

ANA MARIA MICU – LEFT HAND TO DISTANT VIEW

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By Maria

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The last few months have been eventful in terms of my professional life, with many challenges and nights on call riddled with anxiety as I am completing my last big rotation before I return back to my beloved Endocrinology department. I think you'd find it hard to believe, but the one thing that kept me going was knowing that at some point I would be able to take some days off and visit Bucharest and the many exhibitions I would read about online. My main goal was to not miss Ana Maria Micu's *Left Hand To Distant View* exhibition at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest and, as fate would have it, in the same period the artist had one more exhibition at the Institute of The Present.

Ana Maria Micu is a nurturer. And I'm not just making this observation based on the vast array of plants that thrive under her careful guidance and the fact she treats each artistic medium she chooses with utmost reverence. In the process of discovering the closest version of the habitat the artist created in her studio, the whole experience felt as a warm embrace, that soothed away all my fears and unrest.



Detail of restraint and seclusion. ... On the other hand, 2022, acrylic and acrylic inks on linen, 190 x 91 cm.



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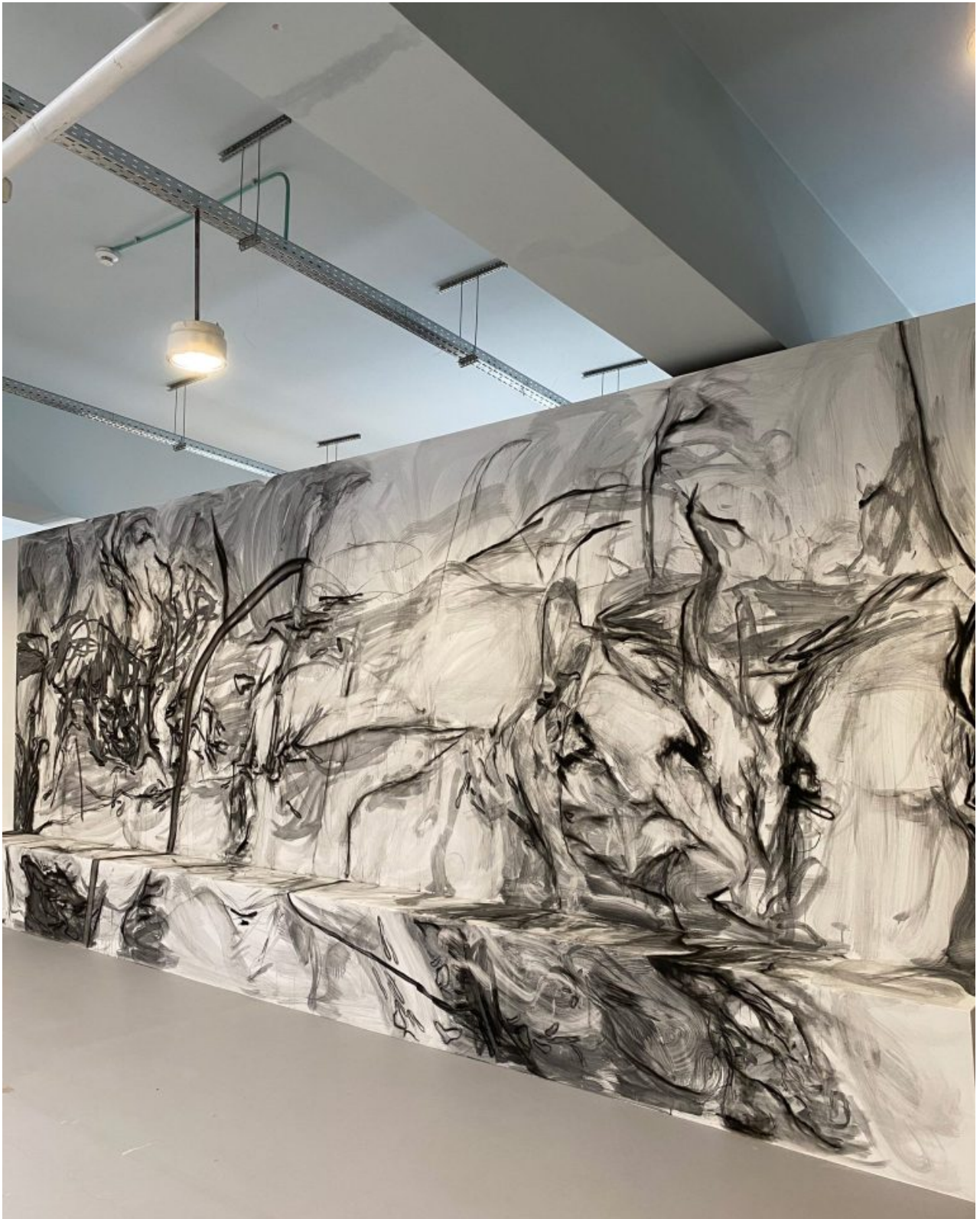


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I have written about Ana Maria Micu and her artistic practice before, if you want a brief introduction you can start by reading my account [here](#). It is, however, a completely different situation, as the first time around I based my research on [her artist website](#) which thoroughly documents the complete body of work. No matter how much we owe to the internet for facilitating the discovery of artists, exhibitions and of providing us paths to reaching out, actually seeing the exhibition in person has once again reminded me that you cannot fully embrace contemporary art without also physically being there. The

