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# This Is the Place

Karey Kessler maps the interconnectedness of physical, spiritual, and emotional spaces

by Kate Mothes

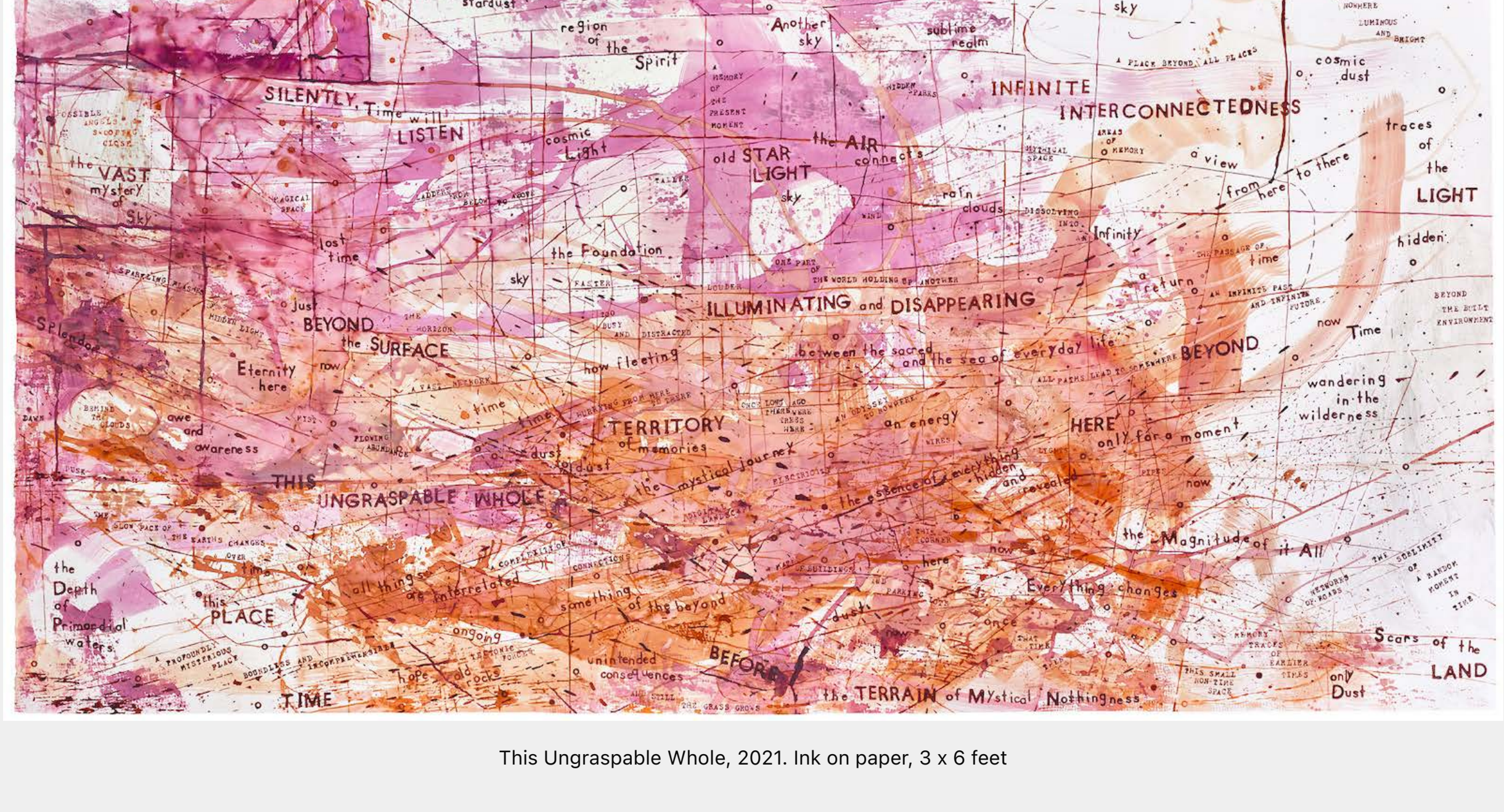
Drawing Maps Painting

Karey Kessler describes her work as “map-paintings,” merging watercolor, stencils, and freehand writing in compositions that explore routes and connections between physical places and spiritual, temporal, and emotional spaces. The artist says, “They explore the entangled ways in which our minds, time, and place are deeply interconnected.”

