

HOPE IS THE THING

Anila Rubiku

WITH

2022

FEATHERS

“Hope” is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops – at all

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest Sea
Yet – never – in Extremity,
It asked a crumb – of me.

Emily Dickinson.

THE VOICE OF ANILA RUBIKU:
THE LYREBIRD AND OTHER STORIES
By Elisa Fulco

Each bird sings on its own genealogical tree, said *Alejandro Jodorowsky*. Birds learn to sing from their parents and speak different dialects, so they tell the latest discoveries of zoo-semiotics. *Charles Darwin*, on the other hand, argued that there was a common origin between human language and birdsong. *Aristotle* had already found similarities between mouth and beak; a simple difference in degree that generates different sounds. Aristophanes, in his comedy “The birds”, described a very powerful kingdom of heaven managed by humans together with birds.

So, it is not surprising that birds occupy a special place in the history of evolution, and that their peculiar nature has always inspired poetry, stories, myths and works of art.

It is then no coincidence that birds are the protagonists of the multifaceted work of the Italian artist of Albanian origin *Anila Rubiku*, presented on the occasion of the *III Biennale d’Architecture Du Fonds Régional d’Art Contemporain* (Frac Center-Val de Loire): Infinite Freedom: a World for a Feminist Democracy.

The installation is titled *The Swing of Injustice*, and consists of a site-specific intervention in the public space of Vierzon - a swing as a “usable” work of art, whose seats are in the shape of a bird, and other new pieces in which the representation of birds is the common thread. Looking at the series of 100 birds on paper that make up the installation “Hope is the thing with feathers “(2022), which quotes a line from a poem by *Emily Dickinson*, I am reminded of the name of a bird that can imitate all sounds, natural and human-made. These are called Lyrebirds.

I thought that this bird was the perfect metaphor of the female condition: trained for centuries to be able to perfectly emit the sounds of others, to compose melodies that are not their own, acting as a sounding board for a world built by men for men. A reflection on how the male cast has modelled the urban space and the very idea of the female, by limiting its expressiveness.

If it were the beginning of a fairy tale it would say: “Once upon a time and there were a hundred beautiful colourful birds that, invisibly trapped in an intricate network of socio-cultural norms which often holds back or prevents these birds from flying”.

The swing of justice advances and retreats. From the first to the fourth feminist wave, was justice fair? The reproduction of the natural voice itself has historically occurred through the sampling of male voices considered as normal. The absence of samples of female voices has long made them perceived as problematic and difficult to

summarize. How many artists and architects have we never heard of?

The work of *Anila Rubiku* itself seems at times to get lost in the din of contemporary art. Yet if we retrace everything that she has produced over time, we hear a single and strong voice.

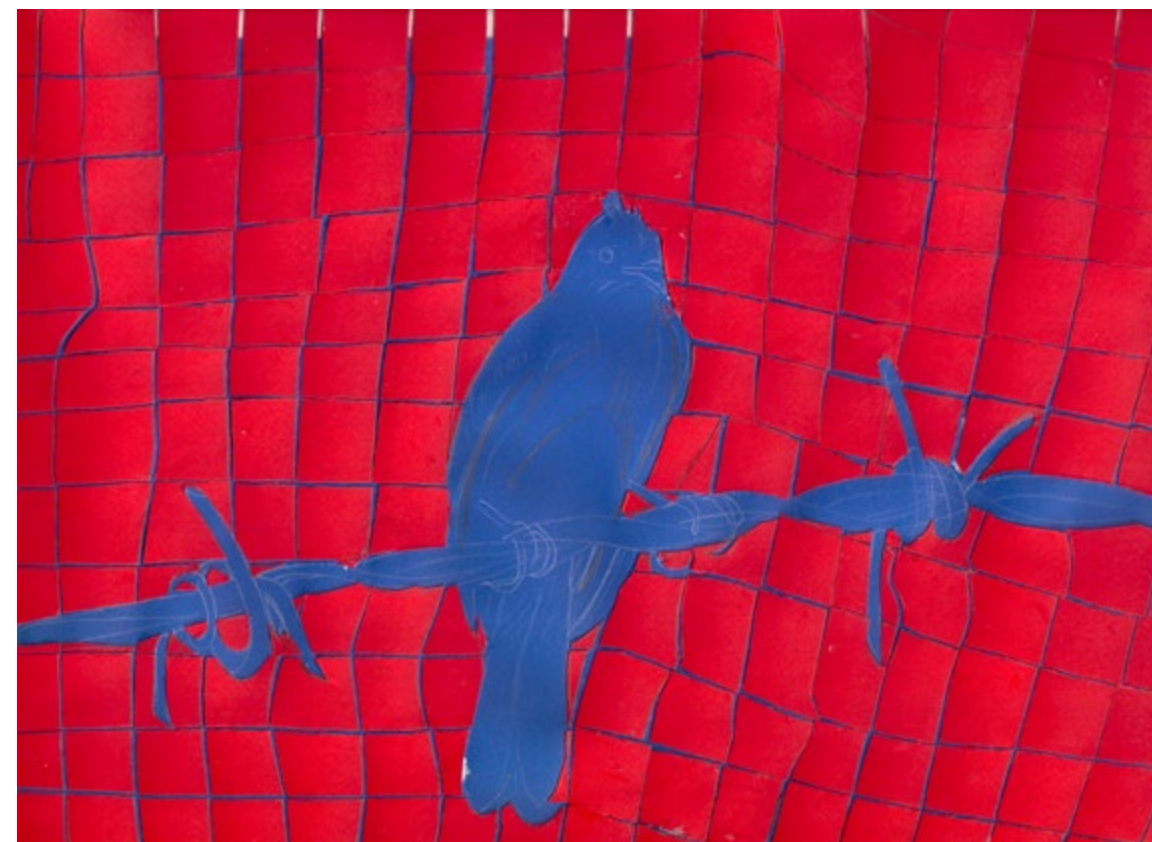
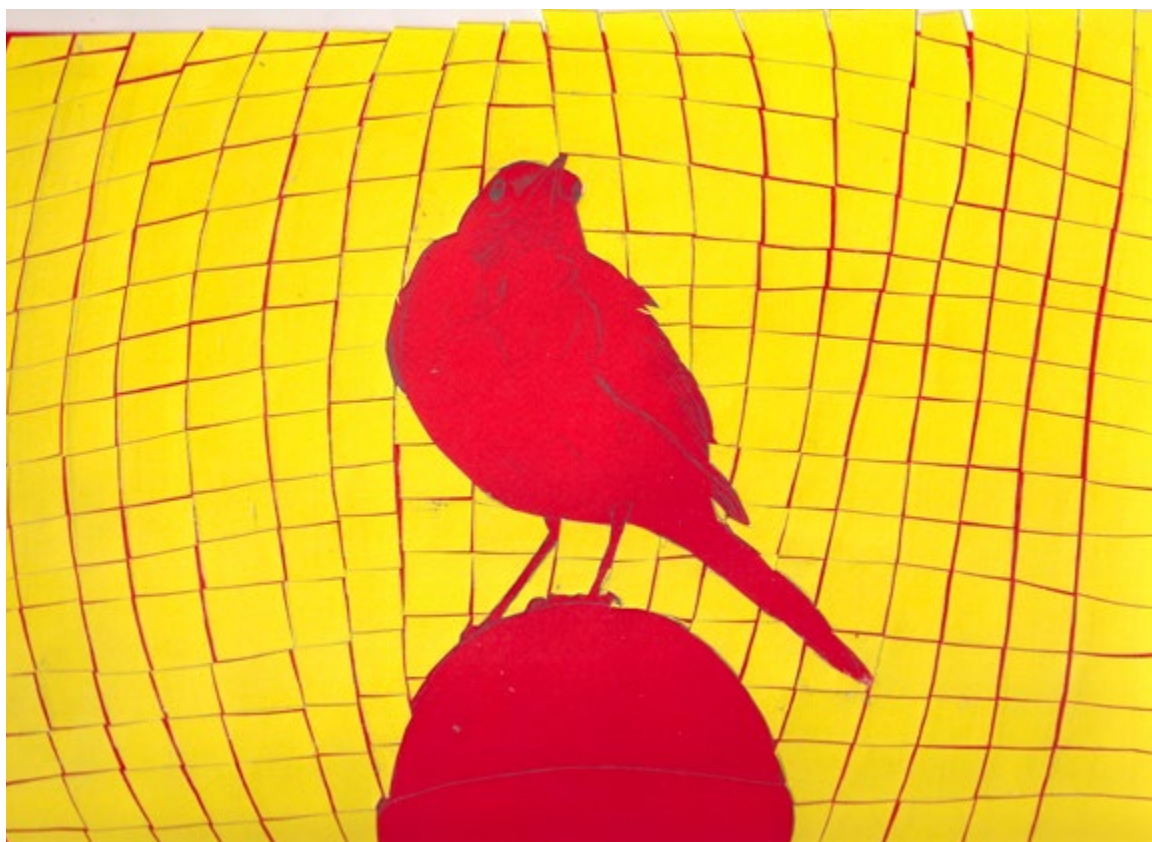
This voice demonstrates her strength of perseverance and commitment; as well as the incessant work, the perfectionism, the continuous drive towards beauty; fidelity to an idea, which has taken different forms, all closely linked to the theme of equality, gender inequality, and social justice.