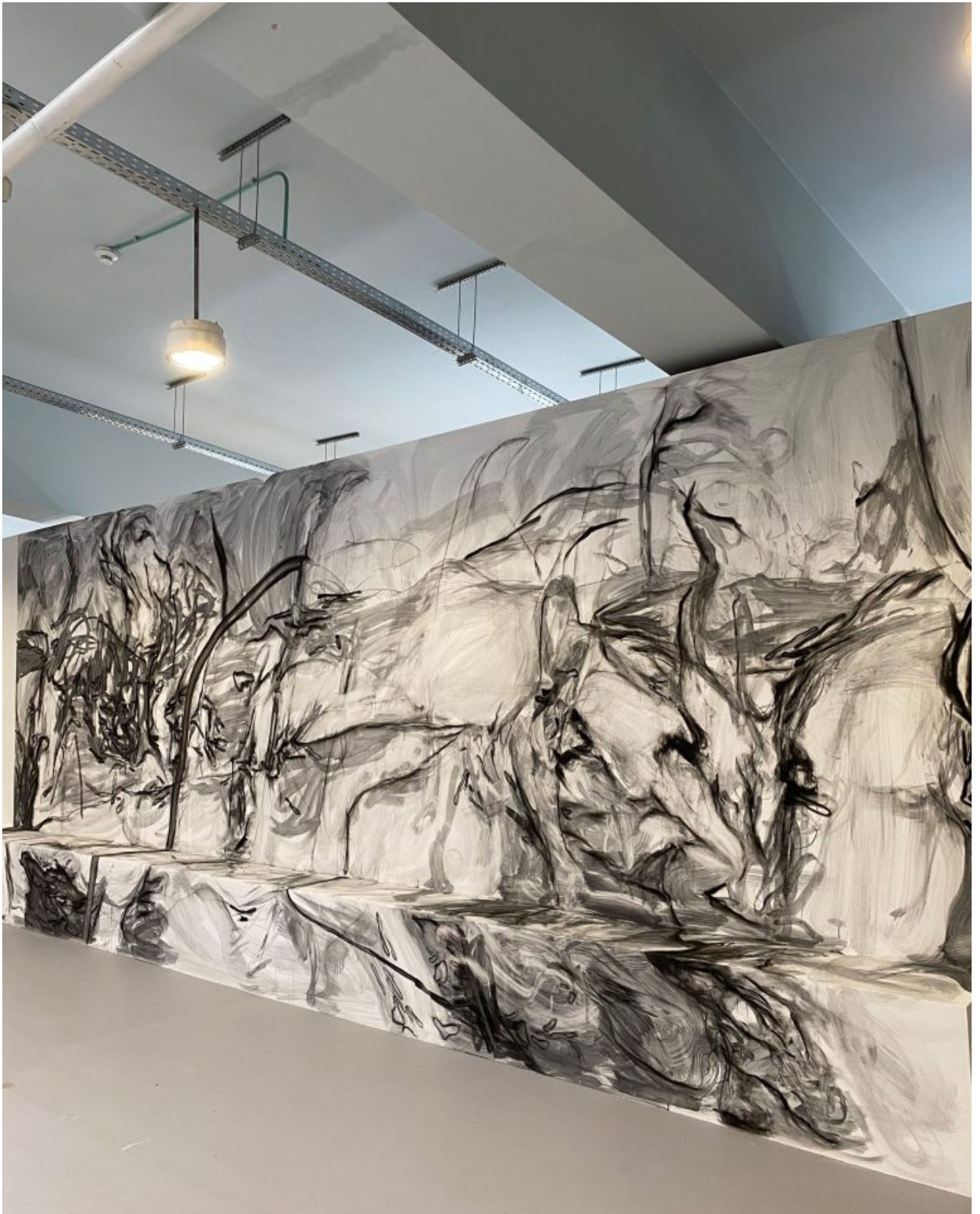
murals created on-site specifically for the exhibition generated an atmosphere that I cannot manage to properly put into words. The loose figuration employed for them called for many interpretations – my partner saw them as various plants, an extension of the vegetation that lives in the artist’s studio and which is also masterfully depicted on the canvases, while my mind surprisingly went into a reverie mode, loosing myself between all the lines and tones, feeling like the whole wall I was facing had just become a big pacifying hug.













Installation view, Left Hand to Distant View

I also found myself completely absorbed into *restraint and seclusion*. ... *On the other hand*, a painting depicting a small botanical universe on the artist's hallway. Leaving aside the fact that having my own indoor garden still seems like a faraway dream, and that the highlight of my week was having one of my plants finally blossom again after two years of no success, I got very emotional because I was instantly transported back to my childhood, as my late grandma had the same furniture set. She was my favorite person as I was growing up and I just never expected when I stepped inside the museum that day that somehow I would end up recollecting all those happy memories. I don't know how many times during the course of your life you just encounter works of art that just make you not want to leave a space because that means you are parting ways with them, but I had that distinctive feeling regarding this painting, while simultaneously my partner was experiencing the same situation, only towards *lifetime educational* ... *Viewed in this light*. I have seen the work exhibited before in a group show in Iasi and the composition still managed to mesmerize me just as much as the first time.



lifetime educational ... Viewed in this light, 2022, acrylic and acrylic inks on linen, 120 x 80 cm.



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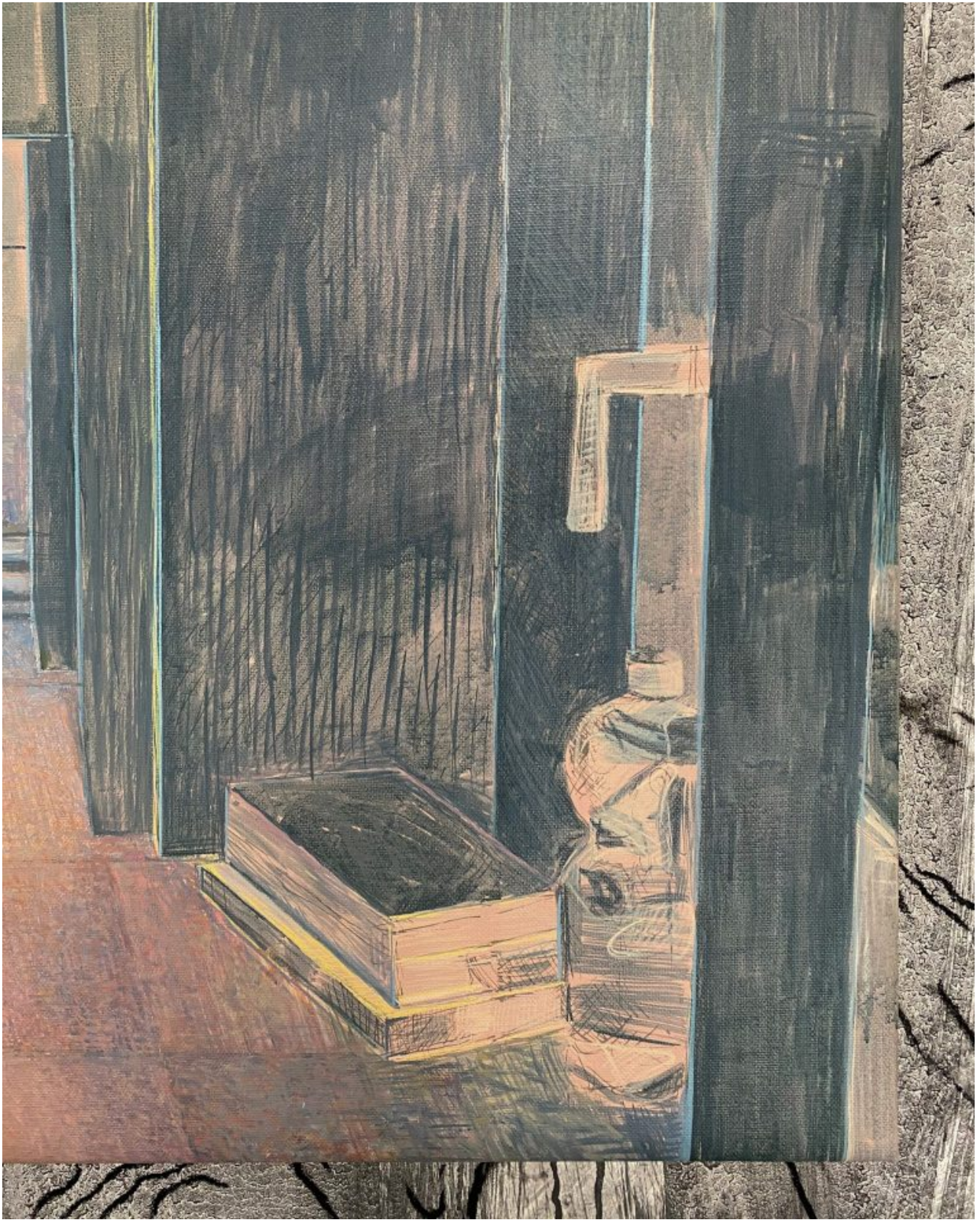


