

You Will

by

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Introduction

The works featured here are part of the series *You Will*, which began as a celebration of hair braiding, namely pineapple production, and prayer. This series aims to explore these subjects beginning with the pineapple's geometry, from its spiral symmetry to the interlocking units that characterize its skin and continue to the heart of the fruit. These configurations also appear in traditions of hair braiding. In response to this connection, like a hair braider, I allow the pineapple to direct my works on paper without restricting the resulting forms. In both forms of expression, there are no rulers, technological devices, still-life guides, or other shortcuts that predetermine any aspect of the final rendering. Without such limitations, my hands aspire to the unadulterated precision that appears in nature. So doing, I consider my children and the possibility of using my practice to leave a legacy that might inspire. The titles are constructed based on contemporary prayers in Nigeria that also stand as decrees. They incorporate Pidgin English spoken in Lagos, Jamaican patois, and depart from histories of meanings assigned to hairstyles. The series is in dialogue with the work of photographers J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere and Karl Blossfeldt and histories of botanical illustration.

With an interest in documenting and creating contemporary channels of communication, Ogunbiyi is a visual artist who creates mixed-media artworks. Her approach is often site-specific, and explores botany, human adornment, and pattern—as textile, human habit, and repeated gesture. References imbedded therein are informed by history, current events, and her interactions with particular places. She uses drawing and sculpture to fragment and reconfigure this source material, which often includes personal anecdotes.

Temitayo OGUNBIYI's projects have been showcased at The Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, The Centre for Contemporary Art Lagos, The Museum for Contemporary African Diasporan Art, and the Fries Museum in Berlin. Born and raised in the United States, to a Jamaican mother and Nigerian father, Ogunbiyi now lives predominantly in Lagos, Nigeria with her husband and children. In 2018, she was awarded a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship and her work is featured in *Strange Attractors*, an artist book produced as part of the 10th Berlin Biennial. Ogunbiyi received a bachelor's from Princeton University and her MA from Columbia University. Currently, she is building her playgrounds, which interprets Yoruba hairstyles as outdoor, interactive places of play.

Thoughts on Historical Precedents

To begin, this is not intended to be a tight academic text, filled with robust footnotes and followed by an insightful bibliography. I am a visual artist and my hope is to merely share some of the influences and historical markers I have stumbled upon while building this body

of work.

In my experience, archives of hairstyling have not been the best kept. They are often preserved in memories recalled as oral histories and in photographs of anonymous people. Therefore, I have had to rely upon my own observations and conversations with others and hair braiders especially, to learn about current trends, forgotten hairstyles and their links to historical events as reflections of human experience.

Most of the hairstyles featured, or that I have referenced, to be more precise, may be closely associated with South-West Nigeria, where I currently live and work. For example, 'Your pot will always be half-full and if it turns over, it will be no more to clean up than you can bear' departs from a style called *koroba*, a word which means turned over a pot of stew in Yoruba, one of the three most popular indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria (see Image 7). Today, based on my observations, this hairstyle is very popular among toddlers of all socio-economic strata and the occasional adult, usually of the working class, though not always.