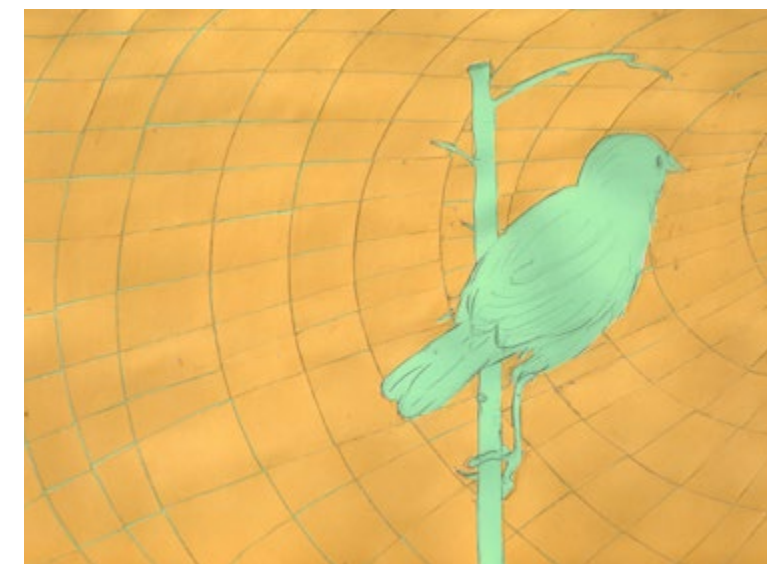
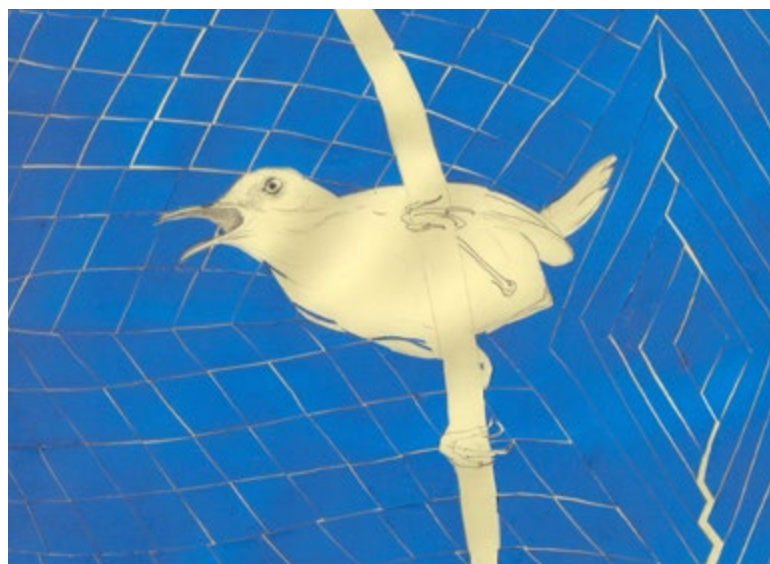
By now we know that we only recognize sounds that are above or below an auditory threshold. *Anila Rubiku* works precisely in these uncrowded shaded areas with high emotional intensity where unspeakable memories, fears, dreams and winged hopes roam. With her beak she relentlessly pulls them out. There are her nutrients. The Swing that gives the installation its title, is a ‘swing’, but first of all a rhythm.

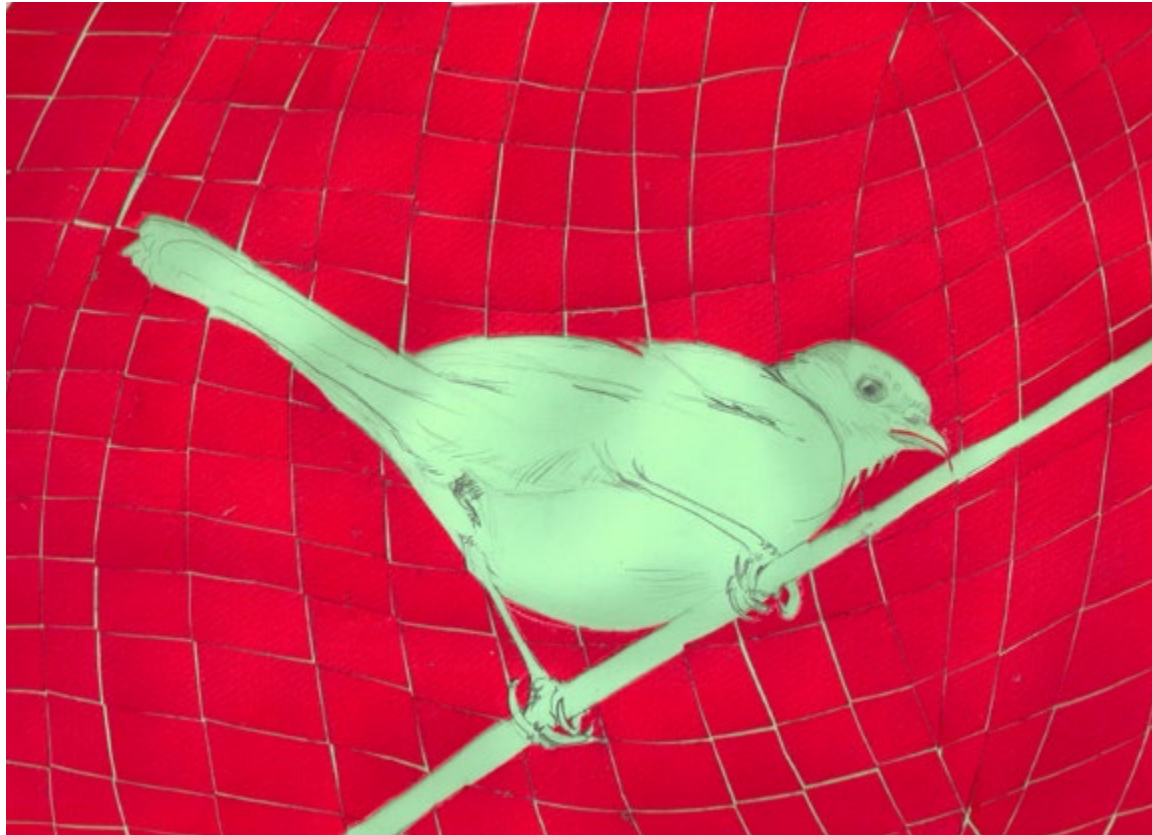
The momentum of this art that is committed and fights for social change. The nexus between humans, animals and nature opens up new possibilities.

“I talk to the Birds but they don’t listen to me”.

“Try it again Anila, sooner or later they will answer you”.