Left Hand, 2022, oil-based charcoal on toned canvas stretched on wood panel, 78 x 118 x 4 cm., and digital photograph on ceramic plate, 24 x 30 cm., variable placement

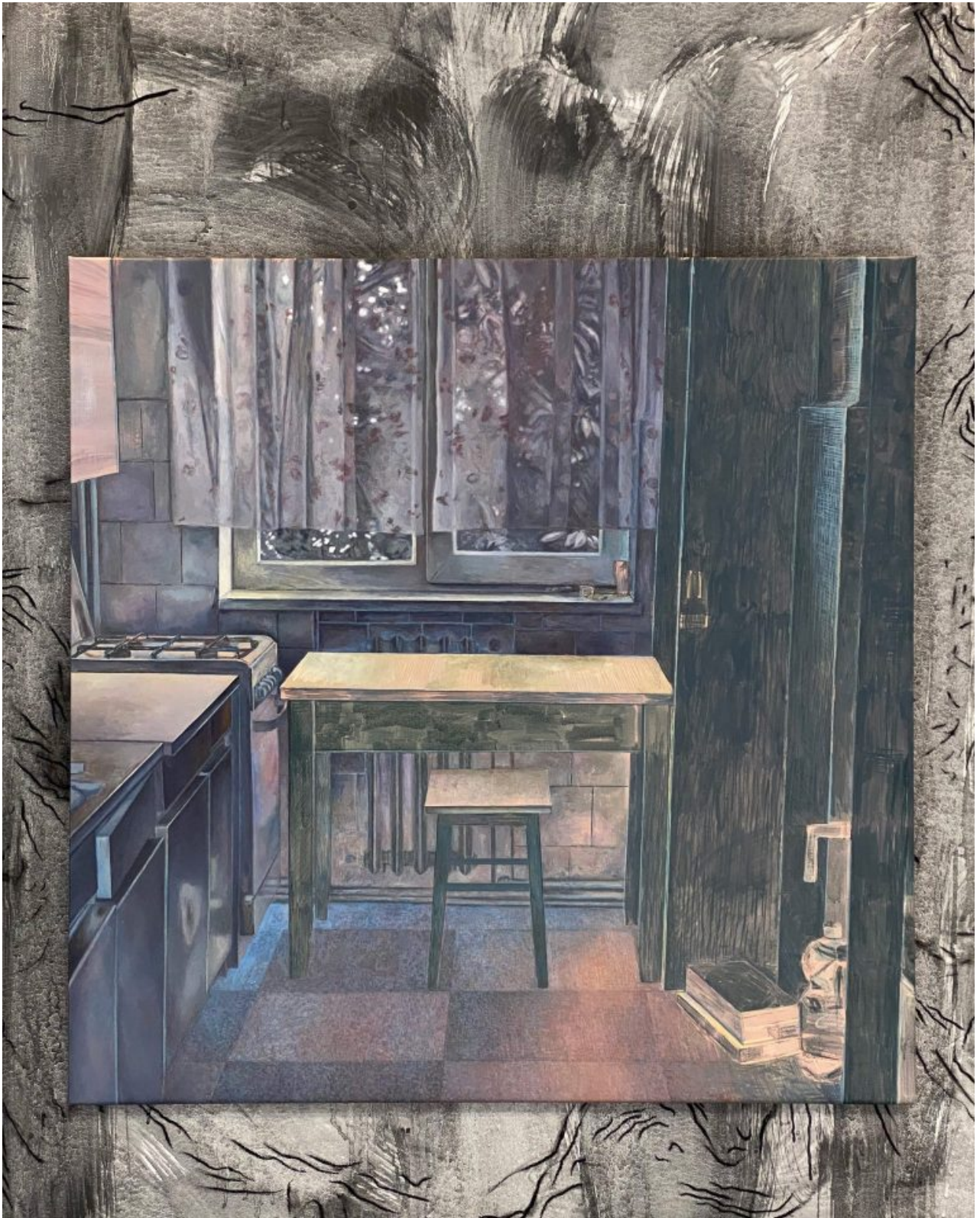
There aren't many artists who are willing to share what goes behind the closed doors of their studios. In the center of the space, you could find *Left Hand*, a work that started the concept of the exhibition. One day, as the artist was drawing the closest subject one can have- the other hand, she found herself lost in her train of thoughts, suddenly glancing in the background, seeing beyond what was supposed to be the focus. I found it extremely powerful that the murals created in the space managed to have the same impact on me- in

my distant view, my mind found all the reassurances it needed and I left there happy and calm. I imagine other people found all kinds of different answers – in the end, good art is always guiding you towards introspection.

Anyone who will step inside the main room will understand that Ana Maria Micu willingly opened the doors of her studio to the audience. In *blurry and like a . . . seem to be attracted*, you will see how the kitchen looked initially when the artist took residence in the space. I still can't get over how the curtains have been painted, I spent a lot of time admiring them, this may be my favorite color palette. You'll also notice all different angles of the main space she creates in, rendered in oil-based charcoal drawings on canvas. Then you'll see two small rooms and once you step inside, you will be granted a special invitation into this universe, which takes everything further. There is a video which features the artist as she was drawing *Left Hand*. For someone not having remotely any decent skill when it comes to this activity, such as myself, it was truly enthralling to watch and naturally, the first thing I did after watching the process was to go back to the artwork and admire it in a completely new light. You can see the video yourself on the [artist's website](#).