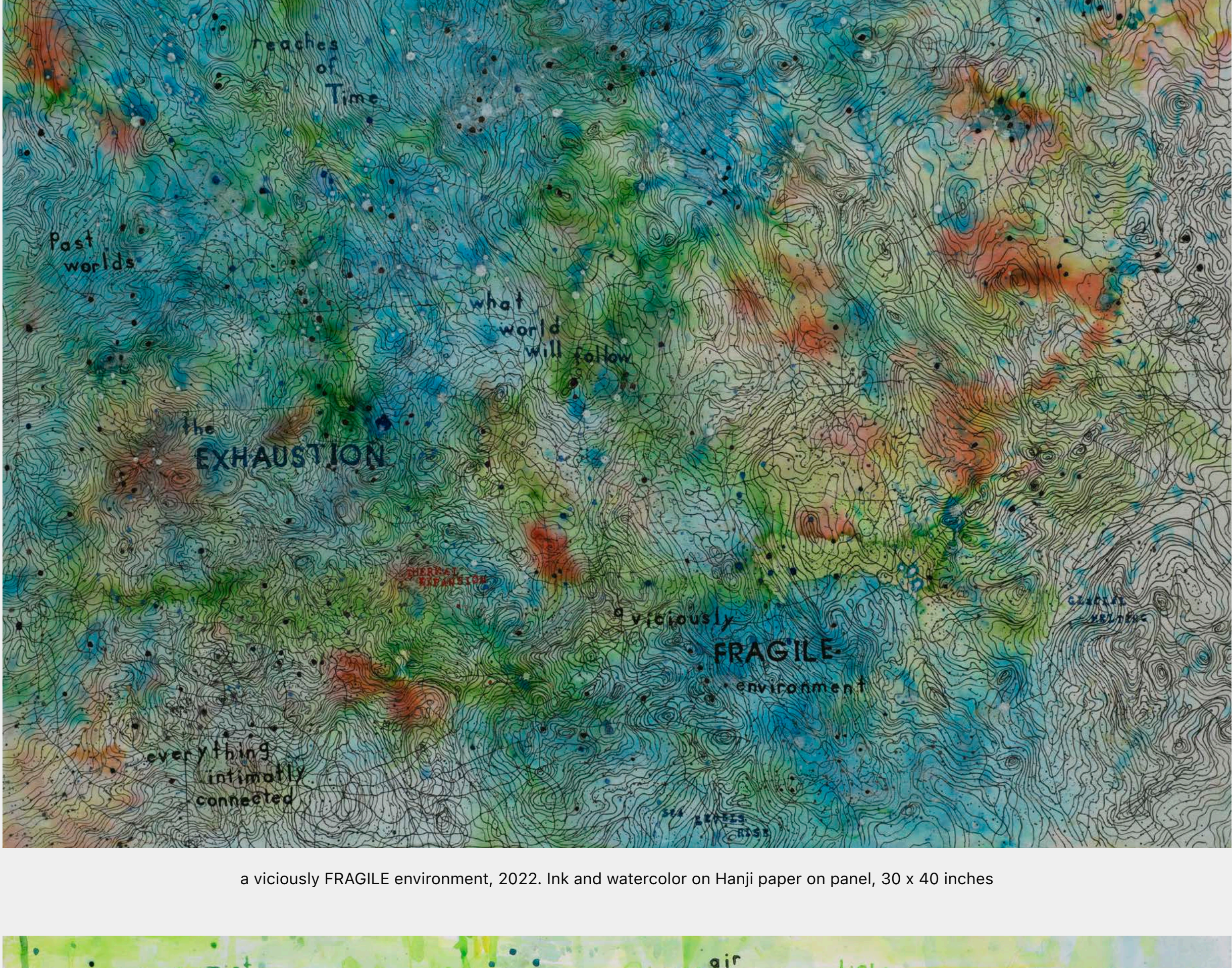
Kessler is fascinated by the role of maps as historical artifacts, means of way-finding, snapshots of time, and physical and social geographies. “I create maps that challenge the conventional notion of what it means to be ‘here’ and subvert our sense of knowing exactly where we are,” the artist says. While the contours, paths, and intersections on these maps don’t physically exist in the real world, they re-imagine Kessler’s personal experiences, intuition, and feelings about the world into evocations of wonder and curiosity.