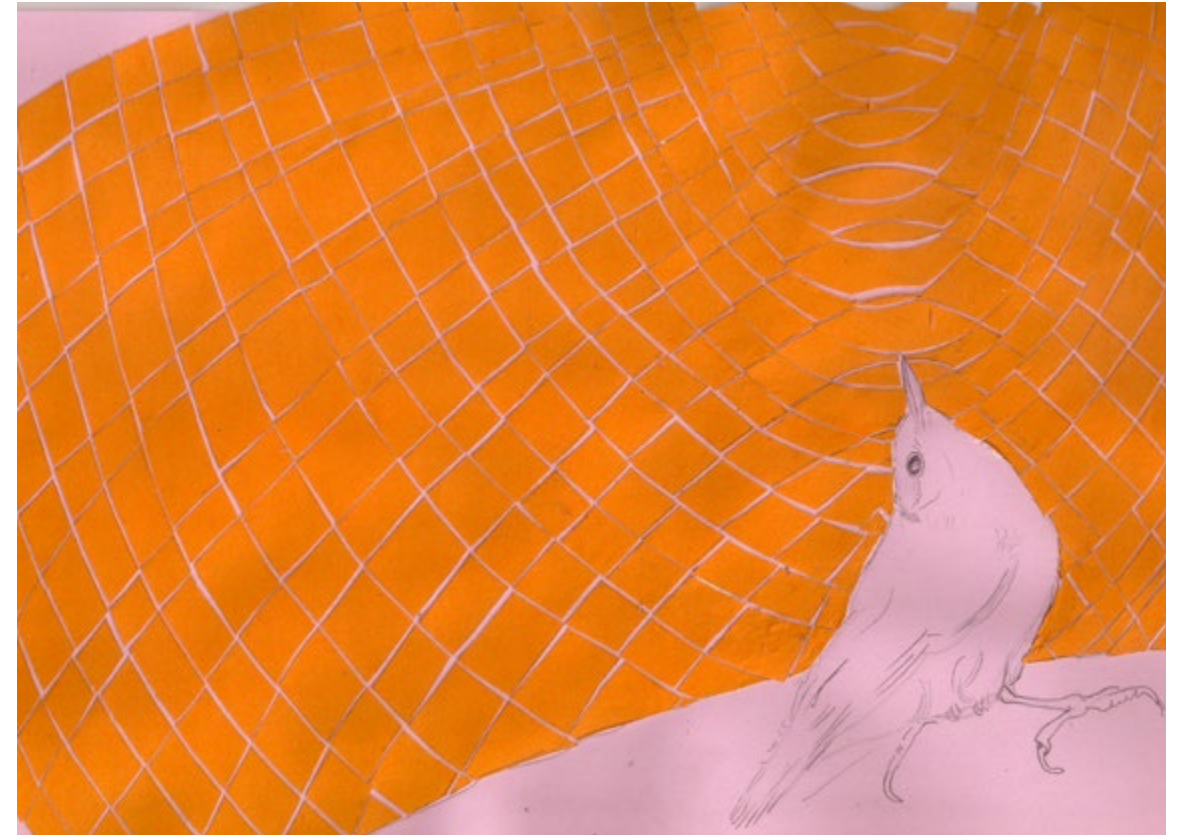










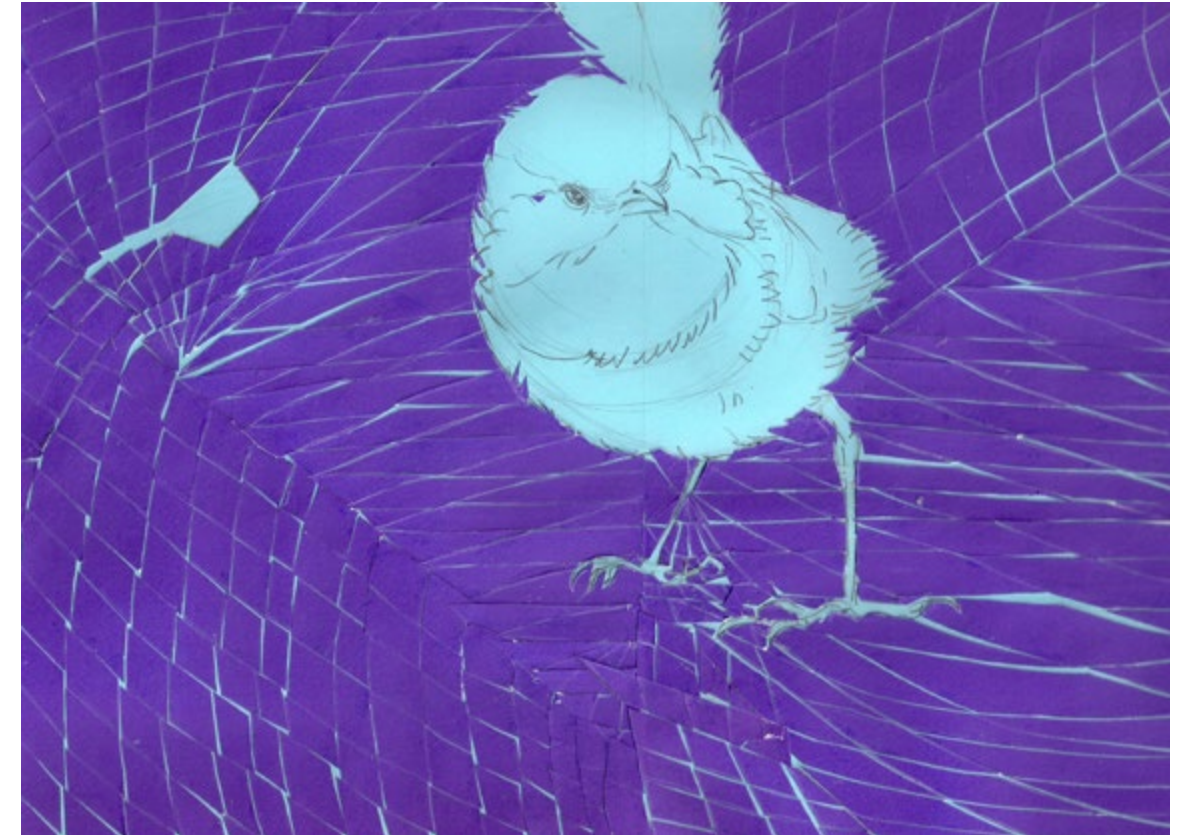
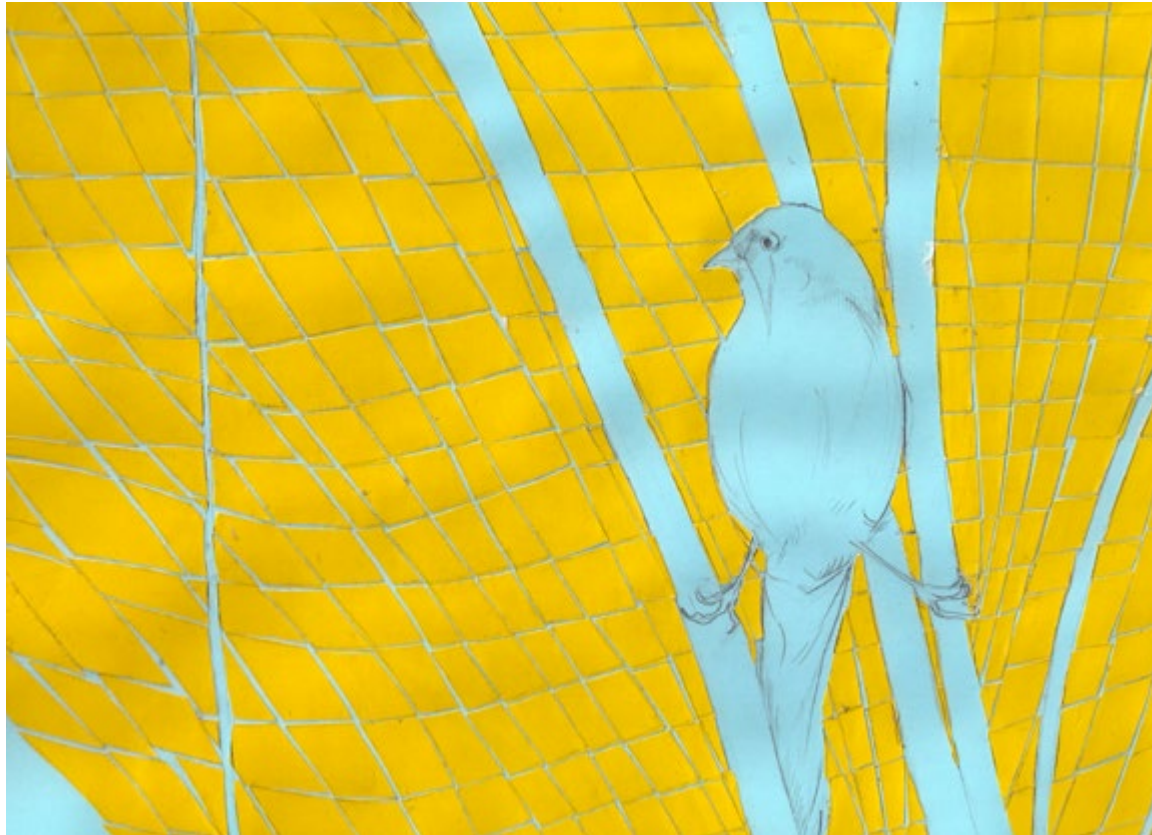


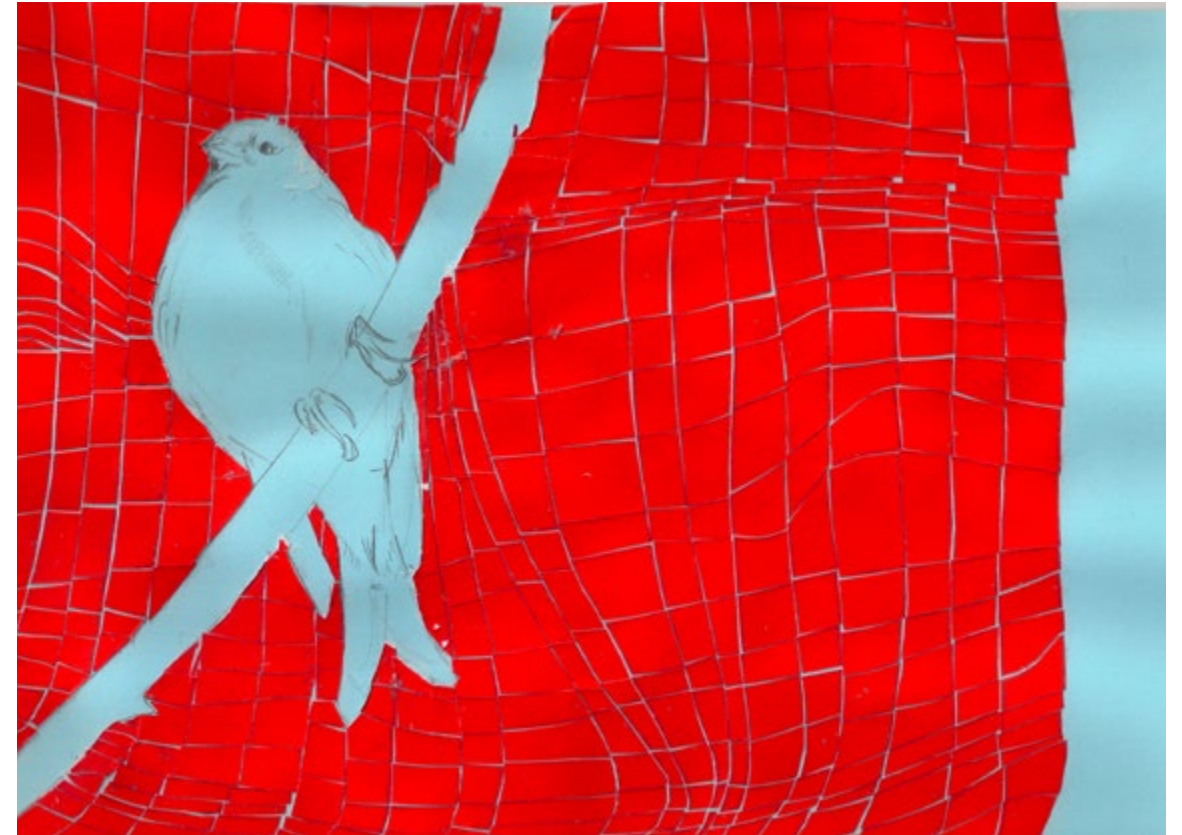


Hold fast to dreams,
for if dreams die,
life is a broken-winged
bird that cannot fly.