Detail of blurry and like a . . . seem to be attracted, 2022, acrylic and acrylic inks on linen, 120 x 120 cm.



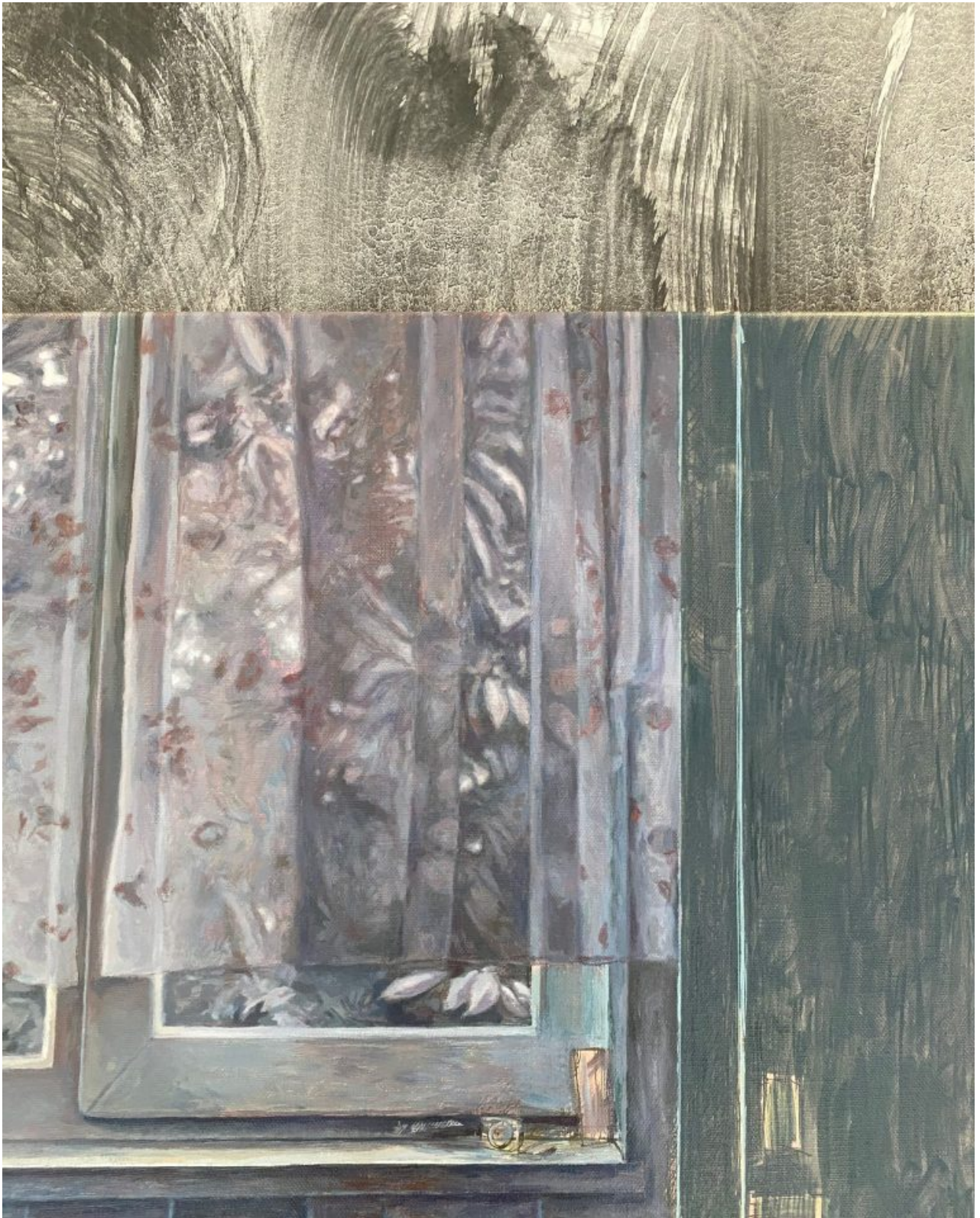
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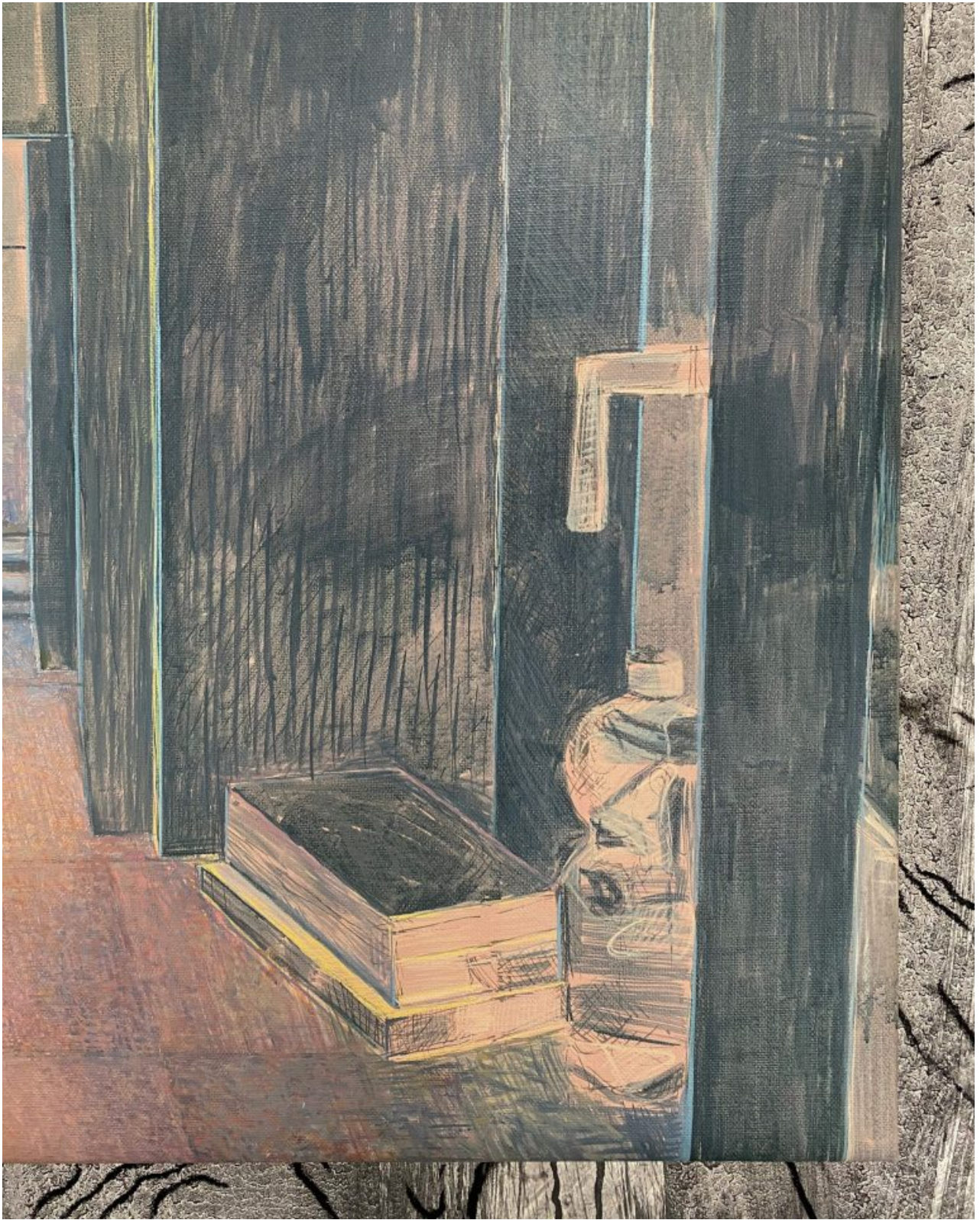
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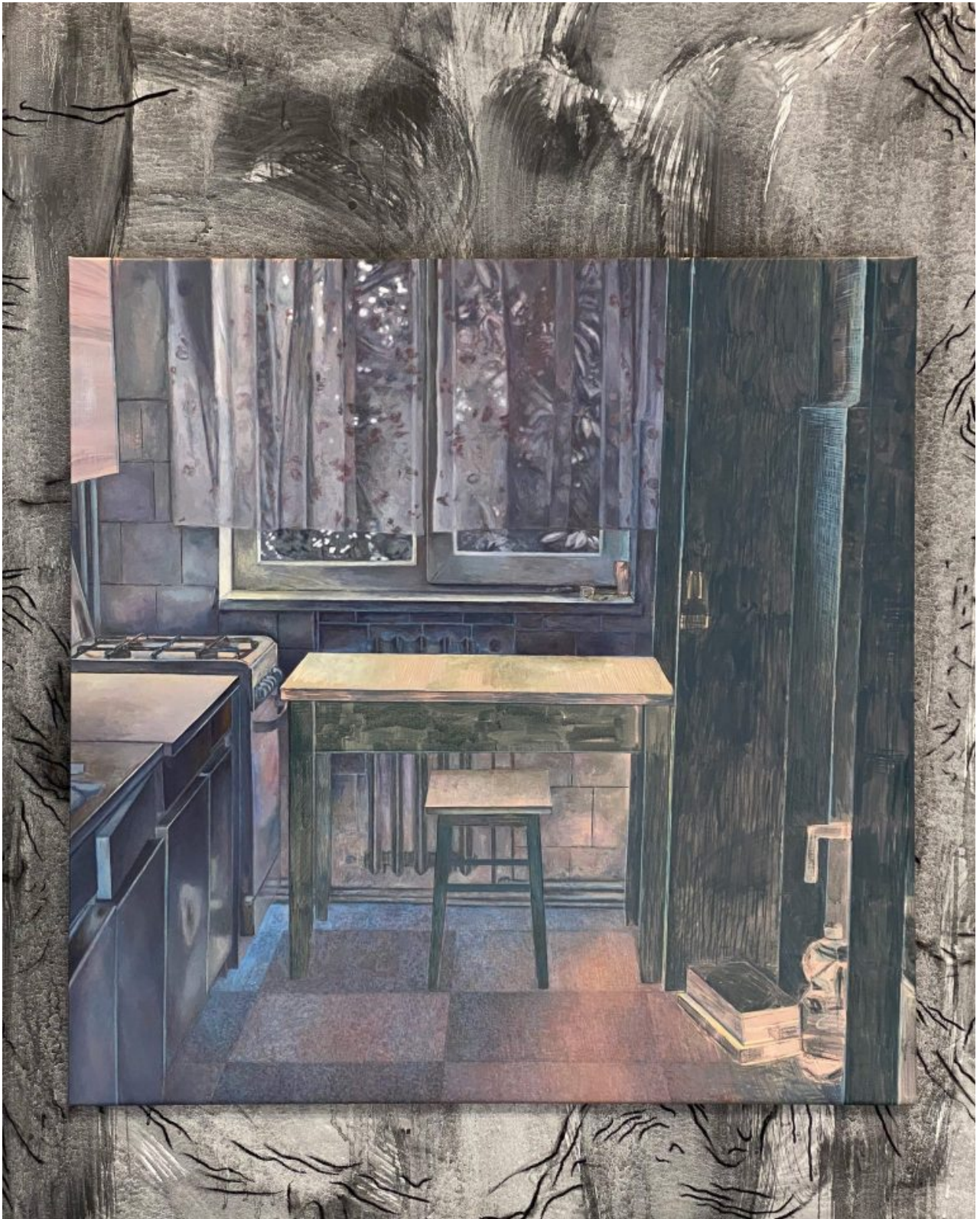
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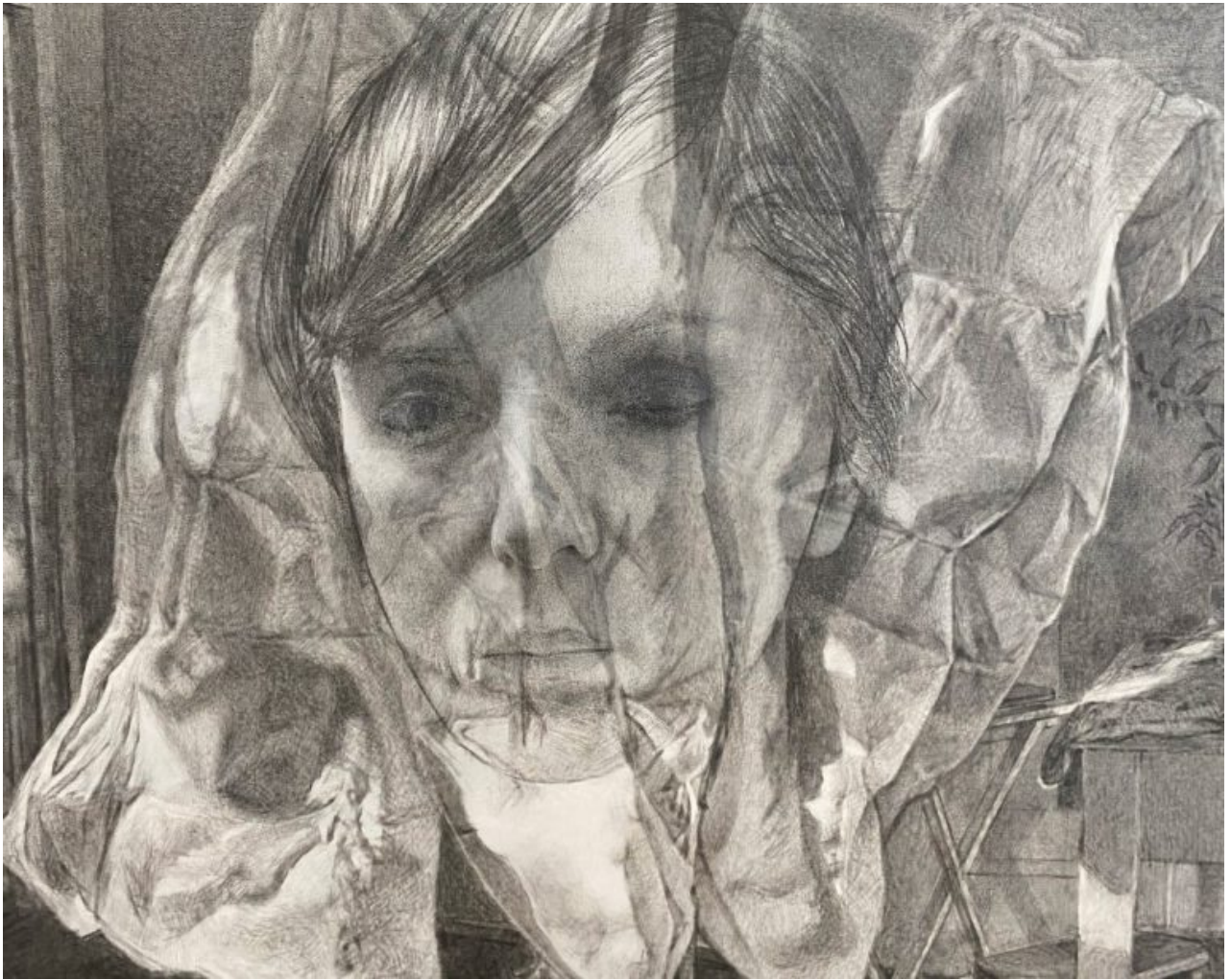
The last room features an animation which encompasses all the different scenarios you may have envisioned as you were discovering the charcoal drawings featuring the artist in the midst of working in her studio. Taking into consideration the fact you may have not seen them beforehand, I choose to include the drawings first, and right after the animation:



expansion joints The joints shall comply with the details, 2022, oil-based charcoal on toned canvas,
125 x 185 cm.



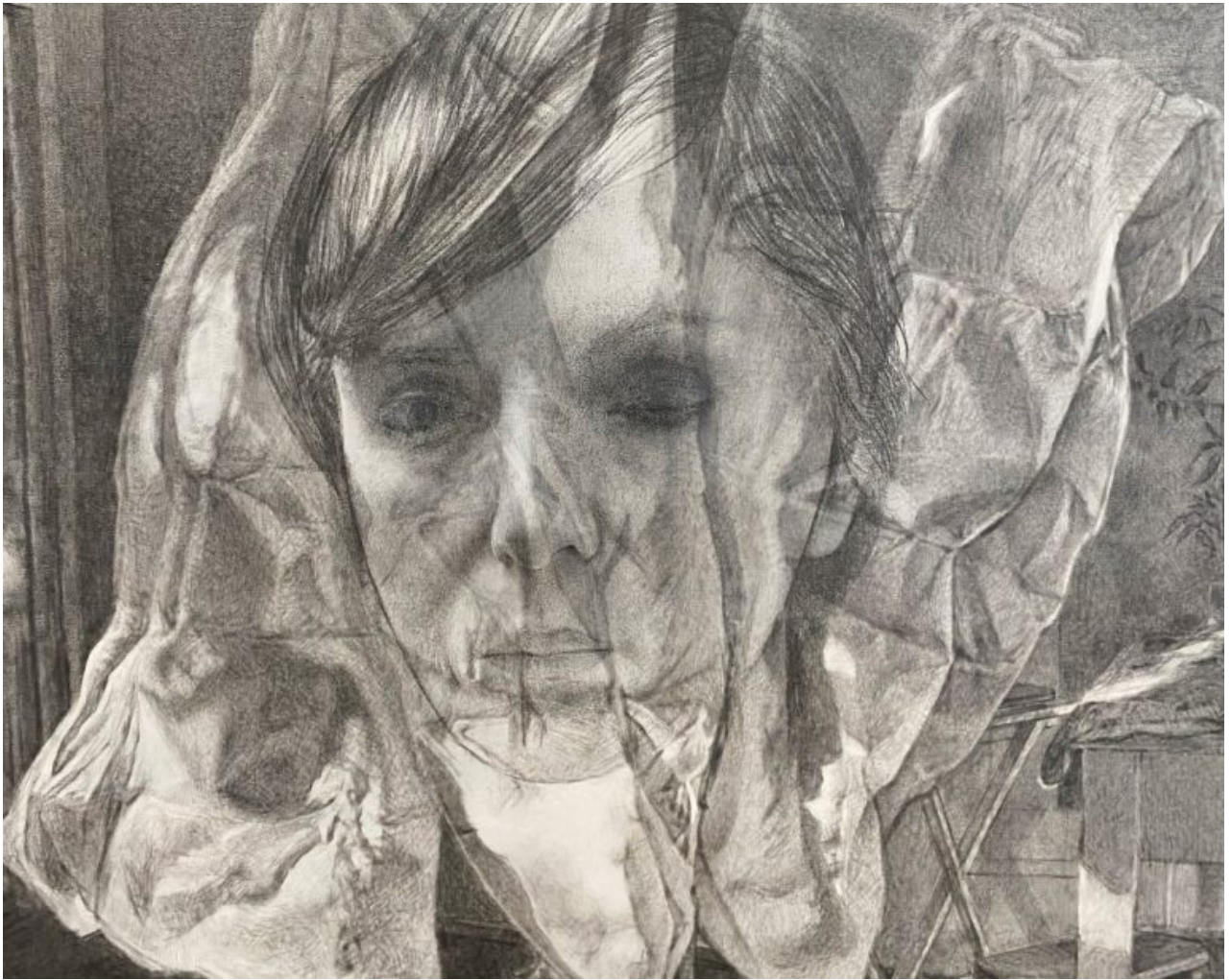
services due to ... events such as thunderstorms, 2022, oil-based charcoal on toned canvas, 175 x 115 cm.