Deriving words and phrases from poetry, prose, scientific documentation, and Jewish texts, Kessler traverses myriad interpretations of place or location. “I think a lot about the Hebrew word *Makom*, which means ‘place,’ but is also used as one of the names for God,” she says. “In my paintings, ‘here’ can be a specific, known physical place, or it can be an infinite conceptual space—a spiritual realm filled with time, light, and energy.” She adds that the complex worlds comprise networks of symbols, which can be interpreted in myriad ways. “Dots can be birds, rocks, or stars; lines can be roads, rivers, or the passage of time; pools of color can be clouds or lakes or a mysterious presence.”

Kessler’s work is currently on view in *Hillel: Radical Kindness* in the gallery at Peninsula Jewish Community Center in Foster City, California, through December 26. Find more on the artist’s [website](#) and [Instagram](#).



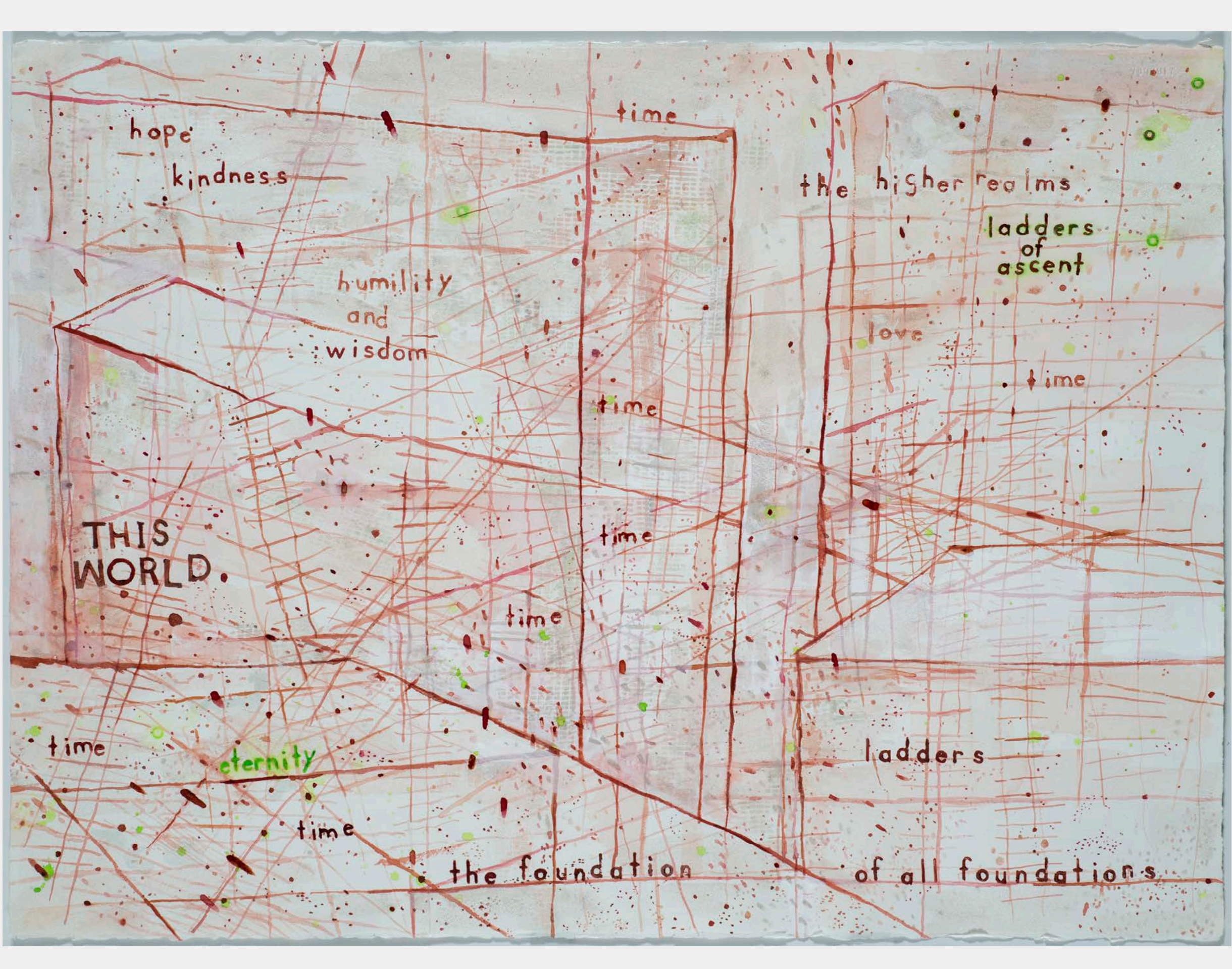
This Ungraspable Whole, 2021. Ink on paper, 3 x 6 feet



a viciously FRAGILE environment, 2022. Ink and watercolor on Hanji paper on panel, 30 x 40 inches