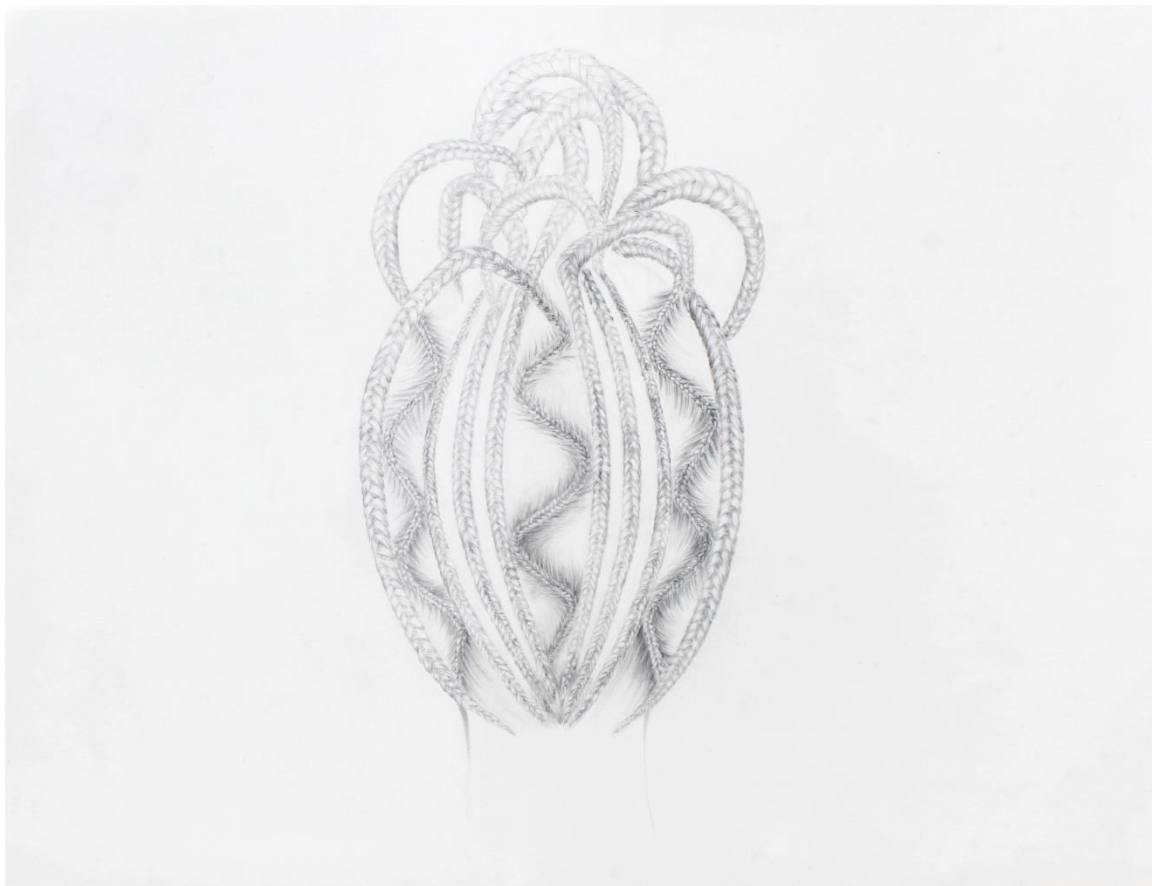
Another work departs from *payinapu*, a pigeon English word meaning *pineapple* (see Image 6). Other styles, such as the beehive, nod to Western histories of hair styling and undoubtedly, cultural exchange that likely happened during the Civil Rights era of the United States of America. This period, from the late 1940s and late 1960s, overlaps with 1959 when television was broadcast in Nigeria for the first time. Shortly after this period, in 1977, a pan-African cultural showcase called Festac77, took place in Festac (Lagos). I imagine an influx of hairstyles would have happened during this time when persons across the Diaspora descended upon Lagos. Afro hairstyles remained especially popular in Lagos through the 70s (see Image 13).

To be sure, cultural exchange has continued to influence hair styling, and I imagine this has exposed persons living in Nigeria to hairstyles elsewhere, and vice versa. I am curious to know more about the contemporary influence of Nigerian hairstyles on an international public, and across generations. Today, many major cities have hair-braiding salons, often run by West African women who have emigrated from the continent. To speak of where the hairstyles that they create originate, is a challenge. At best, I might recall where and when I first observed a particular style. I have always thought that it is impossible to identify origins. It is especially so in South-West Nigeria, and moreover Lagos, where many cultures intersect.