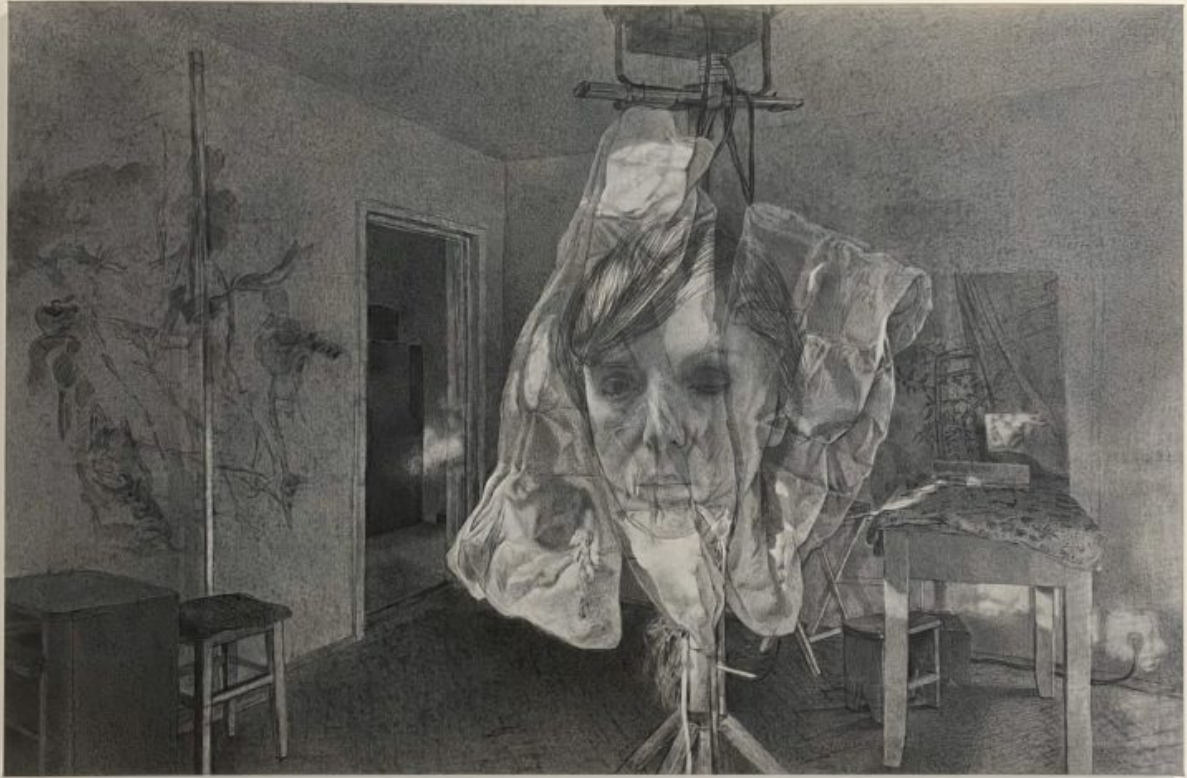
indoors during ... Ghost, 2022, oil-based charcoal on toned canvas, 175 x 115 cm.



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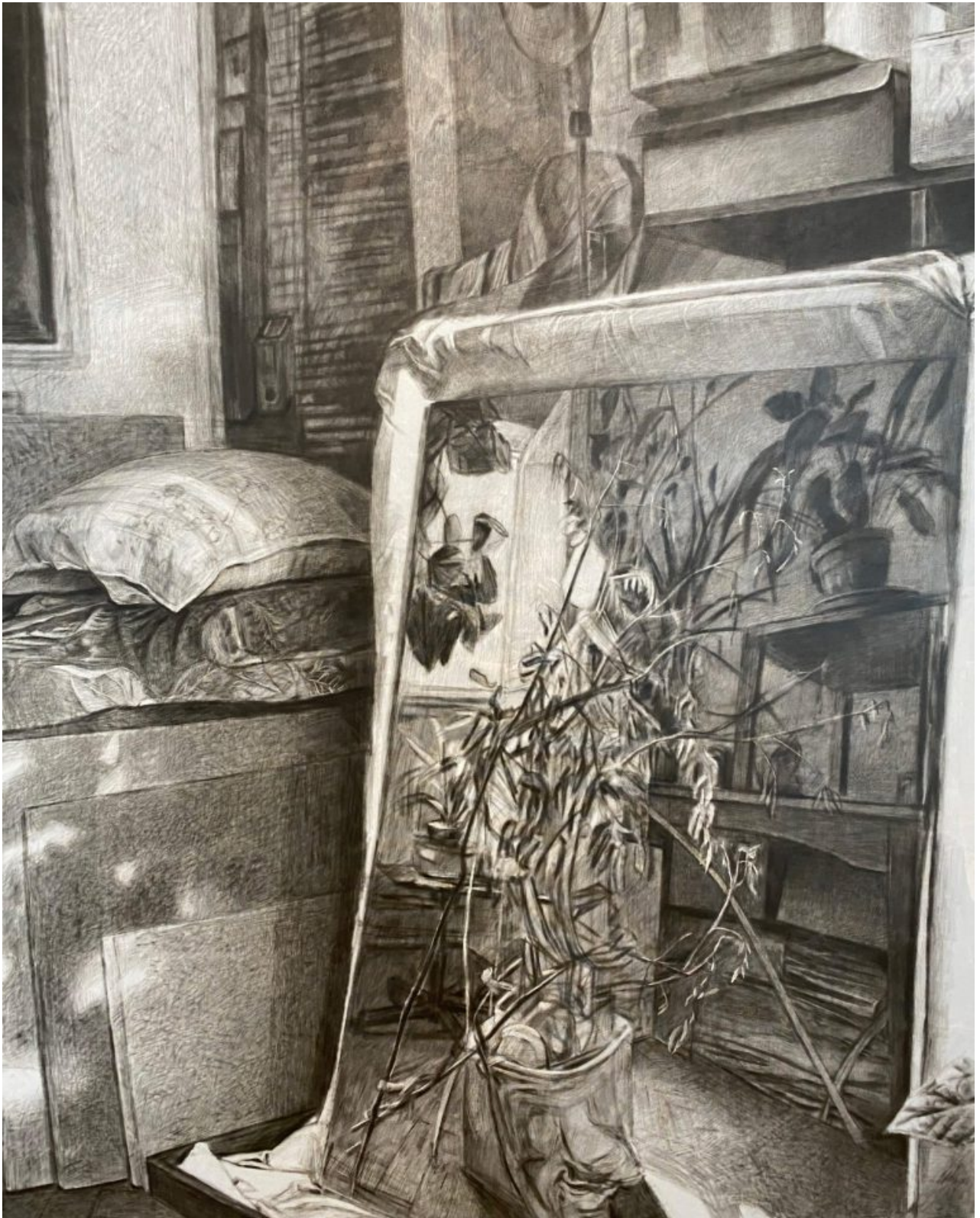


indoors during ... Ghost, 2022, oil-based charcoal on toned canvas, 175 x 115 cm.