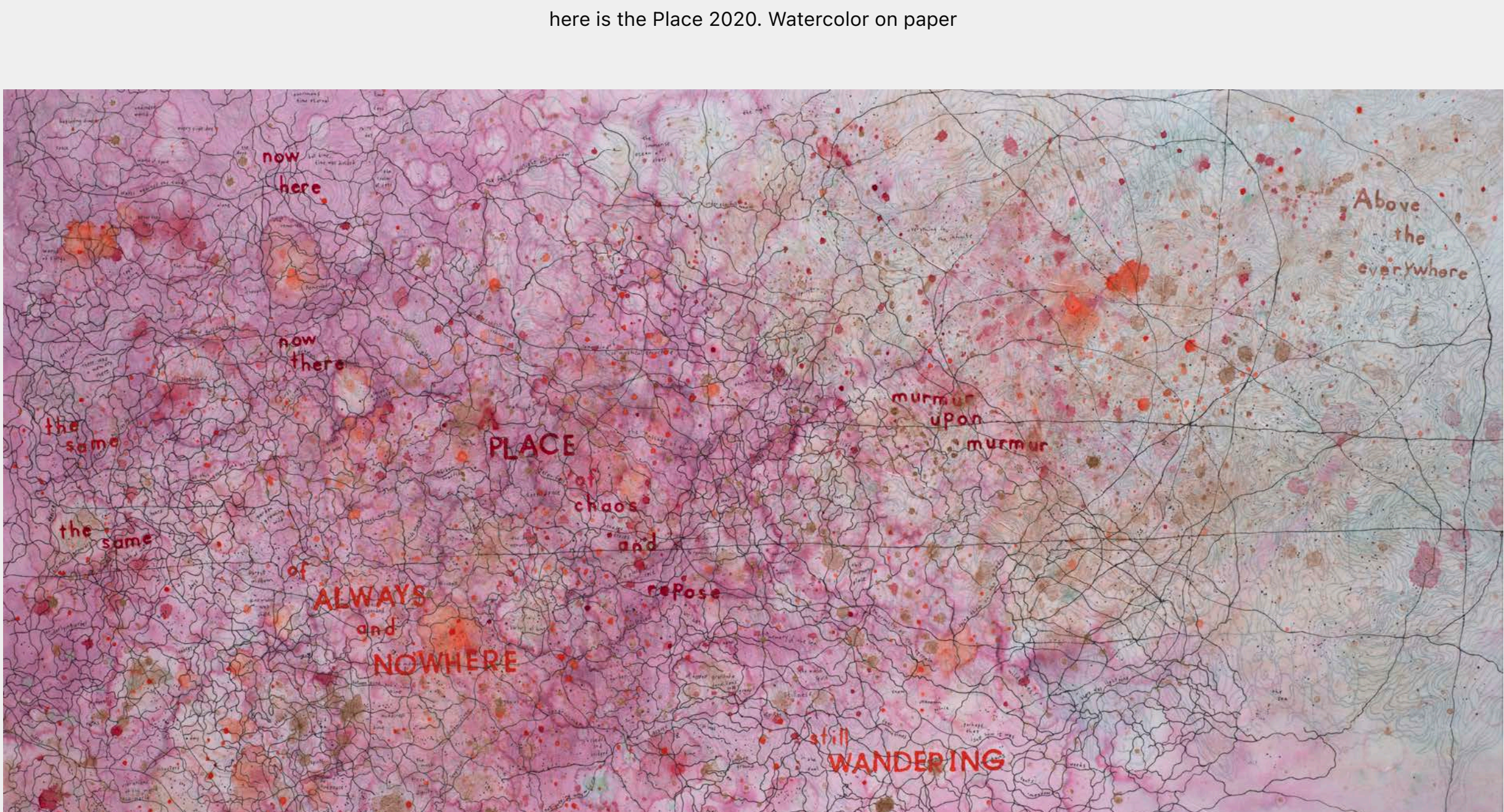
Mystic Unity, 2023. Watercolor on paper, 36 x 40 inches