The diversity and evolution of style is impossible to ignore. While some of the styles that inform my work have persisted for generations, in recent years the palettes of the referenced hairstyles have shifted from natural black and brown attachments to purple, royal blue, gray, white, and a host of other bright colours. The interest in using attachments that blend with one's natural hair colour seems to have waned significantly in the last five years. In many instances today, hair attachments are an accessory that may be likened to a handbag or pair of shoes. This seems to be more true with women between the ages of 17 and 40. Older women continue to have *didi*, braids turned inward, done with their own hair or modest styles with little attachment, which is often covered with head-ties. Many young girls wear similar styles in terms of simplicity and with little attachment. Though, often times their hair is accented with brightly coloured beads.

Hair, and hair styling, often complicate the distinctions between socio-economic classes that one might gauge from other forms of bodily adornment, such as jewelry. I have also witnessed that which I might term the inversion of style, where someone from the upper-class shuns trends of wearing weaves and wigs and instead opts for a threaded or natural style without attachments. Mrs. Otedola comes to mind, as does the work of Njideka Akunyili Crosby. This trend suggests that traditions of hair braiding and styling that connect to local histories has regained popularity in the last three years, with women wearing braided styles without attachments or attachments that are almost identical to tightly coiled hair textures that are prevalent among many people of African descent.

For me, the histories and various factors that impact and are reflected in hairstyling are significant indicators of the malleability of cultures and of an alternative means of navigating human experience. More interesting still is the potential for rethinking design through the forms expressed in hairstyles. I imagine using these, through my visual art practice, to impact the future of outdoor spaces with beginnings that reference hairstyles and celebrate those who showcase and often create these styles. Connecting the gestures that appear in hairstyles, to those in nature, the series 'You Will' aims to blur the boundaries between human gesture and the lines observed in nature. Perhaps, it is in this space that we might find structures to shift the ways in which we experience our environments and interpret one another.



1. Title: *Your life will be purposed (whole)*
Date: 2016
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 18 x 24 in. (46 x 60 cm.)



2. Title: *You will uncover detail in simplicity (Quarter minus d heart)*
Date: 2016
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 18 x 24 in. (46 x 60 cm.)