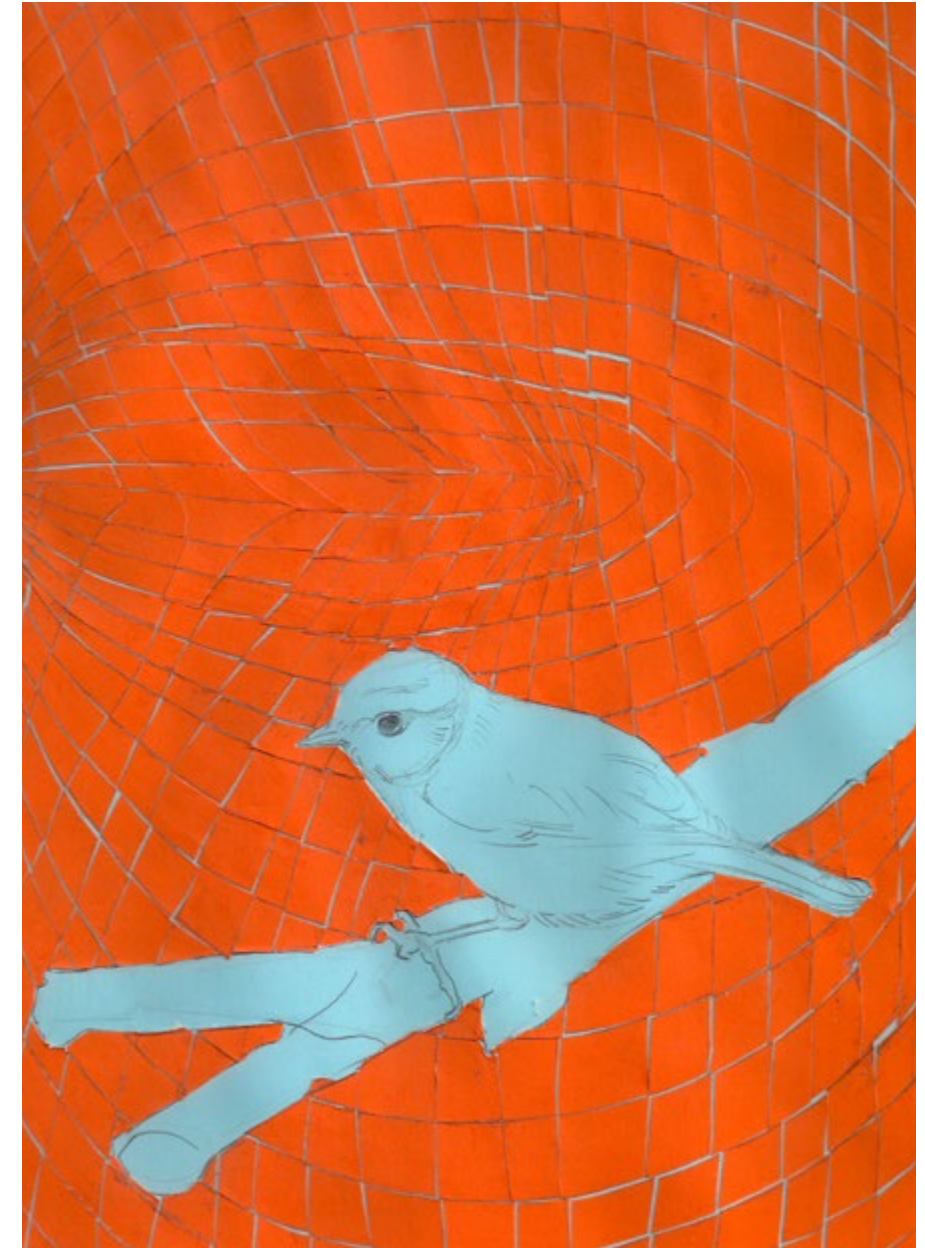
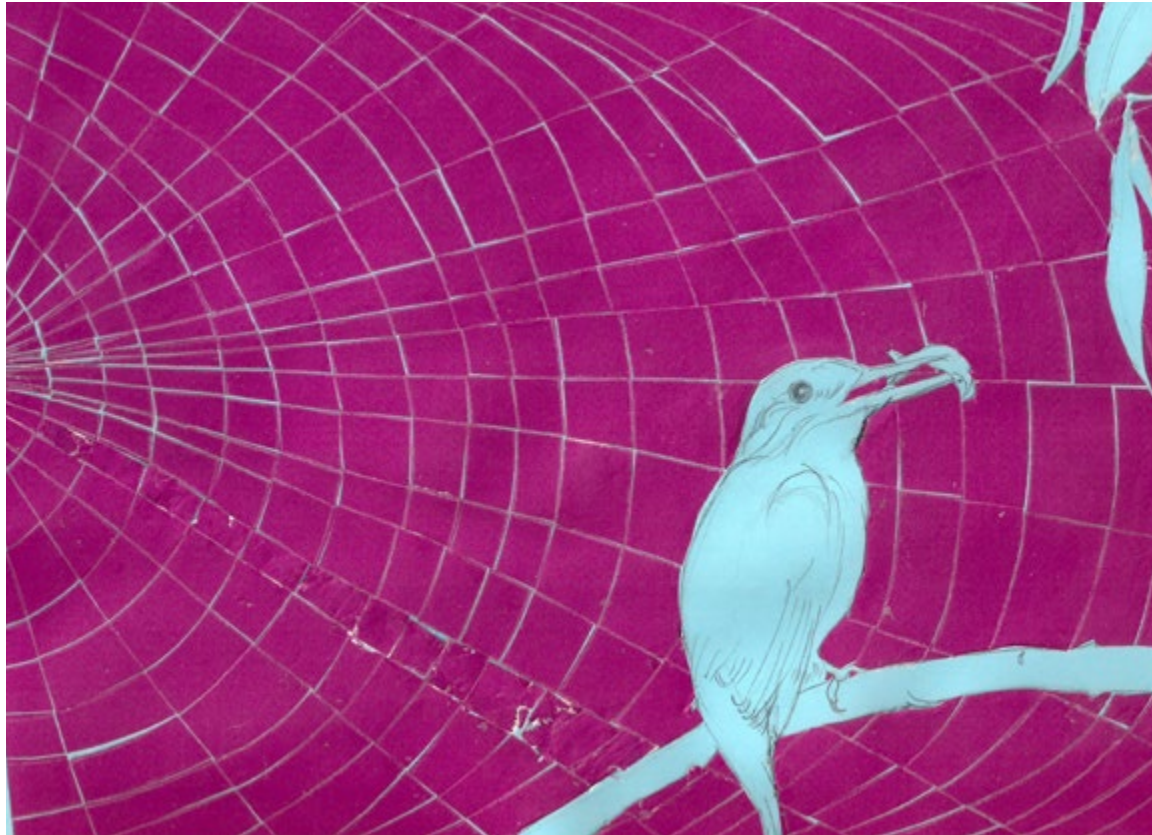
The reason birds can fly
and we can't is simply that
they have perfect faith,
for to have faith is to have wings.

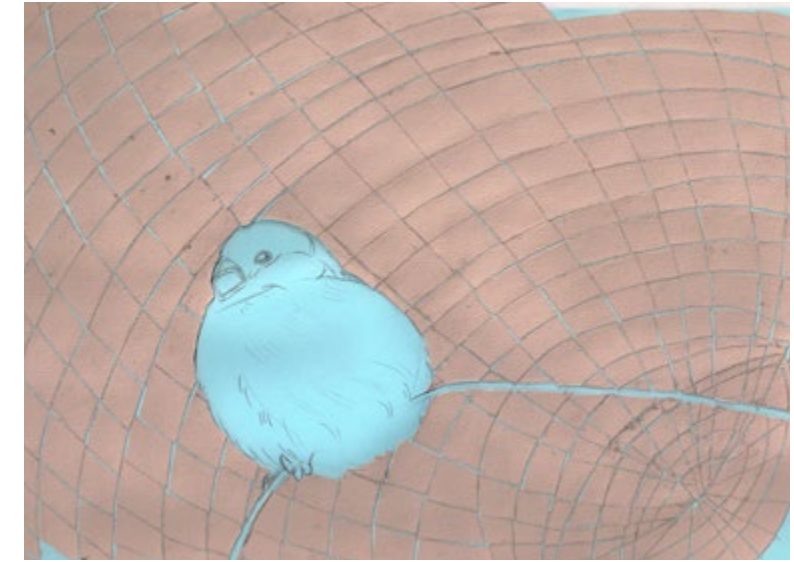
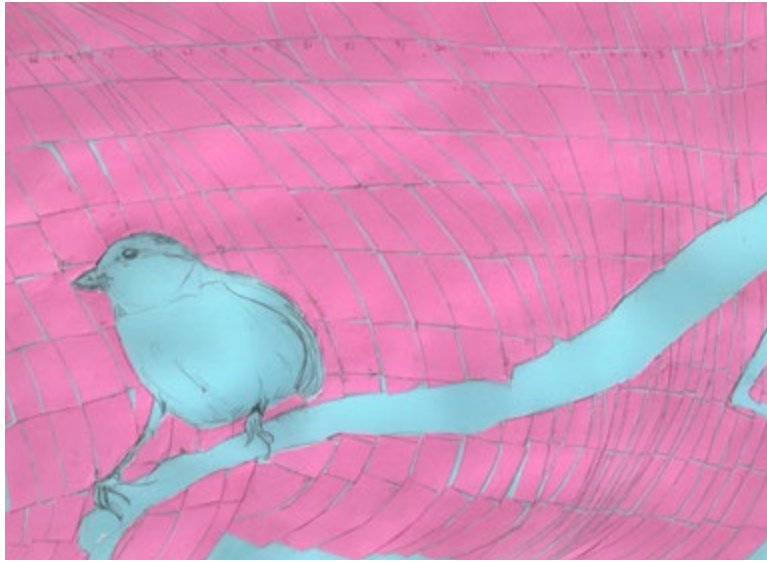
J. M. Barrie.

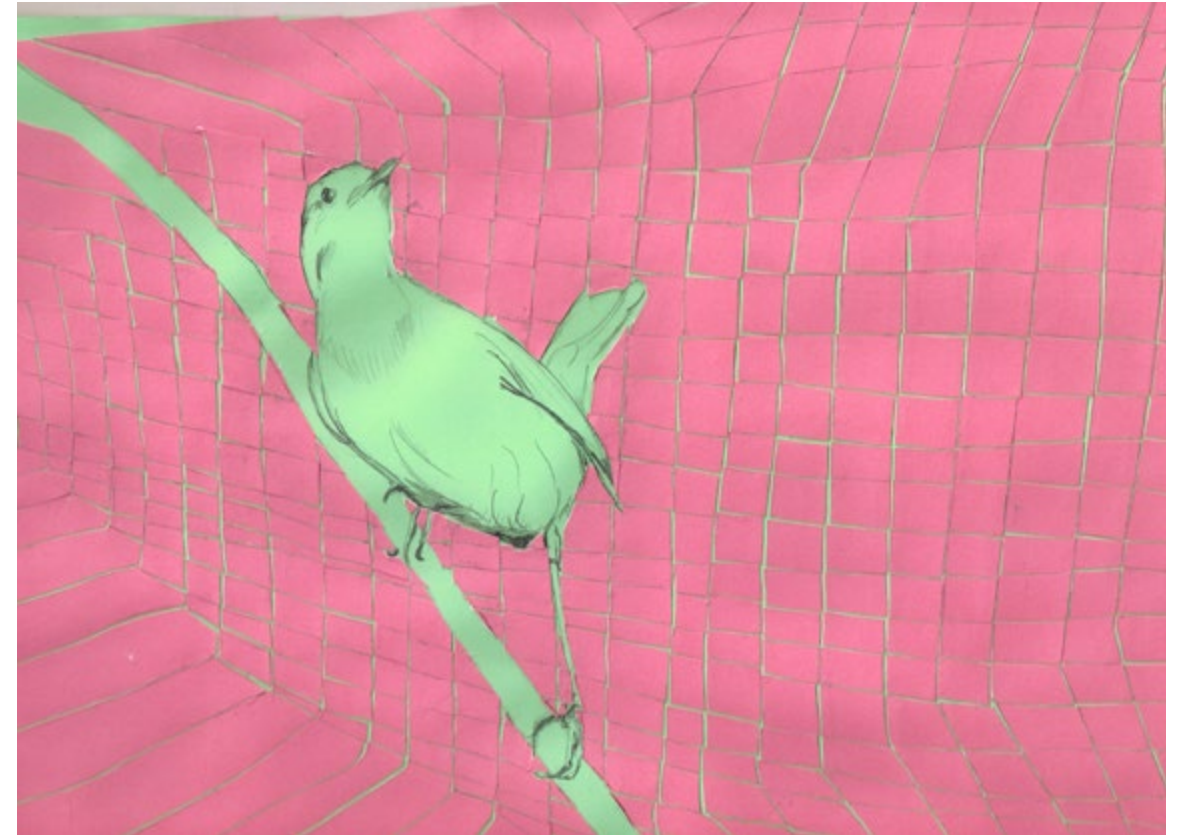
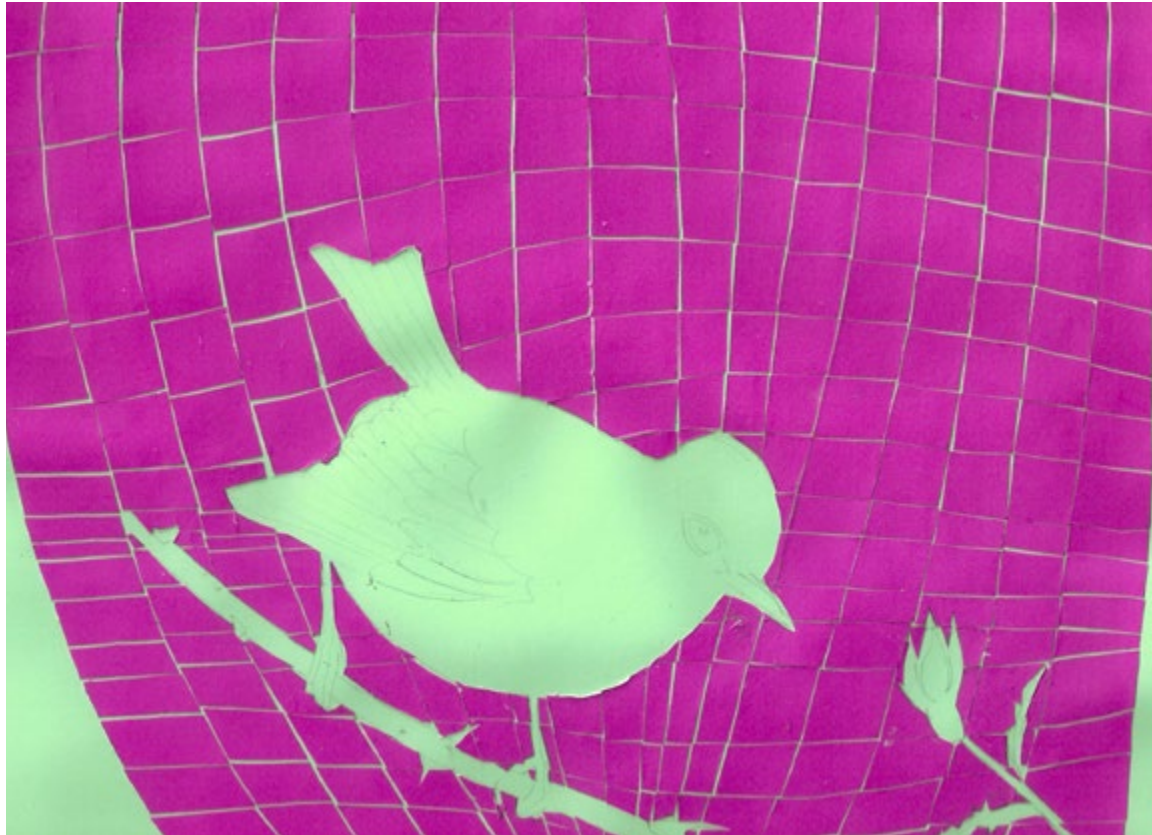