I loved this animation for the manner in which it addressed the questions that naturally appeared as I was discovering the artworks in the main room at first – how did the artist manage to climb up there as she was working on the two paintings featured in the exhibition or how are the plants that grace the studio being taken care of. What I also found incredibly interesting is that revealing some of the stages that go into her method in this manner did not make the character come across as the main focus – I saw it as a synergy between the artist and the environment she created and in which her practice thrives.



Right after seeing the exhibition at MNAC I wanted to go to the Institute of the Present's space to her *engaging activities*, ... *Back to All NightCrawler* installation. Last year, I wrote about the installation Ana Maria Micu exhibited at Romanian Creative Week, which consisted of a painting, a drawing made using black vinyl cuttings and an animation, which was one the highlights of my year. When I saw there is once again a drawing on-site made using the same technique, an animation and a charcoal drawing on canvas, I couldn't wait to visit the space.



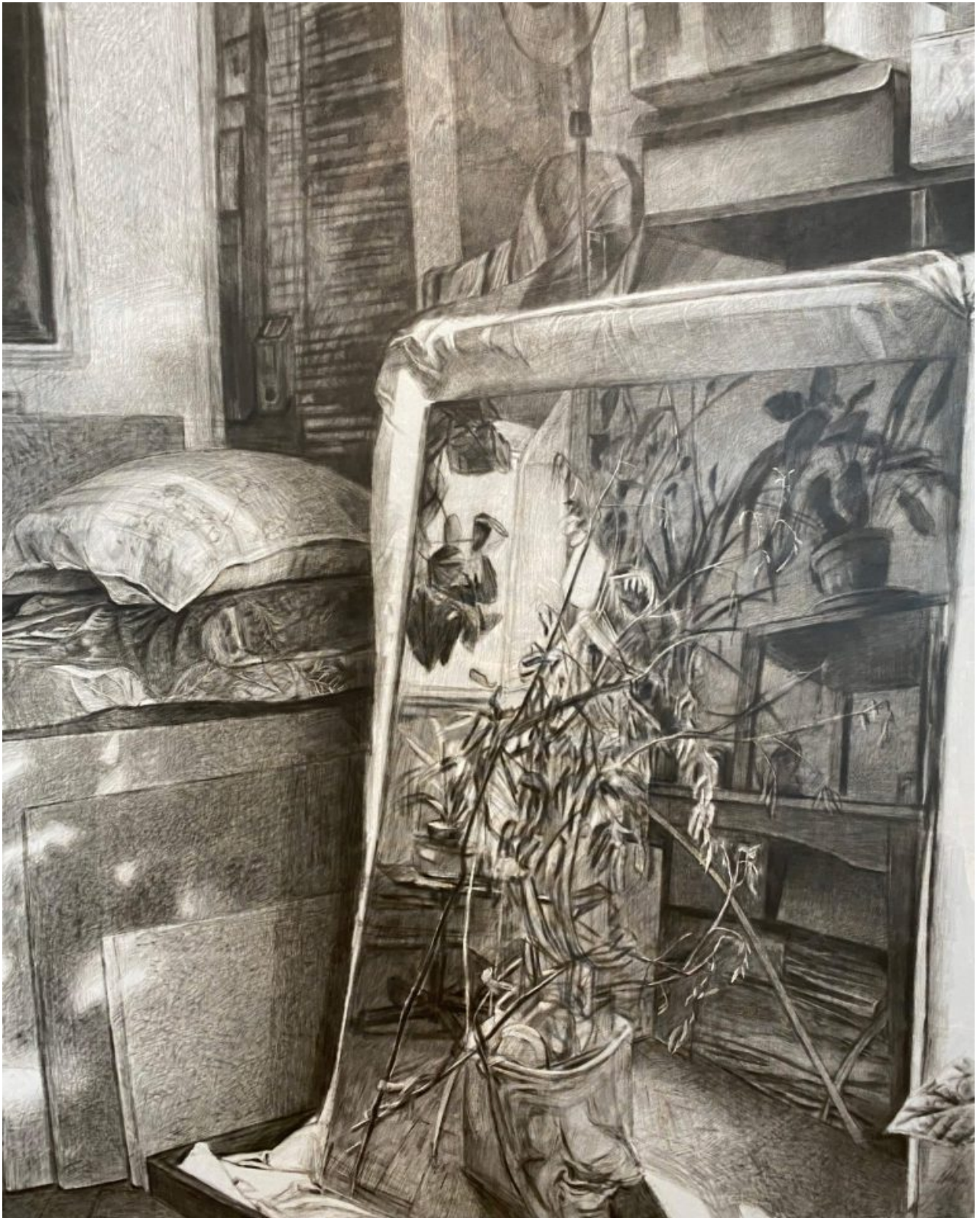
Detail of engaging activities, ... Back to All NightCrawler, 2023, charcoal on toned canvas, 150 x 175 cm.



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I have always been fascinated with Ana Maria Micu 's choice to feature paintings within paintings, but what made the charcoal drawing on canvas so compelling is the choice of the three artworks featured: on the top left there is a painting which is part of her *Bloom* series. That is her first solo show mentioned on her website, and one can notice that even in the early stages of her career, she has always taken an interest in the ways the vegetal realm inspires and influences her art. On the top right, there is one of my favorite paintings by the artist, painted in 2012 and which was actually included in her solo show

at the C-Space Gallery in Beijing. The lines in the original painting are actually quotes from the English subtitles of the *Still Life* movie, by Jia Zhangke. I saw the selection of this artwork as an acknowledgement of the impact her period of living in China had shaped her career and artistic practice. Then you have the *lifetime educational ... Viewed in this light* painting which was on display at MNAC. The fact that it's in the forefront works like a sort of time stamp for this drawing. In the middle of the storage room, there is the artist herself getting out of a secret place. Or is she actually going back in? I love the fact one can interpret it in two completely different ways, and that the whole drawing is surrounded with the mystery of what lies in that hiding space.

Then comes the animation, which illustrates both routes. It seemed like the perfect metaphor for the fact that taking time for self-observation and contemplation are essential in our lives, and that once we find the answers to our pondering we are ready to crawl back up. Just like the character made of vinyl cuttings that had remained drawn on the wall of the space, I sat watching in awe at the extraordinary installation.