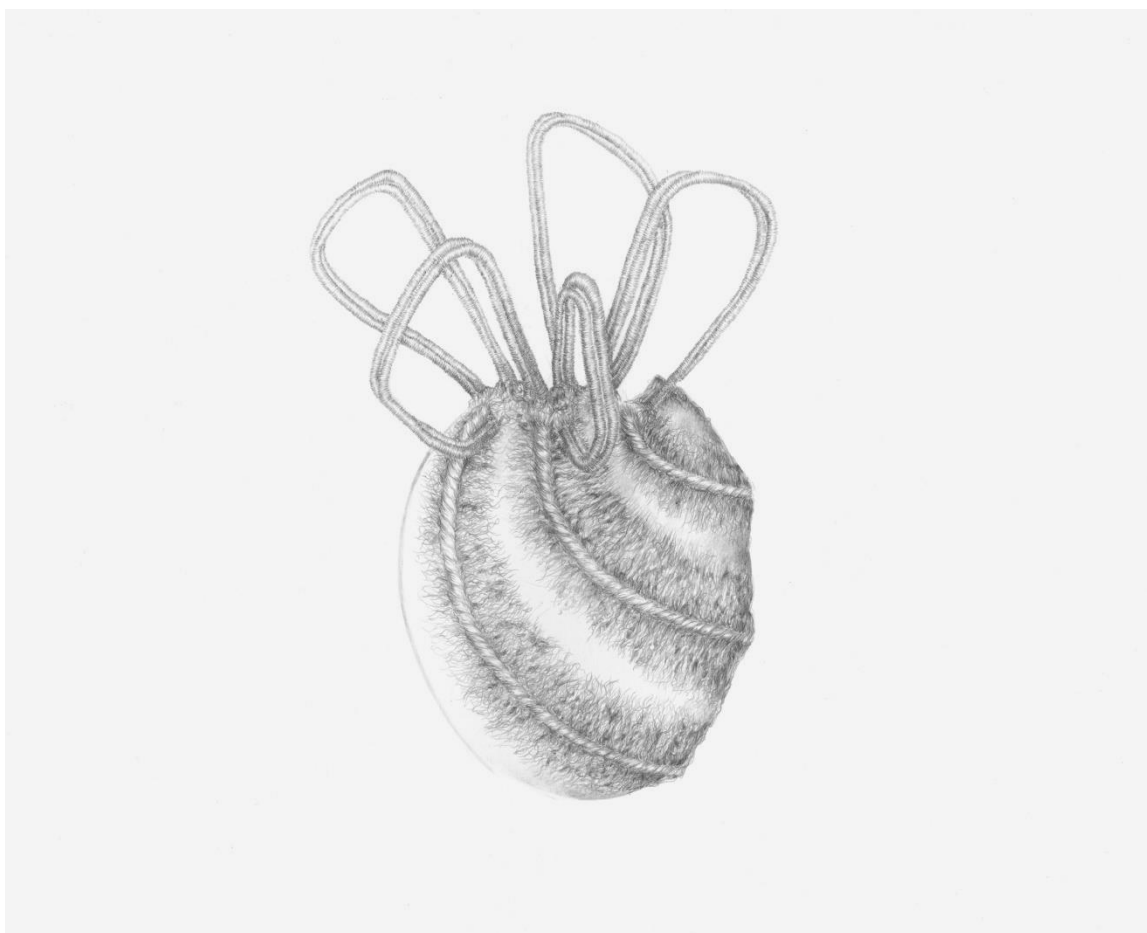
3. Title: *You will age in grace (comot d up)*
Date: 2016
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 18 x 24 in. (46 x 60 cm.)



4. Title: *You will intermix (slice the flesh)*
Date: 2016
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 18 x 24 in. (46 x 60 cm.)



5. Title: *Your eyes will pass those of the pineapple (boil d skin for zobo/sorrel)*
Date: 2016
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 18 x 24 in. (46 x 60 cm.)



6. Title: *You will see that a little can be enough*
Date: 2017
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 13.4 x 19.7 in. (34 x 50 cm)



7. Title: *Your pot will always be half full and if it turns over, it will be no more to clean up than you can bear*
Date: 2017
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 13.4 x 19.7 in. (34 x 50 cm)