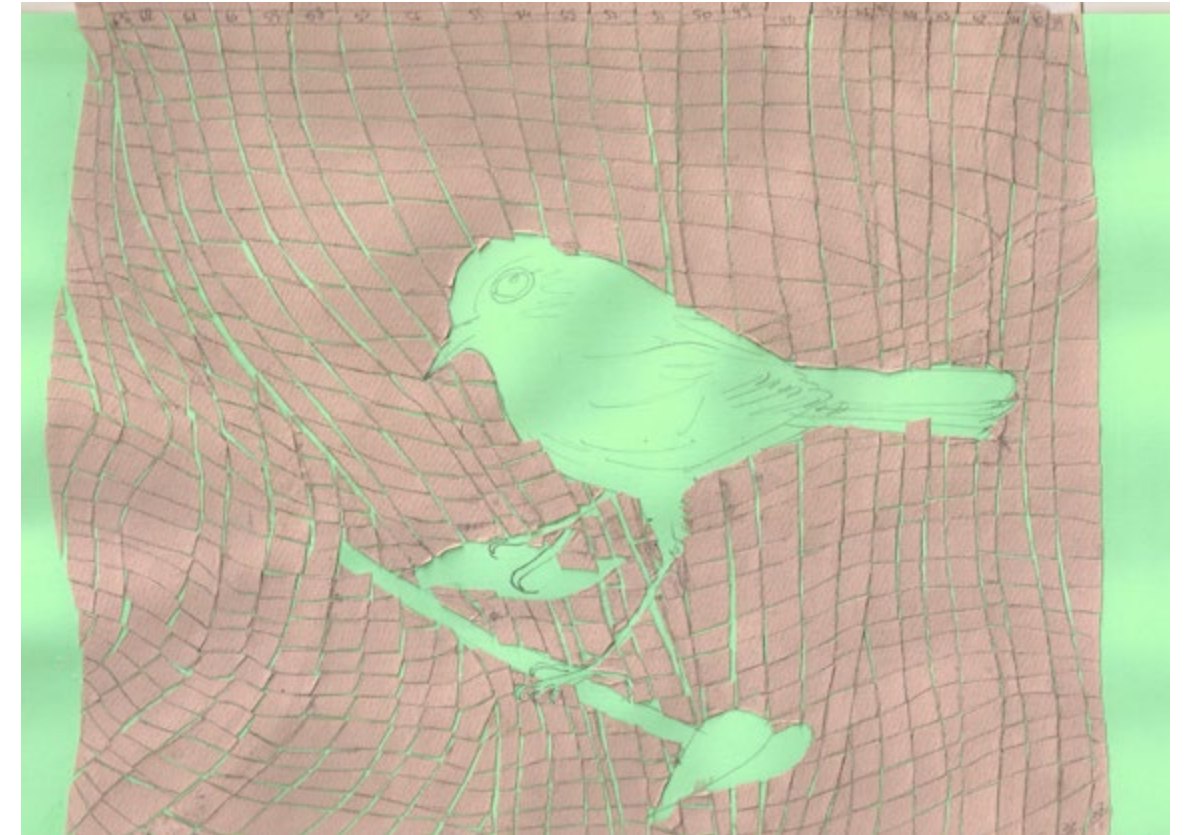














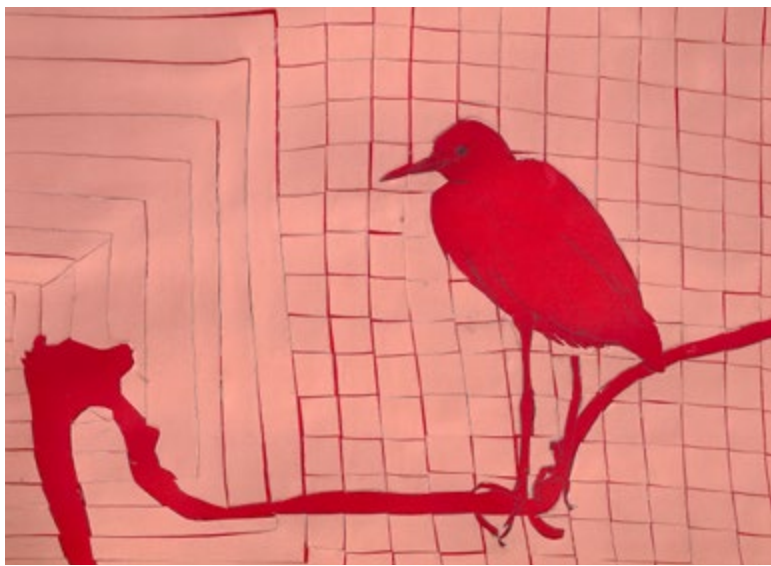
I would like to paint
the way a bird sings.

God loved the birds
and invented trees.
Man loved the birds
and invented cages

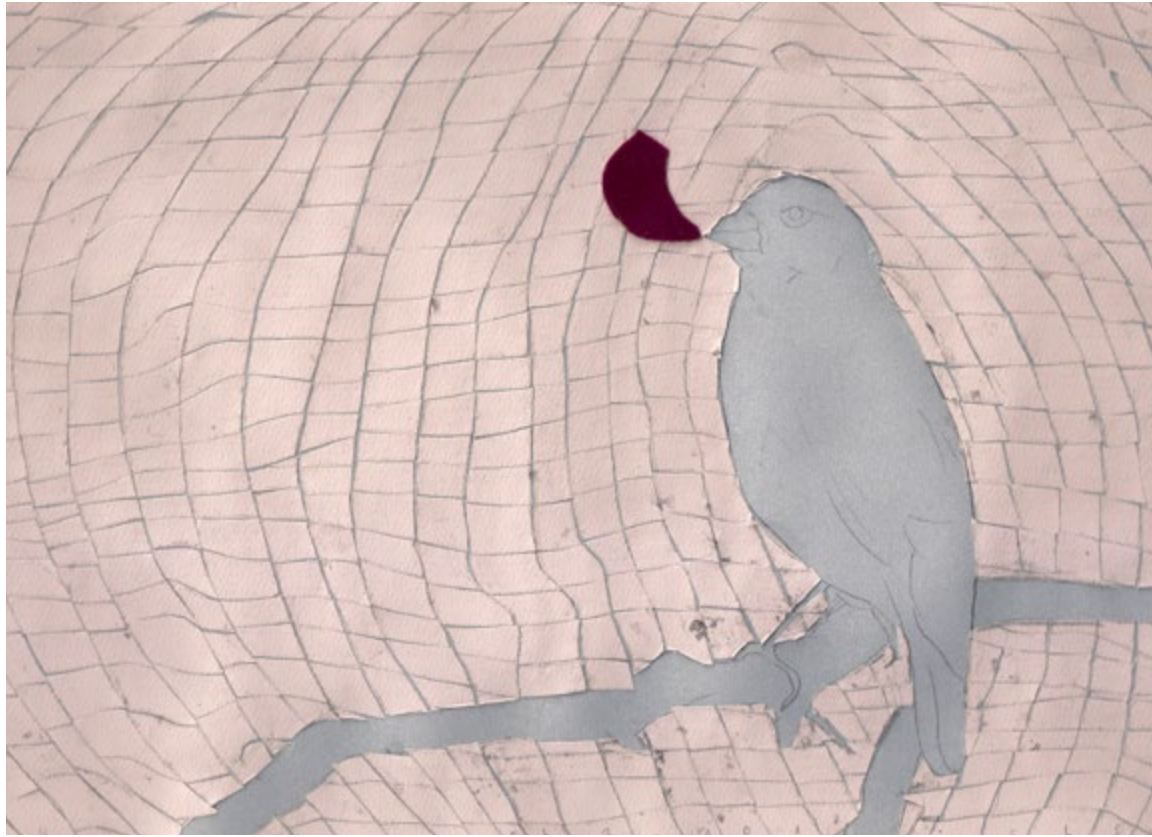
Jacques Deval.

