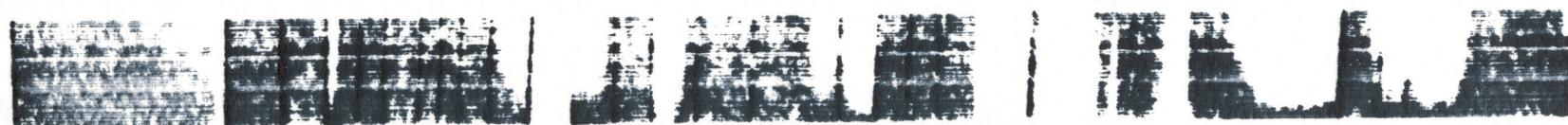
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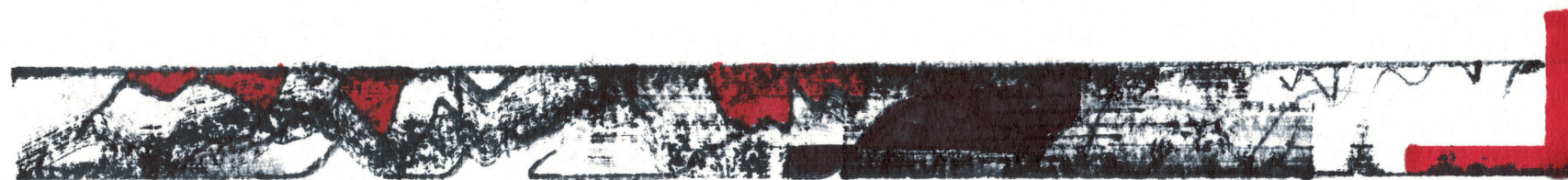
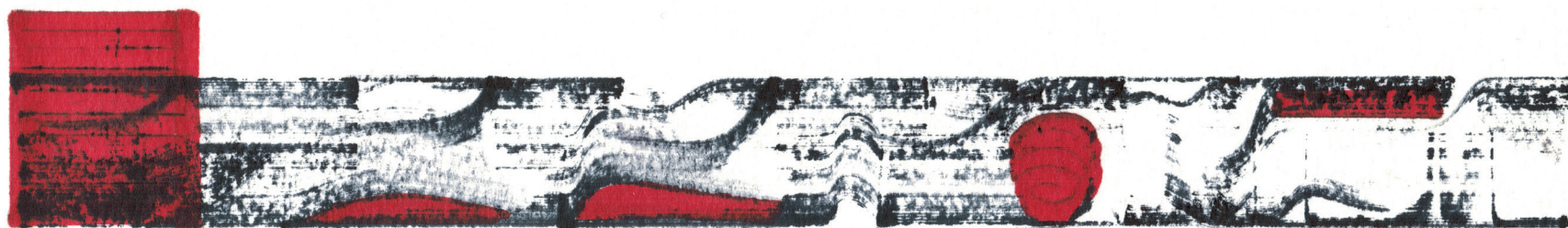
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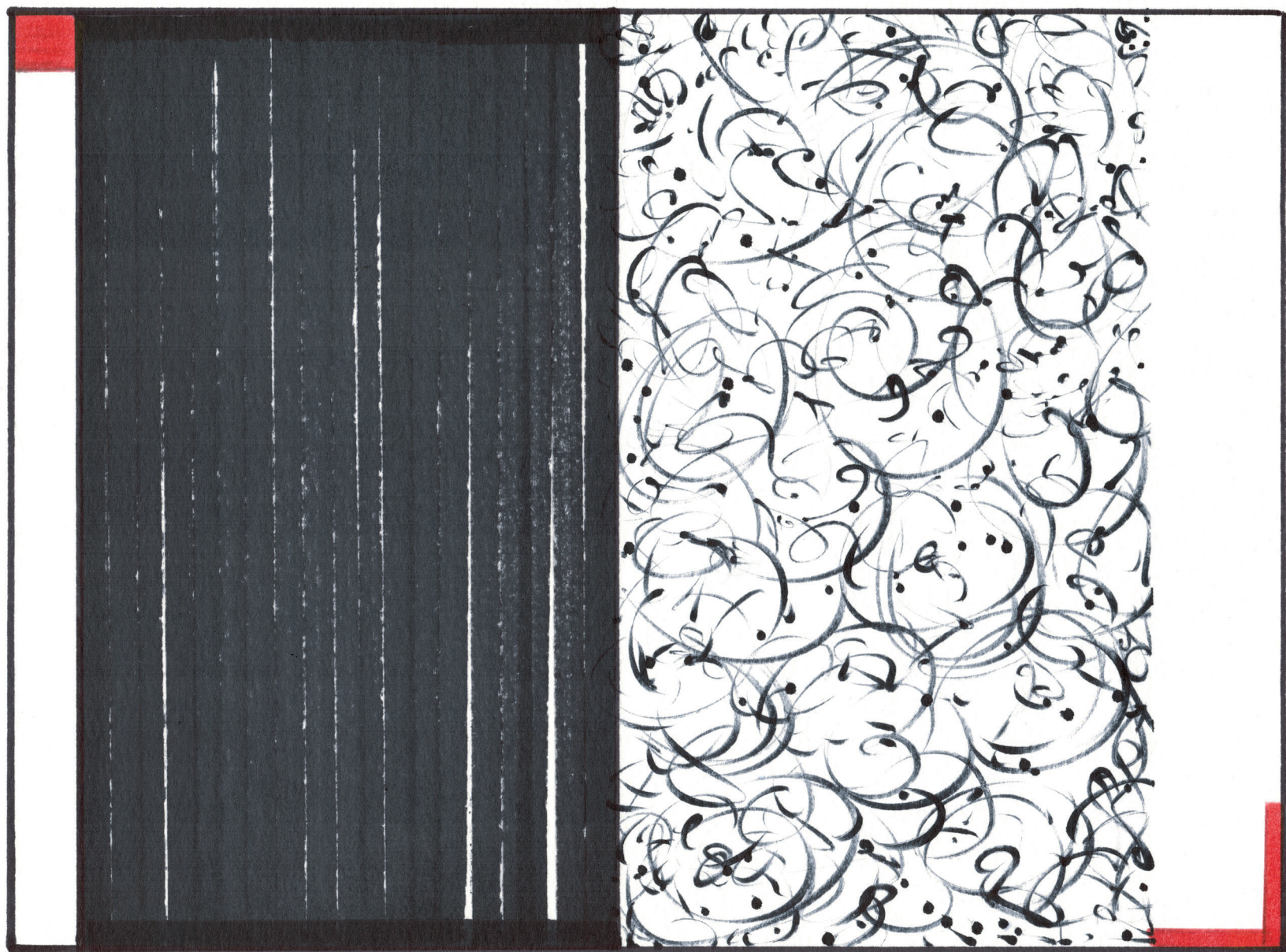
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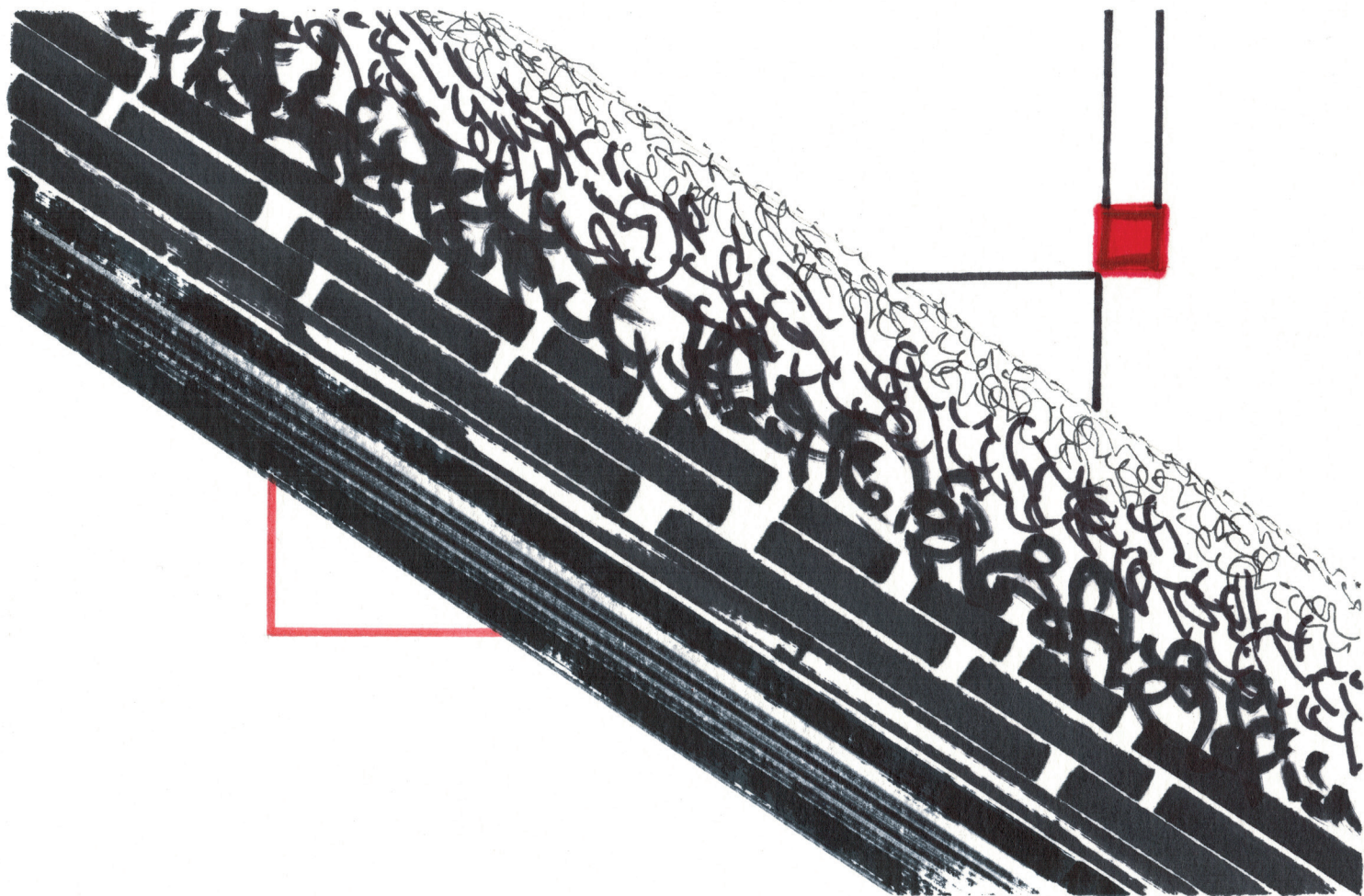
✓ I have heard from the police

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When red speaks in Dona Mayoora's wonderful series, she's often a plinth of a square and its far-off bracket; at other times she's fizzing or floating through the pages' other (black and white) choices. Although red is often sequestered here – and seems sad – she can at least, Dona Mayoora demonstrates, be read/red. At the same time, this poetic work elegantly and powerfully dismisses the notion of the literal to show how vividly things speak no matter who listens. What a pleasure to meet this idea so variously and beautifully rendered. Hello, red, hello – and thank you.

~ Terri Witek

When the answer to the question is, it's seismographic writing of your radio waves, the question must be, what is it exactly that emanates from these red boxes? This book holds a sequence of scripted energy broadcasts that originate directly from these red boxes. The transmissions contain various codes and markings that create compositions that embody a blend of Suprematism and Brion Gysin tendencies. Dona Mayoora's talent lies in her use of an Asemic cursive hand and smart balanced construction. Each piece is a visual slant rhyme, is a building waiting for its viewer to inhabit it. Go in, rummage about.

~ Nico Vassilakis