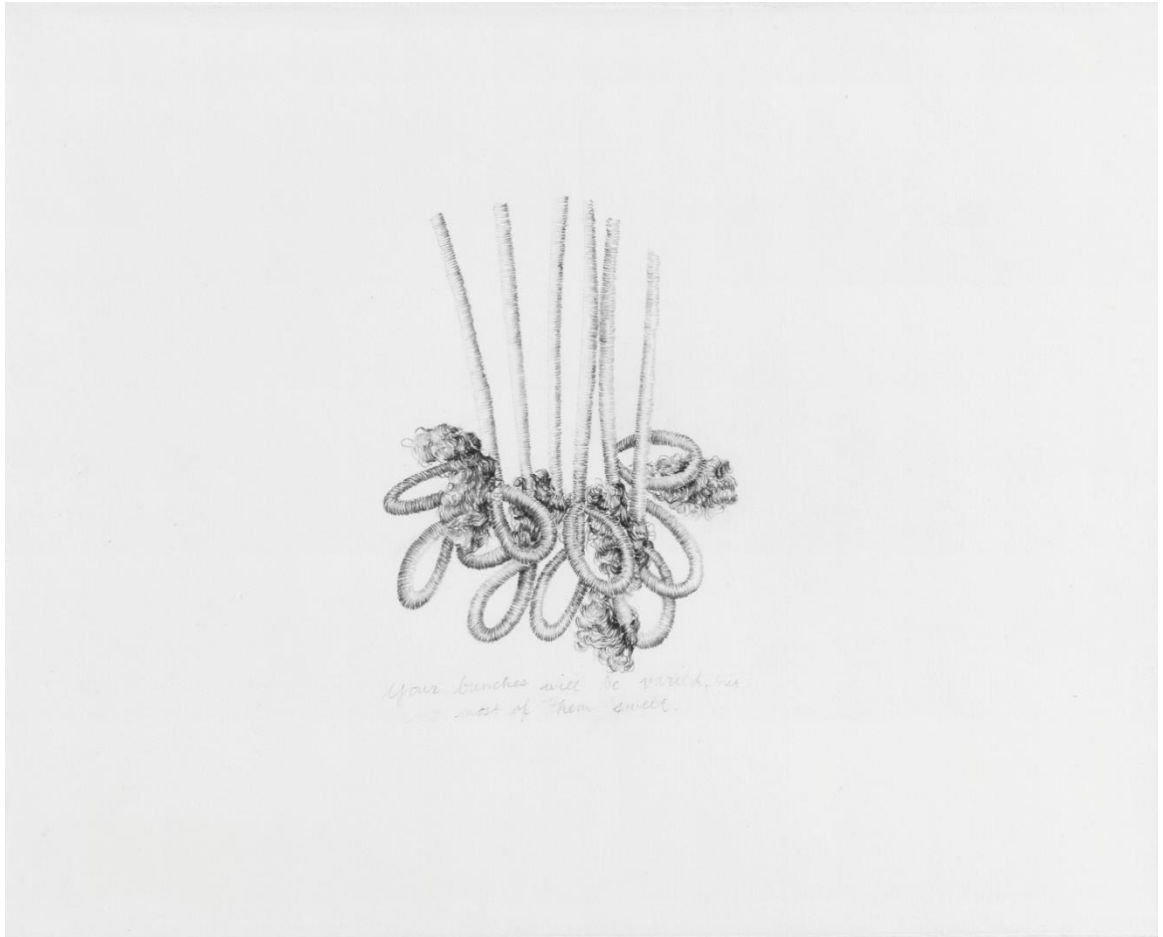
8. Title: *You will wind past vacuous dreams and through thorned gait*
Date: 2017
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 13.4 x 19.7 in. (34 x 50 cm)



9. Title: *You will find that order can be dynamic*
Date: 2017
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 13.4 x 19.7 in. (34 x 50 cm)



10. Title: *You will have offshoots of pleasant surprises*
Date: 2017
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 9.25 x 10 in (25 x 25.4 cm)



11. Title: *Your bunches will be varied, but most of them sweet*
Date: 2017
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 9.25 x 10 in (25 x 25.4 cm)



12. Title: *You will set trends that distinguish the real*
Date: 2018
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 9.25 x 10 in (25 x 25.4 cm)



13. Title: *You will find wealth in clusters as rich as those of the shea tree*
Date: 2018
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 9.25 x 10 in (25 x 25.4 cm)