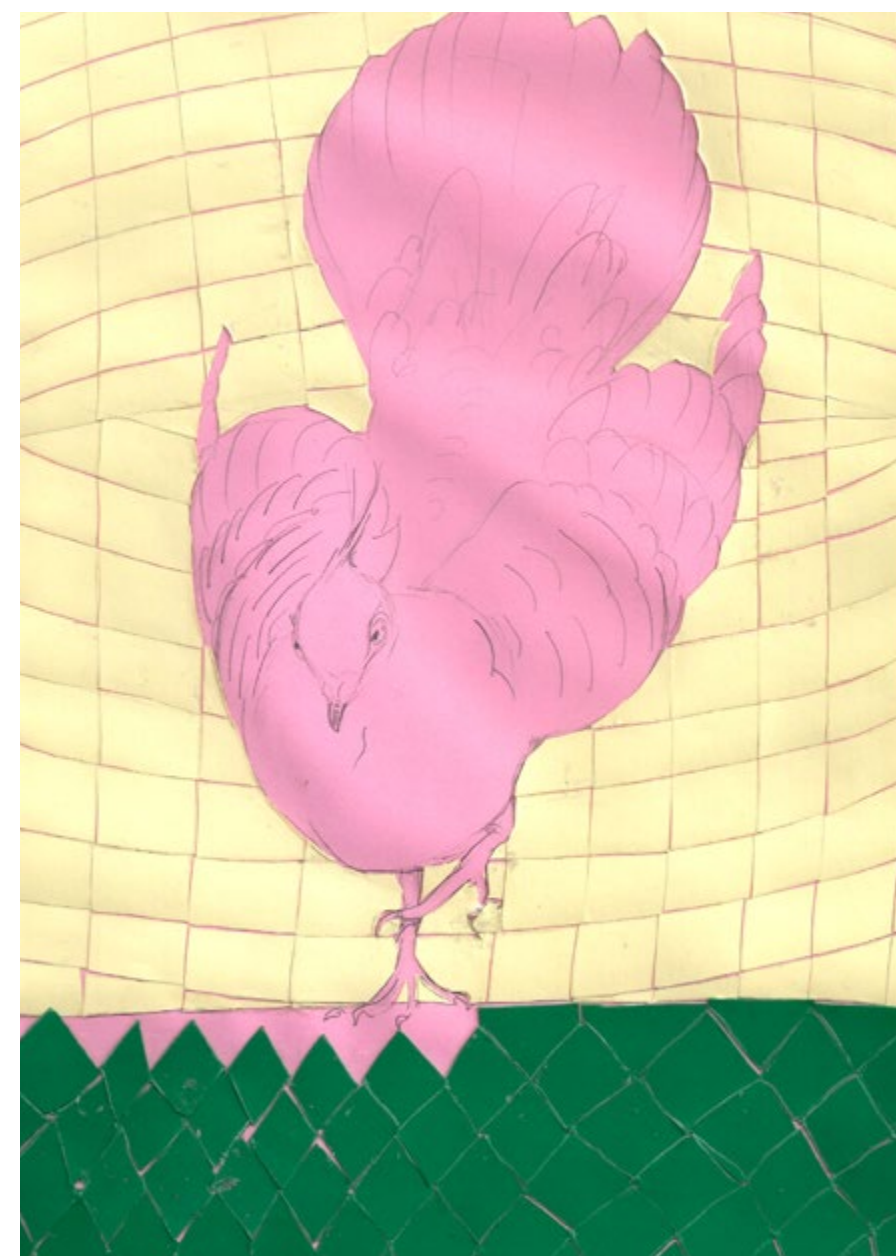






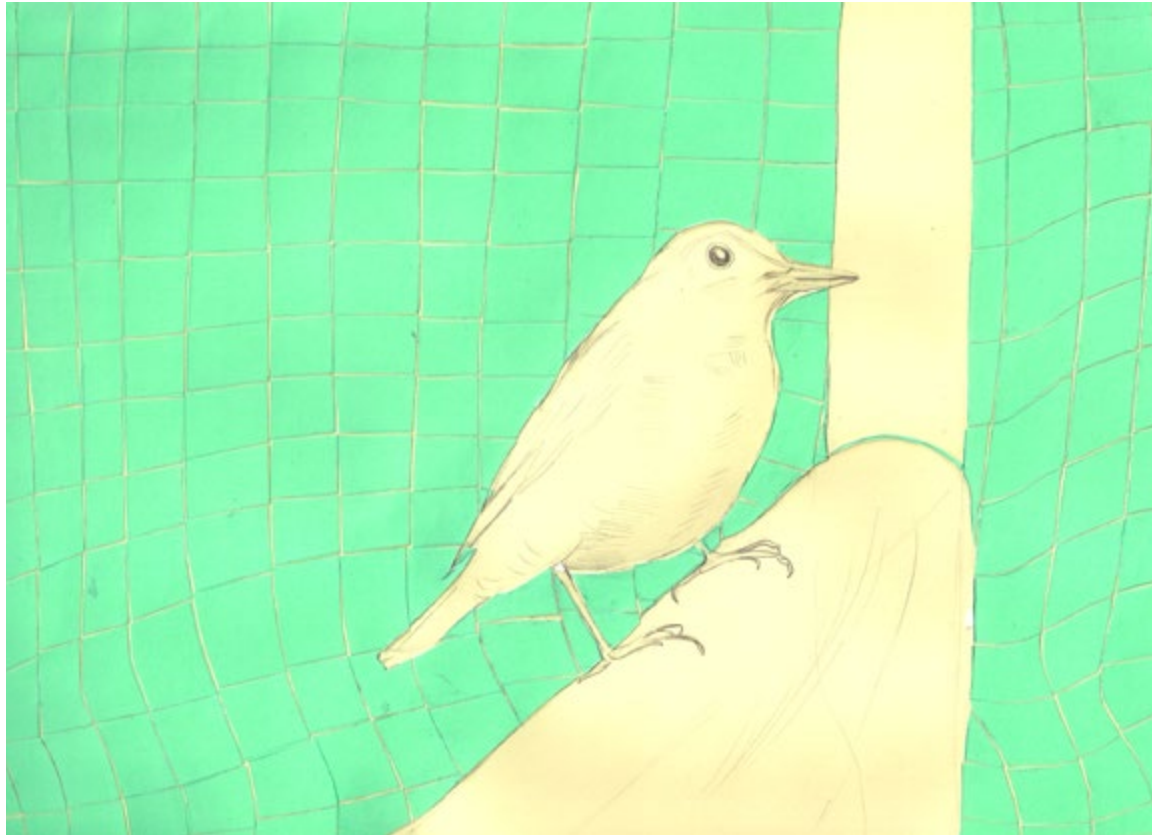












Relationships are like birds.
If you hold tightly, they die.
If you hold loosely they fly.
But if you hold with care,
they remain with you forever.

No matter how high a bird
flies it has to come down to water.

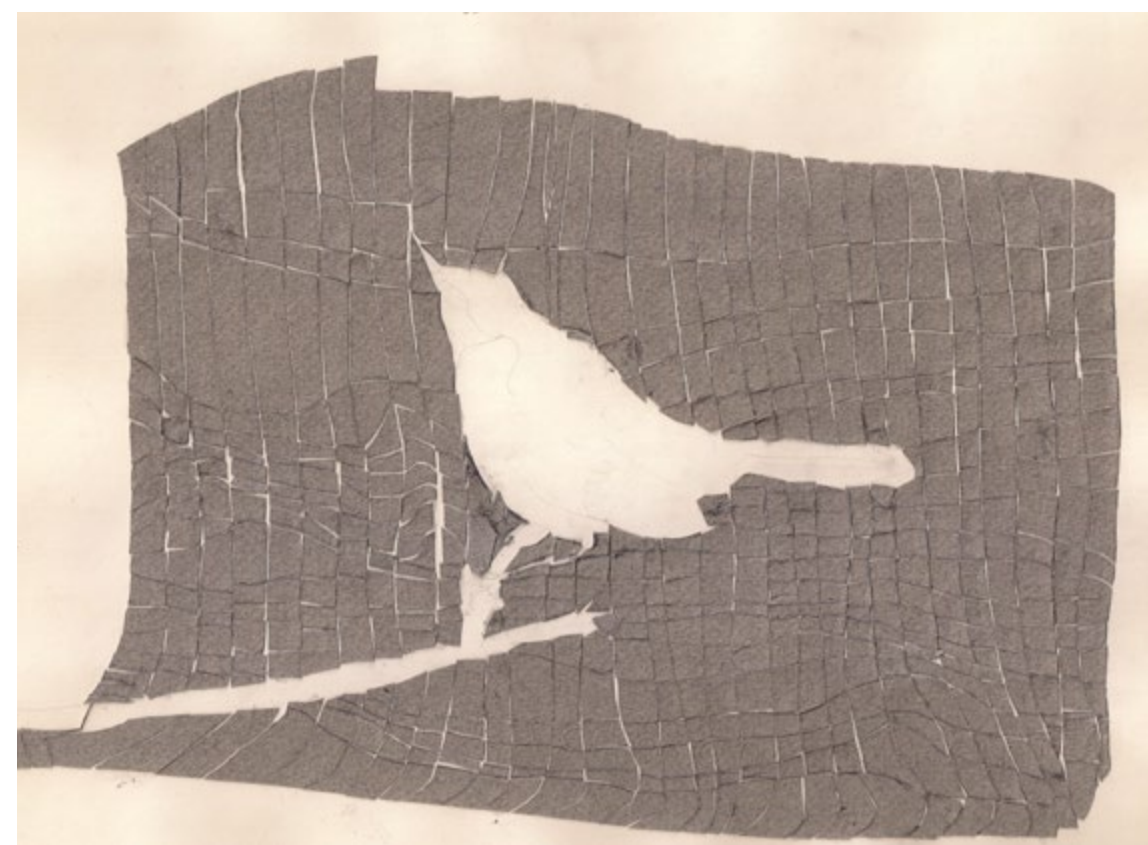
Anonymous.



















My heart is like
a singing bird.