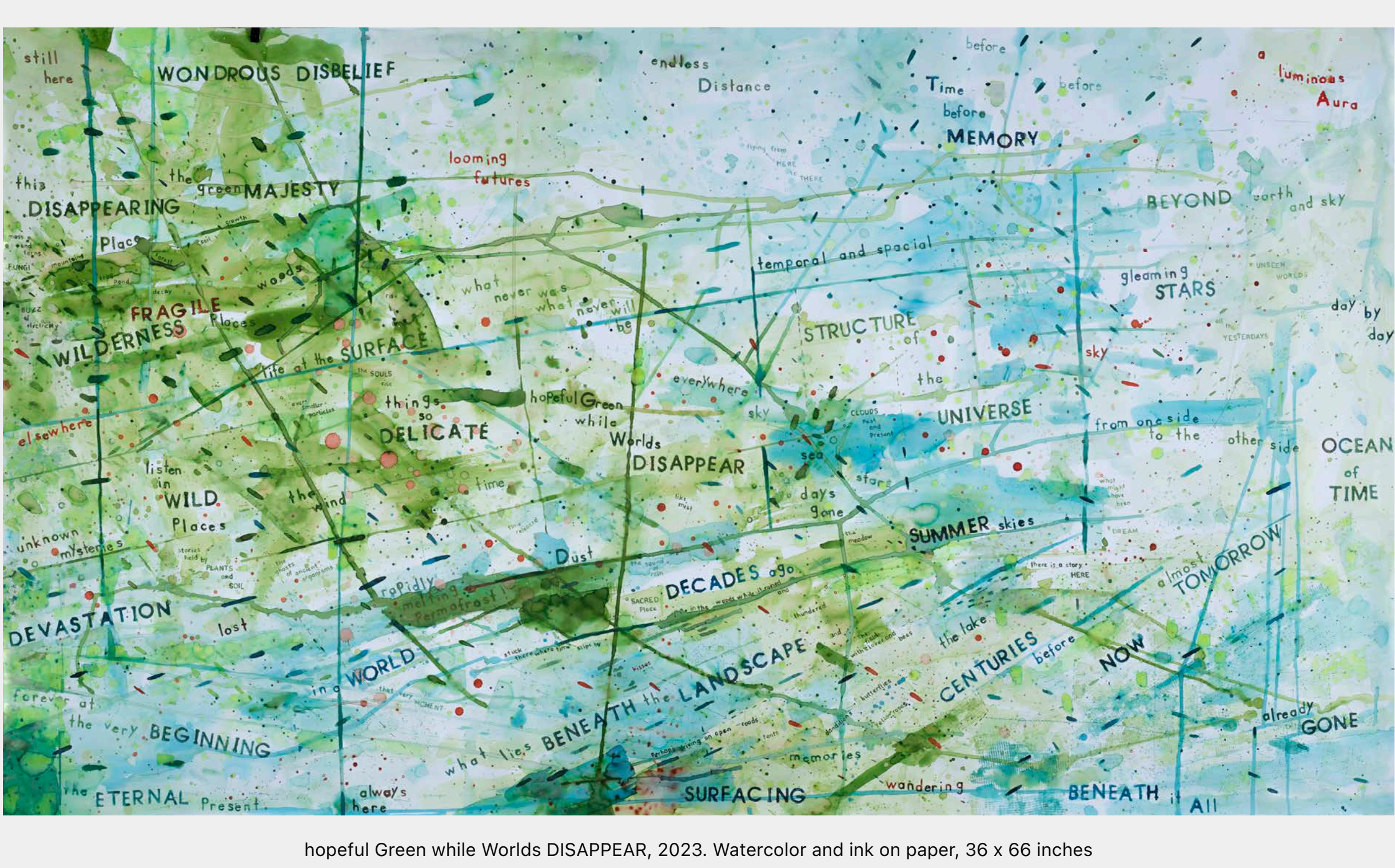
The Foundation of All Foundations, 2023. Watercolor on paper, 23 x 30 inches



here is the Place 2020. Watercolor on paper



still WANDERING, 2022. Watercolor and ink on Hanji paper on panel, 24 x 48 inches



hopeful Green while Worlds DISAPPEAR, 2023. Watercolor and ink on paper, 36 x 66 inches

Header image: Detail of *The CHAOS and the MAGIC*, 2023. Watercolor and ink on paper, 36 x 44 inches

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