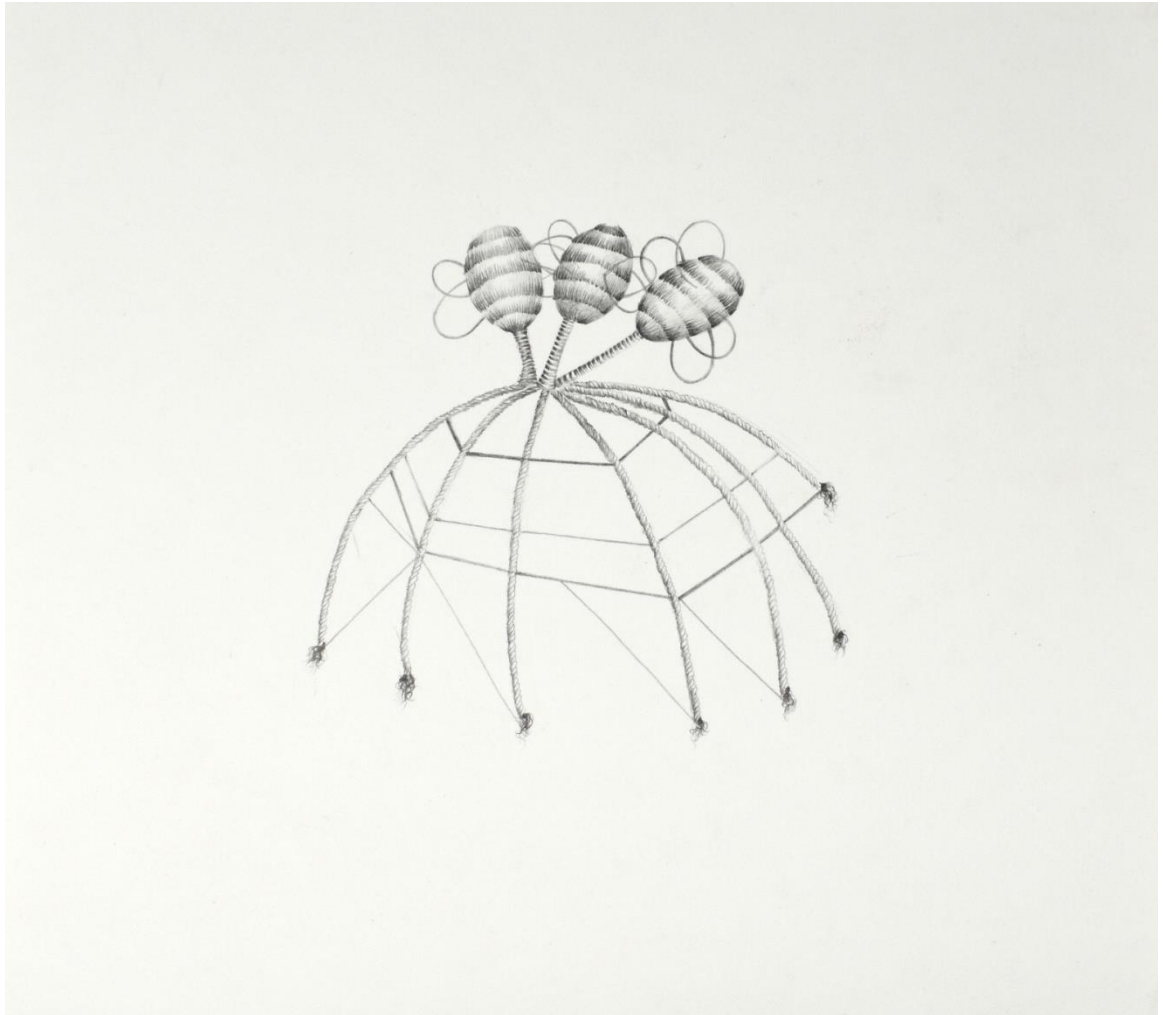


14. Title: *Your great grandchildren will see bees on flowers*

Date: 2018

Medium: pencil on paper

Dimensions: 9.25 x 10 in (25 x 25.4 cm)