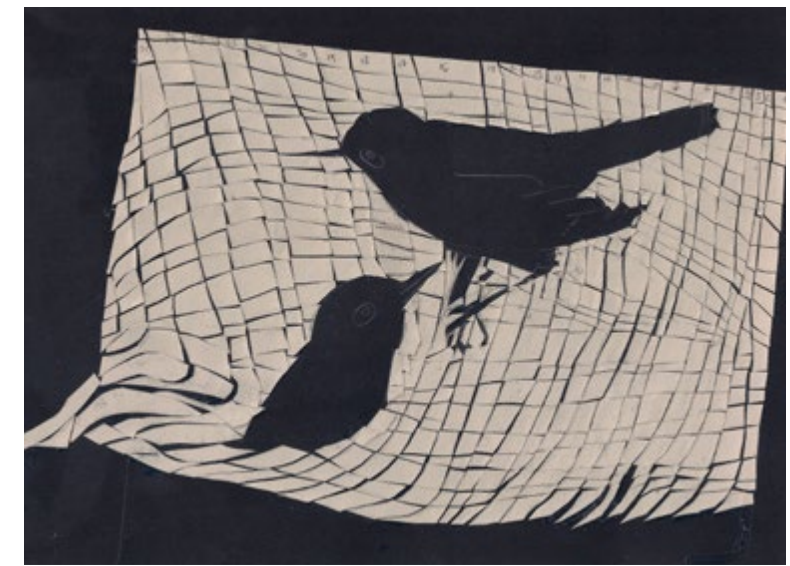
A spoken word
is not a sparrow.
Once it flies out,
you can't catch it.

Russian Proverb



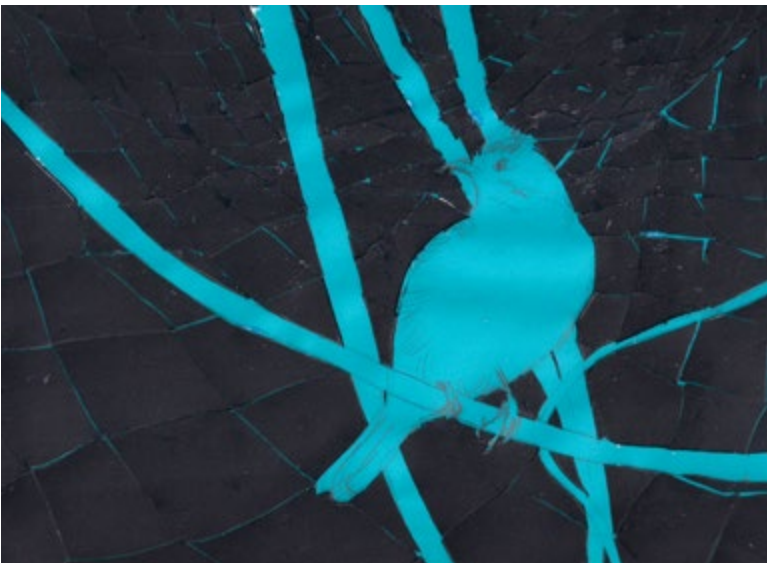
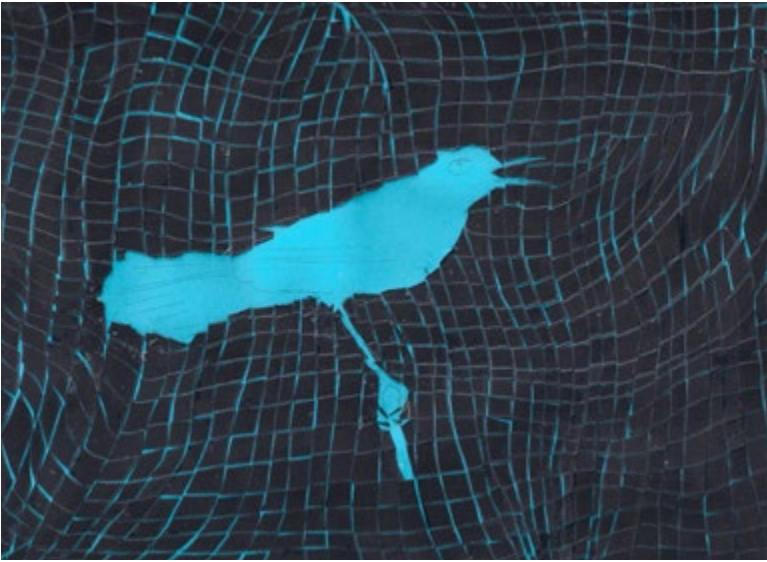
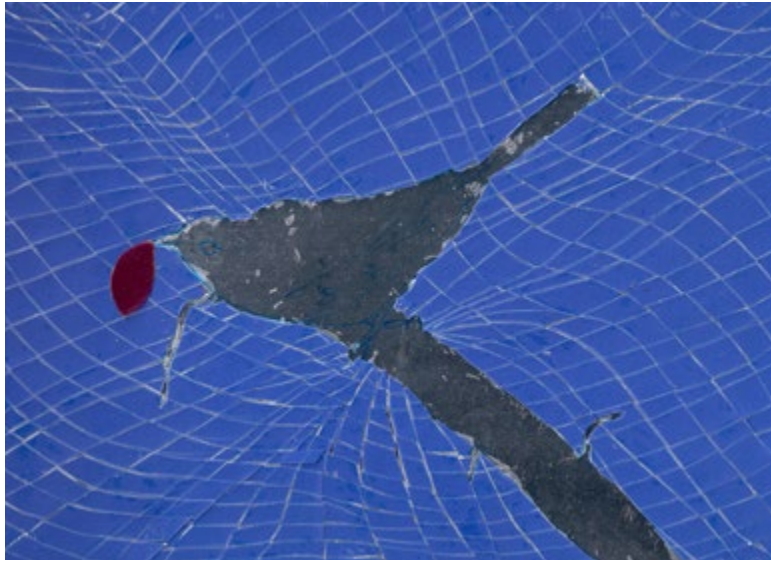


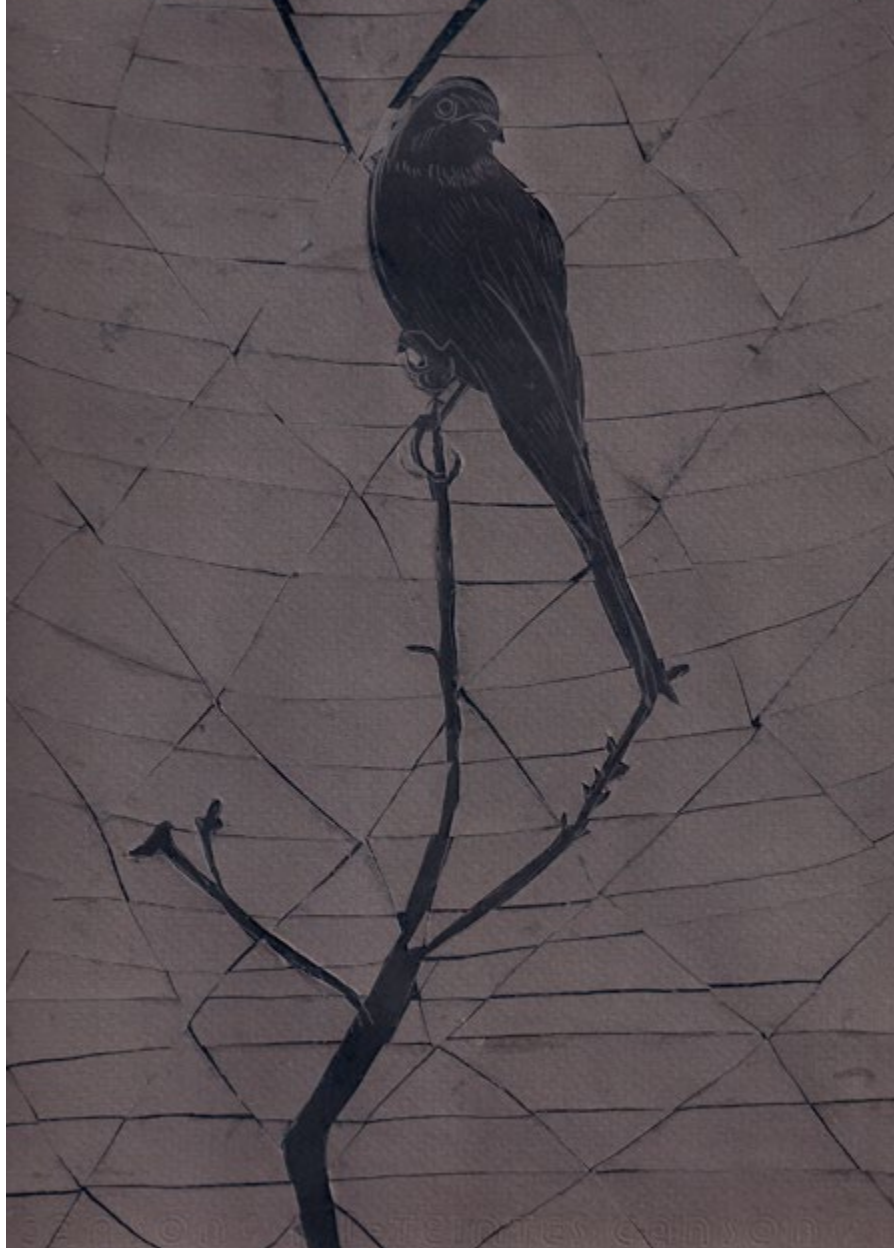












Wherever there are birds,
there is hope.

UNE HUMANITÉ RÊVÉE
Abdelkader Damani
Directeur Frac Centre-Val de Loire

We are waiting for a world that no longer appears.
It is not that far away, but this world resists welcoming us back,
after our betrayal. We have betrayed the world by our oversights, our
violence, by our voracity in wanting to possess it.

I met *Anila Rubiku* at a time when she was frantically
erasing the portraits of dictators she had just drawn. Obliteration.
A non-artistic a priori act. This work contradicted the will of
contemporary art which desires to saturate the world with new forms...
as if the world were poor in forms, poor in colors, poor in signs.

I find her now with a new obsession: painting birds,
drawing them, embroidering them. This time, to tell us that birds
are missing, absent, invisible. Birds are missing, now, after losing the
world. We have seen them drown in oil spills. And we began to miss
them, until the day when we had to be silent.

During COVID, the invisible enemy, we plunged for
months into the silence of expectation. We began to be aware again
of the order of nature; Its rhythm, its breaths, its smells, its violence,
its sweetness; how it fits and completes us. So, it became vital again
to the one and only concern of the living. The air has cleared in the
cities. The din of machines was replaced by the sounds of children.
The raindrops turned into percussion.