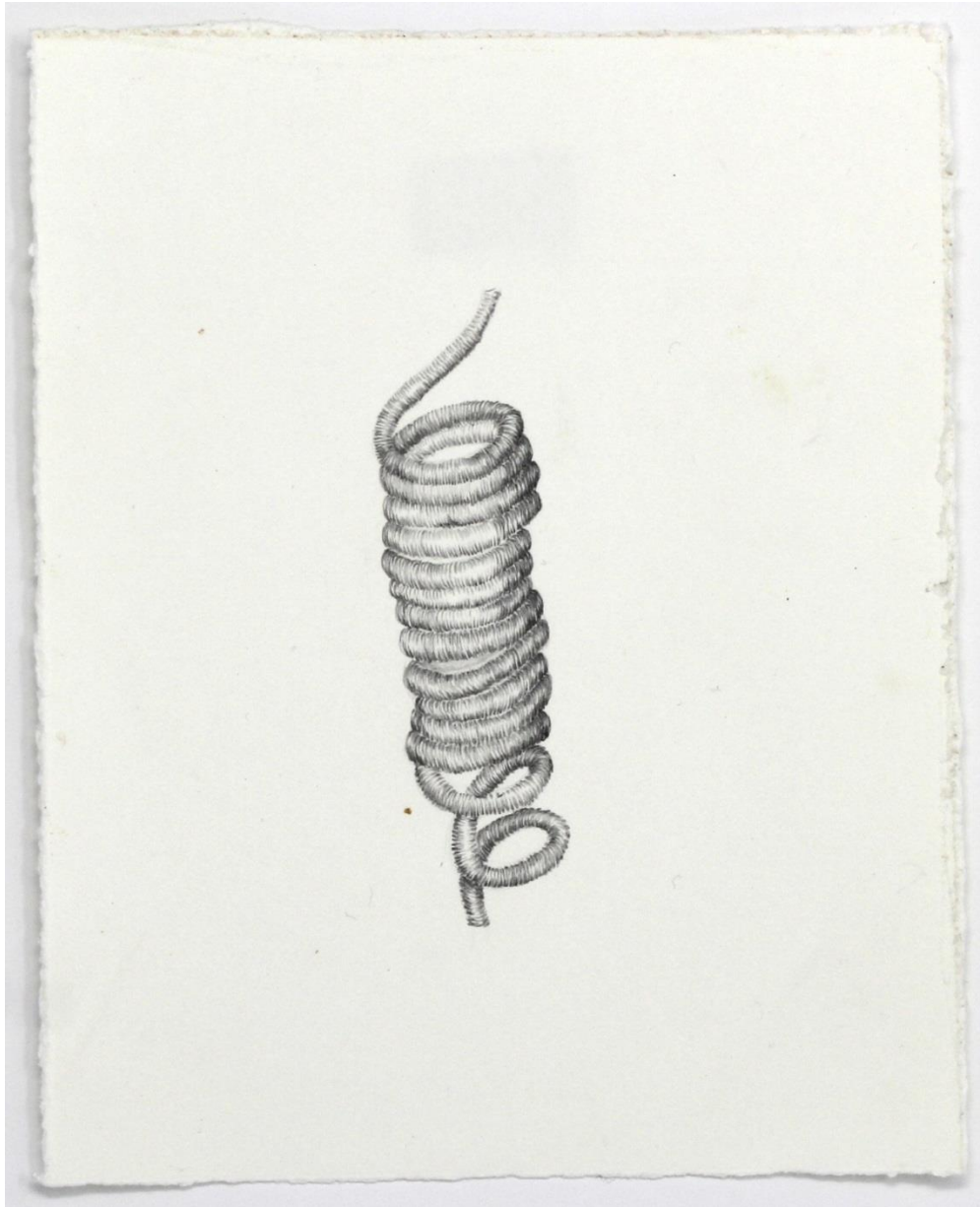
15. Title: *You will find structure in the lattices of youth*
Date: 2018
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 9.25 x 10 in (25 x 25.4 cm)



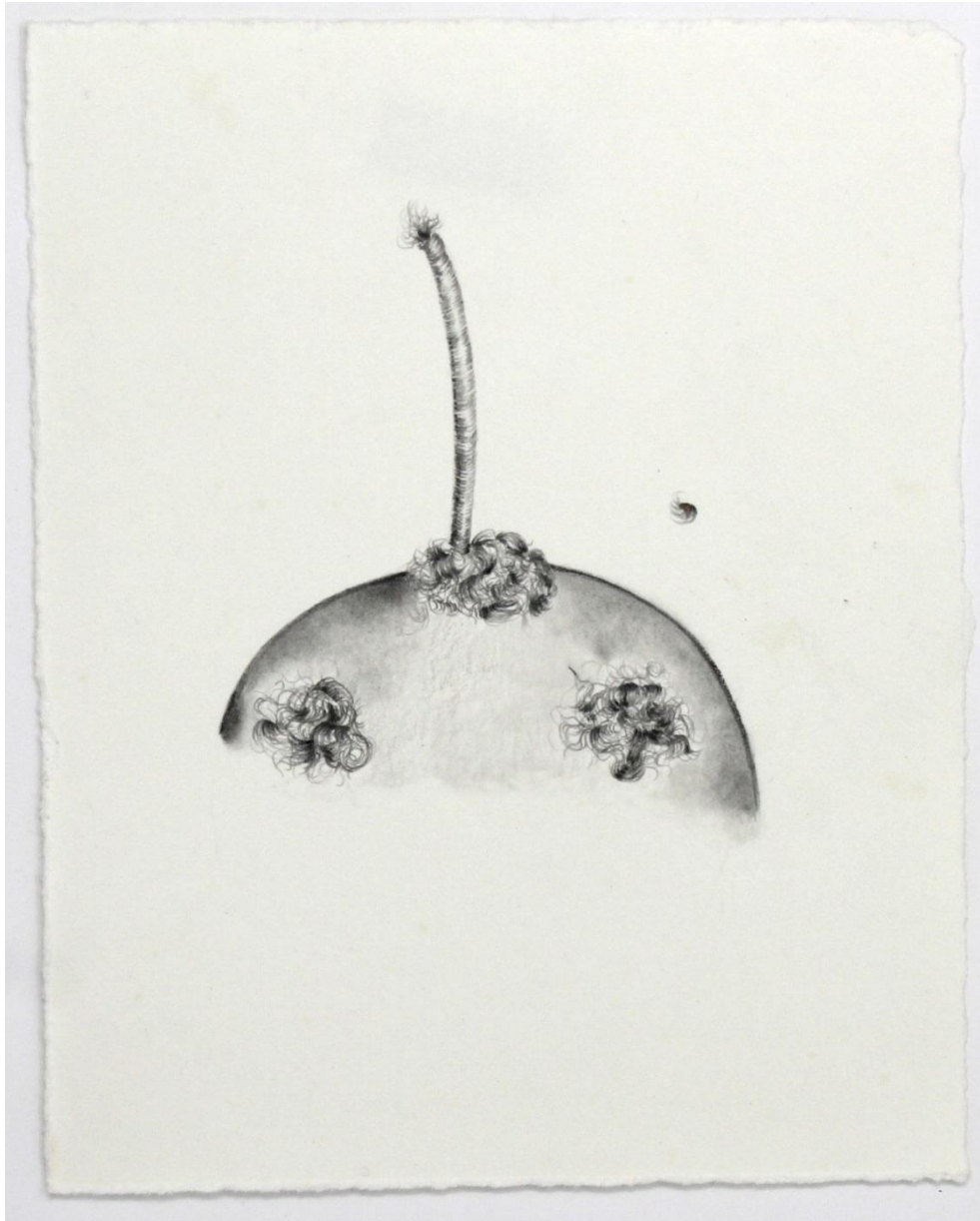
16. Title: *You will be the nucleus of good things*
Date: 2018
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 7 x 5 in. (17.78 x 12.7 cm)



17. Title: *You will create your own Dubai*
Date: 2018
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 7 x 5 in. (17.78 x 12.7 cm)



18. Title: *You will find a way around emptiness*
Date: 2018
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 7 x 5 in. (17.78 x 12.7 cm)



19. Title: *You will see that sometimes it just takes one*
Date: 2018
Medium: pencil on paper
Dimensions: 7 x 5 in. (17.78 x 12.7 cm)