Meanwhile, Anila listened to the returning birds.
More precisely, like an Augur, at the time of ancient Rome, she
observed the birds from her window, scrutinized their movements and
interpreted their songs. The result is a series with multiple paths that
invite us to restore the link that we encompass of our exteriors: the
fauna, the flora, the minerals, the seas, the winds... It is in this that
Anila's birds are the portraits of a dream humanity. These are us, if we
had the courage to belong to the Earth again.

[...]

Le Bon oiseaux se tait et dit :
“Non ! Ce n’est pas toi que j’attire, voyageurs,
Avec mon bruit —
J’attire une femelle des auteurs —
En quoi cela peut-il te concerner ?
Seul ne m’est pas belle la nuit.
En quoi cela peut-il te concerner ? Car tu dois cheminer
Sans jamais, jamais le moindre répit !
Pourquoi demeures-tu ici ?
Que t’a donc fait mon chant flûté,
Ô homme fait pour voyager ?”
Friedrich Nietzsche, le voyageur

LET’S LOOK AT BIRDS AGAIN
By Jeffrey William Adams

Birds are everywhere and nowhere. We don’t look
at birds. But birds encircle us whether we live in large conurbations
or the country. We take them for granted as we get on with our lives.
We might say to a friend, “*look at that bird*”. But we both soon move on.
Or we might say, “*listen to that bird*”! As if the bird were singing for us.

Again, we soon move on. But birds play a magical part
in our collective unconscious: the eagle, the national bird, the dove, the
cuckoo, the ostrich... they are heavy with universal significance
for humans. They are probably the original metaphor that allows us
to understand ourselves and the lives we live.

For the Poet, *Emily Dickinson*, “*hope is a thing of feathers*”
for *Edgar Allen Poe* a prophet of doom; Mournful and Never-ending
Remembrance. There is even a bird that stands in for our greatest wish,
everlasting life, also known as the Phoenix rising from the ashes. Birds
connect us to that part of our nature which is truly animal and which,
quite frankly, we would like to repress. Animals die. It’s not just poets
who’ve been obsessed with birds.

Messiaen comes to mind and would the flute exist
if birds hadn’t sung? Also the birds of May, in *Clément Janequin*’s,
Birdsong. *Vivaldi* as well! Great artists too have used birds: *Van Gogh*’s
kingfisher and *Rousseau*’s flamencos.

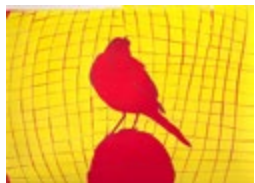
Birds are the ultimate archetype; a metaphor and,
like all great metaphors, birds connect. They connect us not just with
our animal nature but also with life and death, stillness, procreation,
as in *Hughes*’ Hawk in the Rain, whose “*wings bold all creation in
weightless*”. Hope really is a thing of feathers; delicate, fragile and
vulnerable. *Rubiku*’s re-presentation of birds brings birds back
to awareness, elevated by her art from the very centre of our deep,
imaginative life to consciousness and to where these noble creatures
belong, too long buried by our quotidian lives. Birds are freedom,
independence, survival and, above all, beauty. They are the ultimate
archetype. Look at them again. In this magical book.

Anila Rubiku (1970) is an Albanian born, Italian
artist. After studying at the *Tirana Academy* (1994), she obtained a post-
graduate degree in Milan, at the *Brera Academy* (2000). She currently
works and lives between Milan and Toronto.

Her work is intimately connected to political
and social issues, using various media: installations, sculptures,
embroideries, engravings, paintings.

In her poetic and ironic works, she addresses issues
related to gender inequality and social injustice (*Havana Biennial, 2019*,
5th Thessaloniki Biennial, 2015), which touch on environmental issues
(*Frac Centre-Val de Loire 2022, Kiev Biennale, 2012*) and relational (*56th
October Salon, Beograd 2016*), reflecting on the meaning of being an
immigrant today (*Biennale di Venezia 2011, Hammer Museum residency,
LA, 2013*) and on the relationship between city and democracy (*Venice
Architecture Biennale, 2008*).

Her work is part of the following private and public
collections: *Frac Centre-Val de Loire, National Gallery of Art, Washington
DC; Mint Museum, Charlotte NC; Israeli Museum, Jerusalem; Deutsche Bank
Collection, London, UK; Edition5 Collection, Erstfeld, Switzerland, P.O.C.
Collection Brussels.*



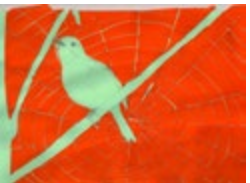
#1



#2



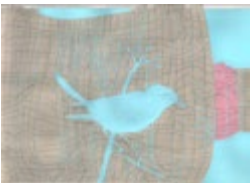
#3



#4



#25



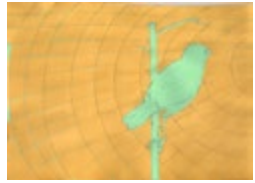
#26



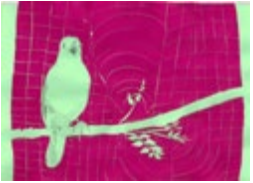
#27



#28



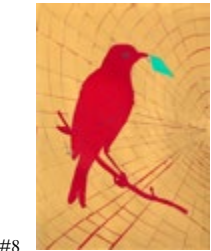
#5



#6



#7



#8



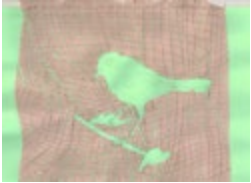
#29



#30



#31



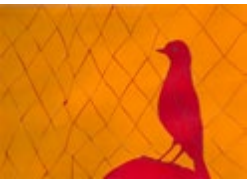
#32



#9



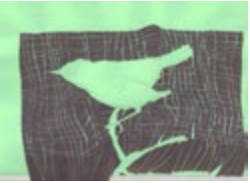
#10



#11



#12



#33



#34



#35



#36



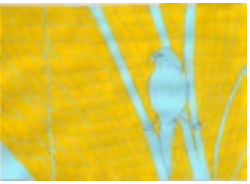
#13



#14



#15



#16



#37



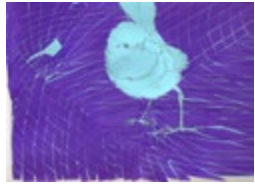
#38



#39



#40



#17



#18



#19



#20



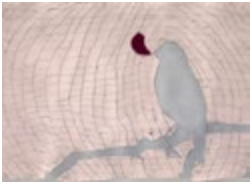
#41



#42



#43



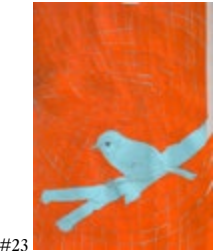
#44



#21



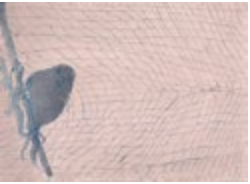
#22



#23



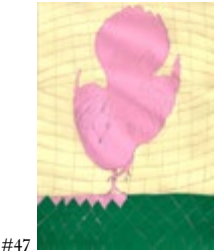
#24



#45



#46



#47



#48

2022 — HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS
21 × 29,7 cm. Collage on vintage Pantone paper. Unique

2022 — HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS
21 × 29,7 cm. Collage on vintage Pantone paper. Unique



#49



#50



#51



#52



#73



#74



#75



#76



#53



#54



#55



#56



#77



#78



#79



#80



#57



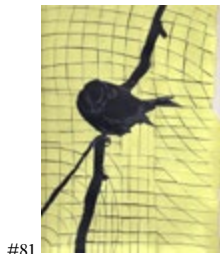
#58



#59



#60



#81



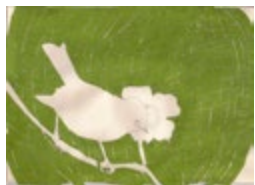
#82



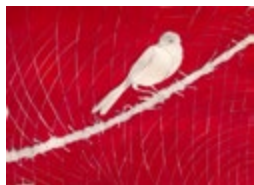
#83



#84



#61



#62



#63



#64



#85



#86



#87



#88



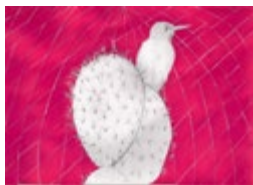
#65



#66



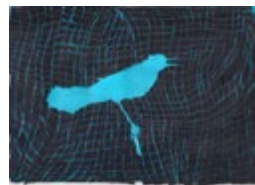
#67



#68



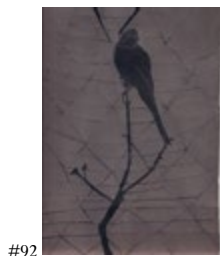
#89



#90



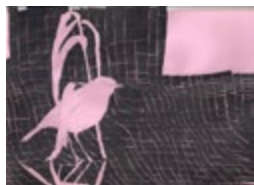
#91



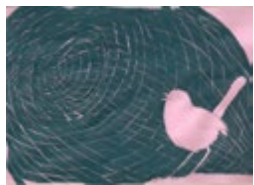
#92



#69



#70



#71



#72

2022 — HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS
21 × 29,7 cm. Collage on vintage Pantone paper. Unique

2022 — HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS
21 × 29,7 cm. Collage on vintage Pantone paper. Unique

EXHIBITION
“INFINITE FREEDOM, A WORLD FOR A FEMINIST DEMOCRACY”
2022 Biennale of FRAC Centre-Val de Loire
16/09/2022 – 01/01/2023 – Vierzon, France

BOOK ANILA RUBIKU
“HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS”

CURATED BY
Elisa Fulco
GRAPHIC DESIGN
Maurizio Strippoli
TEXTS WRITTEN BY
Abdelkader Damani
Elisa Fulco
Jeffrey William Adams
COORDINATION
Antonio Leone
TRANSLATION
Jeffrey William Adams
PRESS OFFICE
Ada Tullo
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER
Alessandra Maiarelli
PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS
©Anila Rubiku
PRINT
Vasco Casini – Grafiche Omnia, Milan
November 2022

Our thanks go to Abdelkader Damani who believed in this project and the Italian Council for making this book possible.

Project supported by the Italian Council (10th edition, 2021), program to promote Italian contemporary art in the world by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Culture

ALL THE RIGHTS ARE RESERVED.
Not any part of this work can be reproduced in any way without the preventive written authorization by the artist. All work is copyrighted ©to their respective owners

©2022 ACROBAZIE EDIZIONI
info@acrobazie.org
www.acrobazie.org

